

## Half of Canadians say government's stance on Saudi arms deal is a "bad decision"

*Most also say Saudi Arabia deserves Canada's condemnation rather than respect*

**February 29, 2016** – Nearly one-in-two Canadians say the Trudeau government's decision to stand by an inherited arms deal with Saudi Arabia is the wrong one, while the majority are disinclined to pursue economic, military or cultural ties with the Kingdom.

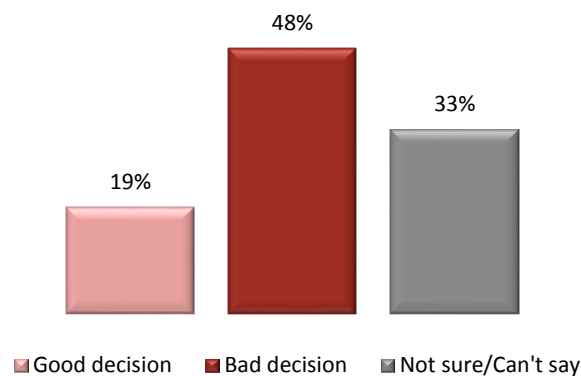
And while Canadian opinions of Iran are similarly hard-line, a plurality see the lifting of sanctions against that country as a "good thing" for this one.

These are among the findings of the most recent study from the Angus Reid Institute, canvassing views toward seven countries: Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Turkey and Iran.

### Key Findings:

- Just over half of Canadians (54%) say the Saudi government should be condemned rather than respected
- Opinion is more divided on whether lifting sanctions on Iran is good for Canada or, more broadly, for international security
- Overall, the governments of the seven countries canvassed elicit relatively little respect from Canadians. The most respected of the group is Israel, at less than one-third (29%)

**In your opinion, is the current federal government's decision to stick by the Saudi Arabian arms deal a good or a bad one?**



### METHODOLOGY:

The Angus Reid Institute conducted an online survey from February 2 – 5, 2016, among a representative randomized sample of 1,507 Canadian adults who are members of the [Angus Reid Forum](#). For comparison purposes only, a probability sample of this size would carry a margin of error of +/- 2.5 percentage points, 19 times out of 20. Discrepancies in or between totals are due to rounding. The survey was self-commissioned and paid for by ARI. Detailed tables are found at the end of this release.

### MEDIA CONTACT:

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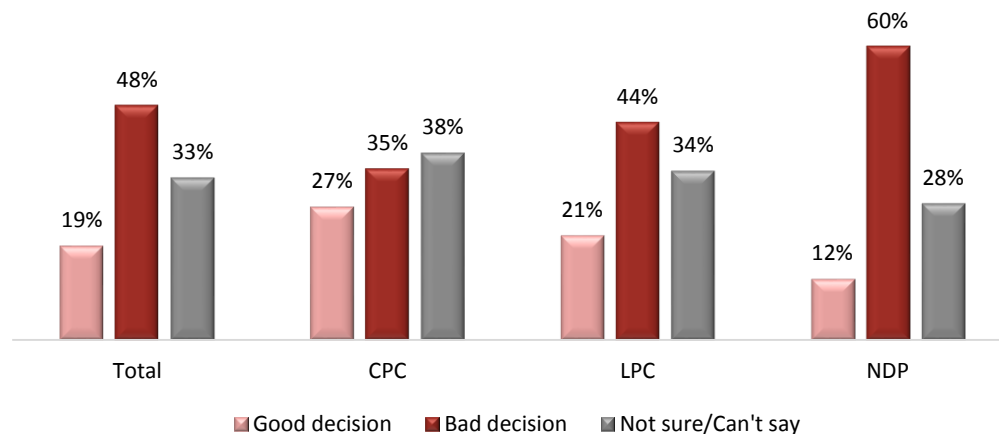
## Little love for Saudi arms decision

Despite the fact that Canadians tend to have largely negative views of the Kingdom (as will be discussed later in this report), Canada – along with much of the Western world – has [maintained mostly cordial relations](#) with Saudi Arabia, pursuing trade and supporting the Saudi regime.

