

## Unmasked but not Unwilling? More than half would bring back mask mandates, including many who rarely wear one

Three-in-ten Canadians (31%) say they're wearing a mask most of the time when in public spaces

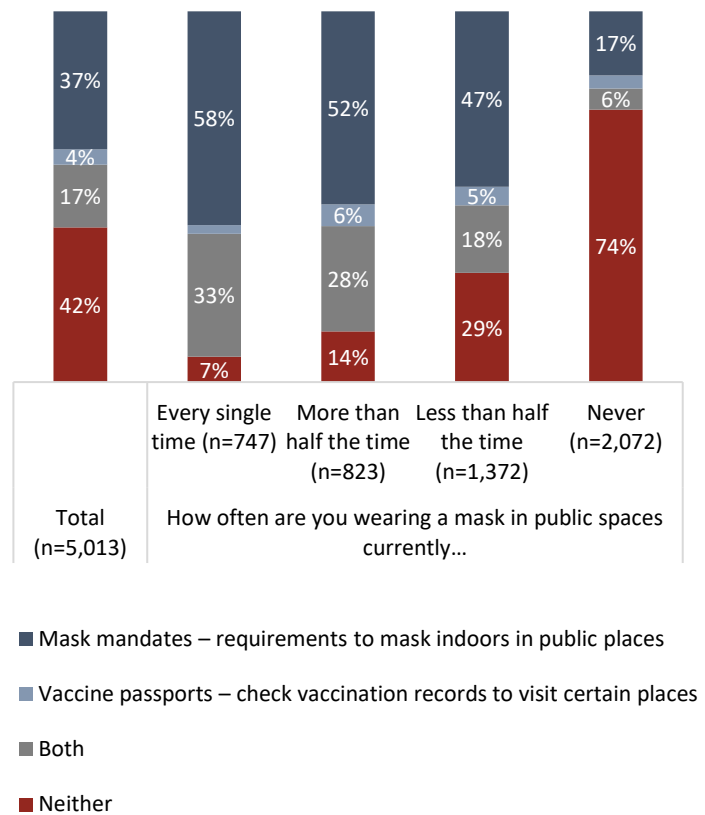
**December 22, 2022** – This year's holiday season looks a lot different than the previous two, with public health restrictions now largely left to the Ghost of Christmas Past. However, a large group of unmasked Canadians would evidently appreciate a push from government to force them to take a more cautionary approach.

A new study from the non-profit Angus Reid Institute finds more than half of Canadians supportive of re-implementing mask mandates if cases of COVID-19 rise this winter. This, while just three-in-ten (31%) say they are wearing a mask more than half of the time in public spaces currently on their own volition.

As [immune-evasive](#) Omicron variants spread, and [influenza and respiratory illnesses](#) cause problems for health care providers across the country, [some have speculated](#) that mask mandates may be needed to curb infection. One-quarter (23%) of those who "never" wear a mask say they would support a mask mandate while two-thirds (65%) of those who rarely but sometimes wear one also say they would accommodate a return to mandatory masking.

As many look to their government for action on masking, few have the same appetite for a reintroduction of vaccine passports. One-in-five (21%) would support this action, while two-in-five Canadians (42%) say neither masking mandates nor vaccine passports should be in Canada's future.

**In your opinion, if COVID-19 cases continue to rise this winter, should the chief medical health officer in your province reintroduce:**



### **METHODOLOGY:**

The Angus Reid Institute conducted an online survey from Nov. 28 – Dec. 3, 2022 among a representative randomized sample of 5,030 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 +/- 1 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.

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## More Key Findings:

- Those in Alberta (58%) and Saskatchewan (59%) are the most likely to say they are never wearing a mask in public. Those in Nova Scotia (22%), Newfoundland and Labrador (19%) and Ontario (20%) are the most likely to say they are wearing a mask all the time when they are in the grocery store or bank.
- Seven-in-ten (68%) of women over the age of 54 say COVID-19 is still something they think about regularly.
- Women (63%) are more likely than men (45%) to support a return of mask mandates.
- As evidenced by their masking practices, many Canadians are now taking a passive approach to COVID-19. Half (49%) say they do not think about the disease anymore, including two-thirds of men younger than 55.

