

In a survey of 3,000 workers across Canada conducted Sept. 28 to Oct. 19, focused on COVID and its mental health impacts, 86 per cent of respondents agreed the virus is a serious public health risk. Six per cent said they do not, and eight per cent said they were undecided.

Those who believe COVID-19 is not a serious public health risk also reported lower rates of poor mental health than those who do believe the virus is a risk. The mental health of skeptics is 6.9 per cent lower than pre-pandemic rates, whereas the average of mental health decline among Canadians is around 11 per cent, Morneau Shepell says, citing its Mental Health Index.

This indicates that believing COVID-19 does not pose a serious risk “contributes to less mental health strain,” Morneau Shepell said of its findings in a report, released Thursday.

Paula Allen, senior vice-president of research, analytics and innovation at Morneau Shepell, said finding a small percentage of the population that didn’t believe in the risk of COVID-19 was not surprising.

“I’d question the data if that number was zero,” Allen said.

But the data does indicate what some know to be true: not everybody agrees that COVID-19 is a danger.

Dr. Colin Furness, an associate professor at the University of Toronto’s Dalla Lana School of Public Health, said the percentage of people who don’t believe in the risk of the virus or are undecided is likely to be higher at 20 per cent, given that those who are unconvinced about the severity of COVID-19 likely won’t answer surveys about its impact.

Furness said it’s difficult to decipher why some people are apathetic about COVID-19. Part of it, he said, could be denial, though it’s hard to measure people’s perception of their own reality through self-reporting surveys.

Headlines newsletter

Top stories delivered to your inbox.

[Sign Up](#)