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# Canadians are Nervous About the Future of the Health System

May 8, 2019

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# Introduction and Methodology

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- Canadians consistently rank health care as the most important issue facing the country. Yet, federal political parties, regardless of whether they sit on the right or left, have opted over the last few elections to not prioritize federal leadership to address health and health care shortfalls in their party election platforms.
- As part of The Canadian Medical Association (CMA) National Listening Tour, Ipsos conducted a national on-line survey and focus groups with physicians and the general public across Canada in late February/early March. (See Methodology in Appendix for details).
- The objective of the research was to gain a deep understanding of Canadians' views regarding the future of health care in Canada.
- In total, 3,352 Canadians completed survey between February 25 and March 4, 2019. The survey data weighted by: Gender, Age, Region and Education in line with the latest Census. A survey of this nature has a credibility interval +/-1.9%.
- Follow-up 90-min focus groups with Canadians were conducted in St John's, Oakville, Montreal and Victoria.

# Worries Over Health Care in an Election Year

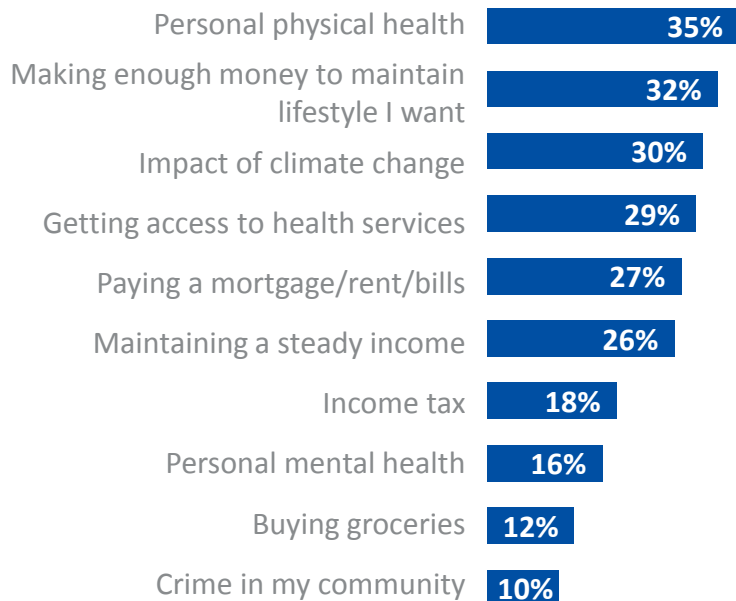
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- ❖ Canadians are feeling angst over health and health care today and this only intensifies when asked to look to the future.
- ❖ Health and health care top the list of personal worries, and worries for Canada.
- ❖ As for the job government's are currently doing on health/health care issues, *universal access* is the only area where over half rate it as *good*. *Timely access to physicians* and *affordability of medication* are rated particularly poorly.
- ❖ Looking out, Canadians are worried about the future of health care in the country. Half of Canadians (49%) describe the future of health care in their province as very or somewhat negative, with just 4 in 10 offering a positive assessment (41%).
- ❖ When asked what emotions describe how they feel when they think about the future of health care in Canada, negative emotions (62%) far outweigh positive (38%), with *nervous*, *afraid* and *distressed* being the emotions most associated with the future of health care.
- ❖ These worries can largely be linked to what Canadians see as looming cuts, and issues of affordability, as Canadians are concerned they will have to pay more for health care down the road.
- ❖ Canadians' worry over the future of health care in the country may translate into action at the ballot box, as 6 in 10 (60%) say they will vote for the party they think has the best plan for the future of health care in Canada.

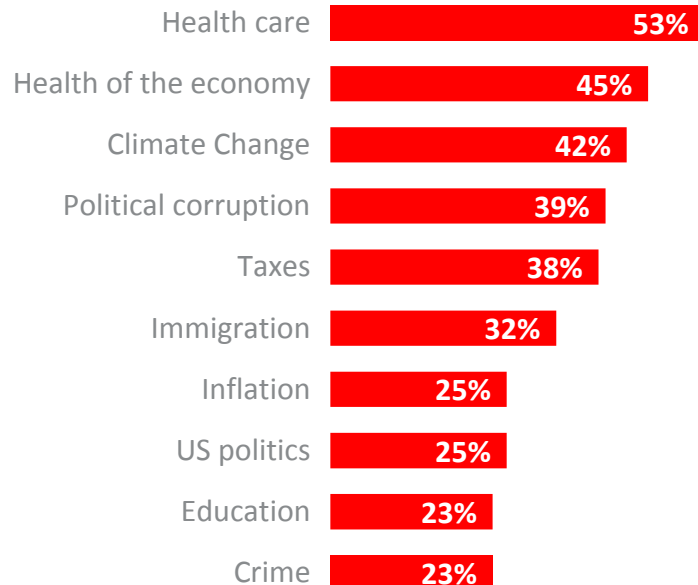
# Worries

**Health care the economy top the list of worries for Canada. Health and affordability issues to the list of personal worries.**

