

Is the Honeymoon ending? Trudeau's declining job approval in Ontario drives ten-point national slide

Number of Ontarians who approve of PM's job performance drops 16 points since September

December 15, 2016 – In a sign of cooling for the Prime Minister, the number of Canadians who say they approve of the job Justin Trudeau is doing has dropped ten points over the last three months.

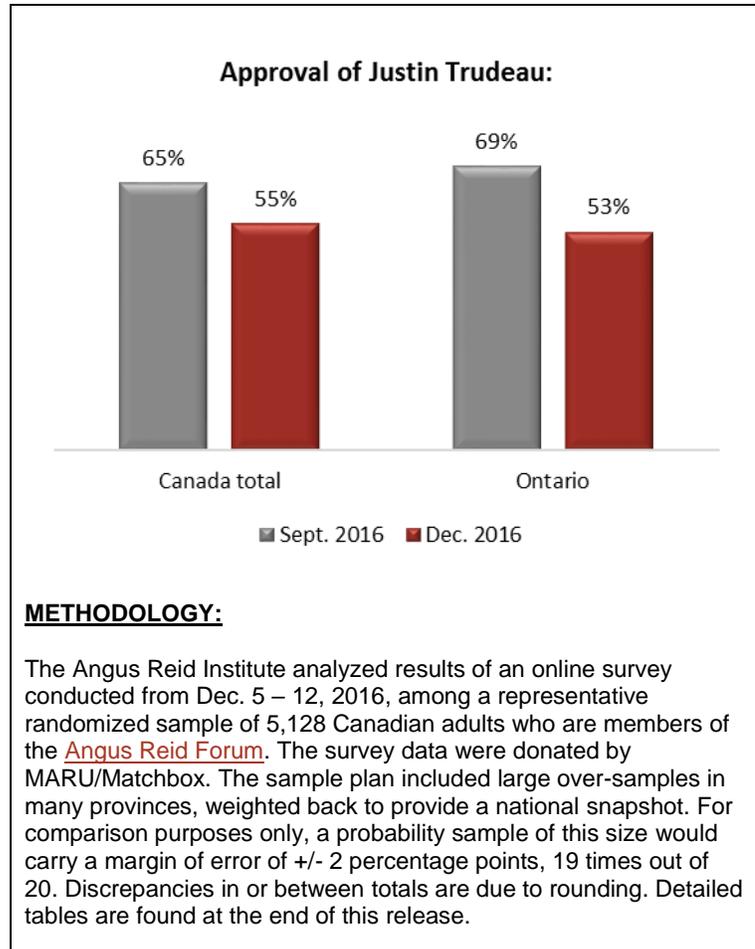
A majority – 55 per cent – continue to express confidence in the PM's performance. And while this level of approval may well be the envy of prime ministers past and future, it also represents the lowest approval he has recorded at any point since his Liberal Party won a majority mandate in last October's election.

The Angus Reid Institute's latest quarterly analysis of public opinion data from more than 5,000 Canadian adults comes as the Trudeau government weighs in on a number of energy and climate change issues, from approving liquefied natural gas and pipeline developments – which angered some – to adopting a Canada-wide agreement on carbon pricing – which angered others.

Though these decisions may have cost Trudeau some goodwill, [plummeting approval](#) of Ontario Liberal premier Kathleen Wynne may also be having a notable impact on what people in Canada's most populous province think of the Liberal Prime Minister.

Key Findings:

- Satisfaction with government performance on a variety of files – including the economy – decreased alongside the PM's overall approval rating
- Most Canadians feel either "pleased" (36%) or "neutral" (37%) about the government's decision to approve Kinder Morgan's TransMountain pipeline expansion project. Albertans voice the most support, while Quebec, B.C., and Ontario residents offer the most opposition



- Nearly three-in-ten (29%) say they expect their standard of living to worsen in the next 12 months – the highest number expressing this worry since this quarterly study began in 2010. Those with “middle class” incomes – a key focus of the Trudeau government – express only marginally less worry (26%)

