

## Federal Politics: In CPC leadership race, Poilievre faces a support ceiling, Charest must connect more with base

*Increasingly pessimistic Canadians push Trudeau disapproval to highest level since 2019*

**June 27, 2022** – As Canadians wind down the school year and contemplate a summer break, they do so feeling increasingly pessimistic about their own lives and the future of the country.

New data from the non-profit Angus Reid Institute finds 52 per cent of Canadians are pessimistic about the future of Canada. This is considerably higher than responses noted in recent years, as an inflation crisis and a health-care system hampered by delays and staffing shortages contribute to Canadians' foul mood.

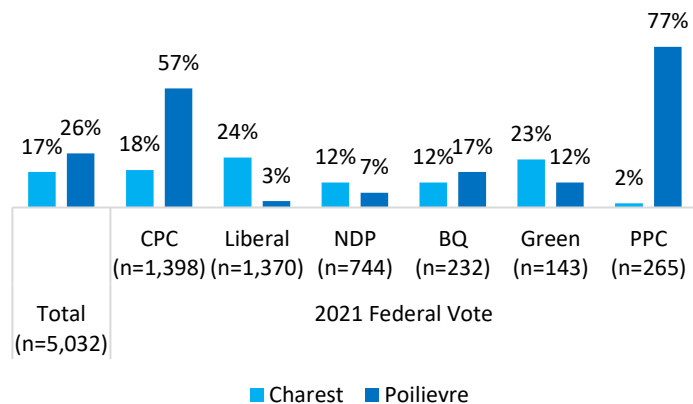
These negative sentiments may present an opportunity for the Conservative Party of Canada, one they will hope to capitalize on with a new leader this fall. In that race, Conservative MP Pierre Poilievre continues to lead the way, as the most appealing option to 26 per cent of Canadians, followed closely by former Quebec Liberal Premier Jean Charest (21%).

While a path to a future electoral victory for the CPC under Poilievre may be carved with strong support from the party's 2021 base and voters who cast ballots for the People's Party of Canada last fall, it draws little interest from past Liberal and New Democrat voters. That group represents a much larger pool of potential support. By contrast, 38 per cent of those who voted Liberal last fall say they find Charest the most appealing potential leader. Charest's challenge is that past Conservative voters say they're less likely to support the party again with him as at the helm.

In addition to pessimism about the country comes an increase in criticism of Prime Minister Justin Trudeau. Three-in-five (59%) disapprove of his performance, the highest marks since before the pandemic in 2019 when he and the government were beset with allegations of corruption related to SNC-Lavalin.

In the short term, Trudeau and the Liberals are insulated from mood shifts of the electorate because of the [confidence-and-supply agreement with the NDP](#).

**More or less likely to vote for a CPC party led by...**  
**(Percent who selected 'more' or 'much more' likely shown)**



### **METHODOLOGY:**

The Angus Reid Institute conducted an online survey from June 7-13, 2022 among a representative randomized sample of 5,032 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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## More Key Findings:

- Few past Liberal voters (4%) find Pierre Poilievre the most appealing leadership option. Instead, three-in-five (57%) past CPC voters say the most attractive leadership campaign is Poilievre's, compared to 14 per cent who choose Jean Charest.
- Two-in-three Canadians (66%) remain optimistic about their own future, while one-in-three are pessimistic (34%). Pessimism rises to 45 per cent among the lowest income households.
- Justin Trudeau's approval rises above two-in-five among women (44%) and drops to 32 per cent among men.

## 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.*

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

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### Part One: Mood of Canadians

Emerging from the bulk of COVID-19 restrictions – including recently rescinded federal travel constraints – Canadians may well have hoped they were entering a period of prosperity. And while the pandemic has been relegated as a pressing concern – just seven per cent of Canadians now consider it a top issue ([see detailed tables](#)) – anxieties around inflation and the rising cost of living, housing affordability woes, and health-care challenges have made the mood of the nation more dour than cheery.

