

Federal Politics: Trudeau still seen as best PM, but Conservatives ‘best to form government’

Almost half (45%) say it's ‘time for a change in government’ – highest mark since Liberals took office

September 28, 2017 – It was a turbulent summer for Prime Minister Justin Trudeau and his government, which has faced criticism for its handling of [the surge](#) in irregular border-crossings in Quebec, the decision [to pay Omar Khadr](#) more than \$10 million to settle his lawsuit against the government, and its [proposed changes](#) to small business taxation.

As this last critique of the Liberal government continues into fall, a new analysis of quarterly polling data – fielded by MARU/Matchbox and donated to the Angus Reid Institute – finds evidence that Canadian public opinion is changing with the autumn leaves.

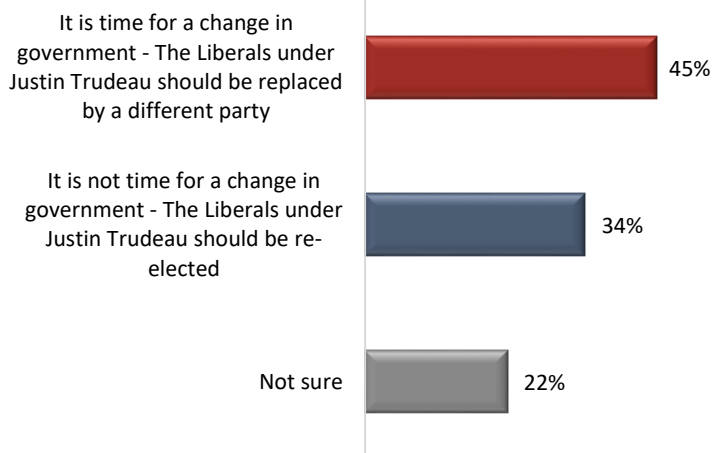
While Trudeau retains the approval of half of Canadians, more respondents disapprove of his performance “strongly” (27%) than approve strongly (14%).

And, though Trudeau’s overall approval rating remains significantly higher than that of Conservative Opposition leader Andrew Scheer, enthusiasm for Trudeau’s party lags behind support for its leader. For the second consecutive quarter, more Canadians say it is “time for a change” in government than say it is not, and more now choose the Conservatives as the best party to lead in Ottawa than Trudeau’s Liberals.

More Key Findings:

- More Canadians say Trudeau would make the best Prime Minister than Scheer (33% versus 18%), but slightly more say Scheer’s Conservatives than Trudeau’s Liberals would make the best government (36% versus 33%)

Which of the following two statements best reflects how you feel today?



METHODOLOGY:

The Angus Reid Institute analyzed the results of an online survey conducted from September 5 – 19, 2017, among a representative, randomized sample of 5,466 Canadian adults who are members of the [Angus Reid Forum](#). The survey data were donated by MARU/Matchbox. The sample plan included large over-samples in many provinces, weighted back to provide a national snapshot. For comparison purposes only, a probability sample of this size with this sample plan would carry a margin of error of +/- 2 percentage points, 19 times out of 20. Discrepancies in or between totals are due to rounding. Detailed tables are found at the end of this release.

CONTACT:

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- Scheer is seen as the federal party leader best suited to deal with economic issues (29% versus 24% who choose Trudeau)
- “The economy” remains a top issue for one-in-five Canadians (22%), even as Canada’s economic outlook is rated best in the G7, and Canadians express more pessimism than optimism when it comes to their personal standard of living in the coming year

Index:

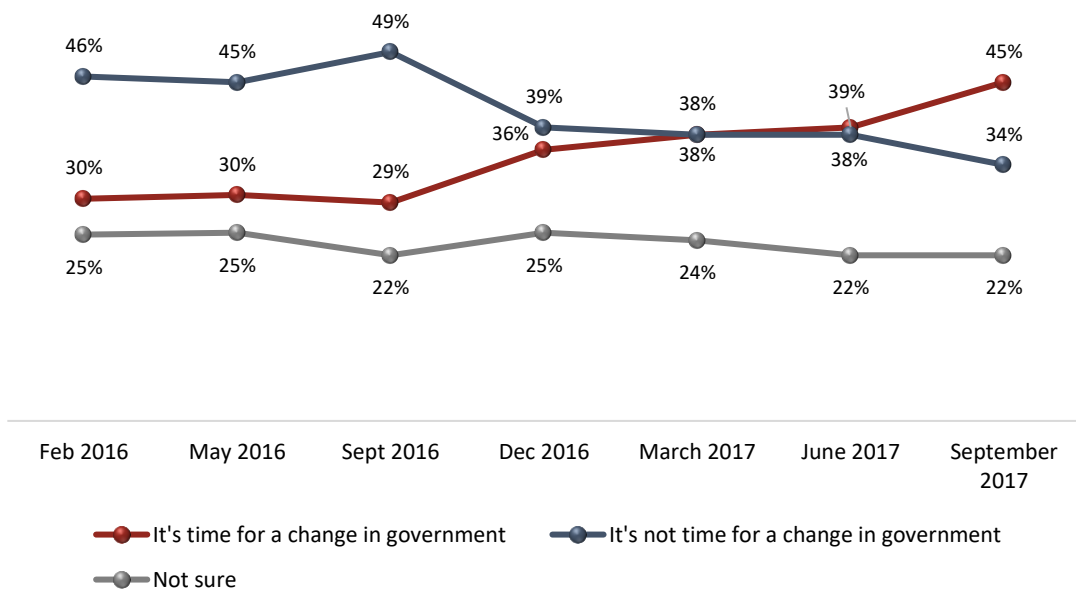
- **Part 1 – Time for a change? More say yes than no**
- **Part 2 – Trudeau seen as best PM, but losing ground on economic leadership**
- **Part 3 – As economy booms, worries remain at household level**

