

53% of Canadians would not send diplomats to 2022 Olympic Games; two-in-five would keep athletes home

Three-quarters (73%) of Canadians believe nothing Canada does can change China's behaviour

December 7, 2021 – Not since the 1980 Games in Moscow has Canada declined to send athletes – or officials – to the Olympics.

But as the U.S. [announces a diplomatic boycott](#) of next February's Winter Games in Beijing – other Western nations are being asked their intentions.

While the [Canadian government contemplates who – if anyone – it will send to the Olympics](#), a new study from the non-profit Angus Reid Institute finds just over half of Canadians (53%) supportive of their country taking the same measure as the U.S., denying any diplomatic presence in Beijing.

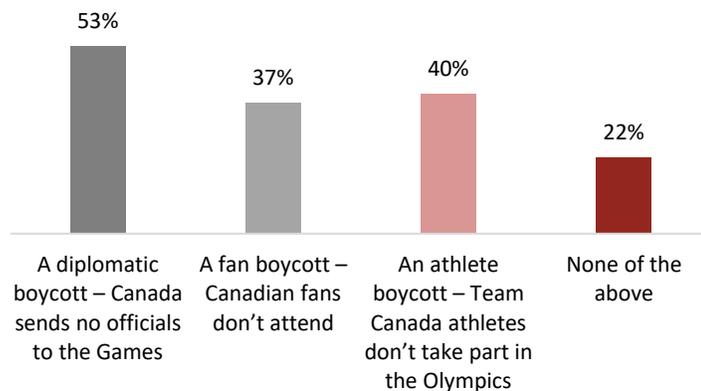
Two-in-five would go further, keeping athletes home from China as a protest against human rights abuses in the host country.

Overall, four-in-five (78%) support some sort of boycott. Despite this sentiment, the vast majority are resigned to the fact that Canadian protest will have little impact on China's domestic policy. Nearly three-quarters (73%) say it is "unrealistic" to expect actions taken by this country will change China's behaviour.

More Key Findings:

- Favourability towards China has increased since Michael Spavor and Michael Kovrig were released from prison and returned to Canada, but it is the minority view. One-in-six (16%) Canadians say they hold favourable views of the country.
- Half (48%) of Canadians who view China positively say there should be no boycott of the Games; one-in-five (17%) of those who view the country negatively say the same.
- Men between the ages of 18 and 34 are the most supportive of officials and fans staying home at two-thirds (63%) and half (47%) respectively.

The Winter Olympics are scheduled to take place in February in Beijing, China. Some people say Canada should boycott the Games. Which, if any, of the following would you support? (All respondents, n=2,005)



METHODOLOGY:

The Angus Reid Institute conducted an online survey from Nov. 26-29, 2021, among a representative randomized sample of 2,005 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 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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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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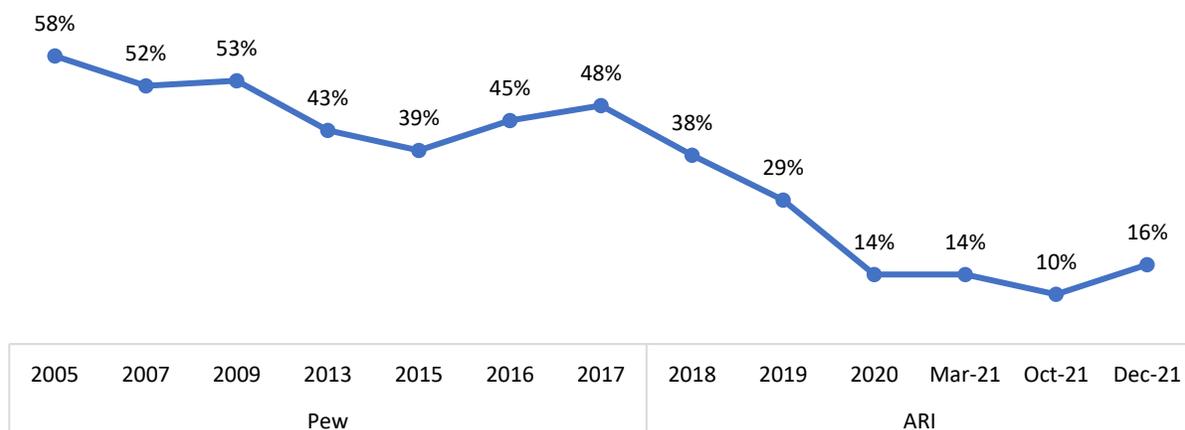
Part One: Favourability of China improves, still near historic lows