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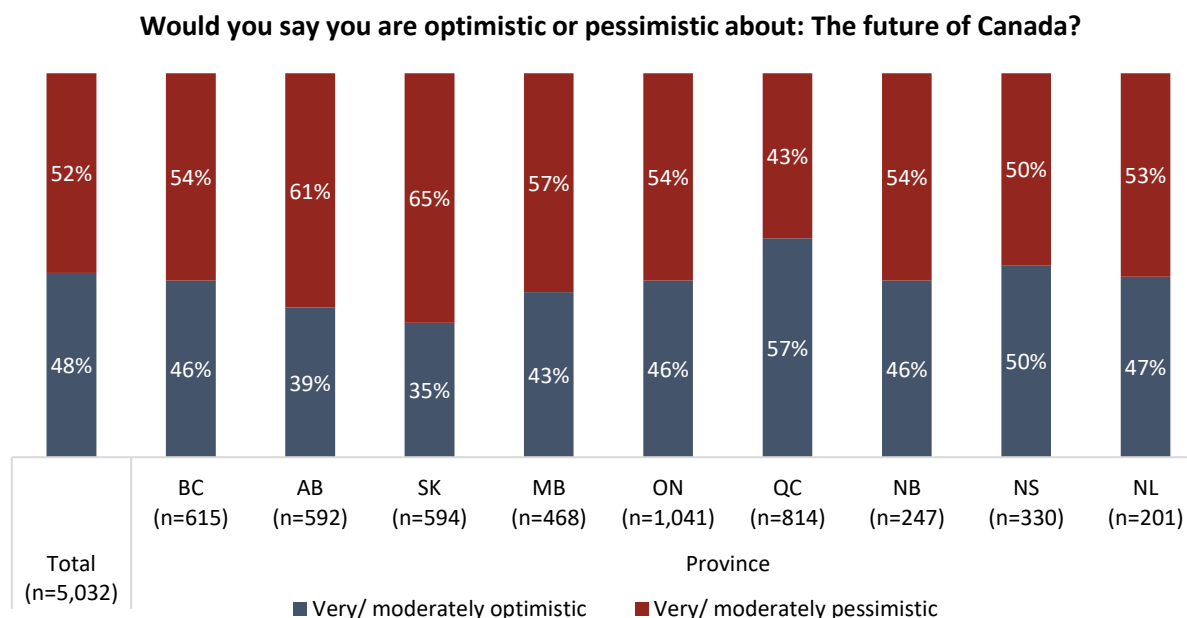
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Asked how they feel about the future of Canada, half of Canadians are pessimistic (52%) and half are optimistic (48%). Pessimism is far more pronounced in Alberta and the Prairies, while Quebec is the only region of the country with net optimism:



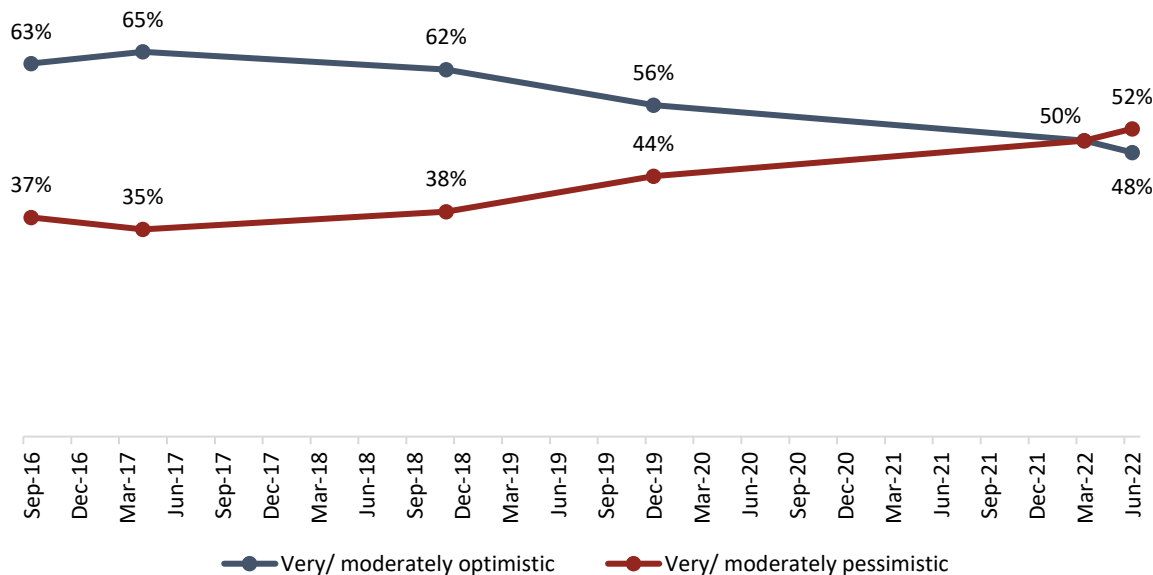
*Note: Because its small population precludes drawing discrete samples over multiple waves, data on Prince Edward Island is not released.*

