

Second Wave Angst: COVID-19 concern levels rebound to April highs as Canadians brace for worse to come

One-quarter continue to suffer from poor mental health as pandemic wears on

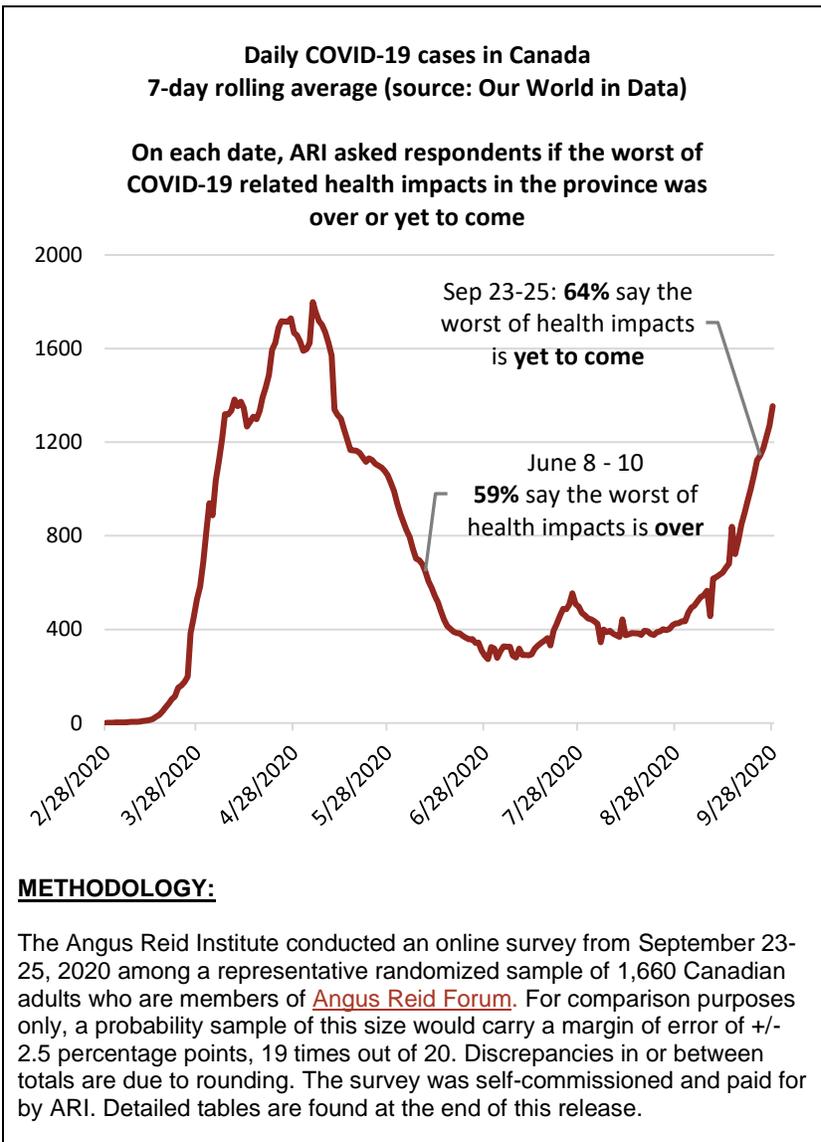
September 30, 2020 – As public health officials confirm that Canada is into its second wave of the COVID-19 pandemic, new data from the non-profit Angus Reid Institute finds that as infection rates spike, so do personal anxiety and concern over falling ill, reaching peaks not seen since the spring.

Two-in-three Canadians (64%) say the worst of the health impacts from the novel coronavirus are yet to come. This represents a stark increase in worry from June, when nearly the same number held the opposite view – that the worst was over.

On a more positive note, asked to describe their mental health over the past few weeks, three-quarters of Canadians report that it is at least “good” (58%), if not “great” (15%).

That said, those under the age of 35 appear to fare worse. More than one-third of both men and women in this group saying they are struggling.

Further, two-in-five women between the ages of 35 and 54 – the demographic **most likely** to be caring for children and other family members – say their mental health is bad (34%) or terrible (4%).



More Key Findings:

- Seven-in-ten Canadians now say they are concerned about personally contracting COVID-19, up from a low-point of 46 per cent in early June.

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- 35 per cent of Canadians over the age of 54 now say they are “very concerned” about becoming sick, the highest mark recorded thus far by the Angus Reid Institute, and up from 14 per cent in early June.
- 73 per cent now say they feel the worst of economic impacts is yet to come for their province. Half of Canadians said this when asked in that same June survey.

