

Vast majority of Canadians support Net Neutrality, but split over whether current regulations are sufficient

Four-in-five say US made wrong decision in voting to removing internet protections

April 4, 2018 – While the internet has grown in scale, influence and importance in the lives of most everyone on the planet over the past few decades, it has largely maintained the governing principle of freedom and openness. Recently, however, many people have been wondering how much the future of the internet will resemble its past.

A new study from the Angus Reid Institute finds Canadians overwhelmingly supportive of a key concept in the ongoing debate over internet openness – net neutrality. And, while they're supportive of equal treatment of data and ensuring no unfair advantage for one web company over another, Canadians are divided on how best to safeguard this principle in Canada.

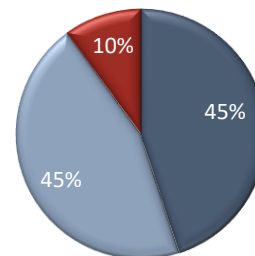
Nearly half of Canadians say current protections from the CRTC are enough, while the same number say new legislation is necessary to enshrine net neutrality into Canadian law. Just one-in-ten say no net neutrality protections are needed in Canada.

Canadians are also decidedly against a recent decision by the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) in the United States that reversed the Open Internet Order. Eight-in-ten Canadians say the FCC made the wrong choice in reversing the 2015 order that sought to enshrine net neutrality regulations in that country.

More Key Findings:

- Among those following this issue closest, 75 per cent say Canada needs a specific net neutrality law. Overall, 45 per cent say a law is needed, while 45 per cent say the CRTC is currently well-equipped to ensure that the concept is protected without new legislation
- Seven-in-ten Canadians (72%) voice concern about the costs of their web-based services rising as U.S. firms adjust to new regulatory environment in that country

Which of these three perspectives is closest to your own?



- Canada needs a specific net neutrality law
- The current protections for net neutrality through the CRTC are sufficient, no new law is necessary
- There should be no net neutrality regulations in Canada, including the ones we already have

METHODOLOGY:

The Angus Reid Institute conducted an online survey from January 23 – 26, 2017, among a representative randomized sample of 1520 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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- Almost four-in-ten Canadians (38%) had never heard of net neutrality until participating in this study, while one-in-eight (13%) said they were quite familiar with the term. Young men are most aware of the concept (68%), while women ages 55 and older profess the least awareness (21%).

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Four-in-five say U.S. made wrong move by removing regulations

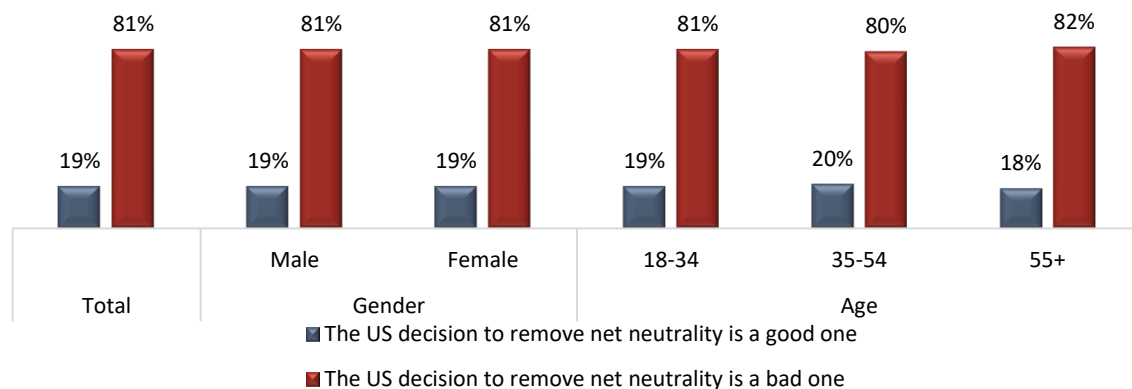
Net neutrality can be broadly characterized as the principle of maintaining an open internet. That means no website, program or service is prioritized over any other. If it's legal, it's equal. That means the access and speed at which a user can visit the New York Times is the same as if they want to read a lesser-known blog.

Supporters of the decision to remove net neutrality protections in the U.S. have relied on free-market concepts as the driver of their argument. They claim that regulations to networks are restrictive and that controlling the actions of internet service providers (ISPs) can discourage the kind of investment that would improve access to the internet and the performance of internet service.

