



2021

HOTEL QUARANTINE SAFETY INDEX



@FACESOFADVOCACY



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Brief submitted to the Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security

March 10 2021: *Safety and Security of Passengers Required to Stay in Federally Mandated Quarantine Facilities and At Home Under Federal Quarantine Orders*

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With Contributions from Elizabethe Zala, Sydney Manton, Erin Avenant, and Alexandria Aquino

Executive Summary:

The Faces of Advocacy are a grassroots Canadian organization of over 10,400 established to safely reunite families in Canada during the COVID-19 travel restrictions. We are directly responsible for the Extended Family and Compassionate Travel Exemptions announced on October 2nd 2020. **We thank the Government of Canada** for allowing family reunification during this difficult time, and we continue to **reunite responsibly**.

Our members are not travelling for leisure and recreation - they are binational families who have no choice but to travel to be together. Public health measures must be taken to protect Canadians from COVID-19, and many Canadian families have safe, existing homes where they can quarantine. For this reason we **implore the Government of Canada to declare family reunification as essential travel**, as Canadian **families are disproportionately affected by the high cost of hotel quarantines**. This is in addition to the fact that as of today, according to the Government of Canada's own epidemiologic data, domestic transmission of COVID-19 from contact with a traveller is 0.8%. While that number should be zero, **it is vastly more likely for a Canadian to get COVID-19 from someone who stayed within Canada than someone who left**. Additionally as of writing, the Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC) have yet to publicly produce evidence that home quarantine is less effective than hotel quarantine.

This Hotel Quarantine Safety Index chronicles the financial, emotional, and mental health impact the current mandatory hotel quarantine has on binational families. Our members have **endured unreasonably high non-refundable fees, doors that do not lock, no dietary accommodation, and sexual assault for needing to be with their families**. Please consider a safe, humane, and compassionate approach to Canadian families at this time of pain.

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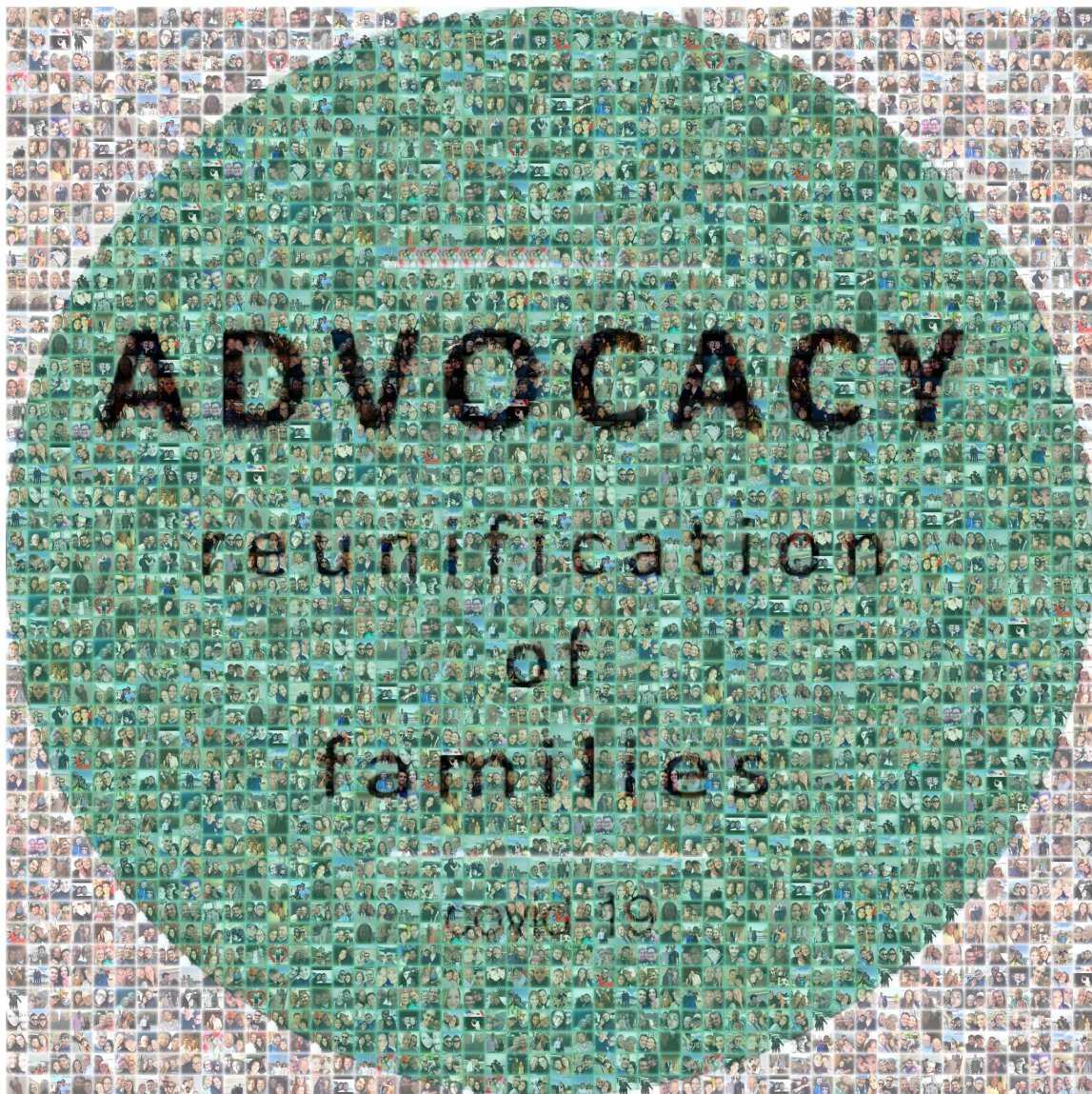


