

Third APUO Pandemic Stress Survey: Winter 2022

Between March 3rd and March 28th, 2022, the APUO conducted its third survey on stress experienced in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic confinement. Some 554 APUO members, or 42% of the membership, responded to this survey which was a follow up to the two earlier surveys we had conducted in [May](#) and [November of 2020](#). The APUO is grateful to members for having taken the time to complete these surveys. As we enter into the third year of the pandemic, your responses enable us to gauge how it has and is impacting the working conditions and wellbeing of our membership.

Throughout the pandemic members have undertaken extraordinary measures to fulfill teaching and service duties, and to maintain active research programs. These included developing new teaching methods for remote and bimodal classes, managing increased email traffic stemming from the shift to online teaching and new service obligations, and taking care of children and others in our families and communities who depend on us for daily functioning and support. In the written comments received in the most recent survey, members noted the costs to their mental and physical well-being resulting from the need to sustain ever increasing energy levels and organizational and problem-solving prowess in order to cope with the pandemic and its consequences for both their professional and personal lives.

Throughout the past two years, the APUO has consistently sought to protect members' rights under the Collective Agreement as well as ensuring provisions were put in place to adjust member's workloads in light of the challenges presented by the pandemic (e.g. the LOUs in [Spring/Summer 2020](#), [Fall 2020](#), [Winter 2021](#), Spring/Summer 2021, and Fall 2021). The results of this third survey will enable us to better represent you as we strive for solutions in the coming years to addressing potential issues (e.g. gaps in career progression) resulting from the the pandemic.

One of the most prominent aspects of the results from the latest survey pertains to the impact the pandemic has had on members who are parents. The reported stress levels relating to research/creation for members with children elementary-school aged and younger, and children with special needs, are almost twice that of members without children. For example, 64% of respondents with children in daycare report experiencing high levels of stress regarding research/creation, while only 33% of respondents without children indicated experiencing high stress levels in relation to research (see Table 5). On a similar note, members who have children with special needs are more than twice as likely to feel high levels of stress with respect to community service work. Finally, members who are single parents feel higher stress levels than their counterparts who are not single parents(see Table 9).

The results of this latest survey give rise to notable equity concerns regarding the pandemic's effects on members, particularly the pronounced ways in which COVID-19 has affected members of visible minorities and members with disabilities. While overall stress levels are down somewhat from the previous two surveys, the stress levels of members of marginalized groups

remain high. For example, 49% of respondents with disabilities reported experiencing high stress levels regarding teaching whereas 33% of those without disabilities reported experiencing high stress levels related to teaching (see Table 7). When it comes to community service, 38% of respondents with disabilities reported experiencing high levels of stress, compared to 21% of respondents without disabilities. Another marked discrepancy is evident in the area of research/creation, where 56% of those who identify as visible minorities¹ report high stress levels, compared to 42% of respondents who are not visible minorities (see Table 4). The information presented in Table 3 shows that 40% of female-identified members report high stress regarding teaching with 30% of male-identified members reporting high stress levels related to teaching. Also noteworthy is the finding that members holding non-tenured or non-continuing appointments report experiencing higher levels of stress for research/creation than their tenured, continuing appointment counterparts (see Table 10).

Below are three key dimensions of concern highlighted in comments received in the survey.

Dimension 1: Members with children. Members with children are deeply concerned about the effects the pandemic has had on their professional and personal lives. More than one quarter of the responses (n=97) to the question about work/life balance focused on this issue. Even members who do not have children expressed concerns about the wellbeing and future career paths of their counterparts with children. Studies on gender and research dissemination during the pandemic already show that women-identified scholars are falling further behind their male colleagues. To this end, some respondents also pointed out that mothers are disproportionately affected by the challenges COVID has placed upon academic careers and others pointed to the necessity for the university's senior administration to acknowledge this gender imbalance and implement material measures to rectify it. The Policy 94 fund is one of the existing mechanisms to address this type of inequity, but its eligibility criteria will need to be reviewed and its funding significantly enhanced to serve this purpose.

