

# PREMIERE NORTH AMERICAN PUBLIC OPINION STUDY ON DEPRESSION AND THE WORKPLACE

*84% Of North Americans Say CEO's Should Make Helping  
Employees in The Workplace With Depression A Key Human  
Resources Priority*



**Ipsos Reid**

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## PREMIERE NORTH AMERICAN PUBLIC OPINION STUDY ON DEPRESSION AND THE WORKPLACE

### *84% Of North Americans Say CEO's Should Make Helping Employees in the Workplace With Depression A Key Human Resources Priority*

**Washington DC** -- A premiere North American public opinion survey conducted by Ipsos Reid for The Global Business and Economic Roundtable on Addiction and Mental Health was released today in Washington, DC. The survey involved representative sample of 1000 Canadians and 1000 Americans and was released at a special Roundtable convened by Ambassador Michael Wilson at the Canadian Embassy in Washington, DC on February 15, 2007.

*These are the findings of an Ipsos Reid poll conducted for The Global Business and Economic Roundtable on Addiction and Mental Health. The survey was fielded from Jan 31 – February 1, 2007 amongst a representative randomly selected sample of 1000 adult Canadians and 1000 Americans and conducted via telephone. With a sample of this size, the aggregate North American results are considered accurate to within  $\pm 2.2$  percentage points, 19 times out of 20, while each country sample of 1000 is considered accurate to within  $\pm 3.1$  percentage points, 19 times out of 20, of what they would have been had the entire adult North American, Canadian and American population's respectively had been polled. The margin of error will be larger within each sub-grouping of the survey population. These data were weighted to ensure the sample's regional and age/sex composition reflects that of the actual Canadian and American population according to Census data.*

## ***Depression in North America: 1 in 6 (17%) Have Been Diagnosed... Overall 21% Think They Have Depression But Have Not Been Properly Diagnosed... Yet...***

Opinions about depression in the workforce are set against the following North American landscape: *seventeen percent of North American adults* [14% in Canada and 20% in the United States] indicate that they have been *diagnosed with depression by a doctor* - diagnosis *is more prevalent among females* (23%) versus males (11%), among North Americans with *lesser income* [25% with less than \$30k per year compared with 22% with income between \$30k-\$50k and 13% with income of \$50k] *and those with lower education* [25% with less than a high school education, followed by 21% with high school education and 15% with post secondary education].

It's also interesting to look at both countries and examine some of the differences among those diagnosed: in Canada [14%], 11% of men and 18% of women report being diagnosed with depression by a Doctor; by contrast, 12% of men in the *United States* compare with 27% *of women* who indicate that they have been diagnosed with depression by a doctor. In the North American workplace, 11% of Canadian workers admit to being diagnosed with depression by a Doctor compared with 15% of American workers.

Twenty-one *percent* [22% in Canada and 21% in the United States] indicate that they *think they suffer from depression but have "never actually had it properly diagnosed by a doctor"*. In this respect, one in five [19%] Canadian workers and 17% of American workers believe they suffer from depression but have never been diagnosed properly by a doctor.

Further, *most North Americans [72%] know someone who has been diagnosed* by a doctor as having depression -- a full majority [72% in Canada and 72% in the United States].



## ***Depression in North America: Recognition of A Life Threatening Illness...***

*Eight-in-ten North American adults* [81% in Canada and 79% in the United States] believe that "*Depression is a life threatening illness*" compared with only 19% in North America [18% in Canada and 20% in the United States] who disagree, and **62% of North Americans** [63% in Canada and 60% in the United States] indicate that if someone told them that they had depression that "*would know what to do to help them*" compared with 37% [36% in Canada and 39% in the United States] who indicate that they would not know what to do to help them.

## ***Depression in North America: Widespread Acknowledgment, Understanding...***

Only about *three-in-ten (31%) North Americans* [33% in Canada and 30% in the United States] say they *are really unclear about the difference between someone who is depressed versus someone who is just "in a sad mood"*. On the contrary, 67% of those in North America [66% in Canada and 68% in the United States] imply that they are clear about the difference.

Related is the fact that *one quarter (25%) of North Americans* [27% in Canada and 23% in the United States] indicate that they "*don't really understand what depression is*" compared with three-quarters [74%][72% in Canada and 76% in the United States] who imply that they do understand what depression is. And, **20%** [23% in Canada and 17% in the United States] who agree that depression is really "*just someone feeling really sad and not someone with a medical or mental illness*" versus a full majority [79%] [76% in Canada and 81% in the United States] disagree with this proposition.

Fewer than *two in ten (18%) North Americans agree* [24% in Canada and 11% in the United States] that *people who are depressed can "just snap out of it if they really wanted to"* the majority 82% disagree [75% in Canada and 88% of United States]. Even fewer (14%) feel



those who are depressed are *"really just trying to attract attention"* [15% in Canada and 13% in the United States]; in contrast 85% disagree [85% in Canada and 85% of United States].

Further, *only 13% in North America* [13% in Canada and 14% in the United States] believe that people *"choose to be depressed"*, while 87% of North Americans [87% in Canada and 86% in the United States] don't believe depression is a choice.

*Virtually all (90%) North Americans* [87% of Canadians and 93% of Americans] believe that depression can be caused by *"a chemical imbalance in the brain"*; this compares with only 7% of North Americans [9% in Canada and 5% in the United States] who don't believe that depression can be caused by "a chemical imbalance in the brain".

