

What to do when it's over? After COVID-19, Canadians long to live stress-free, hug their friends and travel

Return-to-normal not expected by most until at least next fall, if ever

December 22, 2020 – For many Canadians, the answer to a common question in December carries an unusual answer. What are you doing New Years Eve? Waiting for next year.

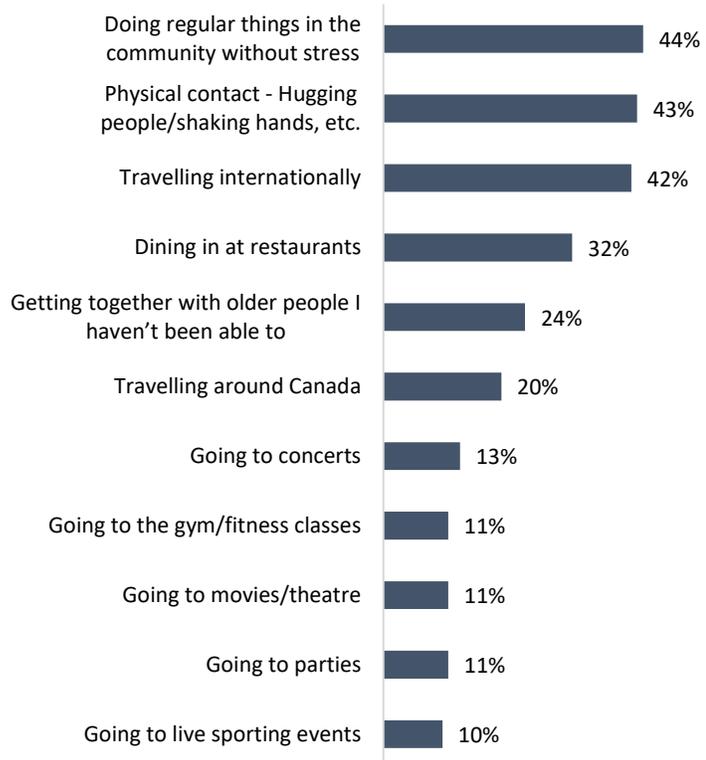
For many, this holiday season – with parties cancelled and traditions put off – is an obstacle to overcome. Now, new data from the non-profit Angus Reid Institute finds people from coast-to-coast hoping fervently for a new era when neighbours and communities are safely vaccinated, and (almost) everyone regains a life that looks more like it used to.

Three things that Canadians are looking forward to most: being able to go about their day-to-day routine without worrying about the virus (44% look forward to this), being able to resume the hugs, pecks on the cheek and handshakes that come with physical contact (43%), and international travel (42%).

More Key Findings:

- British Columbians are most likely to look forward to hugging their loved ones (51%) while Quebec leads the nation in wanting to go out for dinner (45%) and go to a party (19%).
- Manitoba residents are most excited to get together with older people they have been unable to see. 35 per cent say this, with Saskatchewan second at 28 per cent.
- One-in-five Canadians say that a pre-pandemic normal will never return. Notably, 48 per cent of those who will not get vaccinated against COVID-19 say this, while the proportion is just 15 per cent among those who will.

Activities Canadians are most looking forward to when the pandemic passes (All respondents, n=1,603)



METHODOLOGY:

The Angus Reid Institute conducted an online survey from December 8 – 11, 2020 among a representative randomized sample of 1,603 Canadian adults who are members of [Angus Reid Forum](#). For comparison purposes only, a probability sample of this size would carry a margin of error of +/- 2.4 percentage points, 19 times out of 20. Discrepancies in or between totals are due to rounding. The survey was self-commissioned and paid for by ARI. Detailed tables are found at the end of this release.

CONTACT:

Shachi Kurl, President: 604.908.1693 shachi.kurl@angusreid.org @shachikurl
Dave Korzinski, Research Director: 250.899.0821 dave.korzinski@angusreid.org

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.

INDEX:

Part One: Post pandemic, what do Canadians yearn for most?

- **British Columbians want a hug, Quebecers want to party**
- **Generational differences in post-pandemic priorities**
- **Wealthier Canadians want to get back in the skies**

Part Two: Majority anticipate return to “normal” next fall or later

Part One: Post pandemic, what do Canadians yearn for most?

As lockdowns put a damper on the usual holiday festivities, and the [rollout of vaccines](#) begins to shine a light at the end of the tunnel, Canadians – while largely [committed](#) to the restrictive requests of public health officials – can be forgiven for casting their gaze to the future. What will you do when the pandemic is over?

