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### COVID-19 Pandemic and Affordability Top Issues Determining Vote Choice on September 20th

#### Liberals Losing Steam Compared to Start of Campaign on Being Best to Tackle Pandemic, Other Key Issues

**Toronto, ON, Sept 15, 2021** — A week out of the federal election, Canadians across the country are thinking about the issues that are most important to them when deciding how they will vote, and what the future of the country could look like.

According to a new Ipsos poll, the COVID-19 pandemic is the top policy issue among Canadians in determining vote choice, which has seen a four-point increase since the beginning of the “pandemic election.” The issue of affordability and cost of living has also increased in importance, and as Canadians have continued to feel the pressure of the pandemic on their finances, many agree that the essential costs of living have become less affordable in the last year. In the final week of campaigning, the leaders will no doubt try to address the concerns that Canadians have on these issues to convince undecided or waffling voters that their plan is best.

#### *COVID-19 Pandemic and Affordability Top Issues; Pandemic Continues to Increase in Importance*

When it comes to the most important issues to Canadians in determining their vote choice, the COVID-19 pandemic (30%), affordability and cost of living (26%), and healthcare (26%) are top-of-mind. Compared to when the election was called, the pandemic has increased in importance by four points to take the top spot. While healthcare remains important to Canadians, this issue has seen a *decrease* of three points. Affordability and cost of living has become *more* important (+3), as has housing (+5). Notably, gun control has risen by seven points, which is likely due to Justin Trudeau and the Liberal Party focusing on this as a wedge issue between the Liberals and the Conservatives.

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### Top Issues (mentioned in top three)

Issue	September 2021	August 2021
COVID-19 pandemic	30% (+4)	26%
Affordability and cost of living	26% (+3)	23%
Healthcare	26% (-5)	31%
The economy	21% (-4)	25%
Housing (e.g., affordability, availability)	19% (+5)	14%
Climate change	19% (-4)	23%
Taxes	16% (-2)	18%
Government deficits/debt	13% (-2)	15%
Unemployment/jobs	12% (+3)	9%
Gun control	12% (+7)	5%
Indigenous issues involving First Nations and Native peoples	11% (+2)	9%
Poverty and social inequality	10% (-4)	14%

Note: Issues under 10% in September 2021 not shown. Please see tab 1 of the data tables for full listing.

What Canadians prioritize is not the same across the country. British Columbians are more worried than others about the COVID-19 pandemic, while Atlantic Canadians and Albertans have healthcare as a top-of-mind issue. Quebecers are especially concerned about gun control compared to other regions.

### Top Issues by Region (mentioned in top three)

- British Columbia: COVID-19 (37%), affordability and cost of living (34%), healthcare (26%), housing (e.g., affordability, availability) (25%), and climate change (24%)
- Alberta: Healthcare (33%), COVID-19 pandemic (29%), affordability and cost of living (29%), the economy (29%), and taxes (22%)
- Saskatchewan/Manitoba: Healthcare (31%), COVID-19 pandemic (25%), climate change (25%), affordability and cost of living (24%), and taxes (21%)
- Ontario: COVID-19 pandemic (34%), affordability and cost of living (33%), healthcare (25%), housing (e.g., affordability, availability) (25%), and the economy (22%)
- Quebec: Gun control (31%), COVID-19 pandemic (25%), healthcare (18%), abortion (18%), and the economy (17%)
- Atlantic: Health care (45%), affordability (37%), climate change (24%), COVID-19 pandemic (23%), and housing (e.g., affordability, availability) (20%)

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### *While Liberals Still Most Favoured on COVID-19 Pandemic, Trust Has Dropped; NDP Picking Up Steam*

While healthcare, the COVID-19 pandemic, affordability/cost of living, healthcare, the economy, and housing are the top five issues that Canadians say will be the most influential in determining their vote in next week's election, which parties they believe are best-suited to lead on these issues has shifted since mid-August.