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: Concern rises alongside COVID-19 cases

- **Disparity between younger, older people**
- **Ontario residents most concerned, Alberta least**
- **Partisanship a factor?**

Part Two: Mental health a challenge for more than one-quarter

Part Three: More say the worst is yet to come

- **Health impacts**
- **Economic impacts**

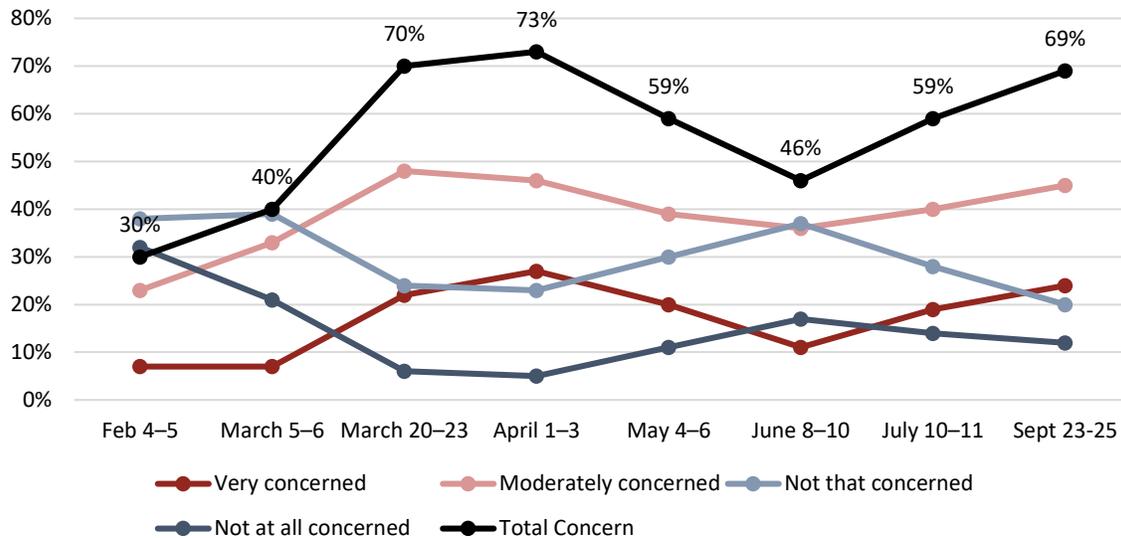
Part One: Concern rises alongside COVID-19 cases

Public health officials are redoubling efforts to get through to Canadians in their attempts to arrest the rise of COVID-19 cases across the country. Over the past two weeks, the average daily number of new cases in Canada **has doubled**. On September 28, Ontario recorded its **highest daily total** since the pandemic began. As cases have risen, so too has anxiety among the public. Seven-in-ten residents now say they are concerned about becoming sick, a proportion not seen since April:

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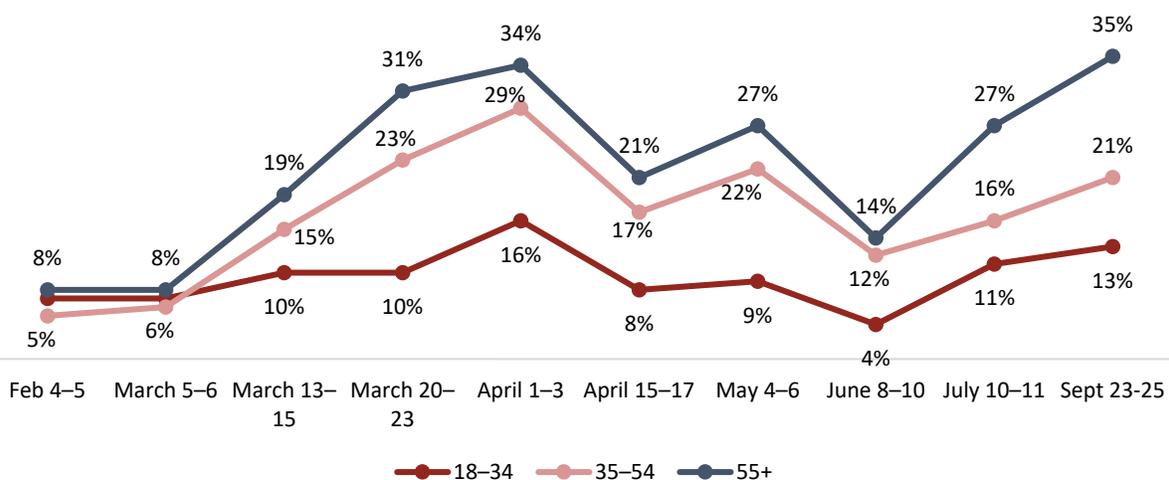
Personal concern over contracting COVID-19



