

Mental Health in the Canadian Music Industry: SOUNDCHECK Final Report 2026

Final findings from **SOUNDCHECK**, a national study on mental health in the Canadian music industry, reveal urgent challenges requiring action. As of October 31, 2025, more than 1,250 music professionals contributed through a national survey, focus groups, and one-to-one conversations across Canada.

National mixed-methods study combining survey data, focus groups, and one-to-one interviews.

Key findings include:

Prevalence of Mental Health Challenges

- 94% of respondents agree that mental **health issues are widespread** in the Canadian music industry, making it one of the most pressing concerns facing professionals today.
- 86% have personally experienced mental health challenges, and 95% have witnessed others struggling, proving that **these issues affect nearly everyone in the industry**.
- Despite these high numbers, **systemic barriers, stigma, and lack of support** prevent many from accessing the help they need, leaving industry professionals vulnerable to **burnout, distress, and long-term harm**.

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Mental Health Crisis

- 53% have felt life wasn't worth living, and 43% have considered taking their own life.
- 86% experience anxiety, 75% fatigue, and 70% persistent sadness, pointing to **industry-wide burnout**.



Toxic Work Environment & Leadership Gaps

- 84% felt their work environment was not conducive to mental health, and 95% believed **the industry could do more** to address these issues.
- Only 10% strongly agreed that leaders actively support mental health in the workplace, highlighting a **significant leadership gap**.

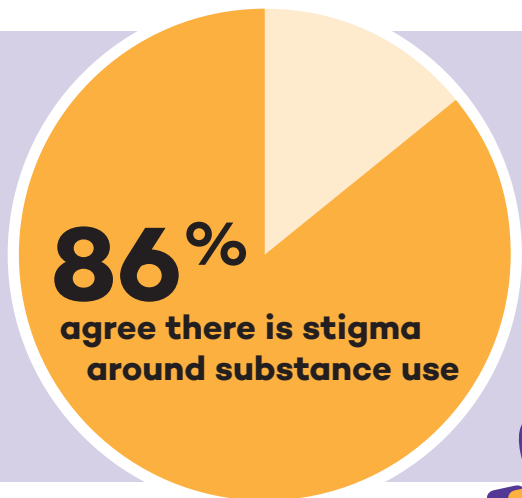
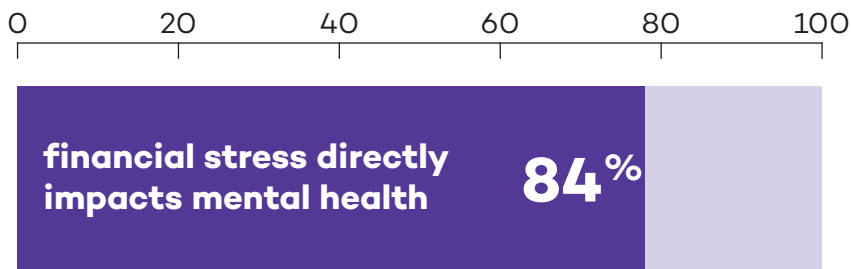
Only 10%

strongly agree that leaders actively support mental health in the workplace



Financial Stress & Job Insecurity

- 84% of industry professionals say **financial stress** directly impacts their mental health.
- Only 5% feel a sense of job security, reflecting the **precarious nature of careers in the music industry**.

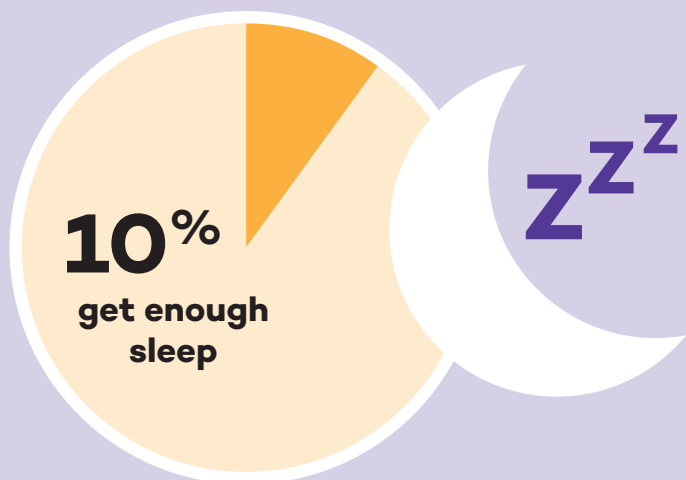
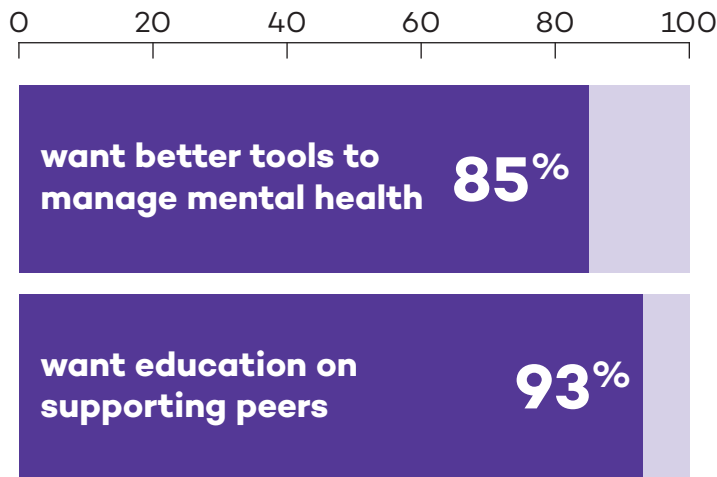


