

## Ford Fumbles: Ontarians most likely to blame their provincial government for “preventable” third wave

Nearly twice as many Canadians say third wave was preventable as say it was inevitable

**April 23, 2021** – It was Ontario's lost weekend. Within a span of 48 hours, after public health officials implored the Ford government to [implement changes](#) aimed at protecting and prioritizing front-line workers as new COVID-19 infections ravaged the province, it instead closed playgrounds and gave police sweeping new powers. What followed was seething anger across the province, and a swift reversal from Queen's Park.

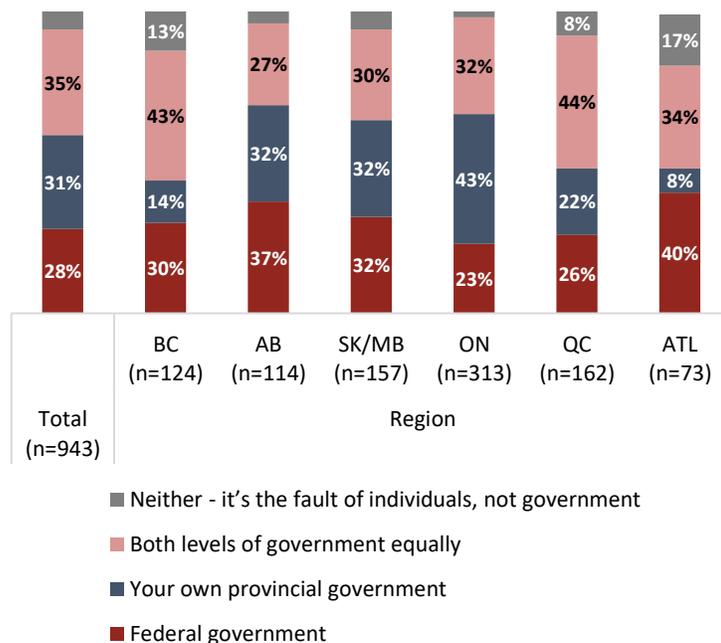
But five days and a tearful apology from Premier Doug Ford later, Ontarians are of the opinion that a third wave of COVID-19 could have been averted – and that their provincial government should have been the one to avert it.

New data from the non-profit Angus Reid Institute indicates those living in Canada's most populous province are not only most likely to say that this latest outbreak of the novel coronavirus was 'preventable' (69%) but also that their provincial government is primarily to blame for not preventing it (43%).

Further, fewer than one-third (31%) of Ontarians say they feel Ford is doing a good job of handling the pandemic, while 67 per cent say he is doing a poor job. This represents a slight, statistically insignificant worsening of opinion over the last two weeks, but a decline of 24 percentage points since November of last year.

He is not the only premier to be on the receiving end of his constituents' disappointment. One-quarter of those in Alberta say Premier Jason Kenney is doing a good job (26%) and fewer than three-in-ten say the same for Manitoba Premier Brian Pallister (28%).

**Which level of government do you blame more?  
(Among those who believe 3rd wave was preventable - 58% of Canadians)**



### **METHODOLOGY:**

The Angus Reid Institute conducted an online survey from April 20 – 22, 2021 among a representative randomized sample of 1,594 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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## More Key Findings:

- Overall, 58 per cent of Canadians feel COVID-19's third wave was preventable, while 32 per cent feel there is little their provincial governments and health officials could have done to stop it
- Among those who say this wave of the virus could have been stopped before it started, 35 per cent say their provincial and federal governments are equally responsible for it. The rest blame primarily their provincial government (31%) or mostly the federal government (28%).
- Regarding the issue of restrictions on movement and commerce in individual communities, 45 per cent say they don't go far enough, 29 per cent say they are too stringent and 27 per cent say they are well-balanced

## 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: COVID-19 management, or lack thereof

- **Ford fumbles**
- **Views from other provinces**
- **What about Ottawa?**

### Part Two: Plenty of blame to go around for 'preventable' third wave

- **Three-in-five say third wave could have been prevented**
- **Who's to blame?**

### Part Three: Views of current restrictions

### Part One: COVID-19 management, or lack thereof

#### Ford fumbles

"We made a mistake". Those were the words offered by Ontario Premier Doug Ford as he addressed the province from a family home in Etobicoke where he is isolating after one of his staffers tested positive for COVID-19. Ford and his government have faced a wave of criticism over the past week for implementing measures not recommended by public health officials – most prominently, increasing police power to arbitrarily stop citizens to question them about their activities, and the closure of public parks and outdoor

