

COVID-19 across the border: Americans say they're far more stressed and financially pressed than Canadians do

People in neither country confident their neighbours will do what's needed to reverse rising case numbers

November 2, 2020 – As COVID-19 cases surge in North America and across the globe, a new study by the non-profit Angus Reid Institute finds Americans having a more difficult time than Canadians weathering the relentless financial and health challenges wrought by the pandemic.

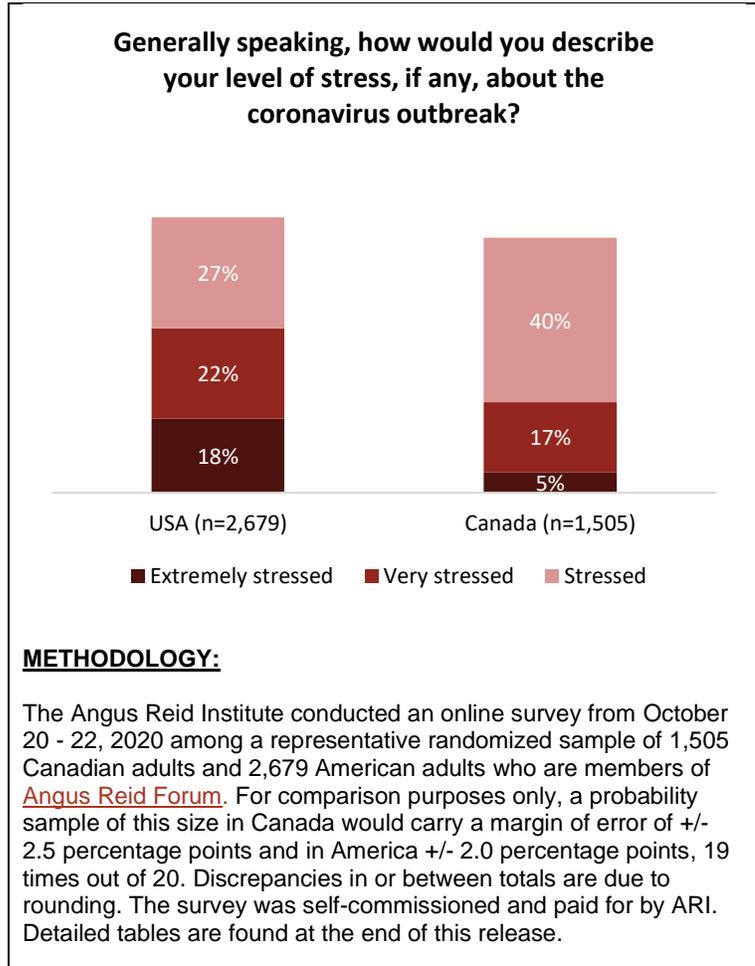
At an individual level, Americans are nearly twice as likely as Canadians to be dealing with elevated stress levels. Two-in-five Americans (40%) are either 'very' or 'extremely' stressed due to the pandemic, while in Canada that number reaches one-in-five (22%).

Further, nearly half of Americans (46%) are 'very' or 'extremely' worried about their personal financial situation, compared to a significant but considerably lower 28 per cent of Canadians.

As the pandemic wears on, citizens in both countries voice fatigue at the precautions requested of them. Just over half on each side of the border say they have grown tired of social distancing, mask wearing and other practices. That said, Canadians are slightly more confident that people in their country will turn the situation around quickly and stem rising case numbers. Half (52%) in Canada say they have confidence in their country to reverse this trend compared to 42 per cent in America.

More Key Findings:

- Both Americans and Canadians continue to be cautious with the amount of time they spend in public places. One-in-three Americans (35%) are avoiding restaurants entirely, compared to 40 per cent of Canadians. Another one-in-three in each country are taking extra precautions if they do go out for a meal.
- Canadians are more bullish about the efforts of their neighbours to curb the spread of COVID-19. Seven-in-ten say they think people in their community are doing a good job with precautions, while just 49 per cent of Americans say the same.



