



# COVID 19 PANDEMIC: NOVA SCOTIAN EXPERIENCES

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[www.drkarenblair.com/covid](http://www.drkarenblair.com/covid)

# KEY TERMS

## LGBTQ+

LGBTQ+ stands for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer plus and is used to refer to individuals who identify their gender and/or sexuality as something outside the realm of heterosexual and/or cisgender. When we use LGBTQ+ in this report, we are referring to participants who indicated that they identified as:

Gay/Lesbian  
Bisexual  
Queer/Pansexual  
Asexual  
Transgender  
Non-binary  
Agender  
Genderqueer/Genderfluid

## BIPOC

BIPOC stands for Black, Indigenous, and People of Colour and is used to refer to non-white individuals while also acknowledging that not all people of colour have the same lived experience. When we use BIPOC in this report, we are referring to participants who identified their racial/ethnic identity as one of the following:

Asian  
Black/African/Caribbean  
Indigenous/Aboriginal  
Latin American  
Middle Eastern  
Mixed/Multiple Ethnic Groups

We also included participants who indicated that we did not have an option that applied best to their identity.

# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS AND FUNDING

We want to thank all of the student research assistants who worked to make the COVID-19 Interpersonal Coping Study possible:

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researchNS



# CONTACT INFORMATION

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**More information about the COVID-19 Interpersonal Coping Study and access to other reports based on the study can be found at: [www.drkarenblair.com/covid](http://www.drkarenblair.com/covid)**

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## RESEARCH OVERVIEW

The current report summarizes the preliminary findings of the COVID-19 Interpersonal Coping study. The study surveyed 2426 Canadians, including 958 Nova Scotians. Participants were asked about their mental and physical well-being, economic stability, COVID-19 related behaviours and concerns, help seeking behaviours, impact of COVID-19 on social connection and experiences of intimate partner violence. We made an effort to specifically recruit LGBTQ+ participants and they responded to an additional set of questions regarding LGBTQ+ belonging and access to gender affirming care.

Note: All statements marked with an asterisk (\*) are statistically significant ( $p < 0.05$ ).

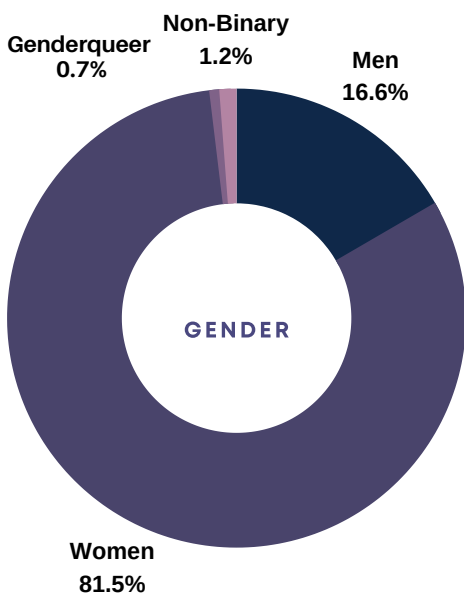
All statements marked with a caret (^) are no longer statistically significant when the analysis controlled for age, race and/or socioeconomic status and LGBTQ+ identity.

## OBJECTIVES

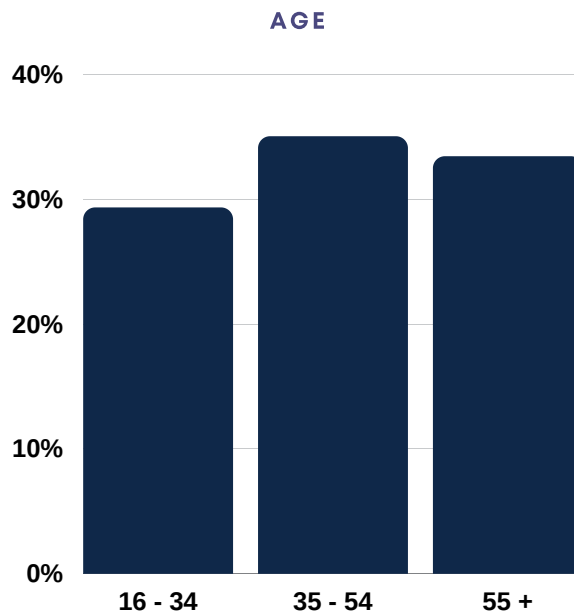
- To examine Nova Scotians' experiences during COVID-19; namely, what negative impacts are they experiencing during COVID-19 and how are they coping?
- To compare COVID-19 experiences of Nova Scotians to Canadians living in other provinces.
- To investigate Nova Scotians' well-being and how it is associated with engagement in social distancing, psychological vulnerabilities, and social connectedness during the pandemic, and provide information regarding coping strategies that are associated with better or worse well-being.

# DEMOGRAPHICS

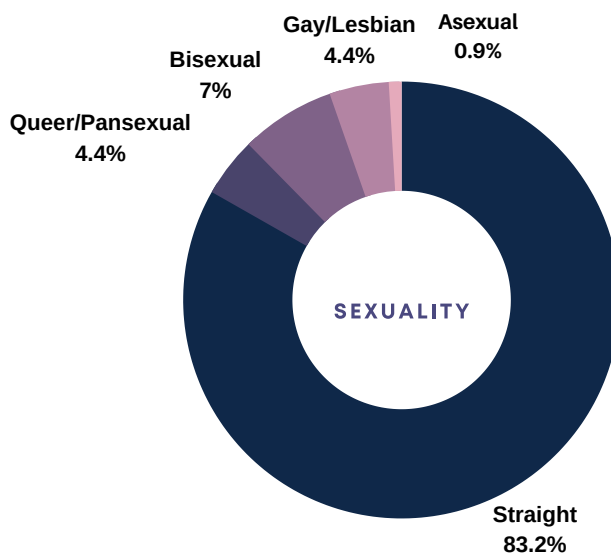
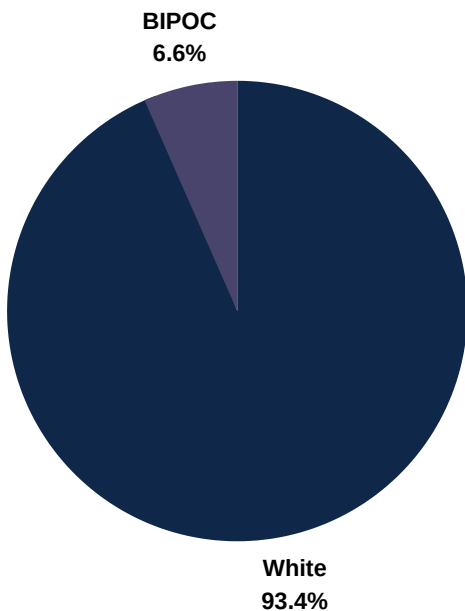
## NOVA SCOTIAN PARTICIPANTS



Note: 0.7% responded "Not Listed" but weren't included in the above chart.



