

# Crowdsourcing participants' trust in governments, public health authorities, businesses and others during the COVID-19 pandemic

*Released at 8:30 a.m. Eastern time in The Daily, Friday, June 26, 2020*

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Trust is an important aspect of the response to the COVID-19 pandemic. A collective effort involving broad and voluntary adherence to public health measures is required to prevent the spread of the novel coronavirus. This is predicated on trust—trust in elected officials and health authorities to lead the response, trust in other people to follow public health measures and be mindful of their community, and trust in businesses and organizations to protect the health of their employees and the public. A growing body of international research has documented the importance of trust in limiting the spread of the virus and in bolstering people's well-being through the pandemic.

From May 26 to June 8, 2020, approximately 37,000 Canadians participated in our online questionnaire "Impacts of COVID-19 on Canadians: Trust in others." Today, Statistics Canada is releasing these findings as part of a series of results based on this crowdsourcing initiative. Readers should note that, unlike other surveys conducted by Statistics Canada, crowdsourcing data are not collected under a design using probability-based sampling. Therefore, caution should be exercised when interpreting the findings, and no inferences about the overall Canadian population should be made based on these results.

## **Crowdsourcing participants generally trust others, but have less trust in the public during reopening**

Most crowdsourcing participants expressed a high degree of trust in other people. About three-quarters of participants (76%) said that, generally speaking, most people can be trusted, while 24% said that most people cannot be trusted.

However, while overall trust in other people is prevalent, crowdsourcing participants have less positive expectations of the public in the context of reopening. When asked what percentage of people in their province or territory they think will follow the recommended public health measures (e.g., physical distancing) as workplaces and public spaces reopen, the largest share of crowdsourcing participants (38%) said they think 40% to 59% of people will do so. Just over one-third of participants think at least 60% of the public will follow recommended health measures and 5% think at least 80% will do so. It is not possible to present results for provinces and territories because the numbers of crowdsourcing participants are too small.



**Table 1**  
**Crowdsourcing participants' overall levels of trust**

	0 to 19	20 to 39	40 to 59	60 to 79	80 to 100	Total
	%					
<b>Panel 1</b>						
What percentage of people in your province or territory do you think will follow the recommended public health measures during reopening	5.6	22.2	37.6	29.4	5.2	100
<b>Panel 2</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	
How much do you trust businesses to:						
Protect the health of employees during reopening	6.9	20.1	37.4	29.6	6.1	100
Protect the health of customers during reopening	4.8	15.9	38.4	34.2	6.8	100
<b>Panel 3</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	
How much do you trust each of the following to make good decisions about when and how to reopen workplaces and public spaces:						
Federal government	7.3	8.7	22.5	41.4	20.1	100
Provincial or territorial government	7.6	12.1	24.6	37.3	18.5	100
Municipal government	5.1	10.2	30.0	38.7	16.0	100
Federal health authorities	4.9	6.1	14.6	37.5	36.9	100
Provincial or territorial health authorities	3.3	6.3	16.2	37.8	36.5	100
Municipal health authorities	3.6	7.1	24.2	38.6	26.5	100

**Note(s):** For Panel 2 and Panel 3, 1=cannot be trusted at all, and 5=can be trusted a lot.

**Source(s):** Impacts of COVID-19 on Canadians: Data Collection Series (5323).

## About 4 in 10 crowdsourcing participants express high levels of trust in businesses

Trust that one's health will be protected when returning to the workplace or when entering a business establishment is an important consideration during reopening. Crowdsourcing participants were asked to rate how much they trust businesses to protect the health of their employees and customers during this process. Responses were given on a scale from 1 to 5, where 1 means "cannot be trusted at all" and 5 means "can be trusted a lot."

