

See Us, Hear Us 2.0

MENTAL HEALTH AND WELL-BEING IMPACTS OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC ON CHILDREN, YOUTH AND FAMILIES IN SASKATCHEWAN

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INTRODUCTION

- ◆ In our 2021 **See Us, Hear Us (SUHU) 1.0** survey, we examined the mental health impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on children and youth in Saskatchewan using a sample of 510 families (one parent/caregiver and one child aged 8-18 from each family for a total of 1020 participants).
- ◆ Findings of that survey can be found [here](#).
- ◆ The SUHU 2.0 survey investigates the mental health of children and youth in the 2021-22 school year.
- ◆ Here we present preliminary descriptive results focused on a few central questions; subsequent reports will provide more detailed analyses, including additional data on health behaviours, coping, social support, and help seeking.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

How much impact did the Covid-19 pandemic have on the overall experience of children and youth at school and outside school hours during 2021-22?

How is the mental health of children and youth and how has the pandemic affected them?

What are the most common mental health diagnoses children and youth received before and since the pandemic began?

What are families' needs for help with mental health? Where do they seek help? How well are their needs being met?

SUMMARY OF PRELIMINARY FINDINGS

How much impact did the Covid-19 pandemic have on the overall experience of children and youth at school and outside school hours during 2021-22?

Most children and youth (77%) attended school in person in 2021-22, with students in smaller cities more likely to do online learning/homeschooling or a mix of online and in-class compared to those in Saskatoon, Regina or rural areas.

About half (52%) felt that their schooling experience was a lot different than it would have been without a pandemic, while slightly fewer (42%) said the same about their after-school experiences.

Those who attended school in person all year were least likely to say that their schooling or after-school experiences were a lot different.

How is the mental health of children and youth and how has the pandemic affected them?

A quarter of children and youth (23%) reported depression and even more experienced irritability (39%), fatigue (38%) and anxiety (38%) in the two weeks before the survey.

Two thirds of children and youth (64%) and their parents (66%) say that children's mental health worsened during the pandemic; but over half say it is better now than it was earlier in the pandemic (56% of children; 59% of parents).

Two thirds of parents (66%) believe the pandemic has had a negative impact on their child's life overall, while 23% said the impact is an equal mix of positive and negative. Most parents (81%) are concerned the pandemic will have a negative impact on their child's future.

What are the most common mental health diagnoses children and youth received before and since the pandemic?

One quarter of study participants had been diagnosed with anxiety (24%), followed by ADHD (15%), depression (11%), and an eating disorder (1%).

Most children and youth with depression were diagnosed after the start of the pandemic (73%) as were those with an eating disorder (60%). About half of those with ADHD or anxiety were diagnosed prior to the pandemic.

What are families' needs for help with mental health? Where do they seek help? How well are their needs being met?

About one third (34%) of children and youth surveyed said they needed mental health help, of whom more than one third were not getting help.

The most common reason given for not getting needed help was feeling uncomfortable or scared to ask (55%).

Family/friends were the most common source of help (74%), along with psychologists (55%), school counsellors (35%), teachers (24%), and others.

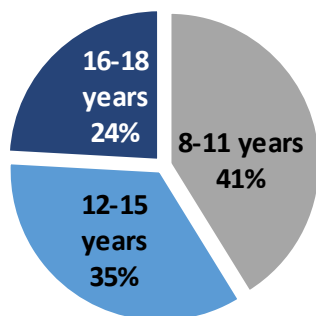
Children and youth who needed help were more likely to be in high school, come from a lower income family, have been home-schooled or done online schooling at home in 2021-22, felt that their schooling had been a lot different and that the changes in schooling had been mostly bad.

One in five (20%) parents/caregivers were concerned about the child or youth's mental health and 10-15% had concerns about the mental health of other family members.

The most helpful sources were family/friends, teachers, and psychologists, while family doctors were seen as least helpful.

STUDY SAMPLE

AGE



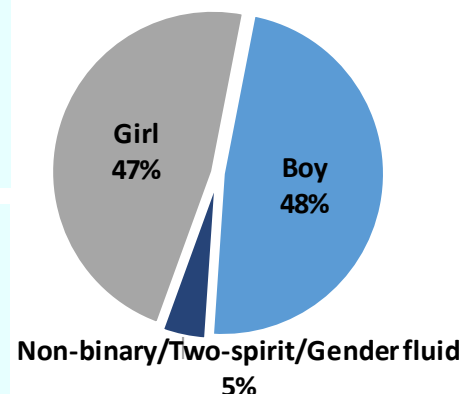
We collected data from **563 children and youth (8-18 years)** and their parent/caregiver via an online survey between May 17 and July 21, 2022.

Over half of the children and youth (59%) are aged 12-18 years and about one half are girls. Most (85%) have parents born in Canada and about half of the sample reported a household income over \$100,000. One fifth of the participants (20%) are Indigenous or people of color. Slightly less than half live in Saskatoon or Regina.

The age distribution of our study group is very similar to that of the Saskatchewan population. Children and youth who self-identified as boys and girls are well represented compared to the 2021 census. Respondents with household incomes of \$100,000-\$150,000 are underrepresented. The sample was slightly underrepresented in rural areas.

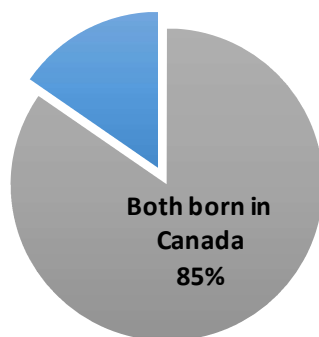
To make our results more accurately reflect the entire population, we weighted the sample by age, gender, and location of residence using the 2016 Canadian Census data. All percentages presented in this brief are weighted.

