

MMIW: Canadians strongly support inquiry, but have doubts about its ultimate effect

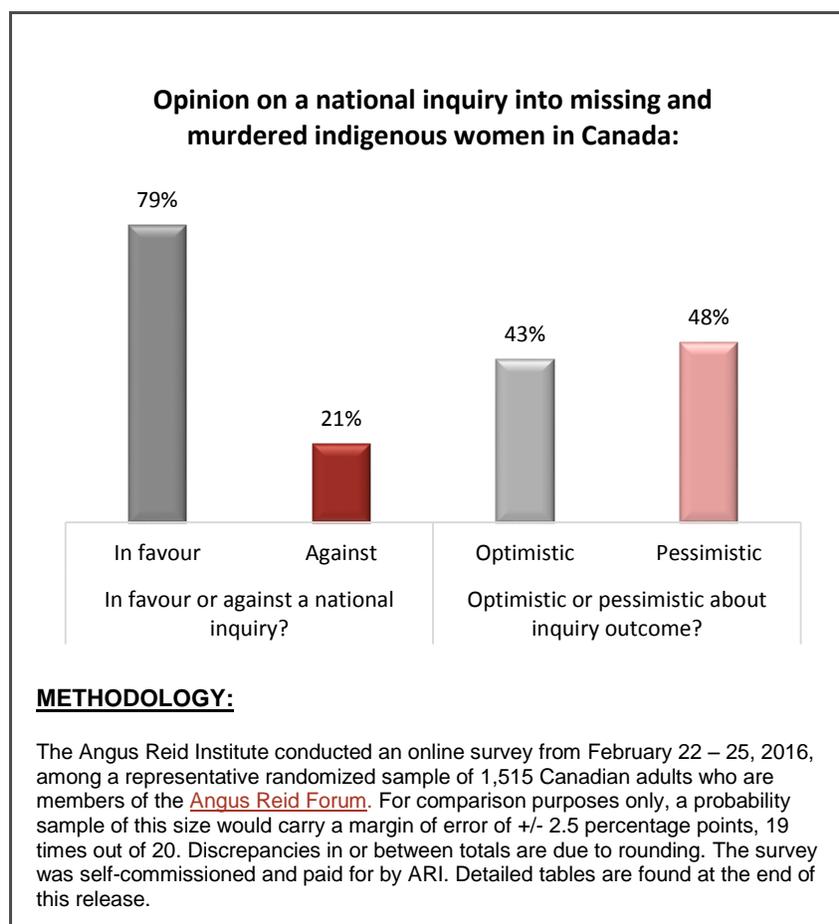
Pessimism driven by doubts recommendations will be followed

March 2, 2016 – As Prime Minister Justin Trudeau prepares to meet with indigenous leaders in Vancouver this week, a new survey by the Angus Reid Institute finds widespread support for the government's promised national inquiry on missing and murdered indigenous women and girls, but skepticism about the eventual outcome of such an inquiry.

Fewer than half of all Canadians say they're optimistic that the inquiry will ultimately result in a better situation for Aboriginal women in Canada. The most commonly cited reason for this pessimism is the belief that any recommendations the investigation produces won't be implemented.

Key Findings:

- Four-in-five Canadians (79%) say they're in favour of a national inquiry, but many of these supporters (37%) are pessimistic that it will make things better for indigenous women when completed
- Central and Atlantic Canadians are more strongly supportive than those who live in western Canada – but majorities in all regions support an inquiry
- Canadian women are more supportive of an inquiry – and more optimistic about its outcome – than men



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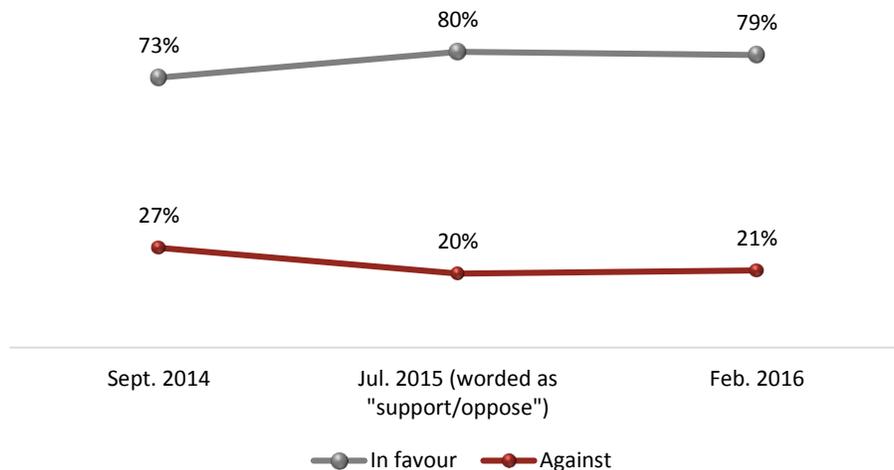
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Four-in-five support inquiry

