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Five years on: Tracing the costs of lockdowns

Examining overlooked physical,
social, and economic harms of
Covid lockdowns



Justice Centre
for Constitutional Freedoms

We Defend
Freedom
in Canada

Abstract

March 2025 marked five years since Covid lockdowns were imposed in Canada. These lockdowns restricted Canadians' *Charter* rights and freedoms and caused untold harm. This report evaluates the immediate and ongoing impacts of lockdowns on Canadians' mental and physical health, societal well-being, and economic stability. It reveals a significant decline in mental and physical health for adults and youth. The cancelled and delayed medical treatments during lockdowns resulted in unprecedented and ongoing long medical wait times. A disturbing rise in non-Covid deaths was also observed, particularly among Canadians under age 45, with significant increases in several causes of death, including euthanasia. Crime also increased, with elevated homicide rates and a surge in cybercrime. Economically, the unprecedented job losses disproportionately affected low-wage workers, and the high public spending and soaring government debt contributed to high inflation, exacerbating financial hardships for many Canadian families. The findings in this report underscore the need for governments to carefully weigh the harms of any freedom-restricting policy against any potential benefits to justify a restriction on any of Canadians' *Charter* rights and freedoms.

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Updates to this report

This is Version 1.0 of this report, which may be updated periodically

About the authors

This report was produced by Justice Centre staff and researchers.

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Executive Summary

In response to Covid, Canadian governments repeatedly imposed non-pharmaceutical interventions (lockdowns) with the stated goal of managing Covid transmissions and saving lives. They did this despite mounting evidence that lockdowns did little to save lives, but instead caused Canadians a great deal of harm.

Five years later, the data reveals the true cost of such policies. Will we learn and avoid repeating the same mistakes in the future?

Building on previous Justice Centre reports, which reported on a host of lockdown harms, this report investigates the ongoing harms lockdowns have caused Canadians. Using publicly available statistics, this report reveals the year-over-year trends of the costs of lockdown and the gravity of these harms during each of the last five years.

Our report finds that there was a significant deterioration in Canadians' mental health during lockdowns, as demonstrated by Canadians' self-perception of their mental health, increased number of mood disorder diagnoses, and the alarming surge in opioid overdose deaths. Canadian children and youth weren't spared: being barred from physical activities and often having nothing to do but stay glued to their screens, their mental well-being took a significant hit.

Canadians also saw a deterioration in their overall health, as shown by their lower self-perceived health and their access to timely healthcare, including MRI scans and diagnoses and treatment of critical diseases like cancer. During lockdowns, thousands of scheduled diagnostic visits were delayed and cancelled, resulting in more deaths in the long term and an ongoing backlog at healthcare facilities, perpetuating a cycle of extended wait times.

While birth rates saw a significant drop during lockdowns, a higher number of Canadians were dying (over and beyond Covid deaths) than would have been expected under normal circumstances. These "excess deaths" were seen in categories like liver diseases, diabetes, and hypertensive diseases, largely due to lifestyle changes during lockdowns. In the case of Canadians under 45 years of age, a significantly higher percentage of "excess deaths" were due to non-Covid causes than were due to Covid, indicating that lockdowns had a particularly hard-hitting effect on this young and typically healthy demographic.

Another somber statistic was the spike in euthanasia cases, which in 2023 accounted for 4.7 percent of all deaths in Canada. Many who received assistance in committing suicide were not facing the prospect of a natural death in the "reasonably foreseeable" future.

Crime also surged. Homicide rates surpassed the previous five-year trend significantly, claiming many innocent victims in Canada. Cyber-crime thrived as well, particularly in



identity theft, fraud and online child sexual exploitation, resulting in thousands of innocent victims.

Economically, the lockdowns were devastating. Millions of workers relying on their jobs to put food on the table were sent home for months – even years – on end, leading many Canadians to struggle to provide for their families. Lower-wage earners were particularly harshly affected compared to higher-wage earners. The “laptop class” of lawyers, accountants, politicians, judges and academics were almost entirely exempted from financial hardship.

As a result of massive government subsidies to keep Canadians afloat amid mass layoffs and the consequent soaring of government debt, Canadians have seen significantly high inflation rates over the last several years. This has led even more Canadians to struggle to pay their bills and provide for their families.

In examining these lockdown harms, this report paints a clear picture: lockdowns were not worth the cost. Covid lockdown harms should serve as a cautionary tale for future “emergencies,” and Canadians’ *Charter* rights and freedoms should not be taken lightly.

The *Canadian Charter of Rights of Freedoms* requires governments to “demonstrably” justify with persuasive evidence any health order, vaccine mandate or other law that violates our *Charter* freedoms, including religion, expression, peaceful assembly, association, and mobility. Governments must show that any freedom-violating policy brings about more good than harm. This requires governments to identify, track, and monitor lockdown harms, and weigh those harms against any potential benefits.

Five years after the first lockdowns, no federal, provincial, or territorial government in Canada has conducted an honest and transparent analysis of their lockdown policies. Sadly, it falls upon non-government actors like the Justice Centre to carry out this necessary work.

While this report is no substitute for the comprehensive analyses governments should have undertaken, it takes important initial steps in documenting many of the lockdown harms – including ongoing harms – that Canadians experienced. It offers an important reminder: Canadians’ rights and freedoms must never again be suspended without careful, transparent, and evidence-based justification.



Introduction

Five years ago, much of Canadians' daily life came to a grinding halt. On March 17, 2020, Ontario¹ and Alberta² were the first provinces to declare states of emergency due to rising Covid cases. They imposed lockdowns to “flatten the curve,” shutting down all gatherings of 50 or more and closing children’s play centres, community centres, fitness facilities, recreation centres and arenas, casinos, theatres, and more. Other provinces followed suit soon after. Borders between provinces were closed to all “non-essential” travel, and mandatory quarantines were issued for individuals arriving in Canada.³

Canadians' *Charter* freedoms to move, travel, associate, assemble, and worship were restricted, catapulting Canadians into a long, dark winter – the initial “two weeks to flatten the curve” lasted more than three years.

At what cost?

A previous Justice Centre report,⁴ released at the end of 2021, explored the various harms lockdowns caused, cataloging a whole series of harms based on data from Statistics Canada and other publicly available sources. This report investigates the continuing trend of lockdown harms in 2025, five years after the initial rounds of lockdowns in 2020.

In 2020, politicians in Canada and around the world mimicked the lockdown policies of countries like China and Italy.⁵ Stringent restrictions on rights and freedoms were repeatedly justified as scientific, despite there being little scientific basis⁶ for lockdowns, which were “unprecedented in public health history.”⁷ Rather than critically examining or questioning the narrative, governments – and government-funded media – continued to

¹ Global News, “Ontario government declares state of emergency amid coronavirus pandemic,” March 17, 2020, <https://globalnews.ca/news/6688074/ontario-doug-ford-coronavirus-covid-19-march-17/>

² Global News, “Premier Jason Kenney declares COVID-19 public health emergency in Alberta,” March 17, 2020, <https://globalnews.ca/news/6690858/alberta-coronavirus-march-17-2020/>

³ Toronto Star, “A timeline of COVID-19 in Canada,” January 24, 2021 https://www.thestar.com/politics/a-timeline-of-covid-19-in-canada/article_825f5047-a427-5336-8c9c-0463dcfb9469.html

⁴ Justice Centre Report, “Are lockdowns worth their cost?,” December 14, 2021, <https://www.jccf.ca/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/2021-12-14-Lockdown-harms- JC6.pdf>

⁵ Jonas Herby, Lars Jonung & Steve H. Hanke, “Were COVID-19 lockdowns worth it? A meta-analysis,” *Link Springer*, November 28, 2024, <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s11127-024-01216-7>

⁶ Brownstone Institute, “More Than 400 Studies on the Failure of Compulsory Covid Interventions (Lockdowns, Restrictions, Closures),” November 30, 2021, <https://brownstone.org/articles/more-than-400-studies-on-the-failure-of-compulsory-covid-interventions/>

⁷ Joe Nocera and Bethany McLean, “COVID Lockdowns Were a Giant Experiment. It Was a Failure,” *Intelligencer*, October 30, 2023, <https://nymag.com/intelligencer/article/covid-lockdowns-big-fail-joe-nocera-bethany-mclean-book-excerpt.html>



portray Covid as an unusually deadly killer and insisted that extreme measures, such as lockdowns, were the only effective means to address the problem.

During all this, lockdowns were simply assumed to generate more benefits than harm. No federal or provincial governments in Canada conducted the kind of cost-benefit analysis required to “demonstrably” justify their *Charter* restricting policies, as required by the *Charter*. The few cost-benefit analyses that *were* undertaken by others often operated on false assumptions, overestimating the benefits and underestimating the costs, according to Douglas Allen, an economics professor at BC’s Simon Fraser University.⁸ Consequently, most of the cost-benefit analyses arrived at conclusions that were later disproven, while new studies showed lockdowns’ effectiveness to be extremely limited, at best.

This report analyses annual statistics and studies to measure the year-over-year ongoing trend of lockdown harms across several domains, including mental health, healthcare access, health, crime rates, excess deaths, and the economy, and reveals the various direct and indirect harms the unscientific lockdowns imposed on Canadians.

It should be noted, however, that it is difficult (and perhaps impossible) to establish a concrete causal relationship between lockdowns and the harms identified in this report. It is possible, and in some cases likely, that there were other contributing factors to the troubling trends observed. However, it is incumbent on Canadian governments to provide measurable, reliable, and comprehensive data and data analyses to clearly demonstrate the effects – both positive and negative – of their policies. Any violation of Canadians’ *Charter* rights and freedoms must be “*demonstrably justified*” based on such data analysis, which Canadian governments have not yet done, five years after the initial lockdowns.

Canadians need to understand the reality of what took place with the governments’ lockdown measures. Without such understanding, Canadians will not be able to resist future assaults on their *Charter* rights and freedoms in the event of another “emergency” in the future.

Lockdowns’ toll on Canadians’ mental health

Negative effects on mental health were an obvious consequence of lockdowns. When issuing lockdown orders that keep people mostly at home, significant negative effects on mental health are bound to occur due to stress, social isolation, and disrupted schedules.

⁸ Douglas W. Allen, “*Covid Lockdown Cost/Benefits: A Critical Assessment of the Literature*,” Simon Fraser University, April 2021, <https://www.sfu.ca/~allen/LockdownReport.pdf>



A drop in self-rated mental health

One of the best measures of Canadians’ mental health is how they perceive their own mental health, that is, their “self-rated mental health” (SRMH). Statistics Canada surveys show that lockdowns had a significantly negative effect on Canadians’ mental health, with high SRMH decreasing from 64 percent to 58 percent for Canadians aged 12 and above.⁹ While this downward shift was observed in all age groups, it particularly affected young people. For instance, young adults (aged 18 – 34) reported the lowest levels of SRMH (51 percent), while Canadians aged 65 and older reported the highest levels of SRMH (68 percent).¹⁰

Figure 1 – Canadians’ perception of their mental health^{11, 12}

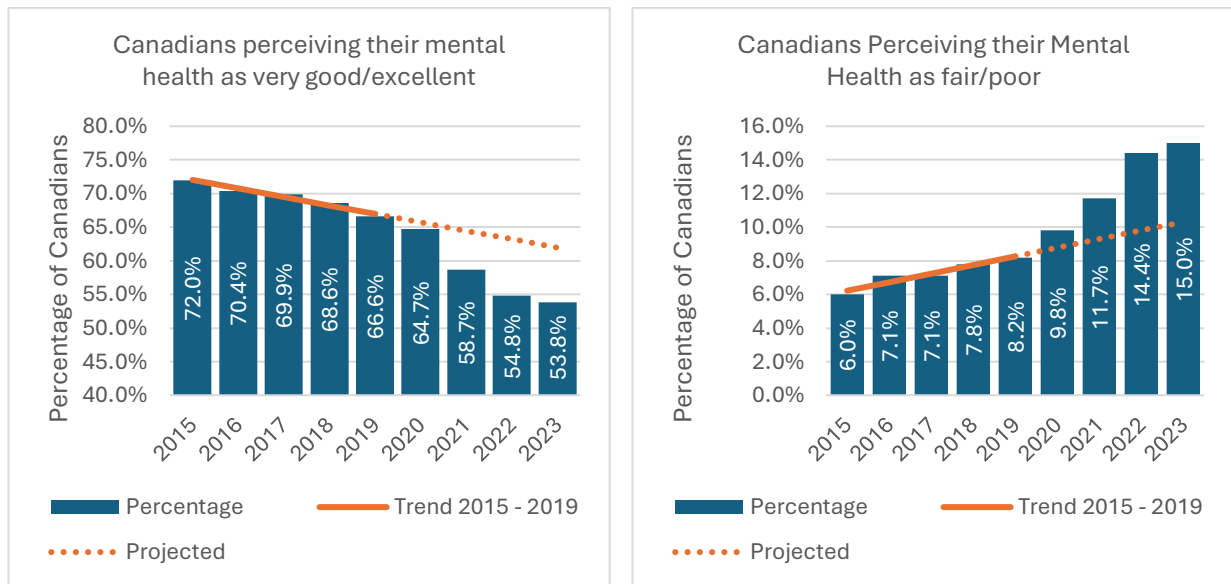


Figure 1 shows Statista’s finding of the percentage of Canadians aged 18 and older self-reporting their mental health as either very good/excellent or as fair/poor. There was a clear decline in Canadians’ self-perceived mental health during lockdowns – a trend observed through 2023.

