

Three months after COVID-19 pandemic declared, Canadians express 'fatigue', are social distancing less

Young people, ages 18 to 34, are least likely to be continuing to follow advice from health officials

June 15, 2020 – With the advent of summer mere days away, public health officials [expressing](#) concern that Canadians are flagging in their vigilance towards social distancing and other public health measures may have good reason to worry.

The latest study from the non-profit Angus Reid Institute finds a significant number of Canadians now less stringent about following certain behaviours aimed at preventing the spread of the coronavirus.

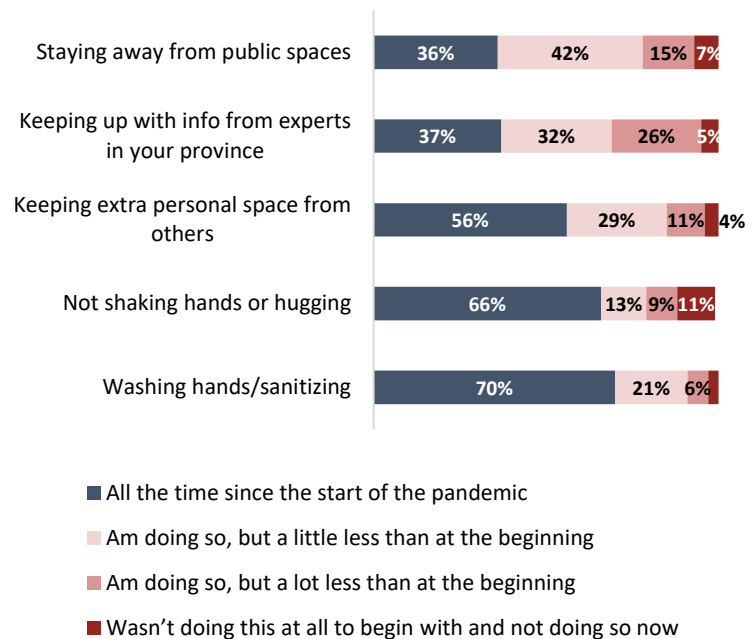
Indeed, just 36 per cent of Canadians now say they are staying away from public spaces as much as they were in the early days of the outbreak, while 56 per cent are continuing to keep extra space from others as much as they were earlier this spring, despite it being one of the [key aspects](#) in preventing community transmission of the disease.

This comes as Canadians are most likely to report that they have been feeling "fatigued" (31%) and "anxious" (28%) over the last few weeks.

And as COVID-19 infection rates have continue to [trend downward](#), the number of Canadians who say they are worried about contracting the virus has dropped from a peak of 73 per cent in early April to below half (46%). That said, concerns about community transmission and the infection of friends or family members remain well above majority level.

The biggest challenge for public health officials may be connecting with younger Canadians. Those in the 18- to 34-year-old cohort are least likely to be following recommended advice and much less likely to voice personal concern over becoming sick.

Thinking about the last couple of weeks, how much would you say you are doing each of the following (n=1,510)



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.

CONTACT:

Shachi Kurl, Executive Director: 604.908.1693 shachi.kurl@angusreid.org @shachikurl
Dave Korzinski, Research Director: 250.899.0821 dave.korzinski@angusreid.org

More Key Findings:

- Two-in-five Canadians (41%) say the worst of the health effects in Canada are yet to come. The majority (59%) feel that the country has made it through the most difficult time in terms of illness.
- Those under 55 years of age are much more likely to feel worn out or fatigued than older Canadians. Women 18 to 54 are most likely to feel anxious, while men 55 and over are most likely to feel optimistic.
- Ontario residents are most likely to say they're keeping up with social distancing (64%) just as much as they were in earlier weeks of the pandemic.

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: Canadians worn out, anxious but grateful

Spring will shortly turn to summer and with the new season comes new freedoms for Canadians. In most communities now, local businesses are re-opening, and many are enjoying the sun in [safer outdoor](#)

