

## Canada and the Culture Wars

Angus Reid Institute

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Table of Contents

**Introduction** ..... 3

**Methodology**..... 3

**Part One: Canadian Cultural Mindsets** ..... 4

**Part Two: Cancel Culture, Free Speech, and Exhaustion** ..... 7

    Culture wars seen as exhausting, divisive ..... 8

    We’re changing the way we communicate, for better or worse? ..... 11

    Self-censorship, actual censorship, and safe spaces..... 14

**Part Three: On Gender and transgender issues** ..... 21

    Transgender issues ..... 25

    Children, hormones, and transitioning ..... 29

    New Brunswick/Saskatchewan school pronoun policy..... 31

**Part Four: Experiences and perceptions of racism** ..... 37

    Who faces discrimination ..... 37

    Privilege and priority ..... 42

    Views on cultural appropriation ..... 45

**Part Five: Legacy of Colonialism and Indigenous issues**..... 49

    Colonialism in modern Canada ..... 49

    Contentious questions ..... 53

**Part Six: Climate change and Capitalism** ..... 62

    Broad agreement that climate change is occurring..... 62

    Views of capitalism and taxation..... 66

**Summary and Conclusions** ..... 72

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## Introduction

It's a familiar refrain these days: Canadians are having a harder time talking to each other.

A multitude of factors have contributed to what is [a perceived increase](#) in polarization between different demographic groups, generations, and political spheres in this country, and alongside this, an increase in often divisive conversations among friends and family.

Against this backdrop, the Angus Reid Institute undertook a wide-ranging study to better understand the perspectives of Canadians on a host of issues – from gender and identity, to race, Indigenous issues and the legacy of colonization, to free speech and precautions taken to ensure the comfort of those who don't wish to partake in charged debates. These topics have become flashpoints in what has been [labelled](#) as the ["culture wars"](#).

Exploring these contentious grounds can help to answer some questions.

Are our conversations really changing? Do we have common interests to build upon? Where do the values of Canadians diverge? This project endeavours to help this conversation along and provide insight for Canadians to better understand each other.

## Methodology

The Angus Reid Institute developed a large-scale survey of Canadians regarding issues that made up the cultural conversation in Canada over the spring/summer of 2023. [View the full questionnaire in both official languages here](#). The Angus Reid Institute then conducted an online survey from July 26-31, 2023, among a representative randomized sample of 3,016 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. Another 322 Canadians who do not identify as male or female and who are also members of the Forum were also surveyed as a population booster. Discrepancies in or between totals are due to rounding. The survey was self-commissioned and paid for by ARI, a non-profit institution.

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## Part One: Canadian Cultural Mindsets

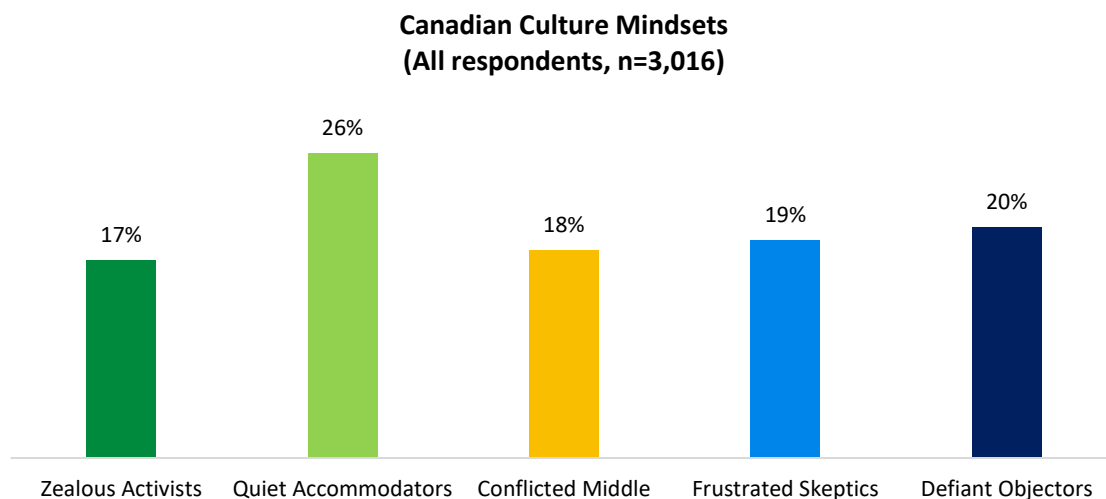
What started out almost exclusively as the domain of [American cable news](#) networks has woven its way into the fabric of Canadian political, educational, and societal discourse: the so-called “culture wars”.

The catch-all phrase has become shorthand for divisive discourse around issues such as the dimensions and limits of public speech, and those related to gender, race, climate, capitalism, and the legacies of colonialism. These issues are independent but at times related in cultivating one’s own personal philosophy of how to approach societal issues.

To assist in analysis and understanding of these issues, 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](#).

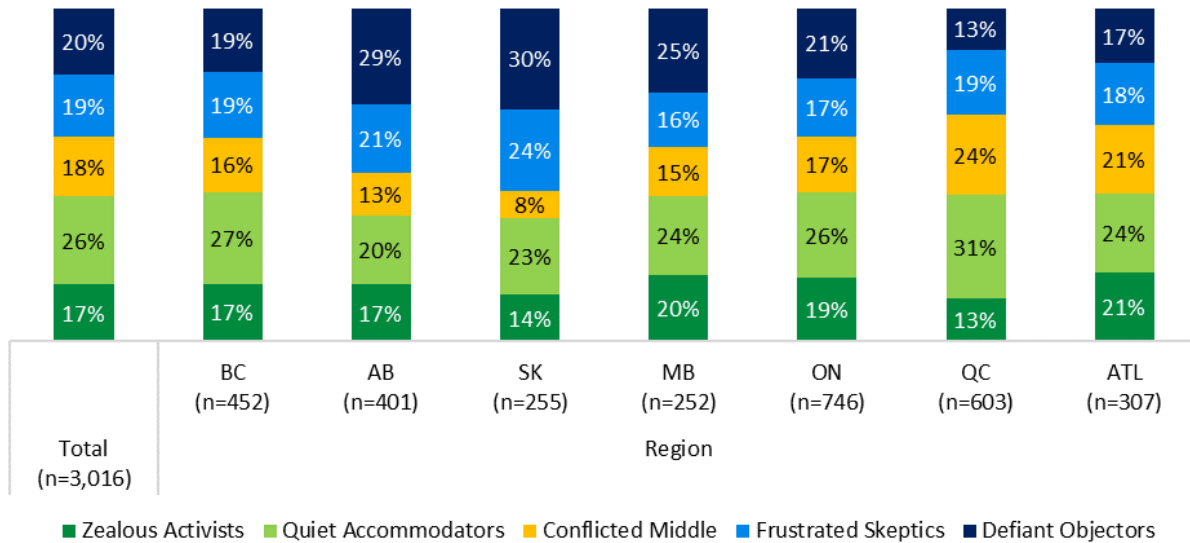
Respondents were then analyzed and broken into five groups based on the intensity of their views. Thinking in conventional terms, these range from more traditionally conservative positions to more modern progressive ones. That said, there’s an element at play here that supersedes ideology or political 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.

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.



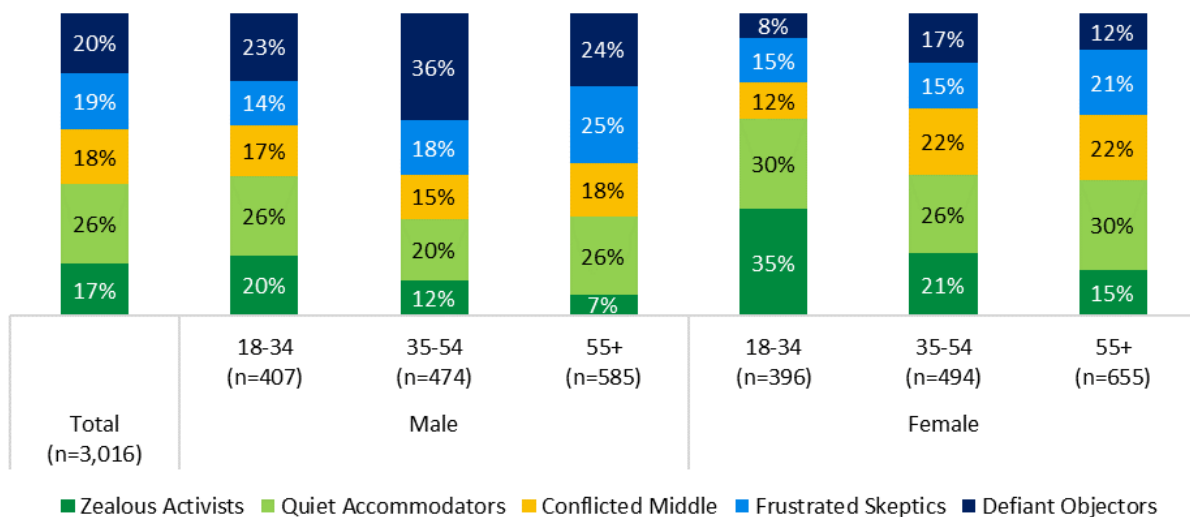
Regionally, there is a concentration of Defiant Objectors and Frustrated Skeptics in Alberta, Saskatchewan, and Manitoba:

### Canadian Culture Mindsets



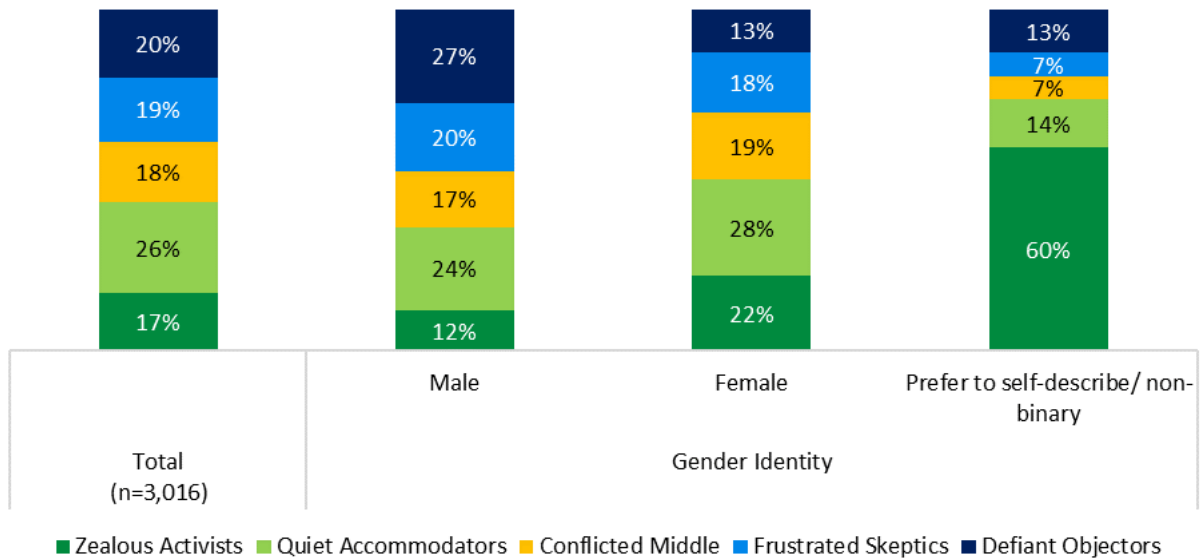
The two groups most likely to be on opposite ends of these debates are men between the ages of 35 and 54, and women younger than 35. Women of all ages are generally more likely than men to occupy space in the Quiet Accommodators and Zealous Activists:

### Canadian Culture Mindsets



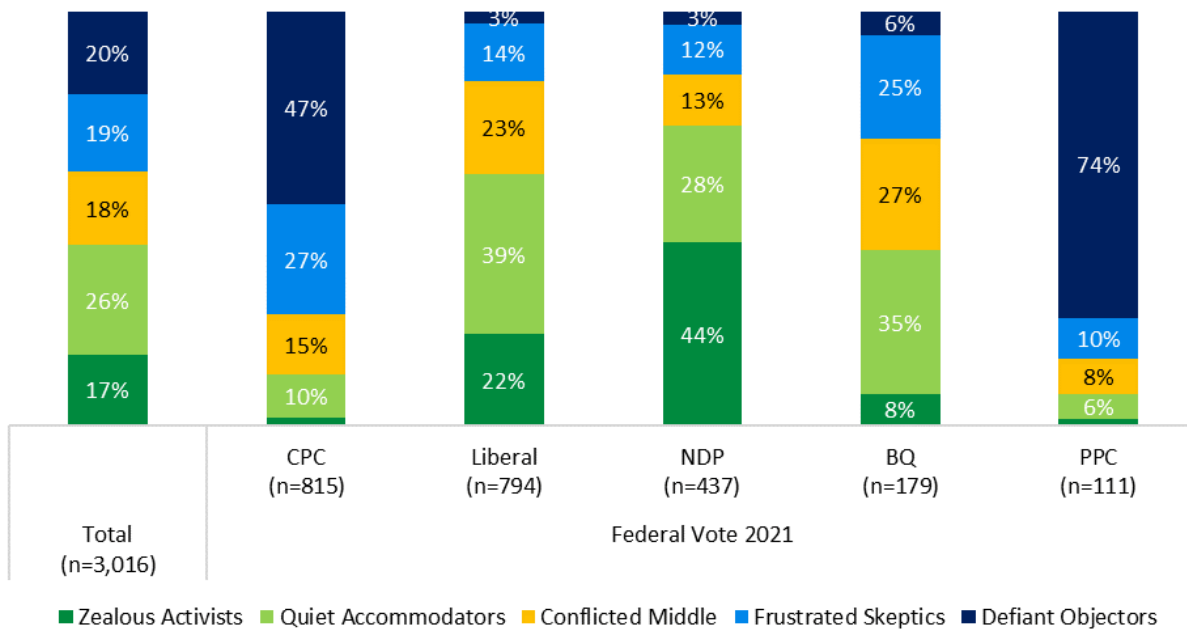
Gender identity is also a factor. Those who do not identify as either male or female are far more likely to express views that place them within the Zealous Activists.

### Canadian Culture Mindsets



As one might expect, given the current state of discourse in Canada, much of these viewpoints tend to be heavily correlated with political perspectives:

### Canadian Culture Mindsets

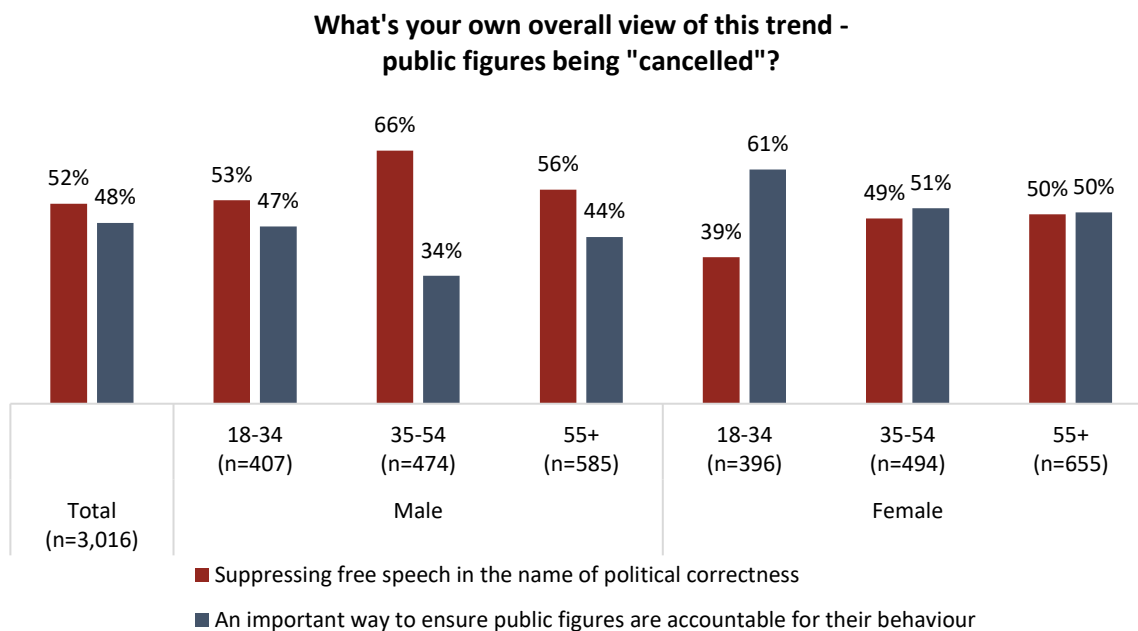


## Part Two: Cancel Culture, Free Speech, and Exhaustion

In 2019, Don Cherry lost his long-time position as an intermission NHL commentator after he referred to minority Canadians as [“you people” in on-air remarks](#), as he [insinuated new immigrants did not pay proper respect to veterans by wearing a poppy ahead of Remembrance Day](#). He refused to apologize and his segment, Coach’s Corner, was cancelled. Though that was the last straw, it was hardly the first time the former NHL coach of the year had made controversial comments; previous intermission segments were categorized as [“xenophobic”](#) and [“sexist”](#).

Cherry is perhaps one of the most prominent Canadian examples of a public figure who was “cancelled” for inappropriate beliefs or remarks, but he is one of many celebrities, politicians, and sports figures who have faced career-altering consequences for controversial speech.

This trend is a key source of division. Half (52%) of Canadians believe the “cancellation” of public figures and celebrities is “suppressing free speech in the name of political correctness.” Half (48%) disagree, and instead say it is “an important way to ensure public figures are accountable for their behaviour.” Men are much more likely to believe the former, including two-thirds (66%) of men aged 35- to 54-years-old who believe cancel culture is limiting free speech. Women are more split, except women under 35, of whom three-in-five (61%) say cancelling keeps public figures accountable:

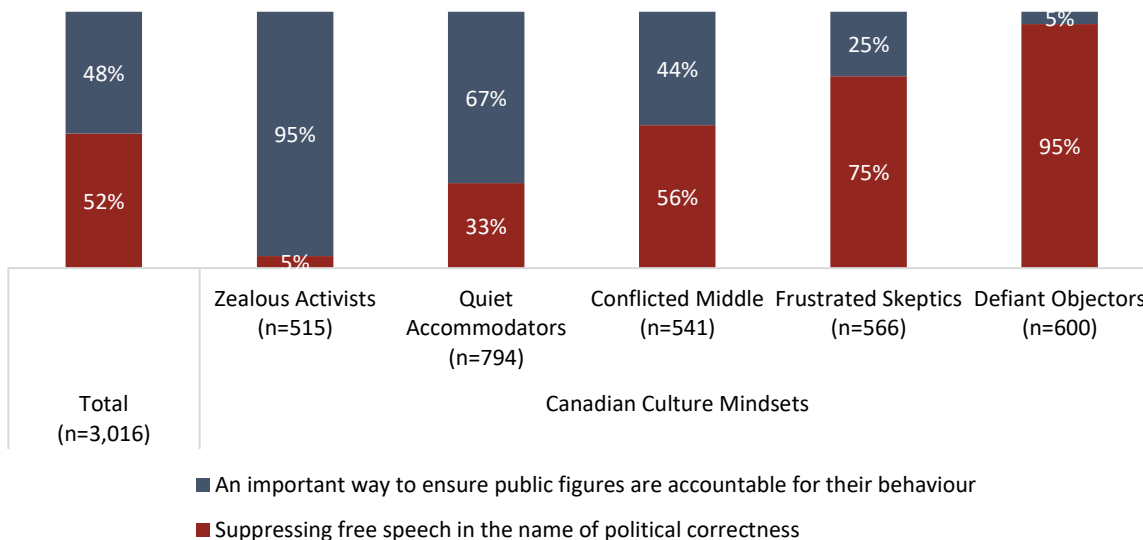


Approaching three-in-five in Alberta (57%) and Saskatchewan (59%) believe cancelling celebrities is more about suppressing free speech than accountability, the most in the country. However, those who believe celebrities being cancelled is more about accountability peaks at half in Ontario (50%, [see detailed tables](#)).

The sense that cancel culture is about policing free speech is highest among those who voted Conservative in 2021. Past NDP voters, meanwhile, are the most likely to believe cancelling public figures is about holding them accountable ([see detailed tables](#)).

Defiant Objectors and Zealous Activists find themselves on opposite ends of the issue. The Conflicted Middle lean towards believing cancel culture suppresses free speech (56%):

**What's your own overall view of this trend - public figures being "cancelled"?**



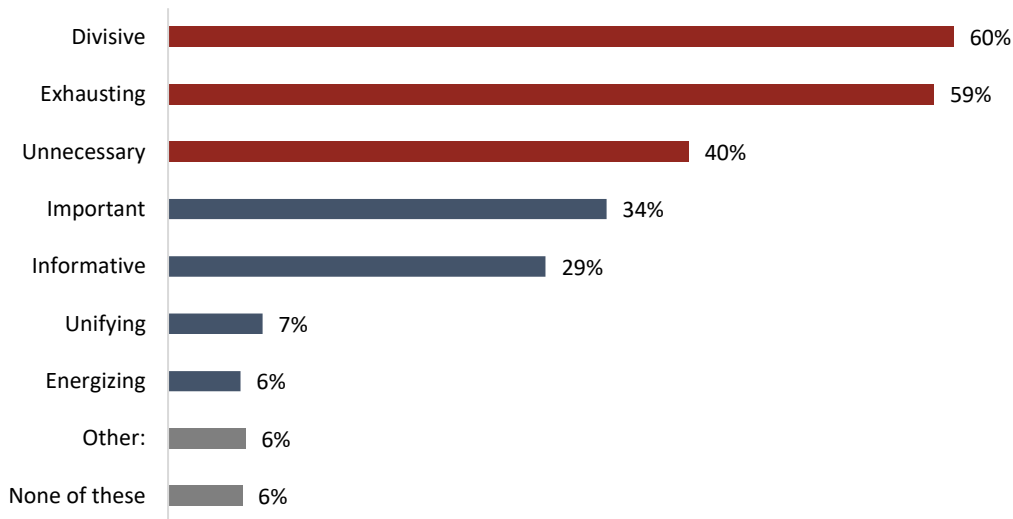
**Culture wars seen as exhausting, divisive**

The culture wars are being fought on many fronts. There are skirmishes over issues of free speech, self-censorship and safe spaces, as well as the environment, issues around gender and race, and the legacy of colonialism.

Taken together, Canadians were asked what words came to mind when they think about the multifront culture wars. Majorities find the battles “divisive” (60%) and “exhausting” (59%), while two-in-five (40%) describe them as “unnecessary”. However, there are others who believe the culture wars have value. One-third (34%) say they are “important” and another three-in-ten (29%) describe them as “informative”:



**Words most associated with the culture wars  
(Up to three chosen; all respondents, n=3,016)**



The feeling of exhaustion over the ongoing culture wars is common among all Canadian Culture Mindsets. However, Zealous Activists are much more likely to feel the discussions have value. Seven-in-ten (69%) in that group describe the culture wars discourse as important, while half (50%) say they are informative. Quiet Accommodators are more likely to feel they are divisive (52%), but nearly as many also describe the culture wars as important (49%). Defiant Objectors are the most likely (75%) to feel there is no need for culture wars debate they find “divisive” (83%) and “exhausting” (77%):

Words most associated with the culture wars (Up to three chosen, top five words selected overall shown)						
	Total (n=3,016)	Canadian Culture Mindsets				
		Zealous Activists (n=515)	Quiet Accommodators (n=794)	Conflicted Middle (n=541)	Frustrated Skeptics (n=566)	Defiant Objectors (n=600)
Divisive	60%	43%	52%	56%	68%	83%
Exhausting	59%	44%	46%	57%	73%	77%
Unnecessary	40%	13%	23%	33%	58%	75%
Important	34%	69%	49%	30%	12%	8%
Informative	29%	50%	41%	32%	14%	7%

Though among all demographics the most common descriptors are “divisive” and “exhausting”, women are more likely than men to find these discussions worthwhile. Approaching two-in-five women of all ages

describe them as important, while women over the age of 54 are the most likely (37%) to find them informative:

Words most associated with the culture wars (Up to three chosen, top five words selected overall shown)							
	Total (n=3,016)	Male			Female		
		18-34 (n=407)	35-54 (n=474)	55+ (n=585)	18-34 (n=396)	35-54 (n=494)	55+ (n=655)
<b>Divisive</b>	60%	60%	70%	68%	47%	57%	58%
<b>Exhausting</b>	59%	63%	64%	61%	54%	57%	55%
<b>Unnecessary</b>	40%	40%	49%	55%	25%	32%	36%
<b>Important</b>	34%	31%	25%	28%	43%	38%	38%
<b>Informative</b>	29%	22%	23%	25%	32%	32%	37%

At least half of all past voters describe the culture wars as divisive. However, among past voters of the NDP and Liberal Party, there are more who believe they are “important” and “informative” than “unnecessary”:

Words most associated with the culture wars (Up to three chosen, top five words selected overall shown)						
	Total (n=3,016)	Federal Vote 2021				
		CPC (n=815)	Liberal (n=794)	NDP (n=437)	BQ (n=179)	PPC (n=111)
<b>Divisive</b>	60%	76%	57%	55%	51%	81%
<b>Exhausting</b>	59%	74%	55%	54%	38%	74%
<b>Unnecessary</b>	40%	62%	30%	23%	27%	71%
<b>Important</b>	34%	17%	45%	52%	29%	13%
<b>Informative</b>	29%	14%	40%	37%	34%	10%

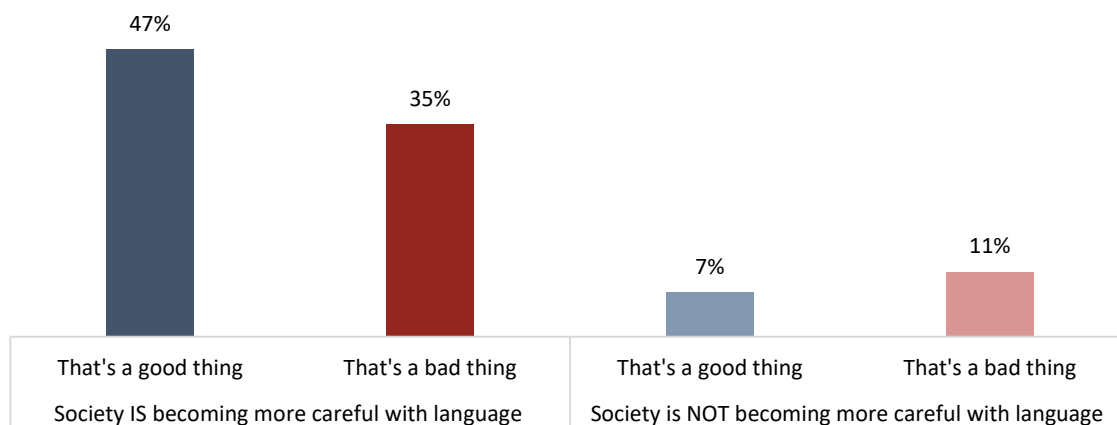
**We're changing the way we communicate, for better or worse?**

Language is constantly evolving over time. In recent years, common turns of phrase uttered by previous generations without second thought have come under the microscope. For example, even as recently as five years ago, the term “master bedroom” to describe the largest bedroom in a house was ubiquitous in real estate listings. However, in 2020, the Canadian Real Estate Association eliminated the term “master bedroom”, because of its [“perceivable connection to slavery”](#), replacing it with “primary bedroom.”

While just one example in [a world of evolving terms](#), the change in real estate is emblematic of the ongoing cultural shift Canadians are experiencing. Indeed, most Canadians (82%) believe society is becoming more careful with language. Among that group, more believe it's a good thing (47%) than a bad one (35%).

