

COVID-19

PUBLIC TRUST & READINESS BAROMETER

A guide to safely navigating
the late-Covid economy.

ENVIRONICS
RESEARCH



TABLE OF CONTENTS

- INTRODUCTION 4
- TREND ONE | TRUST & CONFIDENCE IN CANADA'S HEALTH SYSTEM 7
- TREND TWO | TRUST & CONFIDENCE IN HEALTH PRACTITIONERS AND GOVERNMENT 11
- TREND THREE | READINESS TO VACCINATE AND MASK 16
- TREND FOUR | READINESS TO RESUME NORMAL ACTIVITY AND CONSIDER TRAVEL 21
- CONCLUSION 25

THIRD EDITION | JUNE 2022

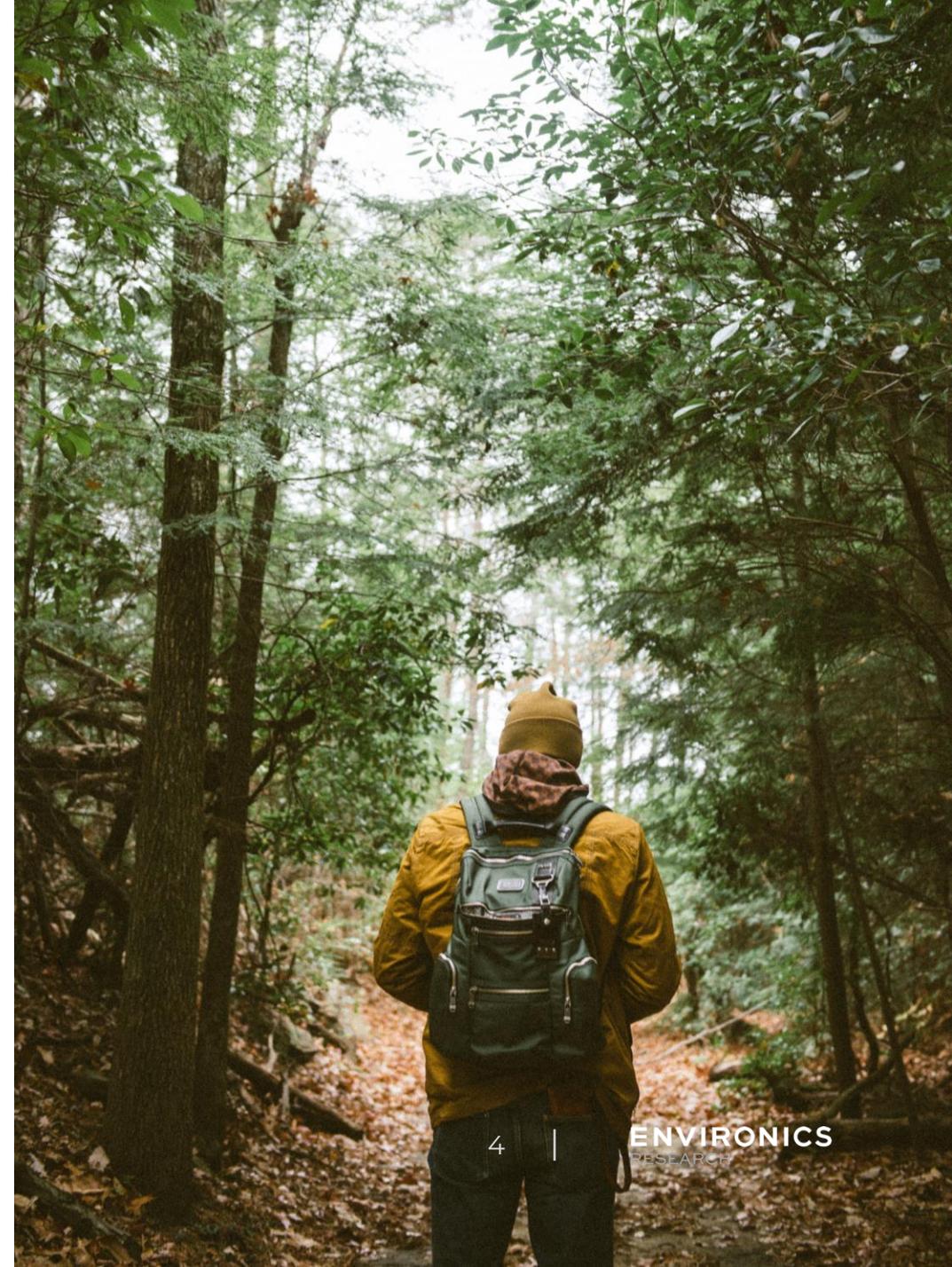
The Public Trust & Readiness Barometer assesses the evolving mood of Canadians and offers guidance for organizations navigating COVID-19 and the economy. Welcome to this third edition of the Public Trust & Readiness Barometer.

Introduction

Where are we now?

For many Canadians, the strictest pandemic measures are still a fresh memory – those days of sourdough starters and frequenting the closest grocery store as if it were a French Marché are not yet far from our minds. We can still easily recall the two previous springs, as hospitalizations slowed down, and we were told we could enjoy a patio beer, or begin to visit our extended family members again, cautiously. This year, perhaps, feels a bit different – more open, more normal. Yet, despite this, a persistent lack of certainty continues to frustrate.