[Related: A COVID Christmas – How will Canadians spend the holidays this year?](#)

Three items stand out. Just over two-in-five (44%) say they want most to resume a normal life where the simplest day-to-day activities do not take on extra stress. Nearly everything in public life has been imbued with a health risk as COVID-19 spread this year, and many people are anticipating lifting this weight off their weary shoulders. The same number (43%) say they can't wait to be able to hug their friends again or greet an acquaintance with a handshake. Many Canadians are also eager to spend some time far away: taking a trip internationally is chosen by two-in-five respondents (42%) as well. The airline industry has been crippled by COVID-19. Air Canada, for example, reported a [96 per cent](#) reduction in second quarter passenger travel this year and an [88 per cent](#) reduction in the third quarter. Notably, one-in-five Canadians (20%) are looking forward to taking a trip closer to home, within Canada.

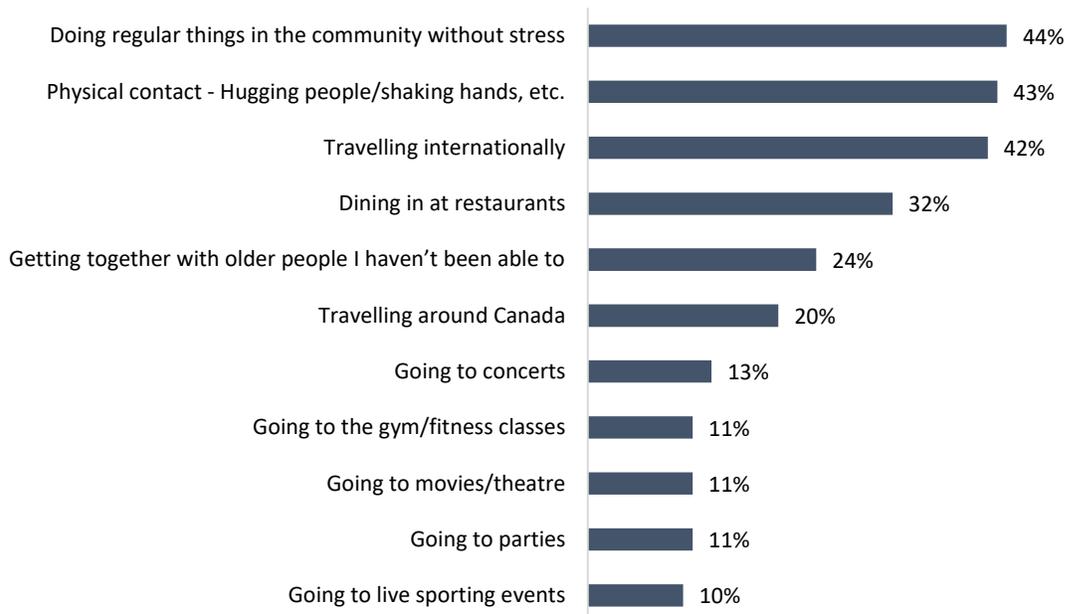
CONTACT:

Shachi Kurl, President: 604.908.1693 shachi.kurl@angusreid.org @shachikurl
Dave Korzinski, Research Director: 250.899.0821 dave.korzinski@angusreid.org

When the pandemic is passed and there are no more restrictions, what are you most excited to do when that time comes?

(Up to three selected, items with 10% or greater shown)

(All respondents, n=1,603)



British Columbians want a hug, Quebecers want to party

Looking at these data regionally yields some interesting stories across the country:

- British Columbians are evidently Canada's biggest huggers. 51 per cent say they look forward to resuming this and other physical contact.
- Manitoba residents, who have dealt with one of the most extreme lockdowns in the country, are most excited to get together with older people they have been unable to see. 35 per cent say this, compared to 28 per cent in Saskatchewan, and lower elsewhere in the nation.
- Atlantic Canadians are most likely to say they look forward to resuming their day-to-day errands and activities. It is the only region in the country where at least 60 per cent choose that activity.
- Quebecers want to party at nearly twice the national average (19% vs. 11%). They also are by far the most likely in the country to wish to go out for dinner or drinks at a restaurant. Nearly half (45%) say this in Quebec, while Ontario and Manitoba are next at just 30 per cent.
- One-in-five Saskatchewan residents (19%) look forward to live sporting events – the highest mark in the country – suggesting that the return of the Rough Riders may be greatly anticipated.

