

Canadian opinions of China reach new low

85% of Canadians say Chinese government has not been honest or transparent about pandemic

May 13, 2020 – The latest study from the non-profit Angus Reid Institute finds Canadian favourability towards China at a new low.

Indeed, just 14 per cent of adults in this country now say they have a positive opinion of China, a level half as high as it was six months ago (29%).

The deterioration comes as Beijing faces accusations from United States intelligence that it intentionally hid the severity of the COVID-19 outbreak in the early days of the pandemic. Others have expressed skepticism regarding the true number of Chinese cases and deaths from the illness.

More than four-in-five (85%) Canadians say the Chinese government has not been honest about what has happened in its own country.

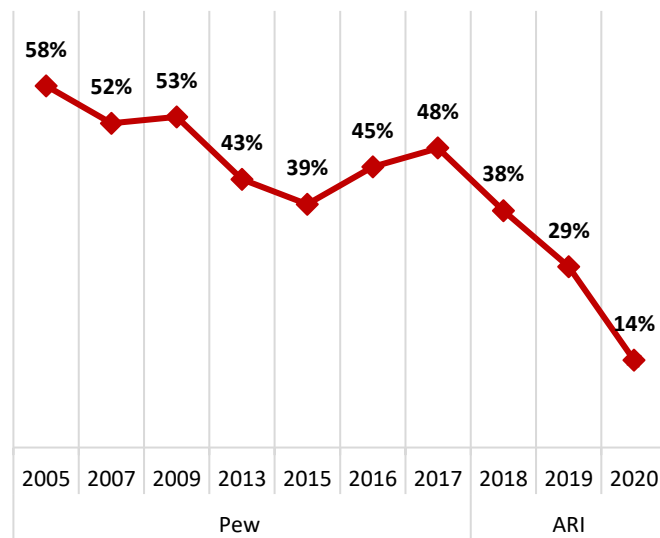
Canadian opinion towards China has significantly declined since that government arrested and detained two Canadians in prison, in a tit-for-tat reaction to Canada's arrest – and subsequent release on bail – of Huawei executive Meng Wanzhou.

If Canadians had their way, there would be real-world consequences to perceived malfeasance on the part of the Asian power. Just 11 per cent of Canadians say Canada should focus its trade efforts on China, down from 40 per cent in 2015. Further, four-in-five say Canada should bar Huawei from taking part in the building of new 5G infrastructure in this country.

More Key Findings:

- Asked about the country's approach to relations with China, three-quarters of Canadians (76%) say Canada should prioritize human rights and the rule of law over economic opportunity
- The United States' favourability among Canadians has now dropped to 38 per cent – plummeting to a 40-year record-low

Percentage of Canadians holding 'favourable' view of China



METHODOLOGY:

The Angus Reid Institute conducted an online survey from May 4 – 6, 2020 among a representative randomized sample of 1,518 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.

CONTACT:

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

- Among a list of Canada's major trading partners, the European Union emerges as the top choice (52%) to develop closer trade ties, though, notably, support for increasing trade with the U.S. has also risen 9 points since 2019 (now at 37%)

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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Favourable views of China drop after COVID-19 outbreak

