

Half of Canadians taking extra precautions as coronavirus continues to spread around the globe

Just one-quarter concerned about contracting virus; many more concerned about global impact

February 5, 2020 – As the number of people confirmed to have contracted a new strain of coronavirus [continues to rise](#), Canadians are remaining relatively calm, at least when they consider the situation domestically.

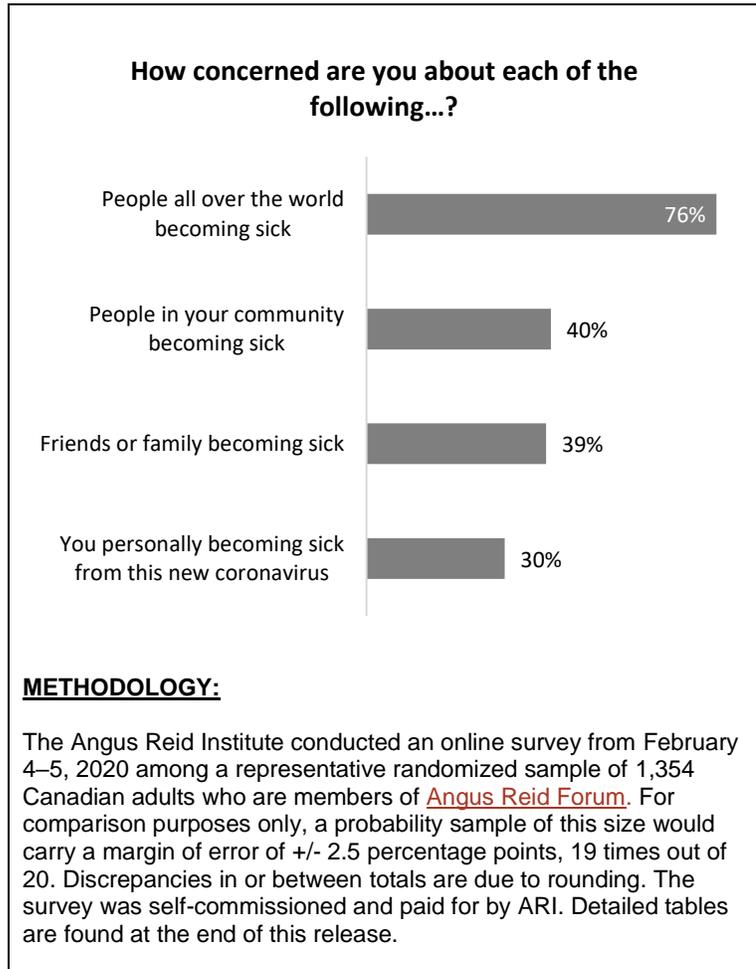
A new study from the non-profit Angus Reid Institute finds three-in-ten (30%) residents in this country say they are worried that they may contract the virus, for which [researchers across the globe](#) are racing to create a vaccine.

Anxiety is much greater when Canadians apply their lens more broadly. Four-in-ten (40%) are concerned about the impact the outbreak may have on their community, and three-quarters (76%) are concerned about the impact on the global community, as they watch the death count rise in China.

Most are approaching the situation with caution. Half of Canadians are taking some form of extra care, whether that is washing their hands more often or avoiding public places. Further, half (48%) say they would cancel any plans to travel areas in and around China that have been most affected, while just one-in-twelve (8%) say the coronavirus would not affect their travel decisions at all.

More Key Findings:

- A significant segment of Canadians (33%) say they are not confident in their province's own front-line health services to handle a coronavirus outbreak if the problem does, indeed, worsen in this country.
- Seven-in-ten Canadians say that they feel the threat of the coronavirus when it comes to an outbreak in Canada is largely overblown. Three-in-ten say they feel the threat is real and should be taken seriously.



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- Canadians are near-unanimously aware of this health issue. The coronavirus outbreak scores as the second highest of any issue ever asked about by the Angus Reid Institute, with just one per cent of respondents having not heard much about it.

