

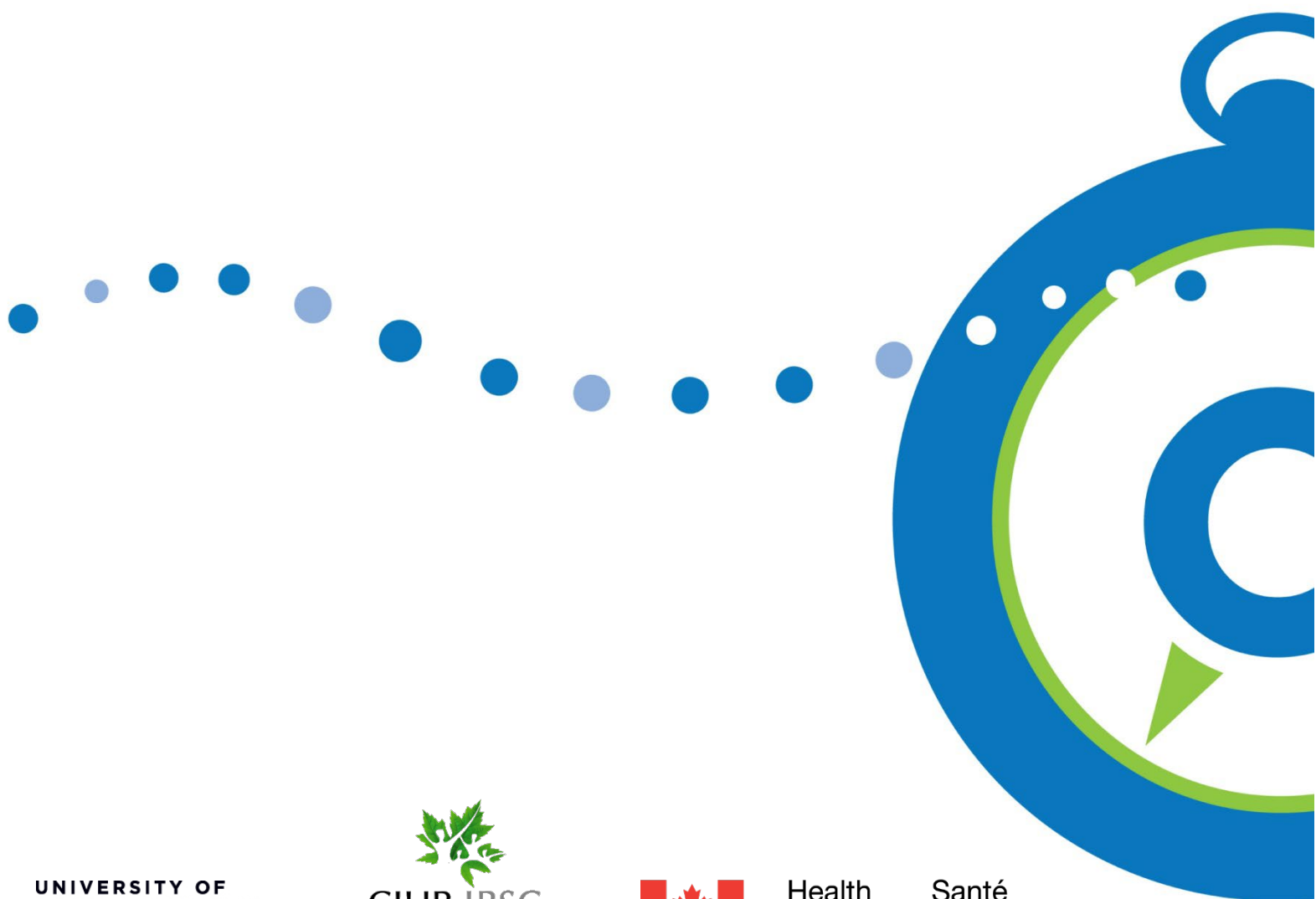


Cohort study evaluating how changes in school programs, policies, and resources impact youth health behaviours

