

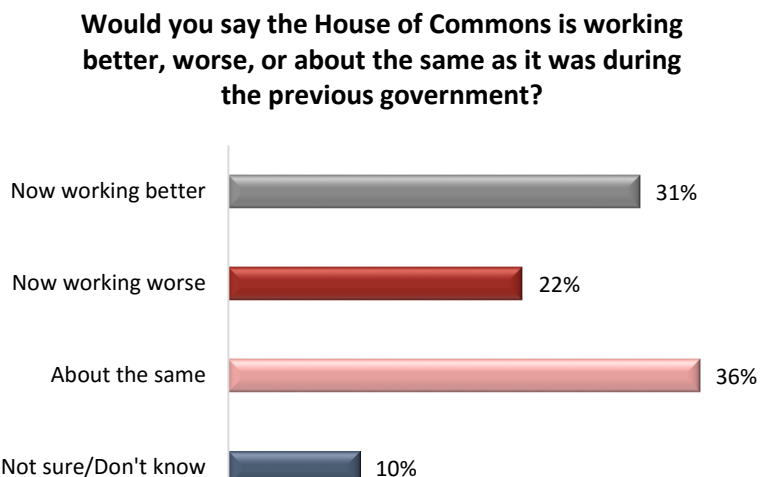
Style, substance, or both? Canadians weigh in on Liberals' first House of Commons session

Most see government working as well as or better than it did with Harper as PM

June 22, 2016 – With the House of Commons in the first days of its summer recess, a new public opinion poll from the Angus Reid Institute finds Canadians have mixed feelings about the first full Parliamentary session of the federal Liberal government they elected last year.

On one hand, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau remains immensely popular, and more Canadians think Parliament has improved with his party in charge than think it has worsened.

On the other, relatively few Canadians see Parliament as representing the interests and concerns of people in their region – a feeling that is especially strong in the country's west – while most think this government is too concerned about its image, even as many also see real progress being made.



METHODOLOGY:

The Angus Reid Institute conducted an online survey from June 13 – 16, 2016 among a representative randomized sample of 1,519 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.

Key Findings:

- Asked whether the Liberal government has been “making real progress and getting things done” or “putting too much emphasis on PR and photo ops,” Canadians lean toward the latter (36% versus 25% for the former), and one-in-six (17%) say both are true
- Despite this view of his government, the Prime Minister enjoys the job approval of more than three-in-five Canadians (63%)

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- Strong majorities of Canadians in the western provinces of British Columbia (60%), Alberta (64%), and Saskatchewan (70%) believe the interests of their regions of the country are poorly reflected in the House of Commons

'Making progress' or over-emphasizing PR?

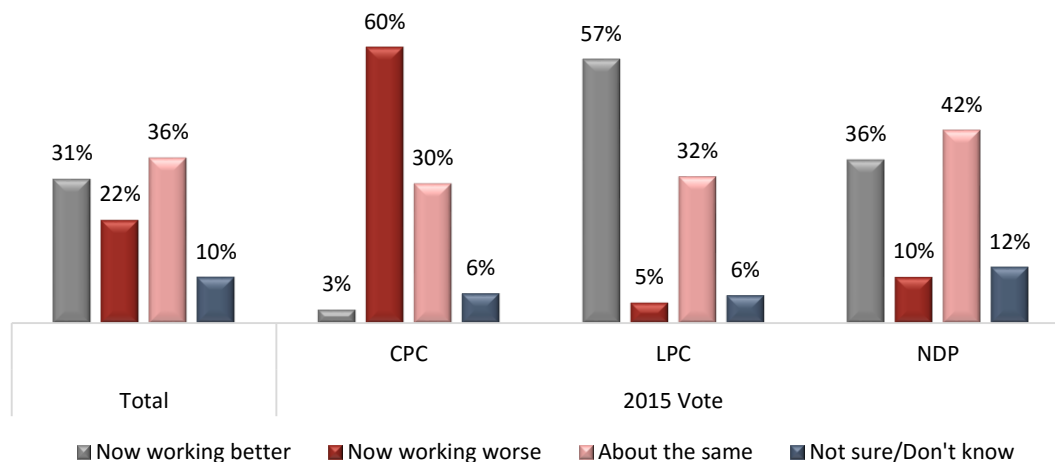
Much of the Liberal Party's "Sunny Ways" agenda under Justin Trudeau has been about changing the tone of Canada's government. The Liberals' 2015 election platform included promises to allow more free votes in the House of Commons, to revamp the Senate as a nonpartisan body, and to avoid using so-called "legislative tricks" such as prorogation and omnibus bills.

