

Nine-in-ten Canadians say 'no' to future arms deals with Saudi Arabia; divided over cancelling current one

Two-thirds say Canada should continue public criticism of Saudi human rights abuses

November 6, 2018 – While Canadians express almost total unanimity about prohibiting future sales of weapons and defence equipment to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, the latest public opinion survey from the Angus Reid Institute shows they are evenly divided over the question of what to do about the current, 15-year, \$15 billion dollar agreement between this country and the KSA to exchange military goods for cash.

In the wake of the coverup - and later confirmation of Washington Post journalist Jamal Khashoggi's murder allegedly on the order of senior Saudi officials, nearly half of Canadians (46%) now believe the government should cancel the deal, a 6-point increase in the number saying this last year.

Another 44 per cent of respondents say Canada should honour the deal, but have no further engagement with the Saudi's in this industry going forward.

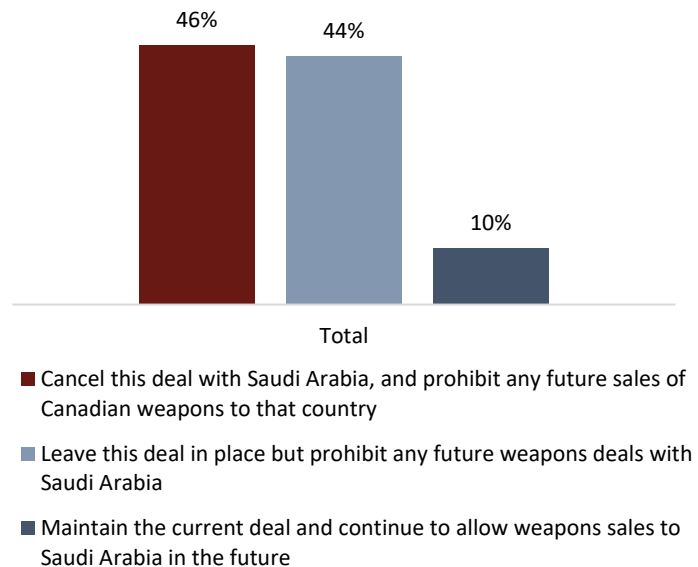
Canadians also express support for the Trudeau government's actions criticizing the Saudi regime for human rights abuses.

After comments from Foreign Affairs Minister Chrystia Freeland led to a diplomatic spat and demands for an apology from the Saudi Royal Family, 32 per cent of Canadians say the government should continue to voice its displeasure when necessary, while the same number say officials should increase their criticism further. Only three per cent of Canadians say the government should hold back on criticism entirely.

More Key Findings:

- While a majority of Canadians (63%) say they have followed the news of Jamal Khashoggi's murder, it does not appear to have an impact on views of the Saudi Arms deal. In fact, those with *no* pre-existing knowledge of the case are more likely than all others to say Canada should end the deal

What would you advise the government to do with the deal?



METHODOLOGY:

The Angus Reid Institute conducted an online survey from October 24 - 29 among a representative randomized sample of 1500 Canadian adults who are members of [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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- Asked which countries Canada should not sell military arms to, 76 per cent of Canadians say Saudi Arabia should be banned. This represents a 14-point increase from 2017. The same number say Iran should be prohibited, while 54 per cent say China should be as well.
- Politics drives opinion on this issue: past NDP supporters are most likely to say Canada should end the 15-year arms deal now and prohibit future sales – 57 per cent say this, compared to close to four-in-ten Liberals (43%) and Conservatives (38%)

