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Liberal love-in? Trudeau's approval among his base tops what CPC, NDP bases feel for Scheer, Singh

Opposition leaders must overcome significant unknown factor among their own supporters

October 16, 2018 – As stopwatches are set in the count down to an expected federal election 12 months from now, the latest public opinion survey from the Angus Reid Institute finds more Canadians say they may be open to voting for the Conservative Party of Canada (CPC), but it is the Liberal vote universe that is most buoyant about the performance of its leader, Justin Trudeau.

In canvassing the views of Canadians who say they'll definitely, likely or maybe vote for the three main parties currently represented in the House of Commons, several themes emerge – revealing the strengths, weaknesses, advantages and hurdles each party leader faces in the year ahead.

While Trudeau and CPC leader Andrew Scheer are seen among their potential bases as equally likely to be able to achieve electoral success in the next election – it is Scheer – along with the New Democratic Party's Jagmeet Singh, who must also define themselves to the electorate they court.

Further, Singh faces the additional task of igniting excitement and confidence, even among locked-in NDP voters who profess an allegiance to the party, but are ambivalent about their leader or his chances at the ballot box next year.

Percentage of potential Liberal, CPC & NDP voters who describe their leader as "good" or "very good" (n=500 for each party)

Liberal Party leader Justin Trudeau — 79%

Conservative Party leader Andrew Scheer — 65%

New Democratic Party leader Jagmeet Singh — 47%
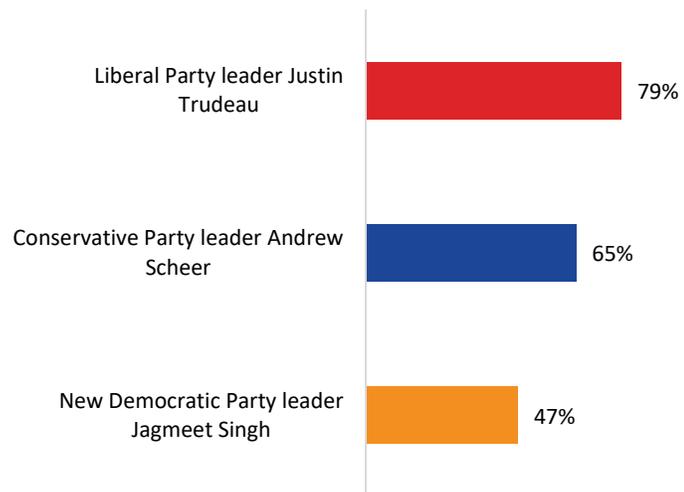
METHODOLOGY:

The Angus Reid Institute conducted an online survey from October 3 – 8, 2018 among a representative randomized sample of 1,500 Canadian adults who are members of Angus Reid Forum. From that sample, the institute randomly selected 500 potential supporters of each of the three major political parties for in-depth analysis. For comparison purposes only, a probability sample of 1,500 would carry a margin of error of +/- 2.5 percentage points, 19 times out of 20, and a probability sample of 500 would carry a margin of error of +/- 4.4 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.

More Key Findings:

- Most potential CPC voters (60%) say Andrew Scheer is setting the party up to win more seats in 2019; the same number of potential Liberal voters (61%) credit Trudeau with the same. By contrast, half as many potential New Democrats (34%) are confident about Singh's ability to grow his party's seat count next year

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- Scheer and Singh have little time to lose defining themselves to their own bases: nearly one-third (30%) of potential CPC voters say they don't know enough about Scheer to describe him, and this number grows to nearly half (46%) of potential NDP voters asked to describe Singh

- Trudeau's support for the TransMountain appears to appeal to less certain Liberal voters, providing a hint on which issues resonate across party lines. For Scheer, it is his stance on border security, and for Singh, it is the promise of universal Pharmacare

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Part 1: The vote universe

This survey sought to assess Canadians' propensity to vote for each of the main federal parties by looking at respondents' personal voting history as well as their willingness to consider the parties under their current leaders in a future election.
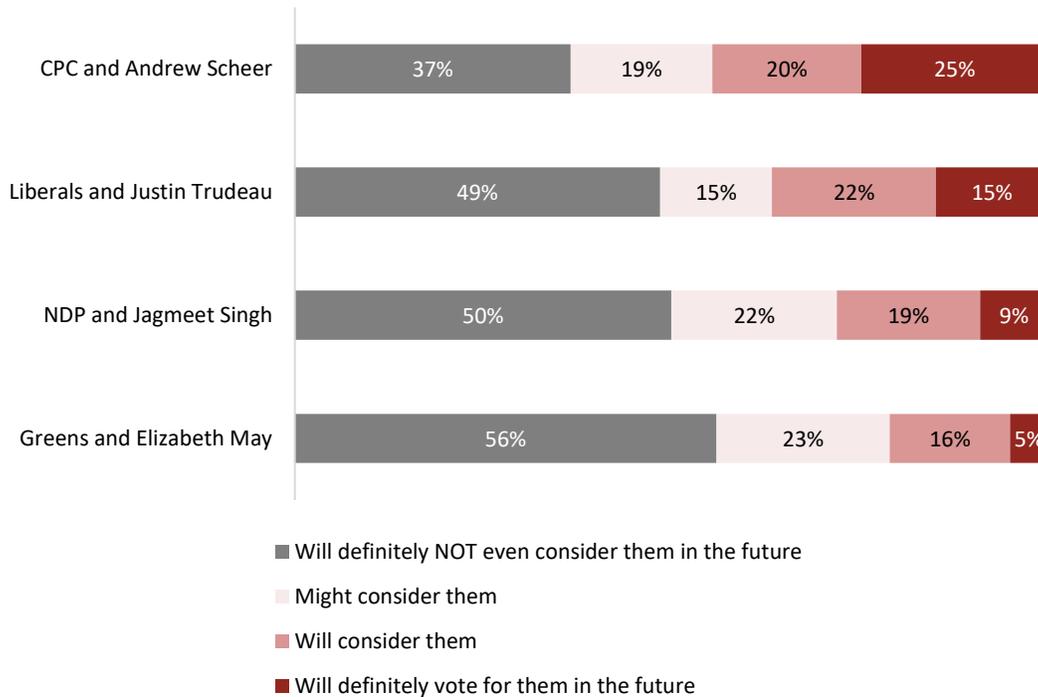
As seen in the following graph, more Canadians are open to voting for the Conservatives and Andrew Scheer than any of the alternatives:

Canadians' willingness to vote for each party:

Party	Will definitely NOT even consider them in the future	Might consider them	Will consider them	Will definitely vote for them in the future
CPC and Andrew Scheer	37%	19%	20%	25%
Liberals and Justin Trudeau	49%	15%	22%	15%
NDP and Jagmeet Singh	50%	22%	19%	9%
Greens and Elizabeth May	56%	23%	16%	5%

