

'Generational fairness'? : Seven-in-ten Gen Z, Millennials say Trudeau's government not working in their interest

Concern over inflation cools, worry over the deficit rises; few see Trudeau best to handle top issues

April 25, 2024 – As the federal government looks to address “generation fairness” in its most recent budget, new data from the non-profit Angus Reid Institute finds most Canadians doubting it's working for any generation at all.

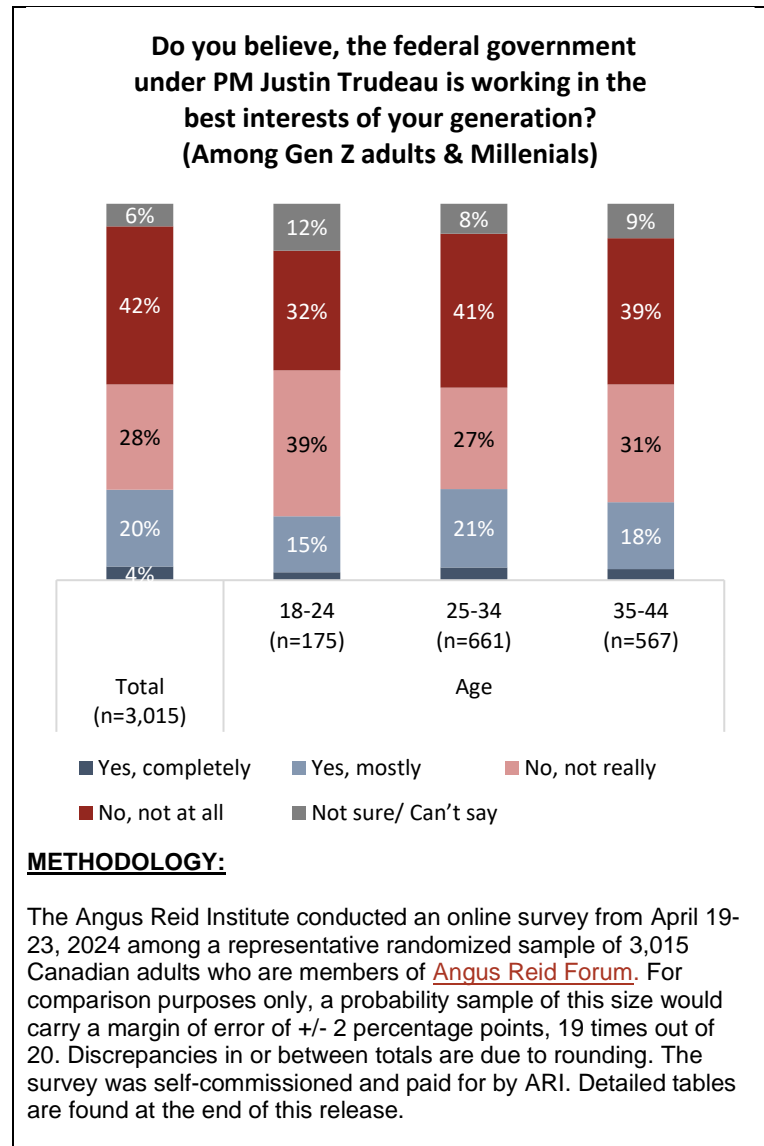
In the second part of a post-budget scan of Canadian public opinion, seven-in-ten Canadians of all generations say they don't believe the federal government under Prime Minister Justin Trudeau is working in the best interest of their age group. Vast majorities of Gen Z adults (18- to 24-year-olds) and Millennials (25- to 44-year-olds) also express doubt the Liberals have their best interest at heart, despite a volley of measures in the [recent budget](#) aimed at some of their top issues.

Related: [No Bounce: Liberals' hoped-for support surge in wake of under-40 targeted spending blitz has yet to materialize](#)

Canadians' top issues vary by generation but have been consistent for several years, with health care and affordability rating as high concerns since the end of the COVID-19 pandemic. On the latter, there has been some abatement. Half (51%) of Canadians believe cost of living to be a top issue, an 11-point drop from last year.

