

Trudeau's blackface shame darkens Liberal prospects, yet CPC support still remains static

Liberal momentum softens as centre-left voter look again to Greens, NDP

September 23, 2019 – The question was not whether damning revelations that Prime Minister Justin Trudeau had participated in the demeaning act of blackface (not once, but on at least three occasions) would hurt Liberal re-election prospects in this election campaign, but how much?

Canadian voters have now had the better part of a week to consider the prime minister's past behaviour and his subsequent apologies.

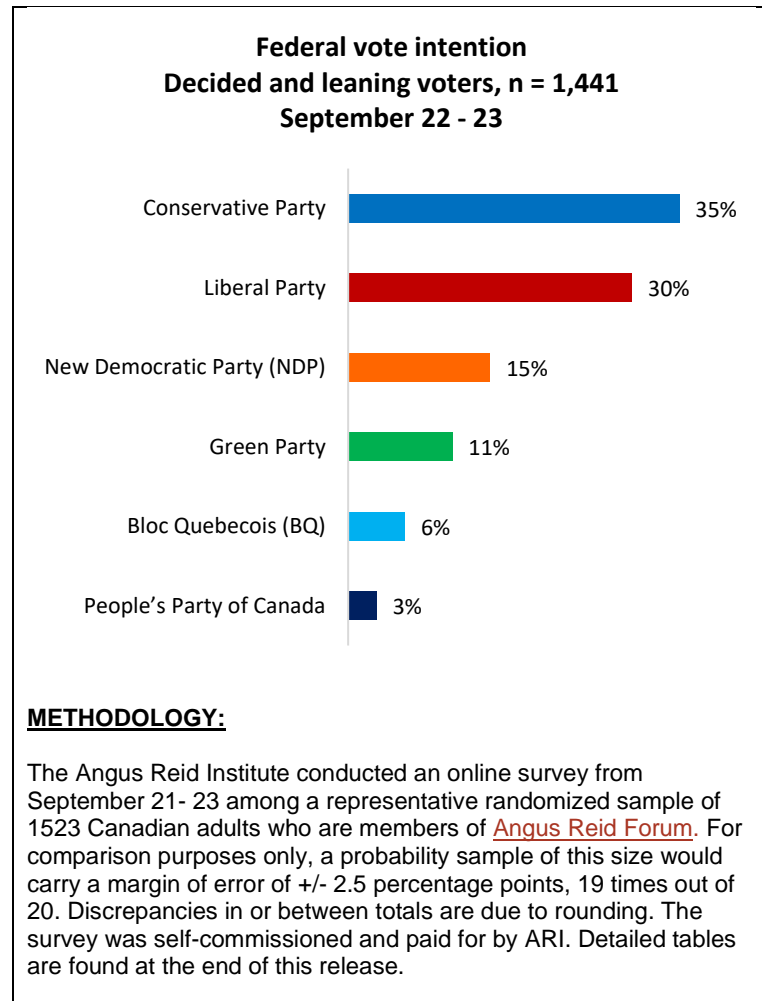
As a result, new polling data from the non-profit Angus Reid Institute exposes a vote landscape wherein the incumbent Liberals have once again yielded some support among a key demographics – younger voters – namely to the Green Party – and overall, in the battleground province of Quebec.

But while opinions of Trudeau have worsened and as the governing party once again sees its key left-of-centre base drift, other signs show the Liberals and their leader may have enough time to recover from this embarrassing disclosure.

To begin, the Conservative Party is seeing no gains from last week. While the party's loyal and motivated base remains steady, leader Andrew Scheer remains unable to persuade voters unhappy with Trudeau to look at the CPC.

Further, Trudeau has given no ground on the key question of which of the two main party leaders would make best prime minister. And notably, the Liberals hold a slight lead in vote intention among Canadians who identify as visible minorities.

The outstanding questions heading into the third week of the campaign continue to be whether the Liberals can (once again) pull the left of centre base back together, and whether Trudeau, bruised a damaging week on the campaign trail, can convince younger voters to cast ballots come voting time.