GENDER



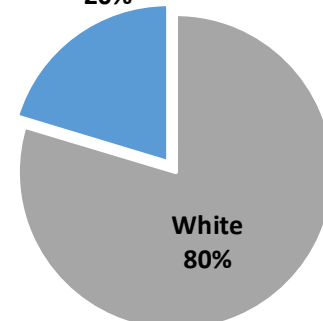
PARENTS' IMMIGRATION STATUS

None/either one born in Canada
15%

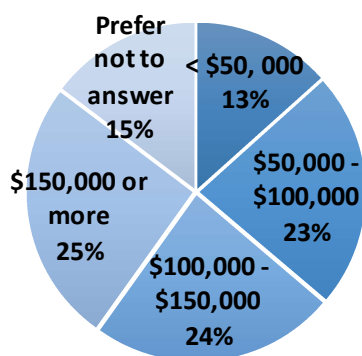


ETHNICITY

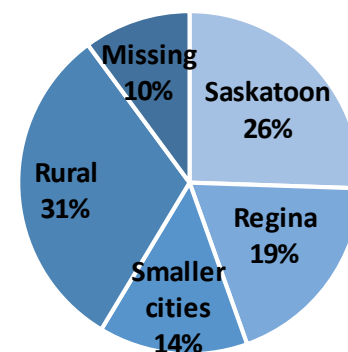
BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, people of color)
20%



HOUSEHOLD INCOME



PLACE OF RESIDENCE

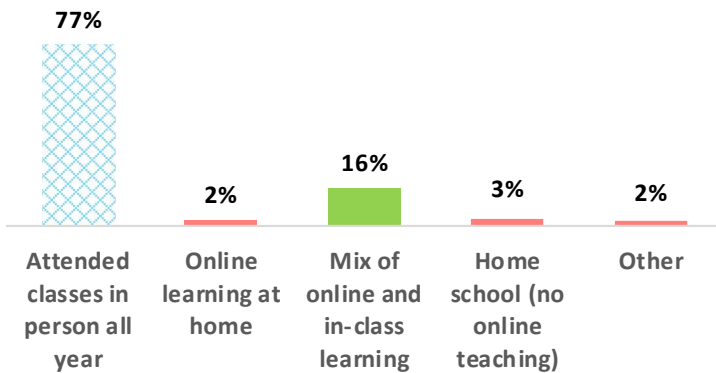


1. Independent associations/ relationships were tested using Pearson's chi square test or Fisher's exact test where applicable; results presented are significant at P-value <0.05

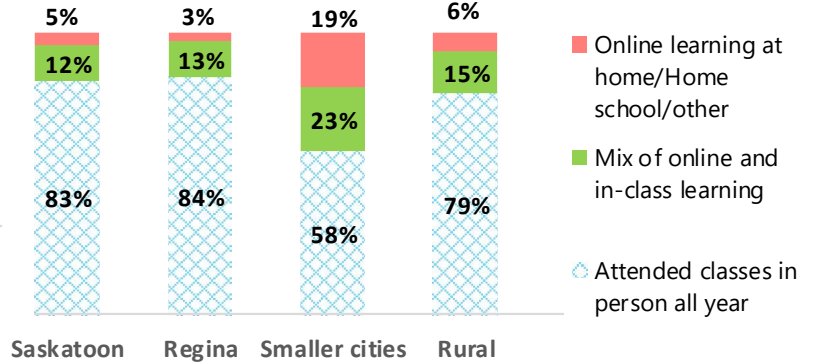
SCHOOLING IN 2021-22

What was schooling like in 2021-22?

SCHOOLING SITUATION SINCE SEPT 2021

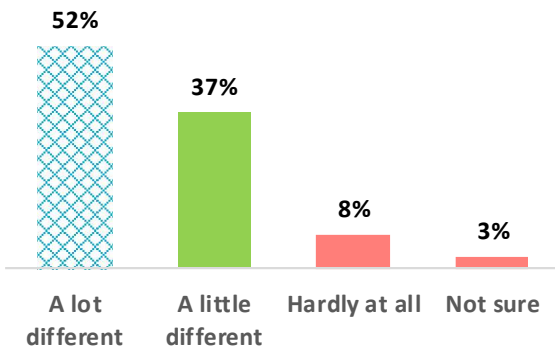


SCHOOLING SITUATION BY PLACE OF RESIDENCE

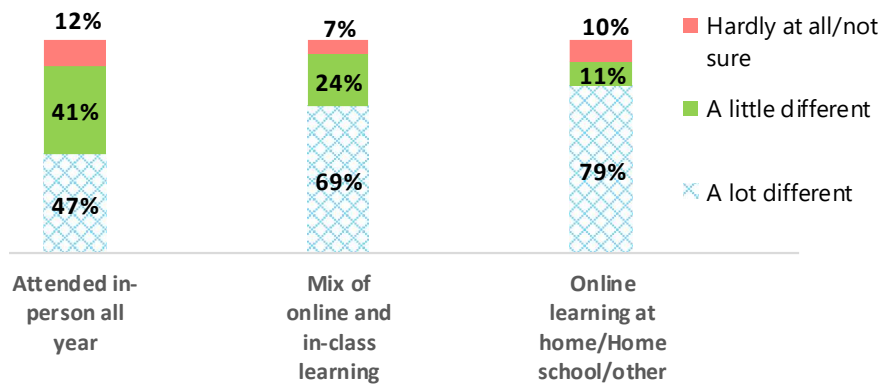


How different was school in 2021-22 due to the pandemic?

