

# COVID-19 When You Are Under 19: Adolescents' Relationships and Well-Being During the Pandemic

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# Two big questions:

- How are adolescents shaping COVID-19?
- How is COVID-19 shaping adolescents?

# Overview

- Understanding adolescent COVID-19 guideline adherence
- Wellbeing and COVID-19
  - What we know vs. what we are worried about
  - Relationships and adolescent functioning
  - Relationships and COVID-19 outcomes

# Part 1: Adolescents and COVID-19 guideline adherence

WEBMD NEWS BRIEF

# Teens, Tweens More Likely to Spread COVID-19

By Carolyn Crist



## North Van teens, families warned after party linked to COVID spread

Recent gathering of teens from several North Van schools results in warnings for seven classes, families in self-isolation

Feb 12, 2021 1:55 PM By: Jane Seyd



COMMENTARY

## COVID-19 and the superspreaders: Teens

Publish date: October 8, 2020

By [Margaret Thew](#); [DNP](#); [FNP-BC](#)

## Do teenagers spread coronavirus more than young children?

Experts suspect greater social contact among teenagers spreads Covid-19 more quickly, but the science is unclear

- [Coronavirus - latest updates](#)
- [See all our coronavirus coverage](#)

Pediatric News

## Big contact tracing study shows role of kids and superspreaders in coronavirus pandemic

By Maggie Fox, CNN

Updated 2:37 AM ET, Thu October 1, 2020

The New York Times

[Virus Outbreak](#) > **LIVE** Latest Updates [Maps and Cases](#) [Risk Near You](#) [Vaccine Rollout](#) [New](#)

### *She's 13, and the Source of a Family's Covid-19 Outbreak*

The C.D.C. and four state health departments described how one girl spread the coronavirus to 11 relatives during a gathering.

CORONAVIRUS

## Teens and Tweens Are Fastest COVID-19 Spreaders, New Study Finds

By [Jordan Davidson](#) | Jul. 20, 2020 10:59AM EST

HEALTH + WELLNESS

# Adolescents and COVID-19 guideline adherence

- The central role of adolescents in spreading COVID-19 is largely related to one study focusing on South Korea earlier in the pandemic
  - More recent research suggests that adults aged 20-49 are most responsible for COVID-19 spread
  - Focus on adolescents' role in COVID-19 transmission
    - Lower rates of serious complications
    - Stigma surrounding adolescents
- BUT adolescents can transmit COVID-19 and can experience serious complications as a result of infection

# Adolescents and COVID-19 guideline adherence

- Adolescents ages 17 to 22 (n = 569) in the province of Quebec of whom half had childhood histories of conduct problems in May 2020
  - 57% always reported washing hands or using hand sanitizer every time they were at risk for coming into contact with the virus
  - 76% always covering mouth and nose when they coughed or sneezed
  - 63% reported never spending time with non-residents inside their home
  - 90% reported never attending gatherings like birthday parties or religious ceremonies indoors

# Adolescents and COVID-19 guideline adherence

- Adolescents (n = 887) ages 14 to 18 from all 10 Canadian provinces collected between August and October 2020
  - 60% reported washing their hands a lot more
  - 70% reported avoiding crowds a lot
  - 64% reported wearing a mask a lot
  - 53% reported using disinfectants
- Higher age was associated with more compliance behaviours



# Adolescents and COVID-19 guideline adherence

- Factors associated with COVID-19 guideline adherence among adolescents
  - Beliefs about their **self-efficacy** in following guidelines, the benefits of following guidelines, the perceived severity of COVID-19
  - Lower feelings of trust in the government is associated with lower compliance
  - The role of social influence on adolescent health risk behavior
- Role of peers regarding social norms

# Adolescents and COVID-19 guideline adherence

- The same factors associated with following rules more generally may also have more difficulty following COVID-19 guidelines
  - Conduct problems are associated with being less likely to follow COVID-19 guidelines
  - Youth with childhood histories of conduct problems were less likely to follow COVID-19 related guidelines
    - This vulnerability was explained by callous unemotional traits and higher substance use

# Adolescents and COVID-19 guidelines

- Research supports varied approaches to supporting engagement in COVID-19 guidelines
  - In general, providing accurate information about the efficacy and benefits of following guidelines may be important for adolescents
  - Adolescents with conduct who are less receptive to punishment or prosocial motivation
    - “Let’s get smart” and intervention approaches that increase children’s motivation to perceive the thoughts and feelings of others

# Adolescents and COVID-19 guidelines

Coronavirus COVID-19 Public Health Advice

**Protect each other Stand apart**  
2 metres

**Protect each other Sit apart**  
2 metres

**Protect each other Shop apart**  
2 metres

**Protect each other Play apart**  
2 metres

**Protect each other.**  
Stay 2m apart.

Rialtas na hÉireann Government of Ireland

Coronavirus COVID-19 Public Health Advice

**Has COVID-19 but doesn't know it yet.**  
**Doesn't think he has it...**  
**Has an undiagnosed heart condition. If they had sat further apart, she'd have been okay.**  
**Will infect her sister. She's a doctor.**

**Says it's fine. It's just a normal cold.**  
**Thinks it's just a cough she's had for ages.**  
**Will pass the virus on to his granny. If he had stayed at home, she'd have been okay.**  
**Will give COVID-19 to her dad. He's asthmatic.**

**We're in this together.**  
Small changes will save the people we care about.  
Stay 2m apart.

Rialtas na hÉireann Government of Ireland

Part 2: How is COVID-19  
impacting adolescents?

