

Impacts on Mental Health

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Key messages:

- Youth have experienced the greatest declines since the pandemic began.
- Those already experiencing poor mental health before COVID-19 were impacted even more by the pandemic – including those from the LGBTQ community.
- Visible minority groups were more likely than Whites to report poor mental health (27.8% vs. 22.9%) and symptoms consistent with “moderate” or “severe” generalized anxiety disorder (30.0% vs. 24.2%).
- Those reporting poor mental are up to 4 times more likely to report increased substance use since the pandemic began.

The pandemic has impacted the mental health of Canadians, with youth experiencing the greatest declines

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

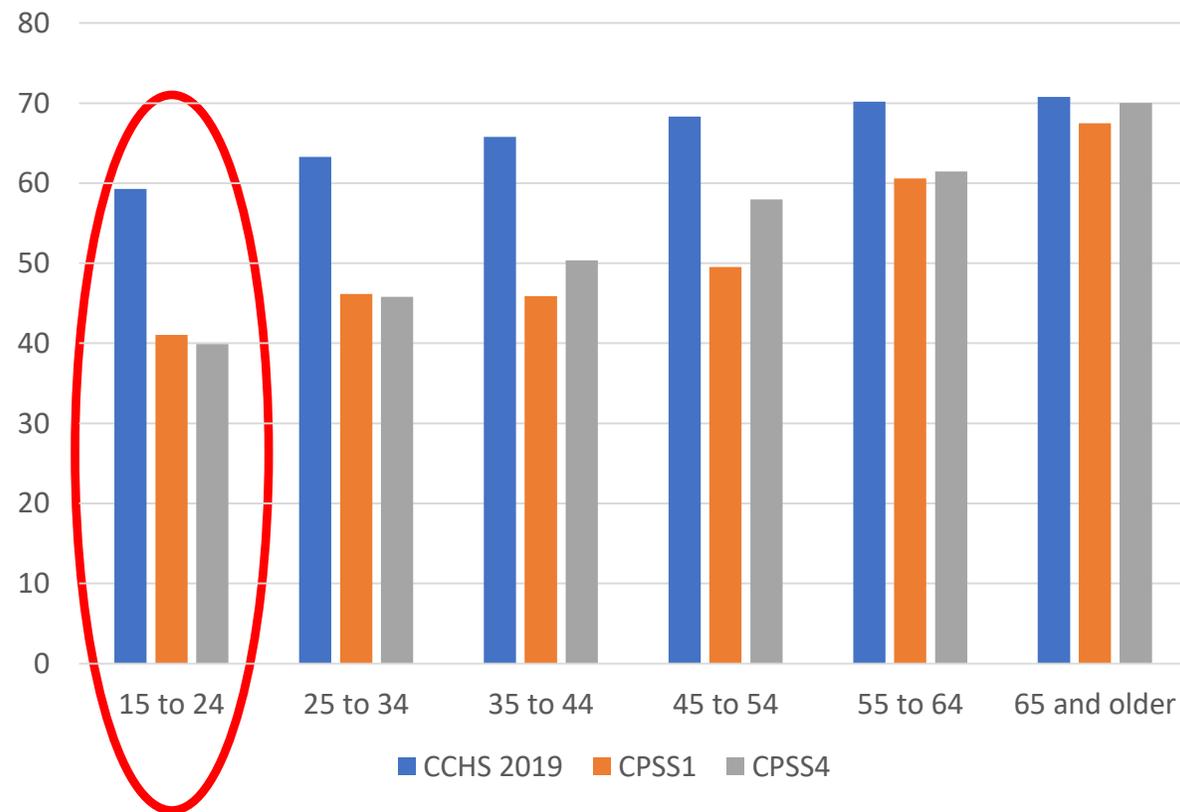
Prior to COVID-19, youth aged 15-24 were the least likely to report excellent or very good mental health.

- They report the greatest declines - **20 percentage point reduction from 60% (pre-COVID) to 40% (July 2020)**

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%**.

