

CPC Crossroads: Disaffected Liberals, NDP voters bolster Charest's ranks; Conservative base holds with Poilievre

Both candidates garner 34% in hypothetical vote faceoff; but Charest lead over Liberals double Poilievre's

July 25, 2022 – After five months of campaigning, the outcome of the third Conservative Party leadership campaign in six years looms over the horizon.

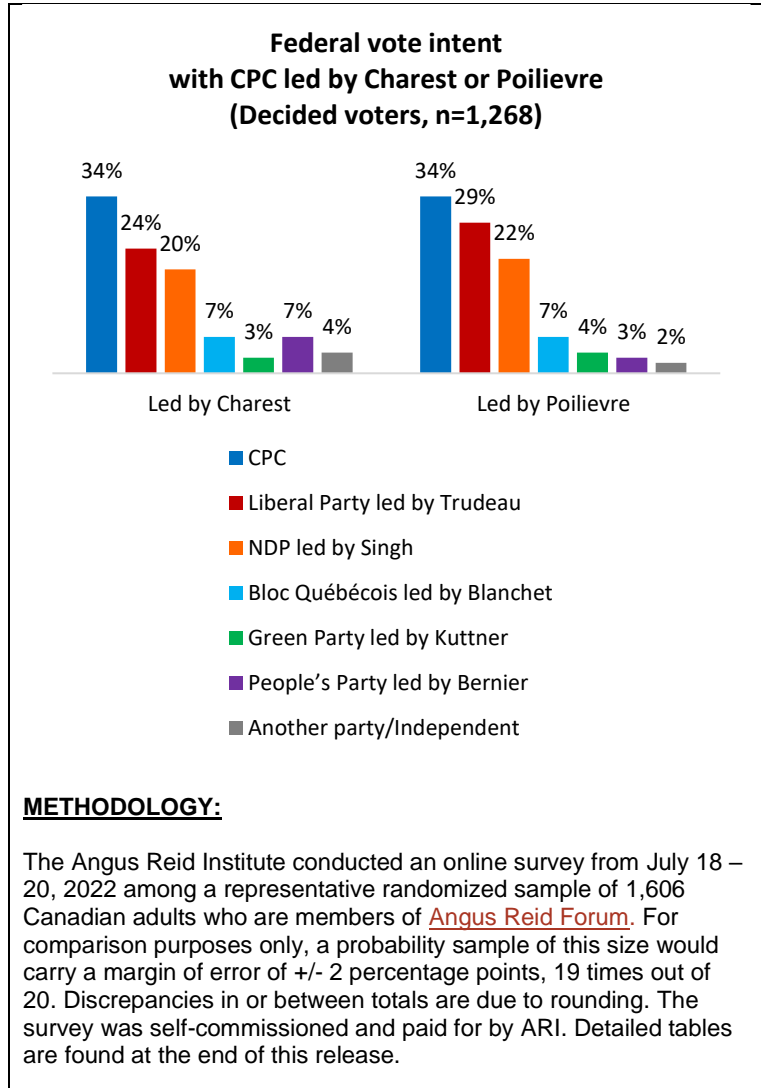
As [a swelling membership base](#) mull over the future direction of the CPC, a new study from the non-profit Angus Reid Institute finds the top two leadership candidates earn a similar level of vote intention. Indeed, 34 per cent of Canadians say they would support the CPC led by each – nearly identical to the number who supported the party in 2019 and 2021 in its failed bids to form government.

The leaders, however, have different strengths. Former Quebec Premier Jean Charest draws vote intention from close to one-in-five 2021 Liberal voters (17%) and one-in-ten past New Democrats (10%), while receiving intended support from 72 per cent of those who supported the CPC last October. He does, however, lose support from 12 per cent of the 2021 CPC base to the People's Party. Nonetheless, his appeal to centre-left voters creates a 10-point gap over the Liberals.

Carleton MP Pierre Poilievre, meantime, draws support from those who voted for the PPC in 2021, alongside 85 per cent of past CPC voters. He receives little to no support from past Liberals or New Democrats.

Due to this lack of support for Poilievre, the combined Liberal-NDP portion of the voting population climbs seven points under his hypothetical leadership, with the Liberals receiving 29 per cent support and the NDP 22 per cent. A Poilievre-led CPC holds a five-point vote intention advantage over the Liberal Party.

