

## Security vs. privacy: Canadians want more accountability, but accept trade-offs on civil liberties

*Support for anti-terror law Bill C-51 remains high, but most back proposed changes to it*

**March 18, 2016** – Canadians say they have high hopes and broad support for the Trudeau government's proposed changes to Bill C-51, the controversial anti-terror law that prompted mass public protest.

But in the ongoing debate over where to draw the line between civil liberties and anti-terror measures, a new poll from the Angus Reid Institute shows Canadian support for greater oversight of government agencies that collect and share personal data is accompanied by the majority view that anti-terror efforts may sometimes justify infringements on privacy.

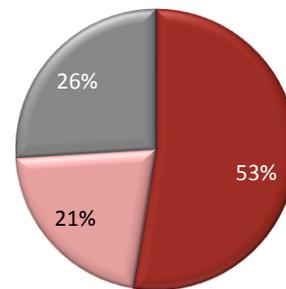
Indeed, while two-in-three Canadians say changes to Bill C-51 are needed, an even greater majority – fully four-in-five – are in favour of the legislation as it stands today.

Further, more than half would rather the government scrap plans to repeal another security and terror related law – Bill C-24.

### Key Findings:

- Most Canadians (61%) are closer to the view that security and anti-terrorism efforts sometimes require infringing on civil liberties
- Eight-in-ten Canadians (80%) say they support Bill C-51, while a significant majority (67%) are also in favour of proposed changes to increase oversight and protect privacy

**On the 'Strengthening Canadian Citizenship Act,' also known as Bill C-24, do you think the government should:**



■ Leave this law as it is ■ Go ahead and repeal it ■ Can't say/not sure

### **METHODOLOGY:**

The Angus Reid Institute conducted an online survey from March 14-17, 2016 among a representative randomized sample of 1492 Canadian adults who are members of the [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](mailto:shachi.kurl@angusreid.org) @shachikurl

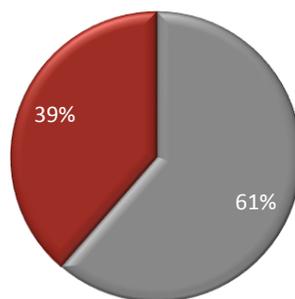
- Two-in-three Canadians (68%) say the federal government is doing either a “good” or “very good” job on the national security file overall
- But just over half (53%) believe the Trudeau Liberals should not be repealing Bill C-24, which among other things, strips citizenship from dual citizens who are convicted of terrorism

## National Security versus Personal Privacy

This pollster has been canvassing Canadian opinion on such issues for years, from security in the post-9/11 era, to [issues of trust in government](#) in the wake of the Edward Snowden leaks, to ongoing tracking of how Canadians feel about the security-versus-privacy trade-off.

Today, when asked which sentiment is closer to their own point of view, most Canadians (61%) say the occasional infringement on civil liberties trumps safeguarding personal privacy at all costs, while a significant segment say otherwise:

### What, for you, is the MOST important consideration in thinking about the issue of national security vs. personal privacy?



- Security and anti-terrorism efforts mean we may sometimes have to infringe on civil liberties such as personal privacy
- Security and anti-terrorism concerns do not justify weakening civil liberties such as personal information privacy

## Amending C-51: Security risk or much-needed change?

When it comes to Bill C-51, Canadians continue to firmly support legislation that enables government agencies and police to collect and share information about Canadians they suspect to be terrorists, but they also enthusiastically await amendments tempering that legislation.

From the time it was first proposed in January 2015, Bill C-51 has both enjoyed the support of a strong majority of Canadians and has been the subject of vociferous opposition on the basis that it goes too far.

In [ARI's first poll on C-51](#) in February 2015, nearly seven-in-ten Canadians (69%) chose “there should be additional oversight to ensure the police agencies do not go overboard with these new powers” over the alternative: “we already have adequate oversight.”

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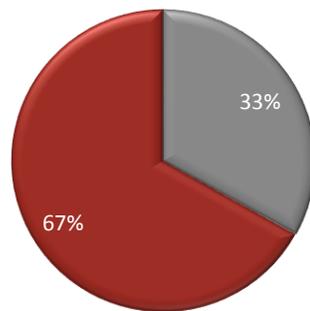
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These numbers held steady when ARI [asked again](#) in May 2015, with 71 per cent calling for additional oversight.