⁹ Government of Canada, Statistics Canada. *The Daily — Self-Rated Mental Health Decreases after Another Year of the COVID-19 Pandemic*. 7 June 2022, <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/daily-quotidien/220607/dq220607e-eng.htm>

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Statista, “Canadians Mental Health Status Very Good Share 2015-2023.” <https://www.statista.com/statistics/434057/share-of-canadians-perceiving-their-mental-health-as-very-good-or-excellent/>, Accessed 29 Apr. 2025.

¹² Statista, “Canadians Mental Health Status Fair or Poor Percent 2015-2023,” <https://www.statista.com/statistics/434065/share-of-canadians-perceiving-their-mental-health-as-fair-or-poor/>, Accessed 29 Apr. 2025.



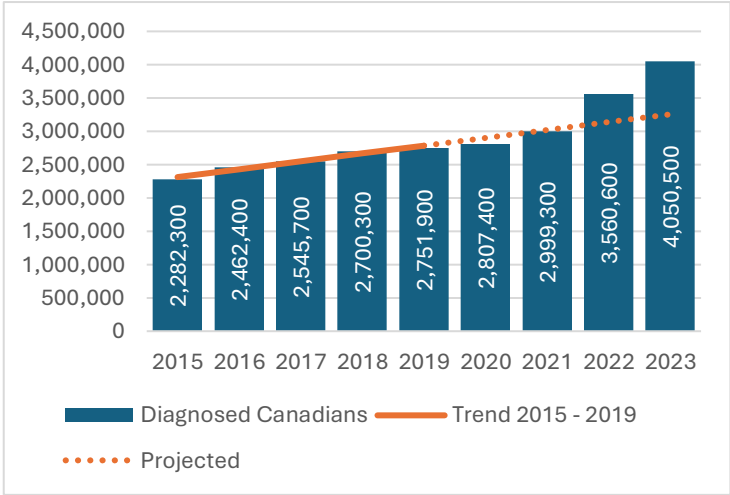
The percentage of Canadians self-reporting their mental health as *very good/excellent* went from 67 percent in 2019 and a low of 54 percent in 2023. While the general downward slope continued into 2020 at 65 percent, 2021 saw a significant decrease to 59 percent, and down to 54 percent in 2023. This means that, by 2023, 13 percent fewer Canadians reported having very good/excellent mental health than expected based on the previous five-year trend.

Canadians perceiving their mental health as *fair/poor* mirrored this concerning trend, with a general increase since 2015 and a significant jump during and after lockdowns. Here, the percentage of Canadians perceiving their mental health as fair/poor increased from 8 percent in 2019 to 15 percent in 2023. This means that, by 2023, 46 percent more Canadians reported having fair/poor mental health than projected based on the previous five-year trend.

Rising numbers of mood disorder diagnoses

The number of people diagnosed with a mood disorder is another metric illuminating a society’s mental wellbeing. Canadian statistics also show a concerning trend here, especially in 2022 and 2023. For these two years, the number of Canadians diagnosed with a mood disorder jumped to 13.5 percent (2022) and 24.45 percent (2023) higher than projected based on the previous five-year trend.

Figure 2 - Number of Canadians Diagnosed with Mood Disorders¹³



While 2020 and 2021 remained on the pre-lockdown five-year trend (2015-2019), this may be due to a delayed psychological impact of lockdowns (especially in 2020, as also observed in Canadians’ self-perception of mental health) and delays in proper diagnoses. During lockdowns, Canadians often lacked access to proper professional help, which lowered the

¹³ Statista, “Canadians Reporting Mood Disorder Diagnosis 2015-2023.” <https://www.statista.com/statistics/434304/number-of-canadians-reporting-being-diagnosed-with-a-mood-disorder/>, Accessed 29 Apr. 2025.

number of diagnoses during these years, as observed in other categories like breast cancer, for example.¹⁴

Opioids Overdose deaths – a disturbing trend

Opioid toxicity deaths (overdose deaths) are another metric showing increased struggles with mental health during lockdowns. The number of Canadians that have died due to opioid overdose increased significantly since the first lockdowns in 2020, a trend continuing through 2023.

Opioid overdose deaths jumped by 72 percent from 2019 to 2020, going from 3,739 deaths in 2019 to 6,429 in 2020 (44 percent above projected).

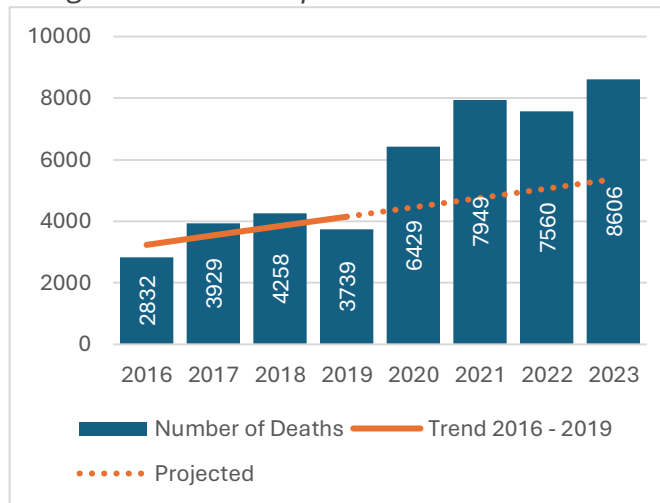
Numbers were even higher for the three subsequent years at 7,949 in 2021, 7,560 in 2022, and 8,606 in 2023. In total, from 2020 to 2023, 10,906 opioid deaths occurred above the projected trendline. Moreover, the pre-lockdown average (2016–2019) was 3,664 deaths per year, while the lockdown average (2020–2023)

dramatically increased to 7,624 deaths per year, reflecting an alarming rise of 108 percent in the average number of deaths per year.

From January to September 2024, “most (83 percent) of the opioid toxicity deaths occurred in British Columbia, Alberta, and Ontario, most among males (72 percent), with a significant portion aged 30 – 39 (28 percent).¹⁶ Most (75 percent) involved fentanyl.

Numbers specific to certain provinces are even more bleak. In Saskatchewan, overdose deaths increased by more than 200 percent in 2020 (compared to Canada’s overall increase of 72 percent).¹⁷ However, being on the lockdown bandwagon, instead of increasing capacity to deal with this surge in overdoses, Saskatchewan reduced the number of detox treatment beds from 209 to just 110, to comply with social distancing

Figure 3 - Annual Opioid Deaths in Canada¹⁵



¹⁴ CBC News, “Oncologist fears ‘tsunami of cancer’ after COVID-19 lockdowns limited screening,” CBC News, 17 Dec. 2020, <https://www.cbc.ca/news/health/cancer-tsunami-screening-delays-covid-1.5844708>

¹⁵ Government of Canada, “Key Findings: Opioid- and Stimulant-Related Harms in Canada,” 11 Dec. 2019, <https://health-infobase.canada.ca/substance-related-harms/opioids-stimulants/>

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Justice Centre Reports, “Are lockdowns worth...”



rules. Ontario, Alberta, and British Columbia were other provinces that saw significant spikes in opioid deaths beginning in the first year of lockdowns.

Physical health on decline

Lockdowns did not just have a negative effect on Canadians' *mental* health, but they also harmed their *physical* health. They barred them from accessing vital facilities like gyms, pools, and sports arenas, which help maintain physical health, and kept them from accessing timely medical diagnoses and treatment, leading to more advanced diagnoses and more deaths. Those who defied the rules, like going on walks to stretch their legs and breathe a bit of fresh air, were often fined for being outdoors by themselves, as one couple found out when the woman decided to go on a walk with her husband on a leash to skirt lockdown rules.¹⁹ As one can imagine, lockdowns ended up having a significant toll on Canadians' overall health.

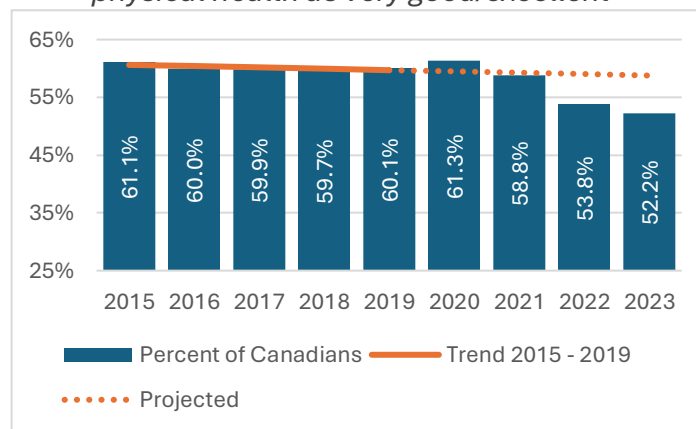
Woman walking man on leash¹⁸
(not the actual couple)



Perceived physical health declines

As Figure 4 shows, Canadians' perception of their physical health took a downturn, though not right away. Interestingly, the percentage of Canadians perceiving their overall health as being very good/excellent remained steady into the first two years of lockdowns (61 percent in 2020 and 59 percent

Figure 4 - Percentage of Canadians perceiving their physical health as very good/excellent²⁰



¹⁸ Cult MTL, "Quebec Couple Fined \$3,000 for Wife Walking Husband on Leash after Curfew," 11 Jan. 2021, <https://cultmtl.com/2021/01/quebec-couple-fined-3000-for-wife-walking-husband-on-leash-after-curfew/>

¹⁹ VICE, "Quebec Woman Fined For Putting Leash on Her Partner, Taking Him for a Walk." 12 Jan. 2021, <https://www.vice.com/en/article/quebec-woman-fined-for-putting-leash-on-her-partner-taking-him-for-a-walk/>

²⁰ Statista, "Canadian Adults Health Status Very Good Percent 2015-2023," <https://www.statista.com/statistics/434031/percent-of-canadians-perceiving-their-health-as-very-good-or-excellent/>, Accessed 29 Apr. 2025

in 2022), with significant declines only appearing in 2022 (54 percent) and 2023 (52 percent).

The steady rate in perception of overall health in the first two years of lockdowns is puzzling, but it could mean that it took some time for Canadians to feel the health consequences of being locked down. Some of the explanations for the subsequent drop in health could reflect the effects of reduced physical activity and improper diet in the first two years of lockdowns, stress of lockdowns and routine interruptions, increased mental health struggles, disruptions in healthcare access, and longer wait times to receive healthcare.

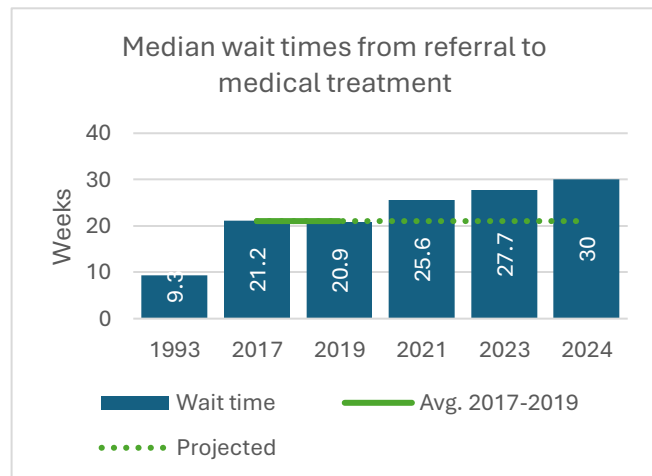
Some studies found that during lockdowns, many Canadians were hesitant to seek healthcare services, including for cardiac events and cancer illnesses, leading to negative health consequences.²¹ Some statistics showed that Canadian emergency department visits dropped by 50 percent during the first few months of lockdowns in 2020.²² Many Canadians also missed or cancelled their regular doctor's check-up, resulting in many missed diagnoses with serious health consequences observed into 2025.

Reduced access to health care

Longer wait times for medical treatment

Wait times for medical treatments saw a dramatic increase during and after lockdowns. In 2017 and 2019, the median wait time from receiving a referral by a doctor to receiving medical treatment was 21 weeks. That number jumped to 26 weeks in 2021, with further increases in both 2023 and 2024, bringing the median number of weeks in wait time to 30 weeks in 2024. In short, wait times increased by 43 percent from the pre-lockdown (2017-

Figure 5 - Median wait times from referral to medical treatment in Canada²³



²¹ Justice Centre Reports, "Are lockdowns worth..."

