

POLICY BRIEF: Canadians' thoughts on relaxed regulations

Colin Craig | May 2020



Executive summary

Since COVID-19 took hold in Canada, governments across the country have relaxed a number of restrictions and rules to help people and businesses cope with the pandemic.

From allowing restaurants to serve alcohol with their delivery orders to allowing doctors to video conference with their patients, governments have been able to help people by simply getting out of the way.

SecondStreet.org has been keeping a running list of relaxed government regulations and rules during the COVID-19 period: the examples involve many different industries and a wide array of government activities.

SecondStreet.org hired Leger to poll Canadians about ten examples of relaxed regulations to see if the public supports making the changes permanent after COVID-19 has passed.

Highlights from the May 1 – May 3, 2020 public opinion research, include:

- A majority of Canadians support relaxing on a permanent basis all ten restrictions;
- Support was especially high for maintaining flexibility in health care: 91% support continuing to allow pharmacies to deliver medications, 87% support allowing doctors to continue to videoconference with patients and 81% support continuing to allow pharmacists discretion when refilling prescriptions;
- Citizens support keeping technological improvements to government service delivery: renewing drivers licenses over the phone, email or online (81%), being able to submit electronic court documents (74%) and allowing notary publics to witness wills through videoconference (66%);

- 64% of Canadians supported allowing restaurants to continue to sell alcohol with delivery and takeout orders, allowing victims to provide victim impact statements to parole boards by phone and allowing products to be sold without bilingual packaging; and
- While support was strong for the ten relaxed regulations that SecondStreet.org asked Canadians about, approximately 45% of respondents indicated they believe that Canada's overall level of regulations is about right (23% felt there are too many regulations and 16% believed there aren't enough).

As governments begin to reopen large segments of Canada's economy, they may wish to not only make some of their own relaxed restrictions permanent, they might also want to copy eased restrictions from other parts of the country and even internationally.

Further, governments could consider implementing processes to regularly review red tape. Instead of temporary red tape committees, which are often struck sporadically, a standing red tape committee at each level of government could regularly meet with the public and determine regulations that need to be removed or updated. This could help ensure government regulations are amended regularly and are responsive to society's evolving needs.



Methodology

The data represented in this report is from a national online survey of 1,526 adult Canadians between May 1 – May 3, 2020. The data has been weighted to reflect the regional, age and gender population distribution of Canada. The respondents for this survey were drawn from Leger’s research panel which has proven to be a representative sample of the broader Canadian population. Were this a probability sample, the margin of error of a survey of this size would be +/- 2.5 percent 19 times out of 20. Some figures in this report may not add to 100 due to rounding. Please see appendix for polling data.

Results

The following section includes the survey questions posed to Canadians, results and related information. For a breakdown of the data by age, gender and geographic region, please see the appendix.

Question 1

Since the COVID-19 pandemic took hold in Canada, different governments across the country have been relaxing a number of restrictions and regulations in order to help people and businesses manage and conduct their affairs. Which of the following changes do you think governments should make permanent after the COVID-19 pandemic has passed?

Policy Option ¹	Yes
Continue allowing pharmacies to deliver medication to customers at home?	91%
Continue allowing patients to have the option of meeting with a doctor via videoconference if they can't meet in person?	87%
Continue allowing pharmacists the discretion in some circumstances to extend a customer's prescription for medication without the patient having to get their doctor to renew the prescription?	81%
Continue allowing motorists to renew their drivers' licenses over the phone, by email or online?	81%
Continue allowing people to submit documents electronically for court purposes?	74%
Continue allowing people to have their wills witnessed by a notary public by videoconference?	66%
Continue allowing victims to provide victim impact statements during parole board hearings by phone?	64%
Continue allowing consumers to order alcohol with take-out and delivery orders?	64%
Continue allowing products to be sold in Canada even if the product's packaging is not both French and English?	64%
Continue allowing consumers to have cannabis delivered to their homes by local cannabis stores?	51%

Since COVID-19 took hold in Canada, governments have been limiting personal and economic freedom across the country with the idea of slowing the spread of the virus. From forcing businesses, schools (public and private) and religious institutions to close to fining people for sitting too close together on park benches, the state has restricted liberty unlike any other period in modern Canadian history.²

Yet despite this, there have also been dozens of examples of governments helping people and businesses by simply getting out of the way.

