

Gender Pay Gap: men, women differ over seriousness of issue, but back legislative measures for equal pay

One-in-five working Canadians say gender pay gaps exist in their own workplaces

April 3, 2019 – As issues of gender balance and representation are tackled in boardrooms and senior finance offices in the public and private sectors, the gap between what men and women earn for doing the same work is never far from the conversation.

But is it a real problem? And if so, is there support for a fix?

The answer to the first question, according to a national public opinion survey of employed Canadians by the non-profit Angus Reid Institute, is “it depends”. The answer to the second, is largely “yes”.

While four-in-five working women (79%) say the gender pay gap is a “serious issue” in this country, only half of working men (51%) say the same.

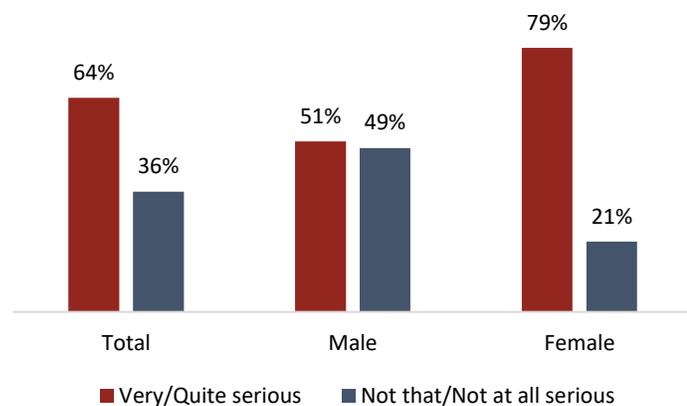
That said, seven-in-ten (including majorities among both genders) say an equal pay law that certifies companies with more than 25 employees are paying men and women close-to-equal wages for close-to-equal work is something they would support.

Overall, while the majority of working people in this country say they are compensated fairly (62% do), a significant segment of one-in-five (18%) say that a gap in pay based on gender does exist in their own workplace. Women are more likely to feel this way (21%) than their male colleagues (13%).

More Key Findings:

- Employed Canadians are more inclined to believe that the gender pay gap has been shrinking (53%) over the past decade, rather than growing (13%), while a significant proportion say it remains the same (36%).

**Based on whatever you may have seen or heard about the gender pay gap, how serious of an issue would you say it is in Canada?
(Responses from 1,501 working Canadians)**



METHODOLOGY:

The Angus Reid Institute conducted an online survey from March 8 – 12, 2019, among a representative randomized sample of 1,501 Canadian adults who are currently working and 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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- Women and men disagree about many aspects of the modern workplace. Across all age groups, male workers are at least twice as likely as their female peers to say that any gap in pay is based on the decisions that women make, rather than discrimination.
- Seven-in-ten employed women (72%) also say that their gender is held to a higher standard in the workplace, compared to just one-in-three men (32%) who agree.
- In areas where female workers disagree, views are largely driven by their political beliefs. Conservative-leaning women are more than three times as likely to say that the gender pay gap is driven by women's choices, and are much less likely to say that women are held to higher standards than men in the workplace (though a majority still do)

About ARI

*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.*

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Part 3: What can or should be done?

- **For most, knowledge of wage disparity would hurt own view of their workplace**
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Methodology note:

This survey canvassed the opinions of 1,501 employed Canadians, 1,369 of whom have at least one co-worker at their place of business. Respondents in both groups represent a broad range of company sizes, from those with a handful of employees to corporations with 50 or more workers ([see comprehensive tables for a detailed breakdown of company sizes](#)).

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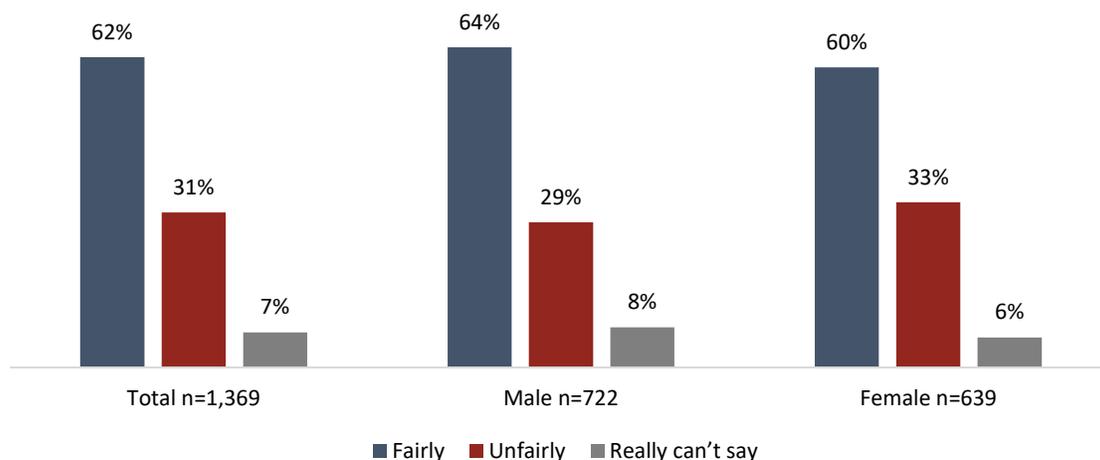
Part 1: The compensation landscape

Most Canadian workers feel fairly compensated

It's likely that most people at some time in their working lives ponder the fairness and comparability of their earnings. The Angus Reid Institute began this study by asking Canadian workers to reflect upon this.

Broadly speaking, working Canadians with at least one colleague at their place of business are more likely to be content than troubled with the wage or salary they currently earn. Asked whether or not they felt their compensation was fair, at least six-in-ten among both men (64%) and women (60%) say that it is. That said, nearly one-third – 31 per cent – say they are paid unfairly:

**Overall, do you feel you are paid fairly or unfairly for the work you do?
Responses from working Canadians with at least one colleague**



Further, about one-in-ten Canadian workers (12%) say they are paid more than co-workers who do similar work, while approximately twice as many (22%) say they are paid less.

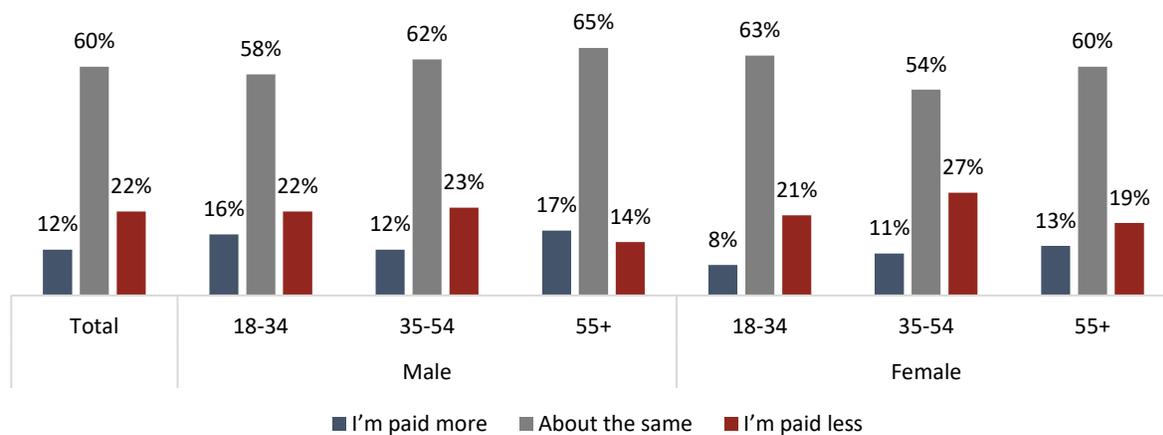
The proportion of employed Canadians who say they are paid too little is similar across age and gender groups, though men are more likely than women in each age category to say that they are paid more than their directly comparable peers.

Women between the ages of 35 and 54 are most likely to say that they are paid less for similar work, and young men are twice as likely as young women to say that they are paid more:

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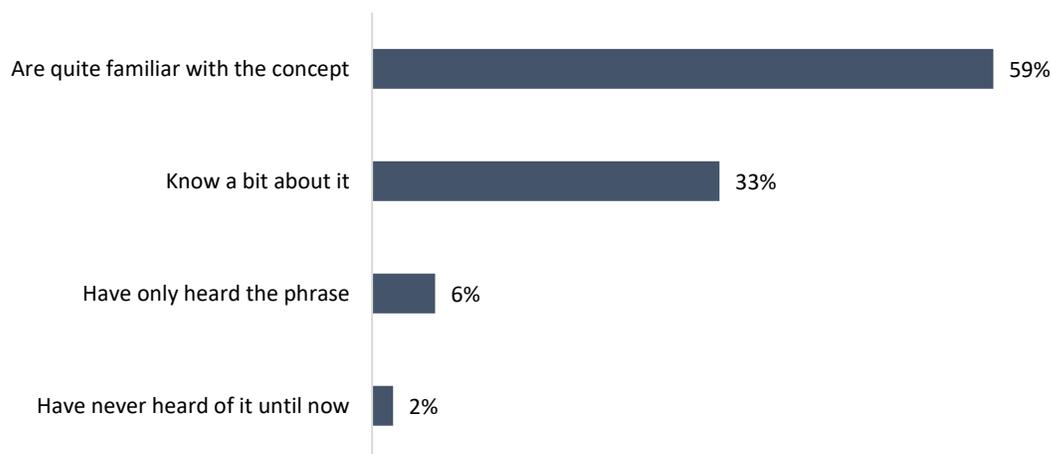
**Compared to other people doing similar work in your workplace, do you think you, yourself, are paid more, less, or about the same as they are?
(Among Canadians in the workforce, with at least one other co-worker, n=1369)**



Men divided, women united on seriousness of equal pay issue

With this in mind, working Canadians were asked about the concept of equal pay. That is, the fact that women, on average, make less money than men when doing comparable work, according to (among others) Glassdoor Economic research. It's an issue with which most are quite familiar.

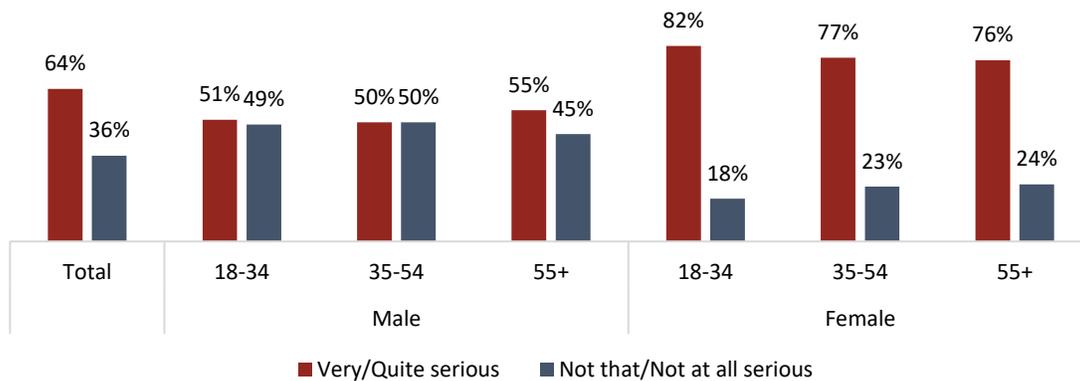
**Women, on average, make less money than men when doing comparable work. How familiar would you say you are with this concept?
All respondents, n=1,501**



But familiarity doesn't necessarily equal a consensus viewpoint: responses depend largely on gender.

Employed men are divided equally across generations, while at least three-quarters of working women say this is important across each of the age cohorts, with women under 35 most concerned:

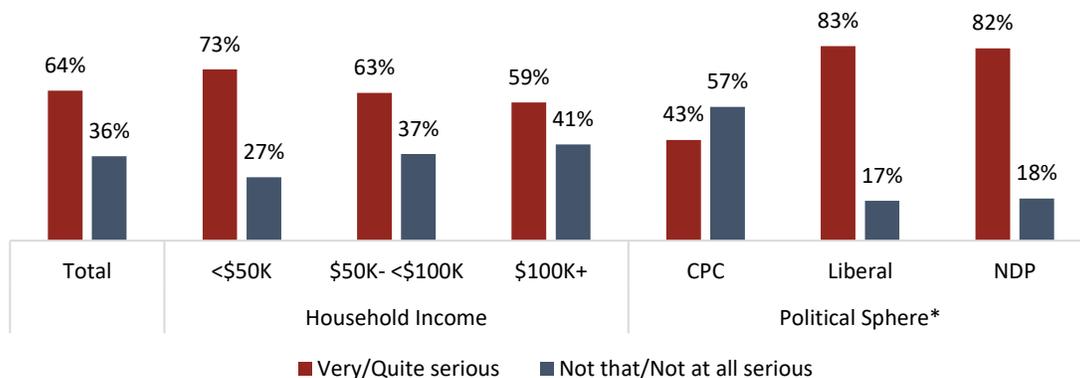
**Based on whatever you may have seen or heard about the gender pay gap, how serious of an issue would you say it is in Canada today?
(All respondents, n=1501)**



Opinions about the gender pay gap also cut deeply along ideological lines: nearly six-in-ten workers who say they'd consider voting for the Conservative party in the next election (see methodology for explanation of "political spheres") say that this is not that serious, while more than four-in-five of those in the Liberal and NDP consideration spheres lean the other way.

Comparing responses by income level, at least six-in-ten workers within each income bracket say that this issue is quite or very serious:

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(All respondents, n=1501)**



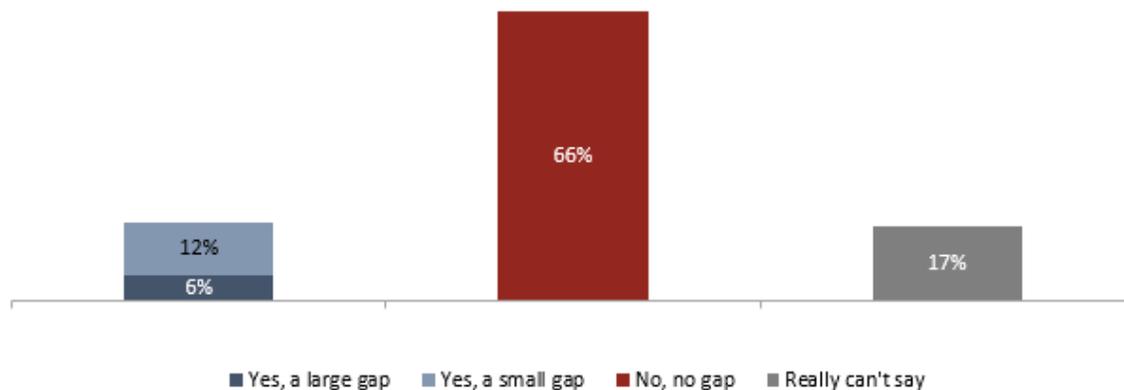
*See end of report for Political Sphere methodology

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One-in-five say there is a pay gap at their own workplace

