



STUDENT BUDGET CONSULTATION

Preliminary Report

17 March 2023

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Methodology

Between 24 January and 6 March 2023, Vox Pop Labs and CIVIX engaged high school students and teachers from all across Canada for the 2022 - 2023 Student Budget Consultation.

A total of 1,499 online responses were included in this report to provide a preliminary snapshot of the perceptions and priorities of the next generation of the Canadian workforce.

To improve the representativeness of the findings, the Statistics Canada population estimates for July 2021 (17-10-0005-01) were used to weight the data to reflect the distribution of males and females, aged 12 to 18, in Canada.

This report includes incomplete responses, meaning that sample sizes will vary from question to question. Moreover, due to rounding, percentages presented throughout this document may not add up to 100% and precisely reflect the absolute figures.

Main Findings

Current and Future Outlooks

Students are most optimistic about their own future, with 68% of reporting being moderately or very optimistic about their future. Just under half (47%) of students are optimistic about the future of Canada, and only 31% of students are optimistic about the future of the world ([Figure 1](#)). More students (43%) believe they will be worse off than their parents, compared to 34% who believe otherwise ([Figure 2](#)). Although 32% of students report their mental health as being somewhat or much worse than a year ago, 38% reported improvements in their mental health – and 26% report it being about the same ([Figure 3](#)).

Household Finance

Addressing the high cost of living is the most important priority for students in the budget ([Figure 10](#)). However, only 22% of students think their household's financial situation is worse compared to a year ago, compared with 27% of students who think it is better. 42%

of students think their household financial situation hasn't changed ([Figure 4](#)). Students think that higher grocery bills and rising cost of gas have had the largest negative effect on their household financial situation, with 32% reporting that higher bills and 31% reporting that the rising cost of gas have affected their household financial situation a great deal. Meanwhile, 32% of students think that health care costs had no negative effect at all on their household financial situation, and a further 30% of students think health care costs had very little negative effect. Half of students (50%) consider housing costs to have had negatively affected their household financial situation somewhat or a great deal; and just less than half of students (47%) thought that the COVID-19 pandemic had negatively affected their household financial situation somewhat or a great deal ([Figure 5](#)).

Wealth Inequality

58% of students believe that the gap between those with high incomes and those with low incomes is too large, compared to only 11% who think otherwise ([Figure 6](#)). Just over half of students (52%) believe that wealthy people have a greater financial obligation than others to help those who are in need, compared to 16% who disagree ([Figure 7](#)). 57% of respondents also think that large corporations should pay somewhat or much more tax ([Figure 8](#)). However, fewer than half of students (45%) are in favour of the government providing all Canadians with a guaranteed minimum income, regardless of employment status ([Figure 9](#)).

Environment and Climate Change

More than half (69%) of students believe that Canada has a responsibility to take action on climate change, even if the countries with the largest emissions don't follow suit ([Figure 11](#)). However, less than half (43%) of students support stricter environmental protections even if this increases prices for consumers ([Figure 12](#)). 39% of students somewhat or strongly disagree with the notion that serious action on climate change should wait until the rate of inflation eases, compared to 28% of those who somewhat or strongly agree ([Figure 14](#)).

Health Care Coverage

66% of students believe that all Canadians should have access to government-funded prescription drugs ([Figure 15](#)). Nearly three-quarters (74%) of students believe that the

government should invest more in mental health services ([Figure 16](#)). When faced with the trade-off of increasing the federal deficit, only 46% of students agree with the idea of the federal government increasing the amount of money it gives to provinces and territories to pay for health care ([Figure 17](#)). Without the trade-off, 66% of students agree with the notion of increasing provincial and territorial funding for health care ([Figure 18](#)).

Government Supports for Young Canadians

When asked what the priorities of the budget should be, the plurality of students (16%) believe addressing the high cost of living should be the government's main priority, followed by building more affordable housing. Addressing climate change and providing support for people living in poverty were both ranked third ([Figure 10](#)).

Housing Affordability

Building more affordable housing is the second-highest budget priority for students ([Figure 10](#)). The plurality of respondents (36%) believe that making housing more affordable is the most important step that the government could take to support young Canadians ([Figure 19](#)). Furthermore, half of students (50%) thought that housing costs had negatively affected their household financial situation somewhat or a great deal ([Figure 5](#)).

Education

Government efforts to make post-secondary education more affordable is noticeably less of a priority among young Canadians. Only 18% of students believe that access to affordable post-secondary education is the most important step the federal government can take to support young Canadians ([Figure 19](#)). Moreover, only a quarter (28%) of respondents believe that post-secondary education should be free, even if it means higher taxes for everyone ([Figure 20](#)). A further 11% of students think that making student debt more manageable is the most important step the federal government can do to support young Canadians over the next five years ([Figure 19](#)).

Mental Health

Although only 15% of students consider increased access to mental health support to be the most important step the federal government can take to support young people ([Figure 19](#)), almost three-quarters (74%) of students believe that the government should invest more in mental health services in general ([Figure 16](#)).

Indigenous Relations

Although only 3% of students believe that reconciliation with Indigenous peoples should be a priority for the budget ([Figure 10](#)), 86% of students support increasing government funding for health care in Indigenous communities and 79% support increasing government funding to protect Indigenous languages ([Figure 21](#)). Further, 68% of respondents believe that the government should settle all outstanding land claims, regardless of the cost ([Figure 21](#)). In addition, 73% of students support giving Indigenous peoples more say over how Canada's natural resources are used ([Figure 21](#)).

Most students (93%) believe that Indigenous and non-Indigenous children should receive the same quality of education, and 70% of students support mandating schools to teach Indigenous history and culture ([Figure 21](#)). They are also supportive of reducing the number of Indigenous children in foster care (77%), and facilitating independent investigations into former residential schools (76%) ([Figure 21](#)). Over half (62%) of respondents support reducing the number of Indigenous people in prison ([Figure 21](#)).

Fiscal Policy

Students are generally divided over government spending; 53% of respondents prefer lower taxes and fewer government services, versus 47% who prefer higher taxes and more government spending ([Figure 22](#)). Similarly, while 22% of students agree that the federal budget deficit should be reduced, even if it leads to fewer public services, 24% of respondents disagree with the notion. More than half of respondents (54%) were either unsure or neutral ([Figure 23](#)). 52% of respondents think the federal government should cut taxes on carbon emissions to lower the cost of gas ([Figure 13](#)).

Other Government Expenditures

Over half of Canadian youth (67%) believe that all students should be given a free meal at school, even those who can afford to pay for their own meals ([Figure 24](#)).

Students are generally mixed when asked about how much money the federal government should spend to protect the French language in Canada; 42% of students think the current amount is about right, 30% of students think that less money should be spent, and 19% think more should be spent. ([Figure 25](#)).

42% of students are satisfied with the amount of spending on arts and culture in Canada, and 30% of respondents would like more spending on arts and culture ([Figure 26](#)).

36% of students are satisfied with the amount of spending on foreign aid. Less than half (39%) of respondents think that Canada should spend more on foreign aid ([Figure 27](#)).

Institutional Trust

Young Canadians have a high degree of trust in government workers, particularly doctors and nurses (90%), public health officials (70%), military personnel (71%) and law enforcement (63%) ([Figure 28](#)). In contrast, their trust in elected officials (23%) and news media (31%) is noticeably low ([Figure 28](#)). Just under half of students (47%) describe themselves as somewhat or very interested in politics, compared to 54% who are not very or not at all interested in politics ([Figure 29](#)).

Graphs of the Results

Figure 1 (Q5)

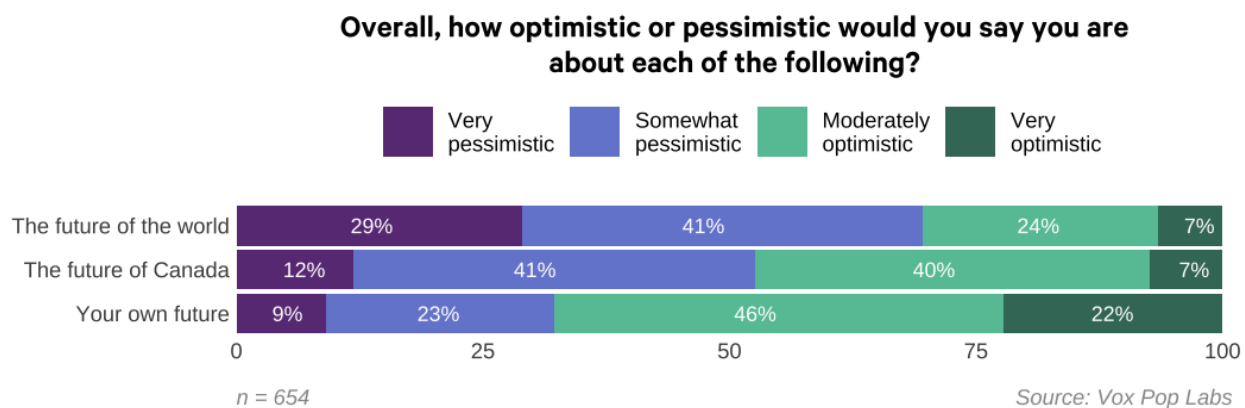


Figure 2 (Q8)