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



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

Those already experiencing poor mental health before COVID-19 were impacted even more by the pandemic

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

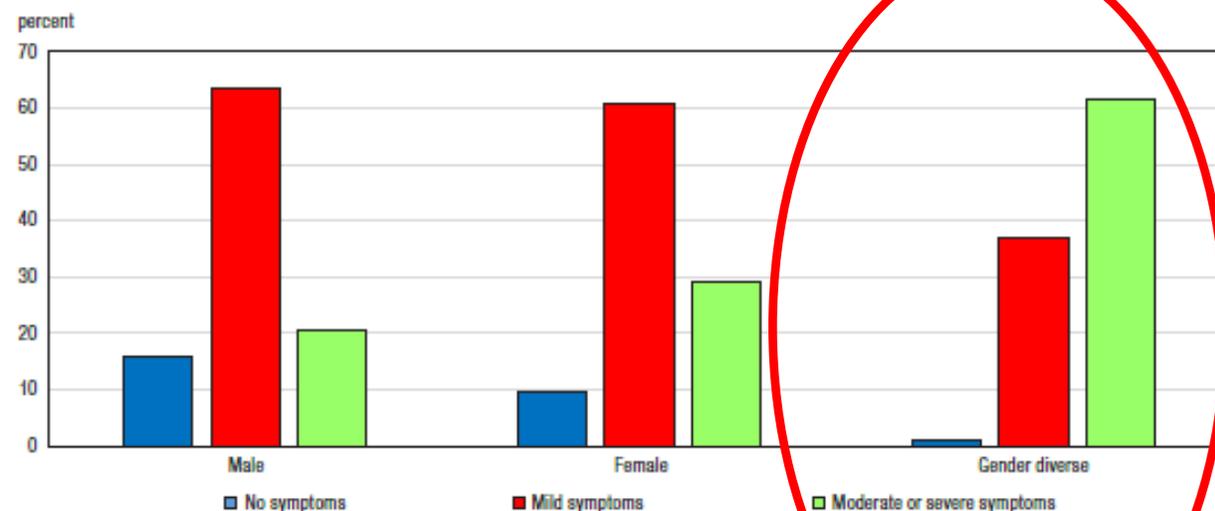
Since the pandemic, among respondents to a crowdsourcing survey, gender diverse individuals were...

- 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 symptoms consistent with moderate/severe GAD (62%, 29%, 21%).

These differences can be explained in part by...

- Younger age among gender diverse individuals;
- Gender diverse participants were more likely to be very/extremely concerned about the potential impacts of COVID-19; and
- Greater likelihood of job loss and inadequate financial resources.

General anxiety level disorder levels among respondents to a crowdsourcing 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.

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

Since the pandemic, among respondents to a crowdsourcing survey, members of visible minority groups* were more likely than Whites to...

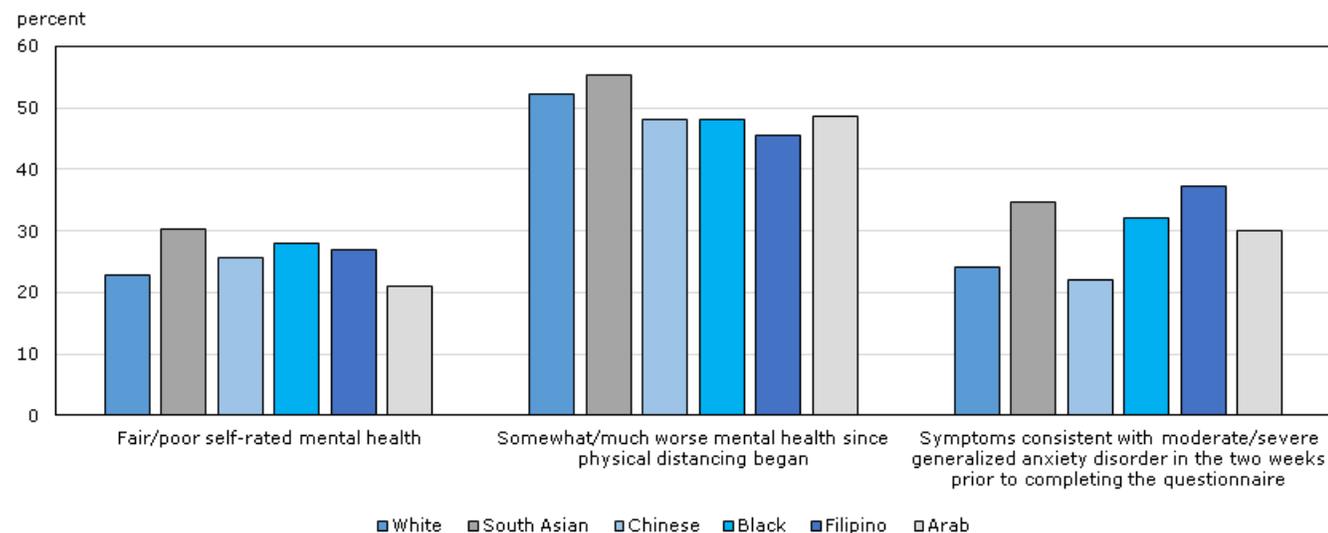
- Report “fair” or “poor” self-rated mental health (27.8% vs. 22.9%).
- Report symptoms consistent with “moderate” or “severe” GAD (30.0% vs. 24.2%).

