

## A terrible, tough, or just average year ahead? Canadians brace for more COVID-19 challenges in the next 12 months

*Half now say that 'back to normal' won't happen until 2022, if ever*

**February 3, 2021** – As new strains of COVID-19 begin to take hold and as Canadians watch and they [lose confidence](#) in the national vaccine distribution plan, they are adjusting their expectations for the year ahead.

Where once, the first half of 2021 marked in the minds of millions in this country an end to the pandemic – the latest data from the non-profit Angus Reid Institute finds they are lengthening their timelines and bracing for another tough year to come. Indeed, while fewer expect 2021 to be as “terrible” a year as they say 2020 was, just one-in-five (21%) expect this year to be “good” or “great”.

Amid these muted predictions, the proportion of those expecting life to be back to normal by fall of this year has dropped 14 points since early December, while there has been a corresponding rise in the number who say life will not return to the way it was until at least 2022. The number of Canadians holding the latter view has increased by an identical 14 points over that same period.

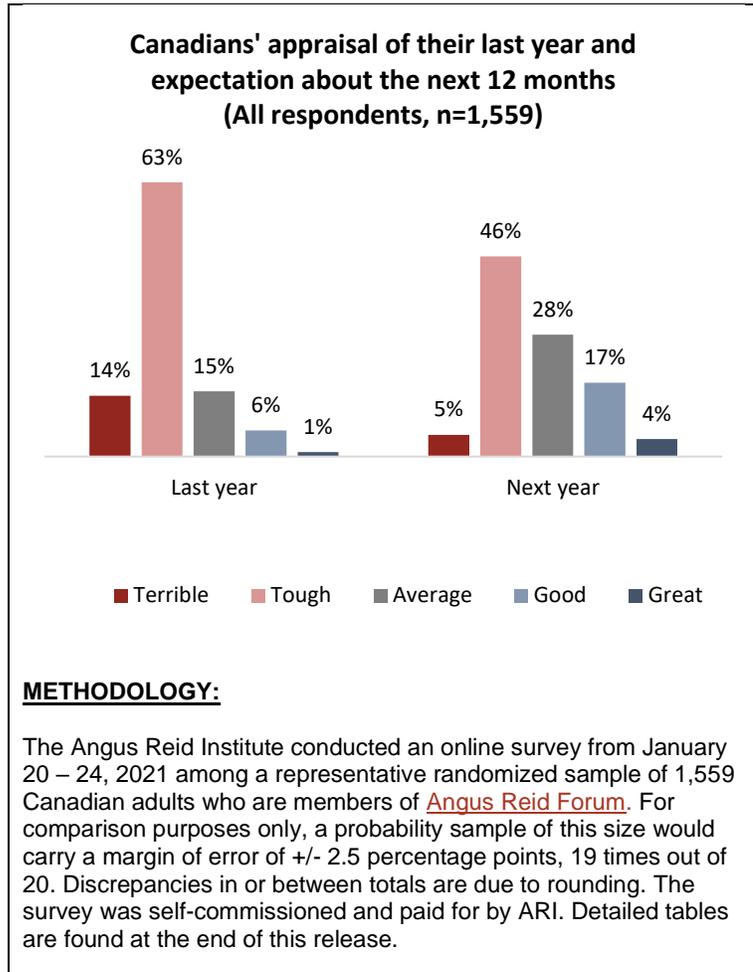
### More Key Findings:

- Canadians continue to disagree about the proper level of restrictions for their province. Overall, 37 per cent say they don't go far enough, 35 per cent say they're about right, and 28 per cent say they're too strict.
- Younger men, those aged 18-34, are most likely to say this past year was the worst of their lives (20%). Meanwhile, those with lower income levels are also more likely to say this.
- Anxiety over COVID-19's virulence remains very high: 84 per cent of Canadians worry about a friend or family member becoming sick with the coronavirus.

