

## Canadians say business and political corruption is common, but few trust government to address issue

*Half believe corruption in housing, essential goods like groceries, plays 'a big role' in rising cost of living*

**November 27, 2024** – As Canada's federal government offers a tax holiday to help Canadians deal with the high cost of living over the holiday season, many say there is another culprit playing "a big role" in raising the price of essential goods like groceries and housing – corruption.

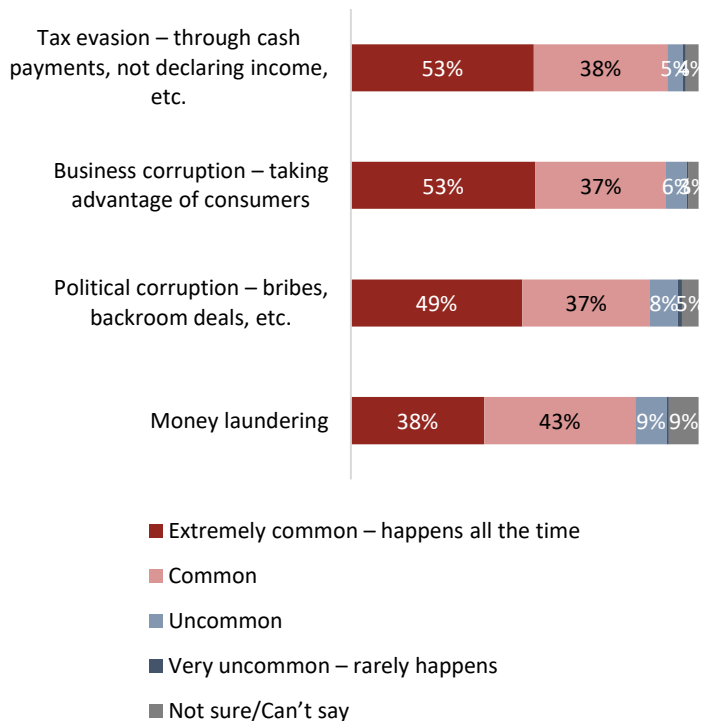
New data from the Angus Reid Institute in partnership with the [Mindset Social Innovation Foundation](#) and the [World Refugee & Migration Council](#) finds most Canadians believe corruption among businesses – for example taking "under the table" payments or being involved in money laundering – and in politics – e.g. backroom deals or bribes – is widespread and half (49%) believe it has a significant part in the rising cost of living.

Nearly all believe tax evasion (91%) and businesses taking advantage of customers through overcharging, misrepresenting their goods or services, or otherwise (91%) are common occurrences in their province, while more than four-in-five say backroom political deals (86%) and money laundering (81%) occur regularly.

This comes as Canadians are four-times as likely (79%) to believe the level of corruption in the country has increased in the past three years than stayed the same (21%). Just one-in-100 (1%) see less corruption around them.

Meanwhile, there is little confidence in Canadian businesses to prevent illegal behaviour such as bribery or money laundering by their employees. One-quarter (27%) say they are very confident or confident in businesses and even fewer that the federal government (19%) and their respective provincial (19%) governments are equipped to combat corruption in Canadian businesses.

### How commonly do you think each of the following occurs in your own province? (All respondents, n=1,615)



#### **METHODOLOGY:**

The Angus Reid Institute in partnership with the Mindset Social Innovation Foundation and the World Refugee & Migration Council conducted an online survey from Nov. 14-19, 2024 among a representative randomized sample of 1,615 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 jointly by ARI and Mindset. Detailed tables are found at the end of this release.

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This has left Canadians broadly agreeing (88%) with the perception that the people responsible for corruption are rarely brought to justice.

### More Key Findings:

- The construction (59%), real estate (49%) and insurance (34%) industries are viewed as most susceptible to corruption by Canadians. Regionally, real estate (65%) is viewed as most vulnerable to corruption in B.C., while construction (79%) is overwhelmingly the top choice in Quebec.
- Two-in-five (42%) say they have had dealings with a business in their community they suspected was connected to the underground economy or experienced illegal behaviour from a local business such as money laundering or tax avoidance. Most (73%) didn't report it, with the top reason being that they didn't believe it would make a difference.
- Two-thirds (65%) of Canadians say they have "no trust" in politicians to act according to the rules that govern them, placing them at the bottom of the list of professions surveyed, below car salespeople (53%), real estate agents (26%) and insurance brokers (24%).

