



## FACTUM

### What Pandemic? COVID-19 Surpassed by Health Care (31%), Affordability (25%), Climate Change (24%), and Economy (24%) as Top Issues of the Day

Liberals Seen as Best Suited to Tackle Most Top Issues, But Cede Major Ground to Conservatives Regarding Economy

**Toronto, ON, July 26, 2021** – A recent Ipsos poll conducted on behalf of Global News finds that while the pandemic has had an oversized impact on the country for the past year and a half, when it comes down to casting their ballots, Canadians will have other things on their minds. Perhaps a result of having put so much effort into lockdown measures, vaccination efforts, and social distancing, Canadians now have the luxury of setting concerns over COVID-19 on the back burner and instead making their decision on who to vote for in the next federal election based on a different set of issues.

However, the incumbent government does not stand to lose out on this focus on non-pandemic related issues; Canadians believe that the Liberals have the edge over the Conservatives on several (though not all) top-of-mind issues. This certainly bodes well for Justin Trudeau and the Liberals as the country inches closer to a potential fall election.

#### *COVID-19 Adds New Concern to Already Crowded List of Worries*

Although the COVID-19 pandemic has added a new issue for Canadians to consider when considering their vote, the top issues largely remain the same from two years ago<sup>1</sup>. Health care remains the number-one issue (31%), followed by a statistical tie between the affordability/cost of living (25%), climate change (24%), and the economy (24%). Also related to health care, COVID-19 (20%) rounds out the list of top-five concerns.

The addition of COVID-19 to the issue set means that fewer Canadians are choosing health care (-6) and climate change (-6) among their list of top-three concerns when compared with October 2019. Taxes (17%), a major hot-button issue just before the last federal election, has fallen eight points and now sits just outside of the top five. Other issues have managed to become more salient than they were two years ago, namely Indigenous issues (11%, +6), poverty/social inequality (14%, +3), and unemployment/jobs (13%, +3). Widespread closures and lay-offs for the past year or more have certainly made Canadians more attuned to poverty and unemployment. Furthermore, the recent gruesome discoveries on the grounds of former residential schools and the selection of a new Governor General have certainly contributed to raising the salience of Indigenous issues among the general Canadian population.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.ipsos.com/en-ca/news-polls/One-Week-from-E-Day-Canadians-Hearing-More-Negativity-About-Candidates-Leaders-than-Policy>

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### Importance of Issues on Vote Choice (Mentioned in top three)

Issue	Percentage	Change from October 2019
<b>Health care</b>	<b>31%</b>	<b>-6</b>
<b>Affordability and cost of living</b>	<b>25%</b>	<b>-</b>
<b>Climate change</b>	<b>24%</b>	<b>-6</b>
<b>Economy</b>	<b>24%</b>	<b>-</b>
<b>COVID-19</b>	<b>20%</b>	<b>N/A</b>
Taxes	17%	-8
Housing (e.g., affordability, availability)	15%	+1
Poverty and social inequality	14%	+3
Unemployment/jobs	13%	+3
Government deficits/debt	12%	+1
Corruption and ethics in government	11%	+1
Indigenous issues	11%	+6
Seniors' issues/aging population	11%	-3

*Bold indicates top 5 issues.*

*Note: Issues below 10% not shown*

### Top Issues Differ by Preferred Federal Party

What Canadians consider to be the top issues influencing their vote choice also vary according to which party they plan to support during the next federal election. Those who say they either have already decided to vote for the Conservatives or are leaning in that direction prioritize fiscal issues such as the economy (32%), taxes (29%), and government deficits/debt (26%), whereas those decided/leaning Liberal voters are making their decision based on issues such as health care (35%) and climate change (32%). Those who are looking to support the NDP in the next election say that affordability/cost of living (39%) and climate change (37%) are influential.

In addition, undecided voters also have a role to play, with 14% of the Canadian adults saying they are undecided as to who they would vote for.<sup>2</sup> Should they decide to vote, they will be casting their ballots mainly based on the issues of health care (38%), followed by affordability/cost of living (25%), and unemployment/jobs (21%).

