

Portrait of Canadian Society: Perceptions of life during the pandemic

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In Canada, like almost everywhere in the world, the COVID-19 pandemic has called for physical distancing measures that have had profound impacts on social interactions. These disruptions to normal social interactions have likely affected mental health and life satisfaction. For example, according to a Statistics Canada crowdsourcing survey conducted at the start of the pandemic in April 2020, approximately one in two participants (52%) said that their mental health had deteriorated since the introduction of distancing measures (see the publication [Canadians' mental health during the COVID-19 pandemic](#)).

To collect information on self-reported general health, self-reported mental health and life satisfaction of Canadians 12 to 13 months into the pandemic, Statistics Canada conducted the Portrait of Canadian Society (PCS) survey from March 29 to April 11, 2021. This survey is the first in a series of web panels.

The results show that fewer Canadians reported excellent or very good general health and mental health than at the beginning of the pandemic (in April 2020). Furthermore, Canadians were on average less satisfied with life overall in 2021 than in 2018, before the start of the pandemic.

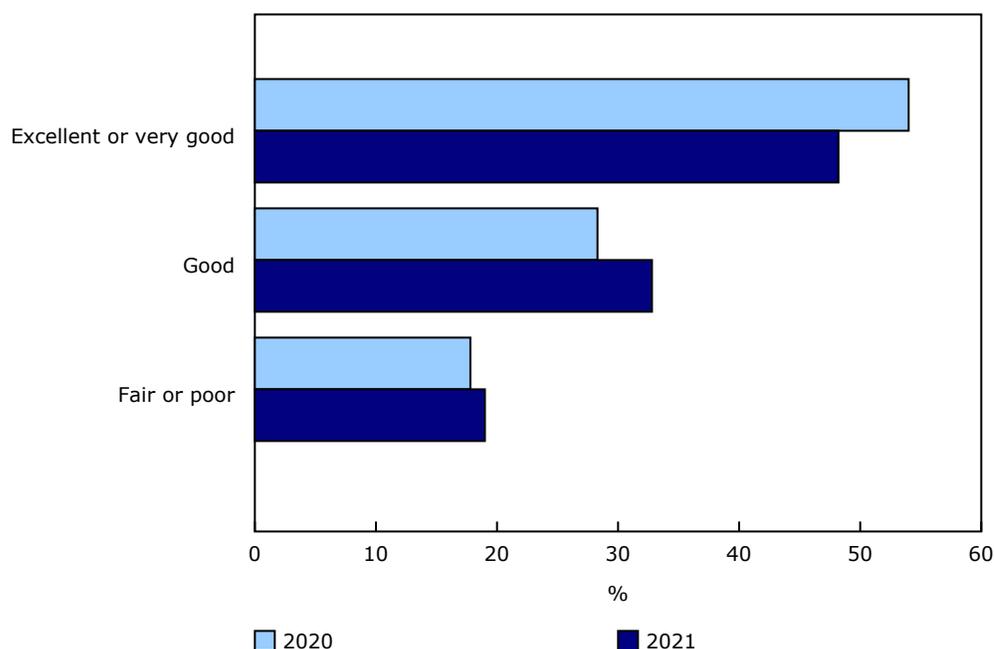
After one year of the pandemic, fewer Canadians reported excellent or very good mental and general health

According to data from the [Canadian Community Health Survey - Annual Component \(CCHS\)](#), almost 7 in 10 Canadians (67%) reported their mental health to be excellent or very good in 2019, the year before the pandemic.

At the beginning of the pandemic, in April 2020, this proportion declined to 54%, and one year later, in April 2021, it fell further to 48%, according to data from the first wave of the PCS survey series. One-third (33%) of Canadians reported good mental health in April 2021, while 19% stated that their mental health was fair or poor. In April 2021, men (53%) were more likely than women (44%) to report excellent or very good mental health. Additionally, self-reported mental health varied by age group and marital status.



Chart 1
Self-reported mental health, 2020 and 2021



Source(s): Statistics Canada, Portrait of Canadian Society – Perceptions of Life During the Pandemic, 2021; Canadian Perspectives Survey Series 1 – Impacts of COVID-19 (CPSS-COVID), 2020 (5352).

