

Platform Inaccessibility? Canadians living with disabilities say key issues are being overlooked in Election 44

Canadians emphatic that post-pandemic recovery should be not just green, but inclusive

September 7, 2021 – Now well into Canada's 44th election, party leaders are laying out their visions of Canada's future in a bid to gain an edge in an [increasingly tight race](#). While criss-crossing the country, party leaders have [made promises on a number of subjects](#) from tax reform and the government deficit to energy policy and climate change.

One subject rarely broached in townhalls, photo-ops, and media scrums is how best to support Canadians living with disabilities.

A new study from the non-profit Angus Reid Institute, conducted in partnership with the [Rick Hansen Foundation](#), confirms this, finding two-thirds (67%) of Canadians living with a disability don't think the question of how to best support those with a disability is receiving enough attention.

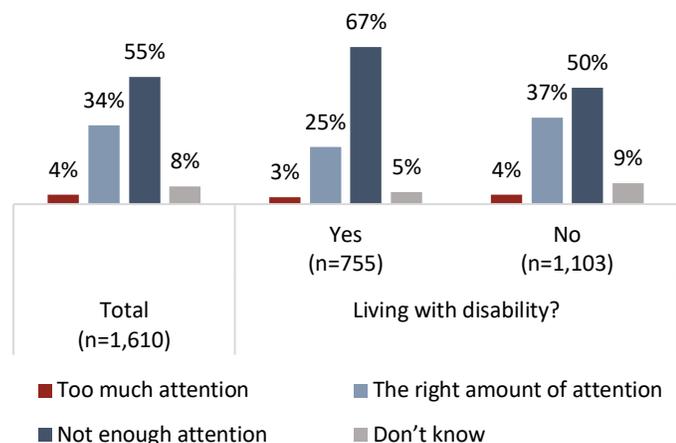
Further, one-third of the Canadian population overall (34%) are unable to identify a party that they believe has the best policies to support those living with a disability. Of those with a lived experience of disability, two-in-five either don't know (25%) or believe that no party has the answer (17%).

On the specific question of accessibility, those living with disability are clear that there is still much room for improvement: fully 86 per cent report having their daily activities impacted at least occasionally by their condition. The favoured solution for four-in-five Canadians—both those living with a disability (80%) and without (78%)—is to implement some form of harmonized national standard of accessibility.

More Key Findings:

- When it comes to who has the best proposals for supporting those living with disabilities, one-in-three (32%) Canadians living with disabilities choose the NDP. Notably the NDP is also the second choice for those living with disabilities who voted for both the Liberals (36%) and the Conservatives (12%) in 2019.

Do you think how best to support Canadians living with disabilities is receiving too much attention, about the right amount, or not enough attention?



METHODOLOGY:

The Angus Reid Institute conducted an online survey from August 16 – 20, 2021 among a representative randomized sample of 2,085 Canadian adults who are members of [Angus Reid Forum](#). This included a national general population survey sample of 1,610 as well as an augment of Canadians living with disability to bring that key survey sub-sample up to 983. 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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- On the question of accessibility, 92 per cent of Canadians believe that taxpayer funded projects should be held to the highest standards—a finding with important implications for post-pandemic infrastructure recovery projects.
- Canadians are clear that they do not want taxpayer money spent on building new barriers to accessibility, with the majority of respondents (56%) preferring a priority on both environmental and accessibility concerns
- Four-in-five Canadians (78%) surveyed believe there should be a national standard of accessibility. When thinking about what this should look like, 63 per cent say it should be to the highest existing standards and practices.
- For more on how we define disability, and a comparison with Statistics Canada figures, please see our previous study [here](#).