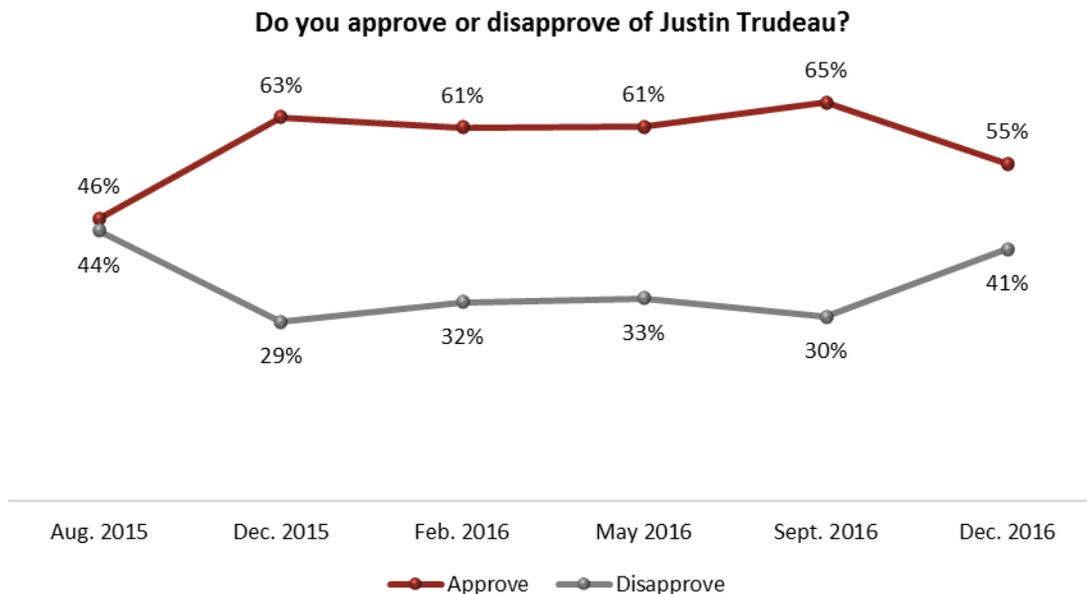
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PART 1: Is the honeymoon ending?

More than half of all Canadians (55%) still approve of Prime Minister Justin Trudeau’s job performance, but, as previously mentioned, that number is down 10 percentage points [since September](#), the biggest change in opinion on him in more than a year.

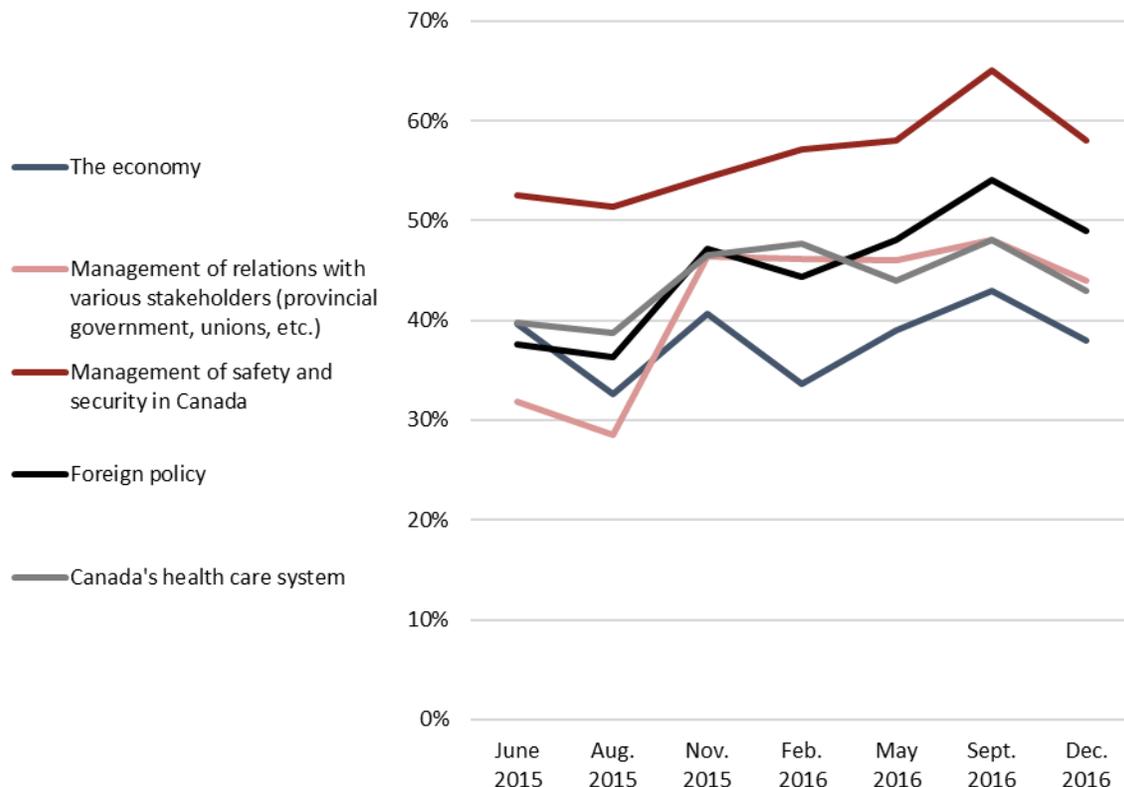
That said, Trudeau’s approval rating remains well above where it was shortly after last year’s election campaign began:



Further, Trudeau remains more popular with Canadians than either Interim Conservative Party leader Rona Ambrose (35% approve of her) or New Democratic Party Leader Tom Mulcair (43% approve of him), both of whom are due to be replaced as party leaders in 2017.

