

Afghanistan Evacuation: Almost no Canadians call mission successful; most hesitant to call it a failure yet

Most say Canada should accept at least 20,000 Afghan refugees; One-fifth say crisis will affect their vote

August 30, 2021 – An election campaign many had thought would be fought and won or lost on the basis of Canada's post-pandemic future is instead being overshadowed in its first weeks by the future of Afghanistan and the evacuation of those desperate to leave the embattled nation.

The images from Hamid Karzai International Airport in Kabul and other parts of the country have been troubling, and the questions to the Trudeau government over whether it has done enough, pointed.

New data from the non-profit Angus Reid Institute show that while the number of Canadians calling this country's efforts to evacuate Afghan nationals "successful" hovers near zero, many (20%) are refraining from judging at this point, while the largest portion (41%) say that operations went as well as can be expected, with the Taliban taking over surrounding areas and ISIS-K posing a [constant threat of violence](#).

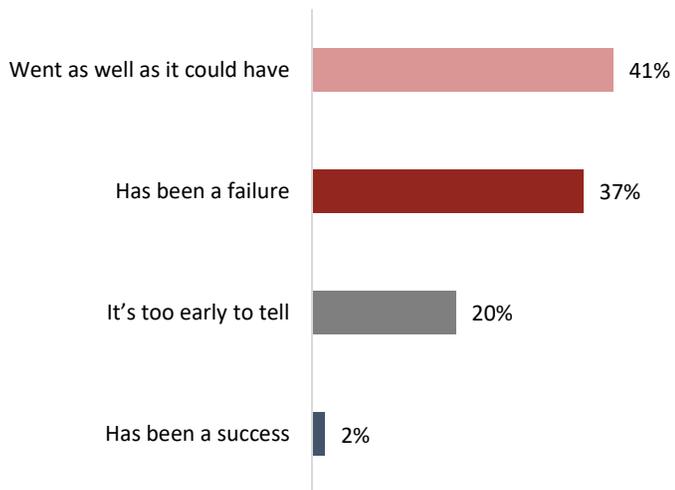
That said, nearly two-in-five (37%), led by those currently intending to vote for the Conservative Party (65%), say that the execution of the plan should be considered a failure.

While Canada has removed nearly 4,000 military personnel and Afghan refugees, the expectation is that thousands more will follow in the coming months and years. Justin Trudeau announced that Canada would commit to accepting 20,000 Afghan refugees – something all other major federal party leaders committed to in a show of rare campaign solidarity.

A plurality of Canadians (44%) agree with this target for resettlement, while one-quarter (25%) would take even more Afghan's seeking to leave the country. That said, 31 per cent say this number is too high, including 45 per cent of Erin O'Toole's current supporters.

The timing of the crisis – running in parallel with the 44th federal election, creates an obvious political dimension for parties and leadership. And while the majority of the electorate (59%) say it will have no impact on their vote, one-in-five say it will.

When you consider all the circumstances, would you say the Canadian government's evacuation operation: (All Respondents, n = 1,639)



METHODOLOGY:

The Angus Reid Institute conducted an online survey from August 27-29, 2021 among a representative randomized sample of 1,639 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.

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Those who say these events will affect their choice are unfavourable to the Liberal Party. Two-thirds of this group (14% of Canadians overall) say the events have made them less likely to support the Liberals. represents a net risk to the Liberal Party and leader Justin Trudeau.

More Key Findings:

- Canadians are following the events in Afghanistan with a keen eye. Four-in-five say they have been keeping up with the evacuation and other events over recent weeks.
- While there is no group in Canada who believe the evacuation was an outright success, current Liberal voters largely feel it went as well as it could have. The largest proportion of NDP and BQ voters also say this. A majority of those leaning toward supporting the CPC say it was an outright failure.
- After two decades of involvement in Afghanistan on a military and humanitarian level, half of Canadians would like Canada to leave the region permanently. Just one-in-five say that there is a role for this country to play going forward

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 One: Evacuation not a success, but was it a failure?

The contrast between the scenes could not have more stark. On August 15, as Justin Trudeau [visited Rideau Hall](#) asking Governor General Mary Simon to dissolve parliament and trigger an election, Canadians watched as the [Taliban took control of Kabul](#) – and effectively the entire nation – hours after its President fled the country.

