

Canada Summer Jobs attestation requirement seen as 'unfair' by half of Canadians, 'fair' by the other half

Pro-choice versus pro-life viewpoints heavily influence opinion on contentious issue

May 15, 2018 – Canadians are acutely divided over the Trudeau government's controversial attestation requirement for organizations applying for federal funding under the Canada Summer Jobs program.

In the wake of heated debates [in policy circles](#), a new study from the Angus Reid Institute finds Canadians split evenly in their views of whether the obligation for organizations to verify that their core mandate respects the underlying values of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms – specifically reproductive rights – is fair. Fifty per cent say it is, while 50 per cent say it is not.

There is however, considerable difference of opinion over the requirement based on how the grant money might theoretically be spent.

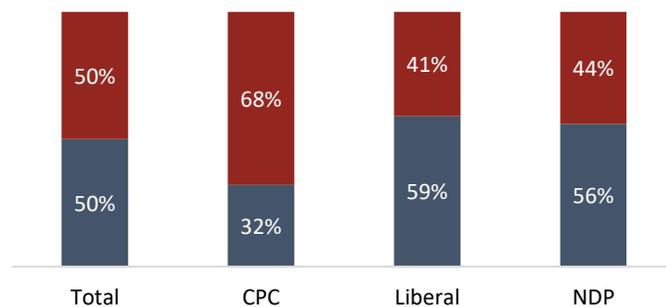
In a hypothetical scenario where a pro-life organization applies for the Summer Jobs Grant program to subsidize activities unrelated to abortion advocacy, three-quarters of Canadians (73%) say they should be eligible for federal funding.

In another hypothetical scenario, where a pro-life group spent its grants on anti-abortion advocacy, support for funding drops to under four-in-ten (37%). Notably, while Canadians from different political perspectives largely agree about the first scenario, they differ widely in opinion on the second.

More Key Findings:

- Opinions regarding abortion play a significant factor in a person's opinion about the fairness of attestation. Those who say abortion should be severely restricted are substantially more likely to say that attestation is unfair (86%) than those who take a staunchly pro-choice stance (36%)

Which of the following is closest to your own overall view? Please pick the argument closest to your view even if it's not exactly it.



- These rules are not fair - the federal government is over-reaching when it withholds funding from organizations because of their beliefs on the issue of abortion
- These new rules are fair - abortion is permitted Canada and those who don't support this should not be eligible for student summer job funding

METHODOLOGY:

The Angus Reid Institute conducted an online survey from May 2 – 3, 2018 among a representative randomized sample of 1,512 Canadian adults who are members of the Maru Voice Canada panel. For comparison purposes only, a probability sample of this size would carry a margin of error of +/- 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.

- Once taken through specific scenarios where government funding to organizations might be withheld, a majority of Canadians say they support the government's decision to require employers to confirm that they accept a woman's right to have an abortion
- Seven-in-ten past Conservative voters (68%) say that the attestation policy is unfair and over-reaching, while majorities of 2015 Liberal (59%) and NDP (56%) voters say that the requirement is fair
- While those over 55 are divided (51% support, 49% oppose), six-in-ten younger than that age demographic support the Trudeau government's decision

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Different examples, differing judgments

The Trudeau government's decision to alter the requirements for Canada Summer Jobs funding has been a hot topic of conversation in the House of Commons in recent months. That program granted [more than \\$200 million](#) last year leading to almost 70,000 jobs for students.

The Angus Reid Institute presented Canadians with two scenarios to gauge how people would respond to some of the underlying tension in the debate. That is, what type of activities do Canadians think should disqualify an organization from government funding? The first scenario supposes that a religious group is morally opposed to abortion, but is running programs that are unrelated to that position. In this example, they are involved in programs for the homeless, and would use grant money to hire students who would not be involved in anti-abortion activities.