The drop in the PM's approval rating corresponds with decreases in satisfaction with a variety of issues, many of which had – until now - been increasing:

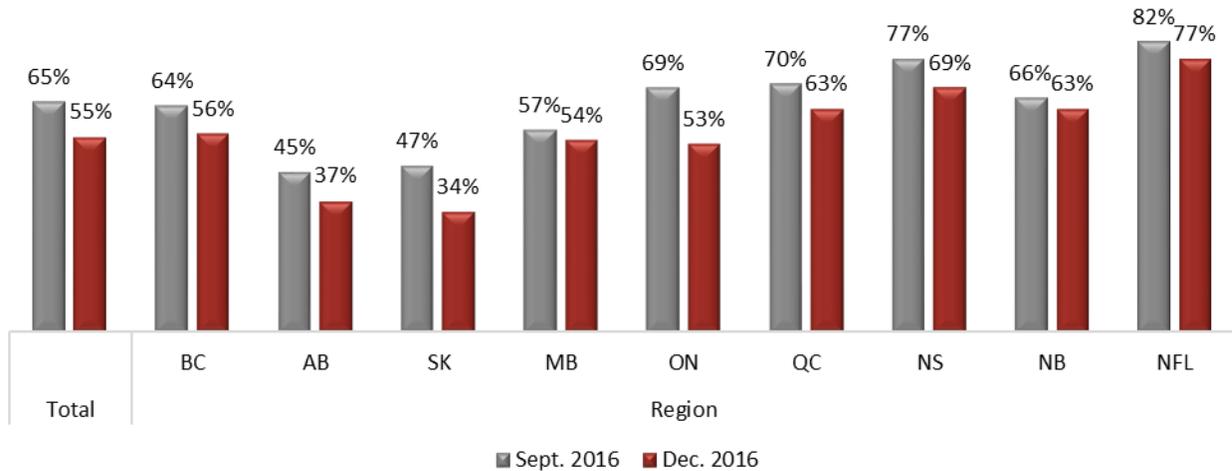
Overall, would you say you are satisfied or dissatisfied with each of the following in Canada?



The PM's approval rating has fallen in every region of the country since September, but the drop is most significant in the Liberal Party's historical stronghold of Ontario. There, 53 per cent of respondents approve of Trudeau, down 16 points from last quarter.

Some may suggest Trudeau's amicable relationship with Ontario premier Kathleen Wynne – the two have campaigning enthusiastically for each other over the years – could play a role in this. Recent Angus Reid Institute quarterly approval rankings found Wynne to be the country's least popular provincial leader, at just 16 per cent approval.

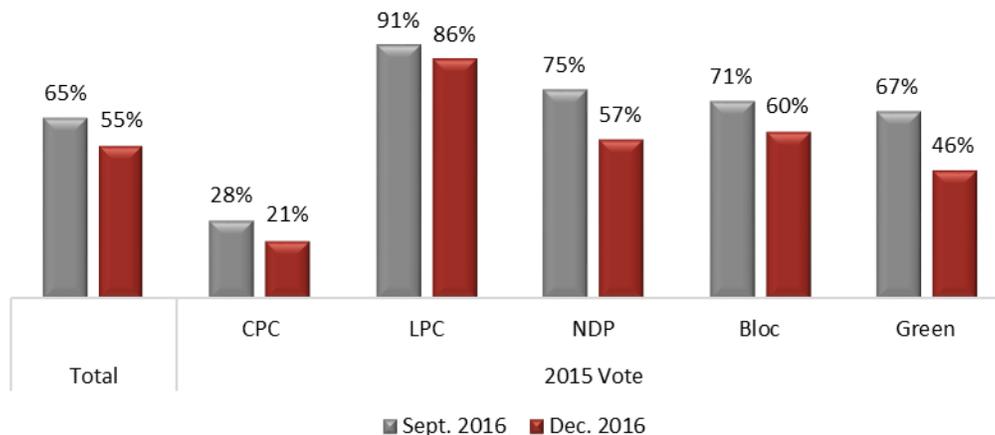
Approval of Justin Trudeau by region:



Another notable sign of the ebbing goodwill toward Trudeau? Hardening opinions among those who lean toward the left of the political spectrum. Since taking office, Trudeau has enjoyed high levels of approval among these Canadians, regardless of whether they voted for the Liberal Party in 2015. Last quarter, for example, in addition to having the approval of nine-in-ten Liberals (91%), Trudeau enjoyed the favour of fully three-quarters of NDP voters (75%) and two-thirds of Green Party supporters (67%).

This quarter, views of his job performance have dropped across the political spectrum:

Approval of Justin Trudeau by party support:



On some level, the recently concluded parliamentary session was always going to be challenging one for the Trudeau government. It was the sitting in which the government moved from talking about its agenda to attempting to implement it, with mixed results from a public opinion standpoint.

Among the possible reasons for the slip in Trudeau's approval ratings this quarter are his Liberal Party's continued use of "cash-for-access" fundraisers, a practice he has [repeatedly defended](#). This week, Ethics Commissioner Mary Dawson [revealed she will question the Prime Minister](#) over whether he breached the Conflict of Interest Act by attending such fundraisers.

And the government's [perceived reticence](#) to make good on its promise that the 2015 federal election would be the last one conducted under the current "first-past-the-post" system has surely done the Prime Minister no favours with left-leaning voters, many of whom have long led the charge for a more proportional electoral system.

