COVID-19
Canada

THE END OF THE WORLD
AS WE KNOW IT?

RESEARCH REPORT NO. 2

ADHERENCE TO COVID-19 GOVERNMENT MEASURES OVER TIME: GENDER AND AGE MATTER

THIS RESEARCH REPORT IS INTENDED FOR POLICY MAKERS AND THE GENERAL PUBLIC

Recommendations

When governments need to introduce or reintroduce strict health measures to reduce the spread of COVID-19, it is critical to:

1) Understand that adherence to government measures tends to decrease over time.

2) Mobilize specific groups – *younger people and men* – who consistently show lower levels of adherence to government measures.

Definition of key concept

Concept	Definition
Adherence	The extent to which a person reports actually following provincial government measures.

Adherence was measured by five preventive behaviours which are describe in the following table.

Currently, how often do you do the following preventive behaviours? 1 (Never) – 10 (Always)	Mean adherence for each measurement time				
	1	2	3	4	5
Maintain a distance of at least two meters (about two arm's lengths) from others when I am not at home.	9.06	9.07	8.90	8.80	8.65
Stay home as much as I can.	9.11	9.11	8.77	8.57	8.28
Avoid inviting people over for dinner or coffee.	9.54	9.63	9.48	9.25	9.06
Avoid touching my face with my hands.	7.50	7.45	7.20	7.21	7.16
Cover my mouth and nose with my elbow when I sneeze or cough.	9.27	9.29	9.17	9.16	9.19

Research questions

Asking Canadians to adhere to effortful and restrictive government measures that require continuous commitment is a major challenge. This report examines:
- What is the level of adherence to these government measures?
- How does the level of adherence to these government measures change throughout a lengthy pandemic?
- How does adherence to these measures vary between gender groups and different age groups?

Hypotheses

1) Adherence to measures will generally be high, but will decrease over time.
   Based on previous scientific research, we also expect that age and gender will play an important role for adherence to government measures:

2) Compared to women, men will show less adherence at each measurement time.

3) Compared to older individuals, younger people will show less adherence at each measurement time.

Method

Data were extracted from a large survey which asked a representative sample of Canadians (N=3617) to complete an in-depth questionnaire on multiple occasions over several months. For more methodological details, please consult our technical report (de la Sablonnière et al., 2020).

Measurement Time	Sample Size	% (n) Women	Mean age (range)	Survey Dates
1	3617	50.5 % (1827)	48 (18-92)	6 April - 6 May 2020
2	2282	48.9 % (1115)	49 (18-86)	21 April - 11 May 2020
3	2369	49.2 % (1165)	49 (18-86)	4 May – 25 May 2020
4	2296	48.5 % (1113)	49 (18-86)	18 May – 10 June 2020
5	2154	48.7 % (1048)	49 (18-92)	1 June – 23 June 2020

Results

Before testing our hypotheses, we attempted to better understand Canadians' support for government measures. Thus, we have examined more carefully how each of the preventive behaviours is distributed within the Canadian population and over time. We observed that:

- Canadians' adherence to specific government measures is generally high over all measurement times (Figure 1). However, some measures seem more difficult to adopt than others, leading to a lower level of adherence for all measurement times. For example:

    - Canadians almost unanimously adhere to refraining from inviting people over for dinner or coffee, but;

    - Canadians adhere less with the measure "I avoid touching my face with my hands" than other measures. Moreover, the answers to this question show greater variability than the answers to the other questions assessing adherence to measures.

