

CPC policy hypotheticals: Canadians see a balanced budget, longer jail time as 'good'; defunding CBC as 'bad'

Majority believe CPC has 'hidden agenda' it won't reveal until the party is in office

September 18, 2024 – The House of Commons returns from its summer break this week in a more precarious situation than it left, as the minority Liberals govern without the firm backstop of a supply and confidence agreement with the NDP. This has many looking ahead to a potential election in the coming months, and a potential CPC government given the [lopsided vote intention picture](#) in the party's favour.

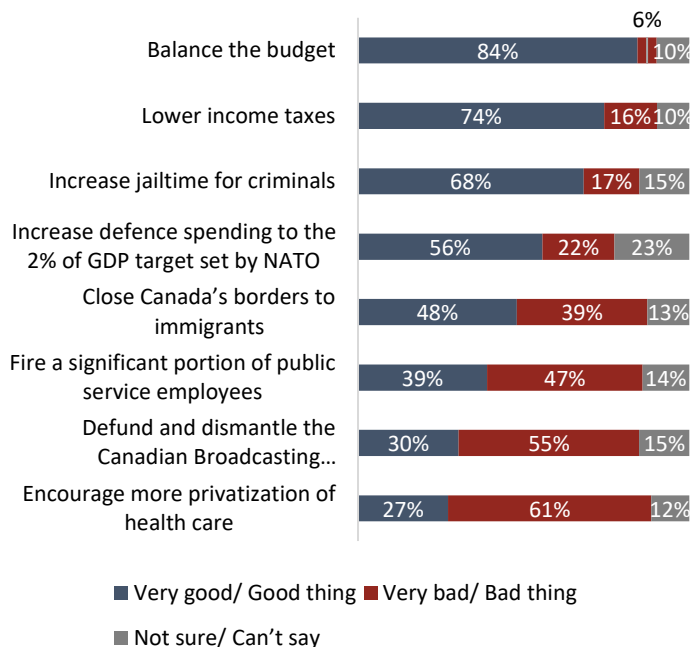
A new survey from the non-profit Angus Reid Institute asks Canadians to assess potential and hypothetical CPC policy addressed at some of the key ballot issues for the next federal election. Some – balancing the budget, lowering income taxes, increasing jail time for criminals, spending more money on defence – are viewed as overwhelming winners by Canadians. Others – the potential of further privatization of health care, defunding the CBC – are viewed by a majority as “bad things”.

These policies are presented to respondents in a mix of both real promises made by Pierre Poilievre since he became leader of the CPC, as well as hypotheticals beyond what the Conservatives have laid out so far.

Despite plenty of policies that will likely form the pillars of a campaign platform once an election is called – [“axe the tax”](#), [“jail not bail”](#), [“defund the CBC”](#) – other areas have remained relatively blank. How would a CPC government approach health care and reach the balanced budget it promises?

In the absence of these important policy proposals, there is evidently some apprehension among Canadians. Half (46%) say they are “fearful” of the CPC forming government, while fewer (35%) anticipate it with hope. A majority (54%) suspect Poilievre and the CPC have a “hidden agenda” that won't be revealed until after the party wins the elections.

Do you think it would be a good thing or a bad thing if the CPC formed government and did the following:
(All respondents, n=1,602)



METHODOLOGY:

The Angus Reid Institute conducted an online survey from Aug. 29 to Sept. 4, 2024 among a representative randomized sample of 1,602 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 +/- 2 percentage points, 19 times out of 20. Discrepancies in or between totals are due to rounding. The survey was self-commissioned and paid for by ARI. Detailed tables are found at the end of this release.

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There is also some doubt that a Poilievre-led government can balance the budget and lower income taxes as promised, even if most view them to be “good things”. More than two-in-five (45%) say neither will happen.