## 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: A pandemic of indifference?

#### Half of Canadians say they don't think about COVID-19 much anymore

This time last year, Canadians were warned of the impending rise of the Omicron variant of COVID-19, elevating concern over personal infection. The concern was justified – Omicron tripled Canada's COVID-19 infection count in the early months of 2022. However, this wide level of exposure affected Canadians' perception of COVID-19 – after the widespread of Omicron, many believed a personal infection with that variant would be mild.

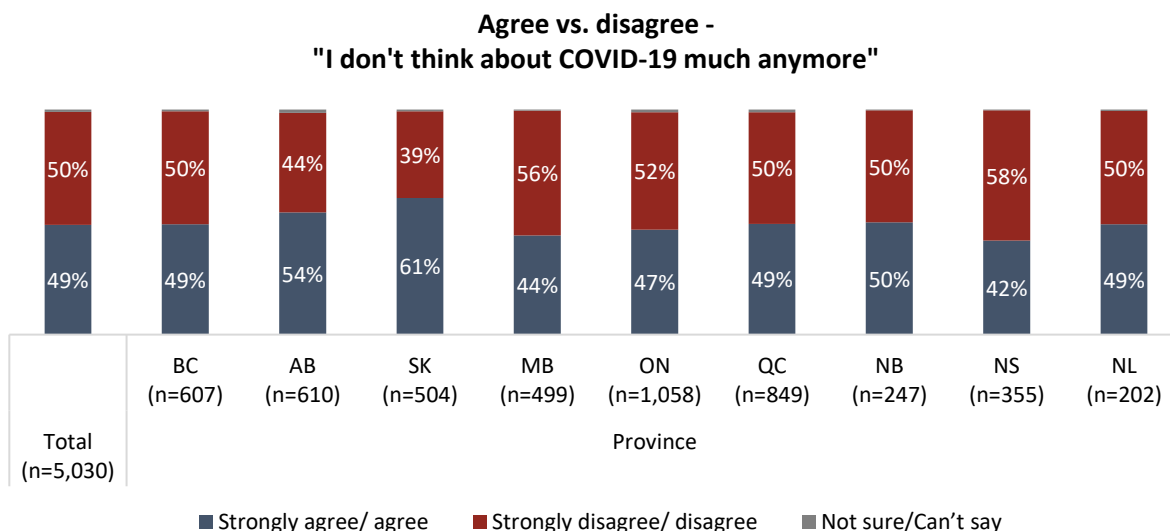
With many provinces now ignoring re-infection data or testing less regularly, an accurate trend of COVID-19 cases may be more difficult to track. This perhaps helps to partially explain the finding that as another COVID-19 winter looms, half (49%) of Canadians say they do not think about the virus much anymore.

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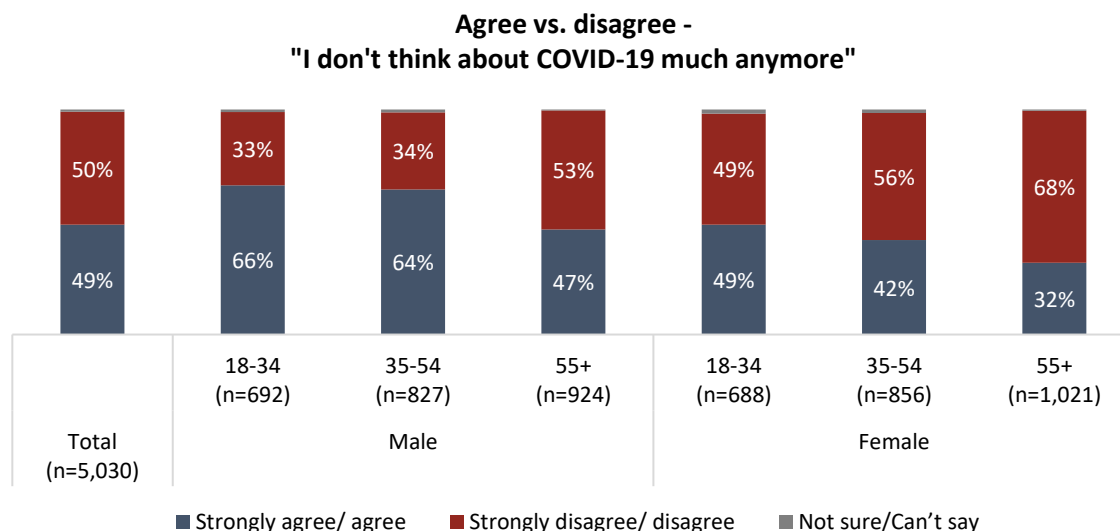
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This sentiment varies across the country. COVID-19 is not in the thoughts of three-in-five (61%) in Saskatchewan, while as many in Nova Scotia (58%) say they still think about the virus:



*Note: Because its small population precludes drawing discrete samples over multiple waves, data on Prince Edward Island is not released.*

Men are more likely than women to say they aren't thinking about COVID-19. Seven-in-ten (68%) women over the age of 54 disagree, the most of any demographic:



### **Majority rarely or never masking**

As of Oct., 1, the federal government no longer required masking on airplanes, ending the last mask mandate in the country outside of health care settings. Outside of airports, masks have not been required for most of 2022.

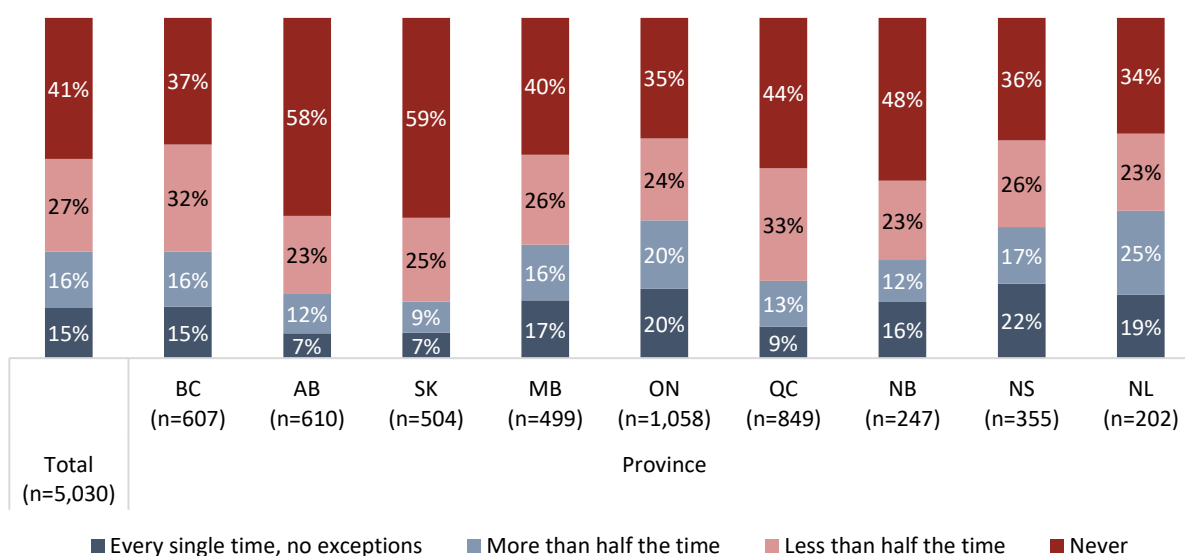
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As cases of the **BQ variant rise**, few Canadians say they are wearing masks when they are in public places around people. One-in-six (15%) say they are always wearing a mask in places like grocery stores and banks. Another one-in-six (16%) are doing so most of the time. A majority are either wearing them rarely (27%) or never (41%).