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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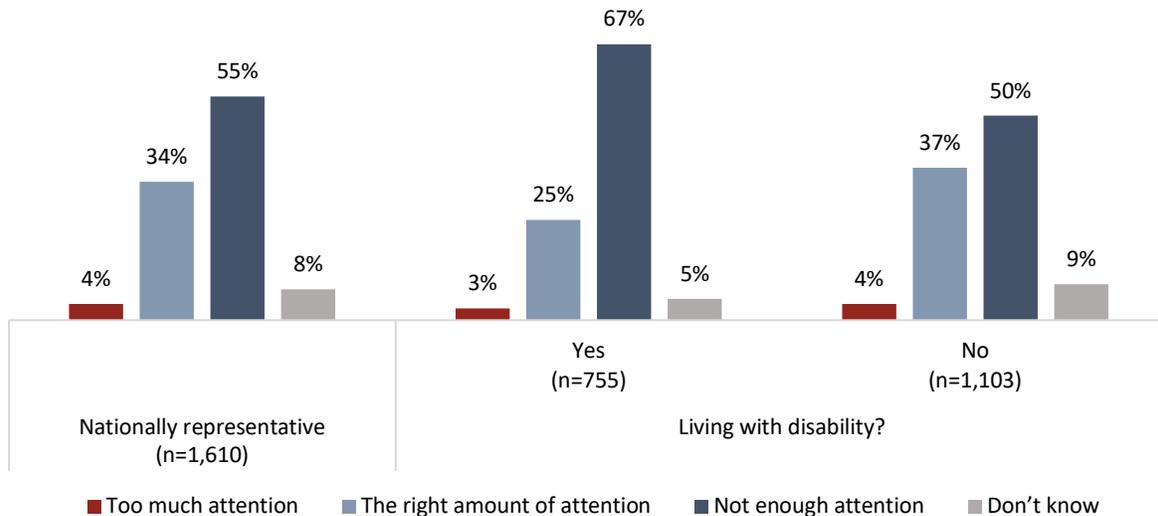
Part One: A party of none? Canadians unsure who would best support those living with disability

If Canadians are not clear on who has the best policy proposals for how best to support those living with disabilities, it is clear that a majority think that the issue is being overlooked. Nationally, just over half (55%) say the issue deserves to be discussed more. When asking those directly affected—that is, Canadians living with disabilities—two-thirds (67%) say the same.

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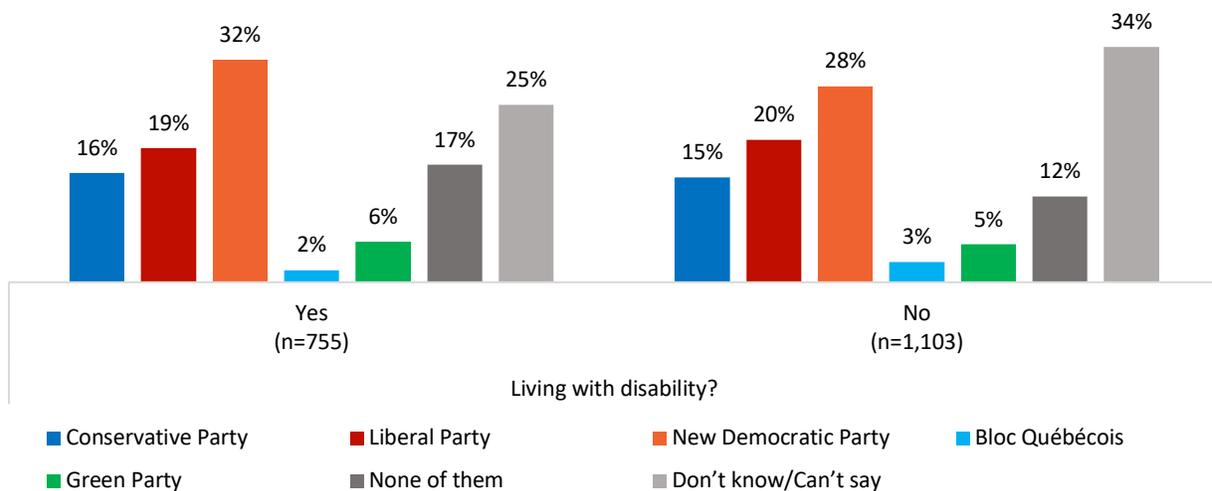
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Do you think the issue of how best to support Canadians living with disabilities is receiving too much, about the right amount, or not enough attention?



While those with a lived experience of disability still prefer the NDP over any other major party, 42 percent either don't know or say that no party offers a good option:

Now that we are headed into a federal election, in your opinion which party, if any, do you think has the best ideas for supporting Canadians living with disabilities?



