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Most Canadians Worried About COVID-19 Variants (81%), Fourth Wave (69%)

But Six in Ten (62%) Optimistic that the Current Uptake of Vaccines Will Be Enough to Curb A Potential Fourth Wave in Canada

Toronto, ON, July 29, 2021 – As reopening plans are rolled out across Canada, and as more Canadians enter into what Justin Trudeau hoped would be their “one-dose summer” following increased vaccine distribution, most Canadians say they are still concerned about COVID-19 variants delaying a return to normal life and the potential for a fourth wave.

A recent Ipsos poll on conducted on behalf of Global News finds that though six in ten (62%) feel the current uptake of the vaccine will help Canada avoid a fourth wave of the pandemic, the majority (81%) of Canadians say they are worried that the new COVID-19 variants will delay a return to normal. While there are few highly significant differences by age or gender in terms of sentiment on Canadians’ future with COVID, region plays a large role in opinion, linked to the differences in how Canadians in different parts of the country experienced the pandemic over the last year.

Eight in Ten Canadians Worried About COVID-19 Variants, and Most Worried About a Fourth Wave

Ipsos data shows that the majority of Canadians (81%) are worried that the new COVID-19 variants will delay things getting back to normal (27% strongly agree, 54% somewhat agree). This worry is felt most strongly among those from Atlantic Canada (89%), who, on the tail end of an overwhelming variant-driven third wave after several periods of low cases and normalcy, may be hoping that the end could be in sight. Ontarians are also significantly more likely to express worry about the COVID-19 variants (85%), after an exhausting 16 months of rolling lockdowns (SK/MB 83%, BC 77%, QC 77%, AB 73%).

The majority of Canadians are also worried about the potential of a fourth wave of the pandemic in the country (69%), with those in Atlantic Canada (82%) and British Columbia (76%) most likely to feel worried (compared to SK/MB 74%, ON, 72% AB 66%, QC 57%). Notably, those in Quebec are least likely to feel worried about the potential for a fourth wave. This is consistent with a level of optimism seen in previous research among Quebecers,¹ who may be feeling a sense of relief amidst vaccine rollouts after having some of the highest COVID-19 caseloads in the country over the course of the pandemic.

Six in ten (62%) express some level of agreement that the current uptake of the COVID-19 vaccine will be enough to avoid a fourth wave of the pandemic in Canada. Compared to the level of worry about the spread of variants prolonging the pandemic, however, this may suggest that Canadians feel the country could be approaching a vaccination saturation point, as vaccination opportunities become more available and there remains a portion of the population still holding off from receiving a shot.

¹ <https://www.ipsos.com/en-ca/news-polls/seven-in-ten-canadians-believe-summer-2021-will-be-a-disappointment>



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On the other hand, the majority of Canadians would support further lockdown measures if there is a fourth wave of COVID-19 (69%), though there are key regional differences in sentiment when it comes to lockdowns. Those in British Columbia (84%) and Atlantic Canada (79%) are most likely to indicate support for more lockdowns, while those in Alberta (60%) and Quebec (62%) are less likely than other regions (vs. ON 70%, SK/MB 68%). British Columbia may be feeling the after-effects of their third wave, the variant having originated in Canada on the west coast, while Atlantic Canadians have made rapid lockdowns part of their COVID strategy since the beginning of the pandemic. On the other hand, Albertans have generally been less supportive of lockdowns than in other parts of the country, and Quebecers may be reacting to a recent announcement made by their government that there will be no more lockdowns, instead requiring vaccine passports as an alternative.

Consensus on New Normal Is Split by Region

As Canadians prepare for what the new normal could look like, sentiment on how to navigate living with COVID-19 post-pandemic is less clear-cut, especially by region. Just over two-thirds (67%) agree that we should learn to live with active COVID-19 cases as long as hospitals aren't overwhelmed, indicating a certain level of acceptance that COVID may be here to stay.

There is less consensus on the trade-off between unrestricted daily life and the spread of COVID-19 cases. Overall, 56% of Canadians feel that the spread of less-serious COVID-19 cases is acceptable in order to live without restrictions. This sentiment is most strongly felt in Quebec (63%) and less common in British Columbia (47%), compared to other regions (ATL 60%, AB 58%, SK/MB 57%, ON 54%). After living through the epicenter of the pandemic in Canada, Quebecers' may have a higher tolerance of less-serious COVID-19 cases in favour of enjoying unrestricted life again.





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About the Study

These are some of the findings of an Ipsos poll conducted between July 19th and July 20th, 2021, on behalf of Global News. For this survey, a sample of 1,000 Canadians aged 18+ was interviewed. 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.

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