

From Sunny Ways to Midterm Blues? Two years after Trudeau majority, Liberals and CPC in dead heat

Fewer than half say PM has met expectations, more than half say the same about government overall

October 13, 2017 – Long removed from heady memories of buoyant voters, a bright change in tone, and easy wins with the public, Canadians are approaching the two-year anniversary of the 2015 election with a far less enthusiastic, even jaundiced eye on Prime Minister Justin Trudeau and his government.

While they tilt slightly towards approval of Trudeau's first two years in office – they are also marginally more inclined to say the Liberal government's failures have outweighed its accomplishments.

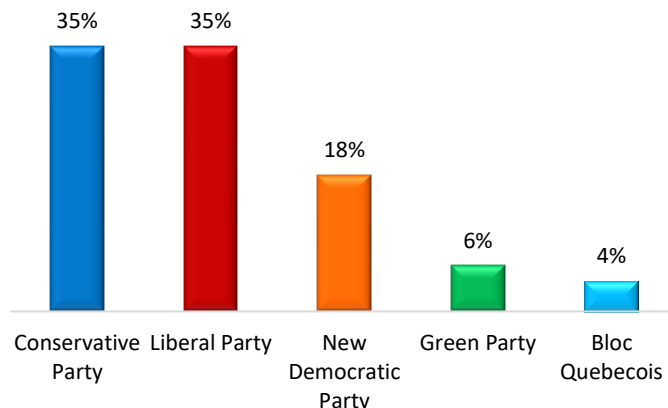
The combination of perceived hits and misses on policy and direction from the Trudeau government is changing the dynamics of federal politics in this country.

Were an election held tomorrow – the Liberal Party would find itself in a dead heat with the Conservative Party – fighting to hold onto power.

More Key Findings:

- Despite strongly supporting personal income tax changes designed to support the middle class, more than two-thirds say the Trudeau government has had no (35%) or a negative (33%) impact on this influential demographic subset
- Canadians are most inclined to say this government has enhanced this country's reputation on the world stage (54% do)

If a federal election were held tomorrow, which one of the following parties would you be most likely to support in your constituency? (Including those who say they are 'leaning' toward each party)



METHODOLOGY:

The Angus Reid Institute conducted an online survey from October 10 – 12, 2017, among a representative randomized sample of 1,492 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.

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For Immediate Release
Canadian Public Opinion Poll

Page 2 of 20

- A plurality (41%) say the Liberals have hurt the Canadian tax system – a sign of its handling of small business tax changes over the summer
- A gender-balanced cabinet, changes to the Human Rights Code, approval of the TransMountain Pipeline, and – notably, the imposition of carbon pricing are also among this government's most-approved-of actions so far
- By contrast, the government's reversal on electoral reform, the \$10.5 million dollar legal settlement with Omar Khadr and new immigration and refugee settlement targets are garnering the most disapproval at this 2-year mark

INDEX:

Part 1 – Leadership and Vote Intention

Part 2 – Policy hits and misses in the first two years

Part 3 – For Better or for Worse: Impact of the Trudeau government so far

Part 1– Leadership and Vote Intention

Leadership – was Trudeau ready?

Leadership was arguably the defining dimension of the 2015 election campaign. Long before the writ had been dropped, Canadians – especially those who were left-leaning, younger, and some who had never voted before – were already viscerally angry with then-Prime Minister Stephen Harper.

Around that time, the words most chosen by [Canadians to describe him](#) included “secretive”, “arrogant” and “dishonest”.

In turn, the then-Conservative government focused its attention and attacks on Justin Trudeau, whom they cast as too inexperienced, too young (ironically, he is now the oldest among the main party leaders), and “[Just not Ready](#)”. The ads resonated with many, but may have backfired in the end. On October 19th, Trudeau's Liberals captured 39.5 per cent of the popular vote and won a majority. Turns out Trudeau was readier than Conservative strategists thought.

The question two years later is whether Canadians were ready for the style of leadership and policy decisions Trudeau and his government made – or didn't make. Asked now whether they view the Liberal leader and Prime Minister favourably or unfavourably, half of Canadians say the former:

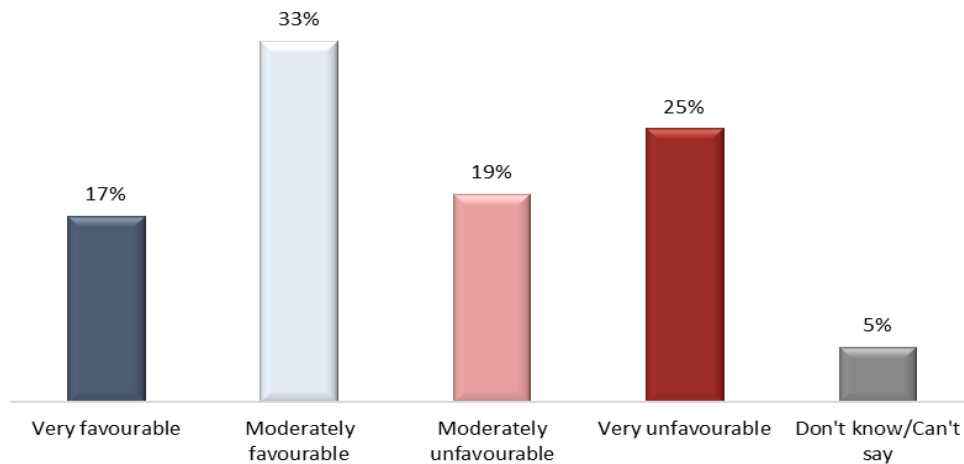
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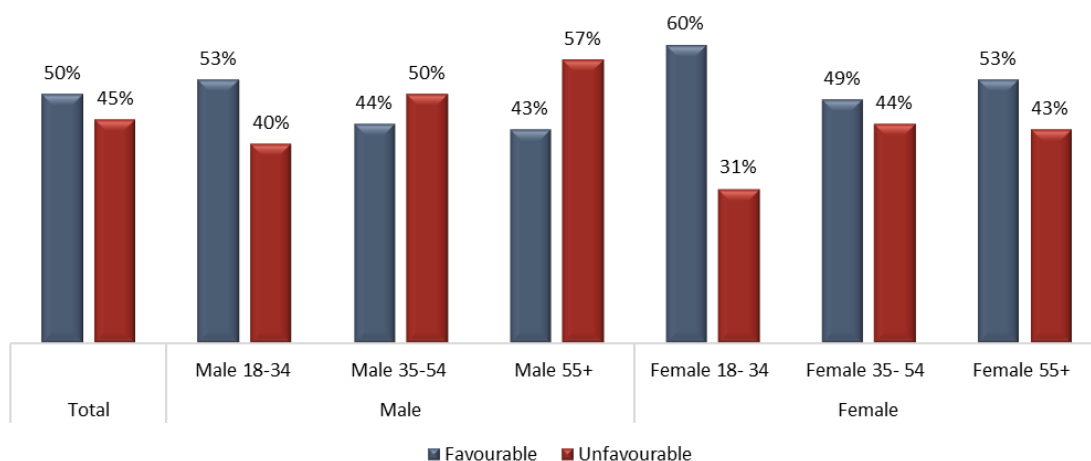
Do you have a favourable or unfavourable opinion of Prime Minister and Liberal Party Leader Justin Trudeau?