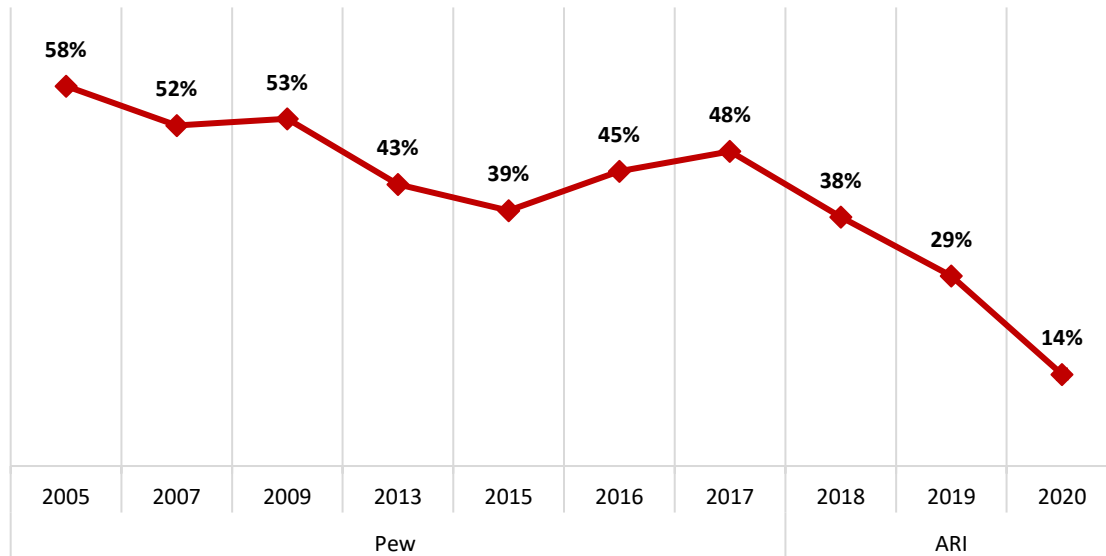
The world has spent most of 2020 coping with a crisis unparalleled in the lifetimes of most. While debate continues over just how the novel coronavirus that causes COVID-19 was initially spread, there is unanimity about its source – China.

As nations have responded to the pandemic, Canadian views towards China are in apparent free-fall, as favourability of the nation hits a new low, dropping to 14 per cent – half of where it was in late 2019, and representing just a quarter of where favourability towards China stood in 2017:

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Percentage of Canadians holding 'favourable' view of China

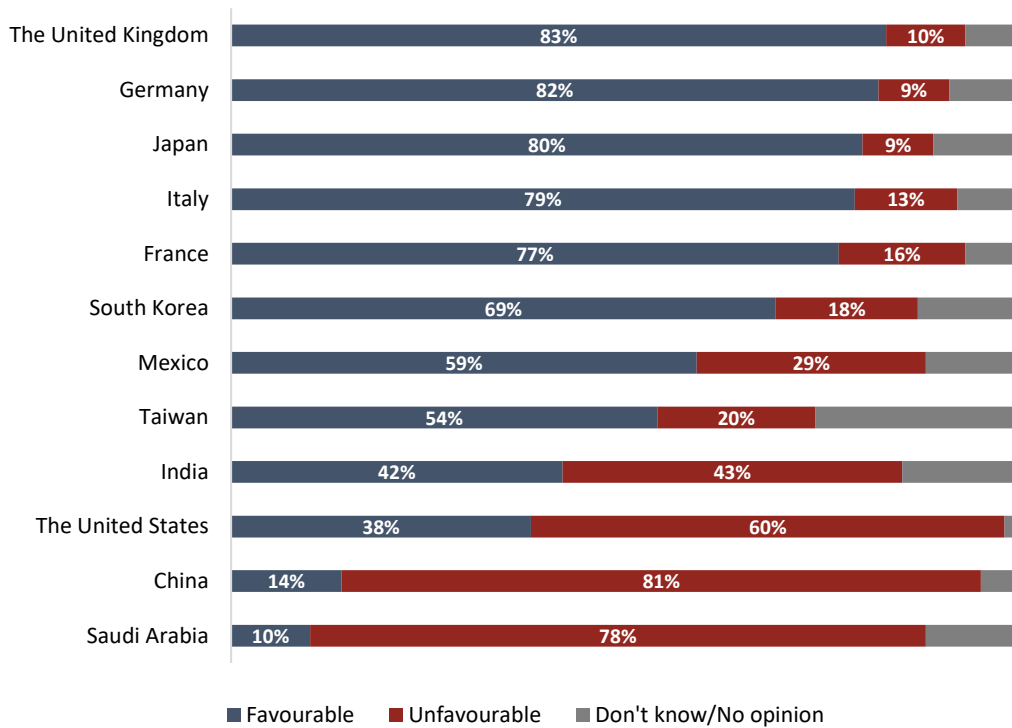


Additional Source: Pew Research Center

Note: For Pew Research, favourable combines "very favourable" and "somewhat favourable" responses, while ARI uses "very favourable" and "mostly favourable".

