

Pandemic, Polarization, and Expectations for Government

Rising optimism about vaccine meets rising
pessimism about second wave

By Frank Graves

December 2, 2020





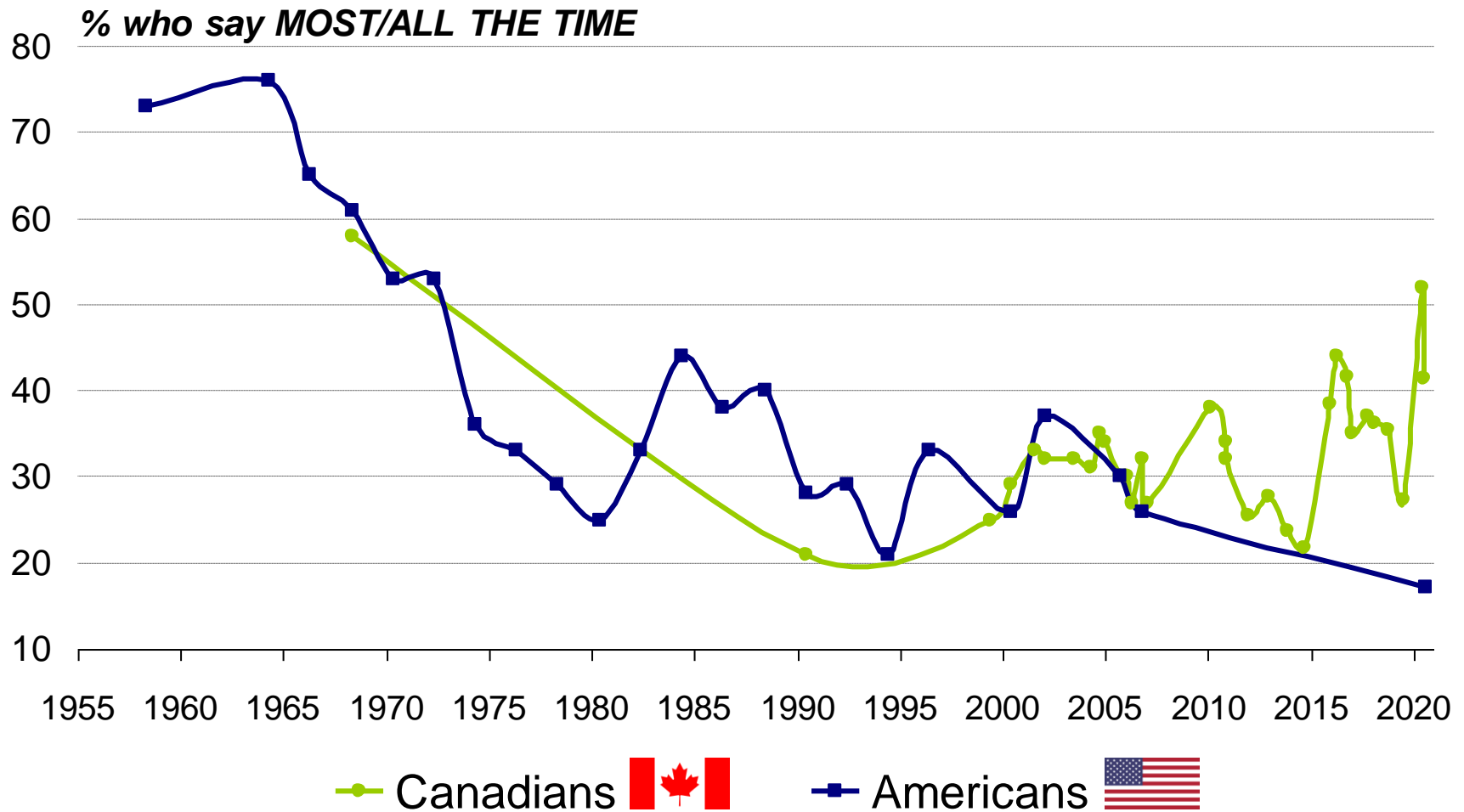
- 1) **Outlook on Government**
- 2) **Growing Links between Masks, Vaccine Acceptance, and Polarization**
- 3) **Options for Post-Pandemic Canada**
- 4) **Conclusions**

Broad outlook on government

- » The pandemic initially produced a dramatic diminution of polarized views on government and country
 - Huge jump in trust in government/direction of government
- » As time went on, however, that polarization began to creep back in
 - In terms of confidence in national direction, the 80-20 split in favour of 'right direction' has narrowed to 60-40
- » Confidence in national direction is lower among:
 - Residents of Alberta/Saskatchewan
 - Men
 - Working-class Canadians
 - Non-university educated

Tracking trust in government

Q. How much do you trust the government in Ottawa/Washington to do what is right?



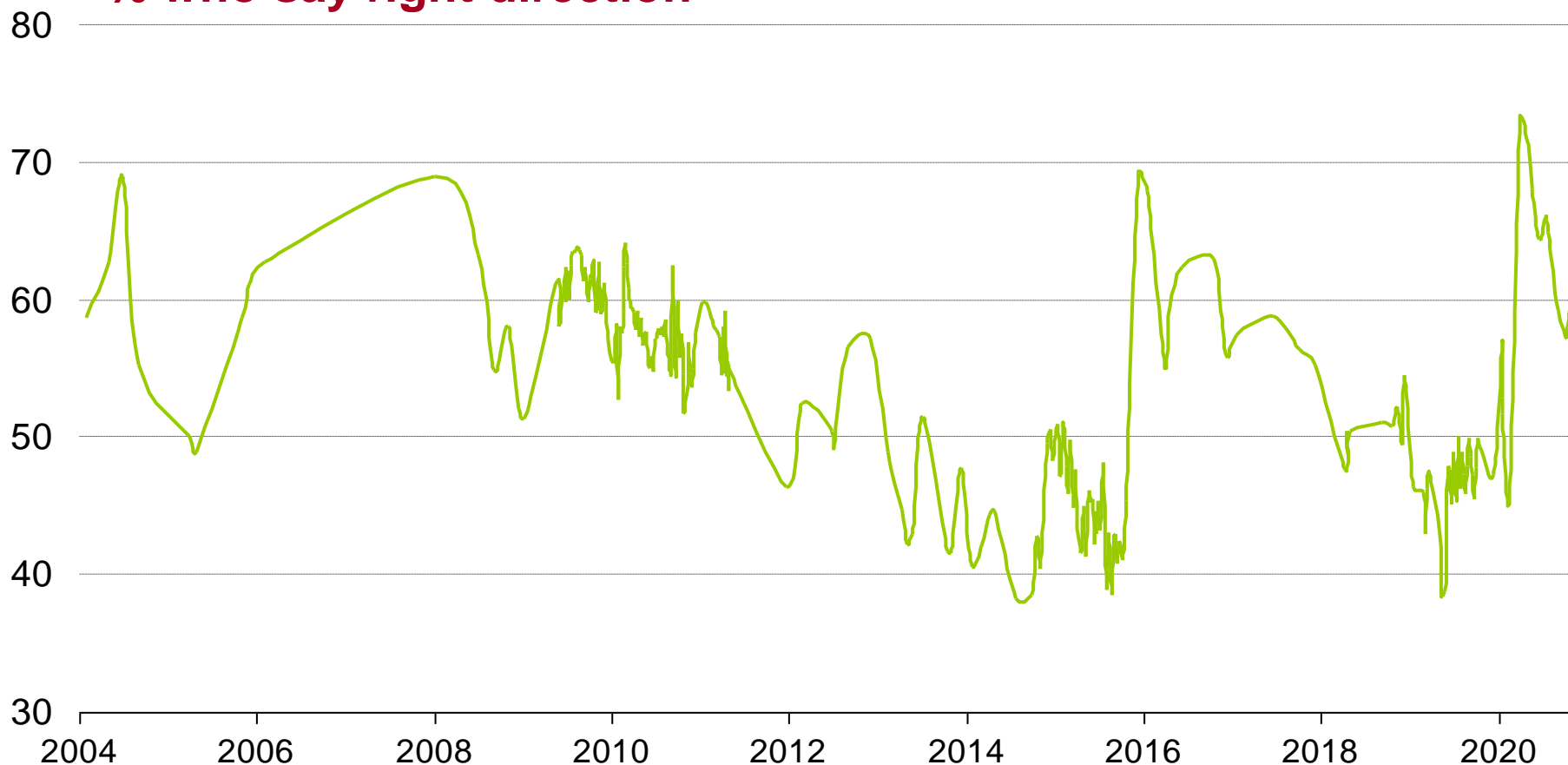
BASE (U.S.): Americans; August 7-16, 2020, n=710, MOE +/- 3.7%, 19 times out of 20

BASE (Canada): Canadians; June 24-30, 2020, n=1,021, MOE +/- 3.1%, 19 times out of 20

