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Eight in Ten (79%) Canadians Believe Acts of Violence Will Increase in Canada in the Future

Mental Health Impacts of the COVID-19 Pandemic Cited by Two-Thirds (65%) of Those Who See More Violence in Their Communities Since the Pandemic Began

Toronto, ON, March 9, 2023 – A new Ipsos poll conducted on behalf of Global News finds that Canadians feel more violence in the country may be on the horizon (79%). For the six in ten (58%) who report feeling that there has been an increase in violence in their community since the COVID-19 pandemic began, the pandemic's impacts on mental health (65%), the breakdown of common values (51%), and economic uncertainty (48%) are believed to be the main causes.

Mental Health Impacts of COVID Thought to Play a Role in Increased Violence

A strong majority (79%) of Canadians feel that acts of violence will increase in Canada in the future, though a lower proportion (43%) say they feel less safe where they live than they did a year ago (with 57% disagreeing with this statement), not including those who did not provide a response. Younger Canadians are more likely to say they feel less safe where they live than a year ago (59% 18-34, 40% 35-54, 35% 55+).

Thinking about violence in Canada over the last year, almost six in ten (58%) Canadians feel that there has been more violence in their community since the COVID-19 pandemic began, excluding those who did not provide a response.

When those who feel there has been an increase in violence since COVID-19 were asked about the reasons behind this increase, two-thirds (65%) believe the pandemic has had a negative effect on people's mental health, which is higher among women (71% vs. 58% for men) and those aged over 55 (72% vs. 60%: 18-34; 62%: 35-54). Half (51%) believe the breakdown of common values and social cohesion is the reason for the increased violence, while a similar proportion (48%) blame economic uncertainty (which is higher among women 55% vs. 41% for men). Elsewhere four in ten (41%) believe unemployment is at the root of the surge in violence (which is higher in Ontario: 52%, +11 points compared to the national average). Meanwhile a similar proportion (39%) believe racism and discrimination to be the problem and three in ten (28%) believe inequality is the main explanatory factor.



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While Most Report Feeling Safe in their Neighbourhood Doing Daily Activities, Some Feel Safer than Others

When asked how safe Canadians feel with various activities or aspects of life, overall, the majority say they feel safe walking in their neighbourhood during the day (89%, 34% somewhat/54% very) and at night (69%), though the latter is driven by a higher portion say they feel only “somewhat” safe (46%) rather than “very” safe (23%). Canadians also say they feel safe living where they do in Canada (85%, 43% somewhat/42% very) and taking a taxi or ride-share (73%, 48% somewhat/25% very).

Unsurprisingly, women are significantly more likely to say they feel *unsafe* walking in their neighbourhood at night (36% vs. 21% men) and taking a taxi or ride-share (20% vs. 12% men). Younger Canadians (those 18-34) are also more likely to say they feel unsafe with:

- Walking in their neighbourhood during the day (19% vs. 8% 35-54, 6% 55+);
- Walking in their neighbourhood at night (40% vs. 24% 35-54, 25% 55+); and
- Living where they do in Canada (23% vs. 13% 35-54, 8% 55+).

Those in different regions in the country also vary in their feelings of everyday safety. Albertans are significantly more likely to say they feel unsafe walking in their neighbourhood during the day (19% vs. 11% SK/MB, 10% ON, 9% QC, 8% BC, 5% ATL), and living where they do in Canada (21% vs. 16% ON, 14% BC, 10% SK/MB, 10% QC, 8% ATL).

Most Canadians Feel Women and Immigrants Have Become Greater Targets of Violence

High portions of Canadians (excluding “don’t know” responses) agree that women (70%) and immigrants (64%) have become greater targets of violence in the country over the last year.

Demographically, women are more likely than men to feel that their gender has become more of a target over the last year (77% vs. 64% men), that immigrants have also become more of a target (69% vs. 59% men), and that they would not walk alone at night in their neighbourhood (55% vs. 31% of men). Younger Canadians are more likely to say there appears to be more violence in their communities since the pandemic began (71% 18-34, 55% 35-54, 50% 55+) and that they would not walk alone at night (54% 18-34, 38% 35-54, 40% 55+).

Opinions on perceived level of safety and changes over the last year vary by region. Those in British Columbia, Saskatchewan and Manitoba, and Ontario are more likely to say they feel less safe where they live than they did a year ago than those in other regions. British Columbians in particular are most likely to feel that there appears to be more violence in their communities since COVID-19, and Atlantic Canadians are more likely to feel immigrants have become more of a target of violence in Canada.

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By contrast, those in Quebec and Atlantic Canada are least likely to say they feel less safe now than a year ago. Those in Alberta are least likely to feel that women have increasingly become targets over the last year, and that they feel there has been more violence in their community since the pandemic began.

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following?

By Region

% Agree, “Don’t know” responses excluded

		Region					
	Total	BC	AB	SK/MB	ON	QC	ATL
Women have become more of a target of violence in Canada over the past year.	70%	73%	57%	78%	69%	75%	66%
Immigrants have become more of a target of violence in Canada over the past year.	64%	70%	62%	54%	66%	56%	81%
There appears to be more violence in my community since COVID-19.	58%	69%	44%	64%	62%	51%	50%
I feel less safe where I live than I did a year ago.	43%	50%	44%	52%	49%	32%	27%
I would not walk alone at night in my neighbourhood.	43%	42%	40%	48%	44%	44%	36%

Amidst Perceived Increased Violence, Under Half Feel the Government is Taking the Right Steps to Mitigate

Excluding “don’t know” responses, 43% of Canadians feel the government is currently taking the right steps to mitigate acts of violence in Canada, with 57% *disagreeing*. Those in Alberta are *less* likely to feel the government has a proper handle on mitigating violence, whereas those in Quebec, in line with their general optimism, are *more* likely to feel it is doing so. This suggests that, in light of a sense that there will be more violence in the future, Canadians aren’t certain the government will act to help ensure this trend does not continue.



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About the Study

These are some of the findings of an Ipsos poll conducted between February 15 and 17, 2023, on behalf of Global News. For this survey, a sample of 1,350 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 ± 3.1 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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ISIN code FR0000073298, Reuters ISOS.PA, Bloomberg IPS:FP

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