

As newsrooms grapple with shifting media landscape, most Canadians oppose government intervention

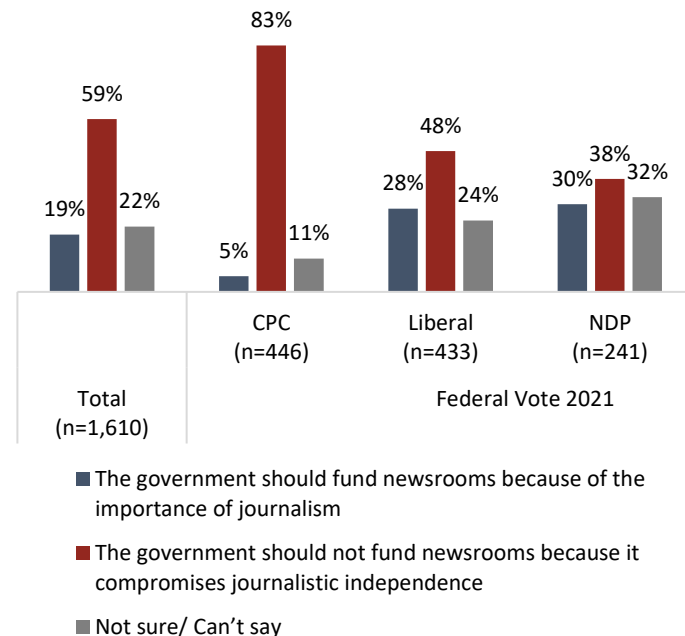
Consolidation also opposed as daily print readership evaporates as news consumption moves online

July 13, 2023 – The top story of Canadian news in recent years is one of decline – falling revenues, shrinking work forces of journalists, and fewer readers, watchers and listeners.

This has left Canada's media companies looking for answers. New data from the non-profit Angus Reid Institute has Canadians ruling out at least two proposed solutions. A majority (59%) oppose the government funding of private newsrooms, believing it "compromises journalistic independence". A similar proportion (57%) say the consolidation of media – such as [the recently considered but ultimately rejected coming together of Torstar and Postmedia](#) – should be discouraged "so there is more competition in news coverage in Canada". In opposition are minorities who say "consolidation is necessary for the survival of newspapers" (20%) and "the government needs to fund newsrooms because of the importance of journalism" (19%).

What remains is uncertain – [though earlier released ARI data found Canadians in support of the goal of Bill C-18](#) to funnel money from the "Big Tech" duo of Meta and Google to newsrooms if not the means. However, there is no stop to the seismic shift to the media consumption landscape happening under newsrooms' feet. Even as recently as 2016, two-in-five (42%) Canadians said they read a print publication daily for their news. Now that figure has halved (19%). Television (71% to 52%) and radio news (57% to 45%) have also declined in prominence, though they remain important sources of information for majorities of Canadians over the age of 54. In their place, nearly all (89%) Canadians turn to the internet for news, leaving newsrooms to compete in a crowded advertising dollar ecosystem dominated by the [two Big Tech apex predators](#).

Which of these statements is closest to your view, even if you agree with neither entirely:



METHODOLOGY:

The Angus Reid Institute conducted an online survey from July 4-6, 2023 among a representative randomized sample of 1,610 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:

- Though the government funding of private newsrooms is unpopular among Canadians, half (47%) disagree the federal government should completely defund CBC. One-third (36%) want to see CBC's funding cut off, including approaching three-quarters (72%) of past CPC voters.
- Fewer than one-in-five (17%) supported the now-dead merger between Torstar and Postmedia. Nearly as many were opposed (43%) as uncertain (40%, [see detailed tables](#)).
- Three-quarters (74%) of Canadians over the age of 54 say they turn on the TV daily for their news. One-quarter (26%) of 18- to 34-year-olds say the same. In fact, as many of the youngest Canadian adults (28%) say they get news from podcasts on a typical day.