Confidence in national direction

Q. All things considered, would you say the country is moving in the right direction or the wrong direction?

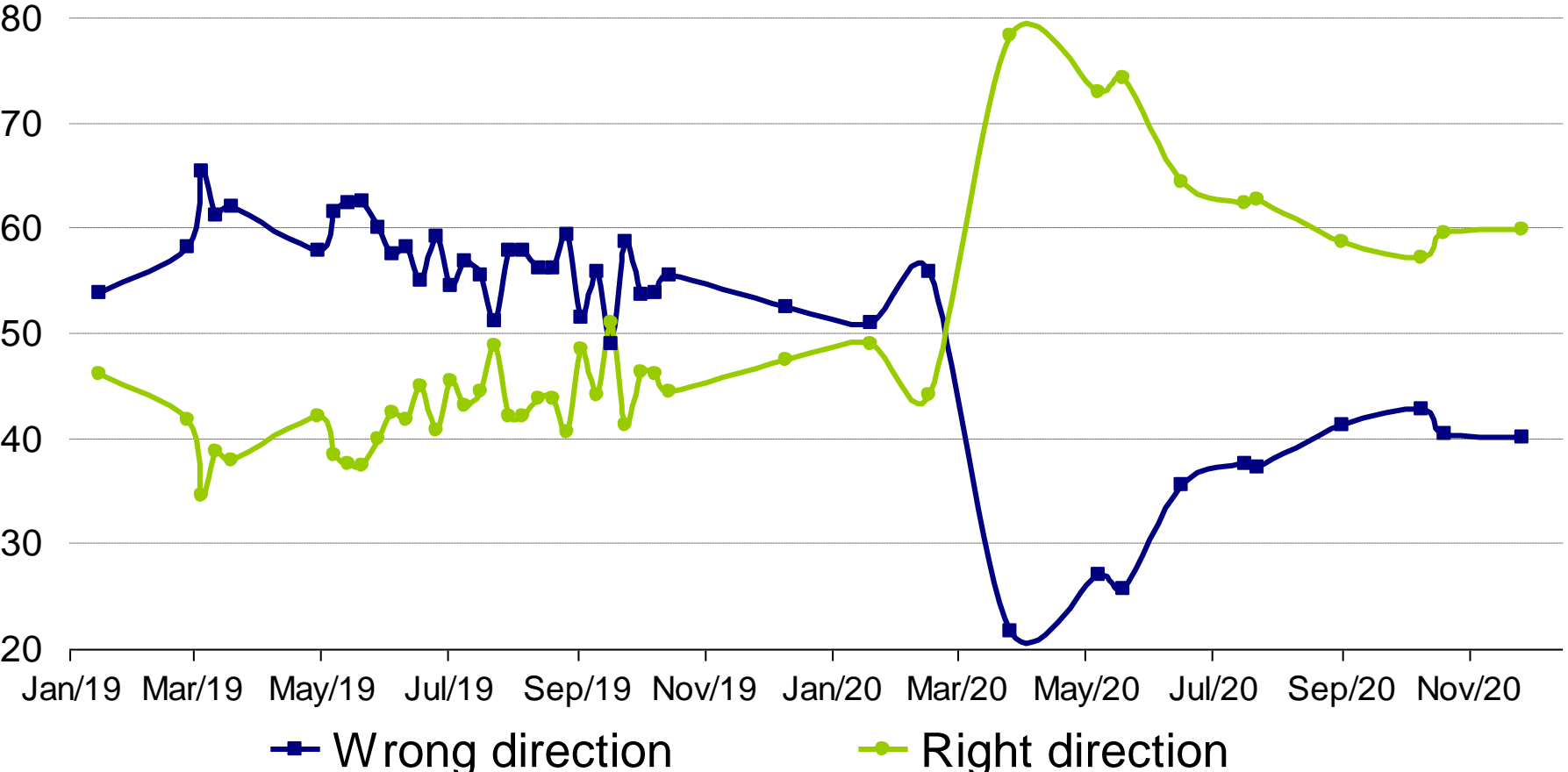
% who say right direction



Note: Figures adjusted to exclude those who skipped the question.

Direction of government

Q. All things considered, would you say the Government of Canada is moving in the right direction or the wrong direction?



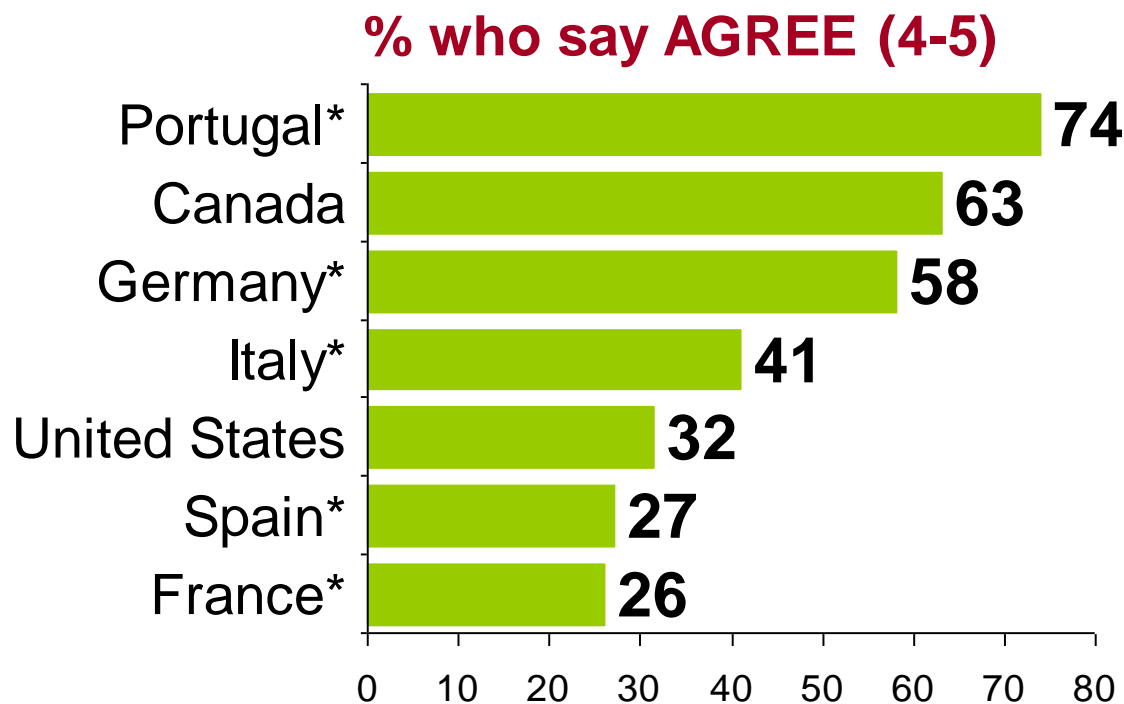
Note: Figures adjusted to exclude those who skipped the question.

BASE: Canadians; November 13-26, 2020, n=2,657, MOE +/- 1.9%, 19 times out of 20

Comparison of government approval ratings

Q. Please rate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements:

I feel that (my government) has risen to the challenge of COVID-19 well in its response



* European figures drawn from “10 Takeaways from the COVID-19 Crisis”, a study conducted for the European Council on Foreign Relations (July 2020)

BASE (U.S.): Americans; August 7-16, 2020, n=710, MOE +/- 3.7%, 19 times out of 20

BASE: Canadians; July 14-21, 2020, n=1,052, MOE +/- 3.0%, 19 times out of 20



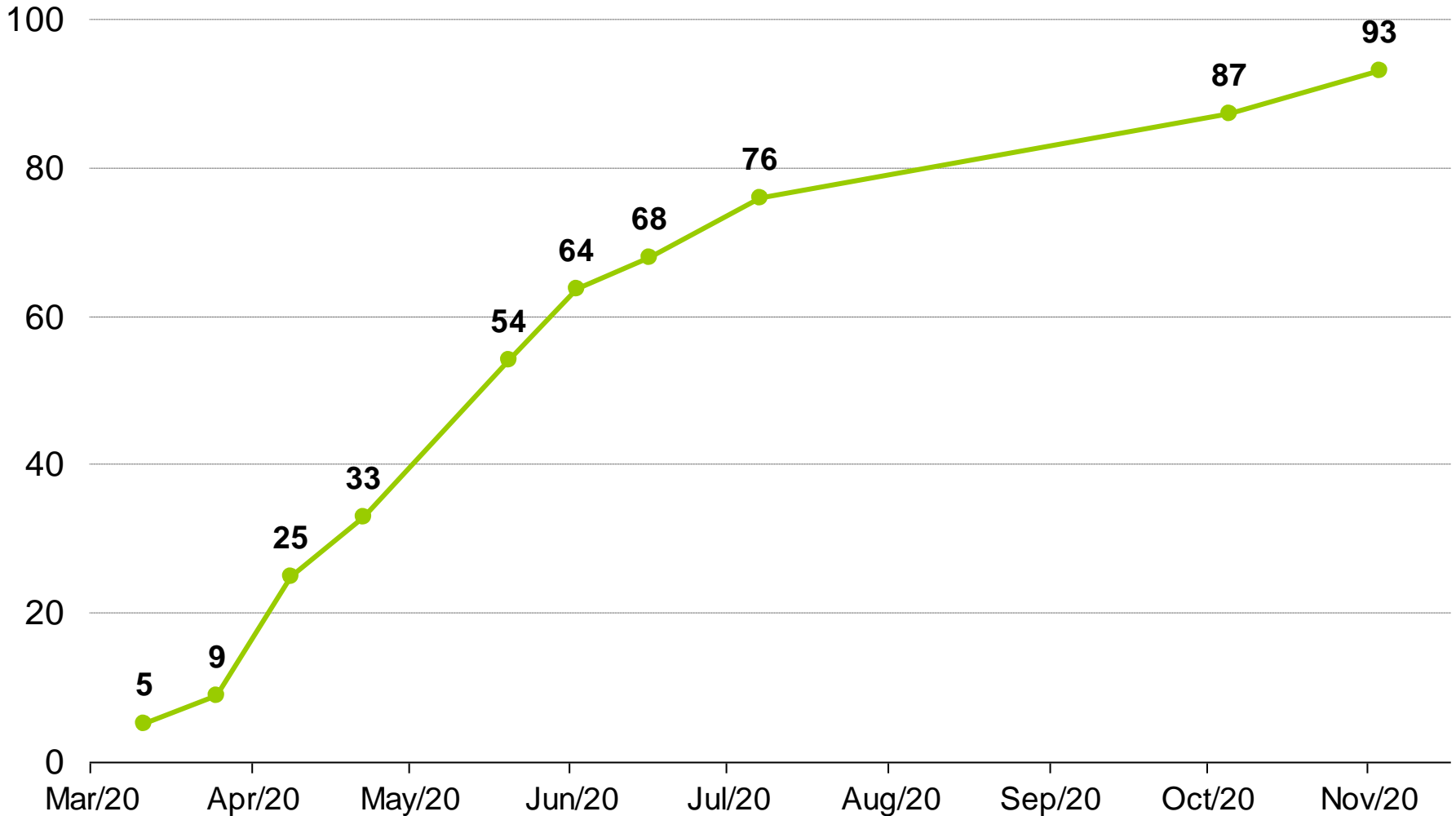
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Mask acceptance

