

# Child, Adolescent, and Parent Mental Health During the COVID-19 Pandemic in Belgium

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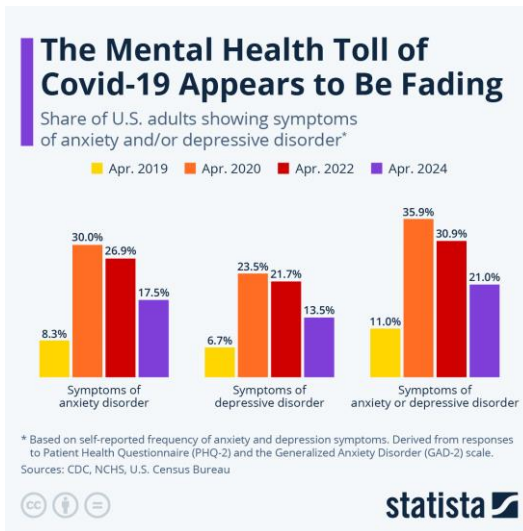


***Dr. Simone Marchini***

*Health of Children and Young Adults During the COVID-19 Crisis*

*22/01/2025*

## COVID-19 Pandemic Impact

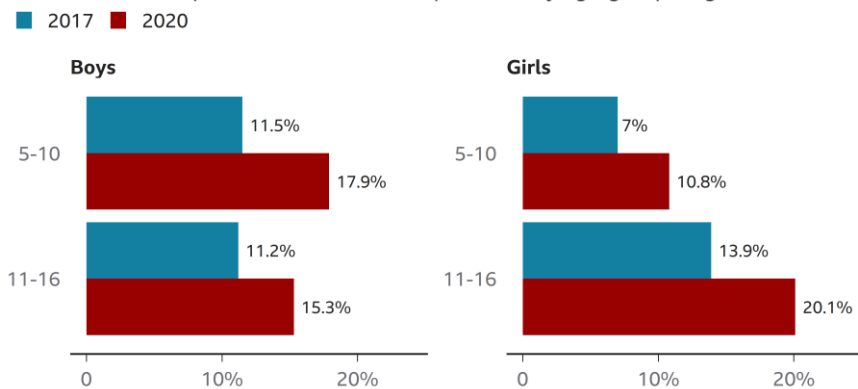


Nationwide lockdowns and restrictions.

Mental health deterioration reported globally in children, adolescents, and parents.

### Mental health in children has worsened

% of children with probable mental health problems by age-group, England



Source: NHS Digital

BBC

## COVID-19 Pandemic Impact

*Why our study?*

Belgium-specific data was limited.

Understanding emotional well-being to guide policy and interventions.



## COVID-19 Pandemic Impact

1. Assess the mental health of children, adolescents, and their parents during the pandemic.
2. Compare outcomes between first and second wave of restrictions.
3. Investigate risk factors for depressive and anxiety symptoms.

### Discover Mental Health



Research

**Child, adolescent, and parent mental health in general population during a year of COVID-19 pandemic in Belgium: a cross-sectional study**

Amélyne Wauters<sup>1,2</sup> · Julien Tiete<sup>3,4</sup> · Joana Reis<sup>1,2</sup> · Isabelle Lambotte<sup>2</sup> · Simone Marchini<sup>1,5</sup> · Véronique Delvenne<sup>1,2</sup>

