

To view an archived recording of this presentation please click the following link:

<https://youtu.be/5sKhIEMs4YE>

Please scroll down this file to view a copy of the slides from the session.

Disclaimer

This document was created by its author and/or external organization. It has been published on the Public Health Ontario (PHO) website for public use as outlined in our Website Terms of Use. PHO is not the owner of this content. Any application or use of the information in this document is the responsibility of the user. PHO assumes no liability resulting from any such application or use.

Public Health Workforce Burnout: A Canadian Cross-Sectional Study

August 22, 2023

David Edward-Ooi Poon, MD, MPH, CCFP, FRCP

Japteg Singh, MPH, MSc

Jessica Hopkins, MD, MHSc, CCFP, FRCPC, FCFP

On behalf of the Burnout Survey Project Team

Public
Health
Ontario

Santé
publique
Ontario



CANADIAN
PUBLIC HEALTH
ASSOCIATION

ASSOCIATION
CANADIENNE DE
SANTÉ PUBLIQUE

McMaster
University



DEPARTMENT OF HEI
Health Research
Methodology



Peterborough
Public Health

Disclaimer

This presentation was created by its author and/or external organization.

It will be published on the Public Health Ontario (PHO) website for public use as outlined in our Website Terms of Use.

PHO is not the owner of this content. Any application or use of the information in this document is the responsibility of the user.

PHO assumes no liability resulting from any such application or use.

Authors have no conflicts of interest to declare

Learning Objectives

1. Describe the **prevalence** of burnout in the Canadian public health workforce
2. Identify **associated factors** of burnout in the Canadian public health workforce
3. Discuss potential **next steps** that can address burnout in the public health practice



Background



WHAT IS BURNOUT?

Burnout is a psychological syndrome marked by certain characteristics such as emotional exhaustion and a decrease in individual achievement.¹

1. Koutsimani, P., Montgomery, A., & Georganta, K. (2019). The relationship between burnout, depression, and anxiety: A systematic review and meta-analysis. *Front Psychology*, 10(284).

Audience polling question #1

COVID-19 and Burnout



Mass Vaccination Clinic at Toronto's Scotiabank Arena (Jan 2022)
By Cole Burston – The Canadian Press



Nurse at a rally at Yonge-Dundas Square in September 2021
By Steve Russell– Toronto Star

PH Workforce Burnout rates outside of Canada

Country	PH Burnout rate	Data Collection Date
Malaysia ³	45%	May 2021
China ⁴	50%	October-November 2018
United States ⁵	66%	September 2020
South Korea ⁶	90%	March-April 2021

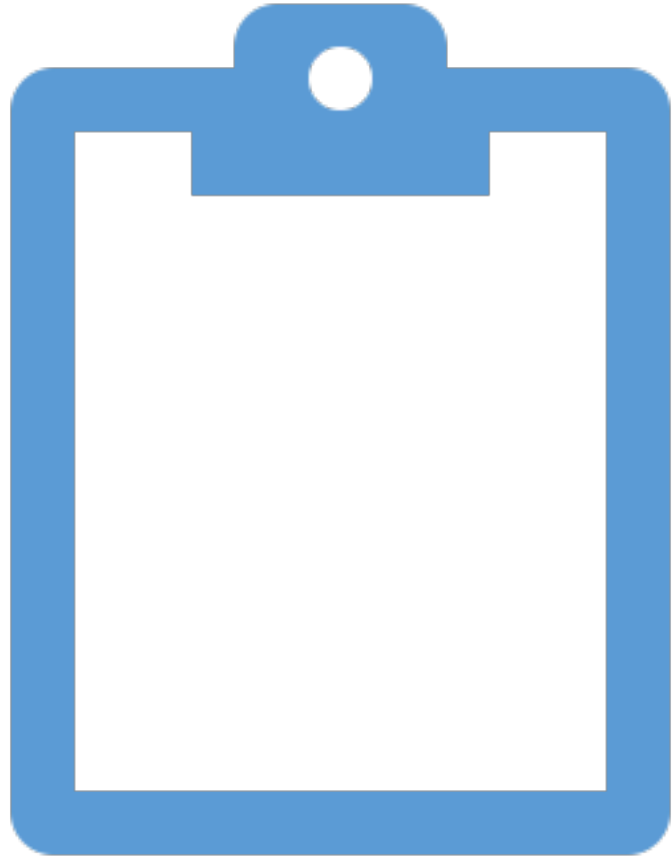
No Canadian study looking at burnout among the public health workforce!