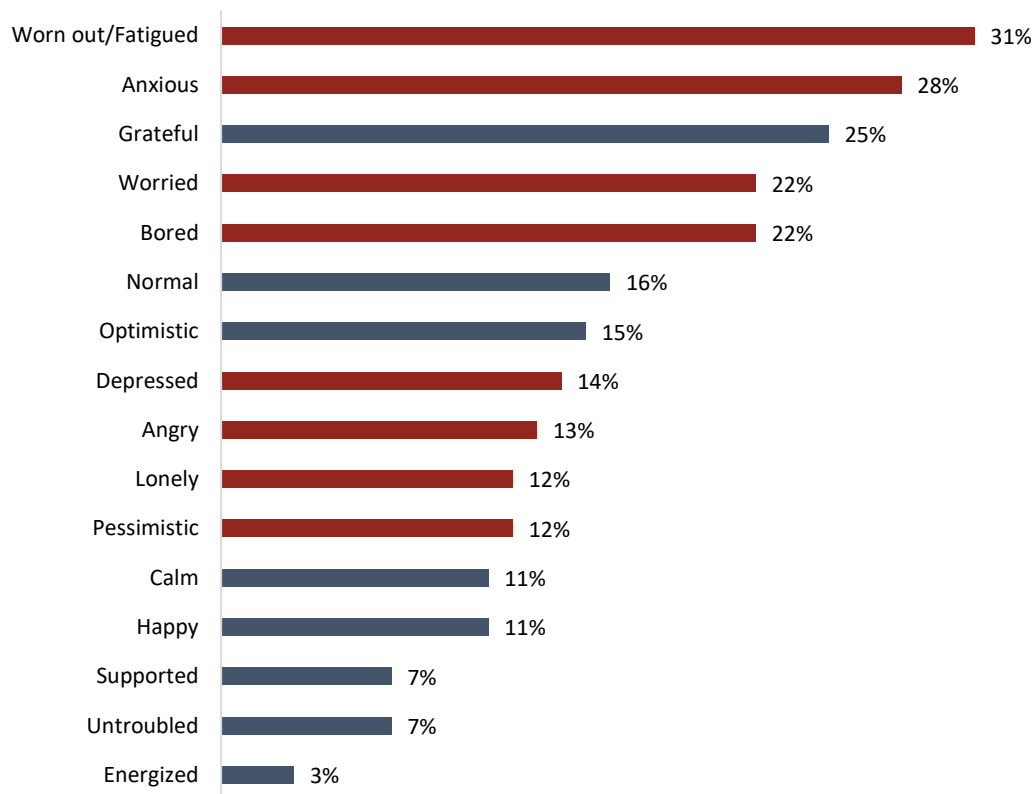
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[spaces.](#)

After months of isolation and distancing, new activities are likely a relief for many. The Angus Reid Institute asked Canadians how they have been feeling over the past couple of weeks and four of the five most common responses are negative, including feeling worn out (31%) and anxious (28%). Canadians also continue to be grateful (25%):

**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?
(Respondents allowed three choices, n=1,510)**



Age and gender factors

Younger women are most likely to say that they feel fatigued or anxious. In each case, 18- to 34-year old women are most likely to feel this way. Notably, young men are most likely to feel depressed, one-in-five (18%) say this, while men 55 years of age and older are most likely to say they feel optimistic:

What words would you use to describe how you've been feeling the last couple weeks?							
(Weighted sample sizes)	Total (n=1,510)	Age and Gender					
		Male			Female		
		18-34 (n=204)	35-54 (n=248)	55+ (n=269)	18-34 (n=222)	35-54 (n=271)	55+ (n=292)
Worn out/ Fatigued	31%	38%	34%	20%	43%	38%	20%
Anxious	28%	25%	25%	18%	44%	34%	23%
Grateful	25%	16%	20%	26%	26%	31%	28%
Bored	22%	27%	23%	24%	25%	19%	19%
Worried	22%	14%	23%	19%	29%	22%	25%
Normal	16%	18%	14%	21%	11%	13%	18%
Optimistic	15%	11%	12%	23%	11%	15%	17%
Depressed	14%	18%	12%	10%	15%	15%	13%