Indigenous women in Canada are roughly six times more likely than other women to be victims of homicide. RCMP reports have identified roughly 1,200 cases of Aboriginal women and girls who have been murdered or gone missing since 1980, but the federal cabinet ministers charged with leading the pre-inquiry public consultation process say they that the actual number may be as high as 4,000.

As the public awaits the government's terms of reference for the inquiry, this poll finds four-in-five Canadians (79%) in favour of conducting one – 36 per cent *strongly* in favour, and 43 per cent generally. This is a slight increase from ARI's 2014 survey on this topic, and significantly higher than the 44 per cent of British Columbia residents who supported an inquiry in that province in 2010.

Support for MMIW inquiry over time:



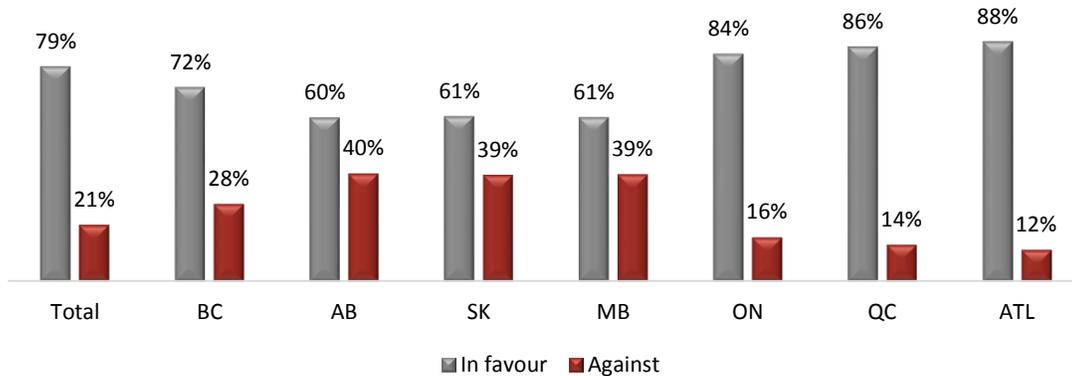
Part of the reason for higher national support for an inquiry when compared to the 2010 process in BC may be found in the significant east-west divide in opinion on this issue. Indeed, this divide is further evidenced in a 2015 ARI poll on the Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

While majorities in every region are in favour of the inquiry, support is greater than 80 per cent in Ontario and regions to the east of it. Support is considerably lower in Western Canada, although still above the majority mark overall, as seen in the following graph:

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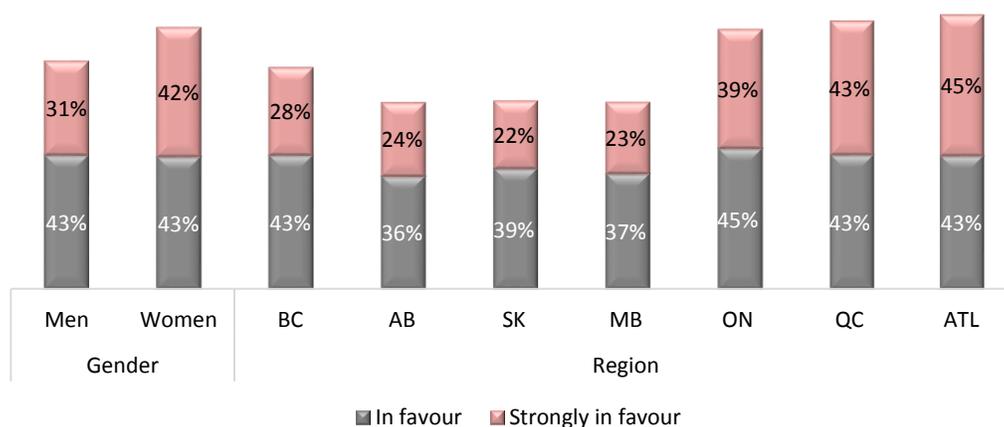
Are you in favour or against a national inquiry into missing and murdered indigenous women in Canada?



