

TORONTO'S
VITALSIGNS



The Toronto FALL

Key insights for an equitable recovery

REPORT

Half a year in the life of COVID-19

"Nobody who is not white and wealthy wants to go back to the way things were."

Mohini Datta-Ray, Executive Director, North York Women's Shelter

Toronto has been a gathering place for Indigenous people since time immemorial. We acknowledge we are on the traditional territories of the Huron-Wendat, the Anishinabek Nation, the Haudenosaunee Confederacy, and the Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation.

Today, Toronto is home to upwards of 70,000 Indigenous people from across Turtle Island. Close to 90%, or 63,000 people, live at or below the poverty line. Indigenous people in Toronto are among the most marginalized and vulnerable people in the city, facing disproportionately high levels of unemployment, food insecurity, and chronic physical and mental health conditions. This is the legacy of colonial trauma, systemic anti-Indigenous racism, and ongoing injustices.

And yet even in the face of these stark realities, Indigenous communities in Toronto remain strong, vibrant, and resilient. We are incredibly proud and humbled to work alongside Indigenous organizations. Our work at Toronto Foundation has been strengthened and enriched by the knowledge, expertise and lived experience that these organizations, their leaders, their staff, and their community members have generously shared with us.

We all have a lot to learn from Indigenous societies about how to build a more equitable and just city. We face this learning journey with humility, energy, and a strong drive for action.

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EQUITY AND AN EQUITABLE RECOVERY

Equity guarantees that all people and communities, including those who bear the burden of historic and contemporary forms of marginalization and oppression, have access to the opportunities, resources, networks, and decision-making power they need to fully participate in society and the economy, to achieve their goals, and to lead fulfilling lives.

This report applied an equity lens to the identification of data and issues, and to the analysis of the research. In so doing, this report documents the disproportionate impacts of COVID-19 on marginalized populations and the organizations that serve them. At the same time, it surfaces the knowledge and expertise, of community leaders whose lived and professional experiences shed light on the fallout from the pandemic. Their perspectives and ongoing leadership will point the way to a more fair and just social and economic recovery in Toronto.

ABOUT TORONTO FOUNDATION

PURPOSE

We aim to create a more fair and just society, where everyone can thrive by mobilizing those with resources and the will to partner with others. The new philanthropy focuses on cocreating a society that fights exclusion and marginalization, creates a sense of wellbeing and belonging, and promotes trust.

MISSION

To connect philanthropy to community needs and opportunities.

VISION

A city of informed, engaged philanthropists accelerating meaningful change for all.

VALUES

Brave, thoughtful action. Humility in our relationships. Public trust above all.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This report involved the work of countless organizations and people. We sincerely thank all who contributed and hope we have not missed anyone in this list. All opinions and interpretations in this report are the opinions, interpretation, or perspectives of the author and editorial team and do not necessarily reflect the opinions of any organizations or people we acknowledge here.

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Vancity Community Investment Bank

Thank you to Vancity
Community Investment
Bank for their early
support during the
pandemic and for
sponsoring this report.

Quoted in this report

The following people provided their valuable perspectives in the report:

Eugenia Addy

Visions of Science

Toyo Ajibolade

Lady Ballers Camp

Philip Akin

Formerly of Obsidian Theatre Company

Minaz Asani-Kanji

Park People

Ekua Asabea Blair

Massey Centre

Michael Carlson

Kapapamahchakwew Wandering Spirit School

Tanya Chung-Tiam-Fook

Evergreen Canada

Mohini Datta-Ray

North York Women's Shelter

Phylicia Davis-Wesseling

KGO Adult Literacy Program

Armi de Francia

Transportation Equity Toronto

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Ontario Council of Agencies Serving Immigrants

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CEE Centre for Young Black Professionals

Alica Hall

Nia Centre for the Arts

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Birchmount Community Action Council

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Native Women's Resource Centre of Toronto

Tai Huvnh

UHN OpenLab

Sarah Jama

Disability Justice Network of Ontario

Alfred Jean-Baptiste

Toronto Centre of Learning & Development

Garima Talwar Kapoor

Maytree

Emmay Mah

Toronto Environmental Alliance

Medhat Mahdy

YMCA of Greater Toronto

Harvey Manning

Anishnawbe Health Toronto

Nancy Martin

Miziwe Biik Aboriginal Employment & Training

Keith McCrady

2-Spirited People of the 1st Nations

Kwame Mckenzie

Wellesley Institute

amanuel melles

Network for the Advancement of Black Communities

Tesfai Mengesha

Success Beyond Limits

Shelley Nicholls

Sistering

Patti Pettigrew

Thunder Woman Healing Lodge Society

Rosemarie Powell

Toronto Community Benefits Network

Cheryl Prescod

Black Creek Community Health Centre

Imara Ajani Rolston

City of Toronto's Confronting Anti-Black Racism Unit

Quoted in this report

The following people provided their valuable perspectives in the report:

Suman Roy

Scarborough Food Security Initiative

Karlene Ruddock

Economic Justice Advocate **Utcha Sawyers**

Boys and Girls Club of East Scarborough

Jeffrey Schiffer

Native Child and Family Services of Toronto **Neethan Shan**

Urban Alliance on Race Relations

Shakhlo Sharipova

Thorncliffe Park Autism Support Network Paul Taylor

FoodShare

Steve Teekens Na-Me-Res

Anna Victoria Wong

Community Family Services of Ontario



Thank you as well to the many organizations who completed Toronto Foundation's 2020 Toronto Nonprofit Survey. See Appendix for more details. Additional partners who helped distribute the survey are acknowledged there.

Thank you as well to 211 Ontario for access to their data systems and technical expertise and 211 Central for supporting analysis and interpretation of their data used in this report.

Carrie Moody

Jeff Nicholls

Don Nichols

Brian Page

Jane Pyper

Dan Rosen

Devika Shah

Laura Smith

Elder

Adri Stark

Pat Tobin

Cathy Taylor

Steven Sinclair

Andrew Parkin

Carolyn Rowan

Aaron Sanderson

Markus Stadelmann-

Barbara Thompson

Melanie Rodriguez

Additional Individuals Consulted

To the many individuals who provided data, feedback, edits, perspectives and opinions, and helped us access research, thank you as well. Your input was crucial.

Aderonke Akande Shelagh Pizey-Allen Paul Anderson Margaret Arnason Rose Barcarse Karim Bardeesy Abhijit Bhamidipati Elena Bird Kate Black Melissa Bosman Alvssa Brierlev Talia Bronstein Amy Buitenhuis Cheryll Case Nation Cheong Kirc Cobb Sarah Collier Susan Davis Stephanie Fernandes Lesa Francis

Alexandra Gardner

Jenny Gatov Alyssa Gebert Michelle German Ruth Goba

Max Greenwald Criss Habal-Brosek Sherri Hanley

Teshini Harrison Dave Harvey

Miranda Hassell Brett Hendrie Annie Hodgins

Claire Hopkinson Sonia Hsiung

Devon Hurvid
Sunil Johal

Nerin Kaur Ada Kwong Heather Marshall Karen Milligan

Karen Milligan Kiera Toffelmire

Dave Montague Beth Wilson

Leah Yuyitung

Leadership Table

Thank you to the following experts for your guidance on Toronto Foundation's evolving equity work, including the public engagement on this report, as well as our next granting program and the related funding recommendations.

Agapi Gessesse

CEE Centre for Young Black Professionals

Lindsay Kretschmer

Toronto Aboriginal Support Services Council

Tim Laronde

Anishnawbe Health Foundation

Gillian Perera

Centre for Connected Communities

Imara Rolston

Confronting Anti-Black Racism Unit, City of Toronto

EXECUTIVE SUMMARIES



HEALTH AND WELLNESS

Summary

COVID-19 has led to more than 1,400 deaths across the city and laid bare already existing inequities in health outcomes.

- People earning less than \$30,000 annually were 5.3 times more likely to be affected by COVID-19 than those with annual incomes above \$150,000.
- While COVID-19 rates were similar across neighbourhoods at the end of March 2020, by the end of May 2020, the most racialized parts of the city had 10 times more cases than the least racialized parts of the city.
- The majority of people dying from COVID-19 in Toronto have been over 80
 years old, in large part due to outbreaks in chronically underfunded long-term
 care facilities.
- The pandemic has led to increasing rates of food insecurity, and supportive nonprofits are struggling to keep up with demand.

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INCOME AND WEALTH

Summary

The pandemic has been devastating for already-vulnerable workers, and about 30% of people in Toronto are struggling to pay essentials, like rent, food, and utilities.

- In the Toronto Census Metropolitan Area (CMA), those in the bottom 25% of hourly earners (making less than \$17.48 per hour) have seen their total work hours reduced by 30%, while those in the top 25% (making more than \$36.07 per hour) have seen their total work hours increased by 21%.
- More than eight million Canadians unable to work due to the pandemic received the Canada Emergency Response Benefit (CERB). The widespread take-up of this program has led to renewed calls for a universal basic income and more robust social safety nets.
- The individual monthly \$2,000 CERB payments were significantly higher than
 the \$1,169 that people receive on the Ontario Disability Support Program and
 the \$733 that people receive from Ontario Works underscoring the difficulty
 of living on existing social assistance programs.
- The challenges brought by COVID-19 are reinforcing decades of growing inequality. For example, between 1980 and 2015, the average inflationadjusted income for white Torontonians increased by 60%, while the average income for racialized individuals increased by only 1%.

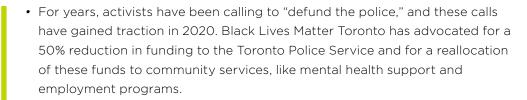


SAFETY

Summary

This year has seen unprecedented mainstream attention on anti-Black and anti-Indigenous police violence, as more and more white Canadians understand the systemic racism embedded within the justice system and embrace long-standing calls for reform. The spread of COVID-19 and the associated lockdowns have also led to a rise in anti-Asian discrimination and an increase in domestic violence.

• Protests in Toronto have drawn attention to pre-existing issues within the Toronto Police Service (TPS), including the fact that Black residents are nearly 20 times more likely to be shot by the police than white residents.



- Currently, the TPS budget is more than \$1 billion, which is more than the City of Toronto spends on parks, forestry, and recreation; subsidized housing, shelter, and supportive housing; employment and social services; and economic development and culture combined.
- A Statistics Canada study found that in April 2020, 10% of women were highly concerned about violence in the home during the pandemic. Calls to the Assaulted Women's Helpline were up by more than 75% in May 2020, and racialized women account for 73% of callers, with more than 4,000 calls coming in monthly.
- Discrimination and harassment against people of Asian ethnicity have risen sharply, both in-person and online, with Chinese Canadians reporting the most significant impact.



WORK

Summary

Toronto has the second highest unemployment rate in Canada, and racialized workers, young people, and women with young children have been among the most severely affected by pandemic-related job and income losses.

- Canada's economic recovery has already begun, but in Toronto it has been especially slow. Toronto had the highest unemployment rate in the country as of September 2020, measured on a three-month moving average. The unemployment rate in the city of Toronto heading into the pandemic was 6.2%. By May 2020, it had increased to 14.2%, and in August, it had ticked up to 14.4%. While the unemployment rate declined to 10.7% in September, additional lockdowns may have caused more job loses.
- Black, Indigenous, and People of Colour (BIPOC) have unemployment rates almost twice as high as white Canadians. The unemployment rate among BIPOC youth is 32.3%, compared to 18% for white youth, both of which are unprecedented.

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- During the lockdown, non-white workers were disproportionately likely to be classified as essential workers because of the nature of their work, meaning they had to continue to work in-person, while millions of other Canadians were able to safely remain at home.
- Across Canada, women with children under the age of six years have seen their hours reduced by 17%, compared to February 2020, and women whose youngest child is between the ages of six years and 12 years have seen their hours decreased by 14%. The longer women remain out of the workforce, the longer it will take for a full economic recovery.



CIVIC ENGAGEMENT AND BELONGING

Summary

Creating a sense of belonging for all the city's residents requires acknowledging and combating the deep-rooted racism and discrimination within Toronto's institutions. And regular citizens and the nonprofit sector are increasingly engaged in this cause.

- More people are rallying together against anti-Black racism and police brutality, and 60% of Canadians reported seeing racism as a serious issue, versus 47% a year ago.
- Most nonprofits quickly moved their programming online during the pandemic, but now face the combined challenges of plummeting revenues and increasing demand, with small grassroots organizations at the most risk of permanent closure. This highlights the need for long-term core funding to make a stronger, more resilient sector.
- Amid system-wide calls for racial justice, the lack of diversity in nonprofit leadership is a glaring gap, especially within the most powerful institutions.
- Traditional volunteering has declined during the pandemic, but mutual aid networks have formed at unparalleled rates and grassroots groups quickly took initiative, as neighbours seek to support one another.



HOUSING

Summary

The pandemic has laid bare a polarized housing system, with growing real estate wealth on one end and the spectre of mass evictions on the other. Dropping rents and the prospect of new affordable builds give hope for the affordable housing crisis.

- This past spring and summer saw both record high real estate prices and record numbers of people unable to pay rent.
- With the eviction moratorium lifted in early August 2020, Toronto is seeing more people than ever reaching out for support from eviction prevention, rental assistance programs, and affordable housing providers.
- Homelessness is being described as its own "epidemic" by those working in the field, as shelters are operating at fully capacity, and an estimated 2,000 people are living in tent encampments.
- Affordable housing advocates believe the current environment presents the biggest opportunity to create permanent affordable housing.



GETTING AROUND

Summary

Public transit usage plummeted during the pandemic, but usage remained relatively high in areas home to many lowincome and precarious workers, who will be disproportionately hit by any potential transit cuts.

- Transit usage is beginning to rebound, but it remains unclear whether it will
 ever recover to its pre-pandemic levels. A recent survey of Toronto transit
 users by researchers from the University of Toronto (U of T) found that 37% of
 people who stopped using public transit during COVID-19 said they would not
 come back until they were vaccinated or when the pandemic is over.
- Transit usage during the pandemic has been significantly tied to income. Researchers from U of T found that only 14% of those with \$125,000-plus in household income were still riding transit, compared to 41% of those with less than \$40,000 in household income

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- Statistics Canada found in a June 2020 survey that three-quarters of public transit users who gave it up during the pandemic shifted to personal motor vehicles.
- To encourage more bike usage here, the City of Toronto implemented ActiveTO, resulting in the approval of 40 kilometres of new cycling infrastructure in 2020, with most implemented before the end of the summer.



ARTS, CULTURE, AND RECREATION

Summary

Organizations in the arts, culture, and recreation sector have been devastated by the pandemic. Although some online alternatives have emerged, they cannot replace the breadth and depth of creative and recreational offerings previously available.

- Two-thirds of arts and culture organizations reported a decline in revenue, with a median decline of 50%.
- Many organizations have pivoted online, with some success stories, particularly for larger organizations, but the corresponding fee revenue cannot compete with that generated from live experiences.
- The Toronto Public Library played a critical role in the cultural life of the city during shutdowns, with more than 4.6 million ebooks, audiobooks, movies, and newspapers accessed online.
- A total of 72% of arts, culture, heritage, and tourism organizations strongly agree that future government cutbacks could have a bigger impact than the pandemic itself, compared to 39% of other types of organizations.



ENVIRONMENT

Summary

Two of the few positive outcomes of the pandemic were improved air quality and an increase in park usage, but work needs to be done to make these gains permanent.

 Air quality in Toronto improved significantly, albeit temporarily, during the pandemic. Poor air quality disproportionately affects low-income and BIPOC communities, and a widespread adoption of electric vehicles would help make these gains permanent.

- Park usage in Toronto doubled in summer 2020, compared to 2019, but facilities remain distributed unequally across the city.
- July 2020 was the hottest month ever recorded in Toronto, since records began 84 years ago.
- People without home air conditioning who had to self-isolate during the pandemic faced greater risks of other negative health consequences.



LEARNING

Summary

The sudden shift to online learning has been difficult for many students, and this is especially true for low-income students who have less access to technology, high-speed internet, and tutoring opportunities.

- Before the pandemic, students from the lowest income families in the Toronto District School Board (TDSB) were 3.3 times more likely to drop out than students from the highest income categories, and the pandemic risks exacerbating these inequalities.
- Almost half (47%) of TDSB students said they were not enjoying learning at home. While the majority felt they had what was necessary to continue with remote learning (68%), this leaves a massive number of students who feel illequipped to continue learning at home.
- Returning to in-person school is riskier for students in low-income neighbourhoods that have been harder hit by COVID-19, and lone-parent families are forced to make additional sacrifices to support at-home learning.
- Recent post-secondary graduates are facing grim employment and financial realities.
- Lifelong learning and skills upgrading will play an important role in the economic recovery.

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INTRODUCTION

INTRODUCTION

The Toronto Fallout Report captures six months in the life of the COVID-19 pandemic in Toronto. It was modelled, in part, after the biennial Toronto's Vital Signs Report, Toronto's "report card" on quality of life in the city. While Vital Signs is a roundup of two years of data and trends, this companion report is a snapshot of life in Toronto during this uniquely challenging period of time from mid-March to mid-October 2020. We hope it will spur action from funders, policymakers, community organizations, and residents, too. We also hope that the next full Toronto's Vital Signs Report, to be released in October 2021, will capture a city in full recovery, with community-driven solutions at the forefront.

As with the 2019 Toronto's *Vital Signs Report*, we applied an equity lens to the data collection and the analysis of the findings. This meant focusing on available data that is disaggregated by factors such as income, race, gender, and geography. Where such data was unavailable for the city of Toronto, we had to rely on available broad-based national data.

Due to an absence of data on the Toronto nonprofit community, Toronto Foundation conducted a first-time survey of nonprofits in July 2020: The Toronto Nonprofit Survey. The findings are interspersed throughout this report and, in particular, can be found in the chapter on Civic Engagement and Belonging. The 10–15-minute survey was in the field from July 29 to August 24 and the findings are based on 233 completed responses and 286 partial

responses from organizations large and small with significant operations in Toronto and working across sectors. These new findings allow for an empirical look at the impact of COVID-19 on some of the city's most important pandemic partners. More detailed findings from this dataset will be released in the near future.

Also new to the Toronto's *Vital Signs* series of reports is a first-time narrative research component. To best understand the inequitable impacts of COVID-19, we identified and interviewed 40+ primarily Black and Indigenous leaders to help analyze and interpret the data, bringing both their professional context as nonprofit organizers and administrators, and their lived experience to the task.

Every effort was made to include the most recent available data in producing this report. Updates were included up to the middle of October 2020. Unfortunately, publication deadlines prevented us from including the findings from the Toronto Office of Recovery and Rebuild's COVID-19: Impacts and Opportunities report and its data from the public consultation process. Any pandemic-related response will benefit from a thorough review of this report and its comprehensive recommendations.

Unlike the City of Toronto report, this report does not attempt to capture the full picture of the public health crisis in Toronto. We chose instead to focus on the knock-on effects of COVID-19 on the most vulnerable residents in the city and the community-based organizations that serve them. We hope this research will support the planning and advocacy efforts of community organizations working across issues and sectors. Both private and public

funders and policymakers can use this report to guide charitable and other investments for an equitable recovery.

Though we know Indigenous Torontonians have been disproportionately impacted by COVID-19, it was particularly challenging to gather current, real-time Indigenous data. There are a number of systemic barriers to Indigenous data collection, including "the lack of culturally-based, Indigenousled and specific measures and [...] information systems that prevent and exclude Indigenous people from governing, managing, and leading their own research and data processes," as described in Well Living House's Our Health Counts study. This report attempts to compensate for these gaps by including anecdotal input from Indigenous social services agencies, specifically several members of the Toronto Aboriginal Support Services Council, as well as Anishnawbe Health Toronto.



The end of CERB is affecting people who are not getting the money. So, that is the second wave of not only COVID-19, but also the second wave of poverty we're going to face in the next little while. And it's people from all walks of life — people whom we haven't seen in the past.

Suman Roy

Scarborough Food Security Initiative

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As of early November 2020, COVID-19 has directly led to 1,400 deaths and counting in this city. Necessary mitigating efforts to stem the spread of the virus have in turn affected the health and wellness of even more city residents. In this context, inequities in health outcomes have shone through as pre-existing concerns have been exacerbated throughout the pandemic. Rising food insecurity and declining mental health are two such factors. And the fact that COVID-19 disproportionately affects low-income racialized residents is impossible to ignore. As the crisis has unfolded, health and wellbeing supports have been strained and have exposed the gaps in services for the most vulnerable among us.

With so much stress on the health-care system and thousands of residents disproportionately impacted, how will we increase community-based supports to aid an equitable recovery? Can we commit to investing in preventative measures, too, for the wellbeing of all residents?

KEY INSIGHTS

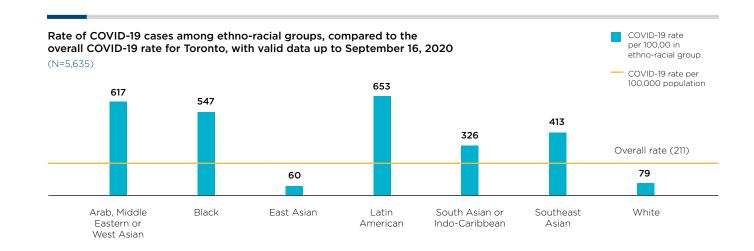
- People earning less than \$30,000 annually were
 5.3 times more likely to be affected by COVID-19 than those with annual incomes above \$150,000.
- While COVID-19 rates were similar across neighbourhoods at the end of March 2020, by the end of May 2020, the most racialized parts of the city had 10 times more cases than the least racialized parts of the city.
- Experts called out the severity of food insecurity pre-COVID-19, and there is now widespread concern that supporting organizations do not have the money to sustain operations, let alone meet the needs of a second wave.
- COVID-19 has exacerbated mental health challenges and exposed the need for system overhauls.

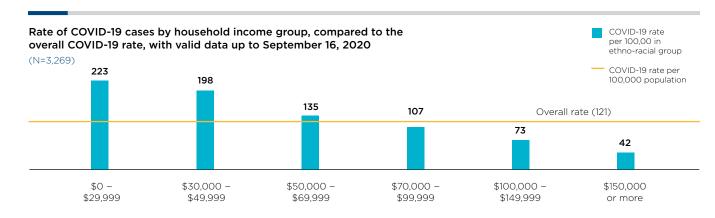
COVID-19 infections are devastating for some, while others have been largely spared

As of November 7, 2020, Toronto recorded more than 29,700 identified COVID-19 cases and over 1,400 deaths. Most of those who died were 70-plus years of age, with the majority over 80.1 For seniors, the ripple effects are widespread due to the prolonged social isolation that is likely to continue into the foreseeable future.

But age is not the only area where we see the differential impacts of COVID-19.

Race and income are inextricably linked in Toronto, and this is apparent in health outcomes and has become particularly acute during the pandemic. In data up to September 16, 2020, households making less than \$30,000 annually were 5.3 times more likely to be affected by COVID-19 than those with annual incomes above \$150,000. As of September 16, Black, Latin American, and Arab, Middle Eastern or West Asians had rates of COVID-19 infection that were at least seven times higher than white residents.

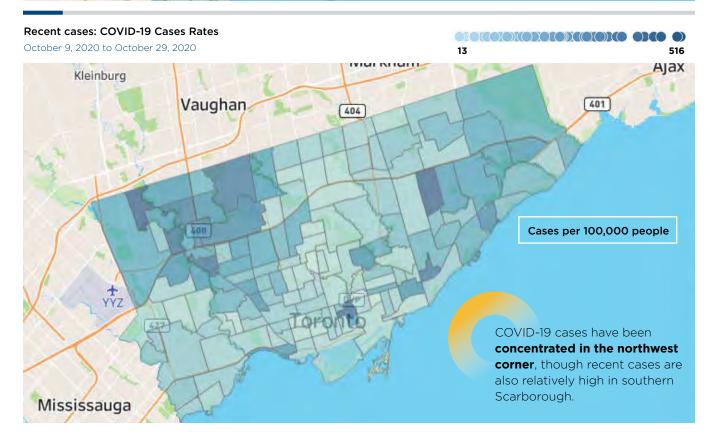




Source: Toronto Public Health²

Note: Toronto Public Health updates these numbers regularly, and full method details are available online.

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Source: Toronto Public Health.3

Note: Toronto Public Health updates these numbers regularly, and full method details are available online.

While COVID-19 rates were similar across neighbourhoods at the end of March 2020, by the end of May 2020, the most racialized parts of the city had 10 times more cases than the least racialized parts of the city. The northwest corner of Toronto has had the highest rates of infection, though recent cases have been concentrated in southern Scarborough as well.

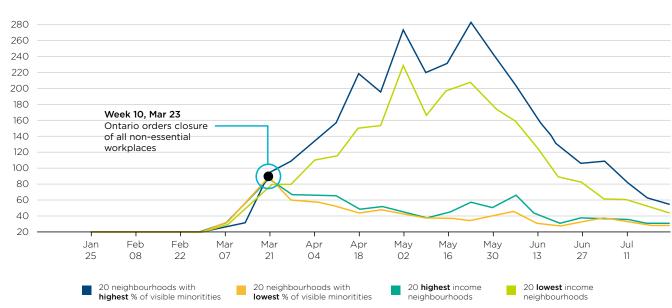
01. HEALTH AND WELLNESS

Given these challenges, the Alliance for Healthier Communities and the Indigenous Primary Health Care Council recently recommended improvements to Ontario's COVID-19 testing strategy, with a focus on scaling up access to community-based testing. This includes prioritizing community-driven testing, funding existing pilot projects and mobile testing, funding Indigenous-led health organizations, and expanding these working models to more communities.⁴

Those with higher income generally had the luxury of working at home, hiring others to do their grocery shopping, and — when necessary — travelling via private vehicles that kept them from risk of exposure. Those with lower incomes, many of whom are racialized and qualified as essential workers, were often unable to self-isolate and were required to work onsite and in close proximity to others.

Weekly new sporadic COVID-19 cases, by neighbourhood characteristics

2020, City of Toronto



Source: Toronto Star. Lockdown Worked for the Rich, but Not for the Poor. The Untold Story of How COVID-19 Spread across Toronto, in 7 Graphics. 5

Note: The 20 neighbourhoods with the highest and lowest percentage of residents in low-income households, using census LIM-AT measure.

After non-essential workplaces were shut down, the neighbourhoods with workers earning the highest income and those with the highest number of white residents immediately saw declines in the number of new COVID-19 cases. The exact opposite occurred for low-income workers and highly racialized neighbourhoods.

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The pandemic has reinforced existing inequities in health care

The inequities caused by COVID-19 were no surprise to health sector leaders. Liben Gebremikael, executive director of TAIBU Community Health Centre, sheds light on the realities: "For racialized groups, those in the Black community, and for new immigrants, it's very important to note that before COVID-19, these were areas where there were a lot of disparities, challenges, and adverse outcomes. Whether it's mental health, whether it is physical health and chronic disease, whether it's social networks, education ... We were already at the bottom of the ladder."

"Nobody who is not white and wealthy wants to go back to the way things were before, because a lot of the issues that we're talking about in COVID pre-existed for a lot of communities," adds Mohini Datta-Ray, executive director of North York Women's Shelter.

Datta-Ray comments further on the systemic issues that have perpetuated a status quo that holds many back: "When there's one person yelling for justice, it's really easy to suppress them, it's very easy to dismiss them, to gaslight them about their own experience."

However, there is also hope for change.

"But when you have this collective movement of organizations, of individuals, of activists, of artists

coming together and pushing for change, I think we have an opportunity here. What white folks decide to do with that opportunity, we can't really control. What I like is that there are less places to run and hide from that racism ... And there's a desire to shift, there's a desire to understand, so I'm hopeful around that," offers Datta-Ray.