### ETHNICITY/RACE

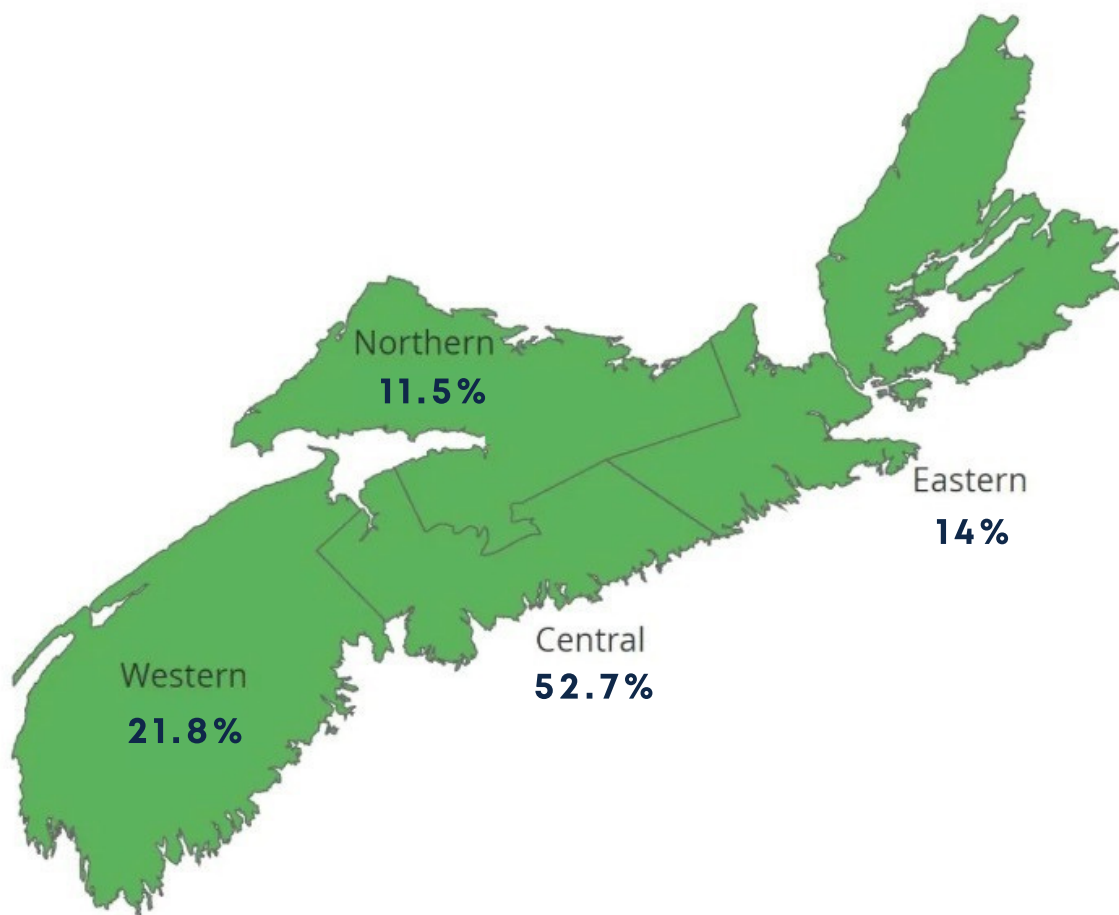


Note: 2.2% responded "Not Listed" or "Prefer Not to Respond" but weren't included in the above chart.

# DEMOGRAPHICS

## NOVA SCOTIAN PARTICIPANTS

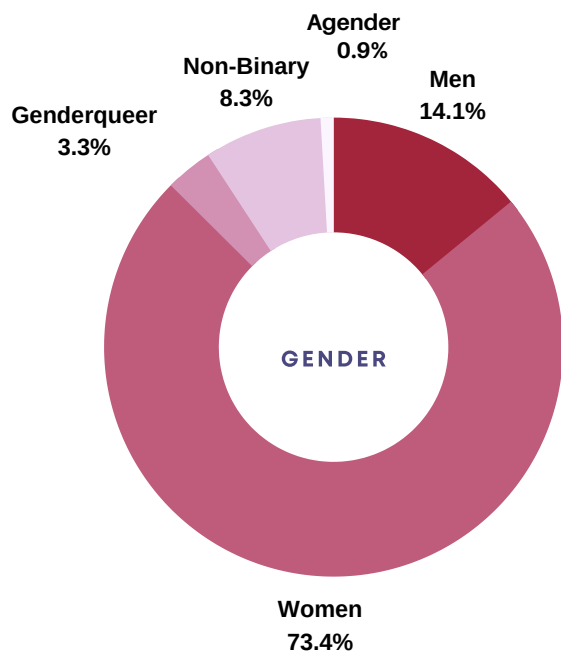
REGION OF NOVA SCOTIA IN WHICH PARTICIPANTS LIVED:



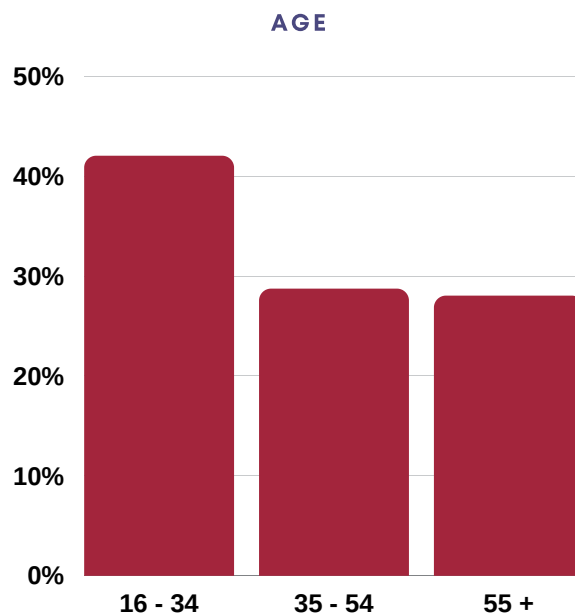


# DEMOGRAPHICS

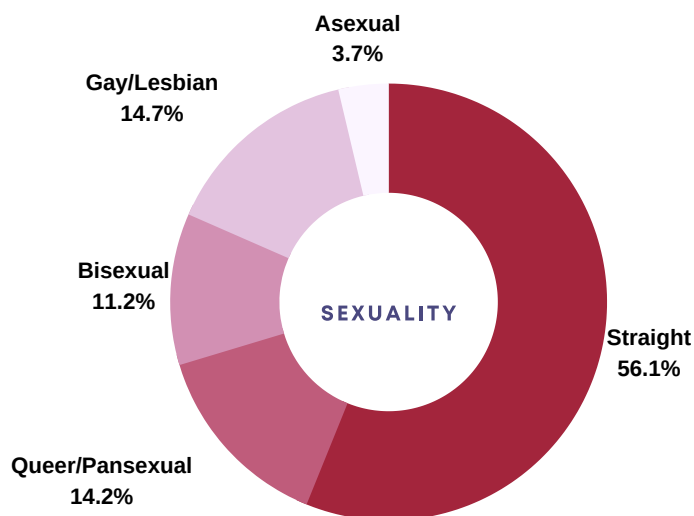
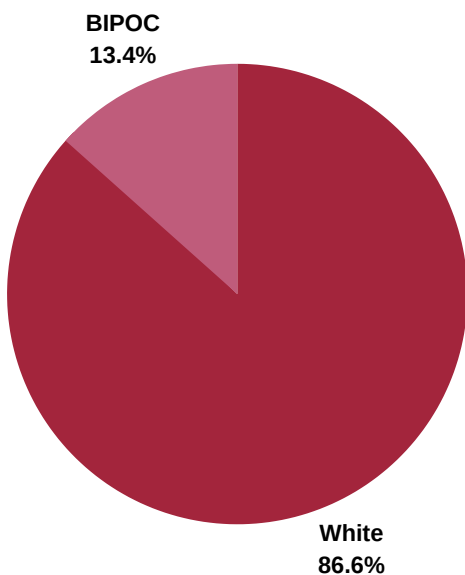
## NON-NOVA SCOTIAN PARTICIPANTS




Note: 1.3% responded "Not Listed" but weren't included in the above chart.



