



# The Mental Health Impacts of COVID-19

*Presentation to the House of Commons' Standing Committee on Health for its study of the Emergency Situation facing Canadians in Light of the Second Wave of the COVID-19*

December 4, 2020



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## The health impacts of COVID-19 go beyond the effects of the virus

### The pandemic has had unprecedented impacts on Canadians' quality of life, with lowest levels of life satisfaction reported since start of time series in 2003

The pandemic has had unprecedented impacts on the quality of life of Canadians, who have reported their lowest levels of life satisfaction since data became available in 2003.

Fewer Canadians reported being in very good or excellent mental health – with young Canadians registering the largest declines.

Youth and immigrants experienced largest declines in life satisfaction since the start of the pandemic.

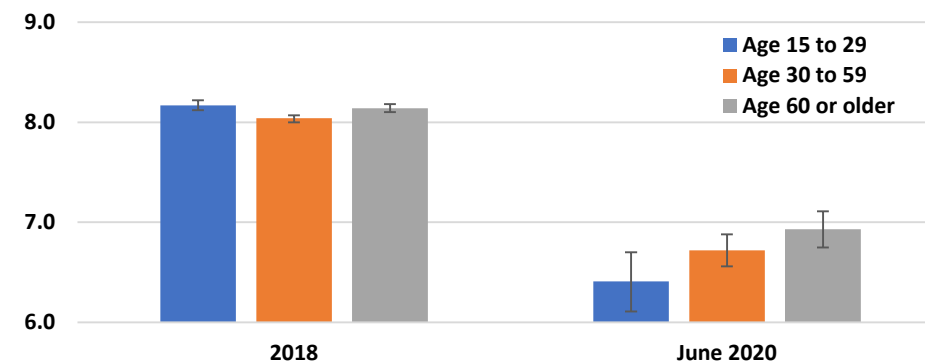
**43%** of Canadians rated their **life satisfaction** as **8 or higher on a 10 point scale**, compared with 73% of Canadians in 2018.

**55%** of Canadians reported **very good or excellent mental health**, compared with 68% of Canadians before the pandemic. Youth experienced the greatest declines – a **20 percentage point** reduction from 60% (pre-COVID) to 40% (July 2020).

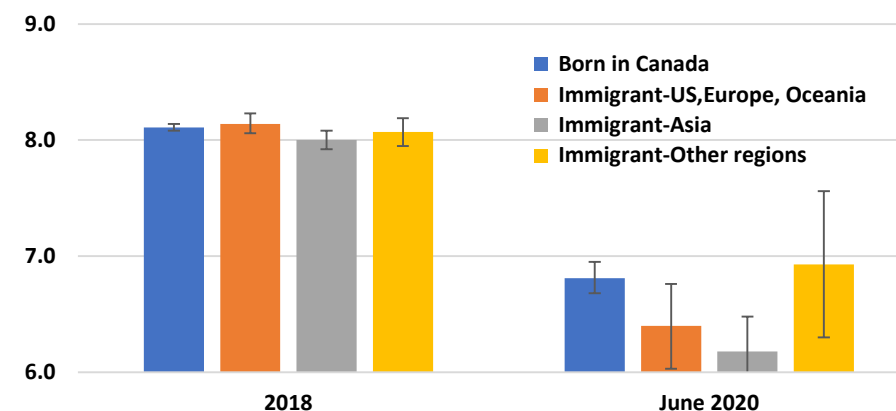
## Differences observed across vulnerable population groups – youth and immigrants experienced largest declines in life satisfaction

- Since the pandemic, average life satisfaction among youth declined by -1.8 points compared with -1.2 points among older Canadians.
- Before the pandemic, life satisfaction was generally similar among immigrants and the Canadian-born.
- Since the pandemic, average life satisfaction declined more among immigrants from Asia (-1.8 points) and USA/Europe (-1.7 points) than among individuals born in Canada (-1.3 points).
- Average life satisfaction reported by women and men did not differ significantly before or during the pandemic.

Average life satisfaction, by age group, Canada, 2018 and June 2020



Average life satisfaction, by immigration status, Canada 2018 and June



Sources: 2018 CCHS and June 2020 CPSS.

