



# COVID-19 DISABILITY SURVEY

Report for Data Collected up to  
December 18, 2020



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## Who made the survey and this report?

The survey was made by the Abilities Centre and their partners. These partners are from the Canadian Disability Participation Project. They work as researchers at The University of British Columbia and Queen's University.

## Here are the all the partners who also helped make the survey.

- Abilities Centre
- Canadian Disability Participation Project
- University of British Columbia
- Queen's University
- Rick Hansen Foundation
- Canadian Autism Spectrum Disorder Alliance
- Canadian Labour Congress

## Here are the members of the COVID-19 Disability Survey Research Team who helped with the survey.

- Kathleen Martin Ginis (University of British Columbia)
- Cameron Gee (University of British Columbia)
- Femke Hoekstra (University of British Columbia)
- Amy Latimer-Cheung (Queens University)
- Adrienne Sinden (University of British Columbia)
- Joan Úbeda-Colomer (University of British Columbia)
- Pinder DaSilva (Abilities Centre)
- Melanie Carrey (Abilities Centre)
- Stuart McReynolds (Abilities Centre)
- Tara Joy Knibbe (Abilities Centre)
- Meagan O'Neill (Abilities Centre)

## Here are the other people and groups who also helped with the survey.

- Jonathan Lai (Canadian Autism Spectrum Disorder Alliance)
- Canadian Labour Congress
- COVID-19 Disability Working Group for the British Columbia Ministry of Social Development and Poverty Reduction
- Rick Hansen Foundation

## Here are the people who made this report.

- Kathleen Martin Ginis
- Cameron Gee
- Femke Hoekstra
- Adrienne Sinden



## Here are the people who designed how this report looks and did different versions.

The Wave Front Centre and Christine Deschênes contributed to the translation to Plain Language, ASL, and French translations respectively. The report is formatted by Sarah Tarpey (Abilities Centre).

## Contact Information

Find out more about the survey at this website: [www.disabilitysurvey.ca/](http://www.disabilitysurvey.ca/)  
Email questions to this address: [disabilitysurvey@abilitiescentre.org](mailto:disabilitysurvey@abilitiescentre.org)





## Summary of this report

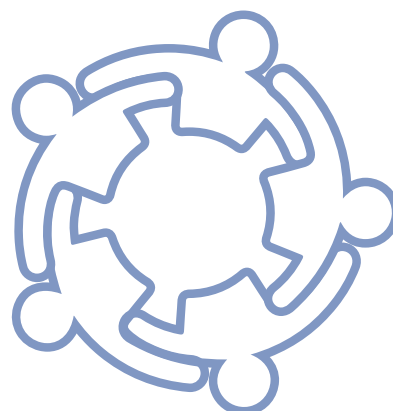
This report shows the results of a survey. The survey looks at how COVID-19 has changed the lives of people with disabilities. It tries to find out if their needs are being met. It tries to measure their well being and health.

The results of this COVID-19 survey are useful. It will help COVID-19 planners make sure everybody's needs are met. It will help planners who look after dealing with the virus. It will help community groups. It will help government. It will help groups that work with people with disabilities. This will be good for all Canadians.

This report shows the responses from people who took the COVID-19 survey. This survey was for people who have a disability. It was also for their family members or caregivers. The survey was open for 6 months. It started on June 18, 2020. It finished on December 18, 2020.

People could do the survey in English, French, Plain Language, or American Sign Language. A diverse group of people did the survey. This included people with many different kinds of disabilities. A total of 713 people finished the survey.

In this report, the people who completed the survey are called 'respondents.'



## Important survey results

Over half of the respondents said their needs were not met during the pandemic. These needs were in the following areas.

- Emotional counselling
- Recreation and leisure programs
- Income and financial support
- Specialized health care
- Access to food and groceries
- Accessible housing
- Transportation
- Case management and attendant care
- Support from their peers

Most respondents had these needs met before the pandemic started. These needs stopped being met once the pandemic started.

- Support can come from different sources. It can come from government and the community. It can come from family, friends and neighbours. Less than 50% of the respondents got support for their needs during the pandemic. This does not include income support.
- Most respondents (82%) said the pandemic has hurt their mental health. Most adults with disabilities (80%) also said they are more isolated and lonelier. People with disabilities are more likely to be isolated during the pandemic than other people.
- Over half of adults said that they have become less physically active during the pandemic. Their diet has also become worse. Some respondents smoke, drink alcohol, or use cannabis. Over one-third of them said they use more now than they did before the pandemic.
- Over half of parents or caregivers said that their child with a disability gets less exercise during the pandemic. Over 40% said that their child's eating habits have become worse.
- These survey results show the harm caused by the pandemic. They show that the pandemic lock down has hurt people with disabilities. People with disabilities are saying their needs are not being met. Their health care, wellbeing and social life are all worse. They are also lonely and less active. All these things have hurt their mental health.

More information about the survey can be found at this website <https://osf.io/z4gr2/>.







## Introduction to this report

The purpose of the COVID-19 survey is to get information. The needs and concerns of people with disabilities are important in this information. It will help with supports during the COVID-19 pandemic. It will help with the response to COVID-19. It will help in meeting the needs of people of all abilities.

Adults who identify as a person with a disability can take the survey. Parents and caregivers of children with a disability can also take the survey. The survey includes questions about people's needs and fears. It also asks about their lifestyle and well-being.

Respondents will take the survey more than once. This will show any changes in their situation over time. This report shows the results of the first time they took the survey. The results are for 713 people who took this survey. They did it between June 18, 2020 and December 18, 2020.

The survey is available in English, French, and Plain Language. It is available in American Sign Language on this website: [www.disabilitysurvey.ca/](http://www.disabilitysurvey.ca/).

More information about the survey can be found here <https://osf.io/z4gr2/>. The records that support this report are also on this website.

This report is divided into two parts.

The first part looks at the information from the following survey respondents.

- Adults living with a disability
- Adults who have a disability and care for a child
- Family members of people with disabilities
- Roommates of people with disabilities

The second part looks at the information about children with disabilities.

