

Perpetual Pandemic: Canadians say post-COVID-19 'return to normal' is far off

68% now say it will be at least six months before normal life resumes, up from 43% in April

May 15, 2020 – Remember when we went to the movies, or when summer vacation plans included getting on planes? What day is it today, anyway? For Canadians greeting each sunrise to begin a day eerily similar to the last, the cycle of self-isolating, staying home, and not doing too much may be beginning to grate.

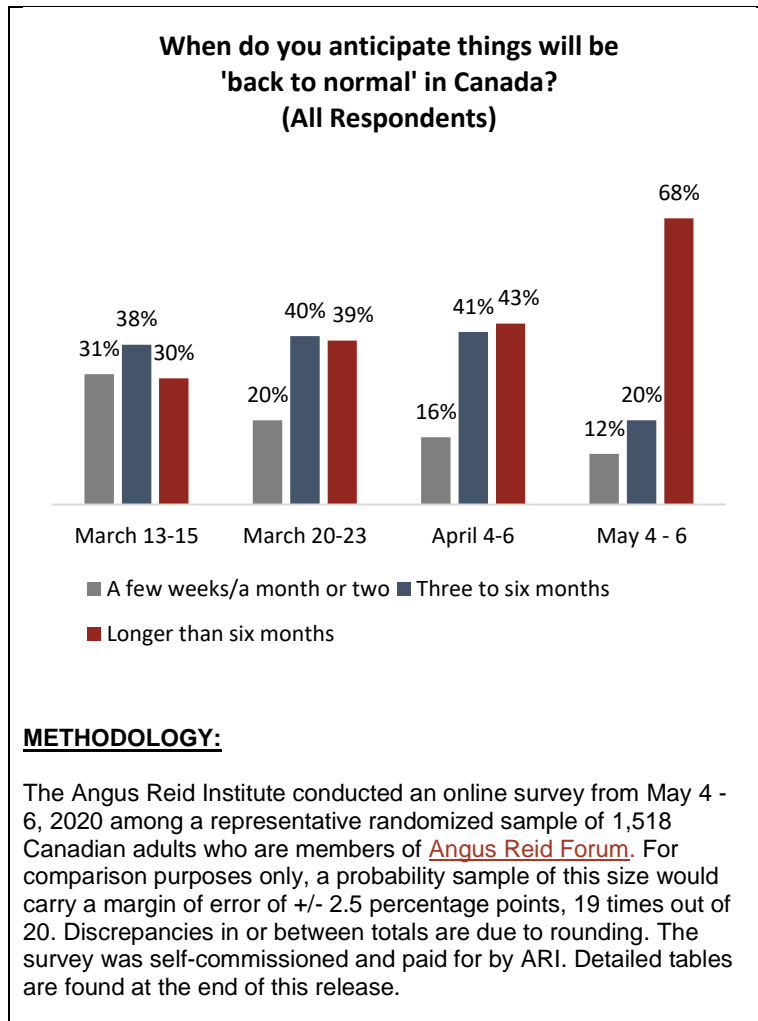
Nonetheless, the latest public opinion data from the non-profit Angus Reid Institute finds Canadians resigned to their fate for the long haul.

Seven-in-ten (68%) now see a timeline for a full return to normal life – post-COVID-19 – as at least six months away. This represents a stark increase in the number of Canadians holding this view from March (30%) and April (43%).

For the vast majority (79%), their primary concern continues to be the risk of illness for friends and family, compared to 59 per cent who say they are worried about their personal risk.

The good news is that for many, the potential economic turmoil foreseen in the early days of the pandemic has not been realized. While a number did not pay their rent in full (13%) last month or have had to reduce the quality of their groceries (16%), this is a fraction of the number who were worried about these situations occurring back in March (in each case at least three-in-ten did).

And as provinces begin to slowly lift restrictions and outline plans for a cautious opening up of communities and their economies, Canadians continue to be of the opinion that it is too soon to reopen many of the businesses and institutions where they live. Seven-in-ten say it is too soon to go to elementary schools (71%), places of worship (69%), gyms (73%), and other places in their neighbourhoods.