Today, the view that this law doesn't include adequate checks and balances is reflected in the roughly two-thirds (67%) of respondents who say changes to it are needed:

### Which statement is closest to your own point of view?



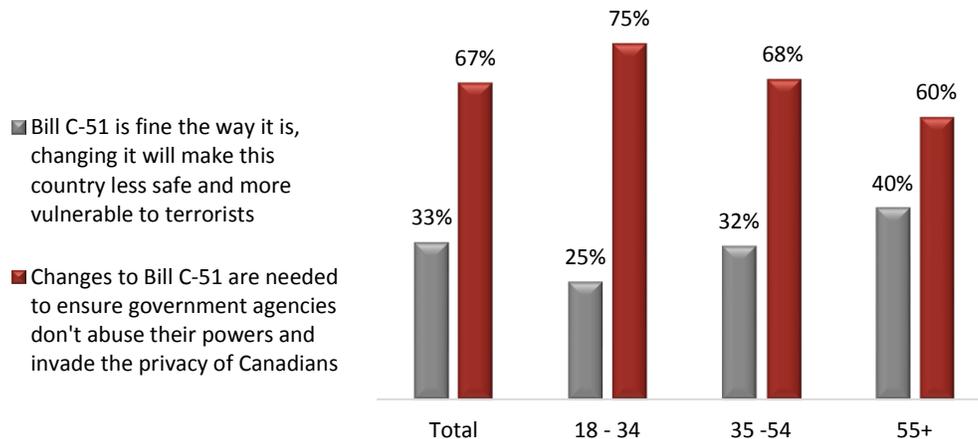
■ Bill C-51 is fine the way it is, changing it will make this country less safe and more vulnerable to terrorists

■ Changes to Bill C-51 are needed to ensure government agencies don't abuse their powers and invade the privacy of Canadians

The feeling that the law should be changed is strongest on the coasts, with three-quarters (75%) of British Columbians and four-fifths (83%) of Atlantic Canadians saying changes are needed.

Younger Canadians (those ages 18 – 34) are also more likely to say Bill C-51 should be modified. And while majorities of each age group feel this way, the majorities grow increasingly smaller as respondent ages increase:

### Which statement is closest to your own point of view?



■ Bill C-51 is fine the way it is, changing it will make this country less safe and more vulnerable to terrorists

■ Changes to Bill C-51 are needed to ensure government agencies don't abuse their powers and invade the privacy of Canadians

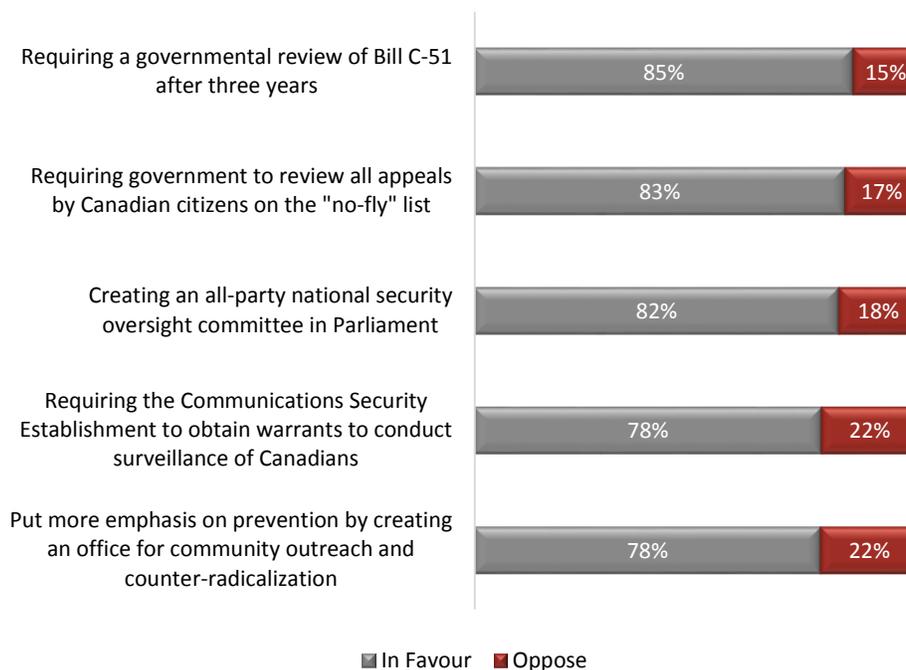
## Most support proposed changes to C-51

The position most Canadians take today on this anti-terrorism law roughly parallels the one taken by the Liberal Party since the bill was introduced.

