

Khadr's Compensation: 71% of Canadians say government made wrong call by settling out of court

Many say they would have offered apology, but not financial compensation

July 11, 2017 – The vast majority of Canadians say the federal government made the wrong decision in settling a lawsuit with former child soldier Omar Khadr and instead apologizing and paying him \$10.5 million in compensation for his treatment as a prisoner in Guantanamo Bay, Cuba.

A new survey from the Angus Reid Institute indicates more than seven-in-ten (71%) are of the opinion the Trudeau government should have fought the case and left it to the courts to decide whether Khadr was wrongfully imprisoned.

Further, most Canadians reject the notion that government officials had “no choice” but to settle – but money appears to be the main source of opposition to the deal. Canadians are slightly more inclined to have said sorry to Khadr than offer compensation, had the decision been in their own hands.

While Public Safety Minister Ralph Goodale [blamed the previous Conservative Government of Stephen Harper](#) for not dealing with the issue sooner, current Conservative Leader

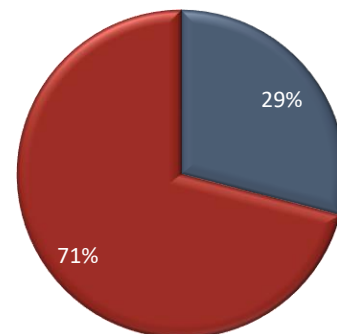
Andrew Scheer has responded by calling the settlement “[disgusting](#)”. Unsurprisingly, views diverge sharply along political lines. Where past Conservative voters are unequivocal in their views, there is less consensus among those who voted Liberal and NDP in the 2015 election.

Key Findings:

- When asked if Omar Khadr has ultimately been treated fairly or unfairly, Canadians most commonly answer that they are unsure (42%); slightly more are inclined to say he's had fair treatment (34%) than unfair (24%)

Which statement comes closest to your own view?

- The Trudeau government did the right thing by settling the case and offering an apology and \$10.5 in compensation
- The Trudeau government did the wrong thing - it should have fought the case and left it to the courts to decide whether Khadr was wrongfully imprisoned



METHODOLOGY:

The Angus Reid Institute conducted an online survey from July 7-10 among a representative randomized sample of 1521 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 @shachikurl
Ian Holliday, Research Associate: 604.442.3312 ian.holliday@angusreid.org
Dave Korzinski, Research Associate: 250.899.0821 dave.korzinski@angusreid.org

- Two-thirds (65%) reject the notion the Trudeau government had “no choice” but to settle and offer Omar Khadr an apology and compensation
- The same number (64%) also agree that Khadr remains a “potential radicalized threat” now living in Canada

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The Background:

On July 7, the Liberal government confirmed reports that had been circulating all week about a [settlement to the civil court case](#) brought by Omar Khadr’s lawyers. A Canadian citizen, Khadr has been a subject of [debate and political angst in this country for more than a decade](#).

Born in Toronto, Khadr moved back and forth between Pakistan and Canada during his youth, his family eventually settling in Afghanistan in 1996. It was in that country that he was arrested in 2002, at the age of 15, [allegedly killing an American soldier](#) during a firefight. His father, Ahmed Said Khadr, was reportedly a [founding member of the al-Qaeda](#) terrorist group.

Gravely injured in the conflict, the younger Khadr survived and eventually spent ten years at the U.S. prison in Guantanamo Bay. While there, he [pleaded guilty](#) to several charges and was convicted by an American military tribunal. He later said the [guilty plea was made under duress](#).

In 2010, the Supreme Court of Canada ruled that the [Canadian government of the day acted unconstitutionally after Khadr’s arrest](#), and that it is partly responsible for his continued imprisonment in Guantanamo Bay. He was transferred to a prison in Alberta in 2012 and [released on bail in 2015](#) while appealing his US conviction. In 2004, he [sued the federal government](#) for \$20 million for wrongful imprisonment.

As mentioned, the Canadian government has now responded by [settling out of court](#), offering a formal apology to Khadr, and paying him just over half the amount he had been seeking. Khadr has said that he hopes the apology will [help to restore his reputation](#), as he moves on to the next phase of his life.