## Teen shares how eating disorder unfolded as doctors grapple with surge in cases during pandemic



Children and teens are presenting in higher numbers, with more severe cases, than before, experts say

CBC Radio · Posted: Feb 23, 2021 4:00 AM ET | Last Updated: February 23

 CBC.ca

High school students say education during pandemic taking mental health toll

"COVID-19 is obviously the number one concern, but the mental health concerns ... "Adolescents are in a really unique developmental stage," ...

GTA

Most Ontario children are faring worse during COVID-19, but some are doing better, SickKids study says

## *‘What’s the Point?’ Young People’s Despair Deepens as Covid-19 Crisis Drags On*

Experts paint a grim picture of the struggle with lockdown isolation — a “mental health pandemic” that should be treated as seriously as containing the coronavirus.

## Covid: Parents worry about lost learning as schools reopen

By Jeanette Long  
BBC News education reporter

## Keep paying attention to your kids' mental health in this pandemic

By Lisa Selin Davis, CNN

 Radio Canada International (en)

## Pandemic adding to children's mental health risk: UNICEF

Pandemic adding to children's mental health risk: UNICEF ... by UNICEF of data from the Oxford COVID-19 Government Response Tracker. ... low life satisfaction and Canada has one of the highest rates of adolescent suicide.



CONTRIBUTORS OPINION

Youth are being saddled with lifelong problems due to prolonged lockdowns

# Variation in vulnerability: Socioeconomically vulnerable youth

- Wide variability in socioeconomic vulnerability
  - Youth without housing/precarious housing
  - Youth whose families were experiencing socioeconomic difficulties prior to the COVID-19 pandemic
  - Youth whose families are experience socioeconomic difficulties as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic
- Youth reporting lower affluence also reported lower levels of coping as a response to the COVID-19 pandemic

# Variation in vulnerability: Socioeconomically vulnerable youth

- COVID-19 related barriers for socioeconomically disadvantaged youth
  - Fewer resources for social distancing
  - Difficulties with at-home learning
  - Being employed or having family members employed in higher contact jobs (i.e., more stress regarding COVID-19 exposure)
  - Less or no contact with school-based support and/or resources



# Variation in vulnerability: Racialized youth

- Racialized youth are youth whose ethnic backgrounds causes them to be identified to be identified as non-white (i.e., visible minority youth)
- Pre-COVID-19 context
  - Experiences of racism and discrimination, and the consequences of these experiences for health
  - Racial wage gap
  - Barriers around immigration and immigration status
  - Limited infrastructure for online access in Canada's North and in indigenous communities in particular

# Variation in vulnerability: Racialized youth

- COVID-19 related barriers for racialized youth
  - The negative impact of increased surveillance of adolescent behavior, especially for Black youth
  - Youths' role as language/cultural translators for family members with language barriers
  - Pre-existing stressors impacting current medical vulnerability for adolescents and their families
  - Exacerbation of pre-existing inequalities in terms of resource availability
  - Difficulty in engaging in online learning due to access issues in Indigenous communities

# Variation in vulnerability: Gender and sexual minority youth

- Gender minority youth: Individuals whose gender identity differs from the sex they were assigned at birth
- Sexual minority youth: Youth with non-heterosexual identities, or non-heterosexual sexual or romantic interests
- Pre-COVID-19 context
  - Lower levels of family support
  - More online friendships, and more support from their online friendships
  - Importance of family and community support for mental health

