

COPING DURING

COVID-19



RESEARCH SUMMARY ON YOUTH MENTAL HEALTH AND SUBSTANCE USE IN ONTARIO DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

On **March 11th 2020**, the World Health Organization (WHO) declared **COVID-19** a pandemic.

We started surveying youth (aged 14-29) **every 2 months starting in April 2020** to learn more about the impacts the pandemic was having on young people. **All surveys were developed with youth co-researchers.**

HOW IT ALL STARTED

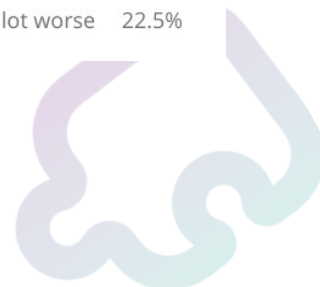
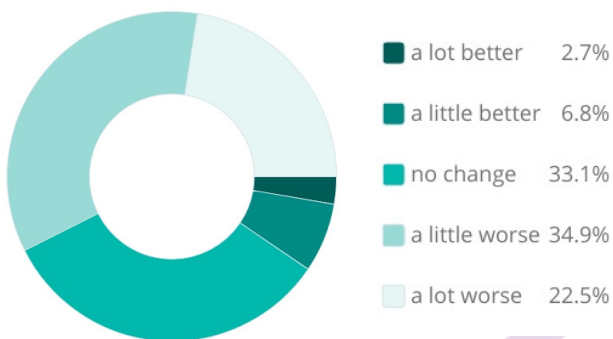
In **April 2020**, early in the pandemic, we found that **over 50% of youth had more mental health concerns than before the pandemic.**

Youth with **physical health concerns and transgender and gender expansive youth** found the pandemic to be **especially challenging.**

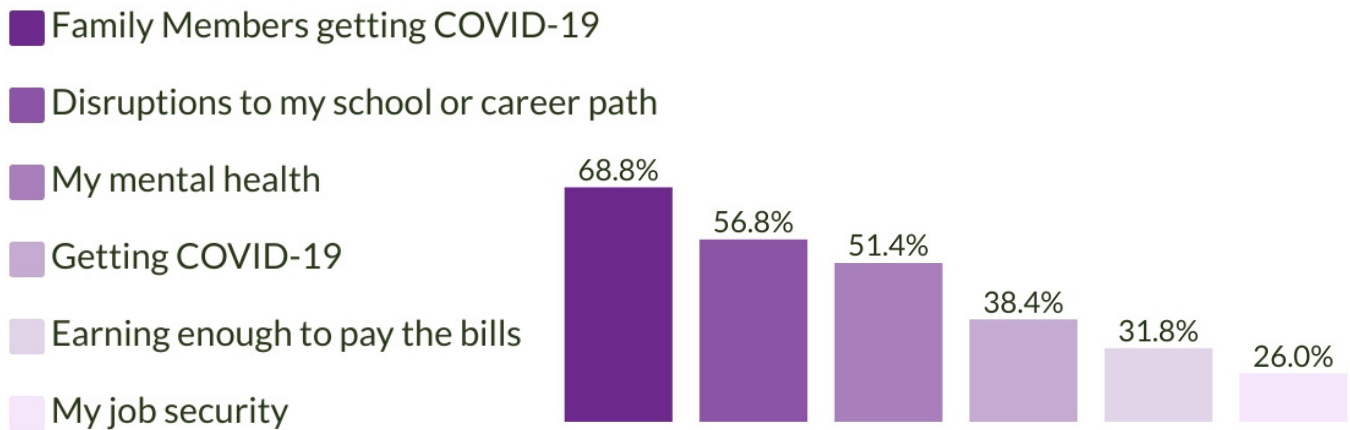
30% of youth told us that they **needed mental health or substance use services that they weren't getting.**

For **80%** of youth, **substance use didn't change.**

Change in mental health from before the pandemic to April 2020



Many youth were **worried about family members** and **themselves getting COVID-19**. Youth were also concerned about how the pandemic would **impact their mental health, schooling and career paths**.