Disparity between younger, older people

Those most at risk - older Canadians - are most concerned. More than one-third (35%) of those over the age of 54 now say they are “very concerned”, while 21 per cent of 35-to-54-year-olds feel the same. Younger Canadians continue to voice significantly less concern about their own risk of falling ill from COVID-19, at a time when officials say they are responsible for most of the new cases:

Percentage of Canadians saying they are "very concerned" about contracting COVID-19

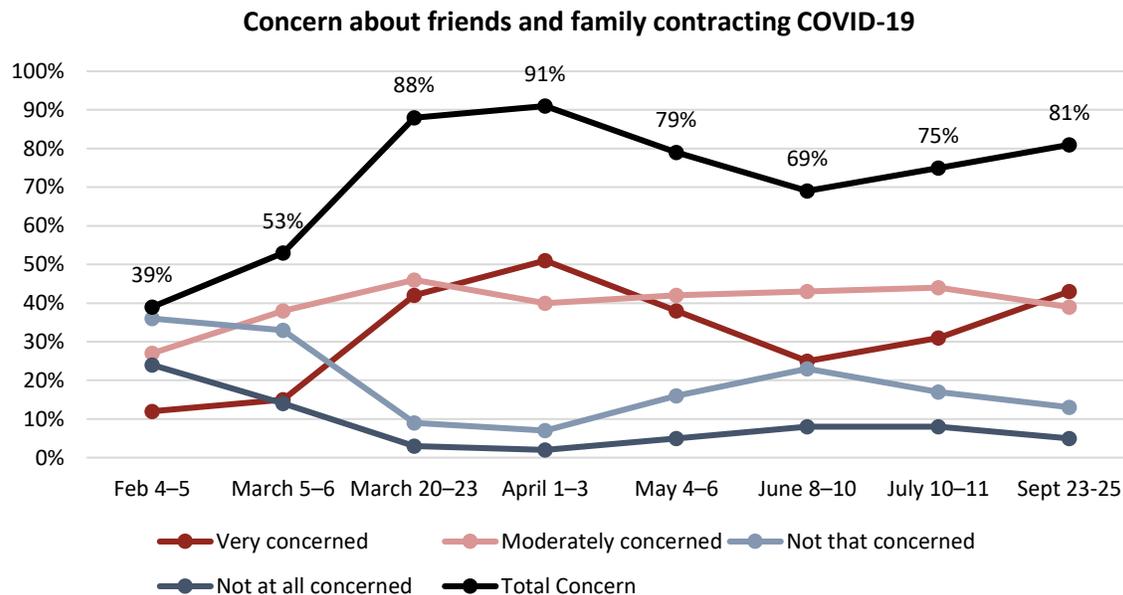


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As the pandemic has worn on, a majority of Canadians has continued to worry about family and friends getting sick. The level of concern for others has not fluctuated as much as concern for self, but it is worth noting that four-in-five (81%) are now expressing fear:

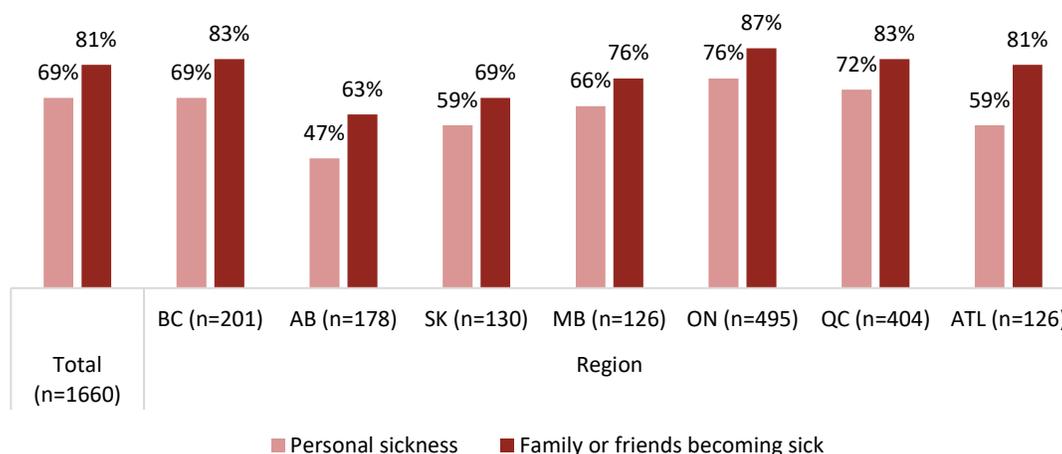


Ontario residents most concerned, Alberta least

In Ontario, where cases have been rising most quickly in recent days, residents are most concerned about both their personal risk and that faced by their friends and family. Alberta is on the other end of this spectrum. Just under half of Albertans say they are worried about becoming sick, despite having the [second highest](#) per capita levels of the virus.

Quebecers rank just behind Ontario residents in concern levels. This, as Montreal is set to [re-impose](#) some of the tightest community restrictions in the country on Thursday:

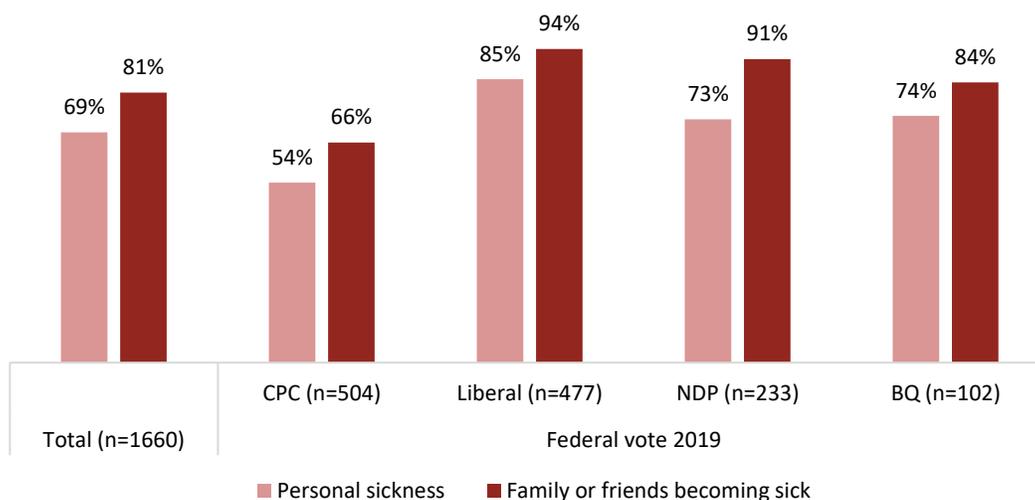
Percentage worried about each of the following re: COVID-19



Partisanship a factor?

What remains notable about the way the risk of illness during the pandemic has been interpreted is the lower level of concern among those who voted for the Conservative Party in 2019. This group is far less likely to express concern for themselves or others. Just over half of past CPC voters (54%) are personally worried about becoming sick, compared to at least three-quarters among other party supporters:

Percentage worried about each of the following re: COVID-19



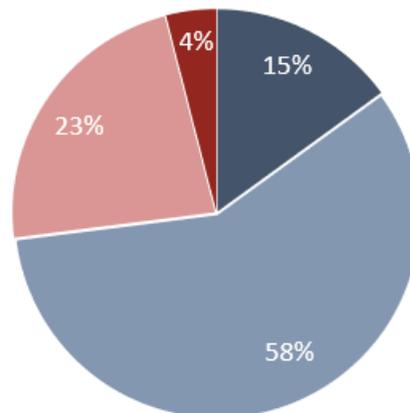
Part Two: Mental health a challenge for more than one-quarter

The Angus Reid Institute has been tracking the [mental health aspects](#) of this pandemic over the past months, finding many Canadians struggling to get by. That trend continues, as one-quarter of residents say that over the past few weeks their mental health has been either poor (23%) or terrible (4%).