Three main factors drive feelings about Trudeau: age, gender and region.

Women – particularly those under the age of 35 or over the age of 55 – are most likely to feel warmly about the PM. Overall, more than half of millennials view him favourably, but the same cannot be said about men over the age of 35:

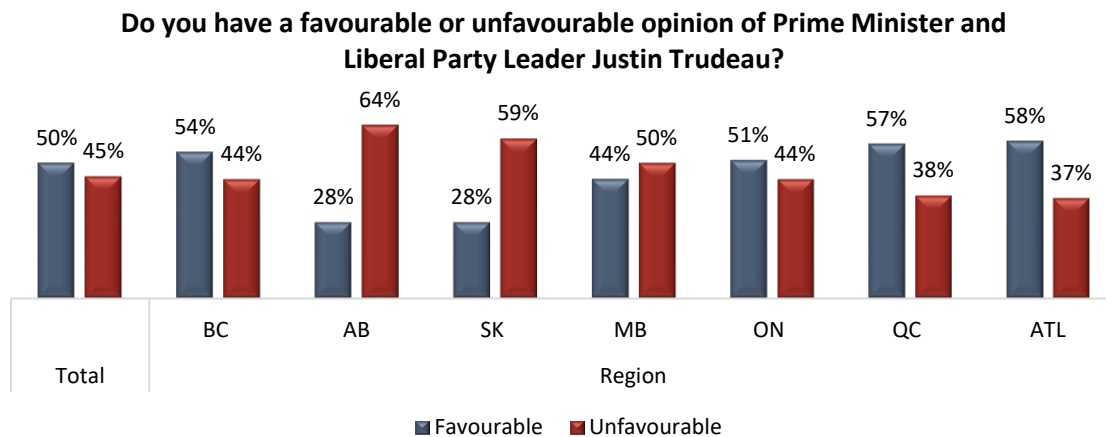
Do you have a favourable or unfavourable opinion of Prime Minister and Liberal Party Leader Justin Trudeau?



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Further, were it not for Trudeau hitting a wall of unfavourability in Alberta, Saskatchewan and Manitoba, his overall favourability would be higher on average:

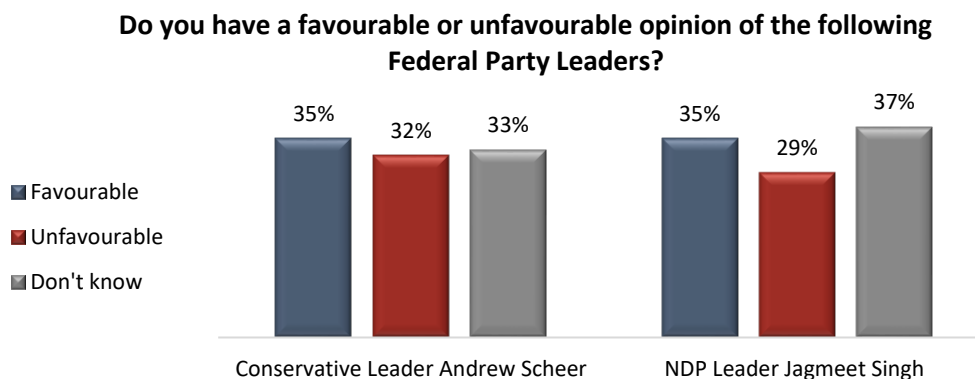


Favourability has a different flavour when it comes to the leaders of the main opposition parties, the CPC's Andrew Scheer – and the NDP's Jagmeet Singh. Scheer was elected in [an upset over frontrunner Maxime Bernier](#) at the end of May. Singh's [landslide victory](#) over three other contenders was just weeks ago.

Related: [As Conservative leader, Scheer must balance core voters' values with party's need for growth](#)

Related: [Conflicted on Singh: Most could vote for a party led by a Sikh, but half say their friends, family wouldn't](#)

In other words, neither is well known, and it shows in terms of each one's favourability with Canadians:



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Again, several demographic factors drive opinions about both Scheer and Singh ([see comprehensive tables for more details](#)) – but for now – age stands out. Scheer's highest level of favourability is among Canadians over the age of 55 (41%). Singh's fan base is among millennials (44%).

