

## Election 45: Carney preferred on top issues; Canadians divided on spend vs. cut; concern over foreign interference

*Canadians divided 51/49 on preference for spending on social programs vs. budget balancing cuts*

**April 2, 2025** – The candidates are crisscrossing the country sharing their plans for [housing affordability](#), dealing with [President Donald Trump](#), economic growth, and other top issues. New data from the non-profit Angus Reid Institute shows that thus far in the campaign, the top issues favour Mark Carney and the Liberals.

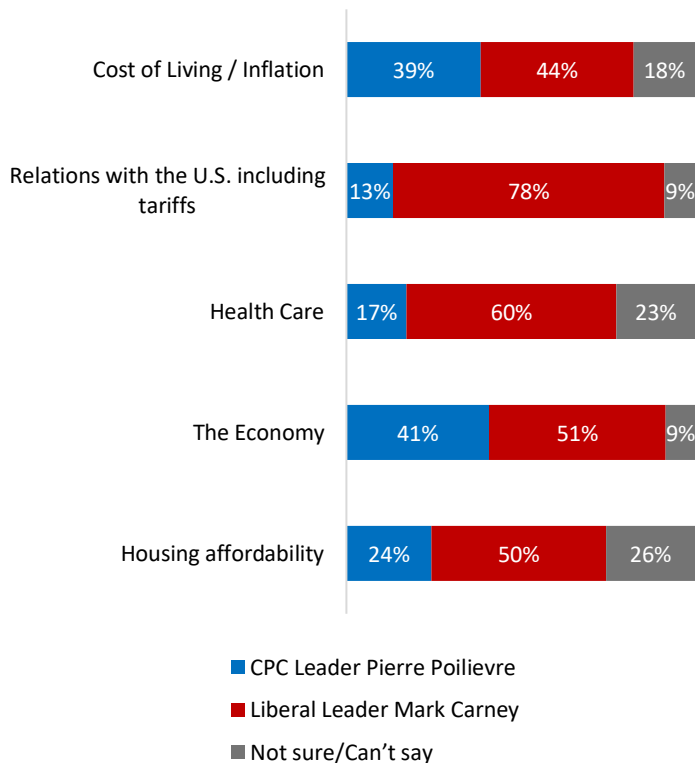
In a faceoff with Conservative Party leader Pierre Poilievre, Mark Carney holds an advantage on each of the five top issues as chosen by Canadians. His advantage ranges from marginal – five points over Poilievre on the cost of living and inflation, ten points on handling the economy – to massive – 65 points on handling U.S. relations and 43 points on health care.

While concrete details trickle out, Canadians are divided about one core economic philosophy – cut or spend.

Half of the population say that the federal government should focus on improving social programs even if it means more deficit spending (51%) while half say the feds should seek to balance the budget, even if it means cuts to said programs (49%).

What is clear in this debate is that Canadians are less interested in cutting recently established programs under Justin Trudeau's government (with support and pressure from the NDP). Seven-in-10 Canadians say they would keep both the pharmacare (69%) and dentalcare (69%) programs implemented in 2024.

### Which of these two leaders is best to handle... (Among those who selected it as a top issue - top 5 issues shown)



### METHODOLOGY:

The Angus Reid Institute conducted an online survey from March 28-31, 2025 among a representative randomized sample of 2,131 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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## More Key Findings:

- Asked about foreign interference in this federal election, 53 per cent say this is a major problem, while three-in-10 say it's a problem, but a minor one (30%). Majorities of Liberal and Conservative voters say it's a major issue.
- Seven-in-10 Canadians say that all federal party leaders should receive the appropriate security clearance to be able to read relevant materials related to foreign interference.
- Asked what the government should be focusing on economically, the proportion of those choosing "controlling inflation" is 30 points higher than it was in 2015 (63% vs 33%). There has been a corresponding drop in preference for a focus on "fair taxation" (42% to 27%) and other priorities.
- Asked about the previous Liberal government's social program spending (more than \$85 billion over 10 years) 58 per cent of Canadians say it was worth it and Canadians are better off, while 24 per cent disagree.

