

Policy preferences: Pharmacare a winner, majority prefer continued deficit spending rather than cuts

Partisan voters often at odds or less than enthusiastic about some of their own parties' policies

October 18, 2019 – In an election campaign where the day-to-day movements of the federal leaders are covered by the media like paparazzi, a key aspect of *why* those leaders are on the hustings to begin with – the party's promises and policies – has largely been subsumed.

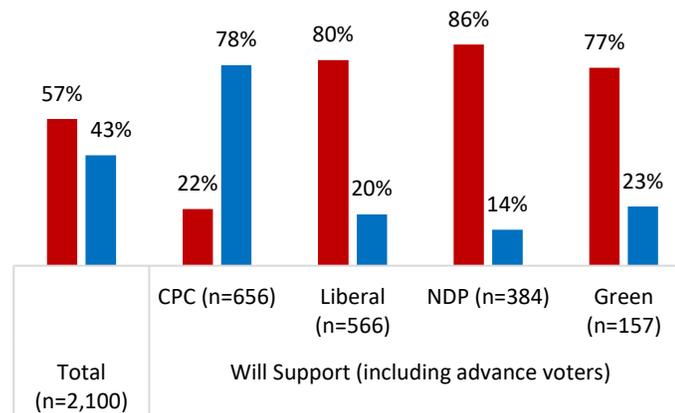
Indeed, a new study from the Angus Reid Institute finds voters in Canada three times as likely to say that they will base their vote on platforms over personalities. But whose platforms are resonating most with voters? And are declared voters aligned with their parties' own positions?

The survey canvassed the electorate on a number of main themes and party promises – and finds certain pledges enjoy vastly more support than others.

More Key Findings:

- A majority of Canadians (57%) say they would prefer to continue running deficits in order to fund social programs and job growth, while four-in-ten (43%) say the next government should focus on balancing the budget within the next five years
- The Liberal plan to make a \$6 billion investment over four years as a “down-payment” toward a Pharmacare program is preferred (46%) to the NDP's plan to initiate and fund Pharmacare with \$10 billion per year starting in 2020 (32%). Four-in-ten Conservatives prefer the Liberal plan (44%) while the same number (43%) prefer the government not move toward universal Pharmacare
- Canadians continue to be deeply divided about pipelines. An equal number say that the next government should increase pipeline capacity (35%), continue the current approach (35%), or do less to get pipelines built (31%)

Federal deficit management: Which overall approach would you prefer?



- Run deficits over the next four years, starting with a \$27 billion deficit in 2020 that will decrease to \$21 billion by 2023, to invest in job growth and social programs
- Focus on achieving a balanced budget within five years even if it means raising taxes or cutting social programs

METHODOLOGY:

The Angus Reid Institute conducted an online survey from October 12 - 15 among a representative randomized sample of 2,100 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 +/- 2.0 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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- Given the choice between two proposals aimed at housing affordability, lower-income Canadians prefer a Liberal proposal to build 100,000 new low-income and senior residences, while wealthier Canadians prefer a Conservative proposal to increase the amortization period for insured mortgages

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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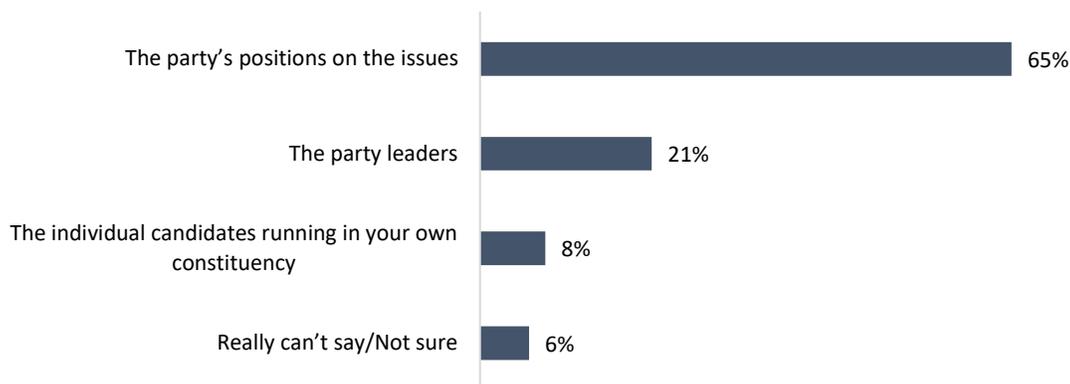
The issues that matter

