

As restrictions ease, leaders who understand influences on trust + behaviour will see best outcomes

Policy, strategy + comms based on behavioural science insights make sustainable outcomes more likely

(MISSISSAUGA, ONTARIO - APRIL 23, 2020) - One of the most [significant findings](#) over the past four weeks from Decision Partners' voluntary Coping Survey has been who respondents say are their most-trusted sources of pandemic information.

In Canada, the CBC and WHO were most frequently cited as “most trusted” sources, followed by general references to Government (federal and provincial) and “public health” and then more specifically PHAC, Dr. Tam (and “CPHO”) and Justin Trudeau (and “Prime Minister”).

In the US, the story is quite different with less-frequent citing of the Federal Government in general. The CDC and Dr. Anthony Fauci are most frequently cited, followed by the WHO, State Governments (and their governors), the New York Times and CNN.



Above: Most-trusted sources of pandemic information, March 24 - April 19
Response to survey question: Which organization or individual do you trust most when it comes to information related to the COVID-19 pandemic? (hi-res images available on request)

“These findings are important as trust has had a significant influence on people’s judgment, decision making and behaviour related to public health restrictions that help flatten the curve. Trust in leaders -- government, public health, business, schools, and others -- will continue to be critical as restrictions ease. People’s behaviour through the transition will directly affect how well Canada does in flattening the curve while restarting the economy,” said Sarah Thorne, President and CEO of Decision • Partners.

Thorne, and her team of social scientists, researchers and management consultants, just released results from their 4th weekly COVID-19 Coping Survey. The survey is a voluntary behavioural research initiative -- and weekly results are shared online.

Across Canada elected and business leaders are working on plans for a staggered easing of public health restrictions. They will be asking employees and consumers to leave the relative safety of their homes to re-enter their work and marketplaces and do so under new conditions.

“In the past four weeks, our respondents essentially accepted self-isolation and complied with public health orders in an effort to stay safe and keep their families and communities safe,” Thorne said. “As we move forward and begin the transition into a new normal, people will be asking themselves the two fundamental questions: “Am I safe?” and “Can I trust you? What is and is not acceptable will depend on each individual’s decision-making and actions related to their perceptions of risk and trust.”

So, how are people coping? [Highlights from Survey #4 \(April 13-19\) plus new data from the past 4 weeks:](#)

- People are **resigned** that we are **in it for the long haul**.
- Several are reporting **they are tired, frustrated, bored and anxious – but coping**.
- People are **concerned about their mental health** and that of others – they are struggling to stay positive. But almost all report they are prepared to handle the impacts of social isolation.
- For the fourth week in a row, **people are most grateful for “family” and “health”**. The top thing they are looking forward to – **spending time with friends and family**.

“Evidence-based behavioural insights can help leaders and public health officials make policy and design appropriate risk communications to help people through the transition. People need to be able to weigh the risks, benefits and tradeoffs related to eased restrictions in order to make decisions about what is acceptable to them -- for example, using public transit, getting a haircut, or going back to work. We hope that our research provides valuable insight to leaders preparing for the transition,” Thorne said.

Over the last four weeks, Decision Partners’ has been conducting voluntary, opt-in behavioural research through its [weekly COVID-19 Coping Survey](#).

Thorne said, “In my experience, leaders who understand and monitor the influences on their stakeholders’ judgment, decision making and behaviour make better-informed decisions relating to strategy, policy and communications that have a higher likelihood of producing sustainable behavioural outcomes.”

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.