- » Consensus to behave safely may be declining/polarizing
- » Nevertheless, use of masks has surged
 - Best predictor of overall compliance
 - Men, those in rural settings and those experiencing low stress/risk perception less likely to mask
 - Those with ordered outlook less likely to wear a mask (not masking = symbol of defiance?)
 - This behavioural shift is remarkable given that other public health campaigns (e.g., smoking, seat belts, impaired driving) took decades, not nearly as effective
 - Strong link to ideology and partisanship
- » Now tightly predicts vaccine hesitancy/rejection

Tracking use of masks

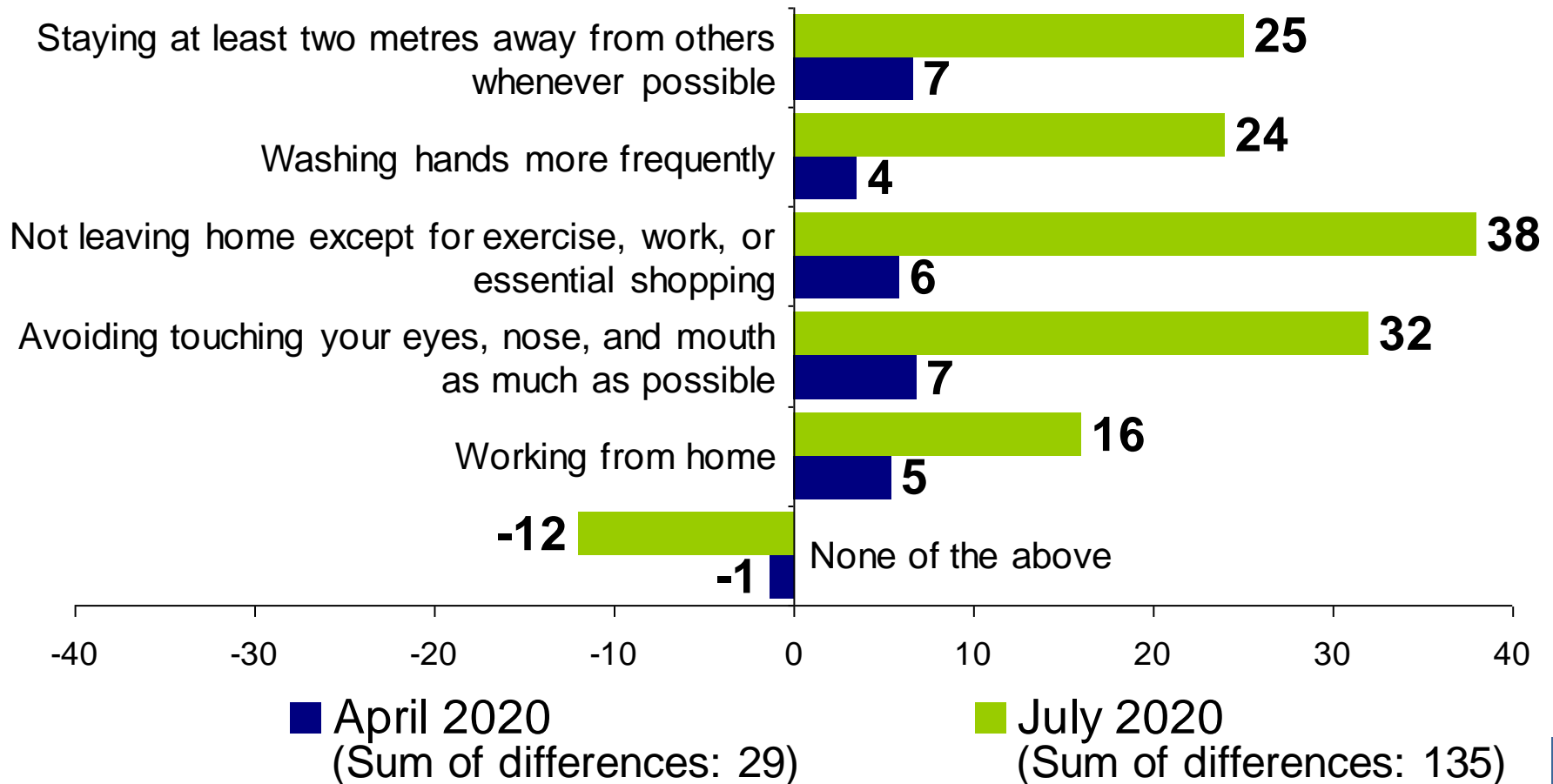
% who say they regularly wear a mask in public



Tracking link b/w masks & other safe behaviour

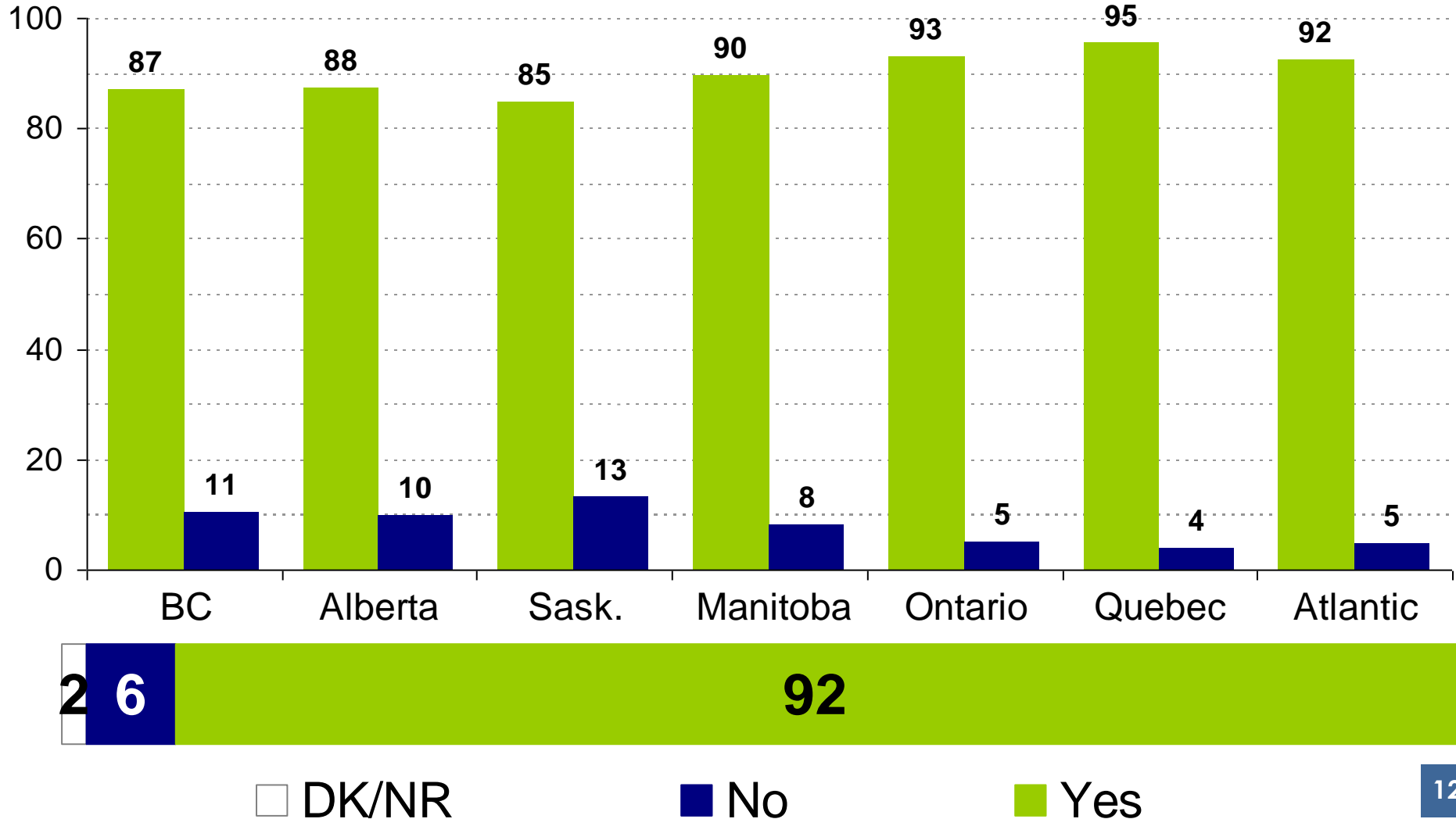
Q. Which of the following steps have you taken in response to COVID-19? [Multiple responses accepted]