In the weeks since, what was supposed to be a campaign framed around pandemic related issues such as vaccinations and health care has been dominated by scrutiny over Canada's mission to evacuate Canadians, Afghans, and others from Afghanistan ahead of the US deadline for troop withdrawal August 31.

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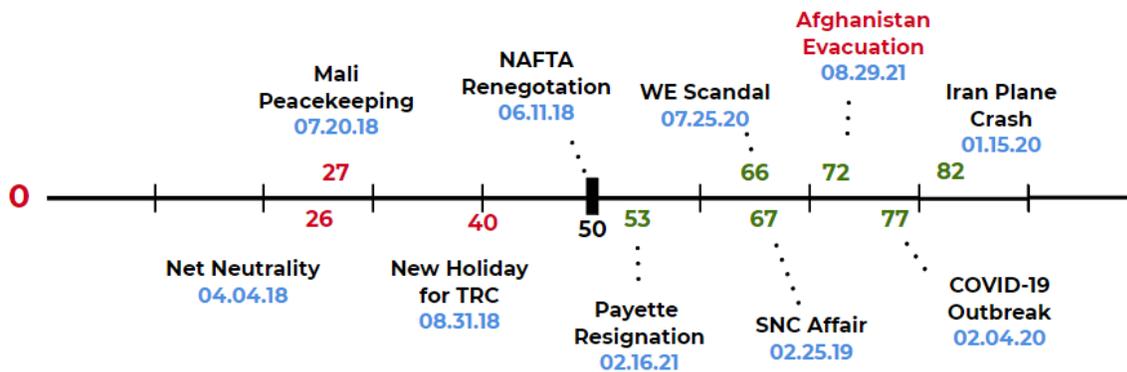
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So far, Canadian military personnel have removed nearly 4,000 people, but thousands more, including those who helped the Canadian government during its two-decade presence in the country remain stuck, with no clear path to leave. Canada has ended its official evacuation mission. Officials say efforts will continue but safety concerns preclude the continuation of its formal, direct evacuation strategy. Critics have derided the Trudeau government for not doing more in the face of increasing desperation.

Canadians have been gripped by events in Afghanistan. Two-in-five have been following the story “very closely” (41%), while a similar number (40%) have been following the headlines. Overall, this represents a score of 72 on the Angus Reid Institute Engagement Index, placing it above the number who were following the earlier weeks of the WE Scandal and SNC-Lavalin affair:

Scores on Angus Reid Institute Engagement Index



50 = generating an average level of engagement

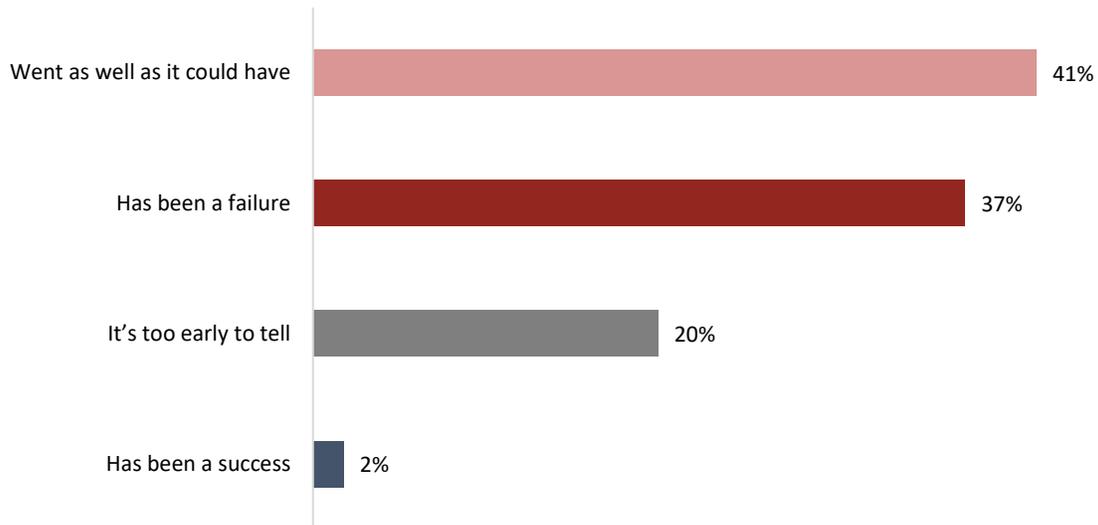
On Sunday Canada’s Foreign Affairs Minister Marc Garneau accepted criticism of the removal campaign as “fair”, reiterating a familiar refrain from leaders, both American and Canadian, that no one could have predicted how quickly the country would fall into the hands of the Taliban regime.

