

Meng and the Michaels: Most support PM's refusal to swap Huawei executive for imprisoned Canadians

Across political spectrum, two-thirds agree Meng situation be left to courts, disagree with intervention

June 29, 2020 – As Prime Minister Justin Trudeau rebuffs calls to intervene in the extradition case of Huawei executive Meng Wanzhou in order to secure the release from China of detained Canadians Michael Spavor and Michael Kovrig, a majority of Canadians support his stance.

Last week, in response to a letter signed by 19 prominent Canadians – including several former Liberal politicians – Trudeau has emphatically refused to entertain the suggestion of the Chinese government to end legal proceedings against Meng (who was arrested at the request of the U.S. Government) in order to free “the Michaels” – held in China for more than a year and recently charged with espionage.

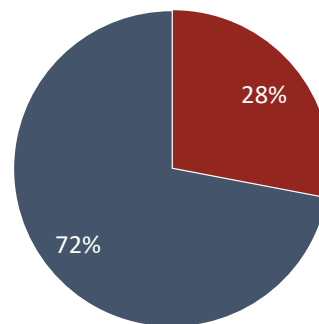
Now, the latest study from the non-profit Angus Reid Institute finds Canadians supportive of the federal government's position of letting Meng's extradition case play out in the courts. Seven-in-ten (72%) feel this way, while a minority (28%) say that they would rather the government negotiate a way to exchange Meng for Canadians Kovrig and Spavor.

This sentiment is consistent across generational lines, gender, and political partisanship. At least two-thirds of past voters for each of the main federal parties say the case should continue in court.

That said, views of Trudeau's overall handling of the situation are less positive. Close to two-in-five (37%) say the government has done a good job, led by those who supported the Liberals in the last federal election (64%). Half (50%), however, say he's done a poor job, with past Conservative voters overwhelmingly critical (83%), and past NDP voters divided close to equally on each side.

If you were advising the federal government – what would you tell it to do?

(n=1,488)



- Intervene in the independent court process and send Meng home in exchange for Canadians Kovrig and Spavor
- Continue to treat the Meng case as a legal matter and leave it with the courts to decide Meng's future

METHODOLOGY:

The Angus Reid Institute conducted an online survey from June 25 – 26, 2020 among a representative randomized sample of 1,488 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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Amid the ongoing tension, disagreement continues over whether Canada should have arrested Meng in the first place. As was the case last December, half of Canadians (50%) say that the arrest was the right move, while an equal number (50%) say it should have been avoided.

More Key Findings:

- Four-in-five Canadians (81%) say that consumers in this country should boycott Chinese goods in response to the detainment of Kovrig and Spavor.
- Those who do not want to see intervention in the court case give the Liberals mixed reviews on their overall handling of tensions with China (43% good, 44% poor), while those who feel the government should intervene say the relationship with China has been handled poorly (67%).
- Nine-in-ten Canadians (93%) say that China cannot be trusted to uphold human rights, continuing a consistent trend in opinion noted over the last 18 months.

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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Canadians say courts should decide Meng's fate

The political tensions between Canada and China continue unabated. Just two weeks ago Chinese officials announced that they had charged two Canadians, Michael Kovrig and Michael Spavor, with espionage. These charges have been described as [baseless and arbitrary](#) by Canadian and international officials. China has denied that the arrest of the two men was in response to Canada's December 2018 arrest of Huawei executive Meng Wanzhou, who was held at a Vancouver airport at the request of the United States, which hopes to charge her with fraud. The two Canadians were arrested [just days after](#) and have been held without legal representation or access to family for more than 550 days.

Last week, Chinese officials [suggested that](#) the men may be released if Meng were to be sent back to China and dismissed of charges. This, after the British Columbia Supreme Court ruled that her [extradition case could proceed](#) in May. Prime Minister Justin Trudeau has repeatedly stated that he will not intervene in the case, though a number of high profile Canadian public figures sent him a letter on June 24, asking that he do just that.