### ETHNICITY/RACE



Note: 2.9% responded "Not Listed" or "Prefer Not to Respond" but weren't included in the above chart.

A close-up photograph of a person's hands and arms. The person is wearing a brown, ribbed sweater. Their right hand is resting on a silver laptop keyboard, holding a black pencil. The left hand is also visible, resting on the laptop. The background is a plain, light-colored surface. The text "INCOME, EMPLOYMENT AND LIVING SITUATION" is overlaid on the left side of the image in a bold, dark blue font.

**INCOME,  
EMPLOYMENT  
AND LIVING  
SITUATION**

# INCOME

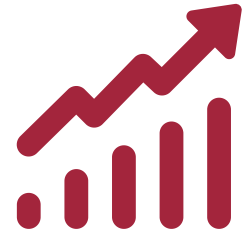
## INCOME LEVEL

**71.4%**  
of Nova Scotian  
participants



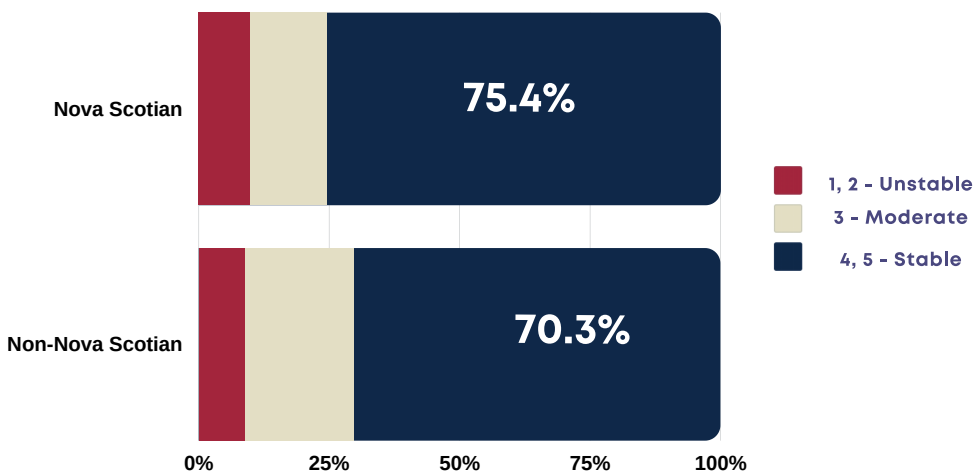
**67.6%**  
of Non-Nova  
Scotian  
participants

Nova Scotians were just as likely as Non-Nova Scotians to report that their income allowed them to meet their basic needs with some left over.



Nova Scotians living in the Central zone reported higher levels of income than those not living in the Central zone.\*

## INCOME STABILITY



Nova Scotian participants reported similar levels of pre-COVID-19 income stability than Non-Nova Scotian participants.

# EMPLOYMENT



**4.6% VS 9.8%**

Nova Scotians were less likely than **Non-Nova Scotians** to have been unemployed and seeking work before the COVID-19 pandemic.\*



**41.2% VS 35.5%**

Nova Scotians were more likely than **Non-Nova Scotians** to have been employed full-time before the COVID-19 pandemic.\*

Nova Scotians living in the Central zone were more likely than those living in others areas of Nova Scotia to be employed full time.\*

Nova Scotians were just as likely as **Non-Nova Scotians** to currently be working in a job:



**Classified as essential.**  
(16.3% vs 15.6%)



**That makes it difficult or impossible to avoid close contact with others.**  
(8.3% vs 9.7%)



**That requires them to leave their home.**  
(13.6% vs 13.7%)

# LIVING SITUATION

12.6%  
VS  
22.7%

Nova Scotian participants were less likely than **Non-Nova Scotian** participants to be living with their own or their partner's parent(s).\*

5.8%  
VS  
8.1%

Nova Scotian participants were less likely than **Non-Nova Scotian** participants to be living with roommates.^

16.2%  
VS  
18.8%

Nova Scotian participants were just as likely as **Non-Nova Scotian** participants to be living with someone with a pre-existing health condition that puts them at risk for COVID-19.

Central Nova Scotians were more likely than those living in the rest of Nova Scotia to be living with their own or their partner's parent(s).\*



3% VS 6.1%

Nova Scotian participants were more certain than **Non-Nova Scotian** participants that they would not need to move in the near future due to COVID-19.\*



43.1% VS 18.2%

Nova Scotian participants were more likely than **Non-Nova Scotian** participants to report that they were currently living in a rural or remote location.\*

Central Nova Scotians were less likely than those living in the rest of Nova Scotia to be living in a rural area.\*

# COVID-19 SPECIFIC BEHAVIOURS AND EXPERIENCES



# COVID-19 SYMPTOMS AND TESTING

12.7%

of Nova Scotian participants

VS

17.3%

of Non-Nova Scotian participants

were experiencing at least one symptom of COVID-19.<sup>^</sup>

Q: "Are you currently experiencing any of the following symptoms, whether you suspect them to be related to COVID-19 or not? Dry cough; Fever; Muscle aches and pain; Shortness of breath."

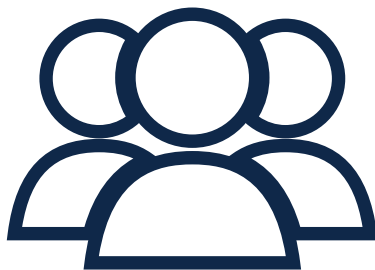
Please note: the symptoms included in this question reflect information provided by the WHO at the time of survey design.



17.6%

of Nova Scotian participants  
(vs 25.7% of Non-Nova Scotian)  
knew someone who had  
COVID-19\*

Nova Scotians living in the Central zone were more likely than those living in other areas of Nova Scotia to know someone who had COVID-19.\*



7.1%

Nova Scotian participants were just as likely as Non-Nova Scotians (8.3%) to report they had been tested for COVID-19.

# COVID-19 PREP BEHAVIOURS

On average, Nova Scotian participants (4.22) engaged in a similar amount of COVID-19 prep behaviours as **Non-Nova Scotian** participants (4.06) did.

Such as making sure they had:



a body temperature thermometer.



enough food for 2 weeks.