There is also nearly one-in-five (18%) who dispute that society is becoming more cautious with its words. That group is split between believing that's a good thing (7%) or a bad one (11%):

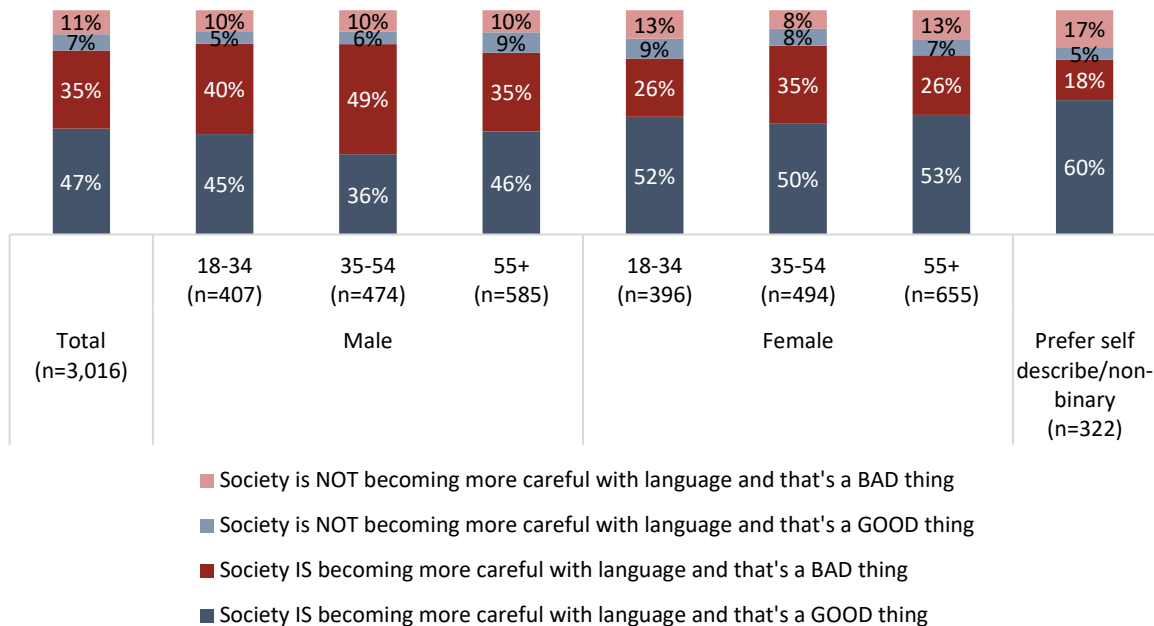
**When you think about people being more careful with what they say and how they say it to avoid offending people around them, would you say...  
(All respondents, n=3,016)**



**Generational and gender divisions**

All demographics believe society is becoming more cautious with language at a majority level, but there is a difference in opinions between genders whether that's a good thing or a bad thing. Men, including half of those aged 35- to 54-years-old, are more likely to say it's the latter. At least half of women of all ages believe society's growing caution with language is a positive development:

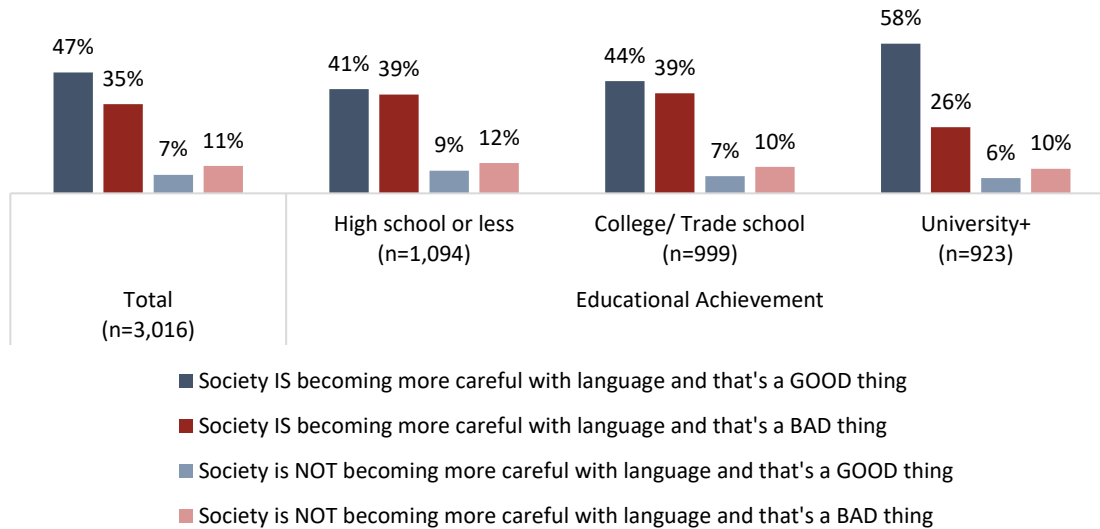
**When you think about people being more careful with what they say and how they say it to avoid offending people around them, would you say...**



**The education perspective**

Canadians who hold at least an undergraduate degree from a university are much more likely (58%) than those who stopped their education in high school (41%) or college (44%) to believe it's a good thing society is becoming more cautious with language. Those with high school or college educations are near evenly split between believing society's re-evaluation of the words it uses is positive or negative:

**When you think about people being more careful with what they say and how they say it to avoid offending people around them, would you say...**

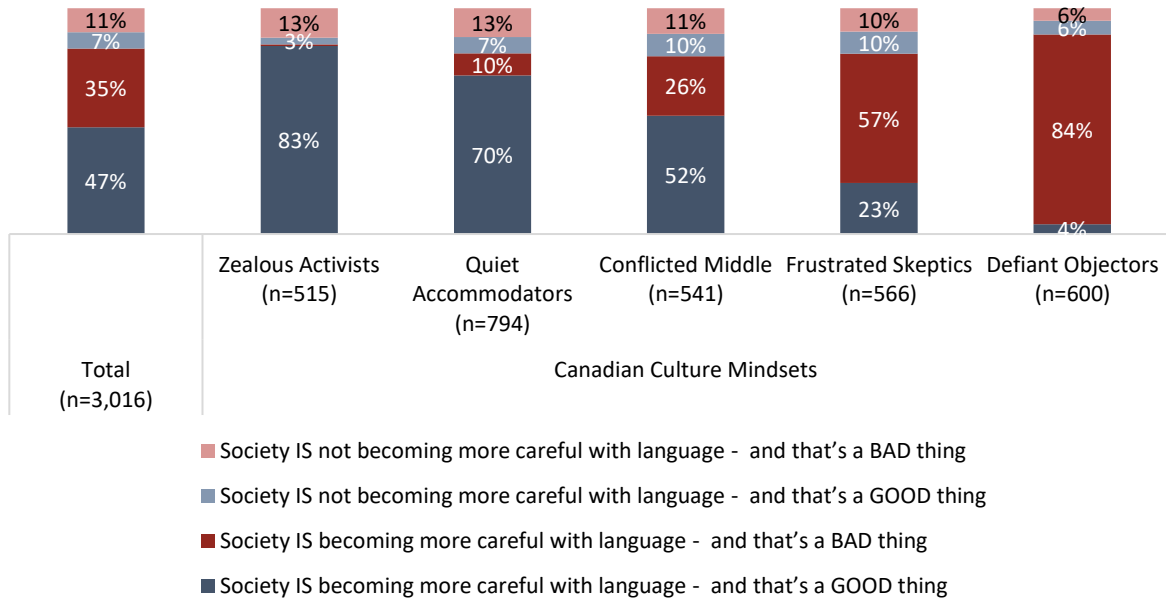


**Perceptions and politics**

There is agreement across the political spectrum that society is becoming more wary with words. Those who voted for right-leaning parties in 2021 are more inclined to believe this is a bad thing, while those who supported left-leaning parties say it is a good thing at majority levels. Those who voted for the Bloc Québécois in 2021 find themselves in between ([see detailed tables](#)).

Among Canadian Culture Mindsets, there is also widespread agreement that society is becoming more careful with language. But there is delineation as to whether this is a good thing – 83 per cent of Zealous Activists say this – or a bad thing – the belief of 84 per cent of Defiant Objectors:

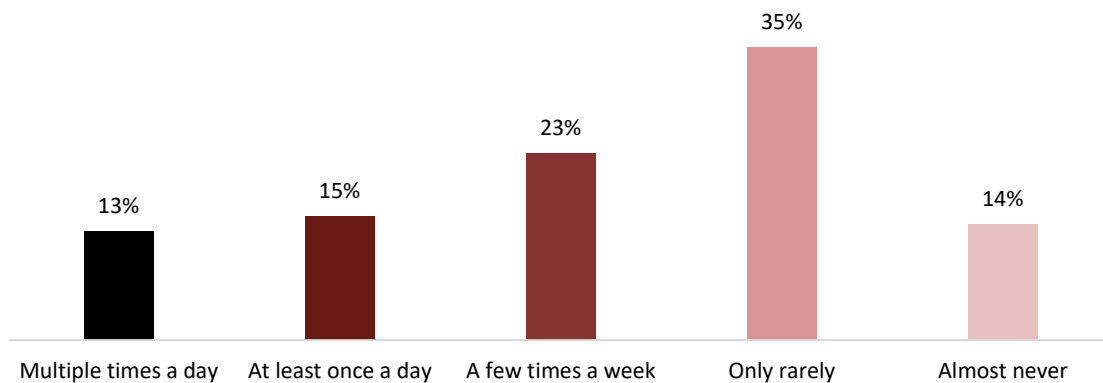
**When you think about people being more careful with what they say and how they say it to avoid offending people around them, would you say...**



**Self-censorship, actual censorship, and safe spaces**

In an environment of evolving linguistic standards, there are evidently many Canadians who watch what they say. Only one-in-seven (14%) say they speak freely regardless of who is present. A near equal group (13%) say they are keeping some thoughts to themselves multiple times a day, while 15 per cent find this to be a daily occurrence. One-quarter (23%) “hold their tongue” a few times each week. The largest group – 35 per cent – say only rarely do they think better of something they were about to say and leave it unsaid:

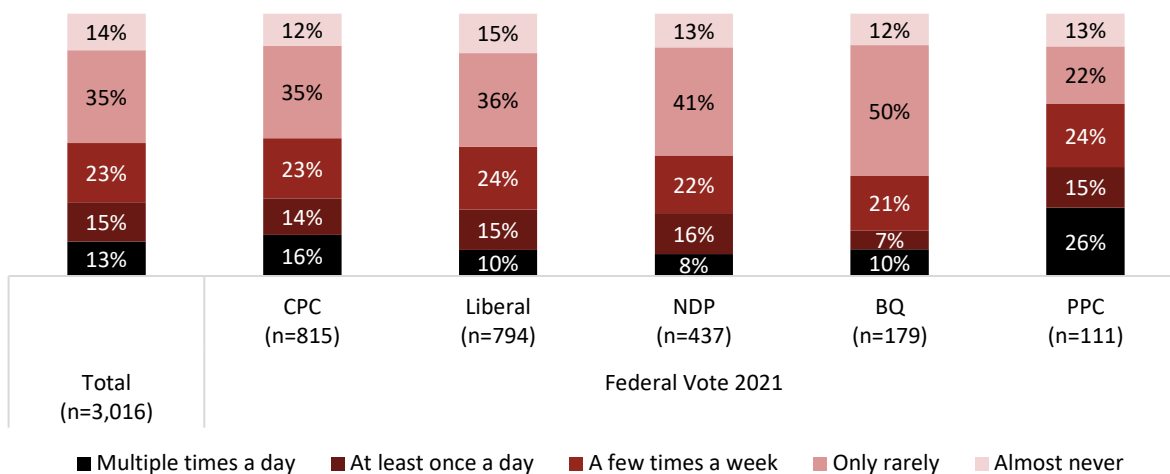
**Thinking about your day-to-day life, how often, if at all, would you say you “hold your tongue”?  
(All respondents, n=3,016)**



Older Canadians are much less likely to filter what they say than younger ones. At least half of men (54%) and women (58%) older than 54 say they rarely or never “hold their tongue”. Meanwhile, approaching two-in-five (37%) men under 35 say they keep thoughts to themselves at least daily ([see detailed tables](#)).

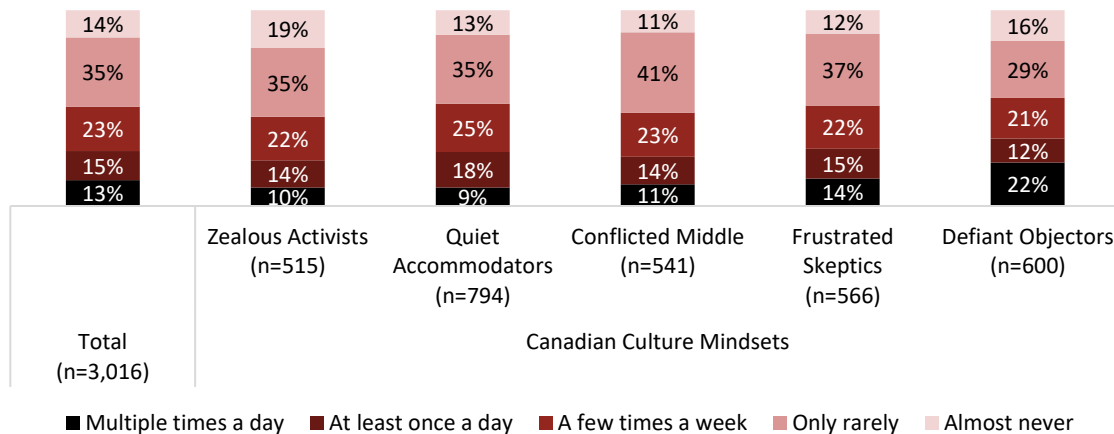
At least half of past voters for the four largest Canadian political parties say they rarely or never hold back what they have to say. Those who voted for the People’s Party of Canada in 2021 are much more likely than others to say they regularly refrain from sharing their thoughts – two-thirds (65%) say this happens at least once a week:

**Thinking about your day-to-day life, how often, if at all, would you say you “hold your tongue” ?**



The Defiant Objectors are the most likely to report often holding their tongue; 55 per cent say this is a weekly occurrence, including one-in-five (22%) who say they have to keep thoughts to themselves multiple times a day. At least half of all other groups among the Canadian Culture Mindsets say holding their tongue happens at least once a week – except Zealous Activists, who are the most likely to say they rarely or never hold their tongue (54%):

Thinking about your day-to-day life, how often, if at all, would you say you “hold your tongue”?



**Campus Life: Views on avoiding uncomfortable topics at schools**

University campuses have always been prominent arenas when it comes to debating wider societal trends. However, provocative speakers and the proliferation of “trigger warnings” – advanced notice that material contains content such as depictions of sexual assault or self-harm that may trigger a traumatic reaction – have ignited a battle over whether there should be limits to speech on campus.

Canadians lean towards believing universities should play a role in fostering a “safe space” for students on campus, as well as not platforming speakers who hold offensive views. Three-in-five (58%) say universities “should prohibit speakers who promote offensive views about race or gender.” A similar number (57%) believe trigger warnings are a positive development which keep people from reliving past trauma. Half (52%) say there should be safe spaces on campus so students can “avoid conversations that make them uncomfortable”.

Canadians are more protective of the written word than they are of speech on campus, it seems. Only one-in-five (18%) feel it is acceptable to republish classic literature with passages deemed offensive by today’s standards omitted or changed.

The Defiant Objectors reject prohibiting speakers (86% oppose), safe spaces (78% oppose), and trigger warnings (65% oppose) at the highest levels. Frustrated Skeptics are split when it comes to those three issues but find common ground with the Defiant Objectors in opposing censoring new editions of classic literature. At the other end of the spectrum, nearly all Zealous Activists believe speakers who have offensive views on race and gender should not be allowed to speak on campus (91%), and support trigger warnings (88%) and safe spaces (77%). They are also the most likely to feel it’s fine to censor classic literature (31%), though half (53%) remain opposed:



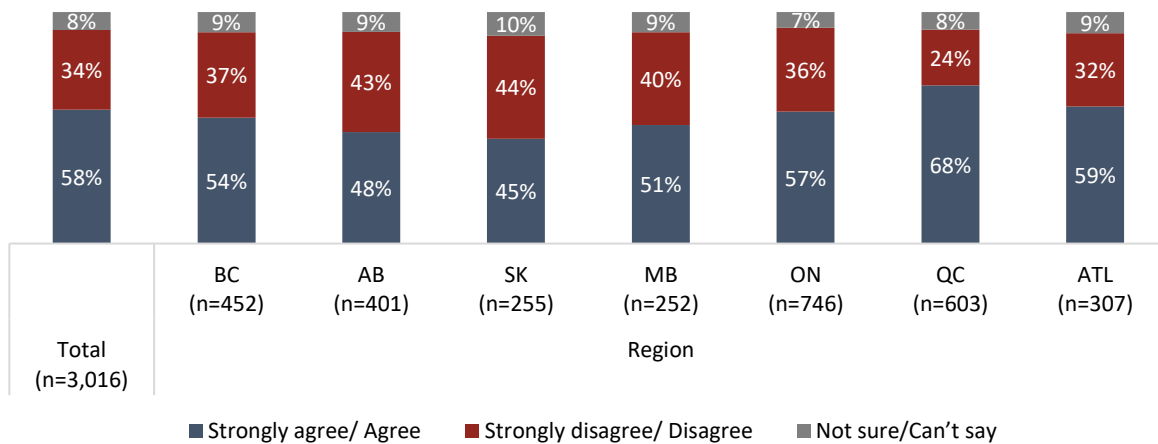
Percentage who agree with the following statements						
	Total (n=3,016)	Canadian Culture Mindsets				
		Zealous Activists (n=515)	Quiet Accommodators (n=794)	Conflicted Middle (n=541)	Frustrated Skeptics (n=566)	Defiant Objectors (n=600)
University campuses should prohibit speakers who promote offensive views about race or gender	58%	91%	77%	67%	43%	9%
“Trigger warnings” are a good way to keep people from reliving past stress, anxiety, or trauma	57%	88%	73%	62%	42%	17%
Students should be allowed to have ‘safe spaces’ where they can avoid conversations that make them uncomfortable	52%	77%	67%	52%	44%	15%
It’s okay that classic literature is republished with offensive words censored or changed	18%	31%	23%	18%	9%	7%

### University speakers

Universities have become flashpoints of free speech debates in recent years as students [have protested](#) and [successfully halted](#) controversial speakers from appearing on campus, while others have argued such actions [violate the spirit of inquiry and discussion in academia](#). In Alberta, the provincial government has gone as far as to require post-secondary universities to [report to the government annually](#) about their efforts to “protect free speech” at their schools.

Opinions are split regionally on whether those with offensive views about race or gender should be banned from speaking on campus. Those in Alberta (43%), alongside those in Saskatchewan (44%), are the most likely to believe universities should not prohibit speakers with offensive views. Elsewhere in the country, more than half in each region believe universities should not host speeches from those with offensive racial and gender views:

**Agree vs. disagree -  
"University campuses should prohibit speakers who promote offensive views  
about race or gender"**



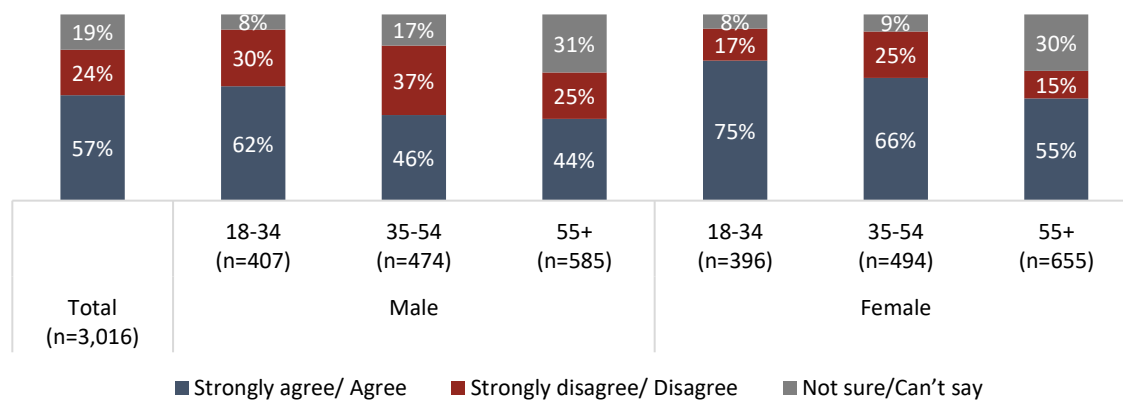
Approaching three-quarters of those who voted Liberal (72%), NDP (72%) and Bloc (74%) in the 2021 election believe universities should not platform speakers with offensive views. More than half (56%) of past CPC voters, and 80 per cent of those who voted PPC, disagree ([see detailed tables](#)).

**Trigger warnings**

The place of trigger warnings on campus has been another point of debate. The Canadian Association of University Teachers [came out against them](#), calling trigger warnings “inimical to the academic enterprise because they foreclose the process of inquiry, encourage censorship, and empower the inappropriate surveillance of the classroom.”

All demographics are more likely to believe trigger warnings are a good way to keep people from reliving past trauma than not, however, women are much more likely to support the warnings than men:

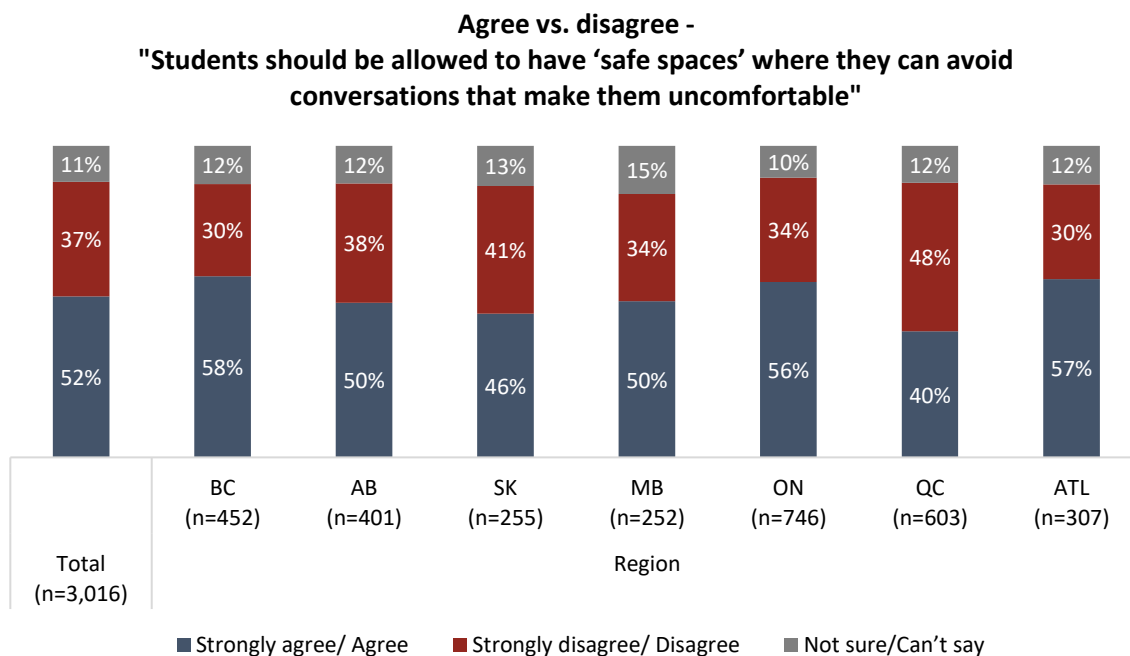
**Agree vs. disagree -  
"'Trigger warnings' are a good way to keep people from reliving past stress,  
anxiety, or trauma"**



**Safe spaces**

In 2021, a Quebec government committee declared that university classrooms in that province are not safe spaces and trigger warnings should not be used. The committee was created in response to concerns from university professors who worried of potential confrontations with students over controversial material in their classrooms, as well as specific incident where a University of Ottawa professor was suspended for using the N-word during a class lecture.

Half (48%) in Quebec disagree that students should be allowed safe spaces to avoid uncomfortable conversations, the most in the country. In B.C. (58%), Atlantic Canada (57%) and Ontario (56%), majorities believe safe spaces belong on campus:



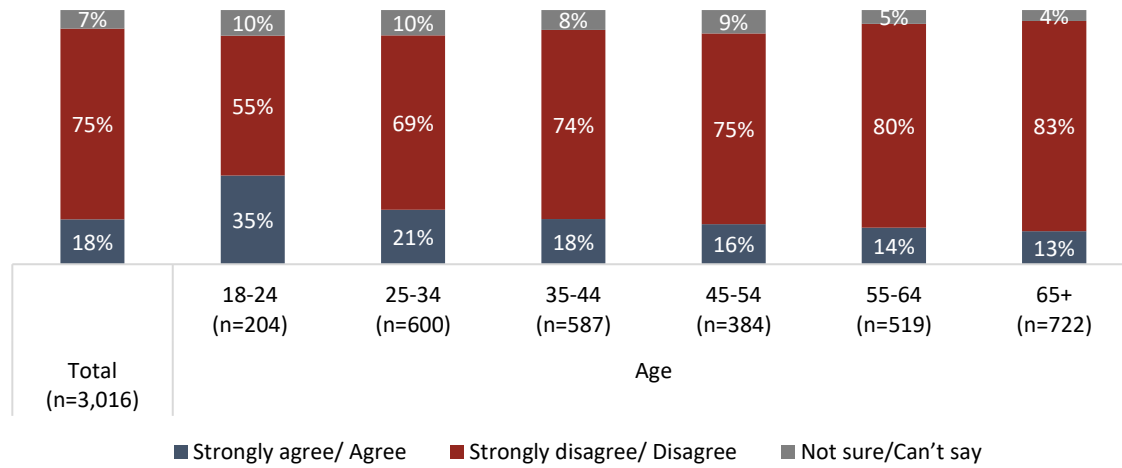
**Censoring classic literature**

There was an uproar earlier this year when the British publisher of Roald Dahl announced it would be altering language related to weight, mental health, gender and race in new editions of the classic children's books. In Charlie and the Chocolate Factory, Augustus Gloop would be referred to as "enormous" rather than "enormously fat". Witches in new editions of Witches are described as working as "top scientist or running a business" rather than a "cashier in a supermarket or typing letters for a businessman".

Three-quarters (75%) of Canadians oppose rewriting classic literature to remove offensive language. One-in-five (18%) are okay with it, including three-in-ten (31%) of Zealous Activists (see detailed tables).

There is a clear delineation on this matter by age. Though a majority of all age groups oppose republishing classic literature with censored language, 35 per cent of 18- to 24-year-olds find this acceptable:

**Agree vs. disagree -  
"It's okay that classic literature is republished with offensive words  
censored or changed"**



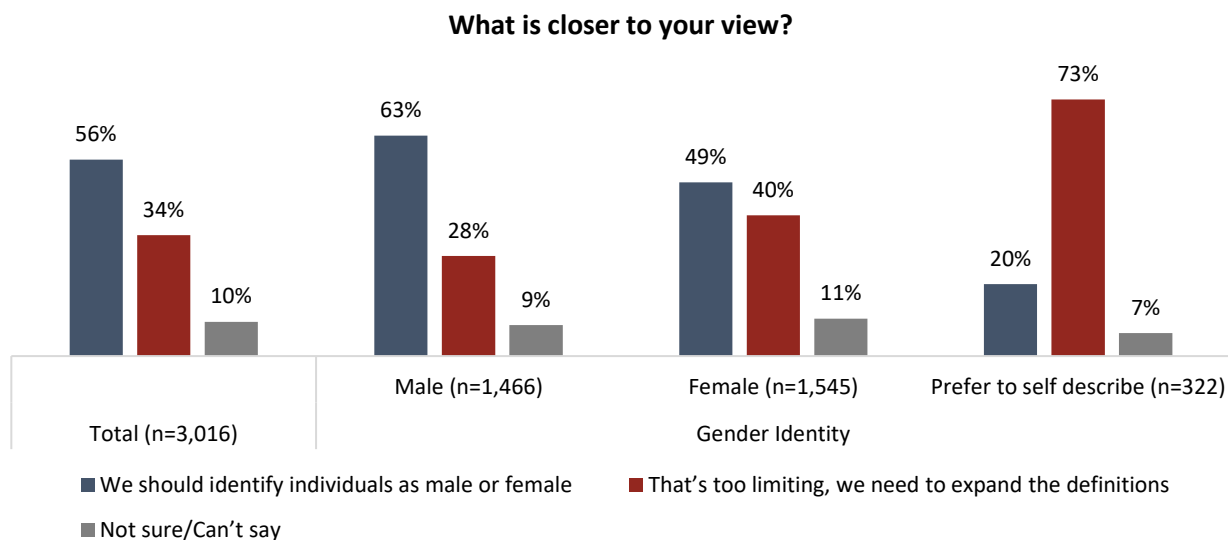
## Part Three: On Gender and transgender issues

Conversations about gender identity in Canada are [inarguably](#) more common in 2023 than they were a decade ago – but they’re not new. The gender binary has been a subject of discussion and debate for centuries, if not millennia – from [ancient myths](#), to [Roman Emperors](#), to [Indigenous](#) cultures’ recognition of two-spirit individuals. More recently, social media and political opportunism have, in many ways, amplified this dialogue. While society continues to struggle with the modern version of this discourse, many Canadians express more inclination for the male-female gender binary rather than something more complex or nuanced.