From allowing restaurants to serve alcohol with their delivery orders to allowing doctors to video conference with their patients, SecondStreet.org has documented many examples of relaxed government regulations across a wide array of industries as well as for government services.

The regulatory changes in question were of course approved by governments to help people and businesses during a difficult time. SecondStreet.org's research begged the question – why not make the relaxed regulations permanent?

SecondStreet.org chose ten regulations from its list and polled Canadians to assess public support or opposition to making each temporary change permanent.

The research showed a majority of Canadians support making all ten changes permanent – from a low of 51% support for continuing to allow consumers to have cannabis delivered to their homes by local cannabis stores to a high of 91% support for allowing pharmacies to continue to deliver medication to customers.

While some regulations were only relaxed in certain parts of the country, the questions were posed to Canadians nation-wide. With that in mind, a government might decide to implement a decision from another jurisdiction if the change proved to be helpful and well-received.

Question 2

Which of the following best represents your view about government regulations in Canada?

We have too many regulations in Canada. They make life too difficult for people and businesses	23%
We have just the right amount of regulations in Canada	45%
We don't have enough regulations in Canada. We need more to make life better for people and businesses	16%
Don't know	17%

Governments have passed thousands of regulations, bylaws and laws nation-wide, regulating everything from the packaging of food in stores and the number of pets households can own to the number of beers consumers can purchase at a single time while sitting in a pub.

SecondStreet.org decided to ask Canadians what they think about the overall regulatory burden in Canada.

The Leger poll results show that while a majority of Canadians supported permanently relaxing the ten restrictions in question one, Canadians appear to be more comfortable with the overall regulatory burden.

45% of respondents indicated Canada's regulatory burden is "just the right amount," 23% believe there are "too many" regulations and 16% believe there aren't enough.

British Columbians were most likely to indicate there are "just the right amount of regulations" (49%) while Saskatchewanians were least likely to agree with that sentiment (31%). Saskatchewan residents were also the most likely to indicate there are "too many" regulations (36%).

Policy options

The COVID-19 pandemic has drawn attention to how outdated many practices are – whether it's a courtroom relying on printed documentation, vehicle licensing bodies requiring in-person visits or various interactions throughout the medical system.

As governments begin to reopen large segments of the economy, they may wish to not only make some of their own eased restrictions permanent, they might also want to copy eased restrictions from other parts of the country. This research helps elected officials learn more about policies that Canadians found to be helpful.

Further, governments could also do a better job of keeping regulations up-to-date and responsive to society's needs (and technological change) by striking permanent committees to regularly review red tape.

Right now, it's common for governments to establish temporary red tape review committees, and implement some of the recommendations thereafter. Yet, years often pass between such reviews.

For example, the City of Winnipeg established a red tape review commission in 2004 and committee members issued their report in 2005.³ However, the city's next formal red tape review process didn't occur until 2019.

All three levels of government could establish permanent committee structures to regularly review, and act on, red tape concerns from the public. The benefits of curtailing red tape and keeping regulations up-to-date cannot be understated. The Canadian Federation of Independent Business has estimated that unnecessary government regulations cost small businesses alone more than [\\$10 billion each year](#).⁴

Conclusion

SecondStreet.org's public opinion research suggests there is widespread support for maintaining many of the relaxed regulations after the COVID-19 period. There would be merit in governments not only considering making permanent their own relaxed regulations, but those enacted in other jurisdictions. Establishing permanent red tape review committees could also help ensure regulations are responsive to the needs of the public and keep current with technological change.

About the author

Colin Craig is the President of SecondStreet.org. He has an MBA and a BA (economics) from the University of Manitoba and is the author of *The Government Wears Prada* – a book that examines how Canada can meet the needs of our nation's aging population without raising taxes.

About Leger

Leger is the largest Canadian-owned, market research and analytics company with more than 600 employees in eight Canadian and US offices. Leger has been working with prestigious clients since 1986. Please visit [Leger.com](#) to learn more.