Those opposed to the decision claim that without net neutrality regulations, ISPs will drive up costs for consumers, create tiers with different speeds, and make it harder for small companies to gain traction online. They further argue ISPs could block access to their competitors' web content. All of this would give an advantage to bigger, more-established companies and hamper free-market competition.

Given a brief explanation of the situation, including these arguments for and against net neutrality, four-in-five Canadians say the FCC made the wrong choice. This opinion holds uniformly across age and gender:

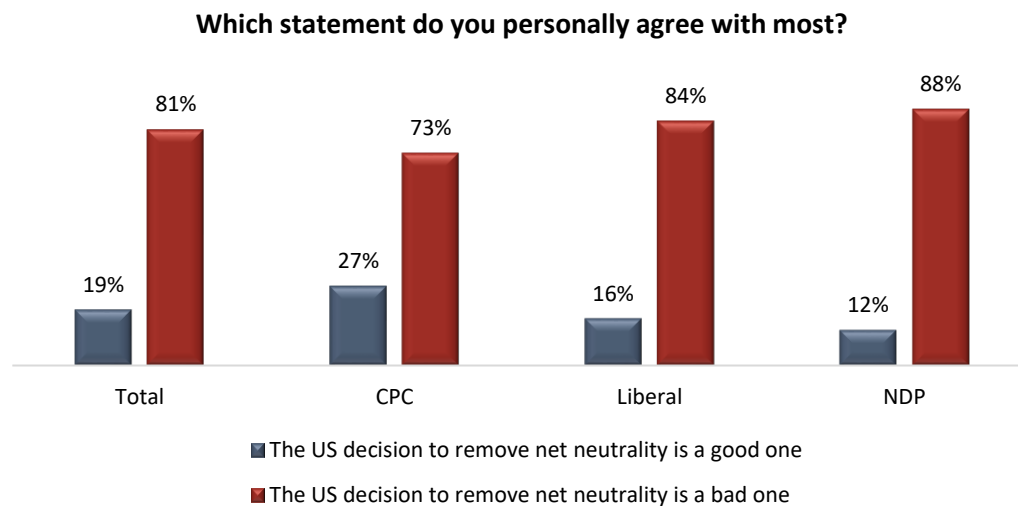
Which statement do you personally agree with most?



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Opinion closely aligns among conservatives in each country as well. In the U.S., three-quarters of Republicans (75%) [opposed the FCC decision](#), while 73 per cent of past Conservative Party of Canada voters do the same:



Population split over current regulations vs. new net neutrality law

In Canada, net neutrality is protected by the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission (CRTC), which has a mandate to uphold the principle of equal treatment of data and to ensure no company has undue or unreasonable preference or advantage over another. This is based on language in the Telecommunications Act of 1993, and has provided a foundation for maintaining net neutrality in Canada.

There have been some landmark cases in which the CRTC's position has been tested, both in [2015](#) and [2017](#). Each time, it has come down on the side of net neutrality, ruling that ISPs are not allowed to exempt certain streaming services and apps from monthly data limits without offering the same preferred treatment to other such services. Former CRTC chairman Jean-Pierre Blais [said at the time](#), "rather than offering its subscribers selected content at different data usage prices, internet service providers should be offering more data at lower prices."