## 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: Who's trusted on top election issues?

Today has been labeled "[Liberation Day](#)" in the United States, as tariffs on global goods are set to go into effect, potentially [destabilizing the global economy](#). Canadians have been [watching closely](#) since the saga began in February, and choose both the cost of living and U.S. tariffs as the top two issues facing Canada currently, as the federal election campaign rolls along. The cost of living appears to be a non-partisan concern, while tariffs and the U.S. relationship are considered much less of a worry by Conservative Party voters than others.

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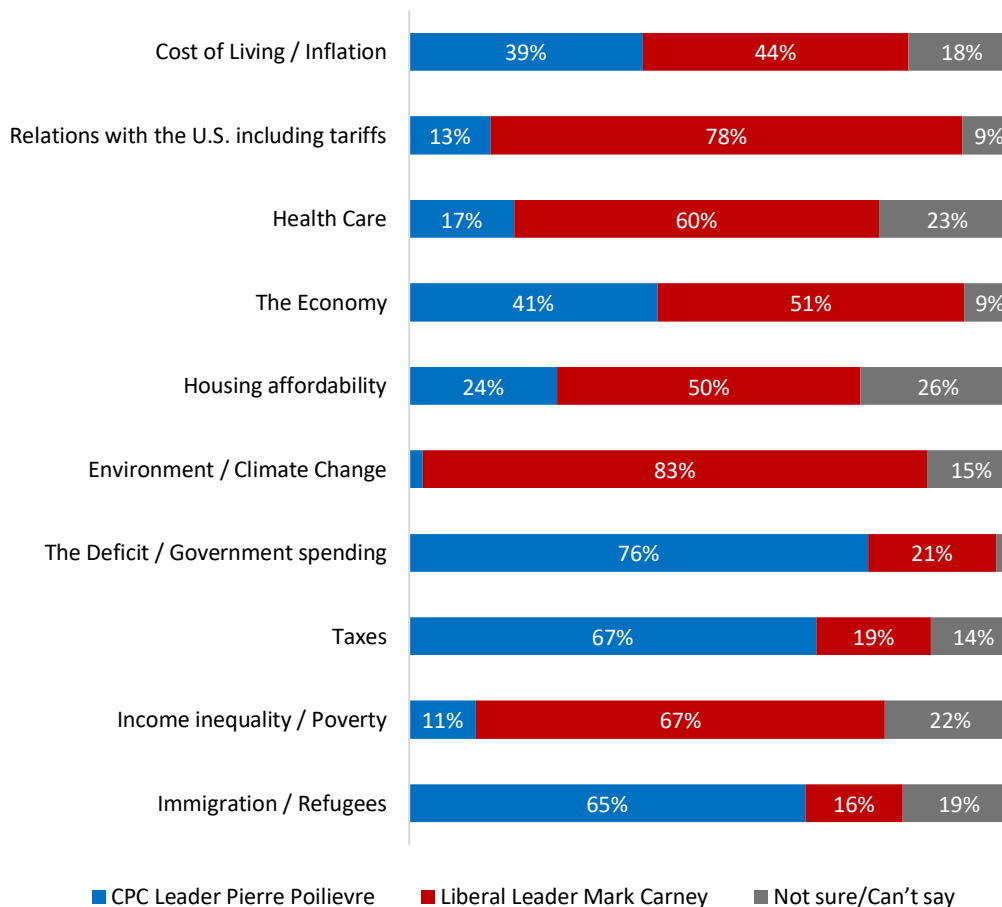