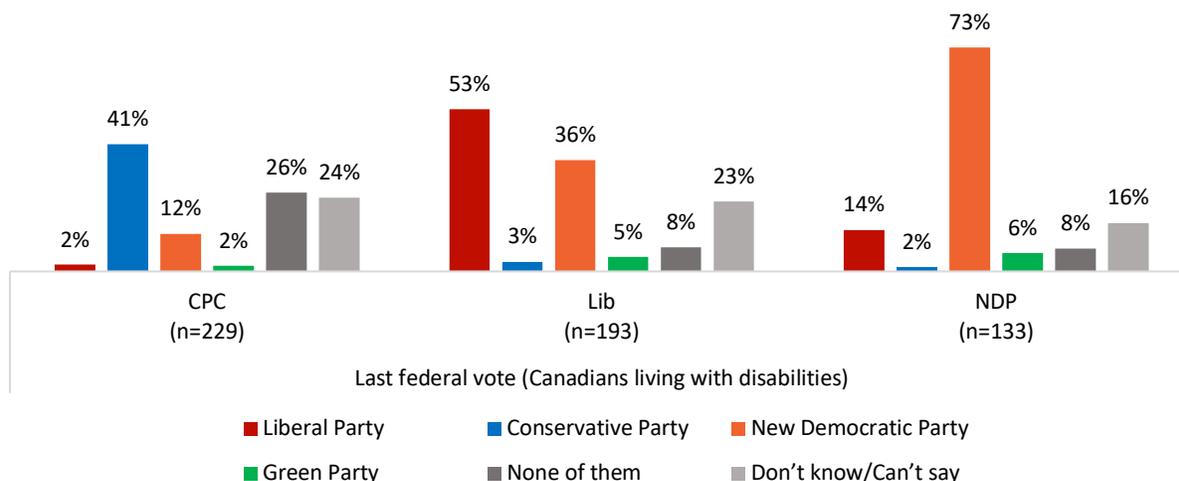
A certain degree of belief in each party's platforms may be explained by partisan support, illuminated by looking at how these numbers breakdown when cross-referenced against how respondents voted in 2019.

Of the major federal parties, those living with a disability who backed the NDP in the last election are the most confident in their own party's proposals at 73 per cent this time around. The party has promised a raft of new measures in its [platform](#) (accessible version [here](#)), including expanding income security programs to ensure a guaranteed livable income and strengthening the *Accessibility Act*. Of note, the NDP is the second choice on this issue for those living with disabilities who supported the Liberals and the Conservatives in 2019.

Despite having [unveiled plans for a new Canada Disability Benefit](#), only half of Liberal partisans who have a disability (53%) see the party as best on this file. As for the Liberal plan, should the party be returned to power, its recently released [Disability Statement](#) promises to re-introduce and implement the *Canadian Disability Benefit Act*, create a direct monthly payment to low-income Canadians living with disabilities, and to develop a targeted employment strategy.

Those living with a disability who supported the Conservatives in 2019 have the least faith in their own party: on this question 26 per cent don't believe any party has the solution while another 24 per cent say they don't know. The CPC so far has [committed](#) to doubling the Disability Supplement, investing more in the Enabling Accessibility Fund, and making it easier to qualify for disability supports.

Now that we are headed into a federal election, in your opinion which party, if any, do you think has the best ideas for supporting Canadians living with disabilities?



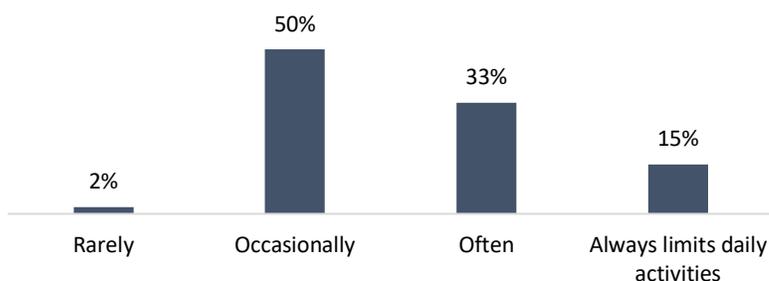
Part Two: Building back better... AND more accessible

A key question in this election campaign is how each party plans on managing the post-pandemic recovery. For many Canadians living with disabilities [who already felt left behind by the government's pandemic response](#), there is concern that this might happen again in the recovery process.

The state of (in)accessibility in Canada

While lived experiences with disability are diverse in their expression and severity, 86 per cent of Canadians of those living with a disability report having their daily activities impacted at least occasionally by their condition, with half (48%) saying that it affects them either “often” or “always.”