■ Will definitely NOT even consider them in the future

■ Might consider them

■ Will consider them
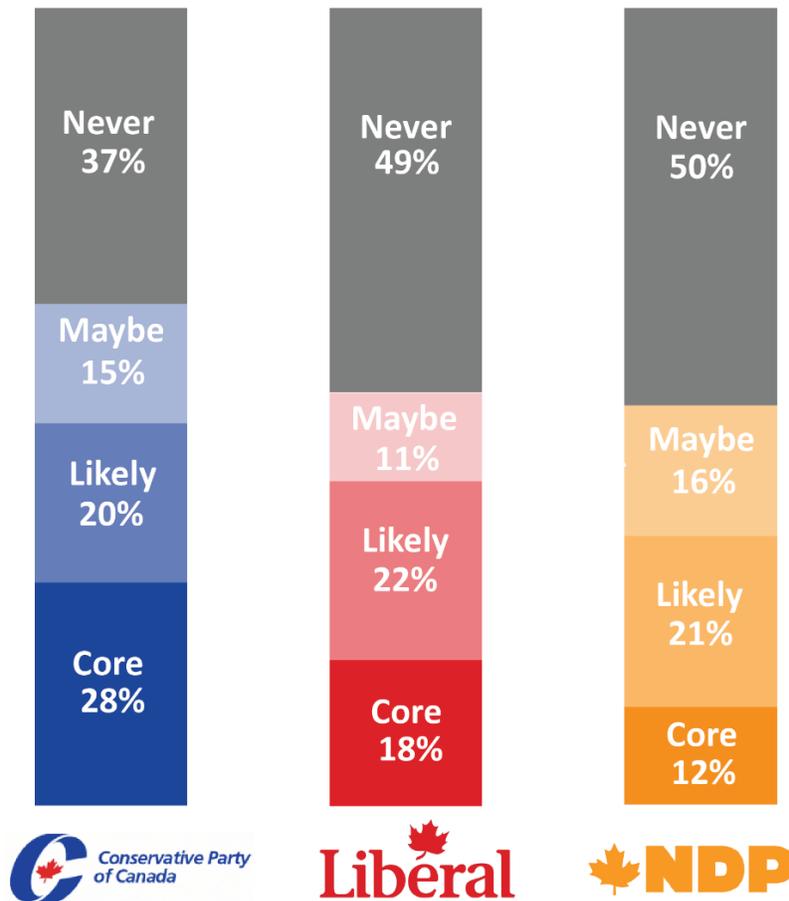
■ Will definitely vote for them in the future

ARI researchers combined this data with respondents' reported voting histories to create three categories within each party: "Core", "Likely", and "Maybe" supporters.

Broadly speaking, a party's Core supporters are the people who vote for the party in every election and tend to toe the party line on every major issue. Likely supporters are less locked-in to their choice, but still largely align with the party on issues and vote for its candidates. A party's Maybe supporters, meanwhile, are people who are open to considering that party, but do not have a history of voting for the party regularly.

The three main parties' Core, Likely, and Maybe groups are shown in the following graphic:

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How likely are Canadians to vote for each party?
(n=1500)

Conservative Party of Canada
- Never 37%
- Maybe 15%
- Likely 20%
- Core 28%

Liberal
- Never 49%
- Maybe 11%
- Likely 22%
- Core 18%

NDP
- Never 50%
- Maybe 16%
- Likely 21%
- Core 12%

Note that the size of the Liberal and NDP "Never" groups appears to have grown considerably since the last time the Angus Reid Institute performed this analysis, when each one contained roughly four-in-ten Canadians. The Never CPC group has remained roughly the same size it was last year.

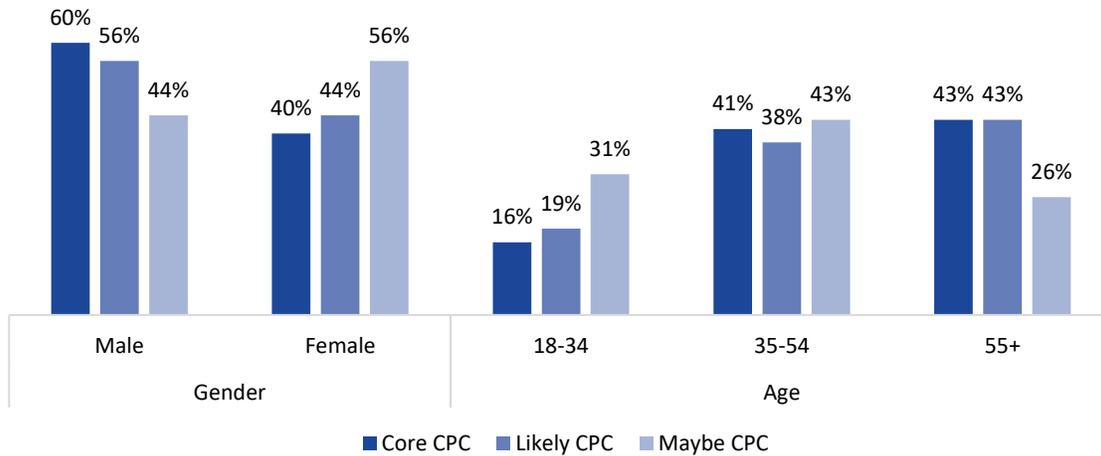**Related – Analysis: Which Canadian party has the biggest tent?**

The demographic make-up of each party's consideration set is discussed in the following sections. For greater detail on each one, see voter propensity tables.

Who would consider the CPC?

Core CPC voters tend to be older, male, and more likely to be located in Alberta and Saskatchewan.

Likely CPC voters share the age and gender characteristics of the Core, but are more evenly distributed geographically, while Maybe CPC voters are younger and more female than the other two groups, as seen in the graph that follows:

Characteristics of the CPC vote universe:

Chart legend: ■ Core CPC ■ Likely CPC ■ Maybe CPC

Gender:
- Male: 60%, 56%, 44%
- Female: 40%, 44%, 56%

Age:
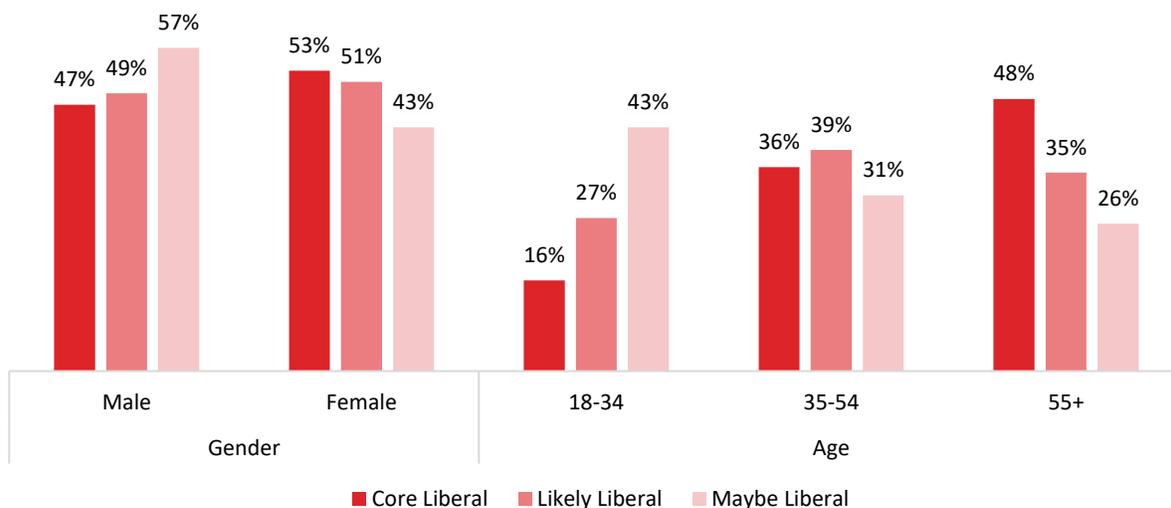- 18-34: 16%, 19%, 31%
- 35-54: 41%, 38%, 43%
- 55+: 43%, 43%, 26%

Who would consider the Liberals?

Like the CPC Core, the Liberal Core tends to be older than the general population. Unlike the CPC Core, it contains roughly equal numbers of women and men. Geographically, Core Liberals are quite evenly distributed, though it's notable that the Liberal Party is the only party with a Core that contains significant numbers in Atlantic Canada.