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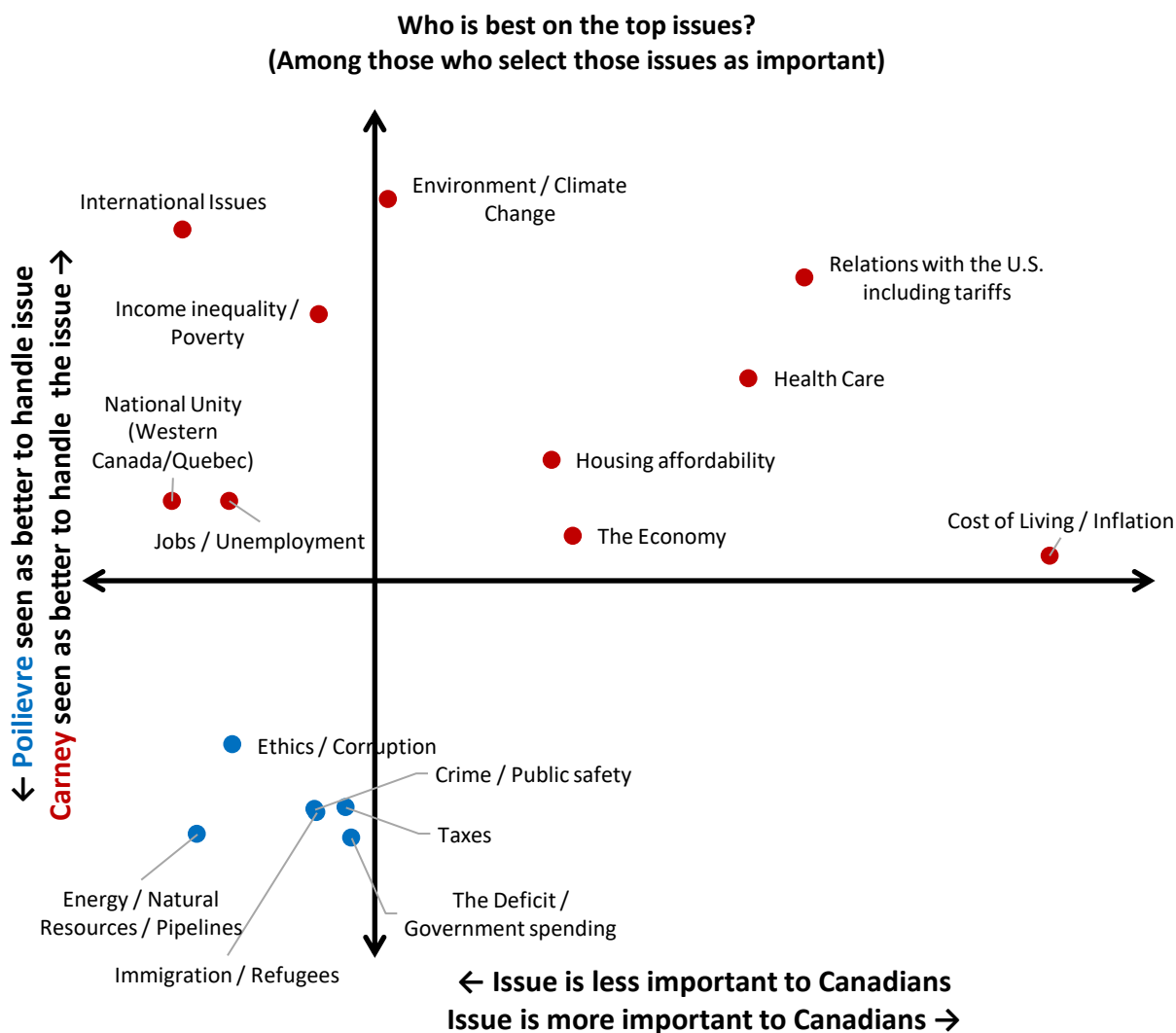
Canadians' top issues by vote intention (Up to three chosen)				
Total (n=2,400)	Federal vote intention (Decided and leaning voters)			
	CPC	Liberal	NDP	BQ
Cost of Living/ Inflation 50%	Cost of Living/ Inflation 54%	US/Tariffs 55%	Cost of Living/ Inflation 60%	Cost of Living/ Inflation 45%
US/Tariffs 38%	Economy 36%	Cost of Living/ Inflation 44%	Health Care 41%	US/Tariffs 43%
Health Care 35%	The Deficit/spending 30%	Health Care 43%	Housing Affordability 37%	Health Care 32%
Economy 26%	Taxes 26%	Housing Affordability 27%	Environment/ Climate Change 34%	Environment/ Climate Change 32%
Housing Affordability 25%	Immigration/ Refugees 22%	Economy 24%	US/Tariffs 28%	Housing Affordability 28%