Image: A mosaic picture of members of Faces of Advocacy with the extended family members they are separated from.

Quarantine Hotels: The Disproportionate Effect on Families

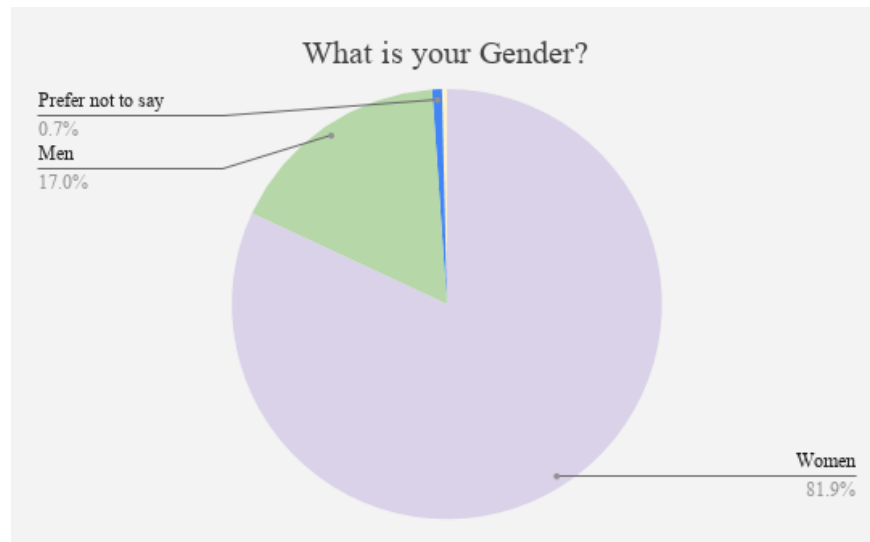
Binational Canadian families are adversely affected by the new travel restrictions implemented on February 14, 2021. The Faces of Advocacy polled 500 members of Canadian families, focusing on the harms caused by both the mandatory hotel quarantine to their mental health, financial stability, and family life. **The vast majority of those impacted were women.**

The majority of those polled, have had to make major life changes due to the new mandates.

- A significant grouping have decided to not return to Canada and or have made plans to leave Canada permanently.
- Many have had to quit their job due to these restrictions which has a large life impact given the uncertainty of employment and financial stability during the pandemic.
- Over 95% of respondents have dealt with and are dealing with declining mental health.
- The majority of families will also not be able to afford these new restrictions.
- Over 44% will be completely prevented from seeing their family.
- Over 33% will experience financial instability and or visits with their family members will be greatly reduced.
- For children that are involved, the majority will be impacted from seeing their family members.

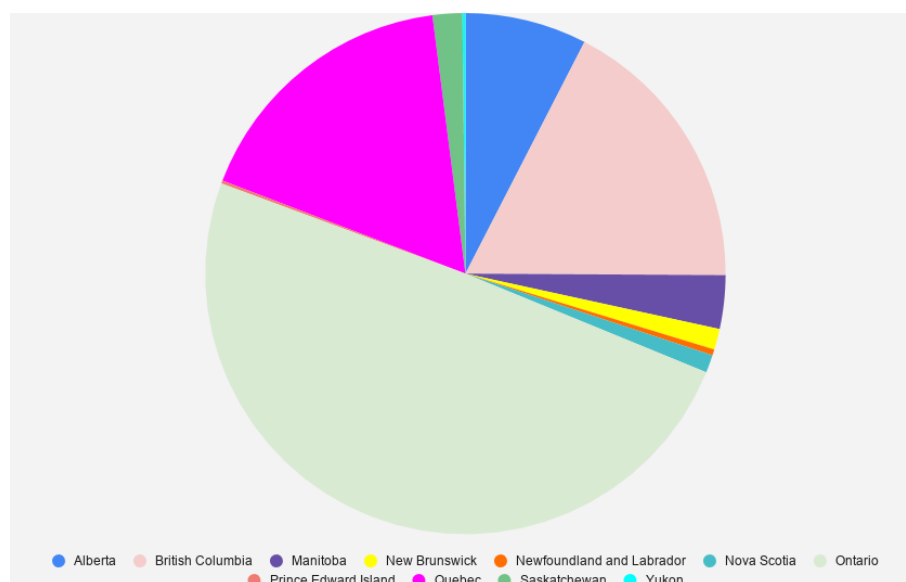
Gender Distribution

Out of the pool of respondents, 82% were female, 17% were male, and the remaining 1% were other or preferred not to say.



