

**The Indirect Impacts
of the COVID-19
Pandemic on
Individuals Living in
the Nipissing and
Parry Sound Districts:
A Summary Report**

NOVEMBER 2021

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The Indirect Impacts of the COVID-19 Pandemic on Individuals Living in the Nipissing and Parry Sound Districts: A Summary Report

In January and February 2021, the North Bay Parry Sound District Health Unit surveyed individuals, aged 16 and older, living in Nipissing and Parry Sound districts to learn about the indirect impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. Participants were asked about their experiences since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic (March 2020). Survey questions were related to mental health and well-being, physical health, substance use, access to programs/services, child well-being, parental concerns, income, and access to basic needs. The survey was available online through the Health Unit website. It was promoted through the Health Unit's social media accounts, and advertised by local community agencies via their websites, social media, and print. During the survey's collection period, the Nipissing and Parry Sound districts were under a Stay-at-Home Order, and schools were closed for a portion of the survey collection period (January 5th to February 8th, 2021).

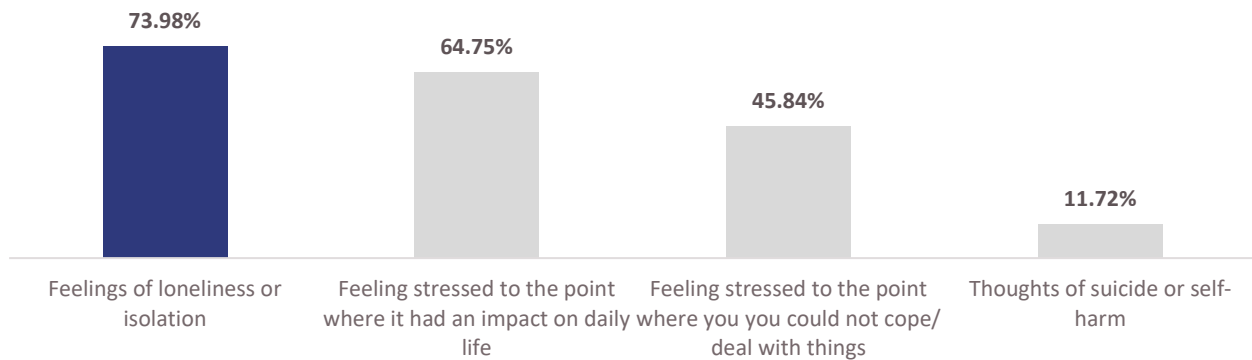
Overall, 1,629 individuals aged 16 years and older responded to the survey. Four out of five (79%) respondents identified as female, and two-thirds (67%) indicated they lived in the Nipissing district. The age group with the highest proportion of respondents was 35-to-44 years, and 44% of respondents indicated they were the parent/guardian of at least one child, aged 17 years or younger, living at home. The majority of respondents reported working during the pandemic (70%), while 8% reported not working because of the pandemic, 14% reported not working for other reasons, and 8% reporting being retired. Approximately one-third (28%) of respondents reported receiving government financial assistance due to COVID-19.

This report outlines key findings specific to all individuals aged 16 years and older living in the Nipissing and Parry Sound districts who responded to the survey. Descriptive statistics of demographic traits, as well as frequency tables detailing supplementary information, can be found in the appendix (Tables 1-16). In addition to this report, subsequent reports on priority populations are available.

Please note, data collected from the community survey may be subject to various survey biases, including social desirability bias (i.e., respondents may give an answer that they believe is socially acceptable), response bias (i.e., certain groups of people are more likely to complete a survey than others) and recall bias (i.e., misremembering events or information to accurately answer a question). As a result, data should be interpreted with caution. Additionally, individuals without internet access were excluded from the sampling frame.

FINDING #1: The COVID-19 pandemic and its associated public health measures impacted respondents' mental health and well-being.

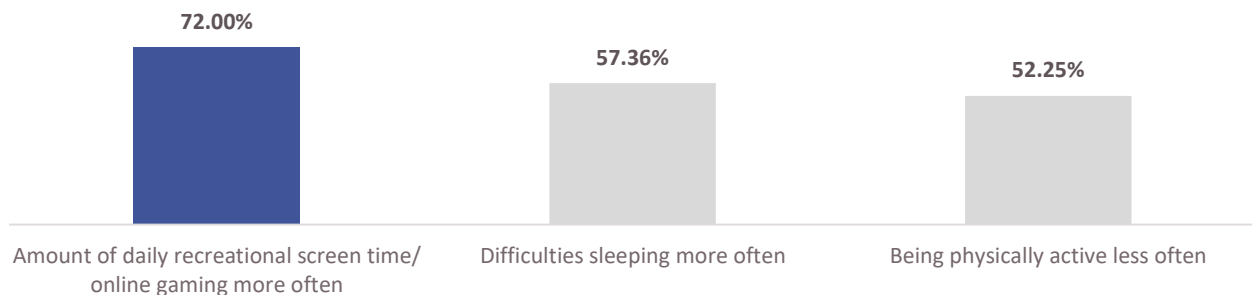
Three quarters of respondents reported **feelings of loneliness or isolation** more often since the start of the pandemic. Two thirds of respondents reported feeling stressed to the point where it had an impact on their daily life, while one half reported feeling stressed to the point where they felt they could not cope/deal with things.



