

Trudeau Groping Allegation: most past Liberal voters unfazed, but one-in-five say PM's response 'inadequate'

Politics, rather than gender, drives differences in opinion on the issue

July 20, 2018 – Weeks of unflattering headlines and uncomfortable questions about an allegation of inappropriate touching almost two decades ago do not appear to have had significant damaging impact on Justin Trudeau's standing in the eyes of his support base.

The issue has forced the Prime Minister to attempt to reconcile his initial denial and subsequent explanation of this alleged conduct – which took place long before he entered politics – with his current public stance supporting women who come forward with allegations of sexual harassment.

While this has led critics and observers to accuse Trudeau of hypocrisy, a new Angus Reid Institute study finds that a majority of Canadians (62%) – and, indeed, eight-in-ten women who voted for Trudeau's Liberal Party in 2015 (83%) – say the Prime Minister's response to these allegations has been "adequate".

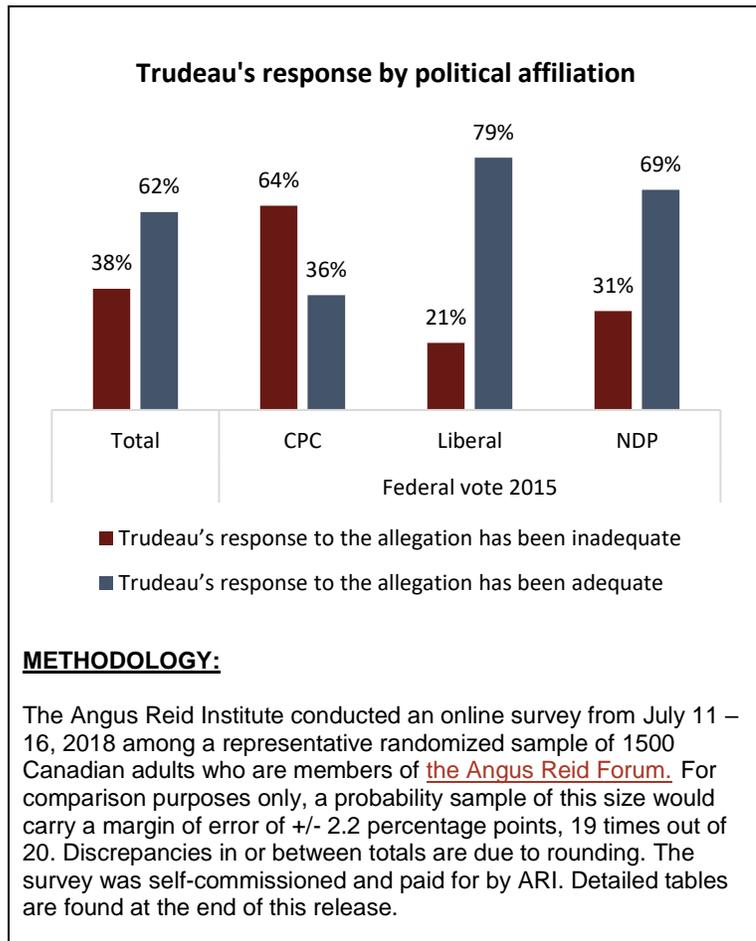
However, this leaves one-in-five past Liberal voters (21%) looking for more by way of response from Trudeau and saying their view of him has worsened in light of the incident.

Past Conservative voters are significantly more likely to be paying attention to the issue, and are twice as likely as past New Democrats and Liberals to say that their opinion of him has deteriorated as a result (58% say this).

Ultimately, Canadians offer competing views when considering allegations of inappropriate conduct. Nearly all say that men need to take responsibility for their actions toward women (91%). That said, more than six-in-ten (63%) say this specific incident is overblown and garnering too much attention.

More Key Findings:

- Eight-in-ten (79%) of Trudeau's 2015 voters say that his response to inappropriate touching allegations has been adequate, while seven-in-ten (69%) New Democrats agree. Two-thirds of Conservatives (64%) disagree



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- Six-in-ten Canadians (61%) say that their opinion of the Prime Minister has not changed after hearing of this event. Three-in-ten (33%), however, say that their view of him has worsened
- Women and men and of all age groups are equally likely to say that this issue has received too much attention. Divisions emerge based on political affiliation, with past Conservative voters disagreeing

INDEX:

- **Trudeau response not problematic for most Canadian women**
- **How has this allegation affected opinions of the PM?**
- **Most say women right to come forward, but this specific issue overblown**

Trudeau response not problematic for most Canadian women

The beginning of summer 2018 has forced Prime Minister Justin Trudeau to cast his attention back almost 20 years, to the Columbia Brewery's Kokanee Summit Festival in Creston B.C. While at this fundraising event, a then 28-year-old Trudeau was accused of "groping" and "inappropriately handling" a young female reporter. According to an [editorial published](#) in the Creston Valley Advance newspaper the next day, Trudeau was said to have apologized for behaving in a way that was "forward".

