

Blockade Backlash: Three-in-four Canadians tell convoy protesters, 'Go Home Now'

Two-thirds say Justin Trudeau's conduct has "worsened" situation; several public figures condemned

February 14, 2022 – If the goal of the Freedom Convoy was to capture the attention of millions of people in Canada and around the globe – mission accomplished.

If, however, the goal was to build support for their demands to end pandemic-related restrictions – it has backfired utterly.

New public opinion data from the non-profit Angus Reid Institute shows after more than two weeks of unrest, Canadians are now more likely to *oppose* measures sought by protesters.

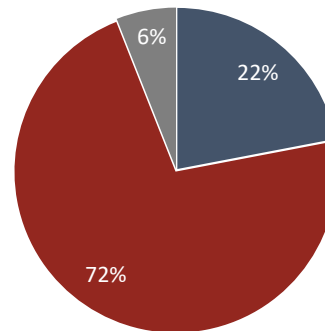
Overall, more than two-in-five now say Canadians say the protests have made them more inclined to support ongoing restrictions related to masking indoors (44%) and vaccination requirements to cross the Canada-U.S. border (44%).

As the country rolls into another week of uncertainty, nearly three-quarters of Canadians (72%) say the time has come for protesters to "go home, they have made their point."

As to how the situation should be resolved – most feel the time for talking is done. Nearly seventy per cent either think local police need to step in and send people home (45%) or that the military should be summoned (23%). One quarter (26%) say it's up to politicians to negotiate a dénouement.

However, those same politicians, including the prime minister and the leader of Canada's official opposition, are roundly criticized for harming, not helping events. Two-thirds (65%) say Prime Minister Justin Trudeau comments and actions have worsened the situation, while two-in-five (42%) say this of Candice Bergen, leader of the official opposition. The Ottawa police and Ontario Provincial Police also garner considerable criticism, with more Canadians – and Ontarians – saying they have worsened rather than helped to resolve the situation.

What do you think the protesters should do?
(All respondents, n=1,622)



- Stay in Ottawa and other protest sites until their demands are met
- Go home now, they have made their point
- Not sure/Don't know

METHODOLOGY:

The Angus Reid Institute conducted an online survey from Feb. 11-13, 2022 among a representative randomized sample of 1,622 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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More Key Findings:

- The story has caught the attention of many Canadians. Two-thirds (64%) say they are following it in the news and discussing it with friends and family. A further three-in-ten (28%) say they are still paying some attention to it. Very few, one per cent, say they had not heard about the situation ([see detailed tables](#)).
- Those who support some form of action (93% of Canadians) to remove protesters are largely supportive of arrests if demonstrators refuse to leave. Three-in-five (62%) say this should happen.
- Half of Canadians believe premiers Doug Ford (50%) and Jason Kenney (49%) have harmed the situation more than they have helped. For both, that is also the majority opinion in their own provinces.

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: Canadians to truckers: ‘Go home’

Since Jan. 29, protests in the nation’s capital have frustrated locals and garnered attention from nearly every corner of the country – [and the world](#). There aren’t many Canadians who haven’t heard anything about it – just one per cent say that’s the case. Instead, two-thirds (64%) are following it very closely and talking about it regularly, while three-in-ten (28%) say they are keeping tabs on it and having the odd conversation about what they have seen and heard ([see detailed tables](#)).

