



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE DATE: March 17th, 2022

**CONTACT: SFSS Executives, SFSS President, Corbett Gildersleve,
mediainquiries@sfss.ca**

Burnaby, B.C. (March 17, 2022)

The Simon Fraser Student Society Executive Committee sent out a survey to its members regarding the sudden changes that have emerged within BC following the PHO's recent announcement regarding lower restrictions in regards to COVID-19, some of which include masking requirements. PHO guidelines regarding face coverings or masks indicate that "Individual businesses [including the SFSS] ... can choose to continue requiring masks on their premises". As a student-focused and student-led organization, the SFSS' decisions are to be made with the intent of fostering community care and limiting the risk of exposure and transmission of COVID-19.

With these guidelines, the Executive committee released a [survey](#) in response to hearing from students and understands that further consultations regarding decisions with wide-scale impact were needed, even as they may be operational decisions under its jurisdiction, as delegated through Council. The 'Student Consultation Regarding Face Covering or Masks' Student Consultative Survey was made available to students from March 14 to March 16 and received over **3,298 submissions**. The Executive Committee has received the survey results through the consultative survey released entitled "Student Consultation Regarding Face Covering or Masks".

The data collected from the survey demonstrate that the SFSS members at large, as well as SFSS members from specific equity-seeking and marginalized student communities, believe that there should be a continued requirement for masks in the SUB. In addition to that, the data collected indicates that a majority of students call on SFSS to continue to advocate for continued mask requirements in SFU indoor spaces such as lecture halls, theatres, labs, and the library. Out of the 3,298 that submitted responses for the question, 1,804 (55%) students think that face coverings should continue to be required for the rest of the semester in the SUB, whereas 1494 (45%) students voted otherwise. For SFU indoor spaces (such as lecture halls, labs, theatres, and libraries), **1,920 (58%) responded that face coverings should continue to be required for SFU indoor spaces**, whereas 1371 (42%) voted otherwise. For the spaces where requirements were most important for continued mask requirement, the following were indicated by the respective number students to be spaces that must have masking requirements (if just a portion of SFU indoor spaces keeps these requirements): Lecture halls: 2018 students, theatres: 1744 students, labs: 1797 students, indoor event space: 1659 students, shared spaces: 1663 students, library: 1595 students, none of the above: 1164 students, and other: 166 students.

As it relates to barriers that members felt in regards to masking and face-covering requirements, 2407 students felt that masking was not a barrier, however, we recognized that some folks have barriers and we will be working with the community to ensure these barriers are alleviated in the best way we can. Some of these barriers where students had were difficulty breathing with masks on (619), visual clarity for lip reading (420), financial access to medical-grade masks (223), limited access to medical grade masks (216), stigma towards people who cannot wear masks (139) and sensory issues (248). As such, the Executive Committee will continue to order thousands of KN95 masks for distribution for free to make it more accessible, and other medical masks which can be retrieved at the SUB, and look into options for clear masks and other accessible masks and will be also ensuring the air filtration to enable ease of breathing in the SUB. If you have any additional feedback please do let us know.

The purpose of this survey was to help guide and inform the SFSS Executive and Council in decision-making in terms of student safety amidst the pandemic and to inform our advocacy initiatives in relation to SFU. We thank all the students for submitting and the turnout was amazing, which is higher than the previous voter turnout in the SFSS elections.

As a result, the SFSS Executive Committee will be voting on **Monday, March 21, 10am - 12pm**, guided by this feedback from SFSS members, feedback from the various community groups including immunocompromised and disabled student community groups, the thoughts of the various student union representatives at council, as well as regular correspondence with students, and staff.

If you are a member you can **attend this meeting** or send an email to execonly@sfss.ca where there will be an overview and subsequent decision which will guide our decision for the SUB, as well as guide our advocacy to SFU on the masking requirements for the rest of the semester.

As guided by previous community advocacy, and, the BC Human Rights Council [report](#) (Disaggregated demographic data collection in British Columbia: The grandmother perspective) the SFSS collected disaggregated social-demographic data to ascertain information that may be otherwise overlooked or ignored to also guide equitable decision making and to building respectful relationships with marginalized communities to ensure that community needs and voices are meaningfully included in data collection, use and disclosure processes.

The SFSS ensured demographic data was to see how varying marginalized communities felt where otherwise may or may have the risk of being neglected or be rendered invisible. If you have feedback on any of the questions for these demographic data collections, please reach out to the VP Equity and Sustainability at vpequity@sfss.ca. See the demographic data breakdown for the first two questions below. The full survey results breakdown will be attached and you will be able to see the wider breakdown for all the questions.

Self-Identified as Disabled or Neurodivert

For the top two questions:

347 (64%) out of 550 students who chose to self-identify as disabled and/or immunocompromised thought face coverings should be required for the rest of the semester in the SUB,

Whereas, 372 (68%) out of 550 students who chose to self-identify as disabled and/or immunocompromised thought face coverings should be required for the rest of the semester in SFU indoor spaces.

Self-Identified as having Higher risk for complication or death (or living with)

For the top two questions:

714 (75%) out of 956 students who to select as having higher risk for complication or death (or living with people as such) thought face coverings should be required for the rest of the semester in the SUB,

Whereas, 759 (79%) out of 550 students who chose to select having higher risk for complication or death (or living with people as such) thought face coverings should be required for the rest of the semester in SFU indoor spaces.

You can see the survey questions raw responses linked below. A fully formulated report and further recommendations on campus will be created and released through our Policy Research and Community Affairs office in the near future, including the demographic breakdown, and including the written responses and comments.

Note and Disclaimers:

Demographic data breakdown for Gender identity, ethno-racial self-identification, international students, SUB usage frequency, faculties, and in-person class enrolment breakdown, and others will be outlined in the full report, alongside the written submissions summaries results.

Please remember to attend the meeting and reach out to your councilors, executives as well as share this survey report to any SFSS members. We cherish and value your feedback and thank you for the opportunity to continue to serve students.

Note on survey

- We substituted men-identifying in for Male as the Gender Identity question to remove confusion from Male listed as Gender due to the historical context of harm to transgender community members where "Male" and "Female" were used as a mechanism to discount their experiences. In this survey, we took anyone selecting "Male" to include cisgendered and transgender men, and "Female" to include cisgendered and transgendered Women.

We apologise for the confusion that this question may have caused. Going forward, we will be adding under Gender identity questions "Man-identifying" and "Woman-identifying" to remove all confusion as well as keep multi-select for Gender identity demographic category.

- If any self-identification or wider category is less than 50 people who are not listed above, the collection sample set and breakdown is discarded and will be not outlined in order to protect against overfitting and oversubscribing (if it is less than 10 it will be omitted from the report altogether as the numbers would be too small to protect against privacy/community concerns).
- It is important to note that surveys such as these give a sense of what communities want but are not prescriptive and include margins of errors, which is highly increased when there is less. Correlation != Causation. Note that some people chose not to self-identify/who clicked prefer not to say are not reflected and numbers are not exact.

See raw results survey Breakdown [\[here\]](#)

Full Comprehensive Mask Requirements Survey Report and Recommendations: [**To be published**]

References

- [BC Human Rights Report on Disaggregated Data](#)
- [Anti-Racism Data Toolkit by Canadian Federation of Students](#)