While rhetoric and machinations often absorb most of the political oxygen in the room during campaigns, when it comes time to get down to brass tacks, Canadians profess to care about the issues. While one-in-five Canadians (21%) say that the federal leaders are the key factor for them in deciding their vote, three-times as many (65%) say that the party's positions on the issues are most important:

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**What is the MOST important consideration for you in making up your mind which party you will support?
(Excluding advance voters, n=1769)**



So, which issues matter most? It depends largely on party preference. Economic issues, in particular, personal taxation levels and management of the federal deficit appear to be highly valued by Conservative supporters. Health care and affordable housing are also a significant consideration, particularly among centre-left voters:

Top Issue By Vote Intention (Respondents allowed two choices, responses receiving 10% or more shown)					
	Total (n=2,100)	Current Vote Intention			
		CPC (656)	Liberal (566)	NDP (384)	Green (157)
Climate change	37%	6%	57%	51%	70%
The amount of taxes I pay	26%	44%	17%	13%	13%
Improving health care access	24%	14%	33%	29%	24%
Transparency and honesty in the federal government	19%	30%	12%	13%	12%
Management of the federal deficit	18%	38%	5%	7%	3%
Access to affordable housing	16%	6%	23%	26%	16%
Immigration policy	12%	21%	4%	4%	4%
Natural resource and energy policy	12%	18%	9%	6%	15%
Improving living conditions for Canada's First Nations	10%	2%	12%	22%	14%

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Gauging support – a note on methodology

The Angus Reid Institute presented Canadians with a number of policy options that each of the parties have included in their platforms. Each policy was presented without labelling or attribution, in order to ensure that respondents were responding simply to their top preference, regardless of partisanship. Read the full questionnaire [here](#).

It is important to note that when considering each of these results, these policies are not an exhaustive list of all that has been proposed, and some parties may have offered multiple proposals within each area. Nevertheless, responses are valuable in order to assess how each party's platform is resonating with potential voters.

Climate change

The debate over how best to address climate change has centered on a few key areas in this election – the carbon tax and pipelines.

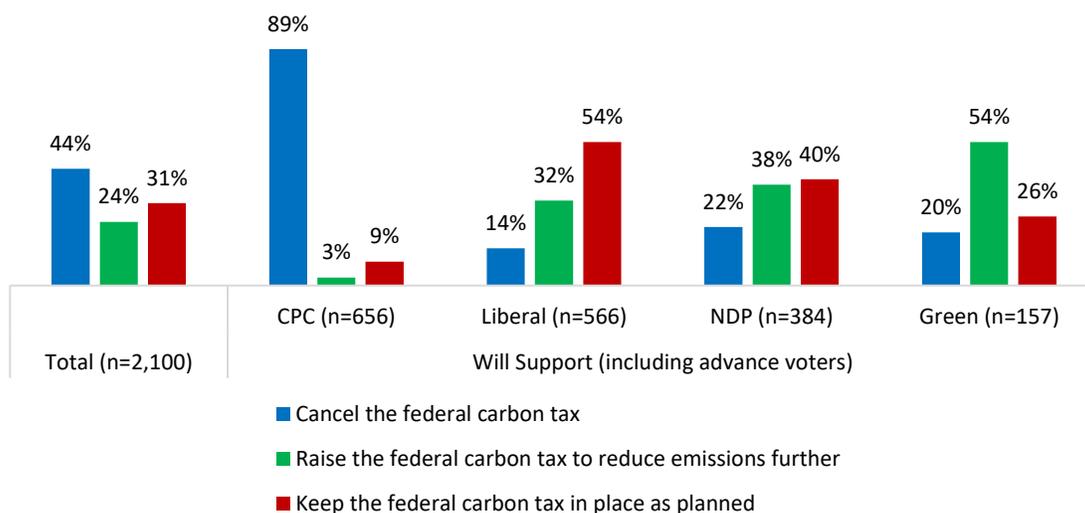
Carbon tax

One of the most contentious policies implemented by the Liberal government is the federal carbon tax. The tax is applied in provinces that choose not to create their own emissions reduction targets. The policy – and Trudeau – ran into a brick wall of opposition in Ontario, Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Alberta and New Brunswick.