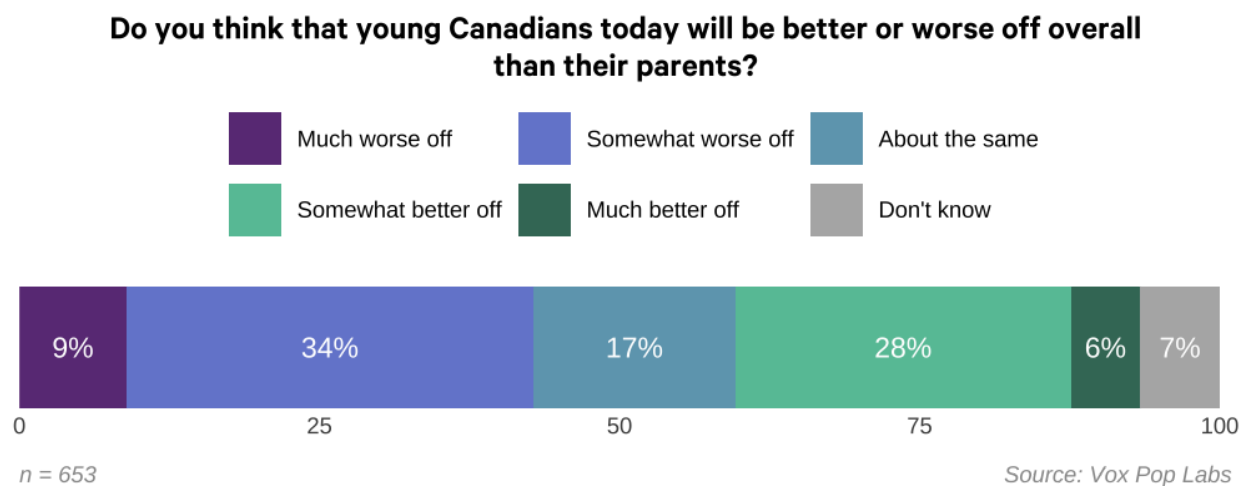


Figure 3 (Q6)

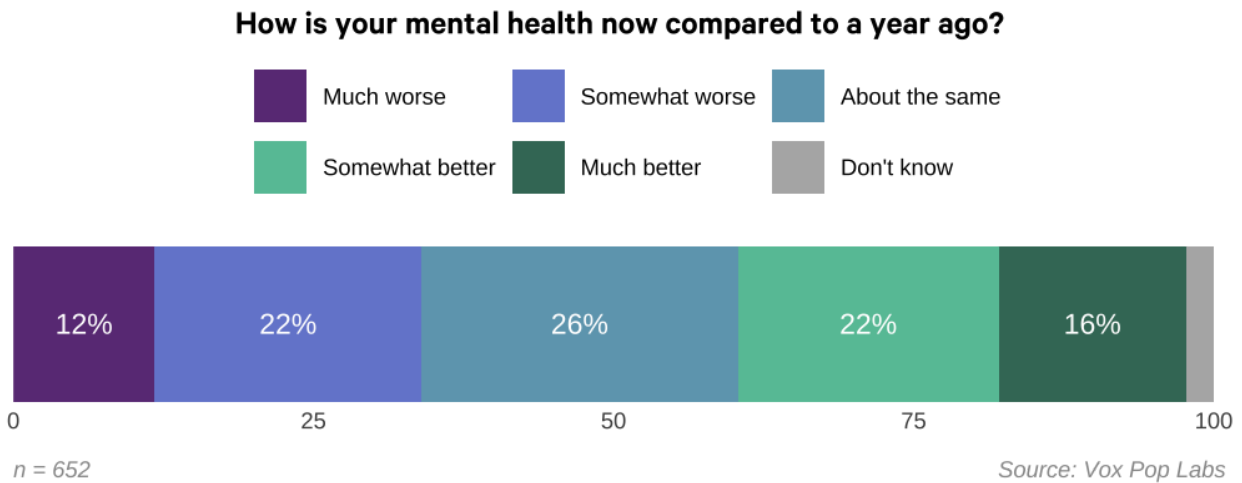


Figure 4 (Q9)

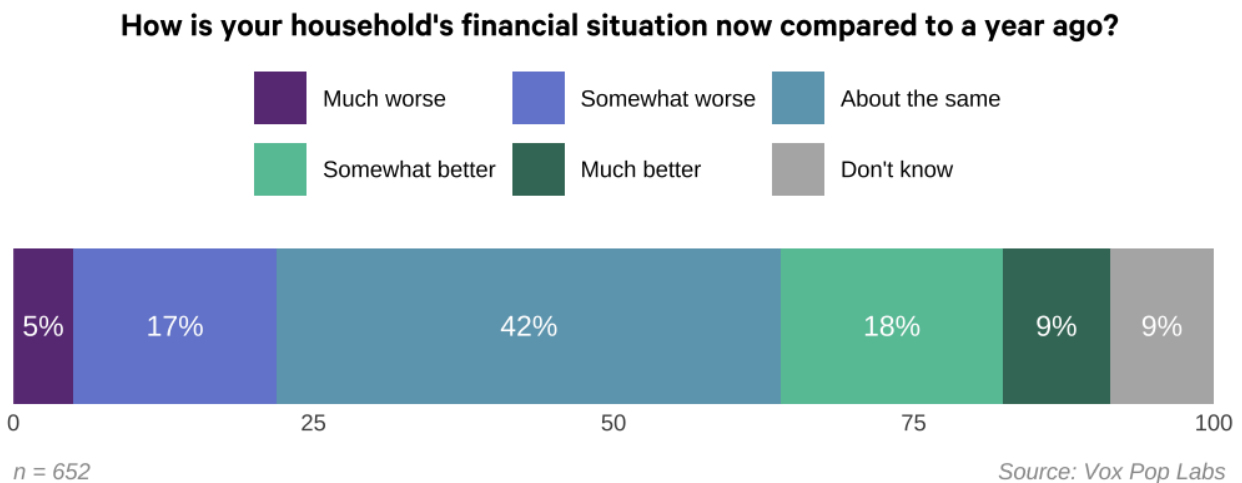


Figure 5 (Q10)

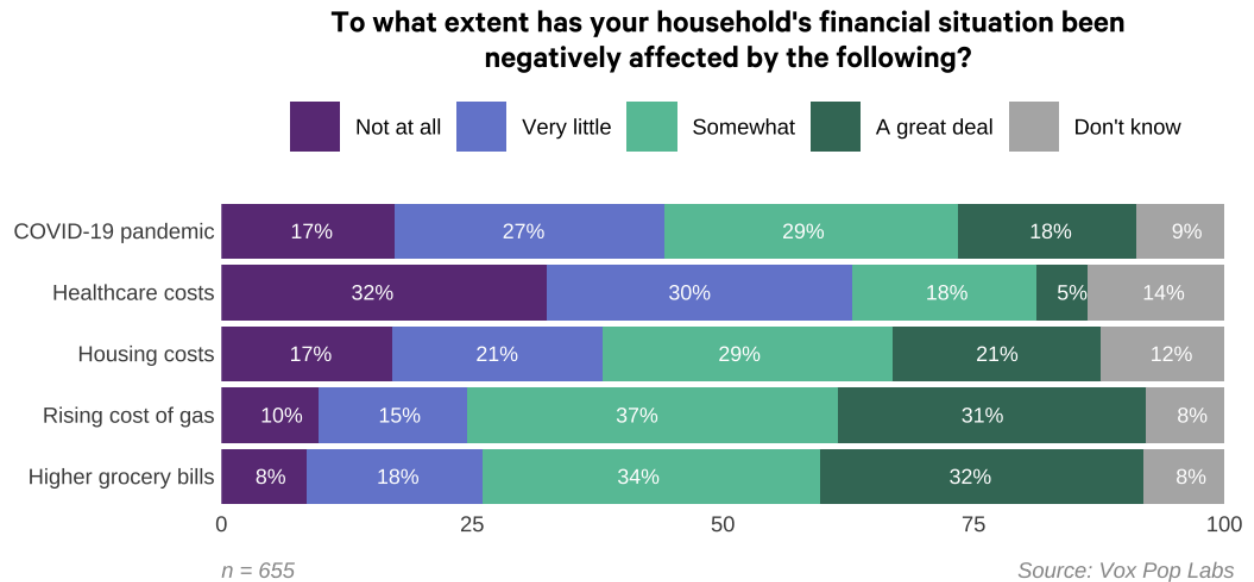


Figure 6 (Q57)

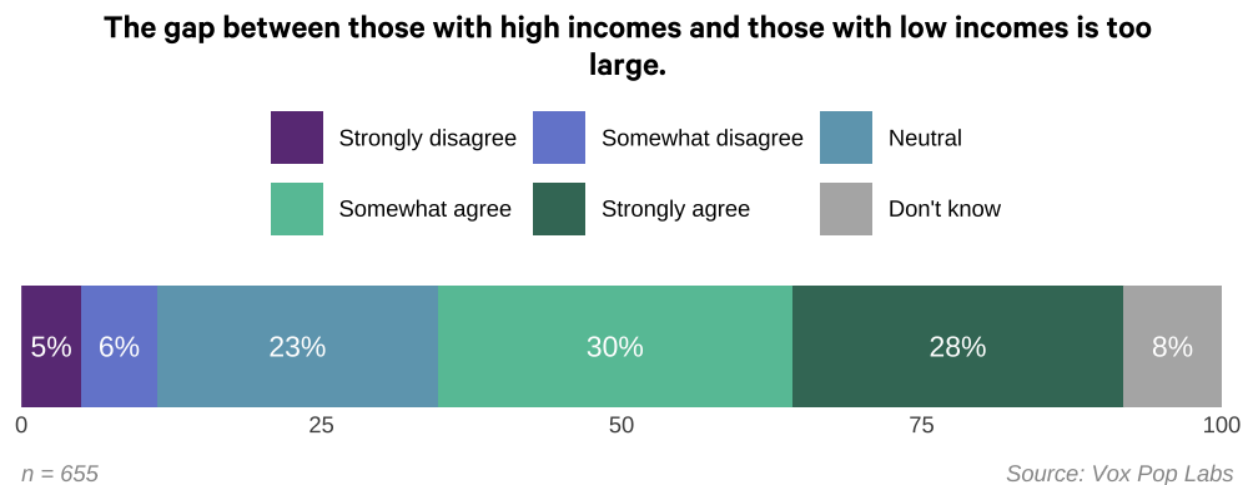


Figure 7 (Q37)

Wealthy people have a greater financial obligation than everyone else to help those who are in need.