### **More than half say male or female; one-third say that’s too limiting, others unsure**

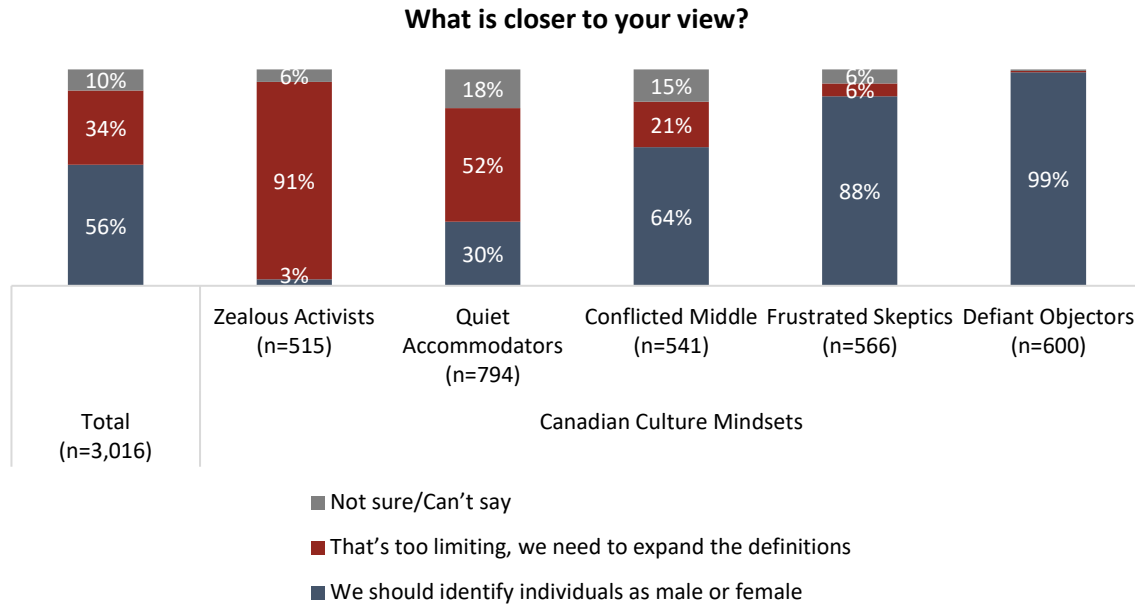
Canadians were asked whether society should define individuals as male or female or whether this is too limiting and should be expanded to include other identities on a non-binary spectrum. For more than half, (56%), the limited male and female option is preferred. This is a more common position for men, for whom twice as many say that a person should be male or female. Women are more divided, though lean slightly toward this binary, while those who do not identify as male or female in this survey are far more likely to say that the gender binary is too limiting.

Please note, the ‘prefer to self describe group is a broad category that may include those who identify as non-binary, trans, genderfluid, genderqueer and many [other types of gender expression](#). In Canada, approximately [one in 300 people older than 15](#) identify as non-binary or transgender. For the purposes of this survey, those who choose an option other than male or female as their gender were oversampled in order to better share their views.



### **Canadian Culture Mindsets diverge widely**

One can see how polarized the two ends of these spectrum are on the issue of gender identity. Notable here are the Quiet Accommodators, a group who are less vocal about their views, but for whom the preferred approach on this issue would be to further open gender expression beyond male and female. Three of the five groups lean heavily toward a gender identity binary:

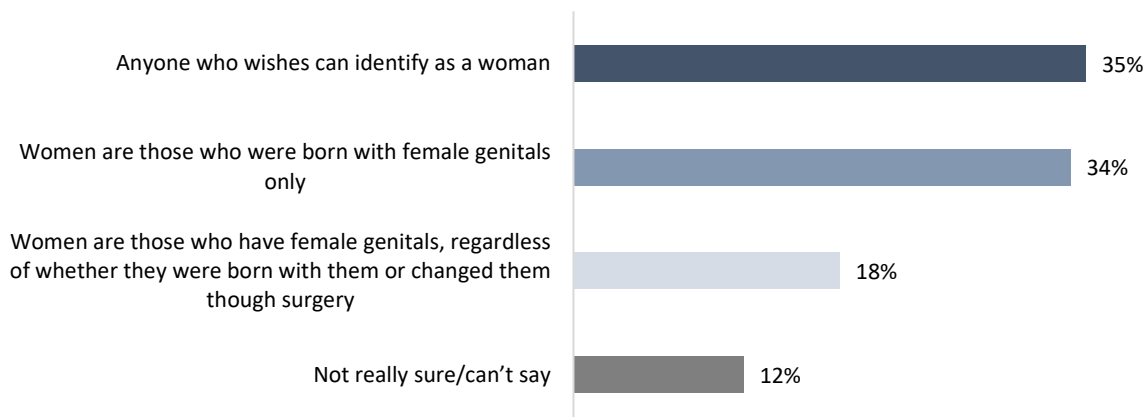


An additional layer to this discussion is the concept of manhood or womanhood more broadly – is it based on innate biology or adopted identity? For the purposes of this study, ARI focused on female identity, and perspectives on what is sufficient for Canadians to recognize someone as a woman.

**Different perspectives on what a woman is**

The two largest groups are those who say a woman is anyone who identifies this way (35%) or someone who was born with female genitals (34%). Another one-in-five (18%) say that if someone has changed their genitals through surgery, that person is a woman in their eyes as well. Twelve per cent of Canadians are unsure how they would define this:

**Some people who identify as women were born with male genitals. In this case, do you personally feel that:  
(All respondents, n=3,016)**

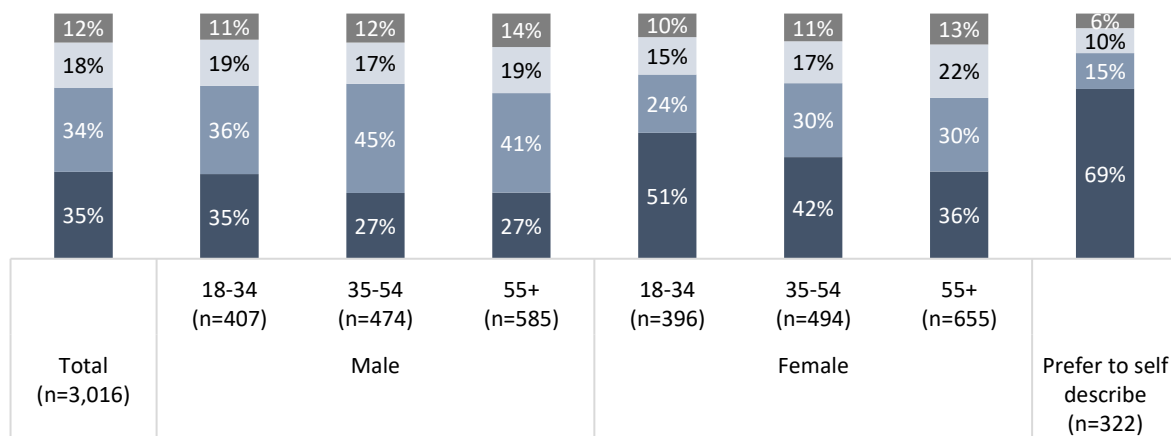


**Young women occupy a unique space on these issues**

Younger women, those between the ages of 18 and 34, are more permissive or accepting of the idea that anyone who wishes to identify as a woman is in fact a woman. Half (51%) say this compared to 36 per cent of their peers older than 54. Notably, however, those older women are the most likely group to accept someone as a woman if they have had [gender-affirming, or sex-reassignment](#), surgery.

Those individuals who do not identify as strictly male or female are much more likely to say that if a person identifies as female, they are a woman – seven-in-ten (69%) say this. Men of all age groups are much less likely to say that anyone who wants can identify as female:

**Some people who identify as women were born with male genitals. In this case, do you personally feel that:**

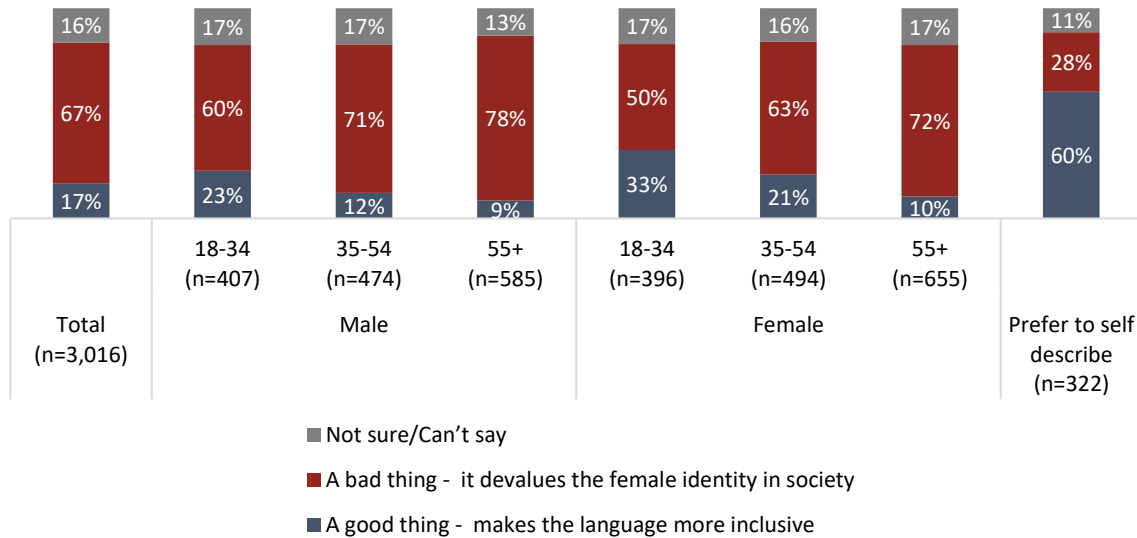


- Not really sure/can't say
- Women are those who have female genitals, regardless of whether they were born with/ changed through surgery
- Women are those who were born with female genitals only
- Anyone who wishes can identify as a woman

**Gender-neutral language eschewed by two-thirds**

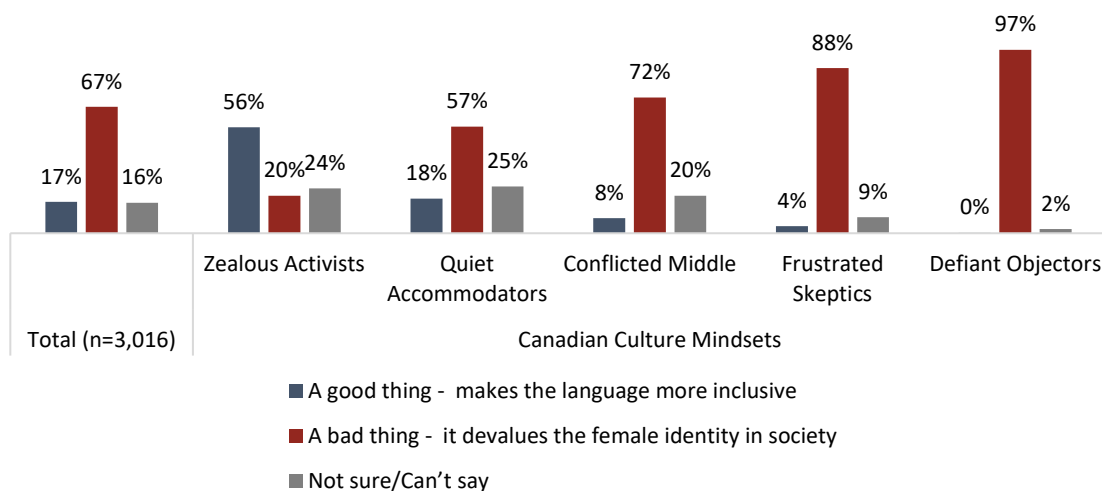
Some advocates have argued that [gender-inclusive language](#) is a way to overcome some of the alienation trans people can face in their daily lives, advocating for terms such as "[pregnant person](#)" instead of pregnant woman, or in some cases "[people who menstruate](#)" instead of women. For these issues that focus specifically on female biological function, motherhood, and birth, there is little appetite for gender-neutral language. These concepts are more supported among young women - where they rise to 33 per cent, twice the level noted by the general population (17%) - and among those who do not identify as male or female (60%):

**How do you feel about the trend of using gender-neutral terms when talking about women, birth, and motherhood?**



While the Zealous Activists are generally close to unanimous in support of progressive concepts in this study, they show less absolutism here than on other issues:

**How do you feel about the trend of using gender neutral terms when talking about women, birth, and motherhood?**

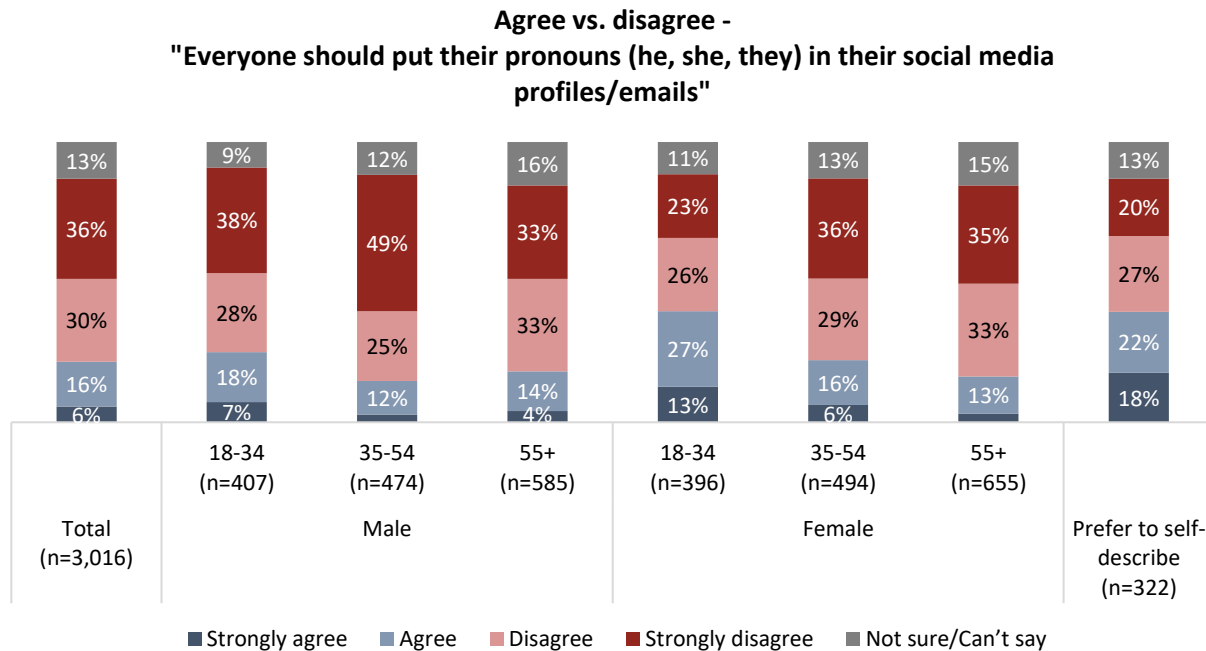


**One-in-five support pronouns in emails/profiles**

Another trend designed to accommodate people with diverse gender expressions is the practice of placing one's pronouns in social media profiles, in email signatures, and in other identifying spaces. This



is most likely to be supported by young women, for whom two-in-five say this, but is opposed by majorities in all other groups:



## Transgender issues

A note on methodology:

To ensure a baseline knowledge of the issues discussed in this survey, respondents were presented with the following definition:

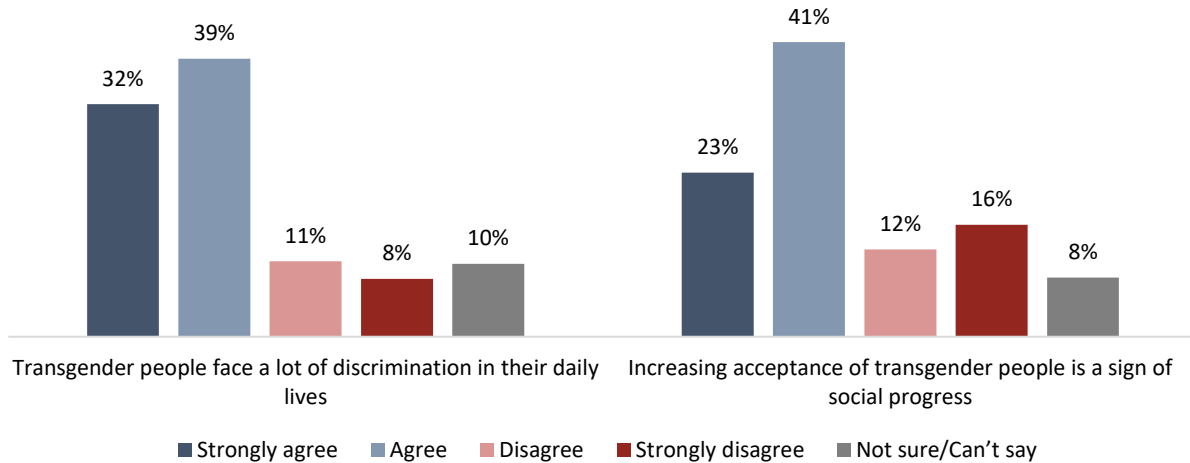
The word “transgender” is an umbrella term that refers to people who identify as a gender other than the one they were assigned at birth (based on a doctor’s observation of their genitals). Transgender people may identify as men or women, or neither, or both.

Some transgender people choose to have surgery, so their genitals match their gender identity, but many do not.

## Widespread awareness of discrimination trans people face

Nearly a decade after Time Magazine declared transgender rights “[the next civil rights frontier](#)”, the struggle for acceptance in society continues for many trans people. [Protests against transgender people have contributed](#) to an [increase in anti-trans hate](#) crimes over the past year. Amid these incidents, the vast majority of Canadians feel that trans people face heavy discrimination (71%) and that better recognition of this would be a sign of social progress (64%):

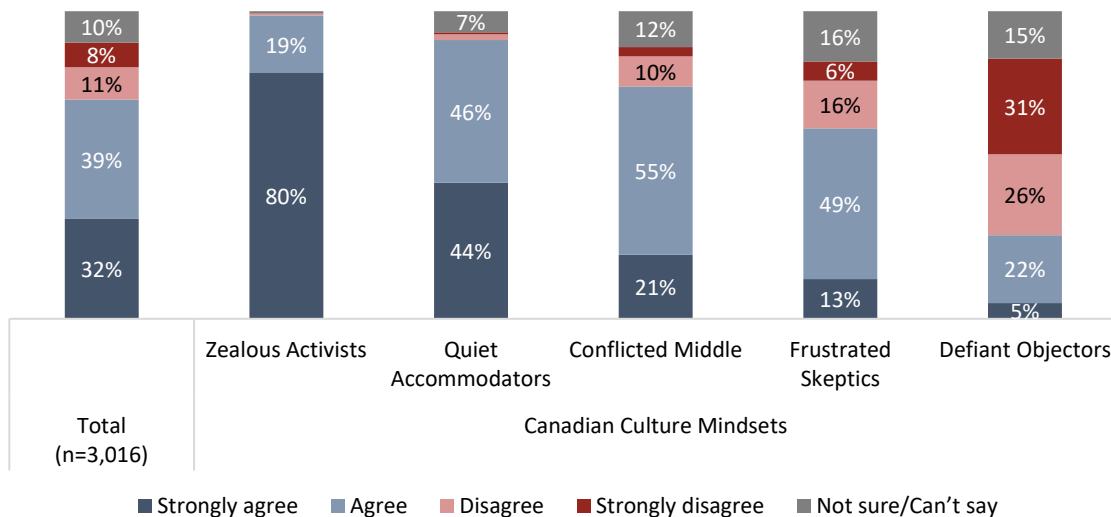
**Agree vs. disagree with each statement  
(All respondents, n=3,016)**



**Canadian Culture Mindsets show profound disagreement**

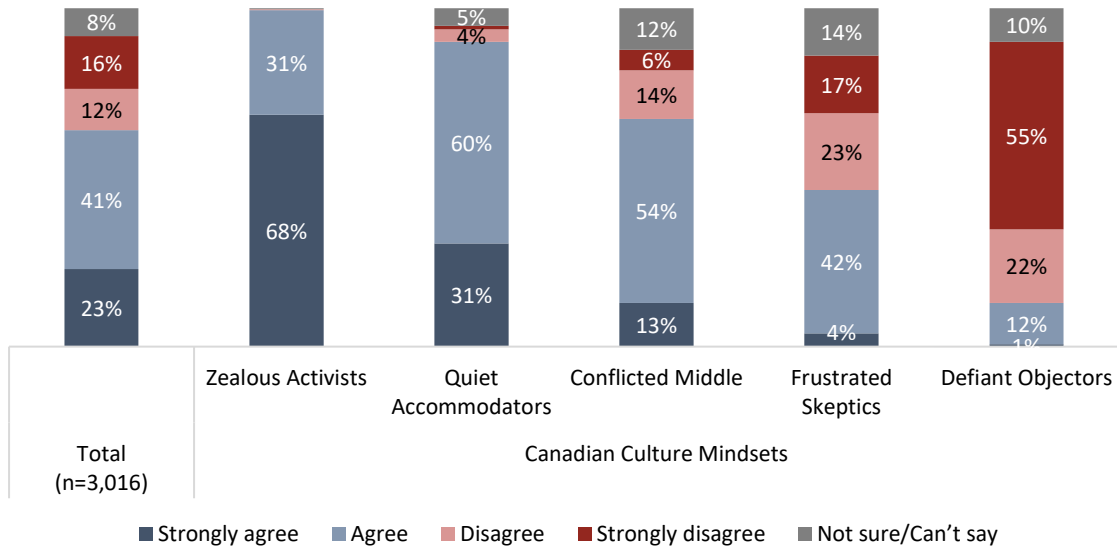
One group contests these statements to a much higher degree – the Defiant Objectors. Here, near three-in-five (57%) disagree that trans people face discrimination, a level well over double that of any other group:

**Agree v. disagree -  
"Transgender people face a lot of discrimination in their daily lives"**



The Frustrated Skeptics are more likely to join the Defiant Objectors when it comes to disagreeing about the value of accepting transgender people, but even among this group, more say that acceptance is preferred (46% to 40%):

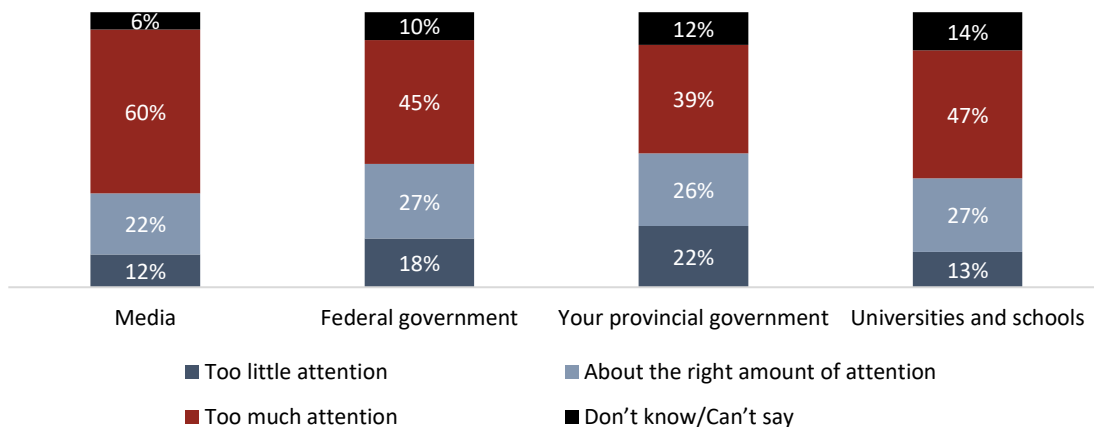
**Agree v. disagree -  
"Increasing acceptance of transgender people is a sign of social progress"**



**Canadians feel media is too fixated on these discussions**

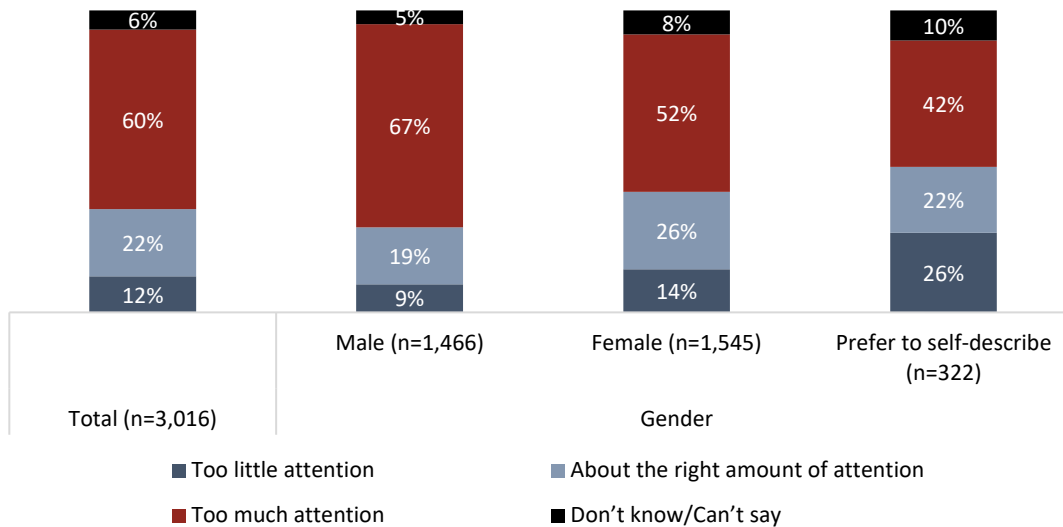
Acceptance is one thing most Canadians agree on, but the majority also feel that media are overly attentive to stories involving trans issues. Three-in-five say news media give too much attention (60%) to these issues, compared to 12 per cent who feel more attention is needed:

**Attention paid to transgender issues from each:  
(All respondents, n=3,016)**



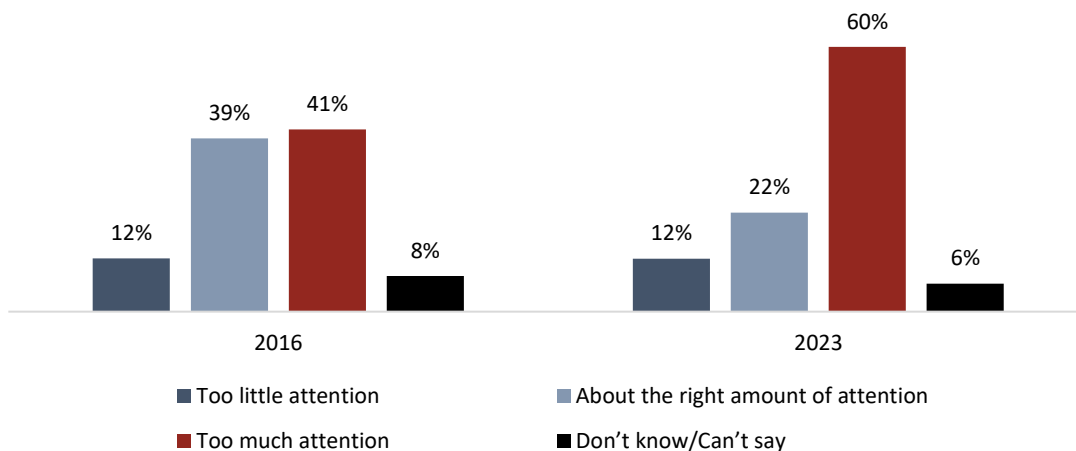
Men are by far the most likely group to say that trans issues receive too much media coverage, though a majority of women (52%) and two-in-five (42%) of those who do not identify as male or female agree:

**Attention paid to transgender issues from Canadian news media:**



Another datapoint helps to exemplify the change in the cultural conversation in recent years, compared to 2016, when ARI [first studied transgender issues](#), the percentage of Canadians saying the news media is giving too much attention to this issue has risen 19 points, or 50 per cent:

**Attention paid to transgender issues from Canadian news media:**

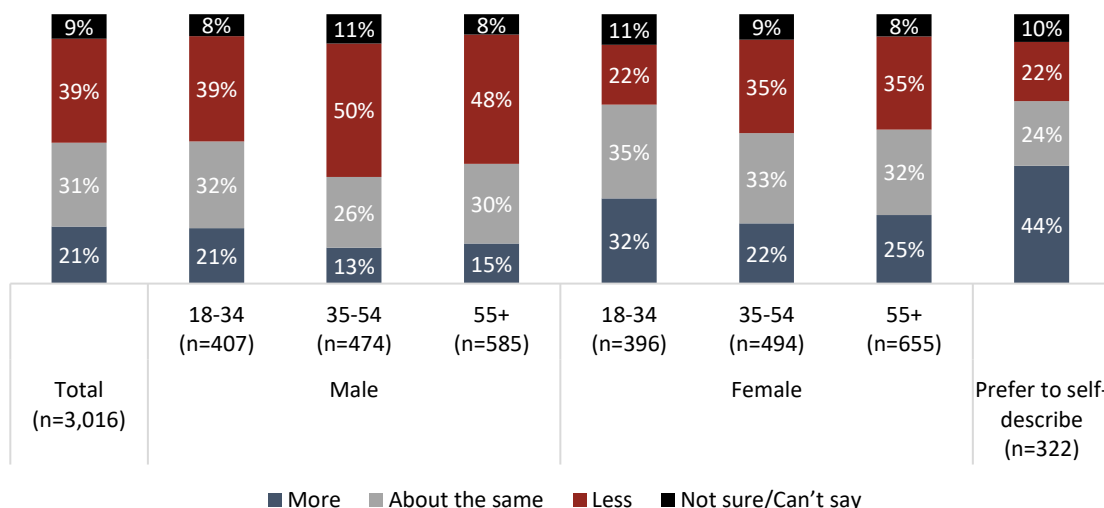


**LGBTQ2+ causes and advertising**

Many companies in Canada and the United States, including [Disney](#), [Walmart](#), [Starbucks](#), [Lululemon](#), the [major banks](#) and others, support Pride month and other LGBTQ2+ causes through the year. One-in-five Canadians say they would like to see more support for these types of causes, while 31 per cent say what they're seeing now is suitable. A large proportion of two-in-five, including half of men older than 34, say that there should be less of this. Many brands have faced increasing pushback in 2023 over their support,

including [Bud Light](#), [the NHL](#), and [Target](#), which has caused some to weigh the costs and benefits of these campaigns:

**When you think of companies advertising their support for LGBTQ2+ causes, would you like to see more or less of this:**



**Children, hormones, and transitioning**

An emerging area of medical care, both in Canada and the rest of the world, deals with gender affirmation. That is, if a child who was born as one gender wishes to transition to another and which types of treatments are available to that child. This can include hormone-blocking agents, gender-affirming hormones, and even transition-related surgeries including breast removal and genital removal and modification.

