

Federal Politics: As Conservative convention begins, Poilievre viewed as best PM by 2-to-1 margin over Trudeau

Prime minister's approval drops to three-year low; party trails by 12-points in vote intention

September 7, 2023 – While the Bank of Canada holds steady – for now – on the borrowing rate, there appears to be little end in sight to a 15-month slump in Liberal political fortunes. The popularity of both the governing party and its leader, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, have been on a consistent slide, and the latest results of a public opinion survey from the non-profit Angus Reid Institute do nothing to reassure a shrinking Liberal base.

Trudeau's perceived handling of the ongoing cost-of-living crisis has sent a significant segment of past LPC voters to both the New Democrats and opposition Conservatives and sent his personal approval down to levels unseen since early 2020.

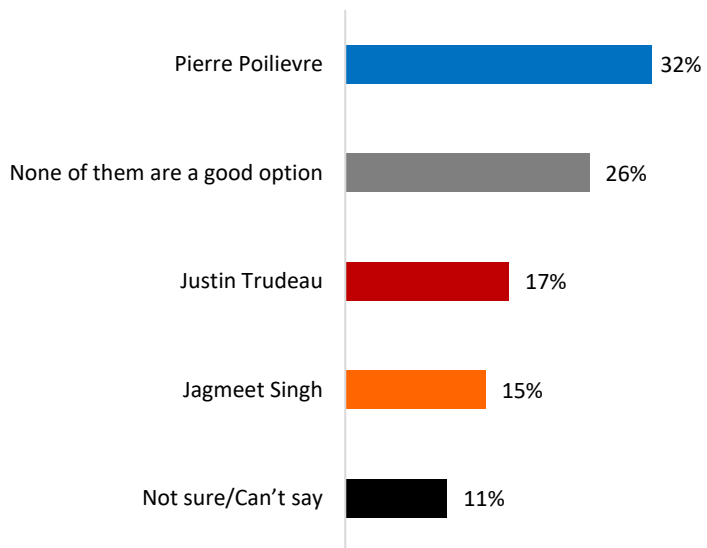
This bleeding of support benefits the Conservative Party directly, with CPC vote intent now at 39 per cent, a 12-point advantage over the Liberals.

More critically, Conservative leader Pierre Poilievre is now seen as best prime minister by twice as many as those who say the same of the actual prime minister (32 versus 17 per cent) and is additionally viewed by a plurality (41 per cent) as best to manage the economy.

As many Canadians consider whether the grass is greener on the blue side of the fence, given the option, most would prefer a different arrangement in parliament than the Liberal minority, with NDP support, that Canada currently has. Two-in-five (38%) say a Conservative majority would be the best government for Canada going forward, slightly more than the proportion who prefer the ongoing NDP-Liberal supply-and-confidence set-up (35%). Equal numbers prefer a Liberal majority (13%) as a Conservative minority (15%).

Conversely, though a Conservative majority is the most preferred choice, it is also the most feared one. When presented with the same options and asked to evaluate which one would be worst for the country, more than two-in-five (43%) say a Conservative majority. A similar number (38%) believe a Liberal majority would be the worst possible government Canada could have over the next four years.

Which of these leaders would make the best prime minister of Canada? (All respondents, n=3,400)



METHODOLOGY:

The Angus Reid Institute conducted an online survey from Aug. 31 to Sept. 6, 2023 among a representative randomized sample of 3,400 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 +/- 1.5 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:

- Fewer than half (45%) of 2021 Liberal voters currently say that Trudeau is the best option of the federal leaders to be prime minister. Comparatively, 77 per cent of past Conservative voters say Poilievre would be best.
- The Liberal Party currently does not lead in vote intent in any region of the country canvassed in this survey. The LPC holds an advantage over the CPC in only one – Quebec – where it sits second behind the Bloc Québécois.
- Conservative and Liberal vote intention has inverted in the 905 belt of Greater Toronto. Comparing data from last September, the Liberal Party has dropped 17 points in vote intention from 47 to 30 per cent, while the CPC has jumped 10 points from 36 to 46 per cent.
- Those Canadians who are suffering most financially – a group that say they're worse off this year than they were last year, and they expect this to continue to worsen into next year – are most likely to say the CPC is best on economic issues (56%). Just nine per cent of them trust the Liberals on this file, while 22 per cent say there's no good option to help them.

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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- Age and gender
- Vote retention favours CPC

Part One: Top issues

As summer days dwindle and the cooler winds of autumn descend upon Canada (to the appreciation of many smoke- and fire-ravaged communities), the Bank of Canada took a break from applying heat to money markets. The BoC held its key policy rate [at five per cent](#), as premiers in two of Canada's largest provinces [appealed on behalf of their residents](#) for a halt to interest rate increases. Though inflation continues to simmer, Ontario premier Doug Ford [highlighted](#) the effect rising interest rates have had on mortgages and other borrowing costs. B.C. premier David Eby [worried](#) another rate hike could worsen inflation rather than help further.

[Related: Canadians react to a historically brutal fire season](#)

The cost of living and inflation continue to be the given the highest priority by Canadians, unifying people across the political spectrum. Health care and housing affordability are also key priorities. Past Conservative voters emphasize economic issues, with others point to climate change as the issue they care most about:

Thinking of the various issues and challenges facing Canada, which ones do you personally care about the most? (Up to three chosen, those selected by 10% or more shown)					
	Total (n=3,400)	2021 Federal Vote			
		CPC (n=922)	Liberal (n=893)	NDP (n=494)	BQ (n=220)
Cost of living/ Inflation	62%	65%	55%	60%	61%
Health Care	41%	32%	51%	48%	45%
Housing affordability	33%	27%	34%	42%	34%
Environment/ Climate Change	27%	7%	44%	45%	38%
Taxes	18%	30%	11%	8%	8%
The Economy	17%	29%	14%	10%	12%
Crime/ Public safety	15%	18%	13%	10%	12%
The Deficit/ Government spending	14%	31%	4%	5%	15%
Income inequality/ Poverty	14%	5%	18%	26%	17%
Ethics/ Corruption	12%	17%	8%	8%	5%