Bill C-51 passed in the House of Commons last year under the previous Conservative government, but with the support of Liberal MPs led by Justin Trudeau. At the time, Trudeau said the bill wasn't perfect, but was good enough to earn his party's support. He promised to make amendments to the bill if his party formed the next government. This happened when the Liberals won a majority mandate last October 19.

Now that Trudeau is Prime Minister, Canadians are looking to the new government to make the changes his government promised and proposed:

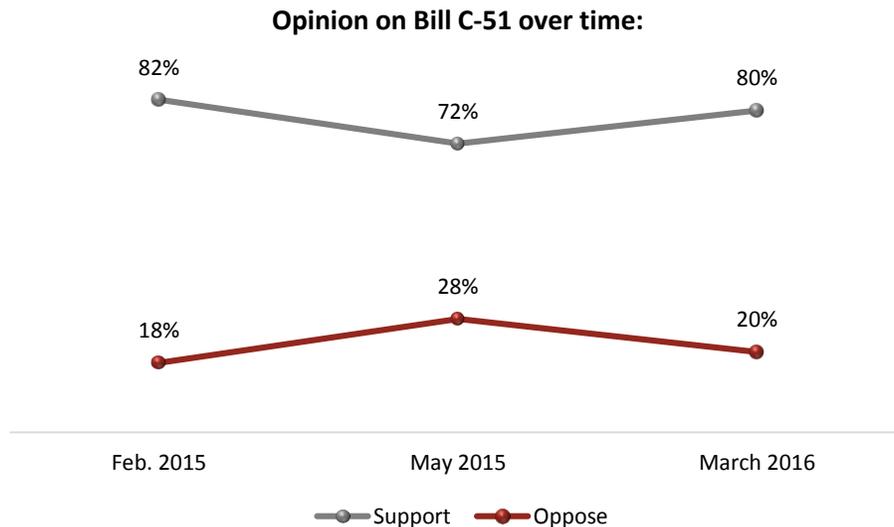
### Do you favour or oppose the following proposed amendments to Bill C-51?



## Overall Support for C-51 remains high

In spite of the staunch [outcry](#) and [opposition](#) to this legislation in the form in which it was introduced, debated and passed, Canadians remain steadfastly supportive of the law: 80 per cent support in its current form, while 20 per cent oppose it.

As it has on two other occasions, the Angus Reid Institute asked Canadians about some of the specific provisions of Bill C-51 – as well as whether they support or oppose the law overall. The following graph shows how support has changed since the legislation was first introduced:

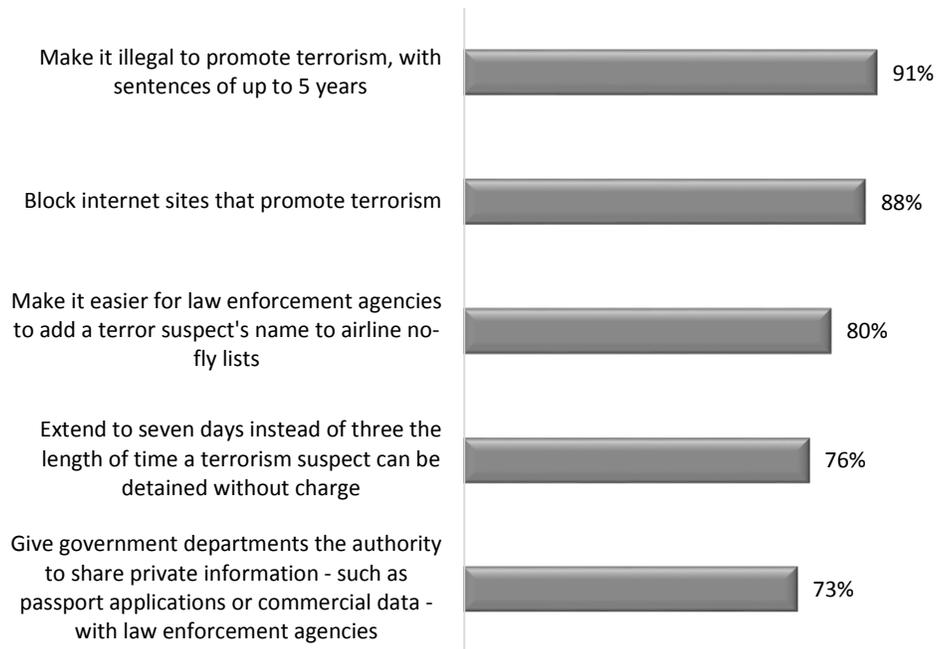


Indeed, if anything, support has ticked up slightly over the past ten months. This may be due in part to less focus on terror and security issues in general, because other issues [such as the economy](#), are currently preoccupying Canadians.