Related: [Two alternate voting systems seen as competitive to First Past the Post](#)

The approval of Kinder Morgan's TransMountain pipeline expansion project may also have hurt Trudeau's reputation among certain Canadians. The decision has been met with vocal opposition in some circles, though the majority of Canadians either feel pleased or neutral toward the decision, as will be discussed in the following section.

PART 2: Threading the needle on energy and the environment

In late September, the government [approved](#) plans for a liquefied natural gas terminal on British Columbia's north coast. Then, just days later, it [announced its plans](#) to require provincial governments to put a price on carbon emissions – either through a carbon tax or a cap-and-trade system – by 2018. If provinces failed to adopt such a policy before the deadline, the federal government would impose a carbon tax on them directly.

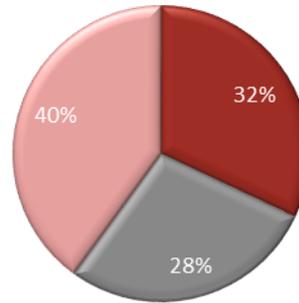
More recently, the Trudeau government [approved](#) Enbridge's [Line 3 pipeline replacement project](#) and Kinder Morgan's [TransMountain pipeline expansion](#), while rejecting the proposed [Northern Gateway pipeline](#) (also an Enbridge project). This, after announcing [\\$1.5 billion in funding](#) for coastal protections at a press conference in Vancouver in early November.

Taken together, these decisions represent the government's approach to the challenging dual-issue of mitigating the effects of climate change in a nation with an economy heavily invested in extracting and exporting fossil fuels.

How do Canadians feel their government has fared in its attempts to meet this challenge? The largest individual group of Canadians (40%) say the government has "struck the right balance between economic growth and environmental protection," as seen in the following graph:

Based on whatever you've seen, read, or heard about the government's efforts on these files, would you say the federal government has ...

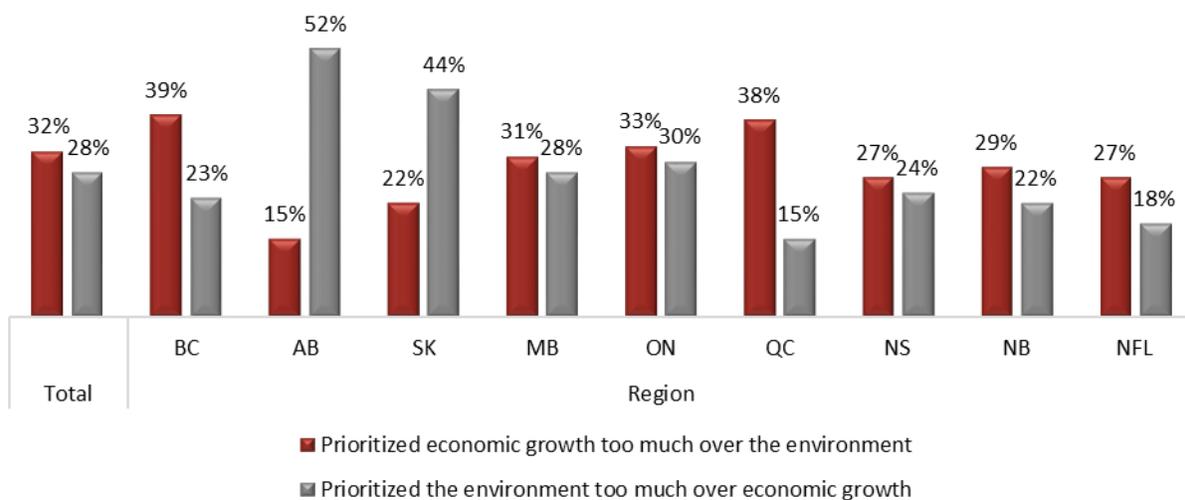
- Prioritized economic growth too much over the environment
- Prioritized the environment too much over economic growth
- Struck the right balance between economic growth and environmental protection



Among those who think the government has been unbalanced in its approach, slightly more think it has leaned too far toward economic growth than think it has tilted disproportionately toward the environment.

This latter view – that the Trudeau government has been too focused on the environment – is considerably more prevalent in the energy-producing provinces of Alberta and Saskatchewan. All other regions of the country are at least equally likely to say the government has been too focused on the resource economy, as seen in the graph that follows.

Based on whatever you've seen, read, or heard about the government's efforts on these files, would you say the federal government has ...



Notably, in Manitoba and more easterly regions, the most common response is that government has found the “right balance” (see summary tables at the end of this release).

B.C. divided, Alberta on board for Kinder Morgan decision

Of the federal government’s recent energy and climate change decisions, approving the TransMountain project has been arguably the most hotly debated. It drew harsh criticism from Vancouver Mayor Gregor Robertson, [who called it](#) “a step backward for Canada’s economy, environment, and climate change.” Alberta Premier Rachel Notley, meanwhile, was delighted with the decision, saying the federal government [had shown](#) “extraordinary leadership.”