Whether the party is able to keep these promises over its term in government remains to be seen. Indeed, the newly independent Senate has already caused headaches for government with its efforts to amend assisted dying legislation. Moreover, depending on one's definition of an "omnibus bill," that particular pledge may already be broken.

For now, though, Canadians tend to see the House of Commons functioning at least as well as – if not better than – it did during the Harper years. As seen in the first graph of this report, the largest group of Canadians (36%) say they feel the House is working about the same as it did in previous years. Roughly three-in-ten (31%) feel it's working better, and slightly more than one-in-five (22%) think it has worsened.

As might be expected, Canadians who voted for the Conservative Party last year are much more likely to find themselves in this latter group, as seen in the following graph:

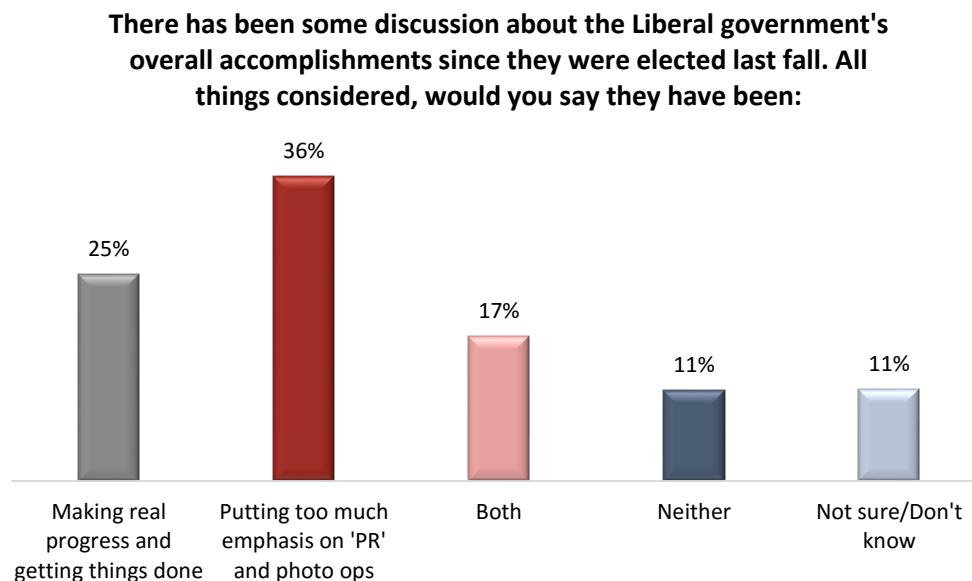
Would you say the House of Commons is working better, worse, or about the same as it was during the previous government?



The Liberals have also adopted an image-conscious style of governing that can be seen in their “Canada’s back” mantra and in the celebrity of Trudeau himself – his [appearances in magazines](#) and [on late night talk shows](#), and the images of him [doing yoga](#) or [explaining quantum computing](#) that become viral hits.

Trudeau’s seeming ubiquity has led critics to label him “[PM Selfie](#),” a suggestion that he – and by extension his government – is more concerned with style than substance. But how does the Canadian public feel about Liberal government’s approach?