Rates of stress were significantly higher for parent/guardians than non-parent/guardians¹.

FINDING #2: The COVID-19 pandemic and its associated public health measures impacted respondents' physical health behaviours.

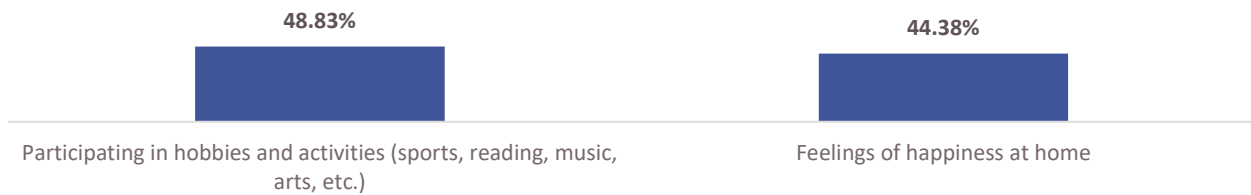
Approximately **three quarters** of respondents reported engaging in **more recreational screen time/online gaming**, while just over half reported difficulties sleeping more often and engaging in physical activity less often.



¹ Parents/guardians are defined as those with at least one child aged 17 years or younger at home. Additional information regarding specific findings relevant to parents/guardians can be viewed in the report titled "The Indirect Impacts of the COVID-19 Pandemic on Individuals living in the Nipissing and Parry Sound Districts: A Focus on Families".

FINDING #3: The COVID-19 pandemic and its associated public health measures resulted in changes to respondents’ participation in hobbies and activities, as well as feelings of happiness at home.

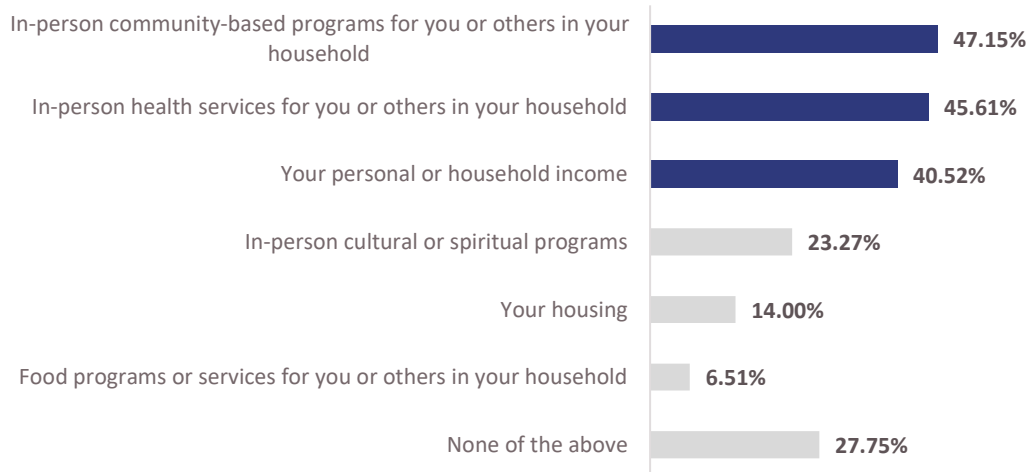
Specifically, almost **half** of respondents reported participating in **hobbies and activities** less often since the start of the pandemic. **Feelings of happiness** at home was also reported **less often** among nearly half of respondents.



Individuals who reported increases in substance use during the pandemic were significantly more likely to report lower levels of participation in hobbies and activities as well as lower levels in feelings of happiness at home².

FINDING #4: Respondents were worried about the impacts caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.

