

## Judging the Budget: Just over half say it's "more good than bad"; near-even split over size of deficit spend

*Liberals hold slight vote intent advantage amid lack of enthusiasm and declining approval for Trudeau*

**April 28, 2021** – This week's vote in the House of Commons passing the new federal budget means Canadians will not be going to the polls this spring, a prospect they've clearly indicated they were in [no mood for](#).

Their feelings regarding the Trudeau government's fiscal plan are more nuanced, however, with the divisive document drawing praise from Canadians on the centre-left, and ire from Conservatives, along with centrists concerned about deficit spending.

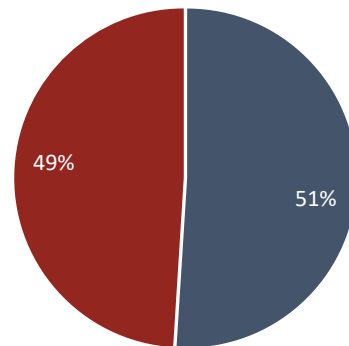
New data from the non-profit Angus Reid Institute indicates that while just over half of the country deem the first budget in two years to be "more good than bad" (49%) or "excellent" (4%), the rest deem it to be "more bad than good" (28%) or "terrible" (18%).

Among the items Canadians aware of the budget like best are new taxes on foreign homebuyers (54%) and on purchases of luxury items such as planes and boats (49%). The Trudeau government's showcase \$10 a day child care program, meanwhile, is a favourite of two-in-five (41%).

On the other hand, the landmark amount of spending in the 2021 budget, and the associated debt it accumulates, drives concern. Indeed, asked what they don't like about this year's budget, this is the top answer, chosen by half of Canadians (49%). Further, Canadians are near evenly divided over whether the extraordinary times driven by the COVID-19 pandemic justify the amount projected to be spent, with half saying yes (51%) and the other half disagreeing. Significant gender divides drive opinion on both sides of this argument, as does politics.

Vote intention itself, however, has not budged. The Liberals have not gained a post-budget bump in momentum or support, nor have the CPC, leaving parties standing largely where they have been for the last month. The incumbent party maintains a slight but insignificant lead (34%) over the Conservatives (32%) as perceptions of ho-hum leadership at the helm of both parties leave voters uninspired.

**Opinion of spending in the 2021 federal budget**



- Extraordinary times call for extraordinary spending
- Even if these are extraordinary times, too much is being spent

### **METHODOLOGY:**

The Angus Reid Institute conducted an online survey from April 20 – 25, 2021 among a representative randomized sample of 2,008 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 +/- 2.2 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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## More Key Findings:

- Half of women under 55 years of age say that \$10 a day child care is an aspect of the budget that they like. It is the most popular element of the budget for young women (ages 18 to 34)
- Erin O'Toole's favourability drops five more points this month. Just 24 per cent of Canadians view him favourably compared to 59 per cent who view him unfavourably
- Just seven per cent of Canadians would be 'thrilled' with a Liberal majority in the next federal election, while 31 per cent would be 'content' with that result. One-quarter say they would be 'unhappy' (25%) or 'distraught' (27%)

## 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 1 – Judging the Budget

### Canadians’ priorities centre on COVID-19 response, healthcare, environment

On April 19, the Finance Minister Chrystia Freeland presented the Liberal government’s [first budget in two years](#). Within the more than 700-page document were additional measures for COVID-19 relief, alongside taxation and spending priorities to lead Canada out of the pandemic.

The budget comes at a unique time in Canadian history. The top issue in the country continues to be the response to a once in several generations crisis – the COVID-19 pandemic. A coincident priority – health care – draws the second highest level of urgency, while climate change continues to be a massive point of interest for the 18 to 34 demographic.

The economy and the deficit are both a top priority for approximately one-quarter of Canadians, though notably they are generally perceived as more important by men than women.

Top Issue facing the country (choose up to three) Top three highlighted							
	Total (n=2,008)	Male			Female		
		18-34 (n=273)	35-54 (n=333)	55+ (n=357)	18-34 (n=295)	35-54 (n=361)	55+ (n=388)
Coronavirus / COVID-19 response	44%	36%	39%	38%	39%	50%	55%
Health Care	37%	17%	22%	42%	37%	47%	49%
Environment / Climate Change	30%	41%	22%	23%	43%	30%	26%
The Economy	24%	28%	36%	28%	14%	22%	20%
The Deficit / Government spending	23%	20%	27%	38%	10%	13%	25%
Income inequality / Poverty	22%	25%	18%	15%	28%	26%	24%
Housing affordability	22%	25%	23%	11%	34%	23%	19%
Taxes	17%	19%	24%	26%	8%	12%	13%
Jobs / Unemployment	15%	16%	18%	10%	14%	19%	12%
Ethics / Corruption	15%	14%	17%	20%	14%	10%	13%
First Nations / Indigenous issues	10%	13%	7%	5%	22%	7%	8%
Energy / Natural Resources / Pipelines	10%	16%	12%	13%	6%	4%	8%

The priorities among past party supporters are varied as well. Those who supported the CPC in 2019 lean heavily toward an emphasis on the deficit and the economy, while COVID-19 and climate change are among the highest priorities for all others:

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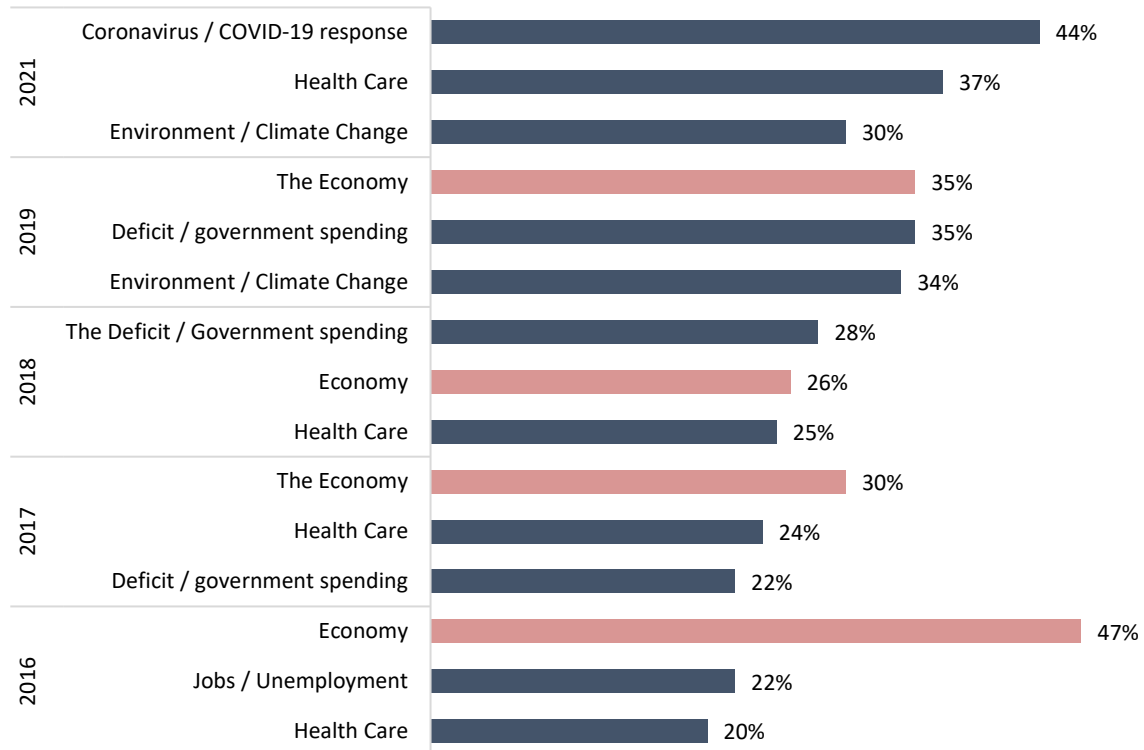
Top Issue facing the country (choose up to three) Top three highlighted						
	Total (n=2,008)	Federal Vote 2019				
		CPC (n=598)	Liberal (n=571)	NDP (n=277)	BQ (n=129)	Green (n=108)
Coronavirus / COVID-19 response	44%	35%	56%	45%	48%	44%
Health Care	37%	25%	49%	37%	43%	32%
Environment / Climate Change	30%	5%	40%	45%	42%	60%
The Economy	24%	39%	20%	15%	19%	13%
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Ethics / Corruption	15%	24%	8%	13%	11%	12%
First Nations / Indigenous issues	10%	2%	11%	20%	7%	16%
Energy / Natural Resources / Pipelines	10%	20%	4%	3%	6%	11%

The absence of the economy from Canadians' top three priorities is noteworthy given that in every previous year of the Trudeau government's budgets it was among the top three concerns. The COVID-19 pandemic and the ongoing issue of climate change have evidently shifted policy preferences for many Canadians.

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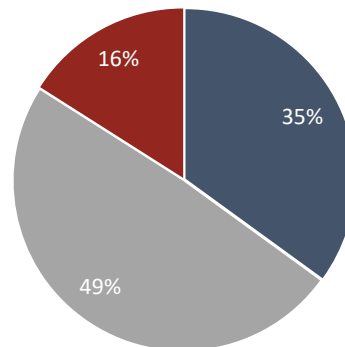
**Top three federal priorities in month the budget was presented**



**How many paid attention?**

A public health pandemic into its fourteenth month has left Canadians pre-occupied, stressed, and exhausted. It also meant previously planned budgets were replaced with [economic statements](#). After the [longest period](#) in Canadian history without a formal budget, most Canadians were only nominally aware, at best, that a budget had been tabled, with one-third (35%) following it closely:

**As you may have heard, this week, the federal Liberal government tabled its first budget in two years. Are you aware of that?  
(All respondents, n=2,008)**

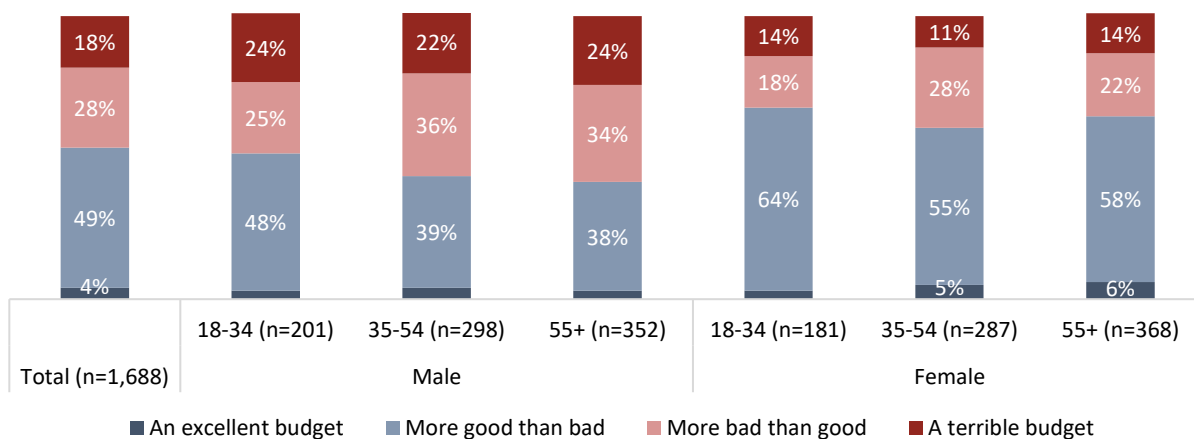


- Very aware – I've followed, watched, or read a lot about the budget
- Aware – I heard about it, but I don't have a lot of details
- No, didn't know about the budget until now

