

Canada & the Culture Wars: Most agree on causes of climate change, find consensus on how capitalism affects inequality

Men twice as likely as women to say anyone can get ahead in a capitalist society

October 11, 2023 – In a nation filled with [divided discourse](#), Canadians agree on two significant pieces of the public puzzle.

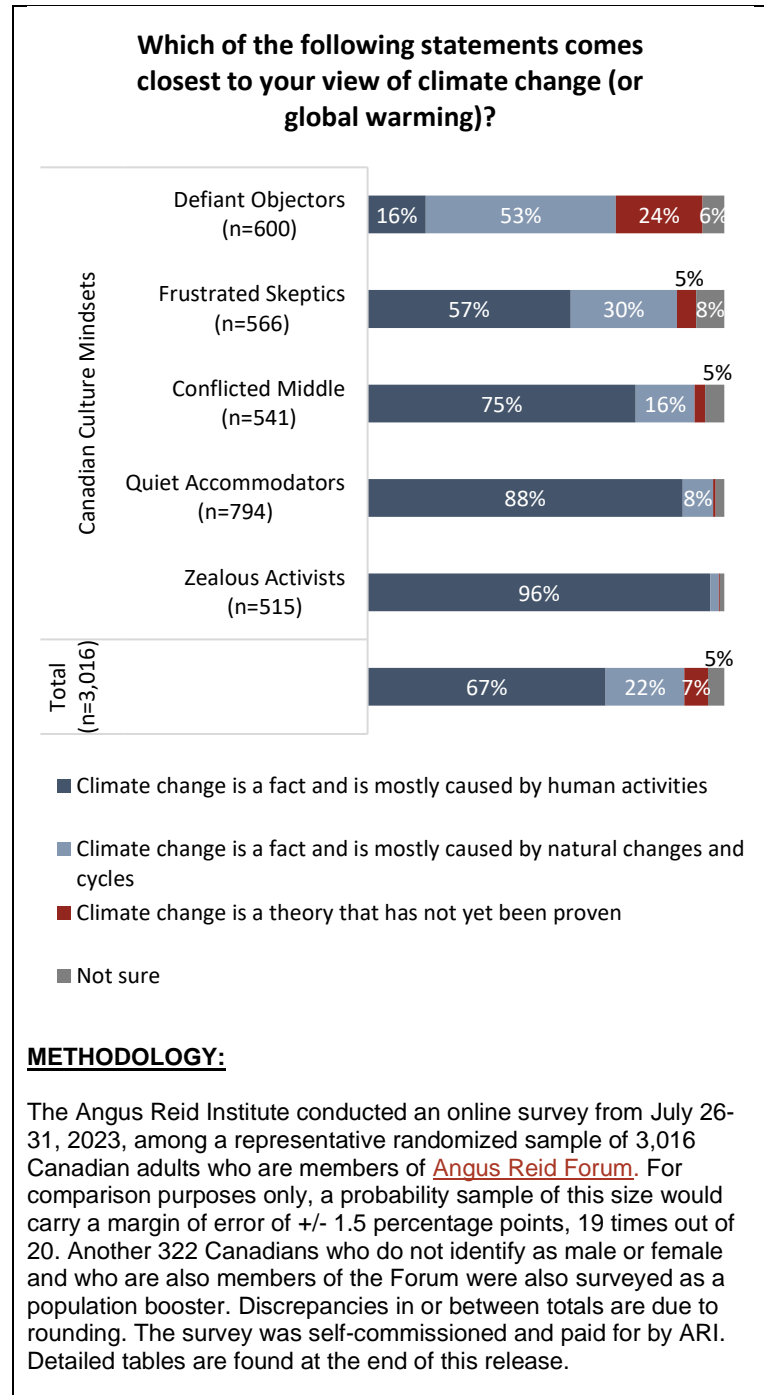
The latest data from the non-profit Angus Reid Institute – the fifth in a series looking at [Canada and the Culture Wars](#) – finds more to agree upon than dispute when it comes to climate change and capitalism. This, despite vehement debate on two sides of the Cultural Mindset spectrum.

[Take the Cultural Mindset Quiz Here](#)

Indeed, two-thirds (67%) say climate change is real and human caused. A further 22 per cent of Canadians say the trend is natural. In a nation ravaged by wildfire and extreme weather events leading to catastrophic floods, it is notable that the proportion of those saying climate change is “unproven” has dropped from 16 per cent in 2014 to just seven per cent now.

A majority also say that climate change is a “crisis” (63%) that necessitates immediate action. Smaller groups feel more concrete in their views that there is no problem at all (11%) or that the time for action has already passed, and there’s little we can do now to turn things around (10%).

There is also agreement among Canadians when gauging the impact of capitalism and the free market on society. Canadians are largely critical, with twice as many saying that within a capitalist system the “rich get richer and the poor get poorer” (58%), rather than feeling that anyone can get ahead (30%). The more negative assessment



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of capitalism is held by a majority of four groups across ARI's Cultural Mindsets, with only the Defiant Objectors doing just that, objecting to the idea that this economic system inherently creates inequality.

More Key Findings:

- In a head-to-head choice between two options, half of Canadians (50%) say that people work hard for their money and should have control over when and where to give it away, while 36 per cent say more money should be redistributed from the wealthy to those worse off.
- Notably, even half of those who say capitalism exacerbates inequality also say that people should be able to control when and where they share their wealth (50%), rather than supporting more redistribution (35%).
- Canadians are largely supportive of the concept of a "wealth tax" (73% support) but more than half oppose to a capital gains tax on profits from selling one's principal residence if the sale exceeds \$1.5 million (56% oppose).
- Among those who feel climate change is a problem Canada needs to take on, the largest number of Canadians say that the government bears the most responsibility (48%), while three-in-ten (31%) say businesses should lead. One-in-five (22%) say this is an individual responsibility.