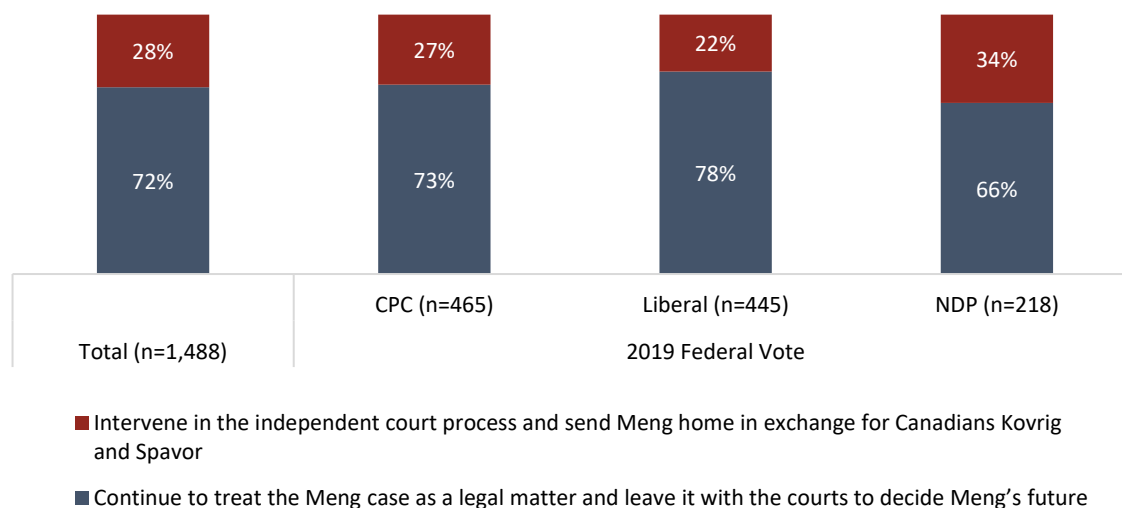
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Most Canadians side with Trudeau and the Liberal government on this course of action. Seven-in-ten (72%) say that the case should continue, and that Meng’s fate should be left up to the independent judicial system. That said, 28 per cent disagree, and feel that an exchange would be worth pursuing and Meng’s case should be dropped.

Opinions on this issue are remarkably consistent across age and gender demographics, with at least two-thirds of each group feeling the case should continue in the courts ([see detailed tables](#)). Even political partisanship – often a source of significant division – is not a factor, as majorities who voted for each of the main political parties in the 2019 election are on the same side of this debate:

**If you were advising the federal government – what would you tell it to do?
(n=1,488)**



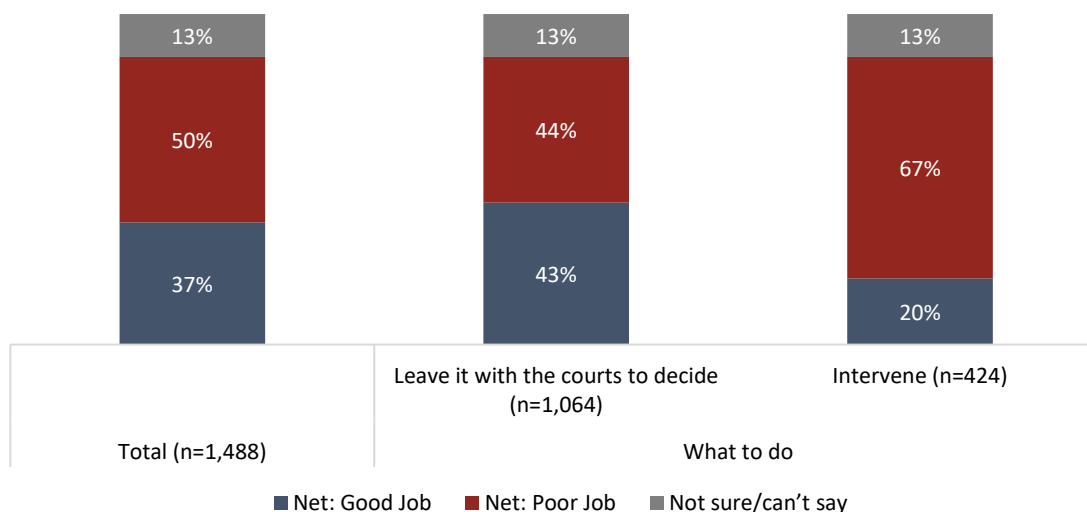
Liberals graded poorly on overall handling of this issue

While Canadians may agree with the Prime Minister that he should not intervene in the case, they do not feel that he and his government have managed recent tensions with China as well as they could have. Some, including Conservative leadership candidate Erin O’Toole, suggest that Trudeau has not been firm enough with the Chinese government, while others argue that Canada does not have the political or economic clout to take a more aggressive posture.