Substance Use & Stigma

- 86% agree there is **stigma around substance use**, while 58% also reported **stigma around sobriety or recovery**.
- This double-edged stigma **discourages open discussions and access to support**.

Severe Lack of Mental Health Resources

- Despite 97% agreeing that **mental health education is critical**, 80% have never received formal training.
- 85% want **better tools** to manage their own mental health, and 93% want **education** on supporting their peers.
- **Only 10% feel their workplace has strong support measures in place**, highlighting an **urgent need for structured psychological safety and leadership training** across the industry.

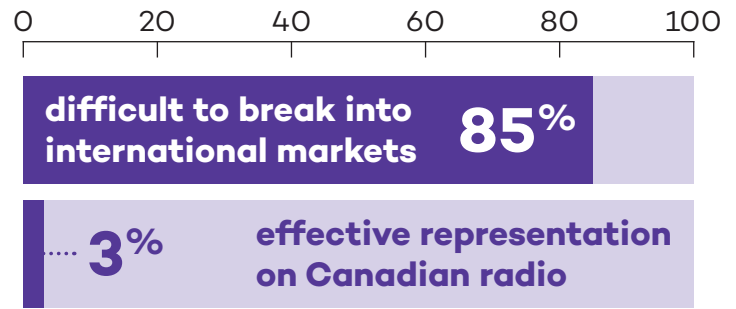


Exhaustion & Physical Well-being

- Only 10% of respondents get **enough sleep** to perform at their best.
- **Self-reported long-term conditions**—including neurodivergence (such as autism, ADHD, and dyslexia)—are common: 41% identify as neurodivergent, 22% report arthritis, and 21% report mobility-related conditions. Yet these experiences are **rarely acknowledged** in industry conversations.

Barriers to Career Sustainability

- 85% say it's **difficult for Canadian musicians to break into international markets**, creating financial and career instability.
- Only 3% strongly agree that Canadian radio effectively represents homegrown musicians, **limiting opportunities for local talent**.



Discrimination, Harassment & Industry Culture

- Reports of **sexism, racism, bullying, and harassment** were widespread, with gender and racial minorities disproportionately affected.
- Women, non-binary individuals, and racialized groups reported the highest levels of **workplace discrimination** and lowest response rate.

Key Insights from SOUNDCHECK

1. Stigma and low mental health understanding remain major barriers

Across the music industry, many people still don't have the language or confidence to talk about mental health in a clear, informed way. Stigma and silence lead to misunderstanding and "othering," making it harder to speak up, ask for help, or support one another early. When leaders and workplaces lack basic mental health know-how, problems often go unnoticed until they become crises.

2. Work environments—not personal resilience—drive mental health risk

In the music industry, mental health challenges are far more often shaped by how work is structured than by individual strength or coping skills. Insecure income, unclear roles, constant pressure, and unhealthy or poorly led workplaces create ongoing stress that wears people down over time. When work environments don't support basic stability and respect, even the most resilient people are put at risk.

3. The industry has changed faster than its support systems

Music work has evolved quickly, but the systems meant to support people haven't kept up. Many workers are navigating new pressures without clear guidance, strong leadership, or easy access to preventative mental health supports. As a result, people across the industry are often left without reliable ways to protect their wellbeing before problems escalate.

What this means

Improving mental health outcomes in the Canadian music industry requires system-level action—strengthening leadership capability, normalizing mental health literacy, and embedding psychological safety into how music work is organized, led, and sustained.

These insights inform the national recommendations and sector partnerships now underway.

To learn more about the data, contact: catherine@revelios.com Media enquiries: Phil@annexe.media