

Highlighting COVID-19 Impacts on Families of Children with Special Needs

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Who We Are: The Child and Parent Resource Institute (CPRI)



Tertiary service provider for children, youth, families, and community agencies across Ontario, Canada.



Located in London, Ontario.



Operated by Ontario Ministry of Children, Community, and Social Services.







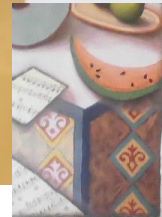
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What Does the Literature Say?



According to several global surveys during lockdown (Spring 2020)...



Most parents experienced more stress and exhaustion during pandemic (parenting = moderating factor for worsening mental health).



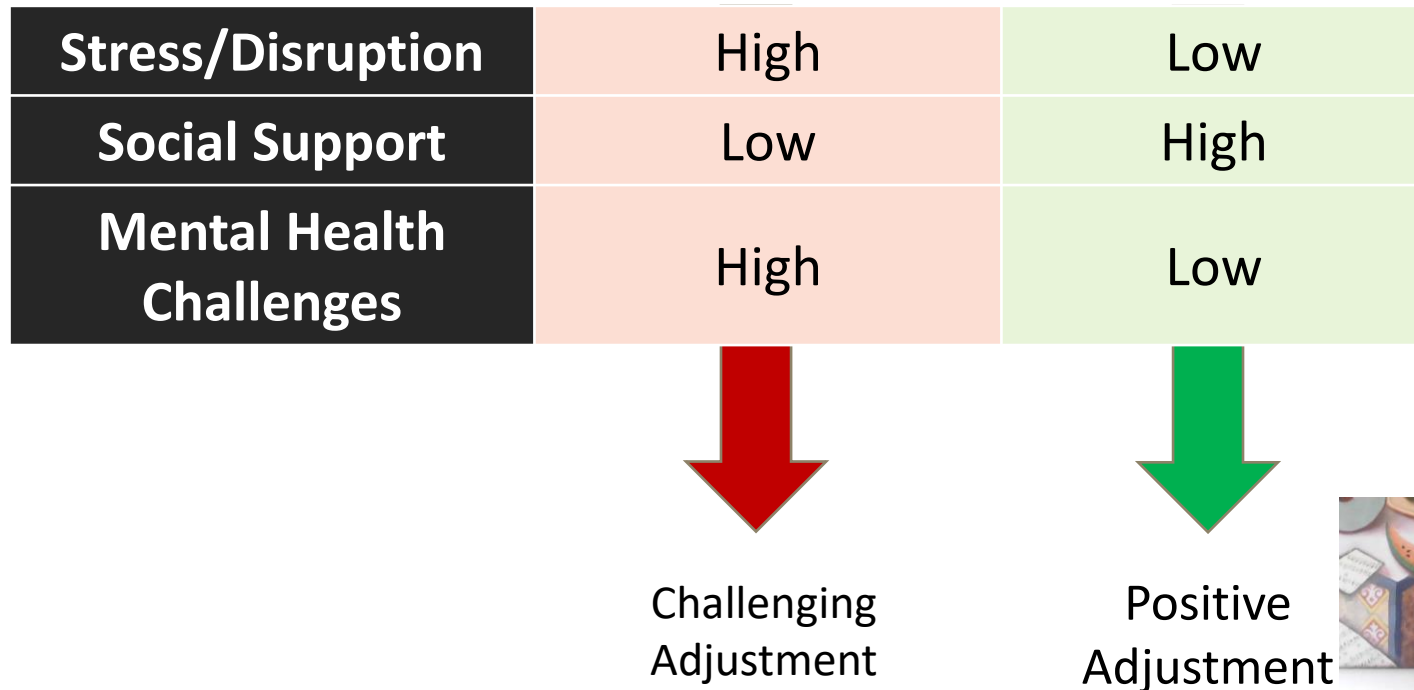
However, some parents reported strengthened family connections during the pandemic.

(American Psychological Association, 2020; Bentenuto et al., 2021; Brown et al., 2020; Gadermann et al., 2021; Giannotti et al., 2021; Goldberg et al., 2021; Patrick et al., 2020; Pierce et al., 2020; Spinelli et al., 2020; Statistics Canada, 2020; Visone et al., 2022)



What Does the Literature Say?

