

# HOW CANADIAN COMPANIES SHOULD CELEBRATE INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY

Ipsos research and social media provide a guide for workplaces and C-suites to make better decisions to show women matter year-round

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**GAME CHANGERS**



## OBJECTIVES

**This year's International Women's Day put into stark focus the impact of COVID-19 on many women in the Canadian workforce.**

Many female workers will come out of the pandemic farther behind than their male counterparts.

While social conversations around International Women's Day indicate that Canadian women in the workforce may be outwardly joyful, many are in fact feeling frustrated, lonely and bored.

Others are feeling optimistic, calm and well-prepared – but less so than the average Canadian man.

Canadian companies' business decisions need to consider the needs and desires of women, as they are not always congruent with those of men.





International Women’s Day, the global holiday celebrated each year on March 8, was especially poignant this year for Canadian women in the workforce – and carries lessons for companies on how they can better address workers’ needs.

On Canadian social media, the topic was popular. Ipsos research shows year-over-year growth in discussion on topics related to the advancement of women, something that is encouraging and helps build awareness. But social conversations, as well as Ipsos surveys on the impact of COVID-19 on women, suggest that many women will come out of this crisis farther behind than their male counterparts.

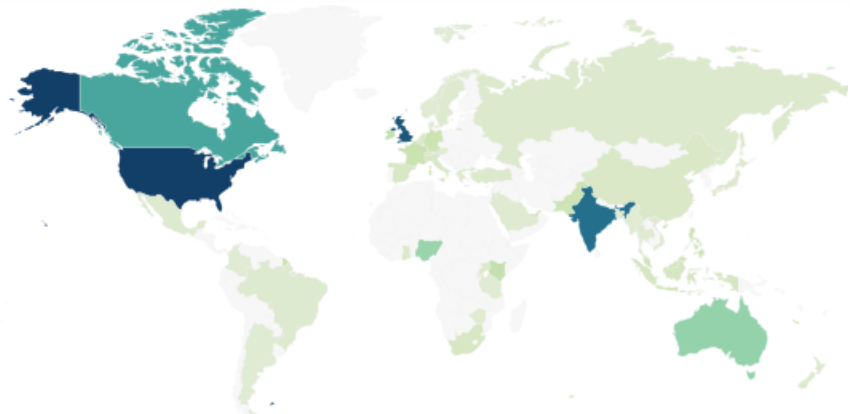
Moreover, the hope and energy triggered by International Women’s Day could generate high expectations. Left unmet, these higher expectations will serve to increase existing gaps and reinforce disillusionment. Canadian companies must seize the opportunity to build momentum beyond a day in March.

Conversations on social media showed International Women’s Day as a day to celebrate women, and North Americans were talking about it more than most.



**Top 50 countries**

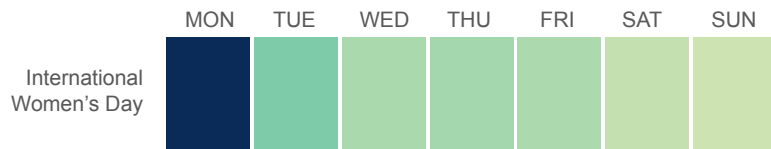
February 10 – March 13, 2021



In Canada, there were nearly 30,000 mentions of International Women’s Day that took place on March 8, according to Ipsos’ Synthesio social listening platform. The strength of that discussion continued to echo through the week:

**What’s The Topics Weekly Distribution?**

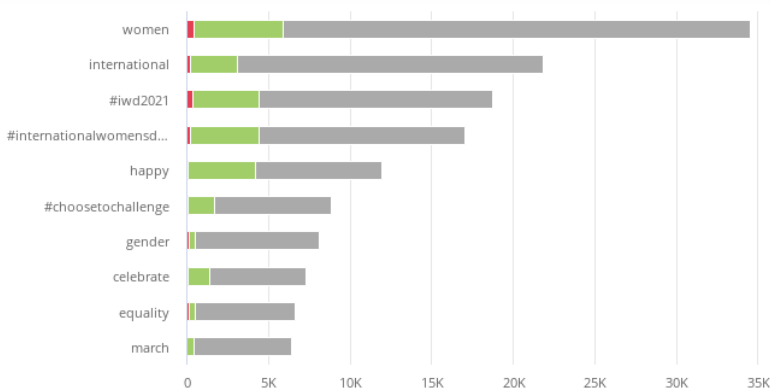
March 22, 2020 – March 22, 2021



The social conversation itself was fairly absent of negative sentiment, with a lot of discussion related to celebration of the day and #choosetochallenge. Celebrating strong women and celebrating women's success were common themes, rather than working towards specific future change, although "equality" and "#ChooseToChallenge" did appear in the top 10 words.

### Top 10 Keywords by sentiment

February 10 – March 13, 2021



### Top Keywords

February 10 – March 12, 2021



### Top Emojis

February 10 – March 12, 2021

EMOJI	VOLUME (Total)	EMOJI	VOLUME (Total)
🖤	1,232	💕	350
✨	630	🎉	326
💜	581	♀️	325
💪	466	👉	315
🇨🇦	451	🙌	293

There were more than **44,000 mentions of International Women's Day** between Feb. 10 – Mar. 12, 2021

a **78% increase** in conversation versus the same period in 2020.



Instagram | 62% and



YouTube | 24% drove much of the chatter related to the observance.

🌟 Day 8: Women's Day 🌟 Yes it's all about women today but I've also got to acknowledge the very many men in my life who have supported me and bolstered my confidence and belief in myself when perhaps others tried to tear it down. Happy international women's day to everyone #iwd2021 #iwd #women #feministaf #feminism #mindfulmarch #mindfulness #coachsuzi

Empowered women Empower women.



Some social media users also took the day as a moment to reflect on the past year, including their own personal challenges. The day was a chance for users to celebrate their own and other individual women's achievements in the past year, and provide moment of reflection and self-care.

Today at an #IWD2021 event, I took some time to reflect on the past year and focused on how quickly everything had to move last spring. As we look back, it's good to keep that context in mind  
<https://www.theglobeandmail.com/politics/article-inside-the-negotiation-of-ottawas-supersized-coronavirus-bailout/>

