

# Incidental impacts of COVID-19 series: Parents and children

## Health indicator report

### Background

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- The COVID-19 pandemic has had incidental impacts on health and well-being. These impacts 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., school and business closures, online learning, physical distancing requirements). The indicators in this report examine potential effects on parents and children.
- In 2022, half of parents in Ontario reported that the COVID-19 pandemic had interfered with their child's development, including socialization, speech and attention or motivation, while 60% reported impacts on learning and education.<sup>1</sup> Many parents (79%) also said that their child's screen time had increased in the past year.
- During 2022, half (50%) of Ontario parents reported that their child had received mental health support from a professional in the past six months, an increase from 33% in 2021.<sup>1,2</sup>
- To examine potential impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on parents and children in Halton, this report uses data from the 2021 and 2022 Rapid Risk Factor Surveillance System (RRFSS). In 2021, data was collected from July to December. In 2022, data was collected for the full year (January to December).
- Responses during the 2021 and 2022 survey cycles were likely influenced by changes over time related to the COVID-19 pandemic and associated public health measures across Ontario. Data in this report should be interpreted within this context.

### Key findings

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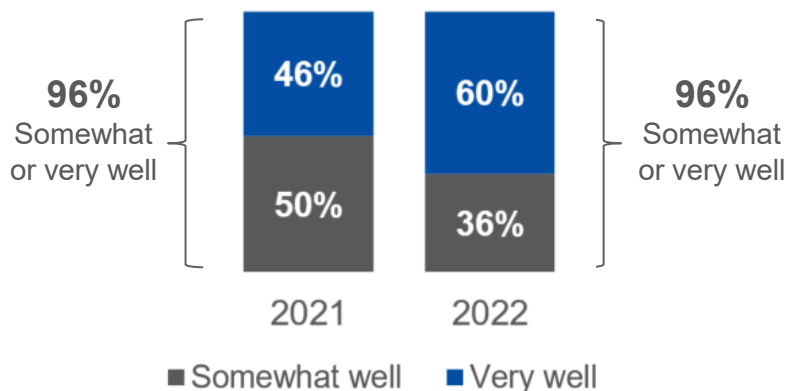
- In 2021 and 2022, most parents in Halton (96%) said that they had handled the day-to-day demands of raising children somewhat or very well over the past two weeks.
- During 2022, 36% of parents said that they had handled the day-to-day demands of raising children somewhat well, while just over one-third (60%) said they had handled the demands very well.
- Halton parents were asked about concerns related to their children over the past two weeks. Screen time and academic success were among the top three concerns of parents in both 2021 and 2022, along with mental health (in 2021) and online safety (in 2022).



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## Overview

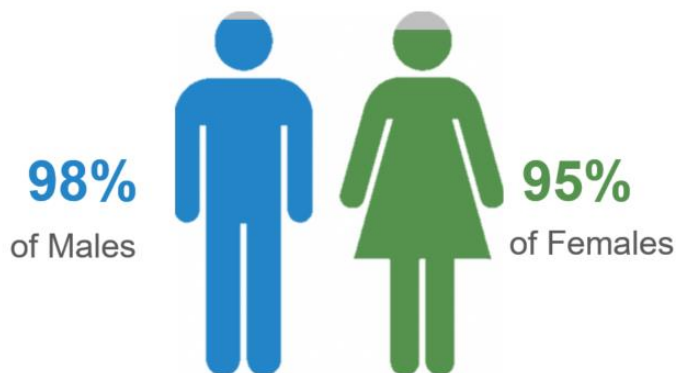
- In 2021, most parents (96%) said that they had handled the day-to-day demands of raising children somewhat (50%) or very well (46%) over the past two weeks. This is similar to 2022, when 96% of parents said that they handled the day-to-day demands of raising children somewhat (36%) or very well (60%) over the past two weeks. Differences between 2021 and 2022 were not statistically significant.



