

Canadians to Ottawa: In hiring next GG, cut pay, review job description, take final decision out of PM's hands

Plurality would eliminate the position, as long-term support for Canada as constitutional monarchy wanes

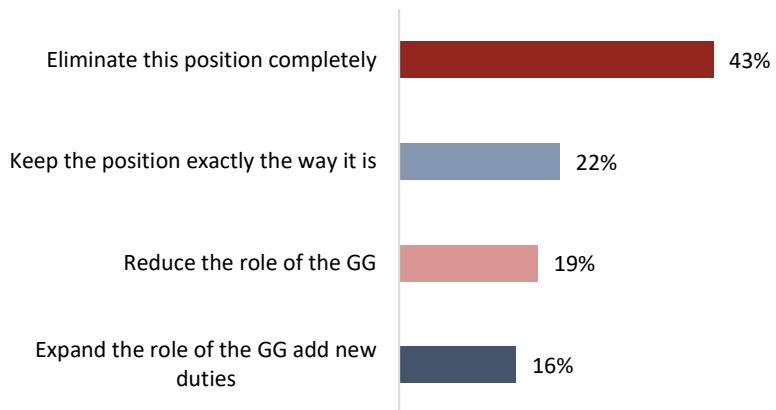
February 18, 2021 – Julie Payette's unprecedented resignation under a cloud from her role as governor general is prompting more than the usual, predictable questions about who should replace her.

It is also setting off a debate among Canadians about the future of a job tied directly to this nation's status as a constitutional monarchy.

The latest data from the non-profit Angus Reid Institute finds that as support for maintaining the monarchical status quo declines, a majority of Canadians are also inclined to reduce or eliminate the role of the governor general.

Further, Canadians are in near-unanimity over who should actually hire Payette's successor. Nine-in-ten (91%) say that decision should be up to a parliamentary committee, rather than at the sole discretion of the prime minister.

Suppose you were a hiring manager, and you were going to review the role of GG before you repost the position. Would you:



METHODOLOGY:

The Angus Reid Institute conducted an online survey from February 11-16, 2021 among a representative randomized sample of 1,601 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 +/- 2.4 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.

More Key Findings:

- Canadians across the country have competing ideas about what to do with the governor general role. In Quebec, a full majority (63%) would eliminate the position, but elsewhere residents are divided between eliminating, reducing, or even expanding the purview of the position.
- Those who say they would reduce the purview of the position (approximately one-in-five Canadians) are most likely to say they would eliminate the governor general's place as a symbolic leader to the Canadian Armed Forces, if they could change the job
- While half of Canadians support continuing to recognize the Queen as head of state, just one-third (32%) say they would like Canada to remain a monarchy for coming generations. This is down 10 percentage points over the past five years

About ARI

CONTACT:

Shachi Kurl, President: 604.908.1693 shachi.kurl@angusreid.org @shachikurl
Dave Korzinski, Research Director: 250.899.0821 dave.korzinski@angusreid.org

*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.*

INDEX:

Part One: After Payette’s resignation, Canadians divided about Canada’s future as monarchy

- **High awareness for unprecedented resignation of Governor General**
- **Relevance of royals, significance of monarchy both drop**
- **What about constitutional monarchy, long term?**

Part Two: Views of Governor General role and responsibilities

- **Three-quarters say GG responsibilities should be absorbed by others**
- **More than half would reduce or eliminate the role**
- **Near unanimous opinion that position pays too much**
- **Canadians trust parliamentary committee over PM to appoint next GG**

Part One: After Payette’s resignation, Canadians divided about Canada’s future as monarchy

Awareness for unprecedented resignation of Governor General

The abbreviated term of former Governor General Julie Payette was a tumultuous one. Prime Minister Justin Trudeau [announced Payette](#) as his appointment for the position in 2017. Payette stirred debate in September 2018 after she [criticized](#) climate change denial, creationism, and other beliefs at a science conference. Some felt that the comments were [breaking with tradition](#) for a position that is mandated to encourage unity and act in a non-partisan fashion in public.

Payette later faced criticism for her [comparatively inactive](#) public schedule, her decision [not to move](#) into Rideau Hall after renovations were completed, and allegations over her management style at Rideau Hall.