A change in national government may also have made Bill C-51 less of a lightning rod for voter dissatisfaction with the now-defeated Harper Conservatives. (A more fulsome discussion of the political divides driving views on these issues is found at the end of this report.)

When the law is deconstructed into individual elements, support remains high for each provision canvassed, as seen in the graph that follows. Indeed, support for each individual component of Bill C-51 has been above 70 per cent every time ARI has asked about the law (read [February 2015 results here](#) and [May 2015 results here](#)).

## Support for components of Bill C-51:



## Repealing C-24: Right or Wrong decision?

But while the new federal government's direction on C-51 appears very much in line with public opinion, this alignment does not extend to all aspects of its approach to the public safety and anti-terrorism file.

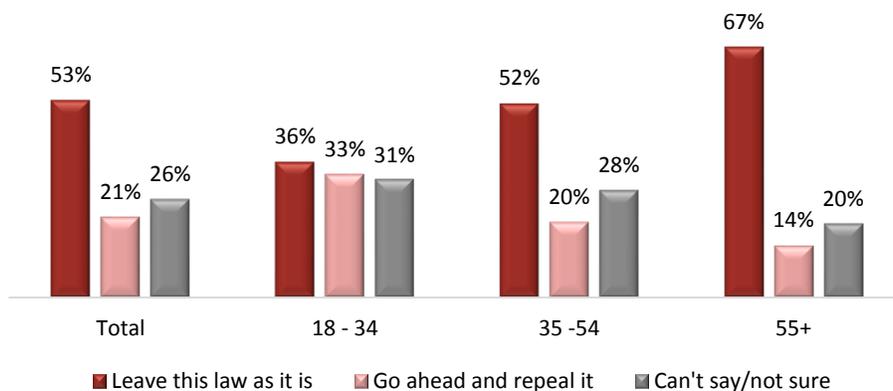
Case in point, its intention to repeal Bill C-24, known as the "Strengthening Canadian Citizenship Act". This law – which the Liberal party campaigned against – made Canadian citizenship harder to acquire and allowed government to strip citizenship from dual citizens who are convicted of, among other things, terrorism and high treason.

Trudeau explained his opposition to the law by arguing that it created a two-tiered system of citizenship that unfairly threatened dual citizens, famously saying "a Canadian is a Canadian," during one of the leaders' debates, a mantra that [his government has repeated](#) in moving to repeal the law.

But Canadians are not entirely on board with the government's plan. This survey finds a narrow majority (53%) of respondents would prefer to leave the law as it is, while roughly one-in-four (21%) say government should go ahead and repeal it (the rest, 26% are unsure). Expressed another way, Canadians of a firm mind on the issue want Ottawa to leave C-24 alone two-to-one over those calling for it to be repealed.

Age is a driver of opinion on this matter. Younger Canadians and those with higher levels of education are more inclined to say the law should be scrapped:

**On the 'Strengthening Canadian Citizenship Act,' also known as Bill C-24, do you think the government should:**

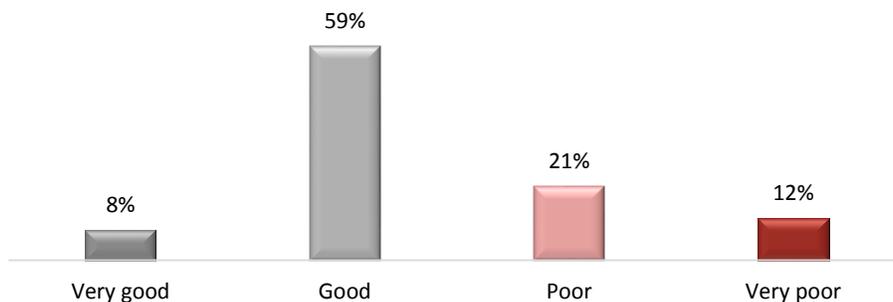


**Political divides and government performance:**

With the Trudeau government continuing to enjoy its honeymoon with the Canadian public, it should come as no surprise that a full majority (59%) rates the government's performance on terrorism and national security as "good."