How often are your daily activities limited by your own overall health and the condition(s) and/or disability you may be living with? (n=755)



This, in turn, raises questions of accessibility—that is, how easy it is for everyone—regardless of whether they are living with a disability to get into, move around, and use a given space.

“I’ve had situations where I’m in a mobility scooter and unable to open a door. Simple as that. I either have to try incredibly hard and still sometimes fail or wait for someone to assist me which hurts my pride.”

- Male respondent from B.C.

Among those reporting the most severe experiences of disability, three-in-five (58%) say they encounter inaccessibility at least occasionally while, among those without disabilities, one-third (37%) know someone who has run into this problem ([see detailed tables](#)).

Of the over 700 respondents who self-described as living with disability, many individuals reported encountering inaccessibility in their daily life and expressed how these situations made them feel helpless, frustrated, and impinged on their pride and dignity.

“My mother was legally blind and there were very few provisions made for the sight impaired. Tripping on carpets, low lighting, no signs on bathroom doors, and non-clearly marked directions for one way exits/walkways were a common occurrence.

- Female respondent from Manitoba

“My daughter is in a wheelchair. We were going to a doctor’s appointment in winter. There were two disability spaces, both in use. I had to use street parking on a busy street and lift her wheelchair over the snowbank, then try and get her over into the chair... So upsetting, frustrating, and not safe.”

- Female respondent from Atlantic Canada

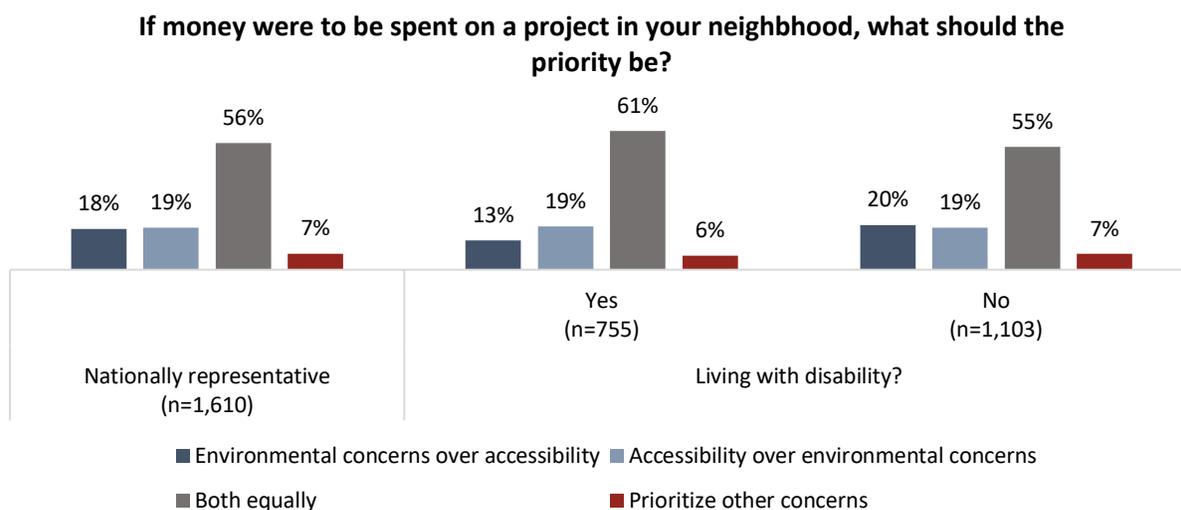
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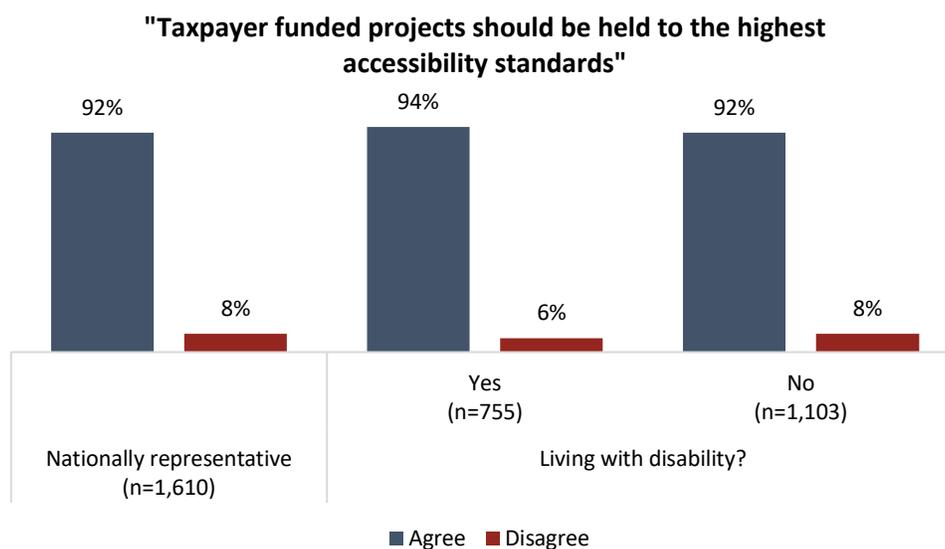
Building an accessible future