Some of that frustration is mitigated by the ability to see more of each other – quite literally, as mask mandates across the country have lifted over the last few months. Optimistically, this allows some of us to open ourselves back up to socializing and the power of body language. Though we still hear about people catching COVID, our human propensity to feel hopeful is being fed by the return of at least some of the routines and pleasures we considered normal two and a half years ago. Yet even as mask requirements drop, many people still choose to wear them, and recommendations or mandates persist in some circumstances. In fact, the Public Health Agency of Canada’s website still recommends that Canadians wear masks in indoor public spaces. As Canadians attempt to enjoy the present and most appear ready or even eager to resume elements of their pre-pandemic lives, the transition back to normal is not without challenges. Nevertheless, our recent research suggests widespread feelings of confidence and goodwill that will likely help Canadians navigate this period of change – including inevitable hiccups – relatively well.



Four themes of public trust and readiness

History has shown that moments of economic and social insecurity can lead to major shifts in public perception. The themes discussed in this barometer aim to illuminate the public mood today, and to guide policy makers and business leaders to meet Canadians where they are.



Trust & confidence in Canada's health system.

The pandemic has shone a bright light on health care in this country.



Trust & confidence in health practitioners and government.

Increased reliance on health practitioners and government to comfort and clarify opened new doors to critique and conversation.



Readiness to vaccinate and mask.

Mask mandates have lifted across the country, giving Canadians the choice to *mask or not to mask*.



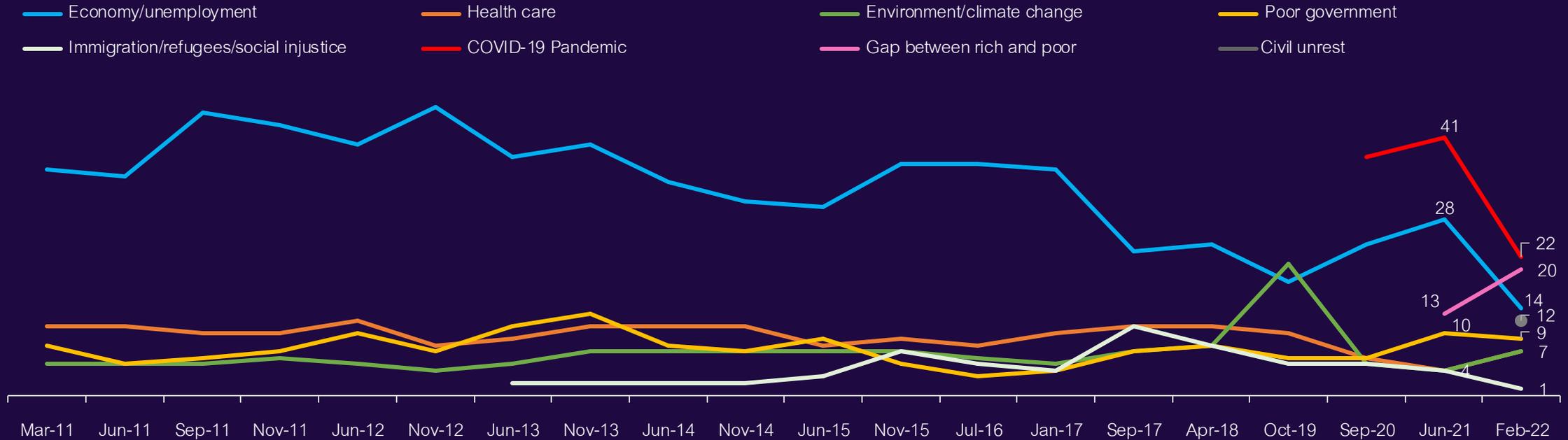
Readiness to resume normal activity and consider travel.

With restaurants and gyms open, and travel becoming less restricted, Canadians are left to choose their activities based on their own comfort level.

What's on the minds of Canadians?

The COVID-19 pandemic continues to be the most pressing issue facing Canada, though mentions have declined significantly since June 2021. While general economic anxieties such as unemployment remain somewhat widespread, concerns about the gap between rich and poor is rising, specifically to do with the cost of living and shortage of affordable housing. Concerns related to the environment as well as opinions on poor government persist, fluctuating slightly over time. Civil unrest emerges for the first time as a prominent concern this year, due to the Trucker Freedom Convoy that was happening at the time of this survey.

Q. In your opinion, what is the most important problem facing Canadians today?



THEME ONE

TRUST & CONFIDENCE IN THE CANADIAN HEALTH CARE SYSTEM



Perspective

State of Canada's Health Care

Healthcare has always been a galvanizing topic at the heart of Canada's national identity. The arrival of publicly funded health care in the second half of the 20th century expressed the principle that health care should be universal and accessible.

The pandemic has shone a light on weaknesses in our health care system. Concerning news about Canada's long-term care homes and the growing numbers of health care workers reportedly* planning to leave their jobs may have impacted the confidence that Canadians have in the health care system. More than two thirds of Canadians now consider the country's health care system to be in a state of crisis.

