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HOW TO IMPROVE YOUR MENTAL HEALTH DURING A PANDEMIC

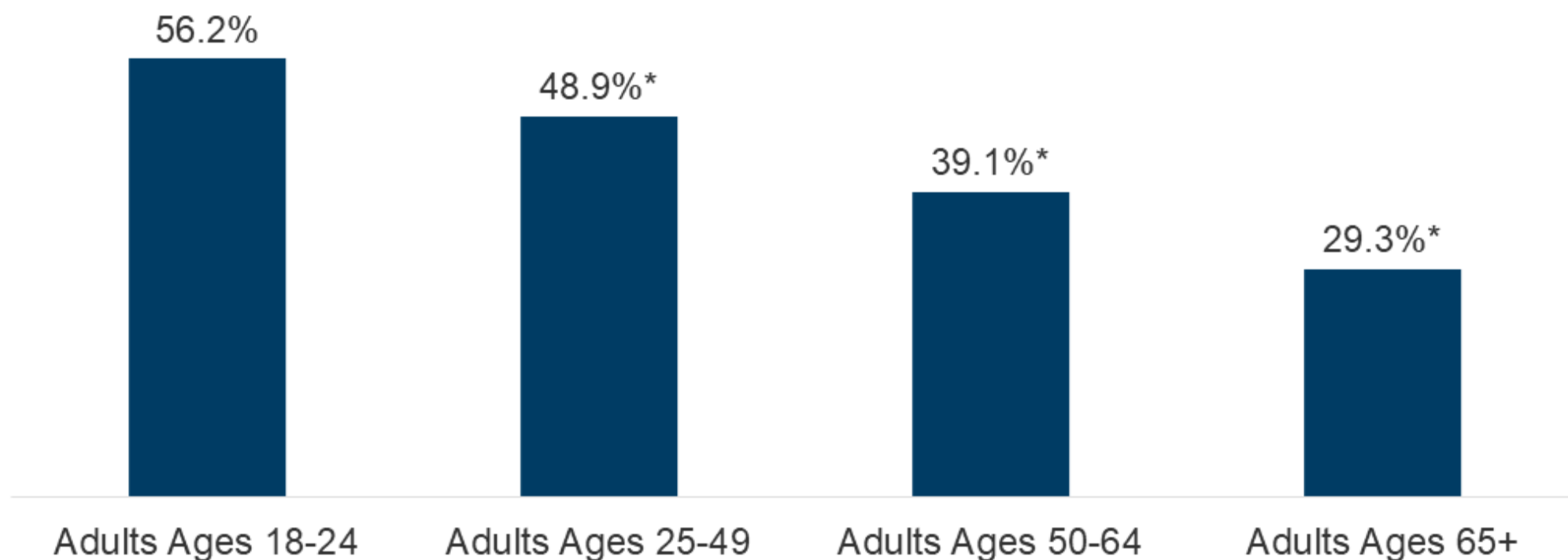


INTRODUCTION

- For over a year, the world has been dealing with the Covid-19 pandemic and increased mental health issues have been a major source of concern. Bereavement, isolation, loss of income and fear are triggering mental health conditions or exacerbating existing ones. Populations particularly at risk include young adults, people experiencing job loss, parents and children, communities of color, and essential workers.

Figure 3

Share of Adults Reporting Symptoms of Anxiety and/or Depressive Disorder During the COVID-19 Pandemic, by Age



NOTES: *Indicates a statistically significant difference between adults ages 18-24. Data shown includes adults, ages 18+, with symptoms of anxiety and/or depressive disorder that generally occur more than half the days or nearly every day. Data shown is for December 9 – 21, 2020.

SOURCE: U.S. Census Bureau, Household Pulse Survey, 2020.

SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS OF STRESS

- Covid has called for social distancing and has caused individuals to isolate from friends and family. It has increased individuals' stress and anxiety
- Stress can wreak havoc on an individual's immune system and the patient can be more susceptible to illnesses.
- During this pandemic, there has been an increase in individuals seeking treatment for anxiety and mood disorders.

SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS CONTINUED...