### Personal Worries



### Worries for Canada



Q2A. What are the top things that worry you personally?

Q2B. What are the issues that worry you the most for Canada?

## WHO'S MORE WORRIED ABOUT HEALTH AND HEALTH CARE?

Those who are heavier users of the health system, and those 55+ are more likely to worry personally about their health, and of health care in Canada. Those in Atlantic Canada, women and liberal voters are most likely to worry about health care in Canada.

### More likely to personally worry about health....



High Health System Contact (76%)



55+ years old (75%)



Quebec (69%) – particularly South Shore Montreal (77%), BC (65%)



Positive economic outlook (64%)

### More like to worry about health care in Canada...



55+ years old (65%)



Atlantic Canada (65%), lowest in Alberta (44%)



High Health System Contact (64%)



Women (60%)



Liberal voters (58%)

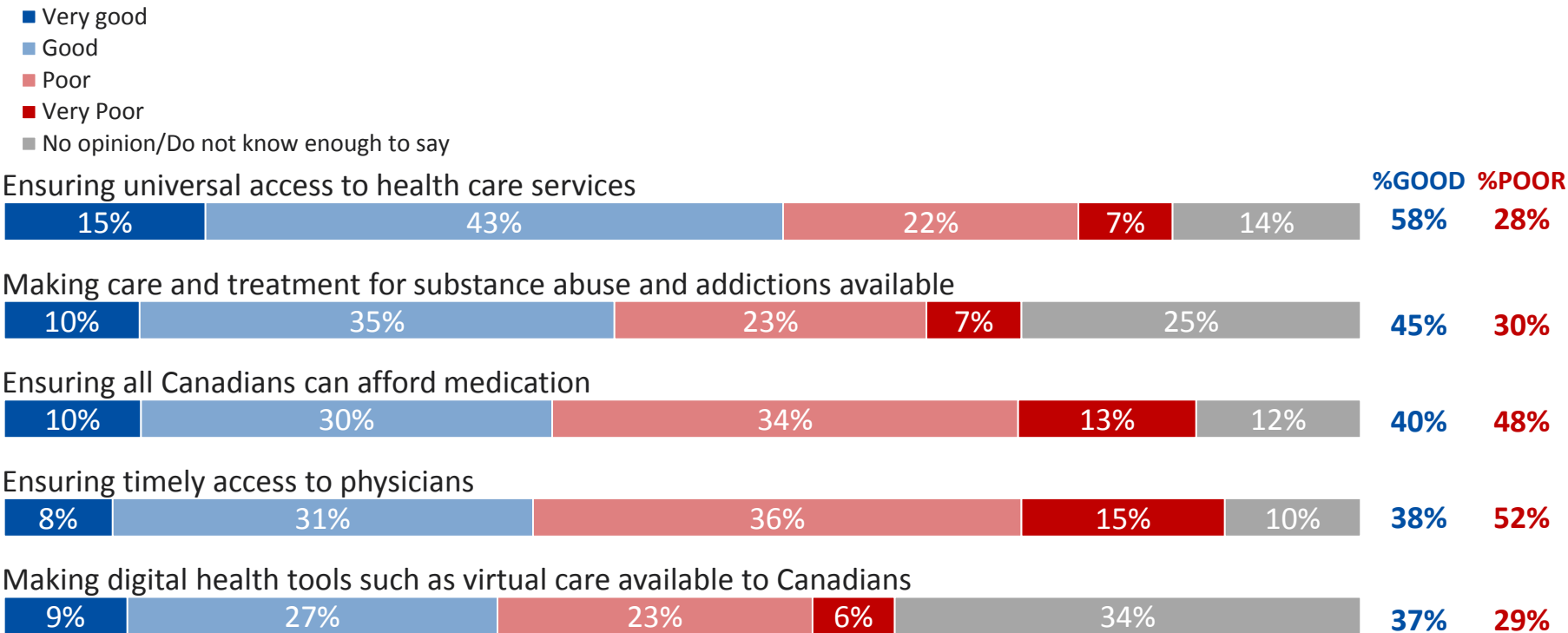
Q2A. What are the top things that worry you personally?