Vote Intention

And while leadership is a major driver of vote intention, it is not the only one – which is what leads to the current draw between the CPC and Liberals, if an election were held today:

Vote Intention by Province					
	CPC	Liberal	NDP	Bloc Quebecois	Green
Total	35%	35%	18%	4%	6%
BC	33%	29%	23%	-	13%
AB	61%	21%	11%	-	5%
SK	50%	21%	21%	-	7%
MB	55%	24%	13%	-	8%
ON	37%	37%	19%	-	6%
QC	20%	40%	18%	16%	4%
ATL	29%	46%	19%	-	5%

The regions tell the story once more: the CPC commands strong support in Alberta and the prairie provinces. The Liberals garner flatter support across the country, but grow stronger in vote-rich Quebec and Ontario. The party's strength in Quebec – relative to the 2015 popular vote – is also a result of the current sinking support for the NDP in that province. By contrast, lower support relative to the party's 2015 popular vote in B.C. will be of concern.

While the CPC's strong advantage in Alberta, Saskatchewan, and Manitoba helps drive the party to a national tie with the Liberals in voting intention, it could also be construed as a weakness: The party's support is so concentrated in these regions that it could end up over-performing in the popular vote and under-performing in terms of seat count.

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If there is an advantage for the Conservatives, it is in retention of the party's vote base: 90 per cent of 2015 CPC voters say they would vote for the party again if an election were held today. By contrast, the Liberal Party holds onto 71 per cent of its past voters, and New Democrats keep 68 per cent of theirs ([see comprehensive tables for further detail](#)).

Part 2 – Policy hits and misses in the first two years

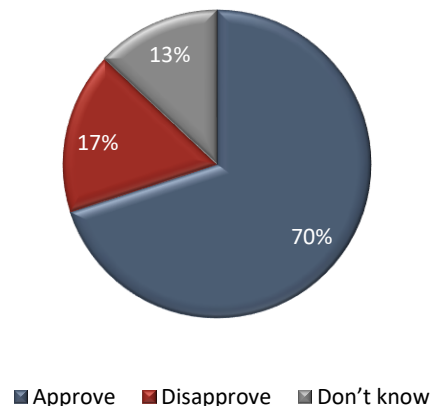
Campaigns are full of promises. Governance, however, can be a much murkier road to travel than the ones trodden by the campaign caravans, full of supporters and goodwill. Two years into a four-year term, the Liberal government has its fair share of hits and misses. Some promises have been delivered, some commenced, and some abandoned. Here's a look at which decisions resonated most – or least – with Canadians.

The Hits

Gender equality in cabinet

Trudeau announced the first gender-balanced cabinet in Canadians history. Asked why he decided upon parity, Trudeau famously stated, “because it’s 2015”. The decision is the most popular of those canvassed by the Angus Reid Institute for this report, seven-in-ten Canadians approve of it, and fewer than one-in-five disapprove:

**Would you say you approve or disapprove of:
'Naming a cabinet in which half of the ministers are women'**

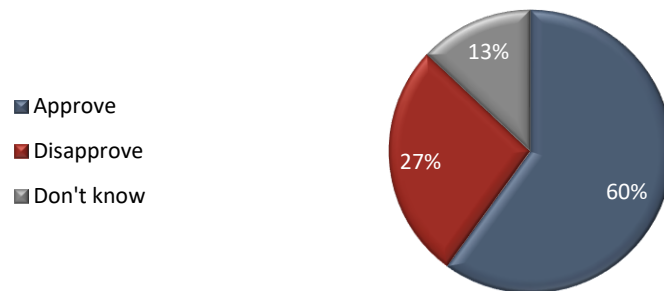


In addition to creating a gender balance in cabinet, the government [introduced Bill C-16](#), to add the terms “gender identity” and “gender expression” to the list of grounds protected from discrimination under the Canadian Human Rights Act, and the majority approve of this move.

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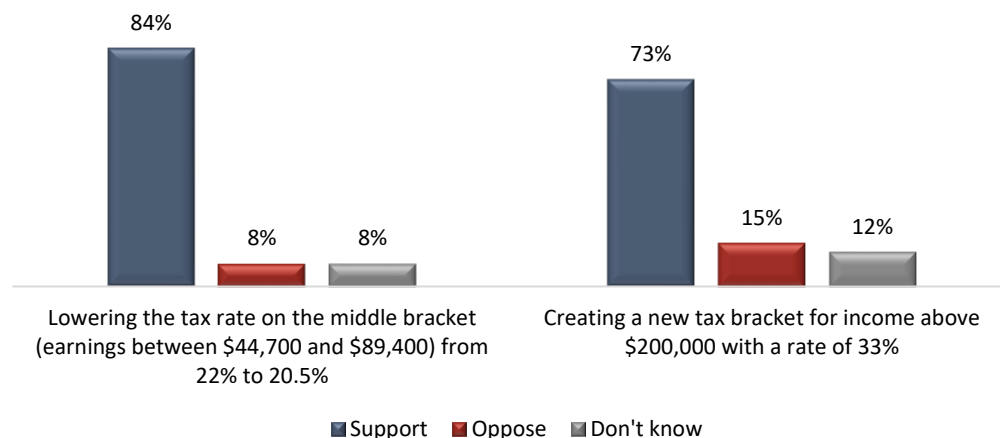
**Would you say you approve or disapprove of:
Adding gender identity and expression to the Canadian
Human Rights Code**



Personal Income Tax Changes

Tax changes have been front and centre in the first half of the Liberals' term, lowering the tax rate on middle income earners, from 22.5 to 20.5 per cent, and creating a new tax bracket for income earners over \$200,000 per year, set at 33 per cent. Both of these policies receive high marks from Canadians, with at least seven-in-ten supporting each:

For each policy listed below, please indicate whether you support or oppose it.