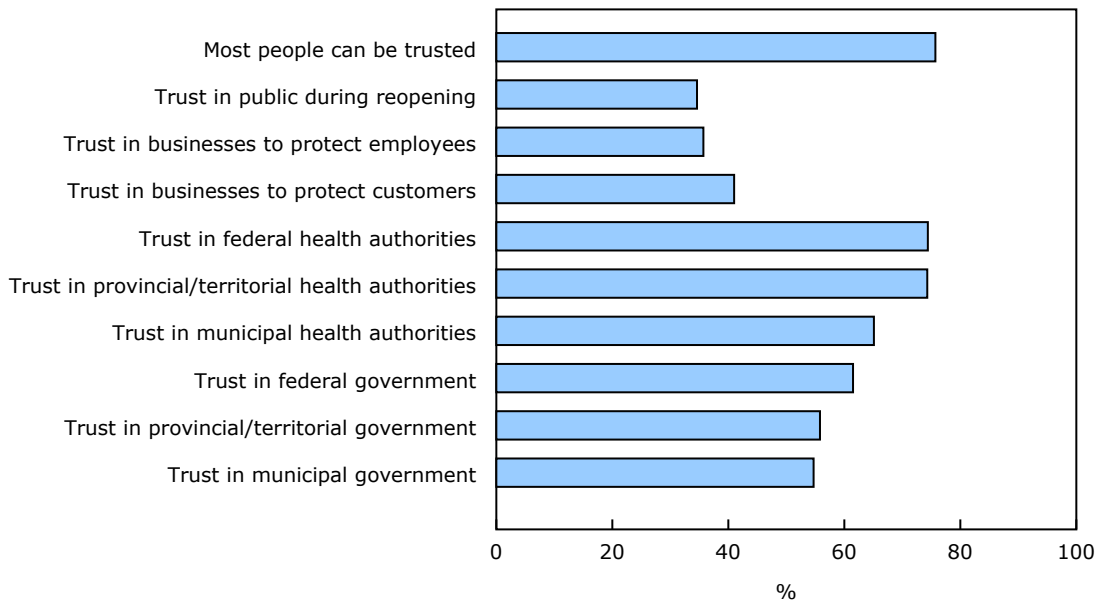
About 4 in 10 participants (41%) expressed having a high level of trust in businesses to protect the health of their customers, and 36% expressed having a high level of trust in businesses to protect the health of their employees. A high level of trust is defined as responses of 4 or 5.

## Most crowdsourcing participants express high levels of trust in public health authorities and governments

Crowdsourcing participants were asked how much they trust federal, provincial, territorial and municipal health authorities to make good decisions about when and how to reopen workplaces and public spaces. Two-thirds (65%) expressed high levels of trust in municipal health authorities and three-quarters (74%) expressed high trust in provincial or territorial and federal health authorities, again defined as responses of 4 or 5.

Between 55% and 62% of crowdsourcing participants reported having high levels of trust in federal, provincial, territorial and municipal governments to make good decisions about when and how to reopen.