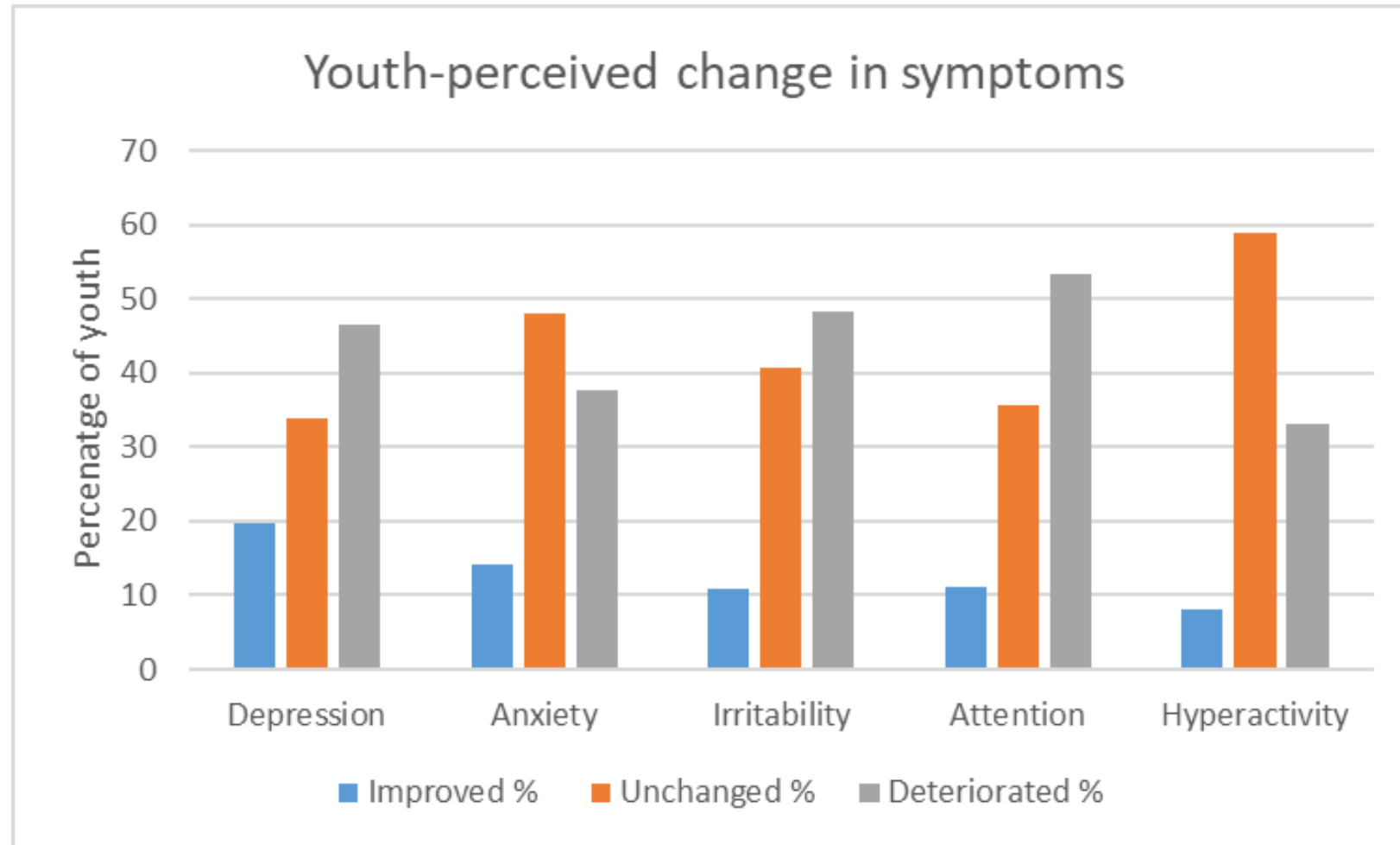
# Variation in vulnerability: Gender and sexual minority youth

- Post-COVID-19 concerns
  - Exacerbation of pre-existing issues around housing security
  - Fewer opportunities to connect with community
  - Limits in mental health and access to mental health services
  - Less access to identity affirming medical services
  - Feeling stuck with unsupportive family members

