Statistics are people with the tears wiped away:

Why have so many workers got sick or died in this pandemic?

Dorothy Wigmore

(Occupational health specialist)

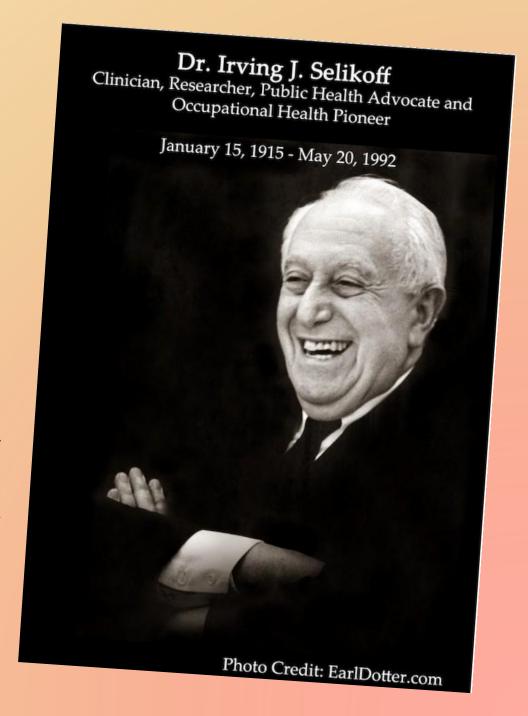
Presented at

Workers' Health and Return to Work in a Changing World of Work

Ottawa, June 11, 2024

I often reference his quote "Statistics are people with the tears wiped away." Selikoff's groundbreaking survey of 17,800 asbestos insulation workers showed "people who worked with asbestos for less than a week had scarred lungs 30 years later."

https://www.asbestosdiseaseawareness.org/ newsroom/blogs/dr-irving-selikoff-clinicianresearcher-public-health-advocate-andoccupational-health-pioneer-1915-2015/





Start where it matters: transmission truth

FACT CHECK: COVID-19 is NOT airborne

The virus that causes COVID-19 is mainly transmitted through droplets generated when an infected person coughs, sneezes, or speaks. These droplets are too heavy to hang in the air. They quickly fall on floors or surfaces.

You can be infected by breathing in the virus if you are within 1 metre of a person who has COVID-19, or by touching a contaminated surface and then touching your eyes, nose or mouth before washing your hands.

To protect yourself, keep at least 1 metre distance from others and disinfect surfaces that are touched frequently. Regularly clean your hands thoroughly and avoid touching your eyes, mouth, and nose.



March 28 2020



This message spreading on social media is incorrect. Help stop misinformation. Verify the facts before sharing,

#Coronavirus #COVID19



If it IS in the air, you need to clean it, not your hands and surfaces. Would you take chances?

Yet, a week earlier, a key WHO official said:



Dr. Michael J. Ryan, Executive Director, WHO Health Emergencies Programme. March 20, 2020 press briefing about the pandemic, reflecting on lessons from the Ebola crisis.

If you need to be right before you move, you will never win...

Everyone is afraid of making a mistake. Everyone is afraid of the consequence of error, but the greatest error is not to move, the greatest error is to be paralyzed by the fear of failure.

= Precautionary principle



WHO rejects 239 specialists call about airborne transmission

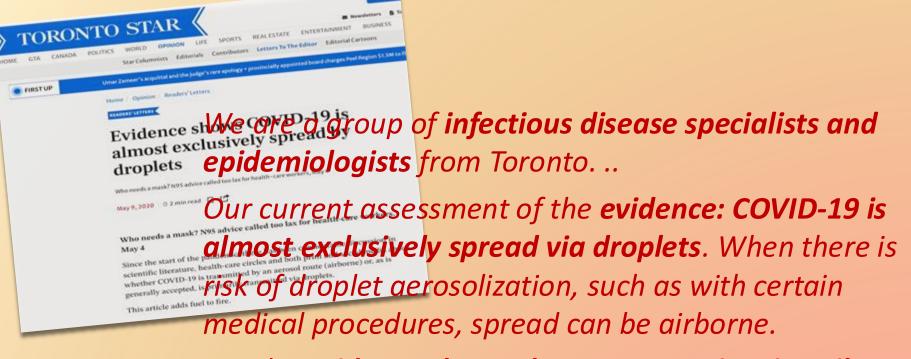
It is understood that there is not as yet universal acceptance of airborne transmission of SARS-CoV2; but in our collective assessment there is more than enough supporting evidence so that the precautionary principle should apply.

"239 Experts With One Big Claim: The Coronavirus Is Airborne" NY Times, July 4/20 "These are fields of research that are really growing and for which there is some evidence emerging but is not definitive," Dr. Benedetta Allegranzi, WHO's technical lead for infection prevention and control, said during a briefing in Geneva Tuesday.