*North Americans tend to be optimistic about people's ability to get help with seven-in-ten* [74% in Canada and 66% of United States] agreeing that *"anyone who really wants help with depression can get the help they need"* -- compared with 29% who disagree [25% in Canada and 33% in the United States].

*North Americans are, however, split as to whether or not medication can help everyone who is depressed:* only 47% [52% in Canada and 42% in the United States] believe this to be true compared with 52% in North America [46% in Canada and 57% of the United States] who don't agree with the premise.

## *Despite the Above, There's Stigma and Fear in the Workplace...*

*A full majority [78%] of all workers in North America [79% in Canada and 77% of the United States] believe that a person diagnosed with depression in their workplace would most likely keep it to themselves "for fear of hurting their future opportunities".* This contrasts with one in five [20%] North American workers [19% in Canada and 22% in the



United States] who don't believe that a person diagnosed with depression would most likely keep it to them selves for fear of hurting their future opportunities.

*Half [50%] of North American workers [45% of workers in Canada and 56% of workers in the United States] believe that if someone at their work was suffering from depression and missing work because of it, they would be more likely "to get into trouble and maybe even fired". This compares with 47% of workers in North America [52% in Canada and 42% in the United States] who don't believe this to be the case.*

The sense that people would hide their condition or that they would perhaps be fired is prominent despite the fact that *66% of North American workers [67% in Canada and 64% in the United States] are confident that if they told the President/CEO of their company that they suffered from depression "they would most likely be understanding" and sixty-five percent [66% of workers in Canada and 64% of workers in the United States] agree that their workplace gives employees access to a counselling service "where they can get help if they suffer from depression".*

This compares with one third [32%] of North American workers [30% in Canada and 33% in the United States] don't believe the President/CEO of the company "would most likely be understanding" and one third [31%] of North American workers [29% in Canada and 33% in the United States] who disagree that their "workplace gives employees access to a counselling service where they can get help if they suffer from depression".

So, when it comes to the *total North American population, including workers, the vast majority [84%] [88% in Canada and 80% in the United States] indicate that CEOs should make helping employees in the workplace with depression "a key human resources priority". Only 15% of North Americans [11% in Canada and 18% in the United States] disagree with this view.*

## *An Attitudinal Segmentation of the Population in North America towards Depression: Americans More Supportive Than Canadians...*

We can also step-back to examine the overall picture of public opinion as it relates to depression. When using the *entire data set for analysis*, North Americans essentially cluster in three groups; those who are supportive (47%), confused (26%) and misinformed (22%)<sup>1</sup>. Americans are more likely than Canadians to be supportive [in Canada: Supportive (44%), Confused (25%), Misinformed (26%); in the United States: Supportive (51%), Confused (27%) and Misinformed (18%)].

*Supportive North Americans (47%)* feel they are knowledgeable about depression and know what to do to help. Eight-in-ten agree that if someone told them that they had depression, they would “know what to do to help them”. Only 3% say they “Don’t understand what depression is” and 9% are unclear about the difference between “someone who is depressed and someone who is just in a sad mood”. Virtually no-one from this group buys into negative stereotypes surrounding depression:

- Only 6% indicate people who are depressed “could just snap out of it if they really wanted to”
- Only 5% indicate people who say they are depressed “are really just trying to attract attention”
- Only 5% indicate “people choose to be depressed”

*Supportive North Americans are more likely to have been diagnosed with depression (23%) and or know someone who has been diagnosed (83%)* than those who are confused or misinformed.

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<sup>1</sup> 4% of North Americans could not be classified because of missing responses.

*Confused North Americans (26%)* resemble those who are Supportive in that they do not buy into negative stereotypes; however, they are somewhat perplexed about depression and are in need of more education:

- 50% indicate they “don’t understand what depression is”
- 52% indicate they are “unclear about the difference between someone who is depressed versus someone who is just in a sad mood”
- Only 24% indicate that if someone told them that they had depression they would “know what to do to help them”.

Among those segmented as Confused, 13% have been diagnosed with depression and 66% know someone who has been diagnosed.

In contrast, those who are the *Misinformed (22%) aren't particularly knowledgeable about depression and hold negative stereotypes.*

- 62% indicate “a person with depression is really just someone feeling really sad and not someone with a medical or mental illness”
- 59% indicate people who are depressed “could snap out of it if they really wanted to”
- 56% indicate they are “unclear about the difference between someone who is depressed versus someone who is just in a sad mood”
- 40% indicate they “don’t understand what depression is”
- 43% indicate people who are depressed “are really just trying to attract attention”
- 38% indicate “people choose to be depressed”

*Ironically, 70% of the Misinformed indicate that if they were told that someone had depression, they would “know what to do to help them”. Further, 36% of the Misinformed cluster believe that they, personally, think they “suffer from depression but have never actually had it properly diagnosed by a doctor” (versus 16% of those Supportive and 18% of*



those Confused). Among the *Misinformed* 13% *have been diagnosed with depression and 59% know someone who has been diagnosed.*

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*For more information on this news release, please contact:*

*John Wright  
Sr. Vice President  
Ipsos Reid Public Affairs  
(416) 324-2900*

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