Likely and Maybe Liberals tend to follow the same geographic distribution as the Core, while containing fewer people ages 55 and older and more people under age 35. This is especially true of the Maybe Liberal group, which is also notable for containing more men than women:

Characteristics of the Liberal vote universe:

Chart legend: ■ Core Liberal ■ Likely Liberal ■ Maybe Liberal

Gender:
- Male: 47%, 49%, 57%
- Female: 53%, 51%, 43%

Age:
- 18-34: 16%, 27%, 43%
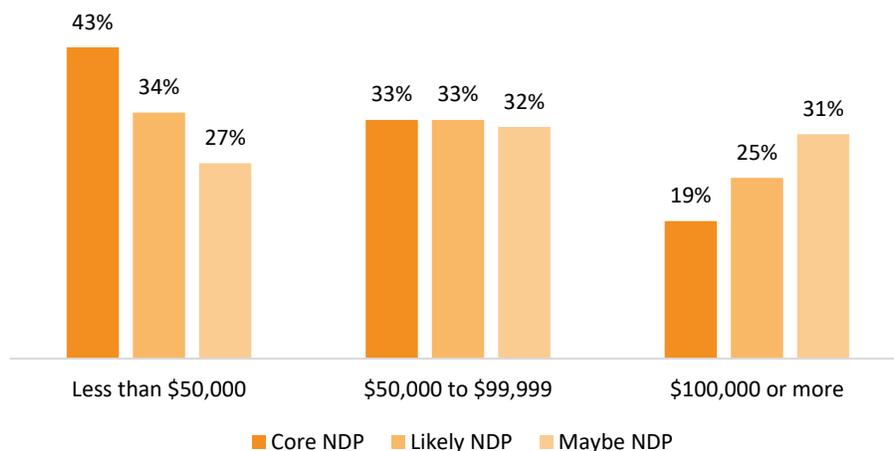- 35-54: 36%, 39%, 31%
- 55+: 48%, 35%, 26%

Who would consider the NDP?

In addition to being much smaller than the CPC Core, the NDP Core has a lot of the opposite characteristics. It tends to be overrepresented in British Columbia and Quebec, but underrepresented in Alberta. It also contains more women than men and is much more evenly distributed across age groups.

Likely NDP voters are also more female than male, while the Maybe NDP group contains more men than women.

One interesting characteristic that separates the NDP consideration set is income. The core tends to come from households with lower incomes, while the Likely and Maybe groups have larger numbers of higher-income individuals within them:

Household income in the NDP vote universe:

Core NDP   Likely NDP   Maybe NDP

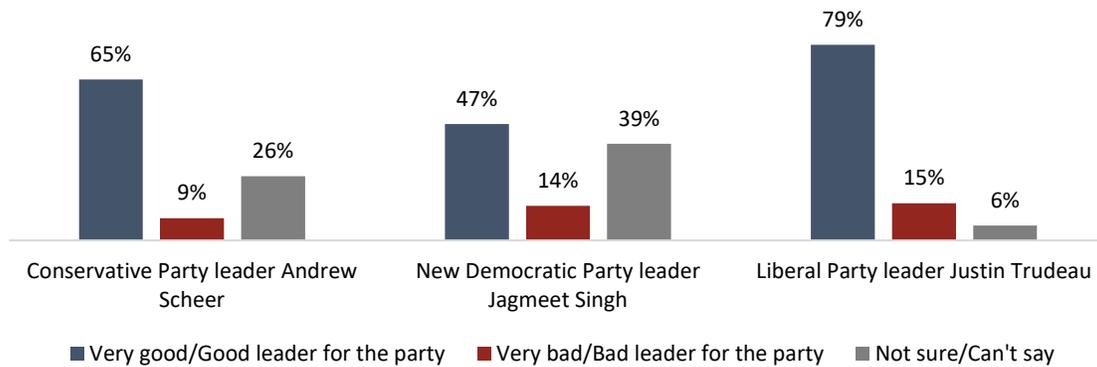|	Less than $50,000	$50,000 to $99,999	$100,000 or more
Core NDP	43%	33%	19%
Likely NDP	34%	33%	25%
Maybe NDP	27%	32%	31%

**Part 2: Measuring leader performance**

Good or bad overall?

On this measure, Prime Minister and Liberal Party leader Justin Trudeau inspires greater confidence among his potential voters than either Conservative leader Andrew Scheer or NDP leader Jagmeet Singh. As seen in the graph that follows, this may be attributed to the fact that fewer of Trudeau's partisans are unsure about his leadership qualities, while significant numbers are uncertain about Scheer and Singh.

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**How each party's potential voters describe that party's leader
(n=500 for each party)**

- Very good/Good leader for the party   ■ Very bad/Bad leader for the party   ■ Not sure/Can't say

For each leader, the bulk of support comes from his Core voters, while Likely and Maybe voters tend to have more reservations, either saying they are not sure or that they feel the party's current leader is a bad one. Here, again, Trudeau has the highest number of supporters who say he is a good leader for the Liberal Party, though it's worth noting that he also has the highest number of Maybe supporters who see him as a bad fit for the role.

**Percentage who describe each leader as "good" or "very good"
(n=500 for each party)**
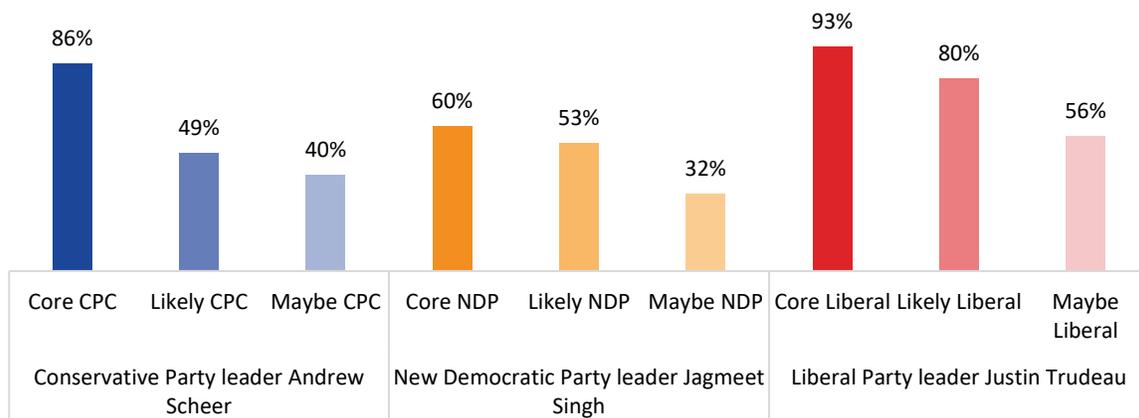
Scheer and Trudeau evenly matched on key metrics

