

FOCUS GROUP CONSENT FORM

Understanding the use of travel measures during the COVID-19 pandemic: Lessons for post-pandemic recovery and future preparedness from Canada-US border management

Study Purpose

The purpose of this research project is to better understand people's experiences and perceptions of public health measures applied to travel between Canada and the US during the COVID-19 pandemic. Travel measures are applied to control who is permitted to travel and under what conditions. We are interested in four types of travel measures:

- a. travel restrictions (to control who is and who is not allowed to travel)
- b. testing (to find out which travelers are infected or not infected with the COVID-19 virus)
- c. quarantine or isolation (to separate travelers infected or potentially infected with SARS-CoV-2 from the general population)
- d. vaccination (to limit travel by unvaccinated individuals or those without sufficient immunity)

As part of this project, you are invited to participate in a focus group, to understand your experiences with these measures applied to travels between Canada and the US during the COVID-19 pandemic.

We will use the results of focus groups to better understand how different people (aged 18 years and over) and communities have experienced these measures. This will help inform decision makers if travel measures need to be used during future public health emergencies. Results from the focus groups will also be used to produce research outputs (such as academic articles, policy briefs and presentations).

This project is being conducted by the *Pandemics and Borders Project* team at Simon Fraser University (Canada), led by Professor Kelley Lee, and the *Border Policy Research Institute* at Western Washington University (USA), led by Professor Laurie Trautman. The project, which started in February 2023 and will be completed by February 2025, is funded by the New Frontiers in Research Fund (grant NFRFR-2022-00241).

Inclusion and exclusion criteria

You are invited to participate if you are 18 years or older; resided in the US or Canada during the COVID-19 pandemic; and intended to travel or travelled between the two countries at any time between March 2020 and May 2023.

Voluntary participation

Your participation in this focus group is wholly voluntary. You have the right to decline participation in this study. If you decide to participate, you may end your participation at any time. You may choose to answer or not answer any of the questions posed during the focus group discussion.

Study Procedures

If you agree to participate in the focus group, here is how we will conduct the discussion:

- You will be invited via email to complete a short survey of screening questions to choose between an in-person or online focus group, and indicate your preferences and availability for the discussion.
- If you meet the inclusion criteria and we are able to accommodate your preferences and availability, you will be assigned to a focus group of 4 to 8 people.
- During the focus group, you will be asked about your experiences of travel measures used during the COVID-19 pandemic (e.g. we will ask you about the impacts they had on your life, your experience travelling during the pandemic).
- At the end of the focus group, you will be asked to fill out a short (2 minutes) form to gather socio-demographic information. This information will provide us with context for the discussions to follow and inform subsequent data analysis.
- The focus group (online or in-person) will last approximately 75 minutes (15 minutes for set up, consent forms, introductions; and 60 minutes for discussion).

Depending on your experiences with travel measures during the COVID-19, some questions or topics discussed during the focus group may be sensitive or personal. If you are uncomfortable with any questions, you can choose not to answer.

[For in-person only] For in-person focus groups, the discussion will take place at a central location depending on the geographical location of participants. The address will be shared ahead of time only with participants. Focus group discussions will be facilitated by [insert research team member and institution], with support from [insert additional team member(s) names].

[For online only] Online focus groups will be conducted using Zoom®. A link will be shared ahead of time with all participants who will be located in different geographical locations in Canada or the US. Focus groups will be facilitated by [insert team member and institution], with support from [insert team member(s) and institution(s)/location]. Zoom is a US-owned and registered company. Any data you provide may be transmitted and stored in countries outside of Canada, as well as in Canada. It is important to remember that privacy laws vary in different countries and may not be the same as in Canada.

If you have questions about how focus groups will be conducted, please contact Dr. Andréanne Bissonnette (bissona2@wwu.edu).

[For in-person only] For participants of in-person focus groups, please note that the research team will strictly abide by any current public health guidelines or requirements in the relevant jurisdiction related to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Potential Benefits

There are no direct benefits to you for participating in this study. However, the results from this study will support better understanding of the experiences of travel measures by different people and communities. The findings will be shared with decision makers to inform the potential use of travel measures during future public health emergencies.