CONTACT:

Shachi Kurl, President: 604.908.1693 shachi.kurl@angusreid.org @shachikurl

Dave Korzinski, Research Director: 250.899.0821 dave.korzinski@angusreid.org

When the pandemic is passed and there are no more restrictions on activities, what are you most excited to do when that time comes? (Up to three selected, items with 10% or greater shown)								
Unweighted sample sizes	Total (n=1,603)	Region						
		BC (n=202)	AB (n=150)	SK (n=129)	MB (n=125)	ON (n=458)	QC (n=394)	ATL (n=145)
Doing regular things in the community without stress	44%	45%	46%	54%	50%	46%	33%	60%
Physical contact - Hugging people/shaking hands, etc.	43%	51%	39%	38%	38%	43%	48%	29%
Travelling internationally	42%	44%	42%	41%	31%	45%	37%	43%
Dining in at restaurants	32%	21%	24%	22%	30%	30%	45%	27%
Getting together with older people I haven't been able to see	24%	23%	23%	28%	35%	25%	21%	17%
Travelling around Canada	20%	22%	30%	32%	23%	20%	8%	36%
Going to concerts	13%	12%	10%	9%	11%	15%	14%	14%
Going to parties	11%	11%	7%	7%	13%	9%	19%	8%
Going to movies/theatre	11%	11%	8%	7%	7%	10%	15%	8%
Going to the gym/fitness classes	11%	10%	11%	9%	8%	11%	13%	5%
Going to live sporting events	10%	10%	16%	19%	14%	9%	5%	10%

Generational differences in post-pandemic priorities

When looking at different demographic groups, the activities which make the top five are similar, but their relative importance varies.

Those who are 55 or older are most keen on being stress-free about doing regular things. It is the most anticipated activity among men of that age, and a close second for women. This may owe to the elevated personal risk of COVID-19 in that age group and the fact that many people may have spent months planning shopping trips around specific hours, or stayed home entirely, in order to remain safe.

CONTACT:

Shachi Kurl, President: 604.908.1693 shachi.kurl@angusreid.org @shachikurl
 Dave Korzinski, Research Director: 250.899.0821 dave.korzinski@angusreid.org

Most anticipated activities by age and gender (Up to three selected)					
Male			Female		
18-34 (n=218)	35-54 (n=266)	55+ (n=286)	18-34 (n=236)	35-54 (n=288)	55+ (n=310)
Travel abroad 41%	Travel abroad 43%	Stress free normal activities 50%	Travel abroad 44%	Physical contact 49%	Physical contact 62%
Physical contact 28%	Physical contact 37%	Travel abroad 44%	Stress free normal activities 39%	Travel abroad 47%	Stress free normal activities 59%
Stress free normal activities 28%	Stress free normal activities 35%	Physical contact 42%	Physical contact 35%	Stress free normal activities 46%	Restaurants 34%
Restaurants 27%	Restaurants 32%	Restaurants 37%	Seeing older people 26%	Restaurants 31%	Travel abroad 33%
Travel in Canada 25%	Seeing older people 22%	Travel in Canada 22%	Restaurants 25%	Seeing older people 29%	Seeing older people 27%

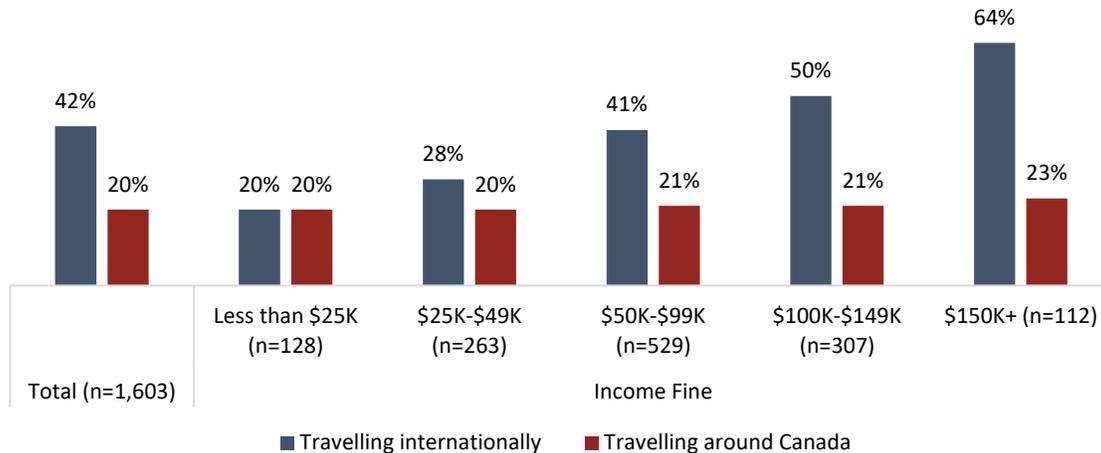
Wealthier Canadians want to get back in the skies

Differences are also evident based on household income levels. While income does not appear to influence a person's likelihood to travel domestically post-pandemic, it bears considerable impact on international travel. Among those whose household income is \$150 thousand or more, two-thirds (64%) say they look forward to international travel. That number drops across each subsequent lower income level, to just 20 per cent among those with incomes less than \$25 thousand.