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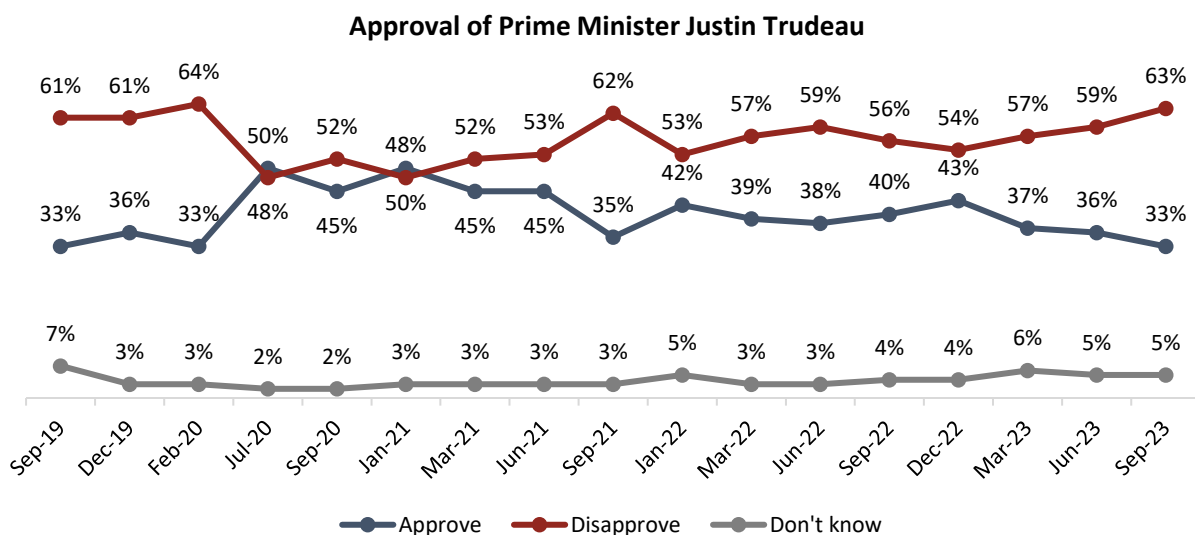
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Part Two: Federal party leaders

Trudeau approval drops to three-year low

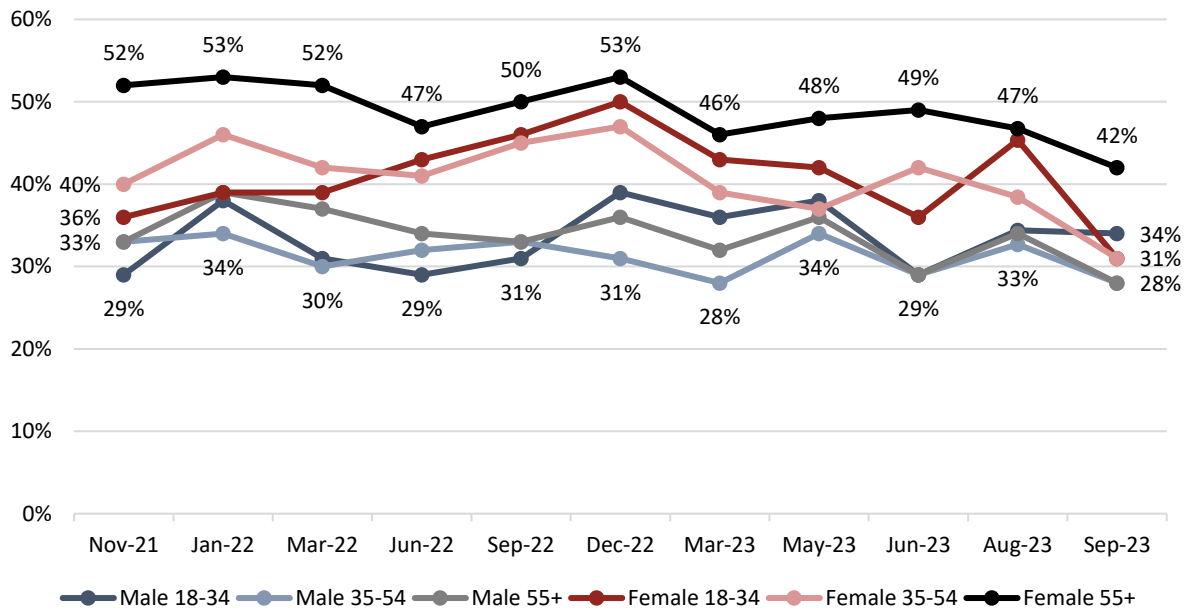
As many Canadians suffer as a result of the cost-of-living crisis, so too do Justin Trudeau's political fortunes. His personal approval has fallen to a three-year low of 33 per cent.

The prime minister and his government were heavily criticized after making assurances that housing affordability was a top priority but offering no new plans to address the issue following a [three-day ministers retreat](#) in August. Trudeau's disapproval rises above three-in-five (63%) this quarter, a nine-point jump since the end of 2022:



Trudeau has seen his approval fall among women over the age of 54, who typically represent a source of stalwart support for the prime minister. Since he was re-elected with a minority government in 2021, Trudeau's approval among all demographics has dropped, with a notable exception among men aged 18- to 34-years-old. Given the prime minister's recent lack of personal popularity among this latter group, it is too early to tell whether this represents an anomaly in the trend line, or the beginning of a recovery among this segment:

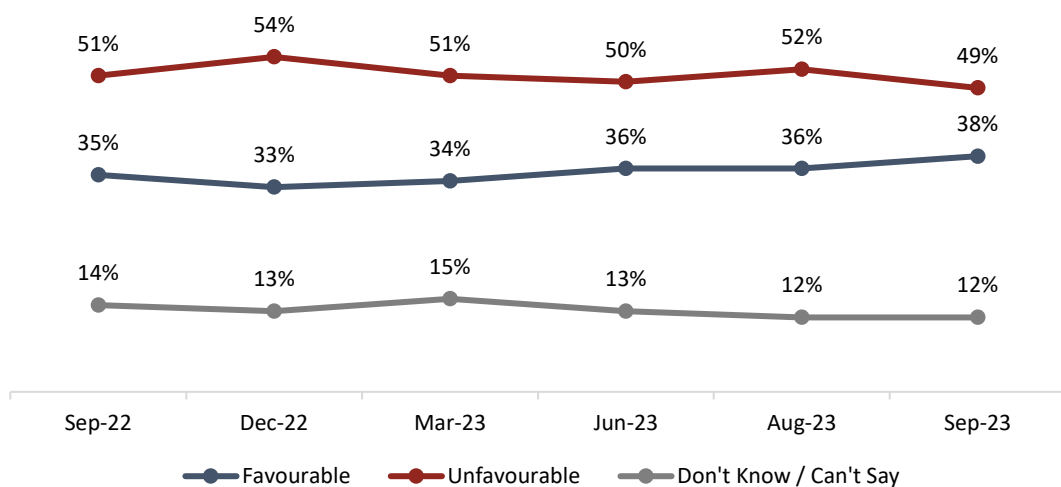
Trudeau approval by age and gender



Poillievre sees modest gain in personal appeal

Meanwhile, there has been a slow but positive trend this year for the leader of the Conservative party, Pierre Poillievre. He has gained favourability to the point where now two-in-five say they view Poillievre positively. Negative views of the leader of the opposition have remained consistent in the year since he won the Conservative leadership election, with approximately half of Canadians voicing this sentiment:

Favourability of CPC leader Pierre Poillievre



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Singh, Blanchet both more favourably viewed

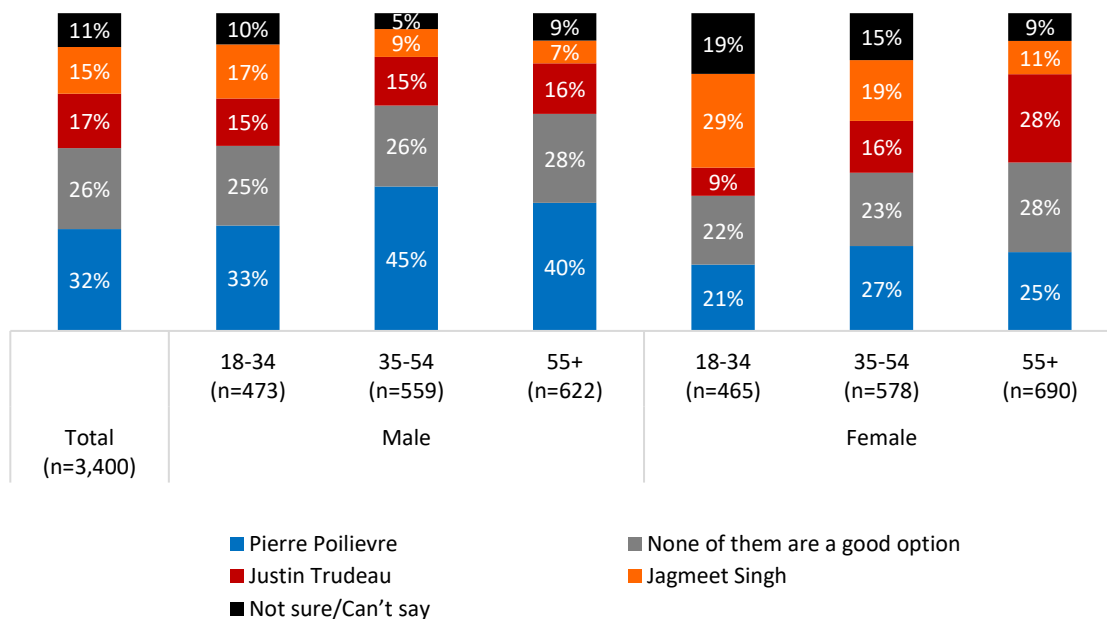
The leaders of the third- and fourth-most popular parties from the 2021 election are viewed more favourably than the prime minister and the leader of the opposition. More than two-in-five have a positive view of NDP leader Jagmeet Singh. In Quebec, half say they view Bloc Québécois leader Yves-François Blanchet favourably ([see detailed tables](#)).

Who would make the best prime minister?

As Trudeau begins his third year as the leader of a minority government, few believe he is the best prime minister available. By a near two-to-one margin, Canadians choose Poilievre (32%) as the best option for prime minister over Trudeau (17%). Nearly as many believe Singh (16%) would be best to lead the country as the current PM. Notably, “none of the above” (26%) is the second-most popular option.

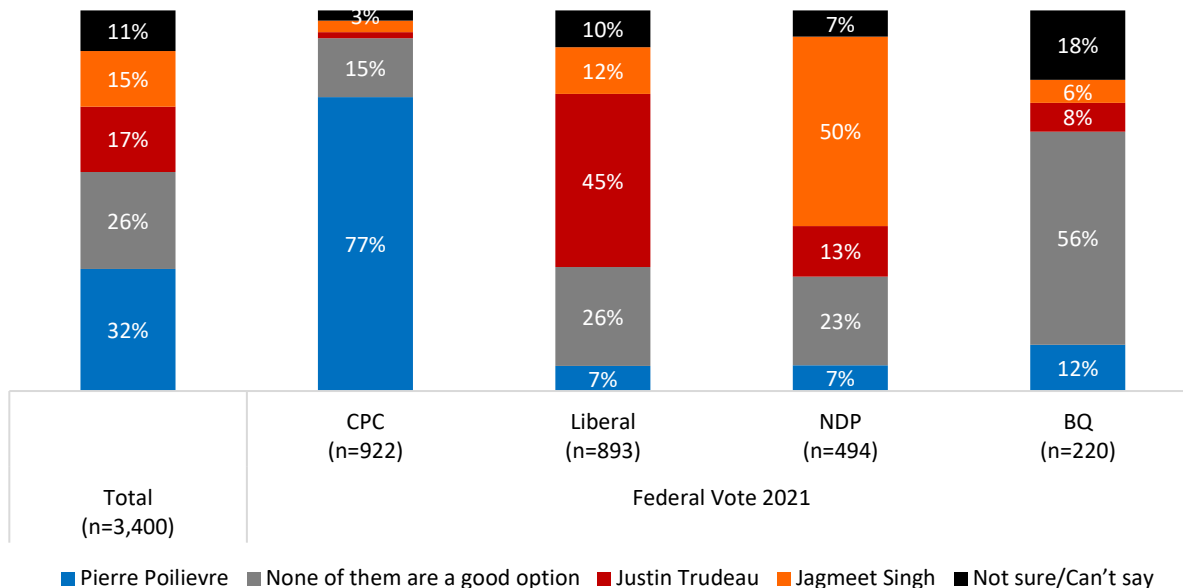
No demographic chooses Trudeau as the best prime minister at a plurality level, though among women older than 54, he (28%) and “no one” (28%) tie as the top pick. Two-in-five men aged 35 and older believe Poilievre is the best possible person of the three main party leaders to hold the country’s top job:

Which of these leaders would make the best prime minister of Canada?