There are no specific details about what actually occurred, and the woman who accused the PM released a statement in early July saying she stands by her story but wishes to move on with her life.

The first response from the Prime Minister's office was to [state that Trudeau](#) "remembers being in Creston for the Avalanche Foundation, but doesn't think he had any negative interactions there." After "[reflecting very carefully](#)", Trudeau said he feels confident he did not act inappropriately, though he suggested that someone else may have perceived his actions differently.

[Related: A comprehensive look at #MeToo in Canadian society](#)

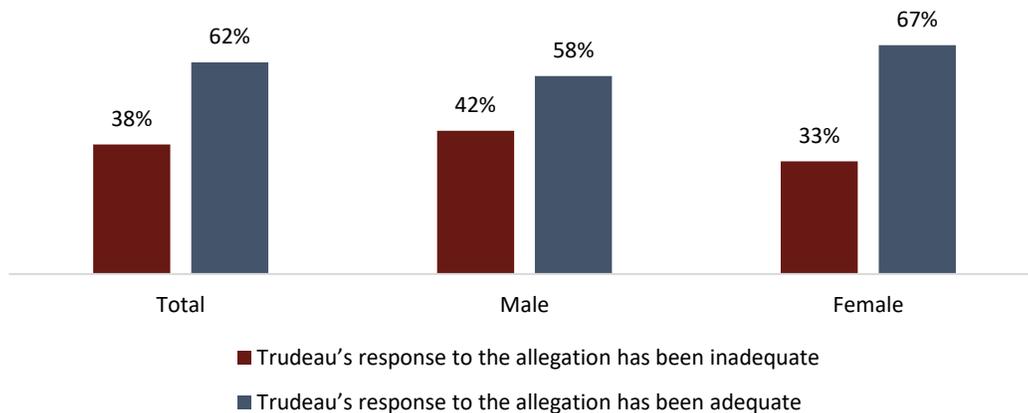
Most Canadians are say that Trudeau has responded to this situation adequately, while a significant minority of four-in-ten (38%) say that they expected more from him.

What is perhaps most notable from this study is the finding that in an era of discussions about the inappropriate behaviour women face on the job, female respondents are more inclined than men to say Trudeau's response has been adequate. The PM has faced [allegations of hypocrisy for](#) advocating so strongly for women's rights and feminism, while at the same time facing these allegations. Trudeau's party has also [removed member Kent Hehr](#) for inappropriate conduct and suspended others. These criticisms are evidently not resonating with women as much as they are with men. Two-thirds of female respondents say the Prime Minister's response has been sufficient:

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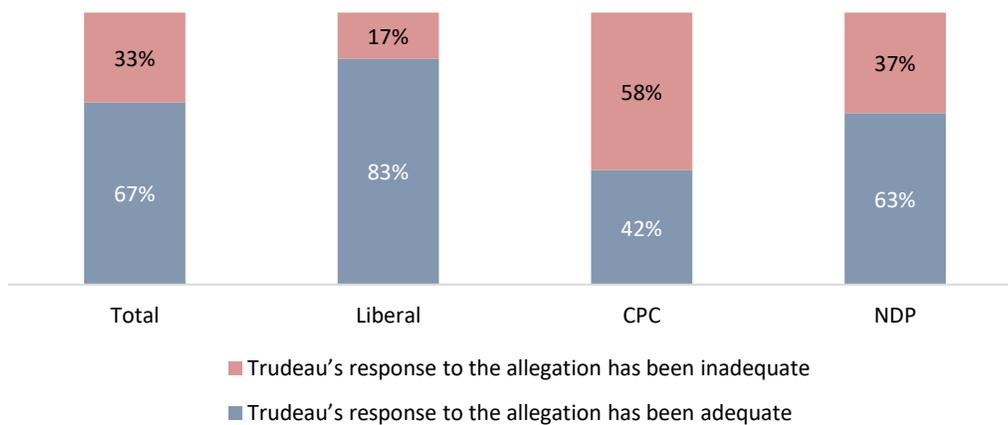
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Which statement is closest to your own view, even if you don't entirely agree?



