

# Protective Factors for Student Mental Health and Well-being: Learnings from the YDI and Kids & Covid Project

Speaker: Dr. Hasina Samji

Webinar Host: Michelle Cianfrone

December 6, 2022

Welcome! We will begin the presentation shortly. Please note that your microphones have been muted and your cameras are turned off.





# BC Children's Health Promotion and Health Literacy Team

## What we do:

- Resource development, curation and navigation
- Education, peer support and professional development
- Capacity-building across complex systems like schools, communities and health organizations
- Provincial network and partnership development



# BC Children's Mental Health Supports and Resources for School Communities

## We offer:

- Support with school mental health promotion planning and implementation
- Resources and support for parents and caregivers - [keltymentalhealth.ca](https://keltymentalhealth.ca)
- Support for school counsellors and other clinicians providing mental health and substance use care to students - [compassbc.ca](https://compassbc.ca)

## School Mental Health Promotion

The BC Children's School Mental Health Promotion team supports school communities with mental health promotion planning and implementation by providing mentorship, resources and professional learning.

*Generously supported by our partners:*





## Housekeeping

- Attendees are automatically muted and cameras are turned off.
- Please submit questions for the speakers through the “Q&A” function.
- Please submit technical questions or comments through the “Chat” function.
- At the end of the webinar, a survey will pop up that we invite you to complete.
- A PDF of the slides will be available at: [keltymentalhealth.ca/school-professionals](https://keltymentalhealth.ca/school-professionals)
- The webinar will be recorded and made available at the same link.
- This information applies to the context in British Columbia. If you are in another jurisdiction please consult local health and school authorities for further information.

## Speaker



Dr. Hasina Samji

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Senior Scientist, Population Mental Wellbeing, BC Centre for Disease Control



# Protective Factors for Student Mental Health and Well-being: Learnings from the YDI and Covid & Kids project

**Dr. Hasina Samji**

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Simon Fraser University

Senior Scientist in  
Population Mental Well-being,  
BC Centre for Disease Control

Director,  
Capturing Health and Resilience  
Trajectories (CHART) Lab

# Land Acknowledgement

Our team is grateful to live and work on the unceded traditional territories of the Coast Salish peoples, including the Kwikwetlem, Musqueam, Squamish, Stó:lō, and Tsleil-Waututh First Nations.





# CHART Lab

Research Team



# Today's Objectives

- Present **key findings of the 2021/2022 YDI and Covid & Kids project**
- Identify **key protective factors** related to mental health and well-being
- Discuss **active ingredients** for supporting student mental health and well-being

IF WE WANT  
TO ADDRESS  
MENTAL  
HEALTH

# WE NEED TO dig deeper

@ALYSERURIANI





# Significance of Youth

- ▶ 62.5% of people living with mental illness have onset of symptoms **before the age of 25** (Solmi et al., 2022).
- ▶ Adolescence is a **developmental transition period** between childhood and early adulthood involving the navigation of new physical, hormonal, cognitive, and emotional changes as well as social challenges.
- ▶ This period presents a critical time for **mental illness prevention and promotion of mental health and well-being**.

# The Youth Development Instrument (YDI)

- ▶ Provincial **well-being self-report questionnaire** for Grade 11 students in British Columbia
- ▶ Developed through partnership between the **BCCDC & HELP**
- ▶ Funded by research dollars provided by **BCCDC, SFU & SSHRC**

