

# THE MASK SURVEY

November 16, 2022

## Letters to the Editor



ILLUSTRATION BY GABRIEL WILLOW

Dear Members,

A “survey,” rather than a “vote,” is nonbinding, allowing the surveyors to interpret and deal with the results as they see fit. The coordinators’ mask survey polled members on whether masks should be mandatory or optional for shoppers, and for work-

ers.

But the coordinators multiplied two simple and logical categories—“shoppers” and “workers”—into four complex combinations, which produced these results:

51%: Masks are optional for all member workers and shoppers.

43%: Masks are required for member shoppers and members working inside the Coop.

4%: Masks are required for members working inside the Coop and optional for shoppers.

2%: Masks are optional for all member workers and required for shoppers.

Based on this combination of categories, they arrived at a majority (51%) for masks being optional for both shoppers and workers, which they assessed as “too close to consider changing the current policy at this time.” But by uncombining these four categories into the two logical questions, “Should masks be optional or mandatory for shoppers?” and the same question for “workers,” one sees that 55% of members voted “optional” for shoppers and 53% of members voted “optional” for workers, more substantial majorities, which is less easily characterized as “too close” to consider.

But let’s also consider the fundamental assumption underlying the “survey” itself, the assumption that such a policy is—quite naturally—for the coordinators to decide. But is it? Are the coordinators any more knowledgeable than members about COVID-19, or about the efficacy and absolute necessity of masks? Is this not a cooperative, run democratically? And so are the coordinators thus exceeding their authority in unilaterally continuing a mask mandate after the City has ended its own such mandate? Shouldn’t this be a decision for the General Meeting to make?

*David Barouh*