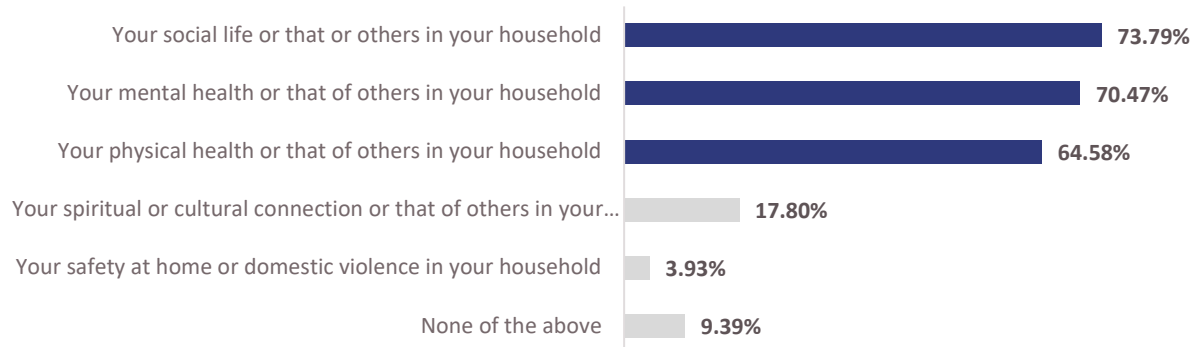
Specifically, respondents were **most worried** about the loss of **in-person community-based programs** and **in-person health services**. A large proportion of respondents (41%) also reported worries about their **personal or household income**.



² Substances include nicotine, alcohol and cannabis. Additional information regarding specific findings relevant to substance can be viewed in the report titled “The Indirect Impacts of the COVID-19 Pandemic on Individuals living in the Nipissing and Parry Sound Districts: A Focus on Substance Use”.

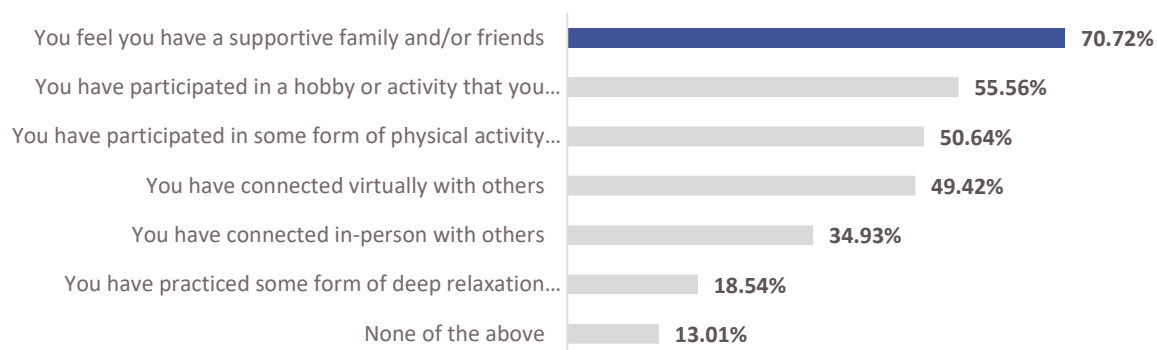
FINDING #5: Respondents were worried about the impact the COVID-19 pandemic has had on daily life.

Respondents were **most worried** about the impact of COVID-19 on their **social life**, followed by their **mental health** and **physical health**.



FINDING #6: Respondents adjusted to the COVID-19 pandemic by connecting with others and engaging in activities.

In the 7 days before completing the survey, nearly **three quarters** of respondents **felt they had supportive family and/or friends**. In the same time frame, about half of respondents indicated they participated in a hobby or activity, while a similar amount reported they participated in some form of physical activity for at least 30 minutes. In addition, half of respondents connected virtually with others, and one third connected in-person with others, in the 7 days before completing the survey.

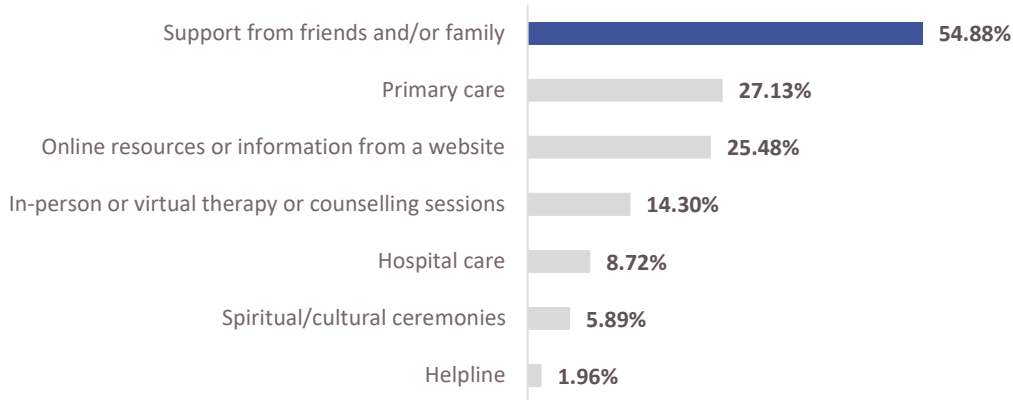


Respondents aged 65 years and older were more likely to report feeling they had supportive family and/or friends, and that they had connected virtually with others in the last seven days, compared to respondents aged 64 years and younger³.