In January, an independent review of conduct at Rideau Hall found current and former employees describing the work environment under Payette and her second-in-command, Assunta Di Lorenzo, as [“toxic”](#), among other negative descriptors. The report, which drew from interviews of nearly 100 public servants, also contained accusations from staff of [“yelling, screaming, aggressive conduct, demeaning comments and public humiliations.”](#)

Her term culminated last month in resignation after a review by the Privy Council Office [confirmed](#) these accusations among dozens of staffers.

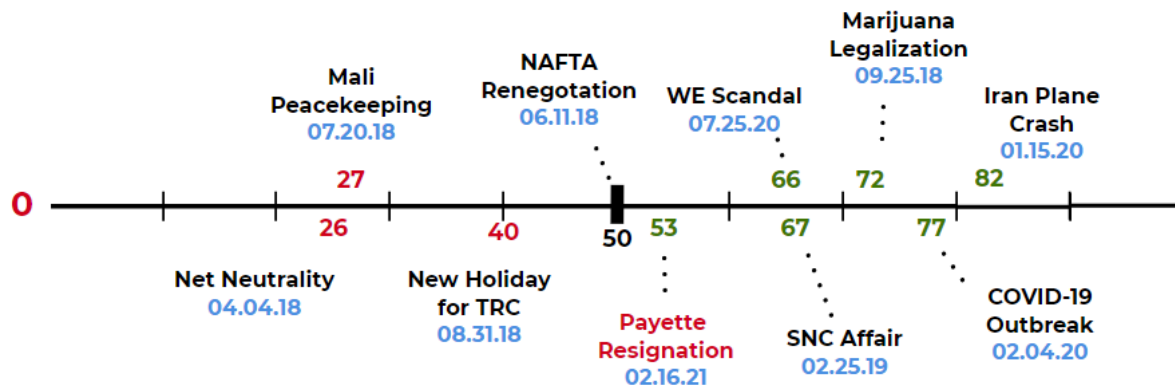
For a position that is significantly ceremonial, these events and allegations have caught the attention of many Canadians. Indeed, one-quarter (24%) say that they followed the news closely surrounding Payette’s resignation, while just 13 per cent had not heard anything about it ([see detailed tables](#)).

CONTACT:

Shachi Kurl, President: 604.908.1693 shachi.kurl@angusreid.org @shachikurl
Dave Korzinski, Research Director: 250.899.0821 dave.korzinski@angusreid.org

The ordeal scores a 53 on the Angus Reid Institute's Awareness Index, which suggests it has had an above-average level of engagement from Canadians but is not an issue that has galvanized them at a time when other issues dominate.

Scores on Angus Reid Institute Engagement Index



50 = generating an average level of engagement

Beyond Payette, the future of the role of governor general is evidently a source of uncertainty for a country seemingly at a crossroads over the very future of the monarchy's role in a modern Canada.

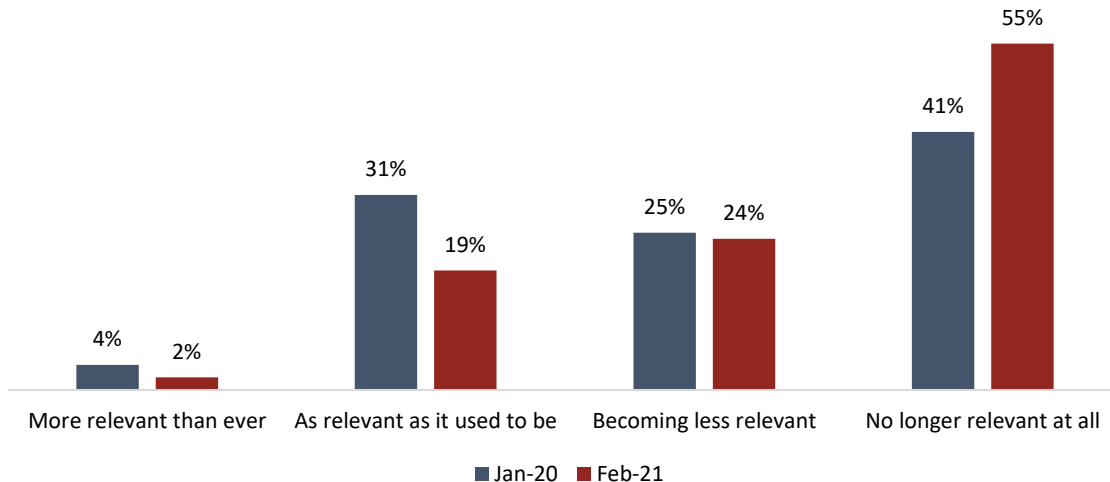
Relevance of royals, significance of monarchy both drop