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: Readership and consolidation

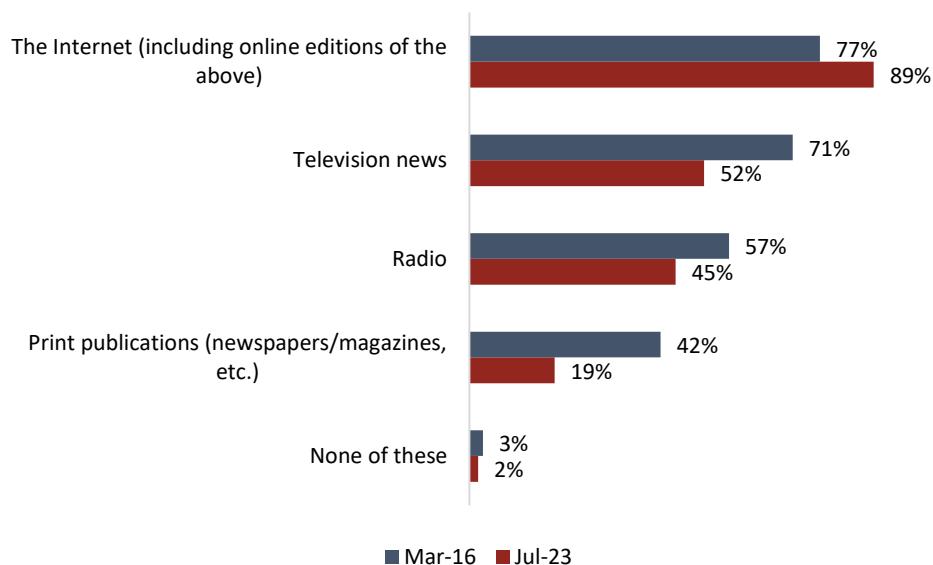
Print readership has declined as media consumption moves to internet

As internet-based news options – including podcasts, aggregators, and social media platforms – continue to [permeate and saturate](#) Canadians' media consumption habits, the role of print publications has moved from a place of prominence to an afterthought. Asked how they gather news and information on any given day, just one-in-five Canadians (19%) say that they utilize a print source, a proportion that has halved over the past seven years and continues a steady [downward trend](#). The number of Canadian adults using online editions and other internet sources has risen 12 points over that same period, while television and radio have also diminished:

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Do you get any news from any of the following?



While there are important generational differences in terms of Canadians' news consumption, print tops out at just 25 per cent utilization among those 65 years of age and older. Young people rely almost solely on the internet, while television news is a key source of information for those over the age of 54:

Thinking about a typical day in your life, do you get any news from any of the following?						
	Total (n=1,610)	Age				
		18-34 (n=429)	35-44 (n=309)	45-54 (n=209)	55-64 (n=282)	65+ (n=380)
The Internet (including online editions of TV, radio, newspapers, etc.)	89%	93%	91%	88%	85%	86%
TV news	52%	26%	40%	50%	67%	79%
Radio	45%	33%	42%	50%	55%	52%
Print publications	19%	17%	13%	16%	22%	25%
None of these	2%	3%	2%	4%	1%	0%

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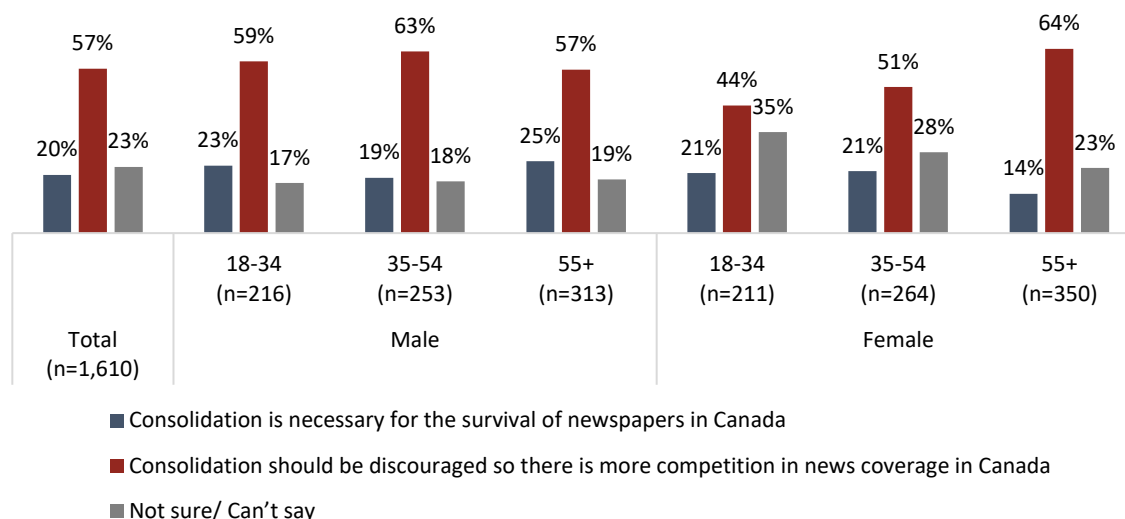
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Most want media consolidation to be discouraged to keep news coverage diverse