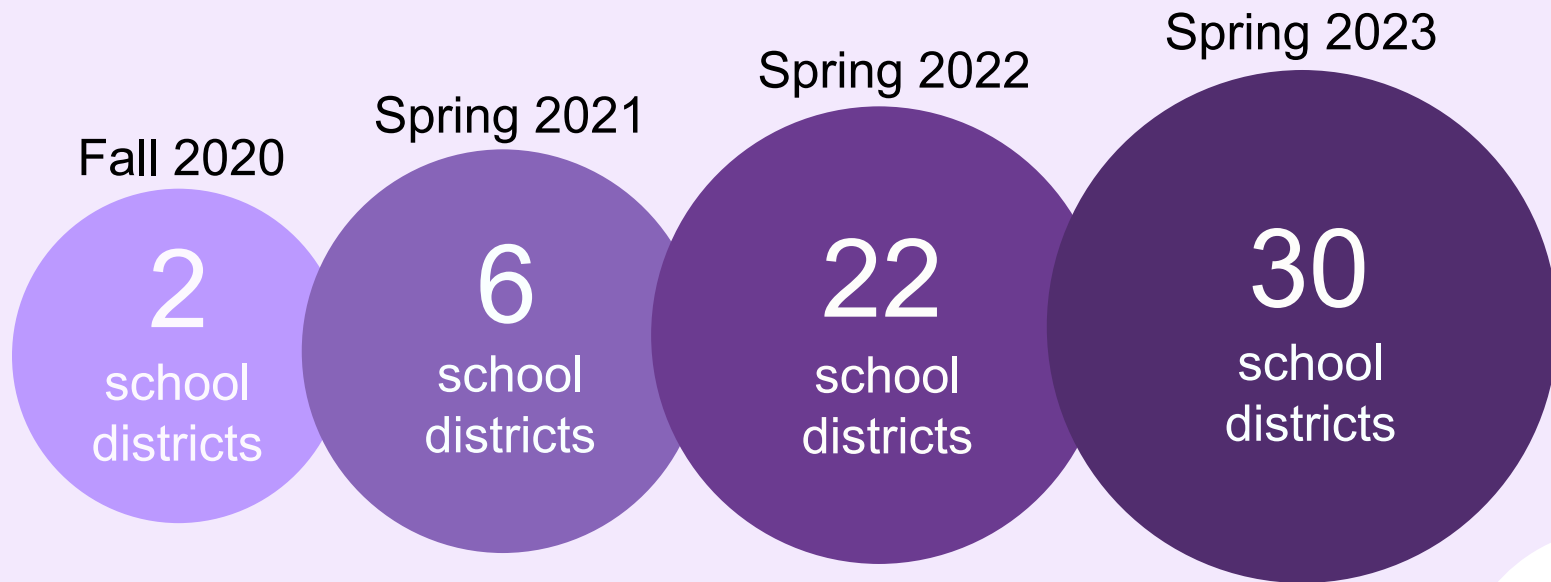
# YDI Pilot & Expansion



Piloted in 2020 & 2021



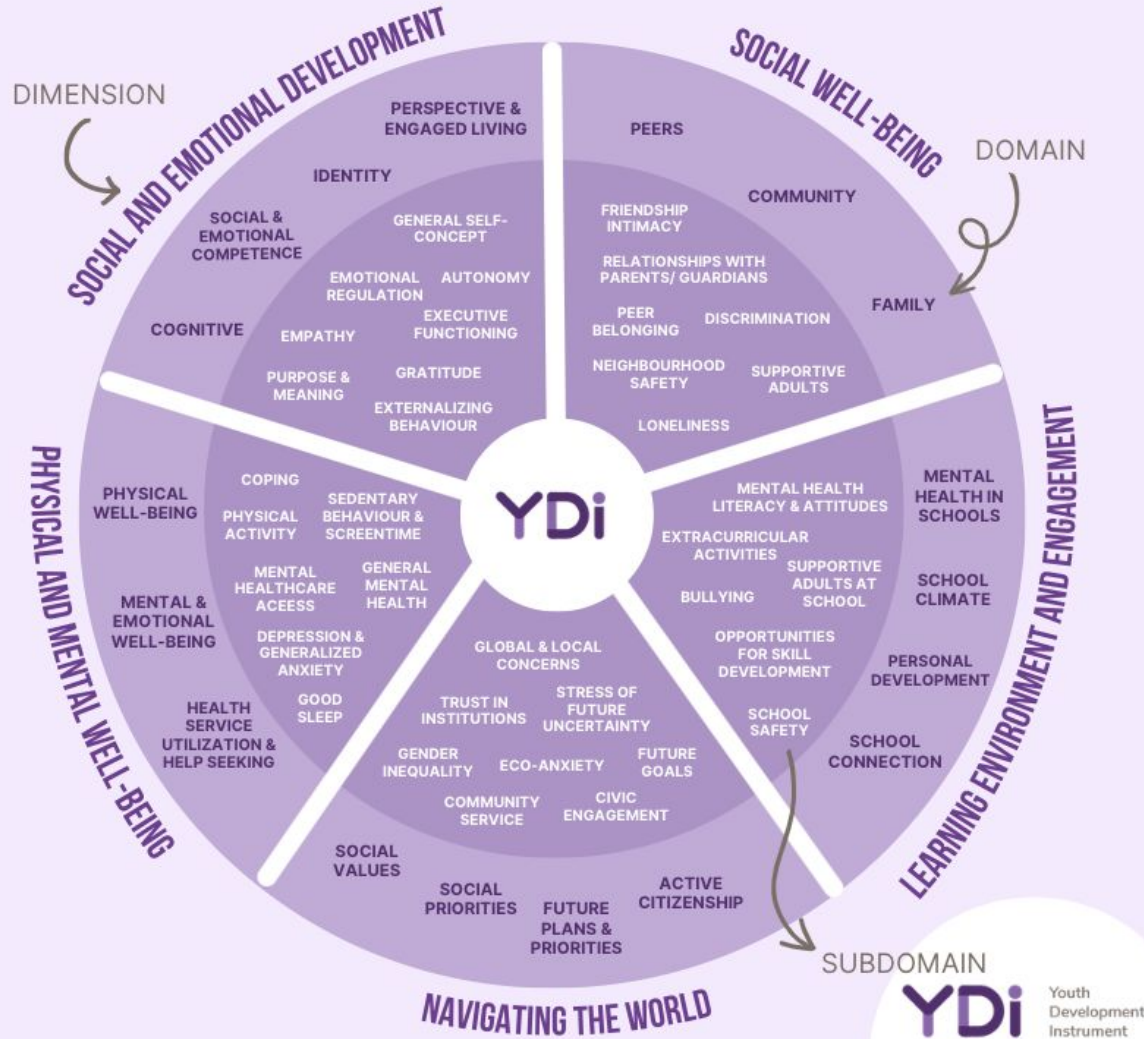
Provincial roll-out in 2022



# YDI Objectives

- Identify **key assets** developed during adolescence that create foundations for positive mental health and well-being trajectories
- Provide education, health, clinical, and community partners with resources and tools to understand and address youth well-being
- Link YDI data to **past student responses** in childhood and early adolescence and **prospectively to health services data** to identify factors that predict youth flourishing
- Meaningfully contribute to and shape public health interaction with the BC education system