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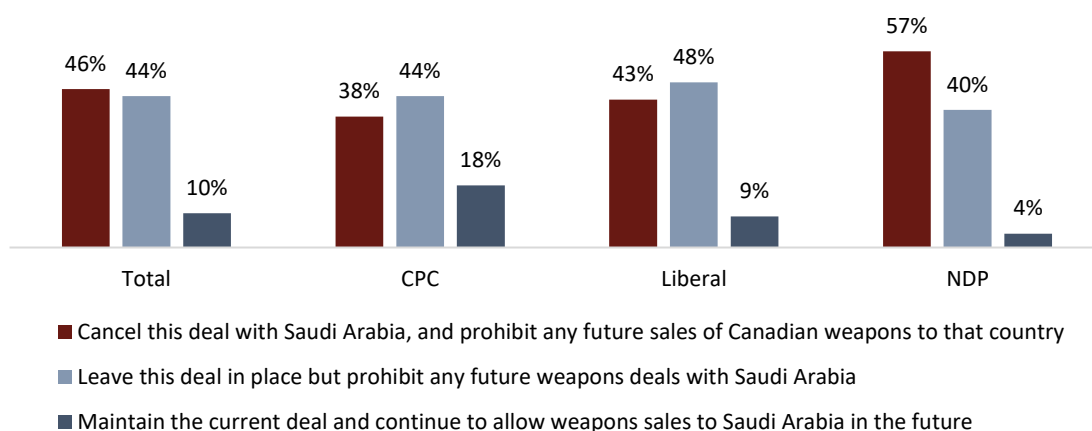
After Khashoggi murder, 9-in-10 say no to future arms exports

Canada’s \$15 billion agreement to sell light armoured vehicles to Saudi Arabia was negotiated during the previous Conservative government of Prime Minister Stephen Harper, but sign off and decisions about its future have been and now are the responsibility of the Liberal government under Justin Trudeau.

After the murder of Jamal Khashoggi on October 2, Canada’s government has faced renewed criticism over the contract and calls to cancel it as punishment to the Saudi regime. This, after Germany announced it would suspend further arm sales to the nation until more details are given about the journalist’s death. Trudeau commented that the contract signed by the previous Conservative government would be “very difficult” to suspend or break, though he could not offer details because, in his words, “part of the deal” includes “not talking about” the deal.

The desire to cancel future arms sales to Saudi Arabia is near universal in Canadian public opinion – 46 per cent say the government should cancel the deal and prohibit future sales, while 44 per cent say they would prefer to leave the deal in place, but likewise, would prohibit future exports.

What would you advise the government to do with the deal?