Those in Alberta (58%) and Saskatchewan (59%) are most likely to say they are never wearing a mask. Two-in-five in Ontario (40%), Nova Scotia (39%) and Newfoundland and Labrador (44%) say they are wearing masks half of the time or always around other people:

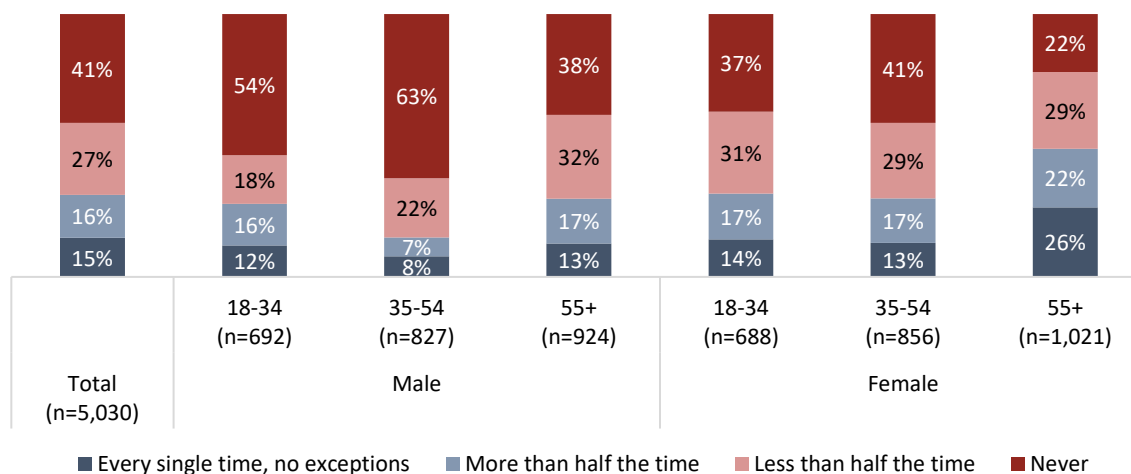
**How often are you currently wearing a mask indoors when you're around other people, that is, in places like the grocery store, bank, or movie theatre?**



**Note:** Because its small population precludes drawing discrete samples over multiple waves, data on Prince Edward Island is not released.

Men, and especially those under the age of 55, are the most likely demographic to say they are never masking. Meanwhile, one-quarter (26%) of women over the age of 54 say they are always masking when they are in public places:

**How often are you currently wearing a mask indoors when you're around other people, that is, in places like the grocery store, bank, or movie theatre?**



**Part Two: A return to mandates?**

**Half support return of mask mandates if cases rise**

Canada's health system is facing pressure from a triple threat of viruses – [RSV, flu, and COVID-19](#). [Experts believe](#) a return to mandatory masking could help limit the spread of the three viruses. For now, there's been [little movement](#) towards mask mandates from government officials.

More than half (54%) of Canadians say mask mandates should return to their province if COVID-19 cases continue to rise. This view seemingly runs in contrast to Canadians' own voluntary actions, as far fewer – just three-in-ten (31%) – are wearing a mask more than half of the time in public spaces.