More Key Findings:

- Poilievre has said that a Conservative government would scale back on immigration but has not said to what level. As Canadians express [more concern over immigration](#), half (48%) believe it would be a “good thing” if Canada closed its borders to immigrants.
- Three-in-10 (29%) say a Conservative government would “absolutely” encourage more privatization of health care. Twice as many (61%) say it would be a “bad thing” if that were to happen.
- Two-thirds (68%) say it would be good for Canada to increase the jail time for criminals.

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: Poilievre's promises and perceived policies

As the Conservative Party of Canada has maintained [a 20-point lead in vote intention](#), there has been much commentary as to what leader Pierre Poilievre might do should the polling lead carry through the next election and lift his party into government.

Related: [Federal Politics: Concern over immigration quadruples over last 24 months](#)

While he has signalled he would repeal Liberal policies – the carbon tax, various bills regulating the internet – Poilievre has also [been criticized](#) for a lack of concrete plans otherwise.

To gauge what Canadians expect from a potential CPC government, the Angus Reid Institute presented respondents with a series of policies which included some real policy suggestions raised by Poilievre since he became leader as well as others that were more hypothetical and beyond anything suggested by Poilievre and the Conservatives.

For example, on immigration, Poilievre has said he would limit immigration by [tying it to the growth of the housing stock](#). This would scale back immigration but fall short of closing Canada's borders completely to immigrants.

Poilievre has signalled he would honour [last year's increase in federal health transfers](#), but has not offered much beyond that as to what to expect from a Conservative government under him when it comes to health care policies.

However, he has said [he would increase jail time for criminals by limiting bail](#), [balance the budget](#) and [lower income taxes](#).

On the CBC, [Poilievre has suggested he would keep the French-language Radio-Canada programming while defunding the English services](#). English respondents were asked if they believed a CPC government would defund and dismantle the CBC entirely, while French respondents were asked the same but for Radio-Canada ([see the questionnaire for details](#)).

Most see more jail time for criminals as 'good', defunding CBC as 'bad'

At least half of Canadians say that defunding the nation's public broadcast system would be bad for the country (54%) and three-in-five (61%) say that more privatization in health care would worsen an already difficult situation. While Poilievre has not indicated this is a direction he would choose for health care, it has been a path [well worn](#) by [provincial conservative governments](#) in recent years.

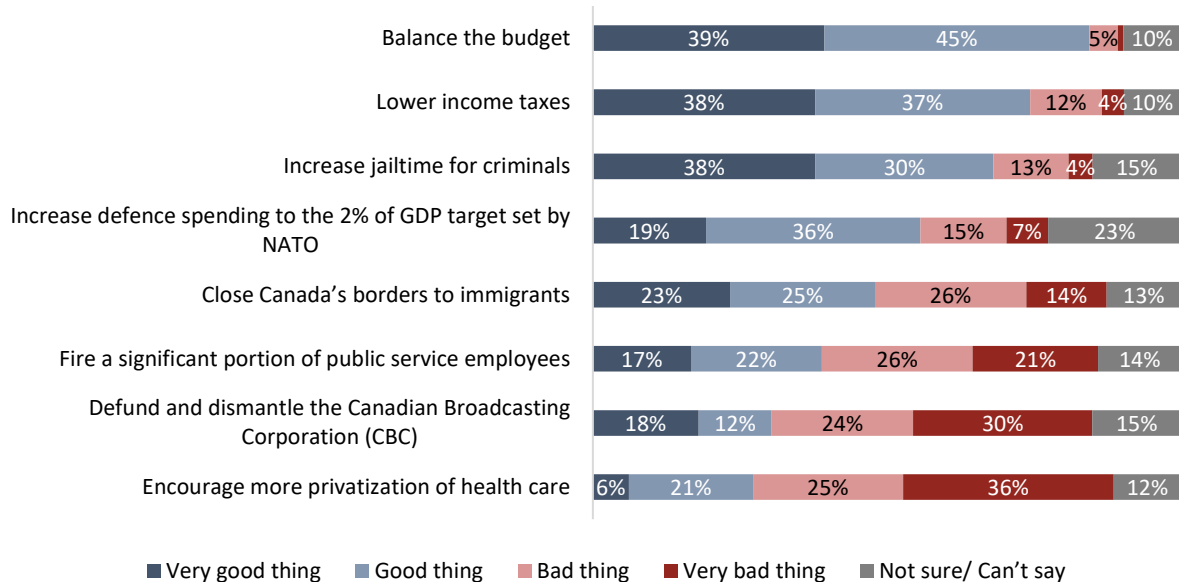
[As Canadians' concern over immigration has grown](#), they have become more supportive of limiting immigrants coming into the country. Half (48%) say closing Canada's borders to immigrants would be a 'good thing', though again this goes beyond what Poilievre has said a government [under him would do](#).