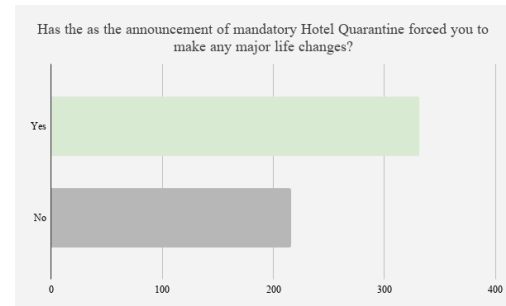
Home Province

The majority of respondents reside in Ontario (49.45%), with the remaining from British Columbia (17.53%), Quebec (17.16%), Alberta (7.56%), Manitoba (3.32%), Saskatchewan (1.85%), New Brunswick (1.29%), Nova Scotia (1.11%), Newfoundland and Labrador (0.37%), Prince Edward Island (0.18%), Yukon (0.18%).

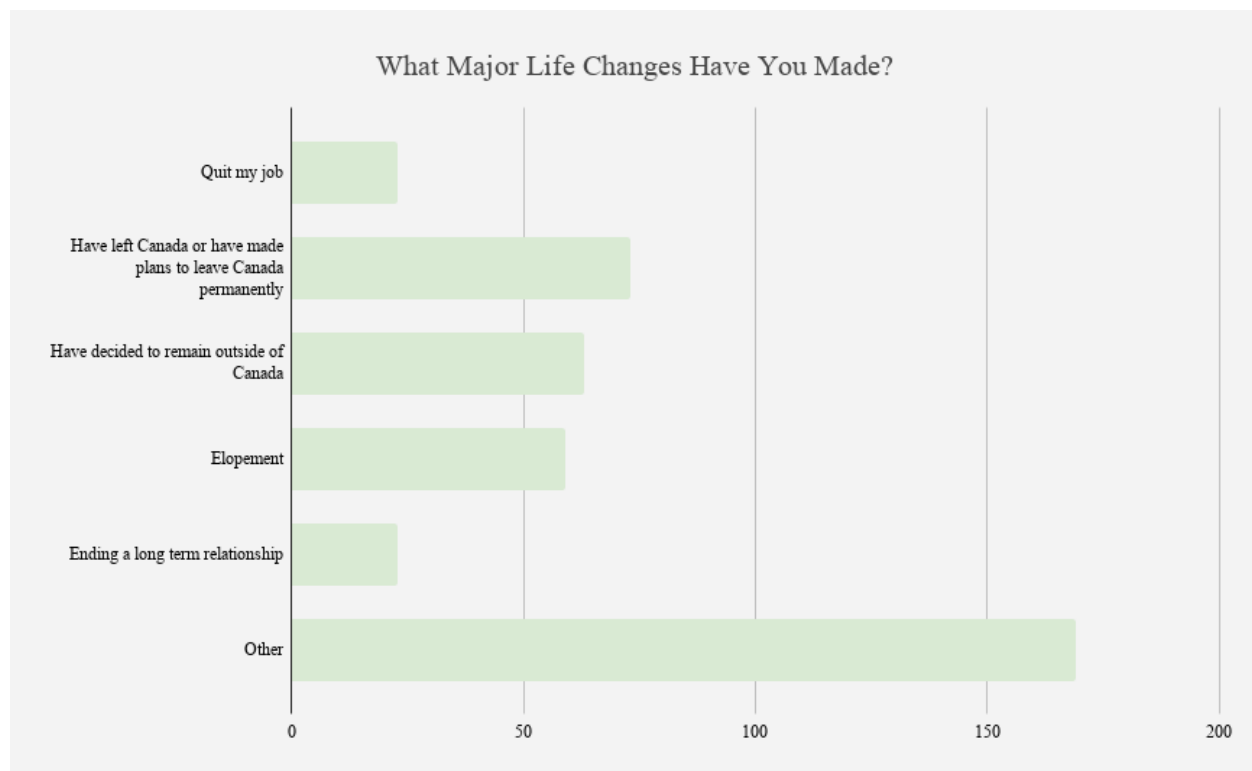


Major Life Changes

Respondents were asked *“Has the announcement of mandatory Hotel Quarantine forced you to make any major life changes? (Ex: quit your job, made plans to immigrate out of Canada, etc.)”*