But when asked about the Trudeau government's decision not to cancel a \$15-billion deal to sell Canadian-made weaponized fighting vehicles to the Saudis – negotiated by the previous government – almost half of Canadians (48%) think the decision is a bad one. Fewer than one-in-five (19%) say it's a good decision, while the rest (33%) are unsure.

Interestingly, the feeling that government is making a bad decision by allowing the arms deal to continue cuts across political lines. Even among Canadians who voted for Stephen Harper's Conservatives in the 2015 election, those who say allowing the deal to go forward is a bad decision outnumber those who say it was a good one:

### In your opinion, is the current federal government's decision to stick by the Saudi Arabian arms deal a good or a bad one?



A gender divide also emerges on this question, with men likely to say allowing the deal to proceed is a good decision nearly three-to-one over women (29% versus 9%; [see comprehensive tables for greater detail](#)).

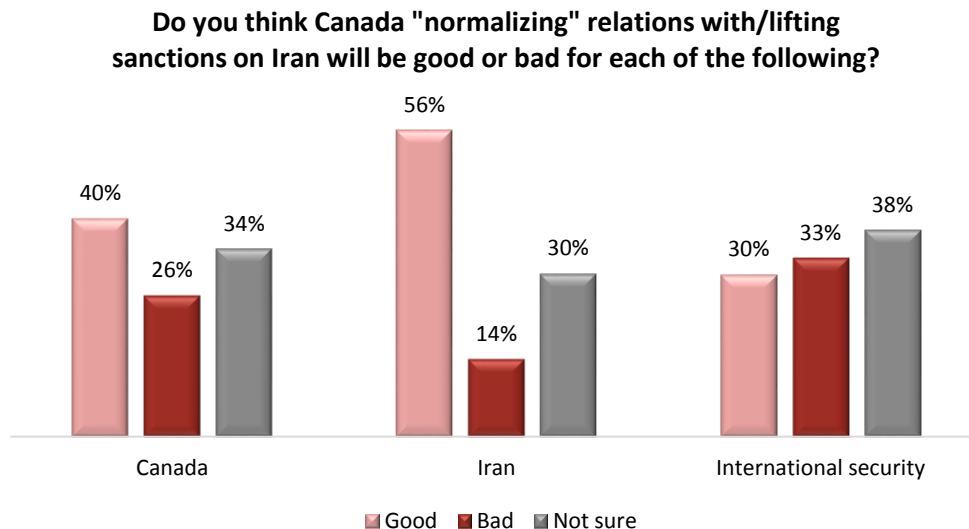
## Lifting sanctions seen as good for Iran; Canada

Canada has not had diplomatic relations with Iran since 2012, when the Harper government closed this country's embassy in Tehran. The Trudeau government has pledged to reverse that decision, and is considering following the United States and European Union in [lifting economic sanctions](#) against the Iranian regime.

