

Incidental impacts of COVID-19 series:

Mental health

Health indicator report

Background

The COVID-19 pandemic has had incidental impacts on health and well-being. **Incidental impacts of COVID-19** are defined as unintended effects that may be related to fear of exposure to COVID-19, the diversion of healthcare or public health resources, or measures to curtail viral transmission or harm (e.g., travel restrictions, physical distancing requirements, the closure of non-essential services). The indicators in this report can help to examine potential effects in Halton.

Key findings

This report contains information about mental health since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, based on the responses of Halton adults aged 18 and over who participated in the 2020 COVID-19 Rapid Risk Factor Surveillance System (RRFSS) survey. RRFSS data were collected during October and November 2020 and represent a snapshot in time. Continued monitoring is required to examine impacts over time including during the recovery period.



Canada

Mental health has worsened for some Canadians during the COVID-19 pandemic. In April and May 2020, 24% of Canadians reported that their mental health was **fair or poor** compared to 8% in 2018.¹

In March and April 2021, 42% of Canadians reported their mental health had **worsened** during the pandemic, an increase from 30% in September 2020.² By June, July and August 2021, this had decreased to 28%, coinciding with the easing of many public health restrictions during summer.²

Canadians aged 15 to 24 have reported the **greatest declines** in mental health among all age groups.^{2,3,4} Canadians who are female, gender-diverse, identify as a visible minority, have young children at home, lower household incomes, or who experienced job loss have also been more likely to report worsened mental health as a result of the pandemic.^{2,3,4,5}



Halton

In October and November of 2020:

Nearly one-third (30%) of survey respondents in Halton indicated that their mental health and emotional well-being was **fair or poor** over the past two weeks, while 36% said it was **good** and **33%** said it was **very good or excellent**. Respondents who were female or aged 18 to 24 were most likely to report that their mental health had been fair or poor in the past two weeks.

More than half (52%) of respondents said that their mental health and well-being had **worsened** due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Over two-thirds (71%) of respondents were **worried** about the mental health of themselves or others in their household, while over half (53%) were concerned about **burning out** because they had no break from their responsibilities.

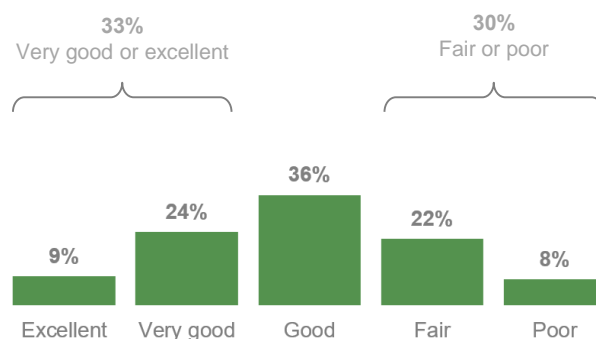
The results of a 2017 RRFSS survey showed that 72% of Halton residents rated their mental health as very good or excellent, while 22% reported that it was good, and 6% reported it was fair or poor.⁶ However, data from 2017 and 2020 are not directly comparable due to differing methodology. Similarly, RRFSS data are not directly comparable to Canadian estimates.



Incidental impacts of COVID-19: Self-rated mental health

Self-rated mental health

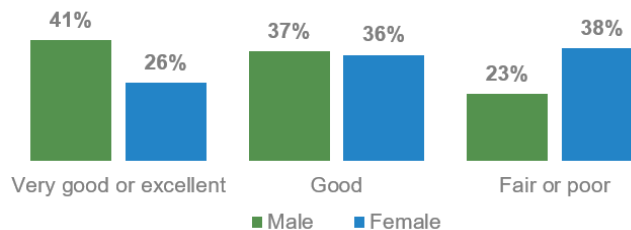
- In October and November of 2020, 33% of Halton respondents indicated that their mental health and emotional well-being were very good or excellent over the past two weeks, while 36% reported that their mental health was good and 30% reported that it was fair or poor.



Self-rated mental health status, respondents aged 18 and over, Halton Region, October/November 2020

Sex

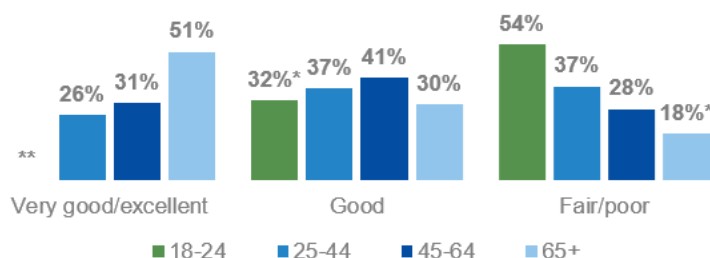
- Male respondents were more likely to report that their mental health had been very good or excellent in the past two weeks, while female respondents were more likely to report that their mental health was fair or poor. These differences were **statistically significant**.



Self-rated mental health status, respondents aged 18 and over, by sex, Halton Region, October/November 2020

Age

- Halton respondents aged 65 and older were more likely than respondents in any other age group to indicate that their mental health had been very good or excellent in the past two weeks. These differences were **statistically significant**. Respondents aged 18 to 24 were more likely to report that their mental health was fair or poor than respondents aged 45 to 64 or aged 65 and older. These differences were also **statistically significant**.