Asked whether the government has been “making real progress and getting things done” or “putting too much emphasis on PR and photo ops,” Canadians are more likely to choose the latter than the former, as seen in the following graph:

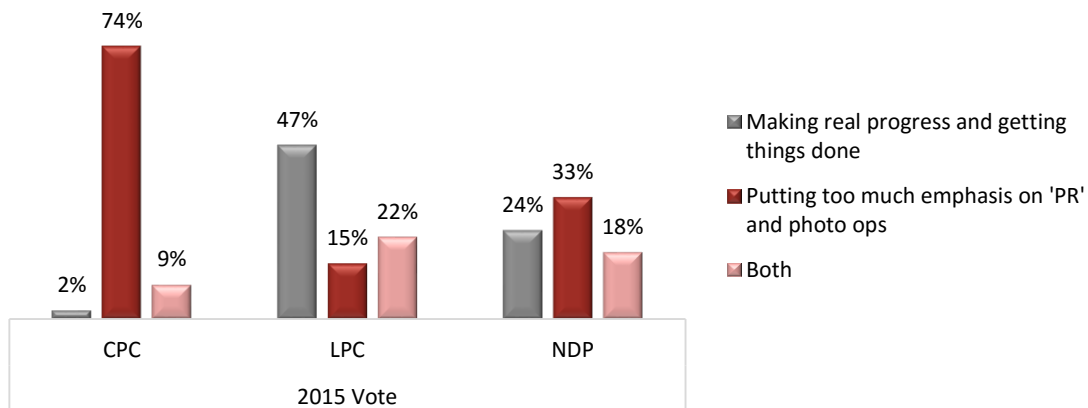


Notably, fully one-in-six Canadians (17%) feel the government has both made real progress *and* been overly image-focused. When this group’s dual position is considered, a full majority of Canadians (54%) say government has put too much emphasis on style, and 42 per cent believe it has been achieving the substance of its agenda.

Again, views on this question shake out along partisan lines. Three-in-four (74%) of those who voted for the Harper-led Conservatives in 2015 think the Trudeau government has been too focused on its public image, and another one-in-ten CPC voters (9%) say the government has done “both.”

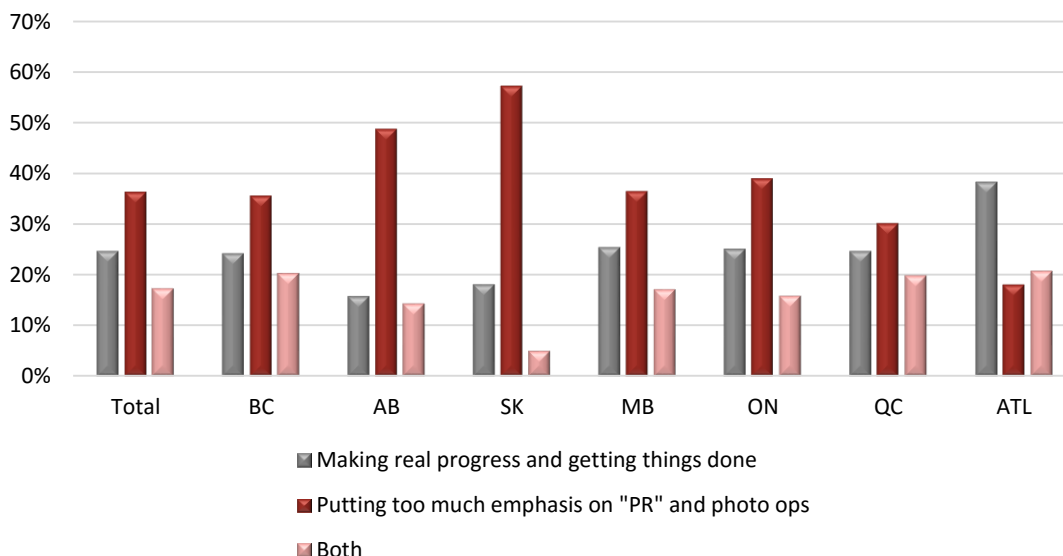
Among past Liberal and New Democratic Party supporters, considerably larger numbers see government making progress on its agenda, though it should be noted that one-in-six (15%) Liberals and twice that many New Democrats (33%) think there has been too much focus style. Roughly one-in-five supporters of each of these parties choose “both,” as seen in the following graph:

There has been some discussion about the Liberal government's overall accomplishments since they were elected last fall. All things considered, would you say they have been:



Regionally, the “too much emphasis on PR” camp is larger than the “making real progress” camp everywhere except in Atlantic Canada, where the Liberals swept all 32 seats in last year’s election ([see comprehensive tables](#)).

