

COVID-19: Canadian concern over falling ill on the rise again

Majority of Canadians wearing mask most of the time in public (55%), many wear one rarely, never (45%)

July 16, 2020 – As the COVID-19 pandemic continues to rage in the United States, Canadian provinces and territories have been focused on controlling community outbreaks on a smaller scale as well.

Now, a new study from the non-profit Angus Reid Institute finds concerns about personally contracting the virus rebounding after declining in each of the last three months. Three-in-five Canadians (59%) say they are worried about getting sick, up 13 points from June.

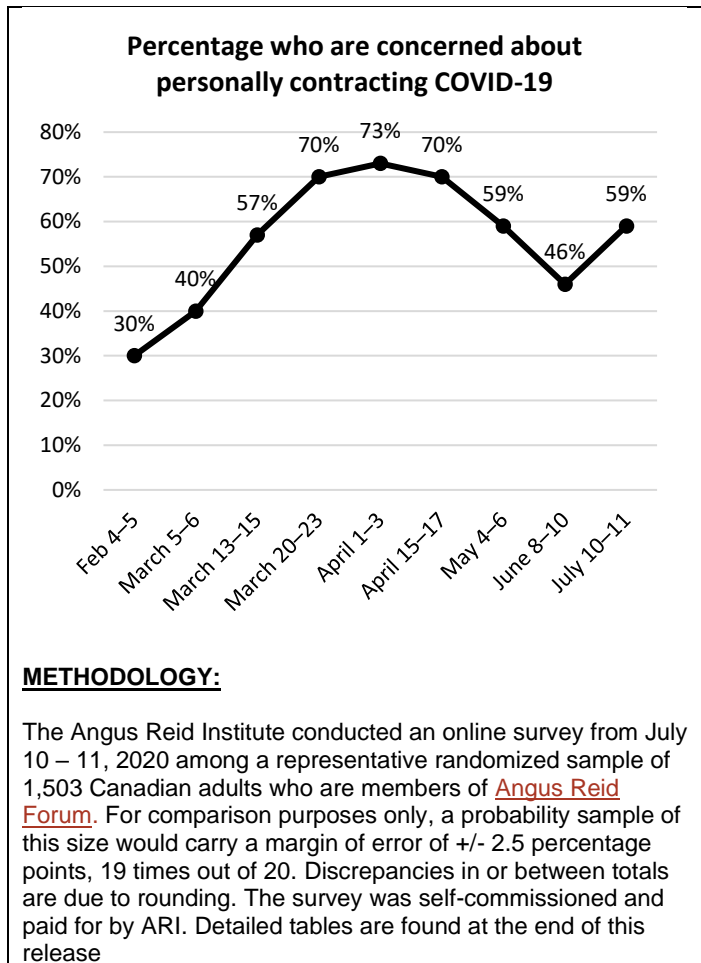
This concern, however, does not mean all Canadians are adopting a key mitigation suggestion from public health officials – mask usage. Just one-in-five (20%) say they always wear a mask when they go out in public, while 35 per cent say they do so “most of the time”. That said, another one-in-three (32%) say they rarely wear one, and 13 per cent never do.

Many Canadians who do not wear a mask constantly say they are cognizant of social distancing rules if they go out without one (28%). Others, say they forget to wear their mask (26%), say it's uncomfortable (23%), or do not worry about getting sick (20%).

Notably, support for a mandatory mask policy is higher than the rate of personal usage. Three-quarters of Canadians (74%) say they would be fine with that policy if it were implemented in their community.

More Key Findings:

- Worry about becoming sick plays a significant role in a person's likelihood to wear a mask. Four-in-five (81%) of those who are very worried about contracting the virus say they wear a mask always or most of the time. Four-in-five (85%) of those who are not worried at all about becoming sick say they rarely or never wear one.
- Concern about becoming sick remains variable across generations. Seven-in-ten of those ages 55 and over (71%) are concerned, while this percentage drops below a majority among 18-to 34-year old's (41%).



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- Support for mandatory masks is 73 per cent or higher in British Columbia, Manitoba, Ontario, Quebec, and Atlantic Canada. Support is 60 per cent in Alberta and 55 per cent in Saskatchewan.