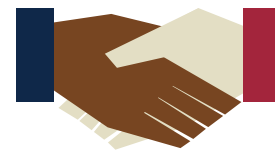
enough household supplies for 2 weeks.



a will or created a will.



taken extra precautions regarding the safety/security of their family/home.



medical directives or created medical directives.



# PERCEIVED IMPACTS OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

Nova Scotian participants reported stronger agreement than **Non-Nova Scotian** participants with the statements:



"In the end, everything will be fine."<sup>^</sup>

5.55 vs 5.32

Responses were indicated on a scale of 1 to 7

"I will not experience lasting harm as a result of this pandemic."<sup>\*</sup>

4.77 vs 4.42

Responses were indicated on a scale of 1 to 7



Nova Scotian participants were less likely than **Non-Nova Scotian** participants to have been experiencing a stressful period in their life prior to COVID-19.<sup>^</sup>

4.08 vs 4.41

Responses were indicated on a scale of 1 to 7



**SOCIAL DISTANCING,  
MASK WEARING AND  
WHO RECOMMENDATIONS**

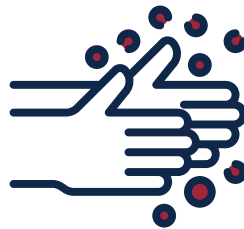
# WHO RECOMMENDATIONS

**Nova Scotian participants (4.47) reported more engagement in WHO recommendations regarding COVID-19 than **Non-Nova Scotian** participants (4.35).<sup>^</sup>**

Responses were indicated on a scale of 1 to 5



**Avoiding physical contact**



**Regular hand washing**



**Staying at home**

**Nova Scotian participants (4.45) were more likely than **Non-Nova Scotian** participants (4.31) to report that following these recommendations was feasible for them.<sup>^</sup>**

Responses were indicated on a scale of 1 to 5



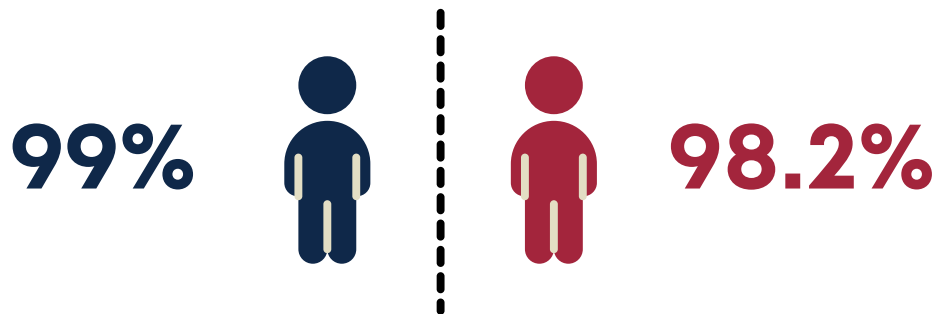
**However, **Non-Nova Scotian** participants (3.89) reported more agreement than Nova Scotian participants (3.84) with statements indicating that COVID-19 was a very serious public health risk.<sup>^</sup>**

Responses were indicated on a scale of 1 to 7

**Nova Scotians living outside of the Central zone reported more agreement than those living in the Central zone.\***

# SOCIAL DISTANCING BEHAVIOURS

Nova Scotian participants and **Non-Nova Scotian** participants were just as likely to report that they have been engaging in social distancing.



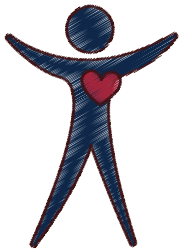
Nova Scotian participants (6.26) felt more competent in their abilities to social distance than **Non-Nova Scotian** participants (6.02).\*

Responses were indicated on a scale of 1 to 7

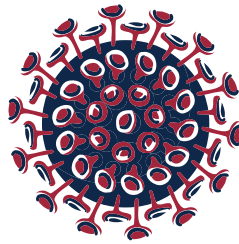


# SOCIAL DISTANCING BEHAVIOURS

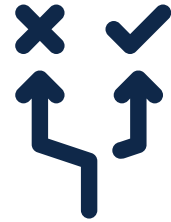
Nova Scotians (5.16) and **Non-Nova Scotians (5.16)** reported the same level of intrinsic motivation for social distancing, indicating agreement with statements such as:



I personally believe that engaging in social distancing will improve my health.



I am trying to avoid getting the virus.



Social distancing is a choice I really want to make.

Nova Scotians (4.26) reported higher levels of extrinsic motivation for social distancing than **Non-Nova Scotians (3.89)**, indicating stronger agreement with statements such as\*:



I would feel guilty if I didn't do what the authorities were advising.



I don't have a choice, it's the law.



It's easier to do what I am told than to think about it.

# MASK WEARING

**Nova Scotian participants were less likely than **Non-Nova Scotian** participants to agree that wearing a mask in public should be mandatory.\***

**55.1% vs 67.3%**

**Nova Scotian participants living in the Central zone were more likely than those living outside the Central zone to agree that wearing a mask in public should be mandatory.\***



**Nova Scotian participants reported wearing a mask in public less often than **Non-Nova Scotian** participants.\***

**36.4% vs 53.6%**

**Nova Scotians living in the Central zone report wearing a mask in public more often than those living outside the Central zone.\***

Mask wearing data was collected May - June 2020, before mandatory mask regulations were in place in Nova Scotia.

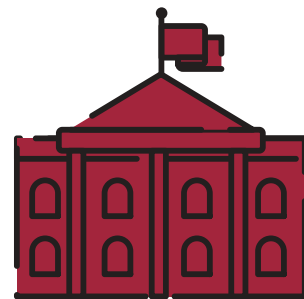
# POLITICAL ALIENATION

Nova Scotian participants (3.59) felt less alienated from their government than **Non-Nova Scotian** participants (3.90), and were less likely to agree with statements such as^:

Responses were indicated on a scale of 1 to 7



People like me don't have any say about what the government does.



For the most part, the government serves the interest of a few organized groups, [...] and isn't very concerned about the needs of people like myself.



It seems to me that the government often fails to take necessary actions on important matters, even when most people favour such actions.

# HELP SEEKING BEHAVIOURS AND EXPERIENCES





# MEDICAL AND MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

**10.9%**

of Nova Scotian participants

**VS**

**16.4%**

of **Non-Nova Scotian** participants



were seeing a counsellor or therapist prior to COVID-19.<sup>^</sup>

Nova Scotians living in the Central zone were more likely than those living outside of it to have been seeing a counsellor before COVID-19.\*



Nova Scotian participants were just as likely as **Non-Nova Scotian** participants to have a family doctor with

**86.5%**

reporting they had one.

**86.4% Non-Nova Scotian**

Nova Scotians living in the Central zone were more likely than those living outside of it to have a family doctor.\*

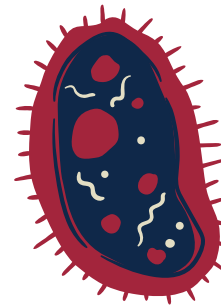
# MEDICAL AND MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

On average, Nova Scotian participants said they were more likely than **Non-Nova Scotian** participants to:



seek medical help right away for a medical condition other than COVID-19 during the pandemic.^

47.9% vs 42.4%



seek medical help right away if they thought they had COVID-19.\*

92% vs 87.4%

On average, Nova Scotian participants said they were just as likely as **Non-Nova Scotian** participants to:



seek medical help right away for a health problem that was worrying them prior to COVID-19.