Part 1 – Canadians say government made the “wrong decision”

In the days since the settlement was confirmed, some prominent voices have noted that, given the unanimous nature of the 2010 Supreme Court ruling stating Khadr’s rights had been violated, [a settlement was inevitable](#).

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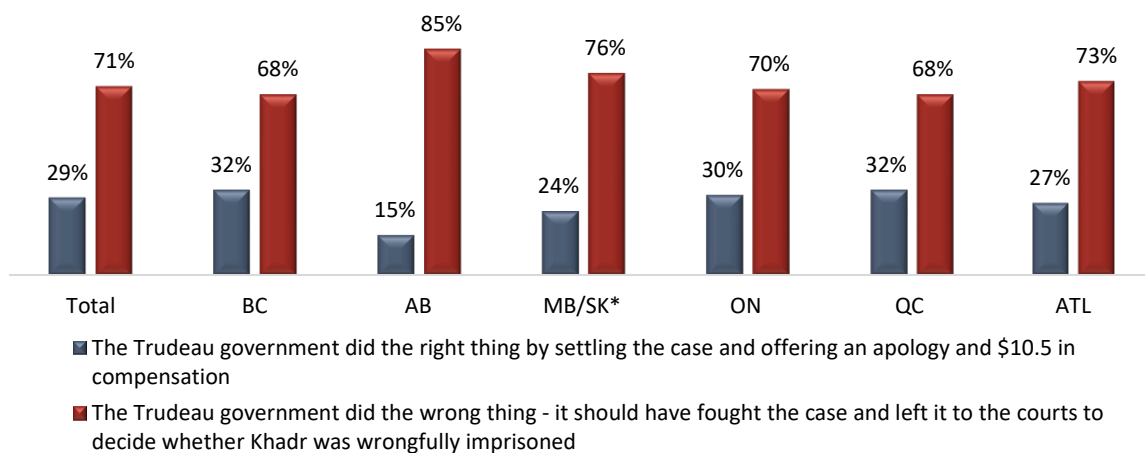
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But the majority of Canadians say the government made the wrong decision in settling the lawsuit filed by Khadr's lawyers.

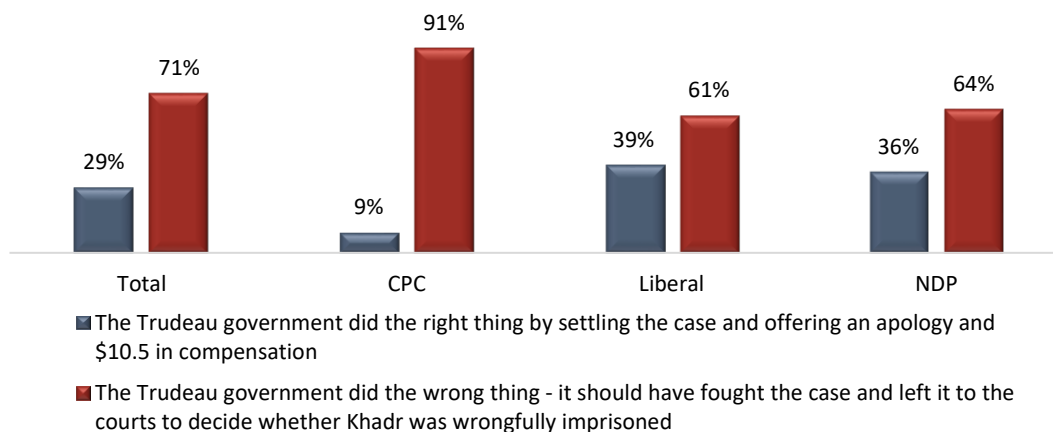
The government's decision is unpopular with at least two-thirds of residents in each region of the country. It resonates most poorly in Alberta where more than eight-in-ten (85%) say the wrong decision was made.

Which statement comes closest to your own view?



Support does not appear to be affected by awareness of Omar Khadr and his story, or by gender ([see comprehensive tables for more detail](#)) but political affiliation plays a major role. Just one-in-ten past Conservative Party voters (9%) say that the Liberal government made the right move, while support rises to four-in-ten among Trudeau's 2015 supporters (39%):

Which statement comes closest to your own view?