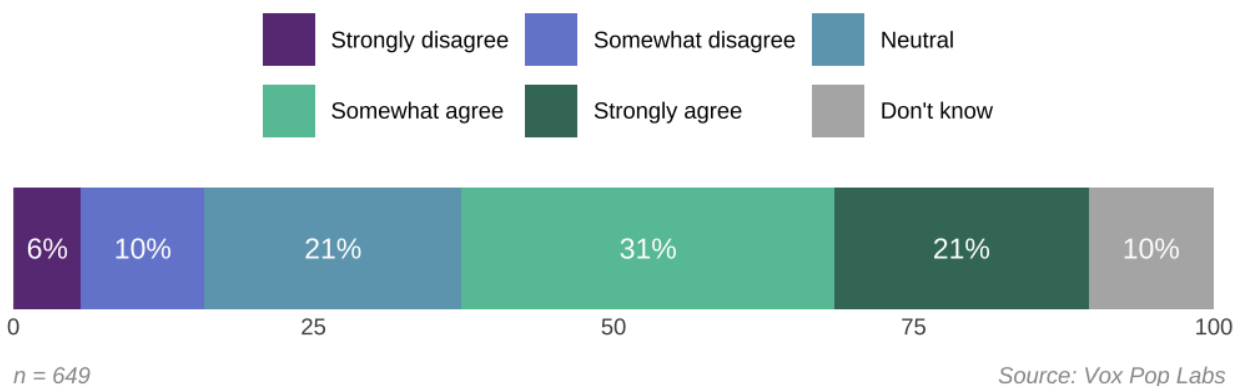


Figure 8 (Q34)

How much tax should large corporations pay?

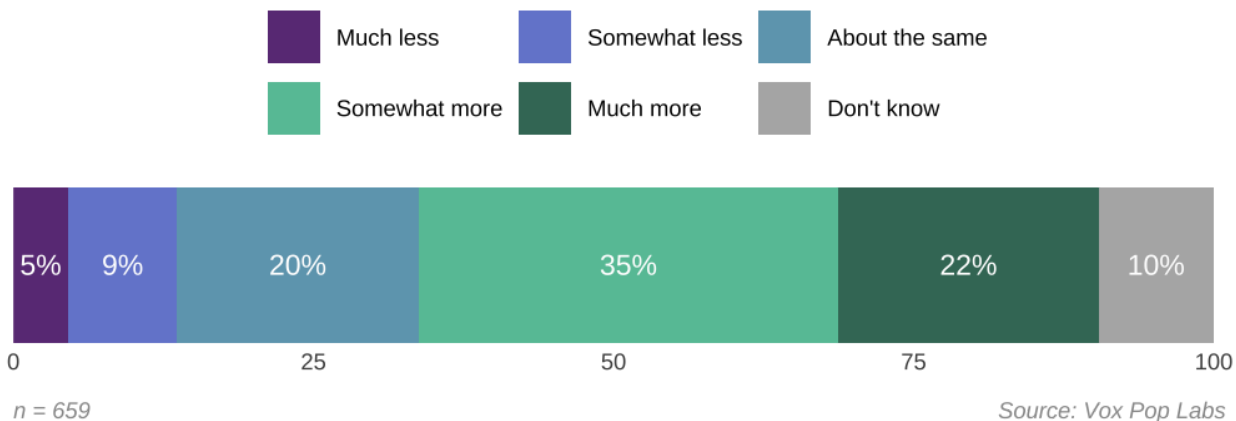


Figure 9 (Q46)

The federal government should guarantee a minimum income for all Canadians, regardless of whether or not they have a job.

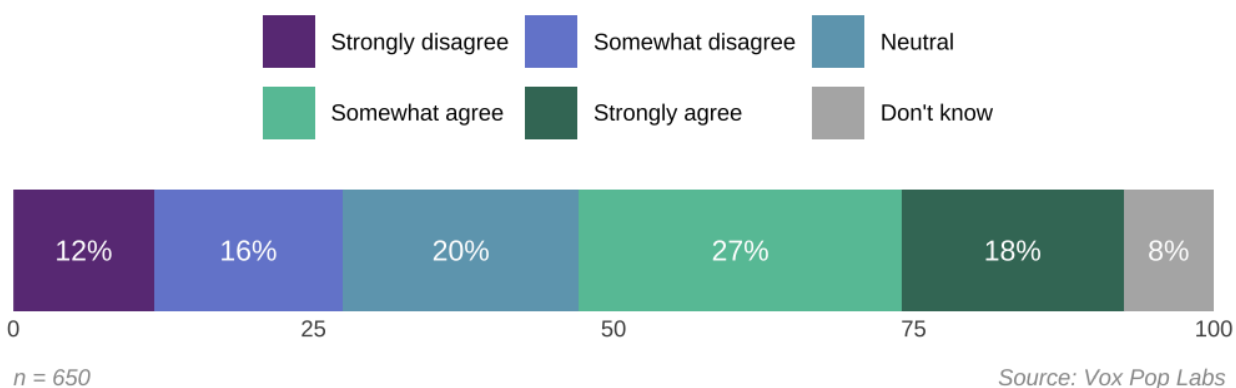


Figure 10 (Q73)

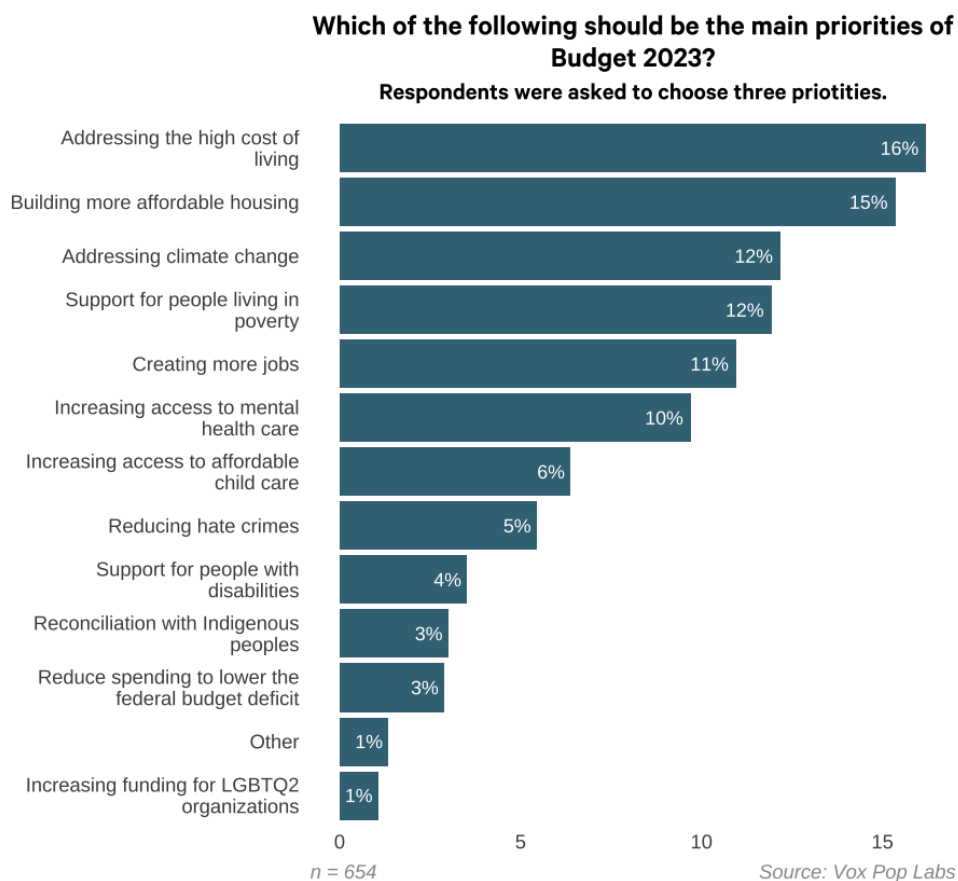


Figure 11 (Q25)

Canada has a responsibility to take action on climate change, even if the countries with the largest emissions don't follow suit.