## Part 1. Information about people who took the survey

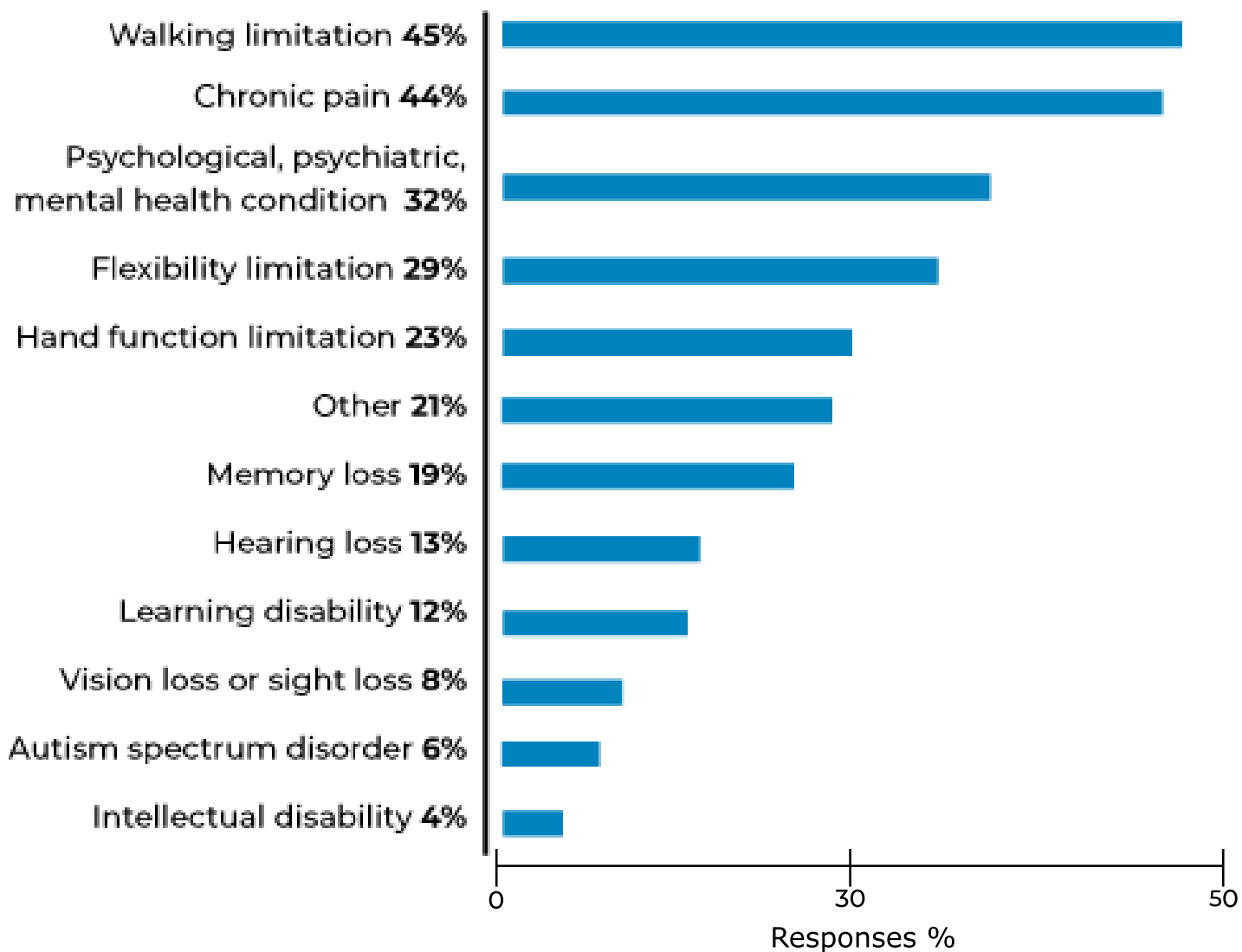
Who took the survey?

This part gives information about the people who took the survey. This includes things like who they are and where they are from.

A total of 713 people filled out the survey.

- 84% said they were a person with a disability.
- 21% said they were a parent or caregiver of a child with a disability.
- 23% said they have a family member or roommate with a disability.
- 70% said they were women.
- 25% said they were men.
- 5% did not say their gender. They may have also said another gender identity.
- Their ages range from 18 to 81 years old.
- Their average age was 49 years old.

### Types of disabilities



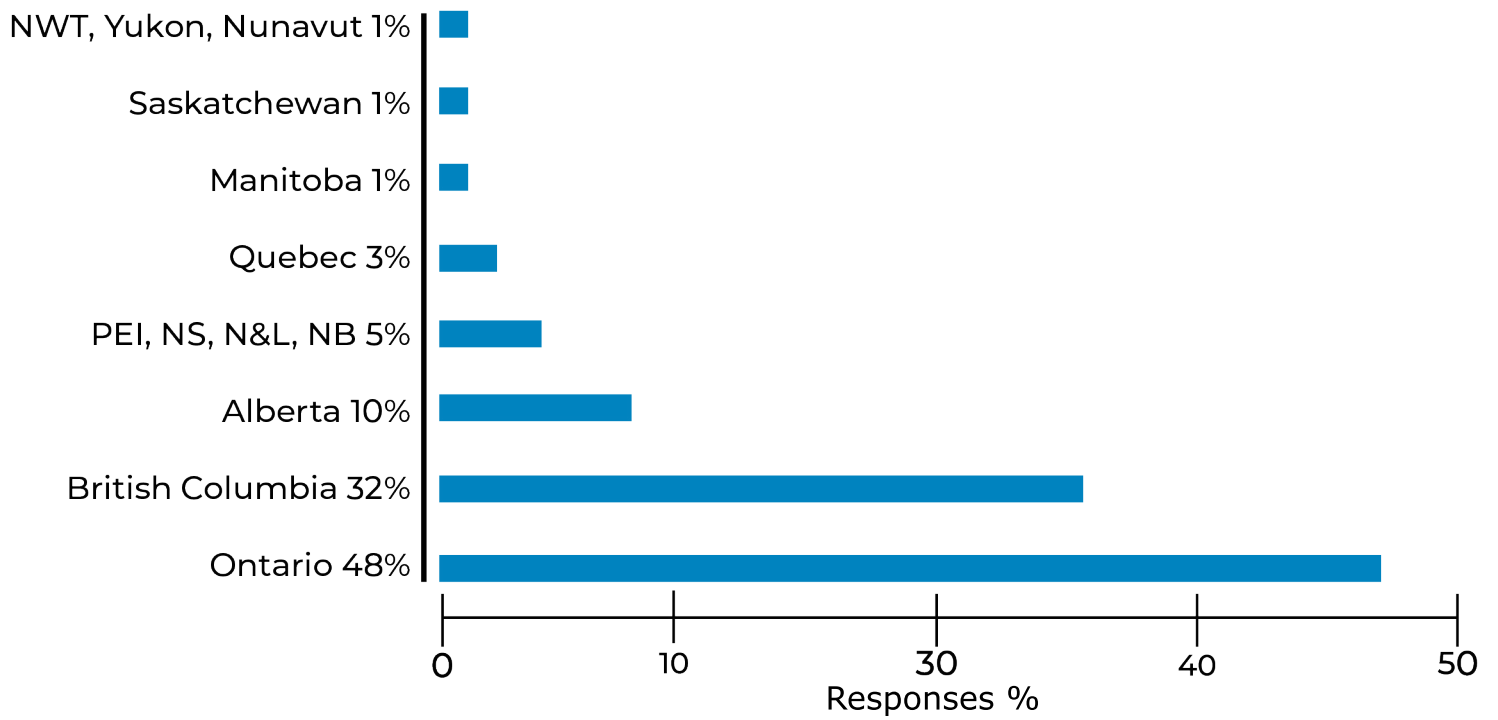
Here are some examples of other disabilities and conditions reported.