About ARI

*The **Angus Reid Institute (ARI)** was founded in October 2014 by pollster and sociologist, Dr. Angus Reid. ARI is a national, not-for-profit, non-partisan public opinion research foundation established to advance education by commissioning, conducting and disseminating to the public accessible and impartial statistical data, research and policy analysis on economics, political science, philanthropy, public administration, domestic and international affairs and other socio-economic issues of importance to Canada and its world.*

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Coronavirus awareness immense

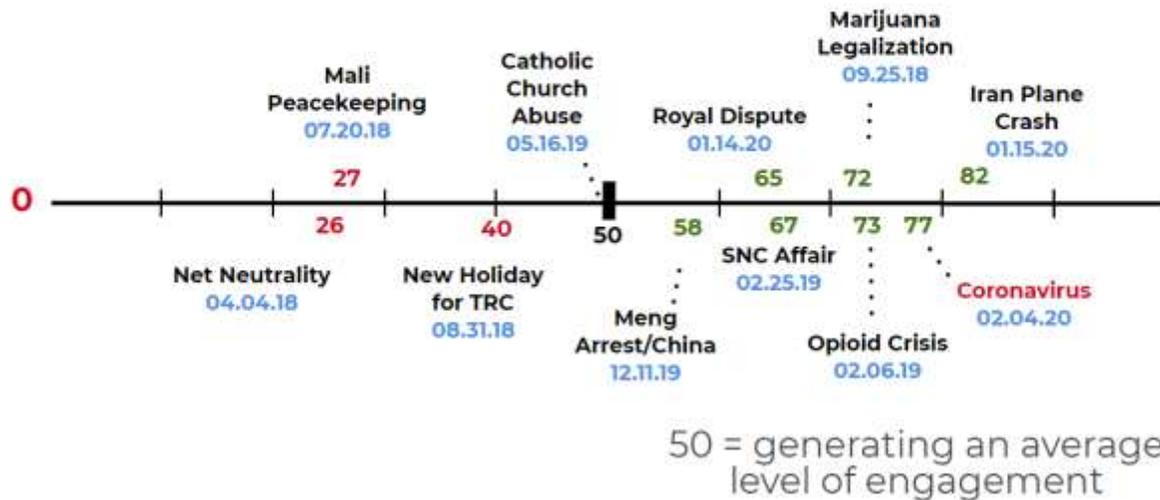
More than 24,000 cases of the coronavirus have been confirmed and nearly 500 people have died at the time of publishing. The first cases of the virus led China to alert the World Health Organization on December 31 that they were seeing a number of unexplained cases of pneumonia. The following days saw officials identify the virus as a novel coronavirus, a strain of coronavirus previously unseen.

As cases have been confirmed in countries across the globe, including four in Canada, Canadians are evidently following the news closely. Just one per cent of respondents say they had not heard much about the outbreak, and it ranks second to only the Iran plane crash from last month in terms of engagement on the ARI awareness index among all issues studied since 2014 (see methodology at end of the release).

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Scores on Angus Reid Institute Engagement Index



What precautions are Canadians taking?

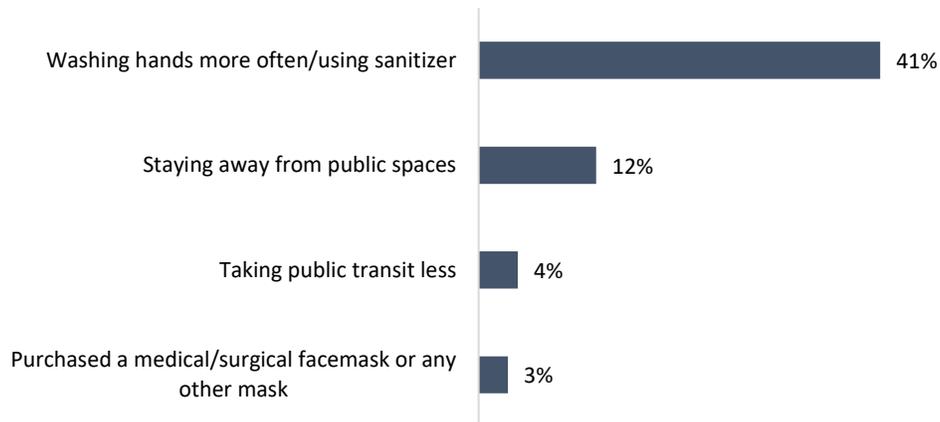
With coronavirus awareness so high, it is perhaps unsurprising that many Canadians are taking extra precautions. Health officials are always encouraging of greater hand washing frequency among the public in efforts to stop the spread of illness, and two-in-five Canadians (41%) are evidently following their advice now.

A smaller number of Canadians, about one-in-ten (12%) also say that they are avoiding public places more than they normally would but, at this point Canadians appear relatively unconcerned about spending time in these areas, or on public transit:

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Have you adjusted any of your own behaviours since hearing about the outbreak?



