

# Health Reports, February 2024

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There are two articles available in the February issue of *Health Reports*.

## **Precarious working conditions in Canada's long-term care and seniors' homes are associated with poor health among health care workers**

During the COVID-19 pandemic, health care workers in Canada's long-term care and seniors' (LTCS) homes experienced staffing shortages and precarious work. Precarious work includes jobs that are temporary, on-call, casual, or on contract when full-time work is preferred. These jobs provide low wages, reduced benefits, and limited social protections.

The study "[Work precarity, employment characteristics and health among Canada's long-term care and seniors' home workers during the COVID-19 pandemic](#)" found that precarious work is associated with increased stress and poor general health for nurses and personal support workers in LTCS homes. On average, 6.5% of LTCS home workers reported precarious work conditions, including income loss, unpaid leave and/or reduced hours of work.

### **Precarious work was more common among immigrant workers than non-immigrant workers in long-term care and seniors' homes**

Overall, 1 in 10 (10.0%) immigrant nurses reported precarious work during the pandemic, compared with 3.7% of non-immigrant nurses. The association of precarious work with poor health outcomes were more pronounced among immigrant workers. Non-immigrants exposed to precarious work were three times more likely to report stress, and immigrants experiencing precarious working conditions were nearly four times more likely to report stress, compared with their counterparts who did not experience work precarity.

Precarious work was associated with having poor mental health outcomes among immigrant health care workers, but not among non-immigrant workers.

Among immigrant health care workers, those exposed to precarious work were nearly two times more likely to report poor mental health, compared with those not experiencing work precarity.

## **The COVID-19 pandemic impacted Canadians' oral health care**

Oral health is an important part of overall health, affecting the ability to eat, drink, speak, smile and even sleep. During the COVID-19 pandemic routine and preventive treatments were sometimes suspended, while emergency services, aimed at preserving a patient's oral function or managing severe pain, were maintained. The article "[Reported need for and access to oral health care services during the COVID-19 pandemic in Canada](#)" shows that nearly 6% of Canadians did not receive the care they needed.

Reduced access to, and use of, different health care services, including those offered by dental professionals, is of particular concern if the service delay leads to worse health outcomes. Regular visits to dental professionals help ensure emergent problems are caught earlier, when they are most treatable.

### **One-fifth of those needing routine care had their appointment cancelled or rescheduled**

Routine dental visits are important for teeth cleaning and for identifying cavities and periodontitis early when treatments are most effective and least invasive. According to the Survey on Access to Health Care and Pharmaceuticals During the Pandemic, collected from March to June 2021, the study found that about 45% of Canadian adults reported needing routine dental care in the 12 months before the survey. Among those, one in five had their appointment cancelled, rescheduled or delayed because of the pandemic. This was more common for individuals with unmet dental care needs (47%) than it was for those who had received dental care (17%).



### Income was a factor in unmet oral health care

Those in the highest income households were more likely to report a need for, as well as access to, routine dental care, and were less likely to report an unmet dental care need compared with those in the lowest-income households.

### Fear of COVID-19 kept one in three from seeking care for pain

Many Canadians (23%) reported pain in their mouth or teeth during the pandemic. Whereas two-thirds of these Canadians received treatment, one-third opted not to seek dental care, owing to fear of contracting COVID-19.

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The articles "[Work precarity, employment characteristics and health among Canada's long-term care and seniors' home workers during the COVID-19 pandemic](#)" and "[Reported need for and access to oral health care services during the COVID-19 pandemic in Canada](#)" are now available in the February 2024 online issue of *Health Reports*, Vol. 35, No. 02 ([82-003-X](#)).

For more information, or to enquire about the concepts, methods or data quality of this release, contact us (toll-free 1-800-263-1136; 514-283-8300; [infostats@statcan.gc.ca](mailto:infostats@statcan.gc.ca)) or Media Relations ([statcan.mediahotline-ligneinfomedias.statcan@statcan.gc.ca](mailto:statcan.mediahotline-ligneinfomedias.statcan@statcan.gc.ca)).