Figure 1. Adherence to government measures at time 1
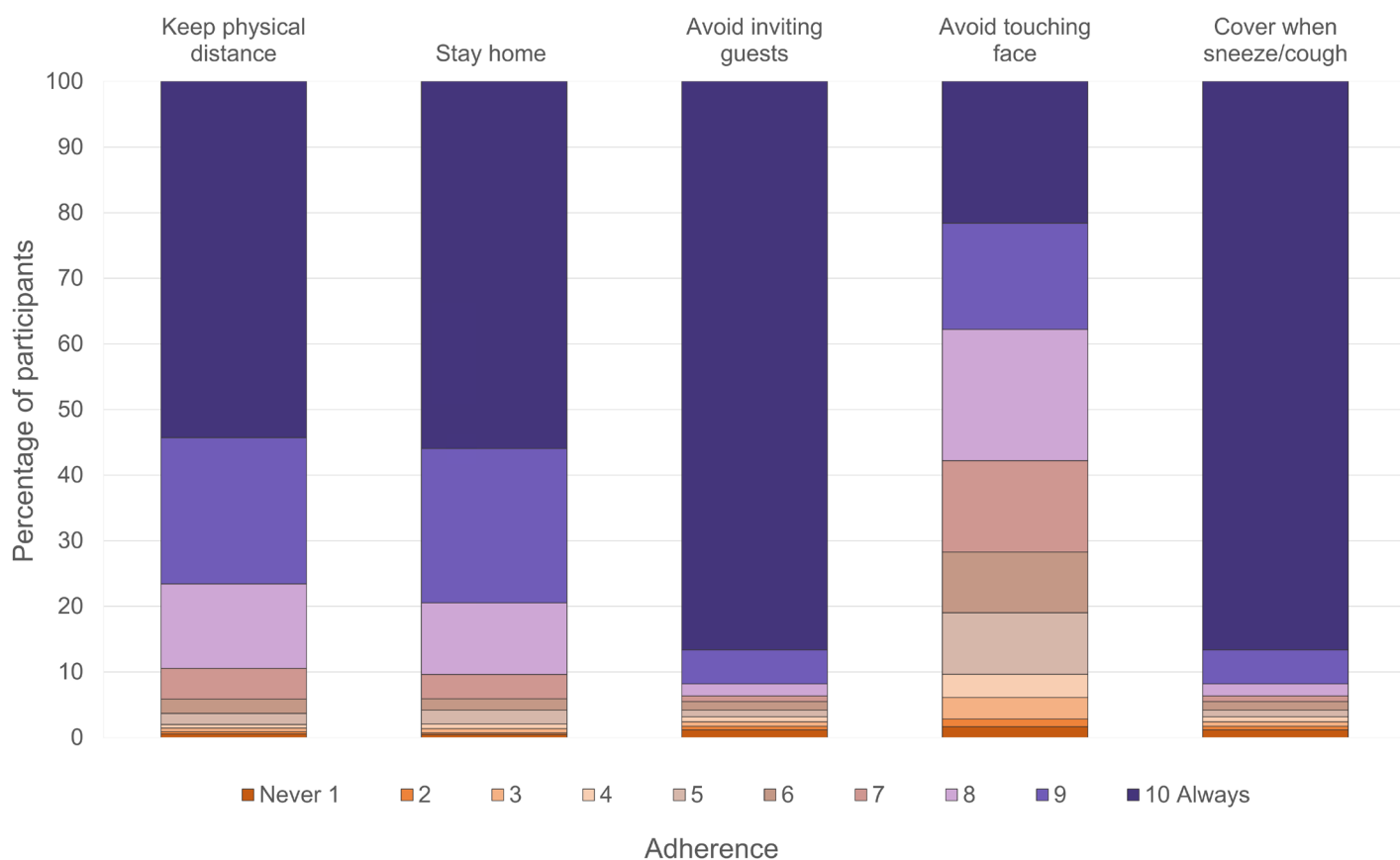
We then proceeded to verify our hypotheses that were confirmed.

- As previously mentioned, Canadians strongly adhere to all government measures. Moreover, this adherence clearly decreases over time: The Canadian population reports practicing preventive behaviours less and less over the course of the pandemic (Figure 2).

- Men are consistently reporting lower adherence to government measures than women (Figure 3).

- Younger people are consistently reporting lower adherence to government measures than elders (Figure 4).

