

HELMETS: ATTITUDES AND ACTIONS

Survey Findings

This public opinion survey was commissioned to serve as a benchmark for future initiatives to increase helmet use in all sports. It establishes anecdotally the rate of current use, attitudes towards the use of helmets, awareness of potential injury and reasons why respondents and family members wear, or do not wear, helmets. The demographic breakdowns identify the profile of helmet wearers and non-wearers. We hope these findings will be used as a basis for future safety efforts and research on how to change the behaviour of those who do not chose to wear a helmet.



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BACKGROUND

The Canada Safety Council and Liberty Mutual Insurance Company commissioned Ipsos-Reid to conduct a national public opinion survey to examine Canadians' attitudes regarding the use and value of sports helmets, and the effectiveness of measures that could be taken to increase usage. The purpose of the survey was to determine the public opinion environment surrounding the use of helmets in sporting activities such as bicycling, skateboarding, in-line skating and using scooters. Specifically, the survey assessed the following:

- use of sports helmets among adult Canadians;
- reported use of sports helmets among the children of adult Canadians;
- perceived reasons for not wearing protective helmets during sporting activities;
- attitudes toward the importance of always wearing helmets during sporting activities;
- awareness of provincial legislation that requires children under 18 to wear a helmet while bicycling; and
- perceived effectiveness of measures that could be taken to increase the use of helmets during sporting activities.

METHODOLOGY

A total of 1,000 interviews were conducted by telephone via the Ipsos-Reid Canadian Express omnibus survey between 8 and 10 January 2002, among a representative random sample of Canadian adults aged 18 years and older.

Results were weighted by region, age and gender to reflect the actual population of adult Canadian based on the 1996 census data. The results of a survey of this size are said to be accurate to within $\pm 3.1\%$, 19 times out of 20. Please note that the margin of error for subsets of this population will be larger.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Canadians' Bicycle Helmet Use

Almost half of Canadian adults (45%) who ride bicycles *never* wear a helmet when they bicycle, while one-third (35%) *always* do. The remaining 20% fall in the middle and say they wear a helmet while cycling *most of the time* (5%) *sometimes* (8%) or *rarely* (7%).

More children are reported to wear a helmet when riding a bicycle than when doing any other activity. The majority of parents report that their children wear a helmet when bicycling (84%), in-line skating (79%), riding a scooter (73%), and skateboarding (69%).

From the list of reasons for not wearing a helmet, issues of appearance and image as well as an assumed ignorance of the dangers of not wearing a helmet dominate the list. Topping the list of reasons why Canadians do not wear sporting helmets, are 'don't bother' (14%), 'appearance' (14%), 'not cool' (13%), 'unaware of dangers' (10%) and 'inconvenience' (10%). Other frequent mentions include 'don't need to' (6%), 'don't believe they can have an accident' (6%), 'they don't like to be made to wear one' (6%), 'it's not mandatory or wasn't in the past' (6%). Other mentions were cited by no more than 5% of respondents.

Perceived Importance of Wearing a Helmet

Eight in ten (86%) Canadians *strongly agree* with the merit of wearing a helmet for activities such as bicycling, skateboarding, in-line skating and using a scooter, because helmets can prevent serious injury. While still a large majority, fewer (78%) *strongly agree* that it is important to *always* wear a helmet while participating in such activities.

Knowledge of Legislation on Helmet Use

The majority of Canadians (86%) believe that their respective provinces have legislation requiring children under 18 to wear a helmet when bicycling. More respondents in British Columbia (90%), Ontario (93%) and the Atlantic Provinces (92%) believe such legislation exists. While still representing fairly large majorities, residents of Saskatchewan/Manitoba (69%) and Quebec (79%) are least likely to believe helmet legislation for children under 18 exists in their province.

Rating the Effectiveness of Measures Taken to Increase Helmet Use

Respondents were presented with three measures that could be taken to increase the use of sports helmets and asked to indicate how effective they felt each would be. The results demonstrate that Canadians have the most confidence in the effectiveness of *public information and awareness campaigns* (88%, 31% say it would be *very effective* and 57% say it would be *somewhat effective*). Safety courses and events (82%), and *government regulation* (77%) are believed to be slightly less effective steps that could be taken to increase helmet use during sports activities.

