

Corruption in Canada: Seven-in-ten support an international court to fight global corruption

Most say Canada has a money laundering problem; half believe country doesn't have power to stop it

May 5, 2022 – Does Canada have a corruption problem? The people of this country are inclined to say “yes”.

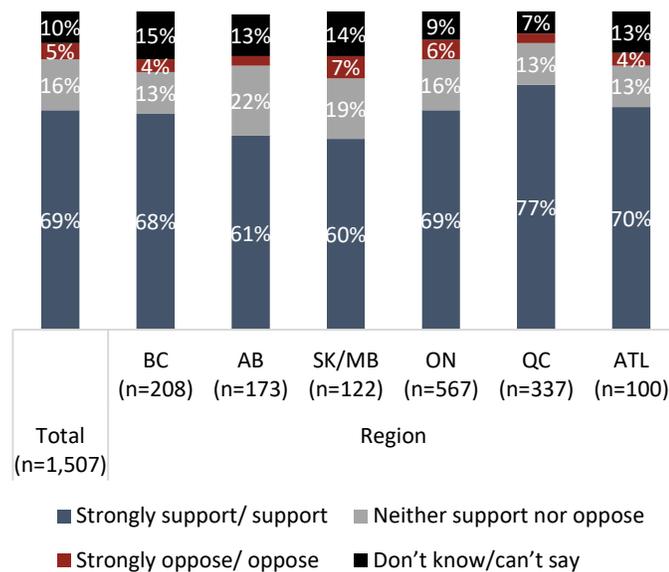
Results from a new public opinion survey from the non-profit Angus Reid Institute, in partnership with the [World Refugee and Migration Council](#) and the [Canadian Task Force Against Global Corruption](#) suggest trust that Canadian businesses and governments are operating above board and with transparency is low.

This study finds Canadians perceiving corruption both domestically and internationally as a growing issue, and supportive of the establishment of an International Anti-Corruption Court in an attempt to mitigate illicit activities.

Canadians see money laundering – along with other forms of corruption such as bribery and the theft of public funds – as a significant problem in the country. Seven-in-ten believe bribery and theft of public funds is ‘a problem’ or ‘a very big problem’ in Canada, while more (80%) say the same of money laundering. As well, Canadians are more likely to believe each of those problems are getting worse than better.

However, while three-in-five (59%) Canadians want their country to do more within its power to fight international corruption, there is also significant belief that Canada alone does not have the tools to effectively take a stand. Half (49%) say the country does not have the influence or power to fight international corruption, twice as many (25%) who disagree.

Do you support or oppose the establishment of an International Anti-Corruption Court?



METHODOLOGY:

The Angus Reid Institute conducted an online survey from April 4-6, 2022 among a representative randomized sample of 1,507 Canadian adults who are members of [Angus Reid Forum](#). A second survey was conducted from April 20-22, 2022 among a representative randomized sample of 1,505 Canadian adults. 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. This applies for both surveys. Discrepancies in or between totals are due to rounding.

The survey was self-commissioned and paid for by ARI and the World Refugee and Migration Council. Detailed tables are found at the end of this release.

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There is one potential solution that has a lot of support among Canadians: an International Anti-Corruption Court. Seven-in-ten (69%) support the establishment of such a body, which would have the power to recoup assets and funds stolen from countries by corrupt leaders.

More Key Findings:

- Asked to point the finger at who or what institutions they blame most for international corruption, Canadians are most likely to name those individuals in charge and with the most influence as a significant part of the problem (84%). That said, two-thirds say that corporations and national government are to blame as well.
- More than four-in-five (85%) British Columbians believe money laundering is a substantial problem in their province, as B.C. Supreme Court Justice Austin Cullen prepares to deliver the findings of an inquiry into the problem – which has potentially funnelled large sums of money into real estate and through casinos – in May.
- Quebecers are more likely to believe theft of public funds and bribery are significant problems in their own province than residents in other regions in the country.
- While there is significant recognition of the problem within Canada's borders, a majority (60%) believes the focus for the country needs to be working with the global community to stop international corruption.

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.*

INDEX

Introduction: Corruption in the Canadian context

Part One: Concern about international corruption and inaction to stop it

- Gauging Canada's efforts to combat global corruption
- Tend our own garden or contribute to the global fight?
- The blame game: plenty to go around
- Canada's (lack of) international influence
- Support for an International Anti-Corruption Court

Part Two: The national story

- Bribery, theft of public funds, money laundering

Part Three: The provincial story

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- **B.C. residents lead the nation in concern over money laundering**
- **Quebecers say malfeasance in their province widespread**
- **Little progress in corruption mitigation perceived by the public**

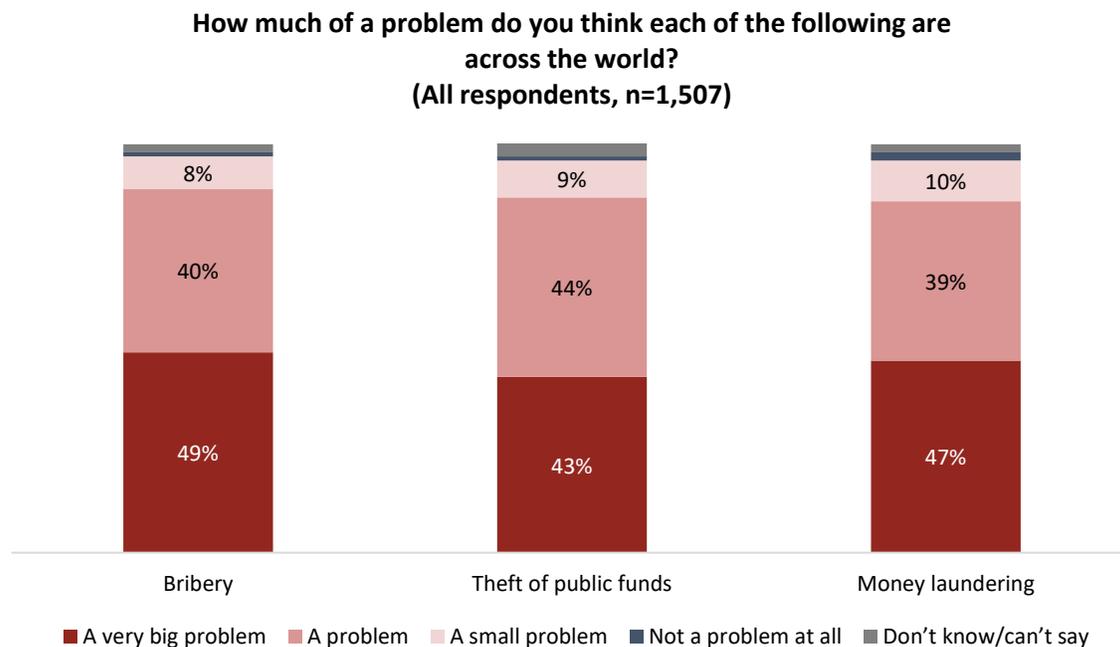
Introduction: Corruption in the Canadian context

Corruption is a global problem that affects not only countries, but their citizens and businesses. Bribery of government officials, diverting of public funds, and money laundering are some of the most common means of international corruption which occurs at the highest levels of power in society. While [kleptocracies like Russia](#) are commonly cited examples of international corruption, Canada is not immune. In fact, experts worry that Canadian real estate is [a haven for money laundering](#), as criminals [buy properties](#) as a means to [legitimize illicit earnings](#), driving up the cost of housing in the country in the process.

