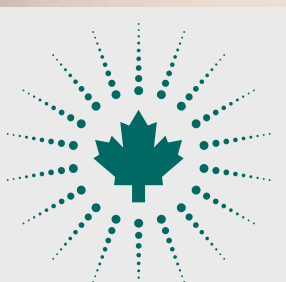




NURSING IN CANADA: A PATH TOWARD SUSTAINABILITY

A brief summary of the “Mental Disorder Symptoms Among Nurses in Canada” and the Canadian Federation of Nurses Unions (CFNU) “Sustaining Nursing in Canada”.



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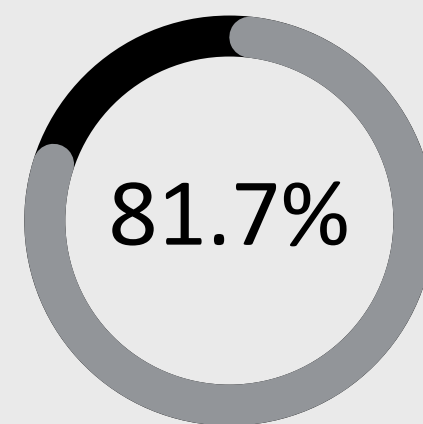
To read the full, in-depth reports: [OSI Report \(1\)](#) [CFNU Report \(2\)](#)

INTRODUCTION: Prior to the pandemic, the nursing profession was strained due to excessive overtime and unmanageable workloads. Healthcare professionals also face ongoing verbal and physical violence, burnout, and moral distress. The current report, Mental Disorder Symptoms of Nurses in Canada (1), provides insight to the challenges that nurses are facing across Canada, and the various help seeking behaviors that are undertaken; and offers some practical steps for moving forward.

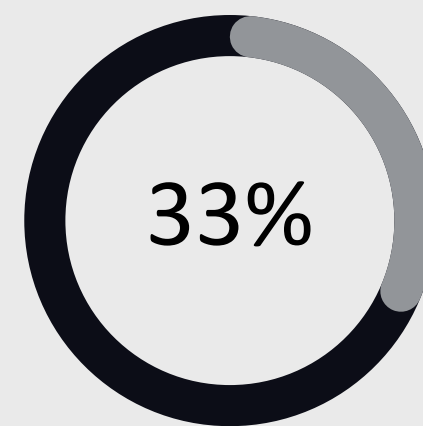
METHOD: A national sample of 3208 nurses (92% female; average age of 42 with 10 years of experience, data from 2019) found nurses experience many different mental health challenges:

Mental Disorder	Nurses (%)	Gen. Pop. (%)
Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)	23.0	8.0
Major Depressive Disorder	36.4	9.0
Generalized Anxiety Disorder	26.1	13.3
Panic Disorder	20.3	3.7
Alcohol Use Disorder	3.2	1.4

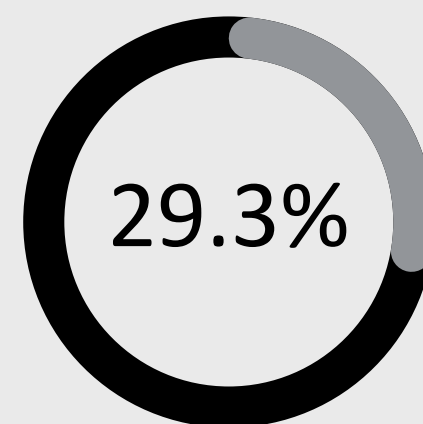
Other challenges reported from nurses:



Experienced critical incident stress during their career



Lifetime suicidal thoughts/ideation

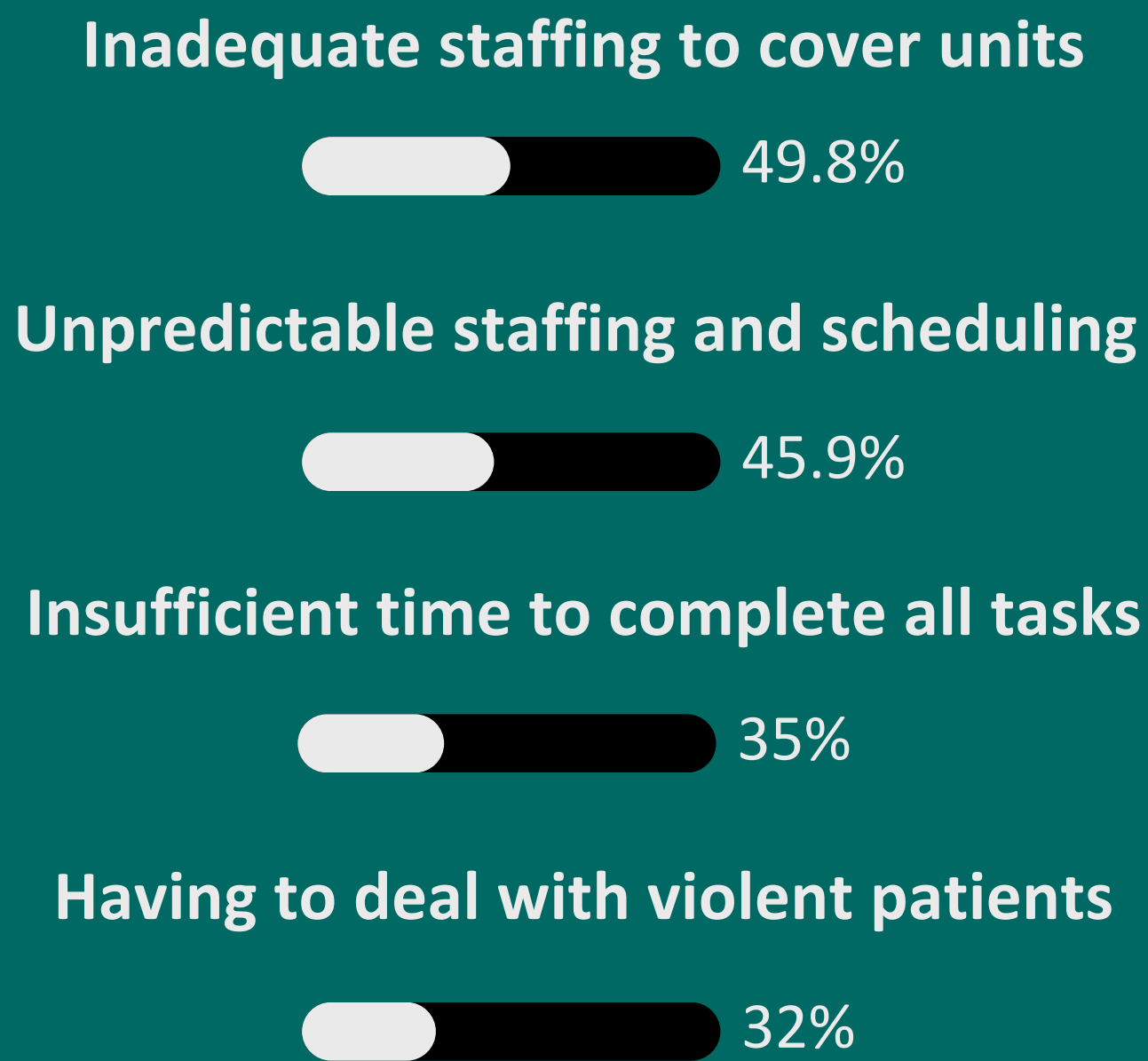


Substantial levels of burnout

TAKEAWAY: Nurses are facing various occupational and operational challenges, resulting in elevated mental health disorder symptoms.

Mental health training, help seeking behaviors, and sources of stress among Canadian Nurses (1)

Sources of stress identified by Canadian nurses:



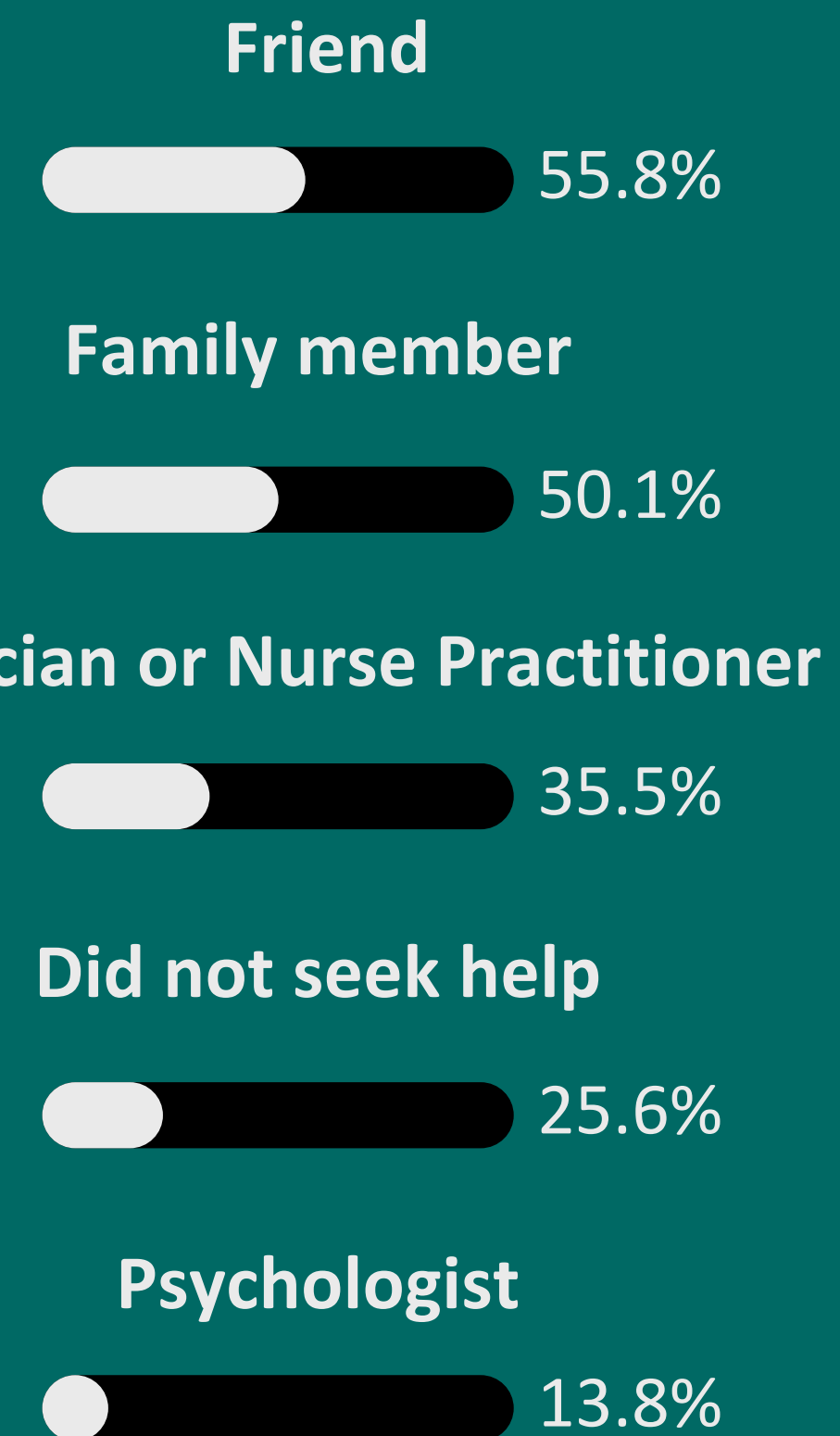
Mental Health Training:

More nurses reported receiving formal training for others mental health (55.4%) than training for their own mental health (32.2%).

Nurses received the following types of training: Mental Health First Aid (35.4%), Union occupational health and safety training (35.6%), Peer support training (31.9%), Critical incident stress management (17.8%) and debriefing (23.7%).

Although many nurses reported that the mental health training increased their own knowledge of mental health (58.7%) and that it helped respond to patients with mental health needs (53.3%), few reported that it helped improve their own mental health (29.5%) or prevent occupational stress injuries (17.3%).

Sources of help sought:



Reasons for not seeking help:

50.2% of the nurses preferred to manage their mental health themselves.

22-24.8% didn't have time to seek help or work interfered with their ability to seek help.

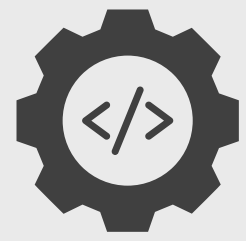
15.5-18.5% of the nurses reported they didn't have confidence in the options available, couldn't afford to pay, or were afraid of what others would think.

TAKEAWAY: Nurses are facing serious occupational demands, time constraints, stigma, and limited resources. There is a need for an integrated mental health support system that begins in training and continues through one's career.