As party leaders seek to elaborate their vision of what a post-pandemic future might look like, they are promising [billions of dollars in spending on new infrastructure](#). Canadians, for their part, are clear on what they do not want: taxpayer money spent on building new barriers to accessibility.

Importantly this doesn't come at the expense of other concerns: accessibility is not seen by most as locked in a zero-sum game. When asked if they would prioritize environmental concerns or accessibility in a hypothetical project in their neighbourhood, a plurality of respondents (56%) replied that they wanted both:



Further, Canadians are near unanimous (92% agree) that taxpayer funded projects should be held to the highest existing accessibility standards—a trend which holds across demographics and regions ([see detailed tables](#)).



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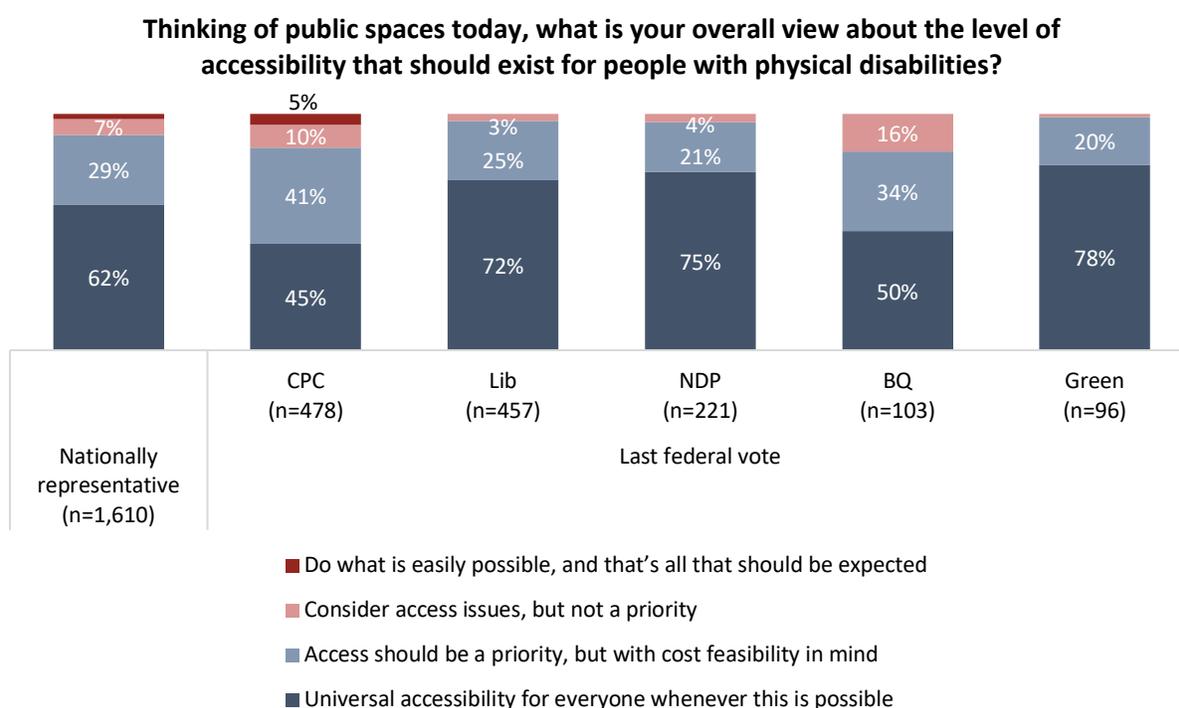
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Harmonising national standards

There is still evidently **much room for improvement** when it comes to accessibility in Canada and supporting those living with disabilities more generally. It is clear that many want Canada to be a world leader on these issues. Of those surveyed, 93 per cent of Canadians agree with the statement that “accessibility is a basic human right” ([see detailed tables](#)).

