

Flight 752: Canadians don't believe full and accurate accounting of aviation tragedy will ever be revealed

Ukraine Airlines plane was shot down on takeoff January 8 killing 176, including 57 Canadians

January 17, 2020 – In the wake of the devastating Ukraine International Airlines plane crash in Tehran that killed 176 people, including 57 Canadians, the people of this country have little confidence the truth about what really happened will ever emerge.

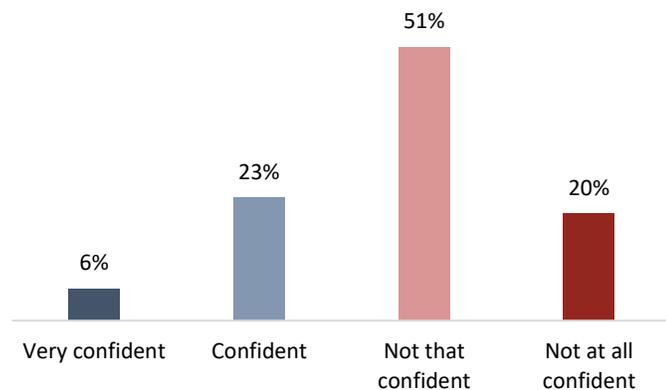
The latest public opinion survey from the Angus Reid Institute indicates most – seven-in-ten – do not believe a full and accurate accounting of what happened will be offered by Iran.

The aircraft was shot down on the same night Iran launched a missile attack on two U.S. bases in Iraq. That was done in retaliation for a U.S. drone attack that killed a senior Iranian general.

Iran initially claimed the aviation tragedy that has left families and friends of the victims devastated was unrelated to tensions with the U.S.

Under mounting pressure, however, Iran's military said it shot at Flight 752, claiming [it was mistaken](#) for an incoming cruise missile.

How confident are you that the world will ultimately get the full, accurate story of what actually happened here?



METHODOLOGY:

The Angus Reid Institute conducted an online survey from January 13 - 15 among a representative randomized sample of 1,538 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.

Complicating matters in the early days of the catastrophe is the fact that Canada and Iran no longer have official diplomatic relations, something half of Canadians (51%) wish to at least partially re-establish now.

More Key Findings:

- Canadians are divided about the future of Canada's mission in Iraq. Equal numbers would like to see Canada maintain troop levels after tensions calm in the region (42%) or remove them completely (38%).
- Amidst the grief, the federal government's reaction to this tragedy appears to be striking the right tone with Canadians: Prime Minister Justin Trudeau's approval has increased seven points in the last four weeks from 36 per cent to 43 per cent

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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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Part Three: Trudeau approval rises**Part One: Ukraine Airlines Crash****Unprecedented Awareness**