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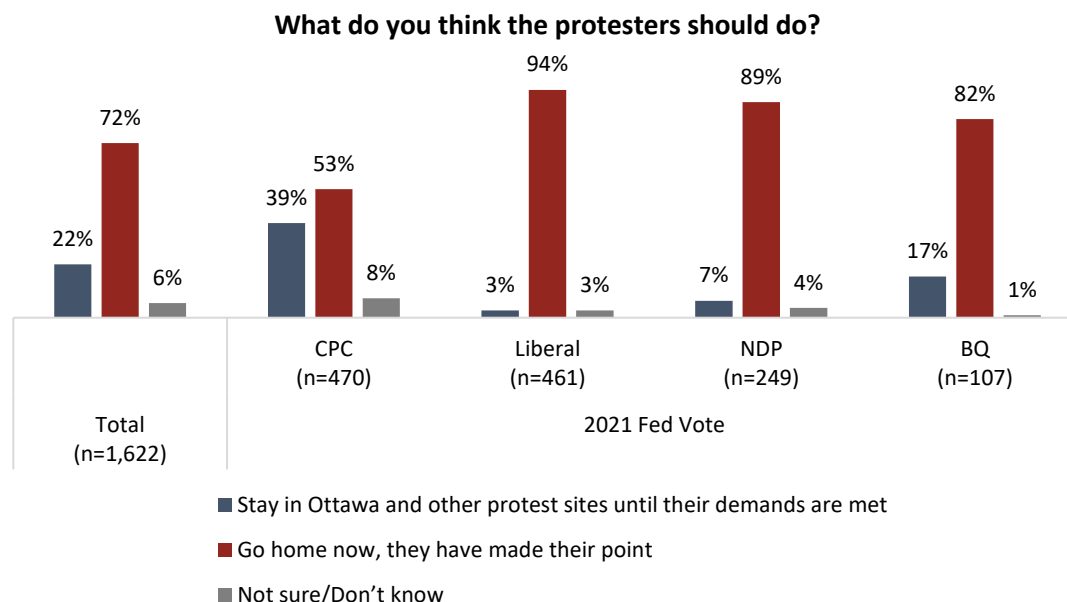
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The “Freedom Convoy” that has besieged Ottawa has been joined by [border blockades](#) in [several provinces](#), which have many looking to police and political leaders to end the demonstrations and get the economy moving again.

Demonstrations have worn on the nerves of residents in Ottawa-Gatineau, as protesters mark a third week of action. Despite a court injunction, much of [the truck honking continues](#). While some residents have endured the noise and abuse at the hand of protesters, others [left the downtown core last week](#). Those still trying to live their lives in downtown Ottawa say they’ve been called [racial, homophobic and transphobic slurs](#) or attacked for wearing masks.

Against this backdrop, it is not only residents in the protest’s epicentre but the majority of the country that has run out of patience. Seven-in-ten (72%) say it is time for the convoy members to go home, while just over one-in-five would see them stay in Ottawa indefinitely. Residents in Alberta and Saskatchewan are most likely to push back and say that protests should continue, but in each case a majority still disagree ([see detailed tables](#)).

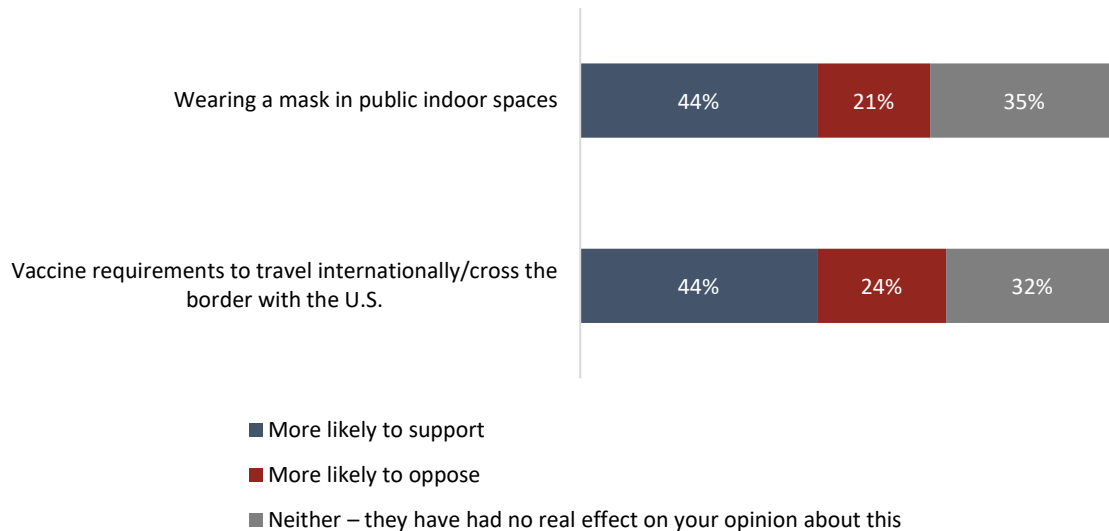
There is more division among those who voted for the Conservative party in the 2021 general election, but among this cohort, a slim majority would still prefer to see the protesters leave Ottawa. Voters for the other major federal parties are closer to unanimous in this view:



Blockade backlash

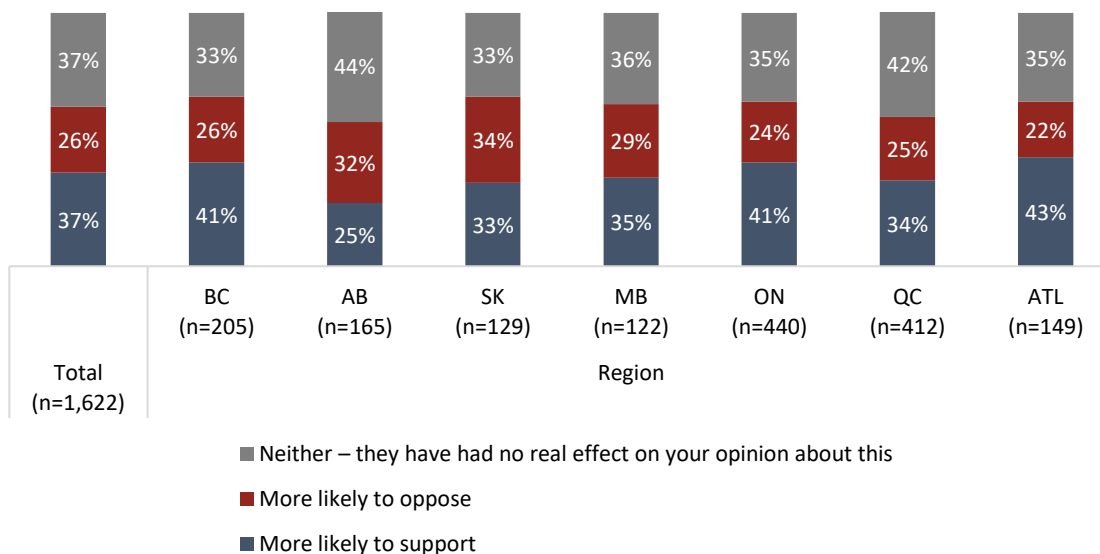
What is perhaps even more notable within this discussion is the overall impact that the protests have had on public opinion regarding pandemic-related mandates and restrictions. By nearly a two-to-one margin, Canadians say that they are now more likely to support both federal vaccine requirements at the Canada-U.S. border and indoor mask requirements in their communities. Another one-in-three Canadians have not been moved at all:

**Overall, have these protests made you any more likely to support or oppose any of the following:
(All respondents, n=1,622)**



So called vaccine passports – proof of vaccination to enter public spaces – are more divisive. Canadians are more likely to say that protests have moved the needle toward strengthening support for that requirement, but one-quarter (26%) disagree. Vaccine passports are the most regionally divisive of the three protocols canvassed. In each case, at least one-quarter of residents are more likely to oppose proof of vaccination and one-quarter are more likely to support it:

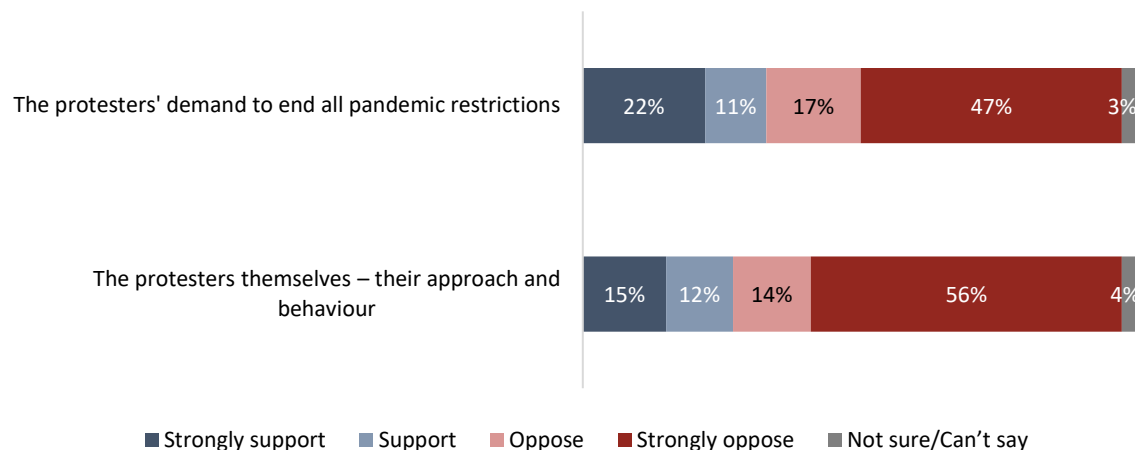
Overall, have these protests made you any more likely to support or oppose [Vaccine passports to enter restaurants/stores/etc. in your community]



