

So long, office space? Two-thirds of Canadians who work from home expect it to continue after pandemic

Half feel the worst of COVID-19's economic impacts are over, while half feel the worst is yet to come

June 11, 2020 – The COVID-19 outbreak has changed a lot of things about life in Canada. One of the more enduring legacies of the crisis may be how it changes the way we work.

Across the country, offices have been shuttered in favour of spare rooms, kitchens, and sofas. Now, the latest study from the non-profit Angus Reid Institute reveals only one-third of Canadians working remotely expect to resume working from the office as consistently as they did pre-pandemic.

Among those working from home, (just under one-third of Canada's adult population) only 36 per cent say they will likely go back to their place of work when COVID-19 concerns subside.

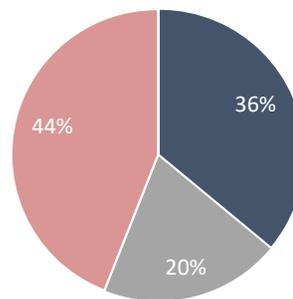
Most who work remotely anticipate splitting time between their workplace and home, while one-in-five (20%) say they will remain primarily at home.

For others, however, such speculation is something of a luxury. The Angus Reid Institute asked workers who have lost hours or been laid off (28% of Canadian adults who had been working when the pandemic was declared) if they anticipate returning to that same job with the same number of hours in the future. Among this group, two-in-five say it's either a doubtful prospect (29%) or that the job is gone forever (9%). This represents a two-fold increase since the end of March.

More Key Findings:

- Half (49%) say that the worst of the job losses and economic strife brought on by COVID-19 is yet to come, while the same number say they feel the worst has passed
- Seven-in-ten of those who have lost work have applied for aid funding from their province or the federal government. The vast majority of this group (79%) either say this assistance has been "vital" or has helped them out "a lot"

**Do you anticipate going back to your place of work as you did before the pandemic, OR do you anticipate continuing to work from home?
(Among those working from home, n=433)**



- Likely to go back to place of work
- Likely to continue working from home
- Probably a mix of both

METHODOLOGY:

The Angus Reid Institute conducted an online survey from June 8 – 10, 2020 among a representative randomized sample of 1,510 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. 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-three 18- to 34-year old's and two-in-five 35- to 54-year old's have been working from home over the last few months. Those working from home are divided about the impact it has had on their mental health, with about equal numbers saying it's been terrible (15%) or great (16%). Most say it has been "okay" (68%).

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: Working from home

Who is affected?

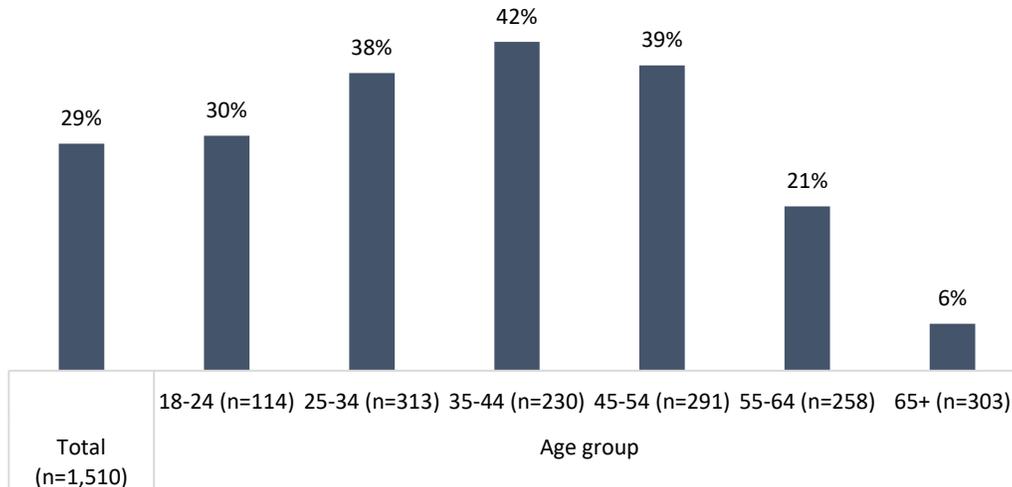
High-profile businesses such as Canada's [Shopify](#) have made the permanent transition to 'work from home' as the COVID-19 pandemic forces workers around the world to trade in their office cubicle for a desk in the spare room or a seat at the kitchen table. In May, Twitter announced that it would allow employees to [work from home permanently](#), while fellow social media giant Facebook has also reportedly started planning for [permanent remote work](#).