Many youth reported **positive impacts** of the pandemic.

- Time for hobbies
- Time with family
- Time to relax
- Time to reflect
- Time for taking care of yourself

What are youth **doing to stay well?**

- Connecting with friends and family remotely
- Spending more time with pets
- Doing hobbies
- Sleeping well, eating healthy and getting exercise



BACK TO SCHOOL

Youth who attended school virtually told us that they had **challenges with remote learning**, including **technology** challenges and **negative social impacts**, like **not being able to connect with peers**.

They also said online school can feel **very tedious**. While many were able to adapt to virtual learning, youth told us that they want **more supportive school environments and teachers**. They also wanted a **tuition adjustment**, since they are not getting the full school experience.

1 in 10 youth

who planned to go back to school in the fall of 2020 **did not end up returning**.

VIRTUAL SERVICES

We found that **about three quarters** of youth are **willing to receive mental health or substance use services virtually** but **less than 40% have actually received virtual services**.

Some **advantages** of virtual services:

- Convenient/Easy to schedule
- No travel time
- Safe from COVID-19



Some **disadvantages** of virtual services:

- Awkward interactions
- Hard to build a connection
- Technology challenges
- Privacy concerns
- Harder to focus

Youth are **getting services** by:

- Video
- Chat
- Phone

MENTAL HEALTH OVER TIME

Youth rated multiple mental health concerns

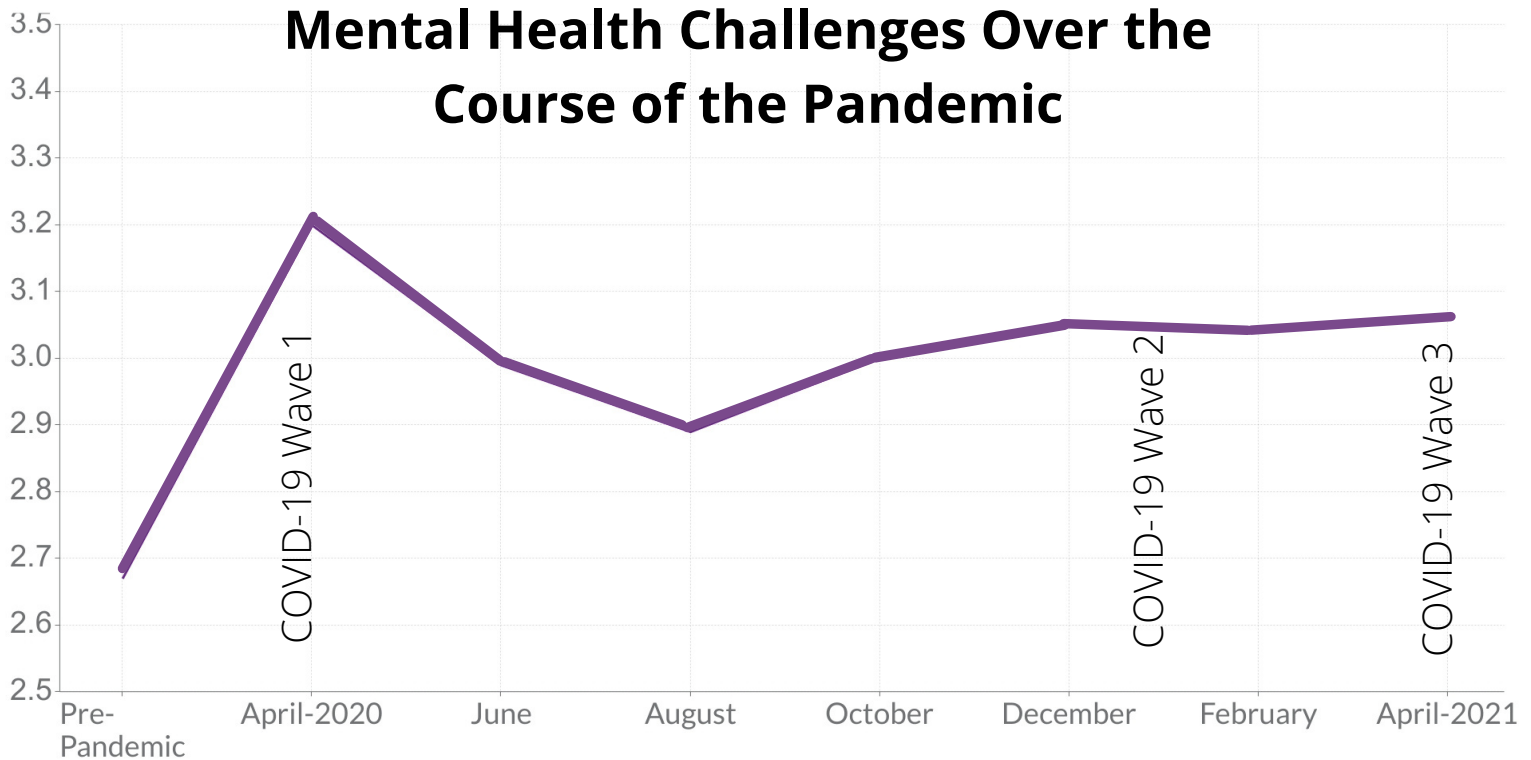
on a scale from 1 to 5.

