

MEDIA RELEASE

Anti-Asian Racism Rife Amid COVID-19 in Canada's Largest Cities

TORONTO, April 27, 2020—Acts of racism related to COVID-19 are disturbingly common in Canadian neighbourhoods, and significant anti-Asian bias is spreading in Canada's largest cities, a new poll reveals.

"With results like this, it is not surprising that we are seeing a growing increase in anti-Asian racism, likely provoked by COVID-19 fears and ignorance, but no less threatening for that," said Susan Eng, director of the Chinese Canadian National Council for Social Justice (CCNC-SJ).

Astoundingly, the weekend poll commissioned by CCNC-SJ, found that a significant 14 per cent of respondents polled in Canada's three largest cities – Toronto, Montreal and Vancouver – either believed that *all* Chinese or Asian people carry the Coronavirus (4 per cent) or were uncertain about that (10 per cent).

"Canada's leaders must stand up and unequivocally denounce every such racist incident and ill-informed belief, lest this behaviour is deemed acceptable and others are invited to do the same," Eng added.

In other disturbing findings, as many as 1 in 5 respondents do not think it's safe to sit next to an Asian or Chinese person on a bus, if they have no mask (21%), while fully a quarter don't know (24%).

While current discussion supporting the use of masks in preventing the spread of COVID-19 may have a role in this finding, the misguided and unfairly biased beliefs about Chinese and Asian Canadians is consistent with other poll findings among 1,130 respondents in Canada's three largest metropolitan areas.

"We should be able to say that everyone believes it is safe to sit next to a Chinese Canadian person on a bus. And we should be able to believe that no one thinks that literally all Chinese people carry the virus," said CCNC-SJ President Amy Go. "This is not an exercise in balancing percentages of bias and ignorance. As Canadians of many ethnicities and heritages, we are all in the fight against COVID-19 together – and many of us are also on the frontlines."

"The results confirm what we have been seeing and hearing about in our communities, with more and more Chinese Canadians and other Asian Canadians coming forward

and sharing their experiences of being shunned, taunted and even attacked,” said Avvy Go, Clinic Director at the Chinese & Southeast Asian Legal Clinic, in Toronto.

Indeed, the poll findings show that nearly 13 per cent, or 1 in 8 respondents, were aware of incidents of racial bias in their neighbourhoods because of COVID-19. Corbett Communications conducted the random sampling of opinions using automated telephone interview questions from 531 respondents in Toronto, 315 in Vancouver, and 284 in Montreal, over the weekend.

“I appreciate the genuine concerns of Canadians about COVID-19 and the impact of the pandemic on all Canadians. However, under no circumstance should racist words or actions be justified. We all have enough stress and work to try to fight this virus; none of us should be bearing additional burdens related to race or other differential impacts if we are all in this together,” said Dr. Joseph Wong, Director of the Chinese Canadian National Council for Social Justice.

Methodology

The analysis in this report is based on results of a survey conducted April 24th among a sample of 1,130 adults, 18 years of age or older, living in Toronto, Vancouver, and Montreal. The survey was conducted using automated telephone interviews (Smart IVR). Respondents were interviewed on landlines and cellular phones. The survey is intended to represent the adult population in these three cities.

The margin of error for the poll is +/- 3% at the 95% confidence level. Margins of error are higher in each city subsample. Totals may not add up 100% due to rounding. Where appropriate, data have been weighted to bring them into line with the most recent Statistics Canada population profiles.

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Detailed Tables

Are you aware of anyone in your neighbourhood experiencing racial bias because of the COVID-19 virus?

	TOTAL	Toronto	Vancouver	Montreal
	1130	524	319	287
Yes	13%	15%	14%	5%
No	87%	85%	86%	95%

Do you agree or disagree it is safe to eat in a Chinese restaurant?

	TOTAL	Toronto	Vancouver	Montreal
	1130	524	319	287
Agree	56%	52%	60%	59%
Disagree	19%	21%	18%	18%
Don't know	25%	28%	22%	23%

Do you agree or disagree it is safe to sit next to a Chinese or Asian person on a bus who wasn't wearing a mask?

	TOTAL	Toronto	Vancouver	Montreal
	1130	524	319	287
Agree	55%	52%	60%	56%
Disagree	21%	23%	19%	21%
Don't know	24%	25%	23%	24%

Do you agree or disagree all Chinese or Asian people carry the COVID-19 virus??

	TOTAL	Toronto	Vancouver	Montreal
	1130	524	319	287
Agree	4%	5%	4%	3%
Disagree	86%	84%	88%	88%
Don't know	10%	12%	8%	9%