CONTACT:

Shachi Kurl, Executive Director: 604.908.1693 shachi.kurl@angusreid.org @shachikurl
Dave Korzinski, Research Director: 250.899.0821 dave.korzinski@angusreid.org

More Key Findings:

- One-in-three Quebec residents say that elementary schools should be re-opened. A similar number of respondents in each region with the exceptions of Ontario (15%) and Atlantic Canada (15%) agree
- Among those who pay residential rent, 87 per cent say they were able to pay in full last month. 13 per cent had their rent either reduced, deferred, or waived
- The 59 per cent of Canadians who are personally concerned about becoming sick with COVID-19 represents a 14-point drop from the previous month. One-in-five Canadians (20%) remain 'very concerned' about becoming sick

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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Part One: Perceived timeline for “back to normal” lengthens

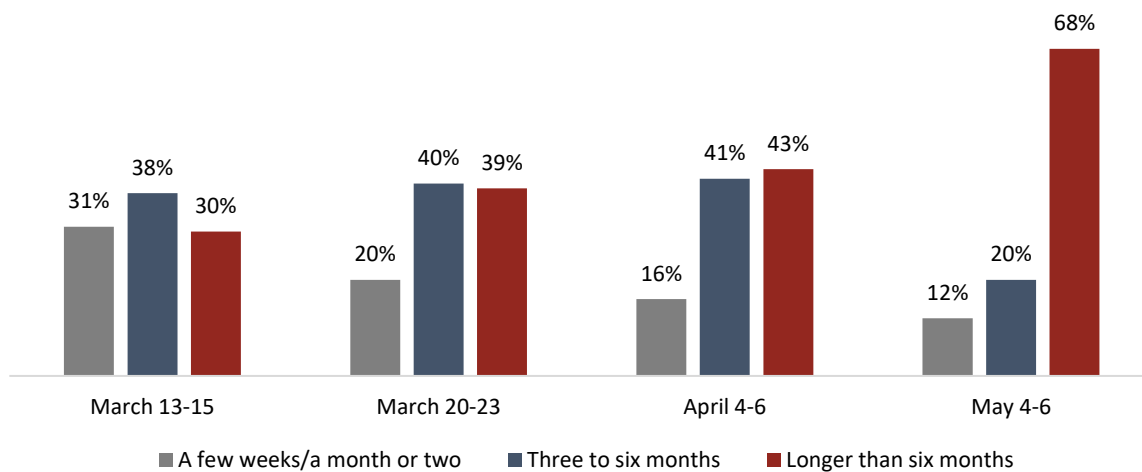
Since the pandemic began, the Angus Reid Institute has been tracking concerns and trends to understand how Canadians are coping with the COVID-19 crisis. These trends include views of when life might return to “normal”.

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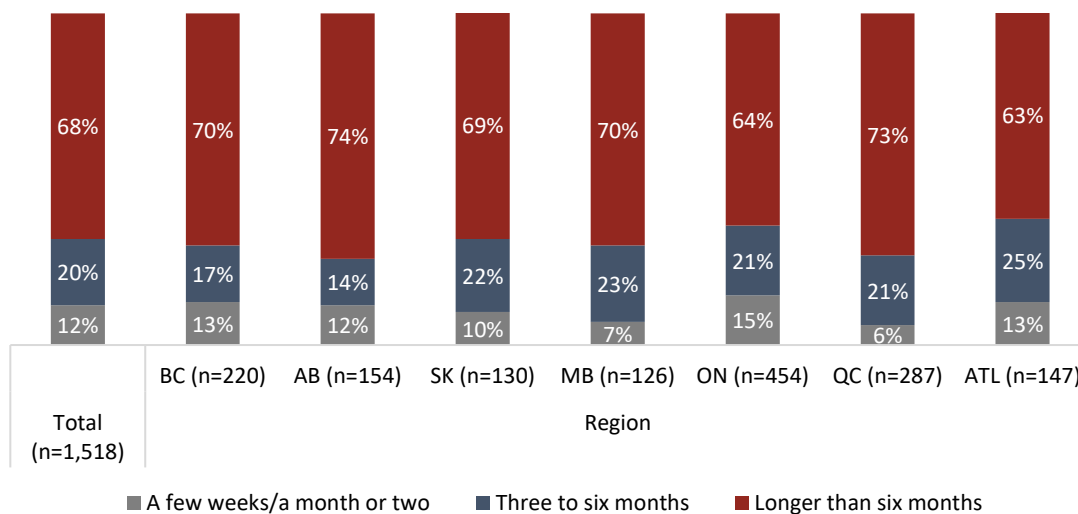
In March, 31 per cent of Canadians felt that the most significant impacts of the outbreak would be largely finished within a month or two. The proportion of Canadians holding that view has diminished steadily with time, and now sits at just 12 per cent. Correspondingly, the proportion of Canadians saying that normal is at least six months off has more than doubled. The latest jump comes after public health officials and governments laid out plans for re-opening their communities but with long-term social distancing guidelines and group size restrictions in place:

**When do you anticipate things will be 'back to normal' in Canada?
(All Respondents)**



There are slight regional variations on this question of anticipation, but in each area of the country at least 64 per cent of Canadians say they are dug in for the long haul:

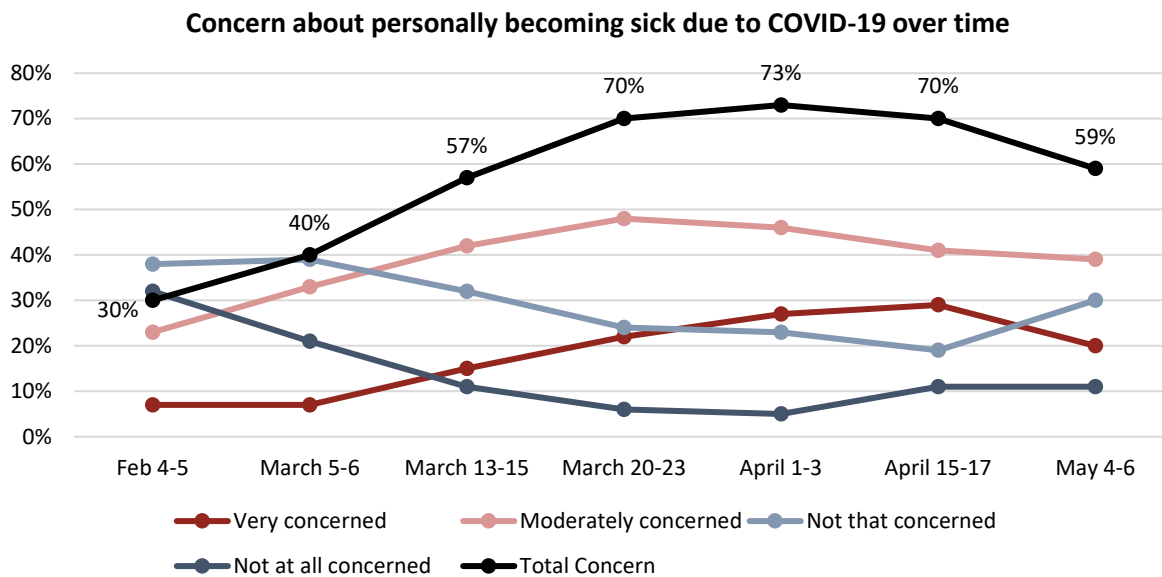
**When do you anticipate things will be 'back to normal' in Canada?
(All Respondents)**



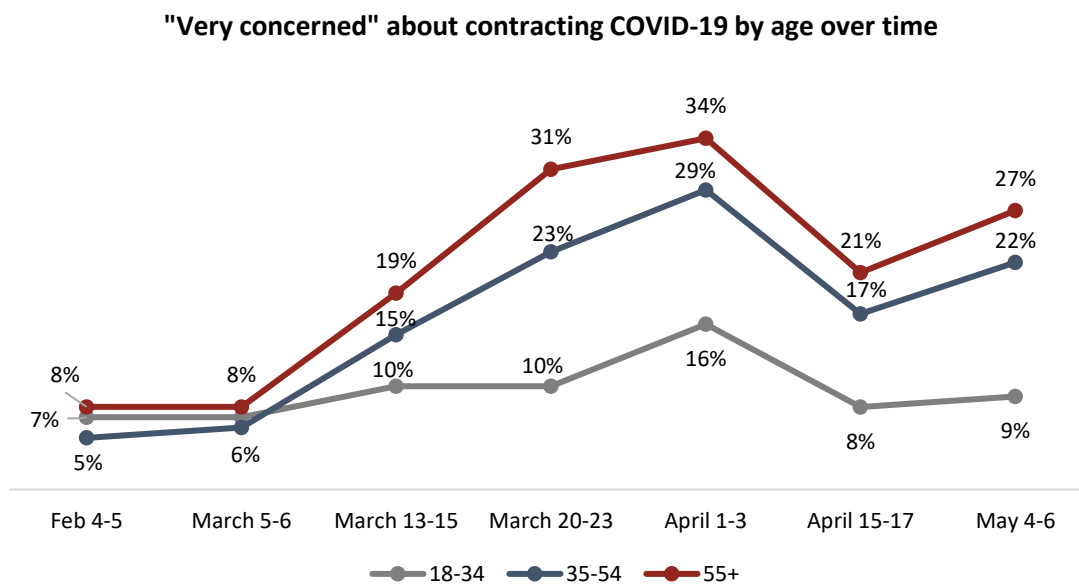
Part Two: Canadian concerns

Concern over personally falling ill drops to mid-March levels

Asked if they are worried about personally becoming sick with COVID-19, one-in-five Canadians (20%) remain very concerned while two-in-five (39%) say they are moderately concerned. This total of 59 per cent who voice some level of concern represents a 14-point drop from the peak found at the beginning of April:



Concern remains highest among older Canadians:

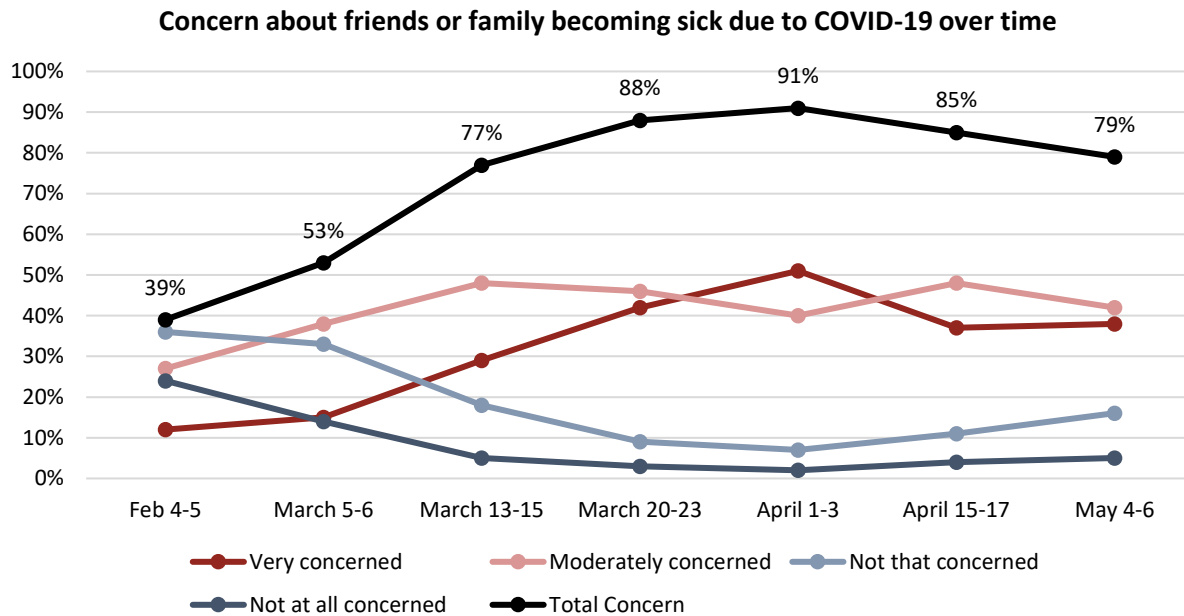


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Worries about friends and family remain primary