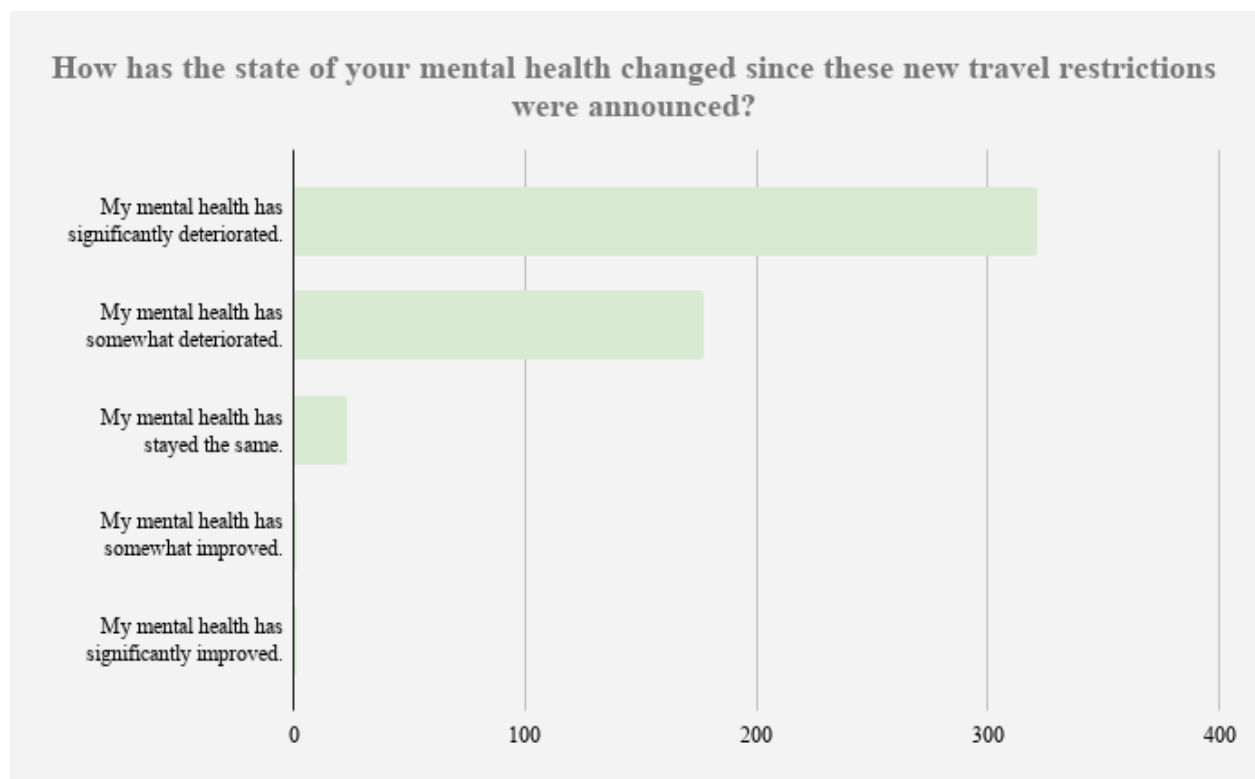


According to the corresponding data, 60.51% of responding Canadians have been forced into making a major life change. Out of that 60.51% of Canadians, 5.61% have quit their job, 17.80% have left Canada or have made plans to leave Canada permanently, 15.37% have decided to remain outside of Canada, 14.39% have eloped, 5.61% have ended a long term relationship, and 41.22% have responded saying they have made “other” major life changes (that were not listed as an option in the poll).



Mental Health

Canadians were asked, “*how has the state of your mental health changed since these new travel restrictions were announced?*”. The majority (61.38%) indicated that their mental health has significantly deteriorated. 33.84% indicated that their mental health has somewhat deteriorated. While 4.40% of respondents' mental health has stayed the same, 0.19% has somewhat improved, and 0.19% has significantly improved. Overall, 95.22% of respondents experienced declining mental health since the announcement of the new travel restrictions.



Financial Feasibility

To gauge affordability, the poll asked, “Are you able to afford the Hotel Quarantine (estimated to be CAD \$2000 for 3 days) in addition to the pre-arrival PCR test, and the costs of quarantining in another safe location for the remaining 11 days (AirBnB, own home, etc.)?”. The results indicate that because of these additional costs, the majority (44.75%) will not be able to reunite with their loved one/family members (due to not being able to afford the cost). 19.83% say that they will be able to afford this but it will significantly impact their future financial plans and financial stability. 13.90% say that they can afford this but it will significantly impact the frequency at which they can reunite with their family. The cost did not affect 10.68% of respondents because they have always entered through the CA/US land border (and are therefore exempt from the hotel quarantine). 10% of respondents typically fly into Canada, but they have now made/will make arrangements to enter via the land border so the cost will not impact them. Only 0.85% of Canadians can afford these new restrictions and it will not have any financial impacts or impacts on their frequency of reuniting with their families.