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- Two-in-five Americans (42%) say the risk of the coronavirus is overblown; one-quarter of Canadians (26%) feels the same. Those who lean conservatives in each country are far more likely to say this than others

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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Americans twice as likely as Canadians to feel high stress

In Canada, provinces are mulling and implementing extra restrictions to stem record positive case numbers. While more than 3,000 cases, recorded on October 30, is certainly cause for concern, it pales in comparison to the 101,000 recorded on the same day south of the border. This, as President Donald Trump insists the country is "[rounding the corner](#)" and continues to [flout restrictions](#) at large political rallies ahead of Election Day this Tuesday.

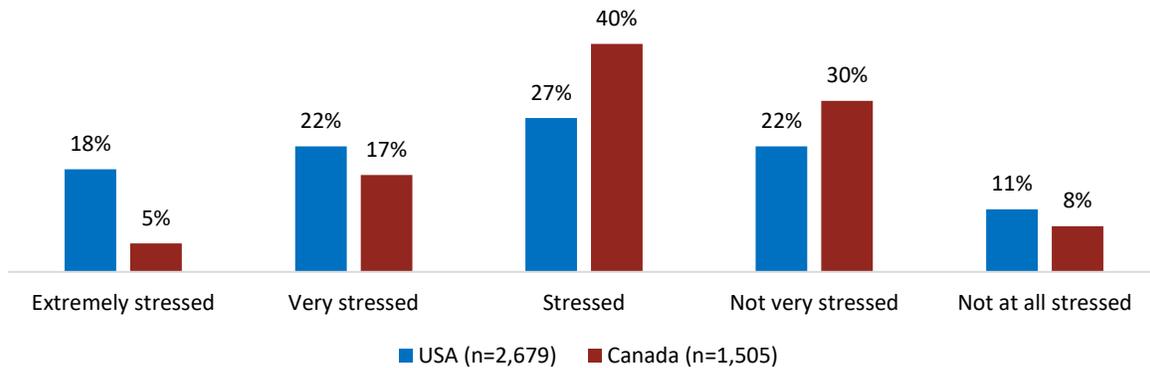
It is perhaps, then, unsurprising that the stress levels felt by residents in each country vary considerably. The United States has experience more than [236,000](#) COVID-19 related deaths, while Canada passed [10,000](#) last week.

Three-in-five Canadians are stressed about the pandemic, though the extremity of their feeling is what separates them from their neighbours. Two-in-five Americans (40%) are very or extremely stressed, nearly double the number who say this in Canada, as seen in the graph below:

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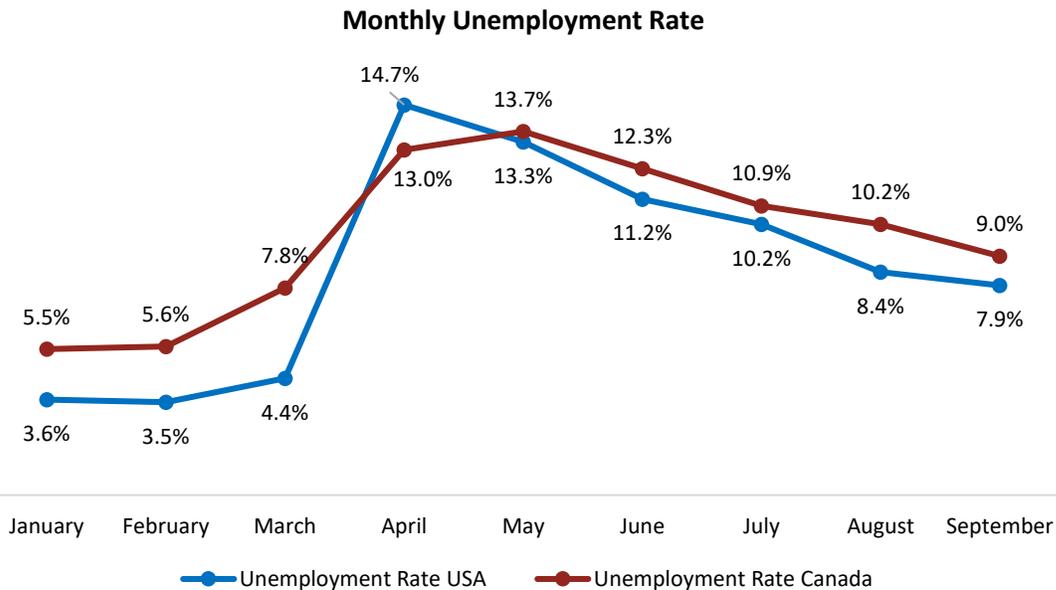
Generally speaking, how would you describe your level of stress, if any, about the coronavirus outbreak?