With local papers and media organizations struggling to maintain advertising and fund journalistic endeavours, consolidation of newsrooms has emerged as [a solution](#) for many media companies. Large organizations including Rogers, Bell, Corus, and Quebecor Inc., own a vast network of websites, radio stations, and papers in Canada which tends to [improve prospects](#) for advertisers, but increase [challenges for high-quality local journalism](#).

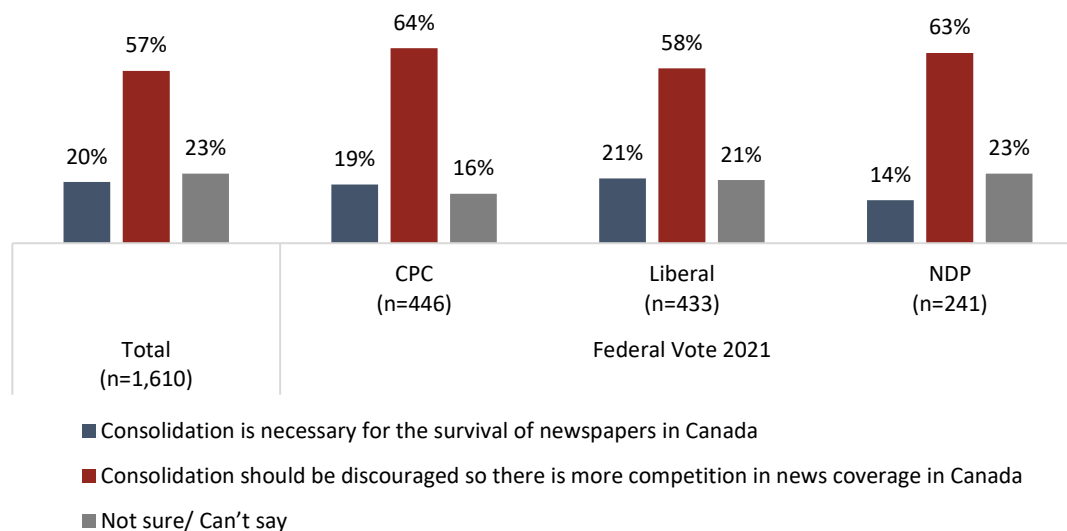
If Canadians had to choose, more, non-integrated news would be their choice. Close to three-in-five (57%) say that consolidation should be discouraged, while one-in-five (20%) say that consolidation is needed in order to keep newspapers afloat. Notably, as it stands, fewer than one-in-six (15%) Canadians said they currently pay for an online news subscription in [data released by ARI earlier this week](#).

Which of these statements is closer to your view, even if you agree with neither entirely:



In a relatively rare moment of cross-partisan agreement, at least 58 per cent of those who supported each of the major federal parties in 2021 say that they would discourage consolidation:

What do you think? Which of these statements is closer to your view, even if you agree with neither entirely:



One extremely high-profile example of consolidation fell through this week, when it was announced that talks between Torstar and Postmedia had broken off. This anticipated merger was opposed by 43 per cent of Canadians and supported by 17 per cent, with a large contingent of Canadians uncertain whether this would be a good or a bad thing ([see detailed tables](#)).

Part Two: The government's role in news industry

The federal government under Prime Minister Justin Trudeau [has taken several steps to help the ailing journalism industry](#) in Canada. The government announced a near \$600-million support package in 2018 which includes financial assistance for print magazines, non-daily newspapers and digital periodicals, and tax credits on wages paid to newsroom employees, and for Canadians who subscribe to digital news. It also passed [Bill C-18 in an attempt to push the "Big Tech"](#) companies to compensate Canadian news companies for their content linked on sites such as Google News and Facebook. As those two websites have responded by announcing they will block Canadian news content when the law is officially enacted, it remains to be seen what effect Bill C-18 will have on the Canadian news environment.