DIFFERENCE IN SCHOOLING EXPERIENCE

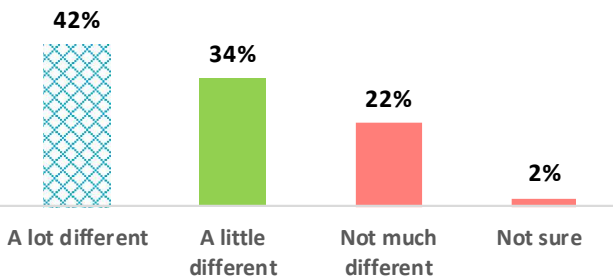


DIFFERENCE IN SCHOOLING EXPERIENCE BY SCHOOLING SITUATION

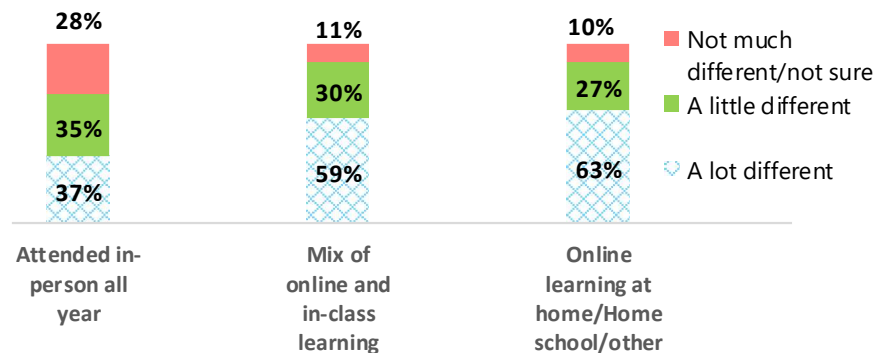


How different were extracurricular activities in 2021-22 due to the pandemic?

DIFFERENCE IN EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES



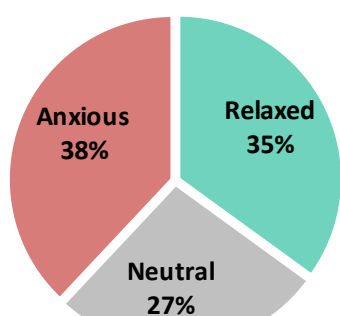
DIFFERENCE IN EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES BY SCHOOLING SITUATION



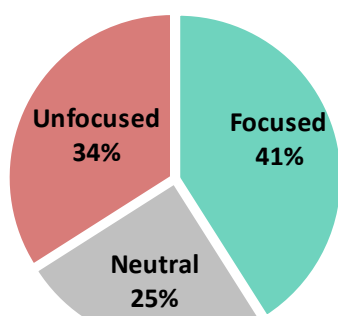
- Most study participants attended school in person in 2021-22, especially those in Saskatoon or Regina and rural areas; children and youth in smaller cities were more likely to have had a mix of online and in-person learning.
- Not surprisingly, those who had a mix of online and in-class learning and those who were home-schooled or did online learning only were more likely to report that both their schooling and the way they spent time after school and on the weekends were a lot different compared to if there were no pandemic.

MENTAL HEALTH CONCERNS OF CHILDREN & YOUTH

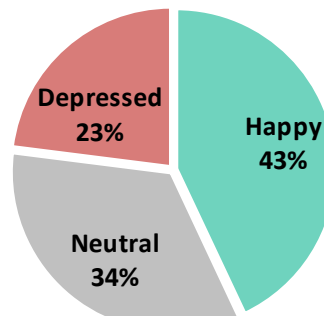
Percentage of children and youth reporting mental health concerns in the two weeks prior to the survey