Percentage of Halton parents aged 18 and over who indicated that they handled the day-to-day demands of raising children somewhat or very well, Halton Region, 2021 (July to December) and 2022 (full year)

## Sex

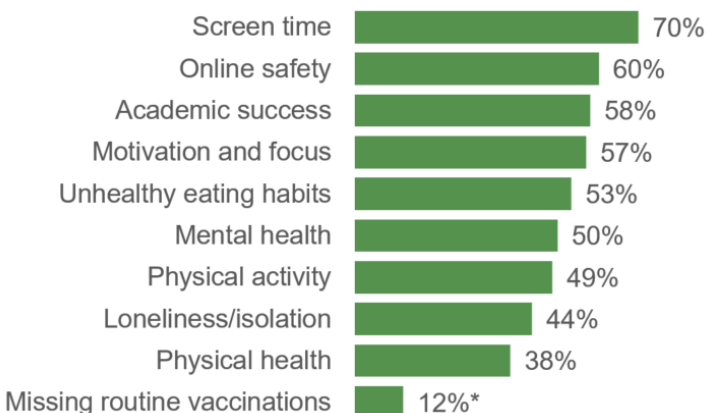
- In 2022, there were no statistically significant differences by sex in the percentage of parents who said that they handled the day-to-day demands of raising children somewhat or very well over the past two weeks.



Percentage of parents aged 18 and over who indicated that they handled the day-to-day demands of raising children somewhat or very well, by sex, Halton Region, 2022

## Parental concerns

- In 2022, Halton parents were asked about concerns related to their children over the past two weeks. The top concerns were related to screen time (70%), online safety (60%), academic success (58%), motivation and focus (57%), unhealthy eating habits (53%) and mental health (50%).
- During 2021, the top concerns were related to screen time (81%), mental health (69%), academic success (68%), and motivation and focus (67%). Over half of parents identified physical activity/health, loneliness/isolation, online safety or unhealthy eating habits as concerns related to their children (data not shown).



Percentage of Halton parents aged 18 and over who indicated they were somewhat or very concerned about issues related to their children, Halton Region, 2022

# About RRFSS

- The Rapid Risk Factor Surveillance System (RRFSS) is an on-going telephone survey (land line and cell phone) used to collect information on attitudes, behaviours, knowledge and awareness of issues related to health in Halton. RRFSS is conducted by the Institute of Social Research and York University.
- Each year, a random sample of approximately 1,200 adults aged 18 and over are surveyed in Halton Region. However, due to staffing constraints at the Institute of Social Research related to the COVID-19 pandemic, only 824 Halton adults were surveyed in 2022.
- Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, regular RRFSS data collection was paused in March 2020 and resumed in July 2021.
- In 2016, RRFSS underwent changes in sampling and analysis methodology. Therefore, it is not recommended to compare data from the 2016 onwards to past years of RRFSS data.
- Data from 2021 or 2022 should not be compared to results from the 2020 RRFSS survey due to differences in survey methods.
- For more information on RRFSS methodology, limitations and statistical terms see the Data Notes and Data Interpretation Guide at [www.halton.ca/For-Residents/Public-Health/Health-Statistics](http://www.halton.ca/For-Residents/Public-Health/Health-Statistics).

# Data notes

## Definitions:

**Incidental impacts of COVID-19:** effects associated with public health measures implemented in response to the pandemic, or impacts resulting from fear of exposure to COVID-19.

**Limitations:** Responses during various survey cycles were likely influenced by changes over time related to the pandemic and associated measures across Ontario. For example, schools remained closed to in-person learning throughout 2021 whereas in-person learning became available in January 2022, limits on social gatherings and organized public events were in place throughout 2021 and lifted in March 2022, and proof of vaccination requirements that had been implemented in September 2021 remained in place until March 2022.<sup>3</sup> Data in this report should be interpreted within this context.

**Data Source:** Rapid Risk Factor Surveillance System [2021, 2022], Halton Region Public Health and Institute for Social Research, York University.

Estimates marked with an asterisk (\*) should be interpreted with caution due to high variability.

## References

1. Offord Centre for Child Studies & McMaster University. 2023. Impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on Ontario Families with Children: Ontario Parent Survey (OPS3) Fall 2022 Follow-Up. Retrieved June 2023 from <https://strongfamilies.ca/wp-content/uploads/2023/05/OPS-Fall-2022-Follow-Up-Executive-Report-EN-1.pdf>
2. Offord Centre for Child Studies & McMaster University. 2021. Impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on Ontario Families with Children: Findings from the Third Wave. Retrieved June 2023 from <https://strongfamilies.ca/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/Findings-from-the-Third-Wave-Executive-Report-EN-Single-Pages-1.pdf>
3. Canadian Institute for Health Information (CIHI). 2022. Canadian COVID-19 Intervention Timeline. Retrieved July 2023 from <https://www.cihi.ca/en/canadian-covid-19-intervention-timeline>

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

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