### 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.*

### About Mindset Social Innovation Foundation

*Mindset Social Innovation Foundation (Mindset) was founded in 2006 by philanthropist and advocate Alison Lawton to advance human rights and foster social innovation by supporting research and initiatives that promote transparency, accountability, and ethical governance. By partnering with organizations to scale impactful solutions, Mindset empowers communities and businesses to build trust and combat challenges such as corruption through collaboration and education.*

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### Part One: Exposure to corruption and shady dealings

Canada is viewed as one of the least corrupt countries in the world by [Transparency International’s](#) Corruption Perceptions Index. However, [Canada’s score has fallen over the past decade](#), as major scandals such as the [SNC Lavalin affair](#) eroded faith in the federal government. Canada ranks below the global average in the [annual Edelman Trust Barometer](#), which measures trust in institutions in a country including non-governmental organizations, businesses, government and media.

**[Related: Corruption in Canada: Seven-in-ten support an international court to fight global corruption](#)**

The spotlight has also been put on Canada as a major destination for money laundering by [criminal](#) and [terrorist organizations](#). TD Bank, the second largest bank in Canada by total assets, recently plead guilty to [conspiracy to commit money laundering and was fined \\$3 billion US](#) by American regulators.

Despite recent strides in some provinces and by the federal government to address money laundering in Canada, financial crime has been described by anti-corruption advocates as [a “free for all” in Canada where enforcement has been lacking](#).

### **Half say corruption in Canada has ‘increased a lot’ in last three years**

The perception among Canadians is that the level of corruption in Canada has been rising in recent years. Half (49%) say it has increased “a lot” while three-in-ten (30%) believe it has increased a little.

While there is certainly a political element to this view – Canadians who voted Conservative in 2021 are nearly twice as likely to believe corruption has “increased a lot” in the past three years than any other group of past voters – majorities of all partisan groups believe corruption is on the rise in the country in the post-pandemic period.

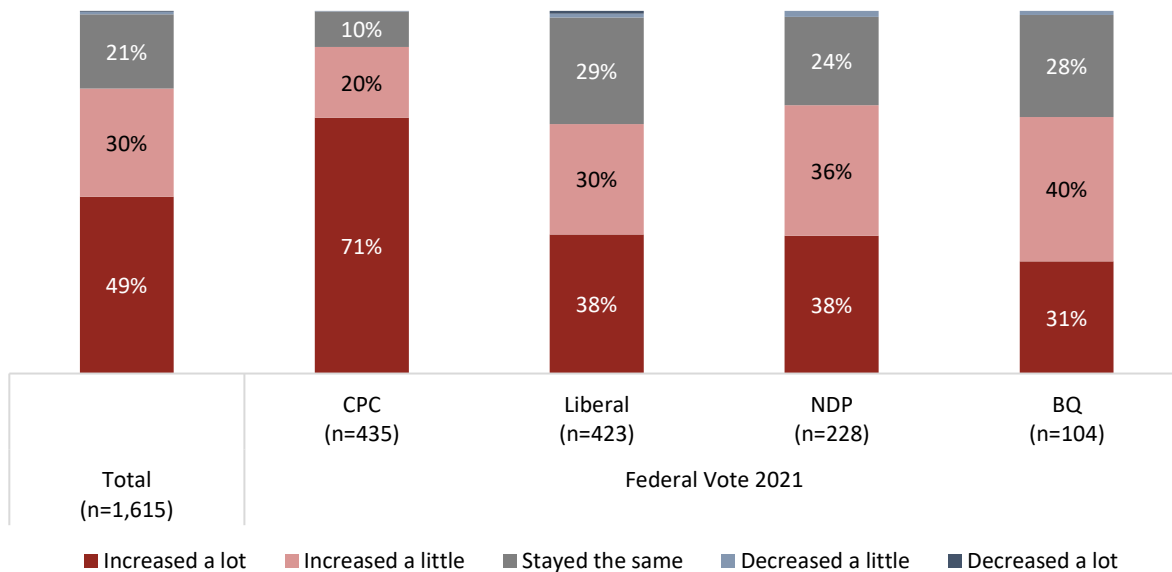
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Across the country, at least seven-in-ten (70%) in every province believe corruption has increased in recent years in Canada. Those in Saskatchewan (58%) and Ontario (55%) are the most likely to believe it has increased “a lot” ([see detailed tables](#)).