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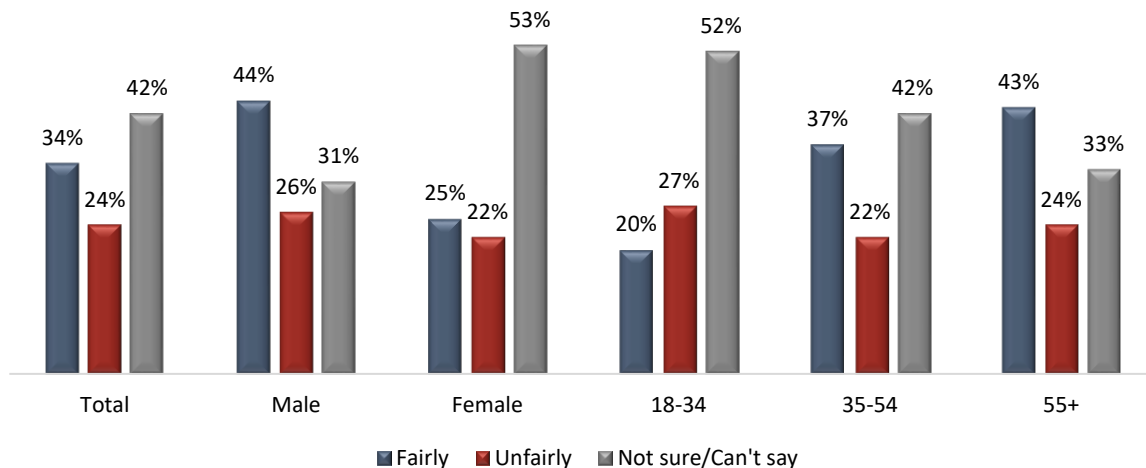
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Notably, their opposition to the government's decision does not necessarily mean that Canadians are satisfied with how Khadr has been treated throughout the past 15 years.

Three-quarters of Canadians (74%) say that Khadr was a child soldier at the time of his arrest, and should have been treated as such. Under international agreements endorsed by Canada such as the [Paris Principles](#) (which came into effect long after Khadr's arrest), child soldiers are to be treated first as victims of the violence they are indoctrinated into, rather than as perpetrators of it. Programs for offending child soldiers are often built around rehabilitation rather than punitive measures.

Perhaps for this reason, a large segment of Canadians is unsure of whether Khadr received fair treatment since his 2002 arrest. Four-in-ten (42%) aren't sure, while one-in-three (34%) say he has been accommodated as much as is required, and one-quarter (24%) say he has been treated unfairly. Older Canadians (those ages 55 and up), and men, are more likely to say that he has been treated fairly:

Thinking about Omar Khadr's overall story during these past 15 years, based on whatever you have seen or read about it and on your own general impressions, would you say he was ultimately treated fairly or unfairly?



Part 2 – What would Canadians themselves have done?

The Canadian government has referred to the 2010 Supreme Court of Canada decision as its reason for settling with Khadr. In briefly addressing the issue while overseas last week, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau stated the Charter of Rights and Freedoms must protect Canadians, [“even when it is uncomfortable”](#).

While the details of the legal agreement were hammered out by senior government officials, what would Canadians have done?

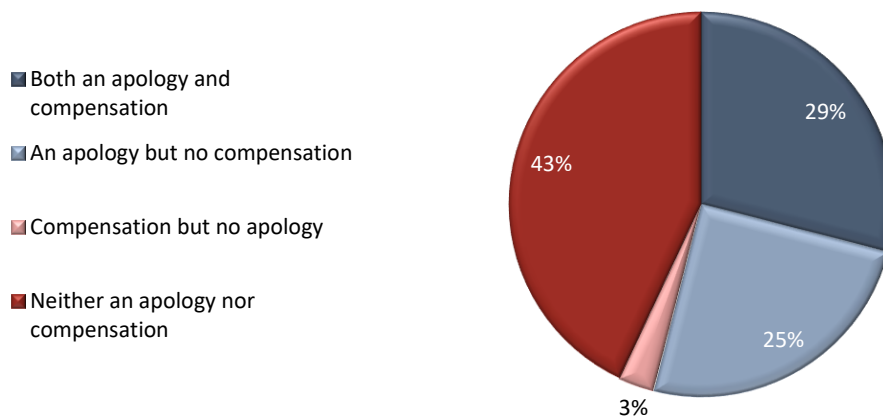
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Asked what their course of action would have been had they themselves been part of the negotiations, one-in-three Canadians (29%) say they would have pursued the path that the government has taken – offering a formal apology and \$10.5 million in compensation.