Past supporters of Trudeau’s party seem lukewarm on the man they helped elect to a third term in office. More than two-in-five (45%) say Trudeau is the best choice for PM, but that leaves more than half who are either unsure (10%) or say Singh (12%), Poilievre (7%) or none of the above (26%) are better options. Past NDP voters are more likely to believe their current party leader is the best pick for prime minister (50%), but not by much. Meanwhile, three-quarters (77%) of those who voted Conservative in 2021 say Poilievre represents the best choice to lead the country:

Which of these leaders would make the best prime minister of Canada?



On economic issues, Poilievre preferred

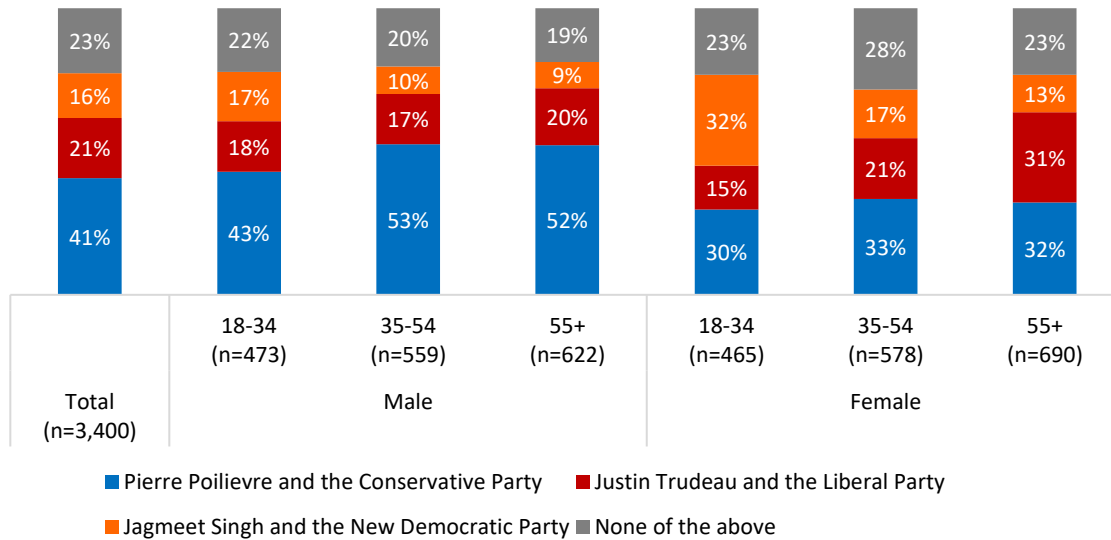
The Bank of Canada took a break this month from its recent cycle of rate hikes, despite inflation still hovering above its intended target of two per cent. [Recent economic data](#) showed that Canada's economy may be responding to previous rate increases. Unemployment is up, and Canada's economy contracted in the second quarter, the first time it had done so since the onset of the pandemic. The short-term concern may be Canada is [heading for a recession](#).

There is also trouble in Canada's broader economic story. While Canada's economy has grown in recent years, much of it has been fueled by rapid population growth. This has meant that Canadians' standard of living, measured by GDP per capita, has declined at the same time, [leaving Canada lagging behind other advanced economies](#).

Against this backdrop, and after eight years of Liberal government, just one-in-five (21%) believe Trudeau and the Liberals are the best equipped of the major political parties to handle the economy. Twice as many (41%) instead say it is Poilievre and the Conservatives.

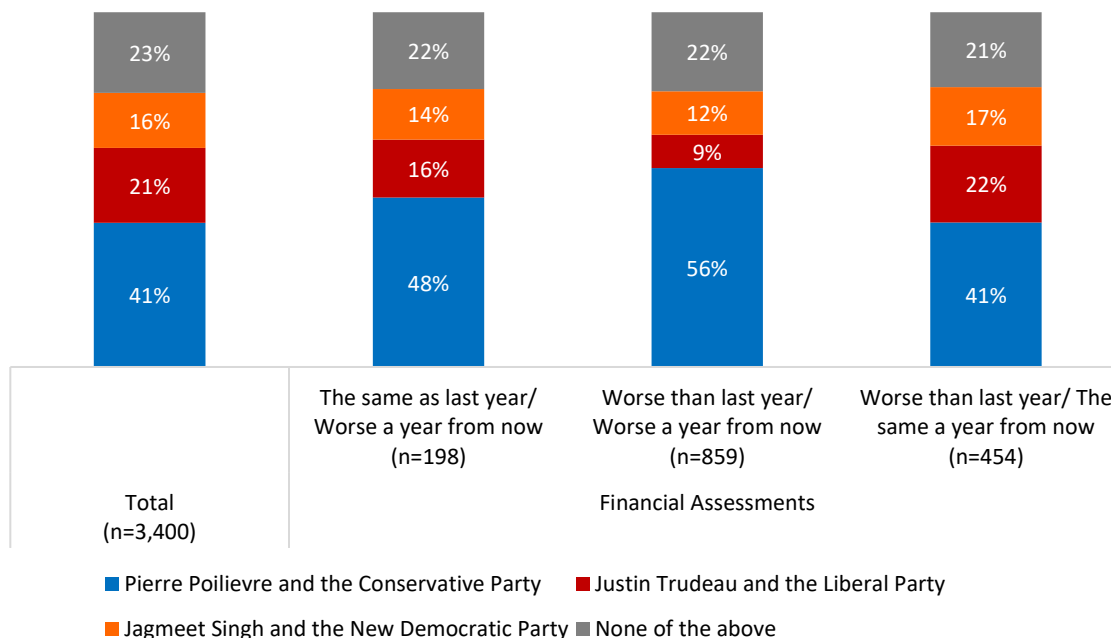
Majorities of men older than 34, and pluralities of all other demographics except women aged 18 to 34, would hand the reins of the economy to Poilievre, given the choice:

Which of the following federal parties and leaders do you think is best to handle Canada's economy?



Those who are most pessimistic about their own financial situation are even more likely to say that Poilievre and the CPC are their preferred leadership on economic issues. More than half (56%) of Canadians who say they are worse off now than they were at this point last year, and expect to see things worsen for them in the coming year, choose Poilievre and the CPC. Just nine per cent among this group trust Trudeau and the Liberal Party to lead them out of their challenges:

Which of the following federal parties and leaders do you think is best to handle Canada's economy?