3. Ibrahim F, Samsudin EZ, Chen XW, Toha HR. The Prevalence and Work-Related Factors of Burnout among Public Health Workforce during the COVID-19 Pandemic. *J Occup Environ Med.* 2022;64(1):E20-E27. doi:10.1097/JOM.0000000000002428
4. : Lu S, Zhang L, Klazinga N, Kringos D. More public health service providers are experiencing job burnout than clinical care providers in primary care facilities in China. *Hum Resour Health.* 2020;18(1):1-11. doi:10.1186/s12960-020-00538-z
5. Stone KW, Kintziger KW, Jagger MA, Horney JA. Public health workforce burnout in the covid-19 response in the u.s. *Int J Environ Res Public Health.* 2021;18(8). doi:10.3390/ijerph18084369
6. Lee J, Jang S-N, Kim N-S. Burnout Among Public Health Workers During the COVID-19 Pandemic in South Korea. *J Occup Environ Med.* 2023;65(3). https://journals.lww.com/joem/Fulltext/2023/03000/Burnout_Among_Public_Health_Wor

Research Questions

What is the prevalence of burnout in the Canadian public health workforce 3 years into the COVID-19 pandemic?

Is burnout associated with any sociodemographic and work-related factors including intention to leave or retire?



Methods and Survey

Survey Criteria

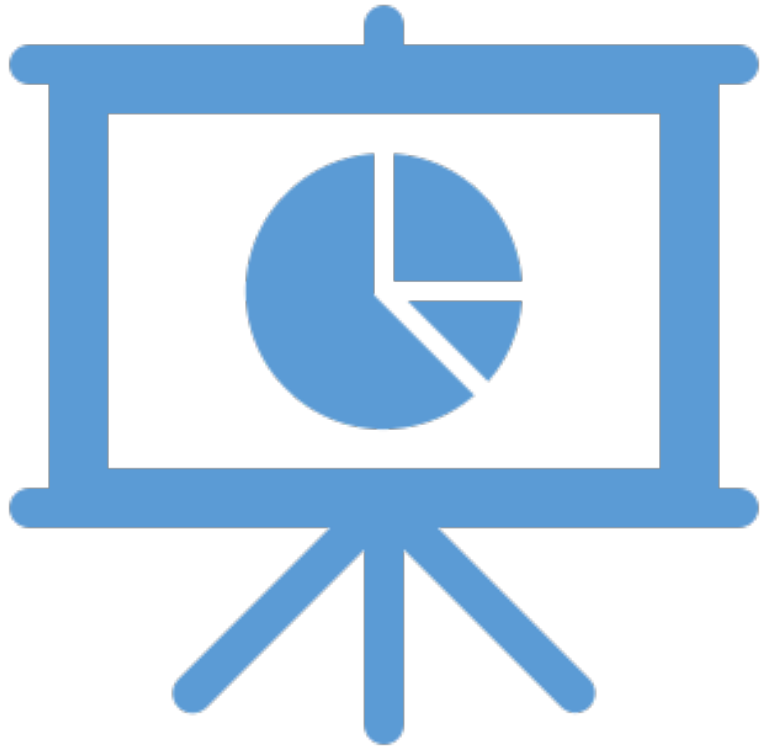
- **Online Survey** via Surveys@PHO and received PHO ethics approval
- **Who was surveyed?** Any public health practitioner whose work aligns with one or more of the core functions for Public Health in Canada²:
 - Population health assessment
 - Health protection
 - Health surveillance
 - Disease and injury prevention
 - Health promotion
 - Emergency preparedness and response
- 18 years or older
- Excluded practicum students and those working outside of Canada

Targeted Distribution

- Between November 22nd 2022 to January 17th 2023
- Using the following Canadian channels:
 - Local, provincial, and national public health associations
 - National Collaborating Centre (NCC) for Methods and Tools
 - Professional networks representing (Epidemiologists, Public health inspectors, community health nurses and public health physicians and medical officers of health)