**In the past three years, would you say that the level of corruption in Canada has...?**



**Nearly all say business and political corruption are common in their province**

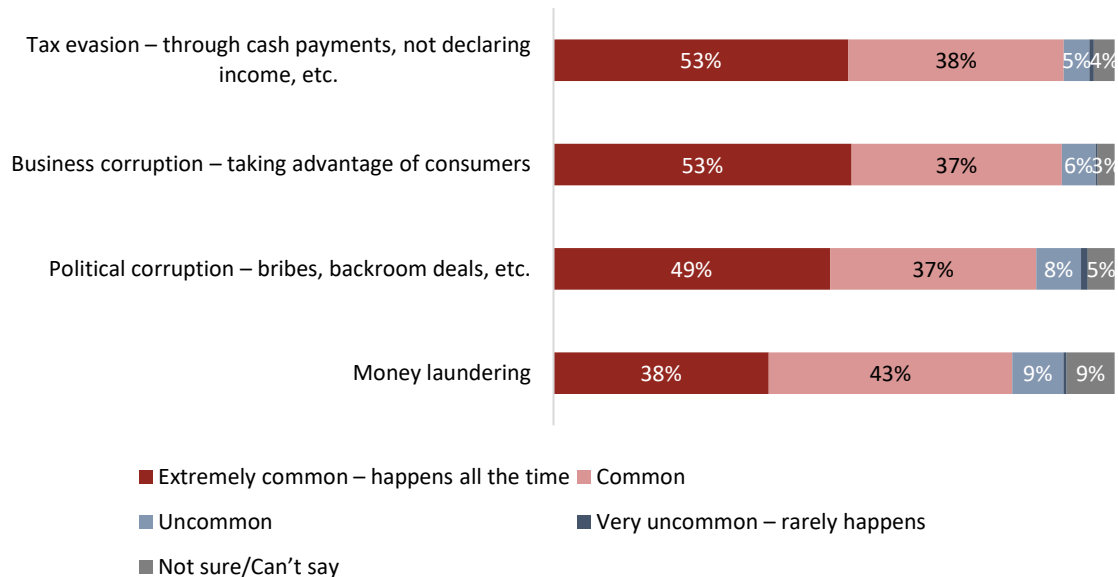
Canadians believe various types of corruption are widespread. At least four-in-five believe money laundering (82%), backroom political deals (86%), business corruption (91%) and tax evasion (91%) are common occurrences in their province. Majorities believe the latter two are “extremely common”.

The Canada Revenue Agency has had [tools added to its arsenal](#) to catch tax cheats in recent years, but in 2022 it was estimated the federal government is losing about [\\$23 billion per year](#) in uncollected taxes. In 2021, it was reported that the CRA audits had resulted in no prosecutions or convictions of ultra wealthy Canadians suspected of tax evasion, [despite a 3,000 per cent increase in spending](#) on a program to keep tabs on high net-worth individuals.

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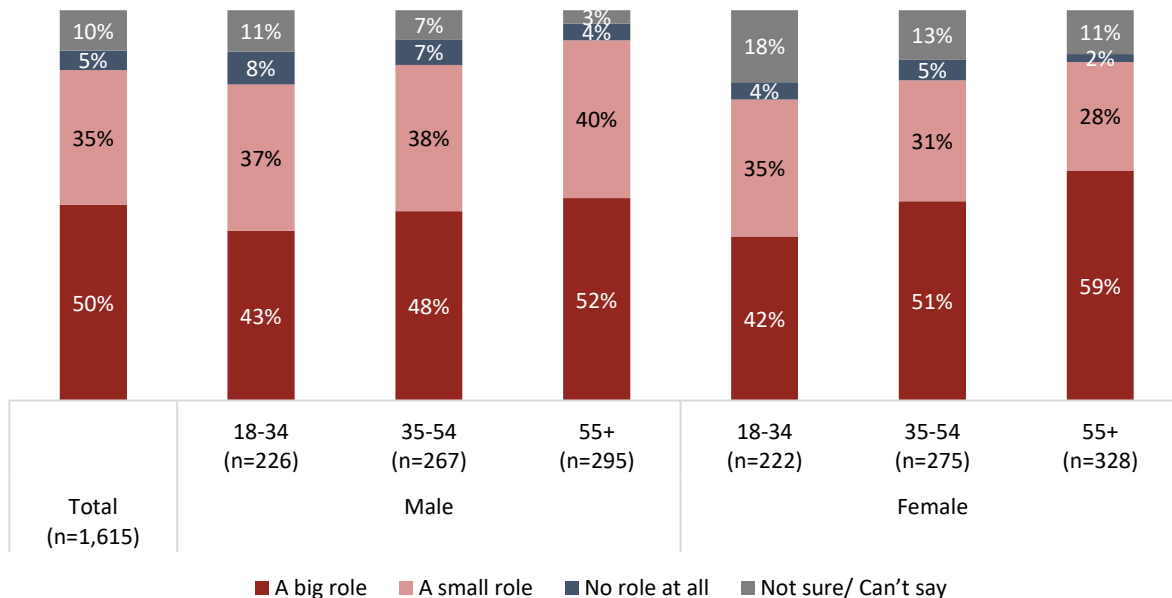
**How commonly do you think each of the following occurs in your own province?  
(All respondents, n=1,615)**



