

## As First Ministers ready for national summit, economy dwarfs all other issues on Canadians' minds

*Anxiety palpable ahead of March 22 budget*

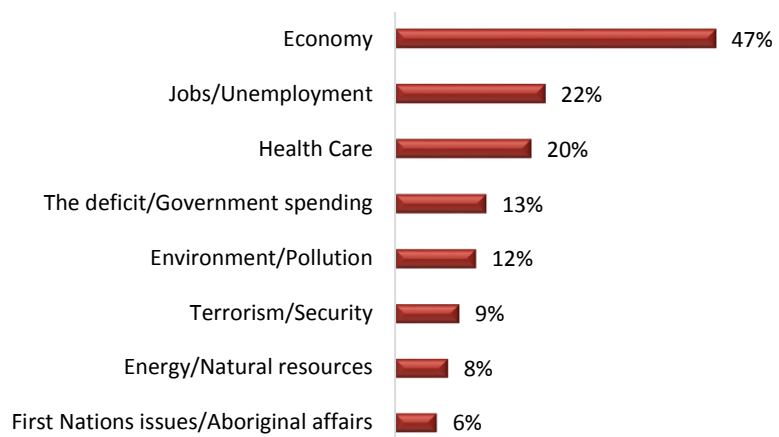
**February 23, 2016** – When Prime Minister Justin Trudeau meets with provincial and indigenous leaders [in Vancouver next week](#) to discuss climate change, he does so not only riding high in public opinion when it comes to job performance – but also with the weight of Canadians' economic anxiety on his shoulders.

The latest Angus Reid Institute (ARI) analysis of quarterly survey results from almost 6,000 adults corroborates what government, news media and individuals themselves have offered anecdotally: the economy is increasingly top of mind for Canadians and is now highlighted as a top priority more than two-to-one over any other national concern.

### Key Findings:

- Trudeau will arrive at the meeting with the approval of three-in-five Canadians (61%), a rating as high as or higher than any [provincial premier today](#).
- Nearly half of all Canadians (47%) say “economy” is the national matter preoccupying them most, while economy-related issues – such as unemployment (22%) and government spending (13%) – round out the top five

### What do you feel are the most important issues facing Canada today? (select up to two)



### **METHODOLOGY:**

The Angus Reid Institute analyzed results of an online survey conducted from February 2 – 10, 2016 among a representative randomized sample of 5,867 Canadian adults who are members of the [Angus Reid Forum](#). The survey data were donated by Vision Critical. The sample plan included large over-samples in many provinces, weighted back to provide a national snapshot. For comparison purposes only, a probability sample of this size would carry a margin of error of +/- 1.3 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.

### **MEDIA CONTACT:**

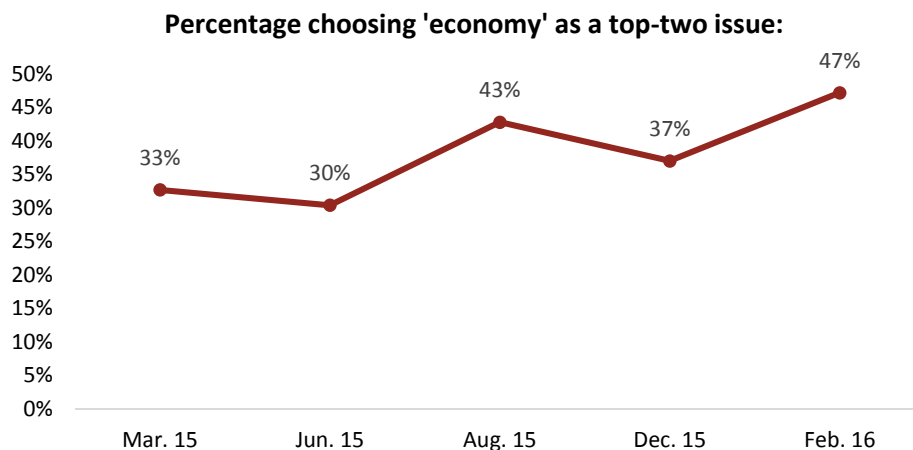
Shachi Kurl, Executive Director: 604.908.1693 [shachi.kurl@angusreid.org](mailto:shachi.kurl@angusreid.org) @shachikurl

- Albertans and Atlantic Canadians are among the most pessimistic when it comes to the prospects of their provincial economies, and their own financial situations at home

### **Economic anxiety getting worse:**

As the federal government prepares to deliver its first budget on March 22, the Angus Reid Institute finds anxiety over economic issues higher than it has been in recent memory.