Another significant concern is the risk the virus poses to friends and family in other households. As has been the case since the outbreak began, respondents are more worried about others than themselves. Four-in-five (79%) say they worry about a friend or family member becoming ill:



Part Three: Economic update

Outcomes have been better than Canadians expected for themselves

The costs of shutting down large swaths of Canada’s economy have also been a source of anxiety. In response, federal and provincial governments have offered [aid programs](#) for low-income earners, seniors, students, businesses and other areas of society, worth billions.

These financial programs appear, thus far, to have buffered Canadians from the worst of the outcomes some anticipated. For example, in March, 5 per cent of Canadians said they had missed a rent or mortgage payment already, and 30 per cent were worried about the prospect of this happening. In May, nearly the same number (6%) say they actually missed a payment, far less than 30 per cent who were worried about it. Worries are now held by 17 per cent of Canadians.

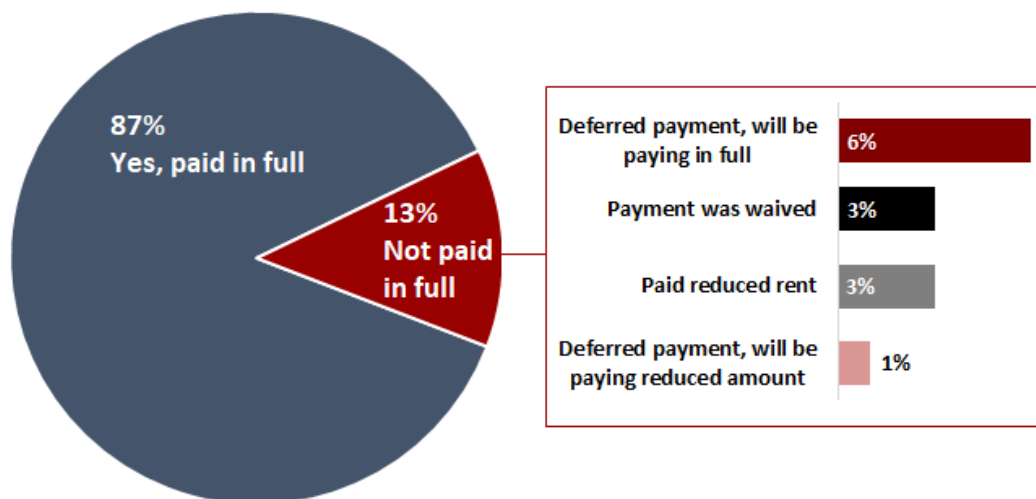
Similar trends are found across a number of other economic aspects regarding COVID-19 fallout on Canadian households:

	Comparing responses to potential economic worries – March 20 to 23 versus May 4 to 6 “Are you worried about....”							
	Not being able to pay rent or mortgage		Not being able to afford quality groceries		Having to use a food bank		Having to borrow money for essentials	
	March 20 - 23	May 4 - 6	March 20 - 23	May 4 - 6	March 20 - 23	May 4 - 6	March 20 - 23	May 4 - 6
This has happened already	5%	6%	20%	16%	5%	6%	9%	8%
Worried about this happening	30%	17%	34%	21%	14%	10%	23%	14%
Not had to and do not expect to deal with this	66%	76%	47%	63%	81%	84%	68%	78%

How are renters holding up?

To better understand the situation that renters have been facing, the Angus Reid Institute asked those who rent their living space how this past month went. Most (87%) paid their rent in full at the time it was due. For the rest, payment of rent has either been delayed, missed, reduced, or some combination of those scenarios. Surveys done by [landlord associations in B.C. and Alberta](#) have noted similar data.