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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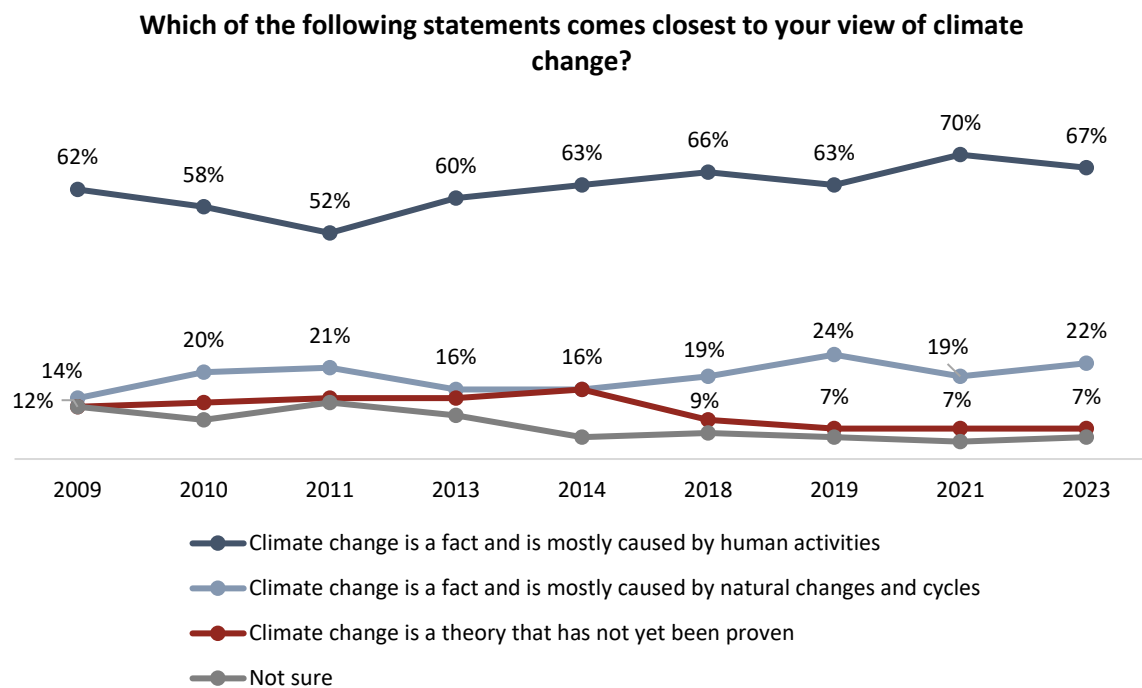
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Part One: Climate change

Canada is enduring increasing climate-related challenges with [each passing year](#). Extreme weather events, floods, storms, and wildfires are damaging properties and chasing people from their homes, with the mounting costs putting many at risk, as [governments](#) and [insurance agencies](#) try to price out a new reality.

Broad agreement that climate change is occurring

While Canadians find no shortage of topics to disagree over, climate change does not appear to be high up on the list. Indeed, nine-in-ten (89%) say that climate change is a fact, though approximately one-quarter of that group feel it is mostly a natural cycle rather than a product of human activities. Seven per cent say that climate change is an unproven theory, a percentage that has held firm over the past half-decade:



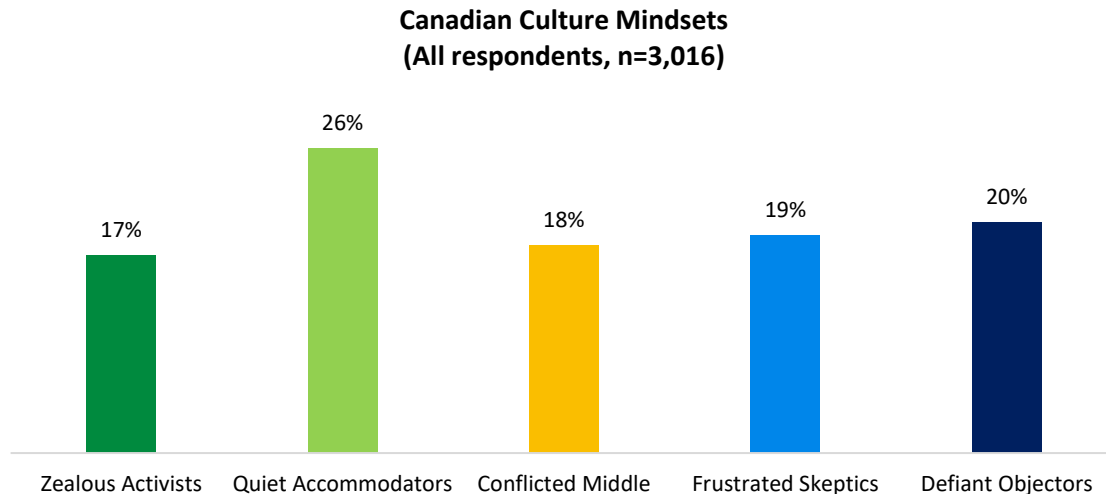
To assist in analysis and understanding of the issues surrounding the culture wars, the Angus Reid Institute created a segmentation using responses to 21 different questions across said topics. For a full list of questions utilized, [click here](#).

Respondents were then analyzed and broken into five groups based on the intensity of their views. Thinking in conventional terms, these range from more traditionally conservative positions to more modern progressive ones. That said, there’s an element at play here that supersedes ideology or political philosophy. There is a level of frustration evident in those on the extremes of each side that separates them from the more muted supporters that silently buttress each. Further, there are a group that approximate a middle ground for whom neither left nor right holds all the answers.

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Approximately one-in-five Canadians comprise each of these groups, with the largest being the more centre-left leaning Quiet Accommodators. They champion progressive values but in a less forceful form.



For a summary of some of the defining demographics of these groups, see the Infographic below. For more detail, [click here](#).

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Canadian Culture Mindsets

How Canadians feel about the controversial conversations of our time



Zealous Activists (17% of population)

- Seek to modernize expression around a progressive view of social & cultural issues
- See the Culture Wars as producing informative and important conversations
- Say that Cancel Culture is about accountability, not suppression
- More likely to be female than male, in particular, women U35 (35%)
- Among those who identify as non-binary, proportion rises to 60 per cent
- 44% of past NDP voters, 22% of past Liberals, 2% of past CPC

Quiet Accommodators (26% of population)

- Tend to agree with Zealous Activists, but view issues with much less intensity
- Equally likely to view Culture Wars as important (49%) and exhausting (46%)
- At least two-thirds support both Safe Spaces and Trigger Warnings
- Largest group in Quebec (31%), at least 20% in all regions of Canada
- Three-in-ten women (28%) and one-quarter of men (24%) in this group
- 39% of past Liberals, 28% of past NDP voters, 10% of past CPC



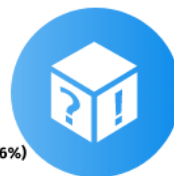
Conflicted Middle (18% of population)



- Half see Culture Wars negatively, one-in-three view it as productive
- Divided as to whether Cancel Culture is suppression (56%) or accountability (44%)
- Equally likely to be men (17%) or women (19%) but tend to be older
- Largest group are in Quebec (24%), smallest in Saskatchewan (8%)
- 23% of past Liberals voters, 15% of past CPC, 13% of past NDP
- Occupy a middle ground on nearly all issues involving gender, race, identity, etc.

Frustrated Skeptics (19% of population)

- Tend to agree with Defiant Objectors, but view issues with much less intensity
- Unlikely to see productive purpose in Culture Wars, tend to feel exhausted by them
- Divided close to evenly in support and opposition of Safe Spaces and Trigger Warnings
- Largest group in Saskatchewan (24%) and Alberta (21%)
- Men over 54 divided evenly between Frustrated Skeptics (25%), Quiet Accommodators (26%)
- 27% of past CPC, 14% of past Liberal voters, 12% of past CPC



Defiant Objectors (20% of population)



- Unanimously say that Cancel Culture is a way to suppress freedom of speech
- Most likely to say the Culture Wars are divisive, unnecessary, and exhausting
- 84% say society is becoming more careful with language and that's a bad thing
- Nine-in-ten opposed to Trigger Warnings or censoring on campus speakers
- Twice as likely to be male (27%) than female (13%)
- Largest group in Alberta (29%), Saskatchewan (30%), Manitoba (24%)
- 74% of past PPC voters, 47% of past CPC voters, 3% of past NDP and Liberal voters

[Click here for a larger version of the above image](#)

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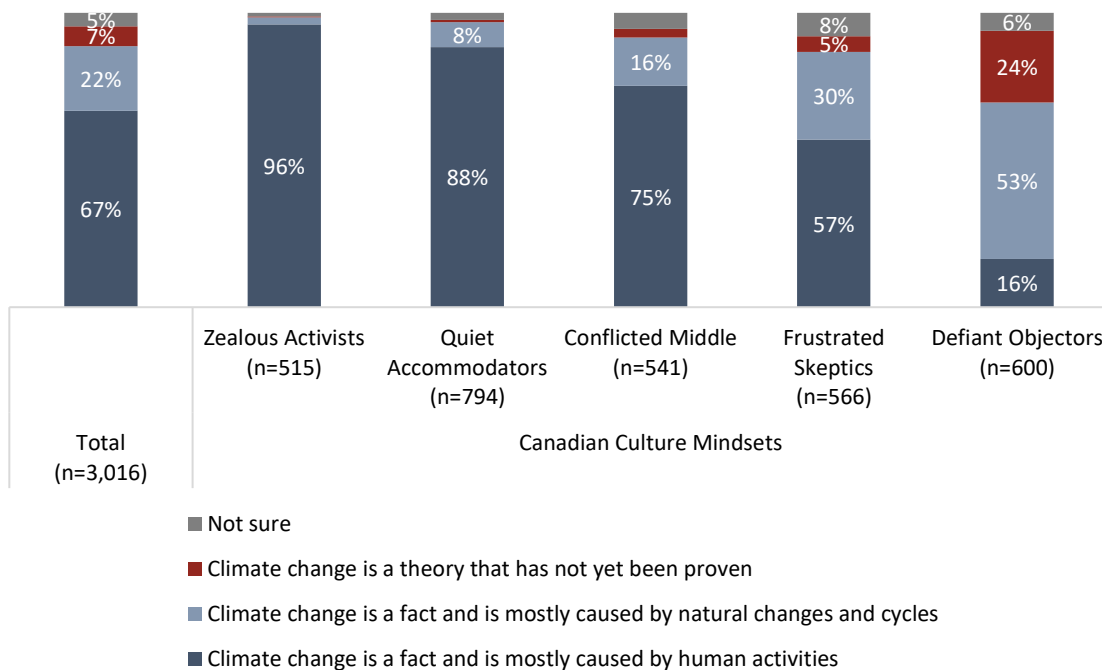
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A majority among four of the five groups on the [Canadian Culture Mindset](#) spectrum say that climate change is a human-caused phenomenon. Only the Defiant Objectors refrain from this majority view, though most among that group feel climate change is still happening:

Which of the following statements comes closest to your view of climate change (or global warming)?



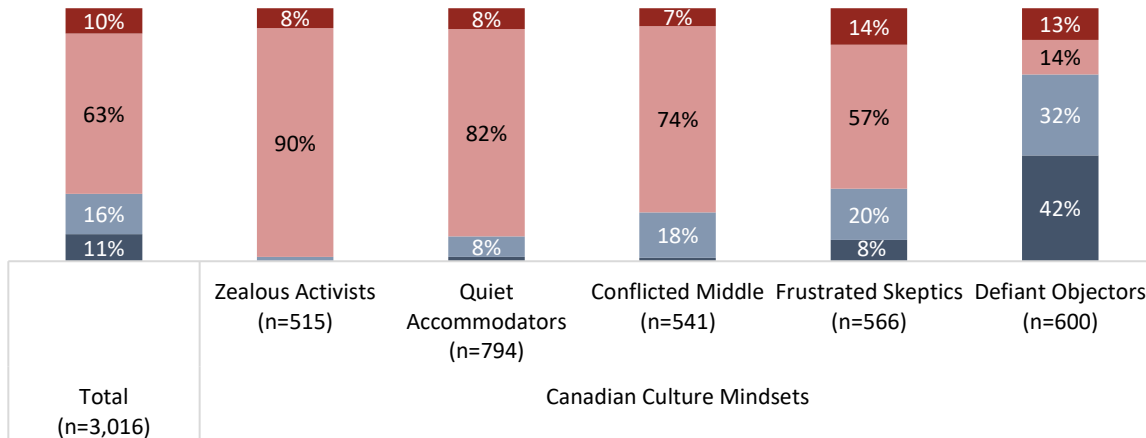
But is there time to act?

While climate change is recognized by most, not everyone agrees about the level of urgency it necessitates. Three-in-five (63%) say that the current situation is a crisis, and that action is needed now if the more damaging long-term impacts are to be fended off. This is a view held by at least three-quarters of the Conflicted Middle, Quiet Accommodators, and Zealous Activists. One-in-six (16%) say that there's a challenge to be met, but that we have plenty of time to work toward solutions. The smallest groups, each approximately one-in-ten, say that nothing needs to be done at all, as they see no problem (11%) or that it's already too late and the situation is hopeless (10%).