Asked what their preferred option was for the carbon tax, a plurality say they would cancel it, while the rest would either keep it or expand it. Note that both the NDP and the Green Party [have suggested different ways](#) to expand the carbon tax.

Politically speaking, Conservative supporters near-unanimously support cancelling the federal carbon tax. Meanwhile, Green Party voters are most likely to say that the tax should be expanded, though – notably – one-in-five who support both the Greens and the NDP say they would cancel the tax altogether:

Carbon tax: What approach would you like the next government to take?



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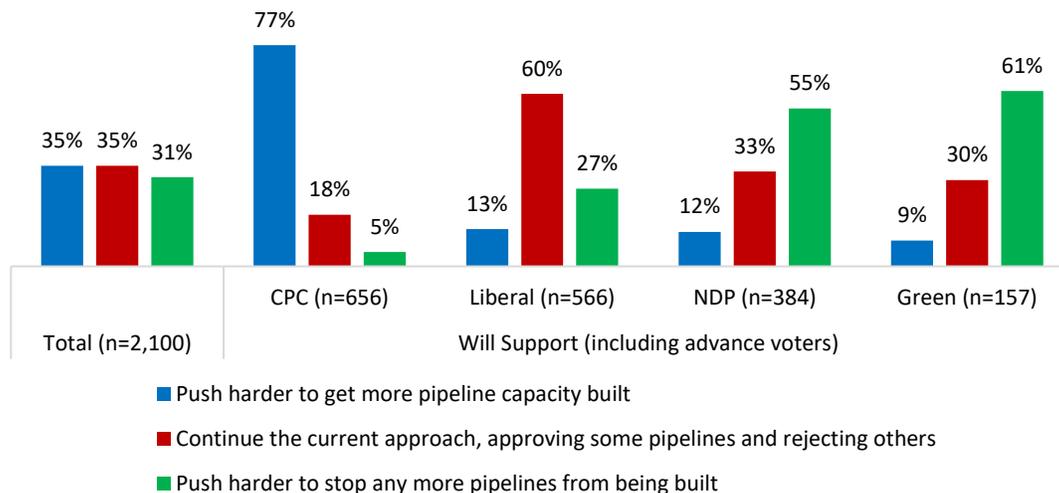
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Pipelines

Another issue divides Canadians like almost no other – pipelines. For evidence of this look no further than the question of what the next federal government should do with respect to Canada’s pipeline capacity. One-in-three (35%) would like to take a more Conservative tactic and increase pipeline capacity outright; one-in-three (35%) would like to follow the Liberal line and approve some projects while rejecting others, based on context; one-in-three (31%) would like to work toward stopping any more pipelines from being built at all.

Notably, Conservatives support increasing capacity while New Democrats and Green supporters lean toward stopping any more pipeline from going forward. However, one-in-three from both of those parties also support the Liberal approach:

Pipeline policy: What approach would you like to see the next federal government take?



From earlier in the campaign: Most say Canada should increase efforts to reach Paris targets

Economic policies

Taxation

On taxation, the Conservatives, Liberals and New Democrats have each proposed changes to tax policy. Overall, the NDP’s “super-wealth tax” – an additional one per cent tax on households with assets worth more than \$20 million – and the Liberal plan to raise the personal income tax exemption from just over \$12,000 to \$15,000 are equally popular, chosen by close to four-in-ten Canadians.

