

# OTTAWA INDIGENOUS COMMUNITY MEMBERS' FIRST YEAR EXPERIENCES DURING COVID-19



## Section 7: Mental Health and Wellness

Results are from the 2021 COVID-19 research survey of 1077 Indigenous community members in Ottawa that described their experience of COVID-19 from March 2020 to June 2021.



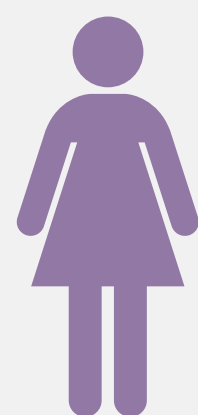
# 68%

indicated an increase in anxiety or depression

### INCREASED MENTAL HEALTH STRESSORS

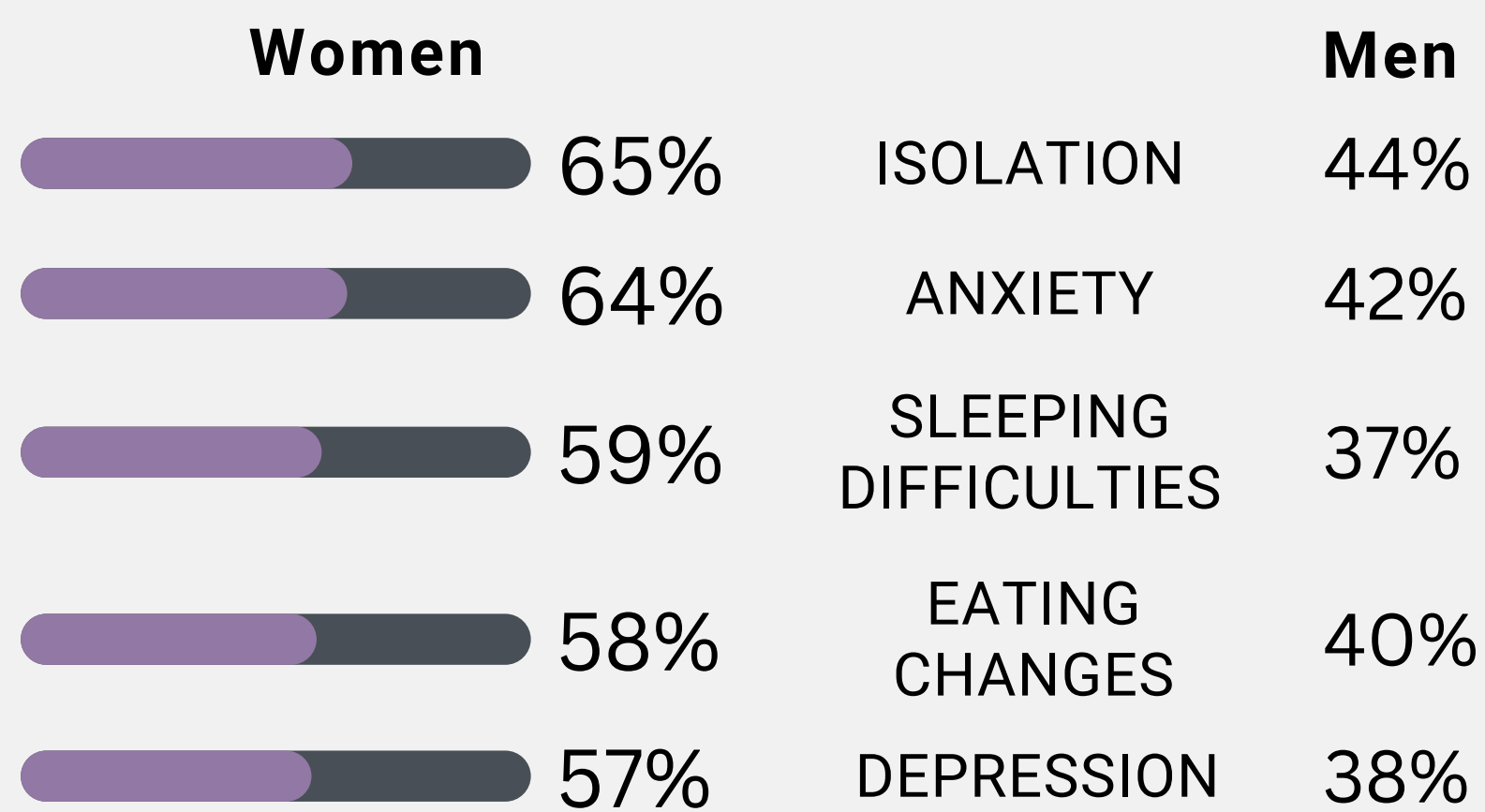
#### Sleep Quality

People who had sleep issues were about **2 times more at risk** of worsening anxiety or depression during the first year of COVID-19.