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More Key Findings:

- The Liberal Party has lost support in Quebec over the past week, but still hold a 12-point advantage in that province. In Ontario, vote intention remains near identical to last week, with the Liberals and CPC both garnering support from 35 per cent of voters
- As was the case one week ago, Trudeau and Scheer are locked in a statistical tie (52 versus 48 per cent respectively) on the question of which head of the two leading parties would of the best prospect for the top job
- After losing a portion of their 2015 voting based in every poll since April of this year, the NDP has gained in vote retention after the blackface scandal. Half of 2015 New Democrats (51%) say they will support he party again, up from 44 per cent last week

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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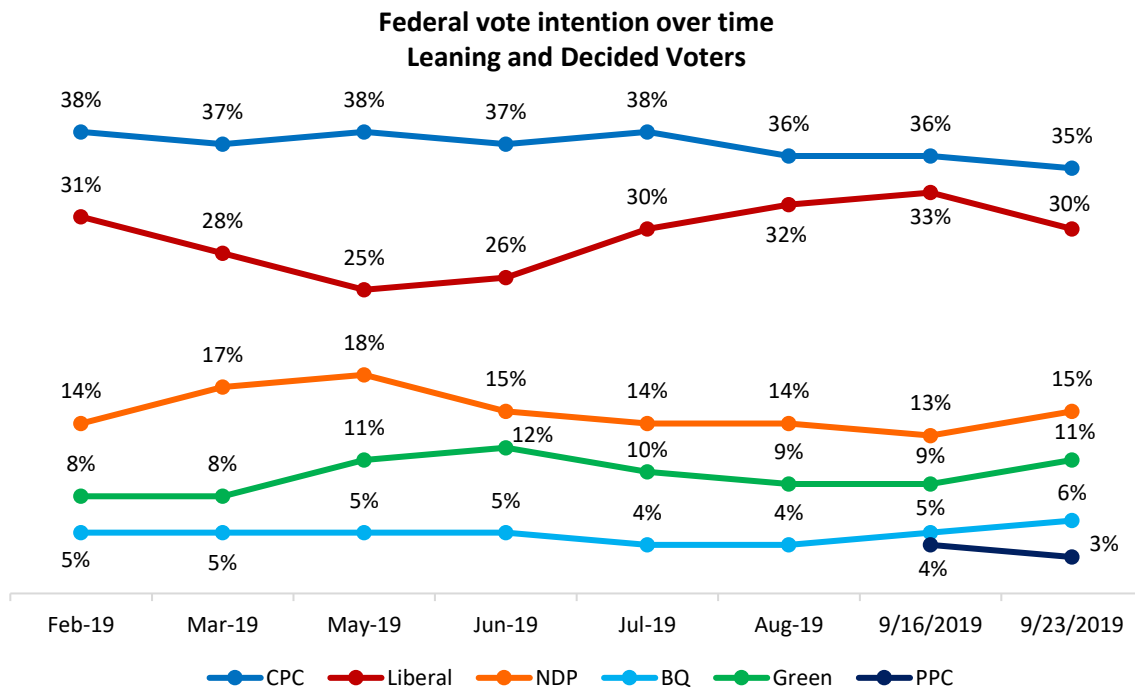
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Part 1: Voting Landscape

In the days since decades-old photos of Prime Minister Justin Trudeau [dressed in blackface and brownface](#) emerged, the Liberal campaign came to a standstill, then offered a plethora of apologies and later attempted to turn the page. How have voters reacted? At first glance, the party's three-point overall decline from last week appears insignificant:

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The regional picture: Liberal declines in battleground Quebec

But it is where – and with whom – the Liberal vote has softened, that requires a deeper look. Liberal Party losses occur in two areas of notably different importance. While the party faces steep declines in Alberta, it was only projected to win two or fewer seats there anyway. It’s a different story in Quebec, where the party must perform exceedingly well in order to have electoral success but sees a six-point loss in support.

Notably, in other battlegrounds, the Liberals do not face a decline in support. In British Columbia, where all four major parties are polling double digits, and the voting landscape in Ontario is unchanged:

Federal vote intention decided and leaning voters (+/-) indicates change from last week							
(Unweighted sample sizes)	Total (1,441)	Region					
		BC (186)	AB (147)	SK/MB (198)	ON (464)	QC (325)	ATL (117)
Conservative Party	35% (-1)	34% (-3)	59% (-2)	50% (-2)	35% (-)	19% (-1)	33% (-6)
Liberal Party	30% (-3)	29% (+2)	17% (-8)	22% (-1)	35% (-)	31% (-6)	39% (+6)
New Democratic Party (NDP)	15% (+2)	20% (+2)	12% (+6)	12% (-3)	16% (-)	13% (+4)	10% (-2)
Green Party	11% (+2)	12% (-3)	8% (+4)	9% (+3)	9% (+1)	12% (+4)	17% (+6)
Bloc Quebecois (BQ)	6% (+1)	-	-	-	-	24% (+2)	-
People's Party of Canada	3% (-1)	4% (+2)	3% (-1)	7% (+4)	4% (-)	1% (-2)	2% (-3)