Families adjusted differently depending on their level of life stress, disruption, mental health, and support.



What Does the Literature Say?

Higher risk of pandemic challenges for families who have children with special needs...

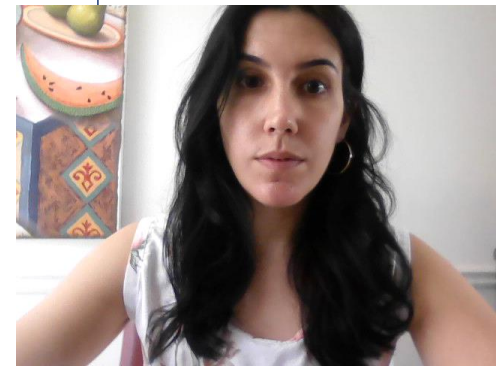


Increased externalizing behaviour predicted by decreased therapeutic support.

More parental stress and exhaustion compared to non-clinical families.

Greater risk of psychosocial problems for children with special needs.

Gap: no pre-pandemic comparison



What did life look like during the COVID-19 pandemic for families with children or youth who have complex needs?

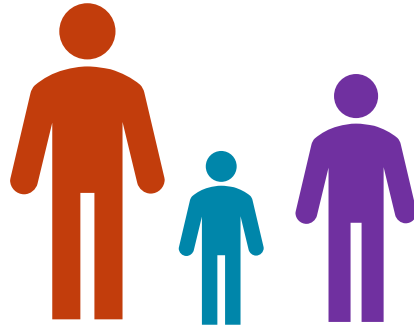


More challenges during pandemic vs. pre-pandemic?



More challenges for those with children vs. youth?





Families with
child/youth
ages 4 - 18

Receiving outpatient services at a
single tertiary agency

Sample 1: Services
18 months before
pandemic

Vs.

Sample 2: Services
in first 18 months
of pandemic



interRAI™ Child/Youth Suite

- 1.** Child and Youth Mental Health (ChYMH)
- 2.** ChYMH-Developmental Disability
- 3.** ChYMH-Screener