Impact on Children

Members were asked if they have children.

41.1% of respondents have children. Of that

grouping, 35.75% of these children are not

impacted by the new restrictions. 23.19%

responded that the new restrictions completely

stops their child/children from seeing their

parent(s). 20.29% said that this completely stops

their child/children from seeing their non-parental family member (ex: grandparent, aunt,

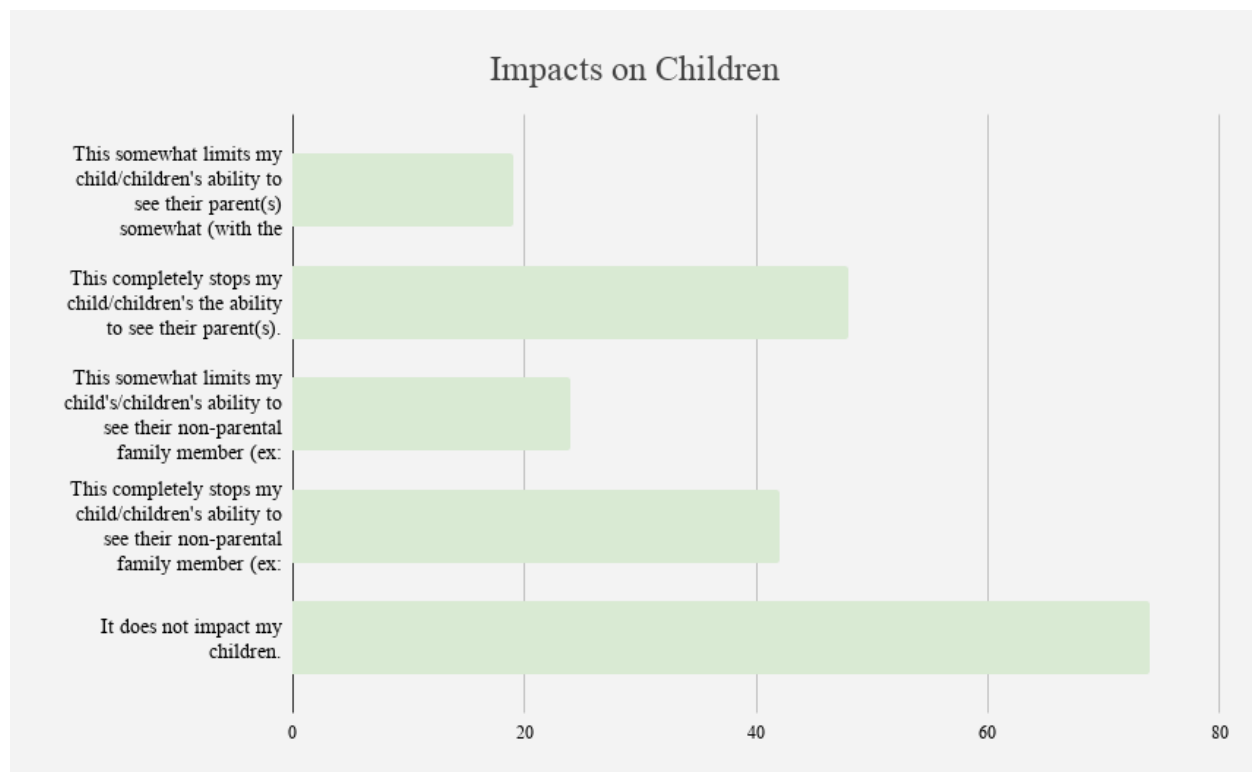
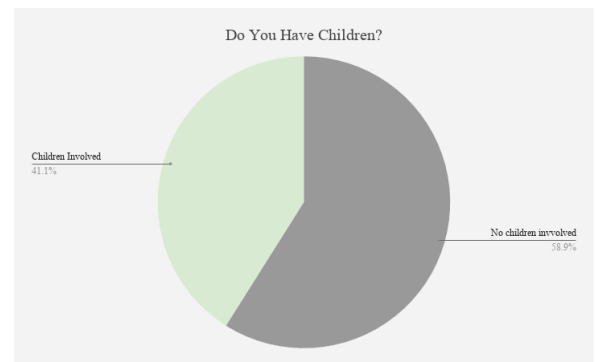
etc.). 11.59% stated that this somewhat limits their child/children from seeing their

non-parental family member (ex: grandparent, aunt, etc.) And 9.18% said that this

somewhat limits their child/children from seeing their parent(s) due to decreased

frequency of visits. Overall, 64.25% of children involved are impacted from seeing their

family member(s).



