

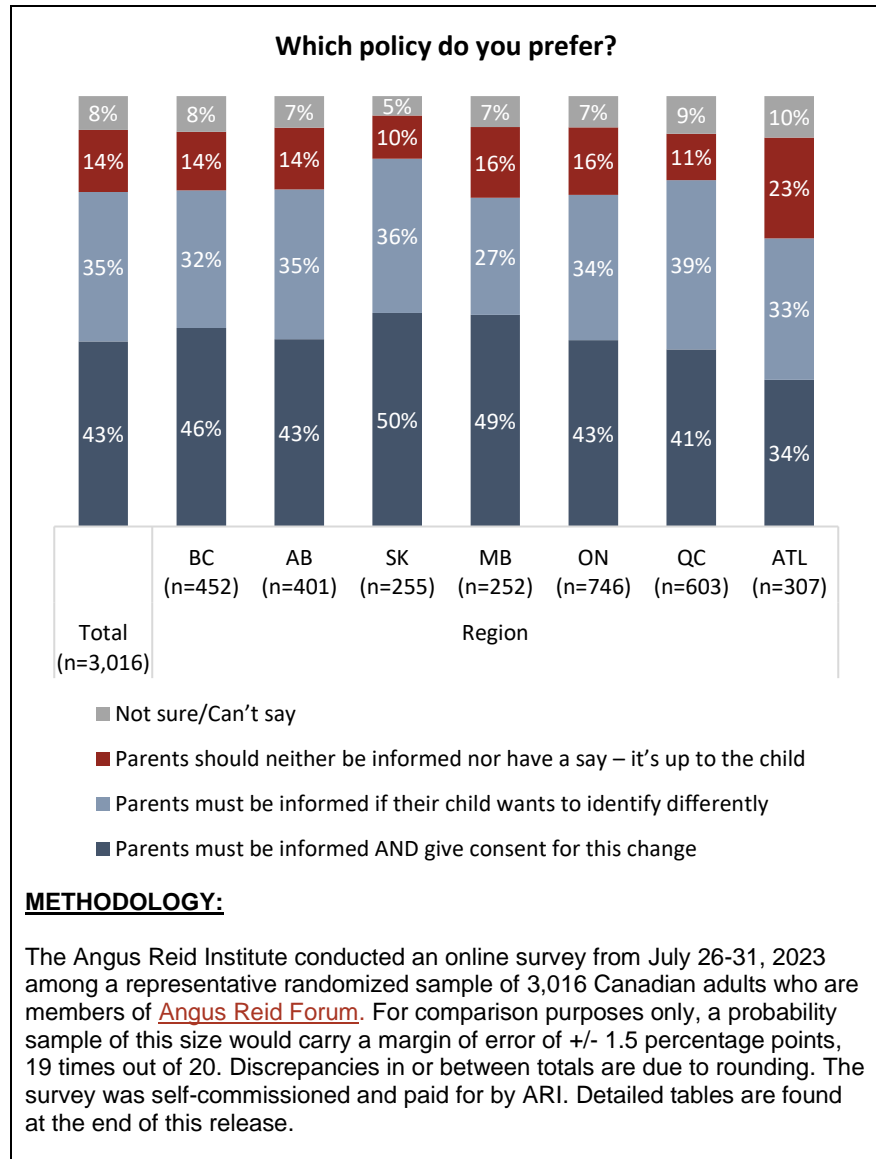
Vast majority say schools should inform parents if children wish to change their pronouns, are split over issue of parental consent

Younger people twice as likely to say parents should have no say whatsoever in this decision

August 28, 2023 – Last week Saskatchewan joined New Brunswick in adopting [a new gender and pronoun policy](#) for schools, which would require parental consent for students who wish to change their preferred name or pronouns.

Vociferous debate has followed in both provinces, and a new study from the non-profit Angus Reid Institute finds Canadians, too, divided on what level of parental involvement is necessary when it comes to children's preferred identification.

Asked which policy they prefer for school districts, two-in-five Canadians (43%) say that parents should be informed and must give consent if a child wants to change how they identify. One-in-seven (14%) say that the parent should have no role in this decision. In between these two groups, another one-in-three (35%) feel that parents should be made aware of any changes that are happening at the school but that these changes should not require parental consent. Those Canadians with children younger than 18 feel more strongly about consent than those without school-aged children (48% to 41%).