"The possibility of airborne transmission in public settings — especially in very specific conditions: crowded, closed, poorly ventilated settings that have been described — cannot be ruled out. However, the evidence needs to be gathered and interpreted."

"Why the WHO won't say the coronavirus is airborne and driving the pandemic", CBC News, July 8/20, https://tinyurl.com/4n4rmj4m





But the evidence shows that COVID-19 is primarily spread via droplet, with clear protection offered by distance, physical barriers to hands and face, and hand hygiene. ...

May 9 2020 (Toronto Star letter, responding to Ontario hygienists' letter about July 4 letter to WHO)

https://www.thestar.com/opinion/letters-to-the-editor/evidenceshows-covid-19-is-almost-exclusively-spread-bydroplets/article_bad1323d-7a20-501b-999c-a53dffb46b13.html



"An aerosol is a particle in the air," said
Lidia Morawska, an engineer and the
director of the International Laboratory for
Air Quality and Health at Queensland
University of Technology. "A droplet is a
liquid aerosol." To her, the distinction
between droplets and aerosols doesn't
make any sense. To her, they are all
aerosols.



Vox, Oct 5, 2020
https://www.vox.com/science-and-health/2020/7/13/21315879/covid-19-airborne-who-aerosol-droplet-transmission-cdc



Opposition from other key public health figures

It's a tempest in a teapot, to foment a bit of controversy.

Dr. Bonnie Henry, July 6/20



We have always said there is a continuum of droplets, and they are spread through the air. What we are not seeing is traditional airborne transmission, which is — colloquially we say — transmission around corners or through ventilation systems, and that is not the main way. We do not see that with COVID-19. (a brief pause)

Except in rare circumstances, as you say, where people are indoors, where there's very poor ventilation, there's large numbers of people, where there can be lots of aerosols generated.

So it is really, um, opportunistic, I guess, for these aerosols to be in sufficient quantity with sufficient virus that it will be transmitted. That is not the usual way. We know that. We know that from how we see outbreaks happening, transmission events between people.



Although ideas about droplet size and range of spread are seemingly well accepted, their foundation is muddled and misleading, and is not consistent with physics.

The **science/evidence says** we inhale this virus easily because it's in the air. Small particles carrying the virus can be near us (**aerosols**) or further away (**airborne**).



https://www.wired.com/story/the-teeny-tiny-scientific-screwup-that-helped-covid-kill/

https://royalsocietypublishing.org/doi/full/10.1098/rsfs.2021.0049



When did public health agencies get to some form of transmission truth?



First step to better prevent transmission for diseases like measles and future pandemic threats, agency says

Thomson Reuters · Posted: Apr 18, 2024 1:39 PM ADT | Last Updated: April 18

by late 2021, the Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC), Centre for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), Public Health Ontario, etc.

✓ **April, 2024**, the WHO (explicitly)

https://www.publichealthontario.ca/en/about/blog/2021/covid-19-transmission https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/how-covid-spreads.html



https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/diseases/2019-novelcoronavirus-infection/prevention-risks.html#h

Who paid the price?



Darwin Doloque, 35, worked at the **Olymel** meat packing plant in Red Deer, Alberta. Died of COVID-19 January 28/21.

www.cbc.ca/news/canada /calgary/red-deer-olymeloutbreak-1.591413



Diana Law with her children, Sydney and Alexander. First known British Columbia **nurse** to die of COVID-19. The 57-year-old patient-care co-ordinator at Peace Arch Hospital in White Rock was in hospital for months before her death April 14, 2021. One of 84,000 HCWs infected by that time.

https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/britishcolumbia/covid-nurse-death-bc-diana-law-1.6002090





Toronto

Amazon site in Brampton, Ont., must close and all employees self-isolate, health officials order

Retail giant will appeal, says spokesperson. 'We're doing everything we can'

CBC News - Posted: Mar 12, 2021 3:28 PM EST | Last Updated: March 12, 2021

Karam Singh Punian, 59, was one of at least 10 **limo drivers** at Toronto's Pearson airport who died by May 2020.

https://www.thestar.com/news/gta/1 0-pearson-taxi-and-limo-drivers-havedied-in-covid-19-pandemic-unionsays/article_4624bc20-8df2-5b64-908b-19224d696286.html There have been more than 600 cases in total (at the Brampton **Amazon warehouse**), with 240 identified in recent weeks, Loh told CBC News, reflecting "significant" growth.

https://www.cbc.ca/news/canad a/toronto/amazon-site-closedbrampton-covid19-1.5947898