65.4% vs 63.9%

Central Nova Scotians were more likely than Non-Central Nova Scotians to agree with this.\*

**MENTAL  
AND  
PHYSICAL  
WELL-  
BEING**



# MENTAL HEALTH

**Nova Scotian participants (20.98) reported experiencing fewer PTSD symptoms than Non-Nova Scotian participants (25.55).\***

PTSD symptoms were measured using the PTSD Checklist (PCL-5) and scores range from 0 to 80

**Some of the symptoms measured included:**



**Repeated, disturbing and unwanted thoughts/dreams about the pandemic.**



**Feeling very upset/having a strong physical reaction when reminded of the pandemic.**



**Having strong negative beliefs, feelings about yourself, other people or the world.**



**Trouble falling or staying asleep.**



**Being super alert or watchful and on guard.**



**Having strong negative feelings such as fear, horror, anger, guilt or shame.**

# MENTAL HEALTH

**Nova Scotian participants (14.04) reported experiencing fewer symptoms of depression, anxiety and stress than Non-Nova Scotian participants (17.92).\***

Depression, anxiety and stress was measured using the Depression, Anxiety and Stress Scale (DASS-21) and scores range from 0 to 84

Some of the items on this scale included:



I couldn't seem to experience any positive feeling at all.



I felt I was close to panic.



I found it difficult to relax.



I felt that I had nothing to look forward to.



I was aware of the action of my heart in the absence of physical exertion.



I felt that I was rather touchy.

# PHYSICAL HEALTH



Nova Scotian participants (65.43) had higher scores than **Non-Nova Scotian** participants (60.82) on a scale measuring general physical health.\*

Responses were indicated on a scale of 0 to 100



Nova Scotian participants



**Non-Nova Scotian** participants

Nova Scotian participants had similar scores to **Non-Nova Scotian** participants on a scale measuring stressful life events that had occurred prior to COVID-19.

# SOCIAL SUPPORT



Nova Scotian participants reported higher levels of perceived social support than **Non-Nova Scotian** participants.<sup>^</sup>

3.45 vs 3.40

Responses were indicated on a scale of 1 to 4

Nova Scotian participants reported that they had just as many friends to call for help if they needed to as **Non-Nova Scotian** participants.

4.11 vs 4.11

Responses were indicated on a scale of 1 to 6

Nova Scotian participants and **Non-Nova Scotian** participants both reported that they felt more socially isolated now than prior to COVID-19.

5.45 vs 5.59

Responses were indicated on a scale of 1 to 7



Nova Scotian participants reported lower levels of closeness to their friends than **Non-Nova Scotian** participants.<sup>^</sup>

5.23 vs 5.38

Responses were indicated on a scale of 1 to 7



Nova Scotian participants reported higher levels of closeness to their family compared to **Non-Nova Scotian** participants.\*

5.58 vs 5.16

Responses were indicated on a scale of 1 to 7

# COPING STRATEGIES

Nova Scotian participants (1.99) engaged in less avoidant coping than **Non-Nova Scotian** participants (2.14).\*

Responses were indicated on a scale of 1 to 4

Which includes behaviours such as:



Turning to work or other activities (e.g. watching movies, reading books) to take my mind off things.



Giving up trying to deal with it.



Using alcohol or other drugs to make myself feel better.

Central Nova Scotians reported engaging in more avoidant coping than Non-Central Nova Scotians.\*

Nova Scotian participants (2.51) and **Non-Nova Scotian** participants (2.55) engaged in a similar amount of approach coping.

Responses were indicated on a scale of 1 to 4

Which includes behaviours such as:



Taking action to try and make the situation better.



Looking for something good in what is happening.

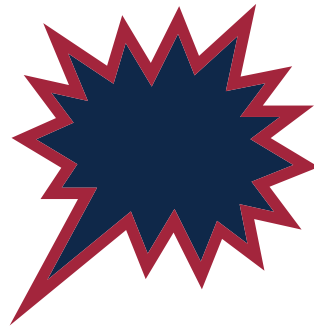


Trying to come up with a strategy for what to do.



# INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE

Rates of psychological aggression victimization and perpetration, as well as sexual aggression victimization, were similar among Nova Scotian participants and Non-Nova Scotian participants.



**67%** vs **61.3%**  
experienced psychological  
aggression from their partner

**67.6%** vs **73.2%**  
perpetrated psychological  
aggression against their  
partner

**9.3%** vs **6.9%**  
experienced sexual  
aggression from their partner

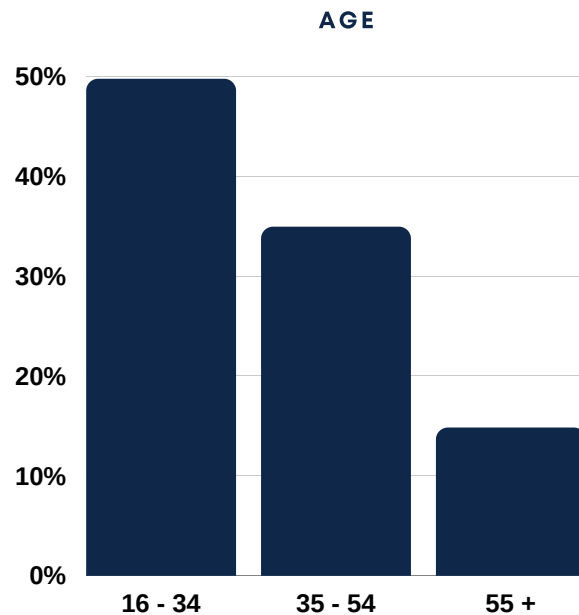
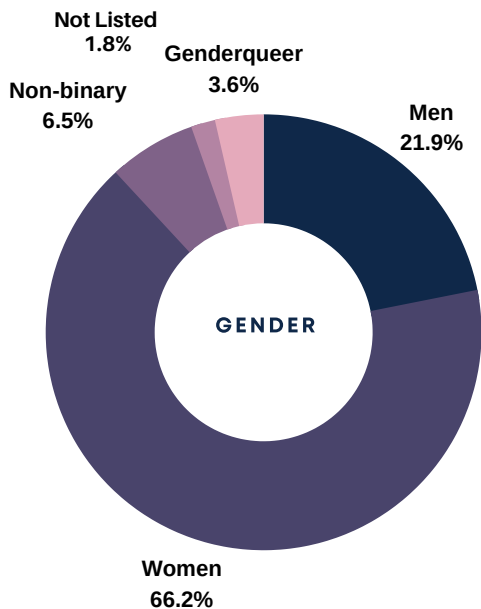
Rates of physical violence were measured but not reported,  
as the rates were too low to include in analyses.