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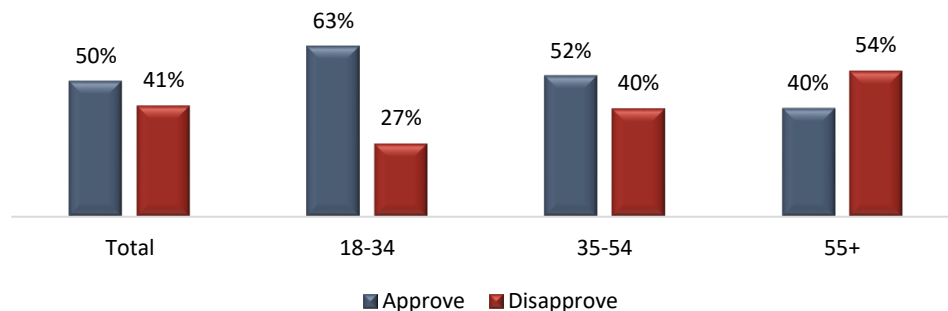
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More recently, the government has undertaken consultations for proposed small business tax changes. And while more support these changes – to passive investment and the practice of ‘income sprinkling’ – than oppose them, other data in this survey makes it difficult to call the proposals a “hit.” Further discussion of these two tax changes can be found in the “splits” section.

Marijuana

The Angus Reid Institute has tracked growing support for marijuana legalization for [a number of years](#). Six-in-ten supported legalization in the summer of 2014, suggesting headway could be made by supporting such a policy. Trudeau’s Liberals did just that. Now, less than one year away from recreational legalization, half of Canadians (50%) say they approve of the Liberal plan. Younger Canadians show significantly higher levels of support than their older compatriots.

**Would you say you approve or disapprove of:
Introducing legislation to legalise marijuana for recreational use
by summer 2018**



Support for the plan is significantly lower than the 68 per cent of Canadians who said marijuana should be legalized last year – perhaps reflecting differing views about recreational use or the method of sale chosen by particular provinces.

Related: [Canadians disjuncted on pot plan: Most support the bill, but think it will fail in its key goals](#)

Carbon Tax

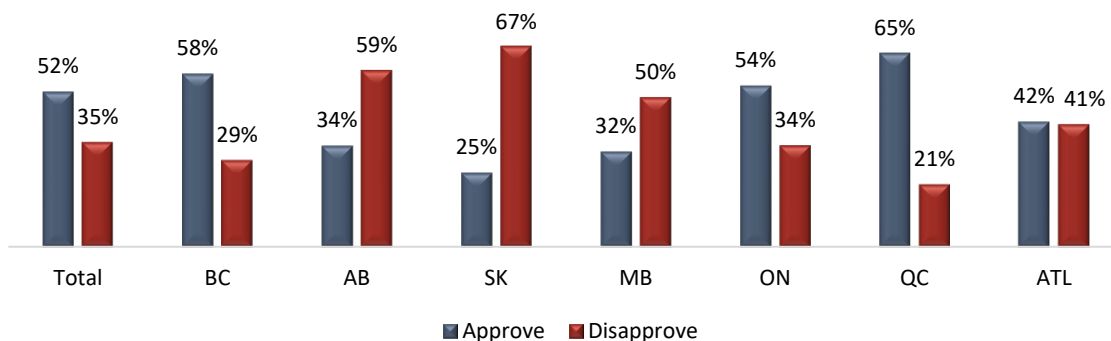
One of the more regionally divisive policies put forth by the federal government is its call for every province to introduce a price on carbon emissions. Several provinces have [already implemented](#) their own emissions-reduction plans – either through a carbon tax or a cap-and-trade system – in order to meet [targets](#) set by the ratification of the Paris accord.

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While a majority approve of the government's policy, pushback has been strong too. Saskatchewan Premier Brad Wall threatened to [take the government to court](#) to fight any carbon pricing imposition. His province is most opposed to the program, while B.C. and Quebec voice the most approval.

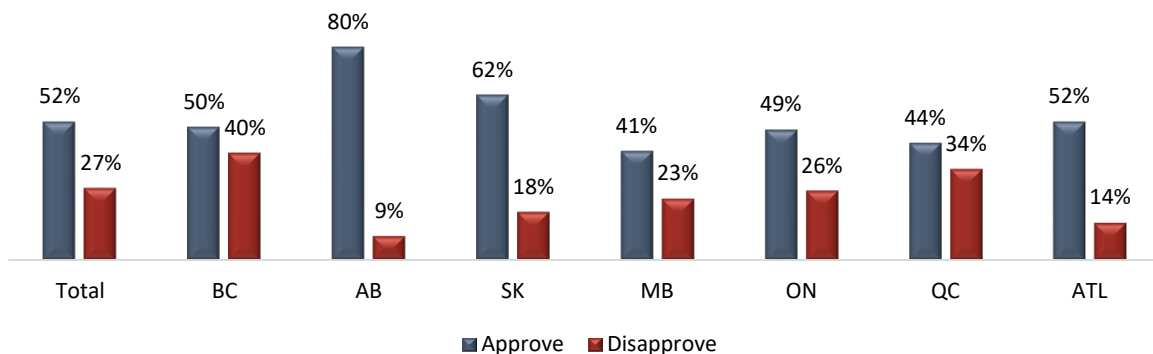
**Would you say you approve or disapprove of:
Requiring every province to put a price on carbon emissions by next year in
order to meet commitments under the Paris agreement**



TransMountain

Less divisive is the Trudeau government's approval of the TransMountain pipeline project between B.C. and Alberta. TransMountain's approval is met with support from just over half of Canadians (52%), while one-in-four (27%) disapprove of the decision. But in each region across the country, more residents approve than disapprove of the decision.

