

Note to editors: This statement is issued on behalf of the Racial and Ethno-Cultural Equity Advisory Committee. The Racial and Ethno-Cultural Equity Advisory Committee is not expressing views on behalf of the City of Vancouver.

Sent on behalf of the Racial and Ethno-Cultural Equity Advisory Committee
News release
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City of Vancouver Racial and Ethno-Cultural Equity Advisory Committee calls for Race-based health data collection in British Columbia

The City of Vancouver's Racial and Ethno-Cultural Equity Advisory Committee is joining the urgent call from community organizations and institutions across British Columbia and Canada for the collection of socio-demographic and race-based data to understand the impacts of COVID-19 on racialized communities. As members of our committee raised in a previous call with Councillor Kirby-Yung, collecting this data on COVID-19 is of utmost urgency.

Marginalized groups experience health inequities despite the existence of Canada's universal healthcare system.

We have ample evidence indicating that individuals and groups of different marginalized identities, including race, experience health inequities despite the existence of Canada's universal healthcare system. Social determinants of health researchers have consistently echoed the findings of the 2018 report titled "Key Health Inequalities: A National Portrait"^[1], where the Public Health Agency of Canada found that "significant health inequalities were observed for those with lower socioeconomic status, Indigenous peoples, sexual and racial/ethnic minorities, immigrants, and people living with functional limitations". It is no longer a debate that a person's identity has significant impacts on their income, employment, access to food and shelter among many other determinants of health.

"This pandemic, and future crises, cannot be effectively tackled without addressing underlying structural inequities that have exacerbated its escalation. Our leaders need to start now by mandating the immediate collection of socio-demographic and race-based data in health and social services". Ignatius But-Co-Chair, City of Vancouver Racial and Ethno-Cultural Equity Advisory Committee.

Racialized communities are among the most likely to contract COVID-19

COVID-19 has exacerbated many of these structural inequities. Racialized communities are among the most likely to contract COVID-19 and face disproportionate challenges navigating life in the "new normal". Racialized

individuals are more often employed in sectors deemed essential (including healthcare^[2], food^[3], and transportation providers), live in smaller housing units where it is difficult to self-isolate, and face barriers to accessing information, resources and support services^[4] among other factors, thus contributing to their vulnerability. Poignant examples have splashed the headlines and have given us a glimpse of the situation; however, a thorough understanding of COVID-19's impacts on racialized communities does not yet exist.

We urge the Vancouver City Council and the Province of B.C. to take action on health inequities by

- Mandating the collection, use and analysis of disaggregated, socio-demographic and race-based data in health and social service sectors; and
- Ensuring that the collection of data is led by critical race researchers who identify as having racialized identities and experiences to ensure that the data collection measures meaningfully contribute to building a culturally safe health care system and is not used for any other purposes.

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For further information contact:

Ignatius But, Co-Chair
ignatiusbut@gmail.com

Kevonnie Whyte, Member
kevonnie.whyte@gmail.com

[1] <https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/publications/science-research-data/key-health-inequalities-canada-national-portrait-executive-summary.html>

[2] <https://www.theglobeandmail.com/canada/article-how-the-coronavirus-took-north-vancouvers-lynn-valley-care-centre/>

[3] <https://www.macleans.ca/society/health/cargill-covid19-meat-plant/>

[4] <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/edmonton/edmonton-language-barriers-covid-19-low-income-housing-1.5517122>

<https://www.thestar.com/news/canada/2020/04/24/new-immigrants-face-special-challenges-adjusting-to-life-in-bc-amid-covid-19.html>