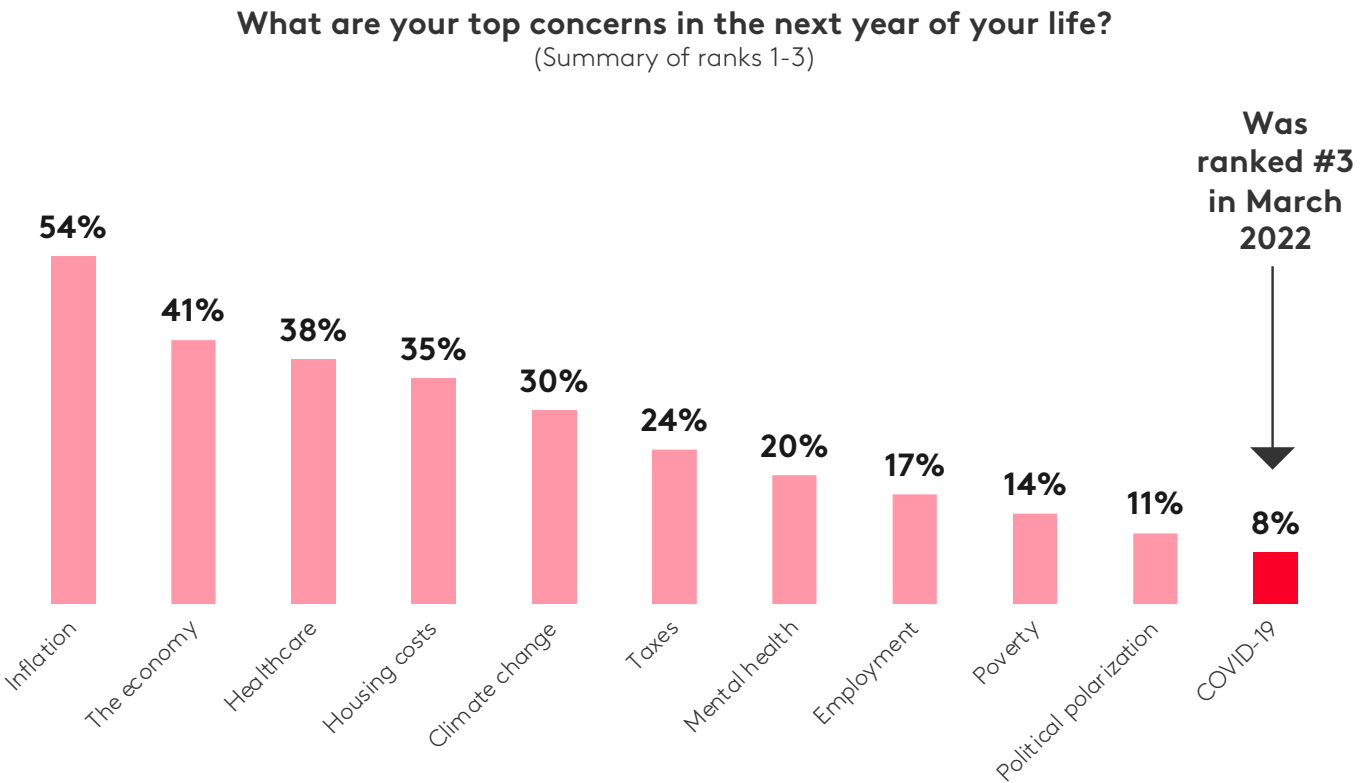




In the minds of most Canadians, the COVID-19 pandemic is a thing of the past. But even as few Canadians list COVID-19 safety as a top priority for 2024, out of sight doesn’t mean out of mind. Unique social and economic dynamics both now and during the height of the virus are leading to unexpected and powerful perceptions of the pandemic years—with key implications for years to come.