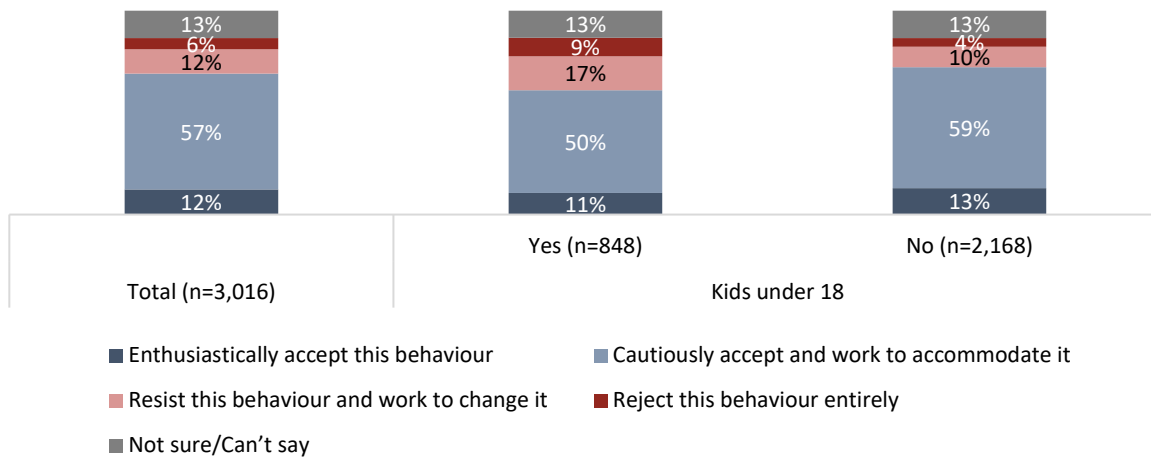
Medical authorities differ regarding at what age these procedures and treatments are available or should be available. Indeed, there are concerns about the [long-term physical effects](#) of treatments like puberty blockers, including impacts on bone density and physical or sexual development. Proponents of treatment point to the significant [reduction in depression and suicidal ideation](#) among those with access to this care.

**Most would accept and accommodate their child who wished to change identity**

In exploring these issues, ARI first asked Canadians, if you had a child who was showing an affinity for a gender other than that of their birth, how would you respond to this? Indeed, seven-in-ten (69%) say that they would accept and work with their child to make this comfortable. Another 12 per cent say they would resist this behaviour, while one-in-11 would reject it (9%). Notably, those with children younger than 18 years of age are more likely to hold these resistant positions:

Suppose you were the parent of a child who, for the last few years, has been behaving in a way that shows an affinity for a gender identity other than the one they were assigned at birth.

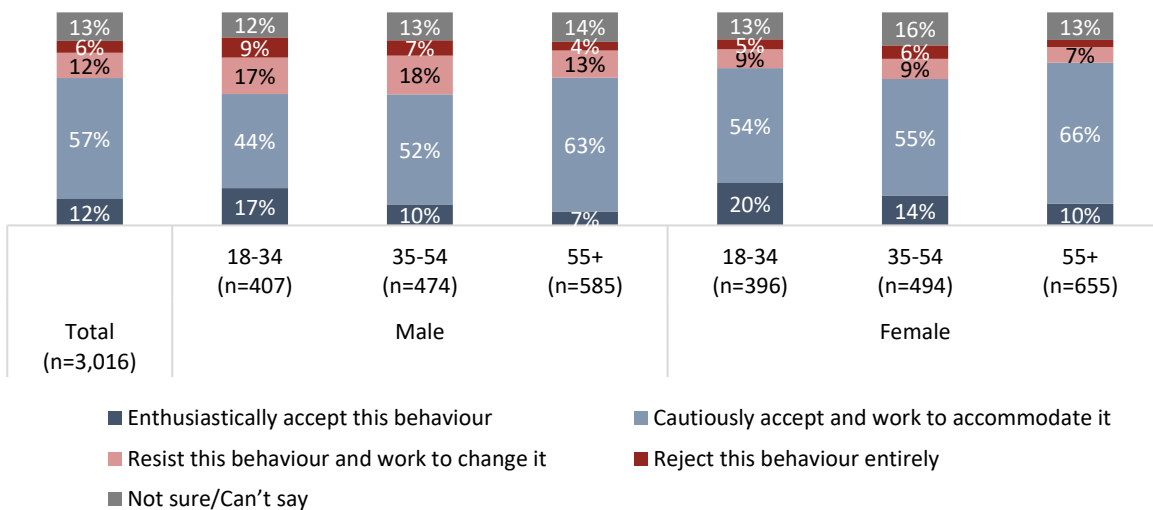
What do you think your reaction to this would be?



Enthusiastic acceptance rises among younger people, though notably, among men, 18- to 34-year-olds are both the most enthusiastically accepting and the most ardently resistant group:

Suppose you were the parent of a child who, for the last few years, has been behaving in a way that shows an affinity for a gender identity other than the one they were assigned at birth.

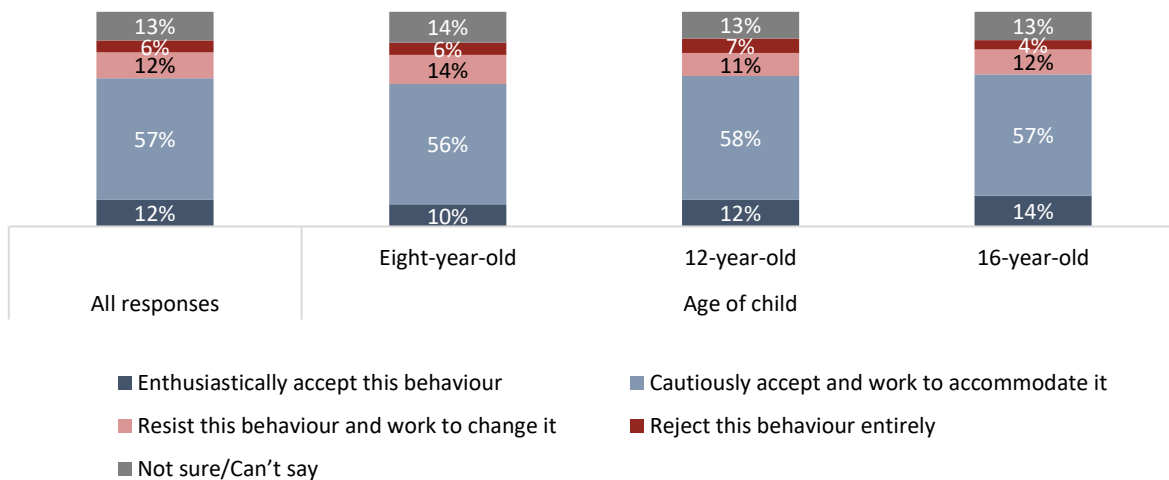
What do you think your reaction to this would be?



On this issue, the age of the child expressing a desire to change their gender does not appear to heavily influence a person's response. ARI split the sample of 3,016 Canadians into thirds, showing 1,000 people the ages eight, 12, and 16, for this question. Below are the results of that split, with little variation:

**Suppose you were the parent of a child who, for the last few years, has been behaving in a way that shows an affinity for a gender identity other than the one they were assigned at birth.**

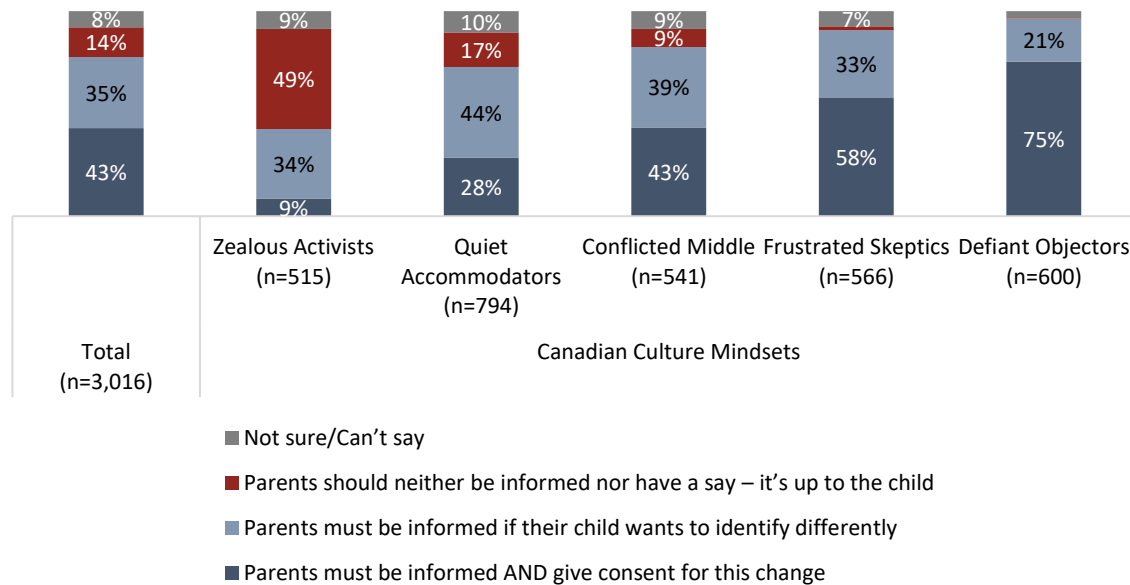
**What do you think your reaction to this would be?**



**New Brunswick/Saskatchewan school pronoun policy**

In late August, 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. While that issue has drawn considerable debate in recent weeks, most Canadians tend to agree that parents should be informed of their child's decision. Whether or not they should have to consent to it, however, is another matter:

**Which policy do you prefer?**



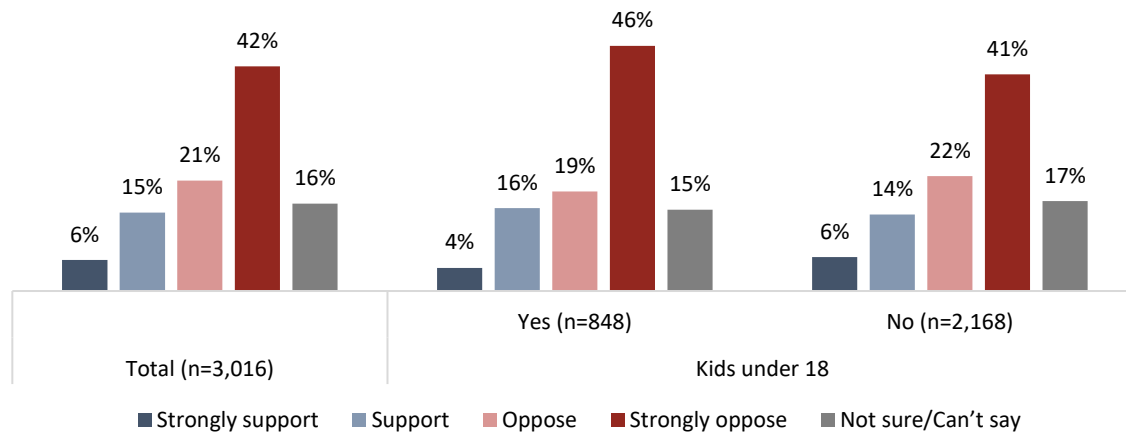
**What about hormone therapy?**

Acceptance is one aspect of this issue, but active treatment appears to be a separate consideration for many. It is important to note that the World Professional Association for Transgender Health suggests that hormone therapy may begin at [14 years of age](#). Further, the Canadian Paediatric Society states that hormone blockers should not be started before puberty, but that benefits can accrue if they are begun in the early stages of pubertal onset. Other doctors have noted that emotional maturity can often be as important as age in determining the right course of action and treatment. Recent [pushback from medical professionals in Europe](#), however, has many governments reviewing treatment guidance, with some doctors pausing prescribing these drugs completely.

Asked if they would allow their child to begin hormone therapy to affirm their chosen gender, just one-in-five Canadians overall (21%), and one-in-five parents of a minor (20%) say that they would support this. Note that three different ages were presented to respondents. For this graph they are combined, but this data is separated further down the report:

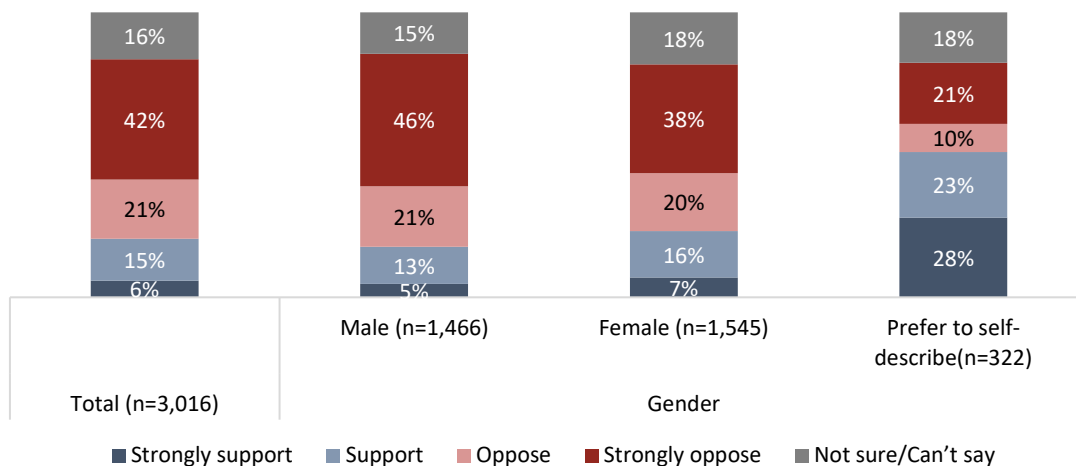


**If an individual wanted to begin hormone therapy at age [8/12/16], would you support or oppose this?  
(Responses to each age combined)**



Half of those individuals who do not identify as male or female say that they would support this, though importantly, that support level is 58 per cent for 12- and 16-year-olds, and 36 per cent for eight-year-olds ([see detailed tables](#)):

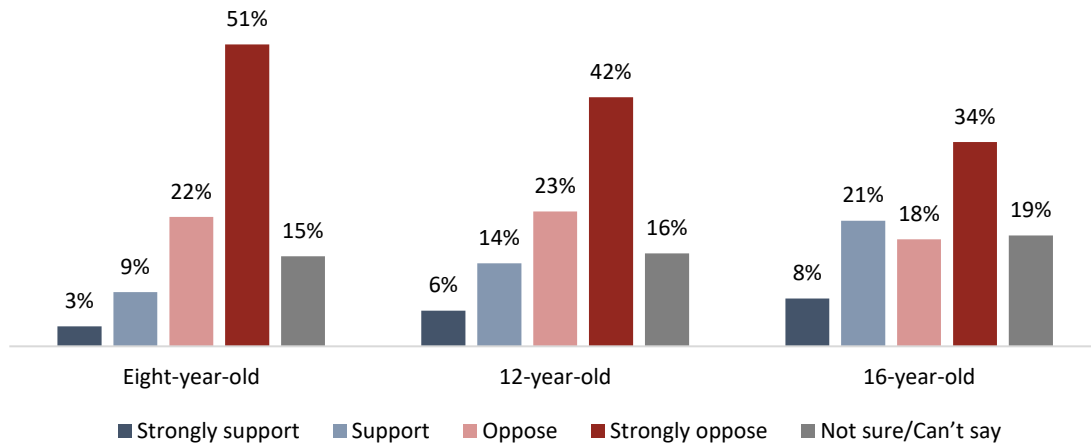
**If an individual wanted to begin hormone therapy at age [8/12/16], would you support or oppose this?  
(Responses to each age combined)**



**The younger the child, the greater the discomfort**

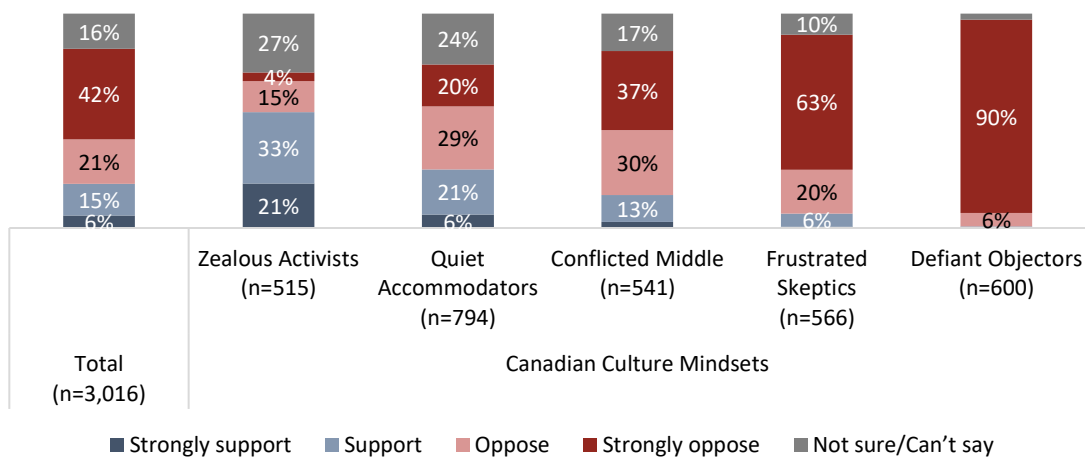
As noted previously, age is a key factor in this decision for many Canadians. A majority oppose this at each of the three ages offered, but are more inclined to accept it once the child reaches 16, though still 53 per cent remain in opposition:

**If an individual wanted to begin hormone therapy at age X, would you support or oppose this?  
(Split sample)**



Hormone therapy is a controversial subject on the Canadian Culture Mindset spectrum. While a slight majority of Zealous Activists are in favour of this, the rest of the groups voice opposition:

**If an individual wanted to begin hormone therapy at age 8/12/16, would you support or oppose this?  
(Responses to each age combined)**



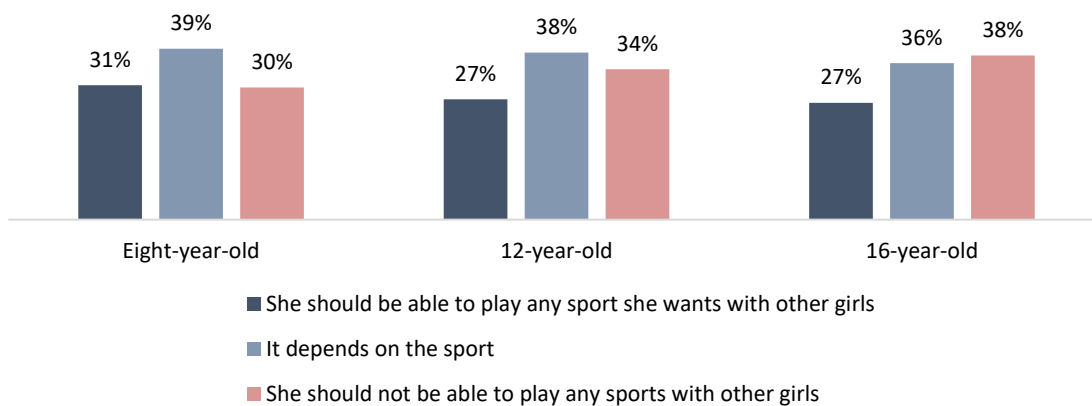
**Trans kids and sports a confounding issue for many**

One of the key figures in the growing cultural awareness of transgender issues was Caitlyn Jenner, a former track and field legend, who came out in 2015. In the unfolding years, sports and transgender rights have become a common pairing in debates. In August, the Republican-controlled House of Representatives in the United States [passed a bill](#) that would ban transgender athletes at federally funded

schools from competing in sports as a female if their biological sex assigned at birth is male. The legislation is unlikely to be implemented by the Democrat-controlled Senate, but it comes on the heels of [nearly two dozen states](#) passing similar bills.

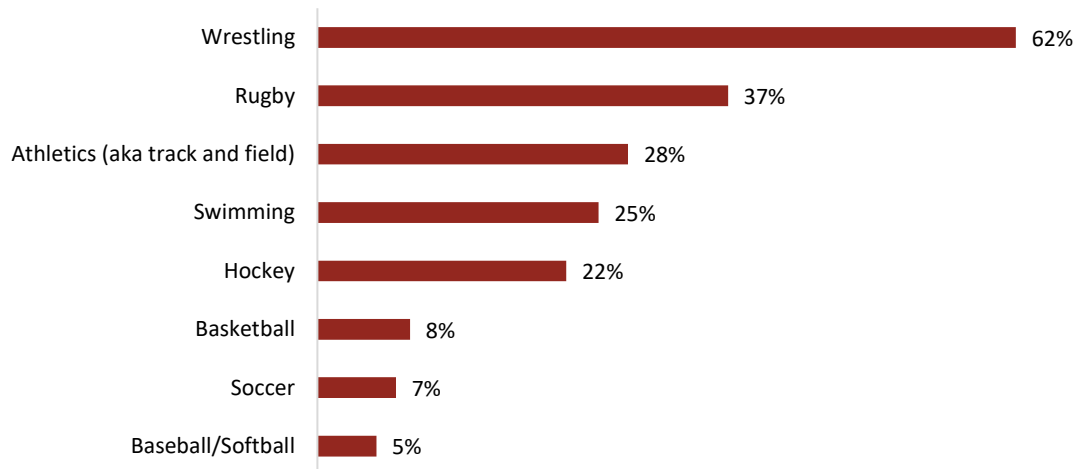
The debate, which hinges on the rights of a child to play with other athletes of their same-identifying gender versus the suggested physical advantages they may have if they were born male, is something that evidently divides Canadians. As seen in the graph below, Canadians hold divergent views on what is appropriate across different ages:

**Suppose an (eight-, 12-, 16-) year-old was born a boy but now identifies as a girl. They now want to play sports with other girls. Should the child be allowed to play whatever sport she wants in these all-girl leagues?  
(Split sample)**



For those who say “it depends”, as to whether a trans girl should be allowed to play with girls, contact sports such as wrestling and rugby are the most commonly identified as sources of opposition:

**Which sports would you not allow this child to play with other girls?  
(All ages combined)**



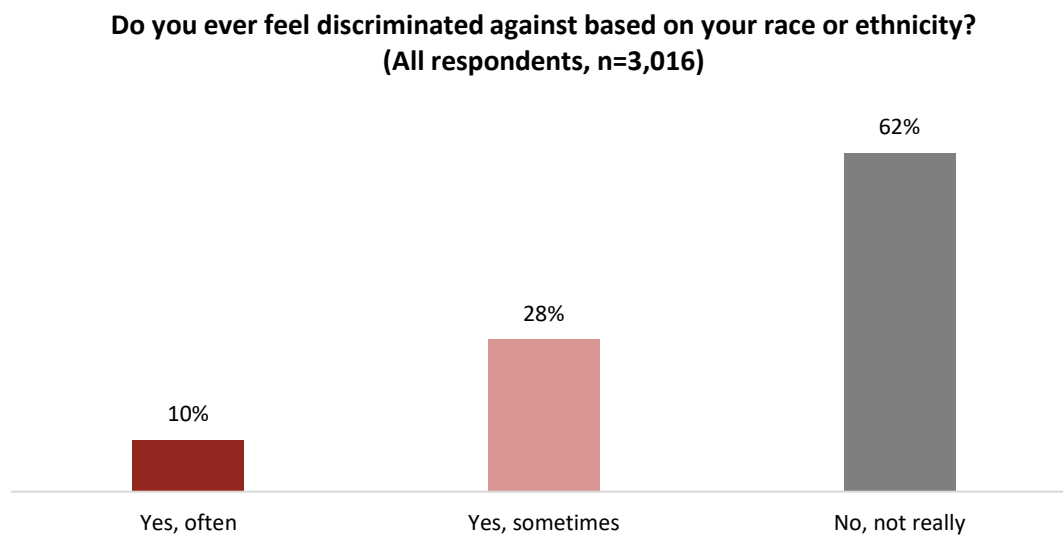
## Part Four: Experiences and perceptions of racism

### Who faces discrimination

In a multicultural country such as Canada, concerns over racial discrimination remain ever-present in the national discourse. In recent years the Angus Reid Institute has studied this in the form of [Islamophobia](#), [anti-Asian racism](#), and challenges faced by [Indigenous Peoples](#) living in Canada.

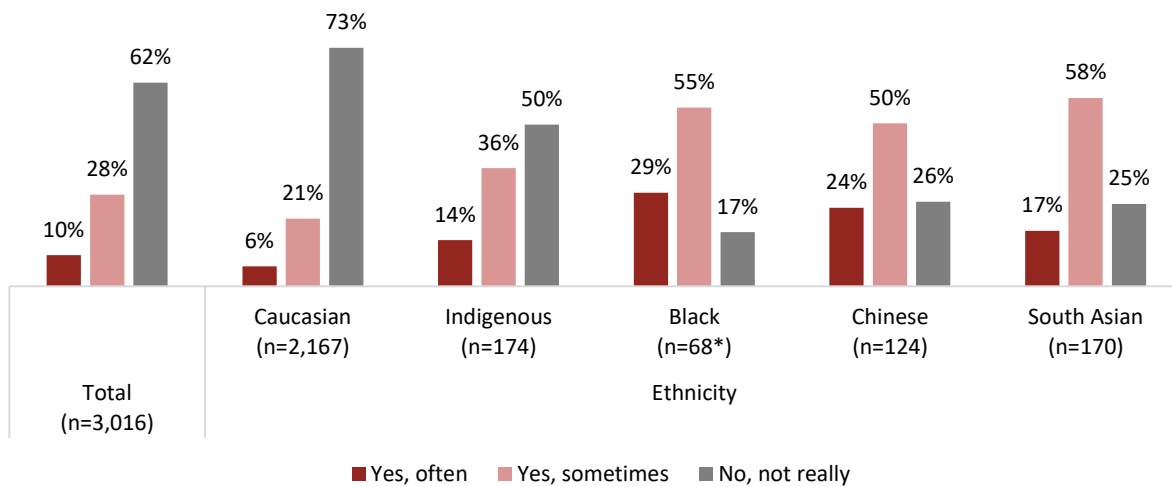
### Related: ARI work on discrimination in Canada

Broadly, two-in-five Canadians say they face discrimination in their day-to-day lives at least sometimes based on their race or ethnicity, with one-in-ten (10%) saying this happens to them often:



Regular experiences of discrimination are much more common among those who identify as a visible minority in Canada (73%, [see detailed tables](#)) and those who self-identify as Indigenous (50%). Nearly one-in-three Black respondents say they often face discrimination:

**Do you ever feel discriminated against based on your race or ethnicity?**



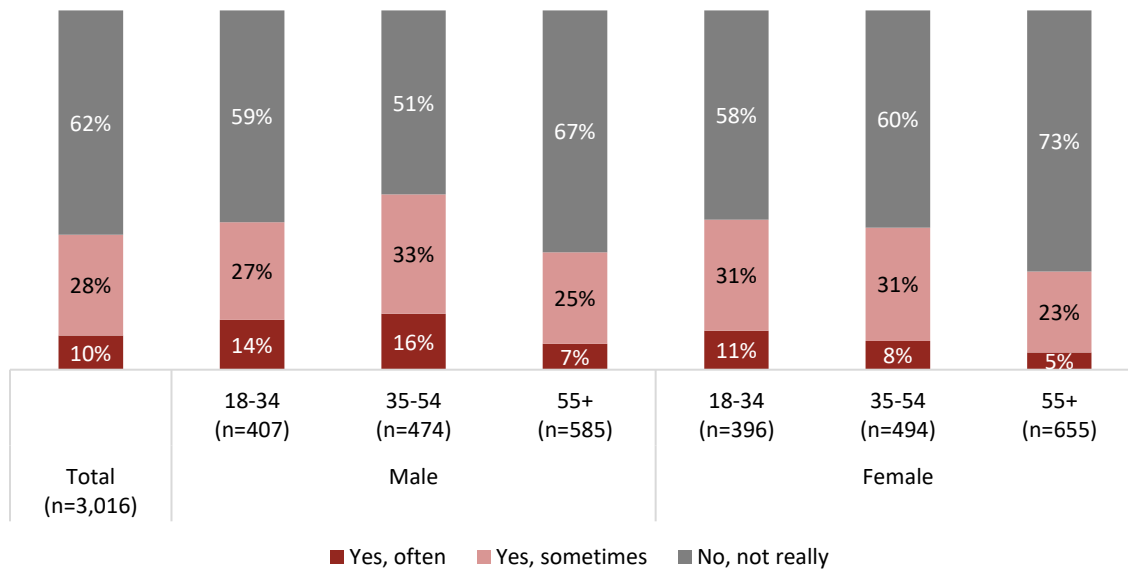
*\*Smaller sample size, interpret with caution*

Note on methodology:

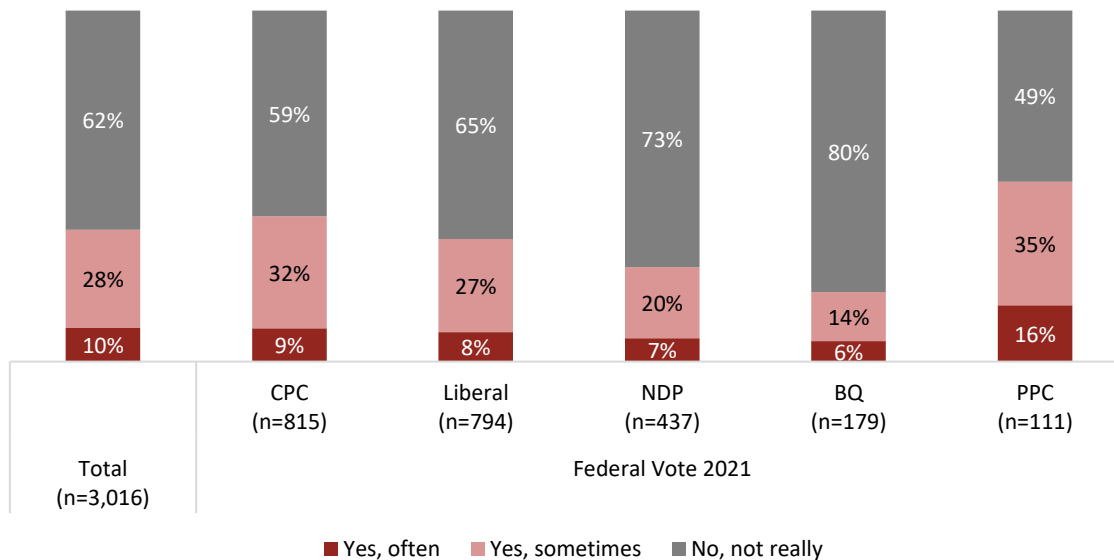
\*Please note, while the views of self-described Indigenous people are reported here to provide valuable context, it should be noted that this sample is not necessarily representative of the Indigenous population of Canada as a whole. The [Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples has identified systemic discrimination](#) as a significant problem in Canada.

There is an exception with the non-visible minority group. Scanning the Canadian Cultural Mindsets, it is evident that the Defiant Objectors – a group that is 78 per cent white – are much more likely to say that they face discrimination based on their race or ethnicity compared to other groups ([see detailed tables](#)). This is likely due to their increased likelihood of being men between the ages of 35 and 54, as well as either past Conservative or PPC voters. Each of these are correlated with increased levels of feeling persecuted, as seen in the graphs below:

**Do you ever feel discriminated against based on your race or ethnicity?**



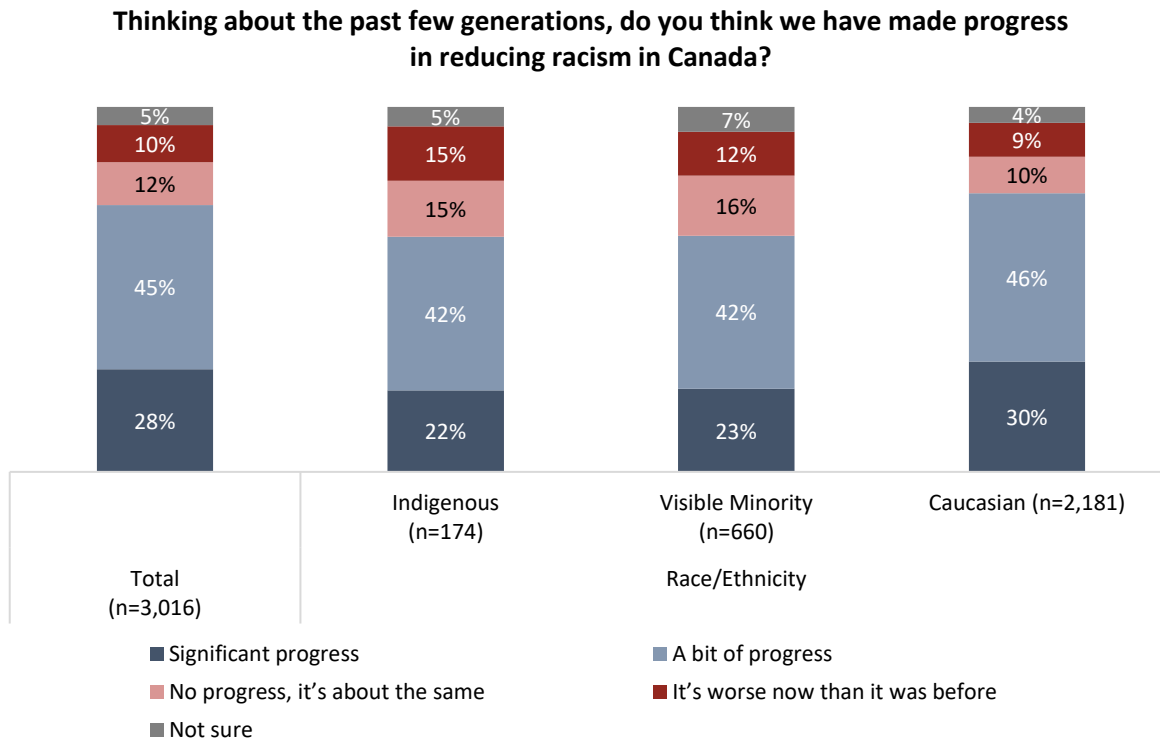
**Do you ever feel discriminated against based on your race or ethnicity?**



**Have we made progress?**

There was an uproar in September 2023 when a poster advertising a “[Whites-only Moms and Tots](#)” group in Port Coquitlam, B.C. went viral on social media. The city denounced the posters as “vile garbage” and bylaw officers were instructed to search for them and remove them. While anti-racist advocates were [encouraged by the backlash](#) to the posters, they provide evidence there are still incidents of racism and discrimination in Canada.

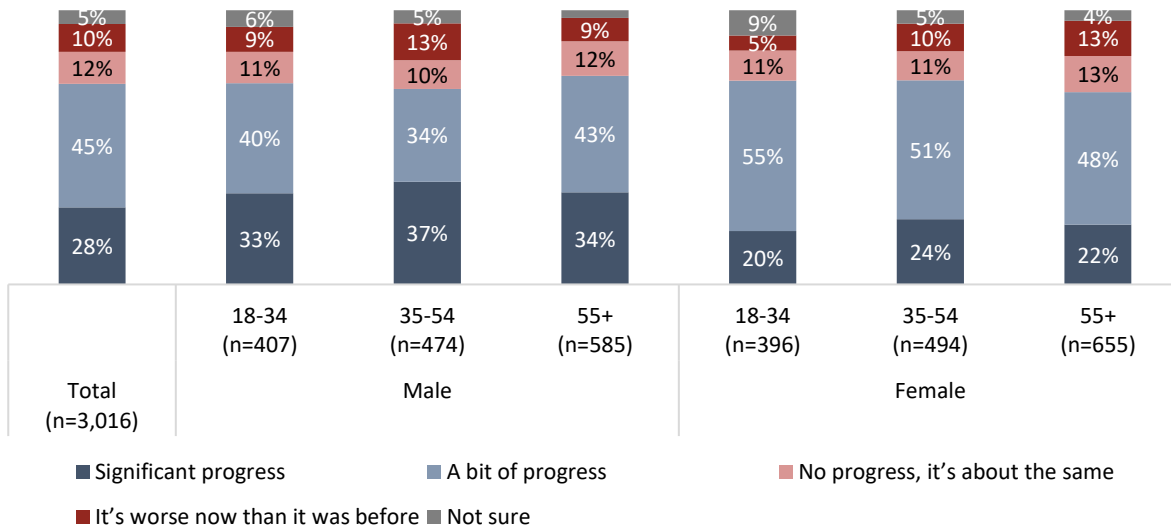
Canadians are largely optimistic about the progress that the country has made at reducing racism in recent generations. Three-in-ten (28%) overall, including close to one-quarter of Indigenous (22%) and visible minority (23%) respondents, say that Canada has made significant progress, while the largest group across all demographics say that this progress is being made, but is slighter:



This sense of progress is not equally distributed. Men are much more likely than women in all age groups to say that significant progress has been made, while women are more reserved in their assessment:

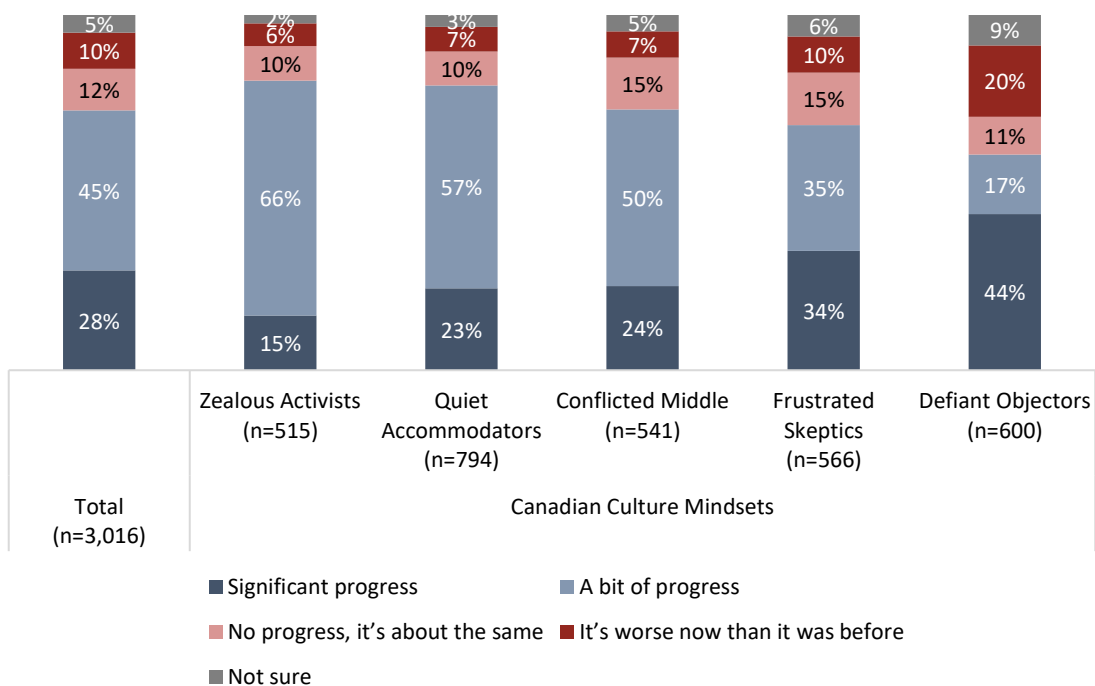


**Thinking about the past few generations, do you think we have made progress in reducing racism in Canada?**



All groups on the Canadian Cultural Mindsets spectrum tend to agree that progress has been made, but Zealous Activists and Quiet Accommodators are more muted in this feeling. Defiant Objectors hold a unique space as the most likely to say that things are both much better and much worse:

**Thinking about the past few generations, do you think we have made progress in reducing racism in Canada?**



**Privilege and priority**

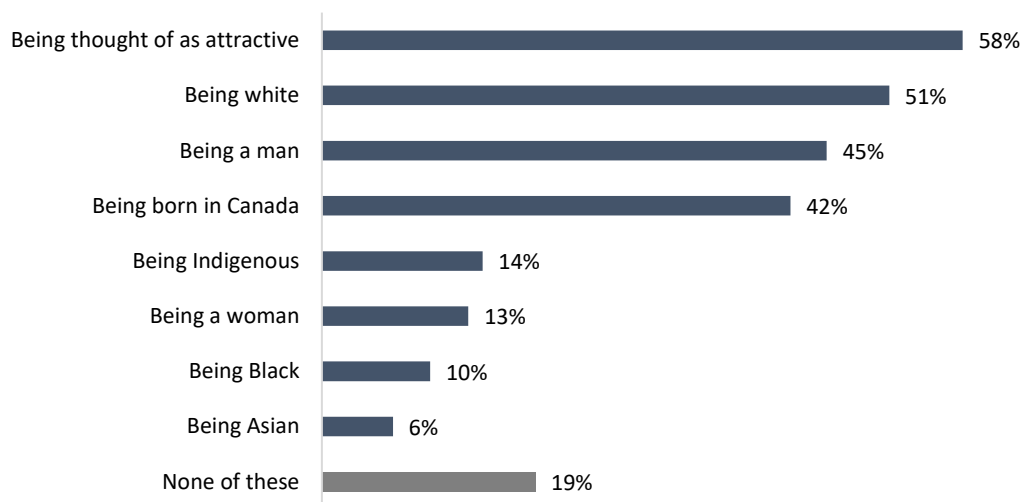
In recent years there has been a brighter spotlight put on Canada’s institutions and societal structures as awareness in the country has grown of systemic racism and privilege.

**Is being a white an advantage?**

In 1988, American women’s studies scholar Peggy McIntosh wrote a paper titled “White Privilege and Male Privilege: A Personal Account of Coming to See Correspondences Through Work in Women’s Studies,” a launch point in the modern conversation of privilege. Her paper detailed 46 examples of where she gained an advantage in society by being white, including “I am never asked to speak for all people of my racial group” and “I can go shopping alone most of the time, fairly well assured that I will not be followed or harassed by store detectives.”

More than three decades later, the concept is still much debated. Half (51%) of Canadians feel being white is a source of privilege, but there are more that believe it is an advantage to be attractive (58%). Two-in-five say being a man (45%) and being born in Canada (42%) gives you a leg-up in this country:

**Do you think any of the following are sources of “privilege”?**  
**(All respondents, n=3,016)**



Three-in-five (59%) who identify as a visible minority feel being white is a source of privilege in Canada, a higher proportion than those who don’t identify this way (49%).

Do you think any of the following are sources of "privilege"?				
	Total (n=3,016)	Race/Ethnicity		
		Indigenous (n=174)	Visible Minority (n=660)	Caucasian (n=2,181)
Being thought of as attractive	58%	53%	57%	58%
Being white	51%	45%	59%	49%
Being a man	45%	41%	49%	45%
Being born in Canada	42%	42%	45%	41%
Being Indigenous	14%	14%	14%	15%
Being a woman	13%	13%	16%	12%
Being Black	10%	12%	12%	9%
Being Asian	6%	8%	9%	6%
None of these	19%	20%	13%	21%

As western societies have explored and analyzed their institutions, processes and policies for systemic racism, a counter movement has developed which argues that movements such as [affirmative action in the United States](#) or [employment equity in Canada](#) are reverse racism against white people. This concept is perhaps evident in the views of the Defiant Objectors, who are more likely to say being Indigenous (31%) or Black (22%) is a privilege than being white (12%). They are also twice as likely to say women are privileged in society (23%) as to say men (11%):

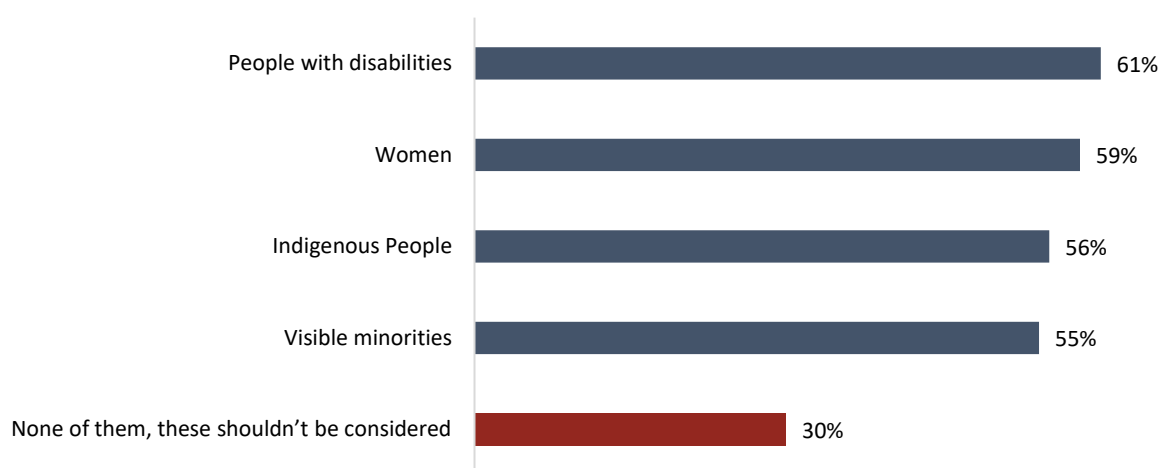
Do you think any of the following are sources of "privilege"?						
	Total (n=3,016)	Canadian Culture Mindsets				
		Zealous Activists (n=515)	Quiet Accommodators (n=794)	Conflicted Middle (n=541)	Frustrated Skeptics (n=566)	Defiant Objectors (n=600)
Being thought of as attractive	58%	78%	63%	53%	52%	42%
Being white	51%	91%	68%	49%	36%	12%
Being a man	45%	85%	59%	39%	34%	11%
Being born in Canada	42%	67%	50%	40%	35%	19%
Being Indigenous	14%	2%	8%	14%	17%	31%
Being a woman	13%	4%	8%	13%	17%	23%
Being Black	10%	1%	4%	11%	11%	22%
Being Asian	6%	4%	5%	6%	7%	11%
None of these	19%	4%	12%	21%	23%	36%

## Employment equity

Canada's Employee Equity Act, first passed in 1986, requires federally regulated employers – such as banks, airlines, railroads, and crown corporations – to actively attempt to increase representation among Indigenous People, women, people with disabilities and visible minorities.

Majorities say the groups designated in the act deserve special consideration when it comes to employment:

### Employment Equity in Canada - should the following groups receive priority for hiring for new jobs? (All respondents, n=3,016)



Support for Employment Equity is higher among women compared to men by a significant margin. This is most true when comparing women's views with those of men between the ages of 35 and 54:

Employment Equity in Canada - should the following groups receive priority for hiring for new jobs?							
	Total (n=3,016)	Male			Female		
		18-34 (n=407)	35-54 (n=474)	55+ (n=585)	18-34 (n=396)	35-54 (n=494)	55+ (n=655)
People with disabilities	61%	56%	44%	57%	73%	68%	70%
Women	59%	48%	38%	51%	75%	70%	70%
Indigenous People	56%	49%	41%	47%	71%	64%	64%
Visible minorities	55%	49%	39%	48%	71%	63%	63%
None of them, these shouldn't be considered	30%	35%	48%	38%	14%	22%	24%

## Modern identities and appropriation

The Employment Equity Act also provides the definition of a visible minority in Canada. The act [defines visible minorities](#) as those who are non-Indigenous, "non-Caucasian in race or non-white in colour". The

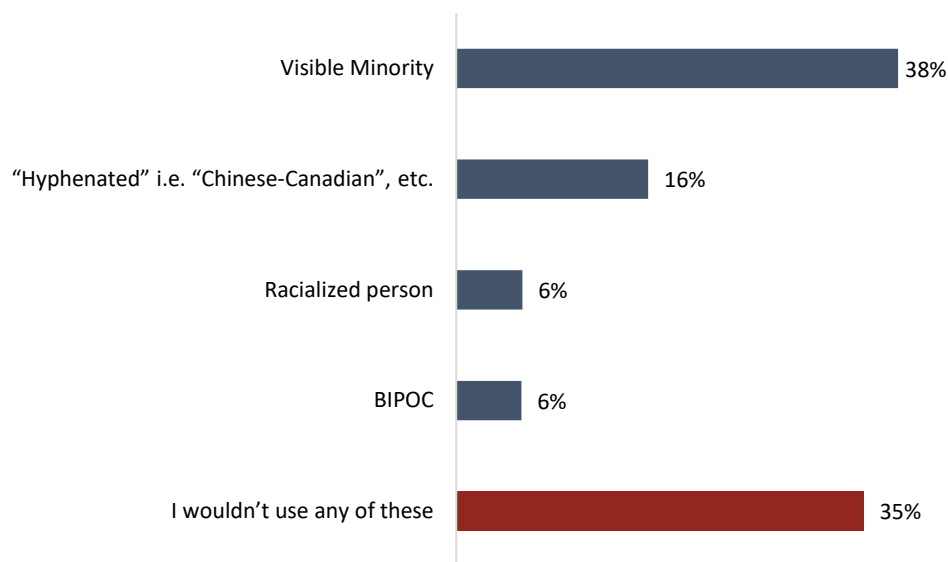
term itself is in the process of being [re-evaluated](#), as previously “visible minorities” become majority populations in some Canadian jurisdictions. Some feel it is too generalizing as it homogenizes disparate racial experiences into one sub-category.

### **What would visible minorities prefer to be called?**

Though two-in-five (38%) who identify as a visible minority say that is their preferred term, more would choose something else. One-in-six (16%) say they prefer to be identified with a hyphen, i.e. Chinese-Canadian. Emerging terms such as “racialized person” and BIPOC (i.e. Black, Indigenous, and People of Colour) are selected by one-in-20 each. More than one-third (35%) eschew these common terms.

The Angus Reid Institute mirrors Statistics Canada’s use of the term visible minority, as census data is used to weight samples to reflect the Canadian population.

### **Which of the following terms would you use to describe yourself to others when talking about your own demography/ background? (Visible minority, n=660)**



### **Views on cultural appropriation**

A CBC documentary [titled “The Pretendians”](#) found that while Indigenous art has become a valuable market in Canada, many of pieces sold as Indigenous art are made by non-Indigenous artists. One study found 75 per cent of the art in tourist shops in Vancouver’s Gastown neighbourhood appeared to be inauthentic.

This is just one example of “cultural appropriation”, [broadly defined](#) as when a cultural group, usually white or Western, takes practices, dress, art or food from another cultural group, usually non-Western or non-white, typically in an exploitive fashion. Cultural appropriation has been discussed in academia as far back as the [the 1980s](#) but has become a more colloquial term in recent years as Western countries [reckon with structural racism, historic discrimination and past colonialism](#).

There are many areas where some argue [that cultural appropriation does not exist](#), saying that throughout human history, cultures have borrowed and exchanged concepts and practices. However, others point out that the groups typically having their culture mimicked or borrowed were historically discriminated against for those same cultural practices and markers, which makes uses by members outside of those historical cultures feel like [“a slap in the face.”](#)

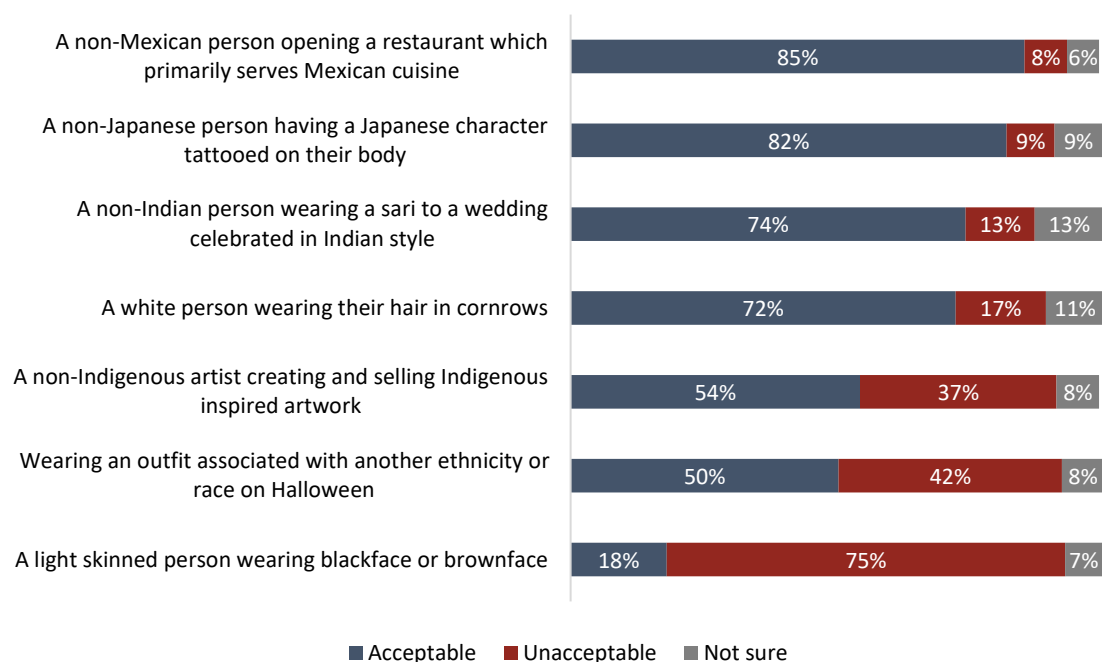
Respondents were offered a series of examples which could be viewed as cultural appropriation and then asked if they found them acceptable or not. Majorities of Canadians believe it is acceptable to sell the cuisine of another culture that isn't your own (85%), be tattooed in foreign languages as a non-native speaker (82%), wear a sari as a non-Indian to an Indian wedding (74%), and for white people to wear their hair in cornrows (72%).