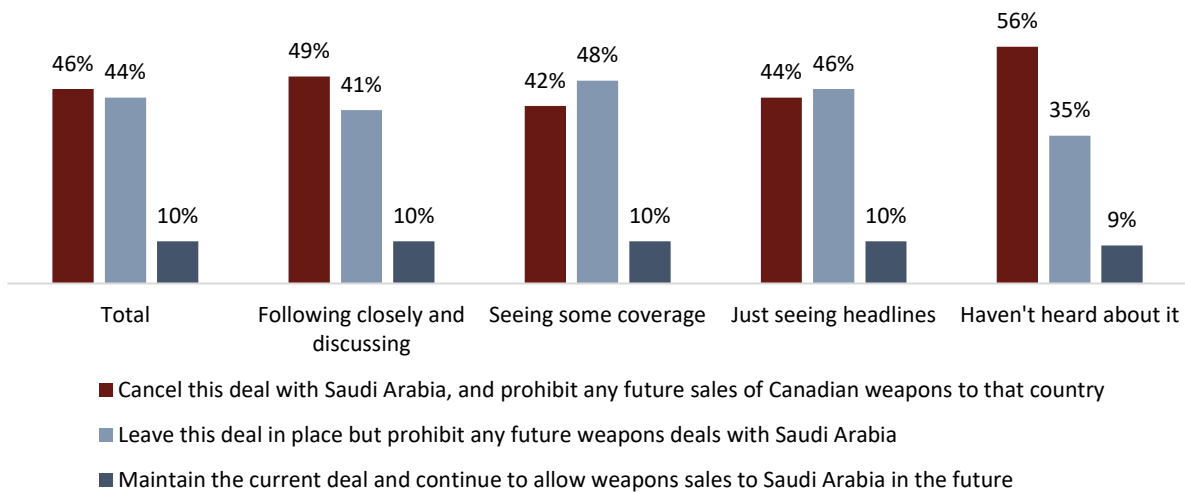


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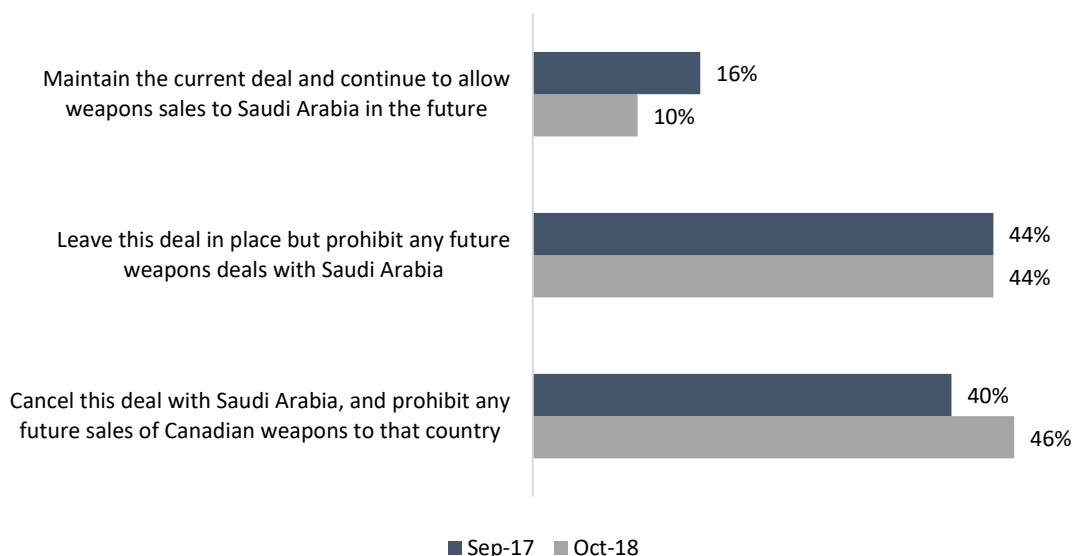
Six-in-ten (63%) say they have been paying attention to the Khashoggi news, though it does not appear to have an impact on views. In fact, those most supportive of cancelling the deal are the group who had not even heard of the incident in Istanbul earlier this month.

What would you advise the government to do with the deal?



The number of Canadians voicing the middle option on this question has not changed since 2017. However, a six-point increase is noted for the group who say cancel the deal and prohibit future sales, mirrored by a six-point decline in the group who say the government should change nothing going forward:

What would you advise the government to do with the deal?



To whom should Canada NOT sell military technology?

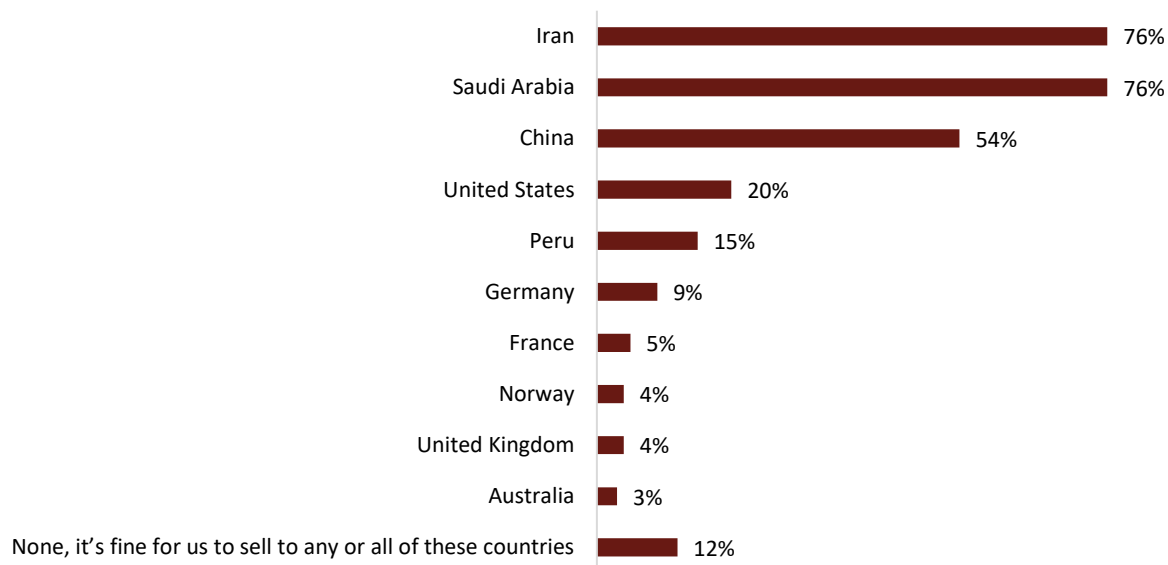
Canada’s arms exports are regulated by [export control policy guidelines](#). The Angus Reid Institute introduced these guidelines to respondents, as noted below, and then asked them to choose from a list of countries those that they would allow trade with and those they would ban.