The percentage of Canadians choosing “economy” as one of the two most important issues facing the country has risen by 10 points since [the previous edition](#) of this quarterly survey in December, and is the highest it has been in the past year:



The increase from 37 to 47 per cent over the last three months is likely related to the unsettled conditions that have three-in-four Canadians [saying they're "worried" about the economy](#) in 2016.

Finance Minister Bill Morneau [has argued](#) that this widespread concern boosts the government's case for running deficits – projected to be more than \$18 billion dollars in 2016-17 even before any new stimulus spending – to jumpstart the economy.

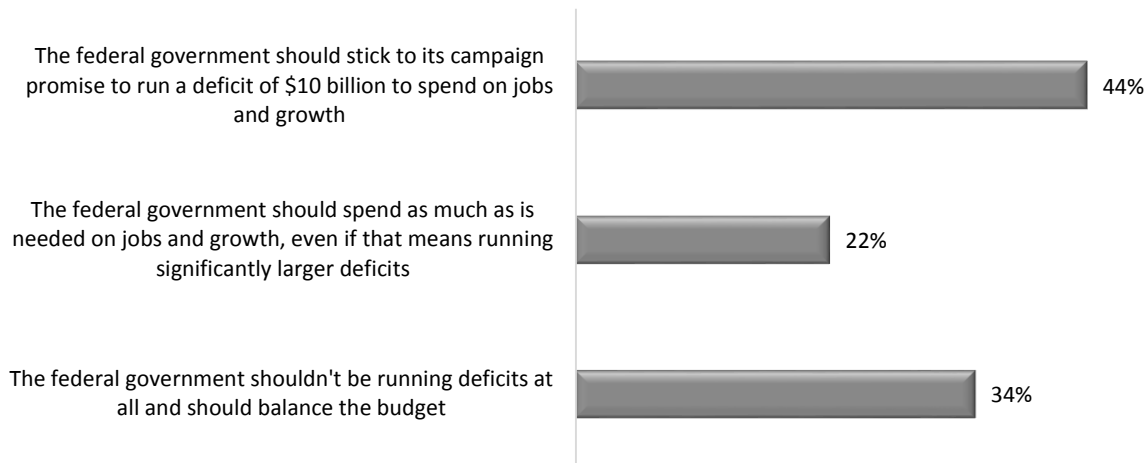
[Recent ARI polling suggests](#) that Canadians have only a limited amount of tolerance for deficit spending, however. Asked late last month, a plurality of Canadians (44%) said they wanted the Liberal government to stick to its campaign pledge to keep deficits at \$10 billion or less. That's twice as many as said government should spend whatever is necessary to stimulate the economy (22%).

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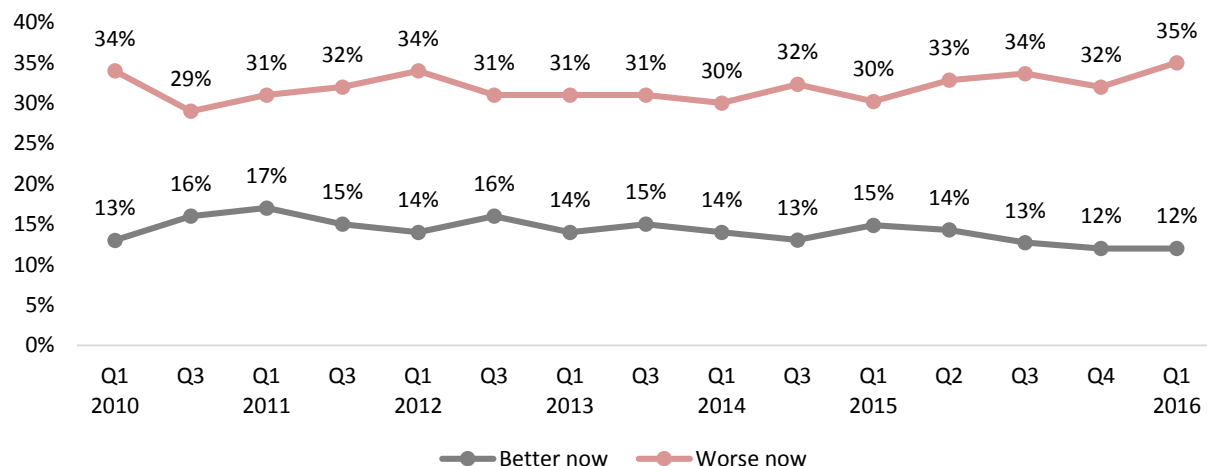
**Of the options below, which do you prefer?  
(results from poll released February 2, 2016)**



