

## As wheels turn over Greyhound service cuts, slim majority backs government-run rural bus services

*Most residents of Western Canada have used a Greyhound bus at least once in their lives.*

**July 27, 2018** – As the nation's premiers – led by Alberta's Rachel Notley, who [recently expanded](#) a rural transportation pilot program – call for a [national response](#) to the impending loss of long-distance bus service in Western Canada and parts of northern Ontario, a new public opinion poll suggests Canadians are looking to government for a solution.

The study, conducted by the Angus Reid Institute, finds six-in-ten Canadians (60%) expressing support for a rural bus service funded by the federal government, and slightly more (64%) supporting a provincially funded service.

This support for government intervention on rural transportation comes not only from frequent users of Greyhound Canada's bus services, but also from those who have been on a Greyhound bus.

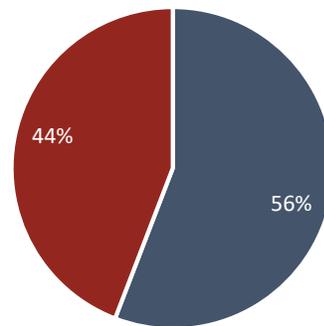
That said, though most Canadians support federal or provincial funding of rural bus service, many are hoping it doesn't come to that. More than four-in-ten say it shouldn't be up to government to fill in the gaps in service, and that private companies will do so if there is sufficient demand.

### More Key Findings:

- Asked to choose between two opposing philosophical statements, a majority of Canadians (56%) say "government should step in to maintain rural and northern bus services, they are vital to communities," rather than "it should not be up to government to maintain these services, private businesses can fill the gaps if there is enough demand" (44%)
- Though Canadians are broadly supportive of government intervention on rural bus service, very few (only 5%) expect to be personally affected by Greyhound's decision

Which would you say is closest to your point of view, even if neither is exactly how you feel?

- The government should step in to maintain rural and northern bus services, they are vital to communities
- It should not be up to the government to maintain these services. Private businesses can fill the gaps if there is enough demand



### METHODOLOGY:

The Angus Reid Institute conducted an online survey from July 18 – 23, 2018, among a representative randomized sample of 1,500 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.

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- Slightly more than half of all Canadian adults (54%) have ridden a Greyhound bus in their lives, with those living in Western Canada – who stand to be most affected by the company’s withdrawal from their provinces – more likely than Eastern Canadians to have ridden one

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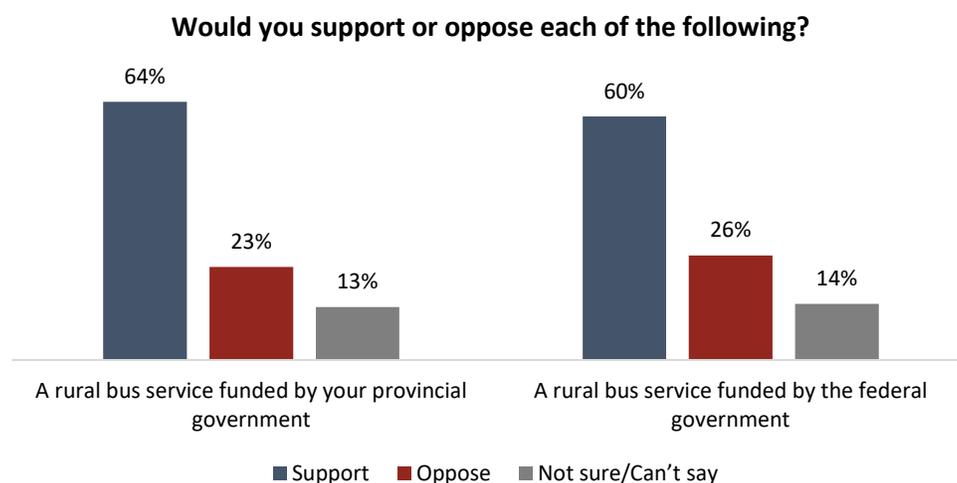
- **Six-in-ten support government-funded rural bus service**
- **Deeper divisions on the principle of government intervention**
- **One-in-four know someone who will be affected by Greyhound changes**
- **Western residents have more experience with Greyhound**

**Six-in-ten support government-funded rural bus service**

Greyhound Canada’s announcement earlier this month that it plans to eliminate all of its bus routes in British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan, and Manitoba has prompted a national conversation about the future of rural transportation in Canada. Provincial premiers have jointly agreed that Greyhound’s withdrawal from rural and northern communities is “a national issue requiring a national response,” and Prime Minister Justin Trudeau has promised to investigate “paths forward.”

