

INTERNAL INFORMATION NOTE

Gender Equity Office

Date: April 9, 2020

GBA+ and COVID-19

GBA+ AND COVID-19:

- Gender-Based Analysis Plus (GBA+) is an analytical process that helps decision makers understand how different sub-populations experience the world differently and are affected differently by policies, programs, and services. GBA+ was approved for implementation across the BC Public Service in July 2018.
- COVID-19 is a global pandemic that impacts different populations differently based on factors such as: age, gender, health status, geographic location, and socio-economic status, etc.
- Incorporating GBA+ into COVID-19 response will help ensure that all British Columbians, regardless of their particular circumstances, are adequately supported through the pandemic.

KEY FACTS TO CONSIDER:

Economic Impact

- Women are at higher risk of long-term economic insecurity as a result of this pandemic and its implications for the economy because of their over-representation in part time work and highly-affected sectors like health, education, home support, and service.
 - Early data from Statistics Canada's most recent Labour Force Survey shows that in March 2020, women and youth in B.C. were disproportionately affected. Of the total jobs lost in B.C., women lost 81,200 jobs while men lost 51,300. Among youth (age 15-24), 50,300 jobs were lost, 30,300 of which were occupied by women.¹
- Women are also much more likely to take on a double burden of having to balance work and care for children who are now out of school due to school closures²:
 - Globally, women are approximately 70% of workers in the health and social care sector,³ meaning women are more likely to be providing paid care to people with

¹ Labour Force Survey, March 2020. Statistics Canada. April 9, 2020. <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/daily-quotidien/200409/dq200409a-eng.htm>

² World Economic Forum. *The coronavirus fallout may be worse for women than men*. March 12, 2020. <https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2020/03/the-coronavirus-fallout-may-be-worse-for-women-than-men-heres-why/>

³ Gender Equity in the health workforce. World Health Organization. March 2019. <https://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/handle/10665/311314/WHO-HIS-HWF-Gender-WP1-2019.1-eng.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y>

the virus while also performing unpaid care work.⁴

- Women are the majority of home support workers in Canada, and a significant number of these women are immigrants and visible minorities.⁵
- Women comprise 72% of all teachers in BC and 83% of teachers aged 29 or below.⁶
- Women make up 62% of minimum wage workers in BC,⁷ and 70% of minimum wage earners between the ages of 25-54.⁸ Closure of many restaurants and bars will disproportionately impact women because almost 82% of liquor servers are women.⁹ Liquor server minimum wage is below minimum wage (\$12.70 per hour compared with \$13.85 per hour).¹⁰
- The gender pay gap means that women are at particular risk of struggling if pandemic supports are delivered at EI percentages, as women in Canada, on average, earn 75% of what men in Canada earn.¹¹ This is further compounded for Indigenous women¹² and visible minorities.¹³
- Economic insecurity is also likely to be amplified for people with disabilities (a higher proportion of whom are women) given only 60.4% of working-age (25-64) people with disabilities are employed.¹⁴
 - Disability prevalence is also higher among Indigenous people across Canada (36% of Indigenous women and 26% of Indigenous men)¹⁵ and they tend to have a lower income than Indigenous people without disabilities (excludes those on reserve).¹⁶
 - For disabled trans and racialized people¹⁷ intersections of discrimination based on gender, race, disability, and immigration status compound employment issues leading to chronic unemployment, under-employment, precarious employment,

⁴ Care Economy. International Labour Organization. Accessed March 18, 2020. https://www.ilo.org/asia/media-centre/news/WCMS_633284/lang-en/index.htm

⁵ Ontario Personal Support Workers in Home and Community Care: CRNCC/PSNO Survey Results, <https://www.ryerson.ca/content/dam/crncc/knowledge/infocus/factsheets/InFocus-Ontario%20PSWs%20in%20Home%20and%20Community%20Care.pdf>, retrieved March 17, 2020

⁶ BC Teacher's Federation, Oct. 2018, retrieved March 17, 2020, <https://bctf.ca/publications/ResearchReports.aspx?id=52009>

