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Canadians divided on whose side they're on in federal union strike

Support tilts slightly to the union as four in 10 (38%) say they're on the union's side compared to three in 10 (28%) who are on the side of the government, but over three in 10 (34%) don't know enough to have an opinion one way or the other

Ottawa, ON, April 27, 2023 – As the federal strike of over 155,000 Public Service Alliance of Canada (PSAC) members drags into its second week, Canadians are divided on whose side they are on, according to a new Ipsos poll for Global News. Close to four in 10 (38%) of Canadians say they are strongly (16%) or somewhat (22%) on the side of the union, while close to three in 10 (28%) are either strongly (10%) or somewhat (18%) on the side of the government. A sizable proportion – 34% - don't know enough to say either way, suggesting that support could evolve as more people pick a side as the dispute rolls on.

Support for the union is strongest among members of Gen Z (54%). It is also stronger in Alberta and Atlantic Canada (46% each). By contrast, support for the government is highest among Quebeckers (39%), Baby Boomers (36%) and those earning \$40K - \$60K or \$100K a year plus (34% each). Women (40%) are much more likely to not know enough to hold an opinion than men (27%), as are those earning less than \$40K a year (46%).

When asked who they think is being most fair and reasonable in the dispute, most (47%) don't know enough to have a view one way or the other. Three in 10 (30%) say the union is being the most fair and reasonable, while 23% say the government is. Gen Z (42%), Millennials (37%), Atlantic Canadians (38%) and those with kids at home (36%) are more likely to say the union is being more reasonable, while university educated Canadians (31%) and Quebeckers (30%) are more likely to pick the government.

Canadians are most likely to find the demand for a right to work from home (58%) and an additional shift premium for late or weekend work (57%) as reasonable demands from the union. Fewer find the extra pay for case workers who support Canada's veterans and for parole officers (51%), a 4.5% increase per year for 3 years (49%), banning replacement workers during a strike (44%) or an annual bilingual bonus of \$1500 for employees who speak an Indigenous language (41%) as reasonable demands,

When asked if they feel sympathetic toward striking public servants, almost half (49%) of Canadians agreed, compared to 31% who disagreed and 15% who did not hold an opinion. Atlantic Canadians (68%), people with kids at home (60%), Albertans (58%), Gen Z (57%) and Millennials (56%) were most likely to agree they felt sympathetic toward striking public servants, while those with less than a high school education (46%), Gen X (37%), Ontarians (36%) and those earning less than \$40K a year were least likely to agree.

While half of Canadians (50%) agreed that the strike is necessary so public servants could get a fair deal, over half (54%) also agreed that we cannot afford to give public servants a raise of 4.5% a year right now, which was a key union demand. A plurality (42%) agreed the strike would not affect them personally, while only the same number (42%) thought the government should pass "back to work legislation" to force public servants back to work.



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The results suggest a divided Canadian public that is not fully engaged or paying close attention to the strike. While there is sympathy for striking public servants, a recognition that the strike is necessary for public servants to get a fair deal, and a slight edge to the union in terms of support, many don't expect to be personally affected by the strike and a majority agree that we cannot afford to give public servants the raise they are demanding. Many Canadians expressed no opinion on specific measures, and the fact that almost half don't know enough to say who is being more fair suggests that, only a week into the labour dispute, Canadians are generally tuned out. It remains to be seen whether Canadians will engage more if the strike persists, and if more Canadians are directly affected by it.

About the Study

These are some of the findings of an Ipsos poll conducted between April 21 and 24, 2023, on behalf of Global News. For this survey, a sample of 1,000 Canadians aged 18+ was interviewed. 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 ± 3.1 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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ISIN code FR0000073298, Reuters ISOS.PA, Bloomberg IPS:FP

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