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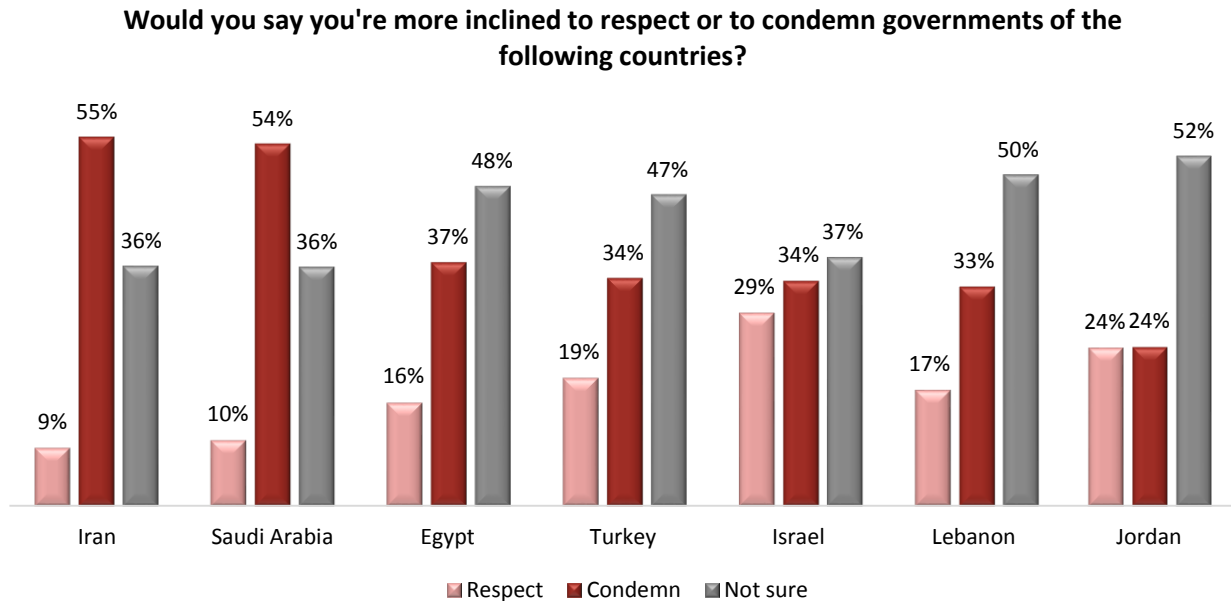
A majority of Canadians (56%) say they expect restored diplomatic and economic ties to be good for Iran, and a plurality of two-in-five (40%) expect the same for Canada. They are, however, divided on what the impacts of normalization may be on international security:



Respondents in Quebec – [where there is talk of Bombardier selling civilian aircraft to Iran](#) – and British Columbia are most likely to think the end of sanctions will be good for Canada and international security, as are younger Canadians (those ages 18 – 34).

### Respect or Condemn? Canadian opinion on various countries

This survey asked Canadians to consider the governments of seven countries in the Middle East – Saudi Arabia, Iran, Egypt, Turkey, Israel, Lebanon, and Jordan – and to think about whether they're more inclined to respect or to condemn them. As seen in the graph that follows, most Canadians choose to condemn Saudi Arabia and Iran, while uncertainty predominates views about the rest of the countries canvassed:



Israel, a long-time ally in the region, has the respect of more Canadians (29%) than any other country canvassed, but respondents are still more inclined to condemn it (34%) overall.

Turkey, a NATO ally, fares even more poorly in the minds of Canadians, with nearly twice as many saying they would condemn the Turkish government (34%) as saying they respect it (19%). Indeed, Canadians feel roughly the same way about Turkey as they do about Egypt and Lebanon.

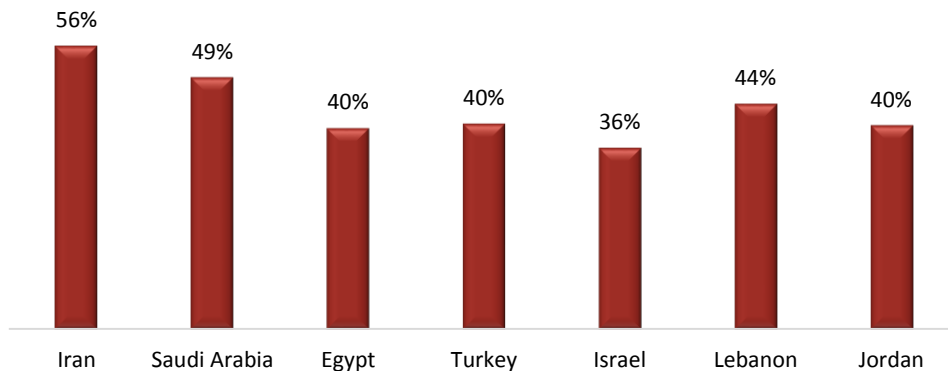
Men are more likely than women both to condemn and to respect each nation on the list, while women are more likely to say they're "not sure" (this is a pattern often seen in survey results featuring large numbers of uncertain respondents). Quebecers are more likely than Canadians from other regions to condemn each of the countries on the list ([see comprehensive tables](#)).