Consistent with last month when the election was first called, the Liberals continue to lead on being the party Canadians feel is best suited to handle the COVID-19 pandemic. However, support has dropped by 6 points on this since our last polling. In fact, the Liberals have seen drops of between two and seven points on all issues except for housing since the start of the election. In contrast the NDP has leapt ahead on healthcare, affordability, and the pandemic since August and are now neck-and-neck with the Liberals to lead on healthcare after an eight-point increase. While confidence in the Conservative party on healthcare has dropped by eight points, the party has seen boosts on housing and handling the pandemic.

#### **Party Best Suited to Deal with Top 5 Issues** (among those selecting issue in top 3) September 2021

Issue	COVID-19 pandemic	Affordability	Healthcare	Economy	Housing
Conservative	17% (+3)	21% (+2)	13% (-8)	<b>43%</b> (+2)	20% (+5)
Liberal	<b>42%</b> (-6)	16% (-6)	<b>28%</b> (-2)	26% (-7)	24% (+2)
NDP	14% (+2)	<b>33%</b> (+6)	<b>28%</b> (+8)	9% (-2)	<b>27%</b> (-)
BQ	1% (-2)	-	2% (-4)	4% (+2)	2% (-)
Green	1% (-)	3% (+1)	2% (-)	1% (-)	2% (-1)
PPC	4%	2%	1%	2%	<1% (-)
Other	-	-	-	1% (-)	-
None of them	21% (-)	24% (-)	26% (+6)	14% (-1)	25% (-6)

### *Few Agree Anything Has Become More Affordable*

Considering the effect COVID-19 has had on many Canadians' pocketbooks, it is not surprising that affordability has become a top campaign issue. When asked how affordability has changed over the past year, few find that things have become *more* affordable. While 15% of Canadians say that putting money aside for savings to paying down their debt has become more affordable, only one in ten or less say that any other aspect of their day to day lives has become *more* affordable.

Some of the most essential aspects of day-to-day life have become *less affordable* in the past year, which includes feeding themselves and their family (63%), housing (52%), putting money aside for savings (52%), or clothing and other household necessities (51%).

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Approximately half of Canadians agree that the cost of staying connected has remained the same this past year: half state that there has been no change in the affordability of their cell phone service (50%) or internet service (48%). Childcare is another area where a majority (67%) of Canadians feel there has been no change in affordability.

	Putting money aside for savings	Paying down debt	Clothing/ other household necessities	Transport	Cell phone service	Feeding yourself /your family	Internet Service	Housing	Childcare
<b>More affordable</b>	15%	15%	11%	11%	11%	10%	10%	9%	9%
<b>Less Affordable</b>	52%	42%	51%	47%	38%	63%	41%	52%	24%
<b>No Change</b>	33%	44%	38%	43%	50%	27%	48%	39%	67%
<b>Net Impact</b>	-37%	-27%	-40%	-36%	-27%	-53%	-31%	-43%	-15%

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### About the Study

These are some of the findings of an Ipsos poll conducted between September 10 and 13, on behalf of Global News. For this survey, a sample of n = 2,001 Canadians aged 18+ was interviewed. A sample of n = 1,501 was interviewed online, via the Ipsos I-Say panel and non-panel sources, and respondents earn a nominal incentive for their participation. A sample of n = 500 Canadians aged 18+ was interviewed by live-interview telephone interviewers by landline and cellphone, using random-digit dialing. Quotas and weighting were employed to balance demographics to ensure that the sample's composition reflects that of the adult population according to Census data and to provide results intended to approximate the sample universe. The precision of Ipsos polls which include non-probability sampling is measured using a credibility interval. In this case, the poll is accurate to within  $\pm 2.5$  percentage points, 19 times out of 20, had all Canadians 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. Ipsos abides by the disclosure standards established by the CRIC, found here:

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<https://ipsosintelligence.ca/canadiancontext/>

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