Younger Canadians were less likely than older Canadians to report excellent or very good mental health. For example, Canadians aged 15 to 34 (33%) were less likely than those aged 35 to 54 (46%) and 55 and older (63%) to report excellent or very good mental health. This could potentially be related to the fact that younger people were more affected by changes in the labour market (see [Labour Force Survey, April 2021](#)) and the education system (see [Impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on postsecondary students](#)) as a result of the pandemic.

People in a couple (married or common-law) were more likely than those not in a couple (widowed, separated, divorced or single people) to report excellent or very good mental health. More than one in two (55%) Canadians who were in a couple reported excellent or very good mental health, compared with 37% of those not in a couple. Furthermore, twice as many Canadians who were not in a couple (28%) reported fair or poor mental health, compared with 13% of those who were in a couple.

Table 1
Self-reported mental health, by respondent's gender, age group and marital status

	Excellent or very good	Good	Fair or poor
	%		
Total	48.2	32.8	19.0
Gender			
Male	53.0	30.9	16.1
Female	44.4 ^A	34.9	20.7
Age group			
15 to 34 years	32.7	34.0	33.3
35 to 54 years	45.6 ^B	39.5	14.9 ^B
55 years or older	62.9 ^B	26.4	10.7 ^{EB}
Marital status			
In a couple ¹	55.2	31.4	13.4
Not in a couple ²	36.6 ^C	35.2	28.2 ^C

A significantly different from the estimate for reference category (Male) (p is less than 0.05)

B significantly different from the estimate for reference category (15 to 34 years) (p is less than 0.05)

C significantly different from the estimate for reference category (In a couple) (p is less than 0.05)

E use with caution

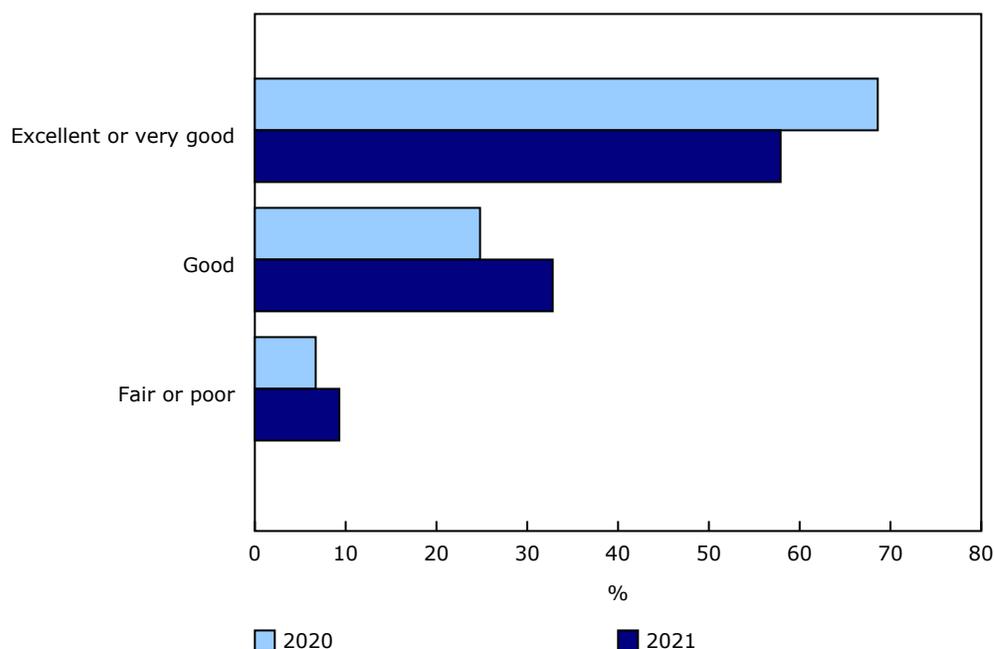
1. Includes married people or people in a common-law relationship.

2. Includes widowed, separated, divorced or single people.

Source(s): Statistics Canada, Portrait of Canadian Society – Perceptions of Life During the Pandemic, 2021 (5352).

In terms of self-reported general health, in April 2021, approximately three in five Canadians (58%) reported that their general health was excellent or very good. A year earlier, this was the case for 69% of Canadians, a decrease of 11 percentage points.