Canada’s relationship with China has been complicated of late. While trade with [China has increased](#), diplomatic relations have been strained. China banned [beef and pork exports](#) from Canada for months in 2019 and has placed restrictions and bans on canola exports for [nearly two years](#). And most notably, at the behest of the U.S., Canadian authorities arrested Huawei executive Meng Wanzhou in 2018. In response, China arrested two Canadians and tried them with espionage.

Favourable views of China in Canada have declined precipitously since 2017, reaching a historic low in October in the wake of [Michael Kovrig and Michael Spavor’s release](#) nearly three years after their arrest. While more Canadians hold favourable views of the country than they did two months ago, the vast majority continue to view the country unfavourably: one-in-six (16%) now look upon the Chinese regime with a favourable eye:

Related: [Canadians say U.S. deserves as much credit for Two Michaels’ release as Canada does](#)

Canadians who hold a favourable view of China

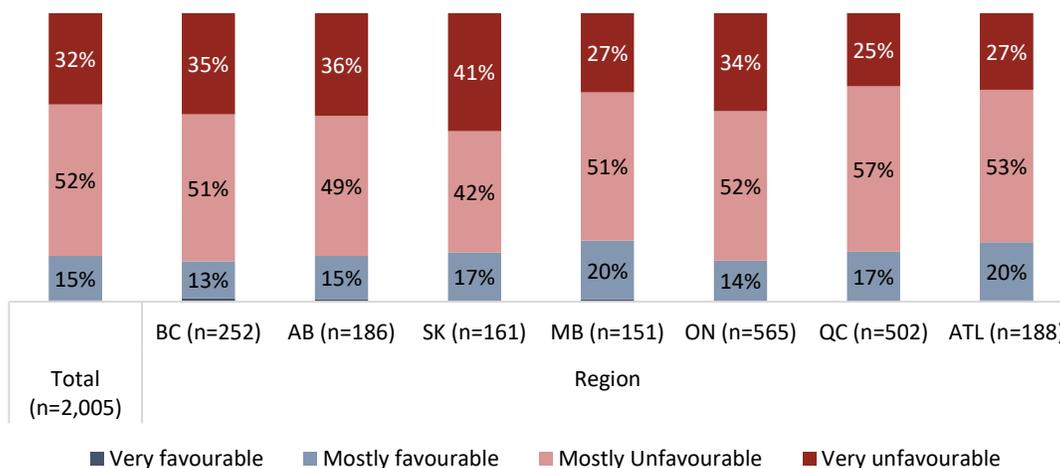


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Those in Saskatchewan hold the most negative views towards the country; two-in-five (41%) say they view China very unfavourably. Favourability peaks in Manitoba (21%) and Atlantic Canada (21%), where one-in-five say they view the country favourably:

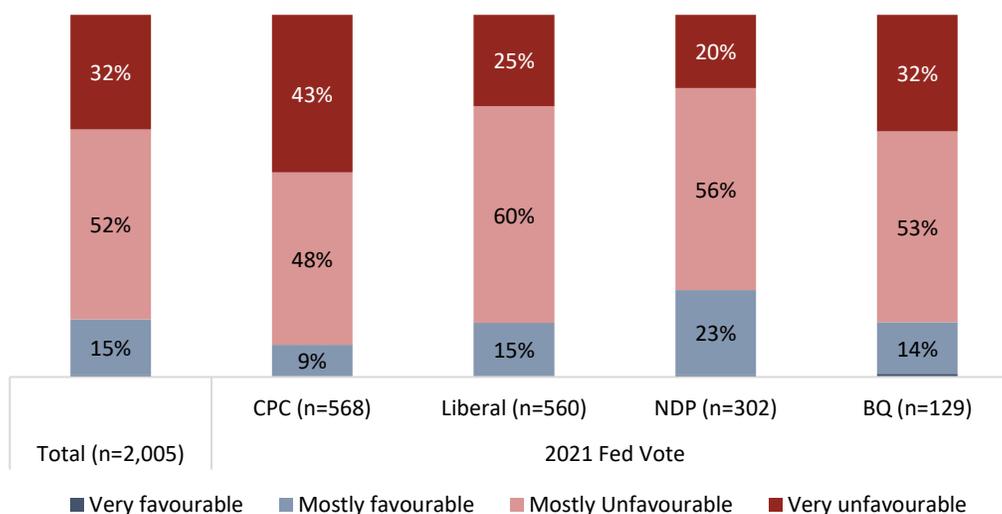
Do you have a favourable or unfavourable view of China?



A majority of every demographic hold unfavourable views towards China, but three-in-ten (29%) women aged 18 to 34 view the country positively, the most of any age-gender group. Men of that age, however, view the country much more negatively; two-in-five (43%) say they have very unfavourable views of China ([see detailed tables](#)).

The majority view across the political spectrum is negative. However, it is worth noting that one-in-five who voted NDP in the September federal election say they view China positively, representing the most favourable view along political lines. By contrast past Conservative voters are least likely to say this:

Do you have a favourable or unfavourable view of China?



Part Two: The 2022 Olympics

Though the International Olympic Committee wants the biennial Games to remain free of politics – it [forbade political gestures](#) at the last summer’s Olympic Games in Tokyo – politics and the Olympics have often gone hand-in-hand.

At the [1968 Summer Olympics in Mexico City](#), medallists Tommie Smith and John Carlos famously raised their fists to protest racial inequality when they collected their medals at the podium. The U.S. led a 66-country boycott of the 1980 Summer Olympics in Moscow after the Soviet Union refused to end the Soviet-Afghan War. The Soviet Union later responded by boycotting the 1984 Summer Olympics in Los Angeles.

That history continued this week as the U.S. announced it would undertake a diplomatic boycott of the Beijing Winter Olympics and Paralympic Games, set to begin on Feb. 4, 2022.

Citing “ongoing genocide and crimes against humanity in Xinjiang,” the [White House announced](#) that it will not send an official U.S. delegation to the Games. American athletes will still be allowed to participate in both Games, but they will not be accompanied by any government officials or diplomats. This represents an escalation of pressure by the Biden Administration in response to allegations of forced labour and human rights abuses against ethnic and religious minorities – including notably the Uyghur population in the western region of Xinjiang.

While a boycott falls short of having the Games taken away from China and moved to another location – something [advocated](#) by lawmakers in the Netherlands, Canada, and the U.S. – some are still calling for the scope of the boycott to be expanded. In the U.S. Republican Senator Mitt Romney has proposed an economic and diplomatic boycott, [urging spectators not to attend](#) in person to minimize the tourist revenue the Chinese stand to gain.