# Youth mental health impacts: The pandemic has impacted the mental health of Canadians, with youth experiencing the greatest declines

Proportion of Canadians reporting excellent or very good mental health pre and post COVID by age group, Canada, 2019, March and July 2020\*

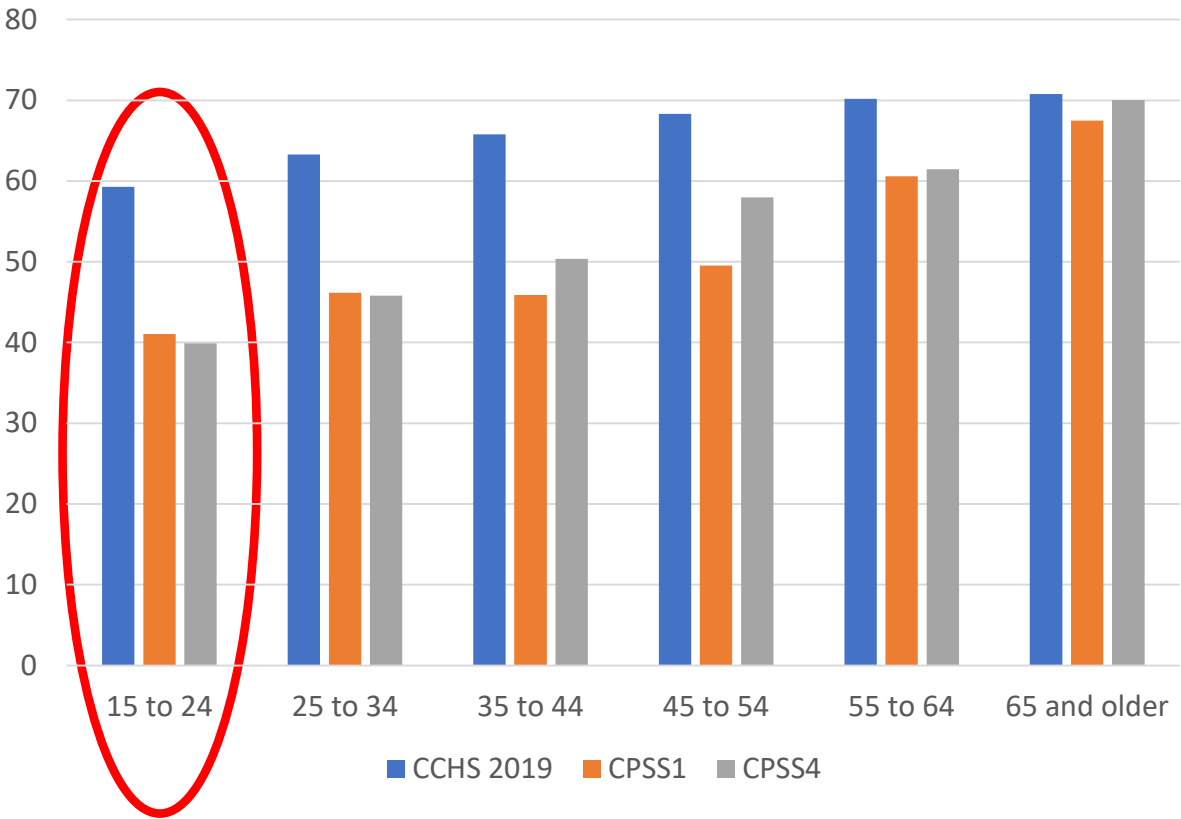
Since COVID-19, fewer Canadians report having excellent or very good mental health – **55% (July 2020) down from 68% (2019).**

Prior to COVID-19, youth aged 15-24 were the least likely to report excellent or very good mental health.

Since COVID, those **aged 15 to 24** reporting the **greatest declines in mental health** - 20 percentage point reductions from 60% (2019, pre-COVID) to 40% (July 2020) of those reporting excellent or very good mental health.

**Seniors aged 65 and older** are the only group to date who have **not experienced declines in mental health** since the pandemic began.

Women continue to report lower levels of mental health compared with men – **52% vs 58%.**