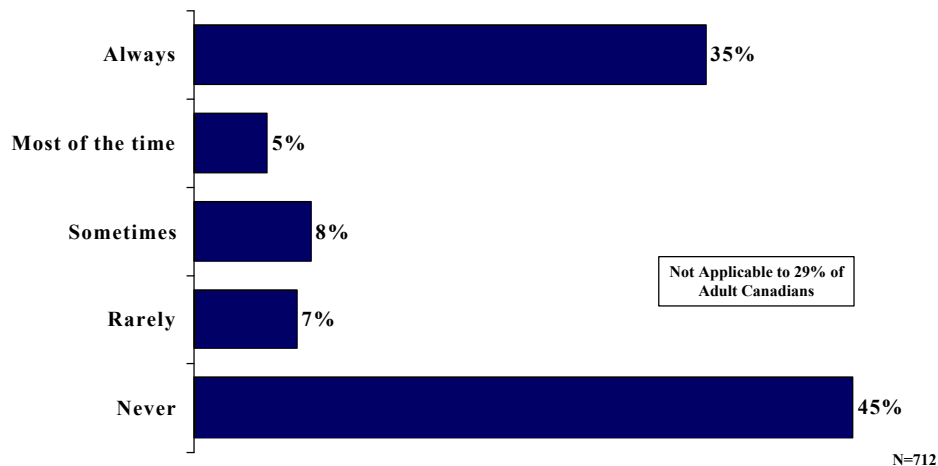
KEY FINDINGS

Adult Canadians' Bicycle Helmet Use

Almost half of Canadian adults (45%) who ride bicycles *never* wear a helmet when they bicycle. While one third (35%) *always* do. The remaining 20% fall in the middle and say they wear a helmet while cycling *most of the time* (5%) *sometimes* (8%) or *rarely* (7%).

Adult Canadians' Bicycle Helmet Use

Would you say you *always*, *most of the time*, *sometimes*, *rarely*, or *never* wear a helmet when *YOU* ride a bicycle?



Across Canada, those living on either coast wear helmets when bicycling more frequently than their midland counterparts. The majority of residents in British Columbia (61%) and the Atlantic provinces (56%) report that they *always* wear a helmet when bicycling, while just one in ten (12%) residents of Saskatchewan/Manitoba and one quarter (25%) of those in Quebec say they *always* wear a helmet.

Key Demographic Split – Always versus Never Wear Helmets

The significance of the demographic comparison between those who *never* wear a helmet while bicycling and those who *always* do is evident in the following table:

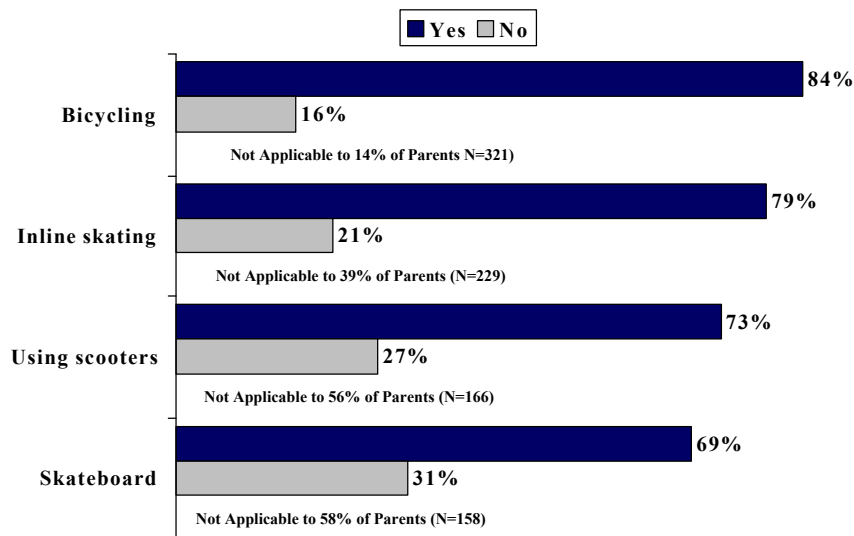
CANADIANS WHO <i>ALWAYS</i> WEAR A HELMET	CANADIANS WHO <i>NEVER</i> WEAR A HELMET
38% of women	48% of men
39% of 35 and over	51% of 18 to 34 year olds; 45% of 55+
38% of post-secondary and 42% of university educated	57% with highschool or less education
37% of urban dwellers	48% of rural dwellers
39% of high-income earners (\$60k+)	54% of low-income earners (<\$30k)
61% of British Columbia residents; 56% of Atlantic Canadians	70% of residents in Sask/Man; 52% of Quebec residents; 45% of Ontario residents; 41% of Alberta residents
38% of Canadians who have children under 18 living with them	48% of Canadians who do not have children under 18 living with them

Children’s Helmet Use

The majority of parents report that their children wear a helmet when bicycling (84%), in-line skating (79%), riding a scooter (73%), and skateboarding (69%). More children are reported to wear a helmet when riding a bicycle than when doing any other activity.