**More good than bad?**

Broadly speaking, the content of the budget itself is viewed with sharp division by those who have read or heard about it. Indeed, a slight majority (54%) say that the budget was a net positive, while 46 per cent disagree. Women who followed the announcement are much more likely to say that the budget is a good one, while men over the age of 34 disagree most heavily:

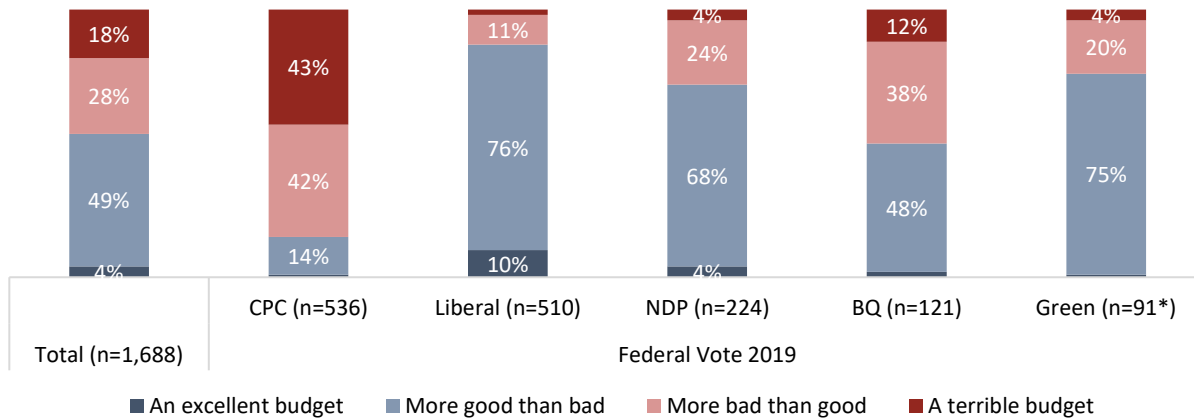
**Based on what you've seen, read or heard about the budget, and given the social and economic circumstances in Canada today, how would you rate it overall?  
(Among those aware of budget)**



With an election forecasted by many pundits for later in the year, it is notable that the budget is seen positively by an overwhelming majority of past Liberal, NDP, and Green voters. It is conversely panned by

past Conservatives, and viewed as equally good and bad among those who supported the Bloc Quebecois in 2019:

**Based on what you've seen, read or heard about the budget, and given the social and economic circumstances in Canada today, how would you rate it overall?  
(Among those aware of budget)**



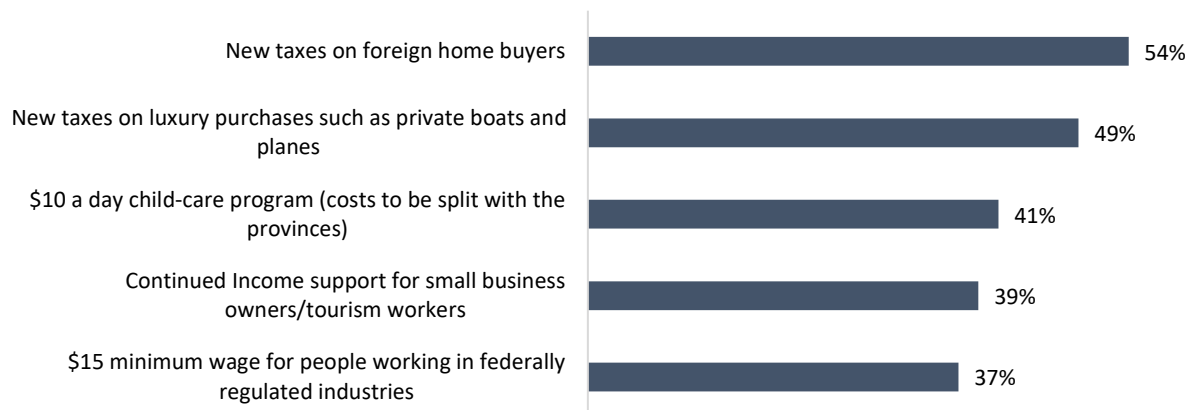
**\*Small sample size, interpret with caution**

**What Canadians liked**

When it comes to the specifics of the budget, the big winners are taxation measures aimed at higher income individuals. Just over half of Canadians (54%) say they like the addition of a one per cent tax on foreign-owned empty homes, while close to the same number (49%) say they like a new luxury tax on most vehicles priced over \$100,000 (pre-tax), as well as personal aircraft and luxury boats.

The government's trademark piece of policy in the budget, its allocation of \$30 billion over five years for a \$10 a day national child care program is chosen by 41 per cent.

**Was there anything you liked in this federal budget? (Top five shown)  
(Among those aware of it, n=1,688)**



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Child care is particularly popular with women younger than 55. Continued support for small businesses that are enduring the effects of COVID-19 is also relatively popular, alongside the establishment of a \$15 an hour minimum wage for federal workers:

<b>Was there anything you liked in this federal budget? (Among those aware of it, n=1,688)</b>							
	Total (n=1,688)	Male			Female		
		18-34 (n=201)	35-54 (n=298)	55+ (n=352)	18-34 (n=181)	35-54 (n=287)	55+ (n=368)
New taxes on foreign home buyers	54%	57%	56%	53%	38%	51%	61%
New taxes on luxury purchases such as private boats and planes	49%	48%	42%	49%	43%	46%	59%
\$10 a day child-care program (costs to be split with the provinces)	41%	38%	37%	29%	49%	51%	46%
Continued Income support for small business owners/tourism workers	39%	32%	38%	36%	37%	37%	51%
\$15 minimum wage for people working in federally regulated industries	37%	34%	30%	33%	46%	37%	46%
New taxes on cigarettes/vapes	34%	33%	30%	33%	30%	33%	40%
Extending the Canada Recovery Benefit by 12 more weeks to a cap of 50 weeks	31%	25%	28%	27%	28%	32%	41%
More spending on projects to help Canada reach its 2030 carbon emission targets	30%	39%	24%	19%	35%	34%	35%
Significant overall spending – projected deficit of \$154 billion	8%	10%	7%	4%	6%	11%	8%
Other:	4%	5%	3%	5%	4%	3%	3%
Nothing	13%	13%	12%	18%	10%	10%	11%

