

## Worry, Gratitude & Boredom: As COVID-19 affects mental, financial health, who fares better; who is worse?

*One-quarter of Canadians among the 'Hardest Hit'; say both mental health and finances have worsened*

**April 27, 2020** – Mental health has been one of the most consistent undercurrents of discussion around the impacts of this country's COVID-19 pandemic.

To what extent have job losses, illness, uncertainty and self-isolation affected the emotional and psychological well-being of Canadians? How are they bearing up? What are they feeling?

Now, a new study from the non-profit Angus Reid Institute is able to answer those questions more fulsomely. New data paint a picture of a nation whose optimism and resilience has been literally depressed by the events of the last month-and-a-half.

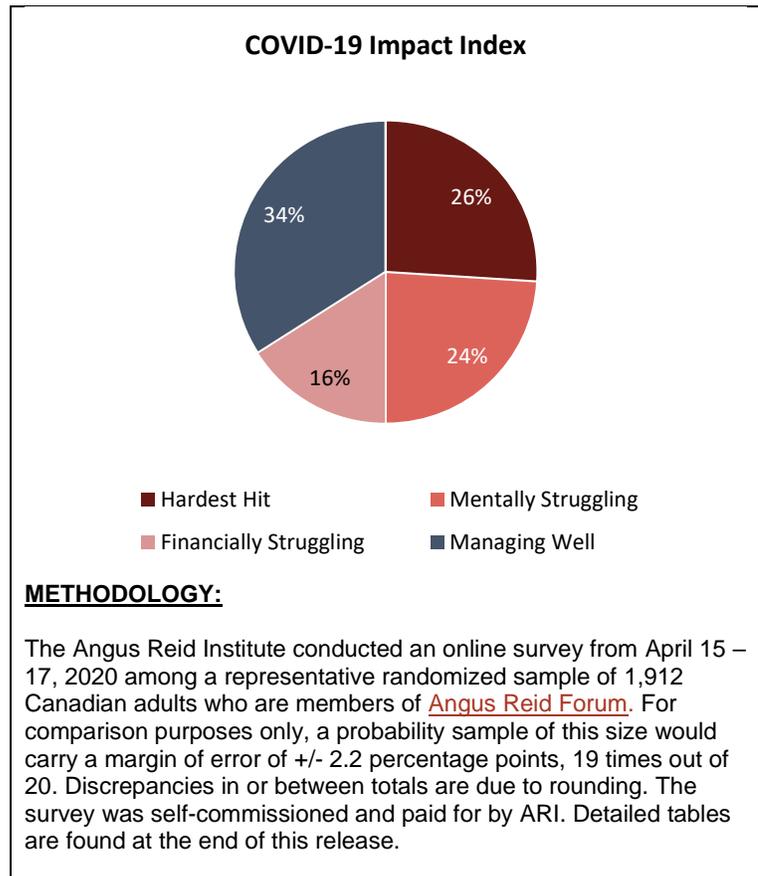
Half of Canadians (50%) report a worsening of their mental health, with one-in-ten (10% overall) saying it has worsened "a lot".

Asked to describe how they have been primarily feeling in recent weeks, Canadians are most likely to say they're worried, (44%), anxious (41%) and bored (30%), although fully one-third (34%) also say they are "grateful".

The combination of deteriorating mental health and ongoing financial troubles at the household level creates a portrait of how the nation is faring through the crisis. Canadians fall into four main categories as part of the Angus Reid Institute's COVID-19 Impact Index: those who are Managing Well mentally and financially, those who are Mentally Struggling, or Financially Struggling, and those who are Hardest Hit, feeling the effects of both factors worse than anyone else.

### More Key Findings:

- At least one-in-five residents in each region of the country fall into the Hardest Hit category. Alberta has the highest number (32%) and Quebec the lowest (20%).
- One-quarter (24%) of the Hardest Hit say that their relationships at home have suffered since the COVID-19 outbreak began, compared to just six per cent of those in the Managing Well group.



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- Regardless of where they place on the COVID-19 Impact Index, three-quarters of Canadians in each group agree that it is too soon to begin lifting restrictions on businesses and public gatherings in their province

### **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: How are Canadians weathering their isolation?**

##### **Finding the words to describe recent weeks**

Canadians have endured a period unlike any other in their lives. With the COVID-19 outbreak spreading and public health officials requesting citizens distance themselves from others and avoid public spaces unless absolutely necessary, most residents have retreated to their homes.

Asked to describe their feelings about the last couple of weeks, two similar words rise to the top of the list: worried and anxious. In each case, at least two-in-five say this is primarily how they have felt, although one-in-three also say they have felt grateful. This likely speaks to the [overwhelming praise](#) Canadians have offered for their public health officials and front-line workers.