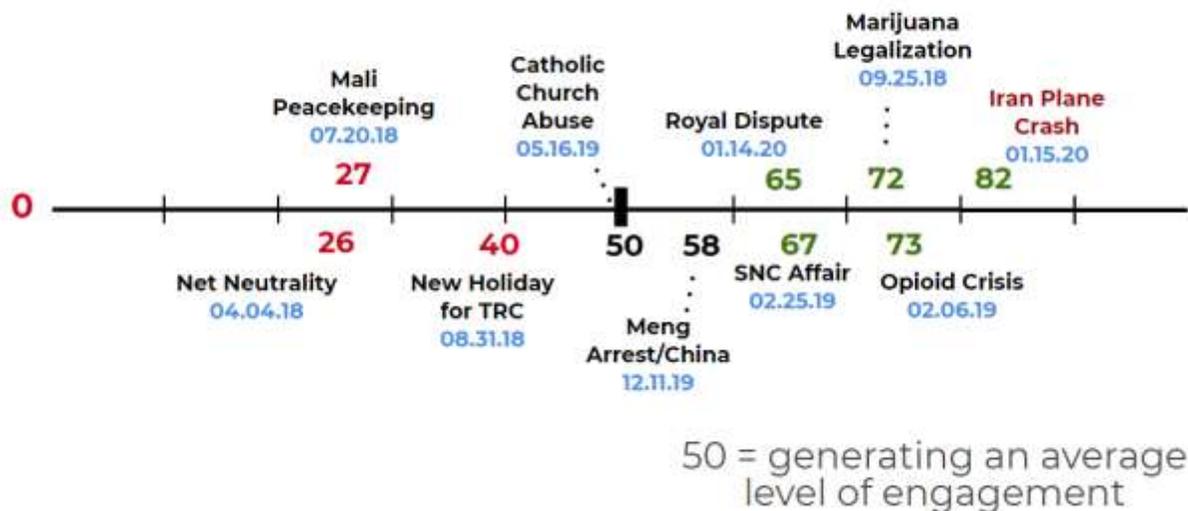
After Flight 752 went down, this country was plunged into grief. 57 Canadians were among the 176 people killed in the crash. [Stories of lost loved ones](#) from across the country began to emerge as news of the tragedy spread. Canadians are following the story closely. Overall, nine-in-ten (89%) are keeping up, reading about the event, and talking to family or friends about it ([view comprehensive tables](#)). To exemplify just how deeply the story has permeated the Canadian consciousness, consider that it rates the highest awareness ever on the ARI Awareness Index.

An "average" topic would score a 50 on the index. The 82 recorded for this story suggests that Canadians are paying considerably closer attention to this issue than they were to many other high-profile stories from 2019. How this story compares to other polling topics can be seen in the graphic that follows. For greater detail on the construction of the ARI Engagement Index, see notes on methodology at the end of this report.

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Scores on Angus Reid Institute Engagement Index



Sorrow has been mixed with anger, especially as Iran's explanations changed in the wake of information and facts. As reports emerged about the crash, Iran initially denied having shot down the plane, suggesting that such insinuations were [Western propaganda](#). Just a day later, however, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau announced that sources were confident that the plane was shot down by a surface to air missile strike by the Iranians. Iran later confirmed this.

Seven-in-ten not confident the truth will emerge

Questions have now turned to learning the full story about what happened, and who is to be held responsible. Iran's Civil Aviation Organization is leading an investigation into the crash and has invited American, Ukrainian and Canadian officials to take part. Iran is [said to be allowing](#) Canadian officials to examine the wreckage as well as data from the aircraft's black boxes which record flight information.

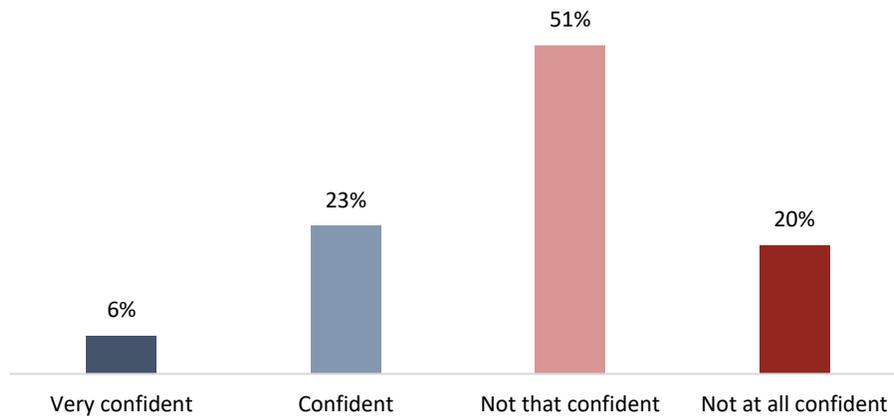
The five nations whose nationals were killed on the plane, Canada, the UK, Ukraine, Sweden and Afghanistan, are working together to hold Iran to account.

Canadians are skeptical. Perhaps put off by initial denials from Iran, just 29 per cent of Canadians feel that the full story will come out with the investigation:

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How confident are you that the world will ultimately get the full, accurate story of what actually happened here?



