

FACTUM

Canadians Split on Future of CERB: 52% Believe CERB Should be Discontinued at its Earliest Opportunity

Six in Ten (63%) Believe the CERB is being misused by many Canadians;
72% Say CERB Has Allowed Many to Not Go Back to Work when they Should;
Eight in Ten (79%) Support Tax Hikes or Spending Cuts to Pay for Income Supports

Toronto, ON, July 16, 2020 – Canadians are split on the future of the CERB. While a strong majority believe it averted financial disaster for many Canadians, they also see it as a short-term emergency relief program only that needs to be phased out. Additionally, Canadians are concerned that CERB has been abused by too many and is also acting as a disincentive to some people from going back to work. This is according to a new Ipsos poll conducted on behalf of Global News.

Half (52%) of Canadians agree (16% strongly/36% somewhat) the CERB should be discontinued at the earliest opportunity, while the other half (48%) of Canadians disagree (12% strongly/36% somewhat) that it should be discontinued. Agreement with its discontinuation is highest in Quebec (58%) and BC (57%), followed by Atlantic Canada (54%), Saskatchewan and Manitoba (49%), Alberta (48%), and Ontario (47%). Those aged 55+ are most likely to believe the CERB should be discontinued (58%), while those aged 35-54 (51%) are evenly split and only 43% of those aged 18-34 think it should be discontinued.

Despite the division on the future of the CERB, there is a general consensus among Canadians that the CERB has done a good job preventing financial disaster for many Canadians: 86% agree (29% strongly/56% somewhat) that it has achieved this goal, while just 14% disagree (3% strongly/11% somewhat). Considering its perceived success, six in ten (59%) hold the position (18% strongly/41% somewhat) that the CERB should be extended for as long as unemployment remains high.

Canadians Concerned about Misuse, Disincentive to Return to Work

Nearly two in three (63%) Canadians agree (19% strongly/43% somewhat) that the CERB is being misused by many Canadians, and most (85%) agree (48% strongly/37% somewhat) that people who have been fraudulently collecting CERB should receive a significant fine.

More than just misuse by Canadians, a majority (72%) of Canadians agree (24% strongly/48% somewhat) that the CERB has allowed many people to not go back to work even when they should. This is likely why the government has made the recent announcement that it will extend the CEWS (wage subsidy), while phasing out CERB.

Majority Supports Basic Universal Income

Some have argued that the CERB has been a *de facto* experiment with a basic universal income for all Canadians, and a majority appear willing to explore a more long-term program of this nature. Six in ten (58%) agree (25% strongly/33% somewhat) that Canada should create a basic universal income for all Canadians, which means that Canadians would receive a guaranteed amount of money from the government regardless of whether they work or not.



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Canadians aged 18-34, who have been hit hardest by job losses related to COVID-19, are most supportive (74%) of a basic universal income, while those aged 35-54 (55%) and 55+ (48%) are less supportive of such an initiative. Support is higher in Atlantic Canada (65%) and Saskatchewan and Manitoba (63%) than it is in BC (60%), Quebec (59%), Ontario (56%) and, especially, Alberta (51%).

How do We Pay for It all?

While two in ten (21%) Canadians say the size of government debt doesn't matter to them and as such are not concerned about paying for these income-support programs, the vast majority (79%) of Canadians are ready to embrace some type of fiscal restraint or increased taxation to help pay for these programs.

Half (49%) believe that Canada should reduce the size of government and its programs, making it the most preferred option. Four in ten (39%) believe that Canada should increase businesses taxes to help pay for the cost of income-support programs, and two in ten (19%) believe that income taxes should be increased in order to tackle Canada's record-level deficit.

Younger Canadians are most likely to say that government debt doesn't bother them (28% of 18-34 year olds vs. 21% of Canadians overall), while older Canadians are most likely to support reducing the size of government and its programs (56% of 55+ vs. 49% of Canadians overall). While one quarter of those in Saskatchewan and Manitoba (27%) and Quebec (25%) don't care about the size of government debts, just 12% of Albertans feel the same way.

About the Study

These are some of the findings of an Ipsos poll conducted between July 8 and 10, 2020, on behalf of Global News. For this survey, a sample of 1,000 Canadians aged 18+ was interviewed online. Quotas and weighting were employed to ensure that the sample's composition reflects that of the Canadian population according to census parameters. The precision of Ipsos online polls is measured using a credibility interval. In this case, the poll is accurate to within ± 3.5 percentage points, 19 times out of 20, had all Canadians aged 18+ been polled. The credibility interval will be wider among subsets of the population. All sample surveys and polls may be subject to other sources of error, including, but not limited to coverage error, and measurement error.

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About Ipsos

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