The pandemic has created new opportunities and innovations, too. Anishnawbe Health Toronto developed a mobile health unit to bring supports directly to Indigenous people around the city who need it, with the goal of helping many get off the streets. According to Harvey Manning, director of programs and services at Anishnawbe Health Toronto: "There are large pockets of Indigenous people living in Scarborough and elsewhere. For some of the mothers to come downtown to see us with kids, that's half a day. It's not affordable or practical. Having a mobile service makes sense. We can offer more primary care that way."6 The mobile health unit also provides COVID-19 testing and demand for tests is huge and growing, especially from shelters. The unit is staffed by a nurse practitioner, a social worker, and a housing worker who provide a broad array of supports. But as Manning explains, the funding for the unit runs out at the end of the year, and more funding will be needed to keep initiatives like this going for the long term.



Nobody who is not white and wealthy wants to go back to the way things were before, because a lot of the issues that we're talking about in COVID pre-existed for a lot of communities.

Mohini Datta-Ray

Executive Director of North York Women's Shelter

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Food insecurity is up dramatically

Dozens of leaders of nonprofits and grassroots organizations were interviewed during the development of this report — and nearly every person raised concerns regarding food security. It was the most common issue area for requests and grants allocated for the first round of Toronto Foundation's Emergency Community Support Fund grants this past summer. Recent data supports this cause for concern, as the severity of food insecurity has deepened from already intolerable levels pre-pandemic.

In May 2020, Statistics Canada polled Canadians about their level of food insecurity during the previous 30 days and found that 14.6% were food insecure⁷, a 39% increase from 2017–18, the last year for which we have data. The pollsters considered the numbers to be underestimated, with the sample not reflecting many of the most vulnerable populations.

The Daily Bread Food Bank surveyed food bank users and found similar results. People reported not eating regularly at a much higher rate than prepandemic. The number of respondents who were "moderately or severely stressed or anxious nearly every day about having enough food tripled during COVID-19." Daily Bread also noted that "about one in four respondents reported not eating for an entire day, because they did not have enough money for food."

Prior to the pandemic, only 10% of white households reported food insecurity, compared to 28% of Black households. The data is even more stark for children, with 12.4% of white children living in food-insecure households, compared to more than one in three Black children (36.6%). While little data is available about how food insecurity was affected by the pandemic, the fact that racialized people were reporting the most difficulty meeting their financial obligations (see page 30) suggests that this may have been exacerbated further.

A total of 40% of Toronto's food bank programs were shuttered during the onset of pandemic-related closures due to their inability to provide services under COVID-19 restrictions¹⁰ — right when foodinsecure individuals and households needed them the most. Since COVID-19 began, the Daily Bread Food Bank saw a 25% increase in its daily food bank usage and a 200% increase in new users. That amounts to 10,000 new people in need of food. By June 2020, the number of food banks it worked with had increased.¹¹

Data from 211 Ontario — a central resource that refers people to social services — on the number of people calling in for emergency food support in Toronto, found increased inquiries in the spring and decreases in the summer, though there were almost twice as many people trying to be connected to food in each month through the summer than there were in February 2020.¹²

It is possible the rate of new inquiries stabilized in July and August due to government financial supports, as well as the loosening of restrictions that allowed more people to get food and return to work.

Important to note is that the rate of food bank usage has never been able to fully capture the number of people going hungry. About one in five of the most severely food insecure people used a food bank before the pandemic.¹³ And with the closure of many food banks and other food services, it is almost certain that more people are falling through the cracks. Second Harvest, which supplies many food banks in the city, reports that its volume of organizations served went down during the pandemic, with about 120 organizations closing their operations and only about 30 reopening through August.¹⁴

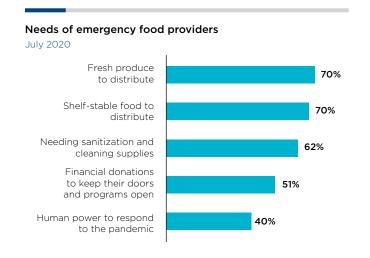
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Food organizations are facing massive challenges and declining revenues

Paul Taylor, executive director of FoodShare Toronto, describes how its fundraising revenues have declined and its capacity to fill the gap in revenues, too: "Social enterprise revenue has disappeared completely," he says, while demand for services has gone up. He explains further that much of the funding support they've received is earmarked for emergency response, which, while essential, diverts funding away from ongoing initiatives focused on broader food systems.

Other organizations are also repurposing funds to ensure that people do not go hungry. Tesfai Mengesha, executive director of operations of Success Beyond Limits, explains how its education program was reorganized to support hungry students. "We literally reprioritized our whole budget for the summer. We would provide breakfast and lunch every day for students; we would provide transportation from the community and back home."

The challenges of food organizations did not start with COVID-19, but it has underlined the need for systemic responses, explains Taylor. "These wicked problems, like poverty and food insecurity and homelessness, have long been offloaded or dumped on to charitable organizations that don't have the capacity to solve them. And now we're feeling even more strained and feel like the funding has been pretty token support. And the bulk of it has been around emergency relief, not the stabilization of the sector."



Source: Second Harvest. Survey of 249 food-providing organizations mostly operating in the City of Toronto primarily conducted over July 2020.



Emergency food and food delivery organizations need more resources, especially with preparing for a second wave

Second Harvest surveyed more than 200 organizations in the city in July 2020 focused on food provision and found that most need more fresh produce to distribute (70%), shelf-stable food (67%), sanitizing supplies (62%), and financial donations to keep their doors open.¹⁵

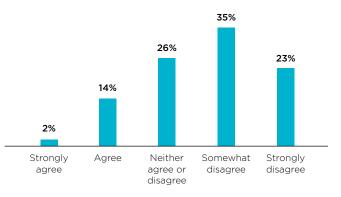
In Toronto Foundation's 2020 Toronto Nonprofit Survey, multi-service food security organizations expressed concerns about a second wave, and 58% of organizations do not believe they have enough resources to cope. Only 16% felt that they had adequate resources.

Taylor also cites lack of leadership diversity as a major issue. "I think these organizations doing work around food security continue to be predominantly white-led, which is problematic, because [it reflects attitudes of] white universalism. We have solutions that are proposed by white leaders to address poverty and food security, while the challenges are being faced by BIPOC [Black Indigenous and People of Colour] folks." In many of this report's interviews, this was a commonly repeated theme by BIPOC leaders in the nonprofit sector and is explored further on page 63.

Taylor feels that the pandemic is an opportunity for low-income communities to "gain control over their food systems." He describes the opportunity to support community leaders to learn how to access, grow, and distribute fresh produce, for example. "This is very different than, middle-class white folks in one neighbourhood coming into a low-income community and distributing leftover food or corporate waste to low-income people. We're actually building food infrastructure, so it is very scalable."

Percentage of food and medicine organizations that felt they had adequate financial resources to respond effectively to another wave of COVID-19 and shutdowns

Organizations operating in Toronto, July/August 2020



Source: 2020 Toronto Nonprofit Survey conducted by Toronto Foundation. For full details, see Appendix.

Experience has shown that emergency support is not a solution to poverty. Long-term food bank usage in Toronto has been increasing for decades. During the Great Recession of 2008–09 and its aftermath, the levels of food bank usage increased and never came down. It is likely we will see the pattern repeat itself. The role of income supports in aiding recovery is covered further on page 29 and on page 56.

In an interview in early October 2020, Suman Roy, chair of the board of directors at the Scarborough Food Security Initiative, explains that "in the last couple weeks, [the number of households we are serving] started creeping up again, I think, because the end of CERB is affecting people who are not getting the money. So, that is the second wave of not only COVID-19, but also the second wave of poverty we're going to face in the next little while. And it's people from all stages, not only just one profession; it's from all walks of life. Now we see people coming to food banks [once CERB ended] whom we haven't seen in the past."

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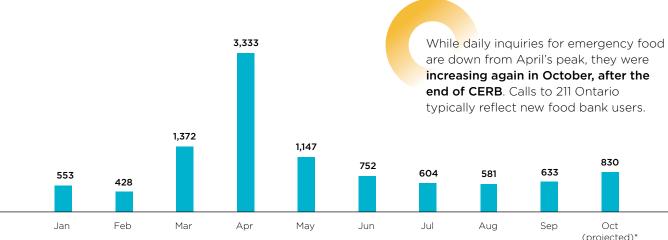
01. HEALTH AND WELLNESS

As the second wave of new food bank users arrives. Roy is worried about new challenges. In the first stages of lockdown, they had a huge volunteer force of hundreds who were not working, who were able to help deliver food to thousands of households each month. "Now, many of them have returned to work and are unable to help," Roy explains. This will be a growing problem throughout the winter if numbers in need continue to rise throughout that time. Through early to mid-October, calls to referral agent 211 Ontario around emergency food and meals in Toronto were about 40% higher than they were in August (see chart).

For Roy, funding challenges are becoming increasingly complicated, especially as a grassroots organization without dedicated funding. He says of a letter he is writing to local government: "If you don't give us the support and infrastructure, one option is shut the program and let the 6,000 people who we are feeding every week go without food. The other option is [supporting us] to continue serving them, because we don't want to see hungry people."

Emergency food calls to 211 Ontario

City of Toronto, 2020



Source: 211 Ontario¹⁶

Note: *Data for October was projected using data for the first 17 days of October only, when this chart was last refreshed. All analysis by author. This chart shows all calls related to emergency food, meals and food outlets; it does not represent the entirety of calls that were categorized as relating to Food/Meals.

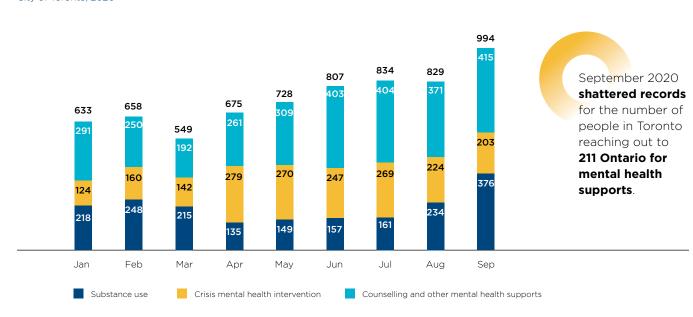
Mental health issues are an expanding crisis in need of a rethink

Throughout the summer, the volume of Toronto calls to 211 Ontario for mental health were at staggeringly high levels.¹⁷ Total calls about substance abuse supports, crisis intervention, and counselling were 50% higher in September 2020 than in February 2020. Crisis calls spiked dramatically early in the pandemic but have declined slightly though are still much higher than normal. Calls regarding substance abuse and counselling continue to climb. Huge call volume increases to the Assaulted Women's Helpline were also noted early in the pandemic, explored further on page 37.

Toronto Public Health noted that the monthly number of suspected opioid overdoses was 62% higher from April to August 2020 than the monthly average for the three years previous.¹⁸ From March 2017 to February 2020, an average of 13 people were dying from opioid overdoses per month in the city, while the average from April to August 2020 was 21.

Number of calls by month to 211 Ontario related to mental health

City of Toronto, 2020



Source: Data from 211 Ontario.19

Note: Unlike the previous chart using data from 211, this data is monthly. The other was shown on a daily basis to show the trend from September.

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01. HEALTH AND WELLNESS 01. HEALTH AND WELLNESS

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40% of respondents indicated they were personally experiencing symptoms of physical and mental burn out



"Wealthy white people have been able to escape the city to spend time at their cottages and regain their mental health. Poorer people, often BIPOC, have not had this space to escape to, to decompress, get outside and recover mentally and emotionally."

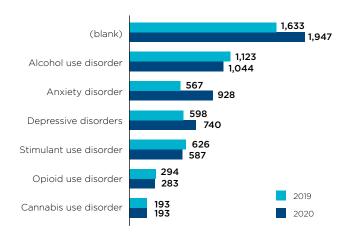
"Mental health is an ongoing issue for all staff and better resources to deal with these stresses would be helpful."

"We need money for isolated people under the poverty line who need materials, hobbies, and supplies to keep their hands busy and distract them." Dr. Kwame McKenzie, CEO of the Wellesley Institute, outlines how COVID-19 is amplifying pre-existing issues.²⁰ "We were already in the middle of a mental health epidemic, and now things are worse," says Dr. McKenzie. Here, he outlines four mental health impacts:

- Fear of COVID-19 itself, which has led to increased anxiety.
- Social distancing has led to more family arguments, loneliness, depression, and substance misuse.
- Many people with mental health problems have been unable to access face-to-face services.
- Widespread financial insecurity and unemployment, which are linked to increased rates of depression, anxiety and suicide.

ConnexOntario provides free, 24-7, and confidential health services information for people experiencing problems with alcohol and drugs, mental illness, or gambling. Its call logs show the biggest increases were related to anxiety disorders, which were up by 64%, and depressive disorders, which were up by 24%.

Number of calls to ConnexOntario related to mental health City of Toronto, April to August 2020 versus 2019



Source: Data provided by ConnexOntario

Note: Not all cases have presenting issues in ConnexOntario data. Those without a designated presenting issue are labelled "blank" in the chart above.

Going forward, the need for more investment in mental health and its related challenges is urgent. Cheryl Prescod, executive director of Black Creek Community Health Centre, worries about what the near future will bring. "The summer has given everyone a bit of a breather. The weather was nice, and people were able to get out. But as the weather starts to get cold again, folks will be forced indoors, and the long-term mental health impacts will continue to be compounded, rather than be eased." Organizations like hers are already strained, and the need is only going to increase.

amanuel melles, executive director of the Network for the Advancement of Black Communities, believes that while short-term funding is important, funding for longer-term solutions is the most critical thing to get out of the pandemic. "Mental health and other problems are systemic challenges. That's why I intentionally use the phrase 'generational challenge' when I talk about scope. They cannot be resolved in timelines of one to three years by throwing money at projects ... The underlying problems remain the same and are getting worse. All the services and programs are addressing the tip of the iceberg."

The mental health crises outlined above intersect with many other issues discussed throughout the report. They contribute to growing mental health issues specifically among students, explored further in the chapter titled "Learning" on page 106. Stress from confinement and challenging financial environments has also been associated with growing domestic violence in the city, explored further in the "Safety" chapter on page 36. The connections between mental health and policing is discussed on page 40. Poor mental health also impacts the ability of many to keep and secure employment and can also increase the risk of evictions, which is a growing concern across the city (explored further on page 72).

TAKEAWAYS

- The mental health ramifications of the pandemic may be just as substantial as the physical, if not more so, and organizations working in these areas need support.
- The pandemic requires sacrifices from everyone, and as the winter comes, it will become more important than ever to physically distance, wear masks, avoid large gatherings, and sanitize regularly.
- Food security organizations have seen huge increases in demand, and many are not properly resourced to cope with a second wave.
- Organizations supporting health and wellbeing will face prolonged and deepened challenges as future waves of the pandemic strike, and they will need unrestricted funding to weather the unpredictable growth in demand.

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About 30% of people in Toronto are struggling to pay rent, mortgage, food, utilities, and other essentials. Low-wage workers have beared the brunt of the pandemic, losing far more hours than higher wage workers. Decades of growing inequality in Toronto have left low-income, younger, and racialized residents with low savings and high debt, much of which grew after the last recession, and challenges have only intensified.

Income inequality is worsening, and the growing chasm is creating a two-tiered city. What is the role of local service providers here and how can a human rights approach reverse the trend?

KEY INSIGHTS

- Higher wage workers have increased their hours worked in Toronto, while lower wage workers have seen their hours decline substantially, with the drop greater in Toronto than the rest of the country.
- Racialized Canadians, younger Canadians, and those with disabilities are struggling the most with making ends meet.
- Difficulty paying bills is associated with anxiety disorders, poor mental health, food insecurity, and worries about violence in the home.
- Increasingly, nonprofits recognize the importance of their role in advocating for more equitable outcomes in the fallout from the pandemic.

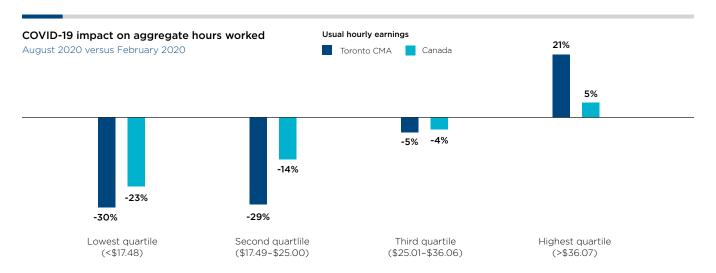
Toronto workers are particularly hard hit

From the launch of the Canada Emergency Response Benefit (CERB) in early April 2020 to shortly before its conclusion at the end of September 2020, more than 8.83 million Canadians unable to work during the pandemic have received this weekly payment of \$500.21 As of September 20, 2020, the government has spent almost \$79 billion on this program, which has kept many afloat in turbulent times. By the end of August and into early September, there were still about four million receiving benefits. With the program concluding, it is estimated that about 776,000 of those will be cut off from government support, including 141,000 in the Toronto CMA.²² Philip Akin, recently retired artistic director of Obsidian Theatre, explains the significance of CERB for many artists: "Getting the CERB is the most financially secure they've ever felt," he says. This is a sentiment echoed by several interviewees for this report. For some Canadians, surviving on \$2,000 a month was a hardship, while for others it brought a rare sense of (short-lived) security.

CERB has significantly benefited Canadians. Among those who lost their job or hours at their job, 37% said government support was best described as "vital, a total lifeline" while an additional 36% said it helped a lot.²³

In the Toronto CMA, those in the bottom 25% of hourly earners (making less than \$17.48 per hour) have seen their total work hours reduced by 30% relative to February 2020, seasonally adjusted. Those in the top 25% (making more than \$36.07 per hour) have seen their total work hours increased by 21%.

When compared nationally, low-wage workers in Toronto saw their hours decrease more than the rest of the country (30% versus 23% for those in the lowest quartile), and similar decreases were seen for the second lowest quartile (those making between \$17.49 and \$25 per hour), who saw their total hours worked decrease by 29% in Toronto, and 14% in the rest of the country. While the period of April to September showed ongoing improvement for low-income residents, data from the September Labour Force Survey shows that progress for low-income groups nationally had mostly stalled by September.²⁴



Source: Labour Force Survey Public Use Microdata Files.

Note: Hours are actual hours on the main job. Values are the difference relative to February 2020, minus the equivalent change in 2018, per method outlined by @Mikaskuterud. Calculations by Steven Ayer.

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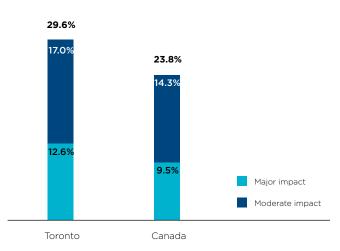
02. INCOME AND WEALTH

The reason for this disparity is not yet fully clear but is likely due to the reliance on the service sector (food and accommodation, service, retail, arts, culture, and recreation) in Toronto. The disparate labour market outcomes for Toronto are explored further on page 48 in, the "Work" section of the report. In that chapter, we explore how our reliance on precarious work made the city even more vulnerable to the impacts of the pandemic.

In the middle of the summer. Statistics Canada conducted a crowdsourcing survey asking Canadians about their ability to pay their essential bills. Unsurprisingly, given the trends already covered, more people in Toronto were struggling to pay their essentials than in the rest of the country (29.6% in Toronto, versus 23.8% in Canada overall). These results are likely due to the different labour market conditions, but they are also exacerbated by higher costs of living in Toronto than in the rest of the country, particularly the cost of housing (explored further on page 68).

The impact of COVID-19 on people's ability to meet financial obligations or essential needs

April 24 to May 11, 2020



Source: Statistics Canada Crowdsourcing Survey on Mental Health Public Use Microdata File. Conducted April 24 to May 11,

Note: These data files do not specify data for Toronto, but they do specify province and community size and the data in the chart above was derived from those variables. All analysis by author. These data points are not collected using random sampling and should be interpreted with caution.

Throughout this report, we talk about the impact of the pandemic on issues like domestic violence (see page 37), food insecurity (see page 21), mental health and severe anxiety disorders (see page 25), and threat of evictions (see page 72). It is important to note that the most financially affected, who were already typically marginalized workers, are bearing the brunt of all of these consequences.

Racialized Canadians, younger Canadians, and those with disabilities are the most severely affected.

Only 23% of white Canadians indicated that the pandemic had a strong or moderate impact on their ability to meet their financial obligations or essential needs. This compares to 44% of Arab Canadians. 43% of Filipino Canadians, 42% of Southeast Asian Canadians, and 39% of Black Canadians.

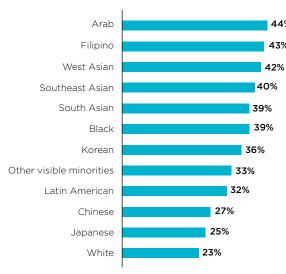
Youth have seen the greatest negative impact on unemployment, and racialized youth are having even more difficult times finding employment (see page 48), contributing to financial difficulties for racialized Canadians.

For those with disabilities, the impact has also been severe. Overall, 61% of respondents aged 15 to 64 years with long-term conditions or disabilities reported at least a moderate impact of COVID-19 on at least one type of financial obligation or essential need.²⁵ Participants with multiple conditions were more likely to report an impact, as were those with children in the household. The disproportionate impact of the pandemic on those with disabilities also translates to a disproportionate impact on seniors (38% of those aged 65 and older had one or more disabilities) and women (24% of women had at least one disability, versus 20% of men), who have higher rates of disabilities in Canada.²⁶

Percentage reporting a strong or moderate impact of COVID-19 on their ability to meet financial obligations or essential needs, by ethnicity

02. INCOME AND WEALTH

May 26 to June 8, 2020



Source: Statistics Canada. Economic Impact of COVID-19 among Visible Minority Groups²⁷

Racialized Canadians experienced much larger impacts of the pandemic.

"Social assistance programs were not liveable before the pandemic, during the pandemic, and after the pandemic," says Sarah Jama, co-founder of the Disability Justice Network of Ontario. She references the \$1,169 that people receive on the Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP) and the \$733 received on Ontario Works, both significantly lower than CERB's (temporary) \$2,000 monthly stipend. According to a recent report by the Daily Bread Food Bank, those on ODSP or Ontario Works are classified as living in "deep poverty," as their incomes are 75% below the poverty line.²⁸

For Jama, the government's response to COVID-19 underlines a pre-existing disregard for the needs of people with disabilities. "People with disabilities are being left out and left behind consistently [and] ... these food insecurity problems [for those on social assistance] existed before the pandemic. The housing issues existed before the pandemic. Most of the people in the homeless encampments have some sort of mental health or disability ... I see people with disabilities being left out because of an inability to fit into the idea of what it means to be of value in our society."

TORONTO NONPROFIT SURVEY FINDINGS

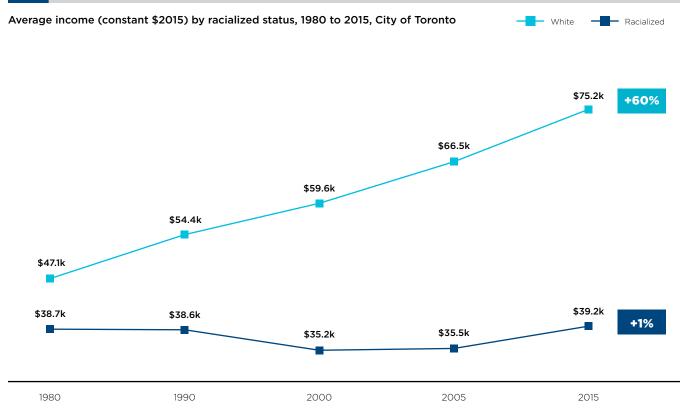
Only 14% of organizations agreed that their funders had made new long-term commitments after shutdowns had begun



"While more services for specific groups who have experienced systemic racism or other forms of discrimination will be important, what is imperative is that we disrupt systems that privilege white people with money and education. It's not about the "haves" helping the "have nots" more...systemic problems require systemic solutions. "

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Source: United Way Greater Toronto: Rebalancing the Opportunity Equation.

Note: Constant \$2015 refers to the fact that all dollars are adjusted for inflation and all figures in the chart are shown in 2015 dollars.

The pandemic has exacerbated decades of growing inequality in Toronto

The financial difficulties of COVID-19 have hit racialized people in Toronto so hard because of income dynamics that have been emerging over recent decades. The average income among racialized people in Toronto has seen no income growth. As costs have risen, this has left many racialized people in a particularly vulnerable position.

For example, on average, for white residents, income gains in this city have been massive. According to a report by the United Way of Greater Toronto,

from 1980 to 2015, the average inflation-adjusted income for those who are white in the city of Toronto increased by 60%, while the average income for racialized individuals increased by only 1%.²⁹ Similarly, poverty rates in the city for racialized residents were well above average, with many children living in households with the highest rates of poverty.

Almost identical patterns of income stagnation were identified for young people and new immigrants.

At the same time as income has been stagnant for many, the average price of a new home has more than doubled since 2008,³⁰ while the cost of rent for a new unit has also increased significantly (discussed further on page 68). For people whose average incomes have not progressed, this signals a

huge step backwards. The costs of childcare, tuition, and transportation have also all been rising faster than inflation, which disproportionately impacts young people, racialized people, and newcomers. These growing costs and lack of income growth are discussed at length in the "Income and Wealth" chapter of the 2019/20 *Vital Signs Report*.

A lack of savings means no safety net for low-income Canadians

The vulnerable financial position of Toronto residents is also evidenced by the amount of debt they have incurred. The bottom 20% of Toronto households in terms of after-tax income had debt that was 420% of their household income. For those in the top 20%, debt levels were 162% of their household income. Mortgages account for much of the debt for all income categories.

Lack of income growth means that residents in the bottom 20% have extraordinarily little savings to tap into, when faced with income or job losses.³² The median wealth of the bottom 20% was only \$9,000, compared to almost \$1.2 million among the 20% richest households.

Karlene Ruddock, a grassroots leader, economic justice advocate and author of *The Impact of COVID on Lower-Income Populations* (The Stop Community Food Centre), is worried that with the end to eviction moratoriums, people will worry about having to resort to payday loans to make rent. And with the exorbitant interest rates, borrowers will always be behind. "Once rent comes due again, you have to borrow again to make up for the shortage. You're just stuck in that cycle, and it just sucks you dry." Google trends data shows that searches for payday loans cratered during the period when mortgages were deferred and evictions were banned increased in Ontario shortly after eviction moratoriums were lifted (evictions are discussed further on page 72).

The economic outlook is uncertain in Toronto

It is unclear how many people will be unable to meet their financial obligations in the coming months. Mortgage and credit card deferrals are starting to expire, evictions are restarting, and tenants are making agreements with landlords to make up missed rent payments, even as they have no income or savings on which to draw.

With CERB ending at the beginning of October, the government has announced further substantial support for many.³³ According to analysis by the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, in Toronto, 463,000 will receive the same support once CERB ends; 128,000 will be better off receiving a full employment insurance (EI) payment; 36,000 will be worse off than under CERB but receiving some government support; and 141,000 will be worse off and receiving nothing. A very small portion (less than 10%) of those worse off will be in that situation because they are now making too much money to access the benefit, but the majority will be receiving less support.

Even under CERB, the most generous income support program in our country's history, we saw huge increases in food insecurity (see <u>page 21</u>), unprecedented rates of people unable to pay rent or mortgages, and profound financial difficulties.

As government income supports go down, it is almost certain that more people will go hungry and will be unable to pay their rent in full. The big unknown in the immediate term is, how the job market will perform into the fall and winter: Will we continue to see gradual improvements in unemployment, or will future COVID-19 shutdowns or losses of seasonal jobs push the unemployment rate even higher? For nonprofits, the concern is palpable. They do not have the resources to take on more after what has been the worst financial period of their histories (see page 59).

