

Information Session on Mental Health for International Students

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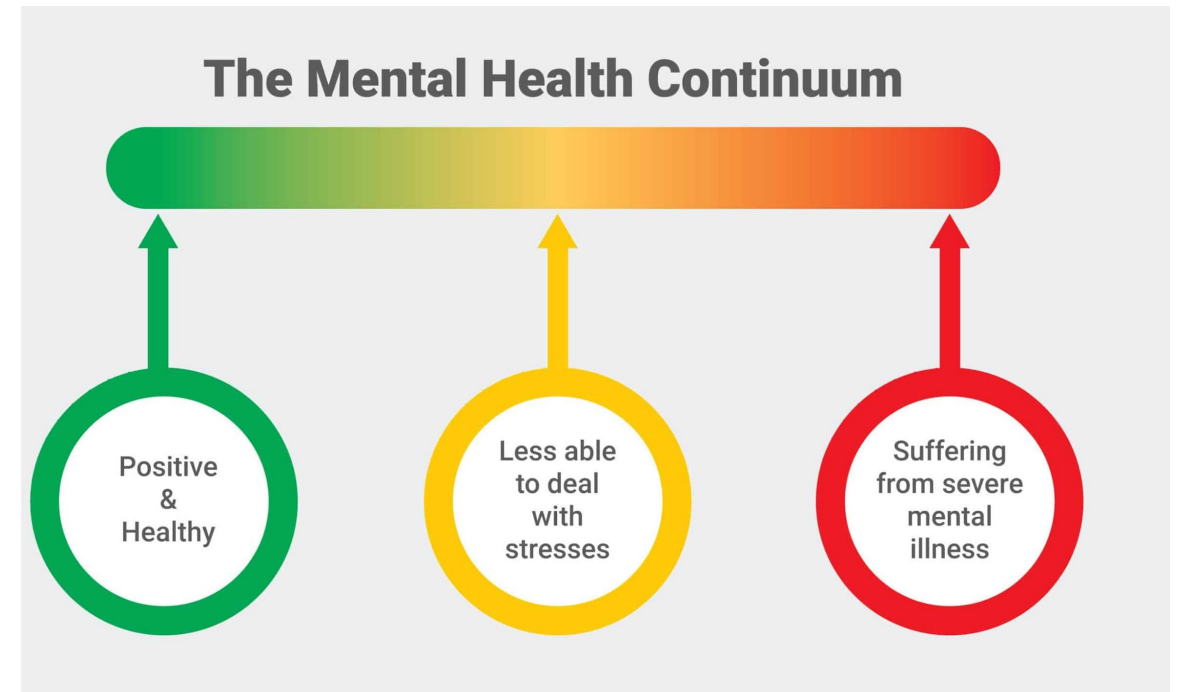
What is Mental Health

- **Mental health is a state of well-being enabling people to cope with life's stresses, realize their abilities, learn, work well, and contribute to their community.**
- **It is integral to health and well-being, underpinning decision-making, relationship-building, and shaping our world.**
- **Mental health is a basic human right and crucial for personal, community, and socio-economic development.**