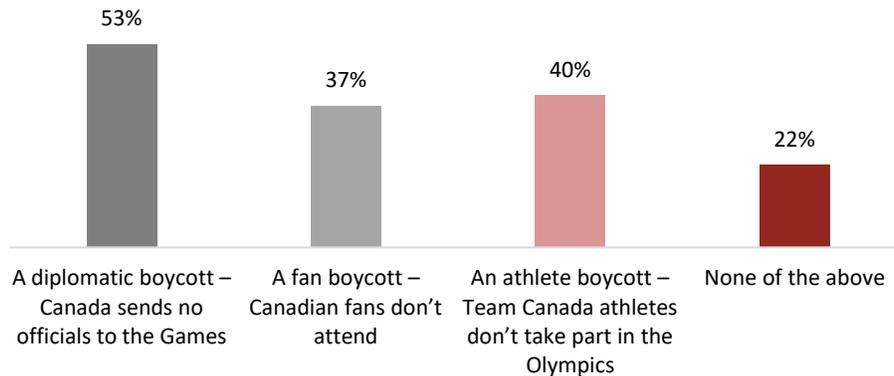
In Canada, politicians passed a motion in early 2021 affirming the recognition that there was a genocide being perpetrated by the Chinese government against the Uyghurs. On the question of a boycott, both the Conservative Party and the NDP have [voiced the possibility of a diplomatic boycott](#). It is as of yet unclear what the Liberal government is planning, with a spokesperson for Foreign Affairs Minister Mélanie Joly saying that [discussions were ongoing](#) with the U.S..

As for Canadians, half (53%) say they support a diplomatic boycott. Two-in-five support a boycott by Canadian fans (37%) and by the athletes of Team Canada (40%). One-in-five (22%) don’t support any form of boycott.

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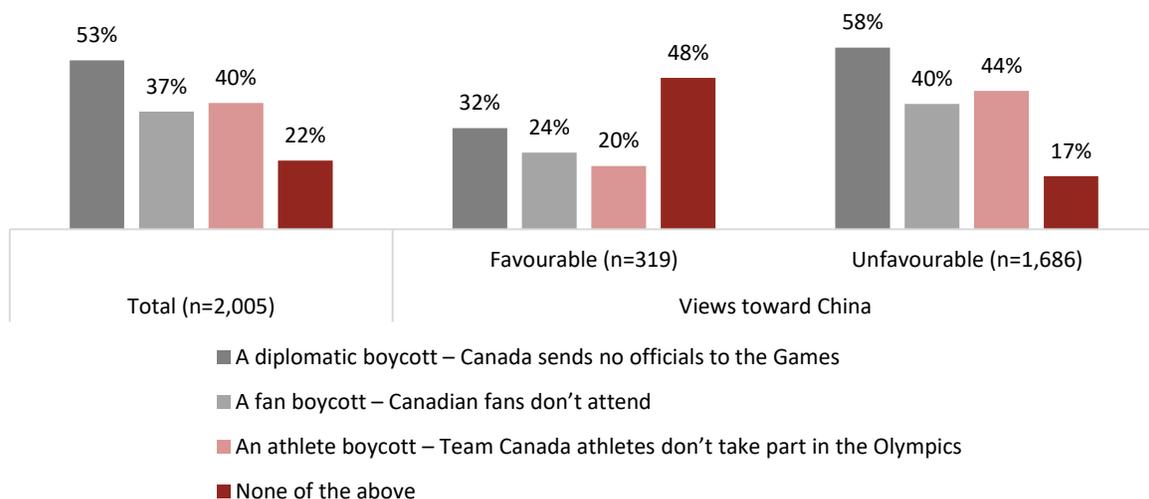
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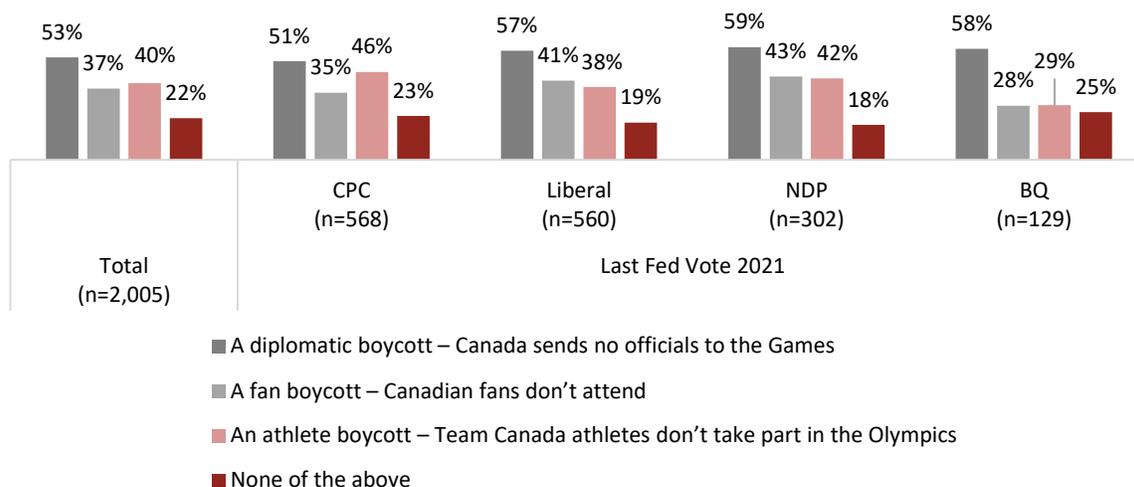
Among the minority of Canadians who say they view China favourably, there is less appetite for a boycott with half (48%) of respondents saying that they do not support any form of boycott. Despite their favourable views, there are still significant minorities which support boycotts: one-third (32%) say they support a diplomatic boycott, one-quarter (24%) a fan boycott, and one-in-five (20%) an athlete boycott:

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A majority across partisan lines support a diplomatic boycott. When it comes to a boycott by Canadian athletes, half of CPC supporters (46%) say they are in favour of keeping Team Canada at home – a number which falls to three-in-ten (28%) among Bloc Québécois voters:

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Three-in-five 18- to 34-year-old men (63%) and women (58%) support Canada following the U.S.'s lead with a diplomatic boycott. Young women, however, are the least likely to support barring athletes from attending the Games:

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(Weighted sample sizes)	Total (n=2,005)	Age and Gender					
		Male			Female		
		18-34 (n=282)	35-54 (n=331)	55+ (n=370)	18-34 (n=274)	35-54 (n=341)	55+ (n=407)
A diplomatic boycott – Canada sends no officials to the Games	53%	63%	54%	48%	58%	54%	49%
A fan boycott – Canadian fans don't attend	37%	47%	40%	31%	46%	37%	28%
An athlete boycott – Team Canada athletes don't take part in the Olympics	40%	43%	42%	44%	32%	36%	41%
None of the above	22%	21%	22%	19%	24%	25%	20%

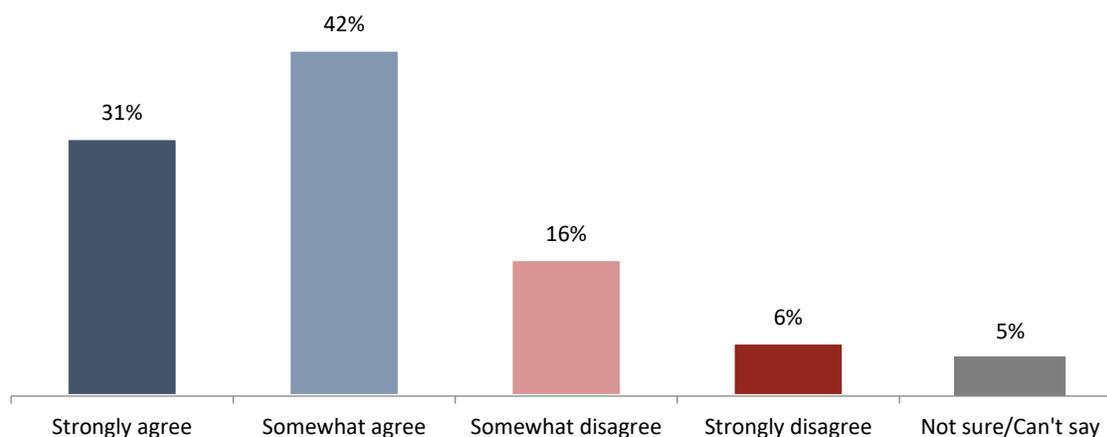
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Part Three: Would a boycott be effective?