This majority pessimism represents a significant departure from pre-pandemic levels:

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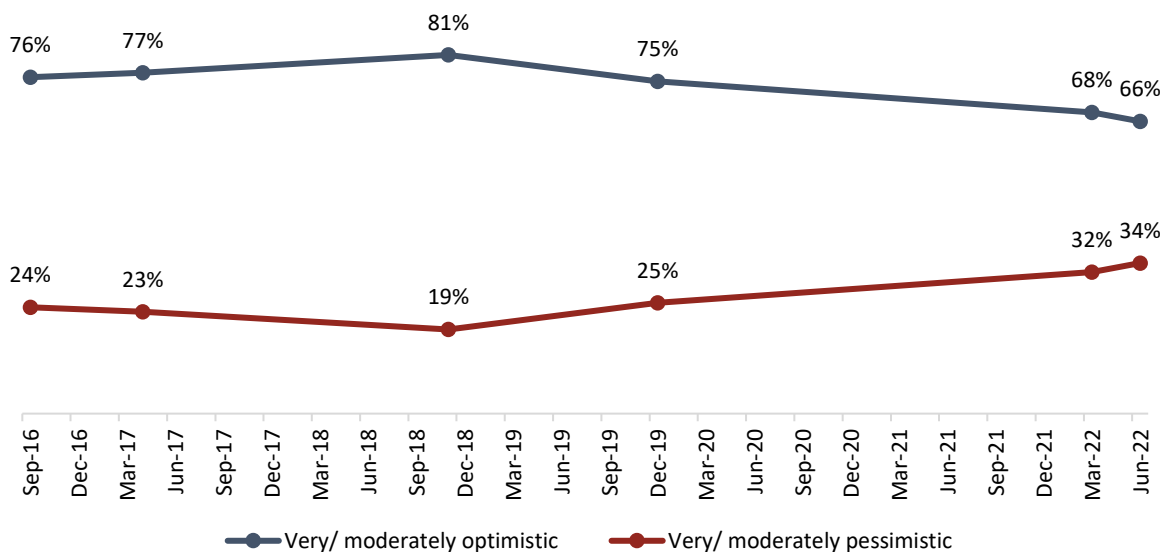
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### Would you say you are optimistic or pessimistic about: The future of Canada?



Personal pessimism – that of one's own future – is considerably lower. Overall, two-thirds (66%) are still optimistic about their own life, though this, too, has dropped.

### Would you say you are optimistic or pessimistic about: Your own future?



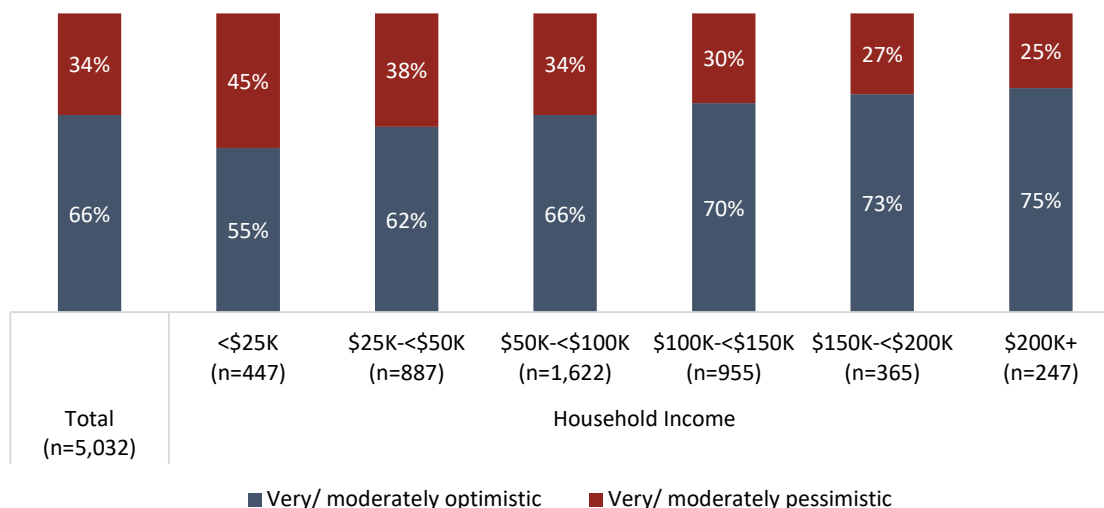
With inflation reaching highs not seen since 1983, there might be a financial factor to optimism. Indeed, Canadians are feeling more pessimistic about their financial outlook in recent months. And those with

