



What We Heard:

Survey Results on the Impact of COVID-19 on First Nations Communities in British Columbia

COVID-19 has highlighted how we need better access to technology to stay informed, connected and supported. In BC, the majority of First Nations communities do not have the access required to use online platforms that most Canadians rely on during the pandemic.

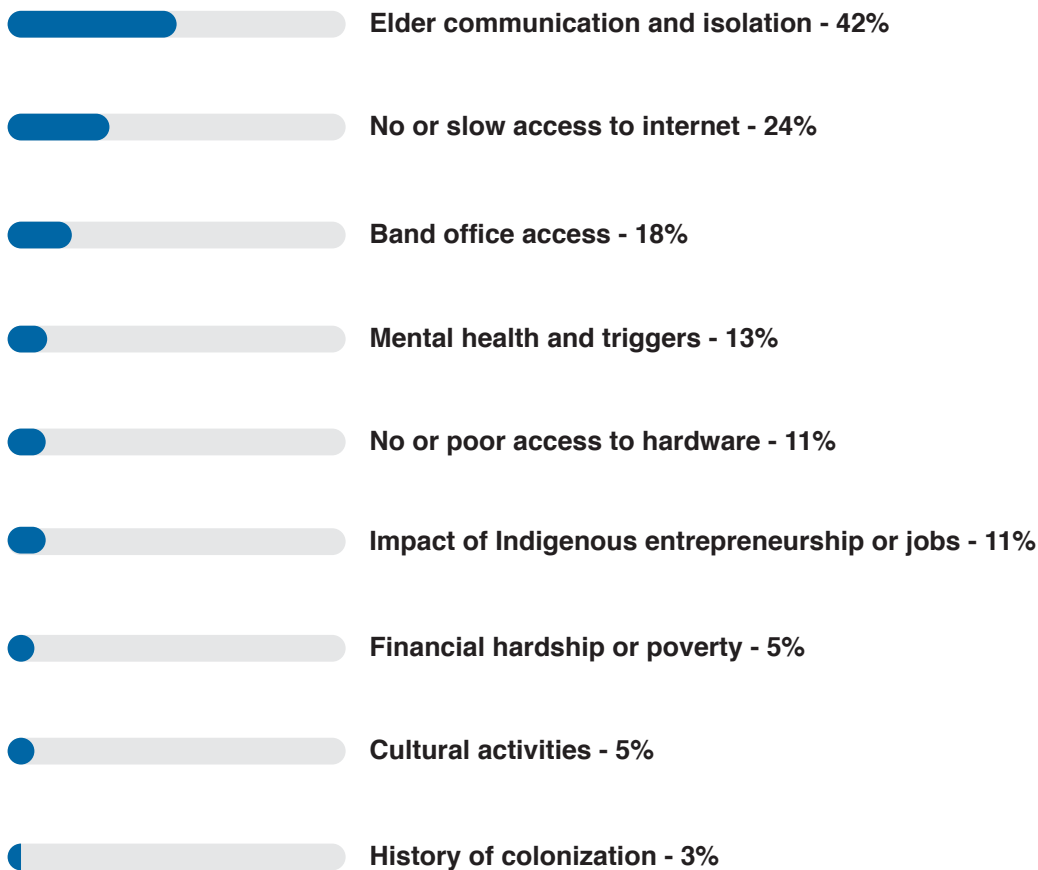
To start the conversation, we released an e-survey to gain insight on how COVID-19 has impacted First Nations communities. The responses we received are illuminating, but limited due to sample size. For those who had the ability to stay connected, 60 individuals responded to the online survey.

This e-survey was distributed via our website and social media channels (e-newsletter, Facebook, Twitter), adopting a non-probabilistic sampling method where respondents self-selected. As such, the themes herein reflect respondents' views only and are not intended to be representative of all First Nations people in BC. We expect that, in particular, people with a lack of access to internet connectivity or hardware were not able to complete the survey.

Impact of COVID-19 on Indigenous Peoples and Communities



My home communities and families are impacted specifically by COVID in the following ways: ability to communicate with elderly populations like my mother, sheer remoteness (closest city is 4.5 hours away), poor and limited internet/broad bandwidth, economically and financially. Many fixed pensioners/income holders/widowers cannot afford luxuries such as television channel packages, which is a vital source of news at this point and a connection to the outside world. Those most vulnerable are deeply impacted: the elderly, persons with disabilities and people battling addictions.



¹ In the survey, there were six long-answer form and seven multiple choice questions and respondents had the ability to choose more than one answer. The thematic analysis of open-ended survey responses (questions 3,4 and 5) was conducted by a Technology Council researcher with percentages intended to demonstrate the number of times these themes were discussed.



Limitations to Accessing Connectivity

33%

Financial

“

The cost of internet services is far too much. I am barely able to continue making monthly payments.

”

“

If I had more internet, my kids could use Zoom and video chat to stay in touch with friends. I could use those apps for social connection vs. work only. Right now I need to guard that bandwidth to keep my job!

”

28%

Limited internet bandwidth

28%

Limited Hardware or Personal Device

“

My son is doing school work online but intermittently as we don't have a computer and he has to use his grandparents' computer when they aren't working.

