

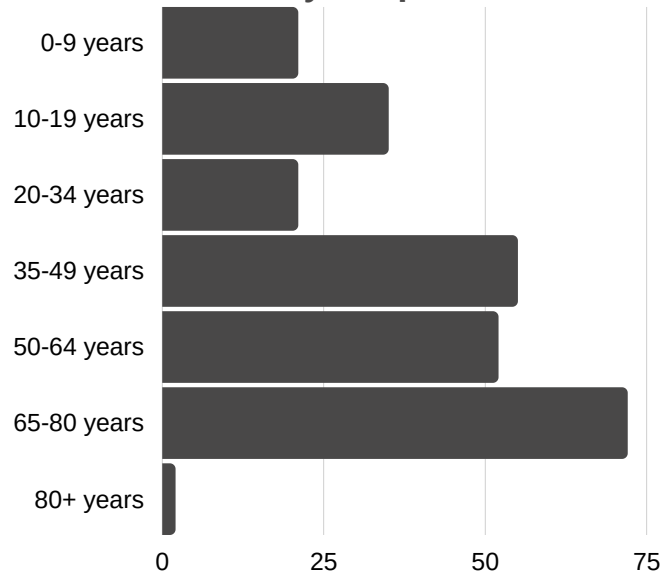


## FAMILY DYNAMICS & CHALLENGES

The COVID-19 pandemic continues to impact families with children, aging family members, and family members with special needs or mobility issues. Finding ways to stay active, hopeful, and connected as a family and community has become challenging with the closure and restriction of many extracurricular activities. Concern for the mental and physical well-being of aging family members has increased since the beginning of the pandemic. Although respondents stay connected to aging family members by using technology, individuals are feeling disconnected and isolated. Accessing necessities continues to be a challenge for those with special needs or mobility issues as following physical distancing guidelines and mask mandates is not possible for everyone. Supporting family members is both a priority and concern for survey respondents as continued isolation is taking a toll on caregivers, children, parents, and seniors.