Gap between mask wearers and non-mask wearers
(% among those who wear masks MINUS % among those who do not)



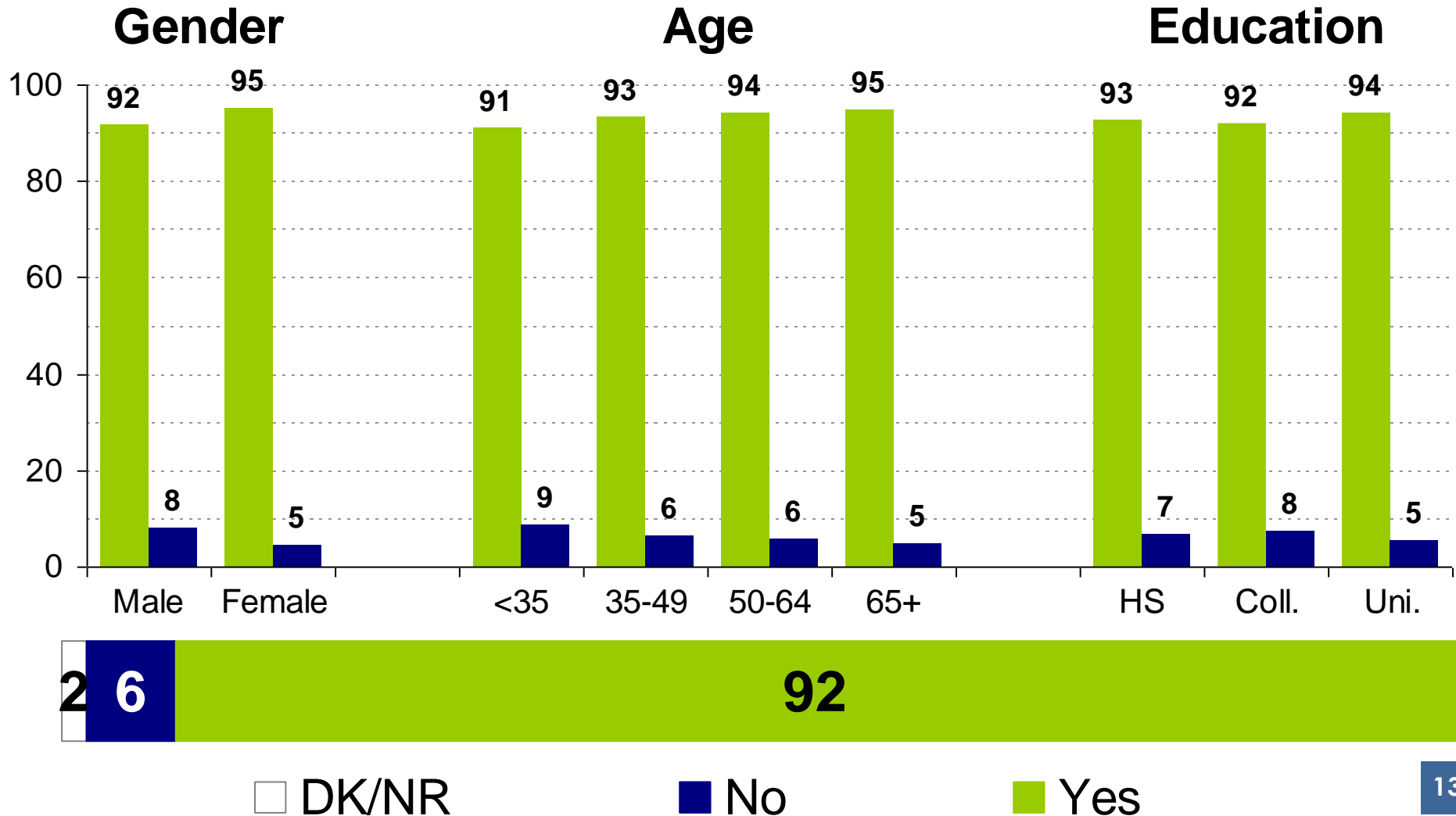
Mask use by region

Q. Thinking about your response to COVID-19, do you regularly wear a facemask in public?



Mask use by demographics

Q. Thinking about your response to COVID-19, do you regularly wear a facemask in public?

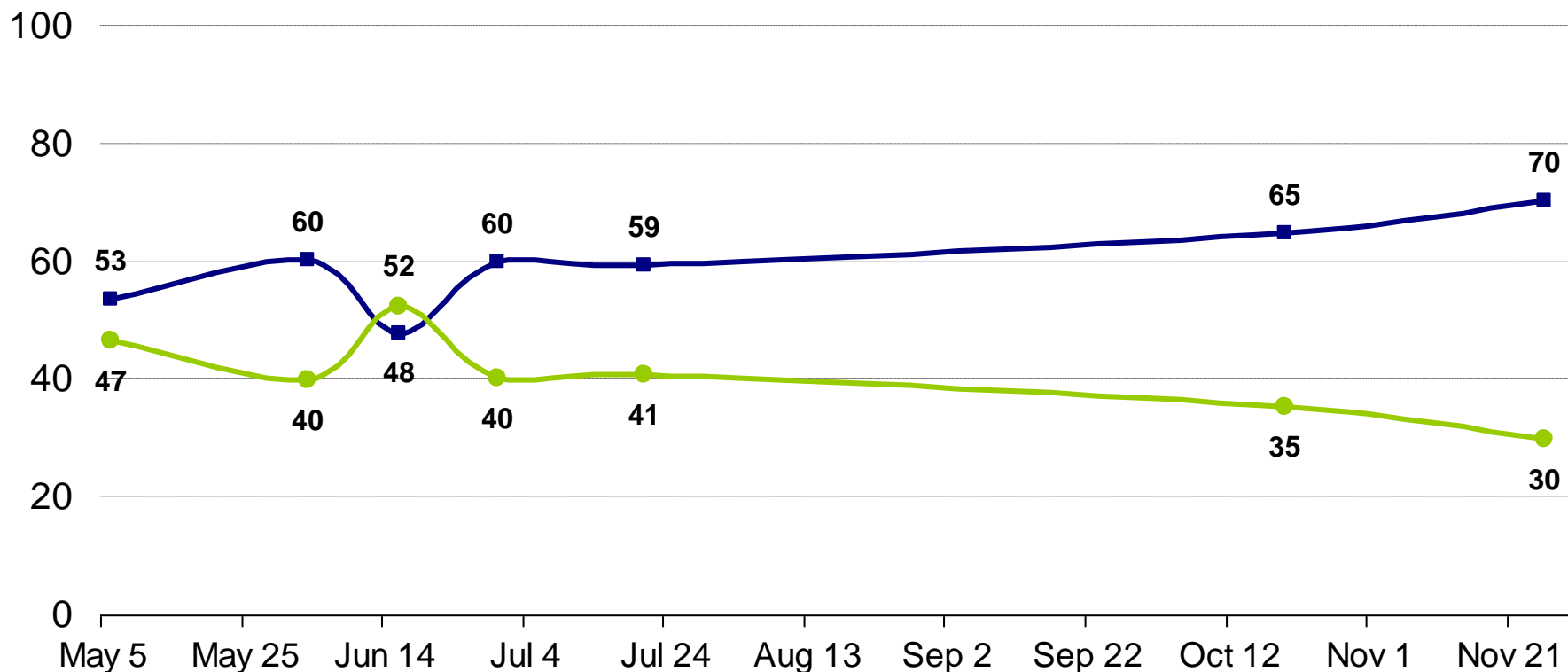


Outlook on COVID-19 outbreak

- » Growing sense that 'worst is yet to come'
- » Groups that are particularly concerned about the trajectory of the outbreak include:
 - Those in poor health
 - Residents of Manitoba and British Columbia
 - Seniors
 - Women
- » Surprisingly, Quebec residents much more likely to say 'worst is behind'
- » Small-c conservatives more likely to say 'worst is behind'
- » Outlook is strongly correlated to facemask use and vaccine hesitancy

Outlook on COVID-19 outbreak

Q. Which of the following best describes your outlook on the COVID-19 outbreak?



■ The worst is yet to come

● The worst is behind us

Note: Figures adjusted to exclude those who skipped the question.