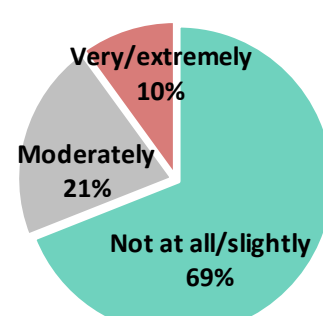
ANXIETY



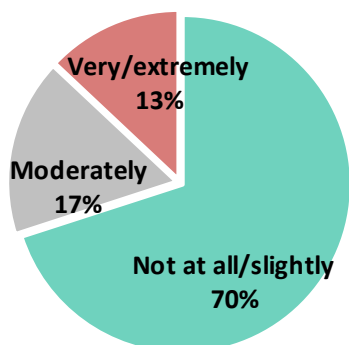
CONCENTRATION



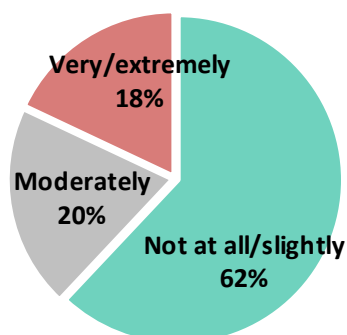
DEPRESSION



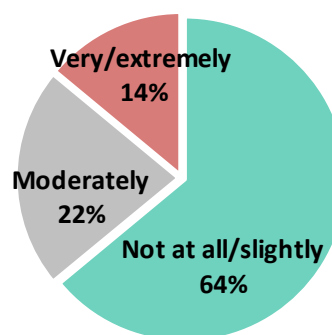
WORRY



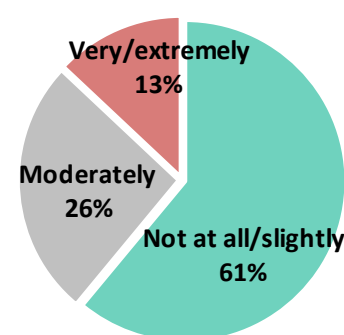
LONELINESS



FATIGUE



RESTLESSNESS



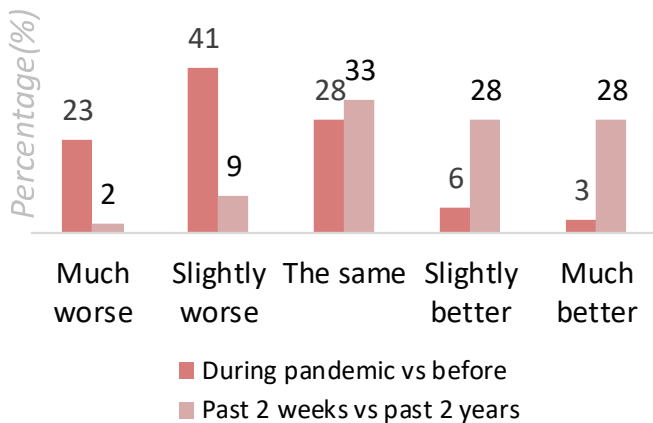
IRRITABILITY

- Most of these mental health difficulties were reported by about one third of children and youth (30-36%) during the two weeks before the survey; depression/sadness was reported by fewer (23%) and anxiety (38%), fatigue (38%) and irritability (39%) were slightly more common.

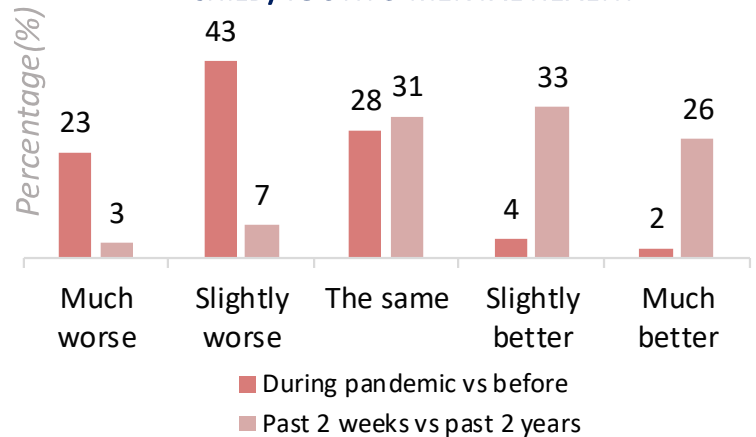
Mental health outcomes were measured using eight mental health components from the Corona Virus Health Impact Survey (CRISIS) tool. Merikangas K, Milham M, Stringaris A, Bromet E, Colcombe S, Zipunnikov V. The corona virus Health Impact Survey (CRISIS). 2020 [accessed 2020 May 15]. <https://github.com/nimh-mbdu/CRISIS>

IMPACT OF THE PANDEMIC ON MENTAL HEALTH

CHILD/YOUTH'S PERCEPTION OF CHANGE IN MENTAL HEALTH

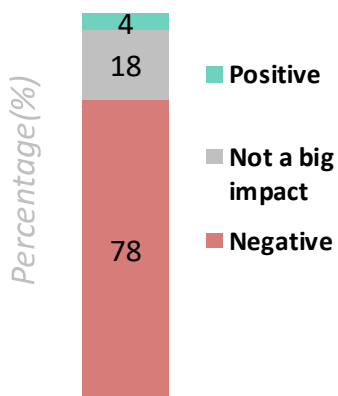


PARENT'S PERCEPTION OF CHANGE IN CHILD/YOUTH'S MENTAL HEALTH

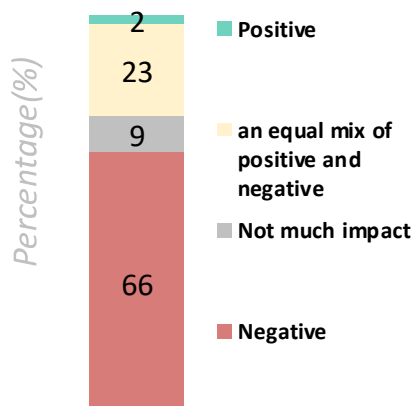


- Almost two thirds of children and youth (64%) felt their mental health was slightly or much worse during the pandemic than it had been before the pandemic.
- When asked to assess their mental health in the past two weeks compared to the previous two years (since the pandemic began), over half (56%) said it was slightly or much better. This is consistent with parents' responses.
- Among the youth (12-18 years), 78% said the pandemic had had a negative impact on their life overall; parents of children and youth gave a slightly more positive assessment
- Most youth (73%) are concerned the pandemic will have a negative impact on their future, as are parents of children and youth (81%).