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**How would you say you are feeling over the past few weeks...?
(All respondents n=1660)**



- Great – not really bothered at all
- Good – some difficulty but nothing major
- Not good – having a pretty tough time with things
- Terrible – barely getting by at this point

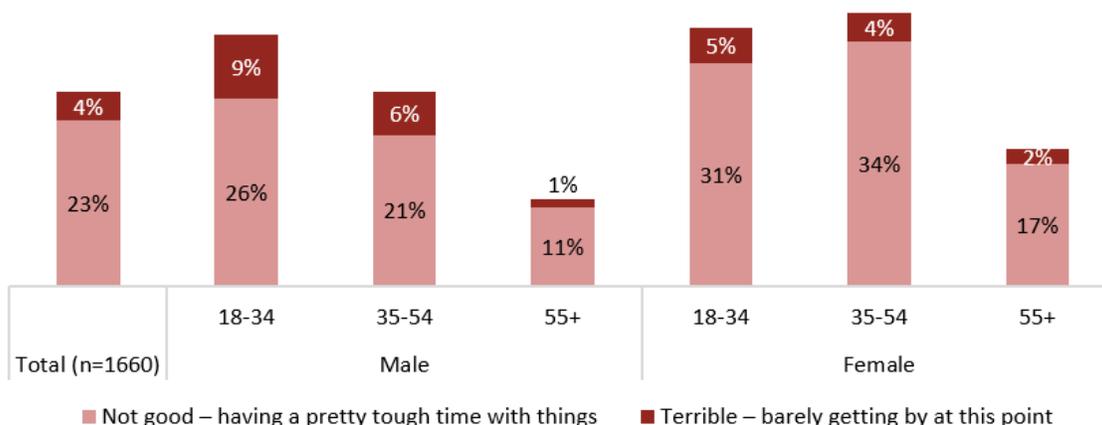
There is a significant age and gender element to this discussion. Young people, those under 35 years of age, and especially younger men, are in most cases considerably more likely to report having a difficult time. This group has been disproportionately hurt by job losses and economic strife.

That said, they are superseded in their angst by one other group: women between the ages of 35 and 54. The stress of COVID-19 for this group has been arguably the most intense. Women have been more likely to lose jobs than men, and this age group in particular is most likely to be responsible for childcare and elder care, and to be employed in health care.

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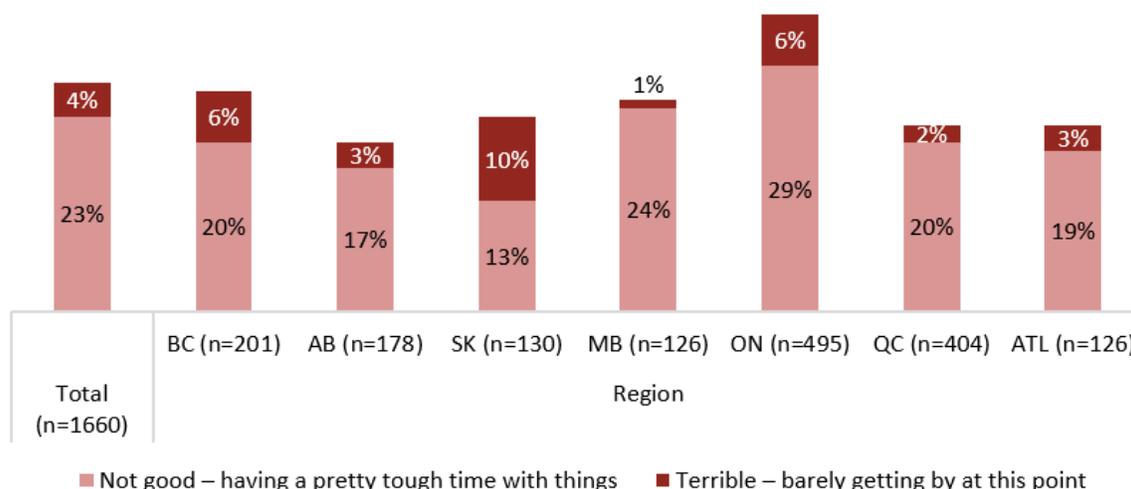
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Now thinking about how you feel personally when it comes to your mental health in dealing with the COVID-19 pandemic. How would you say you are feeling over the past few weeks...?