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lower household incomes are much more likely to say they are pessimistic about their own future than those in households that earn more:

**Would you say you are optimistic or pessimistic about: Your own future?**



**Part Two: The Conservative leadership race**

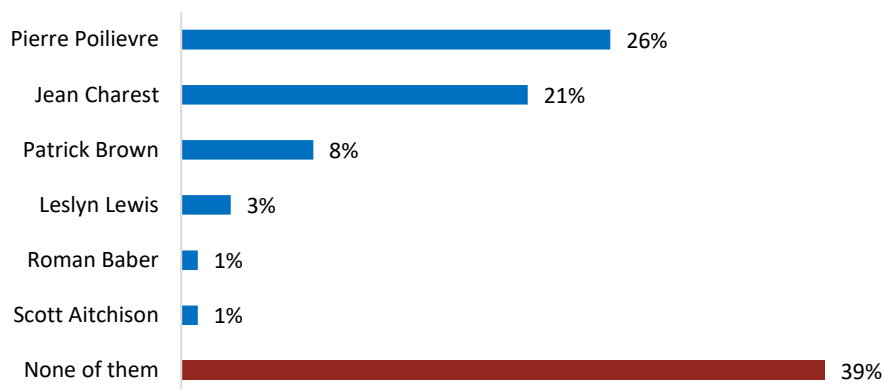
The party looking to capitalize on a mood potentially more favourable to change is amid a leadership race. The early favourites for leader of the Conservative Party of Canada – MP Pierre Poilievre and former Quebec Premier Jean Charest – have more separation from the pack than they did at the beginning of the race. Still, neither’s appeal has moved. One-quarter (26%) say they find Poilievre the most appealing candidate, while one-in-five (21%) say so of Charest, statistically identical numbers to those seen in March.

Meanwhile, fewer Canadians find MP Leslyn Lewis (3%) appealing as a candidate, dropping her behind Brampton Mayor Patrick Brown, who is seen as appealing to one-in-twelve (8%). However, Brown’s campaign has been leaking oil in recent weeks. First, it lost the support of two Conservative MPs who switched their allegiance to Poilievre. Then the campaign co-chair MP Michelle Garner Rempel left to consider, and then reject, a run at the Alberta United Conservative Party leadership, taking with her Brown’s campaign manager.

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**Which of the following people would you personally find most appealing as the next leader of the CPC?  
(All respondents, n=5,032)**



**Party dynamics define competition between Charest and Poilievre**

Despite earning more votes than the Liberals in the last two elections, the Conservatives under Andrew Scheer in 2019 and Erin O'Toole in 2021 have failed to form government. Whomever leads the party next will need to find the votes necessary, perhaps across party lines, to overcome the Liberals' vote efficiency which has seen that party earn enough seats to remain in power in the last two elections.

As a leadership candidate, Poilievre is more likely to appeal to past right-wing voters than his rivals. Three-in-five (57%) of those who voted CPC in the fall election, and seven-in-ten of those who voted for the People's Party of Canada, say they find Poilievre the most appealing candidate.

Meanwhile, Charest is more appealing to past Liberal voters (38%) than any of the other choices offered, though those who voted Liberal in 2021 are slightly more likely to favour none of the above (43%).