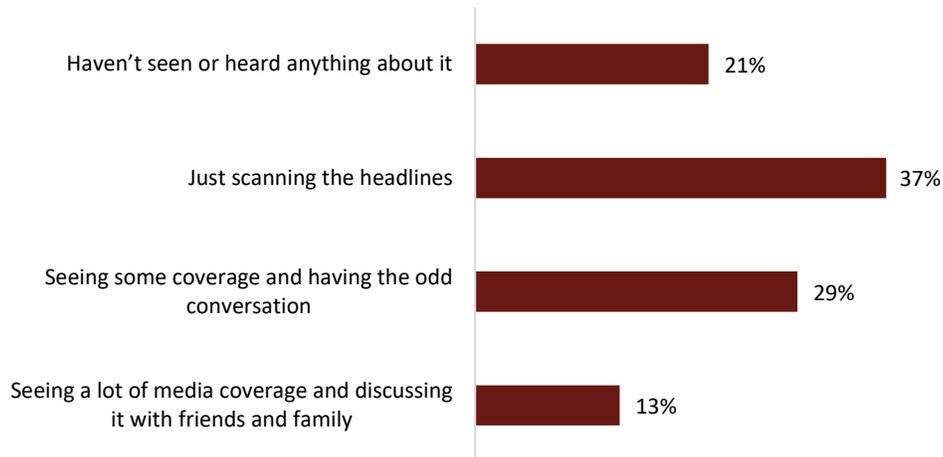
Women who voted for Trudeau in 2015 are overwhelmingly supportive of the way that the Prime Minister has handled the situation. Overall, eight-in-ten female Liberals say the response has satisfied them, and a majority of past female NDP supporters (63%) say the same. That said, there are roughly one-in-six women who voted for the Liberals in 2015 who find the PM's response inadequate:

Response among Canadian women by 2015 vote



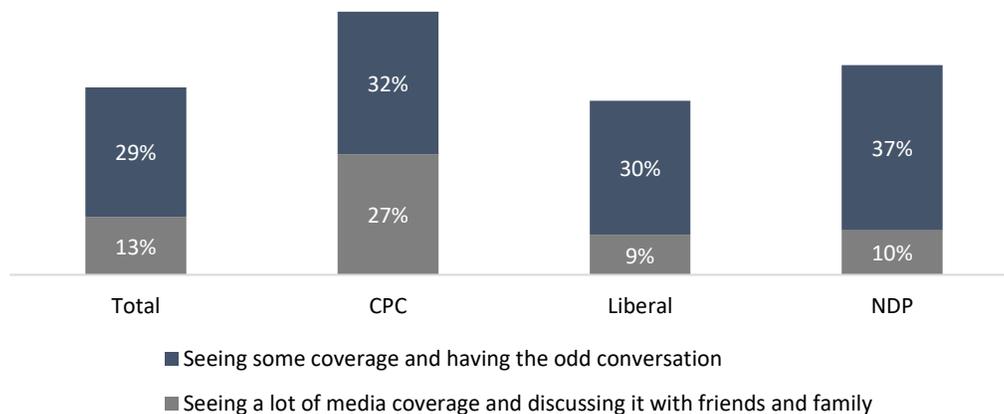
This is an issue that, despite its relatively high media profile and discussion in political circles, has not engaged most Canadians. Just 13 per cent of respondents say they have been following it closely, while another 29 per cent say that they have had the occasional conversation about it.

Awareness of groping allegations:



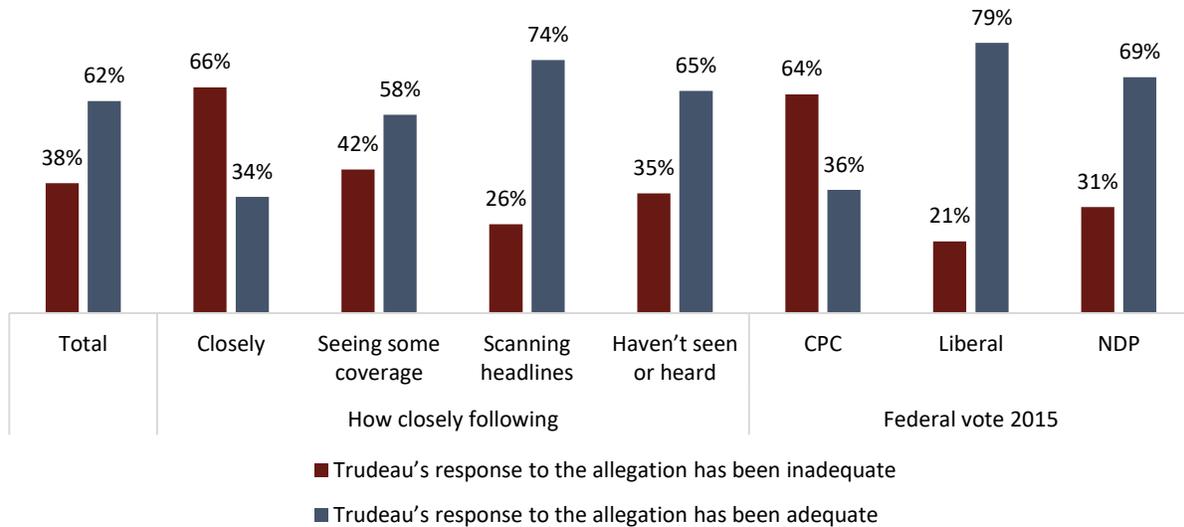
Importantly, past Conservative voters have been most engaged on the issue:

Awareness of groping allegations:



Perhaps for this reason, those following this issue most closely are also most inclined to say that Trudeau has responded inadequately. Responses from past Conservatives closely mirror the responses from those who voice the most awareness of this saga:

Trudeau's response by awareness and political affiliation

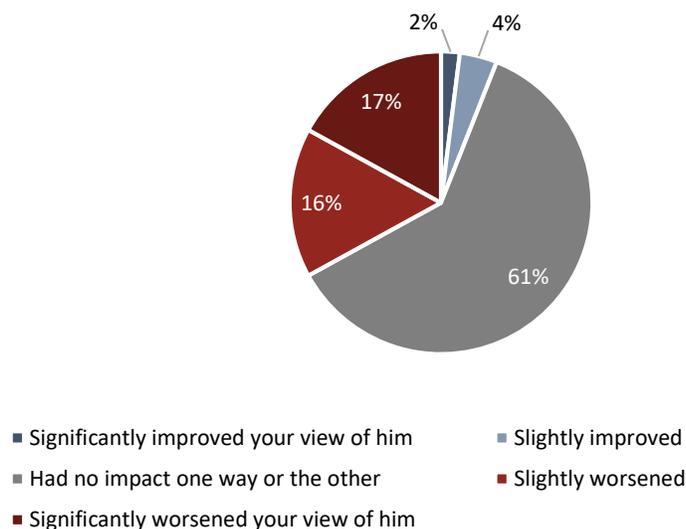


How has this allegation affected opinions of the PM?

The Prime Minister enjoyed a [boost in public opinion](#) in June after a tumultuous G7 Summit and a barrage of attacks from United States President Donald Trump. Trudeau's approval jumped significantly – 12 percentage points – following these events.

So what impact do allegations of misconduct have on Trudeau? For six-in-ten Canadians, their opinion has not changed, while one-in-three (33%) say their view of him has worsened.

Thinking about your own view of Justin Trudeau, what impact, if any, would you say this incident has had on your view of him?