Vaccine acceptance (i)

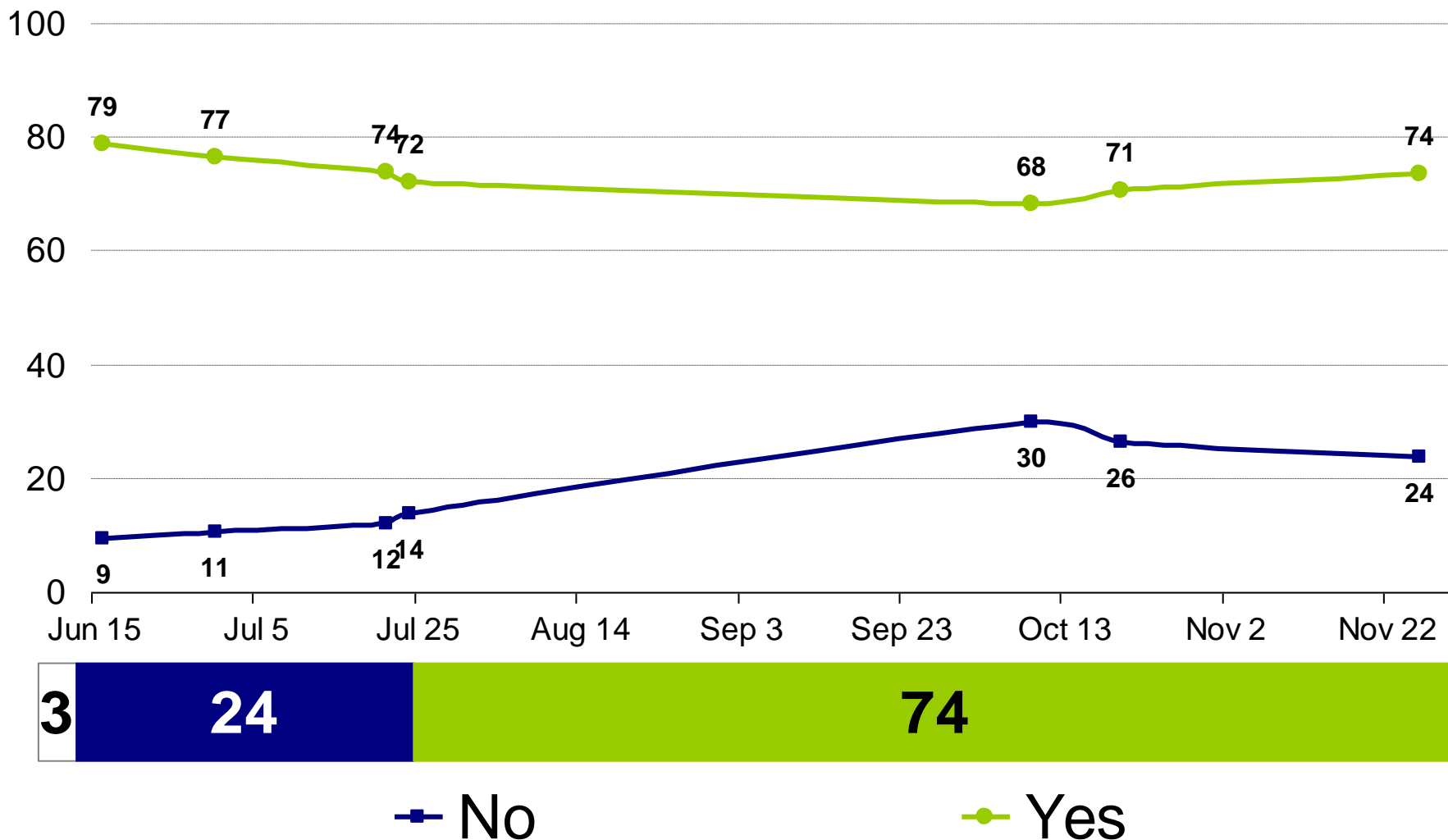
- » One in four Canadians hesitant about receiving a COVID-19 vaccine
 - Declining somewhat, possibly linked to lower pessimism about vaccine arrival
- » Two powerful drivers of vaccine hesitancy
- » The **first driver** is alienation/ideology/vulnerability
 - Remarkably, vaccine acceptance – a supposedly scientific issue – is very strongly correlated confidence in direction of country and federal government
 - Patterns suggest alienation and mistrust are drivers
 - Small-c conservative voters are more likely to shun vaccine
 - Those of lower socioeconomic status more hesitant

Vaccine acceptance (ii)

- » The **second driver** centres on a number of regional and demographic factors – hesitancy higher among:
 - Young people
 - Residents of Alberta
 - Non-university educated
 - Perhaps most concerningly, visible minorities and Indigenous Canadians; this poses a huge challenge, since these groups are at higher risk
- » Seniors are more open to receiving a vaccine which, given their higher risk from COVID-19, could be an argument for putting them higher in the queue
- » Several tests of sensitivity to different versions of the vaccine question produced virtually identical results

