

Federal Politics: Three-in-five Canadians would have preferred outcome of election held using proportional distribution

Majority of each party's voter base say their leaders should maintain position heading into next election

October 15, 2021 – In an election where little changed, Canadians have been left searching for value from the exercise of their franchise. The vote result was near identical to that of two years ago, and the government returned – a Liberal minority – was the government dissolved.

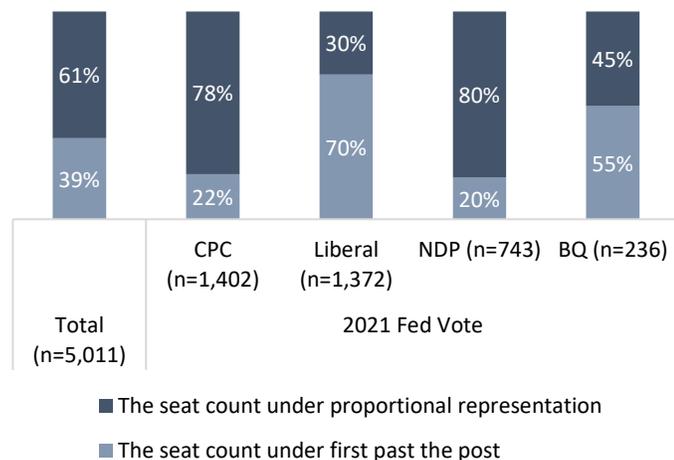
New data from the non-profit Angus Reid Institute finds that four-in-five Canadians were left wondering just why the election was called. Indeed, majorities across the political spectrum say the election was “a waste of time and money and should not have been called.” One-in-five (20%) – including 40 per cent of Liberal voters – disagree and feel it was a good opportunity to hear from voters.

For many, the election result would have provided more satisfaction had it been under a different seat allocation method. When shown the seat distribution under first-past-the-post (FPTP) and proportional representation (PR) systems, three-in-five (61%) say they preferred the hypothetical makeup of the House under the latter. Prime Minister Justin Trudeau has been [criticized](#) over [the past six years](#) by those who expected his promise of proportional representation in the 2015 election campaign to come to fruition. While he argued there was “no consensus” for reform after he first got elected with a majority government, Trudeau said he was [open to electoral reform again](#) near the end of the most recent campaign.

Almost every region of the country leans at least slightly toward PR when choosing between the two. The split, however, is near even in Quebec (51% PR, 49% FPTP). This is perhaps driven by the fact that the Bloc Québécois won 32 seats in parliament with 7.6 per cent of the vote and would thus be deprived of approximately one-quarter of its seats under a PR system.

Nonetheless, as Canadians adjust to a new reality that looks almost identical to the old one, most would like their party leaders to give it another go whenever another federal election is called. More than four-in-

Which seat count would you prefer as an election outcome?



METHODOLOGY:

The Angus Reid Institute conducted an online survey from Sept. 29 to Oct. 3, 2021 among a representative randomized sample of 5,011 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 +/- 2.0 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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five NDP (83%) and Bloc Québécois (90%) voters would have their leader back for the next campaign, while fewer, but still a majority, of Liberal (64%) and CPC (54%) voters, would keep Trudeau and Erin O'Toole on respectively. Even among those least enthusiastic supporters – Conservative voters – just 25 per cent say O'Toole should step aside.

More Key Findings:

- While four-in-five (80%) Canadians responded that the election was a waste of time and money, this number rises to 97 per cent of CPC supporters and 93 per cent of Bloc Québécois voters.
- When it comes to top issues facing Canada, concerns over healthcare (43%) and the COVID-19 response (30%) both increased and claimed the first and third spots respectively. Sandwiched in between is the environment, chosen by 36 per cent of Canadians as one of their top three concerns.
- Although a majority of Canadians (61%) would prefer the outcome of the 2021 election were it held under a proportional representation system, there are clear partisan differences. A majority of Liberal (70%) and Bloc Québécois (55%) supporters say they prefer the current seat distribution, compared with eight-in-ten CPC (78%) and NDP (80%) voters who say they prefer the opposite.

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: Was the election worth it?

