

Coverreaction? The Divide over lessons from the Pandemic

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October 2023

Introduction

What lessons did Canadians draw from the Covid 19 pandemic? To address that key question we commissioned the firm Leger Marketing to ask Canadians three questions:

- 1) Thinking back to the handling of the Covid-19 pandemic, do you think the government's response was excessive, appropriate/balanced or insufficient/didn't take the threat seriously enough
- 2) Thinking back to the handling of the Covid-19 pandemic, do you think your personal response was excessive, appropriate/balanced or insufficient/didn't take the threat seriously enough
- 3) Thinking about the pandemic, please tell us in a sentence or two what was the main lesson(s) that you learned?

An additional question inquired into whether Canadians were aware of the number of deaths from Covid 19 both around the globe and in Canada. The purpose of that question was to determine whether such knowledge had any bearing on how one self-assessed their reaction to the pandemic

The Leger survey was conducted during the week of September 25th, 2023 for the Association for Canadian Studies and the Metropolis Institute via web panel with 1502 Canadians. A margin of error cannot be associated with a non-probability sample in a panel survey for comparison purposes. A probability sample of 1500 respondents would have a margin of error of $\pm 2.5\%$, 19 times out of 20.

Persons over 55 were most likely to think that their government's response to the pandemic was balanced/appropriate

Thinking back to the handling of the Covid-19 pandemic, do you think the government's response was	Total	Male	Female	18-34	35-54	55+
Excessive / An overreaction?	26%	30%	23%	30%	31%	20%
Appropriate / Balanced?	54%	51%	56%	44%	48%	65%
Insufficient / Did not take the threat seriously enough?	13%	12%	14%	15%	13%	13%
I don't know / I prefer not to answer	7%	6%	7%	11%	8%	2%
NET	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

Quebecers and francophones in particular are most likely to think that their government's response to Covid 19 was balanced

Thinking back to the handling of the Covid-19 pandemic, do you think the government's response was	Total	French	English	Other	Atl	QC	ON	MB/S K	AB	BC
Excessive / An overreaction?	26%	22%	28%	24%	26%	21%	28%	30%	25%	29%
Appropriate / Balanced?	54%	67%	51%	51%	56%	66%	51%	49%	44%	51%
Insufficient / Did not take the threat seriously enough?	13%	5%	15%	18%	13%	6%	15%	20%	21%	12%
I don't know / I prefer not to answer	7%	6%	6%	7%	5%	6%	7%	1%	10%	8%
NET	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

The vast majority of Canadians think that their personal reactions to the pandemic were balanced or appropriate. There are more Canadians think they overreacted than those thinking it wasn't taken seriously enough

Thinking back to your personal response to the Covid-19 pandemic, would you describe your reaction as...	Total	French	English	Other	Atl	QC	ON	MB/SK	AB	BC
Excessive / An overreaction?	10%	9%	9%	13%	11%	10%	11%	13%	7%	8%
Appropriate / Balanced?	82%	83%	83%	77%	81%	83%	80%	82%	84%	84%
Insufficient / Did not take the threat seriously enough?	4%	3%	4%	5%	5%	4%	4%	4%	4%	3%
I don't know / I prefer not to answer	4%	5%	4%	4%	4%	3%	5%	1%	6%	6%
NET	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

Canadians that situate themselves to the right on the ideological spectrum were somewhat more likely to believe they personally overreacted to the pandemic

Thinking back to your personal response to the Covid-19 pandemic, would you describe your reaction as...	In thinking about the ideological spectrum, how would you situate yourself?					
	Right	Right of centre	Centre	Left of centre	Left	I don't know/ I prefer not to answer
Excessive / An overreaction?	13.8%	14.7%	9.8%	8.5%	1.9%	8.9%
Appropriate / Balanced?	85.0%	78.8%	82.4%	86.4%	88.7%	77.7%
Insufficient / Did not take the threat seriously enough?	1.3%	4.1%	5.0%	3.0%	8.5%	2.9%
I don't know / I prefer not to answer		2.3%	2.9%	2.1%	.9%	10.5%
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Canadians that situate themselves to the right on the ideological spectrum were far more likely to believe that government overreacted to the pandemic

Thinking back to the handling of the Covid-19 pandemic, do you think the government's response was...	In thinking about the ideological spectrum, how would you situate yourself?					
	Right	Right of centre	Centre	Left of centre	Left	I don't know/ I prefer not to answer
Excessive / An overreaction?	65.4%	41.5%	24.1%	9.7%	5.7%	27.2%
Appropriate / Balanced?	25.9%	46.1%	58.5%	73.3%	64.8%	43.6%
Insufficient / Did not take the threat seriously enough?	8.6%	10.1%	12.4%	11.9%	25.7%	14.9%
I don't know / I prefer not to answer		2.3%	5.0%	5.1%	3.8%	14.4%
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Among those who think that they personally overreacted some two-thirds think that that the government overreacted in its handling of the pandemic