Survey Questions

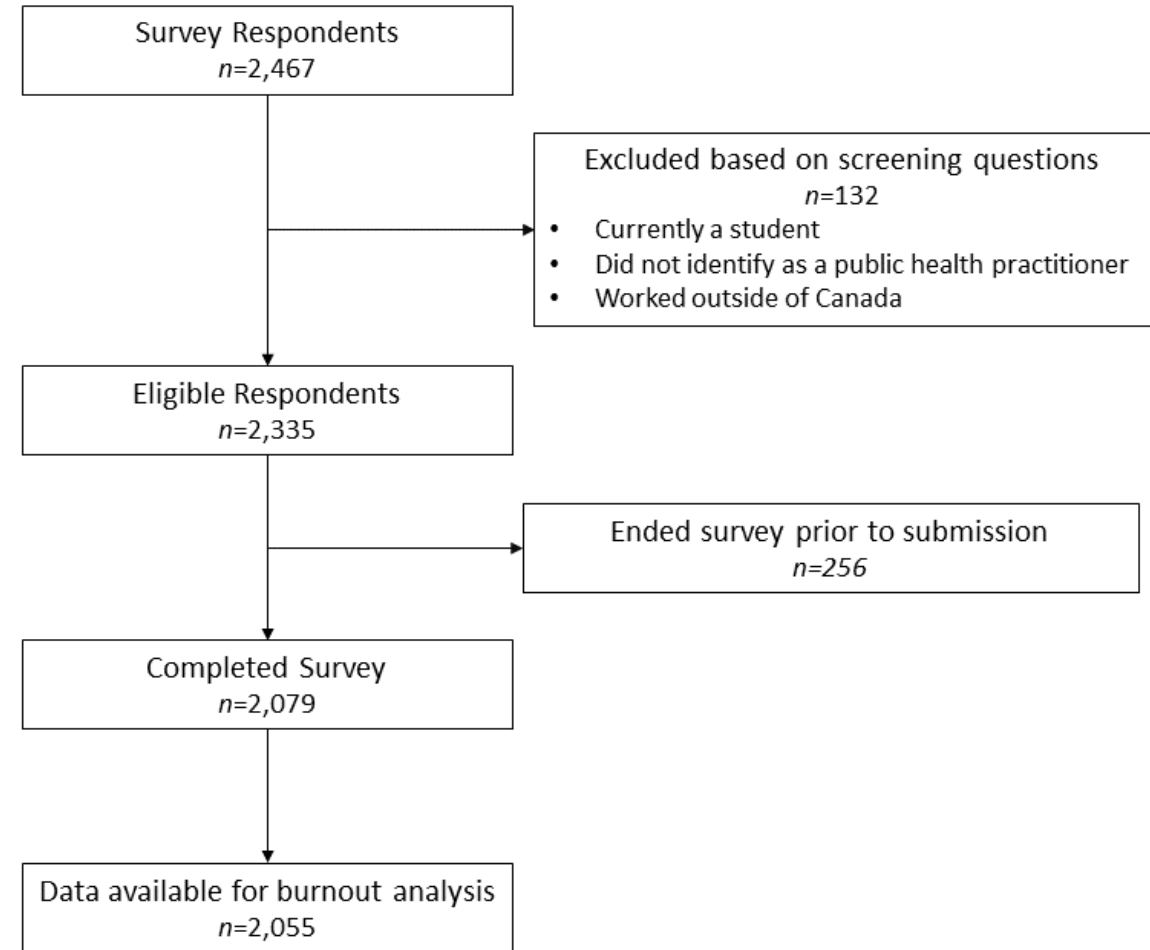
- Burnout measured using Oldenburg Burnout Inventory
 - 16 item questionnaire that uses 4 point Likert scale
 - Higher values correspond to greater levels of burnout
 - Measures Exhaustion and Disengagement
- Demographics
 - Age, gender, education, household income, marital status, etc.
- Work Characteristics
 - Geographic location, years of experience, role or position type
 - Being redeployed to COVID-19 work
 - Workplace safety and supports
 - Being threatened, assaulted or bullied



Results

Results

- Minimum sample size⁷ = 323
- Survey Completion Rate = 92.9%
- Sample size = 2,055
- Respondents from across Canada





79%

Burnout was
found in **79%**
OF CANADIAN
public health
workers.

Results

- 78.7% of respondents met the exhaustion and disengagement threshold to be considered experiencing burnout.
- The majority of respondents who started before December 2019 (82%) or were redeployed (82%) met criteria for burnout.



Who participated

80%

Were between
30 and 59 years old

87%

Identified as a
woman

Who participated

17%

Identified as a **racialized person** or a **person of colour**

88%

With a **bachelor's degree** or higher



Audience polling questions #2

Results

Increased odds of burnout if:

- Redeployed (**AOR 1.71**, CI 1.37 – 2.14)
- Threatened, assaulted, or bullied (**AOR 1.82**, CI 1.46 – 2.27)
- Felt unsafe at work (**AOR 2.43**, CI 1.84 – 3.21)
- Lacked supports in the workplace (**AOR 2.26**, CI 1.73 – 2.95)

Results

Having burnout is associated with:

- Increased odds of being likely to retire early (**OR 6.13**, CI 3.71 – 10.13)
- Decreased odds of retiring later (**OR 0.46**, CI 0.22 – 0.96)

Results

Demographic characteristics including marital status, gender, province of work, income, work location, and race did not have a strong association with the odds of burnout.