As a result, these data show a notable shift in sentiment from before the protests began, when just over [half of Canadians indicated](#) they were ready to consider an end to pandemic-related restrictions. In the weeks since they inserted themselves directly into the conversation about restrictions, the protesters have seen the pendulum swing against their point of view. One-in-three Canadians (33%) say that they support the convoy's demands of ending all public health restrictions and vaccine mandates.

Even less support is found for the tactics taken by the protesters, who have brought [downtown Ottawa to a standstill](#) and until this past weekend were stymieing [\\$300 million dollars a day](#) in trade between the U.S. and Canada by blockading the Ambassador Bridge. One-quarter say the strategy of the protesters is something they support (27%), while seven-in-ten (70%) disagree:

**Overall, given what you know about these protests, would you say support or oppose:
(All respondents, n=1,622)**

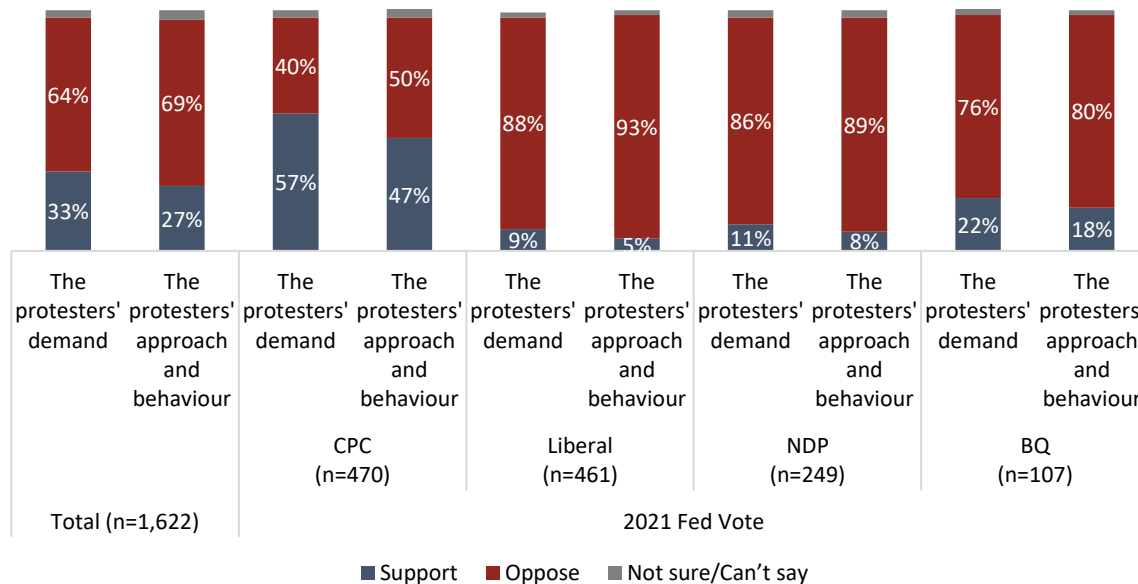


Support for both the demands and the tactics of protesters are considerably higher among past Conservative party voters than the rest of the population. Many Conservative party members [embraced the protesters](#) in the early days of demonstrations, and some have since [walked back that support](#) as actions have continued.

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Overall, given what you know about these protests, would you say support or oppose:



Part Two: What happens next?

