Impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on youth well-being in British Columbia: Findings from the Middle Years Development Instrument (MDI) - COVID-19 Module - Revelstoke

A total of 58 students (52% male, 43% female, 9% in another way; mean age: 13) responded to the COVID-19 survey module asking questions about their experiences during the pandemic. This survey was implemented as part of the Middle Years Development Instrument survey in the school district of Revelstoke (SD19). Responses were collected in January-March 2021, approximately 10-12 months after the COVID-19 pandemic was declared. Key findings from the data are summarized below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Students who completed the COVID-19 survey module in Revelstoke</th>
<th>2020-21</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total no. of students</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male (%)</td>
<td>52%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female (%)</td>
<td>43%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In Another Way (%)</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean Age</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Mental health and coping during the COVID-19 pandemic

Key Finding: 39% of students reported feeling either slightly or somewhat worried that their mental/emotional health was influenced by the pandemic during the past 2 weeks; 12% of students reported that they were either very or extremely worried.

Figure 1: During the past 2 weeks, how worried have you been about your mental/emotional health being influenced by the pandemic?
Activities that helped students cope with the worries and stress related to the pandemic included: connecting with friends and family either in-person or virtually or engaging in activities such as spending time outdoors, exercising, or spending time with pet(s).

Figure 2: What has helped you deal/cope with worries and stress related to the COVID-19 pandemic? (Select all that apply)

SOCIAL CONNECTIONS
- Connecting virtually with friends: 49%
- Connecting in-person with family: 39%
- Connecting in-person with friends: 35%
- Connecting virtually with family: 28%

SUPPORT SYSTEMS
- Getting support from my teacher(s) or other adults at school: 18%
- Getting support from a counsellor or therapist outside of school: 12%
- Accessing mental health websites or apps: 4%

ACTIVITIES
- Spending time outdoors: 49%
- Exercising: 47%
- Spending time with pet(s): 46%
- Exploring my interests: 39%
- Volunteering to help: 5%

Nothing has helped me deal/cope with worries and stress: 56%

I have not felt worried or stressed: 4%
Changes in social connections during the COVID-19 pandemic

Key Finding: Despite the challenges of the pandemic, the majority of students indicated that their relationships with parents or other adults at home, and with friends, stayed about the same compared to before the pandemic (54% for adults at home; 45% with friends) or improved (40% with adults at home; 39% with friends). Regarding their relationships with teachers or other adults at school, most students (74%) reported their relationships stayed about the same. A smaller proportion of students reported that their relationships got worse with parents or other adults at home (6%), with friends (16%), or with teachers or other adults at school (7%).

Figure 3: From before the COVID-19 pandemic to now have your relationships gotten worse or better?

Figure 4: How did time spent change from before the pandemic to now?

Compared to before the pandemic most students reported spending less time with friends in person (60%). Students also reported spending more time with their friends online (68%) and with the family members in their home (64%). 41% of the students indicated spending more time outdoors during the pandemic in comparison to before the pandemic.
Engaging in COVID-related safety behaviours during the COVID-19 pandemic

**Key Finding:** A large proportion of students reported that it was a little or very easy to wash hands or use hand sanitizer (73%) or to stay home when sick (80%). Comparatively, a smaller proportion of students reported that it was a little or very easy to wear a mask (52%), practice physical distancing (37%) or to avoid big groups (51%).

Over the course of the pandemic, provincial guidelines for schools regarding mask wearing, physical distancing, self-assessed daily health checks, and availability of sanitizing materials were implemented in BC.

**Figure 5:** How easy or hard is it for you to do the following behaviours at your school?

![Chart showing the ease or difficulty of various COVID-related safety behaviours at school.](chart)

While the majority of students reported feeling always safe (21%) or safe most of the time (45%) from getting COVID-19 at school, 29% of students reported feeling safe some of the time, and 5% of students reported feeling never safe from getting COVID-19 at school.

**Figure 6:** How often do the COVID-19 safety measures at school make you feel safe from getting COVID-19?

![Pie chart showing the frequency of COVID-related safety measures at school.](chart)
School activities students report missing during the COVID-19 pandemic

Key Finding: Students reported missing several aspects of their day-to-day life at school. Most frequently, students missed field trips (77%), class parties (54%), and participation in school sports clubs (46%).

Figure 7: What do you miss the most at school during COVID-19 pandemic? (Select all that apply)

- Field trips: 77%
- Class parties: 54%
- School sports clubs: 46%
- Assemblies: 37%
- Little buddies reading program: 35%
- Going to library during free time: 26%
- Lunch monitor/Park monitor: 23%
- Other school clubs: 19%
- Typical instruction: 16%
- Choir, strings, band: 14%
- Other (describe): 14%

Voices: Examples of other aspects of school that students report missing include...
- “Most art things :(" 
- “Being able to touch people”
Positive changes that students report during the COVID-19 pandemic

**Key Finding:** Some students also noted positive changes that had occurred during the pandemic. The most frequently mentioned positive changes included spending more time with family members (63%), having more time to themselves (54%), and exploring other interests (53%). 19% of students reported that there were no positive changes that occurred during the pandemic.

**Voices:** Examples of other positive changes that students report include...
- “Have more time to talk to my online friends, and see what they’re usually up to :)
- “less drama”

School districts and communities can utilize data from their local MDI reports to make comparisons between MDI data collected before and during the global pandemic, as well as use their MDI data to follow groups of children over time, taking their local context into consideration. For more practical strategies, tools and resources to assist in understanding and supporting children’s well-being and positive development in the middle years, visit Discover MDI – the Field Guide for the MDI, or contact the Human Early Learning Partnership (HELP) MDI team at mdi@help.ubc.ca
Acknowledgements

We gratefully acknowledge the individuals who generously gave their time, expertise, and feedback in the production of this report:

- Jeremy Higgs, Governance and Analytics Division, BC Ministry of Education
- Nicole Gardner, Governance and Analytics Division, BC Ministry of Education
- The BC students who took the time to complete the survey and share their experiences with us, and the students, teachers, education staff, and school/district administrators who offered their guidance on the original survey content.

We express our deep gratitude to the x̱̓məθkʷəy̓əm (Musqueam) Nation for the privilege of working on their traditional, ancestral, and unceded territory at the Point Grey Campus of the University of British Columbia.

This report was produced and published by the University of British Columbia’s Human Early Learning Partnership (HELP), June 2021. It was funded by a Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC) COVID-19 Partnership Engagement Grant, which was received in partnership with the BC Ministry of Education. All inferences, opinions, and conclusions drawn in this report are those of the authors, and do not reflect the opinions or policies of the BC Ministry of Education.

Suggested Citation: