

The Issues: Conservatives dominate on economy; Liberals preferred on COVID-19, climate change

Current NDP voters favour Liberals over CPC on all nine top issues canvassed

September 9, 2021 – Two French debates are in the rear-view mirror for Canada's federal party leaders, who now turn their attention to the English debate, which will set the tone for the final sprint of the 44th federal election campaign.

While [millions of eager Canadians](#) will be tuning in to hear from party leaders, the two vying for the title of prime minister will enter the debate with clear strengths and weaknesses.

A new study from the non-profit Angus Reid Institute finds the Liberals holding a key edge on some of the most important issues facing the country (according to Canadians) including climate change and COVID-19 response. Their advantage increases greatly among those who say those issues are their top priorities.

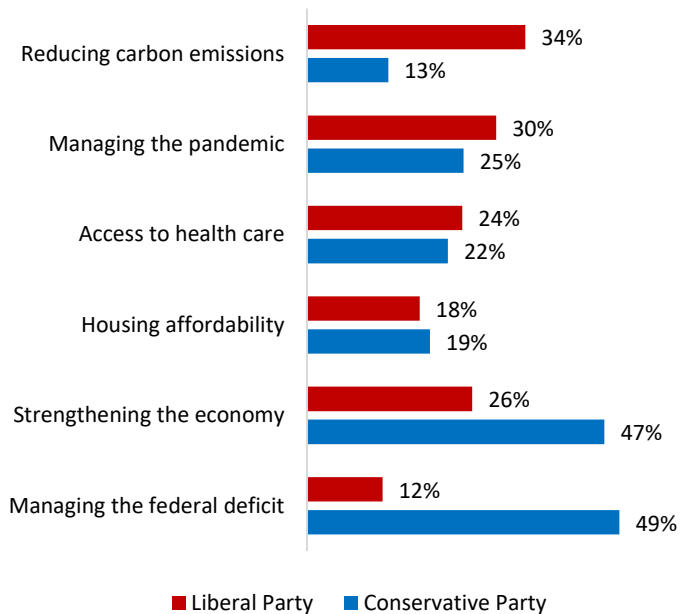
That said, Erin O'Toole and the Conservatives have a clear advantage on a host of economic issues, from strengthening the economy, to taxation, to creating job opportunities. The CPC's advantage on economic issues is considerable, regardless of whether a person appraising them places these issues at the top or bottom of their own personal decision-making process.

With vote intention remaining competitive, key swing voters will likely be a target both during the debate and throughout the final days of the campaign - this includes those who currently say they will vote for the NDP. With speculation swirling about the potential for [strategic voting](#), the Liberal Party is viewed as a better option by current NDP supporters on all nine issues canvassed in this study.

More Key Findings:

- Just 12 per cent of Canadians rank Indigenous issues as a top three issue, half the number who did so in July. Reconciliation will be one of the [five major themes](#) announced for the debate.

Percentage of Canadians who feel each party would improve on these issues if they formed the next government (n=1,709)



METHODOLOGY:

The Angus Reid Institute conducted an online survey from Sept. 3 – 6, 2021 among a representative randomized sample of 1,709 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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- Half of Canadians do not think either a Liberal or Conservative government will make any difference on housing affordability. Among those who say housing is a top priority, 22 per cent say the Liberals would improve the situation if they formed government, while 18 per cent say the Conservatives would.

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: Top issues heading into the debate

While the headlines and narratives surrounding the election have changed week-to-week, the top issues for the Canadian electorate have remained consistent. In fact, with the exception of COVID-19, the key issues are remarkably similar to what they were when an election was called [two years ago](#).

The top two have consistently been a combination of health care and the environment. For the duration of the pandemic, COVID-19 has been in the top three, though it dropped down the rankings when the virus ebbed during the summer. Issues surrounding the economy, including housing affordability and the federal government deficit, make up a second tier of important issues.

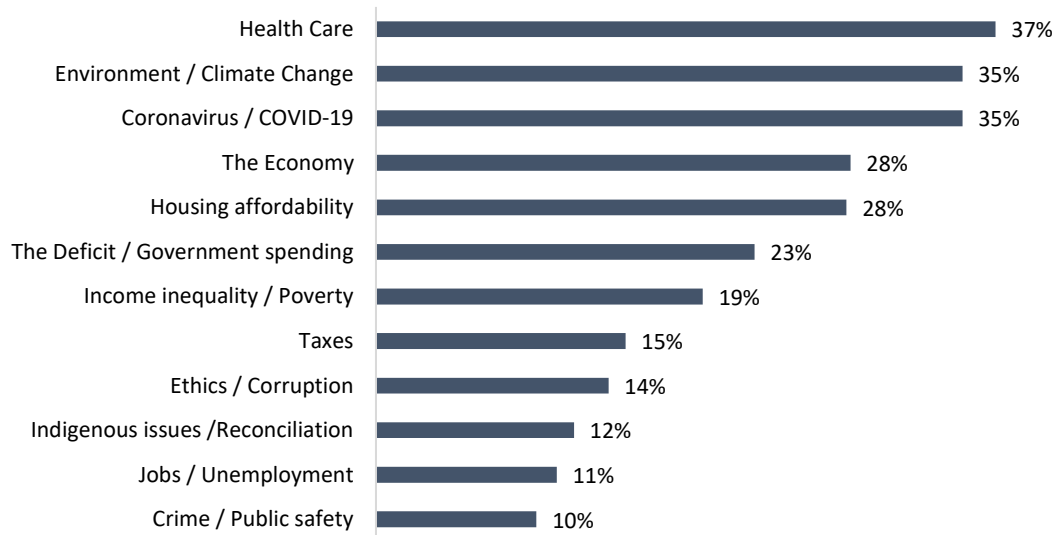
And that's where things stand prior to the first and only English language debate tonight, which will cover five themes according to the [Debate Broadcast Group](#): affordability, climate, COVID recovery, leadership and accountability, and reconciliation. Those touch on all the top issues listed by Canadians with the exception of health care.

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**Top issues facing Canada
(All respondents, n=1,709)
(Top three selected, issues with more than 10% shown)**



Environment a top three issue for all except CPC voters

While there is overlap in issues between voters for the major parties, only Liberal and Bloc supporters share a parallel top three, albeit in a different order. The topics chosen for the debate present an opportunity for the two contenders for prime minister to speak to supporters of other parties on issues they value. Conservative leader Erin O’Toole will have the chance to convince NDP, Liberal, and Bloc voters that he can credibly handle issues around climate change. Liberal leader Justin Trudeau will need to convince NDP voters that he will address affordability.

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Top three issues by current federal vote intention (Weighted sample sizes)			
Liberal (n=507)	CPC (n=554)	NDP (n=324)	Bloc Québécois (n=94*)
COVID-19 51%	The Economy 46%	Environment / Climate Change 57%	Environment / Climate Change 44%
Environment / Climate Change 50%	The Deficit 44%	Housing Affordability 41%	Health Care 43%
Health Care 48%	Health Care 29%	Income inequality 37%	COVID-19 38%

*Small sample size, interpret with caution

Housing affordability a concern for younger people, COVID-19 for older ones

No issue is shared by all age and gender groups and only the environment is shared by five of the six. Men of all ages rank the economy in their top three, while women of all ages include both the environment and health care. Those 34 years of age and younger are concerned with housing affordability, while older age groups are more concerned with COVID-19:

Top three issues by age and gender (Weighted sample sizes)					
Male			Female		
18-34 (n=184)	35-54 (n=299)	55+ (n=335)	18-34 (n=203)	35-54 (n=324)	55+ (n=363)
Housing affordability 37%	Environment / Climate Change 32%	Health Care 39%	Environment / Climate Change 48%	Health Care 43%	Health Care 48%
Environment / Climate Change 35%	COVID-19 32%	COVID-19 34%	Housing affordability 45%	COVID-19 38%	COVID-19 43%
The Economy 34%	The Economy 30%	The Economy 33%	Health Care 33%	Environment / Climate Change 33%	Environment / Climate Change 37%

Top three issues vary considerably by region

Leaders will have to convincingly address affordability at the debate if they are going to speak to key battleground ridings in B.C. and Ontario – and suddenly competitive [Atlantic Canada](#). Climate change

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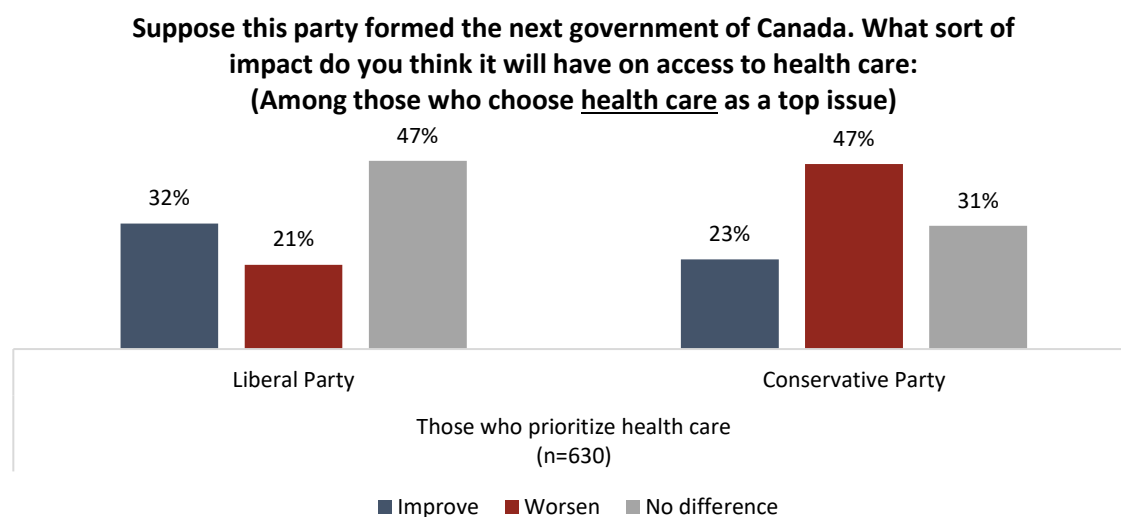
factors into the top three on both coasts and in always-important Quebec. Alberta and Saskatchewan are the only provinces which rank the deficit or the economy in the top three.

Top three issues by region (Unweighted sample sizes)						
BC (n=281)	AB (n=152)	SK (n=125)	MB (n=131)	ON (n=462)	QC (n=401)	ATL (n=154)
Environment / Climate Change 40%	The Economy 37%	The Deficit 46%	Health Care 55%	COVID-19 38%	Environment / Climate Change 46%	Health Care 53%
COVID-19 38%	The Deficit 30%	The Economy 39%	COVID-19 43%	Health Care 36%	Health Care 41%	Housing affordability 32%
Housing affordability 35%	Ethics / Corruption 29%	Energy / Natural Resources 28%	Environment / Climate Change 32%	Housing affordability 36%	COVID-19 36%	Environment / Climate Change 31%

Part Two: Liberals, CPC head-to-head on the issues

Health care

For those who prioritize health care in this federal election, the Liberals are the preferred party of the two major contenders. One-in-three (32%) say the Liberals would improve health care in a forthcoming term, while one-in-five feel they would diminish it. That said, a Conservative government is much more negatively perceived on this issue:



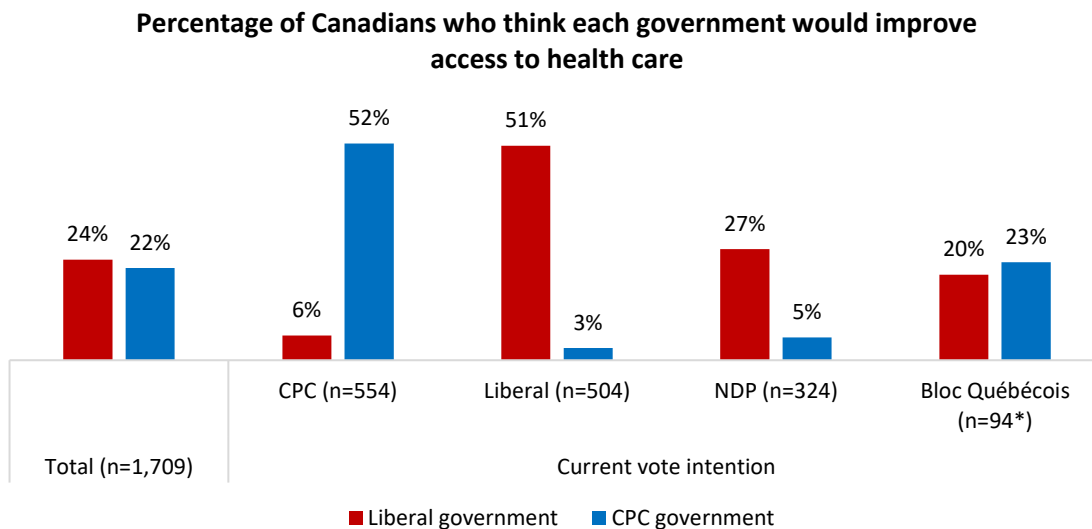
Among all Canadians, regardless of which issues they prioritize, the competition is much closer. One-quarter say the Liberals would improve health care access, while 22 per cent say this of the

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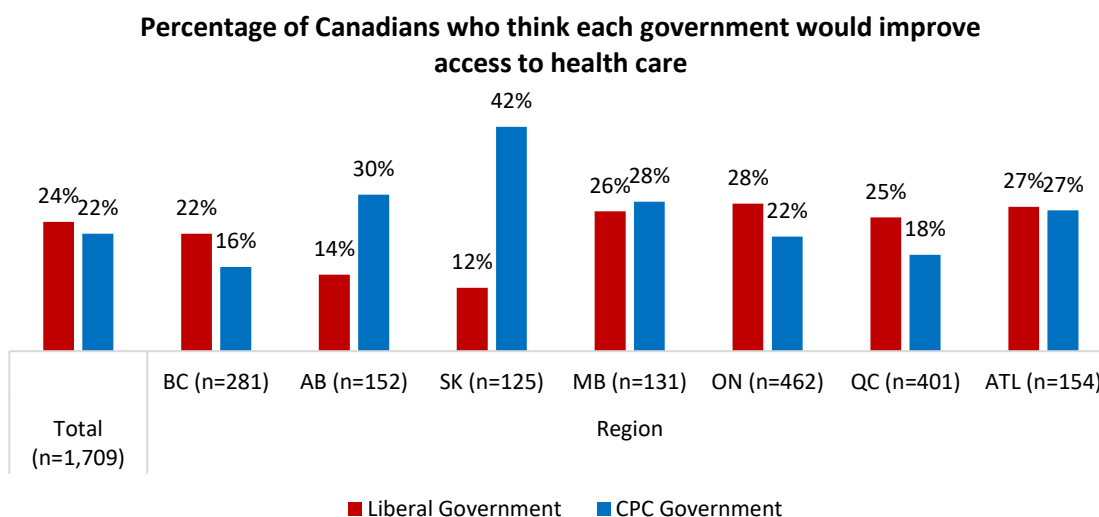
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Conservatives. Notably, current NDP voters are much more likely to feel a Liberal government would be a positive on this file:



**Small sample size, interpret with caution*

Regionally, neither party benefits from strong support outside of the CPC's strength in Alberta and Saskatchewan. Communication on their respective plans for health care thus looks as though it will be immensely important during the debate:



Climate change

Perhaps the greatest divide is witnessed on the environment – the top priority in B.C. and Quebec – where half (52%) say that a Liberal-led government would have a positive impact as opposed to only four per cent who say that of a Conservative-controlled parliament. Of note, fully three quarters (75%) of those