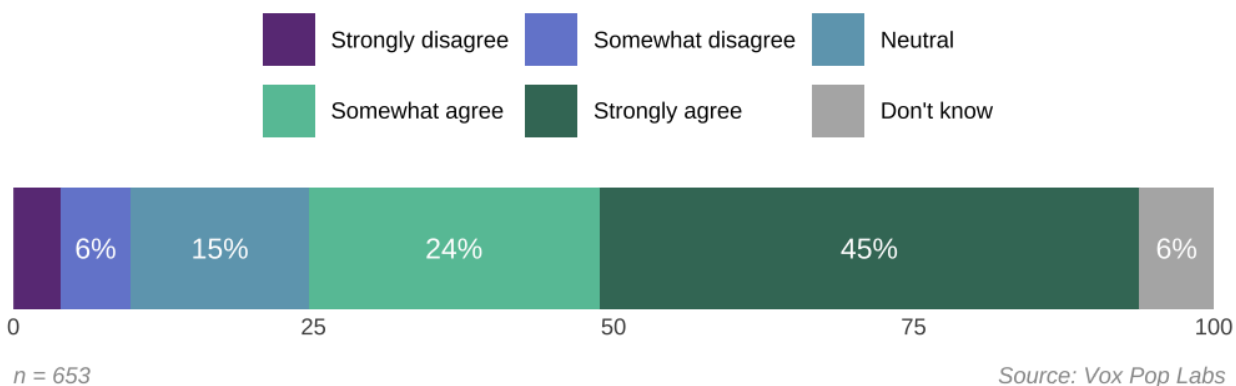


Figure 12 (Q22)

Environmental protections should be stricter, even if it means consumers pay higher prices.

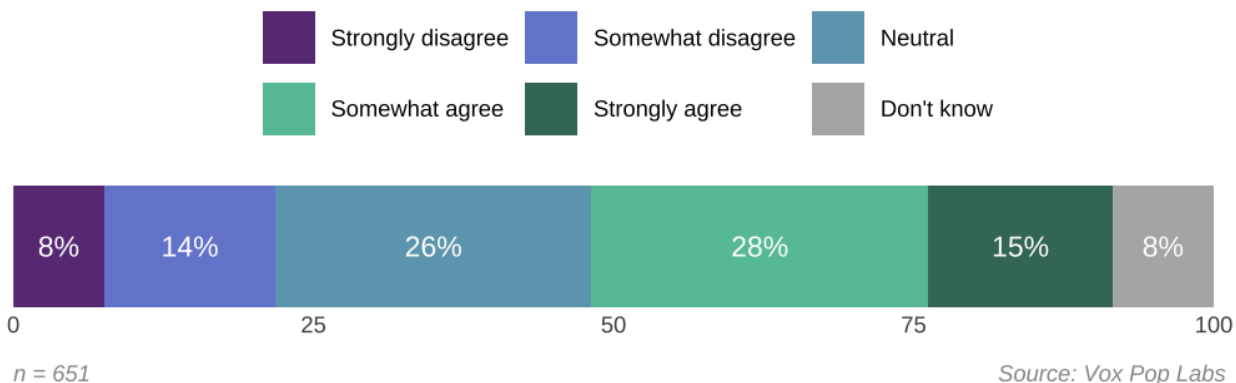


Figure 13 (Q20)

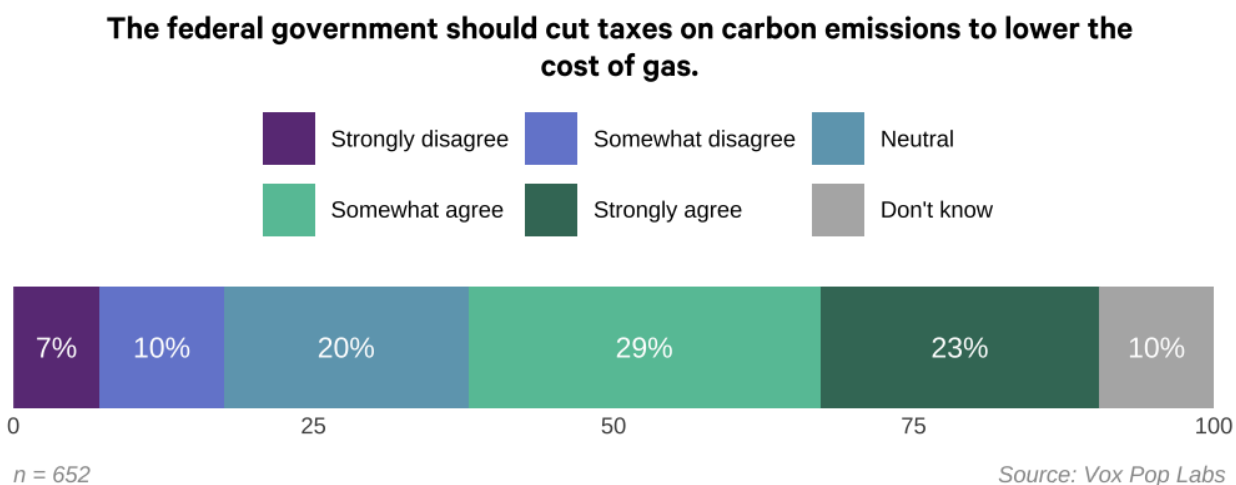


Figure 14 (Q60)

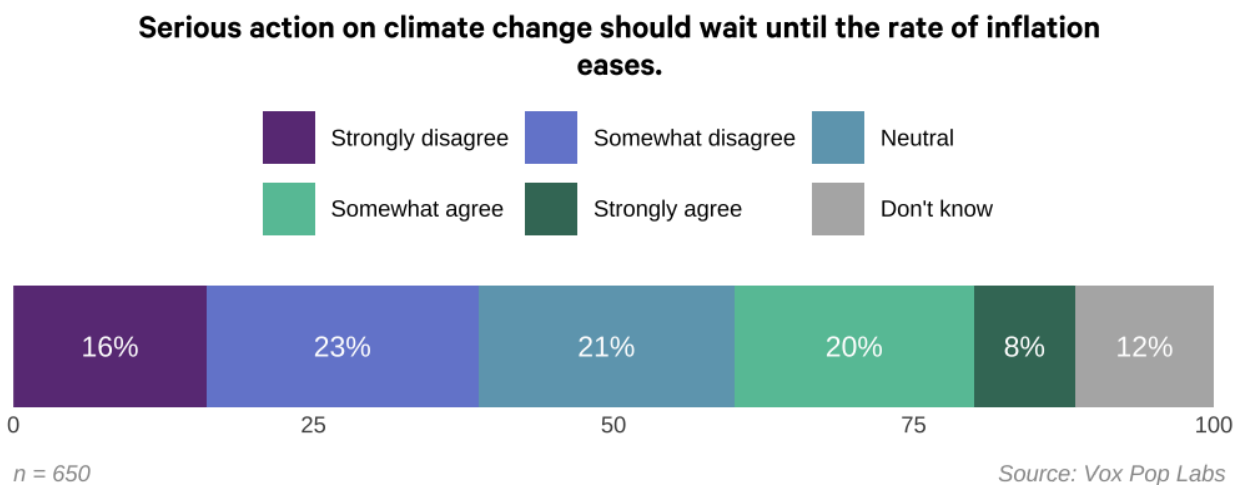


Figure 15 (Q28)

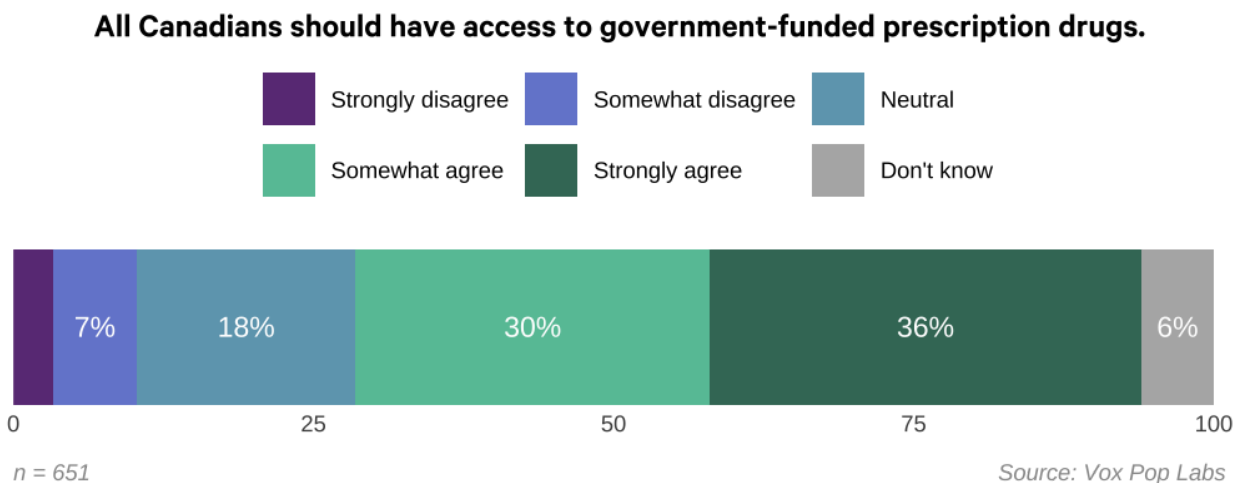


Figure 16 (Q31)