Dimension 2: Lack of support from our Central Administration. Members noted that the workload demands steadily increased throughout the pandemic. The introduction of bimodal teaching, mounting student stress levels, new strains of COVID, school closures, and the occupation of downtown Ottawa, all made work extremely difficult. Yet, the Central Administration frequently had little support or guidance to offer in response. Respondents who taught in the bimodal format expressed much frustration with the Central Administration for its lack of preparedness and support.

Dimension 3: Research/Creation. Researchers have been inhibited by travel restrictions, lack of availability of research subjects, shifts in accessibility and capacity of members of research teams, and various other forestallments of the research process. Nonetheless, for many, expectations regarding research productivity have remained as high as they were prior to the pandemic. Survey comments that underlined the workplace inequities amplified by COVID noted that

¹ Note: the terminology selected to identify specific groups is taken from federal classification systems.

members who are parents will experience a disproportionately lower level of research output and that this will negatively impact their academic careers in the future.

Table 1. Respondents' characteristics (numbers are percentages)

		May 2020 (N=775)	Nov. 2020 (N=523)	March 2022 (N=554)
Faculty	Arts	18	20	16
	Education	5	5	6
	Engineering	7	8	7
	Health Sciences	9	10	11
	Law (Civil Law)	2	2	2
	Law (Common Law)	4	5	4
	Library	4	3	6
	Management	6	7	6
	Medicine	7	7	8
	Science	12	10	11
	Social Science	24	23	23
Gender	Feminine	45	52	48
	Masculine	46	25	27
	Two-spirited	0	0.1	1
	Intersex	0	16	13
	Trans	0	0	0.2
	Non-binary	1	0.3	1
	Did not wish to specify	8	7	8
	Other	0	0.6	1
Employment status	Tenured/Continuing App	90	90	91
	Non-tenured/non-Continuing	10	10	9
Age group	39 years or younger	14	11	13
	40 to 49yrs	39	35	36
	50 to 59yrs	30	35	32
	60 to 69yrs	15	16	16
	70 and over	2	3	3
Member of visible minority		13	12	14
Indigenous		2	0.6	0.5
Disability		4	6	7
Immunocompr.		7	7	7

Children under 18	51	49	51
Children under 2	7	5	14
Child in daycare	16	13	24
Child in elementary school	33	32	63
Child in high school	21	19	43
Child with special needs	8	8	19
Single parent	4	4	9
Family caregiver	24	24	43

Table 2 – Level of stress expressed by APUO members by work in confinement

March – 2022 (N=554)

Categories	Teaching/Professional duties	<i>Research and Creation</i>	<i>Community services</i>
Low (score 0-1)	30%	24%	43%
Moderate (score 2)	34%	31%	33%
High (score 3-4)	36%	45%	24%

November – 2020 (N=523)

Categories	Teaching/Professional duties	<i>Research and Creation</i>	<i>Community services</i>
Low (score 0-1)	19%	19%	43%
Moderate (score 2)	34%	29%	32%
High (score 3-4)	47%	52%	25%

May – 2020 (N=755)

Categories	Teaching/Professional duties	<i>Research and Creation</i>	<i>Community services</i>
Low (score 0-1)	24%	21%	53%
Moderate (score 2)	40%	34%	29%
High (score 3-4)	36%	45%	18%

Table 3 – Comparative tables based on gender identity, March 2022 (N=554).

Teaching (professors) / Professional duties (librarians)

Categories	Feminine	Masculine
Low (score 0-1)	29%	29%
Moderate (score 2)	31%	41%

High (score 3-4)	40	30%
	$\chi^2= 29.3, p= 0.00^{**}$	

Research and Creation

Categories	Feminine	Masculine
Low (score 0-1)	22%	28%
Moderate (score 2)	33%	30%
High (score 3-4)	45%	42%
	$\chi^2= 1.70 \ p= 0.43$	

Community services

Categories	Feminine	Masculine
Low (score 0-1)	44%	46%
Moderate (score 2)	34%	31%
High (score 3-4)	22%	23%
	$\chi^2= 0.5, p=0.78$	

Table 4 – Comparative tables based on identifying as a member of a visible minority March 2022 (N=554).