Sources

1. For further information about relaxed regulations, please visit <https://www.secondstreet.org/2020/04/06/government-has-been-helping-people-by-easing-regulations/>
2. Johnstone, Hillary. "Dozens fined as city moves to enforce pandemic restrictions." CBC News (website), April 6, 2020. <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/ottawa/ottawa-bylaw-parks-fines-1.5523154>
3. "Open for Opportunity: Final Report of the Mayor's Red Tape Commission." Page 15. <http://clkapps.winnipeg.ca/DMIS/ViewPdf.asp?SectionId=106837>
4. "Red Tape Awareness Week returns to challenge excessive and outdated regulation." Canadian Federation of Independent Business news release, January 15, 2020. <https://www.cfib-fcei.ca/en/media/red-tape-awareness-weektm-re-turns-challenge-excessive-and-outdated-regulation>

Report

SecondStreet.org: COVID Poll - Canada Omni Results

DATE 2020-05-10 PROJECT NUMBER 45915-002

The logo for Leger, featuring the word "Leger" in a bold, sans-serif font. The letter "e" is red, while the other letters are black.

We know Canadians

CONTEXT, OBJECTIVES & METHODOLOGY

Context and Objectives

Context

Since the COVID-19 pandemic took hold in Canada, different governments across the country have been relaxing a number of restrictions and regulations in order to help people and businesses manage and conduct their affairs. Most of these changes are for short-term and its uncertain what happens to them once there is a return to normalcy. The SecondStreet.org team wants to understand the opinion of general population on the permanent relaxation of these regulation.

Objectives

The SecondStreet.org team wants to understand general population's opinion on :

- Government regulations in Canada; and
- Continuing certain relaxations introduced during pandemic

Methodology

Study Population

- Canadian residents, aged 18 and older.

Data Collection

- A total of n=1526 online surveys were conducted via Leger's online panel, LEO.
- Interviews were conducted from May 01 to May 03, 2020.

Statistical Analysis

- As a non-probability sample internet survey, a margin of error is technically not to be reported.
- If the data were collected through a random sample, the margin of error would be (n=1526) $\pm 2.5\%$, 19 times out of 20.
- Using data from the 2016 Census, results were weighted according to age, gender, and region in order to ensure a representative sample of the population.
- The numbers presented have been rounded to the nearest whole number. However, raw values were used to calculate the sums presented and therefore may not correspond to the manual addition of these numbers.

Key Findings

Key Findings

Government regulations in Canada

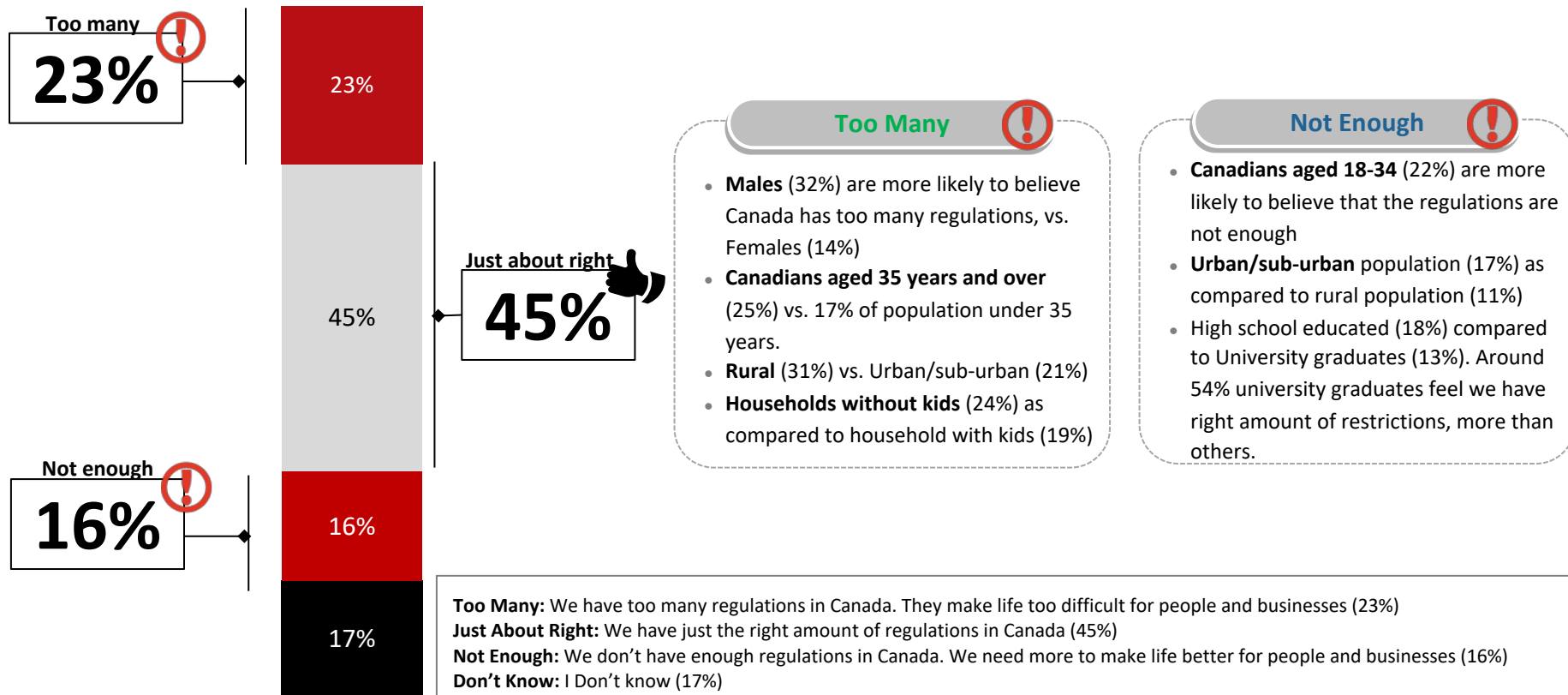
- About half of Canadians believe that Canada has appropriate amount of government regulations. Another quarter of population, predominantly Western Canadian, believes society is over-regulated. Males, aged 35 years and over, residents of rural Canada are more likely to think we have 'too many' regulations.
- Around 16% also believe that regulations are not enough and we need more to make life better for people and businesses. Young Canadians (aged 18-34) and those living in urban/sub-urban areas support more regulations in Canada. Province wise, Ontario residents are somewhat more likely to believe that Canada needs more regulatory control in place.