For Canadians, the mission was by no means a success, but many are hesitant to call it a failure. Most are largely split between saying it went as well as it could have, and saying it was a failure. A mere two per cent say it has been a success. That said, one-in-five say it is too early to tell, refraining from judgement at this point:

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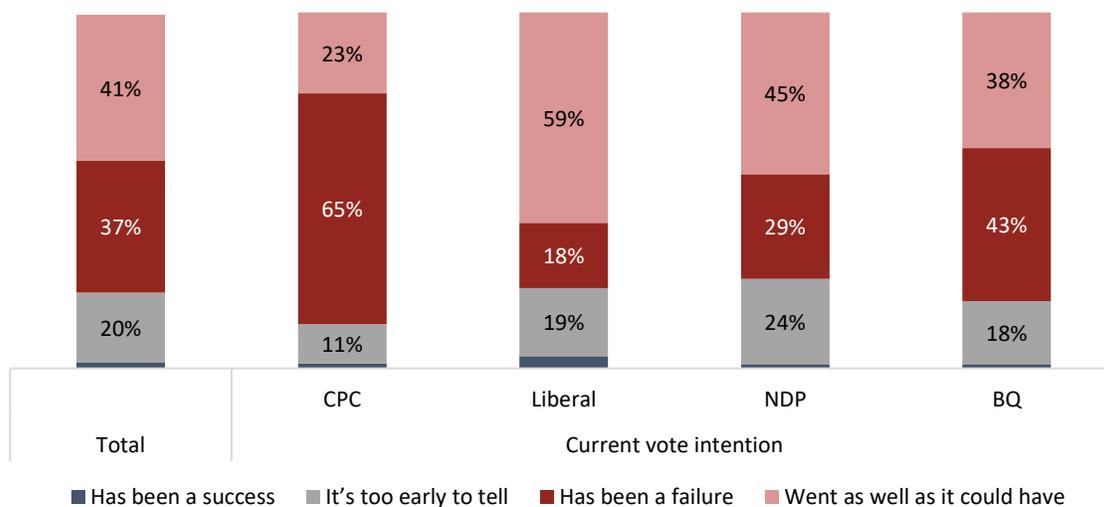
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**When you consider all the circumstances, would you say the Canadian government's evacuation operation:
(All Respondents, n = 1,639)**



A plurality of those who currently intend to vote for the Liberal Party and NDP, say that the evacuation efforts went as well as could be expected, although a significant segment of NDP and BQ voters also characterize it as a failure. They are joined by two-thirds of CPC voters in this opinion:

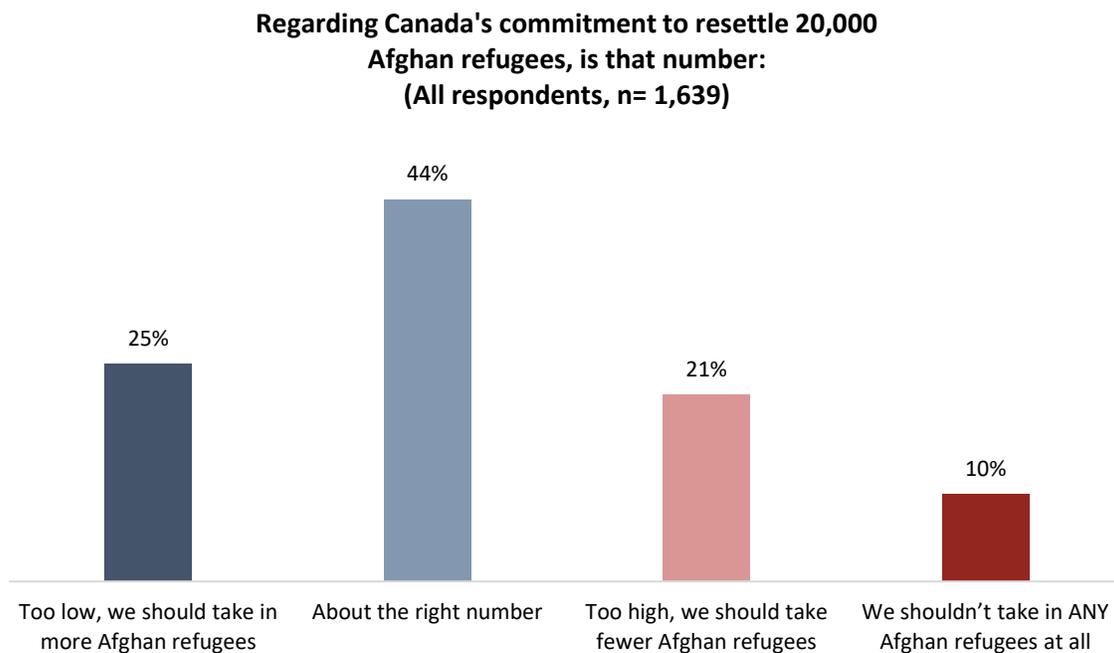
**When you consider all the circumstances, would you say the Canadian government's evacuation operation:
(Among decided and leaning voters)**



