



COVID-19

The pandemic is not affecting everyone in the same way and our province's plans to mitigate future waves of COVID-19, recover economically, and create a "new normal" need to respond to this fact.

Here is what government needs to ask – and act on:

- **Who is least able to protect themselves from exposure to COVID-19 due to social and economic factors?** This includes people who are living in crowded housing, who cannot do their jobs from home, and who are not receiving public health updates in their first language.
- **Who is affected more severely or in unique ways by social distancing measures in place to curb the spread of COVID-19 (particularly more stringent measures, such as stay at home orders)?** This includes people who are experiencing violence in the home, who need to access in-person services that may be limited or shuttered, who take on additional caregiving responsibilities for children and seniors, who do not have paid leave to stay home if needed, and who are working in the most heavily impacted sectors.
- **Whose unpaid labour and reduced labour force participation will the "new normal" rely on?** This is a question of who will stay home with kids when they need to quarantine, whose work from home arrangement is more likely to also include caregiving throughout the day, and who is least likely to return to the workforce post-COVID-19. The answer? Women.
- **Are the people described above represented at decision-making tables in New Brunswick?**

Responses to COVID-19 that do not address these questions are leaving people behind and are not only unequal and inequitable, they are simply not as effective as they could be.

To respond to the pandemic comprehensively and effectively, government needs to understand its gendered impacts and put the people and communities who are the most vulnerable in our province at the centre of COVID-19 planning. After all, the pandemic has shown us how deeply we rely on each other to keep healthy and safe—and this means that we are only as secure as our most vulnerable.

To do this, government needs to use tools and approaches like gender-based analysis and co-creation—and it needs to be transparent about how it is doing this. This will require government to engage people, organizations, and communities.

Through this, government will not only learn about how the pandemic is playing out on the ground but will get concrete ideas about how to respond more effectively. Vulnerable and marginalized communities have been fighting for survival long before COVID-19 and many of the strategies they have developed (like mutual aid networks and bubbles or pods) are going mainstream in the context of the pandemic. This is clear example of how inclusive and equitable decision-making not only benefits those who would otherwise be excluded or disproportionately affected, but all of us.

COVID-19 digital library

The New Brunswick Women's Council has created a library of online content on the COVID-19 pandemic that considers marginalized populations, the not-for-profit sector, or uses a social justice lens.

Visit the library at nbwc-cfnb.herokuapp.com.

