

DATA DIVE WITH NIK NANOS

THE NEXT VACCINE BATTLEGROUND

Once the pandemic is under control, schools will face the thorny issue of whether to require inoculation for in-person learning

OPINION

Nik Nanos is the chief data scientist at Nanos Research, a global fellow at the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars in Washington, a research professor at the State University of New York in Buffalo and the official pollster for The Globe and Mail and CTV News.

During the Cold War between the United States and the Soviet Union, children at school were taught to “duck and cover” and crawl under their desks to protect themselves from nuclear annihilation. Fast forward a generation, and now our public-health officials tell us to “jab and cover” – get the vaccine and wear a mask to avoid getting sick.

In the 1950s, everyone generally agreed to get under their school desk to stay safe. Today, there are impending storm clouds of resistance to what should be a common-sense response – and that’s going to affect whether kids are sitting at their desks for the coming school year, or back in virtual classrooms.

On the upside, the rate of first vaccinations in Canada is trending positively. More than seven in 10 Canadians have received their first shot and the country has catapulted from laggard to leader, even outpacing the United States in the first-jab race.

Last December, Statistics Canada estimated that more than three-quarters of Canadians over 12 are very or somewhat willing to receive the COVID-19 vaccine. The top reasons for any vaccine hesitancy were concern about safety or risks of side effects.

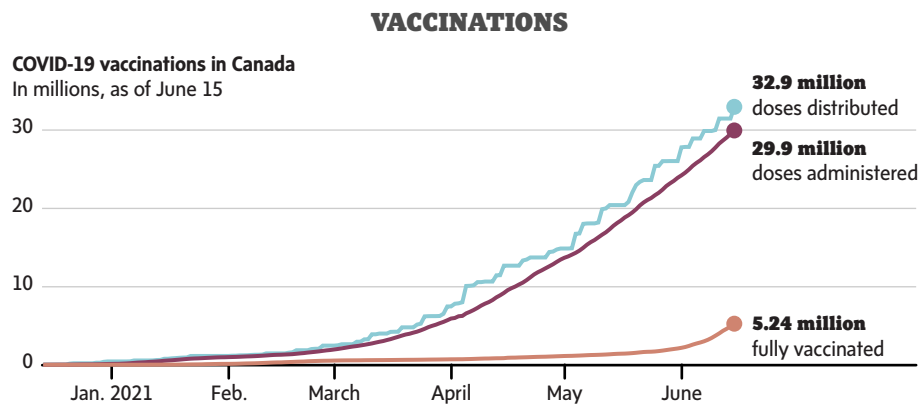
The good news is that a very big majority have voluntarily opted for the shot. But what about those who give it a pass?

Although a strong majority of Canadians have taken the vaccine and are open to taking it, according to a survey by Nanos for The Globe and Mail, one in three Canadians disagreed (21 per cent) or somewhat disagreed (14 per cent) that the COVID-19 vaccination should be mandatory. And the majority of those open to receiving the vaccine become less comfortable when the word “mandatory” is added to the mix, or when reports hit the news about side effects from vaccines experienced by children or teenagers.

The big question is: Once the pandemic is under control, how will the majority of pro-jabbers get along with the minority vaccine-hesitant? A new survey for CTV News suggests that schools could be the next battleground between majority pro-vax Canadians and the minority who are opting out.

For the past year, parents and

Canadians and the COVID-19 vaccine

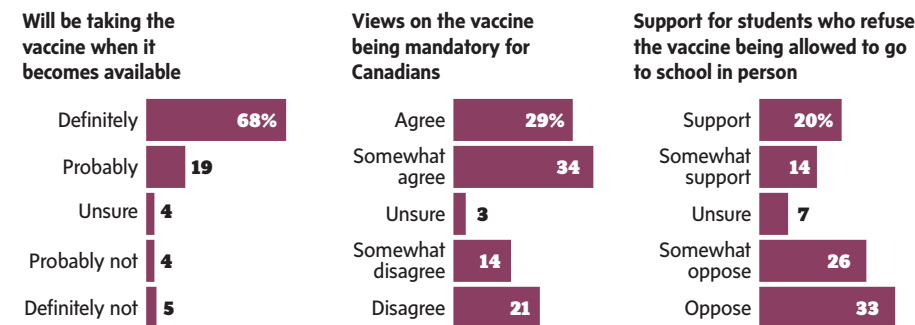


Note: Total number of people calculated based on two-dose shots from Pfizer, Moderna and AstraZeneca and single-dose shot from Johnson & Johnson.

Breakdown of partially vaccinated people, by age and gender
Data are as of June 5 and lag behind the national figures

Age group	Male	Female
0-11	0.4%	0.4%
12-17	36.7	38.7
18-29	47.1	51.9
30-39	54.9	56.4
40-49	63.0	63.5
50-59	68.1	68.2
60-69	76.0	75.9
70-79	76.0	75.2
80+	58.6	51.8

OPINIONS



Note: Numbers may not add up to 100 due to rounding.

MURAT YÜKSELİR / THE GLOBE AND MAIL, SOURCE: NANOS RESEARCH; PUBLIC HEALTH AGENCY OF CANADA; PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENTS

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students have been on a roller coaster. Students are sent to school. Students are sent home for remote learning. Students have both in-person and remote learning. The only certainty was uncertainty. All the while, parents juggled working from home, looking after the family and overseeing their children’s online classes. The desire for normalcy and stability in parents’ day-to-day lives may very well smack up against the uncomfortable social question: “Are you vaccinated – and are your kids vaccinated?”