### **What Canadians disliked**

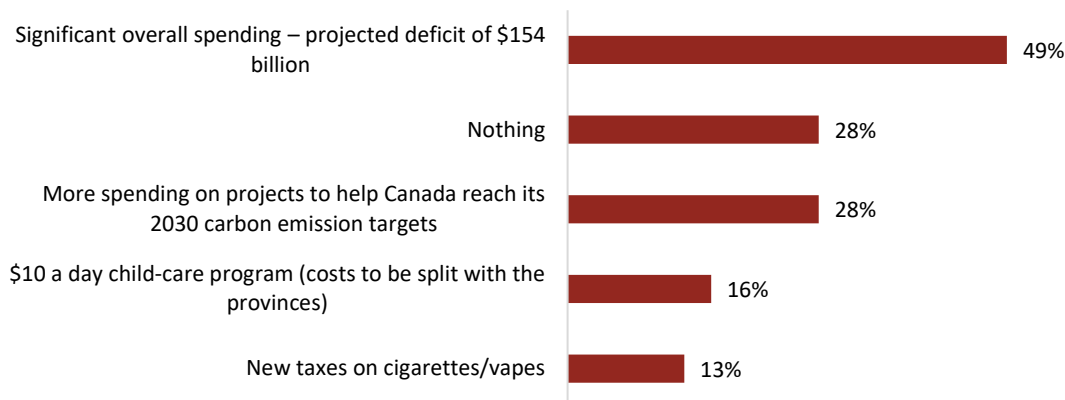
The most objectionable aspect of the budget for Canadians is the cost and associated deficit. The \$154 billion deficit is \$200 billion less than the previous fiscal year's but nonetheless staggering to many Canadians. Half (49%) say that this is something they dislike. Three-in-ten (28%) also dislike Canada's spending on projects designed to help reduce carbon emissions:

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**Was there anything you disliked in this federal budget? (Top five shown)  
(Among those aware of it, n=1,688)**



Men 35 years of age and older are most critical of the budget. This group is much more heavily opposed to significant spending, emission reduction programs, and child care:

Was there anything you disliked in this federal budget? (Among those aware of it, n=1,688)							
	Total (n=1,688)	Male			Female		
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Significant overall spending – projected deficit of \$154 billion	49%	51%	52%	61%	34%	42%	45%
More spending on projects to help Canada reach its 2030 carbon emission targets	28%	26%	34%	43%	16%	18%	26%
\$10 a day child-care program (costs to be split with the provinces)	16%	16%	19%	24%	7%	10%	17%
Extending the Canada Recovery Benefit by 12 more weeks to a cap of 50 weeks	13%	20%	14%	16%	2%	11%	12%
New taxes on cigarettes/vapes	13%	13%	19%	12%	12%	12%	9%
\$15 minimum wage for people working in federally regulated industries	11%	18%	16%	10%	7%	8%	9%
New taxes on luxury purchases such as private boats and planes	10%	17%	17%	10%	6%	4%	5%
Continued Income support for small business owners/tourism workers	4%	8%	6%	5%	2%	3%	2%
New taxes on foreign home buyers	4%	8%	6%	3%	6%	3%	3%
Other:	6%	11%	4%	6%	4%	4%	9%
Nothing	28%	27%	23%	18%	41%	35%	32%

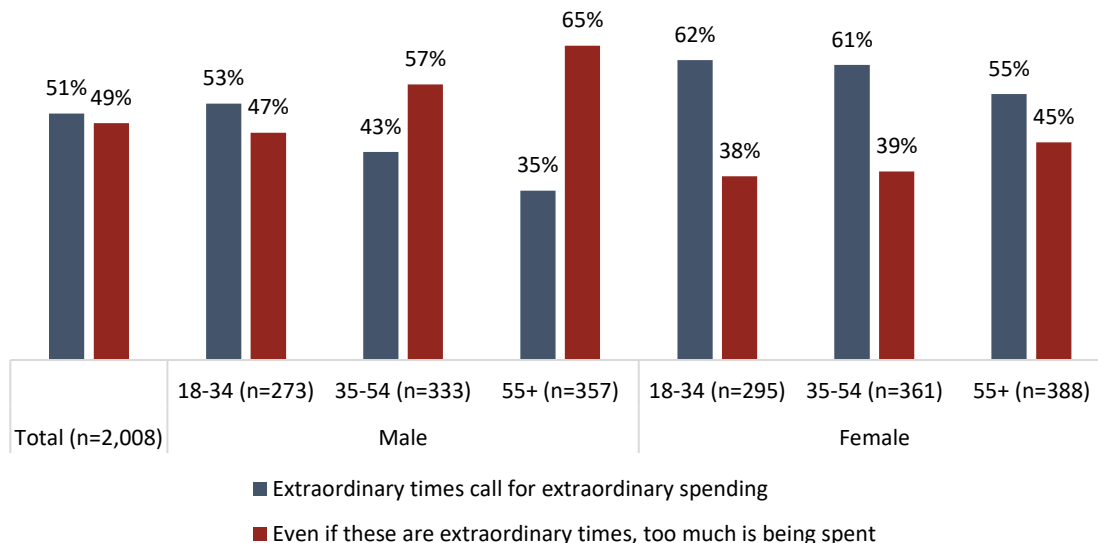
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**Half say spending too high**