Part Two: 20,000 refugees

As chaos continues to unfold in Afghanistan, lives of both civilians and armed forces members have been lost. Amid this turmoil, thousands of Afghans are seeking refuge in other countries. Canada has committed to resettle 20,000 refugees. All parties have affirmed their commitment to that target as a part of their election campaigns.

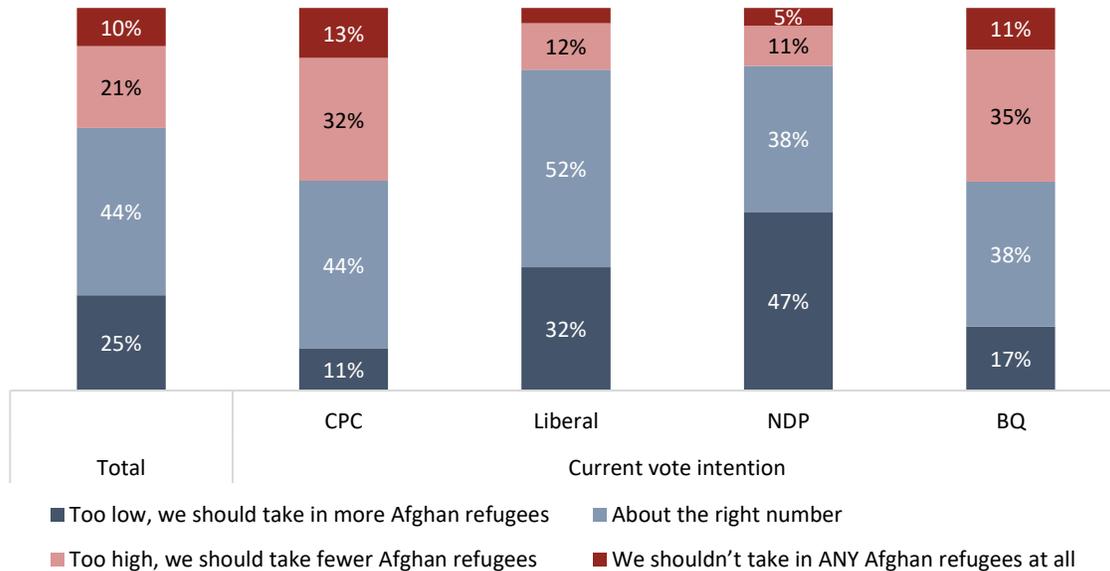
For a plurality of Canadians, 20,000 is a good target, while one-quarter say it isn't enough, and three-in-ten say it is too many:



Those most likely to disagree with resettling Afghan more refugees are Conservative and Bloc Quebecois voters. In each case nearly half say this.

