

All Our Families Study

Understanding Development Across the Lifecourse

Fall 2020

Greetings!

It has been several months since we last reached out to you. I hope you are all well, and your lives have settled into a manageable routine. The back to school agenda was a time of uncertainty for many, and we are hopeful you have found a path that works for your family. The All Our Families team continue to keep you in our thoughts.

As you know, we have been working hard to contribute to the research related to COVID-19. We are very fortunate to have our participants, to help with this research, which has national and global relevance. All Our Families is unique because our participants have provided us detailed information about themselves and their families before the COVID-19 pandemic occurred, providing the rare ability to compare before and after results.



I want to extend a thank you to those who participated in the COVID-19 Maternal Impact survey and the COVID-19 Youth Impact survey. In the **Research to Real Life** section of this newsletter, there will be some 'fast facts' from our early results. In addition to this, there will be some general **study updates**, as well as a **profile** of a few of key staff for the study.

We are still planning the launch of the All Our Families 13 year questionnaire by early fall 2021. This will include a questionnaire to all moms as well as to the All Our Families child. We will continue to update you on this through our twice-yearly newsletter.

As always, we thank our participants for their continued support of the All Our Families study. Your contributions are highly valued, particularly in this unusually disruptive environment. At AOF, we will continue to work towards sharing what we learn with decision makers to inform programs and strategies to help families succeed.

I offer this photo of me taking some time to get outdoors and feel the joy of nature. I hope you are finding your own way to take care of yourself.

Thinking of you,

Suzanne

Study Updates

In light of the COVID-19 Pandemic, the All Our Families delayed the launch of the 12-year survey, scheduled for August 2020, and developed a COVID-19 Maternal Impact Survey. The All Our Families study is in the unique position to compare pre-COVID-19 family experiences with those throughout a global pandemic.



This survey was launched May 20, 2020, and closed June 30, 2020. Over 2,500 All Our Families participants were invited to complete the maternal survey, and we were very pleased to have over 1,300 responses.

We recognized an opportunity to hear from the children of these participants, to get the perspective of youth aged 9-12, and learn of their experiences. Therefore, a decision was made to invite the All Our Families child whose mothers had completed the maternal COVID-19 survey to complete their own COVID-19 Youth Impact Survey.

This survey was launched July 10, 2020 and closed August 31, 2020. Youth had the opportunity to answer questions about home life, changes in schooling, and their feelings. Approximately 1,300 youths were invited, and between 900-1,000 responded.