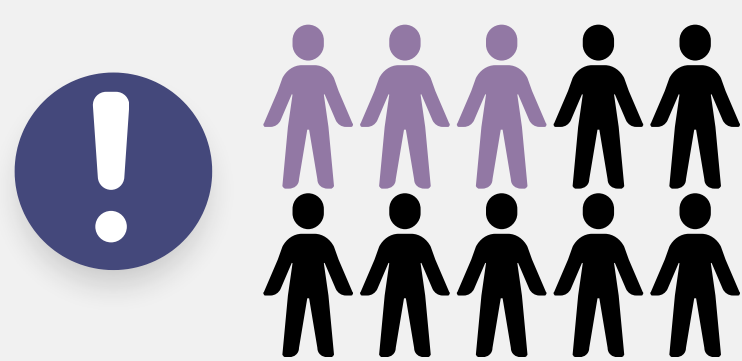


#### Women's Experiences

Women were significantly more likely to experience increased negative mental health such as;

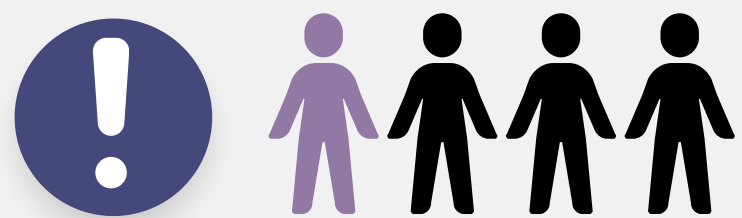


### GRIEF AND LOSS



#### Lost Someone to Overdose

**31%** of community members lost someone due to overdose in the first year of COVID-19.



#### Lost Someone to COVID-19

**27%** of community members lost someone due to COVID-19 in the first year.

### CONNECTING TO CULTURE: BETTER MENTAL HEALTH

*"I lost 40lbs as a result of being **active outside** – just like our ancestors did!"*  
– Community Member

Smudging, prayer, sacred medicines, knowledge, ways of healing, nature, and the outdoors were a source of pride and influenced better health.

### Positive Coping in Relation to Nature and Outdoors

For people who were able to access the outdoors, it was linked to their positive mental health and wellbeing.

**"I OBSERVE AND ABSORB THE BEAUTY OF THIS WORLD WITH AS MANY SENSES AS POSSIBLE."**



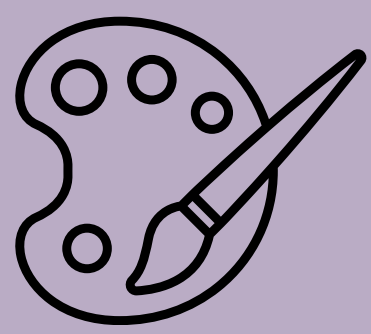


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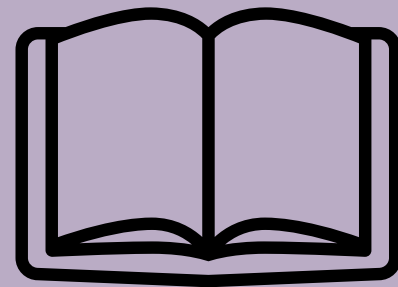
## Mental Health and Wellness