CONTACT:

Shachi Kurl, President: 604.908.1693 shachi.kurl@angusreid.org @shachikurl
 Dave Korzinski, Research Director: 250.899.0821 dave.korzinski@angusreid.org

Percentage that want to travel domestically vs. internationally by income level

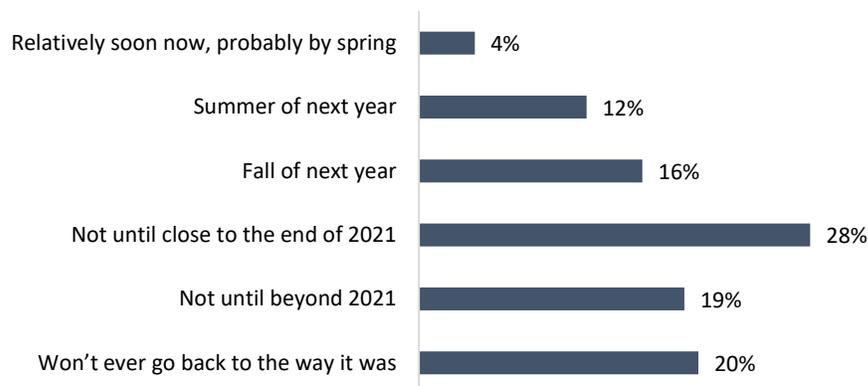


Part Two: Majority anticipate return to “normal” next fall or later

As Canada’s first COVID-19 vaccinations are administered, a return to normalcy becomes less a distant hope and more a forthcoming reality. Experts and public health officials, however, caution that the resumption of pre-pandemic life will not be instantaneous, with some estimating it could take [a year or longer](#).

Canadians largely appear to be attuned to this messaging, as more than three-in-five (63%) do not expect normality to resume any earlier than fall 2021. Notably, one-in-five (20%) are even less optimistic and say life in Canada “won’t ever go back to the way it was”:

**How long do you think it will be before life in Canada goes back to “normal” – that is – the way it was before the pandemic?
(All respondents, n=1,603)**



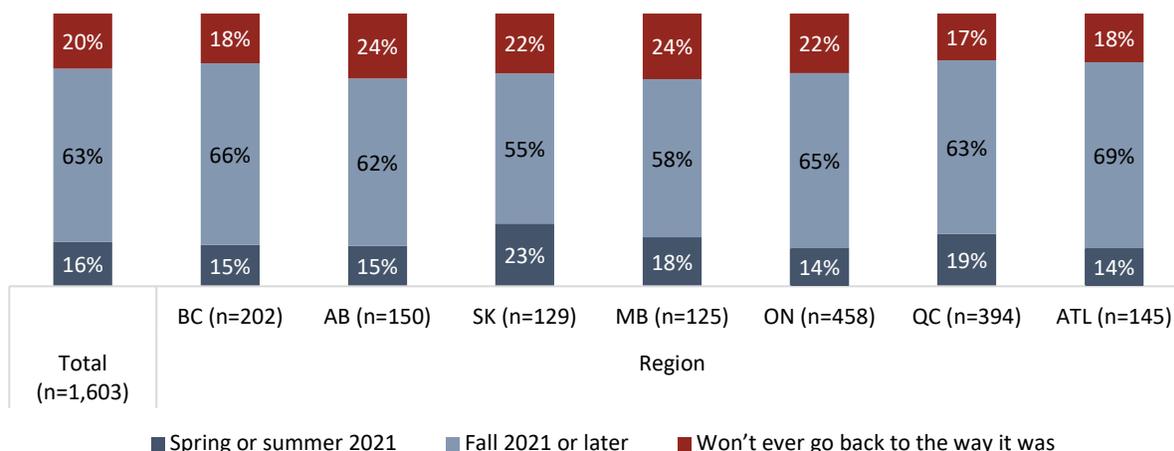
Residents in Saskatchewan, however, appear most optimistic, with nearly one-quarter (23%) anticipating a return to normalcy to occur in the spring or summer.