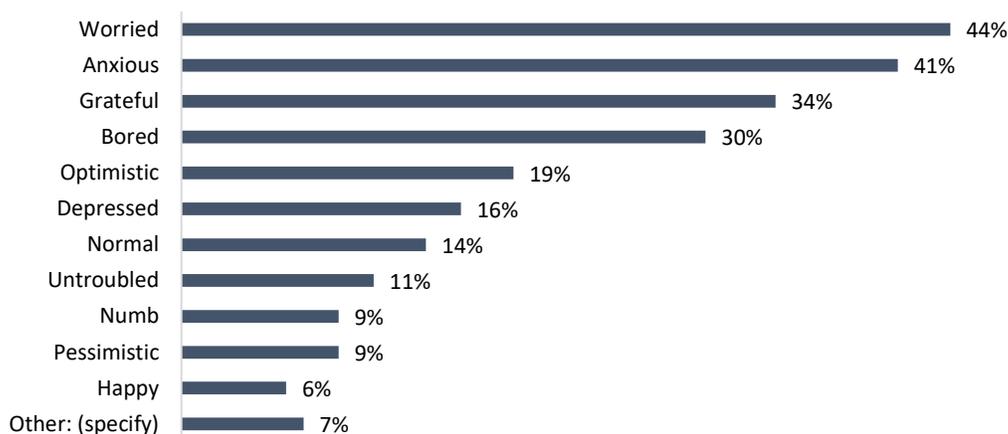
Among the emotions they feel, three-in-ten say they are simply bored.

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**Thinking about the last couple of weeks of your own life, which of the following words best describe what you have been feeling the most?  
Up to three selected (All respondents, n=1,912)**



Worry and anxiety are higher among women than men, but so too are feelings of gratitude. Men are more likely than women to say they're optimistic:

Percentage that say each of the following words describes how they have been feeling the last couple weeks (Up to three selected)							
Top 5 Words Overall Shown, Responses 40% and above highlighted							
	Total (n=1,912)	Age and Gender					
		Male			Female		
		18-34 (n=255)	35-54 (n=313)	55+ (n=334)	18-34 (n=281)	35-54 (n=344)	55+ (n=370)
Worried	44%	31%	41%	42%	39%	50%	53%
Anxious	41%	40%	35%	26%	53%	51%	41%
Grateful	34%	24%	28%	31%	41%	40%	39%
Bored	30%	44%	31%	27%	37%	25%	25%
Optimistic	19%	20%	20%	25%	13%	12%	23%

**How would Canadians rate their lives today?**

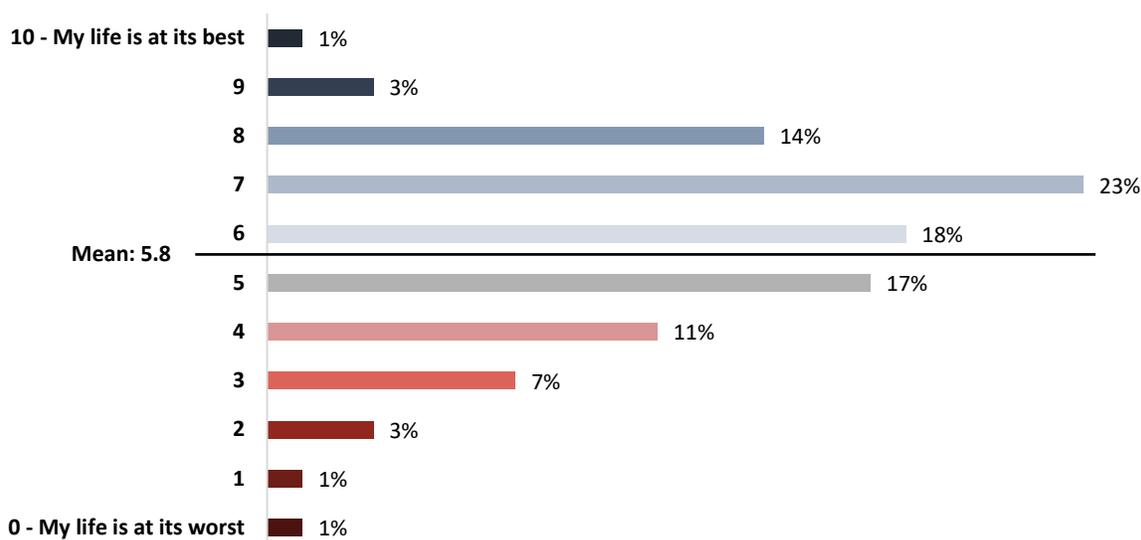
Asked to do some more self-reflection and assess their own lives as if they were on a ladder with 11 steps, Canadians offer a wide range of responses. One-in-five choose a “seven”, while more than one-

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third (a combined 35 per cent) choose either a five or a six. One-quarter (23%) say that they are either a four or below:

### How would you assess your life at this time? (All Respondents)

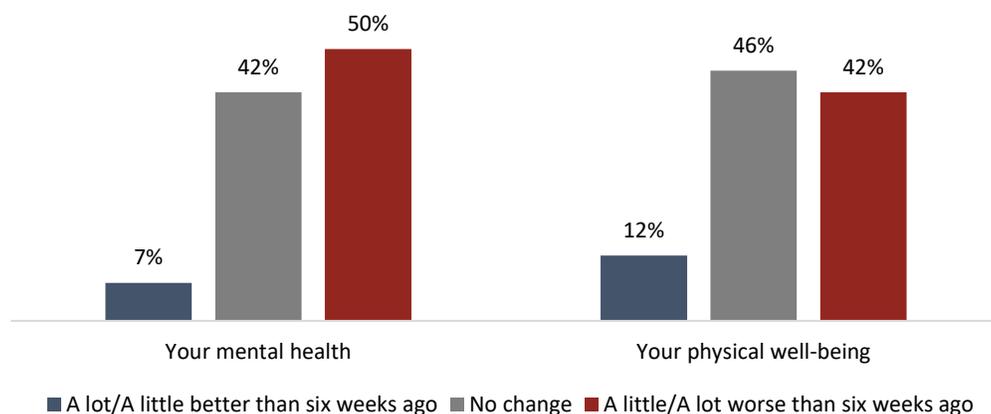


## Part Two: Impact of the COVID-19 crisis on mental health

### Half say their mental health has worsened

Perhaps the most difficult aspect of this self-isolation, notwithstanding those dealing with the virus directly, is the impact it has had on mental health. Half of Canadians (50%) say that their mental health has worsened over the past weeks. Another two-in-five (42%) say that their physical health has diminished due to inactivity:

### Mental health and physical well-being since COVID 19 shutdown (All respondents, n=1,912)

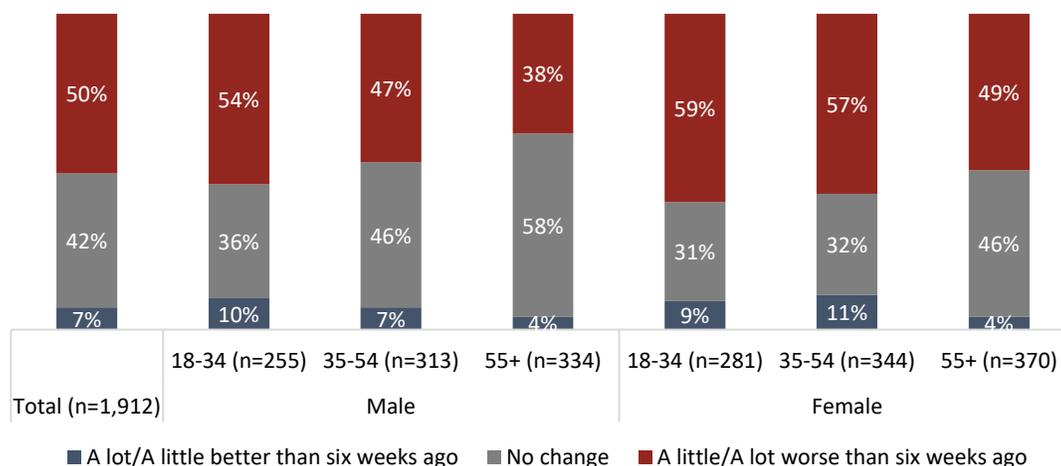


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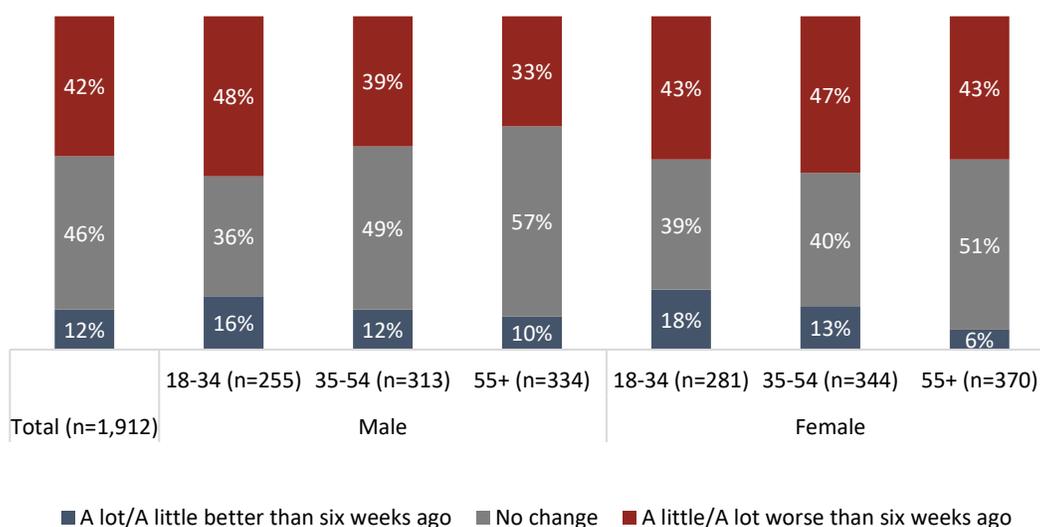
Mental health effects are widespread and common among every age and gender combination. This includes the lowest number affected – men 55 and over – and the highest number, women aged 18 to 54. This latter group is consistently found to be caring more for children and parents, and may be experiencing increased stress:

**Impact on mental health since COVID-19 shutdown  
(All respondents)**



Physical wellbeing is also suffering. Young men are most likely to say that they have been adversely affected (48%), though at least one-in-three Canadians across all age and gender combinations say their physical health has taken a hit:

**Impact on physical well-being since COVID-19 shutdown  
(All respondents)**

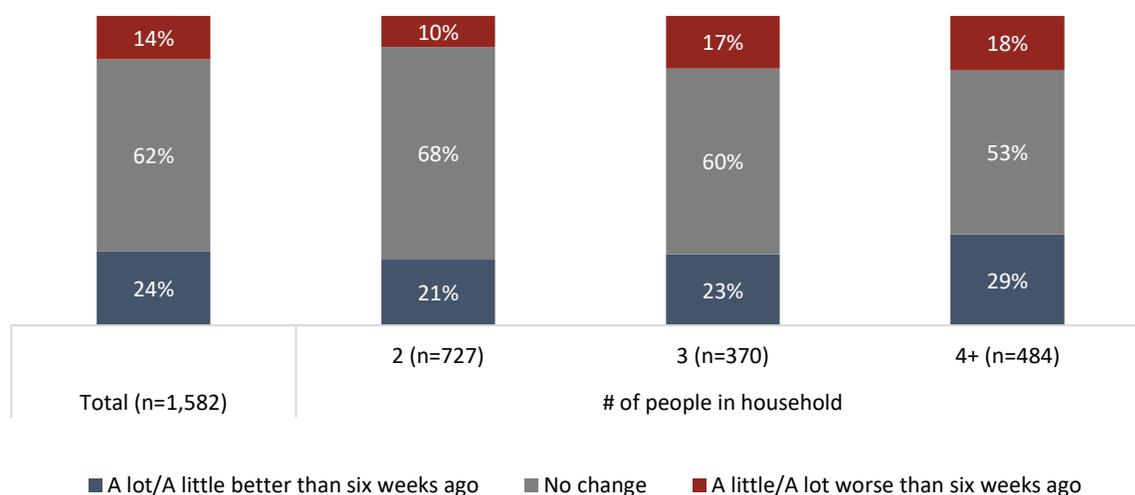


## “Roommate” Relationships

Another aspect to this new reclusive normal is the increased time spent with housemates, be they spouses, partners, parents, children, or roommates. The good news for most Canadians is that substantially more time alone with the people in their household does not appear to be damaging these relationships. While 14 per cent say relationships with whom they share living accommodations have worsened, one-quarter say they have improved. For most, all this time together has yielded no change.

Notably, the bigger the household, the better things seem:

**Impact on relationships with people in household since COVID-19 shutdown  
(Among those living with at least one other person, n=1,582)**



## Missing connections outside the home

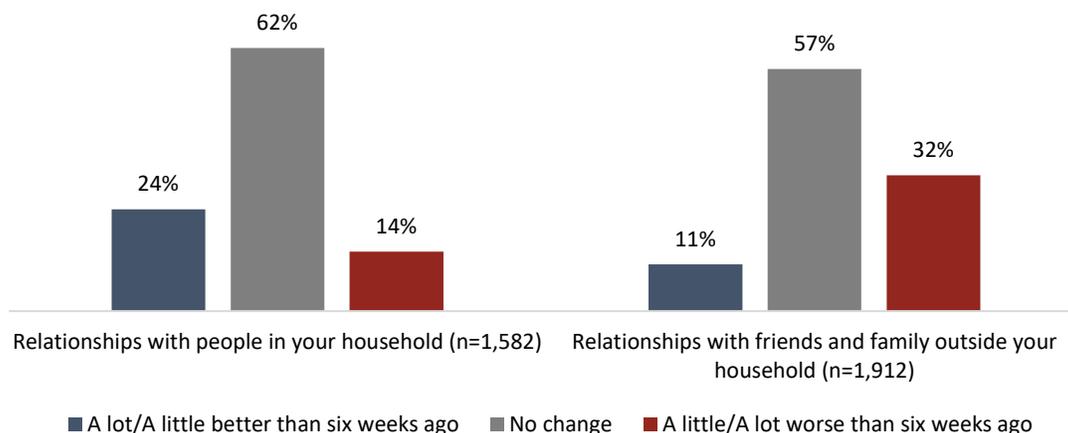
As one might expect, Canadians say relationships with people outside of their homes have worsened. Likely due to an inability to see those friends and family members (with the exception of digital communication), one-in-three (32%) say that this aspect of their life is worse now:

**[Related: Canadians most excited to hug friends, eat out, go back to work when COVID-19 recedes](#)**

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### Impact on relationships within and outside of household since COVID-19 shutdown



### Part Three: The COVID-19 Impact Index

Based on two specific aspects of a person's life right now, their mental health and their financial well-being, researchers at the Angus Reid Institute created an index to better understand Canadians and their experiences.