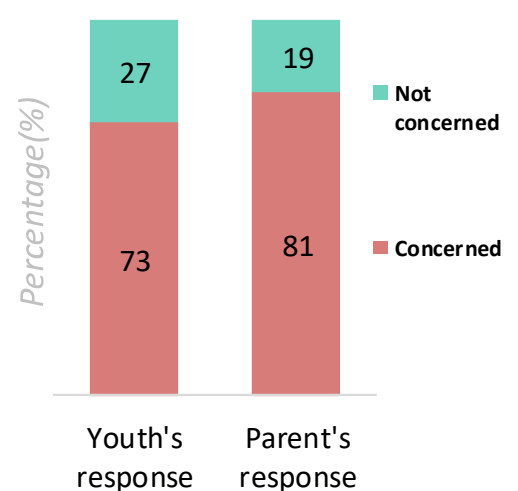
YOUTH'S PERCEPTION OF PANDEMIC'S IMPACT ON THEIR LIFE OVERALL



PARENTS' PERCEPTION OF PANDEMIC'S IMPACT ON LIFE OF THEIR CHILD/YOUTH OVERALL

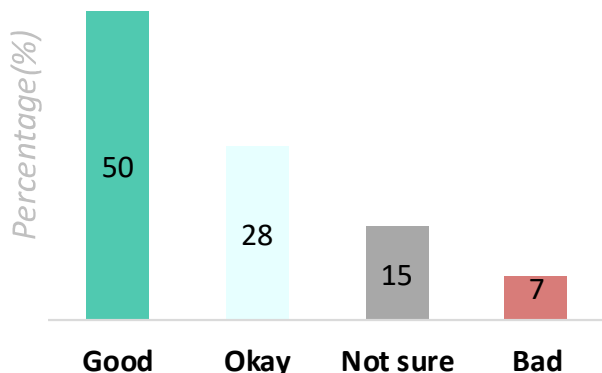


CONCERN THAT PANDEMIC WILL HAVE NEGATIVE IMPACT ON CHILD'S FUTURE (ASKED OF YOUTH AND PARENTS OF CHILDREN AND YOUTH)



IMPACT OF THE PANDEMIC ON MENTAL HEALTH, Cont.

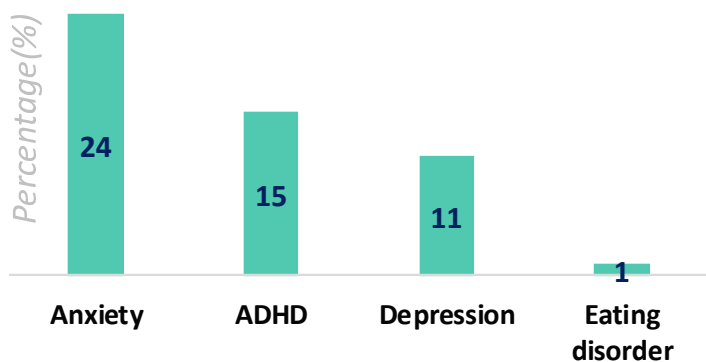
CHILD/YOUTH'S EXPECTATION OF LIFE IN NEXT 3-4 YEARS



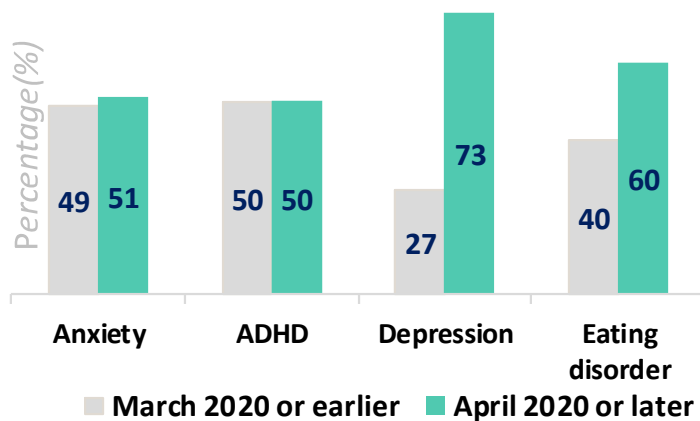
- When asked to imagine their life in three to four years, children and youth were generally optimistic, with half saying their life will be 'really' or 'pretty good' and only 7% expecting it to be 'really' or 'pretty bad.'

CHILDREN AND YOUTH'S MENTAL HEALTH DIAGNOSES

EVER DIAGNOSED WITH MENTAL HEALTH CONDITION*



TIME OF MENTAL HEALTH DIAGNOSIS



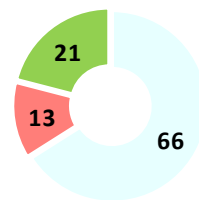
- The most common diagnosis was anxiety (24%).
- Fewer had been diagnosed with ADHD (15%), depression (11%), or an eating disorder (1%).
- The majority of those who had been diagnosed with depression (73%) or an eating disorder (60%) received this diagnosis after the start of the pandemic.
- About half of those diagnosed with anxiety or ADHD were diagnosed prior to the pandemic.