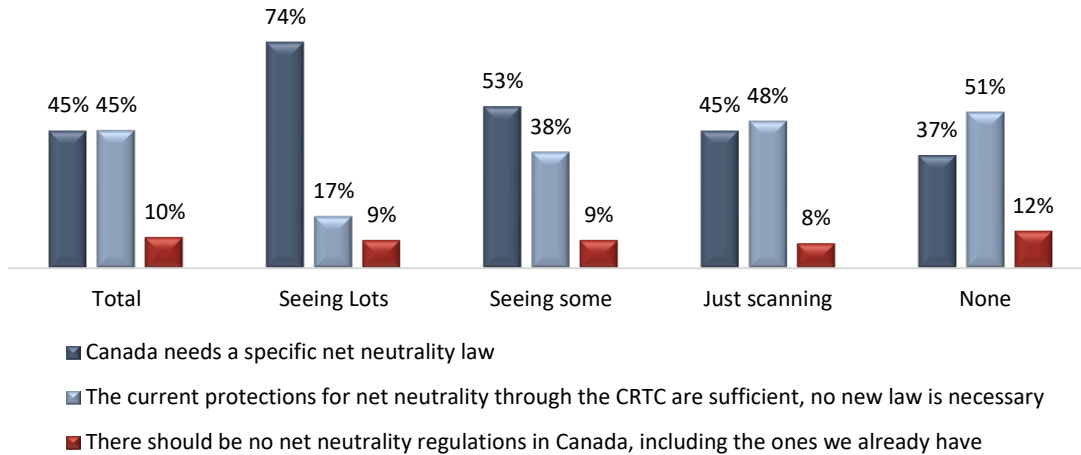
This and other [recent statements by the government](#) affirming support for net neutrality, are enough for some Canadians, but others say that because the term "net neutrality" is not specifically written into Canadian law, it will continue to face challenges. Advocates at [OpenMedia have asked](#) "for net neutrality to be enshrined in principle in the Telecommunications Act itself, to make sure this is no longer interpreted in multiple (CRTC) decisions ... and really clearly spelled out."

Canadians themselves are divided on this issue. An identical number say the current regulations are enough (45%) or that Canada needs a specific net neutrality law (45%). Those most acquainted with the issues are most certain that Canada needs to upgrade its protection:

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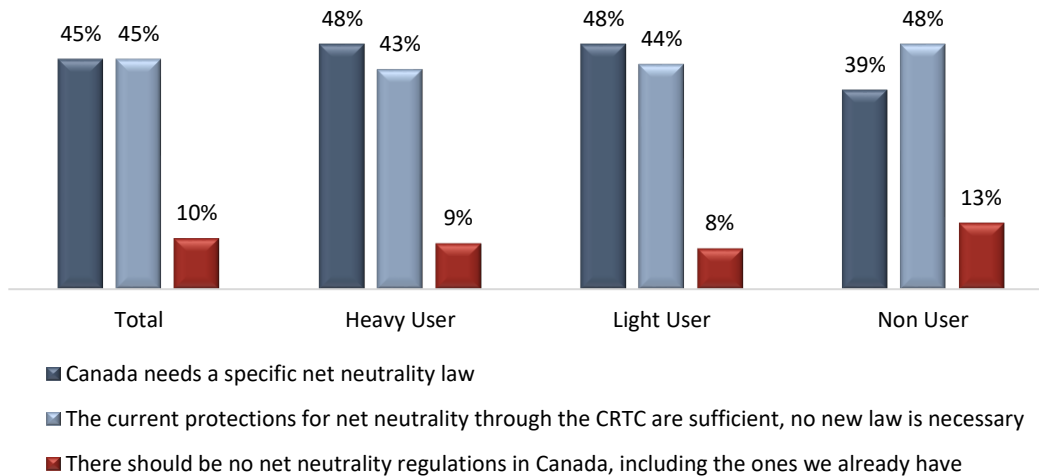
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Which of these three perspectives is closest to your own? (Responses by how much media coverage Canadians have seen of this issue)