International buyers, [including Russian oligarchs](#), have used Canadian real estate to store value outside of their home country. There is plenty of legitimate foreign investment, however, [Canadian property registration rules](#) make it difficult to track who owns what in the event the money flowing in was earned through criminal activities.

Part One: Concern about international corruption and inaction to stop it

Asked for their own perceptions of corruption in the international realm, Canadians are more likely to believe three major forms – bribery, theft of public funds, and money laundering – are a very big problem across the world than not. In each case, fewer than one-in-six Canadians believe these instances of exploitation are a small problem, or not a problem at all:

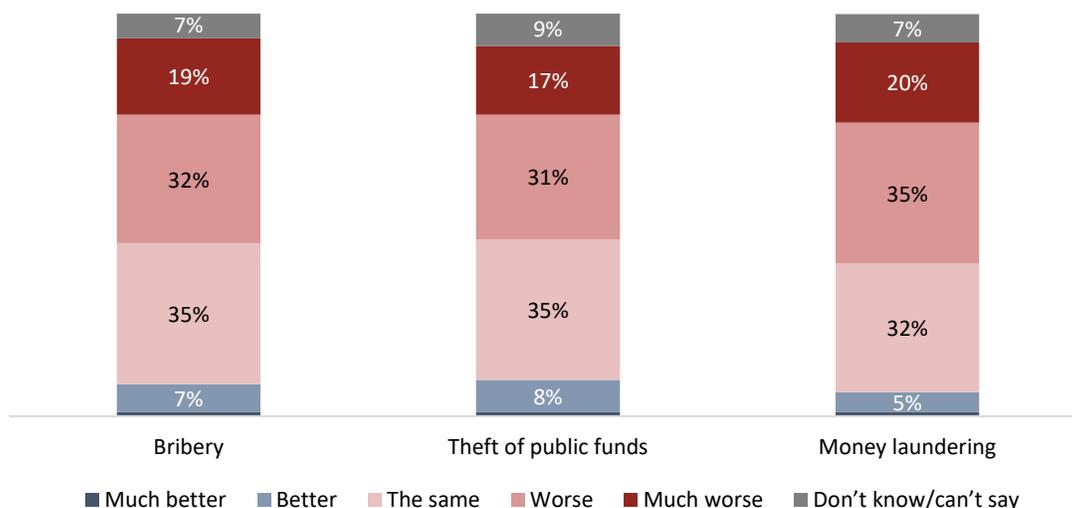


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Perceptions are that while these issues are already a problem, they're also worsening. At least half of Canadians believe bribery, theft of public funds and money laundering are becoming exacerbated globally. One-third say they are staying the same:

**Thinking of each of these issues, do you think they are getting better or worse across the world?
(All respondents, n=1,507)**



Gauging Canada's efforts to combat global corruption

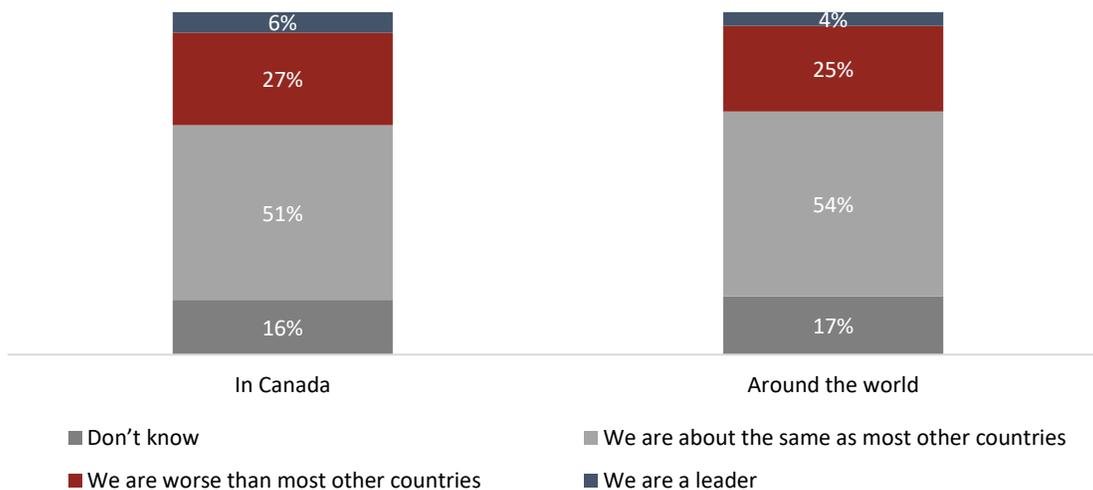
Canadians are more negative than positive when it comes to assessing the country's governments' efforts to combat international corruption.

Respondents are about five times as likely to say Canada is worse than other countries than to call their country a leader at fighting international corruption in Canada and around the world. In each case, half say we are no better than other countries in fighting it:

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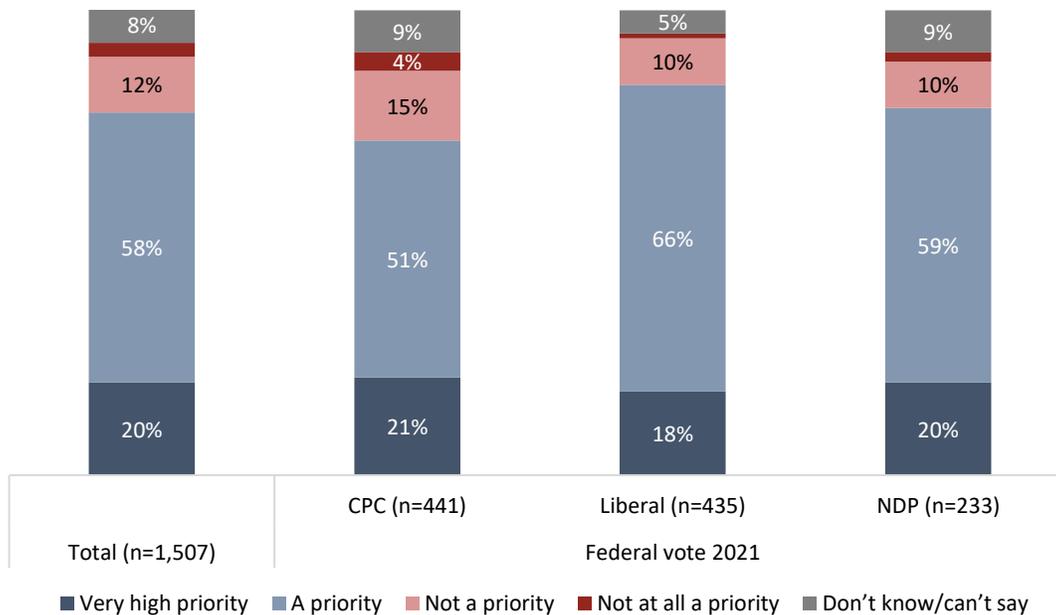
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**In your opinion, how would you rate the job governments in Canada are currently doing to combat international corruption?
(All respondents, n=1,507)**



This comes as many feel that combatting corruption should be a priority for Canada. Three-quarters believe fighting international corruption should be a priority, including one-in-five who say it should be a very high one. Few say it shouldn't be a priority.

