

Impacts of the Covid-19 Pandemic on the Health and Well-being of Young Adults in British Columbia

Young adults aged 18-29 are among those hardest hit by the pandemic and related response measures. Commissioned by Dr. Réka Gustafson, Vice-President, Public Health and Wellness and Deputy Provincial Health Officer, PHSA, the BCCDC Young Adult Task Force report, *Impacts of the COVID-19 Pandemic on the Health and Well-Being of Young Adults in British Columbia* is the first evidence-based report that summarizes how the pandemic has disrupted the lives

of 18 to 29-year-olds across Canada. As such, a coordinated, cross-sectoral approach is urgently needed to monitor and alleviate the impacts of COVID-19 on young adults' health and well-being. This report can be used to inform pandemic recovery priorities and make tangible differences in supporting the lifelong health and well-being of young adults and their communities across BC.

At a glance

The report gathers data from across Canada to inform actions such as incentives and support measures that are needed now to address the far-reaching, negative impacts of the pandemic and support young adults as they re-establish their finances, careers, and futures.

The report contains 32 specific recommendations spread across the following areas of action:

- 1 Address challenges to economic well-being and opportunities
- 2 Address challenges for post-secondary students
- 3 Improve mental health and well-being
- 4 Increase health service access and utilization
- 5 Encourage health promoting behaviours
- 6 Improve social connectedness
- 7 Increase access to healthy built environments
- 8 Promote young adults' voices and engagement
- 9 Initiate ongoing monitoring

"The events industry I worked in won't be the same for what might be a couple of years and I feel I have to re-educate myself to work in a different industry. Otherwise, I won't be able to find good work and can't support myself and my family."

– BC SPEAK participant, 2020



A post-pandemic recovery for young adults must address:

- › Escalating trends in obesity, chronic disease, and substance use, and impact to mental health and resilience
- › Co-housing and living in multi-unit apartment buildings, where the ability to access adequate indoor and outdoor space is challenging
- › Increasingly accrued debt due to the lack of jobs during the pandemic
- › Higher-than-ever debt loads affecting the decision to continue post-secondary studies

See the full report and recommended areas of action at bccdc.ca/covid19andyoungadults

Facilitating actions to alleviate short-term challenges:

- › Facilitating return to work through training and career development opportunities
- › Providing financial relief and debt-reduction initiatives
- › Relieving student competition for courses and training opportunities
- › Increasing access to primary care, STI testing and mental illness and substance use services
- › Providing and evaluating virtual resources for physical and mental health care
- › Creating safe public spaces to help young adults live, play, and connect within their communities
- › Ensuring diverse representation in research, policy development, and decision-making.
- › Monitoring well-being over time, including for under-served subpopulations

Next steps

The future of all British Columbians relies on a healthy and successful young adult population and will advance social development, economic growth, infrastructure, and health in BC. Action is needed to guide initiatives and policies that provide a solid foundation for young adults to move forward in ways that achieve better social, economic, and health outcomes.

AS WE MOVE INTO A CRITICAL PERIOD OF RECOVERY, YOUR DECISIONS WILL MAKE A SIGNIFICANT AND MEANINGFUL DIFFERENCE.

