



June 1, 2022

## COVID-19 FAQ #9 – 2021-2022

In this COVID-19 FAQ, you will find information on: health and safety; mental health; travel; global vaccine equity; the rise of hate crimes during the pandemic; and resources to address racism and other forms of oppression.

### Frequently Asked Questions

#### **COVID-19 cases are going down. Should I still be masking and taking other precautions?**

While COVID-19 seems to be decreasing overall, it's important to note that there are slight increases in cases in some areas (northern Ontario and the GTA).

The government is now focusing on personal decision-making. The chief medical officer of health continues to say that he “strongly recommends wearing masks in indoor areas of public settings.” Schools have some unique risk factors, including vaccination rates among children being considerably lower than in the community.

When the weather allows, opening windows and spending more time outdoors are also good ways to increase your safety at work. Also, remember that staff and students are still required to [screen](#) before coming to school.

#### **Are the government's masking requirements going to be extended? Is there any chance that they will add schools to the list of places requiring masks?**

Masking requirements were last extended until June 11, 2022. The government's list of public settings where individuals may be at increased risk from COVID-19 or where people spend extended periods of time in close settings does not include schools. ETFO stated then that the government's removal of so many COVID-19 protections simultaneously was unwise.

#### **What can I do to prepare for a safe start to the next school year?**

Your administrator or health and safety representative should be able to tell you if there is any work being done over the summer to improve ventilation. They can also tell you if worker input is being given, through the Joint Health and Safety Committee (JHSC), into establishing health and safety protocols for the new year.

Since many repairs and upgrades occur over the summer, it is important that you remind school administration of any concerns in your space so they are not missed. Asking these questions will help prompt important conversations at JHSC meetings.

### **My mental health was negatively impacted this year. How can I have a fresh start next year and protect my mental health?**

A [study](#) of ETFO educators showed that the rates of burnout, anxiety and depression among ETFO members were high during the pandemic. These symptoms were strongly aligned with concerns about infection control in the workplace.

More than ever before, it's important to put your well-being at the top of your summer to-do list. Relaxing may be a part of that, but you can also be proactive about regaining your health:

- Re-establish healthy habits like eating well, engaging in physical activity, and getting enough sleep.
- Access some of the [tools](#) available to help you recover from the constant state of stress you've experienced this year.
- Acknowledge that sometimes the psychological impact of going through a challenging time can emerge when there is a return to regular routines.
- Be aware that you may need some support in this process. If you are struggling, speak to your healthcare provider or a mental health professional.

### **I plan to travel over the summer break. What travel restrictions are in place for those travelling inside and outside Canada?**

It is best to consult the [Government of Canada Travel and Tourism website](#) prior to making any travel plans. There you will find information on travelling to, from and within Canada. For pandemic-related travel information, visit their [COVID 19: Travel, testing and borders page](#) to learn about:

- the ArriveCan app;
- vaccination, testing and quarantine requirements;
- international travel advice and advisories;
- provincial and territorial restrictions; and
- the differences between land, water and air travel.

### **What is global vaccine equity?**

Global vaccine equity plays a significant role in protecting the most vulnerable, and ending the pandemic by ensuring that low- and middle-income nations have access to vaccines. The World Health Organization (WHO) had set a target "to vaccinate 40 per cent of the population of every country by the end of 2021 and 70 per cent by mid-2022." Recent data indicates that just over 15 per cent of people in low-income countries have received a vaccine; this is well below the WHO goal.

In an [open letter](#) to Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, the Canadian Public Health Association outlined its position on what is needed to ensure an equitable global distribution of vaccines. Actions include not only supplying surplus vaccine doses, but

also temporary waivers on vaccine patents so emerging economies can develop and manufacture their own vaccines. Donations of vaccines must be accompanied by assistance with cold chain, coordination and supplies for countries that require them.

For information about global vaccination rates, confirmed cases and the death toll, refer to the [WHO Coronavirus \(COVID-19\) Dashboard](#). Consult the [Global Dashboard for Vaccine Equity](#) for updated data on the global roll-out of COVID-19 vaccines.

### **Hate crimes have risen during the pandemic. How can I address this in my classroom?**

Since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, and well before, ETFO has provided members with information and strategies to address the rising disparities amongst marginalized groups in workplaces and school communities. Incidents of discrimination and hate crimes are exacerbated as individuals have turned to the anonymity of the internet to fuel hatred and organize attacks.

School and workplace communities in Ontario are directly and indirectly impacted by these events. Members can address issues of racism and other oppressive acts with students in developmentally, age-appropriate ways. Here are some strategies and tips\*:

- Discussions about racism can re-traumatize students with lived experience. Ensure you are integrating mental health strategies that foster student well-being, and seek support, resources and advice from administration on how to facilitate trauma-informed, supportive conversations with students.
- Communicate and work with parents/caregivers and community supports to address issues and enhance learning opportunities.
- Use age-appropriate pictures, story books and texts to bring issues into the space and engage in learning about diverse perspectives, power, racism and other forms of discrimination.
- Provide accurate historical and current context to issues.
- Explain that racism and other forms of discrimination are not just done by 'bad people or a few bad apples.' It has structural implications and is very much a part of all institutions, whether in education, the justice system, immigration, or media.
- Address micro-aggressions and unconscious bias when they are present and noticed.
- Encourage students and colleagues to be brave in calling out racism and other forms of oppression. The quote 'silence is complicity' holds weight in this current space of working through allyship and solidarity, and dismantling white supremacy and colonialism.

\*Source: [9 tips teachers can use when talking about racism](#)

### **What resources are available to help me address racism and other forms of oppression in my school and/or classroom?**

Here are some materials, including ETFO resources, developed for educators:

- [2SLGBTQ+ Resources](#)
- [Addressing Anti-Asian Racism: A Resource for Educators](#)
- [Asian and South Asian Heritage Month Resources](#)

- [Anti-Racism and the Fight for Black Lives Video Series](#)
- [Les Hisnoires Black Canadian Curriculum Resources](#)
- [Respond and Rebuild: CRRP Lessons](#)
- [School Mental Health Ontario](#)
- [White Privilege Lesson Plans](#)

**For other information, please check [ETFO's dedicated COVID-19 webpage](#).**