**Half say corruption plays ‘big role’ in rising cost of living**

The last few years have been difficult for Canadians as inflation has made essentials such as groceries and rent more expensive. And Canadians believe the corruption they see as common around them is also having an impact on this rising cost of living. Half (50%) believe illegal activities play “a big role” in the rising costs of housing and food in their community, while one-third (35%) believe it plays a role but a minor one. Few (5%) believe corruption plays no role at all in the high cost of housing, groceries and other essential goods:

**How much of a role do you think illegal or questionable activities play in the rising costs of housing, food, or other essential goods in your community?**



**Part Two: Personal experiences**

At the more local level, one-quarter (23%) of Canadians believe there are “quite a few” businesses in their community who are engaged in suspicious or illegal activities. One-third (33%) say there are at least one or two businesses near them engaged in activity such as money laundering or tax avoidance, while one-in-seven (14%) say they don’t believe there are any businesses in their community doing this.

Those in B.C. (28%), Ontario (25%) and Quebec (26%) are more likely than those elsewhere to believe there are “quite a few” businesses in their community engaged in suspicious or illegal activities ([see detailed tables](#)).

**Two-in-five say they’ve dealt with a suspicious business**

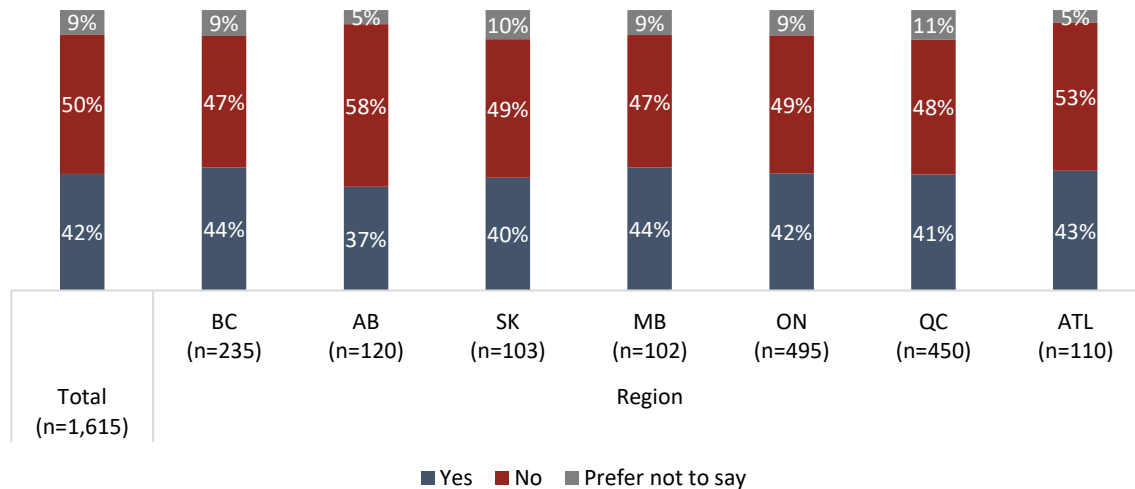
Many Canadians – two-in-five (42%) – suspect a business they’ve had dealings with was connected to the underground economy or experienced corrupt practice from the business themselves. This experience is most common in B.C. (44%), Manitoba (44%) and Atlantic Canada (43%), but approaching two-in-five in each province in the country have had a similar experience:

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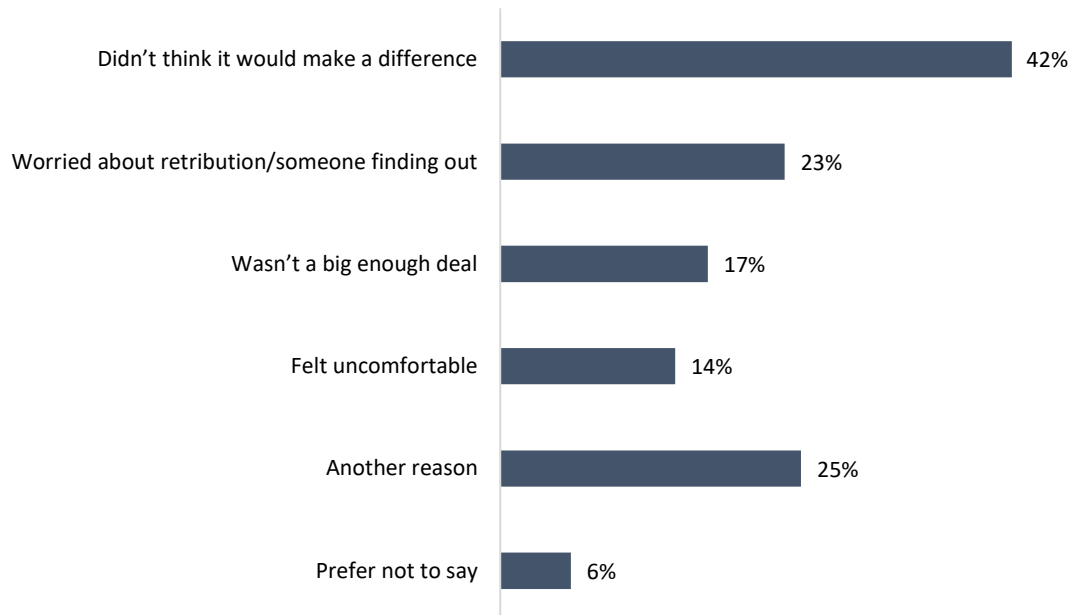
**Have you ever suspected a business or organization you were dealing with was somehow connected to the underground economy or personally experienced illegal or corrupt practice from a business or organization?**



**Most don't report suspicious interactions**

What is perhaps most notable is that the vast majority (73%, [see detailed tables](#)) of those who have experienced this have not reported this suspicious behaviour, which many feel is having damaging impacts in their communities. The top reason (42%) for this is that they didn't feel it would make any difference, reflecting a lack of confidence in enforcement mechanisms. Another core concern is evidently fear of retribution; one-quarter (23%) say this was a reason they chose not to report.

**Reasons for not reporting a suspicious business  
(Among those who encountered one and did not report it, n=492)**



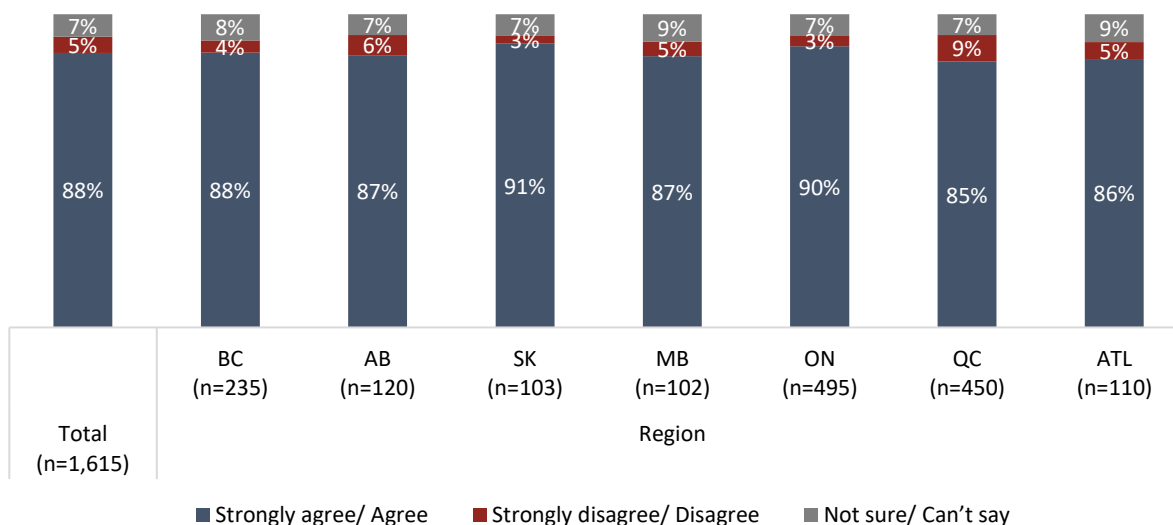
Among those who have not had dealings with a suspicious business, a divide is evident over level of comfort in reporting a hypothetical illegal act to police. Nearing half (46%) said they would be comfortable reporting, while close to the same number would not be (39%, [see detailed tables](#)).

