



NEWS RELEASE

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MEDIA CONTACT

Sasha Chabot-Gaspé
(647) 289-0990
schabotgaspe@torontofoundation.ca

New Toronto Foundation report reveals devastating toll of COVID-19 ripple effects on Toronto

The Toronto Fallout Report also shares insights from Toronto community leaders on an equitable recovery

TORONTO, Nov. 12, 2020 – Released today, Toronto Foundation’s new *Toronto Fallout Report* measures the severe impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic and its knock-on effects on Toronto over the last seven months. Real-time quantitative data from dozens of sources shows that racialized Torontonians, women, seniors, young people, residents with disabilities, and low-income residents have been ravaged by compounding challenges in safety, housing, employment, income, and health.

Using new primary research data and first-hand accounts from more than 40 BIPOC experts, the report also sheds light on the critical role of community organizations during the pandemic, their biggest challenges, and their solutions for how the city can make an equitable recovery. View the full report and download shareable graphics here: www.torontofoundation.ca/FalloutReport

“We hear daily about the rates of contraction and deaths due to COVID-19. But this report documents the full extent of the toll on Toronto,” says Sharon Avery, president and CEO, Toronto Foundation. “By better understanding the compounding impacts resulting from physical distancing – who has been most affected and how – we will be in a much better position to recover quickly and fully. Listening to the leadership of communities struggling the most is the only way we will emerge stronger from this crisis.”

The *Toronto Fallout Report* was written to uncover the implications of the pandemic response for the city’s well-documented and growing inequality. It is a companion report to the biennial *Toronto’s Vital Signs Report*, Toronto’s “report card” on quality of life in the city. This report was made possible by support from Vancity Community Investment Bank.

KEY FINDINGS AND SOLUTIONS:

Toronto community organizations

A first-time survey of Toronto nonprofits shows they are at serious risk. Despite a drastic increase in demand for basics like food, shelter, and access to technology from the most vulnerable residents, Toronto’s smaller charities have experienced a sharp decline in revenues.



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- 60% of organizations reported their revenue had decreased and 40% had cut staff hours
- About one-quarter of small organizations with annual revenues of less than \$500,000 per year rate themselves at high risk of permanent closure

"Many racialized communities don't have the luxury a 100-year history as a nonprofit or an organization with many locations and reach. I think we need to move out of that thinking of it being higher risk and find ways to mitigate that risk by enabling smaller grassroots organizations."

-**Neethan Shan**, executive director, Urban Alliance on Race Relations

Health & Wellness

Mental health issues have skyrocketed:

- Calls to 211 for substance abuse supports, crisis intervention and counselling were 50% higher in September than in February and the Daily Bread Food Bank saw a 200% increase in new users

"Disease epidemics are not new for Indigenous people. There's a deep history of disease epidemics here in Turtle Island, and so there's a lot of intergenerational trauma being triggered right now by the COVID-19 pandemic."

-**Jeffrey Schiffer**, executive director, Native Child and Family Services of Toronto

Income & Wealth

Racialized people were the hardest hit, exacerbating prior lack of income growth and increasing indebtedness in Toronto over recent decades.

- Only 23% of white Canadians indicated that the pandemic had a strong or moderate impact on their ability to meet their financial obligations or essential needs. This compares to 44% of Arab Canadians, 43% of Filipino Canadians, 42% of Southeast Asian Canadians, and 39% of Black Canadians.

"CERB was important in stabilizing the economy and ensuring that people stay at home to reduce the transmission of COVID, but it was a protection of those with recent labour market attachment. Those who are lower-income and on social assistance received very few federal supports."

-**Garima Talwar Kapoor**, director of policy & research, Maytree

Safety

Domestic violence is alarmingly high with vulnerable women stuck at home with abusers.

- Calls to the assaulted women's hotline were up by 78% in May vs prior year

"Women know that if they go into shelter and give up their housing, even if it's with an abusive partner, chances are, they're not going to be able to find housing again. So, they stay." Mohini Datta-Ray, executive director, North York Women's Shelter

Discrimination is on the rise against people of Asian descent

- 30% of Chinese Canadians have perceived an increase in harassment or attacks

"The stigma associated with the pandemic has hit us the hardest." Anna Victoria Wong, executive director of Community Family Services of Ontario

Work

Toronto has one of the highest levels of unemployment in the country and BIPOC youth are experiencing the highest levels

- BIPOC youth have an unemployment rate of 32% vs 18% for white youth, both unprecedented

"We need to take a trauma-informed approach. We take a 360 of an individual's life and tackle whatever barriers that they might be facing to employment one by one, and no one is ever treated with a cookiecutter way of handling pain."