³ Additional information regarding specific findings relevant to those aged 65 and older can be viewed in the report titled "The Indirect Impacts of the COVID-19 Pandemic on Individuals in the Nipissing and Parry Sound Districts: A Focus on Individuals Aged 65 and Older".

FINDING #7: During the pandemic, health and well-being resources were accessed by most respondents.

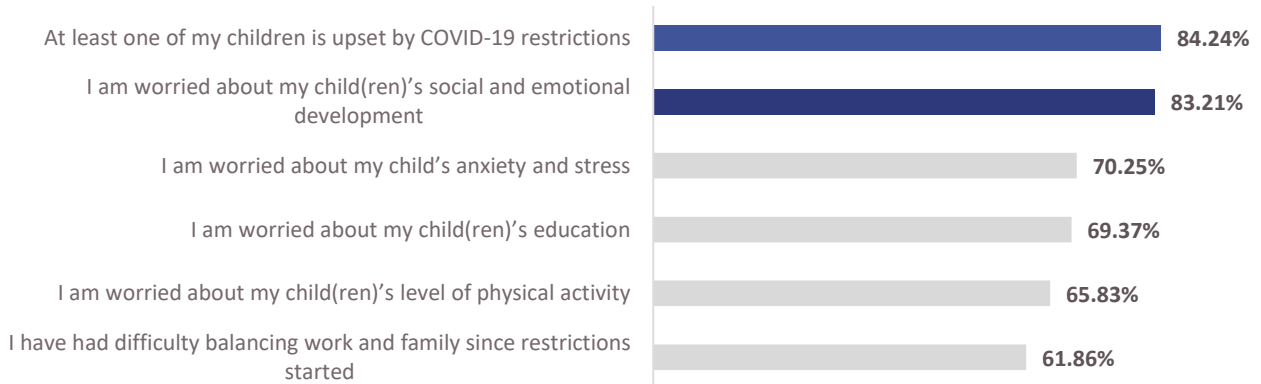
The majority of respondents (75%) used resources to support or improve their health and well-being. The **most frequently** selected resource was **support from friends and/or family**.



Of the survey respondents who did use health and well-being resources, more than half (56%) reported challenges accessing these supports. The most frequently reported challenges were hours that services are open (23%), need for an appointment (20%), and waitlists (20%).

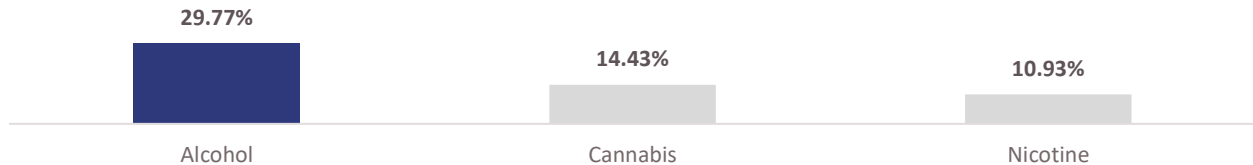
FINDING #8: Parents and guardians worry about the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic and its associated public health measures on their child’s well-being.

Specifically, **most** parents/guardians indicated at least one of their children was **upset by COVID-19 restrictions**. Parent/guardians were **most worried** about their child(ren)’s **social and emotional development**, followed by their child(ren)’s anxiety and stress, and their child(ren)’s education.



FINDING #9: Some respondents indicated an increase in alcohol, cannabis, and/or nicotine use since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic.

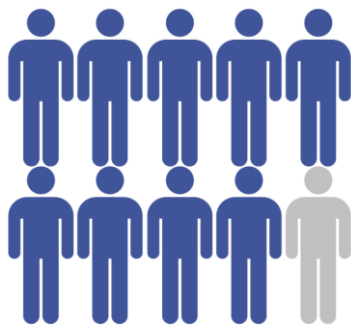
Thirty percent of respondents reported **an increase in alcohol use**, which is twice the rate of cannabis use increase and three times the rate of nicotine use increase since the start of the pandemic. **Stress** was the most frequently selected reason for these increases.