The ultimate measure of success for a party leaders isn't how they are perceived, but how their parties perform in elections. To that end, the Angus Reid Institute asked each party's potential voters whether they believe the party's current leader is setting himself up for electoral success.
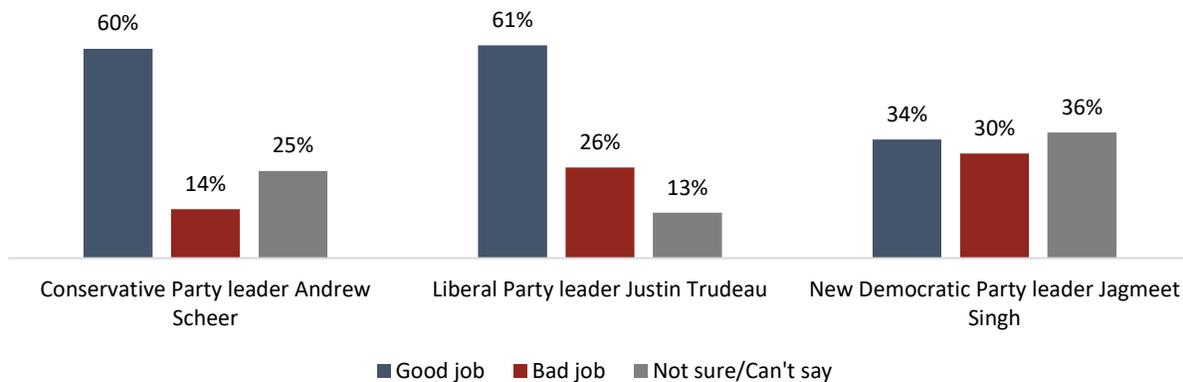
On this key question, Scheer and Trudeau inspire similar amounts of confidence from their respective potential voters, while Jagmeet Singh lags behind.
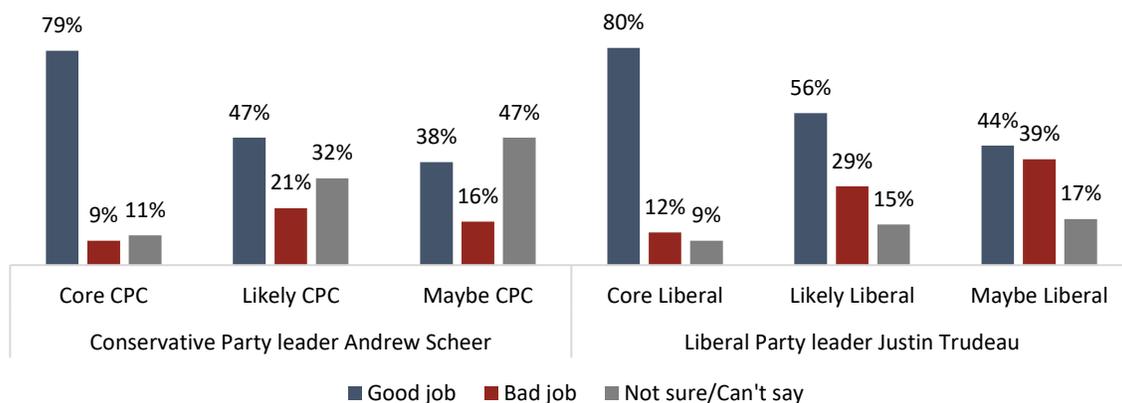
Some six-in-ten (61%) who are willing to consider the Liberals in a future election say Trudeau is doing a good job setting his party up to maintain its majority, and a nearly identical number (60%) of Scheer's potential supporters say he is setting up his party to win more seats in the next election.

Is this leader doing a good job or bad job at setting up his party for the next election? (n=500 for each party)

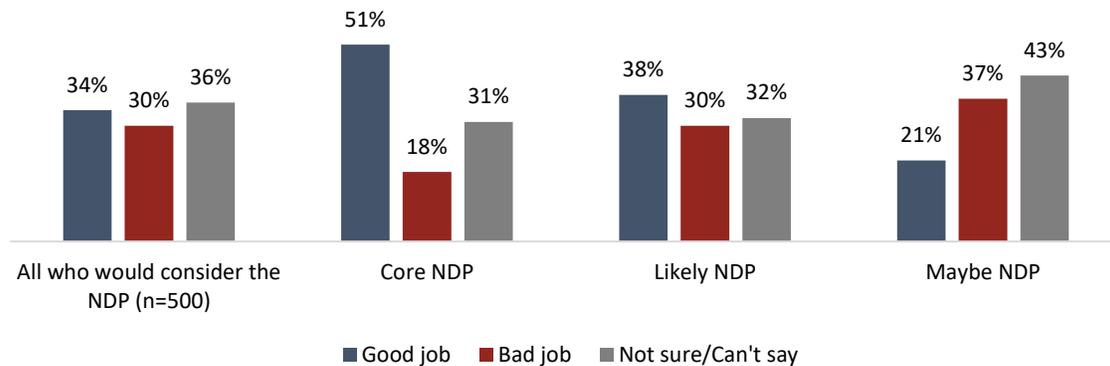|	Good job	Bad job	Not sure/Can't say
Conservative Party leader Andrew Scheer	60%	14%	25%
Liberal Party leader Justin Trudeau	61%	26%	13%
New Democratic Party leader Jagmeet Singh	34%	30%	36%

Both Scheer and Trudeau have the backing of an overwhelming majority of their Core supporters on this question, with less resolve among their Likely and Maybe supporters:

Is this leader doing a good job or bad job setting his party up for electoral success? (n=500 for each party)

	Good job	Bad job	Not sure/Can't say
Core CPC	79%	9%	11%
Likely CPC	47%	21%	32%
Maybe CPC	38%	16%	47%
Core Liberal	80%	12%	9%
Likely Liberal	56%	29%	15%
Maybe Liberal	44%	39%	17%

Conservative Party leader Andrew Scheer   Liberal Party leader Justin Trudeau

For its part, the NDP consideration set is divided on Singh's potential to grow the party's seat count. And while Core NDP voters are more likely to see Singh's performance as good, they do not offer the same large majority endorsement that Scheer and Trudeau receive from their Core groups:
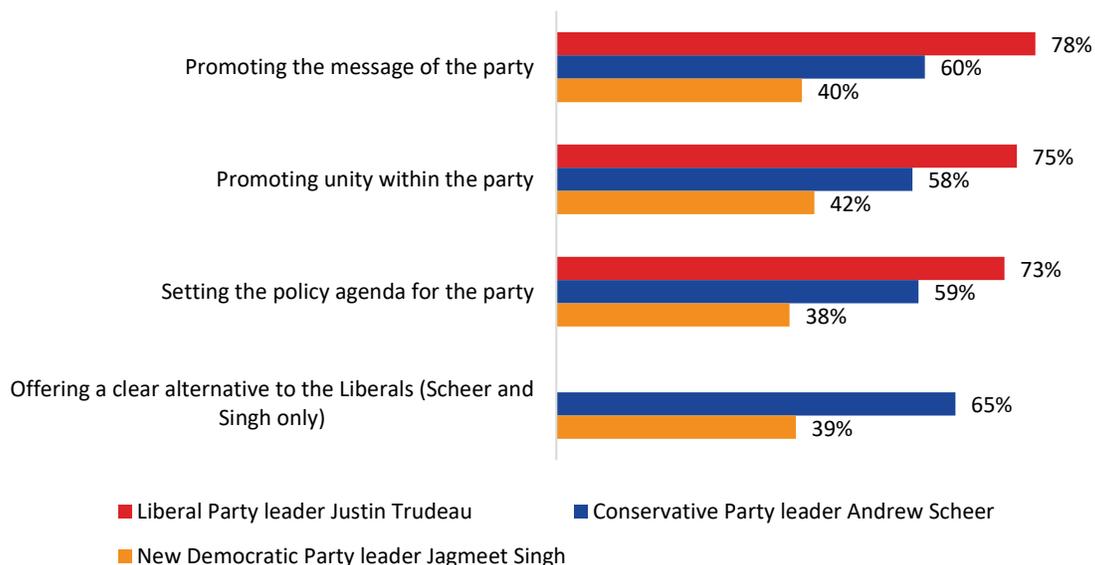
Is this leader doing a good job or bad job setting his party up for electoral success?