Q2B. What are the issues that worry you the most for Canada?

# Government Performance

## GOVERNMENT PERFORMANCE ON HEALTH AND HEALTH CARE

With the exception of *universal access*, less than half of Canadians rate government performance on health/health care issues as good. *Timely access to physicians* and *affordability of medication* are rated particularly poorly.

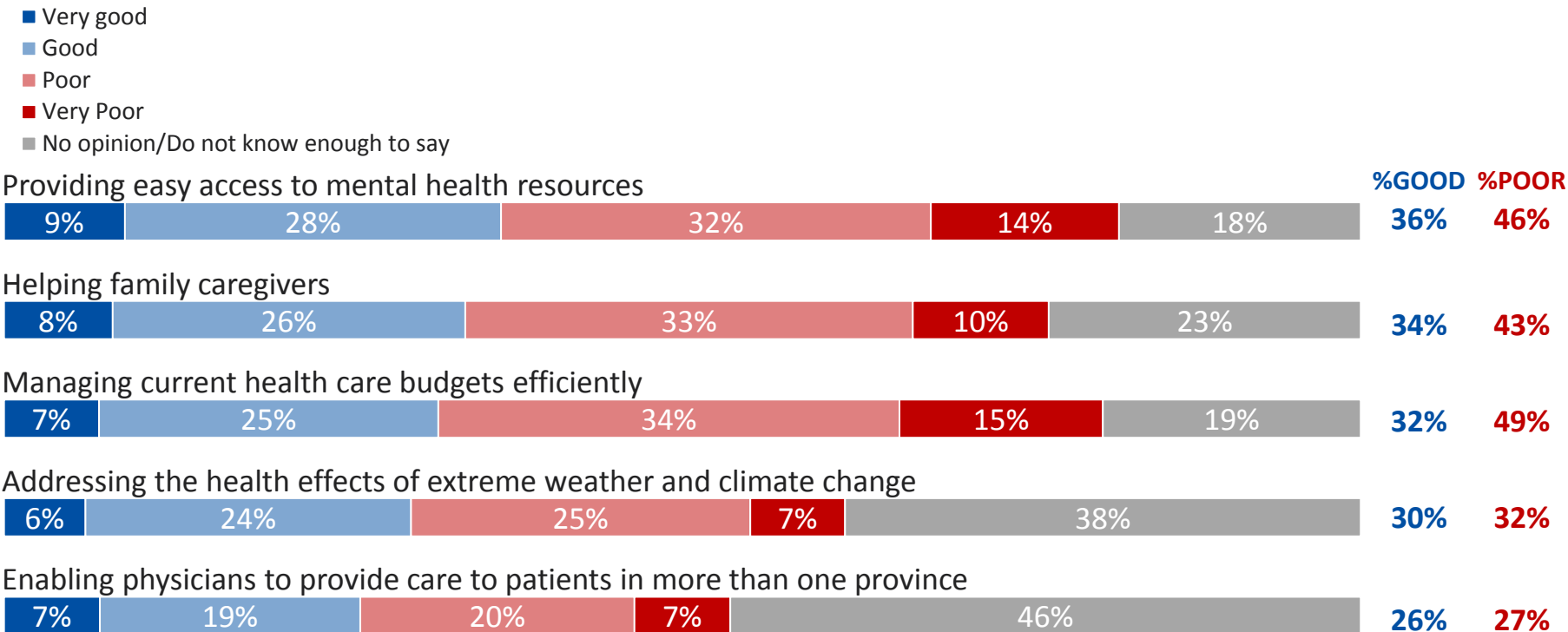


Q4D. How well are governments currently doing in managing the following health and health care issues:



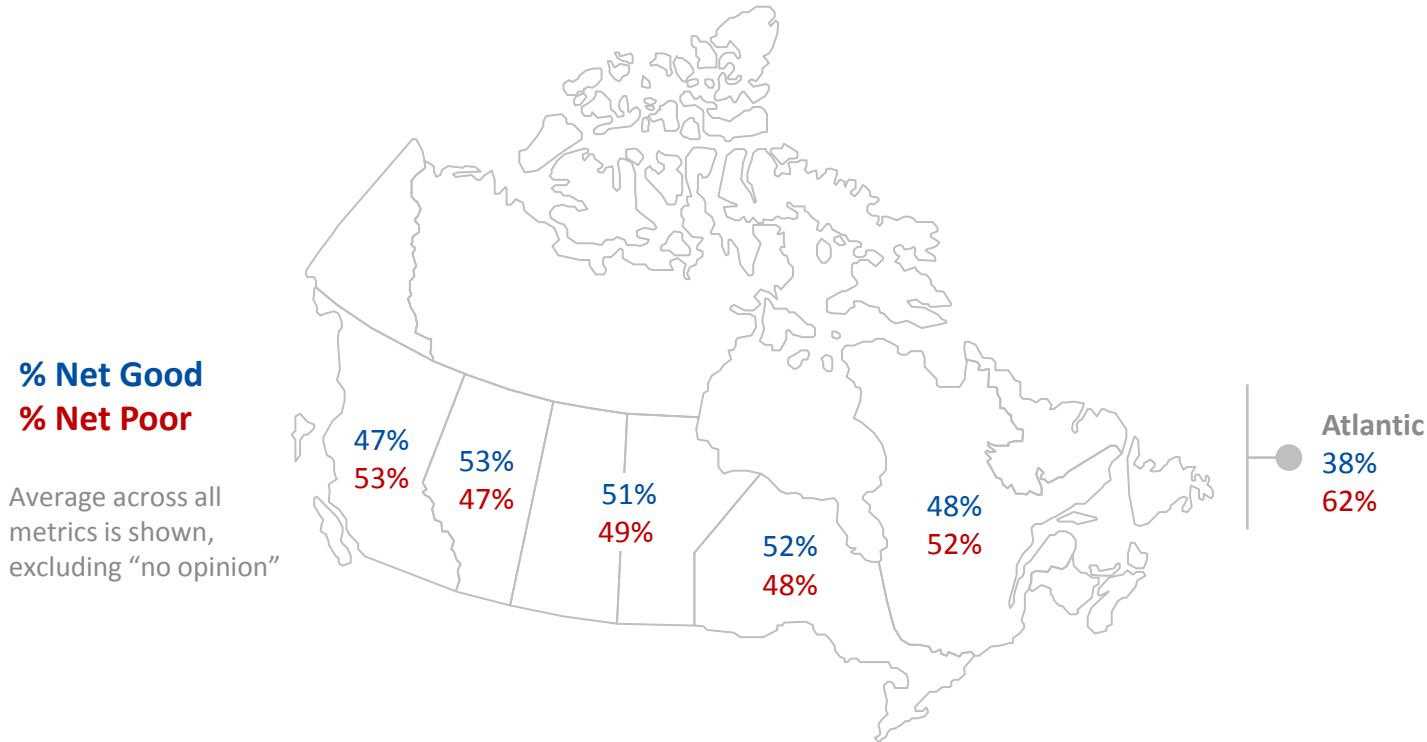
## GOVERNMENT PERFORMANCE ON HEALTH AND HEALTH CARE

**Over 4 in 10 rate *managing current health care budget efficiently*, *access to mental health resources* and *helping family caregivers* as poor. Canadians are less aware of how the government is doing on *physicians ability to work in more than one province* and on *addressing health effects of climate change*.**



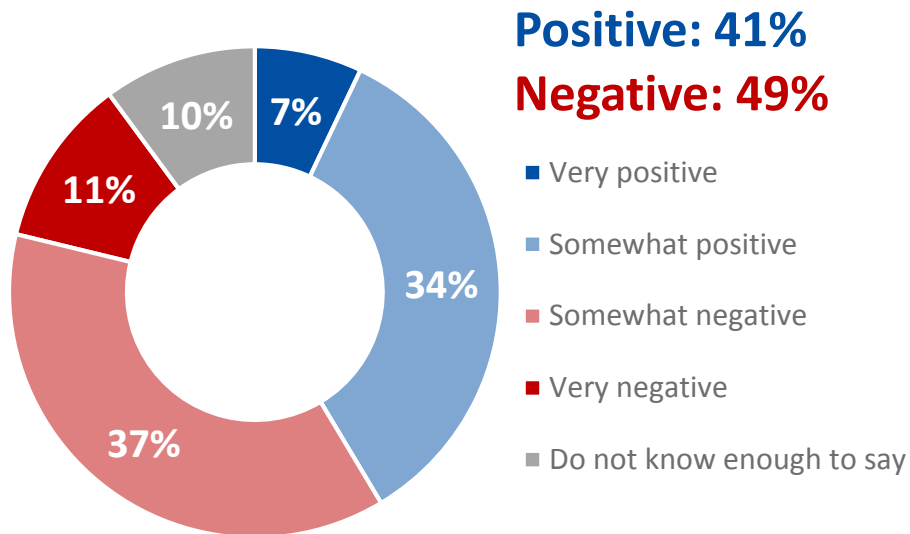
Q4D. How well are governments currently doing in managing the following health and health care issues:

**With the exception of Atlantic Canada, which is decidedly more negative, provinces are split down the middle on whether governments are doing a good job or not when it comes to managing health and health care.**



# Future of Health Care

Half of Canadians have a negative outlook for the future of their provincial health system. Outlook on the health system is strongly linked to overall economic outlook and regionally, Atlantic Canada and Quebec are the most pessimistic.



**More likely to have a positive outlook on...**



BC (48%), AB (46%)



18-34 (51%)



Liberal (51%)



Men (45%)



Positive economic outlook (50%)

**More likely to have a negative outlook...**



Atlantic (61%), QC (55%)



55+ (55%)



CPC (53%), Other (52%)



Women (51%)



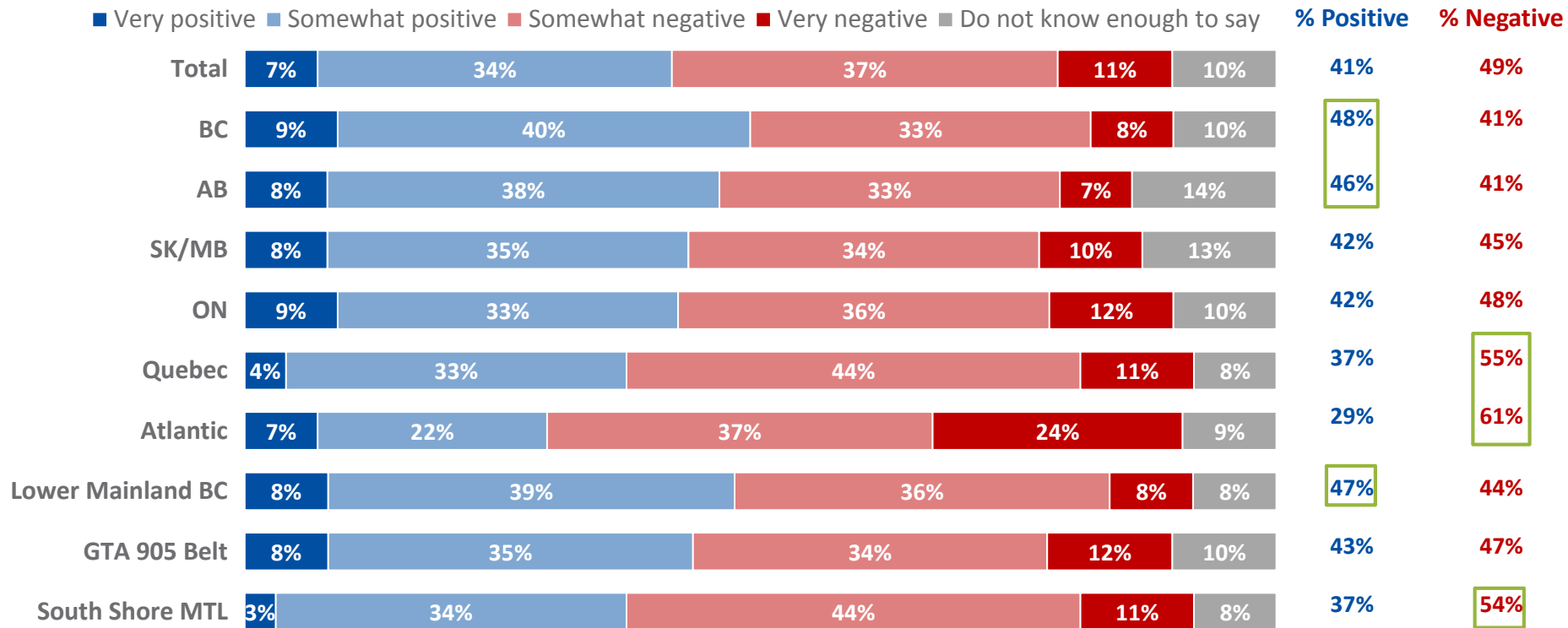
Negative economic outlook (70%)