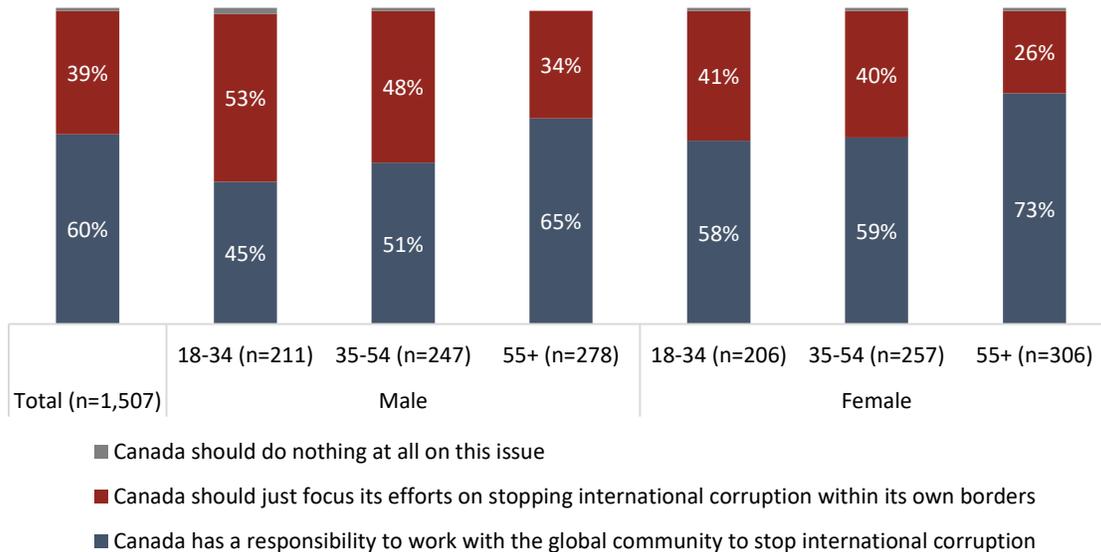
In your opinion to what extent should Canada prioritize combatting international corruption as part of its foreign policy, if at all?



Tend our own garden or contribute to the global fight?

There are two paths to take when it comes to international corruption: prioritize stamping it out within Canada’s borders or focus efforts to fight these crimes abroad in tandem with other countries. Canadians are more likely to believe the focus should be international. Men, and younger Canadian adults, however, are more likely to want to keep the focus within Canada’s borders:

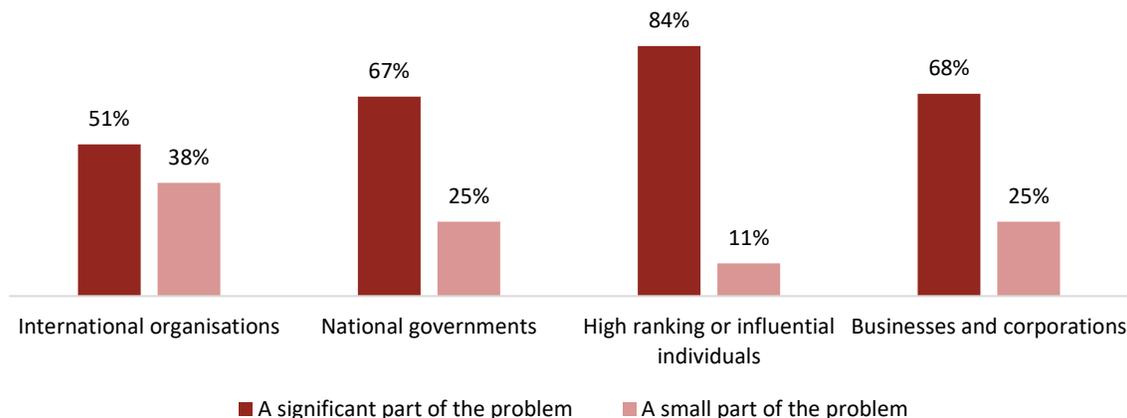
Which of the following statements best reflects your point of view:



The blame game: plenty to go around

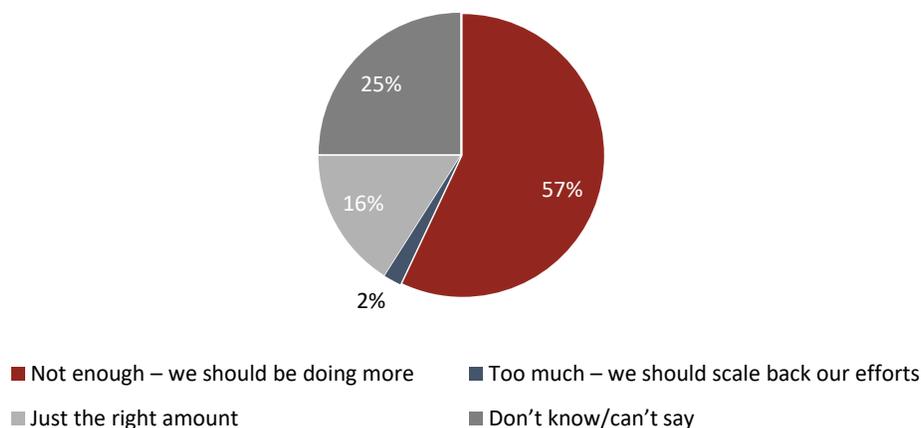
Who is at fault for this perceived to be growing problem? For Canadians, at least half believe high ranking individuals, businesses, national governments and international organizations are a significant part of the international corruption problem. Influential individuals top the list, though, with more than four-in-five Canadians believing they are a major part of the problem:

**When thinking about international corruption, to what extent do you think each of the following are part of the problem, if at all:
(All respondents, n=1,507)**



With that in mind, a majority of Canadians want the government to do more to fight corruption. Three-in-five (57%) say the government is not doing enough. Fewer – one-in-six (16%) – believe the government is doing the right amount and even fewer – two per cent – believe the government should scale back its efforts on fighting corruption:

**Would you say that the government’s efforts to combat international corruption in Canada are...
(All respondents, n=1,507)**