1. * indicates multiple response question, therefore the percentages will not add up to 100%

HELP SEEKING: CURRENT NEED FOR MENTAL HEALTH HELP

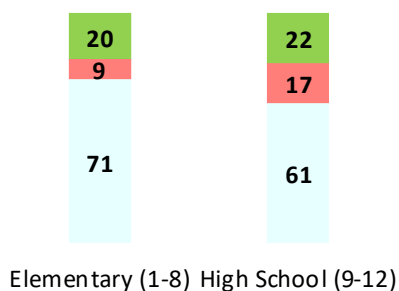
Percentage of children and youth indicating current need for mental health help

- Doing okay
- Need help but not getting it
- Need help and getting it

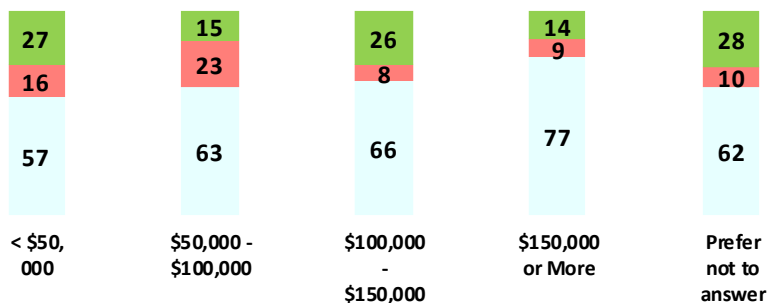


Relationship between need for help and other factors

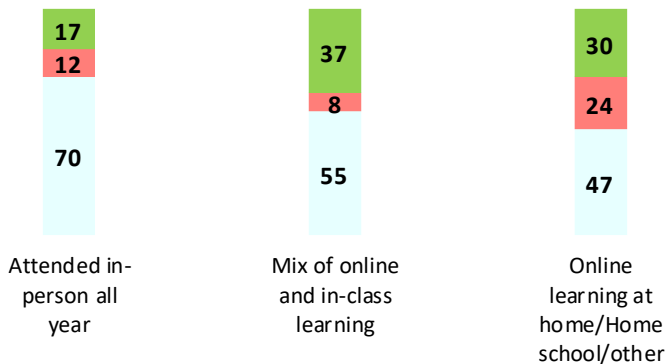
GRADE



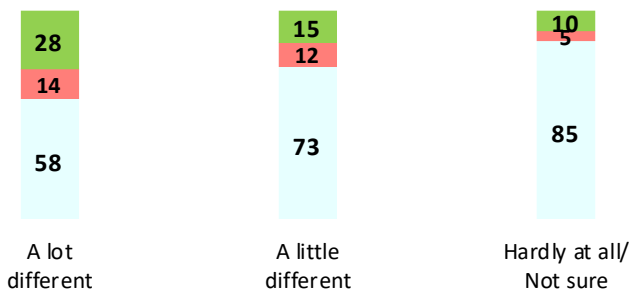
HOUSEHOLD INCOME



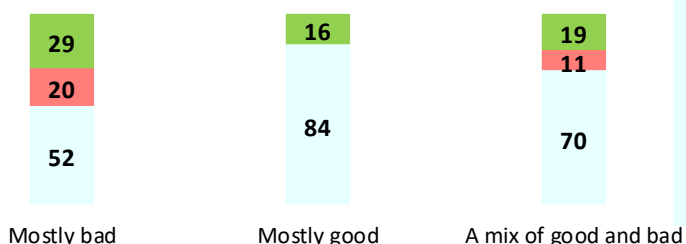
SCHOOLING SITUATION (2021-22)



IMPACT OF PANDEMIC ON SCHOOLING (2021-22)



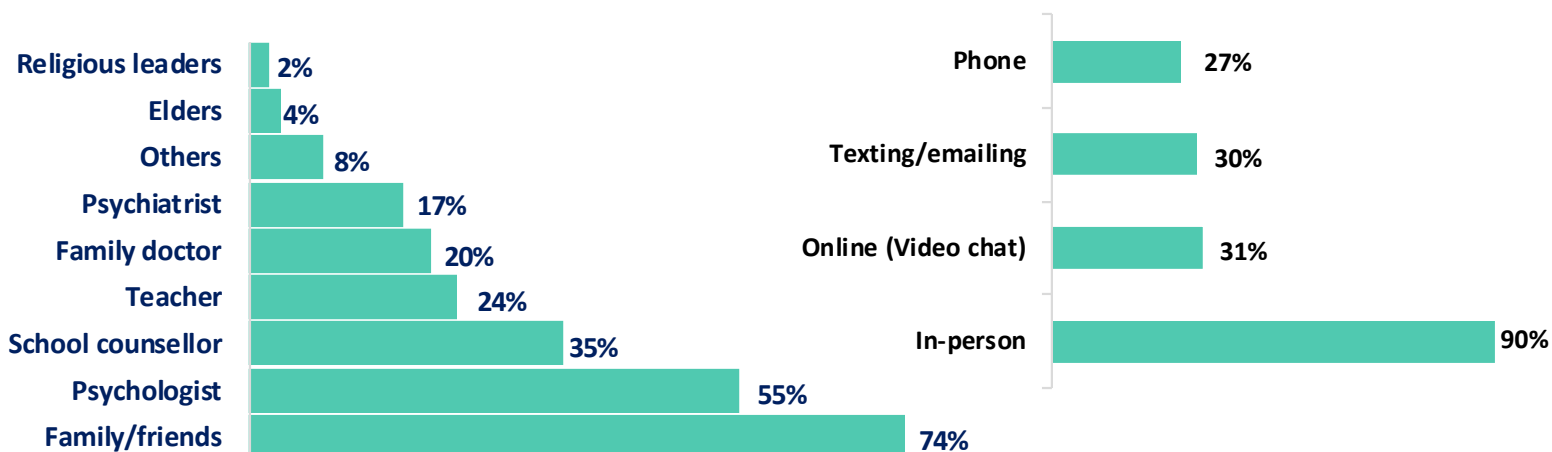
QUALITY OF CHANGE TO SCHOOLING (2021-22)