⁷ BC Fair Wages Commission Report, Jan. 2018

⁸ BC Federation of Labour, fact sheet, retrieved March 17, 2020, <https://bcfed.ca/sites/default/files/attachments/BCFED%20minimum%20wage%20fact%20sheet%20-%20women.pdf>

⁹ BC Fair Wages Commission, Second Report, March 2018

¹⁰ Government of BC. Minimum Wage. Accessed March 18, 2020. <https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/employment-business/employment-standards-advice/employment-standards/wages/minimum-wage>

¹¹ Table 11-10-0240-01 Distribution of employment income of individuals by sex and work activity, Canada, provinces and selected census metropolitan areas, <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/t1/tbl1/en/tv.action?pid=1110024001&pickMembers%5B0%5D=1.1&pickMembers%5B1%5D=2.1&pickMembers%5B2%5D=3.1>

¹² Canadian Women's Foundation, retrieved on March 17, 2020, <https://canadianwomen.org/the-facts/the-gender-pay-gap/>

¹³ Conference Board of Canada, Racial Wage Gap, April 2017, <https://www.conferenceboard.ca/hcp/provincial/society/racial-gap.aspx>

¹⁴ Statistics Canada. Table 13-10-0374-01 Persons with and without disabilities aged 15 years and over, by age group and sex, Canada, provinces and territories

¹⁵ Statistics Canada, 2017 Aboriginal Peoples Survey.

¹⁶ The Federal, Provincial and Territorial Persons with Disabilities Advisory Committee, 2017 Indigenous Peoples Living Off Reserve with Disabilities.

¹⁷ Poverty Reduction in Trans Non-Binary & Two-Spirit Communities: A Summary Report for the British Columbia Ministry of Social Development and Poverty Reduction 2019

and/or exploitative employment.

- Sex workers who rely on physical contact and those who perform in live venues are reportedly already experiencing deep income reductions as a result of COVID-19¹⁸, increasing dangers as sex workers with fewer clients who are in financial hardship are more likely to get pushed into increasingly unsafe situations.
- While economic impacts of the COVID-19 emergency are already being felt across the business community, Chinese-owned businesses have reportedly experienced economic impacts of COVID-19 well before these impacts became generalized.¹⁹

Poverty

- Vulnerability in times of disruption is strongly linked to socio-economic factors, with people in poverty and those with low incomes tending to be less prepared, and more likely to suffer more serious consequences from service and societal disruption.²⁰
- The largest share of persons living in poverty in the province are women aged 18 to 64 in families, which is likely due to the high rate of poverty among single mothers.²¹ They are now at an even higher risk having to balance school closures, economic insecurity, and expectations of increased gender-based violence.
- Additionally, LGBTQ2S+ youth make-up 40 per cent of homeless and precariously housed young people in Canada²² and are less likely to have access to financial and emotional supports from their families.
- Refugee families facing economic insecurity are also likely to face amplified risks due to overcrowding, making self-isolation more difficult. Incidences of crowding are highest in Vancouver (44.8%).²³

Indigenous Peoples

- Indigenous populations face heightened health risks due to lower health outcomes compared with non-Indigenous Canadians. First Nations, Métis, and Inuit populations disproportionately face health disparities linked to the social determinants of health (i.e. social, economic, cultural, political inequities).²⁴ This may make Indigenous populations

¹⁸ How COVID-19 Is Driving Sex Workers Like Me Into Crisis, Molly Simmons, Huffpost, March 17, 2020, retrieved on same, https://www.huffpost.com/entry/sex-workers-covid-19-coronavirus_n_5e6f653ac5b6bd8156fbbdc5

¹⁹ Metro Vancouver Chinese restaurants facing fallout as coronavirus fears spread, Vancouver Courier, Feb. 11, 2020, <https://www.vancourier.com/news/metro-vancouver-chinese-restaurants-facing-fallout-as-coronavirus-fears-spread-1.24073529>

²⁰ Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), Impact: How Disasters Affect People of Low Socioeconomic Status, July 2017, https://www.samhsa.gov/sites/default/files/dtac/srb-low-ses_2.pdf