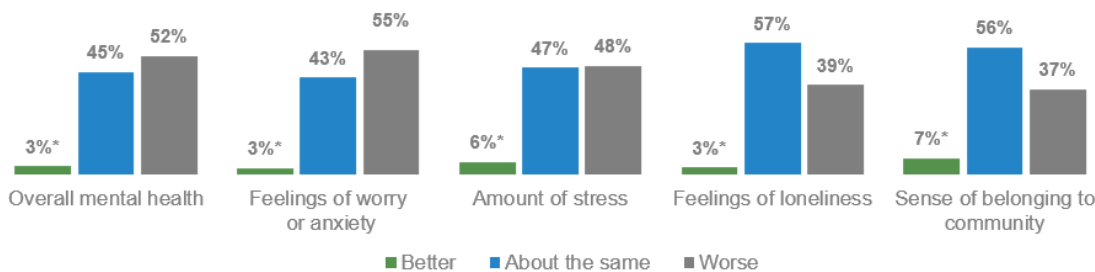
Self-rated mental health status, respondents aged 18 and over, by age group, Halton Region, October/November 2020



Incidental impacts of COVID-19: Changes in mental health & well-being

Changes in mental health & well-being

- In October and November of 2020, Halton respondents were asked about changes in their overall mental health and emotional well-being due to the COVID-19 pandemic:
 - 52% reported that their overall mental health and well-being had worsened
 - 55% reported that feelings of worry or anxiety had worsened
 - 48% reported that feelings of stress had worsened
 - 39% reported that feelings of loneliness had worsened
 - 37% reported that their sense of community belonging had worsened
- Respondents aged 18 to 24 were more likely than respondents aged 45 to 64 or aged 65 and older to say that their **overall mental health** had worsened. Respondents aged 18 to 24 were also more likely than adults in any other age group to report that feelings of **loneliness** had increased. These differences were **statistically significant** (data not shown).
- There were no other significant differences by sex or age.



Percentage of Halton respondents aged 18 and over who reported changes in their mental health and well-being due to the COVID-19 pandemic, October/November 2020



Incidental impacts of COVID-19: Worried about mental health

Worried about mental health of self or others in household

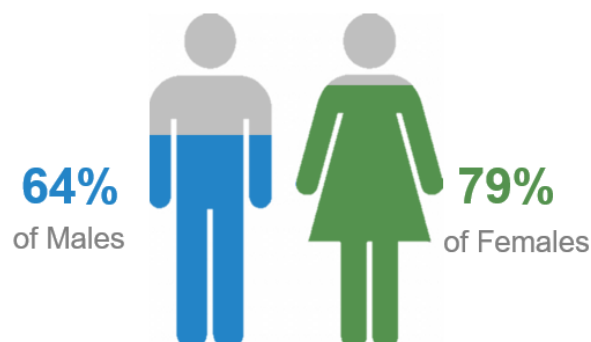
- In October and November of 2020, Halton respondents were asked about the impact of COVID-19 on their own mental health or the mental health of others in their household in the past month. Over two-thirds (71%) of respondents indicated that they had been somewhat or very worried about their own mental health or the mental health of others in their household.



Percentage of Halton respondents aged 18 and over who indicated that they were somewhat or very worried about mental health, Halton Region, October/November 2020

Sex

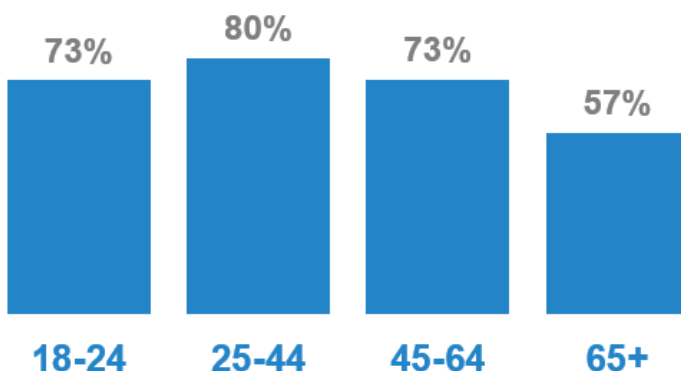
- Female respondents were more likely than male respondents to report that they had been somewhat or very worried about their own mental health or the mental health of others in their household in the past month. This difference was **statistically significant**.



Percentage of Halton respondents aged 18 and over who indicated that they were somewhat or very worried about mental health, by sex, Halton Region, October/November 2020

Age

- Respondents aged 25-44 were more likely than those aged 65 and older to indicate that they had been worried about their own mental health or the mental health of others in their household in the past month. Respondents aged 65 and older were also less likely than those aged 45-64 to indicate that they were worried. These differences were **statistically significant**.