- Brain injury
- Attention-deficit or hyperactivity disorder (ADHD)
- Cancer
- Neurological and brain disorders
- More than one condition

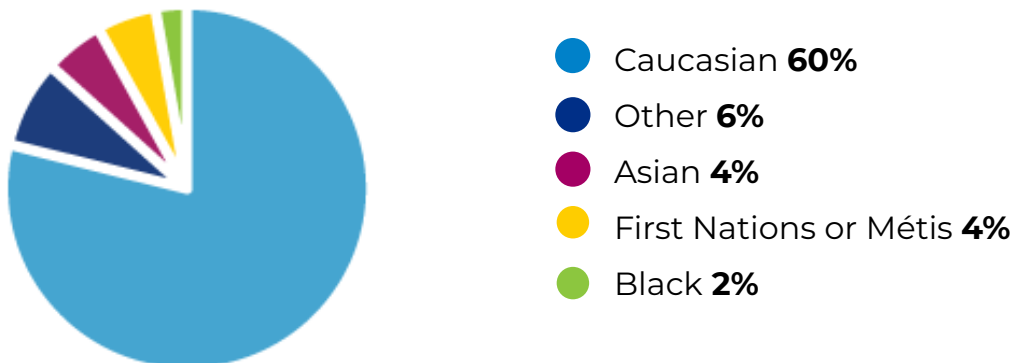




### Province or territory of residence



### Ethnicity





### Highest level of education received



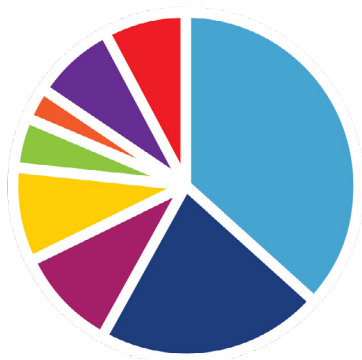
- Some high school **4%**
- High school **11%**
- Some college **18%**
- Some University **9%**
- College degree **18%**
- University degree **33%**
- Other **8%**

### Marital status



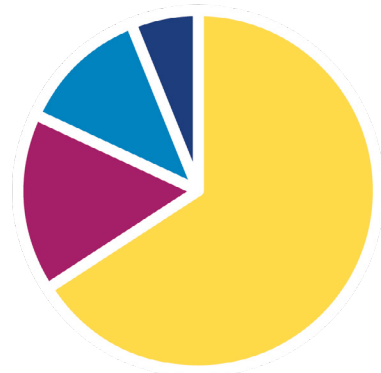
- Married or living as married **44%**
- Widowed **3%**
- Divorced or separated **20%**
- Never married **29%**
- Other **4%**

### Total household income after taxes in last 12 months



- Under \$25,000 **38%**
- \$25,000 - 50,000 **22%**
- \$50,000 - 75,000 **10%**
- \$75,000 - 100,000 **9%**
- \$100,000 - 125,000 **5%**
- \$125,000 - 150,000 **3%**
- Over \$150,000 **8%**
- Decline to answer **8%**

