

# Exploring the Hidden Disabilities of Mental Health in the Chemistry Laboratory

Turns out, everyone's quite anxious in the lab anyway, and COVID-19 didn't help at all



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## BACKGROUND

- Rising numbers of students with diagnosed or undiagnosed mental health conditions.
- Teaching labs are complex environments, with anxiety and confidence interrelated.

## RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- Do a significant number of students have a formal or informal diagnosis of anxiety?
- What impact does this have on their perception of the chemistry lab?
- Did COVID-19 impact these perceptions due to lack of prior experience?

## WHAT WE MEASURE

- Lab anxiety instrument administered before & after year 1
- Additional questions about anxiety diagnosis/self-diagnosis
- Self-assessed impact of pandemic on preparedness

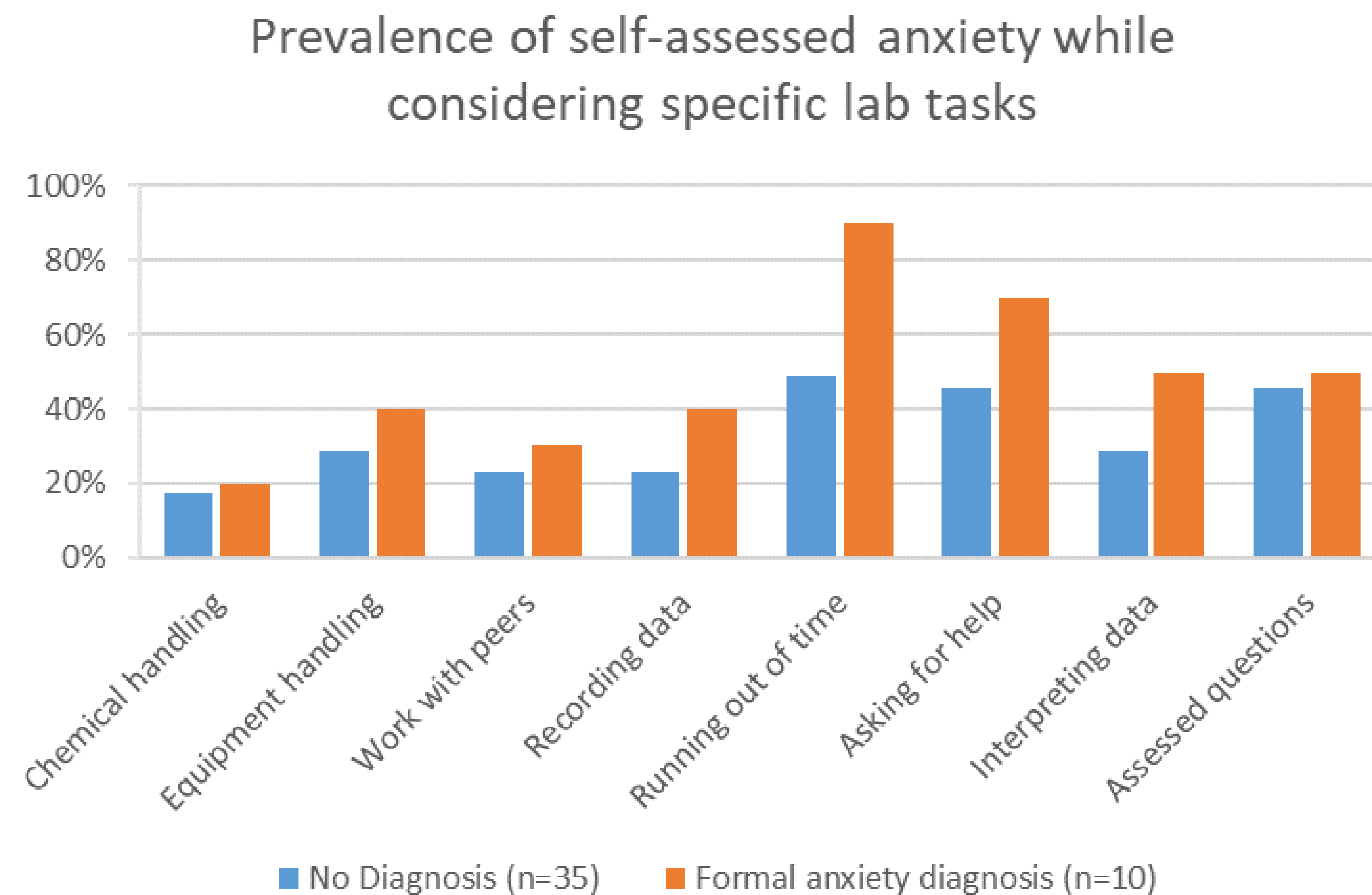
## PRELIMINARY RESULTS

- Self- or formal anxiety diagnosis makes things worse, may even affect perception of own experience

## REFERENCES

- 1) CW Bowen, *Ed. & Psych. Meas.*  
doi:10.1177/0013164499591012
- 2) D Spagnoli, *Student Success*  
doi:10.5204/ssj.v10i1.1104

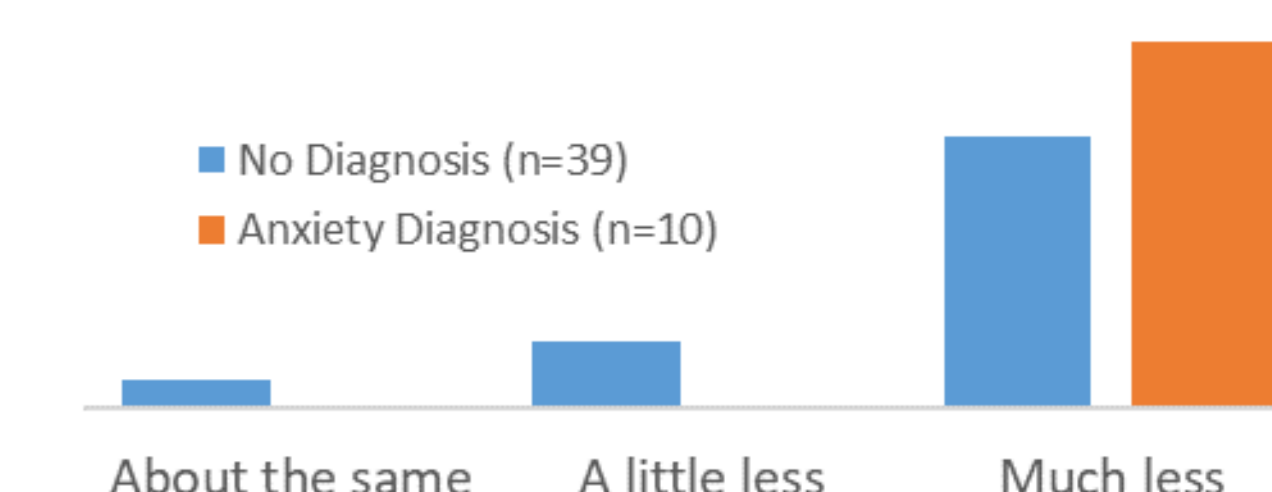
# Lab tasks elevate feelings of anxiety; having a formal diagnosis of anxiety amplifies this for some tasks