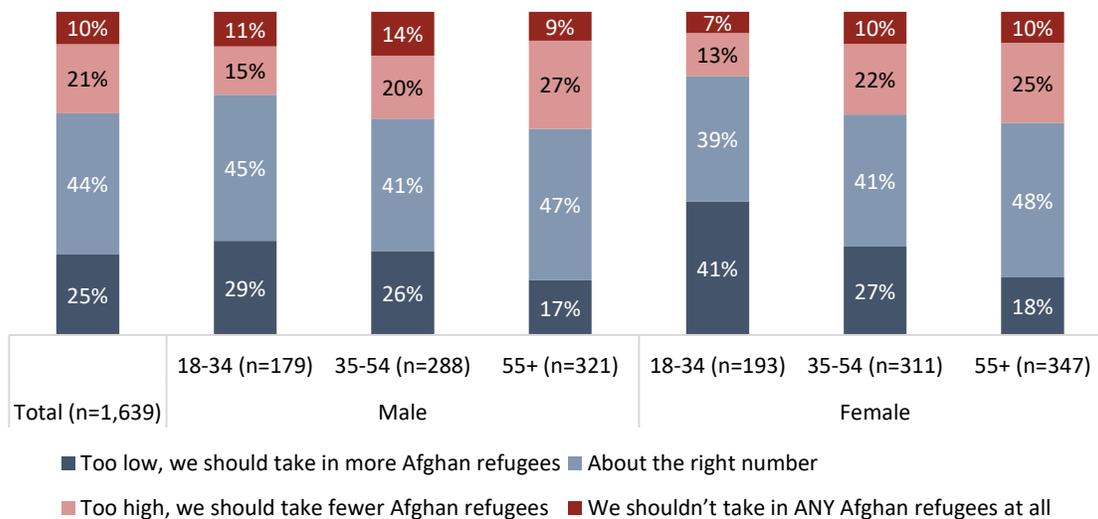
Meanwhile, four-in-five Liberal and NDP voters say the target is either the right amount or too low:

**Canada's commitment to resettle 20,000 Afghan refugees, is that number:
(Among decided and leaning voters)**



Young people are particularly likely to support resettling efforts, though it is notable that a majority of all age and gender groups support either the 20,000 target or higher:

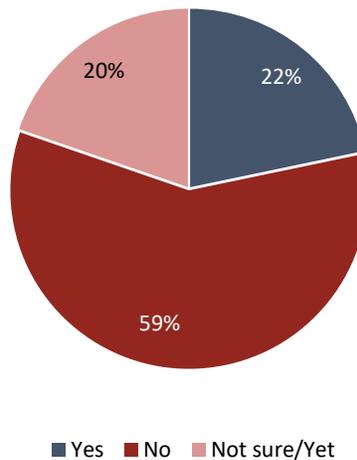
**Canada's commitment to resettle 20,000 Afghan refugees, is that number:
(All Respondents)**



Part Three: How will it affect the vote?

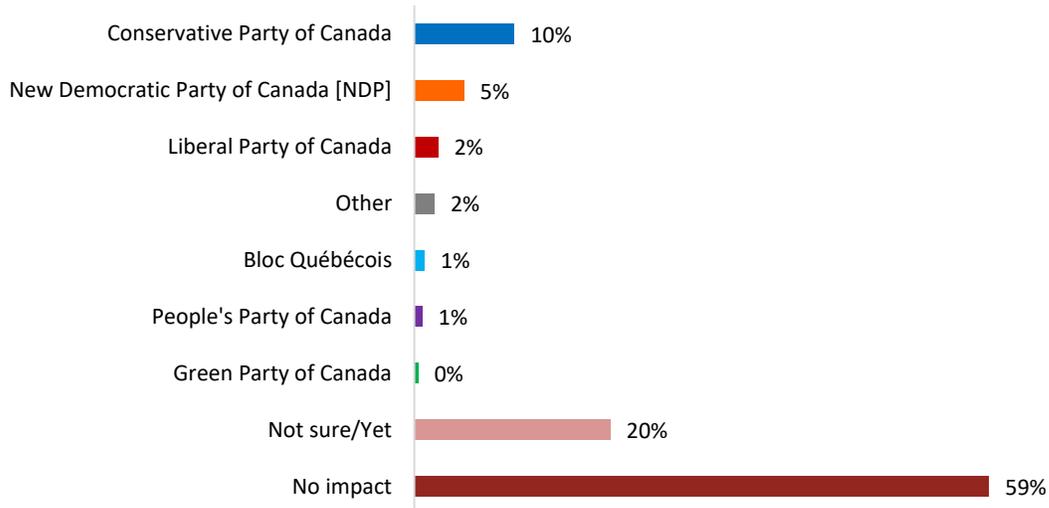
The timing of the events in Afghanistan has imbued the situation with a political element in Canada. But not all voters are viewing the situation through a political prism. In fact, most (59%) say it will have no impact on how they vote. For one-in-five, however, this is now a part of their voting calculus:

Canada is in the middle of a federal election campaign right now. Is this issue having any impact on your voting decision?
(All Respondents? n=1,639)



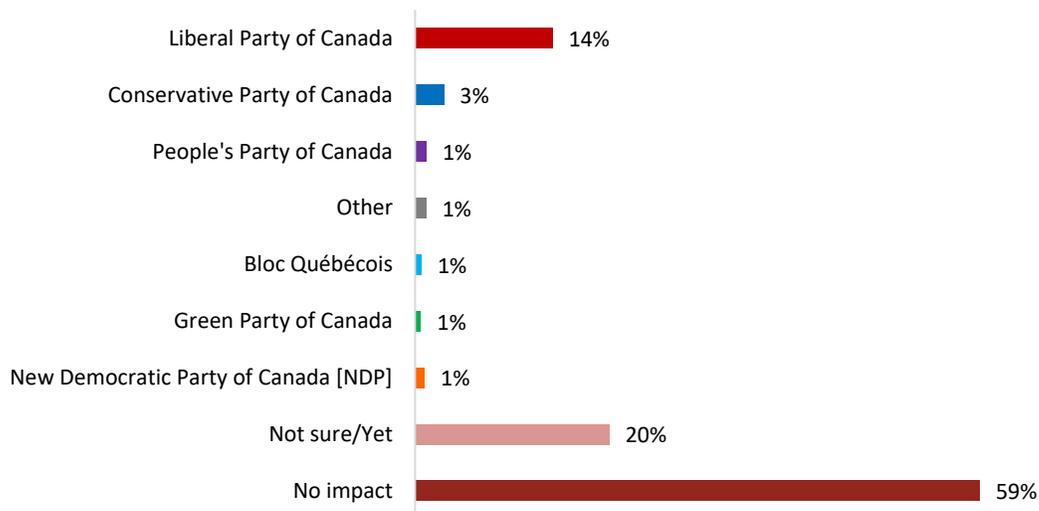
For those who say they will reconsider their vote in lieu of events, the primary beneficiary is the Conservative Party:

Political Impact
Is there any party these events have made you more likely to support?
(All respondents, n=1,639)



Looking at this another way, the negative impact appears to be concentrated primarily with the governing Liberal Party. Among those who say they will re-assess their vote, most say it will discourage them from voting for the Liberals:

Political Impact
Is there any party these events have made you less likely to support?
(All respondents, n=1,639)

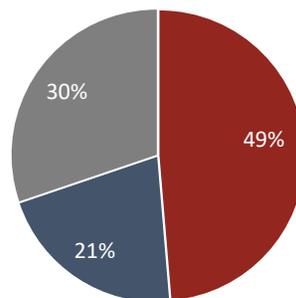


Part Four: Canada's future in Afghanistan

Canada took part in the initial [War in Afghanistan](#) – launched by the United States and an international coalition after 9/11 - for 12 years. After ending its official military operations in 2014, Canada has continued to play a role in a [limited military and humanitarian fashion](#).

So, what does the future hold? Canadians are divided about what they would like to see. Half say that Canada's role in the region should come to an end; they feel the country has done enough. Canadians are more than twice as likely to say this as opposed to the opposite – that Canada has more to do and should maintain a role in Afghanistan in the future.

**Canada has been in Afghanistan as a part of stabilizing and rebuilding operations in various capacities since 2001. Overall, would you say...
(All Respondents, n=1,639)**