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## Cross-sectional study

### Measures:

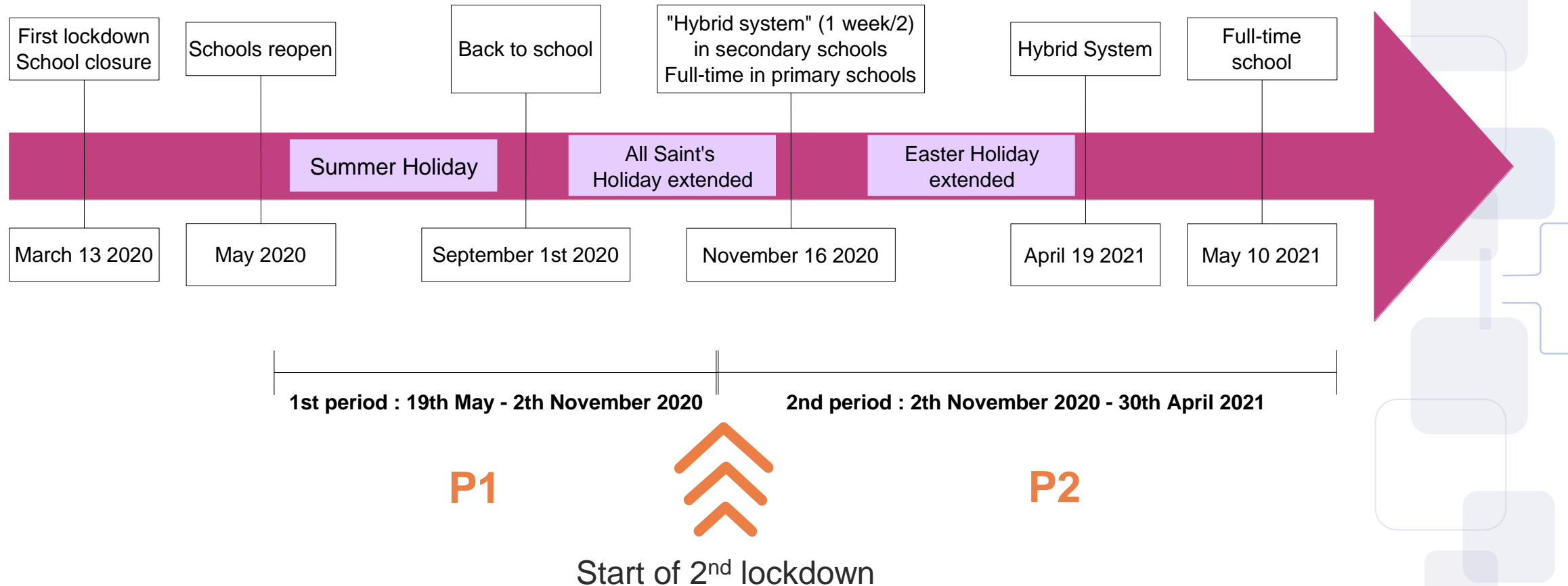
- Depression Anxiety Stress Scale (DASS-21) for parents.
- Multiscore Depression Inventory for Children (MDI-C).
- Child Behavior Checklist (CBCL).