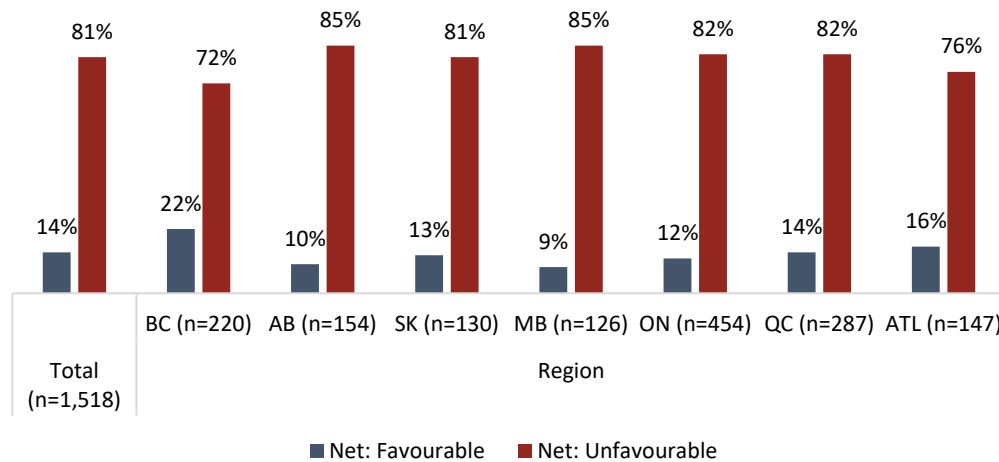
This survey asked Canadians whether they hold a favourable or unfavourable opinion of 12 countries that hold important relationships with Canada. China ranks only above Saudi Arabia, a country whose trading relationship with Canada has been heavily scrutinized in recent years, and well below 10 of Canada's other allies and major trading partners:

**Favourable vs Unfavourable view of each country
(All respondents, n=1,518)**

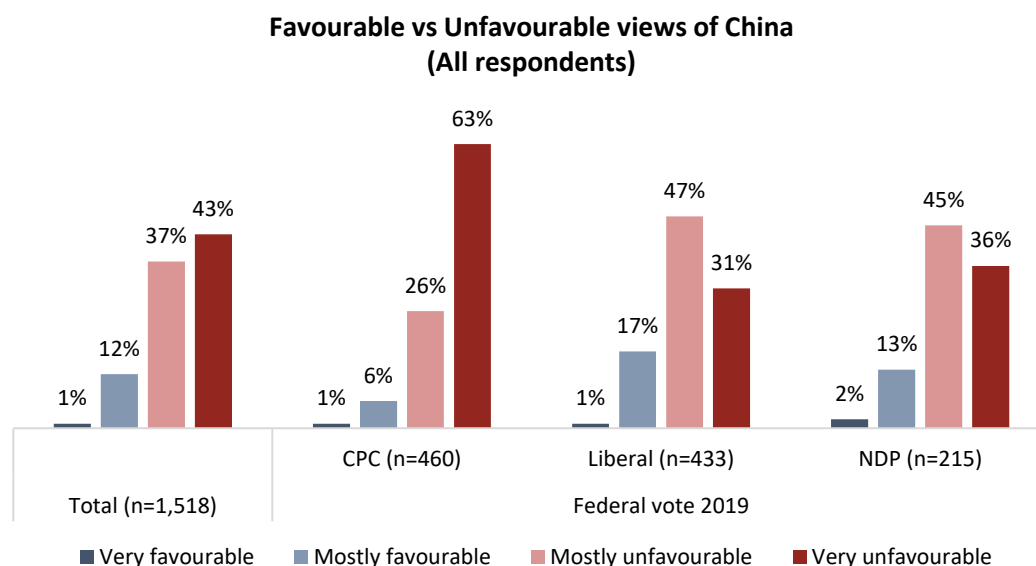


Regionally, British Columbians hold the most favourable views of China, though just one-in-five (22%) say this:

**Favourable vs Unfavourable views of China
(All respondents)**



Past Conservative voters are most negative about China. While an overwhelming majority of Canadians from across the political spectrum view the country unfavourably, those who supported the CPC in the October 2019 general election are twice as likely to say they hold a *very unfavourable* view of China compared to those who supported the Liberal Party:

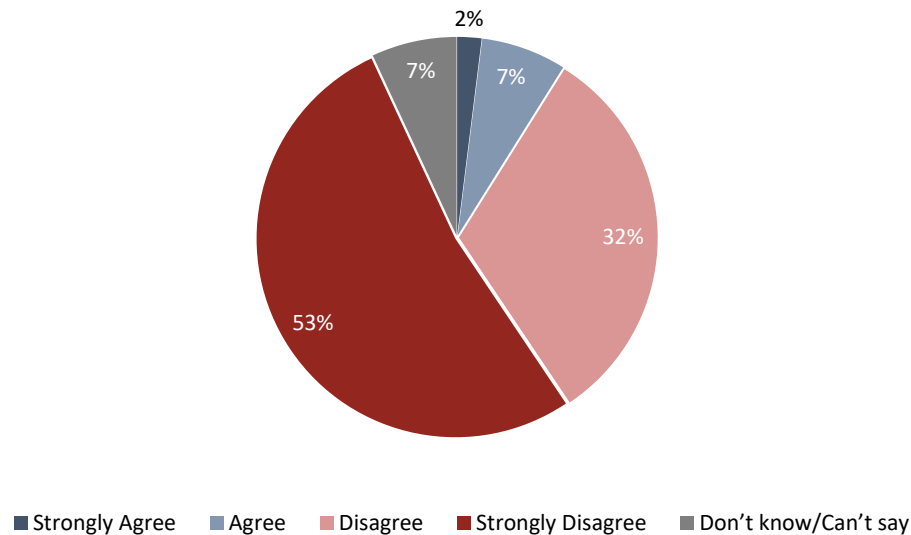


Near unanimous doubt about China’s transparency regarding COVID-19

There have been several recent accusations against China and its handling of the coronavirus outbreak, including [a proposed international inquiry](#) on this issue. U.S. officials [reported in early May](#) that they believed the Chinese government had deliberately played down the severity of the outbreak in the early days in order to preserve its image and stockpile medical supplies. More recently, French President [Emmanuel Macron suggested](#) that he had considerable doubts about the information coming out of China regarding the outbreak.

It would appear that most Canadians share these concerns. The vast majority (85%) disagree with the statement “the Chinese government has been transparent and honest about the COVID-19 situation in that country”. Half (53%) strongly disagree:

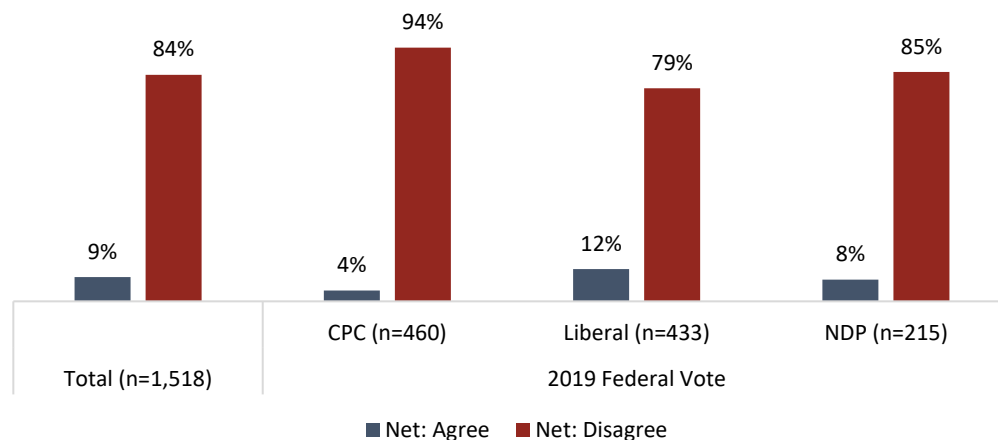
Agree vs Disagree: "The Chinese government has been transparent and honest about the COVID-19 situation in that country"
(All respondents, n=1,518)



In contrast to [U.S. President Donald Trump's](#) frequent criticisms towards China for its coronavirus strategy, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau has not issued any public condemnation towards China on this issue. This move has been criticized by Official Opposition Leader [Andrew Scheer](#), while Conservative leadership hopeful Peter Mackay recently called for [sanctions](#) against Chinese officials for suppressing information related to COVID-19.