Many of these potential paths would no doubt involve federal or provincial delivery of bus service in the affected parts of the country – either directly or through subsidies to Greyhound or other companies interested in maintaining these bus routes. In Alberta, the provincial government has already unveiled new pilot projects in rural areas in response to Greyhound’s cuts. The federal government, meanwhile, is reportedly leaning toward providing loan guarantees and start-up funds to local bus companies, rather than subsidizing providing direct, ongoing subsidies to Greyhound or a competitor.

Asked about the prospect of federally or provincially funded rural bus service, Canadians are broadly supportive. Nearly two-thirds (64%) say they would support such a service funded by their provincial government, and almost as many (60%) would support the federal funding of such a service:

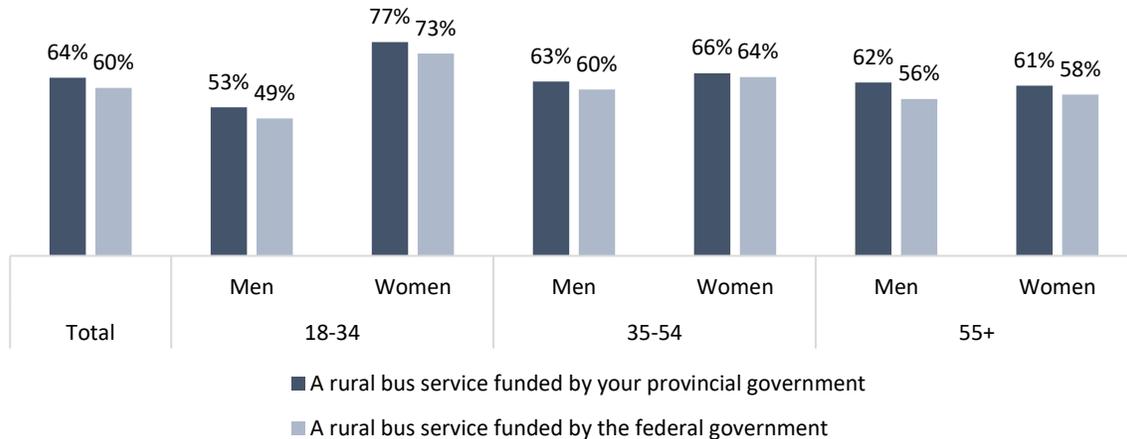


Age and gender are key factors affecting public opinion on this issue. Women under age 35 are among those most supportive of both federal and provincial funding for rural buses, while men the same age are among those *least* supportive:

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Percentage who would support each:

