

**Appendix A:  
Open-Ended Survey Questions, Open-Ended Survey Codebook, and  
Intervention Surveys, Treatment, and Control Materials**

## **A.1. Open-Ended Survey Materials**

Splash Page

### **Short Survey About How UofT Students Are Doing During COVID-19**

Greetings!

With the COVID-19 pandemic changing lives across Canada and the world, many UofT students are facing new challenges, but also coming up with strategies to overcome them.

One way you can help is to share your own experiences so that we, as researchers and administrators at UofT can determine what more we can do.

The survey should only take about 30 minutes to finish. The first 100 students who complete it will be sent \$20 by e-transfer to their university email address, or may opt to receive a \$20 amazon.ca gift certificate instead.

We really appreciate your honest feedback, which we hope to use to better support you and other students more.

Login

Need help or have questions? Email [UofTwarmup@economics.utoronto.ca](mailto:UofTwarmup@economics.utoronto.ca)

Welcome <first\_name>!

The following short survey is designed to learn more about how UofT students are coping with the COVID-19 pandemic while physically distancing and completing courses online.

[If completion <100]

The survey should only take about 30 minutes to finish. You are one of the first 100 students to take it. After you complete the survey, we will send you \$20 by e-transfer to your university email address, or you may opt to receive a \$20 amazon.ca gift certificate instead.

[If completion >=100]

The survey should only take about 30 minutes to finish. You are not one of the first 100 students to take it, but your thoughtful input would still be extremely helpful. Please share what you are going through so that we might learn from your experience and inspire others.

All the the responses you provide in this exercise remain confidential. There are no right or wrong answers.

<insert consent box here, as before> (see next page for consent wording)

Consent

YES, I AGREE to participate in this survey

NO, I DO NOT AGREE to participate

Need help or have questions? Email [warmup@utoronto.ca](mailto:warmup@utoronto.ca)

Next

## **Consent to Participate in Research**

We would like your permission to use your responses in this survey and some of your university administrative data for anonymous research purposes. The research is being conducted with the support from the Economics Department and approval from the University of Toronto Ethics Review Board. The purpose of the research is to evaluate new strategies for addressing challenges during the COVID-19 pandemic, improving student achievement and well-being. Your name and any other identifying information will not be in any reports.

The University of Toronto and the researchers involved in this project acknowledge and appreciate the trust that you place in us to protect your personal information. We are very committed to protecting your privacy. All information collected will be strictly confidential and used only for this project. Only the researchers to this study will have access to this data.

If you agree to participate, information from your responses to this may be used internally to support the research only to the extent it is relevant to the research. The researchers involved in the project will not use or disclose any of your information for any other purpose, and you would never be individually identified. You may withdraw your participation at any time by contacting [philip.oreopoulos@utoronto.ca](mailto:philip.oreopoulos@utoronto.ca).

Your participation in this research does not impact your course grades. Your instructor will not know whether you have chosen to participate.

For more information, you may contact [philip.oreopoulos@utoronto.ca](mailto:philip.oreopoulos@utoronto.ca) if you have further questions. For information regarding your rights as a participant, you may also contact the University of Toronto's Ethics Review Office at [416-946-3273](tel:416-946-3273) or [ethics.review@utoronto.ca](mailto:ethics.review@utoronto.ca).

<have completion bar above>

There are 8 questions. Please answer them as thoughtfully as you can, writing at least one or two paragraphs:

## 1. Challenges

What are some challenges you are facing right now during the COVID-19 pandemic?

[For example, think about how the pandemic has affected your daily life, your social relationships, your financial situation, or other aspects of your life.]

]

<Previous (Save)> <Save> <Next (Save)>

**# Pop-up on NEXT, if word count is less than 10**

Could you please elaborate with a little more detail? Please take your time and share your experience – we'd really like to learn more from you.

**# End pop-up #**

<have completion bar above>

## 2. Changes to routine

What have been the biggest changes to your routine since being asked to physically isolate?

[What changes have been the most difficult? What changes have been the most helpful?]

]

<Previous (Save)> <Save> <Next (Save)>

**# Pop-up on NEXT, if word count is less than 10**

Could you please elaborate with a little more detail? Please take your time and share your experience – we'd really like to learn more from you.

**# End pop-up #**

### 3. Strategies to cope

What strategies have you used to take care of your mental and physical health during this challenging time? What are some additional strategies you plan to use going forward?

[For example, have you taken steps to try to cope with the challenges you mentioned earlier? What has made you feel better under the circumstances?]

]

<Previous (Save)> <Save> <Next (Save)>

**# Pop-up on NEXT, if word count is less than 10**

Could you please elaborate with a little more detail? Please take your time and share your experience – we'd really like to learn more from you.

**# End pop-up #**

## 4. Personal Growth

What are some ways you are learning and growing from coping with the COVID-19 pandemic so far?

[For example, think about positive lessons learned from the experience, possibly stronger social relationships, things you have done that have made you or others feel better, or your resilience.]

]

<Previous (Save)> <Save> <Next (Save)>

**# Pop-up on NEXT, if word count is less than 10**

Could you please elaborate with a little more detail? Please take your time and share your experience – we'd really like to learn more from you.

**# End pop-up #**

## 5. A Specific Example

Please tell us a specific story about how you've been able to overcome a challenge since the COVID-19 pandemic began. What was the challenge, and how did you address it? How do you feel about it now?

[For example, build from your earlier responses but add more details to describe a specific case where you faced a challenge and took action to help address it]

]

<Previous (Save)> <Save> <Next (Save)>

**# Pop-up on NEXT, if word count is less than 10**

Could you please elaborate with a little more detail? Please take your time and share your experience – we'd really like to learn more from you.

**# End pop-up #**

<have completion bar above>

## 6. Online Learning

Did you face challenges when classes transitioned to online learning? If so, what kinds?

[For example, was it harder to focus on the lectures, were you more distracted or more likely to skip material, did you find parts of the setup even better than before?