**Nearly all believe those responsible for corruption get away with it**

There is a broad sense among the public, perhaps buoyed by the lack of willingness to report suspicious activities among those who have experienced it, that corruption in Canada pays. Only a handful of Canadians – approximately six per cent – feel that those who are responsible for corruption don't get away with it, while the vast majority (88%) say that they do:



**Agree vs. disagree -  
"The people who are responsible for corruption usually get away with it"**



**Part Three: Trust and confidence in professions, industries, government**

Broadening the scope of trust and legitimacy in Canadian professions and institutions, the Angus Reid Institute and Mindset asked Canadians which key professions in society they feel are trustworthy when it comes to following the standards, laws, and regulations governing their professions.

**Two-thirds say they have 'no trust' in politicians to follow rules**

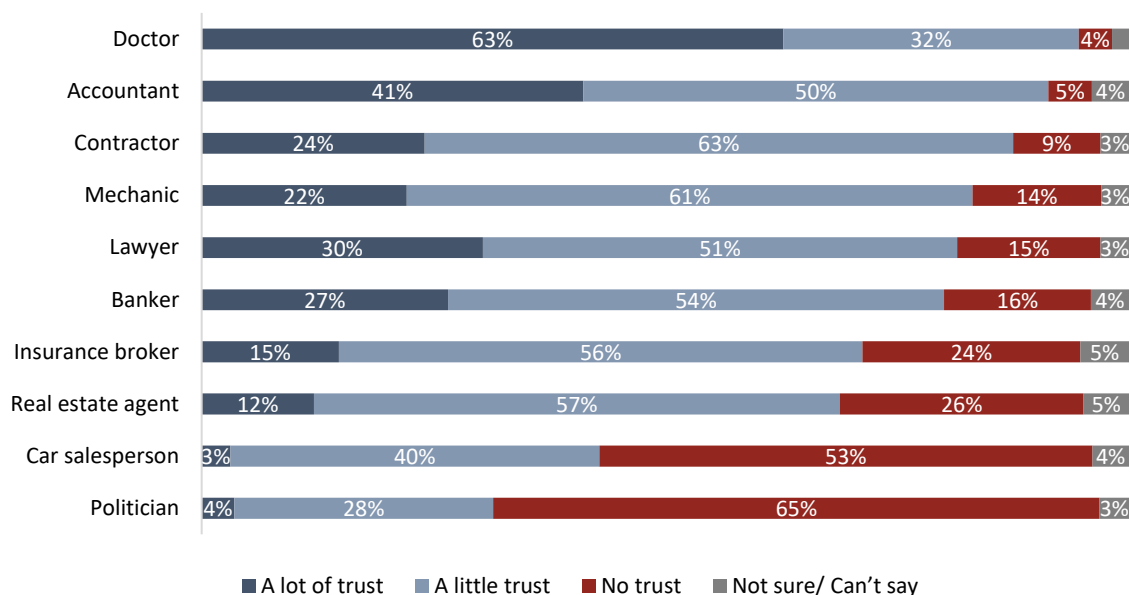
Foremost on the trust scale are doctors, for whom three-in-five Canadians (63%) show a lot of trust and (32%) offer a little. Accountants are the only other group for which two-in-five or more Canadians show a lot of trust (41%). Mistrust begins to show itself further down the list with insurance brokers and real estate agents, professions for which one-quarter have no trust, and reaches a low point among politicians. Two-thirds (65%) say they have no trust in that latter profession. This, perhaps unsurprising at a time when Canada's main federal party leaders are at their least popular point in 50 years of tracking.

