

Canadian Perspectives Survey Series 1: Impacts of COVID-19 on job security and personal finances, 2020

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The novel coronavirus (also known as COVID-19) is having a profound effect on the labour market activities, health and social activities of Canadians. Federal, provincial and territorial governments have introduced a series of measures to limit the spread of the virus, including physical distancing.

To get timely information about how Canadians are coping with COVID-19, Statistics Canada developed a new web panel survey. More than 4,600 people in the 10 provinces responded to this survey from March 29 to April 3. In addition to content on the concerns of Canadians and the precautions they took to reduce the risk of exposure to COVID-19, the survey includes questions on work location, perceptions of job security, and the impact of COVID-19 on financial security.

This is the second release of employment-related information from the web panel survey. The first reported on changes in place of work, including [working from home](#).

Just over one-third of workers are concerned they might lose their job in the next four weeks

The economic shutdown associated with COVID-19 has had a sudden and dramatic impact on the Canadian labour market. The [March Labour Force Survey \(LFS\)](#) reported that employment declined by more than 1 million from February to March, and that a further 2.1 million Canadians remained employed but worked less than half their usual hours, including zero hours, during the week of March 15 to 21.

These impacts have led to concerns about the continued job security of some workers and the financial health of Canadian families.

More than one-third (34.5%) of Canadian workers expressed worry that they might lose their job or main source of self-employment income in the next four weeks, according to new results from Canadian Perspectives Survey Series 1: Impacts of COVID-19, which cover the week of March 22 to 28.

The proportion of Canadians who felt insecure about their work was notably higher among those who had been absent from work the week prior to the survey for reasons related to COVID-19 (61.6%), compared with those who had worked part or all of that week (29.7%). COVID-19-related reasons for being absent from work included personal circumstances (such as self-isolation following travel or caring for children due to school closures) as well as business closure or temporary lay-off.

Among those who worked part or all of the week, there was little difference in perceived job insecurity between those who had recently switched to working from home and those who continued to work at locations other than home. Almost five million people who do not usually work from home did so during the week of March 22 to 28.

Youth aged 15 to 24 (41.8%) were more likely than those in the core working ages of 25 to 54 (33.8%) or those aged 55 and older (33.2%) to feel insecure about their continued employment. The 25-to-54 age group also saw the greatest decrease in employment from February to March, according to the LFS. There was little difference in the share of men and women reporting perceived job insecurity, although the March LFS results showed that women were notably more affected by job losses than men.

The April LFS results will provide additional information about the employment impacts of COVID-19, including whether youth and women continue to be the most affected.



Nearly 3 in 10 Canadians report that COVID-19 affects their ability to meet financial obligations or essential needs

Nearly 3 in 10 (29.0%) Canadians reported that the COVID-19 situation is having a moderate or major impact on their ability to meet financial obligations or essential needs such as rent or mortgage payments, utilities and groceries. A further 23.8% said it was too soon to tell, while just under one-half (47.2%) reported minor or no impact. At the time of the survey, the one week waiting period for Employment Insurance had been waived, and the new Canada Emergency Response Benefit had been announced but was not yet available.

A moderate or major impact was notably more likely among those who were absent from work the week prior to the survey for reasons related to COVID-19 (59.9%), compared with those who worked for part or all of that week (27.0%) and those who were not employed (24.1%). Also, moderate or major impacts were four times more common among those who felt insecure about their employment status over the next four weeks (64.3%) than those who did not feel insecure (15.9%).

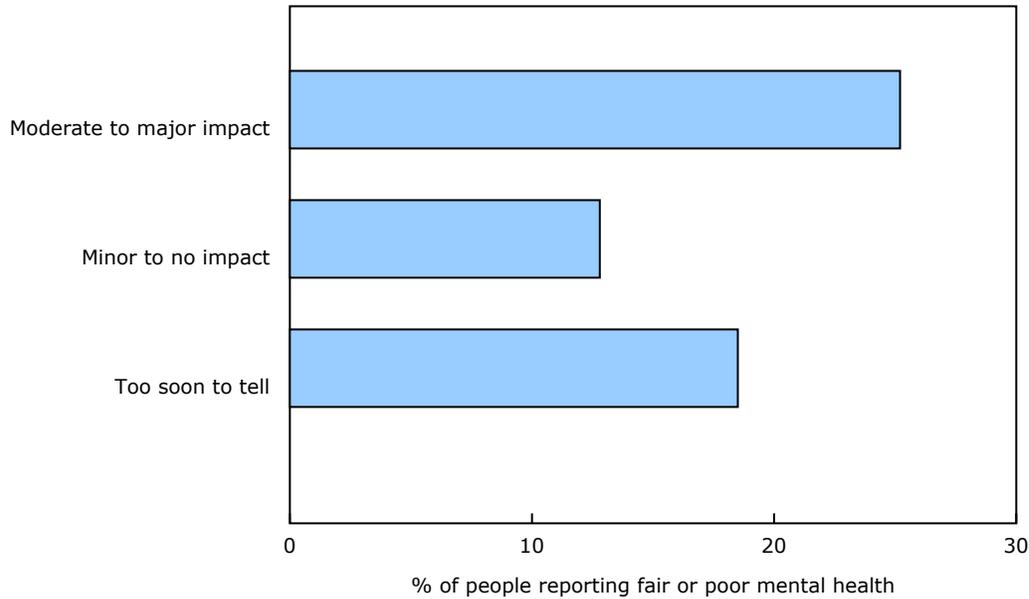
Canadians aged 55 and older were least likely to report a moderate or major impact on their ability to meet financial obligations or essential needs (19.3%), compared with youth (31.0%) and core-aged people (35.9%). This was mostly driven by the fact that older people are less likely to be employed. Among the employed, there was little difference in this proportion across age groups.