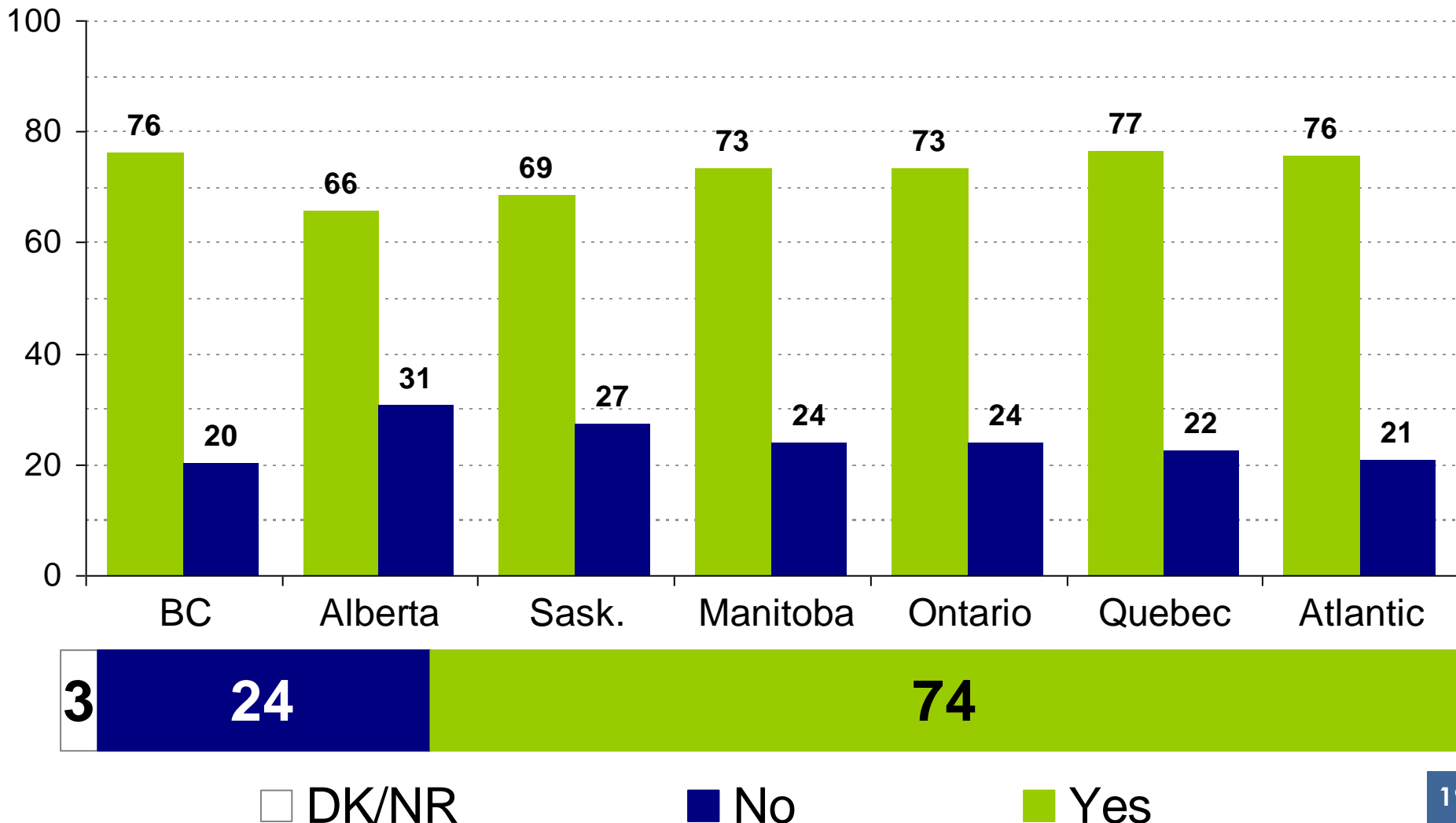
Vaccine acceptance

Q. *Would you be willing to receive a COVID-19 vaccine if one were available?*



Vaccine acceptance by region

Q. *Would you be willing to receive a COVID-19 vaccine if one were available?*



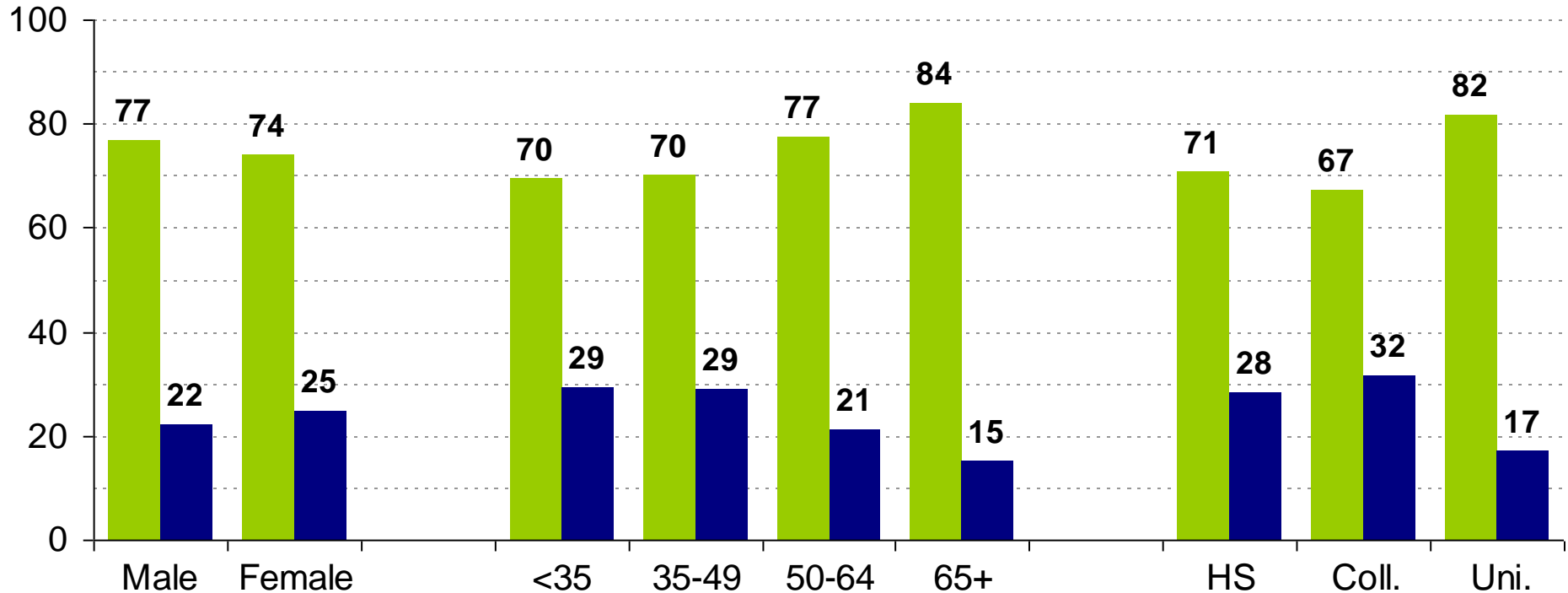
Vaccine acceptance by demographics

Q. *Would you be willing to receive a COVID-19 vaccine if one were available?*

Gender

Age

Education



□ DK/NR

■ No

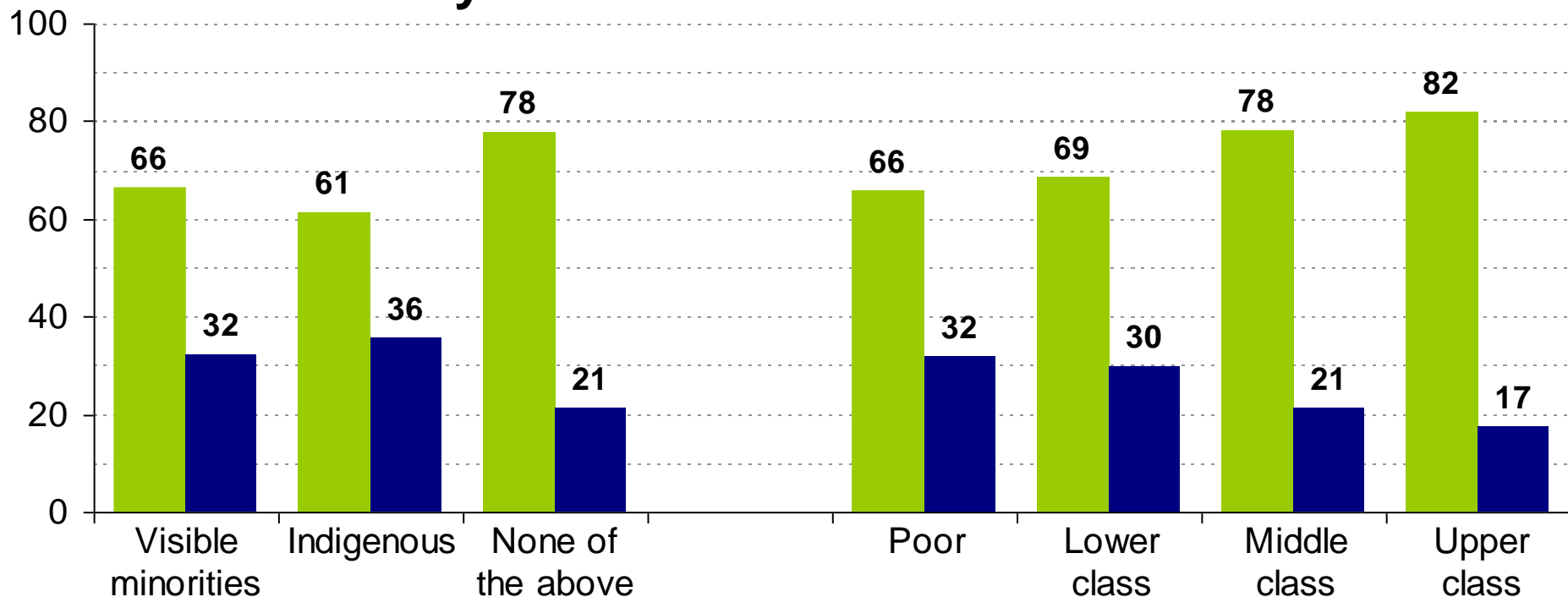
■ Yes

Vaccine acceptance by ethnicity/class

Q. *Would you be willing to receive a COVID-19 vaccine if one were available?*

Ethnicity

Social class



□ DK/NR

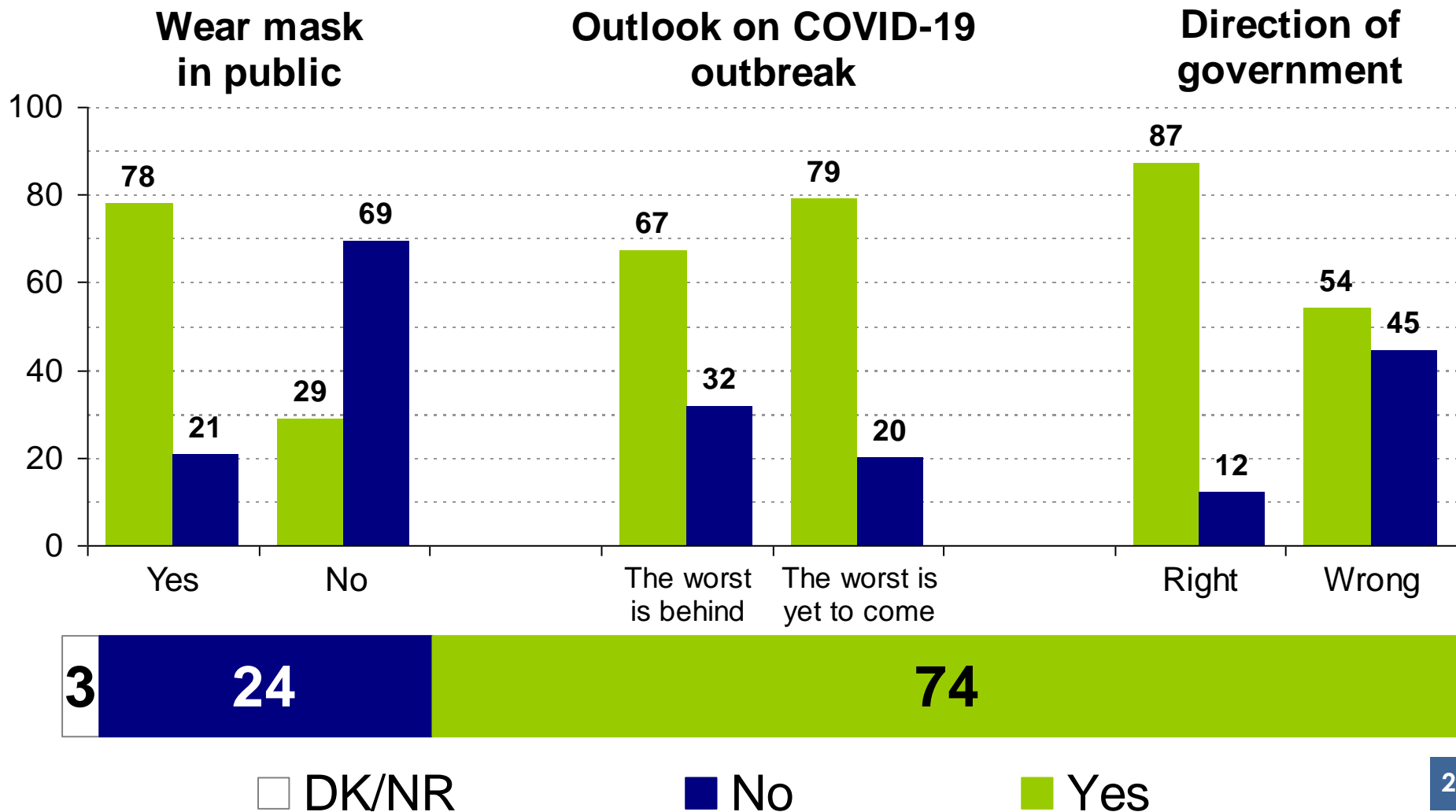
■ No

■ Yes

21

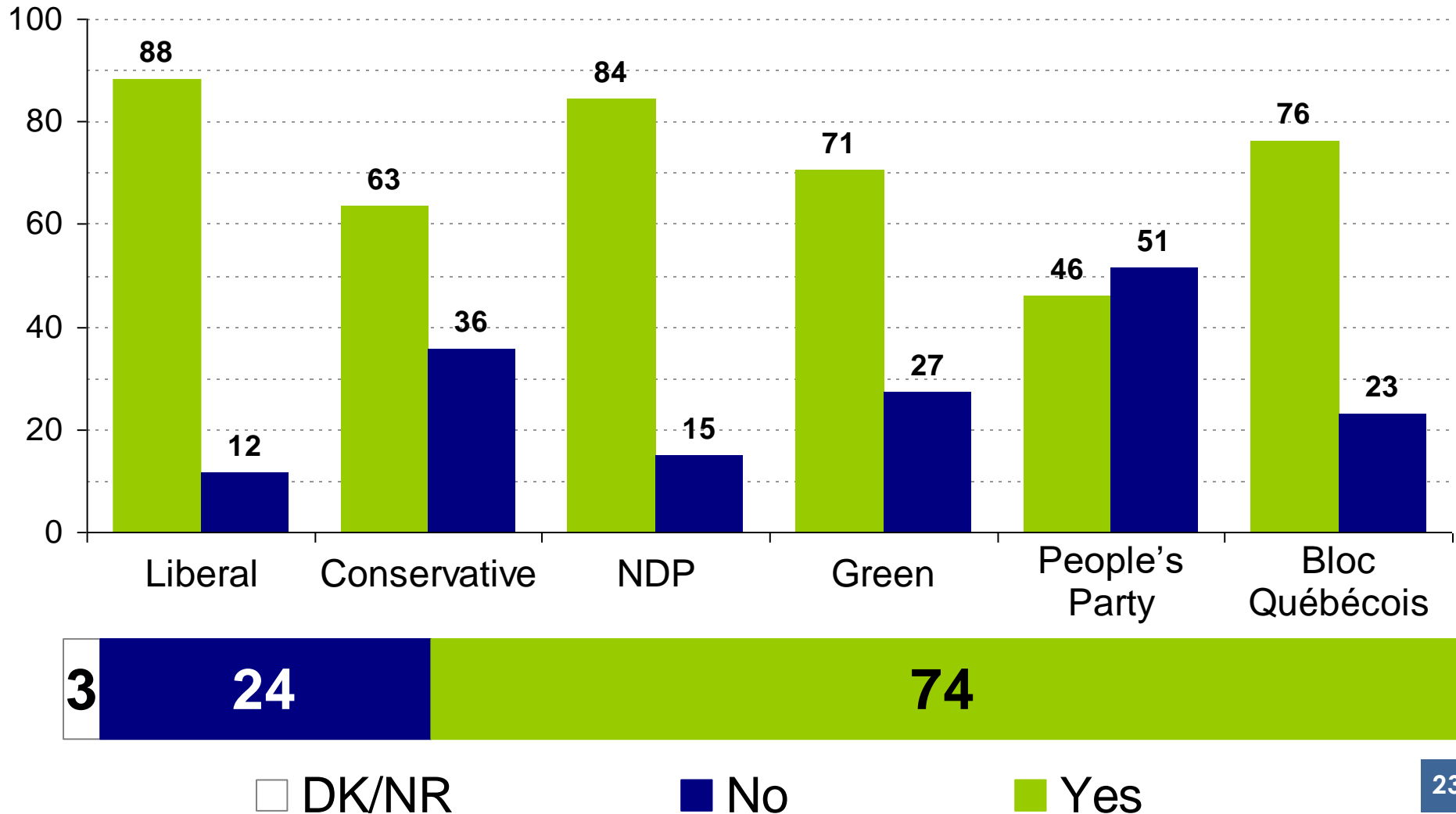
Vaccine acceptance by attitudes/behaviour

Q. *Would you be willing to receive a COVID-19 vaccine if one were available?*