Liberals, New Democrats voice less confidence in their leadership on economy

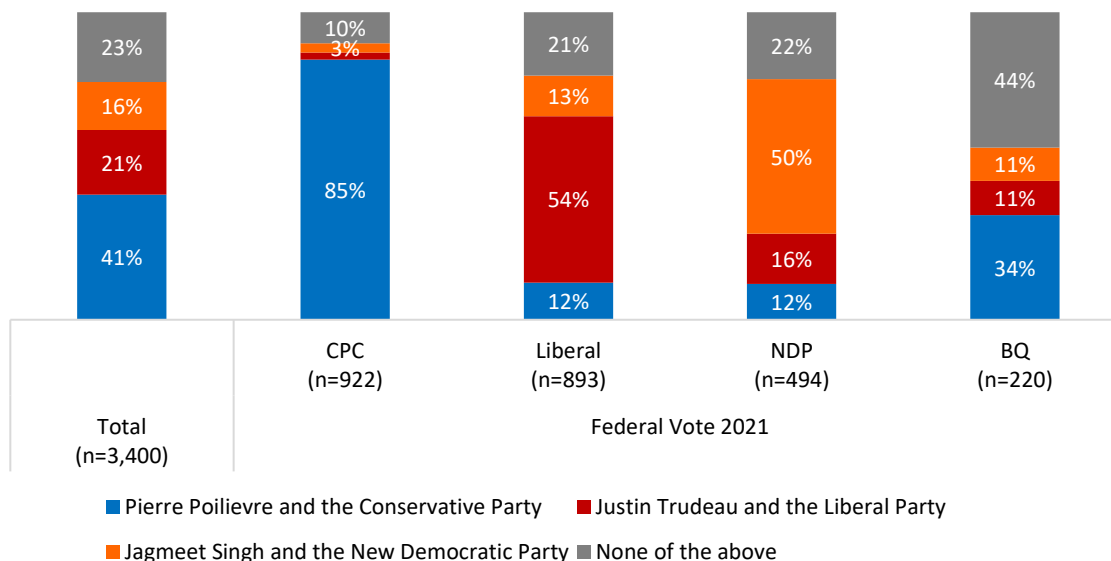
The Liberal and NDP have maintained a minority government through a supply-and-confidence agreement signed six months after the 2021 election in advance of the new government's first budget. As past supporters of those two parties evaluate the results of this cooperation, they offer perhaps mixed reviews. More than half of those who voted Liberal (54%) say Trudeau and the Liberals are the best choice to handle Canada's economy, leaving a sizable group who select other options. Half (50%) of past NDP voters believe Singh and the NDP are the best choice.

Past CPC voters are far more certain. More than four-in-five (85%) believe Poilievre and the Conservatives are the best option for economic stewardship:

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Which of the following federal parties and leaders do you think is best to handle Canada's economy?



Part Three: What kind of government do Canadians want?

Canadians divided between current minority and CPC majority as best result

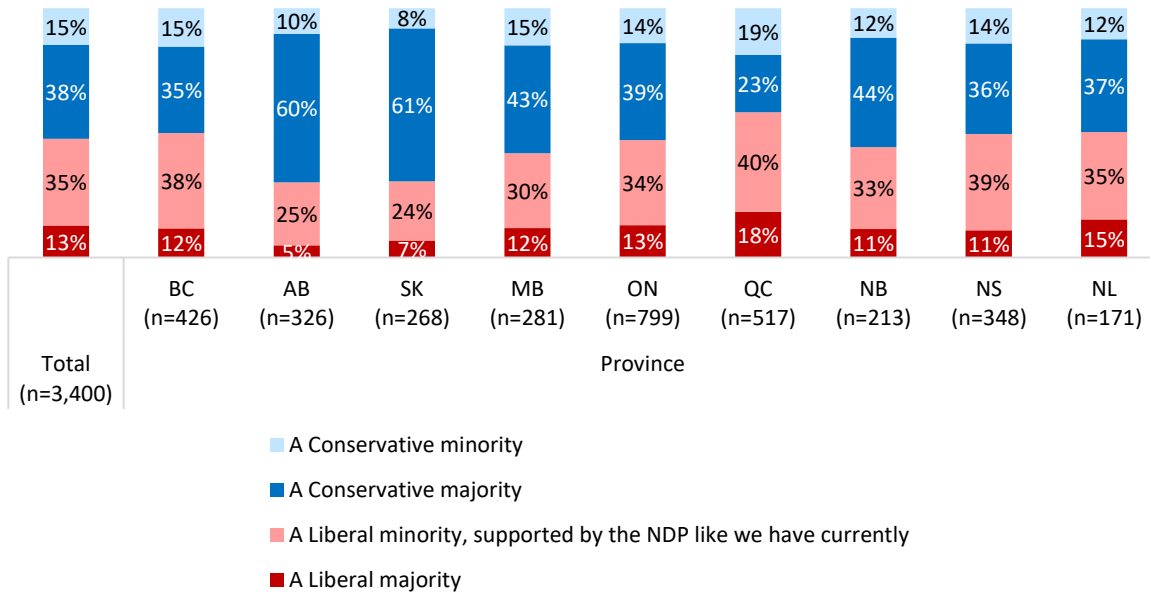
Assuming the supply-and-confidence agreement persists, the Liberal minority government is at its half-life. Looking forward, it seems however most Canadians would prefer an alternate arrangement. Given the choice, two-in-five (38%) say a Conservative majority would provide Canada with its best government over the next four years, more than who say the same of the current situation in parliament (35%). Another 15 per cent would like to see a Conservative minority government, while 13 per cent would prefer a return to a Liberal majority.