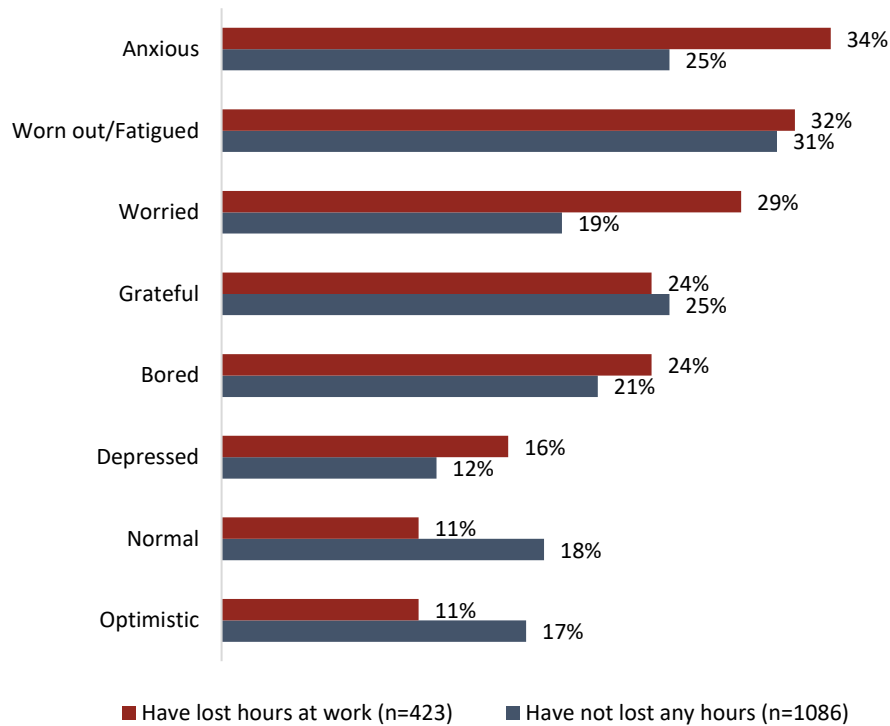
Job loss and anxiety

Job loss is correlated with worry and anxiety. Three-in-ten Canadians (28%) say they have had their hours cut or been laid off completely since the pandemic was declared (for our most recent research on economic factors [click here](#)), and their level of anxiety and worry is notably higher than those who have not lost any work. Among the group that has not faced a change in their working situation, optimism and a sense of normalcy are both higher:

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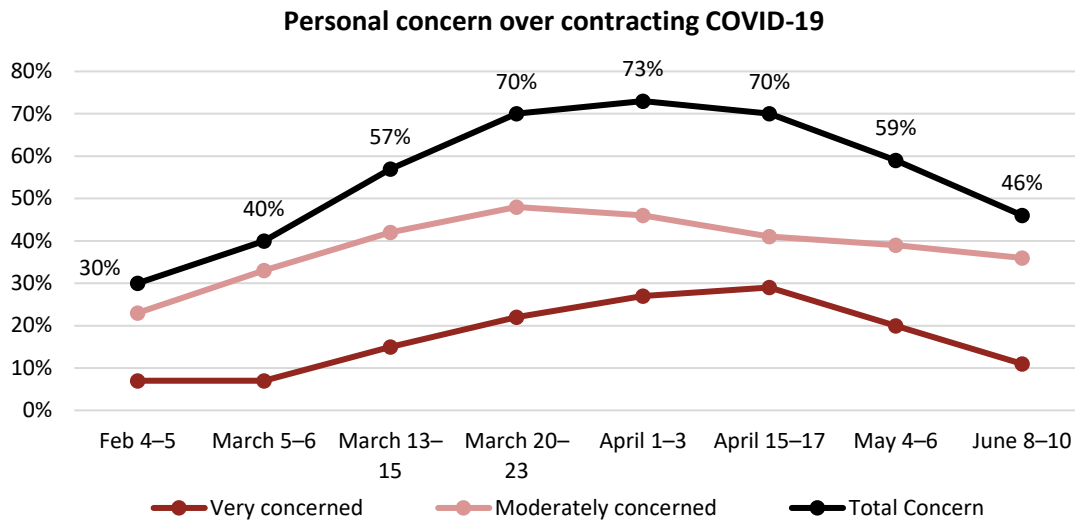
How they're feeling: Those who have lost work vs those who have not (n=1,510)