**Anxiety highest in Alberta, Atlantic:**

This latest survey finds Albertans and Atlantic Canadians are most concerned about the economy at large – as well as their own personal economic prospects. Nationally, Canadians say their standard of living has worsened in the past year three-to-one over those who say it has improved. This represents the highest gap recorded nationally since 2010:

**All things considered, do you think your current standard of living is better or worse now than it was a year ago?**

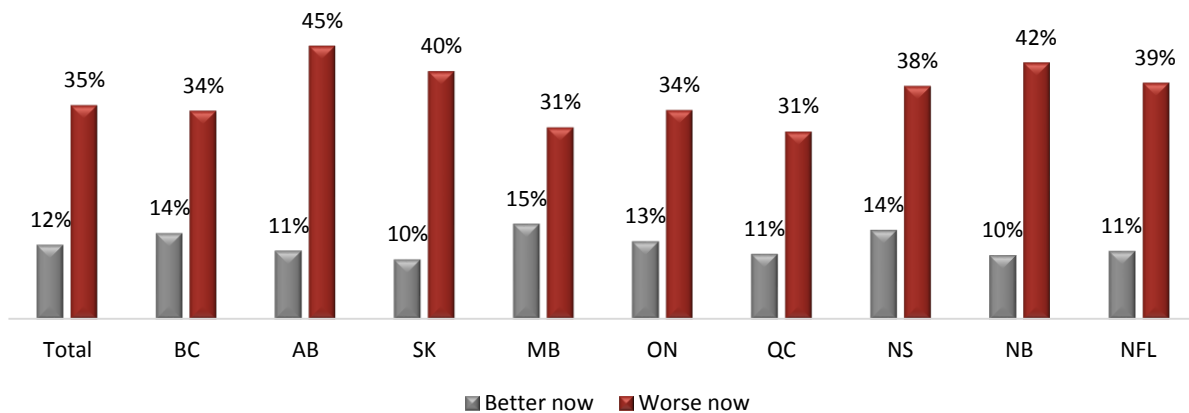


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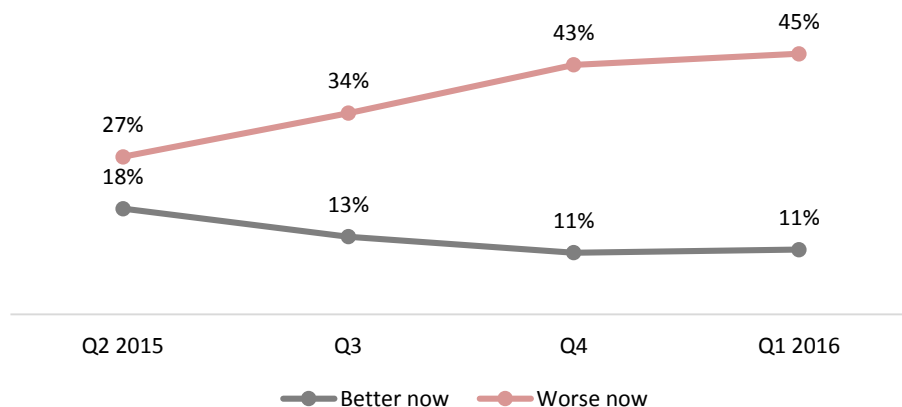
This rises to a margin of roughly four-to-one in Alberta and the Maritimes, as seen in the following graph:

### Do you think your current standard of living is better or worse now than it was a year ago?



And the percentage of Albertans reporting a deteriorating standard of living has increased dramatically over the last year:

### All things considered, do you think your current standard of living is better or worse than it was a year ago? (Alberta responses shown)