Much of the shifting dynamics of vote intention based on leadership may have to do with the policies proffered by each candidate. The Angus Reid Institute presented five different policies – based on each



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candidate's official website and public comments – to respondents, finding much more receptiveness to Charest's published platform than Poilievre's.

Poilievre's strategy has focused on removing so-called "gatekeepers", including firing the governor of the Bank of Canada, and supporting the Freedom Convoy. Elements of his campaign connect well with past CPC voters and PPC supporters, but others fall flat. Charest's campaign, meanwhile, appears to speak louder to disenchanted Liberals and New Democrats – many of whom now disapprove of Prime Minister Justin Trudeau and believe it's time for a change in government.

Ideas such as increasing defence spending to the NATO target of two per cent of GDP and cancelling the carbon tax to replace it with an industry-based tax, are more supported than opposed overall. The benefit for Charest is that his proposals are not only strongly supported by the CPC base, but also garner enthusiasm from past NDP, Liberal and Bloc Québécois voters.

More Key Findings:

- With Charest as leader the CPC hold a four-point advantage over the Liberal Party in vote intention in vote-rich Ontario. With Poilievre as leader, it trails by three.
- Both Charest and Poilievre dominate vote intention among men. A party led by either doubles the Liberal party in vote intention. Charest, however, holds a considerable advantage over Poilievre among potential female voters.
- Two-in-five (38%) Canadians approve of Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, a number unchanged over the past five months. Trudeau's approval hits its highest point in Ontario at 43 per cent. More than half (56%) of Canadians disapprove of Trudeau, including three-quarters in Alberta.
- More than half of Canadians (55%) say it is time for a change in government, including 93 per cent of past CPC voters, 16 per cent of past Liberals and half (49%) of past New Democrats.

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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- Two-in-five approve of PM
- Almost one-in-five 2021 Liberals say it's time for a change in government

Part One: Vote intent

The Conservative leadership race is in its final quarter. As [more than 670,000 members](#) await their chance to vote for one of the five [remaining](#) candidates – Scott Aitchison, Roman Baber, Jean Charest, Leslyn Lewis or Pierre Poilievre – to lead their party after Sept. 10, some of the candidates will hold in August [a third official, party-hosted debate](#). (Two other [unofficial debates](#) were held in English in May and July.) Lewis and Poilievre, [one of the frontrunners](#) in the campaign alongside Charest, are [expected to skip](#) the third and presumably final debate.

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

Vote dynamics under the two frontrunners

The Angus Reid Institute asked Canadians about their vote intentions, offering them the opportunity to evaluate the political field with a CPC led by either of the two frontrunners. In both scenarios, the Conservatives garner vote intention from one-third (34%) of Canadians, leading the rival Liberals.

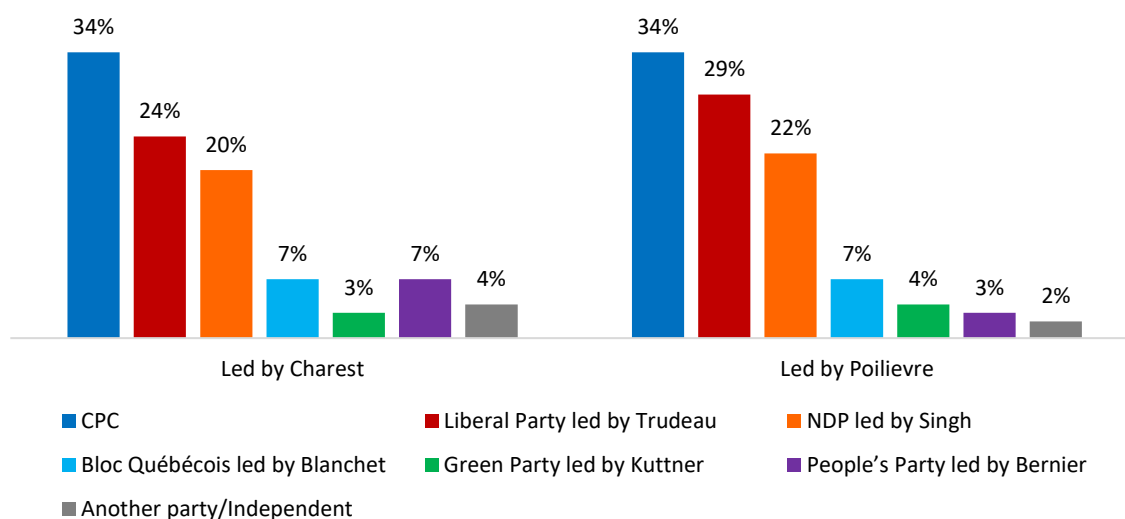
However, the makeup of the vote is significantly different depending on whether the CPC are led by Charest or Poilievre. In the Charest-led CPC scenario, one-quarter (24%) say they would vote for the Liberal party if an election were held today. Comparatively, in the scenario where Poilievre leads the party, three-in-ten (29%) say they would vote Liberal, a five-point gain for that party.