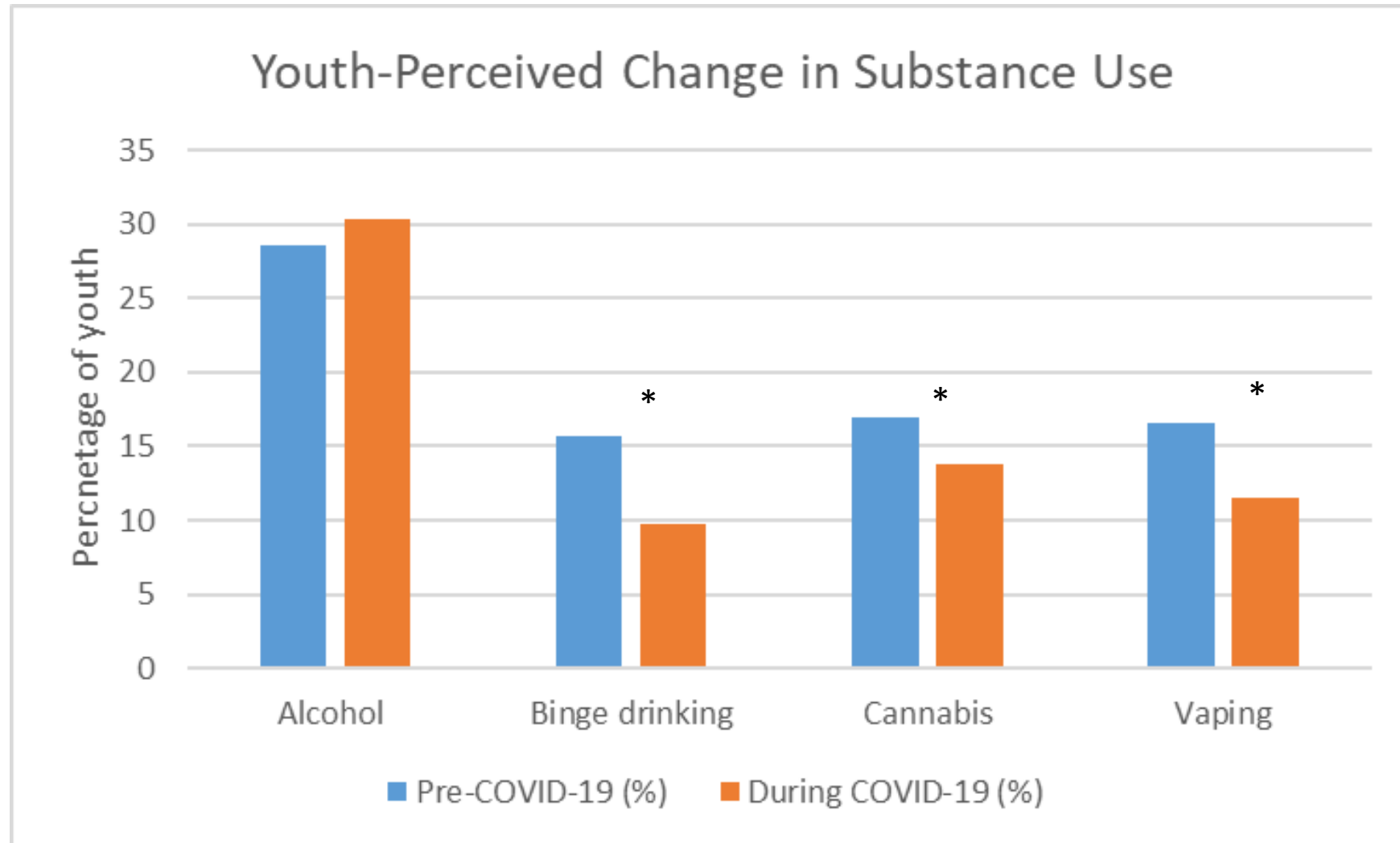
# COVID-19 changes in mental health

- Different kinds of information suggest changes in mental health for adolescents pre and post COVID-19 measures
  - Help lines: In Canada, increase from 1.9 million calls to Kids Help Phone in 2019 to 4.00 million in 2020
  - Youth perceived change
    - Worse mental health
    - Less substance use
  - Limited longitudinal research

# COVID-19 changes in mental health

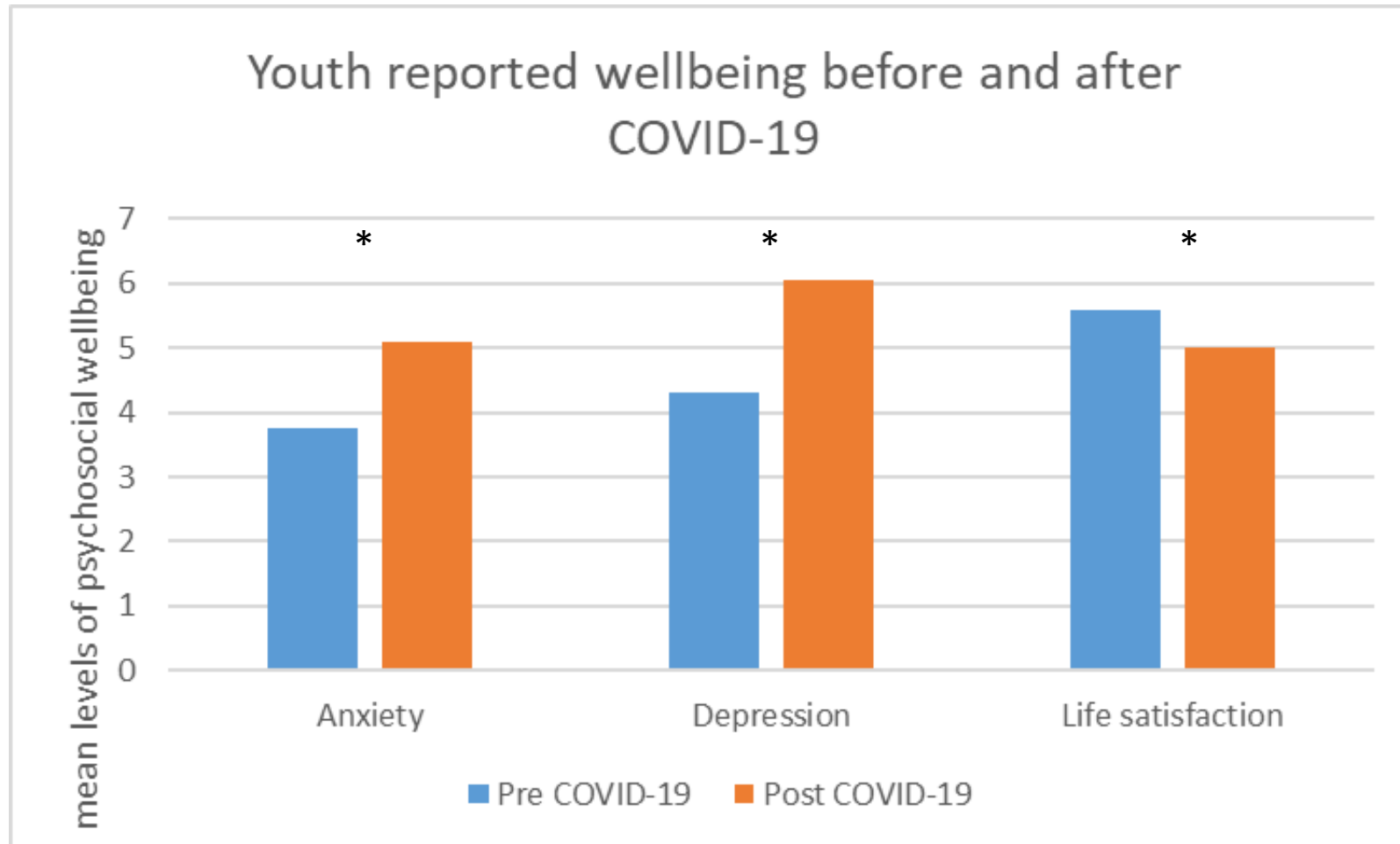


# COVID-19 changes in mental health



(Dumas et al., 2020)