²² Canadian Institute for Health Information, "Overview: COVID-19's Impact on Health Care Systems," <https://www.cihi.ca/en/covid-19-resources/impact-of-covid-19-on-canadas-health-care-systems/the-big-picture>, Accessed 29 Apr. 2025

²³ Statista, "Wait Time for Medical Treatment by Province Canada 1993-2024," <https://www.statista.com/statistics/654494/weeks-waited-from-gp-referral-to-medical-treatment-in-canada-by-province/>, Accessed 29 Apr. 2025



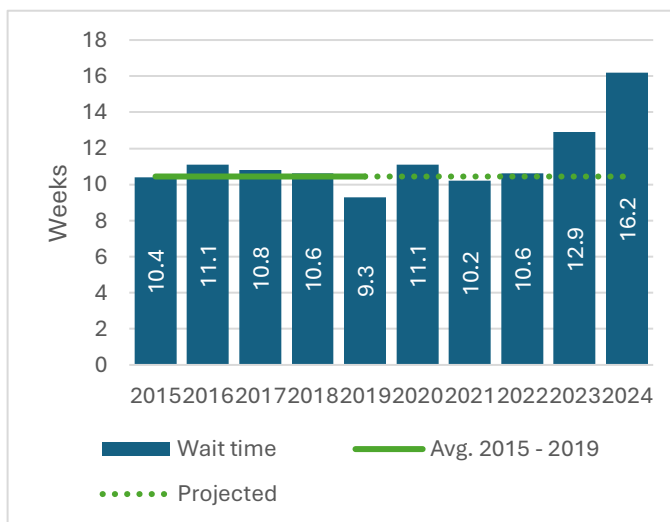
2019) average. This is a far cry from the mere 9.3 weeks median wait time back in 1993. These numbers also demonstrate that wait times have been a chronic and growing problem in Canada for many years, and not just caused by Covid. That being said, the nine-week increase in wait time in just five years since lockdowns began is a significant problem and has generated serious consequences, even death, as shown by a rise in cancer death rates.²⁴

These staggering wait times – especially in the last few years – are in large part due to healthcare backlogs, staffing shortages, and increased healthcare demands due to the delayed/cancelled medical treatments caused by the lockdowns.

Longer wait times to receive an MRI

The backlog in healthcare caused by lockdowns is also reflected in the number of weeks Canadians have had to wait to receive an MRI scan in the last few years. The pre-lockdown five-year average wait time was 10.44 weeks and remained steady into 2022. However, 2023 saw a 22 percent spike in wait times and, in 2024, another 26 percent spike, with wait times going up to an unprecedented 16.2 weeks. This amounts to a 55 percent increase in wait times over the previous five-year average. This means that countless Canadians are receiving delayed diagnoses resulting in worse medical conditions.

Figure 6 – Wait time to receive an MRI²⁵



²⁴ CBC News, “The Unintended Consequences of Surgery Delays during COVID-19,” 27 June 2020, <https://www.cbc.ca/news/health/covid-surgery-delay-unintended-consequences-1.5629360>

²⁵ Statista, “Wait Time for MRI Canada 2024,” <https://www.statista.com/statistics/654492/weeks-waited-for-mri-in-canada/>, Accessed 29 Apr. 2025



Longer wait times for cancer surgery

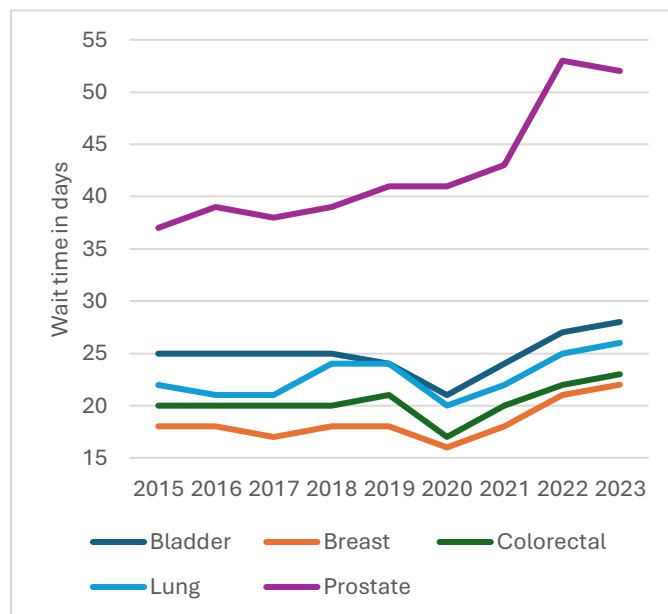
Wait times for cancer surgery also rose across multiple cancer types, particularly in 2022 and 2023. Interestingly, wait times decreased in 2020 for all but one of the cancer types in Figure 7 - prostate cancer. According to a Cambridge University press article that analyzed surgical wait times in British Columbia, this was due to postponing non-urgent surgeries and prioritizing urgent ones,²⁷ which would have applied to those cancer surgeries that were not among the thousands of surgeries cancelled during this time.²⁸

Median wait times for cancer surgeries in 2023 were 3 to 4 days higher than the previous five-year average (2015-2019) for bladder, breast, colorectal, and lung cancers, representing an average increase of 17 percent (24 percent for breast cancer alone). For prostate cancer, wait times rose by 15 days in the same period, representing an astonishing 34 percent increase in wait times.

The backlog created from the cancelled and postponed surgeries during lockdowns is now showing its consequences in the form of dangerously long wait times for many Canadians. One study published by the British Journal of Surgery estimated that in Canada, 27,390 cancer surgeries were cancelled during the first wave of lockdowns alone.²⁹

Each of the increases in wait times above represents a serious risk to Canadians' health and often to their very lives. Wait times are no small matter. Since 2018, more than 74,000 Canadians have died on healthcare waiting lists before receiving various surgeries and

Figure 7 – Median wait times for cancer surgery²⁶



²⁶ Statista, "Median Wait times for Cancer Surgery in Canada from 2015 to 2023, by Type of Cancer (in Days)," 4 Apr 2024, <https://www-statista-com.uleth.idm.oclc.org/statistics/441047/cancer-surgery-wait-times-canada-by-site-50percentile/>

²⁷ Shojaei D, Bakos B, Loree J, et al. "Impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on access to cancer surgery: Analysis of surgical wait times in British Columbia, Canada." *Disaster Med Public Health Prep.* 17(e565), 1–7. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1017/dmp.2023.223>

²⁸ British Journal of Surgery, "Elective Surgery Cancellations Due to the COVID-19 Pandemic: Global Predictive Modelling to Inform Surgical Recovery Plans," 12 May 2020, <https://doi.org/10.1002/bjs.11746>

²⁹ Ibid.



diagnostic scans; at least 15,474 “died on the waitlist” in 2023-24 alone.³⁰ However, there are massive data gaps across provinces in Canada, so the “true number is likely double.”³¹

Canada saw a significant decrease in the number of screenings for breast, lung, colon, and cervical cancer during lockdowns.³² In Ontario, for instance, 41 percent (951,000) fewer screenings were completed in 2020 compared to 2019.³³ This reduction in screenings resulted in thousands of missed/delayed diagnoses and treatments. Delayed treatments result in significantly worse outcomes, with mortality increasing by up to 9.6 percent for breast cancer and 16.6 percent for colorectal cancer after five years.³⁴ In the UK, delayed treatments are estimated to have led to an additional 281–344 deaths for breast cancer patients, 1445–1563 deaths for those with colorectal cancer, and 1235–1372 deaths for lung cancer patients.³⁵ If this holds true for Canada, we should expect to see a spike in cancer deaths in 2025 and future years.

Lockdowns’ toll on children and youth

Lockdowns had the worst effect on Canada’s most vulnerable, including children and youth. Socializing with peers and engaging in physical activity is particularly important for this young demographic. However, with schools, playgrounds, and sports facilities closed intermittently for years on end, lockdowns (and vaccine mandates for those who chose not to get injected) denied this vulnerable demographic access to important activities for healthy development, forcing them to stay at home where many had nothing to do but be on their screens.

One study found that for Canadian youth, those who engaged more in “moderate-to-vigorous physical activity (MVPA) and sleep while minimizing screen time had lower depression scores, less severe emotional dysregulation, and better subjective well-being,”

³⁰ National Post, “More than 74,000 Canadians have died on wait lists since 2018: report,” Jan 15, 2025, <https://nationalpost.com/news/canada/canadians-health-care-wait-list-deaths>

³¹ Ibid.

³² Canadian Partnership Against Cancer, “Delays in Screening and Diagnosis.” <https://www.partnershipagainstcancer.ca/topics/cancer-in-covid-19-era/current-state/delays-in-screening-diagnosis/>, Accessed 29 Apr. 2025

³³ Anna N. Wilkinson, “Mitigating COVID-19’s impact on missed and delayed cancer diagnoses,” Canadian Family Physician (CFP), May 2022, <https://www.cfp.ca/content/cfp/68/5/323.full.pdf>

³⁴ Keim-Malpass, Jessica, et al. “Cancer Screening and Treatment Delays During the COVID-19 Pandemic and the Role of Health Literacy in Care Re-Engagement: Findings from an NCI-Designated Comprehensive Cancer Center Sample.” PMC PubMed Central, May 2023, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s13187-023-02312-w>.

³⁵ Ibid.

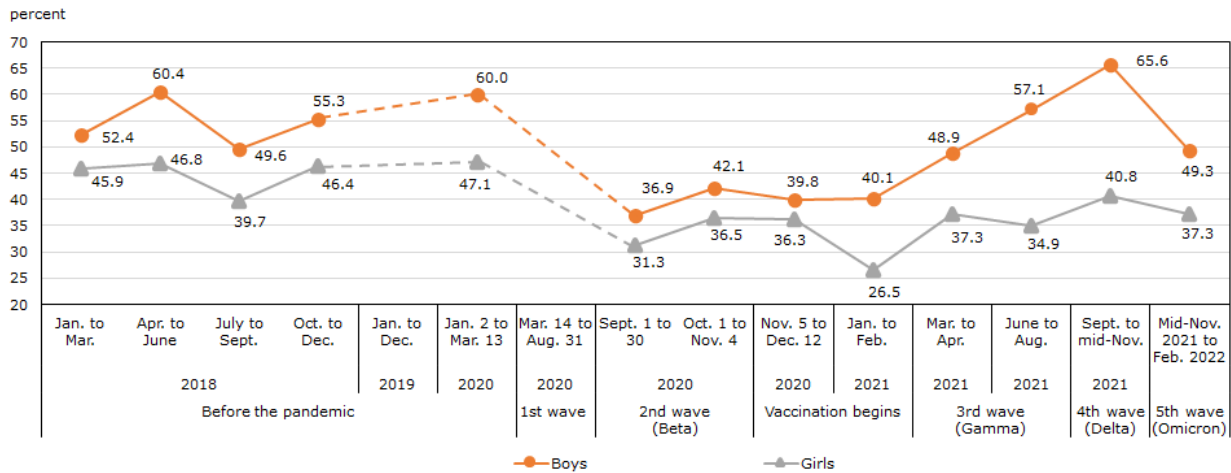


while “those who increased screen time while decreasing either MVPA or sleep experienced mental health decline on all outcomes.”³⁶

Physical activity denied

Figure 8 – (StatsCan figure)³⁷

Figure 1
Percentage of Canadian youth meeting the physical activity recommendation by 2018, 2020 and 2021 collection periods



Source: Canadian Community Health Survey, 2018, 2020 and 2021.

A Statistics Canada report shows that lockdowns had a detrimental effect on physical activity and screen time for Canadian youth aged 12-17. The study shows that before lockdowns, about half of Canadian youth met the recommended physical activity levels (49.6 percent in 2018; 53.7 percent in 2020). However, beginning in the first year of lockdowns, this dropped significantly to 37.3 percent (September to December 2020), improving slightly in 2021 (43.8 percent).

Lockdowns had a more immediate and hard-hitting effect on boys. The percentage of boys meeting the recommended amount of physical activity dropped from 60.0 percent to 39.5 percent in 2020. In the longer term, from 2018 to 2021, physical activity dropped on average by 2.1 minutes per day (14.7 minutes per week).

