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## Depression commonly untreated: report

By OLIVER MOORE  
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Major depression is common in Canada but largely untreated, a new report from Statistics Canada suggests.

The report indicates that almost as many people say they have the symptoms of major depression as have diabetes, heart disease or thyroid problems. Although it is common — reported by almost one in 20 of the people surveyed — less than one-third of depressed people said that they had sought professional help in the previous year.

Depression was least common among people older than 65 but almost equally common among those 15 to 24 and those aged 25 to 64. Young adults were the least likely to seek professional help, though in none of the three groups studied did even half of the respondents say that they had sought help.

The report's authors focused on five specific mental-health disorders subdivided into two separate groups. Problems categorized under "mood" included major depression and mania disorder. "Anxiety" issues included panic disorder, social phobia and agoraphobia (a fear of open spaces). The authors also studied the incidence of alcohol and illegal drug addiction, lumping them together under the heading "substance dependence."

A total of 4.9 per cent of respondents said that they had symptoms or feelings that put them into the "mood" category, the vast majority of them reporting major depression. A further 4.7 per cent reported anxiety problems, almost two-thirds of them suffering from social phobia. Some 3 per cent said that they had substance dependence problems, most of them listing alcohol as their drug of choice.

Looking at mood, anxiety and dependence issues as a whole, the report shows that almost one in five young adults suffer from at least one form of these disorders. Twelve per cent of those between 25 and 44 reported one or more of these problems, as did eight per cent of those 45 to 64. Less than 3 per cent of seniors reported suffering any of these problems.

Young adults were the least likely to seek professional help, with only 25 per cent saying that they had done so within the previous year. One-third of seniors said that they had sought professional help, and about 45 per cent of the other two groups (covering people aged 25-64) reported seeking help. The most common person from whom help was sought was a family physician, consulted by 26 per cent of those who got help. Psychiatrists and psychologists were consulted by another 20 per cent of those seeking assistance.

Based on information collected from about 35,000 people between May and December of 2002, the Statscan report includes data from people older than 15 residing in all provinces but excluding residents of Indian reserves, full-time members of the military, employees of health-care institutions and residents of some remote areas.