Outbreaks – January – July 31, 2021 compared to all 2020

- ☐ farm outbreaks: 223 vs 59
- ☐ farm-based COVID-19 cases: 3,112 vs 1,803



Rogelio Muñoz Santos, 24, died June 5, 2020

Deaths to June, 2021

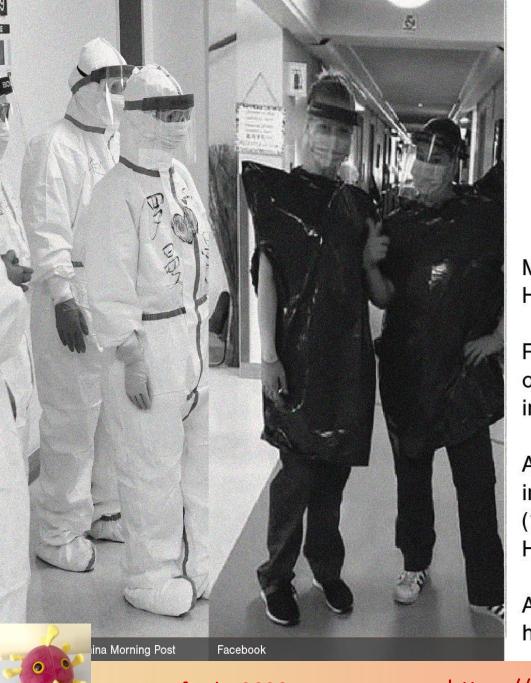
Since mid-March, **five** temporary foreign agricultural workers **died** in Ontario, seven in Canada

- ☐ four were in quarantine (plus another outside Ontario)
- one died of COVID-19, other causes unknown so far
- □ ages 23-57 (average 42)



Bonifacio Eugenio-Romero, 31, died May 30, 2020





How to Measure Canada's COVID-19 Performance?

CANADA

ASIA

More than 21,000 HCWs infected HCWs represent 4.4% of China's COVID-19 infections.

Represent over 19% of all COVID-19 infections

Hong Kong: 5 HCW infections

Almost double the international rate (10 per cent) for HCW infections

Taiwan: 3 HCWs infected

At least 16 HCWs have died

(Most before airborne precautions)

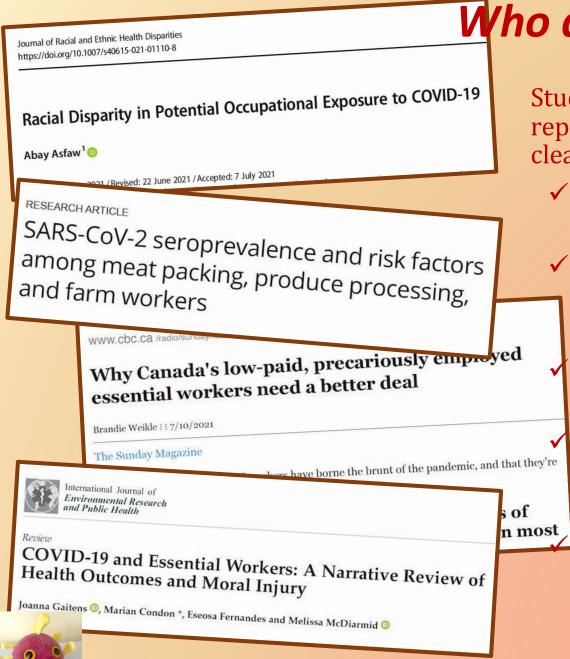
Conton	Allowed	Specifics	Total	
Sector	18,127	(claims made)	22,645	
Service (Health care and social services)	10,898	LTC: 5,998	12,506	
Service (Education)	2,688	Public: 3,098	3,155	
Self-insured employers	807		1,097	
Public administration	800		944	
Service (Other subsectors, including business,		Cleaning: 205		
professional and other services)	563	Day/child care: 152	913	
Trade (Retail)	435	Supermarket: 473	803	
Service (Tourism and hospitality)	349		562	
Construction	324		520	
Transportation and related services	285		495	
Agriculture	337		383	
Manufacturing (Food and beverage products)	157		219	
Manufacturing (Metal and non-metallic				
mineral products)	138		199	
Manufacturing (Wood and paper products)	59		113	
Trade (Wholesale)	55		104	
https://www.worksafebc.com/en/covid-19/claims/covid-19-claims-by-industry-secto				

Workplace and community outbreaks, Toronto – to Aug. 30/22

"Community" often is "workplace"

Category	Cumulative number of outbreaks (ongoing + closed)
Other recreation/Events/ Social gatherings	311
Medical/Health service (Non-institutional)	208
Restaurant/Food service/Bar	176
Workplace - Construction	124
Food retail/Grocery	66
Retail/Malls	64
Workplace - Office setting	61
Personal Service Settings (Tattoo, Nail salons, Aesthetics)	57
Workplace - Other	55





Who are these workers?