Part Two: Canada's role in the region

Half don't want to establish diplomatic ties with Iran

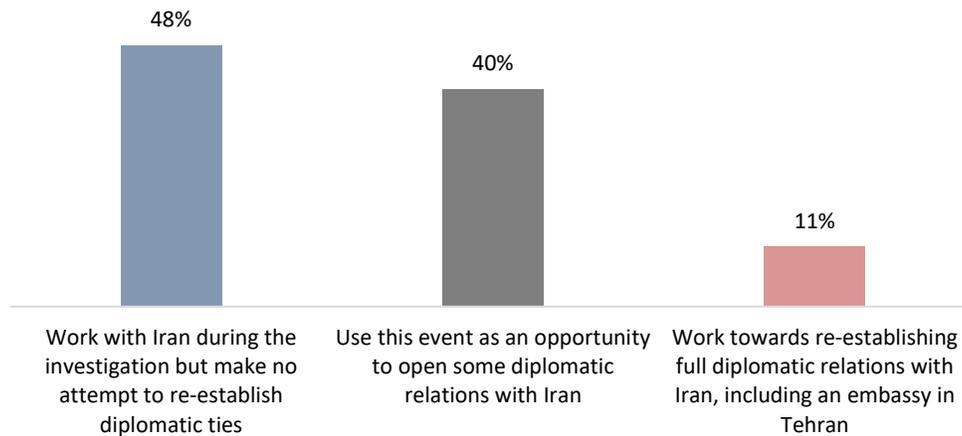
Prime Minister Trudeau has called for "closure, transparency, accountability and justice" for the victims and their families. At this point, accountability may be the goal, but how justice is administered remains unclear. Some observers have noted that the tense political climate and Canada's lack of diplomatic ties may complicate the situation. Canada has not had an embassy in Tehran or any diplomatic relations with Iranian officials since 2012 when then-Prime Minister Stephen Harper's Conservative government closed the embassy and expelled officials from Canada over human rights abuses by the Iranian regime.

When asked what they think the Canadian government's approach should be going forward, half (48%) of Canadians said that their government should work with the Iranian government to investigate this crash but go no further to establish diplomatic ties. Two-in-five (40%) Canadians believe that this could be a good opportunity for the government to establish some ties moving into the future. Only 11 per cent say that Canada should re-establish full economic ties with Iran, including re-establishing an embassy in that country.

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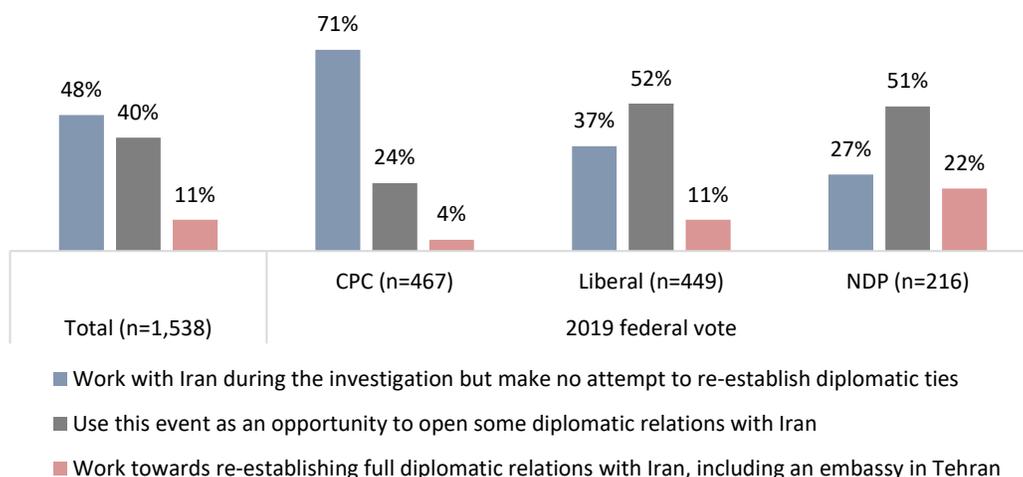
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In your opinion, what approach should the Canadian government take going forward:



While opinions are relatively uniform across age and gender ([view comprehensive tables for more detail](#)) this is not the case when assessing data through a political lens. Conservatives overwhelmingly support working with Iran during the investigation and then cutting off ties, while half of NDP and Liberal voters say Canada should use this opportunity to reopen diplomacy. NDP voters are most likely to support full diplomatic relations, though just one-in-five (22%) do:

In your opinion, what approach should the Canadian government take going forward:



No consensus on Canada's Iraq presence

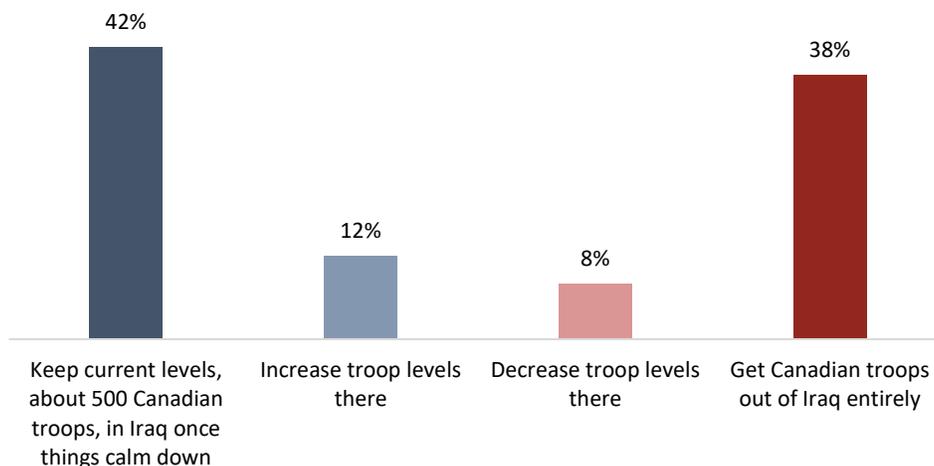
After Iranian General Qassim Suleimani was killed by a drone strike, ordered by U.S. President Donald Trump, Iran vowed to respond. As a precaution, Canada's 500 troops in Iraq were moved to Kuwait. The purpose of Canada's current mission in the region is to help strengthen Iraqi security forces in the [fight](#)

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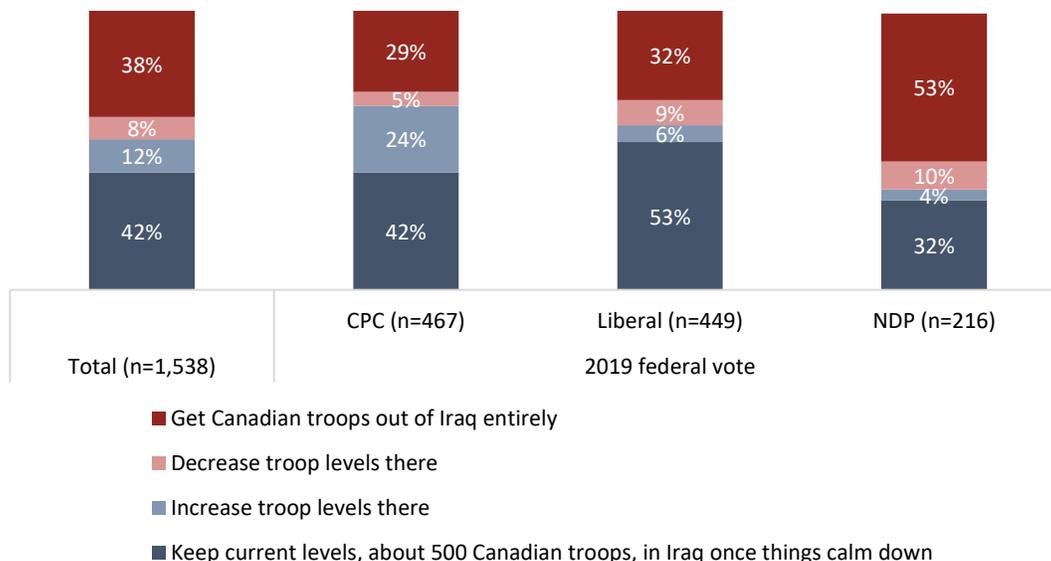
against ISIS. President Trump later suggested that NATO allies, which includes Canada, need to step up and do more to advance military security in the Middle East. With this in mind, the Angus Reid Institute asked Canadians what they would do if they were in charge of troop levels in the region.