Interestingly, respondents east of Manitoba are considerably more likely to say they are “strongly in favour,” while there are no significant gaps between regions on the number saying they are “in favour” (without the “strongly” modifier). The opposite is also true, with more respondents west of Ontario saying they’re “strongly against” an inquiry, and less regional variation in generally (i.e. not “strongly”) “against” responses. See the following graph and [comprehensive tables for greater detail](#).

The same divide can be seen between men and women. More women say they are “strongly in favour” than men (42% versus 31%), but 43 per cent of respondents of each gender say they are generally “in favour,” as illustrated by the graph that follows:

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Other groups more likely to support a national inquiry on missing and murdered indigenous women include residents of Canada's three largest cities, as well as those who voted for the Liberal and New Democratic parties in the 2015 election – though majorities of supporters of all three major parties are in favour of an inquiry (see summary tables at the end of this release).

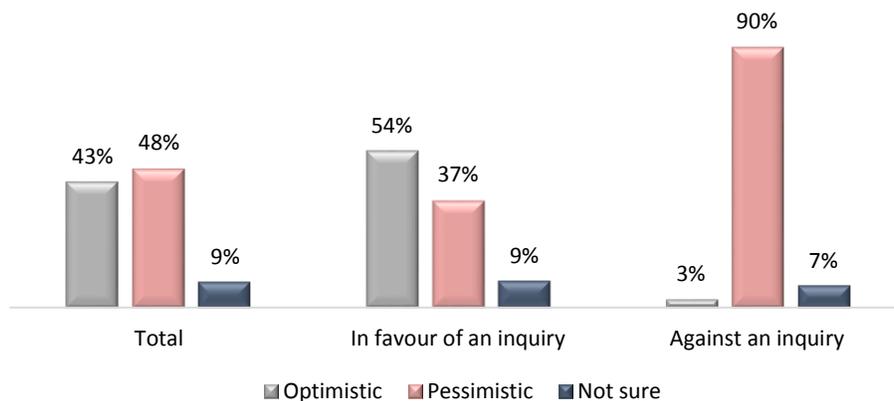
Considerable pessimism about inquiry outcome

Despite their overwhelming support for the inquiry itself, Canadians are divided on whether it will do anything to improve the lives of indigenous women in Canada.

Roughly two-fifths of Canadians (43%) say they're "optimistic" that this will be the case, though only 6 per cent say they're "very optimistic." Roughly three times as many respondents (21%) say they're "very pessimistic" as say they're "very optimistic," and nearly half (48%) are pessimistic overall.

Even many of those who support the inquiry itself are skeptical of its eventual outcome, while those opposed to the inquiry are overwhelmingly pessimistic:

Are you optimistic or pessimistic that this national inquiry into missing and murdered indigenous women will ultimately result in a better situation for indigenous women in Canada?



Those who are pessimistic about the outcomes of such a national inquiry may count former B.C. Attorney General Wally Oppal among their numbers. Oppal, who led [B.C.'s missing women inquiry](#) from 2010 – 2013, came out [against a national inquiry](#) in 2014.

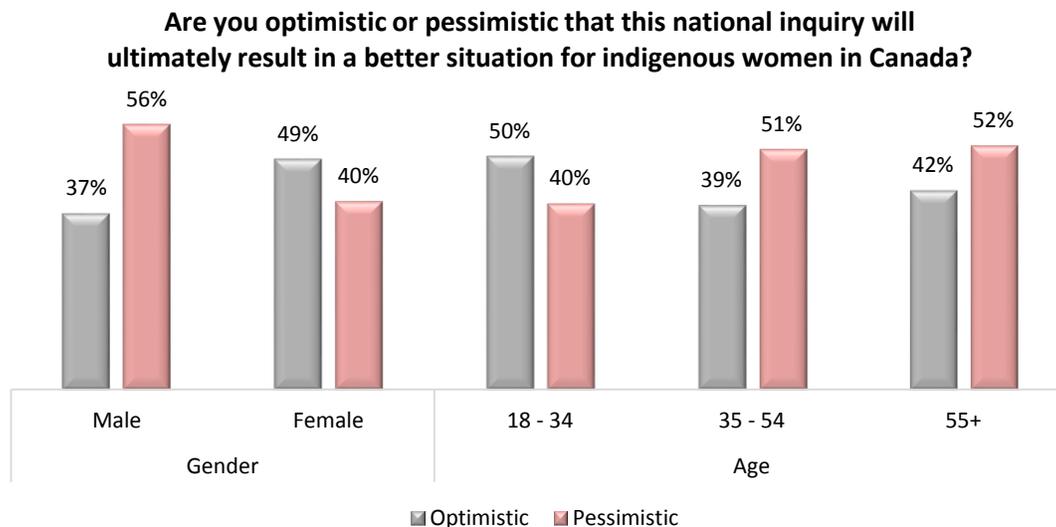
At the time, he said that action – including the implementation of the B.C. commission's 64 recommendations – is more important than further inquiry, making the case that the earlier inquiry's conclusions and proposals apply to all of Canada, not just B.C. [Oppal said more recently](#) that at the very least, a national inquiry should not repeat the same lines of investigation that the B.C. commission followed,