**Chart 1**  
**Proportion of crowdsourcing participants expressing high levels of trust**

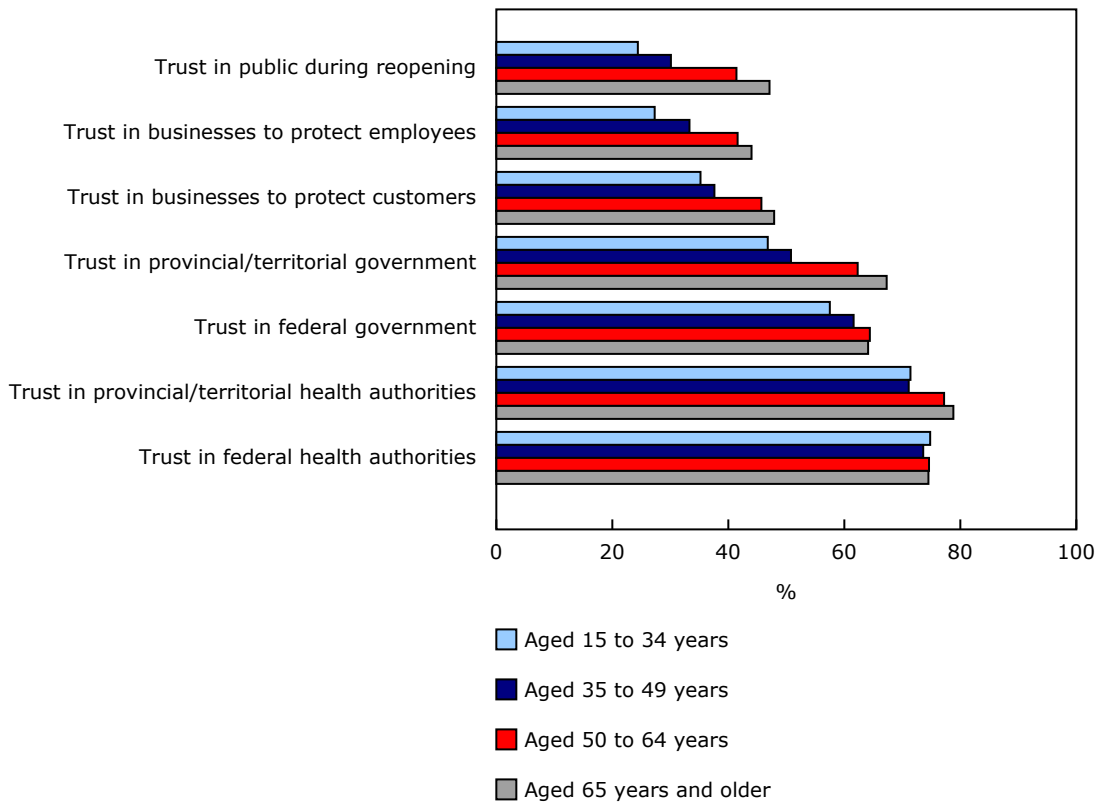


**Note(s):** High trust is defined as a score of 4 or 5 on a five-point scale.  
**Source(s):** Impacts of COVID-19 on Canadians: Data Collection Series (5326).

### Levels of trust are lower among younger crowdsourcing participants

Levels of trust vary considerably across younger and older crowdsourcing participants. For example, 24% of participants aged 15 to 34 expect that at least 60% of people will follow public health measures during reopening, while this figure is 47% among participants aged 65 and older. Younger participants were also less likely than those aged 65 and older to express high levels of trust in businesses and in provincial, territorial and municipal governments, with differences of 12 to 20 percentage points observed between these age groups. However, younger and older participants differed less in terms of their trust in public health authorities.

**Chart 2**  
**Proportion of crowdsourcing participants expressing high levels of trust, by age group**



**Note(s):** High trust is defined as a score of 4 or 5 on a five-point scale.  
**Source(s):** Impacts of COVID-19 on Canadians: Data Collection Series (5323).

In terms of educational attainment, crowdsourcing participants with a university degree were more likely to express high levels of trust in federal, provincial, territorial and municipal public health authorities than participants with a non-university postsecondary credential or with a high school education or less. The same pattern was observed for trust in federal and municipal governments.

The shares of male and female crowdsourcing participants who expressed high levels of trust differed by only a few percentage points on most measures. The same was observed for levels of trust expressed by participants born in Canada and those who immigrated here.

**Table 2**  
**Crowdsourcing participants' overall levels of trust, by various sociodemographic factors**

	Say most people can be trusted	Expect 60% or more of public to follow public health guidelines during reopening	Express high trust in businesses to protect health of employees during reopening	Express high trust in businesses to protect health of customers during reopening	Express high trust in federal government	Express high trust in provincial or territorial government	Express high trust in municipal government	Express high trust in federal health authorities	Express high trust in provincial or territorial health authorities	Express high trust in municipal health authorities
	%									
<b>Total</b>	75.7	34.6	35.7	41.0	61.5	55.8	54.7	74.4	74.3	65.1
<b>Age group</b>										
15 to 34 years	64.5	24.4	27.3	35.2	57.5	46.8	49.9	74.8	71.4	63.7
35 to 49 years	75.6	30.1	33.3	37.6	61.6	50.8	53.1	73.6	71.1	62.7
50 to 64 years	82.5	41.4	41.6	45.7	64.4	62.3	56.0	74.6	77.2	65.3
65 years and older	84.5	47.1	44.0	47.9	64.1	67.3	62.2	74.5	78.8	70.0
<b>Educational attainment</b>										
High school or less	68.1	32.8	38.3	43.9	50.3	53.9	48.8	64.1	69.0	58.2
Non-university postsecondary education	71.6	31.7	39.4	42.9	53.6	57.1	50.2	66.3	70.5	59.0
University degree	79.6	36.4	33.3	39.2	68.3	55.8	58.3	80.9	77.5	69.8
<b>Sex</b>										
Male	76.7	37.4	36.1	41.7	60.4	55.1	53.8	72.8	74.0	64.7
Female	74.6	31.9	35.3	40.2	62.7	56.4	55.6	75.9	74.5	65.6
<b>Immigration status</b>										
Born in Canada	75.5	34.5	35.9	41.3	60.4	55.5	54.3	74.0	74.6	64.9
Established immigrant	78.2	36.4	33.6	38.5	67.6	55.0	55.8	76.1	71.9	66.4
Recent immigrant	70.0	29.8	36.1	38.5	71.6	61.7	60.1	78.7	73.5	67.1
<b>Financial impact of COVID-19</b>										
Major impact	61.6	25.4	31.3	36.5	46.3	40.0	40.4	60.2	58.7	51.2
Moderate impact	68.6	28.5	32.6	38.5	54.9	50.1	48.3	68.9	68.4	58.8
Minor impact	74.7	32.8	34.6	39.5	60.1	54.1	53.3	74.5	74.3	64.7
No impact	81.0	39.0	38.1	43.3	67.2	61.2	60.0	78.7	78.9	69.9
<b>Expect household spending to be much like pre-COVID-19 in three months</b>										
Strongly agree or agree	79.2	38.7	41.9	46.9	63.6	61.6	58.6	75.1	77.3	67.7
Do not agree	72.8	31.2	30.7	36.2	59.9	51.1	51.5	73.9	71.8	63.1

