

Winter of Discontent: As Justin Trudeau's approval deteriorates, can Andrew Scheer sustain gains?

For the first time since October 2015, someone other than Trudeau is seen as best PM

December 19, 2018 – At the end of what has been a challenging and at times chaotic year across the federal political landscape, Canadian approval of Prime Minister Justin Trudeau continues to decline.

With less than a year before an expected election, the number of people who favour Trudeau has fallen to 35 per cent, down from 46 per cent this time a year ago.

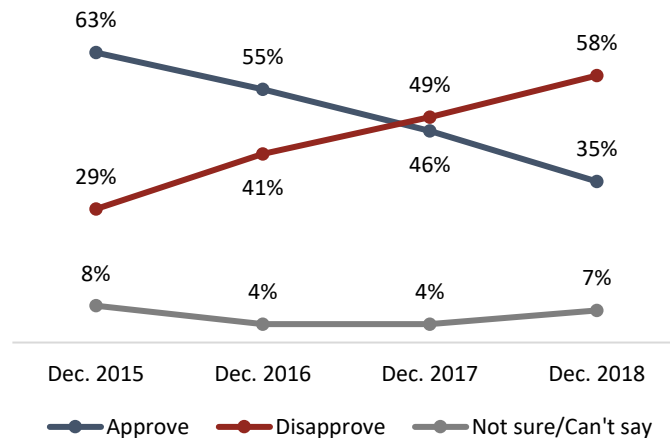
For the first time since October 2015, he is no longer seen as the national party leader who would be the best prime minister. That mantle now narrowly rests with Conservative Party of Canada (CPC) leader Andrew Scheer (33% prefer Scheer; 27% Trudeau), although many say they don't know just who would be ideal in the top job (26%).

Underlying the downward shift in the PM's approval is a tumultuous twelve months that saw his government face criticism for its handling of a number of key files, including [pipelines](#), [trade negotiations](#), and [irregular border crossings](#).

More Key Findings:

- Asked to name the top issue facing the country today, Canadians are most likely to say it is “the deficit/government spending” (28% do, compared to 21% each for the economy, environment/pollution, and health care)
- Younger Canadians, who were outliers in their majority approval of Trudeau until now, appear to have lost some Liberal love. The Prime Minister's approval drops to 42 per cent among 18-34-year-olds, from 56 per cent last year at this time

Justin Trudeau's approval rating in December since 2015:



METHODOLOGY:

The Angus Reid Institute conducted an online survey from December 12 – 18, 2018, among a representative randomized sample of 3,239 Canadian adults who are members of [Angus Reid Forum](#). The sample plan included large oversamples in some regions, which were then 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 +/- 2.5 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.

CONTACT:

Shachi Kurl, Executive Director: 604.908.1693 shachi.kurl@angusreid.org @shachikurl
Dave Korzinski, Research Associate: 250.899.0821 dave.korzinski@angusreid.org

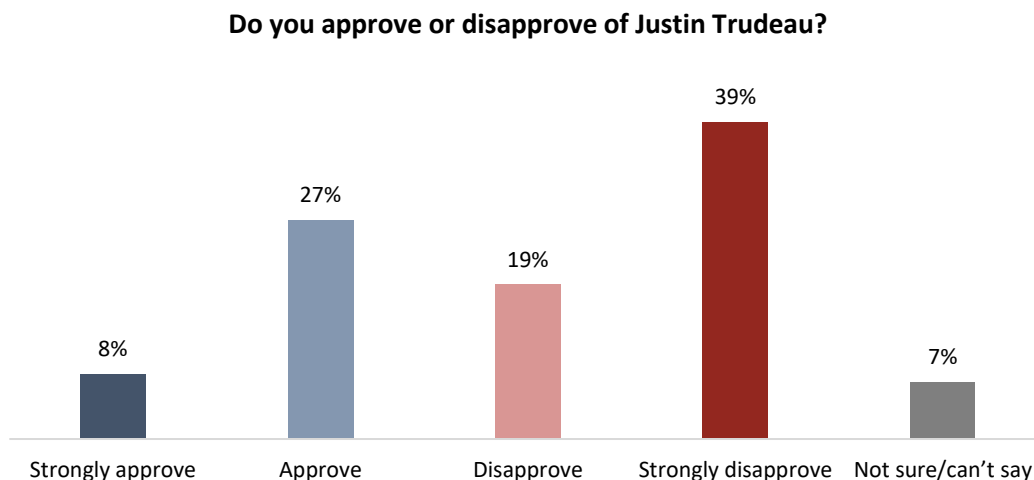
- NDP leader Jagmeet Singh and Conservative leader Andrew Scheer remain a question mark to significant segments of potential voters. But while Singh holds the approval of just one-in-five (21%), Scheer's approval is tied with Trudeau's (36%)