Both health care and affordability have been policy foci for the federal government in recent years. Still, when it comes to both issues, Canadians are more likely to say someone other than Trudeau is best to lead.

On health care, 28 per cent of Canadians say Conservative leader Pierre Poilievre is the best choice. Trudeau (14%) finishes behind NDP leader Jagmeet Singh (22%) and none of the above (22%) and is tied with “not sure” (14%). On housing affordability, Poilievre again leads (31%) and Trudeau (13%) trails



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“none of them” (24%), and Singh (19%) and ties “not sure” (13%). The Conservative leader also outpaces Singh and Trudeau combined when it comes to issues of the economy and handling the deficit.

Gen Z adults are more likely to say Poilievre (25%), Singh (23%) and none of them (21%) are the best choice for prime minister than Trudeau (10%), while Millennials believe Poilievre is the best choice at a plurality level.

More Key Findings:

- Twice as many Canadians (28%) select the deficit/government spending as a top issue as a year ago (14%).
- Two-in-five (43%) Canadians believe Poilievre is best to handle the deficit, outpacing Trudeau (13%) and Singh (8%) combined by a two-to-one ratio.
- When it comes to who is best to lead on various issues, Trudeau performs best on Indigenous issues and the environment. In both cases, one-in-five Canadians believe he is the best choice, and similar numbers choose Poilievre and Singh.

About ARI

*The **Angus Reid Institute (ARI)** was founded in October 2014 by pollster and sociologist, Dr. Angus Reid. ARI is a national, not-for-profit, non-partisan public opinion research foundation established to advance education by commissioning, conducting and disseminating to the public accessible and impartial statistical data, research and policy analysis on economics, political science, philanthropy, public administration, domestic and international affairs and other socio-economic issues of importance to Canada and its world.*

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Part One: The differing priorities of older and younger Canadians

Canada’s post-pandemic era has been defined by two pressing priorities: a health-care system in crisis dealing with myriad problems and rising cost of living squeezing Canadians’ budgets with rising rent and mortgage payments and steeper bills at the grocery store.

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Younger generations prioritize affordability, older generations health care

These dueling crises affect Canadians of different ages in different ways. Older Canadians, who are more likely to be homeowners and to have more fiscal security, are much more concerned about access to primary health care as they age. Inversely, younger Canadians, who are less likely to need the health-care system at the moment, express higher concerns over affordability, and whether or not they’ll be able to enter the housing market to enjoy the security later in life afforded older Canadians now.

Related:

- **[After a ‘decade of decline’ in health care, Canadians not convinced that money is enough to solve the crisis](#)**
- **[Fiscal Divide: Canada’s worst off expect more of the same ahead, the Thriving are most likely to expect even better](#)**

Notably, both health care and affordability have been the focus of the federal government in recent years. Last year, the federal government signed an agreement with the provinces providing a boost to the health transfer over the next decade. This month, the federal government took steps to address the cost of living with a package of programs, including numerous measures focused on rent and the housing market, [in its most recent budget](#).

Thinking of the various issues and challenges facing Canada, which ones do you personally care about the most?							
	Total (n=3,015)	Age					
		18-24 (n=175)	25-34 (n=661)	35-44 (n=567)	45-54 (n=443)	55-64 (n=424)	65+ (n=744)
Cost of Living / Inflation	51%	59%	58%	61%	54%	46%	38%
Health Care	46%	29%	35%	45%	42%	53%	59%
The Deficit / Government spending	28%	15%	20%	24%	33%	33%	35%
Housing affordability	28%	37%	38%	30%	20%	24%	20%
Environment / Climate Change	23%	27%	27%	24%	19%	19%	23%

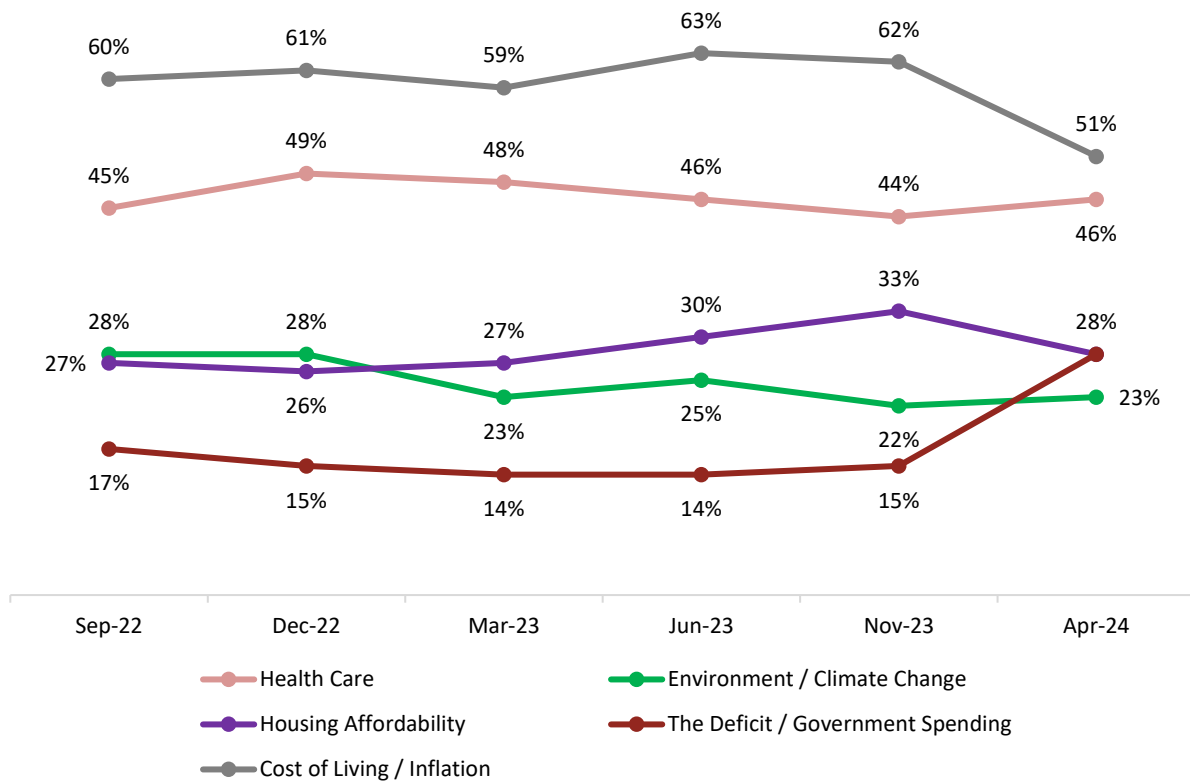
However, as the federal government looks to solve the issues the country is facing by directing increased spending towards them, it is doing so by borrowing money. The budget deficit is projected to be \$40 billion this year. Three-in-ten (28%) Canadians now select the government’s deficit spending as a top issue, double the number who said so last year.

A rise in concern with the deficit has coincided with a drop in worry over the rising cost of living. While still half of Canadians (51%) say it is their top issue, that is the fewest who have said so since the Angus Reid Institute first included it as an option in September 2022.