What would you do if you were in charge of Canada’s military operations in Iraq?



Those who voted for the New Democratic Party in the October federal election are most likely to say that Canada should not have any presence in Iraq – 53 per cent would pull all Canadian troops from the country. Meanwhile, Conservatives are most likely to say troop levels should increase:

What would you do if you were in charge of Canada’s military operations in Iraq?



Part Three: Trudeau's approval rises

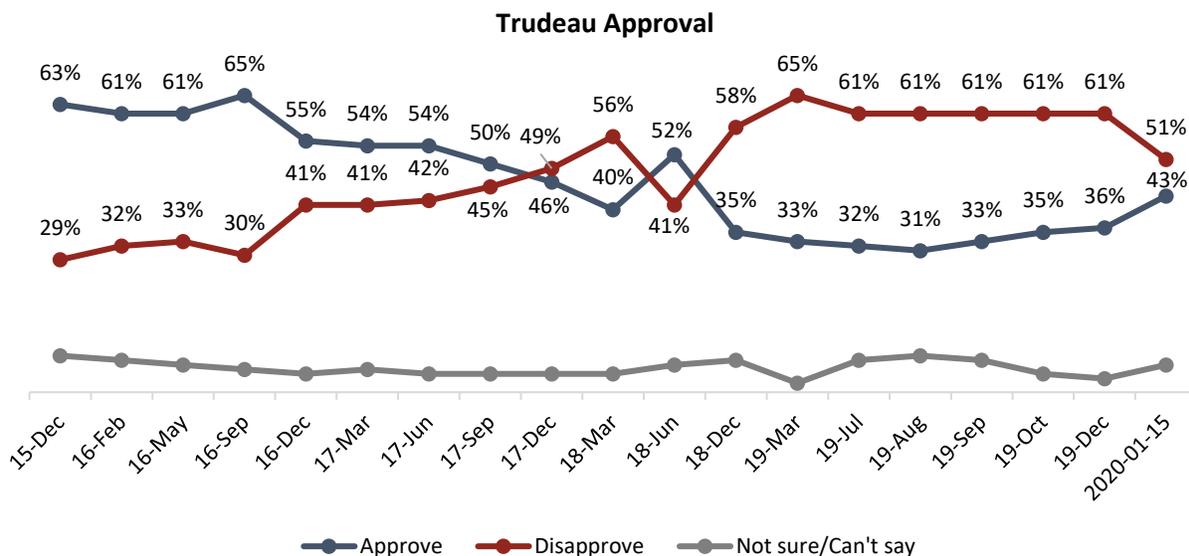
While the focus of the Flight 752 tragedy must remain on the victims and loved ones left behind, the reactions of Canada's political leaders have also been under scrutiny.

The issue is not without precedent. In 1985, the bombing of Air India Flight 182 killed 329 people, 268 of whom were Canadian. It was, and remains, the worst case of terrorism and mass murder against Canadian citizens. Yet, in the days, months, years and decades after the crime, successive Canadian governments were criticized for not fully grasping their responsibilities, and treating the victims' families "like adversaries". Then-Prime Minister Brian Mulroney called the Indian government to condole over the loss of its plane, rather than comforting grieving Canadians at home. A 20-year quest for justice, rife with 'cover up' allegations and the mishandling of evidence, ended in acquittals for the alleged bombers. The wounds have never fully healed.