# Snapshot of YDI Dimensions, Domains & Subdomains





# YDI 2021/22 Participating Districts

- 9,255 student respondents
- 22 school districts (~37% of BC SDs)
- 5 independent schools
- Data collection Spring 2022



# Demographics

## GENDER IDENTITY

Boy or man	50%	Non-binary	3%
Girl or woman	46%	In another way	2%

## SEXUAL ORIENTATION

Straight or heterosexual	77%	LGBTQIA	23%
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## RACE/ETHNICITY

Indigenous	7%	East Asian	18%
White	60%	Southeast Asian	6%
Black	3%	South Asian	8%
Latinx	4%	West Asian	3%
Arab	2%	Other	4%

# Demographics

## IMMIGRATION

Born in Canada	73%	Born outside of Canada	26%
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## LANGUAGES

English only	60%
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English and other language(s)	13%
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Other language(s) only	27%
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## RURILITY

Urban	12%	Rural	88%
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## FAMILY AFFLUENCE

High	39%
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Medium	44%
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Low	17%
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# YDI 2022 vs Canada Census

RACE/ETHNICITY	2022 YDI	2016 CANADA CENSUS
Arab	2%	0.5%
Black	3%	1.5%
East Asian	17.7%	16.2%
Indigenous	7.7%	9%
Latinx	4%	1.1%
South Asian	8.1%	9.6%
Southeast Asian	6.4%	6.2%
West Asian	3.2%	1%
White/European	60.2%	61.9%

