

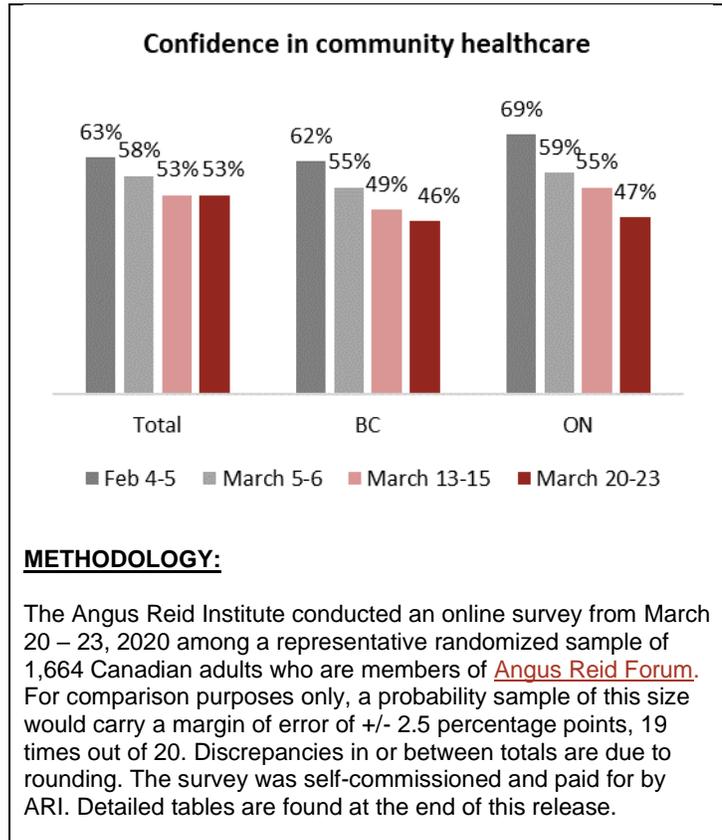
COVID-19 Checkup: Confidence in local health systems slips Ontario & BC, majority report “social distancing”

Majorities continue to say their provincial, federal governments doing a “good job” handling the crisis

March 26, 2020 – As daily diagnoses of new COVID-19 cases rise and governments impose ever stricter controls on public movement, new data from the non-profit Angus Reid Institute show Canadian behaviour and daily life has changed extraordinarily over the last seven weeks.

A “new normal” that at the beginning of February may have seemed inconceivable now includes social distancing, staying home, and persistent handwashing, all in a critical effort to slow the spread of an extremely infectious virus. Vast majorities (85%) now report staying away from others, not touching others (84%) and staying away from public places (81%).

The aggressive spread of this coronavirus is sending anxiety levels spiking as Canadians come to grip with the financial toll it will take on their households (76%) and [job situations](#). It is also softening their level of confidence in local health care systems to cope with what [public health officials warn](#) will be an onslaught of new cases in the coming weeks.



More Key Findings:

- Quebec residents are near-unanimous in praise of their provincial government (93%), while every provincial government is said to be doing a “good job” of handling the COVID-19 outbreak by at least 71 per cent of their constituents
- The percentage saying the federal government is performing well continues to rise. Nearly two-thirds (64%) of Canadians now say this, including 46 per cent of Conservatives. This is a doubling of positive sentiment among past CPC voters since the beginning of March
- Four-in-five Canadians say it will be at least three months, if not much longer, before their lives are what they consider to be “back to normal”

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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.

INDEX:

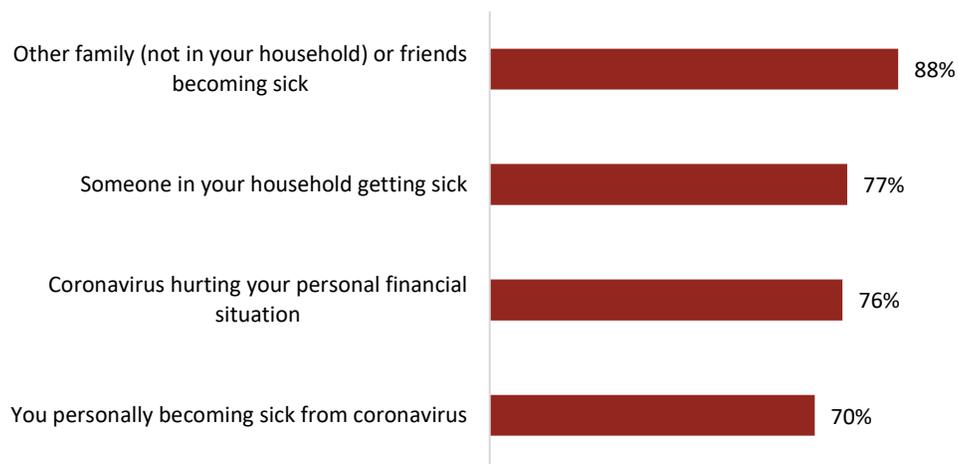
- **Checkup: Concern levels**
- **As threat seriousness sets in, social distancing takes over**
- **Confidence in community healthcare plateaus**
- **Provincial government performance**
- **Federal government performance**
 - **CPC supporters show increased praise for federal response**
 - **Canada compared to USA**
- **Anticipated timeline for ‘back to normal’ is lengthening**

Checkup: Concern levels

Anxiety is on the rise as Canadians watch the number of community infections increase. Cases in Canada change hourly but have risen to nearly 3,000, with more than 25 having died.

Concern is higher when Canadians think about their friends and family than when they think about themselves. Indeed, the highest levels of worry are saved for those family members or close friends that are not within the same household:

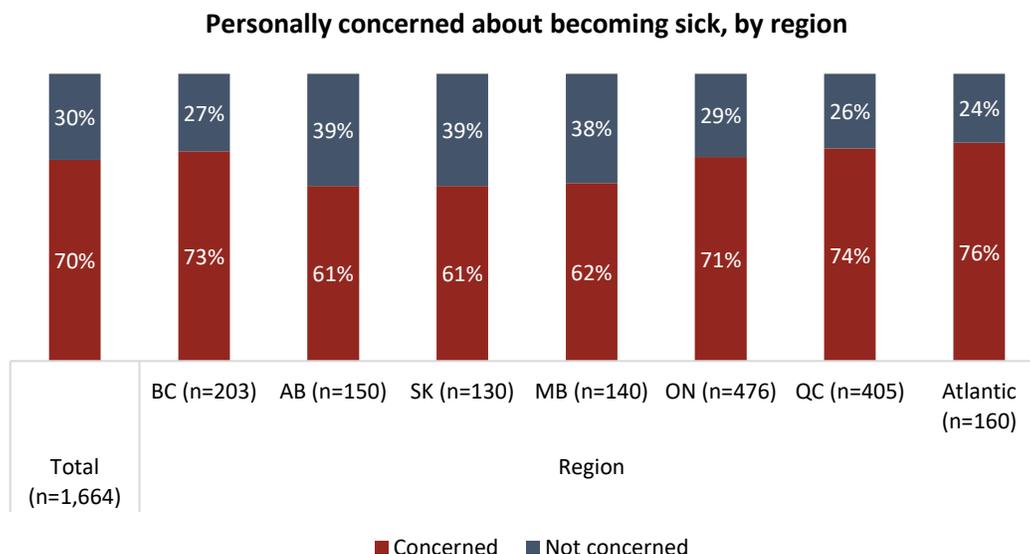
Widespread concern over COVID-19



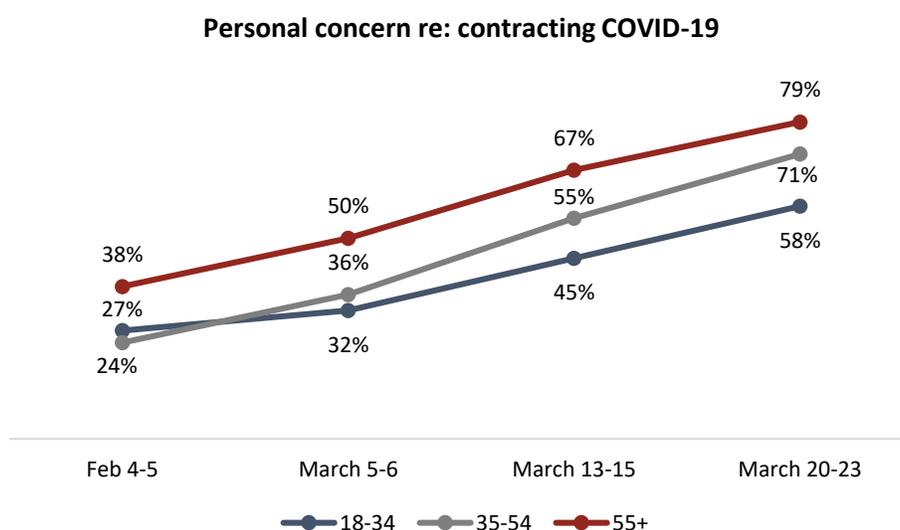
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Regionally, the Prairies and Alberta continue to be home to slightly lower levels of concern. This, as the highest volume of cases have been concentrated in British Columbia, Ontario and Quebec:

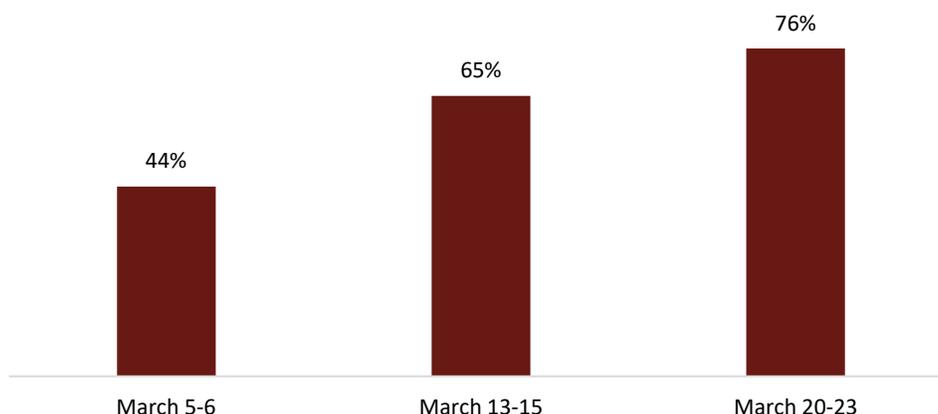


The COVID-19 outbreak has wreaked havoc in parts of the world like Italy and China, causing immense damage among elderly populations and those with compromised immune systems. This knowledge is likely cause for some of the disparity in concern by age groups in Canada. Four-in-five (79%) of those 55 years of age and older are personally concerned, up from two-thirds (67%) last week. For the first time, a majority of those 18 to 34 years old are concerned for themselves:



There is also a deep and growing unease over lost work and plummeting personal investment values. As Canadians look for financial help, an issue Angus Reid Institute canvassed in depth [earlier this week](#), concern about personal finances has risen to 76 per cent:

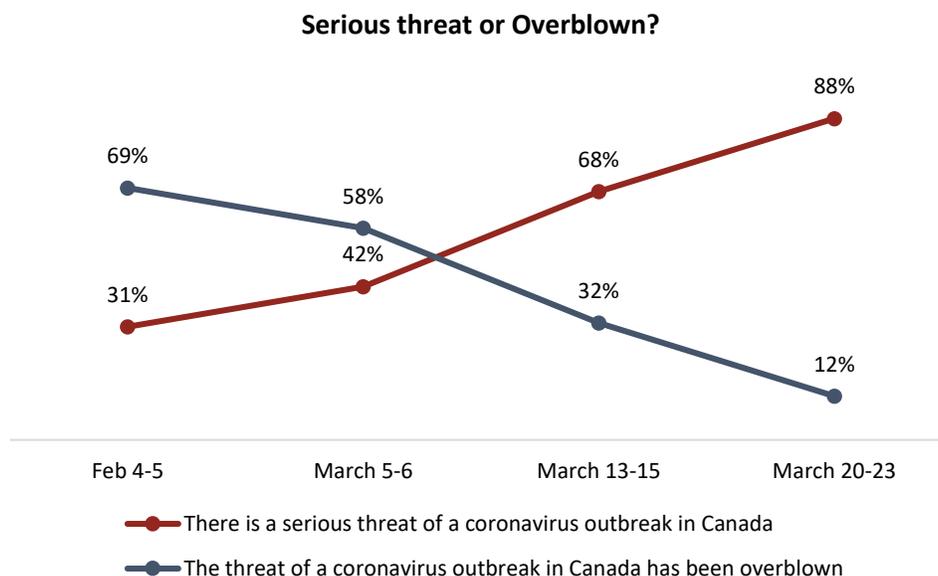
Concern re: COVID-19 hurting your personal financial situation