Concerning Hotel Quarantine Stories

Anonymous Person 1

Reason for traveling: Visiting my fiancé's dad who is in palliative care

Hotel: Abercorn Inn Vancouver Airport

Cost: \$1,334 for 1 night (non-refundable for unused days according to government policy)

Date of Arrival: 2/25/2021

Story: The hotel did not appear prepared to be a quarantine site - no outbreak prevention measures were in place, we had contact with dirty laundry, crossed workers on our path and had to leave the room multiple times to get things from the front desk. The food was not sufficient and due to dietary restrictions and I was unable to eat any of it, even though the government promised that dietary restrictions would be accommodated. I have dietary restrictions that were not met - both meals had gluten and breakfast had dairy. We did not receive enough bottled water for the two of us. Reception is NOT reachable via phone.

Between the airport and the hotel the arriving passengers (we) had 'close' contact with at least 10+ people:

- the people who greeted us and directed us to the tables (3 people)
- the people who guided us through the airport (1-2)
- the customs officer
- the public health officers (2)
- the people talking to the public health officers (no room to social distancing)
- we also used their phone and they did not wipe it or anything before they gave it to us or when we gave it back (cross contamination?)
- the other customs officers that receive your form (there were 6 of them standing together chatting away)
- the person who signed us up for the COVID test
- the people who directed us to the COVID test
- the people did our test
- the people who guided us to transportation
- the taxi driver
- the people at hotel reception (3 people)
- the people we walked by in the hall - cleaning staff with NO PPE on except for a mask and gloves (2)

The only visible thing separating the quarantine area from the non quarantine area is a plastic sheet and from what we witnessed it appeared that the cleaners were moving from one area to the other without extra precautions (I would love to be told otherwise). There were also potentially infected bed sheets and cleaning carts in the hallways.

I worked in senior housing so I have an understanding of what it takes to prevent an outbreak/ keep an outbreak under control, this is NOT it, the staff at this hotel are exposed and we have been exposed since we entered Canada.

Jordan Evans

Reason for traveling: Reunification with partner

Hotel: Aloft Hotel Montreal Airport

Cost: \$1,400 for 18 hours (non-refundable for unused days according to government policy)

Date of Arrival: 2/25/2021

Story: I called the 1-800 number provided by the Canadian Government a total of 4 different times over an hour each time until I'd hang up. The last time I called, I was on hold for 2 hours and 45 mins, I was able to book my hotel at a cost of a whoopin \$1,161 CAD.

- Agent said this cost was non refundable & included my meals, security, transportation to hotel & extra cleaning.
- My airport experience was more complicated than previous travels to Canada.
- Not only did I need a Covid test 72 hours prior to departure but I had to take another test in the airport before exiting, as well as receive an at home test to administer on day 10 of quarantine.
- I could not find my shuttle to get to the hotel and had to ask multiple employees who also had no knowledge.
- I arrived at the hotel and checked in at 1:45. I was given options for dinner, and told if I wanted to buy something from their cafe I could but would not be able to come down later since I cannot leave my room.
- Mind you I just spent \$1,161 on the hotel and they want me to buy more?? I thought the meals were included.
- Went up to my room, no security anywhere, felt like I was in a normal hotel at first.
- My room looked clean but as I inspected, I noticed I did not have a telephone in my room & I found pubic hair on my counter in my bathroom & in the corner of the shower.

It was 4:30pm and I was starving. I still had nothing to eat since the crackers on the airplane. Luckily I saved some and ate those to try and hold me over. I called the front desk from my cell phone due to not having a phone in the room and waited on hold for 5 mins. They said dinner would be delivered between 6:30 and 8pm. At 7:45 there was a knock on my door and the food was hanging on my door handle in a doggy bag. The food was cold, not what I ordered and I didn't even receive a beverage.

- Received negative covid result at 10pm via email.
- In the morning, at 8:05 am, breakfast was delivered on the door handle which consisted of yogurt, 2 pieces of bread, a juice box and water.
- I called to check out & called my ride to come pick me up.
- The front desk made clear my room was not refundable.
- I then checked my credit card I booked the hotel under and saw a charge for an additional \$304 CAD for unknown charges.

Anonymous Person 2

Hotel: Abercorn Inn Vancouver Airport

Reason for travel: Moving back to Canada after 8 years living abroad.

Cost: \$1,352 for 3 nights with 2 adults and a 1.5 year old. We only stayed 2. (non-refundable for unused days according to government policy)

Date: March 4th, 2021.

Story: Accessibility: Used request form to ask for a crib, playpen, access to outdoors if possible. Made known to the shuttle that we'd have lots of luggage & a stroller. Received no confirmation for shuttle. No car seat available in the shuttle. Phone didn't work.



Cleanliness: Had to touch surfaces without them being disinfected (trolley, payment system, pen). Bathroom floor was visibly dirty. Bedsheets had brown substance (chocolate or fecal matter?). Under the bed was sticky.