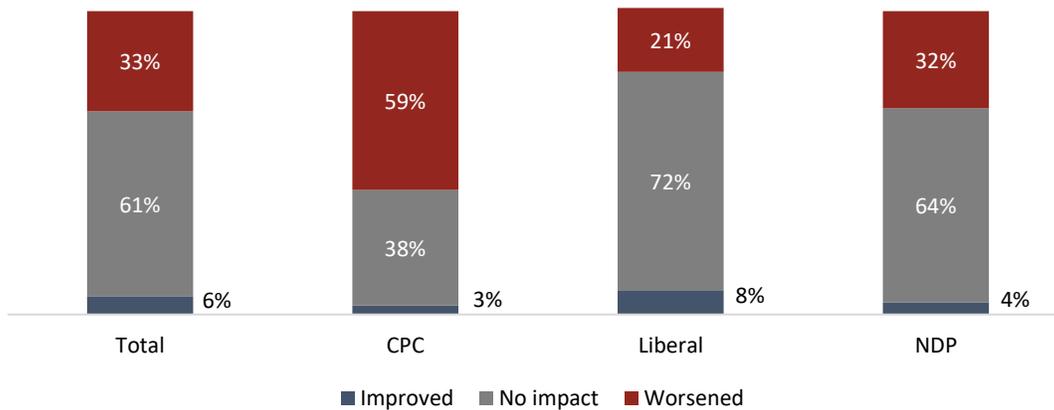


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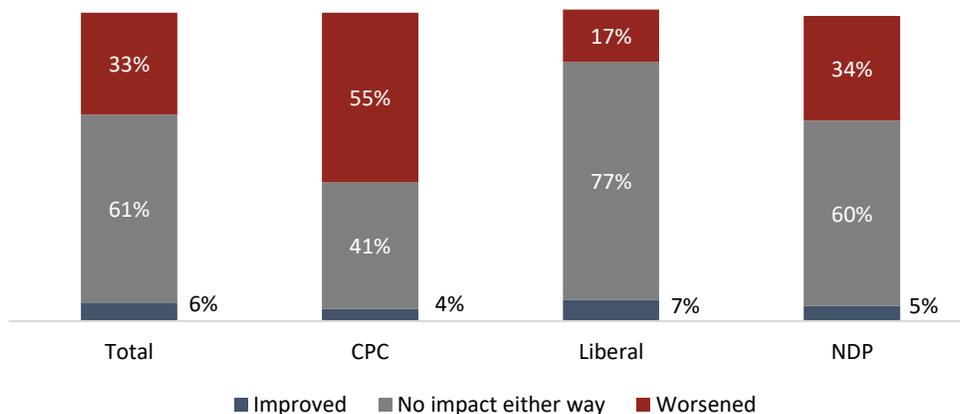
While the federal Liberals will likely be less concerned about the number of past Conservative voters who say their view of the Prime Minister has worsened, three-in-ten past New Democrats (32%) and one-in-five of Trudeau's 2015 voters (21%) say their view has soured.

Thinking your own view of Justin Trudeau, what impact, if any, would you say this incident has had on your view of him?



The potential damage done to the Prime Minister's reputation may not be devastating, but he does not escape without some impact. One-in-three women who voted for the NDP in 2015 (34%), presumably voters the Liberal Party would target in the coming election, say their view of him has worsened:

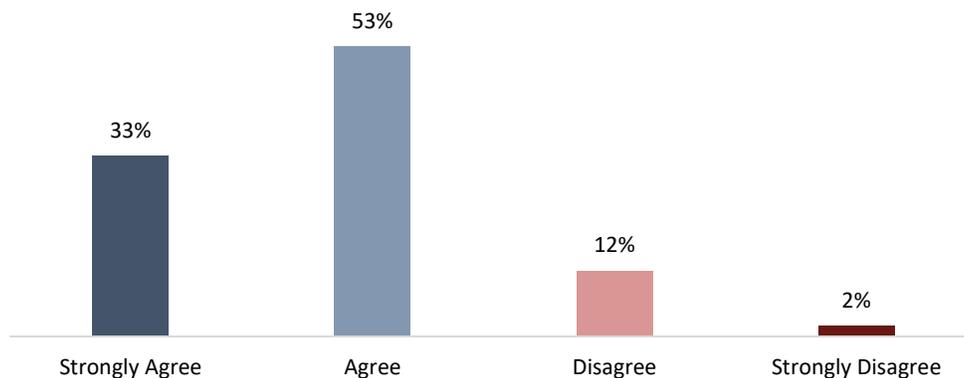
**Thinking your own view of Justin Trudeau, what impact, if any, would you say this incident has had on your view of him?
Canadian women by 2015 vote**