There has been some discussion about the Liberal government's overall accomplishments since they were elected last fall. All things considered, would you say they have been:

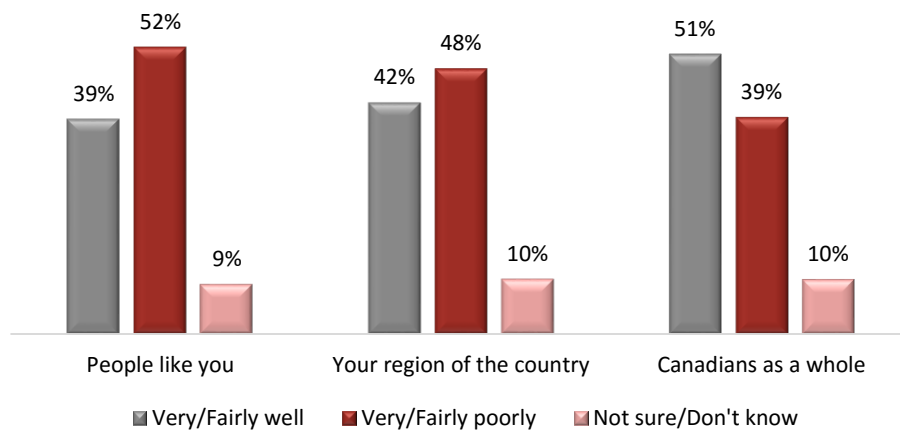


How well does the House of Commons represent Canadians?

Asked how well Parliament represents the interests and concerns of people like them, most Canadians (52%) say it does so either “very” or “fairly” poorly, while fewer than two-in-five (39%) say it does so well.

Interestingly, as seen in the following graph, these totals are essentially reversed when Canadians are asked whether the House of Commons represents the interests of Canadians as a whole:

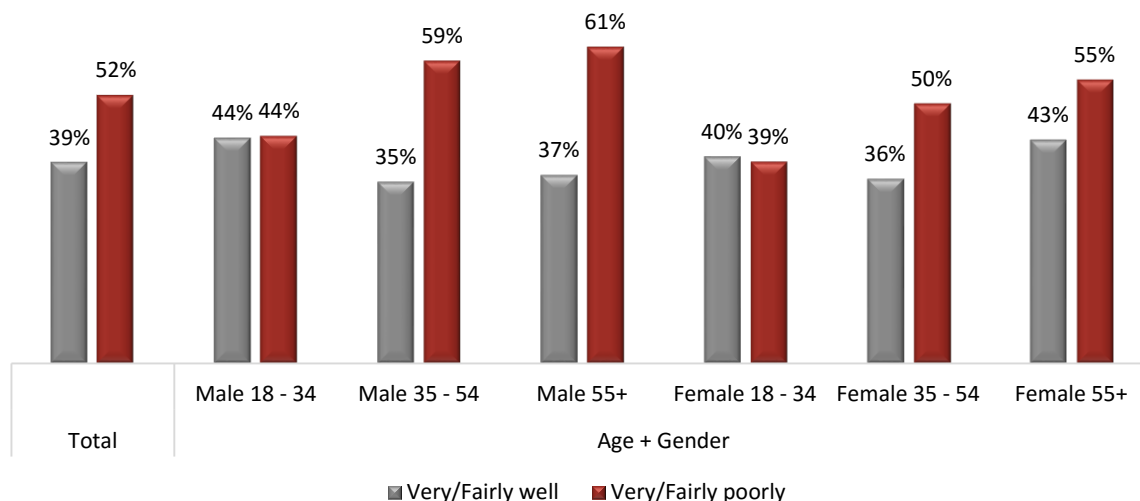
Overall, how well would you say the House of Commons represents the interests and concerns of each of the following groups:



Among those most likely to feel people like them are poorly represented in the House? Men and Canadians ages 35 and older – ironically the demographic groups to which most Members of Parliament belong.