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Trudeau approval

As 2018 comes to a close, Justin Trudeau's approval rating slips to its lowest mark in ARI polling since he became Prime Minister, dropping to 35 per cent overall. Only 8 per cent of people strongly approve of the PM's performance, while a plurality (39%) strongly disapprove:



Comparing Canadian assessments of Trudeau over the course of his first term provides an even more stark indication at how far the Liberal leader's brand has dulled.

Trudeau's approval has dropped considerably in every region since he took office. In December 2015, at least half in every province said they approved of the then-new Prime Minister's performance. Today, no region feels this way.

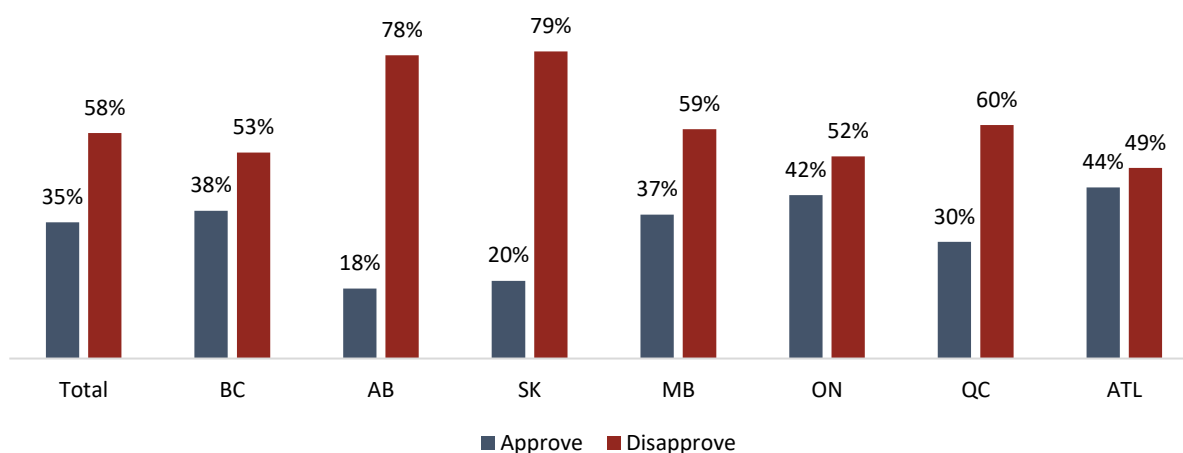
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Justin Trudeau's approval rating in December since 2015:					
Province	Dec. 2015	Dec. 2016	Dec. 2017	Dec. 2018	Net change 2015 – 2018
Canada Total	63%	55%	46%	35%	- 28
British Columbia	63%	56%	47%	38%	- 25
Alberta	51%	37%	30%	18%	- 33
Saskatchewan	50%	34%	34%	20%	- 30
Manitoba	63%	54%	48%	37%	- 26
Ontario	61%	53%	50%	42%	- 19
Quebec	64%	63%	48%	30%	- 34
Atlantic	74%	69%	54%	44%	- 30