Study after study, and media report after media report, made it clear:

- ✓ "essential workers" are racialised
 - they're working in crowded spaces (e.g., meatpacking, post offices, warehouses)

they couldn't work from home

they had to travel by public transit or with others to and from work

they're in crappy jobs (in terms of income, health and safety, autonomy, etc.) and often invisible

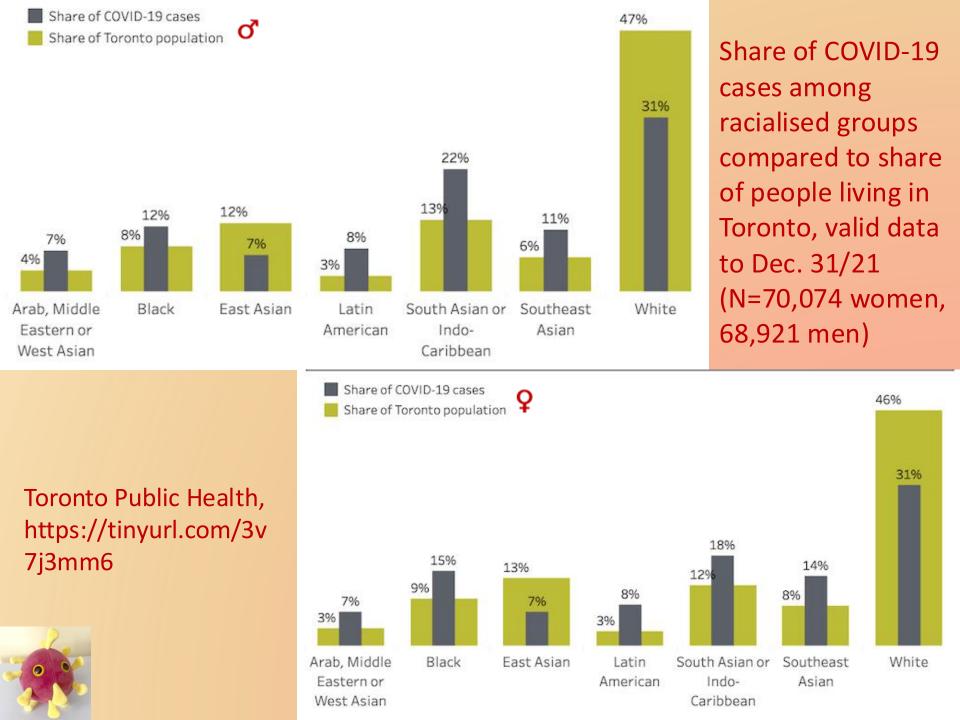


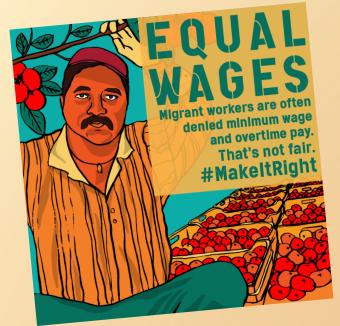


- Racialized and immigrant workers are more likely to be in low-wage, front-line, "essential" jobs:
- ✓ racialized groups/immigrants much more likely work in precarious jobs, earn lot lower wages, racialized women most likely in lowest-paying jobs
- ✓ hospital/long-term care home front-line workers likely to be immigrants, women, from racialized groups (particularly Black, Filipino)
- ✓ health care and social assistance: 23.6% of employed Filipino Canadians, 20.3% of employed Black Canadians
- ✓ accommodation and food services: highest Korean (19.1%), Filipino (14.2%) and Southeast Asian (14.0%) Canadians



More in Toronto Public Health's *More information about inequities in COVID-19,* (May 27/21), https://tinyurl.com/bdejcsh7; CPHO, The Impact of COVID-19 on Racialized Communities, https://tinyurl.com/wvyuhak2.







The situations are a result of long-standing inequities related to ..

- ✓ class or social position
- ✓ racism
- ✓ low wages (and inadequate minimum wage laws/basic income) plus no or inadquate sick pay
- ✓ precarious jobs
- ✓ immigration status
 - health and safety and
employment laws
that reflect
management rights
and power

- hazardous jobs that wear out many after which employers toss them away
- ✓ poor health and workers' compensation coverage/access
- ✓ invisible conditions behind closed doors of workplaces
 - lack of voice, including unions
- ✓ right-wing influence on pandemic/public policy

Public health rules



- ✓ Consistently, "public health" made decisions and OHS law/regulations were ignored
- ✓ they sidelined or ignored occupational hygienists (trained to protect workers), ventilation engineers, respiratory protection specialists and others in the multidisciplinary field of OHS
- ✓ CSA Z94.4 standard about using respirators was ignored, despite being in many OHS laws/guidance
- ✓ Part 5 of the B.C. Emergency Powers of the Public Health Act: Section 53 is an override clause which provides that Part 5 applies "despite any provision of this or any other enactment"
- ✓ when did you ever hear from someone in a OHS agency, as opposed to a "public health official"?