And this past month, were you able to pay your rent for your principal residence? (Pay residential rent, n=579)



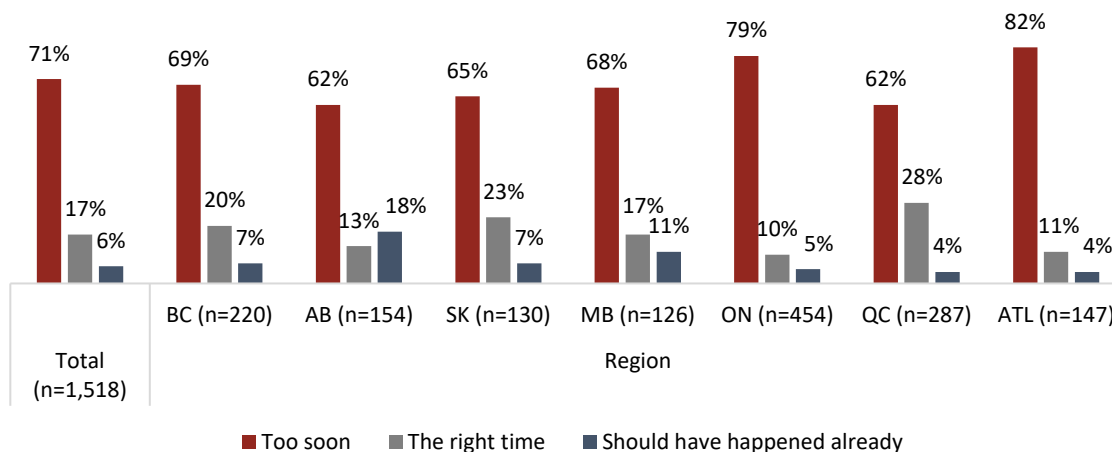
Part Four: Opening up

Less desire to open schools

Many provinces have outlined plans to gradually reopen their schools and businesses. In [Quebec](#), elementary school classes outside greater Montreal re-opened on May 11, while those in Montreal will not open [until next school year](#). A decision about what to do with schools in [Ontario](#) is expected next week, while in [British Columbia](#), a five stage process to return children to school has been unveiled.

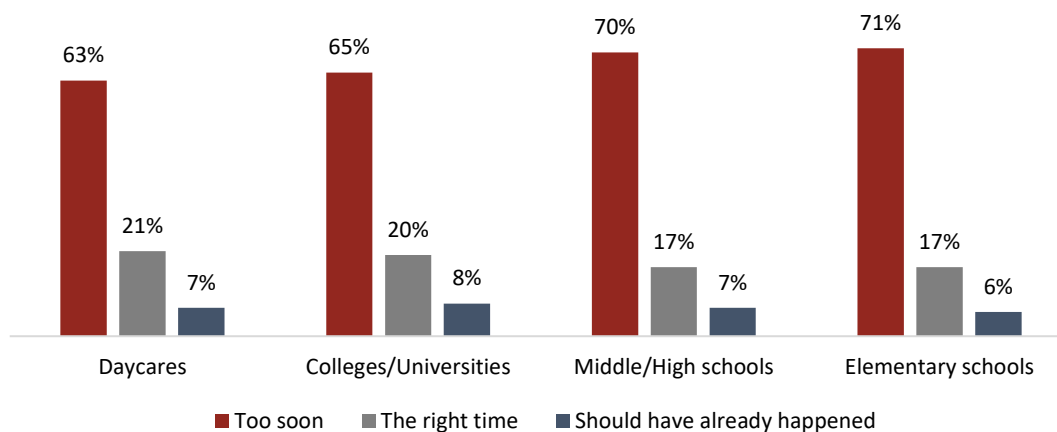
For seven-in-ten Canadians, a mid-May return to school for elementary students is “too soon”. Ontario and Atlantic Canada residents are most likely to say opening now would be in haste:

**Opinion if elementary schools in your province were to open on May 15
(All respondents)**



Similar sentiments emerge about opening up other educational institutions and daycares, with most Canadians saying it is “too soon” to begin opening each:

**Opinion if each were to open in your province on May 15
(All respondents, n=1,518)**



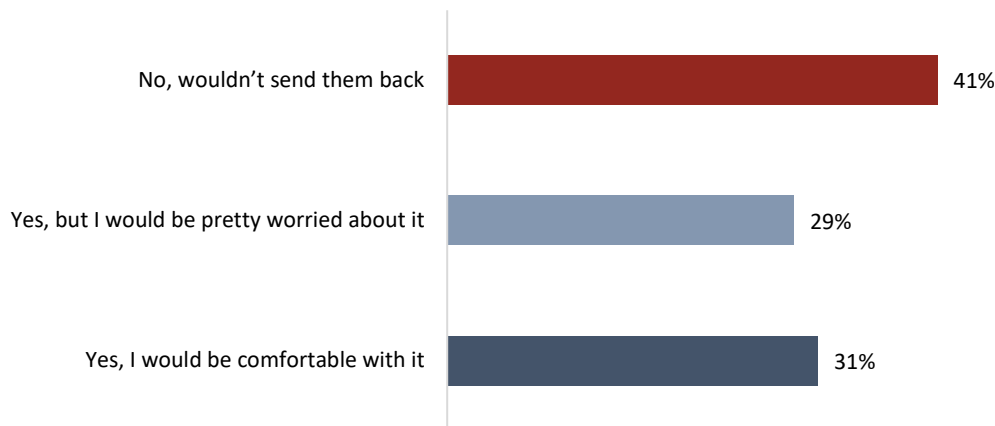
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Two-in-five parents don't want to send kids back right now

As part of a unique survey of Canadian children release [earlier this month](#), the Angus Reid Institute also asked 820 parents of children ages 10 to 17 if they would be comfortable sending their children back to school if schools were opened in May. A plurality, (41%) said “no”:

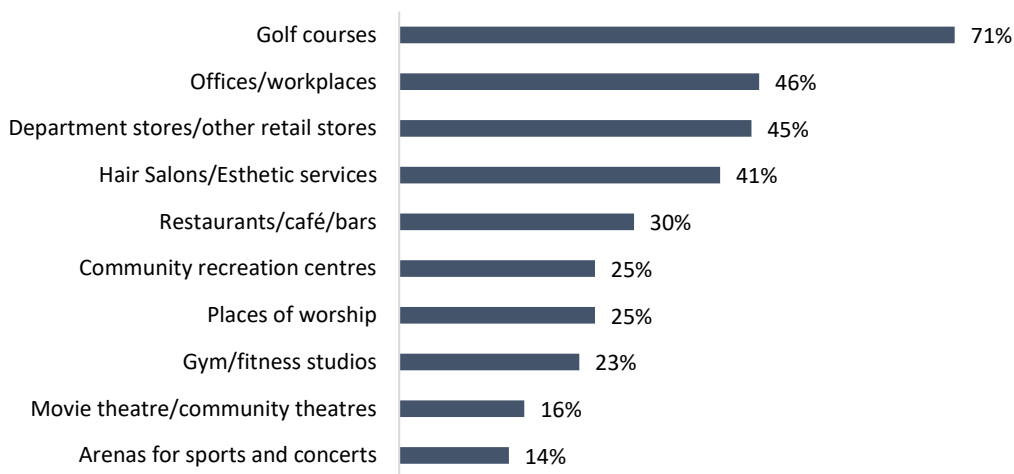
**Views on sending child/children back to school in May
(All respondents, n=820)**



What should be open, what shouldn't?