Past CPC voters are most likely to say that China has not been truthful, though this is a widely held view across the political spectrum:

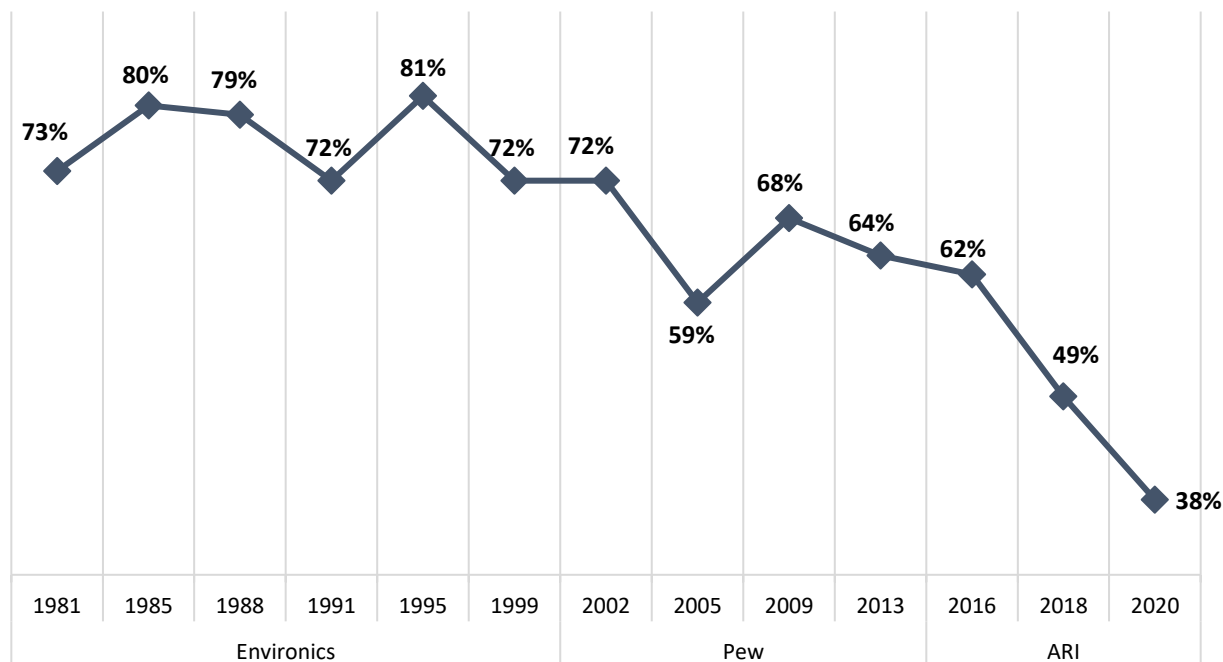
Agree vs Disagree: "The Chinese government has been transparent and honest about the COVID-19 situation in that country"
(All respondents)



Favourability of United States at lowest point in 40 years

China is not the only major nation towards which Canadian goodwill has crumbled. Just 38 per cent in this country now say they hold a favourable view of its largest trading partner. This downward trend had been attributed to the [widely unpopular term of President Trump](#), and may now be exacerbated by his administration’s [widely criticized](#) response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Percentage of Canadians holding 'favourable' view of the United States



Additional Sources: Environics Institute for Survey Research and Pew Research Center

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Preference for trade with China evaporates, United States rebounds