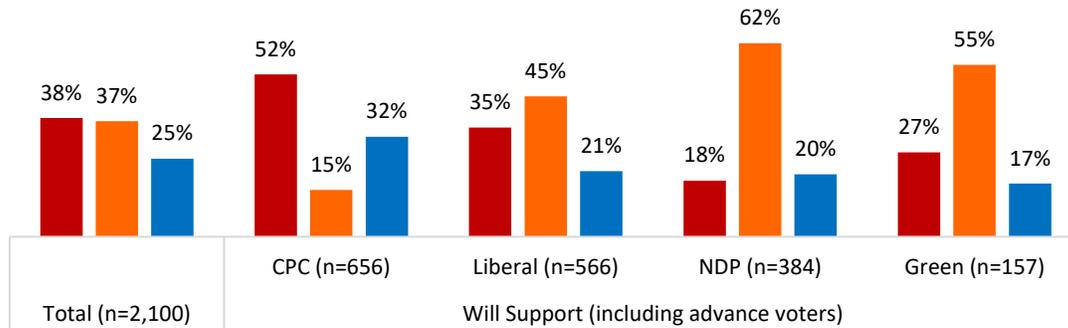
The CPC plan to reduce the tax rate on the lowest-income tax bracket was chosen by one-in-four (25%).

What is particularly notable about the preferences on this question is how each policy resonates across the political spectrum. For example, Conservative voters are most likely to stay that they prefer the Liberal policy, half do (52%). Centre-left voters all lean toward the NDP’s super-wealth tax.

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Taxation policy: Which of the following options would you prefer?



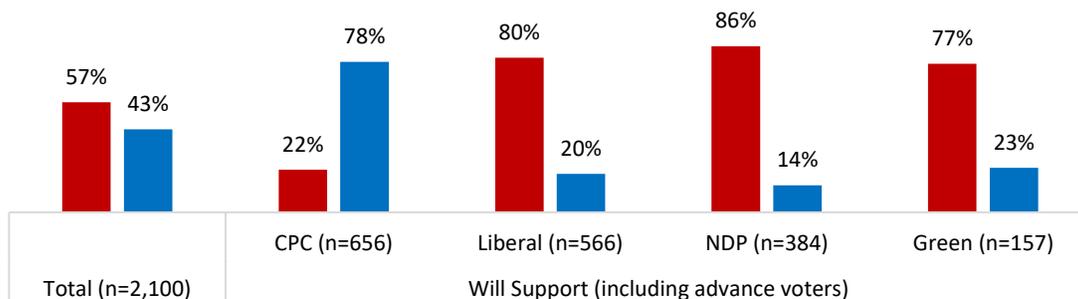
- Raise the personal income tax exemption from the current level of just over \$12,000 up to \$15,000
- Introduce a 1 per cent “super-wealth tax” on households with assets worth more than \$20 million
- Reduce the tax rate for the lowest-income tax bracket (currently \$47,630/year) from 15% down to 13.75%

The deficit

Hindsight and data show us one of the key successes in the Liberal Party’s 2015 election platform was its decision to propose running deficits in order to invest in social and infrastructure spending, as opposed to prioritizing a balanced federal budget. Canadians were less bullish about the prospects of running longer-term deficits at the halfway point of the Trudeau term, but a majority appear to prefer that approach to austerity.

In 2019, three-in-five say they prefer the Liberal promise to run deficits over the next term, compared to the two-in-five who believe focusing on a balanced budget is the best approach. Perhaps unsurprisingly, Conservatives are more supportive of the CPC policy, while centre-left voters prefer the Liberal tact. Interestingly, approximately one-in-five Liberals and Conservatives disagree with their own preferred party on this issue:

Federal deficit management: Which overall approach would you prefer?



