

Support for 2016 MAID law remains high, but softens for expansions, including mental illness as sole condition

Most unaware mental illness eligibility could arrive in 2027, and opinions remain sharply divided

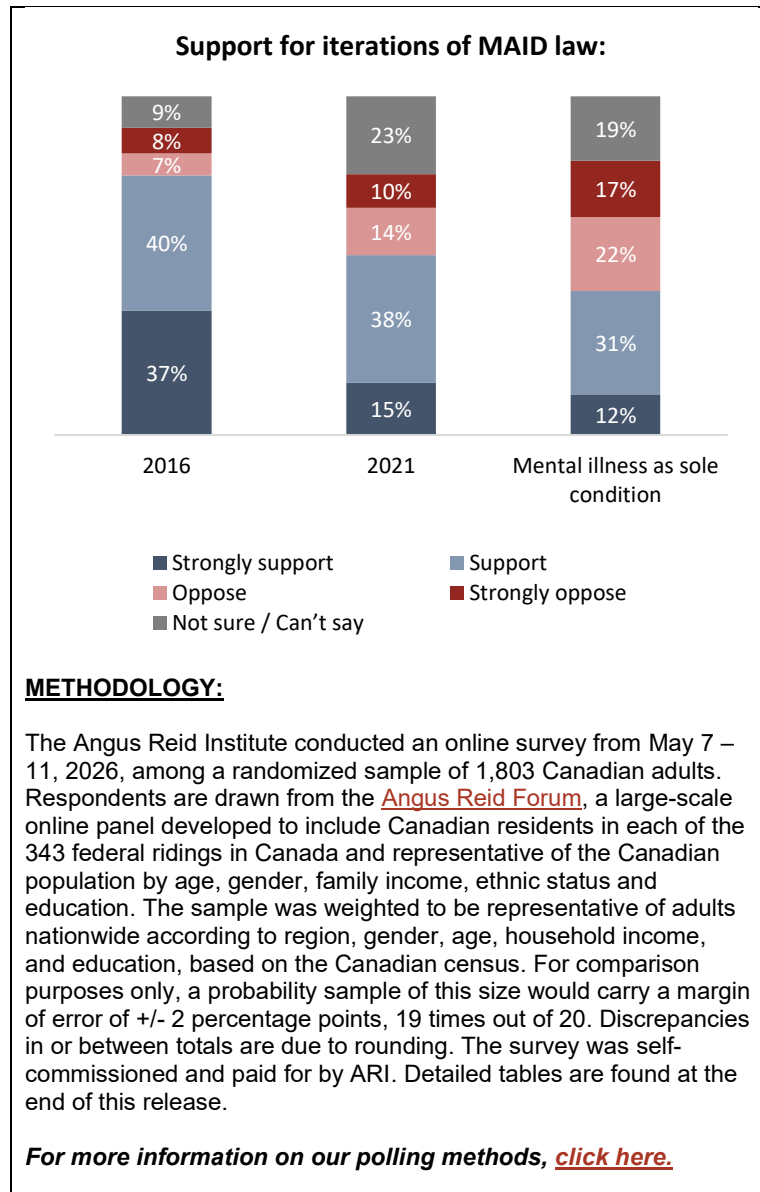
June 1, 2026 – Over the past decade, Medical Assistance in Dying (MAID) has evolved from a narrowly framed end-of-life policy into one of the country's most debated social and ethical and policy issues. While support for the original 2016 MAID framework remains widespread, Canadians express growing hesitation as eligibility expands beyond those whose deaths are reasonably foreseeable and toward the possibility of mental illness as a sole underlying condition.

[Related: Nearly all Canadians would want palliative care when needed; fewer confident they'd be able access it](#)

New data from the non-profit Angus Reid Institute finds nearly four-in-five Canadians (77%) continue to support the original MAID criteria introduced after legalization in 2016. That criteria included reasonably foreseeable death and severe and irremediable suffering.

Support drops, however, for expanded criteria introduced in 2021, which dropped the necessity of reasonably foreseeable death, while opinion becomes deeply divided on allowing MAID for mental illness alone, with 43 per cent in support and 39 per cent opposed. A further 19 per cent are unsure.