### Procedure:

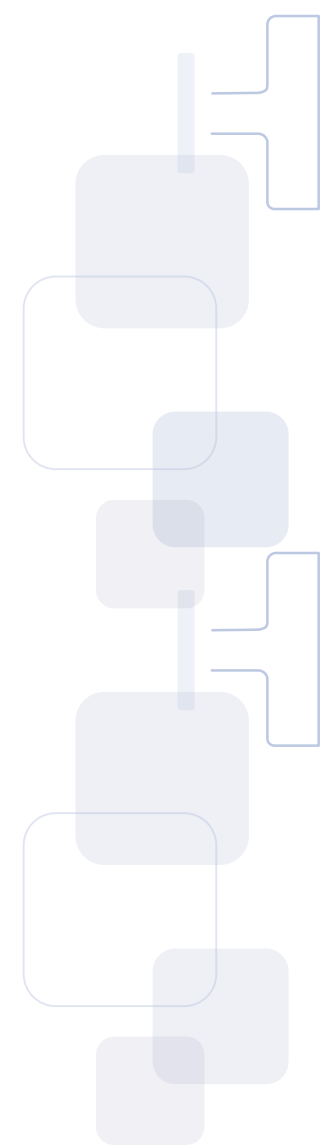
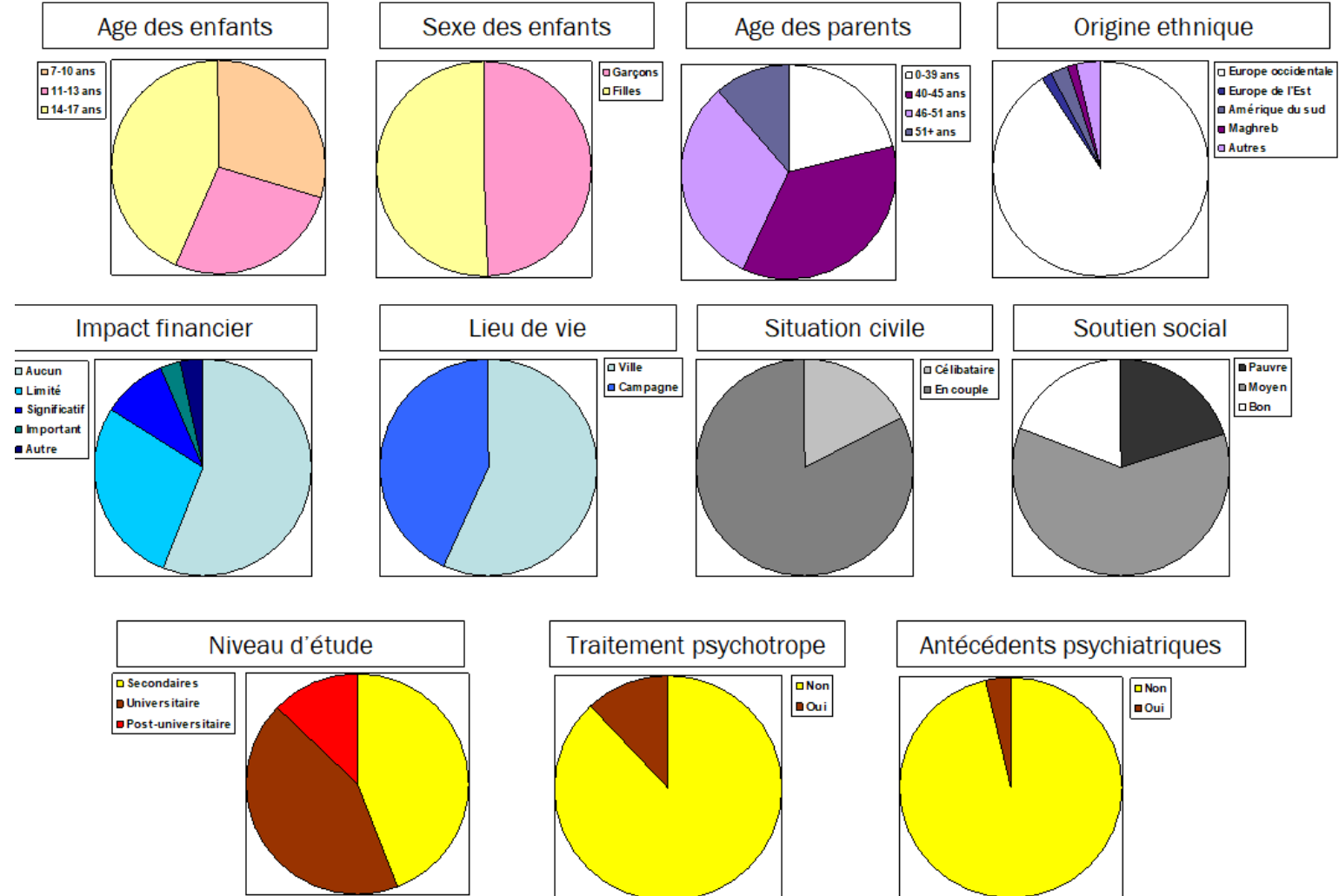
- Online survey conducted in Belgium
- Period 2020–2021.
- Widespread distribution and snowballing