### Top Issues Influencing Vote Choice (Among Decided/Leaning Voters of Each Major Party)

Conservative		Liberal		NDP		Not sure	
Economy	<b>32%</b>	Health care	<b>35%</b>	Affordability/ cost of living	<b>39%</b>	Health care	<b>38%</b>
Taxes	<b>29%</b>	Climate change	<b>32%</b>	Climate change	<b>37%</b>	Affordability/ cost of living	<b>25%</b>
Government deficits/ debt	<b>26%</b>	Economy	<b>27%</b>	Health care	<b>28%</b>	Unemployment/ jobs	<b>21%</b>
Affordability/ cost of living	<b>25%</b>	COVID-19	<b>26%</b>	Poverty/ social inequality	<b>20%</b>	Economy	<b>18%</b>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.ipsos.com/en-ca/news-polls/As-Election-Fever-Builds-Liberal-Majority-in-Doubt>

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Health care	<b>24%</b>	Affordability/ cost of living	<b>22%</b>	COVID-19 Housing	<b>19%</b> <b>19%</b>	Taxes COVID-19	<b>17%</b> <b>17%</b>
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### *Liberals Lead on Top Issues Canadians Consider Important, Except One*

In addition to asking Canadians which issues are the most influential in their vote choice, the survey also asked which political party was best suited to handle them. Out of the top-five issues that Canadians say will be most determinant of their vote in the next federal election, the Liberals lead on three (health care, climate change, and COVID-19). This may be good news for the Liberals, as Canadians seek to reward the incumbent party for its handling of the pandemic.

Among those who believe that COVID-19 is a main issue, the Liberals have a commanding lead when it comes to being perceived as most able to handle the situation (40%), with all other major parties more than 20 points behind (Cons 13%, NDP 12%, Green 4%, Bloc 3%, Other 2%). The Liberals also currently enjoy a comfortable lead among those who say health care is important in terms of being seen as best positioned to tackle the issue (30% v. 22% for the second place NDP). While the Liberals (27%) are essentially tied with the Greens (28%) when it comes to being seen as best suited to deal with climate change, they are still eight points ahead of the next major party, the NDP (19%).

While the Liberals are slightly weaker than the NDP when it comes to being seen as able to take on affordability/cost of living (29% for NDP v. 22% for Liberals), one area where the Liberals stumble is the economy. Among those who say that the economy is a main issue influencing their vote, the Conservatives (35%) have a healthy lead over the Liberals (27%).

However, political cynicism may have some role to play in the next election, as no fewer than one in five say that none of the major political parties are best suited to handle the top issues of the day. For instance, among those who say that affordability/cost of living is a top issue, nearly the same proportion say that the NDP is best suited to deal with it as say that none of the parties are. The lack of perceived differentiation between the major parties on the part of potential voters could either lead them to abstain from voting, spoil their ballot, or making their decision on who to vote for based on other considerations.

### **Parties Best Suited to Tackle Main Issues** *(Among Those Naming Issue as a Top-Three Issue)*

- **Health care:** Liberals (30%), NDP (22%), Conservatives (14%), none of them (25%)
- **Affordability and cost of living:** NDP (29%), Liberals (22%), Conservatives (16%), none of them (26%)
- **Climate change:** Greens (28%), Liberals (27%), NDP (19%), none of them (19%)
- **Economy:** Conservatives (35%), Liberals (27%), NDP (10%), none of them (22%)
- **COVID-19:** Liberals (40%), Conservatives (13%), NDP (12%), none of them (26%)



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### About the Study

These are some of the findings of an Ipsos poll conducted between July 19-20, 2021, on behalf of Global News. For this survey, a sample of 1,000 Canadians aged 18+ was interviewed online. Quotas and weighting were employed to ensure that the sample's composition reflects that of the Canadian population according to census parameters. The precision of Ipsos online polls is measured using a credibility interval. In this case, the poll is accurate to within  $\pm 3.5$  percentage points, 19 times out of 20, had all Canadians aged 18+ been polled. The credibility interval will be wider among subsets of the population. All sample surveys and polls may be subject to other sources of error, including, but not limited to coverage error, and measurement error.

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