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**NEWS RELEASE**

## **Canada's long-term care homes are in their seventh wave of COVID-19 outbreaks, but we can no longer accurately track them**

*National Institute on Ageing is pausing its innovative project to track COVID-19 cases and deaths in long-term care and retirement homes due to a growing lack of publicly available data*

**TORONTO, July 28, 2022** — The National Institute on Ageing has made the difficult decision to pause its innovative [NIA Long-Term Care COVID-19 Tracker Project](#), even though Canada and its long-term care (LTC) and retirement homes have now entered their seventh wave of the pandemic.

We are pausing this project not because the threat to LTC and retirement homes has abated — in fact, [case numbers are surging](#) at LTC homes in several provinces. It's because many of Canada's provincial and territorial governments and public health authorities are no longer providing enough consistent, accurate and timely data on COVID-19 in LTC and retirement homes. Without this, we can no longer ensure our tracker remains a reliable source of information.

In March 2020, as COVID-19 began to intensify around the world, experts and front-line workers sounded the alarm about its potential impact on older adults. The NIA reacted quickly to establish the Long-Term Care COVID-19 Tracker Open Data Working Group, making it the first organization to consistently track outbreaks, resident and staff cases and deaths in LTC and retirement homes in every Canadian province and territory.

Our publicly accessible COVID-19 tracking map, the NIA Long-Term Care COVID-19 Tracker, was built in collaboration with [Empower Health](#) and launched in April 2020. It compiled the best available, verifiable data from multiple sources, including public health units, government reports, news media, and sometimes communications issued by the homes themselves.

The NIA in turn provided this data to other institutions to help inform their reports and policy decisions. It became the principal supplier of comprehensive data on COVID-19 in LTC and retirement homes to the Canadian Institute for Health Information, and routinely provided data to the Public Health Agency of Canada, the [LTC COVID international research consortium](#) based at the London School of Economics and Political Science, and other agencies, institutes, researchers and journalists looking to better understand what was happening in LTC settings.

The NIA's LTC COVID-19 Tracker helped fill gaps in our collective understanding of the pandemic's effects on LTC and retirement homes. It showed us the extent to which these settings were affected by large

numbers of COVID-19 outbreaks and cases, leading to a disproportionate number of deaths. To date, more than 17,000 residents and 30 staff have died of COVID-19, accounting for 43 per cent of Canada's overall COVID-19 deaths. And while vaccinations led to fewer serious or fatal cases of COVID-19, residents have continued to be adversely affected by both outbreaks and the resulting visitor restrictions that have recurred throughout the pandemic.

However, since the beginning of 2022, the majority of Canada's provinces and territories have been sharing less and less data about outbreaks and cases within LTC and retirement homes. Even as case numbers have risen again, it has become increasingly difficult to source timely, accurate and comparable information, and without that, we no longer feel confident that we can provide the quality of information expected from us.

"A tool like this is only as useful as the data it's based on, and without consistent and accurate data, we can no longer guarantee a consistent and accurate LTC COVID-19 Tracker," said Dr. Samir Sinha, Director of Health Policy Research for the NIA.

The LTC COVID-19 Tracker has allowed the NIA and Empower Health to create a framework and system that shows how this type of data collection work can be done and why it is needed. The framework will also allow us to resume data collection quickly in future health crises. But we also hope that in future outbreaks, public health agencies and governments will be more transparent about sharing comparable data, and more proactive about deciding who will collect the data and putting the systems in place to do so.

Data collected by the LTC COVID-19 Tracker Open Data Working Group as of July 1, 2022, will be archived and remain available for future use on the LTC COVID-19 Tracker website, [ltc-covid19-tracker.ca](https://ltc-covid19-tracker.ca).

For more information, read our full report: [Counting COVID-19 in Canada's Long-Term Care Homes: NIA Long-Term Care COVID-19 Tracker Project Summary Report](#).

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### **About The National Institute on Ageing**

The [National Institute on Ageing](#) is a think tank at Toronto Metropolitan University (formerly Ryerson University) focused on the realities of Canada's ageing population. Follow us on Twitter [@NIAgeing](#) and support our call for a National Seniors Strategy [@NSS Now](#).

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