Canadians have largely moved on to a whole new set of crises and concerns

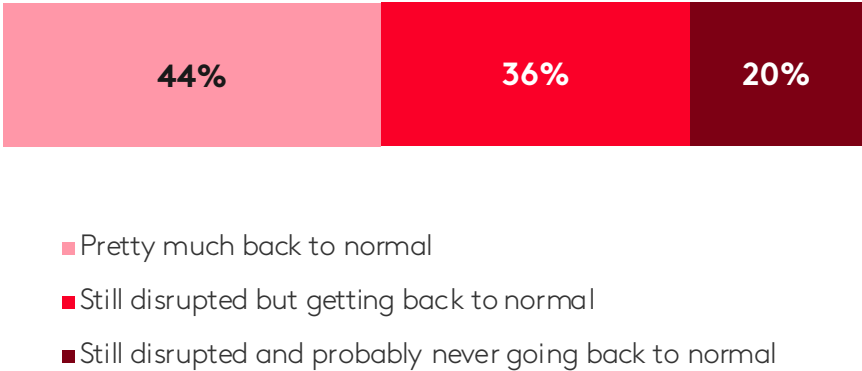
With the COVID-19 virus endemic in Canada, it’s gradually faded from the national consciousness as an ongoing concern. Two years ago it sat in Canadians’ top three concerns about the upcoming year, but in our most recent data it couldn’t even crack the top 10. Canadians have simply found other crises that matter more to them in this moment, largely centered on the national economy and personal finances. When Canadians think of COVID-19, they tend to do so in the past tense.



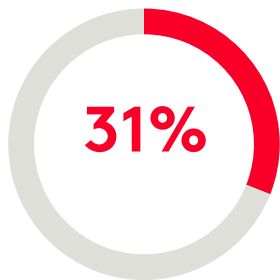
Post-COVID doesn’t necessarily equal post-disruption

The pandemic opened the 2020’s in a shockingly disruptive way for Canadians, and that disruption isn’t necessarily over. Less than half of Canadians think life has gotten “pretty much back to normal” since 2020, and the percentage of Canadians who think life is getting better for most people in their country is actually falling – 31% in data from early 2024, down from 36% in late 2023. Faith that there’s a pre-pandemic “good life” that Canada’s slowly getting back to appears to be in short supply.

Which of these statements best describes how you feel about your life since 2020?

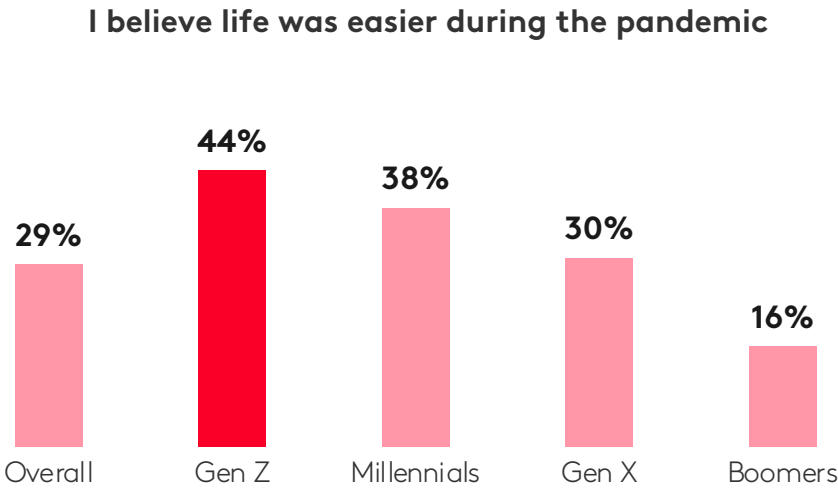


For most people, life is getting better in Canada
(Data from Q1 2024)



A surprising new trend is blooming in Canada: pandemic nostalgia

In a surprising turn, over a quarter of Canadians believe life was easier during the pandemic, and among Gen Z, that figure goes up to almost half. It’s not a majority, but the fact that many Canadians long for aspects of pandemic life is notable by itself. Experts link this ‘pandemic nostalgia’ to a sense of innocence, togetherness, and hope felt during the first few months of nationwide lockdowns--the idea that such a crisis could reveal a strength and grace in Canada’s population, rather than becoming a long-term burden.



With coronavirus stubbornly lingering, ‘pandemic fatigue’ has fueled **widespread longing for the perceived simplicities, innocence, and sense of togetherness** of the early days of COVID-19. Nostalgia has a bad reputation [...] but in traumatic situations like the pandemic, **it may actually come in handy.**