Teaching (professors) / Professional duties (librarians)

Categories	Yes	No
Low (score 0-1)	25%	31%
Moderate (score 2)	35%	36%
High (score 3-4)	40%	33%
	$\chi^2 = 1.69, p = 0.43$	

Research and Creation

Categories	Yes	No
Low (score 0-1)	24%	23%
Moderate (score 2)	20%	35%
High (score 3-4)	56%	42%
	$\chi^2 = 6.43, p = 0.04^*$	

Community services

Categories	Yes	No
Low (score 0-1)	45%	42%
Moderate (score 2)	26%	35%
High (score 3-4)	29%	23%
	$\chi^2 = 2.72, p = 0.23$	

Table 5 – Comparative tables based on having children, March 2022, (N=554).

Teaching (professors) / Professional duties (librarians)

Categories	None	under 18	under 2	daycare	Grade school	High school	w/special needs
Low (score 0-1)	37	24	17	17	22	28	23
Moderate (score 2)	34	34	43	31	33	31	35
High (score 3-4)	29	42	40	52	45	41	42
		$\chi^2=13.50$ $p=0.00^*$	$\chi^2=10.21$ $p=0.01^*$	$\chi^2=14.1$ $p=0.00^*$	$\chi^2=7.29$ $p=0.02^*$	$\chi^2=3.44$ $p=0.18$	$\chi^2=5.66$ $p=0.06$

Research and Creation

Categories	None	under 18	under 2	daycare	Grade school	High school	w/special needs
Low (score 0-1)	29	18	21	9	15	19	11
Moderate (score 2)	38	25	16	27	25	25	27
High (score 3-4)	33	56	63	64	60	56	62
		$\chi^2=11.20$ $p=0.00^*$	$\chi^2=19.61$ $p=0.00^*$	$\chi^2=22.30$ $p=0.01^*$	$\chi^2=14.98$ $p=0.00^*$	$\chi^2=10.71$ $p=0.00^*$	$\chi^2=18.81$ $p=0.00^*$

Community services

Categories	None	under 18	under 2	daycare	Grade school	High school	w/special needs
Low (score 0-1)	49	37	42	33	34	37	31
Moderate (score 2)	34	31	29	37	32	29	31
High (score 3-4)	17	32	29	30	34	34	38
		$\chi^2=6.40$ $p=0.04^*$	$\chi^2=4.06$ $p=0.13$	$\chi^2=6.84$ $p=0.03^*$	$\chi^2=8.44$ $p=0.01^*$	$\chi^2=7.74$ $p=0.02^*$	$\chi^2=12.21$ $p=0.00^*$

Table 6 – Comparative tables based being a family caregiver, March 2022, (N=554).
Teaching (professors) / Professional duties (librarians)

Categories	Caregiver	Not a caregiver
Low (score 0-1)	21	29
Moderate (score 2)	39	30
High (score 3-4)	40	41
	$\chi^2=4.17, p=0.12$	

Research and Creation

Categories	Caregiver	Not a caregiver
Low (score 0-1)	18	18
Moderate (score 2)	25	27
High (score 3-4)	57	55
	$\chi^2= 0.14, p= 0.93$	

Community services

Categories	Caregiver	Not a caregiver
Low (score 0-1)	40	37
Moderate (score 2)	32	33
High (score 3-4)	28	30
	$\chi^2= 0.45, p=0.79$	

Table 7– Comparative tables based on having a disability, March 2022, (N=554).

