

The Art of the Deal? Canadians split along political lines over NDP-Liberal confidence-and-supply agreement

PM Trudeau seen as biggest political beneficiary; early tests may include increased defence spending

March 28, 2022 – The NDP-Liberal confidence-and-supply agreement that would see major New Democratic policy planks adopted in exchange for security on confidence and money votes in Parliament may have united Canada's left of centre political parties, but it has also left the country divided over support for the deal and perceived fairness.

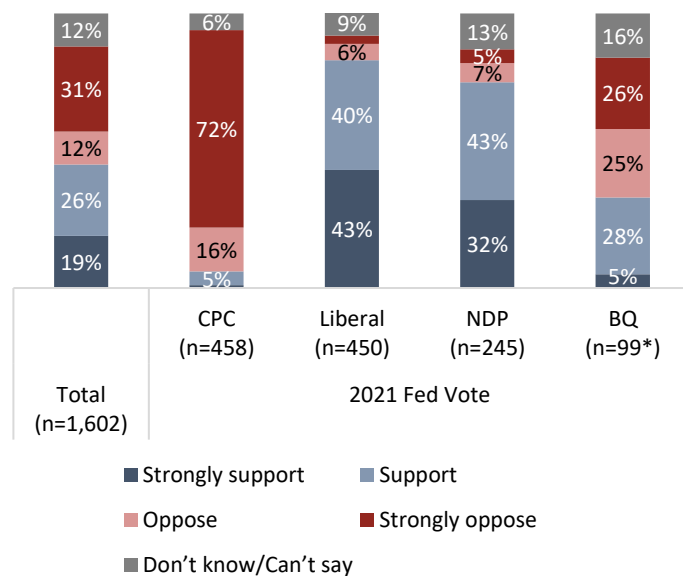
New data from the non-profit Angus Reid Institute finds on one side overwhelming majorities of past Liberal and NDP voters either support or strongly support the agreement. On the other, a near-unanimous number of past CPC voters and half of past Bloc Québécois voters oppose it.

Overall, 45 per cent support the deal, 43 per cent are opposed. Almost three-quarters (72%) of past Conservative voters find themselves in that group strongly against co-operation between the NDP and Liberals.

The bipartisan arrangement is set to hold until 2025, much longer than a minority government typically lasts. Canadians are more likely to see Trudeau and Liberals' side of the bargain as the favourable one, by a factor of three-to-one. Three-in-five (60%) say Trudeau got the better end of the deal; one-in-five (18%) believe it's weighted to the NDP. Notably, just one-quarter (23%) of those who voted NDP in September say leader Jagmeet Singh came out on top.

Another winner of the deal according to many Canadians? The country's social safety net. Half (48%) believe the NDP-Liberal agreement will be a good thing for government social assistance, nearly double those who say it will actually be bad (26%). Otherwise, Canadians are split on the potential effects of co-operation between the NDP and Liberals. Nearly as many say it will be good for the economy (38%), democracy (42%) and themselves (34%) as say the opposite (39%, 38%, 33% respectively).

Based on what you've seen read or heard, how do you feel about this agreement that will see the NDP support of the Liberal minority government for the next three years. Do you support or oppose it?



**Smaller sample size, interpret with caution*

METHODOLOGY:

The Angus Reid Institute conducted an online survey from March 23-25, 2022 among a representative randomized sample of 1,602 Canadian adults who are members of [Angus Reid Forum](https://angusreidforum.com). 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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The upcoming spring budget – expected in early April – presents a first significant hurdle for the NDP-Liberal pact. It potentially includes a “pay the piper” moment for Trudeau’s promises to North Atlantic Treaty Organization allies to increase defence spending in the wake of a now month-long Russian invasion of Ukraine.

Canadians in general are now more supportive of increased defence spending than they have been in the [recent past](#). More than half (56%) believe more money should be allocated to the Department of National Defence. One-third would keep the defence budget stable and one-in-ten (12%) would decrease it.

Among that latter group are a significant proportion of those who voted for Trudeau’s new partner in policy – one-quarter (24%) of past NDP voters want to reduce defence spending, more than any other partisan group. As such, the budget could present a first real test of the NDP-Liberal commitment.