About 6 in 10 Canadians oppose (33 per cent) or somewhat oppose (26 per cent) allowing students who refuse to get vaccinated for the COVID-19 virus to go to school in person. One in three support (20 per cent) or somewhat support (14 per cent) unvaccinated students attending school in person. If one happens to be middle-aged – coincidentally the age cohort most likely to have children – your comfort in having unvaccinated students in school rises to 41 per cent.

The requirement for student immunization for traditional health threats such as diphtheria, tetanus, polio, measles and the like are well-established and include standard exemptions such as medical reasons or due to conscience or religious belief. But the pandemic and variants of the COVID-19 virus represent new threats to public health. Setting aside medical reasons, are reasons of personal conscience or religious beliefs sufficient to allow unvaccinated children in classrooms? And if they remain at home, will those students get the same participation marks as those who attend in person? In our universities, how difficult will it be for students to get academic referrals for graduate school from university professors they have never met?

Hard to tell.

What we do know is that this next phase of the pandemic will trigger some big questions about vaccinations – who could, should or must get the jab, and what it might mean for the future.

In that respect, the canary in the coal mine will be this fall’s returning school year, as parents, students, teachers, unions and administrators grapple with some thorny and awkward questions that will make the days of “duck and cover” seem simple by comparison.

Nanos conducted an RDD dual-frame (land- and cell-lines) hybrid telephone and online random survey of 1,048 adult Canadians for CTV News. Fielded between May 30th and June 2nd, 2021, it is accurate ±3.1 percentage points, 19 times out of 20.

Private refugee sponsorship is much more than a feel-good project

KEITH NEUMAN
MICHAEL ADAMS

OPINION

Keith Neuman is a senior associate with the non-profit Environics Institute for Survey Research. Michael Adams is the Institute’s founder and president.

As we mark World Refugee Day on June 20, new numbers from the United Nations Refugee Agency show that there are now more than 82 million people worldwide who have been forced to flee their homes, and half of them are children. These displaced peoples are fleeing conflict, persecution, human-rights violations and violence, seeking a safe haven in countries that all too often fail to welcome such newcomers. Canada – because of its geography – has been largely insulated from this international migration crisis. But in 2015-16, the country stepped up to welcome more than 33,000 refugees fleeing the war in Syria.

The federal government largely controls and manages the flow of immigration, but the most notable part of the Syrian refugee story was how individual Canadians and community organizations (churches, synagogues, NGOs) came forward to privately sponsor roughly half of the refugee quota to be filled.

Private sponsorship groups

commit to providing financial and social support to the refugee, and to helping them find a place to live. This recent civil society mobilization mirrored an earlier one in the late 1970s that brought 70,000 Vietnamese refugees to Canada.

Few in this country appreciate the fact that private sponsorship of refugees is a Canadian innovation and a model that is now being emulated in other countries such as Ireland, Britain and Germany. Until very recently, only in Canada was it possible for individuals and non-governmental organizations to sponsor refugees; and not just family members living abroad, but also those with whom the sponsors have no prior connection or relationship (often described as “welcoming the stranger”).

Given the immense scale of the continuing migration crisis, perhaps we are kidding ourselves that taking in 10,000 or 20,000 refugees a year makes an important difference.

But the value and importance of this effort is not so much in the numbers as in its impact on those affected and on the country as a whole. Canadians from coast to coast, in large cities and small towns, organized and raised funds to bring individuals and families out of danger and help them start new lives. Statistics Canada research has shown that privately sponsored refugees have higher employment rates and earn more money than

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government-sponsored refugees.

A newly released survey by our Environics Institute for Survey Research (conducted in partnership with Refugee 613) estimates that about 4 per cent of our country’s population ages 25 and older have been involved in sponsoring refugees in the past five years, whether through a faith-based or civil society organization, or with a group of

friends. This translates into more than 1.5 million Canadians volunteering their time and effort in realizing the aspirational values of inclusion and welcoming that we like to think typify our country. Those who get involved in refugee sponsorship often find the experience to be personally rewarding in ways they never imagined and may deepen their sense of citizenship.

And we also find there is considerable potential for much broader participation. Our research shows that another four million Canadians would consider getting involved in helping to sponsor refugees.

This level of interest is striking given that private refugee sponsorship has never been actively promoted or marketed to the broader population at a regional or national level. To date, most of the people involved in “welcoming the stranger” sponsorship have been recruited through personal networks (faith-based organizations, universities) and tend to be white, highly educated and retired. But our research indicates the interest and capacity to get involved in refugee sponsorship is much more widely distributed across the Canadian public. Such interest is driven in part by being aware of the presence of refugees in one’s own community, as well as knowing others who have already become involved.

But private refugee sponsorship is much more than a feel-

good community project. It is creating new Canadians of the very best sort. People who arrive as refugees must rebuild their lives, and with support from both government assistance and private sponsors, they are making impressive progress to establish themselves in their host communities.

In another study recently completed by our institute, we found that the vast majority of Syrians who arrived in 2015-16 are adapting well to their new lives in Canada in terms of language acquisition, employment and creating opportunities for their children. They are very happy to be in Canada (in spite of the weather), generally feel welcomed and have life aspirations most of us would share. These newcomers embrace the value Canadians place on hard work and tolerance. And now that they are here, only 3 per cent hope to one day leave Canada for another country.

Canada is seen by much of the world as an open and welcoming society. We know this reputation is not fully earned as we continue to confront discrimination, racism and fear of the “other” in our communities. But as we strive to do better, let us also celebrate the good work that many Canadians are doing to welcome new strangers to our shores, and consider getting involved.

Doing so is a unique privilege of the Canadian citizenship others envy.