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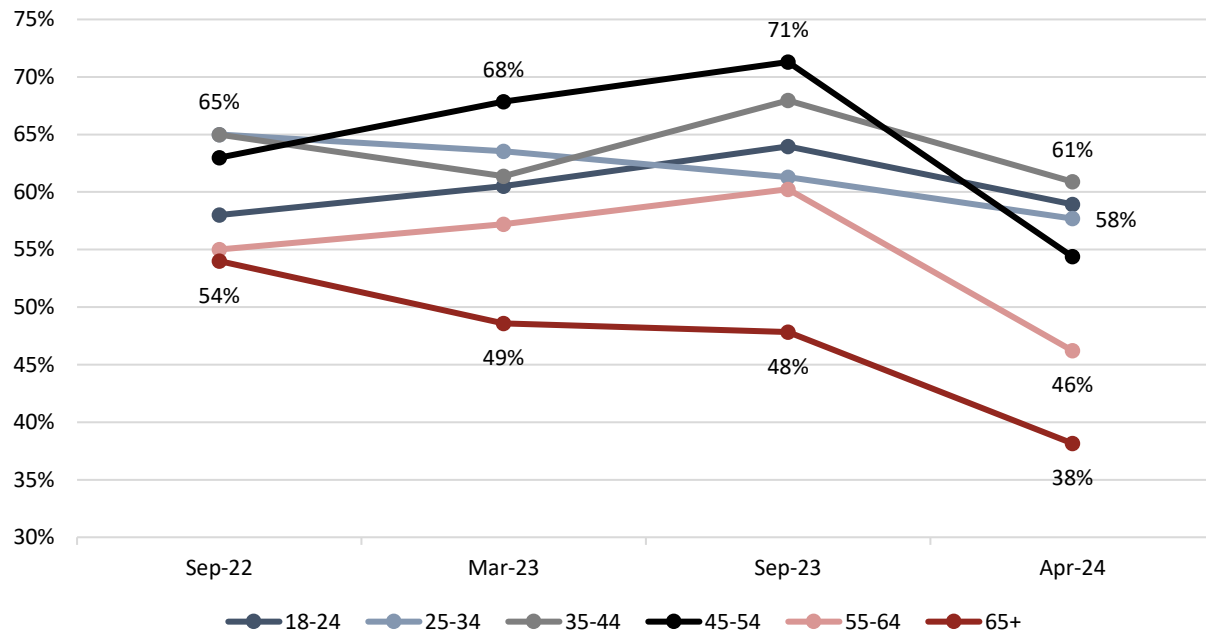
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**Top issues over time
(Top five issues shown)**



Cost of living has fallen as an issue across all age groups, but the drop is most pronounced among those older than 54, who are the only age group to not select inflation as a top concern at a majority level:

Percentage who select cost of living/inflation as a top issue over time by age



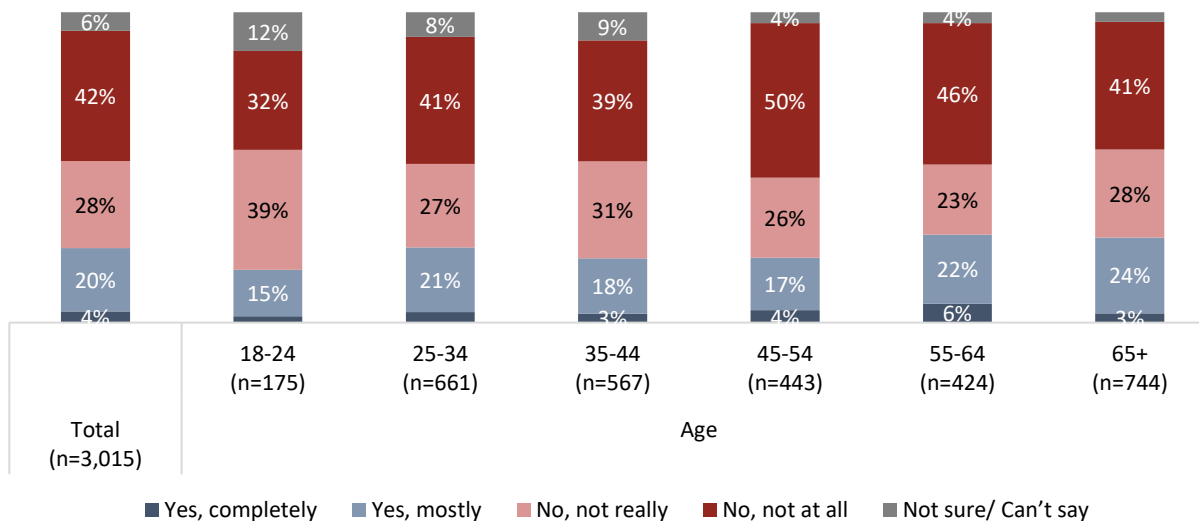
Across generations, Trudeau’s government not seen as working in their interests

The theme of the federal government’s budget is “[generational fairness](#)”, as it looks to address a housing market that has priced out many, especially younger Canadians. As the Liberal government embarks on this journey to make the country work better for Millennials and Gen Z, there are few that believe it’s working for their generation as it stands.