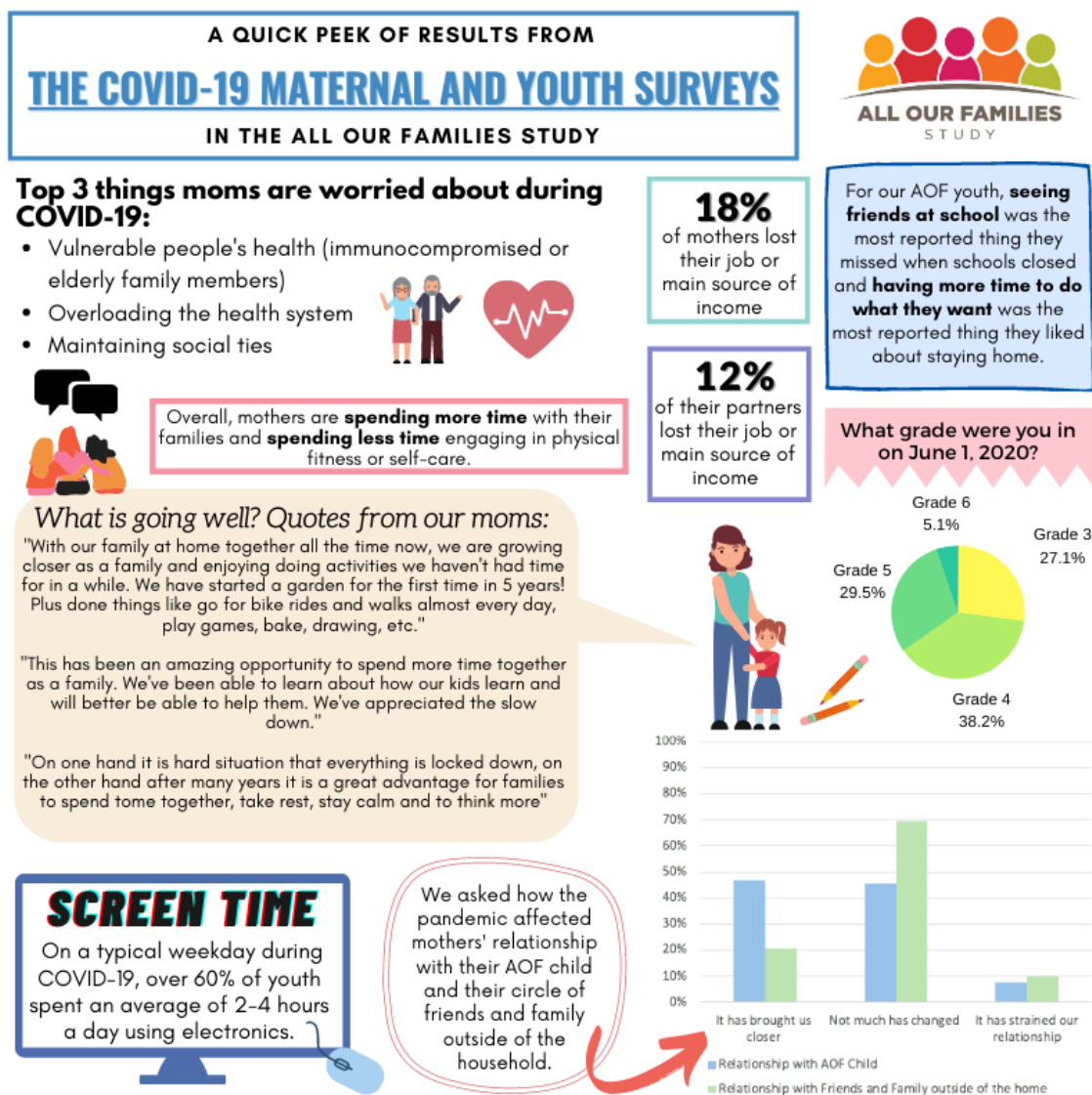
We have highlighted some of the responses in the [Research to Real Life](#) section of this newsletter.

Thanks to all of those who participated in these surveys!

Research to Real Life

Fast Facts from AOF COVID-19 Impact Surveys

Thanks to those of you who participated in the first wave of the COVID-19 Impact surveys! Below are a few interesting samples of the responses.



Team Member Q & A

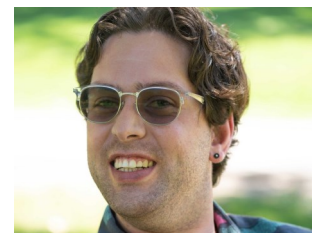
As you know, we often include information about our trainees and researchers in our newsletters. This edition will feature a few of the regular staff who work 'behind the scenes' for the All Our Families Study. Recently, Mark Agius, Project Manager at the Owerko Centre, spent the afternoon interviewing Mary Canning, David Wudel, and Muci Wu. Read on to learn more about some of the people who are key to the day-to-day operations of the study!

What's your role with AOF?



Mary: I am a part-time research assistant with the All Our Families study, and my major role is managing the data collected from the All Our Families participants, sharing that data with approved investigators for them to answer their research questions, tracking news, tracking publications, doing the newsletter. I'm also a working nurse, and it's great, but it's busy, it's demanding, and it's stressful; it's nice to have a role with All Our Families that is none of that and still so very interesting.

David: My role is main reception at our office, but for the last couple years, I've actually gotten to expand my role a little bit into the research team, so I'm able to connect with our participants on a one-to-one level.



Muci: I'm an analyst with the All Our Families study, and typically when I say "analyst," I think people are thinking the person who crunches the numbers, looks at all the details and the info behind the survey data, and then puts together the information behind that. But over the years, there's been so much more added to this analyst role that makes it great. I think I've taken on something more – it's like "analyst plus." And I think I've been so fortunate to have this role, it's been quite fun, to be honest.

What do you like best about working with the AOF team?

Mary: It's very interesting work. I'm surrounded by people who are very smart, and therefore that makes me smart! But to me the study is actually fascinating. Just the idea that we – the study - have been following a group of women for over 12 years, and that we're getting such rich data seeing what families are thinking and doing and feeling. It's just so interesting to me.