Related: Full release on the jarring economic impact of COVID-19 on Canadian households

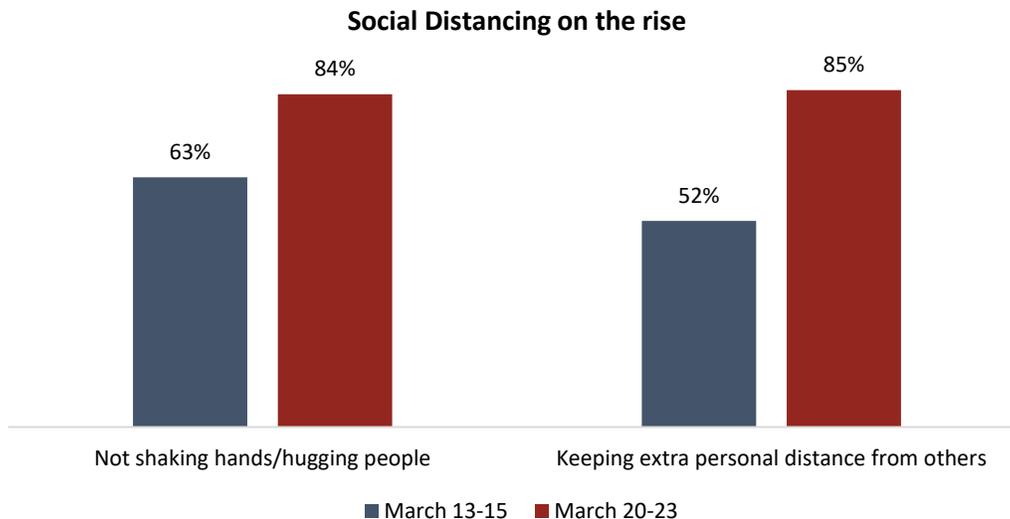
As threat seriousness sets in, social distancing takes over

Initially, Canadians viewed the COVID-19 outbreak with curiosity, not alarm. This has changed. Now, nine-in-ten (88%) say it is a serious problem, while 12 per cent continue to see it as overblown:

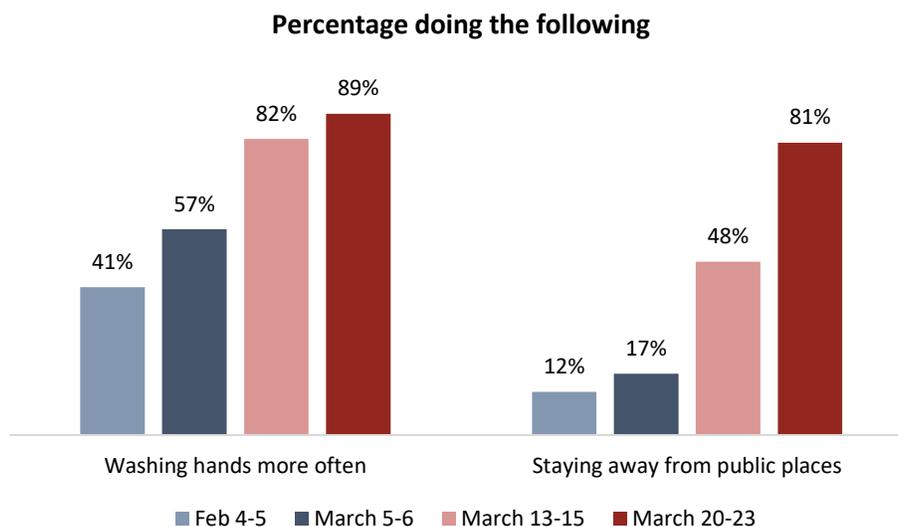


One of the frontrunners for buzzword of 2020, “social distancing”, has taken over most of Canada. Even as recently as the middle of March only half of Canadians were keeping extra physical space from others when they were out in public. That number has now risen to 85 per cent. The same number (84%) are no longer shaking hands or making physical contact with others:

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Municipalities have [reduced the number of people](#) allowed to congregate in one place. In Nova Scotia, the province has threatened to fine individuals up to \$1,000 for not adhering to social distancing guidelines. For most, this appears to not be a problem, as 81 per cent of Canadians say they are avoiding public spaces. That represents a massive increase from those who said this just 10 days prior. Still, one-in-five are evidently not actively avoiding public places:

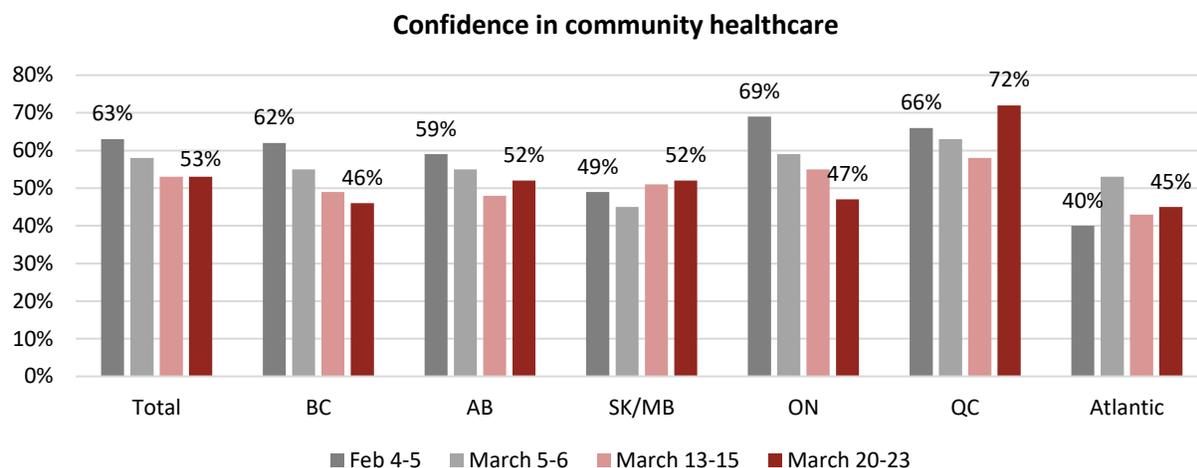


Confidence in community healthcare plateaus

Healthcare workers across the country have been [mentally, and physically preparing](#) for the COVID-19 outbreak, knowing just how quickly it has hit other countries, overwhelming their capacity. Here at home,

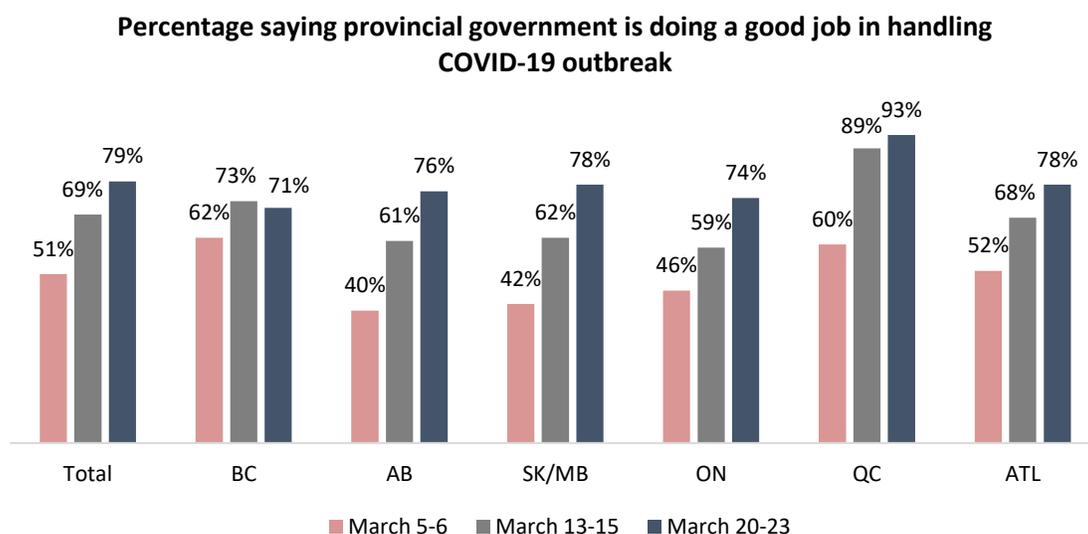
the Saskatchewan Health Authority has predicted that hospitals in the province may be overwhelmed and in British Columbia all elective surgeries have been cancelled to free up beds for future infected patients.