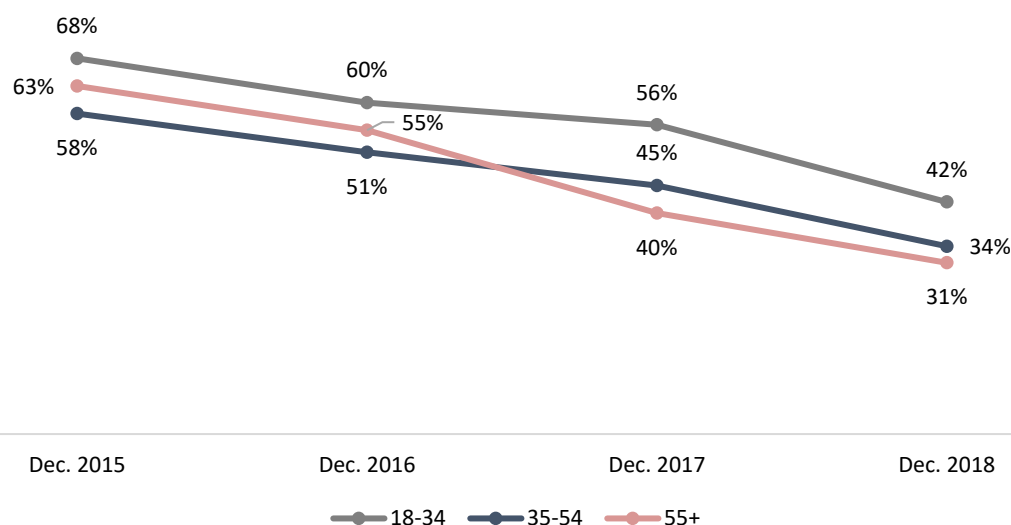
Disapproval of Trudeau has risen correspondingly. Even Atlantic Canada - normally a bastion of Liberal Party support – is more likely to disapprove than approve of the PM's job performance:

Trudeau Approval vs Disapproval by region



Notably, the majority of younger Canadians – long the Prime Minister's strongest base of support – no longer approve of Trudeau. That said, their endorsement still outpaces that of older age cohorts, as seen in the graph that follows.

Justin Trudeau's approval rating in December since 2015:



What's driving the decline?

Trudeau's year got off to a rocky start and appears to be ending the same way. The Prime Minister was found to have broken ethics rules in the waning days of December 2017. He was later criticized for a "[problem-plagued](#)" trip to India in February. The first half of the year was also defined by the tumultuous TransMountain pipeline saga, which ultimately saw the federal government purchase the pipeline for \$4.5 billion in an attempt to assure its completion.

Related: Good Investment or Bad Precedent? Canadians pick sides on pipeline purchase

While he received a short-term bump in approval after locking horns with U.S. President Donald Trump in June at G7 meetings, difficult policy issues have drawn positive sentiment down to this new low point. Canadians were [more disappointed than pleased](#) with the new NAFTA, [divided](#) over the federal carbon pricing plan, and showed a [preference](#) for Andrew Scheer and his party on the contentious issue of border crossings.

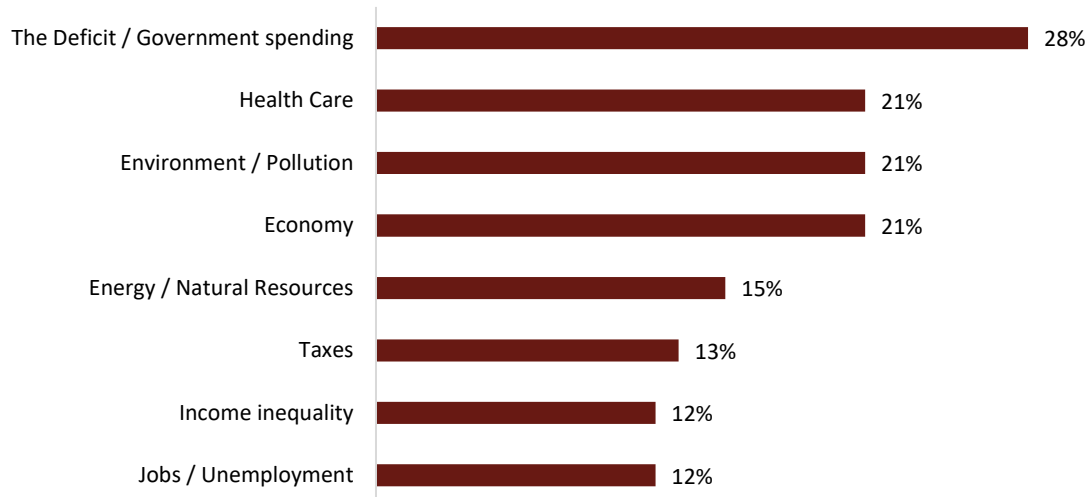
As 2018 enters its final days, this government finds itself bearing the brunt of a diplomatic spat between China and the United States over the [arrest of Huawei CFO Meng Wanzhou in Vancouver](#), and facing [growing resentment](#) in Western Canada over a perceived lack of support for those working in the energy and resource sector. This, against the backdrop of depressed oil prices and ongoing delays in the completion of the TransMountain pipeline.

