

COVID-19: Two-in-three Canadians say borders should be closed to keep sun-seekers close to home

Nine-in-ten say politicians must set an example and stay home

January 14, 2021 – What happens when heightened anxiety from a deadly surge in new coronavirus infections combines with general pandemic fatigue and fury over Canadian politicians seeking heat in southern climes as they sacrifice their own plans?

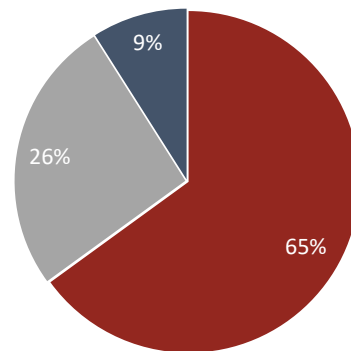
New data from the non-profit Angus Reid Institute finds a majority in this country would close the border to quell discretionary travel. Two-thirds (65%) say if the decision were up to them, they would prohibit personal travel. One-quarter (26%) would maintain the federal government's current approach, which has been to strongly discourage such travel, but not disallow it. Indeed, flights to common sun or beach destinations continue to leave regularly from Canadian airports.

These sentiments are revealed against the backdrop of another major finding: seven-in-ten Canadians have themselves cancelled or put off planned international travel or domestic travel since the pandemic began, suggesting that their own sacrifices may well contribute to a hardline approach against elected officials who have chosen to travel. Nealy nine-in-ten say that while traveling abroad may not be illegal, politicians should be held to a higher standard and stay home.

More Key Findings:

- Concern about the COVID-19 pandemic remains at peak levels. Seven-in-ten (71%) are worried about becoming sick themselves, while 85 per cent are concerned about their friends or family
- While majorities across the political spectrum support a prohibition on discretionary personal overseas travel, past Conservative voters are least likely to (57%), while almost all of those who chose the Bloc Quebecois in the last election (88%) would back such a ban

If it were up to you to set the government policy in Canada regarding international travel, what would you do:
(All respondents, n=1,601)



- Prohibit all international travel: no flights or other transport in or out of Canada
- Maintain the status quo and continue to strongly discourage international travel
- Say nothing, leave it up to Canadians if they want to travel abroad

METHODOLOGY:

The Angus Reid Institute conducted an online survey from January 7–11, 2021 among a representative randomized sample of 1,601 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 +/- 2.4 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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- The number of Canadians saying Prime Minister Justin Trudeau is doing a good job in handling the pandemic has dropped four points since November to 50 per cent.

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: Views on travel during the pandemic

Seven-in-ten have cancelled their own domestic, international trips

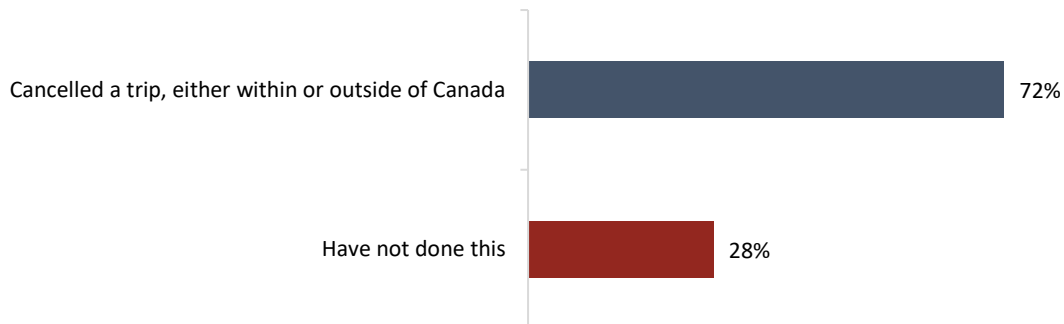
As COVID-19 cases surged, Canadians were asked to sacrifice over the holiday season, canceling Christmas dinners, outings to church, and vacations. It may therefore come as little surprise that when stories surfaced of sun-seeking politicians who chose non-essential travel overseas and ignored the guidance of their own premiers, [people in this country were incensed](#). As Ontario Finance Minister Rod Phillips asked people in his province to sacrifice over the holidays in order to control the coronavirus outbreak, for instance, he was in [St. Barts](#), a Caribbean island. Turning to Alberta, [six MLAs took non-essential international trips](#). All six have since either resigned from or lost their ministerial or cabinet committee roles. Premier Jason Kenney's chief of staff also resigned upon request after it was found that he, too, had traveled.

