

'Goldilocks zone': Canadians divided on whether Trudeau's pipeline approach is too much, too little or just right

But, by 2:1 ratio Canadians say next government should build TransMountain pipeline expansion

September 13, 2019 – The campaign for the 43rd federal election is officially underway and that means Canadians are considering what the coming years can and will bring for their country. One of the core debates in Canada continues to be the development of the oil and gas sector.

Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, seeking re-election, will once again find himself defending his record on this file, with opponents to the TransMountain pipeline project attacking the government's decision to buy it, and pipeline proponents furious about what they say is Trudeau's failure to complete it. Recent news that the [Federal Court of Appeal](#) will hear six new challenges to the pipeline's isn't likely to quell that anger.

Against this backdrop, a new study from the non-profit Angus Reid Institute finds that Canadians more than twice as likely to say the next federal government should proceed with and complete that project (53%) rather than stop it (24%).

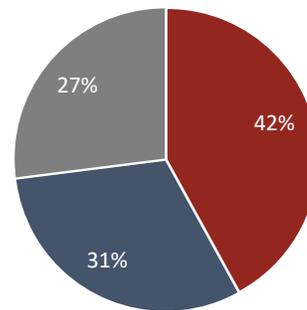
If the project does indeed go forth and [provide funding](#) for a transition to clean energy, most Canadians would likely be pleased.

Six-in-ten (63%) say renewable energy is a 'huge opportunity' for Canada, and most (52%) would like their province to invest in renewable energy over non-renewables if offered federal government funding.

However, Trudeau's party is not the top choice of voters to steward the nation's oil and gas sector. That position is held by the Conservatives, who are chosen as best on the issue by 36 per cent of Canadians, compared to 19 per cent who choose the Liberals.

Overall, when they consider the past four years, Canadians are divided on how Trudeau has handled the pipeline file. Four-in-ten say his government has not done enough to expand pipeline capacity, though three-in-ten take the opposite view, while one-quarter say the Liberals have struck the right balance.

And when you think about the Liberal government's record under Prime Minister Justin Trudeau on the pipeline issue more broadly, would you say it has been:



- Doing too little to build new pipeline capacity for Canada's oil and gas industry
- Pushing too hard to build more pipeline capacity for Canada's oil and gas industry
- Or, has their approach been about right overall

METHODOLOGY:

The Angus Reid Institute conducted an online survey from August 21 - 26 among a representative randomized sample of 1,534 Canadian adults who are members of [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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More Key Findings:

- Each region of the country outside of Quebec voices significantly more support than opposition to the TransMountain expansion (TMX). But even Quebecers are split, as 36 per cent support the project while 39 per cent oppose. Support is highest in Alberta, where 85 per cent say the next government should complete the TMX.
- Those leaning toward the Conservatives in the coming election overwhelmingly feel that the Trudeau government has not done enough to grow the nation's pipeline capacity (83%). Most Liberal leaning supporters say the government has struck the right balance (59%), while NDP (59%) and Green (67%) supporters say the Liberals have pushed too hard on the pipeline issue.
- Canadians across the country, outside of Alberta, voice an overwhelming preference that their provincial government invest in renewable energy sources instead of non-renewable projects.

About ARI

*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.*

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- **Most would prefer their province invest in renewables over oil and gas**
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Part 1: Oil and gas sector stewardship

Elections are a time for appraisal and anticipation. With the federal parties putting forth their plans for the nation, the role of the federal government in natural resource development will inevitably rise to the forefront. One of the key debates over the Liberal government's first term has been the TransMountain expansion pipeline. The project faces a fresh round of legal obstacles after the Federal Court of Appeal ruled it would hear six new challenges to it. With pipeline construction resumed, but one-third of landowners along the route having yet to consent to the project, the fate of the project is as murky as the diluted bitumen proposed to flow through it.

