Mental Health Referral Insights in Ontario 2023

Anxiety is the primary issue across all ages

Depression ranks second among adults and teens, while children primarily face challenges related to emotion regulation. Trauma is a significant concern for adults, whereas ADHD is prevalent among teens and children, ranking third. School-related issues hold the fifth position for teens and fourth for children.

Bypassed 10,000 Referrals
in October 2023

- Annual Referrals
  - 2021: 2,431
  - 2022: 3,619
  - 2023: 4,579

Growing demand for psychological services

- Private services on the rise post-COVID due to limited access to public agencies
- 27% more referrals in 2023 compared to 2022 (as of November 30th)
- Largest annual rise seen in children & youth (0-12) from 2021 to 2022
- Seniors (66+) saw the highest increase between 2022 & 2023

Individual therapy continues to be the most sought-after psychological service. Psycholgical assessment services, which saw a 224% increase between 2021 and 2023, was second.

Referral patterns

11% of referrals were sent by physicians, nurse practitioners & other clinicians. Of these, 60% were sent as part of the publicly funded frontline workers program, indicating the public sector will leverage services when they are publicly funded (e.g., OHIP).

Patient preferences

While 35% of Ontarians had no specific preference with regards to their psychologist, many indicated low wait times & the clinician’s gender as most important.

In-person visits preferred over virtual care in 2023; a reversal from 2021 & 2022.

Regional insights

Higher demand per capita in southern Ontario cities. This may signal greater need, less access to publicly funded services, and/or better access to benefits, among other things.

OPA provides a scalable and integrated centralized intake service that matches patients of all ages with the support they need. Get in touch with us today to discover more.