The anger is driven in part by the fact that so many Canadians have put off travel themselves. Overall, more than seven-in-ten Canadians have cancelled or put off a trip overseas or domestically since the pandemic began:

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Please indicate whether you have had to cancel or postpone any of the following over the last year due the pandemic.
(All respondents, n=1,601)

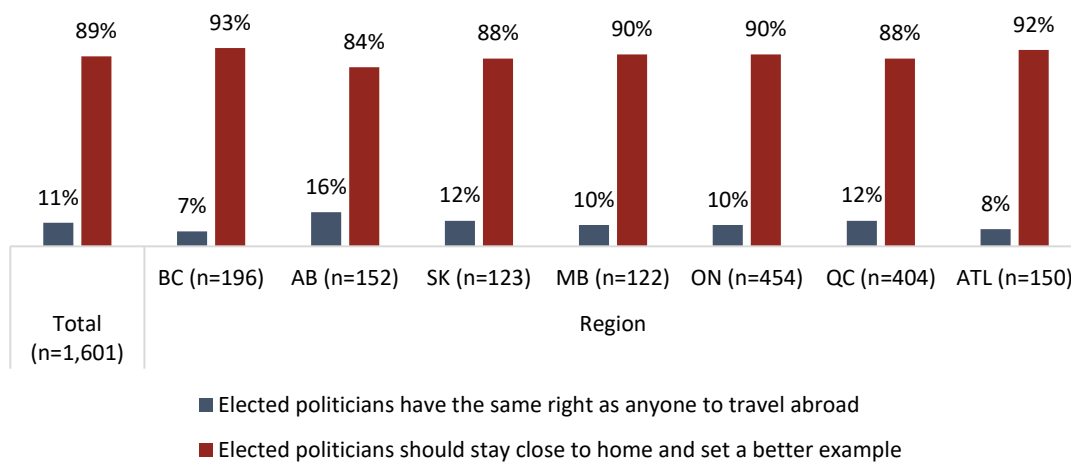


Vast majority say politicians need to set better example

While the federal government has strongly discouraged non-essential international travel, there are no outright prohibitions. Thus, it must be noted that the politicians in question did not break any laws. Given this, the Angus Reid Institute canvassed Canadians for their opinions on the responsibilities of such elected officials.

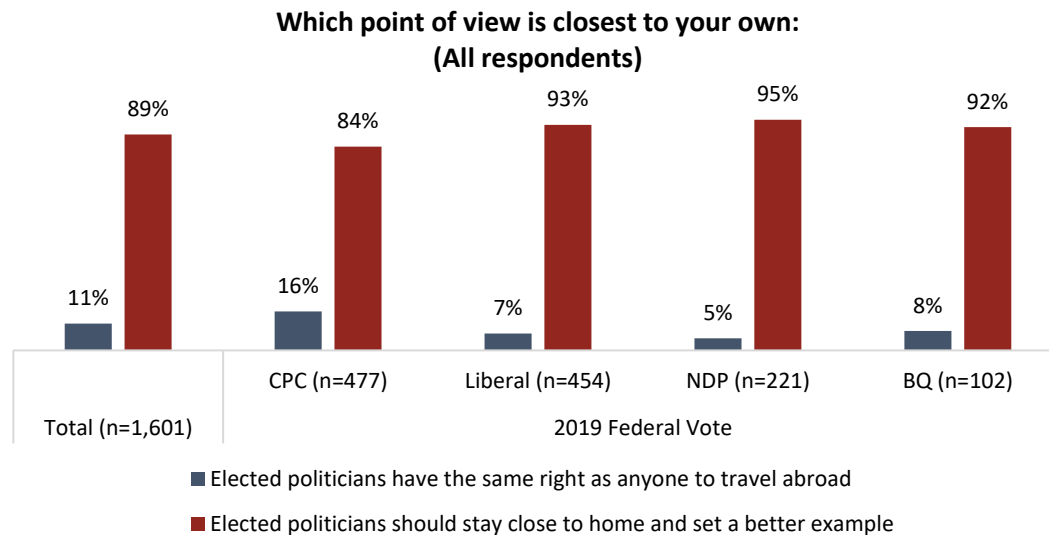
Nearly all Canadians (89%) view the issue through the lens of leadership, saying elected politicians should set a better example and stay close to home. Just one-in-ten (11%) tilted towards a viewpoint that like any other Canadian citizen, they have the same rights to travel if they so choose. Albertans are slightly more likely to hold this latter viewpoint, though this group is in the minority:

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



This view is also one that holds across all political affiliations, as indeed, federal politicians across party lines have likewise faced reprimand for travelling internationally during the pandemic. [A Conservative MP,](#)

[two Liberal MPs](#), and [a federal NDP MP](#) all faced consequences from their parliamentary duties following scrutiny over their recent travel.



Two-thirds would prohibit international travel entirely

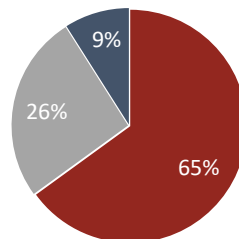
The reality of travel during the pandemic is evolving. Under [new federal rules](#), travellers five years of age or older are required to show proof of a negative test result for COVID-19 to the airline prior to boarding a flight to Canada. The federal government also announced further plans to dissuade international travel by passing legislation retroactive to January 3, 2021 that makes it so that international [travellers are not eligible for federal income support](#) during their mandatory quarantine.

These data, however, suggest that many Canadians feel these may not go far enough, as two-in-three (65%) say they would prohibit all international personal travel entirely at this point in the pandemic. That said, one-quarter (26%) are satisfied with the current measures, while just 9 per cent say they would not discourage overseas travel at all:

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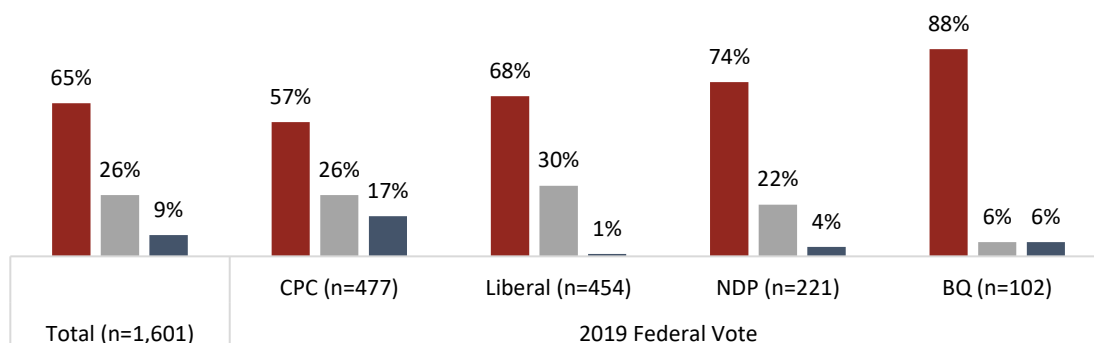
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(All respondents, n=1,601)**



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Opinions on this vary with political affiliation, with those who voted for the Conservatives in the last federal election nearly twice as likely to say the government should not even be discouraging international travel. The highest level of support for closing the border for international travel is found among past Bloc Quebecois voters.