The current landscape on top issues appears to favour the Liberal Party and leader Mark Carney. Among the top six issues chosen by Canadians, Carney is widely seen as the better leader to handle each. Importantly, however, on that top issue of the cost of living and inflation, the divide is just five points:

**Which of these two leaders is best to handle...  
(Among those who selected it as a top issue - top 10 issues shown)**



Plotting these issues by level of importance among Canadians and the gap between the two leaders on each, one can see the relative strength of Carney. Those issues for which Poilievre is viewed as best are those important to a much smaller proportion of the population ([see detailed tables](#)):

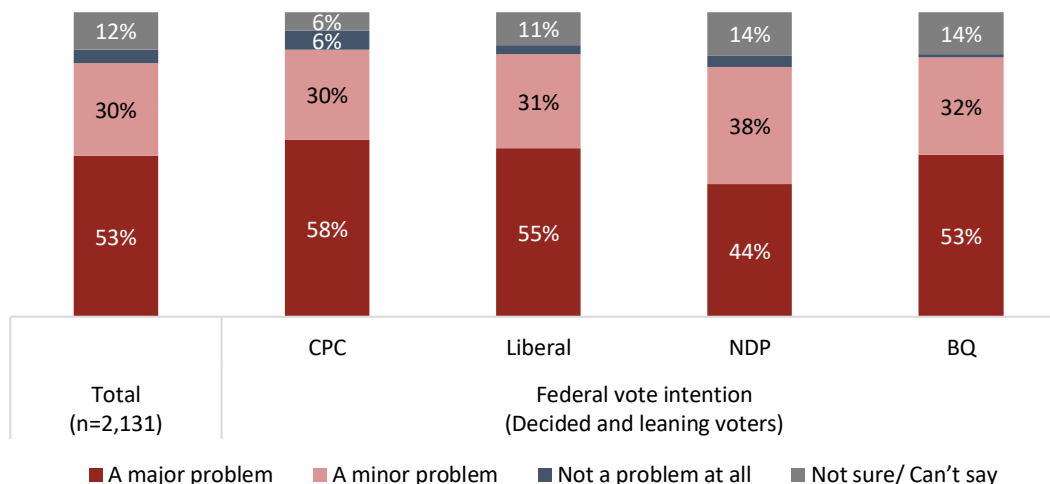


## Part Two: Concern over foreign interference

The subject of foreign interference in Canadian elections has jumped to the fore in this campaign. A [Globe and Mail report](#) published allegations that individuals associated with the Indian government had contributed to and helped to organize support for Pierre Poilievre's 2022 Conservative party leadership bid. This compounds concerns reported in June by the National Security and Intelligence Committee of Parliamentarians, which reported a number of [threats posed by foreign states](#) and the [inadequacy of the federal government response](#) in recent years. The Canadians Security Intelligence Service said in March that election interference from [both India and China should be expected](#).