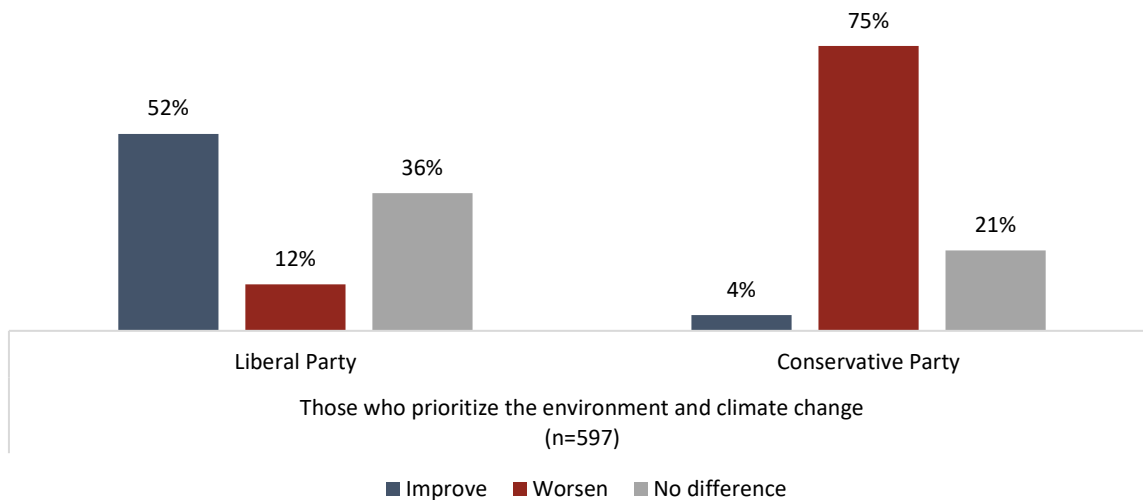
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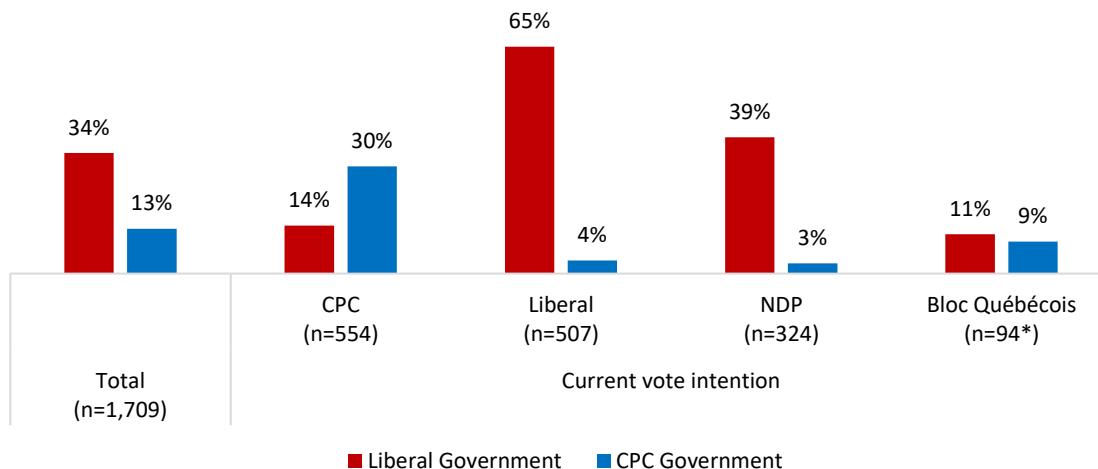
who prioritize the environment think that, were O'Toole to assume power, there would be a negative impact on Canada's efforts to curb carbon emissions.

**Suppose this party formed the next government of Canada. What sort of impact do you think it will have on reducing carbon emissions:
(Among those who choose environment and climate change as a top issue)**



While Conservative Party partisans are more supportive of their party's potential on this file, Liberals and New Democrats are unlikely to say that the CPC would make any progress on emission reductions if elected. The Liberal Party is seen as a more viable option among the broader public on this issue:

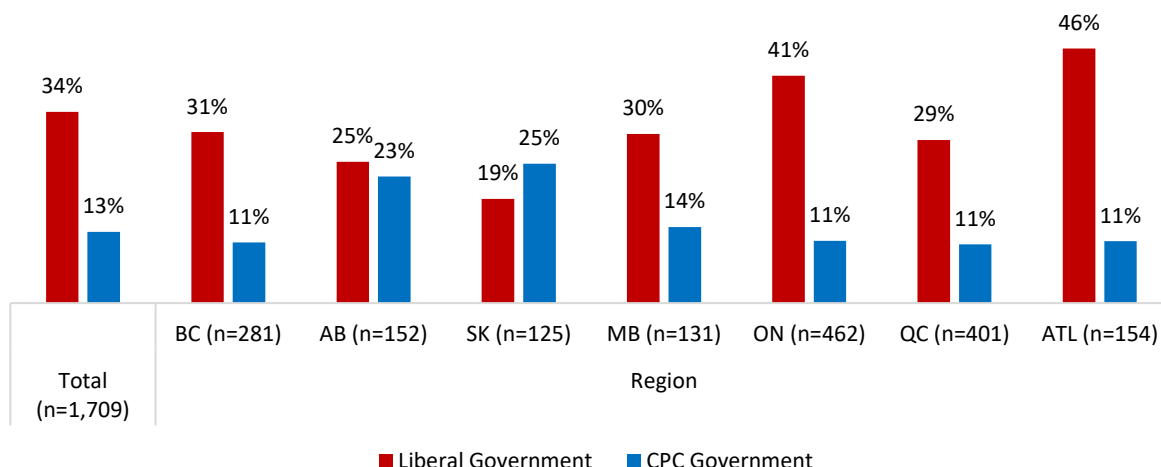
**Percentage of Canadians who think each government would improve
Canada's reduction of carbon emissions**



**Small sample size, interpret with caution*

The Liberals and Conservatives are competitive in Alberta and Saskatchewan in terms of reducing Canada's emissions, but the Liberals hold a considerable advantage everywhere else:

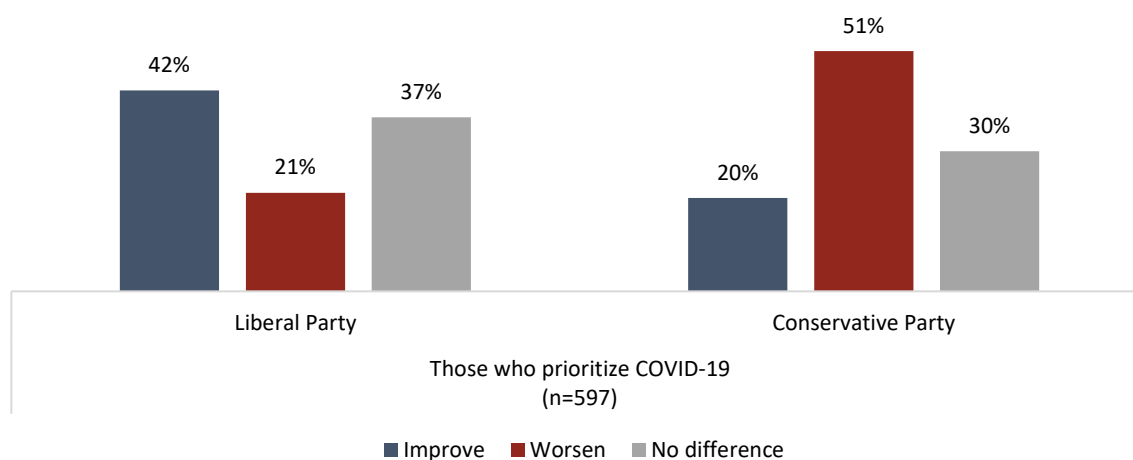
Percentage of Canadians who think each government would improve Canada's reduction of carbon emissions



COVID-19 response

Many speculated that the Liberal government decided to call an election to ride the wave of support that they believed to stem from their [handling of the pandemic](#). Although the numbers are not quite as divergent as on the environment, there is a clear preference for a Liberal government among those who prioritize handling of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. Two-in-five (42%) say conditions would improve under Liberal stewardship. In contrast, and perhaps paralleling growing unhappiness with the way the pandemic has been managed in [Conservative-led provinces](#), half (51%) of those who prioritize pandemic management say that the CPC would worsen the situation:

**Suppose this party formed the next government of Canada. What sort of impact do you think it will have on managing the COVID-19 pandemic:
(Among those who choose COVID-19 response as a top issue)**