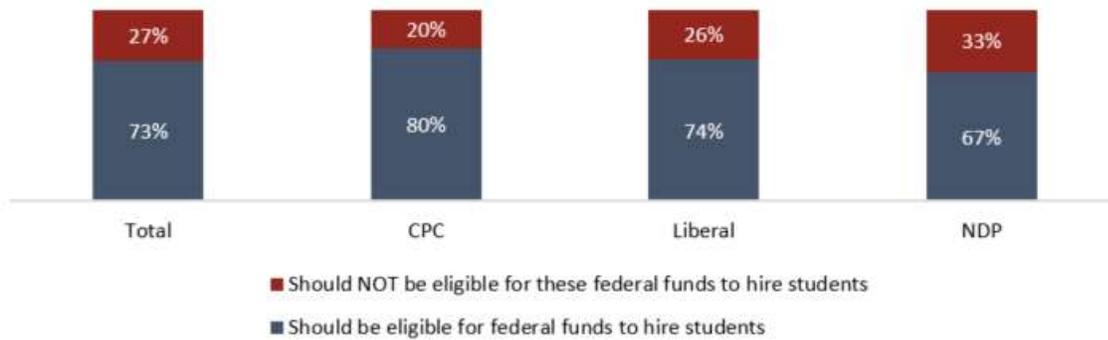
In this case, three-quarters of Canadians (73%) say that such a group should be eligible for federal funds to hire students. This opinion rises to 80 per cent among Conservatives, and drops to two-thirds (67%) among past NDP voters:

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Scenario 1

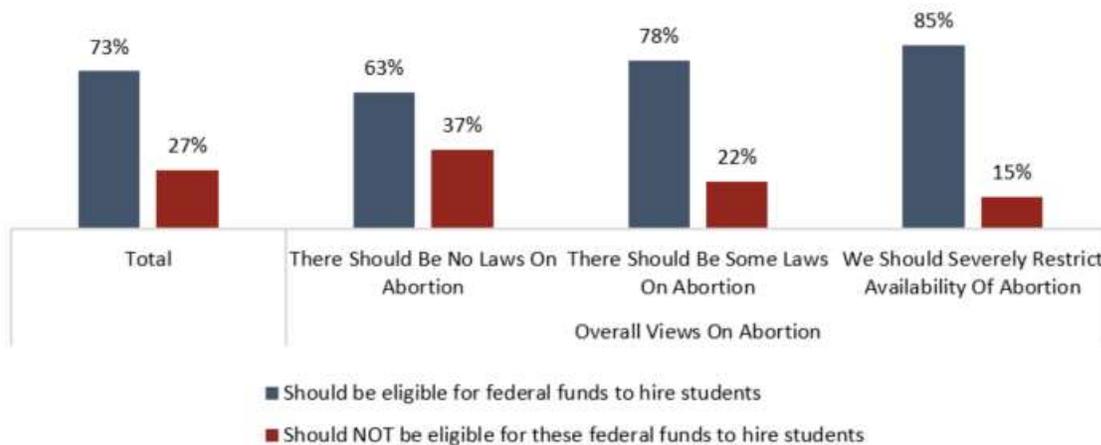
Suppose the employer applying for the Canada Summer Jobs program is a religious group morally opposed to abortion. It is applying for money so students can be hired to run a soup kitchen and programs for the homeless. None of the student employees would be involved in anti-abortion activities. In this case, do you think such a group:



This first scenario is relatively uncontroversial among the Canadian public. Even among the group of Canadians who are most pro-choice, more than six-in-ten (63%) say that the first group should be eligible for federal funding to hire students:

Scenario 1

Suppose the employer applying for the Canada Summer Jobs program is a religious group morally opposed to abortion. It is applying for money so students can be hired to run a soup kitchen and programs for the homeless. None of the student employees would be involved in anti-abortion activities. In this case, do you think such a group:

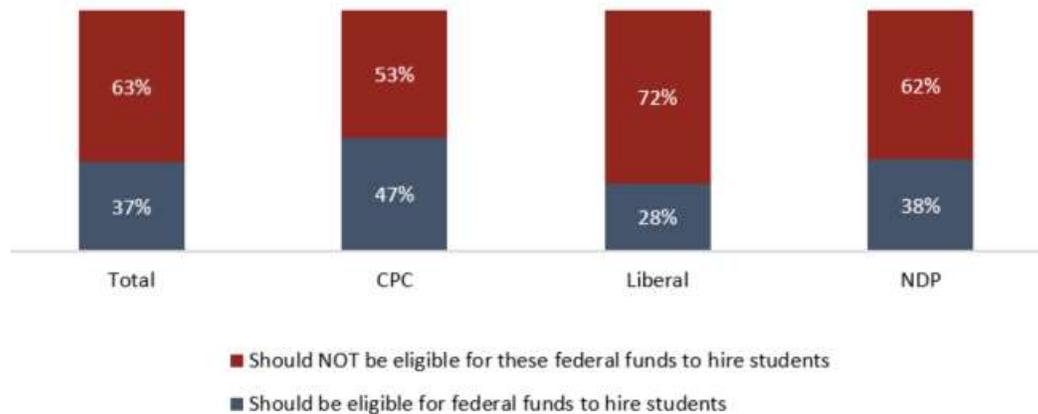


The second scenario presented is one where a religious group with an anti-abortion program is applying for funds to hire students for the summer. In this case, the group would be openly advocating for stricter abortion laws in Canada. There were multiple reports that Members of Parliament, both Liberal and Conservative, had approved funding for anti-abortion groups [in 2016 and 2017](#), leading to discussions over the validity of doing so.

In such a case, fewer than four-in-ten Canadians (37%) say that this group should be eligible for the summer grant program. This includes half of Conservatives (53%) and seven-in-ten Liberals (72%).

Scenario 2

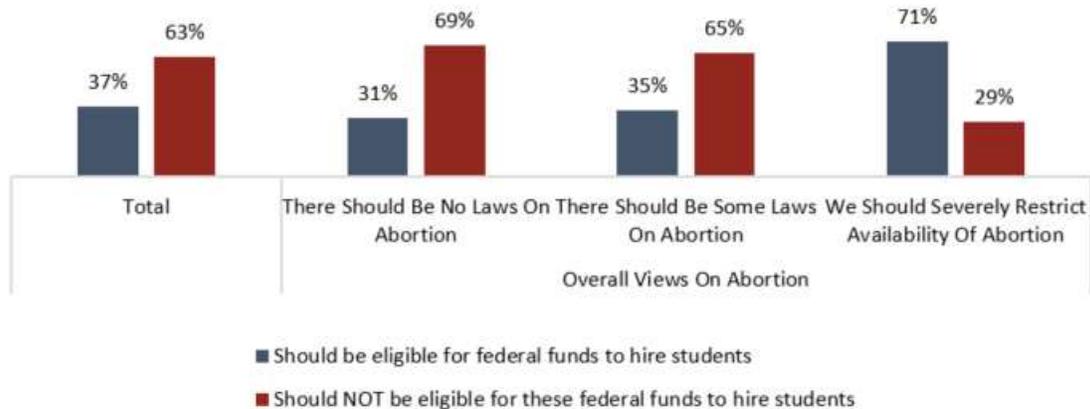
Consider this scenario: Suppose the employer applying for the Canada Summer Jobs program is a religious anti-abortion group promoting and advocating for stricter abortion laws in Canada. In this scenario, the student employees would be hired to help out by distributing flyers in their community. In this case, do you think such a group:



In this scenario, opinion on abortion laws plays a much larger role in the Canadian public's perception. Seven-in-ten Canadians who say abortion should be severely restricted would like this group to be eligible for federal funding through the Summer Jobs grant program, while only one-in-three who feel less strongly about restricting abortion say the same:

Scenario 2

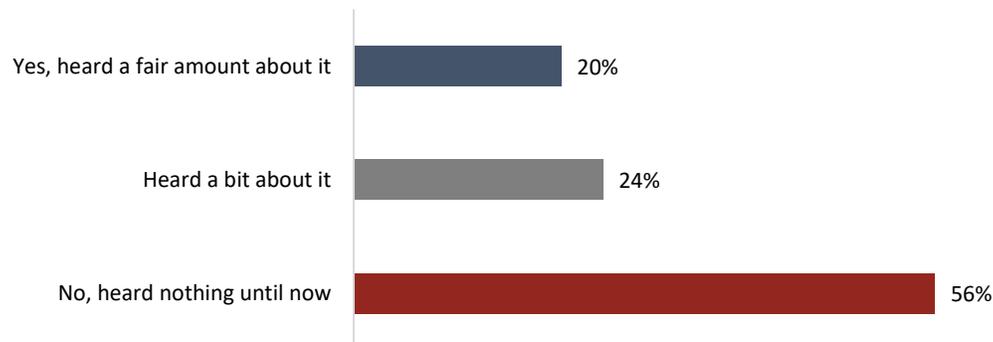
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Fewer have been following the debate closely

Just one-in-five residents (20%) say they have heard a fair amount about the attestation requirement added by the federal government. More than half of Canadians (56%) say that they hadn't heard of the issue until they were asked about it.

Have you heard anything about this new requirement the federal government has added to the student jobs program, or the debate surrounding it?



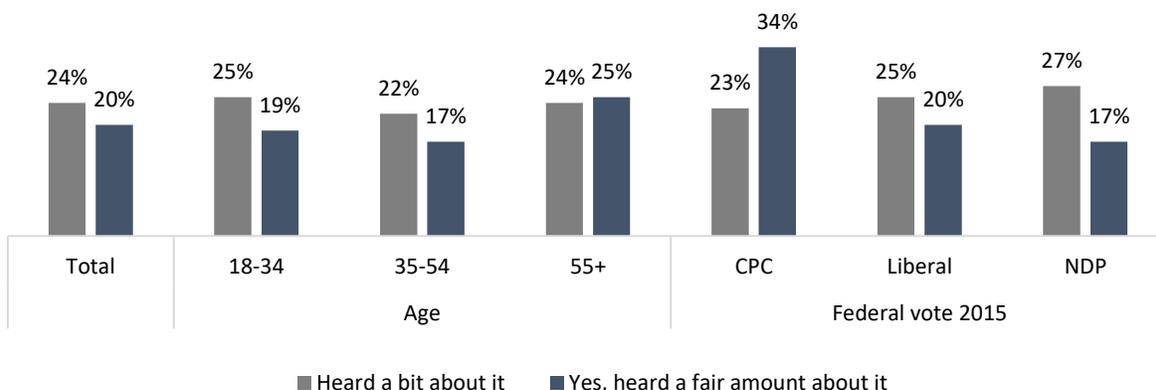
The backlash against the Liberal government for implementing this requirement has come from [faith-based groups](#) and [Conservatives in parliament](#) who have claimed the government is imposing values on Canadians, while support has come from [pro-choice and human rights groups](#), who argue that the government is, in fact, upholding Canadian values.

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In terms of those most engaged with the ongoing debate, past Conservative voters and those over 55 years of age have followed the conversation most closely.

Have you heard anything about this new requirement the federal government has added to the student jobs program, or the debate surrounding it?