Mental Health

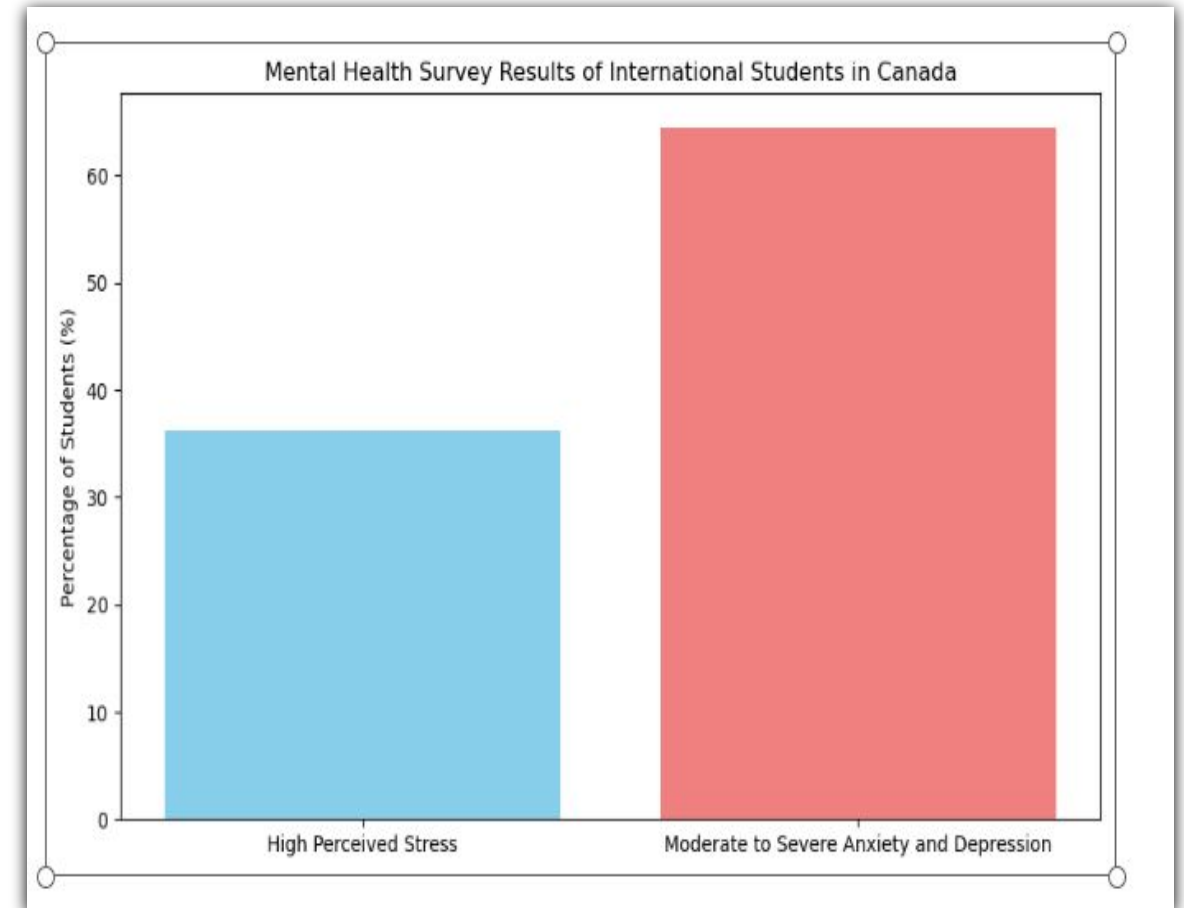
Mental health is more than the absence of mental disorders; it exists on a continuum with varying degrees of difficulty and distress.



International Students and Mental Health

- **Recent research has shown that international students often report higher levels of loneliness, anxiety, and stress than their domestic counterparts.**
- **This chart visualizes the percentage of students reporting high perceived stress and moderate to severe anxiety and depression symptoms.**

(Tan1 & Sekercioglu2, 2022)



Statistics

(New Canada Media)

Risk of Mental Health Issues:

- 55% of respondents were at risk of depression.
- 50% were at risk of an anxiety disorder.
- International students reported loneliness, mental exhaustion, panic attacks, and social isolation.