- that pose a threat to Canada and its allies;
- involved in or under imminent threat of conflict or war;
- under United Nations Security Council sanctions;
- whose governments have a persistent record of serious human rights violations against their own citizens, unless it can demonstrated the weapons won’t be used against civilians

The list of countries offered includes the top ten nations in terms of Canada’s arms export value, as well as the two that had permits denied in 2017 – Iran and China.

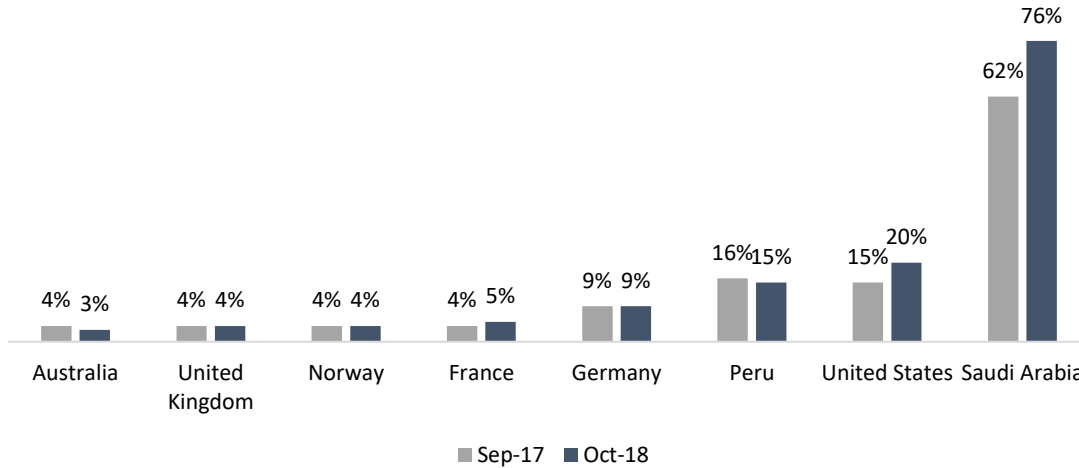
Three-quarters of Canadians (76%) say that Canada should not sell military defense and technology to Iran or the KSA. China is chosen by fewer, but still a majority of respondents:

Which of the following countries, if any, should Canada NOT sell military defense and technology to?



