

# Peer Research, Labour Practices and the Impact of COVID-19 on Community-Based Research



On Nov 18, participants joined panelists Dr. Zack Marshall and Veronica Benz to further explore issues raised during their Nov 11 webinar on a national community-based research project focused on labour practices in participatory research. **This summary highlights discussion themes from CBRCanada's participant-led live discussion.**

## Live Discussion Summary The Effects of COVID-19 on Peer Research

### Technology Barriers

Many peer researchers did not have stable access to technology over the pandemic. Many identified ethical issues, such as saving sensitive data to personal devices.

### Precarious Labour Conditions

During the pandemic, many peer researchers experienced job precarity. Many peer researchers were in limbo and lost pay, largely because the use of cash as labour compensation had been restricted.

### Who Benefits?

Some peer researchers experienced precarious housing and employment that was exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. This shone a spotlight on larger power dynamics and inequities, leading people to question 'who benefits' from community-based research.

## Suggestions for Working Equitably with Peer Researchers

1

### Reforming Human Resource Policies

Institutions and organizations must re-evaluate human resources policies to ensure they are in favour of equitably hiring and supporting peer researchers (e.g., hiring processes, qualifications).

2

### Supporting Peer Researchers

Peer researchers need to be provided with sufficient support to thrive in their roles, especially while doing research online (e.g., tech training, laptops, access to services or supports).

3

### Addressing Power Dynamics

In order to achieve equity within community organizations and institutions, power scales need to be rebalanced (e.g., status, wages, benefits).

4

### Unionizing Peer Researchers

To ensure safety and economic sustainability for peer researchers, more robust and structured labour supports need to be developed (e.g., a peer researcher cooperative, integrating peer researchers into pre-existing unions).

## Questions to Ponder



Peer researchers make valuable contributions to the research process. Does your organization or project provide equitable and meaningful compensation for peer researchers' labour and contributions?

Do peer researchers have what they need in order to feel safe, supported and well prepared during their employment within projects, organizations and institutions?

Structurally, whiteness is deeply embedded in institutions, human resource policies, and societal norms. This can create power imbalances and structural barriers for many racialized peer researchers (e.g., selective hiring and discriminatory professional dress code regulations). How can organizations, institutions and community-based research projects work towards rupturing white supremacy culture in the workplace or within projects?

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