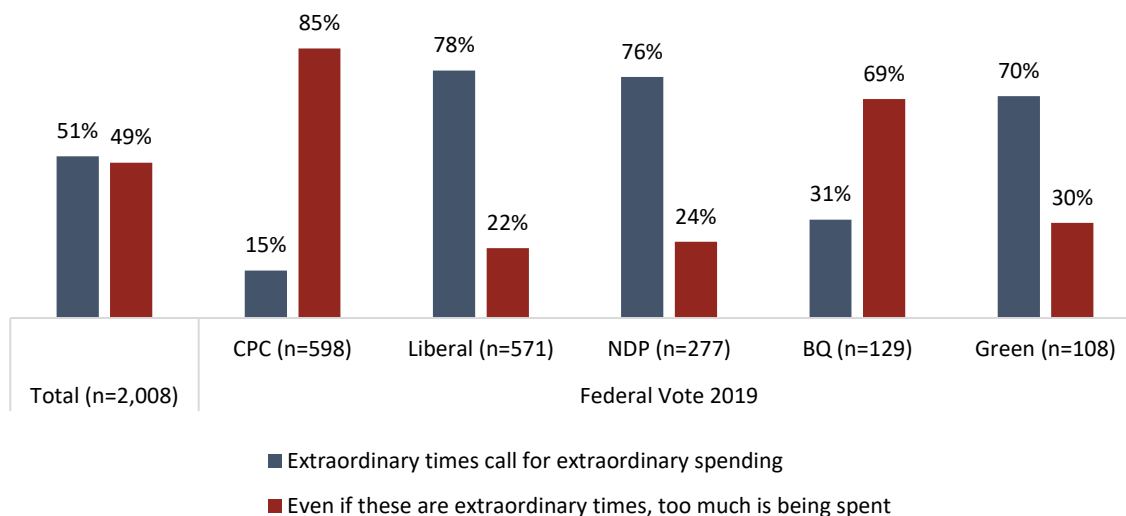
The public are remarkably divided when it comes to the idea that Canada must spend more to emerge from the COVID-19 downturn. Asked whether they feel these extraordinary times call for extraordinary spending, half (51%) agree and half (49%) disagree. As noted, men over the age of 34 are most likely to be opposed to spending:

**Which statement is closest to your view – even if you don't totally agree:**



The budget expenditures cause far less concern among past Liberal, NDP and Green voters, at least 70 per cent of whom say that spending right now is justified. More than four-in-five past Conservative voters (85%) and 69 per cent of past Bloc Quebecois voters say too much is being spent:

**Which statement is closest to your view – even if you don't totally agree:**



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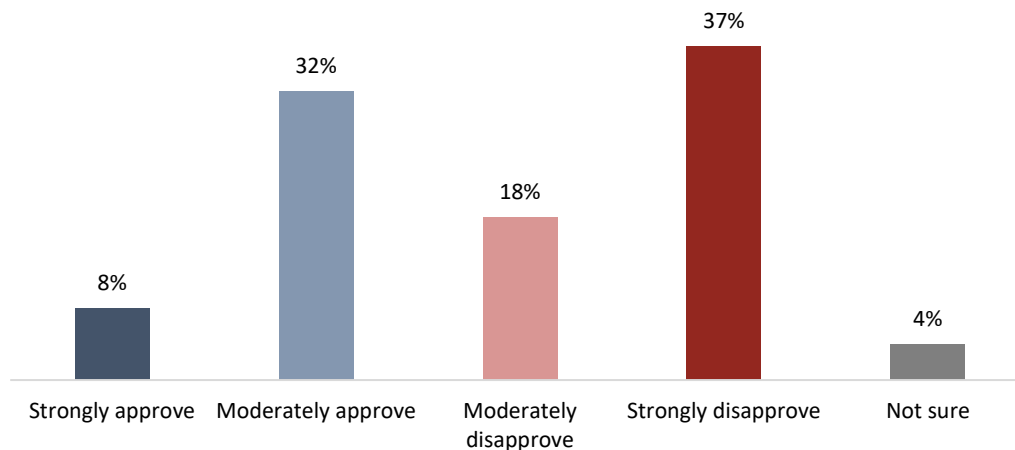
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**Part Two: Leadership**

**Trudeau approval down four points from March**

Prime Minister Justin Trudeau has found himself defending his record on a few fronts, not just the criticisms about how the pandemic is being handled which have become routine for many political leaders. He also faces scrutiny on the federal government’s handling of the sexual misconduct allegations against military chiefs as well as the country’s efforts to curb climate change. Canadians are divided on Trudeau’s performance, though currently more disapprove of him (55%) than approve (41%).

**Do you approve or disapprove of the performance of Prime Minister and Liberal Party leader Justin Trudeau?**  
(All respondents, n=2,008)

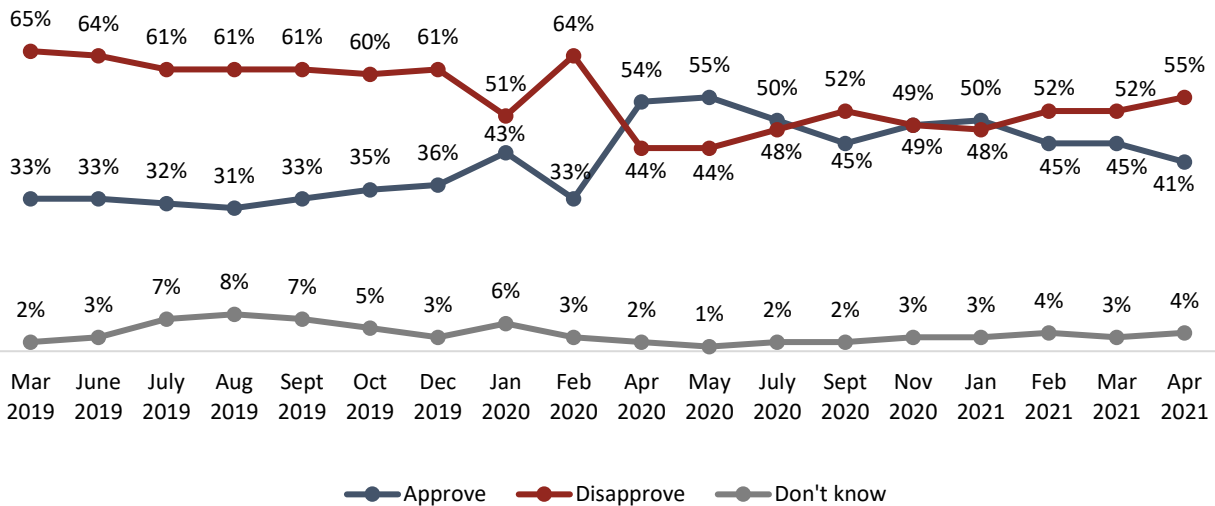


The prime minister’s approval rating has fallen by four percentage points since March, and is now down 13 points from where it was a year ago, when he enjoyed a popularity bump in the initial onset of the pandemic in Canada.