Those in Saskatchewan (61%) and Alberta (60%) are more likely than those in other provinces to believe a CPC majority would be the best government to lead the country. A plurality in B.C. (38%), Quebec (40%) and Nova Scotia (39%) support a continuation of the current NDP-Liberal agreement:

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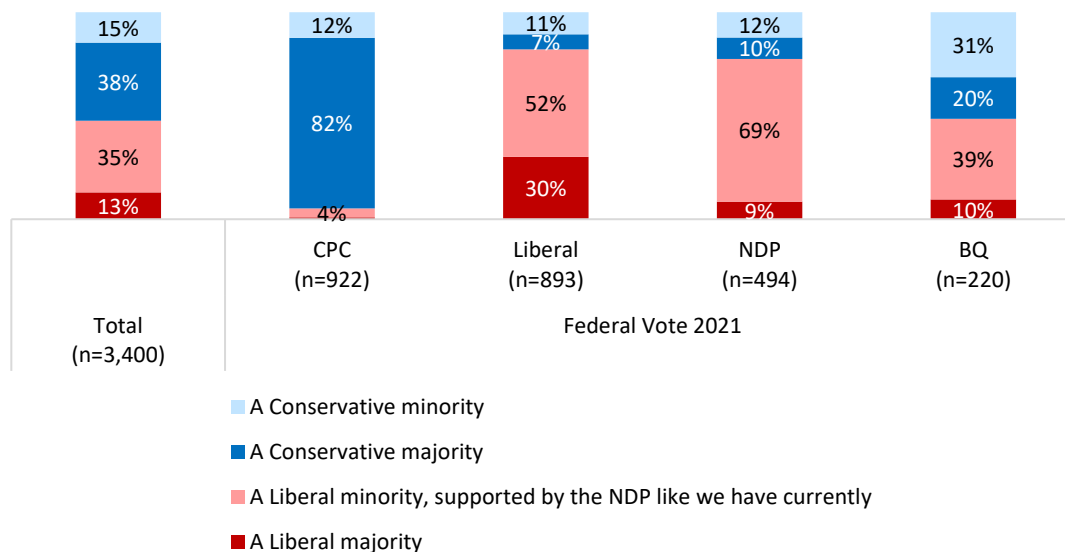
Which of the following options do you believe would provide the best government for Canada over the next four years?



There appears to be reluctance from past Liberal voters to hand over full control of Canada’s government to their party for a term. Three-in-ten (30%) who voted Liberal in 2021 believe a Liberal majority would be the best government for Canada over the next four years. More (52%) among that group say the current arrangement, where the Liberals are supported by the NDP, is the better choice.

Comparatively, there is much less hesitancy from those who voted Conservative in 2021. Four-in-five (82%) among past CPC supporters say a Conservative majority would provide the best government to Canada:

Which of the following options do you believe would provide the best government for Canada over the next four years?



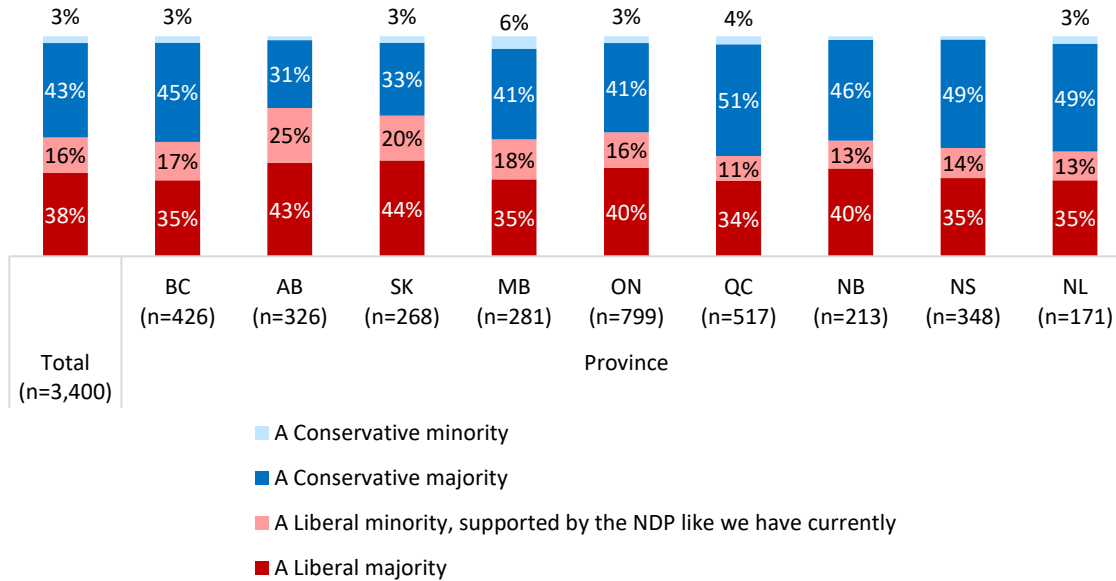
CPC majority most feared result, followed by Liberal majority

While Conservative supporters heavily prefer their own party winning a majority government in the next federal election, this proposition causes heavy consternation for others. Indeed, the most feared result for a future election is exactly that – a CPC majority. More than two-in-five (44%) say this, including the largest proportion of respondents in B.C., Manitoba, Quebec, and Atlantic Canada. For others (38%) a Liberal majority is most troublesome. This group is largest in both Alberta and Saskatchewan:

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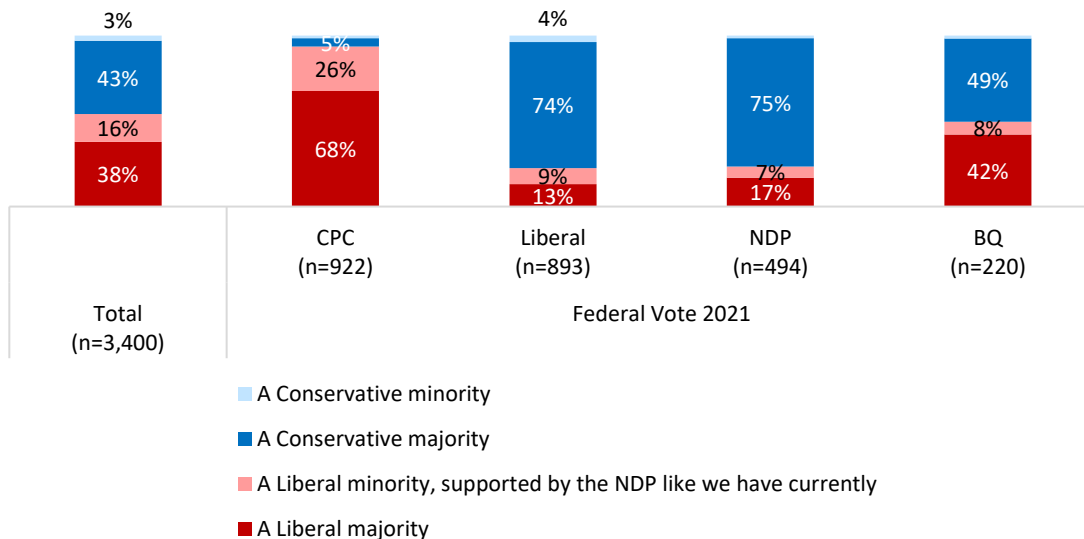
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And of those same options, which of them do you fear would provide the worst government for Canada over the next four years?