Generationally, Canadians hold at times divergent views. Consider that those between the ages of 18 and 24 are twice as likely as the general population (28% to 14%) and three-times as likely as those older than 64 years of age (10%) to say that this is not an issue parents should necessarily be involved in.

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In Saskatchewan, higher levels of support for both informing parents and requiring consent are noted (50%). This, likely given the population's more conservative lean. Those who supported the Conservative Party of Canada in the 2021 federal election are twice as likely as past Liberal voters (64% to 30%) and three times as likely as past NDP voters (20%) to say parents' consent is needed if a child wishes to change their gender identity in school. A majority of all partisans agree that parents should be informed, but many disagree as to whether consent is necessary.

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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Introduction

Two Canadian provinces are in the process of implementing a new policy for gender identity and pronouns in schools. New Brunswick first introduced changes to its LGBTQ policy for schools [in June](#), requiring parental consent for students under the age of 16 if the student wishes to change their pronouns. Saskatchewan announced it would be following suit [in August](#). In both cases, the Canadian Civil Liberties Association said [it is considering legal action](#) to fight the policies. Advocates in both [Saskatchewan](#) and [New Brunswick](#) worry the new policy violates the rights of children in the provinces.

Across the country, [most provinces](#) advise schools to recognize children by their preferred pronouns and names even without parent knowledge and consent, often [in recognition](#) of the protections offered to gender identity under the [Canadian Human Rights Act](#).

By region

The issue rotates on two primary axes: parental notice and consent.

On the former, Canadians overwhelmingly believe parents should be informed if their child wants to change their gender identity or pronouns. Four-in-five (78%) say this.

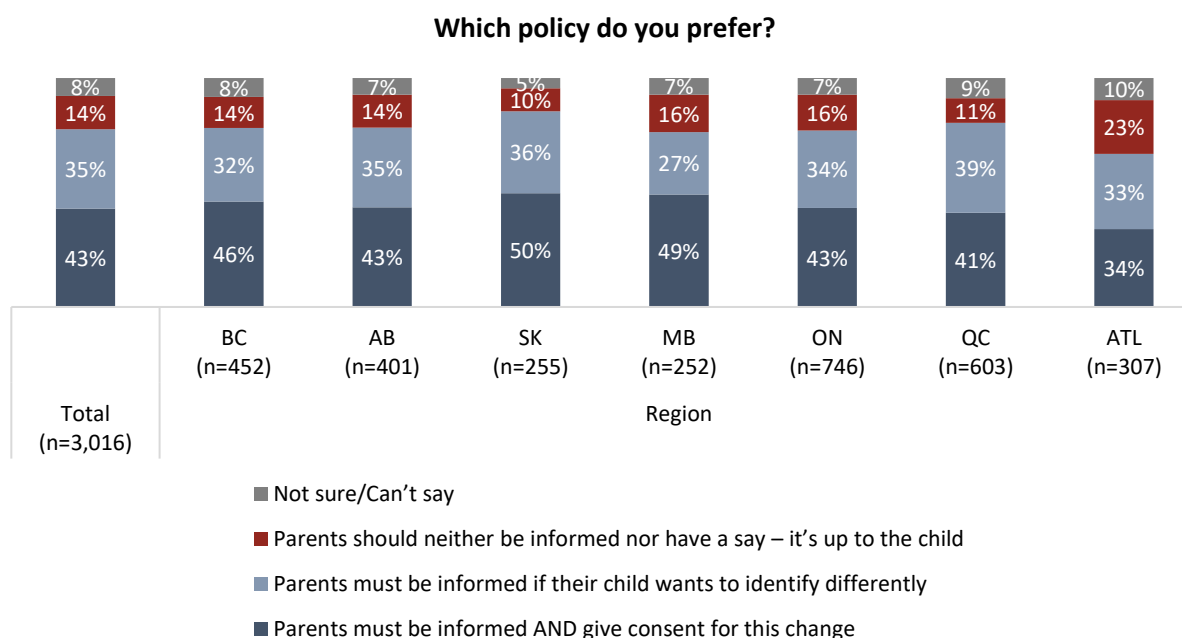
On the latter, which has formed the basis for the controversial policies in New Brunswick and Saskatchewan, there is more division. More than two-in-five (43%) Canadians believe parents should also consent to their child changing gender identity at school. However, half (49%) disagree, including 14 per cent who believe the parents should neither be informed, nor should their blessing be required.