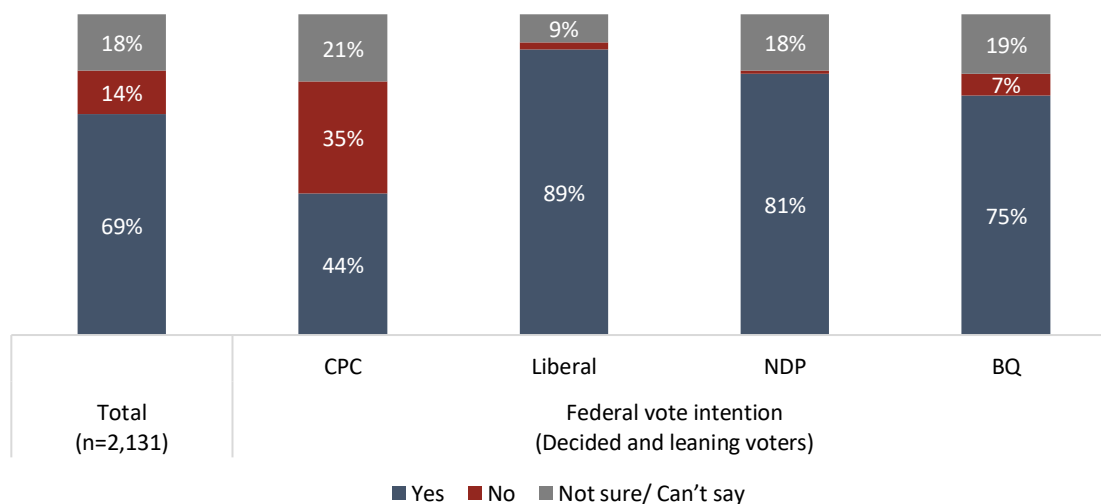
Asked whether they feel foreign interference is a problem to deal with in the current election, half of Canadians say it's a major one (53%) while three-in-ten (30%) say it's a more minor concern:

**In your opinion, how much of a problem, if at all, do you believe foreign interference is in this current federal election?**



Poilievre has resisted calls to receive the security clearance necessary to read classified materials related to these events and concerns. The Conservative leader contends that this would prevent him from speaking freely about these issues, while Liberal leader and Prime Minister Mark Carney has called his decision irresponsible. ARI asked Canadians whether all federal leaders should receive this security clearance to read the NSICOP reporting, without mentioning any of the leaders' names, and finds seven-in-10 saying this should happen. Notably, a plurality of CPC voters agree (44%):

**In your opinion, should all the federal leaders receive security clearance and read the report, or not?**



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### Part Three: Economic and social spending issues

While domestic economic policy has, in some ways, taken a rearview to the international trade dispute dominating headlines, there are no shortage of campaign promises rolling out.

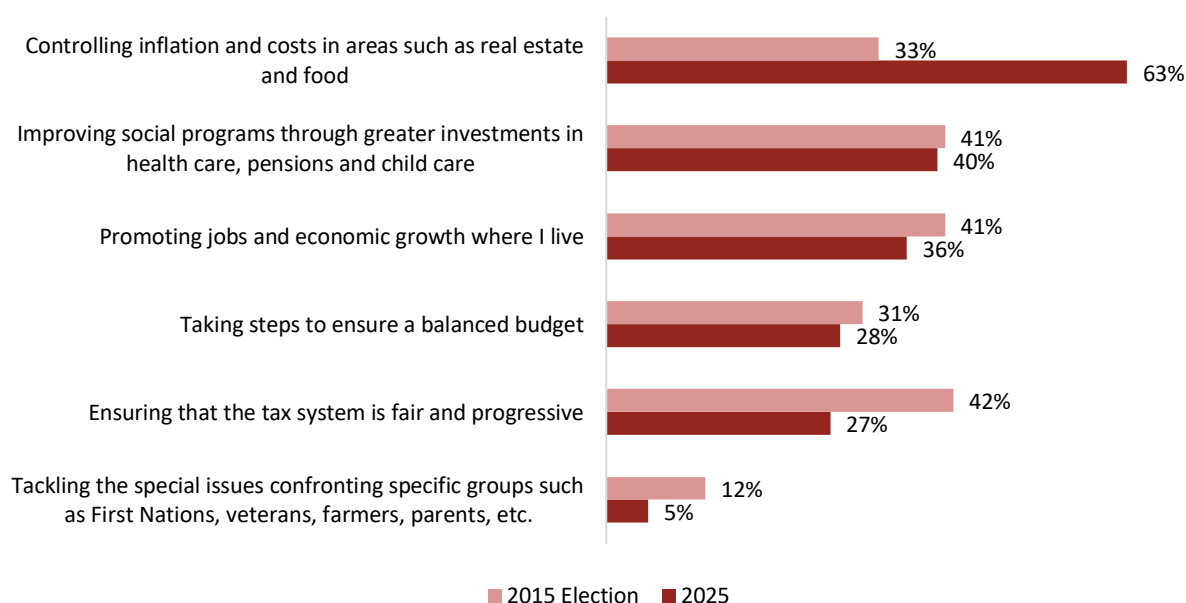
Carney has promised to double the rate of housing construction in Canada by creating a new federal entity that would both act as a developer and providing financing to homebuilders. The Liberals have also promised the creation of a \$5-billion Trade Diversification Corridor fund to build infrastructure and create jobs to diversify Canada's trading partners.

