Relaxing restrictions

TORONTO, February 15, 2022—The results of a national survey released today by Maru Public Opinion finds that as federal and provincial leaders seemingly race to lower or eliminate societal restrictions to prevent the spread and impact of COVID (and possibly as a concession to protesters who demanded such over the past three weeks) all things considered, unless their local hospitals/ICUs are affected by a sudden surge that compromises the care for people, two thirds (64%) of Canadians say it’s time to drop the restrictions imposed on Canadians because of COVID and we should start to live with the virus.

Further, a majority (56%) of Canadians agree that it’s time to stop pressuring those who refuse to get vaccinated – if they haven’t by now, they won’t, and all its doing is creating backlash that is worse than living with them in our communities. And a significant minority (45%) of Canadians believe it’s time for the chief medical officers and health officials to stand back and be less involved in deciding what’s best for “our society”.

The findings also demonstrate that while there may be national averages reported as topline results, each of the various provinces/regions have their own dynamics to contend with in relaxing or imposing any of the restrictions tested in the study. Further, there are relevant demographic and socioeconomic dimensions that should also be taken into account: as a general finding, women are more likely than men to want restrictions kept in place by an average of six percentage points (6%), as are those who are the oldest (55+), those with higher incomes ($100,000+) and those with the highest level of education (University+).

This piece of work must also be put in context with the many other results posted to the Maru Public Opinion website since mid-December concerning the “Omicron” virus and its impact on the public and the healthcare system. In early January, we found that four-in-ten (38%) Canadians were aware of someone either in their family or circle of friends who had contracted COVID-19 in the previous ten days.

It might well be argued that this breakthrough of the virus into communities – into the many, many homes of people who were by then fully vaccinated and could withstand the resulting sickness (or even knowing of those who described the symptoms as “mild”) – was a turning point where the majority of Canadians began to build confidence that it was time for measures to be relaxed and for them to go about living their life with caution but with some sense of new normalcy.

The findings also suggest a conditionality in opening communities up further: that whatever restrictions may be relaxed now could be brought back into force if there is a sharp, negative impact on a community healthcare system (like escalating hospitalization or access to ICU’s.) Given that understanding, the role of the chief medical officer for each province and for those in such a position for each community, is to continue to be vigilant and make decisions with respect to the public and their ability to use their local healthcare system. At the same time, they must recognize the emergence of the public from a long hibernation and their desire to start making decisions on their own and to begin, for the most part, living with the virus as opposed to always running away from it.

The key findings

Canadians have had to deal with the impact of the COVID-19 virus for almost two years. Given where we are today...

Two-thirds (64%) of Canadians say it’s time to drop the restrictions and start to live with the virus— though, with a condition

All things considered, unless their local hospitals/ICUs are affected by a sudden surge that compromises the care of people, two thirds (64%) of Canadians say it’s time to drop the restrictions imposed on them because of COVID and we should start to live with the virus.
This view is most likely to be held by those living in the province of Québec (71%) followed by those residing in Alberta (65%) and Ontario (65%), Atlantic Canada (61%), Manitoba/Saskatchewan (59%), and British Columbia (52%).

Those less likely to take this position are most likely to reside in the province of British Columbia (48%), followed by those living in Manitoba/Saskatchewan (41%), Atlantic Canada (39%), Ontario (35%) and Alberta (35%) and Québec (29%).

**Overall, two-thirds (63%) of Canadians say it’s time to stop restrictions and start living**

As a general sentiment, and consistent with the previous national finding, two-thirds (63%) of Canadians are of the view that after two years of dealing with COVID, it’s time to stop restrictions and start living with this virus instead of constantly running from it.

This sentiment is most likely to be found in the province of Québec (72%), followed by those living in Ontario (65%) and Alberta (63%), Manitoba/Saskatchewan (57%), Atlantic Canada (55%), and British Columbia (48%).

Those who are less likely to have this view (37%) reside in British Columbia (52%), followed by those living in Atlantic Canada (45%), Manitoba/Saskatchewan (43%), Alberta (37%), Ontario (35%), and Québec (26%).