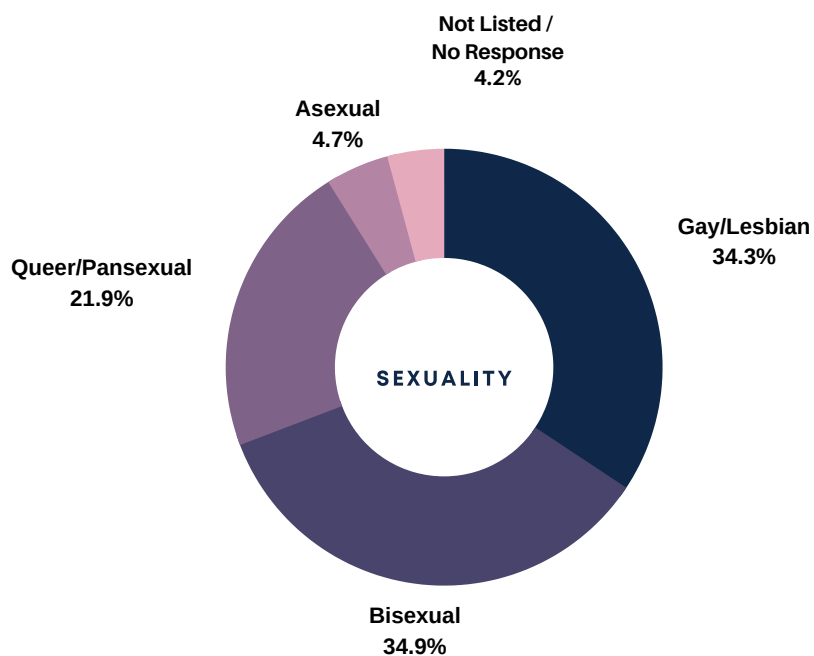
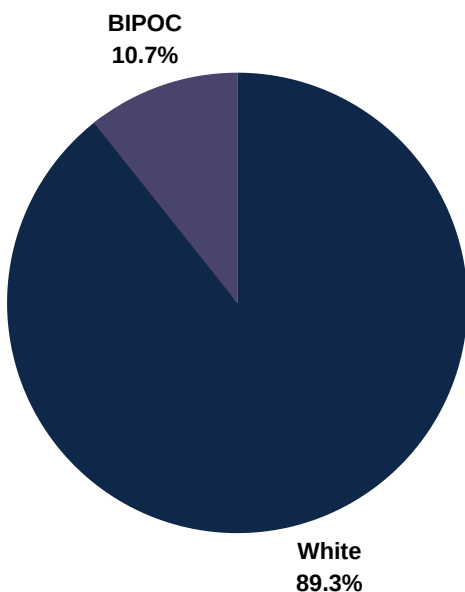
EXPERIENCES  
OF LGBTQ+  
AND BIPOC  
NOVA  
SCOTIANS

# DEMOGRAPHICS

## LGBTQ+ NOVA SCOTIANS

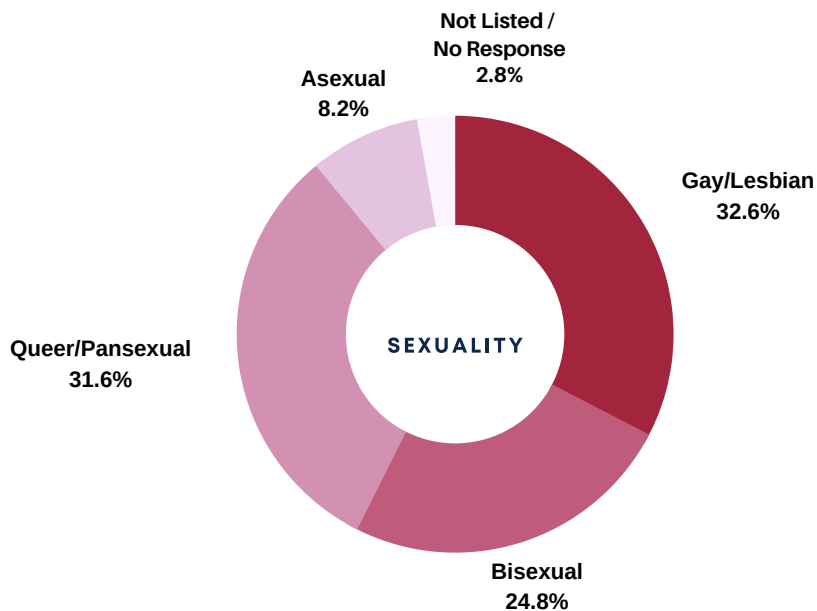
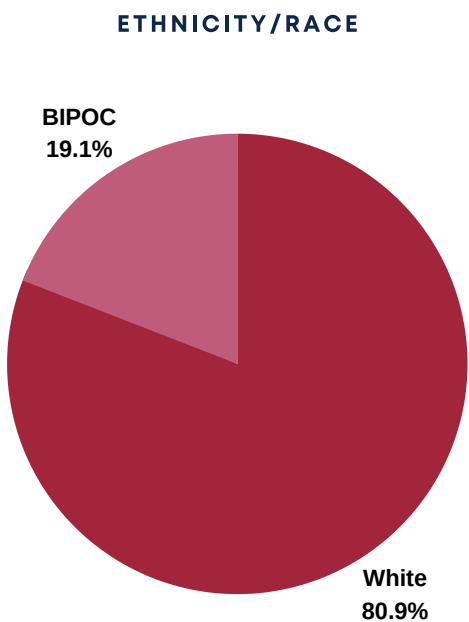
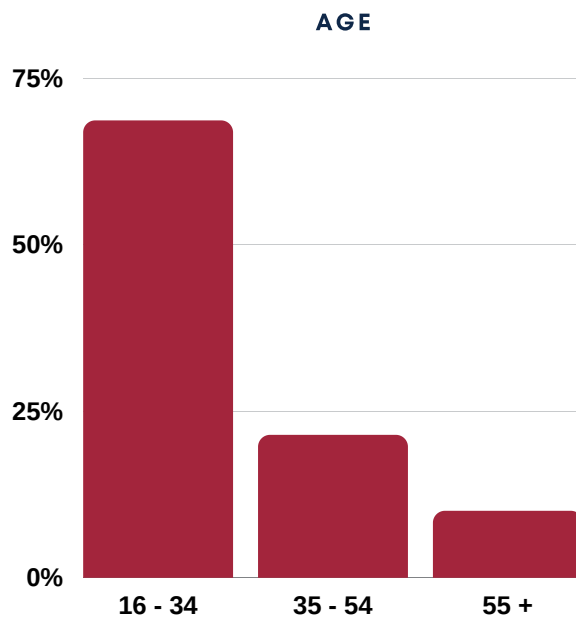
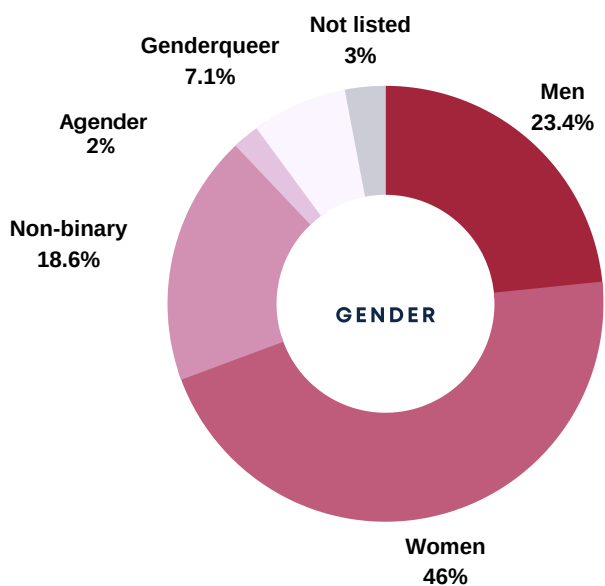