]

<Previous (Save)> <Save> <Next (Save)>

**# Pop-up on NEXT, if word count is less than 10**

Could you please elaborate with a little more detail? Please take your time and share your experience – we'd really like to learn more from you.

**# End pop-up #**

<have completion bar above>

## 7. Academics

How have your academic experience and success been affected by the changes caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, if at all?

[For example, have you had difficulty studying or learning course material while physically isolating? Have you missed services or outside supports that are no longer easily accessible?].

]

<Previous (Save)> <Save> <Next (Save)>

**# Pop-up on NEXT, if word count is less than 10**

Could you please elaborate with a little more detail? Please take your time and share your experience – we'd really like to learn more from you.

**# End pop-up #**

<have completion bar above>

## 8. What Can the University Do?

What are ways the university has helped with the challenges created by the COVID-19 pandemic?  
What more could they do?

<Previous (Save)> <Save> <Next (Save)>

**# Pop-up on NEXT, if word count is less than 10**

Could you please elaborate with a little more detail? Please take your time and share your experience – we'd really like to learn more from you.

**# End pop-up #**

## Anything Else?

Is there anything else you would like to share about your experience as a university student during the COVID-19 pandemic?

<Previous (Save)> <Save> <Next (Save)>

[If completion <100]

Thank-you! For completing the survey, do you wish to receive:

\$20 by Interac e-Transfer (requires Canadian bank account)

\$20 Amazon.ca gift certificate

Please allow for up to 7 days. The sender of this amount will be Philip Oreopoulos (Professor of Economics), [philip.oreopoulos@utoronto.ca](mailto:philip.oreopoulos@utoronto.ca)

Thank-you! You are done! We really appreciate your time and feedback during this time.

If you are interested in learning more about managing mental health during COVID-19 please access UofT's information website for students [here](#) or the University's Health and Wellness' Frequently Asked Questions [here](#).

You might also be interested in taking a short free online course about this topic launched by Steve Jordans, an award winning teaching professor at UofT. The course can be found by clicking [here](#).

Suggested email:

Subject: short COVID-19 survey for \$20

Hello {first\_name}, [or just Hello, if you can't pull first name]

We need your help to learn more how we can help.

The researchers who brought you the Economics Warm-up Exercise are now conducting a short survey intended to learn more about how UofT students are coping with the COVID-19 pandemic while physically distancing and completing courses online.

The survey takes about 30 minutes to finish. The first 100 students who complete it will be sent \$20 by e-transfer to their university email address, or may opt to receive a \$20 amazon.ca gift certificate instead.

To take the survey, please go online at <https://warmup.utoronto.ca> [make this clickable]

Thanks for your help and be well!

Philip Oreopoulos, Professor of Economics  
(on behalf of the Warm-up Exercise Team)

## **A.2 Open-Ended Survey Codebook**

### COVID-19 Survey Codebook

#### **Mental Health and Well-Being**

0: remained optimistic; adapted well to new routine

1: experienced depressive or anxious feelings; experienced loneliness, lethargy or a lack of motivation; struggled to establish new routine and/or settle into new living situation

In general students were struggling to adjust to at-home learning because of the lack of physical interaction with friends, anxiety surrounding the global situation, depression from spending too much time inside and/or alone and lack of motivation to attend lectures due to the flexibility of the online learning set-up. Many international students' mental health was especially poor because of the distance from their families and feeling isolated in Toronto.

#### **Experienced Depressive or Anxious Feelings**

0: mental health/outlook remained positive

1: experienced depression or anxiety from transition to online learning, the pandemic, etc.

Many students reported they had previously been diagnosed with depression and/or anxiety, and their new living situations and the uncertainty of the pandemic were exacerbating their symptoms. Many students were very anxious about them or a family member contracting the virus.

#### **Experienced Loneliness**

0: remained connected with social network; found ways to socialize virtually

1: experienced loneliness; struggled with the lack of face-to-face interaction

For many students, loneliness was a major challenge. Most students reported missing their friends and felt lonely in their new living situations. Those left in residence and international students stuck in Toronto struggled the most.

#### **Experienced Lethargy or Lack of Motivation**

0: was able to work efficiently and stay motivated

1: struggled to complete work and/or create new routine due to lethargy or lack of motivation

Many students struggled with a lack of motivation in their new situation. Many missed working in the library and struggled to find motivation to attend online lectures and study. Some students' anxiety surrounding the pandemic manifested as lethargy and they struggled to get out of bed.

#### **Struggled to Establish New Routine and/or Settle into New Living Situation**

0: settled into new living situation or established a new routine with ease

1: struggled to create a new routine or adapt to new living situation

Although many students tried to create a new routine and practice healthy habits, they struggled to adjust to their new living situations. Many struggled with the lack of freedom and being indoors all day.

#### **Sleeping Affected**

0: sleeping was unaffected/no mention of sleep routine

- 1: because of the more flexible schedule, students deliberately went to bed later and slept in later
- 2: students unintentionally fell into an unhealthy sleeping routine

Many students took advantage of the flexible class schedule and stayed up until 3-4am and slept until 12-2pm. As a result, they felt lethargic and unmotivated to do their work. Other students were experiencing poor mental health or were distracted, causing an unhealthy shift in their sleep routine.

### **Adjustment to Online Learning**

0: no clear answer/neutral

1: adjustment was smooth or had a minor challenge

2: adjustment was difficult; students faced multiple challenges transitioning online

Some students had a smooth transition to online learning, and a few preferred it. For the most part, these were commuters who experienced fewer logistical disruptions. For many students, the transition was challenging because of issues with technology, struggles with self-learning and distractions. For international and out-of-province students, the adjustment was especially challenging because of the time difference for exams and live lectures, and challenges booking flights and packing while still keeping up with classwork.

### **Difficulty Concentrating due to Distractions**

0: online learning was efficient; no distractions from learning environment or the Internet

1: experienced at least one major distraction such as a loud work environment, video games, the Internet or being too comfortable at home to study

Almost every student struggled with distractions. Many missed studying at the library as the quiet environment helped them focus. Many were quarantined with family members and their homes were too loud for them to be productive or did not have a suitable environment where they could study. The most common distraction was from constantly being online, as students were tempted to browse the Internet, play video games and watch TV.