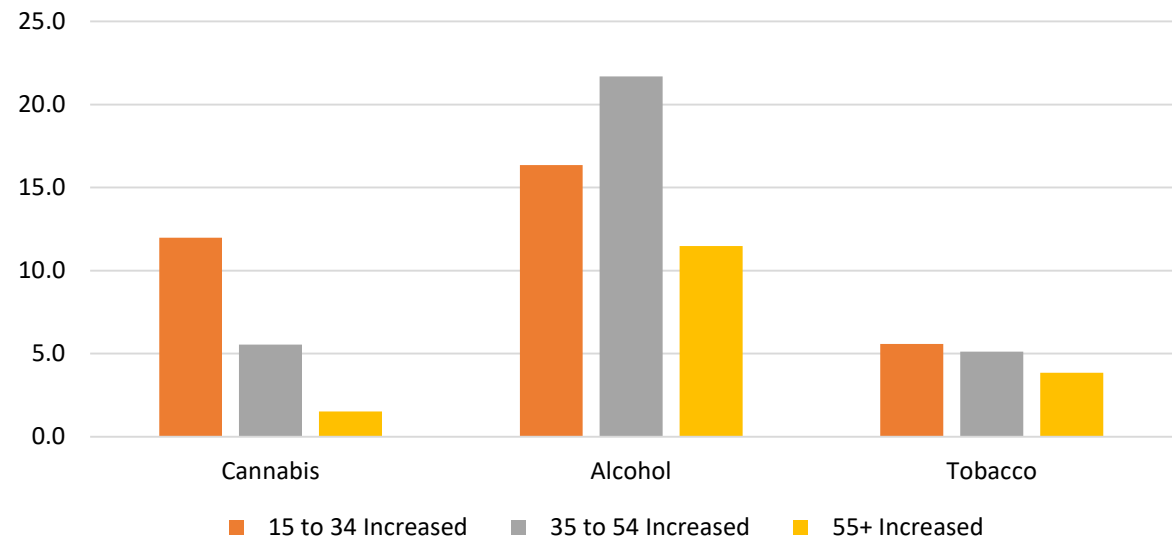
Sources: Statistics Canada, Canadian Community Health Survey, 2019; Canadian Perspectives Survey Series 1; Canadian Perspectives Survey Series 4; \*not seasonally adjusted.



## Youth are also more likely to have increased their use of substances – particularly cannabis

- **Poor mental health** has been shown to be associated with **increased use of substances** during the pandemic.
- **Youth aged 15 to 34 most likely to have increased their cannabis use** during the pandemic – 12 %.
- Prior to COVID, 14% of Canadians report consuming cannabis – the rate was 24% among youth (15 to 24 years of age).

Proportion of Canadians reporting an increase use of substances during COVID-19 by age group, July 2020



Source: Statistics Canada. Canadian Perspectives Survey Series (CPSS), Wave 4, July 2020.

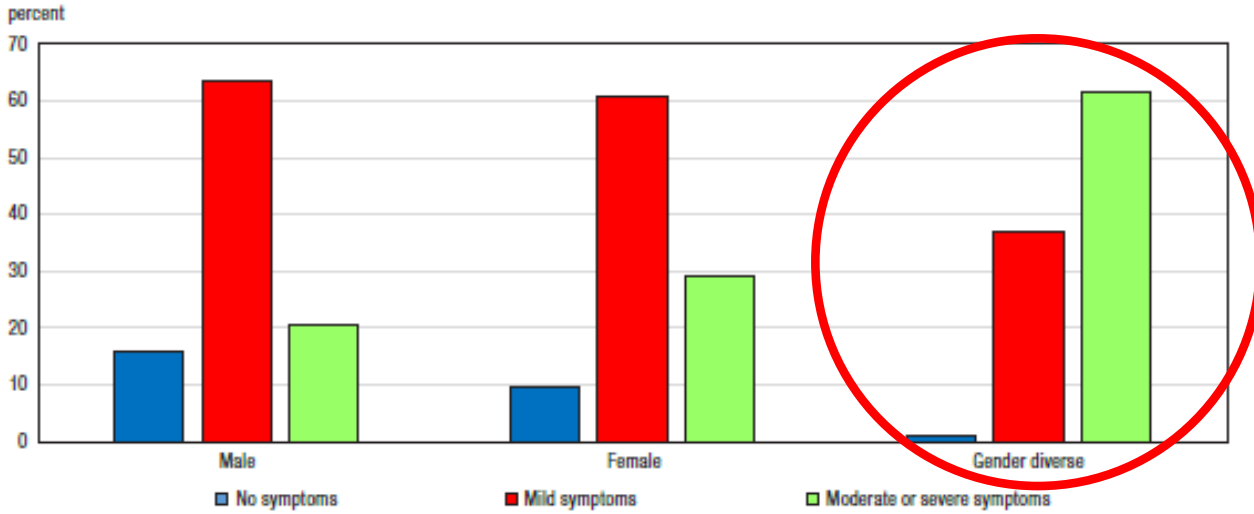
# LGBTQ Canadians' mental health: Those already experiencing poor mental health before COVID-19 were impacted even more by the pandemic

Prior to the pandemic, LGBTQ Canadians were at higher risk of mood disorder.