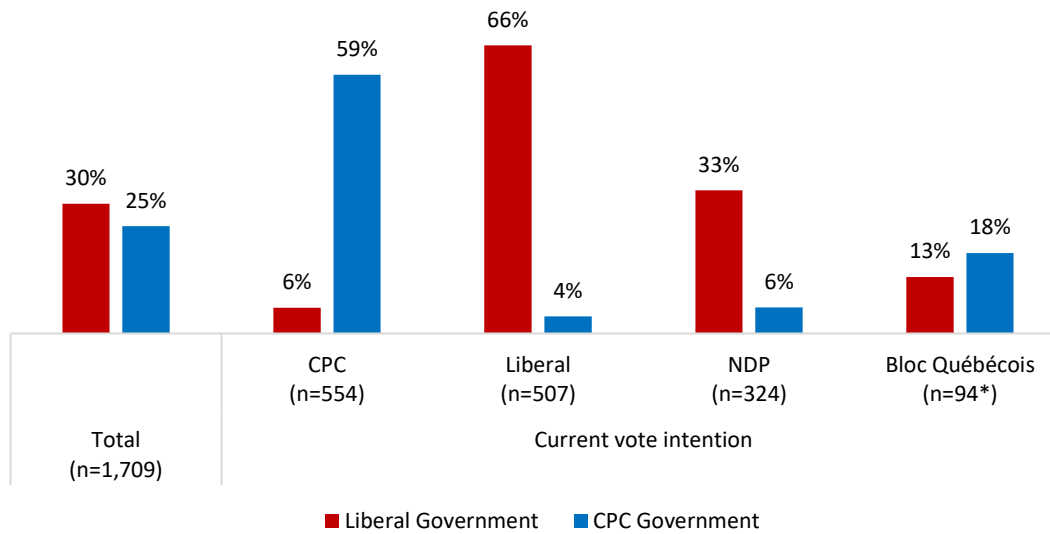
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Current NDP voters are five times as likely to feel that the Liberals would handle COVID-19 well than compared to the Conservatives. Meanwhile, Liberal voters feel their party would make progress on the issue and CPC voters say the same of theirs:

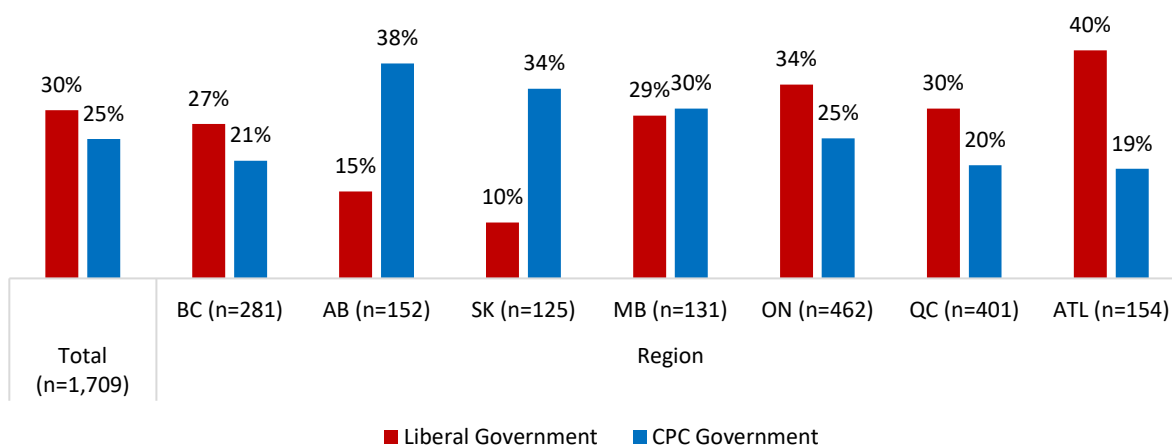
Percentage of Canadians who think each government would improve the management of the COVID-19 pandemic



**Small sample size, interpret with caution*

While the Liberals have a massive advantage among those who prioritize the management of the COVID-19 pandemic, they do worse among those who consider it less of an important issue. When looking at the whole population, the Liberals are preferred only slightly in B.C. and Ontario. Meanwhile, the CPC are seen as better in Alberta and Saskatchewan, which coincidentally have the [lowest vaccination rates](#) in the country:

Percentage of Canadians who think each government would improve the management of the COVID-19 pandemic



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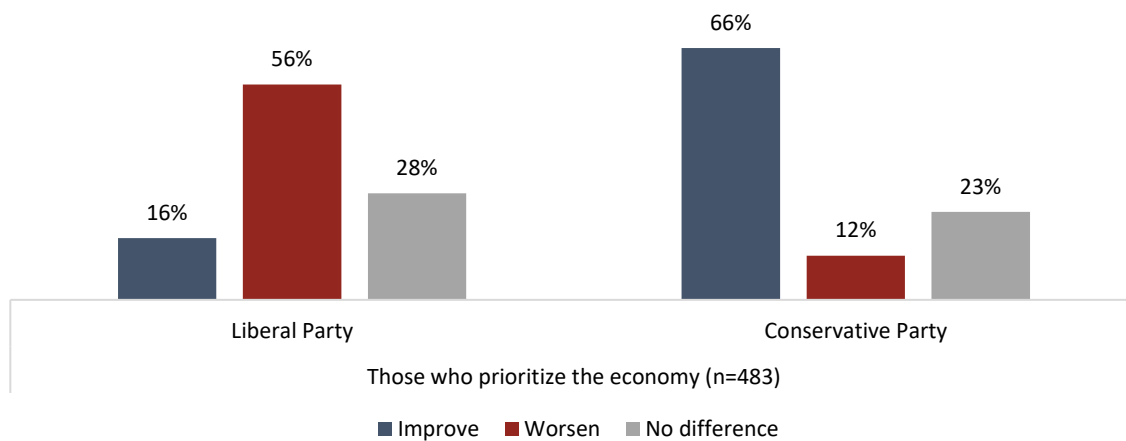
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Strengthening the economy

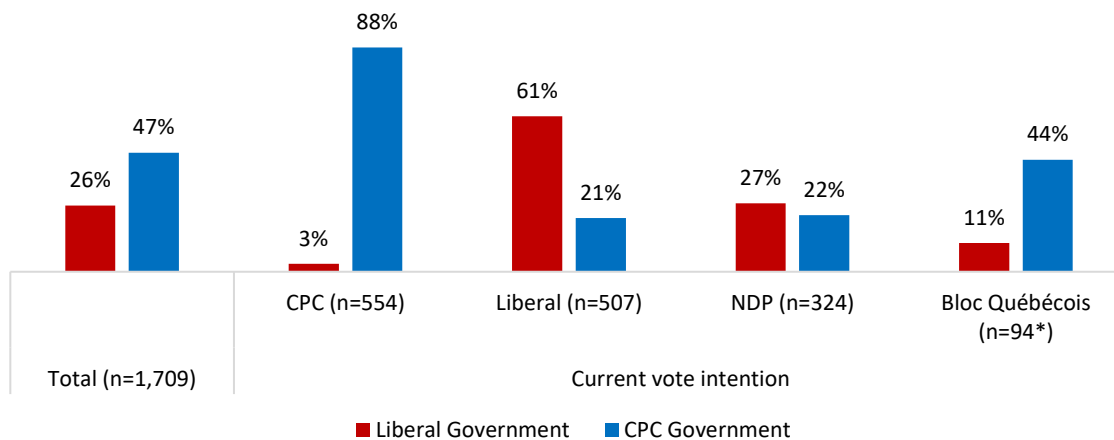
The one issue among the top five where a Conservative-led government has a clear advantage over a Liberal one in the eyes of Canadians is on strengthening the economy. Two-thirds of those who prioritize this issue say a Conservative government would have a positive impact, whereas only 16 per cent think the same of a Liberal equivalent. Notably over half (56%) believe a Liberal government would worsen efforts to strengthen the Canadian economy.

