

MAKING THE INVISIBLE VISIBLE:  
WORKPLACE VIOLENCE AND INCIVILITY ON  
THE PUBLIC LIBRARY'S FRONTLINES  
**Your voice matters**

On February 2, 2020, weeks before the pandemic lockdown, CBC posted a story: "Librarians face increasing violence on the job". Data collected by the Toronto Public Library revealed that the number of reported cases of violent and abusive behaviours, including threats of violence, had increased from 365 cases in 2011 to 872 in 2018, a 139% increase in incidents. This problem is not unique to Toronto, with media reporting on the more dramatic incidents that have unfolded within large urban libraries across this country, the US and abroad. Incidents occupy a continuum from **violence and death to unwelcome behaviours, i.e. sexual harassment, racism, fighting, drug use, intoxication, and pornography use as well as exposure to biohazards (i.e., urine, feces, etc.)**.

Despite significant anecdotal evidence, little is known about your lived-experiences with, and perceptions of, these serious health and safety issues, nor their impact on the quality of your working and personal life.

In order for your Local to effectively negotiate policies that ensure a healthy, enriching, and equitable workplace for all, a number of public library CUPE locals, in partnership with a researcher from the University of Toronto's Faculty of Information (Prof Siobhan Stevenson) have developed this survey to begin that important work.

Notably, this partnership developed on the eve of the pandemic shutdown and, since that time, two historic events have occurred that cannot be ignored in any study of frontline library workers' health and safety: (1) the Black Lives Matter movement and the acknowledgement that systemic racism exists everywhere, and (2) the re-opening of the economy while a cure for the virus has yet to be found and fears of a second wave persist. For these reasons, this survey discusses the option to participate in focus groups about experiences with racism (overt, covert and as microaggression) as well as some questions about your library's re-opening when the risks of contracting the virus continues (for a fulsome survey on the latter, please contact me at: [siobhan.stevenson@utoronto.ca](mailto:siobhan.stevenson@utoronto.ca) or 416.573.2373

### Who am I?

My name is Siobhan Stevenson. I am an Associate Professor at the University of Toronto but before my academic career, I spent my working life (since my teenage years) working in the North York Public Library System as a page, a clerical, and a clerk caretaker and, after completing a my library degree at Western, went on to work with the Southern Ontario Library Service in a variety of capacities. I remember frontline work well and my research passion has always revolved around labour in libraries.

To view the survey (and complete), please go to:

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/FrontlineLibraryWorkerSurvey8FJT3P9>

or