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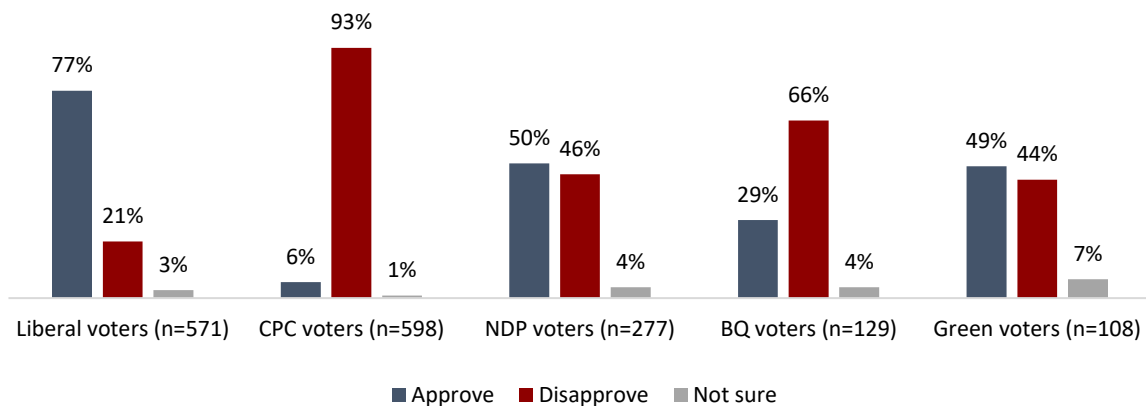
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**Do you approve or disapprove of Justin Trudeau?**



The hit to Trudeau’s rating is in part fuelled by left-leaning voters, many of whom are not enthusiastic about him. Those who voted for the NDP or the Greens in the last federal election are barely more likely to approve than to disapprove of him, and one-in-five (21%) who voted for the Liberals disapprove of him.

**Do you approve or disapprove of the performance of Prime Minister and Liberal Party leader Justin Trudeau?  
(Among 2019 voters for each of the major parties)**



**Positive views of O’Toole drop again too**

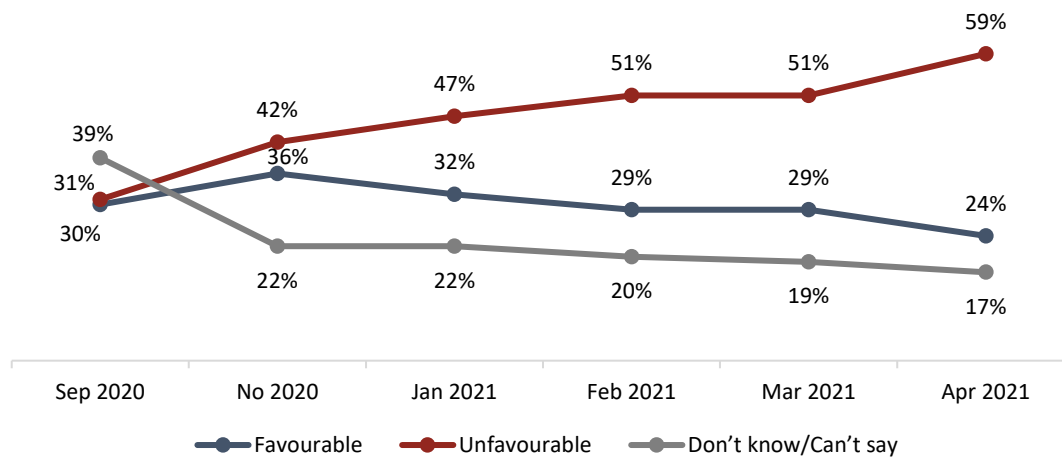
Normally these developments would be excellent news for Conservative Leader Erin O’Toole. However he does not look well positioned to capitalize on Trudeau’s diminished standing. Only one-in-four Canadians view him favourably, while more than twice as many view him unfavourably.

Do you have an overall favourable or unfavourable view of the following people? (All respondents, n=2,008)				
	Erin O’Toole – leader of the Conservative Party and Official Opposition	Jagmeet Singh – leader of the NDP	Yves-François Blanchet – leader of the Bloc Québécois (QC only, n=501)	Annamie Paul – leader of the Green Party
Very favourable	4%	12%	14%	3%
Favourable	19%	34%	32%	20%
Unfavourable	30%	22%	22%	15%
Very unfavourable	29%	22%	16%	13%
Don’t know/Can’t say	17%	10%	16%	49%

Note, differences in total approval or disapproval in release is due to rounding

While the heads of other parties remain roughly where they have been in terms of popularity, O’Toole joins Trudeau in seeing his worsen as of late, with an eight-point increase in unfavourable ratings.