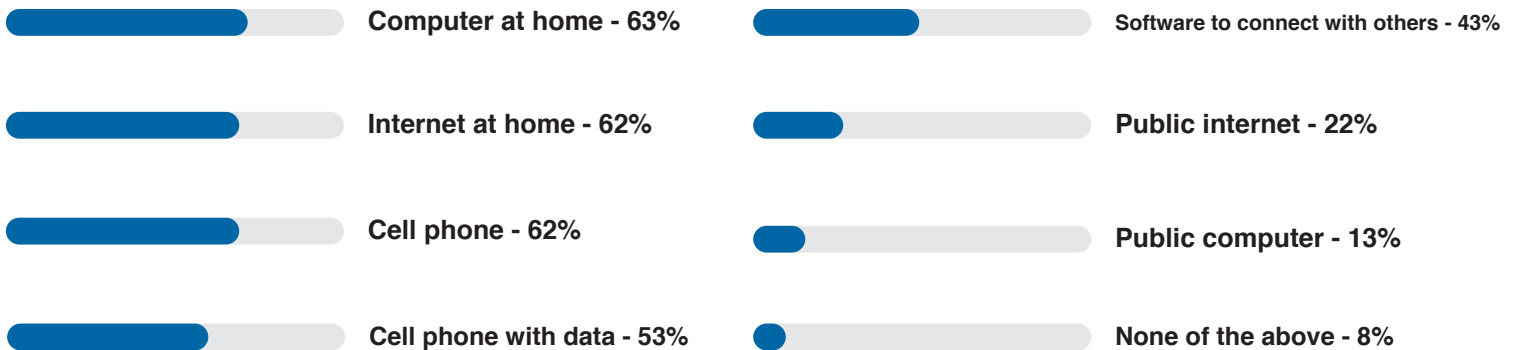
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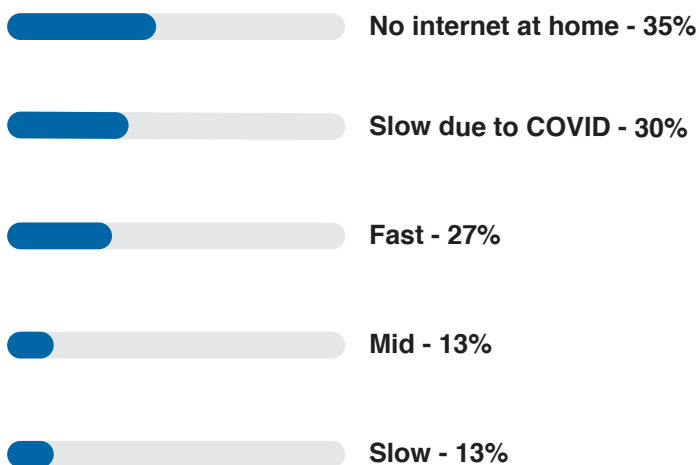
Access to Personal Devices and Internet



I have one desktop that is at least 6 to 8 years old and I work from home as a small business. So I was having technology difficulties, but now my grade 11 student is supposed to do all his high school course work from home.... He is attending class through Zoom and my work schedule is around his Zoom class time.



Internet Speed



I am extremely privileged living in the city and having a stable income that allows me access that is not available to rural and remote communities. My relatives at home have far less and the digital divide is still a huge barrier for them. Eighty percent of Canadians have no idea that the gap has grown wider for many First Nations communities as the speed and bandwidth has increased for the urban areas. What most of us take for granted, the remote communities have no opportunity to access. Without equitable access, communities are forced into situations that threaten their health and security and cultural identities.



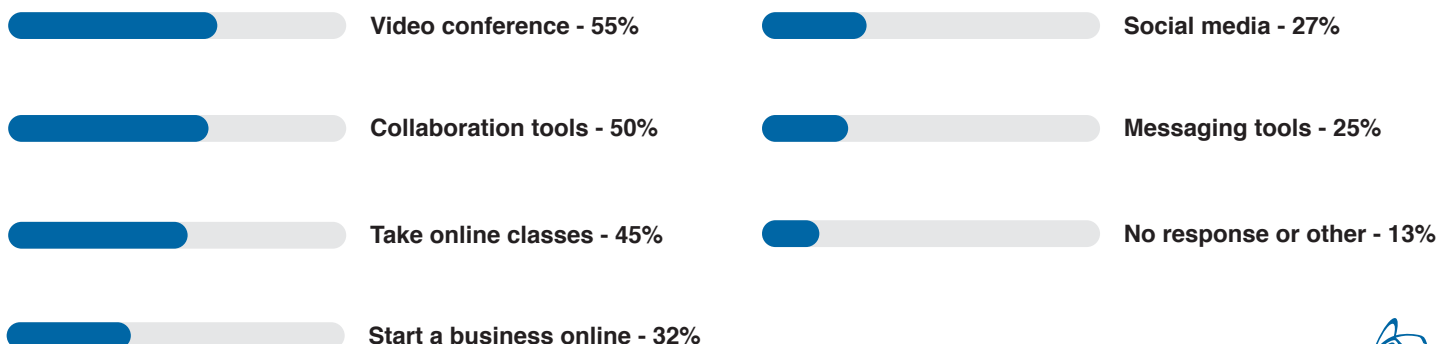
Ways To Use Technology To Better Serve You During COVID-19



“ Isolation is very hard to deal with. Feeling lonely is difficult, too. Not being able to visit my friends, and share meals with my people is exceptionally difficult to deal with. ”

Online Skills to Improve On

“ The mental health and wellbeing of everyone has been so drastically impacted. Access to essential life skills, counselling, digital learning opportunities, television channels and cable, as well as basic connectivity to the internet is so needed right now. ”



The First Nations Technology Council has been advocating for digital equity since 2002. The Technology Council is an Indigenous-led organization that serves all 203 First Nations communities across BC, working to ensure that Indigenous peoples have full and equitable access to the tools, training and support to maximize the opportunities presented by technology and innovation. The Technology Council sees the strengthening of local Indigenous economies and the empowering of Indigenous innovators as contributing to Indigenous self-determination and nationhood.

The Technology Council will continue to support First Nations communities across BC during these unprecedented times and will keep you informed on new developments.

For questions about the survey results or methodology, please contact us at info@technologycouncil.ca.



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