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 Whites (35.0% vs. 22.1%) rates highest among...

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

* 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).

Declines in mental health observed by employment status

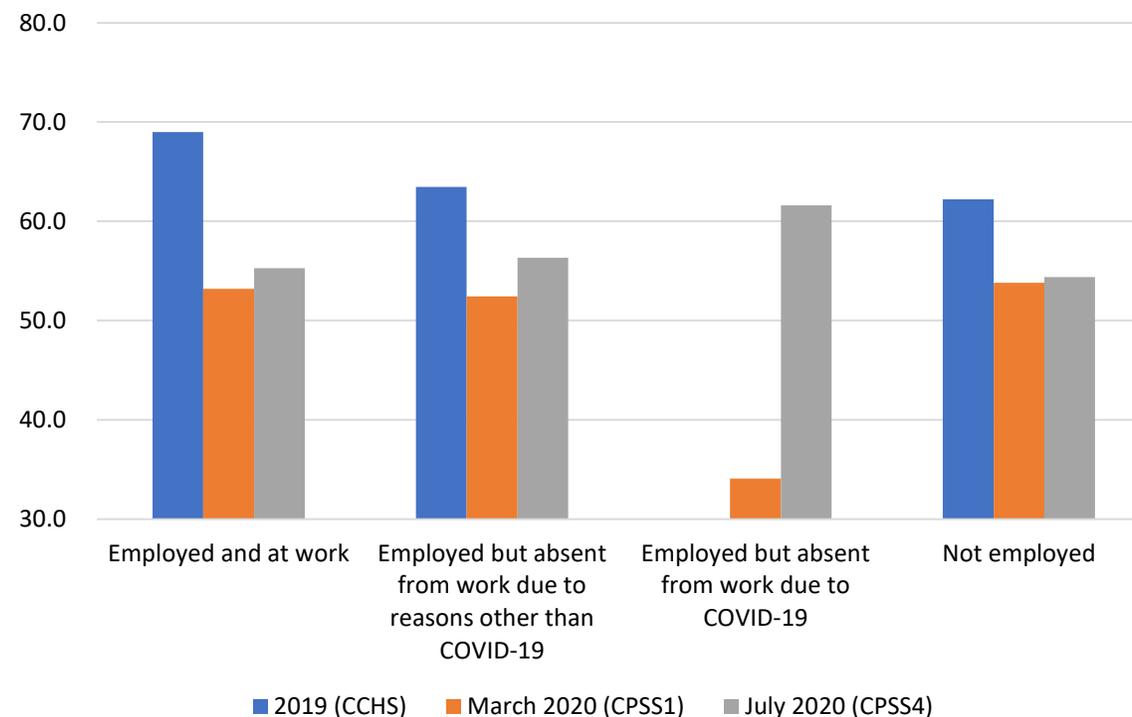
Evidence suggests a link between economic downturns and changes in mental health.

Since COVID, significant declines in mental health is observed among all employment groups compared to pre-COVID levels.

At the start of the pandemic (March), those not working due to COVID reported the lowest levels of excellent or very good mental health reported among (34%).

- But this group reported the largest increase in July at 61% - possibly reflecting the impacts of support programs.