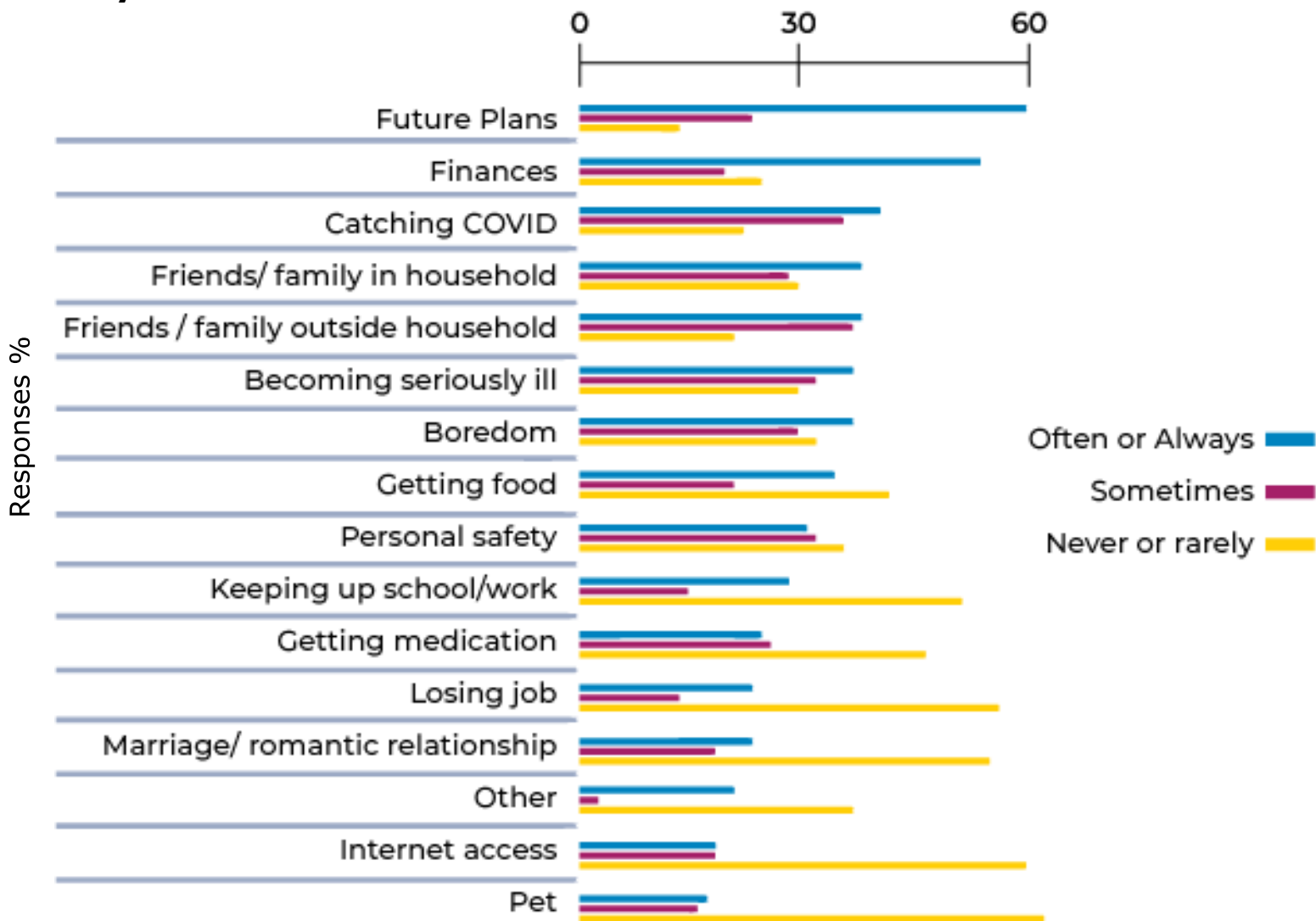
### Impact of COVID-19 on employment



- No change **66%**
- Hours reduced **16%**
- Laid off **12%**
- Furloughed **6%**

One-third of respondents reported a change in their job status since the start of the pandemic. Some people said that their hours had been reduced. Some said that they had been laid off. Some said they were on leave with no pay.

**These are the main things that cause people to feel stress and worry.**



Respondents talked about the things they worry about. The things they worried about the most were their future and their money or finances. Sometimes, they are also afraid of catching COVID-19. They are afraid of their family and friends getting sick as well.

Almost all respondents were worried about the following things.

- Catching COVID-19
- Friends and family
- Becoming seriously sick
- Being bored
- Getting food

Respondents also reported other fears and worries in the following areas.

- Getting services
- Getting medical care
- Getting food and groceries
- Feeling lonely and abandoned
- Housing and being homeless
- Feeling suicidal
- Not getting to socialize
- Not getting government support
- Having a loved one die
- Being anxious and afraid for the world
- Accessing (safe) transportation
- Keeping clean and hygiene



**Other stressors or worries:**



“Ability to see loved ones”

“access to supplies for the winter such as food and heating”

“access to alternative medicine practitioners and chiropractors”

“education for children”

“getting a new assist dog”

“snow removal”





## Needs and Unmet Needs of Canadians with Disabilities During the COVID-19 Pandemic

Abbreviations: G = Government; CO=Community Organizations; O=Others which may include friends, family, and/or neighbours.

Need	Respondents who have this need	Respondents with need who say it was met 'not at all' or 'very little'		Respondents who received support for this need during COVID	Main sources of support
		BEFORE COVID	DURING COVID		
Recreational & leisure programs	62%	30%	76%	27%	CO, O
Emotional counselling	56%	47%	70%	38%	CO, O
General health care	56%	16%	48%	48%	G
Income support	54%	38%	59%	75%	G
Specialized health care	48%	32%	65%	34%	G
Peer support	45%	40%	65%	43%	CO, O
Access to food/shops/groceries	44%	28%	53%	48%	O
Equipment/medical supplies/aids	44%	33%	58%	38%	G
Transportation	36%	32%	61%	44%	O
Internet and technology	35%	25%	31%	39%	O
Accessible housing	30%	45%	54%	28%	G,CO,O
Accessible media and websites	29%	23%	33%	40%	O
Case management	29%	55%	72%	36%	G,CO,O
Attendant care	19%	31%	55%	47%	G,CO,O
Other	24%	52%	67%	54%	G,CO,O

What information does the table above show?

This table looks at people’s needs. The first column shows the types of needs people have. The second column shows if those needs were being met before the pandemic began. The ‘Case Management’ need was the only need that most (55%) said was unmet before the pandemic.

The third column of Table 1 shows that respondent’s needs were not met during the pandemic. Over half said that 11 different types of needs were not met. Here is a list of the areas of needs that were not met.

- Recreation and leisure
- Income support
- Peer support
- Transportation
- Case management
- Attendant care
- Other needs
- Emotional counselling
- Health care
- Access to food, shopping, and groceries
- Accessible housing

The fourth column shows the number of respondents who have received support for each need. Most respondents (75%) received income support from the government. Nearly half of respondents had their health care needs met by government support.

People with disabilities need support during the pandemic. Many respondents (60%) said these four important needs are not being met.

- Leisure and recreation programs
- Emotional counselling
- Peer support
- Transportation

Less than half (from 27% to 44%) of respondents got assistance for these four needs. Most (60%) consider them unmet. Government has not done enough to support them in these areas. Any support they got came from community groups, friends, or neighbors.

Over half (54%) said that other needs were also not being met. These needs are in the following areas.

- Attendant care
- Accessible housing
- Case management

Less than half (From 28% to 47%) of respondents said they received support for these needs. The support they did get came from government and community groups and others.

More than half of respondents said they did get support for the following needs.

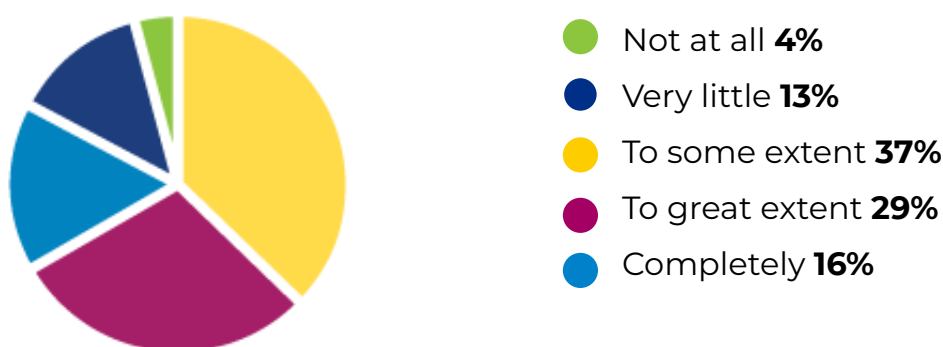
- Drugs and medicine
- Financial planning
- Clothing, cleaning supplies, face masks and other COVID-19 related items
- Household chores and personal care support
- Support for children’s needs

### General impact on mental health

These results are from adults who identified as a person with a disability. Has the COVID-19 pandemic negatively impacted your mental health?