²¹ A Poverty Reduction Plan for BC. CCPA. December 2008. <https://www.policyalternatives.ca/publications/reports/poverty-reduction-plan-bc>

²² Homeless Hub, Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Transsexual, Queer, Questioning and Two-Spirit (LGBTQ2S), retrieved March 18, 2020, <https://www.homelesshub.ca/about-homelessness/population-specific/lesbian-gay-bisexual-transgender-transsexual-queer>

²³ CMHC. *Recent Refugee Housing Conditions in Canada (2016 Census Data)*. April 26, 2019. <https://www.cmhc-schl.gc.ca/en/data-and-research/publications-and-reports/socio-economic-analysis-recent-refugee-housing-conditions-canada>

²⁴ National Collaborating Centre for Aboriginal Health. *An Overview of Aboriginal Health in Canada*. 2013. <https://www.ccnsa->

more vulnerable to complications and death from COVID-19.

- Close to one fifth of Indigenous people live in crowded housing,²⁵ which can make self-isolation more difficult, increase risk to vulnerable family members, and increase mental health consequences due to lack of space and privacy for long stretches of time.
- Indigenous elders are knowledge keepers and, often, among the last fluent speakers of their languages. Among First Nations in BC, fluent speakers make up only 3% of the total population and the majority are elders (51.9% over 65 years old).²⁶ Any loss of these important community leaders could have significant cultural and mental health impacts on Indigenous Peoples.
- At this time the First Nations Health Authority is recommending Indigenous communities consider alternatives to large cultural gatherings,²⁷ however, long-lasting restrictions on cultural practices and ceremonies may trigger PTSD and intergenerational trauma related to colonial bans on cultural activities.
- People from rural and remote communities and people on-reserve often need to travel significant distances to receive health care services. Self-monitoring may be made more difficult and dangerous in many Indigenous communities due to the associated travel times to clinical care.
- 61 Indigenous communities in Canada are under long-term boil water advisories.²⁸ Given that handwashing is required to contain COVID-19, these communities may be at particular risk during the pandemic.
- Many First Nations communities already have extremely high levels of food insecurity.²⁹ This may put Indigenous families at further risk in a prolonged COVID-19 pandemic. Food insecurity could be compounded if access to wild foods becomes restricted due to sickness, social distancing and self-isolation. Access to traditional foods is important to the health and well-being of both urban and non-urban Indigenous peoples.³⁰
- Indigenous people are overrepresented among those serving time in the Canadian federal prison system, with Indigenous people accounting for 30% of all federal inmates – including 42% of all female inmates – compared to their share of the Canadian population, which is 5%.³¹ The federal Public Safety Minister has asked the federal prison service and the parole board to look at early release for some offenders to prevent

nccah.ca/docs/context/FS-OverviewAboriginalHealth-EN.pdf

²⁵ Statistics Canada, First Nations People, Métis and Inuit in Canada: Diverse and Growing Populations, March 2018, <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/89-659-x/89-659-x2018001-eng.htm>

²⁶ First Peoples' Cultural Council. *Report on the Status of B.C. First Nations Languages*. 2018. <http://www.fpcc.ca/files/PDF/FPCC-LanguageReport-180716-WEB.pdf>

²⁷ First Nations Health Authority. *Information on novel coronavirus (COVID-19)*. March 17, 2020. <https://www.fnha.ca/about/news-and-events/news/information-on-novel-coronavirus>

²⁸ Indigenous Services Canada, Ending long-term drinking water advisories, Feb. 2020, <https://www.sac-iscc.gc.ca/eng/1506514143353/1533317130660>

²⁹ First Nations Food, Nutrition and Environment Study, Final Report for Eight Assembly of First Nations Regions, Nov. 2019, <http://www.fnfnes.ca/download>

³⁰ Healthy Eating and Food Security for Urban Aboriginal Peoples Living in Vancouver, PHSA

