

COVID-19 Concern: Half in Canada now worried about risk of infection among friends, family & community

Three-in-ten say they'll avoid large events such concerts and hockey games

March 11, 2020 – As Canada records its first COVID-19 related death, the latest tracking survey data from the non-profit Angus Reid Institute finds the number of Canadians who now see the threat of this virus as “real and serious” has spiked significantly over the last month.

Two-in-five (42%) Canadians now say this, compared to fewer than one-third at the beginning of February, while the corresponding number who see the situation as “overblown” has softened.

Heightened sensitivity to the risks and effects of the novel coronavirus comes as the spread of the infection takes hold in more countries, as well as communities within Canada itself.

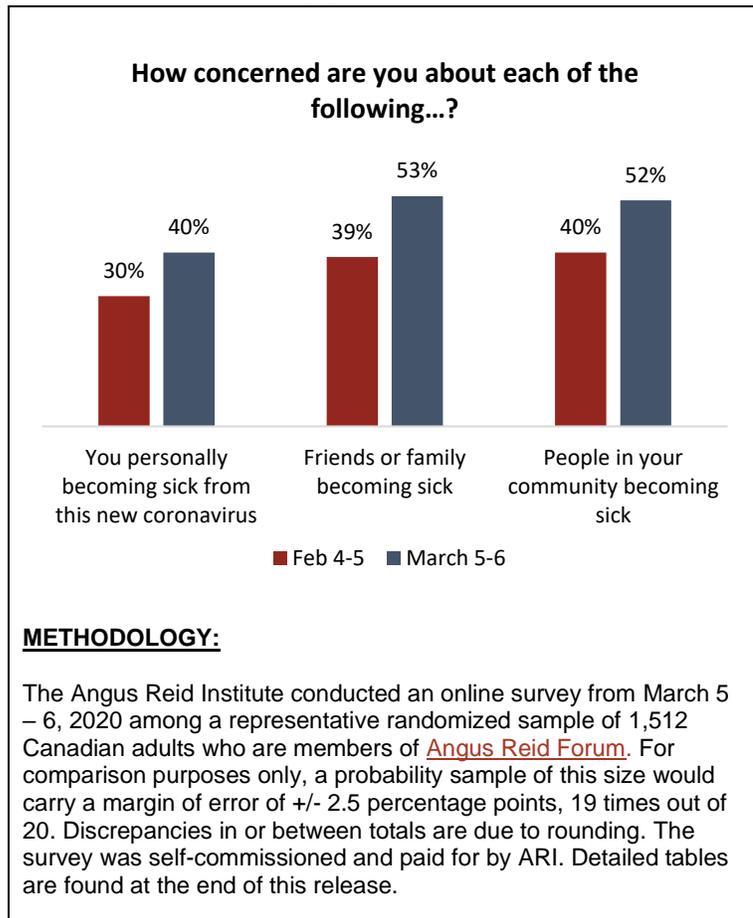
Indeed, as more cases are identified in Canada, 40 per cent now say they are worried about personally becoming sick from the illness, an increase from 30 per cent last month.

As major events, including sporting events such as the IIHF world women's hockey championship are cancelled or postponed, three-in-ten Canadians say they would not attend a concert or sporting event right now, or even go to an airport.

That said, Canadians appear relatively confident in the response of their governments. Half say the Trudeau government has done a good job (49%) of handling the crisis. Further, the two provinces most affected by the COVID-19 outbreak – British Columbia and Ontario – offer net-positive views of their own provincial governments' actions. Nearly two-thirds (62%) of those in BC say the Horgan government has done a “good job”, while in Ontario, 46% say they same about the Ford government's reaction.

More Key Findings:

- Beyond concerns around physical health, two-thirds (66%) say they fear the COVID-19 outbreak will harm the Canadian economy, while a plurality (44%) are worried about their own personal finances being negatively affected



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- A majority of Canadians (58%) continue to have confidence in their own community healthcare system's ability to deal with new cases of coronavirus. This represents a slight drop from 63 per cent who said the same last month
- One-in-five Canadians (17%) say they have been stocking up on extra supplies. Three-in-five (57%) are washing their hands more often
- Asked what they would do if they had international travel booked in the next six months, three-in-ten (28%) say they would cancel
- Half (48%) say they do not trust the news media to offer accurate information about COVID-19. Most say they trust their own local health authorities and the World Health Organization (79% and 76% respectively). Political preferences represent deep differences in opinion on both measures
- Two-in-five Canadians (38%) say that the Tokyo Olympics should go forward as planned in August, while half (52%) would put the games on a delay until the outbreak has passed

