

# Can I see my friends ever again without worries?

## Uncertainty in Swiss university students during the COVID-19 pandemic

Klein Swormink, A.<sup>1</sup>, Zysset, A.<sup>1</sup>, Dratva, J.<sup>1,2</sup>, on behalf of the HES-C group

<sup>1</sup>Zurich University of Applied Sciences, School of Health Professions, Institute of Health Sciences

<sup>2</sup>University of Basel, Medical Faculty

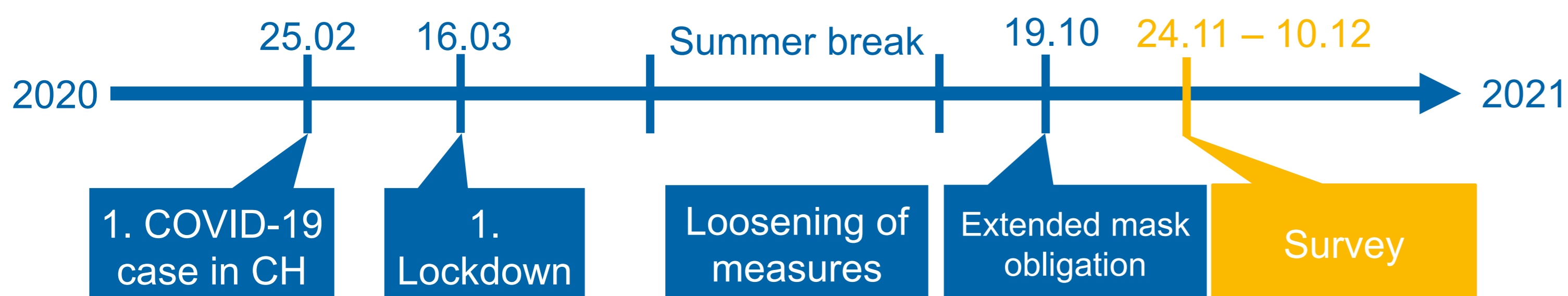
### Background

- Young adulthood is characterized by developmental and social transitions, resulting in insecurities and uncertainties.
- The measures implemented to contain the coronavirus pandemic (COVID-19) abruptly changed the personal and academic lives of university students, adding new uncertainties to their lives.

 **To investigate students' uncertainties about the pandemic, their future, social and professional development**

### Method

- Cross-sectional online survey (N = 1138)



- **Quantitative** - Uncertainties measured with the adapted version of the uncertainty subscale from Satow<sup>1</sup> (7-point-likert-scale, “not felt burdened” (1) to “felt strongly burdened” (7)).
- **Qualitative Content Analysis** (Schreier, M<sup>2</sup>. and Kuckartz, U<sup>3</sup>.) - Open Question: “Which uncertainty is the most difficult for you personally to endure?” - Consensus coding (two coders)