In total, 29 per cent of Canadians say they are working from home, with the proportion highest among 35- to 44-year-olds:

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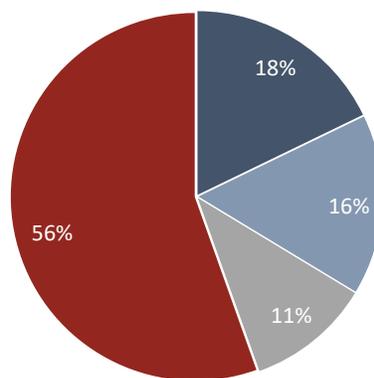
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Number of Canadians working from home due to COVID-19 outbreak



The Angus Reid Institute further found this situation affects nearly half (44%) of households. In such households where toiling on laptops propped up on coffee or patio tables represents the new normal, one-in-five (18%) report working alone, while another 11 per cent report sharing their new workplace with someone else in the home. Sixteen per cent say they are not working from home, but their partner or roommate is:

**Because of the coronavirus outbreak, have you or someone in your household, been working from home?
(All respondents, n=1,501)**

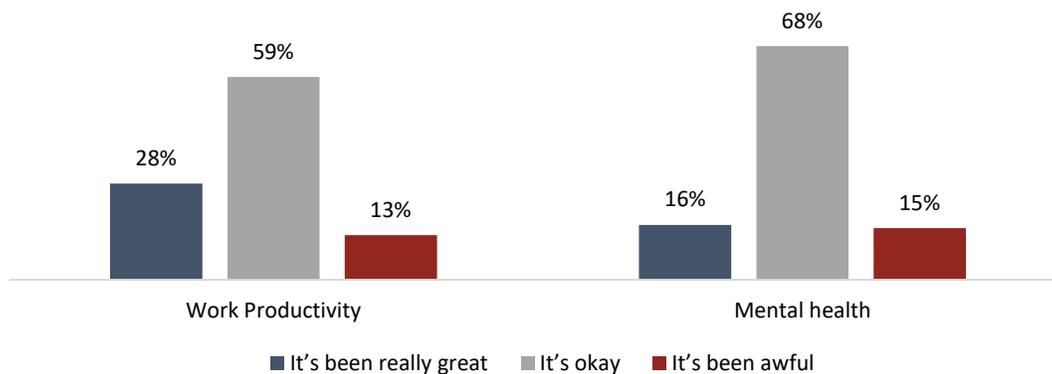


■ Yes, I am ■ Yes, someone else in household ■ Both ■ No, neither

How do Canadian workers like the at-home office?

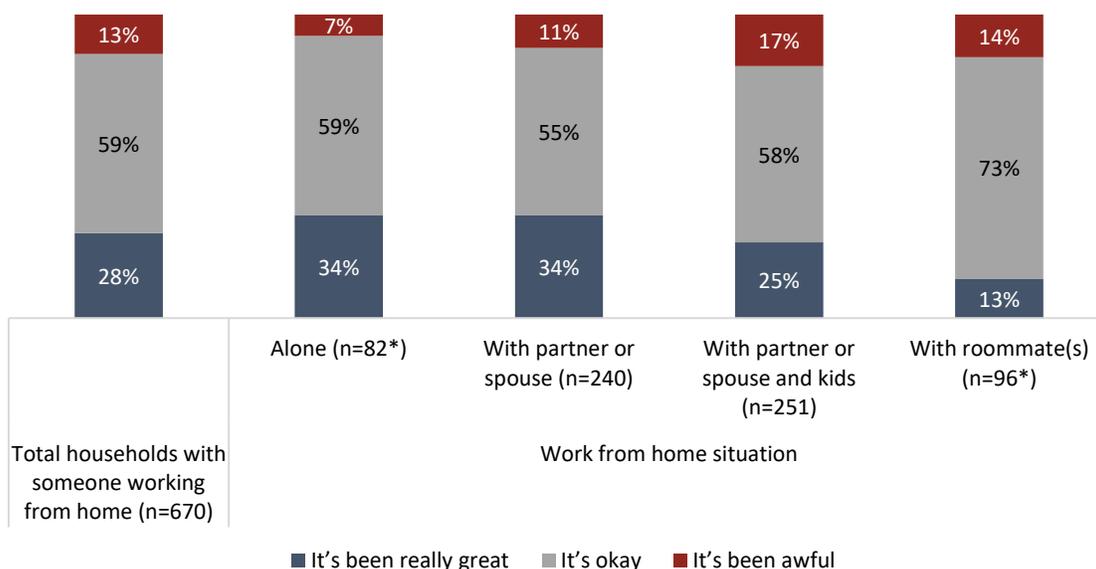
For most, the work from home experience has been a combination of the satisfaction of getting more tasks done combined with mixed feelings over the emotional toll. More than twice as many say their productivity has been “great” than “awful” but are almost evenly divided about the impact on their mental health.