As seen in the following graph, men in the 35 – 54 and 55+ age groups are particularly likely to say people like them are poorly represented, though it should be noted that women and Canadians under 35 don't necessarily feel better represented. Rather, these groups are more likely to say they're “not sure” ([see comprehensive tables](#)).

Overall, how well would you say the Canadian House of Commons represents the interests and concerns of people like you?



A resurrection of “Western Alienation?”

As might be expected, beliefs about Parliament reflecting one’s own region of the country vary significantly depending on the region in question.

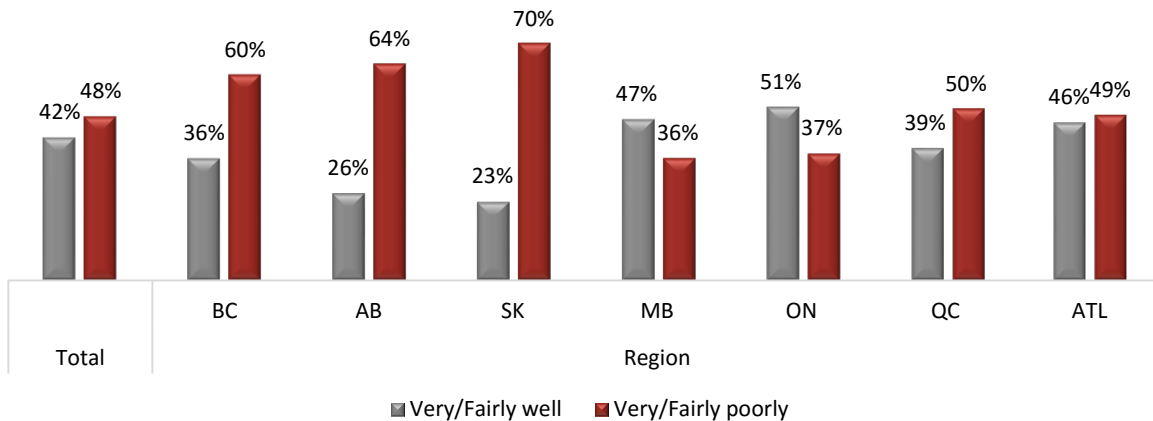
In Ontario – the seat of government and the province with the most MPs – fully half (51%) say the House represents their region’s interests and concerns. Atlantic Canada and Manitoba give similarly high marks (46% and 47%, respectively).

In Western Canada, however, respondents are much less inclined to see their provinces reflected in the national government, a view that follows a trend of Western Alienation [some have argued](#) goes back as far as confederation.

This trend exists despite Trudeau’s [prominent efforts](#) to assure Albertans their economic interests are front-and-centre for his government, as well as to ensure that British Columbia – a place he refers to as “[home](#)” – has been at the front of the line for [investments](#) such as infrastructure funding.