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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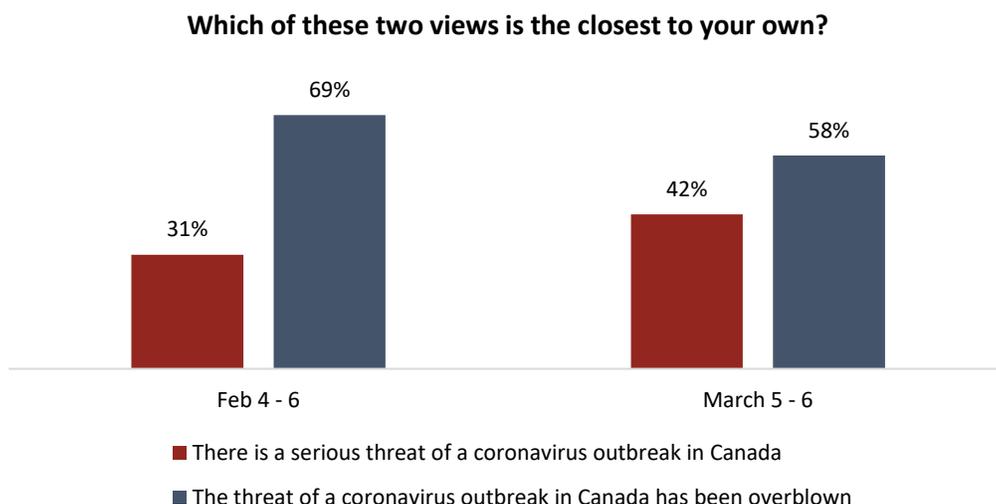
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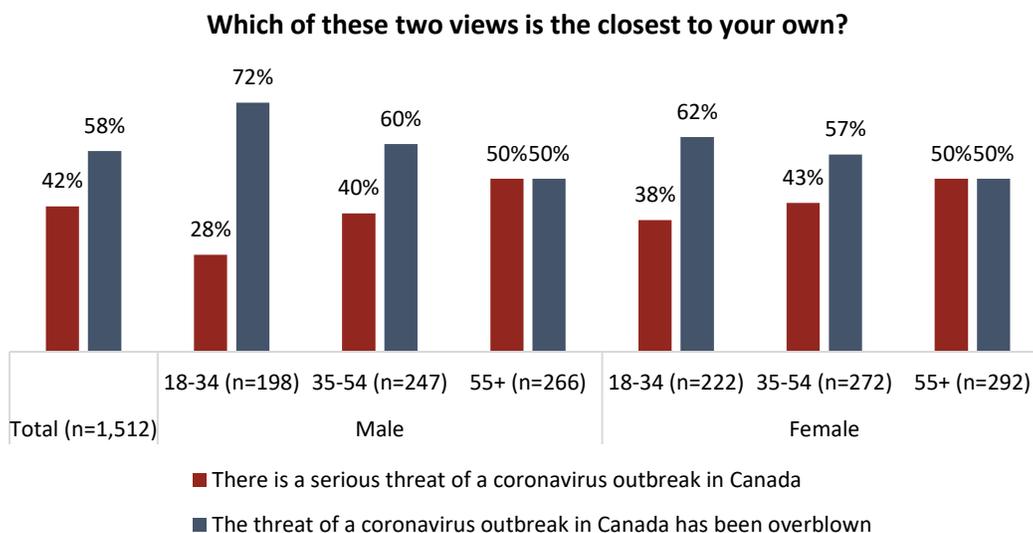
Canadian anxieties

Number who see COVID-19 as serious threat spikes

So far, more than 117,000 cases of COVID-19 have been confirmed worldwide, and over 4,000 people have died. In Canada, 80 cases have been confirmed at the time of publishing, with one death in B.C. As the number of those contracting the virus has increased, Canadians are more convinced that COVID-19 is a serious threat for Canada. Two-in-five now say this (42%), up from 31 per cent from [previous polling](#) done in early February:

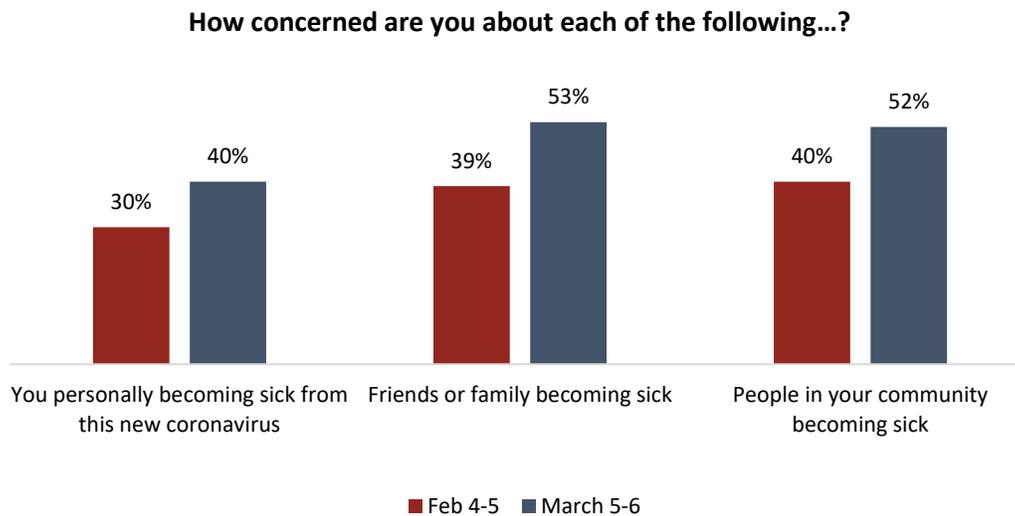


Notably, both men and women 55+ are divided equally over the situation. Younger Canadians, less at risk of the most serious effects from this coronavirus, are also less likely to feel the threatened:

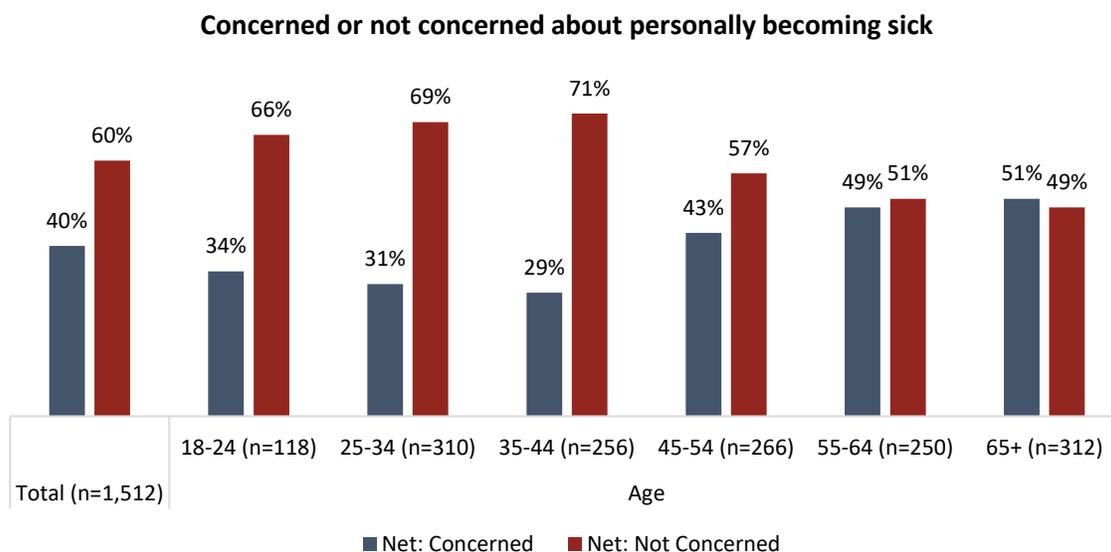


Personal, community concern on the rise

In early February, three-in-ten (30%) told the Angus Reid Institute they were concerned about personally becoming sick. That number has now increased to 40 per cent. Concern about their friends and family more broadly has also risen and is now the view of more than half of Canadians:

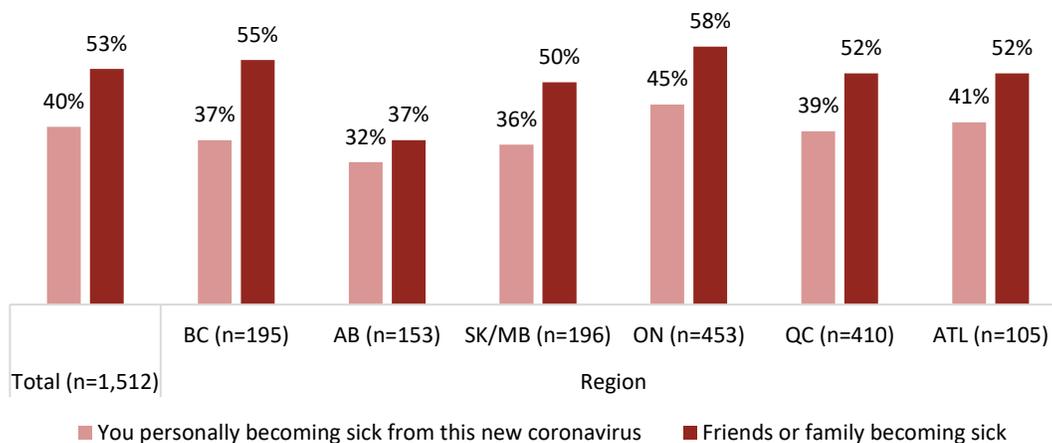


Those 55 years of age and over are most concerned about personally contracting the coronavirus, though notably are divided on the question:



Concern for friends or family becoming sick is even higher. Overall concern is lowest in Alberta and highest in Ontario – the province with the highest number of confirmed cases in Canada:

Percentage concerned about each of the following:



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

Economic concern high

It's not just physical health Canadians are worried about: fully two-thirds express concern about the outbreak affecting this country's economic health. Economic experts have predicted that the Canadian economy will indeed be hurt. This led the Bank of Canada to [cut its interest rate](#) by half a percentage point on March 4 in order to calm markets, which took [a nosedive](#) on March 9 anyway – due in part to jitters over the outbreak.

Finance Minister Bill Morneau has said that the federal government will provide [financial help](#) to Canadians who are quarantined and assured that the budget has enough fiscal capacity to help businesses through any challenges if the economy is badly hit. Additionally, he has said the upcoming budget will have a 'greater provision for risk' in the economy. This will be key, as two-in-four (44%) are concerned that the coronavirus could hurt their own personal finances:

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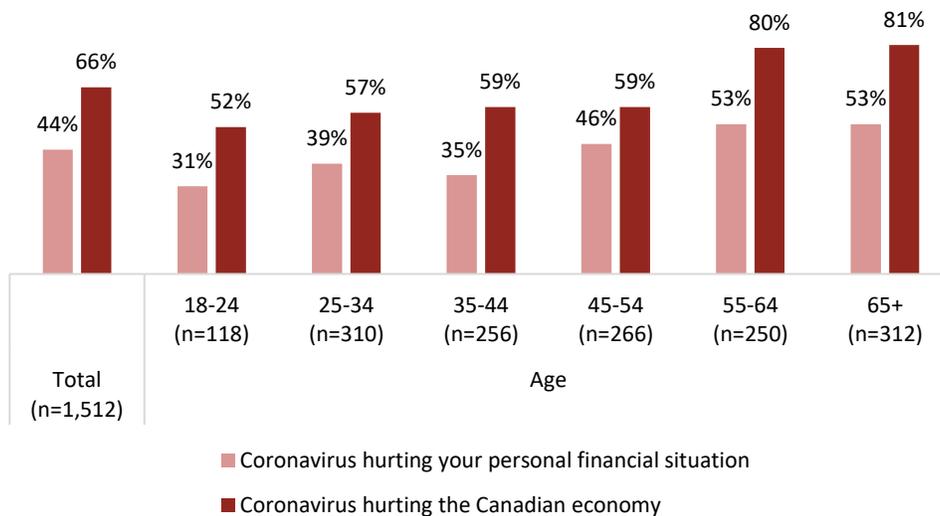
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How concerned are you about each of the following...?



Concerns for both the Canadian economy overall as well as anticipated personal financial loss increase with age:

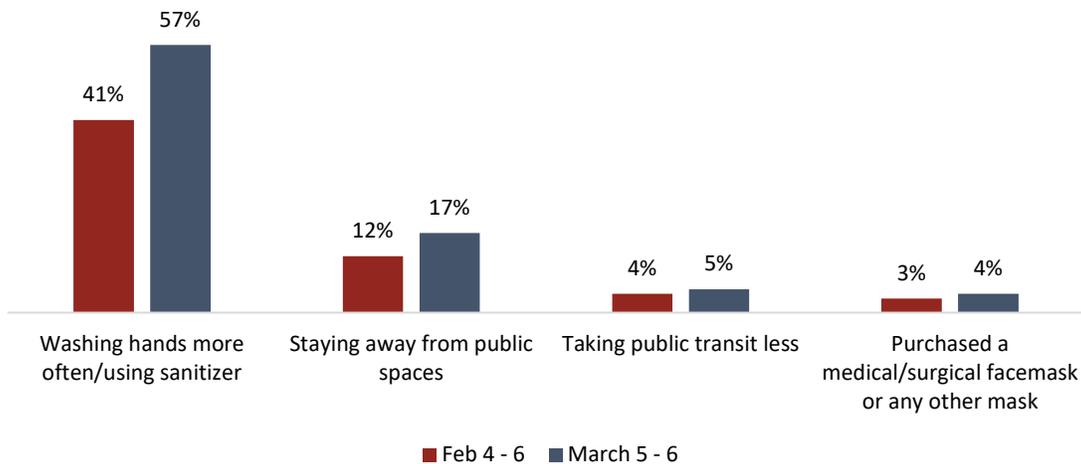
Personally concerned about each of the following:



Changing behaviour and crowd avoidance

Asked what sort of precautions they may be taking as COVID-19 spreads, nearly six-in-ten Canadians (57%) say they're washing their hands more often, an increase from 41 per cent in early February, and close to one-in-five (17%) say they are staying away from public spaces:

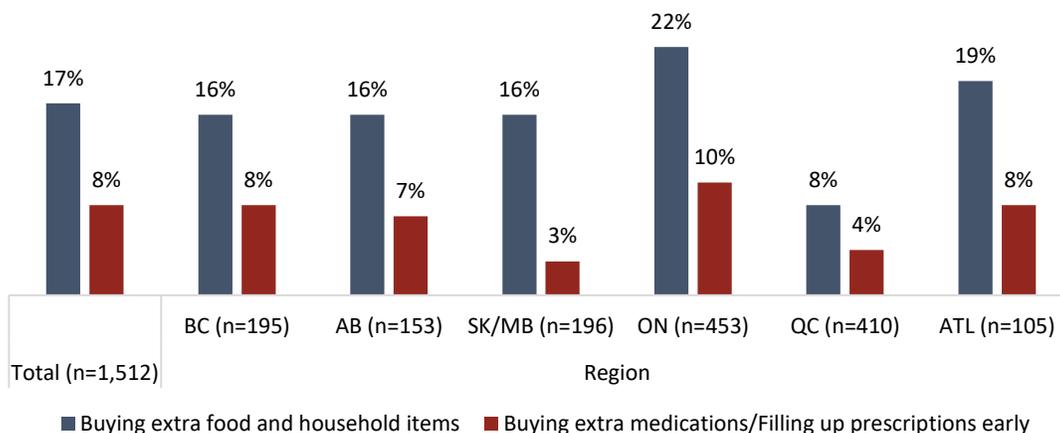
And have you adjusted any of your own behaviours since hearing about the outbreak?



Stocking up on supplies

Canada’s Health Minister Patty Hajdu recommended that Canadians prepare for the worst by stockpiling the food that they would need for several weeks at home and ensuring that they have enough medication in their home in the event of a quarantine. So far, under one-in-five (17%) say that they have purchased extra food and household items, with Ontario residents most likely to have done so:

And have you adjusted any of your own behaviours since hearing about the outbreak? Percentage who have been:



Cancelled trips?

A major concern for thousands of families as spring break intersects with the growing spread of the virus is whether to stick with pre-planned travel. In addition to issuing travel health notices for areas severely affected by COVID-19, the Public Health Agency of Canada is recommending that Canadians avoid all

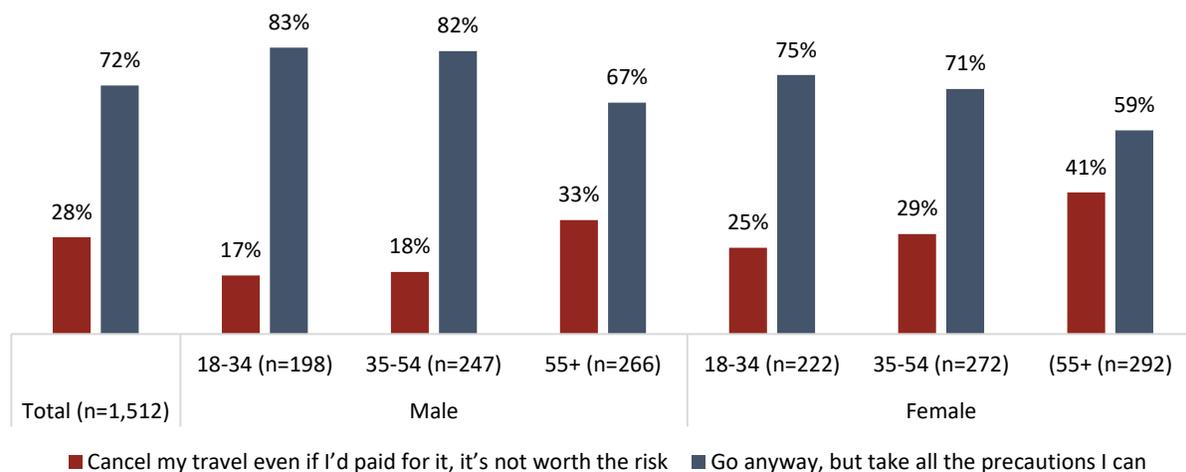
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[cruise ship voyages](#). Meanwhile, [school districts across the country](#) have cancelled international spring field trips to Europe and the United States. In response, several Canadian insurance companies have [ended coverage](#) for trip cancellations related to coronavirus travel advisories.