While schools are a no-go for approximately two-thirds, many Canadians say other places are ready to get back up and running. In addition to parks, which Canadians [recently said should be open first](#), a majority say golf courses should be open. At least four-in-ten also say that offices, department stores and hair salons should be open:

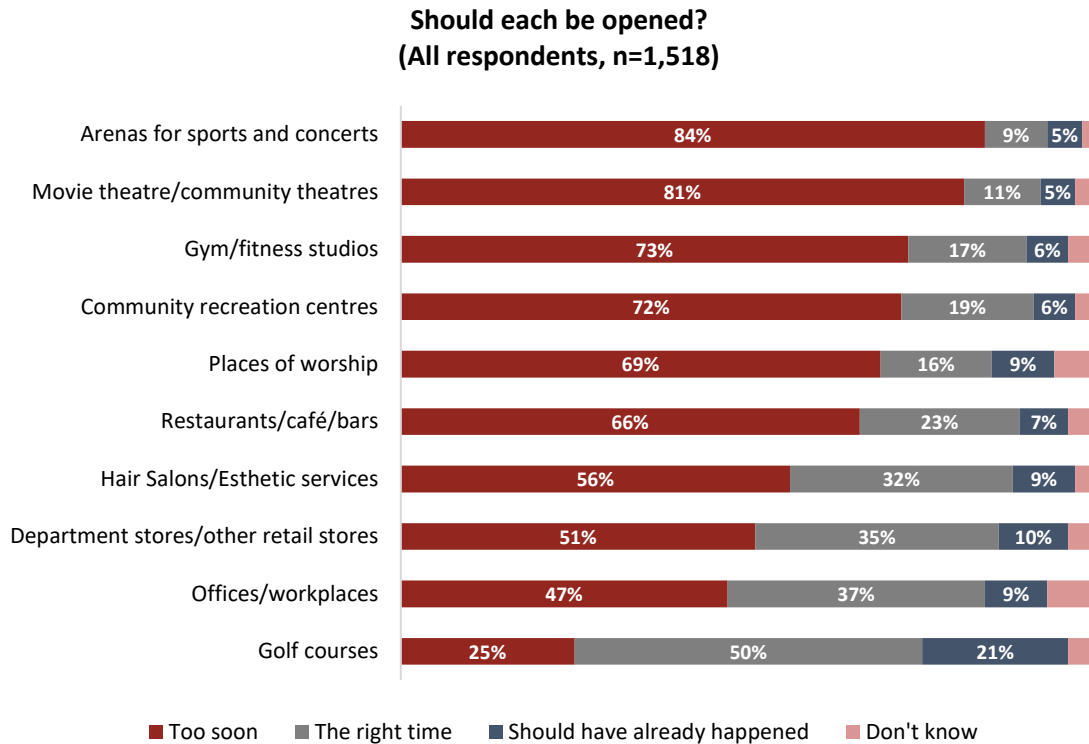
**Percentage of Canadians who say each should be open now
(All respondents, n=1,518)**



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By contrast, there is little appetite to open arenas, theatres, gyms, or places of worship, where large groups would gather:



The table below highlights places for which at least 70 per cent of respondents in each province or region don't support opening yet. While Canadians are cautious overall, those in Ontario, Quebec and Atlantic Canada are more so:

Percentage of Canadians who say it would be “too soon” to open each of these places
Boxes highlighted where at least 70% of residents say “too soon”

	Total (n=1,518)	Region						
		BC (n=220)	AB (n=154)	SK (n=130)	MB (n=126)	ON (n=454)	QC (n=287)	ATL (n=147)
Arenas for sports and concerts	84%	77%	77%	81%	85%	87%	86%	87%
Movie theatre/ community theatres	81%	76%	75%	74%	84%	83%	84%	83%
Gym/fitness studios	73%	67%	64%	58%	68%	75%	80%	78%
Community recreation centres	72%	69%	58%	63%	62%	74%	77%	80%
Places of worship	69%	68%	59%	60%	68%	70%	74%	74%
Restaurants/ café/bars	66%	60%	52%	49%	55%	68%	74%	68%
Hair Salons/ Esthetic services	56%	60%	48%	39%	40%	58%	56%	62%
Department/ retail stores	51%	44%	38%	34%	43%	56%	55%	54%
Offices/ workplaces	47%	39%	42%	33%	36%	54%	44%	53%
Golf courses	25%	18%	17%	18%	16%	29%	29%	21%

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

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