Against this backdrop, confidence in community healthcare systems to handle the outbreak has dropped significantly (16 points) in British Columbia from last month. The same is true in Ontario (22 points). Overall, 53 per cent of Canadians have confidence that their community healthcare is prepared to deal with the pandemic:



Provincial government performance

Performance for governments across Canada continues to remain high. Indeed, the number saying their provincial government is doing a good job has risen in all but one region of the country since mid-March, and is unchanged in B.C. In Quebec, respondents are near unanimously saying the Legault government has done a “good job”:



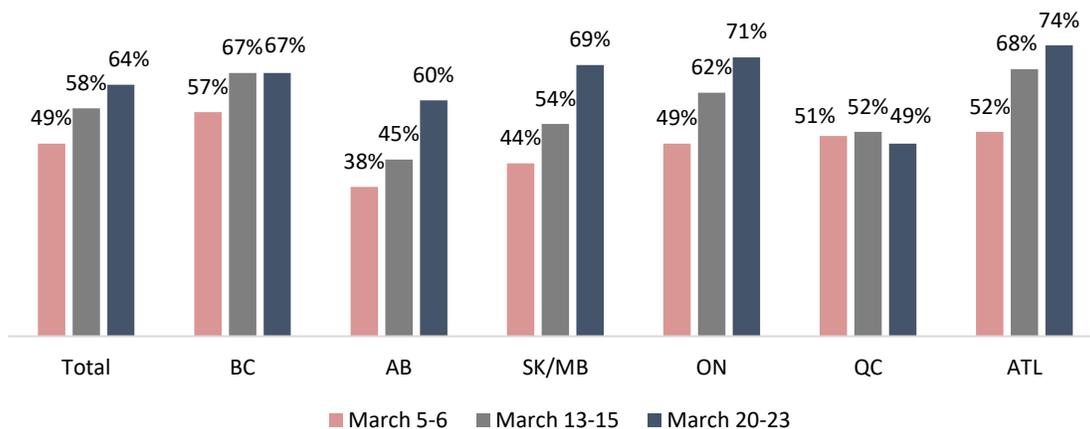
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Federal government performance

Meanwhile, at the federal level, 64 per cent of Canadians now say that the Trudeau government has done a good job handling the outbreak thus far. The proportion of Canadians saying the federal government has done a good job has even risen to three-in-five (60%) in the province most traditionally critical of Trudeau, Alberta:

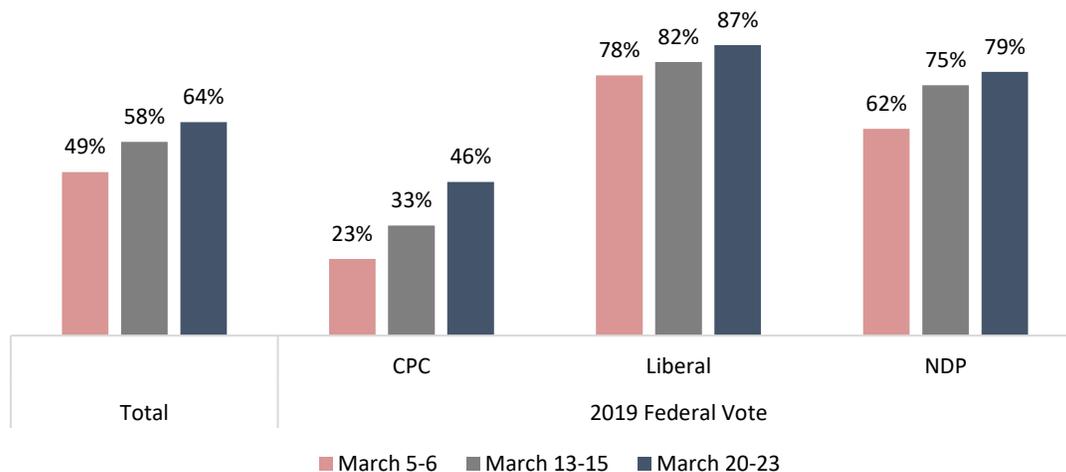
Percentage saying federal government is doing a good job in handling COVID-19 outbreak