Researchers found Canadians broadly fall into four main categories:

- **The Hardest Hit:**
  - 26 per cent of the population
  - They report that both their household financial situation and their mental health have worsened through this pandemic period
  - One-quarter (24%) say their lives today rate on the lower rungs of the 10-point self-assessment scale – between zero and three
  - They are most likely to live in Alberta
- **The Mentally Struggling:**
  - 24 per cent of the population
  - This group says their mental health has worsened, but household financial situation has not
  - 41 per cent of this group say their lives are a three, four or five, on the 10-point self-assessment scale
  - Women are more likely to be found in this category than men
- **The Financially Struggling:**
  - 16 per cent of the population
  - They say their financial situation has worsened, but their mental health has not

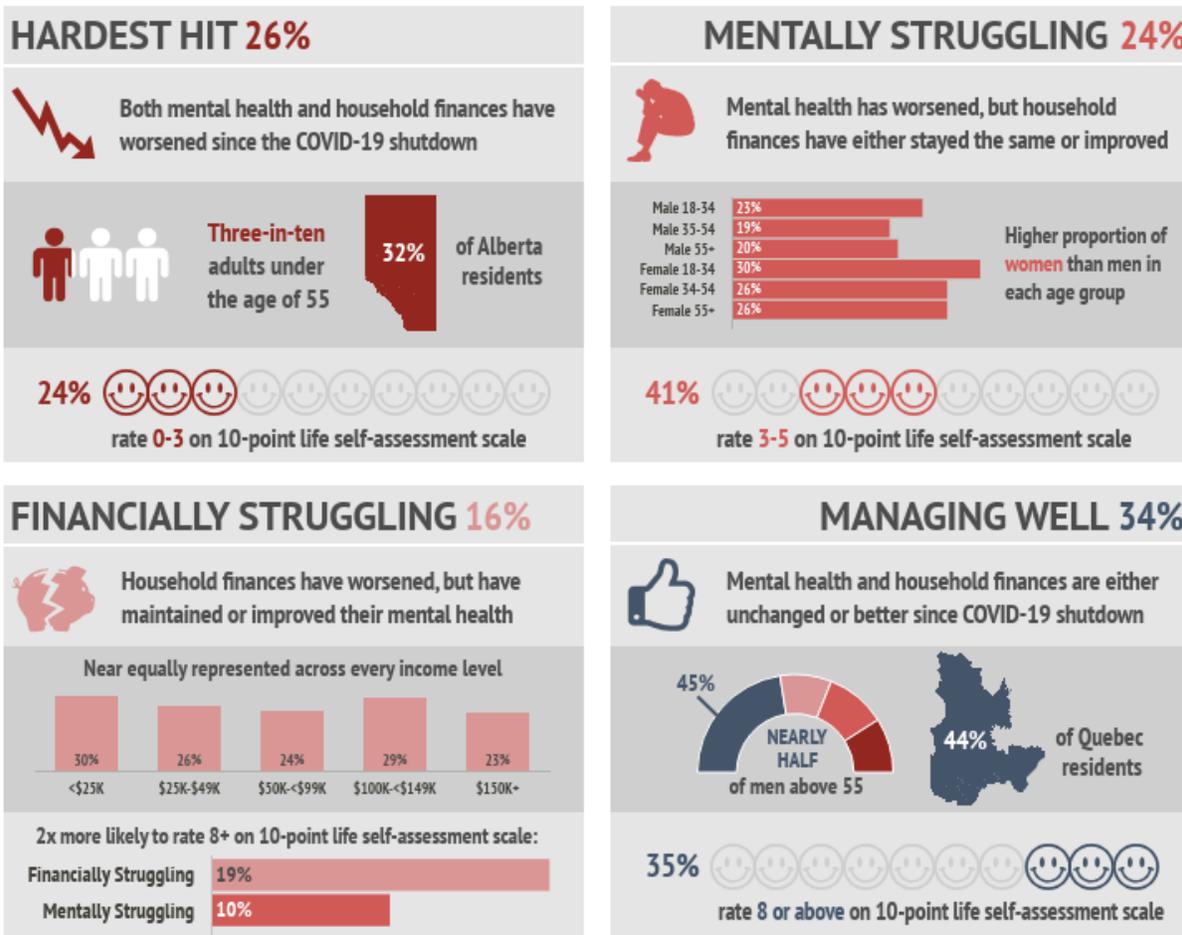
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- They're twice as likely to rate their lives as an eight, nine or 10 on self-assessment scale compared to the Mentally Struggling
- Are almost equally represented among every income level
- The **Managing Well**:
  - 34 per cent of the population
  - This group reports neither their household financial situation nor mental health have deteriorated
  - One-in-three rate their current lives on the highest rungs of the 10-point self-assessment scale (35% between 8-10)
  - Most likely to be men 55 years of age and over, as well as living in Quebec