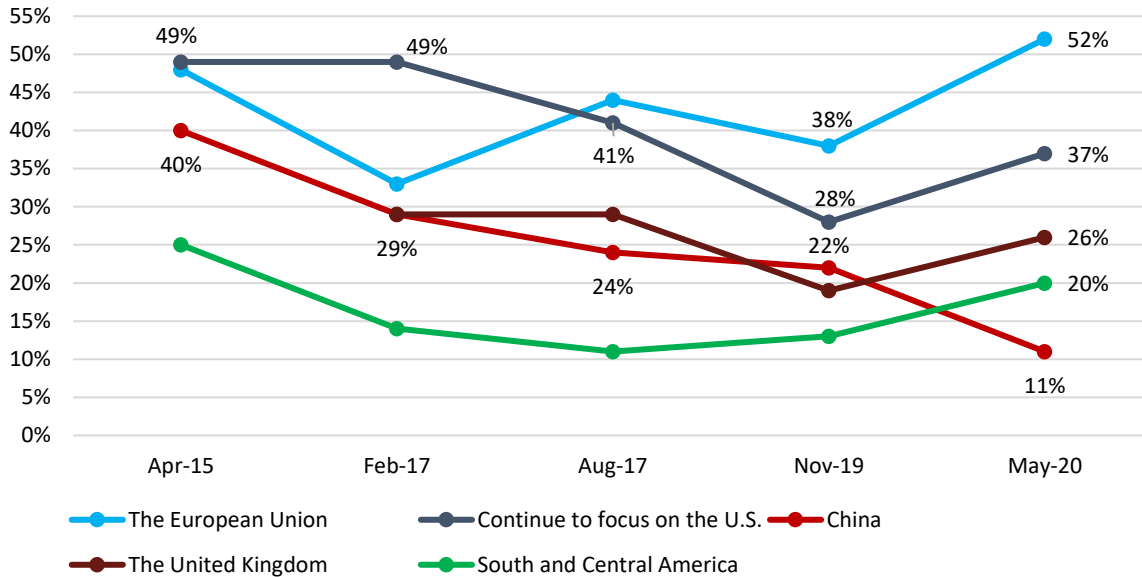
While China and the United States share a similar trajectory in terms of favourability within the Canadian public, their trade prospects are assessed differently. In the case of the U.S., 37 per cent of Canadians say the federal government should focus on increasing the trade relationship with that country, a rebound of nine-points compared to 2019. The proportion of Canadians who prefer their country seek to further the relationship with China is halved this year, to just 11 per cent. This is down from 40 per cent in 2015.

If there is a “winner” to emerge in terms of preferred trading partners, it is the European Union, for which preference has never been higher. Half of Canadians (52%) now say that the E.U. is among their preferred trading partners, up 14 points from last year:

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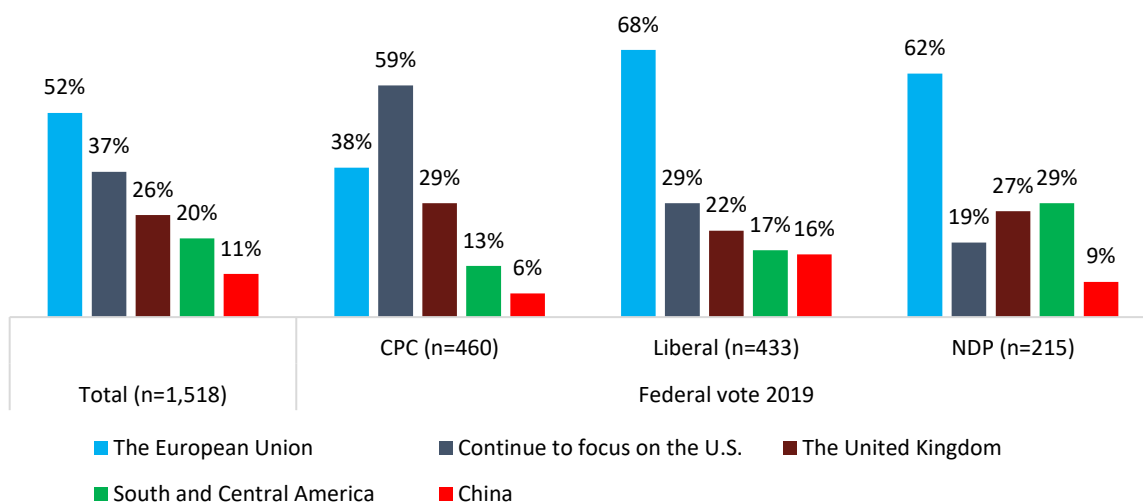
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As we look to the future, with which of the following countries or regions do you think Canada should try to develop closer trade ties? (Select up to two)