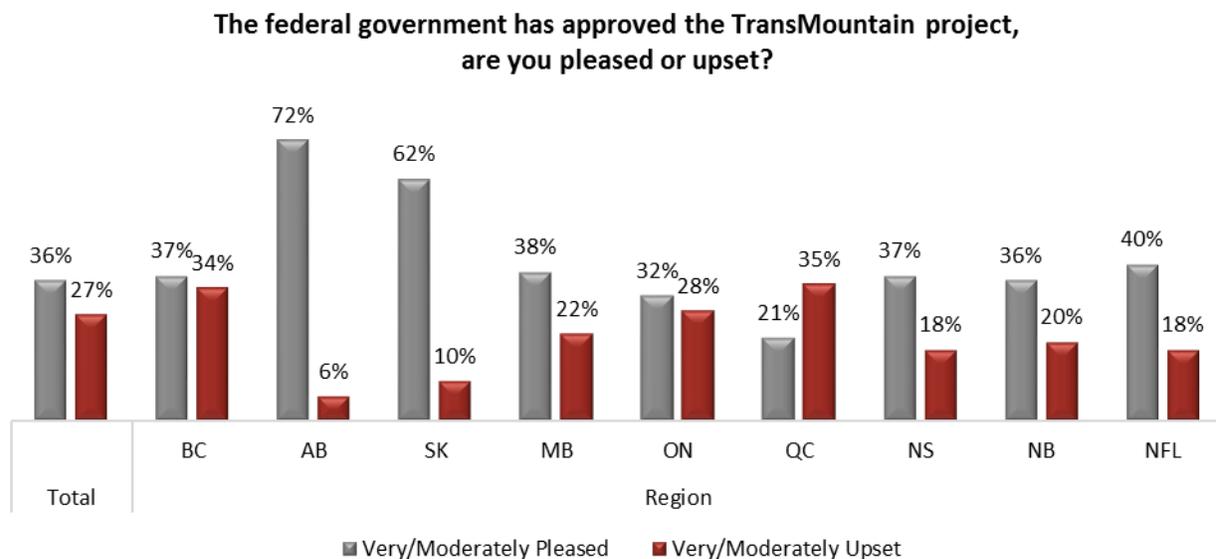
As might be expected, it is the two provinces where TransMountain is located – Alberta and B.C. – where residents have been paying closest attention to media coverage of the pipeline.

Nearly three-quarters of British Columbians (73%) say they have been seeing “some” or “a lot of” coverage of the issue, as do a majority of Alberta residents (61%). Those living farther east – especially in Quebec and the Atlantic provinces – are less likely to be paying attention.

Overall, the Canadian public’s reaction to the approval of the TransMountain project is more positive than negative. Some 36 per cent say they are pleased with the government’s decision, while 27 per cent say they are upset. The largest group (37%) express no opinion, saying they feel “neutral” about the decision.

These views vary considerably by region, however. In B.C., roughly equal numbers are pleased and upset, while residents of Alberta and Saskatchewan are overwhelmingly pleased.

Frustration with the decision is strongest in British Columbia and Quebec, but the latter distinguishes itself as the only province in which those upset outnumber those who are pleased:



Again, those living farther east feel less strongly about this issue. The percentage of respondents choosing “neutral” rises to more than two-in-five between Manitoba and Atlantic Canada (see summary tables at the end of this release).

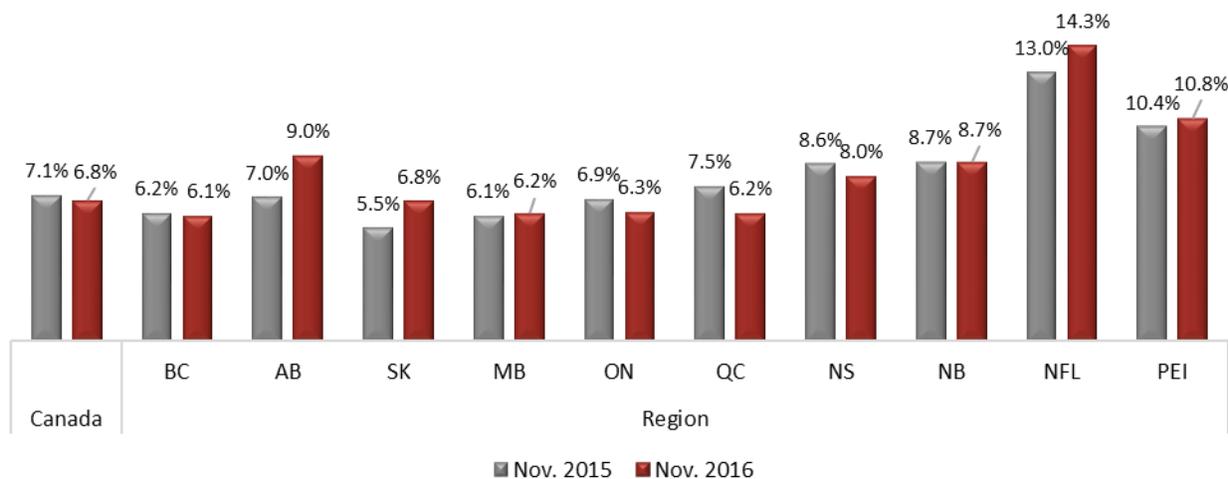
PART 3: Economic uncertainty and the year ahead

By approving natural resource projects, the federal government no doubt hopes to kick-start a sluggish economy, particularly in Alberta, where earlier this year the provincial unemployment rate eclipsed the national average for the first time since 1988.