Part 1 – Time for a change? More say yes than no

For a second consecutive quarter, more Canadians say it is “time for a change in government” than say it is not. However, the gap has widened from just one percentage point in June to 11 in September, with 45 per cent now saying it is time for a change, compared to 34 per cent who say it is not.

Crucially, one-in-five (22%) are unsure, close to the midway point of the Liberals’ four-year term.

Which of the following two statements best reflects how you feel today?



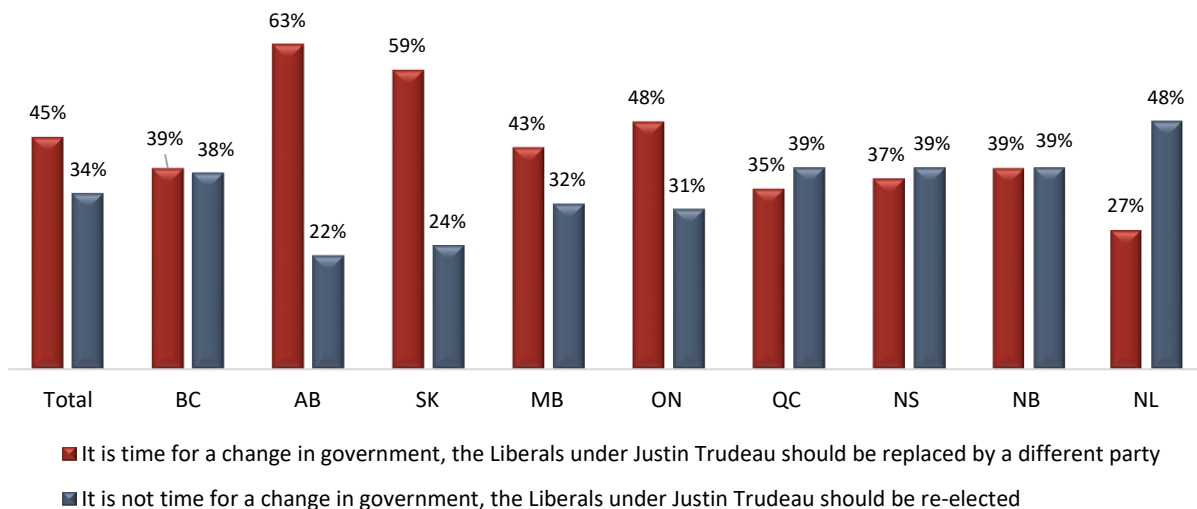
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As seen in the graph, the government has lost 15 percentage points on this question since this time last year.

This desire for change is driven by older Canadians (those ages 55 and up), where this opinion reaches a majority (50%), as well as by respondents in Alberta (63%) and Saskatchewan (58%). That said, “it is time for a change” is the more common response in every province west of Quebec, as seen in the following graph:

Which of the following two statements best reflects how you feel today?



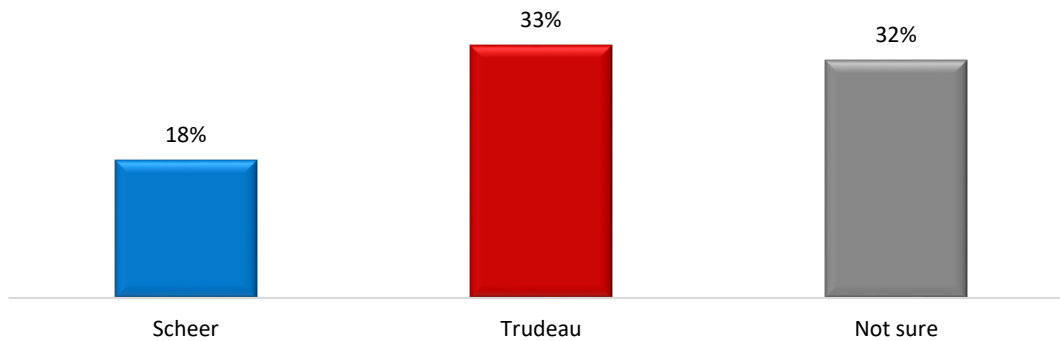
Part 2 – Trudeau seen as best PM, but losing ground on economic leadership

The federal political picture is one undergoing substantial change in 2017. By the end of the year, both of Trudeau’s main 2019 challengers will be in place – the Conservative party having chosen Andrew Scheer as their leader in May, and the New Democrats settling their leadership race in October. This quarter appears to show both positive and negative signs for the PM.