Potential Risks

During the focus group discussion, you may find some questions upsetting as you recall experiences related to travel during the COVID-19 pandemic. Some topics covered may require you to recall difficult choices or experiences during the pandemic due to travel measures. You do not have to answer every question and are free to answer only questions that you feel comfortable with. If you experience discomfort, fatigue or stress, you are welcome to take a short break or end your participation. Should you find it helpful, you can find a list of mental wellness resources at the end of this form. Finally, as full confidentiality cannot be maintained in a group setting, your participation in the focus group discussion may lead to other community members being aware or know about your experiences with COVID-19 related travel measures.

Participant compensation

[For in-person only] All participants will receive \$70CAD in the form of a prepaid gift card: \$50 as an honorarium for their participation and \$20 to compensate for transportation costs associated with in-person attendance.

[For online only] All participants will receive \$50CAD in the form of a prepaid gift card as an honorarium. Please let us know ahead of time about any support or accommodation you might need to participate.

Confidentiality

Full confidentiality cannot be maintained in a group setting. If you choose to participate, we ask you to respect the privacy of other focus group participants, and to not discuss the content of the focus group with people outside the group. However, we cannot control what participants do with the information discussed.

To produce research outputs, we request your consent to use focus group discussions to inform the development of a decision tree for potential use by decision makers, scholarly research outputs, and other outputs (e.g. follow up funding applications). Ideally, we would like to quote you verbatim and acknowledge your contribution by name (first name only) and location (town and province or state of residency). If you do not wish to be quoted verbatim, or to be directly attributed, please indicate this on the consent form. If information gathered through the focus group is used for any other purpose, we will contact you again to obtain your written consent beforehand.

Where your permission is granted to quote your responses in outputs, for each quote used, any risks/benefits to you or others will be carefully considered before deciding whether or how to use the quote. The research team has substantial experience of conducting this type of study, including discussing subjects of cultural and commercial sensitivity, and dealing with ethical and data protection issues. Where there are potential risks to you, quotes will be anonymized. Confidentiality will be strictly maintained in the collection, storage and use of focus group data. In general, the project will regard this data as “restricted data” and thus not subject to distribution to the general public given participant confidentiality.

Security of the raw data

If eligible to participate in a focus group, your responses to the pre-screening questions completed online using Qualtrics will be retained by researchers. This data is sensitive as it

includes identifying information (i.e. your name and contact information) and will be securely stored in the SFU One Drive Project folder. Access to pre-screening data will be restricted, on a need-to-know basis, to Dr. Bissonnette, the Project Managers, and Principle Investigators (Dr. Lee, Dr. Smith and Dr. Trautman). Incomplete pre-screening data will not be collected or stored (for example, if you do not meet the study criteria and do not complete/submit your responses). Data collected through pre-screening questions for individuals who are later unable or unwilling to participate in a focus group for any reason will be deleted.

To facilitate analysis, the focus group discussion will be sound recorded.

[For Online focus groups] The focus group will be recorded using the Zoom recording function, and set for the recording files to be saved directly to the Project Manager's SFU Zoom account cloud. The Zoom recording function combines video and audio recording, however only the audio recording file and contributions or messages through the chat function will be retained by researchers. The video recording file will be deleted by the Project Manager immediately following the online focus group.

[For in-person focus groups] Notes and written materials (e.g. flipcharts or sticky notes) used to facilitate the focus group discussion will also be retained by researchers. These will be securely stored by the lead focus group facilitator and scanned or transcribed into electronic form for secure storage in the SFU One Drive project folder.