[Related: While Canadians say 'Big Tech' should pay to share Canadian news, few see Online News Act as the solution](#)

Overall, the situation is still dire for newsrooms in the country. This year alone Bell laid off 1,300 employees including [top journalists at CTV National News](#). Meanwhile Postmedia, the parent company of dailies including the Vancouver Sun, Calgary Herald, Montreal Gazette, Ottawa Citizen, Toronto Sun and the National Post, [laid off 11 per cent of its editorial staff](#) earlier this year.

Canada's situation lands in the middle of a broader discussion as to what the government's role in media should be. Some argue [that journalism is a public good](#), and given the economic threat it faces from the shifting landscape, it [should receive public financing](#) to ensure there is trustworthy journalism available. Others worry that [any amount of government funding of journalism causes the perception, at least, or, worse, the possibility, of conflict of interest](#) in the media reporting on the government that funds it.

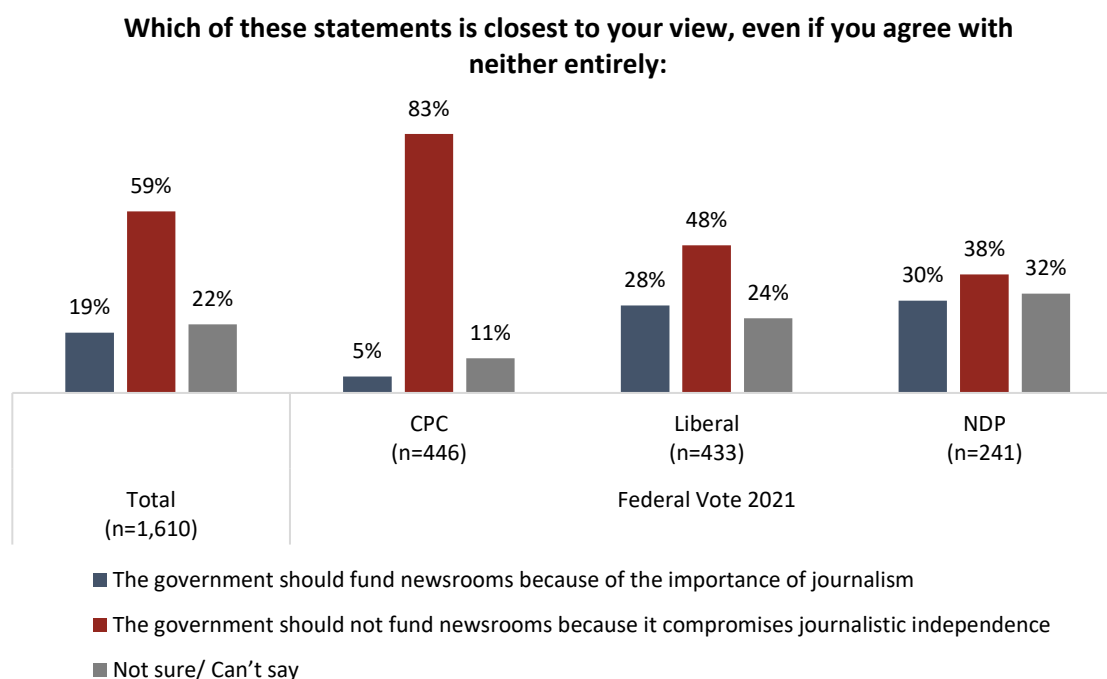
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Majority oppose the government funding private newsrooms

Canadians are more likely to believe the latter. Approaching three-in-five (59%) say the “government should not fund newsrooms because it compromises journalistic independence”. One-in-five (19%) disagree, and believe governments need to fund newsrooms “because of the importance of journalism”.

Past CPC voters are the most likely to oppose government funding of newsrooms at more than four-in-five (83%). However, pluralities of those who voted Liberal (48%) and NDP (38%) in 2021 agree:



Canadians more likely to oppose than support government defunding CBC

The most prominent example of a government-funded newsroom in Canada is the CBC, [which received \\$1.24 billion in government funding in 2022](#). It also generates revenue from advertising and subscriptions to the amount of \$651.4 million last year. However, when the CBC's own journalistic independence was questioned during [a spat with Twitter over being labelled government-funded media earlier this year](#), CBC noted that its “editorial independence is protected by law”.