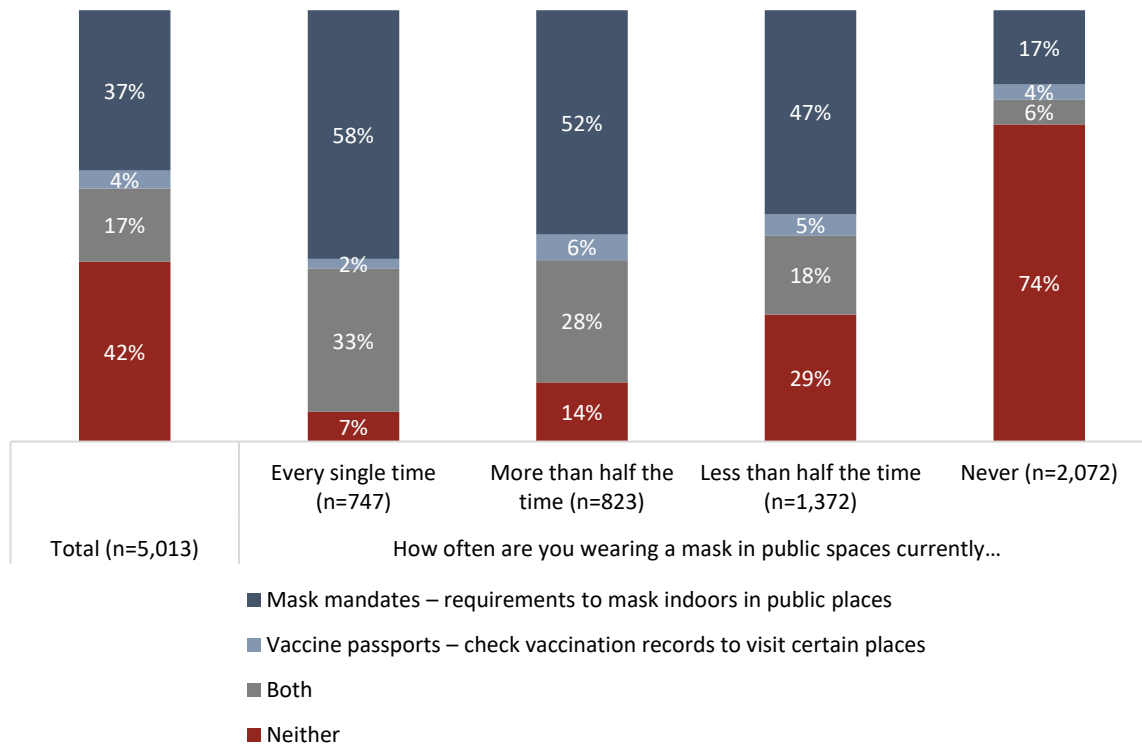
There is much less support – 21 per cent – for a return of vaccination passports. Two-in-five (42%) believe neither measure is necessary.

Those who are already wearing a mask regularly are enthusiastic about a return to mandatory public health measures. Among those who wear a mask less than half of the time, but not never, two-thirds (65%) would support the government forcing them to do so:

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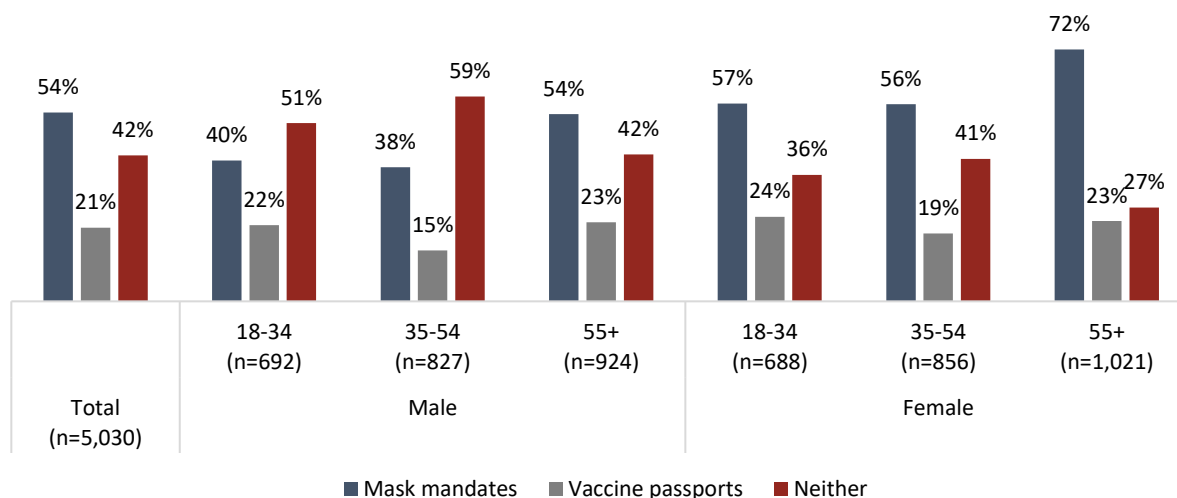
**In your opinion, if COVID-19 cases continue to rise this winter, should the chief medical health officer in your province reintroduce:**



Women over the age of 54 – the age group most likely to be masking as noted above – are the most likely to say mask mandates should return to their province at 72 per cent. In fact, majorities of women of all ages believe masking should be mandatory if COVID-19 cases continue to rise. Among men, only