OHS laws weren't enforced, comp hard to get

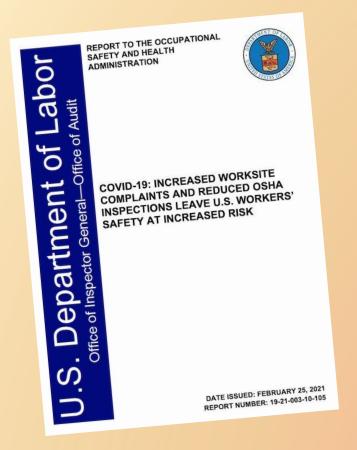
- ✓ many health and safety rights violated in many workplaces
- ✓ workers not given or lacked access to adequate protective equipment
- ✓ **not** consistently **told** about the ✓ Ontario private LTC homes not hazards (including if colleagues or patients had COVID-19)
- ✓ Ontario Ministry of Labour inspectors' union president said "inspectors are being told to send their reports and orders to lawyers and managers within the Ministry"

- and "are telling us they can't do their jobs"
- ✓ none of over 200 Ontario workers' **refusals** to do dangerous work were upheld
- covered by workers' comp
- ✓ proving COVID-19 job-related often difficult (and travelling to work isn't covered) for workers' comp

Katherine Lippel, "Occupational Health and Safety and COVID-19: Whose Rights Come First in a Pandemic?", Vulnerable. The Law, Policy and Ethics of COVID-19, 2020



Forget OHS law, workers' rights



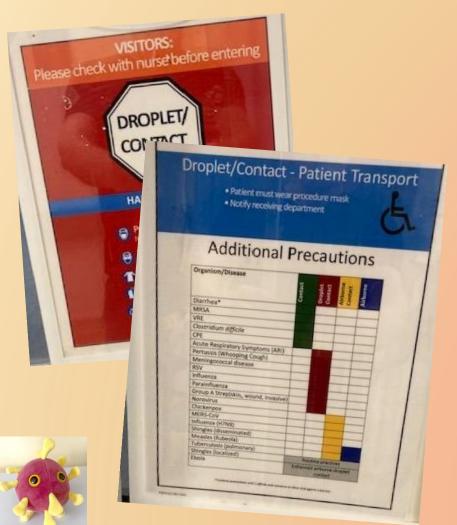
https://tinyurl.com/47f8a2te

- Ontario inspectors felt the Ministry was sidelined in the pandemic, like SARS, "a crucial failing" of the 2003 epidemic" (Campbell Commission).
- one felt worker protection responsibility was "abdicated."
- another said response was too reactive, focused on keeping businesses open, not penalizing repeated non-compliance.
- □ some inspectors sounded the alarm about ventilation, possible airborne transmission, yet the guidance remained centred on droplet contact.



"How a COVID-19 'blind spot' put Ontario's essential workplaces at risk", *Toronto Star,* https://tinyurl.com/ya438p9a.

The advice (still is, too often): clean surfaces/hands, not the air





Amongst other things, **authorities** providing direction and guidance **failed to**:

- understand or learn basic principlesof respiratory protection (e.g., fit matters)
- □ **consult** with those with expertise (e.g., hygienists, respiratory protection specialists, manufacturers, CSA)

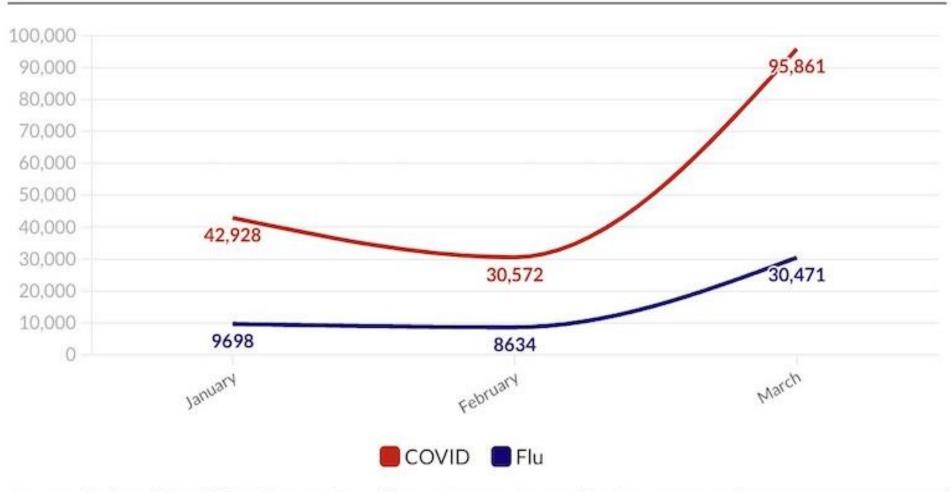
A consequence: COVID-19 is NOT the flu, and it's still here

COVID-19 FLu 2022/23 2200 5900 2.7x 120 970 8x 3100 4500 1.5x 2023/24 so far 170 550 **3**x



Alberta Health Respiratory Virus Dashboard, https://tinyurl.com/ycyxpyew; thanks to Gosia Gasperowicz