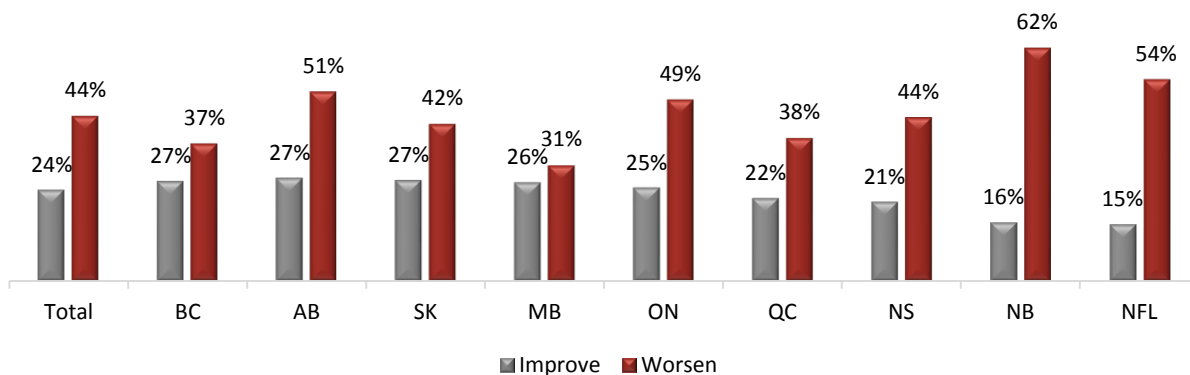
As to those with the bleakest future outlooks? They live in New Brunswick and Newfoundland. And while a majority of Albertans (51%) say their province's economy will worsen over the next year, Alberta is also tied with British Columbia and Saskatchewan for the largest proportion of respondents saying they think

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things will improve (27% in each province). The difference, of course, is that those two provinces are considerably less pessimistic than Alberta, as seen in the following graph:

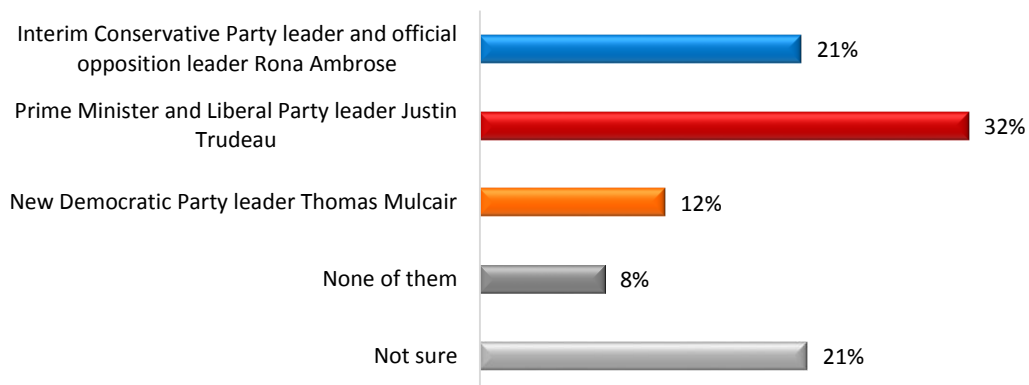
**Over the next twelve months, do you think the economy of your province will improve, remain the same, or worsen?**



**Trudeau best on the economy:**

As Canadians wrestle with anxiety about the direction of their personal, provincial, and national economies, about one-third (32%) say Justin Trudeau is the best party leader to deal with this issue. The rest are divided between his political opponents, or aren't sure:

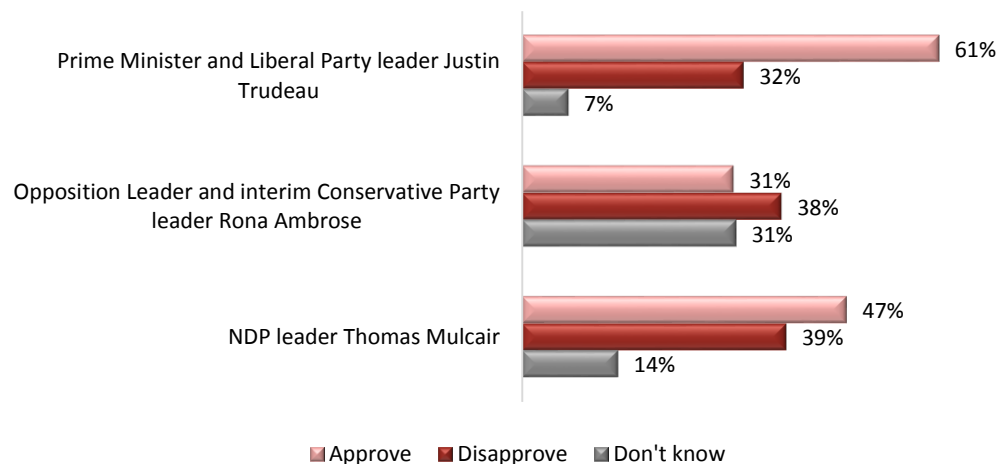
**Which is best suited to deal with the economy?**