Other stated CPC policies are much more highly supported, however. Balancing the budget, something [not done in a decade](#), is overwhelmingly seen as a good thing, while lower taxation levels are also viewed positively. Increasing jail time for criminals would be welcomed by two-thirds (68%) of Canadians:

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**Do you think it would be a good thing or a bad thing if the CPC formed government and did the following:
(All respondents, n=1,602)**



As to which of these policy concepts are political winners, those who support the Conservatives already are in favour of all of them at a higher rate than others. That said, increasing sentencing length for criminals, increasing the defence budget to the two per cent of GDP NATO target, balancing the budget and lowering income taxes are all cross-partisan winners:

Do you think it would be a good thing or a bad thing if the CPC formed government and did the following: ('Good thing' minus 'bad thing' shown)					
	Total (n=1,602)	Federal Vote Intention (Decided and leaning voters)			
		CPC	Liberal	NDP	BQ
Balance the budget	+79	+94	+71	+60	+83
Lower income taxes	+58	+90	+43	+26	+39
Increase jail time for criminals	+51	+90	+25	+11	+41
Increase defence spending to the 2% of GDP target set by NATO	+34	+58	+40	+5	+33
Close Canada's borders to immigrants	+9	+59	-42	-43	+17
Fire a significant portion of public service employees	-8	+48	-53	-65	-9
Defund and dismantle the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC)	-24	+39	-77	-71	-50
Encourage more privatization of health care	-34	+17	-69	-76	-55

The breakdown between men and women continues to be notable and worth watching as the gears of the electoral cycle begin to grind into motion. Immigration in particular is an issue that divides men and women, as do, to a certain extent, defunding the CBC and reducing the public service. Age and gender dynamics will be a key storyteller in the months (or year, if the election date holds) to come.

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Do you think it would be a good thing or a bad thing if the CPC formed government and did the following: (‘Good thing’ minus ‘bad thing’ shown)							
	Total (n=1,602)	Male			Female		
		18-34 (n=217)	35-54 (n=263)	55+ (n=297)	18-34 (n=218)	35-54 (n=273)	55+ (n=327)
Balance the budget	+79	+69	+82	+89	+68	+76	+83
Lower income taxes	+58	+47	+60	+67	+56	+57	+59
Increase jail time for criminals	+51	+39	+58	+68	+36	+42	+58
Increase defence spending to the 2% of GDP target set by NATO	+34	+42	+36	+58	-2	+5	+54
Close Canada’s borders to immigrants	+9	+14	+22	+25	-8	-5	+1
Fire a significant portion of public service employees	-8	-11	-3	+18	-31	-28	-2
Defund and dismantle the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC)	-24	-24	-10	-9	-30	-39	-31
Encourage more privatization of health care	-34	-35	-21	-25	-44	-43	-37

Part Two: But which policies do Canadians expect a CPC government to implement?

Canadians most certain of more jail time, health care privatization, defunding the CBC

There is a difference between talk and action as campaign promises sometimes fall by the wayside once a party takes office. For the most part, there is uncertainty as to whether a Poilievre CPC government would enact many of the above policies. Canadians are most certain that a CPC government would encourage more health care privatization (29% say this will absolutely happen), increase jail time for criminals (27%) and defund the CBC (28%). One-quarter also say they believe it’s a certainty that Poilievre as prime minister would “fire a significant portion of public service employees” (25%) and “close Canada’s borders to immigrants” (23%), which have not been explicitly promised by Poilievre or the Conservatives.

