

Attack on Parliament Hill: terrorism or mental illness? Canadian public opinion is divided

54% of Canadians say federal government should emphasize prevention over punishment of radicalization

November 25, 2014 –

Canadians are divided in their view of the underlying cause of the fatal attack on Parliament Hill by gunman Michael Zehaf-Bibeau on October 22, 2014.

A survey on radicalization and homegrown terrorism by the Angus Reid Institute (ARI) – in partnership with the Province (part of the Postmedia Network), the Laurier Institution and the Canadian Race Relations Foundation – reveals two-in-five Canadians (38%) say the attack was an act of mental illness, while about as many (36%) say it was terrorism. One-quarter (25%) say they aren't sure.

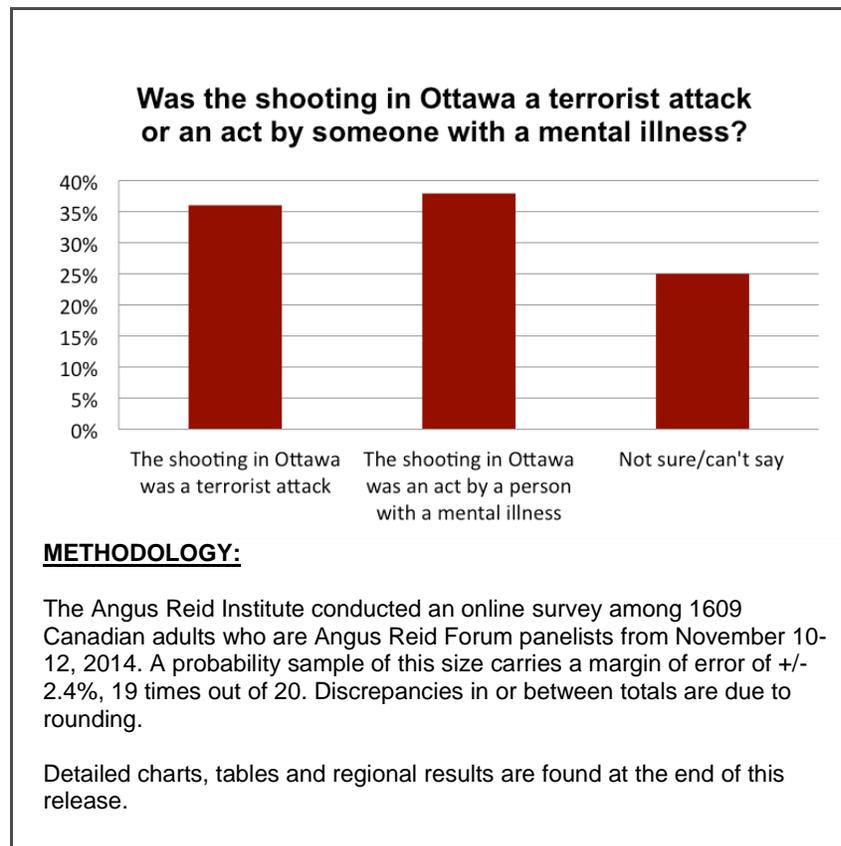
The online poll also suggests more Canadians believe the federal government should be putting emphasis on preventing acts of homegrown terrorism than on punishment.

[Click here to read part one of ARI's report on this survey, published on November 24, 2014.](#)

Prevention of Radicalization:

Asked about the best places to prevent and address the radicalization process by which people become driven by violent ideology, Canadians said attention should be focused on:

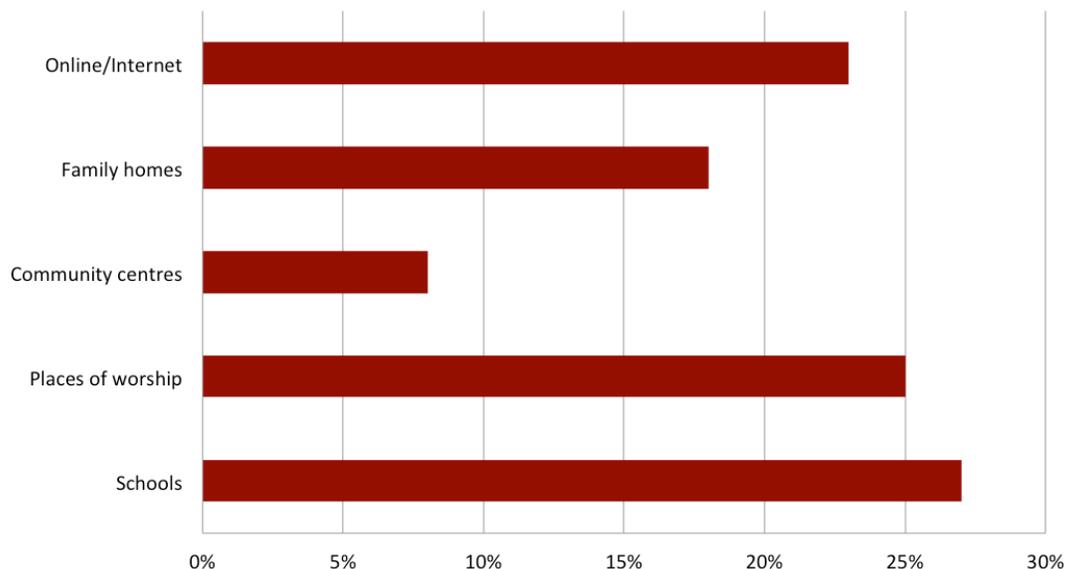
- Schools (27%)
- Places of worship (25%)
- Online/Internet (23%)
- Family homes (18%)
- Community centres (8%)



MEDIA CONTACT:

Shachi Kurl, Senior Vice President: 604.908.1693 shachi.kurl@angusreid.org @shachikurl

Thinking about prevention, where is the best place to address the radicalization of Canadians?



Terrorism or Mental Illness?

Respondents were asked whether the attack and fatal shooting of military personnel on and around Parliament Hill in Ottawa by Michael Zehaf-Bibeau, was either a terrorist attack or an act of someone with a mental illness.

Canadians were almost evenly divided in their views on this issue. Nearly two-in-five (36%) said the shooting was a terrorist attack. About as many (38%) said it was an act of mental illness. The rest (25%) said they weren't sure.

A look at how respondents answered by region shows differences in opinion. In BC and Atlantic Canada, respondents said the shootings were a result of mental illness almost two-to-one over terrorism. In Alberta, Saskatchewan and Manitoba, slightly more respondents say it was terrorism. Ontario and Quebec respondents are more evenly divided on this question (see tables at the end of this release).

Prevention versus Punishment

As to where the federal government should be putting more priority to address radicalization, just over half (54%) of Canadians told ARI the emphasis should be on initiatives to prevent radicalization, and one-third (34%) said government should focus on sterner measures to punish those who become driven by violent ideologies. The rest chose neither option.