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How do you feel about the current state of the climate change and how society should respond? Would you say:



- It's hopeless, there's nothing we can do to turn things around
- It's a crisis and we need to act quickly if we have any chance
- It's a problem, but we have plenty of time to fix it
- It's fine, nothing needs to be done

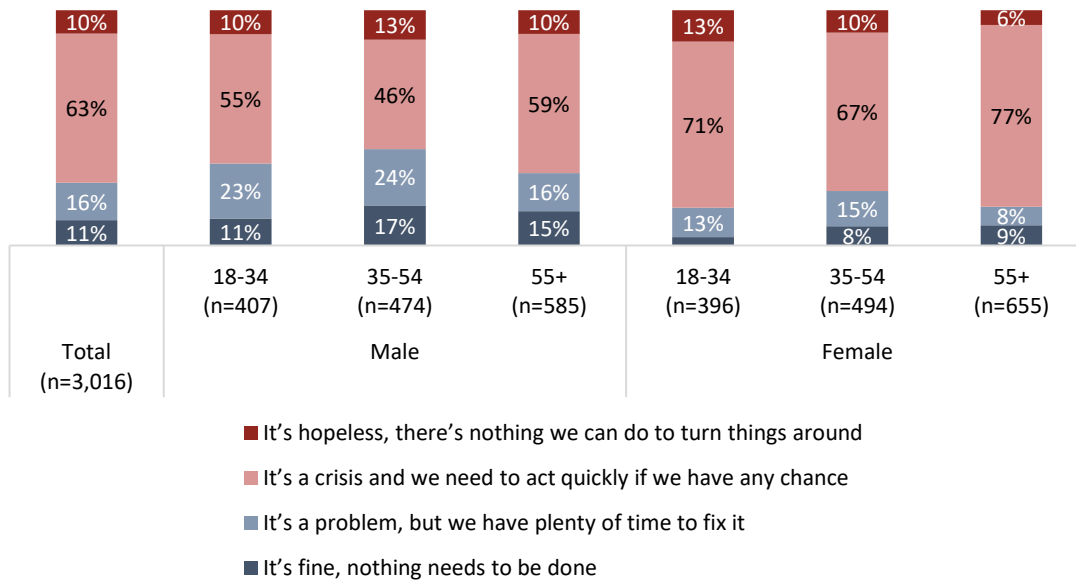
Men and women differ on necessity of action

Men are twice as likely as women (35% to 16%) to perceive little to no urgency, though both still hold this as a minority view. Women of all age groups are significantly more likely than men of the same age to say that action needs to be taken quickly:

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How do you feel about the current state of the climate change and how society should respond? Would you say:



Half who see the need for action say it's government's problem to solve

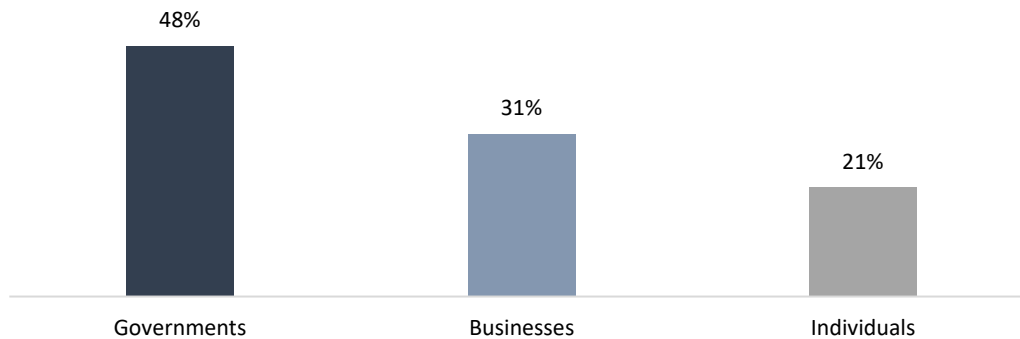
Taking on climate change is a gargantuan and at times nebulous job. Consider the competing balance of priorities that Canadians, themselves, offered in previous Angus Reid Institute [election polling](#), with majorities saying that both climate change and oil and gas development should both be top priorities for the federal government. Supposing action is needed, who's responsibility is it?

As individuals, most Canadians do not feel it is their responsibility alone to change their actions and work toward reducing emissions. Most say that the government must take charge (48%), while three-in-ten (31%) say businesses should lead.

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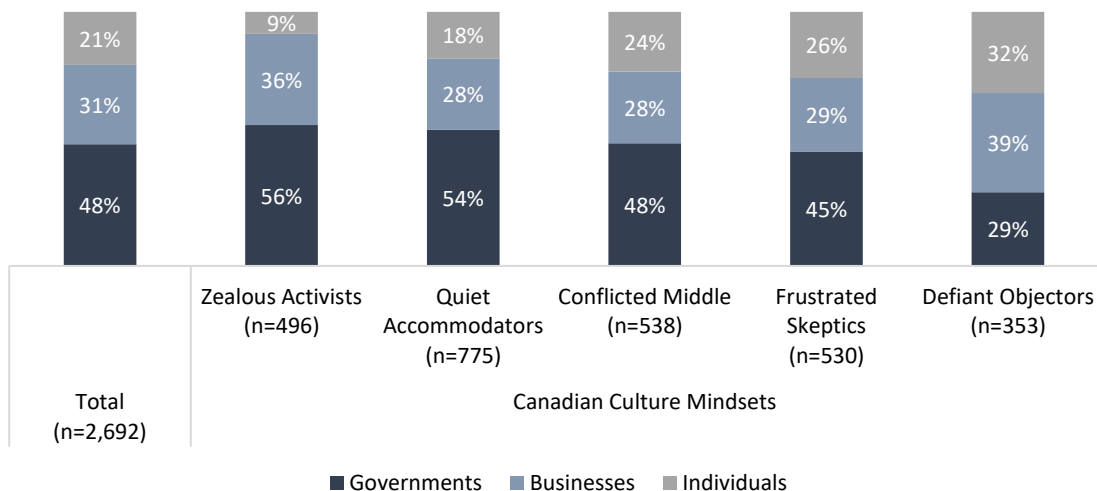
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**Who do you believe is primarily responsible for slowing climate change? Is this the responsibility of:
(Among those who say action is needed, n=2,692)**



Across different mindsets, a preference for large scale action by governments and businesses wins out over individual actions, though all groups offer a mix of perspectives:

**Who do you believe is primarily responsible for slowing climate change?
Is this the responsibility of:
(Among those who say action is needed)**



Part Two: Views of capitalism and taxation

Canada is a capitalist country, but social programs like medicare and low-income supports are a key source of pride for many Canadians. Evidently, much of the population is wary of leaving too much of the market unregulated.