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The relatively high level of pessimism seen in this survey could well be related to Oppal's sense that this is ground that has already been covered – yet not fully acted upon – and perhaps to a feeling that the impacts of the B.C. inquiry have not had a tangible effect on improving the lives of the indigenous women (see more about specific reasons for pessimism later in this report).

Optimism about the inquiry varies by age and gender, as seen in the graph that follows. Fully half of Canadians ages 18 – 34 say they're optimistic, as do nearly the same percentage of women:



Regionally, Prairie residents tend to be more pessimistic than residents of other areas ([see comprehensive tables](#)).

Why so pessimistic?

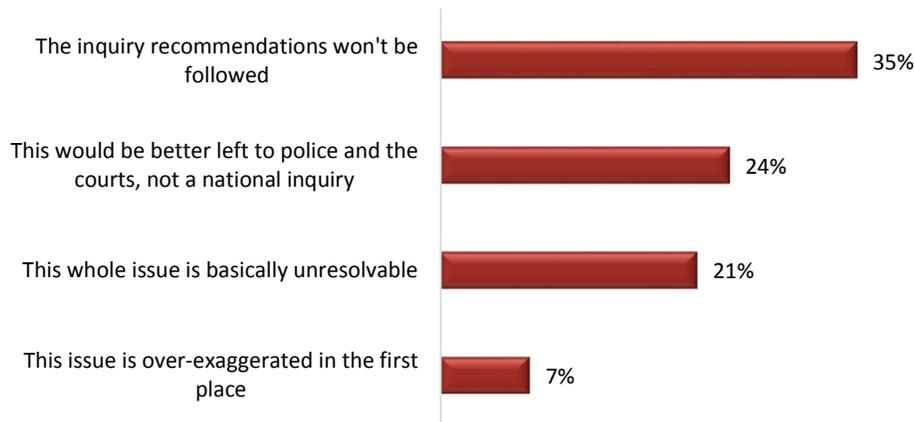
Canadians who are pessimistic about the inquiry offer a variety of reasons for holding this perspective. The number one reason for low expectations – offered by one-in-three (35%) of those who said they are pessimistic – is a general concern that the inquiry's eventual recommendations won't be followed. This skepticism was voiced by half of Quebecers who are pessimistic about the ultimate impact of the inquiry (49%).

Another one-in-four (24%) say the issue would be better left to police and courts, and one-in-five (21%) of these pessimists see the issue as basically unsolvable:

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What is your main reason for being pessimistic? (asked only of those who are pessimistic, n=727)



Liberal government gets the nod on this file

Supporting a national inquiry on missing and murdered indigenous women and girls was one of the ways in which Justin Trudeau and the Liberal Party sought to contrast themselves to the Stephen Harper Conservative government during the 2015 election. Given the large majority of the electorate favouring such an inquiry, Liberal strategists surely saw the issue as a winner.