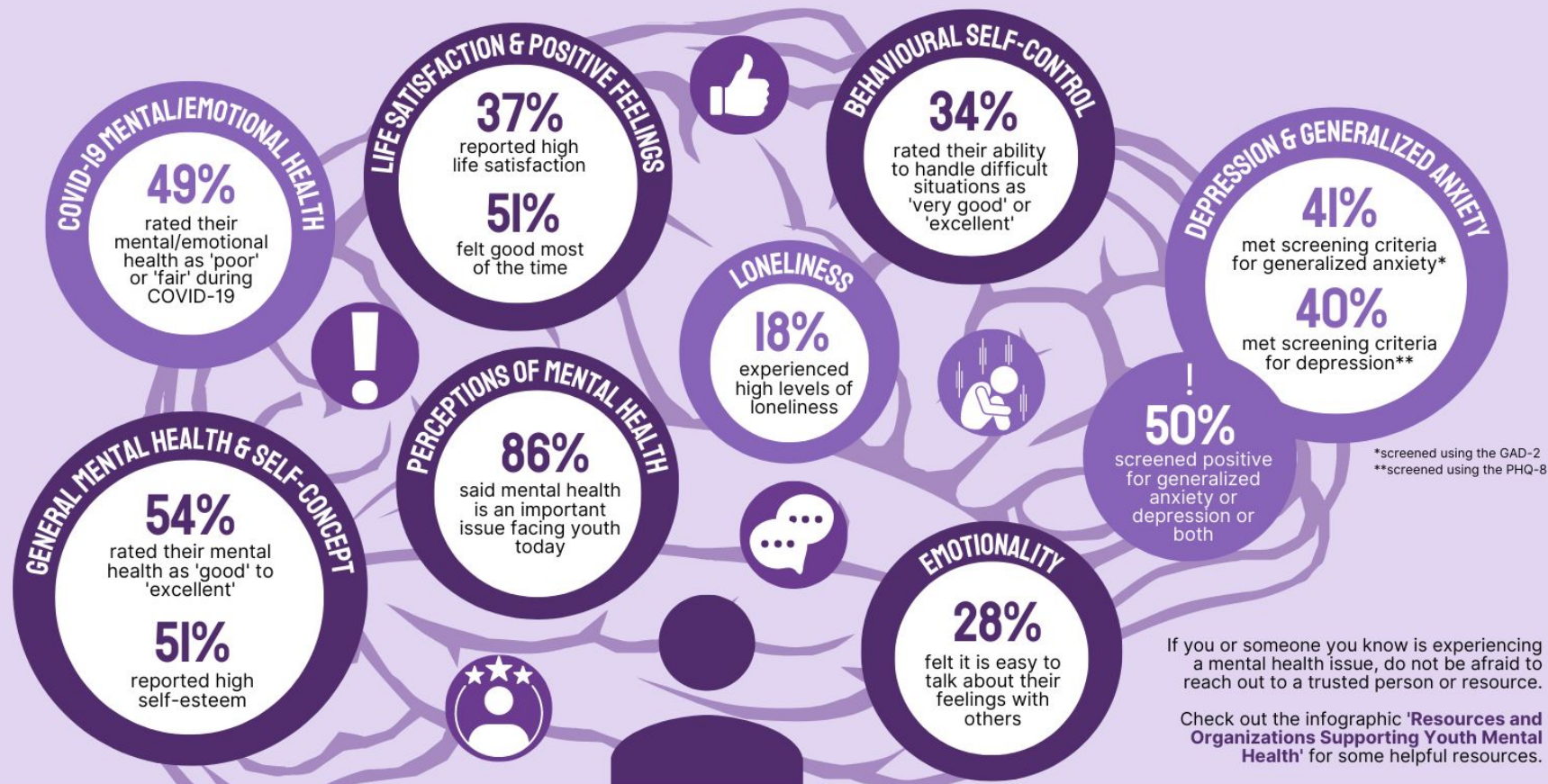
# Mental Well-being

How are youth doing?



# A SPOTLIGHT ON MENTAL HEALTH EXPERIENCES

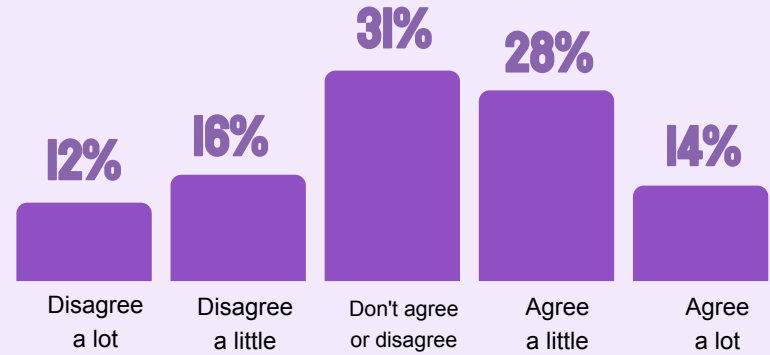
The 2021/2022 YDI asked 9255 youth about areas that impact their mental health, including both positive and negative feelings, mental health during COVID-19, and coping skills.



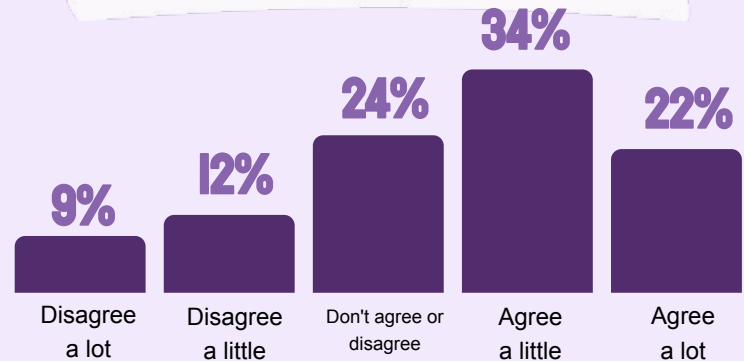
# Perceptions of Mental Health in Schools

n=~8,508

People at my school talk openly about mental health.



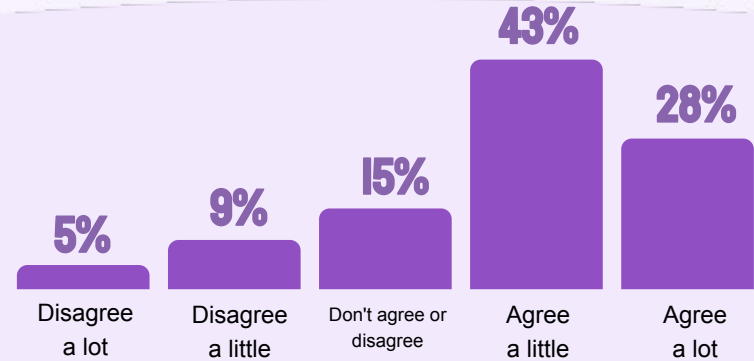
My school encourages students to take care of their mental health.



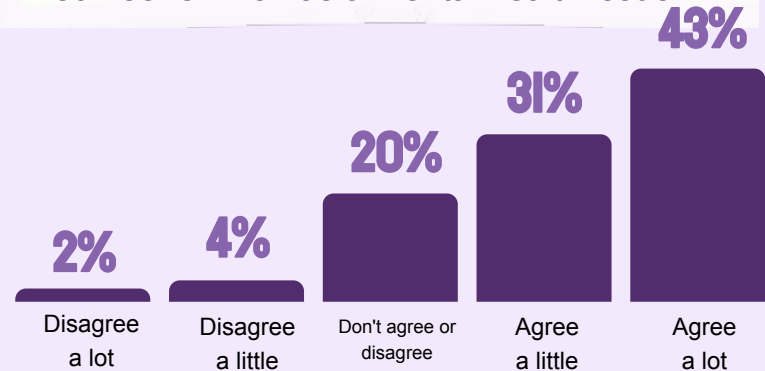
# Mental Health Literacy & Attitudes

n=8,512

I would know how to help a friend who is constantly feeling worried, nervous or down all the time.