Those in Atlantic Canada are the least likely (34%) to believe parental consent should be necessary if a child wishes to change their gender identity in school and the most likely (23%) to say parents should be

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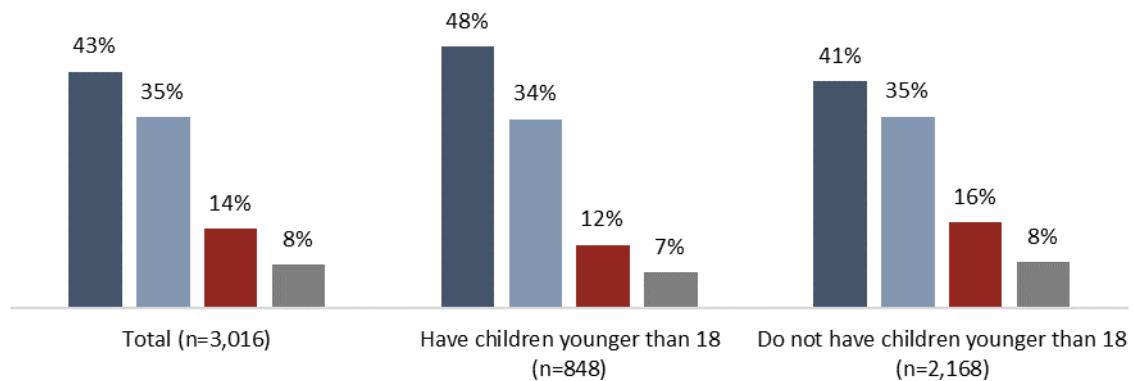
kept in the dark about their child’s preferred pronouns if that’s what the child wishes. At the other end of the spectrum are those in Saskatchewan, where half (50%) say parents should be informed and should agree to any changes to their child’s gender identity in schools:



Parents’ views

Canadians with children younger than 18 feel more strongly about requiring parental consent for identification changes, though not by an overwhelming margin. Approximately half (48%) of these parents say information and consent are both needed, compared to 41 per cent of Canadians who do not have children in this age group. Both groups tend to agree that parents have the right to know about any changes that occur at school:

Which policy do you prefer?

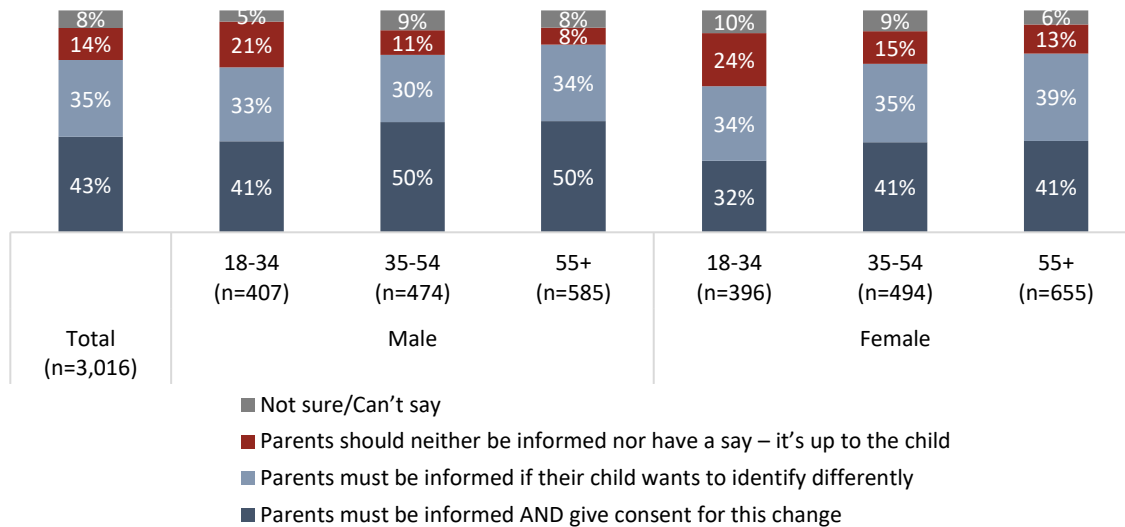


- Parents must be informed AND give consent for this change
- Parents must be informed if their child wants to identify differently
- Parents should neither be informed nor have a say – it's up to the child
- Not sure/Can't say