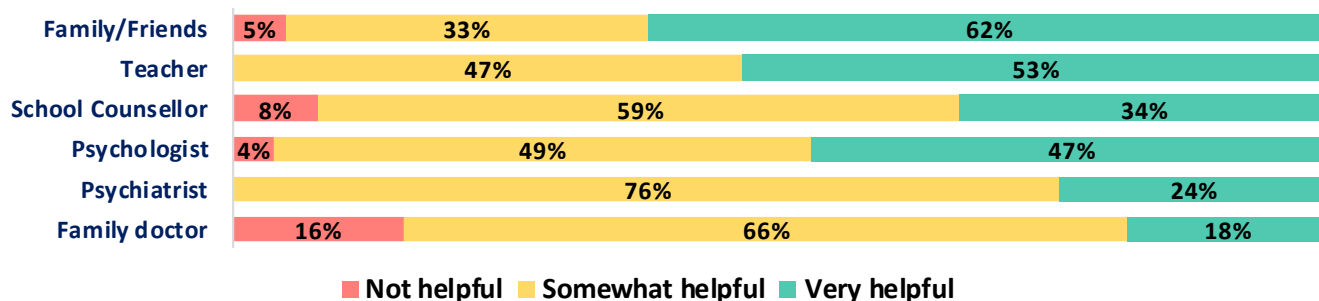
- ◆ About one third (34%) of children and youth felt they needed help and 13% were not getting it.
- ◆ Those most likely to not be getting needed help: were in high school, from families with household incomes under \$100,000, doing online learning/home schooling, said their schooling in 2021-22 was a lot or a little different than before the pandemic, and perceived the changes to schooling to be mostly bad.
- ◆ Those most likely to report needing help and getting it: had a mix of both online and in-person schooling in 2021-22, said that schooling was a lot different vs before pandemic and the changes were mostly bad.
- ◆ Those who reported not needing help were more likely to be in elementary school, come from a family with an income over \$100,000, have attended school in-person all year, and to say their schooling had been hardly any different (or be not sure) and that the changes in schooling were mostly good.

HELP SEEKING: SOURCES & DELIVERY OF MENTAL HEALTH HELP

From whom and how are children and youth getting help?*

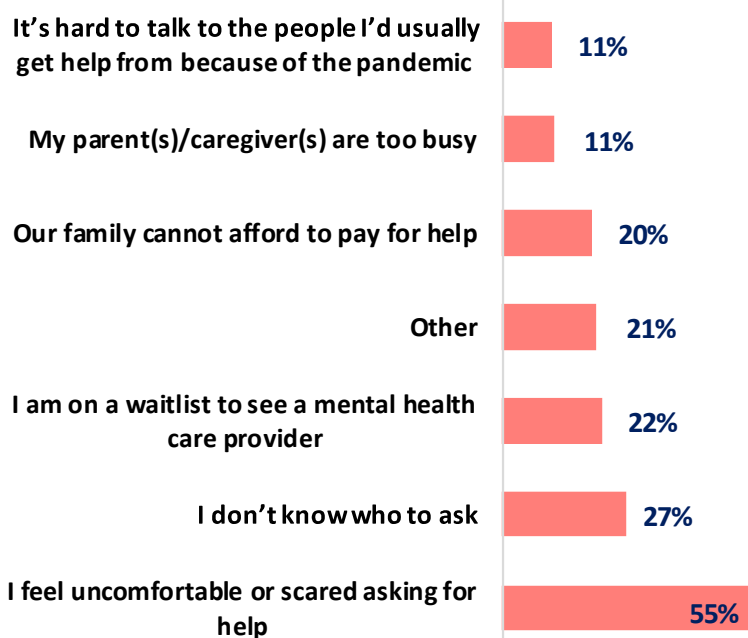


How helpful are these sources of help?*



- ◆ The most common source of help by far was family/friends, followed by psychologists and school counsellors.
- ◆ Most children and youth got help in person, though other methods were also fairly common.
- ◆ The most helpful sources were family/friends, teachers, and psychologists, while family doctors were least helpful.
- ◆ Over half of those who needed help but weren't getting it said it was because they felt uncomfortable or scared asking for help; not being able to afford help (20%), being on a waitlist (22%) and not knowing who to ask (27%) were other notable reasons.

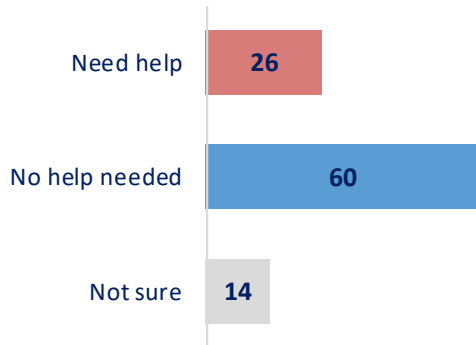
Barriers to getting help (among those needing help but not getting it)*



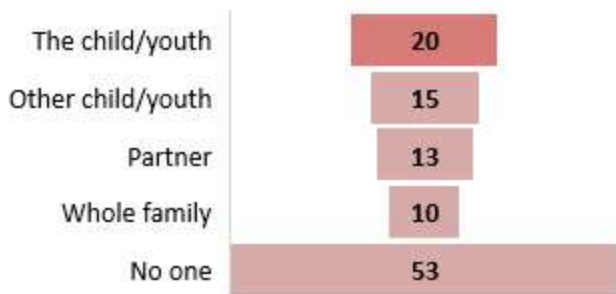
1. * indicates multiple response question, therefore the percentages will not add up to 100%