Meantime, Poilievre and the Conservatives have said they would keep in place the Liberals' existing pharmacare, dental-care and child-care programs while announcing numerous measures to speed up infrastructure projects in the country, including a national energy corridor and "shovel-ready zones" with pre-approved permits.

Both the parties likely to form government after the election have also promised tax cuts of differing sizes.

The public mood has shifted considerably from 2015. The priority of controlling inflation has nearly doubled compared to when the same question was asked in the 42nd federal election, from 33 to 63 per cent. The same level of support is found for improving social programs through investment, chosen by two-in-five in each election. The biggest drop in priority is for ensuring a fair and progressive taxation system, chosen by 42 per cent in 2015 (the top priority) and 27 per cent now.

#### We want to know what people think the government should be focusing on when it comes to the economy. Please choose your top two economic priorities from the list below.



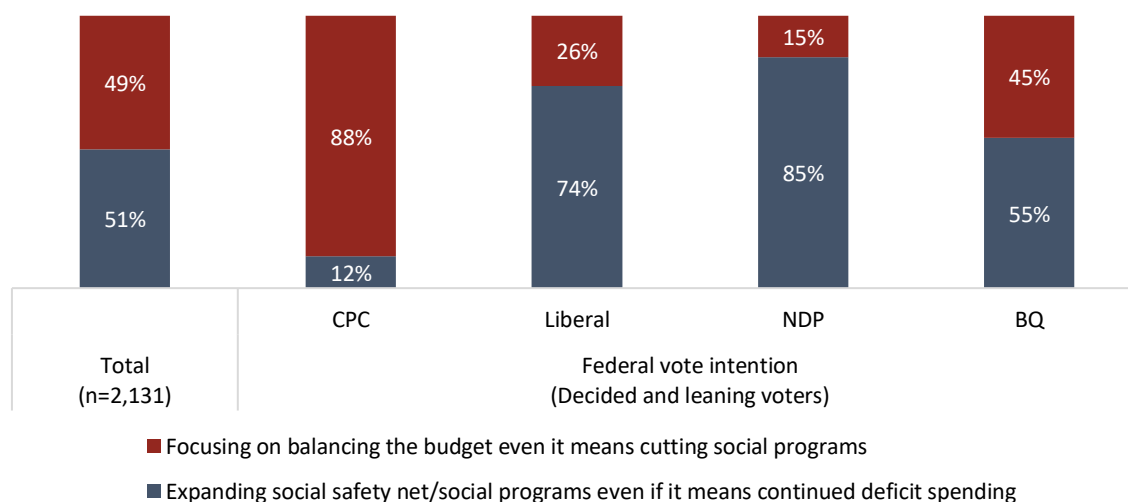
This election may end up being one of contrasting visions. Certainly, Conservative and Liberal voters have disparate views of what should be done by the next federal government economically and socially. Half of Canadians (49%) and 88 per cent of Conservative voters would pursue a more austere economic

