Trudeau Groping Allegation: most past Liberal voters unfazed, but one-in-five say PM’s response ‘inadequate’

Politics, rather than gender, drives differences in opinion on the issue

July 20, 2018 – Weeks of unflattering headlines and uncomfortable questions about an allegation of inappropriate touching almost two decades ago do not appear to have had significant damaging impact on Justin Trudeau’s standing in the eyes of his support base.

The issue has forced the Prime Minister to attempt to reconcile his initial denial and subsequent explanation of this alleged conduct – which took place long before he entered politics – with his current public stance supporting women who come forward with allegations of sexual harassment.

While this has led critics and observers to accuse Trudeau of hypocrisy, a new Angus Reid Institute study finds that a majority of Canadians (62%) – and, indeed, eight-in-ten women who voted for Trudeau’s Liberal Party in 2015 (83%) – say the Prime Minister’s response to these allegations has been “adequate”.

However, this leaves one-in-five past Liberal voters (21%) looking for more by way of response from Trudeau and saying their view of him has worsened in light of the incident.

Past Conservative voters are significantly more likely to be paying attention to the issue, and are twice as likely as past New Democrats and Liberals to say that their opinion of him has deteriorated as a result (58% say this).

Ultimately, Canadians offer competing views when considering allegations of inappropriate conduct. Nearly all say that men need to take responsibility for their actions toward women (91%). That said, more than six-in-ten (63%) say this specific incident is overblown and garnering too much attention.

More Key Findings:

- Eight-in-ten (79%) of Trudeau’s 2015 voters say that his response to inappropriate touching allegations has been adequate, while seven-in-ten (69%) New Democrats agree. Two-thirds of Conservatives (64%) disagree.

METHODOLOGY:

The Angus Reid Institute conducted an online survey from July 11 – 16, 2018 among a representative randomized sample of 1500 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 ±2.2 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.
• Six-in-ten Canadians (61%) say that their opinion of the Prime Minister has not changed after hearing of this event. Three-in-ten (33%), however, say that their view of him has worsened.

• Women and men and of all age groups are equally likely to say that this issue has received too much attention. Divisions emerge based on political affiliation, with past Conservative voters disagreeing.

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Trudeau response not problematic for most Canadian women

The beginning of summer 2018 has forced Prime Minister Justin Trudeau to cast his attention back almost 20 years, to the Columbia Brewery's Kokanee Summit Festival in Creston B.C. While at this fundraising event, a then 28-year-old Trudeau was accused of "groping" and "inappropriately handling" a young female reporter. According to an editorial published in the Creston Valley Advance newspaper the next day, Trudeau was said to have apologized for behaving in a way that was "forward".

There are no specific details about what actually occurred, and the woman who accused the PM released a statement in early July saying she stands by her story but wishes to move on with her life.

The first response from the Prime Minister’s office was to state that Trudeau "remembers being in Creston for the Avalanche Foundation, but doesn’t think he had any negative interactions there." After "reflecting very carefully", Trudeau said he feels confident he did not act inappropriately, though he suggested that someone else may have perceived his actions differently.

Related: A comprehensive look at #MeToo in Canadian society

Most Canadians are say that Trudeau has responded to this situation adequately, while a significant minority of four-in-ten (38%) say that they expected more from him.

What is perhaps most notable from this study is the finding that in an era of discussions about the inappropriate behaviour women face on the job, female respondents are more inclined than men to say Trudeau’s response has been adequate. The PM has faced allegations of hypocrisy for advocating so strongly for women’s rights and feminism, while at the same time facing these allegations. Trudeau’s party has also removed member Kent Hehr for inappropriate conduct and suspended others. These criticisms are evidently not resonating with women as much as they are with men. Two-thirds of female respondents say the Prime Minister’s response has been sufficient:
Women who voted for Trudeau in 2015 are overwhelmingly supportive of the way that the Prime Minister has handled the situation. Overall, eight-in-ten female Liberals say the response has satisfied them, and a majority of past female NDP supporters (63%) say the same. That said, there are roughly one-in-six women who voted for the Liberals in 2015 who find the PM’s response inadequate:

Response among Canadian women by 2015 vote

This is an issue that, despite its relatively high media profile and discussion in political circles, has not engaged most Canadians. Just 13 per cent of respondents say they have been following it closely, while another 29 per cent say that they have had the occasional conversation about it.
Importantly, past Conservative voters have been most engaged on the issue:

**Awareness of groping allegations:**

- Haven’t seen or heard anything about it: 21%
- Just scanning the headlines: 37%
- Seeing some coverage and having the odd conversation: 29%
- Seeing a lot of media coverage and discussing it with friends and family: 13%

Perhaps for this reason, those following this issue most closely are also most inclined to say that Trudeau has responded inadequately. Responses from past Conservatives closely mirror the responses from those who voice the most awareness of this saga:
How has this allegation affected opinions of the PM?