The government’s actions are likely to be closely scrutinized as nine-in-ten Canadians (91%) now feel that the tension between the two countries is ‘serious’ ([see detailed tables](#)).

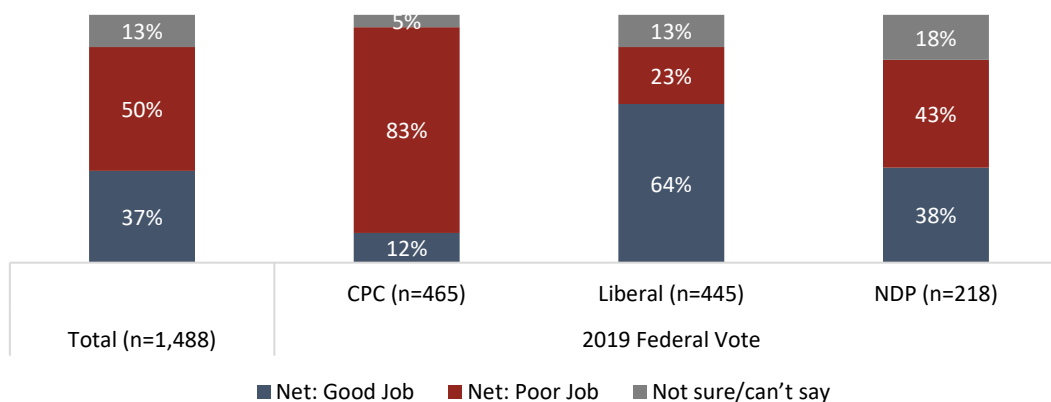
Close to two-in-five Canadians (37%) say that the government has handled these recent events well, while 50 per cent disagree. Those who feel the government should intervene in the case and exchange Meng for the two Canadian men are more critical of the government’s overall handling of the Sino-Canadian relationship:

Based on whatever you have seen, heard or read about this situation with China, what kind of a job do you think the Trudeau Liberal government has done handling this?



Past Liberal supporters are most likely to give the government positive marks on this issue, they do so by nearly a three-to-one margin, while past New Democrats are divided, and past CPC voters are overwhelmingly negative:

Based on whatever you have seen, heard or read about this situation with China, what kind of a job do you think the Trudeau Liberal government has done handling this?



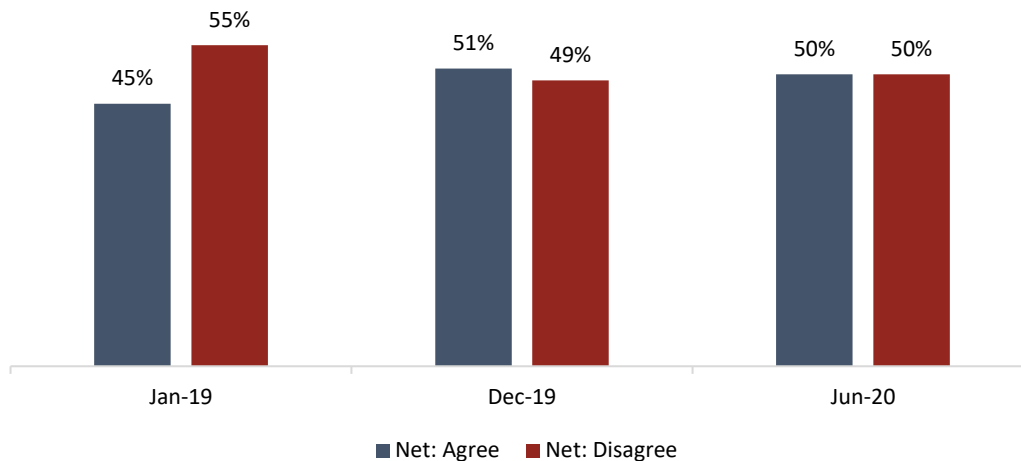
Half feel arrest should never have been made

Canadians remain divided about the wisdom of arresting Meng at the United States' request in the first place. Just as was the case in December, half of Canadians (50%) say she should not have been arrested in the first place, while half disagree (50%).