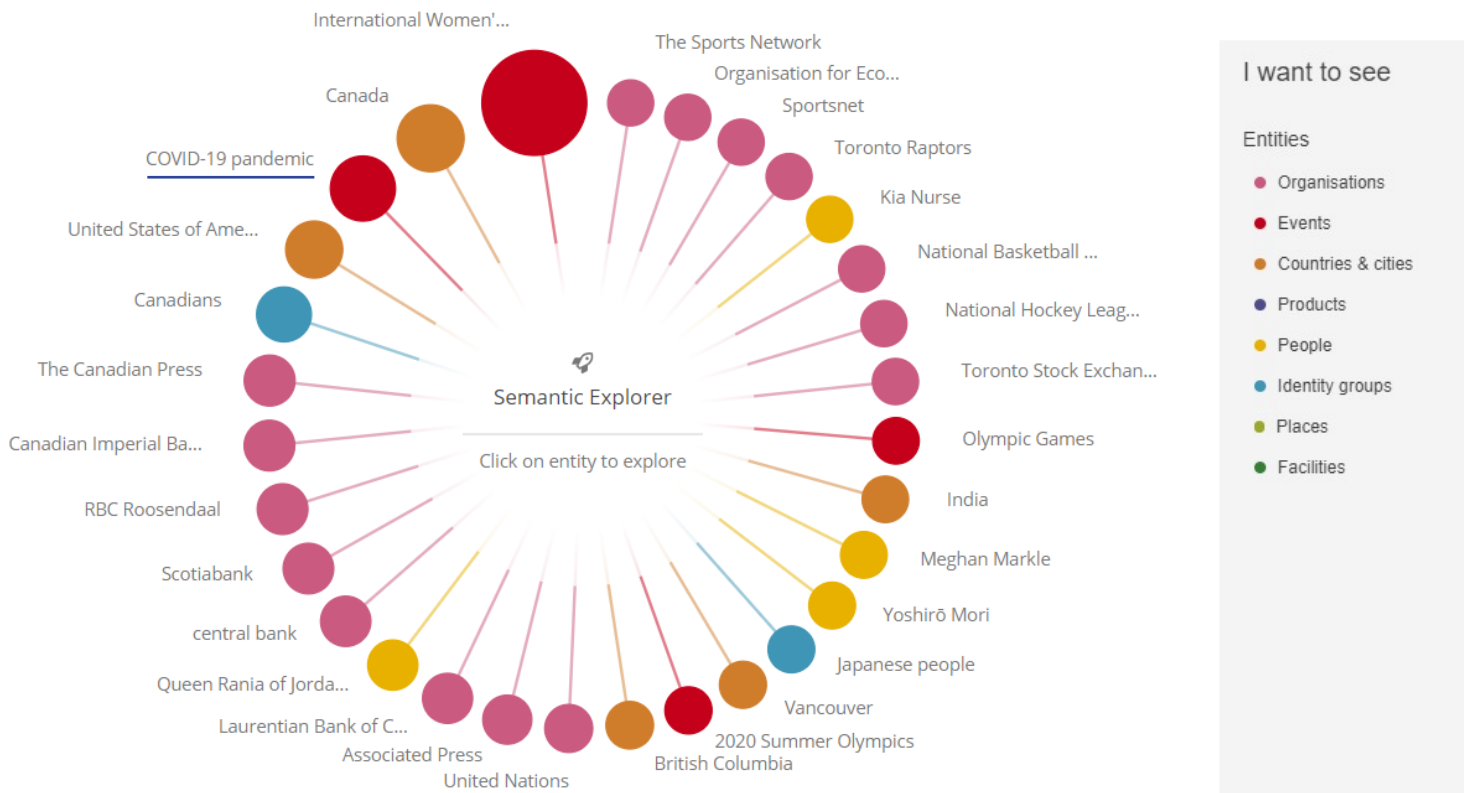
Laurier Alumni @LaurierAlu...

03/04/2021 12:18 PM

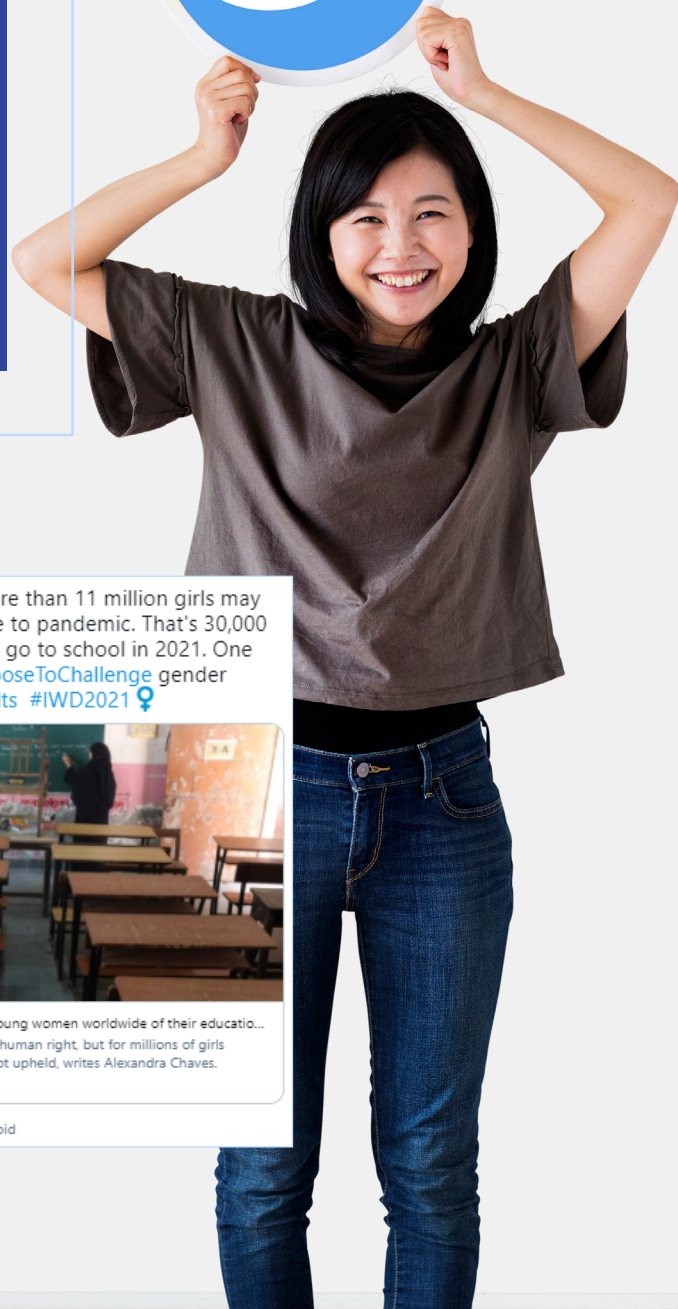
"I had to juggle getting the meal ready for my 20th anniversary dinner with an afternoon meeting with the Prime Minister on CERB policy." - Laurier economics professor @tammyschirle on work-life balance during the pandemic. #IWD2021 #IWD