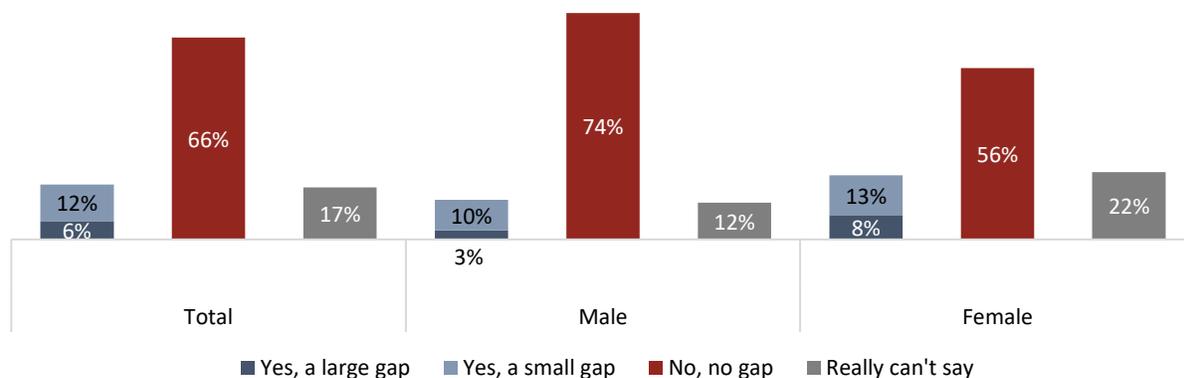
With two-thirds of working Canadians saying this is an issue they consider to be serious, it is worth noting that far fewer view it being an issue in their *own* place of work (18%):

**Thinking about the place you work, to the best of your knowledge, is there a gap between what men and women are paid for doing comparable work?
(Among Canadians in the workforce, with at least one other co-worker, n=1369)**



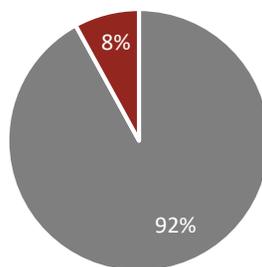
Working women are much more likely to perceive a gap within their own workplace (21% do) than working men (13%). Conversely, men are much more likely to say outright that there is *no* gap where they work (74% of men versus 56% women). There are, notably, no significant differences by size of the company a person is working at ([see comprehensive tables for more](#)).

**Thinking about your workplace, to the best of your knowledge, is there a gap between what men and women are paid for doing comparable work?
(Among Canadians in the workforce, with at least one other co-worker, n=1369)**



Respondents who identified a gap in their own place of work were further asked who generally benefits from the gap. Nine-in-ten say it favours men:

**And, to clarify, does this gap generally favour men or women?
(Among those who say there is a pay gap
in their own place of work, n=219)**



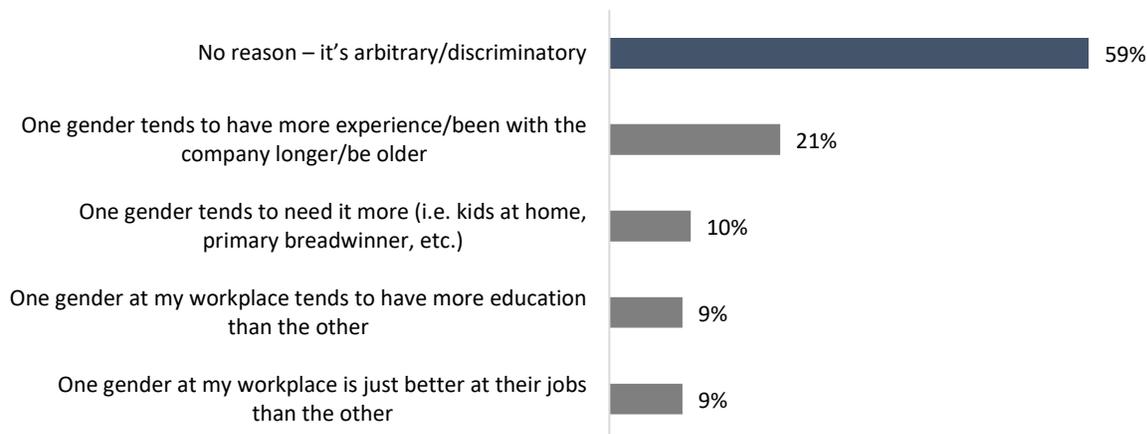
■ Men are paid more ■ Women are paid more

Part 2: Underpinnings of the issue

Most who say there is a gap, say it is discriminatory

If there is indeed a gap in pay between genders, most employed Canadians who perceive it at their place of business say it is arbitrary, not based in skill or experience. This view among this group is held by majorities of men and women alike.

**Why do you think there is a gap between what men and women are paid at
your workplace for doing comparable work?
(Among those who say there is a pay gap
in their own place of work, n=219)**



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As noted previously, most Canadian workers do not believe there is a pay gap in the place where *they* work. That said, a recent study of more than 21,000 Canadian workers by Glassdoor Economic Research offers some illumination on just what the gender pay gap looks like in Canada. The study looked at the median wage of male and female workers, and how it can vary in this country.