**Participants:** 273 children (7-17 y.o.) and 218 parents

## Cross-sectional study

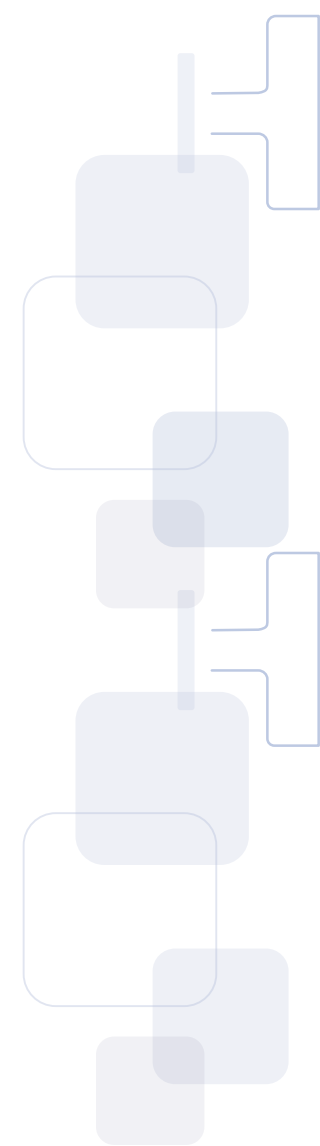
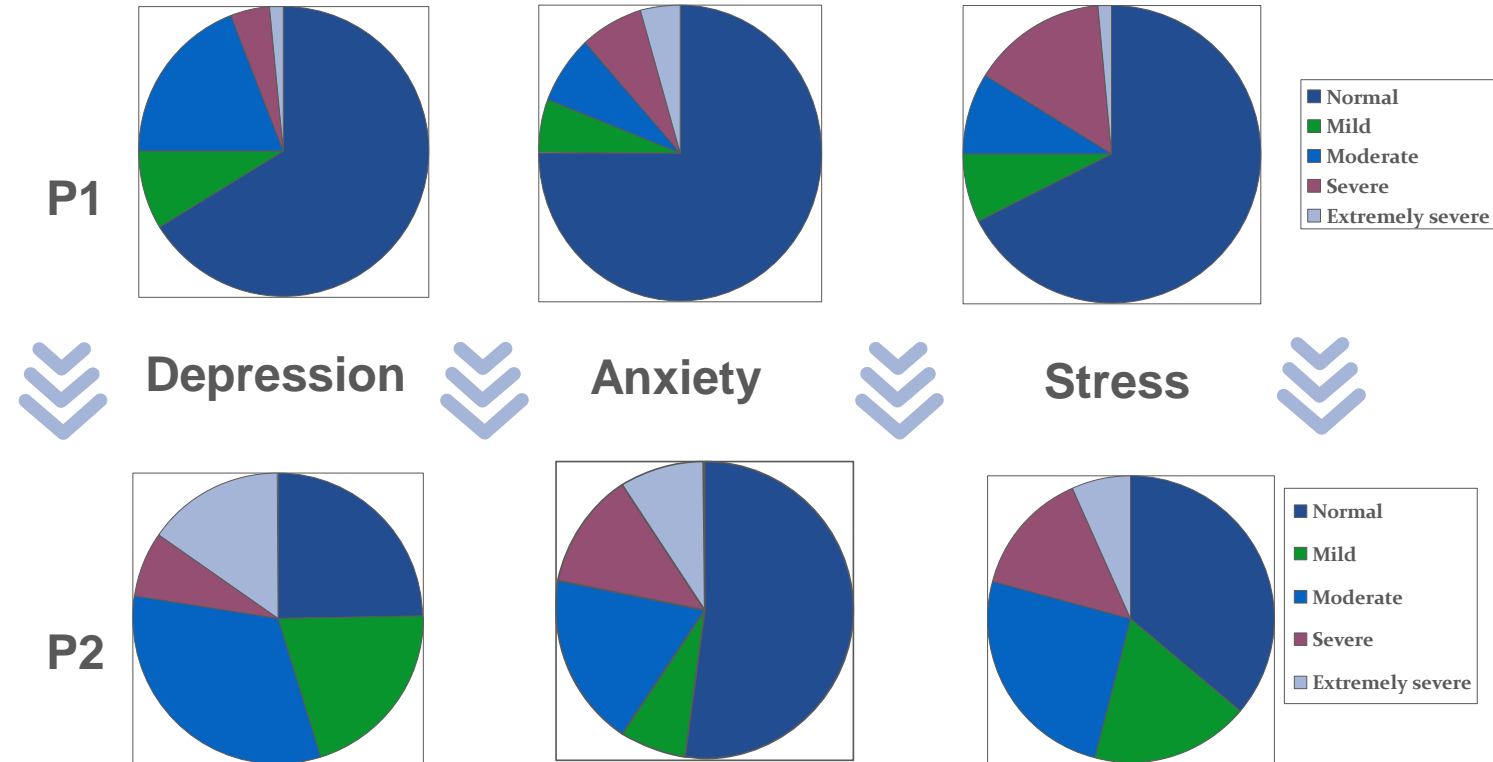