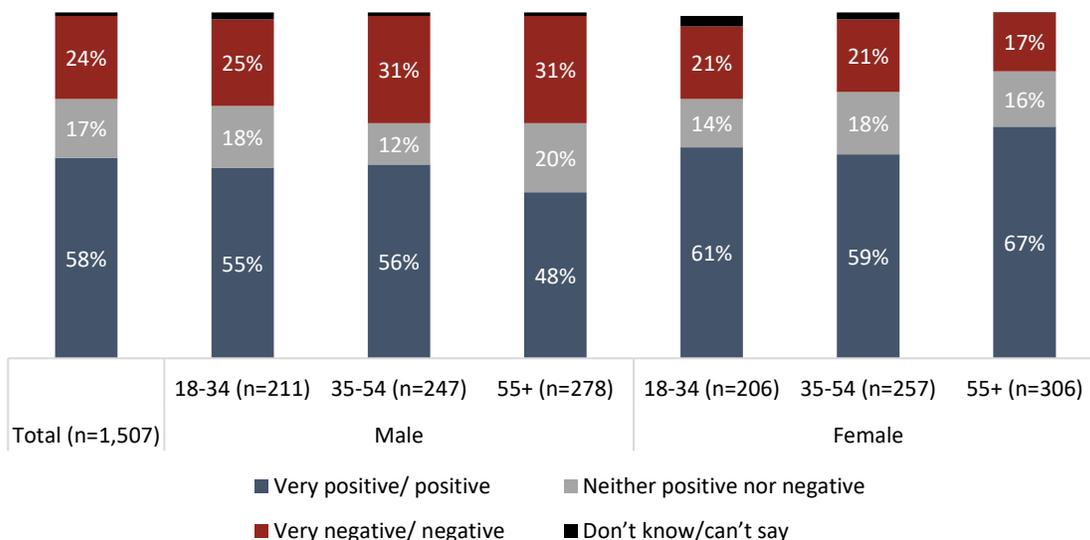


Canada’s (lack of) international influence

Internationally, three-in-five (58%) Canadians believe their country still has a positive reputation, more than twice as many who say the opposite (24%). Women are more likely than men to believe Canada is

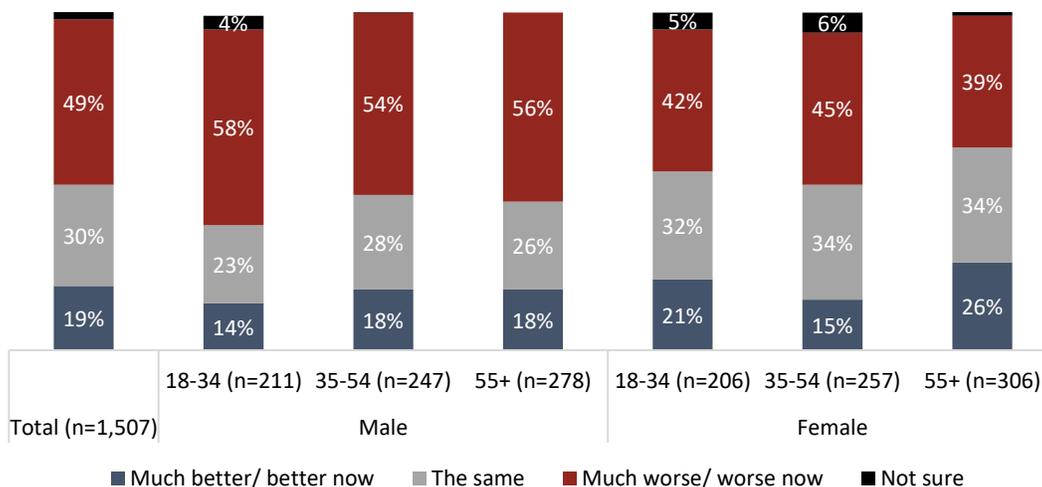
viewed positively around the world. Men over the age of 34 are most likely to say the opposite. Still, for all demographics, Canadians are more likely to believe the country is viewed positively than negatively:

Thinking of Canada’s international reputation – that is, how it is perceived by other countries – would you say it is positive or negative overall?



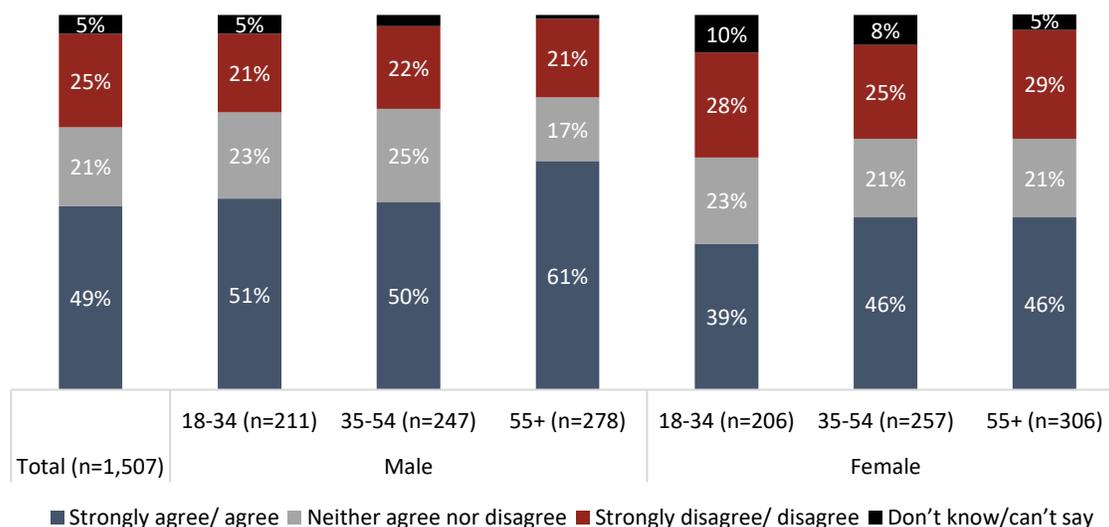
However, half (49%) of Canadians believe that reputation has suffered in the last decade, a proportion that equals the number of Canadians who instead say it has stayed the same or gotten better. Younger Canadians are more negative on this matter than older ones. As well, majorities of men of all ages believe Canada’s international image has deteriorated over the last ten years:

All things considered, do you think Canada’s reputation around the world is better or worse now than it was ten years ago?



Canadians are more likely to doubt their country has the power to affect international corruption than not. Twice as many believe (49%) the country does not have the influence or power to effectively combat international corruption than who say the opposite (25%). Men are more likely than women to doubt Canada's ability to fight corruption around the world, and older Canadians more likely than younger ones:

**Agree vs. disagree -
"Canada does not have the influence or power to effectively combat international corruption"**

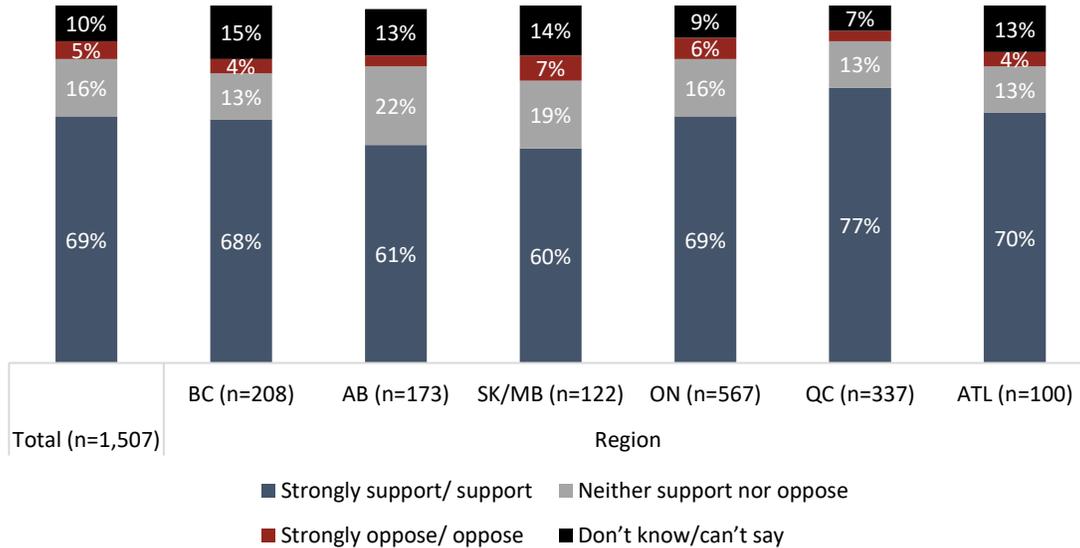


Support for an International Anti-Corruption Court

One proposed solution to fight international corruption is to start an [International Anti-Corruption Court](#) as a separate body from the International Criminal Court. The IACC would strengthen and enforce laws against corrupt leaders. It would also have the authority to recover, repatriate and repurpose stolen assets. This idea was first proposed [in 2012](#).

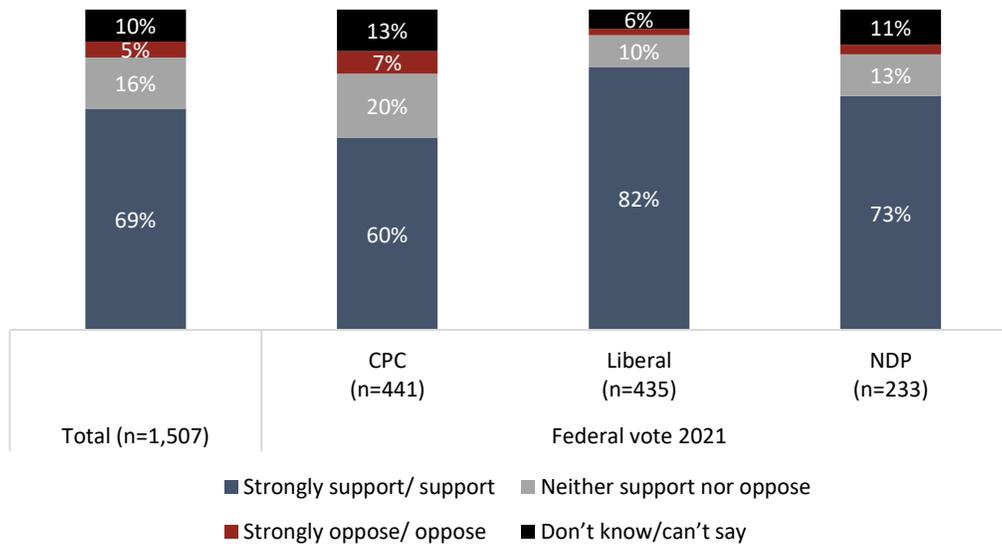
A significant majority of Canadians support such a proposal. Seven-in-ten either support or strongly support the establishment of the IACC while one-in-20 oppose it. At least three-in-five in every region in the country agree with the creation of such a body:

Do you support or oppose the establishment of an International Anti-Corruption Court?



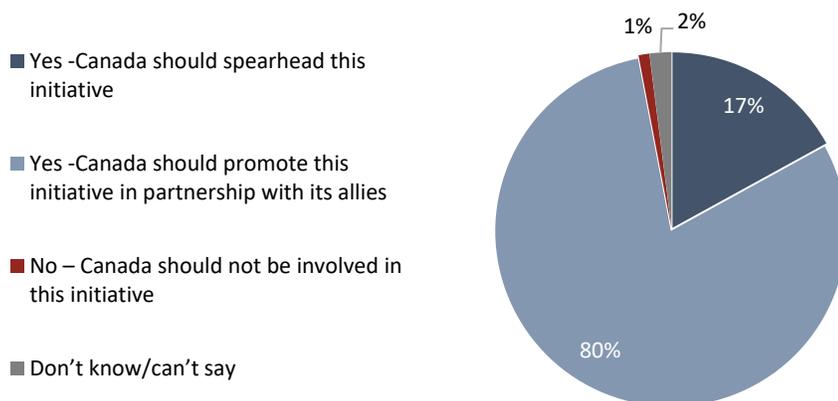
While those who voted for the Conservative Party in last year's federal election are less likely to offer their support for an IACC, three-in-five (60%) are on board with the proposal. They are joined by four-in-five (82%) past Liberal and three-quarters (73%) of past NDP voters:

Do you support or oppose the establishment of an International Anti-Corruption Court?



For those who support the establishment of an IACC, approaching one-in-five (17%) believe Canada should take the lead on this initiative. Four-times as many, however, believe it should instead look to establish the IACC in concert with its partners and allies:

**Do you think Canada should take an active role in promoting the establishment of an International Anti-Corruption Court?
(Among those who support the establishment of the court,
n=1,003)**



Part Two: The national story

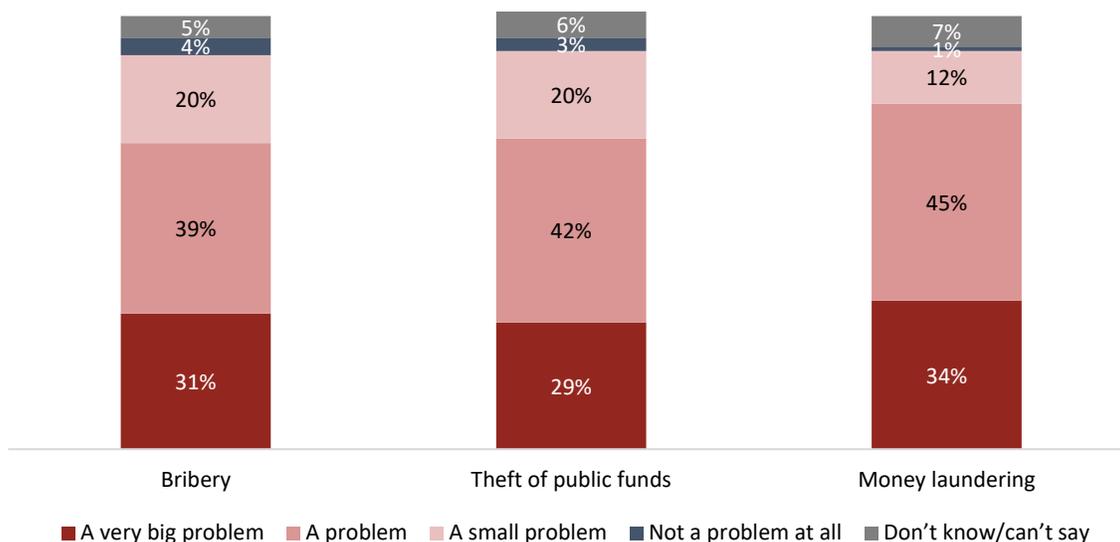
Bribery, theft of public funds, money laundering