### ETHNICITY/RACE



# DEMOGRAPHICS

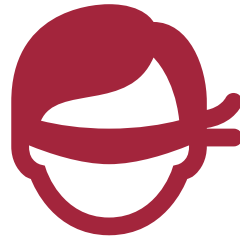
## LGBTQ+ NON-NOVA SCOTIANS



# LGBTQ+ EXPERIENCES



Nova Scotian LGBTQ+ participants (18.78) reported fewer symptoms of depression, anxiety and stress than **Non-Nova Scotian** LGBTQ+ participants (23.26).\*



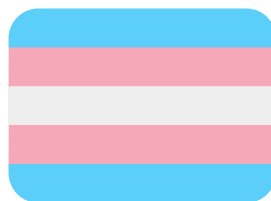
Nova Scotian LGBTQ+ participants (2.15) reported engaging in less avoidant coping than **Non-Nova Scotian** LGBTQ+ participants (2.33).\*



Nova Scotian LGBTQ+ participants (5.00) reported being closer to their family than **Non-Nova Scotian** LGBTQ+ participants (4.51).\*



Nova Scotian LGBTQ+ participants (4.92) reported being less close with their friends than **Non-Nova Scotian** LGBTQ+ participants (5.38).\*



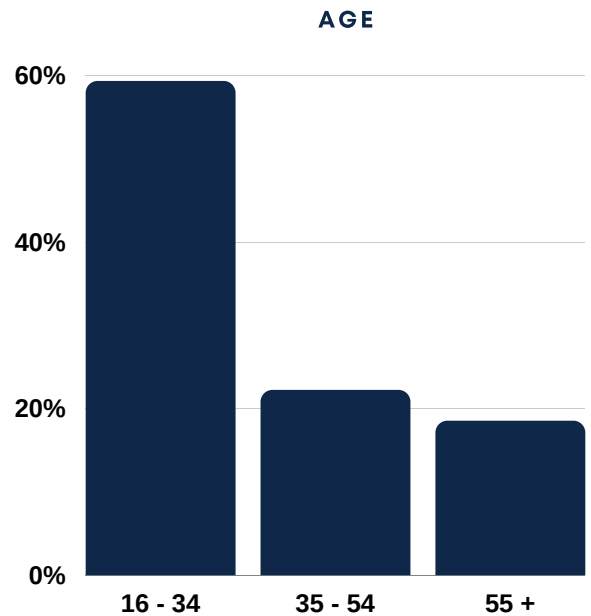
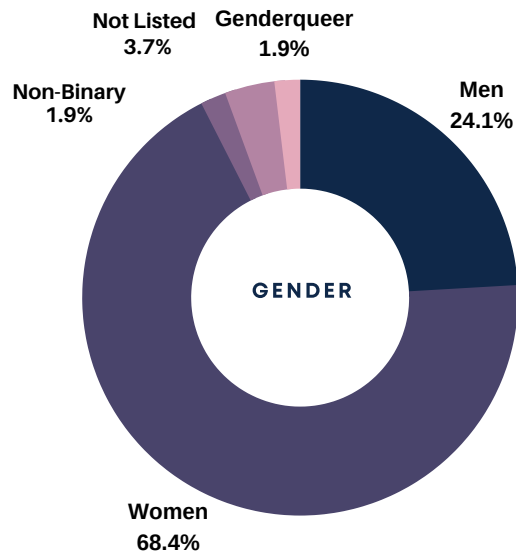
Nova Scotian LGBTQ+ participants (13.6%) were less likely than **Non-Nova Scotian** LGBTQ+ participants (42.6) to identify as Trans and/or Non-Binary.\*



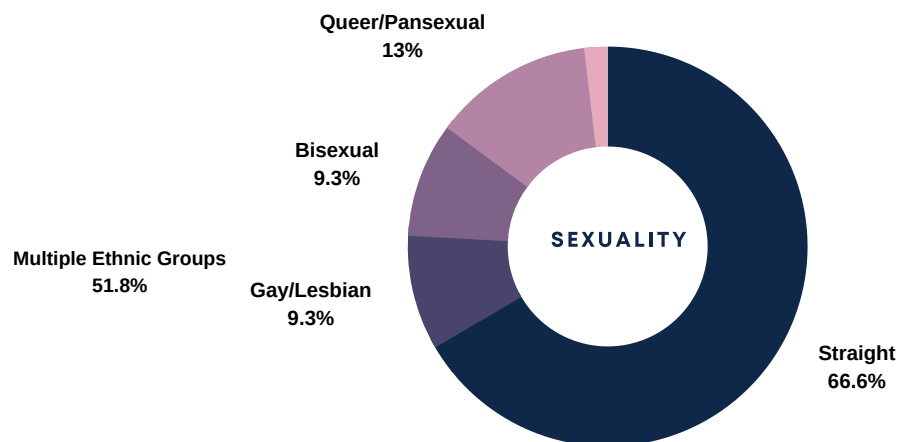
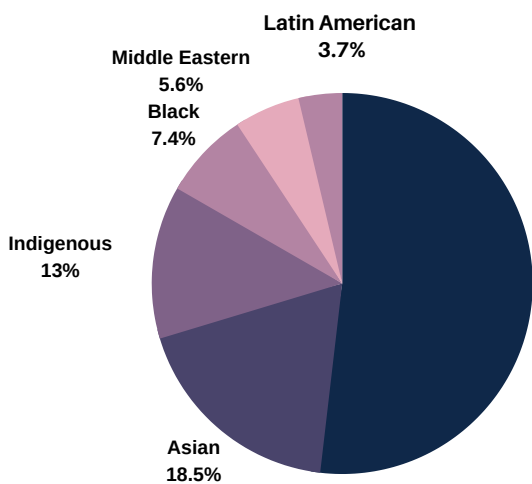
Nova Scotian LGBTQ+ participants (26.9%) were more likely than **Non-Nova Scotian** LGBTQ+ participants (12.2%) to describe where they currently live as rural.\*