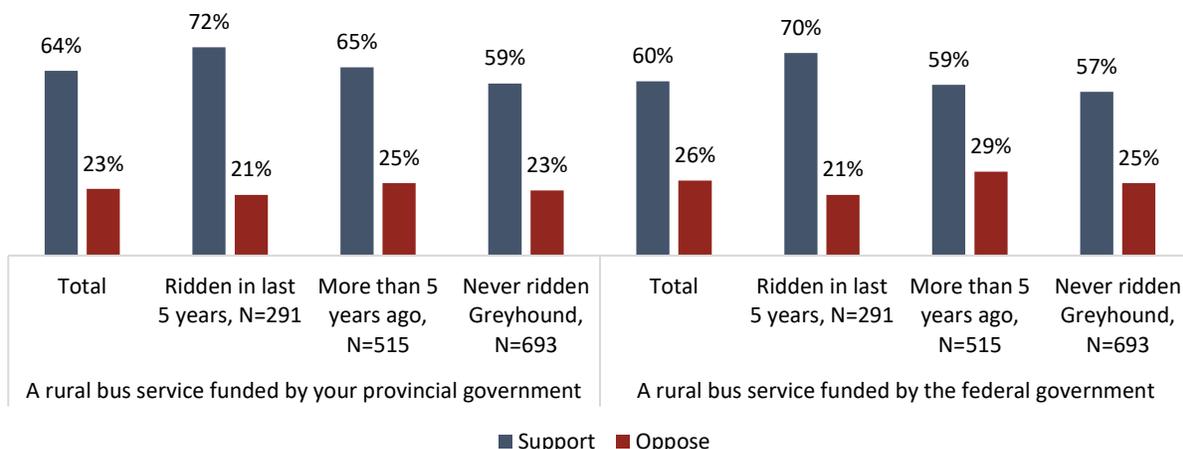


Regional differences in support are less pronounced. Perhaps surprisingly, those living in rural areas or small towns are no more likely than those living in large cities to favour either provincial or federal funding for rural bus service. Indeed, urban Canadians are slightly *more* likely than those living in less-developed areas to support a provincially funded rural bus service, as seen in the summary tables at the end of this report.

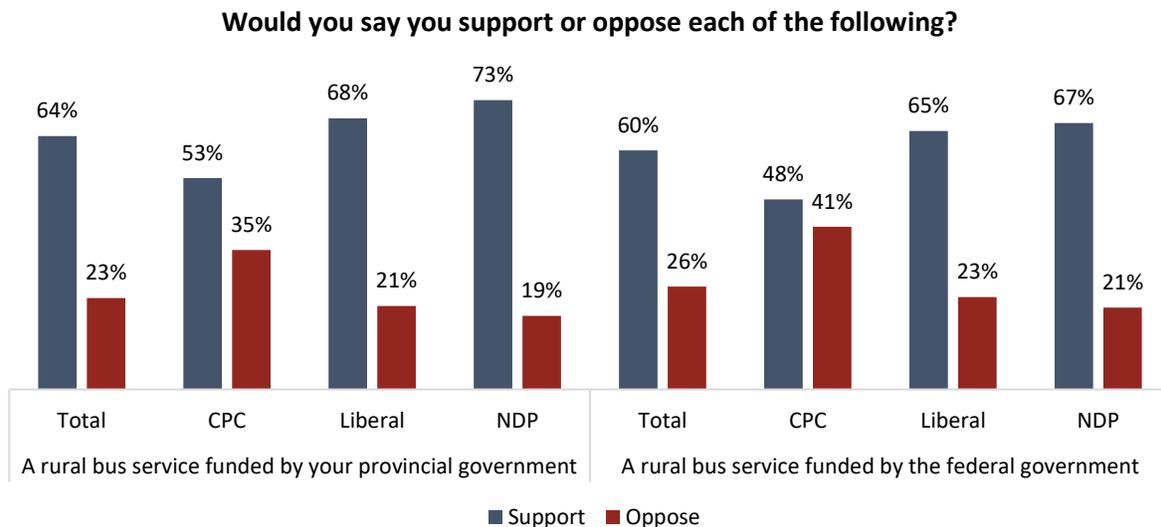
At the provincial level, support is lowest among Albertans (53% for provincial funding; 49% for federal), but it still easily outpaces opposition. This is true across all regions ([see comprehensive tables for greater detail](#)).

One's own experiences with Greyhound service also influence opinion on this question. Those who have ridden the bus in the last 5 years are more likely to support government funding, though it should be noted that even those who have never ridden a Greyhound bus in their lives are supportive:

Would you say you support or oppose each of the following?



Notably, support for each of these potential government interventions cuts across political lines. Even those who cast ballots for the Conservative Party of Canada in 2015 are more likely to support than oppose bus funding from each level of government. That said, past Conservatives *are* substantially more divided in their responses to this question than past supporters of either the Liberal or New Democratic parties:



### Deeper divisions on the principle of government intervention

While Canadians of all stripes are broadly supportive of government stepping in to fund rural bus routes, a more abstract, philosophical version of the question prompts divisions.

Respondents were presented with a pair of statements and asked to choose which one more closely reflects their own views. On one side of this trade-off was the statement, “*The government should step in to maintain rural and northern bus services, they are vital to communities.*” On the other side was the statement, “*It should not be up to the government to maintain these services. Private businesses can fill the gaps if there is enough demand.*”

Framing the question this way yields some interesting divergences in opinion, most notably among past CPC voters. Nearly two-thirds of this group (64%) choose the “it should not be up to government to maintain these services” option in this face-off.