Those who supported the CPC in last October's federal election show a clear preference for the United States, with the European Union following. Past Liberal and NDP voters place the E.U. at the top of their list by a considerable margin:

As we look to the future, with which of the following countries or regions do you think Canada should try to develop closer trade ties? (Select up to two)
Top five choices shown



Regionally, Alberta is more inclined to seek closer trade ties with the United States, and Atlantic Canadians show more affinity for the United Kingdom.

As we look to the future, with which of the following countries or regions do you think Canada should try to develop closer trade ties? (Up to two responses selected)								
Top 5 choices shown								
*unweighted sample sizes	Total (n=1,518)	Region						
		BC (n=220)	AB (n=154)	SK (n=130)	MB (n=126)	ON (n=454)	QC (n=287)	ATL (n=147)
The European Union	52%	53%	47%	42%	50%	53%	56%	51%
Continue to focus on the U.S.	37%	31%	44%	38%	35%	39%	36%	36%
The United Kingdom	26%	27%	20%	34%	33%	30%	16%	42%
South and Central America	20%	24%	15%	20%	12%	19%	24%	16%
China	11%	9%	12%	12%	11%	11%	9%	10%

Huawei involvement in 5G network a no-go for Canadians

Fifth-generation wireless technology is expected to [increase speeds and improve connectivity](#) when Canada builds its network. Canada has not decided who will build its network and has not ruled out the possibility of China's Huawei Technologies' participation. Huawei is considered a global leader, having [spent more](#) on research and development in 2018 than both of the other market leaders, Ericsson AB and Nokia Oyj, combined.

Canada's allies have been concerned about the security issues that may arise if China gains access to vast amounts of domestic data and senior Canadian military officials have also [reportedly said](#) Huawei would be a national security risk if allowed to build the network.

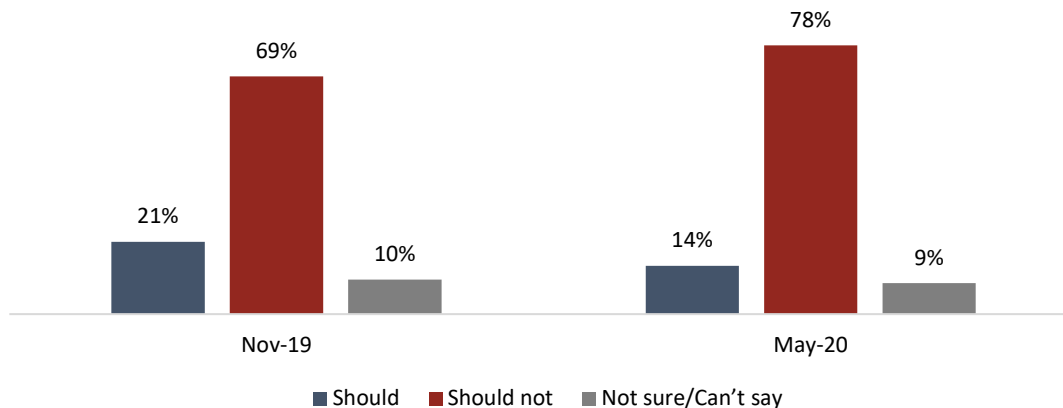
Tensions between Canada and China have been high since the arrest of Huawei executive Meng Wanzhou in 2018. Meng was arrested at the request of the United States for [violating sanctions in Iran](#).