Since the pandemic, among respondents to a crowdsourcing survey, **gender diverse individuals** were...

- **More likely to report fair/poor mental health (70%),** compared with female (25.5% ) and male participants (21.2%)
- **Twice as likely as females and three times as likely as males** to report some symptoms consistent with **moderate/severe GAD** (62%, 29%, 21%).

Generalized anxiety level disorder levels among respondents to a crowdsore survey by gender identity, Canada, June 2020



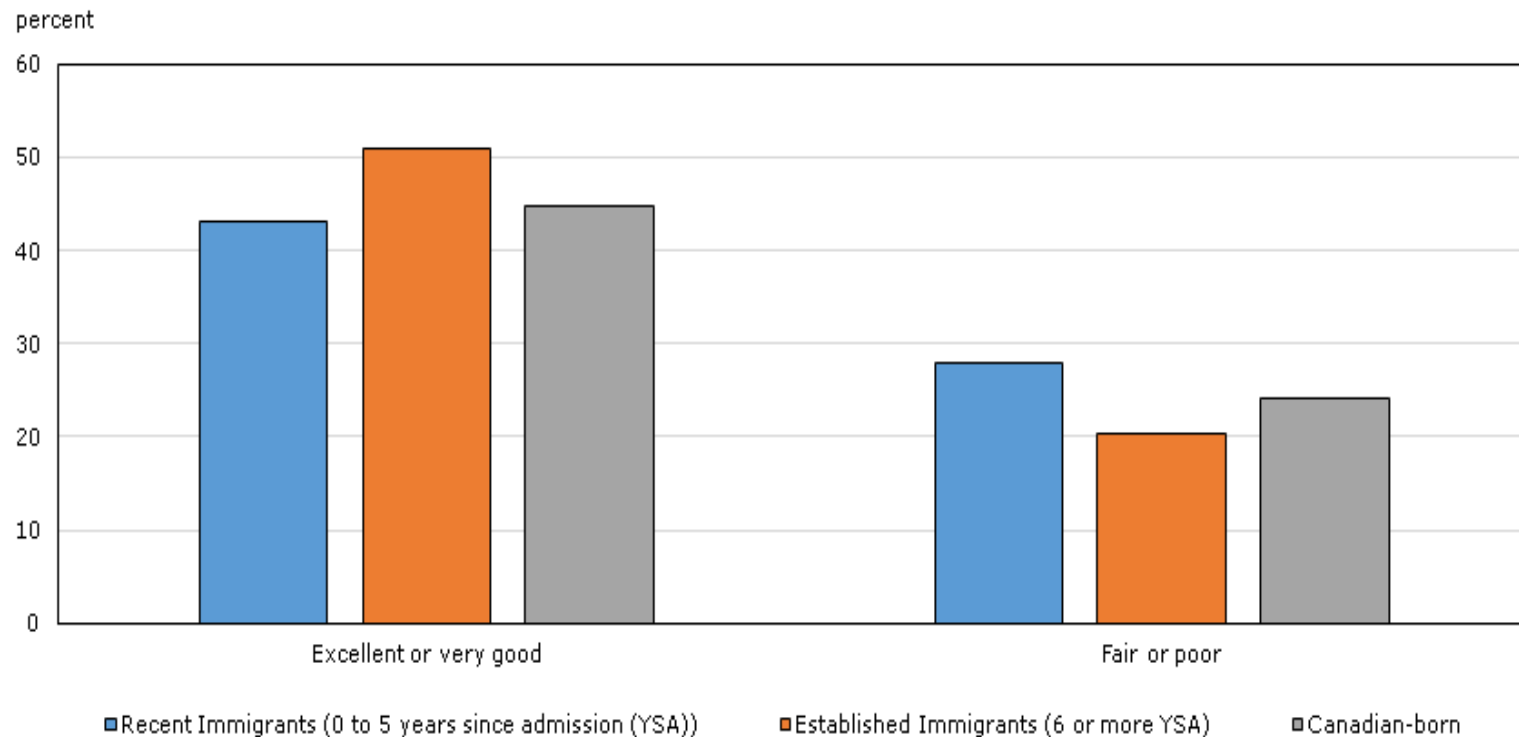
Source: Statistics Canada, Impacts of COVID-19 on Canadians - Mental Health.

Generalized anxiety disorder (GAD) is a condition characterized by a pattern of frequent, persistent worry and excessive anxiety about several events or activities.