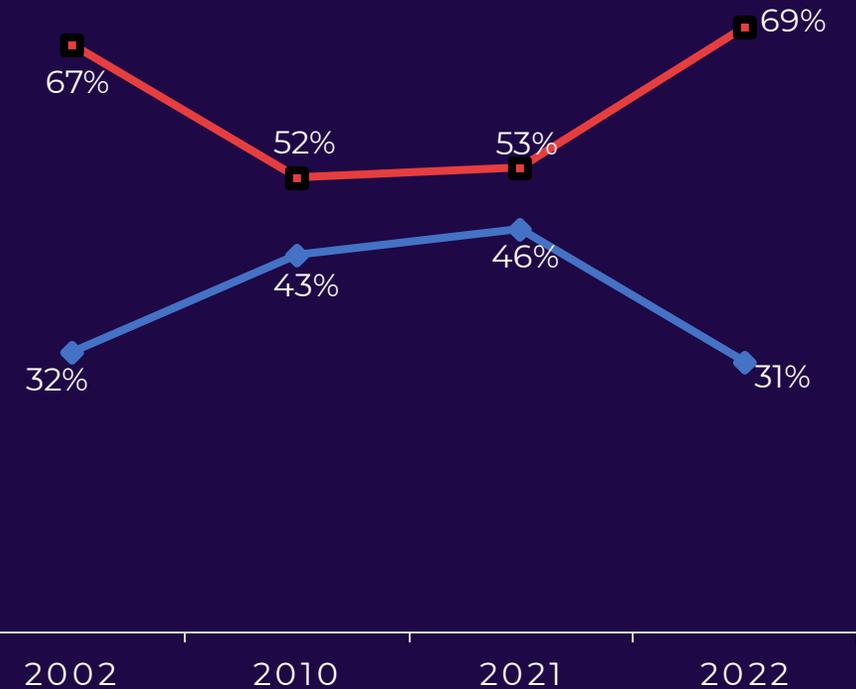
The noteworthy increase in Canadians feeling skeptical towards their health care system, from 53% in June 2021 to 69% in February this year, might also reflect the situation at the time, as hospitalizations for COVID peaked toward the end of January but remained in the headlines during February.

Graph Contents: 'Which of the following is closer to your point of view?'. Data before 2021 gathered from Focus Canada (2010 – Environics Institute).

** Data from Survey on Health Care Workers' Experiences During the Pandemic (SHCWEP); Statistics Canada.*

Which of the following is closer to your point of view?

- Canada's health care system is in a state of crisis
- ◆— Canada's health care system is basically in good shape



Perspective

State of Canada's Health Care

The proportion of Canadians who believe that the country's health care system is in a state of crisis has increased over the course of the pandemic.

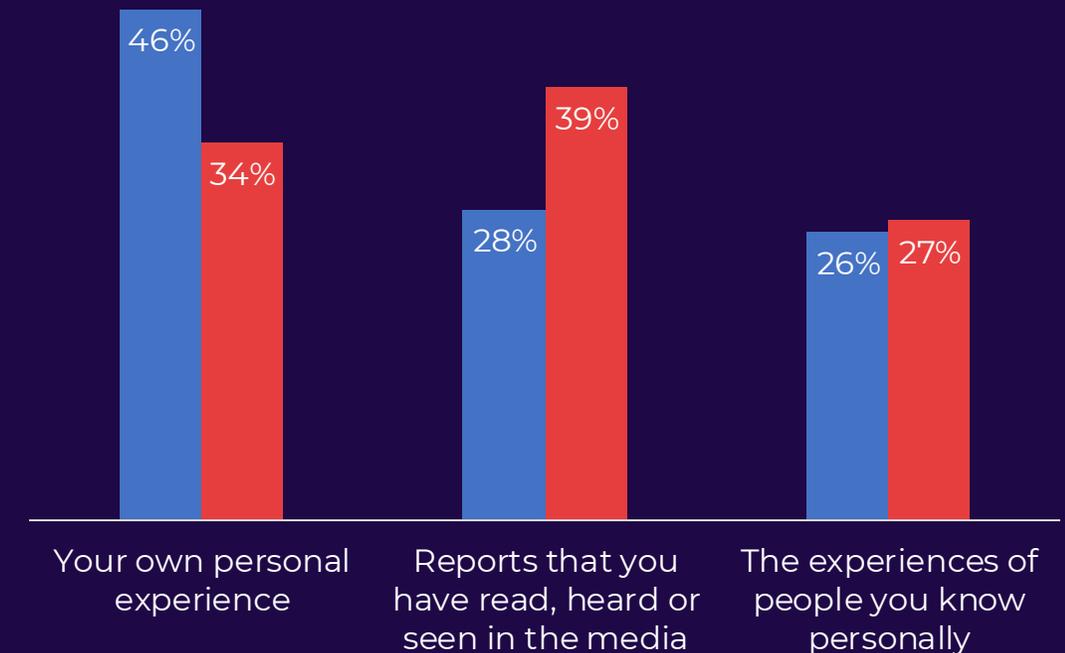
To some extent, perceptions of health care are linked to the type of information Canadians use as the basis for their opinions. Those who consider the country's health system to be in a state of crisis are more likely to base their opinion on reports they've read or seen in the media.