**Suppose this party formed the next government of Canada. What sort of impact do you think it will have on strengthening the Canadian economy:
(Among those who choose the economy as a top issue)**



Economic issues are a clear Conservative strength. Among all Canadians, half (47%) say the CPC would improve the Canadian economy, while just one-quarter say this of the Liberals:

Percentage of Canadians who think each government would improve the Canadian economy



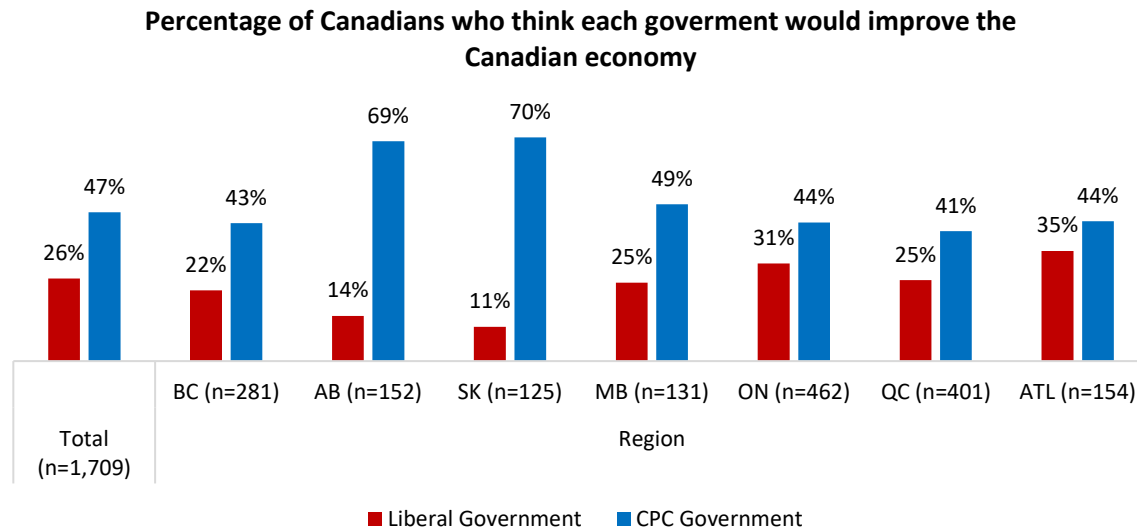
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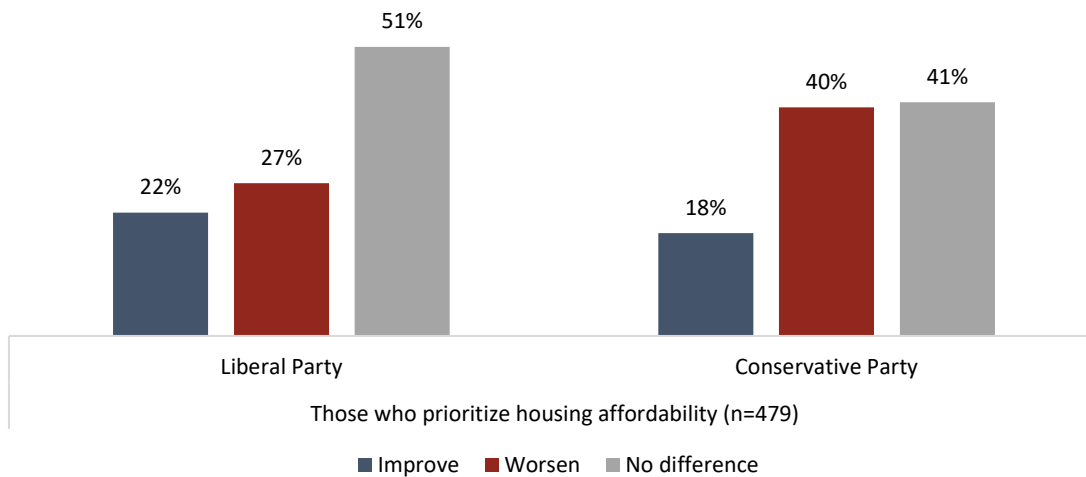
The CPC advantage on the economy is perhaps most evident regionally. The party is seen as a better option by Canadians in every region of the country, regardless of each region's current vote intention profile:



Housing affordability

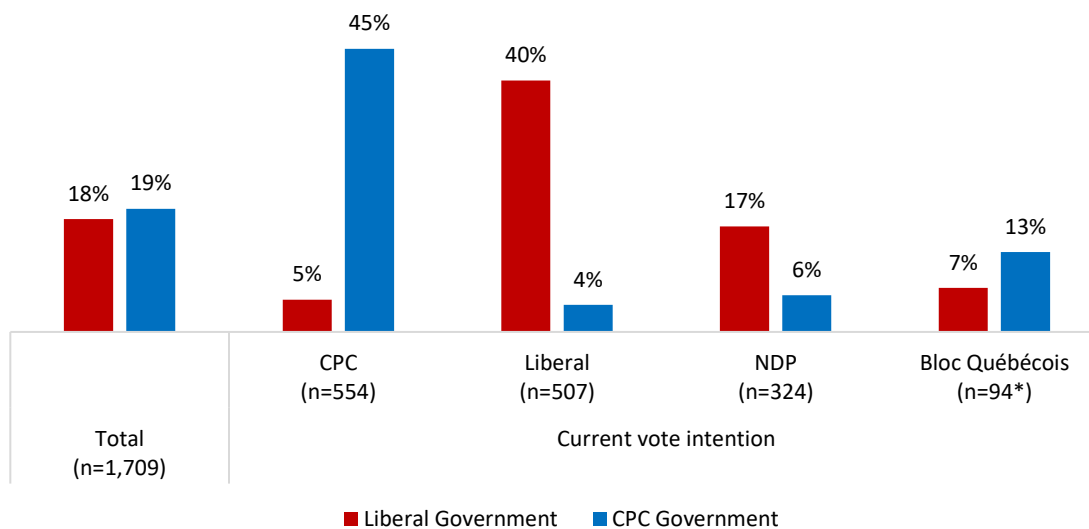
On the question of housing affordability, a key issue in [battleground ridings](#) in Canada's major metropolitan areas and the subject of some major policy proposals – including [a two-year ban on foreign buyers](#) floated by the Liberals – neither party fares particularly well. Approximately one-in-five say each hypothetical government would improve the situation, while more say the CPC would worsen it than the Liberals:

**Suppose this party formed the next government of Canada. What sort of impact do you think it will have on housing affordability where you live:
(Among those who choose housing affordability as a top issue)**



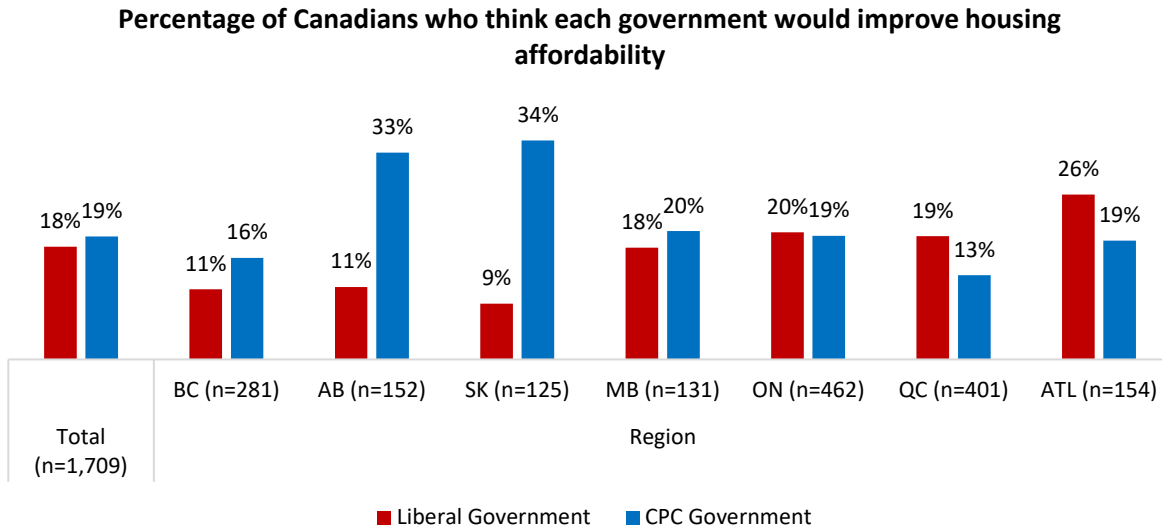
O'Toole and Trudeau have the confidence of at least two-in-five of their own party supporters that they will be able to improve housing affordability. Though NDP supporters believe Trudeau would be the better choice on that file than O'Toole, only one-in-five (17%) believe another Liberal government would improve affordability:

Percentage of Canadians who think each government would improve housing affordability