About ARI

*The **Angus Reid Institute (ARI)** was founded in October 2014 by pollster and sociologist, Dr. Angus Reid. ARI is a national, not-for-profit, non-partisan public opinion research foundation established to advance education by commissioning, conducting and disseminating to the public accessible and impartial statistical data, research and policy analysis on economics, political science, philanthropy, public administration, domestic and international affairs and other socio-economic issues of importance to Canada and its world.*

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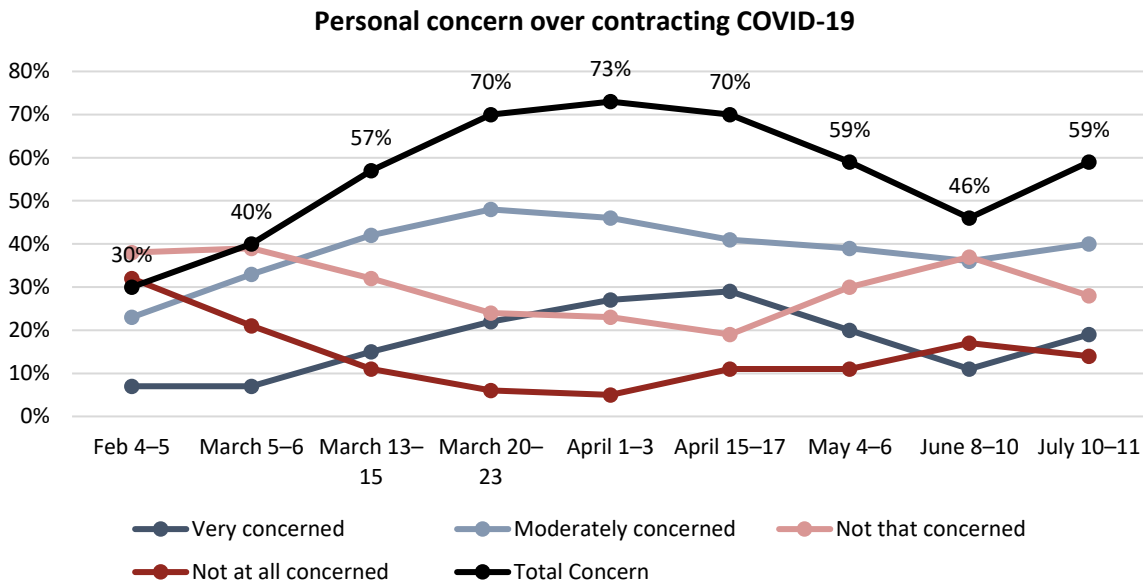
Part One: Concern levels rising again

Canada's daily cases of COVID-19 have diminished greatly from the peaks of late April and early May. Approximately 300 cases are being catalogued each day, compared to 1,700 to 1,900 at the peak of the first wave of the outbreak.

Despite this, anxiety in Canada has increased since June. This, as stories of international flights coming to Canada with passengers that tested positive for COVID-19, and Americans using an Alaskan-travel loophole to enter Canada have been reported by Canadian media. Three-in-five Canadians (59%) now say they worry about contracting COVID-19, the same number who said this in May, and a proportion 13 points higher than last month:

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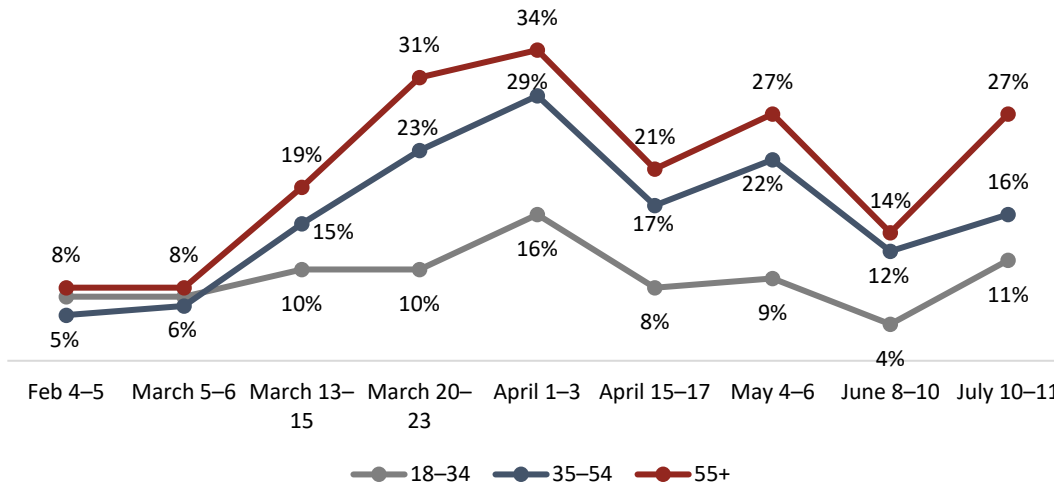