Force preferred over negotiation

The province of Ontario declared a state of emergency on Feb. 11 to wield heavy fines, jail time and vehicle license seizures against protesters in an attempt to bring [an end to the protests](#). There have been [some arrests and charges in Ottawa](#) – and in Windsor as [police began to end the blockade of the Ambassador Bridge](#) – but [criticism of police inaction](#) to illegal activity by [protesters is rampant](#).

Prime Minister Justin Trudeau said he [won't deploy](#) the military to end the protest. The Ottawa Police Service has instead formed an ["integrated command centre"](#) with the Ontario Provincial Police and the RCMP to help coordinate efforts to end the protest.

If almost seven-in-ten Canadians had their way, the situation would be resolved not through negotiation, but force: 45 per cent would have police pursue resolution by enforcing laws and removing protesters. Another quarter (23%) would use force but have the military lead the way. One-quarter of Canadians (26%) including half of past Conservative voters (47%) say that political leaders should be the ones to negotiate a solution.

In Ontario, the polestar of nationwide demonstrations, 51 per cent say that police – whether local or provincial – should be in charge of resolution ([see detailed tables](#)).

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Which of these do you think you should be the main or primary approach to end the protests and blockades?					
	Total (n=1,622)	2021 Federal Vote			
		CPC (n=470)	Liberal (n=461)	NDP (n=249)	BQ (n=107)
Local/Provincial police should enforce existing laws	45%	31%	63%	58%	48%
The Canadian military should be called in	23%	15%	28%	28%	30%
Political leaders should negotiate with the protesters	26%	47%	6%	11%	17%
Do nothing, let the protesters stay as long as they want	7%	7%	3%	3%	5%

Majority back arrests, charges

The 93 per cent of Canadians who support some form of action to resolve these protests were then asked a key question – what happens if protesters refuse to leave? In this case, the largest group say that arrests should be made – three-in-five (62%) say this, with delineation between those who believe criminal charges should accompany the arrests (53%) and those who advocate for arrests but no charges (9%). In Ontario – ground zero for most of the disruption – the hardest line is taken. Overall, one-in-five (18%) would do nothing:

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Suppose these protesters refuse to follow a legal order to leave their protest sites – what do you think should happen to them? (Excluding those who say 'do nothing' to end protest)								
	Total (n=1,513)	Region						
		BC (n=188)	AB (n=151)	SK (n=116)	MB (n=114)	ON (n=420)	QC (n=378)	ATL (n=138)
They should be arrested AND criminally charged	53%	55%	47%	45%	51%	59%	48%	57%
They should be fined	10%	8%	12%	9%	12%	10%	13%	8%
They should be forcibly removed but not arrested	9%	10%	6%	5%	13%	9%	11%	8%
They should be arrested, but not criminally charged	9%	8%	8%	11%	4%	9%	11%	10%
Nothing should happen	18%	19%	28%	29%	20%	14%	17%	18%

A majority of those who supported parties other than the CPC in the September federal election say that arrests and charges are the best way to ensure this situation is resolved. Meanwhile, past Conservative voters are nearly three times as likely as other partisans to say that nothing should happen to the protesters:

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Suppose these protesters refuse to follow a legal order to leave their protest sites – what do you think should happen to them? (Excluding those who say ‘do nothing’ to end protest)					
	Total (n=1,513)	2021 Federal Vote			
		CPC (n=435)	Liberal (n=445)	NDP (n=241)	BQ (n=101)
They should be arrested AND criminally charged	53%	38%	76%	64%	53%
They should be fined	10%	10%	8%	10%	11%
They should be forcibly removed but not arrested	9%	10%	6%	10%	14%
They should be arrested, but not criminally charged	9%	10%	8%	10%	10%
Nothing should happen	18%	33%	3%	6%	12%

Part Three: Criticism abounds for police and politicians

All involved perceived to be making things worse

There has been plenty of blame to go around as the protesters in Ottawa became entrenched in the last two weeks. The Ottawa Police Service has yet to receive the 1,600 reinforcements it has requested because it reportedly has no plans on how to use them or how to end the occupation of the national capital. Downtown Ottawa residents have been critical of the police response, with some calling the constant noise and harassment by protesters a “nightmare”.