I would be happy to develop a close friendship with someone who has a mental health issue.





# Protective Factors

How do we protect youth mental health?

# Coping

Youth selected all the activities they do to cope with distressing events, such as COVID-19.

Which activities were the most youth engaging in? How helpful were they?



# Positive Childhood Experiences (PCEs)



Protect against poor development and health outcomes during times of challenge



Warm, supportive home



Participating in community traditions



Positive relationships with peers



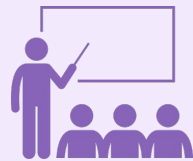
Positive school relationships

# YDI Findings: PCEs (2021 & 2022)

## PCEs most strongly related to mental well-being



Social and emotional competencies  
(self-esteem, optimism, emotion  
regulation)



Positive school experiences  
(e.g., feeling safe at schools,  
feeling a sense of belonging)



Positive experiences at home  
(e.g., supportive caregivers,  
feeling safe, connection)



Spending time with supportive  
peers



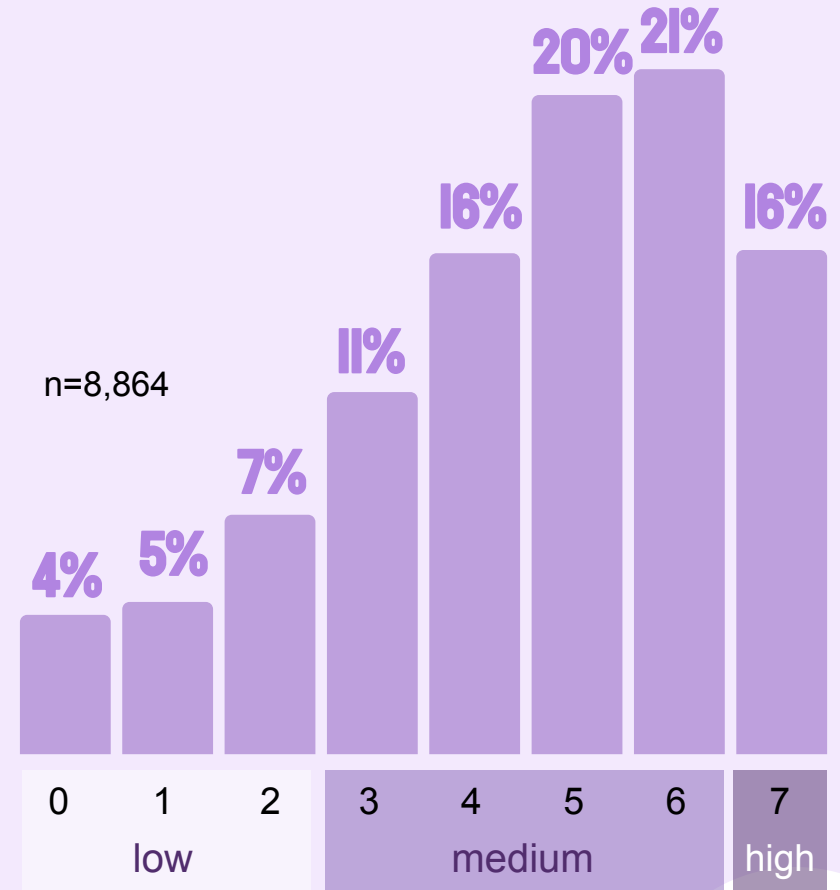
Good sleep

# Number of PCEs

Beneficial experiences before the age of 18 that are thought to promote resilience