**Thinking about the following factors,
how would you describe the experience so far?
(Among those with someone working from home in household, n=670)**



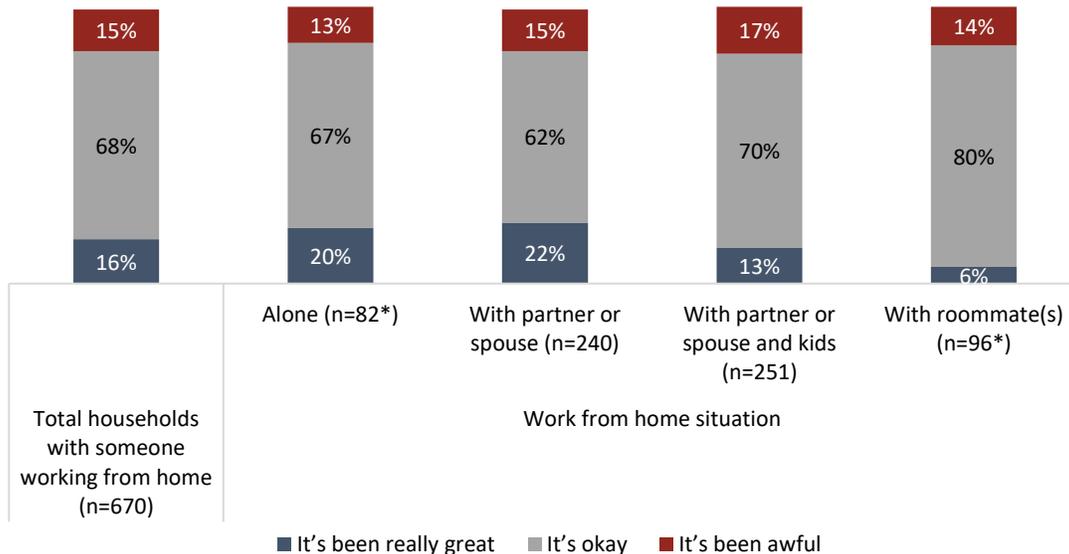
Notably, those who are working from home in a situation where they either have children or a roommate around are less likely to say that their productivity has been “great”, but minorities in every situation report the experience has been untenable overall.

How has work productivity been impacted by working from home?