The jobs story unfolding at the end of 2016 is one of competing narratives. While it is true that the number of jobs has increased by more than 180,000 since November, 2015, resulting in a lower unemployment rate overall, the quality of jobs has been questioned. Full-time employment dropped by 30,000 jobs, while the number of Canadians working part time increased by 214,000 people.

Statistics Canada attributed the slight decrease in the unemployment rate between October and November of this year to a decrease in the number of Canadians looking for work, rather than an increase in available jobs. Those who are not actively searching for work are not counted in the unemployment rate.

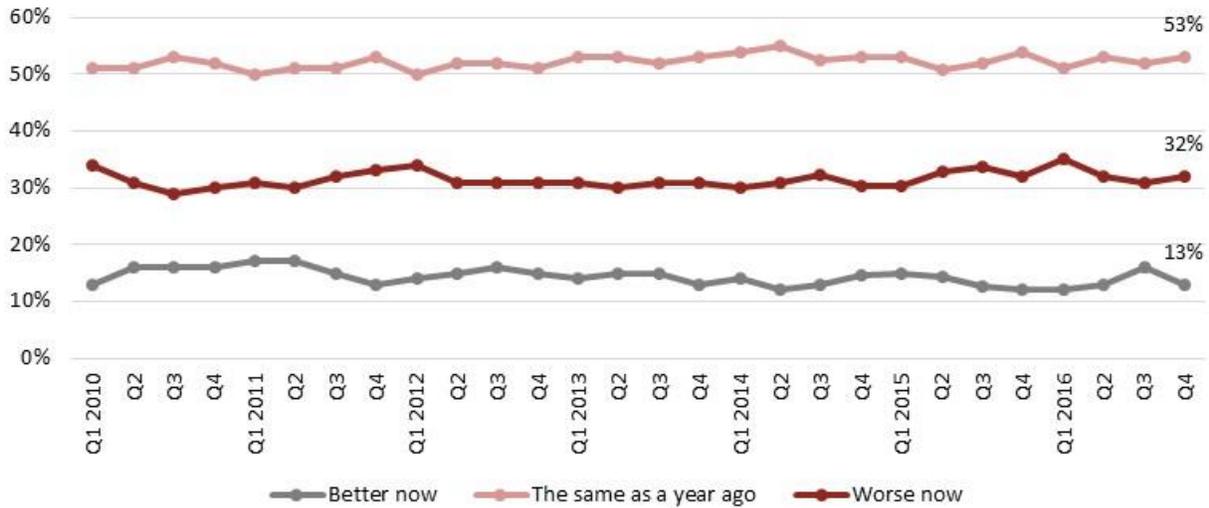
Unemployment rate in Canada, year over year:



Canadians are most likely to name “the economy” as one of the most important issues facing the country today (some 34% do so). Another one-in-five (20%) identify jobs and unemployment as an issue of top concern.

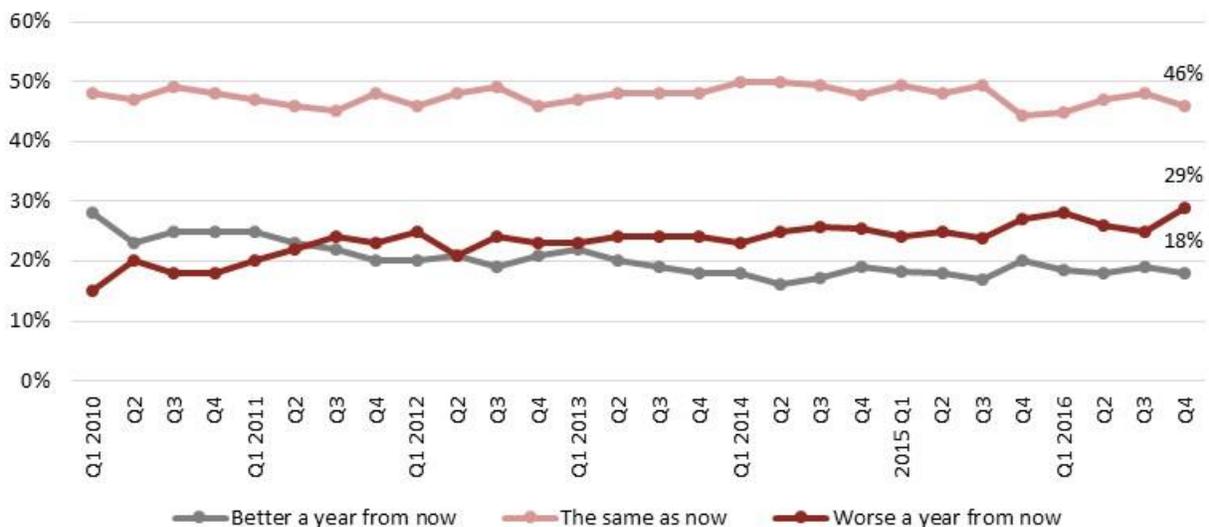
As they have been for years, people are more likely to say their standard of living has worsened over the last 12 months than to say it has improved. Roughly half (53%) say they’ve seen no change, while the “worsened” camp is roughly two and a half times as large as the “improved” camp:

All things considered, do you think your current standard of living is better or worse now than it was a year ago?

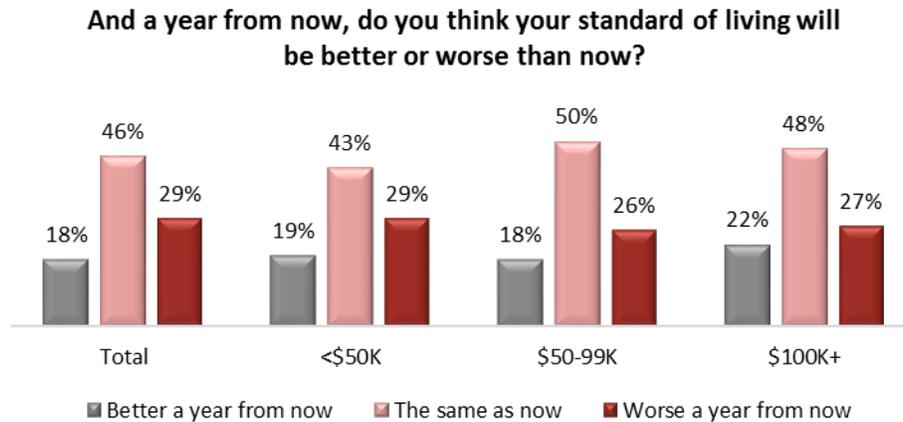


Notably, Canadians are also more likely than ever to say they anticipate their standard of living worsening in the next year. Almost three-in-ten (29%) expect 2017 to be worse than 2016, the largest number expressing economic anxiety for the upcoming 12 months since this quarterly survey began:

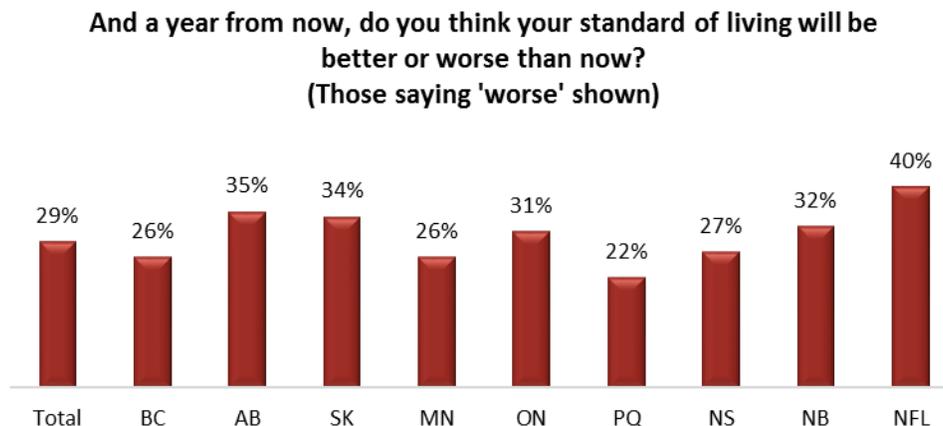
And a year from now, do you think your standard of living will be better or worse than now?



Despite the Trudeau government's explicit focus on improving economic conditions for the middle class, those in the middle-income group are not significantly more confident about the coming year than others. Close to three-in-ten respondents from each income category say they expect their standard of living to diminish over the next 12 months:



Regionally, however, much more disparity of opinion is found. Those living in the resource-extracting provinces of Alberta (35%), Saskatchewan (34%), and Newfoundland and Labrador (40%) are more likely to have a negative outlook.



While economic anxiety has so far not seemed especially correlated with approval of Justin Trudeau and his government, history suggests that continued pessimism about the economy will eventually be blamed on Ottawa.

*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.