There is more disagreement over concepts such as non-Indigenous people profiting from Indigenous art (54% say acceptable) and wearing a cultural outfit on Halloween (50%), but still at least half of Canadians find these to be acceptable.

Blackface and brownface is widely viewed (75%) as unacceptable by Canadians. This comes after [a cultural reckoning](#) in the wake of Black Lives Matter protests in 2020, when streaming services removed scenes or whole episodes of sitcoms such as Golden Girls, The Office, 30 Rock, and Scrubs due to characters appearing in blackface.

Prime Minister Justin Trudeau [apologized in 2019](#) after videos and photos emerged of him wearing blackface and brownface prior to his career in politics, who said [he “didn't think it was racist at the time, but now I see it was a racist thing to do.”](#)

**For each of the following, tell us whether you personally feel each is acceptable or unacceptable?  
(All respondents, n=3,016)**



Those who identify as Indigenous or visible minority offer different views on the examples. Indigenous people are more likely (45%) than those who don't identify that way to believe it is unacceptable for non-Indigenous artists to profit from Indigenous-inspired artwork though half (49%) disagree.

More who identify as visible minorities (20%) say it is unacceptable for white people to wear their hair in cornrows than those who don't describe themselves that way (16%).

However, it is Canadians who don't identify as visible minorities who are most likely to view blackface and brownface unacceptable (77%):

Percentage who say the following are totally or mostly <u>unacceptable</u>				
	Total (n=3,016)	Race/Ethnicity		
		Indigenous (n=174)	Visible Minority (n=660)	Caucasian (n=2,181)
A light skinned person wearing blackface or brownface	75%	68%	70%	77%
Wearing an outfit associated with another ethnicity or race on Halloween	42%	46%	44%	41%
A non-Indigenous artist creating and selling Indigenous inspired artwork	37%	45%	38%	37%
A white person wearing their hair in cornrows	17%	14%	20%	16%
A non-Indian person wearing a sari to a wedding celebrated in Indian style	13%	17%	12%	13%
A non-Japanese person having a Japanese character tattooed on their body	9%	10%	12%	8%
A non-Mexican person opening a restaurant which primarily serves Mexican cuisine	8%	12%	12%	7%

For nearly all the examples, Zealous Activists are the most likely Canadian Culture Mindset to believe they are unacceptable. They are the only group who believe a non-Indigenous artist profiting from Indigenous-inspired art is unacceptable at a majority level. Zealous Activists are also the only group who find themselves divided over whether a white person wearing cornrows is acceptable. And though majorities disagree, they are more than four times as likely to feel it is inappropriate for non-Mexican people to open Mexican restaurants (20%) and non-Japanese people to have Japanese characters tattooed on their body (21%) as Defiant Objectors (3% and 5% respectively):

Percentage who say the following are totally or mostly <u>unacceptable</u>						
	Total (n=3,016)	Canadian Culture Mindsets				
		Zealous Activists (n=515)	Quiet Accommod- ators (n=794)	Conflicted Middle (n=541)	Frustrated Skeptics (n=566)	Defiant Objectors (n=600)
A light skinned person wearing blackface or brownface	75%	92%	77%	72%	70%	65%
Wearing an outfit associated with another ethnicity or race on Halloween	42%	78%	52%	40%	28%	14%
A non-Indigenous artist creating and selling Indigenous inspired artwork	37%	73%	42%	35%	27%	14%
A white person wearing their hair in cornrows	17%	44%	16%	12%	10%	6%
A non-Indian person wearing a sari to a wedding celebrated in Indian style	13%	15%	12%	16%	13%	9%
A non-Japanese person having a Japanese character tattooed on their body	9%	21%	10%	7%	5%	5%
A non-Mexican person opening a restaurant which primarily serves Mexican cuisine	8%	20%	8%	7%	6%	3%



## Part Five: Legacy of Colonialism and Indigenous issues

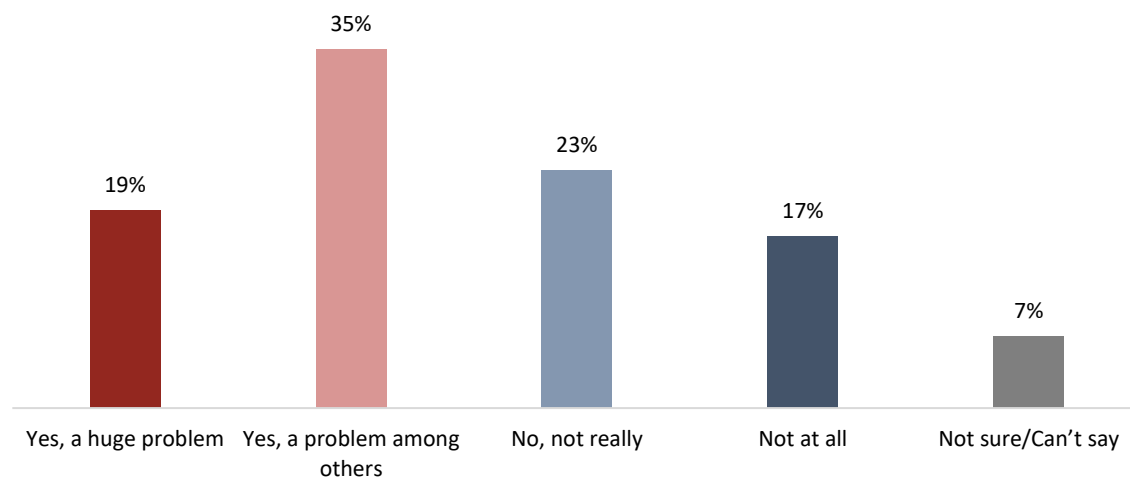
Canadian society has been reckoning with the legacy of colonialism in Canada for much of the 21st century. In 2008, [the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada](#) was founded as part of the agreement reached between the government of Canada and the 86,000 Indigenous Peoples in the country who were at some time enrolled in the residential school system. The commission explored the legacy of the residential schools, but also brought attention to the legacy of other colonial systems in the country.

For many, [the ripple effects of colonialism](#) are [still being felt](#), or at the very least, more subtly [embodied](#) by people in the country. Still others feel that if there is, indeed, a legacy of colonialism in Canada, [there are as many things to celebrate from it](#) as there are to repudiate. For many Canadians, awareness of Indigenous issues is [simply non-existent](#).

### Colonialism in modern Canada

More than half of Canadians (54%) feel the legacy of colonialism is a problem for the country today, including one-in-five (19%) who describe it as a huge problem. Two-in-five (40%) disagree:

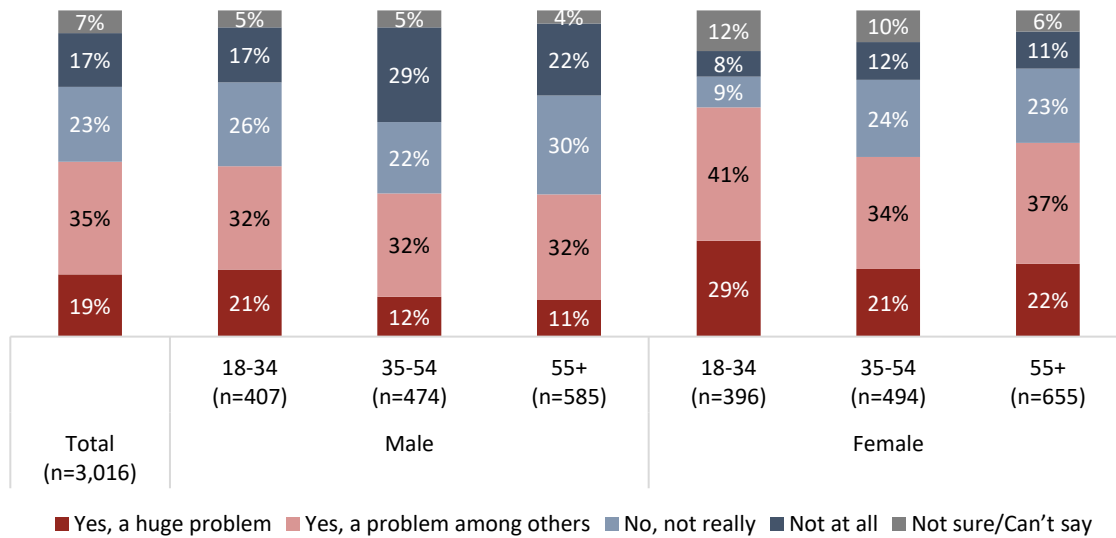
**Do you consider the legacy of colonialism to be a problem in Canada today?  
(All respondents, n=3,016)**



### Perspectives vary widely by generation, cultural mindset

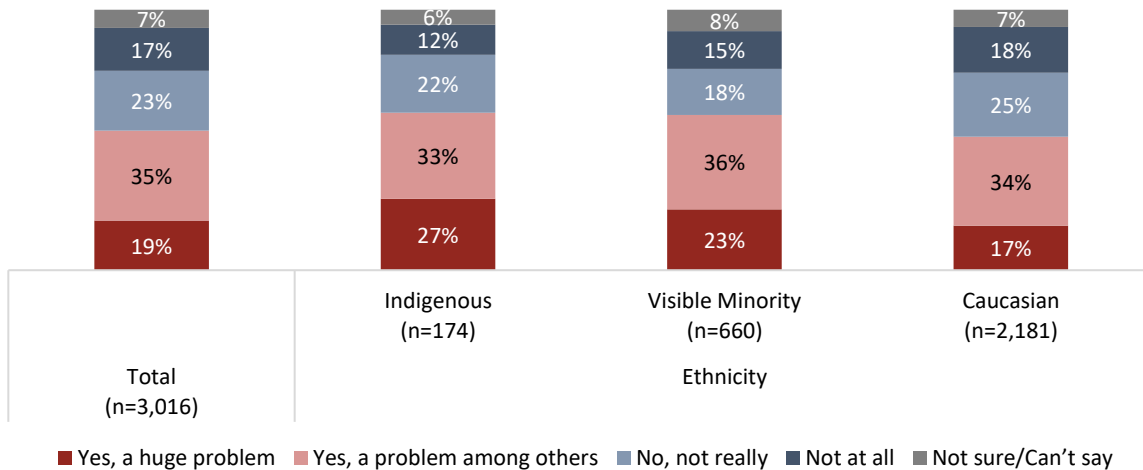
Women and younger Canadians are much more likely to believe the ramifications of colonialism are a modern problem. Meanwhile, half of men older than 34 believe the legacy of colonialism is not an issue today:

**Do you consider the legacy of colonialism to be a problem in Canada today?**



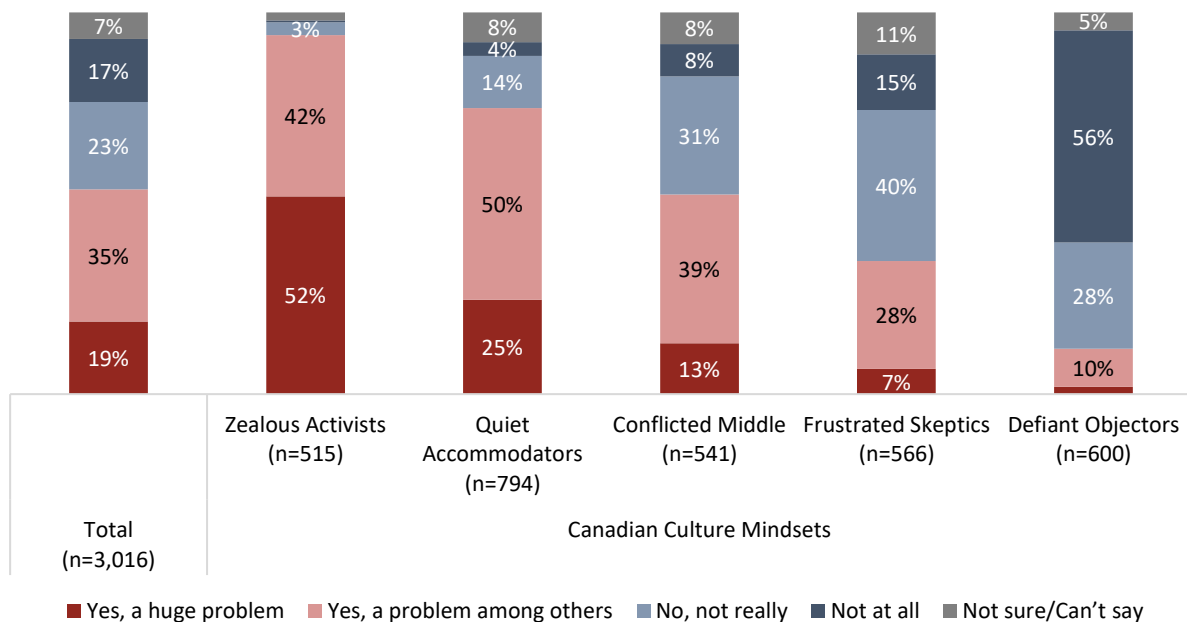
A majority (60%) of respondents who identify as Indigenous believe colonialism is a problem in Canada today, including more than one-quarter (27%) who say it is a huge problem. Half (51%) of Caucasian agree the legacy of colonialism continues to be a problem, but they are more likely to disagree (43%) than Indigenous respondents (34%):

**Do you consider the legacy of colonialism to be a problem in Canada today?**



Canadians at opposite ends of the Canadian Culture Mindsets are also in opposition on the implications of colonialism for modern Canada. Nearly all (94%) Zealous Activists believe the legacy of colonialism is a problem today, while 84 per cent of Defiant Objectors disagree. The Conflicted Middle lean towards believing the lasting effects of colonialism are still an issue, but only one-in-eight (13%) say it is a huge problem:

**Do you consider the legacy of colonialism to be a problem in Canada today?**



**Optimism about improvements in lives of Indigenous Peoples living in Canada**

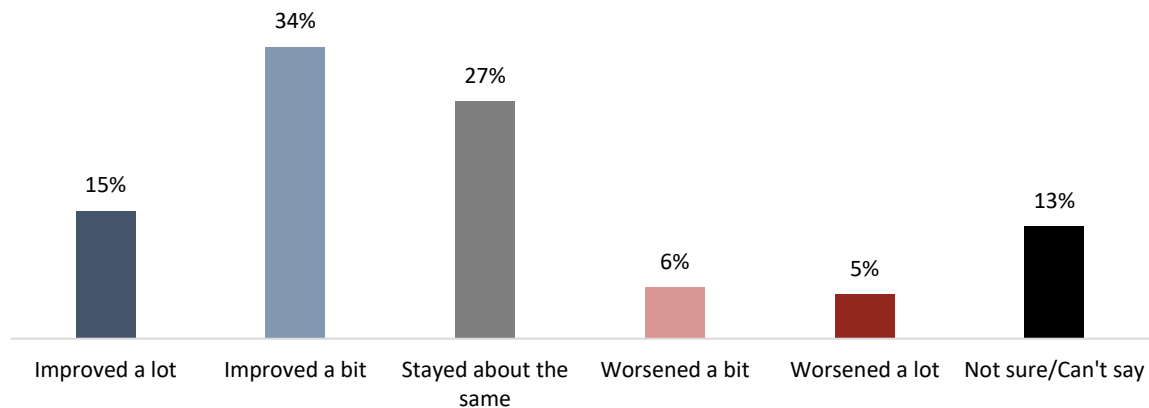
At the release of the final report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, Chair [Justice Murray Sinclair](#) said he was “hopeful that we are at a threshold of a new era in this country.”

“A period of change is beginning,” [Sinclair continued](#), “that if sustained by the will of the people, will forever realign the shared history of Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples in Canada.”

However, he cautioned that change would likely not be instantaneous, “It will take years, perhaps generations.”

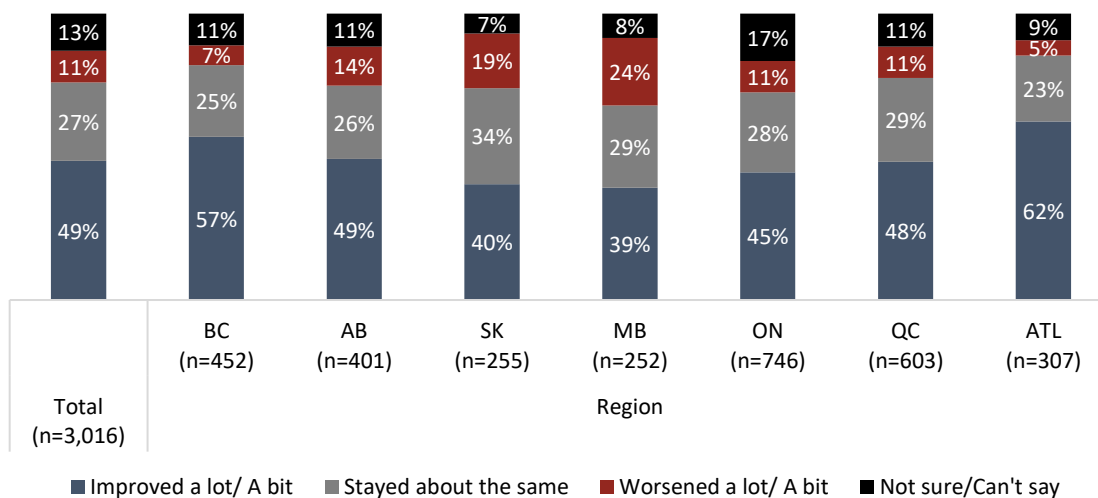
It has been more than eight years since the release of that report, and 15 years since the founding of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. In that time span, half (49%) of Canadians believe the situation for Indigenous Peoples in their own province has improved. One-quarter (27%) feel there has been no improvement, but the situation has not worsened. One-in-ten (11%) believe Indigenous Peoples’ circumstances have deteriorated:

**And, over the past 10 or 15 years or so, would you say the situation of Indigenous Peoples in your own province has improved or worsened?  
(All respondents, n=3,016)**



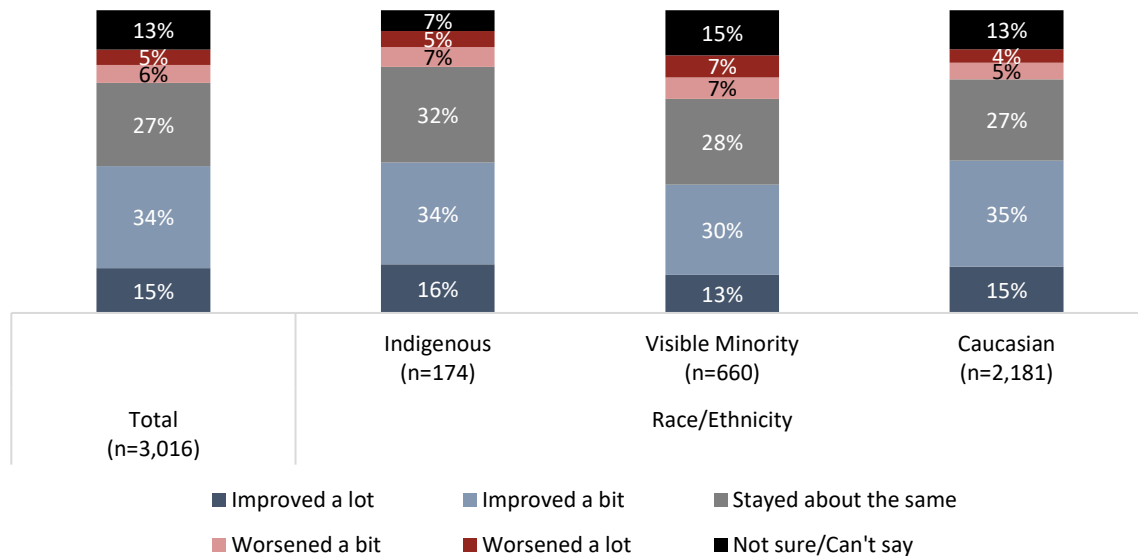
A plurality in every region across the country believe the situation of Indigenous Peoples in their province has improved. However that sentiment is lowest in Manitoba (39%) and Saskatchewan (39%), the provinces with the largest and second-largest proportion of Indigenous Peoples in the country.

**And, over the past 10 or 15 years or so, would you say the situation of Indigenous Peoples in your own province has improved or worsened?**



Half of those who identify as Indigenous say their situation has improved in the past decade. However, one-third (32%) see no improvement and one-in-eight (12%) see their condition worsening:

**And, over the past 10 or 15 years or so, would you say the situation of Indigenous Peoples in your own province has improved or worsened?**



*Note on methodology:*

*\*Please note, while the views of self-described Indigenous people are reported here to provide valuable context, it should be noted that this sample is not necessarily representative of the Indigenous population of Canada as a whole.*

**Contentious questions**

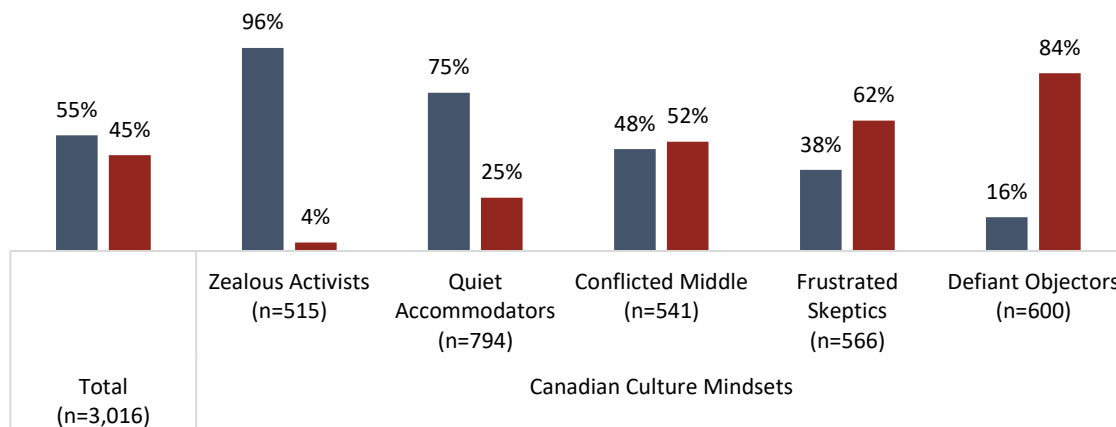
As Canada walks the path of reconciliation, there is both understanding and resistance. The Angus Reid Institute wanted to gauge Canadians’ opinions on some of the more contentious topics surrounding reconciliation for this study, as many discussions connected to reconciliation provoke divisive discourse in Canada’s culture wars. The questions offer some background and touch on whether Indigenous Peoples should maintain a special status in Canada, Canadians’ understanding of what happened at residential schools, and whether enough has been done to address the harm those institutions perpetuated. [To read the full questionnaire, click here.](#)

**Division over whether Indigenous Peoples should have unique status**

Indigenous Peoples in Canada [have access](#) to social programs, non-insured health benefits, tax exemptions and other rights and benefits not available to non-Indigenous Peoples. More than half (55%) of Canadians believe this should be the case, as Indigenous Peoples “have an inherently unique status because their ancestors were here first.” Two-in-five (45%) disagree, saying that there should be no special status conferred to Indigenous Peoples in modern Canada.

On this question, the Conflicted Middle is near evenly split. Nearly all (94%) Zealous Activists believe Indigenous Peoples should fundamentally have a unique status, while most (84%) Defiant Objectors argue Indigenous Peoples and other Canadians should have the same status in modern Canada:

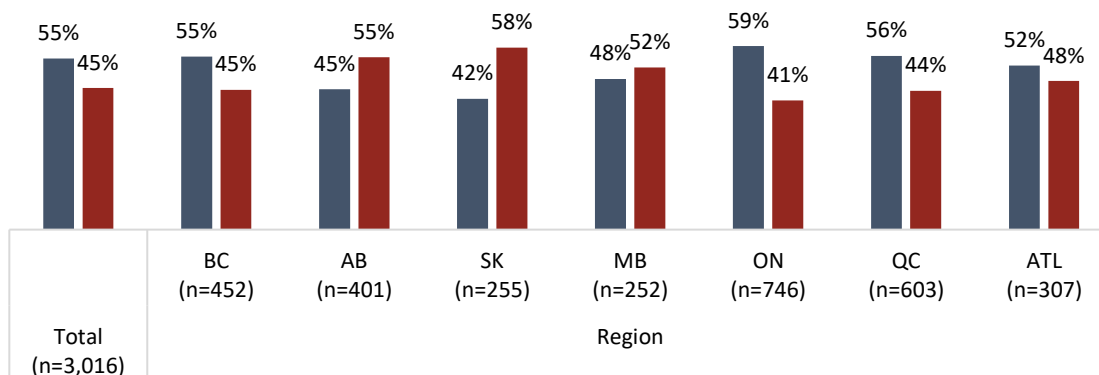
**Fundamentally, do you think:**



- Indigenous Peoples in Canada have an inherently unique status because their ancestors were here first, before Europeans settled here
- In modern Canada, Indigenous Peoples should have no special status that other Canadians don't have

Three-in-five (58%) in Saskatchewan feel Indigenous Peoples should have no special status, the most in the country. Those in Ontario are more likely (59%) than those in other regions to believe that because Indigenous Peoples pre-date Europeans, they should have a unique status in Canada:

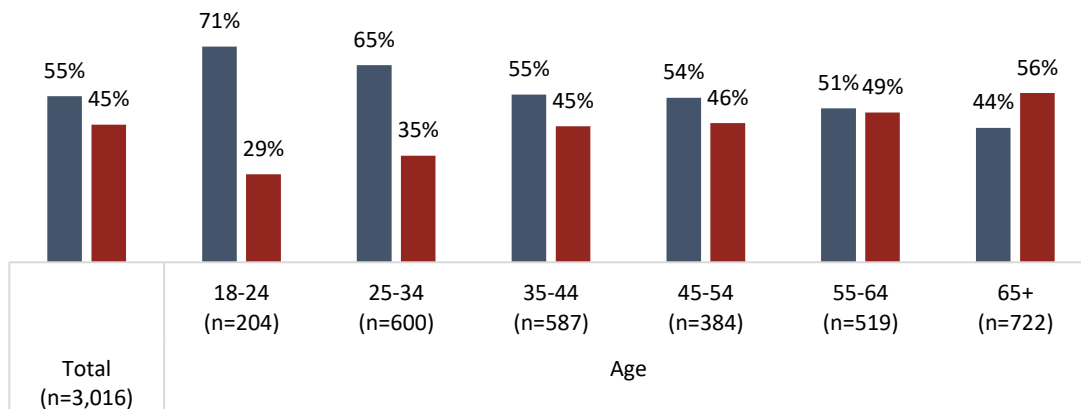
**Fundamentally, do you think:**



- Indigenous Peoples in Canada have an inherently unique status because their ancestors were here first, before Europeans settled here
- In modern Canada, Indigenous Peoples should have no special status that other Canadians don't have

Canadians older than 64 are the only age group who believe Indigenous Peoples should have no special status in Canada at a majority level. That sentiment is disputed by at least half of all other age groups, including seven-in-ten (71%) 18- to 24-year-olds:

**Fundamentally, do you think:**

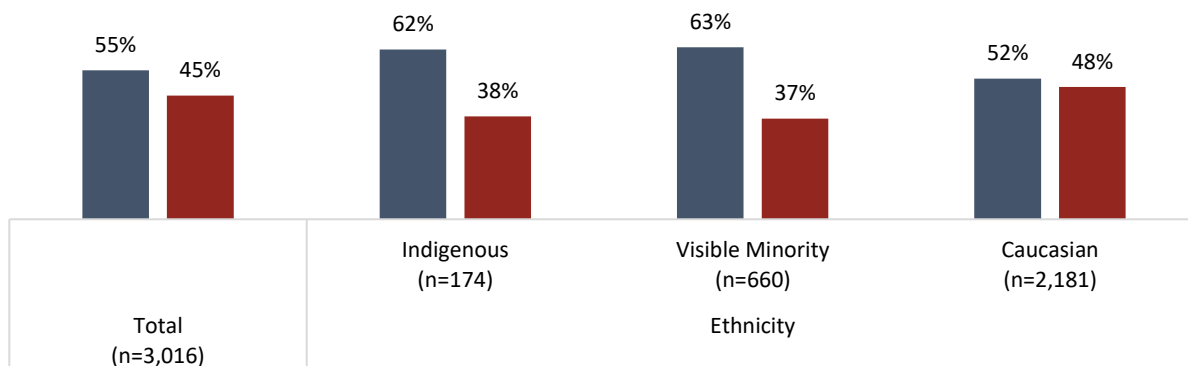


■ Indigenous Peoples in Canada have an inherently unique status because their ancestors were here first, before Europeans settled here

■ In modern Canada, Indigenous Peoples should have no special status that other Canadians don't have

More than three-in-five (62%) of those who identify as Indigenous believe Indigenous Peoples should have a unique status in Canada because their settlement pre-dates the arrival of Europeans. Caucasians are split on the matter:

**Fundamentally, do you think:**



■ Indigenous People in Canada have an inherently unique status because their ancestors were here first, before Europeans settled here

■ In modern Canada, Indigenous People should have no special status that other Canadians don't have

**Two-in-five believe harm from residential schools largely resolved; half disagree**

In a long-awaited move, the Newfoundland and Labrador provincial government apologized on the day before National Day for Truth and Reconciliation in 2023 for its role in residential schools in that province. The apology had been promised by former Premier Dwight Ball after Prime Minister Justin Trudeau delivered one from the federal government in 2017, but Ball never delivered on the promise before leaving office in 2020. Newfoundland and Labrador was not included in the initial federal government apology by former Prime Minister Stephen Harper in 2008 because the schools were set-up in the province before it joined Confederation.