Similar to COVID, excess stress can cause the following symptoms

- Shortness of Breath
- Muscle Tension
- Nausea
- An increased heart rate
- Chest pain
- Frequent cold or infections
- Headache
- Low energy



SHORT-TERM EFFECTS OF STRESS

On your body

- Headache
- Muscle tension
- Chest pain
- Fatigue
- Stomach upset
- Sleep problems

On your Mood

- Anxiety
- Restlessness
- Lack of motivation or focus
- Feeling overwhelmed
- Irritability or anger
- Sadness or depression

On your behavior

- Overeating or undereating
- Angry outburst
- Drug or alcohol misuse
- Tobacco use
- Social withdrawal
- Exercising less

LONG-TERM EFFECTS OF STRESS

Musculoskeletal

- Chronic pain
- Harder recovery
- Weakness

Cardiovascular

- Hypertension
- Heart attack
- Stroke
- Increased cholesterol levels

Endocrine

- Chronic fatigue
- Diabetes
- Obesity
- Immune disorders

Gastrointestinal

- Heartburn/GERD
- Bowel muscle spasms
- Constipation

Male Reproductive System

- Decline in testosterone
- Loss of sex drive
- Negatively impacts sperm production and maturation

Female Reproductive System

- Absent or irregular menstruation
- Reduced sexual desire
- Negatively impacts ability to conceive

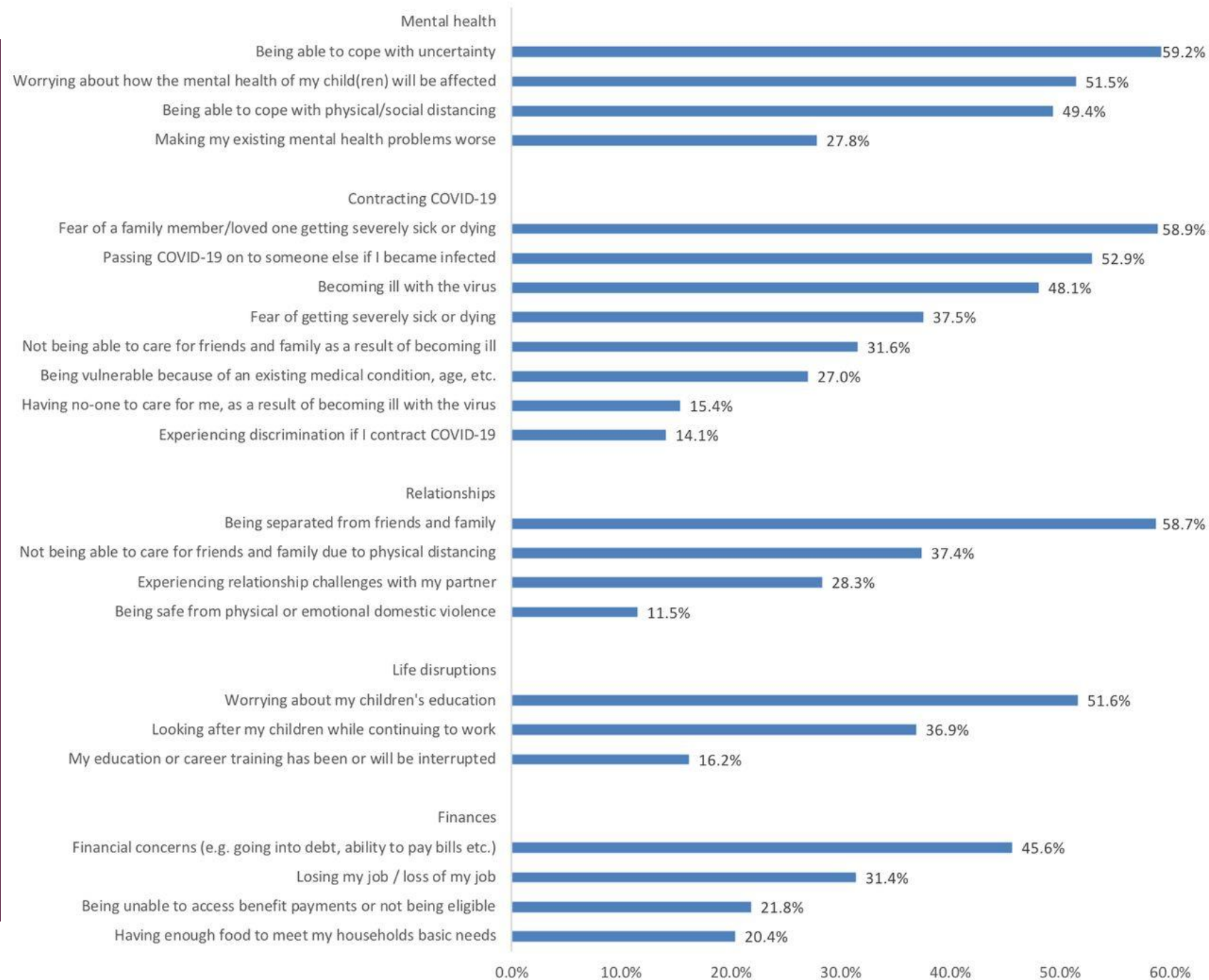
HOW STRESS CAN IMPACT FAMILIES



The stress of the pandemic has affected different ages groups in many different ways