However, there were also deeper discussions about the future for women going on in the social space. Semantic analysis shows one of the largest topics in Canadian mentions related to International Women's Day was COVID-19.

### Social Intelligence: International Women's Day Semantic Analysis



Tweets about the pandemic mention the effects on women's workplace participation and urge action to help women stay in the workforce and build better lives in Canada – and now globally – as the economy recovers.



Happy International Women's Day! This past year has acutely underscored the disproportionate impact pandemic has had on women. Thank them for starters. Then act in ways to make their lives permanently better - pandemic or not. #InternationalWomensDay ♀

9:52 AM · Mar 8, 2021 · Twitter for Android

According to UNESCO more than 11 million girls may never return to school due to pandemic. That's 30,000 girls per day who may not go to school in 2021. One girl every 3 seconds. #ChooseToChallenge gender inequality. #Canada4Results #IWD2021 ♀



OPINION | Pandemic robbing many young women worldwide of their education... Access to education is a fundamental human right, but for millions of girls around the globe it is a right that is not upheld, writes Alexandra Chaves. @cbc.ca

6:43 AM · Mar 8, 2021 · Twitter for Android

Today is International Women's Day; We know that COVID-19 has disproportionately impacted women, from layoffs, to caregiving roles, to domestic violence. As we recover from the pandemic, our focus is on a feminist recovery, emphasizing equality and empowerment.

Supporting an inclusive recovery means advancing gender equality, and economic and social stability for all people in Canada



Canada

9:55 AM · Mar 8, 2021 · Twitter Web App

I #ChooseToChallenge barriers that hold women and girls back from contributing to the world in the way they want to.

Charitable Impact @wearech...

03/08/2021 12:04 PM

The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the global nature of challenges confronting humanity, says Impact Ambassador @Rajan\_Sweta. Now is the time to transform such challenges into opportunities for #equality. Happy #InternationalWomensDay!