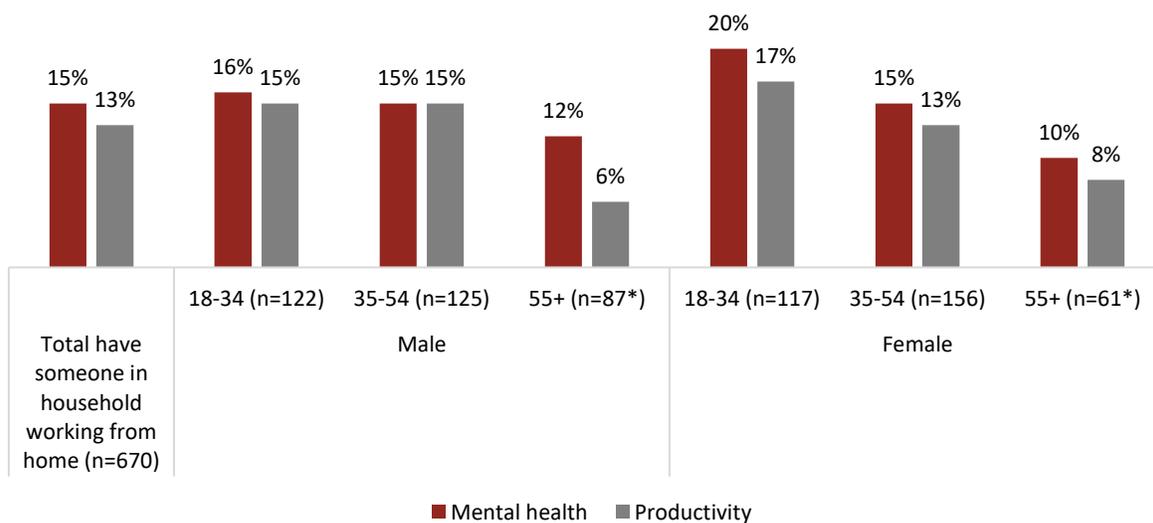
Looking specifically at mental health outcomes by individual work from home situations, it is notable that the distribution of experiences is relatively consistent regardless of who else is in the household:

How has mental health been impacted by working from home?



The number of respondents saying their work productivity has been 'awful' due to working at home is relatively consistent along age and gender lines, however more young women say their mental health has suffered than any other group:

Percentage who say the impact on their mental health or work productivity has been 'awful' due to working from home

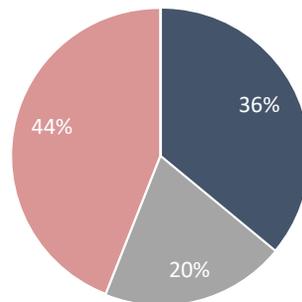


Two-thirds foresee working from home as part of a new normal

While executives and HR managers twist themselves into pretzels over the long-term implications for all their currently unused office space – Canadian workers have a clarity of vision around what the future of work will entail. Most who are working from home today do not anticipate a return to the office full-time.

Indeed, just 36 per cent say this, while one-in-five (20%) foresee working from home permanently. The largest group, 44 per cent say that they will be working from home more than they did before, but it will be a mix of both:

**Do you anticipate going back to your place of work as you did before the pandemic, OR do you anticipate continuing to work from home?
(Among those working from home, n=433)**

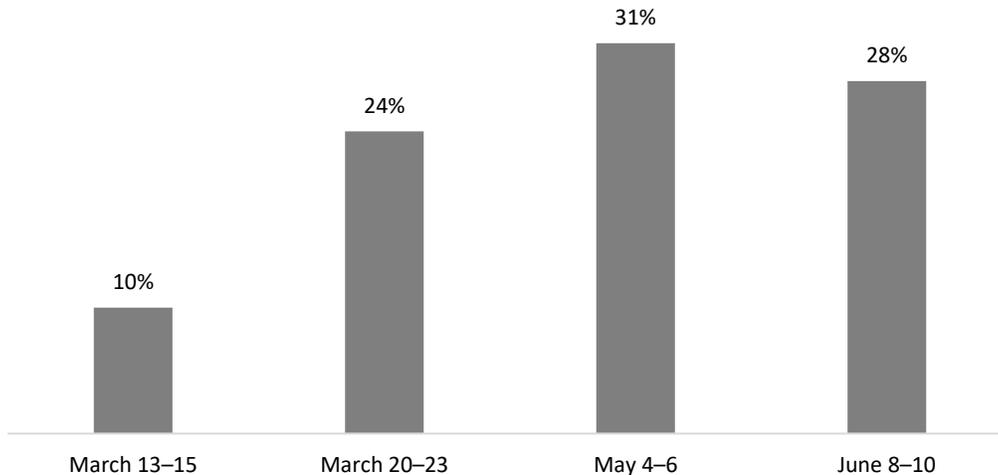


Likely to go back to place of work
 Likely to continue working from home
 Probably a mix of both