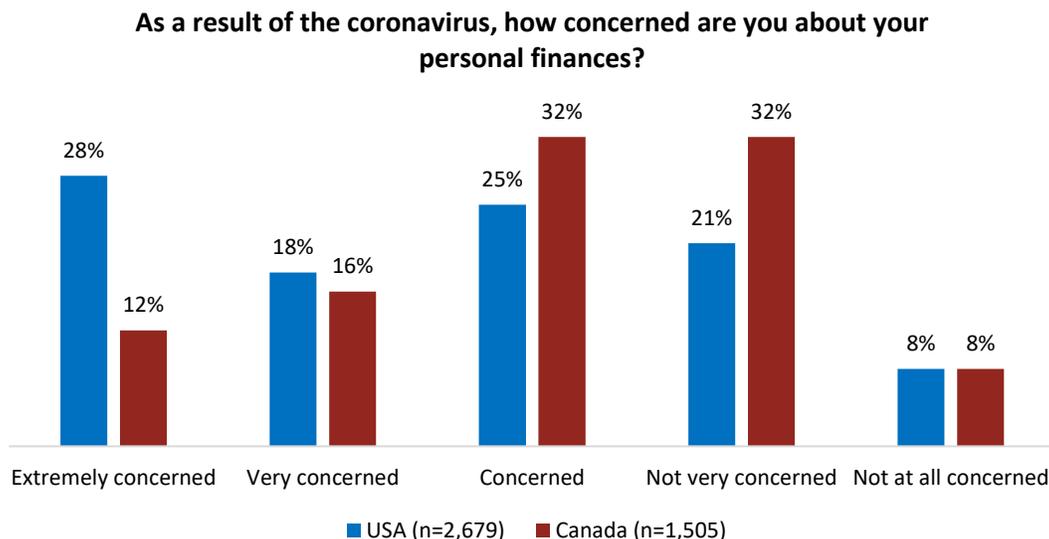
Despite the elevated risk COVID-19 poses to older individuals, stress levels are higher among residents under 55 years of age in each country. Perhaps helping to explain this, Canadians and Americans in this older age groups are notably more likely to feel that things will turn around for the better quickly (see detailed tables at end of report for more).

Disproportionate financial concern likely contributing

One of the elements likely causing stress for residents is their personal financial situation. In Canada, those who were unable to work were able to apply for a [monthly payment](#) of up to \$2,000 through the Canada Emergency Response Benefit. After 28 weeks of the CERB residents are being [transitioned](#) to Employment Insurance. In the United States, congress approved a one-time payment of up to \$1,200 per person earning under \$99,000 per year alongside the [\\$2 trillion](#) CARES act. Additional relief has been [tied up political negotiations](#) for months. This, as both nations have dealt with staggering unemployment levels:

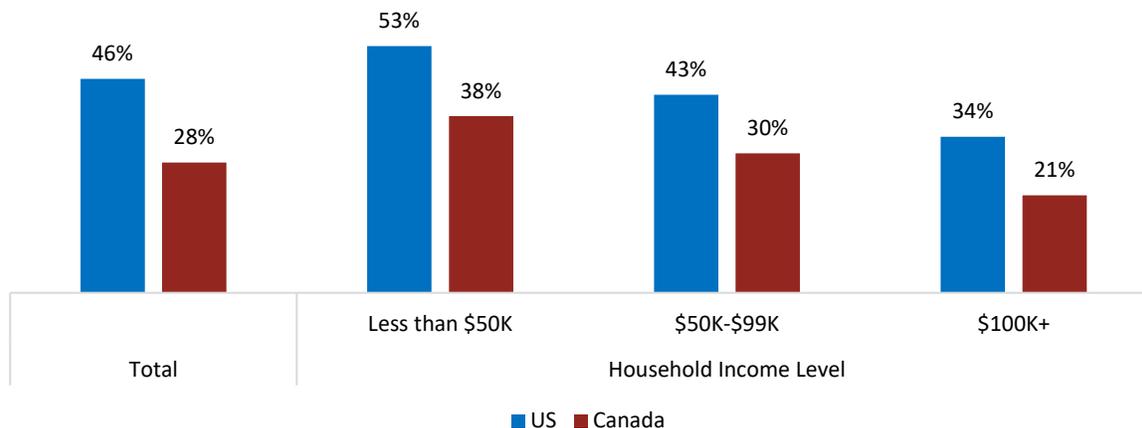


What results from this financial difficulty, paired with disproportionate levels of financial assistance and social safety nets, is that Americans are dealing with substantially higher levels of economic anxiety than Canadians. Consider the proportion in each country that are ‘extremely’ concerned about their personal finances; in the United States this number reaches three-in-ten (28%), while in Canada it hovers closer to one-in-ten (12%):



Lower-income households in both countries are facing immense challenges. Just over half (53%) of residents in the U.S. with household incomes under \$50 thousand are very or extremely concerned about their finances. In Canada, a significant minority (38%) are also having a very tough time:

Percentage of residents who say they are 'very' or 'extremely' stressed due to COVID-19:



Two nations, united by an abundance of caution

Despite much of the political tension that has been generated by the COVID-19 pandemic in both countries, a majority of residents in each say they are considering their actions carefully to reduce exposure. Unfortunately for those who are attempting to mitigate the spread, just a **small number** of non-compliant actors are necessary to fuel proliferation. Nonetheless, asked about a number of different activities, most are being careful or avoiding them entirely.

For example, 40 per cent of Canadians are avoiding malls entirely, while 39 per cent are taking extra precautions if they do go. In the U.S., an even greater number (46%) are avoiding them completely, while 28 per cent are taking extra care if they go:

| As a result of the coronavirus, how do you feel about going out to each of the following: | | | | | | |
|---|-----------------|-------------------------------|-------|-----------------|-------------------------------|-------|
| | USA | | | Canada | | |
| | Fine with going | Would go but be extra careful | Avoid | Fine with going | Would go but be extra careful | Avoid |
| Grocery shopping | 44% | 49% | 8% | 41% | 54% | 6% |
| Retail (in store) shopping | 33% | 47% | 20% | 27% | 54% | 19% |
| Restaurants | 31% | 34% | 35% | 24% | 36% | 40% |
| Malls | 26% | 28% | 46% | 21% | 39% | 40% |
| Airports | 23% | 28% | 50% | 14% | 21% | 65% |