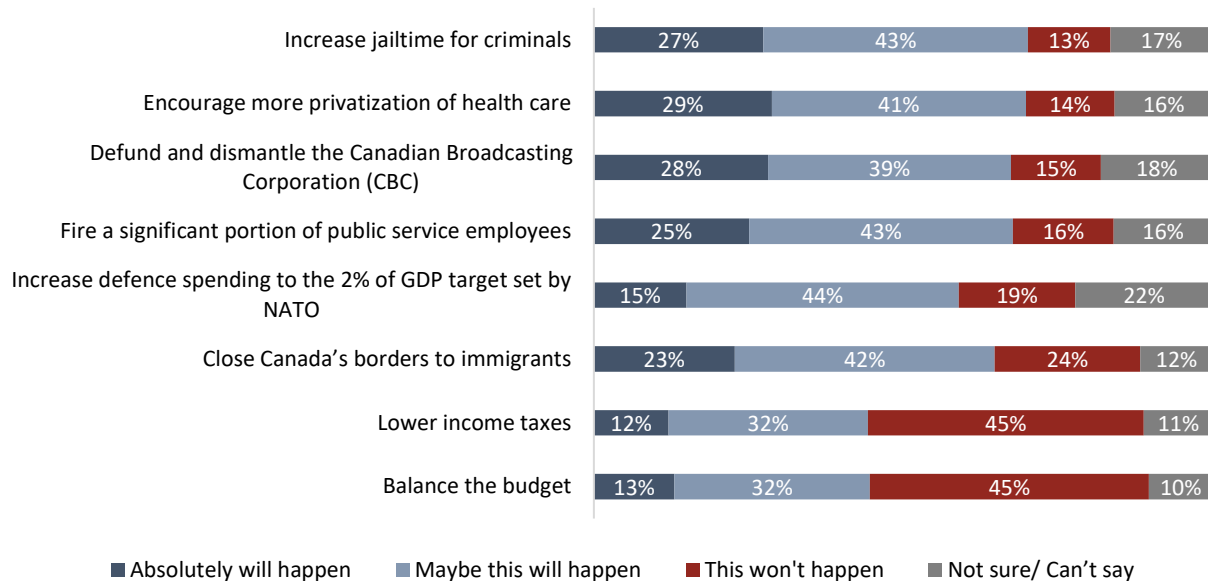
Canadians are most likely to doubt that a Poilievre-led government can lower income taxes (45% say this won’t happen) or balance the budget (45%):

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If Pierre Poilievre becomes prime minister and the Conservatives do win the next election and form government, what do you expect from him and his government?

(All respondents, n=1,602)



Opposition supporters doubt CPC will balance budget

On most matters, expectations are shared by similar numbers of CPC, Liberal, NDP and Bloc Québécois supporters. There is more doubt among likely Liberal and NDP voters that a future CPC government will live up to the two per cent GDP defence spending target, and even more skepticism from those groups of supporters that Poilievre as prime minister will balance the budget:

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Percentage who believe the following 'absolutely' or 'maybe will happen' if Pierre Poilievre and the CPC form government after the next election					
	Total (n=1,602)	Federal Vote Intention (Decided and leaning voters)			
		CPC	Liberal	NDP	BQ
Increase jail time for criminals	70%	84%	64%	65%	75%
Encourage more privatization of health care	70%	63%	84%	85%	66%
Defund and dismantle the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC)	67%	74%	71%	73%	64%
Fire a significant portion of public service employees	68%	73%	69%	74%	62%
Increase defence spending to the 2% of GDP target set by NATO	59%	74%	48%	51%	68%
Close Canada's borders to immigrants	65%	66%	64%	75%	69%
Lower income taxes	44%	71%	22%	33%	45%
Balance the budget	45%	75%	22%	21%	57%

Part Three: The 'fear factor'

