



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Poll: Two years into pandemic, one in three health care workers likely to quit

- *One in three (34.4 per cent) likely to leave health care in the next two years*
- *Three-quarters (75.2 per cent) have experienced pandemic-related burnout*
- *More than one in four (26.1 per cent) are worried that their housing is at risk*

[BURNABY, BC] – Two years into the COVID-19 pandemic, a new poll finds health care workers in B.C. struggling with their mental health, and worried about making ends meet at their current pay rates. One out of three (34.4 per cent) are looking to leave health care altogether.

The telephone survey of more than 800 members of the Hospital Employees' Union paints an alarming picture of the pressures facing those on the frontlines today, and of our ability to retain and recruit health care workers in the future.

HEU secretary-business manager Meena Brisard says health care workers have endured risk and uncertainty, and shown incredible courage and commitment through the pandemic, but the stress has taken its toll.

“There’s no question that many health care workers are at the breaking point, exhausted by all they’ve been through,” says Brisard. “And we should all be very concerned about what that means for our health care system going forward.”

Three quarters of those polled (75.2 per cent) experienced pandemic-related burnout, and one in three (32.9 per cent) do not believe there are adequate mental health supports in the workplace.

Nearly two-thirds (64.1 per cent) say their workloads have gotten worse over the last two years, and a quarter (24.9 per cent) report that their employer rarely or never backfills positions left vacant by illness or vacation.

And health care workers are having a tough time keeping up with rising costs, with more than a third (35.8 per cent) of those polled saying they are less financially secure than two years ago. More than a quarter (26.1 per cent) are concerned that their housing is currently at risk.

“Health care workers have carried the weight of this pandemic on their shoulders for all of us,” says Brisard. “Now is the time to recognize these workers with a wage and compensation package that puts them ahead and not behind.”

“If we want our health care system to survive and thrive in the face of public health emergencies, climate disasters and growing demographic pressures, we must act boldly to retain today’s skilled and experienced health care workforce, and to attract the next generation of health care workers.”

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The random phone survey of 802 health care workers took place between February 22 and March 2 and is accurate to within +/- 3.3 percentage points, 19 times out of 20. It was carried out by Viewpoints Research under commission by the HEU.

The polling sample consisted of HEU members who are part of the facilities subsector and covered by a provincial master agreement that includes hospitals, care homes, health authority corporate offices and supply chain operations.

HEU is leading negotiations on behalf of a multi-union bargaining association with public health employers for a new collective agreement covering 58,000 workers in the facilities subsector.

[Backgrounder attached]

Backgrounder: Health care workers face workplace and financial stress, according to poll

- The telephone survey of 802 members of the Hospital Employees' Union was carried out between February 22 and March 2.
- It is considered accurate to within +/- 3.3 percentage points, 19 times out of 20.
- Winnipeg-based Viewpoints Research conducted the survey on behalf of the HEU.
- The survey sample represents health care workers employed in hospitals, care homes, health authority corporate offices and warehouses and other settings.
- Those polled are covered by the facilities collective agreement – the master provincial agreement covering 58,000 health care workers.
- The agreement expires March 31, 2022. It is the single largest agreement (in terms of number of workers covered) in the current round of public sector bargaining.

Key findings from poll:

One in four workers say their employer rarely or never backfills vacancies due to illness/leave/vacation.

Thinking about your own work area or department, how often would you say that your employer backfills a position left vacant when a worker becomes ill or goes on leave or vacation?

Always.....	27.3%	
Sometimes	40.4%	
Not very often	16.3%	} 24.9%
Never backfill a position	8.6%	
Don't know / Refused	7.4%	

More than half say their workloads have gotten worse or much worse over the last two years.

Thinking about your workload over the last two years, would you say that the situation in your workplace is getting better or worse? **THEN ASK:** Is that much better / worse?

Much better	6.4%	
Better.....	20.7%	
Worse	26.3%	} 54.1%
Much worse	27.8%	
Same/no change	11.7%	
Have worked less than 2 years.....	3.5%	
Don't know / Refused	3.6%	

One in three say mental health supports in workplace are inadequate.

Do you feel you have access to adequate mental health supports in your workplace?

Yes	58.4%
No	32.9%
Don't know / Refused	8.7%

Nearly four out of five say they're experiencing greater levels of fatigue as a result of the pandemic.

Thinking about the impact of the pandemic on your life, please tell me whether it has had no impact, a somewhat negative impact or a very negative impact in each of the following areas. **RANDOMIZE**

	No Impact	Somewhat Negative	Very Negative	DK/REF
Your ability to concentrate	37.7%	48.0%	12.8%	1.5%
Your level of fatigue	19.8%	44.0%	34.9%	1.2%
Your empathy	44.0%	40.9%	11.8%	3.2%
Your alertness	41.5%	44.1%	12.1%	2.2%
Your motivation	31.3%	47.5%	20.1%	1.1%

Three-quarters have experienced pandemic-related burn out.

Has the COVID19 pandemic caused you to experience any of the following? **RANDOMIZE**

	Yes	No	DK/REF
Feeling burnt out	75.2%	24.3%	0.5%
Feeling nervous, anxious or on edge?	67.7%	31.4%	0.9%
Feeling down, depressed or hopeless?	56.6%	42.9%	0.5%

One out of three workers say they're more likely to leave their job in health care in the next two years.

Has your experience during the COVID-19 pandemic made it much more likely, somewhat more likely, somewhat less likely or much less likely that you will leave your job within the next two years?

Much more likely	12.5%	}	34.4%
Somewhat more likely	21.9%		
Somewhat less likely	22.2%		
Much less likely	34.7%		
Don't know / Refused	8.7%		

More than a third are more worried about their finances than they were two years ago.

Thinking about your own financial situation compared to two years ago, would you say you are:

Less financially secure	35.8%
More financially secure	17.2%
About the same	46.6%
Don't know / Refused	0.4%

One out of four workers are worried that their current housing is at risk.

Are you concerned that your current housing arrangement is at risk? (n = 765)*

Yes	26.1%
No	72.0%
Don't know / Refused	1.8%

*Does not include those who reported that they were currently homeless or in a temporary housing arrangement

[END OF BACKGROUNDER]