Those most aware of the issue say attestation unfair

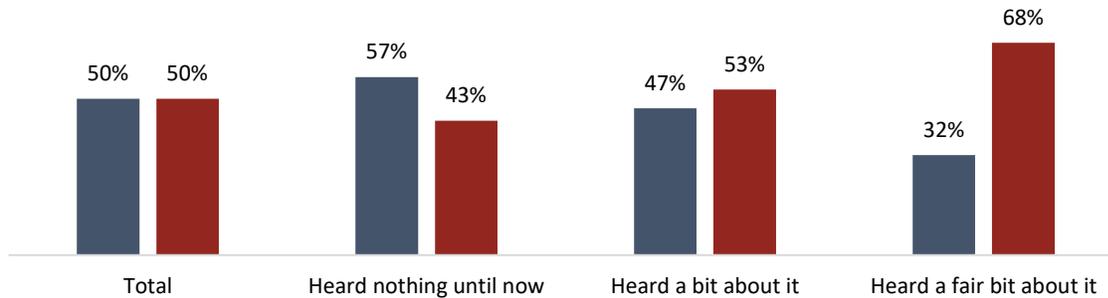
One of the core elements of this debate has been the question of fairness and whether the government is right to ask all groups to attest to something that they may not believe in order to qualify for a federal grant that would enable them to hire a student for the summer. The Angus Reid Institute presented the situation to respondents as follows in the survey questionnaire:

All employers applying for a grant must now confirm that the job they want to fill – and their organization’s “core mandate” – “respects the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms” and specifically refers to women’s rights, including access to abortion. If an employer doesn’t confirm (or “attest”) its agreement with this, they will not be eligible to receive funding.

When asked whether or not this is fair, Canadians are divided evenly. Half say it is fair, abortion is permitted in Canada and those who do not support it should not be eligible. The other half say this is unfair, and is an example of government over-reach.

Those who say they are following the discussions most closely are significantly more likely to say the requirement is unfair.

Which of the following is closest to your own overall view? Please pick the argument closest to your view even if it's not exactly it.

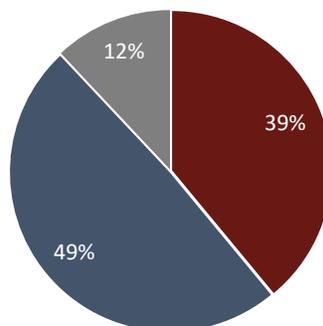


- These new rules are fair - abortion is permitted in Canada and those who don't support this should not be eligible for student summer job funding
- These rules are not fair - the federal government is over-reaching when it withholds funding from organizations because of their beliefs on the issue of abortion

Views about abortion drive opinion

Digging deeper, the overall opinion that a person holds on the legality of abortion is also a factor in their assessment of attestation. Overall, half of respondents say Canada should have limited abortion laws regarding late-term pregnancies. Four-in-ten (39%) say this procedure should be available to women without restriction, while one-in-ten (12%) say that it should never be allowed.

Finally, where do you stand on the issue of abortion rights? Which of the following options would you prefer to see as Canada's policy?



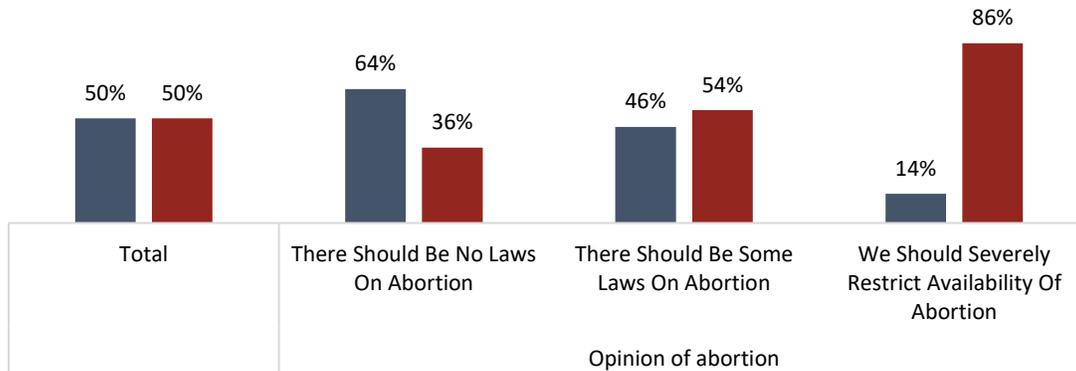
- There should be no laws on abortion and women should have the right to this procedure at any time during the pregnancy
- There should be some laws on abortion in Canada, especially in areas such as late term pregnancies
- We should have abortion laws in Canada which severely restrict availability of abortion except in cases of sexual assault

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Perhaps unsurprisingly, among that group who say that abortion availability should be severely restricted, 86 per cent say that attestation is unfair and over-reaching. The two alternative responses follow a similarly anticipated trend. Those who say there should be “some” laws, are divided, while those who say there should be no laws restricting access are more likely to say that attestation is fair.

