



Frequent Emergency Room Visits for Help With Mental Health and/or Addictions

Across the country, mental illness and addictions are serious issues for Canadians. Federal, provincial and territorial governments are working together to improve access to mental health and addictions services; they have identified a number of indicators to help target these improvements over the next 10 years, including **Frequent Emergency Room Visits for Help With Mental Health and/or Addictions**.



Indicator definition

This indicator measures the proportion of frequent visitors (with at least 4 visits a year) among those who visit an emergency room (ER) for help with mental health and/or addictions. This measure builds on an existing CIHI indicator, Repeat Hospital Stays for Mental Illness.

Why report on Frequent Emergency Room Visits for Help With Mental Health and/or Addictions?

This data can be used to

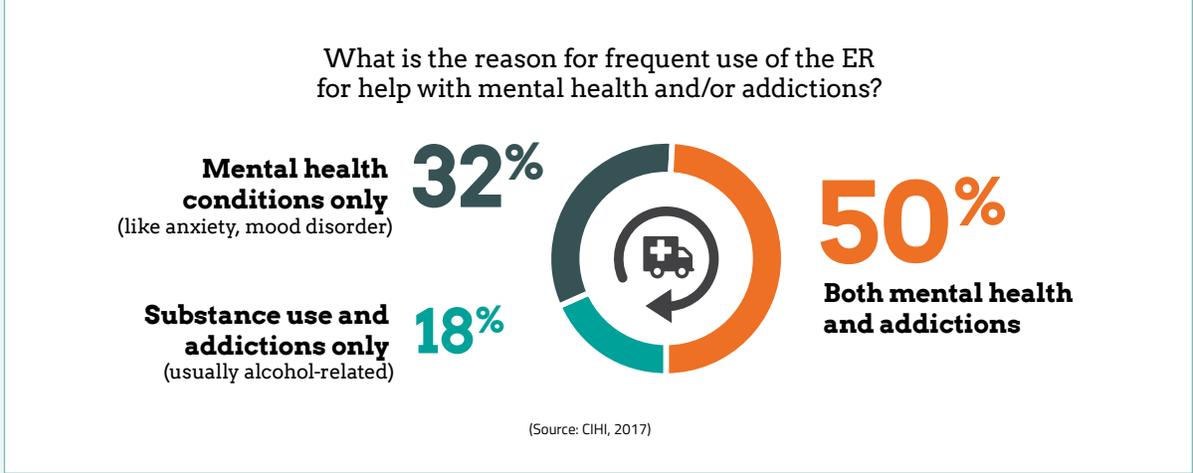
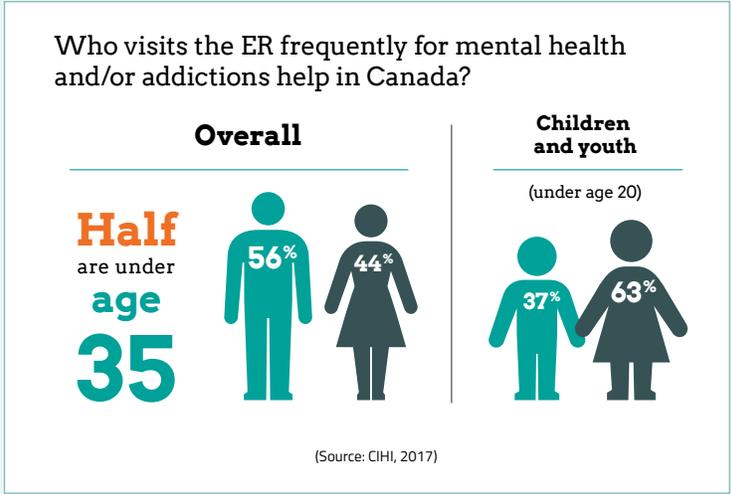
- Monitor the management of mental health and addictions disorders in the community;
- Help assess access to mental health and addictions services or support; and
- Identify areas that could benefit from improved awareness of mental health services available within the community.

Data limitations and caveats

- Data related to ER visits is growing but is not yet fully available across the country. While results for provinces with partial data are based on substantial numbers of cases, they must be interpreted with caution. Results should not be compared. Where data is not submitted by all hospitals and health regions, partial results may underestimate the number of repeat visits.
- Dementia and problems related to brain injuries are not included.
- It is not always possible to confirm a diagnosis in the ER.



At a glance



Additional findings

Frequent ER visitors often hospitalized

- Two-thirds (66%) of frequent ER visitors for help with mental health and/or addictions were admitted as inpatients to hospital at least once over the year.
- A quarter (26%) had 3 or more hospital stays.

Canadians from poorer neighbourhoods more likely to be frequent ER visitors

- Substance use impacts Canadians of all income levels. However, frequent ER visitors for mental health and/or addictions care were nearly 4 times more likely to live in lower-income neighbourhoods than higher-income ones.
- About 7% of those who visited an ER 4 or more times in a year for mental health and addictions services were homeless.



Provincial results for this indicator are available in the [Your Health System: In Brief](#) web tool.

More information about this indicator is available in [Common Challenges, Shared Priorities: Measuring Access to Home and Community Care and to Mental Health and Addictions Services in Canada](#).

Appendix: Text alternatives for images

At a glance image 1

Overall, among patients who frequently use the ER for help with mental health and/or addictions in Canada, half were under age 35. Men were more likely (56%) than women (44%) to make frequent visits. However, among children and youth under age 20, frequent visitors were more likely to be female (63%) than male (37%).

At a glance image 2

Nearly 1 in 10 Canadians who visit the emergency room for help with mental health and/or addictions have 4 or more visits a year.

At a glance image 3

Among patients who frequently use the ER for help with mental health and/or addictions, 50% visited the ER for help with both mental health and addictions. 32% visited the ER for help with a mental health condition only, such as anxiety or a mood disorder. 18% visited the ER for an addiction- or substance-related disorder, most often related to alcohol use.