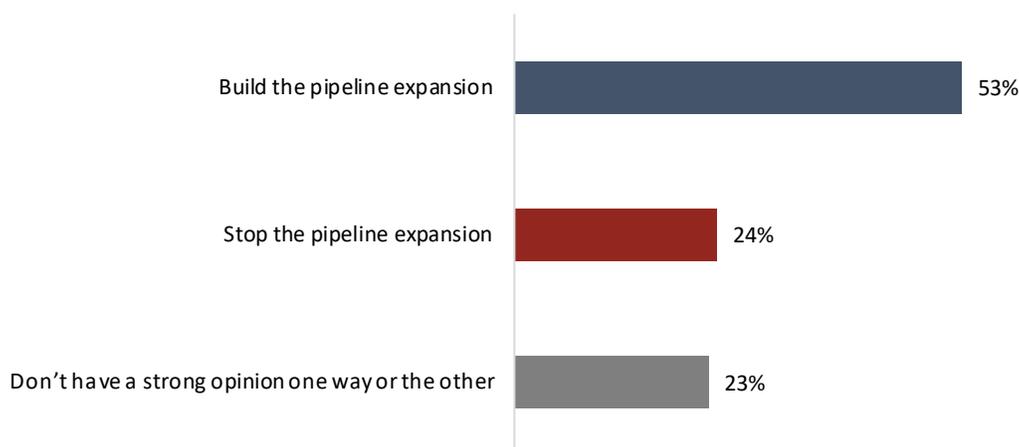
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Should the next federal government finish TransMountain expansion?

For most Canadians, regardless of the government holding office after October 21, the sentiment is that the project should go forth. More than twice as many support (53%) rather than oppose (24%) the expansion.

Which would be your preference for the next federal government – would you like to see them:



The difficulty in navigating the project politically becomes more evident when looking at age and gender splits, as well as political affiliation. Considerable opposition emerges from those who lean toward the New Democrats (51%) and the Green Party (67%), both groups from which Trudeau and his party will be hoping to draw voters. For women under the age of 55, the project is a source of deep division, while men are largely supportive of its completion.

| Which would be your preference for the next federal government – would you like to see them? | | | | | | | | | | | |
|--|------------------|------------------|------------------|----------------|------------------|------------------|----------------|------------------------------------|----------------|----------------|------------------|
| | Total (1,534) | Male | | | Female | | | Current Vote Intention (August 26) | | | |
| | | 18-34 (n=200) | 35-54 (n=259) | 55+ (n=278) | 18-34 (n=221) | 35-54 (n=274) | 55+ (n=302) | CPC (n=511) | LPC (n=447) | NDP (n=196) | Green (n=130) |
| Build the expansion | 53% | 56% | 67% | 74% | 28% | 37% | 54% | 86% | 45% | 31% | 19% |
| Stop the expansion | 24% | 26% | 18% | 13% | 43% | 30% | 20% | 6% | 19% | 51% | 67% |
| No strong opinion | 23% | 17% | 15% | 13% | 29% | 33% | 27% | 9% | 37% | 18% | 14% |

Unyielding support for the project in Alberta is likely unsurprising for many; 85 per cent of respondents in that province say the project should be built. That said, support is considerable in the battleground provinces of B.C. (55% support, 31% oppose) and Ontario (52% support, 20% oppose).

The only region that voices more opposition to TransMountain than support is Quebec, where the population is close to evenly divided (36% support, 39% oppose).

| Which would be your preference for the next federal government – would you like to see them? | | | | | | | |
|--|------------------|---------------|---------------|------------------|---------------|---------------|----------------|
| | Total (1,534) | Region | | | | | |
| | | BC (n=214) | AB (n=159) | SK/MB (n=205) | ON (n=476) | QC (n=352) | ATL (n=158) |
| Build the expansion | 53% | 55% | 85% | 63% | 52% | 36% | 56% |
| Stop the expansion | 24% | 31% | 4% | 17% | 20% | 39% | 22% |
| No strong opinion | 23% | 14% | 11% | 20% | 28% | 25% | 23% |

On pipeline capacity, 4-in-10 say Liberals have done too little, 3-in-10 say too much

The current government's record on pipelines has been mixed. The government approved, and later purchased, the TransMountain expansion. The same government also [rejected the Northern Gateway](#), has [supported the Keystone XL pipeline](#) and voiced [opposition to reviving the Energy East](#) project.

