

# Tracking COVID-19 for Safer Schools<sup>1</sup>

Key Findings from 2021-2022 School Year



## 1 BACKGROUND

- This report presents data collected during the 2021-2022 school year among staff recruited from the Vancouver, Richmond and Delta school districts.
- The purpose of this study was to report the true prevalence of COVID-19 infection among school staff **at the time of the Omicron wave in the winter of 2021-2022**.
- This study also examined vaccine uptake, mental health and COVID-19 related attitudes and behaviours of school staff.

## 2 PARTICIPATION

- **1845** staff completed questionnaires.
- **1620** staff had blood samples collected.

Blood samples were collected between January and April 2022.

## 3 MAIN FINDINGS

- Rates of COVID-19 infection among school staff during the Omicron wave were no greater than rates of COVID-19 infections in the community.
- The mental health of participating school staff has declined over the past year, suggesting that continued monitoring and implementation of strategies to support them will be important.



## 4 ANTIBODY RESULTS

# 26.5% of staff

had antibodies showing evidence of a past **COVID-19 infection**; This compares to 32.4% among a community comparison group (i.e. blood donors of same age, sex, collection month and postal code area of residency)

As expected, rates of infection were higher than last year, after the introduction of Omicron, when 3.2% of school staff had COVID-19 antibodies.

The blood test measured antibodies against the N protein of the virus. N-proteins are nucleocapsid proteins that are found only in the SARS-CoV-2 virus and not found in current COVID-19 vaccines.



# 15.8% of staff

**self-reported** having a positive COVID-19 test (6.5% by PCR Test and 11.8% by rapid antigen test).

**More detailed results on the next page!**

<sup>1</sup>This study was funded by the Public Health Agency of Canada's COVID-19 Immunity Task Force.



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The following results are based on data collected from the self-reported questionnaire:



## 5 MENTAL HEALTH IMPACTS

48.4%

REPORTED THAT THEY WERE FEELING BURNT OUT FROM THEIR JOB AT LEAST ONCE A WEEK.

27.4%

REPORTED FEELING THAT THEIR MENTAL HEALTH WAS FAIR OR POOR (COMPARED TO 14.9% LAST YEAR\*).

21.5%

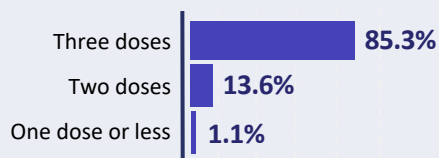
REPORTED EXPERIENCING INCREASED ANXIETY (COMPARED TO 17.8% LAST YEAR\*).

\*comparisons to last year (2020-2021 school year) are among staff who responded to the questionnaire at both time points and were statistically significant.

## 6 VACCINATION RATES

85.3%

reported three vaccine doses.



Despite the challenges faced by school staff this past year, some staff highlighted that a positive outcome of the pandemic has been the development of **RESILIENCY**.

*"I've been impressed with the resilience of our teachers and students! We're all on edge, burned out, but continue to roll along. It takes a lot of grit!"*

*"I believe we've been learning how to be more resilient, patient, and be more flexible than ever."*

We would like to thank the district staff who participated in this research! **STAY TUNED** as we hope to extend this study in the 2022/2023 school year, if funded.

Check out the peer-reviewed publications from last year's phase of the study:

- 1) SARS-CoV-2 seroprevalence among Vancouver public school staff in British Columbia, Canada: A cross-sectional study (*BMJ Open*): <http://dx.doi.org/10.1136/bmjopen-2021-057846>
- 2) COVID-19 vaccine perceptions and acceptance among public school staff of the greater Vancouver Metropolitan Area, British Columbia, Canada (*Frontiers In Public Health*): <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpubh.2022.832444>
- 3) British Columbia school staff during the second year of COVID-19: Anxiety symptoms, psychological distress, and mental health (*Journal of Affective Disorders Reports*): <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jadr.2022.100335>

For more information please visit: <https://www.bcchr.ca/COVIDatschools> or contact Drs. Pascal Lavoie or Louise Mâsse at: [abcovid@bcchr.ca](mailto:abcovid@bcchr.ca)



COVID-19 IMMUNITY TASK FORCE / GROUPE DE TRAVAIL SUR L'IMMUNITÉ FACE À LA COVID-19



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