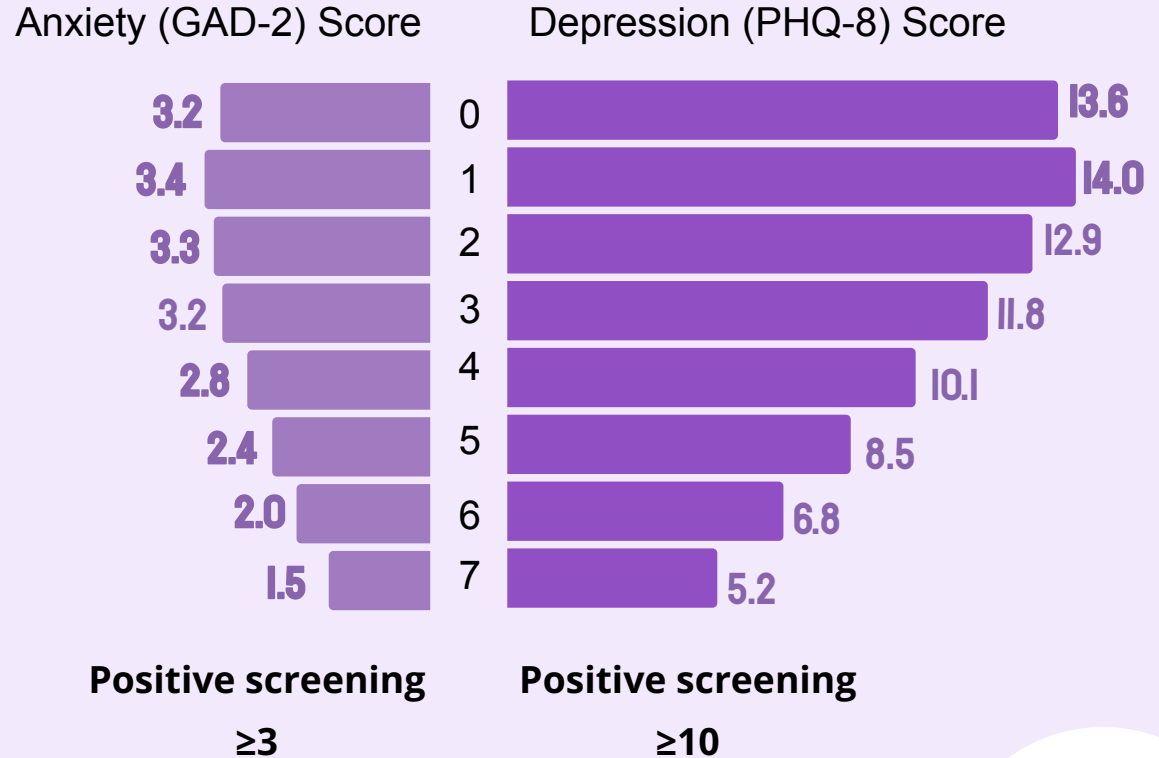
## Examples:

- Could talk about their feelings with family
- Enjoyed participating in community traditions
- Felt supported by friends



Score (Number of PCEs)

# Number of PCEs



n=8,864

# Impacts of COVID-19

How did the pandemic impact youth mental health? What helped?

# Covid & Kids project



**DR. EVELYN STEWART, MD**

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Investigator | BC Children's Hospital  
Director of Research, Child and Adolescent  
Psychiatry | BC Children's Hospital  
Professor | Department of Psychiatry, UBC



**DR. HASINA SAMJI, PHD, MSC**

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Senior Scientist in Population Mental Well-being | BC  
Centre for Disease Control, PHSA  
Assistant Professor | Faculty of Health Sciences, SFU



# Overview of the Covid & Kids project

- **Objective #1:** Understand the impact of the pandemic on youth mental health
- **Objective #2:** Understand if the impact of the pandemic on youth mental health differed across some subgroup populations
- **Objective #3:** Identify protective and risk factors related to youth mental health during Covid-19
- 2350 youth participants from 2020-2021 YDI Phase 2

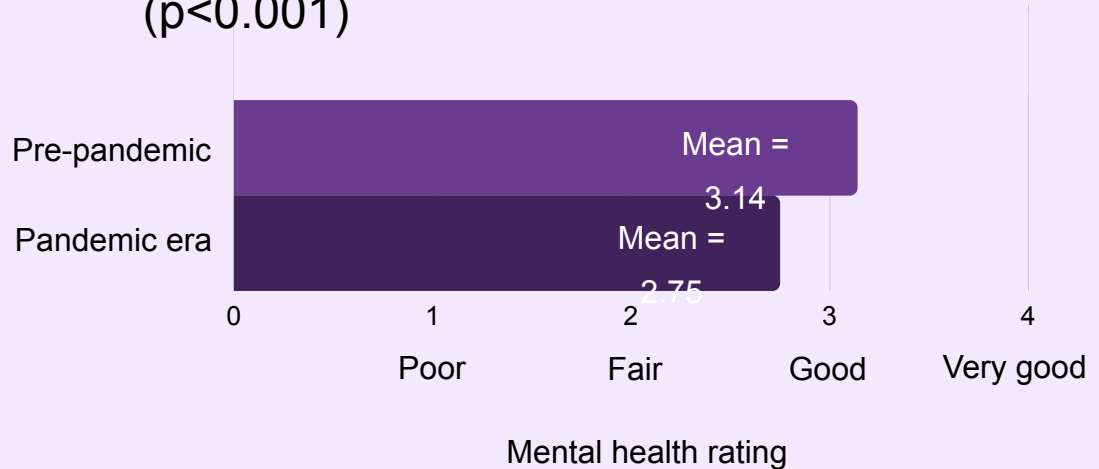
# Objective 1

Understand the impact of the pandemic on youth mental health

# Covid & Kids Findings



**Decline in self-reported mental health**  
between pre-pandemic and pandemic era  
( $p < 0.001$ )



# Objective 2

**Understand if the impact of the pandemic on youth mental health differed across some subgroup populations**

# Covid & Kids Findings



Disproportionate mental health impacts on **female and gender and sexual minority youth** in comparison to their male and non-2SLGBTQIA+ peers



# Objective 3

Identify protective and risk factors  
related to youth mental health  
during Covid-19