Meanwhile, those who rely more on personal experiences to form their opinions are more likely to consider Canada's health care system to be in basically good shape.

Graph Contents: 'On which of the following do you mostly base your opinion of Canada's health system?' Data before 2021 gathered from Focus Canada (2010 – Environics Institute).

On which of the following do you mostly base your opinion of Canada's health system?

- Canada's health care system is basically in good shape
- Canada's health care system is in a state of crisis



Canadians are more likely to blame management for the problems in the health system rather than a shortage of funds.

When asked **‘what is the main cause of problems in our health system?’**

Canadians indicated:

43%

say insufficient funding for the system

57%

say poor organization of the system

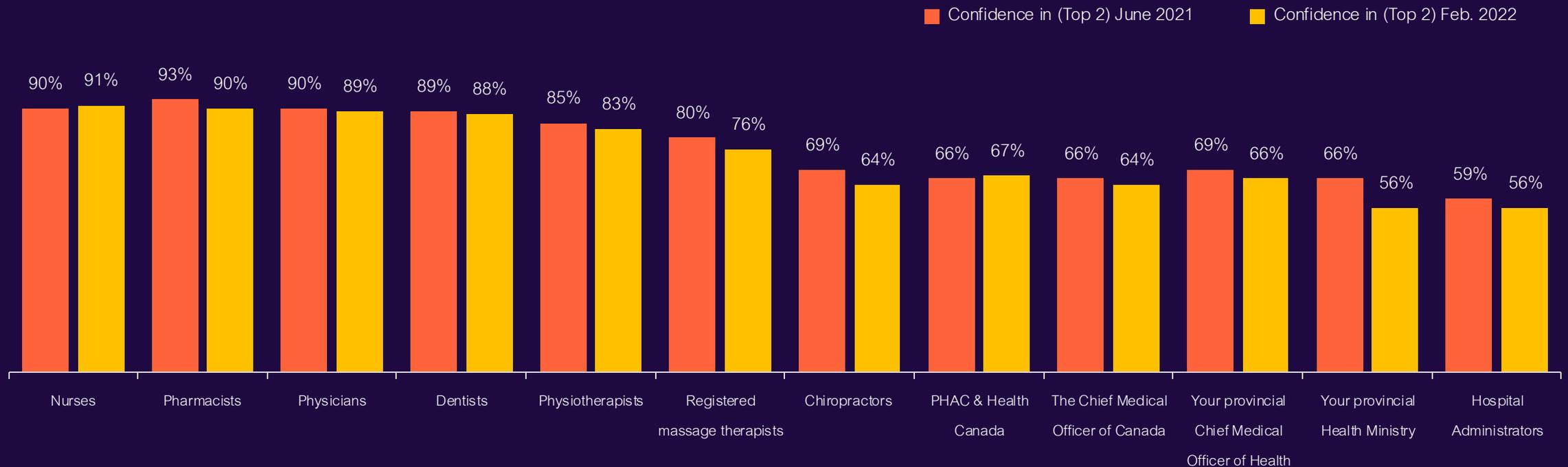
THEME TWO

TRUST & CONFIDENCE IN HEALTH CARE PRACTITIONERS AND GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS

Trust & Confidence in Health Practitioners

Canadians feel most confident in health practitioners they see in their day-to-day lives, such as nurses, pharmacists and physicians. Confidence levels for most players in the system have remained generally stable since 2021, with the notable exception of provincial health ministries, where confidence has declined by 10 points. This likely reflects overall weariness with the provinces' handling of the pandemic, compounded by a January peak in COVID numbers shortly before our survey was fielded.

