

Canadians worry about health and financial security, but are relatively satisfied with the public provision of social services

The OECD's cross-national Risks that Matter survey examines people's perceptions of social and economic risks and how well they feel their government reacts to their concerns. The survey polled a representative sample of 25000 people aged 18 to 64 years old in 25 OECD countries to understand better what citizens want and need from social policy – particularly in the face of the COVID-19 pandemic.

In line with results in most other countries, Canadian respondents are most worried in the short run about becoming ill or disabled (Fig. 1), though the share that is concerned in Canada (57%) is below the OECD average (61%). Similarly, when looking beyond the next decade, 73% of Canadians are worried about ensuring good health as they age. Health is the top perceived long-term risk across OECD countries, and Canada's result matches the OECD average. A similar share of Canadians worry about financial security in old age.

In spite of these perceived health risks, Canadians hold relatively positive views about their access to health services. A slim majority of respondents in Canada agree or strongly agree with having good access to health care, compared to 43% of respondents cross-nationally. This is a noteworthy outcome considering the exigencies of the pandemic and the stressors facing health care providers.

At the same time, there is a relatively high willingness to invest more in public health. 50% of Canadians say they would pay an additional 2% of their income in taxes to ensure better provision of and access to better health services (Fig. 2), compared to 45% cross-nationally. When the 2% price tag is kept out of the question, an overwhelming 68% of Canadians say they would like to see the government spend more or much more on health (but still bearing in mind the taxes the respondent's household might have to pay and the benefits they might receive).

When looking at social protection more broadly, Canadians are relatively satisfied with their government's performance, compared to respondents in other countries. Though just under half of Canadians (46%) say they would count on government to get them through financial difficulties, this is well above the cross-national average of 36%. Compared to respondents elsewhere, Canadians are also among the most likely to say that their views are incorporated in public policy design and that public benefits are distributed fairly. Nevertheless, most people call for greater public intervention: 57% of Canadians want their government to do more to help ensure their economic and social security (Fig. 3).

Fig. 1. Percent identifying 'becoming ill or disabled' as the top short-term risk to themselves or their family

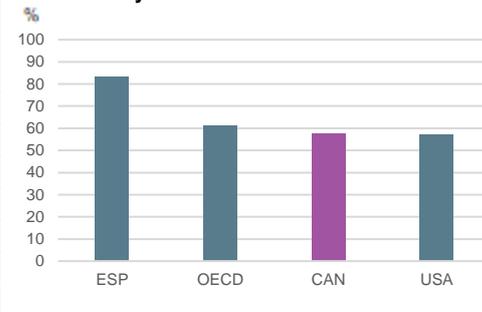


Fig. 2. Percent identifying 'health supports' as a policy area they would pay an additional 2% of their income to support

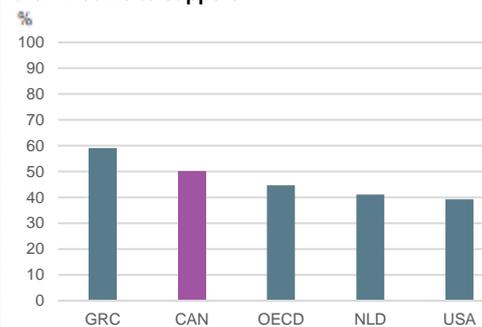
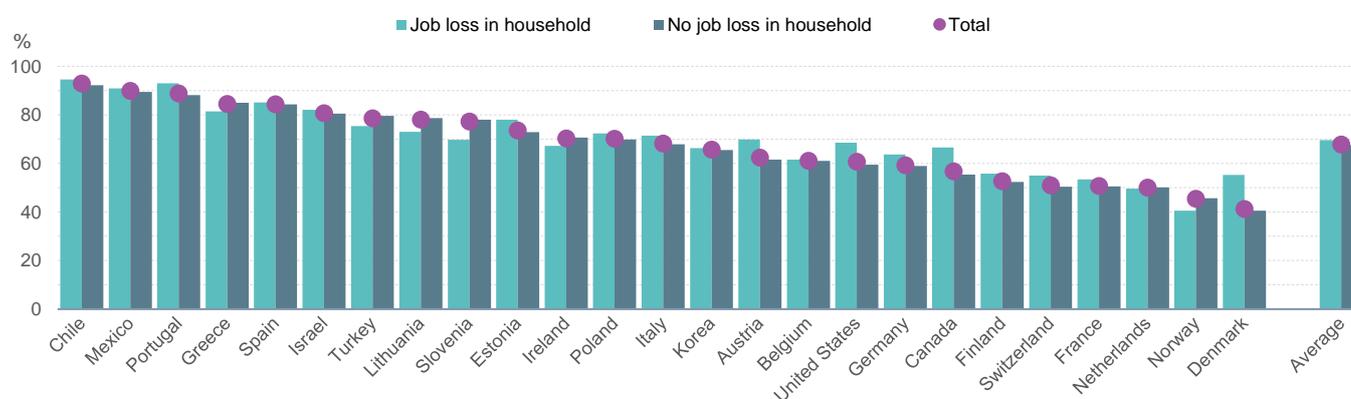


Fig. 3. About six out of ten of Canadians want government to do more to ensure their economic and social security



Notes: Respondents were asked whether they thought the government should be doing less, more, or the same as they are currently doing to ensure their economic and social security. Possible response options were "much less", "less", "about the same as now", "more" and "much more". Respondents could also choose "don't know". "Job loss in household" refers to respondents reporting that either they or any member of their household have/has either "Lost their job or been laid off permanently by their employer" and/or "Lost their self-employed job or their own business", since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic. Source: OECD Secretariat estimates based on the OECD Risks That Matter 2020 survey, <https://www.oecd.org/social/risks-that-matter.htm>

The OECD Risks that Matter (RTM) survey is a cross-national survey examining people's social and economic concerns, how well they think government responds to their needs and expectations, and what policies they would like to see in the future. The survey was conducted for the first time in 2018 to support the OECD Social Policy Ministerial. The 2020 survey, conducted in September-October 2020, draws on nationally-representative samples in Austria, Belgium, Canada, Chile, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Korea, Lithuania, Mexico, the Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Slovenia, Spain, Switzerland, Turkey and the United States.