# Immigrant mental health: Recent immigrants reported fair or poor mental health more often than other Canadians

- 28% of recent immigrants reported fair or poor self-rated mental health, compared to 20% of established immigrant participants and 24% of Canadian-born participants.
- **Recent immigrants participants were more likely to report symptoms of anxiety than other Canadians**
- Recent immigrant participants were more likely than established immigrant and Canadian-born participants to report fearing the loss of their job or main source of income. Of recent immigrant participants who reported a fear of losing their job, 44% reported symptoms consistent with moderate or severe generalized anxiety disorder.

Perceived mental health of participants by immigrant status and period of immigration



Source: Statistics Canada, Impacts of COVID-19 on Canadians – Your mental health, 2020.

## Managing the pandemic moving forward – Immigrants are more concerned with their health and social consequences of the pandemic and more likely to take precautions, but less likely to get a vaccine

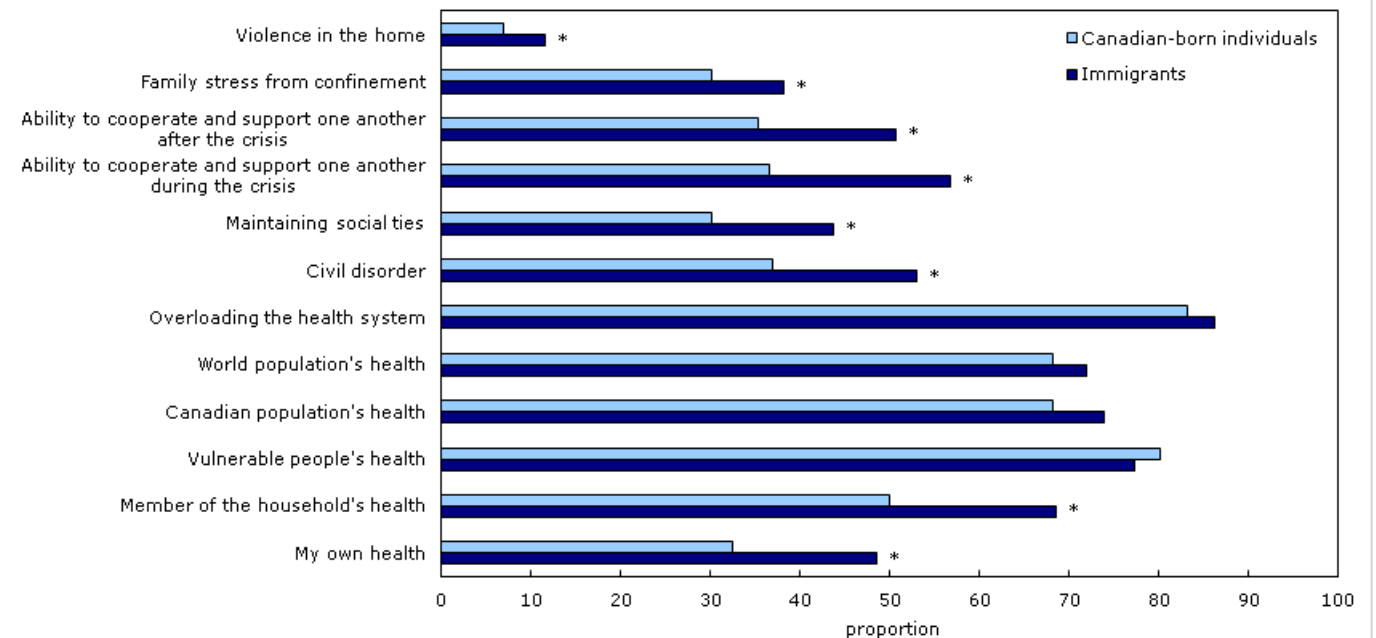
Immigrants were generally more concerned than Canadian-born individuals about the health risks of resuming activities.

Immigrants are more likely than Canadian-born individuals to continue taking precautions as COVID-19 safety measures are relaxed...

- wear masks (80% vs. 61%)
- avoid crowds and large gatherings (93% vs. 81%), and
- keep a 2 metre distance from others (89% vs. 78%).

Despite these trends, immigrants were **less likely** than those born in Canada to report that they would use a vaccine (52% vs 59%).

Proportion of immigrants and Canadian-born individuals aged 15 and older who reported that they were "very" or "extremely" concerned about selected social issues



\* significantly different from Canadian-born individuals ( $p < 0.05$ )  
Source: Canadian Perspectives Survey Series, March and April 2020.