Respondents who reported an increase in any of the above substances were also more likely to report increased recreational screen time, more difficulties sleeping, and less participation in physical activity and hobbies since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic⁴.

FINDING #10: Parents/guardians with a child born in 2020 experienced challenges as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.

For parents/guardians with a child born in 2020, **86%** reported that COVID-19 restrictions **limited the support they received** from family and friends, while 64% experienced depression or anxiety.

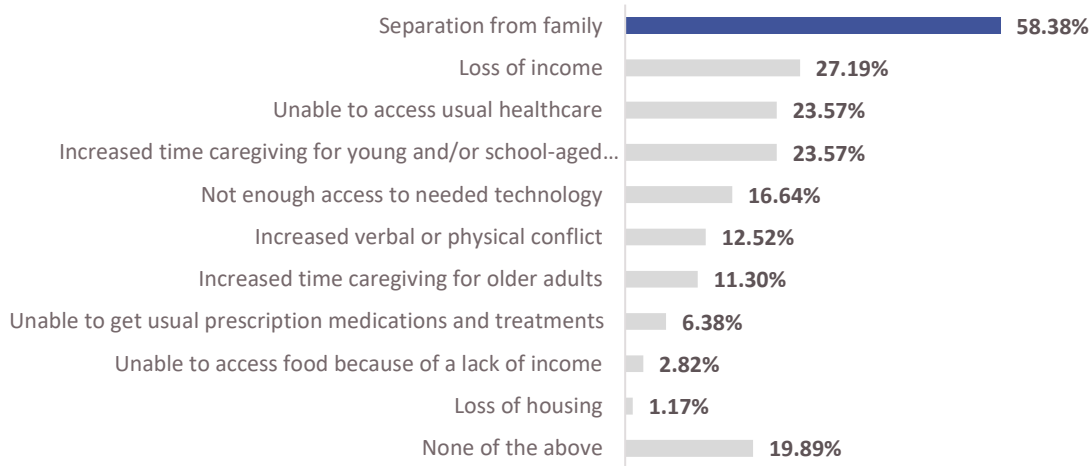


Almost **9 out of 10** parents with a child born in 2020 reported COVID-19 restrictions limited the support they received from family and friends.

⁴ Additional information regarding key findings specific to individuals who reported an increase in alcohol, cannabis, and/or nicotine use since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic can be found in the report titled “The Indirect Impacts of the COVID-19 Pandemic on Individuals living in the Nipissing and Parry Sound Districts: A Focus on Substance Use”.

FINDING #11: Overall, 4 in 5 respondents reported a negative outcome due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

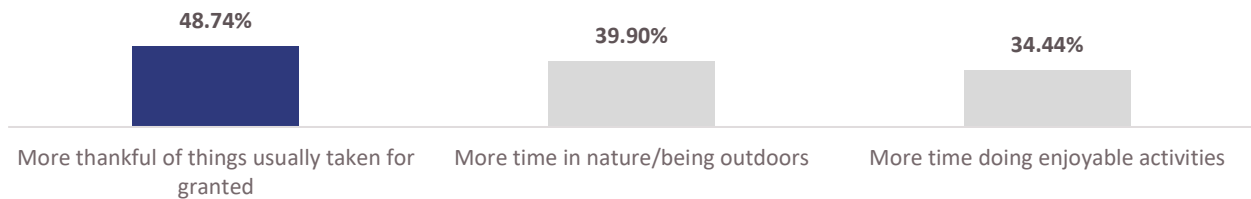
The **most frequently selected** negative impact of the pandemic was **separation from family**, followed by loss of income, the inability to access usual healthcare, and increased time caregiving for young and/or school-aged children.



The rate of separation from family was higher among older adults (65+) compared to those aged less than 64 years⁵.

FINDING #12: Respondents reported experiencing some positive impacts due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