**Favourable vs. unfavourable views of CPC leader Erin O’Toole over time**

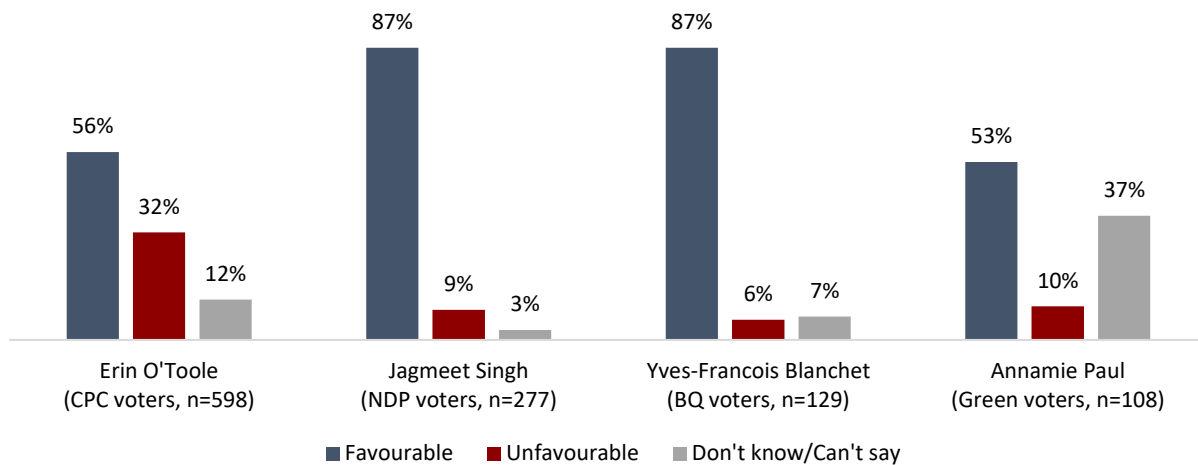


Being on the defensive when your party is not in power can be painful, something the Conservative leader has been reminded of as he insists his low-carbon savings accounts plan is “not a tax at all”. Some of his base seems not to believe O’Toole’s arguments: one-third of those who voted for the CPC in the 2019 election now have an unfavourable view of him, a jump of eight per cent since March, when he had already been facing more animosity from his own party than other leaders.

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**Do you have an overall favourable or unfavourable view of the following people?  
(Among those who supported their respective party in the 2019 election)**

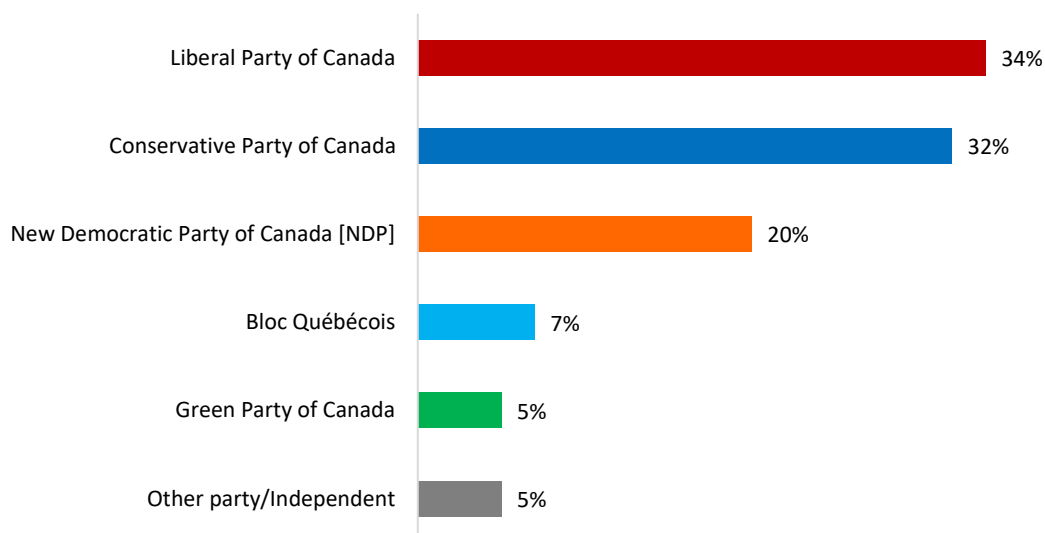


**Part Three: Vote intention**

**Little change in vote intention post-budget**

Neither O'Toole's nor Trudeau's leadership troubles appear to be affecting their parties' standings, however. The Liberal and Conservative parties are almost dead even in terms of their prospective share of votes, with roughly one-third planning to support each of them. The NDP is the top choice for one-in-five (20%) Canadians.

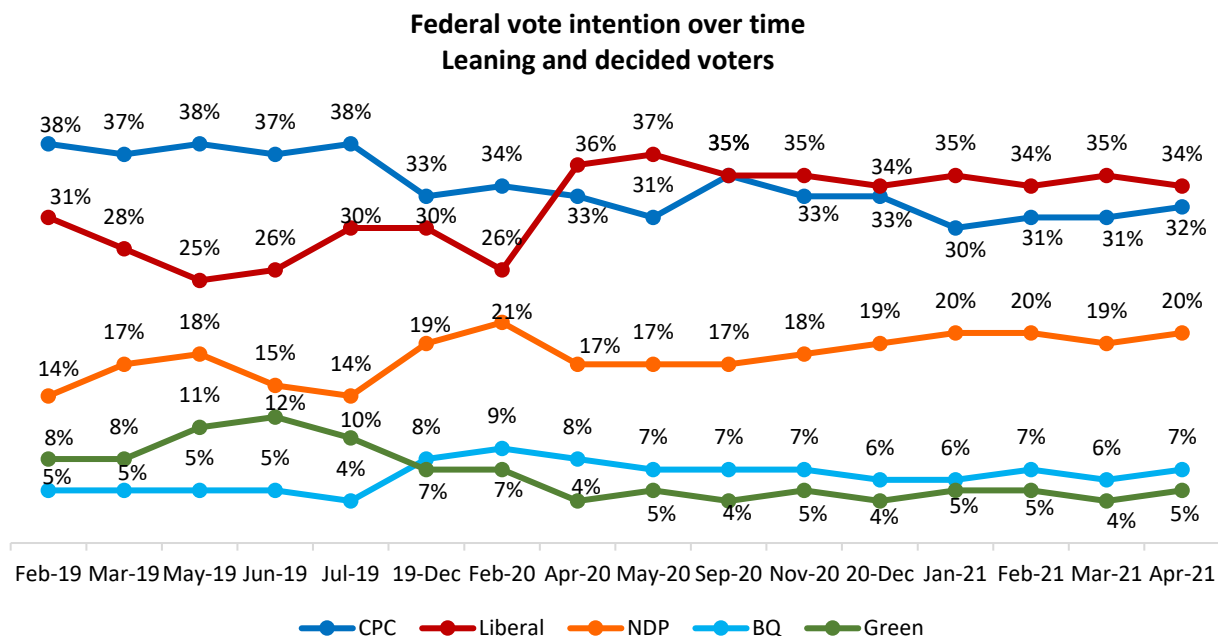
**Federal Vote Intention  
(Decided voters, n=1,857)**