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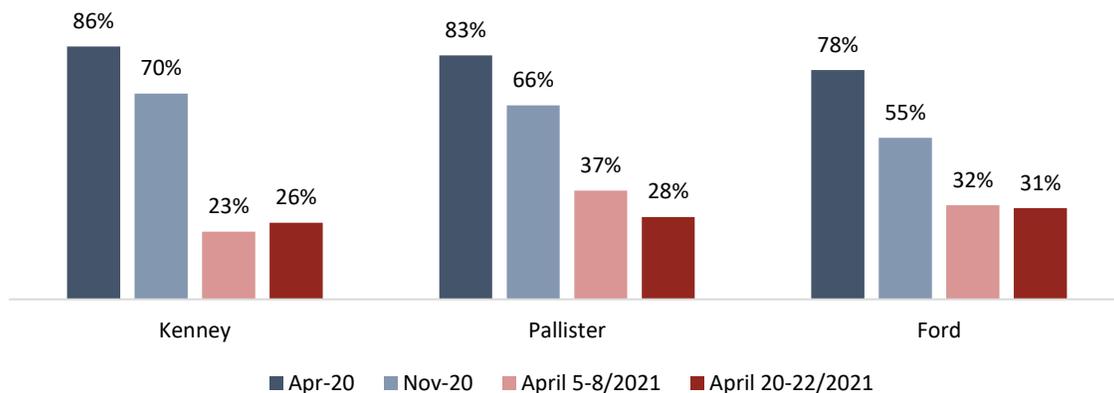
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recreation. Ford apologized on Thursday and also hinted that the province may be implementing paid sick days, something for which public health officials and citizens have vociferously lobbied over the past year.

The week's events, in addition to the challenges of the third wave surge, have Ford's performance on the COVID-19 file continuing to persist among the lowest levels in the country. He, alongside Alberta Premier Jason Kenney and Manitoba Premier Brian Pallister are least likely to find their respective provincial constituents saying each leader is doing a "good job" handling COVID-19:

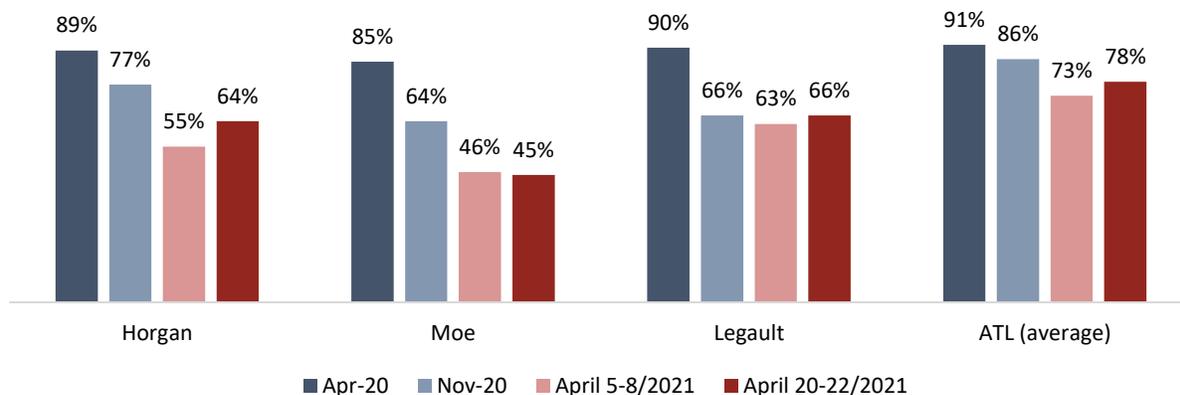
**Percentage saying their provincial premier is doing a good job handling the coronavirus**



**Views from other provinces**

For the rest of the country's provincial leaders, the story is much more positive. Premiers in Atlantic Canada continue to lead the way in performance satisfaction. Meanwhile, while cases and hospitalizations have risen in both British Columbia and Quebec in recent weeks, assessments of Premier Horgan and Premier Legault are largely positive:

**Percentage saying their provincial premier is doing a good job handling the coronavirus**



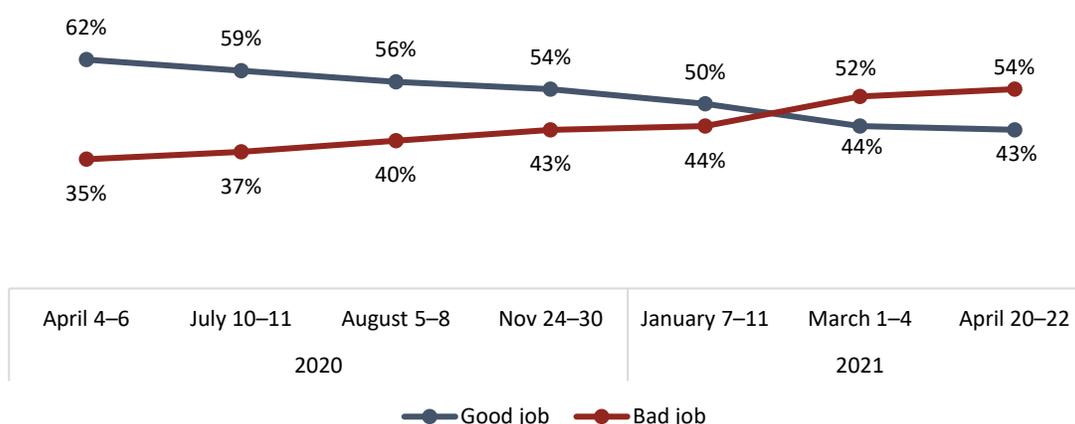
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## What about Ottawa?

The federal government released its budget for the fiscal year on April 19, adding additional spending for COVID-19 relief to the billions already allocated over the past 14 months. Prime Minister Justin Trudeau also announced this week that the federal government will be sending additional help to Ontario in the form of health-care workers and equipment as that province faces increasing hospitalizations. But under fire to close the Canadian border to flights from India as evidence the “double mutant” variant had gained a foothold in this country, more than half of Canadians (54%) say now Trudeau is doing a bad job handling the pandemic. (Note that this data was mostly collected before Ottawa paused some international flights including those from India):

### Do you think [Prime Minister Justin Trudeau] is doing a good or bad job handling the Covid-19 pandemic overall?



## Part Two: Plenty of blame to go around for ‘preventable’ third wave

Much of the discourse surrounding the third wave of cases in Canada has centred on - fairly or unfairly - who, if anyone or anything, is to blame. Vaccination efforts ramped up in recent days with several provinces opening up Astra Zeneca vaccinations to those over the age of 40. But as of April 21, just 27 per cent of Canadians had their first dose, and it is expected to be months until anything approaching herd immunity is reached.

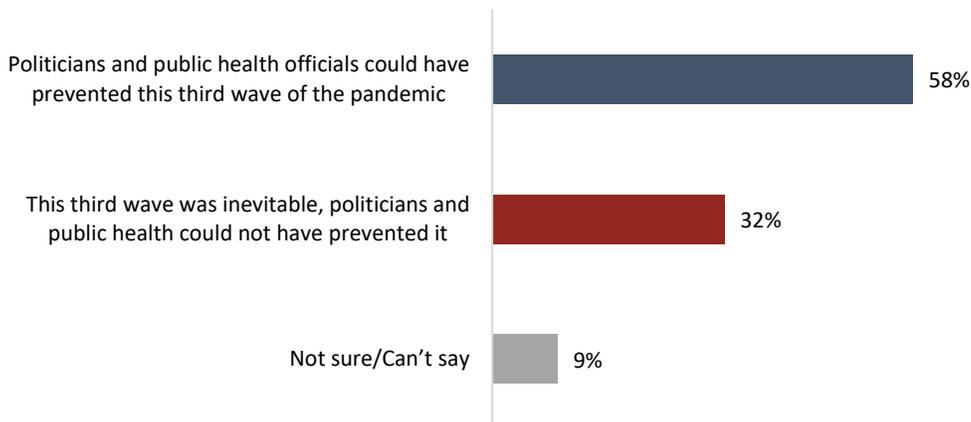
### Three-in-five say third wave could have been prevented

The spread of potentially more contagious and deadly variants has also complicated the situation for the medical community and political leaders. For their part, just 32 per cent of Canadians say that this third wave was inevitable and could not have been stopped. Nearly twice as many view the situation now as a result of failure on the part of public health officials and political leaders:

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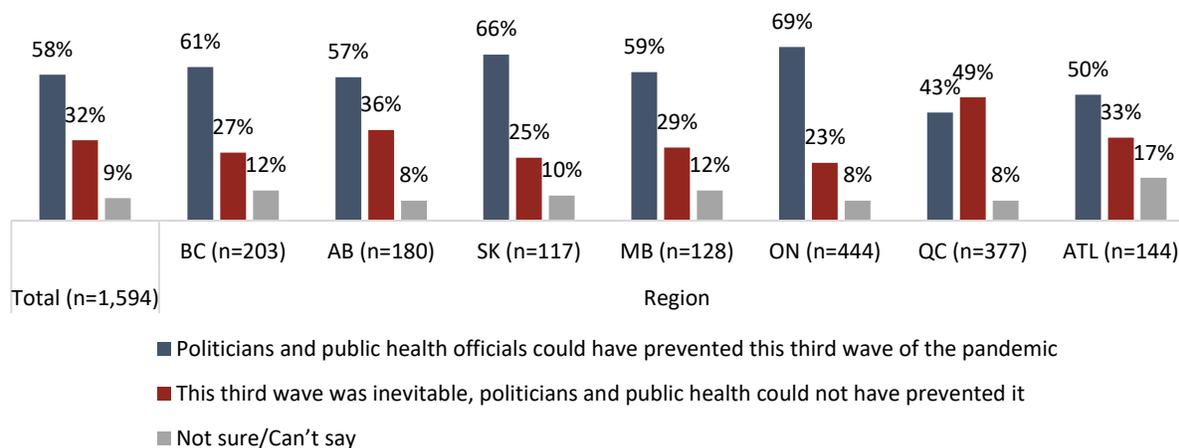
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**In your opinion, was this third wave preventable?  
(All respondents, n=1,594)**



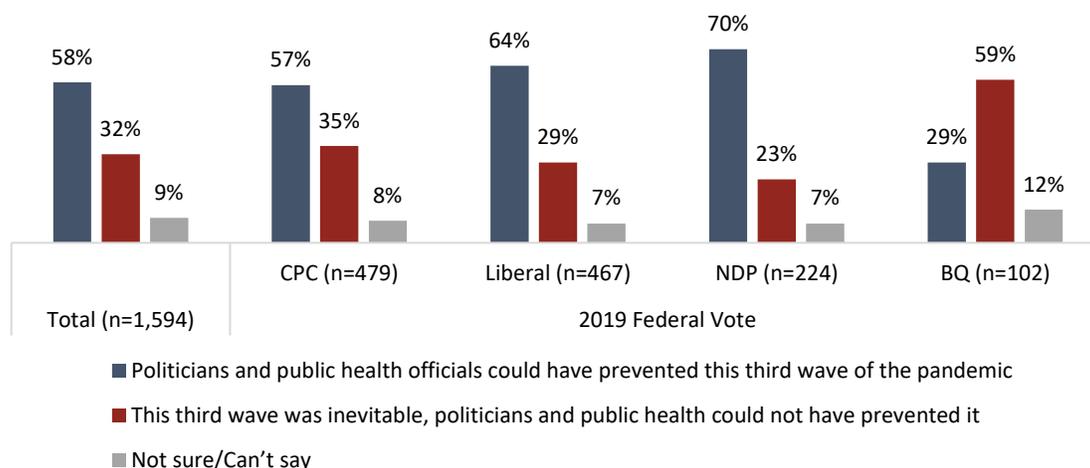
Ontario residents are most likely to say that a third wave could have been prevented, while half of Quebecers disagree and feel it was inevitable:

**In your opinion, was this third wave preventable?  
(All respondents)**



Notably, there is little variation in these responses by age and gender ([see detailed tables](#)), but differences do exist along the political divide. Those who voted for the Conservative Party in 2019 are least likely to say that government and public health officials could have prevented the spring surge (though 57 per cent still do so), while past NDP voters are most likely to say authorities could have stopped it (70%). Given the views of Quebecers on this question, past BQ voters are, unsurprisingly, least likely to say it could have been stopped:

**In your opinion, was this third wave preventable?  
(All respondents)**

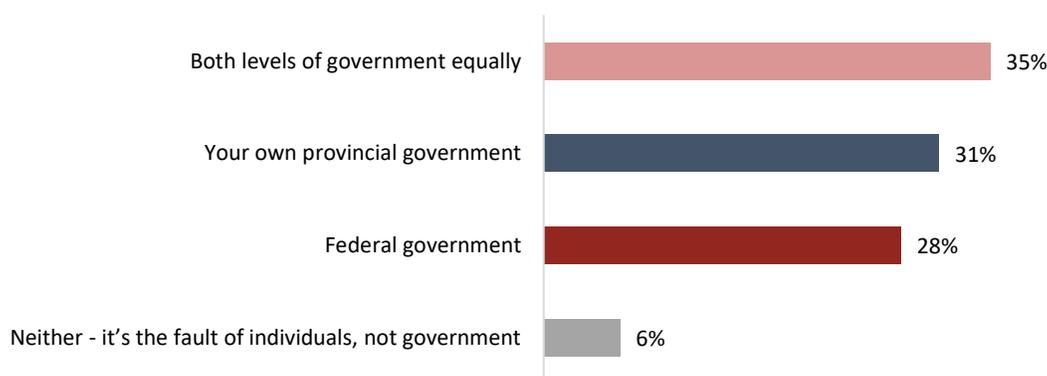


**Who's to blame?**

For three-in-five Canadians, someone or something is to blame for this third wave. But who? Or what? Among those who believe the current situation was not an inevitability, blame is split between federal (28%) and provincial (31%) levels of government, while one-third (35%) say both are to be blamed equally. Very few, a mere six per cent, say the responsibility lies with individual Canadians who did not follow advice from public health officials and political leaders.

**And which level of government do you blame more for this third wave?**

**(Those who say third wave was preventable, n=930)**



Ontario residents are far more likely than others to place blame solely with their provincial government. More than two-in-five (43%) say the Ford government deserves most of the blame, ten points higher than the next closest province – Saskatchewan (33%). British Columbians and Quebecers are most likely to apportion equal blame to their provincial and federal governments:

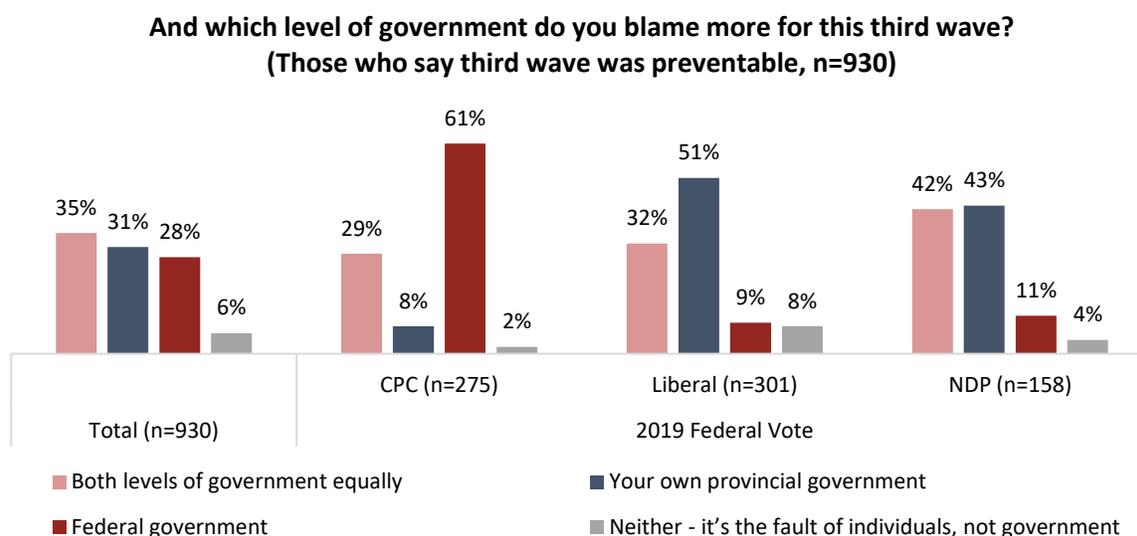
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And which level of government do you blame more for this third wave? (Those who say third wave was preventable)							
	Total (n=930)	Region					
		BC (n=124)	AB (n=114)	SK/MB (n=157)	ON (n=313)	QC (n=162)	ATL (n=73*)
Both levels of government equally	35%	43%	27%	30%	32%	44%	34%
Your own provincial government	31%	14%	32%	32%	43%	22%	8%
Federal government	28%	30%	37%	32%	23%	26%	40%
Neither - it's the fault of individuals, not government	6%	13%	4%	6%	2%	8%	17%