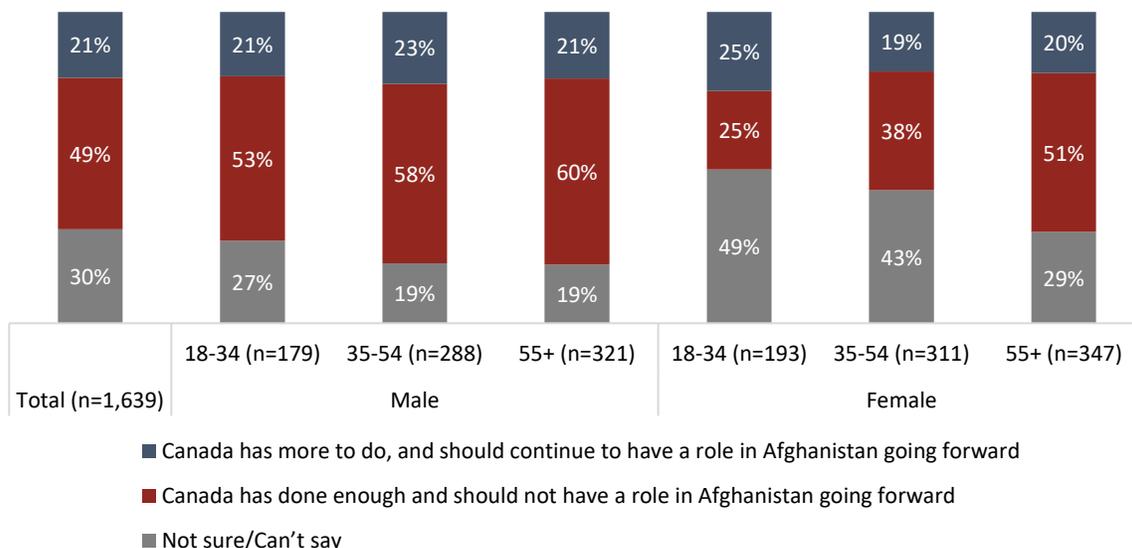
- Canada has done enough and should not have a role in Afghanistan going forward
- Canada has more to do, and should continue to have a role in Afghanistan going forward
- Not sure/Can't say

The sentiment that Canada should refrain from having a role in Afghanistan is held by a majority of men and women 55 and older. Younger women are largely undecided about what they would like to see:

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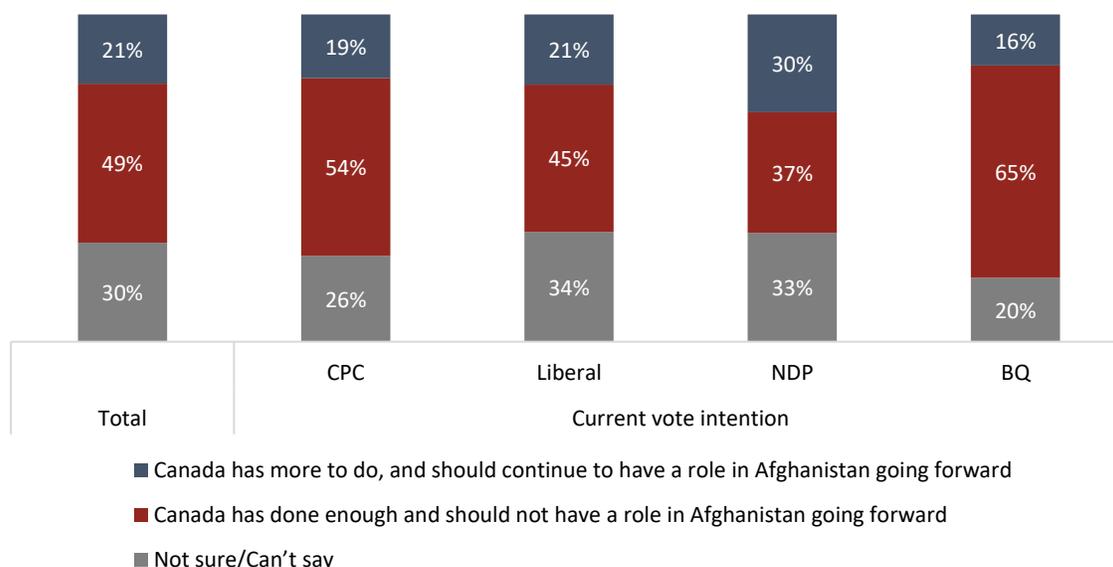
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Political leaders may be pressed in the coming weeks to share their vision for Canada's place in world affairs. When it comes to Afghanistan, fewer feel Canada has more to do. New Democrat voters are most likely to say that they see Canada participating in the future, but only three-in-ten feel this way:

Canada has been in Afghanistan as a part of stabilizing and rebuilding operations in various capacities since 2001. Overall, would you say...



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

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