

Letter of Information and Invitation to Participate in a Research Study:
Cross-Canada Release of the Post-Secondary Student Stressors Index (PSSI) 2023-24

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Co-Investigator: Arlana Vadnais, Associate Director, Wellness and Prevention, University of Manitoba

Key Information (Summary)

You are invited to participate in a national, survey-based research project about post-secondary student stress and mental health. Participation is voluntary. The purpose of this research is to evaluate the sources of post-secondary student stress to aid institutions in improving the tailoring of campus mental health supports. The study will take place during the 2023-2024 academic year, and you will be asked to complete two online surveys approximately 20mins in length (one in September 2023, one in March 2024). There are no risks beyond potentially experiencing an elevated level of stress after answering questions about stress and your mental health. There are no direct benefits to participating in this research for participants.

Dear Student,

You are invited to participate in a national research study using the Post-Secondary Student Stressors Index (PSSI) to evaluate the sources of student stress. The PSSI was designed to better assess the sources of post-secondary student stress and help post-secondary institutions to improve the tailoring of their campus mental health supports. Ultimately, the goal is to contribute towards improving student mental health outcomes. This will be the second launch of the PSSI will be conducted throughout the 2023/24 academic year, engaging students at over 20+ universities and colleges across Canada.

Your Responsibilities

If you choose to participate in this study, you will be asked to complete two online surveys delivered via Qualtrics – the start and end of the year. The first survey will be completed in September 2023 while the second will be sent to you in March 2024. The survey should take you about 20 minutes to complete, and includes: the PSSI, five scales evaluating mental health and wellbeing, two questions regarding mental illness diagnoses, one scale assessing self-care and coping strategies, and several demographic questions (i.e., year of birth, gender identity, level, year and area of study – note that none of this information will be used to identify you). There is a chance you may experience an elevated level of stress after answering several questions about stress and mental health. In this case, participants are encouraged to reach out during office hours (8:30am – 4:30pm, M-F) to the Student Counselling Centre (204-474-8592), Coordinator, Student Health and Wellness Education (204-295-9032), or the Sexual Violence Resource Centre (204-474-6562). You may also contact Klinik Community Health 24/7 at 204-786-8686. In addition, you may visit the access section of Canada's Student Mental Health Network, an online space created for-students, by-students offering evidence-based mental health resources (www.studentmentalhealthnetwork.ca). While there are no direct benefits to participants, the data derived from this research may inform future work regarding student mental health and assist post-secondary institutions with improving the targeting of upstream services. Note that I have no conflict of interest to disclose with respect to this research, and there is no possibility of commercialization of the findings.

Participation is voluntary. You don't have to answer any questions you don't want to. You can stop participating at any time without penalty or impact on your academic standing. You may withdraw from the study up until April 2024 by contacting the Principal Investigator at brooke.linden@queensu.ca to request that your data be removed. Data cannot be withdrawn following this data as identifiers (i.e., e-mails) will be replaced with anonymous, unique identifiers. As such, it will not be possible to locate individual responses.

By completing this survey you are giving your informed consent to the collection of the information in this national study, you are indicating that you have understood to your satisfaction the information regarding participation in

the research project and agree to participate as a subject. Your continued participation should be as informed as your initial consent, so you should feel free to ask for clarification or new information throughout your participation.

Data Confidentiality and Anonymity

Participants' confidentiality will be safeguarded to the extent permitted by the applicable laws. At the beginning of the survey, you will be asked to enter your institutional e-mail (i.e., abc@myumanitoba.ca). We will use your e-mail to link your responses on the first and second surveys. Your e-mail address will be replaced with a numeric study ID on all submitted survey data once the data collection period has ended and the data has been linked (April 2024). Furthermore, all study data will be stored on secure Queen's University servers. The master file that links emails with the numeric study ID numbers will be stored securely and separately from the survey data, accessible only by the Principal Investigator. If you choose to enter the draw at the end of the survey, your e-mail will be added to a separate data file, which will be stored in the same secure manner and accessible only by the Principal Investigator. At the end of the survey, you will also be asked if you are interested in being contacted for future research related to student mental health. If you indicate that you agree to be contacted, your e-mail will be added to a separate data file, which will be stored in the same secure manner and accessible only by the Principal Investigator. Your e-mail will not be used for any other purpose.

Data Storage and Usage

All data related to this study will be stored on secure Queen's University servers (i.e., the PI's OneDrive account as password protected files). The PI, as the data custodian, will store your data securely for at least five years per the Queen's University Policy, and it may be used in subsequent secondary analyses. Your agreement to participate in this study provides me with permission to use your data in the planned analyses related to this study, as well as secondary analyses in the future. Only the Principal Investigator and supervised research team members will have access to the data. Research team members will have access to de-identified data only (i.e., no e-mails). The Queen's University Health Sciences and Affiliated Teaching Hospitals Research Ethics Board (HSREB) and University of Manitoba Human Ethics Board may require access to study-related records to monitor the ethical conduct of the research. The REBs are bound by confidentiality agreements concerning any personal information.

There are no plans to destroy the de-identified survey data. After five years, the de-identified data will be entered into a data repository. The master file that links emails with the numeric study ID numbers will be permanently deleted by the PI at the end of the study period and after data has been successfully linked (30 April 2024). The database of e-mails from participants who have provided consent for us to contact them again about future research in the area of post-secondary student mental health will be retained indefinitely. Participants can withdraw their email from this database at any time by emailing the principal investigator at brooke.linden@queensu.ca.

The intention is for the results of this research to be published in academic journal articles and/or presented at relevant academic conferences. Participants will not be identified during publication/presentation. Results of the research (including incidental findings) will not be delivered to participants directly.

Contact Information:

For ethics concerns please contact the University of Manitoba Human Ethics Officer at 204-474-7122 or humanethics@umanitoba.ca. If you have any questions about the research, please contact the Principal Investigator at brooke.linden@queensu.ca or the co-investigator at arlana.vadnais@umanitoba.ca.

This Letter of Information provides you with the details to help you make an informed choice. All your questions should be answered to your satisfaction before you decide whether or not to participate in this research study. You have not waived any legal rights by consenting to participate in this study. This study has been reviewed for ethical compliance by the Queen's University Health Sciences and Affiliated Teaching Hospitals Research Ethics Board and has been approved by the Research Ethics Board at the University of Manitoba, Fort Garry campus.

If you choose to participate, please remember to maintain a copy of this Letter of Information for your records.

Sincerely,



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