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 Office, 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

## 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

See the full report and recommended areas of action at [bccdc.ca/covid19andyoungadults](http://bccdc.ca/covid19andyoungadults)

## 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.**