Q. How much confidence do you have in the skills and competence of each of the following.



Trust & Satisfaction

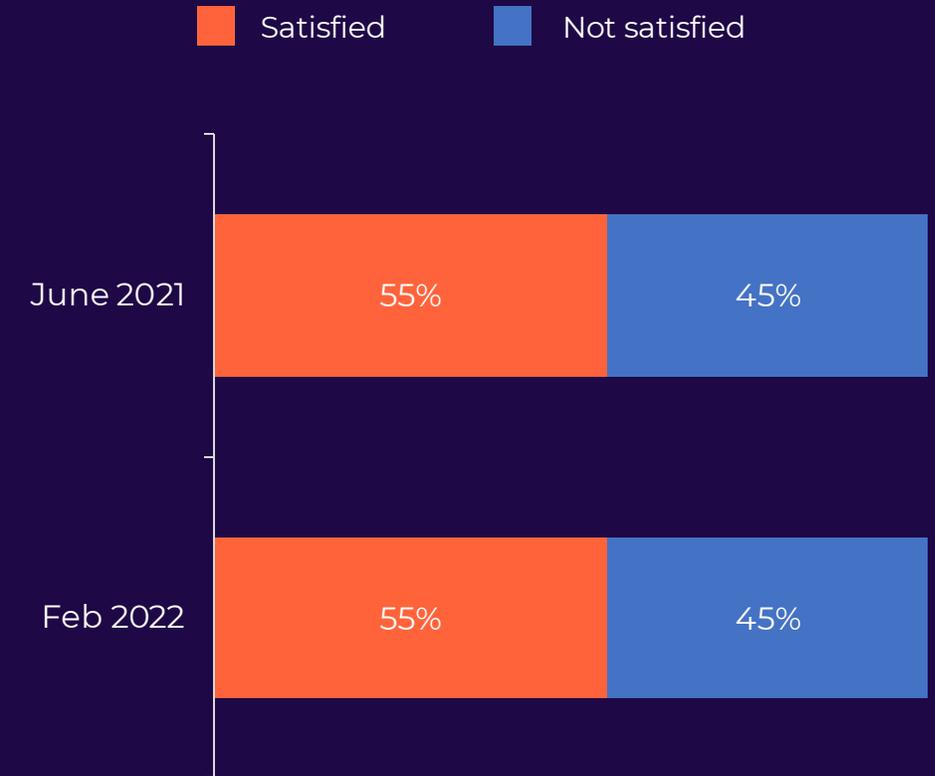
Federal Government

Since June of 2021, noisy expressions of anti-government sentiment have been a presence in the lives of any Canadian with access to the news. In fact, the nation's capital was overrun with anti-mandate protesters between January and February of 2022, making it one of the most important top of mind issues for Canadians.

Because of events like these, much speculation has been made about a supposed loss of confidence in governments and public officials over the course of the pandemic. Survey results, however, point to a steady level of confidence in our federal government.

At the same time, satisfaction isn't rising. One might view this plateau of satisfaction as a sign that Canadians are cautiously reserving judgment (and kudos for the government) until the pandemic feels more decisively behind us. Over the course of the pandemic, seemingly normal summers have been followed by new COVID-19 waves in the fall. Many Canadians are likely waiting to see how things shape up before letting their hopes get too high.

How satisfied are you with the federal government's response to the pandemic?



What has the federal government **done well** during the pandemic?



15%

helping people and small business **financially** through programs such as CERB



14%

making decisions on **public health restrictions** such as quarantines and stay-at-home orders



11%

vaccine **procurement**



11%

timely **vaccinations**, adequate coverage and smooth distribution



7%

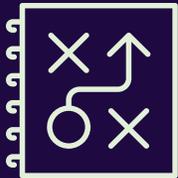
communicating and keeping population informed

What could the federal government have **done better** during the pandemic?



9%

earlier and stricter border closures and **travel restrictions**



8%

more **proactivity**, planning and preparation.



8%

better communication & more consistent messaging



7%

stronger and firmer **vaccine mandates**



6%

fewer public restrictions

THEME THREE

VACCINE AND HEALTH PROTOCOL READINESS



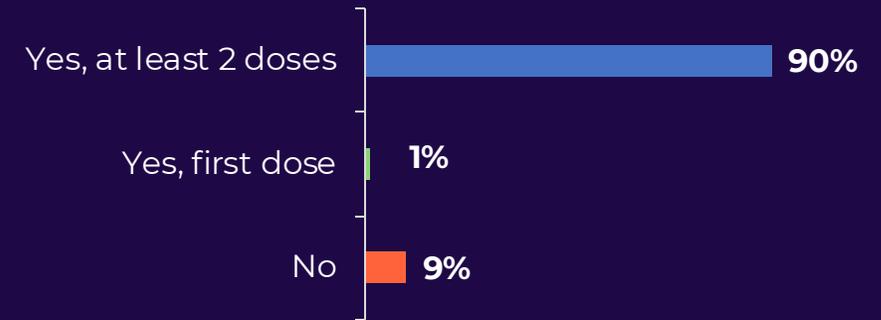
Facts & Figures

Vaccines

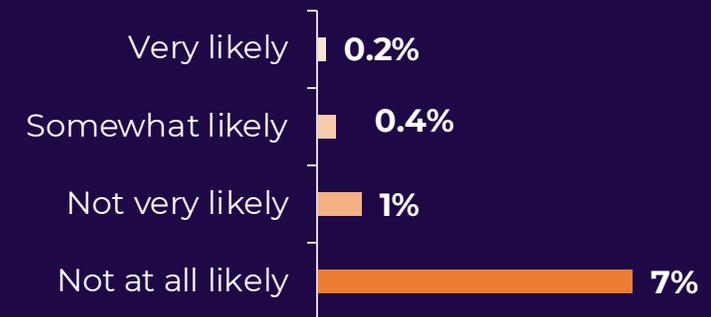
About nine in ten adult Canadians have received at least two vaccine doses and, of those who are unvaccinated, only 7% say they are not at all likely to get vaccinated.

However, while it does appear that only a small minority are oppositional when it comes to vaccines, a significant share of Canadians prioritize others' right to choose. When asked if focus should be on safety and keeping up with public health measures or on letting people make their own choices about living with COVID, a majority (58%) emphasized the former priority. Four in ten (42%), however, emphasized letting people make their own choices.