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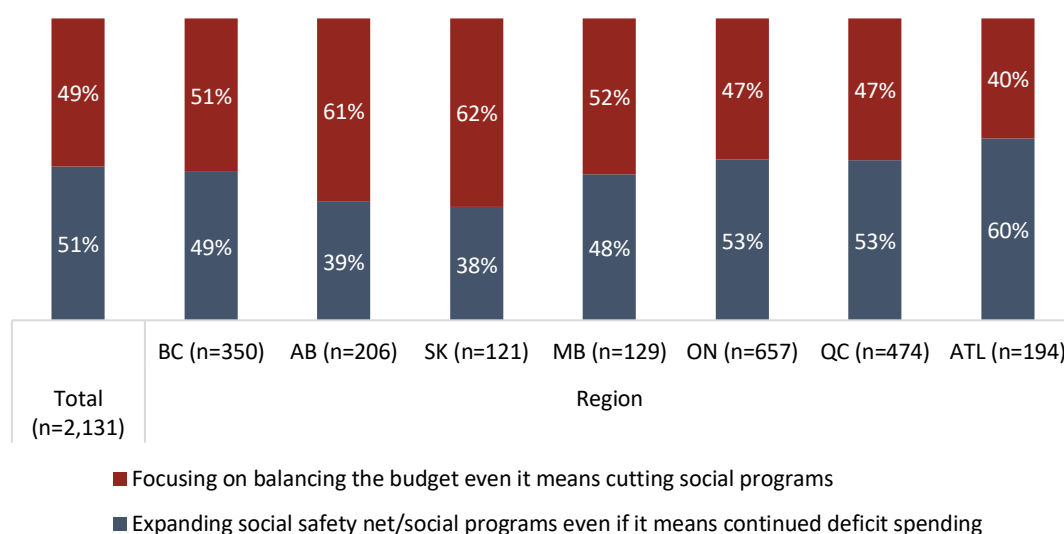
line in efforts to balance the budget, while the other half of Canadians (51%) and three-quarters of Liberal voters would prefer the government invest in social programs, even if it means running deficits.

**More specifically, if you had to choose between these two paths for the next federal government, which one is more important to you?**



This question divides all regions of the country relatively evenly. A large portion in each is supportive of both approaches:

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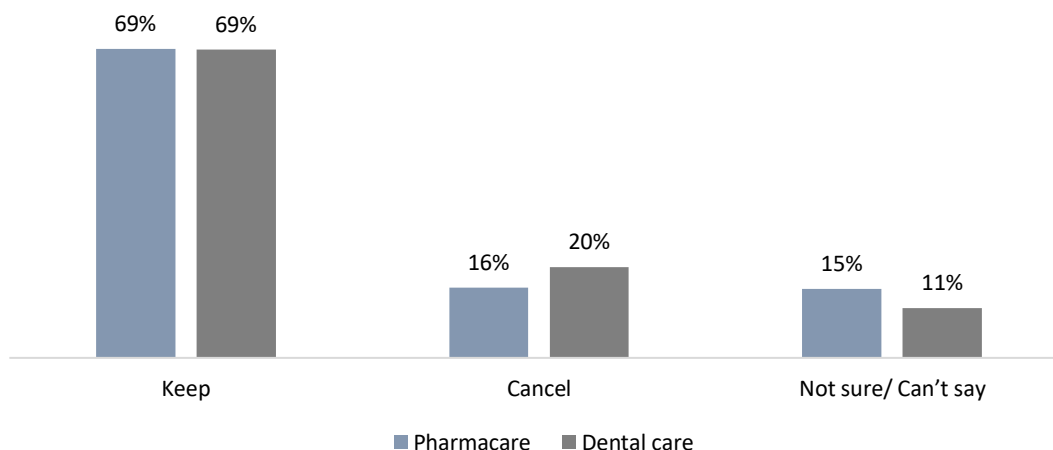
If there are, indeed, budget cuts in the future, the political risk involved in reducing recent pharmacare and dental programs is high. Seven-in-10 Canadians (69%) say each program implemented in 2024