Age and gender

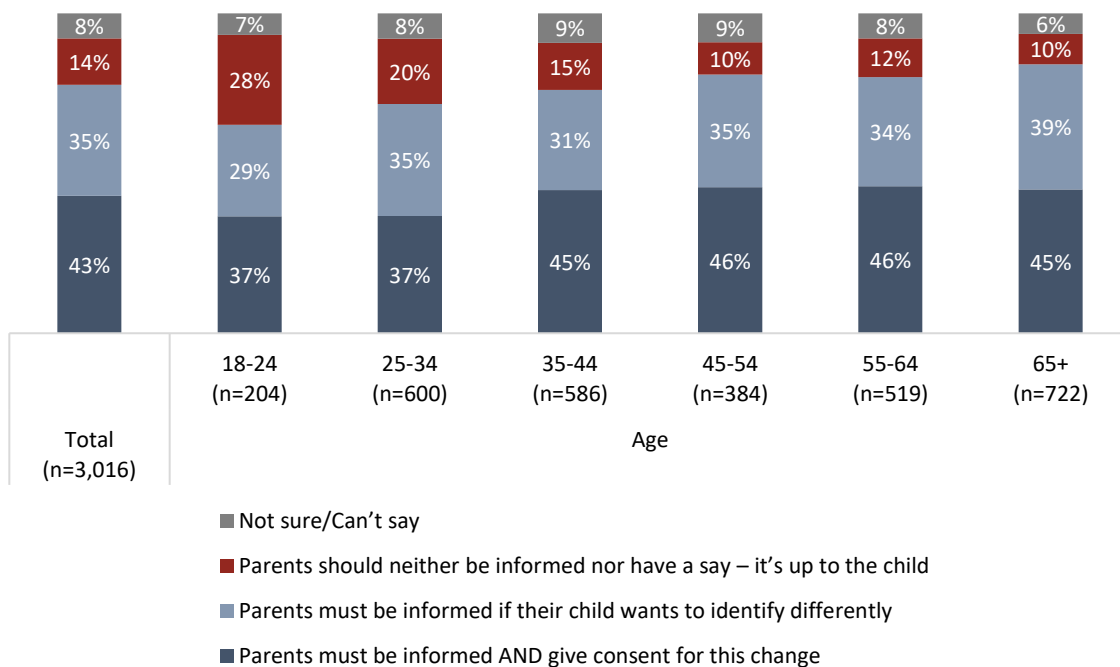
Men are more likely than women to believe parents should be informed and consent if their child wishes to modify their gender identity in the classroom. Women under the age of 35 are the most likely (24%) to believe this decision should be left to the child completely. However, a majority of all demographics say the parent should at least be notified:

Which policy do you prefer?



Perspectives on school pronoun policy appears to correlate with age. Canadians under the age of 25 are the most likely (28%) to say it's up to the child if they wish to change their gender identity and the school should not tell the parents nor seek consent. At least 45 per cent of Canadians older than 34 believe schools should inform and ask for permission before a child changes their gender identity in the classroom:

Which policy do you prefer?