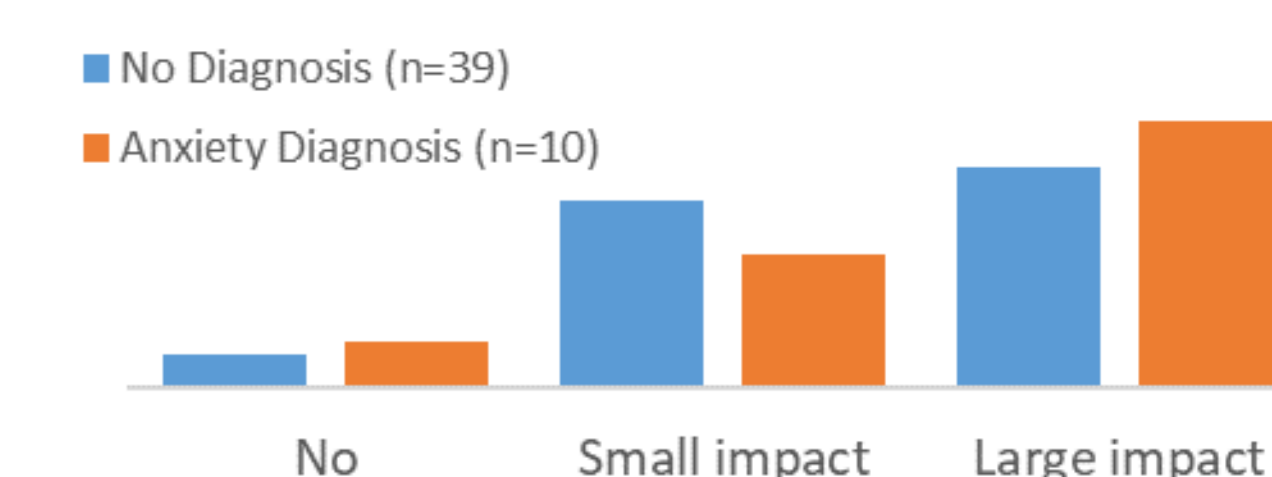
## COVID-19 impact?

- Students also surveyed about the impact of COVID-19 with questions on preparedness and prior lab experience.
- Disproportionate perceptual impact on students with a formal anxiety diagnosis.

Do you feel that you've had less lab experience due to the pandemic?

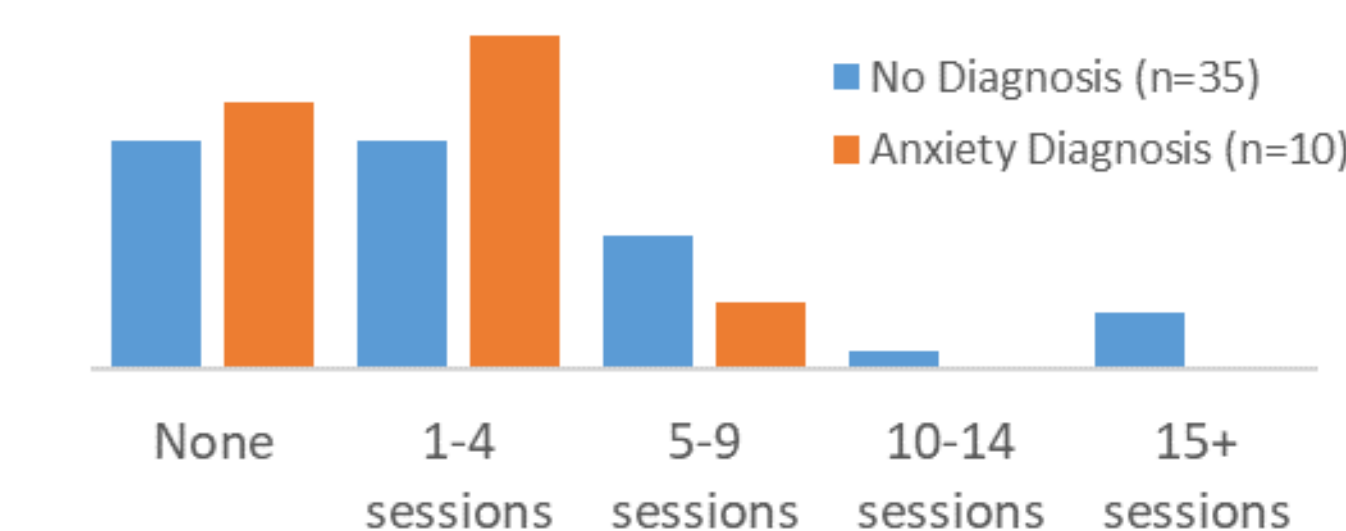


Are you concerned that this will impact your upcoming first year?



- Anxiety may even relate to how much lab experience was gained in the run-up to university

How much lab experience have you had in the last 18 months?



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