The 2021 federal election was pitched as an opportunity for Canadians to “[weigh in](#)” on their government and the post-pandemic recovery facing the nation. Conventional wisdom suggested that the governing Liberals were chasing a majority government in order to move forward with its own agenda as the country

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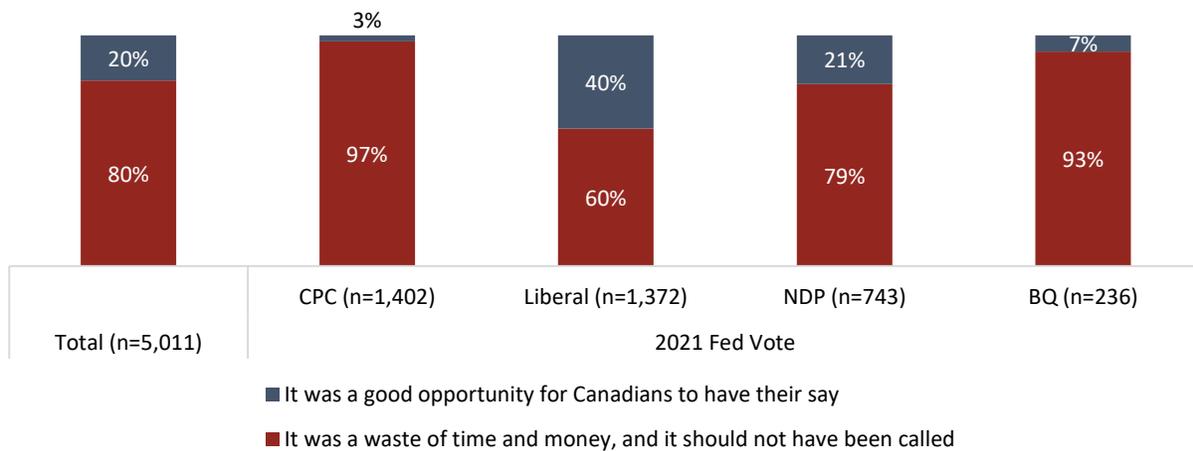
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rebuilt from the social and economic damage of the past 19 months. That result again eluded the incumbents, who chose to go to the polls just as COVID-19's fourth wave was taking hold. In the end, Canada's 44th parliament looks much the same as the 43rd, with each party within one or two seats of its total from 2019.

Four-in-five believe election was a waste of time

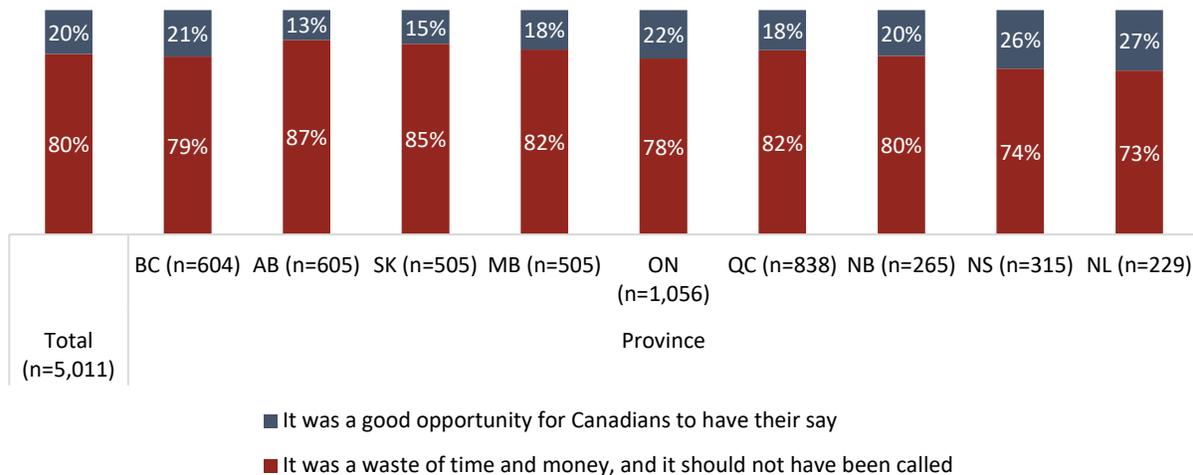
After seeing the results, Canadians aren't convinced the cost – an estimated record \$600 million – was worth it. Four-in-five say the election was “a waste of time and money” while one-in-five say it was valuable for Canadians to have their say. Even among those who voted for the Liberals last month, a majority say the election shouldn't have been called. Two-in-five (40%) in that group, however, say that this was a valuable exercise:

Which best describes how you feel about this election:



The sentiment that an election should not have been held is consistent across the country, with about three-quarters or more in each region saying that now was not the time:

Which best describes how you feel about this election:



**Because its small population precludes drawing discrete samples over multiple waves, data on Prince Edward Island is not released.*

The same uniformity is found along age, gender, and income lines, which can be viewed in the [detailed tables here](#).