HELP SEEKING: PARENTS/CAREGIVERS' PERSPECTIVES

Percentage of parents indicating current need for mental health help for themselves



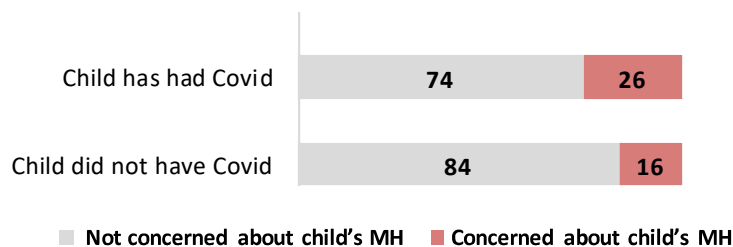
Percentage of parents concerned about family members' mental health*



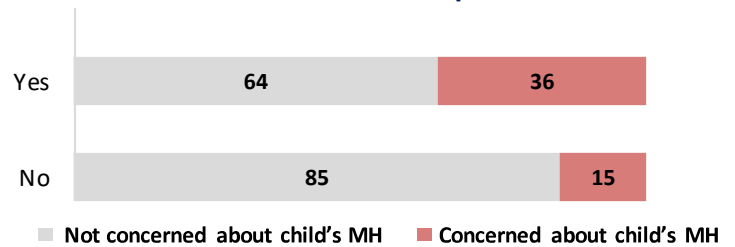
- Over one quarter (26%) of parents reported that they themselves currently needed mental health help.
- One fifth (20%) of parents were concerned about the child/youth's mental health, and 10-15% were concerned about other family members.
- Parents were more likely to be concerned about the child/youth's mental health if the child had had Covid, had been diagnosed with anxiety or depression, reported that the schooling in 2021-22 was a lot different and the changes in schooling were mostly bad.

Relationship between parent's concern about child/youth's mental health and other factors

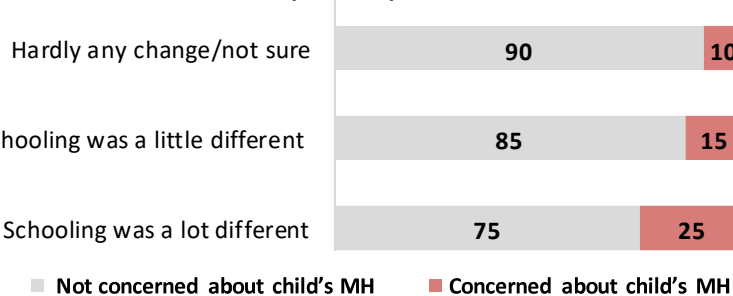
COVID POSITIVITY



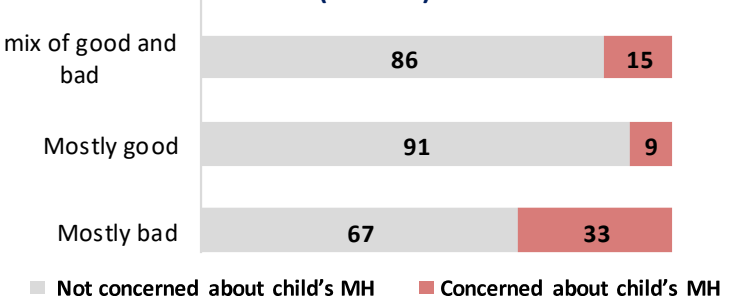
PRE-EXISTING ANXIETY/DEPRESSION



IMPACT OF PANDEMIC ON SCHOOLING (2021-22)



QUALITY OF CHANGES TO SCHOOLING EXPERIENCE (2021-22)



1. * indicates multiple response question, therefore the percentages will not add up to 100%

SUHU RESEARCH TEAM

Principal Investigators

Dr. Nazeem Muhajarine

Department of Community Health & Epidemiology
College of Medicine
University of Saskatchewan
Saskatchewan Population Health and Evaluation
Research Unit (SPHERU)
t: 306.966.7940 e: nazeem.muhajarine@usask.ca

Dr. Tamara Hinz

Department of Psychiatry
College of Medicine University of Saskatchewan
Saskatchewan Health Authority
t: 306.844.1004 e: tamara.hinz@usask.ca

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Research Team

Daniel Adeyinka, Postdoctoral Fellow, Community Health & Epidemiology, USask
Senthil Damodharan, Department of Psychiatry, USask
Isabelle Dena, PhD student, Community Health & Epidemiology, USask
Kathryn Green, former faculty, Community Health & Epidemiology, USask
Marin Habbick, Queens University Visiting Research Intern, USask
Bonnie Jeffery, Faculty of Social Work, U of Regina
Natalie Kallio, Research Officer, SPHERU, USask (until July 31, 2022)
Jane Macleod, Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation, Saskatchewan
Cindy McAdam, Agency Chiefs Tribal Council, Saskatchewan
Jessica McCutcheon, Survey Research Manager and Specialist, CHASR
Tom McIntosh, Political and International Studies, U of Regina
Nuelle Novik, Faculty of Social Work, U of Regina
Vaidehi Pisolkar, PhD student, Community Health & Epidemiology, USask
Sahana Ramamoorthy, MSc student, Community Health & Epidemiology, USask
Anita Roesler, Agency Chiefs Tribal Council, Saskatchewan
Nahin, Shakurun, MSc student, Community Health & Epidemiology, USask
Victoria Taras, Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation, Saskatchewan

Funders:



Partners :



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seeus.hearus@usask.ca

