

Research for Policy: Responding to COVID-19 -- Income and Employment

Date/time: 25 May 2020 (1:00-2:00 pm EST)

Moderator: Carole Vincent (Executive Director, QICSS)

Panelists:

- Kevin Milligan, Professor of Economics, (University of British Columbia)
- Louis Morel, Director General Economic Policy, (Employment and Social Development Canada)
- Andrew Heisz, Director, Centre for Income and Socioeconomic Well-being (Statistics Canada)
- Mikal Skuterud, Professor of Economics (University of Waterloo)

Moderator notes:

- The moderator welcomed and thanked the panelists and participants in coming together with colleagues during this extraordinary time in our country's history, noting that 268 colleagues from universities across the country, from various levels of government and from the nonprofit sector, registered for the webinar.
- Also noted: CRDCN is celebrating its 20th anniversary this year and would like to thank CFI, CIHR, SSHRC, Statistics Canada, university partners from across the country as well as provincial government and private sector partners for their ongoing support.

Note on this summary document

There was a wealth of ideas presented and exchanged during each of the webinars and we encourage you to watch the recordings in full: <https://crdcn.org/covid-19-webinar-series>. In this summary, we present a brief overview of the discussion, framed according to a delineation that emerged in each of the webinars: (1) data and research to inform policy decisions in the shorter term, and (2) research and policy questions for the medium and longer term. That said, there are, of course, strong links between these and the research and policy questions discussed during the webinars in some way involved the full spectrum of shorter to longer term implications.

Data and research to inform policy decisions in the shorter term

- There is a need for real time market labour data and administrative data (with CERB, for example, there are 7 million people on CERB; how many of those will be working in July or September and what are the effects on job search intensity?).
- There is a need for Job Vacancy Wage Survey data and linked labour force data to see individual transitions. It is important to remove the barriers that connect unemployed/under-employed with job opportunities.
- There is a need for data that allow us to better understand how households and families are managing this crisis (there is overwhelming evidence that the constraints are very unequal along gender lines within families; women also are more likely to be single parents).
- Adding extra questions to existing surveys that are already planned to go out in the field presents a valuable and important opportunity to obtain timely and critical data (for example, some questions were added to the Labour Force Survey in April/May).

- During the lockdown, what are the impacts on workers (e.g. by gender, sector, region, age, family situation, employees or self-employed) and on employment (hours worked, income, use of benefits, working arrangements)?
- What factors are driving the magnitude of these impacts and have the economic support programs (e.g. CERB, CESB, CEWS,) been effective in helping Canadians through the pandemic?
- How will the reopening of the economy take place and what are the necessary economic/social conditions to ensure success and if there are other waves of infection?
- We need to have an understanding of the effects of the temporary emergency measures to inform policy decisions (also is the issue of sick leave policy).
- It would be useful to look at the levels of riskiness of work that have changed drastically over the past several months.

Research and policy questions for the medium and longer term

- What are the long run scarring effects of this on things like education, workplace, families?
- It is important to look at poverty impacts in housing, in neighbourhoods, in educational outcomes, in health outcomes; at trends in well-being beyond money metrics (e.g. ESDC's Dimensions of Poverty Hub, the informal economy and who is missing in the data).
- We need to have an understanding of the Impacts on the income of families, how government transfers offset wage losses, how individual circumstances play out at the family level.
- What are the long-term impacts on workers (e.g. unemployment, upskilling/reskilling, labour market outcomes of students/new graduates)?
- Will there be persistent effects on income inequality, on poverty rates, on homelessness? Recent immigrants, Indigenous Peoples, single seniors, persons in lone-parent families, young singles in their 20s, are examples of groups with higher poverty rates than others pre-COVID.
- Will there be changes to the structure of the labour market and the economy (gig economy, the future of work, new skills required, telework, structural labour shortages)? Will there be changes visible in the Canadian Occupational Projection System?

Keeping the conversation going ...

CRDCN is creating a framework based on the key research and policy questions discussed in the webinars to guide concrete next steps. We will be launching CRDCN community channels on Slack in June 2020 in order to provide a platform -- for researchers, data experts, policy-makers and program deliverers-- to connect about key questions, map out next steps and collaborate to advance research and policy efforts. Stay tuned and join us as we continue to support the important work of the CRDCN community.