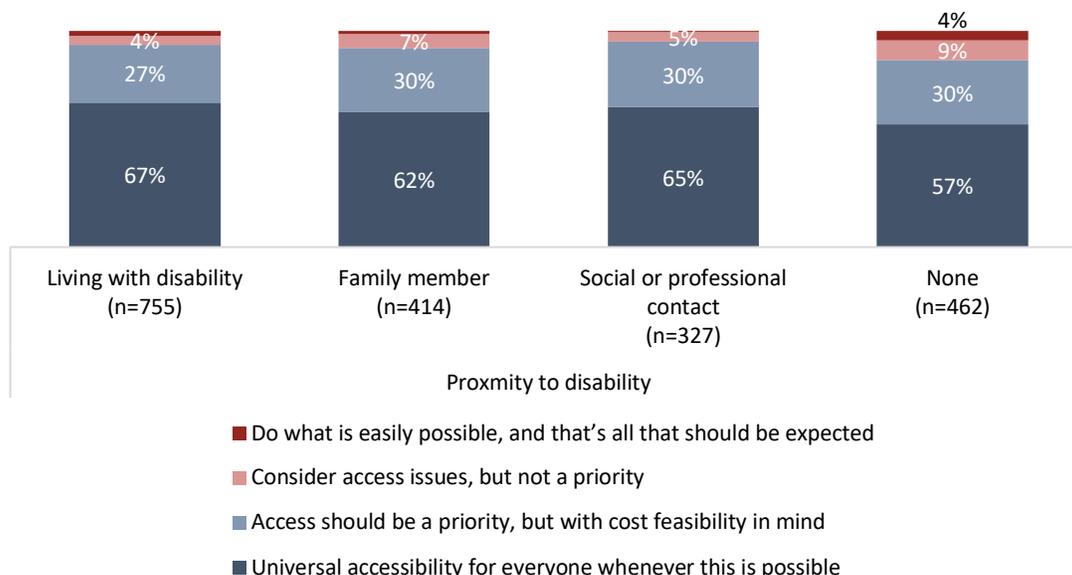
A further nine-in-ten (91%) say accessibility should be a priority, with three-in-five (62%) advocating for universal accessibility as the goal.

When looking at the data by last federal vote, support for universal accessibility among the Conservative and Bloc Québécois party bases doesn't reach the same levels as among those on the centre-left:



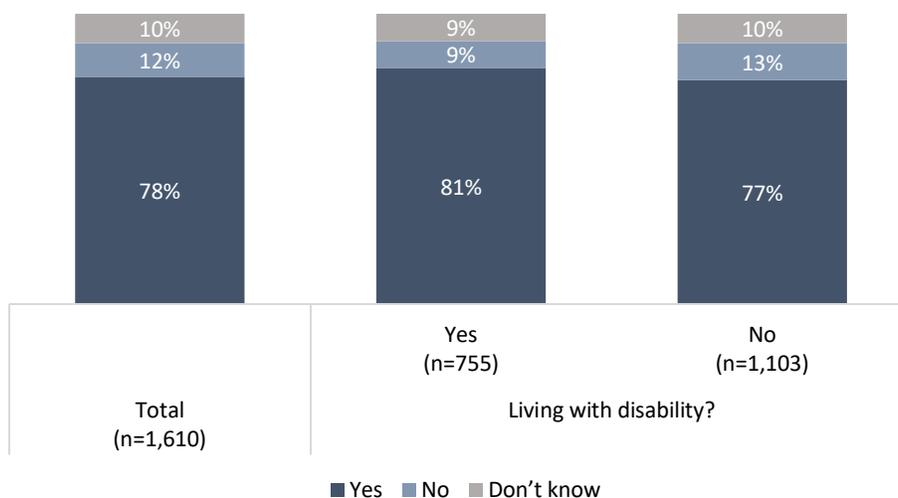
Accessibility aspirations also vary by the respondent's proximity to disability. Two-thirds (67%) of those living with a disability support universal accessibility, compared with three-in-five (57%) who have no exposure to disability. Those with a family member and professional or social contact with a disability fall in between these end points.

Thinking of public spaces today, what is your overall view about the level of accessibility that should exist for people with physical disabilities?