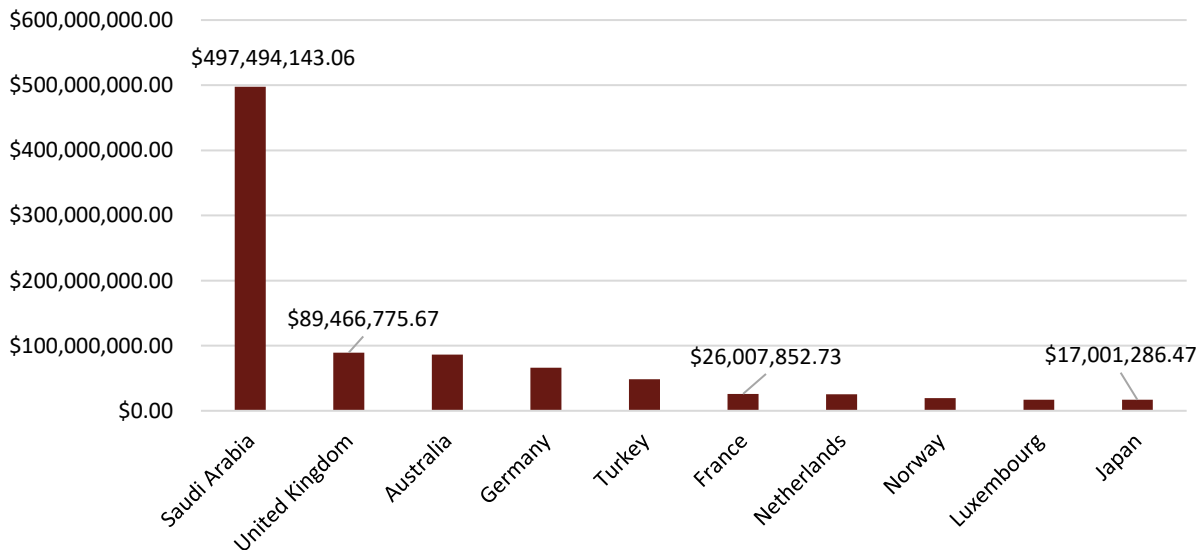
The Angus Reid Institute asked about these same countries – with the exception of Iran and China – last year. At the time, the federal government was facing criticism over allegations that the Saudi military had used Canadian light armoured vehicles to quell dissent among their own citizens. Notably, the number of Canadians saying Saudi Arabia should not be on the list of eligible arms export markets has risen substantially:

Percentage of Canadians who say Canada should not sell military and defense technology to these nations



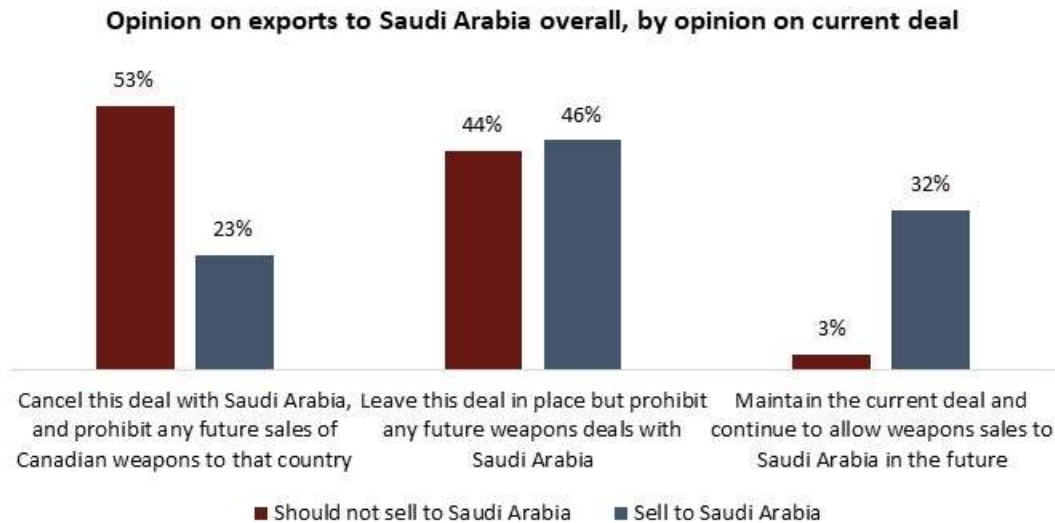
While Saudi Arabia makes up nearly half of all non-U.S. arms exports from Canada, it would be fair to say that many do not feel comfortable with commerce when it comes to this industry and that country. Canada's own [assessment of Saudi Arabia](#) found a "high number of executions, repression of political opposition, arbitrary arrest, suppression of freedom of expression and discrimination against women."

Total Value of non-U.S. military goods and tech exports



Nonetheless, even among those Canadians who say that Canada should *not* be selling arms to Saudi Arabia, only 53 per cent say they would kill the deal outright based on the latest news. Another 44 per cent say they would leave this deal in place, and prohibit future trade. Concerns about a potential [billion dollar price tag](#) that may come with a cancellation of the deal have had many, including the Prime Minister, proceeding with caution when discussing any alterations to the contract.

