

# COVID-19 affects on Depression and Anxiety – IPHA and IPU Survey

- Almost half of people say COVID-19 has prompted depression and anxiety, says new survey for IPHA and IPU

*Behaviour & Attitudes poll on effects of the pandemic on the public's wellbeing shows:*

- 44% gained weight, over-ate or were unable to exercise while 24% missed medical appointments
- Joblessness fears drove anxiety in 25% and 14% said they drank too much
- More people are exercising, sleeping better and finding time for friends
- Spike in the number of people turning to pharmacists for health advice

Almost half of people say COVID-19 has contributed to feelings of depression, anxiety and a lack of confidence, according to the results of a new survey carried out by Behaviour & Attitudes for the Irish Pharmaceutical Healthcare Association (IPHA) and and Irish Pharmacy Union (IPU). The survey results, released to coincide with the IPHA Digital ThinkIn Series, show the pandemic has negatively impacted people's health, with 47% citing depression, anxiety and a lack of confidence to describe how they feel. Over two-fifths of people, or 44%, said the pandemic caused them to gain weight, over-eat or prevent them exercising, while almost a quarter, or 24%, missed a hospital appointment. Just 2% said they contracted the virus. Fears for their jobs and income security drove anxiety in 25% of people while 14% said they drank too much during the pandemic. Women and people aged between 25 and 34 were most likely to worry about COVID-19. When asked whether they feel in control of their mental health and emotions, 34% of men said they did. For women, that figure was 21%. Among 25 to 34-year-olds, 12% said they worry a lot and these feelings were more prevalent among women than men. Twice as many young people feel less in control of their emotions compared to the same time last year, according to the survey. However, COVID-19 has prompted health benefits too, with 29% saying they are exercising more and 21% saying they are getting more sleep. Having time to meet family and friends and experiencing less work-related stress were cited by 35% of people. The survey shows the importance of pharmacy as a central pillar of healthcare in the community, with nearly a one-third of people, or 30%, saying the pharmacist has become more important to them during the pandemic. Almost one in five, or 19%, attended a virtual clinic while 20% consulted their pharmacist. Monthly visits to the pharmacy rose by one-third since COVID-19 began. John Sheehy, Chair of IPHA's Consumer Healthcare Division and Country Manager at Perrigo, said the survey was an important snapshot of the public's mood and behaviours during the pandemic. "COVID-19

*has been hard on everyone, especially those who have lost people close to them or who contracted the virus. This survey shows the toll on people's mental wellbeing has been heavy, causing feelings of depression and anxiety at a time of uncertainty for everyone. There are upsides too, with people spending more time exercising and with their families. We hope the survey can help inform policy decision-making, especially when it comes to assessing the public's response to measures needed to control the spread of the virus. All of us want to navigate our way through this emergency and, hopefully, emerge the far side more resilient and closer as a community."* Darragh O'Loughlin, Secretary General of the IPU, said COVID-19 has demonstrated the the pivotal role of pharmacies on the frontline of the response to the pandemic. *"The survey confirms that interactions between members of the public and pharmacists have increased substantially since the beginning of the pandemic, highlighting the essential role that pharmacists play in delivering healthcare in their communities. When many other healthcare services were shutting down and scaling back, pharmacies stepped up and took on significant extra responsibility and workload to ensure that essential healthcare services and face-to-face advice and care were maintained in communities across the country. The role of the pharmacist has become much more central during COVID-19 and this survey demonstrates that there is a huge public appetite for pharmacy-based services including repeat prescriptions and treating minor ailments."* ENDS

**About the Survey** Behaviour & Attitudes conducted the survey online using a nationally representative quota sample of 1,005 adults aged 16 and over. The survey was done between September 3<sup>rd</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup>, 2020. It draws comparisons with a similar study undertaken a year ago for the IPHA Annual Conference. The margin of error is +/- 3%. The survey conforms with the guidelines dictated by Behaviour & Attitudes' adherence to the Codes of Conduct of the Market Research Society (UK) and the European Society of Opinion and Market Research.

**About IPHA** IPHA represents the international research-based pharmaceutical industry. Our members discover and develop innovative medicines for treating or curing medical conditions and diseases. We aim to improve people's health through innovative medicines and technologies. Our public policy advocacy and reputation agenda is supported by the consumer healthcare division for over-the-counter medicines and by medicines.ie which provides accurate, regulator-approved medicines information.

**About IPU** The Irish Pharmacy Union is the representative and professional organisation for over 1,800 community pharmacies and over 2,300 individual pharmacists. Our vision is to be the authoritative voice of community pharmacy and the driving force in the evolution of accessible, equitable and patient-focused primary healthcare. Members of the IPU are committed to delivering a quality, accessible, personal and professional service that puts the patient first and have, as their primary goal, the optimisation of the health and wellbeing of society. The sector employs, directly and indirectly, 26,000 people.