The sticking point for many, one that has been criticized by the [Canadian Taxpayers Federation](#), and [Conservative politicians](#), appears to be the financial component of the agreement. Indeed, one-quarter of Canadians (25%) say they would support a formal apology but not a financial settlement. The largest group, just over four-in-ten (43%) say they would offer neither component:

Regardless of whether you think the federal government should have settled Khadr's lawsuit or fought it, suppose you were on the government's negotiating committee. Please indicate what you would have offered Khadr:

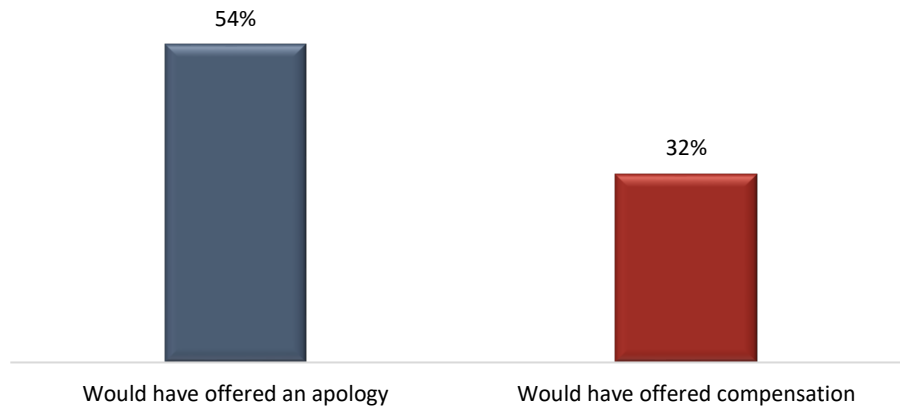


By comparing the responses to this question by those would have offered *something*, the Angus Reid Institute finds that just over half of Canadians say they would have apologized to Khadr, but just one-in-three (32%) would have chosen to offer \$10.5 million.

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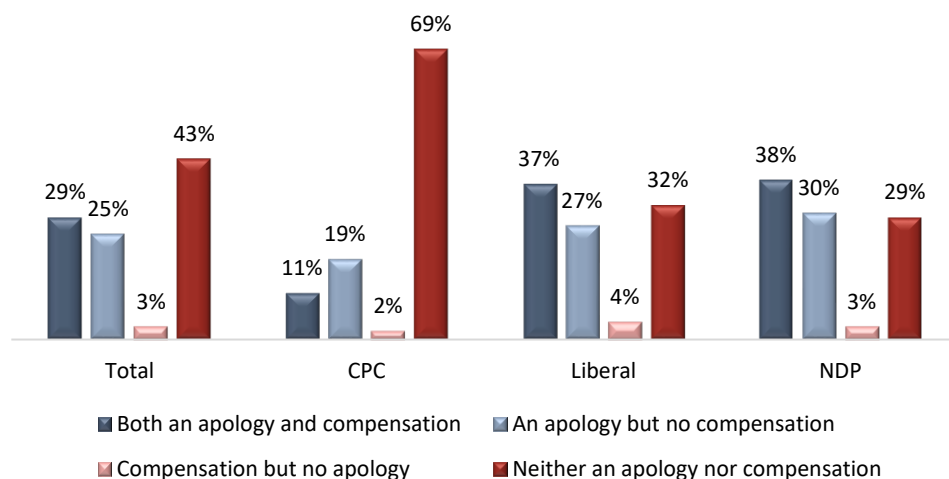
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Please indicate what you would have offered Khadr:



There is a negligible difference in terms of what past Liberal voters and past NDP voters say they would have done. In each case close to four-in-ten would have pursued the same approach as the Trudeau government, while three-in-ten say they would have offered neither part of the deal. The strongest opposition comes from past CPC voters. Of that camp, seven-in-ten (68%) say they would have offered nothing to Khadr, and just one-in-ten (11%) would have taken the Trudeau government's approach.