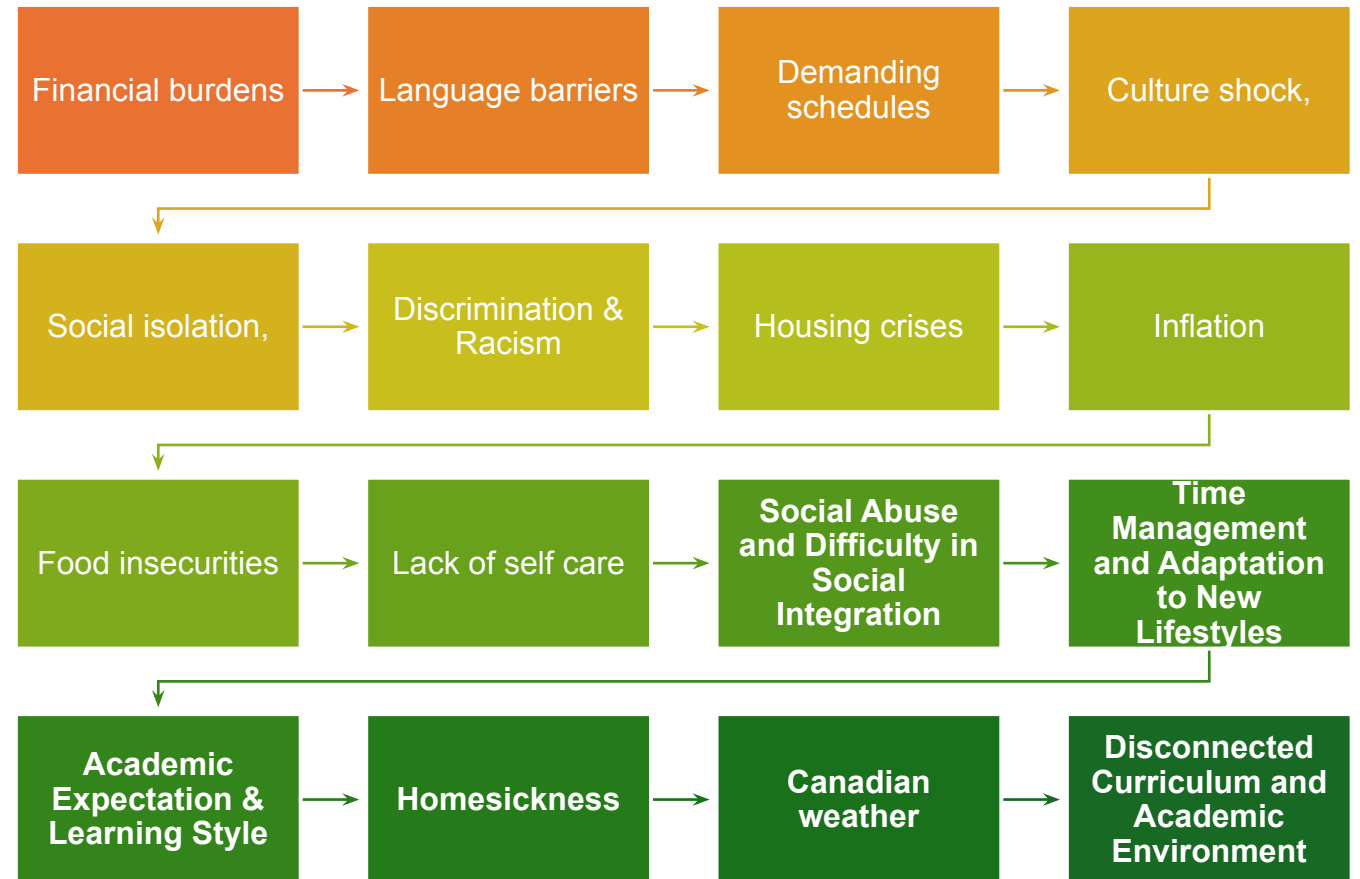
Mortality and Substance Use:

- Since the COVID-19 pandemic, an average of five international students die each month in Etobicoke, Ontario.
- Students often start taking drugs to cope with stress, increasing the likelihood of death.

Suicide Attempts:

- Anu Sharma, a community partner, receives an average of 10 calls a week from one private college in the Greater Toronto Area from students who have attempted suicide.
- The actual number of suicide attempts is likely higher but underreported.

Factors that Affect Mental Health



Mental Health Taboo and South Asian Communities

- A "mental health taboo" refers to a cultural barrier that prevents people from openly discussing, acknowledging, or seeking help for mental health issues due to negative stigma, stereotypes, and the perception that talking about mental health is shameful or weak, often leading individuals to hide their struggles and avoid seeking treatment.
 - Stigma associated with seeking care.
 - Discouragement from older generations acknowledging mental health challenges.
 - Reluctance to seek treatment due to intrinsic biases.
 - Having no ground for sharing mental health symptoms with family members.
 - Dismissive attitudes from parents regarding reported mental health problem symptoms.
 - Traditional cultural perspectives that view mental health issues as a sign of weakness or personal failing.



Mental Health Stigma



Stigma involves unfair attitudes or beliefs about those with mental health challenges, leading to shame and exclusion.



Cultural stigma and lack of access to services can impede mental health care.



Religion and cultural values can influence attitudes towards seeking professional help.