**Small sample size, interpret with caution*

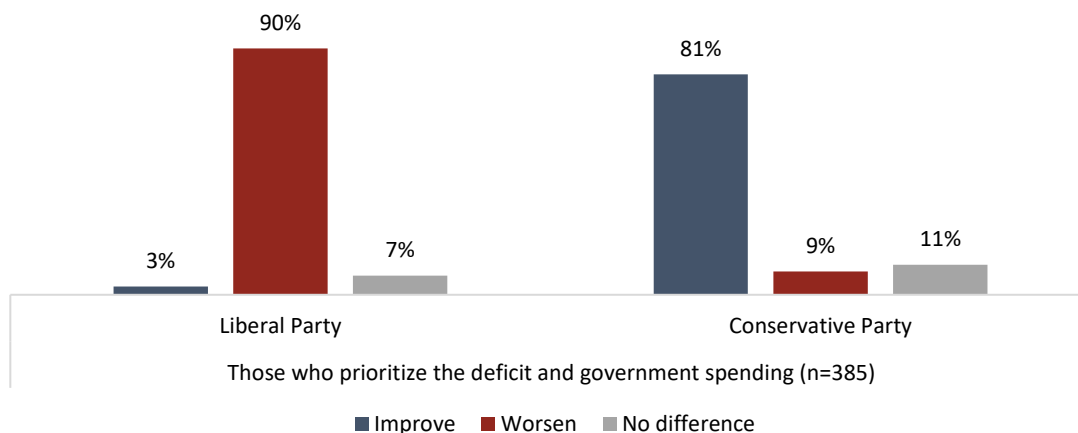
Regionally, expectations for either hypothetical federal government are low on this file. Residents in Alberta and Saskatchewan lean toward the CPC as the party most likely to improve housing affordability, while the rest of the country is divided:



Managing the deficit

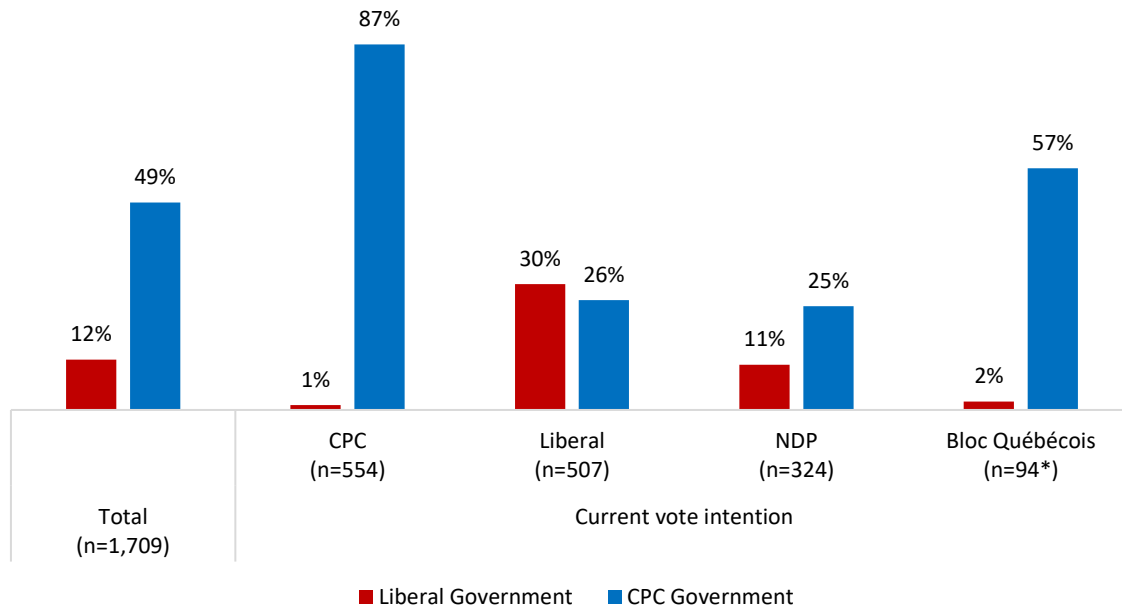
Among those who prioritize the deficit among their top issues, there is no competition for which party is best to lead. Nine-in-ten (90%) say the Liberals would worsen the deficit situation while four-in-five say the CPC would improve it:

**Suppose this party formed the next government of Canada. What sort of impact do you think it will have on managing the federal deficit:
(Among those who choose the deficit and government spending as a top issue)**



Overall, half of Canadians say they believe the CPC would improve Canada’s deficit situation. Just one-in-nine (12%) say the Liberals would. Even Liberal voters are divided close to equally about who would be best:

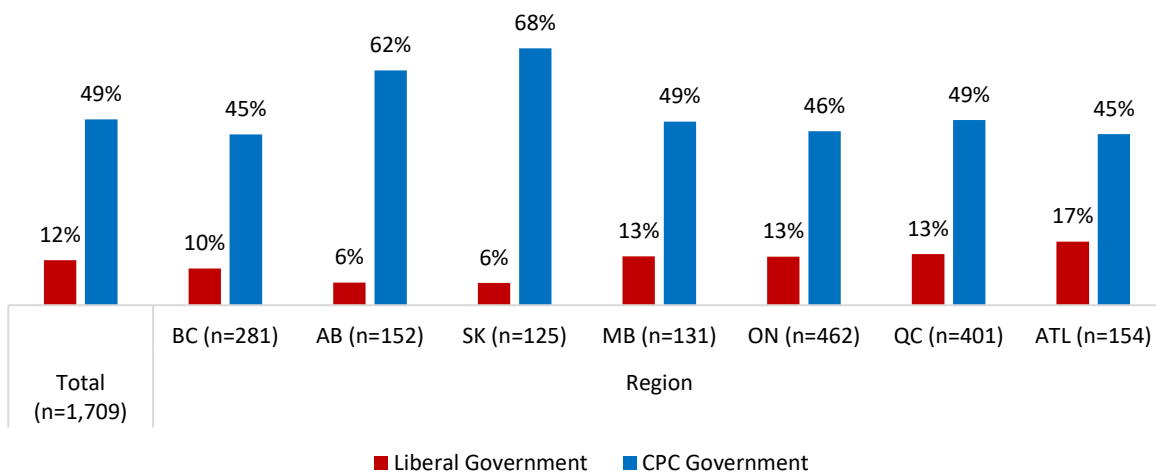
Percentage of Canadians who think each government would improve the deficit and government spending



**Small sample size, interpret with caution*

From coast to coast, it is evident that Canadians trust the Conservatives much more than the Liberals to reduce the deficit:

Percentage of Canadians who think each government would improve the deficit and government spending



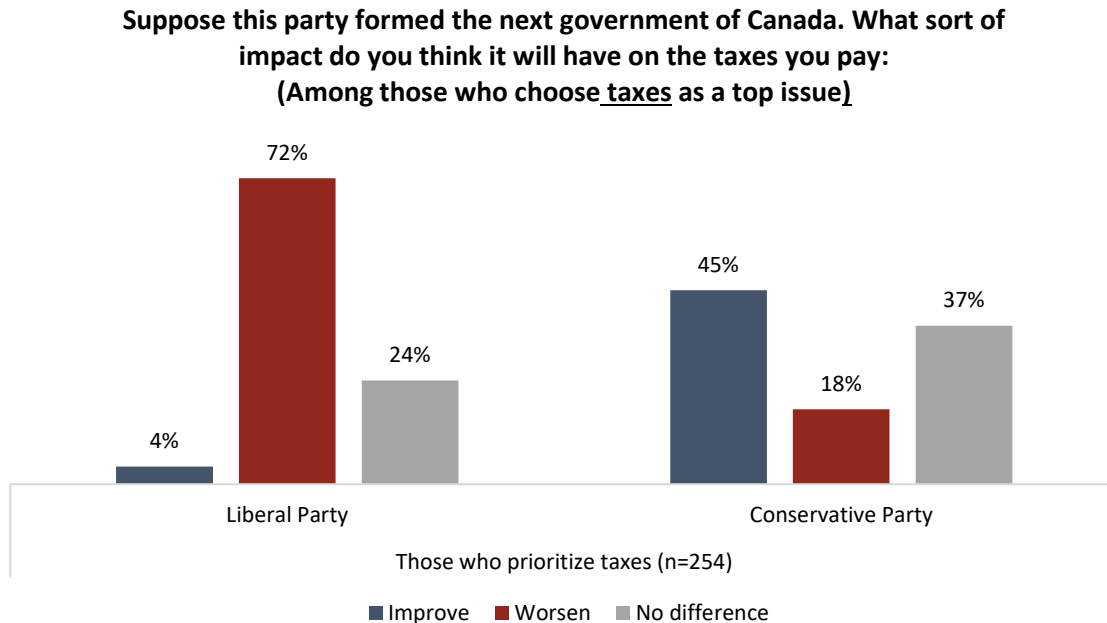
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Taxes