In the Poilievre scenario, the vote intent for the People's Party and other, non-mainstream parties is halved, to five per cent combined. That figure is 11 per cent combined in the scenario where Charest wins the leadership:

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**Federal vote intent
with CPC led by Charest or Poilievre
(Decided voters, n=1,268)**



The Poilievre core versus the Charest coalition?

The distribution of potential votes is further illuminated when looking at vote retention. Broadly, Poilievre retains the core share of the Conservative vote, but pulls few past voters of other parties. Charest, on the other hand, retains fewer past Conservatives – with one-in-eight (12%) moving their vote to the PPC – but draws in nearly one-in-five (17%) past Liberal voters and one-in-ten of those who voted for the NDP in the fall.

Vote intention with Charest vs. Poilievre as leader (Decided voters)					
	Total (n=1,268)	2021 Federal Vote			
		CPC (n=373)	Liberal (n=391)	NDP (n=195)	BQ (n=93*)
Jean Charest					
CPC	34%	72%	17%	10%	14%
Liberal	24%	2%	64%	7%	3%
NDP	20%	2%	15%	77%	5%
BQ	7%	2%	1%	1%	75%
Green	3%	2%	3%	3%	0%
PPC	7%	12%	0%	0%	1%
Other	4%	8%	1%	1%	1%
Pierre Poilievre					
CPC	34%	85%	2%	3%	10%
Liberal	29%	4%	78%	10%	4%

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NDP	22%	5%	15%	81%	10%
BQ	7%	2%	1%	1%	76%
Green	4%	1%	4%	4%	0%
PPC	3%	1%	0%	0%	0%
Other	2%	2%	0%	1%	0%

**Smaller sample size, interpret with caution*

Age and gender a factor

There is also a variation in the vote intention between the two candidates along age and gender lines. Both hold a significant potential advantage over the Liberals with men. But Charest closes the gap between the Liberals and the Conservatives among women.

Poillievre draws in a larger share of younger potential voters than Charest. Charest on the other hand is more popular with those over the age of 54, an age group with [a higher propensity to vote](#):

Vote intention with Charest vs. Poillievre as leader (Decided voters)						
	Total (n=1,268)	Gender		Age		
		Male (n=633)	Female (n=630)	18-34 (n=265)	35-54 (n=380)	55+ (n=624)
Jean Charest						
CPC	34%	40%	29%	26%	35%	37%
Liberal	24%	19%	29%	18%	20%	29%
NDP	20%	15%	25%	35%	22%	13%
BQ	7%	8%	6%	5%	5%	9%
Green	3%	2%	4%	2%	4%	3%
PPC	7%	10%	5%	11%	9%	5%
Other	4%	6%	3%	3%	5%	5%
Pierre Poillievre						
CPC	34%	43%	24%	31%	38%	32%
Liberal	29%	23%	35%	21%	22%	36%
NDP	22%	17%	27%	36%	24%	15%
BQ	7%	9%	6%	4%	5%	10%
Green	4%	2%	5%	3%	4%	4%
PPC	3%	3%	2%	4%	4%	1%
Other	2%	3%	2%	1%	3%	2%

Both men competitive in Ontario, Charest holds advantage in Quebec

Poillievre receives a larger share of vote intent in the Prairies than Charest, but elections for the Conservatives have been won and lost outside of that stronghold. In Ontario, both earn the vote intent of around one-third of potential voters, putting them near the Liberals. However, Charest garners a larger share of vote intent in Quebec (26%) than does Poillievre (21%):