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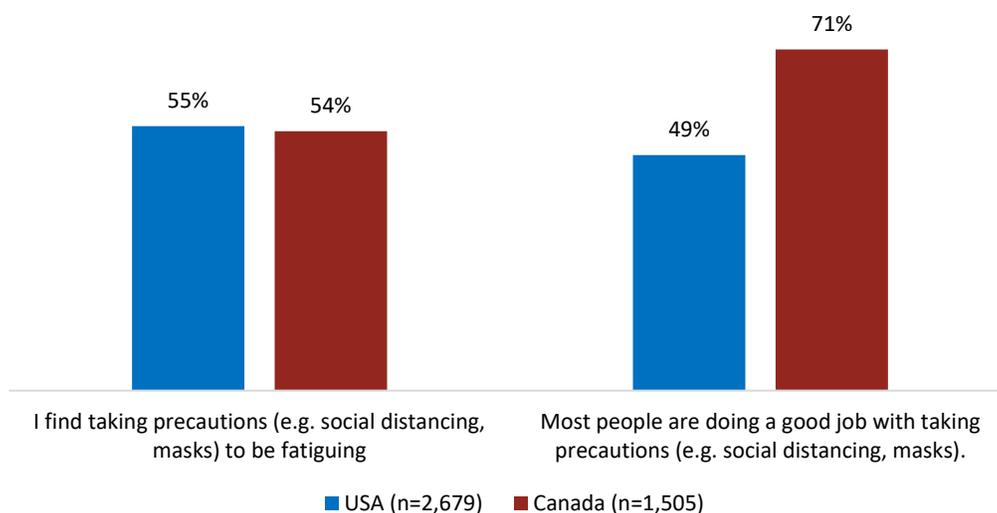
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| | | | | | | |
|-----------------------------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| Movie theaters | 21% | 19% | 60% | 16% | 18% | 66% |
| Live sporting events | 20% | 18% | 62% | 14% | 13% | 74% |

Equally fatigued citizens

Residents on both sides of the border are equally likely to say they're growing tired of the precautions they are being asked to take. Just over half in each country say they're fatigued by social distancing, mask wearing and other safe actions they're practicing. Interestingly, however, Canadians are much more convinced that the people around them are continuing to take the pandemic seriously. Seven-in-ten north of the border (71%) say most people are doing a good job on this front, while just 49 per cent in the United States have this view:

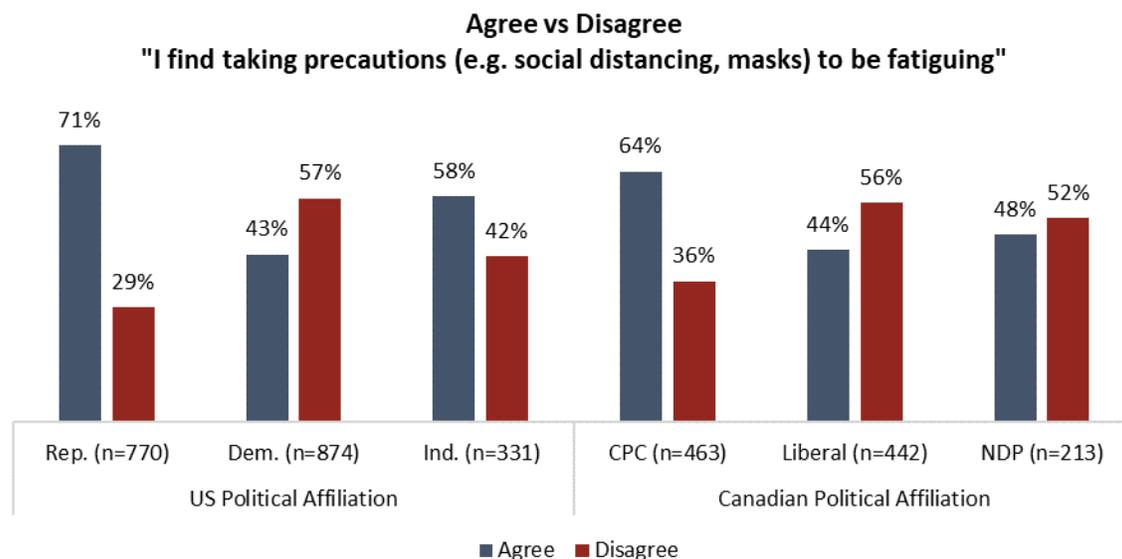
Percentage in each country that agree with each statement:



As is the case in so much of public discourse in 2020, in both countries there are considerable differences of opinion by political affiliation. For example, 71 per cent of Republicans say they are fatigued by taking safety precautions compared to just 43 per cent of Democrats. In Canada, those who supported the Conservative Party in 2019 are vastly more likely than others to also say they're tired:

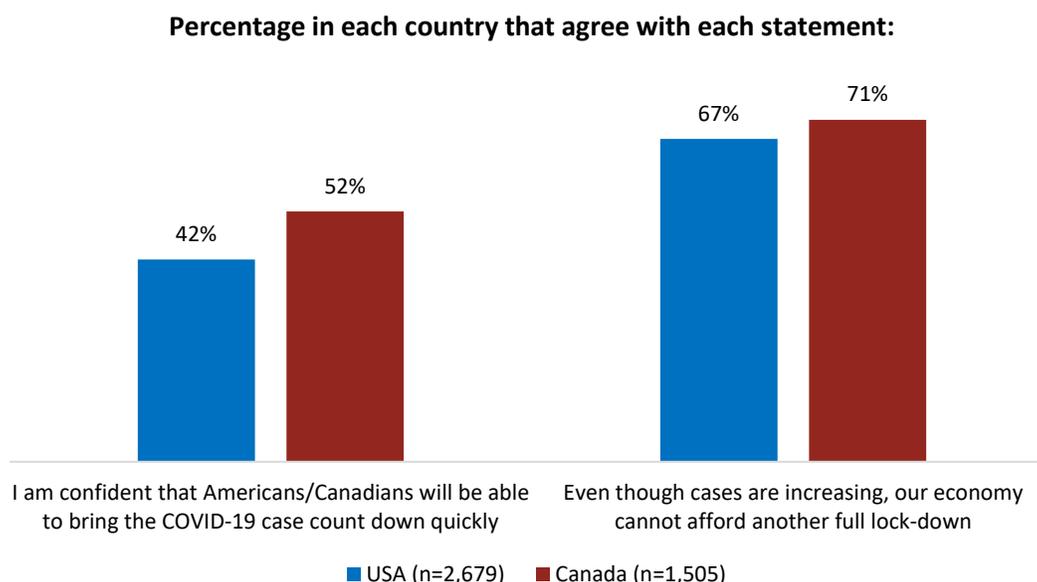
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Canada more confident in ability to reduce cases, neither nation wants another lockdown

Regardless of fatigue levels, much needs to be done if the rises in cases is to be reversed. That said, in both countries there is little appetite for a large scale lockdown. All of these aforementioned factors add up to two nations where confidence is low that the case count can be reduced quickly. Canadians are, however, more confident than Americans:



Americans more likely to say virus risk overblown, time to get back to normal

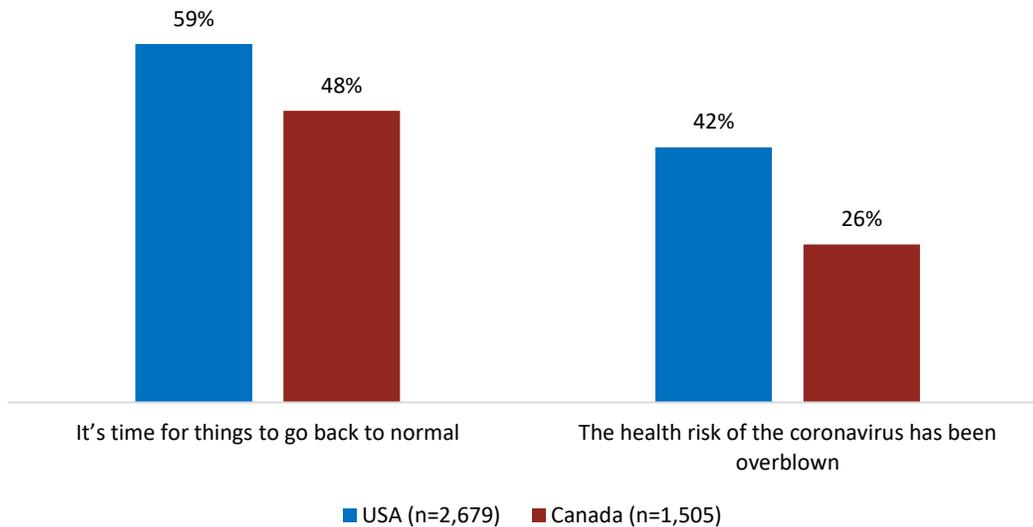
Now entering the ninth month of the pandemic in North America, there is a palpable desire for a return to normal. Whether that normal will ever exist again, however, is the subject of much debate. Americans are