More Key Findings:

- Three-in-ten Canadians believe the agreement will go the distance. As many (32%) believe it will fall apart before the end of next year.
- Half of Canadians (48%) would call the deal fair because parties should work together for government. Two-in-five disagree and would call it unfair (38%) because it’s not what people voted for. Most (81%) past Conservative voters fall into the latter group.
- Three-quarters (76%) of those who voted for CPC in September believe that in the NDP-Liberal arrangement Trudeau got the better end of the deal and Singh got the short end of the stick.

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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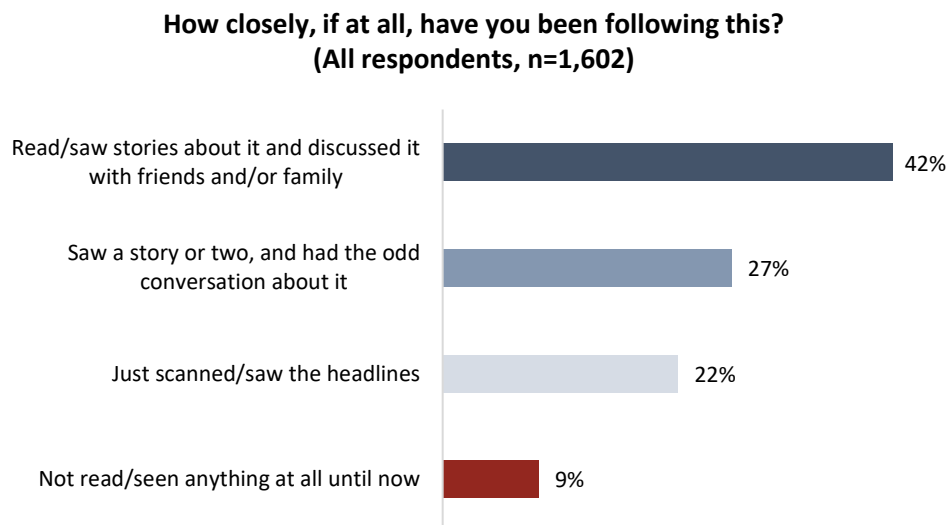
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Part One: The deal

Late [Monday night last week](#), the Liberal and NDP agreed to the framework of a confidence-and-supply deal. In exchange for some promised movement on [NDP policies](#) – including a dental-care program for low-income Canadians, and [progress towards a universal national pharmacare program](#) – leader Jagmeet Singh says that his caucus will support the Trudeau government on votes of confidence and supply (i.e., budgets) until 2025. Time will tell.

While confidence-and-supply arrangements have been in place in provincial legislatures – [including one in 2017 in British Columbia](#) – this is the [first time](#) federal parties have entered into such an agreement (though in 2008 the Liberals, NDP and Bloc Québécois – all in opposition at the time – [signed an agreement](#) to form a “coalition” government).

Awareness of the arrangement between the parties is high. Nine-in-ten respondents have heard something about the NDP-Liberal deal, including two-in-five (42%) who say it has been a regular topic of discussion among friends and family:



Massive political divide drives opinion of deal, perceived fairness

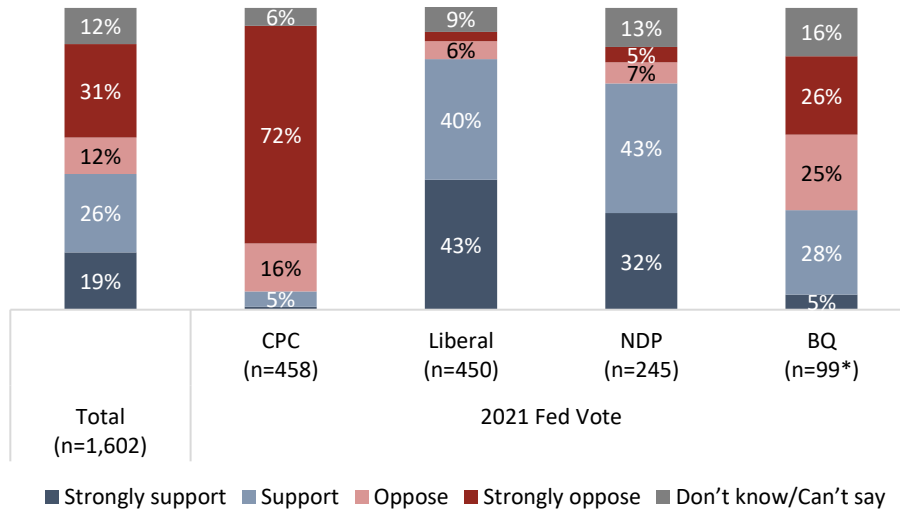
Canadians are split on how they feel about the NDP-Liberal agreement. About as many support it (45%) as oppose it (43%). But those who oppose it are much more likely to strongly against it (31%) than those who support it to be strongly in favour (19%).