While localized outbreaks in Canada are reminders that the risk remains ever present and real in this country, a more likely cause of rising concern may be the situation south of the border. In contrast to Canada’s stable, if diminishing, case numbers, new cases in the United States have exploded in number. In recent weeks, the country has been adding more than 50,000 confirmed cases each day, and the number of deaths per day has begun to climb alongside hospitalizations.

Earlier this week, it was announced that the border between the two nations will remain closed to non-essential travel until at least August 21, an idea for which Canadians have been overwhelmingly supportive.

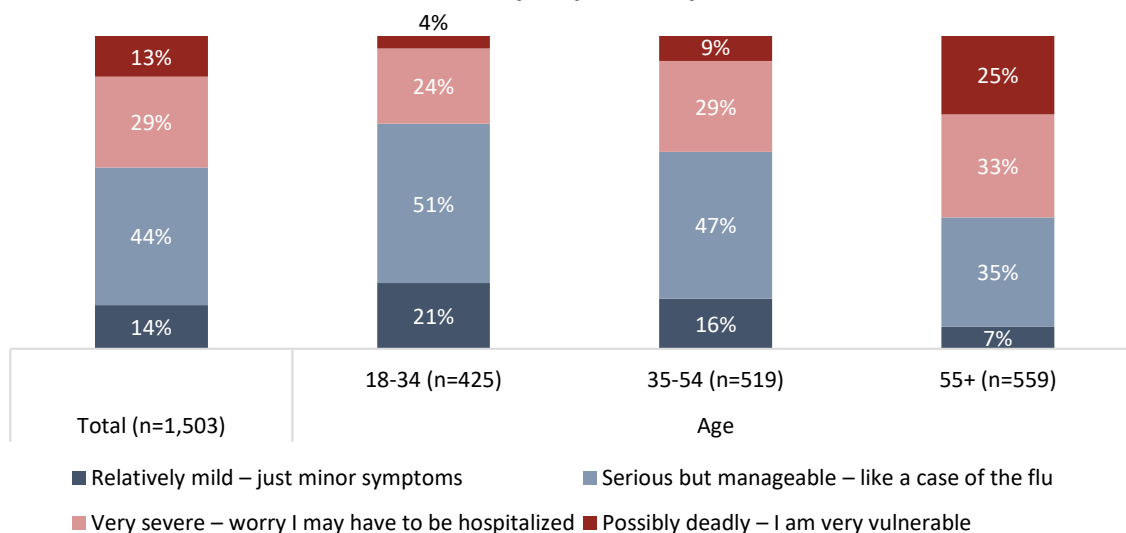
Amid all of this, the percentage of Canadians saying they are ‘very concerned’ about becoming sick has almost doubled. One-in-four respondents over the age of 54 now feel this way, after that sentiment dropped last month:

Percentage of Canadians saying they are "very concerned" about contracting COVID-19