³¹ *Indigenous People in Federal Custody Surpasses 30% Correctional Investigator Issues Statement and Challenge*. Office of the Correctional Investigator. January 21, 2020. <https://www.oci-bec.gc.ca/cnt/comm/press/press20200121-eng.aspx>

the spread of COVID-19 behind bars where they may face unique risks.³²

Violence and Crime

- Inequality makes people who are systematically disadvantaged more vulnerable to the impact of disaster. Women are one of these groups. On average, social disruption and breakdown kills more women than men, and at an earlier age.³³
- Because reporting and law enforcement can be disrupted during disasters, it can be even more difficult for vulnerable people to report a crime that already suffers from low reporting rates.³⁴
- Home is a dangerous place for those who are already experiencing domestic violence. Combined with isolation, economic insecurity is likely to lead to acute stress and risky coping strategies that can increase the risk of gender-based violence.³⁵ This is likely to be compounded for women living in rural areas, Indigenous women, women with a disability, women who identify as lesbian, gay or bisexual, and trans people.^{36 37 38 39}
- Increased racism against people of Asian background has been reported in Vancouver⁴⁰ and the Korean Consulate in Montreal has sent out a warning to those of Korean heritage.⁴¹ Hate crimes have been reported elsewhere around the world, targeting people of Asian background.⁴²

Health

- Populations most at risk with COVID-19 are older adults, those with underlying medical conditions, or those with a compromised immune system⁴³ (including people with HIV, which disproportionately impacts LGBTQ2S+ people, people who use drugs, and Indigenous people).^{44 45 46} People with disabilities may also be at a higher risk, based on

³² Consider releasing some inmates to stem COVID-19 in prisons, minister requests. Canadian Press. March 31, 2020. <https://www.ctvnews.ca/health/coronavirus/consider-releasing-some-inmates-to-stem-covid-19-in-prisons-minister-requests-1.4876496>

³³ Eric Neumayer & Thomas Plümper (2007) The Gendered Nature of Natural Disasters: The Impact of Catastrophic Events on the Gender Gap in Life Expectancy, 1981–2002, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-8306.2007.00563.x>

³⁴ Unseen, unheard: Gender-based violence in disasters, Global study, The International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, 2015,

https://www.ifrc.org/Global/Documents/Secretariat/201511/1297700_GBV_in_Disasters_EN_LR2.pdf

³⁵ Sexual Violence Research Initiative Forum. 2019. <https://www.ifpri.org/blog/how-economic-security-linked-gender-based-violence-new-insights-sexual-violence-research>

³⁶ Statistics Canada, 2014 General Social Survey.

³⁷ Gender-Based Violence, Sexual Assault, and Domestic Violence. Government of B.C. Accessed March 18, 2020.

<https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/safety/public-safety/domestic-violence>

³⁸ Province of BC. Gender Equity Office. 2019 GBA+ Orientation (PowerPoint, p. 11)

³⁹ University of British Columbia. Stigma and Resilience Among Vulnerable Youth Centre, 2015 Being Safe, Being Me: Results of the Canadian Trans Youth Health Survey

⁴⁰ <https://bc.ctvnews.ca/chinese-gallery-hosts-community-event-to-combat-covid-19-racism-1.4823012>

⁴¹ <https://montreal.ctvnews.ca/covid-19-korean-consulate-issues-warning-after-violent-attack-in-montreal-1.4856453>

⁴² <https://www.newyorker.com/news/letter-from-the-uk/the-rise-of-coronavirus-hate-crimes>

⁴³ Coronavirus disease (COVID-19): Vulnerable populations and COVID-19. Government of Canada. Accessed March 18, 2020. <https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/publications/diseases-conditions/vulnerable-populations-covid-19.html>