For girls, meeting the recommended amount of physical activity dropped from a mean of 47.1 percent to 34.8 percent in 2020. However, their drop in physical activity was more

³⁶ Duncan, Markus Joseph, et al. “The Association of Physical Activity, Sleep, and Screen Time with Mental Health in Canadian Adolescents during the COVID-19 Pandemic: A Longitudinal Isotemporal Substitution Analysis.” *Mental Health and Physical Activity*, vol. 23, Oct. 2022, p. 100473. *ScienceDirect*, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.mhpa.2022.100473>

³⁷ Statistics Canada, “The Ongoing Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic on Physical Activity and Screen Time among Canadian Youth,” 18 Oct. 2023, <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/82-003-x/2023010/article/00001-eng.htm>



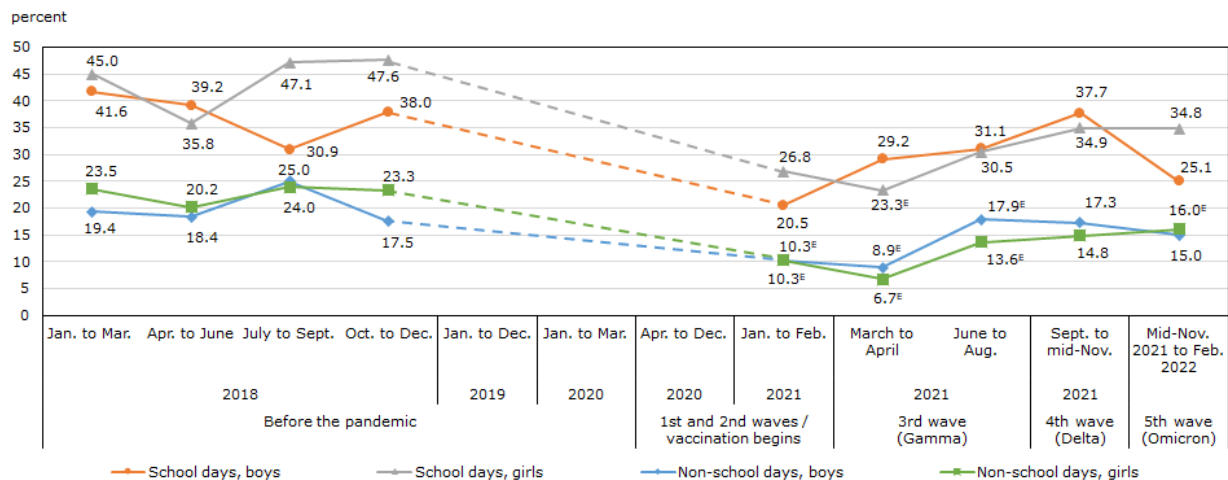
pronounced over the long term, dropping by 8.3 minutes per day (58.1 minutes per week) from 2018 to 2021, indicating that lockdowns had a more pronounced effect on girls in this respect. Indeed, for many, the effects have been long-lasting, with 10 percent of 6- to 12-year-old girls not returning to sports at all, and one in three 13- to 18-year-olds unsure if they were going to continue with sports.

Excessive screen time use

Studies show that too much screen time for children and youth is associated with “higher anxiety, depression symptoms, lower quality of life, lower psychological well-being, lower school functioning, lower academic achievement, lower self-esteem, poor language achievement, and poor math achievement.”³⁸ Too much social media usage in particular has been associated with lower mental well-being for adolescents, and increased risk for depression among girls.³⁹

Figure 9 – (StatsCan figure)⁴⁰

Figure 6
Percentage of Canadian youth meeting the screen time recommendation on school days and non-school days, by 2018 and 2021 collection periods



[£] use with caution
 Note: Use with caution, co-efficient of variation > 16.6
 Source: Canadian Community Health Survey, Annual, 2018 and 2021.

³⁸ Children’s Hospital of Orange County (CHOC) “The Effects of Screen Time on Children: The Latest Research Parents Should Know.” *Children’s Health Hub*, 27 Aug. 2024, <https://health.choc.org/the-effects-of-screen-time-on-children-the-latest-research-parents-should-know/>

³⁹ Santos, Renata Maria Silva, et al. “The Associations between Screen Time and Mental Health in Adolescents: A Systematic Review.” *BMC Psychology*, vol. 11, no. 1, Apr. 2023, p. 127. *BioMed Central*, <https://doi.org/10.1186/s40359-023-01166-7>

⁴⁰ Statistics Canada, “The Ongoing Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic on Physical Activity and Screen Time among Canadian Youth,” 18 Oct. 2023, <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/82-003-x/2023010/article/00001-eng.htm>



In parallel to the drop in physical activity, the percentage of Canadian youths meeting the recommended “two hours or less per day” time limit on screen time also dropped significantly. On school days, it dropped from 40.7 percent in 2018 to 29.1 percent in 2021, while on non-school days, it dropped from 21.4 percent in 2018 to 13.2 percent in 2021. Those hitting “four hours or more per day” increased from 21.1 percent to 33.7 percent.

As with physical activity, lockdowns had a more pronounced long-term (2018 – 2021) effect on girls. Girls saw a 14 percent drop in the number of girls meeting the recommended “two hours or less per day” of screen time, compared to the 9.2 percent drop for boys. Similarly, girls saw a greater increase in excessive screen time usage than boys, with an increase of 15.3 percent of girls hitting “four hours or more per day,” compared to a 10.1 percent increase for boys.

Youth’s decline in mental and physical health

Together, low physical activity and excessive screen time had a troubling effect on Canadian youth.

One study⁴¹ found that during the lockdowns, 67–70 percent of children/adolescents experienced deterioration in at least one of the following mental health areas: depression, anxiety, irritability, attention, hyperactivity, and obsessions/compulsions. While some saw improvements in these areas during lockdowns, the study found a general rate of deterioration for this demographic: “depression 37–56%, anxiety 31–50%, irritability 40–66%, attention 40–56%, hyperactivity 23–56%, obsessions/compulsions 13–30%.”⁴² Moreover, the deteriorations were specifically associated with “increased stress from social isolation” during lockdowns.

There are also very real physical consequences of too much screen time on developing individuals. Studies show that too much screen time increases myopia (near-sightedness) in children. A study of 120,000 children in China⁴³ found that the incidence of myopia in children aged 6 increased from 5.7 percent in 2019 to 20 percent in 2020, a 350 percent increase. Experts believe this increase is related to lockdowns because children are

⁴¹ Cost, Katherine Tombeau, et al. “Mostly Worse, Occasionally Better: Impact of COVID-19 Pandemic on the Mental Health of Canadian Children and Adolescents,” *European Child & Adolescent Psychiatry*, vol. 31, no. 4, 2022, pp. 671–84. PMC PubMed Central, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s00787-021-01744-3>

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ CTV News, “‘Quarantine myopia’: Study examines near-sightedness among children,” January 14, 2021, <https://www.ctvnews.ca/health/article/quarantine-myopia-study-examines-near-sightedness-among-children/>

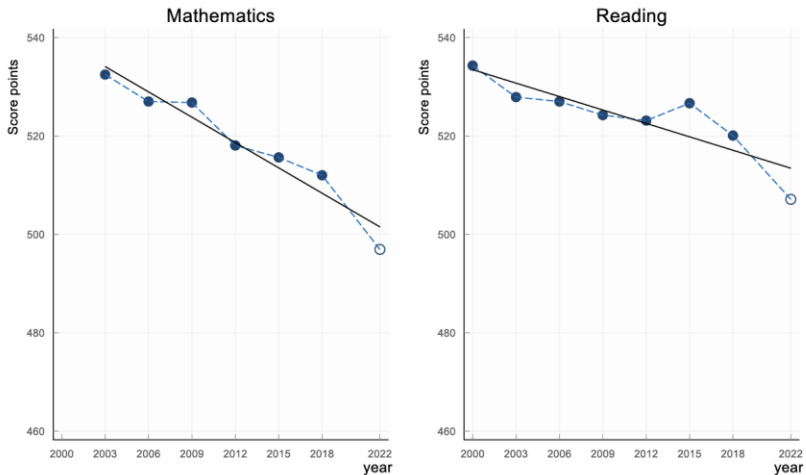


focusing on near-field objects, such as cellphones, to the exclusion of distant objects such as those found outdoors.

Ongoing learning deficits

School closures due to lockdowns also negatively impacted student learning outcomes from the 2018 pre-lockdown results. This was particularly evident in math and reading scores, according to a 2022 Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA),⁴⁵ which tests 15-year-olds' school performance in over 100 OECD⁴⁶ countries.

Figure 10 – Decline in math and reading scores⁴⁴



Specifically, PISA scores dropped by an unprecedented 13 points in reading and 15 points in math, from 2018 to 2022. To put this into perspective, a 20-point drop in test scores represents about a year of learning loss.⁴⁷ The hardest hit provinces even topped this threshold. Declines in reading scores across provinces were as follows: Newfoundland and Labrador (34 points), Nova Scotia (27 points), New Brunswick (20 points), Quebec (18 points), Saskatchewan (15 points), Ontario (12 points), British Columbia and Manitoba (8 points), and Prince Edward Island and Alberta (7 points).⁴⁸ A similar pattern was observed for math scores.

⁴⁴ OECD (2023), *PISA 2022 Results (Volume I): The State of Learning and Equity in Education*, PISA, OECD Publishing, Paris, <https://doi.org/10.1787/53f23881-en>.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ OECD stands for “Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development,” which is an intergovernmental organization that advises governments on various policies.

⁴⁷ Derek J. Allison, “Reading and math scores plummet across Canada after COVID school closures,” Fraser Institute, December 20, 2023, <https://www.fraserinstitute.org/commentary/reading-and-math-scores-plummet-across-canada-after-covid-school-closures>

⁴⁸ Ibid.



While science remained on trend overall in Canada, it also saw a significant drop in the Atlantic provinces – where the greatest drops in math and reading scores were observed – especially in Nova Scotia (16 points) and Newfoundland and Labrador (15 points).⁴⁹

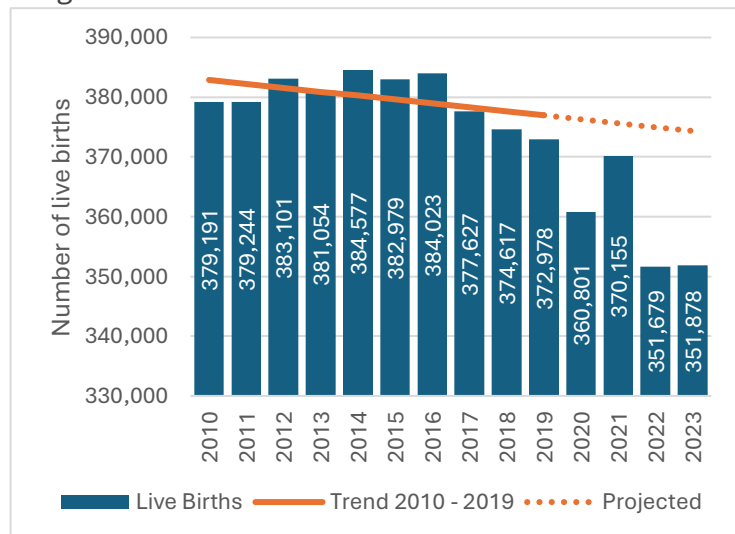
While schools pivoted to online learning during lockdowns, these trends reveal that online learning is no substitute for in-person education. The PISA study found that many students simply struggled to understand school assignments, and about half did not feel confident they could motivate themselves to do school work.⁵⁰

According to researchers, learning deficits are still being felt five years after the initial lockdowns, with students still struggling to catch up.⁵¹ One family in Montreal is spending around \$400 a week on private tutors in 2025 to help their two students catch up, but despite this, they continue to struggle.⁵²

Births in decline

The declining birth rate in Canada is another indicator that the effects of Covid and lockdowns were long-lasting. While the number of live births in Canada has been on a general decline since 2014, there was a significant drop in the first year of lockdowns in 2020. The number of births bounced back to close to 2019 levels (372,978) in 2021, but the subsequent two years saw a staggering drop to 6 percent below the previous

Figure 11 - Total Number of Live Births in Canada⁵³



⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ OECD, “PISA 2022 Results (Volume I and II): Country Notes: Canada,” 5 December 2023, https://www.oecd.org/en/publications/pisa-2022-results-volume-i-and-ii-country-notes_ed6fbcc5-en/canada_901942bb-en.html

⁵¹ CBC News: The National, “Learning deficits persist 5 years after COVID-19 school lockdowns,” YouTube, Mar 17, 2025, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=igv2FX9yQtc>, Accessed, April 29, 2025.

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ Statistics Canada. [Table 13-10-0416-01 Live births, by age of mother](#)
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.25318/1310041601-eng>



10-year trend. Indeed, 2022 saw the lowest number of births in 17 years,⁵⁴ at 351,679 compared to 372,978 in 2019.

The continuing trend of significantly low birth rates into 2023 after most lockdowns were lifted suggests that lockdowns had a long-term effect on birth rates. Interestingly, this trend coincides with the growing inflation and cost of living in Canada, caused (at least in part) by massive annual deficits and growing debt. According to Kate Choi, an associate professor of sociology at Western University, the growing cost of living makes it prohibitively expensive for many young adults to have the kind of lifestyle that allows them to have children.⁵⁵ More women are staying in the labour force longer and delaying births into their 30s. These are troubling trends insofar as birth rates are concerned, as they could have long-term social and economic consequences.