THE CANADIAN FEDERATION OF NURSES UNIONS (CFNU) SUSTAINING NURSING RECOMMENDATIONS (2)

In response to the operational stress injury report findings from 2020 and the impacts of the COVID-19 Pandemic, the CFNU published a detailed report in 2022 that outlines a path toward sustainable nursing in Canada. In short, there is a dire need for a pan-Canadian effort that is coordinated, intentional, and moves towards a well-staffed profession that can predict and respond to future needs and demands of Canadian healthcare users. The recommendations emphasize the health and needs of nurses across Canada



1. The 3 R's:

1a. Retain and Support Nurses:

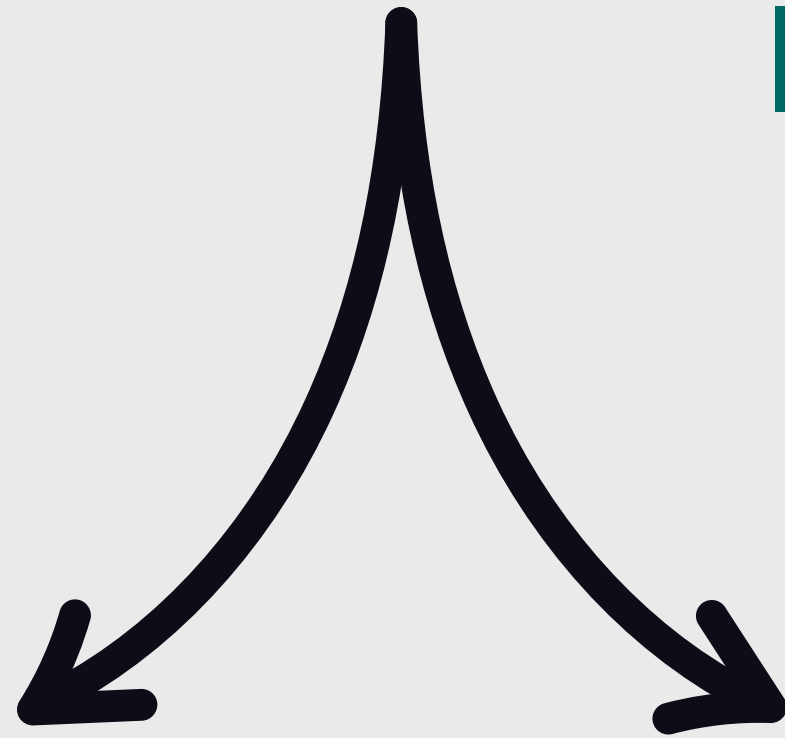
- reduce workloads;
- safe and supportive workplaces;
- evidence informed and accessible mental health supports;
- targeted initiatives that work with nurses to keep them in the profession long-term.

1b. Return and Integrate Nurses:

- return nurses to the public sector that have left for private positions;
- return early or recent leavers of the profession;
- ease the process to integrate nurses with international training/experience.

1c. Recruit and Mentor Nurses

- Expand training and recruitment efforts;
- Diversify the workforce;
- Increase efforts to staff underserved communities.



2. The 3 E's:

2a. **EMBED** ongoing nursing workforce planning and forecasting into ongoing provincial and federal efforts.

2b. **ENHANCE** nursing workforce data so that policy and decision makers have timely access to data.

2c. **ENABLE** nursing workforce partners access to evidence-based, decision-support tools for improved outcomes.



TAKEAWAY: The recommendations outlined by the CFNU require an intentional and coordinated effort by all levels of government, with cooperation from both public and private industries, while incorporating the viewpoints and expertise of nurses.



Sources

(1) Stelnicki, A. M., Carleton, R. N., & Reichert, C. (2020). Mental disorder symptoms among nurses in Canada. Access: https://nursesunions.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/OSI-REPORT_final.pdf

(2) Eddine Ben Ahmed, H., & Bourgeault, I. L. (2022). Sustaining nursing in Canada: A set of coordinated evidence-based solutions targeted to support the nursing workforce now and into the future. Access: https://nursesunions.ca/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/CHWN-CFNU-Report_-Sustaining-Nursing-in-Canada2022_web.pdf

(3) Stelnicki, A. M., Carleton, R. N., & Reichert, C. (2020). Questions & Answers: Mental disorder symptoms among nurses in Canada. Access: https://nursesunions.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/OSI-QA_final.pdf