While individual members of the royal family are never far from the headlines (be it news of Prince Harry and Meghan Markle's latest pregnancy or the latest speculation over Prince Andrew's connections to Jeffrey Epstein and Ghislaine Maxwell), just one-in-five Canadians (21%) currently feel the royal family is just as relevant in Canada as ever:

CONTACT:

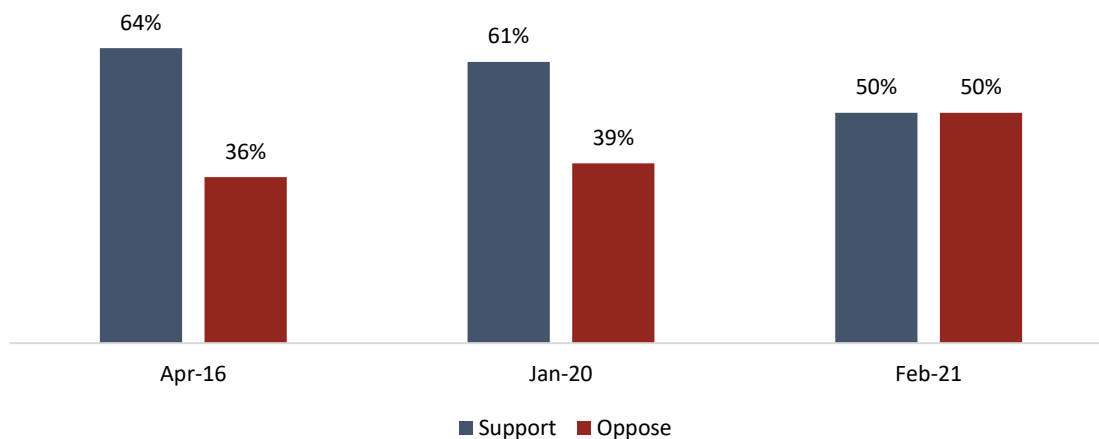
Shachi Kurl, President: 604.908.1693 shachi.kurl@angusreid.org @shachikurl
 Dave Korzinski, Research Director: 250.899.0821 dave.korzinski@angusreid.org

Thinking about the royal family in Britain, how relevant is it to you personally these days?



There has also been a notable decline over the past five years in willingness to recognize Queen Elizabeth II as the official head of state for Canada. Now, half say they would continue to do so, while half disagree:

Do you support or oppose Canada continuing to recognize her as Queen, by swearing oaths to her, putting her on currency, and recognizing her as head of state?



What about constitutional monarchy, long term?

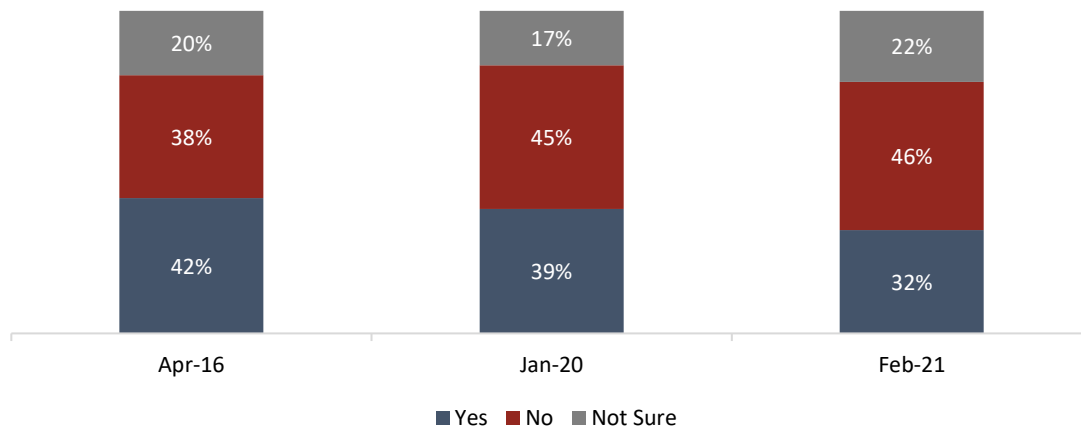
Asked another question about Canada's place as a remaining a constitutional monarchy for generations to come, it becomes clear that the Queen's personal popularity outranks the perceived advantage of the system by which she is Canada's head of state. Compared to the half who say they're happy to continue to recognize Queen Elizabeth herself, just one-in-three (32%) want Canada to remain a constitutional monarchy, long term. Notable is the lack of disagreement among generations on this question, all of

