Morale high among Canadians during COVID-19 isolation, despite elevated anxiety levels

Ongoing study gauges how Canadians are faring in near real-time

For Immediate Release

OTTAWA, ONTARIO, March 18, 2020 — A study by Canada's leading AI public opinion researcher, "Polly," shows that Canadians are displaying resiliency during the self-isolation period of the COVID-19 pandemic, despite elevated anxiety levels.

The study, commissioned by Dentsu Aegis Network Canada, looked at a representative sample of more than 270,000 Canadians on social media between December 31st, 2019 and March 17th, 2020, and is ongoing for a six-week period. The goal is to track Canadians' response to the pandemic by detecting shifts in sentiment and to zero in on the precise issues that are driving public opinion at the national, provincial and metropolitan levels.

Tracking anxiety levels beginning January 8, 2020, Polly assessed anxiety levels about COVID-19 to be increasing at a steady rate, with 29% of Canadians overall currently feeling anxious about the virus. Anxiety levels were highest in the territories, where residents are expressing concern they would not have access to necessary health care services. Among provinces, British Columbia had the highest level of anxiety per capita. Nationally, concern was higher among older Canadians who are perceived to be at greater risk during the pandemic. Men were slightly more likely to be expressing concern than women.

The biggest surprise, however, was morale. Polly found that people scored high

on morale, specifically with feelings of togetherness and solidarity during this period of self-isolation. Across the country, 64% expressed feelings of high morale and optimism.

"We were surprised to see such high levels of morale, yet we recognize this is early days," said Erin Kelly, CEO, Advanced Symbolics Inc., the company behind the AI public opinion researcher known as Polly. "As we track anxiety and morale throughout the crisis, we'll be looking to identify hotspots using a methodology similar to the one we use to track mental health among vulnerable populations online."

"The tools at our disposal right now with AI allow us to monitor opinion in real time to get a clear read on public sentiment without relying on phone polls and other traditional research methods," said Walter Flaat, Chief Data Officer at Dentsu Aegis Network Canada. "These data points help us navigate the uncharted waters with our clients and their brands as they work to stay connected with, and supportive of their customers, employees and communities."

Morale was consistently high through all age groups but did show some regional variation with people in Nova Scotia and New Brunswick showing the highest morale levels at over 70% positive.

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About Advanced Symbolics Inc.
Polly was developed by researchers at The University of Ottawa with patent rights awarded to Advanced Symbolics Inc. Polly's full analysis will be made available to media upon request.

Advanced Symbolics Inc. (ASI), based in Ottawa, uses Artificial Intelligence to accurately predict human behaviour for use in polling, market research and behavioural research. Polly - ASI's patented AI - has a long track record of predicting elections and referendums, including the 2015 Canadian Federal Election, BREXIT 2016, U.S. 2016 Federal Election, and the 2018 Ontario Provincial Election. To learn more about the company and past media interviews please visit www.advancedsymbolics.com.

About Dentsu Aegis Network Canada
Dentsu Aegis Network Canada Innovates the Way Brands Are Built for clients through best-in-class capabilities in media, digital, data and creative communications services. The network's focus on the digital economy and the distinctive products and services are delivered through agencies Amnet, Amplifi, Carat, Cardinal Path, DentsuBos, dentsu X, GRIP, ICUC, iProspect, Isobar, John Brown Media, MKTG, The StoryLab

and Vizeum. As one of the top ten global Dentsu Aegis markets, the Canadian team is headquartered in Toronto and serves clients through a national network of offices in Vancouver, Calgary, Montreal, Saint John and Halifax with nearly 1,500 dedicated specialists.

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