**Would you say you approve or disapprove of:
Approving the TransMountain Pipeline between Alberta and British Columbia**



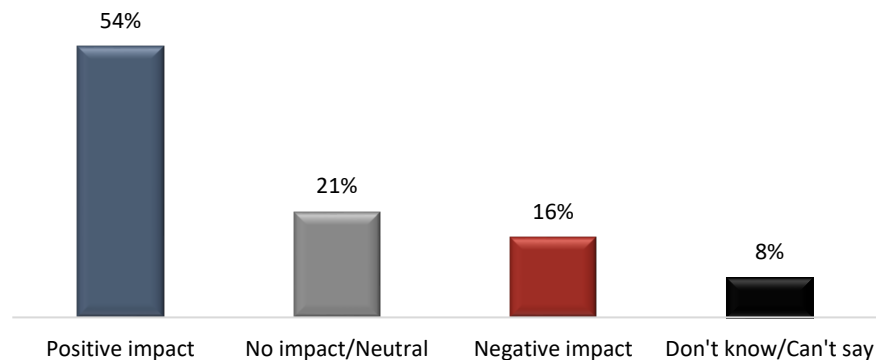
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Canada's reputation on the world stage

One of the biggest perceived strengths of the Trudeau government is the face it presents to the world. More than half of all Canadians (54%) say the government has had a positive impact on Canada's global reputation – a finding likely correlated with the many [positive profiles](#) of the country and of [Trudeau himself](#) in American media over the last two years.

Overall, would you say the Liberal government under Justin Trudeau has had a positive or negative impact on Canada's reputation on the world stage?



The Splits

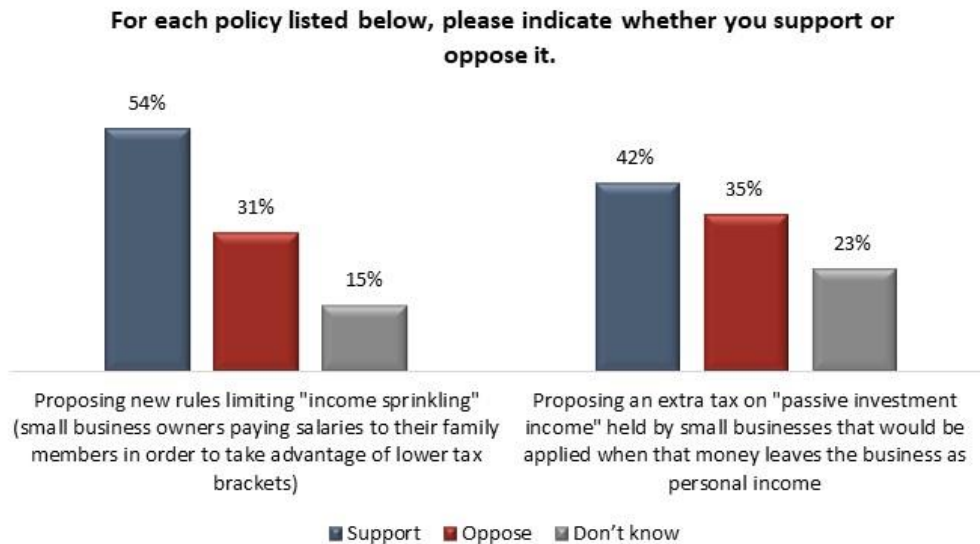
Small Business Tax Changes

Though it has been a source of [massive opposition and concern among Canadian entrepreneurs](#), more Canadians overall support than oppose each of the government's proposed changes to small business taxation, with a noticeably higher number expressing uncertainty than did so on personal income tax changes, as seen in the graph that follows.

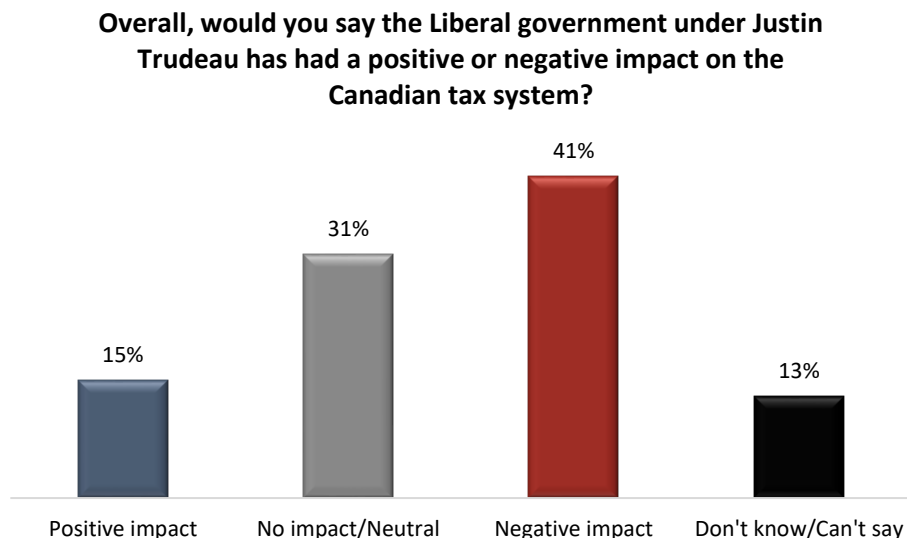
Related: [Canadian entrepreneurs see changes to passive investment rules as 'unfair' by 2:1 margin](#)

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But when asked about the Trudeau government's overall impact on the Canadian tax system, fully four-in-ten (41%) say it has been negative – more than say this about any other item canvassed in this survey. Fewer than one-in-six (15%) say the Trudeau government's effect on the Canadian tax system has been positive:



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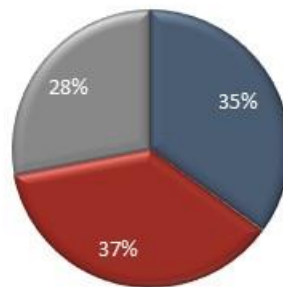
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Notably, despite it being a centrepiece of [the Liberals' 2015 campaign messaging](#), “the middle class” is also an area where Canadians are more likely to perceive a negative impact from the Trudeau government than a positive one. Some one-in-five (20%) say the government has had a positive effect on this file over its first two years, compared to two-thirds who think its impact has been either neutral (35%) or negative (33%).