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02. INCOME AND WEALTH 02. INCOME AND WEALTH

TORONTO NONPROFIT SURVEY FINDINGS



"COVID re-exposed and in some cases deepened existing inequalities. This is especially the case when it came to basic needs for food, housing, and technology to access remote services — the need for this kind of support was overwhelming. But it also revealed how quickly resources could be marshalled to address these core needs as hotelling, food programs, and new emergency funding opportunities opened up in a matter of weeks. I hope that the impact of COVID is the continuation of these rapid-response programs and services that housed and fed people so effectively."

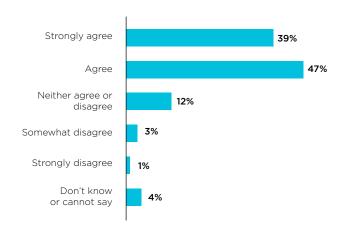
"COVID-19 has perpetuated the dominance of well-funded organizations. Many of the "usual suspects" who receive more stable and consistent government funding also received the lion's share of emergency resources, when the most responsive engagement during the first 10 weeks of the pandemic lockdown came from grassroots groups."

Advocacy for systems change is a key role for nonprofits

Many interviewees suggested that while CERB was successful, there's a clear need for more income supports for the most vulnerable. Garima Talwar Kapoor, director of policy and research at Maytree, says that our "current social infrastructure was created for an economy that no longer exists."

Talwar Kapoor feels that CERB was "important in stabilizing the economy and ensuring that people stay at home to reduce the transmission of COVID, but it was a protection of those with recent labour market attachment. Those who are lower-income and on social assistance received very few federal supports."

Nonprofits will need to dedicate more resources to advocacy to be able to address the long-term consequences of the pandemic



Source: 2020 "Toronto Nonprofit Survey" conducted by Toronto Foundation. For full details, see Appendix.

In a piece, she wrote for Maytree on "five good ideas for income supports in a post-CERB Canada,"³⁴ she argues that the government needs to articulate human rights' principles around social security.

Among other measures, she suggests fundamental reform of El, developing and implementing a refundable working-age tax credit for low-income workers, and increasing federal transfers to the provinces to allow for more financial support for those in the deepest levels of poverty. In an interview, Talwar Kapoor said a priority is "an income floor from the federal government for social assistance." She explains that as it stands, each province "can basically do whatever it wants" and this can lead to unequal outcomes across the country.

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CERB was important in stabilizing the economy and ensuring that people stay at home to reduce the transmission of COVID, but it was a protection of those with recent labour market attachment. Those who are lower-income and who are on social assistance received much fewer federal supports.

Garima Talwar Kapoor

Director of Policy and Research, Maytree

Jama, of the Disability Justice Network of Ontario, suggests that funders should focus on organizations working for systems change. "Canada is stuck in the '90s," she says, when it comes to fully welcoming people with disabilities into society. "Look for groups that are being a bit political, in terms of organizing and pushing against the norm, because I think those are the groups that are going to be the ones to continue to create change — especially if they are led by disabled people themselves," Jama explains. As part of its throne speech, the federal government announced plans to create a new Canadian disability benefit, modelled after the guaranteed income supplement for seniors.35 The government has also announced that as CERB ends, changes to EI will continue to support many Canadians

TAKEAWAYS

- The economic ramifications of the pandemic are likely to far outlive the pandemic itself.
- Racialized people were hardest hit, exacerbating prior lack of income growth and increasing indebtedness in Toronto over recent decades.
- With long-term impacts on poverty and deprivation, nonprofits believe they will need to invest more resources in research and policy advocacy to understand the implications, and they will need funders to support that work.
- Human and social service organizations
 will feel the ripple effects of the pandemic
 for some time. They will require flexible
 funding to help clients recover financially
 and emotionally and retrain for a postpandemic world.

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During the pandemic, many reported crimes have declined, as have rates of traffic fatalities. At the same time, under-reported crimes such as domestic assault have spiked. In this time of uncertainty and fear, levels of anxiety and anxiety disorders have peaked — a topic explored further in the "Health and Wellness" chapter. Safety and security have undeniably been altered in the face of this public health crisis. Both the perceptions thereof and the physical realities have been heightened and vary widely, too, based on gender, race, income, and other factors. In this context, the role of policing has come into focus and under criticism as has the over-representation of Black Canadians and Indigenous people in the incarceration system.

Not everyone feels safe in this city, and race, gender, and income are major factors that influence experience. What needs to change so that our most marginalized residents feel a sense and system of safety?

KEY INSIGHTS

- Domestic violence issues have skyrocketed, with people stuck in isolation with abusers.
- Amid the COVID-19 crisis we've seen unprecedented attention on anti-Black and anti-Indigenous police violence, with Black and Indigenous residents experiencing a disproportionate share of violence from police
- and having far lower confidence in the police than other groups surveyed.
- Discrimination and harassment against people of Asian ethnicity have risen sharply, both in-person and online, with Chinese Canadians reporting the most significant impact.

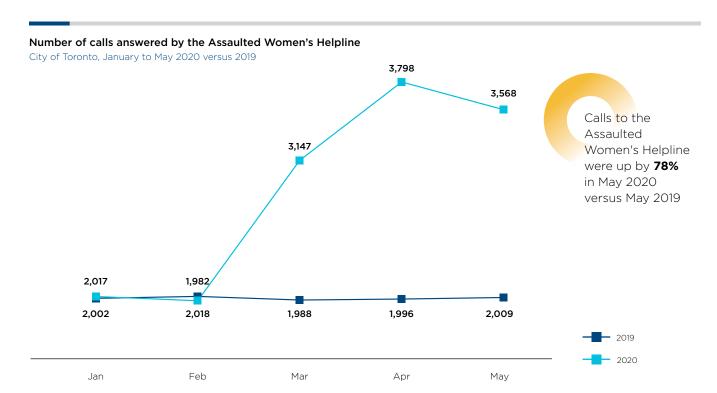
Calls to domestic violence hotlines are up significantly

While many crimes declined during the pandemic,³⁶ domestic violence may be an exception, with worrying data being reported by a number of sources. With lockdowns across the city, anxiety and stress escalated. For some stuck at home, often in small apartments, violence also increased. Across the globe, advocates have raised alarms as to the consequences of confinement on family violence.

From the beginning of the pandemic, the risks of domestic violence were high. An early Statistics Canada study in April 2020 found that one in three women reported a very high concern about family stress from confinement (33.4%), and one in 10 women reported very high concern about violence in the home during the pandemic (9.9%).³⁷ Men reported these concerns less frequently, but still raised serious concerns about both of these issues.

In March, when the city first went into lockdown, call volumes at the Assaulted Women's Helpline were already up by 50%. By April and May 2020, they were up by more than 75%, with almost 4,000 calls coming in monthly.

The makeup of callers also appears to have changed. In May 2019, racialized individuals made up 60% of calls to the hotline but rose to 73% in May 2020. In Toronto, like most other places, racialized individuals have disproportionately experienced many of the impacts of the pandemic, and these data figures suggest that they may likewise be experiencing an unequal share of the violence. Mohini Datta-Ray, executive director of North York Women's Shelter, noted that particularly for those who are forced to turn to violence against women's (VAW) shelters, most are women of colour, specifically, Black, brown, and Indigenous women.



Source: Data provided by Assaulted Women's Helpline

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"Isolation is an unfortunate common thread sometimes in our communities, for various reasons," says Pamela Hart, executive director of Native Women's Resource Centre of Toronto (NWRCT). "Now, all of that is impacted by the isolation we've had across the city [due to COVID-19]. As we've had to very quickly transform to adjust our programs and our services, it has weighed very heavily on me, the idea of the already very isolated portion of the community, those who are maybe living in hotels with individuals controlling them, or those who live in households that are unhealthy, or in relationships with abusers, do not have access to supports and resources." And, thus, NWRCT created an emergency hotline "so there are outlets for women, so they can speak about what they are experiencing or safely relocate if required." They also connect callers with traditional healers who can support those seeking support and offer that cultural connection from a distance.

Domestic violence and access to housing are of course linked. Even before COVID-19, violence was the leading cause of women's homelessness. More than eight in 10 women in shelter (83%) reported being there for reasons of abuse. The Canadian Women's Foundation asked women who had been in shelters what types of support they needed most. The majority -60% — indicated that they needed housing and support to set up their home, including first and last month's rent, access to affordable housing, and start-up support. The support of the start-up support.

Datta-Ray explains how accessing housing has become a risk factor for women, something that predated COVID but has only become more of a concern. "Women know that if they go into shelter and give up their housing, even if it's with an abusive partner, chances are, they're not going to be able to find housing again. So, they stay."

As far back as 2016, 73% of women seeking shelter at transition houses and shelters were turned away and referred elsewhere due to a lack of capacity. 40 As of March 14, 2020, just before the pandemic resulted in shutdowns, the women's shelter system in Toronto was operating at 98% capacity, 41 well above the target of 90%. By the end of summer, more than half of the shelter spaces that had been available in March were eliminated. The City went to great lengths to replace spots lost due to social distancing, but few net new places resulted. 42 The broader shelter system in Toronto is discussed on page 74.

The shortage of shelter spaces has dire consequences for women, especially as they set out to separate themselves from their abusers. A review of 311 domestic homicides in Ontario found that 67% of intimate partner homicide victims had an actual or pending separation from their partner.⁴³

Focus on police violence is high

In multiple days throughout the summer, thousands of Toronto residents attended protests against anti-Black and anti-Indigenous police brutality,⁴⁴ sparked by the May 25, 2020, killing of George Floyd in Minneapolis. With protests kicking off as early as late May and continuing throughout the summer, the movement is already considered one of the largest protest actions in American history. An estimated 15 to 20 million Americans participated in demonstrations in the United States alone, with more than 4,700 distinct protests.⁴⁵

A June poll by Mainstreet Research found that 62% of respondents believed Black Canadians were treated less fairly than white Canadians, and 66% thought the same for Indigenous peoples. 46 Slightly more than half of Canadians had similar perceptions of the justice system.

In Toronto, the protests have also drawn attention to pre-existing issues within the Toronto Police Service (TPS). The Human Rights Commission of Ontario undertook an investigation of complaints against the TPS and found that between 2013 and 2017:⁴⁷

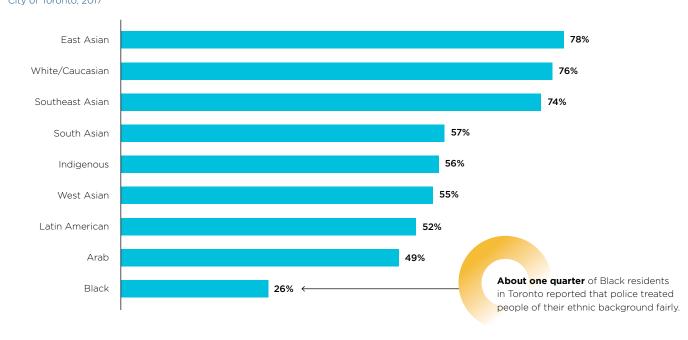
- Black residents were nearly 20 times more likely to be shot by the police than white residents.
- While comprising 8.8% of the population, Black residents represented a disproportionate share of use-of-force cases (28.8%), shootings (36%), deadly encounters (61.5%), and fatal shootings (70%).

 Despite making up 4.1% of Toronto's population, Black men were complainants in one-quarter of Special Investigations Unit cases alleging sexual assault by TPS officers.

For many, these issues are only reinforced as police continue to avoid accountability measures. Debbie Douglas, CEO of the Ontario Council of Agencies Serving Immigrants (OCASI), says that "the police racially profile individuals and yet continue to resist having to document the fact that they continue to stop folks who are racialized, and particularly Black".⁴⁸

Perceptions of police are strongly correlated with race

Percentage of people who agree that the Toronto Police treat people of their ethnic background fairly City of Toronto, 2017



Source: Perceptions of the Toronto Police and Impact of Rule Changes under Regulation 58/16: A Community Survey⁴⁹

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03. SAFETY

While most Toronto residents trust the police, selfidentified race is perhaps the strongest predictor of an individual's perception of the police. Multiple studies looking at perceptions of police in Toronto show substantial differences based on race. A 2017 survey of Toronto residents found that 71.5% who identified as white/Caucasian agreed police are honest, compared to only 41% that identified as Black.⁵⁰ The differences were even more stark regarding whether Toronto police treat people of their ethnic background honestly, with white/ Caucasian respondents about three times more likely to agree than Black residents. Toronto Foundation's 2018 Toronto Social Capital Study found that 72% of Toronto residents who identified as white had high confidence in the police, versus only 45% of those who identified as Black.51

When individuals were carded by Toronto police, their perception of how they were treated is strongly associated with their perceptions of the police. Of people who felt they were treated professionally and with respect when they were stopped by police, 68% thought the police were honest. Of those who thought they were not treated professionally and with respect, which made up more than half of those who were stopped, only 8% thought police were honest.

In an interview with TVOntario. Black Lives Matter member Raven Wings explains that "throughout history, we've been told that Black people are inherently more violent. But what we understand is that enslaved Africans were brought here against their will and forced to work for free in a country that never took care of us, that never supported us. We are literally fighting for our lives and asking the people who are supposed to represent us to have our best interests ... They think that in order for us, Black people, to exist in this society in a safe way, we need more police in our neighbourhoods. And we don't."52

Neethan Shan, executive director of the Urban Alliance on Race Relations, explains that "police tend to be thought of as the go-to options by our systems for anything, from domestic violence to parking disputes to mental health — that is not working in general, but especially for racialized folks." Shan says that "abuse, police violence and brutality, and disregard for human life ... are systemic".

The role and funding of police is being questioned

One BIPOC interviewee, who prefers to be anonymous, explains the complex relationship between providing services to the community and managing relationships with the police in regards to mental health: "As a CEO [of a social services agency], I have a different relationship with police. When there are issues, I will call them. But personally, I will not call the police to my home. I had a crisis in my family, and I wouldn't call the police for [my family member]'s mental health crisis. I was later told by a mental health organization that if I did call the police, it would have been bumped up the priority [chain] for my [family member]. I thought to myself, If I brought the police in [to their] crisis that [they] might die."

In the wake of the protests in Toronto, calls to "defund the police" are on the rise. For example, Black Lives Matter called for a 50% reduction in funding to the Toronto Police Service.⁵³ with those funds reallocated toward community services like mental health, employment programs, and other supports. This movement is fuelled in large part by recent Canadian examples of fatalities during police interactions, including D'Andre Campbell of Brampton, Ont., who was fatally shot after his family called for support during a domestic issue,54 and Chantel Moore of New Brunswick, who was shot and killed during a wellness check.55 Over the summer, a Toronto police officer

was found guilty of assault against Dafonte Miller, for an incident three years earlier that left Miller blind in one eye.⁵⁶

Ekua Asabea Blair, CEO of the Massey Centre, which supports pregnant and parenting adolescents, believes that "police have taken on a more prominent role in mental health than they should. And maybe it's because police are more likely to get resources than social services. It fell into the hands of the police. because we don't fund our social services and our voluntary sector adequately."

Currently, the Toronto Police Service is the largest single budget item at Toronto's City Hall, at more than \$1-billion. A recent motion to reduce the TPS budget by 10% was defeated by Toronto City Council by a ratio of about 2-1,57 even while the City was facing a \$1 billion-plus deficit projected in the wake of COVID-19. The City's deficit has subsequently been reduced, but not eliminated, with funding from other levels of government.

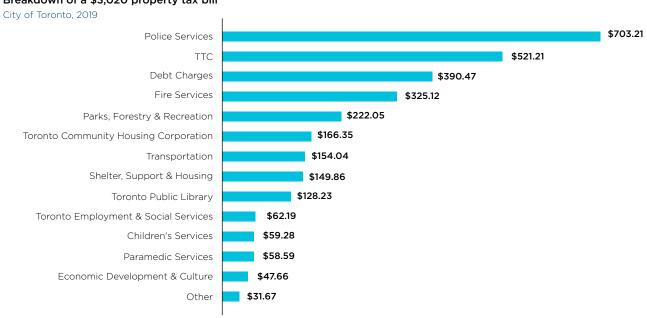


There is a direct relation between high-school dropouts and Black youth unemployment and dropping out of high school is too often a pipeline to prison. We need a holistic solution, including investment in employment programs, the education system, mental health, and other critical areas as part of an ecosystem of support for Black communities.

amanuel melles

Executive Director, Network for the Advancement of Black Communities

Breakdown of a \$3,020 property tax bill



Source: TVO. Is the Toronto police budget really 'untouchable'?58

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Those arguing for defunding the police believe that if the City did not spend more on police than the combined total spent on parks, forestry, and recreation, subsidized housing, shelter and supportive housing, employment and social services, and economic development and culture, the need for police would not be as great.

Recent national studies suggest that a slim majority of Canadians support the principle of reducing police funding and allocating those resources to the other services, like housing or mental health. A recent Ipsos poll found that 51% of Canadians supported this idea, while 49% opposed it.⁵⁹

amanuel melles, executive director of the Network for the Advancement of Black Communities, points to over-policing as a critical problem that is part of a cycle that makes it harder for Black communities to succeed. "There is a direct relation between high-school dropouts and Black youth unemployment, and dropping out of high school is too often "a pipeline to prison." He calls for a "holistic solution," including investment in employment programs, the education system, mental health, and other critical areas as part of an ecosystem of support for Black communities.

Sarah Jama, co-founder of the Disability Justice Network of Ontario highlights that issues of disability are inseparable from issues of police brutality. "The people most at risk of police violence are Black disabled people," she says. "If you're Black and you're disabled and you are not upbeat, you're seen as vile or scary ... you're seen as 'less than.' In our recent history," she explains, "people with disabilities were sterilized or taken from their home and their families and put in asylums. It's ingrained in our history in a way that we just don't talk about, because we don't link these issues." Jama believes that more funding and priority needs to go to disability organizations that are led by racialized individuals, because conversations around disability, race, and police brutality are not happening.

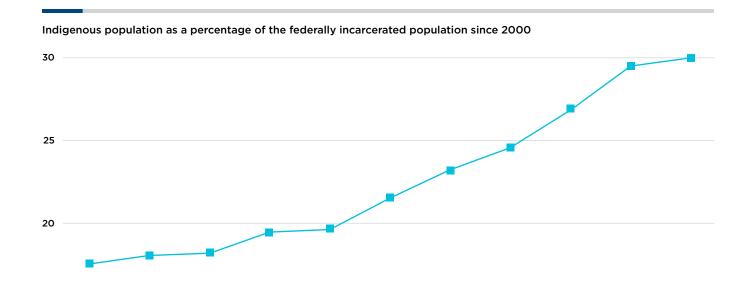
Recent studies suggest there is widespread support for other police reforms, with some variance depending on the type of reform. For example, the June 2020 Leger and Association for Canadian Studies survey found that 90% of Canadians were in favour of police wearing body cameras, and 87% wanted more training for officers in dealing with visible minorities. Slightly more than half of the respondents supported the idea of prioritizing the hiring of visible minorities, and only 32% supported taking firearms away from officers patrolling urban centres on foot.

Shan of the Urban Alliance on Race Relations is concerned about the over-focus on initiatives like hiring racialized officers. "It's not effective. It's not progress. It is good that there's a little more diversity in policing. But what's happening is the structure and the culture within policing continues to be systematically racist."

Over-incarceration of Black and Indigenous people

Concerns regarding over-policing are not just associated with violence; many link the number of police with high rates of criminal conviction and incarceration. Shan agrees that police budgets should be invested in critical services, but also in rehabilitation. "We're not seeing that investment," he argues. "Instead, we invest in the criminalization of racialized — and, particularly, Black and Indigenous — communities ... in a heavily incarceration-focused system."

Overrepresentation of both Black and Indigenous people in federal incarceration is a huge issue in Canada. Indigenous people represent about 5% of the population, but more than 30% of federal prison inmates, and Black people account for 3% of the population and 10% of federal prison population.



2010

2012

Source: Yellowhead Institute⁶¹

2002

2000

The population of federally incarcerated Indigenous people increased 43.4% between 2010 and 2020, while non-Indigenous incarceration declined by 13.7%.⁶²

2004

2006

2008

In a joint press release, the Black Legal Action
Centre and the Centre for Healthy Communities have
called for reform and urgent action to help address
these issues: "The overrepresentation of Black
people in both provincial and federal correctional
institutions, and other places of detention, is rooted
in our country's history of colonialism, slavery, and
segregation. This historical context has produced
stereotypes that link Blackness with criminality,
and in turn, justifies the need to scrutinize and
over-police Black communities. The outcome is the
overrepresentation of Black people in custody."63

COVID-19 has brought this issue into sharper focus, as infection rates in jails and prisons are many times higher than in the general population, particularly in Ontario. In response, the two organizations demanded multiple steps to mitigate the risk of COVID-19, including releasing vulnerable individuals,

distributing free hygienic supplies to those in facilities, and providing housing and transitional support for those who are released.

2016

2020

2018

2014

According to Jason Fleming, of Aboriginal Legal Services (ALS), an organization that provides Indigenous peoples legal support, programs, and representation, their clients face barriers to fair treatment in the justice system, due in part to deeprooted challenges in navigating the justice system. As courts have been physically distanced, some of these challenges have been exacerbated. Fleming explains "remote court has made it difficult for ALS to connect with people who need assistance in real-time and connect with people who may need assistance at the courthouse who may not be aware of their services." This has resulted in some Indigenous people having to navigate the legal system on their own when previously ALS would have been able to provide support. Many clients also lack access to cellphones and computers, making it far more challenging for them to help navigate the system.

O3. SAFETY O3. SAFETY

TORONTO NONPROFIT SURVEY FINDINGS



60% of organizations reported their revenue had decreased and 40% had cut staff hours



"The pandemic has also highlighted the impact of overpolicing as well as systemic anti-Black racism and colonialism. We need to radically re-invest our energy into supporting healthy communities and collectively move towards abolition, healing, and health and human dignity for all."

Indigenous women are particularly overrepresented in federal prisons, making up 42% of federally incarcerated women.64 With COVID-19 striking correctional institutions hard, many vulnerable Indigenous men and women have been released from prison into precarious situations. Thunder Woman Healing Lodge Society is working to "help break the cycle of over-incarceration." The lodge is currently being built in Toronto, and programs are already underway to support Indigenous 2SLGBTQIA+ women leaving incarceration. Patti Pettigrew, founder and executive director, explains that the "[the pandemic has] reaffirmed my belief on how much this lodge is needed ... There are two other lodges in the country, only two. And the statistics show that outcomes for women are really good, compared to the alternative. There's less recidivism and a reclamation of culture." Pettigrew explains that "the benefits of having the lodge are going to be multiple, for not only the women, but also the community, because we're not going to have women going out and being so desperate that they reoffend. A lot of these offences are based out of the fact that these women are living in poverty. And then when you have a criminal record, it's next to impossible to get a job."

In the midst of all of the challenges, people leaving jails are particularly vulnerable in the best of times, but are even more challenged right now, where shelters are physically distancing, and homelessness is rising. Pettigrew explains: "Think about coming out of an institution: you've got no place to sleep, you've got no place to go. And if you look at the murdered and missing women statistics, Indigenous women are really targeted ... and they are particularly vulnerable coming out of the correctional system."



The benefits of having the lodge are going to be multiple, for not only the women, but also the community, because we're not going to have women going out and being so desperate that they reoffend. A lot of these offences are based out of the fact that these women are living in poverty. And then when you have a criminal record, it's next to impossible to get a job.

Patti Pettigrew

Founder and Executive Director, Thunder Woman Healing Lodge Society

Increasing discrimination against people of Asian descent

With the pandemic came a lot of fear and conjecture about the source of the spread. Due to its origins outside of Canada and, in particular, in China, many racialized residents reported being victims of harassment due to the pandemic, particularly those who identify as Chinese.

To understand this better, Statistics Canada conducted a crowdsourcing study of people's perceptions of safety around the country, finding that larger cities are reporting much higher rates of discrimination against visible minorities. In Toronto, 30.5% of "visible minority" residents reported increasing discrimination or harassment in their neighbourhood based on race, ethnicity, or skin colour.⁶⁵

Statistics Canada uses the phrase "visible minority" to describe race and ethnicity, while this report favours the terms "racialized" or "BIPOC" to describe non-white people. This rate is higher than in smaller cities, but still much lower than Vancouver, where more than half of visible minorities reported increasing harassment.

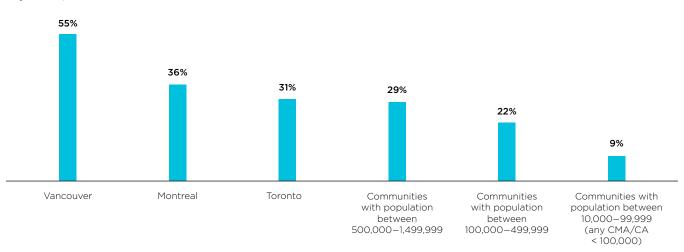
While there is no data available for Toronto, specifically, it appears the most significant increase was reported by those of Asian descent.⁶⁶ This is likely why Vancouver, with the highest percentage of Chinese immigrants in the country, reported the largest increase in harassment due to race, ethnicity, or skin colour.

Nationally, Statistics Canada found that 30% of Chinese, 27% of Korean, and 19% of Southeast Asian respondents reported an increased rate of harassment and attacks in their neighbourhood, based on race, ethnicity, or skin colour.⁶⁷ A smaller percentage of other groups reported increases, including 12% of Black and only 6% of those who do not identify as a visible minority. It is noteworthy that 18% of visible minorities overall reported an increase, versus only 6% of non-visible minorities, a rate three times higher among visible minorities. For those of Chinese background, specifically, they were five times more likely to perceive that this had increased.

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Percentage of visible minorities by city who reported an increase in harassment since COVID-19

May 12 to 25, 2020



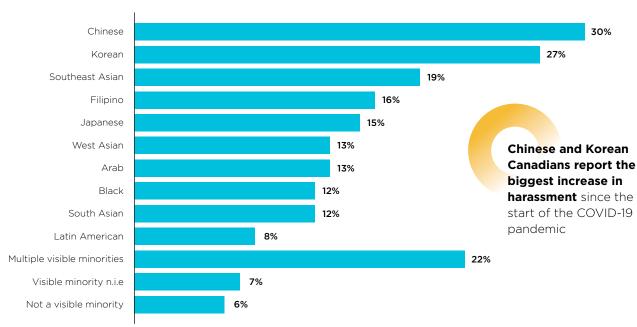
Source: Statistics Canada, Crowdsourcing on perceptions of safety, May 12 to 25, 2020

Public Use Microdata File.

Note: These data files do not specify data for Montreal, Toronto, and Vancouver, but they do specify province and community size and the data in the chart above was derived from those variables. All analysis by author.

Perceived increase in harassment or attacks on the basis of race, ethnicity or skin colour in neighbourhood since the start of COVID-19 pandemic

May 12 to 25, 2020



Source: Statistics Canada, Crowdsourcing on perceptions of safety, May 12-25, 202068

Note: n.i.e. not included elsewhere. The term "visible minority" is used here to replicate the original source. These data points are not collected using random sampling and should be interpreted with caution.

The Angus Reid Institute conducted a study in June 2020 to see how the Chinese-Canadian community is experiencing harassment and racism during COVID-19.⁶⁹ The substantial majority of Canadians of Chinese ethnicity felt like media coverage of people of Chinese ethnicity in Canada had deteriorated because of COVID-19, with the majority believing that children of Asian-descent would be bullied when they return to school.

About half of respondents have been exposed to anti-Chinese social media/graffiti/propaganda/jokes, and 29% said they were made to feel like they pose a threat to the health and safety of others. Half of Chinese Canadians reported that over the last three months they have been called names or insulted, and two in five have been intimidated or threatened.