First, the positive.

When asked who would make the best Prime Minister, Trudeau retains a significant lead over Scheer. One-in-three (33%) say the PM is the federal leader best suited to his current office, compared to fewer than one-in-five (18%) who say Scheer is the best person for the job.

Which of these leaders would make the best Prime Minister of Canada?



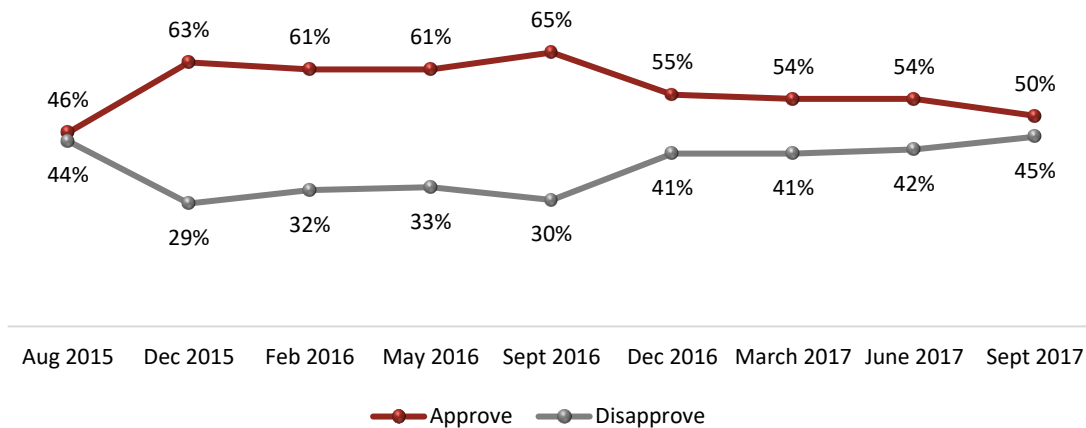
Scheer has struggled to gain momentum in public opinion since the leadership convention. His leadership bump registered as the lowest for any new party leader in 14 years [according to the CBC's Eric Grenier](#). Whomever emerges as new leader for the NDP will certainly alter this picture in the coming months, as one-in-three Canadians are – at this point – unsure who they prefer.

Half approve of Trudeau's performance

The Prime Minister continues to hold the approval of half of Canadians. 50 per cent say they approve of the job he is doing, suggesting that if many are looking for a change, it's not necessarily Trudeau that they're disappointed with.

Notably, this quarter's approval rating is the lowest for Trudeau since he became Prime Minister. That said, it's [roughly comparable](#) to where Jean Chrétien was at this point in his tenure as PM, and slightly above where Stephen Harper was two years into his time on the job, though Harper led a minority government, not a majority.

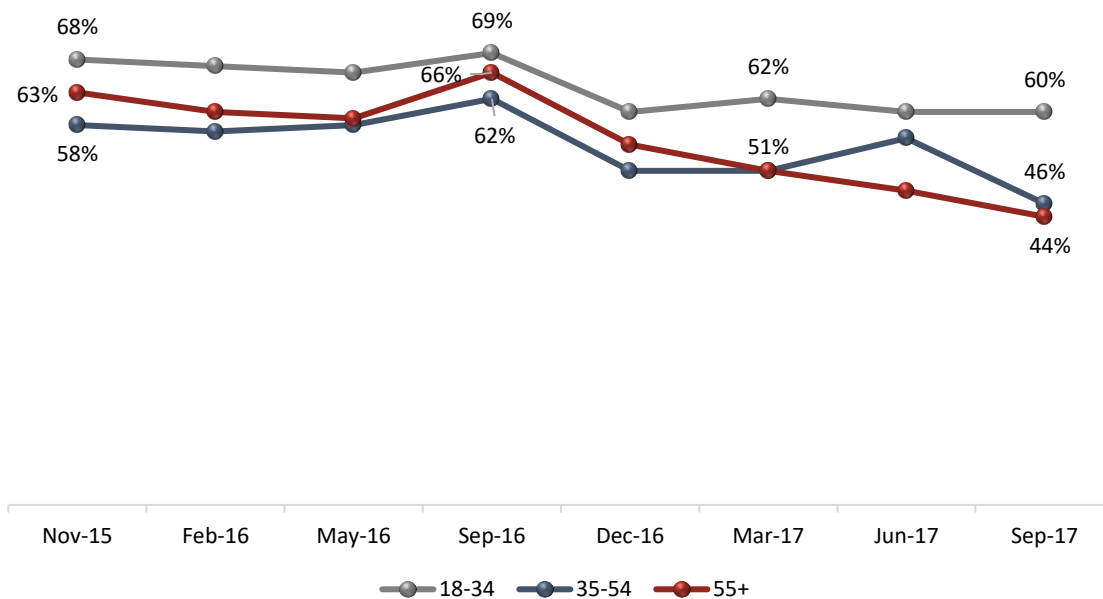
Do you approve or disapprove of Justin Trudeau?



