

FACTUM

Nearly Half of Canadians (48%) Saw People Outside their Household Over the Holidays; Majority (61%) of them Gathered Indoors Without Masks

Despite Widespread Flouting of Pandemic Guidance, Most (95%) Think Their Actions Over the Holidays Did Not Contribute to Virus Spread; One in Ten (10%) Express Guilt over their Actions

Toronto, ON, January 11, 2021 – Despite pleas from all levels of government and public health officials to not gather between households over the holidays, it looks as though many Canadians did not heed this advice. Nearly half (48%) had some form of in-person contact with someone from outside their household over the holidays, a new Ipsos poll for Global News finds. Only 5% of Canadians say they took a COVID test and received negative results before gathering for the holidays.

Most of those who gathered made an attempt to limit their mixing: two in ten (21%) gathered in person with one other household (21%), and another two in ten had contact with just one other person outside of their own household (21%), reflecting the rules in some provinces that a person who lives alone may visit one other person who lives alone. Only 6% (rising to 16% among Gen Z) met up in-person with multiple other households. This leaves the other half of Canadians (52%) who claim to have had no in-person contact with anyone outside of their immediate household over the holidays.

Prairie residents (68%) and Albertans (64%) were the most likely to keep it in the immediate family over the holidays, while Atlantic Canadians were more likely to be sociable, particularly in terms of gathering with one (33%) or multiple (17%) other households.

The survey finds that those who had gatherings over the holidays did not always follow guidelines on PPE and social distancing. Asked to describe how they gathered with people from outside their household, a majority (61%) say they gathered inside and didn't wear masks. Others incorporated safety measures into their holiday plans, including:

- 19% who gathered inside and wore masks;
- 18% who gathered outside and wore masks; and
- 12% who gathered outside but didn't wear masks.

Though many did make an effort to abide by the rules, the fact that so many Canadians interacted with other households over the holidays could be a function of the fact that more than one in four (27%) believe (9% strongly/18% somewhat) the government 'has no right to tell them they shouldn't gather with their own family over the holidays'. Those who feel strongest that government has no right to tell them what to do are more likely to be men (33%) than women (22%), and skew younger than older: 32% of those 18-34 and 35% of those 35-54 agree, compared to just 17% of those aged 55 and over. Regionally, Atlantic Canadians (38%) are more likely to hold this view, while British Columbians (20%) are less likely to agree.

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While many gathered with other households, Canadians did largely avoid travel over the holidays (unlike many of their political leaders!). In stark contrast to American Thanksgiving, most Canadians stayed put over the winter holidays, with very few travelling to another province (2%) or another country, including sun destinations (2%). Just 3% ventured out to a cottage or vacation rental. No significant differences are noted by region, meaning nearly all Canadians across the country stayed close to home, as advised.

For Some, Guilt at Holiday Behaviour

A small number of Canadians – one in ten (10%) – admit to feeling guilty for their COVID-related behaviour over the holidays, rising to 33% among those who gathered with multiple households, 16% of those who gathered with one other household, and 15% who met up with one other person. Guilt is more pronounced among Gen Z (29%) and Millennials (16%), as well as Atlantic Canadians (21%). With a slew of politicians and social media influencers under fire for having travelled outside Canada, travel-shaming is a reality, and 9% of Canadians say they hid the fact that they were travelling for the holidays from other people. Younger Canadians are most likely to agree, including 20% of Gen Z and 15% of Millennials.

Most Think Actions Had No Impact

For the overwhelming majority, however, there are no regrets about how they handled holidays gatherings. Nearly all Canadians (95%) say they're confident that their actions over the holidays did not contribute to the spread of COVID-19 – though this drops to 85% among those who gathered with multiple other families – and nearly as many (93%) say they're perfectly comfortable with their COVID-related behaviour over the holidays. Though not all households approached the holidays the same way, there is widespread agreement (91%) that Canadians did what they decided was right for their family situation, and a significant majority (86%) claim they stuck very closely to public health recommendations not to gather with people outside of their immediate household.

For many, the new normal means being part of a bubble with another household, where members of the two households only gather in-person with each other. Four in ten Canadians (39%) say this is their current situation, and that they are continuing to see these people even as some parts of the country are once again in lockdown.



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About the Study

These are some of the findings of an Ipsos poll conducted between January 5-6, 2021, on behalf of Global News. For this survey, a sample of 1,000 Canadians aged 18+ was interviewed online. Quotas and weighting were employed to ensure that the sample's composition reflects that of the Canadian population according to census parameters. The precision of Ipsos online polls is measured using a credibility interval. In this case, the poll is accurate to within ± 3.5 percentage points, 19 times out of 20, had all Canadians aged 18+ been polled. The credibility interval will be wider among subsets of the population. All sample surveys and polls may be subject to other sources of error, including, but not limited to coverage error, and measurement error.

For more information on this news release, please contact:

Darrell Bricker
CEO, Ipsos Global Public Affairs
+1 416 324 2001
Darrell.Bricker@ipsos.com

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