CPC supporters show increased praise for federal response

Past Liberal and New Democratic Party voters are overwhelmingly endorsing the federal government’s work, while praise among past Conservative voters has doubled since the beginning of March:

Percentage saying federal government is doing a good job in handling COVID-19 outbreak



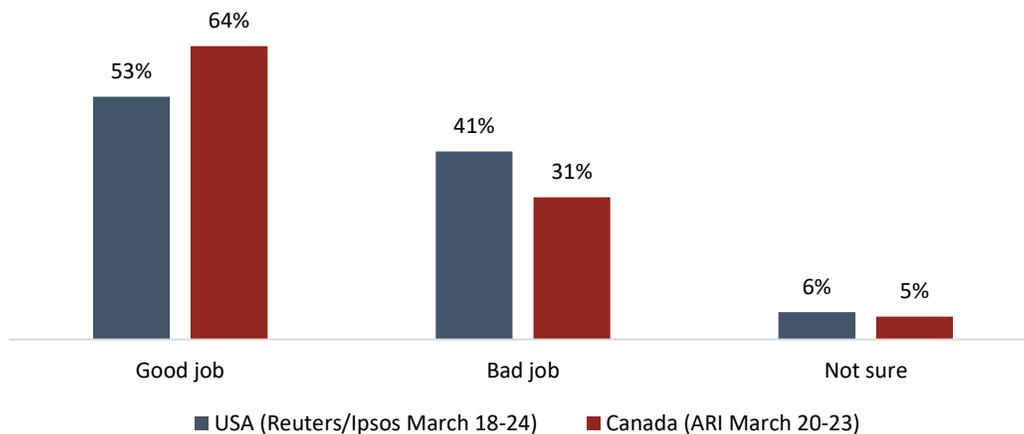
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Canada compared to USA

While many in the United States – and around the world – have [criticized President Trump for being late](#) to take the threat of COVID-19 seriously, a slight majority (53%) still say the federal government in that country is doing a good job.

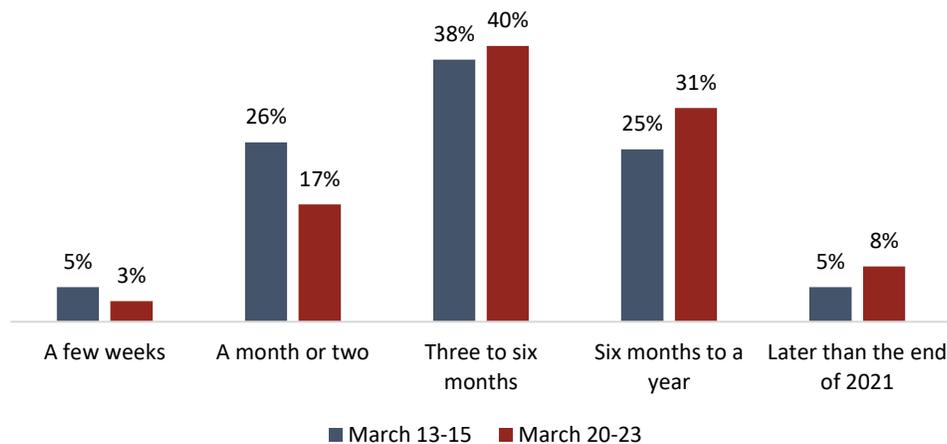
View of federal government performance - USA vs Canada



Anticipated timeline for ‘back to normal’ is lengthening

As Canadians look at the COVID-19 outbreak and consider the future, longer term forecasts appear to be rising. The number of Canadians saying it will be three months or longer before things are back to normal in Canada has risen 11 points in the past 10 days:

Based on whatever you’ve read, seen or heard, when do you anticipate things will be “back to normal” in Canada?



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