Vaccine acceptance by party support

Q. *Would you be willing to receive a COVID-19 vaccine if one were available?*



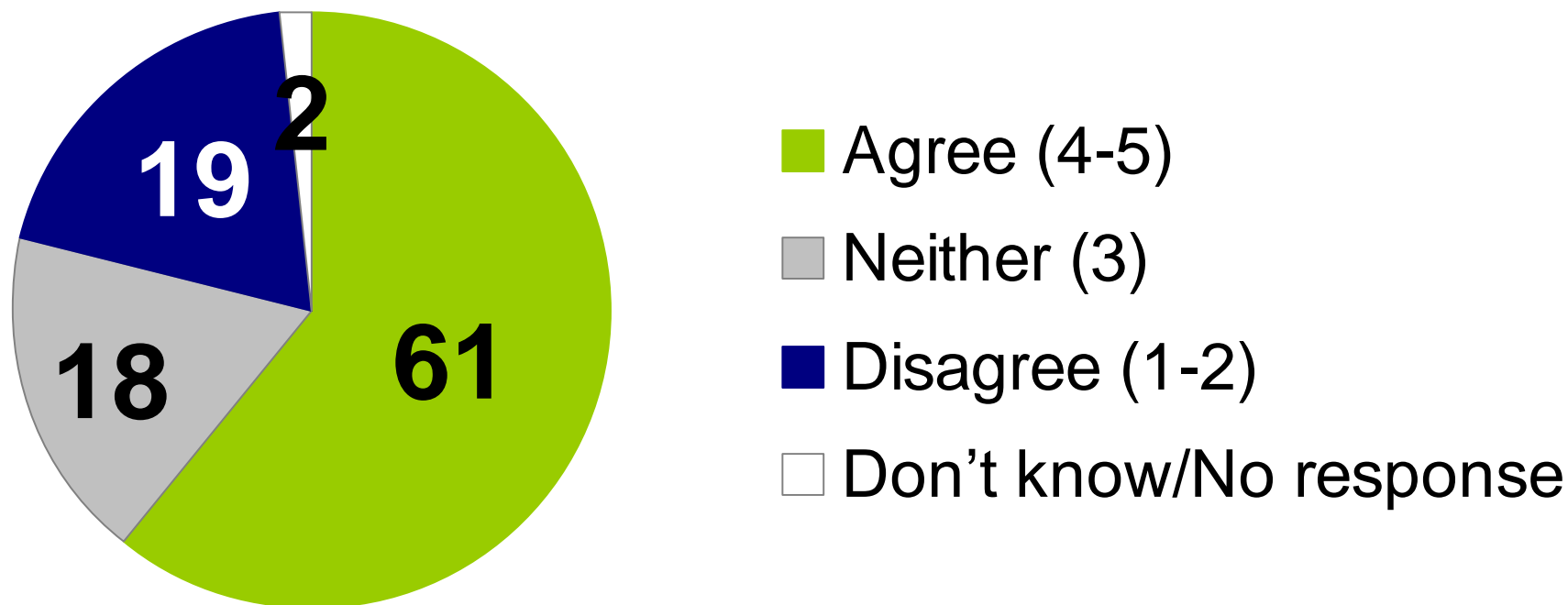
Views on enforcement plan

- » Six in ten Canadians say they want federal and provincial governments to develop a co-operative plan to enforce safety measures
 - Support highest in Manitoba and Ontario
 - Support higher among Liberal and NDP voters
 - Support strongly correlated with confidence in national direction and mask/vaccine acceptance
- » Surprisingly, failing some form of co-operative strategy, seven in ten would support the federal government moving ahead with national guidelines
 - Majority support in all regions (*including* Alberta and Saskatchewan) outside Quebec (plurality support)
 - Opposition follows familiar pattern where alienated and mistrustful more strongly opposed