Security: Zero signs of security during our 40 hour stay. There were 2 people who walked freely out of the hotel and came back in after 10 minutes or so while we were checking in. The lobby was so small making social distancing impossible. Nobody controlled entrance/exits. Smokers were allowed to enter and exit freely. There were no separate entrances for travelers.

The food was punctual but always cold. They did not provide enough food for 2 adults & a child. The breakfast was 1 croissant and 1 juice per person. "The breakfast they sent for two adults was just enough to fill my 1.5 year old child." *Note: Meals not provided for the child. When we asked about how food works, he said the times are posted (which they were) and that we would get 2 meals, 3 times a day. I asked about food for my child and if the food was child appropriate. He said, 'you only booked for two people so you get food for 2 people' - I was very clear that we booked for 2 adults and a 1.5 year old child. He said 'Maybe. But you only paid for the two adults so there is nothing for the child'. I asked what they expect him to eat if we only get food for 2 and his response was shrugging his shoulders."

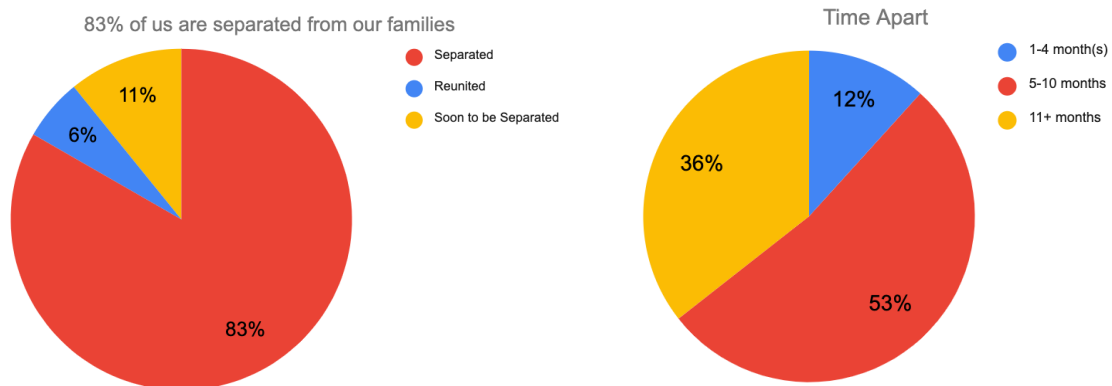
Service: Playpen was requested but not initially given and there was no crib for the child to sleep in. We got a playpen without a mattress (just the frame). He gave us extra blankets to put in the playpen. But that would not have worked because there were hard metal pieces sticking up - he couldn't sleep in that!

Mental Health While Separated

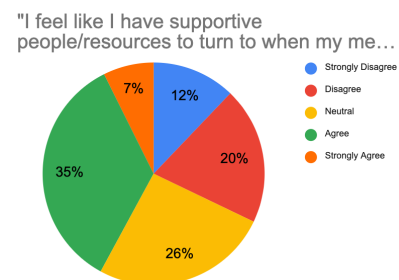
Faces of Advocacy: Mental Health Index II

These are the results of an indexing of 461 of our members in terms of the state of their mental health, conducted between February 21-26, 2021. Validated mental health rating scales were used to assess mental health symptoms after family separation. These are the **PHQ2** (Depression), **GAD7** (Anxiety), and **PCL-C** (Post Traumatic Stress Disorder {PTSD} in civilians). These tools are validated for patients to be able to answer, and while they are not administered by a healthcare professional and likely cannot be diagnostic, they still offer an evidenced-based look into the mental health effects due to the COVID-19 travel restrictions.

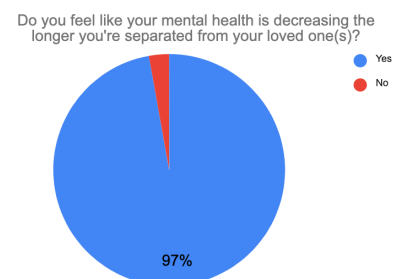
82 percent of us are separated from our loved one(s) at the time of survey. Over a third of us have been separated from our loved one(s) for 11+ months.



26 percent of respondents are neutral, and 32 percent disagree or strongly disagree, when asked if they have **access to supportive resources or people for their mental health**. This means that **fewer than half responded in the affirmative**.