There is significant partisan disagreement on the matter which also drives intensity of feeling. Support is broad among those who voted for the parties involved in the deal. For the parties on the outside of the arrangement, the opposite is true. Nine-in-ten (88%) of those who voted Conservative in September say they oppose it, including almost three-quarters whose opposition is “strong”. By contrast, overwhelming majorities of past NDP (75%) and Liberal (83%) voters support the deal. Past Bloc voters are more likely to be opposed to the agreement (52%), while one-third (32%) say they support it, the latter group at odds [with party leader Yves-François Blanchet who called it a “false majority”](#).

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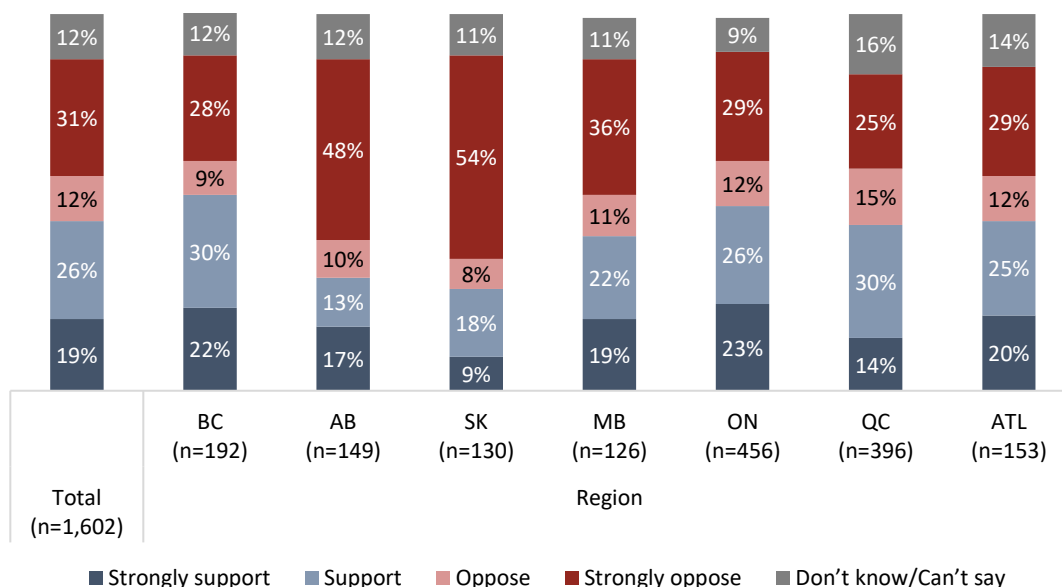
Based on what you've seen read or heard, how do you feel about this agreement that will see the NDP support of the Liberal minority government for the next three years. Do you support or oppose it?



**Smaller sample size, interpret with caution*

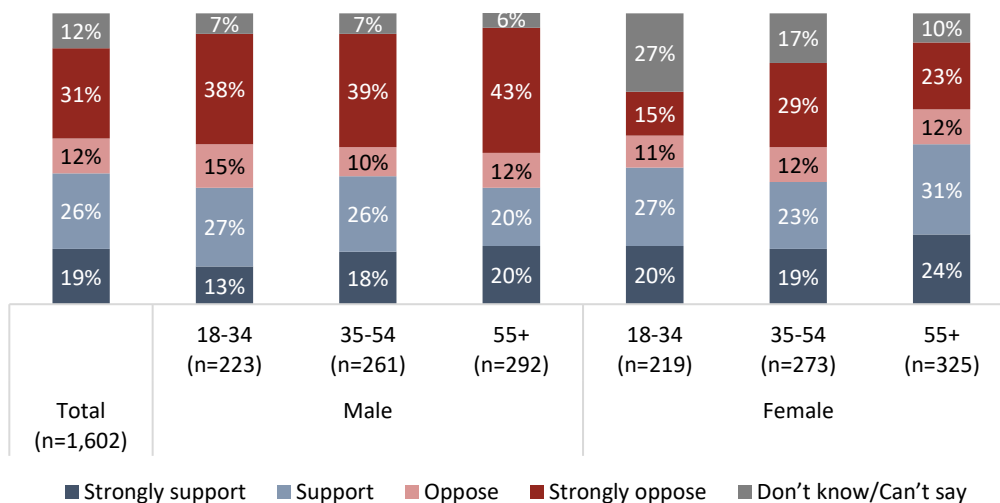
At least one-quarter in all regions across the country strongly oppose the deal. Albertans and Saskatchewanians are most against it – in those two provinces, half strongly oppose the NDP-Liberal arrangement. Only in British Columbia and Ontario does support reach at least half:

Based on what you've seen read or heard, how do you feel about this agreement that will see the NDP support of the Liberal minority government for the next three years. Do you support or oppose it?



Women are more likely than men to be in favour of the pact with support peaking at 55 per cent for women older than 54. At least half of men of all ages oppose the deal:

Based on what you've seen read or heard, how do you feel about this agreement that will see the NDP support of the Liberal minority government for the next three years. Do you support or oppose it?

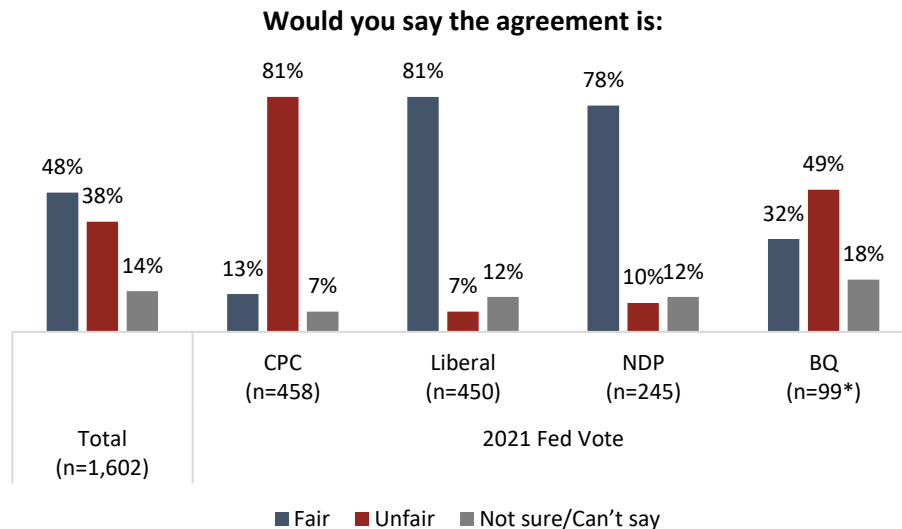


After the deal between the NDP and Liberals was announced, [critics said it wasn't what Canadians voted for](#), suggesting that it was unfair. Interim Conservative leader Candice Bergen called it "[backdoor socialism](#)" and a [desperate power grab](#) by Trudeau.

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Canadians are more likely to believe the deal is fair, but two-in-five (38%) would call it unfair. That latter group includes four-in-five (81%) past Conservative voters and half (49%) of those who voted for the Bloc in September:



**Smaller sample size, interpret with caution*

At least half in Alberta (50%) and Saskatchewan (58%) believe the agreement is unfair. British Columbians – those most likely to be [familiar with such an arrangement](#) – are the most likely to call it fair (55%, [see detailed tables](#)).