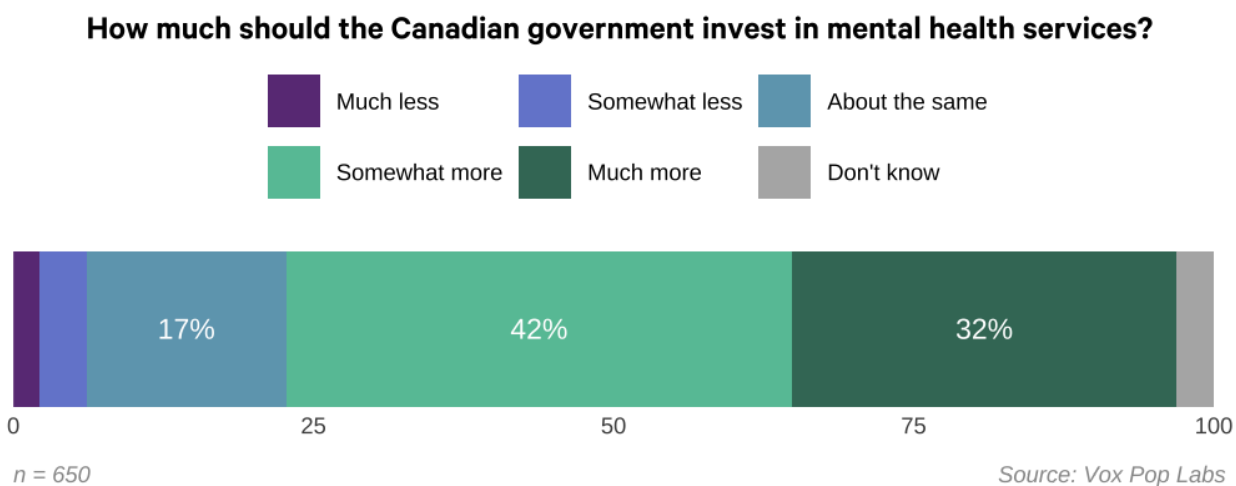


Figure 17 (Q62)

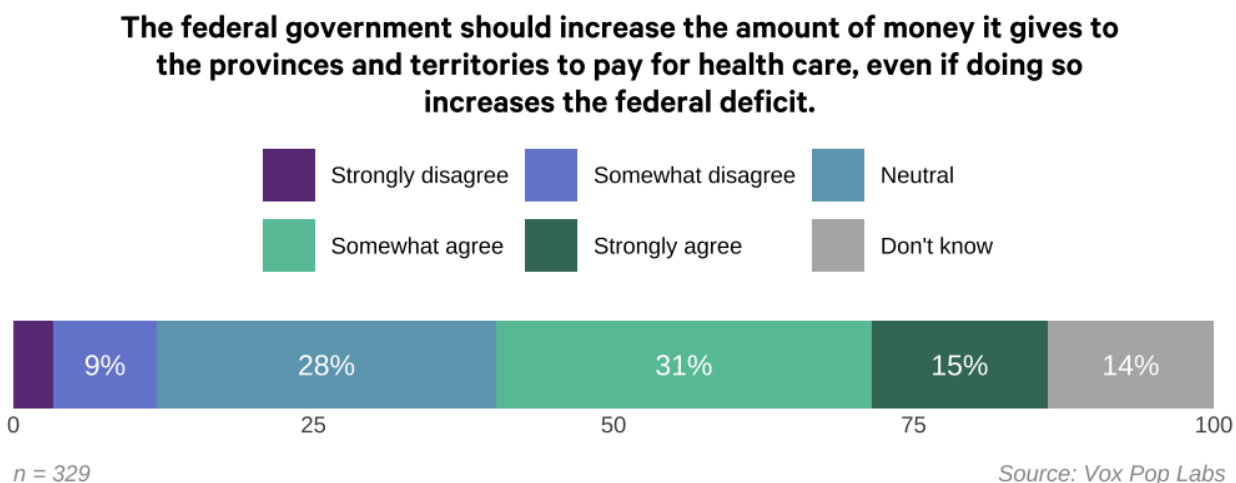


Figure 18 (Q65)

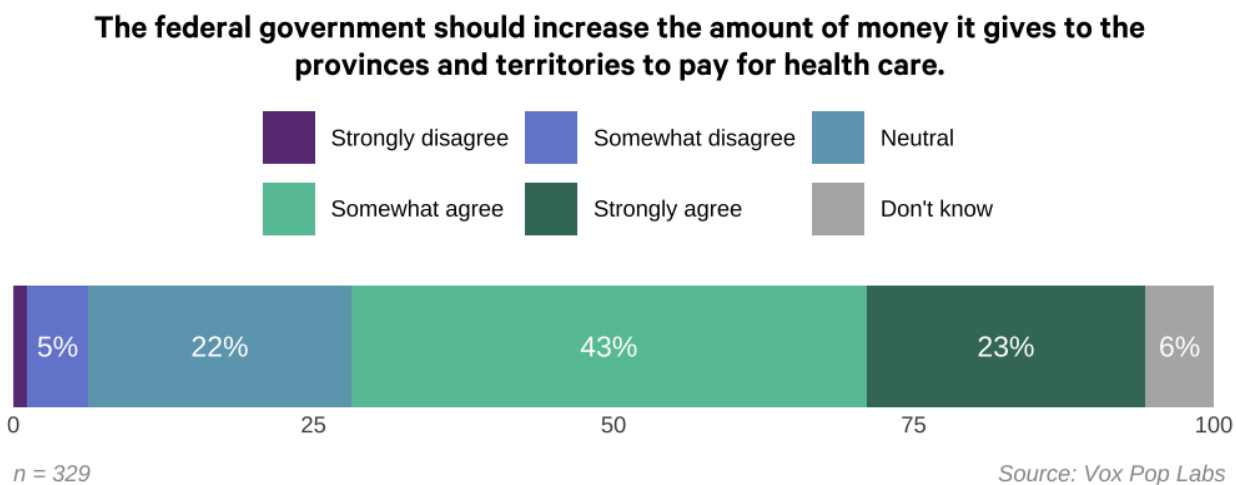


Figure 19 (Q12)

What is the most important step that the federal government can take to support young Canadians over the next five years?

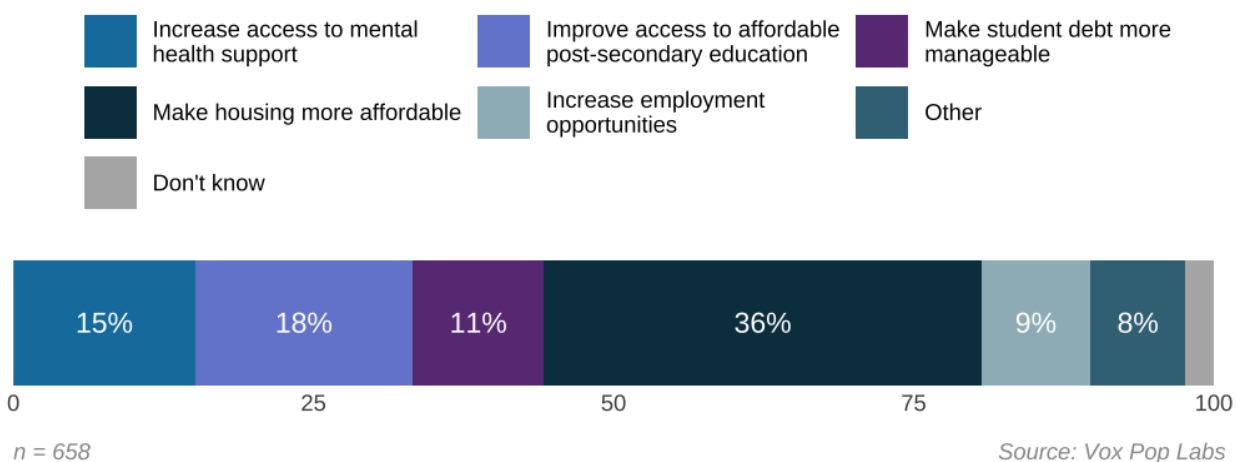


Figure 20 (Q49)

Post-secondary education should be free, even if it means higher taxes for everyone.