Legend: ■ Good job ■ Bad job ■ Not sure/Can't say

	All who would consider the NDP (n=500)	Core NDP	Likely NDP	Maybe NDP
Good job	34%	51%	38%	21%
Bad job	30%	18%	30%	37%
Not sure/Can't say	36%	31%	32%	43%

Other aspects of leadership performance

Respondents were asked whether their party's leader is doing a good job or a bad job at a variety of aspects of his role, from maintaining party unity, to communicating the party's message, to setting the party's agenda. On each one, as seen in the following graph, Trudeau has the highest number of potential supporters saying he's doing a good job, while Singh has the lowest:

Percentage of each party's potential supporters who say the party leader is doing a "good job" at ... (n=500 for each party)

	Liberal Party leader Justin Trudeau	Conservative Party leader Andrew Scheer	New Democratic Party leader Jagmeet Singh
Promoting the message of the party	78%	60%	40%
Promoting unity within the party	75%	58%	42%
Setting the policy agenda for the party	73%	59%	38%
Offering a clear alternative to the Liberals (Scheer and Singh only)		65%	39%

Legend: ■ Liberal Party leader Justin Trudeau ■ Conservative Party leader Andrew Scheer ■ New Democratic Party leader Jagmeet Singh

Scheer's performance on the "promoting party unity" question is notable in light of the high-profile departure of Maxime Bernier from the Conservative caucus.
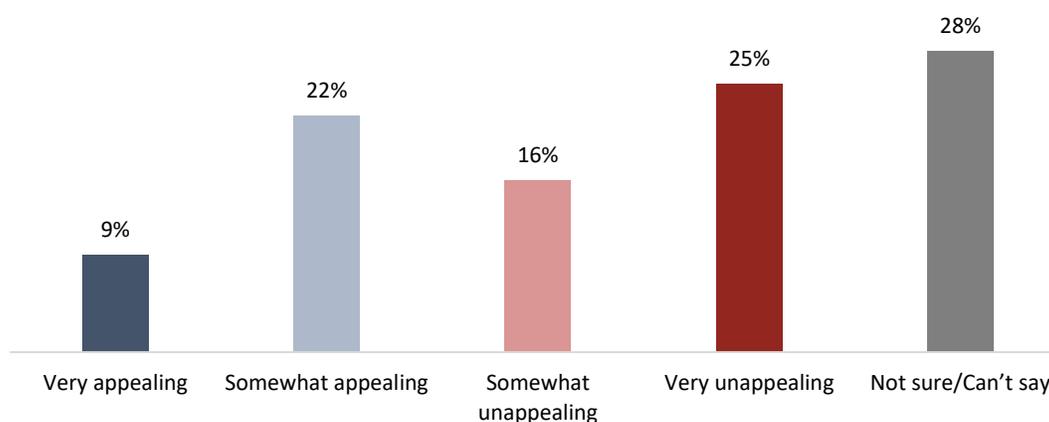
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Bernier narrowly lost to Scheer in the 2017 CPC leadership election and was removed from his role as the party's innovation critic in June of this year. By August, he had quit the party, calling it "intellectually and morally corrupt," and in September he formed the People's Party of Canada.

The fact that a majority of potential Conservative voters say Scheer has done a good job promoting unity within the party bodes well for the Conservative leader. Though Bernier's party certainly has the potential to pry away some would-be Conservative voters, more people in the CPC's consideration set find Bernier unappealing than appealing:

Based on whatever you may have seen or heard and your own impressions of him, how would you say you feel about Maxime Bernier? Is he: (asked of those who would consider the CPC, n=500)
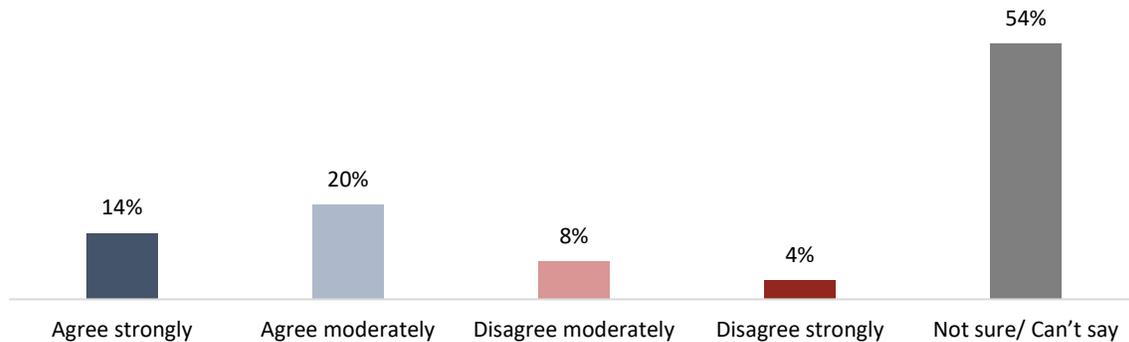
Very appealing	Somewhat appealing	Somewhat unappealing	Very unappealing	Not sure/Can't say
9%	22%	16%	25%	28%

For his part, Singh has also had problems keeping his caucus together. His refusal to readmit Saskatchewan MP Erin Weir to the NDP caucus has angered many long-time party supporters in that province.

Weir was removed from caucus after allegations of harassment, including sexual harassment, were brought to the party's attention. Weir called the party's investigation of the complaints "deeply flawed," and maintains that he did not intentionally harass anyone, but had been "slow to pick up on social cues."

Most potential NDP voters are unsure how they feel about Singh's refusal to readmit Weir to the party's caucus, but those with an opinion are more inclined to agree with the NDP leader than to disagree with him:

**Please indicate whether you agree or disagree with Singh
refusing to readmit MP Erin Weir to the NDP Caucus
(among those who would consider the NDP, n=500)**

Agree strongly	Agree moderately	Disagree moderately	Disagree strongly	Not sure/ Can't say
14%	20%	8%	4%	54%

Part 3: How does each party describe its leader?
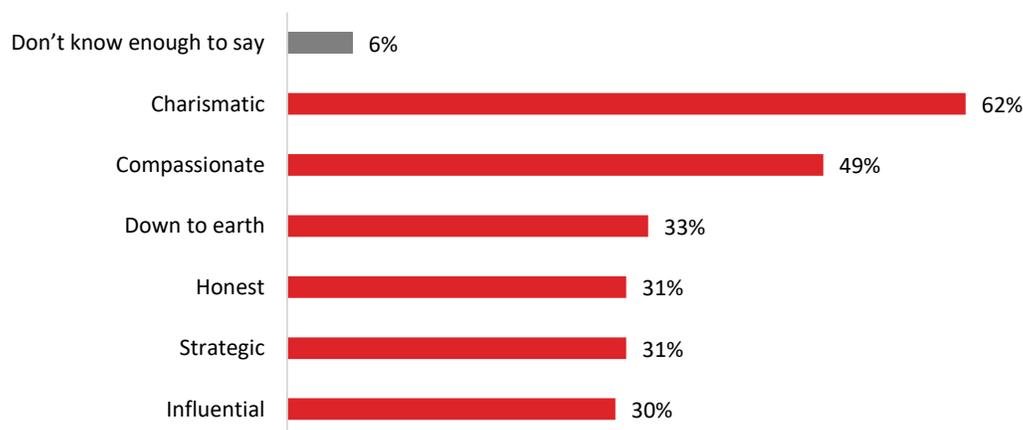
Adjectives for each leader

Each party's potential supporters were also asked to choose up to five words or phrases from a list of 20 that might be used to describe the party's leader, or to write in their own.

Trudeau's top descriptors – "charismatic" and "compassionate" – speak to his personal brand. He is a leader known as much for his emotional appeal and global celebrity as for any specific policy position.

Related – 'Charismatic' and 'Modern' or 'Arrogant' and 'Flaky'? Canadians weigh in on the Trudeau Brand

For full lists of descriptions for each leader, see voter propensity tables.

