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Trade war impacts: Most employed Canadians feel secure in their current jobs, but finding a new one is another story

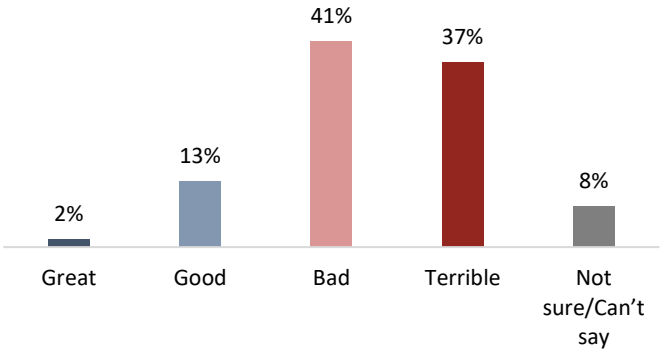
Four-in-five with exposure to job market say it's "bad" or "terrible"; at least 65% in every region

September 29, 2026 – Canada's labour market has spent much of 2026 treading water. After eight months of alternating gains and losses, the country has added just 26,000 net jobs since the beginning of the year, including a loss of 42,000 positions in August.

And while layoffs remain relatively uncommon – the August layoff rate of 0.8 per cent was slightly below where it stood a year ago – other indicators point to a labour market offering fewer opportunities for those on the outside looking in. There are now nearly three unemployed Canadians for every vacant position in the country, almost triple the ratio seen during the labour shortages of 2022 and well above the roughly two-to-one ratio that prevailed before the pandemic.

New data from the non-profit Angus Reid Institute find this divide reflected in Canadians' own experiences. Nearly nine-in-10 employed Canadians (87%) describe their current jobs as secure, unchanged from this time last year. But among those looking for work themselves or who know someone who is, more than three-quarters (77%) describe the job search as "bad" or "terrible."

And based on your own search or what you've heard from someone close to you, how would you describe how the job search is going? (n=1,546 - looking themselves or know someone who is)



METHODOLOGY:

The Angus Reid Institute conducted an online survey from September 8 - 16, 2026, among a randomized sample of 4,417 Canadian adults. Respondents are drawn from the Angus Reid Forum, a large-scale online panel developed to include Canadian residents in each of the 343 federal ridings in Canada and representative of the Canadian population by age, gender, family income, ethnic status and education. The sample was weighted to be representative of adults nationwide according to region, gender, age, household income, and education, based on the Canadian census. For comparison purposes only, a probability sample of this size would carry a margin of error of +/- 1.5 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.

For more information on our polling methods, click here.

The result is a labour market that, for now, appears more difficult to get into than to fall out of. This, as uncertainty over Canada's trading relationship with the United States continues to hang over the economy, a risk the Bank of Canada has identified as significant even as it sees signs of improving economic growth.

Looking ahead to the next 12 months, Canadians are more pessimistic than optimistic. Three-in-10 (28%) say they'll be worse off at this time next year, while 19 per cent expect an improvement, and a plurality (44%) expect more of the same.

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About ARI

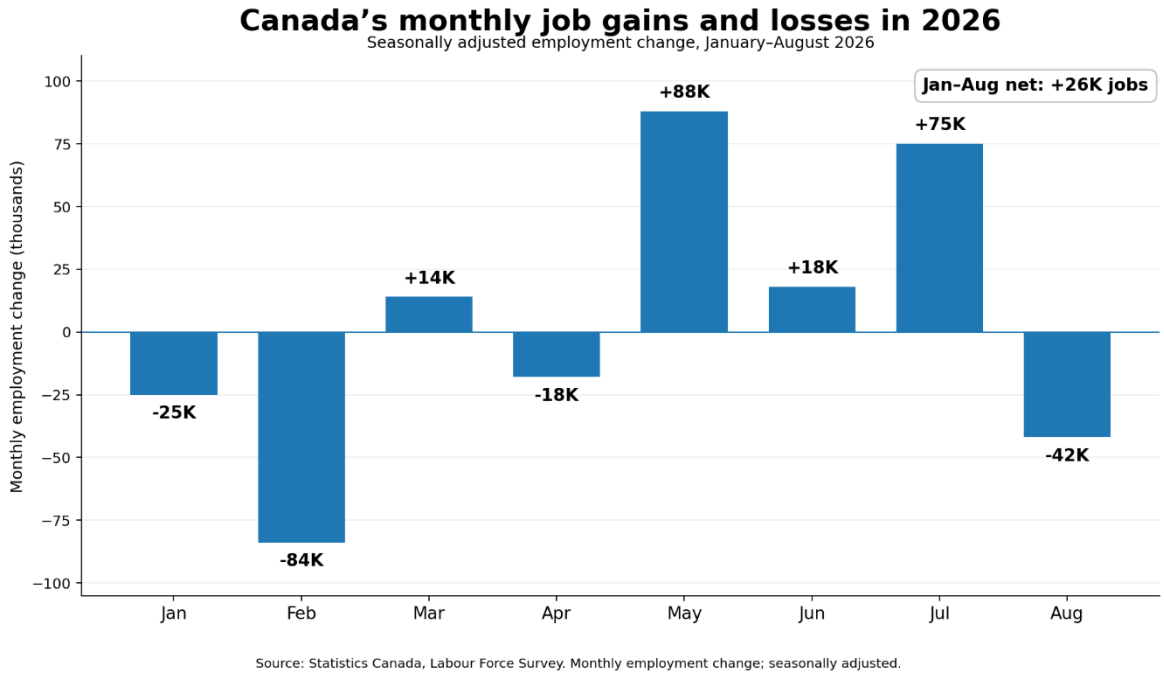
*The **Angus Reid Institute (ARI)** was founded in October 2014 by pollster and sociologist, Dr. Angus Reid. ARI is a national, not-for-profit, non-partisan public opinion research foundation established to advance education by commissioning, conducting and disseminating to the public accessible and 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

- **Employed Canadians remain secure in their jobs despite looming tariff impacts**
- **But those looking for a new job are encountering a "bad/terrible" market**
- **Little improvement in optimism about the coming year**
- **One-quarter say their finances are "poor"**
- **Grocery costs hamstring lower-income households**

Employed Canadians remain secure in their jobs despite looming tariff impacts

The ongoing trade dispute with the United States has not, at least so far, translated into widespread fear among employed Canadians that they will lose their jobs. While certain segments of the economy have faced increased pressure to reduce the workforce, the overall impact on jobs has been negligible at the national level. In fact, for the year, Canada has enjoyed a net creation of 26,000 jobs:



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Perhaps for this reason and driven by their steadfastness in the face of threats from U.S. President Donald Trump, nearly nine-in-10 employed Canadians (87%) describe their current employment as secure, while 11 per cent say the opposite – little changed from a year ago.

Feeling of job security or insecurity:						
Field period	Totally secure	Mostly secure	Net secure	Mostly insecure	Totally insecure	Net insecure
Sept. 2025	35%	52%	87%	8%	3%	11%
Dec. 2025	32%	52%	84%	10%	4%	14%
Mar. 2026	33%	53%	86%	8%	4%	12%
Sept. 2026	35%	52%	87%	8%	3%	11%

These feelings on insecurity are relatively comparable across the last year and across regions of the country:

Percentage voicing job Insecurity								
Field period	Canada	BC	Alberta	Sask.	Manitoba	Ontario	Quebec	Atlantic
Sep. 2025	12%	12%	13%	12%	8%	15%	9%	13%
Dec. 2025	14%	15%	13%	13%	9%	14%	15%	-
Mar. 2026	12%	13%	9%	12%	15%	12%	12%	-
Sep. 2026	11%	11%	10%	7%	9%	14%	8%	14%

But those looking for a new job are encountering a "bad/terrible" market

Finding a job, however, is another matter. Among those looking for work themselves or reporting on the experience of someone close to them, more than three-quarters (77%) describe the job search as going "bad" or "terrible". Just 15 per cent describe it as "good" or "great".

There are signs employers are becoming more cautious. The Bank of Canada's second-quarter Business Outlook Survey found hiring intentions had fallen below their historical average, with most businesses reporting that their existing workforce was sufficient to meet current demand.

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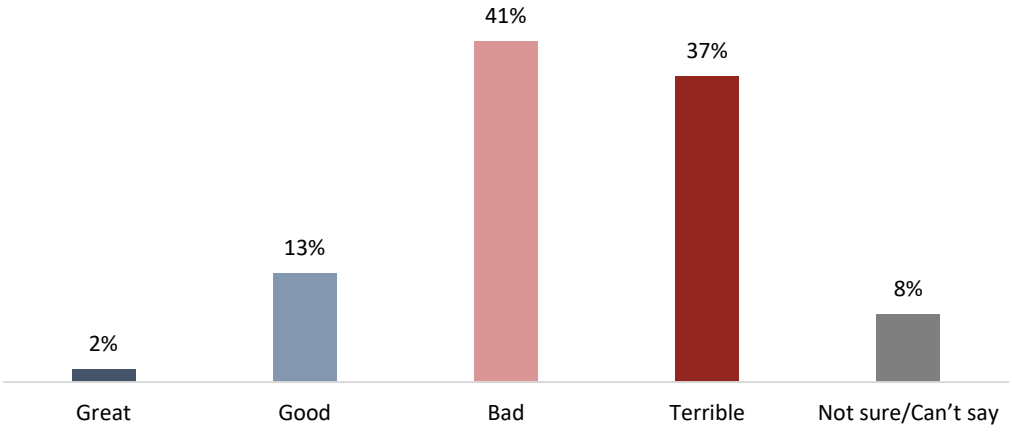

Quebec fares best in terms of job market perception, but still just one-in-four (25%) say it's good or great. Everywhere in the country the vast majority say they're encountering challenges:

And based on your own search or what you've heard from someone close to you, how would you describe how the job search is going? (n=1,546 - looking themselves or know someone who is)								
	Canada	Region						
		BC	AB	SK	MB	ON	QC	ATL
Great	2%	1%	1%	1%	0%	1%	4%	2%
Good	13%	12%	11%	14%	9%	11%	21%	14%
Bad	41%	44%	43%	41%	40%	38%	43%	48%
Terrible	37%	38%	36%	31%	36%	43%	22%	30%
Not sure/Can't say	8%	5%	8%	14%	15%	7%	11%	6%

Little improvement in optimism about the coming year

The financial assessments of Canadians continue to improve year over year from the immense negativity noted in 2023. In September of that year, 49 per cent said they were worse off now than the same time one year prior. That number has fallen 14 points, but the proportion of those saying they're better off has not budged. The resulting situation is one where nearly half of Canadians voice stability (47%) not improvement:

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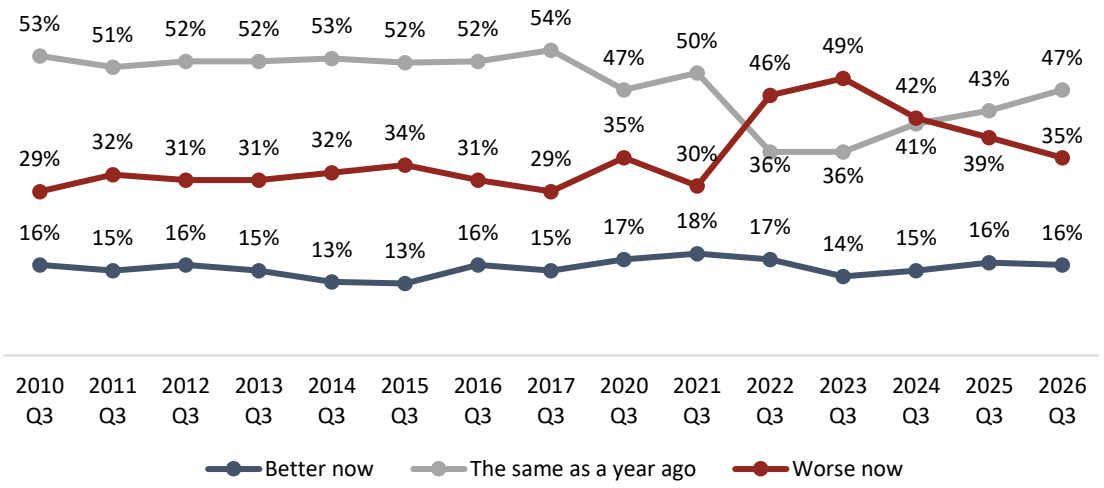
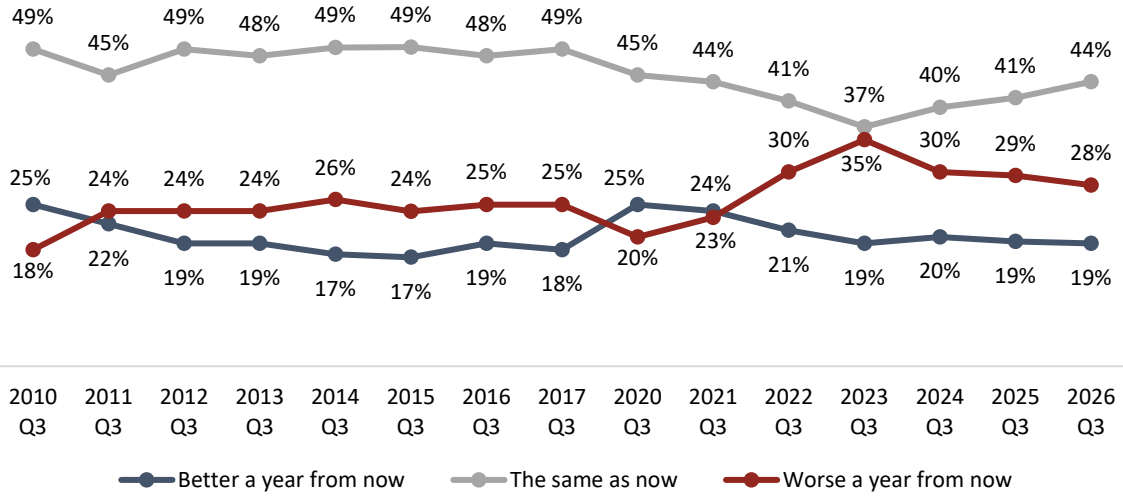
All things considered, do you think you are financially better off or worse off than you were a year ago?



Views of the coming year remain persistently more negative than positive in this environment of economic uncertainty. The ration of three-to-two Canadians saying they'll be worse off next year has persisted for the past three waves taken in third quarter of the year:

And a year from now, do you think you will be financially better off or worse off than you are now?



One-quarter say their finances are "poor"

At the simplest descriptive level, the largest number of Canadians say their household finances are "good". A small group of one-in-seven (14%) go further, saying "very good", while one-quarter choose "poor" or worse:

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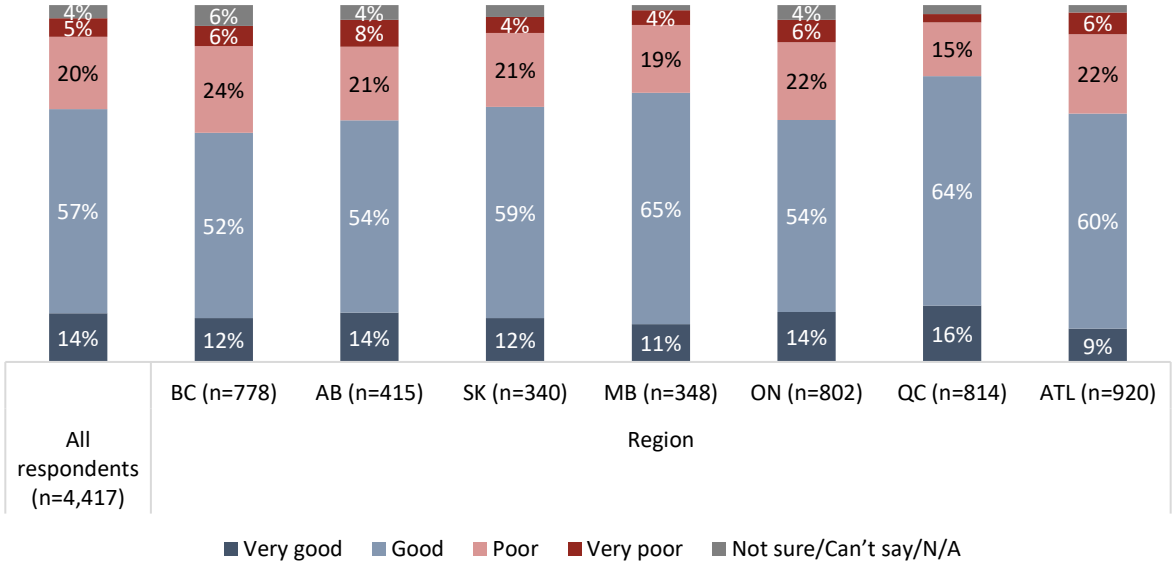
How would you describe your current household finances?



