

They're new parents, retail workers, teachers. And they're fed up with all young people being labelled covidiot

Karon Liu

By now we've all seen videos and photos of packed house parties, [beaches](#) and [even concerts](#) full of young people not physically distancing as if the [pandemic](#) is over.

In July, Ontario Premier Ford [made a plea to young people to "rein it in"](#) and to think of their grandparents after a spike in COVID-19 cases — more than half of which were people 39 and under. In the U.S., health officials have also been [imploring young people to take the outbreak more seriously](#).

But rather than lumping all millennials and Gen Z members into one monolith, it's important to remember that just because someone under 40 gets infected, it's not always via a crowded house party, says Dr. Colin Furness, an infection control epidemiologist and assistant professor at the faculty of information at the University of Toronto.

"The way we answer that question is learning from contact tracing. It will tell you about occupations, who they were in contact with, whether they have a service job or are really rich and bored," he said.

Furness says the more data is collected about those infected, the better understanding we will have of who and how the virus affects people within these age groups. New data released last week, for example, revealed COVID-19's [disproportionate impact on Toronto's racialized and low-income groups](#).

"It's more complicated than kids going to parties," Furness said. "I have students and recent former students and they're all uniformly cautious."

Canadian millennials and Gen Z members have already been feeling the brunt of the pandemic. [Between a quarter and a third of them have lost their jobs](#), many of which are in the retail and food sector, which doesn't allow for working from home.

When thinking about [outbreaks in bars and restaurants](#) something to consider beyond young patrons, is that the people working in those jobs tend to skew younger. [The 2016 Census found the median age of food and beverage servers was 26](#), the median age of people working in retail was 33 and the median age in the overall service sector was 36.

"I find it frustrating when it isn't taken into consideration that (young people) are working in minimum wage jobs, can't afford to quit, are taking care of elderly family members, don't have a car, working in the gig economy and live with our roommates in a tiny condo with no privacy and no windows that open," said Ruth Collings, 30, a Cabbagetown resident whose roommate is a nurse. "As long as certain people want their groceries delivered to minimize their own COVID-19 risk, someone has to