Source(s): Impacts of COVID-19 on Canadians: Data Collection Series (5323).

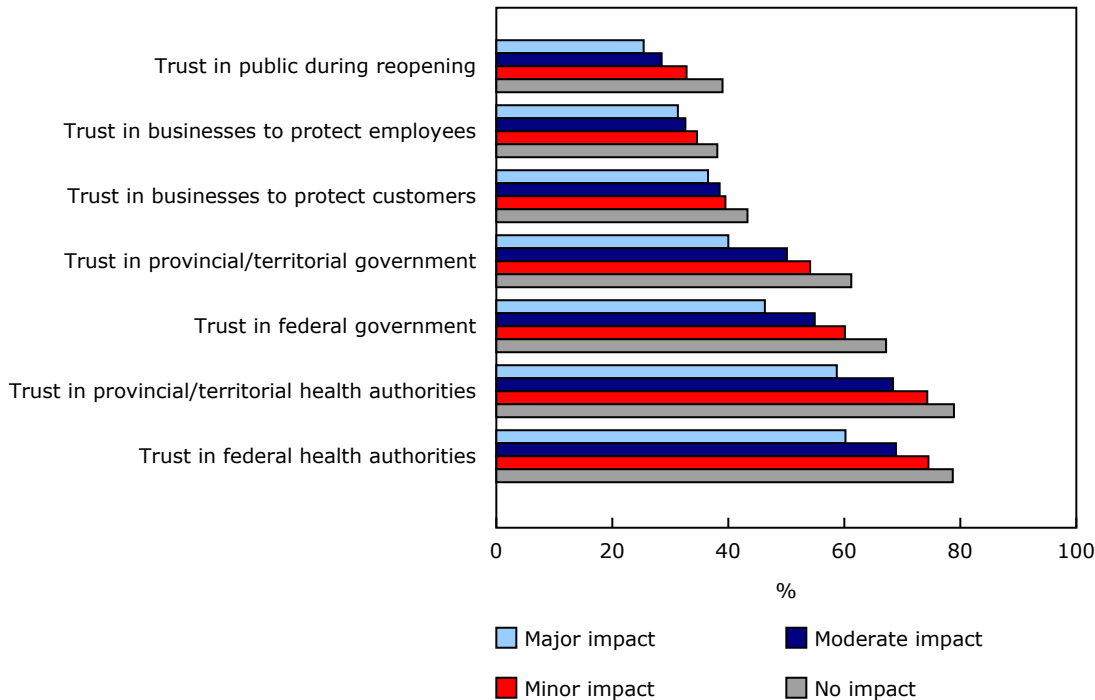
## Participants financially impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic report lower levels of trust

The economic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic has been enormous, and many Canadian families have been affected financially. About half of crowdsourcing participants reported that the pandemic has not impacted their ability to meet financial obligations or essential needs. Another quarter reported experiencing a minor financial impact, while the last quarter reported experiencing moderate or major financial impacts (16% and 9%, respectively). Readers are reminded that broad conclusions about the experiences of Canadians cannot be drawn from these results.

Participants whose financial situations have been impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic expressed lower levels of trust for all measures than those who have not experienced financial impacts. For example, 62% of participants experiencing a major financial impact said that most people can be trusted, compared with 81% of participants not

experiencing a financial impact—a difference of 19 percentage points. Differences of this magnitude were also observed for trust in governments and health authorities. However, the financial impacts of the pandemic were not as strongly associated with trust in businesses.

**Chart 3**  
**Proportion of crowdsourcing participants expressing high levels of trust, by financial impact experienced as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic**



**Note(s):** High trust is defined as a score of 4 or 5 on a five-point scale.  
**Source(s):** Impacts of COVID-19 on Canadians: Data Collection Series (5323).