Liberal support softens among younger voters

When it comes to age and gender, there is one group who clearly have had an adverse reaction to the news about Trudeau over the past week – young voters. Among young men, ages 18 to 34, Trudeau is down nine points from last week. Among young women of the same age, Liberal vote intention is similarly off. The primary beneficiary in both age and gender groups is the Green Party, as seen in the table below:

Federal vote intention decided and leaning voters							
(weighted sample sizes)	Total (1,441)	Men			Women		
		18-34 (202)	35-54 (241)	55+ (266)	18-34 (195)	35-54 (250)	55+ (286)
Conservative Party	35% (-1)	34% (+3)	49% (+4)	46% (-2)	15% (-1)	27% (-8)	33% (-4)
Liberal Party	30% (-3)	22% (-9)	25% (-3)	25% (-3)	34% (-8)	36% (+6)	38% (+1)
New Democratic Party (NDP)	15% (+2)	17% (+2)	11% (+2)	10% (+3)	28% (-1)	15% (+1)	11% (+3)
Green Party	11% (+2)	11% (+4)	6% (-)	7% (+2)	17% (+7)	14% (+2)	10% (-1)
Bloc Quebecois (BQ)	6% (+1)	7% (+1)	4% (-1)	9% (+1)	3% (+1)	5% (+1)	6% (+1)
People's Party of Canada	3% (-1)	9% (+1)	3% (-2)	2% (-1)	3% (+1)	2% (-1)	1% (-2)

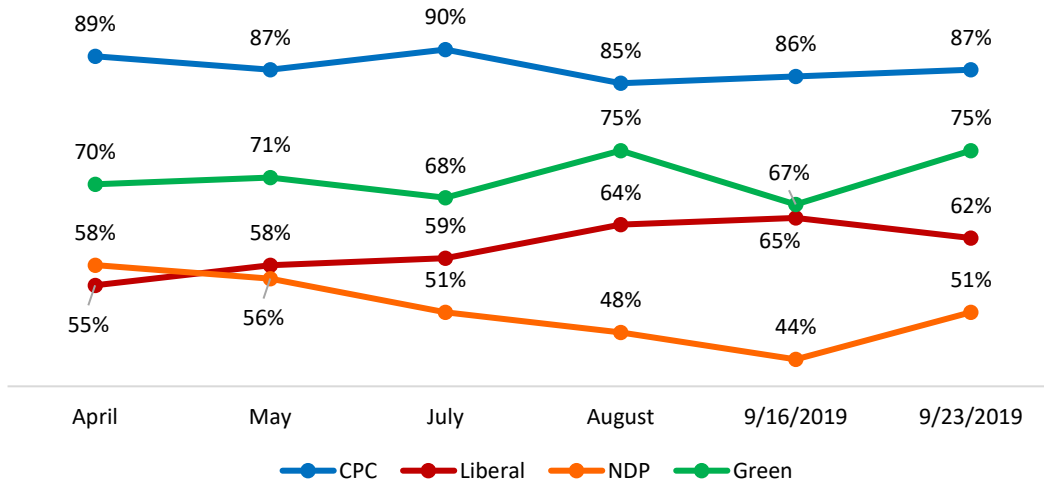
Vote retention numbers show bounce for NDP, Greens

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One of the keys to Liberal momentum over the past several months, as the party recovered from its SNC-Lavalin induced woes, was the apparent willingness of those who supported the NDP in 2015 to leave that party for the Liberals. Trudeau's blackface scandal appears to have reversed the trend of defecting New Democrats. For the first time since April in the Angus Reid Institute's polling, NDP vote retention has risen, rather than declined since the previous wave of data. The Green Party also enjoys a boost in returning voters:

Vote Retention - % of 2015 supporters who say they will support the party again

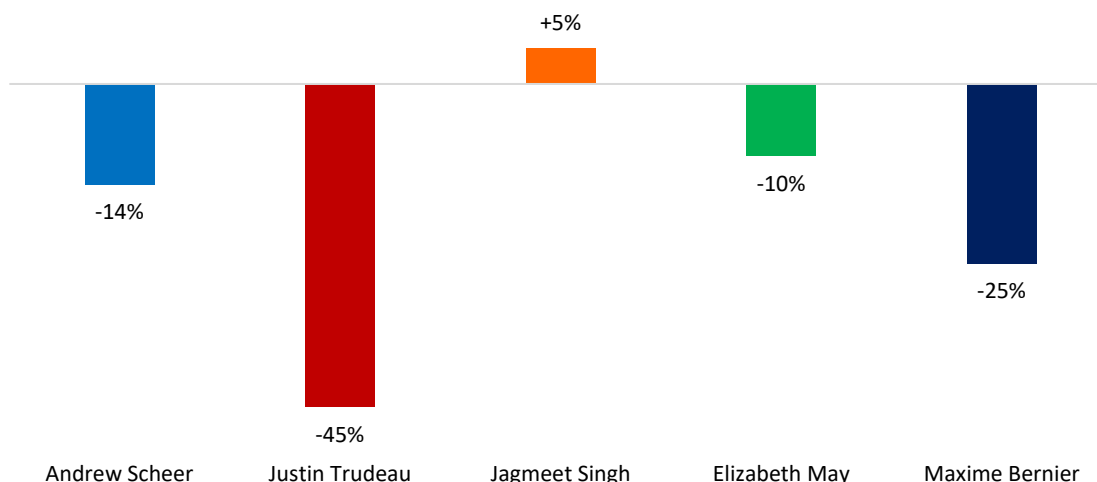


Part 2: Leadership

PM's momentum scores lag all other leaders

While his party's overall prospects have softened but not plummeted, the same cannot be said for Trudeau himself. Already struggling personally at the beginning of the campaign, the last week has not helped. When looking at the Liberal leader's net momentum score (that is number of people whose opinions of a leader have improved, less those whose have worsened), the politician who once defied gravity on the measure of personal popularity now grapples with the most substantial decline in goodwill towards himself than any other national federal party leader:

Net momentum score, in percentage points
Opinion has improved minus worsened over last month



Boosted by young people, Singh the only leader with positive momentum

As noted in the graph above – it is NDP leader Jagmeet Singh who boasts the only positive momentum score among his peers. This is driven almost entirely by Canadians aged 18-34, especially young women. But his current rock star status among this cohort at the same time draws a familiar uncertainty. Will these younger people, with a lower propensity to vote, actually show up for the NDP?

Net momentum score Opinion has improved minus worsened over last month							
	Total (1,523)	Male			Female		
		18-34 (206)	35-54 (254)	55+ (275)	18-34 (214)	35-54 (275)	55+ (298)
Andrew Scheer	-14	-14	+2	+3	-36	-25	-16
Justin Trudeau	-45	-51	-55	-48	-39	-45	-39
Jagmeet Singh	+5	+9	0	-2	+21	+4	+3
Elizabeth May	-10	-16	-22	-18	+15	-5	-9
Maxime Bernier	-25	-17	-24	-32	-20	-25	-33

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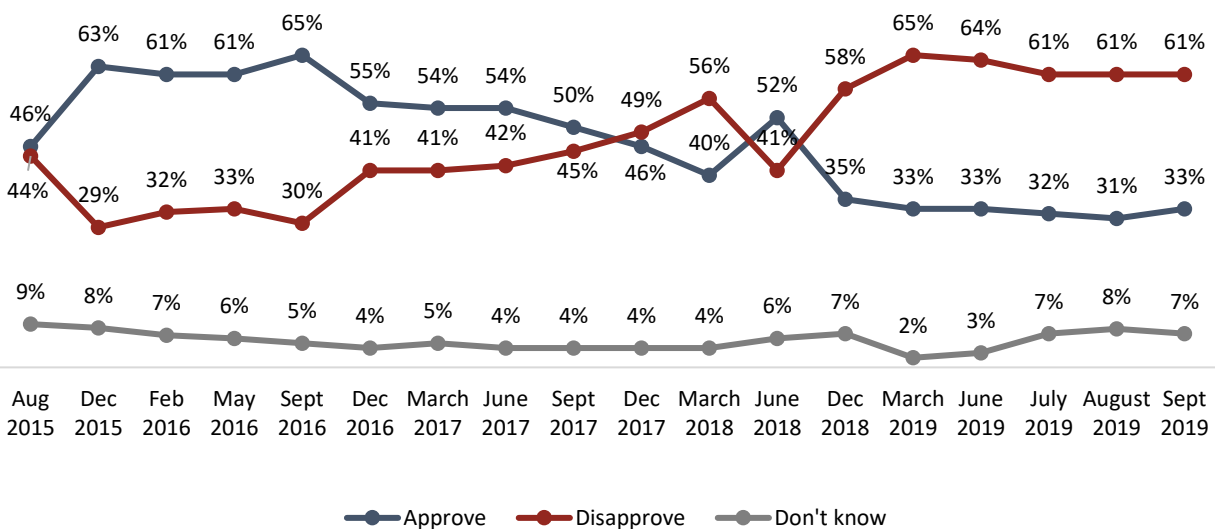
Part 3: Why the Liberals may recover