There has been much criticism, too, for Trudeau. NDP leader Jagmeet Singh said that national leadership has been “missing” during the trucker protest. Trudeau, who has spent time during the occupation away from Ottawa, has seemingly left it to provincial and city authorities to address the deepening crisis.

Interim Conservative Party leader Candice Bergen previously referred to the protesters as “passionate, patriotic, and peaceful” in supporting their efforts. This, as part of an effort to make the protests a bigger problem for Trudeau and the Liberal government. Bergen has since reversed her stance and asked protesters to go home. There is disagreement in her party, though, as CPC leadership hopeful Pierre Poilievre continues to support the movement, launching a petition to end pandemic-related mandates and restrictions.

The Ontario government has not escaped criticism for its handling of the situation, either. It took almost two weeks for Premier Doug Ford and his government to act, declaring a province-wide state of

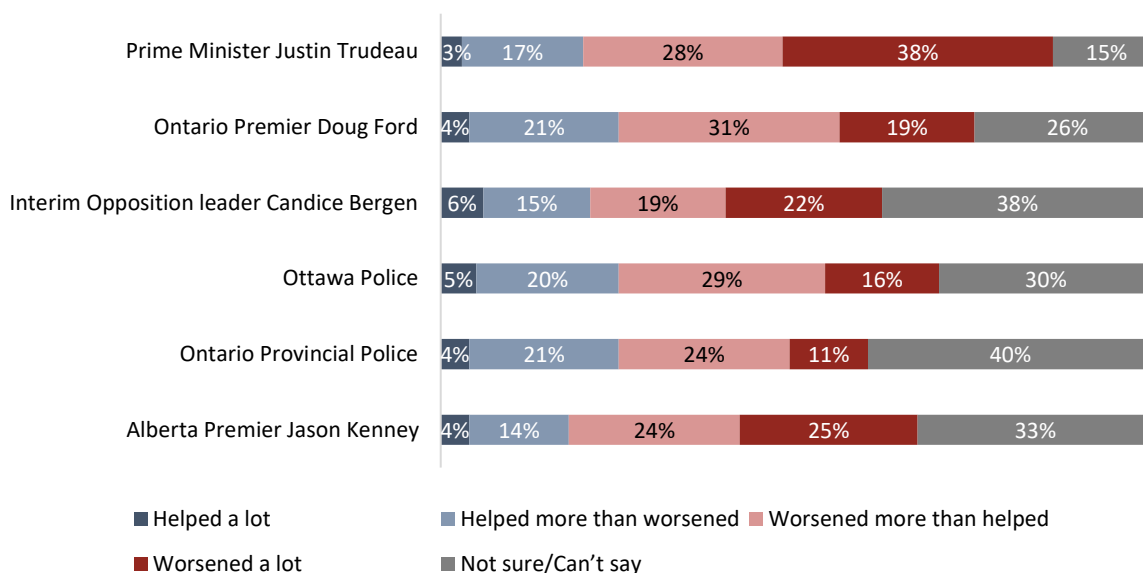
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[emergency on Friday](#). Critics called out Ford for “[dithering](#)”. Alberta Premier Jason Kenney, has been criticized for [appearing to give in](#) to the demand for an end to restrictions in his province.

For all of the key actors – Trudeau, Ford, Bergen, Kenney, the Ottawa and Ontario police – more Canadians believe they have worsened the situation than have helped. Canadians are most critical of Trudeau: two-thirds (65%) say he has hurt the situation, three times as many who say he has helped (20%):

**And based on what you have read, seen, and heard, would you say each of the following has helped the current situation, or made it worse?
(All respondents, n=1,622)**



Criticism outweighs praise for politicians and police in all regions in the country. In Ontario, three-in-five (62%) say Trudeau has made the situation worse, while half say the same of Ford (53%), Kenney (49%), and the Ottawa police (48%, [see detailed tables](#)).

The following table shows the number of respondents in each province who say each politician or institution has helped the situation, less those who say they have worsened it. Not one earns a net positive score.