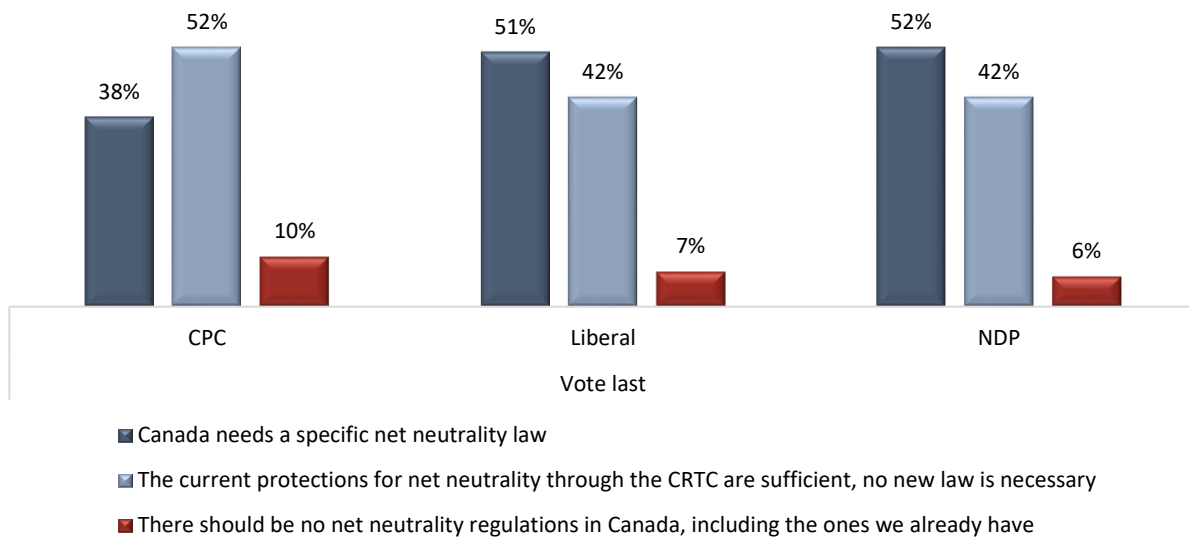
Notably, use of streaming services such as Netflix or Spotify – which could see their services made slower or costlier by a lack of net neutrality protections in the U.S. – does not have a significant impact on Canadians' opinions. Regardless of how often respondents report using audio and video streaming services, they are close to equally split on the necessity of new legislation:

Which of these three perspectives is closest to your own?



Past Liberal and New Democratic Party voters are more inclined to favour a specific net neutrality law, while a slight majority of past Conservative supporters say the CRTC protection is sufficient. Few Canadians of any political stripe say there should be no net neutrality regulations:

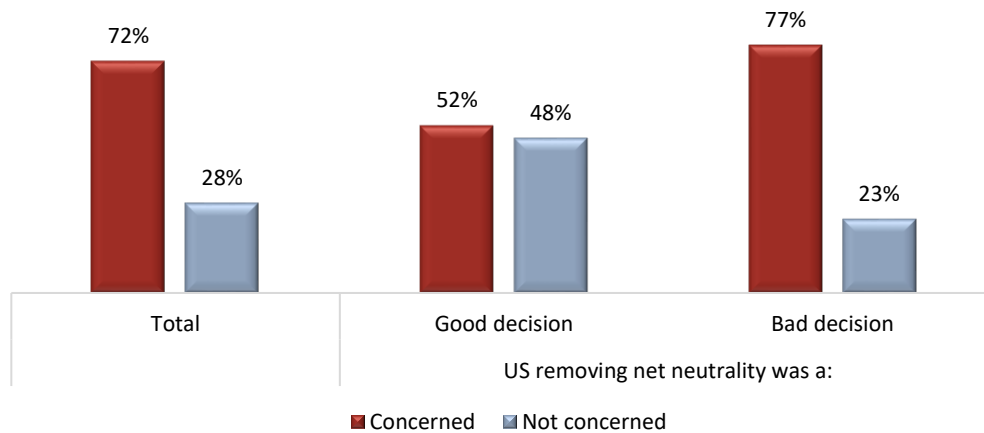
Which of these three perspectives is closest to your own?



High level of concern about potential impacts of U.S. changes on Canadian consumers

One of the spinoff impacts of the net neutrality decision in the United States may be rising costs for Canadian consumers. This point remains uncertain, but [observers note](#) that many of the largest content providers that Canadians use – YouTube, Netflix, and Apple Music, among others – are U.S. firms, which would be negotiating new arrangements with ISPs in that country. Canadian firms would likely have to do the same, and any increase in costs could be passed on to consumers in both countries. So, how concerned are Canadians about this hypothetical situation? Close to three-quarters (72%) say they are worried:

How concerned are you, if at all, about costs for web-based services rising in Canada due to the change in the U.S.?