Chart 2
Self-reported general health, 2020 and 2021



Source(s): Statistics Canada, Portrait of Canadian Society – Perceptions of Life During the Pandemic, 2021; Canadian Perspectives Survey Series 1 – Impacts of COVID-19 (CPSS-COVID), 2020 (5352).

Canadians' average life satisfaction has decreased compared with 2018

Compared with 2018, Canadians' life satisfaction has decreased. In 2018, average life satisfaction was 8.09 on a scale of 0 to 10 (see the publication [Life Satisfaction in Canada Before and During the COVID-19 Pandemic](#)), compared with 7.02 in April 2021. On average, younger Canadians reported, lower levels of life satisfaction than older Canadians, and those in a couple were more satisfied (7.36) than those not in a couple (6.47).

Table 2
Average overall life satisfaction, on a scale of 0 to 10, by respondent's gender, age group and marital status

	Average satisfaction
	%
Total	7.02
Gender	
Male	7.19
Female	6.90
Age group	
15 to 34 years	6.48
35 to 54 years	7.08 ^A
55 years or older	7.42 ^A
Marital status	
In a couple ¹	7.36
Not in a couple ²	6.47 ^B

A significantly different from the estimate for reference category (15 to 34 years) (p is less than 0.05)

B significantly different from the estimate for reference category (In a couple) (p is less than 0.05)

1. Includes married people or people in a common-law relationship.

2. Includes widowed, separated, divorced or single people.

Source(s): Statistics Canada, Portrait of Canadian Society – Perceptions of Life During the Pandemic, 2021 (5352).

The survey also measured Canadians' satisfaction with various aspects of life. On average, individuals were more satisfied with the quality of their local environment (8.07) but less satisfied with feeling part of the community (6.43). Women were less satisfied, on average, than men about personal appearance, and feeling safe (Table 3).

Table 3
Average satisfaction, on a scale of 0 to 10, by respondent's gender

	All gender	Male	Female
		%	
Standard of living	7.46	7.52	7.41
Health	6.89	6.94	6.85
Achievement in life	6.90	7.01	6.84
Personal relationships	7.31	7.37	7.24
Personal appearance (weight, height, features, etc.)	6.55	6.87	6.26 ^A
Feeling safe	7.82	7.97	7.68 ^A
Feeling part of the community	6.43	6.45	6.37
Free time to do what we like doing	6.56	6.67	6.45
Quality of local environment	8.07	8.21	7.93

^A significantly different from the estimate for reference category (Male) (p is less than 0.05)

Source(s): Statistics Canada, Portrait of Canadian Society – Perceptions of Life During the Pandemic, 2021 ([5352](#)).

Note to readers

The data in this release are from the first survey of Statistics Canada's survey series named Portrait of Canadian Society (PCS). The PCS survey series is a brand-new project by Statistics Canada. The project consists of four very short online surveys given to the same respondents over a one-year period. These voluntary surveys use a probability panel based on the General Social Survey – Social Identity and are therefore representative of the Canadian population.

The PCS survey series is part of Statistics Canada's modernization efforts and is at a pilot stage. This collection method will be refined over time. For this study, survey weights were adjusted to minimize potential bias that could arise from panel non-response. Non-response adjustments and calibration using available auxiliary information were applied and are reflected in the survey weights provided with the data file. Despite these adjustments, the high degree of non-response to the panel increases the risk of remaining bias, which may impact the estimates produced using the panel data. Users should consult the accompanying guide for data quality guidelines and considerations.

The first survey in the PCS survey series, which looked at perceptions of life during the pandemic, collected data on Canadians' mental and general health, physical activity, life satisfaction and view of the future.

The aim is to fully understand the needs of communities, in order to implement suitable support measures during and after the COVID-19 pandemic. Statistics Canada would like to thank all Canadians who took the time to answer the questions during this time of crisis.

Definitions, data sources and methods: survey number [5352](#).

For more information, or to enquire about the concepts, methods or data quality of this release, contact us (toll-free 1-800-263-1136; 514-283-8300; STATCAN.infostats-infostats.STATCAN@canada.ca) or Media Relations (613-951-4636; STATCAN.mediahotline-ligneinfomedias.STATCAN@canada.ca).