Excess deaths

Early in 2020, some predicted 40 million global Covid deaths in just 12 months, leading to the never-before-tried lockdowns in attempts to contain the virus.⁵⁶ Within a few short months, however, Covid death data from early 2020 showed these predictions to be wild exaggerations.⁵⁷ Nevertheless, governments and media had accepted (without supporting evidence) that lockdowns would reduce deaths, while disregarding the growing evidence that lockdowns themselves contributed to a significant increase in deaths. One study found that lockdowns reduced Covid deaths only by about 3.2 percent, while they imposed significant economic harm and led to many non-Covid deaths themselves.⁵⁸

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Global News, “Canada just had its lowest number of births in 17 years. What’s behind it?,” September 27, 2023, <https://globalnews.ca/news/9988609/canada-births-2022-statcan/>

⁵⁶ John Carpay, “Covid Apocalypse and the triumph of fear over facts | Justice Centre for Constitutional Freedoms,” Justice Centre for Constitutional Freedoms, September 5, 2024, <https://www.jccf.ca/covid-apocalypse-and-the-triumph-of-fear-over-facts/>

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ Douglas Allen, “Lockdown: A Final Assessment,” Fraser Institute, January 19, 2023, <https://www.fraserinstitute.org/studies/lockdown-final-assessment>

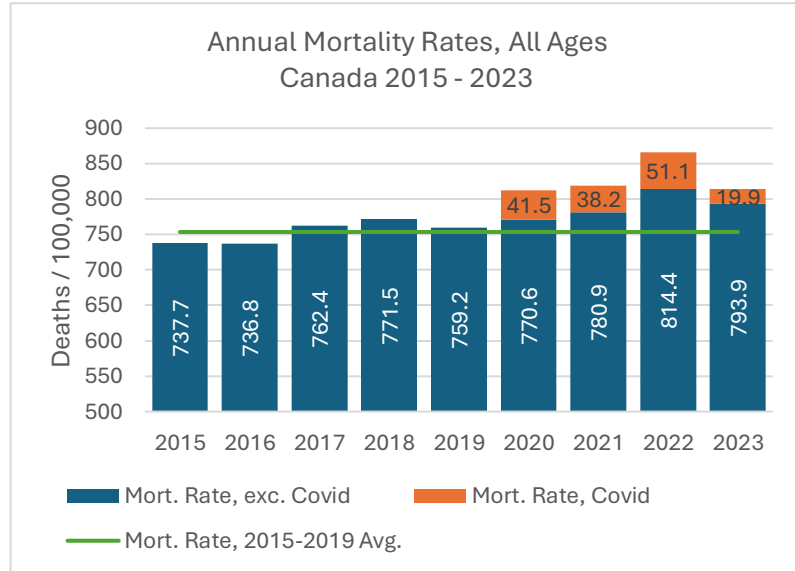


Non-Covid death rate above normal

Government statistics show that during lockdowns, mortality rates *excluding Covid deaths* were higher than the pre-lockdown five-year average of 754 deaths per 100,000 population. While 2020 remained the same as the previous high in 2018, beginning in 2021 non-Covid mortality rates began to increase, jumping significantly in 2022 to 814 deaths per 100,000 (8 percent higher than the previous five-year average) and down a bit in 2023,

though still high, at 794 deaths per 100,000 (5.4 percent above the previous five-year average). These mortality rates seem to indicate that apart from Covid, Canadians were dying at an unusually high rate due to causes other than Covid.

Figure 12 – Annual Mortality Rates, All Ages
Canada 2015 - 2023⁵⁹



This is the case even if all deaths attributed to Covid were correctly attributed. However, there are strong grounds to reject the claims of governments and health authorities about the number of “Covid deaths.” In April 2020, the World Health Organization (WHO) released its guidelines for classifying Covid as cause of death. The guidelines, which were used in Canada and most other countries, provided an excessively broad definition of what constitutes a “Covid death,” counting Covid as death for “all decedents where the disease caused, or is assumed to have caused, or contributed to death,” even if the patient has “another disease” (e.g. cancer) that is “suspected of triggering a severe course of Covid.”⁶⁰ This led to health authorities marking Covid as a cause of death if the patient tested positive for Covid, even if the patient was terminally ill with another disease, like cancer.⁶¹

⁵⁹ Statistics Canada. [Table 13-10-0392-01 Deaths and age-specific mortality rates, by selected grouped causes](https://doi.org/10.25318/1310039201-eng), DOI: <https://doi.org/10.25318/1310039201-eng>

⁶⁰ John Carpay, “A glaring double standard,” Justice Centre for Constitutional Freedoms, March 04, 2025, <https://www.jccf.ca/a-glaring-double-standard/>

⁶¹ Ibid.

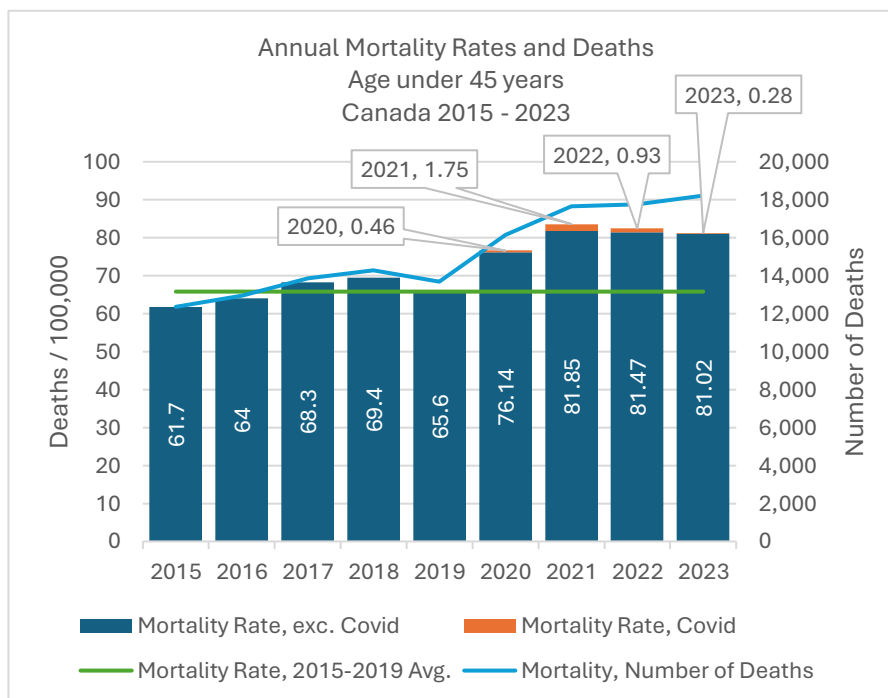


Note that patients only needed to test positive for Covid – not be sick from it – for Covid to be listed as the cause of death. Governments based their Covid death counts on PCR test results, even though PCR tests merely detect traces of the virus and do not (and cannot) determine whether a person is actually sick with Covid.⁶²

High non-Covid death rate for those under 45

The jump in non-Covid mortality rate was particularly pronounced for Canadians under 45 years of age. While the Covid mortality rate for this young demographic was only at 1.75 per 100,000 population, non-Covid mortality rates jumped significantly from a pre-lockdown five-year average of 65.8 deaths per 100,000 to an average of 80.12 deaths per 100,000 from 2020 –

Figure 13 – Annual Mortality Rates and Deaths Age under 45 years Canada 2015 – 2023⁶³



2023. This was a significant increase (22 percent) in the non-Covid mortality rate for this age group. The government’s own data tells us that Covid had little effect on Canadians under 45 years of age; it was lockdowns that inflicted particularly grave harm on this demographic.

⁶² The Duran, “PCR Inventor: “It doesn’t tell you that you are sick” October 06, 2020, <https://theduran.com/pcr-inventor-it-doesnt-tell-you-that-you-are-sick/>

⁶³ Statistics Canada. [Table 13-10-0710-01 Mortality rates, by age group](https://doi.org/10.25318/1310071001-eng)
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.25318/1310071001-eng>



Deaths due to diseases

Mortality statistics show that the number of deaths in some cause-of-death categories increased significantly during lockdowns. The figures 14 - 17 below show increases in deaths across categories that were likely affected greatly by lockdowns.

Figure 14 – Deaths from: Diseases of liver [K70-76]⁶⁴

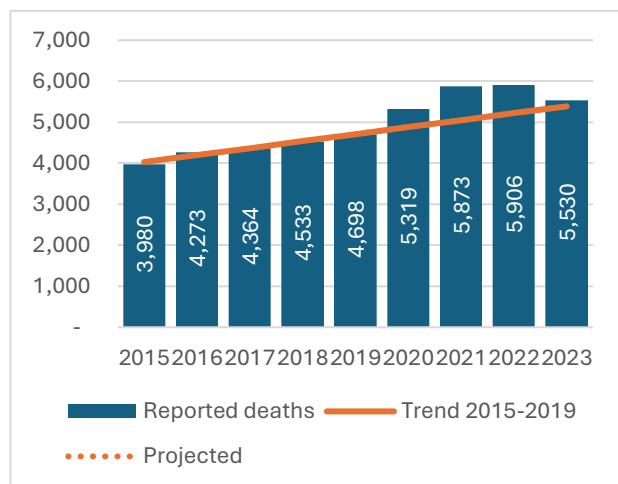
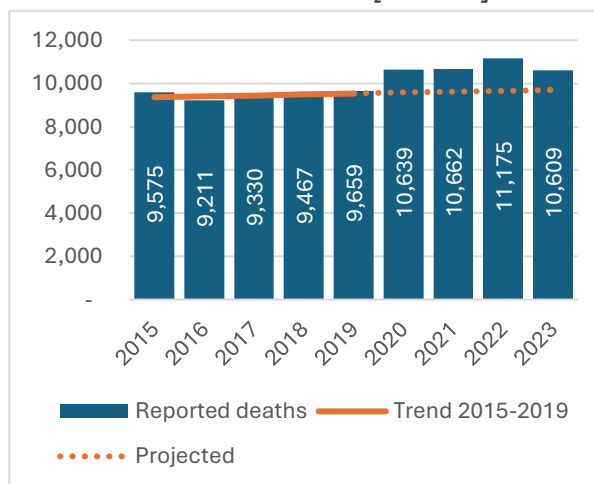


Figure 15 - Deaths from: Diabetes mellitus [E10-14], Malnutrition [E40-46], Obesity and other hyperalimentation [E65-68], and Metabolic disorders [E70-89]⁶⁵



The number of deaths from diseases of the liver, which includes alcohol-related deaths,⁶⁶ increased to 9, 16 and 13 percent above the projected trendline in 2020, 2021, and 2022, respectively. During lockdowns, provinces across Canada designated liquor stores as “essential”, allowing Canadians access to alcohol at a time when many were most vulnerable.⁶⁷ One survey found that nearly 20 percent of those surveyed consumed more alcohol during lockdowns, often because of disrupted schedules, stress, or just sheer boredom.⁶⁸ This increase in alcohol consumption likely explains the increase in deaths from liver diseases.

⁶⁴ Statistics Canada. [Table 13-10-0392-01 Deaths and age-specific mortality rates, by selected grouped causes](#)

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.25318/1310039201-eng>

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ Global News, “Alcohol-related deaths spiked 18% during pandemic, study finds,” February 4, 2025, <https://globalnews.ca/news/11000852/alcohol-related-deaths-spiked-18-during-pandemic-study-finds/>

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ CCSA, “NANOS Alcohol Consumption During Covid-19 Report 2020,” Canadian Centre on Substance Use and Addiction, April 2020, <https://www.ccsa.ca/sites/default/files/2020-04/CCSA-NANOS-Alcohol-Consumption-During-COVID-19-Report-2020-en.pdf>



The number of deaths from the collective causes of diabetes mellitus, malnutrition, obesity and other hyperalimentation, and metabolic disorders are further examples of lockdown harms. The overall increase for these diseases was at 11, 11, and 16 percent above projected levels from 2020 to 2022 (based on the previous five-year trend), remaining significantly high in 2023 at 9 percent above projected levels. These can all be associated with stress or not taking proper care of oneself with a proper diet and exercise, or both.

Figure 16 – Deaths from: Diabetes mellitus [E10-14]⁶⁹

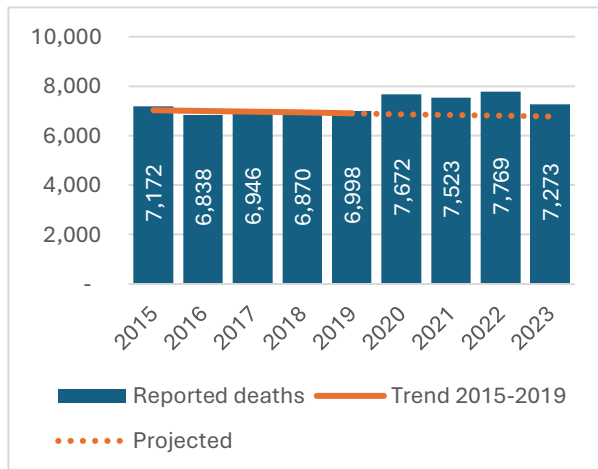
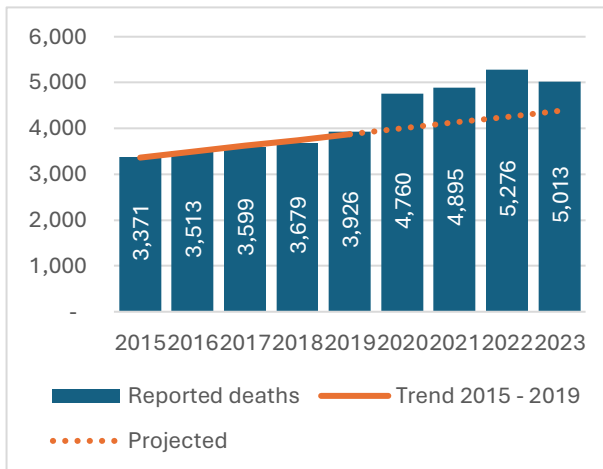


Figure 17 - Deaths from: Hypertensive diseases [I10-15]⁷⁰



The number of deaths from hypertensive diseases (high blood pressure) saw the strongest increase in deaths, jumping to 19, 19, and 24 percent above projected levels from 2020 to 2022, while remaining significantly high in 2023 at 14 percent above projected levels. Factors that can contribute to high blood pressure are “being overweight or obese, not being physically active, high-salt diet, drinking too much alcohol,” amongst others,⁷¹ all of which are more likely during a lockdown.