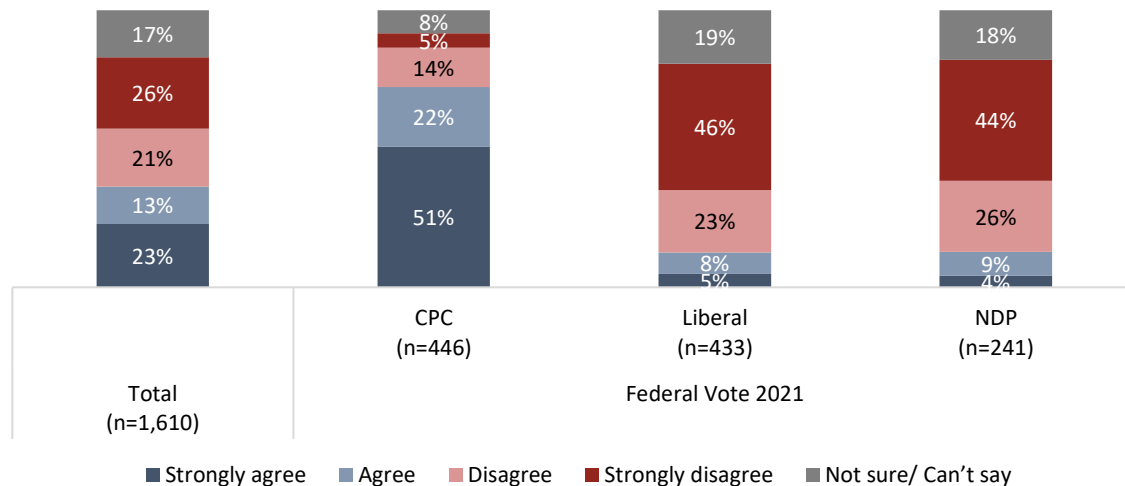
Canadians are more likely to oppose (47%) than support (36%) completely defunding Canada's national public broadcaster.

There is a sharp political division on this matter. Approaching three-quarters (72%) of past CPC voters believe the government should defund the CBC. Most of those who voted Liberal (68%) and NDP (69%) in 2021 are opposed:

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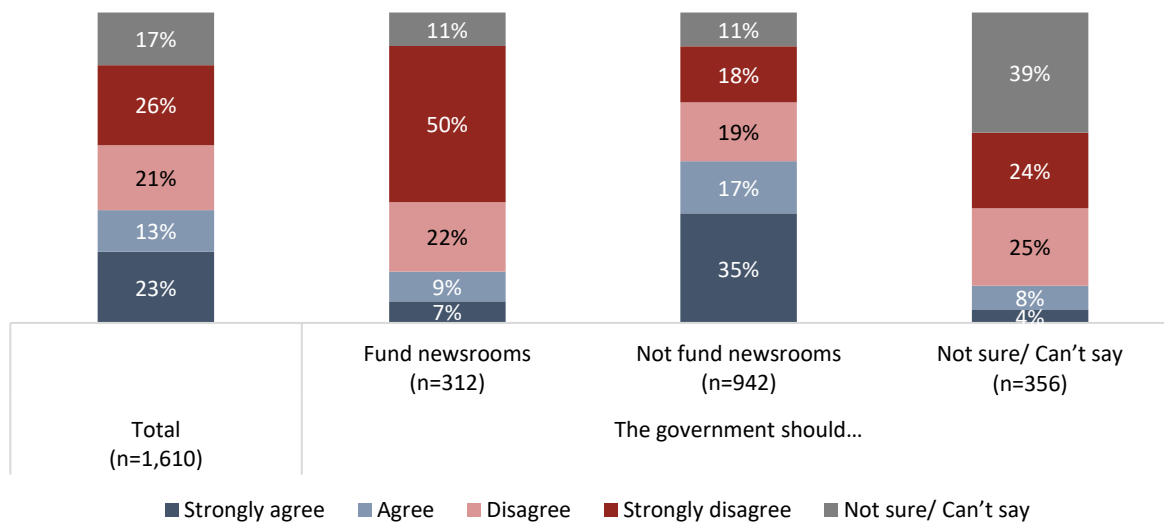
Agree vs. disagree -
"The government should completely defund the CBC"



Journalism, of course, is not the only thing offered by the CBC, which also broadcasts entertainment and sports programming.

Perhaps in recognition of CBC's broad mandate, while many who believe the government should not be funding newsrooms want the federal government to defund CBC (52%), approaching two-in-five (37%) disagree:

Agree vs. disagree -
"The government should completely defund the CBC"



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

For detailed results by whether respondents believe the government should fund newsrooms, [click here](#).

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