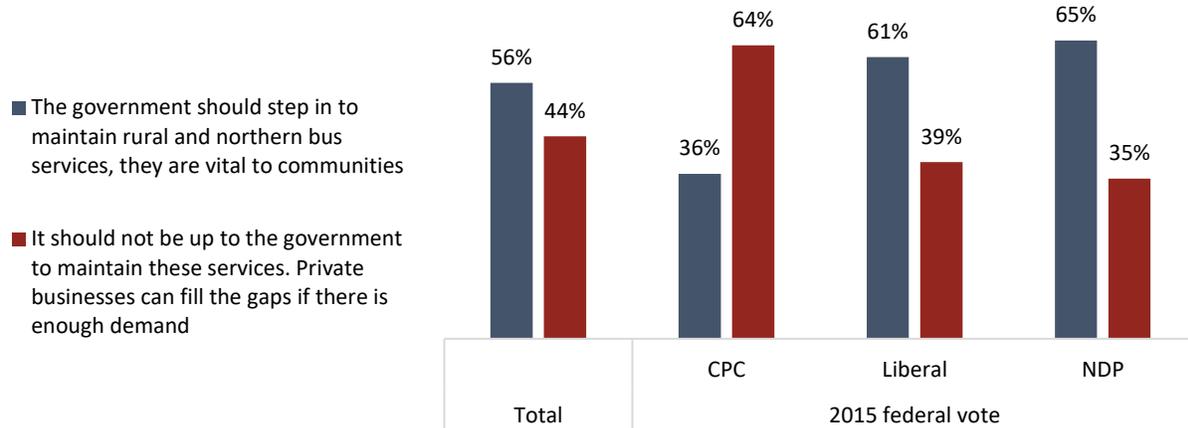
Past Liberals and New Democrats, as seen in the following graph, are not so conditional in their support for government-funded bus services:

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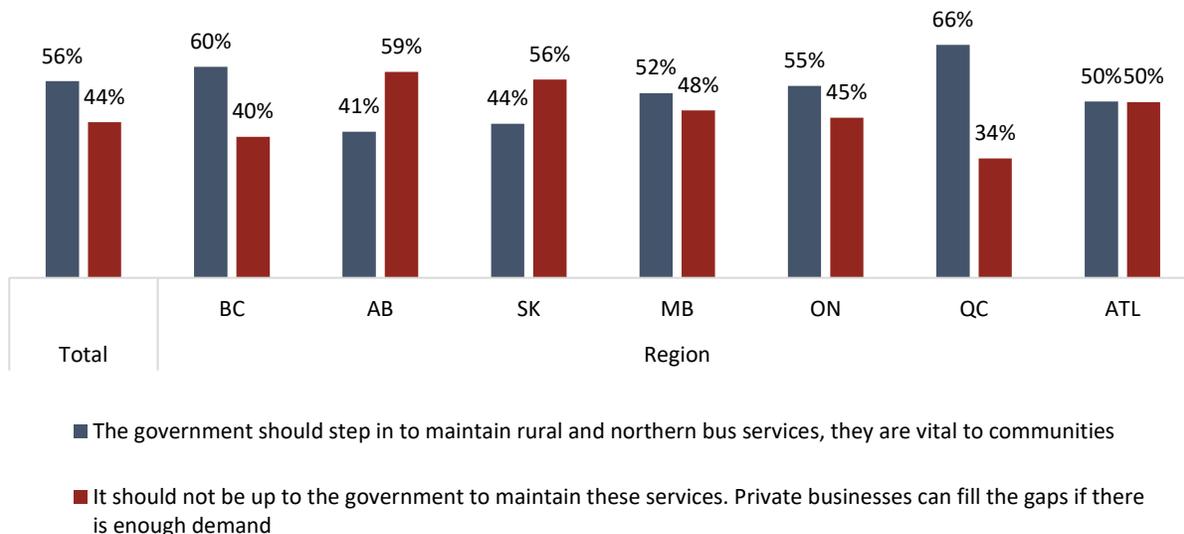
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**Which would you say is closest to your point of view, even if neither is exactly how you feel?**