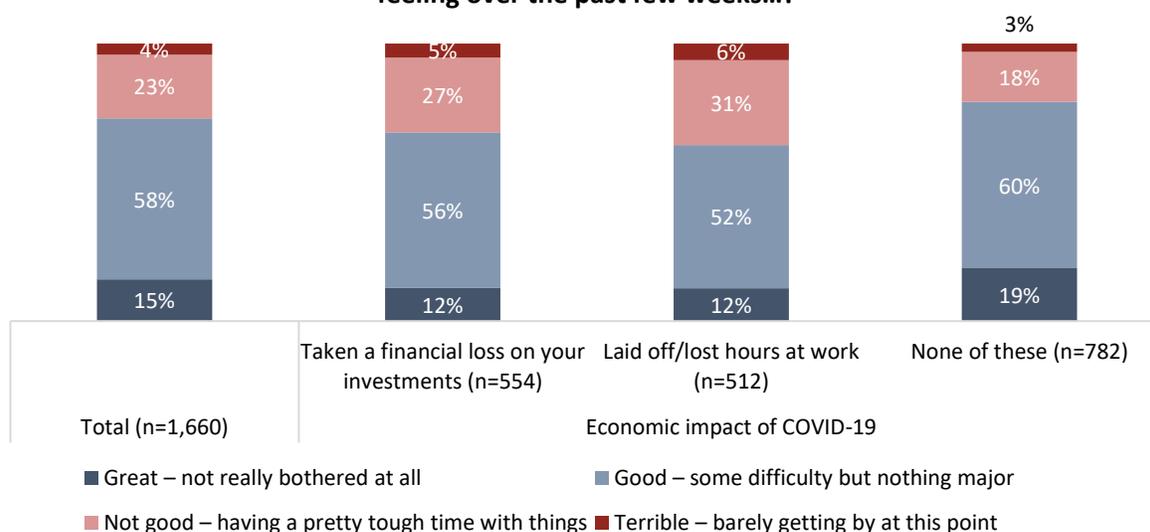
Regionally, Ontario residents report having the hardest time dealing with the pandemic. This, as their province enters a second wave of the virus, with new daily case levels now higher than ever recorded. That said, people in Saskatchewan are most likely to say things are going terribly for them.

Now thinking about how you feel personally when it comes to your mental health in dealing with the COVID-19 pandemic. How would you say you are feeling over the past few weeks...?



There is undoubtedly an economic factor in these mental health responses. Among those who have neither lost investments nor lost work, one-in-five (21%) say they are having a difficult time. Those who have lost work are close to twice as likely to report poor mental health (37%):

Now thinking about how you feel personally when it comes to your mental health in dealing with the COVID-19 pandemic. How would you say you are feeling over the past few weeks...?



Part Three: More say the worst is yet to come

The constantly changing reality of everyday life in Canada is leading to significant shifts in opinion in relatively short periods of time. As concern levels have corresponded with rising cases of COVID-19, the expectation for further damage to both Canadians’ health and finances has re-emerged.