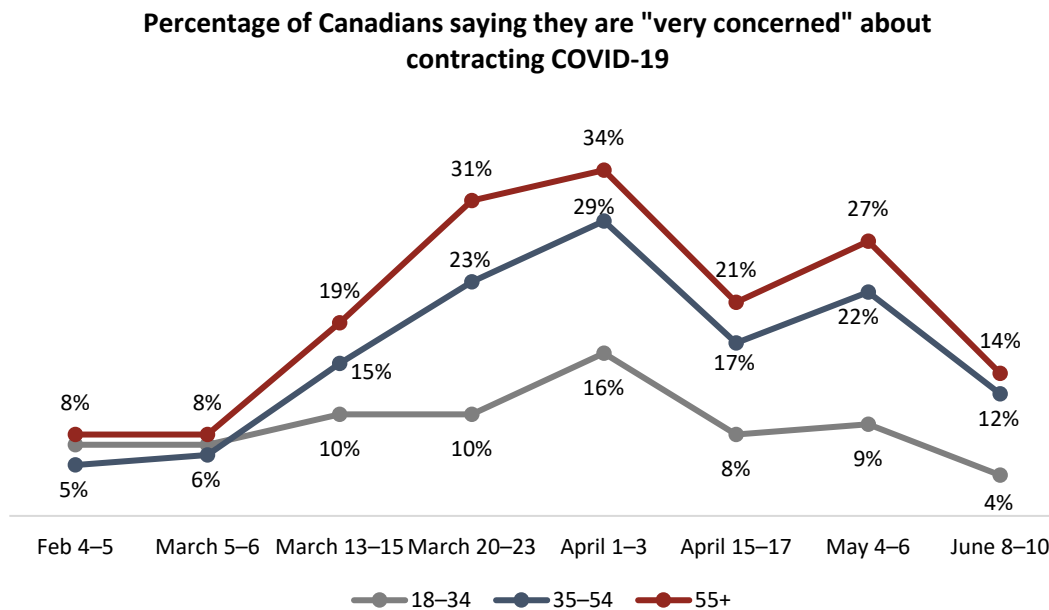
Part Two: COVID-19 infection concern eases

Fewer than half now worried about becoming sick

As the curve of COVID-19 cases in Canada continues to trend downward, so too do personal levels of concern over contracting the disease. Just under half now say they are worried about becoming sick (46%), down from a high point of 73 per cent at the beginning of April:

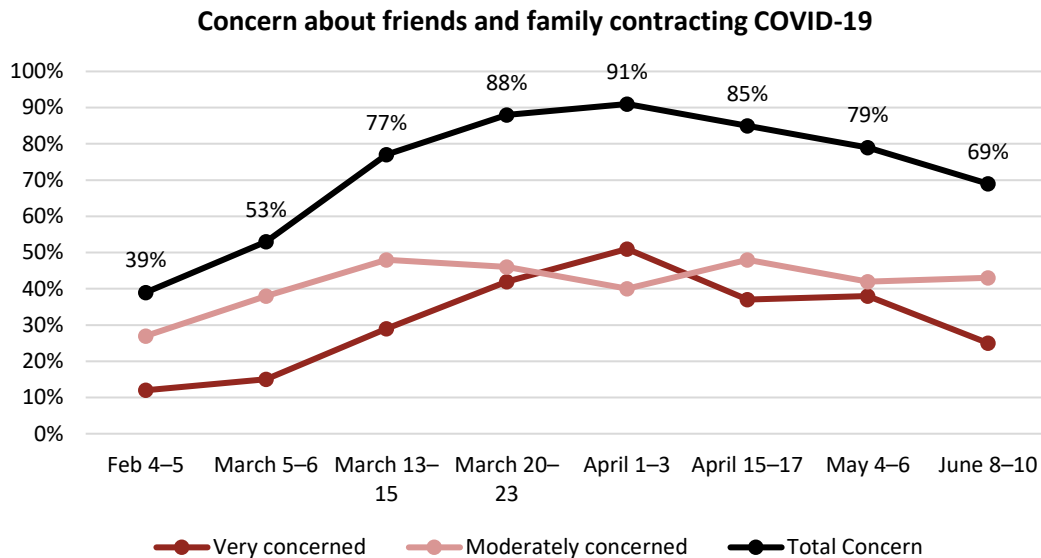


Notably, the number of those aged 55+ who say they are “very concerned” about becoming sick has dropped to just 14 per cent. That is significantly lower than the one-in-three who said this in April:



Concern about friends and family persists

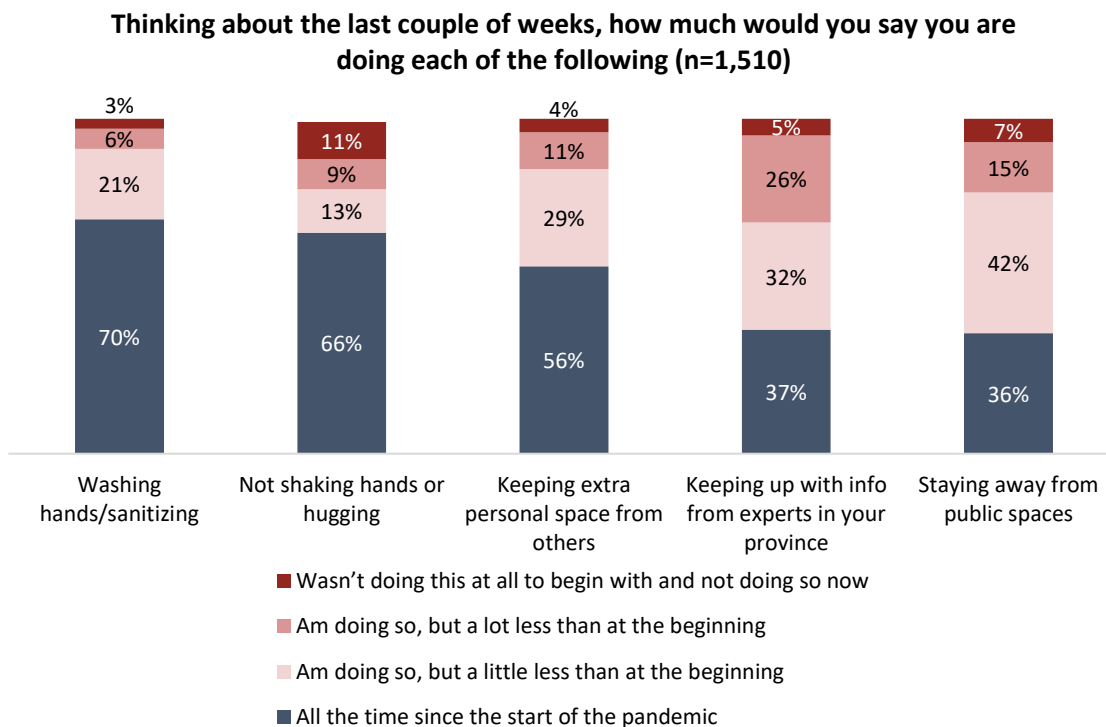
That said, concern about friends and family getting sick has been slower to drop. Seven-in-ten Canadians (69%) remain worried that a family member or close friend may become sick:



Part Three: Changing behaviour

Most are paying less attention to updates, going back out to public spaces more

Adherence to social distancing and health protocols is diminishing alongside worries about contracting the infection. Canadians continue to stick most vigilantly to handwashing and avoiding handshakes and hugs with others, but the same cannot be said for staying away from public spaces:



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Vigilance dropping most among young people

Throughout the pandemic, young people have felt the least amount of concern about their own individual risk. This, as the impact of the outbreak has been felt almost entirely by the older population. Indeed, 97 per cent of deaths due to COVID-19 in Canada were individuals over the age of 59. This helps to explain why Canadians 55 years of age and over are most likely to be keeping up with preventative behaviours while those under 35 are least likely. This data comes as reports in Ontario have emerged that [cases among young people have been rising](#) in recent weeks:

Percentage who are <u>doing each activity less</u> over the last couple weeks							
(Weighted sample sizes)	Total (n=1,510)	Age and Gender					
		Male			Female		
		18-34 (n=204)	35-54 (n=248)	55+ (n=269)	18-34 (n=222)	35-54 (n=271)	55+ (n=292)
Staying away from public spaces	64%	72%	70%	67%	63%	62%	57%
Keeping up with info from experts in your province	63%	70%	69%	55%	79%	57%	53%
Keeping extra personal distance / social distancing	44%	58%	52%	42%	46%	39%	32%
Not shaking hands or hugging people in your life	33%	45%	39%	31%	38%	26%	28%
Washing hands/sanitizing	30%	41%	30%	30%	32%	26%	24%

Ontario residents still following protocols most closely

The good news for Ontario health officials is that their constituents are least likely to be giving up on the social distancing and health measures they have been advised to follow. Half of Ontario residents say they are more likely to be going out into public spaces over the last couple of weeks, but that is well below some other provinces. Further, seven-in-ten Ontarians say they are still avoiding contact and washing their hands just as much as they were before June:

Percentage who are <u>doing each activity less</u> over the last couple weeks							
Unweighted sample sizes	Total (n=1,510)	Region					
		BC (n=197)	AB (n=149)	SK/MB (n=187)	ON (n=467)	QC (n=403)	ATL (n=107)
Staying away from public spaces	64%	73%	82%	75%	54%	63%	72%
Keeping up with info from experts in your province	63%	58%	75%	70%	58%	65%	58%
Keeping extra personal distance / social distancing	44%	49%	67%	58%	37%	40%	37%
Not shaking hands or hugging people in your life	33%	36%	47%	43%	30%	31%	30%
Washing hands/sanitizing	30%	33%	38%	40%	29%	23%	29%