## COVID-19 IMPACT INDEX

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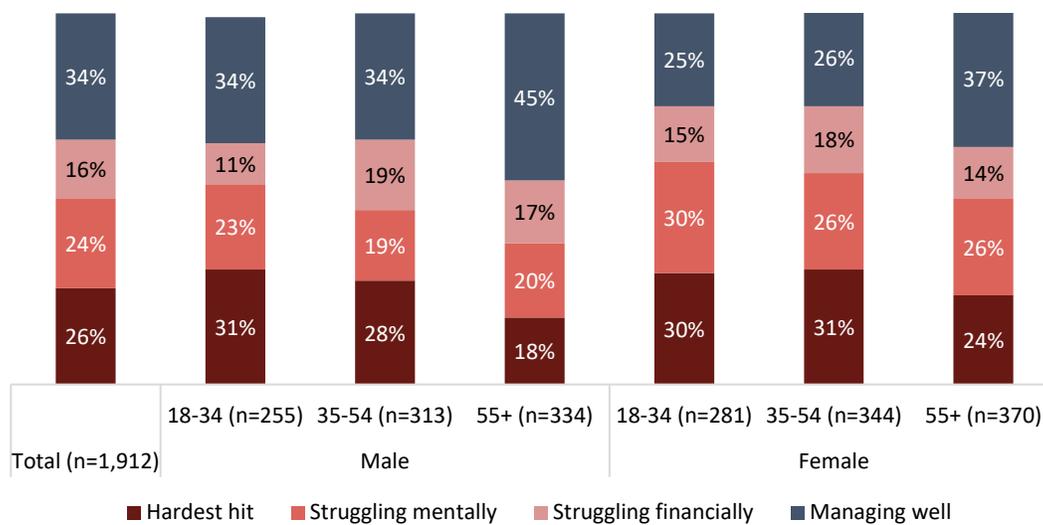
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**Who are the Hardest Hit?**

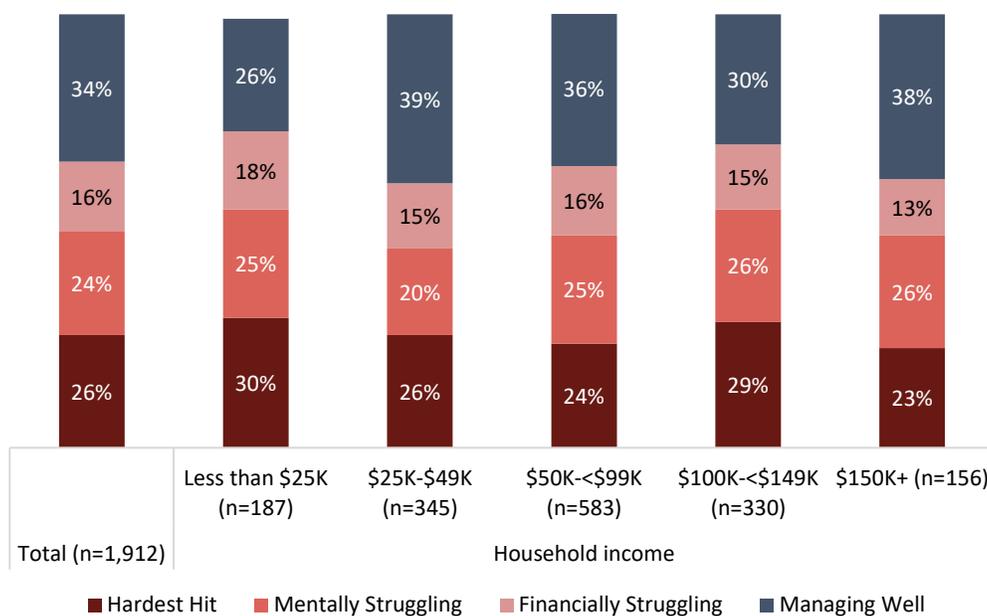
Looking at these groups by age and gender, it is clear that no group is free from mental or financial stress during this time. That said, older men are much more likely than others to be Managing Well. Meanwhile, women of all ages are more likely than their male counterparts to be Mentally Struggling:

**COVID-19 Impact Index by Age and Gender**



Again, underscoring the ubiquity of negative impacts on Canadian society, consider the COVID-19 Impact Index (CII) by household income level. Those with higher incomes are almost as likely to put themselves in the “Financially Struggling” category as lower income levels. After all, belt tightening is in the eye of the beholder. That said, those earning less than \$25,000 a year are least likely to be among those Managing Well:

### COVID-19 Impact Index by Household Income



Regionally, Quebec residents are most likely to be Managing Well, while Albertans most likely to be among the Hardest Hit:

COVID-19 Impact Index by Region							
	Total (n=1,912)	Region					
		BC (n=288)	AB (n=243)	SK/MB (n=229)	ON (n=597)	QC (n=425)	ATL (n=130)
Hardest Hit	26%	26%	32%	28%	28%	20%	30%
Mentally Struggling	24%	22%	22%	25%	25%	22%	27%
Financially Struggling	16%	20%	19%	14%	16%	14%	8%
Managing Well	34%	33%	26%	32%	31%	44%	35%

