

The impact of COVID-19 health measures on the quality of life of adults with multiple chemical sensitivity

Riina I. Bray; Yifan Wang; Nikolas Argiropoulos; Stephanie Robins; John Molot; Lynn M. Marshall; Marie-Andrée Pigeon; Michel Gaudet; Pierre Auger; Emily Bélanger; Rohini Peris

BACKGROUND

- Multiple chemical sensitivity is a chronic disorder characterized by intolerances to chemical substances.
- Since the advent of the COVID-19 pandemic and associated health measures, people with multiple chemical sensitivities are at increased risk of exposure to cleaners and disinfectants in their environment.
- This exposure to sanitary products can potentially exacerbate their symptoms and affect their normal daily functioning. Yet, little attention has been paid to the quality of life of these individuals in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic.

OBJECTIVE

This study explores the experiences of Canadian adults with multiple chemical sensitivity before and during the pandemic.

1. **Living environment**
2. **Access to health care**
3. **Levels of social support**

METHOD

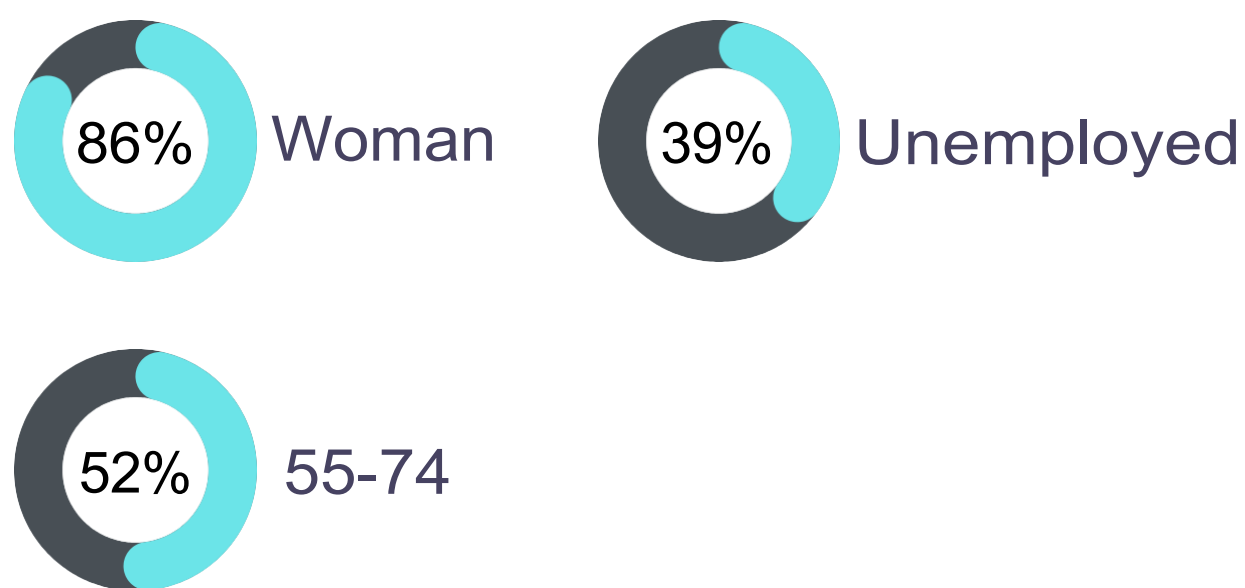
- 119 adults with multiple chemical sensitivity completed an online questionnaire.
- McNemar's chi-square and Wilcoxon signed rank tests

CONCLUSION/INVOLVEMENT

- Increased exposure to disinfectants or cleaners; loss of social support; and barriers to accessing health care during the pandemic.
- Implement fragrance-free and non-toxic or less toxic alternatives for cleaning and disinfection, as well as improve accommodations for adults living with multiple chemical sensitivities such as accessibility to health care and essential services.
- From a public health perspective, it would also be crucial to increase awareness of the chemicals in disinfectants and their health effects by clearly labeling the full list of ingredients and using only effective, less toxic products without fragrances or scents.

RESULTS

Demographics



Significant changes after the pandemic ($p < 0.001$)

Increase

- Exposure to disinfectants
- Social isolation
- Family understanding



Decrease

- Stigma associated with wearing personal protective equipment
- Access to a family doctor was noted during the pandemic