When thinking about overall performance, Canadians are considerably more positive on Trudeau. The Prime Minister's approval rating is almost unchanged from early December, when the memory of his

October election victory was still very fresh. People in this country approve of Trudeau by a margin of nearly two-to-one:

### Overall, do you approve or disapprove of each of the following people?



As the newest leader on the her party's front bench in the House of Commons, interim Conservative Party of Canada leader Rona Ambrose is also understandably the least well known. Given that her stewardship of the party was dependent on not making a run for permanent leadership, this lack of familiarity may not prove to be much of a liability to the CPC's long-term fortunes.

The political stakes are likely much higher for NDP leader Thomas Mulcair. Having led his party to a peak in popular support [last June](#), Mulcair watched as, in the final stretch of the election campaign, his voters deserted the party for the Liberals and Trudeau. Although data from this survey shows he has the approval of 85 per cent of those who voted for him in October, it remains to be seen whether this will translate into sufficient support in the minds of actual NDP members and organizers come [the party's leadership review vote](#) in April.

*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 organization 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.*

**\*Because its small population precludes drawing discrete samples over multiple waves, data on Prince Edward Island is not released.**

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## What do you feel are the most important issues facing Canada today?

	Total (5867)	Region								
		BC (803)	AB (799)	SK (748)	MB (807)	ON (969)	QC (805)	NS (295)	NB (288)	NFL (265)
Economy	47%	46%	59%	49%	44%	50%	39%	48%	47%	51%
Jobs / Unemployment	22%	19%	32%	19%	13%	23%	17%	29%	38%	30%
Health Care	20%	19%	11%	17%	19%	22%	22%	23%	15%	19%
The Deficit / Government spending	13%	13%	14%	15%	21%	13%	11%	11%	18%	20%
Environment / Pollution	12%	17%	7%	8%	11%	11%	13%	10%	10%	6%
Terrorism / Security	9%	6%	8%	11%	8%	8%	15%	7%	6%	8%
Income inequality	8%	10%	5%	8%	7%	7%	10%	12%	7%	8%
Taxes	8%	9%	6%	6%	14%	8%	7%	10%	8%	5%
Energy / Natural Resources	8%	10%	14%	10%	4%	6%	6%	6%	8%	7%
First Nations issues / Aboriginal Affairs	6%	5%	3%	7%	10%	9%	4%	4%	2%	4%
Education / Post-secondary training	6%	5%	4%	3%	3%	5%	8%	6%	3%	2%
Ethics / Accountability	4%	5%	3%	4%	5%	4%	4%	2%	3%	3%
Crime / Public safety	3%	3%	2%	2%	4%	3%	2%	2%	1%	4%
The Senate	2%	2%	1%	2%	3%	2%	1%	2%	1%	3%
National Unity (Quebec separation)	1%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	2%	0%	0%	0%
Other (specify)	3%	5%	4%	5%	2%	3%	2%	2%	4%	2%

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What do you feel are the most important issues facing Canada today?		
	Feb 2016 (5867)	Dec 2015 (5294)
Economy	47%	37%
Jobs / Unemployment	22%	18%
Health Care	20%	20%
The Deficit / Government spending	13%	12%
Environment / Pollution	12%	14%
Terrorism / Security	9%	21%
Income inequality	8%	9%
Taxes	8%	9%
Energy / Natural Resources	8%	5%
First Nations issues / Aboriginal Affairs	6%	4%
Education / Post-secondary training	6%	4%
Ethics / Accountability	4%	5%
Crime / Public safety	3%	4%
The Senate	2%	3%
National Unity (Quebec and Quebec separation)	1%	1%
Other (specify)	3%	4%

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All things considered, do you think your current standard of living is better or worse now than it was a year ago?										
	Total (5867)	Region								
		BC (803)	AB (799)	SK (748)	MB (807)	ON (969)	QC (805)	NS (295)	NB (288)	NFL (265)
Better now	12%	14%	11%	10%	15%	13%	11%	14%	10%	11%
The same as a year ago	51%	51%	43%	48%	51%	52%	56%	47%	47%	49%
Worse now	35%	34%	45%	40%	31%	34%	31%	38%	42%	39%
Not sure	2%	1%	1%	2%	2%	2%	3%	1%	1%	1%