Proportion of Canadians reporting excellent or very good mental health pre and post COVID by employment status, Canada, 2019, March and July 2020



Sources: Statistics Canada, Canadian Community Health Survey, 2019 and Canadian Perspectives Survey Series 4.

Those reporting poor mental are up to 4 times more likely to report increased substance use since the pandemic began

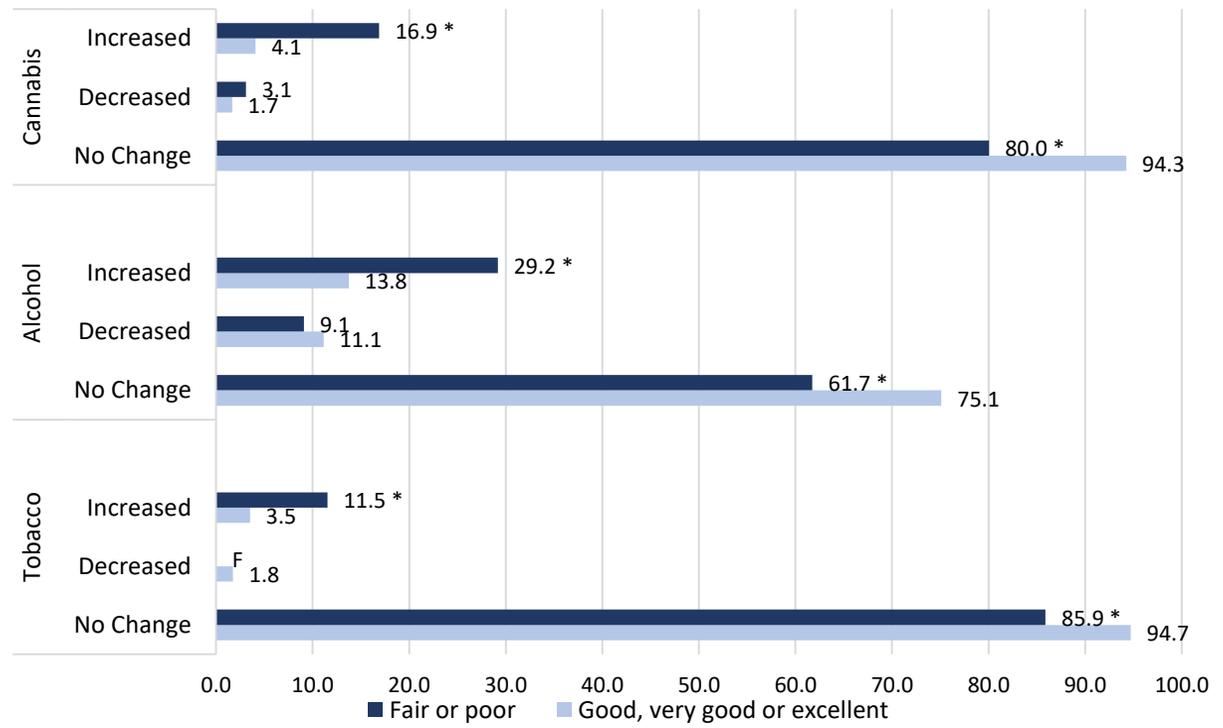
Prior to COVID...

- **14%** of Canadians report consuming cannabis
- Heavy drinking behaviours have remained relative stable– rates are highest among **young males (33%)**.

Since COVID-19, some Canadians continue to report increases in their alcohol (16.2%), cannabis (**6.1%**) and tobacco (4.8%) consumption.

- Increase in cannabis use highest among youth aged 15 to 35 (12%).
- Increase in alcohol use highest among those 35 to 54.
- Patterns were similar between males and females.

Proportion of Canadians reporting increase in substance use by mental health, Canada, 2020



Source: Statistics Canada. CPSS Wave 4, July 20-26, 2020.

Looking forward

- Mental health impact of COVID-19 pandemic needs to be followed over time to see the long-term impact of physical distancing (mental health effects often last much longer than the actual event).
- Youth are particularly at risk given the many changes that occur in this life stage (education, early employment) and the high dependence on social connections.
- More research on other subgroups who may be particularly impacted is necessary, e.g., mental health of parents who are continuing to balance work, school, and home life.