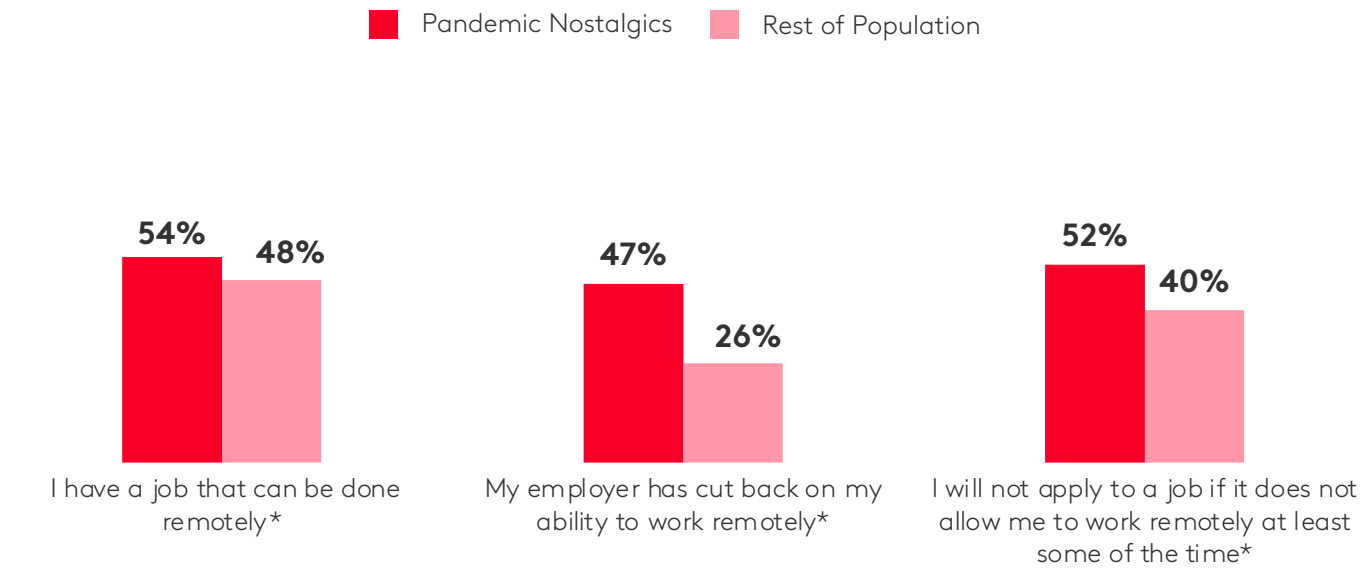
— WebMD

Who is the Pandemic Nostalgic?

Twenty nine percent of Canadians surveyed believe that life was easier during the pandemic—a segment we’re calling ‘Pandemic Nostalgics.’ They skew young (45% Millennials and Gen Z vs 25% among RoP), educated (43% college graduates vs 37% among RoP) and employed full-time (55% vs 34% among RoP). But demographics can’t explain this group entirely—they have firmly-held beliefs that them apart from even their generational and social peers. By diving into these beliefs, we can see what’s causing them to look backward in their lives, and how brands might play a role in re-igniting their passion and curiosity for what lies ahead.

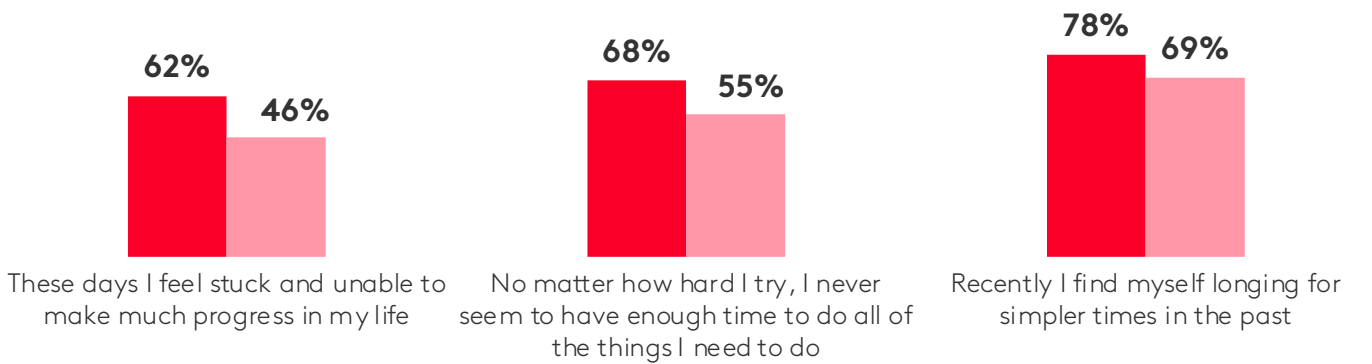
They miss the convenience of remote work arrangements

Pandemic Nostalgics are not only more likely than other Canadians to have jobs that allow remote working, but more likely to have experienced pushback from their employers on continuing the practice. The pull of the pandemic era becomes clear: remote work is something that improved their lives (over half won’t apply to positions without it), and during the height of COVID-19, they felt they didn’t have to fight for it like they often do now.