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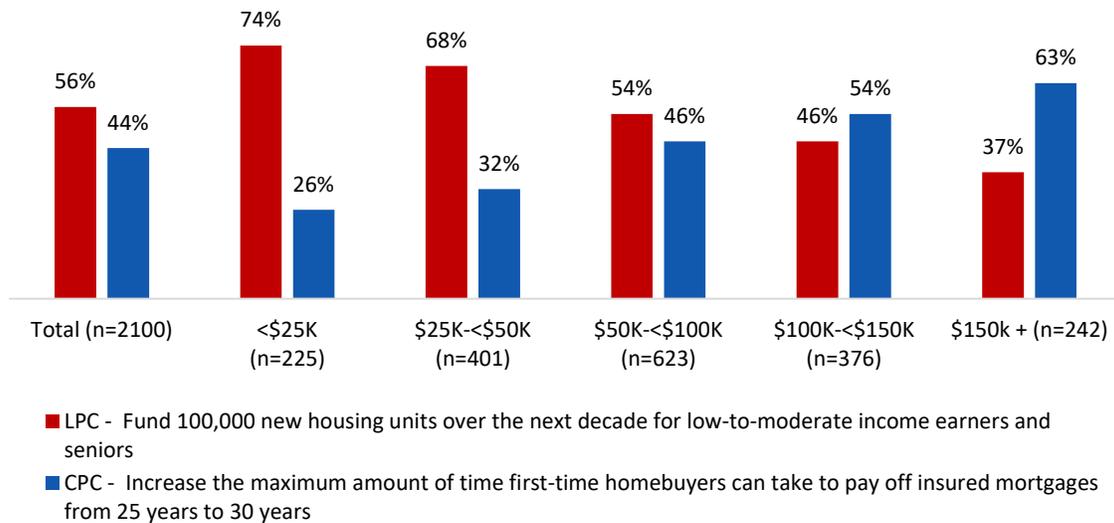
Housing affordability

Increasing housing affordability is chosen as a top issue by one-quarter of Canadians under the age of 35, placing it second only to climate change as a top priority for younger voters. Asked about two different ways in which Canadians may have more access to housing, Canadians are relatively divided.

The Liberal Party has proposed funding 100,000 new housing units for lower income Canadians and seniors. The Conservatives have put forth a plan to help first-time homebuyers by increasing the maximum time to pay off insured mortgages. Both policies generated considerable support, with the Liberal option chosen by slightly more than half (56%). ([See detailed tables for more information](#))

This policy faceoff generates considerably division based on income levels. Lower-income Canadians lean overwhelmingly toward creating more housing supply for those struggling to afford housing, while wealthier Canadians see more value in increasing the maximum amortization period on mortgages.

Which of these proposals for housing affordability would you most like to see the next federal government pursue?



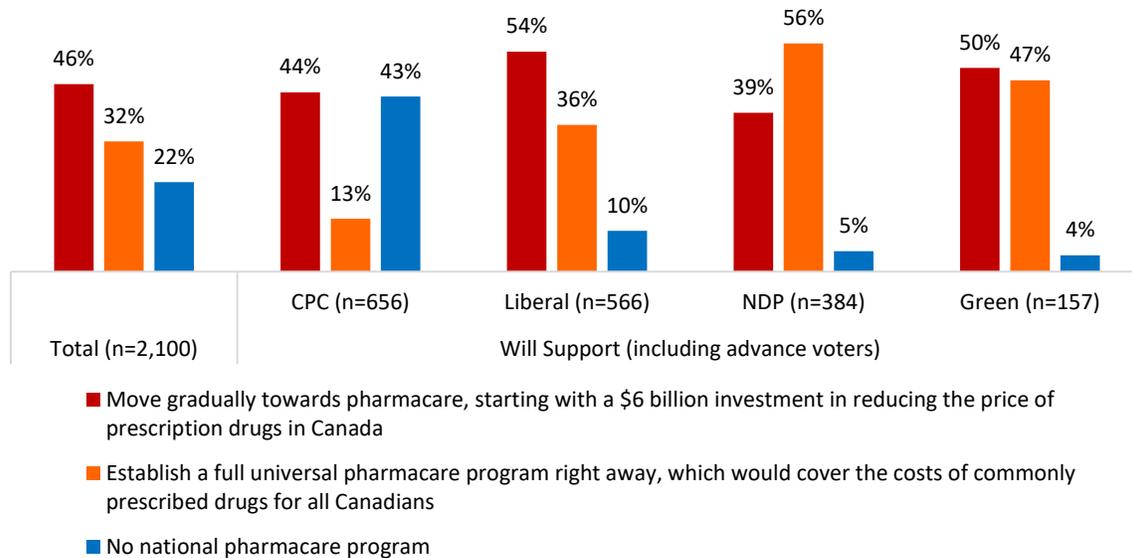
Healthcare

Pharmacare

Pharmacare – universal prescription drug coverage for all Canadians – has dominated the health policy conversation in recent years. The Liberal Party has promised to invest \$6 billion over four years to reduce prescription drug costs, acting as a “down-payment” toward a national Pharmacare program. The NDP plan involves spending \$10 billion a year immediately to cover all medication and medical devices beginning in 2020.