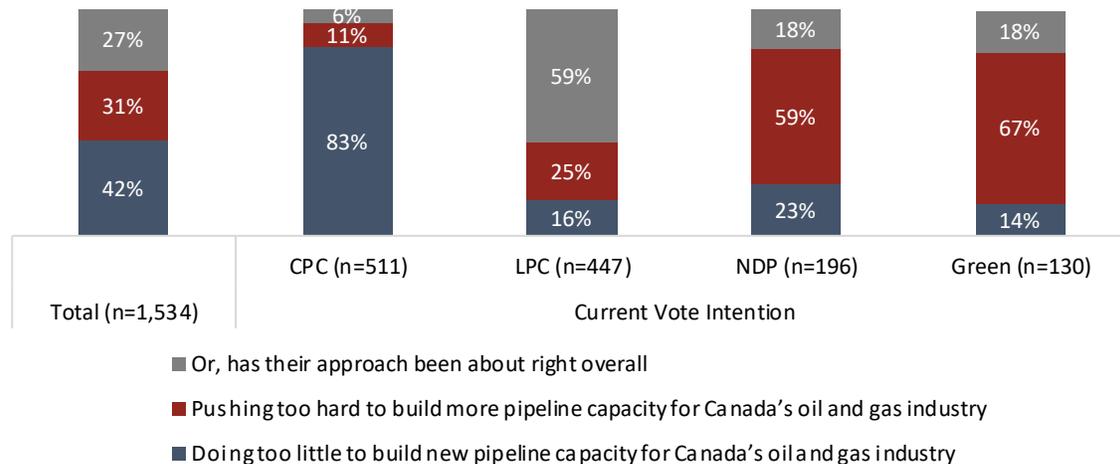
This variable strategy has left Canadians similarly varied in their assessment of government action on the pipeline file. Four-in-ten (42%) say that the government has not done enough to get pipeline capacity increased in Canada, while slightly fewer (31%) say Trudeau has been pushing too hard. Another group, one-quarter of Canadians (27%), say that the government has struck the right balance.

Politically, most Conservatives say the government has not done enough, most Liberals say the government has struck the right balance, and most NDP and Green supporters say it has done too much:

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And when you think about the Liberal government’s record under Prime Minister Justin Trudeau on the pipeline issue more broadly, would you say it has been (Vote intention as of August 26)

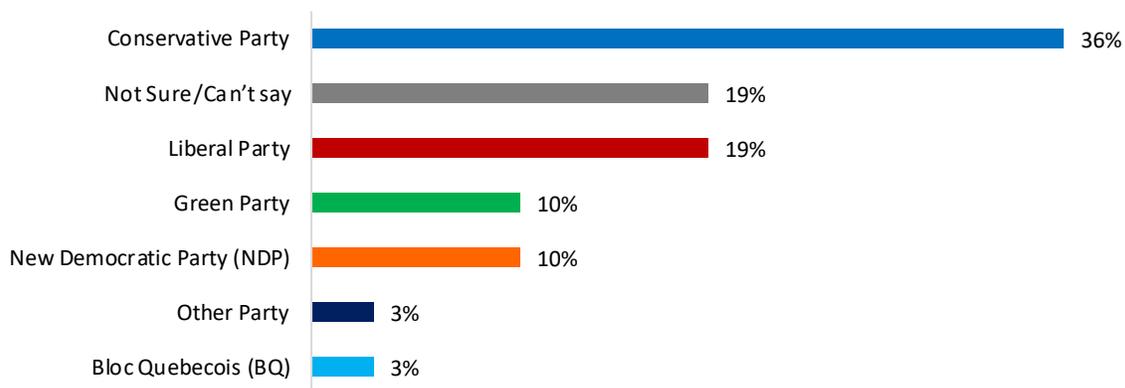


Conservatives seen as best on oil and gas development

If oil and gas development was top of mind for voters, which party holds the advantage?