Continuing certain relaxations introduced during pandemic

- More than 80% Canadians want the government to make pharmacy/medical relaxations permanent even after pandemic has passed. Almost all are in favour of allowing pharmacies to keep delivering medicines at home or doctors to see patients via video conference. The support for continuing these relaxations skews towards the population age 35 years and over and females. Province wise, support is significantly higher for these measures in Quebec, Manitoba/Saskatchewan than British Columbia and Alberta.
- Over two-thirds of Canadians favour continuing the relaxations in the legal processes. Affluent populations (households earning over \$80K) are more likely to support relaxed legal processes. Quebec, New Brunswick provinces show significantly higher support as compared to British Columbia and Alberta.
- Around 60% population also supports continuing consumer product relaxations such as alcohol or cannabis delivery and packaging without language restrictions. Support for these moves is more likely among those in households earning over \$80K annually. MB/SK residents strongly supports the relaxation in the language restriction for packaging of consumer goods and alcohol delivery, while Quebec is least likely to favour language relaxations or cannabis delivery.

Detailed Results Regulations in Canada

About half of Canadians believes we have just the right amount of regulations; another quarter of population feels there are too many.



Q2. Which of the following best represents your view about government regulations in Canada?

Base : Canada Residents (n=1526)

Western Canadians are more likely to say there are 'too many' regulations; Ontario residents feel we don't have enough regulations.

Just about right

- While British Columbia (49%) and Newfoundland (61%*) population is most likely to believe that Canada has sufficient regulation in place, Saskatchewan (31%) is least likely to believe that we have just the right amount of regulations in Canada.






Too Many

- Overall 27% Western Canada feel we have too many regulations, vs. 21% of Eastern Canada.
- Alberta (34%), Saskatchewan (36%), Manitoba (28%) drive the Western Canada opinion

Not Enough

- Ontario (18%) and Nova Scotia (24%) believe that there are not enough regulations in Canada.

-  **Too Many:** We have too many regulations in Canada. They make life too difficult for people and businesses (23%)
-  **Just About Right:** We have just the right amount of regulations in Canada (45%)
-  **Not Enough:** We don't have enough regulations in Canada. We need more to make life better for people and businesses (16%)
- Don't Know:** I Don't know (17%)

*Sample size less than 30.