Covid-19 and flu, Australia — 2024

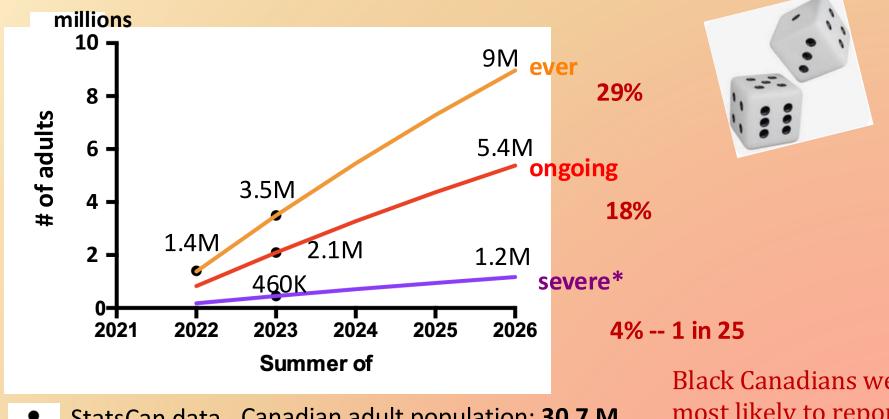


Source: National Notifiable Disease Surveillance System, Australian Government Department of Health and Aged Care





Long Covid projections for Canadian adults



StatsCan data Canadian adult population: 30.7 M

*Often or always limiting daily activities

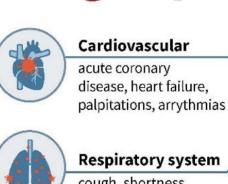
Black Canadians were most likely to report multiple infections compared to other racialized groups

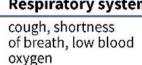


Projection by Gosia Gasperowicz using current re-infection rate (38% of those with 3 infections get Long COVID). Statistics Canada reports' data: Dec. 8/23, https://tinyurl.com/frx7b52y; Oct. 17/22, https://tinyurl.com/frx7b52y **COVID-19: Lasting impact**

WashU researchers link many diseases with COVID-19, signaling long-term complications for patients and a massive health burden for years to come.









Kidneyacute kidney injury,
chronic kidney disease



Musculoskeletal

joint pain, muscle weakness



General

malaise, fatigue, anemia



anxiety, depression, sleep problems, substance abuse



stroke, headaches, memory problems, smell problems



Metabolic/ endocrine

obesity, diabetes, high cholesterol



constipation, diarrhea, acid reflux



hair loss, rash



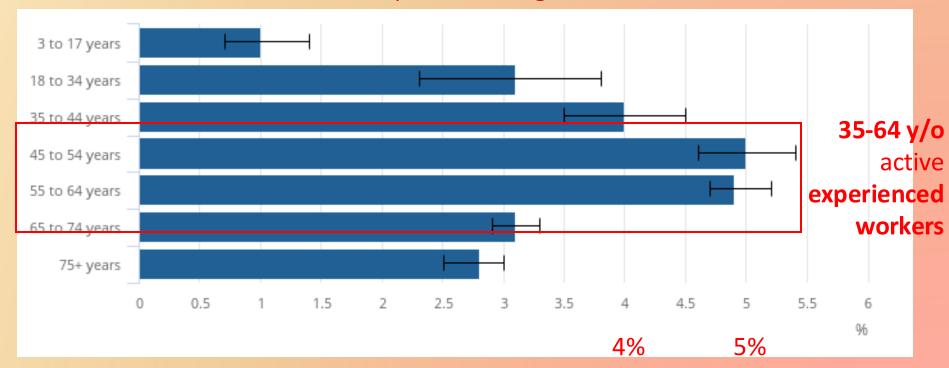
blood clots





Long COVID affects people in the prime working age the most

reported long COVID of any duration by age, England and Scotland, four-week period ending March 7/24

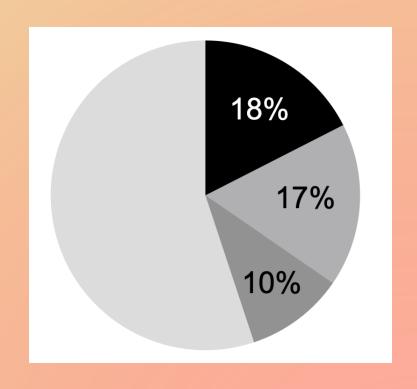






Canadian sectors most affected by Long COVID

- Healthcare & Social Assistance
- Scientific & Teaching Services
- Education Services
- ☐ As of June 2023, about 100,000 Canadian adults have been unable to return to work or school because of Long COVID symptoms
- ☐ 600,000 Canadians missed time from work or school
- cumulative total of about 14.5 million missed days of work or school due to long-term symptoms