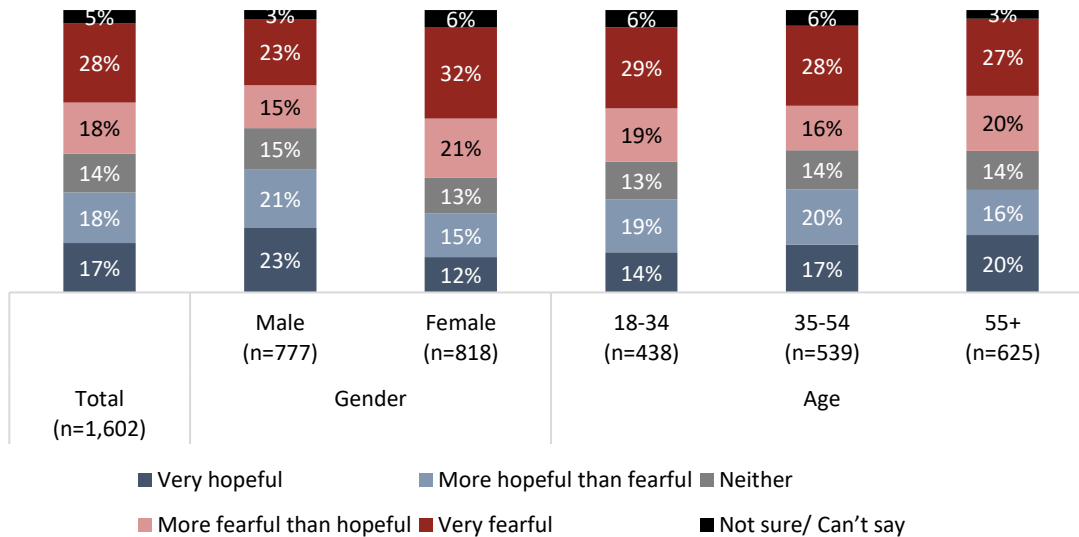
More say they're 'fearful' of CPC victory than 'hopeful'

The prospects of a Poilievre government, while tantalizing to some, are more likely to induce unease among Canadians, particularly women. Overall, approaching half (46%) of Canadians say the potential of a CPC government under Poilievre makes them afraid, while fewer (35%) are hopeful for that outcome. Women are more fearful (53%) than men (38%), who are more likely to express hope (44%):

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Thinking about the possibility of the Conservative Party led by Pierre Poilievre forming government after the next election, would you say that makes you more hopeful, more fearful or neither?



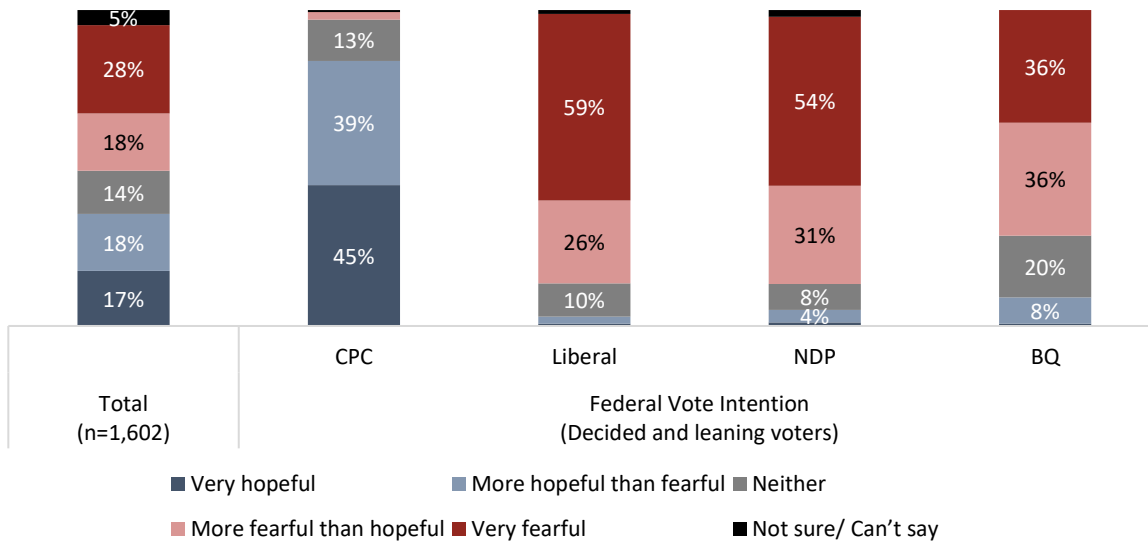
CPC supporters optimistic for victory of their party