⁶⁹ Ibid.

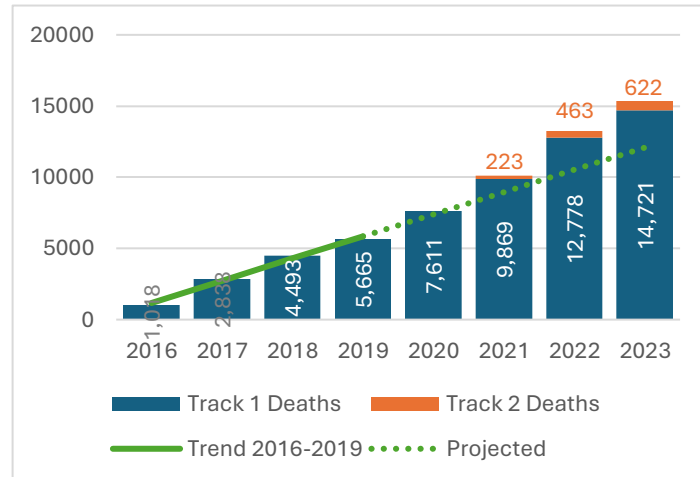
⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ WHO, “Hypertension,” 16 March 2023, <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/hypertension>

Increases in deaths by euthanasia

Deaths by euthanasia indicate that, during lockdowns, many Canadians found more comfort in dying as opposed to living to see another day. Since euthanasia was legalized in 2016,⁷⁴ the number of annual euthanasia deaths has increased steadily. However, beginning in 2021, the number of deaths by euthanasia rose even more, almost doubling from 7,611 in 2020 to 14,721 in 2023, with levels significantly above projected from 2021 to 2023, based on the previous four-year trendline.

Figure 18 - Number of Deaths by Euthanasia in Canada^{72, 73}



Moreover, beginning in 2021, a significant number of Canadians whose “natural death is *not* reasonably foreseeable” (Track 2 deaths) began opting for euthanasia. (Euthanasia cases where death was reasonably foreseeable are logged as Track 1 deaths.) Track 2 deaths amounted to 223, 463, and 622 from 2021 to 2023 (that is 2.21, 3.50, and 4.05 percent of total deaths by euthanasia for those years).

In 2022, 4.1 percent of total deaths in Canada were at the hands of nurses and doctors.⁷⁵ In 2023, that number was 4.7 percent.

Lockdowns were largely lifted in the summer of 2021 and replaced with vaccine passports in the fall of 2021. The direct impact of lockdowns and vaccine passports on euthanasia rates is difficult (and perhaps impossible) to know or measure. However, rising euthanasia rates, especially in respect of Track 2 euthanasia deaths (natural death is not reasonably

⁷² Government of Canada, “Fourth annual report on Medical Assistance in Dying in Canada 2022,” <https://www.canada.ca/en/health-canada/services/publications/health-system-services/annual-report-medical-assistance-dying-2022.html#a4.5>

⁷³ Government of Canada, “Fifth Annual Report on Medical Assistance in Dying in Canada, 2023,” <https://www.canada.ca/en/health-canada/services/publications/health-system-services/annual-report-medical-assistance-dying-2023.html>

⁷⁴ The Canadian Encyclopedia, “Assisted Suicide in Canada | The Canadian Encyclopedia,” <https://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/assisted-suicide-in-canada>, Accessed April 29, 2025.

⁷⁵ ARPA Canada, “Health Canada Releases 5th Annual Report on MAID,” December 18, 2024, <https://arpacanada.ca/articles/health-canada-releases-5th-annual-report-on-maid/>



foreseeable), speak to an ominous societal trend of declining mental health that was likely exacerbated by lockdowns.

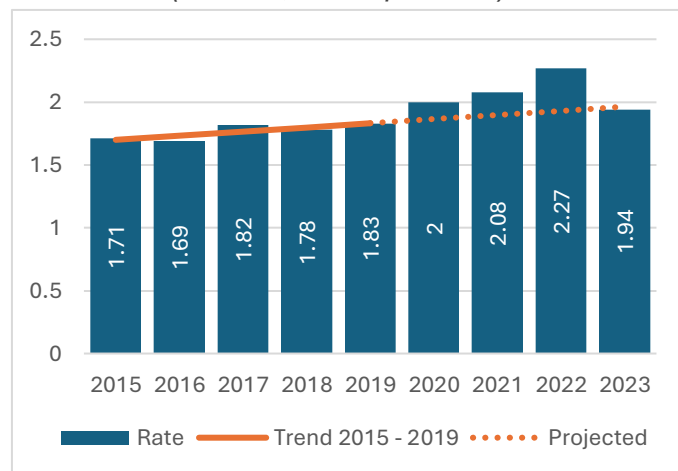
It should be noted that the rising numbers of euthanasia deaths in 2022 and 2023 coincide with economic difficulties amid high cost of living and other economic problems. This could mean that stress related to financial difficulties may be a greater contributor to the spike in those two years than the lockdowns themselves. Nevertheless, it appears that lockdowns contributed significantly to these higher numbers of euthanasia deaths.

Crime

Above normal homicide rates

Government homicide statistics show an increase in homicide rates (and numbers) in Canada during lockdowns. They rose by about 10 percent in 2020 and peaked in 2022 at around 17 percent above the pre-lockdown trend, when homicide rates were at 2.27 per 100,000 population (882 homicide victims). In 2023, numbers decreased back to the pre-lockdown trend, to a rate of 1.94 homicides per 100,000 population (778 homicide victims).

Figure 19 - Rate of Homicide in Canada (Per 100,000 Population)⁷⁶



A spike in cybercrime

As Canadians were locked in their homes for years on end, many were left with nothing to do but sit on their phones, computers, and other electronic devices – a shift also observed with the spike in cybercrime. While the pre-lockdown trend already saw a significant increase, the numbers during and after lockdowns were notably above trend.

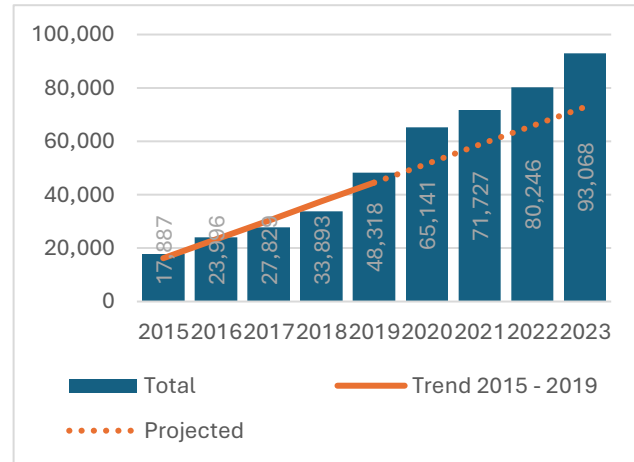
⁷⁶ Statistics Canada. [Table 35-10-0071-01 Number and rate of homicide victims, by Census Metropolitan Areas](https://doi.org/10.25318/3510007101-eng) DOI: <https://doi.org/10.25318/3510007101-eng>



Police-reported cybercrime

The increase in the overall number of police-reported cybercrimes (which include fraud, sexual crimes, threats, and other types of illicit activities) was observed right from the first year of lockdowns. In 2020, the number of cybercrimes was 26 percent above trend, followed by 22, 22, and 28 percent from 2021 to 2023.

Figure 20 - Police-Reported Cybercrime⁷⁷

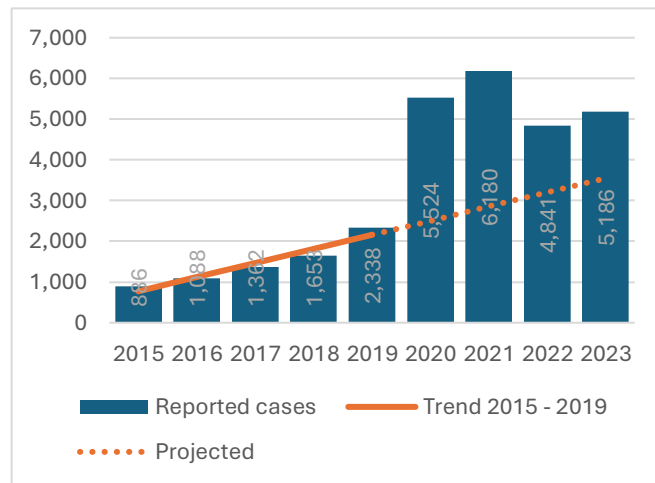


A spike in fraud-related activities

Police-reported “fraud” was one area that saw a significant increase above the pre-lockdown trend. During lockdowns, the overall number of reported “fraud” cases were between 21 and 25 percent above the pre-lockdown trend.

Identity theft and fraud in particular saw a staggering jump during lockdowns. In 2020, the combined number of police-reported “identity theft” and “identity fraud” was 120 percent above trend, followed by 117 percent in 2021, and lower at 51 percent in 2022 and 46 percent in 2023 after most lockdowns had been lifted.

Figure 21 - Identity theft and fraud⁷⁸



Identify theft “involves the collection and use of personal information such as your name, date of birth, address, social insurance number (SIN), and other personal details for criminal purposes,” such as “open a bank account, apply for loans or mortgages, obtain

⁷⁷ Statistics Canada. [Table 35-10-0001-01 Police-reported cybercrime, by cyber-related violation, Canada \(selected police services\)](https://doi.org/10.25318/3510000101-eng) DOI: <https://doi.org/10.25318/3510000101-eng>

⁷⁸ Ibid.



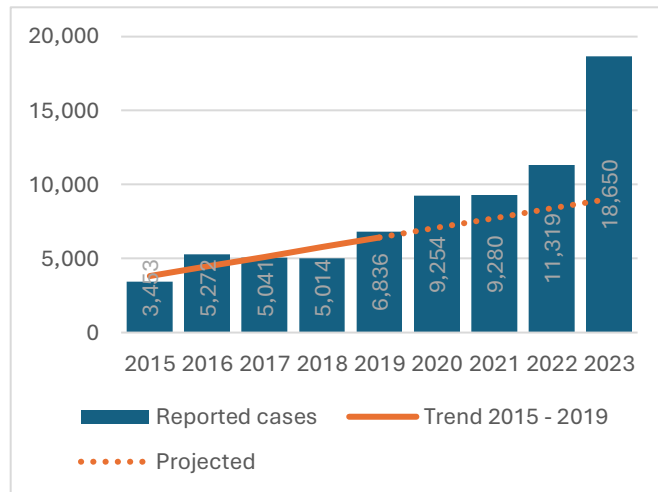
GST/HST rebates or refunds, benefit and credit payments, or income tax refunds, and so on.”⁷⁹

Increase in online child sexual exploitation

A particularly disturbing area of cyber-crime that increased during lockdowns was related to online child sexual exploitation (OCSE), which includes the following categories used by Statistics Canada: “*luring a child via a computer,*” “*child pornography,*” and the “*making or distribution of child pornography.*”

Here, reported cases started at 31 percent above trend in 2020, followed by 20, 35, and 107 percent above trend from 2021 to 2023. For comparison, in 2019, there were 6,838 cases; in 2023, this number was 18,650. Each of these cases means a child suffered at the hands of an online sexual predator. However, these are only the police-reported cases – the real number, in all likelihood, is much higher.

Figure 22 - Online Child Sexual Exploitation⁸⁰



⁷⁹ Government of Canada, “Protect Yourself Against Identity Theft,” <https://www.canada.ca/en/revenue-agency/services/forms-publications/publications/rc284/protect-yourself-against-identity-theft.html>, Accessed April 29, 2025.

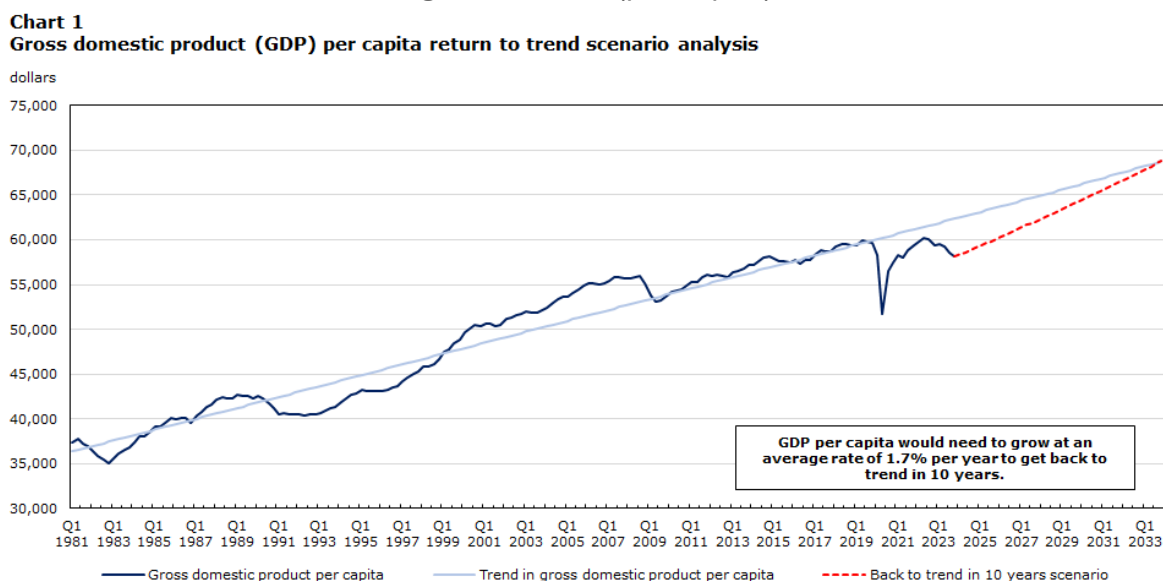
⁸⁰ Statistics Canada. [Table 35-10-0001-01 Police-reported cybercrime, by cyber-related violation, Canada \(selected police services\)](#) DOI: <https://doi.org/10.25318/3510000101-eng>



Economy

Gross Domestic Product (GDP) per capita, slow to recover

Figure 23 - GDP (per capita)⁸¹



Sources: Statistics Canada, tables 36-10-0104-01 and 17-10-0009-01.