Over the next twelve months, do you think the economy of your province will improve, remain the same, or worsen?										
	Total (5867)	Region								
		BC (803)	AB (799)	SK (748)	MB (807)	ON (969)	QC (805)	NS (295)	NB (288)	NFL (265)
Significantly improve	2%	2%	2%	2%	3%	3%	2%	2%	1%	2%
Moderately improve	22%	24%	25%	25%	23%	22%	20%	19%	15%	14%
Remain the same	32%	37%	22%	31%	43%	27%	40%	35%	22%	31%
Moderately worsen	33%	29%	31%	33%	25%	35%	32%	35%	38%	36%
Significantly worsen	11%	8%	19%	9%	6%	14%	6%	9%	24%	18%

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Over the next twelve months, do you think the Canadian economy will improve, remain the same, or worsen?										
	Total (5867)	Region								
		BC (803)	AB (799)	SK (748)	MB (807)	ON (969)	QC (805)	NS (295)	NB (288)	NFL (265)
Significantly improve	3%	2%	2%	2%	3%	4%	2%	3%	3%	3%
Moderately improve	27%	29%	27%	20%	27%	27%	26%	30%	26%	23%
Remain the same	29%	28%	27%	29%	31%	27%	33%	33%	28%	35%
Moderately worsen	31%	30%	29%	35%	29%	31%	32%	26%	29%	30%
Significantly worsen	10%	10%	15%	15%	11%	11%	7%	8%	13%	9%

Which of these leaders is best suited to deal with each of the following issues? (Economy)										
	Total (5867)	Region								
		BC (803)	AB (799)	SK (748)	MB (807)	ON (969)	QC (805)	NS (295)	NB (288)	NFL (265)
Interim Conservative Party leader and official opposition leader Ron Ambrose	21%	22%	41%	30%	28%	22%	10%	14%	19%	11%
Prime Minister and Liberal Party leader Justin Trudeau	32%	34%	21%	28%	32%	31%	34%	45%	35%	51%
New Democratic Party (NDP) leader Thomas Mulcair	12%	11%	6%	11%	6%	12%	17%	9%	11%	11%
Bloc Québécois interim leader Rhéal Fortin	2%	0%	0%	1%	0%	1%	5%	0%	0%	1%
Green Party leader Elizabeth May	4%	4%	2%	2%	4%	5%	3%	3%	6%	1%
None of them	8%	6%	9%	8%	7%	9%	8%	7%	11%	7%
Not sure	21%	22%	21%	21%	24%	21%	23%	22%	18%	18%

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Overall do you approve or disapprove of Justin Trudeau?						
(weighted sample sizes)	Total (5867)	Federal Vote Last				
		CPC (1475)	Liberal Party (1947)	NDP (1139)	Bloc Quebecois (230)	Green Party (222)
Approve strongly	23%	1%	51%	17%	8%	6%
Approve somewhat	38%	18%	41%	53%	43%	63%
Disapprove somewhat	15%	28%	4%	13%	22%	14%
Disapprove strongly	18%	48%	1%	11%	20%	8%
Don't know	7%	4%	2%	7%	8%	9%

Overall do you approve or disapprove of Rona Ambrose?						
(weighted sample sizes)	Total (5867)	Federal Vote Last				
		CPC (1475)	Liberal Party (1947)	NDP (1139)	Bloc Quebecois (230)	Green Party (222)
Approve strongly	7%	21%	2%	1%	1%	2%
Approve somewhat	24%	50%	18%	14%	19%	12%
Disapprove somewhat	17%	8%	24%	19%	15%	22%
Disapprove strongly	21%	1%	28%	34%	36%	31%
Don't know	31%	20%	28%	32%	29%	34%

Overall do you approve or disapprove of Thomas Mulcair?						
(weighted sample sizes)	Total (5867)	Federal Vote Last				
		CPC (1475)	Liberal Party (1947)	NDP (1139)	Bloc Quebecois (230)	Green Party (222)
Approve strongly	9%	1%	6%	32%	2%	4%
Approve somewhat	38%	21%	46%	53%	40%	35%
Disapprove somewhat	21%	30%	24%	7%	27%	33%
Disapprove strongly	17%	39%	13%	2%	18%	13%
Don't know	14%	8%	11%	6%	12%	15%

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