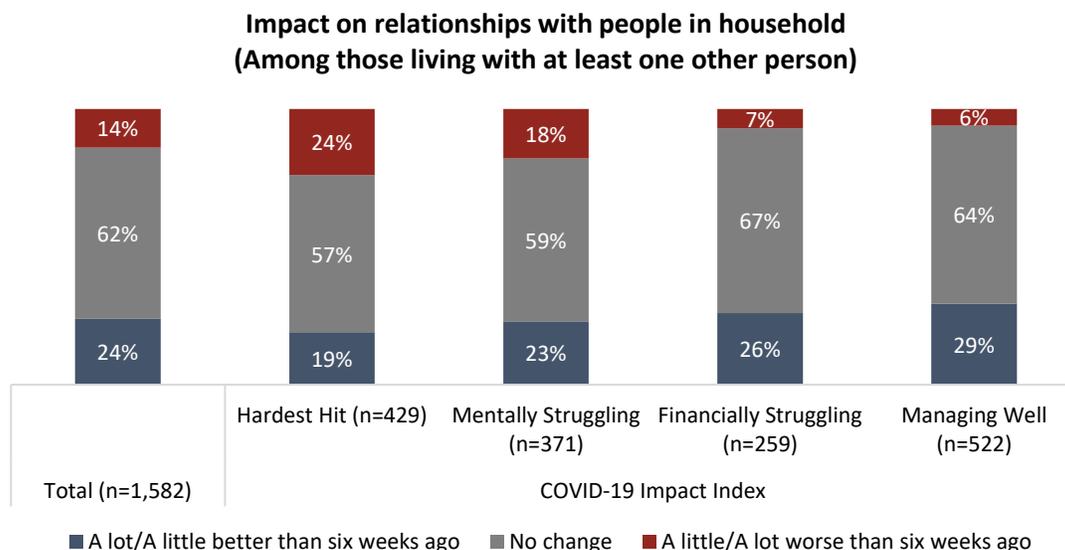
### Relationships at home

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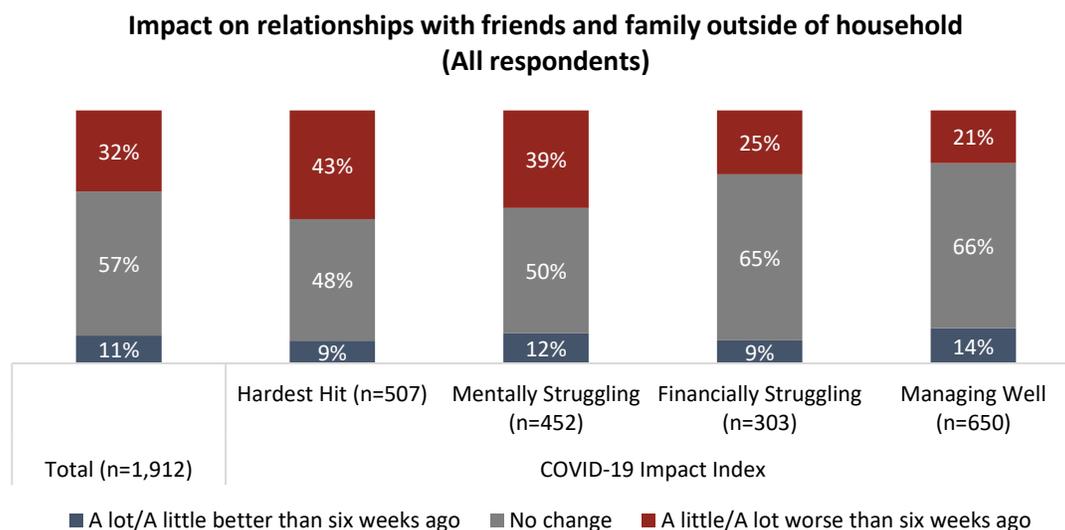
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When it comes to household relationships, those Hardest Hit are four times more likely to say these are suffering – compared to just a handful among those Managing Well.



The same trend is noted when it comes to relationships outside of the household. While in this case the negative effects are much more widespread, they are again, concentrated more highly among the Hardest Hit. Those who say they are Struggling Mentally have also seen a pronounced worsening of their relationships with people they do not live with:



### **The scope of financial struggles**

Examining the financial aspects of this, one is able to see what drives some of the placement of Canadians into these groups. Respondents were asked how the coronavirus outbreak has affected their household on three financial areas – job loss, household income and investment value.

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Among the Hardest Hit and the Struggling Financially, major impacts are noted for approximately two-in-five on each of those three measures. Meanwhile, the Managing Well have come out of the economic crisis relatively unscathed thus far. For full details on financial impacts [view our detailed tables here.](#)

Thinking about the financial impacts of the coronavirus on your household, how have you been affected when it comes to the following: Those who say “Major impact”					
	Total (n=1,912)	COVID-19 Impact Index			
		Hardest Hit (n=507)	Mentally Struggling (n=452)	Financially Struggling (n=303)	Managing Well (n=650)
Job loss	22%	41%	10%	37%	9%
Loss of household income	22%	42%	6%	41%	8%
Loss of investment value	30%	37%	26%	43%	22%

### How much are aid programs helping?

Federal and provincial governments have created a number of financial aid programs to help Canadians through this period. This includes the [Canada Emergency Response Benefit](#), as well as programs targeting [students](#), the [energy sector](#) and others, now worth [over \\$100 billion](#). So far, one-in-three Canadian households (32%) have sought to access the CERB, and just under one-quarter (23%) have received aid.

Among the Financially Struggling, nearly half have applied, while a significant number among the Hardest Hit have as well:

So far, have you or anyone in your household tried to access federal employment insurance benefits, known as EI or the Canada Emergency Response Benefit (CERB)?					
	Total (n=1,912)	COVID-19 Impact Index			
		Hardest Hit (n=507)	Mentally Struggling (n=452)	Financially Struggling (n=303)	Managing Well (n=650)
Applied and received	23%	29%	17%	34%	17%
Applied, not received	9%	14%	5%	14%	6%
Not applied	68%	57%	79%	52%	78%

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In terms of the extent to which they feel the financial assistance is helping, two-in-five (38%) of those who have applied say they are relying on these programs entirely to get by. Another 35 per cent say the programs are helping a lot.