Quebec, with its distinct language and culture, also tends to see itself represented poorly in the House of Commons, though less so than British Columbia, Alberta, and Saskatchewan, as seen in the following graph:

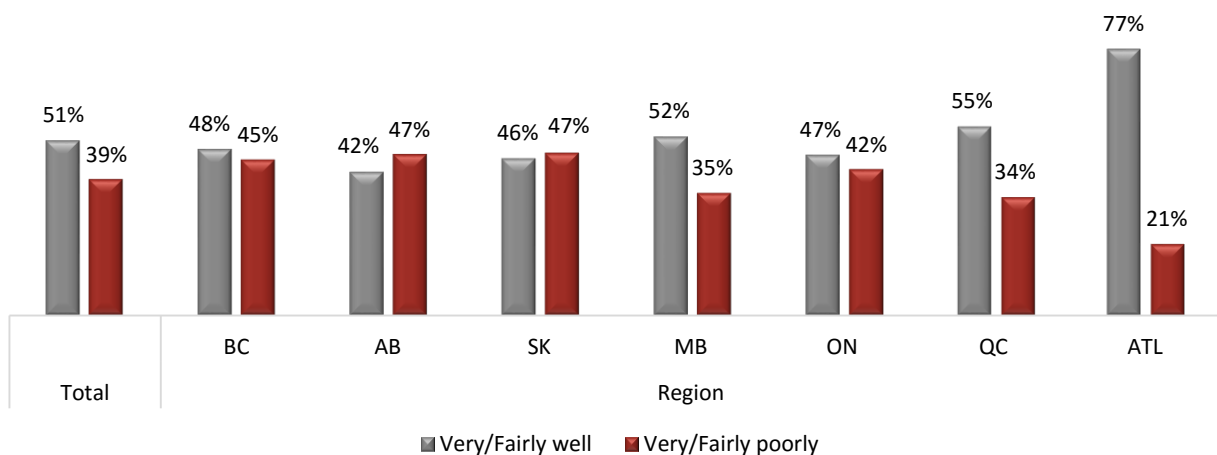
Overall, how well would you say the House of Commons represents the interests and concerns of your region of the country?



On the question of whether Parliament represents the interests and concerns of Canadians as a whole, respondents are generally more positive. That said, in most regions, the total who think the House of Commons reflects Canadians as a whole is less than 50 per cent, as seen in the graph that follows.

The big exception to this pattern is Atlantic Canada, where more than three-quarters of respondents (77%) say the interests of all Canadians are well-represented in the House. The only other regions where this is even the narrow majority view are Manitoba (52%) and Quebec (55%):

Overall, how well would you say the House of Commons represents the interests and concerns of Canadians as a whole?

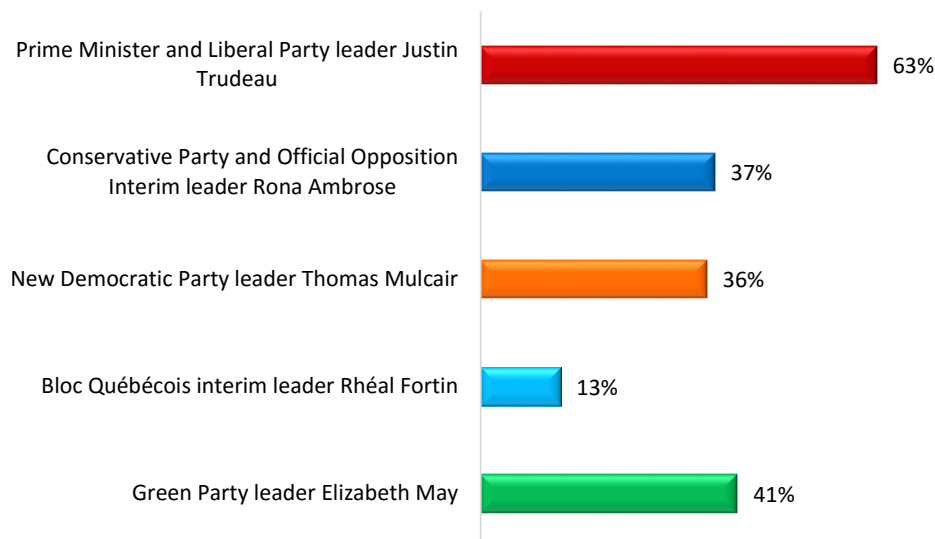


Leadership approval: Trudeau keeping left-leaning voters happy

While the results of this survey paint a rather mixed picture of Canadian opinion on the House of Commons and the current government, the Prime Minister himself remains quite popular.