Health Transfers

After failing to come to an agreement with the provinces over a long-term funding package for health care, the government stated that it would limit annual increases in health care transfers to three per cent. This represents an amount [roughly half](#) of what it has been since 2004. Provincial leaders were [reportedly frustrated](#) with what they saw as a lack of compromise from the government. For their part, Canadians are largely uncertain on this issue. An equal number both approve and disapprove of the governments approach:

Would you say you approve or disapprove of:
Limiting annual increases in federal health transfer payments
to 3 per cent



■ Approve ■ Disapprove ■ Don't know

The Misses

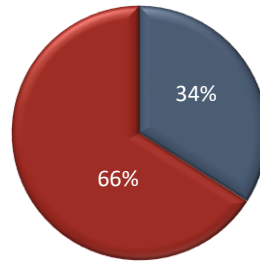
Electoral Reform

Campaigning is one thing, governing is another. This is perhaps best characterized in the Liberal government's choice to ultimately not pursue electoral reform, after Justin Trudeau famously stated that the [2015 election would be the last under the first-past-the-post](#) voting system. Though a committee was established to study the issue, ultimately, the government claimed that a [lack of consensus](#) among Canadians was cause to abandon reform. Canadians overwhelmingly say that the government made the wrong decision in this case.

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Which of the following statements best reflects your opinion on electoral reform and the Trudeau Liberals' handling of it?



- The Liberal government was right to not pursue electoral reform, even though it broke a promise
- The Liberal government was wrong to not pursue electoral reform - it should have kept its promise

Policies towards Immigration and Refugee Settlement

As events concerning asylum seekers crossing from the U.S., refugee resettlement and immigration have dominated the news over the last two years, the Trudeau government has chosen to raise immigration levels to 300,000 entries per year, within which 40,000 refugees will also be accepted.

While four-in-ten Canadians (39%) support such a target, (including half of B.C. residents), half of Canadians disapprove (51%). The largest group of Canadians, 32 per cent, say they *strongly disapprove*.

Would you say you approve or disapprove of:
Setting immigration targets at 300,000 new immigrants,
including 40,000 refugees, per year



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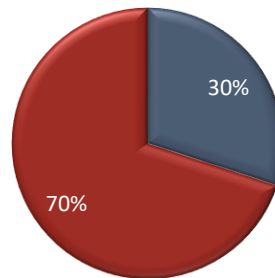
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Budget Deficits

Prime Minister Trudeau ran on a campaign promise to run “[modest deficits](#)” of roughly \$10 billion for the first three years of his government, while balancing the budget in 2019-20. Each of the first two years of the Liberal term saw projected deficits of close to \$30 billion.

In the end, the 2016-17 budget deficit came in at a more modest [\\$17.8 billion](#) and some economists [expect a similar number](#) for 2017-18. That said, these figures are still at odds with a promise of \$10 billion, and seven-in-ten Canadians say that running deficits of this size is the wrong thing to do:

Overall would you say:



- The Liberal government was right to run deficits larger than \$10 billion, even though it broke a promise
- The Liberal government was wrong to run deficits larger than \$10 billion - it should have kept its promise

Legal settlement with Omar Khadr

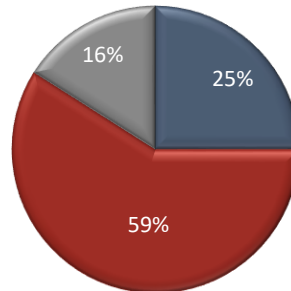
In July, the government paid former child soldier and Guantanamo Bay prisoner Omar Khadr, a Canadian citizen, \$10.5 million to settle a lawsuit he brought against it. The Supreme Court of Canada ruled in 2010 that the government had [violated Khadr's rights](#) as a Canadian citizen.

Though most experts agreed that the government made the safe play – settling a case that they would undoubtedly have lost down the road – at the time, 71 per cent of Canadians said they disagreed with the decision. Three months later, the number of Canadians saying they disapprove of the settlement stands at nearly six-in-ten:

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Would you say you approve or disapprove of the decision to settle Omar Khadr's lawsuit against the Canadian government for \$10.5 million?



■ Approve ■ Disapprove ■ Don't know

Part 3 – For Better or for Worse: Impact of the Trudeau government so far

A net positive or a net negative?

Canadians were asked whether the impact of the Trudeau government has been positive, negative, or neutral on a list of 15 issues. While some have been canvassed earlier in this report, full results may be seen in the table that follows:

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Page 16 of 20

Overall, would you say the Liberal government under Justin Trudeau has had a positive or negative impact on each of the following?				
	Negative Impact	No impact/Neutral	Positive Impact	Don't know/Can't say
The Canadian tax system	41%	31%	15%	13%
Energy/Oil sector	36%	34%	14%	15%
The Canadian middle class	33%	35%	20%	11%
The economy	32%	31%	27%	10%
The relationship between the federal government and the provinces	25%	36%	27%	13%
Health Care	23%	48%	17%	11%
Relations with the U.S.	23%	39%	26%	12%
Jobs/Employment	22%	40%	26%	11%
National Unity	22%	35%	30%	12%
Trade opportunities	21%	34%	29%	16%
Democracy	20%	38%	30%	12%
Climate change/The environment	18%	40%	30%	12%
First Nations/Indigenous Affairs	18%	30%	38%	13%
Infrastructure – i.e. roads, ports, etc	17%	42%	26%	14%
Canada's reputation on the world stage	16%	21%	54%	8%

Notably, some areas where the Trudeau government's actions have been strongly criticized are not necessarily viewed as negatively by Canadians. For example, while [much has been written](#) about the troubles facing the national inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, twice as many say the