Children’s Helmet Use

Do your CHILDREN always wear a helmet when they are:



The majority of children reportedly wear helmets when they participate in the sporting activities included in the survey.

Key Demographic Split – Parents who Always versus Never Wear a Helmet

In each instance, parents who report that they themselves *always* wear a helmet are more likely to say their children wear a helmet, than are parents who themselves *never* wear a helmet. When comparing parents who *always* wear a helmet with parents who *never* wear a helmet, it is interesting to note:

PARENTS WHO *ALWAYS* WEAR A HELMET

Bicycling:

98% say their children *always* wear one

In-Line Skating:

92% say their children *always* wear one

Skateboarding:

80% say their children *always* wear one

Riding a scooter:

80% say their children *always* wear one

PARENTS WHO *NEVER* WEAR A HELMET

75% say their children *never* wear one

68% say their children *never* wear one

68% say their children *never* wear one

70% say their children *never* wear one

Across the country, in every region, more children who participate in the sporting activities examined in this research are reportedly wearing a helmet to bicycle and in-line skate than they are to skateboard or use a scooter.

- More children in Ontario (94%) *always* wear a bicycling helmet than in any other region, and fewer children in Saskatchewan/Manitoba (69%) *always* wear a helmet than in any other region.

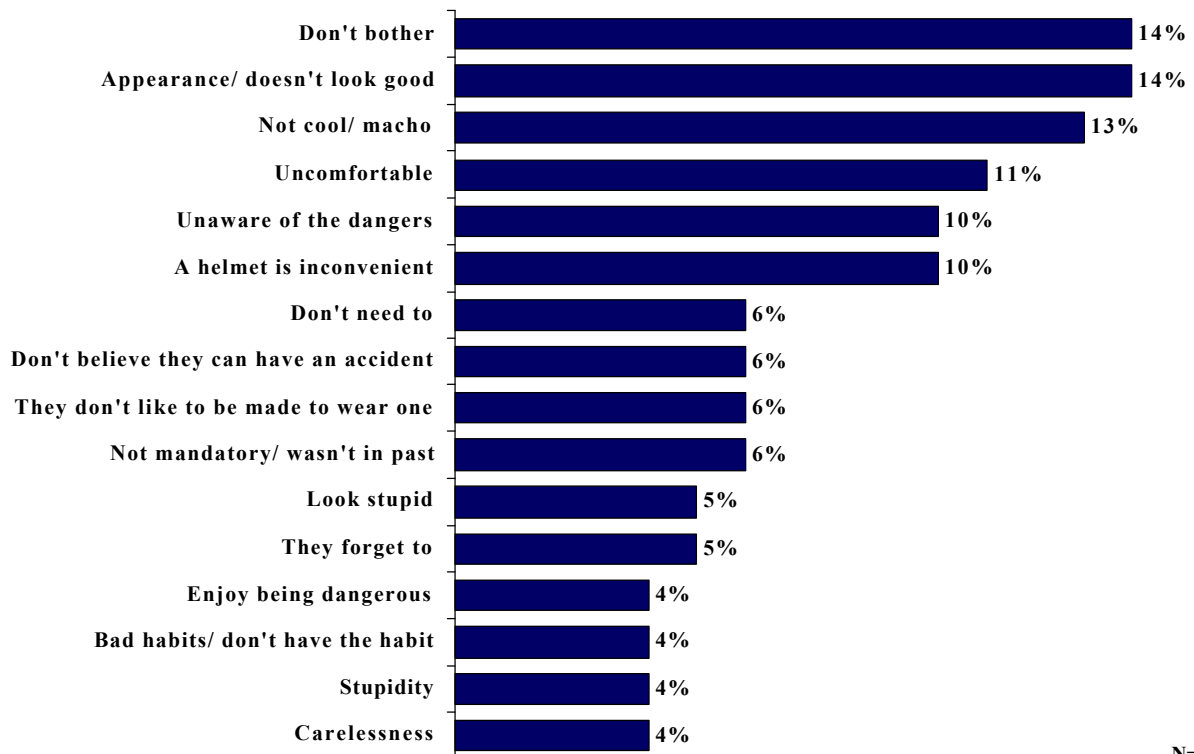
- Close to nine in ten children *always* wear a helmet when in-line skating in Alberta (88%) and the Atlantic provinces (89%), and just under two thirds (64%) of children in British Columbia *always* wear a helmet when in-line skating.
- As many as eight in ten (82%) children in the Atlantic provinces *always* wear a helmet when skateboarding, while just half or less of children in British Columbia (53%) and Saskatchewan/Manitoba (45%) *always* wear a skateboarding helmet.
- Approximately eight in ten children in the Atlantic provinces (82%) and Ontario (79%) *always* wear a helmet when on their scooter, and about six in ten do so in British Columbia (57%) and Saskatchewan/Manitoba (61%).