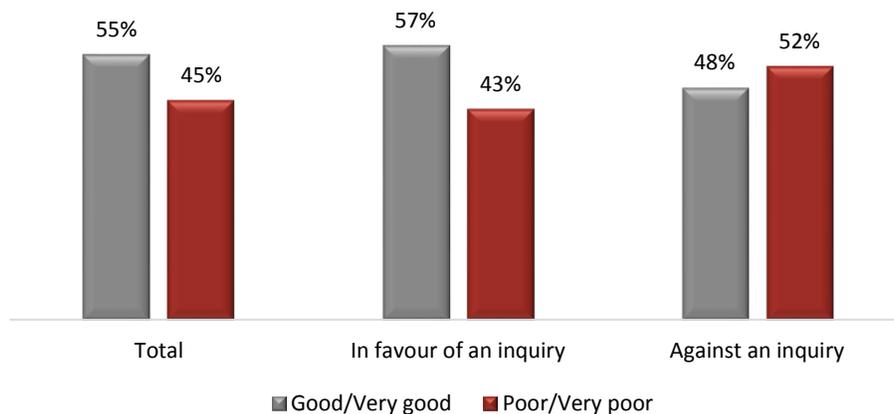
Indeed, though it is still early days for both the government and the yet-to-be-officially-convened MMIW inquiry, the Trudeau Liberals receive a "thumbs-up" from most Canadians for their handling of this file so far. A total of 55 per cent say they are doing either a "very good" (7%) or "good" job (48%) on the issue – numbers roughly comparable to perceptions of the government's handling of [the mission against ISIS](#).

Interestingly, it could be said that the government hasn't fully converted the overwhelming public support for an inquiry into approval of its handling of this file. As the following graph indicates, a significant portion (43%) of those in favour of an inquiry think the government has done either a "poor" or "very poor" job so far when it comes to the area of indigenous women's issues:

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Overall, what kind of job would you say the federal government is doing so far when it comes to this area of indigenous women's issues?



Regionally, the government gets its best marks for handling indigenous women's issues among voters in Quebec (62%), but approval is fairly consistent (50% or higher) across all other regions and main demographic groupings ([see comprehensive tables](#)).

*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](#).

| Based on what you've seen or heard about this, are you in favour or against a national inquiry into missing and murdered indigenous women in Canada? | | | |
|--|-------------------------|---------------------|--------------------------|
| (weighted sample sizes) | February 2016 (1515) | July 2015 (1511) | September 2014 (1508) |
| In favour | 79% | 80% (support) | 73% |
| Opposed | 21% | 20% (oppose) | 28% |

Based on what you've seen or heard about this, are you in favour or against a national inquiry into missing and murdered indigenous women in Canada?

| (weighted sample sizes) | Total (1515) | Region | | | |
|--|--------------|------------------|------------------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| | | Van/TO/Mtl (512) | Mid-sized cities (306) | ROC Urban (508) | ROC Rural (189) |
| Strongly in favour of a national inquiry | 36% | 42% | 34% | 34% | 32% |
| In favour of a national inquiry | 43% | 45% | 39% | 42% | 44% |
| Against a national inquiry | 14% | 10% | 17% | 15% | 16% |
| Strongly against a national inquiry | 7% | 3% | 10% | 9% | 8% |

Based on what you've seen or heard about this, are you in favour or against a national inquiry into missing and murdered indigenous women in Canada?

| (weighted sample sizes) | Total (1515) | Federal vote last | | |
|--|--------------|-------------------|---------------|-----------|
| | | CPC (373) | Liberal (486) | NDP (274) |
| Strongly in favour of a national inquiry | 36% | 16% | 45% | 48% |
| In favour of a national inquiry | 43% | 41% | 41% | 41% |
| Against a national inquiry | 14% | 23% | 12% | 8% |
| Strongly against a national inquiry | 7% | 20% | 2% | 3% |

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Are you optimistic or pessimistic that this national inquiry into missing and murdered indigenous women will ultimately result in a better situation for indigenous women in Canada?

| (weighted sample sizes) | Total (1515) | Views on the inquiry | |
|-------------------------|--------------|----------------------|---------------|
| | | In favour (1199) | Opposed (316) |
| Very optimistic | 6% | 7% | 1% |
| Moderately optimistic | 38% | 47% | 2% |
| Moderately pessimistic | 27% | 28% | 23% |
| Very pessimistic | 21% | 9% | 67% |
| Not sure | 9% | 9% | 7% |

Overall, what kind of job would you say the federal government is doing so far when it comes to this area of indigenous women's issues?

| (weighted sample sizes) | Total (1515) | Views on the inquiry | |
|-------------------------|--------------|----------------------|---------------|
| | | In favour (1199) | Opposed (316) |
| Very good | 7% | 7% | 6% |
| Good | 48% | 49% | 42% |
| Poor | 38% | 37% | 38% |
| Very poor | 8% | 6% | 14% |

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