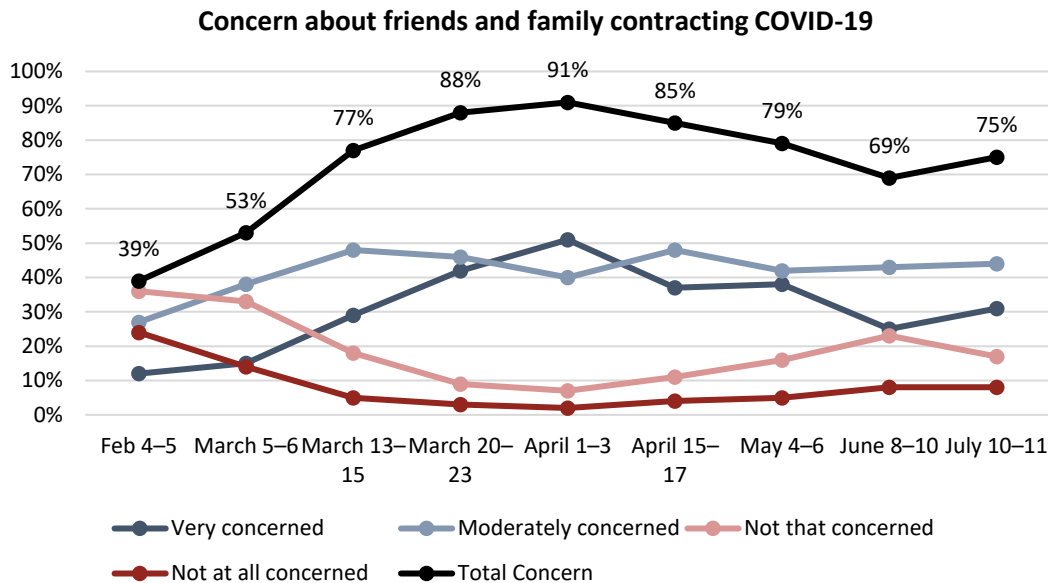


Elevated levels of anxiety in the older population are correlated with a perceived likelihood that becoming sick would lead to severe, if not deadly, complications. One-quarter of residents over the age of 54 (25%) say they fear they are high risk for fatality if they contract COVID-19, while one-in-three (33%) say they would anticipate potential hospitalization:

Suppose you did get sick from COVID-19. How serious do you feel this would be for you, personally?



Concern about friends and family becoming sick continues to outpace personal worries and has also risen this month after dipping in June:



Part Two: Half wearing masks, half not

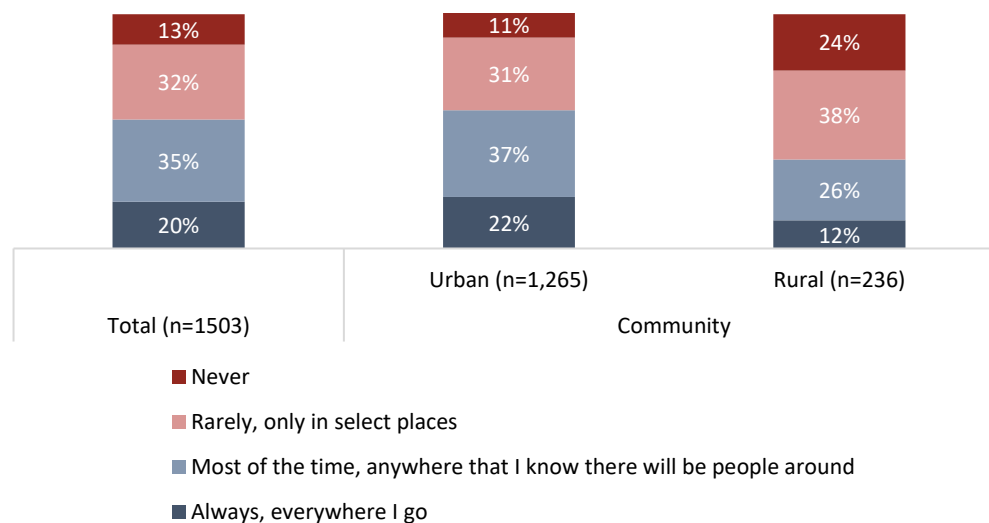
After months of muddle on this subject, public health officials now say one of the most important aspects of reducing community spread of COVID-19 is the wearing of masks (along with social distancing). Canadians are adhering to this advice to varying degrees. While one-in-five (20%) say they always wear a mask outside the home and one-in-three (35%) say they do when they know people will be around, another 32 per cent say they rarely wear one and 13 per cent say they never do.