# Modifiable Protective and Risk Factors



Investigated modifiable variables in four broad categories:



Personal



Family



Peers



School



Also investigated the impact of specific coping strategies and extracurricular activities on mental health

# Personal Protective Factors



SELF-ESTEEM



OPTIMISM



EMOTIONAL REGULATION



SLEEP



PHYSICAL ACTIVITY



SELF-CARE



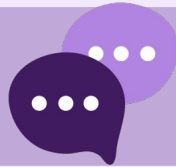
# Family Protective Factors



SUPPORTIVE ADULTS AT  
HOME



POSITIVE FAMILY  
RELATIONSHIPS



GOOD COMMUNICATION WITH  
PARENTS/GUARDIANS



FEELING CONNECTED TO  
FAMILY

# Peer Protective Factors



FRIENDSHIP INTIMACY



SUPPORTIVE PEERS



HANGING OUT WITH FRIENDS

# School Protective Factors



FEELING SAFE AT SCHOOL



SCHOOL BELONGING



POSITIVE SCHOOL  
ENVIRONMENT



SUPPORTIVE TEACHERS AND  
SCHOOL COUNSELLORS

# Community and Contextual Protective Factors



ATTENDING SUPPORT GROUPS



SPENDING TIME OUTDOORS



PARTICIPATING IN USUAL  
EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES



PARTICIPATING IN YOUTH  
ORGANIZATIONS



SPIRITUAL OR RELIGIOUS ACTIVITY



VOLUNTEERING

# Active Ingredients

What can we do?

# Emerging Research

- ▶ 50+ research teams across the world are funded by **Wellcome** to review evidence on depression and anxiety prevention and treatment interventions for young people
- ▶ Teams investigate '**active ingredients**' of depression and anxiety interventions:

**Key factors that impact the effectiveness of anxiety and depression interventions**

- ▶ Ongoing reviews since 2020

**What science has shown can help young people with anxiety and depression**

Identifying and reviewing the 'active ingredients' of effective interventions: Part 1

# Active Ingredients

- ▶ Wellcome's work is aimed at those who work on **evidence-informed programs, policies, and interventions** for youth mental health
- ▶ Serve as an important framework for planning and implementing mental health programs for youth
- ▶ Many overlapping active ingredients and YDI subdomains and Covid & Kids findings



# Active Ingredients and YDI Subdomains

Behaviours and activities	Beliefs and knowledge	Brain/body functions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Behavioural activation*</b></li> <li>• Collaborative goal setting and tracking</li> <li>• <b>Engagement with the arts*</b></li> <li>• <b>Physical activity*</b></li> <li>• <b>Problem solving*</b></li> <li>• Self-disclosure</li> <li>• Exposure</li> <li>• Relaxation techniques</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Cultural connection*</b></li> <li>• <b>Mental health literacy*</b></li> <li>• <b>Sense of mattering*</b></li> <li>• <b>Sense of purpose*</b></li> <li>• <b>Self-evaluation*</b></li> <li>• <b>Social action*</b></li> <li>• <b>Spiritual and religious beliefs*</b></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Circadian rhythms*</b></li> <li>• Gut microbiome</li> <li>• Hippocampal neurogenesis</li> <li>• Omega-3 supplements</li> <li>• Reduced levels of inflammation</li> <li>• Selective serotonin re-uptake inhibitors</li> </ul>
Cognitive and attentional skills	Human connections	Socioeconomic factors
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Affective awareness*</b></li> <li>• Decentering</li> <li>• <b>Emotional controllability*</b></li> <li>• <b>Emotional granularity*</b></li> <li>• <b>Emotional regulation*</b></li> <li>• <b>Helpful attentional and interpersonal thinking patterns*</b></li> <li>• <b>Hopefulness*</b></li> <li>• Mental imagery</li> <li>• Repetitive negative thinking reduction</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Family support*</b></li> <li>• Working alliance</li> <li>• <b>Communication in families*</b></li> <li>• <b>Neighbourhood cohesion*</b></li> <li>• <b>Loneliness reduction*</b></li> <li>• <b>Peer support*</b></li> <li>• <b>School connectedness*</b></li> <li>• <b>Social inclusion*</b></li> <li>• <b>Social relationships*</b></li> <li>• Digital quality social connection</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Economic transfers</li> <li>• <b>Urban access to green space*</b></li> </ul>

\*Indicates overlap with YDI

Adapted from (Wellcome,  
2020, Table 1)



# YDI Findings and Active Ingredients

- **Fostering human connections through family, peers, school, and in the community** as a way to support youth mental well-being is a commonality between active ingredients and our findings
- **Social inclusion** interventions (e.g., 2SLGBTQIA+ allyship training and clubs, etc.) may help address the disproportionate impacts of the pandemic on 2SLGBTQIA+ youth
- **Promoting self-esteem and social and emotional competencies** (e.g., optimism, emotional regulation, etc.) may also be effective in supporting youth mental health

# Key Messages

- ▶ Youth **mental well-being declined** significantly during the pandemic
- ▶ **Females and 2SLGBTQIA+ youth** were disproportionately impacted by the pandemic
- ▶ Key **protective actions** include fostering social connections, positive school environments, reducing loneliness and promoting social and emotional learning
- ▶ **YDI data and active ingredients** offer a promising recipe for youth mental health interventions, and more work should be done to investigate these factors

# Questions?

**Submit via Zoom “Q&A” icon**

# Thank you!

Questions?