## Sociodemographics



## Severity of symptoms *DASS-21 (parents)*

50%  
moderate-to-severe  
depressive symptoms  
during the 2<sup>nd</sup> lockdown





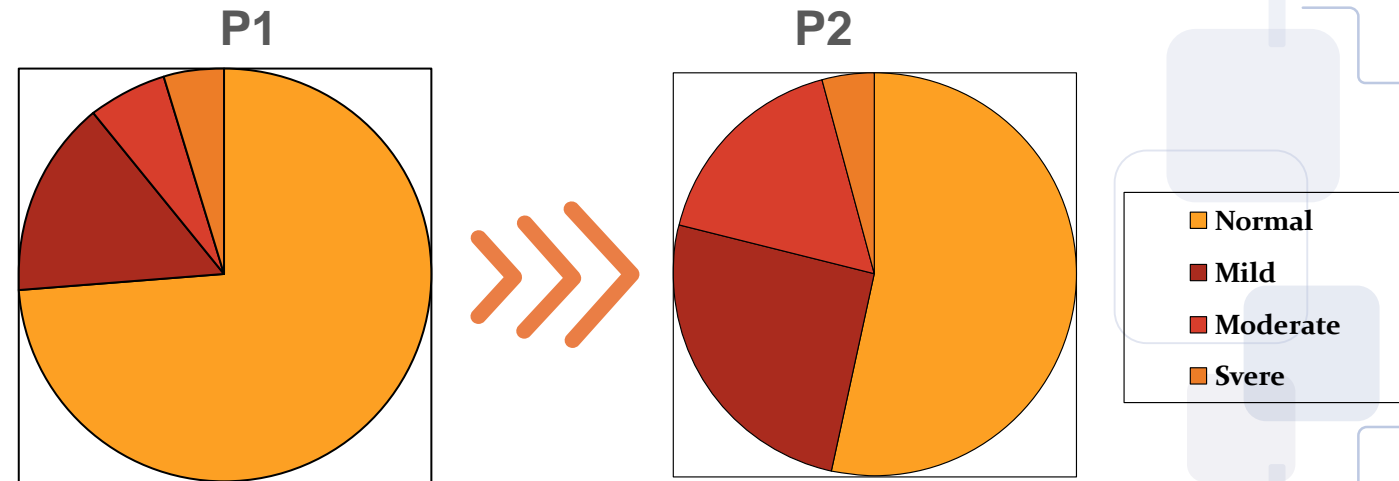
## Severity of symptoms

MDI-C (children and adolescents)

4%

severe depressive symptoms  
(vs. epidemiological norm of 0.6%)

Adolescents higher rates of depressive symptoms than younger children



Measurement	No (%)					
	Total	Time		Age		
		Before 2nd lockdown	During 2nd lockdown	7-10 years old	11-13 years old	14-17 years old
MDI-C						
Normal	163 (59,5)	62 (73,8)	101 (53,2)	64 (78,0)	39 (54,2)	60 (50,4)
Mild	62 (22,6)	13 (15,5)	49 (25,8)	12 (14,6)	19 (26,4)	32 (26,1)
Moderate	37 (13,5)	5 (6)	32 (16,8)	5 (6,1)	11 (15,3)	21 (17,6)
Severe	12 (4,4)	4 (4,8)	4 (4,2)	1 (1,2)	3 (4,2)	7 (5,9)