As he has since the election, Trudeau earns the job approval of six-in-ten Canadians (63%) – far more than approve of any other federal leader, though it should be noted that larger numbers offer no opinion of these leaders' performances (16% for Mulcair; 24% or more [for everyone else](#)) than Trudeau's (5%):

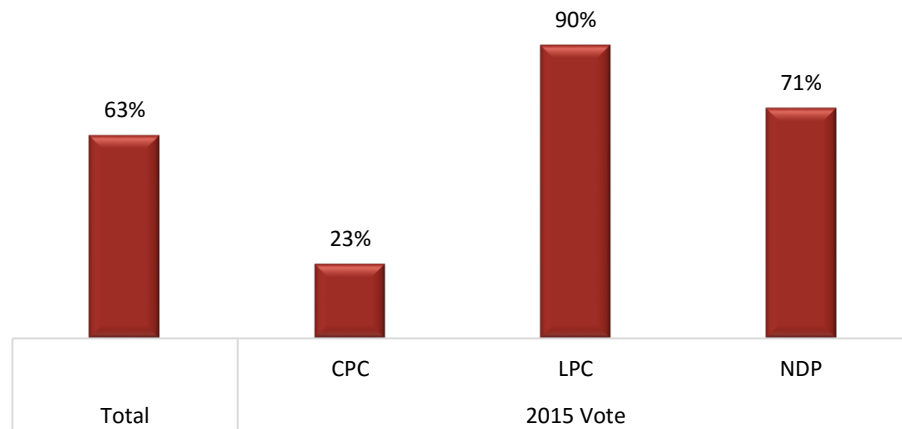
Overall, do you approve or disapprove of the performance of each of the following?



Regionally, the PM's approval rating is highest among Quebecers (74%) and Atlantic Canadians (79%), and lowest among Albertans (44%) and Saskatchewan residents (42%). It's also slightly higher among women (66%) than men (59%; [see comprehensive tables](#)).

A key factor in Trudeau's consistent approval? The continued support of 2015 NDP voters, seven-in-ten (71%) of whom view his job performance favourably:

Trudeau approval by 2015 vote:



It should be noted that most of these New Democrats (57%) say they “moderately approve” of Trudeau (just 14% strongly approve). Whether this support dissipates as the NDP embarks on the process of electing a new leader next year is something that will be of great [interest to that party](#).

*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](#).

The Liberals and Justin Trudeau were elected as the new government last fall. Would you say the House of Commons is working better, worse, or about the same as it was during the previous government?

(weighted sample sizes)	Total (1519)	Federal Vote Last		
		CPC (353)	Liberal Party (504)	NDP (264)
Now working better	31%	3%	57%	36%
Now working worse	22%	60%	5%	10%
About the same	36%	30%	32%	42%
Not sure / Don't know	10%	6%	6%	12%

There has been some discussion about the Liberal government's overall accomplishments since they were elected last fall. All things considered, would you say they have been:

(weighted sample sizes)	Total (1519)	Federal Vote Last		
		CPC (353)	Liberal Party (504)	NDP (264)
Making real progress and getting things done	25%	2%	47%	24%
Putting too much emphasis on "PR" and photo ops	36%	74%	15%	33%
Both	17%	9%	22%	18%
Neither	11%	10%	8%	13%
Not sure / Don't know	11%	4%	7%	12%

Overall, do you approve or disapprove of the performance of each of the following? [Prime Minister and Liberal Party leader Justin Trudeau]				
(weighted sample sizes)	Total (1519)	Federal Vote Last		
		CPC (353)	Liberal Party (504)	NDP (264)
Strongly Approve	20%	1%	46%	14%
Moderately Approve	42%	22%	44%	57%
Moderately Disapprove	16%	27%	6%	18%
Strongly Disapprove	16%	48%	2%	5%
Not sure / Don't know	5%	2%	2%	6%