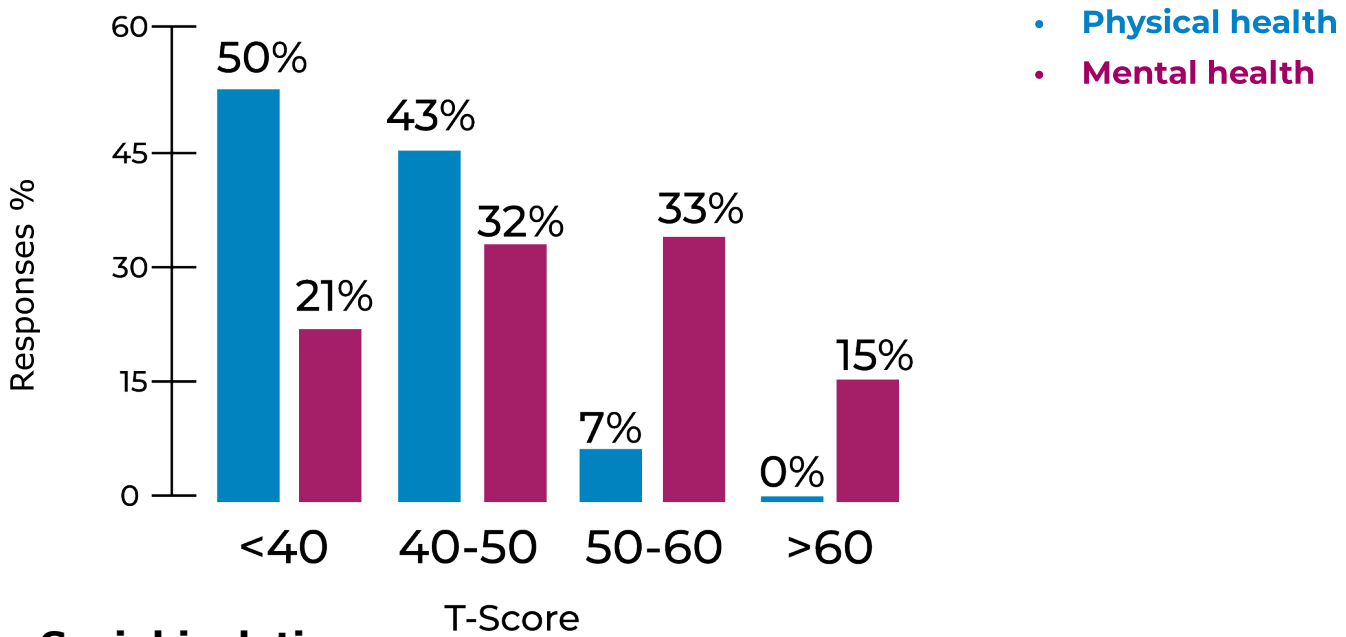
### COVID Impact on mental health

These results are from adults who identified as a person with a disability.

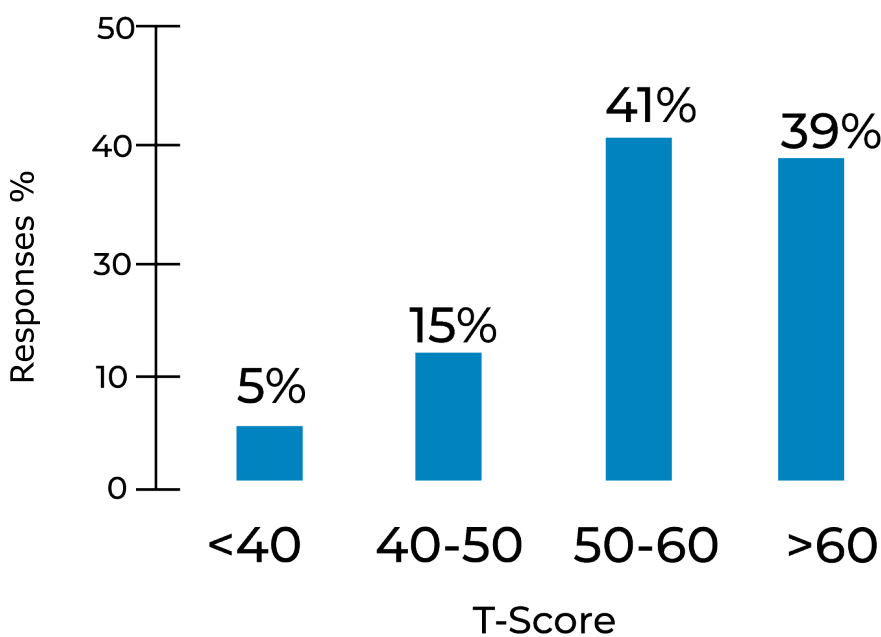


Most respondents (82%) said that the COVID-19 pandemic has made their mental health worse.

### Physical and mental health



### Social isolation

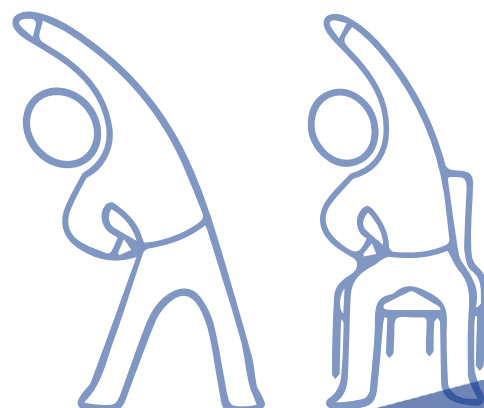


A regular questionnaire method was used for the survey. People were asked about the following areas.

- Their physical health
- Their mental health
- Their feelings of social isolation or loneliness

The survey found that people with disabilities did worse in these areas than the average person.