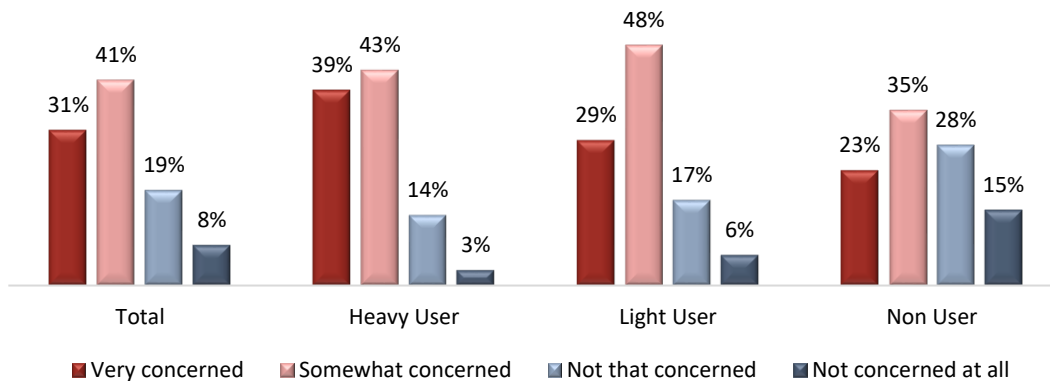


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This proportion of concerned residents rises with the propensity to use streaming services. Eight-in-ten heavy users (83%) say they are concerned, including a much higher number saying they are “very concerned” compared to light or non-users:

How concerned are you, if at all, about costs for web-based services rising in Canada due to the change in the U.S.?

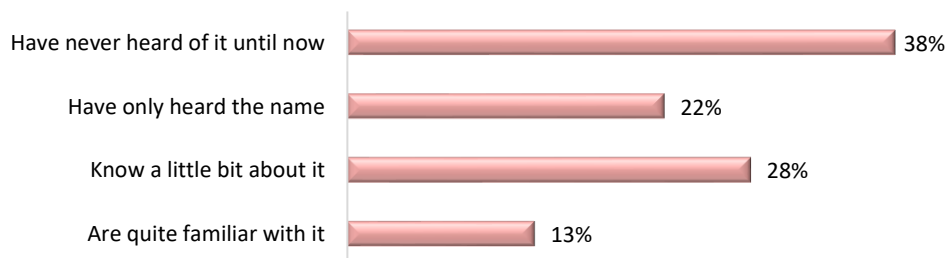


While there is much yet to be decided in this unfolding frontier, one thing is clear: Canadians and Americans alike say they value net neutrality, and hope that their leadership will do what it takes to maintain that principle.

Canadians have poor awareness of net neutrality

For their part, however, many respondents making assessments of net neutrality were relying on the Angus Reid Institute to first inform them of the concept. Asked for their familiarity with the term at the outset of the survey, four-in-ten (38%) say they had never heard of net neutrality. Another one-in-five (22%) say they had only heard the term. This leaves roughly four-in-ten Canadians (41%) with any self-identified knowledge of the term, and closer to one-in-ten (13%) saying they're quite familiar with the concept:

Recently, there have been some conversations in both Canada and the United States about "net neutrality." How familiar would you say you are with this term?