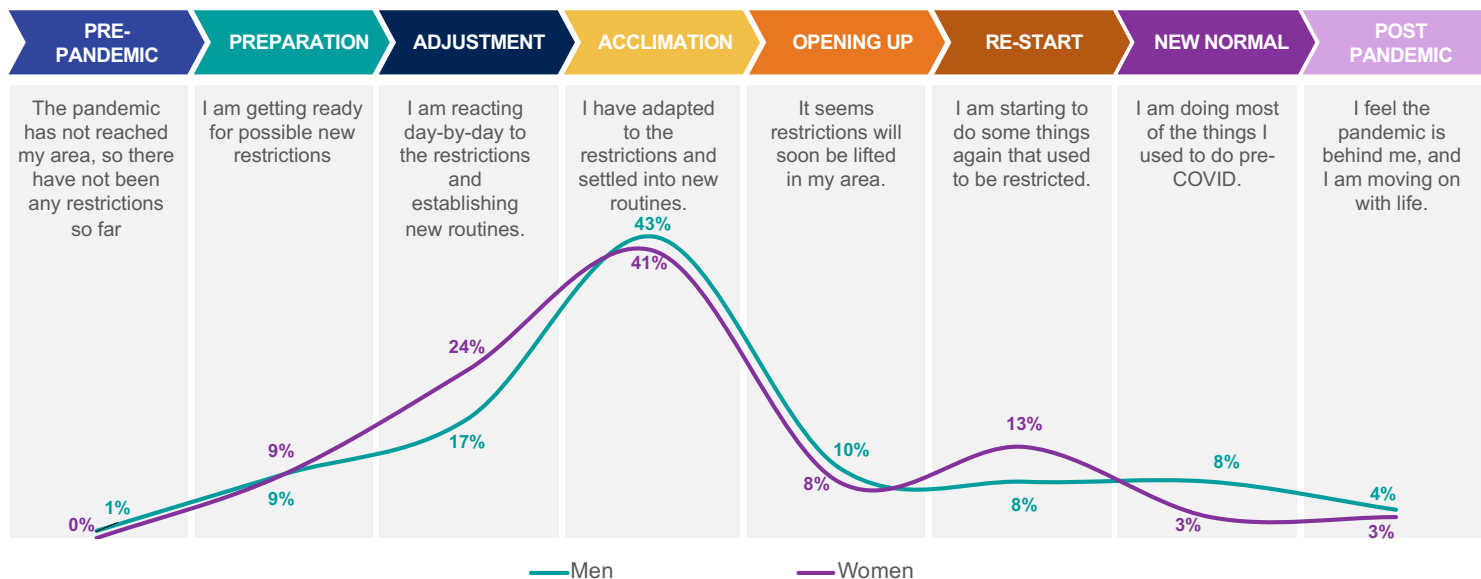
Ipsos data shows the world is moving towards recovery, but not equally. Across many of the metrics we track as part of our Ipsos Essentials program, there have been many shifts in a positive direction over the past month. But the pandemic journey has not been the same for all citizens, especially women. There is much talk of a K-shaped recovery that sets some on a more favorable path than others. Income, sector of employment and gender have been key points of bifurcation where we see paths diverge.



## Women globally report more health and financial impacts than men.

Women have a slightly more pessimistic outlook about the timeline to return to normal. In Canada, 46% of men feel things are already back to normal or will be within a year, compared to 39% of women. And it's not just perceptions of the future – even today, men are, on average, feeling farther along in the pandemic recovery than women.

“Which one of the following phrases do you feel best describes your current situation regarding the COVID-19 pandemic?”



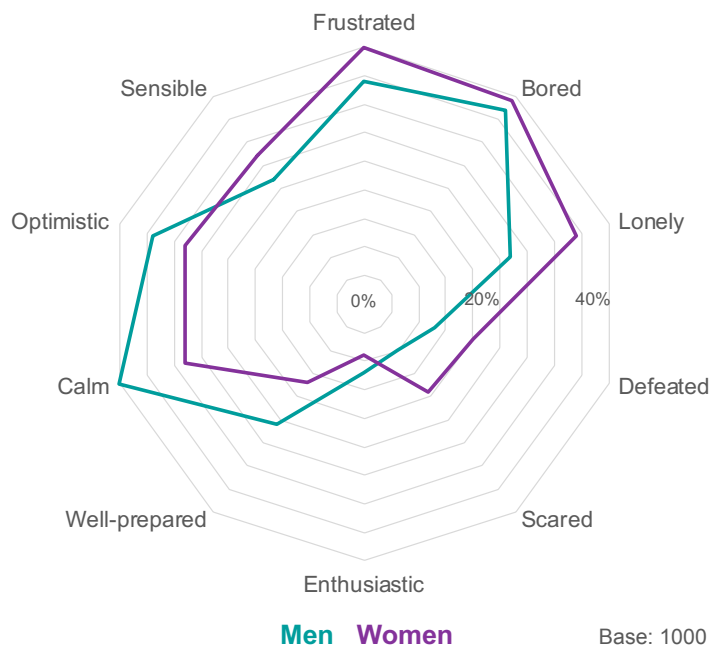
Source: Ipsos Essentials, March 11-14, 2021, Wave 36, Canada n=1,000.