Interestingly, one-quarter of those who originally said it's okay to sell arms to Saudi Arabia (23%), later said they would prohibit future deals once considering all information received in the survey. [View questionnaire here](#) for order of questions and information offered:



Majority supportive of Canada's criticism toward Saudi Arabia

Canada's relations with Saudi Arabia had already made news in 2018, prior to the Khashoggi incident. In August, Foreign Affairs Minister Chrystia Freeland tweeted to call for the release of two Saudi human rights activists.



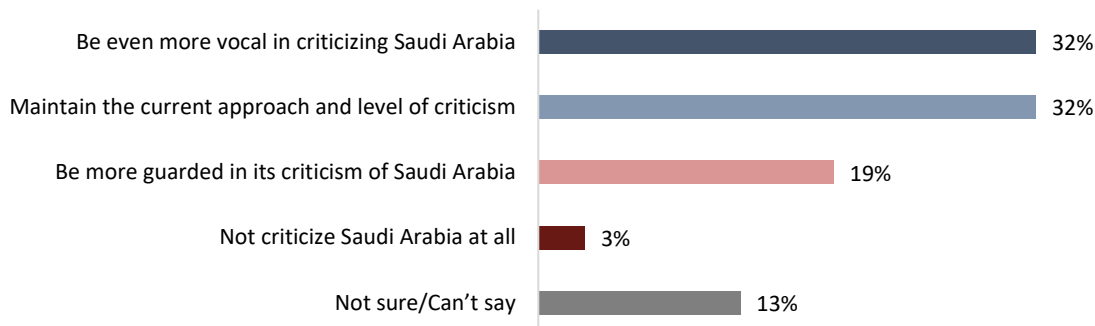
The Saudi government responded with [a severing of diplomatic and trade ties](#) and a demand for an apology from the Canadian leadership. Prime Minister Trudeau said that Canada would not apologize and would ["speak out wherever we see the need"](#).

This path of potential conflict is something that most Canadians support. Indeed, one-in-three (32%) say that the government should continue its current strategy. The same number would prefer that the

government become even more vocal in its criticisms of a regime many would rather condemn than respect.

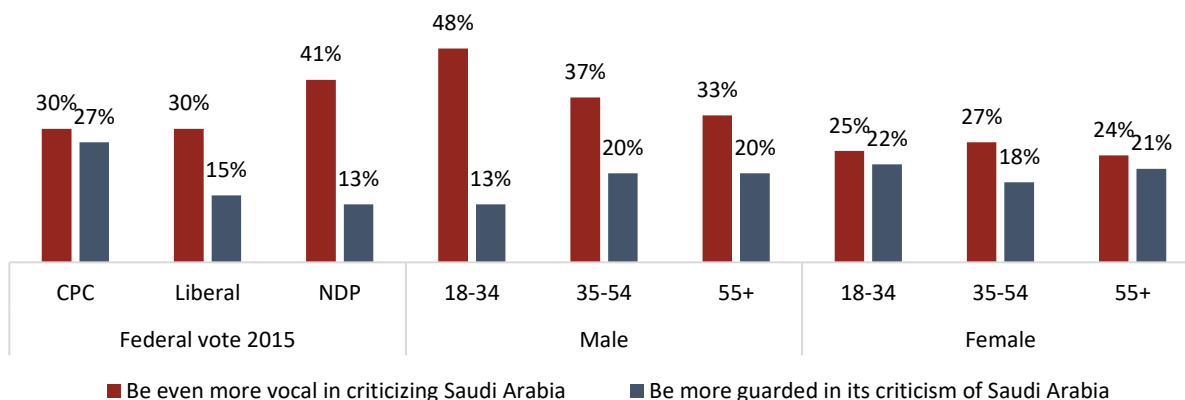
Related: Respect or Condemn? Canadian opinion on various countries

When you think about the Canadian government and its relationship with Saudi Arabia overall, would you say Canada should...



Past Conservative voters are twice as likely as supporters of the Liberals or NDP to say that the government should be more guarded in its criticism, while young men are the most likely to support an escalation of criticism:

When you think about the Canadian government and its relationship with Saudi Arabia overall, would you say Canada should...



*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](#)