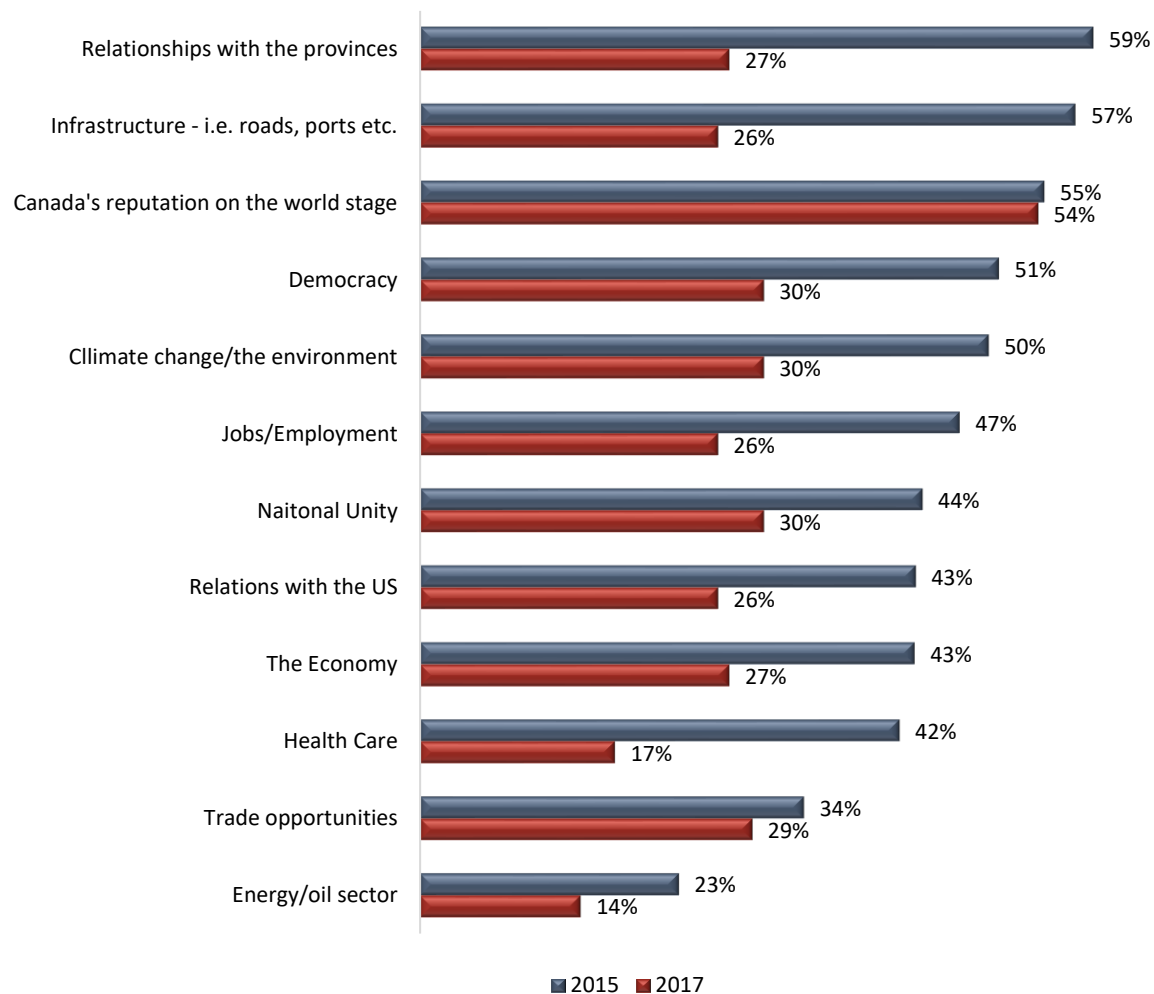
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Trudeau government has had a positive impact on Indigenous affairs (38%) as say it has had a negative one (18%).

At the end of October 2015, the Angus Reid Institute [asked Canadians](#) what impact they expected the new government to have on 12 of the 15 areas canvassed in this survey. Expectations were sky-high then, and on every item except international reputation, the number saying the Trudeau government has had a positive impact in its first two years has fallen considerably compared to the number who expected such an impact:

Percentage who expected the Trudeau government to have a positive impact vs. percentage who say it has had a positive impact after two years:



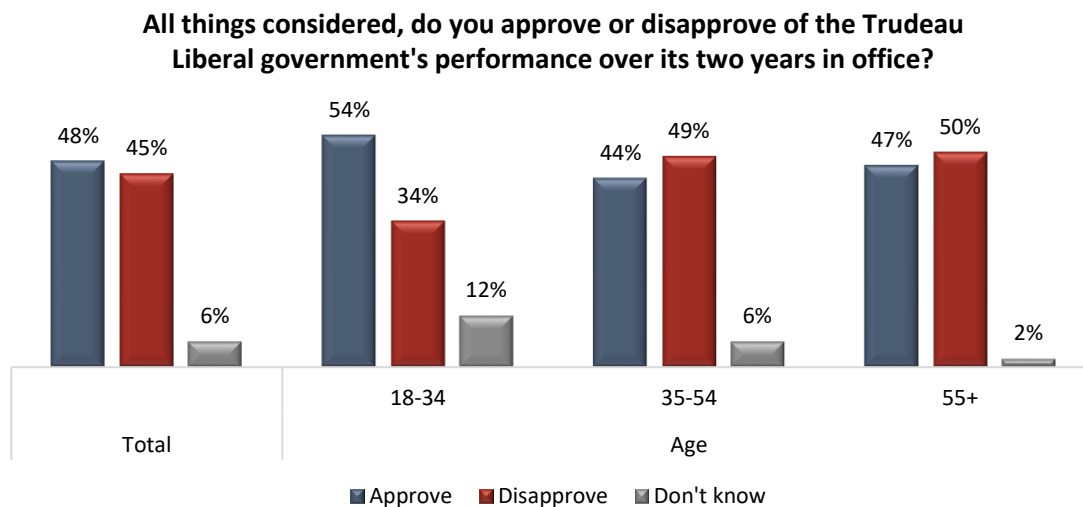
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Half approve of government's performance so far, nearly half disapprove

Roughly half of all Canadians (48%) say they approve of the Trudeau Liberals' performance in their first two years in government, and almost as many (45%) say they disapprove.