Part Two: COVID-19 and job loss

While Canada’s employment market [added 290,000 jobs](#) in May, many Canadians are still laid off or have had their hours curtailed because of the COVID-19 pandemic. The Angus Reid Institute has been asking respondents about lost work since the shutdown began and now finds three-in-ten (28%) reporting lost work. This number is statistically unchanged from early May:

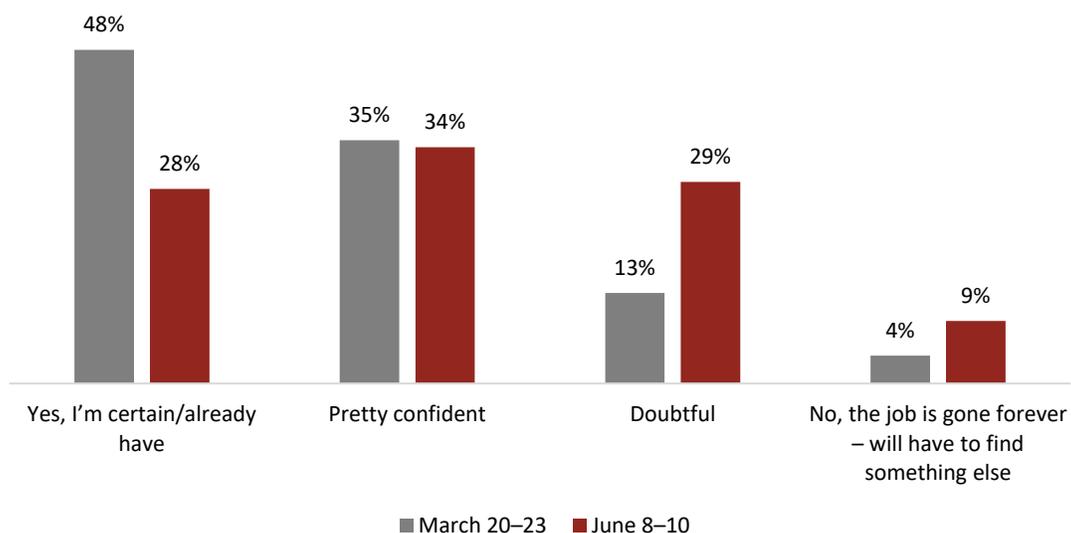
Percentage of Canadians who say they have lost work or been laid off due to COVID-19 over time



Two-in-five now doubt their job will return

More troubling, however, is the dramatic increase in the number who are doubtful that their own jobs will not return or are convinced those positions are gone for good. At the end of March just 17 per cent expressed these sentiments. Today, that number has more than doubled to 38 per cent:

In the future, do you think you will return to this job at the same number of hours worked as before?



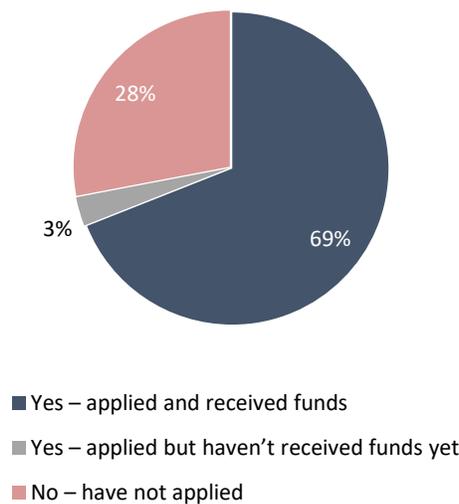
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Many relying on government assistance