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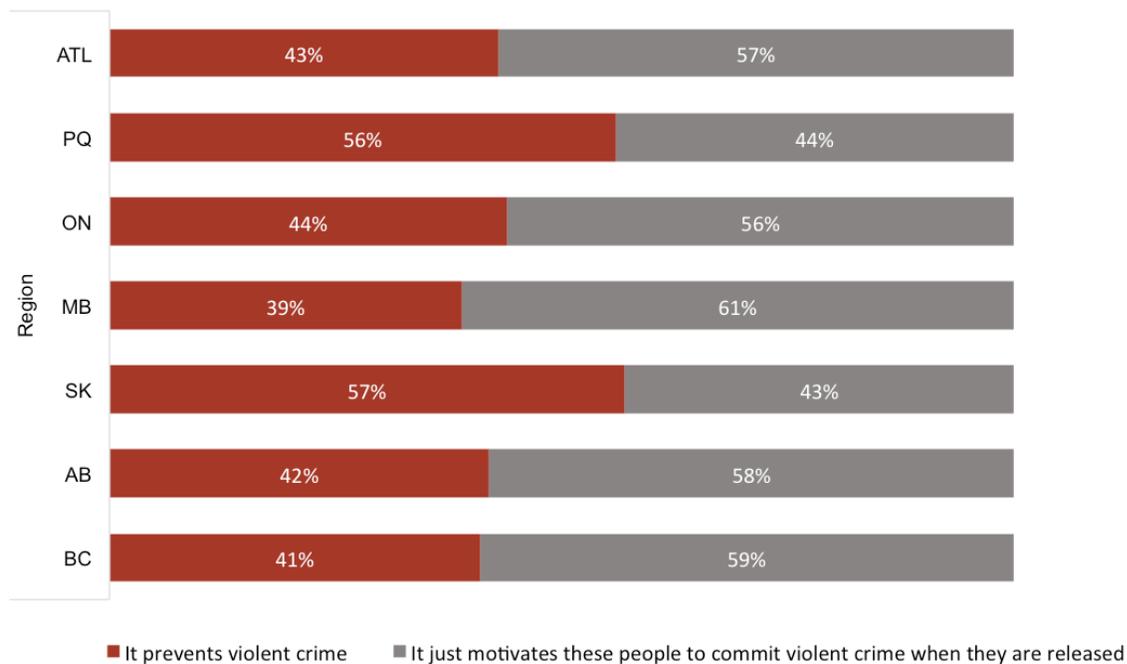
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Those who felt government should place priority on punishment were older: 43 per cent were aged 55+, compared to 29 per cent aged 18-34. They also were more likely to be from Saskatchewan or Manitoba.

Views on imprisonment:

Another discussion point on the issue of how best to deal with suspected homegrown terrorists focuses on indefinite imprisonment. On this question, slightly more than half (54%) of respondents say jailing them for an unfixed amount of time only motivates suspected homegrown terrorists to commit violent crimes when they are eventually released. Slightly fewer than half (46%) say indefinite imprisonment does prevent violent crime.

Is indefinitely jailing suspected homegrown terrorists the best way to reduce violent crime or does it motivate those people to commit crimes when they're released?



Legislation:

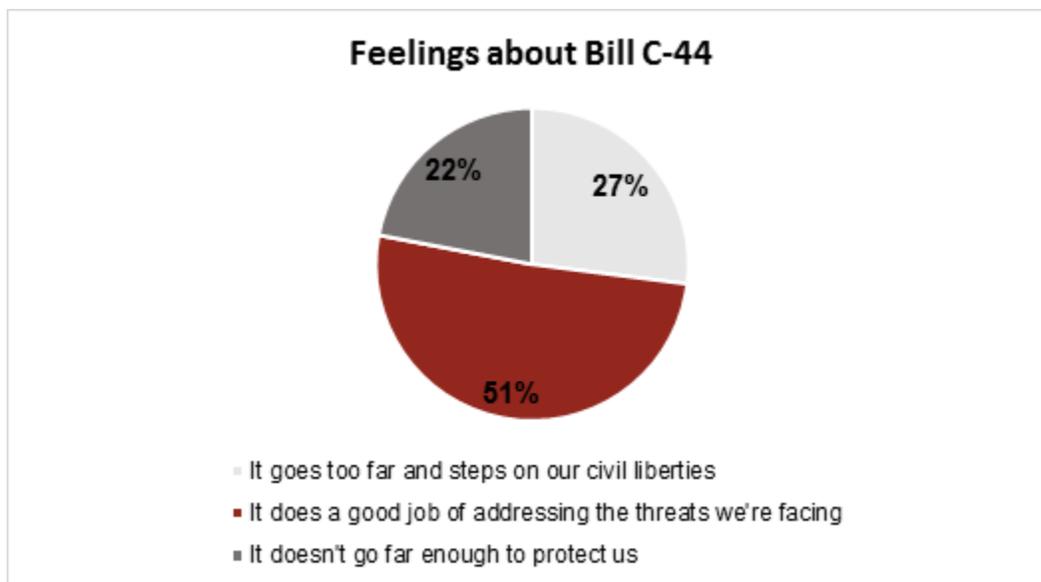
On October 27, 2014, the federal government introduced proposed legislation, Bill C-44, that would give the Canadian Security Intelligence Service (CSIS) increased powers to watch Canadians, the authority to operate outside Canada, and to share information about Canadians with other countries. It also gives more protection to confidential sources.

