

# Suicidal ideation among adults in Canada during the 3rd year of the COVID-19 pandemic comparing with the pre- and early pandemic periods: a cross-sectional study from three population-based surveys

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## 1 INTRODUCTION

- During the COVID-19 pandemic, individuals faced increased isolation, stigmatization, fear of infection, rising unemployment, and uncertainty about the future, which increased risk of suicidal thoughts and suicide-related behaviours during the pandemic.<sup>1-3</sup>
- There are concerns about the longer-term detrimental effects of the pandemic on suicidal ideation within the population, as prolonged stress can negatively impact individuals' emotional well-being and erode resilience.
- Most studies examining prevalence of suicidal ideation during the pandemic are limited to the early pandemic period, and little is known about individuals' experiences and the late effects of the pandemic.

The **objectives** of this study were to:

- 1) estimate the prevalence of suicidal ideation in the 3<sup>rd</sup> year of the pandemic in 2023 and compare it with the pre-pandemic (2019) and early pandemic (2021) prevalence;
- 2) examine the likelihood of reporting suicidal ideation across sociodemographic groups and explore the impacts of COVID-19-related factors on suicidal ideation in the late pandemic period.

## 2 METHODS

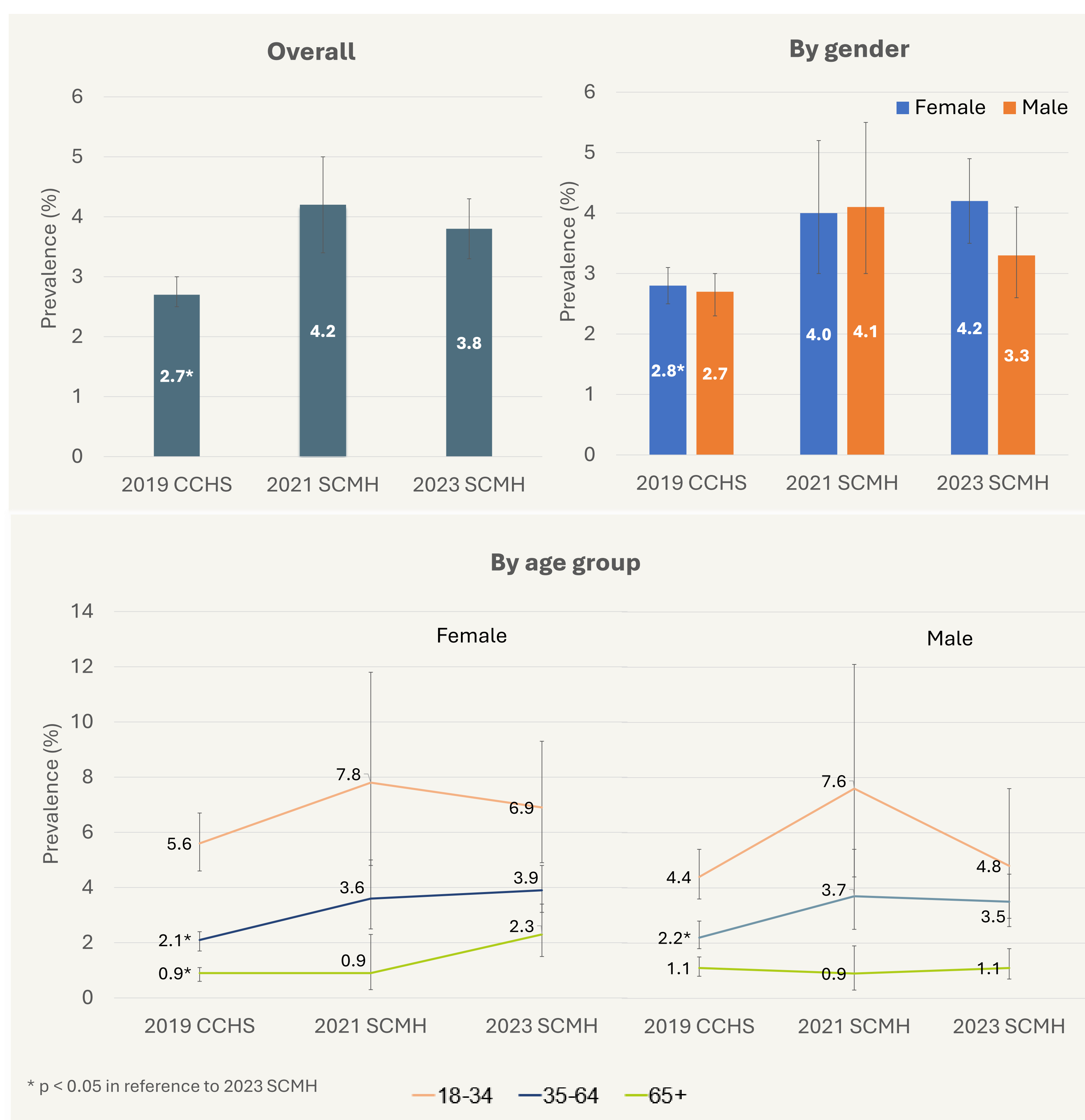
We analyzed cross-sectional, population representative data from 10 provinces in Canada among adults aged 18 years and over from the following sources:

Canadian Community Health Survey	Survey on COVID-19 and Mental Health	
	2019 CCHS	2021 SCMH
Jan 2 – Dec 24, 2019	Feb 1 – May 7, 2021	Feb 23 – May 31, 2023
n= 57,034 (Response rate: 54.9%)	n= 7,039 (Response rate: 51.2%)	n= 15,255 (Response rate: 46.5%)
“Have you ever seriously contemplated suicide?” “Has this happened in the past 12 months?”	“Have you seriously contemplated suicide since the COVID-19 pandemic began?”	“Have you ever seriously contemplated suicide?” “Has this happened in the past 12 months?”

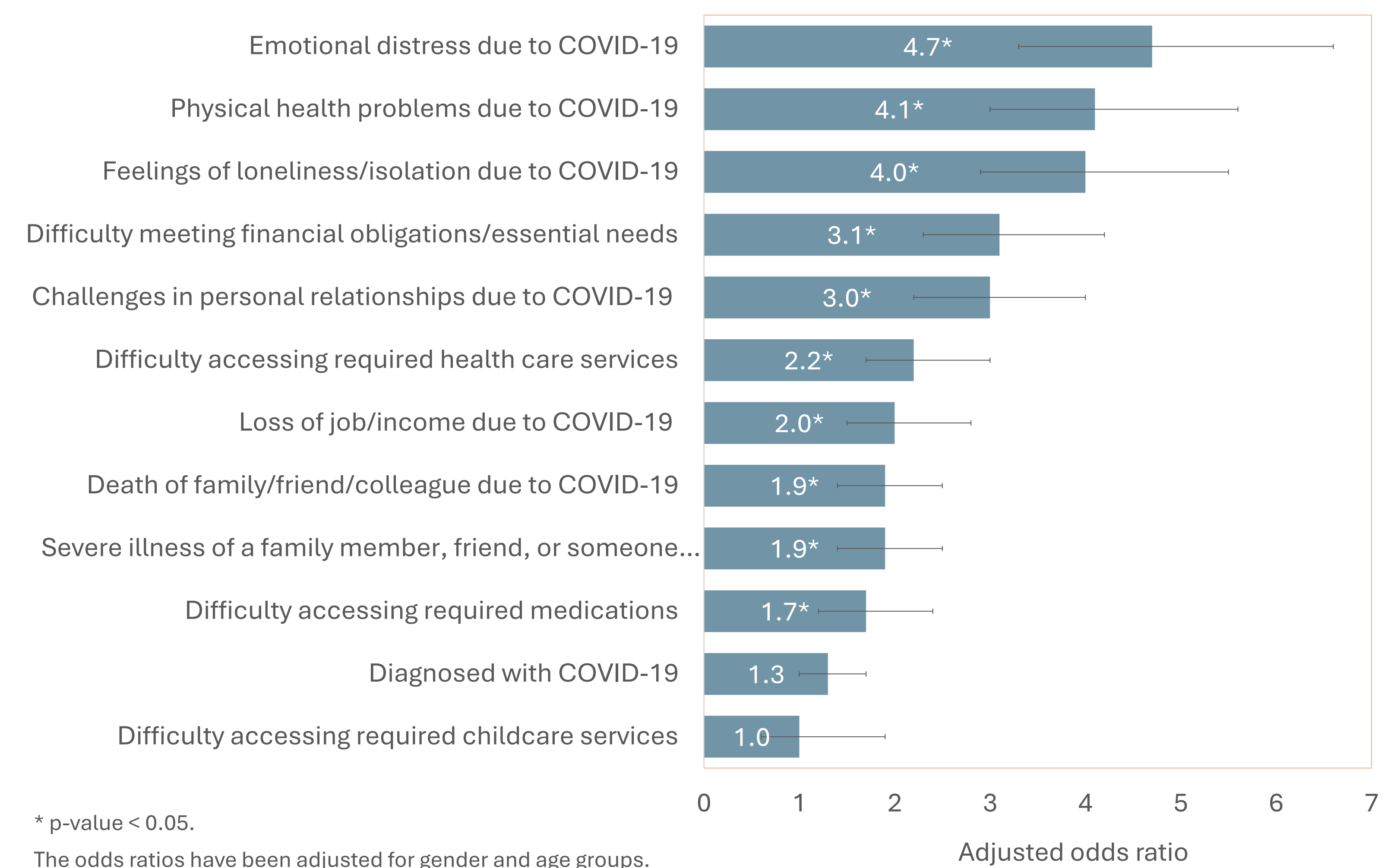
- Prevalence of suicidal ideation was compared using Chi-square tests, and disparities in suicidal ideation across sociodemographic characteristics and COVID-19-related factors were evaluated using logistic regression analyses.
- All analyses were conducted using SAS Enterprise Guide version 7.1 (SAS Institute, Cary, NC, USA).

## 3 RESULTS

**Figure 1. Prevalence of suicidal ideation in 2023 in comparison to the prevalence in 2019 and 2021**



**Figure 2. Adjusted odds ratios of suicidal ideation by COVID-19-related factors in 2023**



\* p-value < 0.05.

The odds ratios have been adjusted for gender and age groups.

Additionally, in 2023