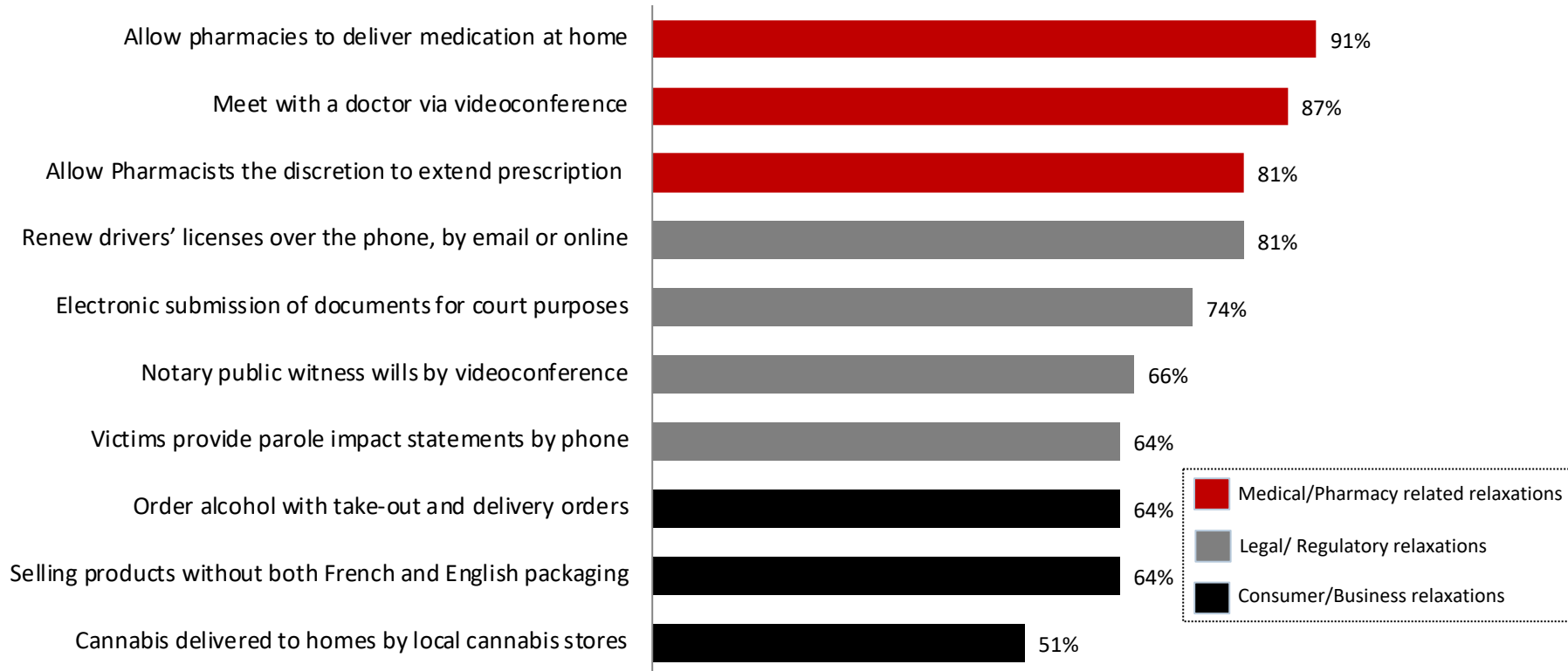
Q2. Which of the following best represents your view about government regulations in Canada?

Base : Canada Residents (n=1526).

Detailed Results

Continuing relaxation after COVID-19

More than 80% Canadians want medical/pharmacy relaxations to continue, over two-thirds also favour relaxed legal processes (% YES)



Q1. Which of the following changes do you think governments should make permanent after the COVID-19 pandemic has passed?

Base : Canada Residents (n=1526)

Females, 35+ population are more likely to favour continuation of medical/pharmacy relaxation



Who favours:

(1) Deliver medication at home:

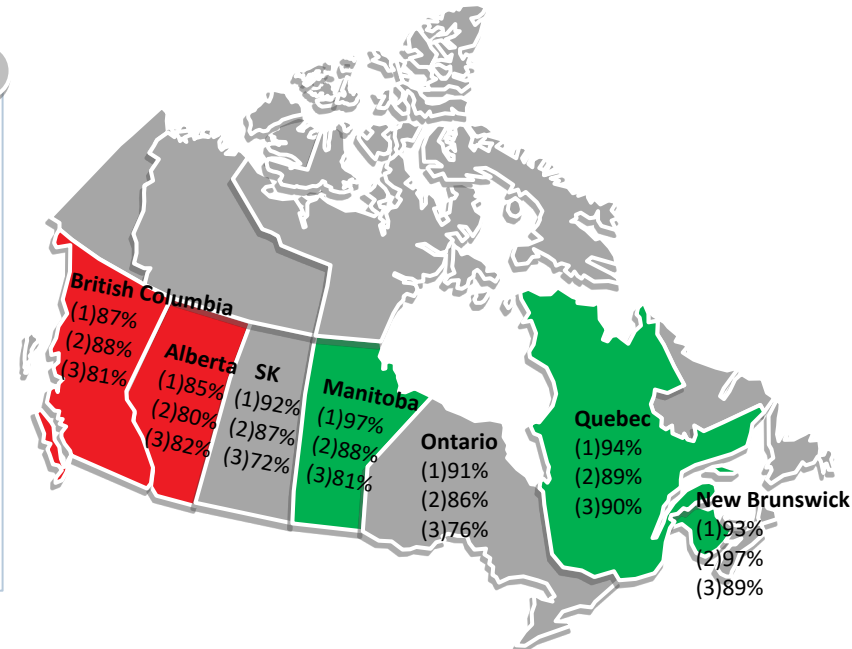
- Population aged **35 years and over** (92%), vs. population aged 18-34 (86%)
- **Females** (93%) as compared to males (88%)
- Married (91%), divorced/widowed (99%), compared to single population (86%)

(2) Meet doctor via videoconference:

- Rural population (91%), vs. urban (85%)
- **Females** (90%) as compared to males (84%)
- Married (89%), compared to single population (84%)

(3) Pharmacist allowed extending prescription:

- Population aged **35 years and over** (84%), vs. population aged 18-34 (74%)
- **Females** (84%) as compared to males (77%)
- Married (84%), divorced/widowed (88%), compared to single population (72%)



1. Continue allowing pharmacies to deliver medication to customers at home
2. Continue allowing patients to have the option of meeting with a doctor via videoconference if they can't meet in person
3. Continue allowing pharmacists the discretion in some circumstances to extend a customer's prescription for medication without the patient having to get their doctor to renew the prescription

Q1. Which of the following changes do you think governments should make permanent after the COVID-19 pandemic has passed?

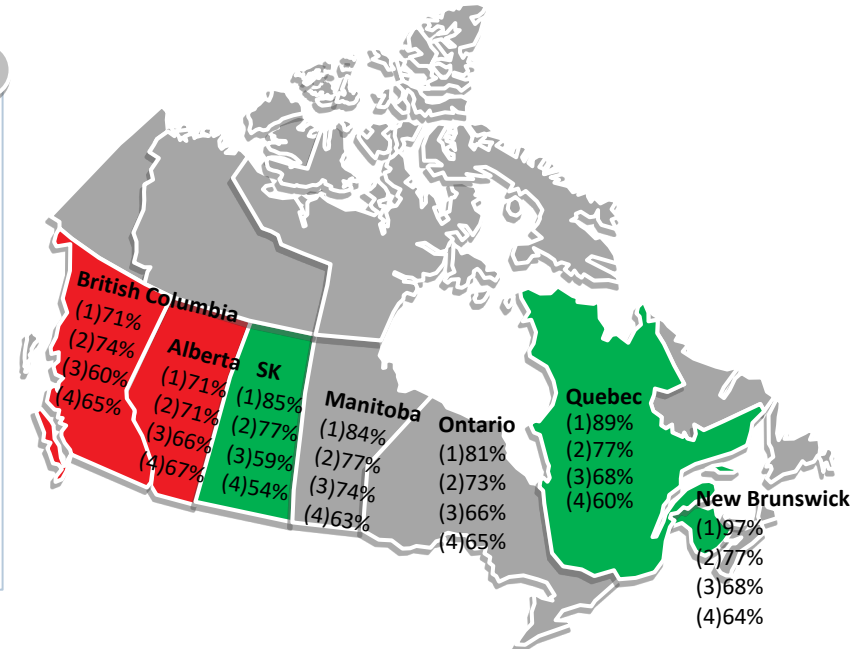
Base : Canada Residents (n=1526). For the statements, provinces in green have statistically higher proportion at 95% over provinces highlighted red.