High Health System Contact (56%)

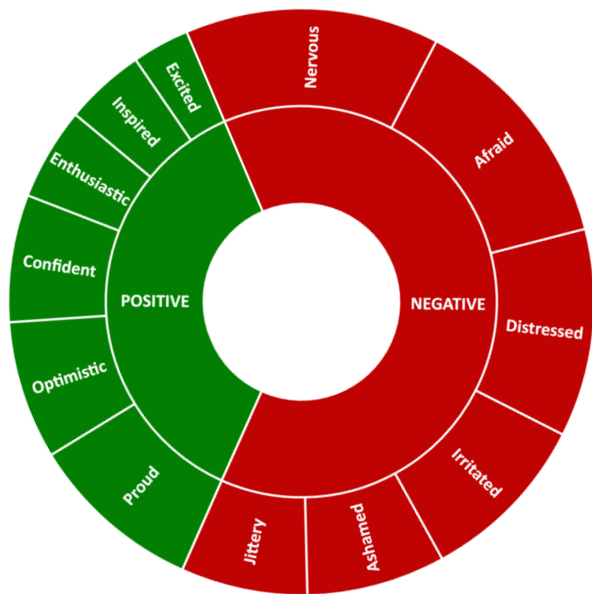
## OUTLOOK ON FUTURE OF HEALTH CARE IN YOUR PROVINCE – REGION

Residents of BC and Alberta hold the most positive outlook for the future of health in their province, though the proportion looking positively to the future is still under half. Residents of Atlantic Canada and Quebecers are the most pessimistic.

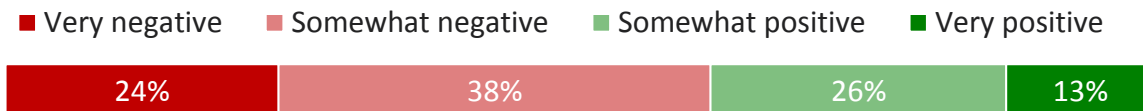


Significantly Higher

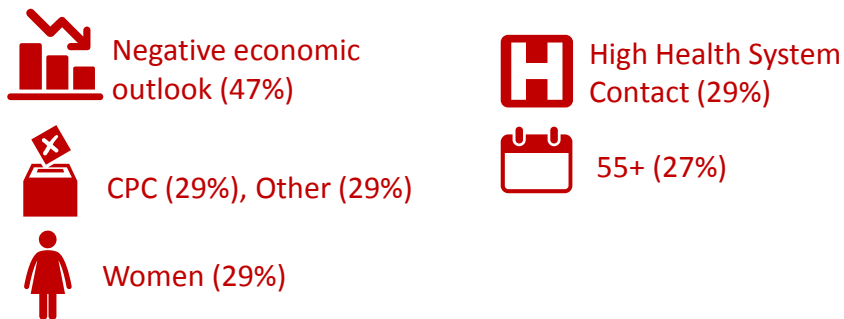
Canadians are far more negative about the future of health than positive, with nervous, afraid and distressed being the top emotions.



### Future of Health Emotion Index



### More likely to have very negative emotions for future of health care...



Q3A. To what extent do the following words describe how you feel when you think about the future of health care in Canada?  
Base: All respondents (n=3351)

**Six in 10 Canadians say they worry a great deal about the *shortage of the health professionals, long wait times, and crowded hospitals.***

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% Worries me a great deal\*

Long wait times

62%

The shortage of health professionals (doctors, nurses, pharmacists)

60%

Crowded hospitals

59%

Health care professionals under stress and experiencing mental health challenges

46%

\* Full scale – Worries me a great deal, worries me a bit, does not worry me personally, I don't know enough about it

## WORRIES ON THE FUTURE OF HEALTH CARE – COSTS AND CUTS

**Two-thirds of Canadians say *potential cuts to health care services* worries them a great deal. Half or more say they worry a great deal about *eventually needing to pay for more services, increased costs to the system due to an aging population and the lack of a plan to make medications affordable*.**

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% Worries me a great deal\*

Governments that may need to cut health care services to balance budgets

65%

That patients will eventually need to pay for more of their health care services

56%

Increased cost to the health system due to an ageing population

52%

The lack of a plan to make medications more affordable for more Canadians

51%

The lack of innovation and modernization of our health system

34%

Increased cost to the health system due to new technology

31%

\* Full scale – Worries me a great deal, worries me a bit, does not worry me personally, I don't know enough about it

Q4C. Thinking about the future of health care please indicate how you feel about each of the following...?