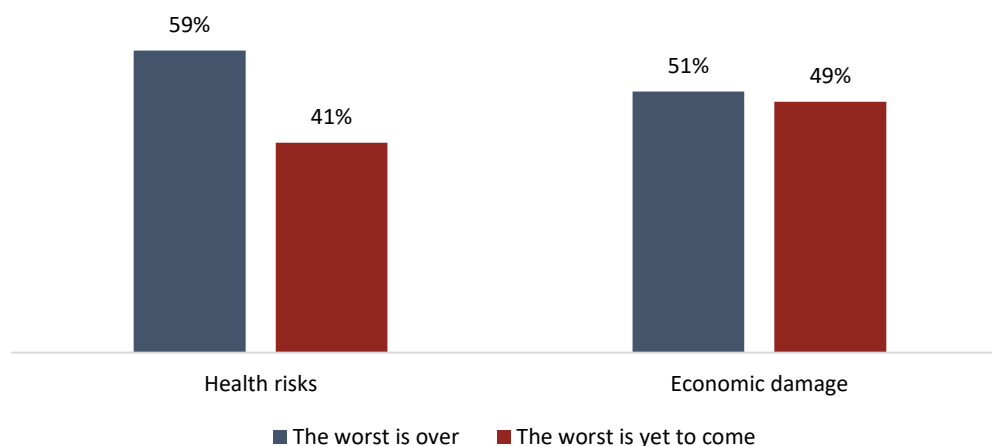
Part Four: Back to “normal”?

Three-in-five say worst of health risks is over

Most (59%) say the worst of the pandemic is over in terms of the health impacts, and that the situation will continue to improve. The rest (41%) say the worst is yet to come. This is a more optimistic outlook than their views on damage to the Canadian economy as a result of the pandemic:

Related: Working from home after COVID-19

Is the worst over or yet to come for each:
(All respondents, n=1,510)