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[@yditeam](https://www.instagram.com/yditeam)



Youth Development  
Instrument



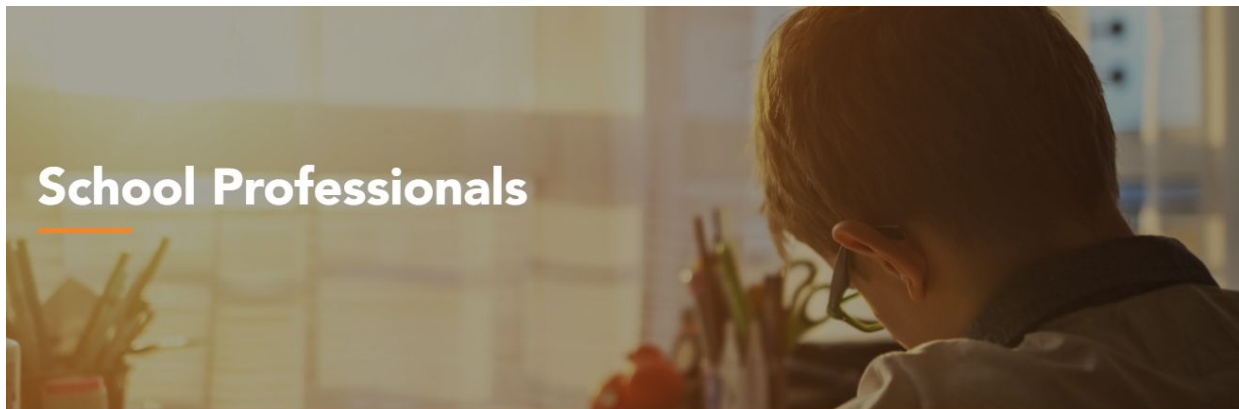
Youth  
Development  
Instrument



BC  
**Children's  
Hospital**  
Research Institute



# Resources for School Communities



The BC Children's Health Promotion Team and Kelty Mental Health Resource Centre provide resources and information to people working to support mental health in the school community including teachers, counsellors, administrators, district staff, community partners and support staff.

In this section, you will find resources for teaching and learning about mental health and well-being in school communities. This includes key resources and lesson plans for supporting social emotional learning in your school community, information on teaching students about mental health literacy, and resources to foster teacher and staff well-being. You will also find stories about great work happening in school districts across the province in the Spotlight Video Series.

For an overview of the supports and resources we offer to school communities and how to contact us, please see [here](#).

Get Support 

For resources and  
information, visit  
[keltymentalhealth.ca/  
school-professionals](https://keltymentalhealth.ca/school-professionals)

# SEL with a Cultural Lens Webinar Series



Redefining and Locating Cu...

Webinar Recording

Part 1: Redefining & Locating Culture within our SEL Practice

with Dr. Robyn Ilten-Gee,  
Assistant Professor at  
Simon Fraser University  
April 20, 2022

**Part 1: Redefining & Locating Culture within our SEL Practice: Webinar for School Professionals** [🔗](#)

BC Children's Hospital



Trailblazing Indigenous Pat...

Webinar Recording

Part 2: Trailblazing Indigenous Pathways Through Social & Emotional Wellness

with Dr. Johanna Sam  
assistant professor, UBC &  
Ivy Chelsea, Secwepmctsin  
language teacher, SD 73

**Part 2: Trailblazing Indigenous Pathways Through Social & Emotional Wellness : Webinar for School Professionals** [🔗](#)

# Learning Burst Videos: School Mental Health Spotlight Series

**SD 45's Framework  
for Mental Health in  
Schools**

**Universal Elements  
for Caring and  
Compassionate  
Schools**

**Schoolwide  
Assessment and  
Growth Plan Toolkit**

**Schoolwide SEL in  
SD 38**

**Engaging Youth to  
Move from Data to  
Action with the YDI**



# Recent Webinars and Podcasts for School Communities

## Podcasts

- When School Staff are Well, Students are Too, Strategies to Avoid Burnout
- Stronger Together: Promoting Mental Wellness in Rural and Remote Schools
- Social and Emotional Learning: Supporting Kids at Home and School



## Webinars

- SEL with a Cultural Lens Series
- School Anxiety & Attendance Challenges
- Selective Mutism & Reluctant Speakers



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**I am a**

☐ Parent/Caregiver

☐ Health Professional

☐ School Professional

☐ Other

[keltymentalhealth.ca](https://keltymentalhealth.ca)



# Questions for the speakers?

## Submit via Zoom “Q&A” icon

*Thank-you for joining*

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hsamji@sfu.ca