Findings like these are not surprising to those organizations serving Asian communities. Anna Victoria Wong, executive director of Community Family Services of Ontario, an organization founded and led by Asian immigrants, points out that "the stigma associated with the pandemic has hit us the hardest."

She points to the particular consequences of discrimination on the most vulnerable groups, such as Asian newcomers seeking housing. "Not having income proof and having the Asian face make it really hard for them to find accommodation," Wong states. As new arrivals, many of her clients received temporary accommodations, such as through Airbnb, but now their options are limited for more permanent housing.

TAKEAWAYS

- With domestic violence soaring, organizations from legal aid to shelters to mental health providers will all need increased resources to address the expanded needs.
- Grassroots and BIPOC-led organizations played a key role in the increased awareness of anti-Black and anti-Indigenous racism. Support for their work will move us from awareness to results.
- Many incidents of police violence are triggered by mental health and wellness checks, a challenge exacerbated by inadequate funding of agencies working in these areas. The high rates of COVID-19 cases in prisons have shone a light on the inequities of the criminal justice system and the need for reform.
- Support for reintegration into society, as well as systemic reform, are needed more than ever.

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Before the pandemic, Canadian unemployment rates were among the lowest on record.⁷⁰ But the spread of COVID-19 and the subsequent lockdowns brought a massive surge in unemployment. After the 2008–09 global financial crisis, it took until June 2016 for the unemployment rate to return below its pre-recession levels in Toronto.⁷¹ During the last recovery, Toronto became increasingly reliant on temporary, low-wage, precarious jobs without sick leave, benefits, and training.⁷² Racialized workers, young people, and women with young children have been among the most severely affected by increasing precarious work over the last decade and have also been the most likely to lose their jobs during the public health crisis.

An inclusive workforce can help build a more resilient city. Are we prepared to rethink how we value work in Toronto and invest in jobs and access to employment that are future proof?

KEY INSIGHTS

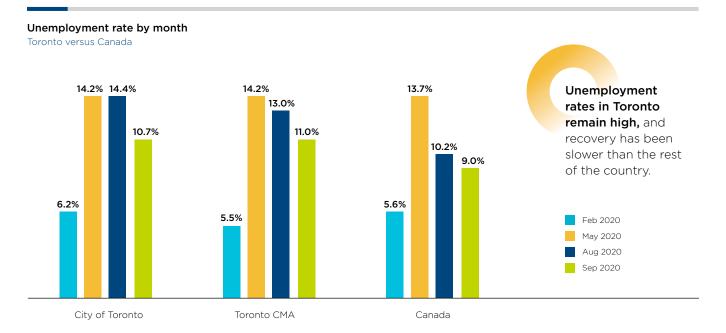
 Toronto had the highest unemployment rate in the country in September calculated using a three-month moving average, though the unemployment rate was lower in September compared to the summer.

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- People working low-wage, temporary, and multiple jobs have had the biggest reductions in hours and the corresponding pay, while high-income workers are putting in more hours than ever.
- Unlike in previous recessions, job losses have been concentrated among women, and women with

- children are not recovering their hours, even as many other workers are getting back to work.
- BIPOC individuals have unemployment rates almost twice as high as white Canadians.
- The youth unemployment rate tripled to its highest level ever and is remaining persistently high for BIPOC youth, especially for males.
- The government is phasing in a replacement for CERB via changes to employment insurance, and the success of that will shape the future of the recovery.

Toronto has one of the highest unemployment rates in the country



Source: Labour Force Survey via City of Toronto Economic Bulletin Open Data⁷³

At the peak of the pandemic, more than eight million people were receiving the Canada Emergency Response Benefit (CERB). Nationally, the unemployment rate peaked at 13.7% in May 2020.

Officially, about three million people lost their jobs nationally, and about two-thirds of people had recovered those jobs by the end of August 2020.⁷⁴

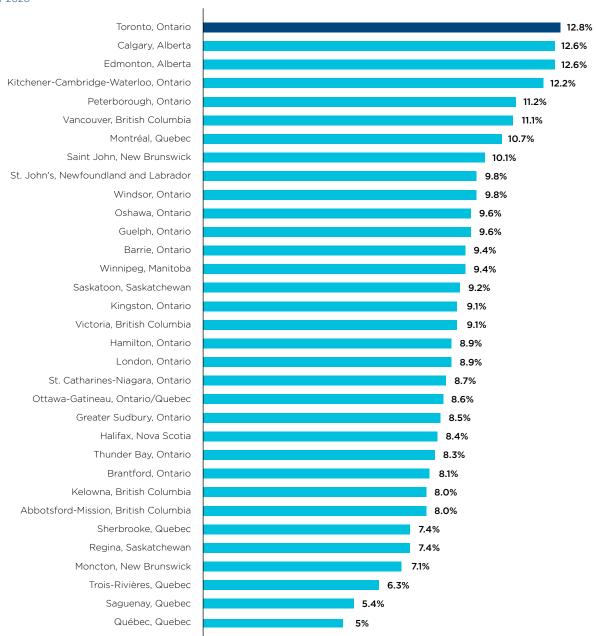
Canada's economic recovery has already begun, but in Toronto it has been slow. The unemployment rate in the city of Toronto heading into the pandemic was 6.2%, by May 2020 it had increased to 14.2%, and in August 2020 it had ticked up to 14.4%. September brought the first signs of good news for the city of Toronto, with unemployment dropping to 10.7%, though this was prior to the announcement of further lockdowns.

The national unemployment rate experienced a similarly rapid rise to 13.7% in May, up from 5.6% in February. But by September, national unemployment had declined to 9.0%, showing that the rest of the country has been posting more rapid job gains, while the city of Toronto has not been recovering as quickly as the rest of the country.

After having one of its lowest unemployment rates in history just months ago, the Toronto Census Metropolitan Area now has the highest unemployment rate in the entire country, at 12.8% (on a three-month moving average). See chart on the following page. for data. This reflects unemployment of 14.6% in July, 13.0% in August, and 11.0% in September.

Unemployment rate, three-month moving average

September 2020



Source: Statistics Canada: Labour Force Characteristics by Census Metropolitan Area, Three-Month Moving Average, Seasonally Adjusted and Unadjusted, Last 5 Months^{76}

Note: The unemployment rate in this chart is the seasonally adjusted three-month moving average.

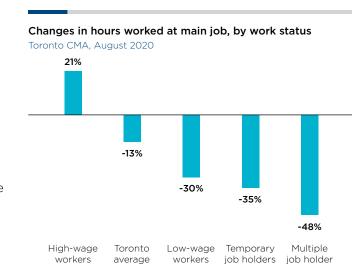
In a departure from the historical norm, many of the largest cities in the country currently have the highest unemployment rates, while many smaller cities are doing better.

Nancy Martin, executive director of Miziwe Bilk Aboriginal Employment and Training, explains the consequences for Indigenous people living in the GTA in a recent interview: "We are literally four times busier than we were before. On any given day, I come in and I don't stop. I get four times more emails than before." Martin explains that the focus has shifted "more to training than employment, because there are no jobs."

Precarious and low-wage workers have lost the most hours

High-wage workers saw their hours increase between February 2020 and August 2020. This is likely due to a combination of increased overtime, hiring in more senior positions, and increasing wages among some workers who were receiving additional pay during the pandemic.

On the other hand, low-wage workers are still working 30% fewer hours than they were before the pandemic and had lost 35% of their hours at the peak of the pandemic. The 2019/20 Toronto *Vital Signs Report* reported how temporary jobs had grown five times faster over the last decade than permanent jobs.⁷⁷ These precarious jobs typically leave workers very vulnerable and at risk of being eliminated without notice. Another decade of job growth concentrated in these areas will leave the city just as vulnerable to future crises, whether they are recessions, climate, or pandemic-related.



Source: Labour Force Survey, Public Use Microdata File August

Note: Hours are actual hours on the main job. Values are the difference relative to February 2020, minus the equivalent change in 2018, per method outlined by @Mikaskuterud. Calculations by Steven Aver.

Unemployment rates are much higher among racialized Canadians

In July 2020, the unemployment rate among those Canadians who are white was 9.3%, compared to almost twice as high for South Asian, Arab, Black, Southeast Asian and Latin American residents.

For youth, this issue is graver still. The current Canada-wide unemployment rate of 23.4% is an improvement over earlier in the summer, but still qualifies as the highest unemployment rate ever recorded. For comparison, the peak unemployment rate for youth during the last recession in 2009 was 16.4%.

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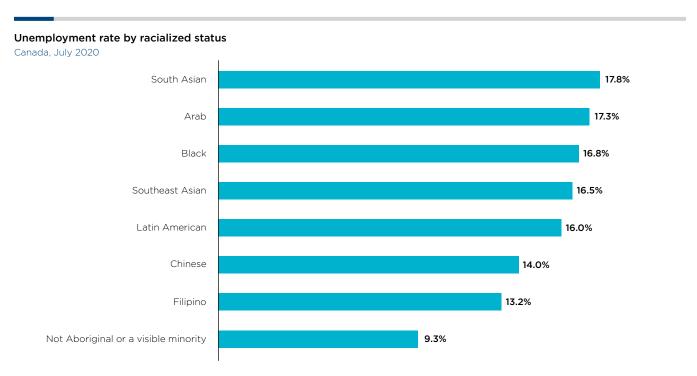
Among racialized youth, the picture is even worse. The unemployment rate among racialized youth is 32.3%, compared to 18% for white youth, both of which are unprecedented. For young men, rates are slightly worse than for young women (25.6%, versus 20.2%). If we do not find ways to engage everyone in the labour market, the long-term implications will last for generations. Data is in the chart on the following page.

Statistics Canada noted that employment for non-Indigenous Canadians was recovering much quicker than for Indigenous people, as of August 2020.⁷⁸

Martin speaks to the huge challenges that Indigenous people in the city have faced in getting access to jobs, but she has seen a few successes, "with many Indigenous people employed in the social services sector and in essential work. There have been new jobs within our community agencies to continue to help assist the community members who need help."

With so few openings and so many people seeking employment, their focus has been on building skills and doing so in a supportive environment for Indigenous people, with all other Indigenous students.

With fewer jobs available, there have been some positives. "We had a group who went through the home renovations training programs at a skilled trades college. Then, some of them are going on to specialize in training in either electrical or plumbing. Before, the focus was sometimes on taking the training and getting the job. Now, we're building more of a continuum of training and getting as many skills as one can" says Martin. She anticipates that renovations and construction will continue to be a booming area in the future, and this will present big opportunities for their clients. The role of community benefit agreements and retrofits in recovery is discussed further on page 103.



Source: Labour Force Survey, July 2020⁷⁹



Before, the focus was sometimes on taking the training and getting the job. Now, we're building more of a continuum of training and getting as many skills as one can.

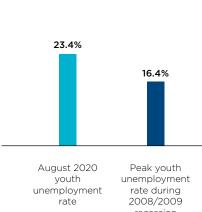
Nancy Martin

Executive Director, Miziwe Biik Aboriginal Employment and Training

55



versus peak of 2008-09 recession



– — Racia

Unemployment rate, youth (15-24), racialized versus non-racialized Canada, August 2020 32.3% 18.0% Racialized youth Non-racialized youth

Young men Young women

Source: Labour Force Survey⁸⁰

Youth unemployment hit unprecedented highs over the summer.

Youth unemployment is far higher than the previous recession.

Racialized youth have an unemployment rate 1.8 times higher.

Young men have an unemployment rate 1.3 times higher.

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04. WORK

"We're going to be in really big trouble," says Agapi Gessesse, executive director of the CEE Centre for Young Black Professionals, a Toronto charity that focuses on addressing the economic and social barriers that impact Black youth. Of 266 alumni in their program, 144 of them lost their jobs during COVID-19. "How are we going to create opportunities for Black youth in a post-COVID world that are targeted and make sense?" she asks.

To help address this extremely high unemployment rate among Black youth, Gessesse believes that new approaches are needed in many neighbourhoods in Toronto. "We need to take a trauma-informed approach," she suggests. Gessesse explains that being Black in many neighbourhoods in Toronto also means dealing with traumas that resemble post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).

Gessesse explains how culturally relevant mental health supports are necessary that recognize the roots of unemployment. "We take a 360 of an individual's life and tackle whatever barriers that they might be facing to employment one by one, and no one is ever treated with a cookie-cutter way of handling pain." This means having full-time psychotherapists and social workers on staff, so that this kind of holistic approach is possible.

Essential workers, often non-white, kept the economy going, at great personal risk

During the lockdown, non-white workers were disproportionately likely to be classified as essential workers because of the nature of their work, meaning they had to continue to work in person, while millions of other Canadians were able to remain at home. Across Canada, more than one in five Filipino Canadians (23.6%) and Black Canadians (20.3%) are employed in health care and social assistance, far higher than the rate of all workers (13.7%).⁸¹

"These workers don't have the luxury to decide to stay home," says Neethan Shan, executive director of the Urban Alliance on Race Relations.

Black Creek Community Health Centre's executive director Cheryl Prescod explains further: "Many people are in the service industry, whether retail, food service, manufacturing, or transportation. With working in close proximity and the inability to self-isolate when needed, the chances of the virus spreading were so much higher."



We need to take a trauma-informed approach. We take a 360 of an individual's life and tackle whatever barriers that they might be facing to employment one by one, and no one is ever treated with a cookiecutter way of handling pain.

Agapi Gessesse

Executive Director, CEE Centre for Young Black Professionals



Women — and particularly mothers of young children — are among the most negatively affected

The pandemic has been called a "she-cession," with women among the first to lose their jobs and overall being the hardest hit. Women with children — balancing the complexities of navigating childcare and work — have been among the hardest hit.

By mid-August, across Canada, women with children under the age of six years have seen their work hours reduced by 17%, compared to February 2020, and women whose youngest child is between six and 12 years old have seen their work hours decreased by 14%. On the other hand, women with older children have seen only a small reduction in total work hours, including only 3% for women whose youngest child is between 18 and 24 years old. Women and men without children have seen smaller decreases in hours.

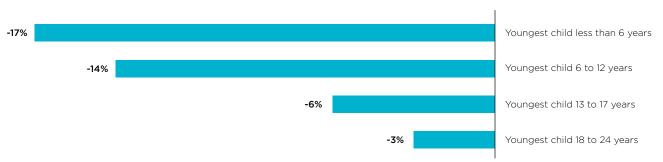
While fathers have also recovered fewer hours when compared to other men, the pattern is much less pronounced than it is for mothers.

Armine Yalnizvan, an economist with the Atkinson Foundation who coined the phrase "she-cession," shared insights in an interview with First Policy Response: "Throughout the 20th century, particularly the second half of the 20th century, it's often been men working in goods-producing sectors like construction, manufacturing, mining, forestry who lost their jobs." She highlights that the strategies that were first implemented were predominantly ones to help men get back to work, while the current circumstances resulted in women being the first to be laid off from the service jobs, where they dominate. This requires different responses that take into account the role of women outside of work, too. Yalnizvan posits that without adequate funding for the return to school and without plans for childcare, the economy will not recover, and the impacts of the recession will linger.

Change in aggregate hours worked, women by age of youngest child

Canada, August 2020

04. WORK



Source: Labour Force Survey via Mikal Skuterud⁸³ Note: Hours are actual weekly hours on all jobs. Values are difference relative to February 2020 minus equivalent chance in 2018.

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TORONTO NONPROFIT SURVEY FINDINGS



87% of organizations reported that the lack of unrestricted core funding for their organization had left them more vulnerable to the impacts of the pandemic



- "Our workers also need access to safe, affordable child care to support their workforce participation."
- "Despite higher unemployment, our job postings receive far fewer applicants currently than they would normally, as people understandably choose to stay home to avoid risk."
- "Every funder wants us to do something shiny and new and "innovative" instead of continuing to fund our key, core programming that is proven to work, and that the community loves. We don't want to chase the shiny new thing. We also don't need more money for capital things. We want to pay our staff a living wage."

As part of the throne speech, the Government of Canada announced it "will make a significant, long-term, sustained investment to create a Canada-wide early learning and childcare system." These investments will likely help more women return to work, thereby providing a broader boost to the economy as well.⁸⁴ The exact details, however, are still unclear.

Recovery requires long-term solutions

It took seven years for the unemployment rate to recover in Toronto after the Great Recession of 2008-09, suggesting a similarly long timeline is in our future, especially in major cities like Toronto.

The federal government has announced major investments in jobs, childcare, and employment insurance reforms, along with infrastructure as part of the recovery.

Investments in infrastructure could include holistic workforce development strategies and skill building, as well as Community Benefits Agreements (see page 103 for a further discussion of these) that ensure local communities benefit directly from the jobs created as a result of large building and construction projects.

Social Planning Toronto and a network of 50 other organizations called for a "permanent increase in minimum wage for low-wage workers in frontline roles that were deemed essential during this pandemic"⁸⁵ in their submission to the City of Toronto's Resilience and Recovery Office. Millions of Canadians relied on the \$500 weekly CERB payments during the pandemic, which will be transitioned to a revamped EI program that will support the majority of the four million Canadians who were still relying on CERB to get by (discussed further on page 33).

By the end of August and into early September 2020, there were still about four million people receiving benefits. With the program concluding, it is estimated that about 776,000 of those will be cut off from government support, including 141,000 in the Toronto CMA.⁸⁶ However, income replacement is just one part of the solutions mix.

These changes to EI will be temporary, and many have called for further improvements. According to Future Skills Centre, job training and re-skilling for new career options must go hand-in-hand with income supports.⁸⁷

TAKEAWAYS

- With unprecedented levels of unemployment, organizations helping connect people to jobs and training are facing huge strain and need a new influx of funding support.
- Toronto has not been recovering as quickly as the rest of the country, as lockdowns have meant that many jobs have not come back.
- Unemployment rates for racialized people are almost twice as high as for non-racialized individuals, speaking to the importance of allocating funds to BIPOC-led organizations working in this space.
- For many marginalized populations, accessing and keeping jobs require holistic supports that take into account the vulnerabilities inherent in precarious work and pre-existing conditions that impact job security.

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The pandemic has had sweeping impacts on how we connect with one another and the social infrastructure enabling that. While research cannot yet substantiate a direct causal link, the mix of forced social isolation, the digital divide, and the inequitable impacts of the public health crisis are the backdrop for some significant shifts. In this context, the call for racial justice has heightened currency, and the need for long-term, sustainable support systems is impossible to ignore.

Will our greater consciousness of racial inequity be a short-lived disappointment, or will we finally recognize that our future depends on everyone's full participation, and support the bottom-up solutions right in front of us?

KEY INSIGHTS

- Protests against anti-Black racism and police brutality quickly became one of the biggest social movements in history, and activists are optimistic they will bring about real change.
- Most nonprofits quickly moved their programming online, but now face the combined challenges of plummeting revenues and increasing demand, with small grassroots organizations at the most risk of permanent closure.
- Most nonprofits believe COVID-19 will significantly threaten their finances for the next five years.
- Amid system-wide calls for racial justice, lack of diversity in nonprofit leadership is a glaring gap, especially within the most powerful institutions.
- Traditional volunteering has declined, but mutual aid networks have formed at unparalleled rates, as neighbours seek to support one another.

The emergence of Black Lives Matter has spurred increased awareness of racial inequities

According to *The New York Times*, Black Lives Matter "may be the largest movement in U.S. history," with between 15 million and 26 million people participating in protests by early to mid-June.⁸⁸

In Canada, more people see racism as at least a fairly serious issue here — a change from just one year ago. In survey results published in late July 2020, 60% of Canadians reported seeing racism as a serious issue, versus 47% a year ago.⁸⁹

In Canada, far less polling has been conducted about the Black Lives Matter movement, but polls do suggest the majority of Canadians support it. More than two in three (67%) Canadians express some level of support for those protesting, according to a September 2020 poll, compared to 55% of U.S. respondents, with youth, women, and university graduates the most likely to support the movement.⁹⁰

Despite evidence to the contrary, including numerous examples cited in this report, almost one in three Canadians (32%) believes the phrase "saying there is systemic racism in Canada is an exaggeration," and 40% of Canadians perceive that racism is an American issue, not a Canadian one.91

The theme of racial equity is interspersed throughout this report, ranging from the existence of police brutality (page 38), lack of income growth in recent decades in Toronto (page 32) and the rates of unemployment (page 51) to representation in leadership (page 63), health disparities (page 16), disparate financial impacts of the pandemic (page 30), and more. Together, they point to the realities of systemic racism in Toronto and across the country, and they clearly demonstrate the need for change to ensure that all Canadians can contribute and are supported.

Cheryl Prescod, executive director, Black Creek Community Health Centre, highlights the need for "continued activism and ensuring that that these issues are kept at the top of the list of priorities." Prescod believes that this needs to be an election issue: "We cannot put this issue on the backburner again," she says.

In terms of broader civic engagement, Prescod explains that we will see progress come out of the movement. "A lot of the dialogue has been about voting and stepping up to be a candidate," she explains. She also believes that communities need space to talk, heal, and develop their own solutions, and that youth need to be a central part of this.

But change requires allies, too. While the long-standing battles against racism have been owned by members of Indigenous and Black communities, Prescod says that others are now joining. "People are now seeing the hurts and the harms that have been done. There's been a lot of coalition building and a lot of learning."

Toronto nonprofits are struggling in the aftermath of the pandemic

In July and August 2020, Toronto Foundation conducted its first survey of nonprofit organizations, revealing concerning findings.

While most nonprofits continued to operate, the majority had transitioned their services online. A full 87% indicated they are now offering digital or virtual programming. The scope of this programming varies widely, including mental health counselling via video conference, live streaming of cultural activities, online language classes, and weekly video youth groups.

Two-thirds of nonprofits reported increased demand for their services, with about one-third of organizations reporting that this demand increased significantly. Social service, health, and community development and housing organizations were particularly likely to report increased demand, especially those involved in mental health counselling, front-line service provision, shelter, or food delivery.

The majority of nonprofits reported reduced revenues (60%). Not every organization specified how much their revenue declined, but the median decline in revenue of those who shared was 40%. These declines led to significant reductions in staff hours: less than half of organizations had to reduce staff hours during the pandemic (40%), but those who did reported around 30% of total employee hours were cut. 92 As the Ontario Nonprofit Network highlights in its project on "Decent Work for Women," more than 80% of workers in the nonprofit sector are women. 93

This decline is unprecedented and results from a mix of cancelled fundraising events and conferences, the loss of in-person conversations with donors that often lead to large gifts, and the temporary closure of fee-for-service programs, like childcare, fitness memberships, day camps, and arts and cultural events and activities.

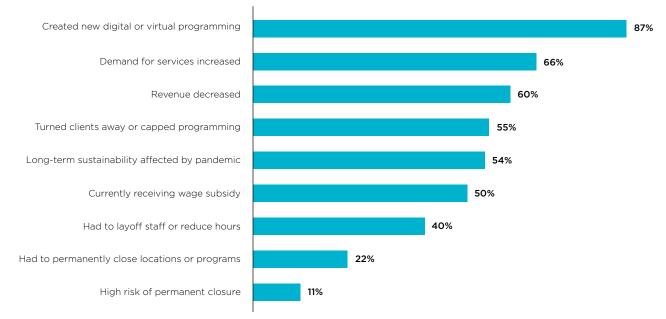
Already, one in five organizations indicated they have had to permanently close locations or programs.

While for many of us these closures are invisible, for those who relied on their services, the impact has been profound and will be long lasting.

Overall, slightly more than one in 10 organizations said they were at high risk of permanent closure.⁹⁴ These organizations tended to be small grassroots organizations, often led by the communities they serve.

Percentage of nonprofits agreeing with various statements

Organizations operating in Toronto, July/August 2020



Source: 2020 Toronto Nonprofit Survey conducted by Toronto Foundation. For full details, see Appendix.

Even those organizations that received infusions of cash to deal with the emergency have pointed to longer-term concerns regarding viability. Paul Taylor, executive director of FoodShare Toronto, which has scaled up emergency food support, notes that "donors are no longer giving to ongoing initiatives, diverting their support to the emergency and leaving core work unsupported."

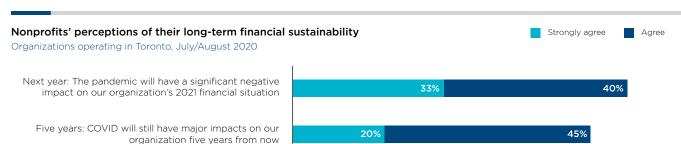
In addition to philanthropic support, Taylor references declines in other, under-the-radar funding streams. "We would sell products to schools as part of our social enterprise. That line of revenue has completely disappeared," he shares. Like many of the organizations discussed above, FoodShare has also had to cancel its fundraising events, including its annual fundraiser and other popular events, like Recipe for Change. And like nearly every organization working in food security in the city, demand for support is way up.

Challenges for nonprofits will be long term

Almost three-quarters of organizations have significant fears for next year (73%), indicating that the pandemic will still have a significant negative impact, with one in three strongly agreeing with this sentiment. Nearly two-thirds (65%) also believe that in five years, the pandemic will still have significant impacts on their organizations.

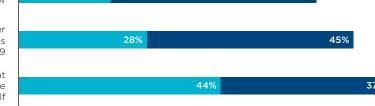
Almost three-quarters (73%) feared that society would be more unequal a decade from now due to the social and financial impacts of the pandemic. More than 80% of organizations agreed that government cutbacks could have a greater negative impact on their organization than the pandemic itself. Given that most organizations are already in precarious financial situations, this potential is chilling for many and for those they serve.

Across the nonprofit sector, leaders expressed fear that their organizations will never be the same. For example, Philip Akin, recently retired artistic director of Obsidian Theatre Company, told us in an interview in June 2020: "My big fear is for 2021 or 2022. That is when we're going to hit a real wall, because by then governments, I believe, will be in the space of trying to see how to manage debt, and the arts have always been a soft target for that, regardless of the fact that we're essential." The particularly challenging environment for arts-, culture- and recreation-related organizations is explored on page 89.



Ten years: Ten years from now, society will have greater inequities due to the financial and social consequences of COVID-19

Future government cutbacks: The risk of government cutbacks in future years could have a greater negative impact on our organization than the pandemic itself



Source: 2020 Toronto Nonprofit Survey conducted by Toronto Foundation. For full details, see Appendix.

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TORONTO NONPROFIT SURVEY FINDINGS



About one-quarter of small organizations with annual revenues of less than \$500,000 per year rate themselves at high risk of permanent closure



"The active involvement of newcomers in the nonprofit sector/all sectors will contribute to reducing inequities."

"Our program is making substantial impacts and we are working hard to make significant changes to our anti-racist policies and procedures, including succession planning, that will help us make even better impacts in the future."

Long-term funding is needed for racial justice

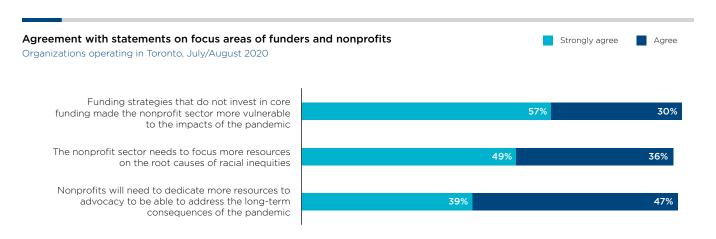
Many nonprofit leaders indicated that current funding models contribute to their vulnerability, with 87% agreeing with this premise, and 57% strongly agreeing, according to Toronto Foundation's 2020 Toronto Nonprofit Survey. There was clear consensus on the critical importance of long-term core funding to make a stronger, more resilient sector.

The role of racial inequities is core to the longstanding organizational vulnerabilities. Liben Gebremikael, executive director of TAIBU Community Health Centre, underlines the entrenched nature of racial inequities and our inability to overcome them.



