

## People trust public health + government leaders but want testing, flatter curve, other assurances before restrictions ease

*Behavioural science insights are key to sustainable behavioural outcomes*

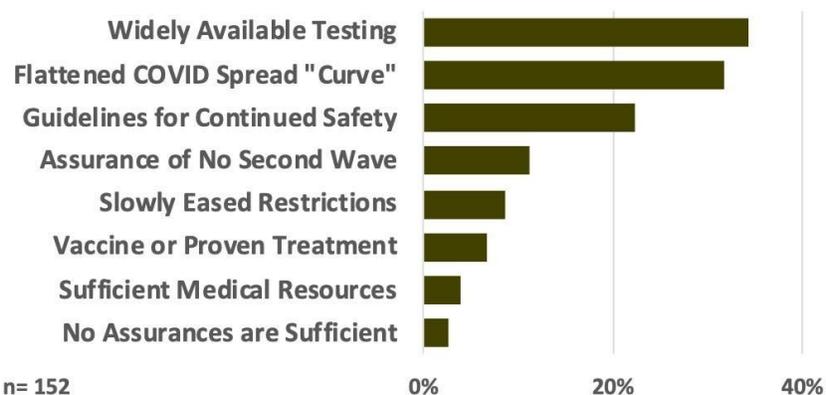
(MISSISSAUGA, ONTARIO - APRIL 30, 2020) - While people continue to trust their government and public health leaders for pandemic information, [one of this week's most significant findings from Decision Partners' COVID-19 Coping Survey](#) is that people want specific assurances from their leaders before restrictions are loosened.

### The bottom line from Survey #5 (April 20-26):

- 85% of respondents think the restrictions in their area are about right.
- They are concerned about opening up too soon and risking another wave of outbreaks – “the virus is not gone” – and lockdowns.
- They want assurances from trusted government and public health leaders that decisions to ease restrictions will be done gradually, carefully and based on data.
- They continue to describe their mood using a wide range of terms, with “tired” the most frequently used; “fine”, “okay”, “good” and “frustrated” are in the top 5. While many respondents are positive, some are still using terms like “anxious”, “uncertain” and “discouraged”.
- They want their leaders to assure them of the availability of the following before easing restrictions and re-opening their society:

**COVID-19 Coping Survey:  
Week #5: April 20-26**

*Q: What would you want to be assured of before officials begin to loosen restrictions?*



“In the past five weeks, our respondents have trusted leaders, accepted self-isolation and complied with public health requirements. Keeping themselves, their families and their communities safe as we all deal with uncertainties related to the spread of the virus has been their top priority,” Thorne said.

“As we begin to transition into a new normal – whatever that will be – every individual will have to make decisions about what is acceptable to them personally, and what is not. The two fundamental questions they will ask themselves as they weigh the risks, benefits and tradeoffs are: “Am I safe?” and “Can I trust you?” The decisions they make and actions they take will be largely driven by who they trust and how they perceive risks and benefits of changing their behaviour.”

“Trust will continue to be a significant influence people’s behaviour through the coming weeks and will directly affect how well nations and states do in flattening the curve and keeping people safe, while restarting their economies,” 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 [5th weekly COVID-19 Coping Survey](#). The survey is a voluntary, opt-in behavioural research initiative -- and weekly results are shared online. (details below)

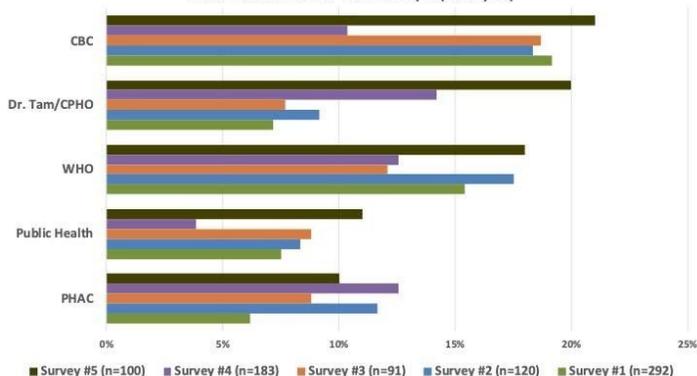
The most trusted sources for pandemic information in Canada and the United States are illustrated here:

**COVID-19 Coping Survey:  
March 13 - April 26**

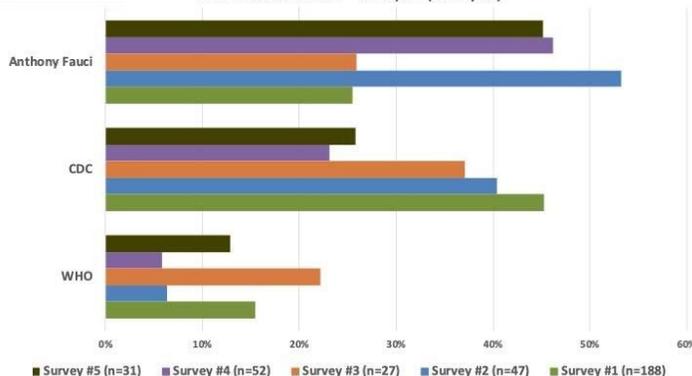
*Q: Which organization or individual do you trust most when it comes to information related to the COVID-19 pandemic?*



Most Trusted Sources – Canada Top 5 (Survey #5)



Most Trusted Sources – US Top 3\* (Survey #5)



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“Leaders who understand and monitor the influences on their stakeholders’ judgment, decision making and behaviour in dynamic situations like this one we are all facing will make better-informed decisions that have a higher likelihood of producing sustainable, behavioural outcomes and build trust and credibility for their organizations in the process. We hope that our research provides valuable insight to leaders who are preparing now for a transition to a new normal,” Thorne said.

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).