For most youth, **mental health concerns increased early in the pandemic**. Then, many youth **felt better over the summer** when school was out, the sun was shining, and case counts were low.

Mental health got a little worse over the fall and winter, when school was back, the days were darker, and the weather was getting colder.

This stayed **pretty steady over the winter and into the spring**, even as wave 2 of COVID-19 came and went and wave 3 ramped up in April.

Mental Health Challenges Over the Course of the Pandemic



We saw **more mental health concerns** among **girls and transgender/gender expansive youth** compared to boys. We also saw more among youth living in **big cities** compared to small cities and rural areas, and youth living with **more people in their home**.


REACHING YOUTH WITH RELIABLE INFORMATION

Youth want **reliable and trustworthy** information to help them **understand public health guidelines** regarding COVID-19.

Youth want **online** access to **accurate information**, with frequent updates. They want **engaging, youth-friendly, bite-sized ads**.

Over 60% of youth said they were getting their COVID-19 information online, from social media, online news venues, and other online sources.

Facebook, TikTok, Instagram and Twitter were the most popular social media sources that youth were using to find COVID-19 updates and stay informed.



These are just some of our early findings. We will have more updates in the future! If you want more information, contact us at McCain.Centre@camh.ca

This summary was developed by young people on CAMH's Youth Engagement Initiative, supported by the Margaret and Wallace McCain Centre for Child, Youth & Family Mental Health and the Child, Youth and Emerging Adult Program at CAMH and the Canadian Institutes of Health Research.

PUBLISHED

Hawke, L.D., Barbic, S., Voineskos, A., Szatmari, P., Cleverley, K., Hayes, E., Relihan, J., Daley, M., (...) Henderson, J. (2020), **Impacts of COVID-19 on youth mental health, substance use, and wellbeing: A rapid survey of clinical and community samples**, Can J Psychiatr, 65(10), 701-709.

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UPCOMING REPORTS

Hawke, L.D., Szatmari, P., Cleverley, K., (...) Henderson, J. **Youth in a pandemic: Longitudinal evolution of mental health and substance use concerns during COVID-19**

Nandlall, N., Hawke, L.D., Hayes, E., Relihan, J., Daley, M., Darnay, K., Henderson, J. **Learning through a pandemic: Youth experiences of going back-to-school during the COVID-19 pandemic**