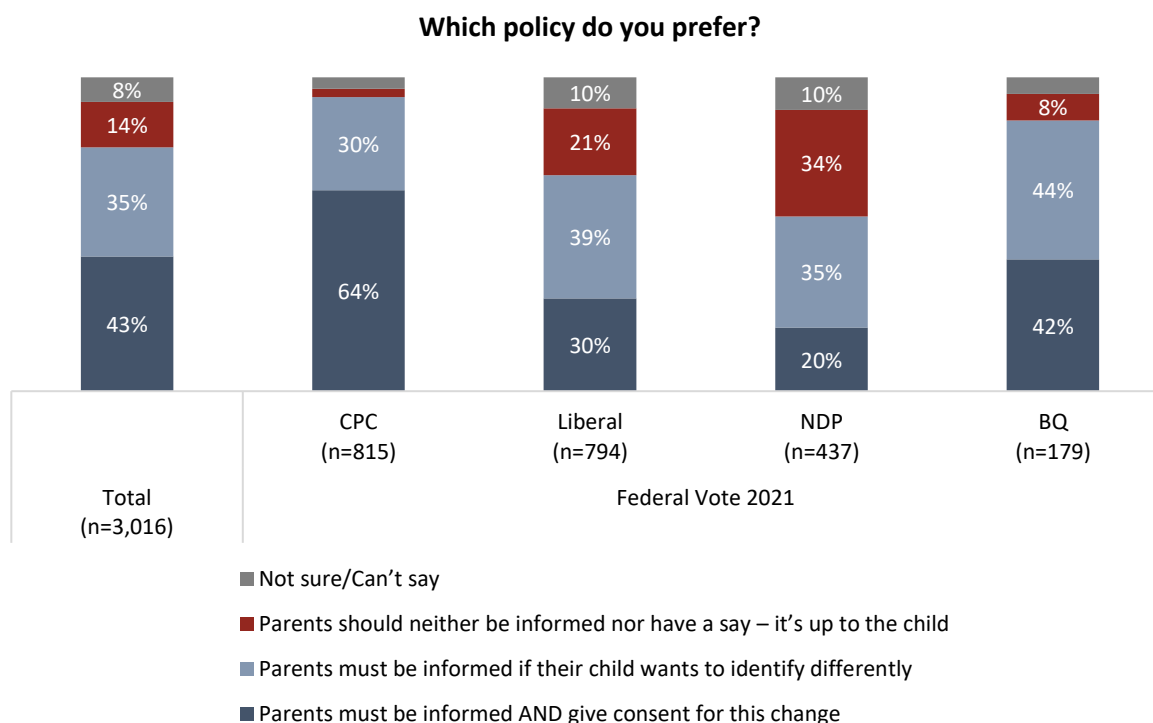
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Politics

The school policy changes in New Brunswick sparked a political spat between Prime Minister Justin Trudeau and Conservative party leader Pierre Poilievre. Trudeau spoke out against the policy, saying “trans kids in New Brunswick are being told they don’t have the right to be their true selves, that they need to ask permission.” Poilievre responded by telling the prime minister to stay out of provincial policy and Trudeau needed to “let parents raise kids.”

The respective party leaders reflect the political divide on the preferred policy on the matter. Two-thirds (64%) of past Conservative voters support the policies in New Brunswick and Saskatchewan, believing parents should be informed and agree to the change if their child wants a new gender identity in the classroom. Those who voted Liberal and NDP in 2021 believe parents should be notified at a majority level, but are much less likely to believe schools should seek their permission:



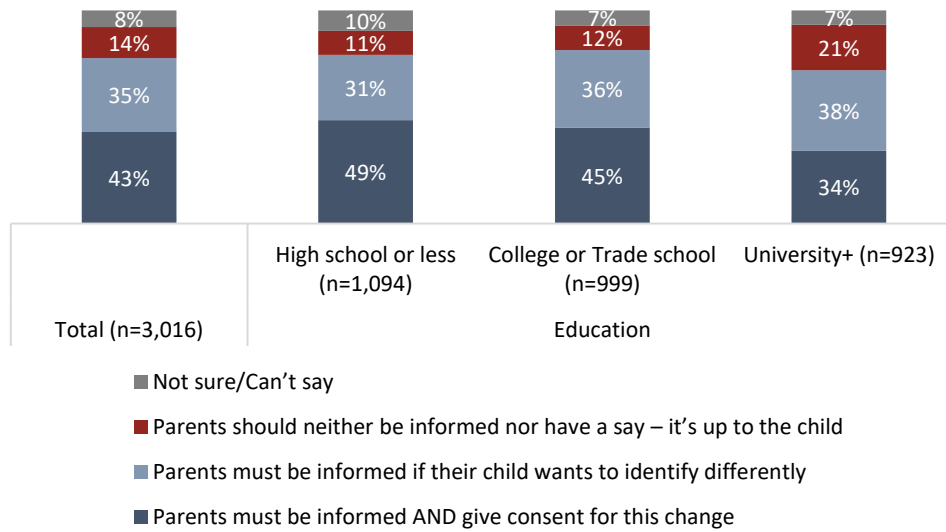
Education

A person’s level of educational achievement influences their views of this matter, too. Those who received a high school education or less are most likely to say that parents must be informed and must sign off on any changes to how their child identifies (49% say this). Those who attended university, meantime, are twice as likely as others to say that this is not the parents’ business:

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Which policy do you prefer?



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