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Although the introduction of this legislation didn't come as a direct response to the shootings on Parliament Hill, it did nonetheless capture the attention of Canadians and change the tone of debate in the House of Commons.

In terms of public opinion surrounding the proposed legislation, ARI asked and found that half (51%) of Canadians felt Bill C-44 does a "good job" of addressing security threats. Just over one-quarter (27%) felt the legislation goes "too far" and steps on civil liberties; just under one-quarter (22%) said Bill C-44 doesn't "go far enough" to protect Canadians.



Again, a deeper look into demographic and regional responses provides a more complete story. Canadians aged 18-34 are twice as likely as those aged 55+ to raise civil liberties issues vis-à-vis Bill C-44. Those aged 55+ say the legislation is too anemic by a ratio of three-to-one over younger Canadians.

Regionally, two-in-five (39%) British Columbia respondents say the proposed law goes too far. This is twice as many who answer the same in Saskatchewan (20%) and Quebec (19%). Most respondents who say the legislation doesn't go far enough are found in Saskatchewan (27%). By contrast, only about half as many who say the same thing are found in Atlantic Canada (15%).

*The **Angus Reid Institute (ARI)** was founded in October 2014 by pollster and sociologist, Dr. Angus Reid. It has the status of a registered charity in Canada. ARI is a national, not-for-profit, non-partisan public opinion research organization established to enhance and encourage better understanding of issues and trends affecting economic, social, governance, philanthropy, public administration, domestic, and foreign policy in Canada and its world*

*Additional interviews were conducted in British Columbia, however for the purposes of reporting national results, they have been weighted to reflect each province's proportion of the Canadian population.

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Q8. Thinking about prevention, where is the best place to address the radicalization of Canadians?

	Total (1609)	Gender		Age		
		Men	Women	18 - 34	35 - 54	55+
Schools	27%	26%	27%	26%	26%	27%
Places of worship	25%	27%	22%	20%	28%	24%
Community centres	8%	9%	7%	11%	7%	6%
Family homes	18%	17%	19%	17%	17%	21%
Online/Internet	23%	20%	25%	25%	22%	22%

Q8. Thinking about prevention, where is the best place to address the radicalization of Canadians?

	Total (1609)	Region						
		BC (402)	AB (152)	SK (97)	MB (104)	ON (401)	PQ (353)	ATL (100)
Schools	27%	27%	22%	18%	32%	28%	28%	24%
Places of worship	25%	24%	25%	19%	18%	28%	23%	20%
Community centres	8%	8%	10%	11%	8%	7%	7%	14%
Family homes	18%	20%	19%	28%	24%	21%	10%	20%
Online/Internet	23%	21%	24%	25%	18%	17%	31%	23%

Q9. Some people say that indefinitely jailing suspected homegrown terrorists is the best way to reduce violent crime, others say it motivates those people to commit crimes when they are released. Which best describes your view?

	Total (1609)	Gender		Age		
		Men	Women	18 - 34	35 - 54	55+
It prevents violent crime	46%	49%	44%	41%	49%	49%
It just motivates these people to commit violent crime when they are released	54%	51%	56%	59%	51%	51%

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Q9. Some people say that indefinitely jailing suspected homegrown terrorists is the best way to reduce violent crime, others say it motivates those people to commit crimes when they are released. Which best describes your view?