Parental
mental
health

Parental
major life
stressors

Conflict
within
family

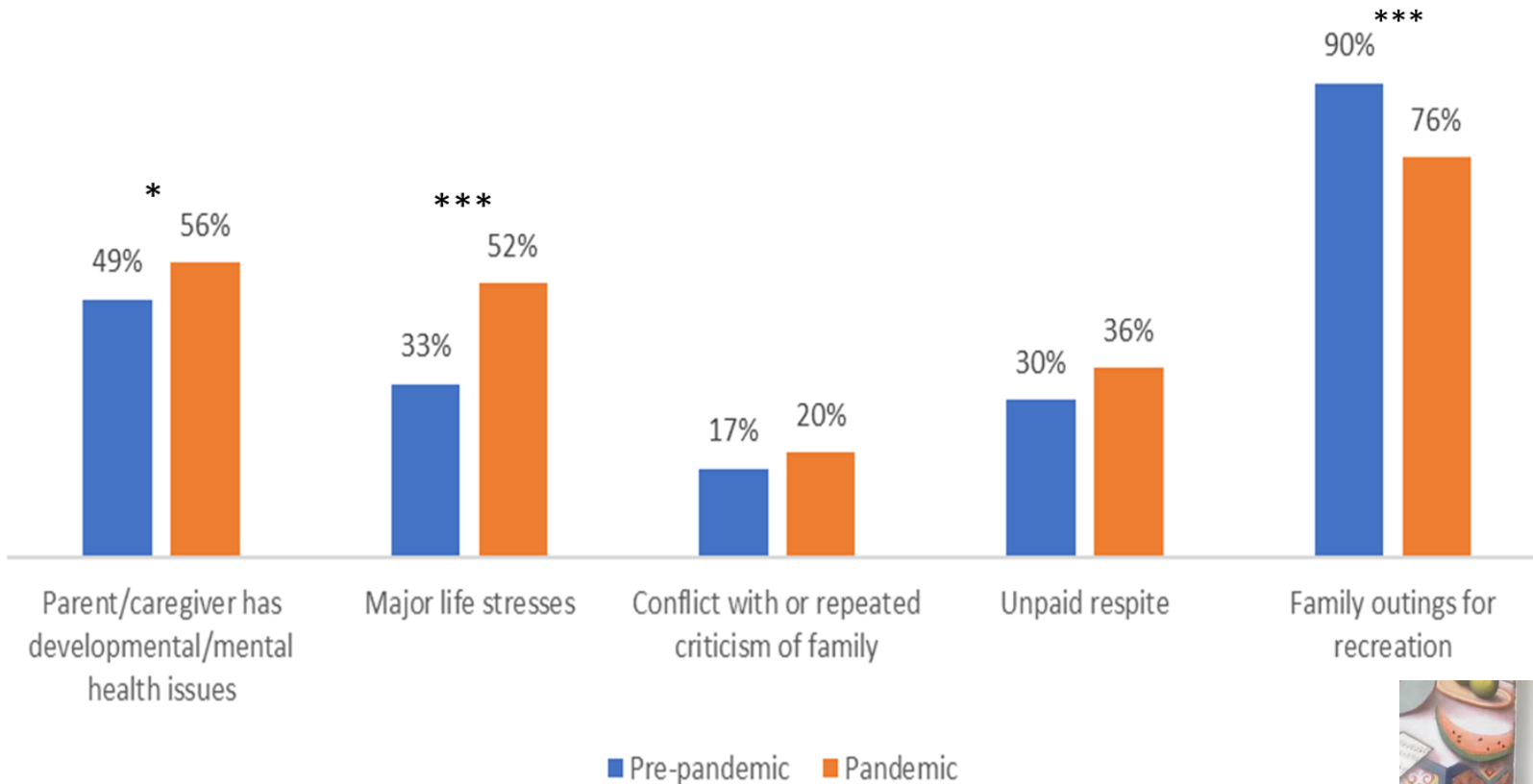
Unpaid
respite
support

Family
outings



Results

Table 1: Results for Comparisons between Pre-Pandemic and Pandemic Clinical Samples for Family Related Experiences (Total Sample)