Liben Gebremikael

Executive Director, TAIBU Community
Health Centre



Source: 2020 Toronto Nonprofit Survey conducted by Toronto Foundation. For full details, see Appendix.

"It's always cyclical attention for the Black community. After the summer of the gun in the early 2000s ... about 150-plus organizations and groups were funded in the amount of about \$40-something million. Out of those 150-plus organizations and groups today, only maybe three are existing. The rest just died after the funding ended. There was no sustainability plan. There was no structure built ..."

He worries that we risk repeating this pattern if we do not get the funding model right. While he understands that funders want quick results, the issues have been long to develop and will require long-term supports to eliminate. "We are addressing a very systemic issue that has gone on for generations. And this cycle of one-year or three-year funding is not going to help. And I think, even from government, if they really want to see a return on investment, it should be long-term sustainable funding that builds resources in the community."

Racial representation in nonprofit leadership is sorely lacking

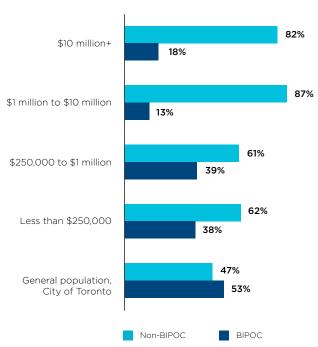
According to the most recent Census, 53% of Toronto residents self-identify as being Black, Indigenous, or People of Colour (BIPOC). However, nonprofit leadership in the city fails to reflect this diversity, and this is especially true for larger organizations. Only 13% of organizations with annual operating budgets between \$1 million and \$10 million, and 18% of organizations with \$10 million-plus in annual revenue, have BIPOC leaders.

The leadership of smaller organizations is more diverse, although it still falls short of the overall demographic makeup of the city. A full 39% of organizations with less than \$1 million in annual revenue, which tend to be grassroots and more likely to be community led, have BIPOC leaders.⁹⁵

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Percentage of nonprofits whose most senior staff person is either Black, Indigenous, or a Person of Colour (BIPOC) by annual revenue

Organizations operating in Toronto, July/August 2020



Source: 2020 Toronto Nonprofit Survey conducted by Toronto Foundation. For full details, see Appendix.

Note: Each respondent was asked if their most senior staff person at their nonprofit was Black, Indigenous, or a Person of Colour. This may underestimate BIPOC leadership, because while the plurality of our respondents were the most senior person at their organization, not all respondents may be aware of how the most senior person identifies at their organization. Respondents from smaller organizations may have been more likely to know the status of their most senior person.

Respondents from larger nonprofits are much less likely to say their organization is lead by BIPOC individuals.

Agapi Gessesse, executive director of the CEE Centre for Young Black Professionals, says: "[As a person of colour], you may be able to run a small grassroots organization or a mid-sized organization. But is the sector receptive to people of colour in these large, mainstream organizations? There's a lot of large organizations that I don't think in the history of their existence have ever had Black leadership."

And for Black leaders, this is an isolating experience. Eugenia Addy, CEO of Visions of Science, shares that "it's very lonely, because there are so few leaders who are representative of the communities that we serve. I go to these roundtables for low-income communities, and I don't find anyone who even has a modicum of lived experience ..."

Still, Addy credits many of the organization's funding partners for helping her succeed in her current position. "When I was just stepping into Visions of Science, there were certain foundations and funders who invested in my leadership. One of our funders, right off the top, sent me to an executive leadership program at Queen's [University], and it changed how I was able to manage and build our organization ... Really investing in leaders is important. I think where funders can be involved is not necessarily mandating, but supporting organizations that will actually reflect and seek to do the work of empowering leadership from within the community."

In addition to investing in diverse leaders, Neethan Shan, executive director of the Urban Alliance on Race Relations, points to the need for funders to also support internal processes to root out systemic racism. He encourages funders to also support the large organizations that lack diversity, to "build in anti-racist, anti-oppressive practices, including actively reporting on benchmarks" about their racial representation in their staff, leadership, and board. With food security playing a growing role during the pandemic, Paul Taylor also discusses the need for supporting BIPOC-led organizations working in this space on page 22.

He emphasizes that we cannot dismantle the systems that got us here without understanding them and the blind spots that they cause for us. "The reason why many of our [BIPOC] organizations are smaller organizations and considered 'higher risk' for funders is systemic, as well," Shan explains. "Many racialized communities don't have the luxury of a 100-year history as a nonprofit or an organization with many locations and reach. I think we need to move out of that thinking of it being higher risk and find ways to mitigate that risk by enabling smaller grassroots organizations."

grassroots organizations."

Many racialized communities don't have the luxury of a 100-year history as a nonprofit or an organization with many locations and reach. I think we need to move out of that thinking of it being higher risk and find ways to mitigate that risk by enabling smaller grassroots organizations.

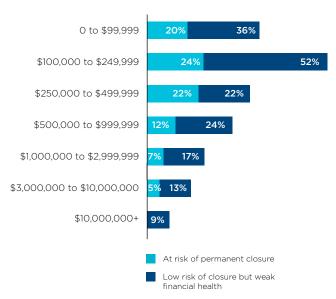
Neethan Shan

Executive Director, Urban Alliance on Race Relations

For many of these smaller organizations, the risks of the coming months are dire. Of organizations with less than \$500,000 in operating revenue, about 20% say they are at risk of permanent closure. These are the organizations that typically represent their communities, and they are the ones that we are most likely to lose. For the largest organizations in the city, none said they were at high risk of closure.

Percentage who perceive a higher risk of permanent closure, by annual revenue

Organizations operating in Toronto, July/August 2020



Source: 2020 Toronto Nonprofit Survey conducted by Toronto Foundation. For full details, see Appendix.

Note: Respondents were asked to answer "On a scale of 1 to 10, with 1 being "at risk of permanent closure" and 10 being "extremely strong financial health", how would you rate the organization's current financial position?"

Respondents scoring themselves a one, two, or three were classified at high risk of closure. Organizations rating themselves a four or five were classified as having weak financial health.

Small charities rate their financial health as very weak, with many at risk of permanent closure.

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Traditional volunteering is down, but helping neighbours is soaring

Toronto Foundation's nonprofit survey found that 32% of organizations strongly agreed that it was harder to leverage volunteers during the pandemic than in the past, and another 29% somewhat agreed. Fewer than one in five organizations thought it was easier to leverage volunteers.

These findings echo national results from Volunteer Canada's survey of volunteer managers and nonprofits, which found that 51% of nonprofits reported fewer people contacting the organization to volunteer, versus 21% who said the number of volunteers increased. This was due to a combination of programming being cancelled, organizations delaying or pausing volunteer recruitment, some volunteers being unable to volunteer because of health and safety concerns, and insufficient volunteer opportunities.

Front-line service organizations were particularly hard hit, because their volunteers need personal protective equipment. This remains an ongoing challenge for emergency food providers in the city as well, a topic discussed further on page 23.

For organizations posting pandemic-appropriate volunteer opportunities, the response generally was quite strong. For example, the Urban Alliance on Race Relations received hundreds of applications after posting a call for volunteers to help share information in their community.

Tai Huynh, the creative director of UHN OpenLab, launched the Friendly Neighbour Hotline to help seniors receive deliveries during the pandemic.

He says that the organization surged in scale due to early enthusiasm from volunteers. Despite only operating since April 2020, it now has close to 1,000 volunteers. Some people initially volunteered, as they were not working and had extra time, but even as more people returned to work, many volunteers have wanted to remain engaged and requested to be able to volunteer on the weekend.

While there are great examples of organizations leveraging huge numbers of volunteers, it is undeniable that there are fewer formal or traditional opportunities than there were before the pandemic. What resulted was a rise in less-formal, citizenled responses. Social support networks, often called mutual aid groups, have stepped in to meet the needs of vulnerable neighbours, for social connection, food, and access to medicine, too. While the existence of grassroots groups providing mutual aid is not new, particularly in BIPOC communities, the scale-up across the city is remarkable. In Toronto, 55% of organizations who responded to the Ontario Nonprofit Network's survey reported working with mutual aid networks, higher than in any other region of the province.97 According to the provincial survey, the majority of such collaborations centred around resource sharing (89 respondents), responding to food supply and security challenges (72 respondents), and providing funding (66 respondents).

Sarah Jama, co-founder of the Disability Justice
Network of Ontario, shares her experience creating
a mutual aid group in Hamilton in partnership
with the Hamilton Student Mobilization Network
Erich's Cupboard and the Hamilton Centre for
Civic Inclusion. She explains that what started as a
Facebook page for people to post what they needed,
turned into an online support system of 7,000
strong. "People immediately signed up to volunteer;
they're still signing up to volunteer. We have too
many volunteers, because we're being stringent on
exposure to COVID."

She highlights the essential role of local nonprofits, too, from a neighbourhood church that gave them space to local food delivery organizations that ensured they had resources to support their community. But the less formal, mutual aid groups, she explains, have a unique and essential function in times of emergency. Jama says that "they show that people know what the need is in the community, before services that are supposed to be responding to these things do. It's because our services and our nonprofits are not usually built to respond to crisis."

Shakhlo Sharipova, a grassroots leader, founder of the Thorncliffe Park Autism Support Network, shares the origins of her mutual aid group that grew out of information sharing on WhatsApp for people struggling. "We started by checking in to see if people were OK, sharing resources around coping with depression and giving advice on what benefits people were eligible for." But as time went on, it got bigger and bigger. "By the end of June, after one month, we distributed 1,800 meals to 500 families," Sharipova adds. She and others in her community also arrange play time in the park that attracts almost two dozen local families.

Stories like this have become increasingly common during the pandemic. And for many communities and grassroots groups, it underlines how mutual aid networks have enabled the most vulnerable to cope when more formal organizations have been challenged to meet the growing demand.

TAKEAWAYS

- Nonprofit organizations are facing steep financial challenges, but are focused on delivering critical services to those most in need.
- An equitable recovery can be enabled by increasing support to grassroots and BIPOCled organizations that serve those most severely affected by the pandemic.
- Mutual aid networks and grassroots groups, who have strong connections in the community, were critical to the emergency response and will be for the recovery too, but their inability to issue charitable receipts should not be a barrier to funders.
- Unrestricted donations and monthly giving will provide organizations with the security to be able to survive the pandemic and plan for the future.
- Volunteers will continue to be important, especially as the weather turns, and people move back into isolation.

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At the outset of the pandemic, some people speculated that the job and income losses caused by the lockdowns would lead to lower home prices in Toronto. And yet, this summer has seen record high real estate prices coupled with record numbers of people unable to pay rent. Tent encampments for homeless people popped up in parks across the city, while sales of luxury home goods have been higher than ever. Toronto has been in an affordable housing crisis for decades, and the pandemic has both increased the polarization of the housing issue and laid bare the vulnerability of our housing system in responding to a crisis.

Going forward will we finally ensure that the right to affordable housing is extended to all Torontonians, or will the divide only widen between those struggling to get by and those who have generated considerable wealth from owning property?

KEY INSIGHTS

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- Canadians are reporting ongoing difficulty paying their bills, including rent and mortgage payments, with 13% of renters unable to make their full rent payments in May."
- With the eviction moratorium lifted in early
 August, Toronto is seeing more people than ever
 reaching out for support from eviction prevention
 and affordable housing providers.
- Homelessness is being described as its own "epidemic" by those working in the field, as shelters are operating at full capacity, and an estimated 2,000 people are living in tent encampments.
- Affordable housing advocates believe the current environment presents the biggest opportunity to create permanent affordable housing.

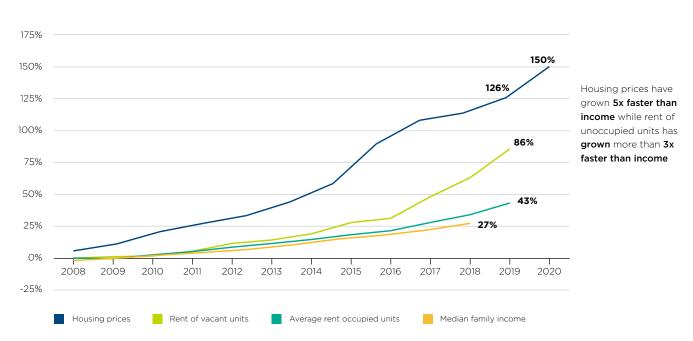
Rental prices are lower, yet the benefits may not be reaching low-income residents

The summer brought with it two strange contrasts: the highest ever average prices for detached homes in much of the Greater Toronto Area, 98 and the biggest ever drops in average rental prices for units on the open market. Home prices in the Greater Toronto Area reached \$951,404 in August 2020, up 20% year over year. 99 In the same month, rental prices in the city of Toronto had declined 12%. The average condominium apartment unit was listed at \$2,220, about \$400 cheaper than in August 2019.

Rentals.ca tracks monthly average prices on its platform and found that downtown condos decreased by 16% year over year in July, while in the outer 416 regions of Etobicoke, East York, North York, York, and Scarborough prices declined 11% from their peak, and the cities of Mississauga, Vaughan, Richmond Hill, Markham, and Pickering have only seen a 4% decrease.¹⁰¹

Housing prices, rent, and income growth, 2008 to 2020

Toronto CMA



Sources: MLS Housing Price Index.¹⁰² CMHC Rental Market Survey.¹⁰³ Statistics Canada. Table 11-10-0009-01. Selected income characteristics of census families by family type.¹⁰⁴

Note: Some of the data for the rent of vacant units is not available through CMHC's website and was provided directly by staff. Housing prices reflect composite housing price data from October of each month, except 2020, which reflects data from September 2020.

Slight declines in rental prices are **not enough to reverse the past decade** of skyrocketing house prices.

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06. HOUSING 06. HOUSING

These prices reflect a significant decrease in demand for living downtown, but these lower prices have still made little impact in making downtown housing affordable. Rental prices of vacant units in Toronto in 2019 were 86% higher than they were in 2008, while incomes have only increased on average by about 27%. Housing prices are more than 150% higher than in 2008.

While Rentals.ca pricing data does not break out as much detail in Toronto, nationally, units at the bottom end of the spectrum have gotten more expensive. The decline in average rent is due to substantial declines in the price of high-end units and a small decline in mid-range options. This means that the lower overall rental prices may not have translated to any increased affordability for low-income residents who are looking for new units.

In Toronto, nearly half of renters spend more than 30% of their income on housing 105 — the point at which housing is considered unaffordable, according to the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation. More than 87% of low-income residents live in housing that is considered unaffordable.

People are having difficulty paying rent and other bills

According to various estimates, between 8% and 13% of people were unable to pay their rent in full in April and May 2020. The Federation of Rental-Housing Providers of Ontario estimated a 10% delinquency ratio in April, the improved in May, up from about 1% in a normal month. The Angus Reid Institute also found in May that 13% of renters in Canada had not been able to pay their rent in full. Little data is available specifically for Toronto, but the data we have suggests that the situation is worse.

Statistics Canada's summer crowdsourcing survey found that Toronto residents were reporting more difficulty paying their bills than the rest of the country (see page 30). Across Canada, a full 16% of mortgages were deferred at the peak of the pandemic, 110 with many of those bills now coming due, which could be a struggle for those still unemployed.

The Daily Bread Food Bank surveyed food bank participants and found 20% of those in private housing were not paying their full rent, and more than a quarter were very worried about the risk of eviction.¹¹¹ Even those who are currently making rent are worried about the long term, with more than one-third of additional respondents saying they will be unable to pay rent in four to six months, if current situations continue.

The Angus Reid Institute's May 2020 poll results suggest that slightly more than half of the people in Canada not paying rent are deferring payment, with most of those expecting to pay in full eventually.¹¹²

Little Canada- or Ontario-specific information is available for the percentage of people unable to pay rent in recent months. There are signs of optimism, as far fewer Canadians are relying on CERB (discussed more on page 29), and national unemployment rates are showing signs of improvement.

Debt levels are worrying

The levels of debt among residents also pose real risks. Canada's household debt to disposable income is among the highest in the world, and this will increase significantly in the coming years, according to Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation.¹¹³ In Toronto, where debt levels are even higher than nearly anywhere else in the country, this is of particular concern. Statistics Canada found that those with the lowest income in Toronto also had the highest relative debt, by far.¹¹⁴ With many now unemployed, the likelihood of not being able to service that debt is hazardously high.

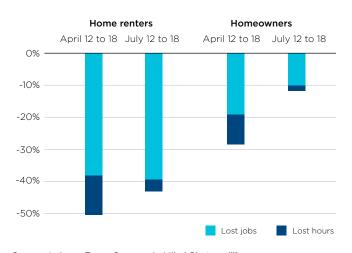
Data from Statistics Canada's Labour Force Survey from July showed that renters saw their work hours not returning to normal at anywhere near the pace of homeowners.¹¹⁵ For example, in July 2020, renters were still working more than 40% fewer hours seasonally adjusted than in February 2020, while homeowners were only working about 10% fewer hours.

On March 17, 2020, the day the Government of Ontario declared a state of emergency, a temporary ban on evictions was also implemented for non-payment of rent. As of August 2020, this moratorium was lifted.

During this eviction moratorium and between March 17 and July 19, 2020, 6,083 applications for evictions for non-payment of rent were filed with the Landlord and Tenant Board across Ontario.¹¹⁶

COVID-19 impact on aggregate hours worked

Percentage change, Canada



Source: Labour Force Survey via Mikal Skuterud 117

Renters have been much harder hit by job loses than homeowners.

TORONTO NONPROFIT SURVEY FINDINGS



86% of organizations surveyed indicated nonprofits would need to allocate more resources to advocacy because of the pandemic



"The pandemic has dramatically increased women's risk of violence, particularly for women who are already on the margins."

"Internally, I am so very impressed with our team, who have gone above and beyond to ensure that we continue to be available to women who reach out to us."

"The biggest issue we are struggling with right now is that our team — that was already stretched — is working at an incredible pace that we can only sustain for so long. We are desperately in need of significant funding and people resources to stabilize our organization, and to allow us to continue to pivot all aspects of our programming and operations for as long as COVID-19 is with us."

Number of eviction applications by year City of Toronto Evictions peaked at 26% higher than 2010, years after the recession of 2008/2009 was declared over. 30,000 25,000 10,000 5,000

2014

2015

Source: Wellesley Institute. Forced Out: Evictions, Race, and Poverty in Toronto¹¹⁸

2012

2013

2011

While evictions could not proceed, landlords could initiate proceedings. As of publication, these are the most recent numbers available. These numbers are quite a bit lower than one would expect over a four-month period, when the board typically receives more than 4,000 per month.¹¹⁹ But it is a substantial number for a period when evictions for non-payment of rent were not allowed.

2010

New rules implemented around evictions allow landlords to work out arrangements to make up missed rent payments. These agreements between landlords and tenants are not regulated. If tenants subsequently are not able to make up their rent payments, eviction proceedings can be accelerated later.

Considering that the average Canadian household saved just \$852 in 2018,¹²⁰ less than one month's rent in Toronto, the ability to meet deferral agreements could be unrealistic for many, especially given the likely slow return to a full employment market.

Considering that the last recession sparked higher eviction rates for years, 121 the outcomes of the current environment have serious implications.

2017

2018

2016

Evictions will likely increase during the next few years, especially for Black residents

A total of 525,000 households were renting their home in the city of Toronto as of the 2016 Census, accounting for approximately 1.3 million people. 122 If 10% were unable to pay rent, this would mean that 53,000 households with about 130,000 people were rent delinquent in May 2020.

The number of evictions processed so far is a fraction of the people who could be evicted.

According to data recently released by the Wellesley Institute, after the last recession, evictions in Toronto continued to increase each year until 2012.¹²³

The recession was considered "over" in summer 2009. In each of 2011, 2012, and 2013, evictions were at least 20% higher than they were in the first year after the recession.

This growing rate of evictions even years post-recession is a demonstration of the concept of economic scarring, where people who go through financial difficulties are more vulnerable in the future.¹²⁴ At the onset of financial difficulties, people are often able to rely on credit, loans from friends and family, and savings to keep making rent. As time goes on and they have depleted their safety net, any further job losses or emergency bills put them at risk of default.

It is also worth noting that the Wellesley Institute found that rates of evictions were twice as high in predominantly Black neighbourhoods, versus neighbourhoods with low concentrations of Black residents, even controlling for factors like poverty and immigration status. Given that Black and other racialized Canadians are reporting more profound financial impacts from the pandemic, these troubling trends are likely to accelerate.

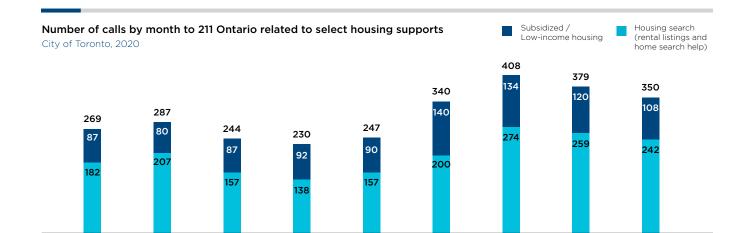
Calls to nonprofits providing housing information and eviction supports are higher than ever

The number of people reaching out for housing supports has skyrocketed during the past few months. The central resource 211 Ontario, which refers people to social services, shared the number of people making housing inquiries in Toronto. This data covers people seeking support in the face of evictions, looking for transitional housing, assistance to pay rent, and to reach social housing providers. In both July and August 2020, there were about 60% more people looking for housing supports, compared to February 2020. Numbers declined slightly in September. This surge in need mirrors the experience of the Centre for Equality Rights in Accommodation (CERA), which provided data from their evictionprevention hotline.125 CERA normally receives 85 inquiries per month and received 173 in September, iust over twice the normal volume.

Jul

Sep

Aug



Source: 211 Ontario.126

Jan

Feb

Mar

Note: Data for subsidized housing combines data form their category for low-income/subsidized rental housing, subsidized home acquisition, and subsidized housing administration - this does not represent the entirety of calls that were categorized as related to housing.

Apr

May

Jun

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Data from early October suggested they were on trend for a similar volume in that month as well. They are inadequately resourced to respond to such an increase in demand, and as call volumes continue to go up, there is a real risk they will need to start turning people away. Increasingly, CERA is seeing calls from people looking for housing while on the verge of homelessness, a growing phenomenon due to the challenges in the current environment.

Data provided by the Rent Bank, a City of Toronto supported initiative that provides rent assistance to people in need, likewise has shown a big increase in applications in recent months. For example, in February 2020 they had 148 applications. In August 2020, the latest number for which we have data, that number had increased to 253, representing a 71% increase. Number of approved loans had increased at a slower rate than applications.

Homelessness and shelters

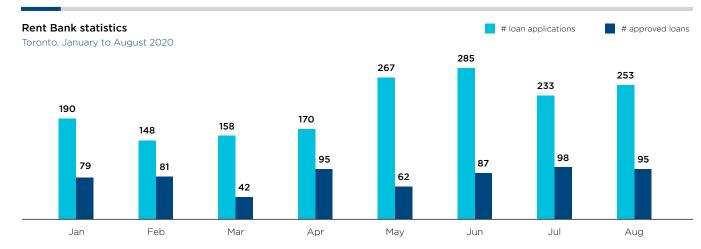
Steve Teekens, executive director of Na-Me-Res, a shelter and affordable housing provider for Indigenous men, describes the current homelessness situation as hitting "epidemic proportions." He has been working in this field for decades and said this "overshadows anything I've seen before."

A representative of the Toronto Drop-in Network estimated between 1,500 and 2,500 people were living in tent cities in June 2020.¹²⁷

Before the pandemic, the shelter system typically operated at about 98% capacity, which on a practical basis made it next to impossible to find a shelter spot. Mohini Datta-Ray, executive director of North York Women's Shelter, told us that this lack of spaces meant that "before the pandemic, only two out of every 10 survivors of violence who need shelter were actually able to get into shelter."

More than half the individual shelter spots in Toronto were eliminated to facilitate social distancing during the pandemic. While the City of Toronto has invested huge sums of money to rent temporary units, the net impact of this is just to replace the total number of units previously available.¹²⁹ The new units are often in rented hotel rooms, which do offer much higher quality of life, while drastically reducing the risk of COVID-19 transmission.

Amid the stark economic issues described above and growing domestic violence issues in the city (see page 37 for a discussion), the pre-existing inadequacy of the shelter system will come more into focus in the comings months and years.



Source: Data provided Housing Stability Services at the City of Toronto.

We took a calculated risk in order to secure desperately needed affordable units by buying the property without all the construction funding.

Steve Teekens

Executive Director, Na-Me-Res

Datta-Ray explains that "shelters were originally formed for women to come for about three or four weeks and then find a new place ... Now, women can't find a place to move for six months, a year, sometimes two years, because there's just nowhere to go. That is the affordable housing crisis in this city," she explains.

Teekens said he is "extremely worried about winter."
Out of the Cold programs are one of the ways
Toronto has historically dealt with homelessness
during the winter, but he does not "know how they
are going to be operating this year, because they
were the first things closed up when we had the
pandemic."

Affordable housing solutions are urgently needed

The affordable housing situation in Toronto is much worse than after the last recession in 2008-09. For one, rent and housing prices have surged (see page 69). Additionally, in 2008, about 65,000 people were on the waitlist for subsidized social housing

for slightly more than 90,000 units.¹³⁰ In early 2019, about 110,000 were on the waitlist — more than there are actual units in the city.¹³¹ The City revised its tracking system for subsidized social housing, removing 25,000 from the waitlist in the second quarter of 2019, bringing the size of the waitlist down substantially. In total, 805 were housed in that quarter in social housing.¹³² Last year, for those not on a priority waitlist, the average time it took to get settled in a unit was 12.1 years.¹³³

Teekens says the issue is straightforward, and yet, the solution feels out of reach. "There's not enough housing stock in the city. That's the problem. It's been a problem for decades." Building new affordable housing is "incredibly time-consuming, and time is running out. Any new housing starts that were started today, I don't think they'll be done quick enough to address the housing shortage" he says.

Teekens' organization provides deeply affordable housing, provided at more than 50% below market rate. They recently finalized the purchase of an affordable housing unit with 20 units, but Teekens explains, "we took a calculated risk in order to secure desperately needed affordable units by buying the property without all the construction funding" and they are looking for support in order to finish the new build.

Modular housing

The long lead time to build affordable housing is why the City of Toronto has embraced modular housing. Modular housing is prefabricated in an offsite factory and transported to the site for assembly. On September 11, 2020, the City announced that two nonprofit partners will help deliver new modular housing: The Neighbourhood Group and COTA Health.¹³⁴ The first phase will deliver 100 modular homes on City-owned sites for fall 2020. Over the next 10 years, the City has committed to providing 1,000 modular housing units in Toronto.

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Datta-Ray understands the challenges of providing better housing solutions in this city, and their new shelter was completed only weeks before the pandemic. The organization went through a substantial capital campaign to be able to pay for the building and was able to raise \$3 million of the \$22 million cost of the upgrade.

The results of this investment paid immediate dividends in the pandemic. "Most shelters have had to reduce their capacity. We were able to increase our capacity in our shelter safely, because each family has their own bedroom and bathroom, which is very unusual for [violence against women] shelters. It's something we fought for when redefining the space, knowing that people deserve that healing and privacy and dignity."

The City of Toronto recognizes the limitations of its current strategies. In mid-September 2020, the City released an appeal to the federal and provincial governments to create 3,000 permanent, affordable homes within the next 24 months and to fund support services for 2,000 of these residents. ¹³⁵ The City highlighted that the cost to operate a shelter bed is now double what it was before COVID-19, more than \$6,000 per month, which is far more than the cost of operating supportive housing, which is \$2,000 per month. Opening these facilities would save \$180 million per year in housing costs alone, without considering the costs to health care, long-term care, and the justice system.

