

KEY MESSAGES: Mental health and substance use impacts of COVID-19

VULNERABLE OR AT-RISK POPULATIONS



THE PANDEMIC IS EXACERBATING PROBLEMS THAT ALREADY EXIST

The COVID-19 pandemic is intensifying existing issues including homelessness and domestic violence. Research highlights the intersection of racialized and at-risk populations, who face disproportionate negative impacts as a result of the pandemic.



MAINTAINING ACCESS TO CARE IS ESSENTIAL FOR INDIVIDUALS IN SITUATIONS OF SOCIAL PRECARIETY

This includes ensuring that appropriate technology, training and supervision are available. Providers must be careful not to inadvertently perpetuate access inequities.

Sex and gender diversity must factor into the adaptation of services during the pandemic to prevent further health inequities, especially for women and 2SLGBTQ+ people who are dealing with substance use.

Youth who experience homelessness are more likely than the general population to have pre-existing mental health and substance use challenges, struggles with financial hardship, and employment uncertainty.



THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC HAS CAUSED AN INCREASE IN INTIMATE PARTNER/DOMESTIC AND GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

Disasters are associated with a rise in intimate partner violence (IPV), along with lasting parallel issues such as post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), trauma, and mental health issues.

Social determinants of health factors place racialized women and girls at an increased disadvantage during the pandemic. Racialized members of society bear a disproportionate burden of stress, illness and health inequities.



VIRTUAL CARE MAY BE EFFECTIVE FOR SOME INDIVIDUALS

Virtual care interventions for individuals at risk of domestic and sexual violence are most effective when used to supplement or facilitate, rather than replace, in-person professional trauma-focused care.

There is an urgent need to address inequities in digital access to care and treatment.

Learn more at <https://cihr-irsc.gc.ca/e/52001.html>