## WORRIES ON THE FUTURE OF HEALTH CARE – DEMOGRAPHIC AND EXTERNAL FORCES

**Over half of Canadians are worry a great deal about the *growing numbers of seniors that will require greater health care*. Half of Canadians worry a great deal about the *growing number of young Canadians facing mental health challenges*.**

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% Worries me a great deal\*

The growing number of seniors who will require greater health care



56%

The growing number of young Canadians facing mental health challenges



48%

The impact of climate change on the health of Canadians



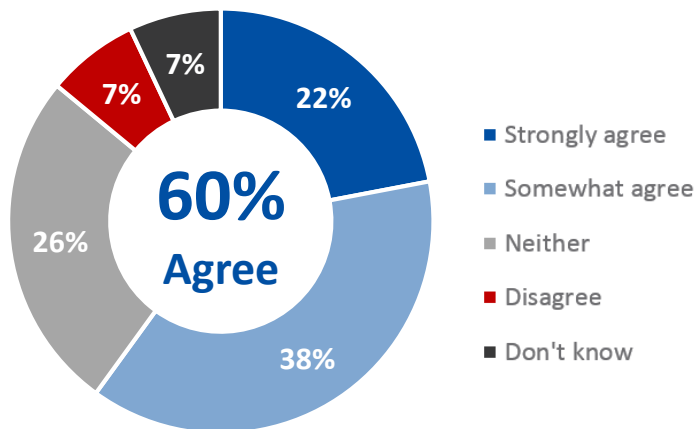
30%

\* Full scale – Worries me a great deal, worries me a bit, does not worry me personally, I don't know enough about it






Q4C. Thinking about the future of health care please indicate how you feel about each of the following...?

These worries over health may translate to action at the ballot box, as 6 in 10 Canadians say they will vote for the party they think has the best plan for the future of health care in Canada, with 2 in 10 agreeing *strongly* with this.

### Will vote for federal party I think has best plan for future of health care in Canada



### More likely to *strongly* agree will vote for party with best plan...

-  Atlantic Canada (31%), AB (16%), Prairies (18%) lowest
-  Very negative emotions on future of health (30%)
-  High Health System Contact (30%)
-  Women 55+ (29%)
-  NDP voters (29%)

### **In-depth discussions find that older Canadians are especially concerned about having to pay for health care and drugs. This is contrary to their strongly held belief that health care is a “Canadian right”.**

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Some are already paying for quicker access or have family or friends who are doing so, including travelling to the US for services. They feel “fortunate” if they have the means to pay right now and doing their best to prepare for retirement.



Still, they are worried about what would happen if they *couldn't* pay, while for others this is already a reality. This also raises questions on fairness, especially when they see better drug coverage in other provinces.



**I have a couple family members who are seeing a therapist. First session was \$115. Another \$150 per session out of pocket. When they talk about a two-tier health system I didn't think of Canada as having that, but now we've been paying out of pocket for access to these services rather than waiting on a list and having to wait months.**

**Now it's more about saving for your health rather than retirement. We only have one child and certainly don't want to assume we can lean on him in our later years. So we talked about different things we can do, creating a nest egg for ourselves and keeping our health in check the best we can to try and be healthier down the road.**

**I have health issues and I look over to Ontario, and Ontario has a far better pharmacare program than Manitoba does, and why is it that if I move to Ontario, I can save a lot more by living there as opposed to Manitoba. Why is it different? We're all Canadians. To me, it doesn't make sense.**

# Contacts

Who add  
for CMA?



**Mike Colledge**

President, Ipsos Public Affairs



[mike.colledge@ipsos.com](mailto:mike.colledge@ipsos.com)



613 292 0253



**First Lastname**

Title



[email.address@ipsos.com](mailto:email.address@ipsos.com)



+XX XXX XXX XXXX



**First Lastname**

Title



[email.address@ipsos.com](mailto:email.address@ipsos.com)



+XX XXX XXX XXXX