As one might expect, past Conservatives tend to say a Liberal majority would be cause for alarm, and past Liberals and New Democrats say the same of that result for the CPC:

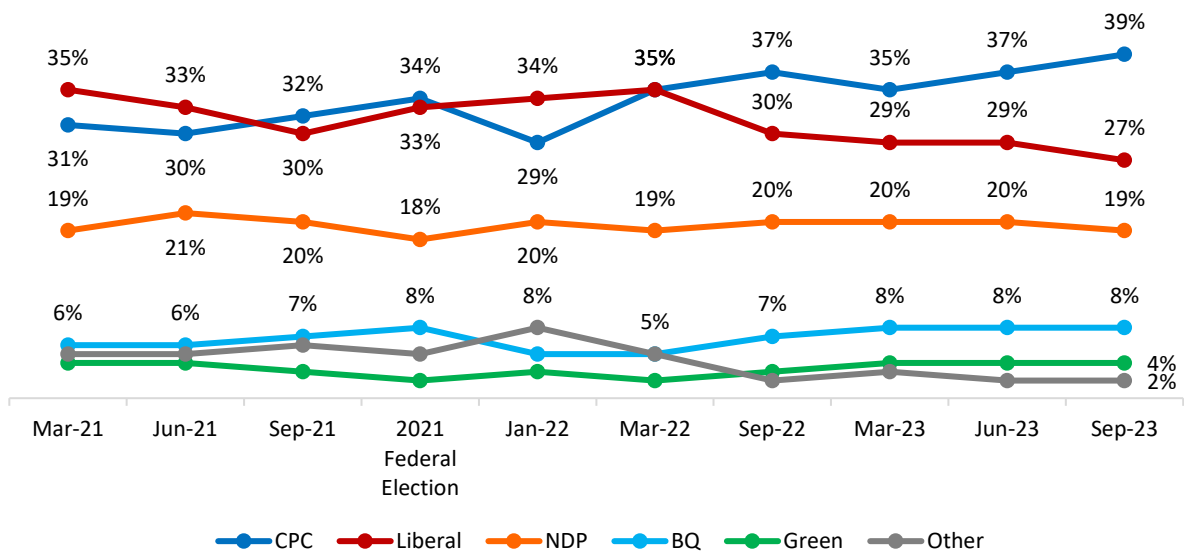
And of those same options, which of them do you fear would provide the worst government for Canada over the next four years?



Part Four: Vote intent

These factors result in the continuation of a positive trend for the opposition Conservatives, with the official opposition party gaining two more points this quarter, at the cost of Liberal support. The CPC now hold a 12-point advantage in vote intention. This is by far the largest lead the party has held since the previous election in 2021. It is also the highest the Conservatives have risen in vote intent since [March 2018](#), in the wake of a trip by Trudeau to India, described as a political [“disaster”](#). Trudeau returns to the country for [the first time since 2018](#) in the coming week.

**Federal vote intent
(Decided and leaning voters)**



Regional results

The CPC advantage has been built in Alberta, Saskatchewan, and Manitoba in recent years. Now, it extends to Ontario and British Columbia. A 12-point edge in both of those provinces helps to produce the 12-point national lead. Compared to last year at this time, the Liberals are down six points in Ontario and four in B.C.:

Federal vote intent (Decided and leaning voters, change from Sept. 2022 noted)										
(Unweighted sample sizes)	Total (3,113)	Province								
		BC (401)	AB (311)	SK (247)	MB (251)	ON (724)	QC (426)	NB (190)	NS (324)	NL (156)
Conservative Party of Canada	39% (+2)	37% (+1)	64% (+9)	60% (-1)	48% (+5)	42% (+3)	20% (-3)	43% (+6)	40% (+6)	41% (+1)
Liberal Party of Canada	27% (-3)	25% (-4)	13% (-2)	14% (+3)	23% (-2)	30% (-6)	29% (-1)	39% (-1)	34% (-5)	40% (-1)
New Democratic Party of Canada	19% (-1)	28% (+1)	20% (-4)	22% (-1)	23% (-5)	21% (-1)	11% (-4)	11% (-5)	23% (-)	15% (+1)
Bloc Québécois	8% (+1)	-	-	-	-	-	35% (+6)	-	-	-
Green Party of Canada	4% (+1)	8% (+1)	1% (-)	2% (+1)	2% (-)	4% (-1)	3% (-1)	5% (-)	1% (+1)	2% (+1)
Other	2% (-)	2% (+1)	3% (+1)	2% (+1)	4% (+2)	3% (+2)	2% (-)	2% (-)	3% (-)	1% (-3)

Urban centres

Canada's urban centres have represented the Liberal Party's path to victory in recent elections, with few exceptions. The governing party is now splitting votes close to evenly in both Metro Vancouver and the Toronto core, a trend that spells trouble for its electoral fortunes if it persists. The biggest difference by far for the Liberals and Conservatives, however, is a swapping of positions in the Toronto suburbs:

Federal vote intent (Decided and leaning voters, change from Sept. 2022 noted)								
	Total (n=3,113)	Cities						
		VAN (n=142)	CGY (n=112)	EDM (n=118)	WPG (n=158)	TO-416 (n=126)	TO-905 (n=176)	MTL (n=180)
Conservative Party of Canada	39% (+2)	29% (+3)	61% (+11)	61% (+10)	39% (+10)	33% (+4)	46% (+10)	13% (-3)
Liberal Party of Canada	27% (-3)	32% (-)	14% (-3)	13% (-5)	33% (+1)	36% (-8)	30% (-17)	34% (-2)
New Democratic Party of Canada	19% (-1)	33% (-)	21% (-6)	23% (-5)	24% (-12)	24% (+1)	18% (+3)	19% (-2)
Bloc Québécois	8% (+1)	-	-	-	-	-	-	28% (+6)
Green Party of Canada	4% (+1)	5% (-3)	1% (-1)	0% (-1)	2% (-)	4% (-)	4% (+2)	4% (+2)
Other	2% (-)	1% (-)	3% (-1)	3% (+1)	1% (-)	3% (+3)	2% (+1)	2% (-)