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Vote intention with Charest vs. Poilievre as leader (Decided voters)							
	Total (n=1,268)	Region					
		BC (n=165)	AB (n=121)	SK/MB (n=198)	ON (n=364)	QC (n=324)	ATL (n=125)
Jean Charest							
CPC	34%	35%	45%	41%	33%	26%	43%
Liberal	24%	22%	14%	16%	29%	23%	26%
NDP	20%	28%	17%	24%	23%	13%	17%
BQ	7%	-	-	-	-	28%	-
Green	3%	4%	1%	2%	4%	2%	3%
PPC	7%	6%	9%	12%	8%	6%	8%
Other	4%	5%	13%	5%	3%	3%	3%
Pierre Poilievre							
CPC	34%	35%	62%	52%	30%	21%	33%
Liberal	29%	28%	12%	17%	33%	30%	38%
NDP	22%	26%	17%	25%	27%	16%	18%
BQ	7%	-	-	-	-	30%	-
Green	4%	4%	2%	3%	6%	2%	3%
PPC	3%	2%	3%	2%	3%	1%	6%
Other	2%	5%	4%	1%	2%	2%	1%

Part Two: Leaders' proposed policies

Poilievre's policies resonate more with past CPC voters

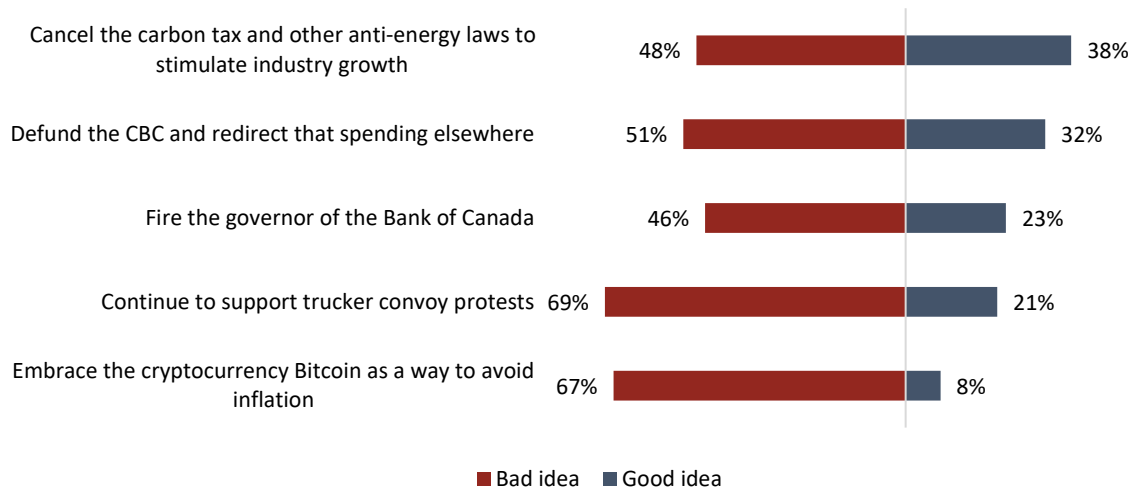
Poilievre and Charest have charted distinct courses for the Conservative party. ARI surveyed Canadians on some of the key policy proposals both candidates have made throughout the campaign and on their [campaign websites](#).

Overall, Canadians are more likely to opine that Poilievre's proposals – [cancelling the carbon tax](#), [defunding the CBC](#), [firing the governor of the Bank of Canada](#), [supporting the trucker convoy protests](#), [embracing Bitcoin](#) – are bad ideas than good ones. Half are not in favour of cancelling the carbon tax and defunding the CBC. Double the number of Canadians call firing BoC governor Tiff Macklem a bad idea (46%) than a good one (23%). Support is much lower for supporting the Freedom Convoy and cryptocurrencies (Poilievre has been criticized for promoting Bitcoin as a way to ["opt out of inflation"](#) in May, weeks before [the cryptocurrency market tanked](#).)