Many Canadians see corruption as a significant problem around them. Nearly all believe bribery, theft of public funds, and money laundering are problems in Canada. Many – at least three-in-ten for each – would describe those types of corruption as a very big problem here:

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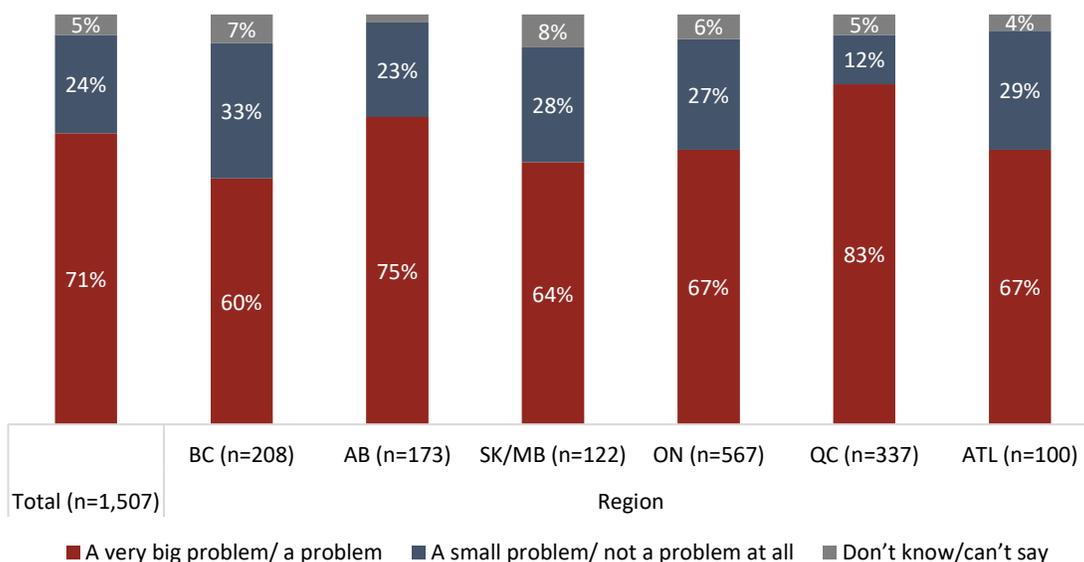
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**How much of a problem do you think each of the following are in Canada?
(All respondents, n=1,507)**



There have been notable recent examples of bribery in Quebec – the former head of the Federal Bridge Corporation Michel Fournier and the former CEO of SNC Lavalin Pierre Duhaime were both convicted in a bribery case related to the refurbishment of Montreal's Jacques Cartier Bridge. In that province, four-in-five (83%) believe bribery is a significant problem in Canada. Across the country, at least three-in-five in all regions agree:

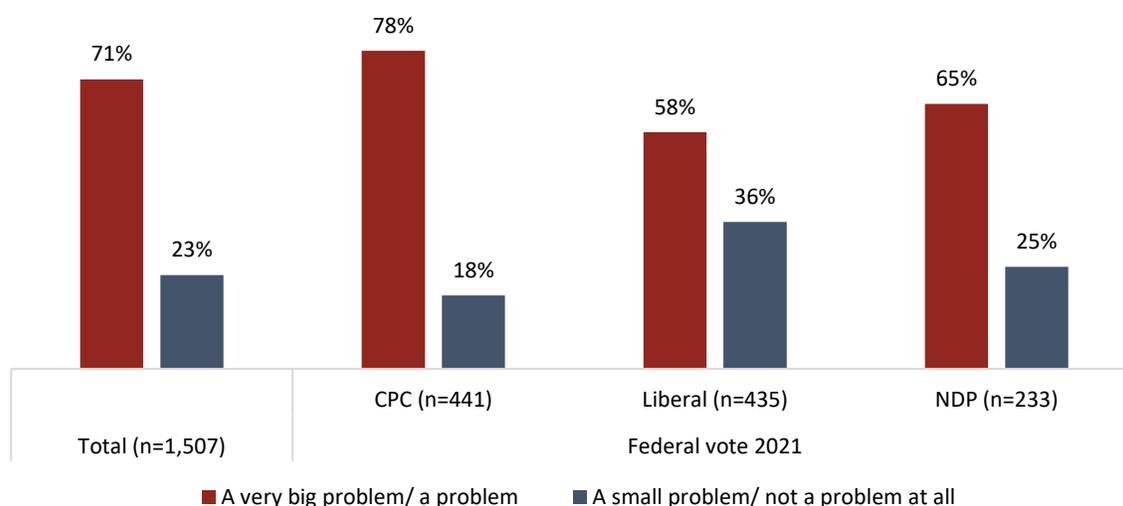
How much of a problem do you think "Bribery" is in Canada?



The federal government dispersed billions of dollars during the COVID-19 pandemic to support Canadians as the economy shrank due to public health restrictions and closures. The Canada Emergency Response Benefit (CERB) and Canada Emergency Business Account (CEBA) programs helped millions of Canadians, but also were reportedly exploited by organized crime.

Four-in-five (78%) past Conservative voters believe the theft of public funds is a significant problem in Canada. Past Liberal and NDP voters are more likely to disagree, but still three-in-five (58%) of those who voted Liberal and two-thirds (65%) of those who voted NDP in the last federal election believe the theft of public money is a substantial problem:

How much of a problem do you think "Theft of Public Funds" is in Canada?

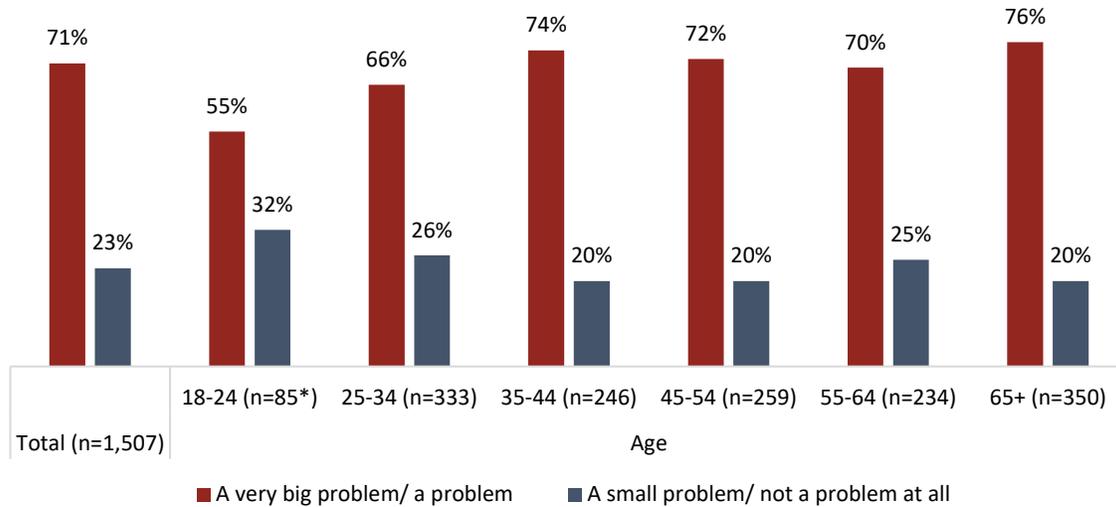


Canadians over the age of 34 are more likely to believe public money theft is a considerable problem in Canada. Still, a majority of all age groups say so:

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How much of a problem do you think "Theft of Public Funds" is in Canada?