-**Agapi Gessesse**, executive director, CEE Centre for Young Black Professionals

Civic Engagement and Belonging

The emergence of Black Lives Matter has spurred increased awareness of racial inequities

- More than two in three (67%) Canadians express some level of support for those protesting, according to a September 2020 poll, compared to 55% of U.S. respondents. However, almost one in three Canadians (32%) believes the phrase "saying there is systemic racism in Canada is an exaggeration," and 40% of Canadians perceive that racism is an American issue, not a Canadian one.



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- In a survey of Toronto nonprofit organizations, almost three-quarters (73%) feared that society would be more unequal a decade from now due to the social and financial impacts of the pandemic.

"It's always cyclical attention for the Black community. After the summer of the gun in the early 2000s about 150 organizations were funded in the amount of about \$40M. Today, only maybe three still exist. The rest just died after the funding ended. There was no sustainability plan. There was no structure built."

-**Liben Gebremikael**, executive director, TAIBU Community Health Centre

Housing

With the eviction moratorium lifted in early August 2020, Toronto is seeing more people than ever reaching out for support from eviction prevention, rental assistance programs, and affordable housing providers.

- Calls to eviction prevention hotlines are surging with double the normal volume this past September.
- The Daily Bread Food Bank surveyed food bank participants and found 20% of those in private housing were not paying their full rent, and more than a quarter were very worried about the risk of eviction.
- The last recession was considered "over" in summer 2009. In each of 2011, 2012, and 2013, evictions were at least 20% higher than they were in the first year after the recession.

"This overshadows anything I've seen before." Steve Teekens, executive director, Na-Me-Res.

Getting Around

While the city has gone virtual, vulnerable residents face a "digital divide," preventing them from accessing core supports.

- 84% of social service organizations and 54% of other organizations agreed that many of their clients did not have the internet at home.

"I see people with disabilities being left out because of an inability to fit into the idea of what it means to be of value in our society." Sarah Jama, co-founder, Disability Justice Network of Ontario.

Arts, Culture, and Recreation

Organizations in the arts, culture, and recreation sector have been devastated by the pandemic. And, although some online alternatives have emerged, they cannot replace the breadth and depth of creative and recreational offerings previously available.

- Two-thirds of arts and culture organizations reported a decline in revenue, with a median decline of 50%.

"When we're in difficult times, when we're trying to work through complex ideas, artists can help us really be laser-focused on what matters, and assess and encourage us to have open dialogue, encourage us to reflect. The arts are necessary in the good times, but even more so in the difficult times."

-**Alica Hall**, Executive Director, Nia Centre for the Arts

Environment

Park usage increased during the pandemic, but work needs to be done to make these gains permanent.

- Park usage in Toronto doubled in summer 2020, compared to 2019, but facilities remain distributed unequally across the city.

"Parks in underserved neighbourhoods often don't fit the needs of the people who live around them. They are flat expanses of grass that lack infrastructure, few benches to sit on, no shelter or shade, no lights after dark, unstable paths to walk on, no barbeque pits, and old, rusty playgrounds that need to be replaced."

-**Minaz Asani-Kanji**, manager of outreach, Park People

Learning

The sudden shift to online learning has been difficult for many students, and this is especially true for low-income students who have less access to technology, high-speed internet, and tutoring opportunities.

- Returning to in-person school is riskier for students in low-income neighbourhoods that have been harder hit by COVID-19, and lone-parent families are forced to make additional sacrifices to support at-home learning.

"We need to structure education in ways that make sense for everyone and for communities like ours at Jane and Finch that's been one of the hardest hit by COVID. How do we create an in-school learning experience where students are not afraid to come to school and get COVID."



-Tesfai Mengesha, co-executive director, Success Beyond Limits

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About Toronto Foundation

Established in 1981, Toronto Foundation is one of 191 Community Foundations in Canada. We pool philanthropic dollars and facilitate charitable donations for maximum community impact. Our individual, family and organizational funds number more than 700 and we administer more than \$400 million in assets. Through strategic granting, thought leadership and convening, we engage in city building, mobilizing people and resources to increase the quality of life in Toronto.

Visit www.torontofoundation.ca and follow @TorontoFdn and #TOVitalSigns #FalloutReport.