The political divide is evident. The bulk of the fear is coming from the current supporters of opposition parties, while most of the hope is coming from current CPC supporters, who also represent two-in-five Canadians currently:

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Majority say the CPC 'has a hidden agenda'

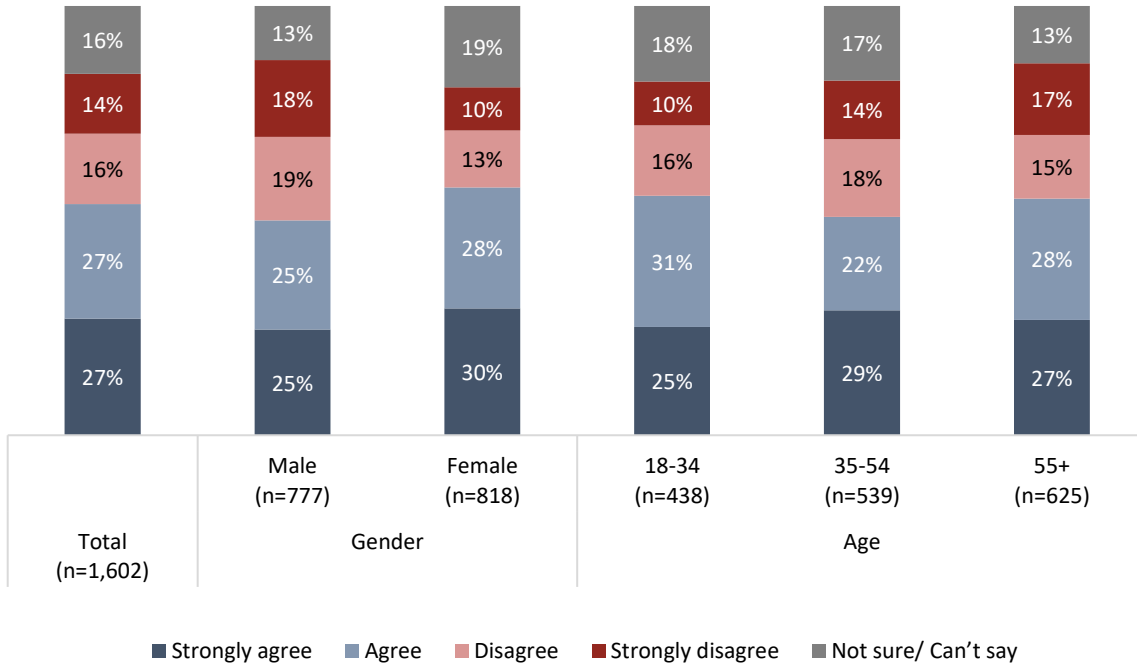
This fear from Canadians may be built on the uncertainty of which direction a Poilievre government might take. There are evidently many Canadians who believe Poilievre and the Conservatives have more of a plan for if they form government than they are letting on. A majority (54%) say the CPC have “a hidden agenda they won’t reveal until after they win the election”.

Approaching three-in-five (58%) women believe the Conservatives have plans they are not revealing until they potentially win the next election. Half of men (50%) agree, but they are more likely to disagree (37%):

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Agree vs. disagree -
"Pierre Poilievre and the Conservatives have a hidden agenda they won't
reveal until after they win the election"



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

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