Liberal leader’s approval no better, no worse than before

No party strategist, nor local volunteer would ever wish to face the kind of fallout from the type of revelations exposed in this second week of the Liberals’ campaign. Trudeau’s outing as a blackface participant stood to severely damage his brand as a tolerant, inclusive, respectful politician. But as noted at the beginning of this report, it may have little, if any impact, on the leader’s and his party’s overall chances of success.

Despite a worsening view of the prime minister among key young voters in the last days and weeks, it has not been enough to have any impact on Trudeau’s overall approval numbers. While they remain admittedly dismal, they have not deteriorated:

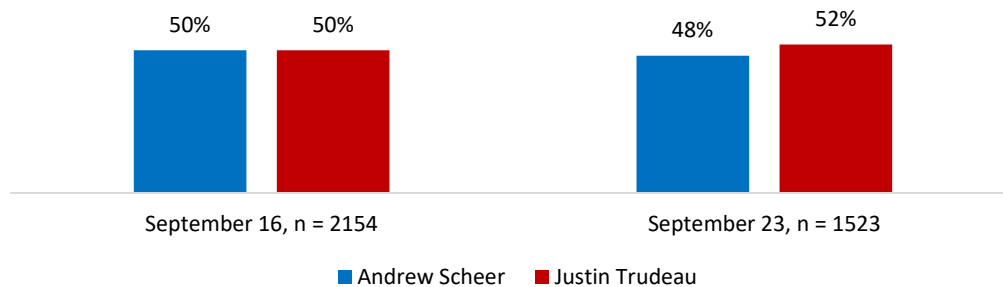
Do you approve or disapprove of Justin Trudeau?



Trudeau, Scheer statistically tied on question of best PM

Another indicator Trudeau may well be able to put the scandal behind him, is that he remains statistically tied with Andrew Scheer on the question of which to the two leading party chiefs in this campaign is best suited to lead the country. One week ago, exactly 50 per cent of Canadians choose each. Within the margin of error, that finding is unchanged this week:

Which of these leaders would make the best Prime Minister of Canada?

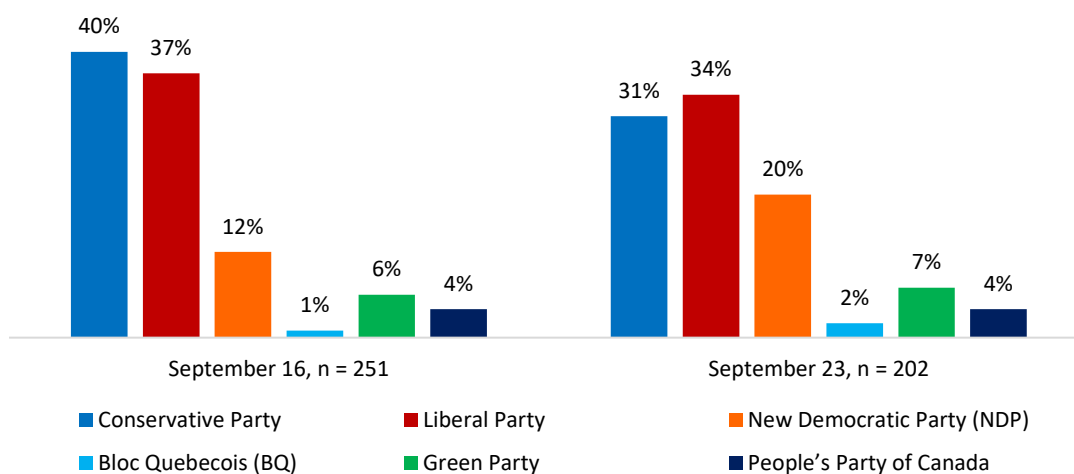


Liberals lead among visible minorities

The fallout from the black and brownface photos included comments from many politicians, writers, journalists and activists offering insight into the potential harm of these photos on Canada's visible minority communities.

But is notable that among Canadians who identify as a visible minority, the controversy does not appear to have hurt the Liberals. While the primary impact among this demographic appears to be a boost in support for Singh and the NDP from last week, it is the Liberals who hold a slight advantage in vote intention among this group, while the CPC have declined:

Vote intention among visible minorities, leaning and decided voters



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

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