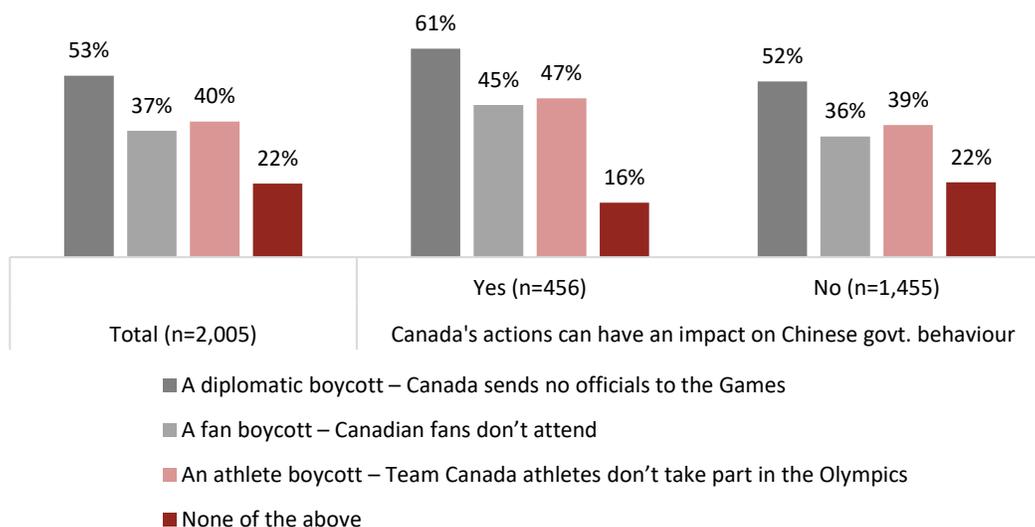
There are those that remain skeptical about the effectiveness of a boycott. Current Canadian International Olympic Committee member Dick Pound recently said that it's unlikely to make any difference. It would appear many Canadians agree. When asked if it was unrealistic that anything Canada does could change China's behaviour, three-quarters (73%) of Canadians agree.

**Would you say you agree or disagree with the following statement?
"It's unrealistic that anything Canada does will change China's behaviour"
(All respondents, n=2,005)**



Support for all forms of boycotts is noticeably higher among the 22 per cent of Canadians who disagree Canada's protest would be inconsequential, including three-in-five (61%) who support a diplomatic boycott.

Support for boycott vs ability of Canadian actions to have an impact



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

Summary tables follow

The Winter Olympics are scheduled to take place in February in Beijing, China. Some people say Canada should boycott the Games. Which, if any, of the following would you support?								
	Total (n=2,005)	Agree vs Disagree "It's unrealistic Canada can change China's behaviour"						
		Strongly agree (n=617)	Some- what agree (n=837)	Some- what disagree (n=328)	Strongly disagree (n=128)	Not sure/ Can't say (n=95)	Agree Total (n=1,455)	Disagree Total (n=456)
A diplomatic boycott – Canada sends no officials to the Games	53%	48%	54%	61%	63%	41%	52%	61%
A fan boycott – Canadian fans don't attend	37%	30%	39%	45%	45%	27%	36%	45%
An athlete boycott – Team Canada athletes don't take part in the Olympics	40%	40%	38%	43%	58%	23%	39%	47%
None of the above	22%	27%	18%	18%	12%	44%	22%	16%
Net: Yes to boycott	78%	73%	82%	82%	88%	56%	78%	84%

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	Total (n=2,005)	Favourable or Unfavourable view of China	
		Favourable (n=319)	Unfavourable (n=1,686)
A diplomatic boycott – Canada sends no officials to the Games	53%	32%	58%
A fan boycott – Canadian fans don't attend	37%	24%	40%
An athlete boycott – Team Canada athletes don't take part in the Olympics	40%	20%	44%
None of the above	22%	48%	17%
Net: Yes to boycott	78%	52%	83%

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