\*Small sample size, interpret with caution

Those who supported the CPC in 2019 are much more likely to blame the federal government, if they blame anyone, while past Liberal and NDP voters are more evenly divided in their assessments of responsibility:



### Part Three: Views of current restrictions

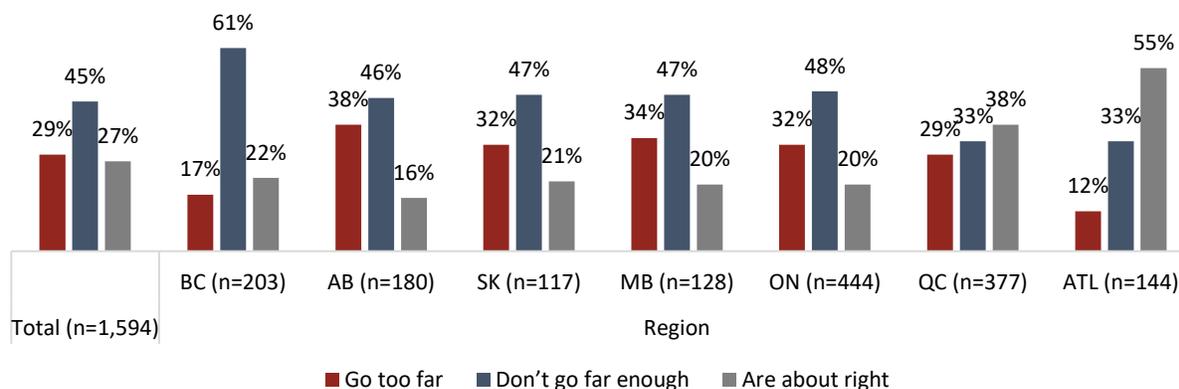
The COVID-19 related restrictions in place from province to province across Canada have been evolving regularly over the course of the past 14 months. In British Columbia, provincial authorities extended 'circuit breaker' measures that were set to expire on April 19. These restrictions are evidently not stringent enough for most, as 61 per cent of British Columbians say that measures should go further.

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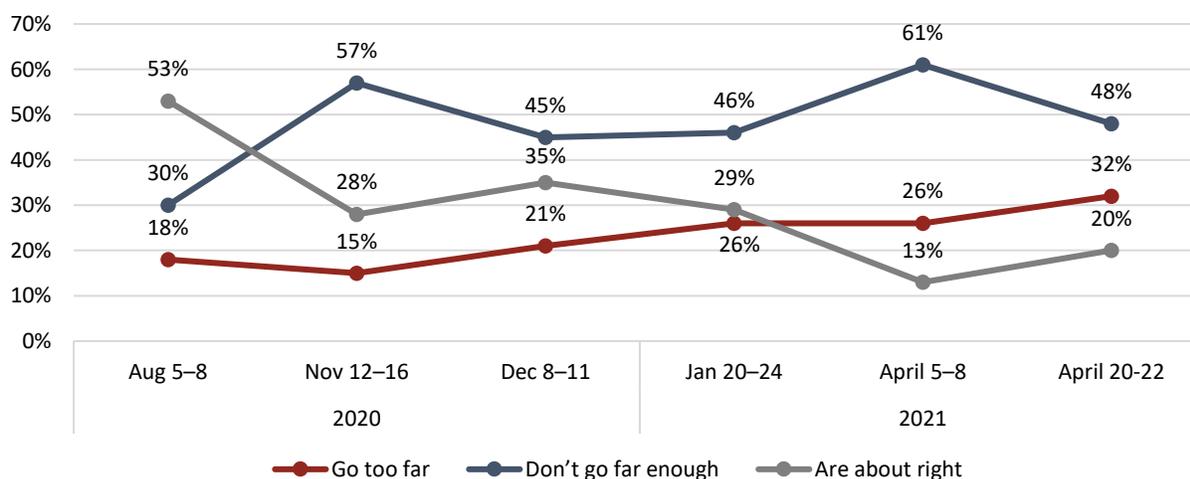
Nearly half of residents in Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba and Ontario say that restrictions don't go far enough, while those in the "Atlantic Bubble" are most likely to see their provinces as having struck the right balance.

**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...?**



Ontario residents are less likely than two weeks ago to say that restrictions are insufficient, though few feel that the province has found the right balance:

**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...? (Ontario residents)**



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

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