

COVID-19: Canadians near-unanimous in expectations of economic woe as pandemic enters second month

Three-in-ten want more information from government, health officials to fully understand situation

April 6, 2020 – As the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic worsen on both health and economic fronts across Canada, people in this country are under few illusions. Along with the health of many neighbours and friends, most expect that their financial situations will also deteriorate further before they improve.

These are among the sentiments of Canadians reflected in the latest public opinion survey by the non-profit Angus Reid Institute.

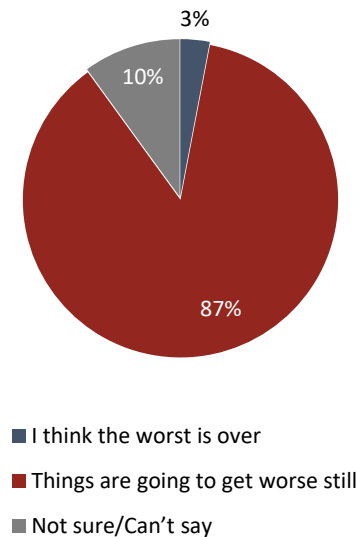
The data show one-in-four residents (27%) now reporting that they are barely keeping their heads above water financially, while just 12 per cent of Canadians say they are in great shape to endure a long economic downturn. Nearly nine-in-ten Canadians (87%) say on the economic front, the worst is yet to come.

There is less consensus among those most directly affected over how much the [nearly \\$100 billion](#) in emergency response funding announced by the federal government will actually help. Asked how they feel their employment insurance and the soon available Canadian Emergency Response Benefit will help their situation, just under half of those who say they are in bad shape already say it will be a big boost (45%). For another 39 per cent of those struggling, there is skepticism about whether the aid will be enough.

More Key Findings:

- Among the 45 per cent of Canadian households that report losing work hours as a result of the pandemic, nearly half also say they've already applied for employment insurance

And thinking about the current economic situation in Canada, which of these is closer to your view ...



METHODOLOGY:

The Angus Reid Institute conducted an online survey from March April 1 – 3, 2020 among a representative randomized sample of 2,162 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 +/- 2.0 percentage points, 19 times out of 20. 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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- One-in-five Canadians fit the criteria of the “Super Concerned”. These people say they are very concerned about each of the following becoming sick: themselves, someone in their household, and their friends and family. Women over 35 are most likely to fit into this group
- Canadians feel they are getting clear information from their governments and health officials about what their responsibility is in order to reduce the spread of the virus. Nearly nine-in-ten residents in each region of the country say their understanding of what is required is clear.

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:

Part One: Grim Economic Outlook

- **One-quarter say they are in bad or terrible shape financially**
- **How much of an extra cost can Canadians handle?**
- **The worst is yet to come**
- **Will employment and emergency benefits help?**

Part Two: Confidence and Concern

- **Concern levels remain high**
- **Confidence in community health care rebounds slightly, remains lowest in Ontario**
- **Provincial government performance**
- **Canadians say public health messaging is clear**
- **Three-in-ten want more information**
- **Federal performance**

Part One: Grim Economic Outlook

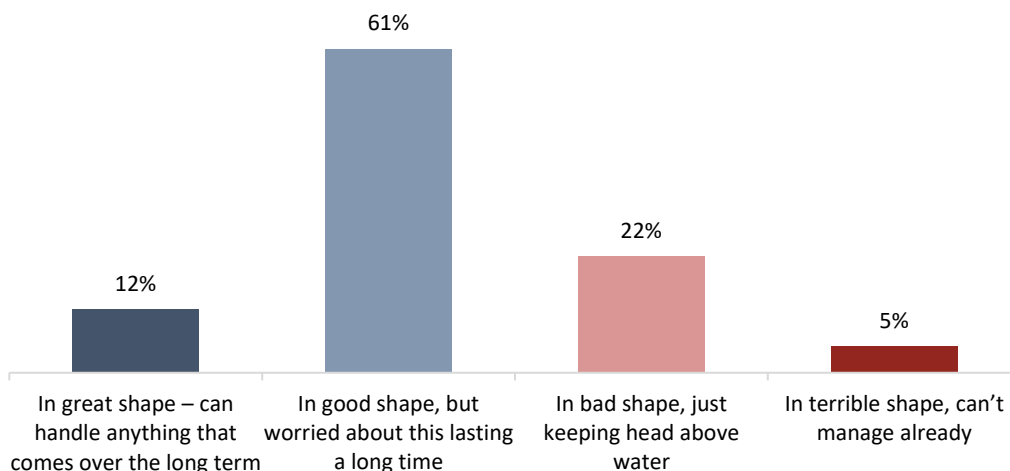
One-quarter say they're in bad or terrible shape financially

Asked how their own personal financial situation has been affected by the downturn, just 12 per cent of Canadians say they are in “great shape”. The majority self-describe as doing well for now but are worried about how long the crisis will last. There is a significant number reporting they're either treading water financially, or already in terrible shape (27% overall):

