

Winter 2023 COVID-19 Checkup

April 21, 2023

Prepared for UASU Executive Committee by
Department of Research and Advocacy



Overview

This survey ran on the UASU Perks platform from April 17 to 21, reaching 737 students. The survey repeated the COVID-19 tracking questions that we have used throughout recent years, as well as a long COVID question repeated from the start of Fall 2022, and added questions about masking and immunocompromised family. The survey ran under an unrelated title to eliminate self-selection bias regarding COVID-related attitudes and behaviors.

The top-line statistics come from questions that we have used in fifteen other surveys, primarily during Winter 2022:

- In the previous two weeks, 2.4% had tested positive for COVID-19 (comparable to the lowest Winter 2022 inter-wave values).
- In the previous two weeks, 9.2% had taken at least one kind of test (lower than any previous results for this survey question).
- The test positivity rate was 26.5% (comparable to the highest Winter 2022 Omicron values).

The low test rate and high test positivity suggest that not enough students are taking COVID-19 tests when sick with indicative symptoms.

Using the long COVID question, we found:

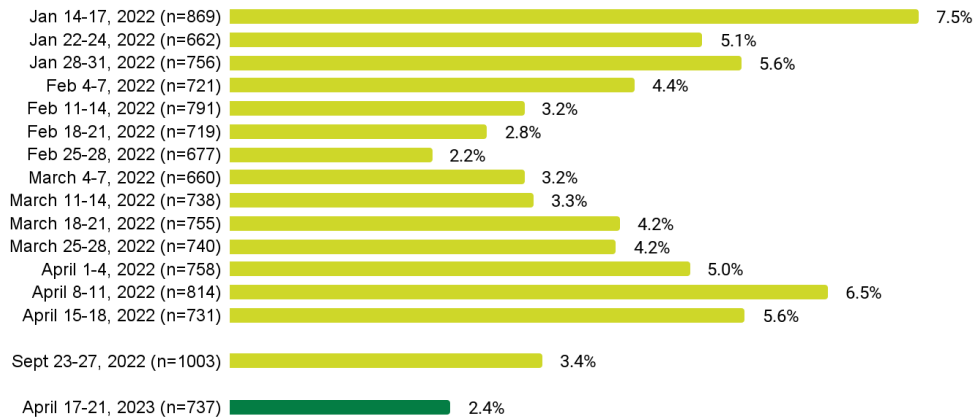
- 56.6% had contracted COVID-19 at some point (which is around five percentage points higher than two semesters ago at the start of Fall 2022).
- 13.7% of all respondents had developed long COVID at some point (after the definition was explained), which is comparable to Fall 2022.
- 24.0% of those who had contracted COVID-19 at some point developed long COVID (which is comparable to Fall 2022).

Thinking about students' needs over the coming year, 7% felt the University's approach to preventing respiratory disease transmission was too much; 56% felt it was about right; and 37% felt it was too little. Out of the 20% of respondents who are immunocompromised or live with someone who is, 'too little' rose to 54%.

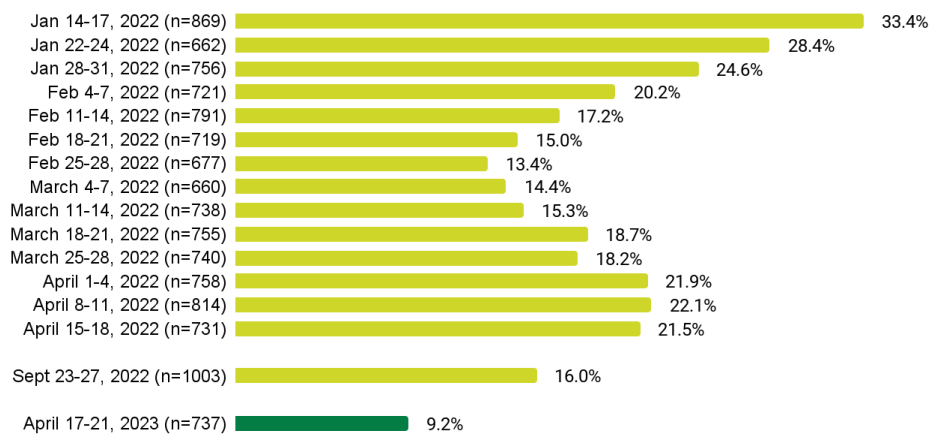
We found an extremely clear dichotomy between those who normally mask in and around class, and those who do not. 55% mask 10% of the time or not at all; 21% mask 80% of the time or more. For the 20% of respondents who are immunocompromised or live with someone who is, those proportions became 40% and 36%, respectively. With a grain of salt, masking appeared most common in Nursing, Law, and Pharmacy, and least common in Business and the satellite campuses.

"Have you tested positive for COVID-19 in the past TWO weeks?"