The Liberal plan proves most popular, chosen by at least four-in-ten within each party’s voting group. The NDP plan is also chosen by one-in-three Canadians overall, but only one-in-eight Conservatives:

Pharmacare policy: Which is most appealing to you?



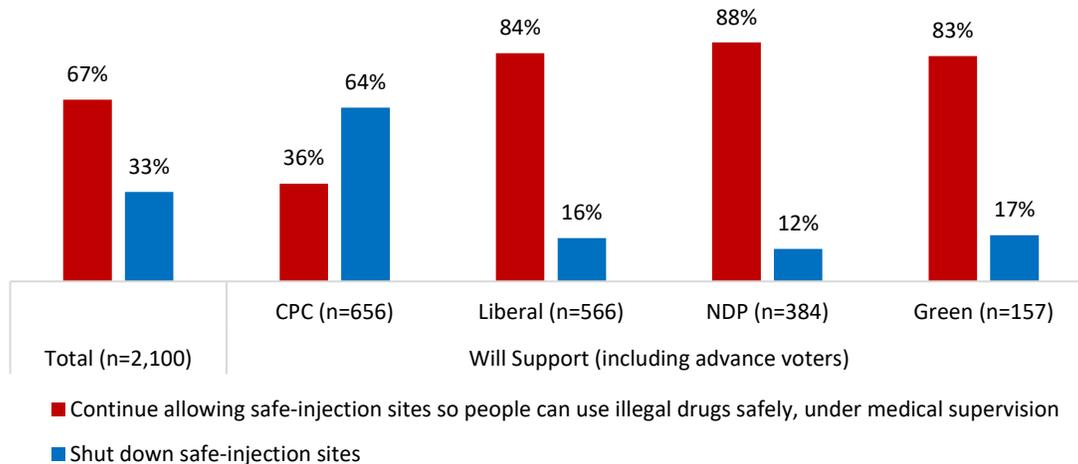
Opioid crisis

Safe injection sites have been a source of disagreement between Liberal and Conservative governments over the past decade. The Liberal government has supported these venues, overseeing the increase of total safe injection sites to 41 nationwide from just one under Stephen Harper’s government. Andrew Scheer has called this approach “terrible”.

For their part, more than four-in-five LPC, NDP and Green supporters would like to see safe injection sites continue to operate. Notably, one-in-three Conservatives agree.

Overall, one-in-three (33%) would shut down safe injection sites.

**Opioid crisis: Which of the following do you feel is best?
(All respondents, n=2100)**



Childcare

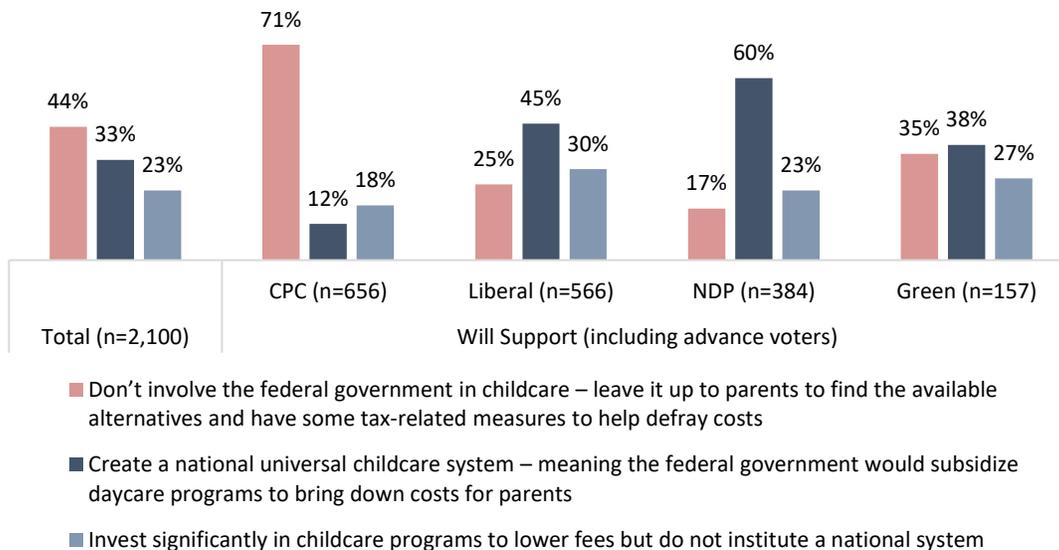
Should the government play a role in looking after junior? Just over half of Canadians say that they would support greater federal investment in childcare, while the rest say that they do not feel it Ottawa’s job to become more involved – beyond some tax-related measures.