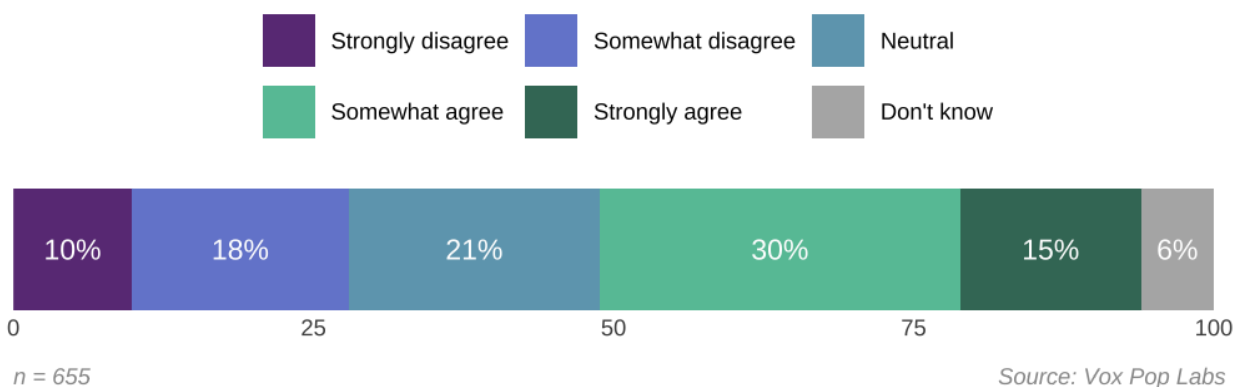


Figure 21 (Q68)

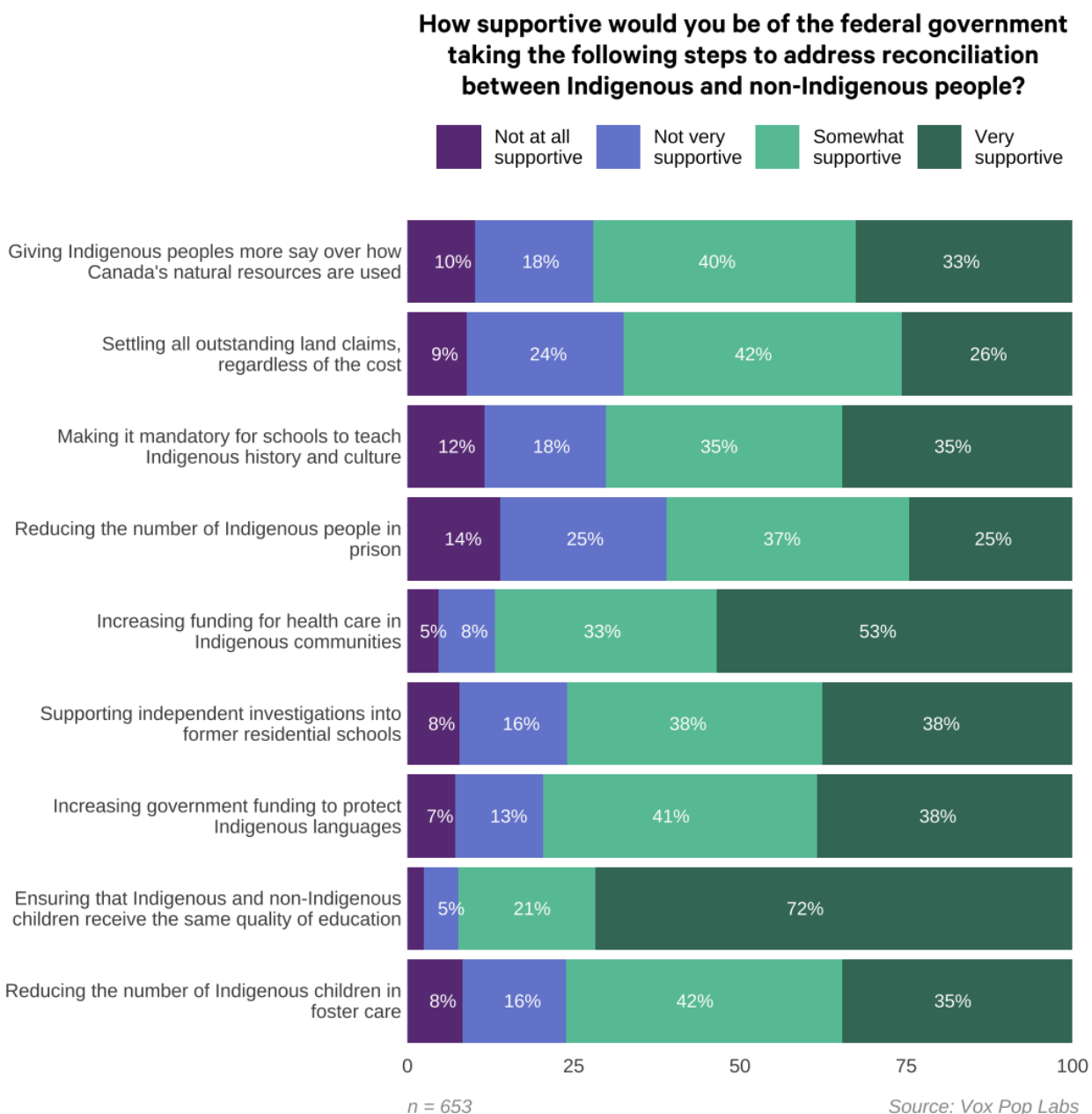


Figure 22 (Q71)

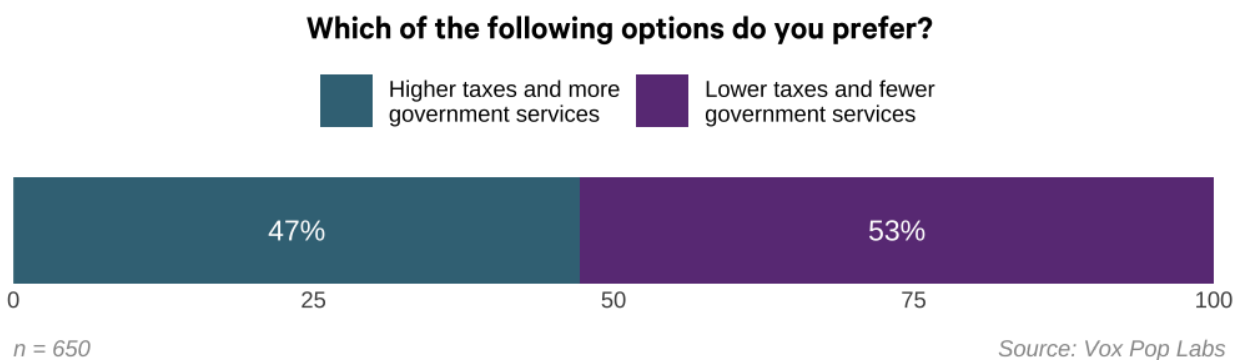


Figure 23 (Q17)

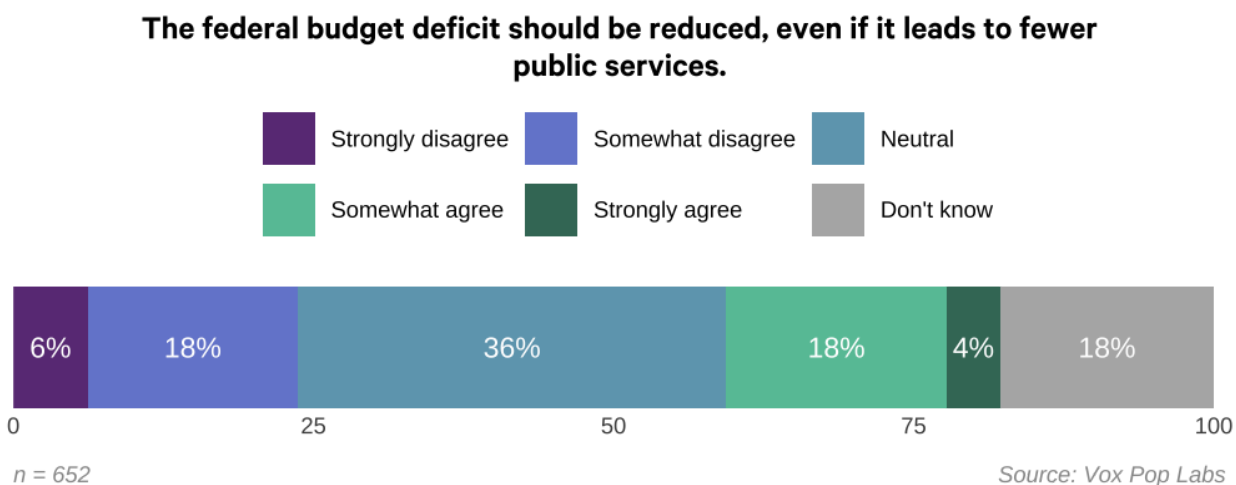


Figure 24 (Q52)

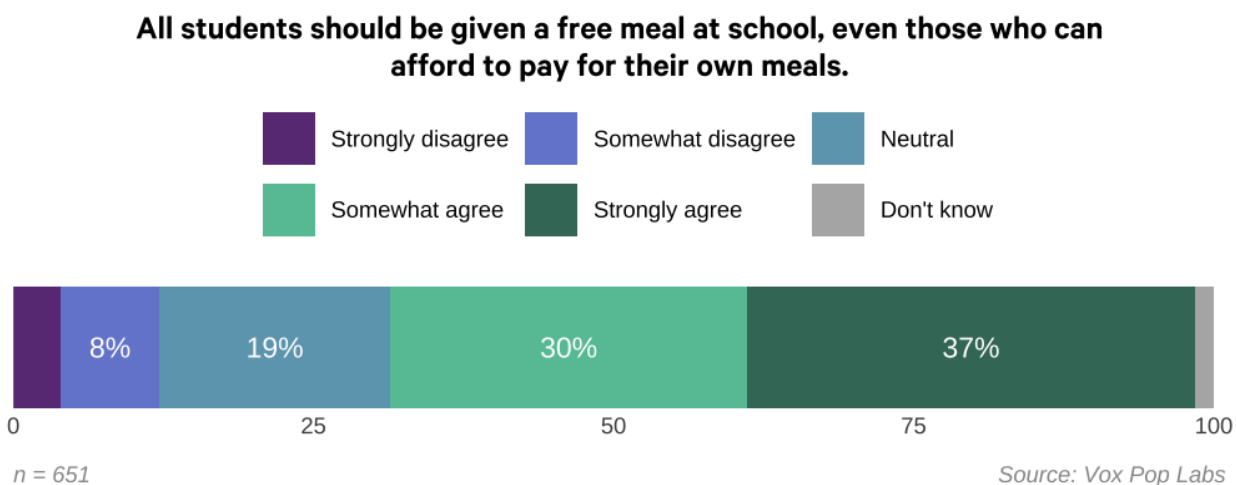


Figure 25 (Q43)