When it comes to how best to achieve the goal of increased accessibility, four-in-five Canadians—both living with a disability (81%) and without (77%)—are in favour of some form of standard of accessibility which would apply to the whole country. Of note, this echoes the [recent promise](#) by the Liberals to harmonise accessibility standards across Canada.

In your opinion, should there be a standard of accessibility that applies to the country as a whole?

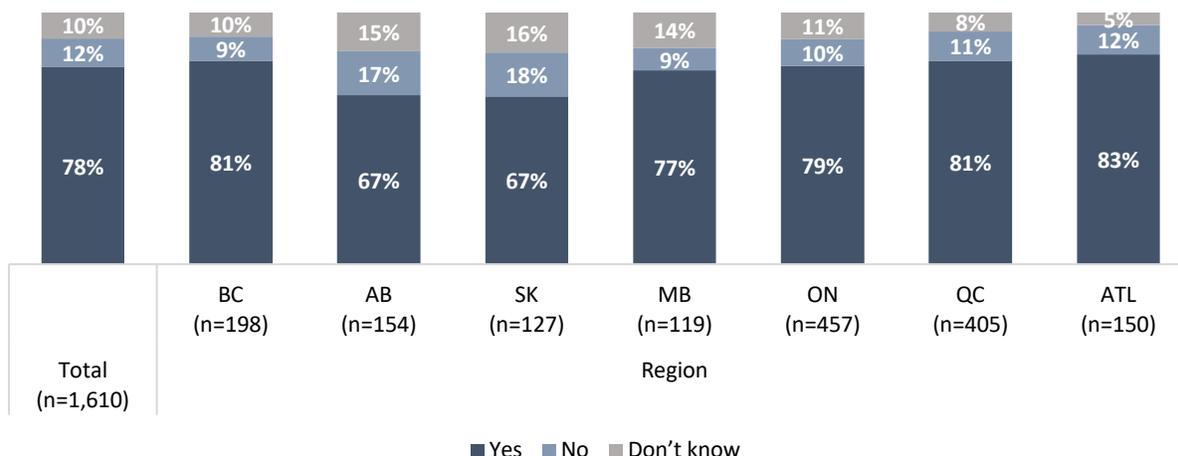


These numbers mask regional differences, however, with lower levels of support for a national standard reported in Alberta (67%) and Saskatchewan (67%):

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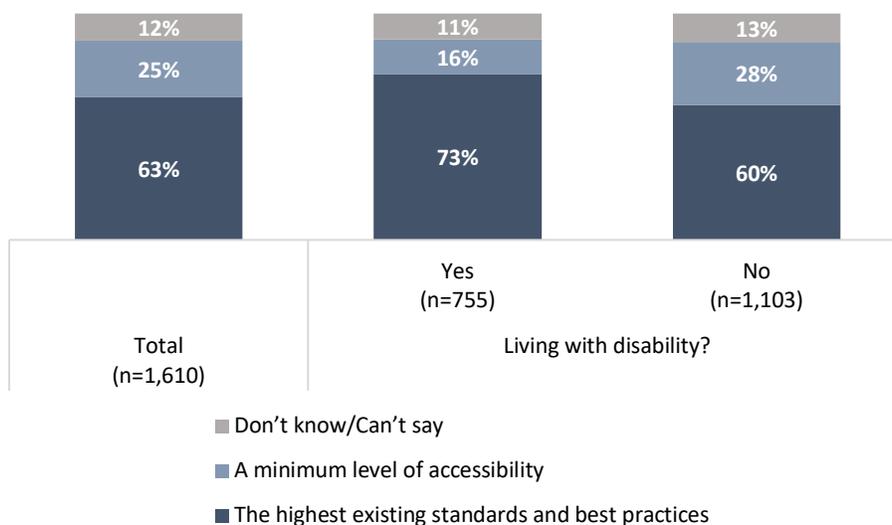
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In your opinion, should there be a standard of accessibility that applies to the country as a whole?



When asked what such a standard should be based on, seven-in-ten (73%) of those with lived experiences of disability say that it should be based off of the highest existing regulations and best practices—three-in-five (63%) Canadians with no disability agree.

Suppose a national standard of accessibility were to be implemented. Should it based on:



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

For detailed general population results filtered by lived experiences of disability and proximity to disability, click [here](#).

For detailed results focusing only on those living with disabilities, click [here](#).

To read the questionnaire, click [here](#).

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