### **Difficulty Concentrating due to Mental Health**

0: students' concentration and/or motivation was not affected by feelings of anxiety, loneliness, uncertainty or depression

1: students reported difficulty focusing due to anxiety, loneliness, uncertainty or depression

In general students' concentration was unaffected by their mental health. Those who reported problems focusing due to loneliness, anxiety, etc. were generally living alone or far away from their families.

### **Logistical Problems**

0: students' online learning was not affected by poor technology, lack of Wi-Fi/Wi-Fi bandwidth or a time difference

1: students' learning suffered because of inadequate technology, poor Wi-Fi or audio connection or a time difference

Logistical problems were a major issue for a lot of students. Many said group work was challenging as group members were often living in different cities/time zones, so it was difficult to collaborate. A lot of students also struggled with poor Wi-Fi, video and audio connection. For international

students, the time difference was inconvenient as it was hard to write exams, focus in lectures and attend office hours.

### **Instructors Handling Online Learning Poorly**

0: instructors handled the transition to online learning well and posted material on time

1: instructors did not post material on time, held less office hours, were unresponsive to emails or made final exams more challenging

Most students were very happy with their instructors' commitment to their learning and quick transition online. A few complained it was harder to attend office hours and that professors made the final exams too difficult to compensate for students having access to their notes.

### **Grades Suffering**

0: students' grades did not change or increased

1: students' grades suffered due to the re-weighting of mid-terms/assignments or difficulty learning material online

Most students' grades were unaffected by the transition online. A few were upset the mid-terms were re-weighted as they had been hoping to use the final exam to boost their mark. Others' grades suffered as they were unmotivated to complete work online or were experiencing mental health issues.

### **Expressed Financial Concern/Worries**

0: students' financial situation was unaffected

1: experienced unemployment, financial losses or expressed concern about paying for tuition in upcoming semesters

Many students' financial situations were negatively affected. Many lost their summer jobs or had family members who lost their jobs. Many expressed concerns about paying for school in the future as they weren't able to earn money during the summer or didn't qualify for government loans as they were international students.

### **Experience with University's Response to Cancellation of In-Person Activities**

1: happy with the university's response

0: satisfied with the university's response but suggested modifications

-1: dissatisfied with the university's response

There was an overwhelmingly positive response to the university's handling of the situation. Almost all agreed it was the right decision and the university had been very fast to set up online learning. Those who were dissatisfied thought there were not enough student support systems in place online.

### **Coping Strategies**

0: reported no coping strategies or positive shift in mindset regarding the situation

1: used a hobby, created a new routine, or optimism to cope with the situation

Almost every student took steps to cope with the situation by taking up old hobbies, socializing online, getting in touch with family members, creating a new routine or recognizing the positive aspects of online learning (e.g. more sleep).

### **Created New Routine**

0: struggled to stay on track with online learning; did not incorporate a sense of structure into new situation

1: incorporated regular, structured activities into daily routine (e.g. exercising, study time, bedtime)

Most students who were not struggling with mental health issues prioritized creating a new routine. Most students' days centred around studying, but many also incorporated exercise and hobbies.

### **Physical Exercise**

0: no effort to incorporate physical exercise into new living situation

1: actively tried to or incorporated regular exercise into new routine

This was one of the most common coping strategies among all students. Many used it as a stress-reliever and distraction from the current situation. In general, those who did not exercise were struggling with severe mental health issues.

### **Meditation**

0: did not incorporate meditation into new routine

1: practiced or attempted to engage in regular meditation

Meditation was a relatively uncommon coping strategy, although a few students started meditating as a way to gather their thoughts during the pandemic. A small portion engaged in meditative and self-reflective activities such as yoga and journaling.

### **Social or Group Activity**

0: did not connect with any family members or friends

1: regularly contacted friends, family members or support faculty at U of T

This was the most common coping strategy. Almost every student made an effort to keep in touch with their friends. If they were living at home, most were enjoying the opportunity to reconnect with their families. International students were also in frequent contact with their families via FaceTime. Many engaged in social online activities such as playing cards, group video games or bible study.

### **Reading**

0: did not incorporate reading for pleasure into new routine

1: used reading as a coping strategy in new routine

Although many students were reading to keep up with schoolwork, only a few reported reading for pleasure. For these students, this was an effective coping mechanism and distraction from reality.

### **Cooking or Eating Well**

0: did not make an effort to cook or eat well to stay healthy and/or cope with new situation

1: used cooking or healthy eating to improve mental and physical health or cope with new situation

In general, only students living on their own made an effort to cook and eat well. Many of these students were finding cooking meditative, although many found grocery shopping extremely stressful. A few students also used baking as a creative outlet.

### **Focusing on Getting Sleep**

0: made no effort to create a healthy sleep schedule

1: prioritized going to sleep early or for longer amounts of time

Only a few students reported they were focusing on getting more sleep or practicing good sleep hygiene. These students were generally the most optimistic about the situation, had the best mental health and were trying to establish better life habits.

### **Other**

0: did not use another coping mechanism

1: used a coping mechanism in addition to or other than those listed above

A few students used religion/spirituality, art, music and video games. Others spent time outside to improve their mental health and well-being.

### **New Skills**

0: did not attempt any new skills or hobbies

1: tried to or successfully learned a new skill or hobby

In general, the few who were learning new skills were those who were coping the best with the new situation. Some were working on passion projects, learning new languages or instruments, and they argued this helped them remain optimistic.

## A.3 Intervention Materials

# Warm-Up Exercise

This website includes a 'warm up' exercise for students enrolled in summer economics classes at the University of Toronto (2020). The purpose of the exercise is to share your experiences with COVID-19 and those of others so that the University can learn how better to help ensure continued academic success and well-being.

Students who complete the warm-up exercise and a short follow-up at the end of the term will receive 2 percentage points towards their final grade. Completion requires logging in using your utorid and following the exercise until told you are finished.