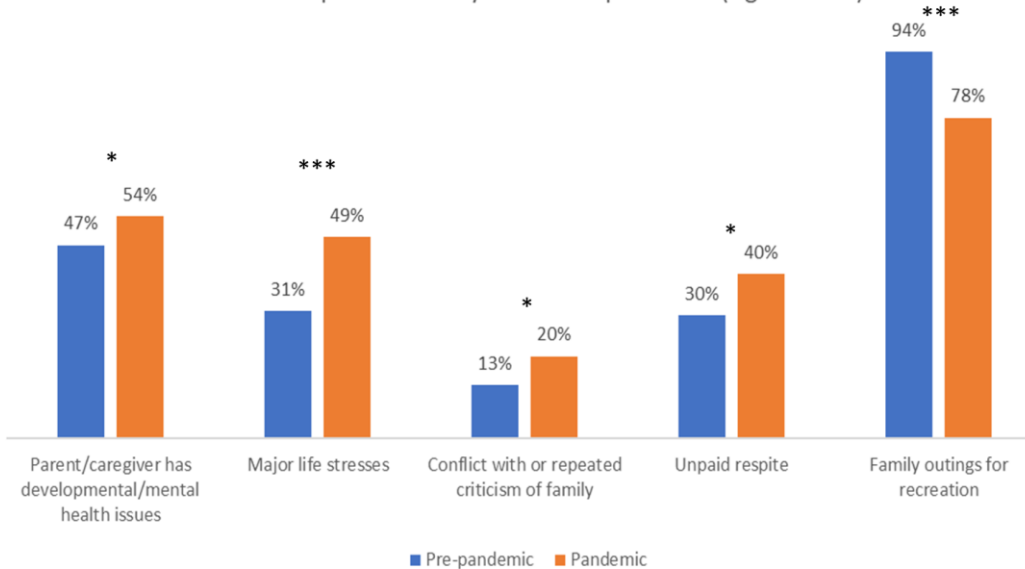


*** $p < .001$; ** $p < .01$, * $p < .05$



Children

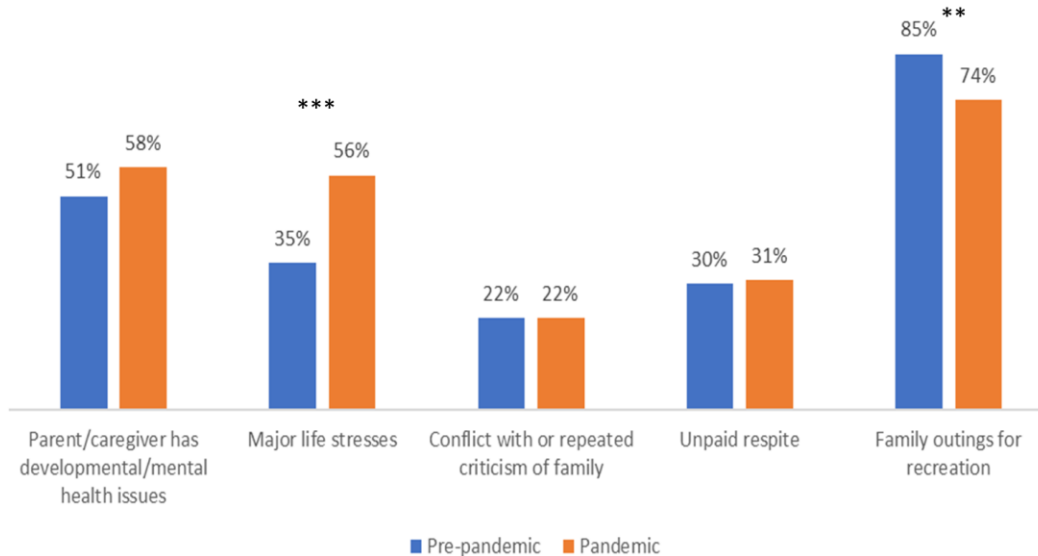
Table 2: Results for Comparisons between Pre-Pandemic and Pandemic Clinical Samples for Family Related Experiences (Age 4 to 11)



*** $p < .001$
** $p < .01$,
* $p < .05$

Youth

Table 3: Results for Comparisons between Pre-Pandemic and Pandemic Clinical Samples for Family Related Experiences (Age 12 to 18)



This is what life may have looked like during the COVID-19 pandemic for families with children or youth who have complex needs:



More parental mental health issues, stress, and family conflict.

Less support and outings.

More challenges for families with children vs. youth.



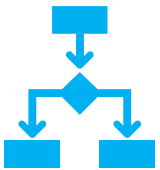
Future Research...



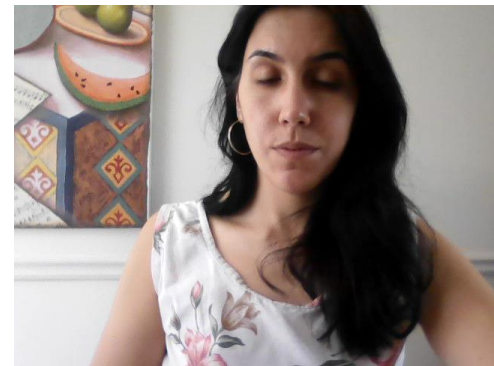
Longitudinal design



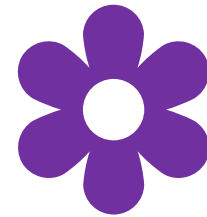
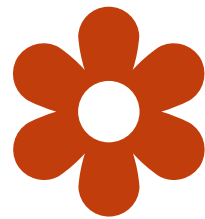
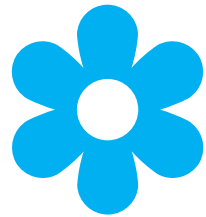
Non-Clinical vs. Clinical



Pathways to Risk/Resilience



Thank You!



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Appendix A: Items Used from interRAI™ Child/Youth Suite

1. “parent/caregiver has current developmental or mental health issues” (Yes or No)
2. “major life stressors for parent(s)/primary caregiver(s) in last 90 days” (Yes or No) *
3. “conflict with or repeated criticism of family” (no/not applicable or yes)
4. “unpaid respite supports” (not needed/available or not available) *
5. “family went on outings for recreation” (never/not within last 30 days or yes, within last 30 days) *

*Item not collected in first 6 months of pandemic (not available in Screener tool)