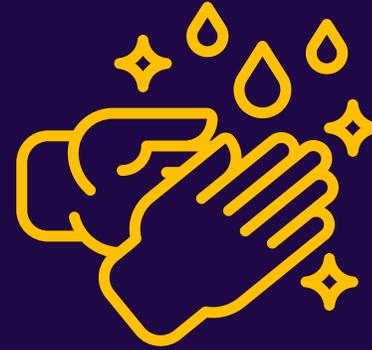
Have you been vaccinated against COVID-19?



If not vaccinated, how likely are you to get vaccinated against COVID-19?



How Canadians are dealing with uncertainty around COVID-19



58%

say that we should focus on safety and keep up with the public health measures such as mask mandates, vaccine passports, and limit



45%

say that we should let people make their own choices about going out and wearing masks, it's time we learn to live with COVID-19

Facts & Figures

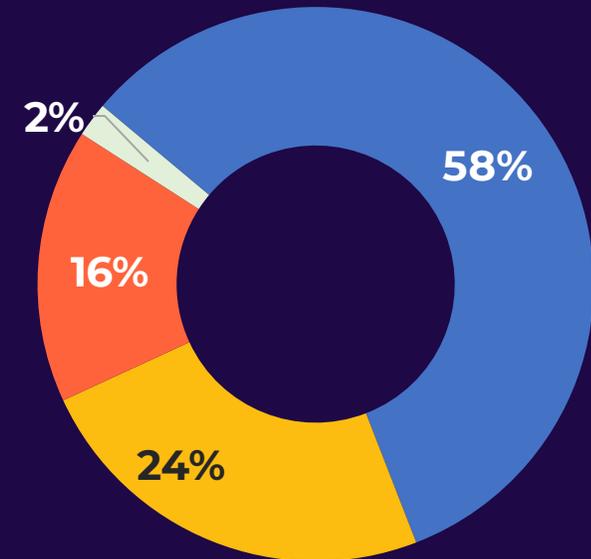
Masks

By February 2022, when these questions were asked, discussions were already underway about the lifting of mask mandates.

Nonetheless, more than eight in ten Canadians (82%) report either liking to wear a mask or being okay with it. This leaves a slim minority who will only wear masks if forced and the very few who won't wear one even if it would mean getting excluded from a particular location.

Which of the following is closest to your opinion about wearing a mask or face covering for day-to-day activities?

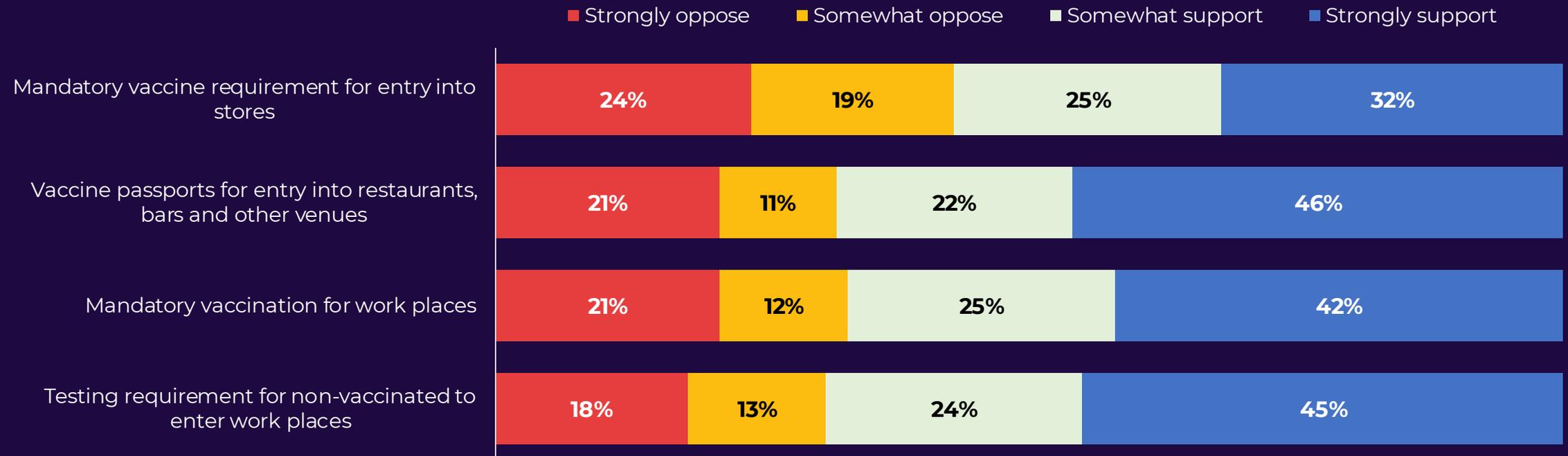
- I like it, it makes me feel safe / confident
- I'm okay with it, but I'm not convinced it matters
- I only do it when I'm forced
- I won't wear a mask. If one is required, I don't enter



Support for personal choice on vaccination

Substantial proportions of the public are reluctant to make vaccination a mandatory condition of participation in society. About two in five oppose mandating this at stores and somewhat fewer oppose mandating it at workplaces. Even among the vaccinated, support for mandating vaccinations for entry into stores or workplaces is mixed.

