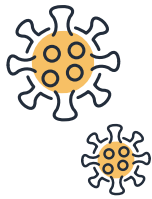


Sense of mastery: a psychological resource during the COVID-19 pandemic



Sense of mastery is the perception that the forces that influence one's own life are under one's own control.¹ It is included as a determinant of positive mental health by the Public Health Agency of Canada.²



People with a **high sense of mastery** agree with statements like

"You can do just about anything you really set your mind to"



and disagree with statements like

"There is little you can do to change many of the important things in your life."

The COVID-19 pandemic had disproportionate impacts on the life circumstances and health of different populations in Canada.

Adults with high mastery were **50% less** likely to report that their mental health was worse during the COVID-19 pandemic compared to those with lower mastery.³

High sense of mastery was more common among:



men
35%
than
women
31%



non-immigrants
34%
than
immigrants
30%



high-income households
41%
than
low-income households
26%



adults aged 35 years and older
35%
than
adults aged 18 to 34 years
28%



non-racialized individuals
35%
than
individuals from racialized groups⁴
27%

Implications

Having a high sense of mastery was a protective factor of mental health among adults in Canada during the COVID-19 pandemic. Disparities in the sense of mastery across different populations may arise from differences in life circumstances and socioeconomic inequalities, which could foster feelings of powerlessness.

Although some aspects of life may be out of our control, there are things we can do to improve our sense of mastery and our well-being more generally; some examples are listed on the **Promoting positive mental health** webpage.

The surveillance data presented here on sense of mastery could help inform additional public health interventions to strengthen people's coping skills, reduce mental health disparities, and protect adults in Canada from the detrimental psychological impact of life's stressful events, such as the COVID-19 pandemic.

Mental health resources are available

If you or someone you know is in crisis or needs mental health and substance use support, there are a wide range of resources and supports available on **Wellness Together Canada** and the **Mental health support** webpage.

More information about the data

The data were collected by Statistics Canada with the Survey on COVID-19 and Mental Health in late 2020⁵ and early 2021⁶ from adults living in the 3 territorial capitals and the 10 provinces in Canada. Data on sense of mastery immediately preceding the pandemic were unavailable for comparison.

REFERENCES AND NOTES

1. Pearlin, L.I., Schooler, C. The structure of coping. *Journal of Health and Social Behavior*, 1978, 19(1): 2-21, <https://doi.org/10.2307/2136319>
2. Public Health Agency of Canada, Centre for Surveillance and Applied Research. Positive Mental Health Indicator Framework (Retrieved April 2023). Available from: <https://health-infobase.canada.ca/positive-mental-health/>
3. Individuals had a high sense of mastery if they scored ≥ 21 on seven items based on the Sense of Mastery Scale (Pearlin & Schooler, 1978), which ranged from 0 to 28.
4. Participants self-identified from 12 categories provided in the Survey on COVID-19 and Mental Health. Individuals from racialized groups included those belonging to a visible minority group as defined by the Employment Equity Act, while non-racialized individuals included the remaining respondents who did not report an Indigenous identity.
5. Statistics Canada. Survey on COVID-19 and Mental Health (SCMH). 2020. (Retrieved April 2023). Available from: <https://www23.statcan.gc.ca/imdb/p2SV.pl?Function=getSurvey&Id=1283036>
6. Statistics Canada. Survey on COVID-19 and Mental Health (SCMH). 2021. (Retrieved April 2023). Available from: <https://www23.statcan.gc.ca/imdb/p2SV.pl?Function=getSurvey&Id=1295371>