In 2021, 32 of Quebec's 78 seats went to the Bloc Québécois. Any additional seats the Conservatives could add in Quebec would greatly help the odds of the party forming government again. For those who supported Bloc in the fall election, as many find Poilievre appealing (21%) as Charest (23%):

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Which of the following people would you personally find most appealing as the next leader of the CPC?							
	Total (n=5,032)	2021 Federal Vote					
		CPC (n=1,398)	Liberal (n=1,370)	NDP (n=744)	BQ (n=232)	Green (n=143)	PPC (n=265)
Pierre Poilievre	26%	57%	4%	7%	21%	10%	70%
Jean Charest	21%	14%	38%	17%	23%	29%	2%
Patrick Brown	8%	7%	12%	7%	5%	10%	1%
Leslyn Lewis	3%	6%	1%	4%	1%	5%	6%
Scott Aitchison	1%	1%	2%	2%	1%	1%	0%
Roman Baber	1%	1%	0%	0%	0%	0%	9%
None of them	39%	14%	43%	64%	49%	46%	11%

As the leading face of the Conservative party changes, the universe of potential voters may expand or contract. Respondents were asked if any of the current leading candidates for CPC leader would make them more or less likely to support the party in the next federal election. One-quarter (26%) say they would be more likely to vote for a CPC party with Poilievre at the helm, more than the one-in-five (17%) who say so of Charest. However, Poilievre appears to be more polarizing than his rival. One-in-five (23%) say Poilievre leading the CPC would have no effect on their vote. For Charest, that figure is higher (35%) ([see detailed tables](#)).

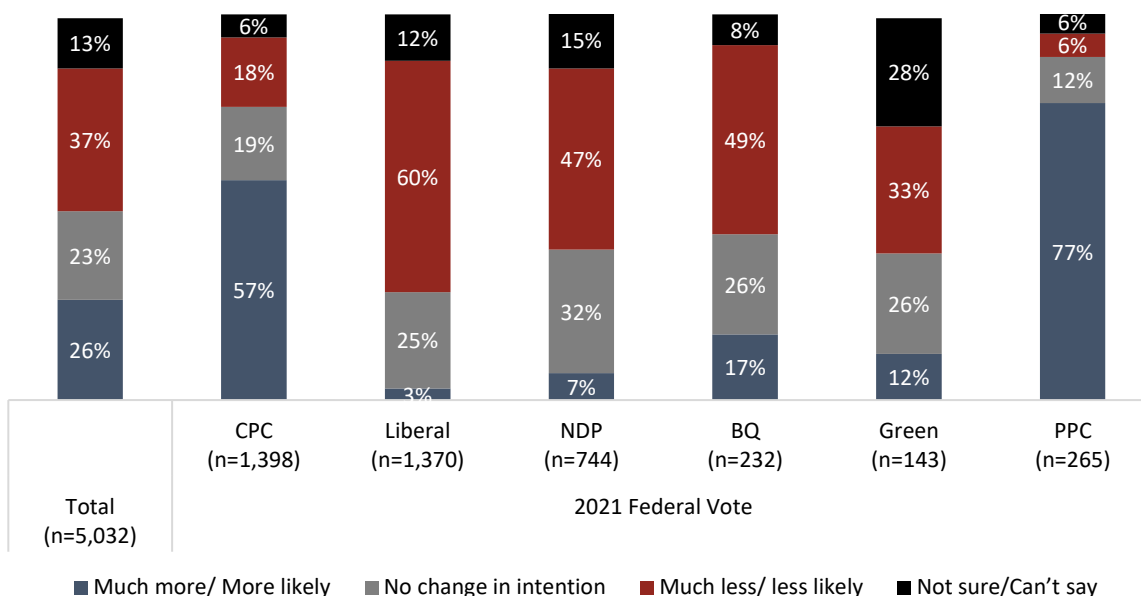
### **Poilievre has a ceiling problem**

If the goal is to expand the pool of potential CPC voters, Poilievre appears likely to bring past PPC voters under the Conservative party tent, but few from other parties. Three-quarters (77%) of those who voted PPC in September say they would be more likely to vote for the CPC if it was led by Poilievre. Meanwhile, a majority of past Liberal voters (60%) and half of those who voted NDP (47%) and Bloc (49%) say they would be less likely to vote for a Poilievre-led Conservative party:

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### More or less likely to vote CPC led by Poilievre



### Charest may have a base problem

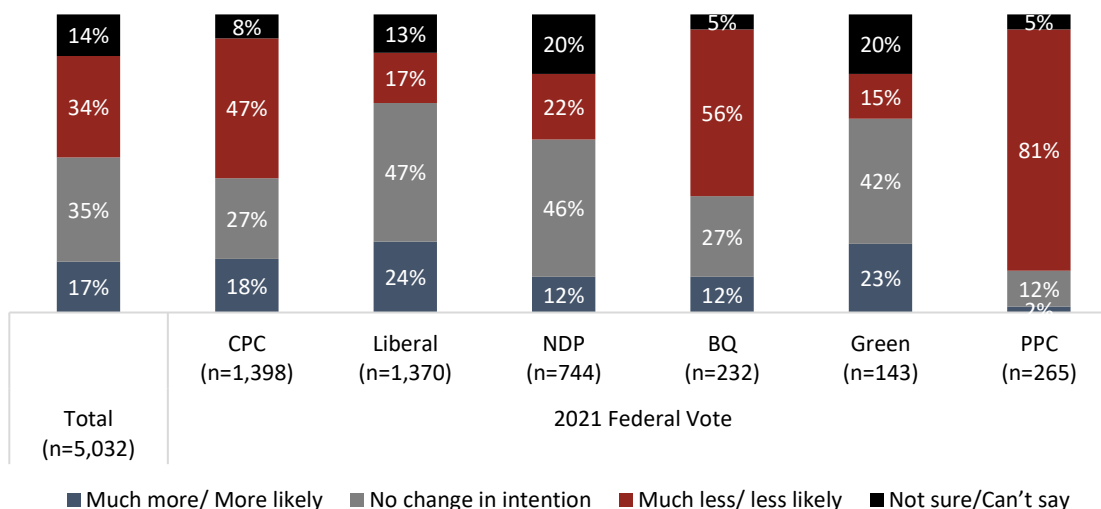
For Charest, the issue is at best, losing right-of-centre voters, at worst, splitting the Conservative Party altogether. Half (47%) of past CPC voters and four-in-five (81%) of those who voted PPC in the last federal election say they would be less likely to vote for a Charest-led Conservative party. Still, one-quarter (24%) of past Liberal voters say they would be more likely to vote Conservative if Charest was at the helm:

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### More or less likely to vote CPC led by Charest



Looking at this another way, taking those who are more likely minus those who are less likely to support each, the party differences between Charest and Poilievre become exacerbated.

For Brown, he is a net negative among all partisan groups. However, should he boost Charest's leadership chances by convincing his supporters to back Charest on the final ballot – and there's been some speculation that the two long-time friends have formed some sort of alliance, though Charest has denied such a pact exists – Charest has the potential to pick up more support among past Liberal voters.

Would you be more or less likely to support the Conservative Party of Canada in the next federal election if they were led by: (Net: More likely shown)							
	Total (n=5,032)	2021 Federal Vote					
		CPC (n=1,398)	Liberal (n=1,370)	NDP (n=744)	BQ (n=232)	Green (n=143)	PPC (n=265)
Pierre Poilievre	-11%	39%	-57%	-40%	-32%	-21%	71%
Jean Charest	-17%	-29%	7%	-10%	-44%	8%	-79%
Patrick Brown	-23%	-19%	-24%	-23%	-36%	-9%	-47%