CONTACT:

Shachi Kurl, President: 604.908.1693 shachi.kurl@angusreid.org @shachikurl
 Dave Korzinski, Research Director: 250.899.0821 dave.korzinski@angusreid.org

which offer approximately one-third support for remaining a constitutional monarchy. This, and [past Angus Reid Institute data](#), suggests that when Her Majesty dies, future monarchs – and the institution itself – will be less well received:

Regardless of what you think about the Queen, do you think Canada should continue as a constitutional monarchy for generations to come?



In order to remove the monarchy as a reality of Canadian life and politics, a constitutional amendment would be necessary wherein which all provinces and the federal government would have to agree to the act. This has historically been an enormous challenge, which suggests that Canada may well preserve the status quo for years to come.

Part Two: Views of governor general role and responsibilities

Three-quarters say GG responsibilities should be absorbed by others

As long as Her Majesty – and the institution she represents – aren't going anywhere, neither is the role of her representative in Canada: the governor general. While Julie Payette made history as the only governor general to be forced to resign from the role, the job itself has a long and storied history.

In the middle of the 19th century, Queen Victoria appointed a representative of the sovereign to coordinate the interests of the British territories and Britain. Canada's first governor general, Charles Monck, served six years as Governor General of British North America and Governor of the Province of Canada before becoming the nation's first governor general in 1867 when Canada was founded as a semi-independent confederation.

As a constitutional monarchy, Canada has maintained a governor general ever since, although the position has become more ceremonial in nature. Since confederation, 29 different people have assumed the role. Until 1952 no governor general had even been a Canadian citizen.

The governor general has a number of ceremonial and participatory responsibilities in the 21st century. The [mandate](#) states that the governor general:

- Exercises the constitutional duties that lie at the heart of the country's system of government (giving the speech from the throne, opening and closing parliament, and granting royal assent to new laws)

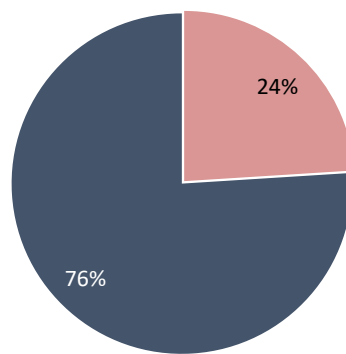
CONTACT:

Shachi Kurl, President: 604.908.1693 shachi.kurl@angusreid.org @shachikurl
 Dave Korzinski, Research Director: 250.899.0821 dave.korzinski@angusreid.org

- Represents Canada at home and abroad
- Provides support and symbolic leadership to the members of the Canadian Armed Forces
- Recognizes and encourages excellence and outstanding achievement in Canada
- Brings Canadians together, promotes unity in a non-partisan fashion

The Canadian public are inclined to believe that the duties of the governor general in modern Canada could be subsumed by others in government. Indeed, only one-quarter (24%) say that the position has a unique and inherent value that in its current form is irreplaceable:

Would you say, based on what you know including what you've read in this survey, that this position is:

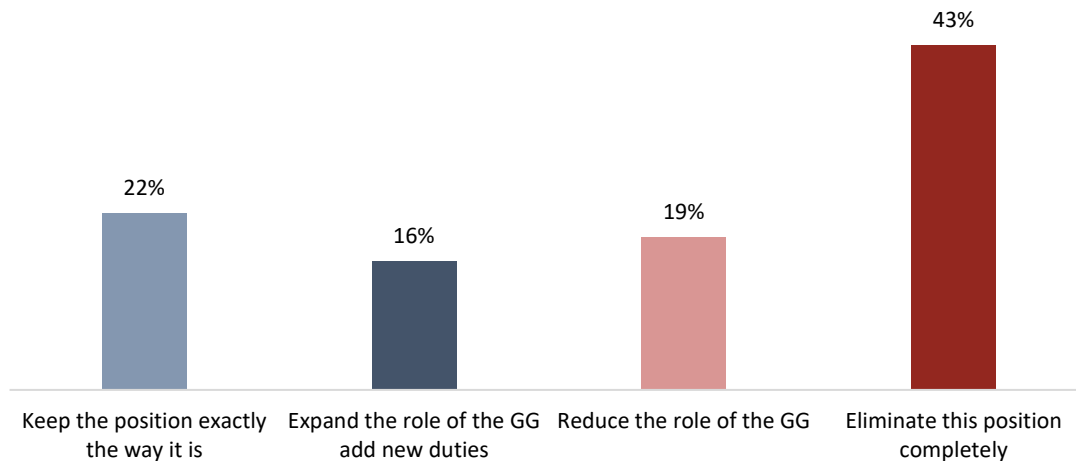


- This is a unique role that only the GG can perform
- This is a role that others currently serving government could perform

