

Epidemiologist

Track where disease comes from and how it spreads, using data instead of a stethoscope. A master's degree, then government or research work.

TYPICAL PAY

\$94,000

a year, full time

PAY RANGE

\$61k to \$117k

starting to experienced

TIME TO QUALIFY

6 to 7 years

after high school

DEMAND

Good

job outlook

LICENCE NEEDED

No

anyone can do it

WHERE YOU WORK

Public health agencies, hospitals, universities, drug companies

How you get there

- 1 **High school** Grades 11 and 12
Biology, math and English. Data and statistics matter more than most people expect.
- 2 **Bachelor's degree** 4 years
Health sciences, biology, statistics, nursing or any science. Take at least one statistics course and keep your marks up: master's programs want a B or better.
- 3 **Master's degree** 1.5 to 2 years
An MPH (Master of Public Health) in epidemiology or a research master's. The University of Toronto's MPH runs 4 to 5 terms including summer, needs a mid-B average and a statistics course, and includes a 12 to 16 week practicum.
- 4 **First job** Months
Public health units, provincial agencies, the Public Health Agency of Canada, hospitals and research institutes hire master's grads as epidemiologists or analysts.
- 5 **Optional: doctorate or field training** 2 to 6 years
A PhD to lead studies or become a professor. Or the federal field epidemiology program, a paid fellowship of about two years where you respond to real outbreaks.

Pros and cons

- + Your work protects whole populations, not one patient at a time
- + Government jobs with pension and hybrid work
- + Skills transfer to data science, research and industry
- Six or more years of school for a job many people have never heard of
- Master's grads compete for a limited number of permanent jobs
- Contract and grant-funded positions are common early on

Optional boosts

Infectious disease and outbreak response. Pharmacoepidemiology. Biostatistics. Cancer, heart or chronic disease surveillance.

Where these numbers come from

Job Bank: Public and environmental health professionals, wages (updated Aug 2026)
University of Toronto, Dalla Lana School of Public Health: MPH in Epidemiology
Canadian Society for Epidemiology and Biostatistics
Public Health Agency of Canada

Numbers checked September 2026. Pay figures are typical full-time annual amounts in Canadian dollars, based on Government of Canada Job Bank wage data and published salary grids. They vary by province, employer and experience. Tuition is for domestic students. Sources, links and the click-through version: <https://career.help/ca/careers/epidemiologist>

Good to know

The job started with a map

In 1854 a London doctor, John Snow, mapped cholera deaths and traced them to a single water pump. Removing the pump handle ended the outbreak. Epidemiologists still call it the birth of the field.

Canada's agency was born from SARS

The 2003 SARS (severe acute respiratory syndrome) outbreak hit Toronto harder than any city outside Asia. The Public Health Agency of Canada was created in 2004 partly because of the lessons from it.



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