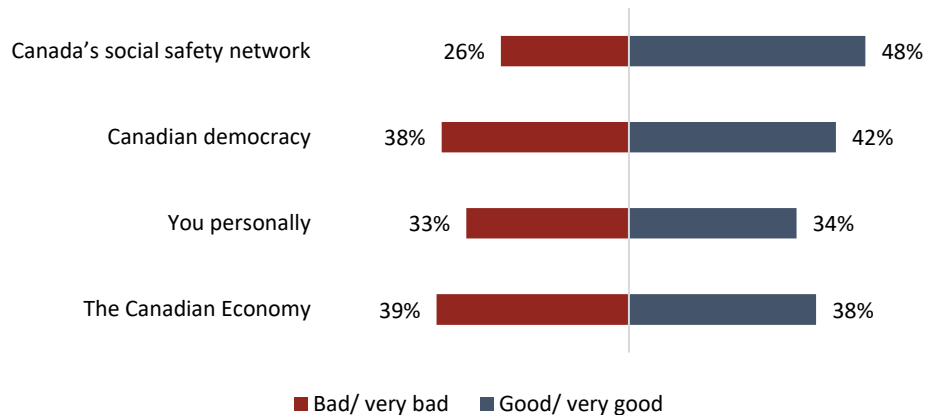
Perceived impacts of the deal

Respondents were asked to assess the impact of the agreement on a number of fronts and were most likely to see benefits to the country's social safety network. They are more split on its effects on democracy in the country, the economy and themselves personally.

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**And overall, do you think this agreement will be a good or a bad thing for the following:
(All respondents, n=1,602)**



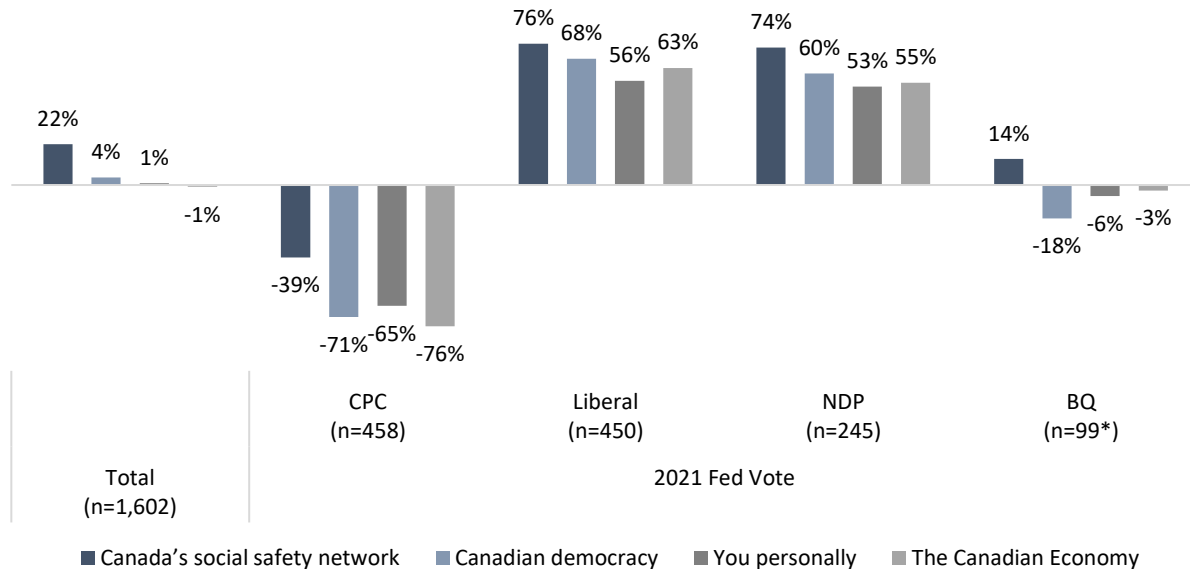
Women are generally more positive than men about the potential for this agreement ([see detailed tables](#)).

Optimism about the agreement is not distributed evenly across political lines. Past Liberal and NDP voters are much more likely to believe the arrangement between their parties will have positive effects on themselves and Canada's social safety network, democracy and economy. Those who voted Conservative in September are much more likely to see the agreement having a poor outcome on the country and themselves. Past Bloc voters are slightly more likely to see positives for the safety net, negatives for democracy and are split on the other matters:

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Percentage who say the agreement is a good thing minus those who say it is a bad thing for each:



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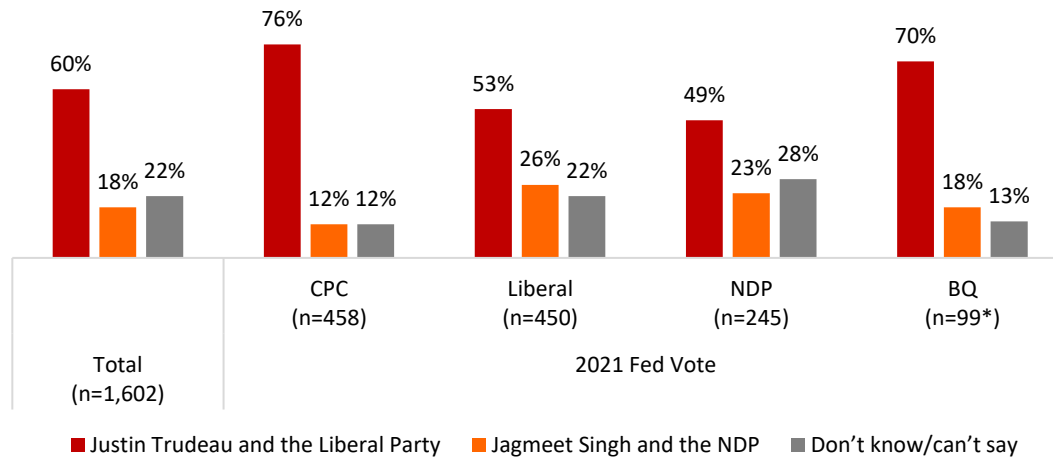
Trudeau seen as big winner

Many believed Trudeau sent the country to the polls in September to try and secure a majority government. He fell short, losing the popular vote to the Conservative Party and ending up with a minority government for the second term in a row. And while minority governments are subject to the whims of Parliament, the NDP has given the Liberal government the prospect of long-term stability. Provided the deal holds, it also means Trudeau could be prime minister until 2025.

On the other hand, NDP could secure Liberal support on key party policies, including expanding national health care to include pharmacare and dental care for many Canadians. Both were **popular measures** among the general electorate over the last two election cycles.

So both parties – and their leaders – stand to benefit. But Canadians are more likely to believe Trudeau and the Liberals get much more out of this agreement than Singh and the NDP by a factor of three to one. Though one-quarter of past NDP voters say Singh won more concessions than Trudeau, more (49%) say the opposite. Three-quarters (76%) of those who voted for the CPC in September say Trudeau was the clear winner:

And based on what you've heard, read or seen about the agreement, who got the better end of the deal?



**Smaller sample size, interpret with caution*

Part Two: Looming challenges

How long can it last?

The confidence-and-supply agreement is not an ironclad contract. Singh said if the Liberals don't hold up their end of the bargain, [the NDP can remove support](#) for the minority government. Before 2025, Trudeau can also choose to ask Governor General Mary Simon to dissolve Parliament, [as he did in the summer](#) to trigger the September election.

B.C. Premier John Horgan [pulled that maneuver](#) in his province in 2020, ending the B.C. NDP's confidence-and-supply arrangement with the Green Party a year early by calling an election. The B.C. NDP ended up with a majority.

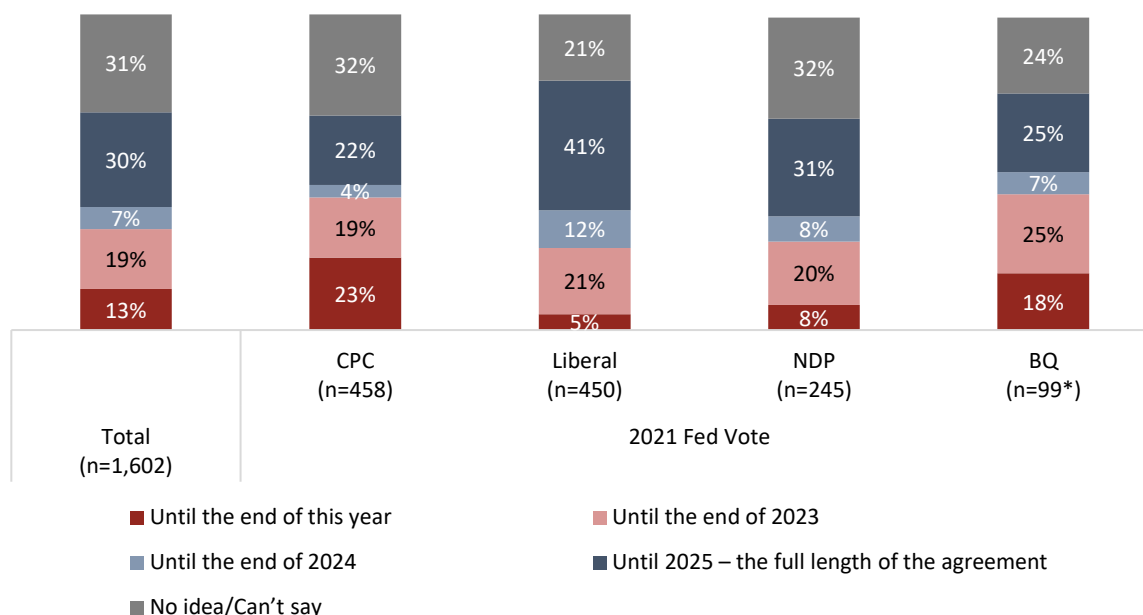
Canadians are more inclined to say the deal will not go the distance until 2025 than will. While three-in-ten believe the federal NDP-Liberal co-operation will last the full length of the agreement, four-in-ten (39%) say it will end sooner, three-quarters of whom say it will only last until the end of next year.