### About ARI

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*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: A tough (or even terrible) year gone**

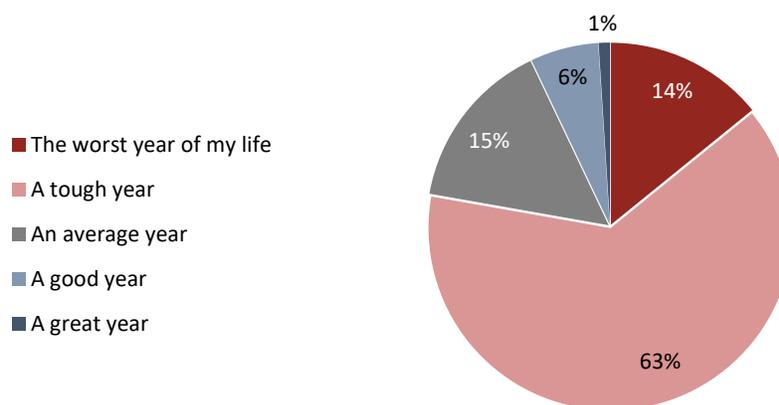
More than 20,000 Canadians have died from COVID-19 over the past year, leaving family and friends devastated by loss. As the pandemic continues, the vast majority of Canadians look back at the past year as a hard one. Indeed, more than three-in-five (63%) say their last twelve months have been “tough”, while 14 per cent – or one-in-seven – say it was the “worst year of their life”. A mere seven per cent say they had a good or great year.

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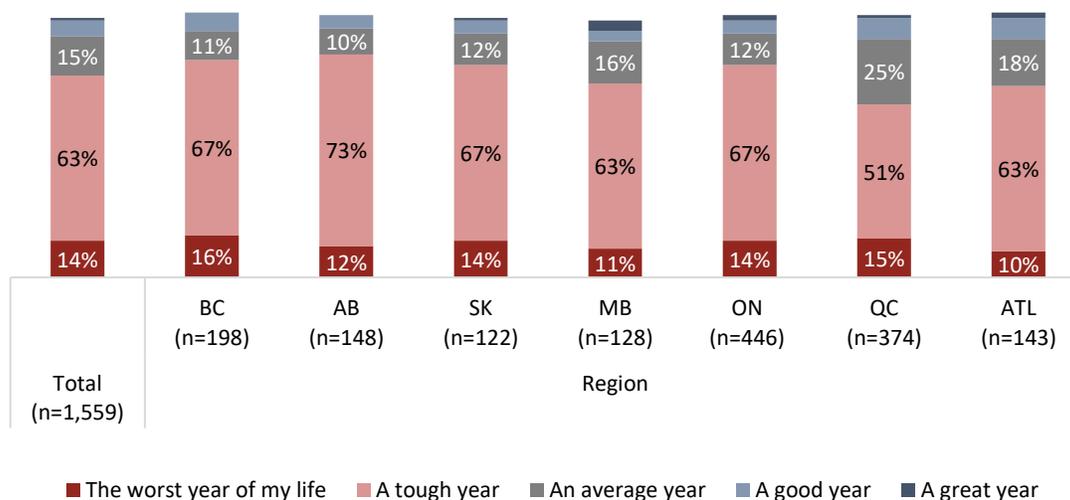
**Looking back over the last year, and thinking about your own life,  
would you say it has been:  
(All respondents, n=1,559)**



**Feeling the hurt from coast to coast**

Every part of the country has experienced restrictions in some form and the curtailment of economic activity to a huge extent. As such, at least two-thirds of residents in all regions say their year was tough or terrible. This number rises above four-in-five in B.C., Alberta, Saskatchewan, and Ontario:

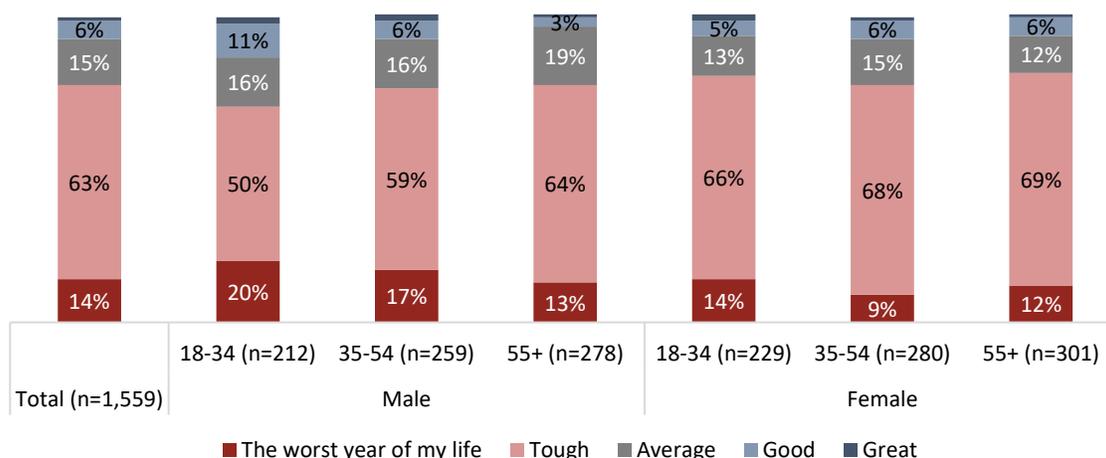
**Looking back over the last year, and thinking about your own life, would  
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**Young men, lower-income households – most likely to say they suffered**

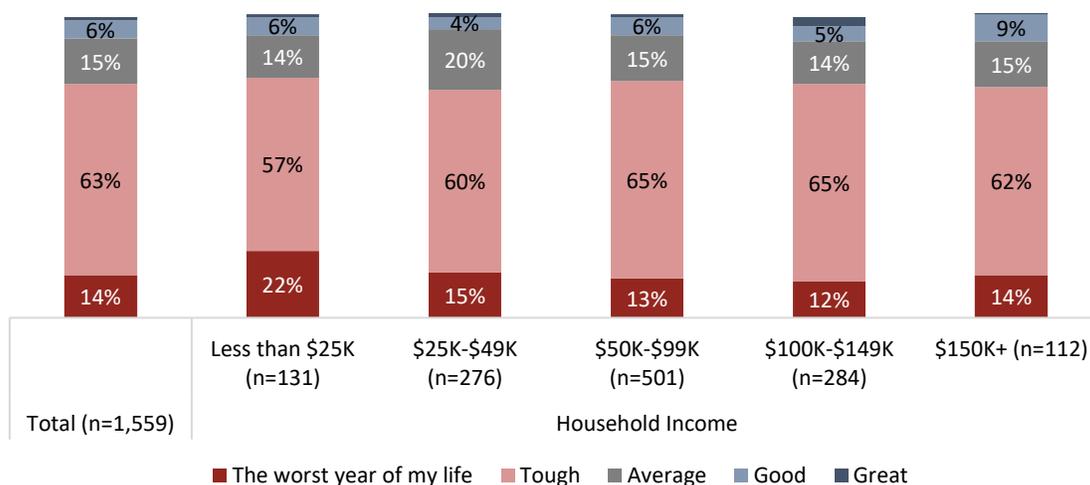
This question yields some notable gender differences. Younger men, those aged 18-34, are most likely to say this past year was the worst of their lives. Further, men between the ages of 35 and 54 are twice as likely as women of the same age to say this (17% to 9%).

**Looking back over the last year, and thinking about your own life, would you say it has been:  
(All respondents)**



The pandemic has consistently hurt low-income, low-wage workers hardest. While many Canadians across all income levels have faced an uphill financial battle this year financially, those lowest on the household income scale are also most likely to say this has been the most difficult year of their life:

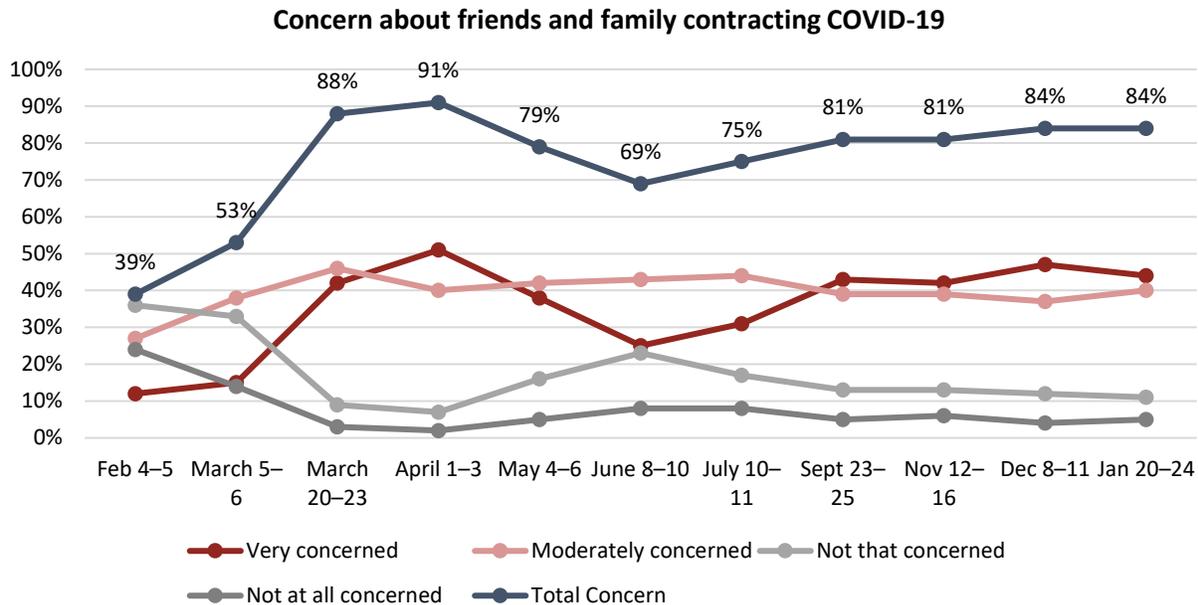
**Looking back over the last year, and thinking about your own life, would you say it has been:  
(All respondents)**



**Part Two: Canadians united in worry, divided about restrictions**

**Elevated concern persists**

As has been the case for a full five months now, seven-in-ten Canadians remain concerned about their own personal risk of contracting COVID-19. For one-quarter (25%), this concern level is heightened ([see detailed tables](#)). The same trend holds for Canadian concern levels regarding their friends and family members. More than four-in-five (84%) have at least one person in their life for whom they are worried:



**Regional disagreement about restrictions**

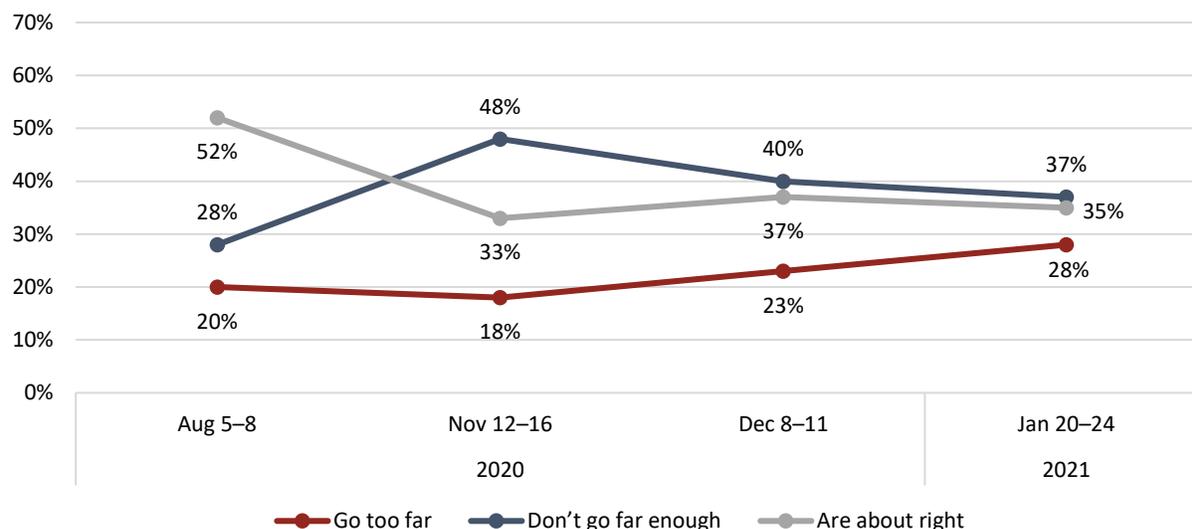
Another question asked by the Angus Reid Institute over the past six months shows more movement. The percentage of Canadians saying that their provincial restrictions are too strict has risen ten points since November as communities have increasingly limited activities and asked residents to avoid all non-essential travel. The proportion saying their restrictions are not going far enough has dropped over that same period while approximately one-in-three Canadians are satisfied that their community has taken the appropriate steps to keep people safe:

Note that this question was asked prior to the announcement from Prime Minister Justin Trudeau that Canadian airlines would [suspend flights](#) to Mexico and the Caribbean until April 30 and that the government will be implementing new return [testing procedures](#) for international travellers, and also prior to Quebec Premier Francois Legault announcing [a partial lifting](#) of the province's lockdown..

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**Overall, thinking about restrictions that have been put in place in the community where you live to prevent the coronavirus from spreading, do you think these restrictions...?**

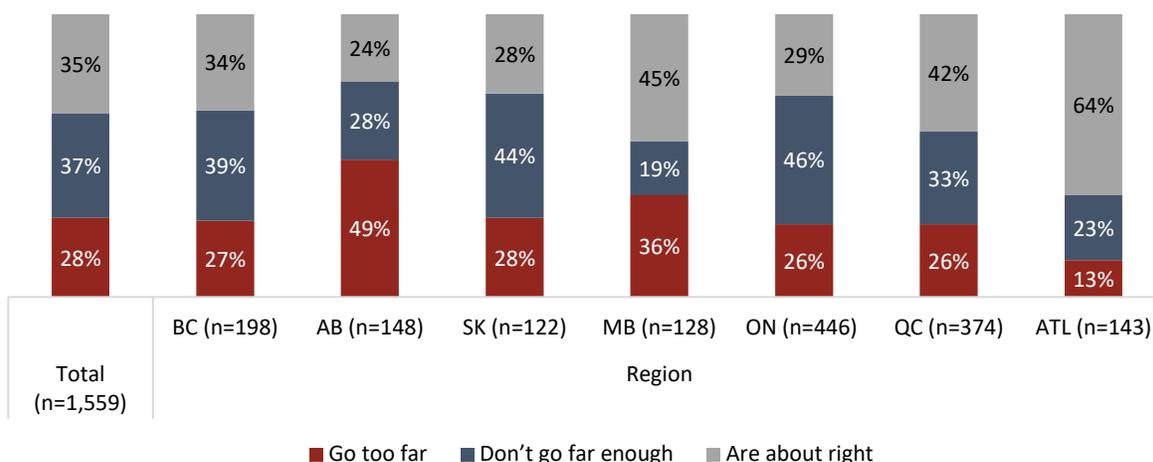


Satisfaction with restriction levels is highest in Atlantic Canada (64%) where premiers have taken a coordinated approach, adopting an Atlantic Bubble for travel from July until November, and suspending that arrangement when a second wave of the virus hit the region. New Brunswick is home to the highest number of cases per day over the past week but has seen [fewer than 20 per day](#) over that period.

In Alberta, half of the province says that restrictions are too strict (49%). Widespread restrictions were not introduced in that province until [December 14](#), and [only Quebec](#) has seen more COVID-19 cases per capita.

Notably, in B.C., Saskatchewan, and Ontario, at least two-in-five residents are saying restrictions still do not go far enough to curb the spread of the virus:

**Overall, thinking about restrictions that have been put in place in the community where you live to prevent the coronavirus from spreading, do you think these restrictions...?  
(All respondents)**



**Part Three: Despite hope, challenges expected for the next year**

In March and April of last year, a firm majority felt life in Canada would be “back to normal” by the fall of 2020. That timeline has been steadily pushed further into the future, a trend that will be addressed later in this report.

