

Interactive COVID data in your hands

Amid the pandemic, it's important for both public health and citizens to have access to real-time data that provides the number of cases occurring and the age groups it is affecting. The COVID-19 Tracker is an interactive tool created to help ensure Albertans and Canadians quickly see COVID-related changes in their area.

The Alberta SPOR SUPPORT Unit (ABSPORU) and the University of Calgary Cumming School of Medicine through an initiative of the University of Calgary COVID-19 Advisory Group, created the only real-time tracker in Canada. With the ultimate goal of providing the best available data through an interactive and comprehensible dashboard, Albertans and Canadians can see data from the beginning of March 2020, to current day. Presenting information along with key events (I.e. non-essential services closed, schools opening), shows how changes in policies have influenced cases in real-time.

True Team Effort

The project brought together 28 individuals with diverse expertise in data science, data visualization, software engineering, biostatistics, epidemiology, and health services research. Leading the project were Dr. Tyler Williamson at the Centre for Health Informatics and the Alberta SPOR SUPPORT Unit staff, Health Services Researchers Dr. Cathy Eastwood and Danielle Southern, and design and content development by Chelsea Doktorchik.

"We can be proud of how we responded to the pandemic because our leaders have made life-saving decisions based on the highest quality information available", explains Chelsea Doktorchik, Epidemiologist with Alberta Health Services. "Our intent was to ensure the public has equal access to the same informative resources."

In total, six provincial and national data sets were combined to provide dynamic information in categories of latest case numbers, hospitalizations, geographical information and testing, severity, age groupings and fatalities. The urgent schedule pushed design and [build](#) to be completed in just over 2 months. The website is updated daily, and changes in the pandemic (e.g. caseload increases, facility re-openings, 2nd wave) have required an iterative design as needs of the public evolve.

Better Information, Better Decisions

Public health reporting of relevant, current data and access to reliable sources of information is critical for decision-makers and citizens to make informed decisions around their pandemic-related actions. Collating large amounts of publicly available data from around the world (e.g. public health interventions in other jurisdictions) and tracking daily cases worldwide can help guide policy and informed decisions around pandemic response to protect the health of Canadians.

"The COVID tracker project showcases Alberta's ability to rapidly transform data into knowledge for improved health outcomes for Albertans. This digital enabled, data informed capability plays a key role in embracing our digital future." Tim Murphy, Vice President Health, Alberta Innovates, co-funder of AbSPORU.

[Access the tool here](#)