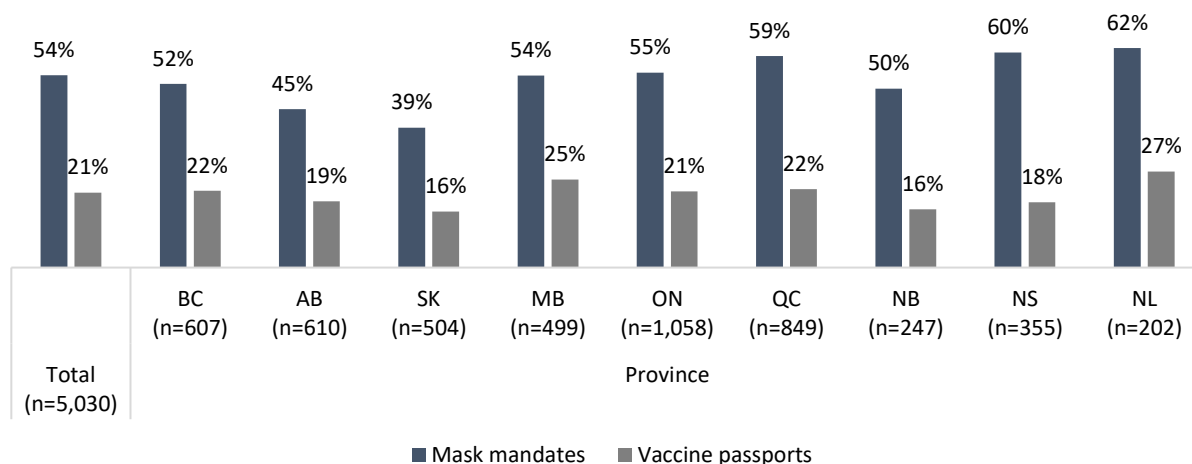
those over the age of 54 support a return of mask mandates at a majority level:

**In your opinion, if COVID-19 cases continue to rise this winter, should the chief medical health officer in your province reintroduce:**



Regionally, support for mask mandates is highest in Nova Scotia (60%), Newfoundland and Labrador (62%) and Quebec (59%). Support is lowest in Saskatchewan, where two-in-five (39%) believe mask mandates should return if there is a surge of COVID-19 infections:

**Support for the reintroduction of the following measures if COVID-19 cases continue to rise**



*Note: Because its small population precludes drawing discrete samples over multiple waves, data on Prince Edward Island is not released.*

**Support for masking mandate much lower than earlier in pandemic**

Canadians' support for masking mandates is much lower than it was at earlier points in the pandemic. As recently as February, in the wake of the Omicron wave which infected nearly 30 per cent of Canadian

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adults, approaching three-quarters (72%) supported mask mandates where they lived. In the months since, support has declined to more than half of Canadians (54%).

**Related: [Angus Reid, U of T study shows Omicron triples Canada's COVID-19 infection count](#)**

Support has rebounded in Alberta (36% to 45%), Quebec (50% to 59%) and Manitoba (49% to 54%) from valleys in July. Elsewhere, support remains consistent with levels seen in the summer:

Support for masking policy over time								
	Total	Region						
		BC	AB	SK	MB	ON	QC	ATL
Jul-20	74%	75%	60%	55%	75%	79%	73%	80%
Oct-20	81%	80%	64%	54%	76%	88%	86%	76%
Nov-20	86%	86%	69%	68%	86%	88%	89%	93%
Feb-22	72%	66%	59%	66%	66%	78%	70%	80%
Jul-22	51%	55%	36%	38%	49%	55%	50%	62%
Dec-22	54%	52%	45%	39%	54%	55%	59%	58%

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

**Summary table follows:**

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In your opinion, if COVID-19 cases continue to rise this winter, should the chief medical health officer in your province reintroduce:

	Total (n=5,013)	How often wearing a mask			
		Every single time (n=747)	More than half the time (n=823)	Less than half the time (n=1,372)	Never (n=2,072)
Mask mandates – requirements to mask indoors in public places	37%	58%	52%	47%	17%
Vaccine passports – checks of vaccination records to visit certain places like restaurants	4%	2%	6%	5%	4%
Both	17%	33%	28%	18%	6%
Neither	42%	7%	14%	29%	74%

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