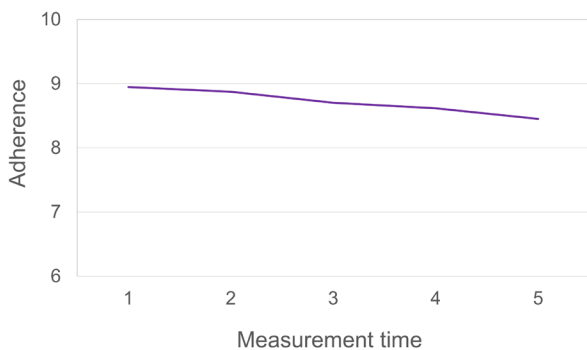Figure 2. Change in adherence to government measures

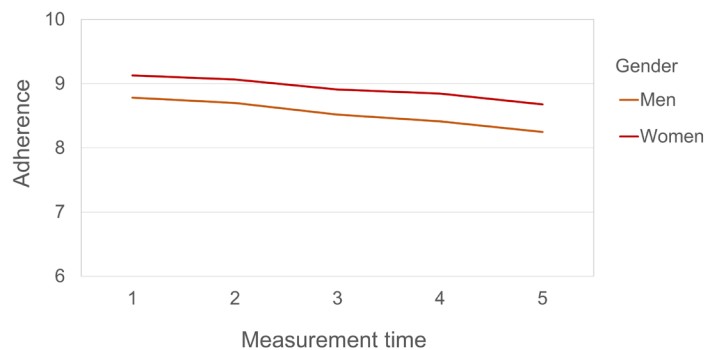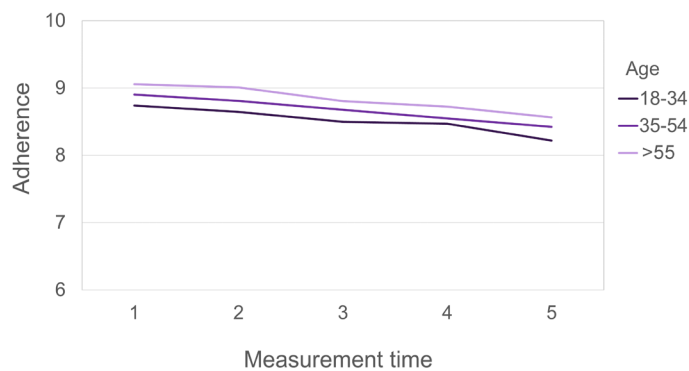Figure 3. Change in adherence to government measures by gender

Figure 4. Change in adherence to government measures by age

Conclusion

Adherence to government measures decreases over time – governments need to continuously encourage and motivate Canadians to adhere to these measures as the pandemic continues.

Importantly, when policy makers plan campaigns and interventions to encourage preventive behaviours, it is crucial to mobilize groups in the population (the younger generations and men) that tend to comply less with the difficult government measures.

Collaborator

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https://csdc-cecd.wixsite.com/covid19csi?lang=en

RESEARCH TEAM

Principal investigator

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Director and founder of the Social Change and Identity Laboratory since 2005, Roxane studies the challenges people face when they are exposed to dramatic social change, such as the colonization that affected Canada's Aboriginal peoples or immigration.

Team members

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Dietlind has directed the Centre for the Study of Democratic Citizenship. She is an expert on trust, social capital, ethnic diversity, attitudinal democratic backsliding and new forms of political participation.

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Author of numerous books on social psychology and a specialist in inter-group relations, Don is particularly interested in the plight of disadvantaged populations, such as indigenous communities.
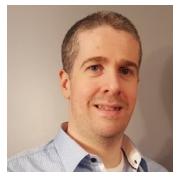
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A social psychology researcher in the Social Change and Identity Laboratory, Mathieu is interested in the profound changes that people face (social and personal changes), in identity, and in negative behaviours (discrimination, prejudice, disruptive behaviours in video games).

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