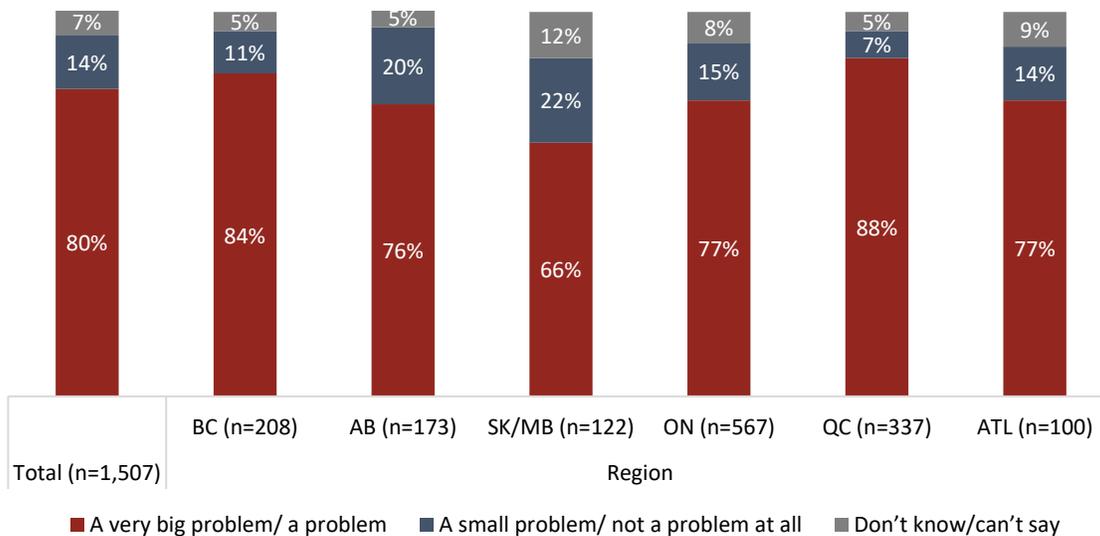


**Smaller sample size, interpret with caution*

Money laundering is apparently so pervasive in Canada that there is a colloquial term for it: [snow-washing](#).

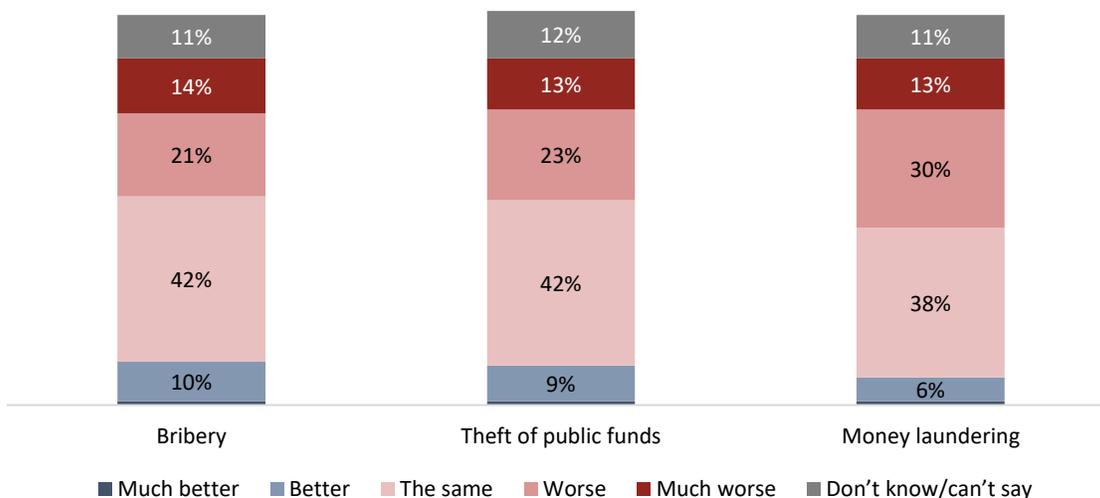
[B.C. real estate](#) is one target of money laundering operations – as much as \$5.3 billion worth of purchases in 2018, according to a report. Casinos in B.C. and Quebec, too, have come under scrutiny for being targeted by criminal money laundering operations. Last year, Quebec announced [it would ban gamblers who engaged in criminal activity](#) to help crackdown on such operations. In those two provinces, respondents are much more likely to believe money laundering is a significant problem in Canada. Elsewhere, at least two-thirds of respondents believe money laundering is a problem in the country:

How much of a problem do you think "Money Laundering" is in Canada?



While governments have taken steps to fight some of these practices, few Canadians believe bribery, theft of public funds or money laundering are becoming less of a problem in their country. Instead, more than one-third in the case of bribery (35%) and theft of public funds (36%), and two-in-five (43%) in the case of money laundering, believe the problem is getting worse:

**Thinking of each of these issues, do you think they are getting better or worse in Canada?
(All respondents, n=1,507)**



Part Three: The provincial story

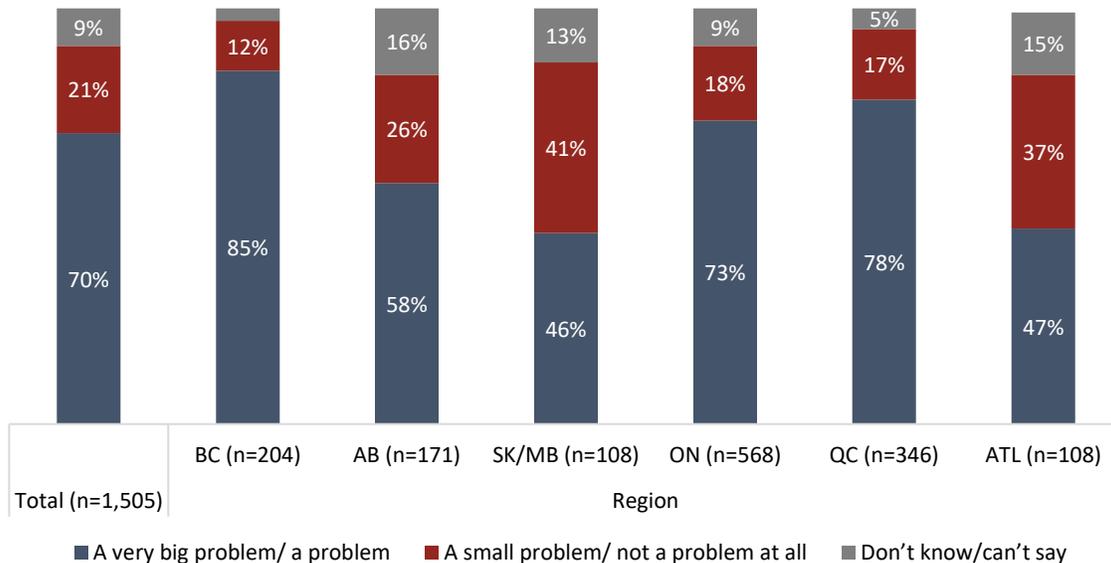
B.C. residents lead the nation in concern over money laundering

When it comes to their own province, seven-in-ten Canadians believe money laundering is a sizeable problem. However, those that believe so are concentrated in the country’s three most populous provinces. Three-quarters in Ontario and Quebec, and more than four-in-five in B.C., believe money laundering is a significant problem in their province. Elsewhere in the country, only in Alberta does a majority say there is a substantial money laundering problem.

