

A VOLUNTARY QUALITATIVE SURVEY WAS CONDUCTED ONLINE BETWEEN MAY AND AUGUST 2018 TO GET A FIRST IMPRESSION OF THE MENTAL HEALTH STATE OF MEMBERS FROM THE EAST COAST MUSIC INDUSTRY. DUE TO THE SIZE AND NATURE OF THIS SURVEY, ONLY QUALITATIVE OBSERVATIONS CAN BE MADE INCLUDING SOME FUTURE STATE RECOMMENDATIONS. BELOW IS A SUMMARY OF THE RESULTS FROM THIS SURVEY.

RESULTS

Fifty (50) individuals responded to the 2018 ECMA Mental Health Survey over the course of four months. There was representation from all “job” categories within the music industry including singer/songwriters, musicians, volunteers, and other industry professionals.

Respondents reported a varying degree of satisfaction with how their career in the music industry is progressing: 50% with positive feelings towards their career, 24% feeling “okay” and 24% indicating “not where I hoped I would be”. Over half of the respondents indicated that they are living below the poverty line (value set for a family of 4 in 2013) with nearly 25% making less than \$10,000 per year.

This would indicate some people who filled out this survey and not students, were at an income level similar to the single person amount provided through Nova Scotia Income Assistance and GST credit combined. We know from past research that living in poverty is a negative indicator for mental health outcomes (2012, Mental Health in Atlantic Canada: A Snapshot). Financial stresses are also more likely from people with young families. Over 65% of individuals were between the ages of 25-44, which is typical of family stage of life.

Forty (40%) percent of individuals stated that they had been diagnosed with a mental health disorder at some point in their life, while 60% felt that they had a mental health disorder that has gone undiagnosed.

According to the 2012 Stats Canada report of Mental Health Indicators, 33.1 % of Canadians report having had a mental health or substance abuse disorder at some point over their lifetime. At any given time, 8.4% of Canadians reported having a mood disorder and 8.6% had a diagnosed anxiety disorder (Statistics Canada, Canadian Community Health Survey Health Canada 2016).

In regards to suicide and suicidal ideation, 20% of those completing this survey reported suicidal thoughts in the past month as compared to the Canadian average of 3.3% in the 12 previous months (Statistics Canada 2012 Mental Health Indicators survey). Twenty-six (26%) of those responding to the ECMA 2018 Mental Health Survey reported suicide attempt(s) over their lifetime.

Fifty (50%) percent of respondents reported being concerned now, or in the past about their alcohol/drug usage and 38% offered that others had been concerned about their use. In the Canadian Alcohol and Drug Use Monitoring Survey in 2012, it was estimated that 21.6% of Canada’s population met the criteria for a substance use disorder. This indicates, through self reporting measures, that East Coast music industry professionals are at-risk of substance abuse disorder.

When surveyed about the type of support avenues respondents accessed in the past, we found a broad usage across typical supports currently offered. The majority have tried individual counselling, working with their family doctor and using the support of friends and family. They reported individual counselling was the most effective support avenue while turning to the traditional medical system (namely emergency rooms and psychiatry) most ineffective. Respondents stated they want to be able to access counselling and assessments even when they are not in a mental health crisis. The two largest barriers to accessing these services were the high cost of private counselling and the long wait lists to get into hospital-based services (free services).

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. A more comprehensive survey of members of the music industry around suicidality is recommended as the results from the present survey indicate higher than average incidences of attempts of suicide.
2. Providing assistance to members in accessing long term, non-crisis based, clinical therapy is also recommended. This could happen through the following ways: (1) an insurance plan for members where comprehensive and well-funded mental health counseling is included; (2) an "in-house" counsellor contracted to provide one-on-one and/or group counselling sessions or to act as an advocate for those navigating traditional community based mental health and addictions services; and (3) connections to free community health services, where new therapists have the opportunity for supervised practice (not practical for more complicated or co-morbid conditions).
3. Having monthly webinars regarding mental illness, addictions, and wellness issues would also be beneficial. Some topics could include: what to expect from counselling, how to navigate community mental health and addiction service agencies, nutrition and mental health, mindfulness, effective boundaries and communication, distress tolerance, stress reduction, fitness and mental health, relapse prevention, and CBT for depression and/or anxiety.
4. Continue to host events meant to reduce stigma of mental illness and addiction. Have people share their experiences and open the floor for people to discuss their hopes and needs for support at ECMAs.
5. Create a working group of industry professionals, musicians, songwriters, and music industry students and those new to the industry to figure out how best to continue the work started by ECMA and the MIAs in a way that comes from their experiences. For example, they may want to tackle strategies to assist artists, industry professionals, and musicians with financial security.
6. Advocating for networking events without alcohol and assistance to understand how to navigate the music industry while supporting sobriety.
7. The next time the ECMAs are in New Brunswick put a focus on mental health crisis since New Brunswick has the highest suicide rate outside of the northern territories. Perhaps funding should be secured for a mental health first aid course at this event as having more trained industry professionals to be able to notice and respond to a mental health crisis being experienced by one of their peers could save a life.