The findings point to a country still broadly supportive of assisted dying in principle, but increasingly conflicted about where the boundaries should be drawn. Canadians express concern not only about mental illness eligibility, but also about whether adequate housing, disability supports, and health care systems are in place before further expansion proceeds. Indeed, three-quarters (74%) say that the government should be required to demonstrate that adequate housing, income supports, and disability-related care are available to a person who is requesting MAID and lives with a disability.



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More Key Findings:

- Two-in-five religious Canadians (43%) are concerned about the increasing number of annual MAID deaths in Canada. Among non-religious Canadians, this drops to 25 per cent.
- Awareness of changes being debated to add mental illness as a condition for accessing MAID increases division over whether it should be allowed. Among those following the news (37% of Canadians) 46 per cent support expansion and 44 per cent oppose it.
- Those Canadians who know someone who has used MAID to end their life (23%) are more likely than others to support each iteration of the law

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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Support for expanded MAID criteria softer than original law

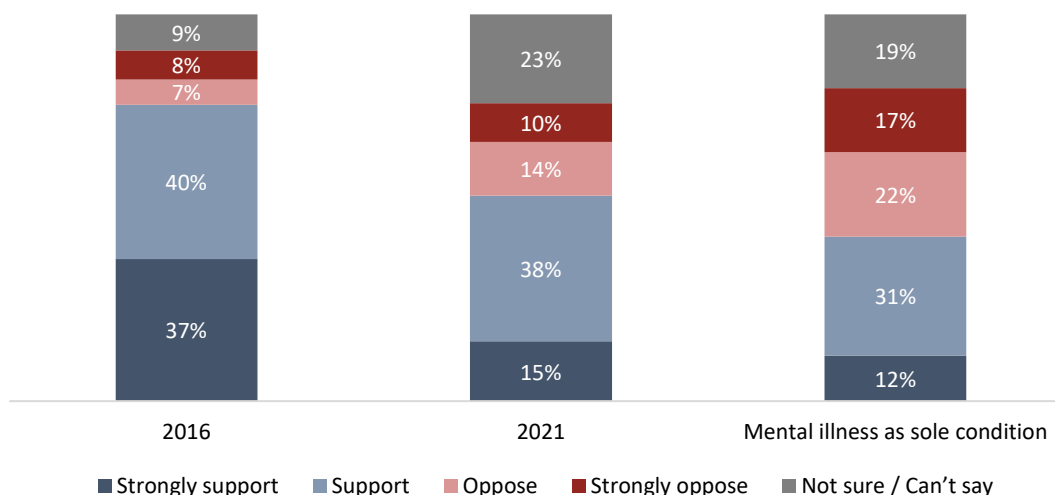
Over the past decade, Canada’s MAID framework has evolved significantly, both legally and socially. When assisted dying was first legalized following the Carter v. Canada decision and subsequent federal legislation in 2016, eligibility was mostly framed around adults experiencing severe and irremediable suffering whose natural death was reasonably foreseeable. Support for those initial criteria remains high in Canada, with nearly four-in-five (77%) saying this and just 15 per cent opposing.

Since 2016, the MAID law has changed through additional court rulings and legislative changes, including the creation of “Track 2” eligibility for people whose natural death is not reasonably foreseeable, and ongoing debate over whether mental illness alone should qualify someone for MAID in the future.

As eligibility criteria have broadened, public opinion has become more divided. Support for making MAID available to those whose natural deaths are not reasonably foreseeable this falls to 53 per cent. Opposition is at 24 per cent, while uncertainty sits at one-quarter (23%).

The prospect of allowing MAID for mental illness as a sole underlying condition generates much more hesitation. In this scenario, opposition rises substantially, to two-in-five (39%) while support drops to 43 per cent. This suggests that many Canadians remain conflicted about where the boundaries of assisted dying should be drawn.

Support for iterations of MAID law:



Breaking down the debate over mental illness as a criteria

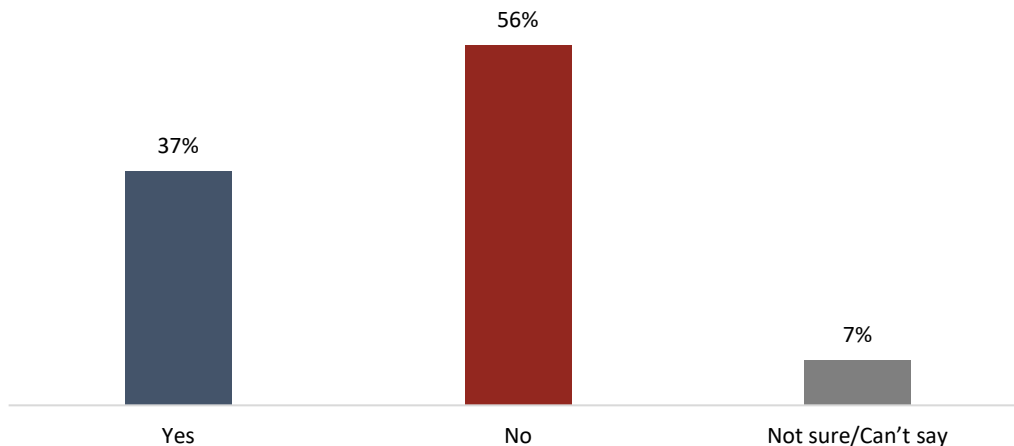
MAID for people whose sole underlying medical condition is mental illness is currently not permitted in Canada. It had been scheduled to become available in 2024, but the federal government delayed eligibility until March 17, 2027, citing the need for more time to prepare the health-care system and safeguards. Prime Minister Mark Carney has stated that he is awaiting an ongoing committee report to be published by parliamentary senators before he takes a position.

The majority of Canadians (56%) are also likely still forming an opinion, as they were evidently unaware of the expansion before this survey.

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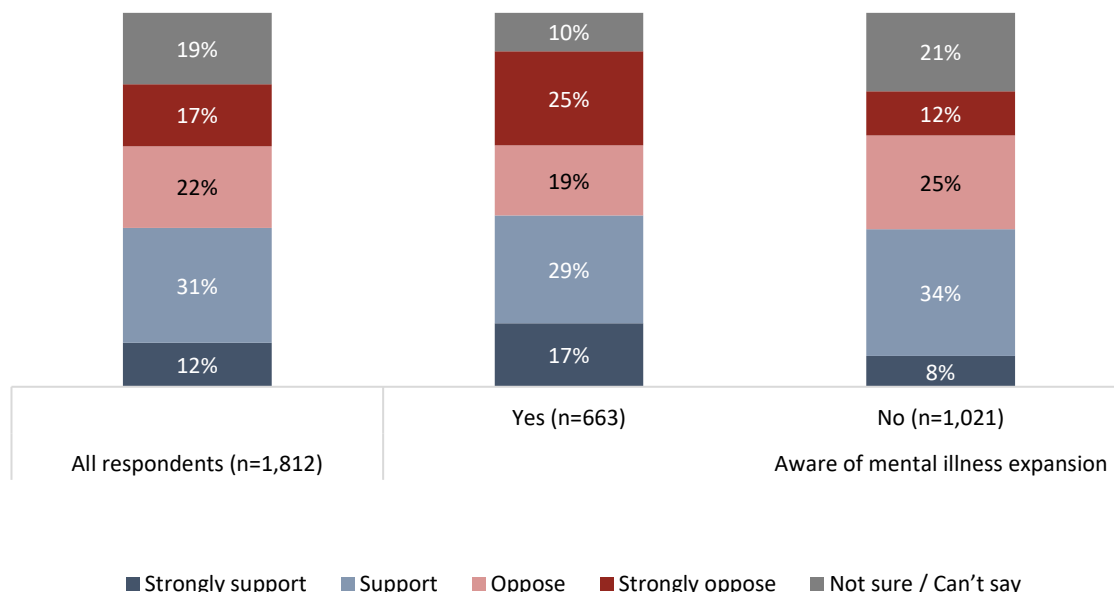
Before this survey, were you aware of the planned 2027 expansion to mental illness?



More division among those following the issue

More awareness does not necessarily generate more resolution on mental illness as sole criteria. More conviction is evident among those who have been following it – “not sure” drops from 21 per cent to 10 per cent compared to those who are not following – but both support and opposition increase. Both groups are deeply divided:

Opening access to MAID for individuals whose sole condition is mental illness, how do you feel about this?