This time, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau's government has carefully taken a different approach. Trudeau himself has consoled victims, attending a memorial in Edmonton, where 13 of the victims lived, as well as meeting with families of victims in Montreal.

Following Iran's admission it shot down Ukraine Airlines Flight 752, Trudeau signalled that Canada will continue to exert pressure on Tehran until the families of victims receive "accountability and justice and closure". For their part, the federal government is taking steps to help families of the victims travel between Iran and Canada, including by working with the Iranian government to facilitate granting visas, and enacting its own "special measures" such as expediting requests for visas and other required travel documents. The federal government is also considering offering interim compensation to families of Flight 752 victims to help them cope with expenses stemming from the tragedy.

Some Canadians appear to endorse Trudeau's handling of the crisis thus far, as his approval has risen considerably this month:

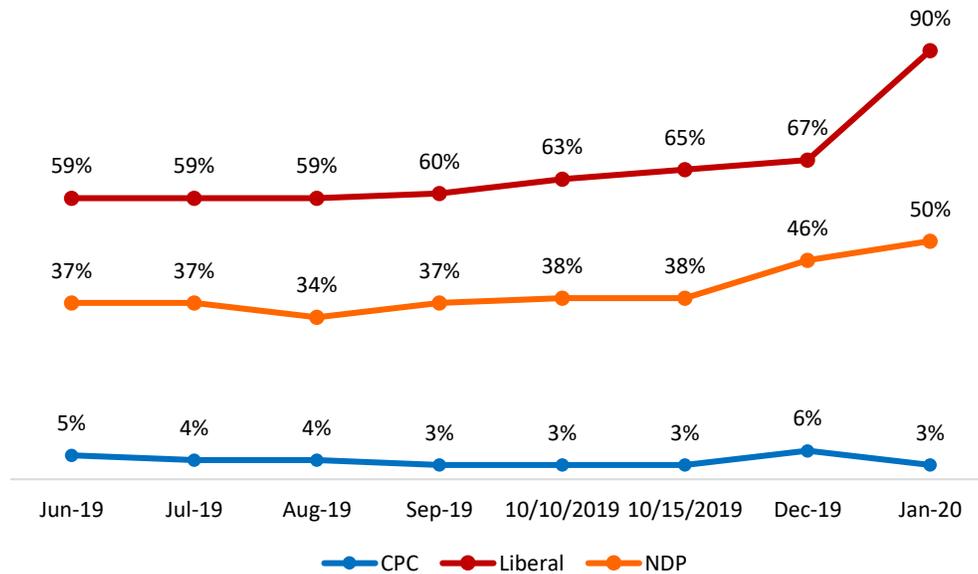


The increase in approval is largely due to Liberal voters. Nine-in-ten who voted for Trudeau's party last October say they approve of him. Meanwhile, half of NDP supporters feel the same (50%). Notably, Trudeau still holds almost no support from Conservatives:

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Trudeau's approval rating by last federal vote since June 2019



Notes on Methodology

Since early 2015, the Angus Reid Institute has been asking Canadians a standardized question about how closely they are following the topics of ARI polls. To facilitate easy comparisons across disparate topics, ARI researchers have developed an Engagement Index based on respondents' answers. For each issue, respondents are asked to say whether they are "following it in the news and discussing it with friends and family," "seeing some media coverage and having the odd conversation," "just scanning the headlines," or not seeing or hearing anything about the issue.

The index is based on the average response to this question over the years, with greater weight given to the highest level of engagement on the scale, and lesser weight given to the "having the odd conversation" and "just scanning headlines" responses. An "average" issue scores a 50 on the index, with scores higher than 50 representing above-average engagement and scores lower than 50 representing below-average engagement.

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