Part Two: Most would have preferred HOC composition under a PR system

Canada’s current first-past-the-post (FPTP) electoral system awards seats in parliament based on which candidate receives the most votes in each riding. Under a hypothetical [proportional representation](#) (PR) system, seats would instead be awarded based on each party’s share of the popular vote. Below is a visualization of the difference between those two systems, based on the preliminary vote count from this federal election:

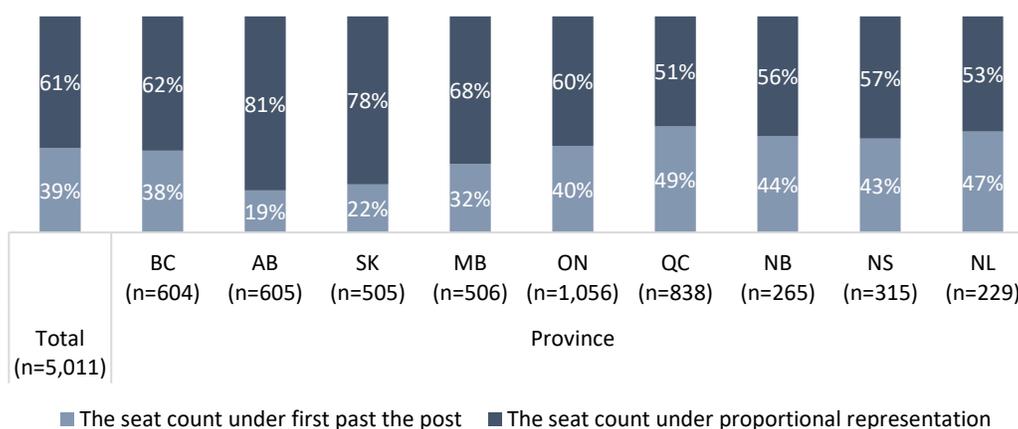
	CURRENT RESULTS	UNDER PROPORTIONAL REPRESENTATION
 Liberal	158	109
 CONSERVATIVE	119	109
 BLOC Québécois	34	24
 NDP	25	65
 green	2	11
 PPC PEOPLE'S PARTY of CANADA	0	21

Source: CBC Power & Politics, Sept. 22, 2021

*Survey respondents were presented with the 2021 election results prior to the counting of mail-in ballots and a judicial recount which gave the Liberals one more seat in Quebec at the expense of the Bloc. Estimates for the seat distribution under PR were taken from CBC: Power & Politics.

After being presented with the alternative election result above, three-in-five Canadians say they would prefer the results under PR. Notably, those in Alberta and Saskatchewan, the two provinces most likely to support the CPC, and thus, most likely to benefit from the advantage PR would offer their party, have the strongest preference for the proportional seat count. Quebec is split between the two scenarios:

Which seat count would you prefer as an election outcome?



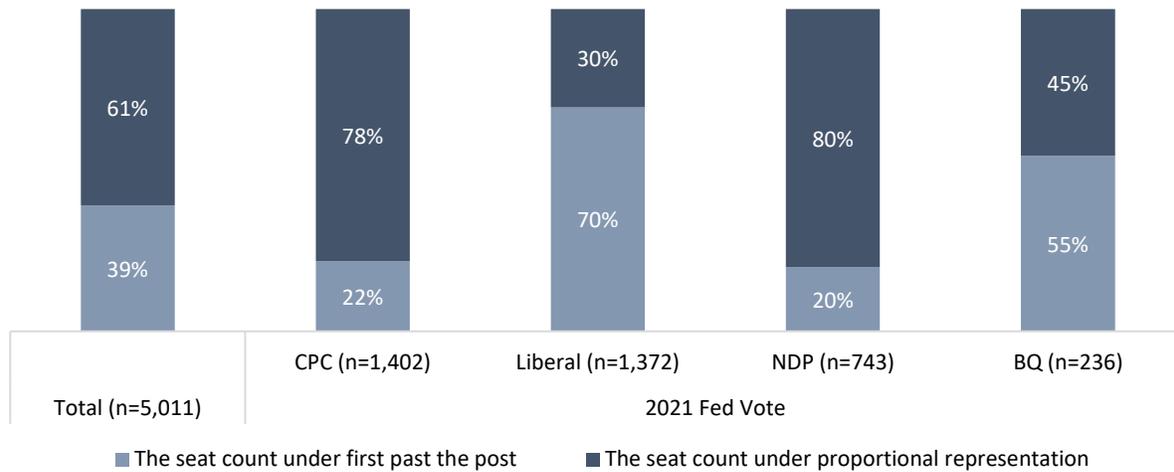
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The Liberals have held minority governments after losing the popular vote in the last two elections and their voters strongly (70%) prefer the current electoral system that delivered them to (relative) power. Inversely, after winning the popular vote and failing to form government in back-to-back elections, Conservative voters overwhelmingly support a PR system at a four-to-one ratio. Supporters of the NDP, are much more likely to prefer a Commons seat count as distributed by a PR system. Given that under PR, the BQ's representation in the House of Commons might have been reduced by as many as eight seats, a slim majority of their supporters prefer the current system:

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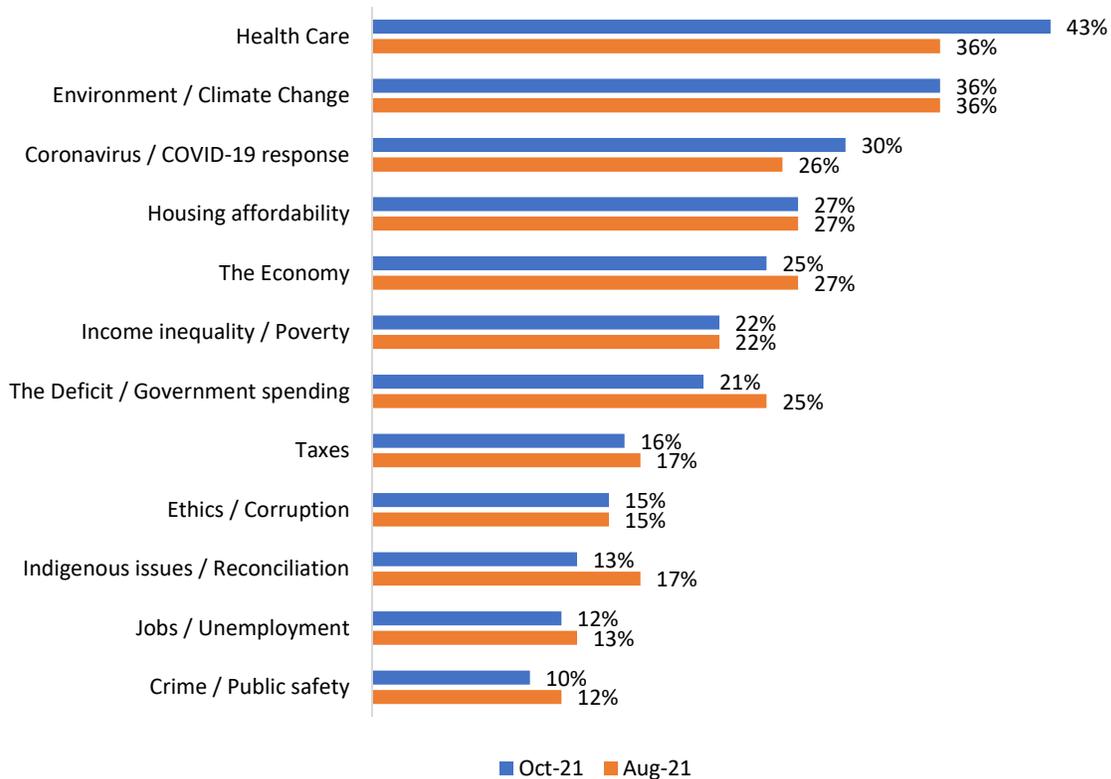
Which would you prefer as an election outcome?