**109** ...total number of respondents for Survey #4

### Household Age Representation of Survey Respondents

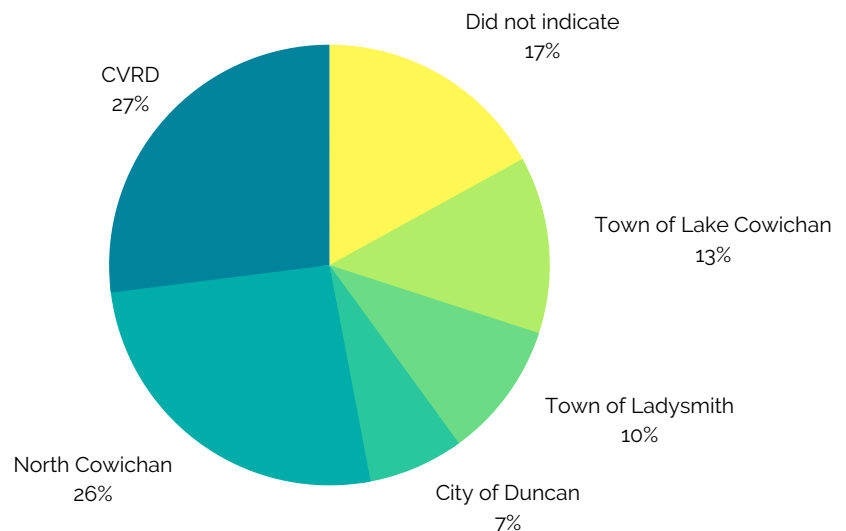


**39%**  
of survey respondents have children in their household

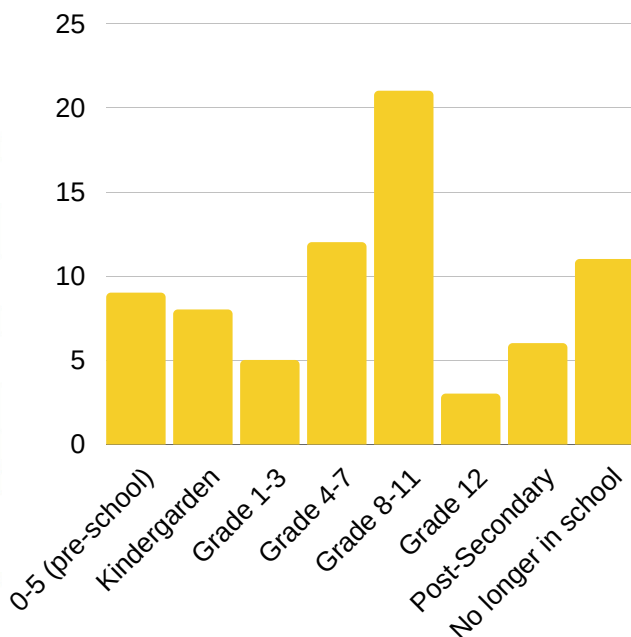
**51%**  
of survey respondents own a home with a mortgage

**9%**  
of survey respondents are renting a home

### Household Location



### School Levels for Children at Home





## FAMILY DYNAMICS & CHALLENGES

**17%**

of survey respondents are sharing parenting responsibilities or are co-parenting between multiple households

- some have blended families
- some live with children and grandchildren

**21%**

of survey respondents have a child or children with exceptional learning needs

- some have ADD or ADHD
- some have ASD
- some need enrichment activities

### Top Ways of Addressing Childcare

- **20%** rely on a non-working parent to take primary responsibility
- **22%** have two parents taking turns
- **22%** indicated children take care of themselves or each other/non-parent family member(s) are helping out
- **22%** rely on extra screen time
- **10%** use community provided daycare and childcare

**"1 in 5 families in the Cowichan region have an unmet need for child care."**

Source: Our Cowichan Communities Health Network Profile, January 2021

### How Children Are Attending School

- **63%** attend in-person
- **5%** are primarily online
- **13%** attend both in-person and online
- **2.5%** are remote and intend to transition to in-person
- **15%** are homeschooled



### Common Challenges to Education and Employment

**38%**

have faced challenges in managing their children's educational needs and their personal employment needs

- balancing working from home and homeschooling
- managing work and home life is unsustainable
- lack of time and motivation cause conflict at home

### Are children attending extracurricular activities?

- **5%** are through their school
- **22%** are through community activities
- **5%** are participating in both school and community activities
- **63%** are not attending any activities

#### What types of activities?

- gymnastics
- rock climbing
- private music lessons
- skating and ice hockey
- dance classes



### Internet Access & Use



**90%**

have adequate internet access at home



**79%**

of respondent's children have increased screen time

## FAMILY DYNAMICS & CHALLENGES

**57%**

of survey respondents  
are concerned about  
aging family members



**UP 1%** from  
previous survey

**36%**

of survey respondents  
have family members  
with special needs  
and/or mobility issues

### Current Living Arrangement of Aging Family Members

- **61%** are living independently in their own home
- **10%** are living with family members
- **7%** are living with family who also provide care
- **7%** are living in assisted living or a senior's residence
- **8%** are living in a long-term care home



### How are you staying connected with your aging family members?

- **10%** see them regularly since they share a home
- **14%** visit them regularly to provide care or support
- **22%** visit with them regularly from a safe distance
- **64%** talk over the phone or use video technology
- **7%** visit as they did prior to COVID-19 restrictions
- **5%** connect through the help of caregivers or staff outside of their home

**"48%** of Canadians with long term conditions or disabilities reported that their health was much worse or somewhat worse since before the pandemic."

Source: Statistics Canada: The changes in health and well-being of Canadians with long-term conditions or disabilities since the start of the COVID-19 Pandemic, October 2020

### Are family members with special needs or mobility issues able to access necessities?

#### Yes

- **54%** are going out when necessary
- **23%** have family members who run errands
- **11%** use delivery services
- **11%** go out but find physical distancing a challenge

#### No

- **14%** do not go out
- **11%** do not always go out when they need something

**54%**

of people have  
been somewhat or  
greatly impacted by  
COVID-19  
restrictions in  
accessing services

### How are families handling physical distancing limitations?

- respecting social distancing guidelines and mask protocols when possible
- shopping when stores are quiet
- hiring private caregivers

### How have experiences with COVID-19 restrictions and family members with special needs or mobility issues shifted from Phase 1?

