

COVID Impacts

DIFFERENTIAL MORTALITY RATE IN CANADA'S ETHNO-CULTURAL COMMUNITIES

The COVID-19 pandemic has affected many Canadians as more than 347,000 Canadians have tested positive and nearly 12,000 have passed to date (Canada, 2020a). As our mortality rate continues to increase, we are now seeing disparities in the populations sub-groups who are most vulnerable to the virus. In fact, Statistics Canada found that Canadian neighborhoods with higher proportions of visible minorities have higher mortality rates (Canada, 2020b). The study shows that this is due to pre-existing inequalities and health issues existing for many within these neighborhoods. However, Statistics Canada and provinces have yet to collect or release data analyzing the mortality rate between sub-groups in Canada, such as visible minorities and Indigenous peoples.

WHAT WE KNOW: CANADA

While the Canadian government has reported the number of cases, hospitalization and deaths within Indigenous communities, they have failed to report statistics for Indigenous peoples who live off reserves. Additionally, the accuracy and reliability of Indigenous Services Canada's data is questioned by many (Skye, 2020). To date, Indigenous Services Canada reported 3,451 cases and 29 deaths on First Nations Reserves (Canada, 2020c).

For Black Canadians, research indicates that they are more likely to contract the virus, and three times more likely than the national average to know someone who died due to COVID-19 (Lockhart and Nur, 2020). Montréal houses the second largest Black population in Canada, and alarmingly, they have the highest mortality rate in the city (Canada, 2020b; Statistics Canada, 2019). In Toronto, a similar narrative can be found as South Asian Canadians living in Toronto are overrepresented among COVID-19 cases (Canada, 2020b).

UNITED STATES

In comparison, the United States has been more proactive in collecting race-based mortality rates within their country. Research has found that of the 263,000 deaths, African Americans, Indigenous peoples and Latinx Americans experience the highest mortality rates (APM Research Lab, 2020). In sum, these groups are dying at three times the rate than White Americans. By comparison, the study states that if these three groups died at the same rate as White Americans, over 20,000 African Americans, 10,000 Latino Americans and 1,000 Indigenous peoples would still be alive today. While White Americans' overall mortality numbers may be the highest, they are still among the lowest when comparing between populations subgroups in the country (CDC, 2020). Reasons for these disparities in the United States mirrors the findings of Statistics Canada, wherein visible minorities are dying at a faster rate due to neighborhoods which lack necessities and experience overall lower health statuses (Scott and Animashaun, 2020).

FINAL POINTS

These findings allow us to understand that while COVID-19 can impact anyone, some groups are disproportionately affected by the virus. However, Canadian provinces and the government are failing to collect the race-based data which is urgently needed to help those most affected by COVID-19. The United States has proactively recorded race and mortality data and have been able to identify that COVID-19 is affecting minorities at a higher rate. We are soon approaching a year of enduring this pandemic. As such, it is now time for Canada to collect this data, not only because it is important to know, but also because this information can assist in the development of targeted policy interventions such as public education or rapid testing responses to the most impacted communities.

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ABOUT THE PROJECT

The researchers: A cross-national team of over 30 researchers led by Dr. Lori Wilkinson, Dr. Kiera Ladner and Dr. Jack Jedwab, received funding from CIHR for this study *COVID-19's differential impact on the mental and emotional health of Indigenous Peoples and Newcomers: A socioeconomic analysis of Canada, US and Mexico*.

The study: The team has been collecting data in Canada since March 9 and the United States since March 27, 2020. Ongoing survey waves now include Mexico. Our goal is to measure and follow the changes in attitudes, behaviours, health and socioeconomic outcomes among persons living in all three countries using a mixed methodology of surveys and unstructured interviews.

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