The economic circumstances of Canadians are affected by a wide array of variables, including job security, housing affordability, levels of debt and personal outlooks on financial health. To better assess these varying situations, the Angus Reid Institute created a Financial Pressure Index, which scores respondents on eight questions and sorts them into one of four groups based on the financial pressures they face.

Approaching one-quarter of Canadians (22%) are currently under high financial pressure. This group are more likely to report feeling insecure about their current employment, to describe their household finances as 'poor', say they are falling behind economically and find challenges with covering their groceries and monthly rent or mortgage. The one-in-five (19%) who say they are facing medium financial pressure face many of these challenges as well, but they are overall less severe. The low (36% of Canadians) and very low (23%) financial pressure groups are much less likely to report these issues, and more likely to say they are coping fine in the current economic circumstances and are optimistic about their financial future. For the full responses to these questions, see the detailed tables.

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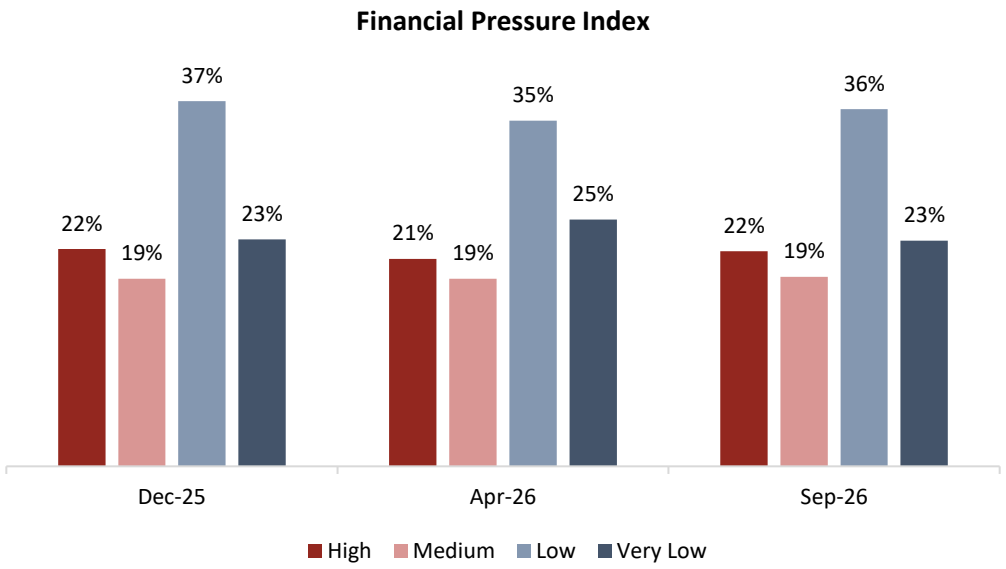
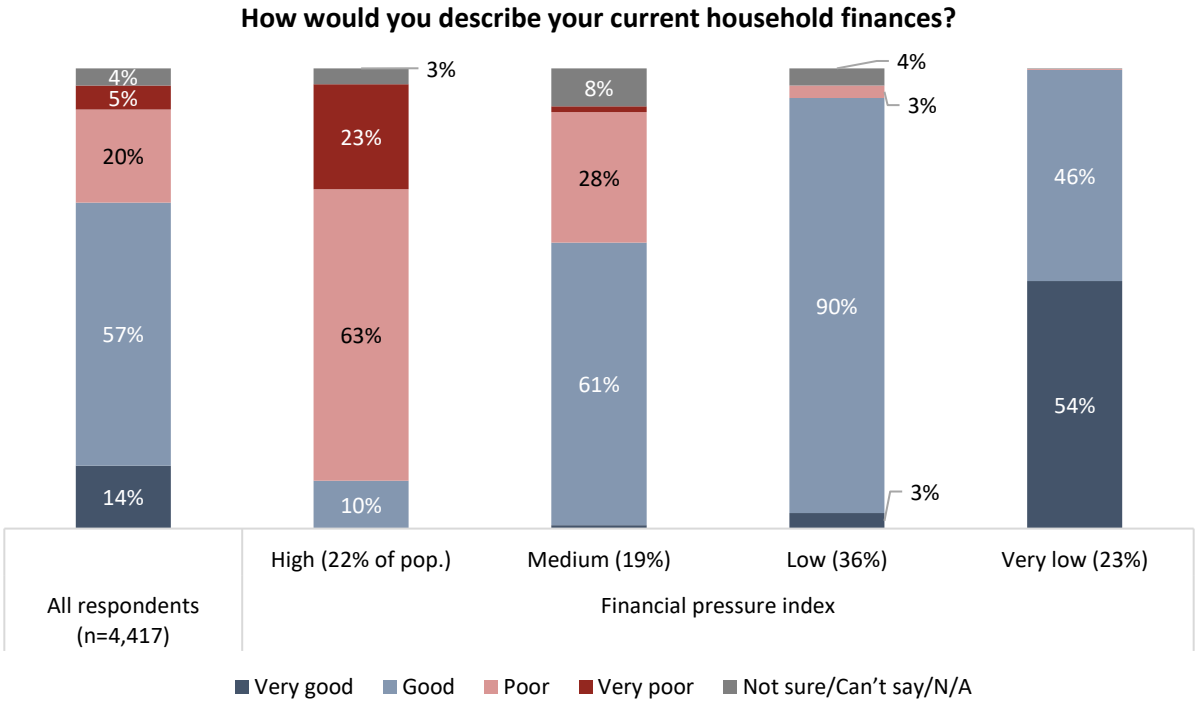