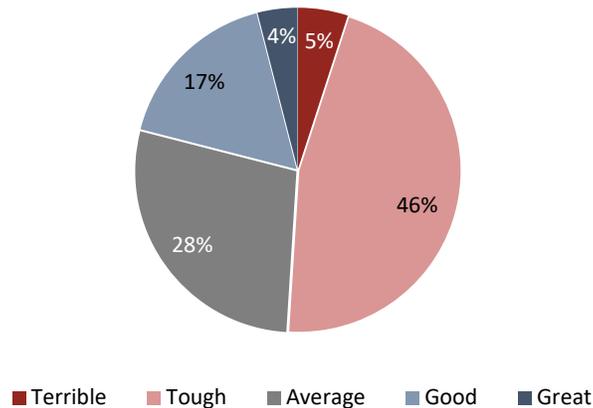
It is not surprising then, that many Canadians are severely tapering their expectations for the coming year. Only four per cent say they expect to have a great year, while fewer than one-in-five expect it will be good. Half indicate that they expect another tough year (46%) if not a terrible one (5%). These responses follow weeks of concern about Canada’s vaccine effort. Shipment delays and a lack of domestic manufacturing have pushed Canada well behind other developed nations in per capita inoculations:

**[Related: Confidence in government’s procurement, distribution of COVID-19 vaccine plummets](#)**

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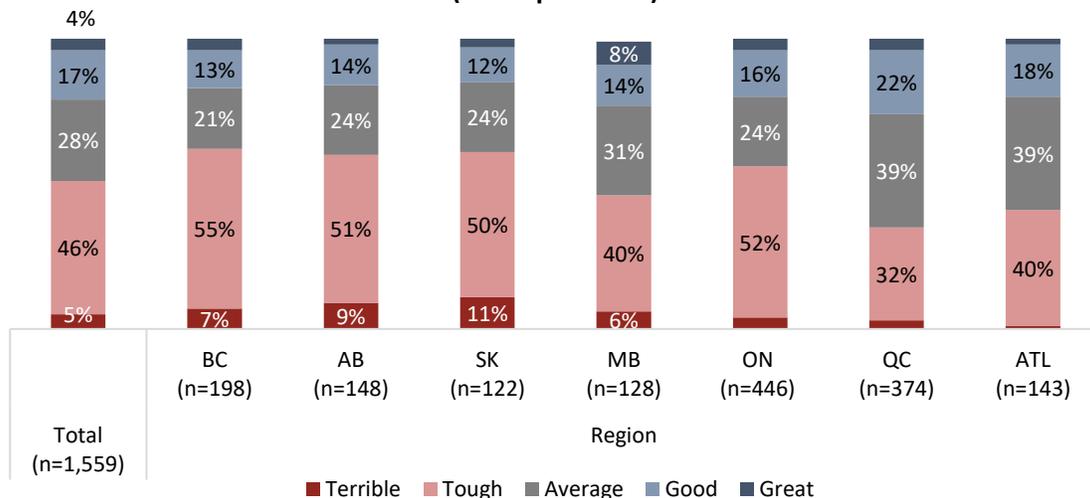
Looking ahead, thinking about your life and how you will be a year from now, would you say the next 12 months will be:  
(All respondents, n=1,559)



**Stark regional differences about expectations for the next 12 months**

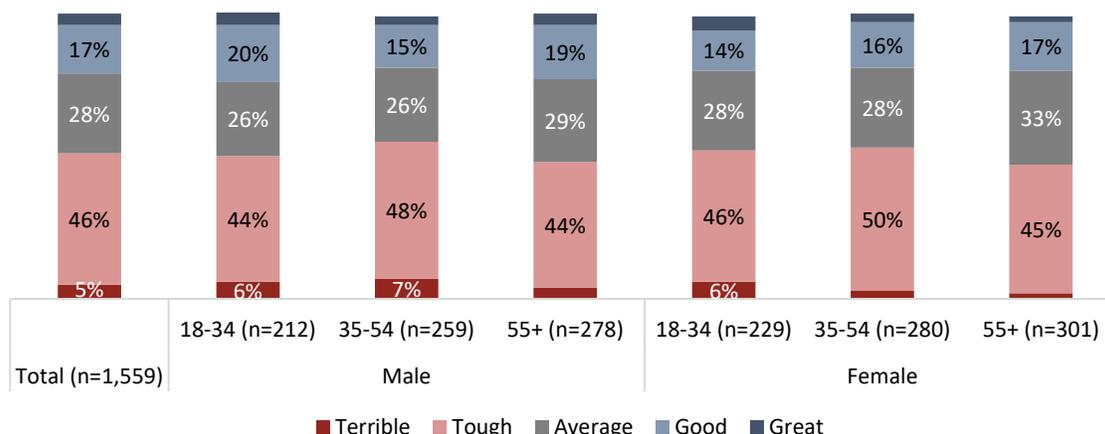
Unlike relatively consistent regional responses to the question regarding the year past, future-casting proves quite varied. In Quebec, just 35 per cent of residents expect a below-average year ahead. Those most pessimistic about the coming year are Western Canadians and those in Ontario, as seen in the graph below:

Looking ahead, thinking about your life and how you will be a year from now, would you say the next 12 months will be:  
(All respondents)



No matter the age, gender or income level ([see detailed tables](#)) of respondents, the expectation of a tough or terrible year hovers around half, with the remaining group divided between expecting an average or good year:

**Looking ahead, thinking about your life and how you will be a year from now, would you say the next 12 months will be:  
(All respondents)**



**The fading reality of a return to “normal”**

As noted earlier, the end of the pandemic has been a moving target for Canadians. The notion that life will return to the way it was before March of last year has been pushed further down the line as the virus continued to spread over the past year. While Prime Minister Justin Trudeau maintains that all Canadians who want to be vaccinated will be by September, few Canadians expect life to return to the way it was before the pandemic by the fall.

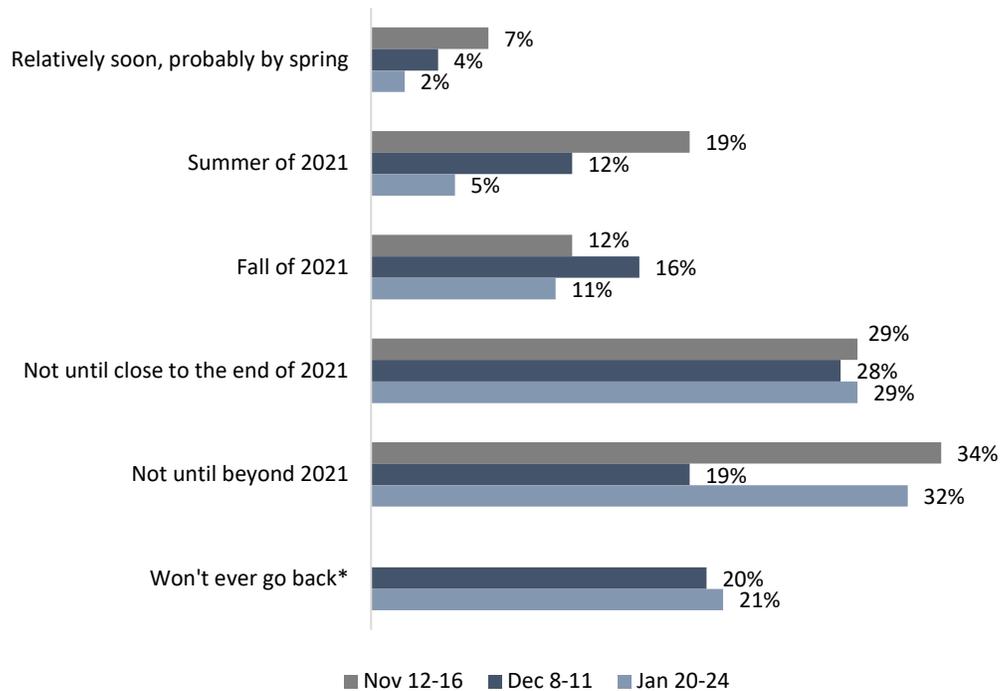
Fewer than one-in-five say they expect to resume regular life by then, while three-in-ten (29%) say the end of 2021 is a higher likelihood. Close to the same number say that normal life will return some time in 2022, while one-in-five say that pre-COVID life is not coming back at all:

Discussions of delays in vaccine shipments and challenges in delivery have evidently had a profound impact on Canadians responses to this question. Over the course of six weeks the number of Canadians saying that they don't expect life to get back to normal until after 2021, if ever, has increased by 14 percentage points:

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**How long do you think it will be before life in Canada goes back to “normal” – that is – the way it was before the pandemic?**



\* "Won't ever go back" was only included in this question starting in December

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

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