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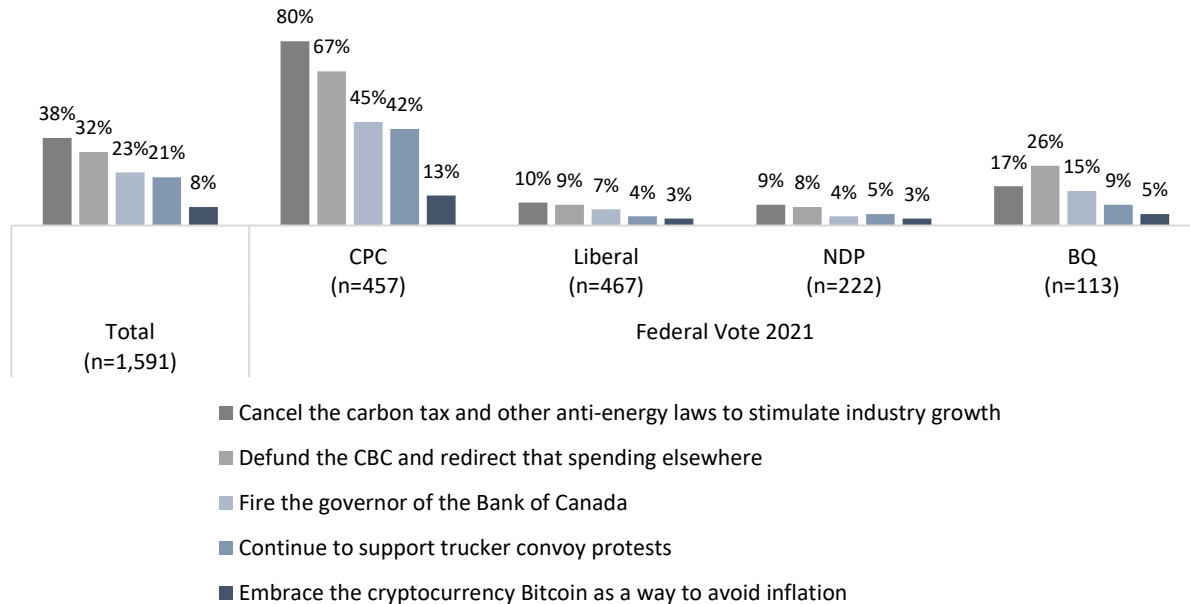
**Poilievre policies: good idea or bad idea?
(All respondents, n=1,591)**



However, speaking to Poilievre’s appeal to past Conservative voters, his ideas are viewed much more favourably among those who voted for the CPC in the 2021 general election. Four-in-five in that group call stimulating oil and gas industry growth by cancelling the carbon tax and other anti-energy laws a good idea. Two-thirds (67%) of past CPC voters want to see CBC funding redirected elsewhere. Still, fewer than half of Conservative voters call firing Macklem or supporting the convoy protests a good idea. Few (13%) say so of embracing Bitcoin.

Among those who last voted Liberal, NDP or BQ, few call any of his policies good ideas:

**Poillievre policies: good idea or bad idea?
(Percentage selecting 'good idea' shown)**



Charest’s policies have more cross-partisan appeal

ARI also presented Canadians with five key Charest campaign promises. Fully two-thirds (66%) say making it illegal to blockade critical infrastructure is a good idea to pursue. Charest [criticized Poillievre](#) for his continued support of protesters in Ottawa in earlier this year, even suggesting Poillievre should be disqualified from the race for doing so.

Two other ideas generate much more support than opposition from Canadians. Increasing national defense spending to 2.0 per cent of GDP (57% good idea, 20% bad) and cancelling the federal carbon tax to replace it with an industry specific version (43% good idea, 27% bad) are both relatively popular.

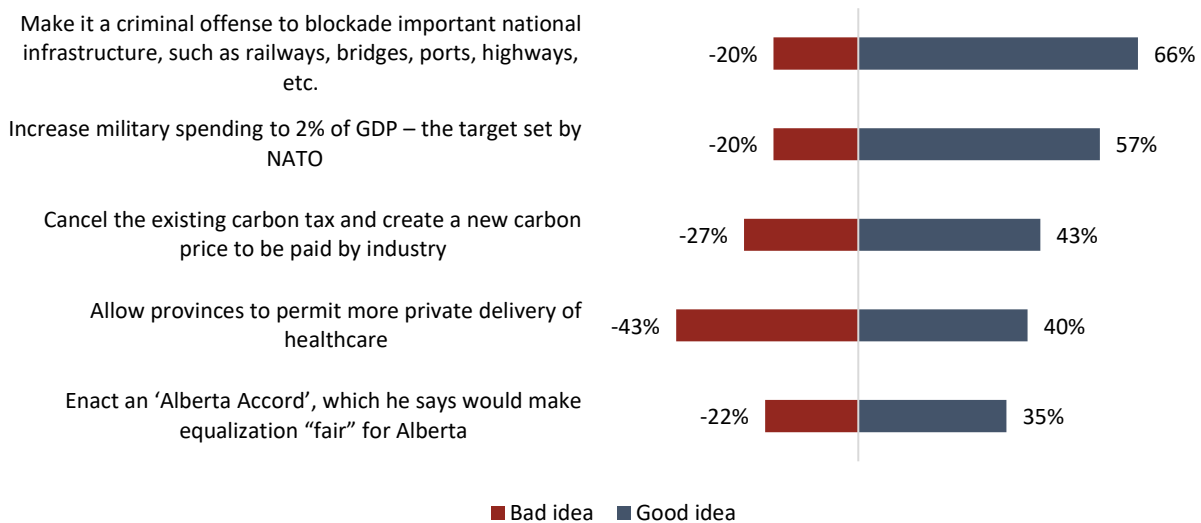
The allowance of more private health care delivery is controversial. Charest has proposed allowing provinces to [increase the capacity for private care](#), something that 40 per cent of Canadians view as good policy and 43 per cent view negatively.

