

How did families of children with Williams syndrome cope during the first wave of the COVID-19 pandemic?



Williams Syndrome i-Reach

Worldwide, 424 families with a child with WS participated

Children were between 1 and 56 years old. Mothers replied 80% of the time.



This report is part of an [international](https://www.specialneeds covid.org) study that included more than 10,000 families with children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities. We would like to thank all of the participants. For more information, see: www.specialneeds covid.org

Main worries of individuals with WS



Not meeting friends



Fewer occasions to approach others



Loss of their routine

Parents' main worries for their children



Fewer occasions for social interaction



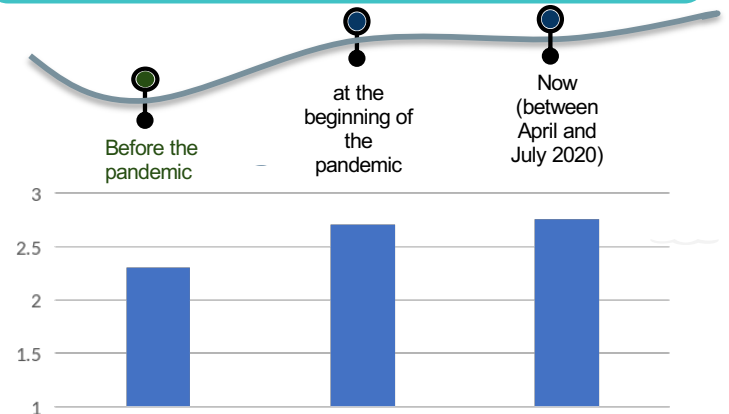
Health and possible infection with COVID-19



Loss of institution access (e.g. school)

Children's anxiety levels

Individuals with WS experienced increased levels of anxiety in relation to the pandemic and their anxiety levels were higher than in other diagnostic groups



Some observations

- 84% of parents reported closure of schools or institutions - suddenly 75% of the individuals with WS were at home compared to 10% before the pandemic.
- Individuals with WS had difficulty coping with their anxiety, engaging more frequently in repetitive and aggressive behaviors than before the pandemic.
- Establishing a routine and shielding from the worst information about COVID-19 seemed to help children with WS.

Conclusions

- Parents anxiety decreased if they had more **clarity about the situation, and financial and health professional support.**
- Children benefitted from **focusing on positive aspects** as well as **establishing a routine** in daily life.
- This study highlights the importance for mental health clinicians supporting families and children with WS to help expand and improve on their coping strategy repertoire.



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Williams Syndrome