Past Liberal voters are most optimistic the deal will reach term (41%), compared to 31 per cent of past New Democrat voters. Still, more than one-quarter of those who voted Liberal (26%) and NDP (28%) in September believe the deal will collapse by the end of 2023. Past Conservative voters are most pessimistic:

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How long do you think the NDP and Liberals will be able to work together?



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Defence spending an early test of loyalties

With the support of the NDP in hand, Trudeau and the Liberals will soon table the first budget of their new mandate. It's expected to be revealed in the [first week of April](#).

The Russian invasion of Ukraine looms large over many matters, including Canada's spending on defence. Members of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization – [a defensive alliance of 30 countries including the United States and Canada](#), some of which share borders with Ukraine – have been ramping up the pressure on each other to spend more on defence in the face of Russian aggression. Trudeau agreed to a commitment by NATO members to bolster defence spending by June at [a recent summit in Brussels](#). He didn't offer details, though.

Currently, Canada is short of its commitment to the alliance. [In 2006](#), members pledged to spend at least two per cent of their GDP on defence. By NATO estimates, Canada spends about 1.4 per cent instead, meaning spending will have to increase by 50 per cent or more to satisfy that stipulation.

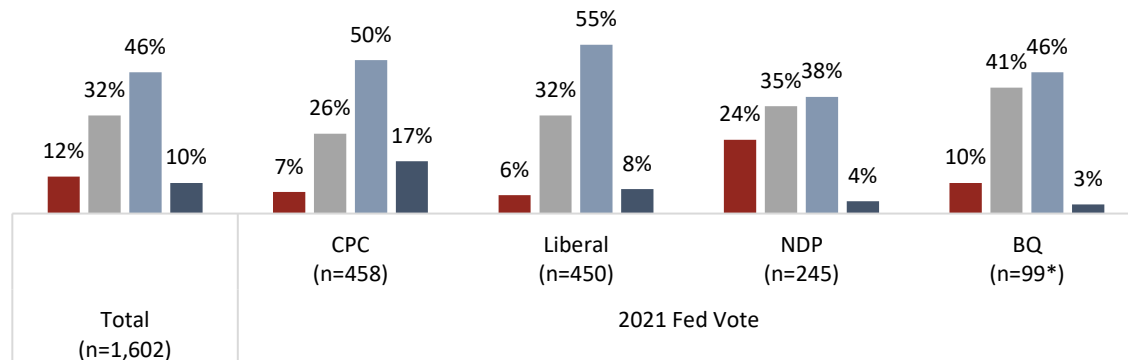
More than half (56%) of Canadians say this should happen. One-third (32%) would keep it where it is and one-in-ten (12%) would spend even less on the military.

There is a notable difference along partisan lines, however, especially among supporters of the two parties which just entered into a confidence-and-supply agreement. While almost two-thirds (63%) of past Liberal voters would increase spending, most recent New Democrats (59%) would either maintain the status quo without increase – or go further – and reduce defence spending. This makes past Singh voters more than twice as likely as the national average to call for a defence spending decrease, potentially making this issue a first crucial test of NDP-Liberal co-operation:

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If you oversaw Canada's budget, what would you do?



- Reduce defence spending even more than it is now
- Maintain the current rate of defence spending – about \$23 billion/year
- Increase spending to the amount NATO recommends - about \$30-\$35 billion/year
- Increase spending to even more than \$35 billion/year

**Smaller sample size, interpret with caution*

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