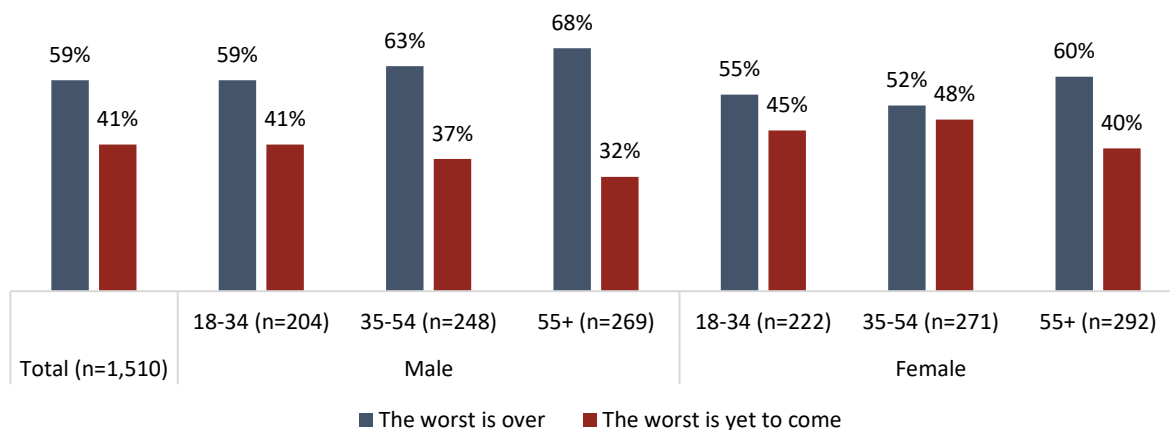


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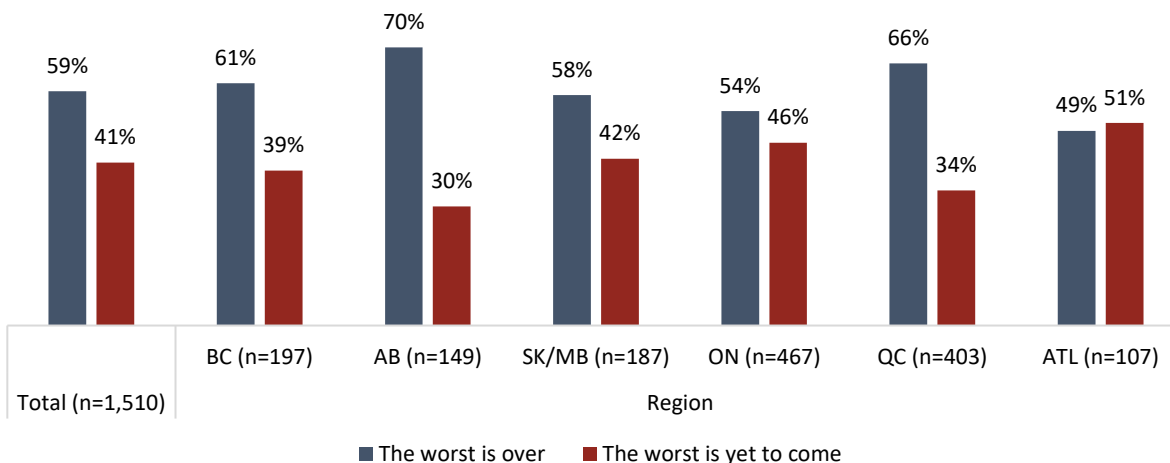
A majority of Canadians across all age and gender categories lean toward optimism, though women under the age of 55 are most divided:

**And, for each of the following, do you think that the worst is over, or yet to come? [More people in my province becoming sick and dying due to COVID-19]
(All respondents, n=1,510)**



Atlantic Canadians are most likely to say that there are harder days ahead, while at least a slight majority in all other regions say that the worst has passed:

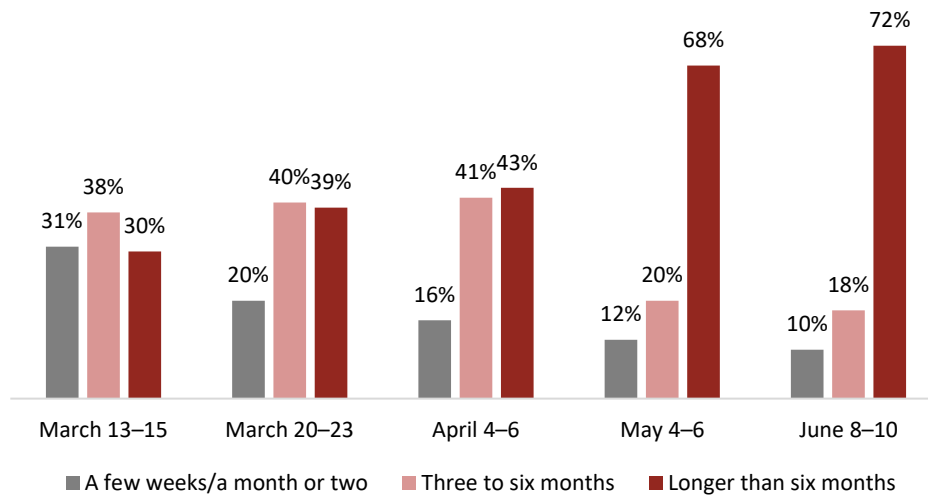
**And, for each of the following, do you think that the worst is over, or yet to come? [More people in my province becoming sick and dying due to COVID-19]
(All respondents, n=1,510)**



Normalcy for Canada a long way off

Travel restrictions continue in Canada and may well for months to come. Reports say the U.S. – Canada border will continue to be [closed past June 21](#) and many Canadians would like to see it closed until at least the end of the year. As these temporary changes to life have become long-term, Canadians say ‘back to normal’ in this country is a long way off. Seven-in-ten (72%) say that they don’t expect the country to be operating normally until 2021. In mid-March, just 30 per cent of residents held this opinion:

How long until Canada is back to normal?



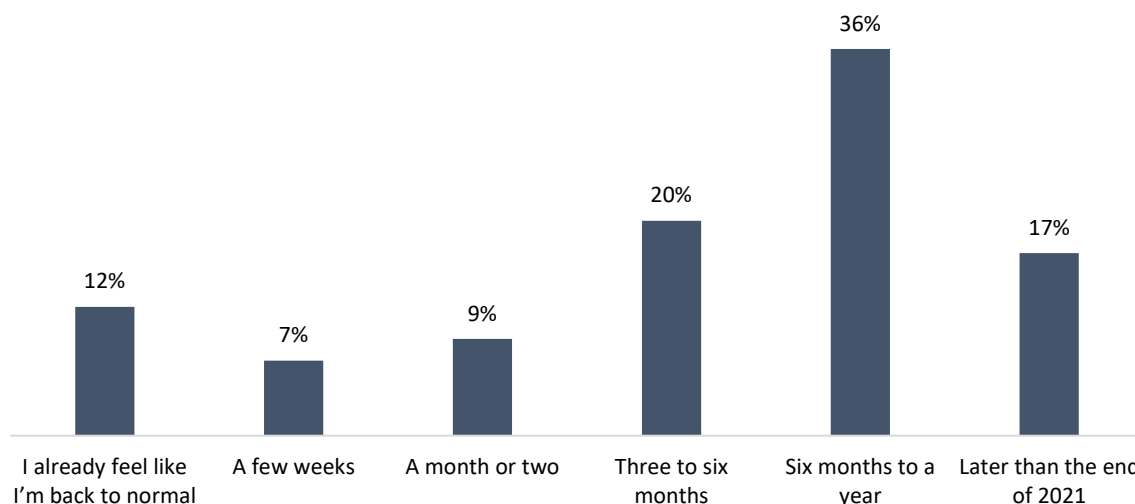
But one-in-three say their own life will be back to normal within two months