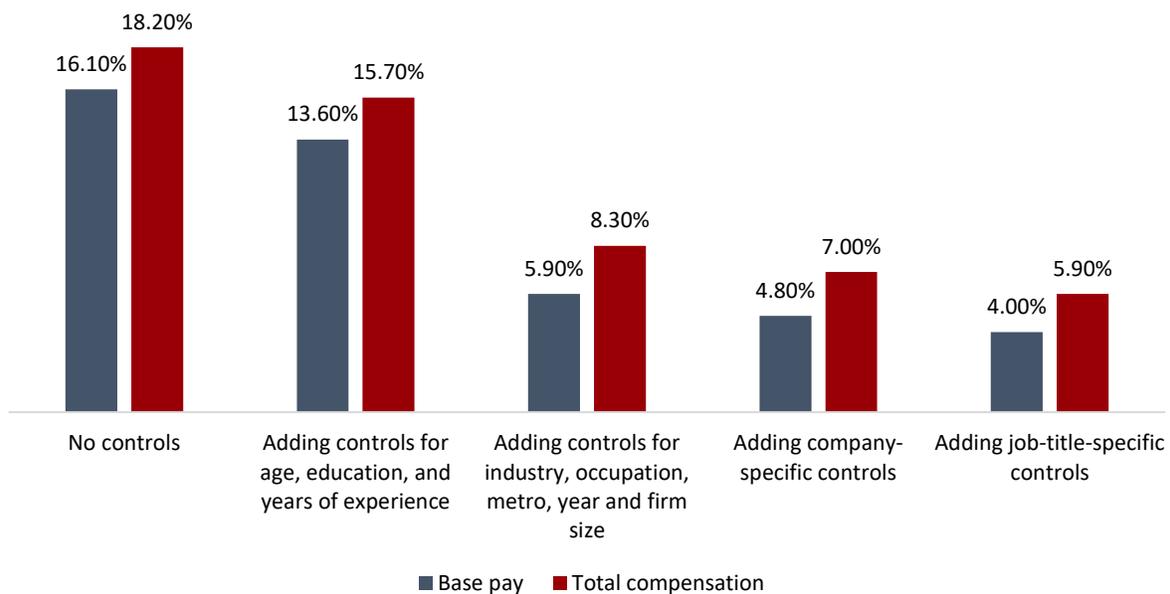
The findings point to an initial gap of about 18 per cent when comparing men and women’s total compensation, with men earning more on average. That said, many of these factors can be accounted for with further analysis. Glassdoor does this by adding in controls for the age, education and experience of workers, noting that the gap is then reduced by 2.5 percentage points (See graph below).

Additional factors – such as industry, firm size, and other more specific controls related to job-title and workplace – can reduce the gap in compensation down to about 6 per cent. The rest of the gap appears to be unaccounted for, however, and is described as “due to differences in the way the labor market rewards men and women with the same characteristics”. This is what advocates describe as the gender pay gap.

The findings from Glassdoor [can be viewed here](#).

Canada gender pay gap, before and after adding statistical controls

Source: Glassdoor Economic Research



Women say they are held to a higher standard, men disagree

Men and women hold distinct and competing views regarding some of the realities of the workplace.

Working men, particularly those under the age of 35, are much more likely than working women to say that a gender pay gap is the product of the choices that women make, rather than discrimination. Just

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over one-quarter of respondents say this (28%), overall, but the sentiment rises to 47 per cent among men 18 to 34 years of age.

Employed men and women also disagree overwhelmingly about what is expected of women in the workplace as it compares to the standards for men. Seven-in-ten women across all age groups say women are held to higher standards and have to do more to prove themselves at work, while just one-in-three men agree with them:

Agree or Disagree with the following statements about the gender pay gap (All respondents, n=1501)								
		Total (1,501)	Male			Female		
			18-34 (253)	35-54 (350)	55+ (176)	18-34 (228)	35-54 (324)	55+ (162)
The gender pay gap is mostly the product of choices women make, not discrimination against them	Agree	28%	47%	37%	33%	16%	16%	16%
	Disagree	65%	45%	57%	61%	77%	76%	77%
Women are held to higher standards than men and have to do more to prove themselves	Agree	51%	35%	31%	31%	72%	72%	71%
	Disagree	43%	61%	63%	66%	22%	22%	21%

Few see pay gap as ‘just the way the world is’

Another oft-debated aspect of the modern workplace is the balance between work and family.

While both men and women deal with the challenges of raising kids, women generally continue to bear a heavier load than men. This may explain why two-thirds of employed men across all age groups say that they can have a family without it damaging their career. Employed women, especially 18-to-34-year-old women – those most likely to be starting a family – are more inclined to disagree.

But is the gender pay gap a reality for which there is no solution? Most don’t think so.