Which of the following is closest to your own overall view? Please pick the argument closest to your view even if it's not exactly it.

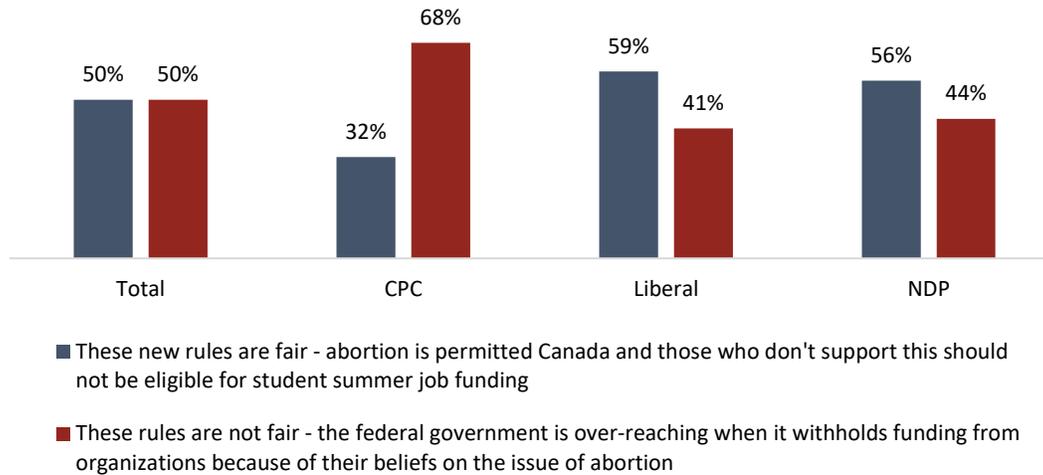


- These new rules are fair - abortion is permitted Canada and those who don't support this should not be eligible for student summer job funding
- These rules are not fair - the federal government is over-reaching when it withholds funding from organizations because of their beliefs on the issue of abortion

The political angle

The issue of abortion is often deeply political, and this controversy captures that tension between progressive and conservative ideologies. The good news for the Prime Minister is a majority of those who supported him in 2015 say the policy is fair. The bad news, however, is that a significant portion of his past supporters (41%) as well as those who supported the New Democratic Party in that election (44%) disagree. Thus, a significant group see this as an infringement. Two-thirds of past Conservative voters also feel this way, leading to the overall split.

Which of the following is closest to your own overall view? Please pick the argument closest to your view even if it's not exactly it.

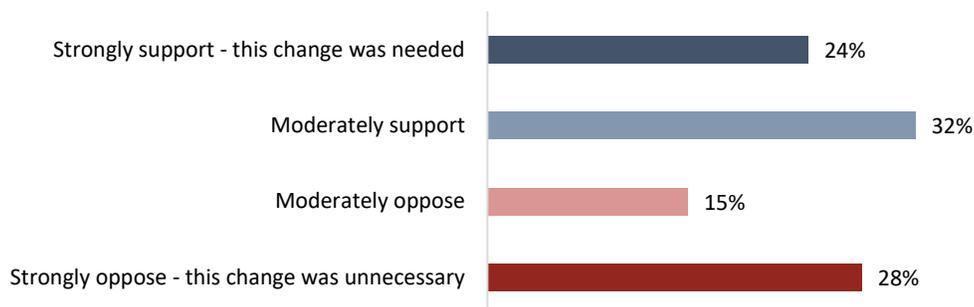


Ultimately, a slight majority support the policy

After considering the two different scenarios presented by ARI, and weighing in on the question of fairness, a majority (57%) of Canadians say they support the requirement that organizations must attest to support women's right to abortion in order to apply for summer jobs grants.