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(All respondents)**



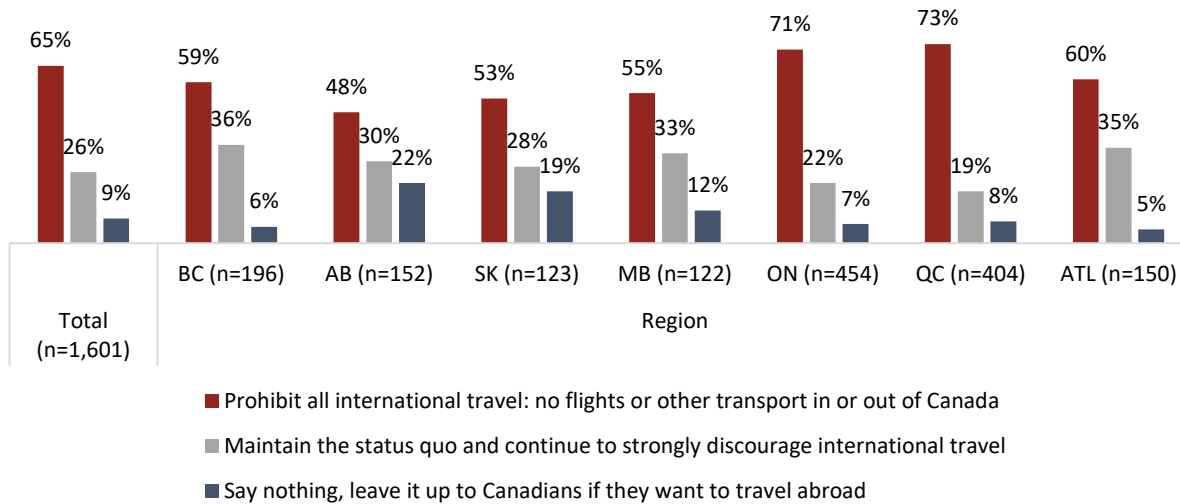
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But politics is not the only driver of opinion on this issue. The strongest desire to completely close the border emerges from the two provinces accounting for the vast majority of COVID-19 cases – Ontario and Quebec. In each, at least seven-in-ten residents say they would prohibit international travel, while this view drops significantly in other parts of the country.

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**If it were up to you to set the government policy in Canada regarding international travel, what would you do:
(All respondents)**



Part Two: COVID-19 concern and government performance

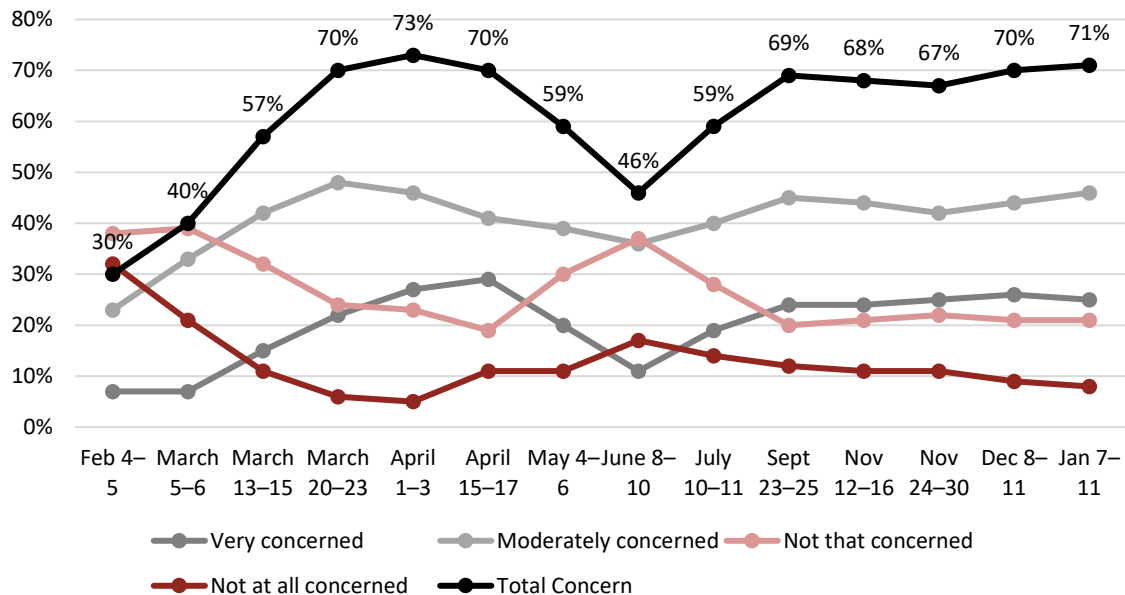
Canadians' concern for themselves and loved ones remains at peak

As cases continue to increase in Canada, the spread of a new, more contagious variant of COVID-19 drives anxious discussions of what impacts it might have. Against this backdrop, levels of concern about infection, both in terms of personally getting sick and having friends or family fall ill, remain elevated.