The exercises should take about 30 minutes to complete. You will need to concentrate and process what you are being asked, so try to complete them when you are feeling alert and relatively unrushed. Do not use your phone (in fact, please turn it off to avoid distraction). There are no right or wrong answers.

<Login>

Need help or have questions? Email [warmup@utoronto.ca](mailto:warmup@utoronto.ca)

# Welcome <user>!

Thank-you for logging on! **All of your responses provided in this exercise remain confidential. There are no right or wrong answers. Your instructor will only know whether you completed the exercise.**

Need help or have questions? Email [warmup@economics.utoronto.ca](mailto:warmup@economics.utoronto.ca)

<Next>

## Introductory Survey

Please begin by completing the brief (22 questions) survey below:

What is the highest level of education you intend to get?

- University Bachelor's degree (e.g. B.A. B.Sc., B.A./B.Sc., B.Ed., other university degree)
- University first professional degree (e.g. dentistry, veterinary medicine, law, optometry, divinity)
- Master's degree
- Ph.D. (or other earned doctorate)

If known by you, what is (or was) the highest level of education completed by your mother?

- Did not finish high school
- Graduated from high school
- Attended a community college but did not complete diploma
- Completed a community college diploma program
- Attended a university but did not complete degree (BA, BComm., etc)
- Completed a bachelor's degree (BA, BComm., etc)
- Completed a master's degree (MA, MSc, etc)
- Completed a doctoral or professional program (PhD, MD, LLB, etc.)
- Don't know or Not applicable

If known by you, what is (or was) the highest level of education completed by your father?

- Did not finish high school
- Graduated from high school
- Attended a community college but did not complete diploma
- Completed a community college diploma program
- Attended a university but did not complete degree (BA, BComm., etc)
- Completed a bachelor's degree (BA, BComm., etc)
- Completed a master's degree (MA, MSc, etc)
- Completed a doctoral or professional program (PhD, MD, LLB, etc.)
- Don't know or Not applicable

What primary racial group do you identify with? If you identify with more than one group, please select one group that represents an important identity for you.

- Black/African
- East Asian (e.g., Chinese, Japanese, Korean)
- Hispanic
- Indigenous
- Middle Eastern
- South Asian (e.g., Pakistani, Indian)
- Southeast Asian (e.g., Filipino, Vietnamese, Indonesian)
- West Indian/Caribbean
- White/Caucasian
- Other not listed above
- Decline to answer

**For each of the 3 questions below, please choose the option that is closer to your opinion and then indicate whether your choice is *much closer* to your opinion or *slightly closer*.**

Which of the two following statements is closer to your opinion?

What happens to me is my own doing.

Sometimes I feel that I don't have enough control over the direction my life is taking.

Is the chosen statement above much closer or slightly closer to your opinion?

Much closer

Slightly closer

Which of the two following statements is closer to your opinion?

When I make plans,

I am almost certain that I can make them work.

It is not always wise to plan too far ahead, because many things turn out to be a matter of good or bad fortune anyhow.

Is the chosen statement above much closer or slightly closer to your opinion?

Much closer

Slightly closer

Which of the two following statements is closer to your opinion?

Many times I feel that I have little influence over the things that happen to me.

It is impossible for me to believe that chance or luck plays an important role in my life.

Is the chosen statement above much closer or slightly closer to your opinion?

Much closer

Slightly closer

Do you expect September UofT classes to remain online for most students?

Yes

No

By when do you expect to NOT have to shelter in place?

May

June

July

August

September

October

November

December

Next year

Indicate the extent to which you agree to the following statement using a 7 point scale, where 1 = fully agree and 7 = fully disagree:

The COVID-19 pandemic has, so far, made my life challenging

(dropdown)

1 (fully agree)

2

3

4

5

6

7 (fully disagree)

My situation during the COVID-19 pandemic is better than most other students at UofT

(dropdown)

1 (fully agree)

2

3

4

5

6

7 (fully disagree)

During the COVID-19 pandemic I am able to feel socially connected to friends and family

(dropdown)

1 (fully agree)

2

3

4

5

6

7 (fully disagree)

**What describes your current living situation (check all that apply)**

Living in the Greater Toronto Area (GTA)

Living in Canada but not in GTA

Living outside of Canada

Living alone

Living with parents

Living with siblings

Living with roommates

Living with partner

Living with young children (under 12 years of age)

Living with older adults (over 65 years of age)

Living in house

Living in apartment

Living in university residence

Living in urban (downtown) community

Living in suburban community

Living in rural community

Since the COVID-19 pandemic started in March, have you:

Worried about whether you would run out of food before you had money to buy more?

Yes

No

Worried about whether you or your family would no longer be able to pay your UofT tuition?

Yes

No

How much stress would you say you have been experiencing in the last 4 weeks?

- None
- A little
- Some
- A moderate amount
- A lot
- A great deal
- An extreme amount

How confident do you feel that you are able to cope with your stress on a day-to-day basis?

- Not at all confident
- Slightly confident
- Somewhat confident
- Moderately confident
- Quite confident
- Very confident
- Extremely confident

Over the last 4 weeks, how often have you been bothered by the following problems?

	Not at all	Several days	More than half the days	Nearly every day
Feeling nervous, anxious, or on edge				
Not being able to stop or control worrying				
Little interest or pleasure in doing things				
Feeling down, depressed, or hopeless				

**What overall letter grade average do you expect to receive this school term?**

[C-, C, C+, B-, B, B+, A-, A, A+] (dropdown)

**Which comes closer to describing your goal in university**

Learn as much as possible: I am willing to sacrifice to get highest grades I can. This extra effort will help me get into graduate programs, help in my career, and in other aspects of my life.

Enjoy the experience: I want to graduate with adequate grades, but I don't want to spend extra time on material if it gets in the way of enjoying life and learning through other experiences."