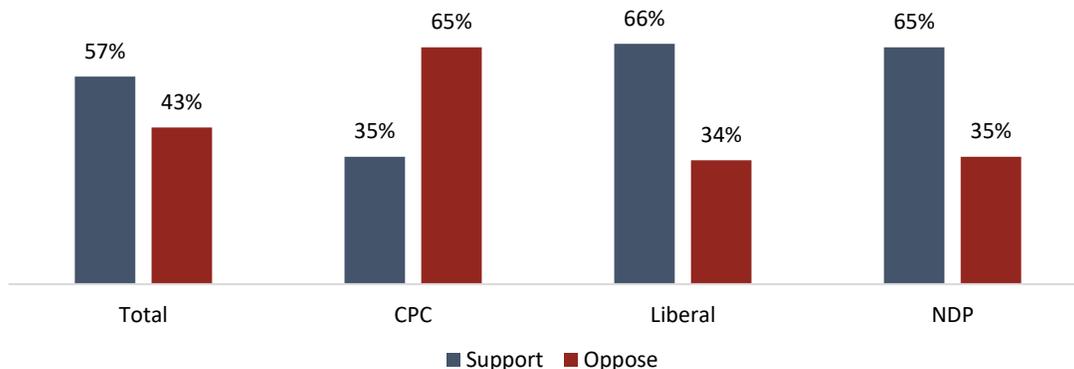
Importantly, there are relatively large groups who feel strongly about the issue. One-quarter of residents voice strong support for the government's decision, while close to three-in-ten (28%) say they strongly oppose the change:

And, overall, would you say you support or oppose this new requirement that organizations must attest to support women's right to abortion in order to apply for these summer job grants?



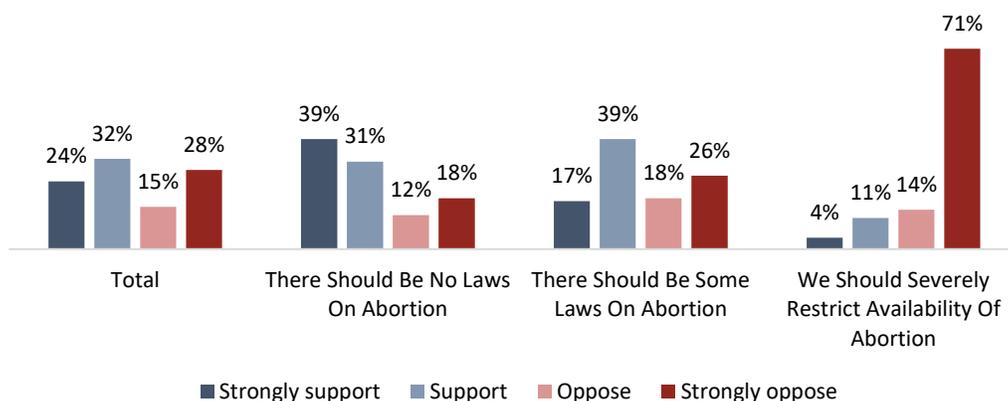
On this question of support for attestation, political divisions become even more pronounced than on the question of fairness. Two-thirds of those who voted for the Liberal Party (66%) and NDP (65%) say they support the policy, while two-thirds of past Conservative Party supporters say the opposite.

And, overall, would you say you support or oppose this new requirement that organizations must attest to support women's right to abortion in order to apply for these summer job grants?



The intensity of opinion again manifests itself in the question of whether there should be restrictions to abortion in Canada. Seven-in-ten pro-life advocates (71%) say they strongly oppose the new policy. On the other end of the spectrum, four-in-ten among those Canadians who lean pro-choice (39%) say that they strongly approve of the move by the Liberals:

And, overall, would you say you support or oppose this new requirement that organizations must attest to support women's right to abortion in order to apply for these summer job grants?



*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.*

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

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