While older Canadians are the most likely to feel Trudeau and the federal government are working in their best interests, that is still a minority opinion. A majority of all generations say the opposite.

This is also true across the country, where at least two-thirds in every province do not believe the federal government is working toward the best interest of their generation ([see detailed tables](#)).

Do you believe, or not, that the federal government under Prime Minister Justin Trudeau is working in the best interests of your generation?



Part Two: Who is best to handle top issues of the day?

The lack of belief that the current federal government is serving their best interest evidently has many Canadians looking elsewhere as they consider their vote for the next federal election.

Related: [No Bounce: Liberals' hoped-for support surge in wake of under-40 targeted spending blitz has yet to materialize](#)

Poillievre seen as best on most issues

As Canadians assess the political landscape, they are more likely to see Trudeau's rivals in Conservative leader Pierre Poillievre or NDP leader Jagmeet Singh or both as better choices to handle the issues they care most about.

Trudeau performs best on the Indigenous and environment portfolios, where one-in-five say he is the best leader to handle them. But for both files, that places him in a statistical tie with Poillievre and Singh, and behind "none of them". On housing affordability, a focus of this year's budget, Trudeau (13%) trails Poillievre (31%) and Singh (19%). He also falls behind his two rivals on health care.

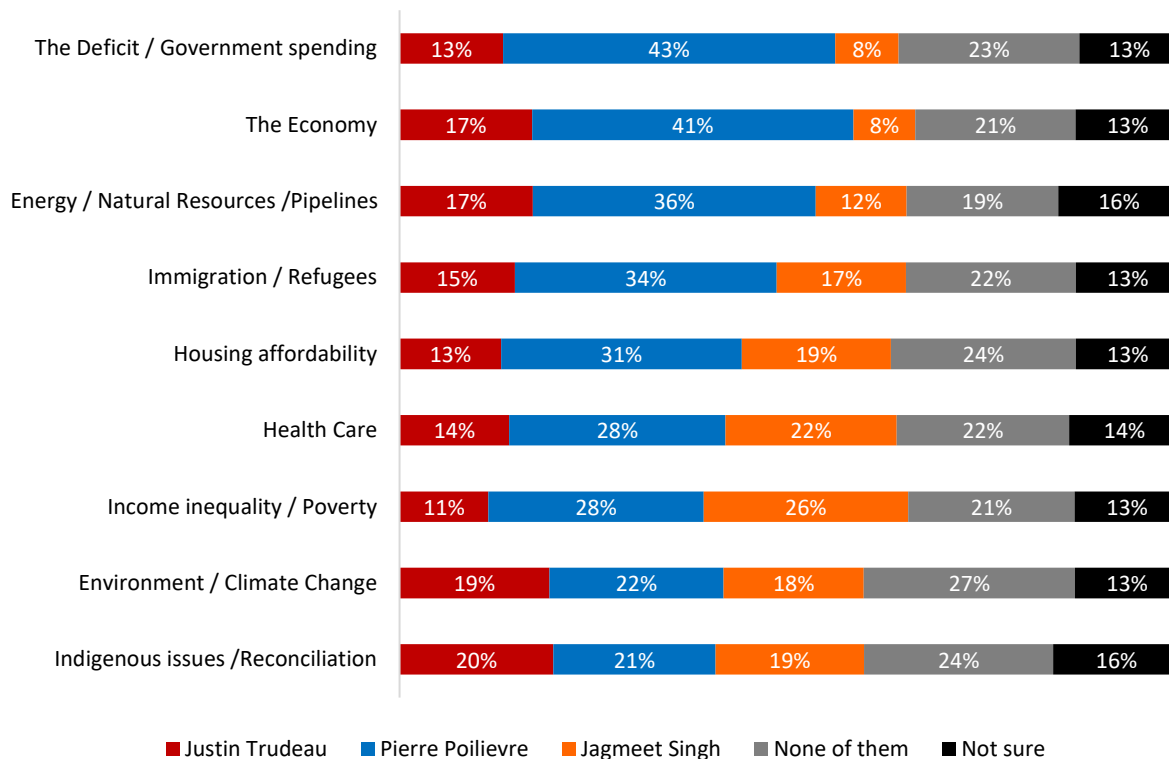
Poillievre outpaces Singh and Trudeau by a two-to-one ratio as the best choice to deal with the deficit and the economy:

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**Which of these leaders is best suited to deal with each of the following issues?
(All respondents, n=3,015)**



On housing affordability, Trudeau trails Singh and Poilievre among Gen Z, Millennials

These data were collected in the wake of the tabling of the budget, which included a multi-week rollout featuring announcements from Trudeau and his ministers across the country focusing on [housing affordability](#). However, the generations Trudeau namechecked when he announced the budget do not offer him a ringing endorsement when it comes to dealing with the housing crisis affecting much of the country.

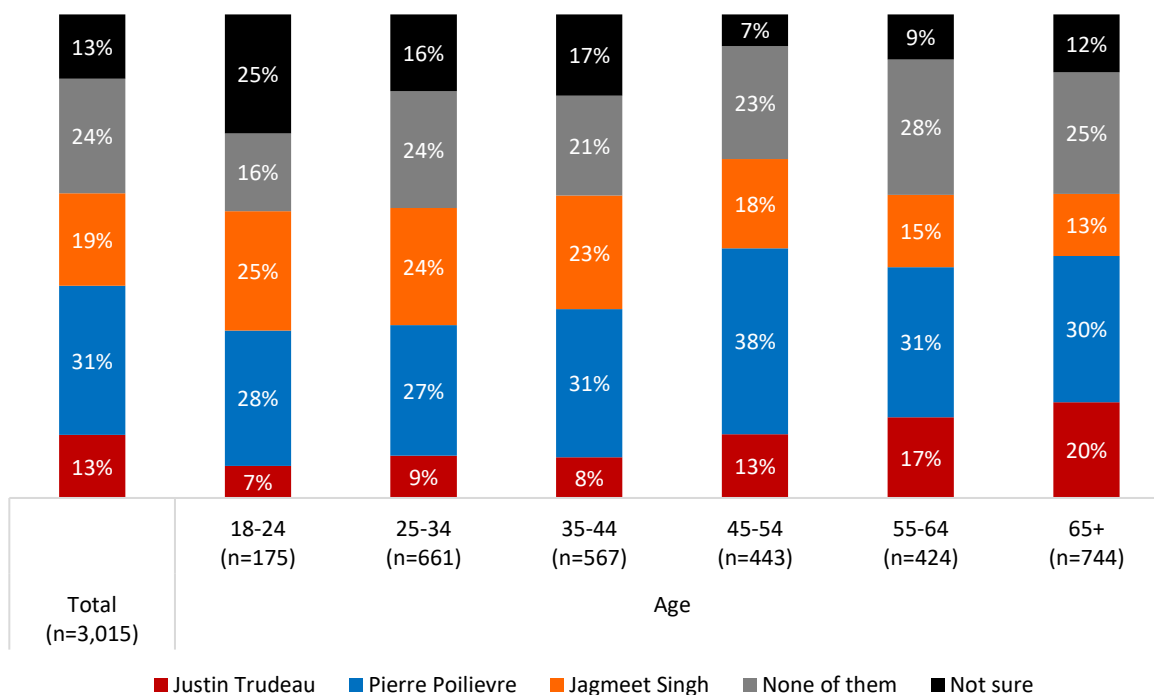
Fewer than one-in-ten Gen Z or Millennials say Trudeau is the best choice to lead on housing. Gen Z (18- to 24-year-olds) and younger Millennials (25- to 34-year-olds) are divided between Singh and Poilievre, while older Millennials (35- to 44-year-olds) lean Poilievre:

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Which of these leaders is best suited to deal with housing affordability?



Older Canadians see Poilievre as best choice to solve health care woes

Health care remains a pressing issue for many. It is a provincial jurisdiction, but the federal government does influence it through a funding agreement, which it increased last year after brokering a deal with the provinces. It also passed new policies to increase coverage of dental care, contraceptives and diabetes medication in recent months.