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Age and gender

The CPC continues to hold a distinct advantage among male voters. Perhaps the most difficult group to pin down currently, however, are young men, who embraced Poilievre early, but appear to have cooled off compared to last September. The challenge for the Liberal Party now appears to be a loss of support among women of all ages. Trudeau’s party is chosen third among young women, well behind both the NDP and CPC. The Liberals maintain a lead among older women, though that too has diminished – down nine points compared to last September:

Federal vote intent (Decided and leaning voters, change from Sept. 2022 noted)							
	Total (n=3,113)	Male			Female		
		18-34 (n=313)	35-54 (n=538)	55+ (n=681)	18-34 (n=288)	35-54 (n=523)	55+ (n=758)
Conservative Party of Canada	39% (+2)	39% (-9)	50% (+3)	47% (+1)	32% (+9)	33% (-1)	32% (+2)
Liberal Party of Canada	27% (-3)	20% (+5)	23% (-1)	25% (-6)	19% (-5)	28% (-8)	37% (-9)
New Democratic Party of Canada	19% (-1)	27% (+1)	12% (-7)	12% (+3)	38% (-4)	26% (+5)	17% (+4)
Bloc Québécois	8% (+1)	7% (+3)	6% (-)	14% (+3)	3% (-2)	6% (-1)	10% (+2)
Green Party of Canada	4% (+1)	3% (-)	3% (-1)	1% (-1)	6% (+1)	6% (+2)	3% (-)
Other	2% (-)	3% (-1)	6% (+4)	2% (+1)	1% (+1)	2% (+2)	1% (-)

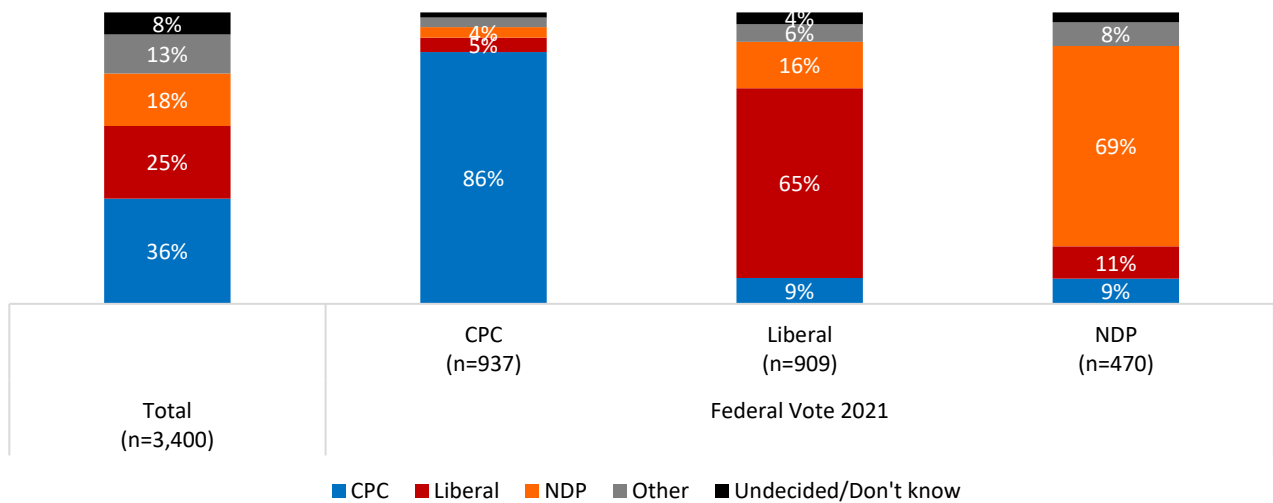
Vote retention favours CPC

If an election were held at the time of fielding, 86 per cent of past Conservatives say they would cast the same vote now as they did in 2021, while few would depart. The same can not be said of 2021 Liberal voters. Two-thirds (65%) among this group say that they would support their Liberal candidate again, but 16 per cent say they would switch to the NDP, and approximately one-in-ten (9%) would vote for the opposition Conservatives. Similar movement is noted among past NDP voters:

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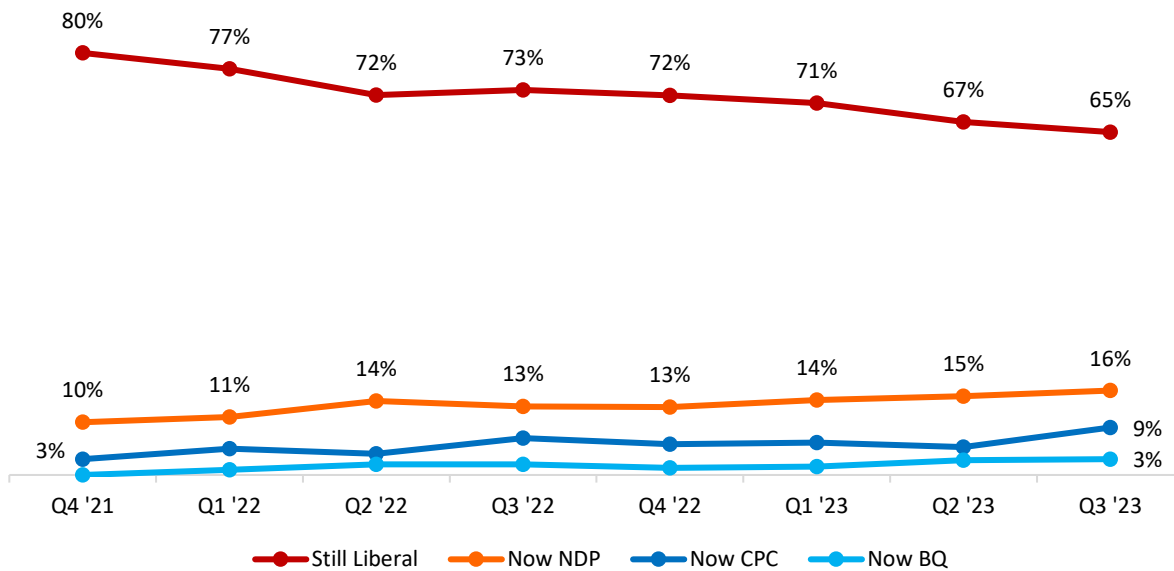
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Vote retention



This retention rate of approximately two-thirds represents a persistent challenge for the Liberals, who have seen a steady erosion of support since the last federal election. Both the Conservatives and NDP have chipped away at the government's past voters:

Liberal vote retention



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