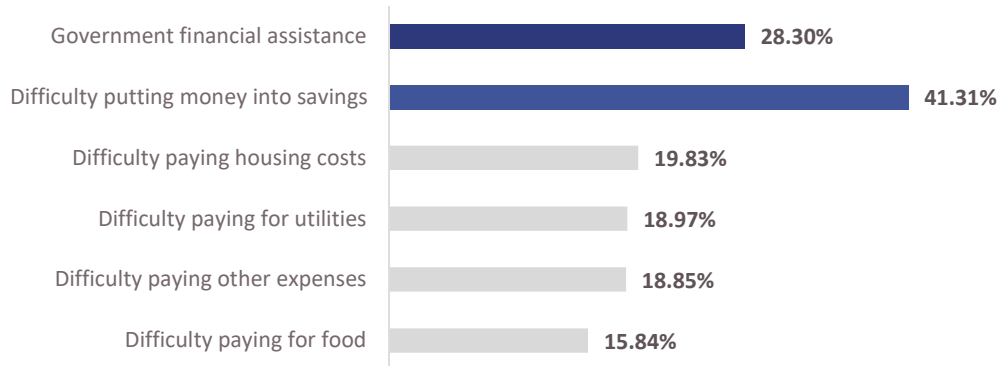
The most frequently selected positive impact of the COVID-19 pandemic was feeling **more thankful of things usually taken for granted**, followed by time in nature/being outdoors and more time doing enjoyable activities.



⁵ Additional information regarding specific findings relevant to adults aged 65 years and older can be found in the report titled “The Indirect Impacts of the COVID-19 Pandemic on Individuals in the Nipissing and Parry Sound Districts: A Focus on Individuals Aged 65 and Older”.

FINDING #13: Many respondents reported financial difficulties as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Specifically, **one third** of respondents reported receiving **government financial assistance** due to the pandemic. In addition, approximately 4 in 10 respondents reported being **worried about or having difficulty putting money into savings**. One in five respondents also reported worries or difficulties paying for housing, utilities, food, and other expenses during the pandemic.



Appendix

Table 1

Characteristics of Respondents

Characteristic	%
Gender (n = 1509)	
Female	79.39%
Male	20.15%
Non-binary	0.33%
Transgender	0.07%
Two-Spirit	0.07%
Age Group (n = 1629)	
16 to 24 years	3.31%
25 to 34 years	19.28%
35 to 44 years	28.79%
45 to 54 years	20.50%
55 to 64 years	17.07%
65 to 74 years	9.33%
75 to 84 years	1.53%
85 years of age and older	0.18%
District (n = 1629)	
Nipissing	66.97
Parry Sound	33.03
COVID-19 Government Financial Assistance (n = 1629)	
Yes	28.30
No	63.29
Prefer not to answer	8.41
Employment Status (n = 1491)	
Working outside the home, without regular face-to-face interaction with the public	12.14
Working outside the home, with regular face-to-face interaction with the public	31.12
Working from home	26.29
Not working but for other reasons than the pandemic	14.22
Not working because of the pandemic	7.85
Retired	8.38
Student Status (n = 1513)	
Not a student	95.24
High school student	0.73
College or university student	4.03

Note. Government financial assistance includes CERB, CESB, EI, rent/mortgage or other payment deferrals (e.g. utilities, credit card balance) from the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic to the time of the survey.

Table 2

Frequency of Respondents identifying as Belonging to the following Groups (n = 1629)

Population Group	%
A person with a mental health disorder	25.66
A person with a chronic illness	19.09
A person who identifies at Francophone	10.68
A person who identifies as First Nations, Inuit, or Métis	7.55
A person with a physical, developmental or sensory disability	4.79
A member of the LGBTQ2S+ community	4.24
A person living in poverty	3.74
A member of a racialized community	2.15
A person who accesses the local food bank or soup kitchen	1.60
A person who is homeless or at risk for homelessness	0.98
A recent newcomer to Canada	0.49
None of the above	50.28

Note. Participants were requested to select all that apply.

Table 3

Level of Agreement of the Changes Experienced by Respondents since the Start of the COVID-19 Pandemic

Change	%					
	Much more	Somewhat more	About the same	Somewhat less	Much less	Does not apply
Amount of daily recreational screen time/ online gaming (n = 1618)	41.04	30.96	19.59	1.55	1.79	5.07
Feelings of loneliness or isolation (n = 1610)	35.03	38.94	15.16	2.36	1.37	7.14
Feeling stressed to the point where it had an impact on how you live your daily life (n = 1620)	28.46	36.30	19.32	3.52	2.35	10.06
Difficulties sleeping (n = 1623)	25.63	31.73	31.61	2.40	2.22	6.41
Feeling stressed to the point where you felt like you could not cope/ deal with things (n = 1612)	17.18	28.66	24.44	3.23	3.23	23.26
Stigma or worry about stigma because of your mental health (n = 1599)	10.94	17.64	32.21	2.13	2.19	34.90
Being physically active (n = 1619)	9.57	13.96	23.84	18.65	33.60	0.37
Participating in hobbies and activities (sports, reading, music, arts, etc.) (n = 1618)	8.65	19.28	21.69	13.66	35.17	1.55
Feelings of happiness at home (n = 1611)	5.65	12.48	35.88	22.78	21.60	1.61
Ability to manage problems or stressful situations (n = 1610)	5.22	15.16	48.63	14.60	11.06	5.34
Thoughts of suicide or self-harm (n = 1570)	3.95	7.77	10.83	0.83	1.02	75.61

Note. Response options included “much more often”, “somewhat more often”, “about the same”, “somewhat less often”, “much less often”, and “does not apply to me”.