Long-term sickness reaches record level in UK

The Observer Economic recovery

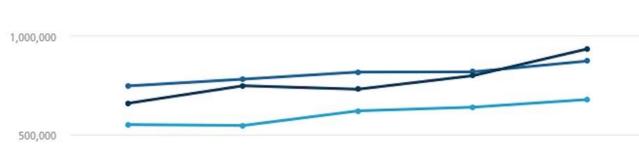
Record long-term sickness bodes ill for UK economic growth

Years of austerity, followed by Covid, have left Britain with unhealthy workers and businesses struggling to recruit, but the road to recovery, of all kinds will long

Figure 3: The number of people inactive because of long-term sickness reporting five or more health conditions has been increasing since the pandemic

https://tinyurl.com/ at2zrkbz

Number of health conditions of people aged 16 to 64 years who are economically inactive because of long-term sickness, UK, January to March 2019 to January to March 2023

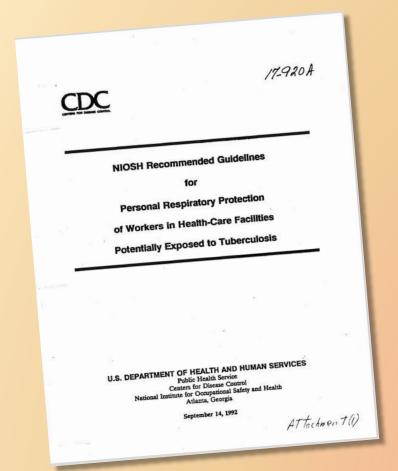


What about Canada? We don't know, yet.

UK Office for National Statistics, Labour Force Survey; https://tinyurl.com/5aeu3nb2



What is to be done? Start with "public health prudence" ...



- "the principle of public health prudence"
- "when faced with uncertainty, it is better to err in favor of human life and health than in favor of any competing value"
- restated as an informal NIOSH operating policy: "faced with scientific uncertainty, if we must err, it will always be on the side of too much protection for the worker rather than too little."
- supported in a 1980 court decision that OSHA and the courts "cannot let workers suffer while it awaits the Godot of scientific certainty"

NIOSH Recommended Guidelines for Personal Respiratory Protection of Workers in Health Care Facilities Potentially Exposed to Tuberculos s, 1992.

https://stacks.cdc.gov/view/cdc/86074

.. as the SARS-1 Commission recommended

The Precautionary Principle



Mr. Justice Archie Campbell

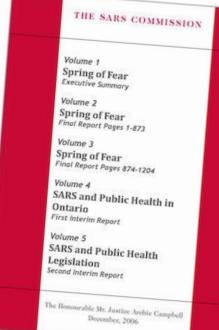
"The point is not who is right and who is wrong about airborne transmission. The point is not science, but safety.

Scientific knowledge changes constantly. Yesterday's scientific dogma is today's discarded fable. When it comes to worker safety ... we should not be driven by the scientific dogma of

yesterday or even the scientific dogma

We should be driven by the precau reasonable steps to reduce risk sh certainty. Until this precautionary pri mandated and enforced ... workers \

(SARS Commission

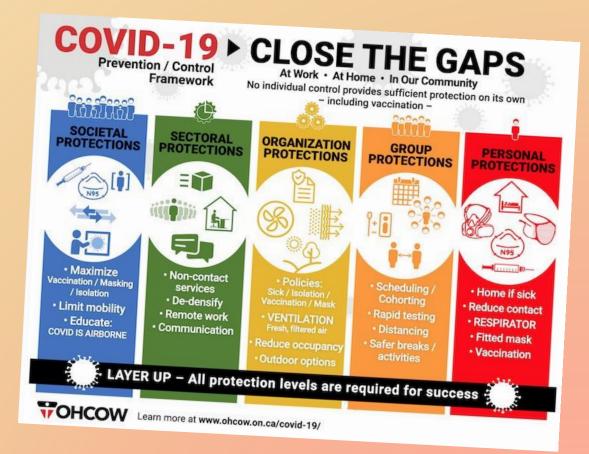




https://www.archives.gov.on.ca/en/ e records/sars/report/index.html

Layered solutions -Vaccines are necessary, but not sufficient

.. and layered solutions –
especially in complex
health-related situations -require many voices and
skills such as occupational
hygiene, ventilation
engineering, physics, aerosol
science, evolutionary biology,
respiratory protection
specialists, and more



■ social ■ group

□ sectoral □ personal

organisation

https://www.ohcow.on.ca/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/close_the_gaps.pdf



Unhealthy indoor air is the "new poop"

- ✓ prevent/reduce airborne disease transmission (target ACH)
- ✓ ventilation (fresh air, can be filtered)
- ✓ filters if not in ventilation
- ✓ ultraviolet anti-germ light
- ✓ avoid ionisers
- ✓ transparency and education





Mitigation of Airborne Disease Transmission

Target a minimum of six air changes per hour in occupied indoor spaces using any combination of ventilation, filtration, and ultraviolet germicidal irradiation systems.

