



## What impact is the pandemic having on post-secondary teachers and staff?

Almost overnight in mid-March, academic staff at universities and colleges across the country transitioned to remote teaching to ensure the education continuity of over 2 million students during the public health emergency. Campuses were closed down, shuttering labs, and stalling research. Libraries, in some cases, initially stayed open, then were also closed due to health and safety concerns.

Myriad workplace issues arose, and questions poured into academic staff associations. How do I effectively teach remotely? How do I teach my applied, hands on, collaborative or lab classes? How do I assess my students in an on-line environment? How can I help students who need extra support with technology? Can I renegotiate the terms of my research grant? Do I have to euthanize lab animals? Will I be compensated for the extra work for moving all my classes online when I am paid only for my time in the classroom? Can we defer or stop the clock on performance appraisals for tenure or promotion because I cannot research now due to caregiving responsibilities and the extra work of remote teaching?

Whereas some of the above questions were resolved in a matter of weeks, big picture questions loom about the safe return to campuses and the short, medium and long-term impacts of the pandemic on post-secondary education and the working lives of academic staff.

To explore how academic staff were reacting to the crisis, CAUT surveyed its members, using crowdsourcing data collection, between May 13 and June 12, 2020. We sought to get a snapshot of the impact of the pandemic on workload, teaching, research and mental health. We asked about supports and resources needed to help them through the crisis and about their feelings about the future. Lastly, we asked questions of identity, contract and job type to see if these may be factors in differing perspectives.

Over 4,300 academic staff participated in the survey, with representation from all provinces. As this is crowdsourced data, the findings cannot be applied to the overall post-secondary staff population in Canada. However, the results offer valuable insights on the experiences of participants.



## This is what we learned

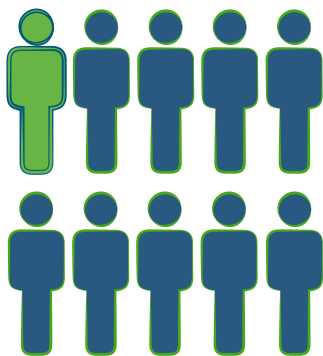
### The rapid shift to remote teaching has resulted in increased workload for many.

The majority of academic staff from universities and colleges are working more than before COVID-19 with almost one-third working an **additional 10+ hours per week**. For regular academic staff, this has had significant negative impacts on their research activities and for contract academic staff this extra work is not compensated. Not surprisingly, the common reasons include the additional support required by students, and the additional efforts needed to transition courses on-line.

“(Contract) instructors are taking the brunt of extra work due to teaching the most classes.”

### Work has been reduced or eliminated for about 1 in 10 staff.

For those working less, the number one reason is caring for dependents. Those working part-time before the pandemic are more likely to be no longer working. Staff with less work are more likely to be administrative staff than teaching staff.



### Remote teaching has been challenging for many and there are positives and negatives.

Within days, post-secondary teachers had to transition their classes to an on-line platform. We asked about the challenges with remote teaching. The biggest challenges identified were the lack of face-to-face interactions with students, followed by struggling with technology.

“Supporting students to complete courses within a strange academic setting, and while in the midst of a global health crisis. Many of my students do not have internet access or laptops, so they are trying to write ten page papers on cellphones.”



When asked about the impact of COVID-19 on teaching, **68%** are worried about the impact on quality of teaching. A majority also feel that remote learning could lead to innovations in teaching.

### Research has been highly impacted.

Two out of three professors and instructors are researching less or not at all. The top five reasons: the inability to hold or attend conferences, dependent care, inability to access labs or offices, not able to conduct in-person research, and teaching demands.

“ My research is participatory, community-based, and international; therefore, I have no idea when or if I will be able to resume projects or start new ones, which involve intensive face-to-face contact. Also, to keep our work going I needed to purchase laptops for my research assistants, but there is no one to receive or set them up much less have them delivered to the RAs. I am continuing to pay them, but they don't have the tools they need for the work.”



**Job insecurity is high – especially for part-time workers.**

Only **1 in 5 part-time workers** feel job secure and more than **1 in 3 fear lay-offs** in the next 12 months. Those in Nova Scotia (42%) and Alberta (37%) are most concerned about their job security, compared to the average of 24%. This is potentially a reflection of the weak job security provisions for contract workers in Nova Scotia and the cuts to post-secondary education in Alberta, which are continuing on top of COVID-19 impacts.

“ To have a job and be paid. Years of investment in institutions which, from one day to the next, act like they owe nothing to contract employees. If there is no course to teach, then they have no obligation... After being there for 10 years, I find that very hard to take.”

**Stress and anxiety levels are much higher.**

**84%** of respondents reported somewhat or much higher stress levels. Reasons for this include anxiety over the pandemic, balancing work and dependent care, challenges with teaching and research, and job insecurity.



“ I was a regular partial load faculty before COVID-19. My hours have been reduced and I lost my benefits in the time of health crises.”

**Staff feel left out of decision-making.**

Only **1 in 4** feel that they are consulted before decisions that affect them are made. This is despite bicameral or shared governance structures at most post-secondary institutions.



### Childcare, mental health, technological assistance and teaching resources are among top supports needed.

When asked about what supports and resources would assist them during the public health emergency, respondents identified safe childcare, more access to mental health services, and technological assistance. More than **3 out of 4** feel that their workload will be greater in the fall as they have to transition these courses to on-line formats. Many called for smaller class sizes, reduced teaching load, more teaching assistants and additional administrative supports. Other needs identified by respondents include library and archive access and better communication from institutions.

“Child care, child care, child care.”

### Top concerns include challenges of remote teaching, workload, health and safety and job security.

When asked about their concerns, respondents identified a number of issues, including ensuring a safe return to the workplace, handling extra workload demands to transition courses on-line, and ensuring job security amidst potential cutbacks.

“Uncertainty about what we will be teaching and how we will be teaching in the fall. There is concern about our financial situation as an institution and whether there will be job loss. We are being asked to do additional work that is not recognized in our workload. There is concern about the health and safety of faculty and students if we do return to face to face delivery in the fall.”

### Outlook on the future differs depending on the province.

Provincial differences exist in regards to the outlook for the future. When asked how confident they are about their institution's ability to recover from the impact of COVID-19, only **1 in 10 nationally** are worried, but in Alberta, where the government has continued with its cuts and reform agenda for post-secondary education, 27% are worried, followed by Manitobans at 22% whose government also announced cuts to the sector. Quebeckers are the most confident in the ability of their institutions to recover with only 4% expressing concern.