The federal government has recently approved Kinder Morgan's TransMountain pipeline expansion project. How much news and commentary would you say you have been seeing about this issue?										
(unweighted sample sizes)	Total (5128)	Region								
		BC (597)	AB (599)	SK (865)	MB (758)	ON (803)	PQ (595)	NS (300)	NB (299)	NFL (229)
Seeing a lot of coverage and having discussions with family/friends	15%	31%	25%	15%	12%	14%	7%	10%	12%	10%
Seeing some coverage and having the odd conversation	29%	41%	36%	35%	27%	26%	25%	29%	26%	24%
Just seeing a little bit of coverage	35%	21%	25%	32%	37%	39%	40%	33%	35%	34%
Not seeing anything about it	21%	6%	15%	17%	23%	21%	29%	29%	28%	33%

Now that the federal government has approved the project, are you pleased or upset with this outcome?										
(unweighted sample sizes)	Total (5128)	Region								
		BC (597)	AB (599)	SK (865)	MB (758)	ON (803)	PQ (595)	NS (300)	NB (299)	NFL (229)
Very pleased	18%	20%	48%	39%	15%	14%	7%	12%	16%	20%
Moderately pleased	18%	17%	25%	23%	22%	18%	14%	26%	20%	23%
Neutral	37%	29%	21%	28%	41%	40%	44%	44%	44%	42%
Moderately upset	15%	14%	4%	7%	13%	15%	21%	10%	12%	14%
Very upset	12%	20%	2%	3%	9%	13%	14%	9%	8%	4%

Based on whatever you've seen, read, or heard about the government's efforts on these files, would you say the federal government has...

(unweighted sample sizes)	Total (5128)	Region								
		BC (597)	AB (599)	SK (865)	MB (758)	ON (803)	PQ (595)	NS (300)	NB (299)	NFL (229)
Prioritized economic growth too much over the environment	32%	39%	15%	22%	31%	33%	38%	27%	29%	27%
Prioritized the environment too much over economic growth	28%	23%	52%	44%	28%	30%	15%	24%	22%	18%
Prioritized the environment too much over economic growth	40%	38%	33%	34%	41%	37%	47%	49%	49%	55%

Overall do you approve or disapprove of the following:

(weighted sample sizes)	Prime Minister and Liberal Party leader Justin Trudeau	Opposition Leader and Interim Leader of the Conservative Party Rona Ambrose	New Democratic Party (NDP) leader Thomas Mulcair
Approve strongly	15%	10%	8%
Approve somewhat	39%	25%	35%
Disapprove somewhat	20%	18%	24%
Disapprove strongly	21%	19%	16%
Don't know	4%	28%	17%

Approval of Trudeau by region										
(unweighted sample sizes)	Total (5128)	Region								
		BC (597)	AB (599)	SK (865)	MB (758)	ON (803)	PQ (595)	NS (300)	NB (299)	NFL (229)
Approve strongly	15%	16%	9%	10%	16%	16%	15%	21%	21%	30%
Approve somewhat	39%	40%	28%	24%	38%	37%	48%	48%	42%	47%
Disapprove somewhat	20%	23%	19%	20%	19%	22%	16%	12%	16%	9%
Disapprove strongly	21%	16%	40%	40%	21%	21%	16%	14%	16%	12%
Don't know	4%	6%	4%	5%	5%	3%	5%	5%	5%	2%

Approval of Trudeau by 2015 vote							
(weighted sample sizes)	Total (5128)	Last party vote					
		Conservative (1417)	Liberal (1620)	NDP (944)	Bloq Quebecois (186)	Green (168)	Other (36)
Approve strongly	15%	2%	36%	8%	4%	10%	12%
Approve somewhat	39%	19%	50%	49%	56%	36%	29%
Disapprove somewhat	20%	25%	10%	27%	17%	28%	9%
Disapprove strongly	21%	52%	3%	13%	23%	22%	40%
Don't know	4%	2%	2%	3%	*%	4%	9%

All things considered, do you think your current standard of living is better or worse now than it was a year ago?

(unweighted sample sizes)	Total (5128)	Region								
		BC (597)	AB (599)	SK (865)	MB (758)	ON (803)	PQ (595)	NS (300)	NB (299)	NFL (229)
Better now	13%	17%	10%	12%	13%	13%	13%	14%	15%	13%
The same as a year ago	53%	50%	44%	47%	57%	51%	61%	59%	50%	48%
Worse now	32%	31%	45%	38%	28%	34%	24%	26%	34%	39%
Not sure	2%	2%	1%	3%	2%	2%	2%	2%	1%	*%

And a year from now, do you think your standard of living will be better or worse than now?

(unweighted sample sizes)	Total (5128)	Region								
		BC (597)	AB (599)	SK (865)	MB (758)	ON (803)	PQ (595)	NS (300)	NB (299)	NFL (229)
Better a year from now	18%	19%	17%	18%	20%	18%	19%	14%	19%	16%
The same as now	46%	48%	41%	39%	44%	44%	51%	51%	45%	40%
Worse a year from now	29%	26%	35%	34%	26%	31%	22%	27%	32%	40%
Not sure	7%	6%	7%	9%	10%	8%	7%	9%	5%	4%

And a year from now, do you think your standard of living will be better or worse than now?				
(weighted sample sizes)	Total (5128)	Household Income		
		<\$50k	\$50-99k	\$100k+
Better a year from now	18%	19%	18%	22%
The same as now	46%	43%	50%	48%
Worse a year from now	29%	29%	26%	27%
Not sure	7%	9%	6%	3%