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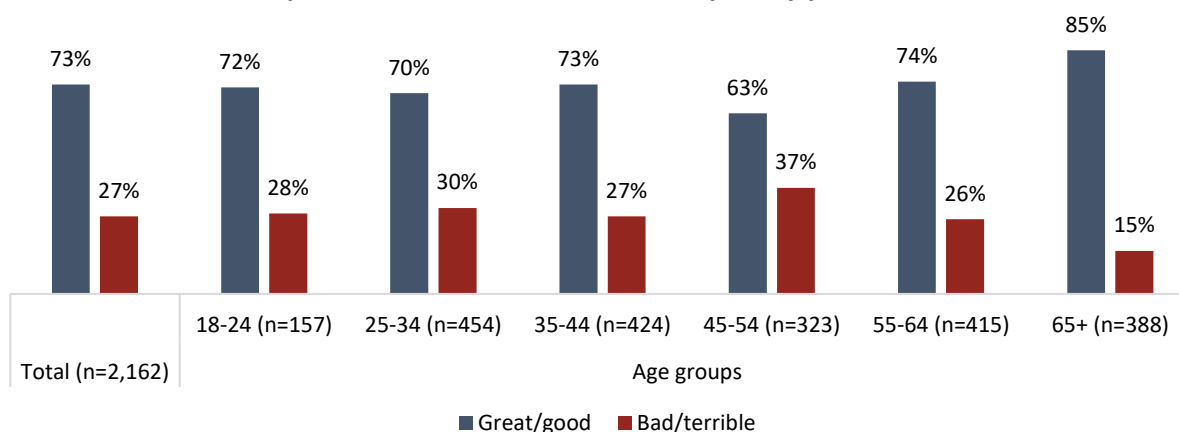
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If you had to describe the overall impact of the COVID-19 outbreak on your personal financial situation would you say you are...



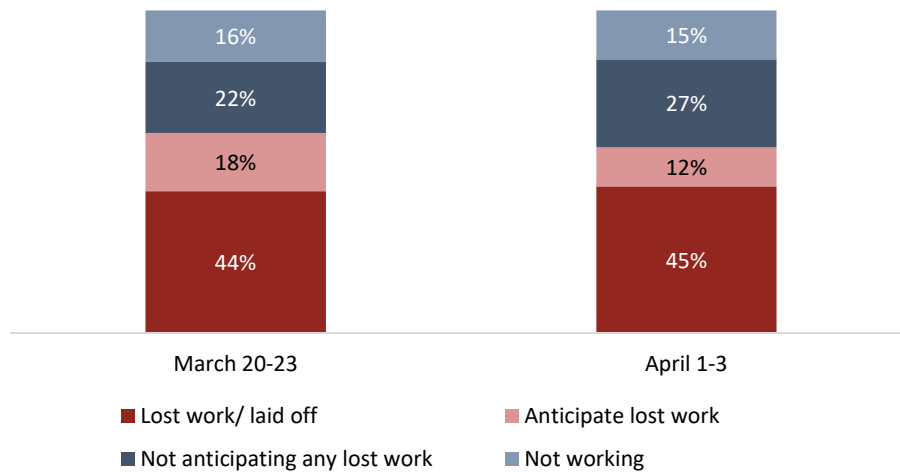
The worst hit are those aged 45-54. Those who are older and more likely to be on fixed incomes in retirement are more likely to say they have not been hurt by the outbreak so far:

If you had to describe the overall impact of the COVID-19 outbreak on your personal financial situation would you say you are...



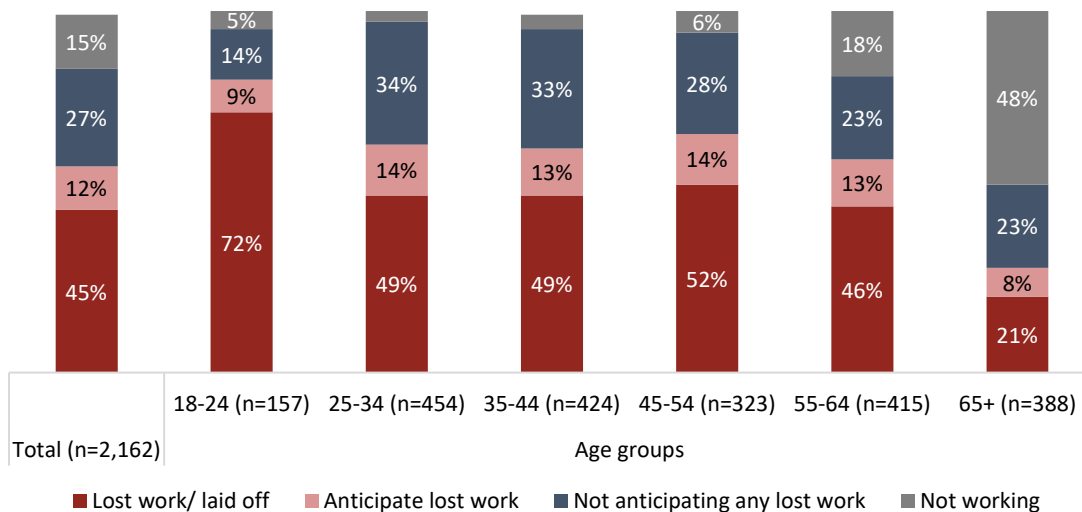
Much of the story here appears to rely on the staggering [number of job losses](#) that have rocked the Canadian labour market in a short amount of time. Overall, 45 per cent of households report losing work (either personally or through someone they live with) due to COVID-19 related cuts, while another 12 per cent say they anticipate having hours cut. These data are consistent with previous recent polling March 20 – 23, although the number of households expecting to lose hours has diminished slightly:

Impact of COVID-19 on Canadian households



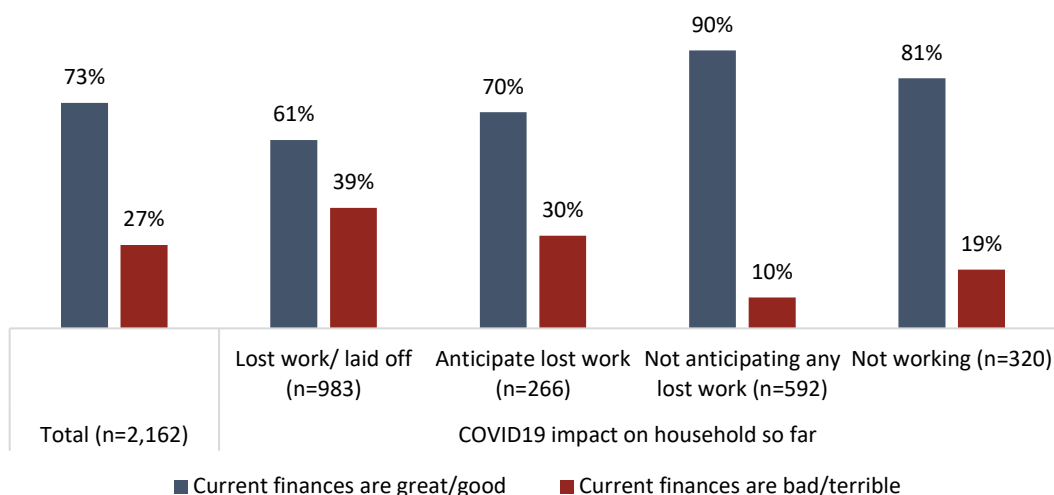
Those most affected are younger workers, an astonishing seven-in-ten of whom have lost hours or been laid off already. That said, nearly half of workers in all age groups below 65 have seen diminished work in their households:

Impact of COVID19 on Canadian households



The segment already experiencing lost work is also significantly more likely to say it has been struggling financially, while three-in-ten of those who are anticipating losing work say they are already having a difficult time:

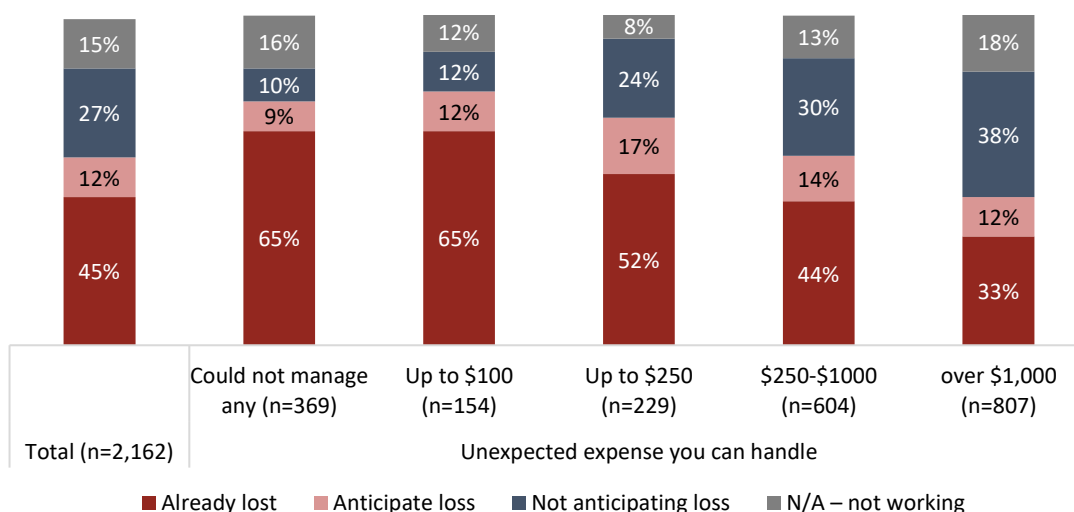
Economic trouble in household



How much of an extra cost can Canadians handle?