Table 4

Frequency of Respondents who indicated they were worried about the following losses caused by the COVID-19 Pandemic (n = 1629)

Variable	%
Your personal or household income	40.52
Your housing	14.00
In-person health services for you or others in your household	45.61
In-person cultural or spiritual programs	23.27
In-person community-based programs for you or others in your household	47.15
Food programs or services for you or others in your household	6.51
None of the above	27.75

Note. Participants were requested to select all that apply.

Table 5

Frequency of Respondents who indicated they were worried about the following impacts caused by the COVID-19 Pandemic (n = 1629)

Variable	%
Your social life or that of others in your household	73.79
Your mental health or that of others in your household	70.47
Your physical health or that of others in your household	64.58
Your spiritual or cultural connection or that of others in your household	17.8
Your safety at home or domestic violence in your household	3.93
None of the above	9.39

Note. Participants were requested to select all that apply.

Table 6

Frequency of Respondents who indicated the following statements applied to them in the previous seven days (n = 1629)

Statement	%
You feel you have a supportive family and/or friends	70.72
You have participated in a hobby or activity that you enjoy	55.56
You have participated in some form of physical activity for 30 minutes or longer	50.64
You have connected virtually with others	49.42
You have connected in-person with others	34.93
You have practiced some form of deep relaxation exercises	18.54
None of the above	13.01

Note. Participants were requested to select all that apply.

Table 7

Frequency of Respondents who indicated they accessed the following resources to support or improve their health and well-being since the start of the COVID-19 Pandemic (n = 1629)

Resource	%
Support from friends and/or family	54.88
Primary care	27.13
Online resources or information from a website	25.48
In-person or virtual therapy or counselling sessions	14.3
Hospital care	8.72
Spiritual/cultural ceremonies	5.89
Helpline	1.96
None of the above	74.77

Note. Participants were requested to select all that apply.

Table 8

Frequency of Respondents who indicated they experienced the following challenges when accessing the resources or supports to improve their health and well-being (n = 1629)

Challenge Experienced	%
Hours that services are open	23.27
Need for an appointment	20.32
Waitlists	20.14
Cost of services	14.73
Limited or no access to computer or internet	11.54
Lack of child care	10.99
Location of services	9.88
Fear of discrimination or stigma by service providers	5.46
Transportation issues	4.79
Lack of culturally appropriate services	2.64
Physical accessibility	2.52
Other	3.68
I did not experience any challenges	44.44

Note. Participants were requested to select all that apply.

Table 9

Percent of Respondents who indicated an increase in the following behaviours since the start of the COVID-19 Pandemic (n = 1629)

Behaviour	%
Alcohol	29.77
Cannabis	14.43
Nicotine	10.93
Online gambling	1.96
Illegal drug use	1.04
None of the above	59.36

Note. Participants were requested to select all that apply.

Table 10*Reason for Increase in Behaviours among Respondents*

Reason	%				
	Alcohol (n = 485)	Cannabis (n = 235)	Nicotine (n = 178)	Illegal drug (n = 17)	Online gambling (n = 32)
Stress	100.00	65.11	74.72	31.25	40.00
Boredom	61.86	52.34	63.48	81.25	80.00
More time at home	49.90	41.70	43.26	37.50	29.41
Loneliness	42.47	35.74	39.89	37.50	60.00
Lack of a regular schedule	39.18	34.04	35.39	28.13	60.00
Pain relief/anxiety	38.56	57.87	32.58	-	52.94
Working from home	21.24	13.62	24.72	18.75	5.88
Cook more/have with supper	16.49	-	-	-	-
Social gatherings	9.90	5.53	1.69	0.00	5.88
No reason	0.21	0.85	1.12	0.00	11.76
Legal age now	0.21	-	-	-	-
Unsure	3.71	0.85	3.93	12.50	0.00
Prefer not to answer	0.00	-	-	-	-
Other	-	5.53	-	9.375	5.88

Note. Only respondents who indicated an increase in the behaviour were given the option to indicate the reason(s) for the increase. As such, percentages are based on the number of participants who indicated an increase in the behaviour.