Trudeau's approval rating remains significantly higher than those of either of the other main federal party leaders, with Scheer's largely unchanged since last quarter (34% approve; 34% disapprove; 32% unsure).

While millennial voters [continue to sustain](#) the Prime Minister in public opinion terms (60% approve), older Canadians are a different story. Trudeau's steady decline with Canadians over the age of 55 continues this quarter. Last September he held the approval of two-thirds (66%) on them – this quarter that number drops another four points to 44 per cent, down 22 points over the last year. Canadians ages 35 to 54 hold a similar view – 46 per cent approve of the Prime Minister.

Trudeau approval by age over time



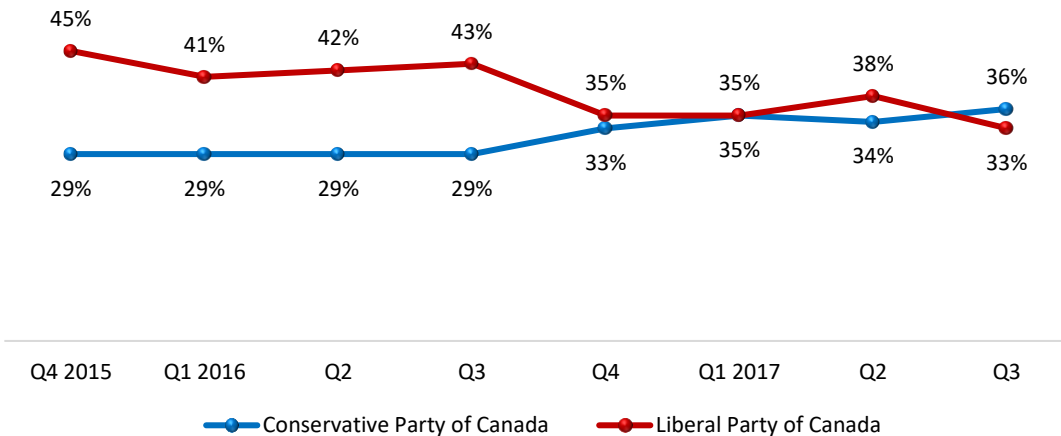
Conservatives seen as best to form government

The bad news for Trudeau and the Liberal party? Though Canadians don't yet view Andrew Scheer as preferred Prime Minister material, they may be beginning to see his Conservative Party as a federal government in waiting.

While Trudeau's approval rating remains relatively high, and he remains seen as the party leader best suited to be PM, Canadians no longer see his Liberal Party as the one best suited to form government.

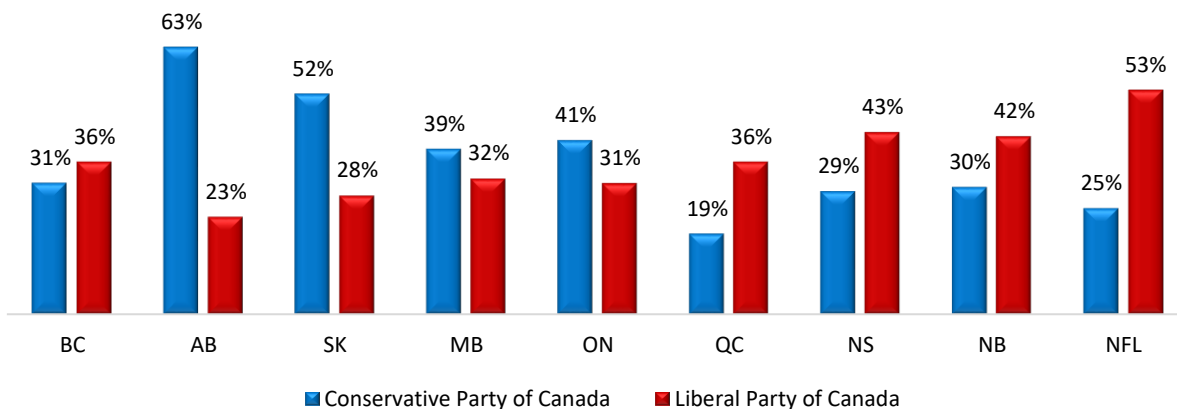
Rather, it is Scheer's Conservatives who lead on this key metric (36% to 33%) for the first time since the Liberals took office:

Regardless of your individual choice for best Prime Minister - tell us which you think is the best party to form government:



Again, Alberta and Saskatchewan lead the way in their preference for a return to CPC rule, but the preference for a Conservative government is notably 10 points higher than the preference for a Liberal one in Ontario, as well:

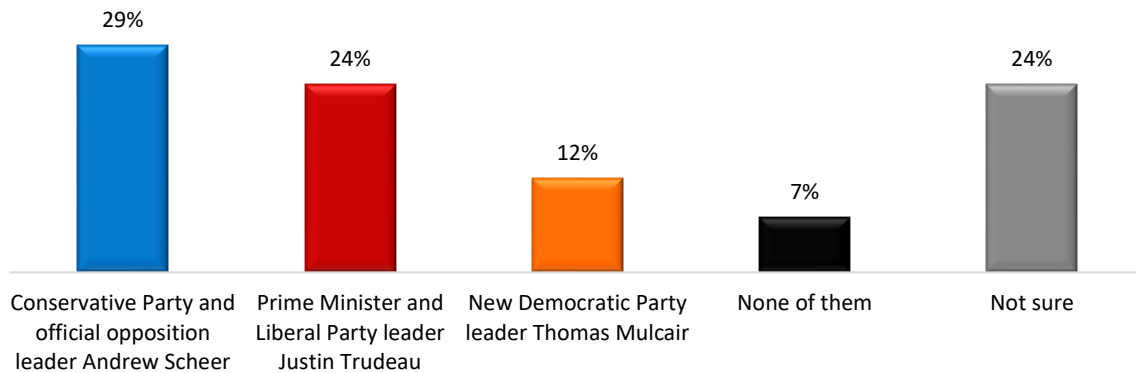
Regardless of your individual choice for best Prime Minister - tell us which you think is the best party to form government:



Scheer seen as best leader on economic issues

Asked which leader is best suited to deal with the economy, Canadians are more likely to choose Conservative leader Andrew Scheer than Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, though one-in-four (24%) are “not sure”:

Which of these leaders is best suited to deal with the economy?

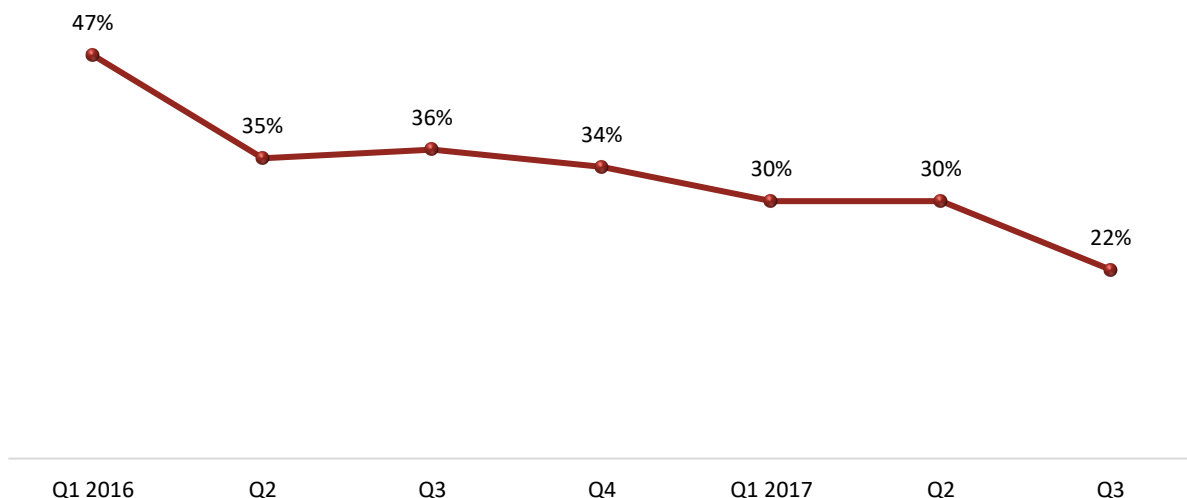


Scheer's lead on economic issues marks a continuation of [an advantage](#) he has held since assuming the Conservative leadership. While macro-economic issues are not necessarily top-of-mind for most Canadians today, many still express concerns about their personal economic futures, as will be discussed in the following section.

Part 3 – As economy booms, worries remain at household level

When Canadians are asked about the top issues facing their country today, fewer than one-in-four (22%) mention "the economy." This marks a significant decline since last year, as seen in the following graph, and it comes as national economic outlooks have been among the rosier in years.

Percentage of Canadians naming "the economy" as a top issue over time:

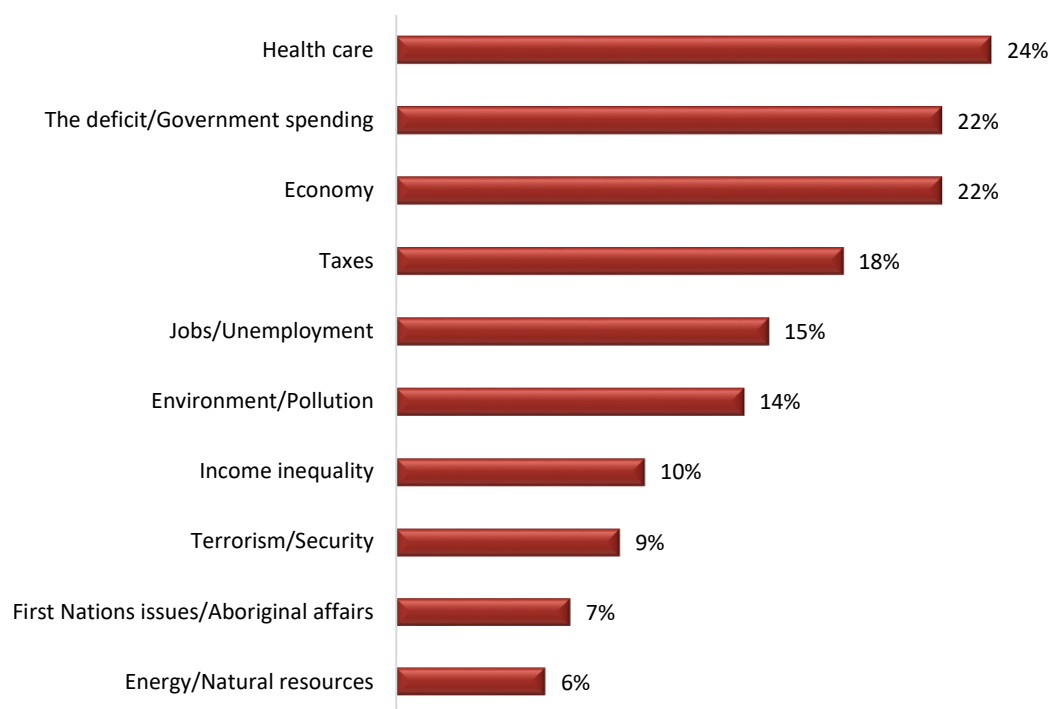


The International Monetary Fund projects Canada to [lead the G7](#) in economic growth in 2017, and the Bank of Canada has twice [raised interest rates](#) this year in anticipation of a sustained robust economy.

The fact that Trudeau does not seem to be getting credit for this positive national economic assessment – as seen in the larger number of Canadians who say Scheer is best on the economy – may be related to his government's [ongoing efforts](#) to amend the tax system for small businesses. These proposed changes have angered small business groups and professional associations, and have been generating negative headlines for the government in recent weeks.

Concern over the economy as an issue is apparently inversely proportional to the quality of the economy itself – at least at a macro level. For the first time since 2014, “the economy” is not the overall most-mentioned issue facing Canada today. That distinction goes to health care, though economic issues still loom large – occupying the next four places on the list – as seen in the following graph:

**What do you feel are the most important issues facing Canada today?
(select up to two; those receiving more than 5 per cent shown)**



As the Angus Reid Institute has [previously reported](#), concern over deficits and government spending has risen considerably since the Liberals – who campaigned on a promise of “modest deficits” – formed government.

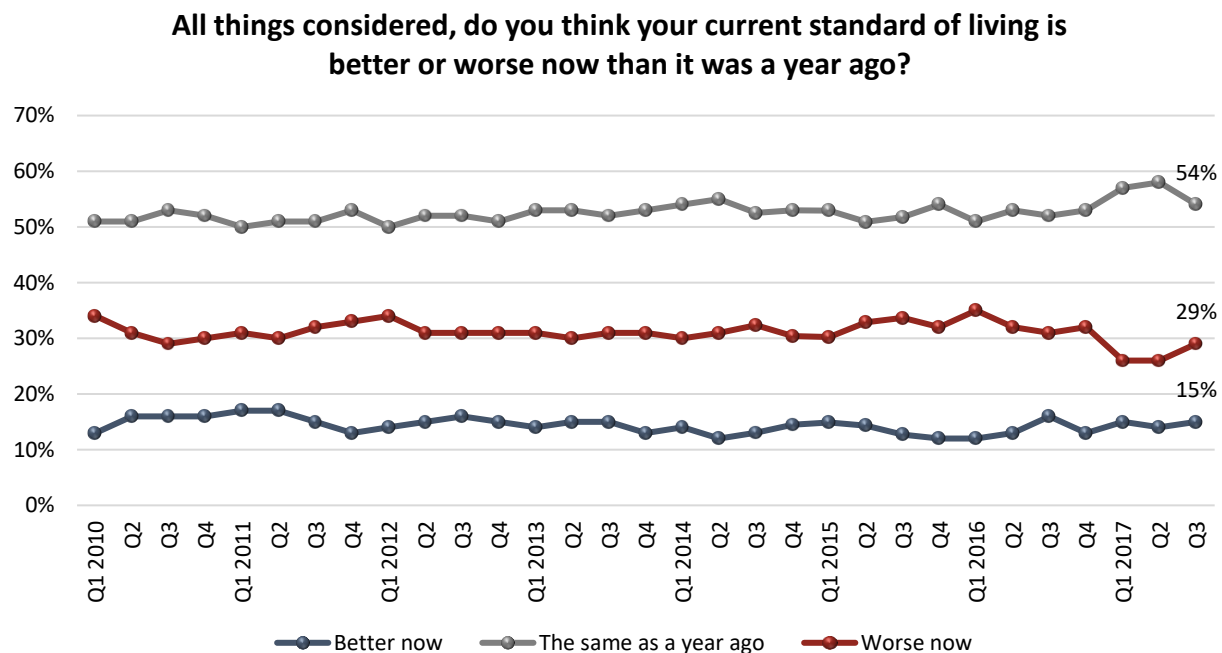
Similarly, the number of Canadians naming “taxes” as a top issue has increased by 7 percentage points since last quarter, a change likely related to the government’s ongoing efforts to reform the tax system for small businesses, which have [angered small business groups and professional associations](#).