Asked what they would do if they had booked an international trip for the coming six months, three-in-ten Canadians say they would cancel:

Suppose you had booked travel outside Canada over the next six months. Which statement best describes what you would do:



It's not just personal getaways at stake. Myriad events are being canceled or postponed as well. Italian soccer matches have been played in front of [empty stands](#), and the popular [SXSW festival in Austin, Texas](#) was cancelled, as well as the [2020 Women's World Cup Hockey Championship](#) in Nova Scotia.

The Angus Reid Institute asked Canadians how they would feel attending a large event, or having to visit an airport, based on their current feelings about COVID-19. When it comes to concerts or sporting events, one-quarter say they'd "definitely" avoid them. A similar number say they would not go to an airport under current circumstances:

Because of COVID-19, based on how you feel right now, how do you feel about going to these places?			
	Sporting events like an NHL hockey game	Concerts	Airports
Definitely avoiding	27%	24%	31%
Would go but it crosses my mind	34%	36%	44%
Fine with it	40%	40%	25%

Half would postpone the Tokyo Olympics

Concern over the Tokyo Olympics scheduled for August is also heightened. Sports federations have spoken to the World Health Organization about holding the Games with no fans, while some have suggested that the games could be delayed until the end of the year.

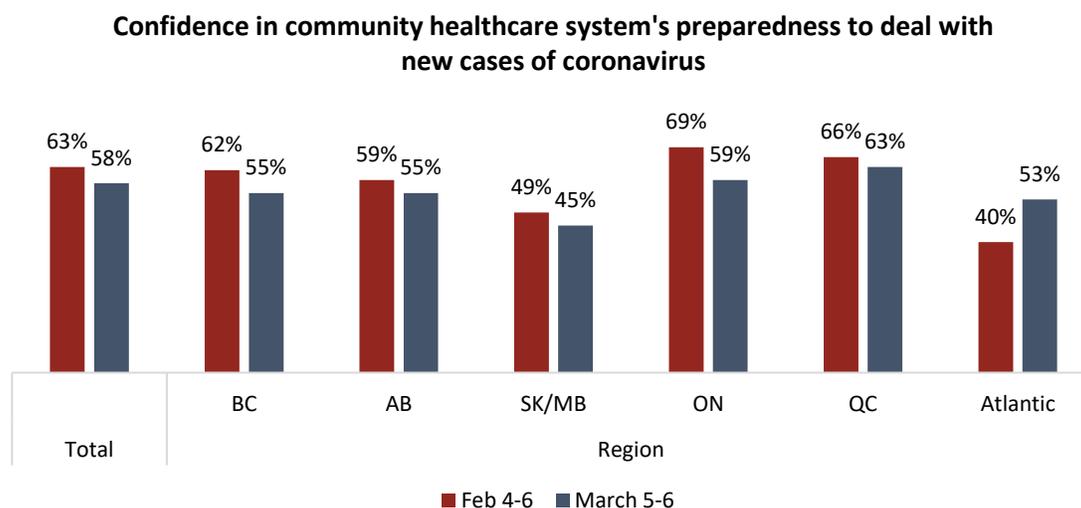
Asked what they think should happen, just over half (52%) say that they would postpone the Olympics indefinitely until the risk had subsided. The rest, 38 per cent, feel the games should go ahead as planned or be cancelled outright (10%).

Performance of government, confidence in institutions

Confidence in community healthcare

As COVID-19 spreads across the country, a majority of Canadians remain confident in their community's ability to handle the associated risks.

Asked about their confidence in their own community healthcare system's preparedness to deal with new cases of coronavirus, residents in the three provinces most affected remain among the most optimistic. There has been a small decrease in overall confidence over the past month in all regions except Atlantic Canada, where the trend is reversed:



Provincial government

In terms of the provincial response across the country, governments have taken a number of steps. COVID-19 focused committees have been created in B.C. and Quebec. Those provinces happen to have the highest proportion of residents saying they have done a good job handling the coronavirus thus far.

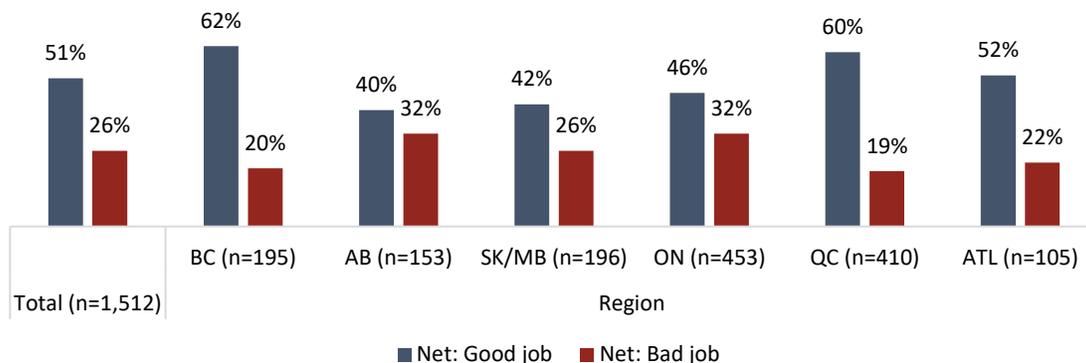
In Ontario, where more than half of the cases in Canada have been concentrated, residents are more critical, with 46 per cent saying the government has done a good job and one-in-three saying the opposite.