MDI-C Multiscore Depression Inventory for Children

## Severity of symptoms

*CBCL (children and adolescents)*

↑ **internalized** symptoms

from P1 to P2 (22,7% → 42,6%)

> 1/3 (sub-clinic to clinic threshold)

*(anxious and depressive symptoms, introversion, somatic complaints)*



**Externalized** symptoms = 12%

*(aggressive behaviors, conduct disturbances,...)*



## Symptoms correlation

*C&A with their parents*

### Correlations (*Pearson's*):

- Children's MDI-C scores are significantly **positively** correlated for each score of DASS-21 scale

### Risk factors:

*~ Adjusted logistic regression for parents socio-educative level, financial impact and origins ~*

- Psychotropic medication use by parents (4 fold)
- Parents' **depression** scores



Association with moderate-to-severe levels of **depression** in children and adolescents



## Focus on children and adolescents

### Total sample:

High rate of **severe depressive** symptoms:  
**4%**  
(vs. epidemiology: 0,6%)

- ▣ Adolescents (14-17 y.o.):  
**greater rate of depression**  
(developmental stage of individuation)

### Comparison between P1 et P2:

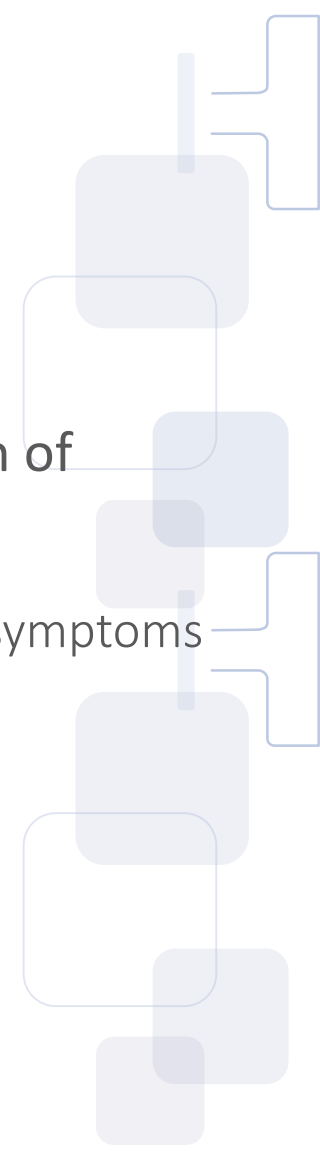
**Only < 50%** presenting no sign of depression during P2

▣ ↑ mild-to-moderate depressive symptoms

▣ = severe symptom

→ general deterioration

↑ internalized symptoms



## Focus on parents

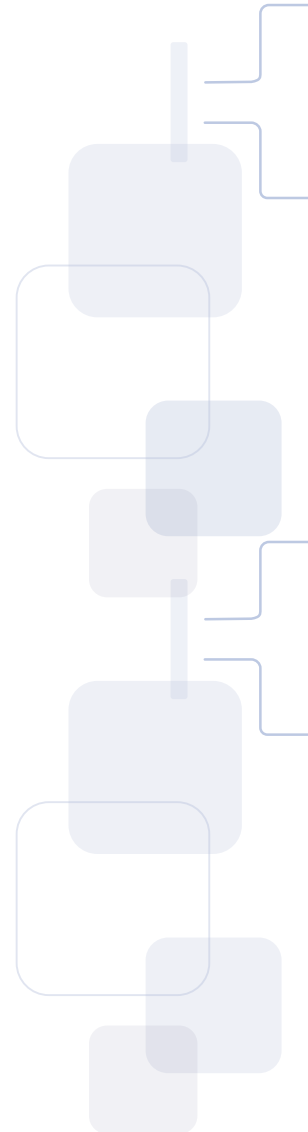
≈ **50%** moderate-to-severe depressive symptoms during 2<sup>nd</sup> lockdown