Ventilation

Bring buildings into compilance with current ventilation standards established by ASHRAE (American Society of Heating, Refrigeration and Air-Conditioning Engineers) and the Canadian Standards. Association (CSA) confirmed through CO₂ monitoring.

Filtration

Upgrade filters in air handling units to MERV-13 or higher where possible, or use a portable HEPA filter or DIY CR box in each occupied space when air pollution is a concern.

Ultraviolet Germicidal Irradiation (UVGI)

Use upper room UVGI systems installed by qualified professionals in health care settings and congregate living settings. Consider its use in high-risk settings and places with high occupant density.

Avoid Additive Air Cleaning and Alternative Methods

Do not use additive air cleaning methods or similar products, such as ionization, until there is a standardized way to ensure their safety and effectiveness.

Transparency and Public Education

Share information about your facility's air quality with occupants including sharing the strategies you are using to ensure safe indoor air and install CO₂ monitors with readable displays.



For more information, view the complete report: Core Recommendations for Safer Indoor Air. ospe.on.ca/indoor-air-quality



https://ospe.on.ca/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/IAQ_Checklist-copy.pdf



- acknowledge existence of, and use, CSA Z94.4 (Selection, use and care of respirators) and Z94.4.1 (certification of respiratory protection)
 - allow enforcement of workplace regulations for respirator selection and use, basic knowledge and practiced without hesitation outside healthcare, as well as ventilation and hazards

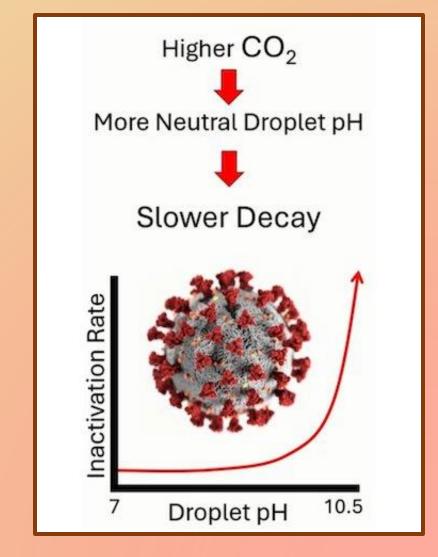
Respiratory protective equipment

6.15(1) An employer must ensure that respiratory protective equipment provided to a worker is selected, used and maintained in accordance with CAN/CSA-Z94.4-11, Selection, Use, and Care of Respirators.

Pay attention to CO2 levels



- ✓ fresh air indicator recommendations for concern are 600 – 1000 ppm
- ✓ recent study shows higher CO2 levels also reduce virus decay rate





Use standards, tools



https://www.ashrae.org/about/news/2023/ashrae-publishes-standard-241-control-of-infectious-aerosols

	Cli	
Ia. type of ventilation system	Classroom Ventilation	Posting
Y HUAC assisted		Posting
1.b room dimensions	unit ventilator	
35 length (in feet)		natural ventilation/hot water/steam radii
	23 width (in feet)	9 height (in feet)
1.c room occupancy	(ft')): 805 volume (in cubic feet (ft ¹)):	7245
35 room maximum capacity		7245
	20 room typical capacity	2 select which execute as
2a. room ventilation rate	halou sauce	2 select which capacity (1=max, 2=typical) 6' distancing achievable
805 HVAC design flow rate (in c	fm) 8.1 cfm OA/person	and a second
proportion outdoor air sun	and the second s	HVAC measured flow rate (in cfm)
our total air turnovers per house		
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The state of the s		
11 MERV rating	date filter was last changed of	
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233 Capp air filters		
231 CADR @ top speed (in cfm of	cleaned air)	
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https://www.ohcow.on.ca/occupationalillness/covid-19/ventilation-calculation-

Collect data that informs decisionmakers and the public



- ✓ all types of outbreaks (especially workplaces)
- ✓ who's affected (cultural community, community, neighbourhood, job, etc.)
- ✓ cases (need on-going tracing), especially amongst the vulnerable
- ✓ effectiveness of workplace, public health, other plans
- ✓ sick pay implementation and use
- ✓ other prevention/reduction measures
- ✓ surveillance (e.g., wastewater)

https://tinyurl.com/yu5vsu9d



We need prevention-focused public health goals and strategies that:



- ✓ are based on the **precautionary principle**
- recognise the **importance of aerosol and airborne transmission** of viruses and other hazards, and "clean the air" solutions
- ✓ use multiple sciences ("evidence" > RCTs) and existing OHS/comp/other laws
- ✓ are **transdisciplinary** (multiple voices, skills, sciences, solutions/layers, groups included)
- ✓ deal with the needs of all workers and others who are vulnerable (e.g., enforce OHS, human rights Convention)
- ✓ are **flexible**, respond to variants/situations
- ✓ are developed with, and implemented and evaluated by, multiple voices, skills, experiences, training, those affected, etc.