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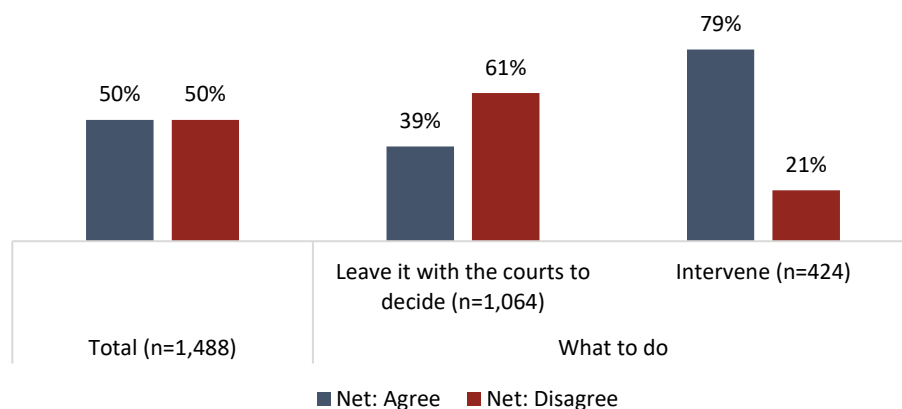
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**Agree vs disagree:
"Canada should have resisted the US request and not arrested Meng
in the first place"**



This opinion is a significant driving factor in how Canadians feel the issue should be resolved. Those who feel the arrest should not have been made are overwhelmingly of the opinion that the government should intervene in the case:

**Agree vs disagree:
"Canada should have resisted the US request and not
arrested Meng in the first place"**



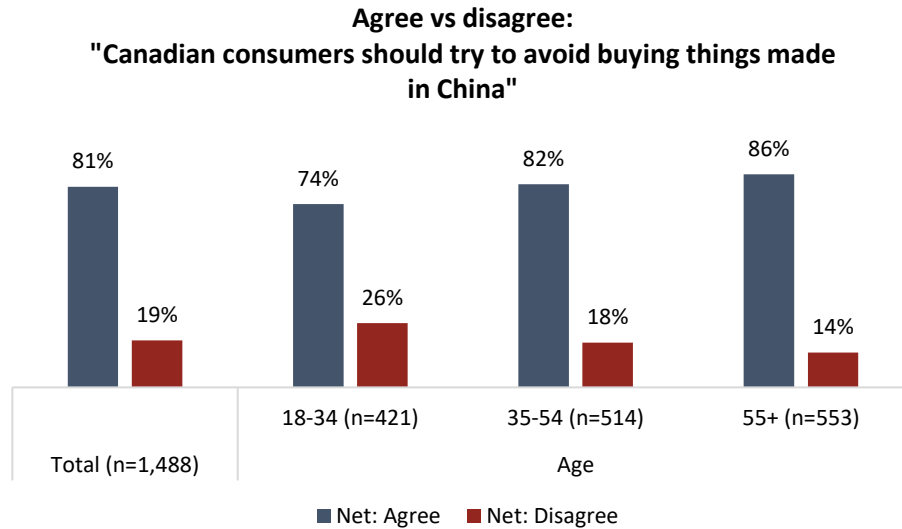
Four-in-five say Canadians should boycott Chinese goods

While many observers note that Canada is in a difficult spot, with [few options](#) to pressure the Chinese government to release Kovrig and Spavor, many Canadians (81%) feel that they should boycott goods made in China to send a message. That may be a challenge for many; in 2019 Canadians spent more than \$2.6 billion on toys, games, and sporting equipment manufactured in China and more than \$3.5

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billion on clothing. Nonetheless, Canadians across all age groups feel that a boycott is something that should be considered:



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