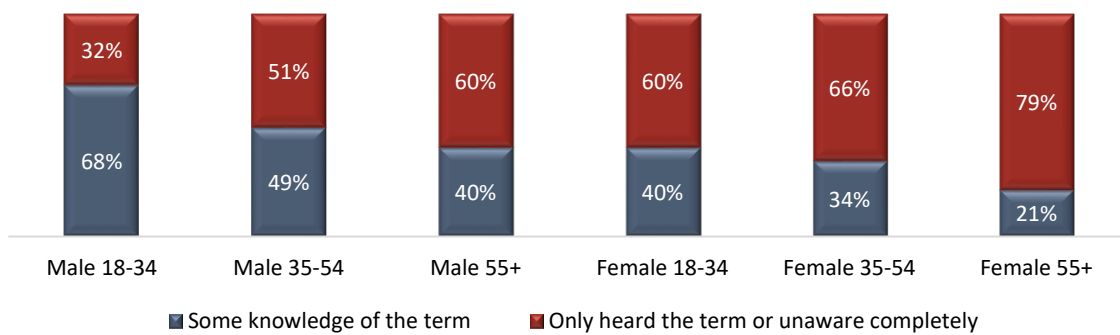


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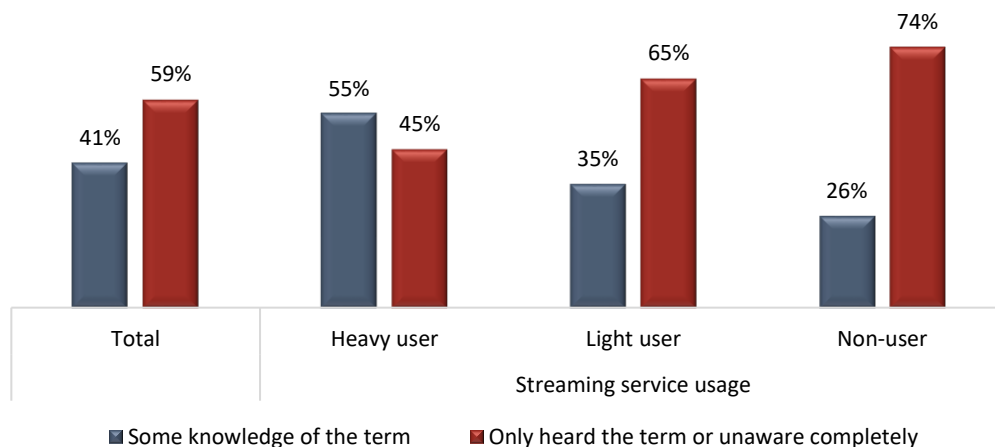
Young men profess the highest levels of knowledge. Among males between the ages of 18 and 34, seven-in-ten (68%) say they know at least a little bit about net neutrality. This group far outpaces all others in its self-assessed knowledge, as seen by the following graph:

Recently, there have been some conversations in both Canada and the United States about "net neutrality." How familiar would you say you are with this term?



Some of this awareness can be attributed to the closer relationship that young people have with streaming services. Those who use one or more streaming services multiple times per week are much more likely to be under the age of 35 ([see comprehensive tables for greater detail](#)). When asked about their knowledge of the term, heavy users express much higher levels of confidence than their less actively streaming peers.

Recently, there have been some conversations in both Canada and the United States about "net neutrality." How familiar would you say you are with this term?



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

Recently, there have been some conversations in both Canada and the United States about “net neutrality.” How familiar would you say you are with this term?				
(weighted sample sizes)	Total (1520)	Use of online streaming services		
		Heavy user (679)	Light user (299)	Non-user (542)
Are quite familiar with it	13%	22%	10%	5%
Know a little bit about it	28%	34%	25%	21%
Have only heard the name	22%	17%	24%	26%
Have never heard of it until now	38%	27%	42%	48%

How concerned are you, if at all, about costs for web-based services rising in Canada due to the change in the U.S.?				
(weighted sample sizes)	Total (1520)	Use of online streaming services		
		Heavy user (679)	Light user (299)	Non-user (542)
Very concerned	31%	39%	29%	23%
Somewhat concerned	41%	43%	48%	35%
Not that concerned	19%	14%	17%	28%
Not concerned at all	8%	3%	6%	15%

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Which of these three perspectives is closest to your own?				
(weighted sample sizes)	Total (1520)	Use of online streaming services		
		Heavy user (679)	Light user (299)	Non-user (542)
Canada needs a specific net neutrality law	45%	48%	48%	39%
The current protections for net neutrality through the CRTC are sufficient, no new law is necessary	45%	43%	44%	48%
There should be no net neutrality regulations in Canada, including the ones we already have	10%	9%	8%	13%

How concerned are you, if at all, about costs for web-based services rising in Canada due to the change in the U.S.?			
(weighted sample sizes)	Total (1520)	The FCC's decision was ...	
		A good one (287)	A bad one (1233)
Very concerned	31%	15%	35%
Somewhat concerned	41%	37%	42%
Not that concerned	19%	31%	17%
Not concerned at all	8%	18%	6%

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Which of these three perspectives is closest to your own?					
(weighted sample sizes)	Total (1520)	Awareness of the net neutrality debate			
		Seeing lots of media coverage (109)	Seeing some coverage (337)	Just scanning the headlines (369)	Not seeing anything about it (704)
Canada needs a specific net neutrality law	45%	74%	53%	45%	37%
The current protections for net neutrality through the CRTC are sufficient, no new law is necessary	45%	17%	38%	48%	51%
There should be no net neutrality regulations in Canada, including the ones we already have	10%	9%	9%	8%	12%

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