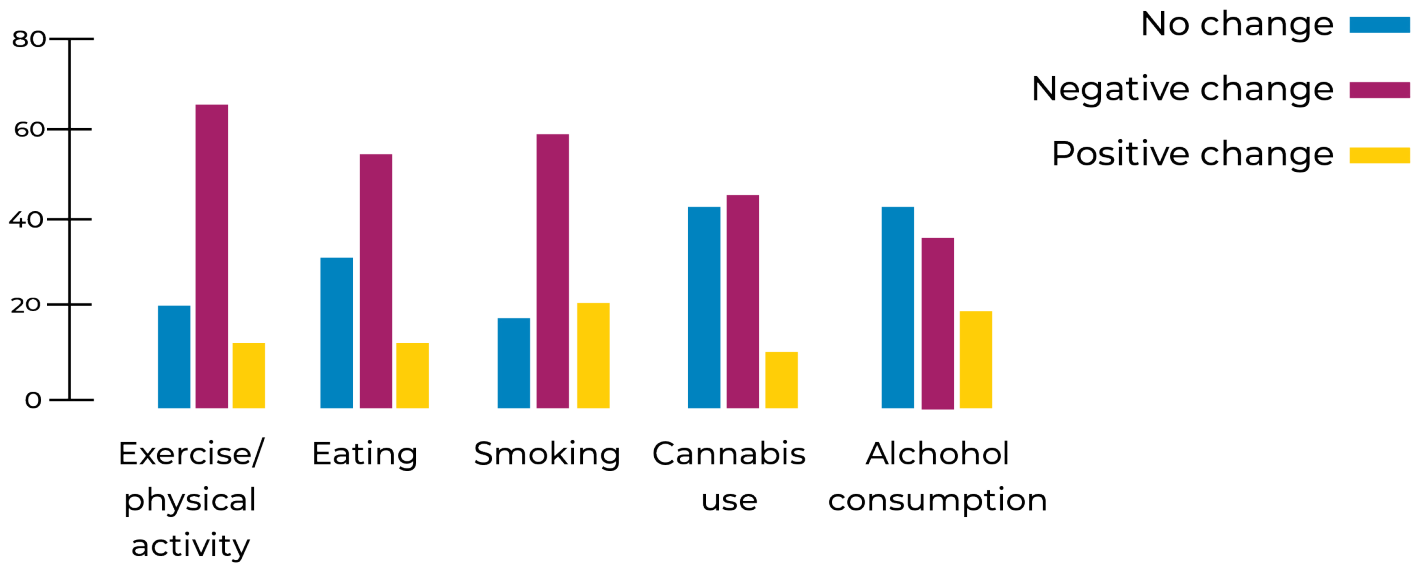
- Almost all, 93%, said their physical health is worse than the average person.
- About 80% said they are lonelier and more isolated than the average person.
- About 52% said their mental health is better than the average person.
- About 48% said their mental health is worse than the average person.





## Lifestyle

People were asked if their health habits changed since the start of the pandemic.

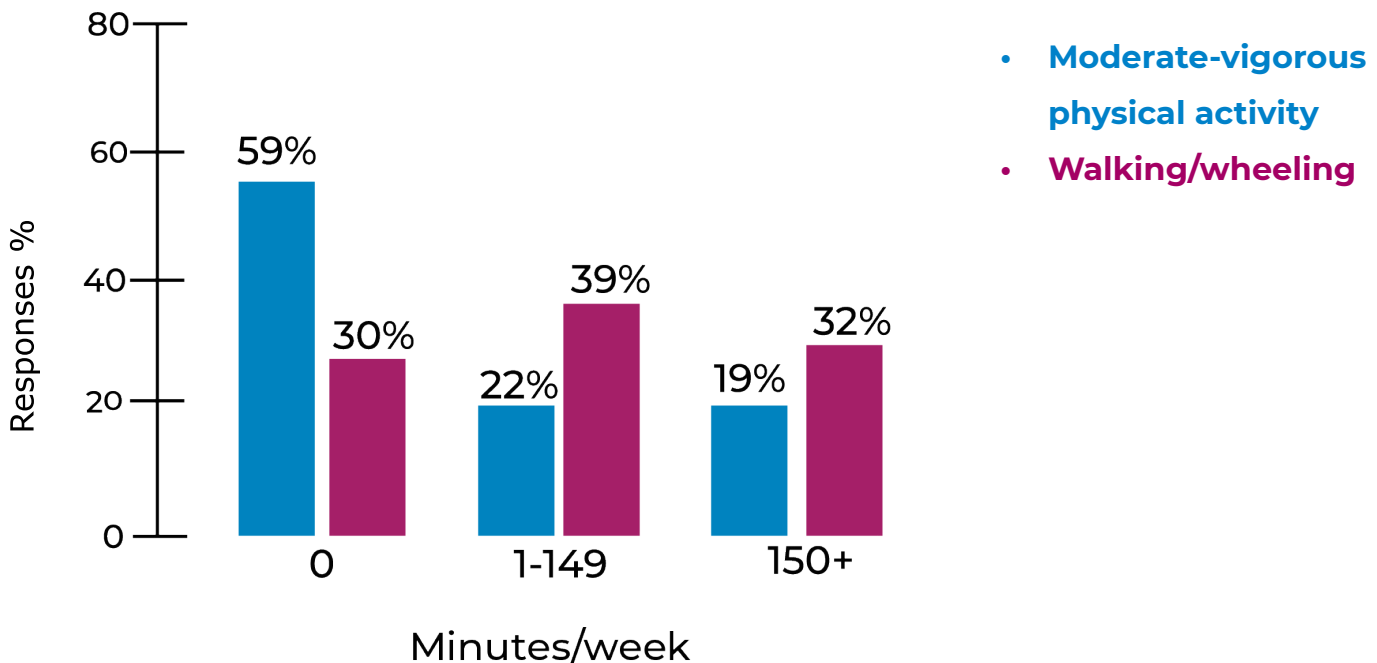


The COVID-19 crisis has made people with disabilities less healthy.

- Over half of respondents said they were less active.
- Over half of respondents said their diet is worse.
- Over one-third of respondents who drink alcohol started drinking more during the pandemic.
- Over one-third of respondents who smoke cannabis started smoking more during the pandemic.
- Over one-third of respondents who smoke tobacco started smoking more during the pandemic.

## Physical activity levels

Figure below shows lifestyle information from the survey.



Respondents say they have been less physically active because of the pandemic.