Top Reasons for Not Wearing a Helmet

From the list of reasons for not wearing a helmet, issues of appearance and image as well as an assumed ignorance of the dangers of not wearing a helmet dominate the list. Topping the list of reasons why Canadians do not wear sporting helmets, are ‘don’t bother’ (14%), ‘appearance’ (14%), ‘not cool’ (13%), ‘unaware of dangers’ (10%) and ‘inconvenience’ (10%). Other frequent mentions include ‘don’t need to’ (6%), ‘don’t believe they can have an accident’ (6%), ‘they don’t like to be made to wear one’ (6%), ‘it’s not mandatory or wasn’t in the past’ (6%). Other mentions were cited by no more than 5% of respondents.

Top Reasons for Not Wearing a Helmet

What do you think are the main reasons why people do NOT wear helmets while participating in sports like bicycling, skateboarding, inline skating and using scooters?



N=1000

Interestingly, those who always wear a helmet when bicycling frequently mention ‘appearance’ (16%) and that it’s ‘not cool’ (16%); whereas, those who never wear a helmet say it is the ‘appearance’ (16%) and the fact that helmets are ‘uncomfortable’ (16%).

The results show that the number-one reason given by Canadian women for people not wearing a helmet is ‘appearance’ (at 17%, versus 11% for men), while for men, the most frequently mentioned reason is that helmets are ‘uncomfortable’ (at 14%, versus 9% women). For those in rural areas, the number-one reason for people not wearing a helmet is that they ‘don’t bother’ (18%), but for their urban counterparts, the top reasons are ‘appearance’ (14%) and ‘not cool’ (14%). ‘Appearance’ is also the most frequent reason for respondents in Quebec (19%) and Alberta (18%). In every other province, ‘not cool’ is the number-one reason: British Columbia (22%), the Atlantic Provinces (18%), Saskatchewan/Manitoba (17%) and Ontario (14%).

Perceived Importance of Wearing a Helmet

Eight in ten (86%) Canadians *strongly agree* with the merit of wearing a helmet for activities such as bicycling, skateboarding, in-line skating and using a scooter, because helmets can prevent serious injury. While still a large majority, fewer (78%) *strongly agree* that it is important to *always* wear a helmet while participating in such activities.

Perhaps not surprisingly, those who report that they *always* wear a helmet are nearly unanimous in strongly agreeing with both statements in the preceding paragraph (95% that helmets should be worn and 94% that wearing helmets can prevent serious injury). However, for those who admit they *never* wear a helmet, significantly fewer *strongly agree* with both statements (60% that helmets should be worn and 79% that wearing helmets can prevent serious injury).

Women (90%) are more likely than men (82%) to *strongly agree* that wearing a helmet prevents serious injuries, and that it is very important to *always* wear a helmet (84% versus 71%).

Canadians aged 55 and over (84%) feel more strongly than do those aged 18 to 34 (70%) that helmets should *always* be worn. However all age groups are as likely to *strongly agree* that wearing helmets can prevent serious injury (those aged 18 to 34: 84%; those aged 35 to 54: 87%; those aged 55 and over: 87%).