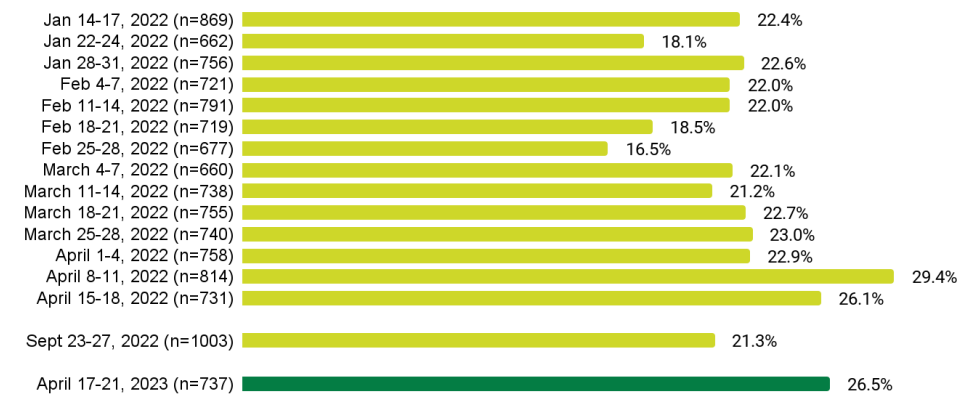
UAlberta undergraduates who tested positive for COVID-19 in the previous two weeks



UAlberta undergraduates who took a COVID-19 test in the previous two weeks



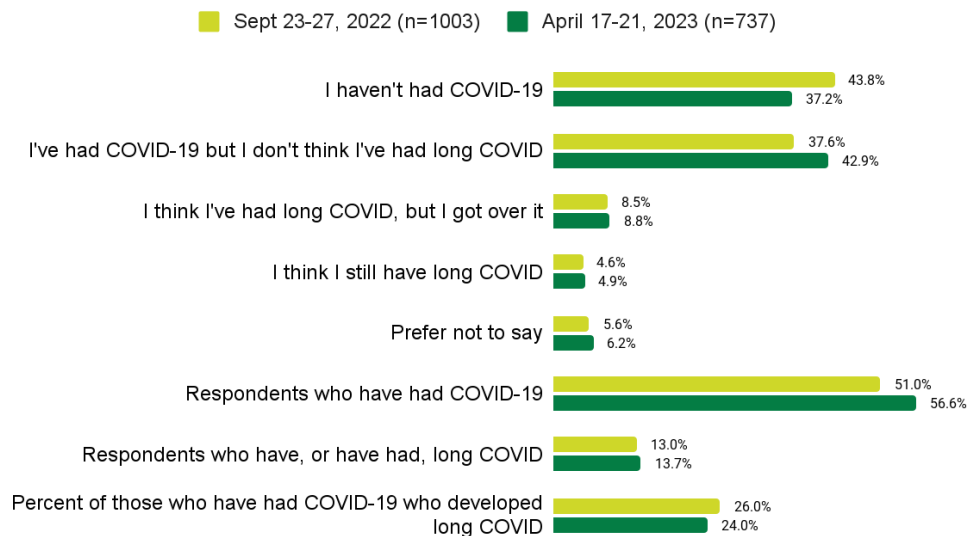
UAlberta undergraduates' COVID-19 test positivity rates in the previous two weeks



Long COVID Prevalence

"Have you had long COVID? From Health Canada: 'Some people still experience physical or psychological symptoms more than 12 weeks after getting COVID-19. This is called post COVID-19 condition (also known as long COVID)...The most common symptoms that we know of in adults include: fatigue, memory problems, sleep disturbances, shortness of breath, anxiety and depression, general pain and discomfort, difficulty thinking or concentrating, posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD).'"

UAlberta undergraduate experiences with long COVID



"Thinking about students' needs over the coming year, how do you feel the University should approach respiratory disease prevention?"

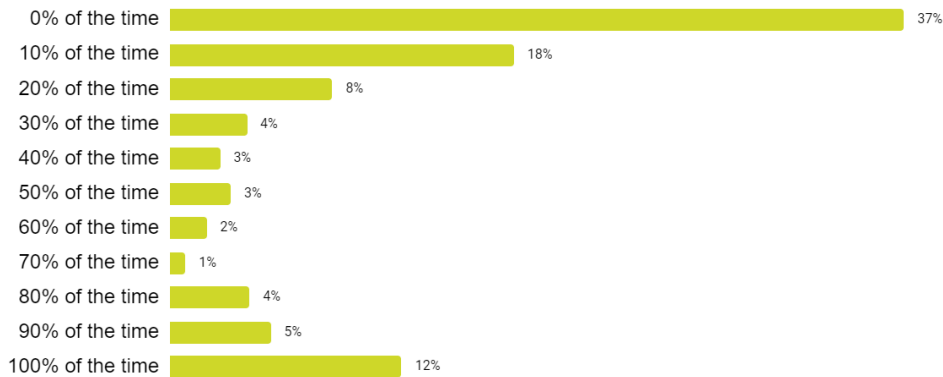
'What the University did this year to prevent respiratory disease transmission was...'