And based on what you have read, seen, and heard, would you say each of the following has helped the current situation, or made it worse? (Helped minus worsen shown)								
	Total (n=1,622)	Region						
		BC (n=205)	AB (n=165)	SK (n=129)	MB (n=122)	ON (n=440)	QC (n=412)	ATL (n=149)
Prime Minister Justin Trudeau	-45%	-39%	-67%	-66%	-48%	-38%	-53%	-33%
Ontario Premier Doug Ford	-25%	-20%	-32%	-31%	-20%	-24%	-26%	-22%
Interim Opposition leader Candice Bergen	-22%	-18%	-1%	-9%	-9%	-26%	-26%	-26%
Ottawa Police	-20%	-9%	-27%	-27%	-21%	-22%	-21%	-12%
The Ontario Provincial Police	-10%	-6%	-21%	-15%	-11%	-2%	-21%	-7%
Alberta Premier Jason Kenney	-31%	-37%	-28%	-38%	-27%	-32%	-25%	-42%

Part Four: Economic interests outweigh right to protest for most

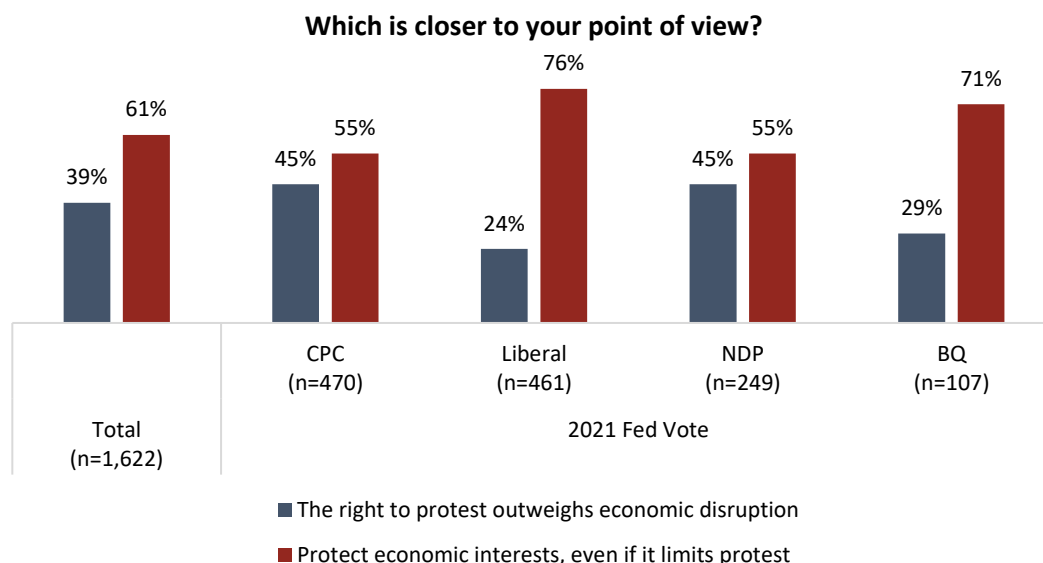
Canadians have come face to face with an uncomfortable reality in recent weeks. On one hand, the right to protest is one generally valued in this country. On the other, protests often cause disruption to people and entities not directly involved. Border blockades have caused supply shortages that have led to auto-manufacturers shutting down production in both [the United States and Canada](#). This is not a new phenomenon for many Canadians. The country's railways were paralyzed by protests in support of the [Wet'suwet'en dispute](#) with Coastal Gaslink in 2020.

Canadians were asked how they feel about the inherent trade-off involved in some protests. Is the economic aspect of the discussion more important than the right to protest, or the other way around? Overall, three-in-five (61%) say that they lean toward protecting the economic interests of other Canadians as opposed to the rights of protesters. That said, a considerable minority disagree.