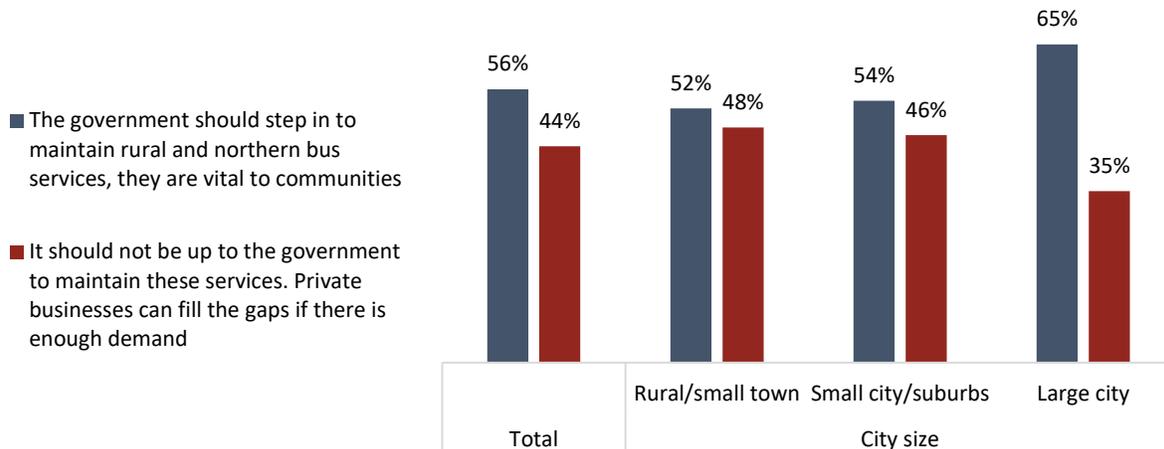
This political divergence appears to influence regional responses to this question as well. Alberta and Saskatchewan – traditional Conservative strongholds – lean toward the perspective that government should not be responsible for maintaining rural bus service after Greyhound ceases operations:

**Which would you say is closest to your point of view, even if neither is exactly how you feel?**



Residents of big cities – where Liberal and NDP candidates traditionally perform better – are more likely to prefer government stepping in:

**Which would you say is closest to your point of view, even if neither is exactly how you feel?**



Interestingly, while support for federal or provincial funding of rural bus services doesn't vary significantly across income brackets, views on this face-off question do. Those with household incomes below \$50,000 heavily favour the perspective that government needs to maintain these bus routes as a vital community service (64% say this), while those with higher incomes are more evenly split ([see comprehensive tables](#)).

**One-in-four know someone who will be affected by Greyhound changes**

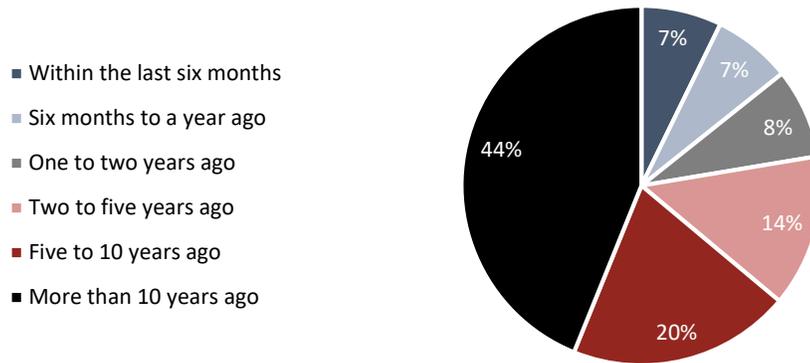
Greyhound Canada's website [estimates](#) that it transports 6.5 million passengers per year to nearly 1,100 locations across the country. A decline in the former number is a key component of Greyhound's rationale for its plans to significantly reduce the latter one.

The company claims that [ridership has declined](#) 41 per cent since 2010, making routes outside of its core traffic in Ontario and Quebec unsustainable. It estimates that some 2 million customers will be affected by the change.