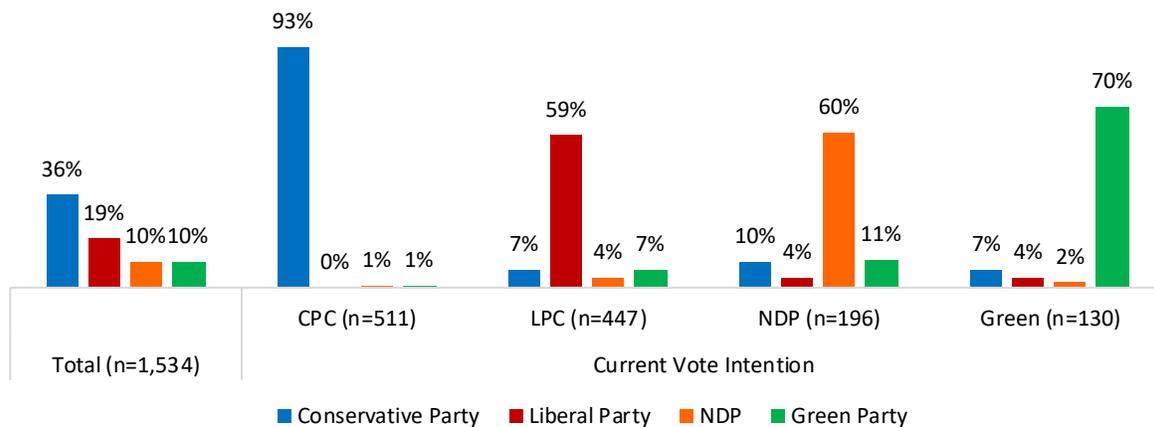
Unlike the party seen as best on climate change, which generated considerable division among Canadians, one party – the Conservatives – has come out as the clear top choice on this issue. One-in-three Canadians (36%) choose the CPC as best to handle this issue going forward, nearly double the second choice – a tie between the Liberals (19%) and uncertainty (19%).

**Suppose the top issue on your mind is how the government handles the oil and gas sector. In that case, which party’s candidate in your riding would you yourself be most likely to vote for?
Vote intention as of August 26**



The Conservative advantage on this issue is based on near unanimity from their own prospective voters, 93 per cent of whom say that their party would handle this issue best. For the Liberals, NDP and Green Party, while inter-party support is high, other options garner consideration as well, as seen in the graph below:

**Suppose the top issue on your mind is how the government handles the oil and gas sector. In that case, which party's candidate in your riding would you yourself be most likely to vote for?
Vote intention as of August 26**



Part 2: Renewable future?

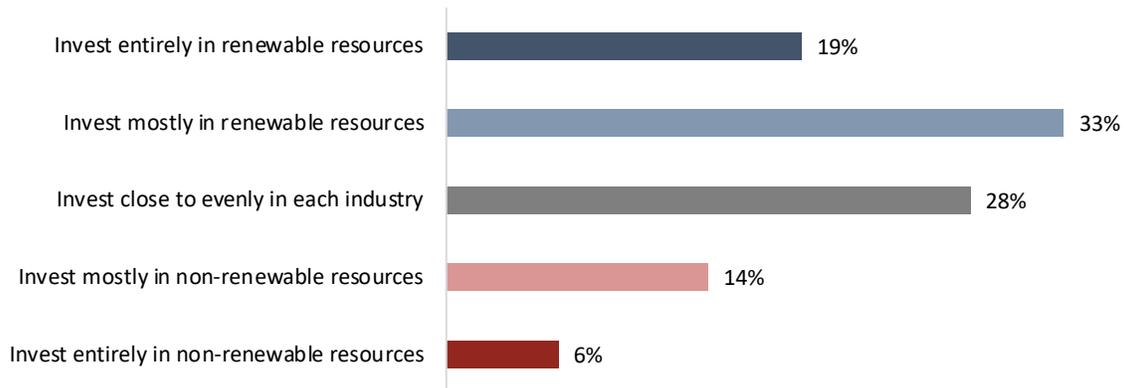
Most would prefer their province invest in renewables over oil and gas

Though Canadians generally would like to see the government continue to invest in the oil and gas sector, their preference for their own province, Alberta aside, is clearly focused on renewable resources. Asked what they would like their province to do in the event that the federal government was to make a large investment in natural resource development, fully half (52%) say that they would prefer the money go into renewables; resources like wind, solar or hydro. Another three-in-ten say an even split between renewable and non-renewable sources would be ideal, while one-in-five (20%) say that non-renewable resources, like oil and gas, should receive most or all of the investment.