Lockdowns also had a devastating effect on the Canadian economy. In 2020, Canada saw the sharpest decline in real gross domestic product (GPD) since 1961,⁸² shrinking by 5.4 percent.⁸³

GDP per capita (per person) fell by almost \$10,000 per person during 2020's lockdowns.⁸⁴ The effects are still felt heavily by Canadians in 2025, with real GDP per capita remaining at 7 percent below the long-term trend in early 2024, equating to a decrease of \$4,200 per person.⁸⁵ To return to the pre-lockdown trend in the next 10 years, GDP per capita would have to grow at a rate of 1.7 percent per year.⁸⁶ To put that into perspective, from 1981

⁸¹ Statistics Canada, "Canada's Gross Domestic Product per Capita: Perspectives on the Return to Trend," 24 Apr. 2024, <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/36-28-0001/2024004/article/00001-eng.htm>.

⁸² Statistics Canada, "Gross domestic product, income and expenditure, fourth quarter 2020," March 02, 2021, <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/daily-quotidien/210302/dq210302a-eng.htm>

⁸³ Global News, "Canadian economy posts worst showing on record in 2020," March 02, 2021, <https://globalnews.ca/news/7671568/canadian-economy-gdp/>

⁸⁴ Statistics Canada, "Canada's Gross Domestic Product per Capita: Perspectives on the Return to Trend," 24 Apr. 2024, <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/36-28-0001/2024004/article/00001-eng.htm>.

⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁶ Ibid.



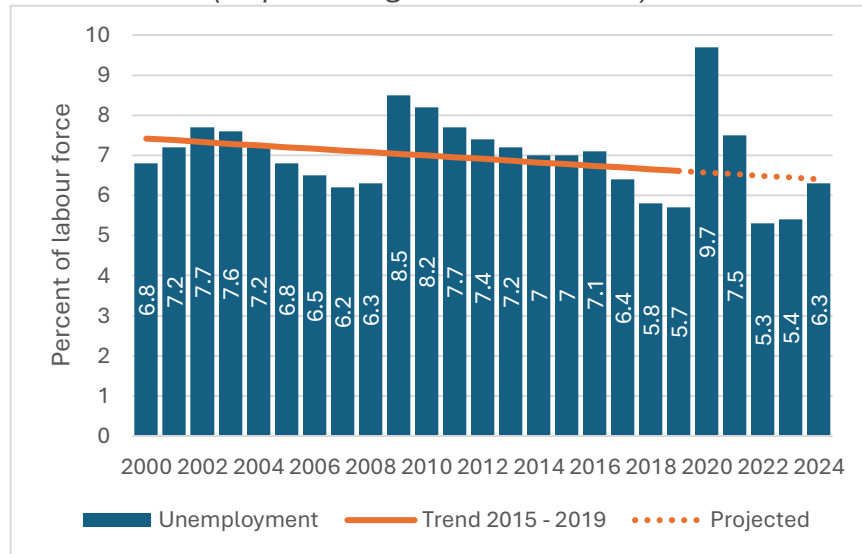
onwards, Canada's GDP per capita grew at an average annual rate of only 1.1 percent.⁸⁷ It would require an astonishing feat for Canada's economy to recover to the pre-lockdown trend in 10 years.

Unemployment at historic levels

Most Canadians rely on steady employment to pay their bills, make mortgage payments, and put food on the table. However, during lockdowns, politicians and health bureaucrats told a significant percentage of Canadian workers that their jobs were not essential, and sent them home. In 2019, Canada's unemployment rate

was at 5.7 percent of the labour force, but in 2020, this number rose to 9.7 percent. The number of people who did not have a job to provide for their family almost doubled!

Figure 24 - Unemployment Rate in Canada (As percentage of Labour Force)⁸⁸



Low-wage earners hit hardest

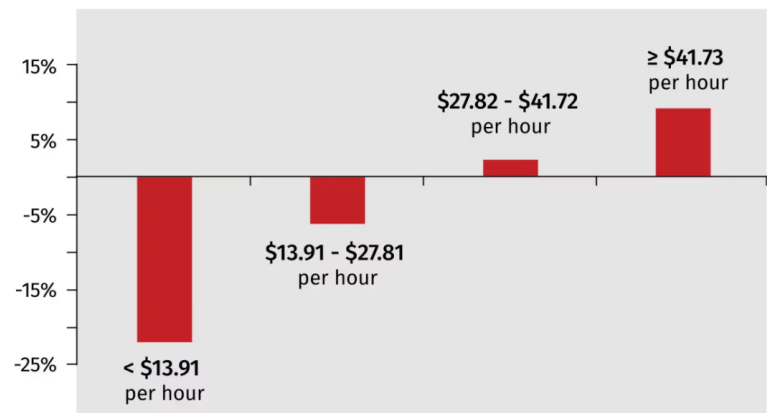
Lockdowns hit low-wage earners the most. According to a CIBC report,⁹⁰ on the whole, jobs lost as a result of lockdowns were those paying \$27.81 an hour or less at a time when the average hourly rate for full- and part-time workers was around \$31.00 an hour.⁹¹ By far, the hardest hit employees were those who made \$13.91 an hour or less, while those earning \$41.73 actually saw an increase in employment by over 5 percent

in the same time. Youth and immigrants are typically among those working in low-wage

Figure 26, from CBC News⁸⁹

Job losses during pandemic disproportionately hit lower-income workers

Change in employment by wage range in Q4 2020 vs. Q4 2019



CBC NEWS

Source: Statistics Canada, CIBC

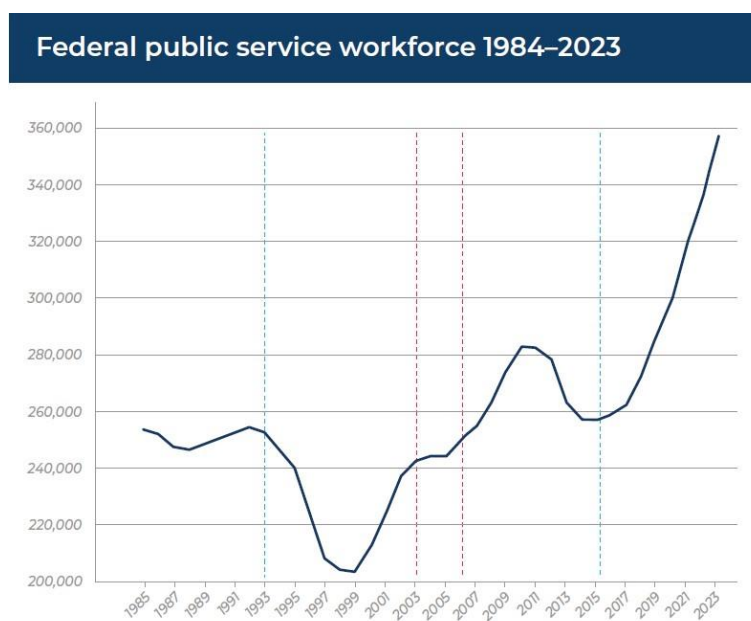


jobs, and are more affected by unemployment.⁹² In short, lockdowns took jobs from Canada's most vulnerable population - those who were already struggling to get by.

Slow private sector job growth, booming government jobs

While private sector job growth has remained slow, the opposite has been true for government jobs. Job growth in government exceeded the private sector in 8 out of 10 provinces from 2019 to 2023, with a 13 percent growth, compared to 3.6 percent growth in the private sector.⁹⁴ The federal workforce specifically, however, grew by over 25 percent within the same time frame!⁹⁵ A big increase in public sector employment "crowds out" private enterprise.⁹⁶ This means that while taxpayers are paying more to increase the

Figure 25 – Fraser Institute Graphic⁹³



⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁸⁸ Statistics Canada. "Unemployment Rate, Participation Rate and Employment Rate by Gender," Annual. 17 Apr. 2019, <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/t1/tbl1/en/tv.action?pid=1410032702>.

⁸⁹ CBC News, "Low-wage earners hit hardest by pandemic job market," February 23, 2021, <https://www.cbc.ca/news/business/job-losses-pandemic-lower-income-1.5922401>

⁹⁰ CIBC, "Economics," https://economics.cibccm.com/economicsweb/cds?ID=12030&TYPE=EC_PDF

⁹¹ CBC News, "Low-wage earners hit hardest by pandemic job market," Feb 23, 2021, <https://www.cbc.ca/news/business/job-losses-pandemic-lower-income-1.5922401>

⁹² Monina Febria and Theresa Jones, "GOING THE DISTANCE: Immigrant Youth in Canada's Labour Market," World Education Services, February 2023, <https://knowledge.wes.org/rs/317-CTM-316/images/wes-canada-report-immigrant-youth-in-canadas-labour-market.pdf>

⁹³ Ben Eisen and Milagros Palacios, "Economic Recovery in Canada before and after COVID", October 22, 2024, <https://www.fraserinstitute.org/studies/economic-recovery-in-canada-before-and-after-covid>

⁹⁴ Ibid.

⁹⁵ Gabriel Giguère, "Bloat in the Federal Public Service: Justin Trudeau Ranks Last among Canadian Prime Ministers over the Past 40 Years," IEDM/MEI, January 25, 2024, <https://www.iedm.org/bloat-in-the-federal-public-service-justin-trudeau-ranks-last-among-canadian-prime-ministers-over-the-past-40-years/>

⁹⁶ Ben Eisen and Milagros Palacios, "Economic Recovery in Canada..."

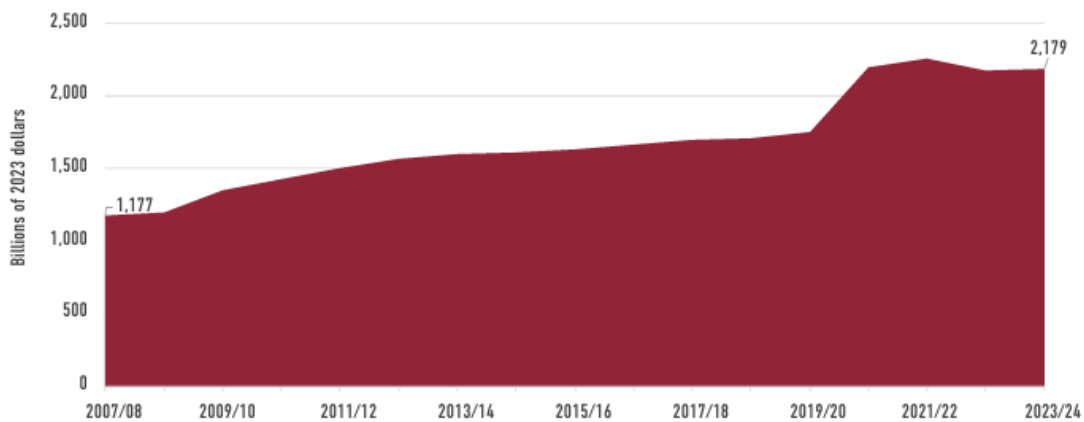


government workforce, these additional government employees do not contribute to the economy in the way private sector employees do.⁹⁷

Astronomical government debt

Figure 27 – Fraser Institute Graphic⁹⁸

Figure 1: Combined Federal and Provincial Net Debt (in billions of 2023 dollars), 2007/08 to 2023/24



With lockdowns, millions of Canadians were denied employment. As a result, Canada’s federal and provincial governments found that they needed to support Canadians with taxpayer-funded subsidy programs, which came at a great cost. During lockdowns, Canadian federal and provincial governments added hundreds of billions of dollars in new debt, to be repaid by our children and grandchildren. Federal and provincial governments added \$658.3 billion in nominal net debt from the last year before lockdowns (2019/20) to the end of the fiscal year 2023/24, amounting to an astonishing increase of 24.3 percent⁹⁹ of the total debt burden on Canadians. At the end of 2023, their net debt amounted to \$2.18 trillion, amounting to about \$54,000 in debt for every Canadian man, woman and child. While GDP decreased substantially, governments continued to pile on more debt with a due date for future generations, and billions of dollars in annual interest payments – money which is not available for public services.