Half would cancel any travel to affected area, surrounding countries

Another way to gauge the level of threat Canadians perceive from coronavirus was offered as a hypothetical. Respondents were shown the following map of affected areas, which includes the bulk of cases in China, as well as areas with more than 20 cases like Japan, Thailand and Singapore:



Source: John Hopkins University

They were then asked whether, assuming they had plans to travel later this year to places that had been more seriously affected, they would still be comfortable going forward with those plans. Half (48%) said they would cancel their plans outright, while 44 per cent said they would reconsider it but not decide until

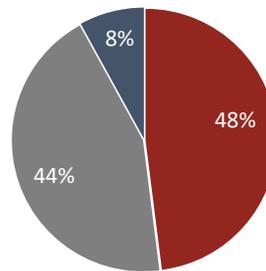
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they gathered more information. Just eight per cent of Canadians said they would not be swayed, and they would go forward with their trip regardless:

Assuming for a moment that you had plans to visit ones of these places later this year, based on whatever you've seen or heard about this and on how you feel right now, would you:

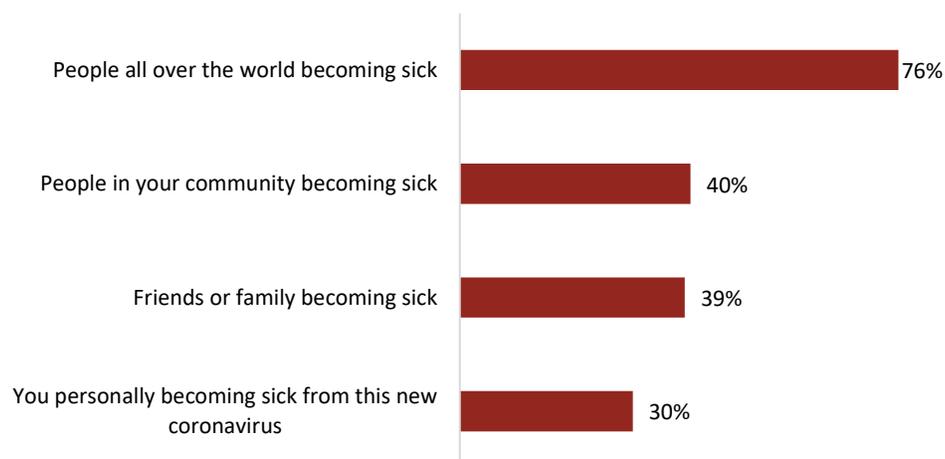


- Cancel your travel plans to that area because of the coronavirus
- Reconsider but not rule it out
- Stick with your travel plans and still visit that region

Concern low at personal level, high for global impact

Asked whether they were worried about contracting the virus themselves, three-in-ten (30%) are concerned. That said, when they think about the situation globally, that concern rises to well over two times that (76%). Cases have been confirmed [in 28 countries](#), though the vast majority have been concentrated in Mainland China.

How concerned are you about each of the following...?

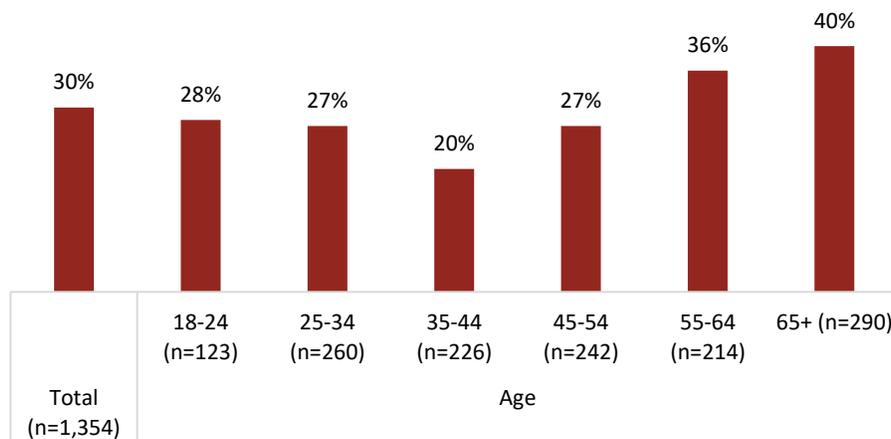


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The coronavirus is reportedly most dangerous to those who are elderly or who are dealing with chronic illness. It is perhaps unsurprising then that the group of Canadians most concerned about their own personal exposure to the virus are those over the age of 65:

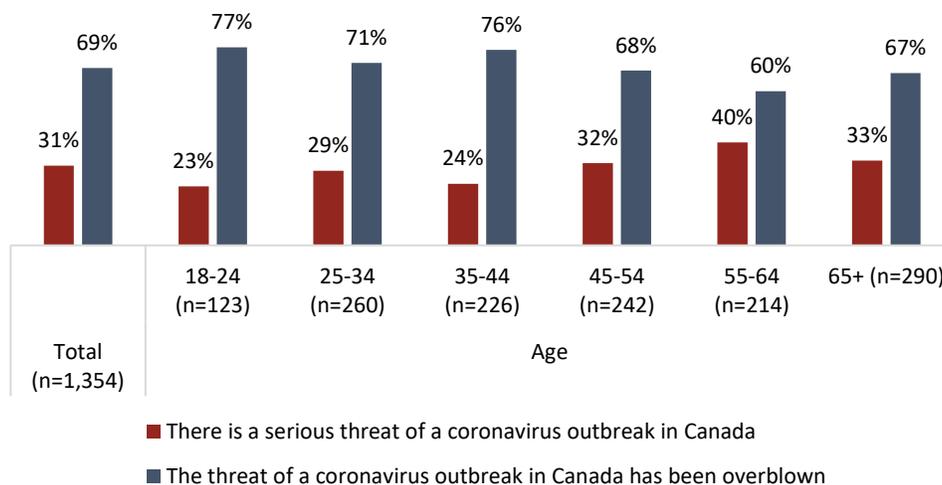
Personally concerned about becoming sick from this new coronavirus



Many say risk overblown

Most Canadians say that they feel the outbreak threat domestically is overblown. While three-in-ten (31%) say that they feel there is a serious threat of an outbreak in Canada, 69 per cent disagree.

Which of these two views is the closest to your own?



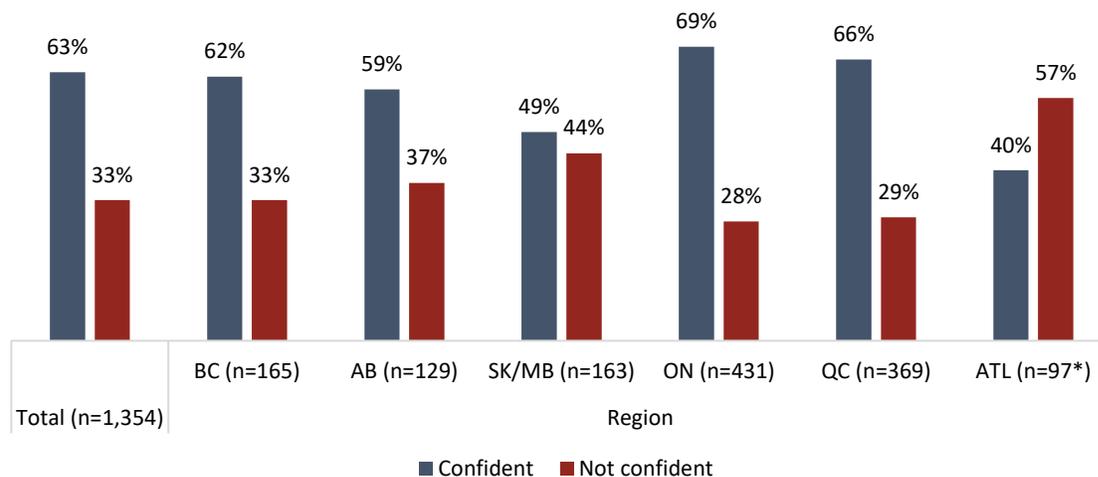
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Confidence in healthcare system’s ability to respond?

Canada has had [four confirmed cases](#) of the coronavirus thus far; three in Ontario and one in British Columbia. Asked whether they have confidence in their own community healthcare system’s ability to handle new cases of coronavirus, Ontario and Quebec residents are most confident. A considerable number of Canadians, one-in-three (33%) overall, say they are not confident that their community would be ready for such an outbreak:

How confident are you that the healthcare system in your community is prepared to deal with new cases of this coronavirus where you live?



Notes on Methodology

Since early 2015, the Angus Reid Institute has been asking Canadians a standardized question about how closely they are following the topics of ARI polls. To facilitate easy comparisons across disparate topics, ARI researchers have developed an Engagement Index based on respondents’ answers. For each issue, respondents are asked to say whether they are “following it in the news and discussing it with friends and family,” “seeing some media coverage and having the odd conversation,” “just scanning the headlines,” or not seeing or hearing anything about the issue.

The index is based on the average response to this question over the years, with greater weight given to the highest level of engagement on the scale, and lesser weight given to the “having the odd conversation” and “just scanning headlines” responses. An “average” issue scores a 50 on the index, with scores higher than 50 representing above-average engagement and scores lower than 50 representing below-average engagement.

For detailed results by age, gender, region, education, and other demographics, [click here](#).

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