



Background: Durham Region Health Department conducted the COVID-19 Health Survey from September to December 2020, collecting responses from 3,969 adults 18 and older.

Public health measures to prevent COVID-19



Respondents felt that the COVID-19 pandemic was very serious



Respondents reported they often or always wore a mask for indoor public activities



Respondents reported they often or always stayed two metres away from non-household members



Respondents planned to get the COVID-19 vaccine once available

COVID-19 information

Percentage of respondents that relied on the following sources for current COVID-19 information:



news media



the government



local public health unit



their family/friends



their health care provider



Respondents felt that Durham Region Health Department was doing a good job at providing up-to-date COVID-19 information

Impacts of the COVID-19 Pandemic

Reduced access to health services



47% avoided getting health services
62% had difficulty getting health services

Increased substance use



42% smoked cigarettes more
41% used cannabis or CBD oil more
28% consumed alcohol more

Changes in behaviour since before the pandemic



Percentage of respondents engaging in activities more since the pandemic:
67% browsed social media, watched TV or videos and **47%** played video games, more often



58% spent more time with household members
50% connected remotely with friends or family
29% participated more often in online gambling



23% got more sleep
22% exercised more often
21% ate more healthy foods



Percentage of respondents engaging in activities less since the pandemic:



41% exercised less often
34% got less sleep
27% ate less healthy foods

Negative mental health



54% had increased feelings of worry or anxiety
50% reported overall mental health and emotional well-being got worse
50% experienced increased stress in their daily life

Negative financial impacts



22% of households experienced food insecurity
29% aged 18+ received government assistance (e.g., CERB, rent or mortgage deferrals)
70% aged 18 to 24 years received government assistance



Percentage of respondents reporting that they found it harder to pay for the following since the pandemic:

32% for the quality or variety of food they wanted
32% debts such as credit cards or student loans
29% for bills such as utilities or car payments
28% for enough food to feed themselves or their household
26% for their rent or mortgage

Conclusion: Survey results showed that the pandemic had serious health and social impacts on Durham Region residents in the first year of the pandemic, which affected people's lives beyond infectious disease transmission.

Methods: The COVID-19 Health Survey was administered as part of the Rapid Risk Factor Surveillance System (RRFSS), which is an ongoing telephone survey on health behaviours, knowledge, and attitudes among Durham Region residents. Interviewers were unable to conduct phone interviews in 2020 due to COVID-19 restrictions. Instead, this survey was administered using an online public survey available on the Health Department website (convenience sample) and a panel survey. A panel survey consists of people who are willing to complete surveys for modest incentives. Data collection firms recruit panelists using various methods to make sure they are representative of the required population, in this case Durham Region adults. Completion of the RRFSS would earn \$2 to \$3 in points redeemable for cash, gift cards or reward miles. The Health Department combined completed surveys from the convenience sample (3,369) and the panel survey (600) for this report. The estimates were weighted to make the combined sample more representative of the population.