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**Do you place a lot, a little, or no trust in the average person working these jobs to act according to the laws and regulations governing their profession?**

(All respondents, n=1,615)



**Construction and real estate viewed as industries most vulnerable to corruption**

Putting politics aside, the industries most vulnerable to corruption according to Canadians are two massive and related ones – construction and real estate. Example in the construction industry centre around [collusion and bribery](#), wherein municipal bids can be manipulated for certain firms, or seemingly competitive processes can be corrupted. Tax evasion, too, has been a subject of investigation in recent years, with some analyses suggesting it [costs Canadians billions each year](#).

In real estate, [tens of billions of dollars](#) are thought to be laundered every year, Both of these aforementioned industries are seen as susceptible to corruption by at least half in Canada (59% construction, 49% real estate, [see detailed tables](#)).

Real estate and construction dominate the list of top corruption concerns in most of the country. In British Columbia, two-thirds (65%) choose real estate. That province was the subject of a New York Times feature [discussing the issue in 2022](#). In Quebec, long thought to be the [construction corruption epicentre](#) of the country, a staggering four-in-five choose that industry (79%):

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Top five industries Canadians believe are susceptible to corruption by region						
Region						
BC (n=235)	AB (n=120)	SK (n=103)	MB (n=102)	ON (n=495)	QC (n=450)	ATL (n=110)
Real estate 65%	Real estate 43%	Real estate 49%	Construction 60%	Construction 60%	Construction 79%	Real estate 47%
Construction 43%	Insurance 42%	Construction 46%	Real estate 52%	Real estate 47%	Real estate 47%	Construction 43%
Banking 35%	Construction 42%	Insurance 36%	Transport/ warehousing 31%	Insurance 41%	Banking 28%	Insurance 41%
Resource extraction 35%	Resource extraction 35%	Transport/ warehousing 29%	Resource extraction 31%	Banking 32%	Transport/ warehousing 26%	Banking 38%
Insurance 27%	Banking 31%	Resource extraction 28%	Insurance 27%	Transport/ warehousing 30%	Resource extraction 24%	Transport/ warehousing 26%

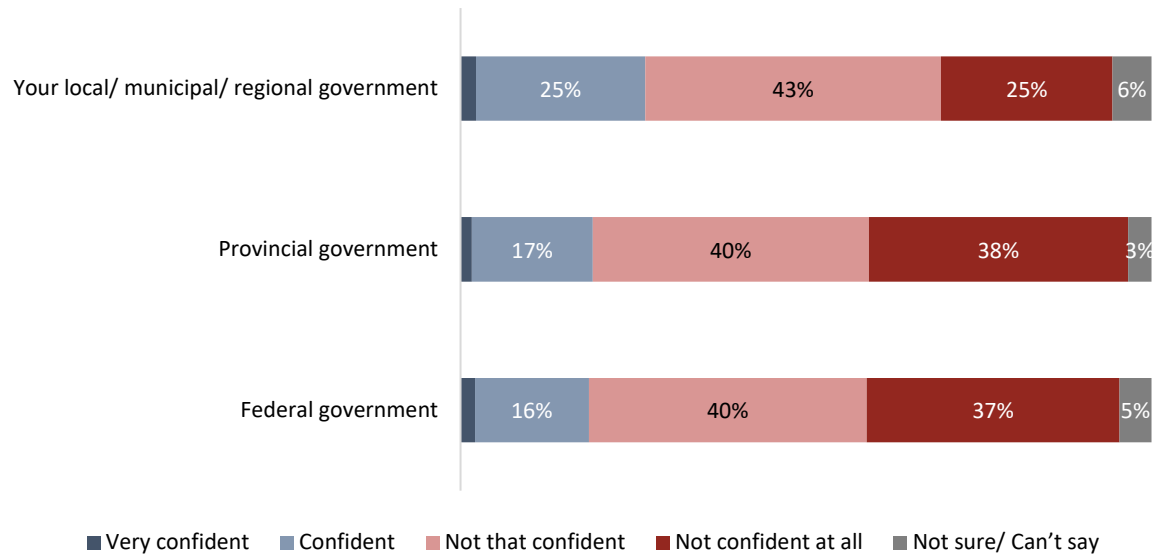
### Little confidence in either business or government to address corruption

While efforts [have ramped up](#) in recent years to take on corruption, there is little confidence at any level of government that these will be particularly effective. At least two-thirds of Canadians lack confidence across local, provincial, and federal governments. Most (80%) believe the federal government needs to invest more resources in fighting corruption ([see detailed tables](#)).