	Total (1609)	Region						
		BC (402)	AB (152)	SK (97)	MB (104)	ON (401)	PQ (353)	ATL (100)
It prevents violent crime	46%	41%	42%	57%	39%	44%	56%	43%
It just motivates these people to commit violent crime when they are released	54%	59%	58%	43%	61%	56%	44%	57%

Q12. On October 27 of this year, the federal government introduced a proposed law (Bill C-44) that would give the Canadian Security Intelligence Service (CSIS) increased powers to watch Canadians, the authority to operate outside Canada, and to share information about Canadians with other countries. It also gives more protection to confidential sources.

What best describes your feelings about Bill C-44

	Total (1609)	Gender		Age		
		Men	Women	18 - 34	35 - 54	55+
It goes too far and steps on our civil liberties	27%	29%	24%	37%	27%	18%
It does a good job of addressing the threats we're facing	51%	49%	54%	51%	51%	53%
It doesn't go far enough to protect us	22%	22%	22%	12%	22%	30%

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		BC (402)	AB (152)	SK (97)	MB (104)	ON (401)	PQ (353)	ATL (100)
It goes too far and steps on our civil liberties	27%	39%	26%	20%	25%	28%	19%	30%
It does a good job of addressing the threats we're facing	51%	44%	52%	53%	55%	51%	55%	55%
It doesn't go far enough to protect us	22%	17%	22%	27%	20%	22%	26%	15%

Q13. Where should the federal government be putting more priority to address the radicalization of Canadians with violent ideologies?

	Total (1609)	Gender		Age		
		Men	Women	18 - 34	35 - 54	55+
Stern measures to punish radicalization	37%	38%	36%	29%	38%	43%
More initiatives to prevent radicalization	54%	53%	54%	61%	53%	49%
Neither	9%	9%	9%	10%	9%	8%

Q13. Where should the federal government be putting more priority to address the radicalization of Canadians with violent ideologies?

	Total (1609)	Region						
		BC (402)	AB (152)	SK (97)	MB (104)	ON (401)	PQ (353)	ATL (100)
Stern measures to punish radicalization	37%	32%	34%	45%	44%	36%	42%	37%
More initiatives to prevent radicalization	54%	53%	58%	45%	44%	56%	51%	53%
Neither	9%	15%	8%	9%	12%	8%	7%	9%

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Q15. Some people have called the shooting in Ottawa a terrorist attack. Others have called it an act by someone with a mental illness. Which statement best describes your opinion?

	Total (1609)	Gender		Age		
		Men	Women	18 - 34	35 - 54	55+
The shooting in Ottawa was a terrorist attack	36%	37%	36%	30%	39%	39%
The shooting in Ottawa was an act by a person with a mental illness	38%	43%	34%	37%	40%	38%
Not sure/can't say	25%	20%	30%	32%	22%	24%

Q15. Some people have called the shooting in Ottawa a terrorist attack. Others have called it an act by someone with a mental illness. Which statement best describes your opinion?

	Total (1609)	Region						
		BC (402)	AB (152)	SK (97)	MB (104)	ON (401)	PQ (353)	ATL (100)
The shooting in Ottawa was a terrorist attack	36%	26%	42%	43%	38%	38%	38%	28%
The shooting in Ottawa was an act by a person with a mental illness	38%	46%	29%	31%	30%	36%	42%	46%
Not sure/can't say	25%	28%	28%	26%	32%	27%	20%	26%

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QUESTIONNAIRE:

Recently, the actions of so-called radicalized Canadians driven by violent ideologies have been in the news. Some examples of homegrown terrorism include the hit-and-run death of a soldier in Quebec and the shooting in Ottawa. We are interested in your opinions on this issue.