Looking ahead to the new year, despite unemployment numbers that have dropped to the lowest point since 1976, Trudeau may face a difficult task in selling his economic strategy in 2019, due to the concern over deficit spending. That issue tops the list of priorities for Canadians, followed by the economy more broadly, alongside healthcare and the environment:

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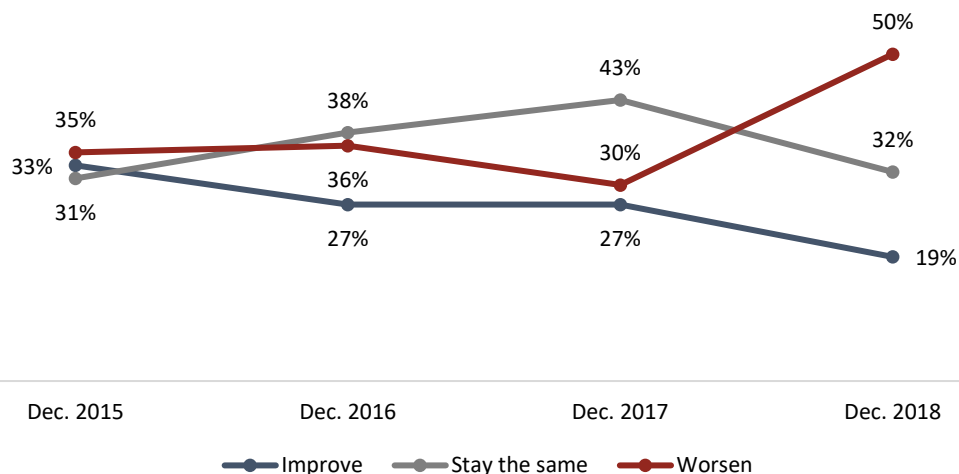
**What do you feel are the most important issues facing Canada today?
Choose up to two**



This, after the government announced in recent weeks it would continue deficit spending, rather than balance the budget in 2019 as promised during the 2015 campaign. While Canadians were [supportive of deficit spending](#) before the election, that enthusiasm has waned. The government now projects an \$18.1 billion deficit for 2018/19.

In addition, Canadians are pessimistic about the economy. Half expect it to worsen in 2019, while just 19 per cent expect it to improve. This sentiment is held in every region of the country.

Over the next 12 months, do you think the Canadian economy will improve, remain the same, or worsen?



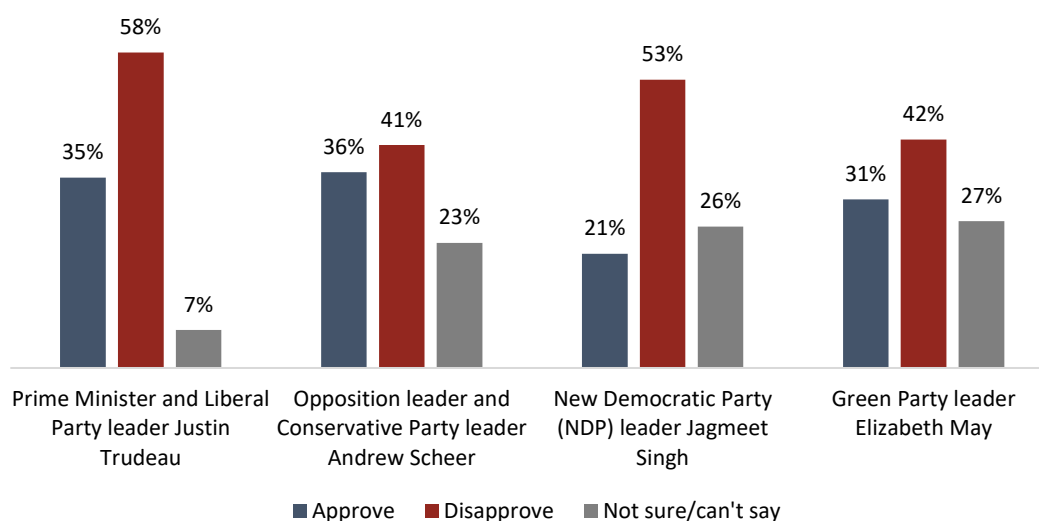
The opposition leaders

While the Prime Minister finishes the year on a down note, it's notable that the other federal party leaders don't appear at first glance to be benefitting all that much – so far – from Trudeau's decline.