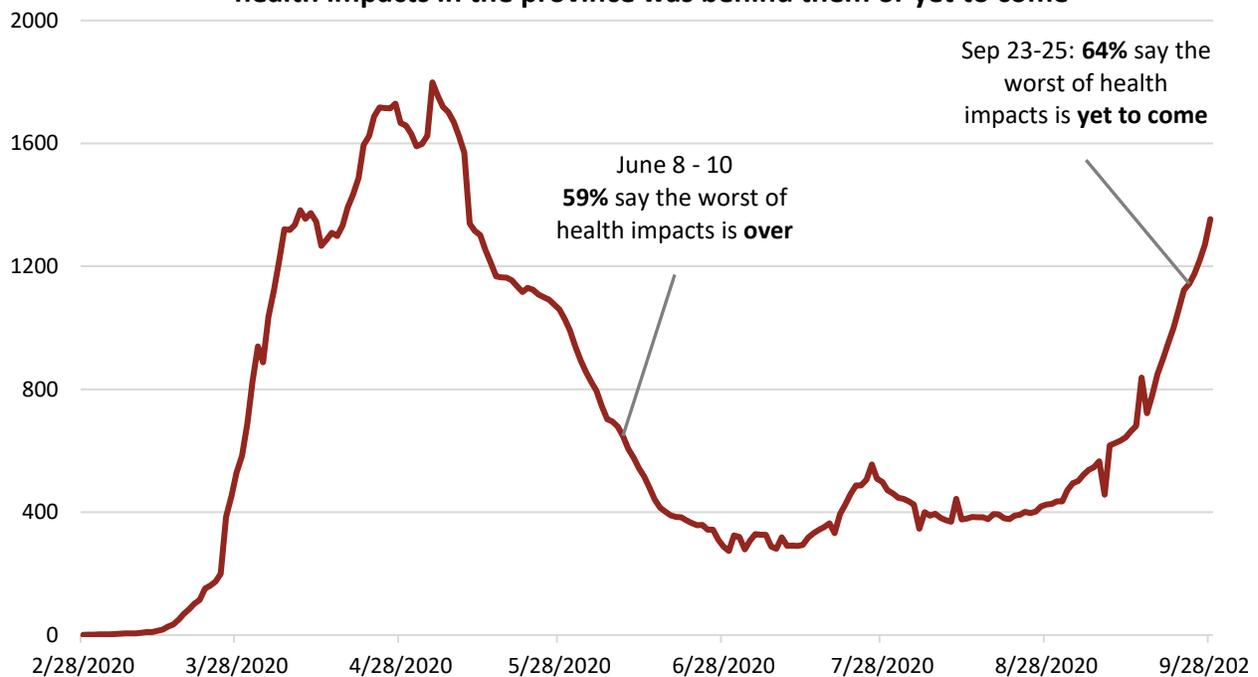
Health impacts

In June, as the average number of cases was steadily dropped in response to large scale shutdowns across the country, many Canadians felt the worst of illness and risk of death was over; three-in-five held this view. Now, as the pendulum swings the other way, two-thirds (64%) hold the opposing view and say that the worst is yet to come on the health front:

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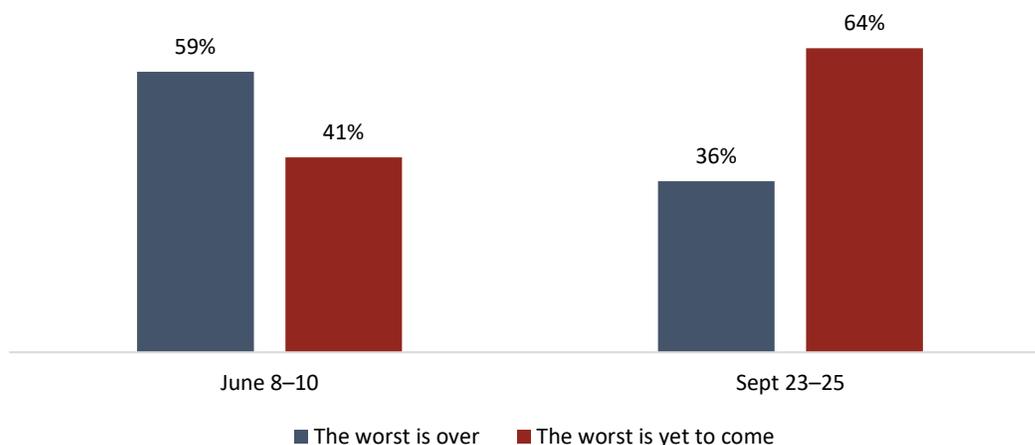
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**New daily cases in Canada - 7-day rolling avg (Source: Our World in Data)
On each date, ARI asked respondents if the worst of COVID-19 related
health impacts in the province was behind them or yet to come**



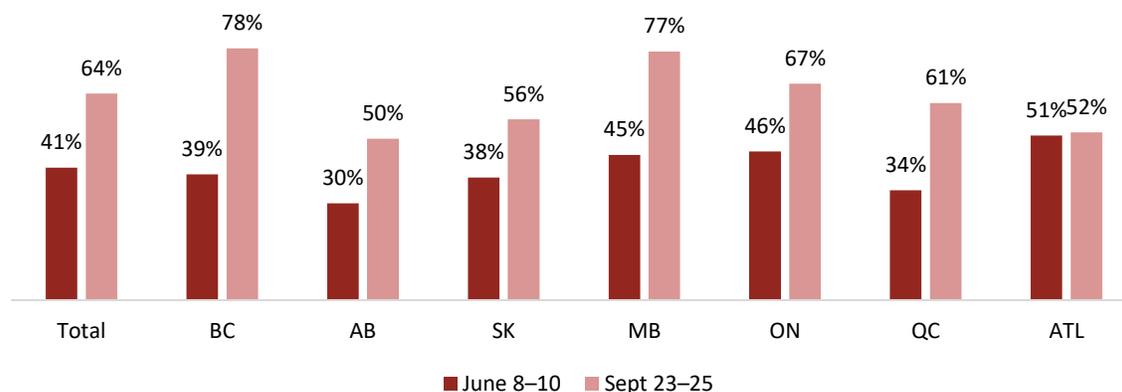
These positions have largely reversed. Just over one-in-three Canadians now feel that the worst is over:

**More people in my province becoming sick and dying due to COVID-19:
Do you think that the worst is over, or yet to come?**



Anxiety is highest in British Columbia. In that province, four-in-five residents (78%) expect this next wave, and anything that follows, to do more damage than has been done thus far. The only region that maintains its original viewpoint is Atlantic Canada, where people remain divided on this question:

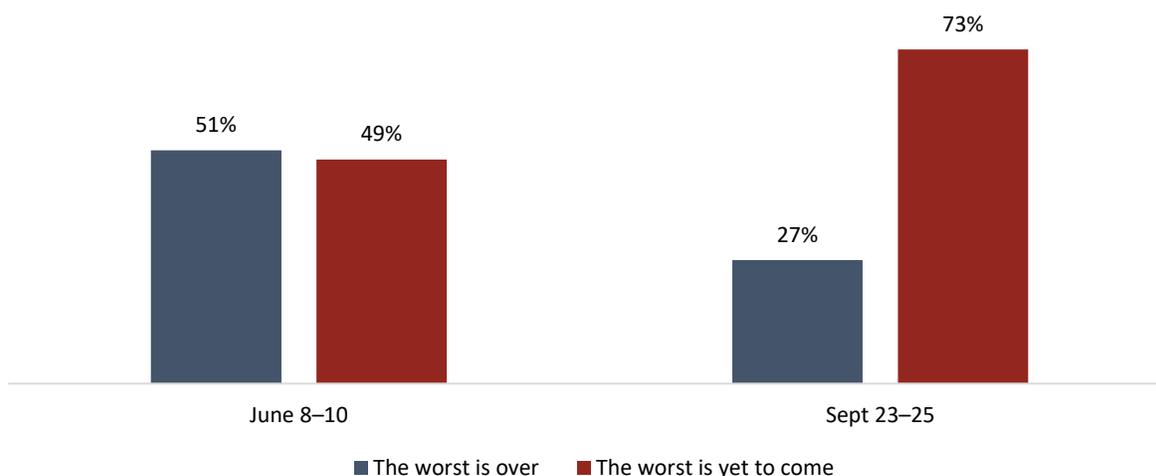
**More people in my province becoming sick and dying due to COVID-19: Do you think that the worst is over, or yet to come?
(Percentage saying "Worst is yet to come")**



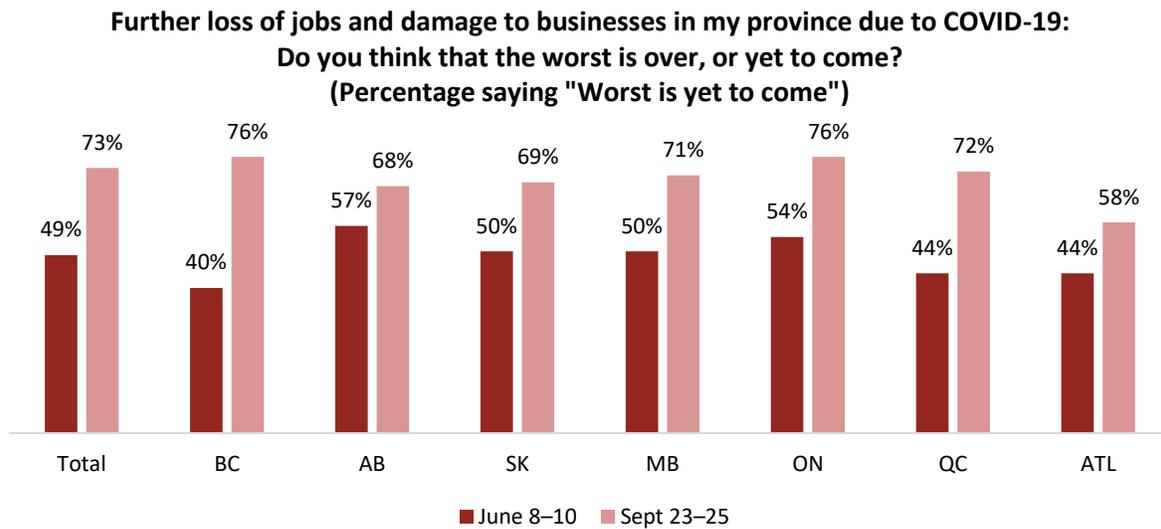
Economic impacts

In June, Canadians were less certain that the worst of economic damage brought by the coronavirus pandemic had passed. At the time half said this, while half expected worsening damage to businesses and workers in their province. Currently, three-quarters of Canadians now expect more economic harm to befall the province in which they live:

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



While B.C. is home to the highest anxiety about health impacts, the regional story is more consistent regarding economic expectations. Three-in-five in every region say they expect more economic damage, rising to three-quarters in B.C. and Ontario:



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