# COVID-19 changes in mental health



(Magson et al., 2021)



# COVID-19 related changes for adolescents

- What are the factors that have changed for youth?
- COVID-19 has led to some major changes
  - Less mobility compared to prior to COVID-19
  - More perceived screen time
  - Reduction in time spent in active play
    - Less than 1% of youth were meeting physical activity guidelines

# Adolescent relationships

- Parents
- Siblings
- Friends
- Romantic partners

# Adolescent Relationships

- Key difference in these relationships is the extent to which they are freely chosen
- Relationships with parents and siblings are typically involuntary
- Relationships with friends and romantic partners are typically voluntary

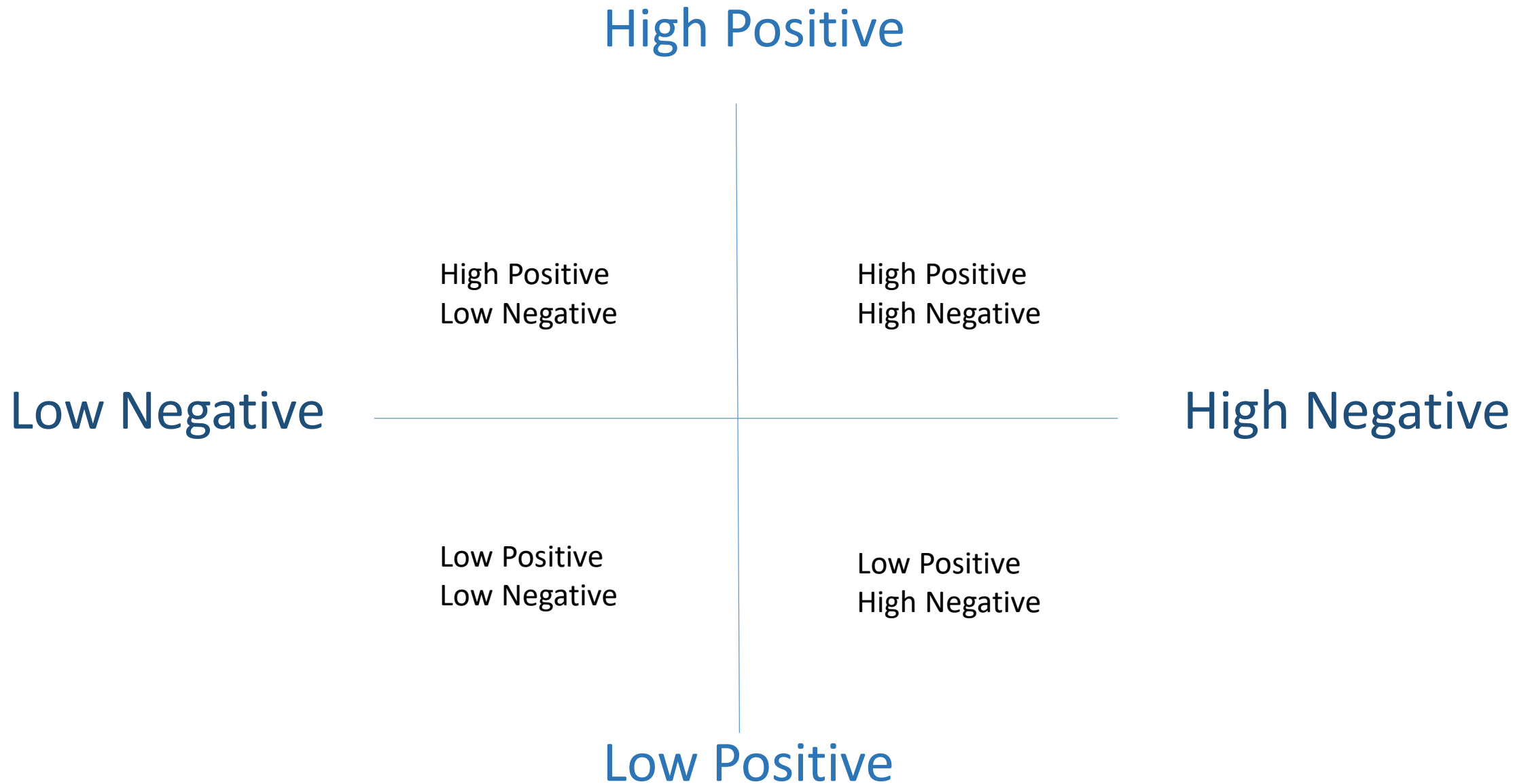
# Adolescent Relationships

- All of these relationships can differ in quality
- Positive features
  - Warmth, companionship, intimacy, fun
- Negative features
  - Conflict, fighting

# Adolescent Relationships

- Positive features and negative features are related but not redundant
- On average, relationships that are more positive are less negative
- But ....

# Adolescent Relationships



# How is COVID-19 Changing Adolescents Relationships?

- With whom are adolescents interacting and how?
- Do adolescents perceive that their relationships have changed since COVID-19?