What is perhaps most interesting is that among those who are Managing Well and have applied for aid, 42 per cent say that this is a total lifeline for them. This suggests that without government assistance they may not be in this group:

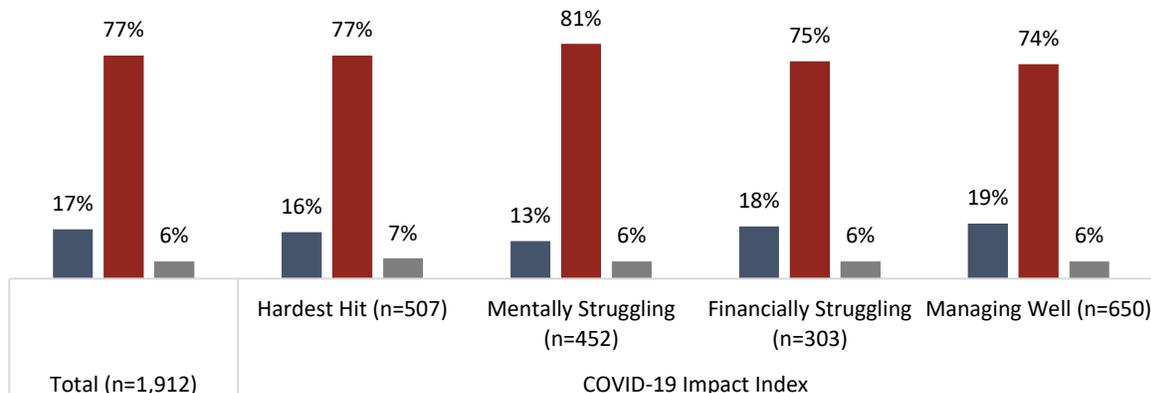
<b>How much have assistance programs helped? Those who have applied for government assistance, n=606</b>					
	Total (n=606)	COVID-19 Impact Index			
		Hardest Hit (n=219)	Mentally Struggling (n=96*)	Financially Struggling (n=146)	Managing Well (n=145)
Programs are a total lifeline	38%	41%	37%	29%	42%
Programs help a lot	35%	29%	43%	41%	34%
Programs help a little	21%	26%	14%	23%	16%
No help at all	3%	1%	-	5%	4%
Not sure yet	3%	3%	6%	2%	4%

### **Regardless of personal impacts, anxiety about returning to normal**

The discussion over when to open up businesses and institutions has been heating up over the last two weeks. Public health officials and leaders have been cautious to commit to any large-scale opening while they continue to stress that staying the course is the best tactic in order to reduce longer term and worse financial damage.

Canadians across of the four groups of the CII, regardless of whether they are struggling mentally or financially, are equally likely to agree on the point that it is too soon to begin to lift restrictions in their province. At least three-quarters of each group say this:

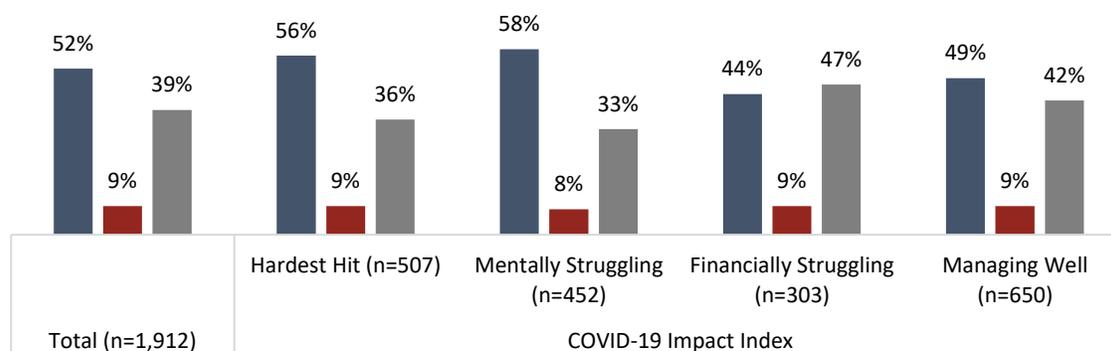
**Which is closest to your own point of view?  
(All respondents)**



- It's time to start lifting some of the public restrictions imposed since the COVID-19 outbreak in my province
- It's too soon to start lifting public restrictions imposed since the COVID-19 outbreak in my province
- Not Sure/Don't know

Much of this is driven by the priority that Canadians place on health over economic concerns. Asked which of those broad priorities would be more important to them in their decision making about when to open up the economy, those among the Financially Struggling and the Managing Well are a little more likely to say “both” than the Hardest Hit and Mentally Struggling:

**If you were a government decision maker, which point of view would carry more weight? (All respondents)**



- Public safety and health depends on continuing restrictions
- Restricting business operations is harming the economy
- Both, equally

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

**For detailed results by the COVID-19 Impact Index, [click here.](#)**

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