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□ P1 → P2 = **x2 increase** general population

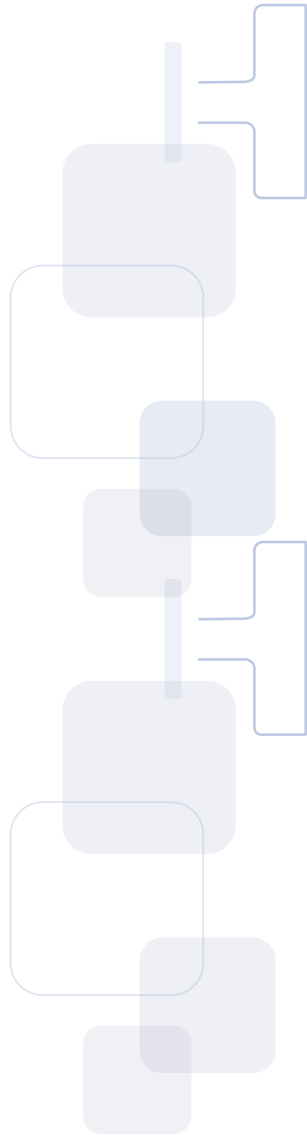
□ Correlation between parental scores with depression scores of their children

**Risk factors for C&A:** parental psychotropic drug & depression



## To take into account:

- Cross-sectional design: correlation and NOT causality
- Extended period of data collected: potentially changing variable?
- Online questionnaires: selection bias? Sample size and generalizability?



## and recommendations...

The COVID-19 pandemic significantly impacted mental health in Belgium.

Impact of containing measures in COVID-19 pandemic on worsen depressive symptoms for both parents & children?

Lessons for managing future public health crises.

### Policy Implications:

- Mental health interventions targeting **both** children and parents.
- Holistic intervention on families.
- School-based mental health programs.

Future Research: longitudinal studies on resilience factors.

## Thank you to the research team

*Child and Adolescent Psychiatry Service*



Pr. V. Delvenne



Dr. S. Marchini



Hôpital Universitaire  
**des Enfants** Reine Fabiola

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Universitair **Kinderziekenhuis**  
Koningin Fabiola



HÔPITAL UNIVERSITAIRE  
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BRUSSEL



Dr. A. Wauters



Dr. J. Reis

## *Psychology Service*

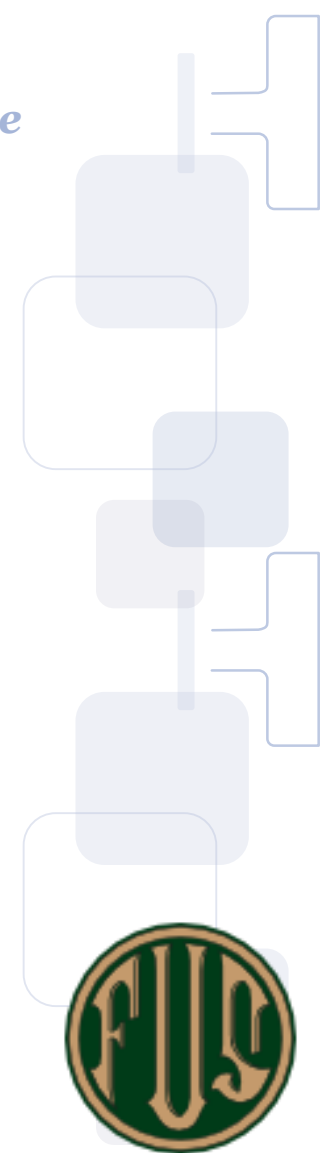


J. Tiete



I. Lambotte

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**THANK YOU!**

QUESTIONS?

[simone.marchini@ulb.be](mailto:simone.marchini@ulb.be)

**H.U.B**

Hôpital  
Erasmé



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