**During the past few weeks, how frequently, if at all, have you worn a facemask outside the home due to the COVID-19 outbreak?
(All respondents, n=1,503)**



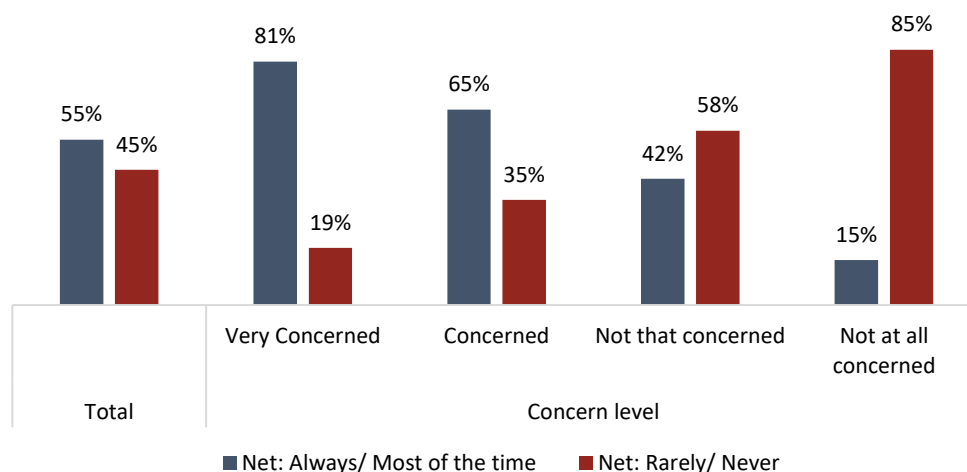
Mask adoption is considerably higher in urban centres where the likelihood of contact with others is significantly increased. That said, 42 per cent of residents in urban areas say they rarely wear a mask in public, if ever:

During the past few weeks, how frequently, if at all, have you worn a facemask outside the home due to the COVID-19 outbreak?



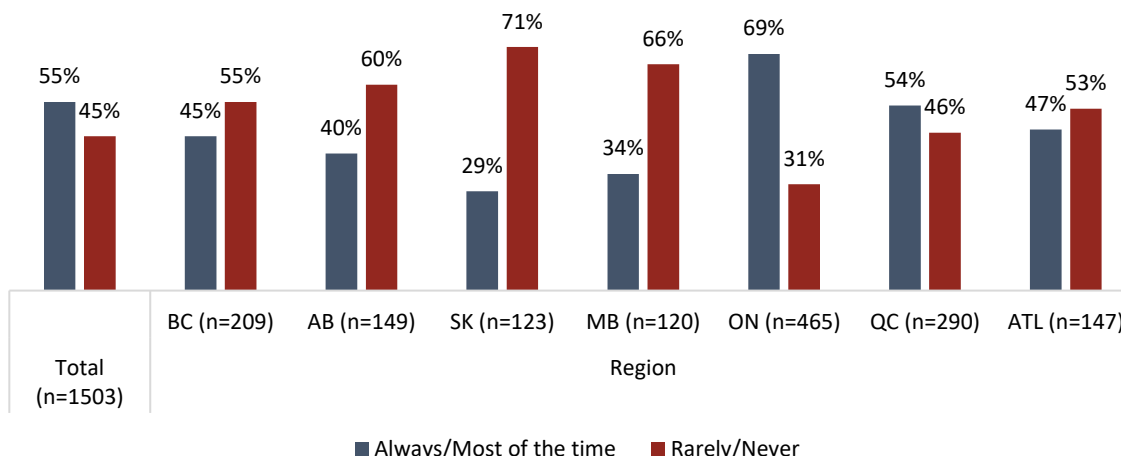
A person’s own anxiety about becoming sick appears to play a considerable role in their likelihood to wear a mask. Four-in-five of those who say they are very concerned about contracting COVID-19 regularly wear a mask. On the other end of the spectrum, those who are not at all worried about getting sick are extremely unlikely to abide by mask recommendations:

**Concern over becoming sick compared by mask usage
(All respondents, n=1,503)**



The two provinces that were hit hardest by the COVID-19 outbreak, and Canada’s most populated regions – Ontario and Quebec – report the highest levels of mask adoption. Seven-in-ten Ontario residents (69%) say they wear their mask when they know they will be around others, while 54 per cent of Quebecers say the same, compared to fewer than half in all other regions:

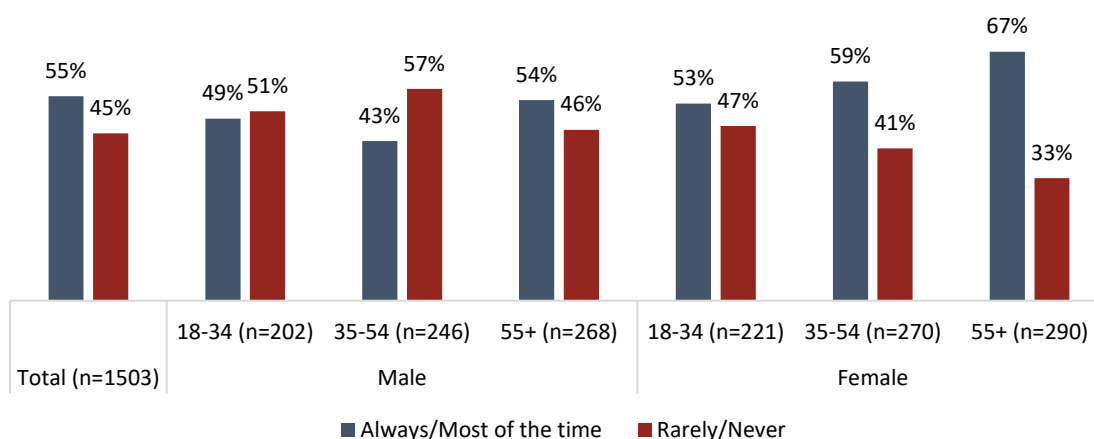
During the past few weeks, how frequently, if at all, have you worn a facemask outside the home due to the COVID-19 outbreak?



Women more likely than men to follow guidelines

Women of all ages are more likely to wear a mask when in contact with others compared to their male generational counterparts. Women ages 55 and over are most likely to be adherent, while men between the ages of 35 and 54 are least likely:

During the past few weeks, how frequently, if at all, have you worn a facemask outside the home due to the COVID-19 outbreak?



Part Three: Why Canadians don't always wear a mask

The Angus Reid Institute asked all of those who do not 'always' wear a mask when they are out in public their main reasons for not doing so.

Three-in-ten (28%) feel that their own social distancing is enough. This group tries to avoid public spaces and maintains distance in public spaces. One-quarter (26%) say that they often forget and a similar

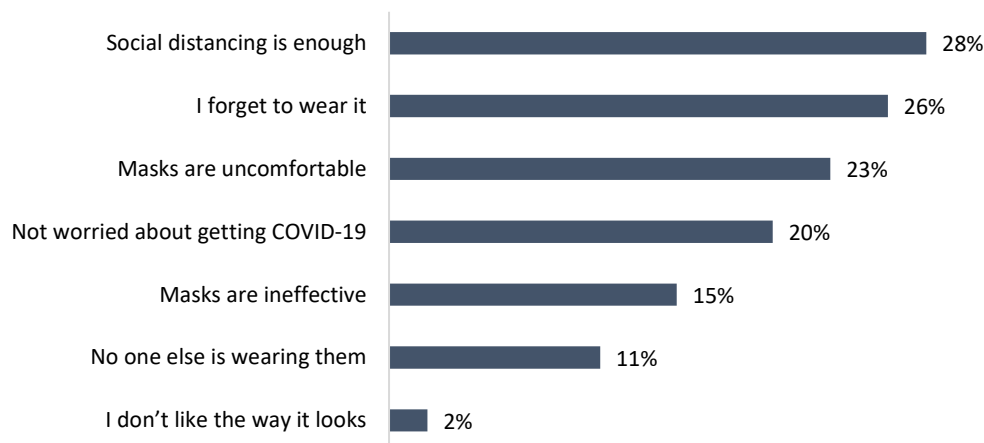
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number (23%) say that they find masks uncomfortable. One-in-five say they aren't worried about getting sick, while 15 per cent do not believe masks are effective:

**What are your main reasons for not always wearing your mask?
(Among those who do not 'always' wear one in public, n=1,202)**



*note, "social distancing is enough" given in response to "other" in question list and manually coded by researchers

The motivations are different for many Canadians. Responses from young people are of particular interest, as they are much more likely to say that they are not worried about getting COVID-19 or that they feel masks are ineffective:

What are your main reasons for not always wearing your mask? (Among those who do not 'always' wear one in public, n=1,202)							
	Total (n=1,503)	Age and Gender					
		Male			Female		
		18-34 (n=167)	35-54 (n=207)	55+ (n=222)	18-34 (n=183)	35-54 (n=201)	55+ (n=217)
I forget to wear it	26%	26%	25%	29%	28%	30%	19%
Masks are uncomfortable	23%	23%	19%	20%	29%	22%	25%
Not worried about getting COVID-19	20%	34%	26%	13%	21%	17%	11%
Masks are ineffective	15%	21%	17%	13%	17%	17%	9%
No one else is wearing them	11%	19%	11%	11%	13%	8%	8%