### Quantitative results (n = 1119, 71% ♀)

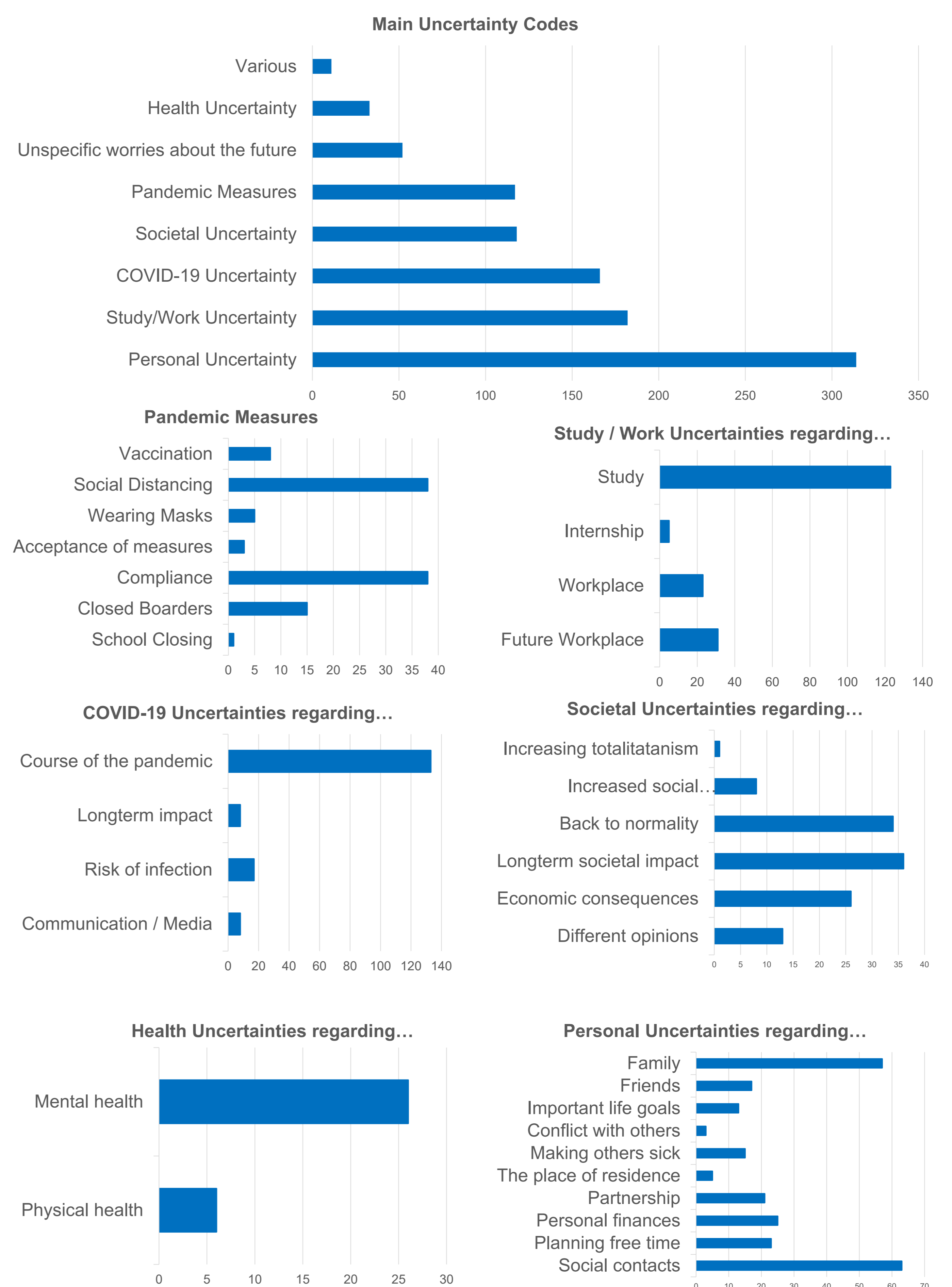
- **Most** stressful for students was “uncertainty about the **long-term impact of the pandemic**” (Mdn = 5, IQR [3-6])
- Second, “uncertainty about **social contacts in the context of the current pandemic**” (Mdn = 5, [3-6]).
- Least stressful uncertain about “uncertainty **whether you have understood the information on COVID-19**” (Mdn = 1, [1-2]).

### Qualitative results (n = 719)

- **Most** of the uncertainties that students are concerned with **relate to personal issues**. Especially in relation to the **well-being of family members and meeting other people**.
- Uncertainties regarding **study and work** are closely followed by **uncertainties related to the COVID-19 virus**. Here, the main worries are related to the course of the pandemic.

### Referenzen

<sup>1</sup> Satow, L. (2012). Stress- und Coping-Inventar (SCI). Stress- und Coping-Inventar (SCI). Test- und Skaldokumentation. <https://www.dr-satow.de/tests/stress-und-coping-inventar/>  
<sup>2</sup> Schreier, M. (2012). Qualitative Content Analysis in Practice. SAGE Publication Ltd. <https://www.lehmanns.de/shop/nocategory/18828895-9781849205924-qualitative-content-analysis-in-practice>  
<sup>3</sup> Kuckartz, U. (2016). Qualitative Inhaltsanalyse. Methoden, Praxis, Computerunterstützung (3. Aufl.). Beltz Verlag. School of Health Sciences [www.zhaw.ch](http://www.zhaw.ch)



### Conclusion

- Greatest and most important concerns were uncertainty about the long-term effects of the pandemic, as well as the social consequences.
- Uncertainty about what comes next, the health status and well-being of family members are also relevant concerns for students.
- There were few concerns about their own physical health, the well-being of friends, and the risk of infection.

**Crisis communication should address uncertainties to reduce stressors and potential adverse effects on mental**

### Contacts

Anthony Klein Swormink – [klii@zhaw.ch](mailto:klii@zhaw.ch)  
 Annina Zysset – [zyss@zhaw.ch](mailto:zyss@zhaw.ch)  
 Julia Dratva – [drat@zhaw.ch](mailto:drat@zhaw.ch)  
 ZHAW, School of Health Sciences, Institute of Public Health