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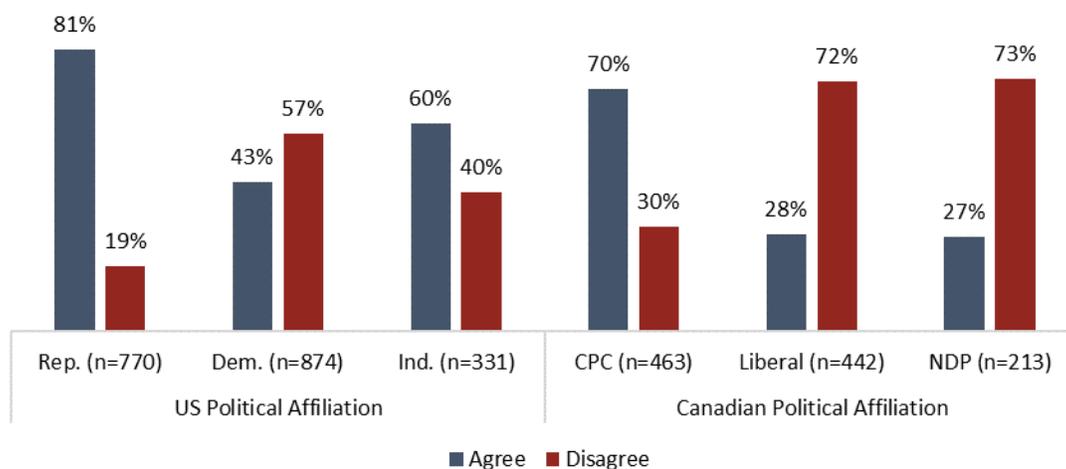
more likely to say that it's time to return to normal, likely due to the fact that they are far more likely to say the threat of the coronavirus is overblown:

Percentage in each country that agree with each statement:



Underscoring the political division in both countries, consider that Republicans are nearly twice as likely as Democrats to say it's time for things to return to normal and in Canada, Conservatives are well over double as likely to say this compared to Liberals and New Democrats:

**Agree vs Disagree
"It's time for thing to go back to normal"**



*For detailed results by age, gender, region, education, and other demographics in Canada, [click here](#).
For detailed results by age, gender, region, education, and other demographics in America, [click here](#).
For detailed results by political affiliation in America, [click here](#).*

Summary tables for political affiliation in Canada are found below.

| Agree or disagree with the statements below | | | | |
|--|-----------------|-------------------|-----------------|-------------|
| | Total (n=1,505) | Federal vote 2019 | | |
| | | CPC (n=456) | Liberal (n=438) | NDP (n=209) |
| "I find precautions like social distancing and mask wearing to be fatiguing" | | | | |
| Agree | 54% | 64% | 44% | 48% |
| Disagree | 46% | 36% | 56% | 52% |
| "It's time for things to go back to normal" | | | | |
| Agree | 48% | 70% | 28% | 27% |
| Disagree | 52% | 30% | 72% | 73% |

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