### Closer ties? Canadians aren't sure they want them

The large numbers of Canadians who feel inclined to condemn each of the countries included in this survey may reflect a segment of society that would prefer not to be involved with the Middle East at all.

Asked whether Canada should pursue military, economic or cultural ties with each nation canvassed, more than one-in-three respondents choose "none" for each one. This percentage rises to two-in-five (40%) or more when looking only at the predominantly Muslim countries on the list (i.e. excluding Israel), as seen in the following graph:

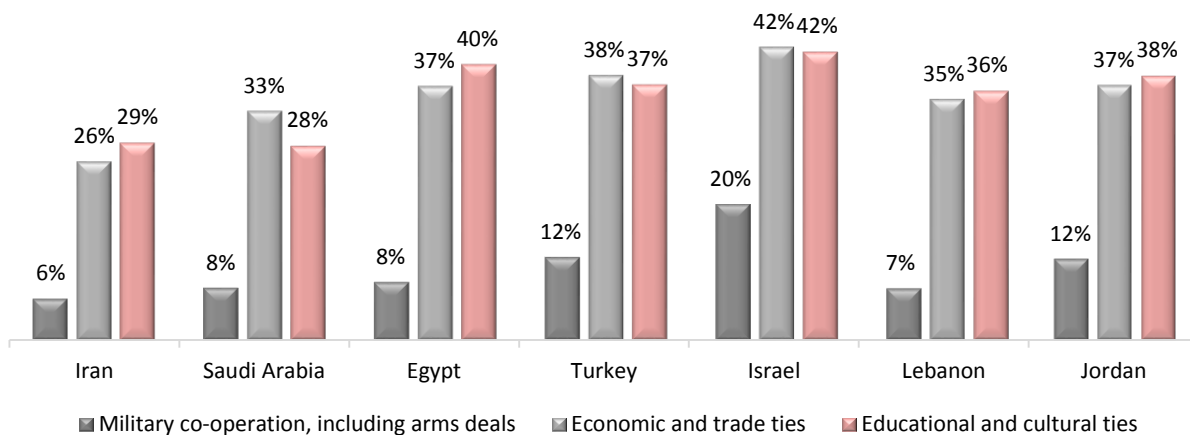
**Now, considering the same countries, which areas, if any, would you say Canada should pursue with each of them?  
(percentage saying "none" shown)**



This more isolationist group tends to include larger numbers of women than men, larger numbers of Quebecers and Manitobans, and larger numbers of Canadians with less than a university education ([see comprehensive tables](#)).

Among those who *do* identify areas they would like to see Canada pursue with these countries, there is a clear preference for “economic and trade ties” and “educational and cultural ties” – roughly equally – over military cooperation, as seen in the graph that follows:

**Now, considering the same countries, which areas, if any, would you say Canada should pursue with each of them?**



Turkey, Jordan, and especially Israel are the countries Canadians are most likely to identify as potential military collaborators in the region, though in each case support for pursuing military cooperation is less than half as high as support for pursuing other areas.

*The **Angus Reid Institute (ARI)** was founded in October 2014 by pollster and sociologist, Dr. Angus Reid. ARI is a national, not-for-profit, non-partisan public opinion research organization established to advance education by commissioning, conducting and disseminating to the public accessible and impartial statistical data, research and policy analysis on economics, political science, philanthropy, public administration, domestic and international affairs and other socio-economic issues of importance to Canada and its world.*

**Summary tables follow. For detailed results by region, age, gender, education, and other demographics, [click here](#).**

In your opinion, is the current government's decision to stick by the Saudi Arabian arms deal a good one or a bad one?				
(weighted sample sizes)	Total (1507)	Federal Vote Last		
		CPC (399)	Liberal Party (450)	NDP (261)
Good decision	19%	27%	21%	12%
Bad decision	48%	35%	44%	60%
Not sure/Can't say	33%	38%	34%	28%