People who report more impact on their ability to meet financial obligations also report poorer mental health

Financial impacts of COVID-19 are associated with differences in current mental health status. The share of Canadians reporting fair or poor mental health (as opposed to good, very good, or excellent) was twice as high among Canadians for whom COVID-19 is having a moderate or major impact on their ability to meet financial obligations or essential needs (25.2%) than among those for whom there is little to no financial impact (12.8%).

Chart 1

People experiencing moderate or major impacts of COVID-19 on their ability to meet financial obligations or essential needs also report poorer mental health, March and April 2020



Source(s): Canadian Perspectives Survey Series 1: Impacts of COVID-19 (5311).

People experiencing moderate or major financial impacts were also more likely to be very or extremely concerned about their own health (44.1%) than those reporting little to no impact (29.1%). The proportion who expressed these concerns was also higher among workers who felt insecure about their continued employment (42.8%) compared with those who did not feel insecure (30.1%).

Table 1
Percentage of employed people who agreed or strongly agreed that they might lose their job or main source of self-employment income in the next four weeks by selected characteristics, March and April 2020

	%
Total	34.5
Sex	
Men	35.4
Women	33.4
Age Group	
15 to 24 years	41.8
25 to 54 years	33.8
55 years and older	33.2
Employment status during the week of March 22 to 28	
Worked for all or part of the week	29.7
Away from work the entire week for reasons not related to COVID-19	26.9 ^E
Away from work the entire week for reasons related to COVID-19	61.6

^E use with caution

Source(s): Statistics Canada, Canadian Perspectives Survey Series 1: Impacts of COVID-19 ([5311](#)).

Table 2
Percentage of people who reported that COVID-19 had a moderate or major impact on their immediate financial situation by selected characteristics, March and April 2020

	%
Total	29.0
Sex	
Men	30.3
Women	27.8
Age Group	
15 to 24 years	31.0
25 to 54 years	35.9
55 years and older	19.3
Employment status during the week of March 22 to 28	
Worked for all or part of the week	27.0
Away from work the entire week for reasons not related to COVID-19	33.5
Away from work the entire week for reasons related to COVID-19	59.9
Not employed	24.1

Source(s): Statistics Canada, Canadian Perspectives Survey Series 1: Impacts of COVID-19 ([5311](#)).

Note to readers

Data in this release are from Statistics Canada's new Canadian Perspectives Survey Series (CPSS), for which a panel of Canadians have agreed to complete a number of short online surveys. The CPSS is a probabilistic panel and is therefore representative of the general population. The CPSS enables Statistics Canada to collect important information from Canadians more efficiently, more rapidly and at a lower cost, compared with traditional survey methods. The first iteration of the survey collected data on the current economic and social situation, as well as on people's physical and mental health, to effectively assess the needs of communities and implement suitable support measures during and after the COVID-19 pandemic. Statistics Canada would like to thank Canadians who took the time to answer questions for this survey at this time of crisis.

The analysis focuses on differences between estimates that are statistically significant at the 95% confidence level.

Detailed results from the Labour Force Survey (LFS) for March were published on April 9 in *The Daily*. For more information on the LFS methodology and population coverage, please consult the *Guide to the Labour Force Survey* ([71-543-G](#)).

The concepts of worker and work absence in the CPSS are not equivalent to LFS concepts. In the CPSS, workers include all persons who worked or were absent for any reason, including temporary lay-offs. Those who have been temporarily laid off are not treated as absent or employed in the LFS.

Methodology

For more information on the methodology used to produce the data presented in this release, please consult the web page [Canadian Perspective Survey Series 1: Impacts of COVID-19](#).

For more information, contact us (toll-free 1-800-263-1136; 514-283-8300; STATCAN.infostats-infostats.STATCAN@canada.ca).

To enquire about the concepts, methods or data quality of this release, contact Martha Patterson (613-299-3942; martha.patterson@canada.ca), Centre for Labour Market Information.