**Are you an International Student?**

Yes

No

**What campus do you take most of your courses at?**

UTM

UTSC

St. George

**[now list consent to participate in research box (same as before), keep default to YES, I AGREE to participate**

**Then Big coloured bar that says 'Submit' across full width at bottom**

[IF RANDOMIZED INTO TREATMENT] [LAST DIGIT OF STUDENT NUMBER EVEN]

[CONTROL WILL GET SHORTENED VERSION OF PERSONALITY TEST or SUMMER SURVEY OF OPEN ENDED QUESTIONS]

Introduction:

It's an unprecedented time. While we may be physically distant right now, there are many ways the University of Toronto Community can still feel connected, pull together, and offer each other support.

We've been doing a lot of talking with faculty, staff, and students lately, to learn how people are coping with the coronavirus pandemic and how we can best help, both academically and personally.

This short exercise has three purposes:

**1) To share with you the experiences and stories of other UofT members about their transition to living with physical distancing during the covid-19 pandemic (in the "April 2020 UofT Student Experience Survey").**

**2) To better understand your thoughts and feelings about living with physical distancing during the covid-19 pandemic.**

**3) To help us provide other UofT students with accurate expectations about the experience of living with physical distancing during the covid-19 pandemic.**

Sharing your own stories will also help us determine what more we can do, and perhaps inspire other students in what they can do to make the most out of the situation.

So please proceed through the exercise by clicking the Next button. You can go back to previous pages by clicking Previous. Each time you click Next or Previous, the data you have entered on that page will be saved. If you need to take a break or two to get up and walk around or help you think, please feel free to do so. Enjoy!

<Next>

# Pop-up on NEXT, if time is less than 5 seconds

Did you really read this whole page in less than 5 seconds? Please take your time and read through the text without rushing.

# End pop-up #

## Summary Findings from the “April 2020 UofT Student Experience Survey”

There were two common themes from the hundreds of students who responded as the covid-19 pandemic and physical distancing progressed just a few weeks ago.

Many students reported challenging feelings:

- A significant proportion of students reported feeling anxious and stressed at times
- A significant proportion reported a lack of motivation to make progress on their school work
- Many students felt down from not being able to be close with their community of friends, family, or everyday outdoor life

But with time, most students reported that they found ways to adapt and grow in the situation:

- Most students reported finding ways to connect with other people
- A significant proportion of students reported positive experiences from communication with the University, using its suggested resources, reaching out to professors, TAs, and advisors
- Most students reported finding ways to adapt to their situations. The most common way appeared to be by creating structure in their lives and developing goals and routines

<Previous (Save)> <Save> <Next>

# Pop-up on NEXT, if time is less than 5 seconds

No need to rush! The exercise is short and intended to help from thinking it through. Take your time and read through the text without rushing.

# End pop-up #

Here are 5 brief stories from the survey in which UofT students describe their experiences living and studying during the covid-19 pandemic. The stories have been edited to improve clarity and preserve anonymity.

After reading them, we will ask about your own insights and experiences, so that we and other students might benefit.

<Previous (Save)> <Save> <Next>

## Story 1 of 5

When classes moved online, I adapted pretty well to online learning, but I found I was spending hours a day looking at the news, trying to learn as much as I could about what was happening and when things would return to normal.

The uncertainty was making me pretty anxious and I started wondering if I could even handle the next few months. I eventually talked to some friends about how worried I was, and it turned out they had a lot of the same worries. I think most people do. I also slowly realized that many of my worries were about things that may or may not happen in the future.

I now try to focus more on the present by doing things that I enjoy and that will help me grow as a person, like reading books and learning to cook new meals. I still have worries - but now I know that I'm not alone in my anxiety, and there are things I can do to cope better.

<Previous (Save)> <Save> <Next>

# Pop-up on NEXT, if time is less than 10 seconds

You'll get more from the stories if you read them at a slower speed. Please take your time to consider them without rushing.

# End pop-up #

## Story 2 of 5

Doing well in school has always been important to me. But when classes transitioned online because of the covid-19 pandemic, I found it hard to get motivated about school without my normal routine of going to lectures and seeing friends.

It was really hard to stay focused when I wanted to work, so I would waste a lot of time surfing the internet or watching Netflix. I even considered dropping my classes until the campus opened up again. Then one of my TAs sent an email checking in on students and I decided to write back.

Even though it felt strange talking to a TA about it, I told him how I was struggling to find motivation. He wrote back the next day and said he had been feeling unmotivated at times too. He suggested setting a schedule – try to wake up at the same time, eat regular meals, exercise, connect with friends, and have set hours when I would do school work. It took some time and experimentation to find the right schedule for me, but once I did, I started feeling like I was accomplishing something each week. I hope they start up in-person classes next semester, but if they don't, at least I know I can keep making progress in my classes.

# Pop-up on NEXT, if time is less than 10 seconds

Really think about this student's experience before rushing to the next.

# End pop-up #

### Story 3 of 5

When physical distancing measures started, I was grateful for the extra time I got to spend with my family, but just having to focus on school work inside without getting to interact with my friends was tough and starting to take its toll. I realized seeing them regularly was an important part of my well being, and I was feeling lost and overwhelmed without my normal routine.

To cope, I'm exercising more on a daily basis at home, which is new for me. I also am meditating more often and discovering my creative side. Yesterday I started painting which is something I didn't know I could do properly.

I also started reaching out to my friends regularly--by phone, social media, or video chatting--just to see how they were doing or if they needed anything. I could tell they were happy to hear from me and I started getting regular calls from them too. I think we all just needed some time to adjust to these new times and learn how to make the best of it. It's still not the same as being able to see each other in person, but I feel like I have a good social life again and am proud of how we've adjusted.

<page break>

# Pop-up on NEXT, if time is less than 10 seconds

Please take your time and read through the text without rushing.

# End pop-up #

#### Story 4 of 5

When I found out all classes were going to be online, I got really stressed out. I was glad to be living with family to keep me company, but my house is chaotic and I didn't have a quiet place where I could work. There were so many interruptions that I couldn't concentrate for long. I thought maybe I wouldn't be able to keep my marks up during this time so I should drop some classes and catch up later.