Woodgreen Community Services, in collaboration with the Toronto Region Board of Trade and TD Bank, recently released a report looking at the scalability of various affordable housing models that have been implemented in Toronto. The report argues for key principles that Toronto should embrace to ensure adequate affordable housing. Among the principles is purposeful building — or building units for those who will live in them. They also argue for land maximization and using as much land for affordable housing as possible. The report also argues that long-term affordability is critical — it is not enough for units to be temporarily affordable but later price out essential workers.

One interviewee who asked to remain anonymous believes that investing in repairs of existing units also needs to be a high priority. "The amount of folks with serious health conditions who have been trapped in elevators in Toronto Community Housing for hours on end is unbelievable." He believes that lack of affordable and subsidized housing and inadequate investment in these areas is "not an accidental by-product of progress. This is intentional anti-Black racism." The opportunity to invest in retrofits as part of a recovery that could include repairs and other environmental benefits is covered in the "Environment" section on page 98.

Investments in new affordable housing can also pose risks. A 2016 report on fairer transit access in the Greater Toronto and Hamilton Area by researchers

Large new builds can displace people from a neighbourhood they have been living in for a long time, because they can no longer afford the neighbourhood. People are being fully displaced from their networks as they move farther outside of the city.

Phylicia Davis-Wesseling

Founder and Program Manager, KGO Adult Literacy Program



at the City Institute at York University points to solutions. It says that public policy must "not result in a net loss of affordable rents or displacement of vulnerable residents" when investing in new infrastructure.

Phylicia Davis-Wesseling, founder and program manager of KGO Adult Literacy, highlights that "large new builds can displace people from a neighbourhood they have been living in for a long time, because they can no longer afford the neighbourhood. People are being fully displaced from their networks as they move farther outside the city."

Imara Ajani Rolston of the City of Toronto's Confronting Anti-Black Racism Unit points to this being a huge problem around Black displacement due to gentrification. He thinks people need to pay more attention to this issue, since it is "destabilizing our social determinants of health. It is pulling whatever footing Black residents had in this city from under us even further."

Housing needs to be combined with social infrastructure

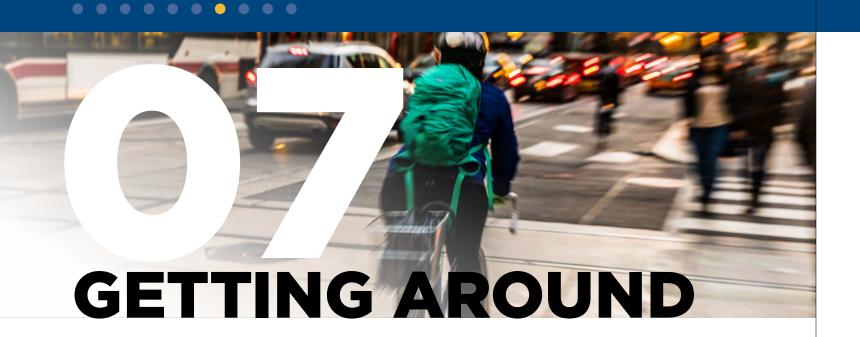
Medhat Mahdy, President and CEO of the YMCA of Greater Toronto, emphasizes that it is not enough just to build housing; you "also have to build social infrastructure." He feels that one of the lessons learned in Toronto over the last decades was that "neighbourhoods where housing was built without social infrastructure are struggling." He explains you need "recreation, you need childcare services, you need small businesses and retail."

The YMCA of Greater Toronto has been undertaking ambitious expansion plans focusing on building new social infrastructure in many of the communities where density has increased, but services have not. The YMCA is also encouraging governments to understand and support the "critical role" of these sorts of investments in ensuring the long-term health of communities.

TAKEAWAYS

- Shelters are experiencing unprecedented challenges, with physical distancing requirements reducing their capacity to house the vulnerable, sending many into parks and other temporary locations.
- The pandemic has accelerated the case for new shelter spaces and, even more so, the need for permanent affordable housing and innovative, cost-effective options, like modular housing.
- Organizations working across the housing continuum require a combination of operating support and capital to bring projects to fruition.
- Eviction-prevention agencies are experiencing unprecedented strain and need support to help residents remain safely at home.
- Keeping vulnerable people housed requires much more than just a permanent roof.
 Wrap-around supports that take into account the complex realities and risks of homelessness are just as important as bricks and mortar.

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The pandemic has fundamentally changed the nature of getting around in Toronto. People have necessarily been spending more time at home, and when they do go out the patterns of mobility are fundamentally different, for good and for bad. For workers on the front lines, leaving home to work is a necessity with very real risk attached. As we emerge from lockdown, we are certainly getting about more, but the changes in how we access the world around us — or not — point to pre-existing vulnerabilities that need new solutions.

What have we learned while staying put that will lead to a more robust, sustainable and inclusive system of getting from place to place and accessing services?

KEY INSIGHTS

- Financial losses at the Toronto Transit
 Commission (TTC) will hit low-income, nonwhite residents hardest, whose ridership is a
 necessity not a choice.
- Car use is up, risking a return to smog days, while active transportation offers a healthy alternative, but one not accessible to all.
- Being isolated at home underscores gaps in access to supports now delivered digitally, a particular issue for those who cannot afford connectivity or whose physical limitations reduce their access.

Revenue shortfall from reduced TTC ridership to further disadvantage marginalized residents

Transit usage is beginning to rebound, but it remains unclear whether or not it will ever recover to its prepandemic levels. Data from the transportation app Moovit shows that for the week ending September 30, 2020, public transit usage had declined by 50% in Toronto, versus a typical week before the pandemic, which was an improvement from the almost 80% decline at the end of April 2020.

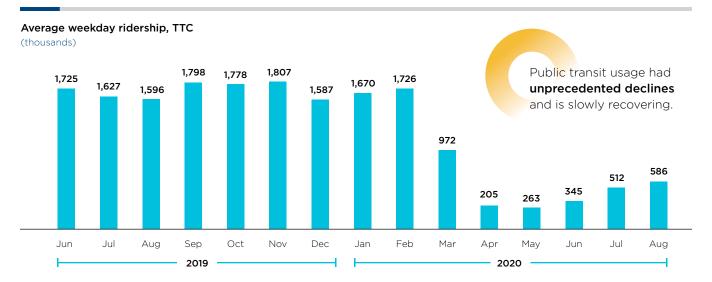
While the TTC's official data lags, it shows similar trends: in August 2020, the TTC averaged 585,800 weekday riders, down from more than 1.6 million the previous year, but an improvement from the just under 204,600 average weekday riders in June 2020.¹³⁹

In the international context, Moovit data indicates that as of August 12, while not at the top of the list of global cities, transit usage in Toronto declined at a higher rate than many major cities, including New York, Montreal, London, Madrid, Paris, and Los Angeles. These declines occur in a context where

Toronto ranks high in overall transit usage and support. Toronto residents are particularly active users of public transportation relative to many global cities, and our fares contribute a much higher proportion of the overall costs of the service.¹⁴⁰

Statistics Canada noted from its 2016 Census that Toronto had a higher percentage of its workforce relying on public transit than any CMA in the country.¹⁴¹

A 2018 study by #CodeRedTO compared public transit usage in the Toronto CMA to other major CMAs around North America and similarly found Toronto's reliance on transit among the highest anywhere. 142 That study by #CodeRedTO also noted that the TTC had the lowest subsidy per transit rider of any system in the Greater Toronto and Hamilton Area, any major transit system in Canada, and any other transit system in the United States to which they compare. Toronto also had the lowest annual operating subsidy as a percentage of total costs.



Source: TTC via Toronto Economic Bulletin¹⁴³

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Percentage of respondents who stopped riding transit, by household income

City of Toronto, May 2020



Percentage of respondents who stopped riding transit, by ethnicity

City of Toronto, May 2020



Source: Preliminary Results from the Public Transit and COVID-19 Survey¹⁴⁴

The low subsidy ratio, coupled with the massive decline in ridership during COVID-19, mean that the TTC will be short about \$700 million by the end of 2020. The province announced in mid-August 2020 that it would allocate \$404 million to the TTC, drastically reducing but not entirely eliminating the TTC's deficit.¹⁴⁵

The deficit remains, even with the City operating transit systems at around 85% of standard operating capacity. Toronto has indicated it will not increase to 100% capacity until ridership returns to above 50% of normal.¹⁴⁶

While the agreement between the province and the City reduces the magnitude of the crisis, the short-and long-term implications remain unclear.

A recent survey of Toronto transit users by researchers from the University of Toronto found that: 24% said they would not use the transit until they were vaccinated, and an additional 13% said they would not use public transit until the pandemic is declared over. If these sorts of declines materialize, the TTC's financial challenges will undoubtedly extend into next year as well, making further cutbacks in service and repair increasingly likely.

In the United States, the head of the transit system in San Francisco warned about the possibility of a "death spiral" for public transit that does not receive adequate government support. This refers to a situation where cuts to service are required, and upgrades and repairs decline, making public transit a less convenient and appealing option for commuters, causing further declines in service and repairs.

These risks to service levels pose the most challenges to low-income and racialized people in the city, and especially women, who tend to rely the most on public transit. According to the 2016 Census, more than half of racialized women in Toronto relied on public transit for their commute (51%), compared to 37% of white women, 33% of non-white men, and only 27% of white males. Black (59%) and Filipino (63%) women had an even higher reliance on public transit.¹⁴⁹

While low-income and BIPOC women were more likely to be using public transit before the pandemic, they are also far less likely to have stopped using it.¹⁵⁰ For example, in the U of T transit study mentioned previously, only 14% of those with \$125,000-plus in household income were still riding transit, compared to 41% of those with less than \$40.000 in household income.

Many of these lower-income riders are non-white: 27% of white respondents indicated they were still riding public transit, compared to 44% of Black and 50% of Filipino respondents. And many are also essential workers with no option but to take public transit to get to work and back. The unique challenges of essential workers in the pandemic are explored further in the "Work" section on page 48.

While the role that public transit plays in spreading COVID-19 is hotly debated, those groups that have continued to use transit do tend to have higher rates of COVID-19 (see the "Health and Wellness" section on page 16 for a further discussion).

Further, the TTC notes that its bus fleet is carrying the bulk of users who are still using transit. Bus boarding was at 40% of normal the week of July 4, 2020, while subway boarding was at 22% of normal.¹⁵¹ Bus trips comprised the majority (60%) of the TTC's fares in 2019, and this share has increased significantly since the pandemic.

This pattern of public transit echoes other demographic disparities in the city. In areas like Jane and Finch, transit usage remains incredibly common, while in other parts of the city, transit usage has slowed to a trickle. The map (on the following page) of where crowding remains high shows that usage remains very high in the northwest corner of the city, the parts of the city with the most Black residents, and where many workers are essential workers.

The Local published a piece in June 2020 on the 35 Jane, the bus route at the heart of the overcrowding depicted in the map: "Buses which were supposed to carry no more than 15 passengers were packed elbow-to-elbow with 50, 60, sometimes 70 people, mostly visible minorities. One of those buses, the 35 Jane, was the busiest in all of Toronto. In a heat map produced by the TTC showing overcrowded surface routes, the 35 Jane lit up like a glow stick."

A City representative noted that they had increased routes in this area, but the degree to which that is succeeding at reducing overcrowding is unclear.

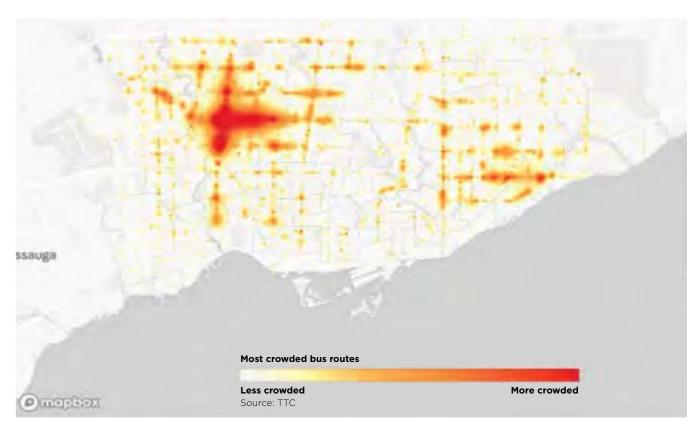
There is also a concern among some advocates that the pandemic will undermine efforts to improve access to affordable transportation in Toronto. Over the last 20 years, the cost of transportation grew at twice the rate of inflation. Revenue shortfalls will necessitate increased government support, a rise in fees, and/or cancelled routes. "We need political will to support these other affordable transportation options that could benefit a wide variety of groups, whether it be people with disabilities or gender nonconforming folks or other people who have been historically neglected systemically," says Armi de Francia of Transportation Equity Toronto.

07. GETTING AROUND

07. GETTING AROUND

Mapping TTC bus usage during the pandemic

Most crowded bus routes between May 15 to June 5



Most crowded bus routes between May 15 to June 5.

Source: Toronto Star. Toronto's COVID-19 divide: The city's northwest corner has been 'failed by the system' 154

Public transit routes may not be a direct source of infection, but reflect where in the city essential workers – people who can't work from home – live. While overall TTC ridership has plummeted during the pandemic, bus routes in the NW were among the most crowded in the city.

The pandemic has brought one innovation to transit that some advocates say is essential. As part of RapidTO, Toronto City Council unanimously approved priority bus lanes along an eight-kilometre stretch on Eglinton Avenue East, Kingston Road, and Morningside Avenue.¹⁵⁵ Experts from the University of Toronto Transportation Research Institute recently concluded that these initiatives would reduce traffic, improve safety, and provide expansive coverage to the most racialized and under-served pockets of the city's suburbs, while being cost-effective and easy to implement.¹⁵⁶

A rise in alternatives to the TTC poses risk and opportunity

While transit has declined, not everyone who stopped using transit remained at home. According to a Statistics Canada study, fewer than one in four (24%) who were using public transit before the pandemic was still using public transit to go to work. More than 40% switched to telework, while a full third switched to an alternative form of transportation (34%).¹⁵⁷

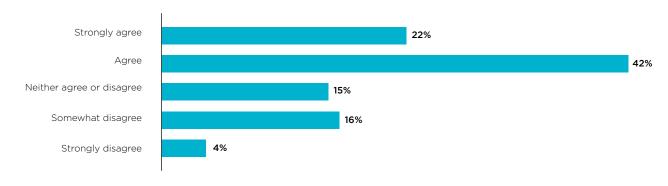
As public transit declined, a high share of those who gave up public transit switched to driving. Statistics Canada noted in June 2020 that of the previous transit users who have been working outside the home, a full three-quarters switched to personal motor vehicles during the pandemic, while only one in five switched to active transportation.

GPS service provider TomTom shows that even with many switching to cars, congestion in the city is still lower than usual. According to its metrics, Toronto's traffic typically runs at about 30% congestion. Several weeks into the COVID-19 restrictions, this plummeted to only 5%, increasing to about 19% by the end of September. It appears that traffic congestion is coming back quicker than transit usage.¹⁵⁸

As time unfolds, there is a genuine risk that car usage could surge even beyond normal, as more people return to work outside the home, but avoid transit. This could reverse decades of progress of having more people relying on sustainable transportation. In cities like Shenzhen, China, one of the first to be hit by the pandemic, public transit usage is still far lower, while more people than ever are driving.¹⁵⁹

Percentage of nonprofits who believe their clients do not have internet access

Organizations operating in Toronto, July/August 2020



Source: 2020 Toronto Nonprofit Survey conducted by Toronto Foundation. For full details, see Appendix.

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Most of us take having a cellphone for granted. A lot of services are now being offered by phone or virtually, but sometimes there are families that don't have those resources. I am worried about these young women who are socially, financially, and emotionally challenged and taking on the biggest job in the world, raising another human being, and are without the social supports they need.

Ekua Asabea Blair *Massey Centre*



But in the short term, at least, declining traffic has led to sharp improvements in certain measures of air quality in Toronto (see page 103). Traffic and emissions in Toronto have been linked to deaths, asthma, and a higher spread of COVID-19, so the reversing of this trend does raise important considerations.

While most people who have given up public transit have switched to cars, active transportation is still up. Data on the exact scope of this is harder to come by, particularly because many are walking and cycling for recreation, as well as to get from place to place.

Whether for personal enjoyment or for getting to work, we know that cycling is on the rise due to increased bicycle sales. According to the NPD Group, US bicycle sales nearly doubled in the first few months of the pandemic, 160 resulting in widespread shortages in stores.

Bike Share Toronto shows a huge increase in interest. In the seven-month period ending July 31, 2020, membership had increased to 186,897, up 76%. Throughout the summer, it continued to see recordhigh usage days, as more and more people turned to bikes as a mode of transportation.¹⁶¹

To encourage more bike usage here, the City of Toronto implemented ActiveTO, resulting in the approval of 40 kilometres of new cycling infrastructure in 2020, with most implemented before the end of the summer. While an improvement, expansion is much lower than Montreal, which added 200 kilometres of space for cyclists and pedestrians. And for the time being, most of the new routes are considered temporary, to be reviewed before the end of 2021. Most of the routes are in the inner core of the city, with few routes in the outer corridors.

The enthusiasm Armi de Francia of Transportation Equity Toronto has for the benefits of active transportation is real but qualified. She points out that low-income communities are hardest hit by the shortage of bikes, as well as access to bicycle repairs. She also references the need for a wider variety of affordable transportation options, so that residents are not restricted to car and transit. In addition to bikes, e-mobility, such as scooters and e-bicycles, present opportunities to open up more transportation alternatives.

A joint letter to the mayor from dozens of environmental organizations noted there is additional need to focus on commuter corridors and not just recreational paths, in order to ensure optimal usage. They recommend creating additional bike corridors along major routes. By converting vehicle lanes to bicycle lanes (and bus lanes), these organizations believe these mechanisms of transit should be encouraged and can be faster than travelling by vehicle.

Staying put at home exacerbates the digital divide

Nonprofits retooled rapidly to unveil new programming online, virtually, and by phone in response to the pandemic. Toronto Foundation's August 2020 survey of nonprofits in the city indicates that nearly every organization (87%) created new digital or virtual programming.

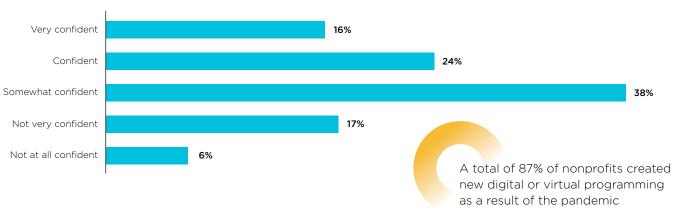
For most residents of Toronto, high-quality, high-speed access to the internet is a given. But 84% of social service organizations and 54% of other organizations agreed that many of their clients did not have the internet at home.

A recent Statistics Canada survey suggested that 94% of residents across Canada have access to some form of internet at home, though it is often not reliable or of high enough speed for work or education. In the city of Toronto alone, with about three million residents, this suggests that at least 180,000 people lack home internet, which reinforces the experience of social service organizations.

In Toronto Foundation's survey, a smaller but still significant number of organizations in the survey (35%) also pointed to lack of phone access among their client base, including 50% of social service agencies, though only 5% strongly agreed with this sentiment

Percentage of nonprofits that are confident that their new digital or virtual programming is accessible and meets all current accessibility requirements including the Accessibility for Ontario with Disabilityes Act (AODA)

Organizations operating in Toronto, July/August 2020



Source: 2020 Toronto Nonprofit Survey conducted by Toronto Foundation. For full details, see Appendix.

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07. GETTING AROUND

07. GETTING AROUND

TORONTO NONPROFIT SURVEY FINDINGS



81% of organizations said government cutbacks could have a larger negative financial impact than that of the pandemic so far.



"Affordable transportation was an issue for many before the COVID crisis and will be worse afterward."

"We've learned that as an organization, we're more resilient than we thought possible."

"We didn't see core funding commitments from funders. That would have helped with the stress. Although dates were changed and much appreciated, we still don't know whether we will get hit with cuts once the new submissions are all in."

Ekua Asabea Blair, CEO of Massey Centre, describes the impact on her client base of young single mothers: "Most of us take having a cellphone for granted. A lot of services are now being offered by phone or virtually, but sometimes there are families that don't have those resources. I am worried about these young women who are socially, financially, and emotionally challenged and taking on the biggest job in the world, raising another human being, and are without the social supports they need."

Shelley Nicholls, former executive director of Sistering, an organization supporting low-income, street-involved women, notes that "there is still 30 to 40% who don't have access to a cellphone or a tablet or anything like that ... It is difficult to help these socially isolated folks, who don't have that technology." ¹⁶⁶

In response, front-line organizations are assisting clients to get access to communications technology and also reaching out directly at home. Keith McCrady, executive director of 2-Spirited People of the 1st Nations, explains: "We know that not everyone has access to phones and access to computers, so we went to those people's houses and ... we made sure [they are] connected." The organization also arranged deliveries of food and other critical supplies to those individuals.

The digital divide has posed particularly complex challenges in the education system, a topic discussed further on page 113.

Residents with disabilities face additional challenges. According to a recent Statistics Canada report, one in five Canadians with a disability does not use the internet at all. The rates of poverty among those with disabilities well exceed the rest of the population, making the internet harder to afford, and many have other limitations as well that make accessing the internet and even the phone more difficult.

Tai Huynh, who runs the Friendly Neighbour Hotline, which has been delivering food to seniors (many with disabilities), points to their particular vulnerabilities during a public health crisis. "[The pandemic] really creates a situation where it isn't safe for them to go out." Service demand peaked at about 300 deliveries a day, dropping to about 100 daily. Huynh says they're preparing for increased demand this fall/winter should virus contraction rates increase.

Phone hotline services are just one way that those with disabilities can access services. Online supports have proliferated, such as online counselling, telehealth, or various supports provided through online classes or video conferencing, but too few of them are fully accessible. The 2020 Toronto Nonprofit Survey found that only 40% of the organizations that added new digital or virtual services were confident that their services meet the requirements of the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act*¹⁶⁹ (chart on page 85).

TAKEAWAYS

- The pandemic has dramatically shifted how people get around in the city, and time will tell to what extent these changes stick.
- Cycling and other active modes of transportation have surged, but uptake is uneven, and income is a factor. Strategies to create more universal access to healthy alternatives need support.
- Overall declines in ridership threaten the viability of the TTC. Organizations advocating for universal access to public transit are important to maintain and strengthen this essential public service.
- With many forced to stay home, loneliness is increasing, and many organizations are looking for volunteers to deliver food and other goods, as well as provide virtual personal and emotional support for isolated individuals.
- Vulnerable residents face a "digital divide," preventing them from accessing core supports.
 Service delivery agents must retool to deliver programs effectively online and ensure that clients have the hardware and software to benefit.

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Recent data shows that the City of Toronto funded more than 30,000 cultural events in 2017, which were attended by more than 17 million people. In 2020, shutdowns cancelled nearly all cultural events scheduled after the middle of March. Access to recreational programming also took a huge hit. It should come as no surprise that organizations in the arts, culture, and recreation sector have been devastated, and that workers have seen huge reductions in hours. Online alternatives are popping up, but they cannot replace the breadth and depth of creative and recreational offerings previously available. Innovations have emerged with programming moving online and outdoors, but creativity alone cannot fill the gaps in revenue needed to sustain the sector.

Arts, culture, and recreation are essential to our wellbeing. How can we ensure that everyone has access and that the sector is not further eroded by the pandemic?

KEY INSIGHTS

- Two-thirds of arts and culture organizations reported a decline in revenue, with a median decline of 50% while hour reductions for workers in the arts, culture, and recreation sector remain the hardest hit of any part of the economy and are recovering slowly.
- Many organizations have pivoted online with some success stories, particularly for larger organizations. But fee revenue for online programming cannot match that generated from the live experience, and access to these virtual experiences is limited for many.
- The importance of culture-specific programming is particularly acute in this period of social distancing.
- The City of Toronto stepped up with new arts and recreational programming and relaxed rules in some cases.
- Toronto Public Library played a critical role in the cultural life of the city during shutdowns, with more than 4.6 million ebooks, audiobooks, movies, and newspapers accessed online.
- Youth sports organizations also posted huge decreases in revenues as leagues were shut down.

Arts and culture organizations are among the hardest hit of all nonprofits

Toronto Foundation's 2020 Toronto Nonprofit Survey found that nearly two-thirds (65%) of organizations in the arts and culture sector reported a decline in revenue, which was slightly higher than the 60% of organizations from other sectors that reported a decline. However, the median decline of 50% of revenues for arts and culture nonprofits was significantly higher than for non-arts and culture organizations (35%).

The Ontario Nonprofit Network's survey found similar results, noting that the most "consistent losses of revenue are reported in sports, recreation, and leisure (92%), arts, heritage, and culture (82%) ... "¹⁷¹ The Toronto Nonprofit Survey did not yield sufficient responses from sports organizations to comment, but they do share many of the characteristics of arts and culture organizations in that many require in-person attendance and rely on fees from these events to cover their costs.

While revenue models vary for arts and culture organizations, more than half (53%) of the income of performing arts organizations (theatre, dance, and music companies) comes from admissions, rentals, bars, parking, and other fees, according to a survey of members of the Canadian Association for the Performing Arts.¹⁷² Many are also reliant on sponsorship dollars, which historically are contingent on a live audience.

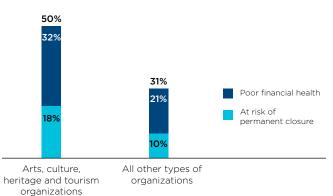
When asked to rate their financial health on a scale of one to 10, with one being at high risk of permanent closure, and 10 being strong financial health, 18% of arts organizations scored themselves a three or less, compared to 10% of all other types of organizations.

Similarly, more arts organizations scored themselves as having a weak financial position (a four or a five).

When asked about the future, few organizations expressed optimism that things will improve in the near term, and most organizations predicted that 2021 would be a difficult year.

Financial health of arts and culture organizations versus other organizations

Organizations operating in Toronto, August 2020



Source: 2020 Toronto Nonprofit Survey conducted by Toronto Foundation. For full details, see Appendix.

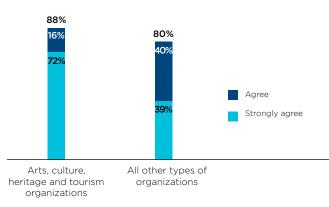
Government funding is playing an important role in keeping arts organizations open

Arts organizations reported a significant amount of government support, which has prevented some of them from going out of business.

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Percentage of organizations that agree that future government cutbacks could have a greater negative impact on their organization than the pandemic itself

Organizations operating in Toronto, July/August 2020



Source: 2020 Toronto Nonprofit Survey conducted by Toronto Foundation. For full details, see Appendix. Please note that figures are rounded.

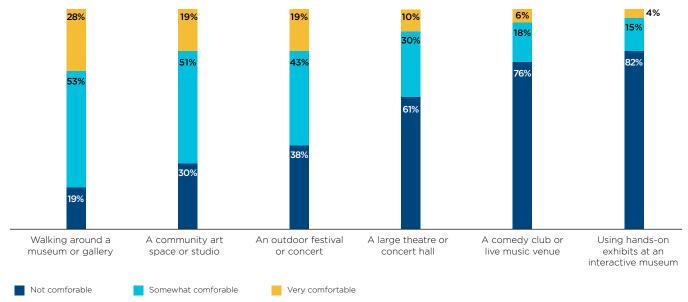
The vast majority, 72% of arts, culture, heritage, and tourism organizations, strongly agree that future government cutbacks could have a bigger impact than the pandemic itself, compared to 39% of other types of organizations.