One other campaign proposal that has turned heads is a new equalization formula specifically for Alberta. This addresses a long-held critique from Albertans that they [give more than they get](#) in federation. Details are sparse to date, but Charest claims he would make equalization “[fair](#)” for the oil producing province. One-in-three Canadians (35%) say this is a good idea, while one-quarter disagree (22%). Perhaps unsurprisingly, the policy receives great enthusiasm in Alberta ([see detailed tables](#)):

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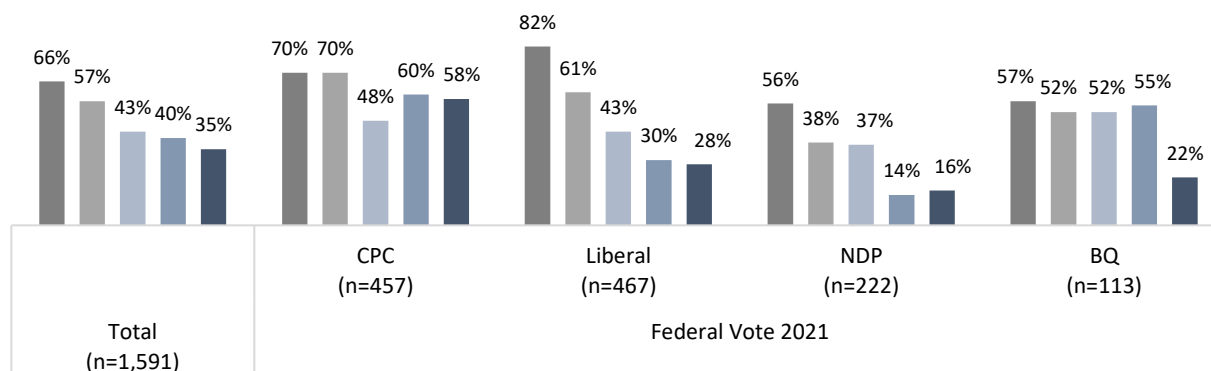
**Charest policies: good idea or bad idea?
(All respondents, n=1,591)**



While Charest has not connected as closely as Poilievre has with the Conservative base, four of his publicly available proposals are receive majority support among this group. Comparatively, that is only the case for two of Poilievre's.

Support for Charest's five ideas is also significantly higher among all other partisan groups compared to Poilievre's:

**Charest policies: good idea or bad idea?
(Percentage selecting 'good idea' shown)**



- Make it a criminal offense to blockade important national infrastructure, such as railways, bridges, ports, highways, etc.
- Increase military spending to 2% of GDP – the target set by NATO
- Cancel the existing carbon tax and create a new carbon price to be paid by industry
- Allow provinces to permit more private delivery of healthcare
- Enact an 'Alberta Accord', which he says would make equalization "fair" for Alberta