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In Alberta, where residents have the lowest level of praise for the government's response thus far, some medical staff have [raised concern](#) about the province's preparedness:

**And, do you think the following are doing a good or bad job handling this whole issue regarding the coronavirus?
Your provincial government**



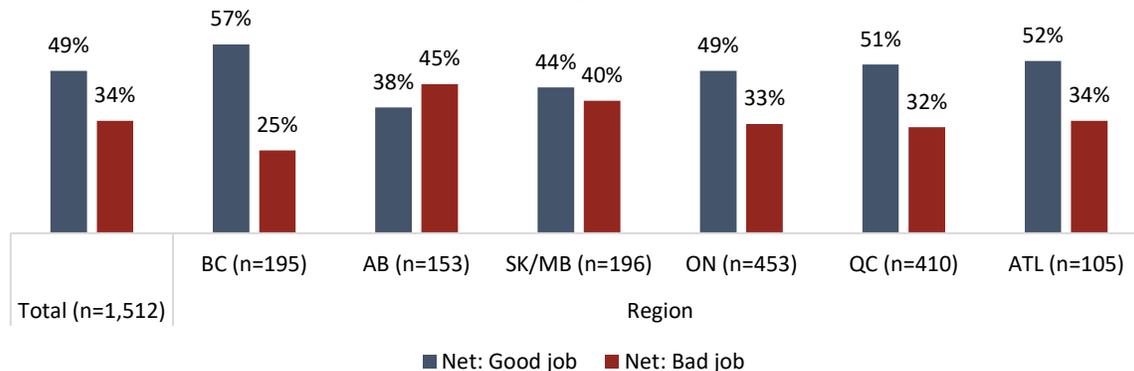
Federal government

Initially, the Liberal government faced criticism for [its pace](#) in evacuating Canadians from Wuhan, China relative to that of other countries. Ottawa has also shied some of the more extreme measures employed by [some of those same countries](#), including stringent travel restrictions.

Against this backdrop, however, Canada's Chief Public Health Officer [Theresa Tam](#) has maintained that the country is ready for any further cases and that the federal-provincial coordination plan is well-established. The Liberals have also created a cabinet committee [chaired by Deputy Prime Minister Chrystia Freeland](#) aimed at coordinating the federal government's response.

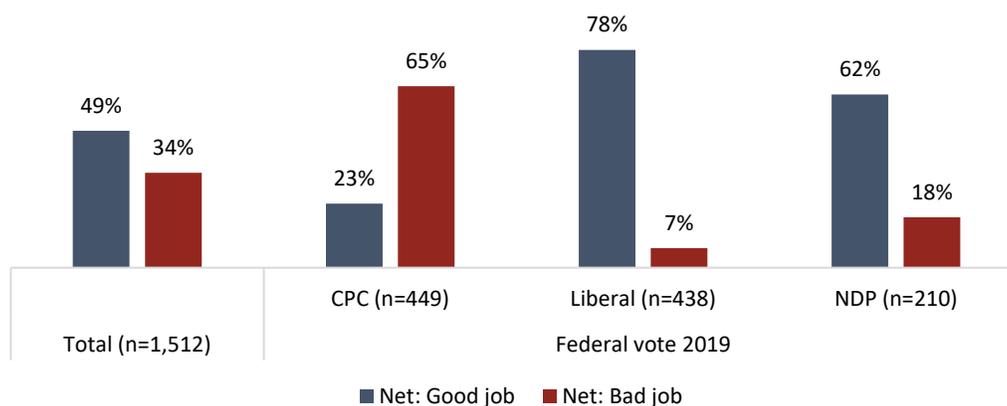
Overall, Canadians are relatively positive when assessing the government's actions to this point in each area of the country outside of Alberta. Half or more in B.C. (57%), Ontario (49%), Quebec (51%) and Atlantic Canada (52%) say the Trudeau government has done a good job:

**And, do you think the following are doing a good or bad job handling this whole issue regarding the coronavirus?
The federal government**



Responses are much more polarized when considering the political preference of respondents. While opinions are stable across age and gender ([see comprehensive tables](#)), those who supported the Conservative Party are overwhelmingly critical of the government response, while both past NDP and Liberal voters are more positive:

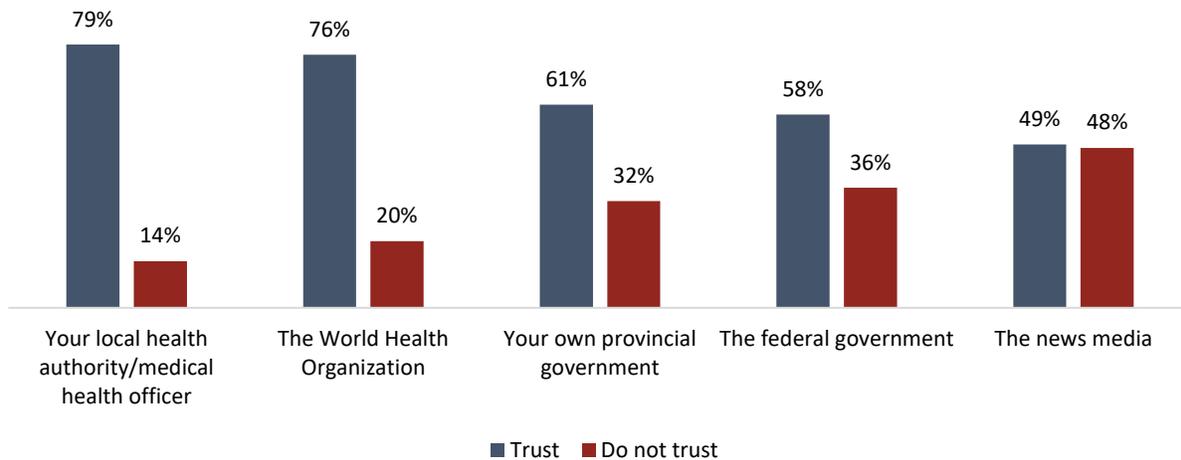
**And, do you think the following are doing a good or bad job handling this whole issue regarding the coronavirus?
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Do Canadians trust the information they're receiving?

Misinformation about the coronavirus has reportedly been a significant problem, [particularly on social media](#). Canadians are most trusting about the information that they are receiving from their local health authorities, as well as the World Health Organization. The level of trust however, is lower when provincial and federal levels of government, and news organizations, are the sources:

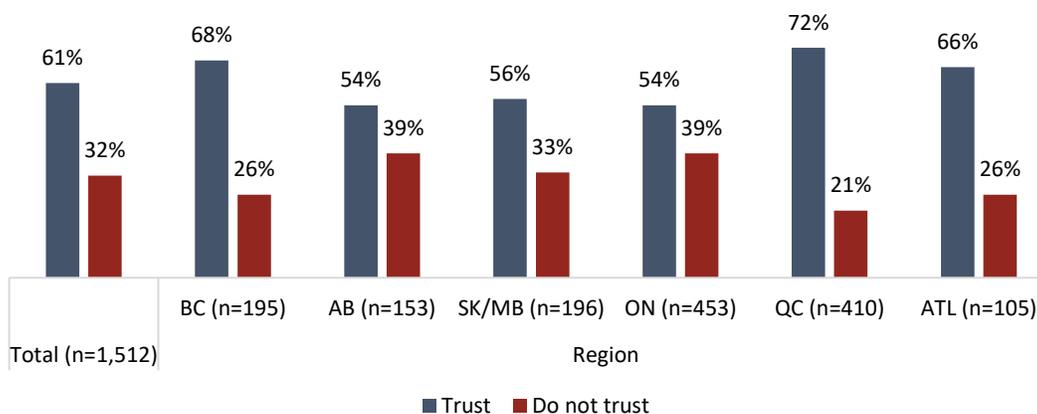
When it comes to information about the coronavirus, how much do you personally trust the information that you are seeing from each of the following:



Quebecers, British Columbians and Atlantic Canadians are more trusting when it comes to the information their provincial governments are offering, while those in Alberta, the Prairies and Ontario are considerably less likely to trust their provincial leadership:

When it comes to information about the coronavirus, how much do you personally trust the information that you are seeing from each of the following:

Your own provincial government



Again, political alignment drives opinion on trust. Those who supported the CPC in the October federal election are vastly more likely to say they do not trust the information they are receiving from any number of sources. This includes being five times more likely to say they do not trust the World Health Organization.

Percentage of Canadians who DO NOT trust each of the following regarding COVID-19 information				
	Total (n=1,512)	Federal vote 2019		
		CPC (n=449)	Liberal (n=438)	NDP (n=210)
The news media	48%	69%	31%	42%
The federal government	36%	68%	8%	21%
Your own provincial government	32%	35%	30%	36%
The World Health Organization	20%	40%	8%	8%
Your local health authority/medical health officer	14%	20%	8%	10%

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

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