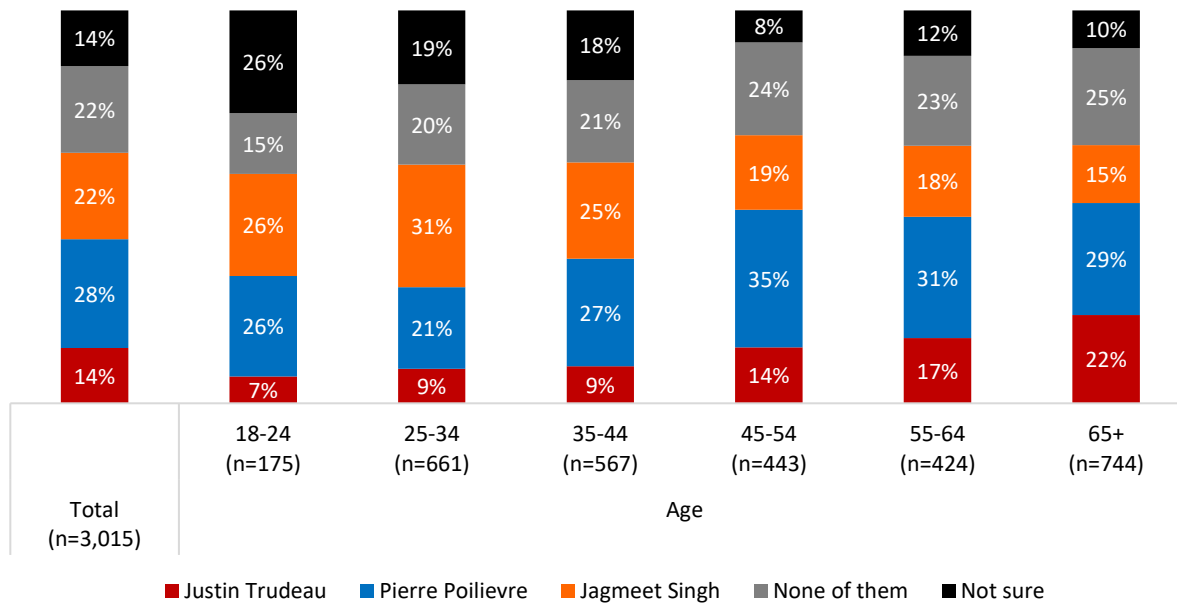
This has evidently inspired little confidence in Trudeau on this file. Canadians across generations are more likely to see either or both of Trudeau’s rivals as better options to lead on health care and are more likely to say no one is the best choice. Poilievre is the plurality choice for older Canadians, who view health care as the top issue the country is facing:

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Which of these leaders is best suited to deal with health care?