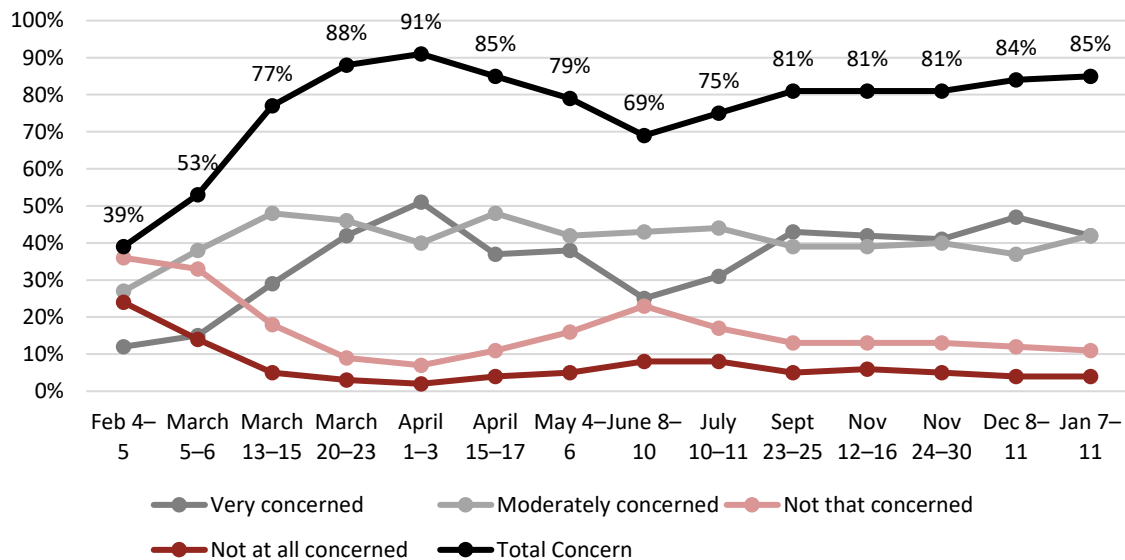
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Personal concern over contracting COVID-19

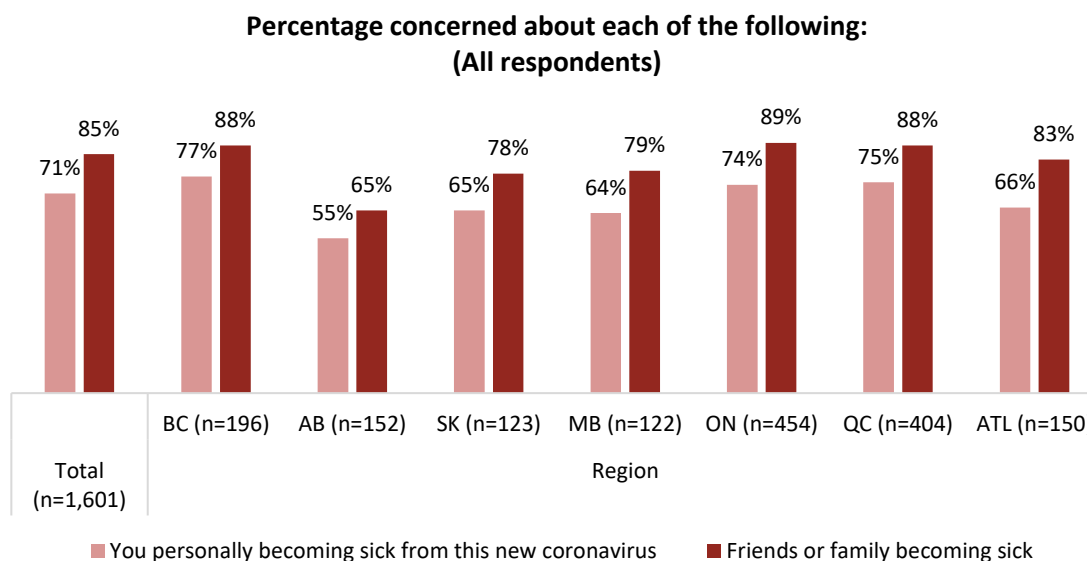


Concern about friends and family contracting COVID-19



As mentioned, [current public health data](#) show the [total number of active cases nationwide](#) continues to rise, largely driven by increases in the country's two most populous provinces: Ontario and Quebec. Case numbers in Western Canada have either seen post-holiday drops, such as in British Columbia and Alberta, or held steady.