These figures – and the [numerous anecdotes](#) from residents of rural and northern regions that have accompanied them – serve to underscore the scope and significance of the Greyhound bus in the lives of many Canadians.

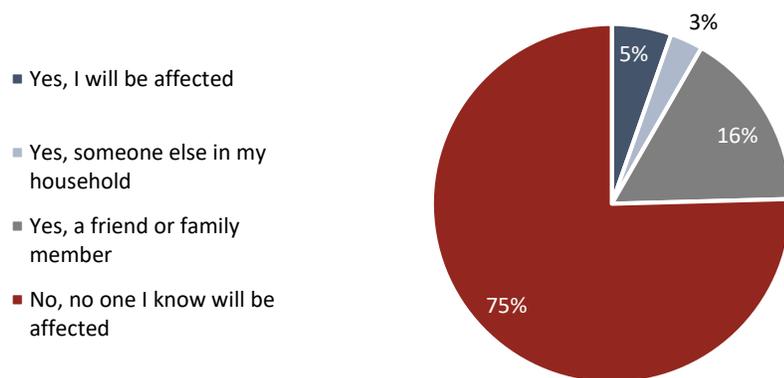
This ARI poll finds more than half of all Canadians (54%) saying they've used a Greyhound bus at least once in their lives. That said, the vast majority of these past Greyhound customers have not traveled with the company recently:

**When was the last time you traveled with Greyhound?  
(Asked of those who have ever traveled with Greyhound, N=807)**



When asked directly whether they feel they will be affected by the end of Greyhound service in Western Canada, just 5 per cent of respondents say yes. Indeed, three-quarters of Canadians (75%) say they don't know anyone who will be affected.

**Do you personally know anyone who will be affected by the  
end of Greyhound bus service in Western Canada?**

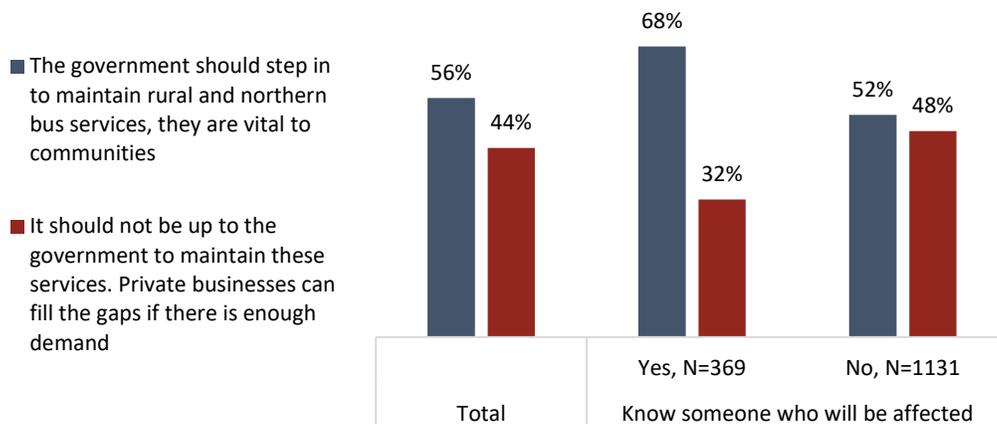


These findings reflect Greyhound's struggles with declining ridership. While the company has touched the lives of a large number of Canadians over the years, its influence has waned considerably in the last five to 10.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, the one-in-four Canadians who know someone who will be affected by Greyhound's departure from Western Canada are much more likely to view rural bus routes as an essential service that government should step in to maintain.

That said, it's notable that roughly half of those who don't know anyone who will be affected by Greyhound leaving Western Canada feel the same way:

**Which would you say is closest to your point of view, even if neither is exactly how you feel?**

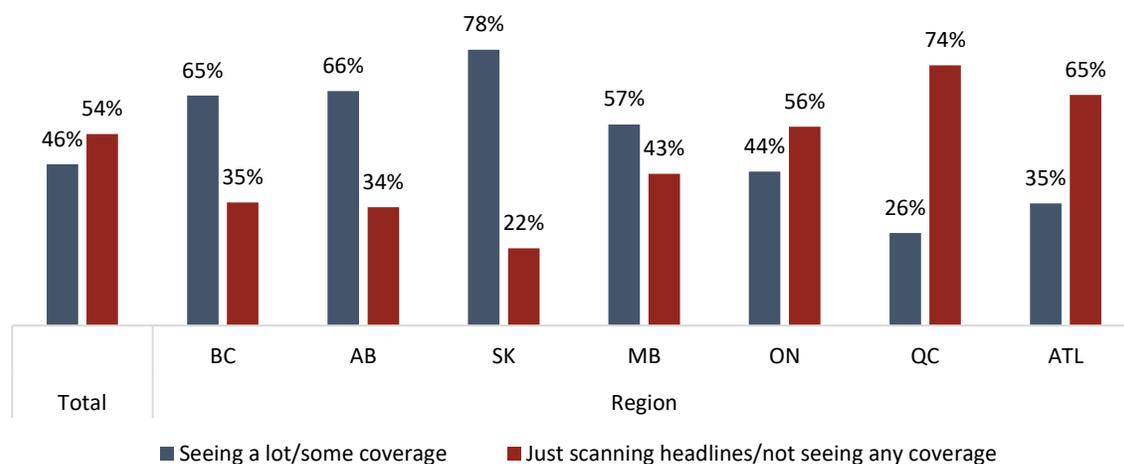


**Western residents have more experience with Greyhound**

The percentage of Canadians who have ever ridden a Greyhound bus is considerably higher in Western Canada than it is in Ontario or – especially – Quebec and Atlantic Canada ([see comprehensive tables](#)).

Perhaps for this reason, those living west of Ontario are much more likely to be following this story in the news. At least two-in-three in B.C., Alberta, and Saskatchewan say they are seeing either “some” or “a lot” of media coverage of this issue, while Quebecers and Atlantic Canadians are much more likely to be “just scanning the headlines” or not seeing any coverage at all:

**How closely would you say you have been following this story? Are you ...**

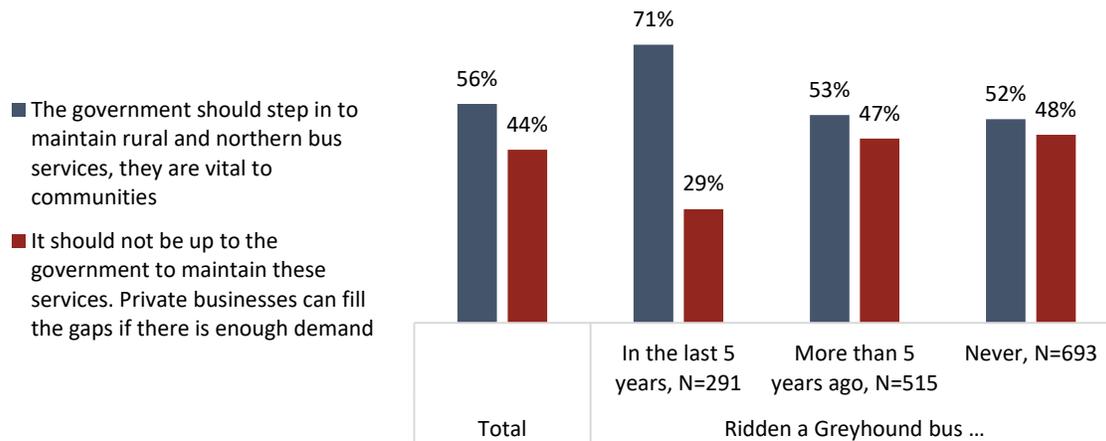


The higher degree of awareness of this issue in Western Canada doesn't seem to have much influence on support for government-funded rural bus services in the region. Nor does the higher-than-average percentage of the population that has ridden a Greyhound bus.

As previously discussed, Alberta and Saskatchewan tend to be less supportive of government intervention, despite their high rates of Greyhound usage and awareness of this story.

Indeed, overall experience with riding a Greyhound bus isn't particularly correlated with support for government funding of the service Greyhound provides. Rather, it is those who have used Greyhound more recently – the 19 per cent of respondents who have ridden a Greyhound bus in the last five years – who hold more favourable views of government intervention:

**Which would you say is closest to your point of view, even if neither is exactly how you feel?**



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](#).