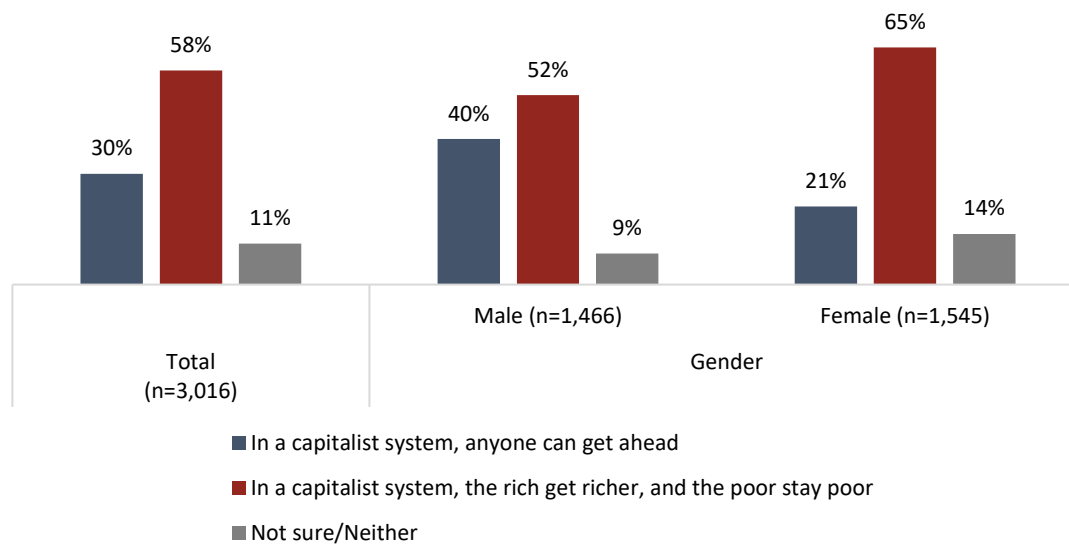
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By two-to-one margin Canadians say the rich get richer, poor get poorer under capitalism

Asked for their views of capitalism as an economic system, most Canadians are critical. Three-in-five (58%) say that the rich get richer, and the poor get poorer within this type of economy, while half as many say that capitalism simply means that anyone who works hard can get ahead. Men are much more likely than women to hold a meritocratic view of capitalism, though a slight majority are still critical overall.

For each of the following paired statements, please tell us which of the two aligns closer to your view when it comes to the idea of “capitalism”.

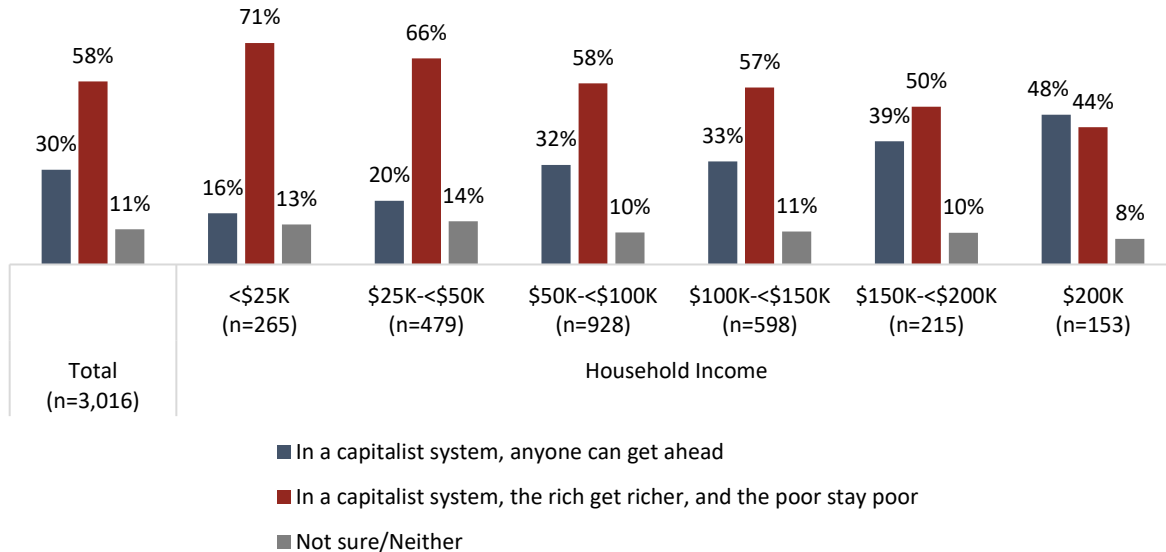


Only the wealthiest group of Canadians, those earning more than \$200,000 per year, are more likely to say that anyone can get ahead in a capitalist system. That view diminishes as household income falls, as seen in the following graph:

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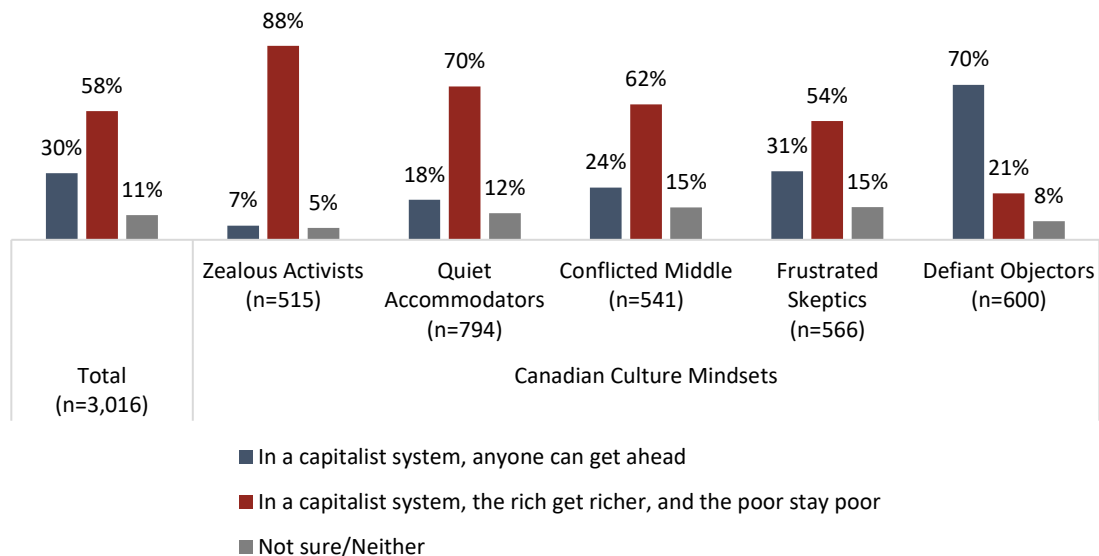
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For each of the following paired statements, please tell us which of the two aligns closer to your view when it comes to the idea of “capitalism”.



Those most likely to view capitalism favourably are the Defiant Objectors, a group that is more likely to be made up of men and past Conservatives voters. For details about Canadian Culture Mindsets, [click here](#).

For each of the following paired statements, please tell us which of the two aligns closer to your view when it comes to the idea of “capitalism”.



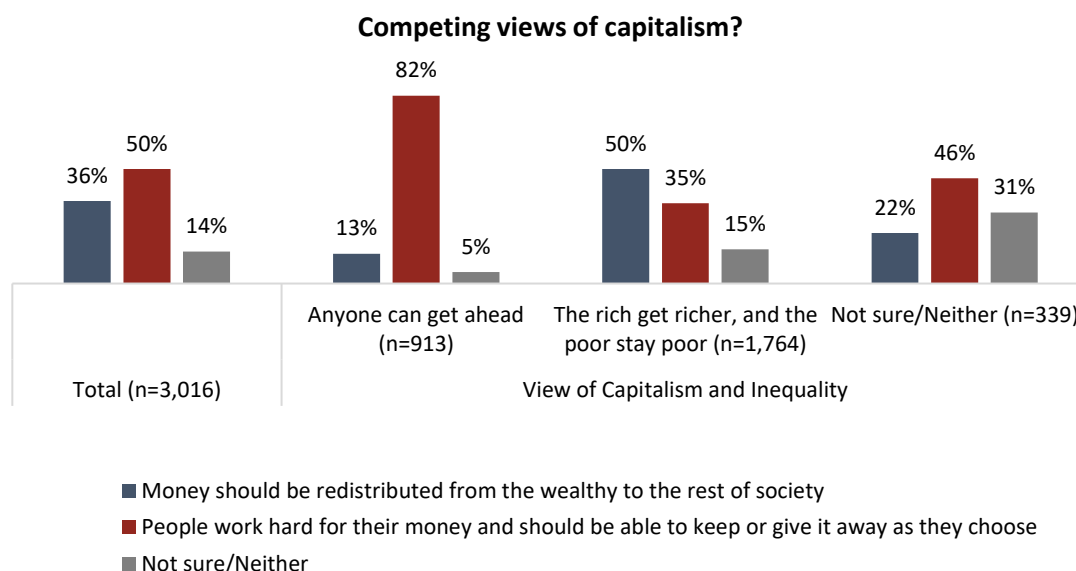
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Redistribution a source of more disagreement

There are more Canadians who offer a cynical view of the capitalist system than support redistributing wealth as a means of balance. Half (50%) of Canadians believe people should be able to use the money they've earned as they see fit, while one-third say money should be redistributed from the wealthy.

Contrasting these views with those of the first question – whether capitalism inherently creates inequality – one can see that even among those who say “the rich get richer and the poor get poorer”, just half say that money should be redistributed from the wealthy to everyone else:

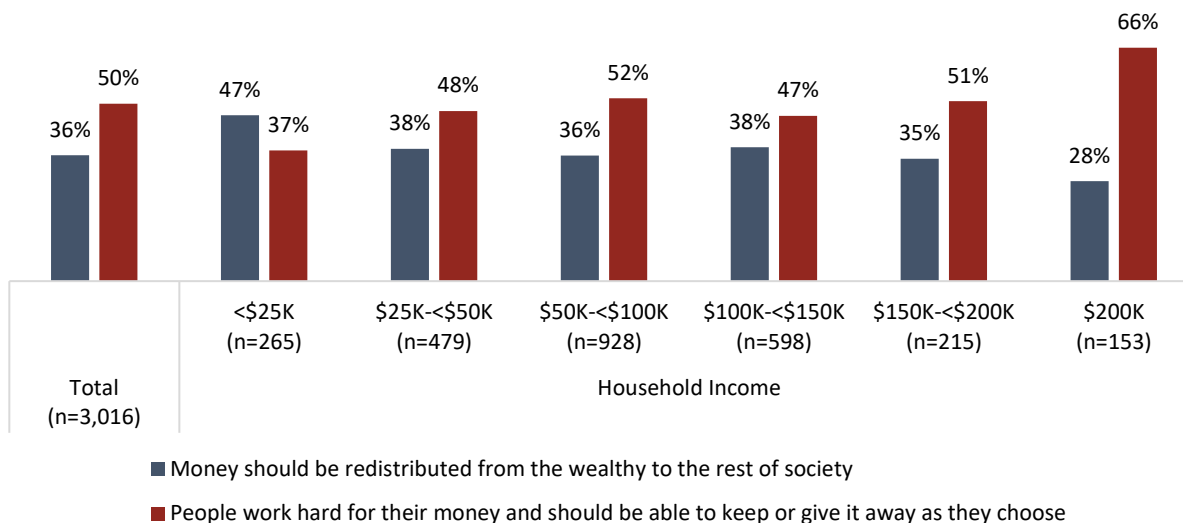


Only among the lowest income household income bracket do the number of people who believe there should be wealth redistribution outweigh those who oppose it:

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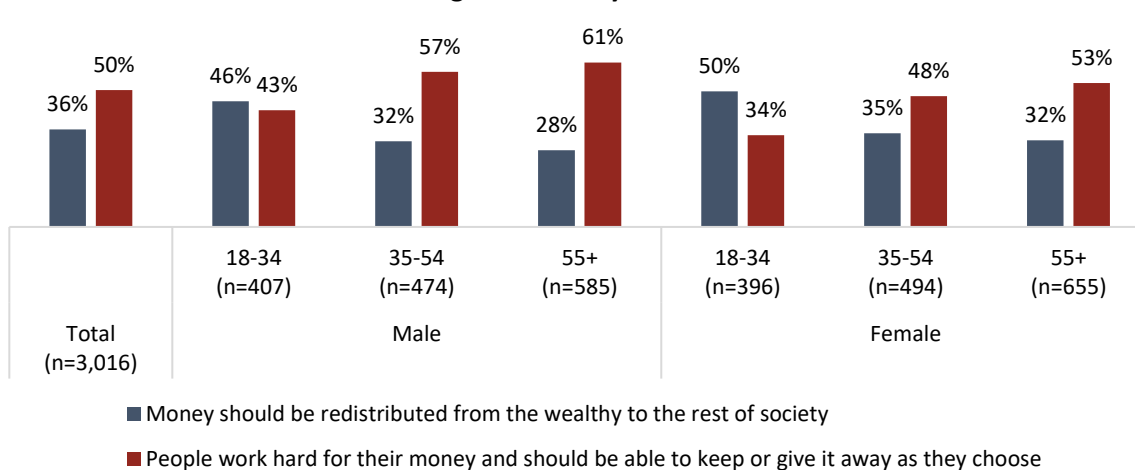
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For each of the following paired statements, please tell us which of the two aligns closer to your view:



Younger Canadians – who on average have much less net worth than older ones – are more likely to support wealth redistribution. Majorities of men older than 34 and women older than 54 oppose taking money from the rich and giving it to everyone else:

For each of the following paired statements, please tell us which of the two aligns closer to your view:



A tale of two taxes – wealth tax lauded, home sales tax opposed

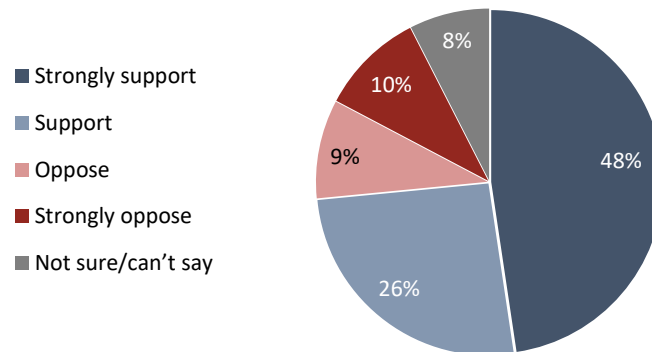
In a more specific policy sense, the Canadian appetite for policies to address inequality is varied. A much talked about “wealth tax”, something proposed by NDP leader Jagmeet Singh and other leftist leaders in numerous countries, is very popular. Half of Canadians (48%) say they support this idea strongly, while

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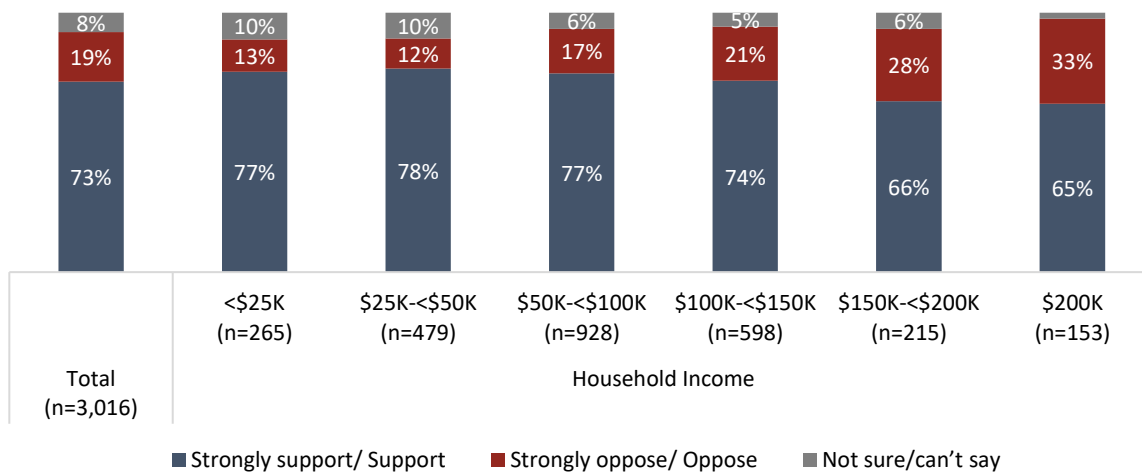
another one-quarter say they support it (26%). The version asked in this question is a tax of one per cent on assets over \$10 million ([see full questionnaire here](#)).

In theory, would you support or oppose this type of “wealth tax”?
(All respondents, n=3,016)



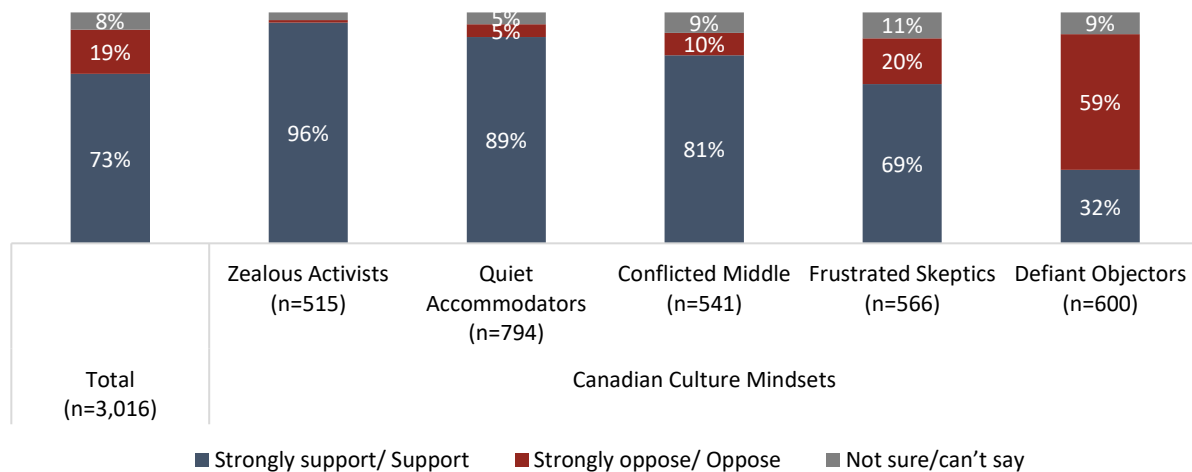
Approximately one per cent of households, or 80,000 families, have a net worth of more than \$10 million in Canada. Perhaps that’s why even though support for a wealth tax at this level declines by the household income of the respondent, it is still at a majority level at the highest income bracket:

In theory, would you support or oppose this type of “wealth tax”?