Arts organizations will have trouble reopening due to public reticence to gather and the reduced income of online events

A June 2020 survey of Ontario residents found that few felt very comfortable attending arts activities.¹⁷³ About one in four (28%) felt very comfortable walking around a museum or gallery, 19% in a community arts space, 19% at an outdoor festival or concert, and 10% or fewer in a larger theatre, concert hall, or other live music venue, although many were somewhat comfortable.

A national survey from May 2020 found similar results, with less than 40% indicating they would feel comfortable attending any of the types of arts activities asked about.¹⁷⁴ Most felt that it would take an average of five months after reopening before they would feel comfortable attending again.

How comfortable would you feel attending the following types of cultural facilities today, assuming they were open and following social distancing guidelines and other health safety procedures?



Source: Audience Outlook Monitor¹⁷⁵

And while many arts organizations have pivoted online, few Canadians are willing to pay the same price for online events. Only 4% of Canadians indicated they would be willing to pay full price for digital performances, and the majority were unsure or expected to pay a quarter or less of normal ticket prices. While going online can expand reach, the associated lower ticket prices can make it difficult to cover costs.

Data on sports participation is lacking, though most organized sports were cancelled. A U.S. survey of youth sports organizers found that 46% thought they were at risk of permanent closure. A much smaller sample from the same survey in July reported that 29% were at risk of permanent closure; it is not clear whether the sample sizes were smaller because some of the leagues had already been shuttered.¹⁷⁶

Without a vaccine, Philip Akin, the now-retired artistic director of Obsidian Theatre Company, explains: "I don't know how the financials are ever going to work. To abide by all of the physical

distancing room rules means that you would be running your theatre at 20% audience, and for most shows, that's [financially] impossible."

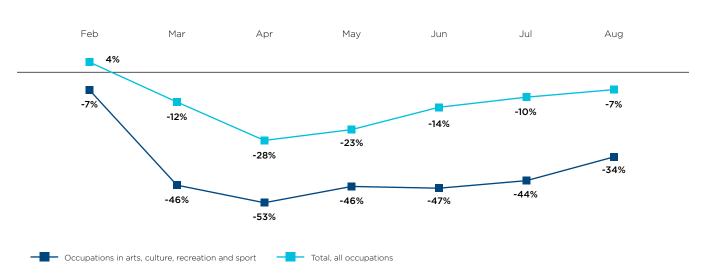
Workers in this sector have also been hit incredibly hard

Across sectors, total hours worked in Ontario were down 7% in August 2020, compared to two years earlier.

But for workers in the arts, culture, recreation, and sport space, hours are down by 34%.

Comparing across all major occupation groups in Ontario, none have had anywhere near as many hours lost as those working in the arts, culture, recreation, and sport-related occupations. The next hardest hit occupation group was sales and service, which was down 14%.

Change in total hours worked (main job) versus two years previous, by occupation $\mbox{\it Ontario}, 2020$

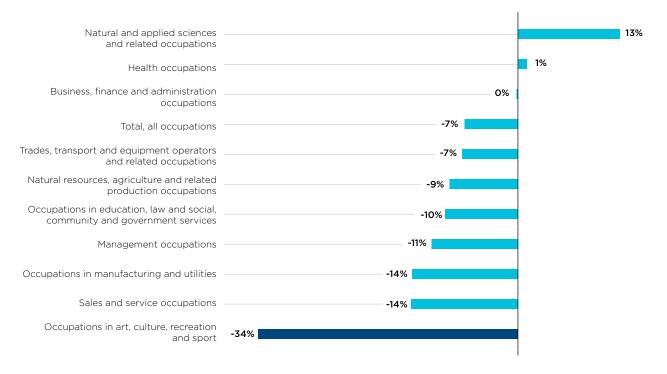


Source: Labour Force Survey. Statistics Canada. Table 14-10-0300-01, Actual hours worked by occupation, monthly, unadjusted for seasonality. Note: By comparing data to same period two years previous, the data is adjusted for seasonality.

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Changes in total hours worked (main job), versus two years previous, by occupation

Ontario, August 2020



Source: Labour Force Survey. Statistics Canada. Table 14-10-0300-01 Actual hours worked by occupation, monthly, unadjusted for seasonality. Note: By comparing data to same period two years previous, the data are adjusted for seasonality.

Toronto Foundation's 2019/20 *Vital Signs Report* pointed to the fact that arts and culture workers have one of the highest rates of poverty of any sector, with particularly high levels of precarious work.¹⁷⁷ In the Toronto CMA in 2015, the median income was \$23,926, almost half the median income of the city as a whole. The reality is even starker for BIPOC artists, whose median incomes are 28% less than for white artists, and for female artists, who earn 18% less than male artists.

It is worth noting that at \$2,000 a month, CERB paid more than a typical Toronto artist makes in a month. "From what I've been told by younger artists, getting the CERB is the most financially secure they have ever felt," says Akin.

Online programming shows some signs of viability

The arts and culture sector has shown significant innovation and adaptation during the pandemic.

Hot Docs — the city's annual documentary film festival — moved online for the first time, presenting 150 films and hosting 70 digital Q&As. Hot Docs began a new partnership with CBC that expanded its national reach, with seven documentaries being shown nationally through CBC. The Docs for Schools at Home and the Docs for Schools projects also reached more than 139,000 unique visitors through Hotdocs.ca.¹⁷⁸

By going online, the festival was able to reach new people: 30% of its audience was new and many from beyond the GTA. Hot Docs launched an online market for filmmakers, and more than 1,600 participants from 46 countries attended the online conference. A full 80% of participating filmmakers reported securing new funding for new or existing projects. Although the attendance numbers were impressive, revenue was only a fraction of that of previous years due to lower overall ticket sales revenue.

Another event with widespread attendance was the interactive *Van Gogh* exhibit, launched this summer. This show, kicked off in the middle of the pandemic, started with planned drive-ins with 10 cars per showing, while 200 people per hour are allowed at the walk-in. More than 100,000 visitors have seen the show, with an average of 1,500 people visiting the exhibit every day.¹⁷⁹

It is important to note that the pivot to online programming is typically more viable for larger institutions, while those operating on tighter budgets with fewer staff and IT infrastructure are at a disadvantage. That said, the sector at all levels has risen to the challenge.

Like many arts, culture, and recreation organizations, Lady Ballers Camp immediately pivoted to identifying ways to "make sure that we were still able to serve our participants," says Toyo Ajibolade, founder and executive director of this organization, which facilitates access for girls to team sports. She describes how the pandemic has been very hard on the students with whom they work: "A lot of our participants shared with us that they were going through anxiety, and loneliness and isolation being in cramped apartments with their whole families and having to stay inside all day." Despite the many challenges facing participants and the organization this summer, the organization was able to reach more youth with its camp-in-a-box program by eliminating barriers in terms of location. She describes how they had "Zoom sessions, fitness segments, dance classes, and art classes, and the

TORONTO NONPROFIT SURVEY FINDINGS



87% of respondents were impressed by how their organization had responded to the pandemic



"We will continue to try and bring community groups together and keep those magical moments where sports unite us at the forefront but this pandemic will have a long-term lasting impact on our charity and the families we serve."

"The initial emergency funds from government were helpful, but this crisis will persist long after those supports expire."

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equipment was all shipped to them." Overall, she feels that a lot of things had gone "better than I ever would have imagined, to be honest with you, and part of that was that we didn't have to find a space big enough to accommodate everyone."

Nia Centre for the Arts, a Toronto-based charity that promotes an appreciation of the arts from across the Afro-Diaspora, also retooled. Executive director Alica Hall explains that many arts organizations were already operating on "razor-thin budgets, and COVID just added to the financial pressure." She says it is a particular challenge in Toronto, where the cost to operate is so high.

The organization's efforts to engage audiences online have been prolific: arts kits were sent to participants across the city, and contests, such as a summer photography challenge, were created, as well as six-word poems about Toronto. Nia Centre for the Arts also launched a mentorship program for Black emerging artists. "All of that is focused on ensuring we don't lose a generation of artists, because they lost opportunities during this pandemic."

Planning going forward is difficult, since "arts exhibitions are typically planned more than a year in advance, so the ability to create a viable model for the future in these uncertain times proves really difficult," she says.

Apart from online engagement in art, Nia's main focus is to get its facility renovated into a professional arts space uptown. "Donors supporting our capital campaign are really critical, particularly because, as a Black arts organization, we historically haven't been supported. We don't have the same kind of connection to mainstream arts networks and funders ... And that's largely related to the fact that Black art isn't seen as valid and professional."



When we're in difficult times, when we're trying to work through complex ideas, artists can help us really be laser-focused on what matters, and assess and encourage us to have open dialogue, encourage us to reflect. The arts are necessary in the good times, but even more so in the difficult times.

Alica Hall

Executive Director, Nia Centre for the Arts

For Black-led and Black-focused arts organizations, current circumstances underline the essential role the arts play in society. "In light of the state-sponsored violence and protests that erupted around North America and Britain, in relation to anti-Black racism, it was important for us to create spaces for our community to talk about the issues," says Hall. "When we're in difficult times, when we're trying to work through complex ideas, artists can help us really be laser-focused on what matters, and assess and encourage us to have open dialogue, encourage us to reflect. The arts are necessary in the good times, but even more so in the difficult times." she adds.

Outdoor arts and recreation activities have played an important role over the summer

The City of Toronto stepped up with a number of new initiatives in support of mental health and wellbeing. As part of ActiveTO, 40 kilometres of new bike routes will be available by the end of the year. CafeTO supported 760 restaurants to expand onto curbs and occupy parkettes, so that people could eat outdoors, and more than 660,000 people accessed outdoor pools as part of SwimTO.¹⁸⁰

Toronto Public Library played a critical role in the cultural life of the city during shutdowns, with more than 4.6 million ebooks, audiobooks, movies, and newspapers accessed online, and with more than 360,000 people who accessed online courses from March to September 2020.

CampTO had 17,900 registrants across 1,200 programs, while ParksPlayTO and Summer in the 6IX offered more than 15,000 hours of programming, with approximately 18,000 visits.

In mid-September, the City of Toronto announced BigArtTO, ¹⁸¹ a City-led art initiative involving large-scale projections in each of the City of Toronto's 25 wards. Together, they will showcase 200 hours of illuminated art created by local artists and will run until December 5, 2020. This initiative will set the stage for ArtworxTO: Toronto's Year of Public Art, a broader project to ensure that residents have access to art.

In this report's "Environment" chapter, increase in park usage in Toronto is highlighted, with people spending more than double the amount of time in parks in August 2020 than the baseline, though October showed park usage reverting closer to normal levels (see page 99). Concurrent with this

trend, Toronto's popular Arts in the Park series was relaunched. It was disrupted early in the summer, but by July events were successfully relaunched, with attendance comparable to previous years, according to the Toronto Arts Council.

Indigenous communities have adapted their cultural practices during the pandemic

Tanya Chung-Tiam-Fook, senior lead of Indigenous Engagement at Evergreen Canada, shared that "many Indigenous groups are performing ceremonies online and in very creative digital ways. Many teachers have started sharing videos on Facebook or Instagram. Many people I spoke to had realized they can reach more people because they are not bounded by geography. But there is a tension there, because that connection to nature is so strong and it cannot be replicated online."

Pamela Hart, executive director of Native Women's Resource Centre of Toronto, spoke about the importance of many cultural activities in the Indigenous community. "Indigenous Day is huge. Normally, we have pow wows, gatherings, and feasts with stories, and foods, and ceremony. That wasn't an option this year. So, we created a full day of programming online where you could sign in, watch different workshops. There was teaching, there was a dance demo, our healer spoke. It was all there so you could feel like part of something big happening in the community."

Chung-Tiam-Fook spoke to the challenges in the current environment where opportunities for in-person connection can be rare: "Just to have the sacred fires, there are bylaws. And sometimes permits are not approved in time."

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While the City has been trying to be accommodating, the bylaws can be restrictive and do not always fully consider different peoples' cultural and spiritual needs. She shares that it is "really foundational for the Indigenous community in a city like Toronto to feel that they have a sense of belonging here. That they can live as their whole self and engage in city life as an Indigenous person."

Steve Teekens, executive director of Na-Me-Res, also shares his views about the critical role that culture plays in healing for residents of the Indigenous men's residence. The organization's onsite medicine gardens are one of the key cultural activities they could continue during the pandemic. "Working with plants and working with the earth has been very healing," he explains. Teekens also references their drumming programs that had to be curtailed, as they are typically accompanied by singing. "When you're singing hard, you're pushing air out through your mouth, and you don't want to push that out to the guy across from you." Instead, they're looking at workshops to teach the men how to make their own hand drums and then take them outside to parks for drum circles.

Jeffrey Schiffer, executive director of Native Child and Family Services of Toronto, emphasizes the link between mental health and access to the outdoors and physical activity in an interview with the *Toronto Star*.¹⁸² "Vulnerable kids are struggling right now with a lot of mental health challenges, isolation, anxiety, depression, problems concentrating, and for Indigenous people this is really acute, because of the history of disease pandemics for Indigenous folks."

His organization is involved with a pilot program supported by the City of Toronto's Indigenous Affairs Office, Toronto Public Health, and the province. They're working with 30 families over four weeks to ensure kids remain active outdoors.

"A lot of affluent families in Toronto have backyards and areas where they can take their kids outside regularly. If you're an Indigenous mom living below the poverty line in a Toronto community housing building with four kids, it's not easy to get your kids outside," Schiffer explained to the *Star*.

Schiffer hopes the pilot can provide an opportunity to reflect on what reconciliation looks like in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, especially since Indigenous people often connect to land for wellness and healing.



Disease epidemics are not new for Indigenous people. There's a deep history of disease epidemics here in Turtle Island, and so there's a lot of intergenerational trauma being triggered right now by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Jeffrey Schiffer

Executive Director, Native Child and Family Services of Toronto

"Disease epidemics are not new for Indigenous people. There's a deep history of disease epidemics here in Turtle Island, and so there's a lot of intergenerational trauma being triggered right now by the COVID-19 pandemic," he said. Chung-Tiam-Fook of Evergreen made the same point: "For most Canadians, they call this unprecedented. But for Ingenious communities, these times are very much precedented."

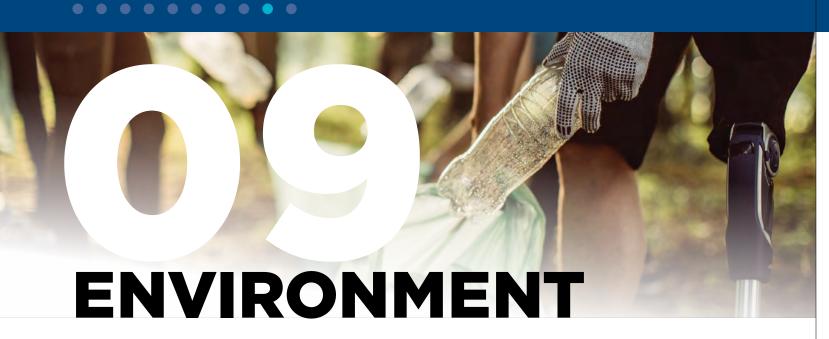
"Since the COVID-19 pandemic started, we really witnessed a lot of the prevention programs that the community relies on disappear," Schiffer said. "As a result, there has been less opportunity for Indigenous families to seek support for things like domestic abuse." Schiffer said.

"Everybody right now is really concerned about the immediate health effects of COVID-19, and that's very important, and we're concerned about that, too. But what we're also concerned about is, what happens if kids are inside for six months," Schiffer said.

TAKEAWAYS

- Arts, culture, and recreation organizations have been among the hardest hit financially of all nonprofits.
- Outdoor and virtual events and experiences
 have helped stem the losses and will require
 ongoing and increased uptake from the public
 to sustain the vital organizations behind them.
- In light of the losses in ticket and membership revenue, increased donations are needed to help organizations avoid deficits and keep people employed.
- Matching the live experience is a tall order, and organizations require additional resources and new skills to translate work and engagement online, for the immediate and longer term, too.
- Physical distancing is a short-term response to the public health crisis that can also open doors to new ways to deliver programming and reach new audiences.
- Arts, culture, and recreation organizations embrace the broad range of health and other social benefits that come through engagement and need reliable long-term support to continue to meet community needs.

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With reductions in physical movement, as well as in industry across the city, air quality in Toronto improved significantly, albeit temporarily, during the pandemic. At the same time, the presence of wildlife in areas not previously seen is reportedly up. And residents in the city have emerged from social isolation indoors to take up cycling and embrace the beauty and community connections offered by City parks. Coming out of the hottest summer ever on record in Toronto, climate issues have been top of mind. Alternative transportation and building retrofits are rising to the fore as both mitigating measures and economic drivers. Environmental policy that capitalizes on these shifts could result in advancements for the natural world and our place in it.

Ignoring the opportunity could set us back decades. As winter approaches, how can we improve access to outdoor activities, and how can retrofits indoors lead us to a green recovery and environmental justice?

KEY INSIGHTS

- Park usage in Toronto doubled in the summer of 2020, compared to 2019.
- July 2020 was the hottest month ever recorded in Toronto, since records began 84 years ago
- People without home air conditioning who had to self-isolate during the pandemic faced greater risks of other negative health consequences.
- Energy used in homes and commercial buildings accounts for more than half of Toronto's GHG emissions, and an extensive energy retrofit program will be required for Toronto to meet its GHG reduction targets.
- Poor air quality disproportionately affects lowincome and BIPOC communities. Air quality has improved during the pandemic, and a widespread adoption of electric vehicles would help make these gains permanent.

City parks usage is at an all-time high

According to data provided by Google Mobility for the "Toronto Region," park usage in Toronto increased by 94% in June, 100% in July, and 97% in August, compared to the baseline. This level of sustained park usage is unprecedented.

However, as the weather cooled, park usage began to decline, with a 71% average increase in September and only a 27% increase in the first nine days of October. As the weather cools, it appears Canadians may be using parks at pre-pandemic levels.

While this surge in park use is noteworthy, Toronto lags the rest of the province, which saw park usage increase 145% in August (versus 97% in Toronto).

Park People conducted a national survey about park usage and found that just under half of the people surveyed in Toronto reported increasing their time at parks (47%), with about one in three indicating they are going to parks more (31%), and about one in six indicating they are going to parks much more (16%).¹⁸⁴ About one-third of respondents in Toronto indicated they were using parks less (33%), with 16% saying they were using them much less.

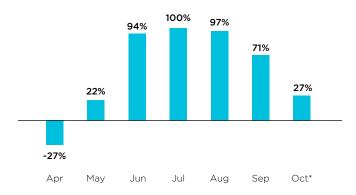
Park People's survey found that 84% of respondents said that parks had become a more important part of their mental health, 72% said it had become more important to their physical health, 68% to their connection to nature, and 44% to their social connections. Given the important role parks have been playing in mental health, this does signal some mental health challenges in the coming winter, especially given the already unprecedented strain on mental health providers in the city (see page 25).

Toronto's responses were very similar to the rest of the country, except that Torontonians appear to be more likely to support the closure of roads/streets to open up public spaces for pedestrians (65% versus, 44% in the rest of the country), and they want more washrooms in parks (57% in Toronto versus 43% in the rest of the country).¹⁸⁵

A researcher comparing empirical studies examining access to parks in developed countries concluded that "low socio-economic and ethnic minority people have access to fewer acres of parks, fewer acres of parks per person, and to parks with lower quality, maintenance, and safety than more privileged people." 186

Knowing similar issues exist in Toronto, Park People has a project called Sparking Change to help groups in underserved parts of the city organize park events and take more ownership of their neighbourhood parks. The project was started to create more equity in Toronto parks. Seed funding and one-on-one coaching helped grow new groups in underserved communities, where there were no park groups before. The groups increased the usage of parks in these neighbourhoods.

Percentage change in time spent at parks versus baseline Toronto Region, 2020



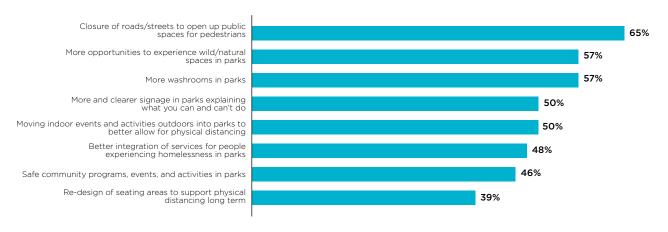
Source: Google COVID-19 Community Mobility Reports

Note: Raw data was downloaded and a simple average of the daily change was calculated for each month. October data reflects the first nine days of October.

09. ENVIRONMENT 09. ENVIRONMENT

Percentage of people who would like to see the following changes in parks

Toronto, 2020



Source: Park People¹⁸⁷

Minaz Asani-Kanji, manager of outreach for Park People, who oversees the Sparking Change program, says: "Parks in underserved neighbourhoods often don't fit the needs of the people who live around them. They are flat expanses of grass that lack infrastructure, few benches to sit on, no shelter or shade, no lights after dark, unstable paths to walk on, no barbeque pits, and old, rusty playgrounds that need to be replaced." She goes on to say that "people in underserved communities don't use parks in the same way as people in more affluent communities. They need parks that fit their needs. This is why events and activities they organize are so important and can bring these parks to life."

Laura Hammond of the Birchmount Community
Action Council explains that the recent addition of
a new playground in their neighbourhood increased
daytime usage, but that many residents still feel
unsafe to use the park at night. With funds from Park
People, she worked with others in the community to
arrange for a fitness instructor to provide classes in
the park.



Parks in underserved neighbourhoods often don't fit the needs of the people who live around them. They are flat expanses of grass that lack infrastructure, few benches to sit on, no shelter or shade, no lights after dark, unstable paths to walk on, no barbeque pits, and old, rusty playgrounds that need to be replaced.

Minaz Asani-Kanji
Manager of Outreach, Park People

Winter is coming

Given the important role that parks have been playing for many during the pandemic, both Asani-Kanji and Hammond worry about the winter.

Hammond explains that some newcomer and low-income residents are not used to the cold, and that barriers to winter activities need to be better addressed. "When it comes to enjoying outdoor recreation like skiing, hockey, skating, resource limitations are a major constraint," says Asani-Kanji. But Hammond does believe that winter initiatives can be successful when they are properly resourced: "We did a March Break camp, and we were able to get the City to provide all the skates. None of the kids had skates. When you're providing the tools and resources, it's easier for them to want to explore."

Outdoor spaces also play key roles for Indigenous communities, both spiritually and for cultural and recreational activities. This topic is explored further on page 95.

COVID-19 underscores the risks in Toronto's residential infrastructure

July 2020 was the hottest month ever recorded in Toronto since records were first tracked by Environment Canada 84 years ago. Select data is presented in the chart on the <u>following page</u>.

Toronto Public Health previously estimated that 120 people die directly from heat in any given year. This excludes deaths that are caused indirectly by heat, like heart attacks, which can be exacerbated by heat waves. It is almost certain that more people died from heat this summer, but we will likely never know the full extent of the excess mortality. Typically, during a heat wave people without air conditioning are encouraged to leave their homes and visit a cooling centre, but this was not possible during the physical distancing required from COVID-19.

TORONTO NONPROFIT SURVEY FINDINGS



73% of organizations reported there will be a significant financial impact next year

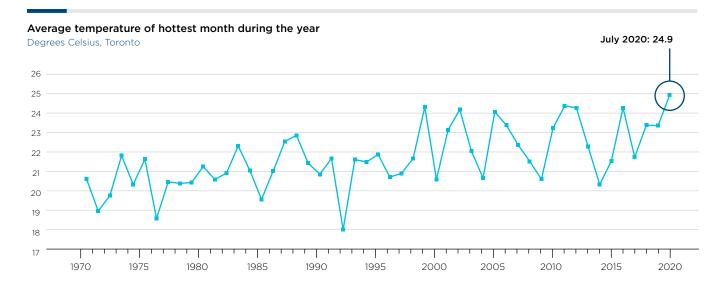


"Instead of thinking strictly about individual organization survival, I would hope that this pandemic allows us to think more globally and comprehensively about how we treat other people and the planet."

"The full impact of COVID-19 on fundraising will not be felt until November or December when most individuals tend to give their annual donation."

"Most nonprofits lack long-term core funding, this makes it impossible to integrate long-term planning in the nonprofit world."

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Source: Weatherstats.ca. Note: Calculations by author using average hourly daily temperatures for Toronto for each day going back to 1970.

While most Toronto residents (88%) have home air conditioning, a significant number of those who do not are among the more than 500,000 people living in older high-rise towers, most of which lack central air conditioning. The indoor temperatures in these old towers can be extreme, well in excess of outdoor temperatures and often above 30°C, which can lead to serious health consequences.

Toronto's Resilience Strategy noted that these towers present the "single most pressing, urgent priority for the city's resilience." This is especially true as many scientists are predicting that pandemics will become more common due to climate change and human encroachment on wilderness due to population growth.

Building retrofits are an environmental and an economic opportunity

Energy used in homes and commercial buildings accounts for more than half of Toronto's GHG emissions, dominated by natural gas used for heating and hot water. The City has set a long-term target of reducing GHG emissions by 65% by 2030 from 1990 levels,¹⁹¹ and this will not be achieved without a complete and expensive retrofit of all older buildings by 2050.¹⁹²

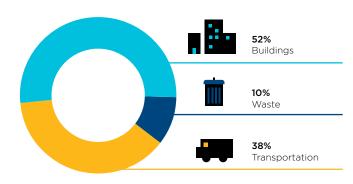
A group of more than 50 nonprofits submitted their joint priorities for an equitable recovery to the Toronto Office of Recovery and Rebuild at the end of July 2020.¹⁹³ Many of the organizations interviewed

for this report were part of this submission, and they recommend "deep retrofits that climate-proof buildings that meet Toronto Green Standards, while improving building accessibility and ensuring tenants are protected from displacement." They also recommend broader programs to encourage large-scale energy retrofits with a focus on these older buildings, as well as investment in workforce development opportunities to ensure that some of these jobs go to equity-seeking groups.

Emmay Mah, executive director of the Toronto Environmental Alliance (TEA), noted that "our city needs a building retrofit strategy that clearly prioritizes which buildings need to be retrofitted first to increase climate resilience, protect tenants and preserve affordable housing." TEA is working with other organizations to figure out "how local communities and tenants will be involved in retrofit planning and how these investments can create workforce pathways for equity-seeking groups".

Rosemarie Powell, executive director of the Toronto Community Benefits Network, works to create agreements for large infrastructure projects that

Toronto's greenhouse gas emissions 2017



Source: TransformTO¹⁹⁵

directly benefit the surrounding neighbourhood. She believes this will be a massive opportunity to aid economic recovery. "Community benefits agreements are about hiring people from local communities, people who have been underrepresented in the industry and in the workforce to get access to the jobs and opportunities that are coming out of these massive government investments," Powell explains. She sees building retrofits in low-income communities as a great opportunity.

The federal government announced plans to support significant funding for energy-efficient retrofits through its speech from the throne, but details are still sparse.

Benefits of improved air quality are likely short lived

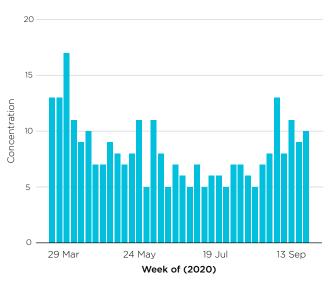
The University of Toronto's Southern Ontario Centre for Atmospheric Aerosol Research has been monitoring air quality in downtown Toronto and found huge improvements during the beginning of the pandemic that diminished as traffic came back. For example, the amount of nitrogen dioxide in the air in downtown Toronto at the TTC's College station dropped from an average of more than 10 parts per billion in February and early March 2020 to five parts per billion the week of August 2, 2020, while increasing back up to 11 parts per billion the week of September 13, 2020. Nitrogen dioxide can contribute to respiratory diseases, hospitalizations, and death.¹⁹⁴

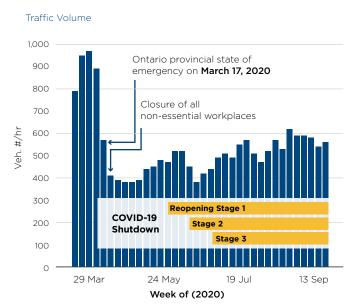
As discussed in the "Getting Around" chapter, there are risks that these gains will be short lived. Transit use is returning much more slowly than car use. For the time being, commuting remains down, but as it rises, the increased car use will negatively impact air quality.