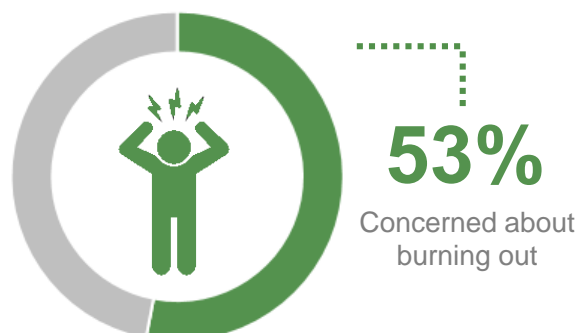
Percentage of Halton respondents aged 18 and over who indicated that they were somewhat or very worried about mental health, by age group, Halton Region, October/November 2020



Incidental impacts of COVID-19: Concerns about burning out

Concerns about burning out

- In October and November of 2020, Halton respondents were asked about the impact of COVID-19 on burning out because they had no break from their responsibilities in the past month. Over half (53%) of respondents indicated that they had been somewhat or very concerned about burning out.



Percentage of Halton respondents aged 18 and over who indicated that they were somewhat or very concerned about burning out, Halton Region, October/November 2020

Sex

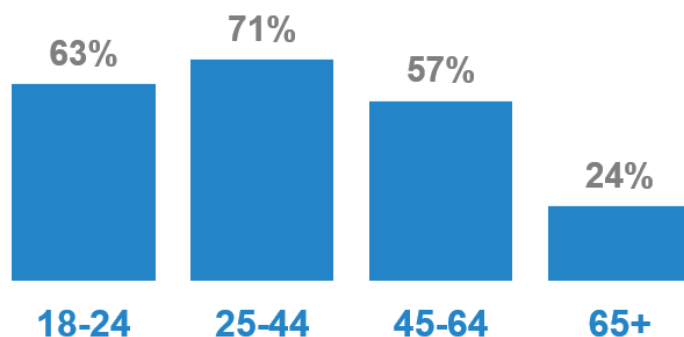
- Female respondents were more likely than male respondents to indicate that in the past month, they had been somewhat or very concerned about burning out because they had no break in their responsibilities. However this difference was not statistically significant.



Percentage of Halton respondents aged 18 and over who indicated that they were somewhat or very concerned about burning out, by sex, Halton Region, October/November 2020

Age

- Respondents aged 65 and older were less likely than those in any other age group to report that in the past month, they had been somewhat or very concerned about burning out because they had no break from their responsibilities. These differences were **statistically significant**. There were no other significant differences by age.



Percentage of Halton respondents aged 18 and over who indicated that they were somewhat or very concerned about burning out, by age group, Halton Region, October/November 2020

About the COVID-19 Rapid Risk Factor Surveillance System (RRFSS) survey

- The COVID-19 Rapid Risk Factor Surveillance System (RRFSS) survey was conducted by the Institute of Social Research at York University. Data were collected from October 27th 2020 to November 15th 2020 among adults aged 18 and over living in Halton Region.
- Data were collected using an online survey panel sample (400 respondents) and convenience sample (834 respondents). For the panel sample, Canadian census data were used in an effort to generate samples that were representative of the population and incentives were used for survey participation. For the convenience sample, a link to the survey was promoted through the Halton Region website ([Halton.ca](https://www.halton.ca)) and social media accounts.
- Data for this report were analyzed with the convenience sample and panel sample combined. It is important to keep in mind that the survey respondents may not be representative of the population of Halton Region in terms of sex, age, income, education and other sociodemographic characteristics. Weights were used to adjust for differences in the age and sex distributions of the sample populations compared to the population of Halton Region.
- Statistical significance between groups was determined using non-overlapping confidence intervals. Statistically significant differences are differences that are unlikely to be due to chance alone.

Data notes

Data Source: COVID-19 Rapid Risk Factor Surveillance System [2020], Halton Region Health Department and Institute for Social Research, York University.

Estimates marked with an asterisk (*) should be interpreted with caution due to high variability. Estimates marked with a double asterisk (**) are not reportable. Totals may not sum to 100% due to rounding.

References

1. Statistics Canada. 2020. Canadians' Mental Health during the COVID-19 Pandemic. Retrieved June 2020 from <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/daily-quotidien/200527/dq200527b-eng.htm>
2. Statistics Canada. 2021. Canadians' Health and COVID-19: Interactive Dashboard. Retrieved May 2021 from <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/71-607-x/71-607-x2021003-eng.htm>
3. Statistics Canada. 2021. Survey on COVID-19 and Mental Health, September to December 2020. Retrieved May 2021 from <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/daily-quotidien/210318/dq210318a-eng.htm>
4. Statistics Canada. 2021. Impacts on Mental Health. Retrieved May 2021 from <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/11-631-x/2020004/s3-eng.htm>
5. Centre for Addiction and Mental Health. 2021. COVID-19 National Survey Dashboard. Retrieved May 2021 from <https://www.camh.ca/en/health-info/mental-health-and-covid-19/covid-19-national-survey>
6. Rapid Risk Factor Surveillance System. 2017. Unpublished data.

For more health indicator and health status reports, visit the Halton Health Statistics webpage at [halton.ca](https://www.halton.ca).

Last updated: March 2022