In addition to [Insert researcher name] who will facilitate the discussion, an additional research team member will be present taking notes. The audio recording will be fully and confidentially transcribed by a professional transcribing company based in Canada or the US that will be required to sign a confidentiality agreement. The audio recordings will be securely transferred for transcription. Following transcription, the recording will be destroyed. Identifying information will be removed from the transcripts and assigned an anonymized identifier. The dataset linking transcripts to identifying information of participants will be securely stored in an SFU OneDrive folder, to which only the Principal Investigators, Project Manager and Dr. Bissonnette have access. The cleaned transcripts and notes (where all identifying information is removed) will then be saved as Word files in a separate password-protected SFU OneDrive folder to facilitate data sharing and analysis across the project team. Completed pre-focus group surveys will be stored on a password-protected OneDrive accessible only to team members on a need-to-know basis. Information shared will be anonymized and copied into an electronic database saved in OneDrive for analysis.

If you do not wish to be sound recorded, you will be unable to participate in a focus group. However, we may schedule a one-on-one interview where we will only take written notes. If you prefer that option, please contact Dr. Andréanne Bissonnette (bissona2@wwu.edu).

Withdrawal

You may withdraw from participation in this study at any time before [Insert date one month following last scheduled focus group, up to December 31 2024] by contacting Dr. Andréanne Bissonnette (bissona2@wwu.edu) or Principle Investigator Professor Kelley Lee (pandemics_borders@sfu.ca). Due to the nature of the discussions, where contributions are made from several participants without necessarily including names of contributors, retracting your specific contributions may not be possible. However, following a request to withdraw from

the study we will delete all information pertaining to your participation to the best of our ability. Withdrawing from the study will have no effect on you.

Who to contact for further information about the study

If you have questions about focus groups, please feel free to contact Dr. Andréanne Bissonnette (bissona2@wwu.edu).

If you have any further questions about this project, please feel free to contact the Principal Investigator Professor Kelley Lee (pandemics_borders@sfu.ca) or co-Principal investigator Dr. Laurie Trautman (bpri@wwu.edu). The results of this research will be made available via open access in due course from the Project Manager (pandemics_borders@sfu.ca).

If you have any concerns about your rights as a research participant and/or your experiences while participating in this study, please contact the Director, SFU Office of Research Ethics, at dore@sfu.ca or 778-782-6593, or the WWU Human Research Protections Program administrator, at compliance@wwu.edu or 360-650-2437.

[For focus group participants]

Consent

I have read and understand this informed consent form. I understand that I have the right to refuse to participate in this study. If I decide to take part and later change my mind, I can withdraw from the study at any time without giving a reason and without any negative professional or personal impact. If I consent to participate, I understand that I am also consenting to have my participation sound recorded. I am participating voluntarily and I consent to Simon Fraser University and Western Washington University collecting, using, and disclosing the information I provide as a focus group participant. I understand that by consenting, I have not waived any rights to legal recourse in the event of research-related harm.

_____ I consent

_____ I do not consent

[For in-person only]

Name: _____

Date: _____

Signature: _____

Mental wellness resources

In Canada:

- Canadian Mental Health Association: <https://cmha.ca/>
- Wellness Together Canada: <https://www.wellnesstogether.ca/en-ca/>
- Not Myself Today: <https://www.notmyselftoday.ca/>
- Psychology Today Find a Therapist: <https://www.psychologytoday.com/ca/therapists>
- Hope for Wellness Helpline: <https://www.hopeforwellness.ca/>
- Qmunity: <https://qmunity.ca/>
- Multicultural Mental Health Resource Centre: <https://multiculturalmentalhealth.ca/>
- Centre de prévention du suicide : 1 866 APPELLE (277-3553)
- Interligne (LGBTQ+) : 1 888 505-1010 (call or text)
- Écoute Entraide : 1 855 EN LIGNE (365-4463)
- Info-Social 811 : 811 (option 2)

In the USA:

- Anxiety & Depression Association of America: <https://adaa.org/find-help/by-demographics>
- Mental Health America: <https://mhanational.org/get-help>
- HelpGuide.org: <https://www.helpguide.org/>
- The Trevor Project: <https://www.thetrevorproject.org>
- National Queer & Trans Therapists of Color Network: <https://nqttcn.com/en/>
- Black Emotional and Mental Health Collective: <https://wellness.beam.community/>