Q. To what extent do you support or oppose the following:



THEME FOUR

READINESS
TO RESUME
ORDINARY LIFE
AND/OR TRAVEL

Readiness To Resume Ordinary Life



Despite what social media and anecdotes of incivility might suggest, most Canadians are prepared to be reasonable and respectful in navigating a return to greater social contact – and they give institutions passing grades (and health care providers much higher marks than that) on their handling of the whole episode.

TONY COULSON, GROUP VP CORPORATE & PUBLIC AFFAIRS,
ENVIRONICSRESEARCH



Readiness

Return to pre-pandemic life

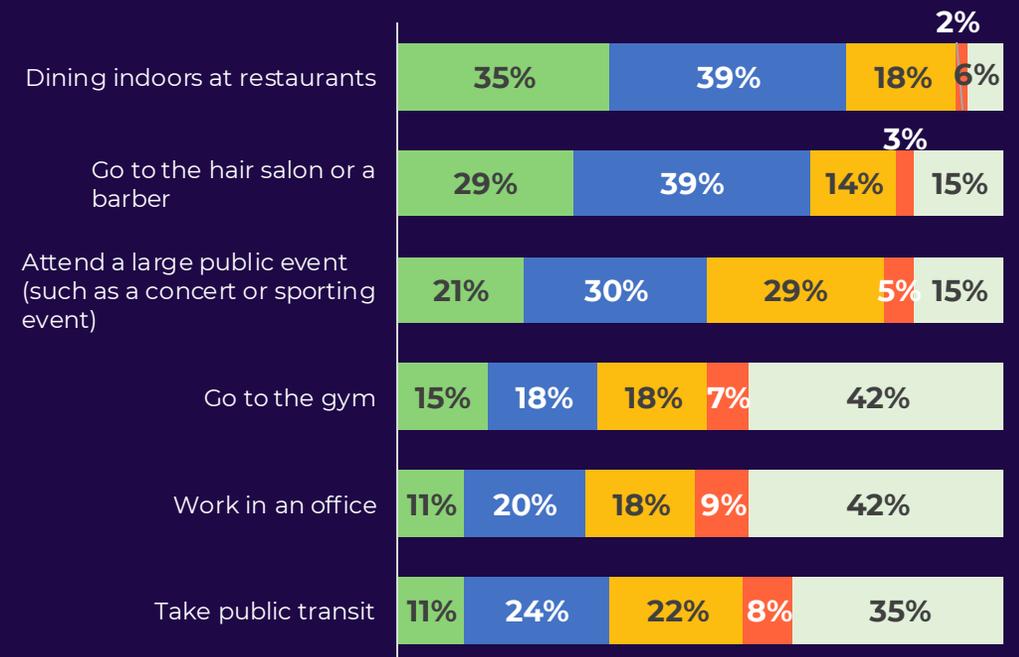
As the majority of Canadians step back into the scene vaccinated and possibly maskless, what defines a 'normal life' may have changed.

Taking public transit and working in an office are two examples of activities that may sound somewhat *outdated* to Canadians who used to commute to work. Seemingly unapplicable after years of working from home, Canadians are more looking forward to recreational activities such as dining indoors or treating themselves to a hair trim.

More than seven in ten Canadians are at least beginning to feel ready for dining in a restaurant. And a little over half of Canadians might consider attending a large public event – although one-third are not in a rush.

How do you feel about the following activities, based on your experience living through the pandemic?

- Can't wait to get back
- Starting to feel ready
- Not in a rush
- Never want to return
- Not applicable to me



Readiness Travel

Besides restaurants and other recreational activities, travel is another aspect of life that Canadians are hungry to resume.

Six in ten Canadians are ready to travel outside of the country. Although the spread of COVID-19 around the world created a sense of unease about international travel, Canadians generally recognize that travel is not in itself especially risky; conditions and case counts continue to shift everywhere, including at home

Domestic travel holds even wider appeal. A majority of seven in ten Canadians are starting to feel either ready or even eager to travel within Canada.

How do you feel about the following activities, based on your experience living through the pandemic?

- Can't wait to get back
- Starting to feel ready
- Not in a rush
- Never want to return
- Not applicable to me