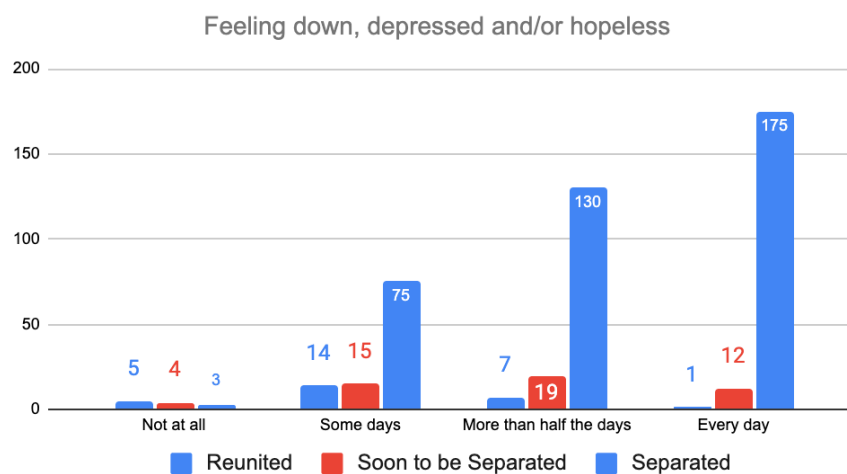


97 percent have felt that their **mental health is on a downward trajectory when they are away from their loved one(s)**.



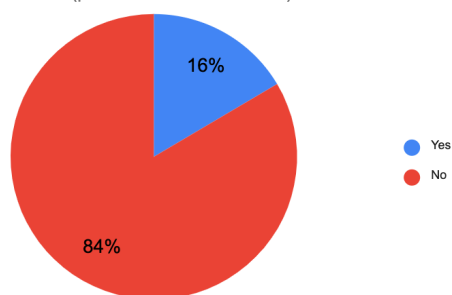
52.3% percent of respondents answered that they have never previously been professionally diagnosed with a mental illness. Despite this, an alarming 66.2 percent would be symptomatic and screen positive for symptoms of moderate to severe clinical depression. These symptoms appeared more often in people who were currently separated from their loved one(s).

Ex: PHQ-2 Depression Questionnaire: *Over the past 2 weeks, how often have you been bothered by any of the following problems?*

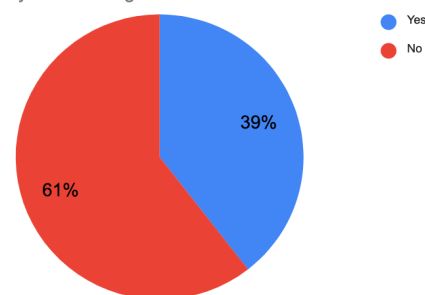


16 percent of respondents had a history of self-harm and/or suicidal thoughts prior to the travel restrictions. **This number nearly doubles, leaping to 39 percent, after the implementation of the Canadian travel restrictions.** A majority of those who have had thoughts of self-harm and/or suicide are separated from their loved one(s).

Do you have a history of self-harm AND/OR suicidal thoughts/attempts (prior to travel restrictions)?



Since the implementation of Canadian travel restrictions, have you had thoughts of self-harm AND/OR suicide?



For Donna

Donna McCall is a Canadian woman who fell in love with an American man, John McCall. They married in Madoc, Ontario on April 23rd 1983. They have two adult children, both born in the United States. She is an ICU nurse who taught the values of compassion and care to future medical professionals at multiple Ontario hospitals, and loved, and was loved by, her family.

Donna was diagnosed with liver failure early in 2020, just as the COVID-19 travel restrictions were put into place. As her condition worsened, the McCall family pleaded with the Canadian government for a compassionate exemption to enter Canada. Despite clear paperwork and birth certificates showing the McCall children having Canadian birthright to enter Canada, they were not allowed entry until IRCC could process their right to citizenship.

Donna died on August 10th 2020. She said goodbye to her children on Facetime.

We advocate in honour of her.



About Faces of Advocacy

Faces of Advocacy is a grassroots organization dedicated to reuniting Canadian families separated from their loved ones during the COVID-19 related travel restrictions. Founded in May 2020, we are asking for a fair and transparent process for timely reunification of Canadians with their loved ones during these challenging times. Our 10,400+ members span the world, and participate in our weekly letter writing campaign to government officials, “Reunification Thursdays.” We have spoken on Parliament Hill, acted as witnesses in multiple Parliamentary Committees, and hosted the first of its kind Virtual Rally for Family Reunification with MPs present from every Canadian political party. Our advocacy directly resulted in Extended Family Travel Exemptions announced October 2nd 2020 by Ministers Mendicino, Hajdu, and Blair.

We are not asking for open borders. We are just asking to be together.

Disclaimer: The Faces of Advocacy, with three plaintiff members, have filed a Charter Challenge to the Government of Canada with the Superior Court of Quebec in regards to the mandatory hotel quarantine violating the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. For this reason, the stories of the plaintiffs, including the person who was sexually assaulted at a hotel quarantine facility, do not appear in this report.

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*Image: Over 400 attendees to the Faces of Advocacy:
Cross-Partisan Virtual Rally for Families on September
26 2020, the first of its kind. In attendance were
Members of Parliament from the Liberal, Conservative,
NDP, Green, and Bloc Québécois parties*