COMPASS Year 9 and 10 Recruitment and Retention

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Introduction

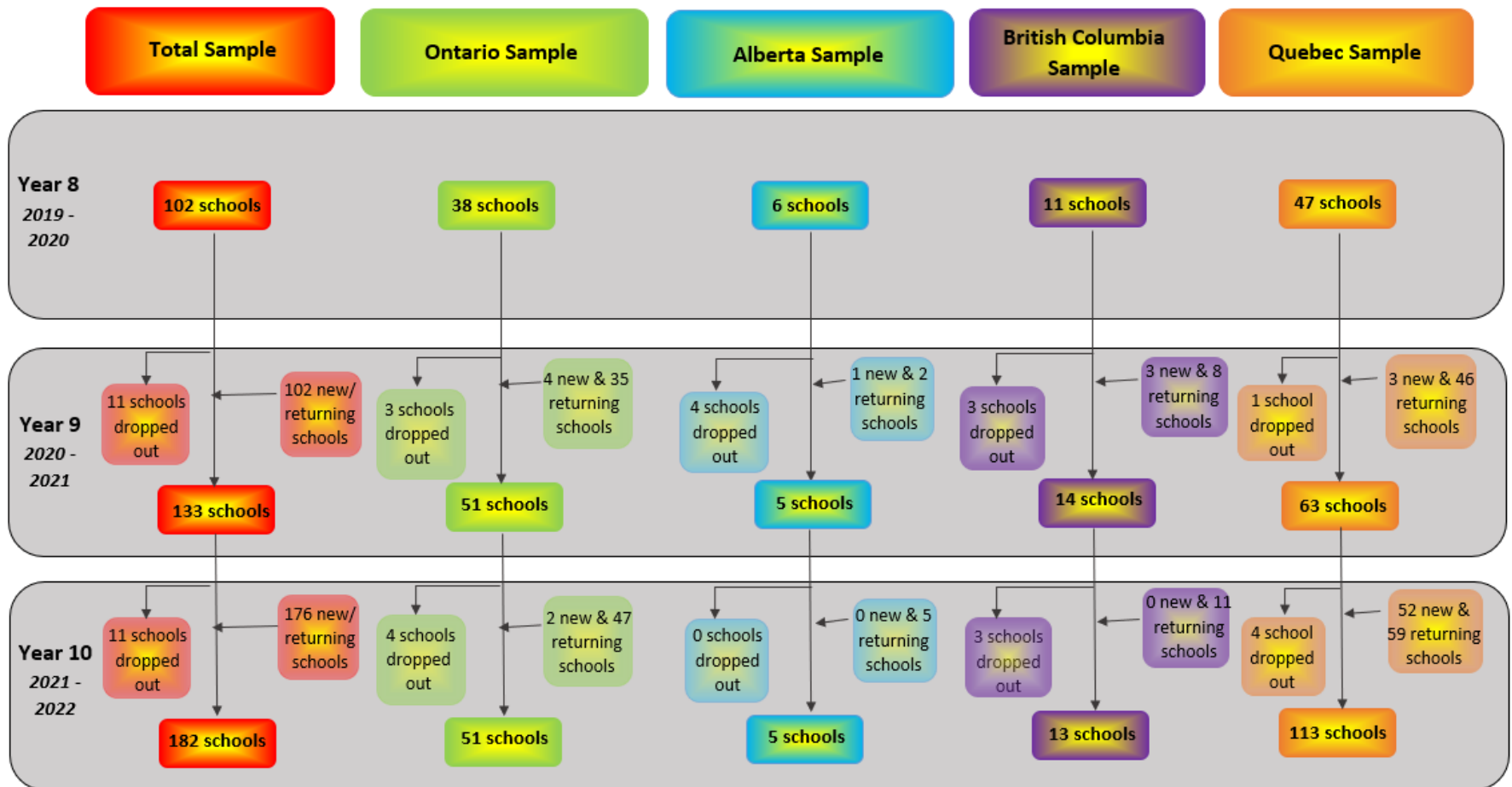
COMPASS is an ongoing longitudinal study (starting in 2012-13) designed to follow a prospective cohort of grade 9 to 12 students attending a convenience sample of Canadian secondary schools over several years to understand how changes in school environment characteristics (policies, programs, built environment) and provincial, territorial, and national policies are associated with changes in youth health behaviours [1]. COMPASS originated to provide school stakeholders with the evidence to guide and evaluate school-based interventions related to obesity, healthy eating, tobacco use, alcohol and marijuana use, physical activity, sedentary behaviour, school connectedness, bullying, and academic achievement. Based on feedback from participating schools as well as current issues among Canadian youth, COMPASS expanded its topic areas to include mental health, and prescription drug use. COMPASS has been designed to facilitate multiple large-scale school-based data collections and uses in-class whole-school sampling data collection methods consistent with previous research [2-5]. However, due to the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, Year 8 (Y8) data collections happening in March 2020 or later were completed online instead of in-class as a function of school closures. Additional details on the transition to an online data collection format for the COMPASS student questionnaire are available [6]. COMPASS also facilitates knowledge transfer and exchange by annually providing each participating school with a school-specific feedback report that highlights the school-specific prevalence for each health behaviour outcome, comparisons to provincial/territorial and national norms or guidelines, and provides evidence-based suggestions for school-based interventions (programs and/or policies) designed to address the outcomes covered in the feedback report (refer to: www.compass.uwaterloo.ca).