⁴⁴ The epidemiology of HIV in Canada, CATIE, 2016, <https://www.catie.ca/en/fact-sheets/epidemiology/epidemiology-hiv-canada>

early reports out of China and research on risk reduction.^{47 48 49}

- As of April 9, sex disaggregated data from Canada shows that females accounted for 53% of all COVID-19 cases reported.⁵⁰ The Government of Canada is reportedly one of seven countries (out of the 20 most affected) providing sex-disaggregated data for confirmed cases, but not for deaths.⁵¹ China, France, Germany, Iran, Italy, South Korea are the six countries that publish sex-disaggregated data for both confirmed cases and deaths.
- Based on early information from countries reporting deaths with sex disaggregated data, trends show that males are experiencing a higher death rate. Global Health 50/50, a research initiative from the UCL Centre for Gender and Global Health, has a live tracker of publicly available sex-disaggregated data reported by national governments around the world.⁵² While these trends could indicate a greater risk of death among males, this is early stage data that is difficult to compare between countries depending on how each government collects it.
- At this stage, experts are uncertain why there is a sex difference, but researchers such as those involved in the Global Health 50/50 initiative speculate that sex and gender are important drivers of risk and response to infection and disease. For example, men may be at a higher risk because, with their gender, they are more likely to be socialized to engage in risky behaviours (e.g. smoking and drinking) and are more likely to struggle with chronic illnesses such as hypertension, cardiovascular disease, etc.
- There is very little known about the impacts of COVID-19 on people who are pregnant, though pregnancy can increase susceptibility to respiratory infections, which can lead to preterm labour and delivery.⁵³ A recent study followed 9 pregnant patients in China with confirmed COVID-19 pneumonia and found no evidence of vertical transmission to the baby. Given the small number of cases and the short duration of the study period, more follow-up studies are required,⁵⁴ including whether there are risks after pregnancy (i.e. breastmilk).

⁴⁵US Department of Veterans Affairs, AIDS-defining illnesses

⁴⁶ Coronavirus COVID-19, Terrance Higgins Trust, 17 March 2020, Dr Michael Brady, Medical Director, <https://www.tht.org.uk/news/coronavirus-covid-19>

⁴⁷ Wilfred Lunga, Paradzayi Pathias Bongo, Dewald van Niekerk, and Charles Musarurwa. Disability and disaster risk reduction as an incongruent matrix: Lessons from rural Zimbabwe, April 2019, <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC6489144/>

⁴⁸ Disabled teenager in China dies at home alone after relatives quarantined, Guardian, Jan. 30, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/jan/30/disabled-teenager-in-china-dies-at-home-alone-after-relatives-quarantined>

⁴⁹ In Coronavirus Fight, China's Vulnerable Fall Through the Cracks, NY Times, March 9, 2020, <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/03/09/business/china-coronavirus-disabilities-wealth-gap.html>

⁵⁰ Epidemiological summary of COVID-19 cases in Canada. Accessed March 25, 2020. <https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/diseases/2019-novel-coronavirus-infection/health-professionals/epidemiological-summary-covid-19-cases.html#a3>

⁵¹ Sex, gender and COVID-19: Disaggregated data and health disparities. March 24, 2020. <https://blogs.bmj.com/bmjgh/2020/03/24/sex-gender-and-covid-19-disaggregated-data-and-health-disparities/>

⁵² Sex, gender and COVID-19. Accessed March 26, 2020. <http://globalhealth5050.org/covid19>

⁵³ Canadian Fertility and Andrology Society Communication on COVID-19. March 17, 2020. https://cfas.ca/CFAS_Communication_on_COVID-19.html

⁵⁴ Qiao, Jie. *What are the risks of COVID-19 infection in pregnant women?* The Lancet, 395-10226. March 2020. <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0140673620303652>

- Pregnant people may be further at risk as families self-isolate and medical services are prioritized to respond to the virus. As jurisdictions begin rationing health care resources, according to news reports in hard-hit countries⁵⁵, there are reports of women being induced early⁵⁶ or potentially having their inductions delayed⁵⁷ as a result of the COVID-19 emergency. Reproductive health services may also be impacted by this prioritization.
- Federal and provincial health officials have encouraged people on chronic medications to make sure they have an adequate supply of their drugs.⁵⁸ However, those on scheduled drugs such as stimulants, testosterone, and opioids, may not have been able to fill early or access back-up supply. This could constitute a risk to the health of these patients, especially those at higher risk, in the case of prolonged isolation or supply disruptions. Withdrawal from substances such as opioids may interfere with requirements for social isolation/quarantine.