Teaching (professors) / Professional duties (librarians)

Categories	Having a disability	No
Low (score 0-1)	23	31
Moderate (score 2)	28	36
High (score 3-4)	49	33
	$\chi^2 = 5.31, p=0.07$	

Research and Creation

Categories	Having a disability	No
Low (score 0-1)	20	24
Moderate (score 2)	30	33
High (score 3-4)	50	43
	$\chi^2 = 0.75, p=0.69$	

Community services

Categories	Having a disability	No
Low (score 0-1)	37	44
Moderate (score 2)	25	35
High (score 3-4)	38	21
	$\chi^2 = 7.17, p=0.03^*$	

Table 8 – Comparative tables based being immunocompromised, March 2022, (N=554).

Teaching (professors) / Professional duties (librarians)

Categories	Immonucomp.	No
Low (score 0-1)	19	30
Moderate (score 2)	42	35
High (score 3-4)	39	35
	$\chi^2 = 3.32, p=0.19$	

Research and Creation

Categories	Immonucomp.	No
Low (score 0-1)	27	23
Moderate (score 2)	35	33
High (score 3-4)	38	44
	$\chi^2 = 0.65, p=0.72$	

Community services

Categories	Immonucomp.	No
Low (score 0-1)	39	43
Moderate (score 2)	36	33
High (score 3-4)	25	24
	$\chi^2 = 0.26, p=0.87$	

Table 9 – Comparative tables based being a single parent, March 2022, (N=554).

Teaching (professors) / Professional duties (librarians)

Categories	Single parent	Not a single parent
Low (score 0-1)	31	37
Moderate (score 2)	19	34
High (score 3-4)	50	29
	$\chi^2 = 0.10.36, p = 0.01^*$	

Research and Creation

Categories	Single parent	Not a single parent
Low (score 0-1)	22	29
Moderate (score 2)	19	38
High (score 3-4)	59	33
	$\chi^2 = 14.64, p = 0.00^*$	

Community services

Categories	Single parent	Not a single parent
Low (score 0-1)	31	49
Moderate (score 2)	31	34
High (score 3-4)	38	19
	$\chi^2 = 10.50, p = 0.01^*$	

Table 10 – Comparative tables based on employment status, March 2022, (N=554).
Teaching (professors) / Professional duties (librarians)

Categories	Non-tenured, Non-continuing	Tenured, Continuing appointment
Low (score 0-1)	18	32
Moderate (score 2)	45	33
High (score 3-4)	37	35
	$\chi^2 = 5.82, p = 0.05$	

Research and Creation

Categories	Non-tenured, Non-continuing	Tenured, Continuing appointment
Low (score 0-1)	13	25
Moderate (score 2)	28	32
High (score 3-4)	59	43
	$\chi^2 = 6.57, p = 0.04^*$	

Community services

Categories	Non-tenured, Non-continuing	Tenured, Continuing appointment
Low (score 0-1)	30	44
Moderate (score 2)	56	30
High (score 3-4)	14	26
	$\chi^2 = 17.24, p = 0.01^*$	

Table 11 – Comparative tables based on age groups, March 2022, (N=554).

Teaching (professors) / Professional duties (librarians)

Categories	39 under	40 to 49	50 to 59	60 to 69	70 over
Low (score 0-1)	24	25	28	45	56
Moderate (score 2)	37	32	39	28	25
High (score 3-4)	39	43	33	27	19
	$\chi^2=38.37, p=0.00^*$				

Research and Creation

Categories	39 under	40 to 49	50 to 59	60 to 69	70 over
Low (score 0-1)	21	18	22	32	63
Moderate (score 2)	30	25	34	42	31
High (score 3-4)	49	57	44	26	6
	$\chi^2=94.88, p=0.00^*$				

Community services

Categories	39 under	40 to 49	50 to 59	60 to 69	70 over
Low (score 0-1)	38	34	47	54	73
Moderate (score 2)	42	34	30	29	18
High (score 3-4)	20	32	23	17	9
	$\chi^2=43.23, p=0.00^*$				

A note on methodology

- χ^2 tests of independence were performed to analyze the relationship between the categorical variables and the stress levels communicated by members. Frequency distributions are shown in the tables. In cases where members indicated “do not want to specify” data was not used to conduct the statistical analysis.