- More than half (59%) say they did not do any exercise in the last week.
- Only a small number (19%) did 2½ hours of exercise in the last week. This is half of what the experts recommend for people.
- Most said they did some walking or wheeling in the last week.
- About one-third did no walking or wheeling in the last week.

## PART 2: Information about children with disabilities

### Demographics of children with disabilities

This section has information about children with disabilities.

- 150 respondents said they are a parent or caregiver to a child with a disability.
- 56% of the children are boys.
- 41% of the children are girls.
- 3% of parents did not give the gender identity of their child.
- The children range in age from 1 to 47 years old.
- The average age of the children is 15 years old.

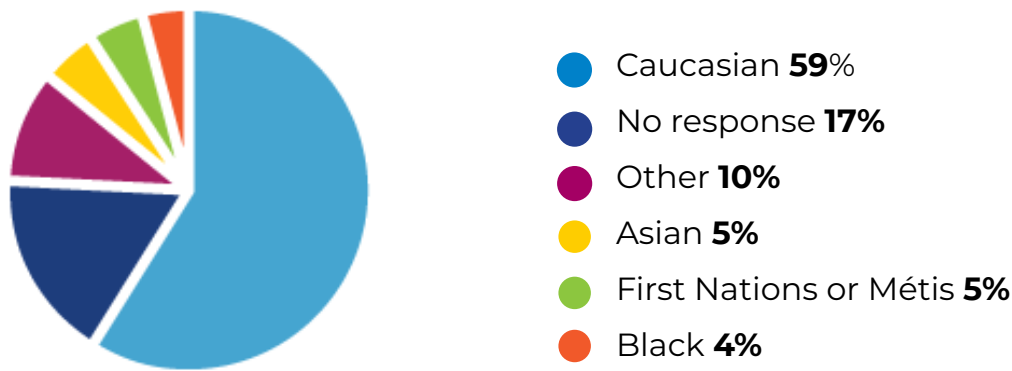
### Types of disabilities



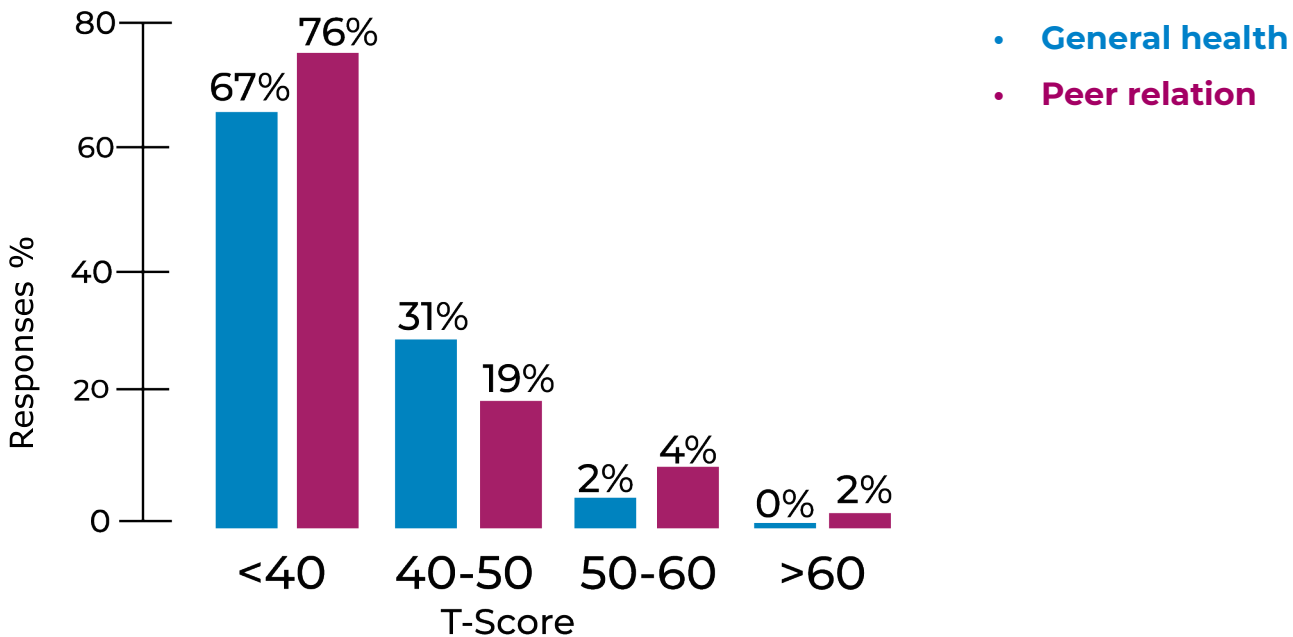
These are examples of other disabilities that were reported.

- Attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD)
- Neurological disorders
- Dwarfism
- Seizures
- More than one condition

### Ethnicity



### General health and peer relationships

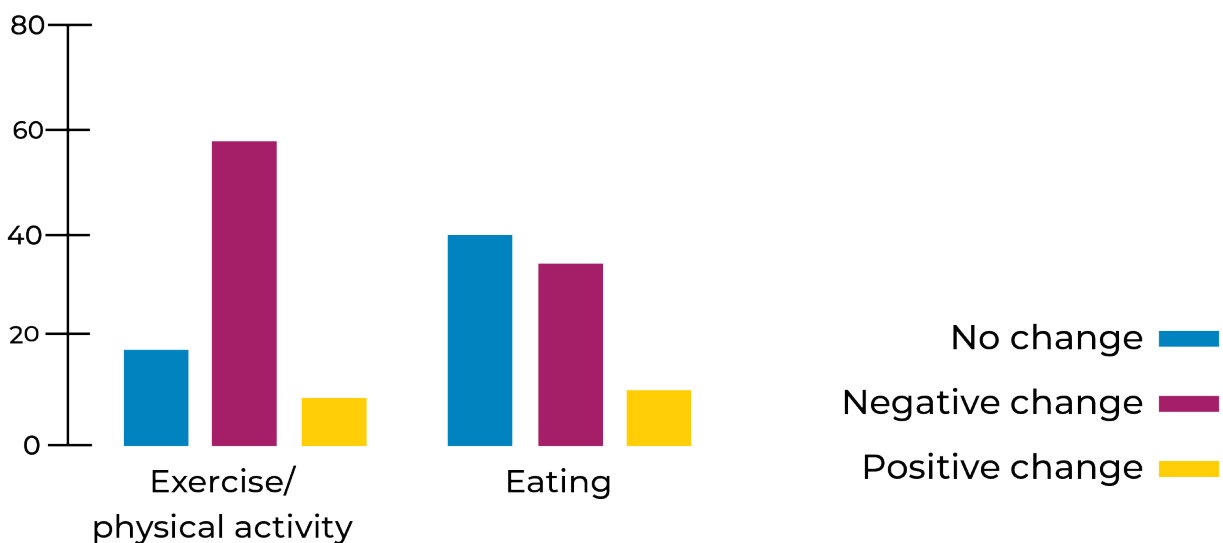


Respondents gave information about their child’s health.