Some Misconception s

Mental health and mental illness are related but distinct.

Mental illness is often invisible, especially when symptoms are managed.

Mental illness alone is not a predictor of violence.

Medication is one part of a broader treatment plan.

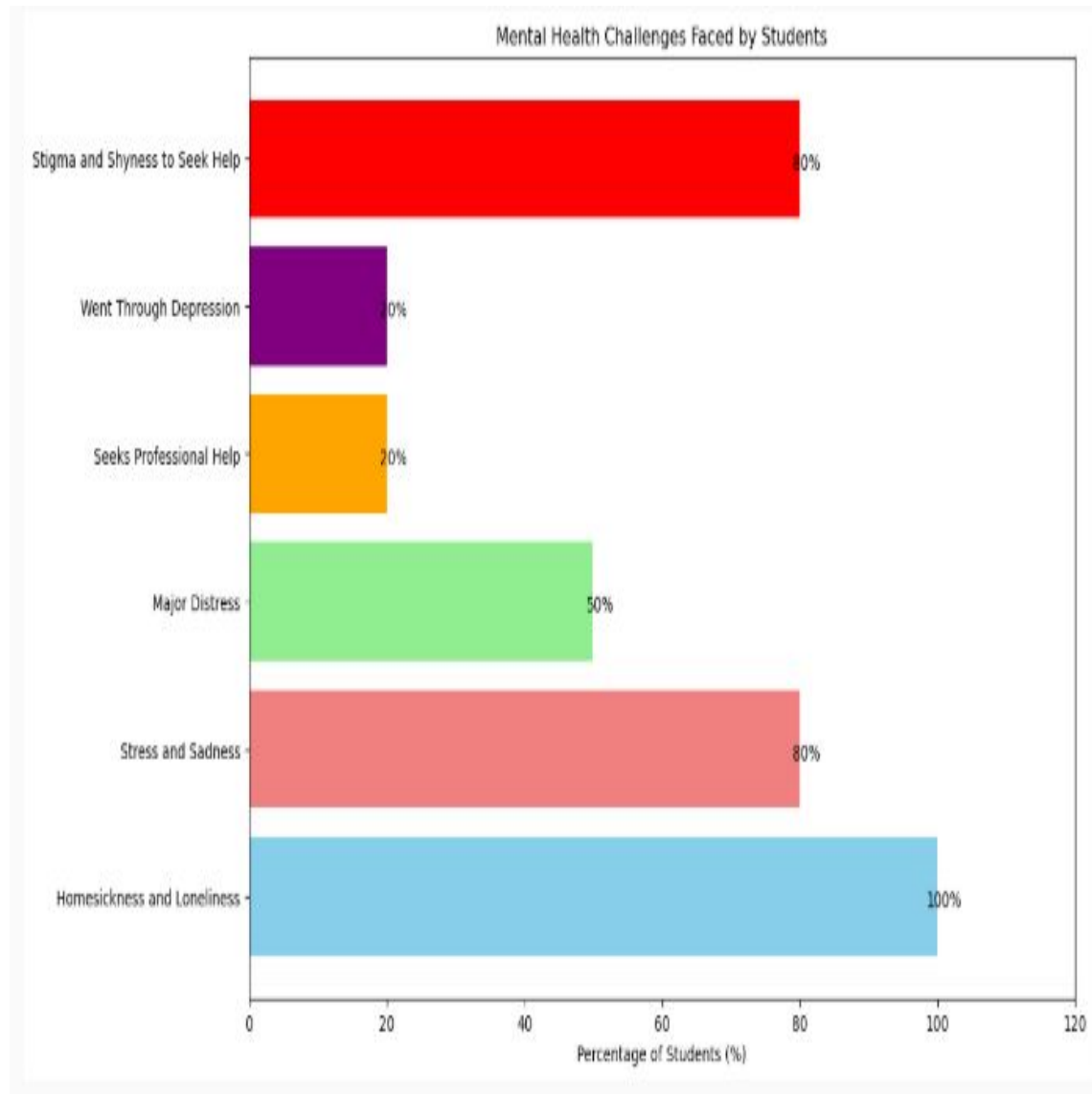
No one is immune to mental illness.

Mental illness is treatable, and recovery is possible.