Opposition leader Andrew Scheer's net approval score is also in negative territory, with more Canadians disapproving of his performance than endorsing it. That said, it would appear Scheer has more room to grow on approval given nearly one-in-four (23%) are still uncertain how they feel about him.

The "not sure" factor also applies to New Democratic Party leader Jagmeet Singh, who finds himself in an even worse situation than Trudeau. While more than half the electorate (53%) disapproves of the NDP leader, just one-in-five (21 per cent), view his performance in a positive light. The rest – a significant number (26 per cent) – don't know.

Approve or Disapprove for federal party leaders



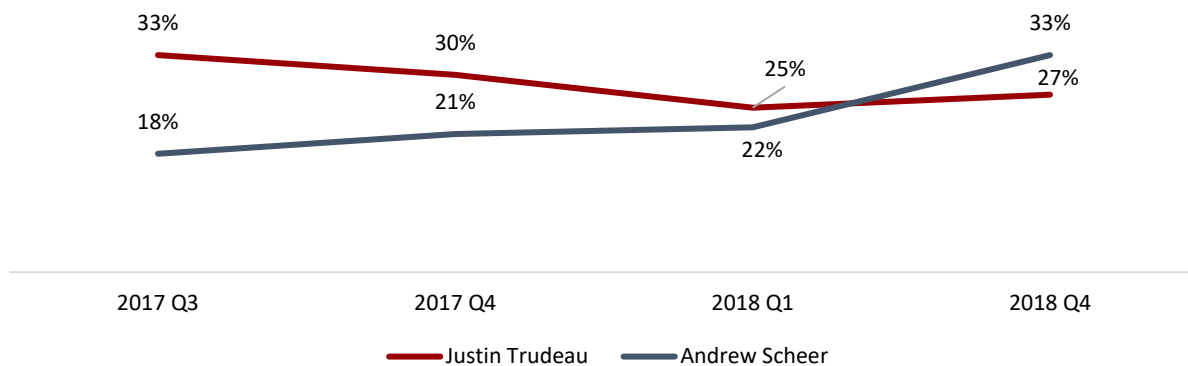
Best PM

Looking at the question of leadership in a different way – who Canadians feel would make the best Prime Minister – Scheer comes out ahead. Roughly one-in-three (33%) say he is best cut out for the country's top political job, while 27 per cent say Trudeau is better. This is the first time since Scheer won the Conservative leadership contest in May 2017 that he has bested Trudeau on this question:

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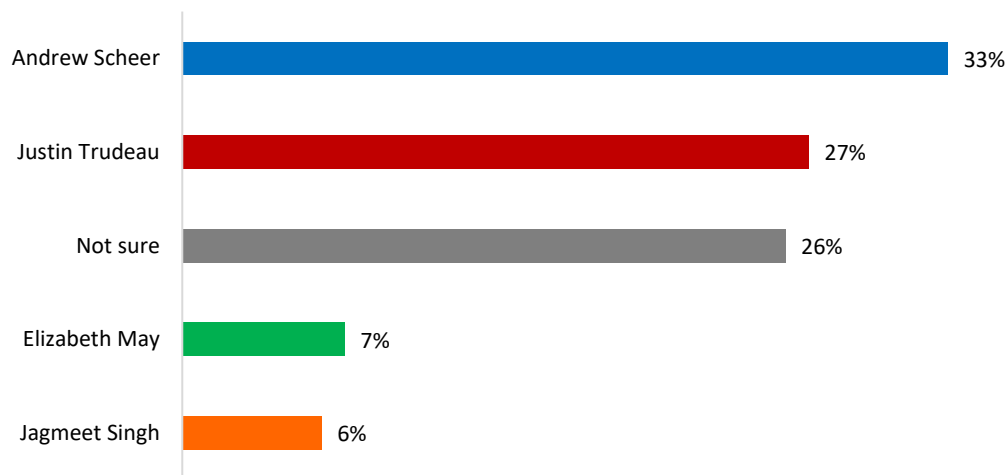
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Which of these leaders would make the best Prime Minister of Canada?



Notably, one-in-four (26%) are unsure *which* federal leader would make the best PM. Few think it would be Jagmeet Singh. The NDP leader is in the single digits on this question, statistically tied with Green Party Leader Elizabeth May:

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



*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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