

COVID-19 Carelessness: Which Canadians say pandemic threat is 'overblown'? And how are they behaving in turn?

Those most skeptical of the outbreak least likely to engage in hygiene and distancing actions

March 30, 2020 – Since the novel coronavirus took root in Canadian communities, opinion about the threat it poses has evolved: from initial curiosity and skepticism to widespread acceptance and anxiety of the power and speed with which it spreads.

But even as the number of cases in Canada exceeds 5,500 and now touches almost every part of the nation, one in every eight adults is of the view that the threat of a coronavirus outbreak is "overblown".

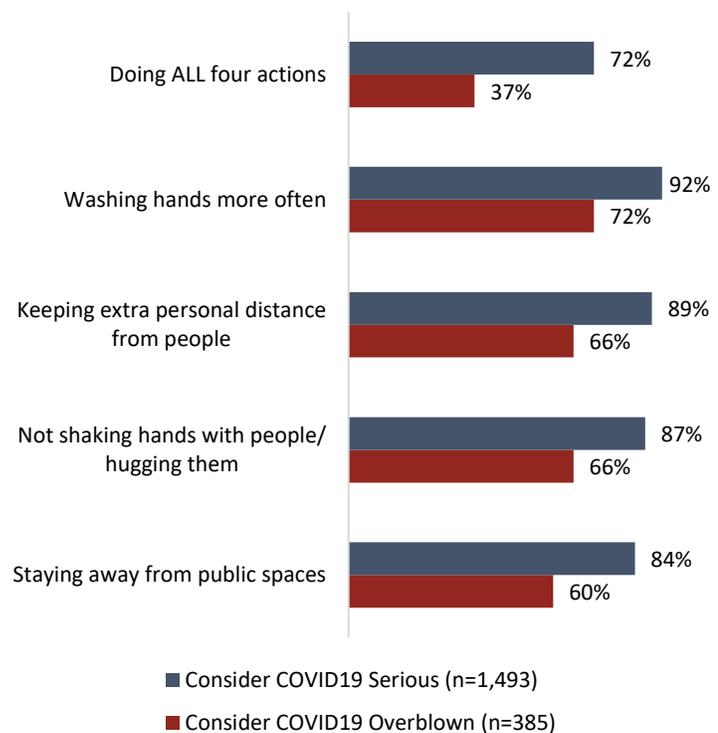
Now, a new study from the non-profit Angus Reid Institute shows this cohort – more cavalier in their approach to the virus that has ground Canadian society to a halt and caused an economic crisis – differs significantly from those who say they take the risk seriously, especially when it comes to distancing and hygiene.

Those who say the attention and worry around COVID-19 is undue are less likely to be staying away from others, from public spaces, or to be regularly washing their hands.

More Key Findings:

- Those who say the threat of COVID-19 is overblown are less concerned about personally contracting the virus or it happening to someone in their household than those who say the threat is serious
- Political partisanship correlates with opinion on the seriousness of the pandemic: those unconvinced are far more likely to have voted for the CPC in the 2019 federal election

COVID-19 precautions being taken



METHODOLOGY:

The Angus Reid Institute conducted an online survey from March 20 – 23, 2020 among a representative randomized sample of 1,664 Canadian adults who are members of [Angus Reid Forum](#). For comparison purposes only, a probability sample of this size would carry a margin of error of +/- 2.5 percentage points, 19 times out of 20.

A second survey was conducted to expand the number of Canadians who see the COVID-19 outbreak as 'overblown'. This survey was conducted from March 25 – 26, 2020, and added 207 more respondents.

Discrepancies in or between totals are due to rounding. The survey was self-commissioned and paid for by ARI. Detailed tables are found at the end of this release.

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- Those who see threat of the COVID-19 outbreak as overblown are also likely to say things will get “back to normal” more quickly than those who say the threat is serious

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.

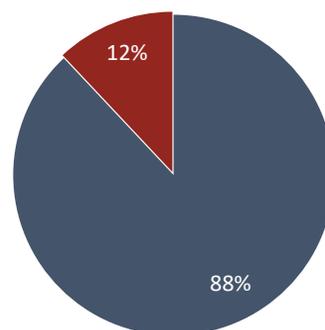
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Not everyone convinced COVID-19 is serious

As the COVID-19 outbreak has proliferated, and thousands of cases have been documented in this country, Canadians have become close-to-unanimously convinced that the threat to residents in this country is serious. That said, there are still a handful of Canadians, one-in-eight (12%), who say they believe the risk at home is overblown:

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

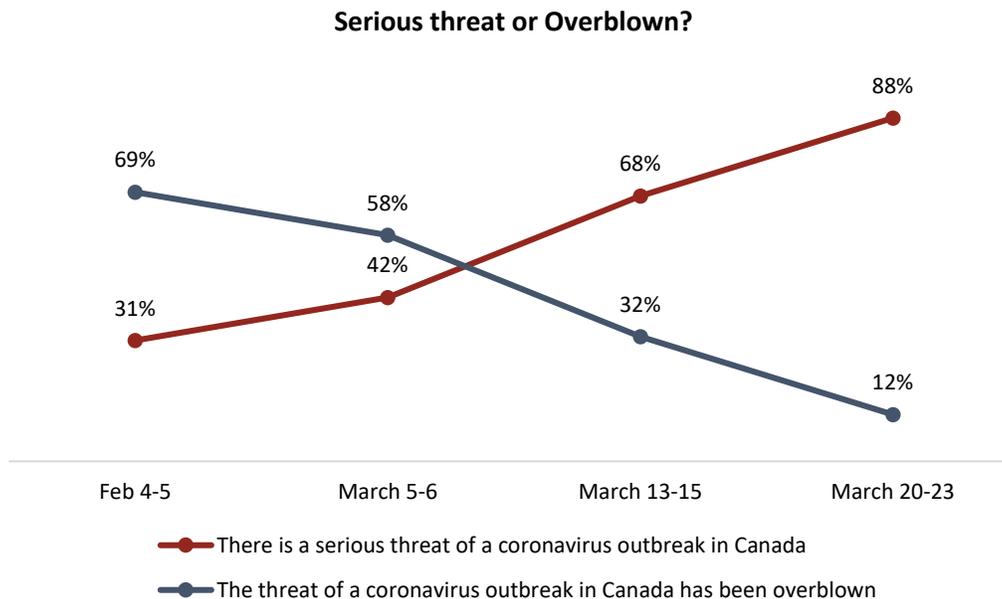


- There is a serious threat of a coronavirus outbreak in Canada
- The threat of a coronavirus outbreak in Canada has been overblown

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This group was much larger at the beginning of February, when the crisis was in its infancy, affecting predominantly China. Since that time, the group saying COVID-19 is serious in Canada has consistently increased in size:

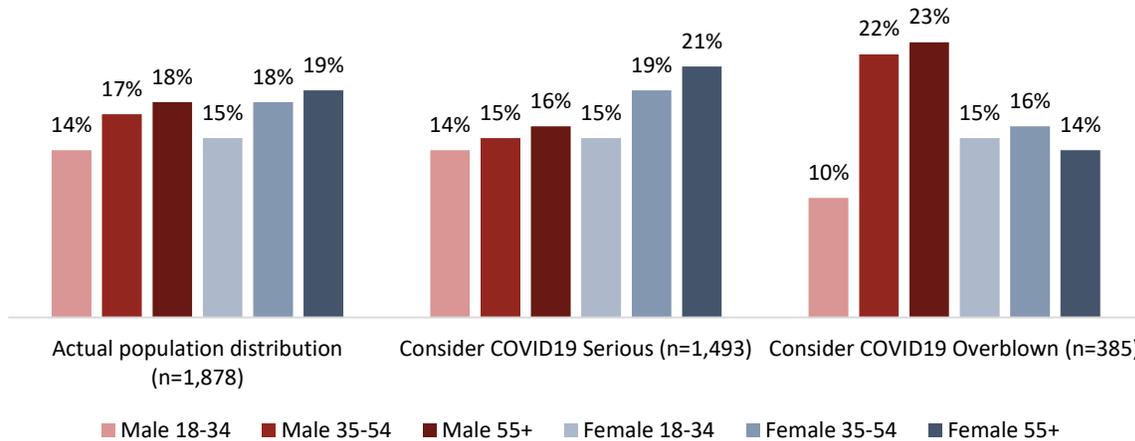


Which Canadians think it's overblown?

To better understand who comprises this group of Canadians unconvinced of the seriousness of the pandemic, the Angus Reid Institute oversampled these Canadians, beyond their natural size in the general population. This sample size, 385, allows for more detail and analysis than the 195 in the original survey.