Mental Health and Substance Use

- Women are nearly twice as likely as men to be diagnosed with an anxiety disorder.⁵⁹ Given the overrepresentation of women among both formal and informal caregivers, there may be an increased need for mental health and respite services particularly for women with underlying mental health disorders during the course of the pandemic.
- There is a significant risk that those with underlying mental health conditions may see their conditions worsen as a result of the COVID-19 emergency as even those without underlying conditions often experience mental instability, post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), anxiety and depression in response to disaster.⁶⁰ For example, LGBTQ2S+ communities have higher incidences of depression, anxiety and suicide⁶¹ and thus may be at a greater risk.
- Senior women (aged 65 and over) are more likely to live alone⁶² and social distancing is likely to have serious implications for their mental and physical health. Additionally, lack of access to religious services and community may heighten people's experience of the loss of normalcy due to the pandemic.⁶³

⁵⁵ The Extraordinary Decisions Facing Italian Doctors, The Atlantic, March 11, 2020

⁵⁶ What it's like to have a baby during the coronavirus pandemic, Julia Belluz, Vox, March 18, 2020

⁵⁷ What If You Can't Avoid the Hospital as Covid-19 Spreads?, Emma Grey Ellis, Wired, March 16, 2020

⁵⁸ BCCSU, COVID-19: Information for Opioid Agonist Treatment Prescribers and Pharmacists, March 11, 2020

<https://www.bccsu.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/COVID-19-Bulletin-March-17-2020.pdf>

⁵⁹ Gender Differences in Anxiety Disorders: Prevalence, Course of Illness, Comorbidity and Burden of Illness, Carmen P. McLean, Anu Asnaani, Brett T. Litz, and Stefan G. Hofmann, 2012 <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3135672/>

⁶⁰ Mental Health Services Required after Disasters: Learning from the Lasting Effects of Disasters, A. C. McFarlane and Richard Williams, Depression Research and Treatment, 2012, <https://www.hindawi.com/journals/drt/2012/970194/>

⁶¹ Rainbow Health Ontario. *LGBTQ2 Health in Canada: Study brief for the Standing Committee on Health*. June 3, 2019. <https://www.ourcommons.ca/Content/Committee/421/HESA/Brief/BR10445304/br-external/RainbowHealthOntario-revised-e.pdf>

⁶² Living Alone in Canada. Statistics Canada. March 6, 2019. <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/75-006-x/2019001/article/00003-eng.htm>

⁶³ Role of Cultural Beliefs, Religion, and Spirituality in Mental Health and/or Service Utilization among Immigrants in Canada: A Scoping Review, Ferzana Chaze, Mary Susan Thomson, Usha George, Sepali Gurugeb, Dec. 2015, Canadian Journal of Mental Health, <https://www.cjcmh.com/doi/abs/10.7870/cjcmh-2015-015?journalCode=cjcmh>

Communications

- Disaster and emergency response planning does not always adequately address the needs of people with limited English proficiency. As government moves quickly to address the COVID-19 emergency there is a risk that people who experience language barriers may struggle to access needed services and supports.
- As few as 13 per cent of US adults have the English literacy skills necessary to fully synthesize information, draw complex conclusions and integrate information found in typical crisis communications.⁶⁴ People with mental disabilities and those with low literacy may also struggle to access supports with complicated and involved program requirements like EI without access to supports.
- While efforts have been made to upgrade broadband infrastructure and cell service throughout the province, many rural, remote and Indigenous communities still do not have access to the technological infrastructure taken for granted in urban areas of British Columbia. Lack of access to reliable, high-speed internet and phone services may have consequences both for the physical and psychological safety of people in these communities.

⁶⁴ Low Literacy Populations and Disaster Communications: 5 Ways to Bridge the Educational Divide, Office of the Assistant Secretary for Preparedness and Response, <https://www.phe.gov/ASPRBlog/Lists/Posts/Post.aspx?ID=190>