As previously reported [7], 102 schools participated in Year 8 (Y8) of the COMPASS study. Of the participating schools, there were 38 Ontario schools, 6 Alberta schools, 11 British Columbia schools, and 47 Quebec schools. For additional information on the recruitment and retention of schools in Y8, please refer to [this technical report](#) [7].

The purpose of this report is to provide details on the school recruitment and retention during Year 9 (Y9; 2020 - 2021) and Year 10 (Y10; 2021-22) of the COMPASS study.

Figure 1: COMPASS School Sample for Year 8 – Year 10 (2019/20 - 2021/22)

Figure 1 shows the school sample size from Y8 to Y10 of COMPASS overall and by province/territory, including annual drop out and replenishment totals. For school sample size for Year 1 to 6, please refer to [this technical report](#) [8]. For school sample size for Year 7 to 8, please refer to [this technical report](#) [7].



COMPASS Sample in Year 9 (2020 - 2021)

As shown in Figure 1, 133 schools participated in Y9 of COMPASS - 51 Ontario schools, 5 Alberta schools, 14 British Columbia schools, and 63 Quebec schools. Of the sample, 24 schools completed their first COMPASS data collection in 2012/13 (Y1 schools), 17 schools completed their first data collection in 2013/14 (Y2 schools), 1 school completed its first data collection in 2015/16 (Y4 schools), 17 schools completed their first data collection in 2016/17 (Y5 schools), 34 schools completed their first data collection in 2017/18 (Y6 schools), 17 schools completed their first data collection in 2018/19 (Y7 schools), 12 schools completed their first data collection in 2019/20 (Y8), and 11 schools completed their first data collection in 2020/21 (Y9 schools).

Recruitment in Y9

A total of 171 schools (including 102 schools that participated in Y8) were contacted via email and/or phone between October 2020 and March 2021 (depending on when the school participated in Y8) with the purpose of coordinating a COMPASS data collection date for the upcoming school year (Y9). In total, there were 91 returning schools from Y8 of COMPASS (35 Ontario schools, 2 Alberta schools, 8 British Columbia schools, and 46 Quebec schools). These schools participated in both Y8 and Y9. Additionally, there were 29 returning schools from Y7 of COMPASS (10 Ontario schools, 2 Alberta schools, 3 British Columbia schools, and 14 Quebec schools). These schools participated in Y7, skipped Y8, and participated in Y9 again. In addition to the returning schools, 4 new Ontario schools, 1 Alberta school, 3 British Columbia schools, and 3 Quebec schools were added to the COMPASS sample during Y9.

Withdrawals in Y9

In Y9, a total of 11 schools withdrew from COMPASS - 3 Ontario schools, 4 Alberta schools, 3 British Columbia schools, and 1 Quebec school. Among these schools, 3 of them participated in COMPASS for eight consecutive data collections, 4 of them participated for seven consecutive data collections, 1 of them participated in three previous data collections, 1 of them participated in two previous data collections, and 2 of them participated in one previous data collection (Y8 only).

Similar to previous protocols, schools were provided the opportunity to indicate why they were withdrawing from COMPASS. The reasons provided included competing curriculum priorities and not having enough time or capacity to administer the COMPASS survey (n=4), having no interest (n=2), dealing with the COVID-19 pandemic (n=2), taking part in another survey (n=1), and no response from school (n=1).

As mentioned previously in [this technical report](#) [7], COMPASS changed its data collection halfway through Y8 from in-class to online method in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. The COMPASS team decided to continue with this method for Y9 data collection as well. Similar to Y8, no Nunavut school participated in Y9 study due to the various difficulties with administering the survey online (i.e., lack of access to internet and electronic devices).

Survey Administration in Y9

COMPASS team advised Y9 schools to post the survey link in their virtual classrooms to maximize participation. Out of 133 schools that participated in Y9 of COMPASS, 72% allocated class time for survey completion, 26% shared the survey link with students so they can complete it on their own, and 2% of schools never confirmed whether they allocated class time or not. The average participation rate for schools that allocated class time was 69%, and this was 33% for schools that had students complete the survey on their own time.