- Baby boomers (born 1946 –1964, ages 56 – 74)
- Generation X (born 1965– 1980, ages 40– 55)
- Millennials (born 1981–1996, ages 24 – 39)
- Generation Z (born after 1996, age 18 to 23)

Pandemic-related stressors



- Pandemic related stress has affected our entire population, including young adults and children. Changes in routine, virtual learning environments, canceled celebrations or life events, and housing or food insecurity are all potential sources of stress for children during this time.
- Signs of stress or anxiety in children may include the following behavioral changes
 - Excessive crying or irritation
 - Returning to behaviors they have outgrown
 - Changes in eating or sleeping habits
 - Acting out
 - Poor school performance
 - Difficulties with attention and concentration
- Helpful ways to decrease stress and anxiety in children; reassure the child's safety, answer questions about COVID-19 in a way that they can understand, try to keep up with the child's regular routine as much as possible, and spend time with the child while doing activities like reading, playing, exercising etc.

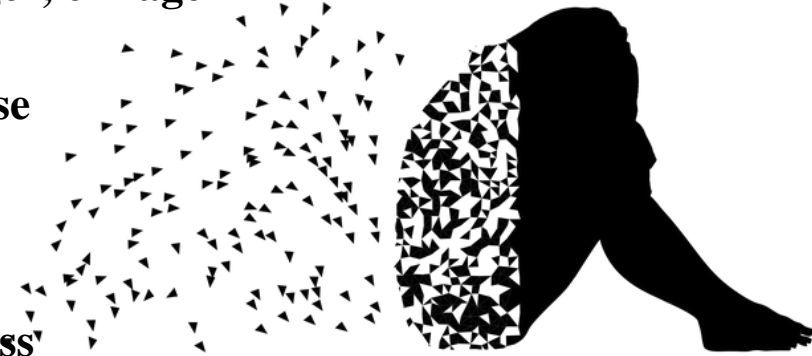
EFFECTS OF STRESS ON CHILDREN

EFFECTS OF STRESS ON THE ELDERLY

- In the same way pandemic related stress has affected our younger population, it has also caused increased stress and anxiety for the elderly population.
- Stress factors
 - Social isolation, especially in nursing home or assisted living facilities
 - Worry and uncertainty about contracting the virus
 - Loss of control or consistency in routines
- Specific ways to decrease stress and anxiety for the elderly population include regular physical exercise, maintaining routines, and speaking to loved ones over the phone or outside while social distancing.

WHEN TO SEEK HELP

- **Feeling like a burden or being trapped**
- **Increased anxiety, anger, or rage**
- **Increased substance use**
- **Extreme mood swings**
- **Expressing hopelessness**
- **Difficulty sleeping or concentrating**
- **Talking about wanting to die/making plans for suicide**



ACTIVITIES TO IMPROVE STRESS

- **Walking, running, hiking**
- **Yoga, Pilates, & Stretching Exercises**
- **Connect virtually with loved ones**
- **Get plenty of sleep**
- **Listening to music, reading, journaling**
- **Gardening, starting new project, or crafting**
- **Making care packages & writing letters to loved ones**



GO OUTSIDE



Sun exposure has many benefits

- Vitamin D “the sunshine vitamin”
 - made when your skin is exposed to the sun
 - protects against depression
- sunlight increases serotonin
 - which helps regulate mood
- improves sleep

5-15 minutes a day can improve your mental health

*remember to wear your spf!

You don't need to social distance from nature!

- A strong connection to the natural environment enhances emotional well-being and alleviates feelings of social isolation
- A nature walk can significantly uplift your mood, promote feelings of happiness and peace
- Reduces stress by lowering the stress hormone cortisol
- Contact with natural light can be therapeutic and has immediate positive effects on stress, blood pressure, and the immune system.



CONNECT
WITH NATURE

COMMUNITY RESOURCES

National Alliance on Mental Illness of Greater Toledo

Family sessions: Every Monday 7:00-8:30 pm

Meeting ID: 144 201 753

Password: 014418

Peer session: Every Tuesday 7:00-8:30 pm

Meeting ID: 756 332 450

Password: 024463

(414)-969-4138

Mental Health and Recovery Services Board of Lucas County

Includes both individual and family resources

<https://www.lcmhrsb.oh.gov/coronavirus/>

COMMUNITY RESOURCES CONTINUED...

Michigan Stay Well counselors

24/7 free and confidential counseling. 1-888-535-6136 and press “8”

Anxiety and Depression Association of America (ADAA)

provides information on prevention, treatment and symptoms of anxiety, depression and related conditions (240-485-1001)

The American Foundation for Suicide Prevention

provides referrals to support groups and mental health professionals, resources on loss, and suicide prevention information (888-333-2377)

The Suicide Prevention Lifeline

connects callers to trained crisis counselors (800-273-8255)

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