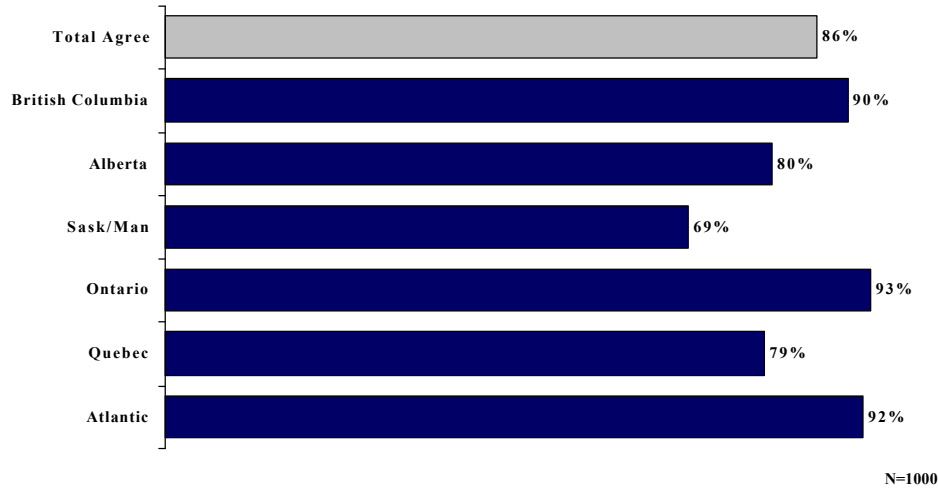
Knowledge of Legislation on Helmet Use

The majority (86%) of Canadians believe that their respective provinces have legislation requiring children under 18 to wear a helmet when bicycling. More respondents in British Columbia (90%), Ontario (93%) and the Atlantic Provinces (92%) believe such legislation exists. While still representing fairly large majorities, residents of Saskatchewan/Manitoba (69%) and Quebec (79%) are less likely to believe helmet legislation for children under 18 exists in their province.

Knowledge of Legislation on Helmet Use

Now, please tell me whether you agree or disagree with the following statement. Is that somewhat or strongly agree/disagree?

There is a law in my province that requires children under 18 to wear a helmet while bicycling



Respondents who *always* wear cycling helmets (85%) are also more likely to *strongly agree* that helmet legislation exists in their respective provinces than Canadians who admit that they *never* wear helmets themselves (59%).

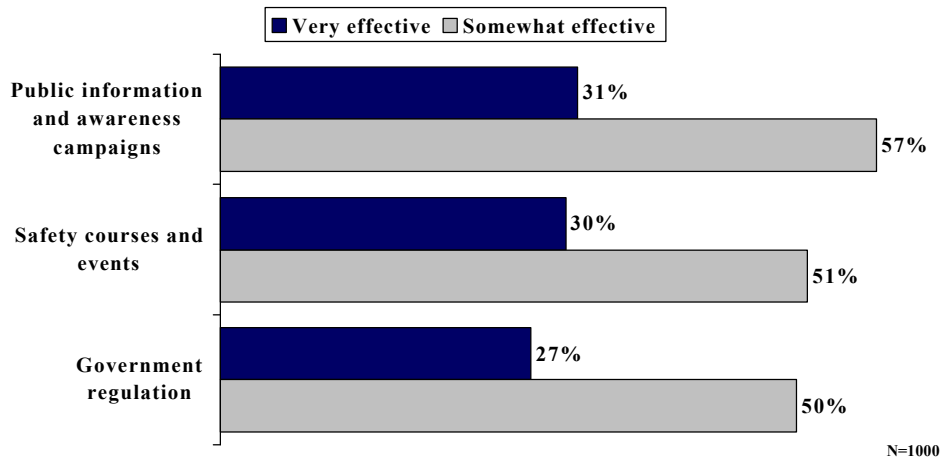
Canadians aged 55 and over (80%) are more likely to *strongly agree* that this type of legislation exists than are Canadians aged 18 to 34 (66%).

Rating the Effectiveness of Measures Taken to Increase Helmet Use

Respondents were presented with three measures that could be taken to increase the use of sports helmets and asked to indicate how effective they felt each would be. The results demonstrate that Canadians have the most confidence in the effectiveness of *public information and awareness campaigns* (88%, 31% say it would be *very effective* and 57% say it would be *somewhat effective*). Safety courses and events (82%), and *government regulation* (77%) are believed to be slightly less effective steps that could be taken to increase helmet use during sports activities.

Rating the Effectiveness of Measures Taken to Increase Helmet Use

Now I am going to read a list of things that could be done to increase the use of helmets while Canadians are taking part in sports activities. Please tell me how effective you think each one would be. Is it very effective, somewhat effective, not very effective or not at all effective?



In general, women, Atlantic Canadians and Canadians who *always* wear a helmet while bicycling themselves tend to be more likely to believe that the proposed actions would be very effective.