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This means that despite the aforementioned political developments that have unfolded over the last month, federal vote intention in Canada remains statistically unchanged since March:



**Regional results**

Regionally, the Conservatives continue to hold substantial leads in Alberta and the Prairies, while the Liberals hold advantages in the East, including five- and six-point leads in Canada’s most populous provinces, Ontario, and Quebec, respectively. As for British Columbia, vote intention is competitive with both parties, plus the NDP, earning similar levels of support.

Federal vote intention, including leaners, decided voters only:								
(unweighted sample sizes)	Total (1,857)	Region						
		BC (235)	AB (187)	SK (139)	MB (132)	ON (511)	QC (468)	ATL (185)
Liberal Party	34%	28%	17%	18%	30%	39%	35%	46%
Conservative Party	32%	35%	53%	55%	40%	34%	15%	26%
NDP	20%	29%	19%	17%	24%	22%	14%	15%
Bloc Québécois	7%	-	-	-	-	-	29%	-
Green Party	5%	5%	2%	4%	2%	4%	5%	11%
Other Party	5%	5%	15%	11%	6%	3%	4%	5%

**Age and gender**

Men across all age groups are most likely to vote for the Conservative Party, including half (48%) of men ages 55 and older. The support Conservatives garner among men, however, is near evenly matched by that which the Liberals have among women. Notably, while the Liberal Party maintains plurality support from women ages 35 and older, those ages 18 to 34 are most likely to vote NDP (45%):

Federal vote intention, including leaners, decided voters only:							
(weighted sample sizes)	Total (1,857)	Age and Gender					
		Male			Female		
		18-34 (206)	35-54 (308)	55+ (373)	18-34 (223)	35-54 (330)	55+ (416)
Liberal Party	34%	27%	31%	27%	31%	40%	43%
Conservative Party	32%	30%	41%	48%	13%	24%	29%
NDP	20%	27%	15%	8%	45%	25%	14%
Bloc Québécois	7%	5%	6%	12%	2%	4%	10%
Green Party	5%	7%	3%	4%	8%	5%	3%
Other Party	5%	9%	10%	5%	2%	2%	4%

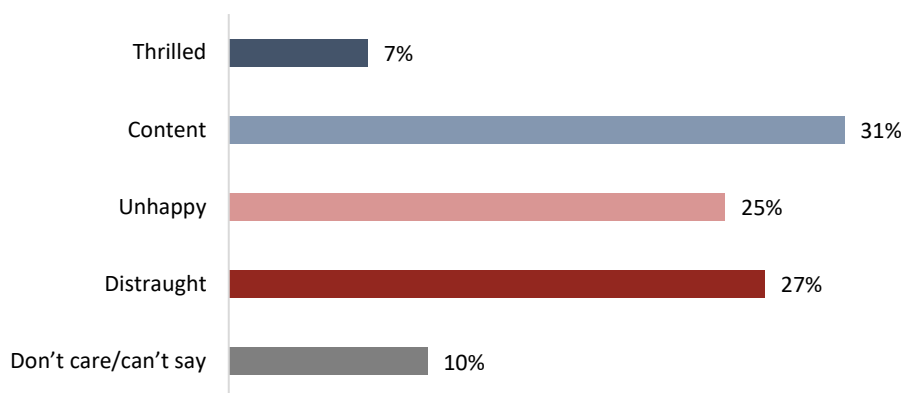
**Just two-in-five would be okay with a Liberal majority**

Voters in four provinces have cast their ballots – whether by mail or in person – amid the COVID-19 pandemic, all delivering majorities for their incumbent governments. While it is unclear from current vote projections whether calling an election would result in a Liberal majority, this pattern has likely caught the federal government’s attention.

Asked how they would feel if an election call produced a Liberal majority, half (52%) of Canadians say they would have a negative reaction, compared to 38 per cent who say the opposite:



**How would you feel if a Liberal majority was the result in an election held in the next six months?  
(All respondents, n=2,008)**



With minority representation in Parliament, the Liberal government has largely relied on support from the NDP in order to implement its policy agenda. Against this backdrop, half of past NDP (49%), and similarly left-leaning Green supporters (48%), say they would react positively to the Liberals winning a majority. By contrast, those that voted for the Conservatives in 2019 near unanimously (94%) express negative feelings toward this election outcome, along with 72 per cent of past Bloc Quebecois supporters:

How would you feel if a Liberal majority was the result in an election held in the next six months?						
	Total (n=2,008)	Federal Vote 2019				
		CPC (n=598)	Liberal (n=571)	NDP (n=277)	BQ (n=129)	Green (n=108)
Thrilled	7%	0%	22%	3%	3%	2%
Content	31%	4%	55%	46%	15%	46%
Unhappy	25%	29%	12%	32%	43%	30%
Distraught	27%	65%	4%	9%	29%	11%
Don't care/can't say	10%	2%	7%	9%	10%	10%

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

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

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