- Far too much: 2.4%
- Somewhat too much: 4.9%
 - TOTAL too much: 7.3%
- About right: 55.9%
- Somewhat too little: 26.6%
- Much too little: 10.2%
 - TOTAL too little: 36.8%

See the end of this report for a cross-tabulation by whether students (or people they live with) are immunocompromised. In summary, out of the one-fifth of students who live in immunocompromised households, over half believe the University did too little this year.

"In and around class, do you wear masks? Pick the closest answer."

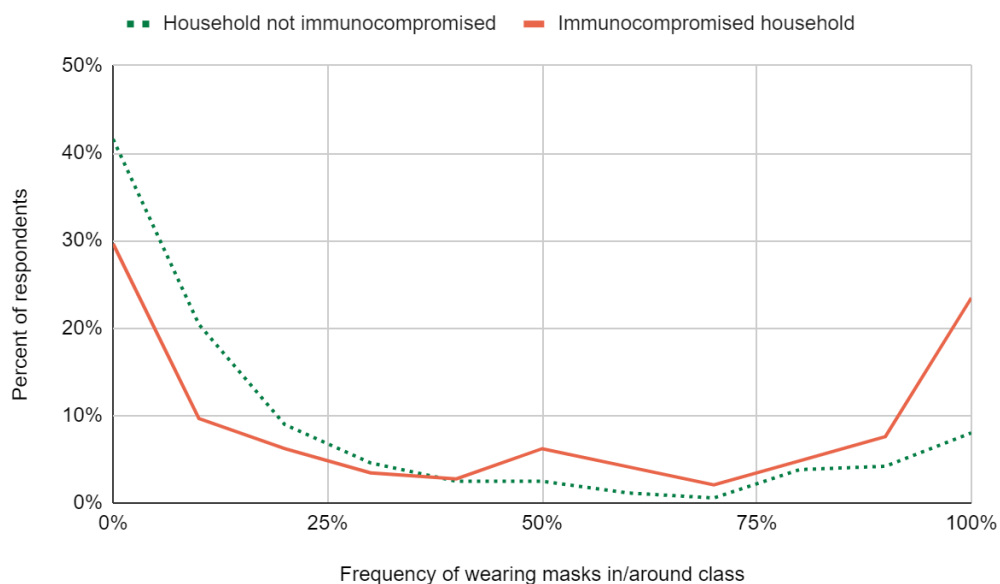
UAlberta undergraduates' masking behavior in/around class



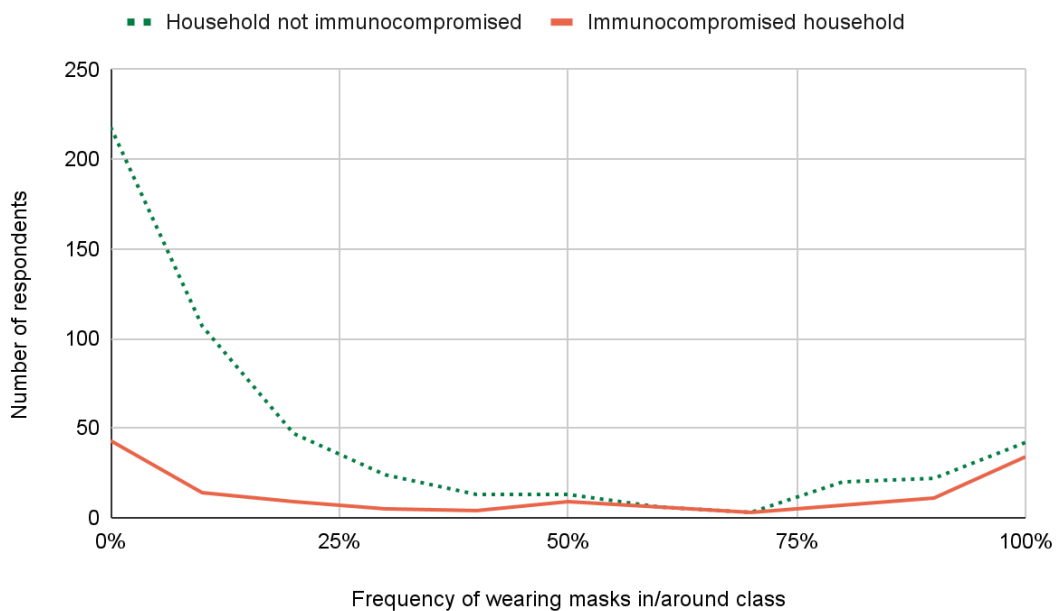
These proportions did not vary notably by year of study. While faculty-level cross-tabulations would be less reliable at this sample size, we did note that by far the most likely faculties to mask were Nursing, Pharmacy, and Law. The least likely by a significant margin were the satellite campuses and Business.

"Are you or people you live with immunocompromised?"

19.7% of respondents opted to say yes to this question. Students in immunocompromised households were far less likely to go unmasked and far more likely to mask.



Roughly half of students who mostly or always masked were living in immunocompromised households.



Students in immunocompromised households were much more likely than other students (54% versus 31%) to disapprove of the University's actions to prevent respiratory infection in 2022/23.