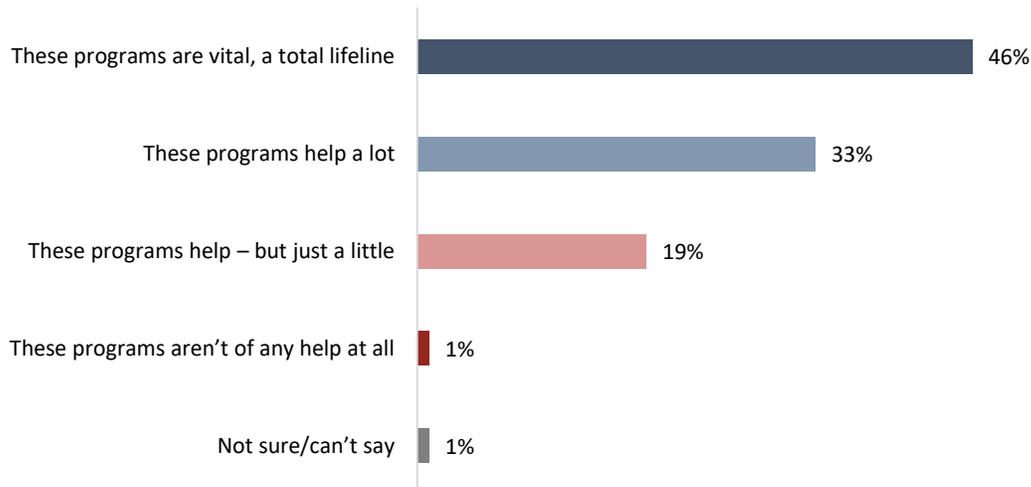
For many who have experienced job loss as a result of the COVID-19 shutdown, government resources have been key in sustaining some financial stability. Among those who have lost work, seven-in-ten have applied for funding from their province or through federal programs like the Canadian Emergency Response Benefit, with all but three per cent saying they have received it:

**Have you applied for financial assistance?
(Among those laid off/lost hours at work, n=423)**



The Angus Reid Institute asked Canadians who had applied just how valuable the programs have been for them, personally. Nearly half (46%) say they have been vital to their sustenance, while one-third say they have helped a lot (33%). For approximately one-in-five, more help is needed:

**Which statement best describes the impact on you and your household during this economic downturn?
(Among those laid off/lost hours at work and have applied, n=305)**



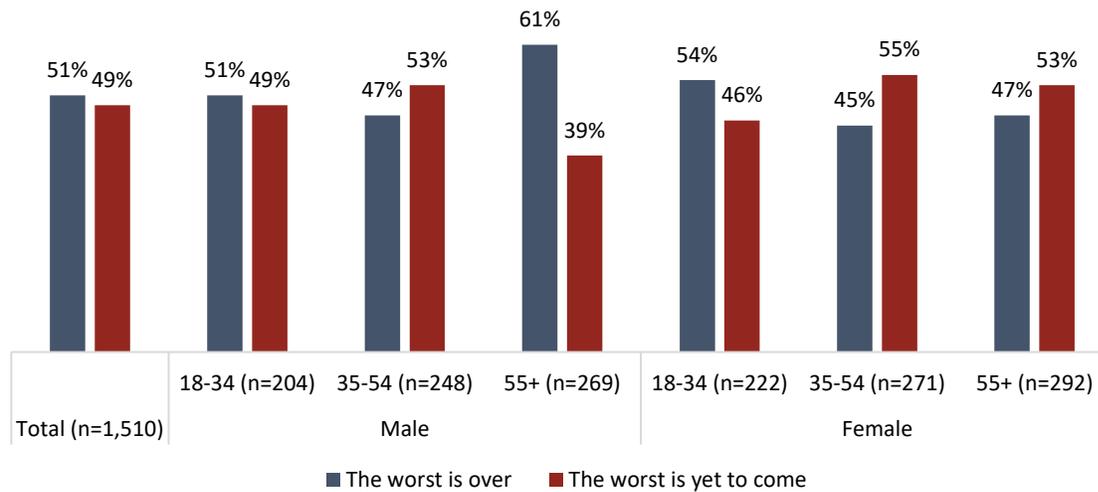
Part Three: Is the worst over, or yet to come for the Economy?

As communities begin to allow businesses, schools, and other institutions to reopen, the gaze of many Canadians has shifted at least slightly to their province's – and their own – economic recovery.