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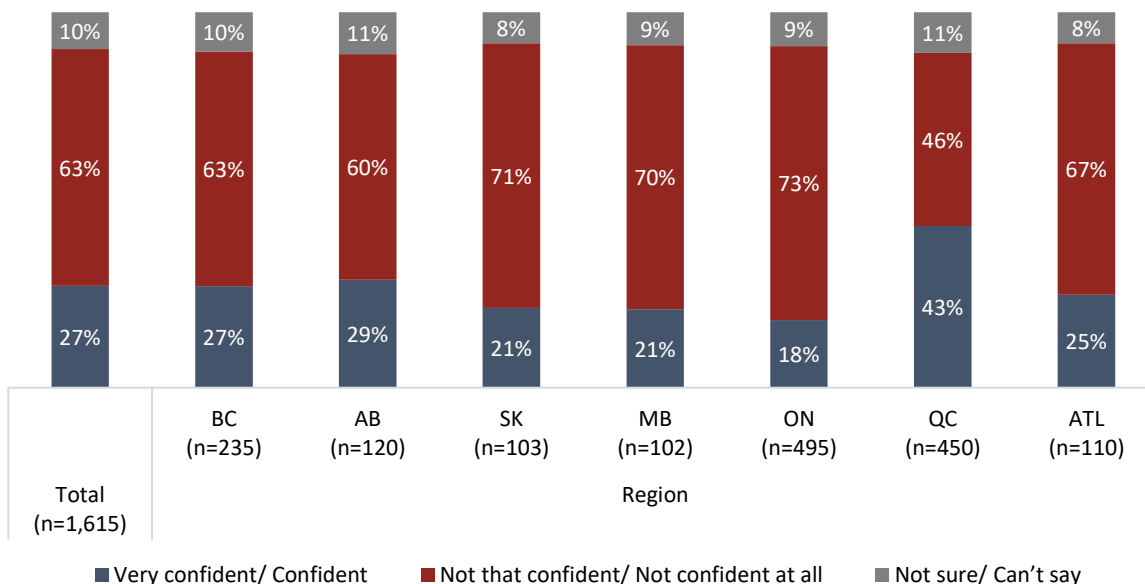
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**Are you confident or not in the following when it comes to fighting corruption in Canadian businesses?  
(All respondents, n=1,615)**



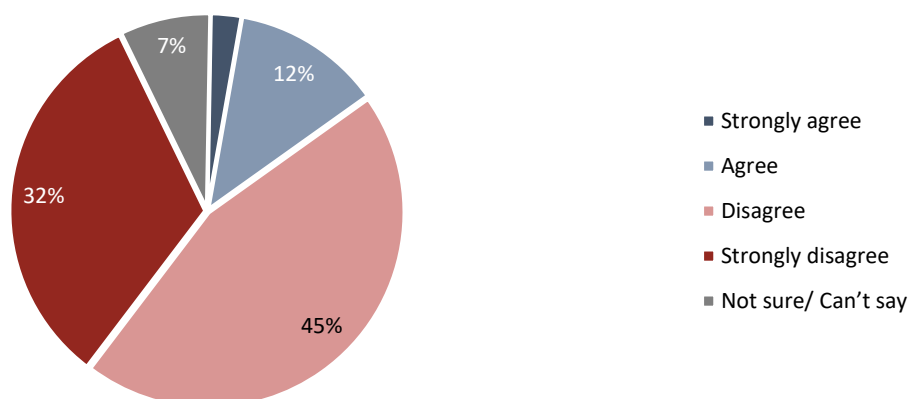
When these efforts are left to businesses, confidence is similarly low. Approximately one-quarter of Canadians feel that businesses are taking the necessary steps across these industries to ensure their employees and senior level management are acting in a legal manner.

**How confident are you that Canadian businesses are taking the necessary steps to prevent illegal behaviour by their employees and senior managers?**



With this lack of confidence there appears to be a desire among the public to take enforcement out of the hands of businesses and hand regulation over to a third party. Just 15 per cent of Canadians say that businesses can be trusted to self-regulate, while three-quarters (77%) disagree:

**Agree vs. disagree -  
"Businesses can be trusted to self-regulate and deal with corruption on their own"**



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