Mental Health Commission of Canada

CSA CANADIAN STANDARDS ASSOCIATION™



FIVE YEARS IN

Uptake and implementation of the Post-Secondary Standard

CSA Z2003, *Mental health and well-being for post-secondary students* (the Standard) provides a set of flexible, voluntary guidelines to help post-secondary institutions support the mental health and well-being of their students. Five years after release, the Canadian Standards Association and the Mental Health Commission of Canada launched a survey in the fall of 2025 to better understand the awareness, adoption, and impact of the Standard to date. This infographic shares results from that survey, providing insights on how the Standard is being used across the sector.*

Who responded to the survey?

Responses were received from post-secondary representatives across 9 provinces[1] (n=117), representing the following roles:

- Student services and wellness roles
- Mental health providers
- Academic administrators, executive leadership & faculty
- Students, researchers, & other roles

Institution type

- **53%** University
- **29%** College
- **18%** Other (CEGEPs, institutes, private career colleges, university colleges, Indigenous institutes)

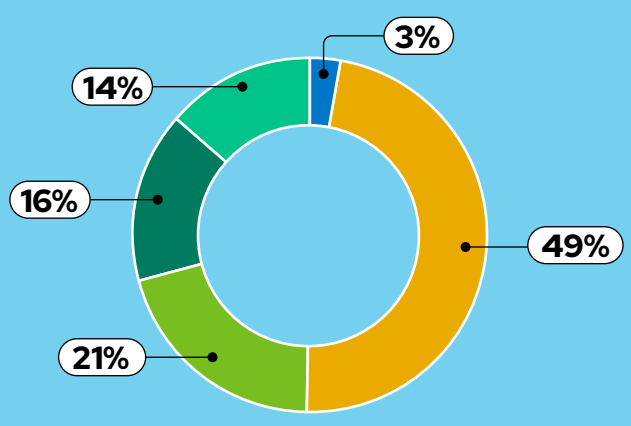
Institution setting

- **83%** Urban population centres (large and medium)
- **13%** Small population centres and rural areas
- **3%** Online/virtual
- **2%** Unsure

[1]no responses received from PEI or the territories

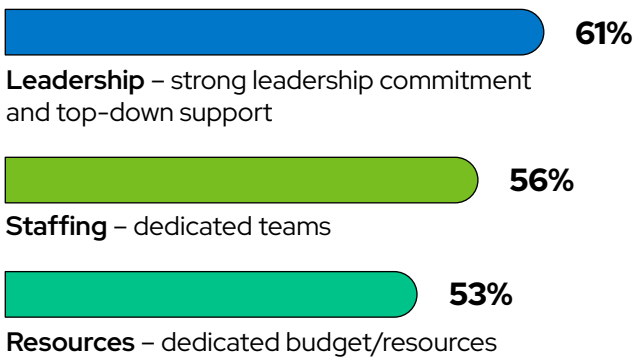
Where are institutions on their implementation journey?

Most institutions are in the early to mid stages of their implementation journey.

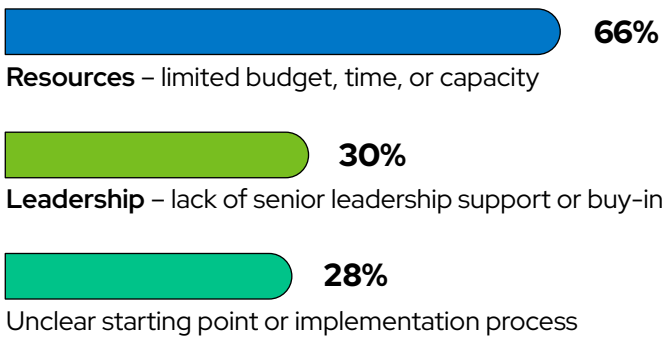


- Fully implemented – have broadly integrated the Standard into institutional policies, practices, and processes
- Implementing – making progress and taking action to integrate the Standard into institutional policies, practices, and processes
- Planning and exploring – considering implementation and next steps, but have not yet taken action
- Currently not implementing
- Unsure

Top 3 success factors for implementation



Top 3 barriers to implementation



What is the impact on student mental health?

Early evidence shows positive student outcomes related to implementation of the Standard. Among survey respondents that are actively implementing the Standard:

- **50%** report **increased awareness** of available mental health programs and services
- **50%** report **easier student access** to programs and services
- **48%** report **reduced stigma** around mental health
- **46%** report **increased** mental health **service use**

> *"Students are more aware of supports available, more aware earlier of when they may need to engage with support, and more willing/able to ask for help."*
>
> — *survey respondent*

How do institutions get started with the Standard?



Planning

- **58%** review the Standard
- **57%** assess areas needing improvement
- **33%** develop a plan with objectives, targets, and measures



Engagement

- **51%** engage students
- **47%** engage senior management
- **42%** consult with employees



Leadership

- **43%** form committees
- **40%** secure organizational champion(s)



Programs and Services



Programs emerged most visibly as an area of both institutional implementation and resource investment.

Respondents reported the Standard informed:

- **59%** health promotion programs or services
- **31%** clinical programs or services

Respondents reported resource investments in:

- **63%** expanded mental health promotion and awareness activities
- **44%** new non-clinical wellness programs
- **38%** new clinical services

What are institutions using the Standard for?



Policy and planning

- **34%** institutional policy
- **32%** institutional strategic planning



Strategy development

- **47%** development of a mental health strategy or framework
- **37%** revisions of a pre-existing mental health strategy or framework

The Standard has also been used to develop and inform institutional suicide postvention strategies and equity, diversity, and inclusion strategies.

Resources allocated to student mental health and well-being



People

- **56%** hired new mental health counsellors or clinicians
- **53%** faculty/staff training to support student mental health
- **34%** hired case managers, peer supporters, or wellness coordinators



Systems

- **25%** new digital tools
- **21%** improved physical spaces or infrastructure

42% of those actively implementing the Standard allocated **new resources** to student mental health and well-being because of Standard implementation.

What does this mean for post-secondary institutions?

- Many institutions have already **taken action to integrate the Standard** into policies, practices, and processes.
- The Standard is being used as a **practical tool to assess gaps, align strategies, and inform program development** and improvements.
- **Leadership support** and **dedicated capacity** to carry out this work are key factors linked to momentum.
- **Constraints in time, budget, and staffing** are the most frequently reported barriers.
- Institutions working with the Standard are seeing **increased awareness of supports, reduced stigma, and increased access to services**, suggesting shifts in culture and how mental health is supported on campus.

"We embarked on implementing the Standard shortly after it was published. It has provided a pivotal guide in terms of our strategic planning, policy development, and institutional culture."
— survey respondent

Learn more about the Mental Health Commission of Canada's work with the Post-Secondary Standard:
mentalhealthcommission.ca/studentstandard

Explore the Canadian Standards Association standards for psychological health and safety:
csastandards.org/PHSstandards

**Note: Percentages throughout this infographic are based on survey responses. Some questions allowed multiple responses; therefore, percentages may not total 100%. Where appropriate, responses have been grouped into themes, and only the most frequently reported responses are shown.*

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