By province, Quebec and New Brunswick favours continuation of legal/regulatory relaxation; stronger support in affluent population



Who favours:

- (1) Renew driving license over phone:**
 - Population earning over \$80K (84%), vs. those earning <\$40K (78%)
 - Married (82%), divorced/widowed (86%), compared to single population (76%)
- (2) Submit documents electronically for court purposes:**
 - Population earning over \$40K (78%), vs. those earning <\$40K (68%)
 - Population aged 18-55(76%), vs. population 55+(70%)
- (3) Notary public witness wills by videoconference:**
 - Population aged 18-55(68%), vs. population 55+(62%)
 - College/university graduates (68%), vs. high school (61%)
- (4) Victim statement during hearings by phone:**
 - Population earning over \$80K (68%), vs. those earning <\$40K (59%)
 - College graduates (69%), vs. high school (56%)



1. Continue allowing motorists to renew their drivers' licenses over the phone, by email or online
2. Continue allowing people to submit documents electronically for court purposes
3. Continue allowing people to have their wills witnessed by a notary public by videoconference
4. Continue allowing victims to provide victim impact statements during parole board hearings by phone

Q1. Which of the following changes do you think governments should make permanent after the COVID-19 pandemic has passed?

Base : Canada Residents (n=1526). For the statements, provinces in green have statistically higher proportion at 95% over provinces highlighted red.

Support for continuation of product/business relaxations strongest in Manitoba, weakest in Quebec



Who favours:

(1) Packages without both languages:

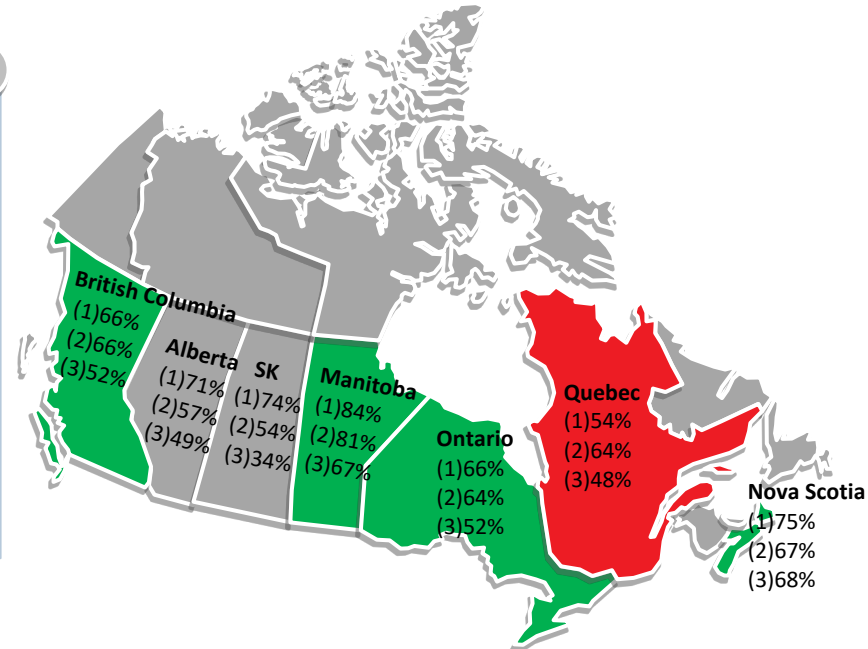
- Population aged 35+(66%), vs. population aged 18-34(59%)
- Population earning over \$80K (68%), vs. those earning <\$40K (59%)

(2) Alcohol take-out and delivery:

- Population aged 18-55(69%), vs. population 55+(55%)
- Population earning over \$80K (70%), vs. those earning <\$40K (57%)
- Singles (66%), as compared to divorced/widowed (56%)

(3) Cannabis delivered to homes:

- Population aged 18-55(57%), vs. population 55+(42%)
- Males (54%), vs. females (48%)
- Population earning over \$80K (56%), vs. those earning <\$40K (47%)



1. Continue allowing products to be sold in Canada even if the product's packaging is not both French and English
2. Continue allowing consumers to order alcohol with take-out and delivery orders
3. Continue allowing consumers to have cannabis delivered to their homes by local cannabis stores

Q1. Which of the following changes do you think governments should make permanent after the COVID-19 pandemic has passed?