1. In recent weeks, how closely have you been following the issue of homegrown terrorism?

Very closely
Closely
Not very closely
Not at all

2. Some people think there is a serious threat of homegrown terrorism in Canada. Others believe the threat has been overblown by politicians and the media. Which of these two views is the closest to your own?

There is a serious threat of homegrown terrorism in Canada
Politicians and the media have overblown the threat of homegrown terrorism in Canada

3.a. Do you feel there are radicalized Canadians living in your community right now?

Yes
No
Not sure

3.b – IF “no” or “not sure” ON 2A ASK

How likely do you think it is that people are becoming radicalized in your community, on a scale from 0 - 10 where 0 is definitely not and 10 is 100% sure there are

0 – Totally unlikely
10 – Totally likely

4. What do you think causes someone to become radicalized or turn into a homegrown terrorist? Pick up to two.

Religion/Culture
Economics/Financial problems
Old country beliefs
Feelings of marginalization
Mental Illness
Internet recruitment

5. Thinking about suspected homegrown terrorists who want to travel overseas, some people say their passports should be taken away. Others say they should be allowed to go. What statement best describes what we should be doing?

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Take their passports, keep them in Canada and have the police watching them
Let them leave if they want to even if it means they might be committing acts of terror somewhere else

6. How confident are you in Canada's security services (CSIS, RCMP and local police) to prevent homegrown radicals from carrying out terrorist attacks in Canada?

Very confident
Confident
Not very confident
Not confident at all
Not sure

7. Do you support or oppose the following methods to address radicalization in Canada?

Indefinite imprisonment
Deportation
Special federal grants for every mosque that wants to spend money on preventing radicalization
Blocking access to any internet site that promotes ISIS or any other terrorist organization
A special federal program to specifically train mental health workers to identify signs of radicalization

Strongly support
Support
Oppose
Strongly oppose

8. Thinking about prevention, where is the best place to address the radicalization of Canadians?

Schools
Places of worship
Community centres
Family homes
Online/internet

9. Some people say that indefinitely jailing suspected homegrown terrorists is the best way to reduce violent crime, others say it motivates those people to commit crimes when they are released. Which best describes your view?

It prevents violent crime
It just motivates these people to commit violent crime when they are released

10. In the most recent domestic attacks there have been ties to Muslim extremism. Some people say the Muslim community is part of the problem, others say it is a valuable partner in the fight against radicalization. Which statement best reflects your opinion?

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The Muslim community is part of the problem of radicalization in Canada.
The Muslim community is a partner in the fight against radicalization in Canada.

11. Thinking about the reaction of Muslim community leaders to the recent attacks, what best describes your opinion?

Muslim community leaders are speaking out enough against homegrown terrorism
Muslim community leaders are not speaking out enough homegrown terrorism

12. On October 27 of this year, the federal government introduced a proposed law (Bill C-44) that would give the Canadian Security Intelligence Service (CSIS) increased powers to watch Canadians, the authority to operate outside Canada, and to share information about Canadians with other countries. It also gives more protection to confidential sources.

What best describes your feelings about Bill C-44:

It goes too far and steps on our civil liberties
It does a good job of addressing the threats we're facing
It doesn't go far enough to protect us

13. Where should the federal government be putting **more** priority to address the radicalization of Canadians with violent ideologies?

Stern measures to punish radicalization.
More initiatives to prevent radicalization.
Neither.

14. Do you support or oppose people wearing each of the following religious symbols or clothing in public?

Turban
Hijab
Tenue de religieuse
Burka
Kippa
Kirpan
Étoile de David
Crucifix

Strongly Support
Support
Oppose
Strongly Oppose

15. Some people have called the shooting in Ottawa a terrorist attack. Others have called it an act by someone with a mental illness. Which statement best describes your opinion?

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The shooting in Ottawa was a terrorist attack
The shooting in Ottawa was an act by a person with a mental illness
Not sure/can't say