CONTACT:

Shachi Kurl, President: 604.908.1693 shachi.kurl@angusreid.org @shachikurl
 Dave Korzinski, Research Director: 250.899.0821 dave.korzinski@angusreid.org

How long do you think it will be before life in Canada goes back to “normal” – that is – the way it was before the pandemic?

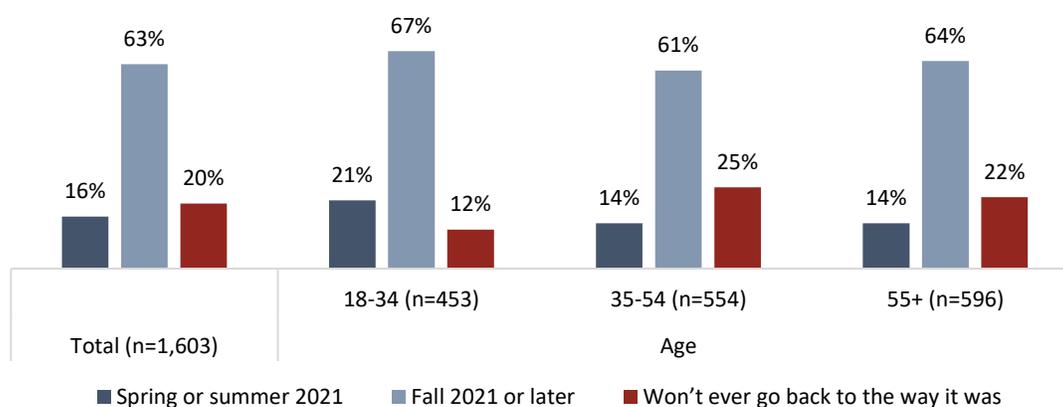
(All respondents)



One-in-five Canadians ages 18 to 34 say the country will be “back to normal” in the spring or summer of next year, compared to one-in-seven of those 35 years old or above. Similarly, those belonging to older age groups are more likely to say that life will be forever changed by the pandemic.

How long do you think it will be before life in Canada goes back to “normal” – that is – the way it was before the pandemic?

(All respondents)

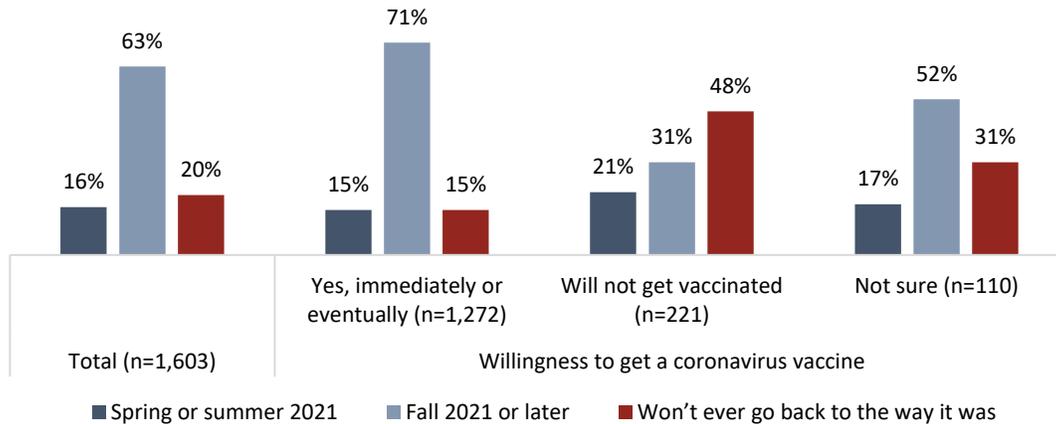


Some of the starkest attitudinal differences are between those who intend to be vaccinated against COVID-19 and those that don't. Among those who want the vaccine, there is much more optimism about a return to normalcy. Fewer than one-in-five (15%) say that things will never go back to the way they were, while half (48%) of those who will not get vaccinated say the same. Those who are not sure whether they will get a job sit somewhere in the middle.

CONTACT:

Shachi Kurl, President: 604.908.1693 shachi.kurl@angusreid.org @shachikurl
 Dave Korzinski, Research Director: 250.899.0821 dave.korzinski@angusreid.org

**How long do you think it will be before life in Canada goes back to “normal” – that is – the way it was before the pandemic?
(All respondents)**



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

For detailed results by willingness to get a COVID-19 vaccine, [click here.](#)

CONTACT:

Shachi Kurl, President: 604.908.1693 shachi.kurl@angusreid.org @shachikurl

Dave Korzinski, Research Director: 250.899.0821 dave.korzinski@angusreid.org