### Part Three: Trudeau approval

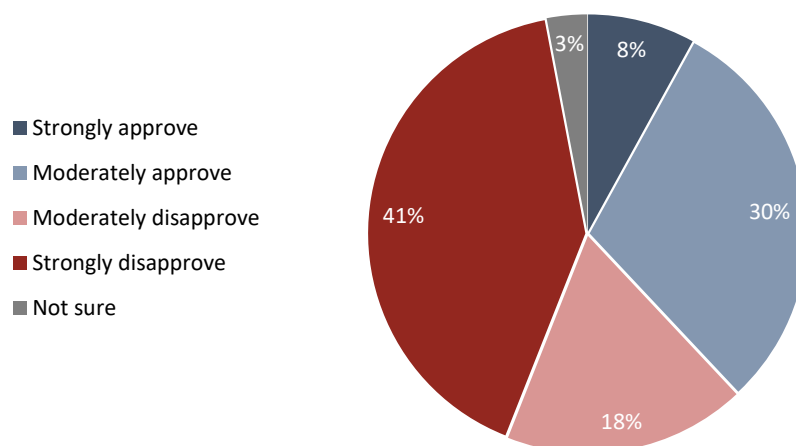
Economically, the country is in dire straits. Inflation is at its highest level in 39 years and Canadians are feeling the financial pressure. Approaching half (45%) say their finances are worse off than they were a year ago, while one-third are looking to the future and seeing no relief.

**Related:** Highest inflation rates in forty years have Canadians tightening belts, bracing for more financial turbulence

Some have claimed that government spending has fueled rising prices, while others claim that spending was necessary to get Canadians through the pandemic, and also due to external factors beyond the government's control. Indeed, compared to other G20 nations, Canada's inflation has been better controlled.

Nonetheless, this and other factors have contributed to a critical environment when it comes to Prime Minister Justin Trudeau. Two-in-five Canadians (41%) strongly disapprove of him this quarter – higher than the number who approve or strongly approve of him combined:

**Prime Minister Trudeau Approval  
(All respondents, n=5,032)**

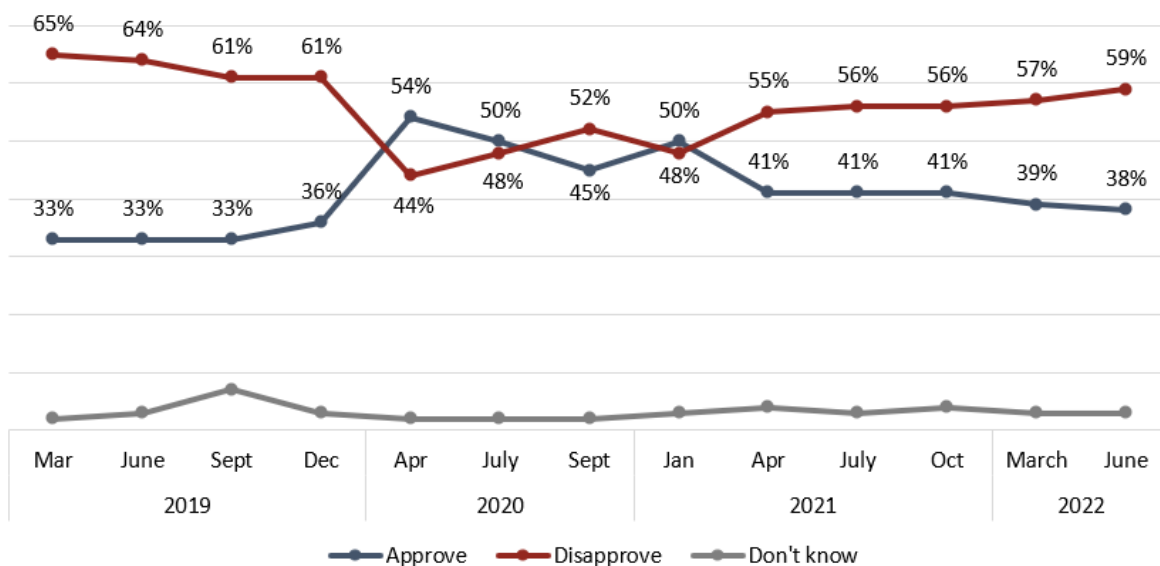


In fact, the Prime Minister's approval is worse now than at any point before the COVID-19 pandemic. In 2019, amid corruption allegations and the SNC-Lavalin scandal, Trudeau's disapproval surpassed three-in-five:

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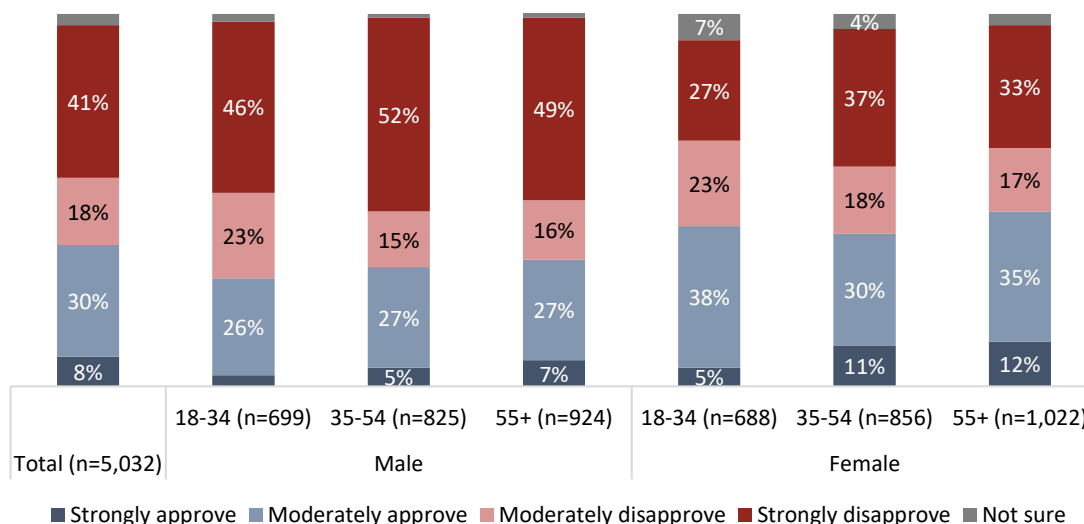
### Trudeau Approval



### Age and gender

Trudeau's performance ratings remain highest among women, and women over the age of 54 to be specific. That group offers him close to an even split between approval and disapproval. Overall, Trudeau's approval is 12 points higher among women (44%) than men (32%):

### Prime Minister Trudeau Approval



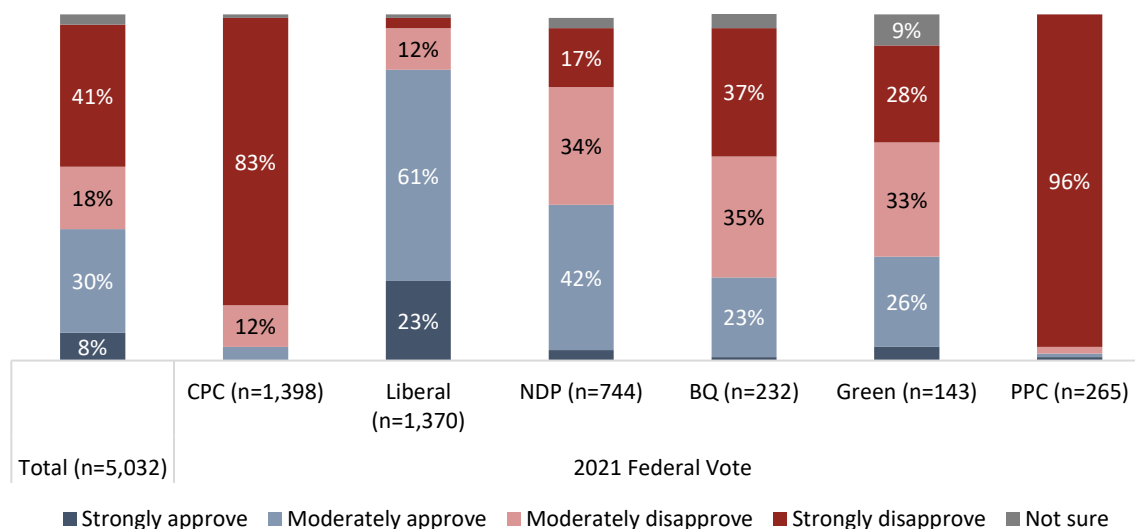
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## Party affiliation

Those who supported his party in 2021 are still largely happy with what they have seen from the prime minister. That said, he no longer retains majority approval from any other partisan grouping – [as he did from NDP supporters in the past](#) – while past CPC and PPC voters are near-unanimously critical:

### Prime Minister Trudeau Approval



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

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