The B.C. government has probed money laundering in that province’s casinos, real estate and banks through [the Cullen Commission](#), an inquiry that started in 2019 and is headed by B.C. Supreme Court judge Justice Austin Cullen. The commission will look to answer questions as to whether inaction by top government officials allowed the problem to grow. [The results of it are expected in May.](#)

Casinos in both [Ontario](#) and [Quebec](#) have been suspected to be targets of money laundering operations.

How much of a problem do you think "Money Laundering" is in your own province?



Quebecers say malfeasance in their province widespread

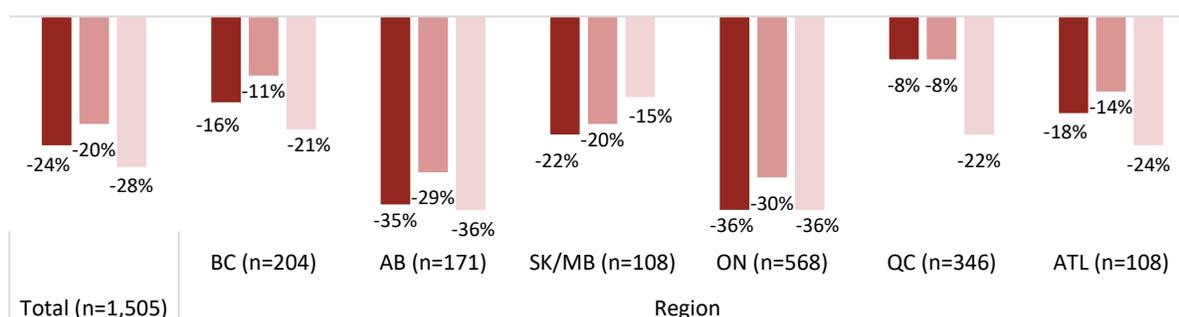
Money laundering isn’t the only brand of corruption that Quebecers believe is widespread in their province. More than three-quarters (77%) of Quebecers say bribery of officials is also a problem in Quebec and three-quarters (75%) believe the same of theft of public funds. In both cases, those are the highest proportion of any region in the country. Corruption is not a recent phenomenon there. In 2010, Maclean’s called the province the most corrupt in Canada on [the cover of its magazine.](#)

Percentage of Canadians who say each of the following is a problem in their own province: Responses 70 per cent or above highlighted							
	Total (n=1,505)	Region					
		BC (n=204)	AB (n=171)	SK/MB (n=108)	ON (n=568)	QC (n=346)	ATL (n=108)
Money laundering – individuals hiding ill gotten funds to avoid law enforcement, taxes, and other forms of accountability	70%	85%	58%	46%	73%	78%	47%
Bribery – i.e., government officials and other high-ranking members of society influencing decisions in exchange for money or gifts	64%	50%	65%	60%	64%	77%	50%
Theft of public funds – i.e., the theft of money from government projects, charities, or other organizations that was intended to benefit the public	61%	51%	56%	53%	61%	75%	47%

Little progress in corruption mitigation perceived by the public

For all three types of corruption, Canadians are more likely to believe the problem is getting worse than better in their province. The trend is perceived to be most negative in Ontario and Alberta:

**Net score on each issue by province:
This issue is getting better minus this issue is getting worse**



- Bribery – i.e., government officials and other high-ranking members of society influencing decisions in exchange for money or gifts
- Theft of public funds – i.e., the theft of money from government projects, charities, or other organizations that was intended to benefit the public
- Money laundering – individuals hiding ill gotten funds to avoid law enforcement, taxes, and other forms of accountability

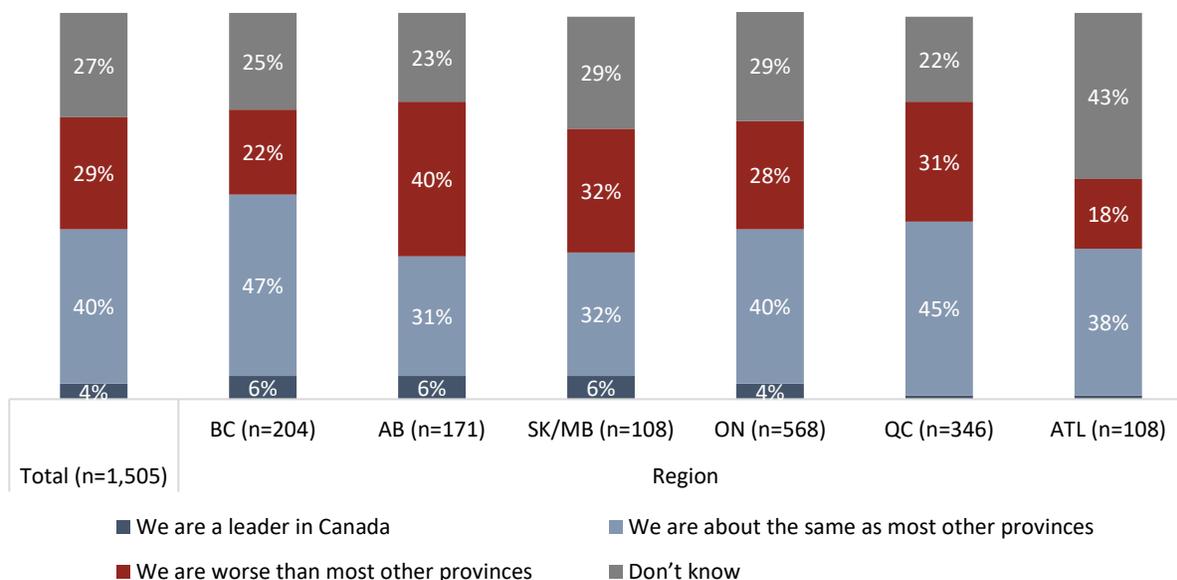
This comes as many respondents offer a negative assessment of their provincial government's efforts to fight corruption. Few describe their provincial government as a leader. Instead, pluralities in B.C., Ontario, Quebec, and Atlantic Canada believe their provincial governments are about the same as other

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provinces. In Alberta, two-in-five believe their province is worse than others at combatting corruption, the most of any region in the country:

In your opinion, how would you rate the job your provincial government is doing to combat international corruption?



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

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

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