## Visible minority Canadians' mental health: Mental health outcomes differ across visible-minority groups who are more likely to report poor mental health and impacts on ability to meet financial obligations

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Since the pandemic, among respondents to a crowdsourcing survey, members of visible minority groups\* were more likely than those who identified as White to...

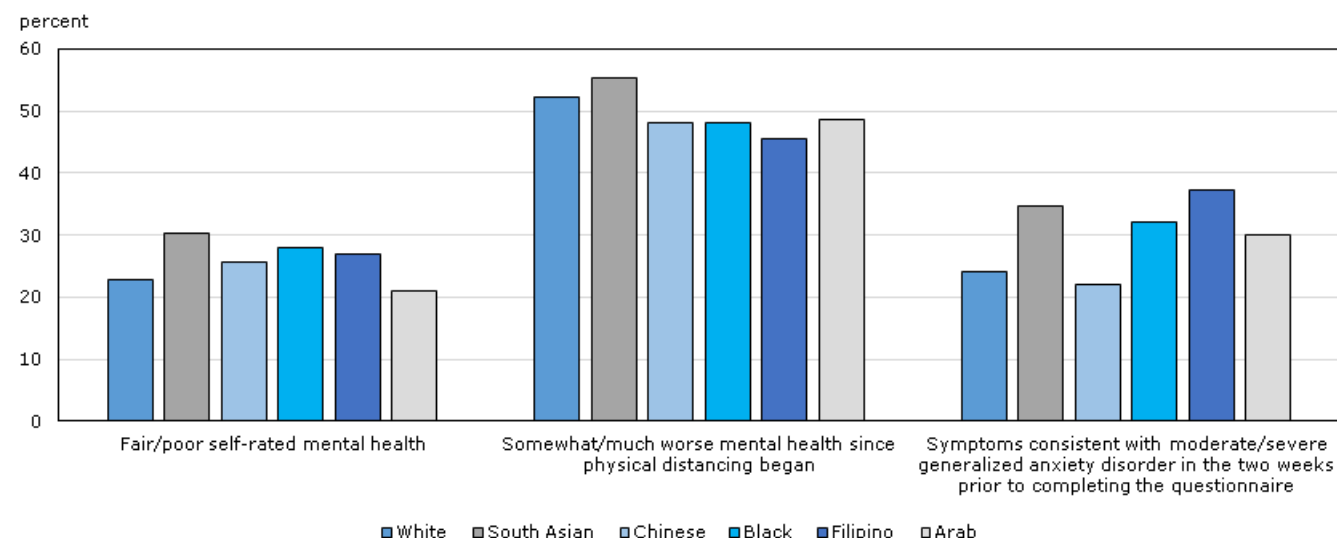
- Report “fair” or “poor” self-rated mental health (27.8% vs. 22.9%).
- Report symptoms consistent with “moderate” or “severe” GAD (30.0% vs. 24.2%).

Visible minority groups were also more likely to report that the pandemic has had a “moderate” or “major” impact on their ability to meet their financial obligations compared with those who identified as White (35.0% vs. 22.1%) rates highest among...

- South Asian – 44%
- Black – 38%
- Filipino – 36%

\* Population groups identified as visible minority groups include South Asian, Chinese, Black, Filipino, and Arab

Proportion of participants by mental health outcomes and specific population groups designated as visible minorities