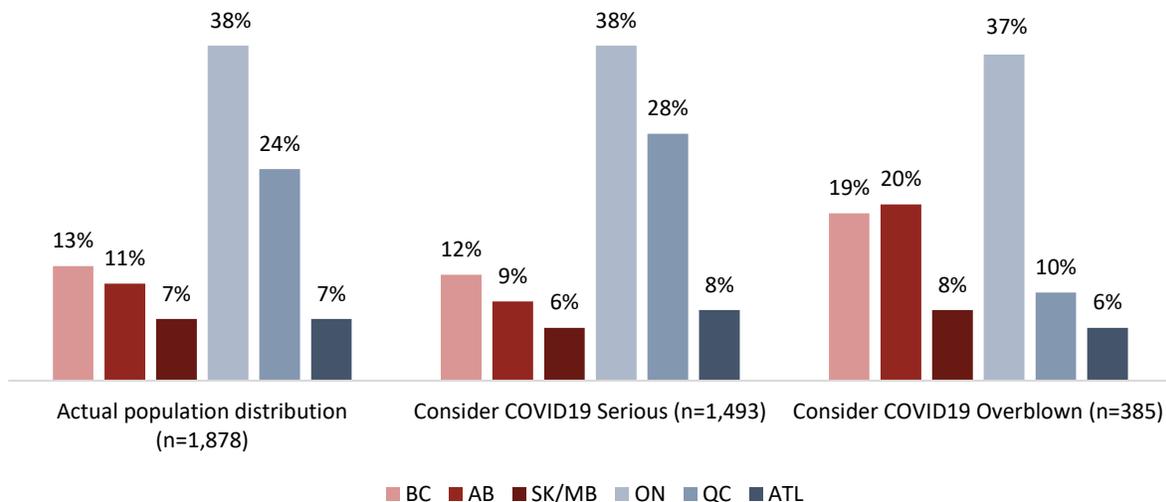
While this group's education and income demographics are similar to those of the general population ([see detailed tables](#)), there are considerable differences in age and gender. A key characteristic of this group is its likelihood to be male and over the age of 34. Both groups of men, those 35 to 54 years of age and 55 years and over, are overrepresented compared to their standard distribution in the general population:

Age and Gender
Those who say COVID-19 threat in Canada is serious versus overblown



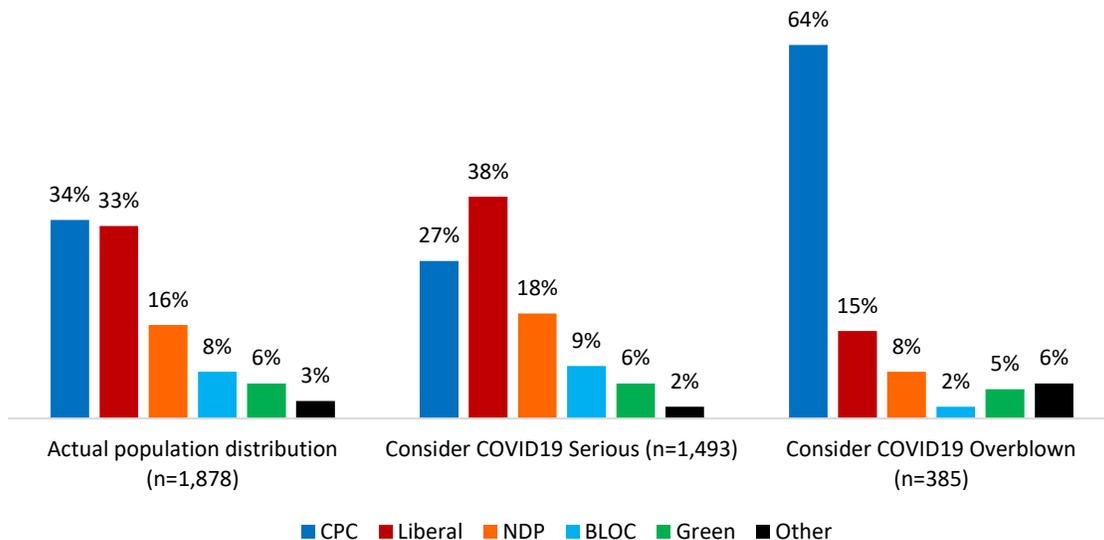
Regionally, British Columbia and Alberta are disproportionately represented in the group who say the threat of outbreak is overblown:

Age and Gender
Those who say COVID-19 threat in Canada is serious versus overblown



But the starkest difference is this group's past voting history: it is vastly more likely to have chosen the Conservative Party in the 2019 federal election. Two-thirds (64%) of those who say the crisis is overblown supported the CPC.