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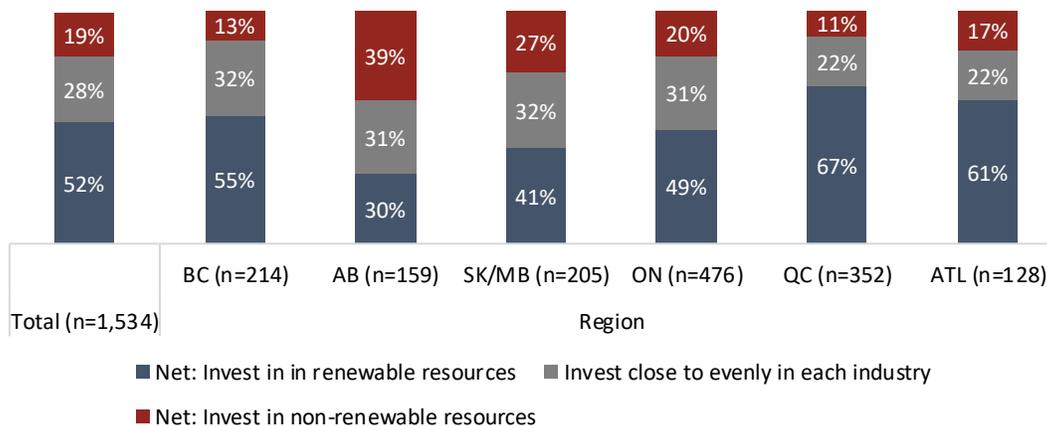
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If the federal government was to make a big investment in an area of natural resource development in your province, what would you want your provincial government to do with these funds?



There are notable regional differences on this question. In Alberta, the epicentre of Canada's oil and gas industry, four-in-ten residents say that they would prefer the investment fund development in non-renewable energy. That said, three-in-ten prefer renewable development. In the rest of the country, and to the greatest extent, in Quebec and Atlantic Canada, Canadians would prefer their provincial governments invest in renewable energy sources:

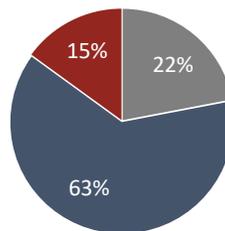
If the federal government was to make a big investment in an area of natural resource development in your province, what would you want your provincial government to do with these funds?



Six-in-ten say renewable energy sources a ‘huge opportunity’ for Canada

Much of this preference for renewable energy can be based on the fact that Canadians feel there is considerable untapped potential within that industry. Indeed, six-in-ten (63%) say that they believe renewable energy is a ‘huge opportunity’ for the country that should be getting greater investment. Currently, [approximately 17 per cent](#) of Canadian energy supply is generated from renewables:

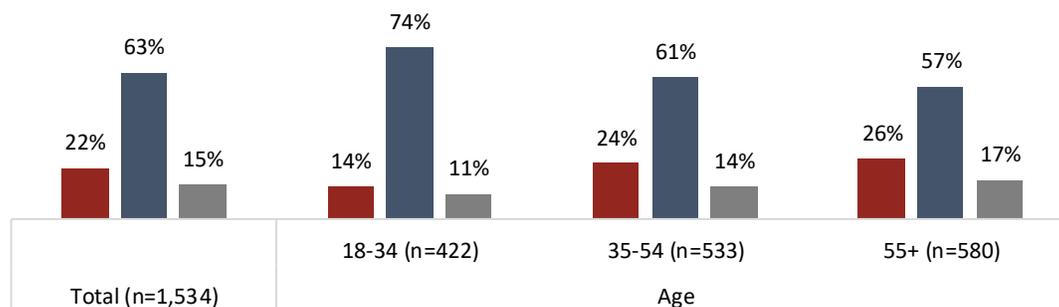
When you think about the federal government’s approach to renewable resources, do you think that these energy sources are:



- Unproven and a risky investment at this time
- A huge opportunity for Canada that we should be investing in right now
- Not sure/Can't say

This is a sentiment that generates agreement among much of the population. At least 57 per cent of Canadians across each age group say that renewables are an opportunity that Canada should be looking to invest in:

When you think about the federal government’s approach to renewable resources, do you think that these energy sources are:



- Unproven and a risky investment at this time
- A huge opportunity for Canada that we should be investing in right now
- Not sure/Can't say

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

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