The negative relationships between the financial impacts of the pandemic and levels of trust were evident across all age groups, indicating that the overall relationship is not solely attributable to the characteristics and experiences of young participants.

Given the cross-sectional nature of these data, it is not possible to determine whether financial impacts resulting from the pandemic diminished levels of trust among affected participants or whether participants who had lower levels of trust prior to the pandemic were more likely to be financially impacted. Crowdsourcing participants were not asked about their income.

**Table 3**  
**Crowdsourcing participants' overall levels of trust, by age and financial impact of COVID-19**

	Say most people can be trusted	Expect 60% or more of public to follow public health guidelines during reopening	Express high trust in businesses to protect health of employees during reopening	Express high trust in businesses to protect health of customers during reopening	Express high trust in federal government	Express high trust in provincial or territorial government	Express high trust in municipal government	Express high trust in federal health authorities	Express high trust in provincial or territorial health authorities	Express high trust in municipal health authorities
	%									
<b>Age group</b>										
<b>15 to 34 years</b>										
No financial impact	70.1	28.7	30.2	37.1	63.8	52.4	56.3	78.2	76.0	69.1
Financial impact	59.8	20.7	25.1	33.7	52.5	42.0	44.7	72.1	67.6	59.3
<b>35 to 49 years</b>										
No financial impact	80.5	32.4	34.4	39.6	67.6	56.7	58.9	79.2	77.4	68.3
Financial impact	70.8	27.9	32.2	35.7	55.9	45.1	47.5	68.1	65.0	57.2
<b>50 to 64 years</b>										
No financial impact	87.0	45.6	44.6	48.8	68.8	67.5	60.5	78.7	81.2	69.2
Financial impact	77.6	36.8	38.4	42.3	59.7	56.9	51.3	70.3	72.9	61.2
<b>65 years and older</b>										
No financial impact	87.8	51.1	44.1	48.4	69.3	69.5	65.3	78.8	81.4	73.5
Financial impact	80.4	41.9	43.9	47.2	57.4	64.4	58.2	69.0	75.4	65.6

Source(s): Impacts of COVID-19 on Canadians: Data Collection Series (5323).

### Trust associated with household spending expectations

Crowdsourcing participants' expectations regarding their household spending in the coming months were also associated with trust. About 45% of participants strongly agreed or agreed that, in three months, the day-to-day spending patterns of their household will be much the same as they were before the COVID-19 pandemic. These participants expressed higher levels of trust in provincial and territorial governments, provincial and territorial health authorities, businesses, and the public than those who did not expect their spending patterns to return to the way they were prior to the pandemic. Differences between these groups for most trust measures ranged from 6 to 10 percentage points.

### Crowdsourcing participants with the lowest levels of trust view the pace of reopening as either too fast or too slow

About 1 in 3 participants either strongly agreed or agreed that workplaces and public spaces are being reopened too quickly in their province or territory, while about 1 in 10 either strongly agreed or agreed that the pace of reopening is too slow. Lower levels of trust were associated with a greater likelihood of viewing the pace of reopening as either too fast or too slow.

**Table 4**  
**Crowdsourcing participants' views on the pace of provincial and territorial reopening**

	Strongly agree or agree that pace of reopening too fast	Strongly agree or agree that pace of reopening too slow
	%	
Most people can be trusted	28.9	11.6
Most people can't be trusted	46.2	15.6
Higher trust in public during reopening	19.2	14.1
Lower trust in public during reopening	40.5	11.7
Higher trust in businesses to protect employees	18.7	19.0
Lower trust in businesses to protect employees	41.1	9.0
Higher trust in businesses to protect customers	20.3	17.8
Lower trust in businesses to protect customers	42.0	8.9
Higher trust in federal government	34.2	6.2
Lower trust in federal government	31.4	22.8
Higher trust in provincial/territorial government	21.6	9.0
Lower trust in provincial/territorial government	47.6	17.0
Higher trust in municipal government	29.0	8.2
Lower trust in municipal government	38.2	17.9
Higher trust in federal health authorities	35.4	6.1
Lower trust in federal health authorities	26.7	31.3
Higher trust in provincial/territorial health authorities	29.7	7.4
Lower trust in provincial/territorial health authorities	42.9	27.6
Higher trust in municipal health authorities	31.8	7.5
Lower trust in municipal health authorities	35.6	22.0

**Note(s):** Higher trust defined as a score of 4 or 5 on a five-point scale. Lower trust defined as a score of 1, 2 or 3.