Almost three-quarters (73%) disagree that a disparity of pay between genders is “just the way the world is”:

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Agree or Disagree with the following statements about the gender pay gap (All respondents, n=1501)								
		Total (1,501)	Male			Female		
			18-34 (253)	35-54 (350)	55+ (176)	18-34 (228)	35-54 (324)	55+ (162)
I can have a family without it damaging my career	Agree	58%	65%	70%	70%	44%	47%	54%
	Disagree	35%	31%	24%	23%	48%	47%	37%
The gender pay gap isn't fair, but that's just the way the world is	Agree	21%	19%	19%	30%	15%	19%	27%
	Disagree	73%	73%	74%	65%	78%	74%	69%

Politics not income most likely to divide women

The divisions between male and female workers are clear, but there are also differences of opinion among women. These disagreements are less about age or income level ([see comprehensive tables](#)) and primarily driven by political ideology.

Surveyed women who identify as possible Conservative Party voters in the next election are more than three times as likely to say that the gender pay gap is driven by women's choices than those who lean to the centre or left politically. They are also far less likely to say that women are held to higher standards than men in the workplace (though a majority still do), and more likely to feel that they can have a family without it affecting career success.

Agree or Disagree with the following statements about the gender pay gap (Female respondents, n=714)				
	Total (714)	Political Sphere*		
		CPC	Liberal	NDP
The gender pay gap is mostly the product of choices women make, not discrimination against them	16%	33%	9%	8%
Women are held to higher standards than men and have to do more to prove themselves	72%	63%	83%	84%
The gender pay gap isn't fair, but that's just the way the world is	20%	22%	17%	12%
I can have a family without it damaging my career	48%	56%	43%	41%

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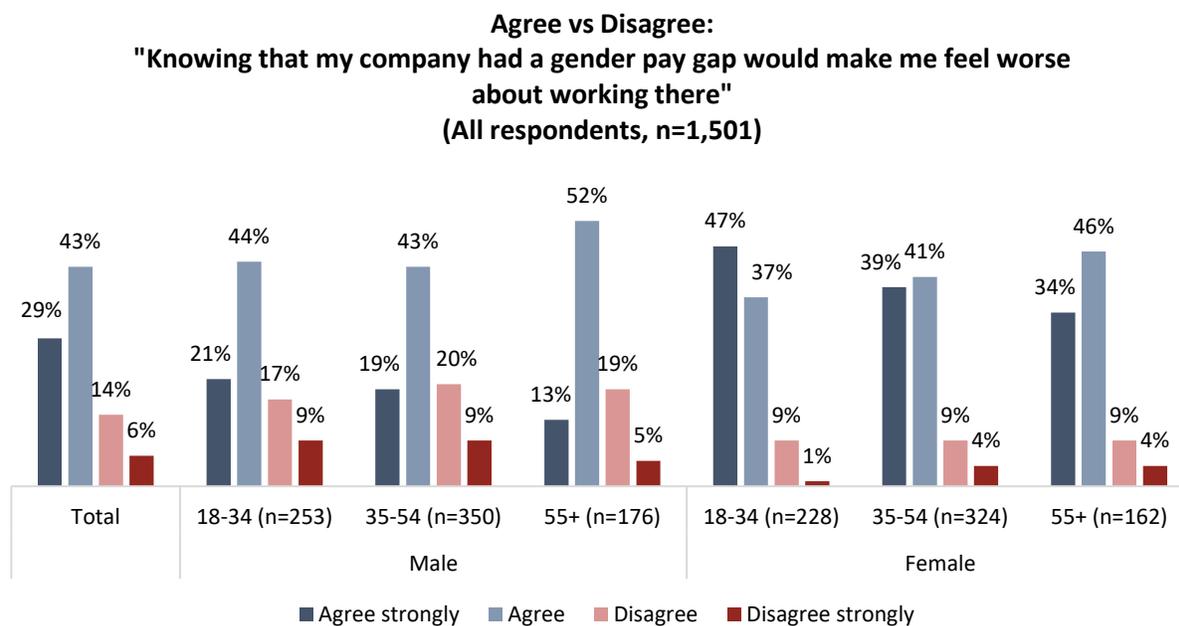
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Part 3: What can or should be done?

For most, knowledge of wage disparity would hurt own view of their workplace

Notably, the vast majority of employed women (81%), and at least three-quarters of women across each political sphere, say that they would feel worse about the company they work for if they found out there was a gender pay gap within that company.

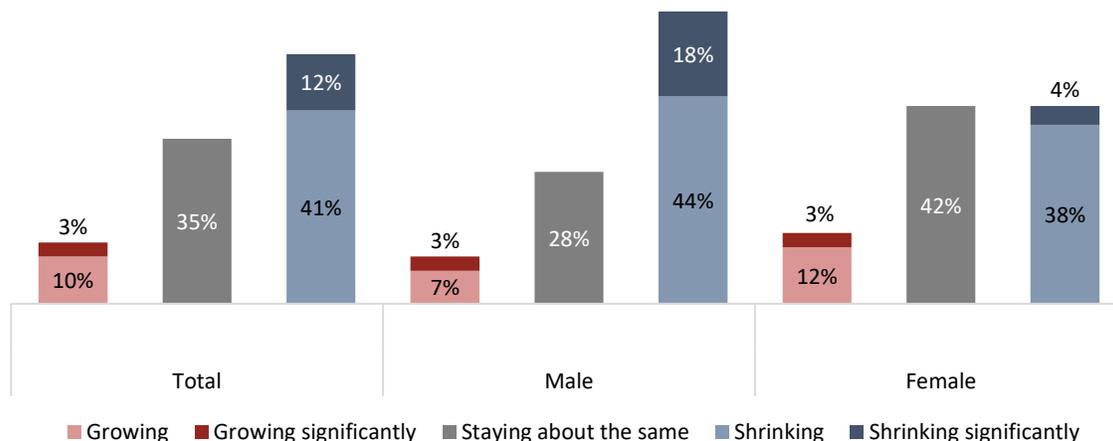
They are joined by a majority of working men in this opinion. That said, this view is subject to different levels of intensity. Men are much more likely to say they “agree”, rather than “strongly agree”, while women are at least twice as likely to feel more deeply about it. Notably, one-quarter of men *disagree* that a gender pay gap would impact their view of the company they work for:



Canadian workers support legislation to ensure equal pay

The majority of working Canadians say this country has been making good progress in recent decades in ensuring fair pay for work regardless of gender. Slightly more than half (53%) say the gap between men and women is shrinking, compared to 13 per cent who believe it is growing:

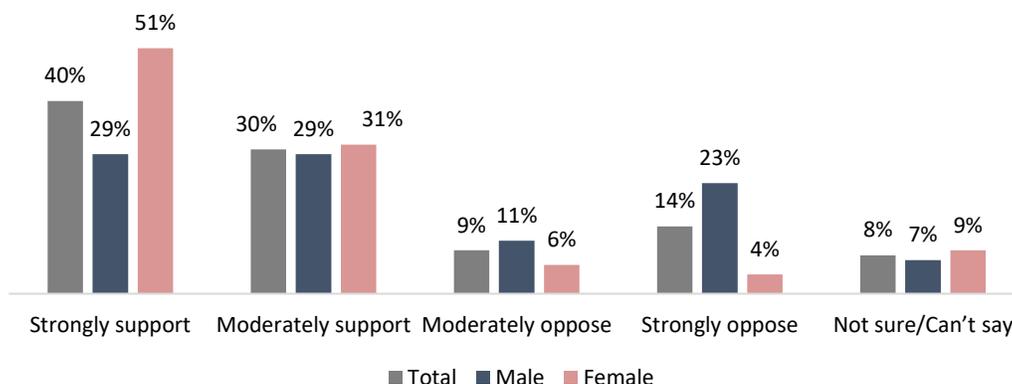
Thinking specifically about the last 10 years or so, would you say the gender pay gap has been ...



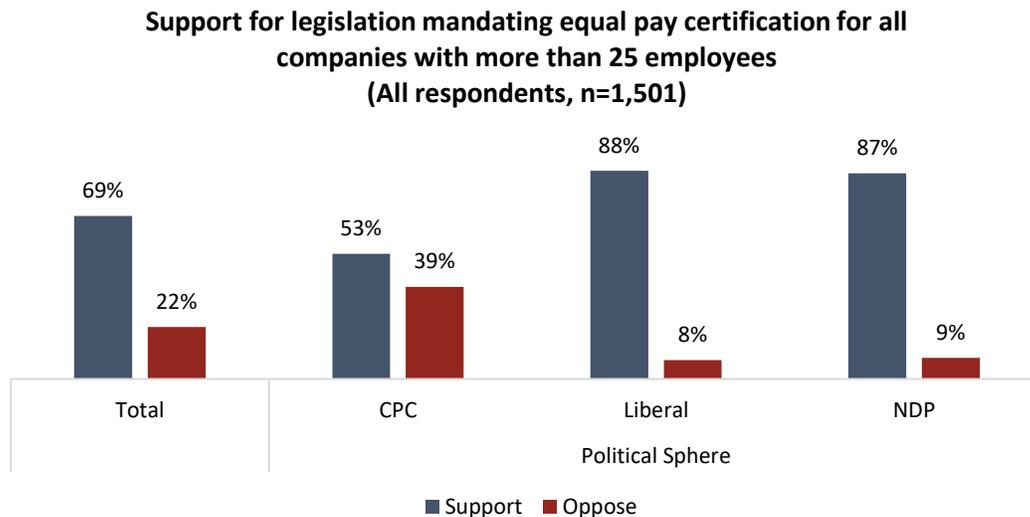
That said, the idea that Canada could do more to effect equality is well-received. Last year, Iceland [passed legislation](#) mandating that all businesses with more than 25 employees must obtain an “equal pay certification” from an accredited auditor showing men and women are paid equally for comparable work. Such a certification would state that the company is basing differences in pay only on what they call “[legitimate factors](#)” such as education, skills, and performance. Certification must be renewed every three years, and companies failing to maintain their certification will be fined.

The majority of working Canadians say they would support mandating that companies with 25 or employees obtain equal pay certification in this country. Support stands at 58 per cent among men, rising to 82 per cent among women.