Many Canadians are having a difficult time dealing with lost hours and layoffs. The situation is worse when considering just how many of them cannot afford to add any extra expense to their life right now. Among those who could not manage any extra cost right now, two-thirds (65%) have lost work in their household. The same can be said of those who say that they could afford one more bill of around \$100 before running into trouble. Considerable portions of all Canadians on this spectrum of ability to pay say that their household has seen hours reduced at work:

Canadians' employment situation versus how much of an expense they could take on this month



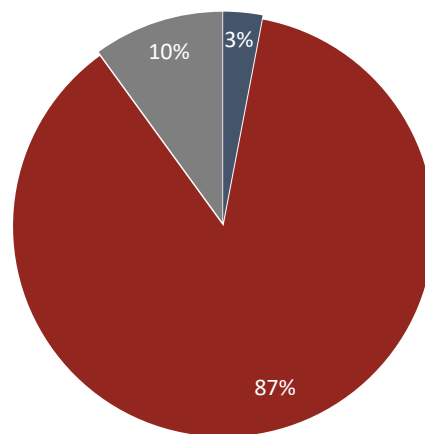
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The worst is yet to come

Regardless of how Canadians are doing today, one bleak sentiment unites them irrespective of who they are, or where they live. A distressing nine-in-ten (87%) say they expect the economic situation to continue to worsen in the days and weeks ahead:

**And thinking about the current economic situation in Canada,
which of these is closer to your view ...**

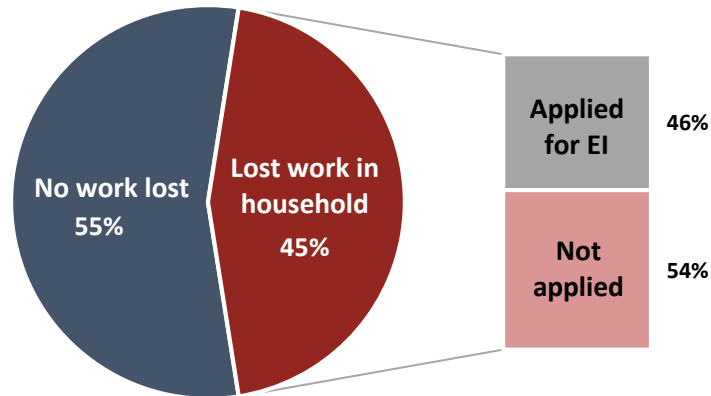


■ I think the worst is over ■ Things are going to get worse still ■ Not sure/Can't say

Will employment and emergency benefits help?

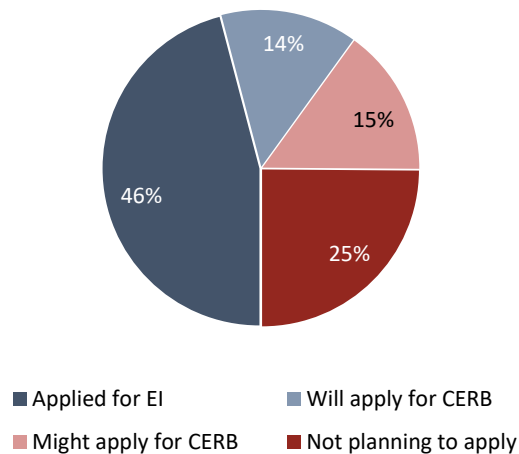
As noted, 45 per cent of Canadian households report having lost work due to the COVID-19 outbreak. Among them, close to half (46%) have applied for employment insurance:

Employment Insurance



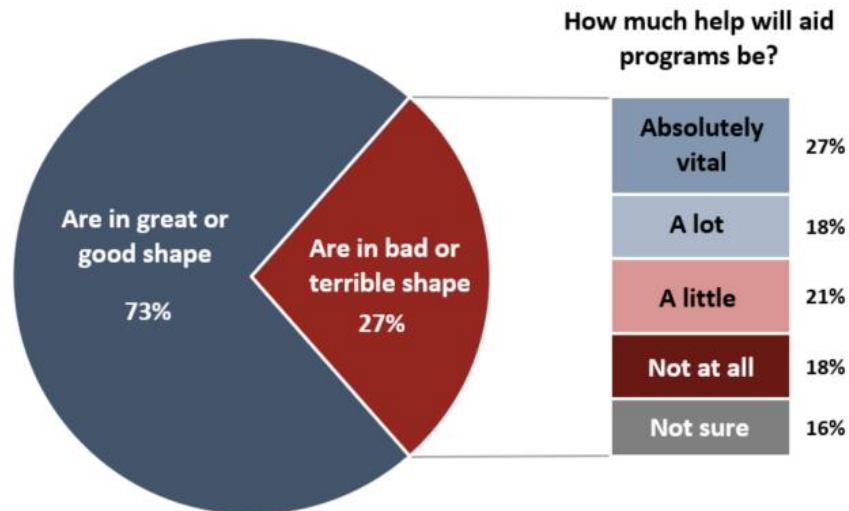
That same group was asked about the Canadian Emergency Response Benefit (CERB). This is notable because those who have applied for employment insurance are being moved into this CERB program. In addition to the 46 per cent of affected workers who have applied for EI, another 14 per cent say they will be applying:

Among those who have lost work due to COVID19:
n=982



Among those who say they are worst off, just under half (45%) say that these benefit programs will help them a lot. Even with these benefits in place, critics have noted that a significant number of unemployed Canadians will not be eligible for the CERB, underscoring the gaps that many Canadians are experiencing:

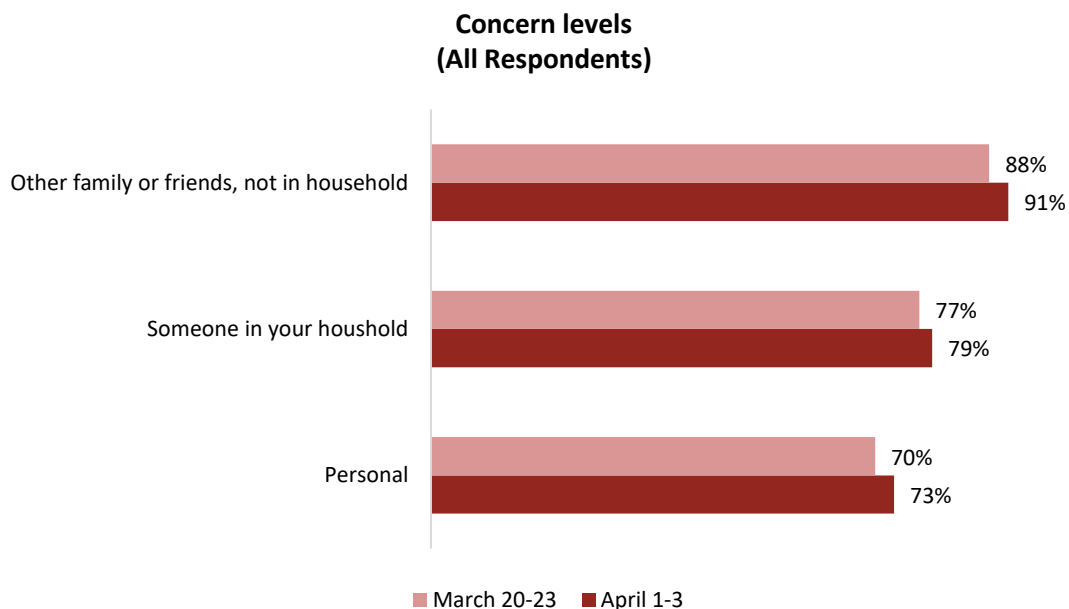
How much will government programs help?



Part Two: Confidence and Concern

Concern levels remain high

As many Canadians adjust to the “new normal” of staying home, physical distancing, and video calling colleagues, friends and family, concern levels remain incredibly high. Nine-in-ten Canadians are concerned friends and family outside of their home may contract COVID-19, while four-in-five are worried about those in own households:

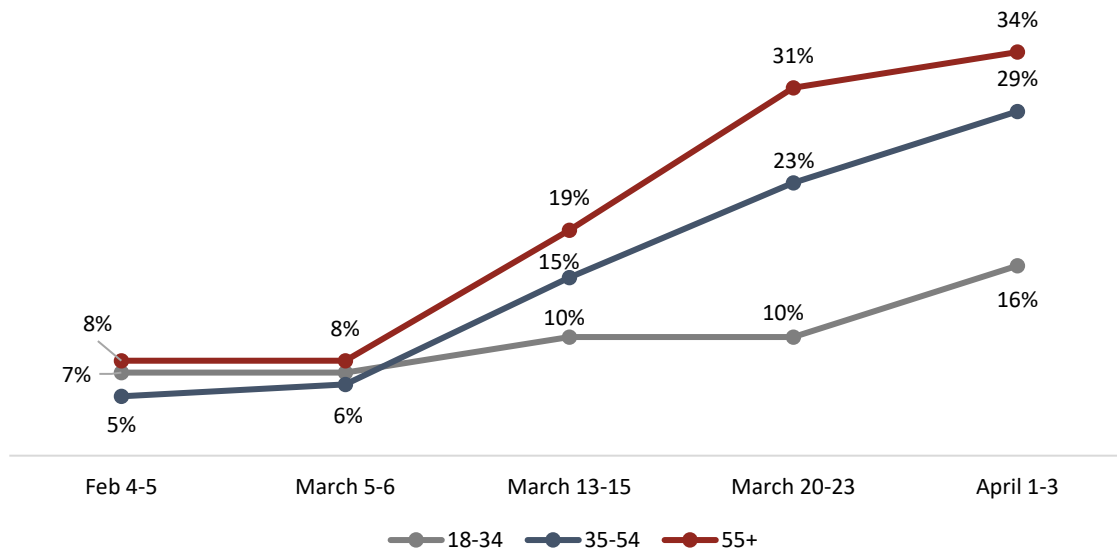


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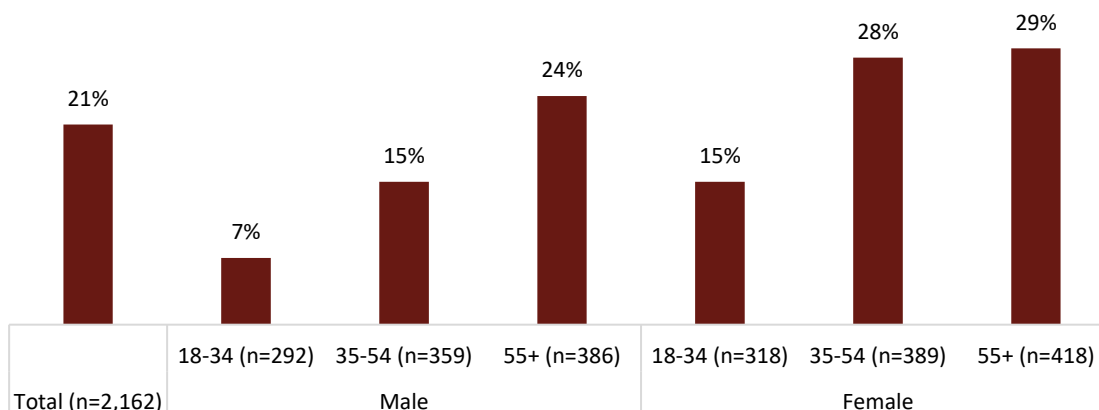
The number of Canadians who are “very concerned” about their own personal risk has been rising since the beginning of February. That number has now reach one-in-three (34%) among those 55 years of age and older, and approaches one-in-five (16%) among younger Canadians:

**"Very concerned" about personally contracting COVID-19 by age
(All Respondents)**



Just over one-in-five Canadians fit the profile of what can be described as the “Super Concerned”. These individuals say that they are “very concerned” about the risk of COVID-19 spread in their household, among friends and family outside of the house, and to themselves personally. Women ages 35 and over are most likely to among the Super Concerned:

The "Super Concerned"
(Those who say they're "very concerned" about the risk to self, their household, family and friends) n=2,162



Confidence in community health care rebounds slightly, remains lowest in Ontario

As the virus continues to spread, Canadians in many communities doubt their own area of the country is prepared. These concerns are highest in Ontario, where just 47 per cent of residents are confident in their own local health care infrastructure and higher in Quebec (69%), British Columbia (61%) and Alberta (61%):

Confidence in local community health care to handle COVID19 outbreak							
Responses 60% or higher highlighted							
	Total	Region					
		BC	AB	SK/MB	ON	QC	ATL
Feb 4-5	63%	62%	59%	49%	69%	66%	40%
March 5-6	58%	55%	55%	45%	59%	63%	53%
March 13-15	53%	49%	48%	51%	55%	58%	43%
March 20-23	53%	46%	52%	52%	47%	72%	45%
April 1-3	56%	61%	61%	52%	47%	69%	50%

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Provincial government performance

Despite these worries, provincial governments continue to garner warm reviews regarding their performances handling the crisis. In every region, at least 70 per cent of constituents say their province has done a good job. In Alberta, where initially just 40 per cent said the United Conservative Party and its team were handling the situation well, 70 per cent now say they same. In Ontario, the proportion of those saying the Ford government has done well has nearly doubled as well, from 46 per cent to 86 per cent:

Percentage that say their provincial government has done a 'good job' of handling the COVID-19 outbreak							
Responses 70% and higher highlighted							
	Total	Region					
		BC	AB	SK/MB	ON	QC	ATL
March 5-6	51%	62%	40%	42%	46%	60%	52%
March 13-15	69%	73%	61%	62%	59%	89%	68%
March 20-23	79%	71%	76%	78%	74%	93%	78%
April 1-3	85%	81%	70%	75%	86%	94%	85%

