



CANADIAN COALITION FOR
PUBLIC HEALTH
IN THE 21st CENTURY

PUBLIC HEALTH MATTERS **Racism and Health**

Canada needs a federal government that is committed to sustained investment in public health across the country. The Canadian Coalition for Public Health in the 21st Century calls on the next federal government to invest in strategies and programs that support strong healthy people in Canada regardless of their economic and social status.

A higher standard for Canadian families

Canada remains a nation where a person's colour, religion, culture or ethnic origin are determinants of health that result in inequities in social inclusion, economic outcomes, personal health, and access to and quality of health and social services. These effects are especially evident for racialized and Indigenous peoples as well as those at the lower end of the social gradient and those who are incarcerated (populations that are also disproportionately composed of racialized and Indigenous peoples).

It's time for Canada to do better.

Call to action

The Coalition is calling on the next federal government to:

- Undertake organization-wide reviews of its systems, regulations, policies, processes and practices to identify and remove racist approaches;
- Undertake the steps necessary to implement programs and systemic change in order to address the 94 *Calls to Action* from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission;
- Undertake the steps necessary to implement programs and systemic change in order to address the 58 *Calls to Justice* directed at governments described in the Final Report of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls; and
- Provide continual accounting and monitoring to demonstrate the steps taken to respond to these recommendations.

Why it matters

[Racism is insidious and affects all aspects of life](#). It is correlated to poorer health outcomes for those subject to the behaviour, with the strongest and most consistent findings (from the United States) associating the results of racist behaviours with negative mental health outcomes, negative physical health outcomes (hypertension, low birth weight, heart disease and diabetes), and negative health-related behaviours (cigarette smoking, alcohol use and substance use). A [2012 report published by the Wellesley Institute](#) has indicated that such relationships are more difficult to track in Canada as care registry data does not regularly record race or ethnicity statistics; however, significant associations were found between self-assessed poor or fair health and the experience of racism.

A Higher Standard for All Canadians

The reasons given for this effect include:

- economic and social deprivation;
- toxic substances and hazardous conditions;
- socially-inflicted trauma (mental, physical, and sexual that are either directly experienced or witnessed, and range from verbal threats to violent acts);
- targeted marketing of commodities that can be harmful to health;
- inadequate or degraded medical care; and
- degradation of ecosystems, including systematic alienation of Indigenous Peoples from their lands and traditional economies.

Adding to this complexity is the increasing diversity of Canadians. In 2016, approximately 2.2 million Canadians were from first or second generation families and this number was expected to increase.

Of particular concern is the relationship with Indigenous Peoples where the growth rate of this population is greater than that for the country as a whole. The relationship between racism, the social determinants of health and Indigenous Peoples of Canada has been described in a series of three publications and a webinar prepared by the [National Collaborating Centre for Indigenous Health](#), as well as [a series of resources](#) curated by the National Collaborating Centre for Determinants of Health along with [a blog](#) summarizing its ongoing work to become an anti-racist organization.

Questions for the candidates

1. Will you speak out against racist views whenever and wherever you witness them?
2. What will your party do to explore, identify and eliminate racist federal laws, regulations, policies and systems of power?
3. What will your party do to reduce racism and the oppression of racialized Canadians?
4. What specific steps will your party take to ensure the implementation of anti-racist and anti-oppression regulations and policies?
5. What specific steps will your party take to ensure that the social determinants of health are considered in all social and economic policies and programs?

Resources

- [CPHA Position Statement: Racism and Public Health](#)
- [National Collaborating Centre for Indigenous Health](#)

About the Canadian Coalition for Public Health in the 21st Century

The Canadian Coalition for Public Health in the 21st Century (CCPH21) is a national network of 21 non-profit organizations, professional associations, health charities and research organizations that share the common goal to improve and sustain the health of Canadians. CCPH21 advocates for public policy to ensure that adequate public health functions are in place and information is made available to protect and promote health, and prevent disease and injury. CCPH21 aims to help all stakeholders work together for the future of public health by generating ideas and potential policy directions for discussion among both the public and decision-makers.

A Higher Standard for All Canadians