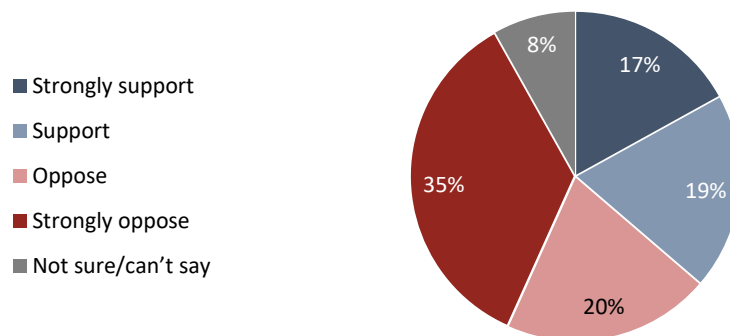
A concept of a wealth tax on those with more than \$10 million in assets is supported at a majority level by all Canadian Culture Mindsets except Defiant Objectors. Three-in-five (59%) in that group oppose it:

In theory, would you support or oppose this type of “wealth tax”?



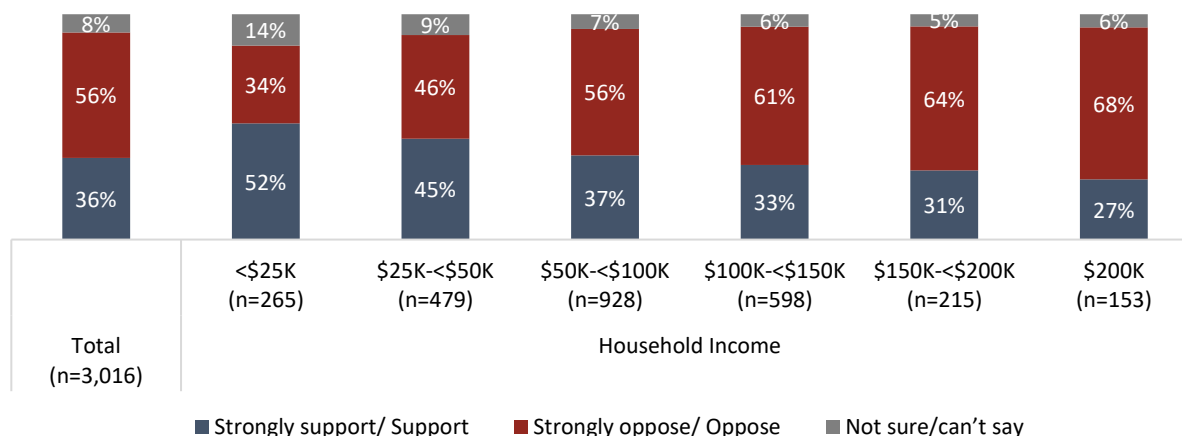
Another proposed form of taxation is much less acceptable to Canadians. A capital gains tax on housing sales for more expensive homes has been debated for decades in Canada, but appears unappetizing to most. ARI asked Canadians about a proposal where houses sold for more than \$1.5 million would be subject to a 25 per cent tax on the profit from that sale. For close to two-in-five (36%) this is an idea with merit, where 55 per cent oppose it. The largest group (35%) strongly oppose the concept:

Would you support or oppose this type of tax for homes that are sold for more than \$1.5 million dollars? (All respondents, n=3,016)



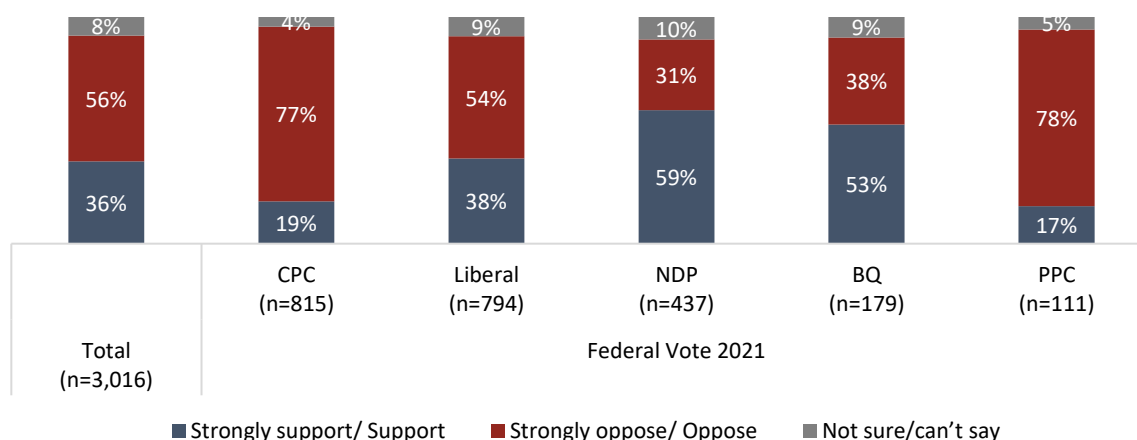
Canada is largely a nation of homeowners; two-thirds in the country own their home, though that rate has declined from highs seen a decade ago. However, those living in lower income households are much more likely to be renters. Still, support for a tax on homes sold for more than \$1.5 million rises to at most half among those with annual household incomes of \$25,000 or less:

Would you support or oppose this type of tax for homes that are sold for more than \$1.5 million dollars?



A majority of past NDP (59%) and Bloc Québécois voters support a tax on homes sold for more than \$1.5 million. Opposition is higher among past Liberal voters (54%) and much higher among those who voted CPC (77%) or PPC (78%) in 2021:

Would you support or oppose this type of tax for homes that are sold for more than \$1.5 million dollars?



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

For detailed results by Canadian Cultural Mindsets, [click here](#).

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