<b>Would you say you support or oppose each of the following?</b>				
<b>(weighted sample sizes)</b>	<b>Total (1500)</b>	<b>Community size</b>		
		<b>Rural/Small town (379)</b>	<b>Small city/Suburbs (767)</b>	<b>Big city (354)</b>
<b>A rural bus service funded by your provincial government</b>				
<b>Strongly Support</b>	<b>28%</b>	<b>27%</b>	<b>26%</b>	<b>35%</b>
<b>Support</b>	<b>36%</b>	<b>35%</b>	<b>38%</b>	<b>32%</b>
<b>Oppose</b>	<b>12%</b>	<b>14%</b>	<b>12%</b>	<b>10%</b>
<b>Strongly oppose</b>	<b>11%</b>	<b>13%</b>	<b>10%</b>	<b>9%</b>
<b>Not sure/Can't say</b>	<b>13%</b>	<b>11%</b>	<b>14%</b>	<b>14%</b>
<b>A rural bus service funded by the federal government</b>				
<b>Strongly Support</b>	<b>28%</b>	<b>27%</b>	<b>28%</b>	<b>30%</b>
<b>Support</b>	<b>32%</b>	<b>33%</b>	<b>32%</b>	<b>31%</b>
<b>Oppose</b>	<b>13%</b>	<b>14%</b>	<b>12%</b>	<b>12%</b>
<b>Strongly oppose</b>	<b>13%</b>	<b>14%</b>	<b>14%</b>	<b>12%</b>
<b>Not sure/Can't say</b>	<b>14%</b>	<b>12%</b>	<b>14%</b>	<b>15%</b>

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<b>Would you say you support or oppose each of the following?</b>				
(weighted sample sizes)	Total (1500)	Ridden a Greyhound bus ...		
		In the last 5 years (291)	More than 5 years ago (515)	Never (693)
<b>A rural bus service funded by your provincial government</b>				
Strongly Support	28%	39%	25%	26%
Support	36%	33%	40%	33%
Oppose	12%	13%	12%	13%
Strongly oppose	11%	8%	13%	10%
Not sure/Can't say	13%	7%	10%	18%
<b>A rural bus service funded by the federal government</b>				
Strongly Support	28%	40%	25%	25%
Support	32%	30%	34%	31%
Oppose	13%	11%	12%	13%
Strongly oppose	13%	10%	17%	12%
Not sure/Can't say	14%	8%	11%	18%

<b>Which would you say is closest to your point of view, even if neither is exactly how you feel?</b>				
(weighted sample sizes)	Total (1500)	Community size		
		Rural/Small town (379)	Small city/Suburbs (767)	Big city (354)
The government should step in to maintain rural and northern bus services, they are vital to communities.	56%	52%	54%	65%
It should not be up to the government to maintain these services. Private businesses can fill the gaps if there is enough demand.	44%	48%	46%	35%

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<b>Which would you say is closest to your point of view, even if neither is exactly how you feel?</b>			
<b>(weighted sample sizes)</b>	<b>Total (1500)</b>	<b>Know someone who will be affected by Greyhound cutbacks</b>	
		<b>Yes (369)</b>	<b>No (1131)</b>
<b>The government should step in to maintain rural and northern bus services, they are vital to communities.</b>	<b>56%</b>	<b>68%</b>	<b>52%</b>
<b>It should not be up to the government to maintain these services. Private businesses can fill the gaps if there is enough demand.</b>	<b>44%</b>	<b>32%</b>	<b>48%</b>

<b>Which would you say is closest to your point of view, even if neither is exactly how you feel?</b>				
<b>(weighted sample sizes)</b>	<b>Total (1500)</b>	<b>Ridden a Greyhound bus ...</b>		
		<b>In the last 5 years (291)</b>	<b>More than 5 years ago (515)</b>	<b>Never (693)</b>
<b>The government should step in to maintain rural and northern bus services, they are vital to communities.</b>	<b>56%</b>	<b>71%</b>	<b>53%</b>	<b>52%</b>
<b>It should not be up to the government to maintain these services. Private businesses can fill the gaps if there is enough demand.</b>	<b>44%</b>	<b>29%</b>	<b>47%</b>	<b>48%</b>

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