### INCREASED RESILIENCY BASED ACTIVITIES



ARTISTIC  
ACTIVITIES

**34%**



READING

**34%**



PROFESSIONAL  
SUPPORT

**30%**



SPIRITUAL  
PRACTICES

**29%**



GOING  
OUTDOORS

**26%**



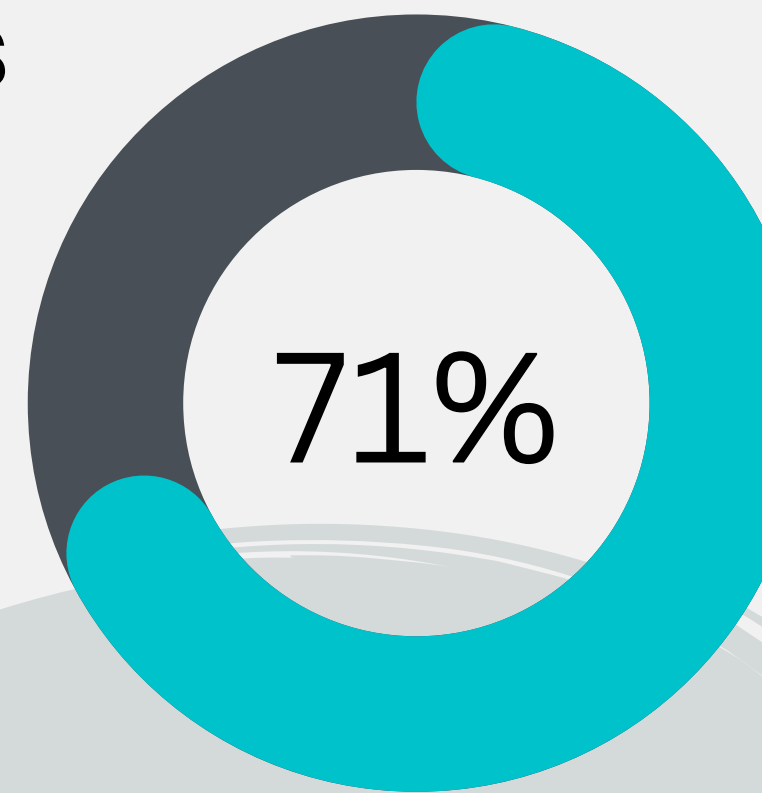
PHYSICAL  
ACTIVITIES

**24%**



### RELATIONSHIP WITH SUBSTANCES

71% of people increased their substance use. This includes one or more of the following;



INCREASE IN  
CIGARETTES

**34%**



INCREASE IN  
ALCOHOL

**35%**



INCREASE IN  
CANNABIS USE

**28%**



INCREASE IN  
STREET DRUGS

**10%**

The # of substances used by people increased by:

1 substance: 42%

2 substances: 22%

3 substances: 6%

4 substances: 1%

### MEN'S AND WOMEN'S EXPERIENCES

Men and women coped in different ways compared to the other gender.

More men increased alcohol (39%), cannabis (32%), and street drug use (15%).



More women increased spending (25%) and eating habits (58%).





# OTTAWA INDIGENOUS COMMUNITY MEMBERS' FIRST YEAR EXPERIENCES DURING COVID-19



## Mental Health and Wellness



### SUPPORTS

Community members talked about drawing on personal strength and also accessing support to decrease use.

- Therapy/Counselling through Indigenous Organizations
- Friends and Family
- Community Mental Health Organizations (Online)
- Doctors/Medical Professionals

### RESILIENCY

**Spirituality, new self-care habits, and identifying strengths in the community and oneself** were all important examples of resiliency.

*"Learning on Zoom with the Western University knowledge network, skipping rope, bought a bunny, I smudge now, and have **kitchen dance parties** on the regular. I joined anti-human trafficking survivor-led committees but none in Ottawa sadly."*



*"My **strength** was realizing that I had to continue to work on me and acknowledging what I feared."*

*"The community is so **strong**, everyone truly looked out for each other and kept everyone close even at times that make us distant."*

### INCREASED MENTAL HEALTH STRESSORS

	<b>71%</b>	DEPRESSION
	<b>56%</b>	ISOLATION
	<b>55%</b>	ANXIETY
	<b>49%</b>	SLEEPING DIFFICULTIES
	<b>41%</b>	RELATIONSHIP DIFFICULTIES
	<b>31%</b>	BAD DREAMS
	<b>21%</b>	THOUGHT OF SUICIDE
	<b>17%</b>	OTHER FORMS OF VIOLENCE
	<b>16%</b>	DOMESTIC VIOLENCE
	<b>2%</b>	SELF HARM