Views on a plan to enforce safety measures

Q. Please rate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statement:

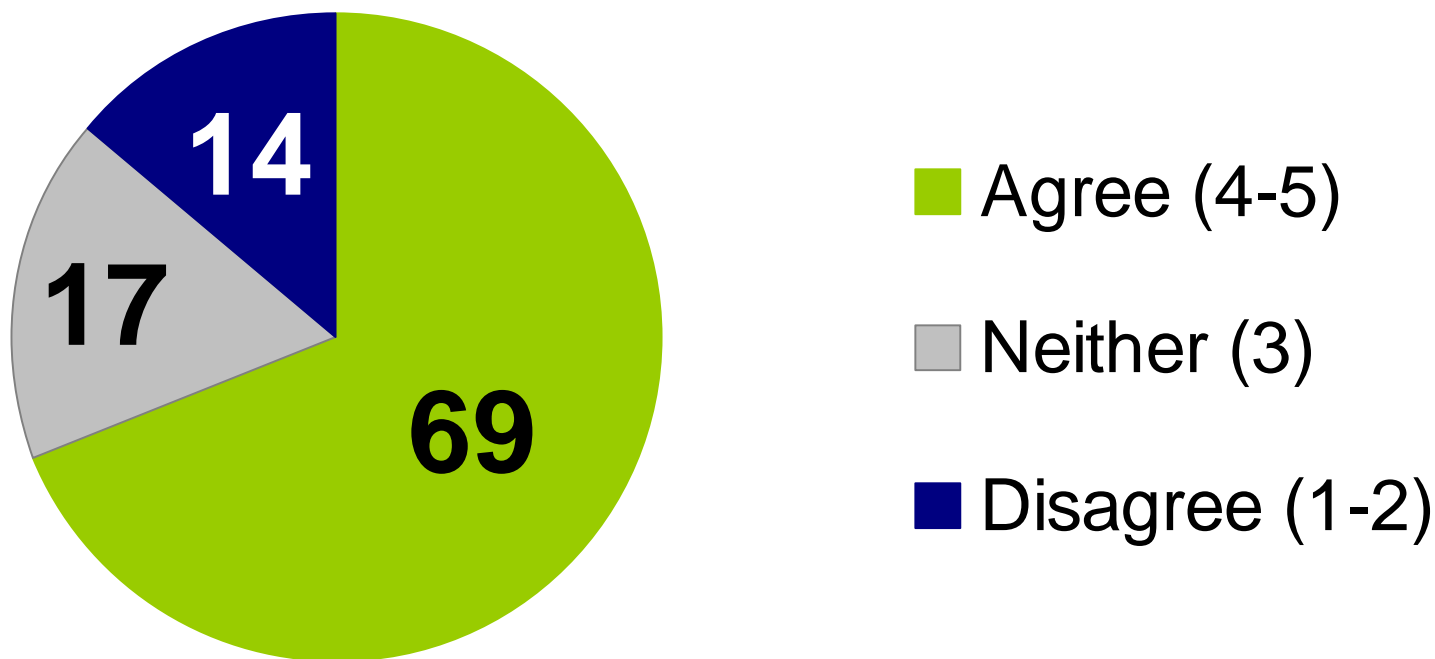
Federal and provincial governments should come up with a common plan to develop and enforce safety measures until a COVID-19 vaccine is available



Views on a plan to enforce safety measures

Q. [IF YES] Please rate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statement:

If federal and provincial governments are unable to agree on a new plan, the federal government should move ahead with creating national guidelines

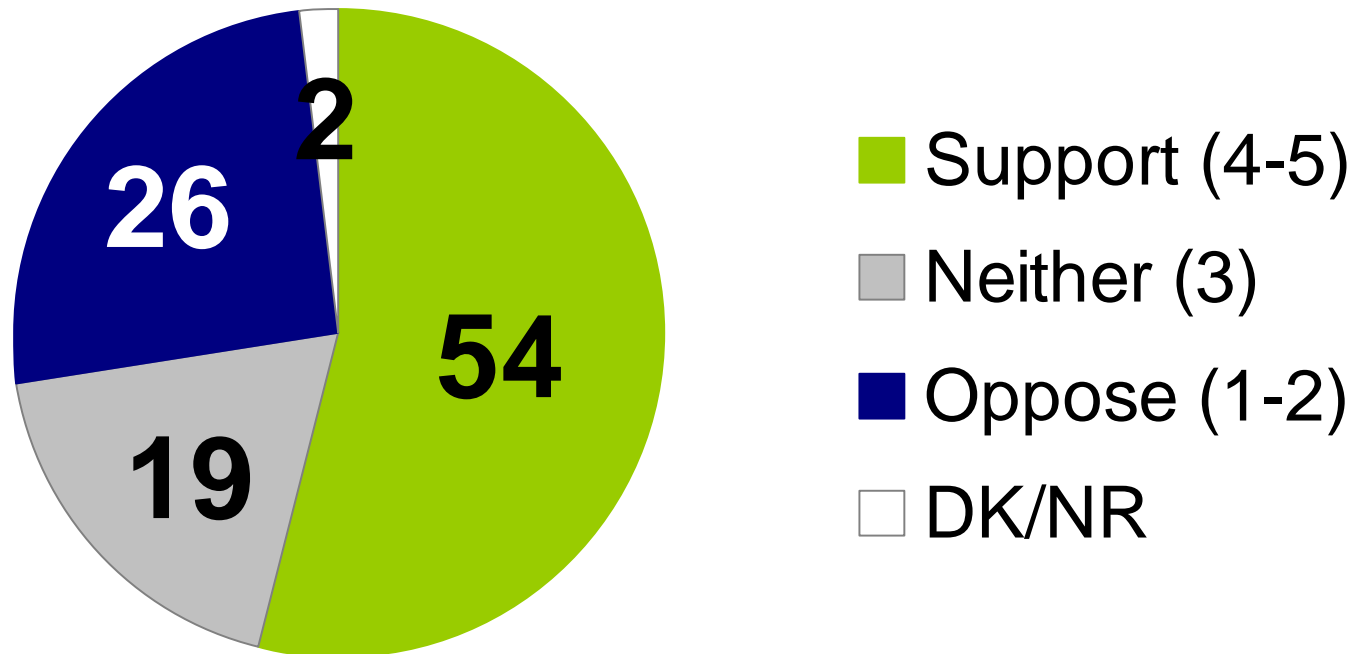


Support for Emergencies Act

- » Just over half of Canadians would support enacting the Emergencies Act
 - Opposition three times higher among anti-maskers and those hesitant about receiving vaccine
 - Regionally, opposition strongest in Alberta
- » These results are remarkable in light of the somewhat draconian nature of the proposition

Support for enacting Emergencies Act

Q. *The Emergencies Act gives the Government of Canada additional powers during a time of crisis, such as prohibiting travel, enforcing self-isolation, limiting assemblies, and mobilizing the military to back up the health system. To what extent would you support or oppose the federal government enacting the Emergencies Act to combat the COVID-19 pandemic?*





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Conclusions (i)

- » We are entering a critical new phase which is defined by two emergent forces:
 - A vaccine is here and will be rolled out in coming months
 - A burgeoning second wave with the highest-ever incidence of Canadians who think the 'worst is yet ahead'
- » These two forces alter the path for the next few months
 - Emphasis on shorter-term compliance may be strengthened
 - Desire for tougher, clearer national strategy with federal government moving unilaterally if co-operative strategy not secured

Conclusions (ii)

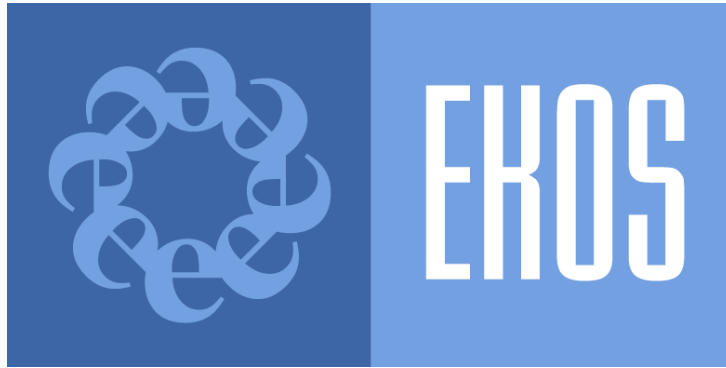
- » BUT emerging polarized challenge from the alienated and mistrustful
 - Waning patience from science-based majority?
- » Separate challenges of gender, generation, race, and social class
 - Seniors may be higher priority, not just because of their greater risk of mortality but also because of much higher levels of vaccine acceptance (tipping point in saving lives vs. slowing infection debate?)
- » Another critical challenge is the much higher vaccine resistance in Indigenous, non-white, and lower socioeconomic groups
 - These groups have poorer health, coupled with MUCH lower vaccine acceptance rates
 - Need to unpack and solve this critical problem

Conclusions (iii)

- » Different outlooks manifest themselves in alternate versions of what a post-COVID-19 world will look like:
 - The **open side** stresses openness, health, education, sustainable environmental, and measures such as wealth taxes and a four-day work week, with heavy emphasis on science and expertise
 - The **ordered side** stresses retreat from globalization, less porous borders, and a new emphasis on economic nationalism and security

Conclusions (iv)

- » Renewed made-in-Canada approach possible bridge across open-ordered divide?
- » Recreating shared progress (key initial driver of polarization) unique opportunity
- » Renewed possibility of bigger North American idea?
- » Case for renewed emphasis on scientific citizen engagement



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