David: I like that I'm able to talk to people on a daily basis, learn new things about my coworkers and just make their lives as easy as possible when they are at work.

Muci: The team itself is really awesome. And I think the amount of time that I've spent with the team, they've sort of grown into a bit of a family – an All Our Families family, you could say.

How do you find balance outside of work?

Mary: I play hockey. I also play ringette, and I value that – I like to be physically active. So, hockey, skating, ringette, biking, hiking, family – activities with family. I just find that physical release is just so important for just overall well-being – emotional, physical.

David: I'm a painter and I'm able to kind of express myself in ways that I normally can't through that. It also lets me kind of express, more or less, the inner struggles I have daily. It's a form of release and a form of therapy for me, for sure.

Muci: I think having hobbies is important, or things that you can sort of really get into. So for me, it's relaxing to focus all my attention onto one specific thing and sort of let my mind go and focus there. So for example, for me it's pottery, where you just give in to the whole process of it – you can't get distracted by anything on the outside.

Do you have any tools or tricks that are helping you manage through the COVID-19 pandemic?

Mary: It's a good question because sometimes I don't. Early on in the pandemic, I've certainly felt – and I believe this was a shared experience with my coworkers – that there was a lot of fear and a lot of paranoia, and we fed it to each other as well. What if we're not safe? What if I'm sick and I don't know it? Is it safe to go to work? So I looked to my family. I kept busy; I kept active. Even though all my sports were shut down, I made a point of getting out every day for a walk.

David: Well, for me art is number one. But find some way to express yourself every day, and just try and take at least one good thing out of one day. It doesn't have to be a big, momentous thing, but even if it's a simple conversation with someone that you haven't talked to in a while, that can go a long way.

Muci: I guess I've been lucky in that I've been practicing mindfulness through meditations, and I've tried to make that a regular thing for me, so I think it's definitely helped in these past couple months in managing moods and stress.

What are you most looking forward to doing or experiencing once the COVID-19 pandemic is over?

Mary: I would look forward to getting dressed in work – not nursing clothes, but work clothes, and going to see other people. Going to an office in normal clothes with my hair washed!

David: Honestly, getting back into the old routine and taking the new things I've learned from this hiatus, and applying them to my work.

Muci: I think just seeing people – seeing my friends and my family and having a meal together without worrying. Or I guess mostly it's just not having to worry anymore. That would be nice! I'm looking forward to feeling relaxed when I go out in public spaces and not anxious. You know, the things that I used to take for granted.

AOF Youth Survey Update

In previous newsletters, we had written of launching an All Our Families Youth Survey. The study's original plan was to launch a survey inviting the AOF youths turning 12, starting in August of 2020. About two years ago we started developing this survey, as well as a Youth Engagement Video explaining the purpose. However, we have since recognized that these past 8 months has been a time of great disruption and collecting information now would not help us understand 12 year olds 'in general'. However, understanding this important transition from child to youth is very important. We are on track to introduce our survey as All Our Families youth begin to turn 13 in the fall of 2021. We will continue to keep you updated through our newsletters and website. As always, any questions, concerns or feedback can be directed to our All Our Families email allourfamilies@ucalgary.ca.



Thanksgiving in 2020



This year, our Thanksgiving weekend will surely look different for many people. Work schedules may have changed, finances may be tighter. Travel is a bit more limited for those who usually travel to visit friends and family within and outside the province or country. Smaller gatherings are encouraged, and for some families – access to family members may be much more restricted.

For some, it may feel there is less to feel grateful for as they may have experienced illness, job loss, or loss of loved ones.

This may be the year you start new, or temporary, holiday traditions with your family. Keep a few things in mind:

- Give some thought about 'why' and 'how' you want to spend the Thanksgiving weekend. Give it a sense of purpose.
- Involve the family in planning! Maybe the kids have some great creative ideas about how to give thanks!
- If you are spending time with family, pre-plan how you will adapt the space to accommodate family while still respecting appropriate physical distancing.
- Try and maintain some routines as a family; predictability in schedules are comforting for kids.
- Weather permitting, get outside, and get some fresh air either alone or as a family. Check out these links to find some COVID-appropriate family-centred activities in Calgary.

[Visit Calgary's Things to Do](#)

[To Do Canada's Fun Things](#)

[Family Fun Canada's family friendly events](#)

- Most importantly – be kind to yourself.