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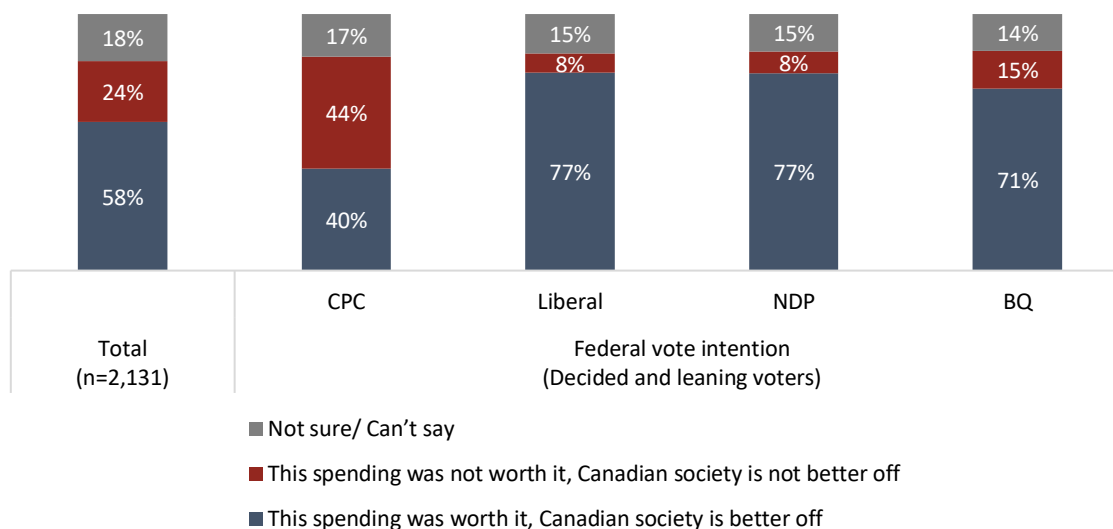
should remain in place. Previously, Poilievre had said a Conservative government would balance the budget “as soon as possible”, but during the campaign has said that neither of those two of the Liberals’ new social programs would be on the chopping block.

**Thinking specifically about new social programs introduced by the federal Liberal government in recent years, would you keep or cancel...  
(All respondents, n=2,131)**



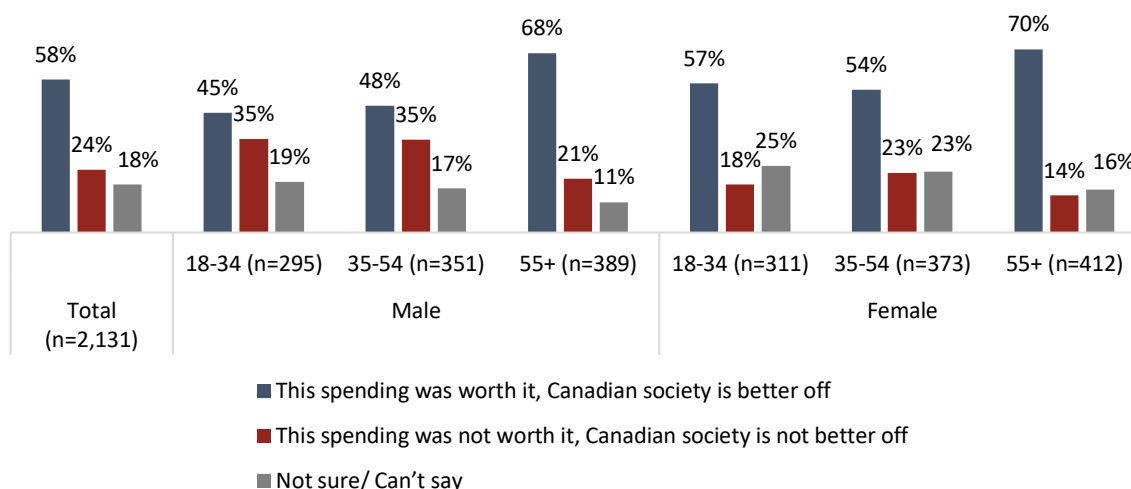
While spending can at times be a risky proposition, the current political environment in Canada appears to be a receptive one. Asked how they felt about more than \$85 billion in additional social program spending by the Liberal government between 2015 and 2025, Canadians are more than twice as likely to say this spending was worth it (58%) than not (24%). Conservative Party voters are divided close to evenly:

Since 2015, federal government spending on social programs (examples) has increased by more than \$85 billion. Which of the following statements is closer to your view:



Across age and gender categories, all groups are more likely to say spending has paid off, with majorities of all female groups saying this:

Since 2015, federal government spending on social programs (examples listed in questionnaire) has increased by more than \$85 billion. Which of the following statements is closer to your view:



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