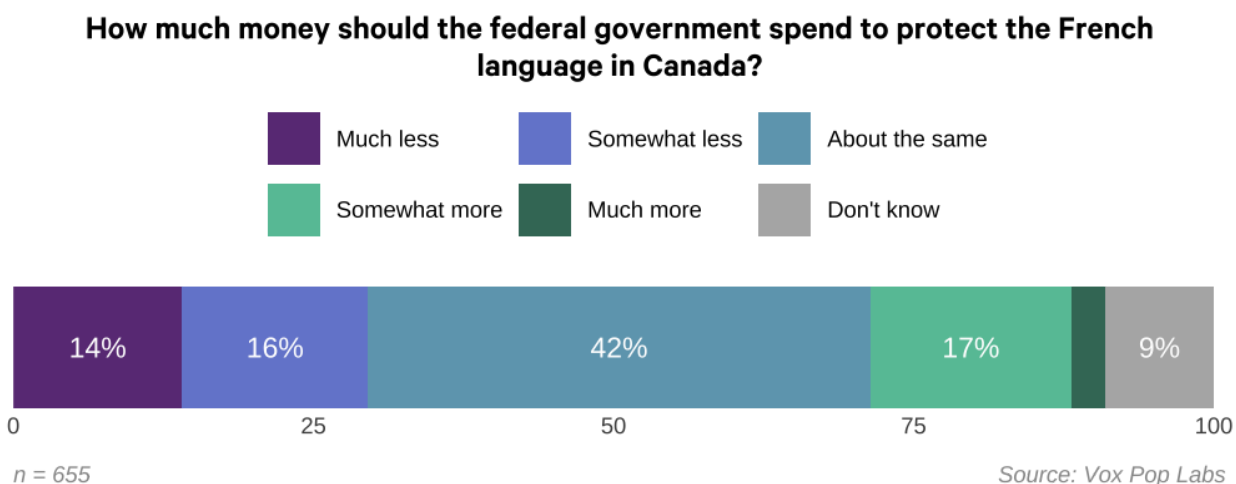


Figure 26 (Q40)

How much money should the federal government spend on arts and culture in Canada?

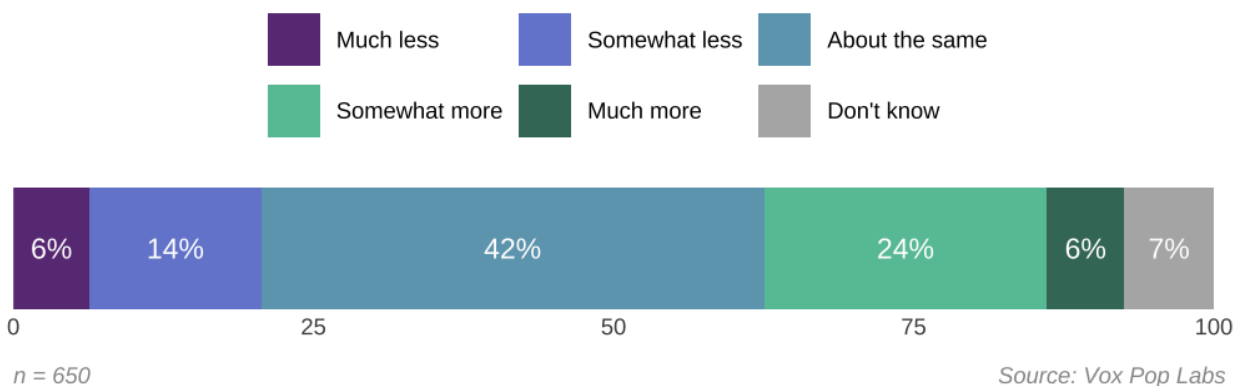


Figure 27 (Q54)

How much should Canada spend on foreign aid?

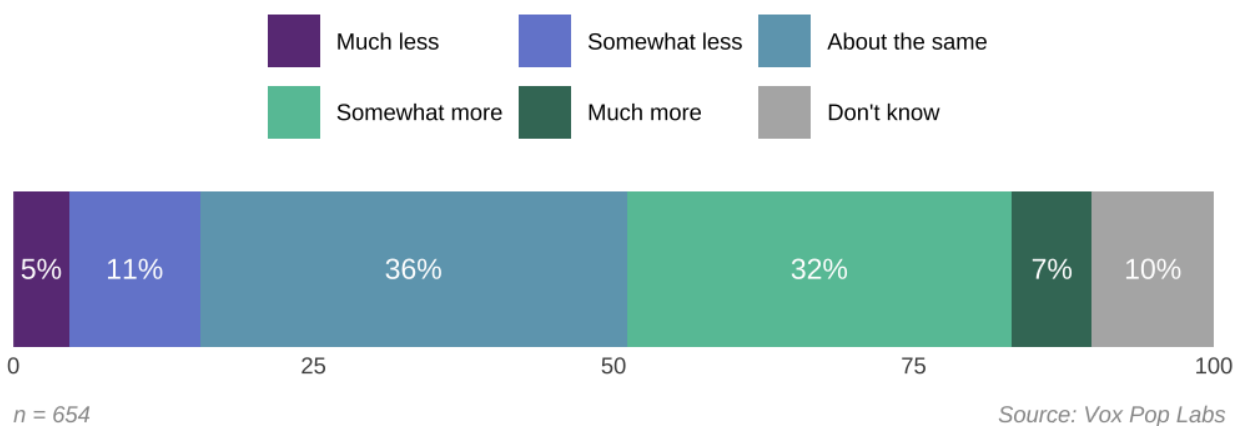


Figure 28 (Q14)