COMPASS Sample in Year 10 (2021 - 2022)

As shown in Figure 1, 182 schools participated in Y10 of COMPASS - 51 Ontario schools, 5 Alberta schools, 13 British Columbia schools, and 113 Quebec schools. Of the sample, 25 schools completed their first COMPASS data collection in 2012/13 (Y1 schools), 17 schools completed their first data collection in 2013/14 (Y2 schools), 1 school completed its first data collection in 2015/16 (Y4 schools), 16 schools completed their first data collection in 2016/17 (Y5 schools), 34 schools completed their first data collection in 2017/18 (Y6 schools), 18 schools completed their first data collection in 2018/19 (Y7 schools), 13 schools completed their first data collection in 2019/20 (Y8), 4 schools completed their first data collection in 2020/21 (Y9 schools), and 54 schools completed their first data collection in 2021/22 (Y10 schools).

Recruitment in Y10

A total of 229 schools (including 133 schools that participated in Y9) were contacted via email and/or phone between October 2021 and April 2022 (depending on when the school participated in Y9) with the purpose of coordinating a COMPASS data collection date for the upcoming school year (Y10). In total, there were 122 returning schools from Y9 of COMPASS (47 Ontario schools, 5 Alberta schools, 11 British Columbia schools, and 59 Quebec schools). These schools participated in both Y9 and Y10. Additionally, there was 1 returning school from Y8 of COMPASS. This was a British Columbia school that participated in Y8, skipped Y9, and participated in Y10 again. In addition to the returning schools, 54 new schools (2 Ontario and 52 Quebec schools) were added to the COMPASS sample during Y10.

Withdrawals in Y10

In Y10, a total of 11 schools withdrew from COMPASS - 4 Ontario schools, 3 British Columbia schools, and 4 Quebec schools. These schools participated in Y9 but did not participate in Y10. Among these schools, 1 of them participated in COMPASS for seven years, 1 participated in four previous data collections, 2 participated in three previous data collections, and 7 participated in one previous data collection (Y9 only).

The primary reason for these withdrawals was the COVID-19 pandemic and the challenges it presented, for example, staff shortage and high student absenteeism rate (n=5). Other reasons provided included virtual schools not running during 2021-22 (n=3), challenging to schedule the COMPASS survey during instructional time (n=2), and school board not approving the study (n=1). Slightly more than half of these schools showed interest to participate in Y11 of COMPASS (n=6).

Survey Administration in Y10

Based on the assessments done by the COMPASS team, class time allocation improves participation rates noticeably, hence helping the survey results become more meaningful and a better representative of the entire school body. Schools that agreed to participate in Y10 of COMPASS were highly encouraged to allocate class time either in person or through virtual classrooms for survey completion. COMPASS research coordinators allowed schools to choose an appropriate option for class time allocation based on their technology availability and Wi-Fi

capacity. Schools were provided with some flexible options to help with this decision making: (a) entire school participate at the same time and day, (b) entire school participate on the same day at different times depending on the grade or class they are in, and (3) students participate at staggered days and times throughout the week, depending on the grade or class they are in.

Out of 182 schools that participated in Y10 of COMPASS, 95% allocated class time for survey completion with an average participation rate of 76%, 4% did not allocate class time with an average participation rate of 14%, and 1% of schools never confirmed if class time was allocated. The second group shared the survey link with students to complete on their own time.

Conclusion

As outlined in this report, the total sample size increased from 133 schools in Y9 to 182 schools in Y10 with much of the increase observed in Quebec in both years.

It seems that many high schools were able to overcome the challenges associated with the online mode of curriculum delivery allowing them to participate in Y9 of COMPASS. Fewer schools in Y9 identified the COVID-19 pandemic as a primary challenge to administering the survey (n=2). The main refusal reason in Y9 was competing curriculum priorities and not having enough time or capacity to administer the COMPASS survey (n=4). The number of schools that opted out in Y10 was similar to the previous year (n=11) while the COVID-19 pandemic being the primary reason for withdrawals.

The majority of schools in Y9 and Y10 of COMPASS allocated class time for survey completion. COMPASS team put more emphasis on class time allocation during Y10 data collections which led to more schools allocating class time (95%) compared to Y9 (72%). In addition, the average participation rate for schools that allocated class time increased from 69% in Y9 to 76% in Y10. Since class time allocation proves to be an effective way to increase participation rates, COMPASS team will continue to strongly advise this option to schools that will be participating in Y11 of COMPASS.

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