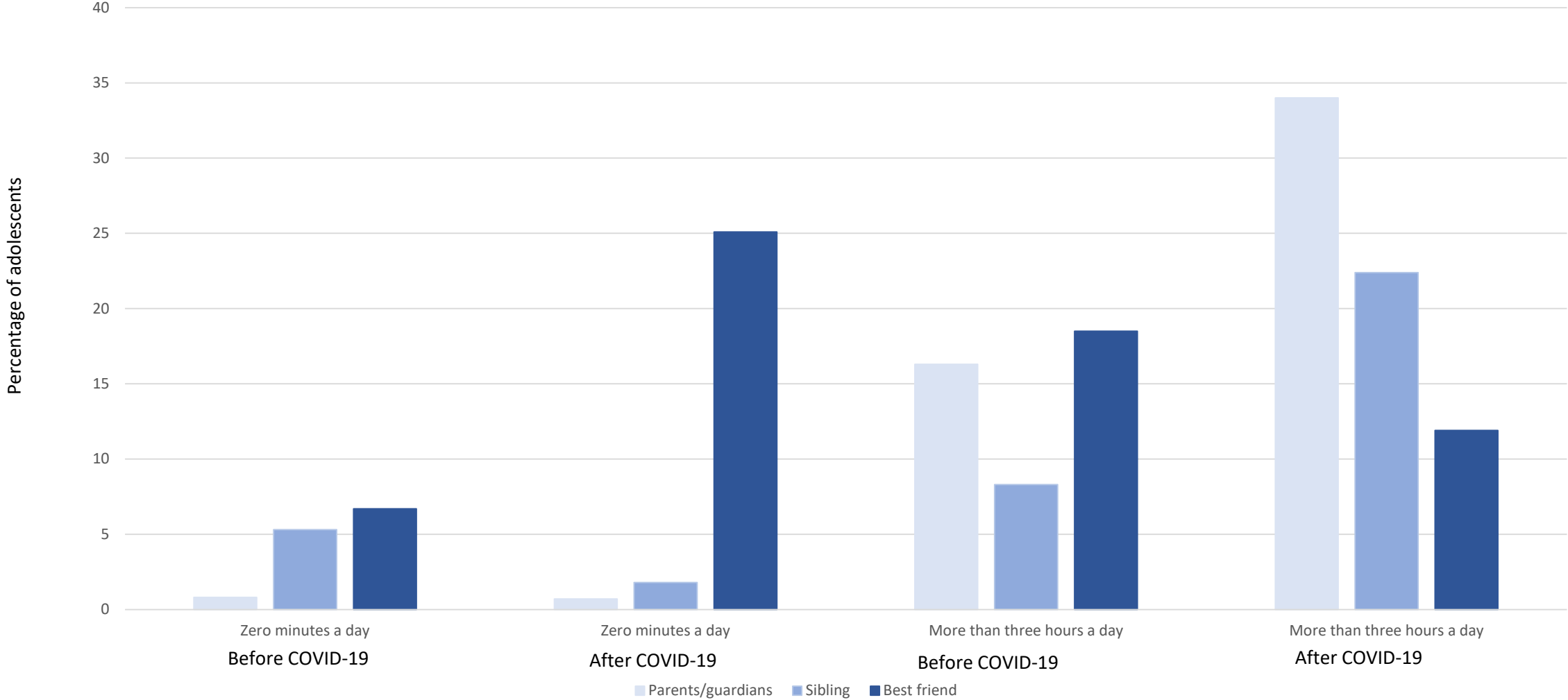
# How is COVID-19 changing adolescent relationships and how does this shape mental health

- 887 Canadian adolescents were asked about their relationships with their parents/guardians, siblings and best friends
- In a typical day, how much time did you spend interacting with them before COVID-19 and after the start of physical distancing?
- How much to you think your relationship with this person has gotten better and gotten worse?



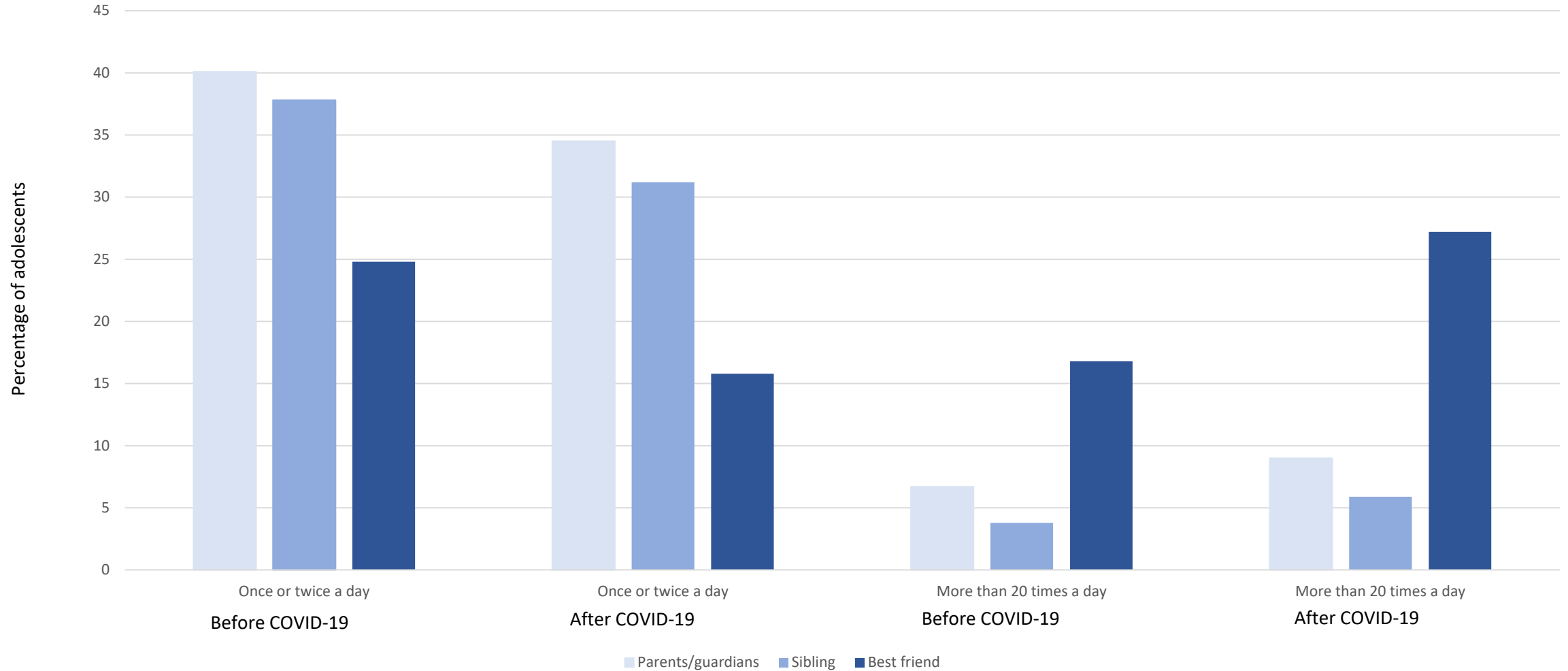
# With whom are adolescents interacting and how?