The Prime Minister enjoyed a boost in public opinion in June after a tumultuous G7 Summit and a barrage of attacks from United States President Donald Trump. Trudeau’s approval jumped significantly – 12 percentage points – following these events.

So what impact do allegations of misconduct have on Trudeau? For six-in-ten Canadians, their opinion has not changed, while one-in-three (33%) say their view of him has worsened.

Thinking about your own view of Justin Trudeau, what impact, if any, would you say this incident has had on your view of him?

- Significantly improved your view of him
- Had no impact one way or the other
- Significantly worsened your view of him
- Slightly improved
- Slightly worsened
While the federal Liberals will likely be less concerned about the number of past Conservative voters who say their view of the Prime Minister has worsened, three-in-ten past New Democrats (32%) and one-in-five of Trudeau’s 2015 voters (21%) say their view has soured.

Thinking your own view of Justin Trudeau, what impact, if any, would you say this incident has had on your view of him?

![Bar chart showing responses to the question about the impact of the incident on views of Justin Trudeau.]

The potential damage done to the Prime Minister’s reputation may not be devastating, but he does not escape without some impact. One-in-three women who voted for the NDP in 2015 (34%), presumably voters the Liberal Party would target in the coming election, say their view of him has worsened:

Thinking your own view of Justin Trudeau, what impact, if any, would you say this incident has had on your view of him?

![Bar chart showing responses among Canadian women by 2015 vote.]

CONTACT:
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Most say women right to come forward, but this specific issue overblown

The woman who accused the Prime Minister of inappropriate touching in August 2000 released a statement in early July, saying that she stood by her allegations but did not wish to engage in or pursue the issue further. The Canadian public is overwhelmingly supportive of her right to do so, regardless of how long it has been. More than eight-in-ten Canadians (86%) say that women are right to tell stories about sexual misconduct they have experienced, even if it was a long time ago:

"Women are right to come forward and tell their stories even if it was in the past"

![Bar chart showing agreement and disagreement percentages for the statement: Strongly Agree 33%, Agree 53%, Disagree 12%, Strongly Disagree 2%]

However, more than six-in-ten (63%) also say that this particular story has been overblown, and that it is receiving too much attention. This opinion does not diverge by age or gender (see comprehensive tables for greater detail), but it rises to 80 per cent among Liberals, while a majority of Conservatives disagree:

"These allegations about Trudeau seem overblown, and are receiving too much attention"

![Bar chart showing agreement and disagreement percentages for the statement: Total 63%, CPC 37%, Liberal 80%, NDP 64%]

This is perhaps explained in part by another, more controversial finding. Among discussions of the #metoo movement and the fallout from many of the accusations made in a public forum, a significant number of Canadians say that they have trouble ascertaining where “the line” is these days. This is not to
say that they are necessarily dismissive of the allegations against Trudeau outright, but more so that seven-in-ten (68%), including equal numbers of men and women, say that there is a significant grey area in their day-to-day interactions:

\[
\text{Percentage of Canadians who agree that: } \text{"It's hard to tell where 'the line' is these days - what's okay and what's not"}
\]

\[
\begin{array}{ccc}
\text{Total} & \text{Male} & \text{Female} \\
68\% & 70\% & 66\%
\end{array}
\]

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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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Which statement is closest to your own view, even if you don’t entirely agree?</th>
<th>Total (1500)</th>
<th>Female responses by 2015 vote</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
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<td>38%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Significantly improved your view of him</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>3%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Slightly improved</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>3%</td>
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<td>Had no impact one way or the other</td>
<td>61%</td>
<td>77%</td>
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<td>Slightly worsened</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>14%</td>
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Canadian women by 2015 vote

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<td>17%</td>
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<td><strong>NDP</strong></td>
<td>34%</td>
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