APPENDIX I – TOPLINE QUESTIONNAIRE

1. *Would you say you always, most of the time, sometimes, rarely, or never wear a helmet when YOU ride a bicycle?*

Base: All Respondents	TOTAL
Unweighted Base	1000
Weighted Base	1000
Always	25%
Most of the time	4%
Sometimes	5%
Rarely	5%
Never	32%
Not applicable/Don't ride bikes	29%
TOPBOX & LOWBOX SUMMARY	
Often (Top2Box)	29%
Seldom (Low2Box)	11%
Never	32%
Base: Excluding Not applicable	
Unweighted Base	712
Weighted Base	711
EXCLUDING NOT APPLICABLE	
Always	35%
Most of the time	5%
Sometimes	8%
Rarely	7%
Never	45%
TOPBOX & LOWBOX SUMMARY	
Often (Top2Box)	40%
Seldom (Low2Box)	15%
Never	45%

2. Do you have any children under the age of 18 currently living in your household?

Base: All Respondents	TOTAL
Unweighted Base	1000
Weighted Base	1000
Yes	35%
No	65%

3. Do your CHILDREN always wear a helmet when they are:

A) Bicycling?

Base: children under 18 currently living in household	TOTAL
Unweighted Base	369
Weighted Base	351
Yes	72%
No	14%
Not applicable/None of the children participate in this activity	14%
Base: Excluding Not applicable	
Unweighted Base	321
Weighted Base	302
EXCLUDING NOT APPLICABLE	
Yes	84%
No	16%

B) Skateboarding?

Base: children under 18 currently living in household	TOTAL
Unweighted Base	369
Weighted Base	351
Yes	29%
No	13%
Not applicable/None of the children participate in this activity	58%
Don't know	0
Base: Excluding Not applicable	
Unweighted Base	158
Weighted Base	147
EXCLUDING NOT APPLICABLE	
Yes	69%
No	31%
Don't know	0

C) In-line skating?

Base: children under 18 currently living in household	TOTAL
Unweighted Base	369
Weighted Base	351
Yes	48%
No	13%
Not applicable/None of the children participate in this activity	39%
Don't know	0
Base: Excluding Not applicable	
Unweighted Base	229
Weighted Base	213
EXCLUDING NOT APPLICABLE	
Yes	79%
No	21%
Don't know	0

D) Using scooters?

Base: children under 18 currently living in household	TOTAL
Unweighted Base	369
Weighted Base	351
Yes	32%
No	12%
Not applicable/None of the children participate in this activity	56%
Base: Excluding Not applicable	
Unweighted Base	166
Weighted Base	153
EXCLUDING NOT APPLICABLE	
Yes	73%
No	27%

4. What do you think are the main reasons why people do NOT wear helmets while participating in sports like bicycling, skateboarding, in-line skating and using scooters?

TOTAL MENTIONS	TOTAL
Base: All Respondents	
Unweighted Base	1000
Weighted Base	1000
Don't bother	14%
Appearance/ doesn't look good - unspecified	14%
Not cool/ macho	13%
Uncomfortable	11%
Unaware of the dangers	10%
A helmet is inconvenient/ cumbersome	10%
Don't need to	6%
Don't believe they can have an accident	6%
They don't like to be made to wear one/ told what to do	6%
Not mandatory/ wasn't mandatory in the past	6%
Look stupid	5%
They forget to	5%
Enjoy being dangerous/ brave	4%
Bad habit/ don't have the habit	4%
Stupidity	4%
Carelessness	4%
Don't have a helmet	3%
Never taught to	3%
It makes hair messy	3%
Cost	3%
Peer pressure	3%
Ugly	2%
Other	3%
Don't know	3%

5. Now, please tell me whether you agree or disagree with the following statements:

Base: All Respondents Unweighted Base: 1000 Weighted Base: 1000	Strongly agree	Somewhat agree	Somewhat disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
Wearing a helmet for activities such as bicycling, skateboarding, in-line skating and while using scooters can prevent serious injuries	86%	11%	1%	1%	0
It is very important to always wear a helmet while participating in activities like bicycling, skateboarding, in-line skating and while using scooters	78%	17%	4%	2%	0
There is a law in my province that requires children under 18 to wear a helmet while bicycling	73%	13%	6%	5%	3%

6. Now I am going to read a list of things that could be done to increase the use of helmets while Canadians are taking part in sports activities. Please tell me how effective you think each one would be:

Base: All Respondents Unweighted Base: 1000 Weighted Base: 1000	Very effective	Somewhat effective	Not very effective	Not at all effective	Don't know
Public information and awareness campaigns	31%	57%	9%	2%	0
Safety courses and events	30%	51%	15%	3%	1%
Government regulation	27%	50%	15%	6%	1%