I first decided to go to my prof's virtual office hours over video chat. It felt a bit awkward at first talking to a prof one-on-one, but she seemed to genuinely care about my concerns. She said she was hearing similar concerns from other students, and assured me that she was structuring the course in a way that would allow students to do just as well as if they were taking it in class.

She also suggested I try to adapt by following a schedule that would let me work when my house is quiet, so I started doing more of my work at night and then sleeping late in the morning. I wouldn't say things are easy now, but I have learned that my stress is shared by a lot of students, and that with support, I can adapt to and succeed in many different situations.

<Previous (Save)> <Save> <Next>

# Pop-up on NEXT, if time is less than 10 seconds

Please take your time to consider this student's experience, then proceed slowly to the next..

# End pop-up #

## Story 5 of 5

I live pretty far from campus, so when classes moved online, I saved a lot of commuting time each day. But I was really stressed. I still need to get good grades because of my career goals. I didn't know what it would take to get those grades in this new online format, and I started to wonder if this was going to affect all the plans I had for my future. Being so stressed just made it harder to concentrate on professors' video lectures, or focus on making study notes.

I tried for a while to just tell myself to not be stressed. But when that didn't work, I thought about times in my past when things had been really hard, and how I had coped. So I started setting personal goals and committed to doing things that usually make me feel good. I began exercising regularly, by going for jogs outside when possible or following workout videos, and then I would meditate or do guided relaxation to help me fall asleep at night.

Over time, I got into a good routine and felt a sense of control. Making my own well-being a priority seemed to help. I still feel pretty stressed at times, but I feel better knowing that I have some coping strategies that work for me.

<page break>

# Pop-up on NEXT, if time is less than 10 seconds

Please take your time and read through the text without rushing..

# End pop-up #

In the stories you just read, students reported experiencing stress and lack of motivation.

But, with time, most students reported that they found ways to adapt and grow in the situation, by reaching out to professors or TAs, accessing UofT resources, connecting with friends, family, and classmates, and creating a weekly structure with goals and routines.

Now we need your help and would like to hear about your insights.

[<Previous \(Save\)>](#) [<Save>](#) [<Next>](#)

What are some of your biggest concerns about this current term? Check all of the concerns that apply below.

- Having lack of motivation for schoolwork or trouble focusing.
- Missing getting together with friends or family.
- Not having a predictable routine or schedule.
- Being anxious about when physical distancing and other public health measures will end.
- Other concerns related to the pandemic. Please describe them briefly: (have a small text box here.)

[James, must click at least one above or fill out something in the other concerns]

What are some solutions that resonate most from the stories you read? Check all that apply:

- Develop a more satisfying routine for accomplishing short and long-term goals
- Try new activities or hobbies to gain new experiences and skills
- Make an effort to socially connect with others, even when physically apart
- Find ways to offer help others
- Speak with instructors, TAs, and other university staff to get advice
- Use setbacks and challenges as opportunities to learn, reflect on life, and prioritize
- Other strategies. Please describe briefly: (have a small text box here)

[James, must click at least one above or fill out something in the other concerns]

<Previous (Save)> <Save> <Next>

## Your Thoughts

We need you to help us create materials for future students that will help them when they find themselves experiencing these types of concerns.

Please write a note to an incoming first-year student this fall who is a lot like you. Tell them about any experiences you may have had with stress and lack of motivation, and how, in time, you found ways to adapt and grow in the situation. You might describe details of the challenge you faced and the strategies you used to improve the situation, such as accessing U of T resources, connecting with friends and classmates, creating a weekly structure with goals and routines, or any other strategies you found to be helpful.

You may also draw on your past experiences with other challenges and on the stories from other UofT students you just read, which are copied below.

Please take as much time and write in as much detail as you like.

Note: Your response may be used anonymously, to incoming U of T students in future terms to help give them a better understanding of what adjusting to physical distancing measures and online learning is like. The more you can describe the challenges you faced, and how you can respond to them, the more future students will benefit. Thank you for your time and effort.

[ What challenges have you faced from having to physically isolate and take courses online?

What strategies have helped you cope and what lessons have you learned?

What advise would you offer to new UofT students in the Fall for managing anxiety from starting university while having to practice physical distancing?

]

<Previous (Save)> <Save> <Next>

# Pop-up on NEXT, if word count is less than 20

Could you please elaborate with a little more detail? Please take your time and share your experience – we'd really like to learn more from you.

# End pop-up #

[James, either show all 5 examples below on their own, or scroll through them exactly as you did before in belonging exercise]

One last thing:

To offer additional support this summer, we are trying a new program that makes available weekly text messages of motivation and advice for how to thrive as a student and person during this term. The program is called You@UofT.

This is a pilot project and you have been selected by lottery to receive this support. If you choose to opt-in, we will send you 3 weekly messages: a Monday 'Study Tip', a Wednesday 'Mental Health Tip', and a Friday 'Check-In', where you'll have an opportunity to text back with an experienced UofT coach and ask questions.

You can stop receiving them at any time by texting back 'stop'. Messages will be sent only throughout this term, and only for this purpose.

To participate, please provide your mobile phone number below.

Cell-phone number

Would name do you like to be called? [include <user>] as default  
[note to James, if we do this, I may need to flip through and decide whether to keep the entry or revert back to the name we have on file – I'm not sure if this is useful, but I could see some preferring it]

<Previous (Save)> <Save> <Next>

**# Pop-up on submit, if phone number is empty and boxes are all unclicked #**

We think you would really benefit from this additional support. You can always try it and decide to unsubscribe later.

<OK, let me try it >

<I don't have a Canadian cell-phone number>

<I'm sure I don't want to receive this support>

**# End pop-up #**

NOTE: IF CLICKS ON DON'T HAVE A CELL PHONE, SAY THAT YOUR COACH WILL CONTACT YOU BY EMAIL INSTEAD, THEN GO TO FINISH

**# Pop-up on I don't have a cell-phone #**

No phone, no problem! We'll send you emails instead.

[Then send to finish page after student clicks 'Next']

**# End pop-up #**

Congratulations! You are finished the exercise! We really appreciate your time and feedback during this time.