While the social conversation would indicate that women may be outwardly joyful and posting encouraging messages as part of International Women’s Day events, the reality of **their day-to-day emotional profile suggests that women are in fact feeling frustrated, lonely, and bored.**

Many are also feeling optimistic, calm, and well-prepared – but less so than the average Canadian man.

### Censyidium Emotions – State of the Mind “Right Now”



Q: Which of these words describe your state of mind right now? Please select at least 3 and up to a maximum of 8 responses.

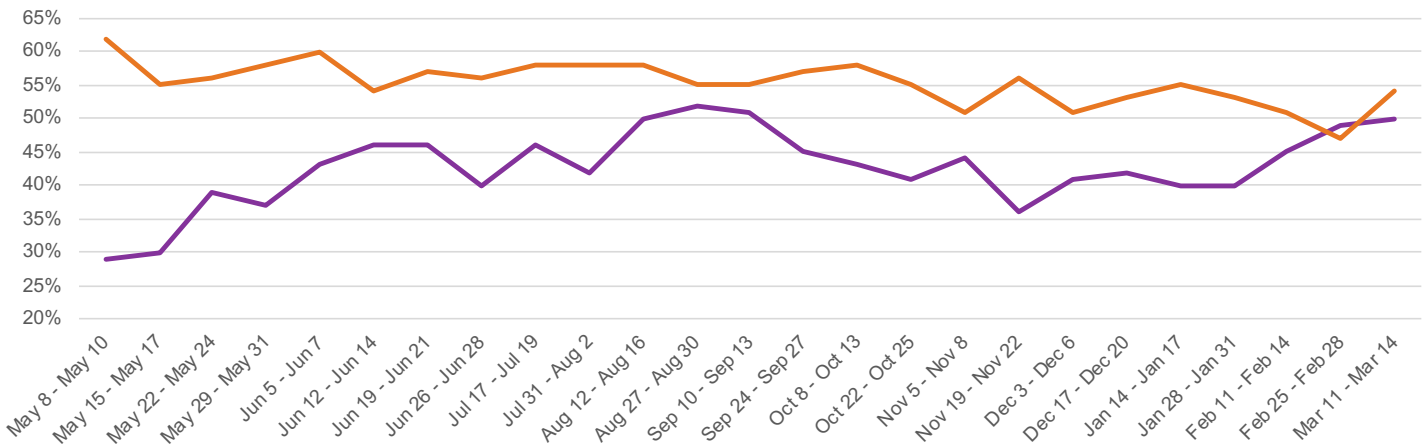
Source: Ipsos Essentials, March 11-14, 2021, Wave 36, Canada n=1,000.

Looking specifically at how we as Canadians feel about fully reopening the economy, attitudes split along gender lines. Men are torn between allowing businesses to freely reopen and the anxiety related to doing so. **Women are more likely to seek a measured approach, showing less support for reopening amid higher levels of anxiety.** This comes as women have been disproportionately impacted financially.