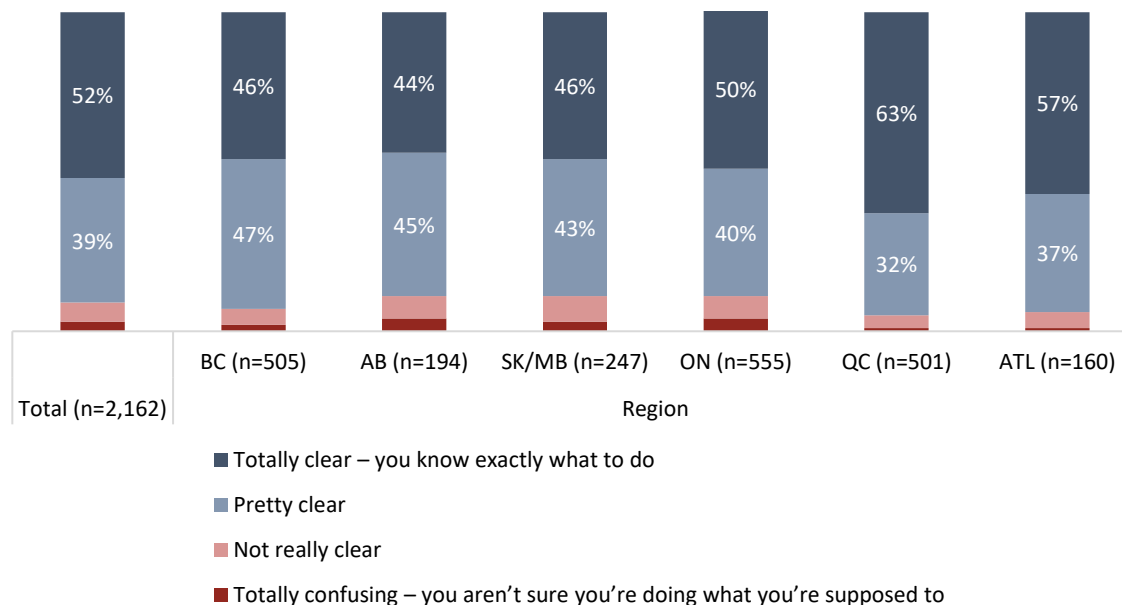
Canadians say public health messaging is clear

The Angus Reid Institute asked respondents if the messages they are receiving from public health officials and politicians - around distancing and staying home to mitigate the spread of the coronavirus - were clear. The answer, broadly, is “yes”, although just half (52%) say the messaging leaves them knowing *exactly* what to do:

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Thinking about what public health officials, politicians and other leaders have been advising, would you say the information has been:

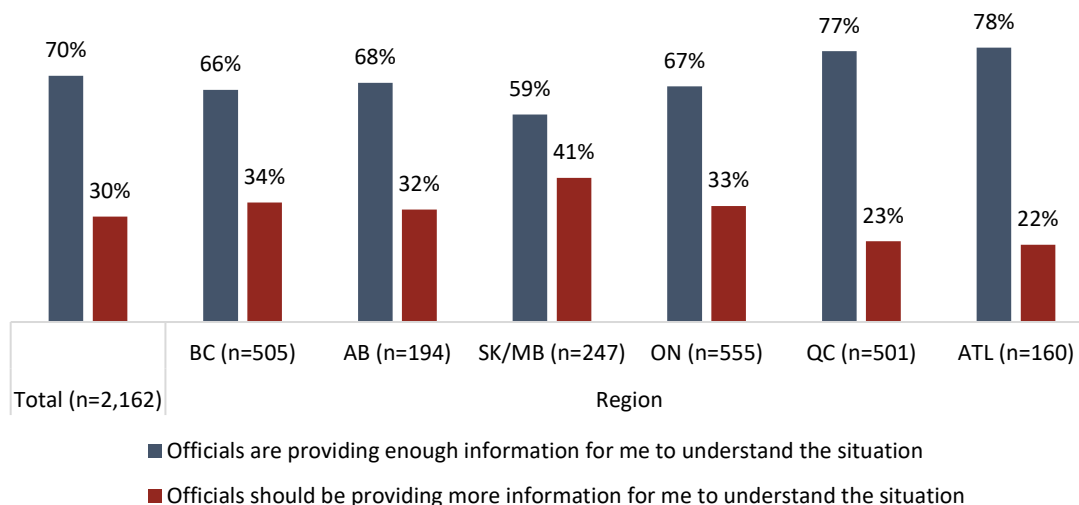


Three-in-ten want more information

Despite the clarity of instructions, a significant number of Canadians say they need and want *more* information from government in order to truly understand the situation the country is facing. While some provinces ([B.C.](#), [Ontario](#)) have released modeling information that offers projections on how long the crisis may last and how serious it may be in terms of infection spread and death, other provinces have declined to do this so far. Late last week, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau faced intense and increasing [scrutiny](#) over whether the federal government would do the same, and he has said it's "coming soon".

Against this backdrop, three-in-ten (30%) say the government should be providing more information to help them understand the situation:

Which statement is closer to your view:

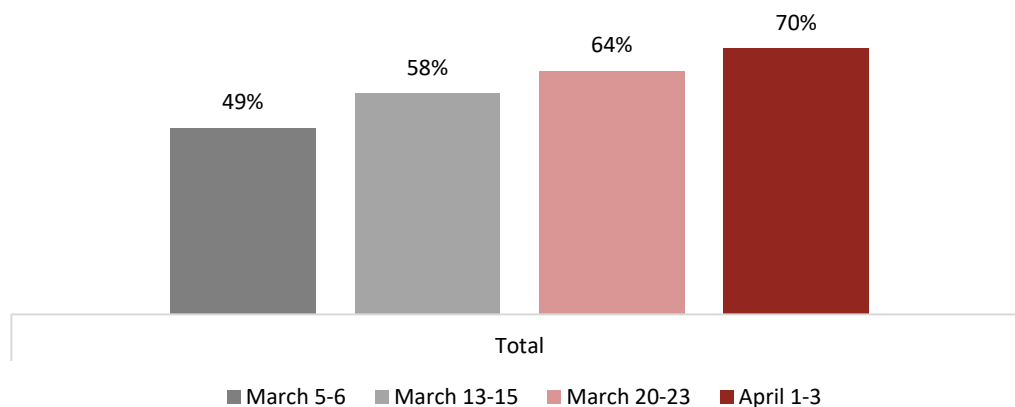


Responses to this question were relatively consistent across age and gender, while Conservatives were more likely to say that more information is needed ([see detailed tables](#)).