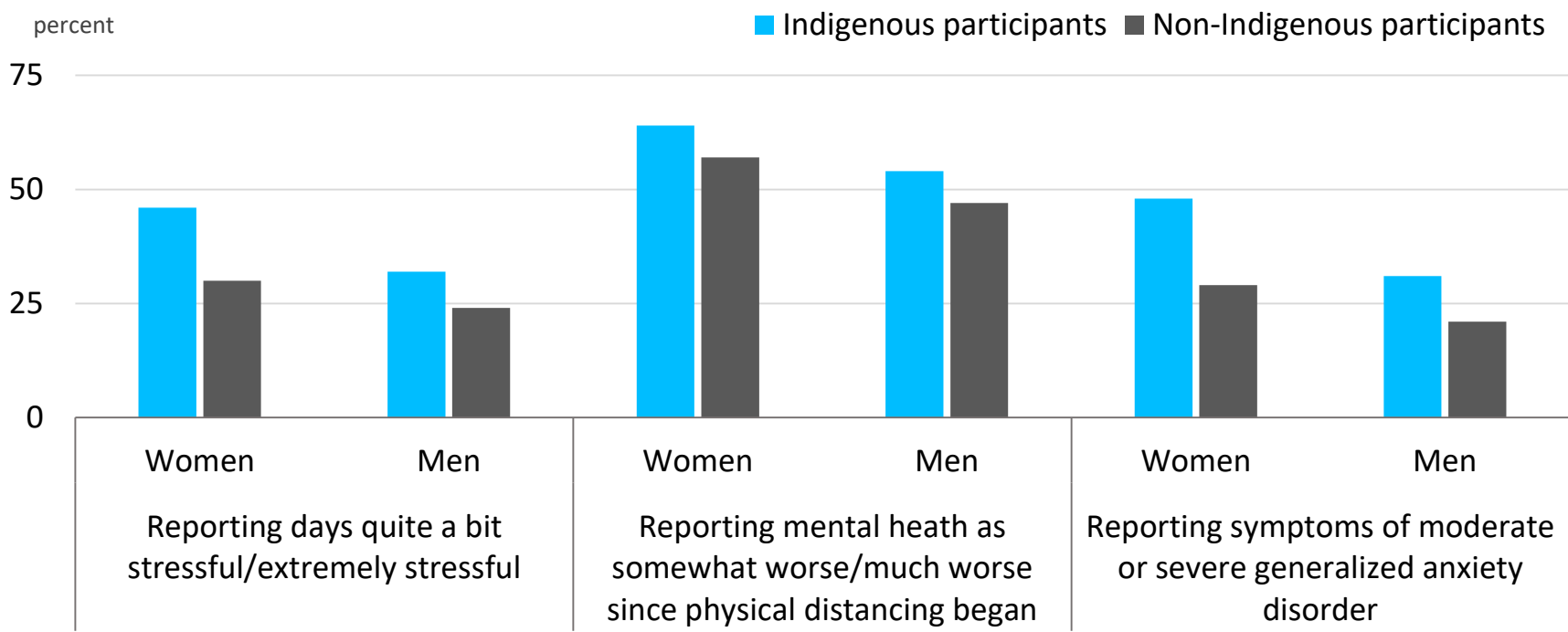


Source: Impacts of COVID-19 on Canadians – Your Mental Health (April 24 to May 11, 2020).

# Indigenous mental health: Indigenous people report worsening mental health since the start of COVID-19, including increases in anxiety and stress

Mental health impacts since the start of the pandemic, Indigenous and non-Indigenous participants by gender, April 24 to May 11, 2020

- 60% of Indigenous participants reported that their mental health is “somewhat worse” or “much worse” since the start of physical distancing
- Indigenous women particularly impacted: 46% reported that their days are quite a bit or extremely stressful and 48% reported symptoms consistent with moderate or severe generalized anxiety disorder.



Source: Impacts of COVID-19 on Canadians - Mental Health.

## Concerns about safety heightened among Indigenous participants

- 17% of Indigenous participants reported that they believe crime has increased in their neighbourhood since the start of the pandemic, compared to 11% among non-Indigenous participants.
- 22% of Indigenous participants felt that people in their neighbourhood are being harassed or attacked “often” or “sometimes” because of their race, ethnicity or skin colour. This is compared with 11% of non-Indigenous participants.

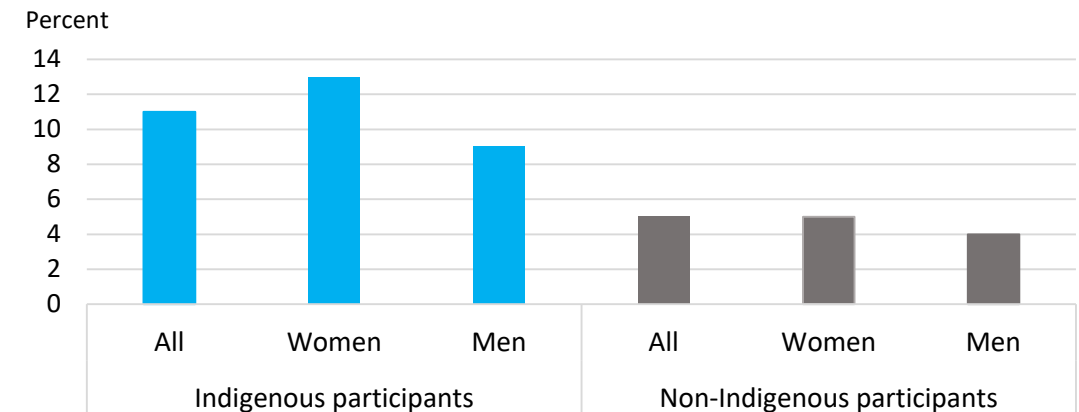
50% of Indigenous participants compared to 62% of non-Indigenous participants expressed a high level of trust in the federal government to make good decisions about when and how to reopen businesses and public spaces.