We will email you when the follow-up exercise is ready to take.

If you have any questions, feel free to email us at [support@warmup.utoronto.ca](mailto:support@warmup.utoronto.ca)

If you are interested in learning more about managing mental health during COVID-19 please access UofT's information website for students [here](#) or the University's Health and Wellness' Frequently Asked Questions [here](#).

You might also be interested in taking a short free online course about this topic launched by Steve Joordans, an award winning teaching professor at UofT. The course can be found by clicking [here](#).

For those with text message opt-in: welcoming text message sent immediately after:

[1/3] Thank-you for completing the warm-up exercise and welcome to You@UofT!

(2 second delay)

[2/3] Each week this term we'll be sending you study tips and ideas for helping manage your well-being.

[3/3] You can always text back 'TIP' or 'HELP' to receive more messages. Every Friday, you'll also have a chance to check-in with one of our support staff to ask a question or let us know what's on your mind.

[IF RANDOMIZED INTO CONTROL] [LAST DIGIT OF STUDENT NUMBER ODD]

<have completion bar above>

The following 5 remaining questions are designed to provide a more detailed picture of how UofT students are coping with the COVID-19 pandemic while physically distancing and completing courses online.

As always, all the responses you provide in this exercise remain confidential. There are no right or wrong answers.

Thanks for sharing your experiences and taking the time to answer them thoughtfully.

<Previous (Save)> <Save> <Next (Save)>

<have completion bar above>

## 1. Challenges

What are some specific challenges you are facing right now during the COVID-19 pandemic?

[For example, think about how the pandemic has affected your daily life, your social relationships, your financial situation, or other aspects of your life.]

<Previous (Save)> <Save> <Next (Save)>

**# Pop-up on NEXT, if word count is less than 5**

Could you please elaborate with a little more detail? Please take your time and share your experience.

**# End pop-up #**

<have completion bar above>

## 2. Online Learning

What have been your experiences with taking online/virtual classes?

[For example, have there been challenges to transitioning having to take classes all online? Are there aspects of online you actually prefer? What class setting would you prefer after it is safe to gather in groups?]

<Previous (Save)> <Save> <Next (Save)>

**# Pop-up on NEXT, if word count is less than 10**

Could you please elaborate with a little more detail? Please take your time and share your experience.

**# End pop-up #**

<have completion bar above>

### 3. Academics

Has your academic experience and success been affected by the changes caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, if at all?

[For example, have you had difficulty studying or learning course material while physically isolating? Have you missed services or outside supports that are no longer easily accessible?].

<Previous (Save)> <Save> <Next (Save)>

**# Pop-up on NEXT, if word count is less than 5**

Could you please elaborate with a little more detail? Please take your time and share your experience.

**# End pop-up #**

<have completion bar above>

## 4. Your Plans for the Fall

**Are you an International or Domestic Student?**

International

Domestic

**Do you expect to enroll at UofT in the Fall (2020) semester?**

Yes

No

**How certain are you in the above decision?**

Very certain

Certain

Uncertain

Very uncertain

**If classes remained online/virtual only in the Fall, do you expect to enroll in the Fall?**

Yes

No

**If no, what do you expect to do instead?**

[open ended]

[required to complete if clicked 'no' above]

**If no, would a one-time bursary grant change your mind to attend? If so, what would be the minimum amount in bursary aid?**

[open ended]

[required to complete if clicked 'no' above]

<Previous (Save)> <Save> <Next (Save)>

<have completion bar above>

## 5. What Can the University Do?

What ways has the university been helpful to you with the challenges created by the COVID-19 pandemic? What have they done or not done that has frustrated you? What more could they do?

<Previous (Save)> <Save> <Next (Save)>

**# Pop-up on NEXT, if word count is less than 5**

Could you please elaborate with a little more detail? Please take your time and share your experience.

**# End pop-up #**

Anything Else?

Is there anything else you would like to share about your experience as a university student during the COVID-19 pandemic?

<Previous (Save)> <Save> <Next (Save)>

Congratulations! You are finished the exercise! We really appreciate your time and feedback during this time.

We will email you when the follow-up message is ready to take.

If you have any questions, feel free to email us at [support@warmup.utoronto.ca](mailto:support@warmup.utoronto.ca)

If you are interested in learning more about managing mental health during COVID-19 please access UofT's information website for students [here](#) or the University's Health and Wellness' Frequently Asked Questions [here](#).

You might also be interested in taking a short free online course about this topic launched by Steve Joordans, an award winning teaching professor at UofT. The course can be found by clicking [here](#).

## **Follow-up Survey**

Please complete the short survey which should take about 30 minutes. We very much appreciate your responses and hope you will also gain from the opportunity to reflect.

All information is treated anonymously and used only for research purposes to learn more about UofT students and to better help support students throughout their programs.

Please take your time to respond thoughtfully.

<previous, next and save>

## Part 1: General Well-being:

All things considered, how satisfied are you with your life as a whole these days?  
(dropdown)

- 1 (Not at all satisfied)
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5
- 6
- 7 (Absolutely satisfied)

All things considered, how satisfied are you with your experience at University of Toronto this term?

(dropdown)

- 1 (Not at all satisfied)
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5
- 6
- 7 (Absolutely satisfied)

I am managing my time well

(dropdown)

- 1 Strongly disagree
- 2 Disagree
- 3 Somewhat disagree
- 4 Somewhat agree
- 5 Agree
- 6 Strongly agree

## **Part 2: Academic Expectations and Satisfaction**

**What overall letter grade average do you expect to receive this term?**

[F C-, C, C+, B-, B, B+, A-, A, A+] (dropdown)

**How satisfied are you with this academic performance?  
(dropdown)**

**1 (Not at all satisfied)**

**2**

**3**

**4**

**5**

**6**

**7 (Absolutely satisfied)**

### Part 3: Sense of Control

For each of the 3 questions below, please choose the option that is closer to your opinion and then indicate whether your choice is *much closer* to your opinion or *slightly closer*.