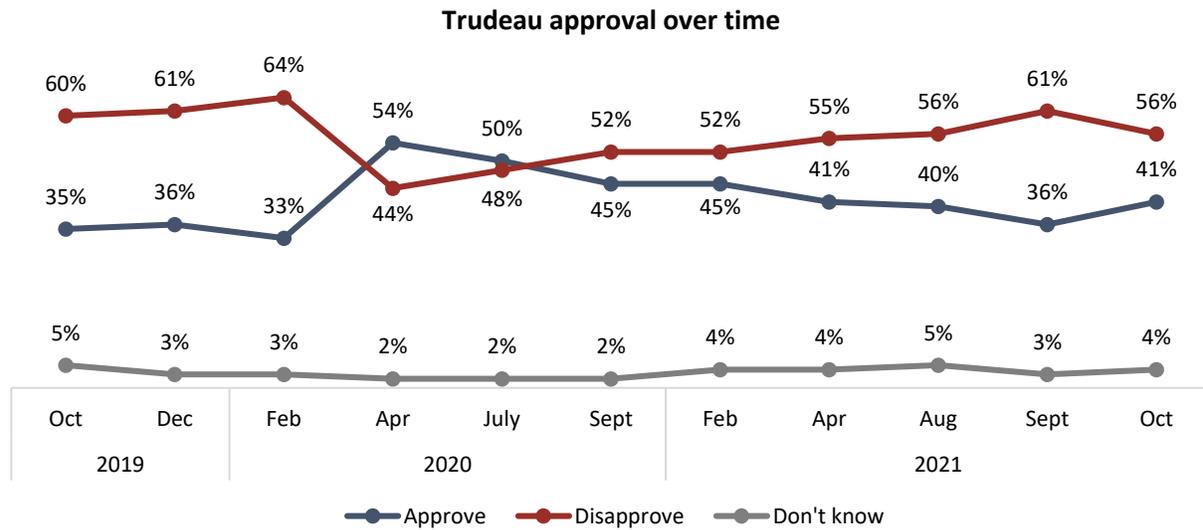
Part Three: Issues and leadership

The House of Commons isn't the only thing that remains mostly unchanged after two months. [Prior to the election campaign](#), the top issues among Canadians were health care, climate change, housing affordability, the economy and COVID-19, in that order. Two months later, the top five issues are the same, though the order has shifted slightly:

**Top issues facing Canada, August vs. October
(Top three selected)**



In the days after the campaign ended, Justin Trudeau enjoyed a bump in approval. One caveat: these data were collected before [Trudeau travelled to Tofino, B.C.](#) for a family vacation on the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation.



Which leaders should stay, and which leaders should go?

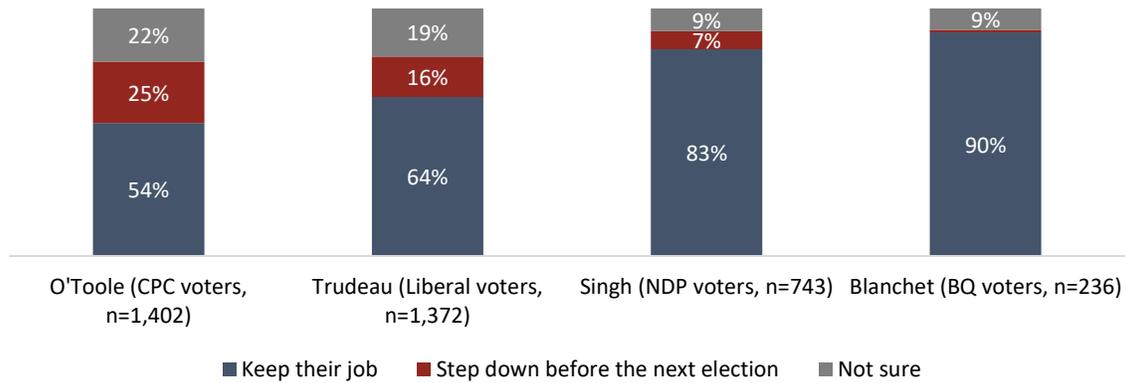
For the second election in a row, a Conservative leader won the popular vote but was unable to form government. In 2019, Andrew Scheer stepped down after failing to defeat Trudeau amidst pressure from party leaders to vacate the position. So far it appears Erin O’Toole’s job is safe, though Conservative MPs gave themselves the power to review his leadership in a post-election caucus meeting.

A majority of Conservative voters believe O’Toole should keep his job, but his party has the highest number of party faithful who want a different leader in the next campaign.

There had been some speculation that Trudeau would consider stepping aside if his bid to win a majority government failed. That line of reasoning does not appear to be well-received within the group of Liberal supporters. By a four-to-one ratio, Liberal voters feel Trudeau should continue to steward the party.

Support is even higher for NDP leader Jagmeet Singh and BQ leader Yves-Francois Blanchet, as seen in the graph below:

Do you think your party leader should keep their job and lead the party into the next election?



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