**Choose up to five words to describe Justin Trudeau:
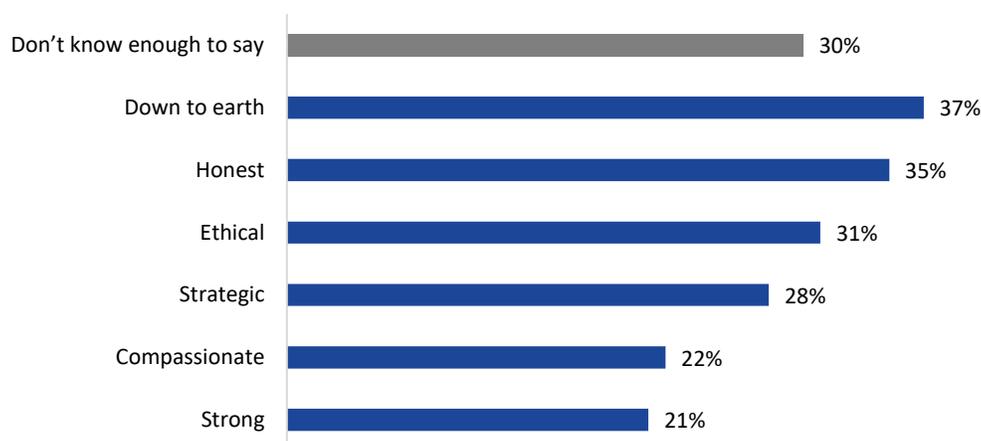(asked of those who would consider the Liberals, n=500)**

Don't know enough to say	6%
Charismatic	62%
Compassionate	49%
Down to earth	33%
Honest	31%
Strategic	31%
Influential	30%

Scheer is most likely to be seen as down-to-earth, honest, and ethical, though his potential supporters are much less unified in their perception of him than Trudeau's.
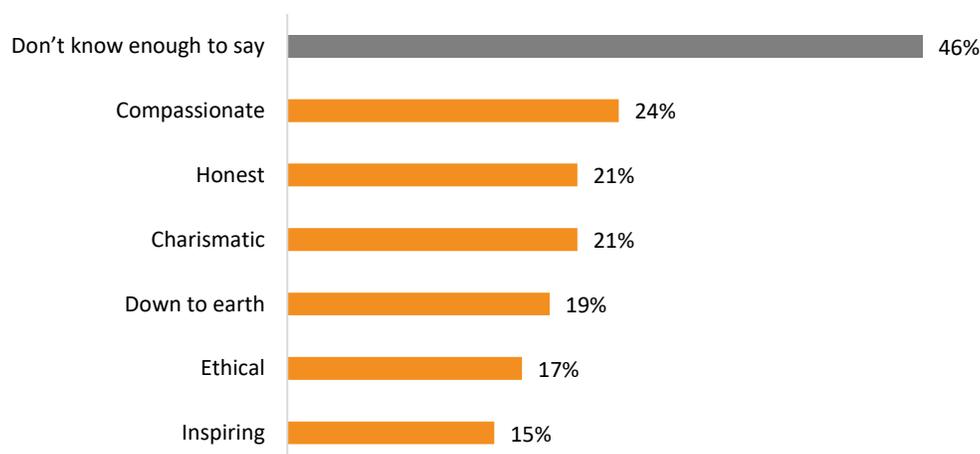
Choose up to five words to describe Andrew Scheer:
(asked of those who would consider the CPC, n=500)

Descriptor	Percentage
Don't know enough to say	30%
Down to earth	37%
Honest	35%
Ethical	31%
Strategic	28%
Compassionate	22%
Strong	21%

Singh's descriptors are similar to Trudeau's, a finding that reflects a comparison made frequently during the former's NDP leadership bid.

That said, the most striking thing about perceptions of Jagmeet Singh among those considering voting for his party is how little of an impression he seems to have made thus far. Almost twice as many would-be NDP supporters say they don't know enough about Singh to choose a description for him as choose any word or phrase:

Choose up to five words to describe Jagmeet Singh:
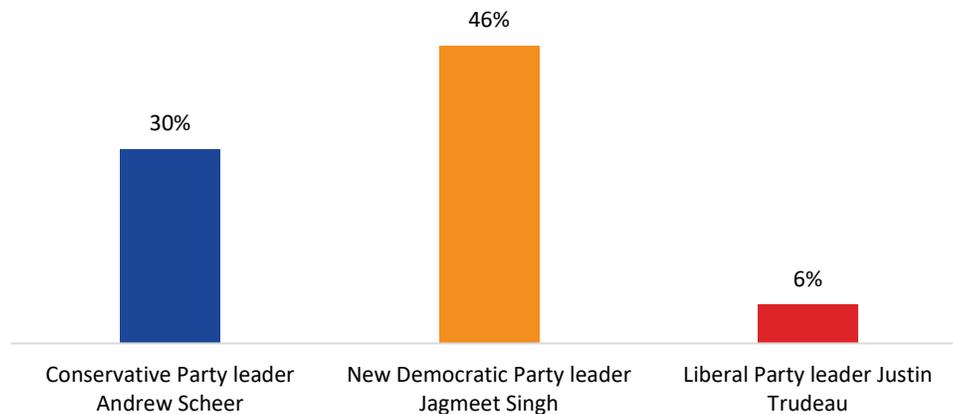**(asked of those who would consider the NDP, n=500)**

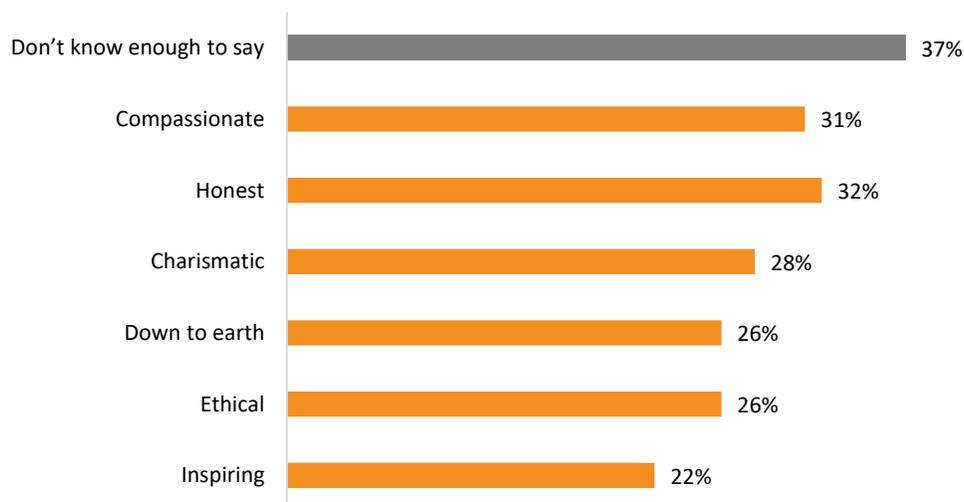| Descriptor	Percentage
Don't know enough to say	46%
Compassionate	24%
Honest	21%
Charismatic	21%
Down to earth	19%
Ethical	17%
Inspiring	15%

Note that the two opposition leaders have higher numbers of respondents who "don't know enough to say" This speaks to the considerable room each of the opposition leaders still has to make an impression with potential supporters, but also to the dwindling of time the leaders have to accomplish this.

Percentage who say they "don't know enough to say" how they would describe each leader (n=500 for each party)

- Conservative Party leader Andrew Scheer: 30%
- New Democratic Party leader Jagmeet Singh: 46%
- Liberal Party leader Justin Trudeau: 6%

For Singh, the uncertainty extends beyond Likely and Maybe NDP supporters – who generally have fewer ties to the party – to those in the Core NDP group. Among Core NDP voters, 37 per cent don't know enough to say how they would describe the party's leader. That's still more than choose any specific descriptor, as seen in the following graph:

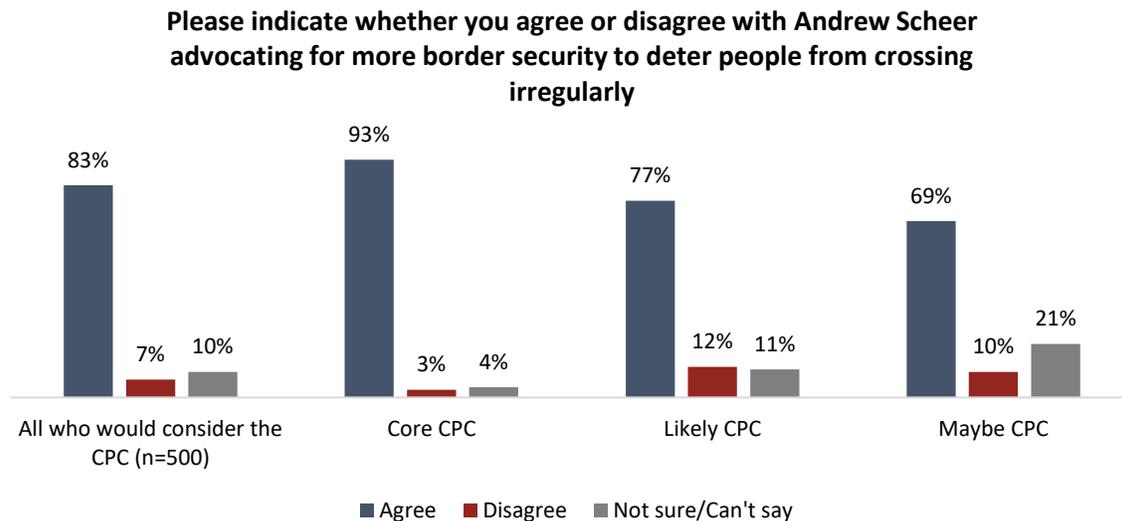**Descriptions for Jagmeet Singh from Core NDP supporters (n=94)**

- Don't know enough to say: 37%
- Compassionate: 31%
- Honest: 32%
- Charismatic: 28%
- Down to earth: 26%
- Ethical: 26%
- Inspiring: 22%

Part 4: Each leader's policy strengths and weaknesses

None of the three main parties has a Core large enough to win an election on its own, without the help of some of the its Likely or Maybe supporters. So, what can the parties do to woo those voters who aren't locked in?

The answer to that question depends on the party. Each one has some policy strengths it will likely look to capitalize on as next year's election approaches, as well as some liabilities it might like to avoid discussing in the coming months.

### Border security a winner for Scheer

If there's a single issue on which the Conservative Party is likely to gain ground leading up to the election, it's border security. Scheer's Core voters overwhelmingly agree with his stance advocating for greater security to deter people from crossing irregularly, but large majorities of Likely and Maybe CPC voters are onside with this position as well:

Please indicate whether you agree or disagree with Andrew Scheer advocating for more border security to deter people from crossing irregularly

	Agree	Disagree	Not sure/Can't say
All who would consider the CPC (n=500)	83%	7%	10%
Core CPC	93%	3%	4%
Likely CPC	77%	12%	11%
Maybe CPC	69%	10%	21%

■ Agree ■ Disagree ■ Not sure/Can't say

Other issues are less uniformly winners for Scheer and his party. Most potential CPC voters agree with his stance on protecting Canada's system of supply management, which restricts the production of milk products, cheese, eggs, chicken, and turkey in order to ensure consistent profits for farmers, but it's not an overwhelming majority.

Crucially, while 62 per cent of Core CPC supporters favour Scheer's approach, a substantial three-in-ten (28%) oppose it. This is significant because Maxime Bernier's opposition to supply management was one of the things that led him to leave the CPC. This data suggests Bernier could possibly siphon support not only from the CPC's Likely and Maybe supporters, but from its Core.

Please indicate whether you agree or disagree with Andrew Scheer's support for supply management

Agree ▪ Disagree ▪ Not sure/Can't say
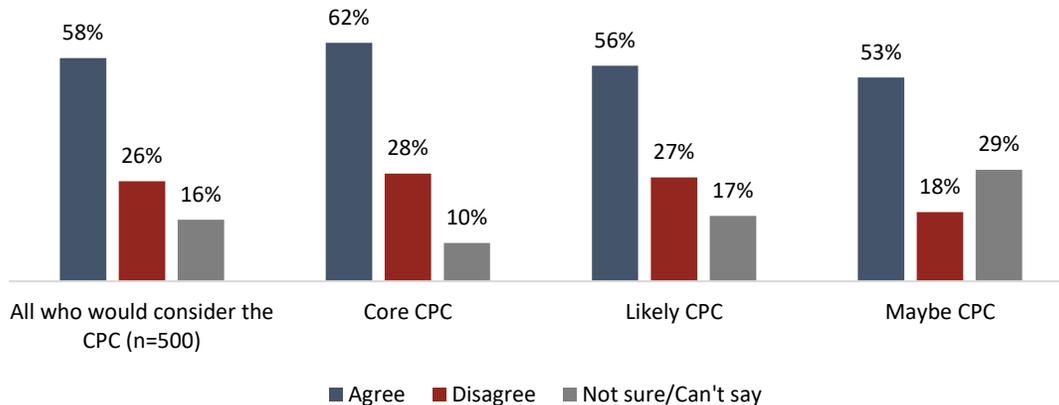
Another potential liability for the CPC is Scheer's position on carbon pricing. While Core CPC voters overwhelmingly support eliminating the federal carbon tax, Likely and – especially – Maybe CPC voters are more tepid in their reaction to this proposal:

Please indicate whether you agree or disagree with Andrew Scheer's plan to remove the federal carbon tax
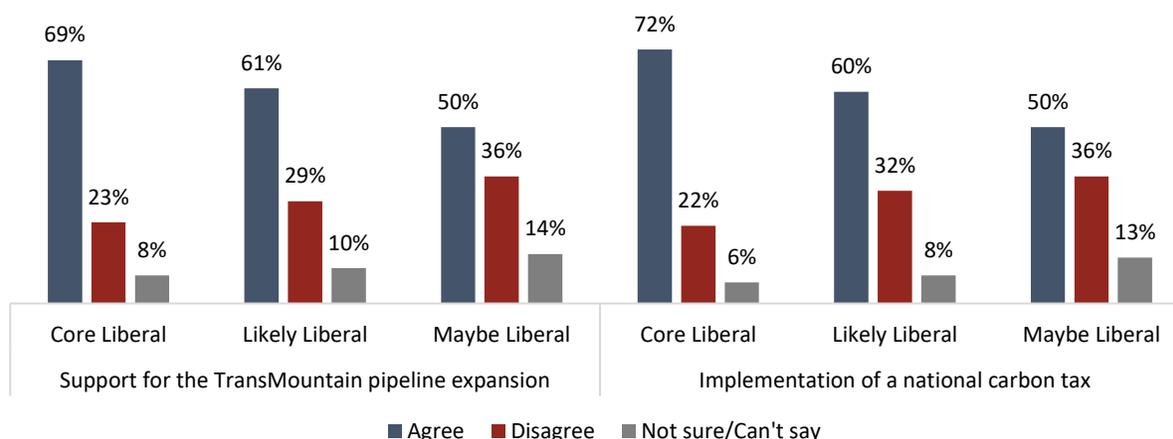

Agree ▪ Disagree ▪ Not sure/Can't say
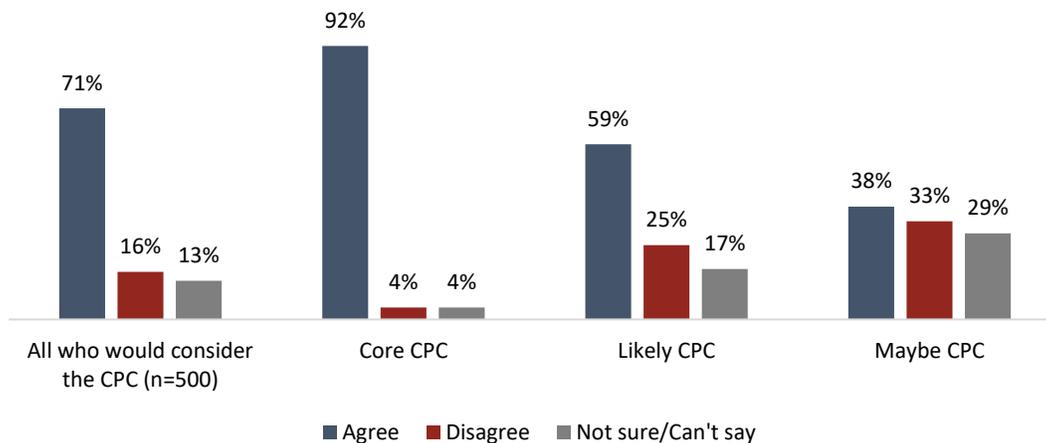
Trudeau fares well on TransMountain; vulnerable on deficits

For the governing Liberals, the calculus is somewhat different. While opposition parties are judged on the positions they take, governing parties are judged on their record.