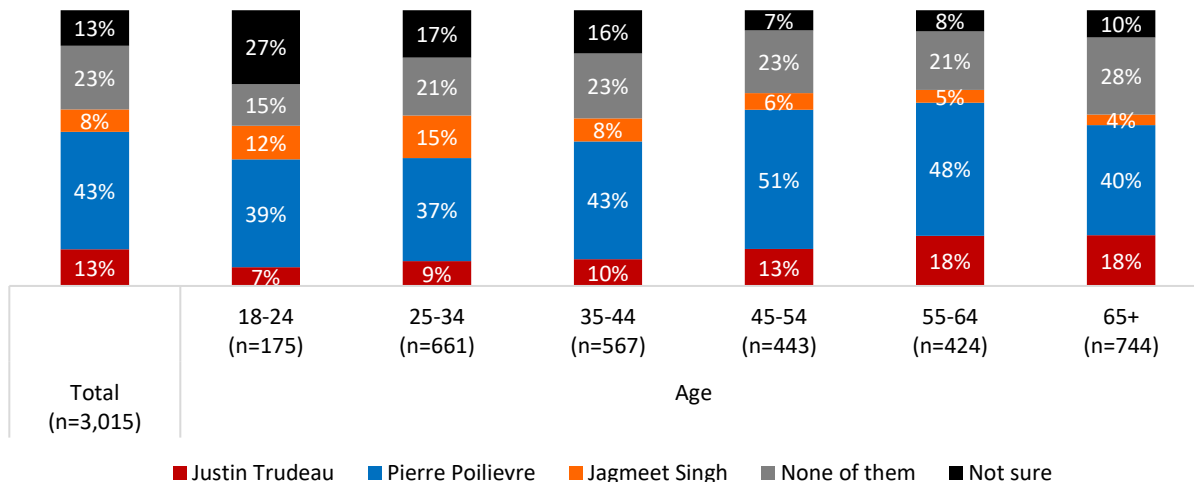


The federal government’s deficit spending has caused considerable consternation in recent years as the country deals with rising inflation. Bank of Canada governor Tiff Macklem warned Trudeau prior to the budget that any major spending increases “could start getting in the way of getting inflation back down to the target on the timeline we’ve laid out”. Inflation has cooled considerably from figures seen in 2022 and 2023 but is still at the high end of the BoC’s target range in March, when it was 2.9 per cent.

The federal government did not include a timeline in this most recent budget as to when it would completely reduce the deficit to zero. Instead, it claims it plans to slowly reduce it over the next five years from the current \$40 billion to a deficit of around \$20 billion in 2028-29.

Perhaps with this in mind, Trudeau is a distant second to Poilievre when it comes to which leader Canadians believe is best to deal with the deficit. At least 37 per cent of Canadians of all ages believe the CPC leader is the best choice on this front:

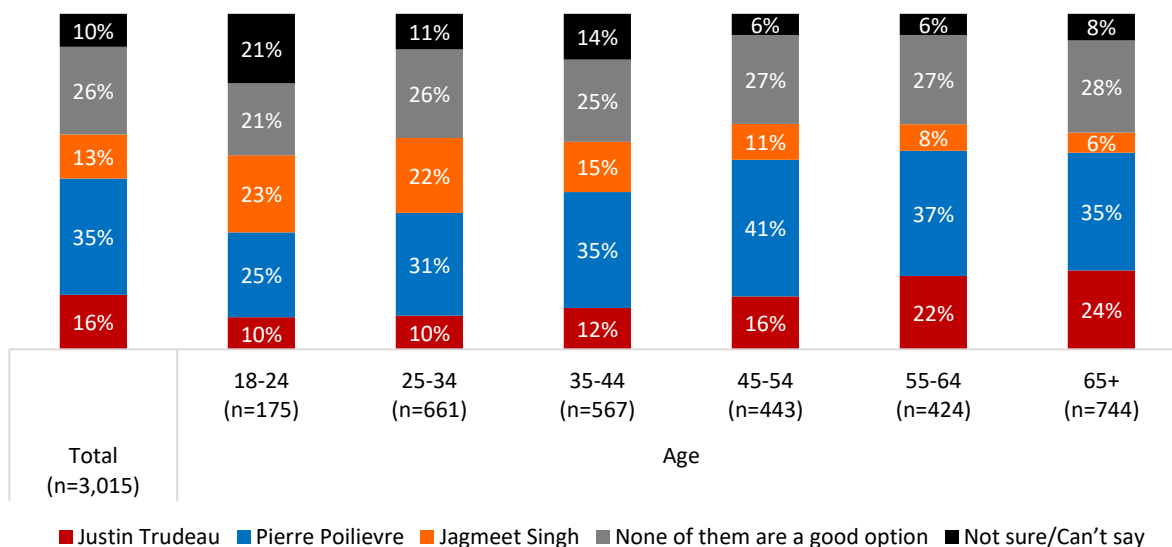
Which of these leaders is best suited to deal with the deficit/government spending?



Best PM? Gen Z split between Poilievre, Singh; Xers and Boomers lean Poilievre

There appears to be much work to do for Trudeau to win over Gen Z and Millennial voters even in the wake of a budget designed to address their concerns. Gen Z adults are more likely to say Poilievre (25%), Singh (23%), and no one (21%) is the best prime minister of the major party leaders than Trudeau (10%). Millennials lean Poilievre and are more likely to select Singh than Trudeau. Trudeau performs better among Gen Xers and Boomers, but still trails Poilievre in those cohorts.

And which of these leaders would make the best prime minister of Canada?



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