Federal vote 2019
Those who say COVID-19 threat in Canada is serious versus overblown

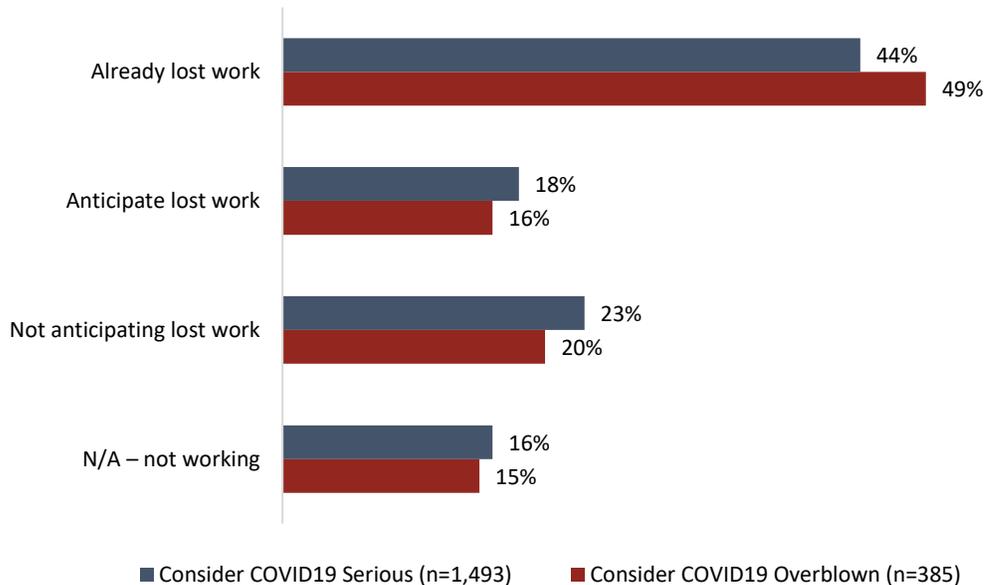


Just as likely to have lost work, or anticipate losing it

Canadians who say the COVID-19 risk is serious and those who say it is overblown are almost equally likely to have felt the economic impact of the pandemic. About half in each group has lost work at the household level already. Just under one-in-five each anticipate losing hours or being laid off in the future:

[For our full study looking at the economic impact of the COVID-19 outbreak, click here](#)

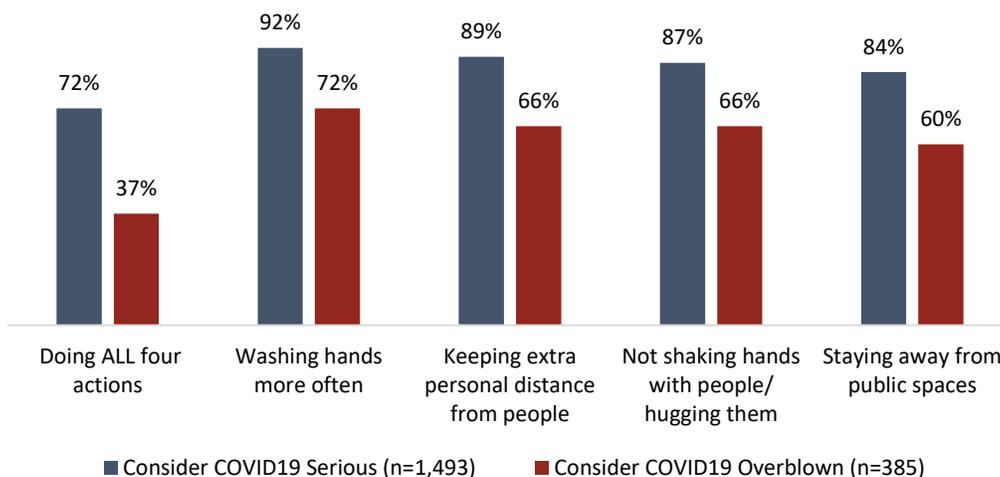
Impact of COVID-19 on Canadian households



Social distancing less common among this group

A number of recommendations from health officials are being ignored by Canadians who see the outbreak as overblown. Majorities in this group may be washing hands more, keeping more space between themselves and others, or staying away from public spaces. But while seven-in-ten Canadians (72%) who see the issue as 'serious' are doing *all* of those things, just 37 per cent of the skeptical group are doing the same:

COVID-19 precautions being taken



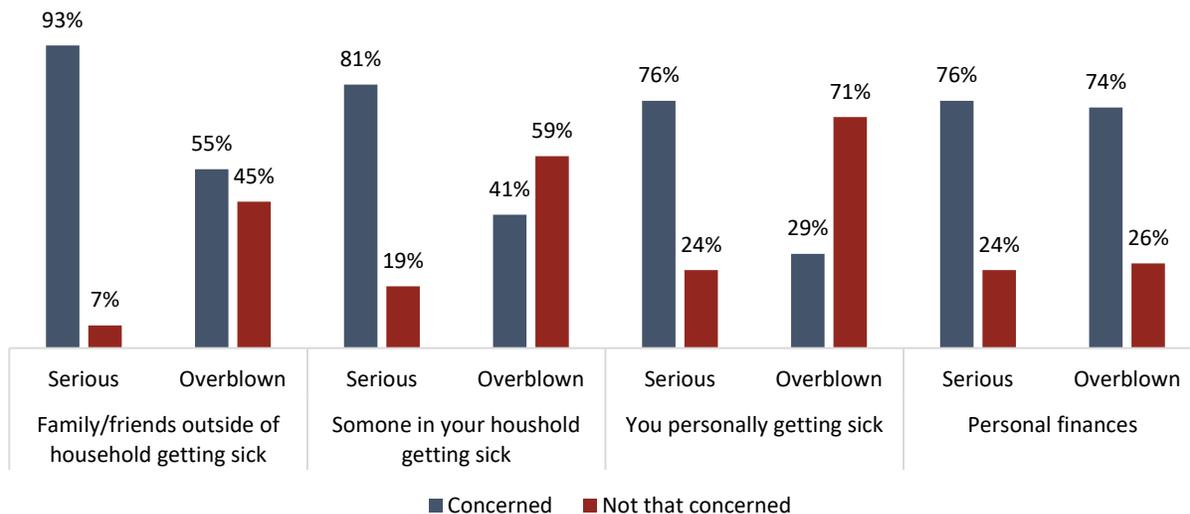
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Those more skeptical less concerned for themselves, others

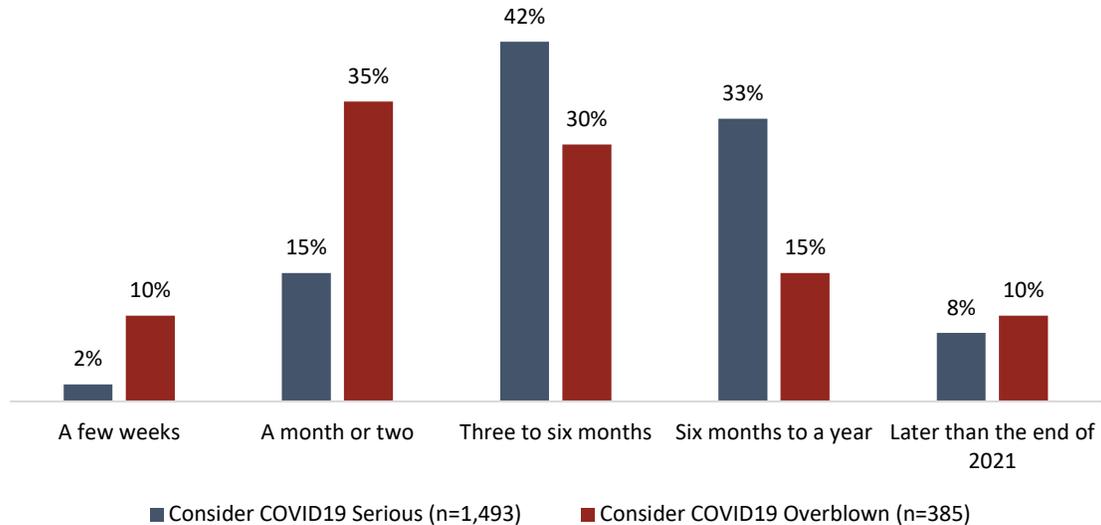
Just as their actions differ, so too does the level of concern among those who don't see the outbreak threat as gravely. While just over half show concern for family and friends outside of their households falling ill, they are *far less* likely to feel this way relative to the 93 per cent in the other group worried for friends and loved ones. These more cavalier Canadians are also far less likely to say they are worried about illness in their own households:

Concern levels for each, based on whether a person feels the COVID-19 outbreak is Serious or Overblown



Asked how long before Canada is “back to normal”, those who consider the outbreak overblown expect a much shorter timeline than those who see it as serious:

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 views on COVID-19, including additional sample from March 25 -26, (serious vs overblown), [click here](#).

For original data tables for March 20 – 23 release, [click here](#).

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