It is important to note, however, that regardless of these fluctuations, the number of active cases per 100,000 remains in the hundreds in all provinces outside of Atlantic Canada. Regional concern levels largely reflect the ongoing severity of the COVID-19 situation:



Rating premiers on handling of the pandemic

Earlier in the pandemic, Canadians applauded their premiers [across the country](#) on the issue of handling the COVID-19 response. Since then, all have seen their approval on this file drop. While some still receive high marks from a majority in their province, others are facing high levels of criticism. Alberta's Jason Kenney and Manitoba's Brian Pallister are now dealing with particularly poor public perceptions, with just one-in-three of their constituents saying they are doing a "good job" dealing with COVID-19.

Percentage saying each is doing a good job of handling the COVID-19 response (Reponses below 50% are highlighted)							
	Horgan	Kenney	Moe	Pallister	Ford	Legault	ATL
April 15–17	82%	67%	82%	74%	88%	92%	83%
July 10–11	83%	67%	81%	74%	79%	75%	85%
August 5–8	74%	51%	68%	56%	74%	75%	76%
November 12–16	74%	48%	61%	32%	61%	72%	87%
November 24–30	69%	43%	55%	32%	56%	67%	80%
January 7–11	66%	33%	48%	35%	50%	70%	80%

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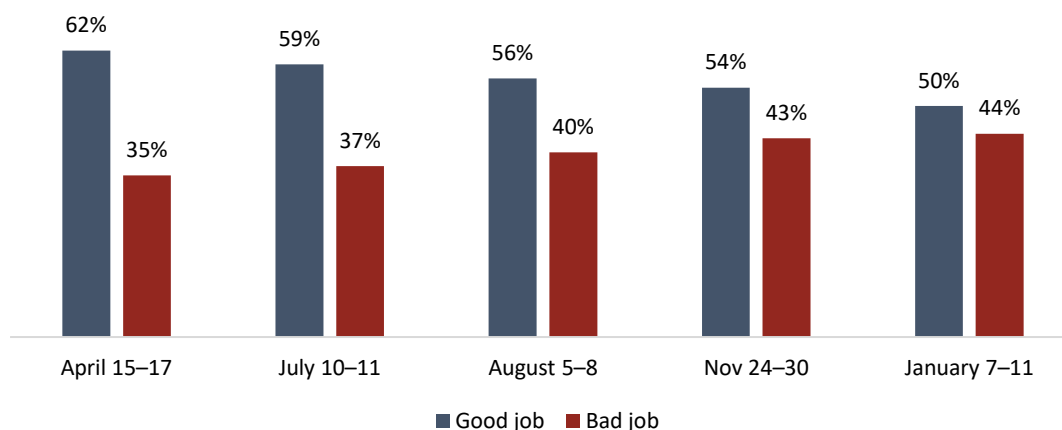
This shift in satisfaction with government may stem from a number of factors, from the inability to stem the second wave of infections, to fatigue with lockdowns, to a vaccine rollout that is going slower than had been hoped.

Half say Trudeau still doing a good job

Perhaps the most central challenge for politicians at the moment is the need to ensure a fast and smooth rollout of vaccinations. Polling from December indicated half of Canadians (47%) were initially satisfied with the federal government's efforts to secure these vaccines, in line with the share who now say that Prime Minister Justin Trudeau is dealing with the pandemic well.

The recent blame game between the provincial and federal levels of government is most likely not helping Trudeau any more than it is the premiers, and the Prime Minister himself recently admitted that his remarks expressing frustration with the pace at which provinces have been administering jabs were not helpful.

Would you say Prime Minister Trudeau has done a good job or bad job in his handling of the coronavirus outbreak?



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

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