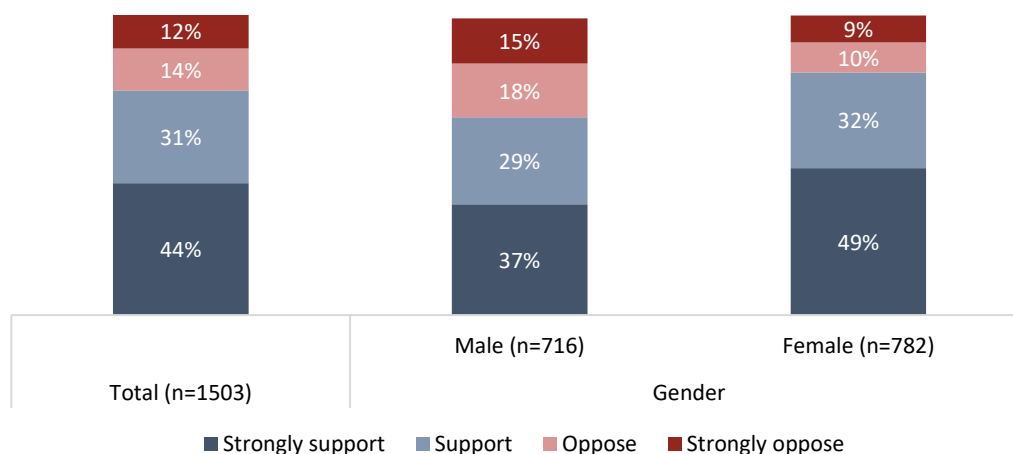
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Three-quarters would support mandatory masks

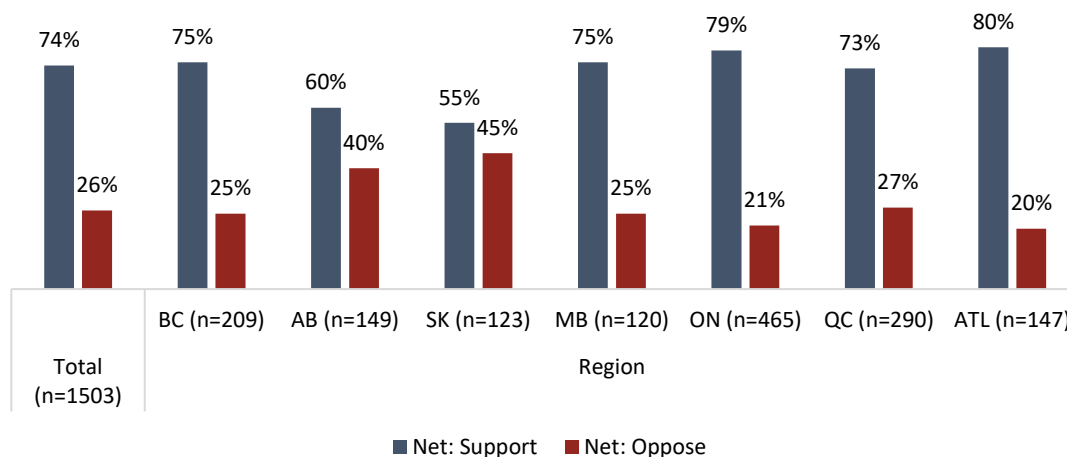
Just this week Quebec [announced](#) that masks would be mandatory in all indoor public spaces for residents over the age of 12. This, after Toronto's city council [voted](#) to do the same earlier in July. Canadians, despite the fact that they may not always wear a mask, are supportive of this idea. More than two-in-five (44%) strongly support this measure in their own community, while three-in-ten (31%) support it. Women are more receptive than men, but a majority of both are on board:

Would you support or oppose a mandatory mask policy in public places where you live?



This concept is relatively uncontroversial across different regions in Canada, with majority support in every part of the country:

Would you support or oppose a mandatory mask policy in public places where you live?



For detailed results by age, gender, region, education, and other demographics, [click here](#).

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