Travel within Canada



Travel outside of Canada



CONCLUSION

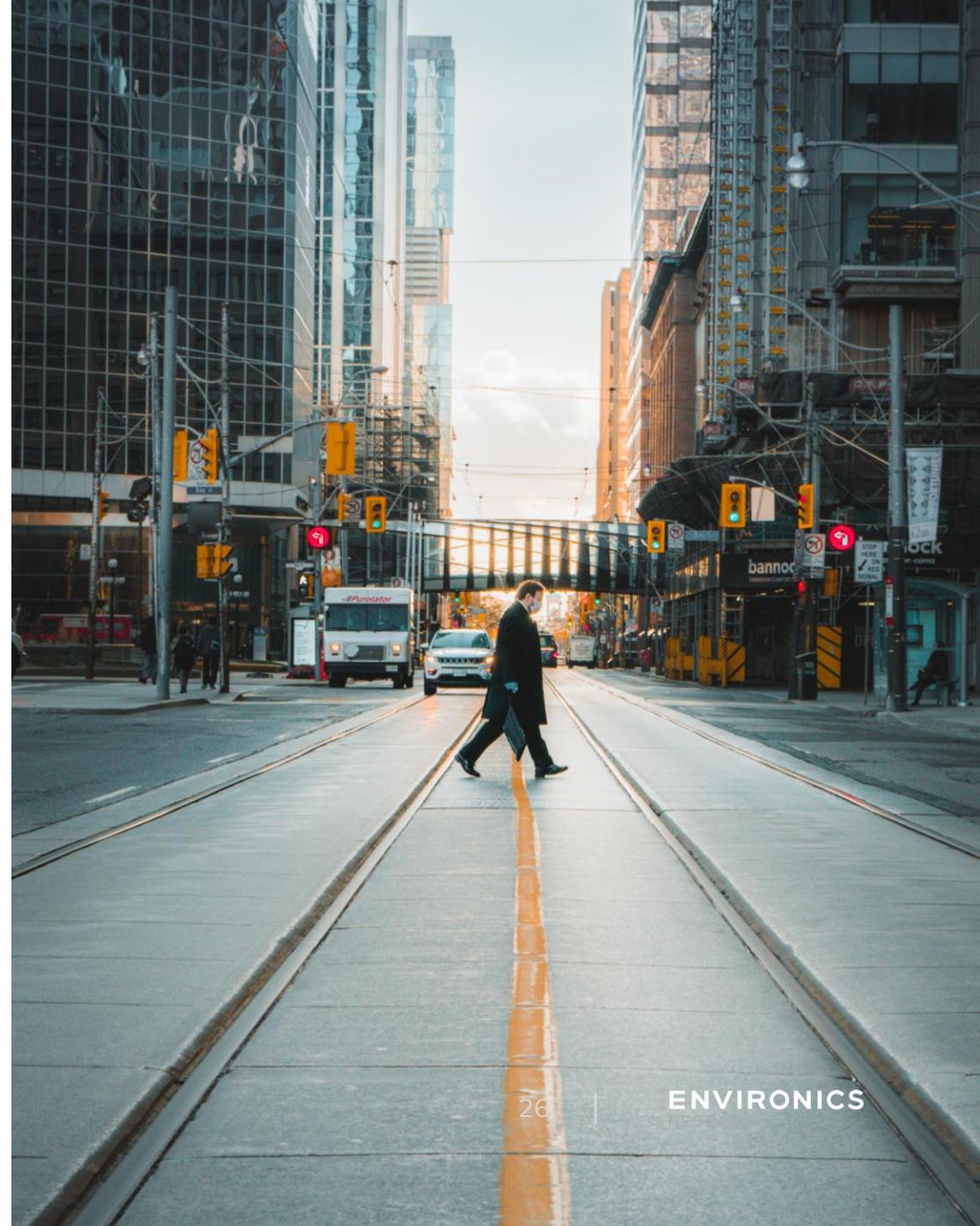
WAVES OF CONFIDENCE AND READINESS DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

Conclusion

Shifting Perspectives

Much has been made about a loss of confidence in officials and governments over the course of the pandemic, and anecdotal information and/or the news could easily convince one that large swaths of Canadians have lost faith. The reality, however, at least over the past year, appears to be modest change. The number of Canadians who are either somewhat or very satisfied with the federal government's response to the pandemic has remained stable since 2021, with Canadians likely to cite available financial supports like CERB and public health restrictions as positive examples of responses to an unprecedented situation.

The often-heard speculation that the media has a role in shaping public perception and opinions can be observed in the way Canadians view our health system. Those who hold the opinion that Canada's health system is in a state of crisis are more likely to base their opinion on reports they have read, heard or seen in the media. Those who base their opinion on direct experience are more sanguine. What that says about the quality of media coverage depends on whom you ask; some may say that the media has helped to reveal vulnerabilities in our health system that the public should be aware of, while others fear this is a message that's been overplayed. Despite what social media and anecdotes of incivility might suggest, however, most Canadians are prepared to be reasonable and respectful in navigating a return to greater social contact, as well as beginning to consider travel.



About The Study

Environics Research

The Environics' Public Trust & Readiness Barometer provides guidance to decision-makers in the public and private sectors who are working to balance public health and economic activity.

This is the third wave of a tracking study that measures:

- *Public trust and confidence in government and health care across the country and in a range of sectors*
- *Vaccine readiness and points of hesitancy*
- *Custom questions provided only to subscribers.*

The most recent Public Trust and Readiness Barometer was conducted February 1-15, 2022 with a sample of 1,077 Canadians.

Some comparisons are made to a survey from June of 2021, where a sample of 1,002 Canadians were asked similar questions related to trust, confidence and readiness.





@ENVIRONICSRESEARCH

The information provided in this white paper is for general knowledge purposes and does not constitute legal or professional advice.

COVER IMAGE CREDIT: GETTY IMAGES

ENVIRONICS
RESEARCH