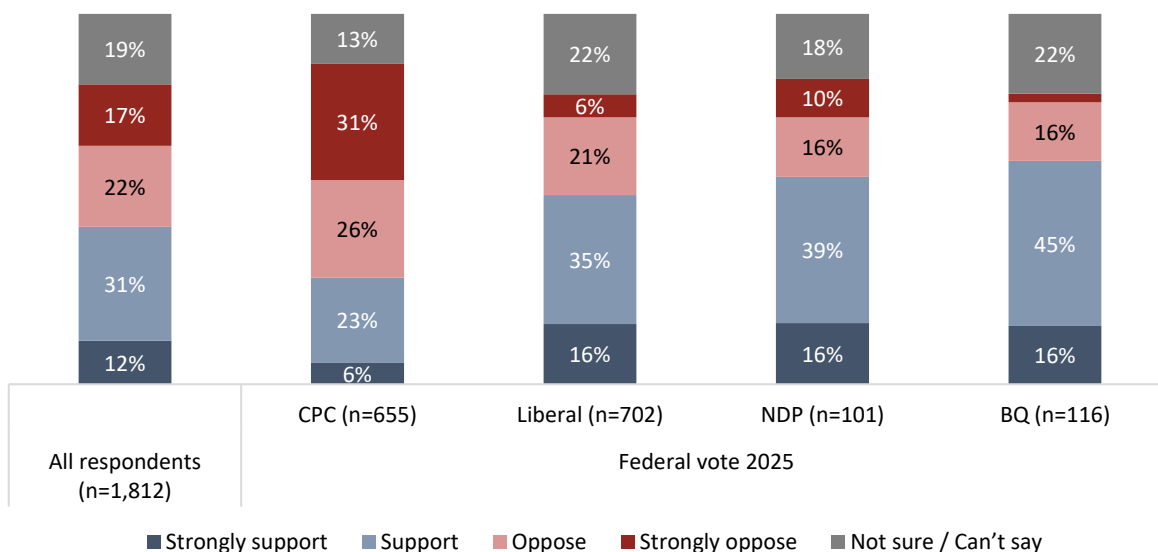
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Political divisions

While Prime Minister Carney says he’s awaiting more information before he takes a position, his party’s supporters show a preference for expanding eligibility to include mental illness as a sole condition for MAID. Half support it while 27 per cent oppose. New Democrat and Bloc voters are more supportive than this, while those who voted Conservative last year voice majority opposition:

Opening access to MAID for individuals whose sole condition is mental illness, how do you feel about this?



Testing the arguments – mental illness as sole condition

Below is the text of a question that was offered to survey participants.

There are debates about this expansion as well. We’d like to get your views on this. Please read each argument below:

Argument 1: People with severe, treatment-resistant mental illness can suffer just as profoundly as people with physical illness. Excluding them is discriminatory. Autonomy applies to the mind as well as the body, and a long-suffering patient should not be forced to keep living because their illness is psychiatric.

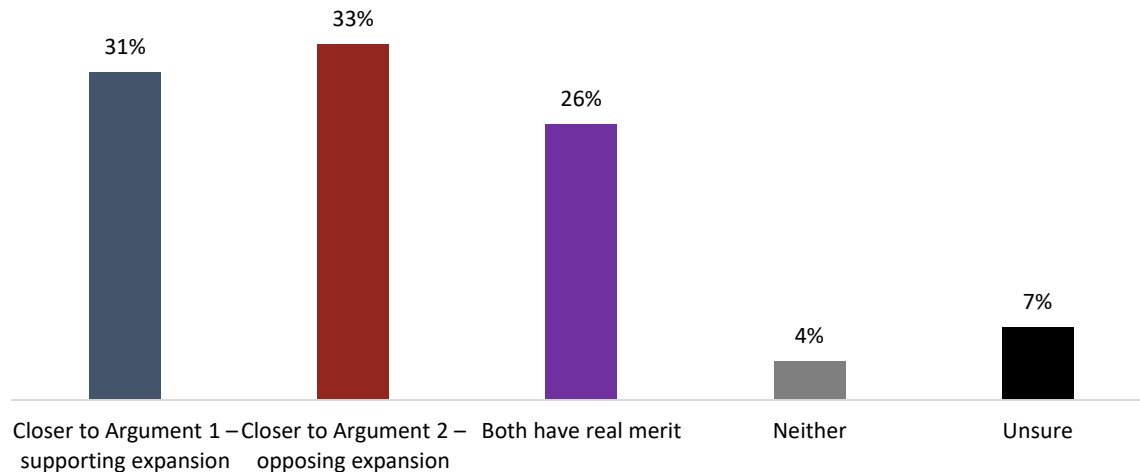
Argument 2: Many mental health conditions can improve over time with treatment. Plus, many people with mental health conditions may lack the ability to make informed decisions about MAID. The emphasis in mental health should be about preventing suicide. If this law passes people will simply doctor shop to find Physicians who promote MAID.

Asked how they feel about this, the scale of division becomes even more evident. Three-in-10 Canadians align more with the argument to support expansion, a near-identical number align with the argument against it, and one-quarter say they’re swayed by both.

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Which view comes closer to your own when it comes to MAID expansion and mental illness?



Concerns over disability and care

While many Canadians continue to support the principle of assisted dying, there is also widespread concern that vulnerable people should not choose MAID because of poverty, inadequate care, isolation, or lack of social supports. Disability-rights advocates in particular have argued that expanding eligibility without improving access to housing, treatment, caregiving, and financial assistance risks placing people in situations where suffering is shaped as much by social conditions as medical ones.

Ninety disability and mental health organizations [called on the federal government to permanently stop plans to expand MAID eligibility](#) to those whose sole condition is mental illness in a letter to Carney and his health and justice ministers in May.

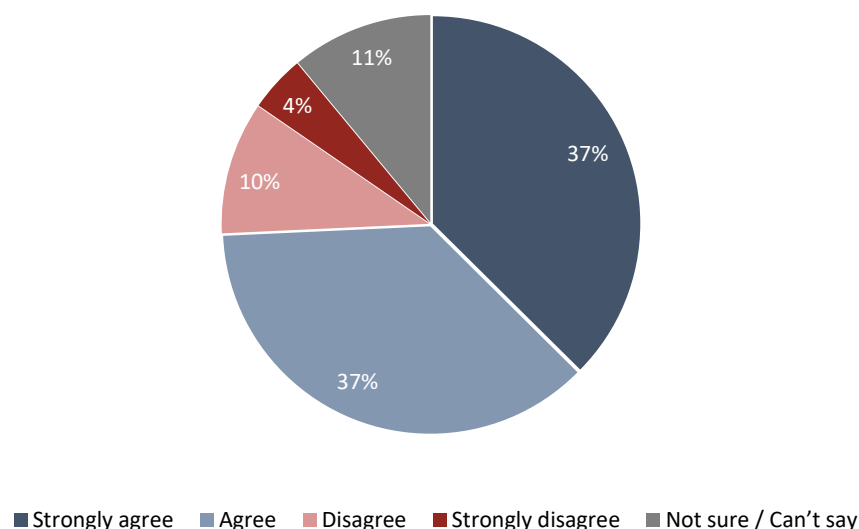
Most say government should demonstrate adequate supports before MAID offered

Most Canadians say governments should demonstrate that adequate social and economic supports are available before MAID is offered to people living with disabilities. Three-quarters (74%) agree that access to housing, income assistance, and disability-related care should be in place prior to someone pursuing assisted dying, including more than one-third who “strongly agree” with this position. Fewer than one-in-seven disagree, while another 11 per cent are unsure.

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Before MAID is offered to a person with a disability, the government should be required to demonstrate that adequate housing, income supports, and disability-related care are available to that person.



Testing the arguments – when death is not reasonably foreseeable

Below is the text of a question that was offered to survey participants.

In 2021, Canada's MAID laws changed. The biggest difference was that MAID became available to people with a serious, incurable illness or disability whose death is NOT reasonably foreseeable. Some refer to this as "Track 2". People seeking MAID under this track would now need to wait at least 90 days (with exceptions if they lose the ability to consent) before they can receive it and must be assessed by two doctors.

Two competing perspectives are central to the Track 2 debate. We'd like to know how you feel about these:

Personal Autonomy/Courts Perspective:

Denying a suffering person access to MAID solely because their natural death is not imminent is an overreach. The lower courts have signalled that this restriction is unconstitutional, and individuals, not the government, should decide when their suffering is unbearable.

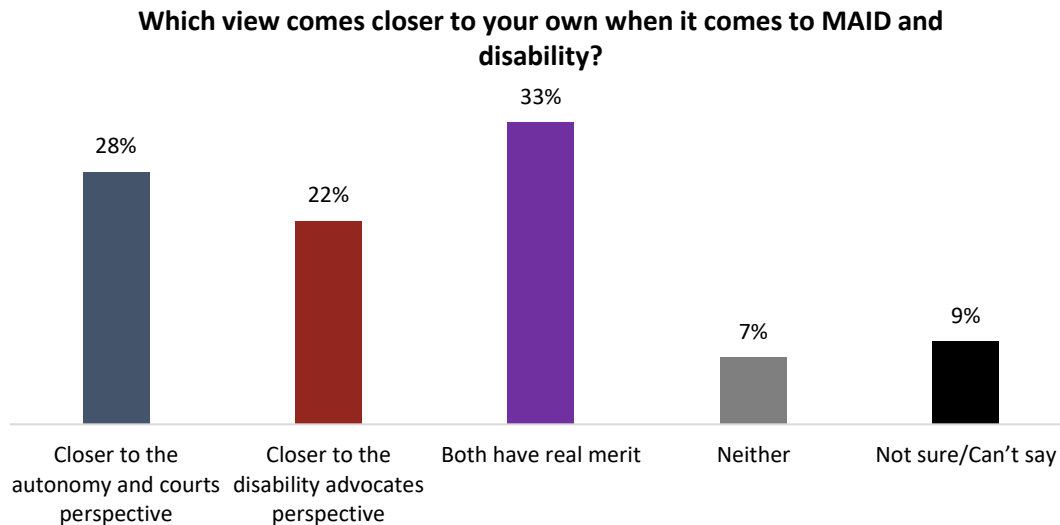
Disability Rights Perspective:

Major Canadian disability-rights organizations have criticized Track 2 MAID, arguing that it makes people with disabilities eligible for assisted dying in a society that has not adequately funded the economic, health, and social supports needed for people with disabilities to ensure quality of life and independent living.

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The most common response to this debate is to see both sides, one-in-three say this (33%). Among those who choose one of the arguments as more persuasive, the autonomy and courts side generates slightly higher interest:



Exposure and influence on support

Between 2016 when MAID was legalized [and 2024](#), the most recent year there is data available, more than 76,000 Canadians chose to end their life with MAID. Among respondents to this ARI survey, three-in-10 Canadians report knowing someone who requested, received or was offered MAID ([see detailed tables](#)). In 2023, when Angus Reid asked a similar question, 15 per cent had a close friend or family member who had used this to end their life. That number has risen to 23 per cent in these latest data.

Personal exposure to a close friend or family member who requested and received MAID appears to correspond with a higher level of support for MAID under the 2016 and 2021 criteria as well as the proposed mental illness expansion.

Those who know someone that was offered MAID without requesting it themselves are about as likely to support or oppose MAID regardless of criteria as other Canadians. But notably, there are fewer people who know someone who was offered MAID unsolicited that strongly support the availability of MAID:

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Level of support for each criterion for MAID			
	All respondents (n=1,812)	Exposure to MAID - family member or close friend...	
		Requested and received MAID	Was offered MAID without request
2016 criteria			
Strongly support	37%	52%	26%
Support	40%	36%	53%
Oppose	7%	4%	7%
Strongly oppose	8%	3%	6%
Not sure / Can't say	9%	5%	8%
2021 criteria			
	All	Requested and received	Offered without request
Strongly support	15%	27%	6%
Support	38%	41%	44%
Oppose	14%	9%	17%
Strongly oppose	10%	7%	7%
Not sure / Can't say	23%	16%	25%
Mental illness			
	All	Requested and received	Offered without request
Strongly support	12%	18%	5%
Support	31%	35%	40%
Oppose	22%	17%	24%
Strongly oppose	17%	13%	15%
Not sure / Can't say	19%	18%	16%

Concern level over rising number of deaths each year

In 2024, 16,499 people received MAID in Canada, representing [one-in-20 deaths that year](#). This also represents a 16-fold increase in the number of MAID deaths compared to 2016, the first year of legalization, when 1,018 people received MAID.

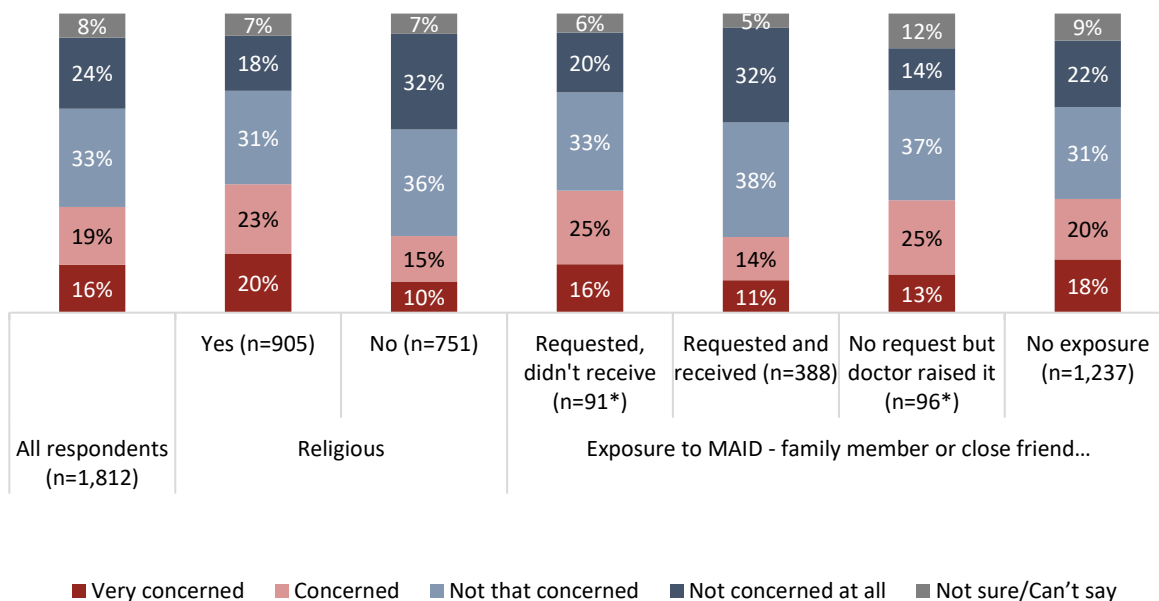
Most Canadians (57%) say they are not concerned about the number of deaths involving MAID; one-third (35%) say they are very concerned or concerned.

Those who report a religious affiliation are more concerned (43%) than those who do not (25%). There is also more concern from those with no personal connection to MAID (38%) than among those who know someone who requested it and ended their life with MAID (25%):

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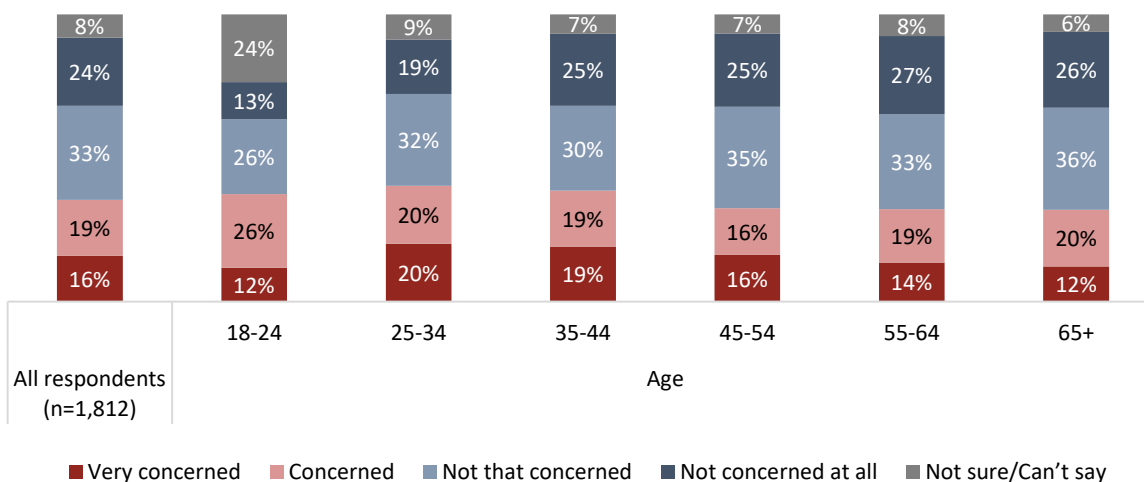
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Overall, are you concerned or not concerned about the number of deaths involving MAID in Canada today?



Those who are aged 25 to 44 are much more concerned about the number of MAID deaths in Canada currently than older Canadians. But at all age groups a majority describe themselves as not concerned, except those under 25, who are more likely to express uncertainty:

Overall, are you concerned or not concerned about the number of deaths involving MAID in Canada today?



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

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