Across nearly all of the High financial pressure group, household finances are poor. This sort of strife is completely absent from the group with Very Low pressure:



Grocery costs hamstring lower-income households

While the pace of grocery inflation has slowed considerably from its post-pandemic peak, Canadians continue to pay substantially more at the checkout. Statistics Canada says prices for food purchased from

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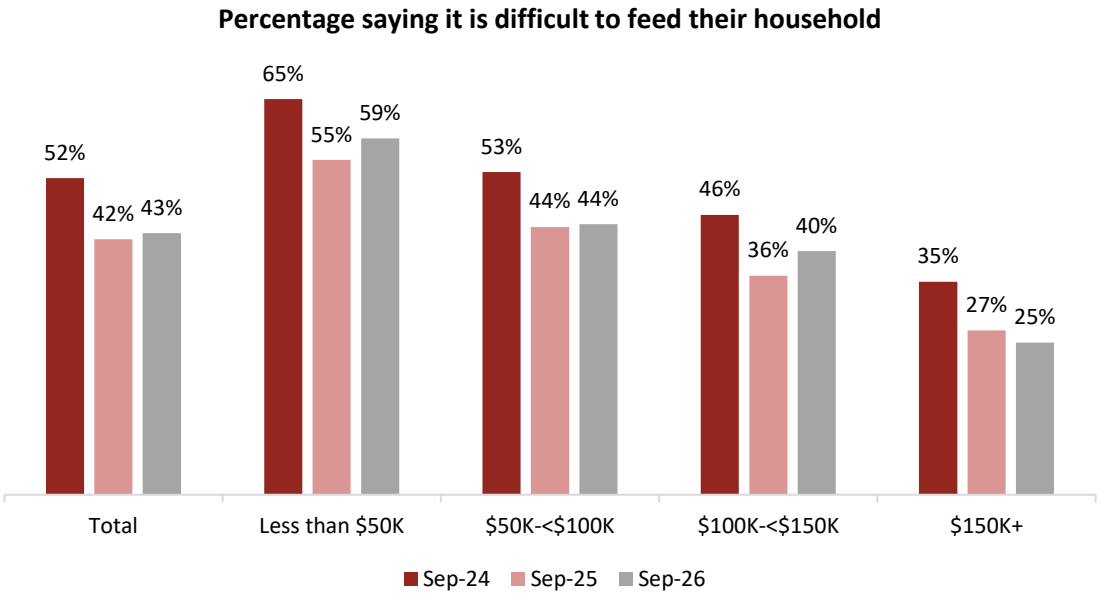
stores have risen 29 per cent since August 2021.

What ARI data have noted is the persistence of challenges for lower-income individuals in meeting the needs of their households.



For detailed results by age, gender, region, education, and other demographics, click here.

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