The major parties have released a [variety of tax policies](#) thus far in the campaign, but those who regard this issue as among their most important show a clear preference for the CPC. Seven-in-ten (72%) say the Liberals would worsen their own personal tax situation, while 45 per cent say the CPC would improve it:



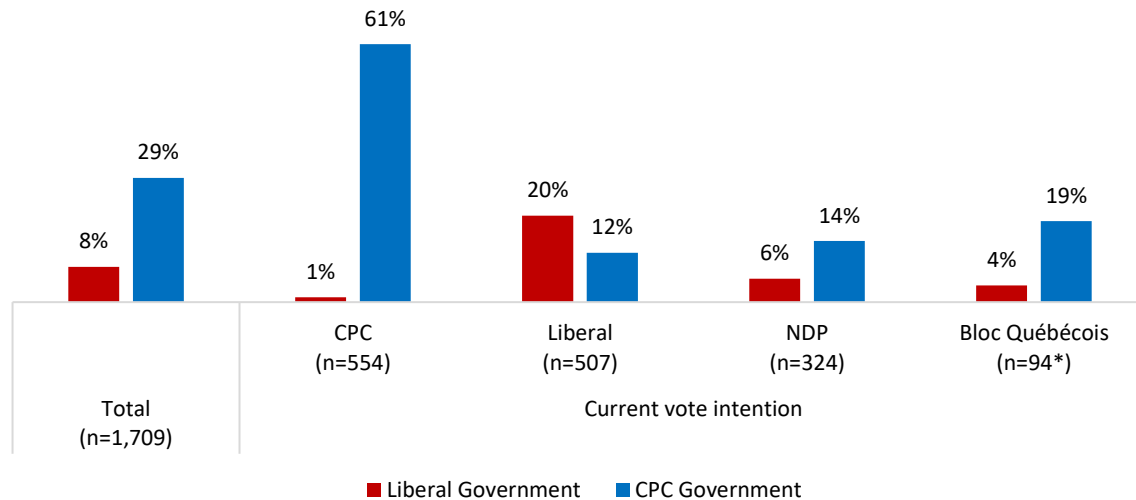
Three-in-five (61%) Conservative voters believe that, were their party voted into power, it would have a positive impact on the amount of taxes they pay. While the Conservatives are the second choice for partisans of all other parties except the Liberals, a plurality in each believe that there will be no impact ([see detailed tables](#)).

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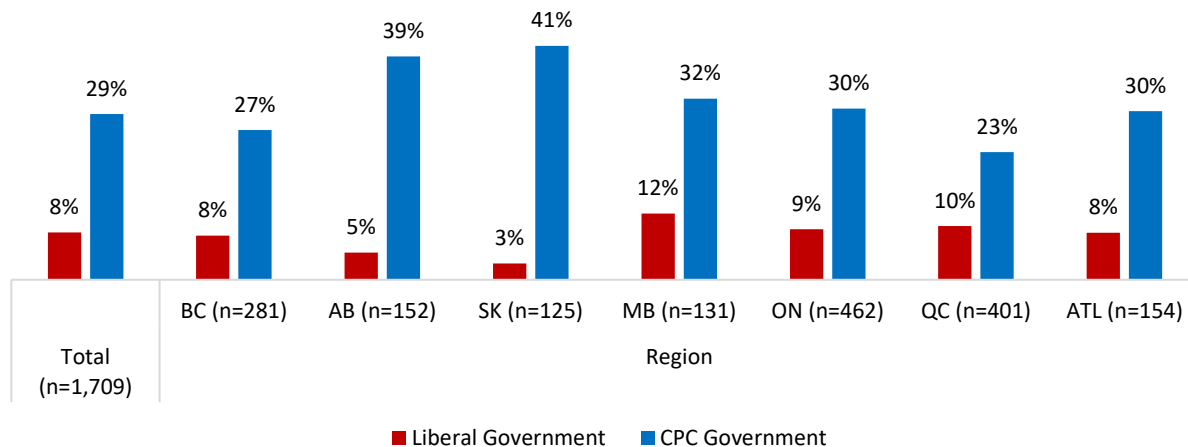
Percentage of Canadians who think each government would improve the taxes they pay



**Small sample size, interpret with caution*

Few across the country feel that another Liberal government would help with their own taxation levels. In every region the Conservative Party garners much higher levels of enthusiasm.

Percentage of Canadians who think each government would improve the taxes they pay

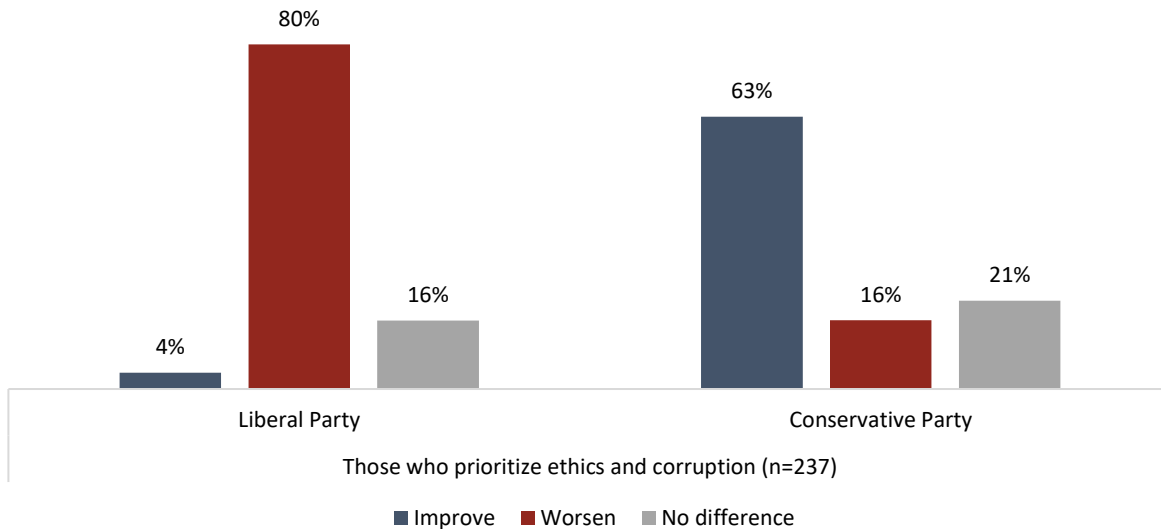


Honesty in government

The Liberal government has been plagued by a number of scandals over its six years, from SNC-Lavalin, to the WE charity affair. Perhaps for this reason, the Conservative Party is overwhelmingly preferred by those who prioritize ethics and corruption:

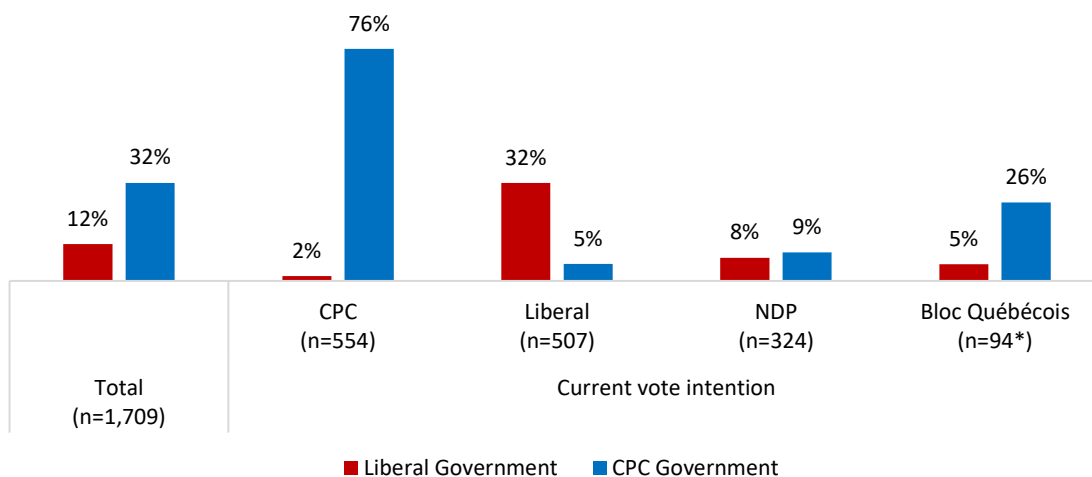
Suppose this party formed the next government of Canada. What sort of impact do you think it will have on transparency and honesty in the federal government:

(Among those who choose ethics and corruption as a top issue)



When it comes to the question of which party would improve governance transparency, three quarters (76%) of Conservative supporters put stock in their party, compared to only one third (32%) of those intending to vote for the Liberal Party. NDP voters, for their part, don't have much faith in either party to improve honesty and transparency in the federal government:

Percentage of Canadians who think each government would improve honesty and transparency in the federal government



**Small sample size, interpret with caution*

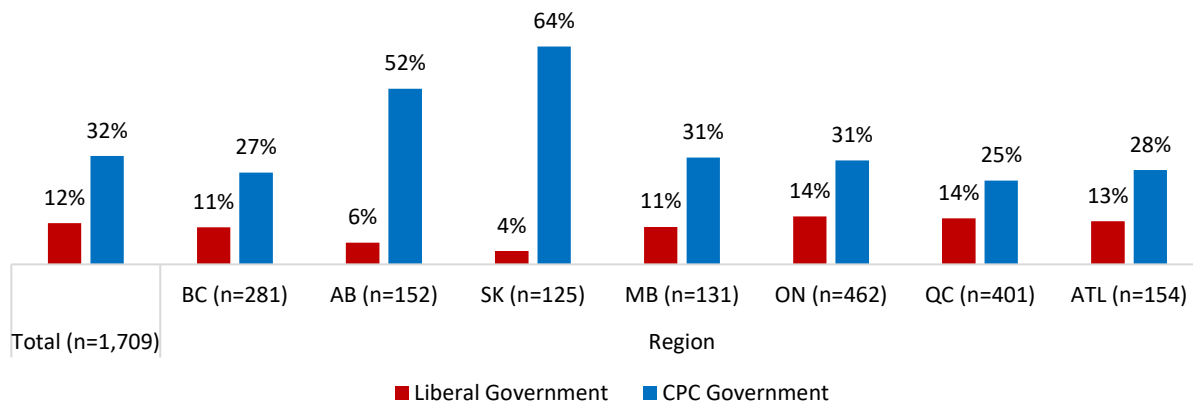
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Residents in Alberta and Saskatchewan are largely convinced that a Conservative government would improve the level of honesty and transparency at the federal level. They are joined by approximately three-in-ten in other regions of the country. Meanwhile, the Liberals draw little support on this measure.

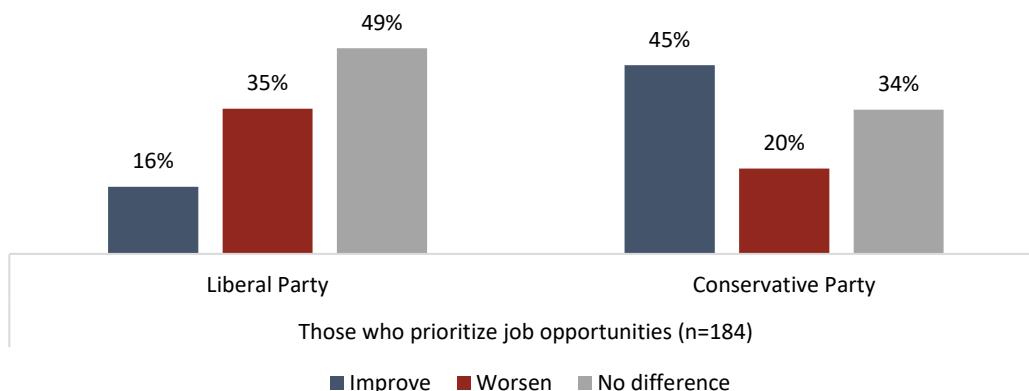
Percentage of Canadians who think each government would improve honesty and transparency in the federal government



Job opportunities where you live

Coming out of the COVID-19 pandemic, many Canadians are seeking to rebuild their financial well-being and are looking for new employment opportunities. Among those who say jobs and unemployment are a top priority, 45 per cent say the CPC would help to improve the circumstances in their community. Just 16 per cent say this of the Liberals:

Suppose this party formed the next government of Canada. What sort of impact do you think it will have on job opportunities in your region: (Among those who choose jobs / unemployment as a top issue)



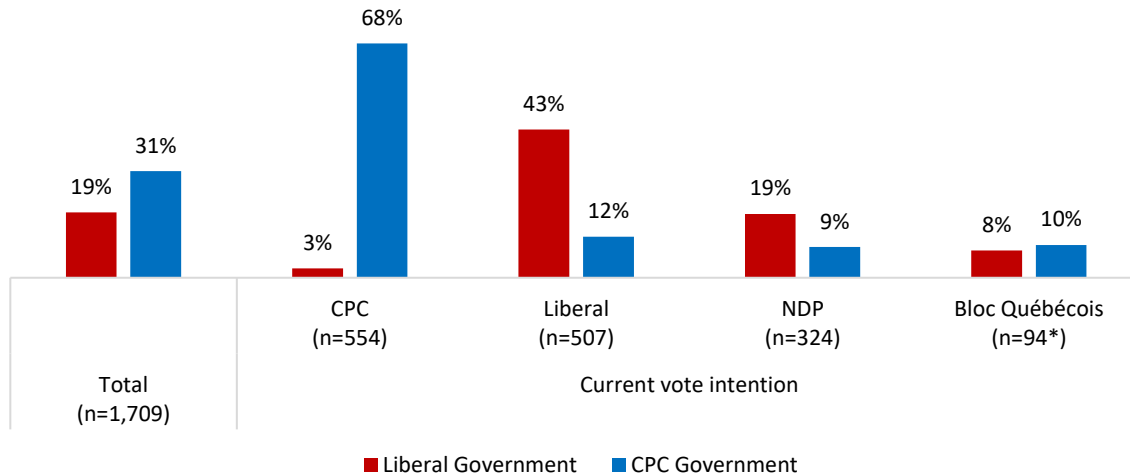
The CPC advantage on this issue is less pronounced when broadening the picture to the whole population. Liberal and NDP voters feel the Liberal Party would be a better choice to improve job opportunities where they live, while seven-in-ten CPC voters say their party would be better:

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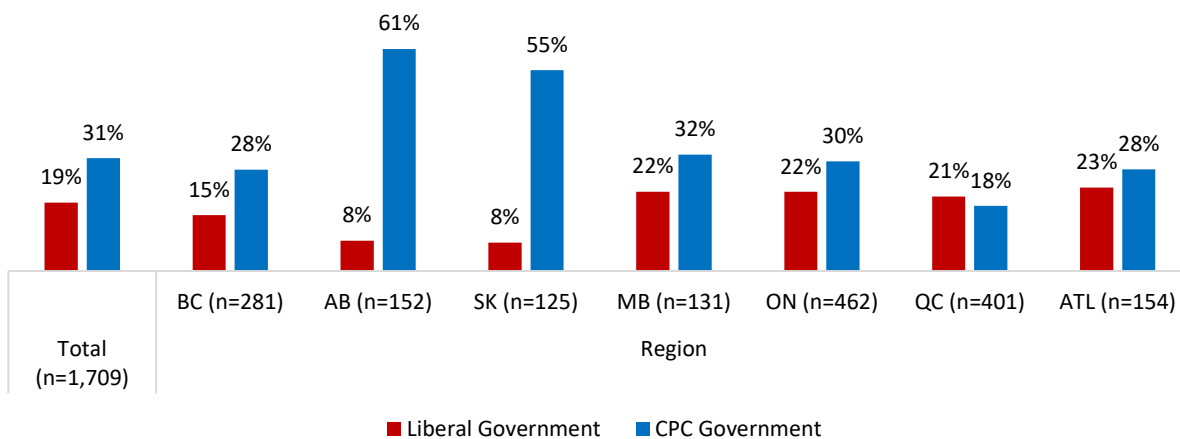
Percentage of Canadians who think each government would improve job opportunities



**Small sample size, interpret with caution*

While the Liberals are competitive in Quebec, they trail the CPC on this question in every other region of the country.

Percentage of Canadians who think each government would improve job opportunities



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

For detailed results by top issue, [click here](#).

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