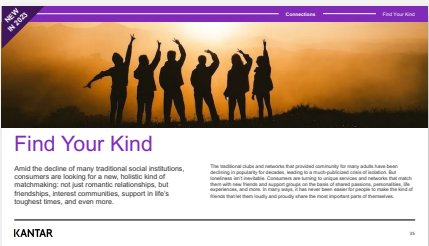
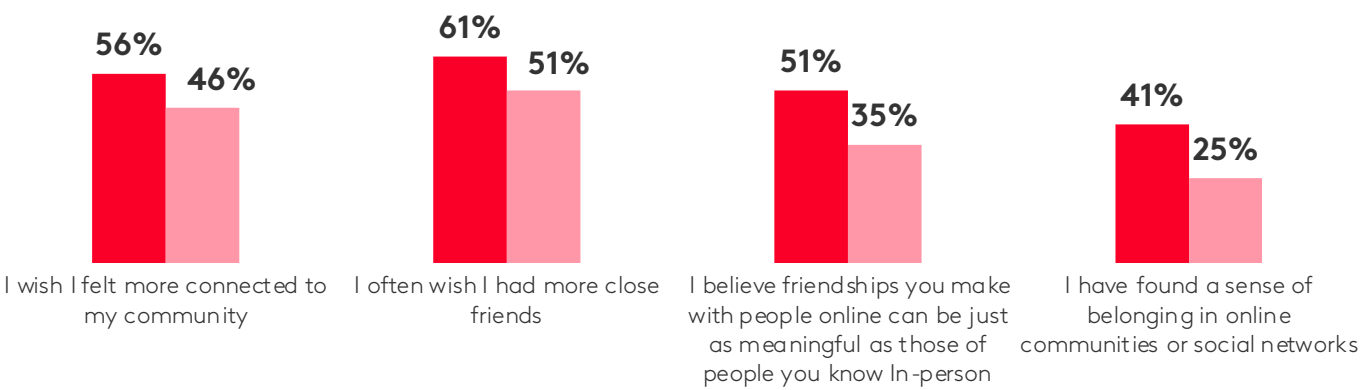
They’re overwhelmed by the stresses of post-pandemic life

Many Canadians looked to the end of the pandemic for recovery, vibrancy, and momentum. For Pandemic Nostalgics, things look a little different: there’s no sense of recovery, just an overwhelming set of stimuli that’s harder than ever to keep up with. The routines of the pandemic felt familiar and predictable, and now the world seems to be moving on without them—leaving Pandemic Nostalgics feeling stuck and aimless.



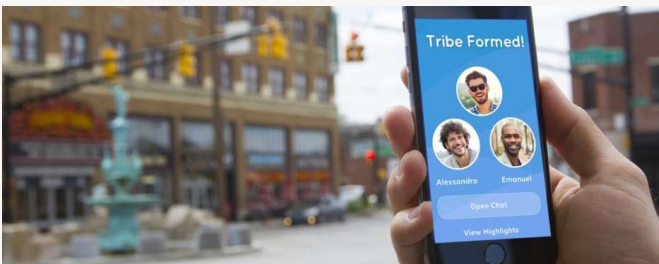
They feel isolated, in ways lifting lockdowns didn’t fix

That sense of feeling stuck and left behind also manifests socially, as Pandemic Nostalgics value online-based relationships and turned to those bonds during lockdowns. With Canada reopened, they again feel left behind, seeking a connection that’s harder to obtain and maintain now that virtual social life isn’t the nationwide default. Identifying ways to help them build meaningful relationships in both the physical and virtual worlds is crucial.



Amid the decline of many traditional social institutions, consumers are looking for a new, holistic kind of matchmaking: not just romantic relationships, but friendships, interest communities, support in life’s toughest times, and even more.

Solutions tapping into Find Your Kind



We3

While most social matching platforms focus on dating, We3 offers a refreshing alternative: creating friend groups. After taking a detailed and nuanced questionnaire, users are matched into friend groups of three. The groups are same-gender to prevent predatory gender dynamics, and three is an ideal number to let each member get to know each other all at once. Once they’ve been matched, the groups are encouraged to meet in person and are given suggested activities that can become the basis of long-lasting friendships.

Learn more in the [2023 Canada Connections Consumer Trends](#)



Dream Dog Sunday Social

Dream Dog is a petcare business located in Bedford, Nova Scotia, with many of the amenities dog lovers are used to: grooming, daycare, training, and more. But it sets itself apart by not simply offering a place to drop off a beloved pooch and forget about them for the day. Rather, Dream Dog has a social mission: to connect dog lovers with each other through a weekly Sunday Social, where owners can meet and befriend fellow Bedfordians who share a passion. The Socials are a great way for animal lovers in the area to find each other and bond, forming friendships that go beyond their pets.