### Anxiety vs. Economy Women (Top-2 Box Agreement)

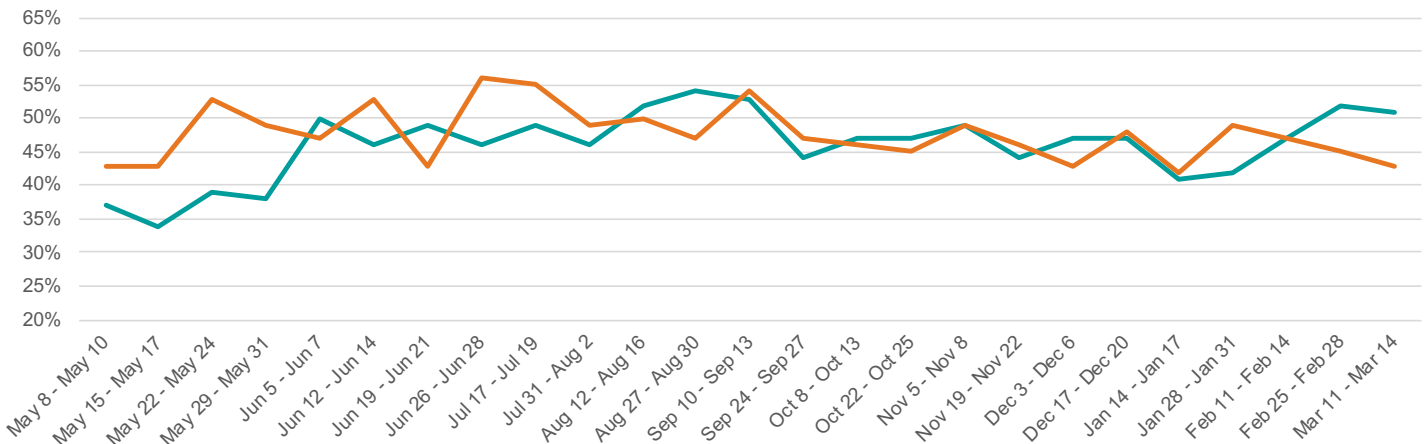
Thinking about resuming normal activities after the pandemic makes me **feel very anxious**  
 We should **restart the economy** and allow businesses to open or operate as they choose



Q: (T2B Summary) To what extent do you agree or disagree with each of the following [Thinking about resuming normal activities after the pandemic makes me feel very anxious] [We should restart the economy and allow businesses to open or operate as they choose]? Source: Ipsos Essentials, March 11-14, 2021, Wave 36, Canada n=526.

### Anxiety vs. Economy Men (Top-2 Box Agreement)

Thinking about resuming normal activities after the pandemic makes me **feel very anxious**  
 We should **restart the economy** and allow businesses to open or operate as they choose



Q: (T2B Summary) To what extent do you agree or disagree with each of the following [Thinking about resuming normal activities after the pandemic makes me feel very anxious] [We should restart the economy and allow businesses to open or operate as they choose]? Source: Ipsos Essentials, March 11-14, 2021, Wave 36, Canada n=474.

Ipsos research conducted during the pandemic has shown that for women to feel comfortable socializing and gathering with strangers, they need more safeguards in place.



Specifically, women in Canada are more likely to want to see continued social distancing, outdoor (vs. indoor) gatherings and cleaning and disinfecting of spaces before they resume public, social activities.

As they navigate the current situation, women in Canada are also more likely than men to seek products and services that support their physical and mental well-being. As a result, we might expect women to seek a paced and pragmatic road to recovery, with a greater focus on well-being and more assurances of safety protocols. Men are more likely to seek a faster route to simply get back to it.





Given the gender disparities among corporate and government decision makers, it's not hard to guess which of the two approaches is likely to win both globally and here in Canada. Male leaders are more likely to engineer a path forward that favours the speed of economic recovery, but perhaps deprioritizes mental recovery and protocols needed to make everyone feel safe. This approach ignores the needs of many Canadians. While International Women's Day was successful in celebrating the great accomplishments of women, as well as the challenges faced during the pandemic, we still risk further inequality on the road to recovery.

# WHAT DO COMPANIES IN CANADA NEED TO THINK ABOUT MOVING AHEAD?

**1** International Women’s Day goes beyond March 8. Be present in support of inclusion and diversity year-round.

**2** Business decisions need to consider the needs and desires of women, as they are not always congruent with those of men.

**3** Women are more anxious about re-entry, and rightfully so under the current situation. Brands and organizations need to show women how they’re supporting emotional well-being as much as physical well-being.

Focus areas could include:

- Communication (backed by protocols) that create assurance and reinforce safety.
- Showing empathy towards those who are not yet ready to reengage.
- Offering flexibility that allows people to define their own “normal” versus a one-size-fits-all model.



## About Ipsos

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