Younger respondents, who have been Trudeau's most faithful base of support since he took office, are 20 percentage points more likely to approve than to disapprove, while Canadians ages 35 and older are more likely to disapprove of the Trudeau government's performance than to approve of it:

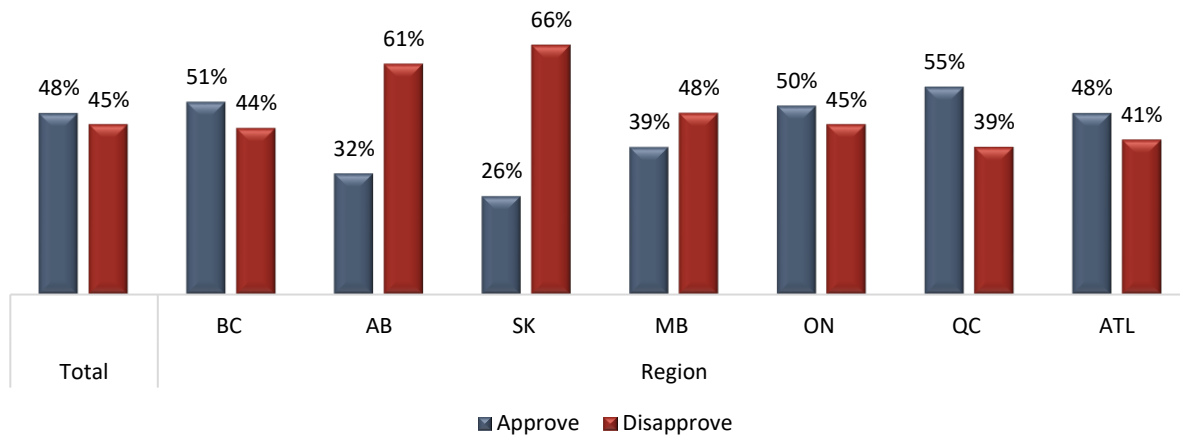


There are also significant regional differences on this question, with Alberta, Saskatchewan, and Manitoba – though especially the first two – more disapproving and every other region more inclined to approve than disapprove:

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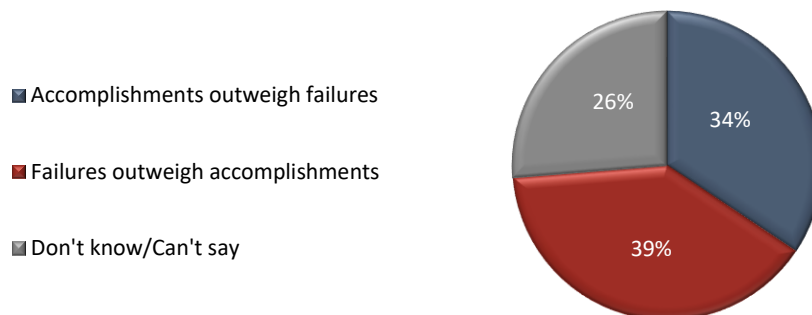
All things considered, do you approve or disapprove of the Trudeau Liberal government's performance over its two years in office?



For all these relatively positive indicators of how the government's performance is perceived, however, there are also negative ones.

Asked to weigh the Liberals' accomplishments against their failures in government so far, more Canadians say their failures have outweighed their accomplishments than say the reverse, with a substantial portion of the population unsure:

Would you say the Trudeau Liberal government's accomplishments have outweighed their failures or would you say their failures have outweighed their accomplishments?

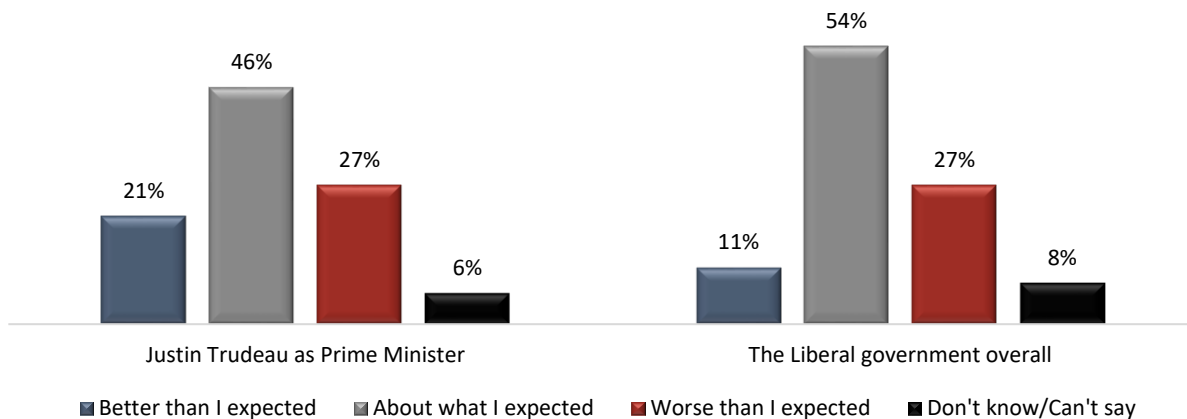


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In a similar vein, relatively few Canadians see the Trudeau government – or Trudeau himself – as exceeding their expectations so far. More than one-in-four respondents (27% in each case) say both Trudeau as PM and the Liberals have been worse than they expected since taking office, while only one-in-ten (11%) say the government has performed above expectations, overall:

Compared to what you expected when they were first elected, would you say each of the following has been better or worse than you expected?



*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.*

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

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