# DEMOGRAPHICS

## BIPOC NOVA SCOTIANS

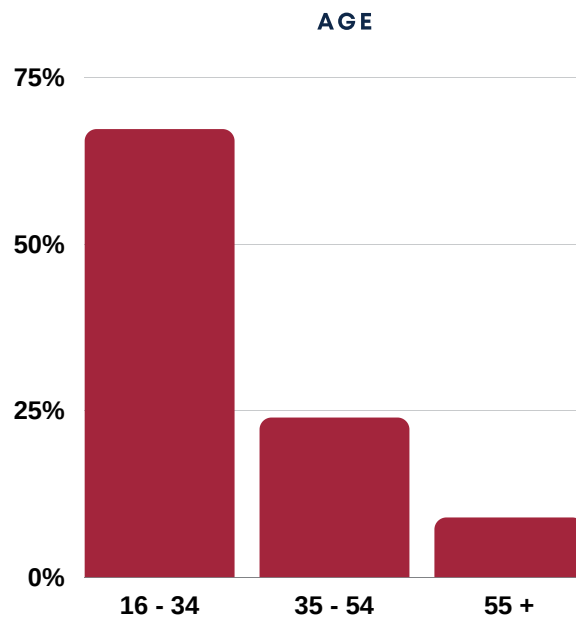
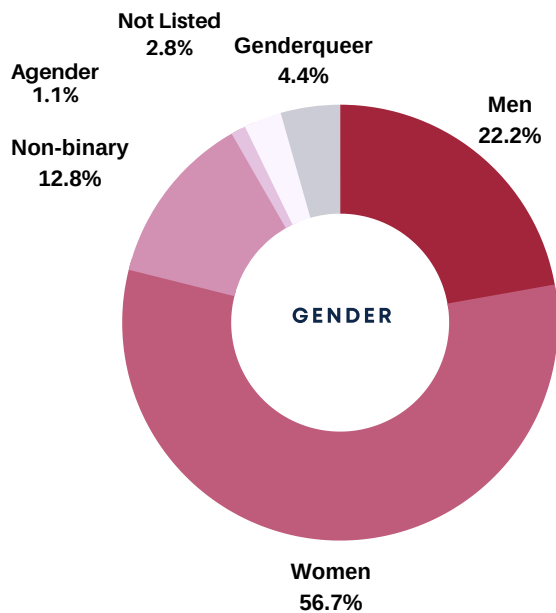


### ETHNICITY/RACE

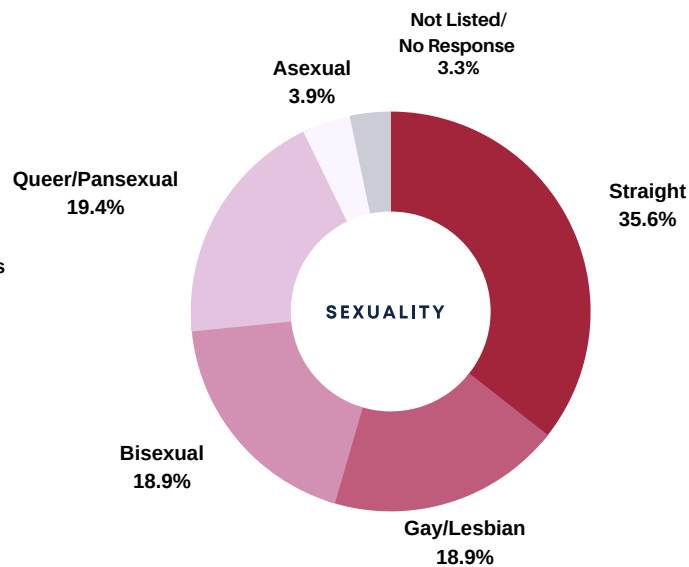
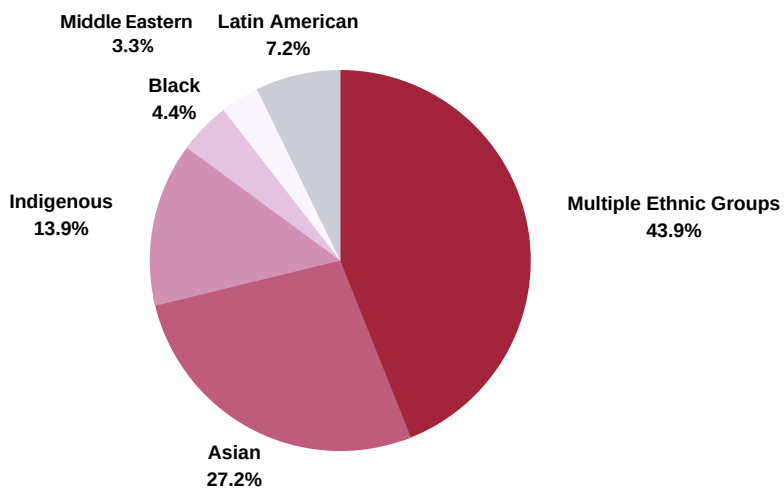


# DEMOGRAPHICS

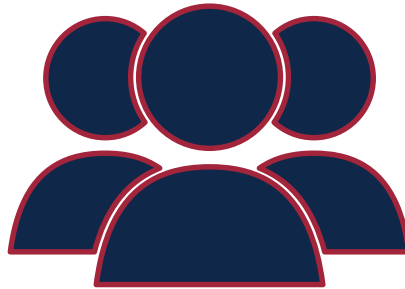
## BIPOC NON-NOVA SCOTIANS



### ETHNICITY/RACE



# BIPOC EXPERIENCES



**Nova Scotian BIPOC participants (3.50) reported higher levels of perceived social support than **Non-Nova Scotian** BIPOC participants (3.29).<sup>^</sup>**

Responses were reported on a scale of 1 to 5.



**Nova Scotian BIPOC participants (5.47) reported being closer with their family than **Non-Nova Scotian** BIPOC participants (4.78).<sup>^</sup>**

Responses were reported on a scale of 1 to 7.





## CONCLUSION

The findings of the current report suggest that Nova Scotians may be faring better during COVID-19 than Canadians living in other provinces. Nova Scotian participants reported higher levels of social support, mental well-being, and medical help seeking behaviours. Nova Scotians also reported more engagement in WHO recommendations, feelings of competency to engage in social distancing and more positive attitudes toward mandatory mask regulations.

While Nova Scotians did report less mask wearing and less serious attitudes regarding COVID-19, this may be due to the outbreak in Nova Scotia being less severe than in other provinces. As of September 1, 2020, Nova Scotia has had a total of 1083 cases of COVID-19 and 65 deaths as a result of COVID-19, whereas Ontario has had 42,309 cases and 2811 deaths total. Nova Scotians were more likely to describe their current home as being in a rural community, which may also allow them to feel more safe from COVID-19, more capable of social distancing, and put them in few situations where mask wearing would be required or necessary.

Living in a province with a low severity outbreak of COVID-19 may have allowed Nova Scotians to remain relatively unscathed in terms of mental health during the pandemic. Nova Scotians are known to be reliant on and emphasize community and social support, especially during difficult times. While COVID-19 would appear to present a unique challenge to such community support through preventing social gathering and face-to-face interaction, Nova Scotians still reported higher levels of social support than other Canadians. Since Nova Scotia experienced a lower case count and a shorter shut down than other provinces, Nova Scotians may have been able to return to pre-COVID-19 levels of social gathering more quickly than other Canadians. Quicker access to social support may have worked to buffer any negative impacts of COVID-19 on Nova Scotians mental well-being.

While LGBTQ+ Nova Scotians and BIPOC Nova Scotians generally had similar responses to their Non-Nova Scotian counterparts, they seemed to be faring better on some measures. LGBTQ+ Nova Scotians reported higher scores of perceived social support, closer relationships with their families and less avoidant coping than other LGBTQ+ Canadians. BIPOC Nova Scotians reported higher scores of social support and family closeness than other BIPOC Canadians.

A limitation of the current report is the lack of BIPOC representation in our sample.