Thinking back to the handling of the Covid-19 pandemic, do you think the government's response was...	Thinking back to your personal response to the Covid-19 pandemic, would you describe your reaction as...			
	Excessive / An overreaction	Appropriate / Balanced?	Insufficient / Did not take the threat seriously enough?	I don't know / I prefer not to answer
Excessive / An overreaction?	66.4%	22.2%	21.7%	13.8%
Appropriate / Balanced?	22.6%	61.4%	33.3%	3.1%
Insufficient / Did not take the threat seriously enough?	6.2%	13.4%	41.7%	1.5%
I don't know / I prefer not to answer	4.8%	3.0%	3.3%	81.5%
	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Those who felt they overreacted to the pandemic were most likely to think the main lesson from Covid 19 is about trust of government while those who feel they didn't take the threat seriously enough feel a key lesson is the ignorance of the population

Thinking about the pandemic?,? please tell us in a sentence or two what was the main lesson(s) that you learned?	Thinking back to your personal response to the Covid-19 pandemic, would you describe your reaction as...		
	Excessive / An overreaction?	Appropriate / Balanced?	Insufficient / Did not take the threat seriously enough?
Exercise good hygiene / sanitation	5.1%	8.6%	8.0%
We need to be prepared / Don't take life for granted (technologically prepared for school/work, supplies, finances, e	3.3%	7.4%	7.5%
Protect yourself/others (unspecified)	2.0%	6.4%	1.5%
People are uneducated / selfish / stupid / ignorant	4.3%	8.9%	16.9%
Follow government/health authority rules / protocols / guidelines	1.5%	4.9%	2.0%
Get vaccinated / Keep up to date with vaccines	.5%	4.4%	4.5%
Life is short / live your best life / don't take things for granted	1.8%	3.2%	4.0%
Wear a mask	1.8%	3.1%	1.0%
Everyone is vulnerable / Life is fragile/unpredictable	1.0%	3.1%	2.0%
Government is not to be trusted ...overreach/control/suspending civil liberties (vaccinations, shut downs, mandates, etc.)	33.7%	2.3%	

There have been some 7 million deaths globally from Covid 19 an estimate correctly identified by one in three Canadians

According to you, approximately how many people died from COVID-19 around the world?	Total	Male	Female	18-34	35-54	55+
(NET) 7 million and 9 million (1,2)	31%	36%	26%	32%	28%	32%
9 million people	16%	20%	12%	16%	14%	18%
7 million people	15%	16%	14%	17%	14%	14%
(NET) 5 MILLION OR LESS (3-5)	37%	37%	37%	39%	38%	35%
5 million people	14%	13%	14%	15%	15%	12%
3 million people	13%	13%	12%	15%	11%	13%
1 million	11%	10%	11%	9%	12%	11%
I don't know / I prefer not to answer	32%	27%	37%	29%	34%	33%
NET	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

There have been some 50 000 deaths in Canada from Covid 19 an estimate correctly identified by 40% of Canadians

According to you, approximately how many people died from COVID-19 in Canada?	Total	Male	Female	18-34	35-54	55+	French	English	Other
(NET) 50,000 PEOPLE OR MORE (1,2)	41%	42%	39%	45%	37%	41%	46%	39%	40%
70,000 people	15%	15%	15%	15%	15%	15%	19%	14%	13%
50,000 people	26%	27%	24%	30%	22%	25%	27%	25%	27%
(NET) LESS THAN 50,000 PEOPLE (3,4)	27%	29%	25%	28%	28%	26%	29%	26%	30%
30,000 people	17%	17%	17%	20%	15%	16%	18%	16%	20%
10,000 people	10%	13%	8%	8%	13%	10%	11%	10%	10%
I don't know / I prefer not to answer	32%	28%	36%	27%	35%	33%	25%	35%	29%
NET	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

Knowledge as to the number of deaths from Covid globally does not have a major impact on Canadians self assessment of their reaction to Covid 19

According to you, approximately how many people died from COVID-19 around the world?	Thinking back to your personal response to the Covid-19 pandemic, would you describe your reaction as...		
	Excessive / An overreaction?	Appropriate / Balanced?	Insufficient / Did not take the threat seriously enough?
9 million people	16.3%	16.7%	11.7%
7 million people	17.0%	14.5%	21.7%
5 million people	12.9%	13.7%	23.3%
3 million people	6.1%	14.1%	10.0%
1 million	12.9%	10.7%	11.7%
I don't know / I prefer not to answer	34.7%	30.2%	21.7%
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

A Final Thought



Thinking back to December 2020 the most common impact Canadians experienced from Covid 19 was 'feeling more grateful for what we have'

Which of the following impacts have you experienced as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic?	Total	Man	Woman
Feeling more grateful for what I have	56%	47%	65%
Spending more quality time with your immediate family	40%	37%	42%
Saving more money / spending less / paying off debt quicker	40%	41%	40%
More free time / spending less time commuting	37%	37%	38%
Strengthening your relationships with your family and friend	26%	24%	28%