When considering their own lives, a return to normal for some Canadians is much closer. One-in-ten (12%) say they feel they are already back to normal, while 16 per cent say they will be within the next couple months. Half (53%) feel that it will be at least six months before their own lives return to normal, compared to the 72 per cent who feel this way about the country more broadly:

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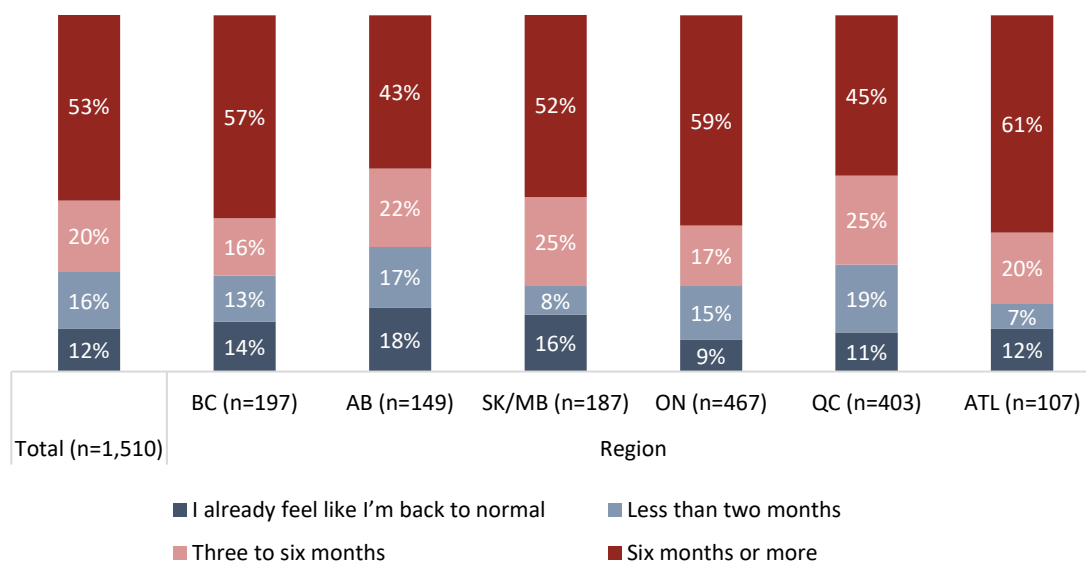
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**And what about your own life, how long do you feel it will take for you to feel like you're back to normal?
(All respondents, n=1,510)**



Regional distinctions are evident. In Ontario and Atlantic Canada, six-in-ten say they will not be returning to normal until 2021. Albertans are twice as likely as Ontarians to say they've already returned to normal:

And what about your own life, how long do you feel it will take for you to feel like you're back to normal?



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

Summary table showing job loss vs non-job loss sentiments below:

QA. 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?

Sample size	1510	423	1086
	Total	Laid off/lost hours at work	
		Yes	No
Optimistic	15%	11%	17%
Happy	11%	9%	12%
Grateful	25%	24%	25%
Untroubled	7%	4%	9%
Energized	3%	4%	3%
Supported	7%	6%	7%
Angry	13%	15%	13%
Normal	16%	11%	18%
Bored	22%	24%	21%
Calm	11%	8%	13%
Anxious	28%	34%	25%
Depressed	14%	16%	12%
Pessimistic	12%	14%	11%
Worried	22%	29%	19%
Worn out/Fatigued	31%	32%	31%
Lonely	12%	12%	12%
Other: (specify)	2%	2%	3%
Net: Positive	55%	50%	57%
Net: Negative	76%	86%	73%

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