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Weekly concentrations of traffic-related air pollutants*







Source: Southern Ontario Centre for Atmospheric Aerosol Research¹⁹⁶

*Air quality and traffic information in this image is preliminary and provided for educational purposes only. Weekly median concentrations on College St./St. George St., Toronto, ON, Canada.

There are about 3,000 premature deaths per year that can be attributed to air pollution in the Greater Toronto Hamilton Area.¹⁹⁷ Toronto Public Health estimates 1,300 annual premature deaths attributable to air quality in the city of Toronto itself, in addition to 3,550 hospitalizations and many more people experiencing lower quality of life.¹⁹⁸

Traffic emissions are the leading cause of these deaths and hospitalizations. People living within 500 metres of a major highway are most affected by emissions, which often means that marginalized communities are most at risk. "Poor air quality is an issue that doesn't rise to the top, but it should," says Black Creek Community Health Centre's Cheryl Prescod. "It is a preventable thing and is something that we can address that could cause some long-term improvements for everyone," she adds.

Poor air quality can exacerbate risks for respiratory ailments, including COVID-19.

A recent submission to the City on climate change by a coalition of Toronto environmental groups made the following recommendations, among others:¹⁹⁹

- Make the pilot ActiveTO car-free zones permanent in 2021, with the goal of creating a zero-emission area in the city by 2025;
- Require City of Toronto vehicles (the TTC, taxis, school buses, garbage trucks, etc.) to be electric by 2025;
- Banning internal combustion engines within the city by 2030.

According to the June 2020 *Clearing the Air* report from Environmental Defence and the Ontario Public Health Association, the public benefits of government funding for cleaner cars and trucks are clear.²⁰⁰ The report found that every electric vehicle replacing a gas-powered car results in \$9,850 in social benefits, an amount almost double the federal government's current \$5,000 per vehicle incentive. The report also indicates that converting all cars and SUVs into electric vehicles would lead to 313 fewer deaths per year, and converting all transport trucks to more environmentally friendly models would result in 275 fewer deaths. Converting all transit systems in the region to electric buses would also lead to 143 fewer deaths.

TAKEAWAYS

- The pandemic has underlined the gaps in access to park and recreation infrastructure in low-income neighbourhoods.
- Opportunity is ripe for investments in sustainable transportation (cycling, electric vehicles), as the benefits to air quality have risen to the fore.
- The emergency crisis response has kept environmental issues in the background, while the time is ideal for climate-positive solutions.
 Environmental non-governmental organizations need ongoing, unrestricted support to maintain momentum.
- A green recovery depends on job growth that will be climate friendly and sustainable. Linking these jobs to employment gaps for marginalized populations will ensure that a green recovery is also a just recovery. Large construction projects that hire locally will produce greater value.

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The shocks to the educational system were unfathomable in scale, affecting students of all ages across all jurisdictions. Schools in Toronto went on March Break and then never reopened their physical locations until the fall, leading to an unprecedented educational experiment, as students were taught online for the entire spring. While some experienced mildly inconvenient disruptions to their learning, others were set off track, with long-term implications. The same is true for adult learners for whom education and training are key to individual and community-wide economic recovery.

What needs to happen now so that marginalized learners don't fall even further behind as a result of physical distancing?

KEY INSIGHTS

• Online learning impacts students unevenly, based on income and circumstance.

- The mental health status of youth was declining pre-COVID-19 and is only getting worse.
- Connectivity is critical in the post-COVID-19 world — and BIPOC communities are more likely to lack it.
- Lone-parent families are forced to make additional sacrifices to support at-home learning.
- Post-secondary students are facing grim employment and financial realities.
- Lifelong learning and skills upgrading will play a critical role in the economic recovery.

Many students have been set back, especially low-income and non-white learners

Virtual school became a common solution for parents who were worried about sending their children back to school. Virtual school represents 37% of elementary students in the Toronto District School Board (TDSB) as of October 13, up from 34% as of September 30.²⁰¹ For post-secondary, as of September 30, 25% of students were attending virtual schools.²⁰² The data from elementary school shows that if anything, enrolment may continue to increase at virtual schools as more children switched into them than away from them.

Students who are attending virtual school tend to be lower socioeconomic status (SES), have parents with less education, and are more likely to be racialized, particularly South Asian. Only 14% of students at virtual school were white compared to 36% attending in person.²⁰³ On the other hand, 35% of students attending virtual school were South Asian compared to 17% attending in-person. Black students were equally likely to be in virtual or in-person schooling, comprising 11% of attendees at both.

This analysis mirrors analysis by other researchers who looked at initial registration data, who found that neighbourhoods with the lowest learning opportunities to start were most likely to opt for virtual schooling.²⁰⁴

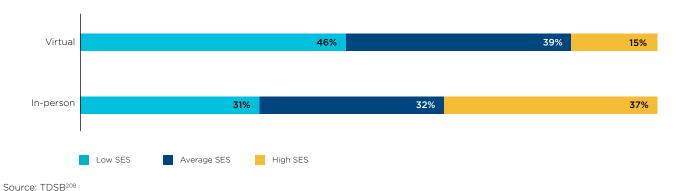
For virtual school, class sizes are larger.²⁰⁵ For elementary school, average class sizes online were projected to be 35 for Grades 4 to 8, compared to 18 at high priority schools, and 24 for all other schools. With larger classrooms sizes, it can be hard for students to get support when they need it.

Overall enrolment at the TDSB was also down about 1.5%, versus projections, representing almost 4,000 students though why students are not attending is unknown.²⁰⁶

There have been other unique challenges for online education, such as delayed starts to virtual education as teachers were still being hired, with some estimating that up to 30,000 students did not originally have teachers assigned.²⁰⁷

Socioeconomic status (SES) demographics of Grade 3 to 12

Students as of September 30, 2020, TDSB



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In early October, TDSB sent a memo to students saying that substantial changes to virtual schooling were coming including class realignment and shifting 570 teachers from in-class to virtual.²⁰⁹ Reports from mid-October suggest almost 2.000 TDSB students were still waiting for laptops and tablets to arrive to support virtual learning.²¹⁰ These challenges are not surprising given the complexity of the task of switching so many students online, but will hamper learning for many students.

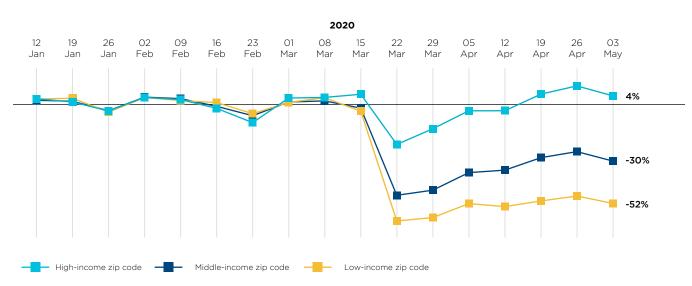
While research in Canada is limited, data from the United States raises serious concerns about the long-term educational outcomes for students resulting from the expedited shift to online learning, especially for students with low socio-economic status. According to Zearn Math platform, between

March and May 2020, U.S. students in high-income in usage of this online educational platform, versus before the pandemic (see chart). In stark contrast, usage plummeted 52% for students in the lowest income households (the bottom 25%) during the comprise the majority, landed in the middle.

The TDSB and the Toronto Catholic District School Board (TDCSB) do not use the Zearn platform, so comparable data for Toronto is not available. However, when the TDSB surveyed students about its learning experience, almost half (47%) of students said they were not enjoying learning at home. While the majority felt they had what was necessary to continue with remote learning (68%), this leaves a massive number of students who feel ill-equipped to continue learning at home.²¹¹

Participation in online math coursework on the Zern platform

United States, 2020



Source: Zearn Math²¹²

Total participation in online math coursework in the United States decreased by 52% for the lowest income households and increased slightly in high-income households.

households (the top 25%) reported a slight increase same time frame. Middle-income households, which

There's a growing inequity. People with wealth, space, time and the ability to support students at home can create these consistent rhythms. They are going to be able to learn, while other kids aren't.

Michael Carlson

Educator, Kapapamahchakwew — Wandering Spirit School

Michael Carlson, an educator at Kapapamahchakwew Wandering Spirit School, which serves Indigenous students, points to the gap in learning that emerged in the spring semester. "There's a growing inequity. People with wealth, space, time and the ability to support students at home can create these consistent rhythms. They are going to be able to learn, while other kids aren't." says Carlson.

He noted that the biggest issues arise in those who "are struggling with things like survival: food, shelter, living in group homes ... those kids aren't learning at all at home." In particular, Carlson is concerned for the future. "I think the metric to look for is graduation rates across the TDSB, based on racial data and income data. I think you're going to see a significant drop here," he explains.

These realities will exacerbate pre-existing conditions in the schools. Before the pandemic, students from the lowest-income families in the TDSB were 3.3 times more likely to drop out than students from the highest income categories.²¹³

As we highlighted in the 2019/20 Toronto's Vital Signs Report, only 30% of graduating students in the TDSB who identified as Black confirmed attendance at university, compared to 50% of white students.²¹⁴ There is great risk that substantial progress in improving high-school graduation and post-secondary confirmation rates among vulnerable students will be undone by the pandemic. In June 2020, the TDSB announced the creation of the Centre of Excellence for Black Student Achievement, staffed by more than 20 people, who will be focused on offering support for Black students.²¹⁵

Liben Gebremikael, executive director of TAIBU Community Health Centre, is worried about the long-term education and health outcomes for both students and parents: "Black students, racialized students, and low-income students in low-income neighborhoods are already struggling with academic success in schools, because of various issues. And now with this pandemic and online schooling, how much impact is that going to have? With all the other stresses that are going on, I think that is an area that we are trying to pay attention to and providing some support for parents and students on an ongoing basis ... so that they don't fall further back from where they were before."

BLAC, the Black Legal Action Centre, released a statement in response to a recent review of anti-Black racism in Ontario's Peel Region:216

"African-Canadian students have disproportionately low educational attainment, high dropout rates, suspensions and expulsions and they are more likely than other children to be streamed into general and basic-level academic programmes, instead of advanced-level programmes. Race-based stereotypes about African Canadian students' scholastic ability have had a devastating impact. The three primary concerns expressed were differential treatment, lack of Black and African-Canadian history and culture in the curriculum and the absence of Black teachers ... It is essential that the Minister

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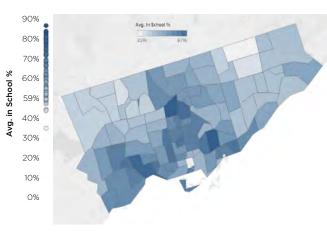
of Education put in place mandatory procedures to deal with the significant anti-Black racism at the Peel District School Board. Indeed, it is essential that the Minister put in place mandatory procedures to deal with anti-Black racism across Ontario."

According to many experts, face-to-face, in-school learning is the best choice for positive educational outcomes for most students. For example, some researchers wrote in a recent position paper that:

"Face-to-face, in-school learning in a controlled, safe and supported environment is the preferred choice, recognizing that alternative arrangements will be necessary for some students."²¹⁷

Percentage of students who confirmed in-person registration as of September 2, 2020

TDSB, by Forward Sortation Area



Source: TDSB registration survey data file prepared by Chmielewski and Khan²¹⁸ combined with additional school address information available online. For detailed interpretation and school level results, please see Chmielewski and Khan.

Note: All analysis and mapping conducted by the author. The original data was processed and combined with additional information about the postal geography of each school to produce this map. All calculations are simple averages of scores for each school in each forward sortation area. About one in ten students did not originally respond to the registration survey, so this distorts some of the analysis but the final percentage of students attending in-person school was similar to the original registrations.

55

We need to structure education in ways that make sense for everyone and for communities like ours at Jane and Finch that's been one of the hardest hit by COVID. How do we create an in-school learning experience where students are not afraid to come to school and get COVID?

Tesfai Mengesha

Executive Director, Success Beyond Limits

For racialized students, the challenge of in-person learning is unique and elevated due to the prevalence of COVID-19 in the neighbourhoods where they often live. (See the "Health and Wellness" section on page 16 for a further discussion of which communities have been most heavily affected.)

Tesfai Mengesha, executive director of operations of Success Beyond Limits, underlines the need for unique strategies based on factors like geography. "We need to structure education in ways that make sense for everyone and for communities like ours at Jane and Finch that's been one of the hardest hit by COVID. How do we create an in-school learning experience, where students are not afraid to come to school and get COVID when there is such a high incidence rate in community?" he asks.

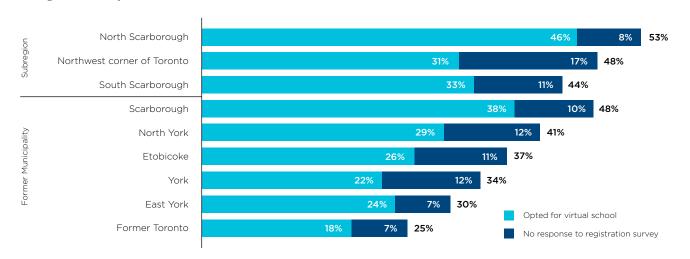
Opportunities to support children are not equal, either. Disproportionately, students from higher income households are able to afford support for tutoring or mentoring.

The federal government has announced plans for substantial investment in national childcare, and before- and after-school programs. Initiatives like these will become all the more critical, while supporting learners left behind by the pandemic.

Students in north Scarborough and the northwest corner of the city were least likely to attend school in-person. For example, in the former city of Toronto, only 25% of students opted-in for virtual school or did not respond to the TDSB's initial registration survey. For students in north Scarborough this was 53%. For the northwest corner of Toronto, it was 48%. Many of these areas were also disproportionately impacted by COVID-19 and other severe impacts of the pandemic, so the additional burden of virtual school will make it challenging for learners in these neighborhoods.

Percentage of students opting for virtual school as of September 2, 2020 based on region of Toronto

TDSB registration survey



Source: TDSB registration survey data file prepared by Chmielewski and Khan²¹⁹ combined with additional school address information available online.

Note: In the chart, north Scarborough refers to the postal codes starting with M1B, M1T, M1V, M1W, M1X, and M1S. South Scarborough refers to all other postal codes in Scarborough. Northwest Toronto refers to the postal codes starting with M3N, M3L, M3M, M3J, M9L, M9M, M9W, and M9V. Further note: Many students did not originally respond to the registration survey. The exact reasons for this are unclear, but areas of the city with low opt-ins are also areas of the city with high infection rates (see Health and Wellness for a higher discussion). Parents may have been waiting longer to see how infection trends in their neighbourhood evolved. Numbers in the chart may not add up due to rounding.

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Schools' ability to connect students is a lifeline for many

Kids Help Phone experienced unprecedented demand for their texting services over several months this year, beginning in April 2020. During that month, the organization witnessed a 140% spike in year-over-year volume, compared to 2019. Demand remained at more than 100% of 2019's totals each month through to July 2020. Kids Help Phone also experienced surges in call volumes. For example, in April 2020, young people in Toronto reached out 72% more than in 2019, as compared to 57% for the rest of the country.

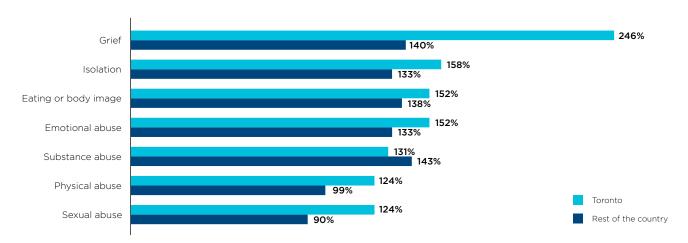
The biggest increases in Toronto were messages about grief, with a 246% increase in volumes, much higher than the rest of the country that saw a 140% increase in messages around grief. It is not clear why this increase was so much higher than in the rest of country, but it is possible that it is due to some of the unique health, labour, and social characteristics in Toronto, versus the rest of the country.

The next biggest increase in text messaging volume was about isolation. "The shutdown was quite difficult for youth. School is not just a place for education; it's also a place for social networks. For some people, it might be a safety network. We've seen that has been a challenge and also has exasperated stress and mental health and retriggering from for some of the youth," explains TAIBU's Gebremikael.

Many community organizations that support students retooled their work in response to the growing mental health challenges among youth. "To help kids cope with the isolation, we took our youth space virtual, with much of the traditional programming now being delivered online," says Success Beyond Limits' Mengesha. While the school boards were critical, numerous organizations stepped in to deliver tutoring, counselling, and recreational activities, and these will continue to be important throughout the school year.

Year-over-year increase in text message volumes around issue areas, by topic area

Early March 2020 until end of June 2020



Source: Kids Help Phone. Note: Kids Help Phone recently released an <u>Insights portal</u> on their website to provide ongoing information on emerging mental health issues due to COVID-19.²²¹

Connectivity is increasingly essential, while racialized communities are least likely to have access

Unlike some jurisdictions, the TDSB and the TDCSB made considerable efforts to ensure students had access to laptops and the internet, to be able to learn online. One individual, who asked to remain anonymous, noted that it took months for the technology to be distributed in their community, "so that's two months of a learning gap and learning loss that's happening. And it's obviously disproportionately affecting low-income families, because others can afford to have those pieces of tech," she says.

In Toronto, the school boards purchased thousands of devices to ensure that students had internet access at home, and many interviewees indicated that this had made an important difference.

But the devices alone are not enough. Access to high-quality internet, having supports from parents who are working at home, and having quiet space in the house are all factors that determine whether or not a student can leverage the IT resources.

"Reliable access to technology and internet is no longer a luxury. It's an essential for education," says Eugenia Addy, chief executive officer of Visions of Science. Addy's organization works in marginalized communities to advance educational achievement through science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) clubs. Participation rates were down by 50% due to the challenges that children and youth face in many low-income communities. "While the programs were successful in many ways, not everyone could get online ... and a lot of kids were just dealing with their own things; a lot of our parents were dealing with their own things."



Reliable access to technology and internet is no longer a luxury. It's an essential for education.

Eugenia Addy, CEO, Visions of Science

They did a community assessment that pointed to "ridiculous" disparities concerning who had access to technology and supports around that, too. "We need to make sure that with every approach that we propose, we are taking into account, 'How does it impact the systemic barriers that were present before this crisis?' And I think that technology, in some cases, can be used as a tool to dismantle those barriers, but not if it is without adequate access, without equitable access."

Erin Knight, a representative of Open Media, wrote a piece for First Policy Response, advocating for universal connectivity to ensure that the leastadvantaged students do not fall further behind:²²²

"To ensure all students are able to participate fully and equitably in online post-secondary education, we need universal connectivity. The federal government actually promised this goal back in March 2019. But to date, there's been no actual action. Press releases and promises are useless to a student who can no longer attend school — they need results.

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It's clear to see the future of education is online. For many, it presents an incredible opportunity and provides a safe learning environment during the pandemic. But until the groundwork of universal connectivity is reality, online learning provides yet one more barrier to equitable access to post-secondary education in Canada."

Other issues caused by lack of connectivity in Toronto are explored in our "Getting Around" section on page 78.

Lone-parent families are among the hardest hit during the pandemic

In the 2011–16 student cohort, only 61% of children in one-parent families confirmed post-secondary attendance, considerably lower than the rate of 76% for those in two-parent families.²²³

Utcha Sawyer, executive director of the Boys and Girls Club of East Scarborough, describes how the role of a single parent is already daunting, without the added pressures of the pandemic. "Layering on the systemic issues that we're experiencing through COVID, it's just been almost unbearable for our single parents."

Ekua Asabea Blair, CEO of the Massey Centre, which works with single parents, highlighted the issue of childcare. Many of their clients are trying to raise children, while also continuing their own education, all without childcare supports. "Trying to care for a young child is extremely difficult ... [but imagine] also keeping up with your own school work."

For recent graduates, the employment situation is unparalleled in Canadian history

While the overall unemployment rate doubled for most of the population, for youth it was close to triple (11.9% in 2019 and 29.4% in May 2020).²²⁴ While unemployment subsequently improved for youth by the end of the summer 2020, it was still at an all-time high compared to previous years.²²⁵

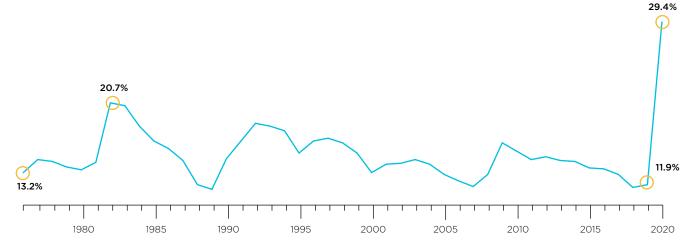
The impact of this labour market disruption will be severe.

Over the last two decades, the cost of tuition has increased dramatically,²²⁶ leaving more and more students graduating with significant debt. The labour market has become increasingly precarious, so even before the pandemic students were graduating into jobs that often gave no security, often provided no benefits or retirement savings. At the same time, housing has increased by more than 120% in the last decade, while rent has increased by almost 90% (see page 69).

For young people who were already among the most challenged in our society, this combination of extremely high costs and few labour market outcomes will have financial implications for decades to come.

Maximum monthly youth umployment rate registered during each year

Canada

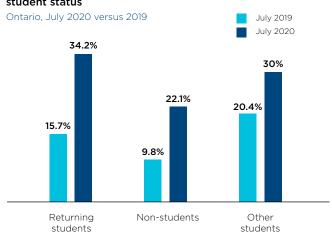


Source: Statsitics Canada, Labour Force Survey²²⁸

One economist, who studied the economic impacts of the less-severe downturns of the '80s and '90s, concluded that the impact on students' wages lasted up to a decade, and the impact was more severe for the less-qualified students. Even in those less-severe economic situations, he concluded that "earnings were lower even after finding work, even after five years. The gap eventually closed after a decade, but by then, unlucky labour market entrants had lost, on average, 5 percent of their lifetime earnings."²²⁷

In today's environment, where costs are higher, the outcomes for these students could be significant.

Youth (aged 15 to 24 years) unemployment rate by



Source: Statistics Canada, Labour Force Survey²²⁹

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Only 18% of the largest Toronto nonprofits are BIPOC-led, compared to 38% of the smallest organizations (53% of Toronto residents identify as BIPOC).



"I am hopeful that the sustained attention to the inequities (poverty, racism) that the pandemic revealed will lead to policy and system changes that benefit the most marginalized individuals in our communities. (Open hearts and open minds can only make things better for society)."

"The federal funding being distributed first come first served meant that those organizations with staff dedicated to grant writing could turn their applications around quickly and get the funding."

Adult learning is on the rise

In the midst of labour disruption, adult learning also came into focus. In 2019, 25% of Canadians reported that they had entered into more education and training due to changes in their labour status. By 2020 and post-COVID-19, this number had increased to 34%.²³⁰ For many who need the learning opportunities most, they often lack access to Wi-Fi and devices, along with basic keyboarding skills and how to navigate a computer. "In the adult literacy framework, digital literacy is not adequately or equitably supported," says Phylicia Davis-Wesseling, founder and program manager of KGO Adult Literacy Program. Many are racialized women and essential workers who are making the hard decision to continue providing for their families, while working in unsafe labour conditions. With jobs that do not allow time off or access to training programs, their learning happens once they're home, at the end of a long day.

In the midst of the pandemic, even with these challenges, organizations offering adult training are seeing huge increases in demand. "Our numbers just shot up," says Alfred Jean-Baptiste, executive director of the Centre of Learning & Development. "We were already in the process of figuring out how to scale our immigrant women's leadership training program, but with the switch to online learning, we were able to significantly improve access." For programs that used to train 10 to 15 women, they can now open up to 40 or more. And this is critical, since their work is all about preparing women for employment. "This, I think, is a new day, a new way of thinking about how we do what we've been doing for a long time, in new and improved ways."

Davis-Wesseling worries that "adult education has been left behind" in the response to COVID-19, as attention has been focused on youth education, which is also critical. She believes "that more support and funding is needed for digital technology and literacy programs" to respond to the increased needs of adult learners. While many have faced challenges, Davis-Wesseling focuses on the benefits of successfully helping adult learners through this, speaking of the "long-lasting impact of adult learning on an existential level." By supporting adult learners, especially those with low literacy, "it gives them a sense of confidence ... it helps them feel like they belong, that they're not ignored, that their voice is heard and their voice is powerful. And that takes them to so many different places and allows them to keep on climbing."

TAKEAWAYS

- With learning being done at a distance, access to technology is essential.
 Racialized and low-income students face the biggest gaps.
- The online educational experience cannot replace face-to-face learning, especially for vulnerable students without family support.
 Funding for before- and after-school programming is more important now than ever to fill some of the gaps.
- Reductions in learning experiences will likely impact graduation rates, and postsecondary attendance and achievement for years to come, underlining the importance of sustained supports for anchor organizations.
- Declining mental health among students must be addressed, so that they do not fall further behind.
- Many organizations will be looking for volunteers, including mentors, tutors, and supports, for learning and helping youth achieve employment outcomes.
- Many organizations are receiving funds for emergency support, but unrestricted funding is still required to support core operations and long-term planning, even as immediate resources are being allocated to ensure that students can return to school.

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2020 TORONTO NONPROFIT SURVEY

Method

The 2020 Toronto Nonprofit Survey was a survey conducted by Toronto Foundation from July 29 to August 24, 2020. The survey was distributed to organizations that Toronto Foundation had granted to or had past relationships with and who were known to have substantial operations in Toronto. The survey was also distributed via social media, by 211 Central Region, and by select funder organizations that work in Toronto.

The survey was focused on how nonprofits had been affected by the pandemic. The survey took most respondents approximately 10 to 16 minutes to complete.

Sample size

The survey had 233 full completes with 286 partial completes. Responses in the charts and analysis presented in this report vary from 233 to 286, depending on the chart.

Questions

For more information or questions, please contact Steven Ayer at steve@goodstrategy.ca.

Sample characteristics

All organizations indicated they had substantial operations in Toronto.

Just over half of the organizations surveyed were local (51%), one in five were regional or provincial (21%), one in five were national (19%), and the remainder were international or other.

A plurality of respondents were CEOs or executive directors (43%), 7% were board members, 16% were VPs or directors, and the remainder were managers (15%), other staff members (12%), or a variety of other categories.

Of respondents, 32% best described themselves as social services organizations, 14% were health organizations, and other categories were all less than 10%.

One-third of respondents had annual revenues of less than \$500,000 per year (30%), one in four had revenues between \$500,000 and \$2,999,999 (26%), and one in three had revenues of more than \$3 million per year (32%). About one in 10 did not know or preferred not to state their annual revenue.

Results are distributed throughout this report with an emphasis in the "Civic Engagement and Belonging" Chapter. While statistical significance testing was not discussed throughout this report, generally only findings that were significant made it into the final report.

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THANK YOU

We are grateful to the founders of Toronto's *Vital Signs* Report,

Maytree and Laidlaw Foundation,
and in particular, Alan Broadbent
and Nathan Gilbert, who created the model in 2001 to monitor quality of life in Toronto.

The report found its home at Toronto Foundation in 2003 to allow for long-term stewardship and to catalyze the findings. Since 2006, Community Foundations of Canada has co-ordinated the national and international replication of *Vital Signs*, which is now being used by 32 Canadian communities and 80 globally.



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