Open Text Results

- **Abuse, bullying and harassment were common**
- Verbal threats from patients, friends, family, public (including protesters), co-workers and supervisors
- Physical abuse: being spit on, barricaded in a room
- Hate messages and death threats through social media, letters, and phone calls
- Causes of harassment: 2/3 public health mandates; 1/3 lack of vaccine access

Open Text Results

- Feeling **unsafe** at work
 - Threats and abuses
 - Lack of managerial support
 - Bullying from supervisors in the workplace
- Feeling **safe** at work and other supports
 - Ability to work from home (65.7% of respondents)
 - IPAC and PPE
 - Physical security in the workplace
 - Good communication and support from colleagues and management
 - EFAP, mental health and wellness programs, counselling
 - Paid sick time
- Factors that kept public health workers motivated during COVID-19 were heartwarming and inspirational.
 - The most cited factor were colleagues, followed by finding working in public health during the pandemic rewarding and impactful.
 - Having friends, family, and partners, the ability to work from home, and being well compensated with pay and wages were also commonly mentioned as motivational.
 - Other factors included exercise, positive community feedback, faith, flexibility, and helping Indigenous communities.



Interpretation

Interpretation

- **Burnout was common (78.7%)**
 - 63% to 89% across all provinces and territories.
 - High rates of exhaustion (85.2%) and disengagement (87.7%)
- **Associations with burnout**
 - 3 or more years of work experience (AOR 1.39-2.59 across experience categories)
 - Redeployed (AOR 1.71)
 - Threatened, assaulted or bullied (AOR 1.82)
 - Felt unsafe at workplace (AOR 2.43)
 - Workplace did not support physical and/or mental well-being (AOR 2.26)



Burnout was associated with four key work stresses.

- 1** **Feeling unsafe at work**
- 2** **Lacking supports**
- 3** **Feeling threatened, assaulted or bullied**
- 4** **Redeployment**

Having burnout was linked to:



**Increased odds
of being likely to
retire early[†]**



**Decreased
odds of
retire later[‡]**

[†] AOR 6.13, CI 3.71-10.13
[‡] AOR 0.46, CI 0.22-0.96



What does this mean for public health?

Strategies to address burnout are urgently needed

- **Evidence-based strategies** to address burnout and aid recovery at individual-, organizational-, and system-levels
- Ability to **count and follow** the public health workforce across Canada over time, including trends in burnout/recovery and intention to leave the workforce
- Public health worker **retention strategies** to keep people in the public health workforce so they're not leaving early

Preparing for future public health emergencies

- Improved planning for **wellness of public health workers** responding to emergencies
- Planning for **long duration emergencies**
- Incorporating **insights from participants** into emergency planning
 - Work from home
 - Adequate access to PPE
 - Access to Employee and Family Assistance Programs
 - Feeling supported by colleagues and management



Summary

WHAT IS BURNOUT?

Burnout is a psychological syndrome marked by certain characteristics such as emotional exhaustion and a decrease in individual achievement.¹

BURNOUT SURVEY

2,055 Canadian Public Health workers completed a burnout survey between November 2022 and January 2023.

AGE 80.8% were between 30 and 59 years old.

♀ 87.4% identified as a woman.

👤 17.6% identified as a racialized person or person of colour.

🎓 49.3% reached an educational level of a bachelor's degree.



Burnout was found in 79% of Canadian public health workers.



RESPONDENTS FELT....



BURNOUT WAS ASSOCIATED WITH...

INCREASED ODDS OF BURNOUT IF YOU...



Feeling unsafe at work.
(↑ OR 2.43)



Lacking supports at work.
(↑ OR 2.26)



Feeling threatened, assaulted, or bullied.
(↑ OR 1.82)



Redeployment.
(↑ OR 1.71)

HAVING BURNOUT WAS LINKED TO...



Increased odds of being likely to retire early. (↑ OR 6.13)



Decreased odds of retiring later. (↑ OR 0.46)

Co-Investigators

- Elizabeth Alvarez, MD, PhD
- Laura Anderson, PhD, MSc
- Emma Apatu, DrPH, MPH
- Donna Churipuy, MN, RN
- Ian Culbert
- Thomas Piggott, MD, MSc, CCFP, FRCPC
- Japteg Singh, MPH, MSc
- Arielle Sutton, MPH
- Chris Verschoor, PhD, MSc

For More Information About This Presentation, Contact:

Dr. Jessica Hopkins: Jessica.Hopkins@oahpp.ca

Dr. David Edward-Ooi Poon: Poon@drpoon.ca

Japteg Singh: Japteg.Singh@niagararegion.ca

Public Health Ontario keeps Ontarians safe and healthy. Find out more at [**PublicHealthOntario.ca**](https://www.PublicHealthOntario.ca)