Which of the two following statements is closer to your opinion?

What happens to me is my own doing.

Sometimes I feel that I don't have enough control over the direction my life is taking.

Is the chosen statement above much closer or slightly closer to your opinion?

Much closer

Slightly closer

Which of the two following statements is closer to your opinion?

When I make plans,

I am almost certain that I can make them work.

It is not always wise to plan too far ahead, because many things turn out to be a matter of good or bad fortune anyhow.

Is the chosen statement above much closer or slightly closer to your opinion?

Much closer

Slightly closer

Which of the two following statements is closer to your opinion?

Many times I feel that I have little influence over the things that happen to me.

It is impossible for me to believe that chance or luck plays an important role in my life.

Is the chosen statement above much closer or slightly closer to your opinion?

Much closer

Slightly closer

In the last 4 weeks, how often have you felt that you were unable to control the important things in your life?

Never

Almost Never

Sometimes

Fairly Often

Very Often

In the last 4 weeks, how often have you been upset because of things that were outside of your control?

Never

Almost Never

Sometimes

Fairly Often

Very Often

#### Part 4: Experiences with COVID-19

Indicate the extent to which you agree to the following statement using a 7 point scale, where 1 = fully agree and 7 = fully disagree:

The COVID-19 pandemic has, so far, made my life challenging

(dropdown)

1 (fully agree)

2

3

4

5

6

7 (fully disagree)

My situation during the COVID-19 pandemic is better than most other students at UofT

(dropdown)

1 (fully agree)

2

3

4

5

6

7 (fully disagree)

During the COVID-19 pandemic I am able to feel socially connected to friends and family

(dropdown)

1 (fully agree)

2

3

4

5

6

7 (fully disagree)

During the COVID-19 pandemic I still feel part of the University of Toronto community

(dropdown)

1 (fully agree)

2

3

4

5

6

7 (fully disagree)

## Part 5: Stress and Anxiety

How much stress would you say you have been experiencing in the last 4 weeks?

- None
- A little
- Some
- A moderate amount
- A lot
- A great deal
- An extreme amount

How confident do you feel that you are able to cope with your stress on a day-to-day basis?

- Not at all confident
- Slightly confident
- Somewhat confident
- Moderately confident
- Quite confident
- Very confident
- Extremely confident

Over the last 4 weeks, how often have you been bothered by the following problems?

	Not at all	Several days	More than half the days	Nearly every day
Feeling nervous, anxious, or on edge				
Not being able to stop or control worrying				
Little interest or pleasure in doing things				
Feeling down, depressed, or hopeless				

## Part 6: Sense of belonging

I feel like I belong here at U of T  
(dropdown)

- 1 Strongly disagree
- 2 Disagree
- 3 Somewhat disagree
- 4 Somewhat agree
- 5 Agree
- 6 Strongly agree

UofT wants me to be successful here  
(dropdown)

- 1 Strongly disagree
- 2 Disagree
- 3 Somewhat disagree
- 4 Somewhat agree
- 5 Agree
- 6 Strongly agree

I know where to go if I need academic advice right now  
(dropdown)

- 1 Strongly disagree
- 2 Disagree
- 3 Somewhat disagree
- 4 Somewhat agree
- 5 Agree
- 6 Strongly agree

I know where to go if I need personal advice right now  
(dropdown)

- 1 Strongly disagree
- 2 Disagree
- 3 Somewhat disagree
- 4 Somewhat agree
- 5 Agree
- 6 Strongly agree

UofT does its best to help support me  
(dropdown)

- 1 Strongly disagree
- 2 Disagree
- 3 Somewhat disagree
- 4 Somewhat agree
- 5 Agree
- 6 Strongly agree

## Part 7: Social Connections

In the last 4 weeks, how often do you feel disconnected from others?

All the time

Often

Some of the time

Never

In the last 4 weeks how often do you feel that you lack companionship?

All the time

Often

Some of the time

Never

## Part 8: Health and Well-being

In the last 4 weeks, would you say your physical health is:

- Poor
- Fair
- Good
- Very good
- Excellent

In the last 4 weeks, would you say your mental health is:

- Poor
- Fair
- Good
- Very good
- Excellent

Right now, how much do you feel that your life has a sense of direction or meaning to it?

- Not at all
- A little
- A moderate amount
- A lot
- A great deal

## **Part 9: Change from COVID-19**

My situation trying to adapt during COVID-19 has, so far, been challenging  
(dropdown)

- 1 Strongly disagree
- 2 Disagree
- 3 Somewhat disagree
- 4 Somewhat agree
- 5 Agree
- 6 Strongly agree

In the last 4 weeks, how do you feel your situation under COVID-19 has changed?

- Improved a lot
- Improved a little
- No change
- Worsened a little
- Worsened a lot

More specifically, can you please write a few words on how your situation has changed, and why?

Is there anything more you could do to help?

No (please tell us briefly why not?)

Yes (please tell us briefly what?)

Is there anything more the University could be doing to help?

No (please tell us briefly why not?)

Yes (please tell us briefly what?)

For non treated:

Thank-you! You are done! We really appreciate your time and feedback.

For Treated:

Part 10: You@UofT

This term you participated in the You@UofT program, which offered study tips, strategies for coping better with COVID-19, and mental health advice. The messages also included weekly check-in message from a coach.

All things considered, would you agree or disagree that the You@UofT program you participated in this term been helpful?

**1 Strongly disagree**

**2 Disagree**

**3 Somewhat disagree**

**4 Somewhat agree**

**5 Agree**

**6 Strongly agree**

Do you think the program should be offered to first year economics students in the Fall?

Yes

No

We may not have the resources but would you be interested in continuing with the program in the Fall?

Can you please suggest changes to You@UofT that you think would improve the program?

(open ended)

**I am coping better now in part because of You@UofT  
(dropdown)**

**1 Strongly disagree**

**2 Disagree**

**3 Somewhat disagree**

**4 Somewhat agree**

**5 Agree**

**6 Strongly agree**

For treated:

Thank-you! You are done! We really appreciate your time and feedback.