**Females** were **1.3 times<sup>†</sup>** (95% CI: 1.0-1.8) more likely to report suicidal ideation than males



**People with disabilities** were **5.6 times<sup>‡</sup>** (95% CI: 4.1-7.5) more likely to report suicidal ideation than those without disabilities

**Members of the LGBTQ2+ community** were **5.1 times<sup>‡</sup>** (95% CI: 3.5-7.4) more likely to report suicidal ideation than those who were non-LGBTQ2+

<sup>†</sup> After adjusting for age groups; <sup>‡</sup> After adjusting for gender and age groups.

## 4 CONCLUSION

- Among most adults in Canada, the prevalence of suicidal ideation during the 3<sup>rd</sup> year of the pandemic in 2023 was still higher than the prevalence of suicidal ideation before the pandemic in 2019, and not significantly different from the prevalence during the 1<sup>st</sup> year of the pandemic in 2021.
- Middle aged adults (35-64 years) and older females (65 years or older) had significantly higher prevalence of suicidal ideation in 2023, compared to the pre-pandemic period in 2019.
- Among sociodemographic groups, people with a disability or members of the LGBTQ2+ community had the largest disparity compared to their counterparts.
- Continued surveillance on suicide-related behaviours and their risk factors will be important to evaluate long term impacts of the pandemic.

## REFERENCES

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