Time Spent Talking in Person

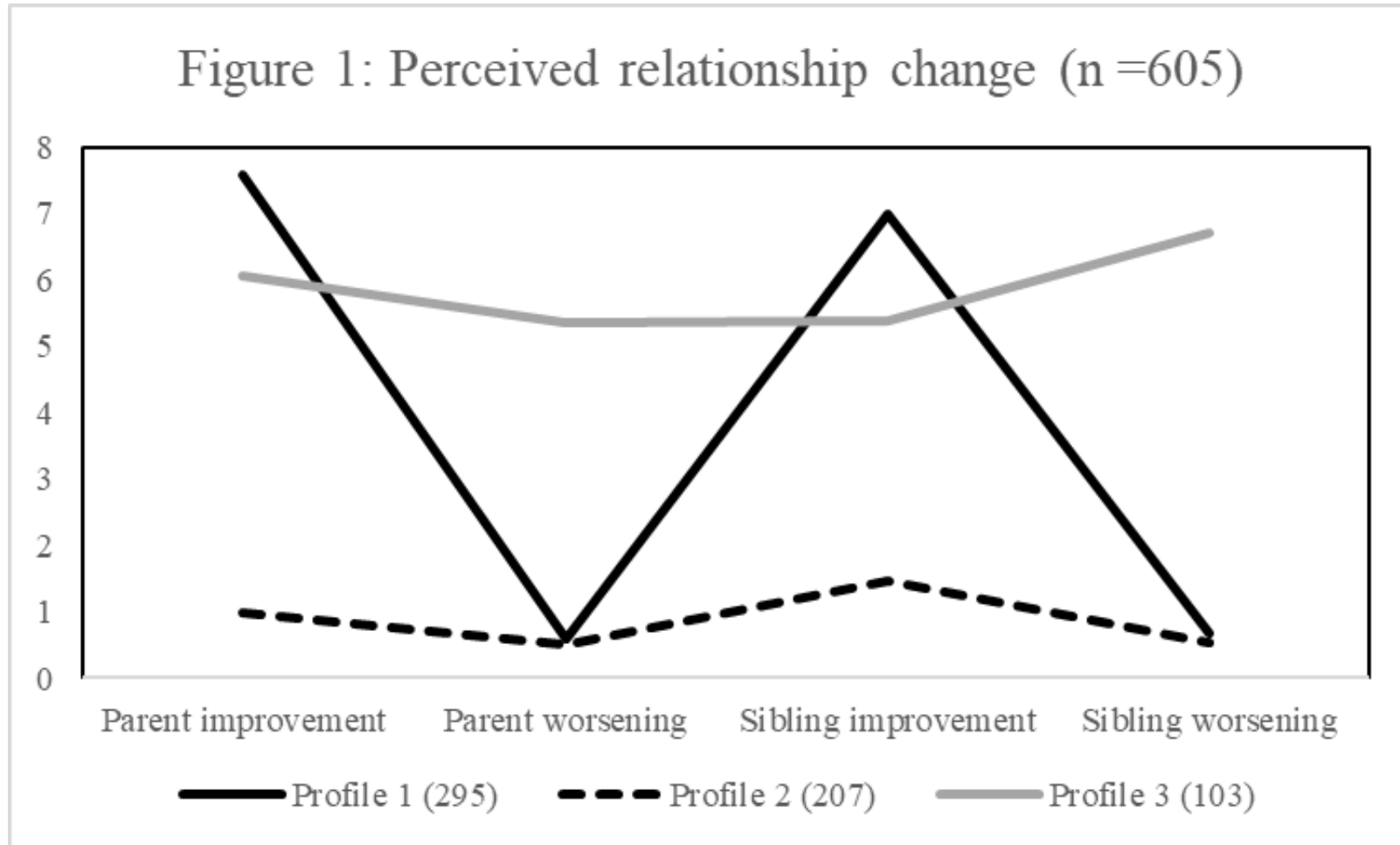


# With whom are adolescents interacting and how?

Texting and Chatting Online



# Do adolescents perceive their relationships have changed since COVID-19?



# Do adolescents perceive their relationships have changed since COVID-19?

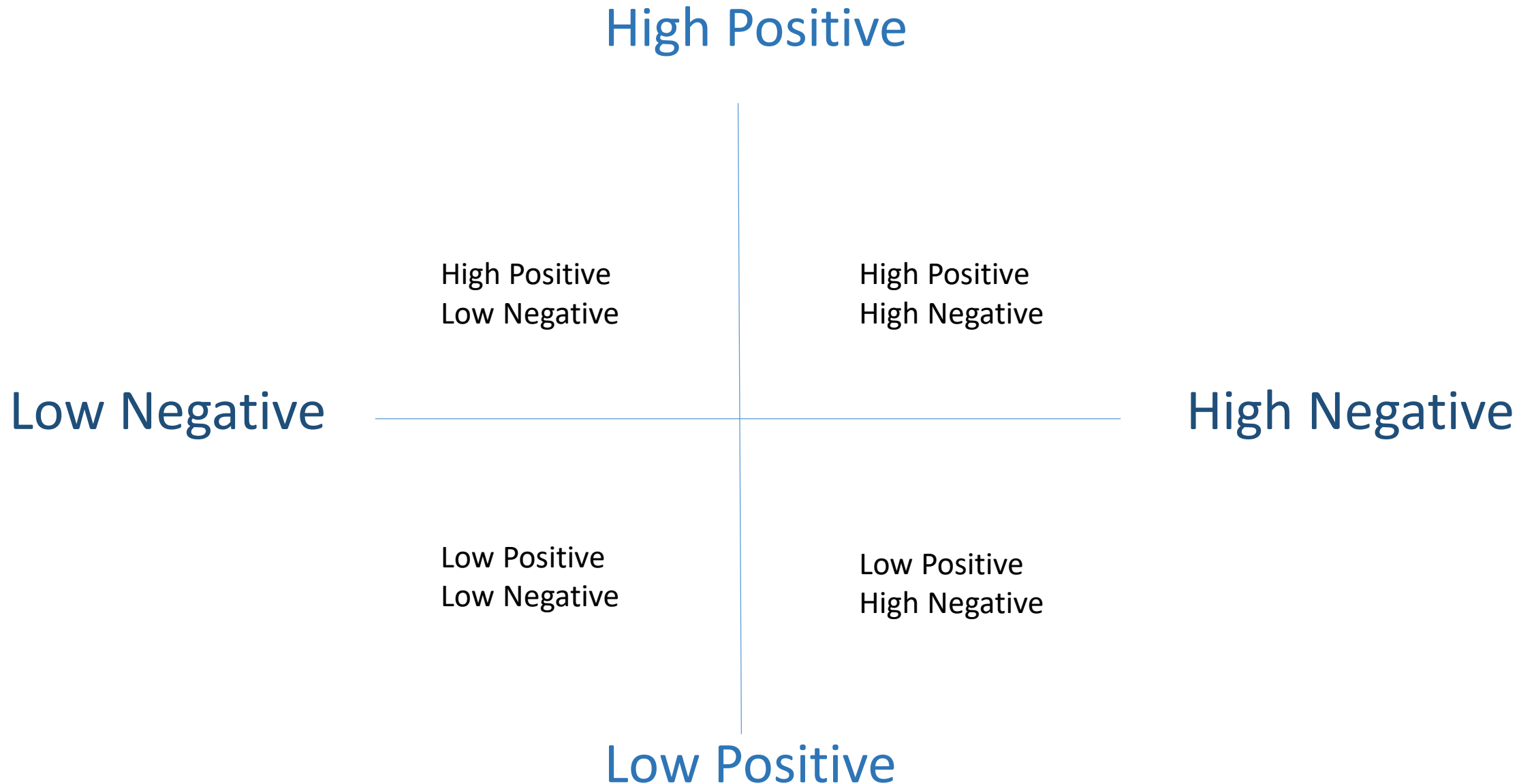
- Youth who saw their relationships as staying the same
  - Had the lowest levels of internalizing symptoms and marijuana use
  - Were the most likely to be sexual minorities
- Youth who saw their relationship as getting better
  - Were in the middle regarding internalizing symptoms and marijuana use
  - Had the lowest family affluence
- Youth who saw their relationships as getting better and worse
  - Had the highest levels of internalizing symptoms and marijuana use
  - Had the highest family affluence
  - In the provinces with the highest rates of COVID-19

# Part 3: Recommendations for parents and educators

# (1) Support healthy relationships at home

- Youth are spending increasing time with parents and siblings
- This increased time presents both risks and opportunities

# (1) Support healthy relationships at home



## (2) Perceived instability of relationships may be a risk marker

- Youth reporting highest levels of depressive symptoms and marijuana use see their relationships as getting better and getting worse
- Youth reporting positive changes in relationships also reporting higher levels of internalizing symptoms



### (3) Reaching youth through multiple modalities

- Varied and individualized approaches in encouraging guideline adherence
- Text-based support may be important for youth who are worried about being overheard/have little privacy

Any questions?