More than half would reduce or eliminate the role

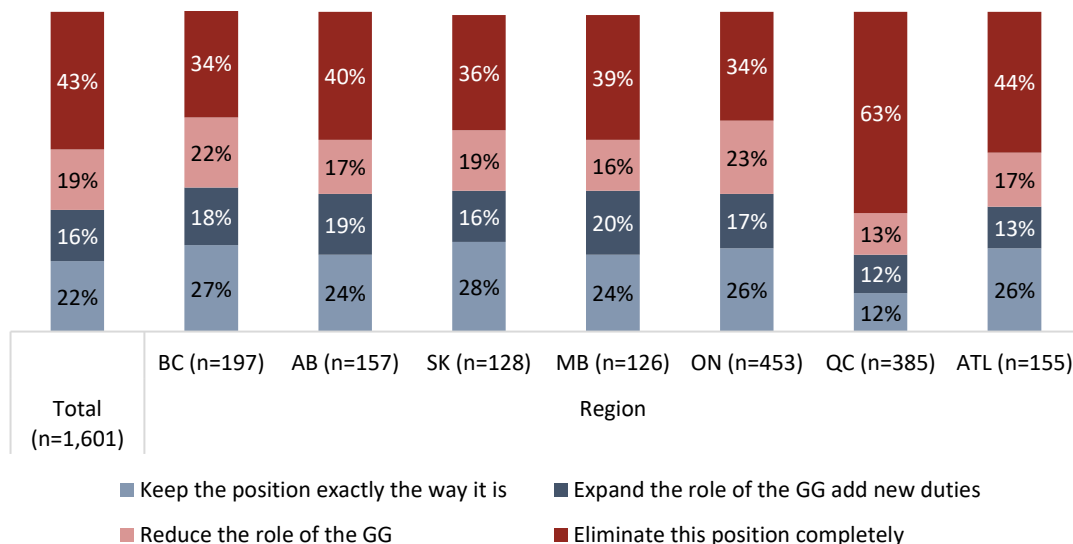
Canadians have a number of mindsets about what they would do with the position if it were their decision to make. For one-in-five (22%) no changes are necessary, while twice that number (43%), say they would eliminate the role entirely. Notably, a significant number would maintain the position - but either expand its purview (16%) or reduce it (19%), suggesting consensus over what to do going forward is nowhere to be found:

Suppose you were a hiring manager, and you were going to review the role of GG before you repost the position. Would you:



Across the country, only Quebec is home to majority agreement about what path to pursue. Even in this case, 63 per cent say that they would eliminate the position, while a significant minority - 37 per cent - hold other views:

Suppose you were a hiring manager, and you were going to review the role of GG before you repost the position. Would you:

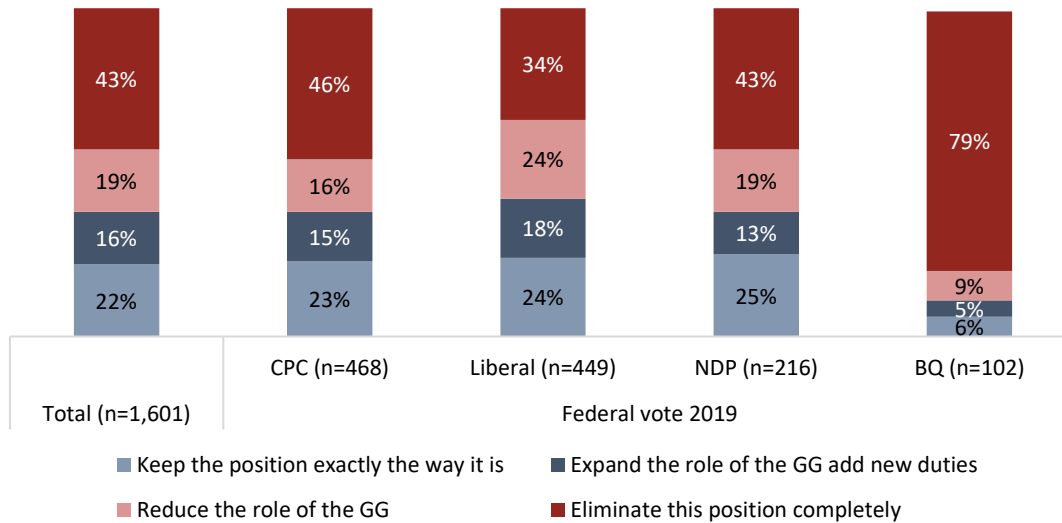


Politically, past Liberal voters are least inclined to pursue and elimination of the governor general, while those who supported the Bloc Quebecois in 2019 are overwhelmingly in favour of such an action:

CONTACT:

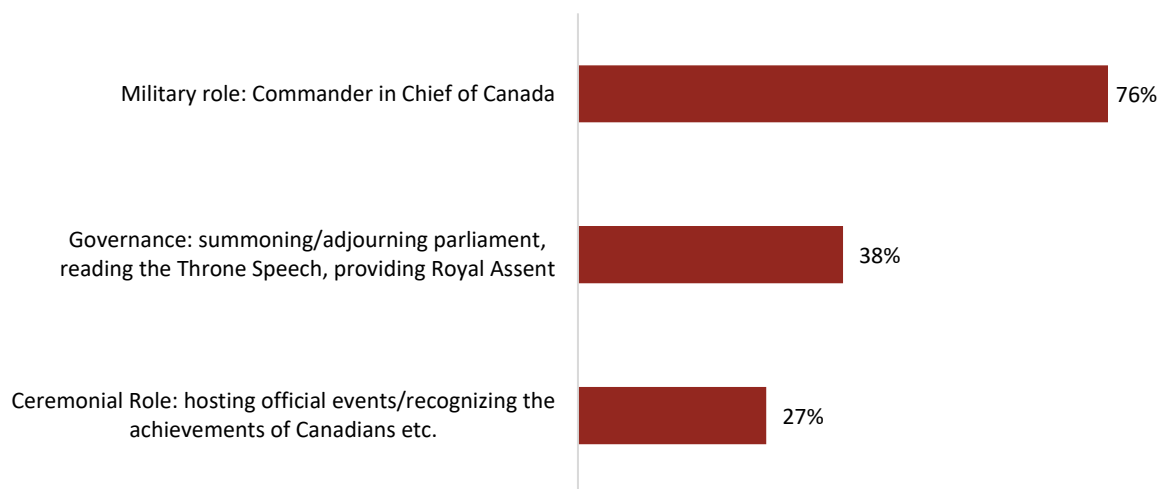
Shachi Kurl, President: 604.908.1693 shachi.kurl@angusreid.org @shachikurl
 Dave Korzinski, Research Director: 250.899.0821 dave.korzinski@angusreid.org

Suppose you were a hiring manager, and you were going to review the role of GG before you repost the position. Would you:



Among those who would reduce the role, one-in-five Canadians (19%), three-quarters (76%) say they would remove symbolic leadership of the Canadian Armed Forces from the governor general’s remit:

**Please select the up to two of the three main element(s) of the job you would eliminate/cut. Would you eliminate:
(Among those that would 'reduce' the role of the GG, n=304)**