The percentage of Canadians saying that Huawei should be allowed to be involved in building the mobile network has dropped to 14 per cent, down seven points from 21 per cent late last year:

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 Dave Korzinski, Research Director: 250.899.0821 dave.korzinski@angusreid.org

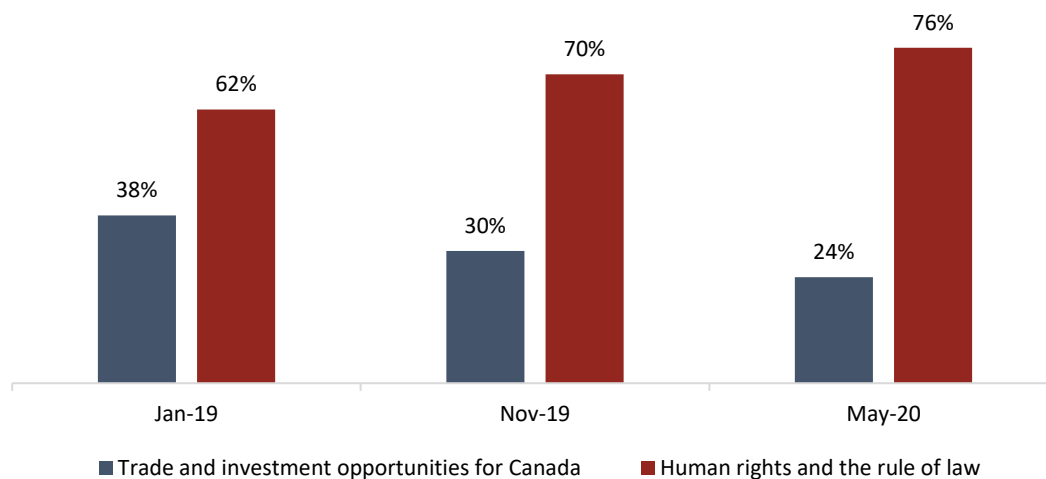
Do you think the federal government should or should not allow Chinese telecom company Huawei to be involved in building Canada's 5G mobile networks?



Concern for human rights in China grows

Canadians are also expressing increasing amounts of concern over human rights in China. Three-quarters (76%) of Canadians now say the most important aspect of their country's relationship with China should be upholding human rights and the rule of law, not trade investment and opportunity. This represents a hardening of opinion over the last 18 months:

Thinking about Canada's overall relationship with China, what should be more important to Canada:

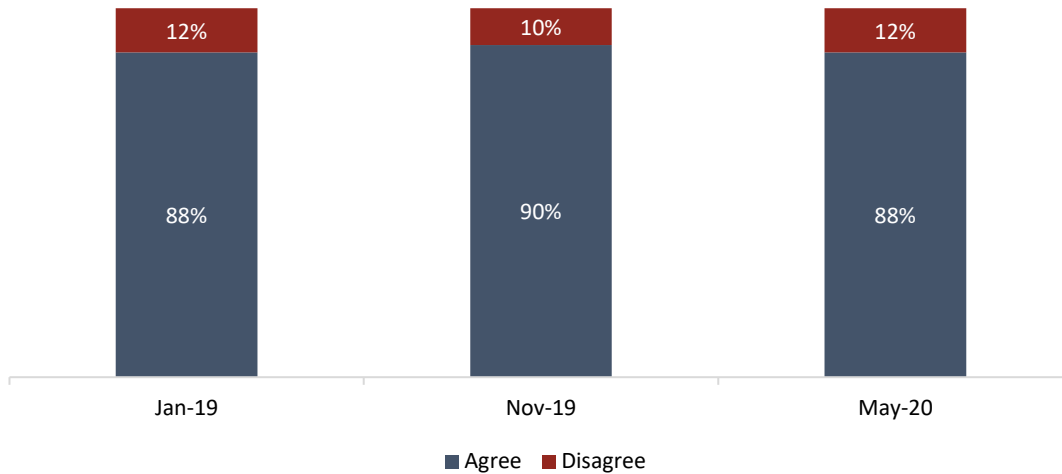


The entrenchment of this trend comes as fully 88 per cent of Canadians say that China can't be trusted to uphold human rights or the rule of law – an opinion that has remained consistent over the same period of time:

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Agree vs Disagree: "China can't be trusted on human rights or the rule of law"



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