Please indicate what you would have offered Omar Khadr:



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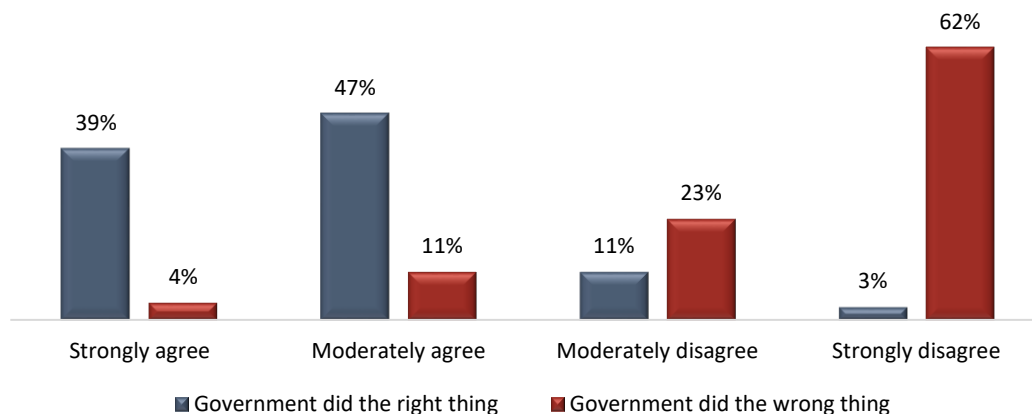
Women (61%) are more likely than men (47%), and Millennials (66%) more likely than older Canadians (35-54 52%, 55+ 47%) to say that they would have apologized ([see comprehensive tables](#)).

Part 3 – Did government have a choice?

Not only do most Canadians think their government made the wrong decision - they firmly believe it had an option to withhold the deal. Two-thirds (65%) disagree with the statement "The Trudeau government had no choice but to offer an apology and compensation to Omar Khadr."

As might be expected, those who think the government made the wrong decision are overwhelmingly inclined to believe it had a choice in the matter. Some 85 per cent of them disagree with the statement, including 62 per cent who disagree strongly. Those who think the Trudeau government did the right thing are nearly unanimous in *agreeing* that the government had no choice, but fewer of them feel strongly about their position, as seen in the following graph:

"The Trudeau government had no choice but to offer an apology and compensation to Omar Khadr"

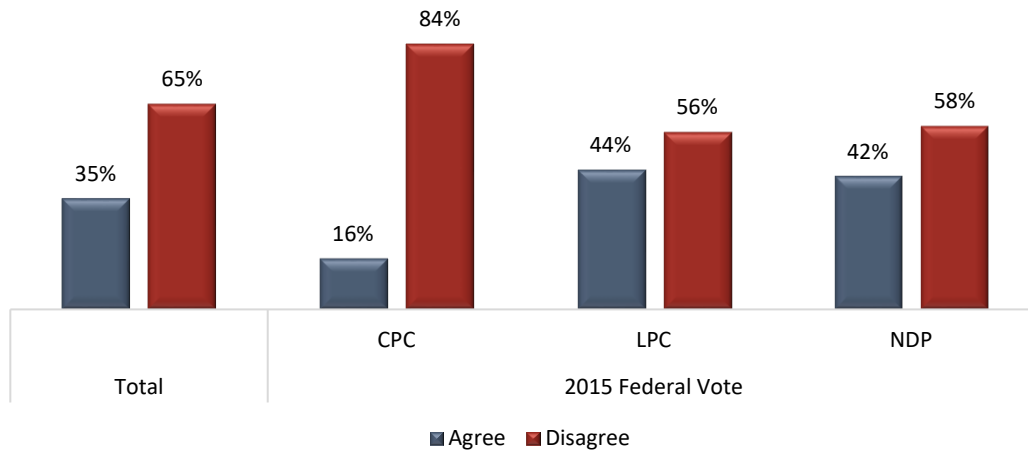


Those who voted for the Conservative Party of Canada in 2015 are especially likely to say this Liberal government could have chosen not to offer an apology and compensation to Omar Khadr, but it's worth noting that even a majority of those who voted Liberal disagree Trudeau "had no choice."