Support for legislation mandating equal pay certification for all companies with more than 25 employees. (All respondents, n=1,501)

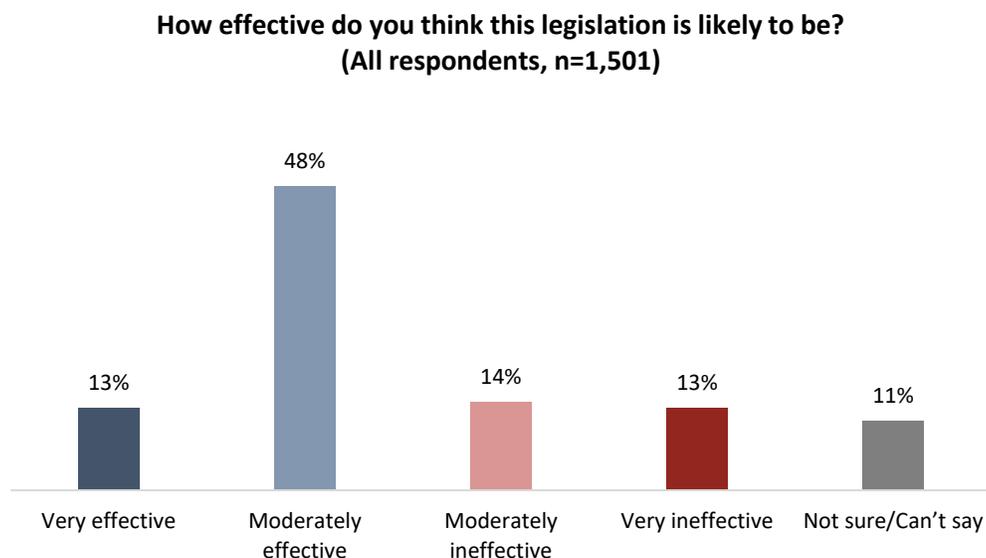


Those workers who might consider the New Democratic or Liberal parties in the upcoming election are overwhelmingly in support of this type of legislation, while potential Conservatives are divided:



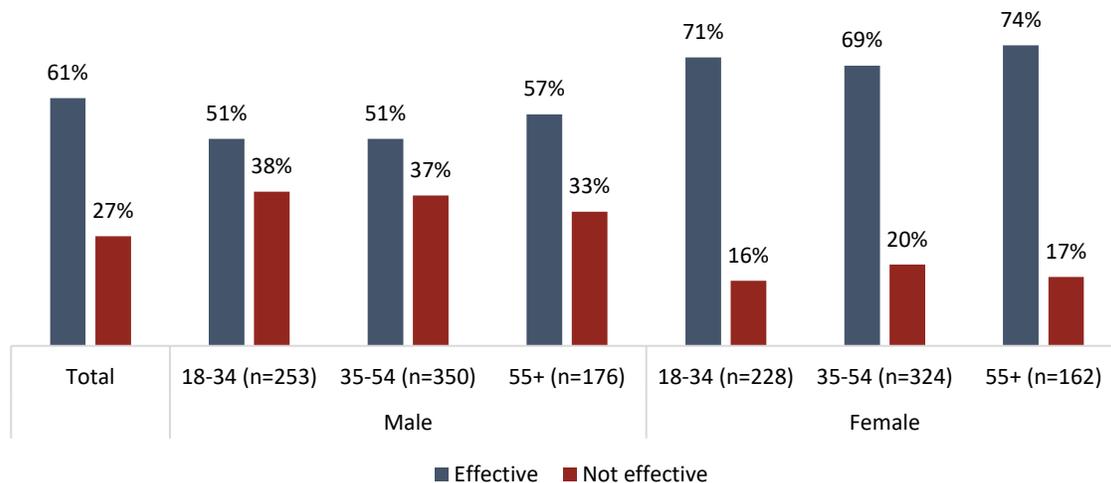
Most believe equal pay certification law would be effective

Support for this law may be partially rooted in the fact that most respondents think it would actually help. Half of Canadian workers say that they believe the legislation would be moderately effective at holding companies accountable and increasing equity in their workplace, while another 13 per cent are more convinced, saying it would be very effective:



A majority of male respondents believe that this action by the government would be largely effective in achieving its aims, though just over one-in-three disagree. Working women are even more confident, with at least seven-in-ten across each age group saying equal pay legislation would be effective in Canada:

**How effective do you think this type of legislation is likely to be?
(All respondents, n=1,501)**



Political Sphere Methodology

Rather than rely on respondents’ potentially faded memories regarding their vote in the 2015 federal election, ARI researchers constructed a measure of political partisanship based on willingness to vote for the main federal parties in a future election under their current leaders.

The question specifically asked respondents how likely they would be to vote for “The Liberal Party led by Justin Trudeau,” “The Conservative Party led by Andrew Scheer,” and “The New Democratic Party led by Jagmeet Singh” in a future election. The response options were “definitely support” the party and leader in question, “certainly consider” them, “maybe consider” them, and “definitely not even consider” them.

Respondents choosing either of the first two options (definitely support or certainly consider) are considered to be a party’s “sphere.” They represent potential supporters of that party, not necessarily decided voters.

It should be noted that the categories are not mutually exclusive. Respondents were asked to give an opinion on each of the main parties and had the option to say they would “certainly consider” each one. Thus, many respondents may appear in the spheres of multiple parties.

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

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