Base : Canada Residents (n=1526). For the statements, provinces in green have statistically higher proportion at 95% over provinces highlighted red.

Continuing certain relaxations introduced during pandemic

Q1. Which of the following changes do you think governments should make permanent after the COVID-19 pandemic has passed?

Base: Canada Residents (n=1526)

Statements	Yes (%)	No (%)	Don't Know (%)
Continue allowing pharmacies to deliver medication to customers at home	91	5	4
Continue allowing patients to have the option of meeting with a doctor via videoconference if they can't meet in person	87	7	6
Continue allowing pharmacists the discretion in some circumstances to extend a customer's prescription for medication without the patient having to get their doctor to renew the prescription	81	11	9
Continue allowing motorists to renew their drivers' licenses over the phone, by email or online	81	11	7
Continue allowing people to submit documents electronically for court purposes	74	12	15
Continue allowing people to have their wills witnessed by a notary public by videoconference	66	17	17
Continue allowing victims to provide victim impact statements during parole board hearings by phone	64	17	19
Continue allowing consumers to order alcohol with take-out and delivery orders	64	25	11
Continue allowing products to be sold in Canada even if the product's packaging is not both French and English	64	25	11
Continue allowing consumers to have cannabis delivered to their homes by local cannabis stores	51	29	20

QUESTIONNAIRE

[BASE=ALL]
 [SIMPLE MENTION GRID]
 [LIST ORDER: In order]
 [STATEMENT LIST ORDER: Randomized]

Q1

Since the COVID-19 pandemic took hold in Canada, different governments across the country have been relaxing a number of restrictions and regulations in order to help people and businesses manage and conduct their affairs. Which of the following changes do you think governments should make permanent after the COVID-19 pandemic has passed?

RESPONDENT/INTERVIEWER INSTRUCTION:	<i>Please select one answer for each statement.</i>			
	List	Yes	No	Don't Know
Statements	Value	1	2	97
Continue allowing patients to have the option of meeting with a doctor via videoconference if they can't meet in person?	1	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Continue allowing consumers to order alcohol with take-out and delivery orders?	2	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Continue allowing motorists to renew their drivers' licenses over the phone, by email or online?	3	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Continue allowing victims to provide victim impact statements during parole board hearings by phone?	4	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Continue allowing people to have their wills witnessed by a notary public by videoconference?	5	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Continue allowing consumers to have cannabis delivered to their homes by local cannabis stores?	6	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Continue allowing products to be sold in Canada even if the product's packaging is not both French and English?	7	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Continue allowing pharmacists the discretion in some circumstances to extend a customer's prescription for medication without the patient having to get their doctor to renew the prescription?	8	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Continue allowing pharmacies to deliver medication to customers at home?	9	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Continue allowing people to submit documents electronically for court purposes?	10	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

[BASE=ALL]
 [SINGLE MENTION]
 [LIST ORDER: Randomized]
 [PROGRAMMER NOTES: Randomize only first three options, the last one should appear at last for all]

Q2

Which of the following best represents your view about government regulations in Canada?

RESPONDENT/INTERVIEWER INSTRUCTION:	<i>(READ LIST/DO NOT READ LIST. ONLY ONE MENTION POSSIBLE) Please select one answer.</i>
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Label	Value	Notes
We have too many regulations in Canada. They make life too difficult for people and businesses	01	
We have just the right amount of regulations in Canada	02	
We don't have enough regulations in Canada. We need more to make life better for people and businesses	03	
Don't know	97	

RESPONDENTS PROFILE

RESPONDENT PROFILE - *Canada*

	Weighted
n=	1526
Gender	(%)
Male	49
Female	51
Age	
18 to 34	27
35 to 54	34
55 years of age or older	39
Household Income	
Less than \$40,000	21%
\$40,000 to less than \$80,000	33%
\$80,000 to less than \$100,000	12%
\$100,000 or more	24%

	Weighted
n=	1526
Gender	(%)
British Columbia	14
Alberta	11
Saskatchewan	3
Manitoba	4
Ontario	38
Quebec	23
New Brunswick	3
Nova Scotia	2
Prince Edward Island	1
Newfoundland and Labrador	1

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