- Wearing a mask can be challenging
- Stigma surrounding invisible disabilities is particularly challenging under mask mandates
- Difficulty accessing doctors and medical practitioners
- Concern for family members with compromised immune systems and respiratory issues
- Staying connected with family members with dementia and mobility issues became more difficult with increased restrictions

### Common special needs or mobility issues...

- Surgeries and transplants
- Multiple sclerosis
- Chronic obstructive pulmonary disease
- Require wheelchair or walker
- Autism spectrum disorder



## FAMILY DYNAMICS & CHALLENGES

### What are the biggest concerns for aging family members and caregivers?

- **9%** say changes to their caregiving situation is unsustainable
- **4%** say there are limited opportunities for residential respite and day programs
- **8%** are concerned with allowing outside community support into the home
- **6%** say there are delays for access into long term care
- **64%** find the inability to visit their family members the biggest challenge

#### other challenges and concerns...

- negative effects of isolation on aging family member's mental health, memory, focus, motivation, and mobility
- less activities to do outside primary residence
- how COVID-19 can affect aging family members
- challenges in understanding COVID-19 and related restrictions by family members with dementia

**Most respondents report that aging family members have had no positive experiences during the COVID-19 pandemic however a few report some positive experiences including...**

- connecting with supportive staff and caregivers
- started connecting online with family members
- maintaining daily routine and relying on indoor activities like crosswords, reading, and watching TV

### How are primary caregivers taking care of themselves?

- getting outdoors
- going for walks
- setting healthy boundaries
- getting adequate sleep and nutrition

### How have aging family members' experiences shifted since Phase 1 of the pandemic?

*missing family  
isolated  
prioritizing health  
losing hope  
worsening dementia  
depressed  
isolated  
worrying more  
lonely*

### How are you supporting aging family members?

- **16%** are continuing caregiving regularly
- **25%** are delivering essentials and running errands
- **67%** are communicating from a distance
- **13%** are not able to connect directly

## Questions for the future...

- How can education systems better accommodate remote learning until all students feel safe returning to school?
- How will mask mandates change throughout the vaccination rollout and how might it affect those with special needs or mobility issues?
- What are tools to stay connected with aging family members?
- What are the short and long-term impacts of COVID-19-related social isolation on dementia and aging?



# WINTER COVID-19 CHECK-IN SURVEY

## FAMILY DYNAMICS & CHALLENGES

"Not being able to see my family. Our daughter lives in the US and we haven't seen her in more than a year. She was hospitalized with a life threatening illness for 3 weeks and nobody could see her. It's been so hard!"

"Biggest concern is spread of the virus; uncertainty about the future. Was impacted by previous work shutdown but my industry is operating again, stress over whether that is for the best is also a concern."

"We are not able to rely on our normal support systems for childcare and with our kids having some health issues it has limited that support system even further."

"My anxiety for the concern of my aging loved one who has been isolated."

### What have been your biggest concerns in Phase 3?

"Family time. Getting creative entertainment. Enjoying our home. Being able to have time to help other families."

"We're new to the community and it has been really hard to make new friends and settle in. Our kids are homeschooled and it's been hard for them to make new friends too. We haven't had them in any activities as we are limiting our bubble."

### Have you had positive experiences during this time of the COVID-19 crisis?

"Flexible hours means more time outside during daylight savings."

"Medical appointment times have less waiting. We can do many consulting over the phone!"

"More outdoor time, practicing mindfulness and gratitude, connecting with friends through social media."

"Trying to rebuild a support network. Seeking counselling for children and self."

"Being realistic that summer will not be the end of all this and that a lot of places will not be open, or will have changed."

"Saving money, take care of my health with a proper diet, more self care and learning how to enjoy life with many restrictions due to COVID."

### What are you doing to prepare for the future?

"Had the seasonal flu shot, ready for the vaccine."

"Taking things day by day as the information available can change quickly."

"Food supply for season just in case we're house bound. Emphasis on gardening and local food support."

[Click here for raw survey data](#)