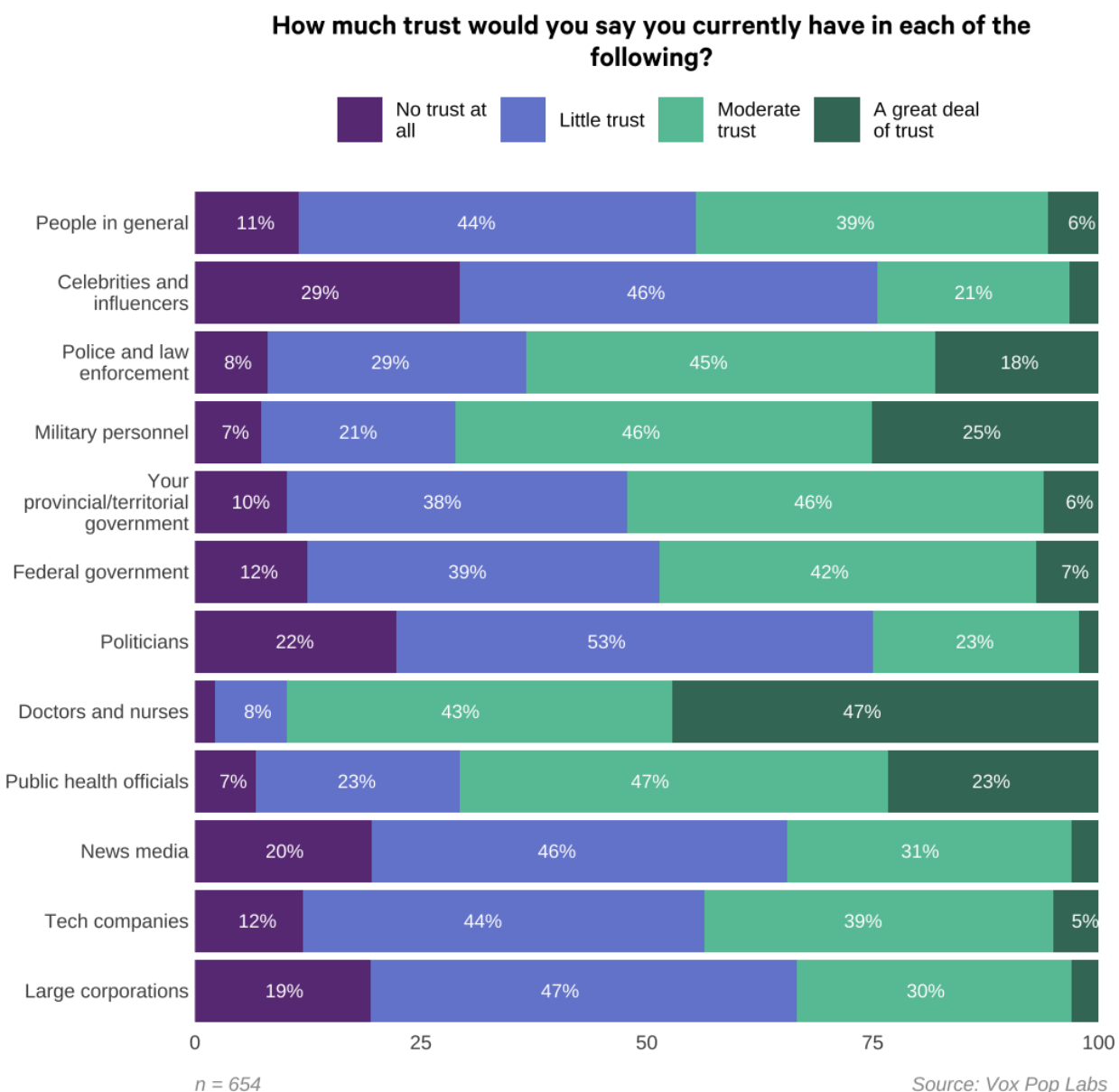
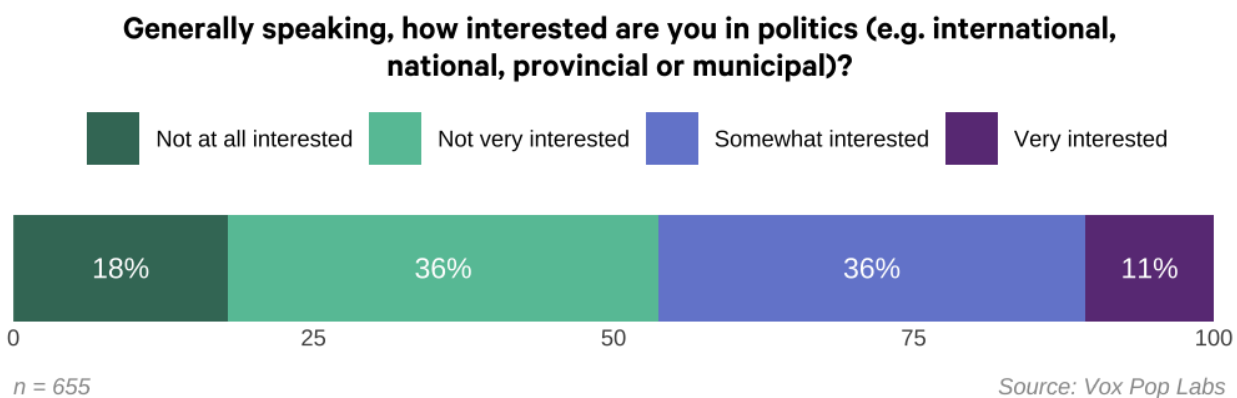
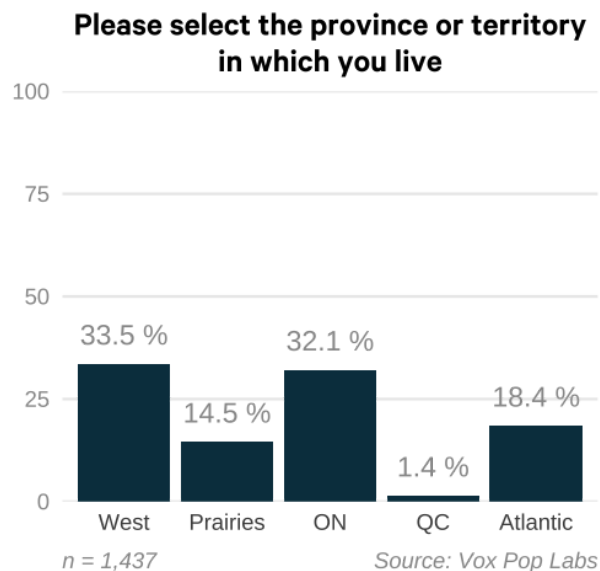


Figure 29 (Q77)

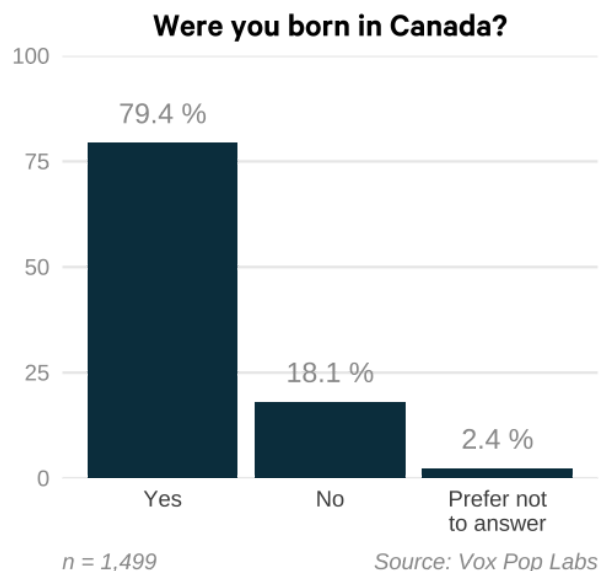


Demographic Profile (before weighting)

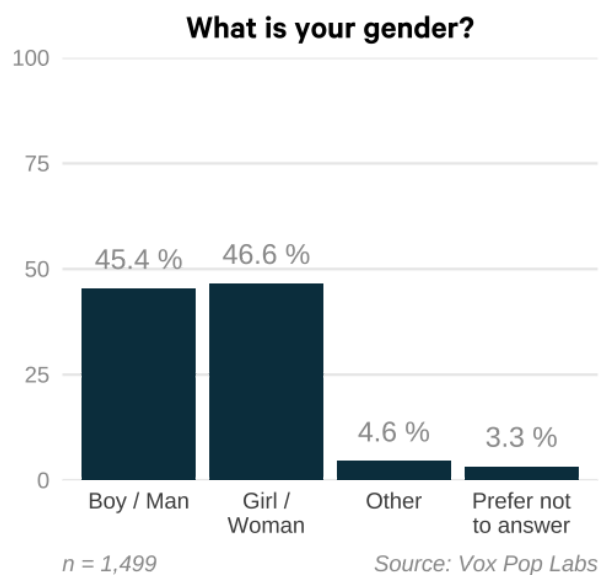
Province



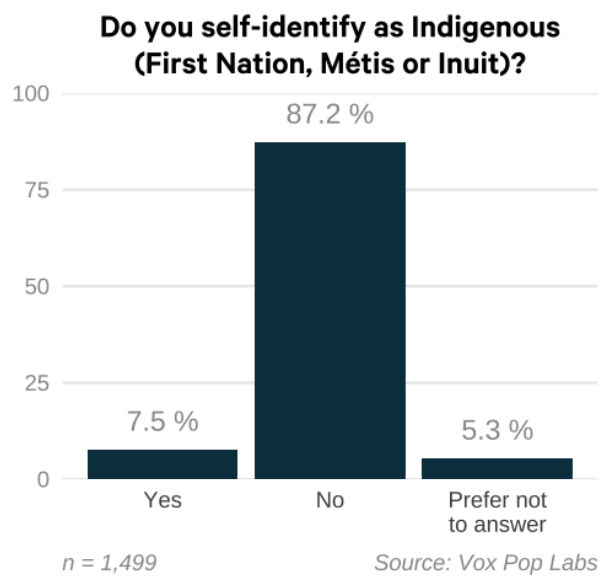
Born in Canada



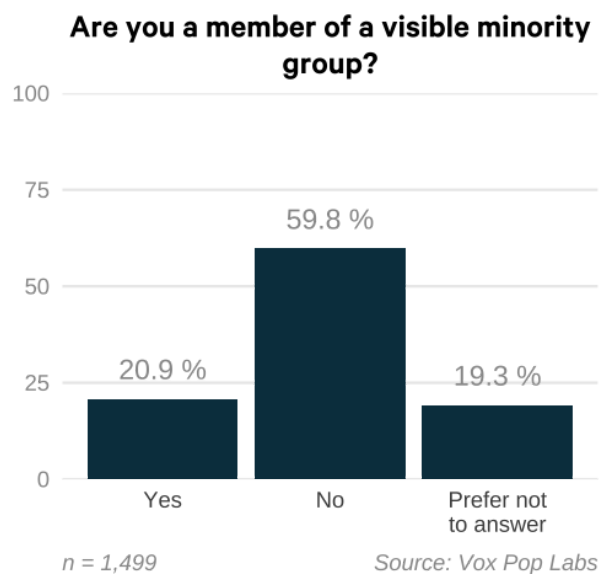
Gender



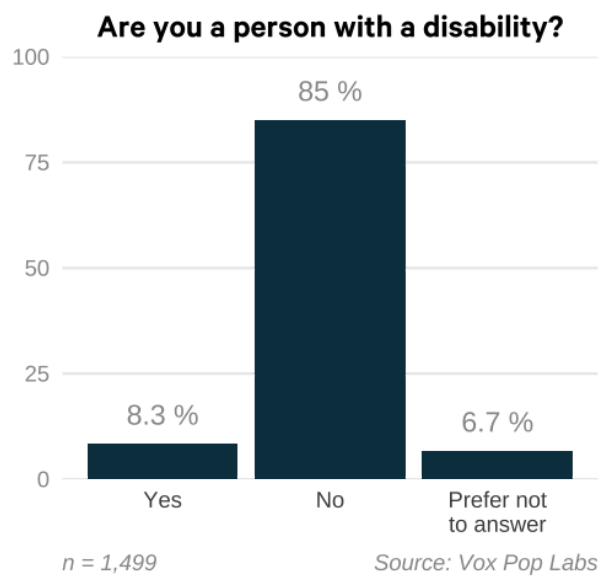
Indigenous



Visible Minority



Disability



Language