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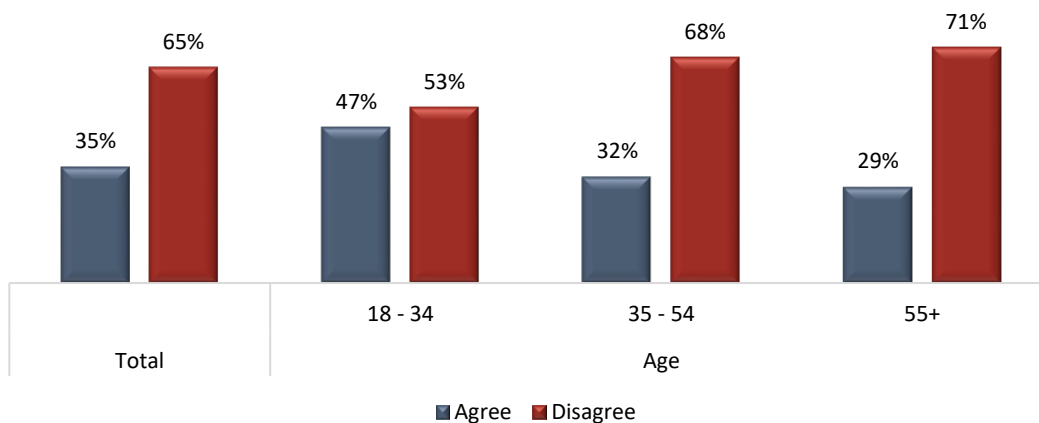
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"The Trudeau government had no choice but to offer an apology and compensation to Omar Khadr"



Canadians in Khadr's own age group - those who have grown up alongside him over the years - are more sympathetic to the government's approach to his situation. Nearly half of those ages 18 - 34 agree that the Trudeau government had no choice but to offer Khadr an apology and compensation (47%). Other generations are far less divided. More than two-thirds of those over age 35 disagree with this statement, as seen in the graph that follows.

"The Trudeau government had no choice but to offer an apology and compensation to Omar Khadr"



One data point that may help explain the lack of sympathy in this survey toward Omar Khadr and the government's handling of his lawsuit: the belief that he remains a potential threat to Canada.

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Though Khadr has [publicly renounced](#) the radicalized worldview of his father, almost two-in-three Canadians (64%) don't appear to believe him.

The number of Canadians who agree Khadr remains a potential radicalized threat has grown – from just over half to two-thirds – since his release from prison in 2015, and in the wake of this settlement:

**Percentage of Canadians who agree with the statement
"Omar Khadr remains a potential radicalized threat now
living in 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.*

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

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There has been lots of discussion about Omar Khadr, and different people have made different arguments. Do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements?

“The Trudeau government had no choice but to offer an apology and compensation to Omar Khadr”

(weighted sample sizes)	Total (1521)	The Trudeau government ...	
		Did the right thing (439)	Did the wrong thing (1082)
Strongly agree	14%	39%	4%
Moderately agree	21%	47%	11%
Moderately disagree	20%	11%	23%
Strongly disagree	45%	3%	62%

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Which statement comes closest to your own view?					
(weighted sample sizes)	Total (1521)	Awareness of Khadr and his story over the last 15 years			
		Have followed it closely and know a lot about it (321)	Have followed it some, and know a little bit about it (713)	Recognize the name, but haven't followed the story/don't know much about it (276)	Don't know anything about Omar Khadr or his story (212)
The Trudeau government did the right thing by settling the case and offering an apology and \$10.5 in compensation	29%	30%	29%	27%	30%
The Trudeau government did the wrong thing - it should have fought the case and left it to the courts to decide whether Khadr was wrongfully imprisoned	71%	70%	71%	73%	70%

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