Table 11*Parent/Guardians' Level of Agreement to the Following Statements (n = 679)*

	% of Respondents					
	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Does not apply	Prefer not to answer
At least one of my children is upset by COVID-19 restrictions	54.64	29.60	3.68	4.27	5.74	2.06
I am worried about my child(ren)'s social and emotional development	50.96	32.25	10.31	3.09	1.62	1.77
I am worried about my child's anxiety and stress	37.56	32.70	15.61	6.33	5.89	1.91
I am worried about my child(ren)'s level of physical activity	37.11	28.72	20.77	6.48	5.15	1.77
I am worried about my child(ren)'s education	36.97	32.40	16.64	6.33	5.45	2.21
I am having difficulty supporting my child(ren)'s remote learning	32.40	22.53	14.87	6.77	21.21	2.21
I have had difficulty balancing work and family since restrictions started	29.16	32.70	19.00	6.77	9.87	2.50
I am worried about maintaining household routines, organization and meals	20.77	34.32	27.10	9.72	5.89	2.21
At least one of my children worries that someone they love will get COVID-19	20.47	35.94	20.03	11.05	9.87	2.65
I am worried about the amount of sleep my child is getting	17.67	26.36	32.40	11.49	10.16	1.91
It is challenging to get the mental health services and supports I need for my child(ren)	17.08	18.41	13.84	4.42	40.50	5.74
At least one of my children worries that they will get COVID-19	15.61	33.14	25.33	12.52	10.60	2.80
My child(ren) and I argue more because of COVID-19 restrictions	15.32	26.36	29.46	10.75	15.32	2.80
I feel I do not have enough parenting support due to COVID-19 restrictions	14.43	20.91	30.34	12.08	17.97	4.27
I am worried about managing my child's behaviour	13.55	23.86	31.37	13.40	15.02	2.80

Table 12

Parent/Guardians with a child born in 2020's Level of Agreement to the Following Statements after their child's (2020) birth

	%
COVID-19 restrictions limited the support I received from family and friends (n = 43)	86.05
I experienced depression or anxiety (n = 42)	64.29
I got the breastfeeding supports I needed (n = 33)	42.42
I breastfed less than I planned because of COVID-19 (n = 37)	18.92

Table 13

Frequency of Negative Impacts as a result of the COVID-19 Pandemic reported by Respondents (n = 1629)

Impact	%
Separation from family	58.38
Loss of income	27.19
Unable to access usual healthcare	23.57
Increased time caregiving for young and/or school-aged children	23.57
Not enough access to needed technology	16.64
Increased verbal or physical conflict	12.52
Increased time caregiving for older adults	11.30
Unable to get usual prescription medications and treatments	6.38
Unable to access food because of a lack of income	2.82
Loss of housing	1.17
None of the above	19.89

Table 14

Frequency of Positive Impacts as a result of the COVID-19 Pandemic reported by Respondents (n = 1629)

Impact	%
More thankful of things usually taken for granted	48.74
More time in nature/being outdoors	39.90
More time doing enjoyable activities	34.44
Eating meals with family more often	23.88
Increased contact with family and friends (through phone or video)	23.08
Increased time to do activities with children	21.98
New connections with supportive people	10.13
None of the above	28.36

Table 15

Frequency of Worries about or Difficulties Experienced by Respondents during the Previous Month (n = 1629)

Variable	%			
	Yes	No	Prefer not to answer	Does not apply
Put money into savings or other investments	41.31	42.85	6.20	9.64
Pay housing costs (e.g. mortgage, rent, major repairs)	19.83	64.27	6.63	9.27
Pay for utilities (e.g. electricity, water, internet, telephones)	18.97	65.81	5.77	9.45
Pay other expenses (e.g. transportation, health-related costs such as dental care or medications, education, childcare, clothing, etc.)	18.85	64.58	6.81	9.76
Pay for food	15.84	69.67	5.03	9.45

Table 16

Frequency Rates of Discrimination by Population Group among Respondents (n = 1629)

Population Group	%	
	Before COVID-19	Since COVID-19
Your physical appearance	8.53	4.79
Your sex	6.20	2.95
Your age	5.83	4.24
A physical or mental disability	3.87	3.68
Your Indigenous identity	2.70	2.15
Your race or skin colour	2.27	1.78
Some other reason	2.15	3.13
Your sexual orientation	1.78	0.86
Your ethnicity or culture	1.66	1.29
Your language	1.23	1.10
Your religion	1.17	1.10
Your gender identity or expression	1.04	0.55
Your accent	0.92	0.55
Did not experience discrimination	20.44	15.59

Note. The heading “Before COVID-19” refers to the two years before the COVID-19 pandemic.