Part Three: The Trudeau Factor

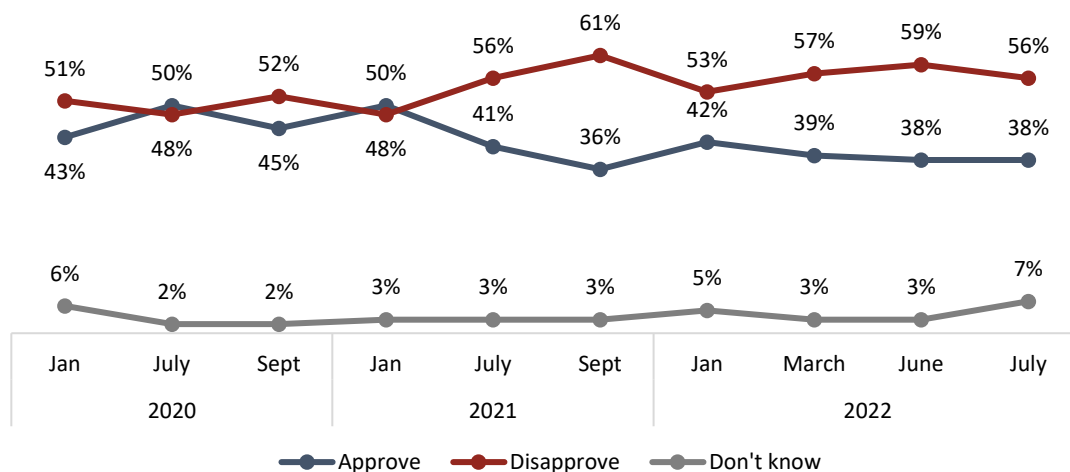
Two-in-five approve of PM

As the Conservatives decide the direction of their party, the Liberals' leader maintains a stable level of (dis)approval. Two-in-five (38%) say they approve of Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, while approaching three-in-five (56%) do not. Trudeau's approval has remained consistent in 2022, after a more dynamic 2021:

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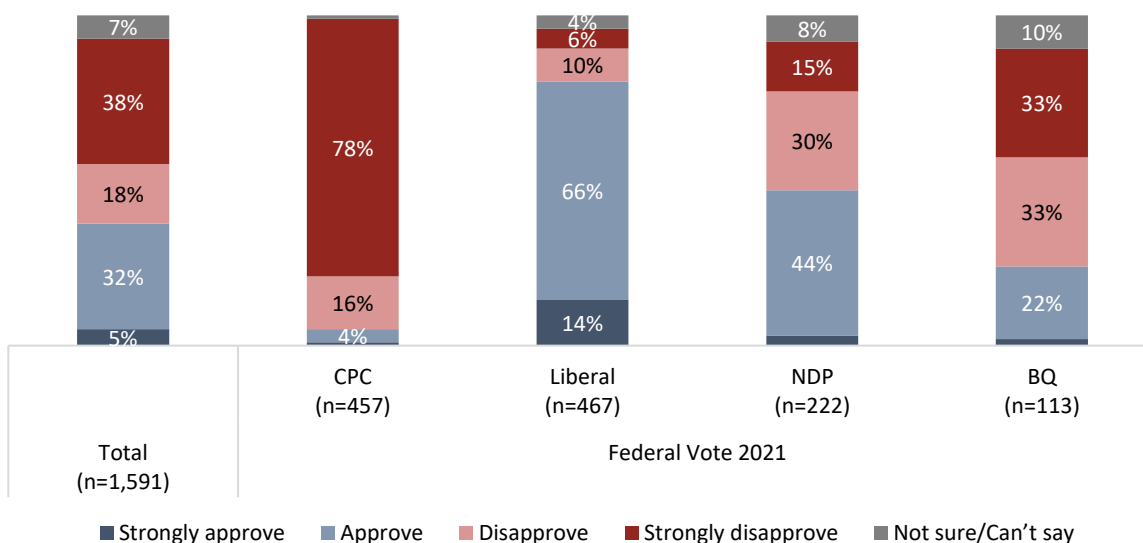
Approval of Prime Minister Justin Trudeau



Trudeau and the Liberals are in a secure position of governance despite a minority in parliament because of a [confidence-and-supply agreement](#) with the NDP. However, approval of Trudeau among those who voted for the NDP in the fall is split: similar numbers give the prime minister a thumbs-up (46%) as a thumbs-down (45%). Even among past Liberal voters, approval is not unanimous. One-in-six in that group disapprove of their leader.

Nearly all who voted CPC in the fall disapprove of Trudeau (96%). They are joined by two-thirds (66%) of past Bloc Québécois voters:

Approval of Prime Minister Justin Trudeau

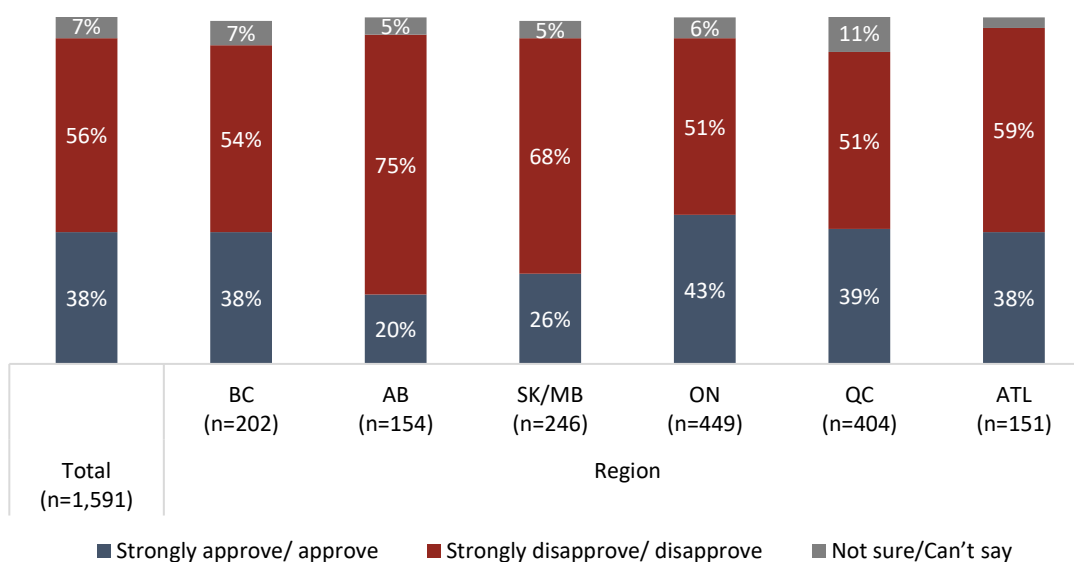


In Ontario, more than two-in-five (43%) approve of Trudeau, the highest measure in the country. That doubles the lowest mark, seen in Alberta (20%). However, at least half of respondents in all regions of the country disapprove of the prime minister:

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Approval of Prime Minister Justin Trudeau



Almost one-in-five 2021 Liberals say it's time for a change in government

More than half (55%) of Canadians believe it's time for a change in government, despite being less than a year removed from the 2021 election. One-third (33%) disagree.

Notably, past Bloc voters are more divided on this question than those who voted NDP. Despite sharing some of the power of the current government through the confidence-and-supply agreement, half (49%) of past NDP voters say it's time for a change in government. They are joined by one-in-six (16%) of those who voted Liberal.

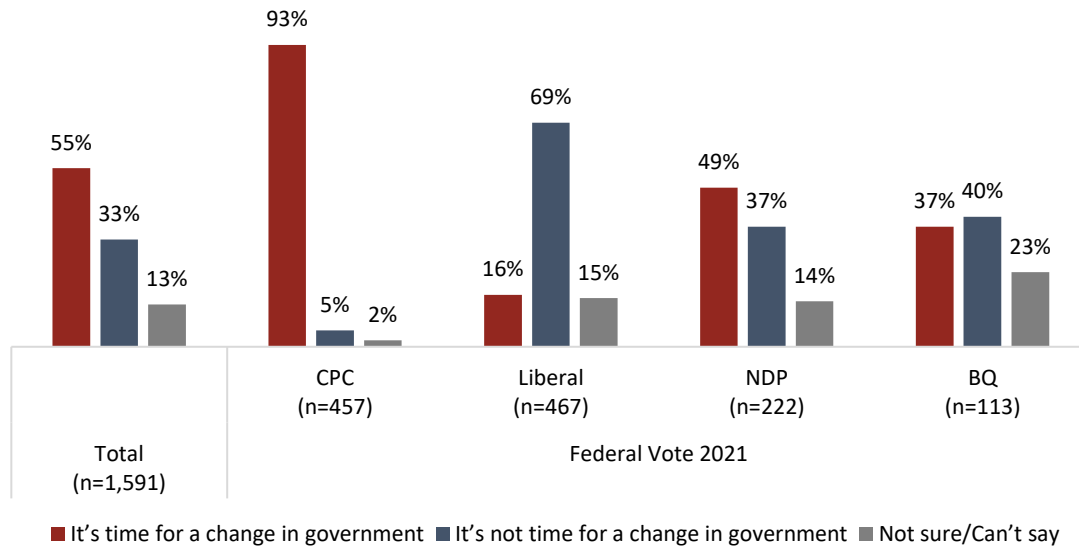
Still, seven-in-ten (69%) Liberal voters say it's not the right time to change government. Nearly all (93%) past Conservative voters disagree:

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Which of the following two statements best reflects how you feel today when it comes to the federal political picture?



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

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