Federal performance

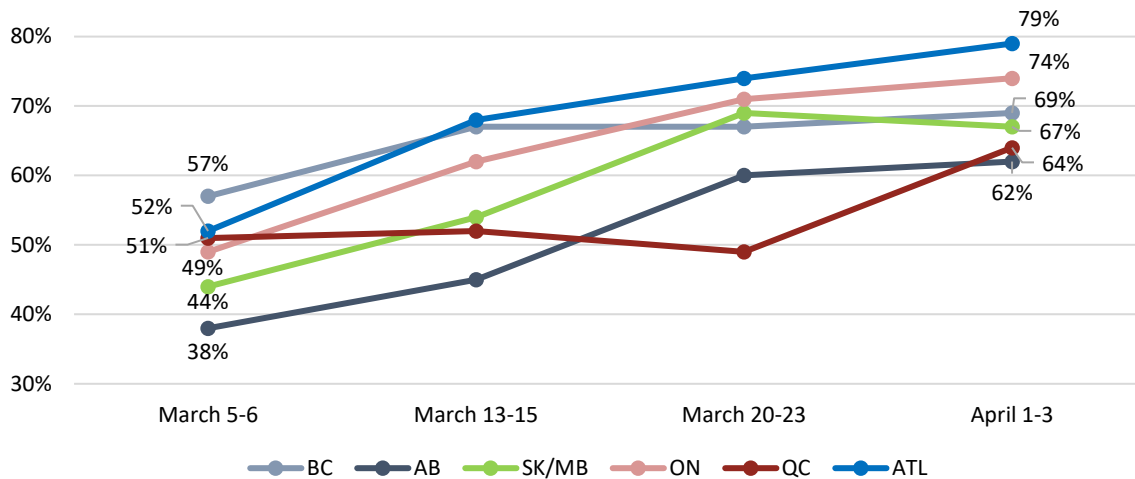
The call for more, and better information, however, has not damaged perceptions of the federal government’s handling of the pandemic. Indeed, the Trudeau government has only since an increase in the number of those saying it has done a “good job” over the last month. The most recent data shows seven-in-ten (70%) now hold this view:

Say the federal government has done a "good job" of handling COVID-19 outbreak



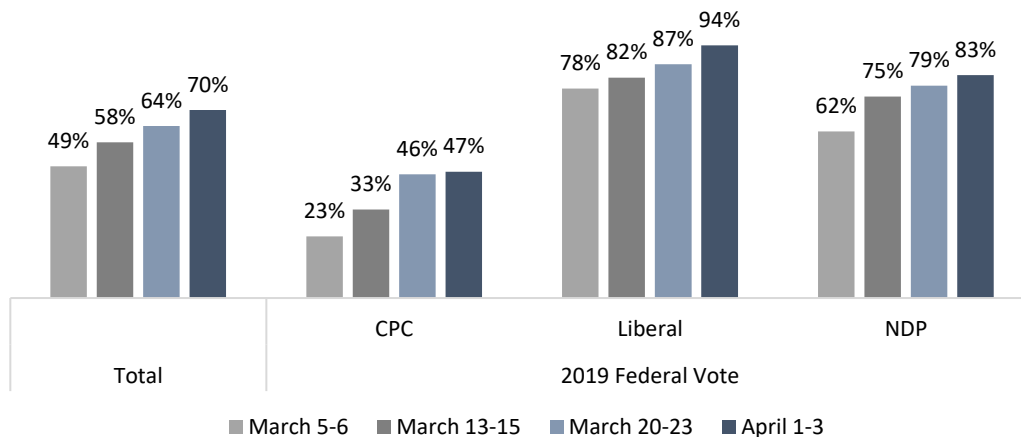
This view has increases in every part of the country over the past two weeks, and especially considerably since the beginning of March:

Percentage who say federal government has done a "good job" handling COVID-19 outbreak (All Respondents)



Positive responses continue to pour in from those who supported the Liberals in the October election. Those who supported the CPC had been increasingly likely to offer commendation, but that number appears to have plateaued:

Percentage who say federal government has done a "good job" handling COVID-19 outbreak (All Respondents)



For detailed results by age, gender, region, education, and other demographics, [click here](#).
 For detailed results by lost work and concern for contracting COVID-19, [click here](#).
 For detailed results by age, [click here](#).