- Almost all (95%) said their child’s health seems to be less than the general population.
- Almost all (95%) said their child’s relationships with their friends seem to be worse than the general population.

### Lifestyle

How have your child’s health habits changed since the start of the pandemic?

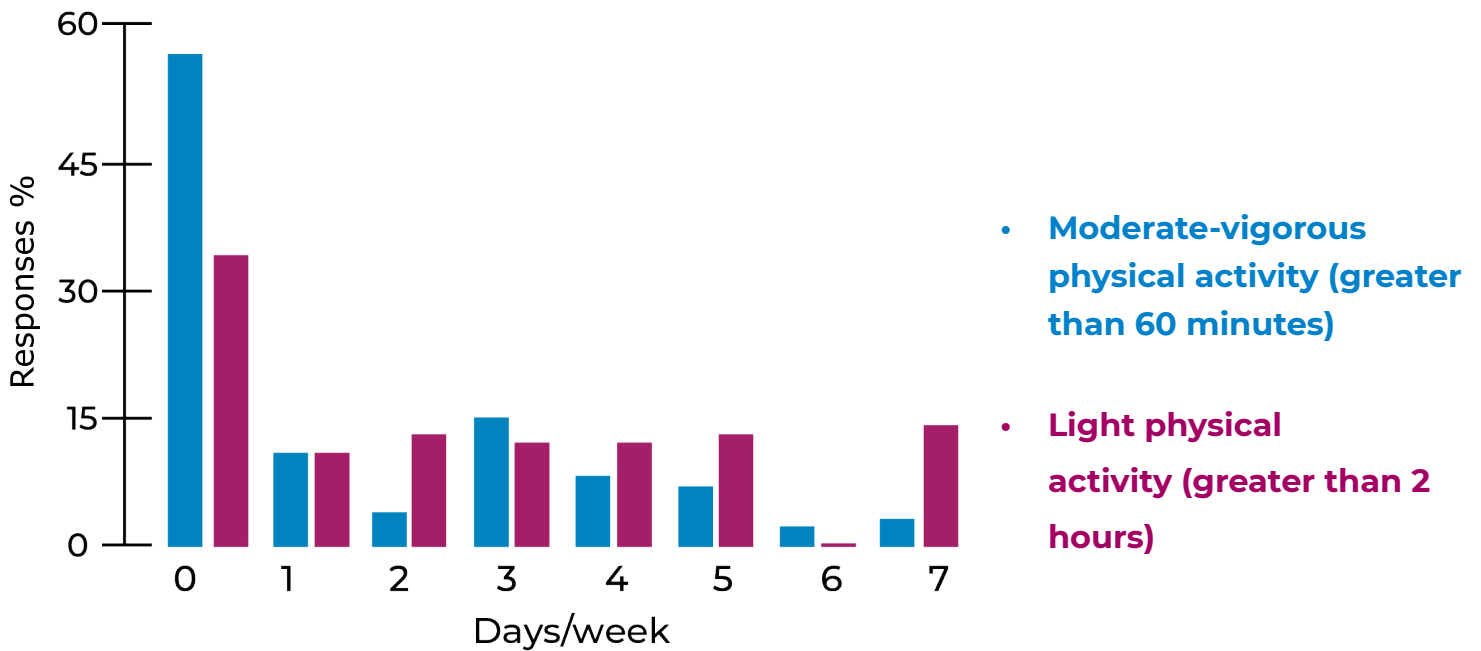


The results for children are like the results for adults.

- Some people have active children. They said that their children are less active because of the pandemic.
- The pandemic did not affect the diet of most children.
- A few children did have their diet affected by the pandemic. It has gotten much worse.



## Physical Activity



This part looks at how much exercise people’s children get. It shows how many children did more than 1 hour of hard exercise. And it also shows children who did 2 or more hours of light exercise.

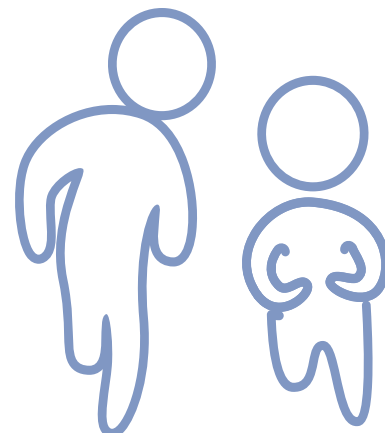
A group that promotes exercise reports that children need exercise every day. Here is how much exercise children need every day.

- At least 1 hour of intense exercise
- At least 2 hours of light exercise

Most children (over 50%) did not get enough exercise in the last week. They also did not get enough exercise on any day of that week.

- Only 3% of children did enough intense exercise.
- Only 13% of children did enough light exercise.
- A third (33%) did not do enough light exercise.

The Canadian 24-hour Movement Guidelines for Children and Youth recommend 60 minutes per day of moderate to vigorous physical activity and several hours per day of light physical activity. Over 50% of parents/caregivers reported that their children did not do 60 minutes of moderate to vigorous physical activity on any day of the previous week. Only 3% of children did 60 minutes of moderate to vigorous intensity physical activity every day of the previous week. One third of parents/caregivers reported that their children did not do light intensity physical activity (e.g. walking or wheeling) for at least two hours on any day of the previous week. Only 13% reported that their children did at least two hours of light intensity activity on every day of the previous week.





**The COVID-19 Disability Survey was developed by**  
Abilities Centre and Canadian Disability Participation Project.

The following project partners contributed survey questions:

- Rick Hansen Foundation
- Canadian Autism Spectrum Disorder Association
- Canadian Labour Congress
- COVID-19 Disability Working Group for the British Columbia Ministry of Social Development and Poverty Reduction