The Conservative Party platform calls for this less involved strategy, [re-introducing two tax refunds](#) for parents that were operational under Stephen Harper.

The Green Party has [put forth](#) an expansive proposal, which would increase funding to one per cent of GDP per year in order to create affordable childcare for all children. Notably, Liberal and NDP voters appear more enthusiastic about it than the Green’s own base, which is divided close to evenly across each of the three proposals.

One-in-three Canadians say they would support a universal program for childcare. The NDP has promoted this type of “[Quebec style](#)” childcare system, and would invest \$1 billion initially and increase funding after 2020. One-in-five Canadians support continuing to invest in childcare but not pursuing a universal model:

Childcare proposals: Which do you find most appealing?

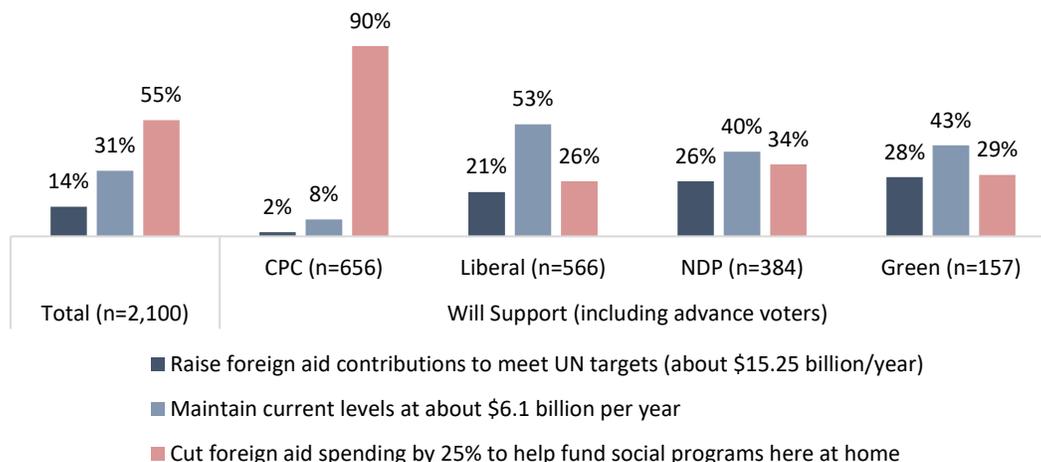


Foreign aid

Canada is well below the United Nations target for overseas development assistance, and it appears most Canadians are fine with that. Currently Canada contributes about \$6.1 billion, or about 0.28 per cent of gross national income. The [target encouraged by the UN](#) is 0.70 per cent of GNI.

Recently, Conservative leader Andrew Scheer stated that he would [cut Canada's development aid](#) by 25 per cent in order to invest in Canada. More than half of Canadians prefer this option rather than continuing to spend our current amount or increasing to meet that UN target. Notably, support for increasing foreign aid contributions is highest among NDP and Green Party voters:

Foreign aid contributions: What do you think Canada should do?



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

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Which of these proposals for housing affordability would you most like to see the next federal government pursue?

	Total (2,100)	Household Income					
		<25\$K (n=225)	\$25K- <\$50K (n=401)	\$50K- <\$100K (n=623)	\$100K- <\$150K (n=376)	\$150K- <\$200K (n=144)	\$200K+ (n=98*)
Fund 100,000 new housing units over the next decade for low-to-moderate income earners and seniors	56%	74%	68%	54%	46%	41%	31%
Increase the maximum amount of time first-time homebuyers can take to pay off insured mortgages from 25 years to 30 years	44%	26%	32%	46%	54%	59%	69%

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