These lingering economic concerns translate into a Canadian public that may not be thinking of the economy as a key federal issue, but isn’t exactly optimistic about economic issues in their day-to-day lives either.

Standard of living concerns increase

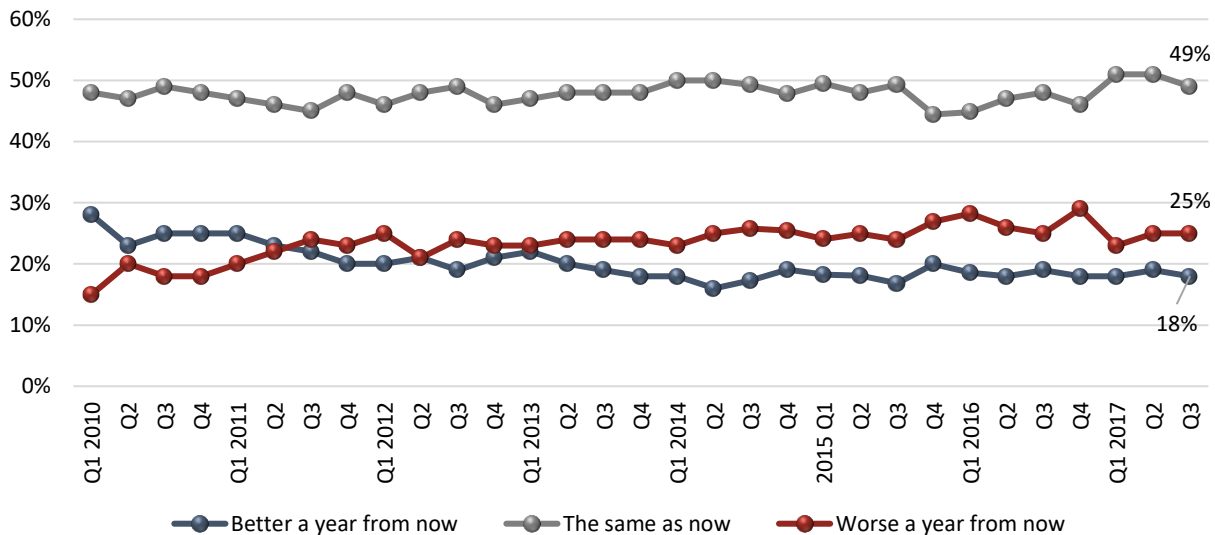
While fewer Canadians say the economy is a top issue in the country today than at any point in the last two years, they remain pessimistic about their household economic futures (and recent pasts).

Canadians are slightly more likely this quarter than last to say their standard of living has worsened in the last year. This represents something of a return-to-form after two quarters in which the percentage saying things are worse now than 12 months ago had fallen to their lowest points since 2010:



In a similar vein, Canadians remain pessimistic as ever about their standard of living a year from now.

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



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 foundation 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.

Which of the following two statements best reflects how you feel today?										
(unweighted sample sizes)	Total (5466)	Region								
		BC (608)	AB (606)	SK (1056)	MB (791)	ON (810)	PQ (609)	NS (298)	NB (298)	NFL (296)
It is time for a change in government, the Liberals under Justin Trudeau should be replaced by a different party	45%	39%	63%	59%	43%	48%	35%	37%	39%	26%
It is not time for a change in government, the Liberals under Justin Trudeau should be re-elected	34%	38%	22%	24%	32%	31%	39%	39%	39%	49%
Not sure	22%	22%	15%	17%	25%	20%	26%	25%	22%	25%

Which of these leaders would make the best Prime Minister of Canada?										
(unweighted sample sizes)	Total (5466)	Region								
		BC (608)	AB (606)	SK (1056)	MB (791)	ON (810)	PQ (609)	NS (298)	NB (298)	NFL (296)
Andrew Scheer	18%	15%	35%	38%	21%	19%	9%	14%	21%	12%
Justin Trudeau	33%	35%	21%	24%	33%	33%	36%	38%	43%	48%
Thomas Mulcair	11%	8%	5%	11%	6%	9%	20%	5%	6%	11%
Martine Ouellet	1%	0%	0%	0%	1%	0%	3%	0%	0%	0%
Elizabeth May	5%	9%	3%	3%	7%	4%	3%	8%	5%	3%
Not sure	32%	32%	34%	24%	33%	34%	29%	35%	24%	26%

Regardless of your individual choice for best Prime Minister – tell us which you think is the best party to form government:

(unweighted sample sizes)	Total (5466)	Region								
		BC (608)	AB (606)	SK (1056)	MB (791)	ON (810)	PQ (609)	NS (298)	NB (298)	NFL (296)
Conservative Party of Canada	36%	31%	63%	52%	39%	41%	19%	29%	30%	25%
Liberal Party of Canada	33%	36%	23%	28%	32%	31%	36%	43%	42%	53%
New Democratic Party	21%	20%	10%	16%	19%	21%	28%	19%	21%	18%
Bloc Quebecois	3%	-	-	-	-	-	11%	-	-	-
Green Party of Canada	7%	12%	4%	3%	10%	7%	7%	10%	7%	4%

Overall do you approve or disapprove of the following?