There have been many apologies over the years, including last year when Pope Francis [made a “penitential pilgrimage”](#) to Canada to apologize for the Catholic Church’s role in residential schools. While just one step, at the time, a majority of Canadians felt it was meaningful progress towards reconciliation between Canada and Indigenous Peoples.

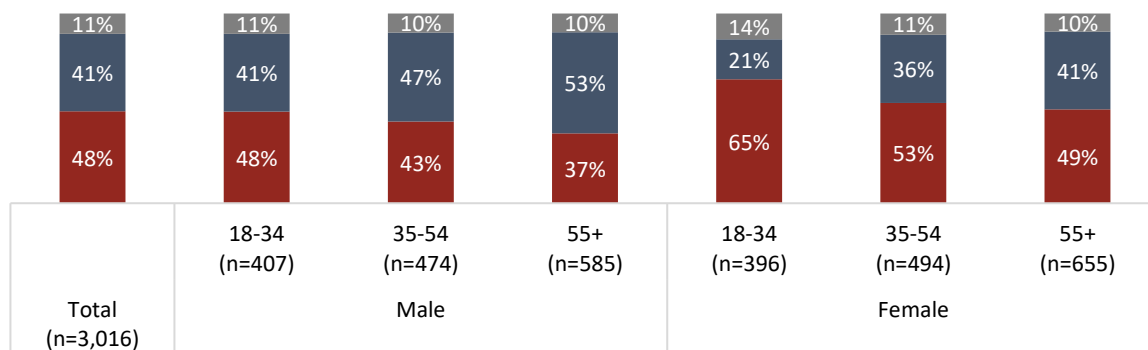
**Related: Majority of Canadians view Pope Francis’ apology for residential schools as a step towards reconciliation**

Many, however, argue [apologies are not enough and there is much more work to be done](#). The Truth and Reconciliation Commission issued 94 calls to action in 2015 to address the painful legacy of residential schools. A December 2022 report found that [only 13 calls to action had been completed](#).

Approaching half (48%) of Canadians feel the harm from residential schools will continue for many generations and will need support from all levels of government. Two-in-five (41%) disagree and believe the harm has largely been resolved.

Men older than 54 are more likely than other demographics to be of the latter opinion – half (53%) believe it’s time to focus on other issues affecting Indigenous Peoples. Women are more likely to believe the harm caused by residential schools will continue for many generations, especially those aged 18- to 34-years-old, of whom two-thirds say this:

**Which statement best reflects your own point of view, even if you don’t totally agree?**



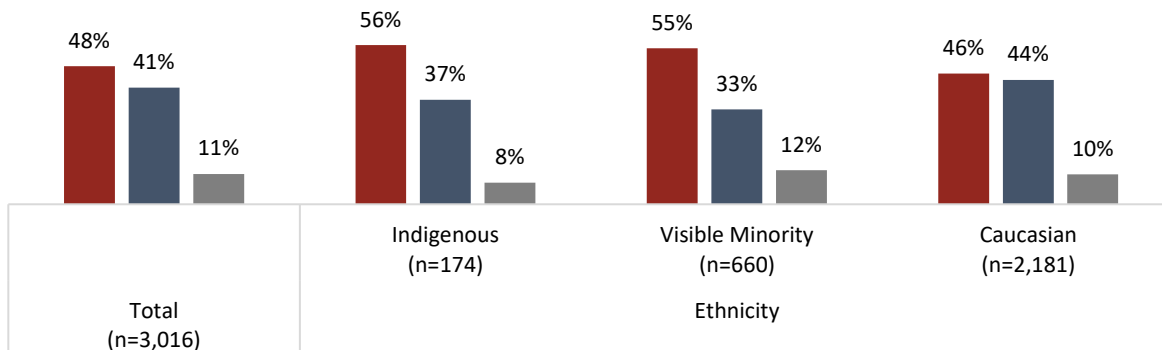
- Not sure/Can't say
- The harm from residential schools has been largely resolved, it's time to focus on other issues affecting Indigenous communities
- The harm from residential schools will continue for many generations and will continue to require support from all levels of govt

**Caucasians equally likely to believe harm continues as it has been addressed**

A majority of respondents who identify as Indigenous believe the harm from residential schools will continue to require support from all levels of government. Caucasians are near evenly split between agreeing that more support is needed (46%) and believing the harm has largely been resolved (44%):



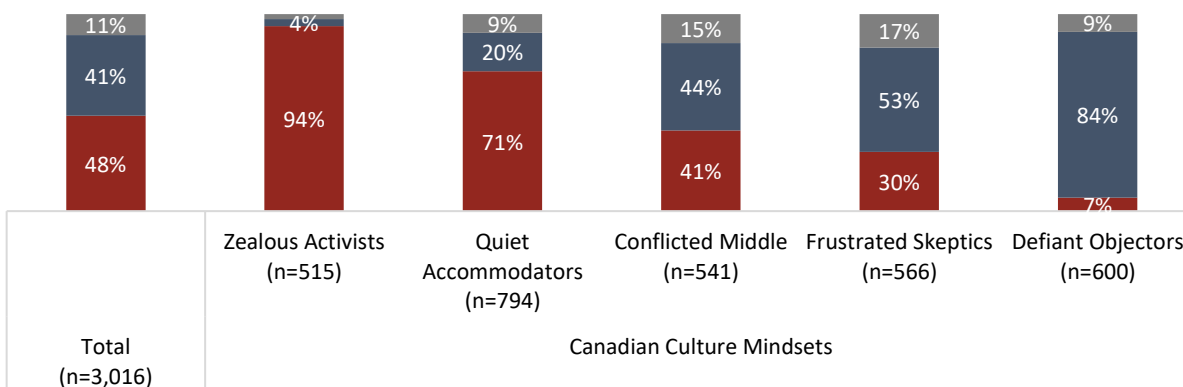
**Which statement best reflects your own point of view, even if you don't totally agree?**



- The harm from residential schools will continue for many generations and will continue to require support from all levels of govt
- The harm from residential schools has been largely resolved, it's time to focus on other issues affecting Indigenous communities
- Not sure/Can't say

There is a clear division between Canadian Culture Mindsets on this matter with nearly all (94%) Zealous Activists believing the hurt of residential schools will need to be addressed by future governments for generations and four-in-five (84%) Defiant Objectors saying the harm has largely been resolved. While Frustrated Skeptics lean towards the latter opinion, they are nearly twice as likely (17%) as Defiant Objectors to say they are unsure:

**Which statement best reflects your own point of view, even if you don't totally agree?**



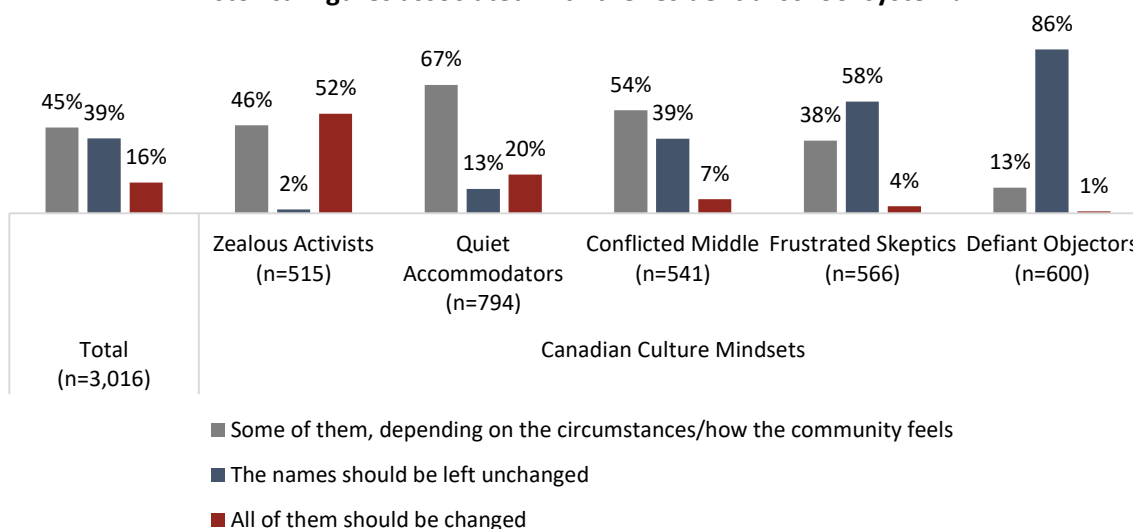
- Not sure/Can't say
- The harm from residential schools has been largely resolved, it's time to focus on other issues affecting Indigenous communities
- The harm from residential schools will continue for many generations and will continue to require support from all levels of govt

**Change the names?**

Given the reconciliation Canada is undergoing with Indigenous Peoples, some have suggested that the names of those who were involved in the creation of residential schools, or oversaw this policy's enactment, should be removed from public spaces. Others have argued that those figures are key in the formation of Canada and our national identity, that it is a step too far to remove them from our collective history.

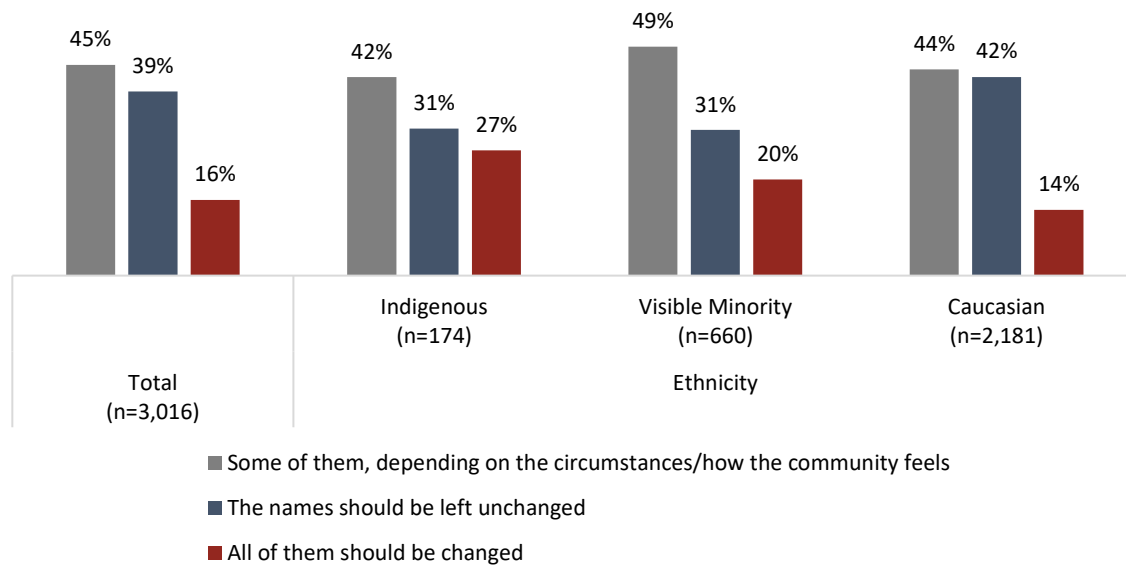
In recent years, statues of John A. MacDonald, the first prime minister of Canada, have been toppled or vandalized, and the names of MacDonald, Egerton Ryerson, and others have been removed from public buildings and institutions in favour of more inclusive monikers. Asked specifically about changing these names, Canadians are most likely (45%) to say that context is important and that communities should look at these on a case-by-case basis. A similar sized group of two-in-five (39%) say that names should not be changed, while 16 per cent would change all of them. The latter is a view primarily held by Zealous Activists, with the former is the majority opinion of both Frustrated Skeptics and Defiant Objectors:

**How do you feel about changing the names of streets/schools named after historical figures associated with the residential school system?**



A plurality (42%) of those who identify as Indigenous feel some names should change and some should stay the same, depending on the circumstances. However, respondents who identify as Indigenous are twice (27%) as likely as Caucasians (14%) to believe all of the streets and schools named after historical figures associated with the residential school system should change:

**How do you feel about changing the names of streets/schools named after historical figures associated with the residential school system?**



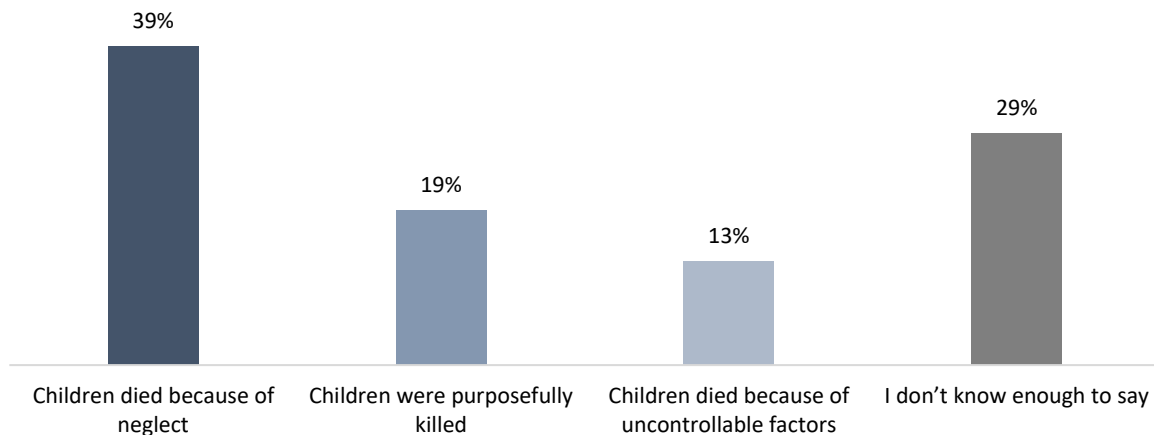
**On the deaths at residential schools**

In recent years, discussion and debate has emerged among some populations about conditions within residential schools, and the ultimate aims of their construction. Some have called [this residential school denialism](#), the idea that schools had positive goals and that children who died there were [just as likely to have died in other settings](#). For their part, Canadians overwhelmingly felt when asked by ARI that these schools were a [form of cultural genocide](#), but what do they feel about the causes of deaths?

Deaths in residential schools were [much more common](#) than the general population of children at the time. A plurality, two-in-five (39%), say that the deaths were a product of neglect, with poor treatment for diseases and issues like malnutrition and overcrowding contributing. Three-in-ten (29%) – say that they simply do not know enough to say what happened.

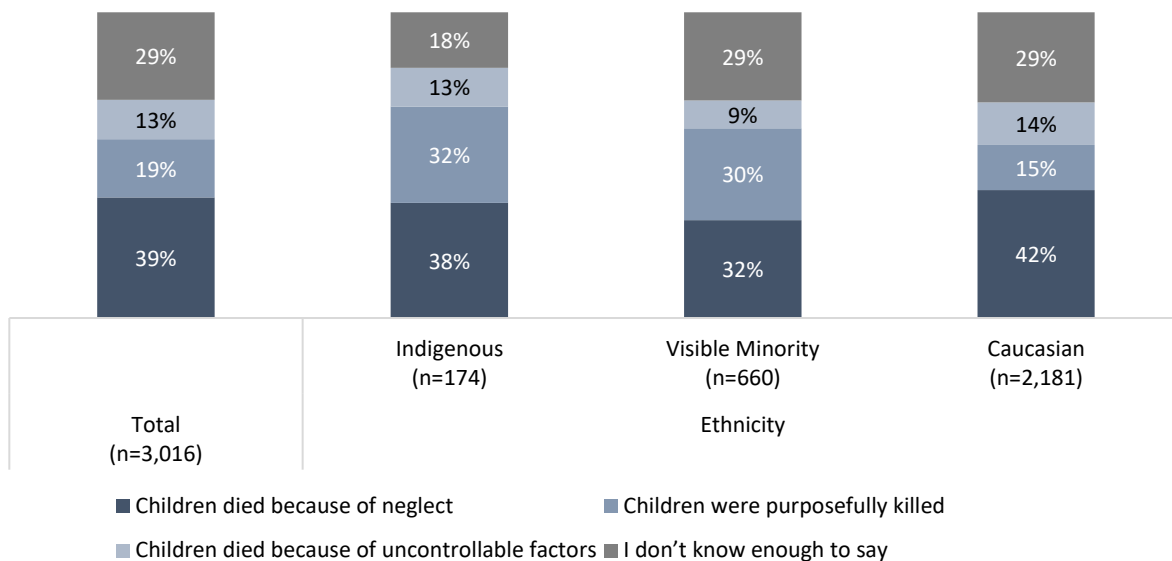
One-in-five Canadians (19%) say that Indigenous children were purposefully killed, rather than neglected, while the smallest group, approximately one-in-eight (13%) say that these deaths were from uncontrollable factors:

**What do you believe led to most of these deaths:  
(All respondents, n=3,016)**



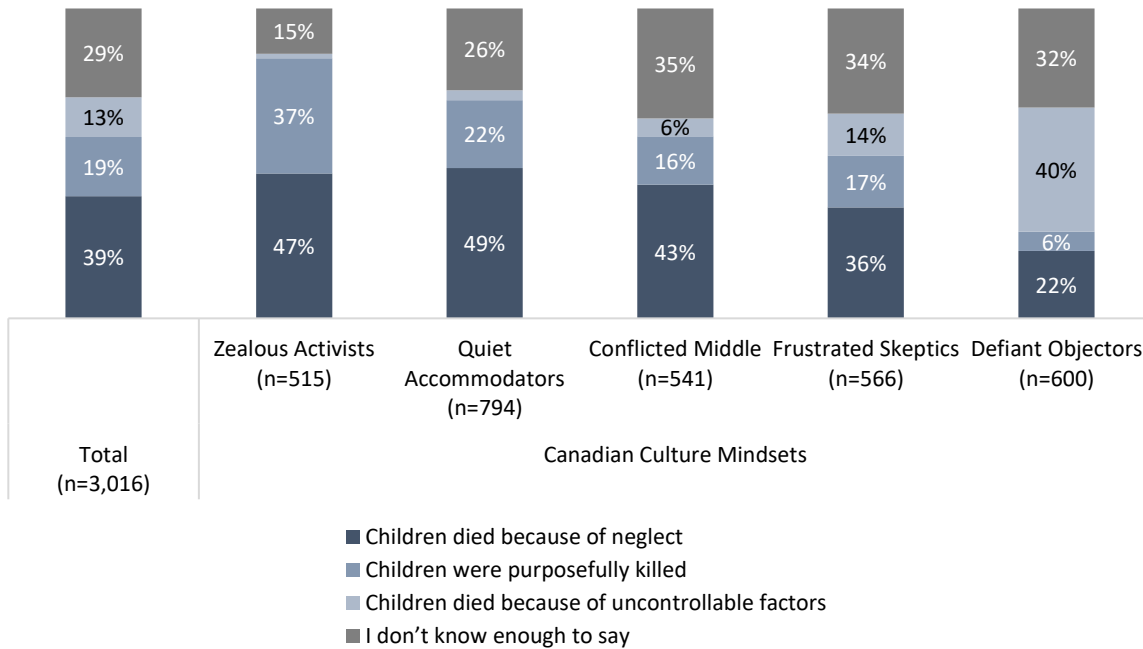
Among respondents who identify as Indigenous, there is a diversity of opinion on this matter. Two-in-five (38%) believe the children in residential schools died of neglect, while one-third (32%) believe they were purposefully killed. Caucasians are half as likely (15%) to believe children were killed on purpose in the residential school system:

**What do you believe led to most of these deaths:**



This issue, too, is divisive across different mindsets in Canada. Many in each group are uncertain what happened. Meanwhile, the largest group in four of the five groups say that neglect was the primary cause of a higher death rate:

**What do you believe led to most of these deaths:**

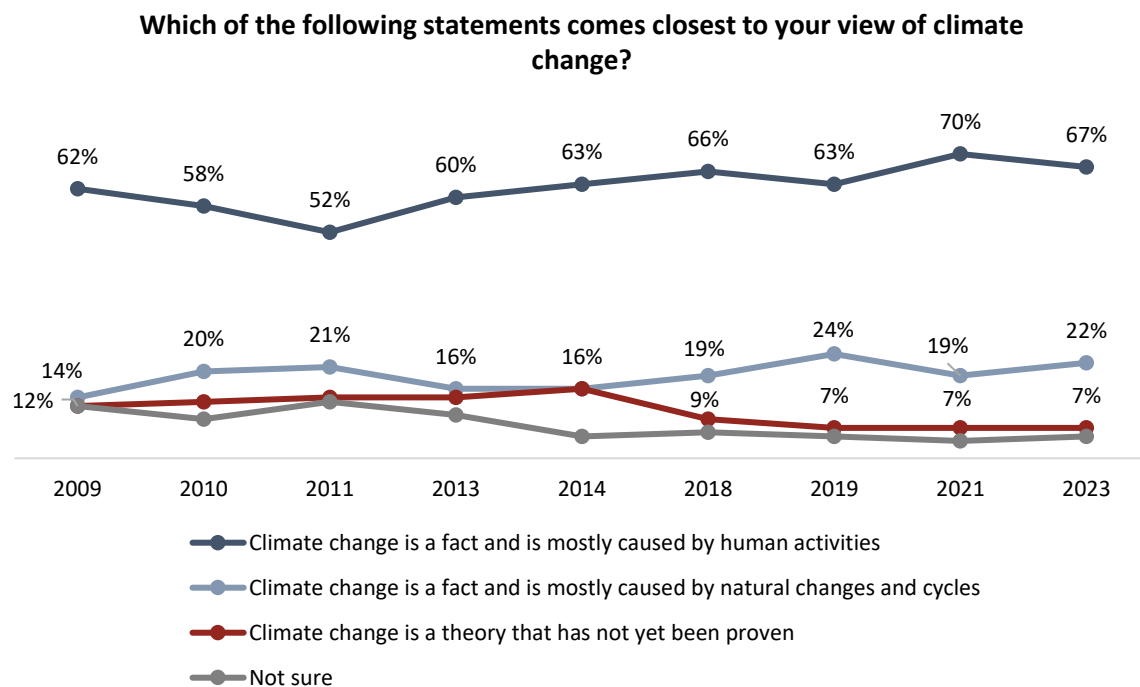


## Part Six: Climate change and Capitalism

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.

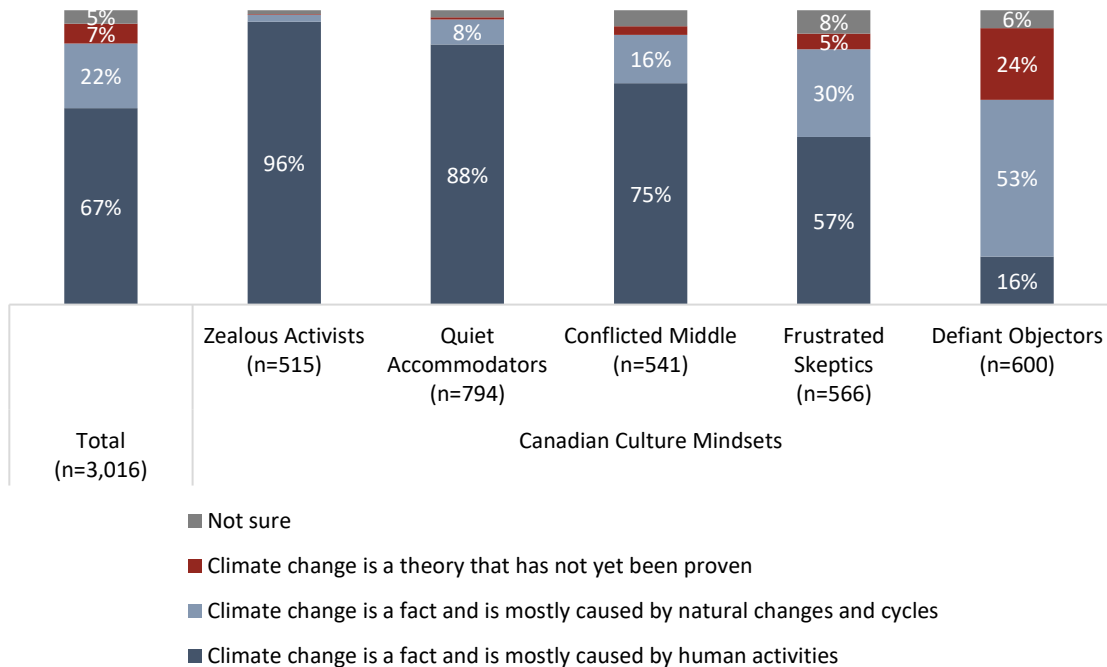
### **Broad agreement that climate change is occurring**

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:



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:

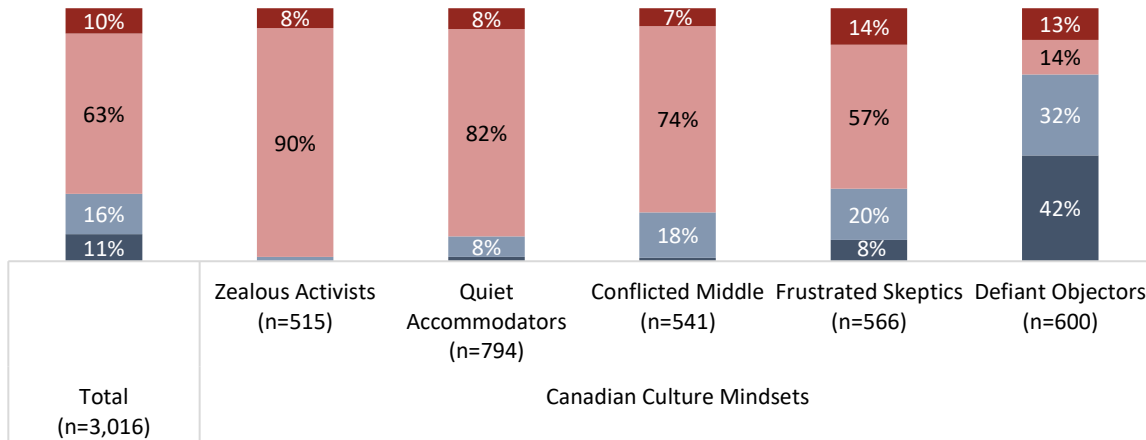
**Which of the following statements comes closest to your view of climate change (or global warming)?**



**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%).

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



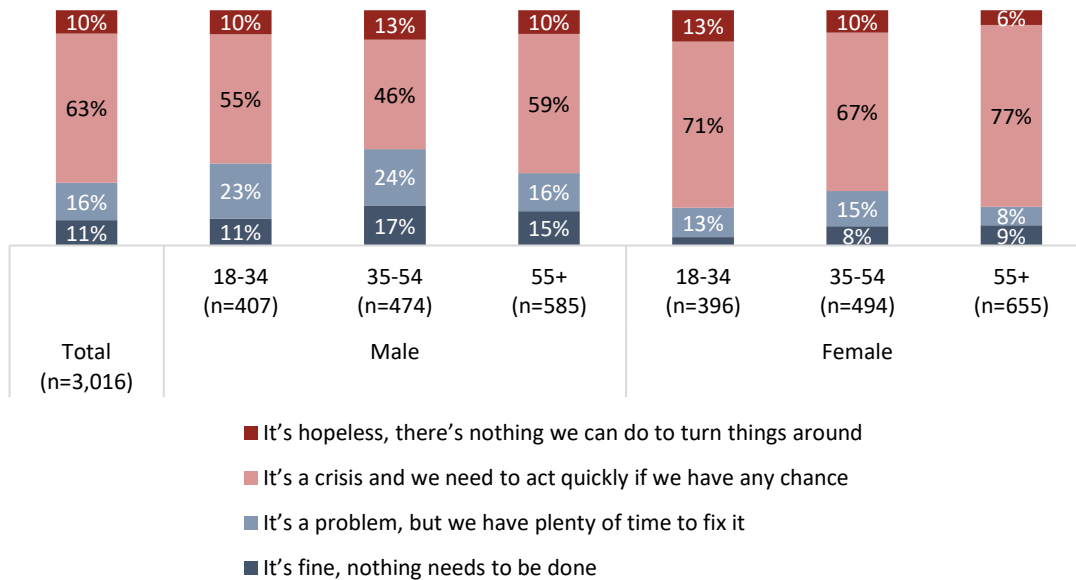
- It's hopeless, there's nothing we can do to turn things around
- It's a crisis and we need to act quickly if we have any chance
- It's a problem, but we have plenty of time to fix it
- It's fine, nothing needs to be done

**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:



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

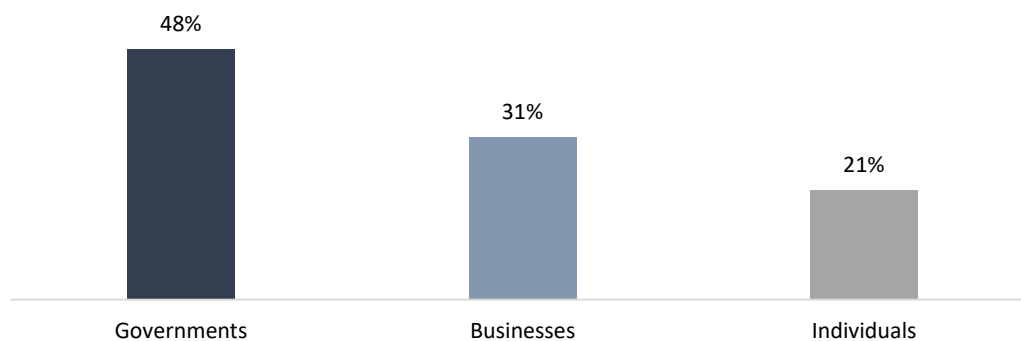


**Half who see the need for action say it's government's problem to solve**

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, whose responsibility is it?