**A majority (56%) of Canadians agree it’s time to stop pressuring those who refuse to get vaccinated**

A majority (56%) of Canadians agree that it’s time to stop pressuring those who refuse to get vaccinated – if they haven’t by now, they won’t, and all its doing is creating backlash that is worse than living with them in our communities. Those most likely to embrace this view are from the province of Alberta (68%), followed by those living in Ontario (58%), then equally in Manitoba/Saskatchewan (54%), Québec (54%), and Atlantic Canada (54%), and finally British Columbia (47%).

Those who disagree with this perspective (44%), are most likely to be found living in British Columbia (53%), followed by those equally in Atlantic Canada (46%), Québec (46%) and Manitoba/Saskatchewan (46%) then by those in Ontario (42%), and Alberta (32%).

**A majority (53%) of Canadians believe it should be left up to them to determine what precautions they take**

A majority (53%) of Canadians believe it should be left up to them to determine what precautions they take to protect themselves and not have to be told by government or healthcare officials where to go and what to do.

This view is highest held in both Alberta (62%) and Québec (62%), followed by those living in Ontario (51%), Manitoba/Saskatchewan (49%), Atlantic Canada (44%), and in British Columbia (41%).

Those who are less enthusiastic about this prospect (47%) can be found living primarily in British Columbia (59%), followed by those residing in Atlantic Canada (56%), Manitoba/Saskatchewan (51%), Ontario (49%), and Alberta (30%).

**Canadian split (51%) over the view that Canada is being left behind**

Canadian are split (51%) over the view that Canada is being left behind as other countries open up and move forward. This perspective is most likely to be found in opinion held majorities in Alberta (57%), Atlantic Canada (55%), Ontario (53%) and in opinion held minorities in Manitoba/Saskatchewan (42%), and British Columbia (38%).
Those less likely to have this view (49%) can primarily be found residing in the province of British Columbia (62%), followed by those living in Manitoba/Saskatchewan (58%), Atlantic Canada (55%), Ontario (47%), Québec (45%), and Alberta (43%).

**A significant minority (45%) believe it’s time for the chief medical officers and health officials to stand back**

A significant minority (45%) of Canadians believe it’s time for the chief medical officers and health officials to stand back and be less involved in deciding what’s best for “our society”. This group of supporters is most likely to be found living in Québec (50%), Alberta (49%), and Ontario (45%) followed by those least likely to support this proposition residing in Manitoba/Saskatchewan (39%) and British Columbia (36%).

Those who disagree with this view (55%) can be found in the highest abundance in the province of British Columbia (64%) along with similar counterparts in Atlantic Canada (62%) and Manitoba/Saskatchewan (61%), followed by those living in Ontario (55%), Alberta (51%), and Québec (50%).

Redux

As noted in the opening paragraphs, as a general finding, women are more likely than men to want to keep restrictions in place by an average of six percentage points (6%), along with those who are the oldest (55+), those with higher incomes ($100,000+), and those with the highest level of education (University+).

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**Methodology**

These are some of the findings from a study released by Maru Public Opinion undertaken by its sample and data collection experts at Maru/Blue February 9-10, 2022, among a random selection of 1523 Canadian adults who are Maru Voice Canada panelists. The results were weighted by education, age, gender, and region (and in Quebec, language) to match the population, according to Census data. For comparison purposes, a probability sample of this size has an estimated margin of error (which measures sampling variability) of +/- 2.5%, 19 times out of 20. Further details may be found at Canadian Public Opinion Polls | Maru Group

The results have been weighted by education, age, gender, and region (and in Quebec, language) to match the population according to Census data which ensures the sample is representative of the entire adult population of Canada. Discrepancies in or between totals when compared to the data tables are due to rounding. Panel and data services provider Maru Blue is deeply rooted in the Maru/HUB technology platform and offers on-demand, high quality, highly scalable online community samples of deeply engaged, known respondents. Respondents could respond in either English or French.
Excerpts from this release of findings should be properly attributed, with interpretation subject to clarification or correction. Maru Public Opinion is a professional services firm dedicated to improving its clients' business outcomes. It delivers its services through teams of sector-specific research consultants specializing in the use of Insight Community and Voice of Market technology.

Maru Public Opinion does not do any work for any political party. Maru Public Opinion polls with supporting detailed tables are found here: Maru Public Opinion Canada. Corporate information can be found here: Maru Group

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