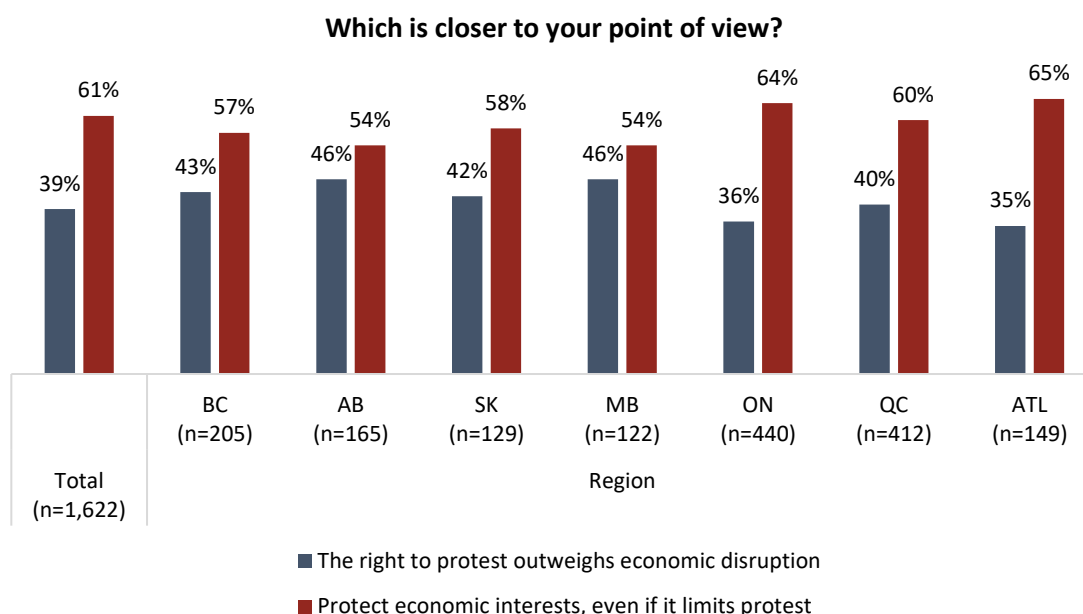
This issue runs along political lines in a significant way. Three-quarters of past Liberal voters believe economics should outweigh the rights to protest, and they are joined by seven-in-ten (71%) of those who voted for the Bloc Québécois in September. Past NDP and CPC voters are split in the exact same manner between the two considerations:

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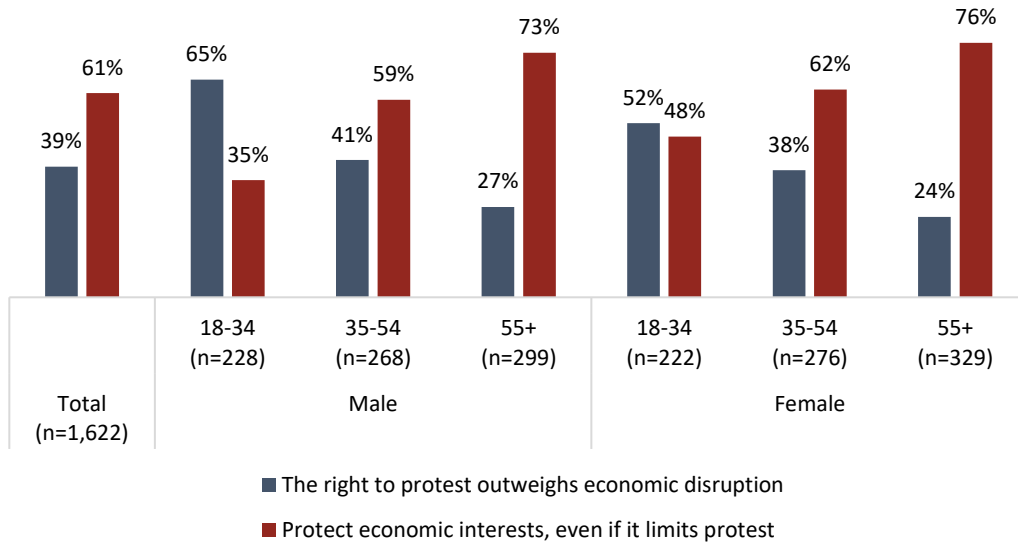


In Ontario, two-thirds (64%) believe economics should be the primary consideration. Two-thirds (65%) in Atlantic Canada and three-in-five in Quebec agree. Out west, the balance is more towards the right to protest, though in no region in the country is it the majority opinion that the right to protest should outweigh economic disruption:



There is a significant generational divide on this issue. Two-thirds (65%) of 18- to 34-year-old men say economic cost is secondary to the right to protest. Three-quarters of men and women aged 55 and older disagree:

Which is closer to your point of view?



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