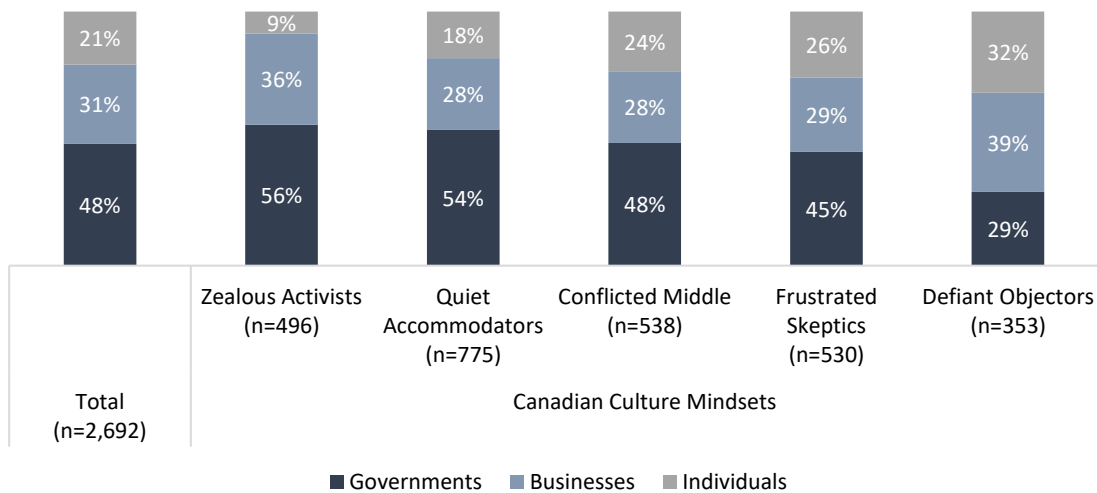
As individuals, most Canadians do not feel it is their responsibility alone to change their actions and work toward reducing emissions. Most say that the government must take charge (48%), while three-in-ten (31%) say businesses should lead.

**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)**



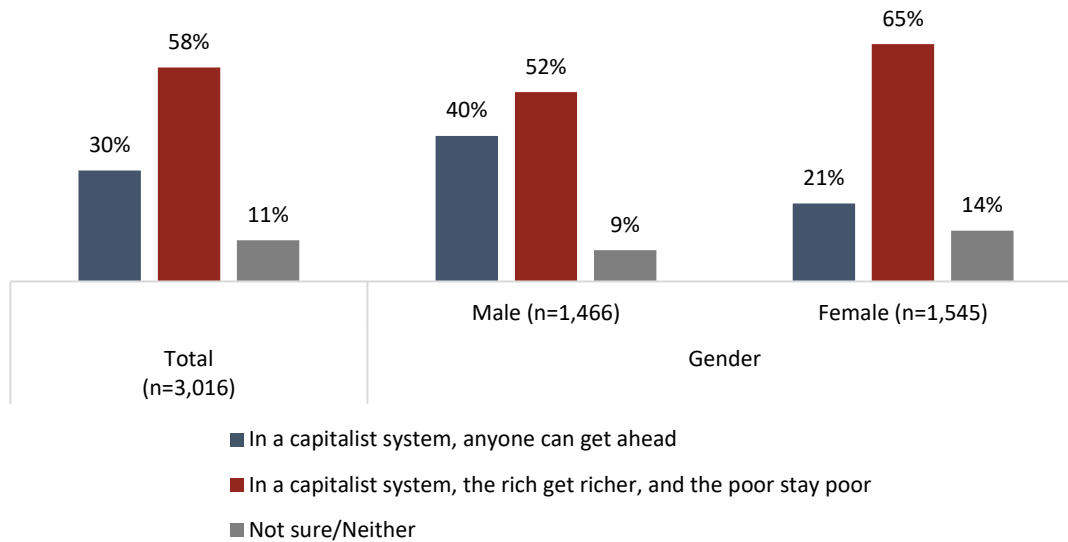
**Views of capitalism and taxation**

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.

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

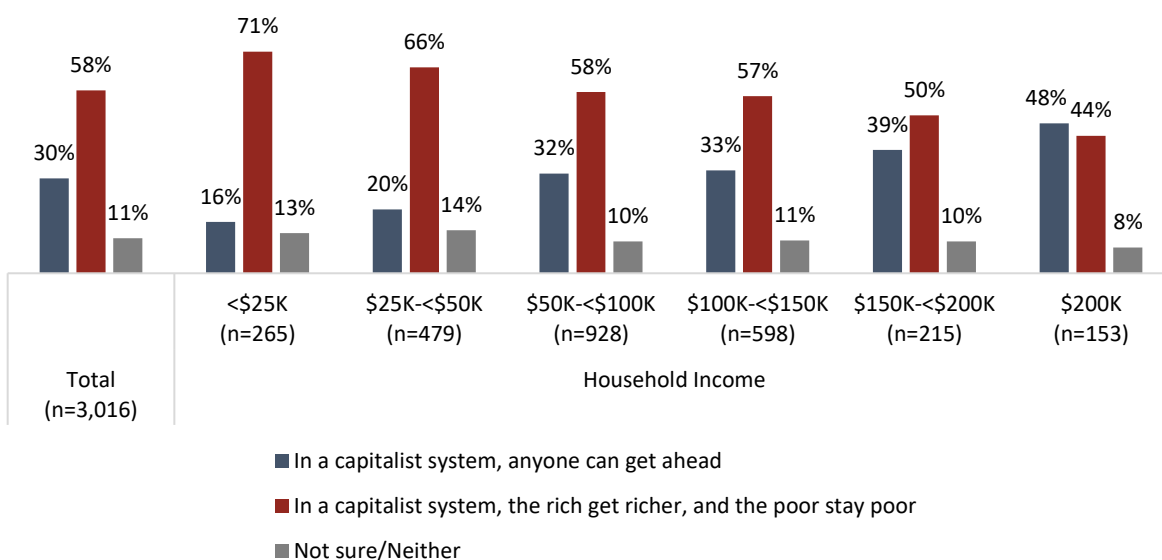
Asked for their views of capitalism as an economic system, most Canadians are critical. Three-in-five (58%) say that the rich get richer, and the poor get poorer within this type of economy, while half as many say that capitalism simply means that anyone who works hard can get ahead. Men are much more 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”.



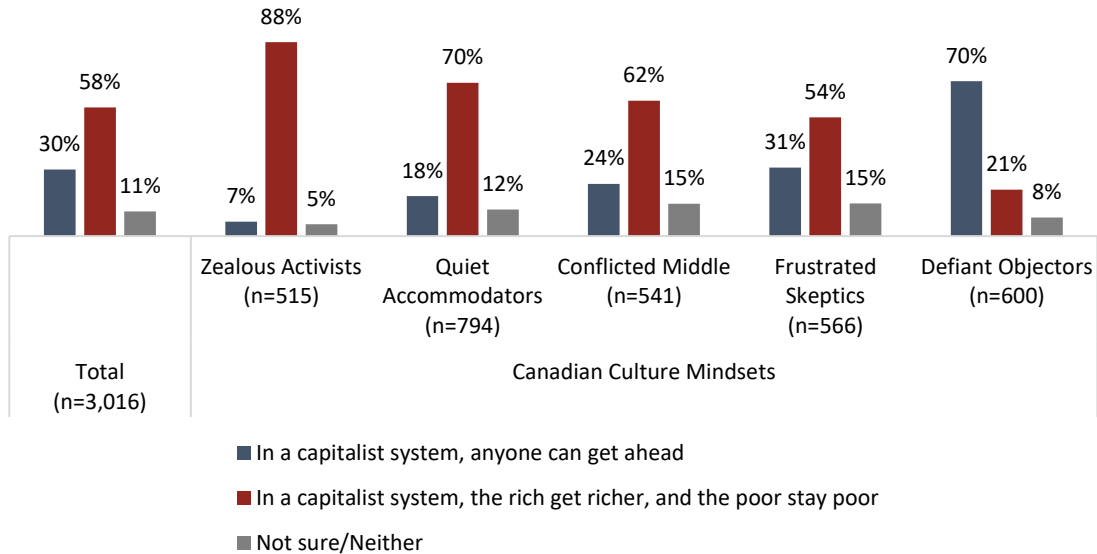
Only the wealthiest group of Canadians, those earning more than \$200,000 per year, are more likely to say that anyone can get ahead in a capitalist system. That view diminishes as household income falls, as seen in the following graph:

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](#).

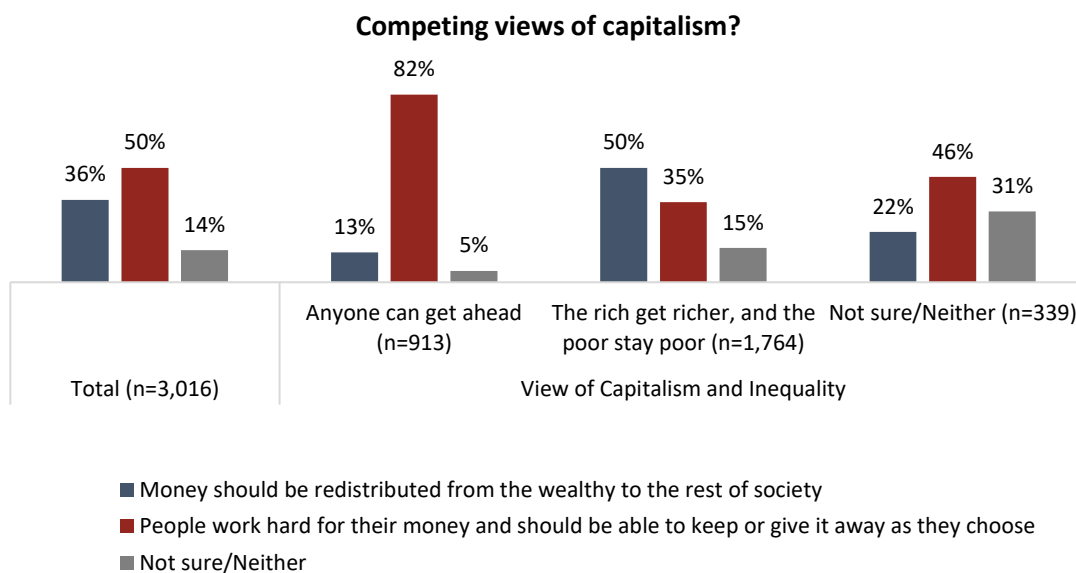
For each of the following paired statements, please tell us which of the two aligns closer to your view when it comes to the idea of “capitalism”.



**Redistribution a source of more disagreement**

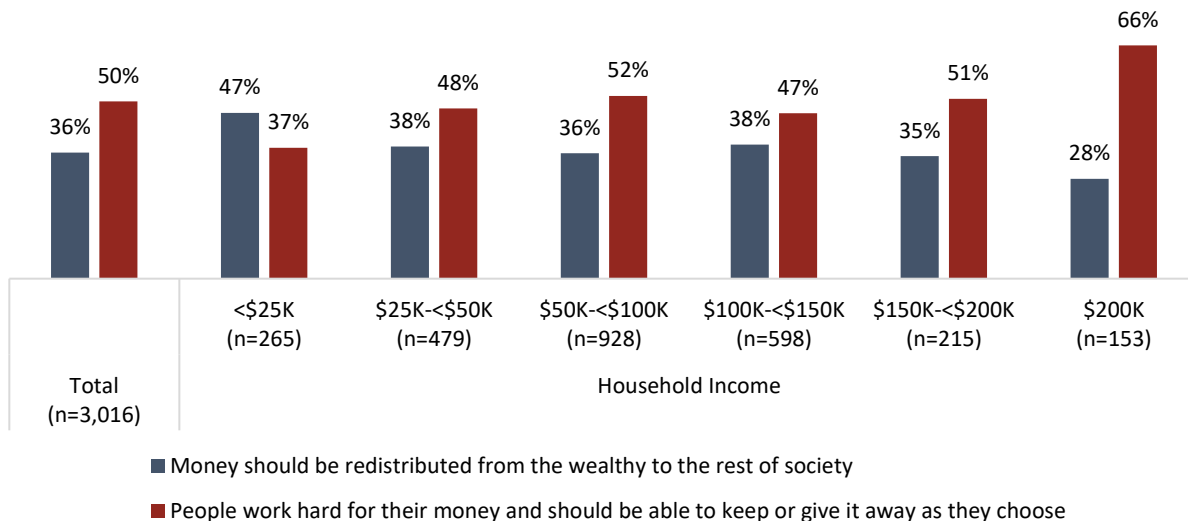
There are more Canadians who offer a cynical view of the capitalist system than support redistributing wealth as a means of balance. Half (50%) of Canadians believe people should be able to use the money they’ve earned as they see fit, while one-third say money should be redistributed from the wealthy.

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:



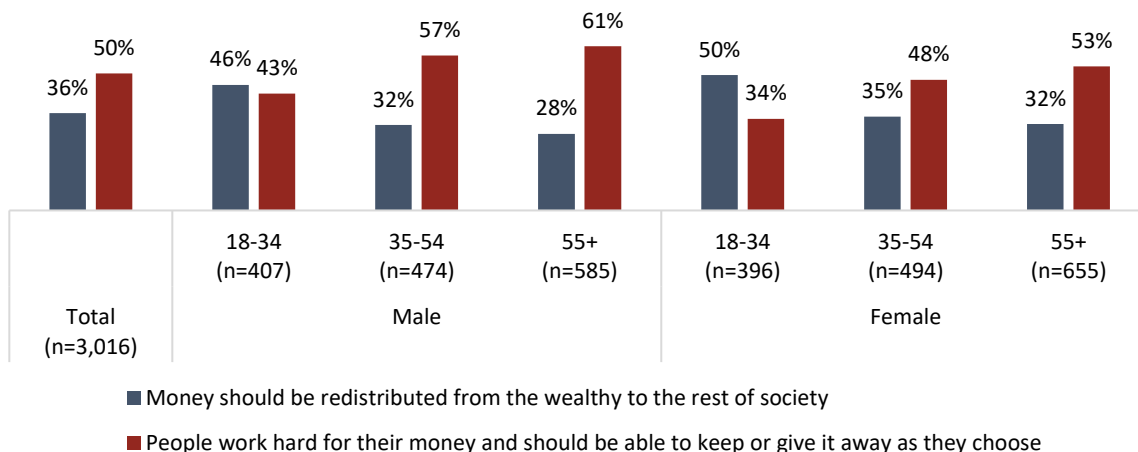
Only among the lowest income household income bracket do the number of people who believe there should be wealth redistribution outweigh those who oppose it:

**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:**

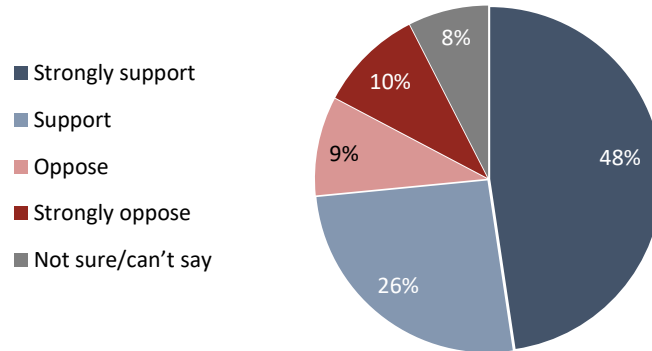


**A tale of two taxes – wealth tax lauded, home sales tax opposed**

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

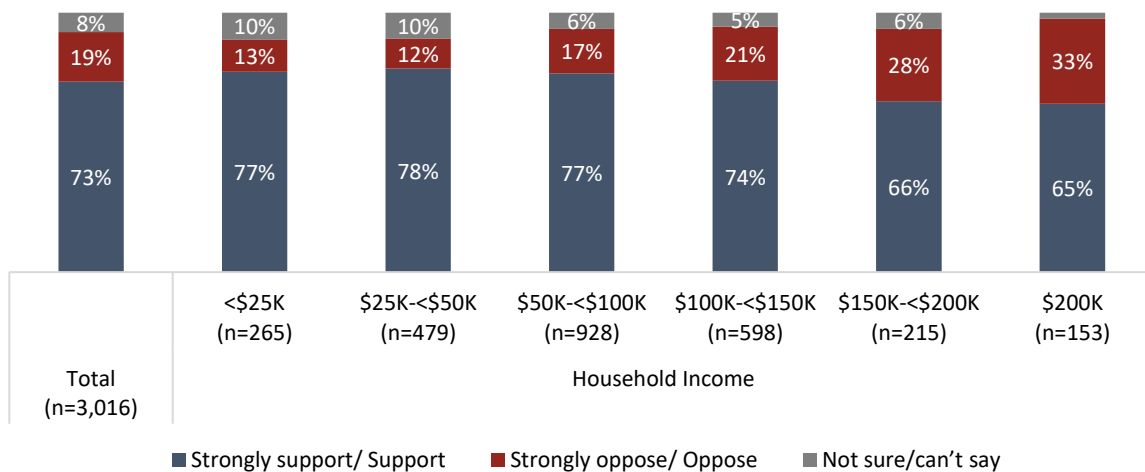
another one-quarter say they support it (26%). The version asked in this question is a tax of one per cent on assets over \$10 million ([see full questionnaire here](#)).

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



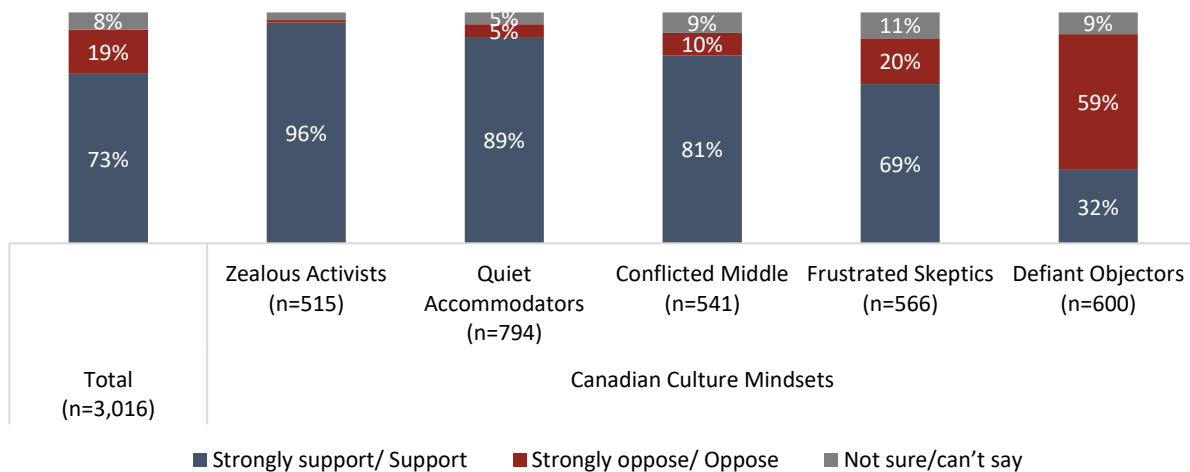
Approximately one per cent of households, or 80,000 families, have a net worth of more than \$10 million in Canada. Perhaps that’s why even though support for a wealth tax at this level declines by the household income of the respondent, it is still at a majority level at the highest income bracket:

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



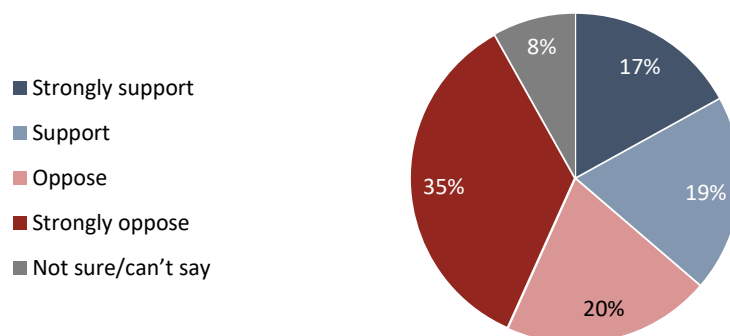
A concept of a wealth tax on those with more than \$10 million in assets is supported at a majority level by all Canadian Culture Mindsets except Defiant Objectors. Three-in-five (59%) in that group oppose it:

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



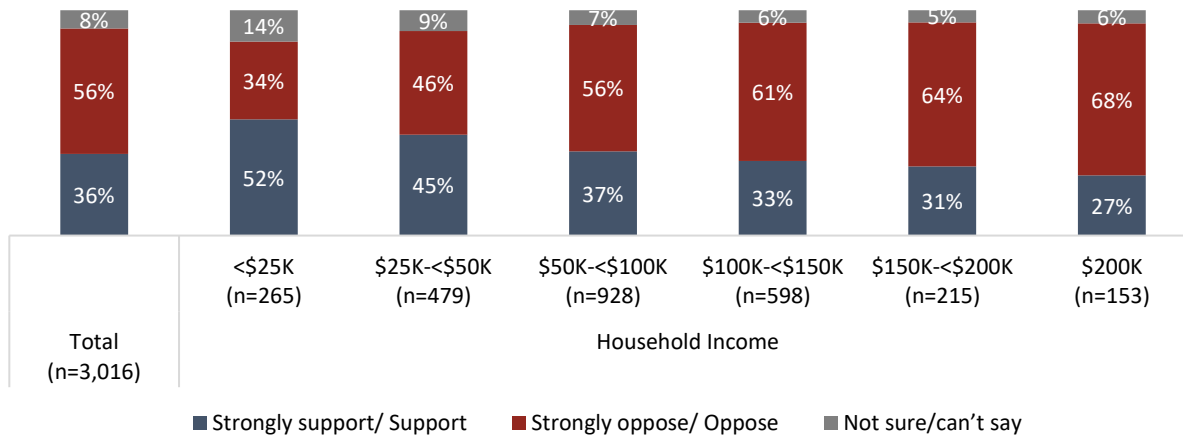
Another proposed form of taxation is much less acceptable to Canadians. A capital gains tax on housing sales for more expensive homes has been debated for decades in Canada, but appears unappetizing to most. ARI asked Canadians about a proposal where houses sold for more than \$1.5 million would be subject 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)**



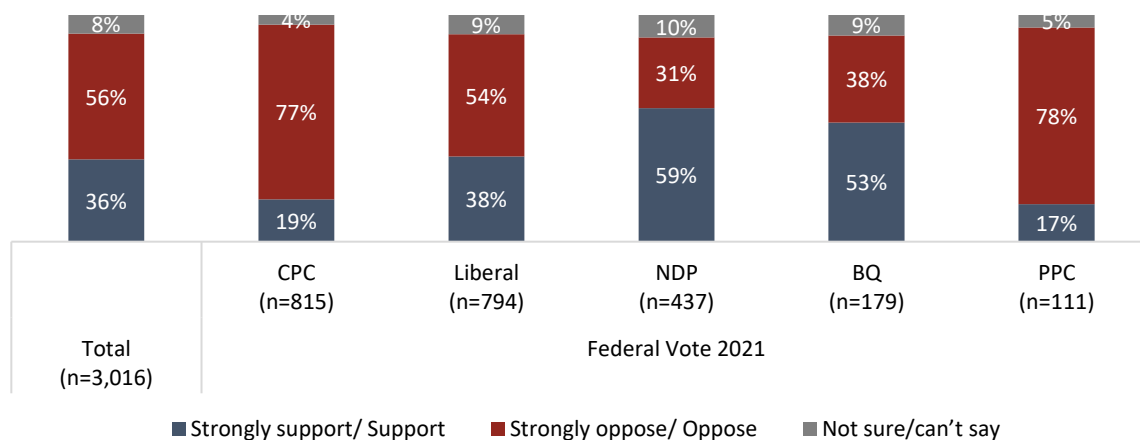
Canada is largely a nation of homeowners; two-thirds in the country own their home, though that rate has declined from highs seen a decade ago. However, those living in lower income households are much more likely to be renters. Still, support for a tax on homes sold for more than \$1.5 million rises 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?**



## Summary and Conclusions

So, what do we do with all of this? First, we take a breath and realize that we don't disagree on everything in Canada, as much as it might feel that way sometimes. Many of these stark debates are taking place between two groups on either end of the ideological spectrum. What this has led to in many cases is a fundamental doubling-down on the culture war as a means of maintaining relevance in the public conversation and generating funding from supporters.



This isn't limited to politics. [Philanthropic organizations](#), [media members](#) and [podcasters](#), too, have jumped into this seemingly perpetual quarrel at the extremes. Yet, importantly, the most common descriptions Canadians offer for the Culture Wars themselves are “exhausting” and “divisive.” This is a prominent view across the country and across Canadian Mindsets.

There are, of course, real divisions across many groups, and it's increasingly clear that we aren't going to cancel our way out of this problem. Even that issue, free speech, is a significant source of divergence for Canadians. Half say that going after public figures for controversial or offensive statements is suppressing free speech; half say it's a good way to hold those public figures accountable. Across our five identified mindsets, this is among the most divisive issues in the entire study.

These data and discussions can provide a roadmap to help us navigate thorny issues. They lead to one unmistakable conclusion: adding more nuance to our public conversations, rather than generalizing or reducing issues to sow societal discontent, is likely the only path forward for a rational nation.

The big remaining question is, will our leaders take it?

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