Justin Trudeau's record has some notable accomplishments and some equally notable failures. In the former column, as far as Likely and Maybe Liberal voters are concerned, is the federal government's support for building the TransMountain pipeline, in conjunction with its implementation of the aforementioned carbon tax. Half of Maybe Liberal supporters agree with Trudeau's stance on both of these issues, as do six-in-ten Likely Liberals:

Please indicate whether you agree or disagree with:
(Asked of those who would consider the Liberals, n=500)

Support for the TransMountain pipeline expansion

	Agree	Disagree	Not sure/Can't say
Core Liberal	69%	23%	8%
Likely Liberal	61%	29%	10%
Maybe Liberal	50%	36%	14%

Implementation of a national carbon tax

	Agree	Disagree	Not sure/Can't say
Core Liberal	72%	22%	6%
Likely Liberal	60%	32%	8%
Maybe Liberal	50%	36%	13%

■ Agree   ■ Disagree   ■ Not sure/Can't say

Trudeau's failure to keep budget deficits to $10 billion or less, and his failure to return the federal budget to balance by 2019, are significant liabilities. While Core Liberals agree with Trudeau's position that larger deficits were necessary, Likely and Maybe Liberal supporters offer considerable disagreement:

Please indicate whether you agree or disagree with deficits in
2018-19 and 2019-20, rather than a balanced budget as initially promised

	Agree	Disagree	Not sure/Can't say
All who would consider the Liberals (n=500)	48%	41%	11%
Core Liberal	66%	26%	9%
Likely Liberal	44%	44%	12%
Maybe Liberal	32%	54%	14%

■ Agree   ■ Disagree   ■ Not sure/Can't say
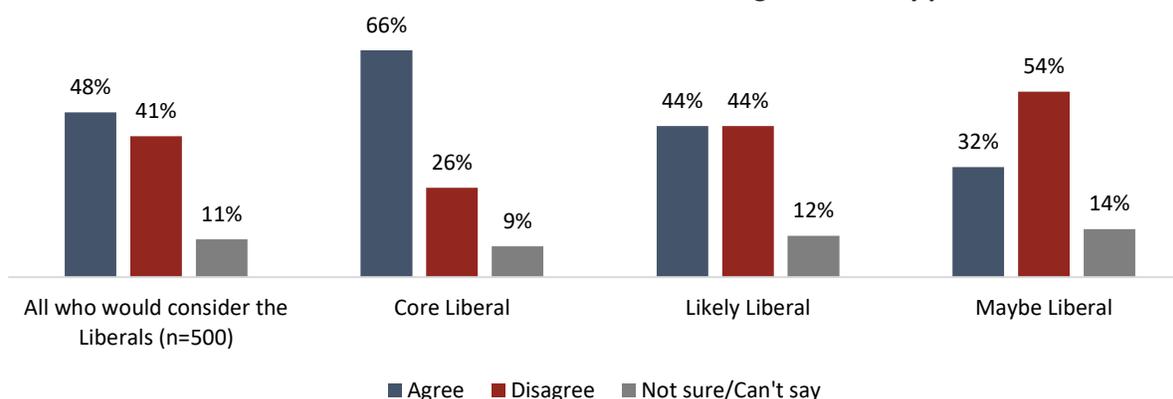
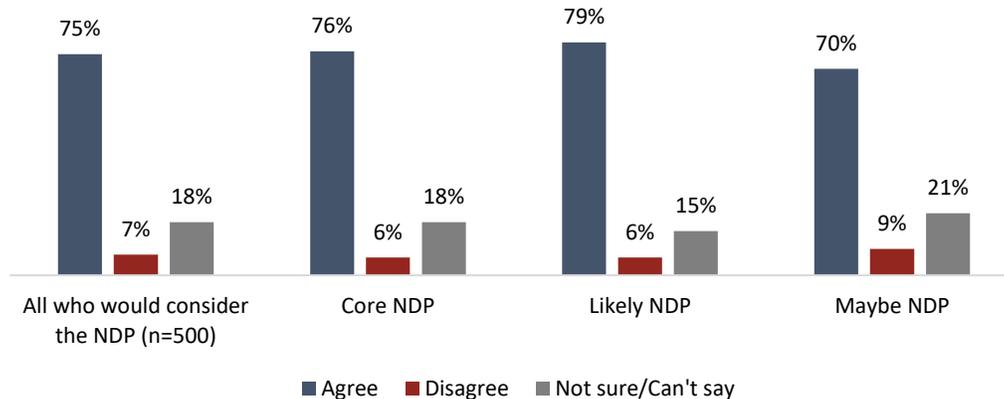## Pharmacare is Singh's biggest strength

Jagmeet Singh's most appealing policy stance appears to be his support for a publicly funded national Pharmacare program. Past Angus Reid Institute polling has found Canadians broadly supportive of such a program, so it makes sense that fully seven-in-ten across Core, Likely, and Maybe NDP voters agree with Singh's position.
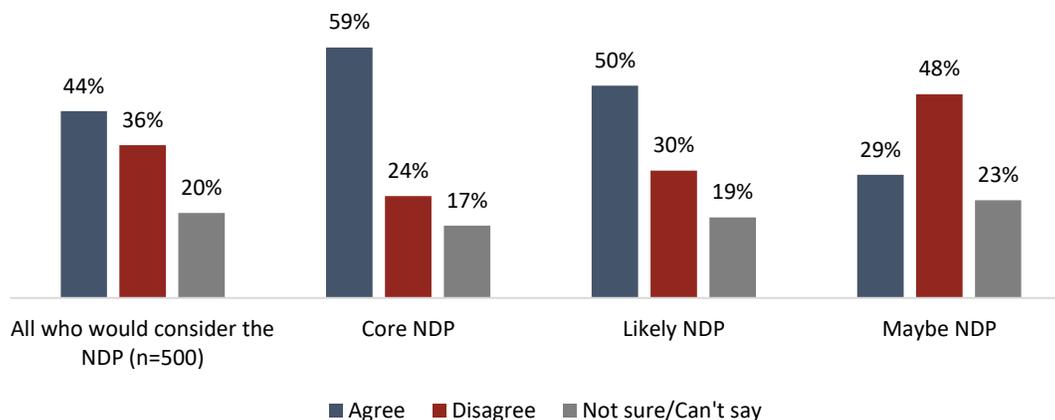
Related – Prescription drug access and affordability an issue for nearly a quarter of all Canadian households

Please indicate whether you agree or disagree with Jagmeet Singh's support for a publicly funded national pharmacare program

	Agree	Disagree	Not sure/Can't say
All who would consider the NDP (n=500)	75%	7%	18%
Core NDP	76%	6%	18%
Likely NDP	79%	6%	15%
Maybe NDP	70%	9%	21%

■ Agree ■ Disagree ■ Not sure/Can't say

Singh's opposition to the TransMountain pipeline project, however, is a considerable liability, particularly with those who are Maybe NDP voters, nearly half of whom disagree with the NDP leader's position:

Please indicate whether you agree or disagree with Jagmeet Singh's opposition to the TransMountain pipeline expansion

	Agree	Disagree	Not sure/Can't say
All who would consider the NDP (n=500)	44%	36%	20%
Core NDP	59%	24%	17%
Likely NDP	50%	30%	19%
Maybe NDP	29%	48%	23%

■ Agree ■ Disagree ■ Not sure/Can't say

*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](#).

For detailed results by voter propensity, [click here](#)

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