This rising debt has a detrimental effect on economic performance by reducing incentives for investment.¹⁰⁰ These high interest payments necessarily require tax increases.

⁹⁷ Livio Di Matteo, “The outsized economic effects of Canada’s cratering self-employment,” The Hub, 11 April 2024, <https://thehub.ca/2024/04/11/livio-di-matteo-public-sector-employment-numbers/>

⁹⁸ Jake Fuss and Grady Munro, “The Growing Debt Burden for Canadians, 2024 edition,” Fraser Institute, January 2024, <https://www.fraserinstitute.org/sites/default/files/growing-debt-burden-for-canadians-2024.pdf>

⁹⁹ Ibid.

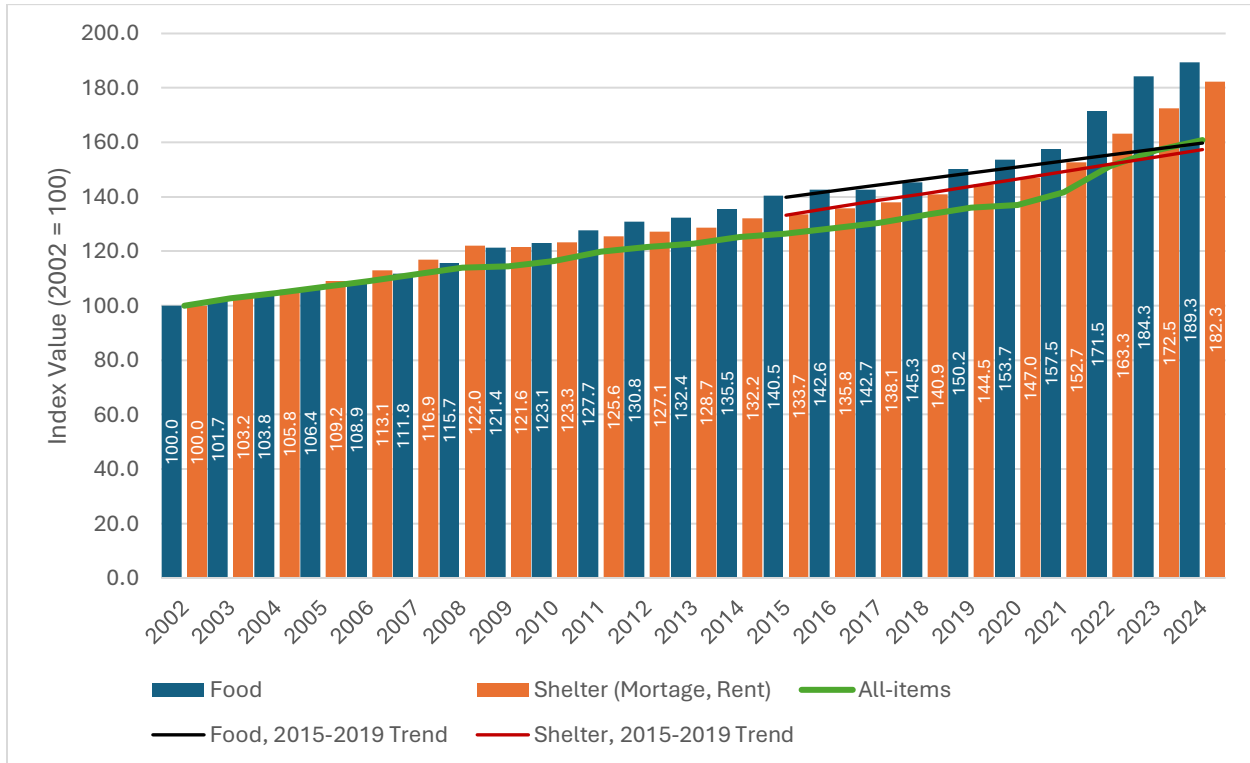
¹⁰⁰ Ibid.



High government debt has yet another negative consequence that silently robs the average taxpayer: inflation.¹⁰¹

Inflation – Stealing from the poor, giving to the rich

Figure 28 - Consumer Price Index (CPI)
(2002 as base)¹⁰²



Measuring the increase in the Consumer Price Index (CPI) is a common way to measure inflation rates. For example, one basket, like food or clothes and footwear, may be \$100 one year, and then rise to \$102 the next year, amounting to a 2 percent inflation rate in that year. When inflation rates are high year over year without a similar increase in wages, wage earners spend more money on fewer goods, without receiving an equal increase in money to pay for those goods.

During and after lockdowns, Canadians have seen a significant rise in the cost of living. However, two of the hardest hit CPI “baskets” were food and shelter (mortgage and rent),

¹⁰¹ Tegan Hill and Jake Fuss, “The problem with deficits and debt,” Fraser Institute, January 13, 2025, <https://www.fraserinstitute.org/commentary/problem-deficits-and-debt>

¹⁰² Statistics Canada. [Table 18-10-0005-01 Consumer Price Index, annual average, not seasonally adjusted](https://doi.org/10.25318/1810000501-eng)
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.25318/1810000501-eng>



which again affect low-income people the most. In 2022, Canadians saw an average increase of 8.9 percent in food prices, followed by another 7.5 percent increase in 2023, and a further 2.7 percent increase in 2024. To put these numbers into perspective, the average annual increase in prices was 2.1 percent from 2015 to 2019. Higher inflation rate means that Canadians were paying 10.4 percent (2022), 17 percent (2023), and 18.5 percent (2024) more for food than would have been expected based on the previous five-year trend (2015-2019).

Canadians saw a similar, though somewhat lower, increase in mortgage and rent prices during these years. For 2022, 2023, and 2024, prices rose to 7.4, 11.5, and 15.8 percent above trend. These high inflation rates mean Canadians are struggling to make their mortgage payments and put food on the table. According to polls, nearly 50 percent of Canadians are struggling to make ends meet,¹⁰³ and 55 percent feel “financially paralyzed.”¹⁰⁴

Seventeen percent of Canadians say they eat less because of rising food costs, while 61 percent buy less expensive foods, cheaper brands, and less meats.¹⁰⁵ Further, 20 percent of Canadians resort to skipping meals, 30 percent eat less healthy food, and nearly 5 percent say they have even stolen food out of necessity.¹⁰⁶ And of course, it is the most vulnerable who are suffering, with immigrants being especially vulnerable.¹⁰⁷

While Canadians are struggling with high inflation, data show that Canadian workers in every province now make significantly less than workers in the poorest US state.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰³ Hafsah Zuhar, “Nearly 50% of Canadians struggle to make ends meet,” Commonwealth Union, August 16, 2024, <https://www.commonwealthunion.com/nearly-50-of-canadians-struggle-to-make-ends-meet/>

¹⁰⁴ Financial Post, “55% of Canadians feeling ‘financially paralyzed’: RBC poll,” January 23, 2025, <https://financialpost.com/news/canadians-financially-paralyzed-rbc-poll>

¹⁰⁵ Statista, “Methods to deal with food inflation Canada 2022,” <https://www.statista.com/statistics/1368359/methods-deal-food-inflation-canada/>

¹⁰⁶ National Post, “Twenty per cent of Canadians skipping meals to cut down on food costs: survey,” October 31, 2022, <https://nationalpost.com/news/canada/survey-suggests-20-per-cent-of-canadians-skipping-meals-to-cut-down-on-food-costs>

¹⁰⁷ Statistics Canada. *The Daily — Recent Immigrants Report Greater Difficulty Making Ends Meet and Are Less Satisfied with Their Amount of Free Time*. 18 June 2024, <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/daily-quotidien/240618/dq240618b-eng.htm>.

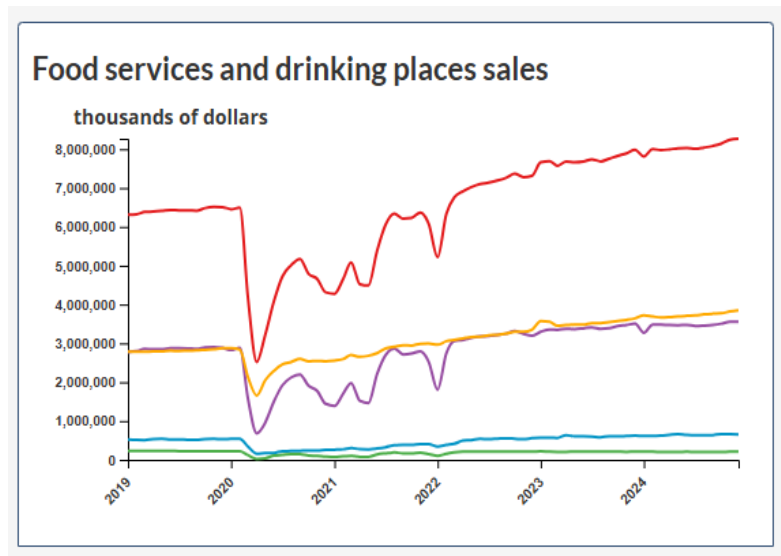
¹⁰⁸ Alex Whalen, Lawrence Schembri and Joel Emes, “Our Incomes Are Falling Behind: Earnings in the Canadian Provinces and US States, 2010–2022,” Fraser Institute, October 03, 2024, <https://www.fraserinstitute.org/studies/our-incomes-are-falling-behind-earnings-in-the-canadian-provinces-and-us-states-2010-2022>



Restaurant industry hit hard

The restaurant industry was one of the hardest-hit sectors in Canada during and after the lockdowns. Being locked down meant that Canadians could not eat out at their favourite local restaurant, servers lost their jobs, and thousands of restaurants were struggling to stay afloat. As shown in this graph, at the height of lockdowns, ‘food services and drinking places sales’ dropped from \$6.5 billion to \$2.5 billion.¹¹⁰

Figure 29 – Statistics Canada graphic¹⁰⁹



According to data from

Restaurants Canada, in 2024, “62% of restaurants are [still] operating at a loss or barely breaking even – up 9% from July 2023 when it stood at 53%. This is compared to 10% pre-pandemic. This alarming statistic underscores the immense pressure on the industry. It also leads to a notable upsurge in closures in 2023, with bankruptcies up 44% – the highest annual figure in a decade.”¹¹¹ Restaurants Canada also found that 80 percent of Canadian restaurants had to take on debt during the pandemic,¹¹² which is probably one of the reasons for the high bankruptcy rates observed now.

Conclusion

While Covid lockdowns in Canada from 2020 onward were intended to save millions of lives, studies and the government’s own statistics paint a picture that looks far different from what was promised. Canada’s *Charter* restricting lockdowns were not able to contain

¹⁰⁹ Statistics Canada. *Food Services and Drinking Places Sales*. 28 June 2017, <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/71-607-x/71-607-x2017003-eng.htm>.

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹¹ Restaurants Canada, “Challenges for the Restaurant Industry Persist into 2024 after Record Breaking Bankruptcies,” February 22, 2024, <https://www.restaurantscanada.org/challenges-for-the-restaurant-industry-persist-into-2024-after-record-breaking-bankruptcies/>

¹¹² Made in CA, “Restaurant Industry Statistics in Canada for 2025,” December 31, 2024, <https://madeinca.ca/restaurant-industry-statistics-canada/>



the transmission of the virus and, at best, saved only a fraction of the lives they were intended to save. Conversely, lockdowns themselves were tremendously harmful to Canadians, leading to an unusually high number of non-Covid deaths, lower mental and physical health, missed diagnoses of serious illnesses, a struggling economy, high crime rates, lower birth rates, and more euthanasia deaths than ever before.

It is difficult to capture precisely how harmful the lockdowns truly were. It is incumbent on Canadian governments to not only ensure we have reliable and comprehensive data, but also to analyze this data in a way that clearly shows the effects of their policies.

The *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms* requires governments to justify “demonstrably” with persuasive evidence any health order, vaccine mandate, or other law that infringes on our Charter freedoms of religion, conscience, expression, peaceful assembly, association, or mobility. Governments must demonstrate that any freedom-violating policy does more good than harm, which demands identifying, tracking, and weighing lockdown harms against potential benefits.

Yet five years after lockdowns began, no federal, provincial, or territorial government has done the necessary work of conducting an honest, transparent analysis of their lockdown policies. Sadly, it falls upon non-government actors like the Justice Centre to carry out this necessary work.

This report merely shows Canadians the concerning trends observed in data, but it is difficult to prove unequivocally a direct causal connection between lockdowns and these trends. For example, the increase in people dying by euthanasia or drug overdoses may be due (entirely or partially) to some other factor(s). The same goes for other criteria, like the decrease in mental health and increase in certain causes of death. This report, however, reveals a series of concerning trends that were *likely* caused – at least in part – by lockdowns, without ruling out other contributing factors. The failure of governments – and their current unwillingness – to provide a comprehensive evaluation of lockdown policies displays an astounding lack of respect for what is required by the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*.

Canadians need to be aware of the real consequences of lockdowns, so they can ensure their *Charter* rights and freedoms to move, assemble, associate, and worship, will not be unjustly restricted again in future. This report is intended to equip Canadians with the kind of knowledge that can translate into effective resistance to harmful public health mandates (and other violations of *Charter* rights and freedoms) in the future.



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