Even divide on economic outlook

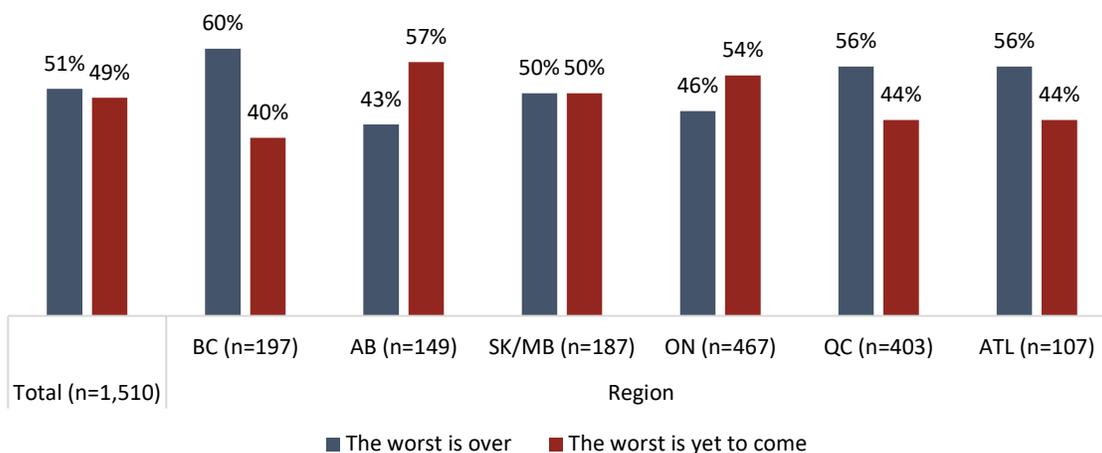
When it comes to the economic outlook for the country, residents are near-evenly divided about whether the worst has passed or is yet to come. Older men are more optimistic, while all other age and gender groups are relatively closely divided:

Do you think that the worst is over, or yet to come...
"Further loss of jobs and damage to businesses in my province due to COVID-19"



Regional divisions are pronounced here. British Columbians, for example, are far more optimistic than their neighbours in Alberta. The same is true of Quebec residents when compared to those in Ontario:

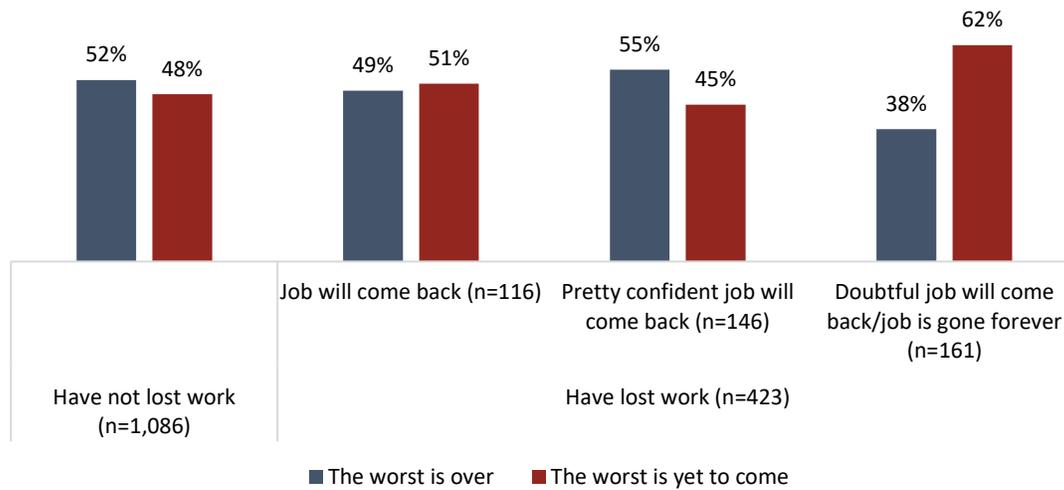
Do you think that the worst is over, or yet to come...
"Further loss of jobs and damage to businesses in my province due to COVID-19"



Job loss and economic forecast

Those who have lost a job that they feel is not coming back are understandably more pessimistic about what the coming months hold for the economy. Three-in-five (62%) among this group say the worst is yet to come, while those who have not lost work are divided:

Which statement best describes the impact on you and your household during this economic downturn?



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

For detailed results by job loss, work from home situation, and other crosstabs, [click here](#).

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