

COVID-19 AND DOWNTOWNS IN CANADA

JACK JEDWAB,

PRESIDENT OF THE ASSOCIATION FOR CANADIAN STUDIES

SEPTEMBER 29, 2020

INTRODUCTION: IS COVID-19 DESTRUCTIVE FOR DOWNTOWN

Prior to COVID-19 downtown areas in some of the country's larger cities were confronting significant challenges arising in part from urban sprawl. But since the contagion the existing challenges confronting cities have grown exponentially as governments have ordered reductions in the size of gathering and social distancing. Such measures have presented considerable difficulties for businesses that depend on a high volume of circulation and therefore welcomed crowds. When asked whether Canadians have been avoiding downtown areas since COVID-19, some 60% say that they have done so according to a survey for the Association for Canadian Studies and Leger conducted between September 18th and September 20th, 2020.

A MAJORITY OF URBAN CANADIANS AVOID GOING DOWNTOWN MORE NOW THAN BEFORE COVID-19

	Compared to before the outbreak of COVID-19, would you say that you are...				
	Avoiding going downtown/city centre	Go downtown/city centre more often	Go downtown/city centre just as much	Not applicable	Total
Urban residents	58.4%	5.7%	20.6%	15.4%	100.0%
Montréal	59.6%	7.4%	11.7%	21.3%	100.0%
Greater Ottawa area	66.1%	3.4%	16.9%	13.6%	100.0%
Greater Toronto area	65.0%	4.6%	13.8%	16.5%	100.0%
Calgary	54.0%	6.0%	24.0%	16.0%	100.0%
Edmonton	75.5%		11.3%	13.2%	100.0%
Greater Vancouver (Metro)	70.0%	2.7%	19.1%	8.2%	100.0%

MAJORITY OF CANADIANS AND AMERICANS AVOIDING DOWNTOWN

Compared to before the outbreak of COVID-19, would you say that you are...		
	Urban Residents only	
	Canada	United States
Avoiding going downtown/city centre	58%	57%
Go downtown/ city centre more often	6%	5%
Go downtown/ city centre just as much	21%	16%
Not applicable	16%	22%

MAJORITY ACROSS ALL AGES AVOIDING DOWNTOWN SINCE COVID-19

	Compared to before the outbreak of COVID-19, would you say that you are...				Total
	Avoiding going downtown/city centre	Go downtown/ city centre more often	Go downtown/ city centre just as much	Not applicable	
18-24	58.7%	9.7%	19.4%	12.3%	100.0%
25-34	55.3%	7.2%	21.2%	16.3%	100.0%
35-44	61.6%	3.3%	17.4%	17.8%	100.0%
45-54	55.2%	3.2%	19.2%	22.4%	100.0%
55-64	63.7%	1.9%	16.5%	18.0%	100.0%
65-69	70.2%	2.0%	11.9%	15.9%	100.0%
>= 70	70.1%	0.6%	11.3%	18.1%	100.0%
Total	61.2%	3.9%	17.2%	17.7%	100.0%

WOMEN MORE LIKELY TO AVOID DOWNTOWN

	Compared to before the outbreak of COVID-19, would you say that you are...				Total
	Avoiding going downtown/city centre	Go downtown/city centre more often	Go downtown/city centre just as much	Not applicable	
Male	58.2%	5.8%	20.1%	16.0%	100.0%
Female	64.2%	2.2%	14.3%	19.4%	100.0%
Total	61.3%	3.9%	17.1%	17.7%	100.0%

ONLY THOSE NOT AFRAID AT ALL OF GETTING COVID-19 THAT ARE MOST LIKELY TO GO DOWNTOWN AS MUCH AS EVER

Are you personally afraid of contracting the COVID-19 (Coronavirus)?	Compared to before the outbreak of COVID-19, would you say that you are...				Total
	Avoiding going downtown/city centre	Go downtown/ city centre more often	Go downtown/ city centre just as much	Not applicable	
Very afraid	80.2%	4.9%	4.0%	10.9%	100.0%
Somewhat afraid	67.8%	4.2%	12.5%	15.5%	100.0%
Not very afraid	54.2%	2.5%	21.2%	22.0%	100.0%
Not afraid at all	29.8%	5.5%	41.4%	23.2%	100.0%
I already have or have been exposed to the virus	14.3%		28.6%	57.1%	100.0%
I don't know / I prefer not to answer	12.5%		50.0%	37.5%	100.0%
Total	61.2%	4.0%	17.1%	17.7%	100.0%

HAMILTON AND TORONTO MOST LIKELY TO BELIEVE THERE WILL BE LOCKDOWNS IN THE PERIOD AHEAD

	In your view, what is the likelihood that, over the next three months, that we will go back to a pandemic lockdown, with business closures and stay-at-home orders (similar to March and April)?						Total
	Total Likely	Very likely	Somewhat likely	Somewhat unlikely	Very unlikely	I don't know / I prefer not to answer	
Greater Vancouver (Metro)	70%	13.6%	56.4%	16.4%	5.5%	8.2%	100.0%
Calgary	50%	15.0%	35.0%	31.7%	11.7%	6.7%	100.0%
Edmonton	52.6%	17.5%	35.1%	22.8%	19.3%	5.3%	100.0%
Hamilton - Niagara Peninsula	80.6%	37.5%	43.1%	9.7%	2.8%	6.9%	100.0%
Greater Toronto area	75.1%	24.1%	51.0%	16.5%	5.0%	3.4%	100.0%
Greater Ottawa area	71.7%	25.0%	46.7%	16.7%	3.3%	8.3%	100.0%
MTL RMR	68.4%	17.8%	50.6%	21.7%	7.8%	2.2%	100.0%

NEARLY THREE IN FOUR PEOPLE THAT ARE AVOIDING DOWNTOWN THINK THAT LOCKDOWN IS FORTHCOMING

In your view, what is the likelihood that, over the next three months, that we will go back to a pandemic lockdown, with business closures and stay-at-home orders (similar to March and April)?	Compared to before the outbreak of COVID-19, would you say that you are...			
	Avoiding going downtown/city centre	Go downtown/ city centre more often	Go downtown/ city centre just as much	Not applicable
Total Likely	73.5%	68.9%	56.8%	67.6%
Very likely	24.5%	16.4%	15.9%	19.1%
Somewhat likely	49.0%	52.5%	40.9%	48.5%
Somewhat unlikely	17.0%	19.7%	29.9%	14.3%
Very unlikely	5.2%	8.2%	10.2%	7.4%
I don't know / I prefer not to answer	4.3%	3.3%	3.0%	10.7%
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

METHODOLOGY

The survey was conducted via web panel by Leger for the Association for Canadian Studies between September 18th and September 20th, 2020 with 1538 Canadians and while no margin of error can be associated with a non-probability sample for comparative purposes it would have a margin of error of $\pm 2.5\%$, 19 times out of 20

METHODOLOGY

The survey was conducted via web panel by Leger for the Association for Canadian Studies between September 18th and September 20th, 2020 with 1538 Canadians and while no margin of error can be associated with a non-probability sample for comparative purposes it would have a margin of error of $\pm 2.5\%$, 19 times out of 20

© 2020 Association for Canadian Studies
All Rights Reserved.

Author: Jack Jedwab.

Created on September 29 2020