Source: [Economic impact of COVID-19 among Indigenous people](#).

When participants were asked about impacts of COVID-19:

- 47% of Indigenous women reported being “very” or “extremely” concerned about family stress due to confinement.
- 13% of Indigenous women reported some level of concern (somewhat/very/extremely) about violence in their home.

**Percentage reporting some level of concern about the impact of COVID-19 on violence in their home, April 24 to May 11, 2020**



Source: Statistics Canada, Impacts of COVID-19 on Canadians - Mental Health.

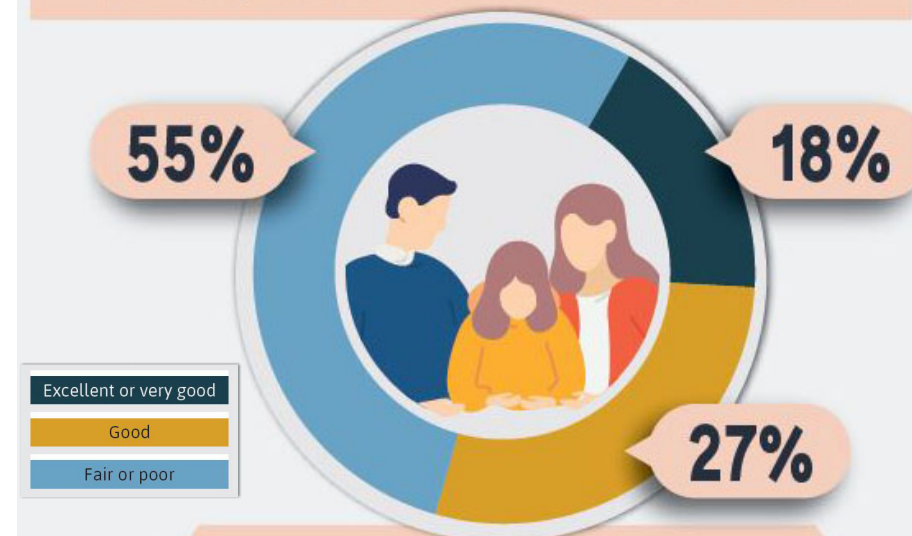
## Canadians living with long-term conditions and disabilities are experiencing increased challenges in the context of COVID-19

- **Almost half (48%)** of participants with long-term conditions or disabilities **reported worse overall health** compared to before COVID-19.
- More than half of participants with long-term conditions or disabilities reported **worse mental health** compared to before COVID-19.
- Among those with a long-term condition or disability, more visible minority participants (61%) compared to non-visible minority (56%) reported 'somewhat worse' or 'much worse' mental health since the start of the pandemic

Source: Statistics Canada, Impacts of COVID-19 on Canadians – Living with Long-term Conditions and Disabilities

## How are Canadians with long-term conditions and disabilities impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic?

### Self-reported mental health status



**Over half (57%)** of participants reported **their mental health is worse than it was prior to the start of the pandemic.**





# Looking Forward:

## Enhancing the Mental Health Data Ecosystem Through Strategic Partnerships

- **Survey of COVID-19 and Mental Health – 2 waves**
  - StatCan-PHAC partnership to address information needs related to **mental health of Canadians during the COVID-19 pandemic**.
  - Collection Wave 1 = November to December 2020; Wave 2 = February to April 2021
- **Survey of Mental Health and Stressful Events**
  - StatCan-PHAC partnership to **measure impacts of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) on mental health and well-being** in the Canadian population.
  - Data will address the ***PTSD Act***.
  - Collection March to May 2021
- **Health Canada's *Expert Roundtable on Mental Health Data Needs and Related Challenges* – September 2020**
  - Participants included academic experts, epidemiologists and practitioners in mental health, and leadership from Statistics Canada, Canadian Institute for Health Information (CIHI), and the Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR).
  - Outcome: Propose concrete actions to improve the quality of mental health data to inform federal policies, programs and research.
    - Better capturing the **state of mental illness in Canada**, and changes over time, using valid and practical measures and robust research designs.
    - Better **integration of data from multiple sources** (e.g. survey, administrative, etc.) in a timely manner
    - Effective **measuring of outcomes to assess impacts of mental health services, investments, and policies**.



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