Near unanimous opinion that position pays too much

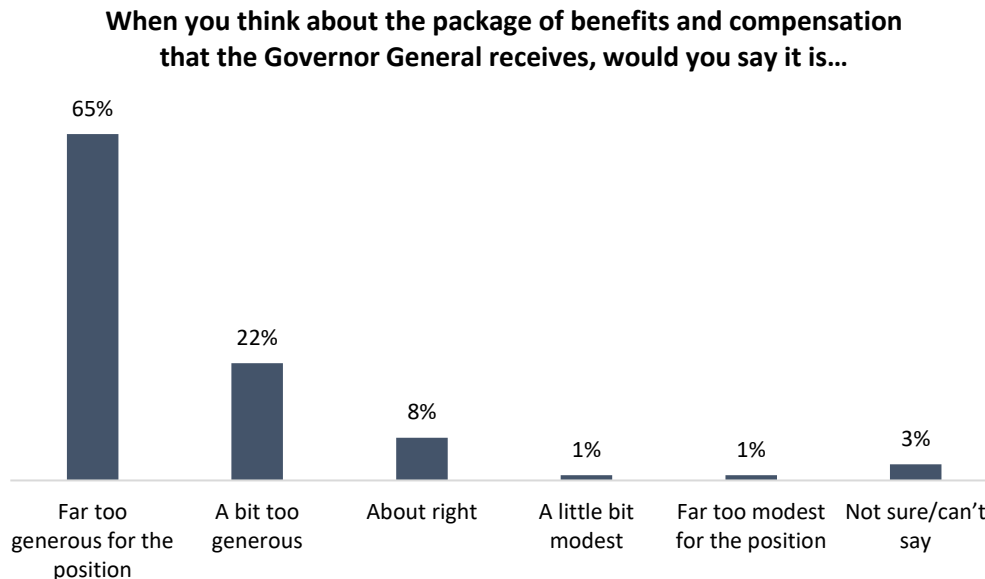
These data suggest there are steps that the government can take to reduce questions and criticism of the position of the governor general, the first of which is to reduce the financial compensation associated with

CONTACT:

Shachi Kurl, President: 604.908.1693 shachi.kurl@angusreid.org @shachikurl
 Dave Korzinski, Research Director: 250.899.0821 dave.korzinski@angusreid.org

it. Currently the Governor General receives a salary of around \$300,000 per year, in addition to having use of Rideau Hall as a residence, a personal driver, and a pension of up to \$150,000 per year after leaving the office. After leaving the role, the GG can then claim up to \$200,000 a year in expenses related to continuing responsibilities of the position after retirement.

Canadians are near-unanimous those that fill the position are overcompensated. Two-thirds (65%) say the benefits and payments are far too generous, while one-in-five (22%) say in turn that it's "a bit" too rich:



Canadians trust parliamentary committee over PM to appoint next GG

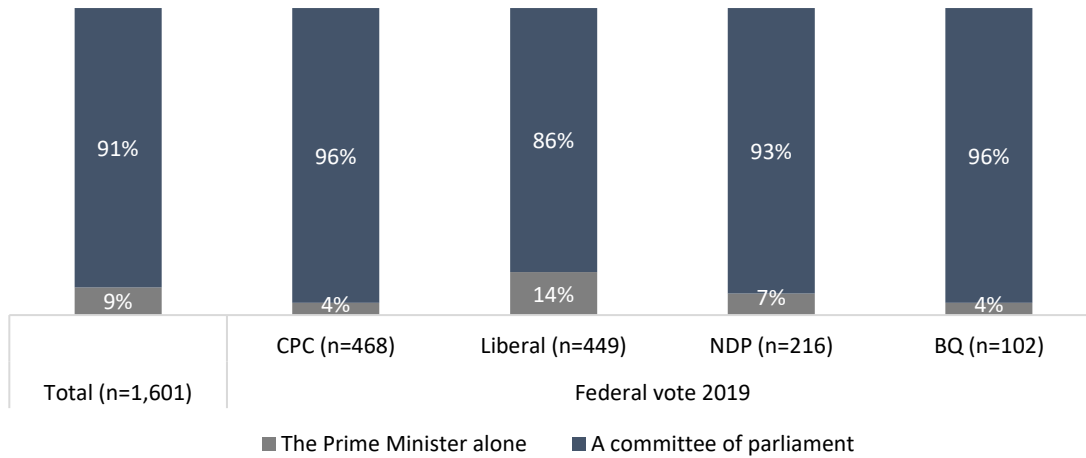
In contrast to Julie Payette's ad hoc appointment in 2017, former Prime Minister Stephen Harper tasked an advisory selection committee to provide him a shortlist of candidates when he appointed her predecessors. Commentators have suggested that such a process might have [exposed past complaints](#) regarding Payette's treatment of staff and mitigated the trouble that ensued.

For Canadians, taking the sole decision away from prime minister is a popular idea. Across all parts of the political spectrum, all age groups and other key demographics, the idea of creating a parliamentary committee to appoint the next governor general near unanimously well-received:

CONTACT:

Shachi Kurl, President: 604.908.1693 shachi.kurl@angusreid.org @shachikurl
 Dave Korzinski, Research Director: 250.899.0821 dave.korzinski@angusreid.org

There's been discussion lately about the best way to appoint Canada's next Governor General. Regardless of how you feel about the role, who should select the next GG?



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