

# RACE AND COVID-19 IN TORONTO

A look at Toronto's COVID-19 data reveals that racialized groups are overrepresented in the city's COVID-19 cases.

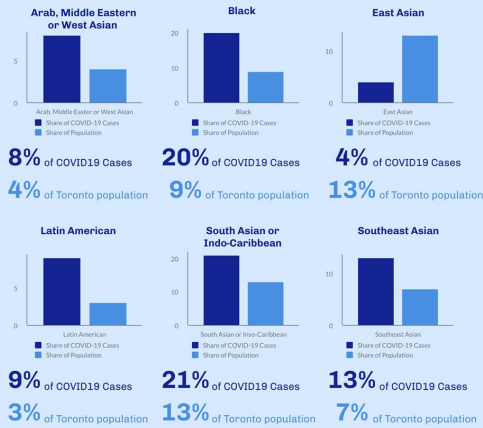
## The Social Determinants of Health

Race is a proxy that can be used to measure the social determinants of health. This is defined as the economic and social factors, related to the conditions an individual lives in, that influences their health. The social determinants of health are strongly affected by systemic racism present in Canada. This leads to racialized groups being more vulnerable to viruses, such as COVID-19, as well as poorer overall health outcomes in general.

## Share of Population vs. Share of COVID-19 Cases

Individuals in racialized groups hold a disproportionately high share of Toronto's COVID-19 cases in comparison to their share of the population. Arab, Middle Eastern or West Asian people, Black people, Latin American people, South Asian or Indo-Caribbean people, and Southeast Asian people were all overrepresented in COVID-19 cases in Toronto, when compared the share of the city's population they hold. Data used below was collected by Toronto Public Health (2020) and Open Data Toronto (2019).

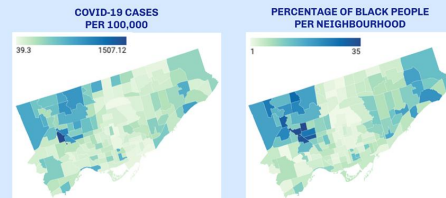
### A Look at the Numbers



White people represent 48% of Toronto's population and 23% of COVID-19 cases.

## Black Neighbourhoods in Toronto

Analysis of data collected by Toronto Public Health from the beginning of the pandemic reveals that Black neighbourhoods in Toronto hold a disproportionately high proportion of COVID-19 cases. When comparing two maps of the city by neighbourhood, one showing COVID-19 cases per 100,000 and the other the percentage of Black people identifying as black, there is a visible association between of higher cases of COVID-19 present in neighbourhoods with higher percentages of Black people (Open Data Toronto, 2019; Toronto Public Health, 2020).



## Hospitalization Rates

**70%** of people hospitalized from COVID-19 identify with a racialized group

Research conducted in the United Kingdom (Sze et al., 2020) found that the likelihood of Black people contracting a COVID-19 infection is twice as likely compared to white people.

## Access to Vaccinations

Recent studies have brought awareness to the existing influence of race on an individual's risk of illness. Academic research has revealed that Black people being significantly less likely than white people to receive the regular influenza vaccinations (Quinn et al., 2011). Differences observed in regular influenza vaccine-seeking behaviour in combination with the increased risk of illness suggest that racialized minorities should be considered as high priority groups during the vaccination distribution process.

With the vaccination process beginning across the country, understanding the impact of these statistics can help curb the spread of the virus through the vaccine distribution process. Policy options for vaccination distribution should focus on enhancing access to and education of vaccinations for minority communities.

### Vaccination Policy Should Include:

- Placement of vaccination sites located directly in minority communities.
- Outreach programs should be implemented to educate minority populations about the benefits of receiving both regular influenza shots and the COVID-19 vaccination.
- Vaccination centres and outreach program should be accessible for non-English speakers.

Creating this knowledge-based communication strategy in minority communities is essential to provide equal access to vaccination information for individuals who would otherwise not seek the vaccination, ultimately leading to effective action. If the vaccination process is not made equitable for racialized groups, there is a significant risk that this will further exacerbate the current pattern of systemic racism in access to health care.

## Stopping the Spread of COVID-19

- Limit trips outside your home to only essentials
- Practice social distancing
- Take a self-assessment if feeling unwell
- Wear a mask or face-covering if unable to social distance and in public spaces
- Wash your hands frequently or use alcohol-based sanitizer
- Download the COVID Alert app

**Sources**  
 Canadian Research: 11 June 2020. "New data suggests racialized people in COVID-19 hot spots."  
 Blackline Newsletter: 12 November 2020. "A method of tracking COVID-19 cases by ethnicity, analysis finds." City News, Community News.  
 City of Toronto: 20 October 2020. "COVID-19 by Ethnic-Racial Identity by Neighbourhood." Data source: Ontario Ministry of Health, "Integrated Public Health Information System and ORES."  
 City of Toronto: 2 October 2020. "Open Data Toronto: Neighbourhood Profiles."  
 Kuchuk, Sergio A. et al. "Prevalence of racial/ethnic minority populations during an influenza pandemic." *American Journal of Public Health*, vol. 98, August 2008, pp. 1262-1265.  
 O'Neil, Heather and Patricia Darr. 3 June 2020. "Black neighbourhoods in Toronto are hit hardest by COVID-19 - and it's not about access to care." *Open News*, Health.  
 Sze, Sandra Ching-chen et al. "Neighbourhood Inequality, Accessibility, and Access to Health Care in the US: A Systematic Literature Review." *American Journal of Public Health*, vol. 101, 2011, pp. 1945-1949.  
 Wu, Wenhui, et al. "Ethnicity and Clinical Outcomes in COVID-19: A Systematic Review and Meta-Analysis." *Clinical Medicine*, vol. 21, 30, Elsevier Ltd, 2020, pp. 100809-100810.