**Source(s):** Impacts of COVID-19 on Canadians: Data Collection Series (5323).

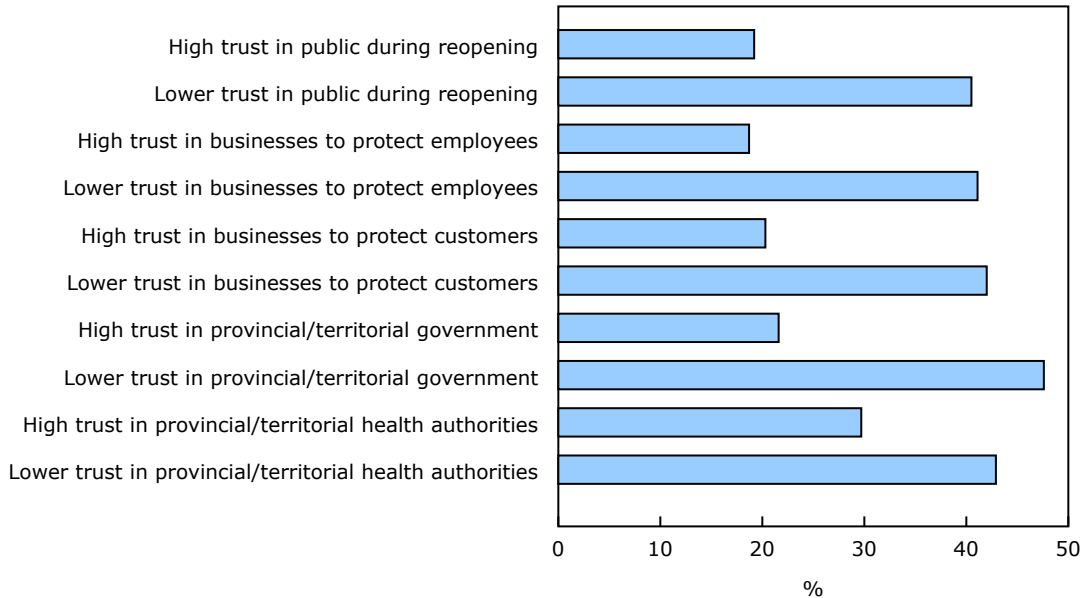
Crowdsourcing participants who expressed lower levels of trust in the public, in provincial and territorial and municipal governments, in provincial and territorial health authorities, and in businesses were more likely to view the pace of reopening as too fast than participants who expressed higher levels of trust. For example, 42% of participants who expressed having less trust in businesses to protect the health of their customers viewed the pace of reopening as too fast, while this figure was 20% among participants who expressed having more trust in businesses. Likewise, almost half (48%) of participants who expressed having less trust in their provincial or territorial government viewed the pace of reopening as too fast, compared with 22% of those with more trust.

Trust was also associated with the view that the pace of reopening was too slow. Participants who expressed lower levels of trust in governments and public health authorities were more likely to view the pace of reopening as too slow than those who expressed higher levels of trust. Furthermore, participants who expressed higher levels of trust in businesses were more likely to view the pace of reopening as too slow.

Whether dissatisfaction with the pace of reopening has eroded trust among crowdsourcing participants or whether crowdsourcing participants who had low levels of trust before the pandemic were more likely to be dissatisfied with the pace of reopening cannot be determined from these data.

**Chart 4**

**Proportion of crowdsourcing participants reporting that the pace of reopening is too fast, by selected measures of trust**



Source(s): Impacts of COVID-19 on Canadians: Data Collection Series (5323).

**Forthcoming releases on trust using these data**

Statistics Canada will release an article on trust among crowdsourcing participants in different visible minority groups on July 6, 2020, and an article on crowdsourcing participants' trust and views on COVID-19 testing and vaccination on July 7, 2020.

**Definitions, data sources and methods: survey number 5323.**

For more information, or to enquire about the concepts, methods or data quality of this release, contact us (toll-free 1-800-263-1136; 514-283-8300; [STATCAN.infostats-infostats.STATCAN@canada.ca](mailto:STATCAN.infostats-infostats.STATCAN@canada.ca)) or Media Relations (613-951-4636; [STATCAN.mediahotline-ligneinfomedias.STATCAN@canada.ca](mailto:STATCAN.mediahotline-ligneinfomedias.STATCAN@canada.ca)).

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