	Prime Minister and Liberal Party leader Justin Trudeau	Opposition leader and leader of the Conservative Party Andrew Scheer	New Democratic Party (NDP) leader Thomas Mulcair
Approve strongly	14%	9%	7%
Approve somewhat	37%	25%	34%
Disapprove somewhat	19%	15%	23%
Disapprove strongly	27%	18%	17%
Don't know	4%	32%	20%

Overall, do you approve or disapprove of Justin Trudeau?

(weighted sample sizes)	Total (5466)	Age		
		18 – 34 (1563)	35 – 54 (2047)	55+ (1856)
Approve strongly	14%	15%	13%	14%
Approve somewhat	37%	45%	35%	30%
Disapprove somewhat	19%	18%	19%	19%
Disapprove strongly	27%	17%	28%	34%
Don't know	4%	5%	5%	2%

Which of these leaders is best suited to deal with each of the following issues? [Economy]

(unweighted sample sizes)	Total (5466)	Region								
		BC (608)	AB (606)	SK (1056)	MB (791)	ON (810)	PQ (609)	NS (298)	NB (298)	NFL (296)
Conservative Party and Official Opposition leader Andrew Scheer	29%	25%	49%	44%	33%	32%	18%	22%	28%	19%
Prime Minister and Liberal Party leader Justin Trudeau	24%	27%	14%	19%	26%	23%	24%	31%	27%	38%
New Democratic Party leader Thomas Mulcair	12%	10%	5%	10%	6%	11%	18%	11%	10%	11%
Bloc Quebecois leader Martine Ouellet	1%	1%	0%	1%	1%	0%	5%	1%	2%	0%
Green Party leader Elizabeth May	3%	4%	3%	1%	4%	3%	3%	4%	2%	1%
None of them	7%	7%	7%	5%	7%	6%	8%	9%	7%	8%
Not sure	24%	27%	23%	20%	22%	23%	25%	23%	25%	23%

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 (5466)	Region								
		BC (608)	AB (606)	SK (1056)	MB (791)	ON (810)	PQ (609)	NS (298)	NB (298)	NFL (296)
Better now	15%	13%	15%	10%	16%	13%	18%	14%	17%	12%
The same as a year ago	54%	57%	48%	54%	55%	51%	61%	57%	47%	48%
Worse now	29%	27%	36%	36%	26%	35%	19%	28%	35%	37%
Not sure	2%	2%	2%	1%	3%	1%	2%	1%	1%	3%

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

(unweighted sample sizes)	Total (5466)	Region								
		BC (608)	AB (606)	SK (1056)	MB (791)	ON (810)	PQ (609)	NS (298)	NB (298)	NFL (296)
Better a year from now	18%	18%	18%	15%	23%	18%	19%	18%	27%	10%
The same as now	49%	49%	45%	46%	43%	42%	61%	49%	42%	46%
Worse a year from now	25%	24%	30%	31%	26%	31%	14%	25%	26%	34%
Not sure	8%	9%	7%	8%	7%	9%	6%	7%	5%	11%

What do you feel are the most important issues facing Canada today? (select up to two; those receiving more than 5 per cent shown)										
(unweighted sample sizes)	Total (5466)	Region								
		BC (608)	AB (606)	SK (1056)	MB (791)	ON (810)	PQ (609)	NS (298)	NB (298)	NFL (296)
Health Care	24%	31%	12%	21%	31%	22%	27%	33%	29%	23%
The Deficit / Government Spending	22%	17%	27%	34%	26%	24%	21%	13%	15%	22%
Economy	22%	24%	37%	27%	17%	20%	17%	31%	25%	33%
Taxes	18%	14%	16%	19%	19%	23%	12%	19%	18%	20%
Jobs / Unemployment	15%	10%	21%	11%	10%	19%	7%	21%	27%	19%
Environment / Pollution	14%	19%	10%	5%	15%	12%	17%	13%	13%	10%
Income inequality	10%	12%	7%	6%	8%	10%	13%	7%	12%	9%
Terrorism / Security	9%	4%	6%	12%	9%	9%	14%	5%	9%	4%
First Nations issues / Aboriginal affairs	7%	7%	6%	8%	12%	6%	8%	8%	6%	7%
Energy / Natural resources	6%	8%	10%	7%	8%	7%	3%	6%	6%	6%