Most say women right to come forward, but this specific issue overblown

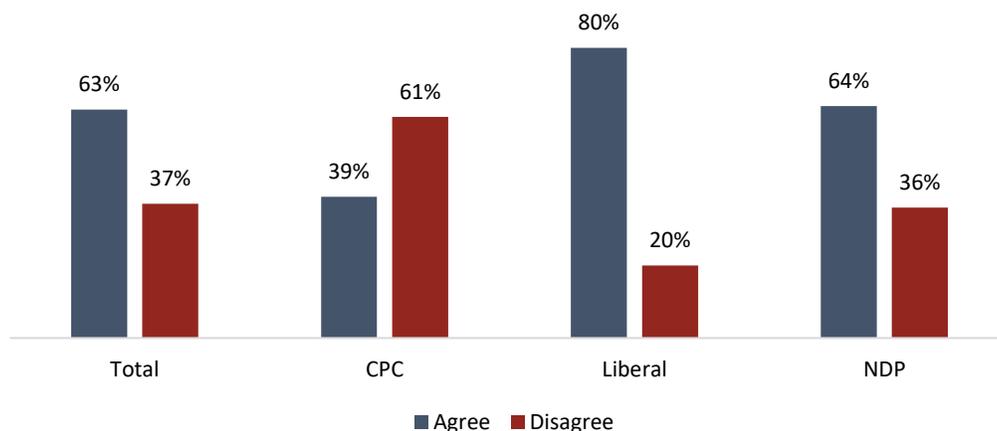
The woman who accused the Prime Minister of inappropriate touching in August 2000 [released a statement](#) in early July, saying that she stood by her allegations but did not wish to engage in or pursue the issue further. The Canadian public is overwhelmingly supportive of her right to do so, regardless of how long it has been. More than eight-in-ten Canadians (86%) say that women are right to tell stories about sexual misconduct they have experienced, even if it was a long time ago:

"Women are right to come forward and tell their stories even if it was in the past"



However, more than six-in-ten (63%) also say that this particular story has been overblown, and that it is receiving too much attention. This opinion does not diverge by age or gender ([see comprehensive tables for greater detail](#)), but it rises to 80 per cent among Liberals, while a majority of Conservatives disagree:

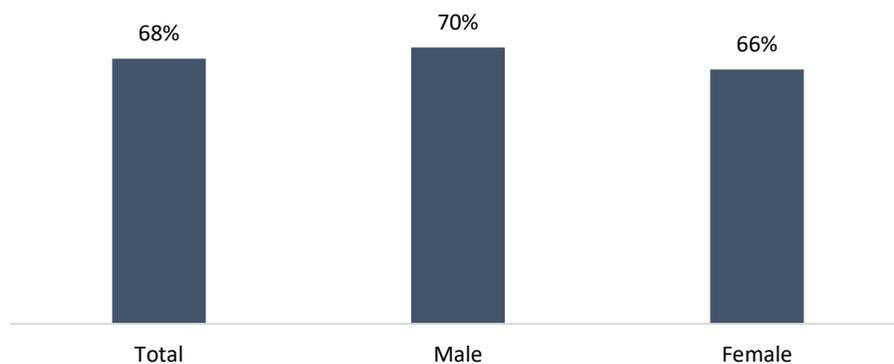
"These allegations about Trudeau seem overblown, and are receiving too much attention"



This is perhaps explained in part by another, more controversial finding. Among discussions of the #metoo movement and the fallout from many of the accusations made in a public forum, a significant number of Canadians say that they have trouble ascertaining where “the line” is these days. This is not to

say that they are necessarily dismissive of the allegations against Trudeau outright, but more so that seven-in-ten (68%), including equal numbers of men and women, say that there is a significant grey area in their day-to-day interactions:

Percentage of Canadians who agree that: "It's hard to tell where 'the line' is these days - what's okay and what's not"



*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](#).

Which statement is closest to your own view, even if you don't entirely agree?				
(weighted sample sizes)	Total (1500)	Female responses by 2015 vote		
		Liberal (240)	CPC (156)	NDP (115)
Trudeau's response to the allegation has been inadequate	38%	17%	58%	37%
Trudeau's response to the allegation has been adequate	61%	83%	42%	63%

Which statement is closest to your own view, even if you don't entirely agree?					
(weighted sample sizes)	Total (1500)	How closely have you been following this issue?			
		Closely (201)	Seeing some coverage (429)	Scanning headlines (554)	Haven't seen or heard (316)
Trudeau's response to the allegation has been inadequate	38%	66%	42%	26%	35%
Trudeau's response to the allegation has been adequate	62%	34%	58%	74%	65%

Thinking of your own view of Justin Trudeau, what impact, if any, would you say this incident has had on your view of him?				
(weighted sample sizes)	Total (1500)	Canadian women by 2015 vote		
		Liberal (240)	CPC (156)	NDP (115)
Significantly improved your view of him	2%	3%	1%	3%
Slightly improved	4%	3%	3%	2%
Had no impact one way or the other	61%	77%	41%	60%
Slightly worsened	16%	14%	19%	24%
Significantly worsened your view of him	17%	2%	36%	10%

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