Another 8 per cent say the government has been doing a "very good" job on this issue:

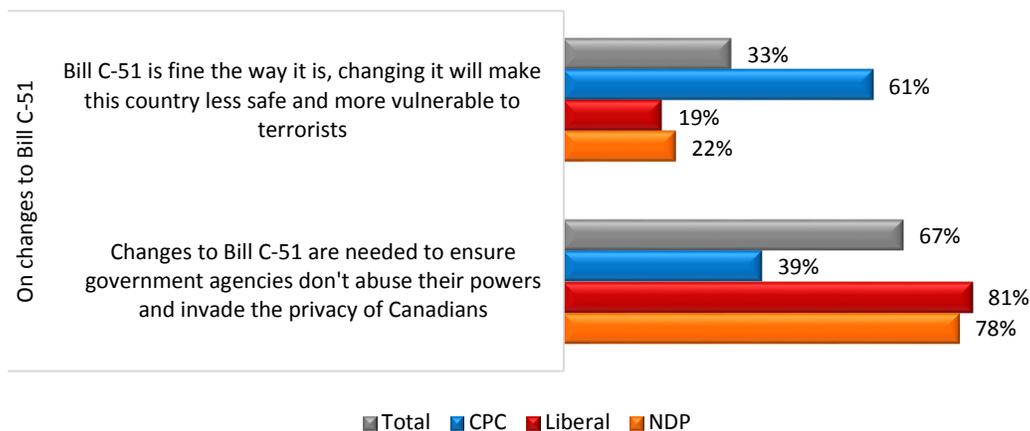
**Overall, what kind of job would you say the federal government is doing so far when it comes to national security and terrorism?**



This rating from the public is notably better than the 55 per cent who said the Trudeau government is doing a good job on [the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women file](#) and expressed confidence in its [handling of the mission against ISIS](#).

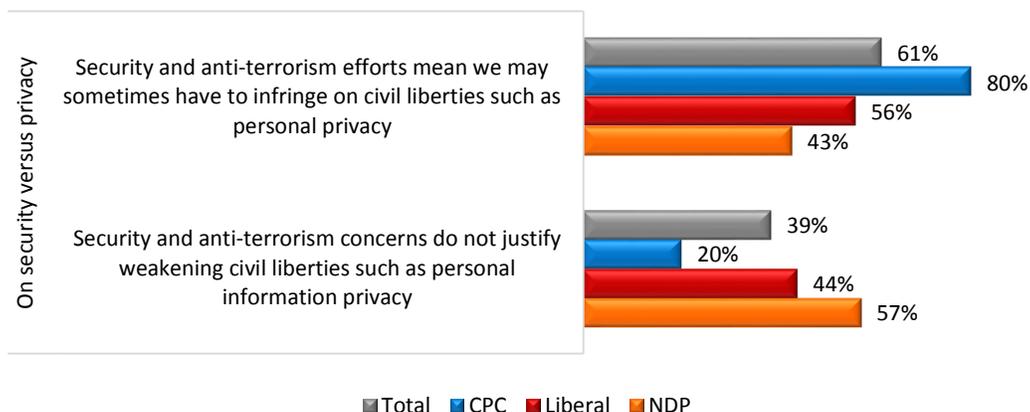
As might be expected, those who voted for the Harper Conservatives last fall are less likely to approve of the Liberal government's performance on this file, or its plans to change and undo legislation designed by the previous administration:

### Political divides on security questions:



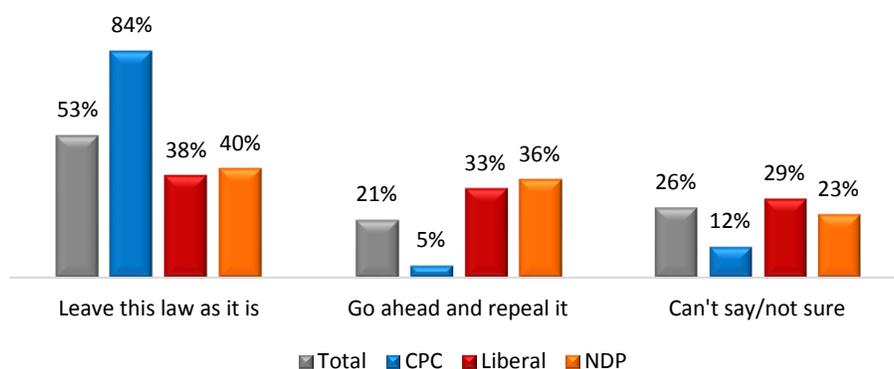
Similarly, political lines divide opinion Conservatives are more likely to prioritize security over privacy:

### Political divides on security questions:



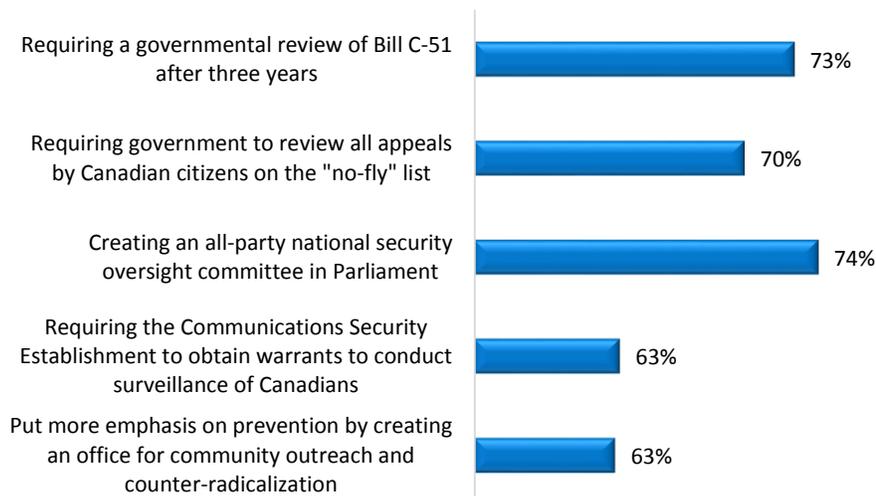
And, on C-24 Conservatives are much more certain in their opinion than supporters of the other main parties, and overwhelmingly prefer to leave the law in place:

**On the 'Strengthening Canadian Citizenship Act,' also known as Bill C-24, do you think the government should:**



That said, this survey also finds a great deal of common ground between partisans. On C-51, for example, majorities of Liberal and NDP voters say they support the law (see summary tables at the end of this release). And while most past Conservatives say C-51 doesn't need to be changed, the majority are in favour of specific changes to the law proposed by the Liberals:

**Percentage of 2015 CPC voters in favour of proposed amendments to C-51:**



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.

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

Overall, what kind of job would you say the federal government is doing so far when it comes to national security and terrorism?				
	Total (1492)	Federal Vote Last		
		CPC (396)	Liberal Party (454)	NDP (255)
Very good	8%	2%	16%	10%
Good	59%	40%	69%	68%
Poor	21%	30%	12%	15%
Very poor	12%	28%	2%	7%

Which statement is closest to your own point of view?				
	Total (1492)	Federal Vote Last		
		CPC (396)	Liberal Party (454)	NDP (255)
Bill C-51 is fine the way it is, changing it will make this country less safe and more vulnerable to terrorists	33%	61%	19%	22%
Changes to Bill C-51 are needed to ensure government agencies don't abuse their powers and invade the privacy of Canadians	67%	39%	81%	78%

**What, for you, is the MOST important consideration in thinking about the issue of national security vs. personal privacy?**

	Total (1492)	Federal Vote Last		
		CPC (396)	Liberal Party (454)	NDP (255)
Security and anti-terrorism efforts mean we may sometimes have to infringe on civil liberties such as personal privacy	61%	80%	56%	43%
Security and anti-terrorism concerns do not justify weakening civil liberties such as personal information privacy	39%	20%	44%	57%

**All things considered, do you yourself support or oppose this anti-terrorism legislation (C-51)?**

	Total (1492)	Federal Vote Last		
		CPC (396)	Liberal Party (454)	NDP (255)
Strongly support	34%	56%	24%	23%
Support	46%	40%	49%	38%
Oppose	14%	3%	19%	27%
Strongly oppose	6%	0%	8%	11%

<b>Do you favour or oppose the following proposed amendments to Bill C-51? (Summary of "Support")</b>				
	Total (1492)	Federal Vote Last		
		CPC (396)	Liberal Party (454)	NDP (255)
Creating an all-party national security oversight committee in Parliament	82%	74%	89%	83%
Requiring government to review all appeals by Canadian citizens on the "no-fly" list	83%	70%	91%	86%
Requiring a governmental review of Bill C-51 after three years	85%	73%	93%	86%
Requiring the Communications Security Establishment to obtain warrants to conduct surveillance of Canadians	78%	63%	86%	85%
Put more emphasis on prevention by creating an office for community outreach and counter-radicalization	78%	63%	87%	83%