Mental health services can be costly, but help is available.

People with mental health problems can be reliable workers.

Findings of My Research Project



Barriers to Access Mental Health

Stigma

Language barriers

Financial burden

Culturally distant services

Availability and complexity of the health system

Work conditions

Insufficient funding for health services

Appropriate training and education

Recommendation

- 1. Expand Mental Health Insurance Coverage:** Ensure comprehensive coverage for therapy, counseling, and emergency mental health services in international student insurance plans.
- 2. Culturally Sensitive Counseling Services:** Prioritize funding for culturally appropriate mental health resources, including hiring trained counselors familiar with South Asian experiences.
- 3. Awareness and Education Campaigns:** Launch campaigns to educate students, faculties and staff on mental health issues, emphasizing help-seeking and stigma reduction through workshops and informational sessions.
- 4. Create Safe Spaces for Dialogue:** Establish environments for open discussions about mental health, including peer support groups and regular check-ins to normalize help-seeking behaviors.
- 5. Improve Accessibility of Services:** Provide mental health resources in multiple languages and offer online counseling options to reduce language and stigma barriers.
- 6. Enhance Training for Healthcare Providers:** Include cultural sensitivity and recognition of mental distress in training programs for healthcare providers and educators.
- 7. Incorporate Student Feedback:** Regularly gather input from international students on mental health services to ensure relevance and effectiveness.
- 8. Foster Community Engagement:** Partner with local South Asian organizations to create support networks and resources beyond campus.
- 9. Implement Comprehensive Support Programs:** Develop programs addressing broader challenges, such as financial literacy workshops, housing assistance, and social integration initiatives.
- 10. Collaboration with Community Partners:** Create collaborative support system engaging community partners that have more cultural knowledge & understanding of South Asian contexts.

Culturally Sensitive Mental Health Service



CULTURAL
BACKGROUND



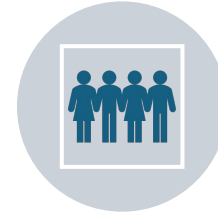
LANGUAGE



BELIEF AND FAITH



CONTINUING
CONSULTATION



UNDERSTANDING
SOUTH ASIAN
PRACTICES OF CARE
AND SUPPORT



REMOVING BIASES AND
JUDGEMENTS



SEEKING COMMUNITY
SUPPORT



RESPECT AND SELF
REFLECTION

Community-University-Government Partnership Model



COMMUNITY
KNOWLEDGE AND
CONNECTION



INSTITUTIONS'
NETWORK AND
RESOURCES



GOVERNMENT'S POLICY
AND FUNDING

Students' Responsibility

- Know about Canadian culture and norms.
- Budget and plan about the financial expenses.
- Do not plan to earn the tuition fees and living expenses by working in Canada.
- Explore information on work opportunities thoroughly.
- Reach out to the university and other students for authentic information.
- Work on language and social communication skills.
- Do not rely entirely on the agent's information and social media posts.
- Explore the resources and services that the institution, city, and the different communities provide.
- Investigate resources thoroughly and be critical while making the decision.
- Reach out to people or different community supporters or college/university designated information.
- Build up a healthy social life once you are in Canada.
- Practice self care.

Resources

- [Mental Health Toolkit](#)
- [Resources for International Students](#)
- [Supporting International Students Webinar](#)
- [The Pardesi Project](#)
- [International Student Connect](#)
- [Study in Ontario: International Students](#)
[YMCA Newcomer Information Centre](#)
- [Government of Canada page Study in Canada as an international student – Canada.ca](#)
- [Supporting International Students Infosheet](#)
- [Mental Health Guide](#)
- <https://ontario.cmha.ca/provincial-mental-health-supports/>

Help Centre for Mental Health Services

- **Good2Talk**: Good2Talk provides free, confidential support services for post-secondary students in Ontario and Nova Scotia
- **Guard Me Student Support Program**
- **Keep me SAFE program - International Students**
- **<https://connexontario.ca/>**
- Lifeworks Crisis Support Line: CALL 1-844-751-2133 **Talk Suicide: 1-833-456-4566 or talksuicide.ca**
- **<https://www.sochmentalhealth.com/contact-soch/>**



Any Questions?

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Thank You.