

## Top pandemic coping feeling – from “anxious” to “tired” in past 3 weeks

*Small firm’s volunteer behavioural research is understanding, tracking how people are coping weekly*

*Participants find answering survey “therapeutic”, “cathartic”*

**MISSISSAUGA, ONTARIO - APRIL 15, 2020** - A Canadian firm’s weekly COVID-19 behavioural research has found that in last week’s survey (April 6 to 12) the most frequently used word to express participants’ emotion is “tired”. This compares to “anxious” which was the most frequently term used in the first two weeks of the survey (March 24 to April 5).

“People everywhere are struggling to understand and cope with the practical, psychological and emotional effects of social distancing, self-isolation, symptom monitoring and general uncertainty. Through our survey, we’re gaining insight into changes in how people are faring from week to week and the things that they are doing to cope,” said Sarah Thorne, President and CEO of Decision • Partners.

Thorne, and her team of social scientists, researchers and management consultants, launched [their weekly COVID-19 Coping Survey on March 24th](#) on their own, and are sharing weekly results online.

These word cloud graphics illustrate participants’ changing responses to the question:  
***What one word would you use to describe how you are feeling today?***



Image 1: Survey #1 (March 24-29)

Image 2: Survey #3 (April 6-12)

“Evidence-based behavioural insights can help leaders and public health officials make policy and design appropriate risk communications to help people through the transition. We hope that our research provides insight that helps their decision-making processes,” Thorne said.

**So, how are people coping?** [Top-line findings from Survey #3 \(April 6-12\):](#)

- People expect **we’re going to be dealing with COVID-19 for a long time**
- Several are reporting that **they are “tired”** – with **more people struggling to stay positive** than we’ve heard in previous weeks
- People continue to be **concerned about the seriousness of COVID-19, its spread and staying healthy**
- For the third week in a row, **people are most grateful for “family”, “health”, “friends”, and “home”**

- The top **questions respondents would like to have answered by public health officials** in Canada and the US are **related to policies and decision making** about pandemic preparedness, current actions and how and when we'll get people back to work
- For respondents from both Canada and the US, **government health officials were most frequently mentioned as the most-trusted sources for pandemic information**
  - For **Canadian** respondents: **elected officials** were mentioned the next-most frequently
  - For **US** respondents: **media sources** were mentioned the next-most frequently

To see all the [weekly highlights reports click here](#), reports are listed in the right margin.

### **Completing the survey seems to help people cope**

The survey seems to be striking a chord with respondents, some of whom reached out to us to say that the mere act of answering the online questions is helping them cope a little better.

Thorne explained, “Several people are telling us that the act of completing the survey questions each week - in itself - has been therapeutic because it helps them reflect on and articulate their feelings and how they're coping, and by doing so, they feel more resilient.”

### **Small company pivots to support the public interest**

Like many Canadian companies and organizations that are rising to the pandemic challenge, the team at Decision Partners knew they could help by doing what they do best: listening and learning to better understand what people are thinking, feeling and doing to cope with pandemic-related changes and challenges, then sharing those insights with respondents, decision makers and the world.

### **Participants needed: Research impact depends on weekly survey data**

Looking forward, Thorne says more weekly data will help maintain the survey's usefulness to both participants and leaders and decision makers in many organizations.

“We're asking adults 18-years and older to help by completing the survey weekly and telling us how they are coping and encouraging their friends and families to participate as well. We're listening and we'll share what we are learning.”

Please visit: <http://decisionpartners.co/Survey.html>

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### **Media Inquiries and Interviews**

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### **About Sarah Thorne, President and CEO, Decision • Partners**

Thorne is recognized globally for her expertise in the field of behavioural research and its application to organizational decision making in the areas of strategy, policy and communication. She works with organizations across a broad range of areas including public health, emergency preparedness, energy and infrastructure, organizational transformation, stakeholder engagement, climate change, sustainability and resilience.

She is Executive in Residence at the Ivey School of Business, and a regular contributor to the scientific and management literature on decision and behaviour-focused strategy and communications. She was a member and co-author of the Canadian Standards Association's Technical Committee on Risk Assessment and Communication, which developed the state-of-the-science *Q850 Risk Management: Guideline for Decision-Makers*, lead author of the Health Canada and Public Health Agency of Canada *Strategic Risk Communication*

*Framework and Handbook* and co-author of the book *Mental Modeling Approach: Risk Management Application Case Studies*, which was published in 2017.

### **About the survey**

Each week, Decision Partners' COVID-19 Coping Survey asks what people are concerned about, what they are grateful for, their coping and protective behaviours, knowledge of and adherence to public health policies and what sources they trust for information about the pandemic.

Each Wednesday afternoon highlights from the previous week's survey are posted online and participants are recruited through convenience and snowball sampling. As such, Decision Partners makes no claims about the representativeness of the survey of any specific population, but believes results provide meaningful insights into people's experiences, beliefs and behaviour during these difficult times.

Decision Partners adheres to all standards for conducting research, confidentiality and ensuring people's privacy. Each week the survey results are aggregated, and no one will be identified as the source of any responses. The firm does not retain, sell, or pass along any personally identifiable information that respondents may provide.

### **About Decision • Partners**

The Decision Partners team believes our world is a better place when people make better decisions. The firm's proven Mental Modeling Insight™ (MMI™) approach helps people do just that. MMI™ is an evidence-based, science-informed management process for systematically understanding the influences on people's judgment, decision making and behaviour. By identifying the full range of people's thinking on complex issues, the Decision Partners team works with their client partners to develop policies, strategies, interventions and communications that effectively address their stakeholders' needs, values, interests and priorities. The results – based on insight into people's judgment – are measurable and sustainable. Visit [www.decisionpartners.co](http://www.decisionpartners.co).