



*Confederation
of Tomorrow*

Trusting federal and provincial government decision-making on key issues

**Environics
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2024 SERIES



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The Environics Institute for Survey Research was established by Michael Adams in 2006 with a mandate to conduct in-depth public opinion and social research on the issues shaping Canada's future. It is through such research that Canadians can better understand themselves and their changing society.

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The Confederation of Tomorrow surveys give voice to Canadians about the major issues shaping the future of the federation and their political communities. They are conducted annually by an association of the country's leading public policy and socio-economic research organizations.

The 2024 study consists of a survey of 6,036 adults, conducted between January 13 and March 4, 2024 (80% of the responses were collected between January 18 and 26); 95% of the responses were collected online. The remaining responses were collected by telephone from respondents living in the North or on First Nations reserves.

View more from the Confederation of Tomorrow series

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Introduction

Canadians are losing trust in the ability of both the federal government and their provincial governments to deal with key issues such as health care, climate change, immigration or the economy.

Since 2019, the annual Confederation of Tomorrow surveys have asked which government Canadians trust more to make the right decisions in different policy areas. A growing number of Canadians say they trust neither level of government to address these key issues. This pattern is evident across all regions of the country.

The survey shows that the proportions trusting the federal government more, or trusting both levels of government equally, have declined. Despite this, there has been no increase in the proportion trusting their provincial governments more. In other words, Canadians have not shifted their trust over time from the federal government to their provincial government.



Key Findings

- Since 2019, the proportion of Canadians saying they trust neither the federal nor their provincial government to make the right decisions has risen in the case of each of the four policy areas covered in the survey: health care, climate change, the economy and immigration.
- The proportions trusting the federal government more to address climate change or to manage immigration and refugee settlement have both declined.
- The proportion trusting their provincial government more to manage the health care system increased at the start of the pandemic, but has declined since then. In none of the three other policy areas has the overall proportion trusting their provincial government more changed significantly since 2019.

- As the proportions of Canadians saying they trust neither government has risen in the case of each of the four areas covered in the survey, the proportions saying they trust both the federal and their provincial government equally have declined.

Trusting neither government

The Confederation of Tomorrow surveys ask Canadians which government - federal or provincial - they trust more to make the right decisions in four different policy areas. The question also gives them the option of saying they trust both governments equally, or that they trust neither government. Since 2019, the proportion saying they trust neither government has increased in each of the four areas:

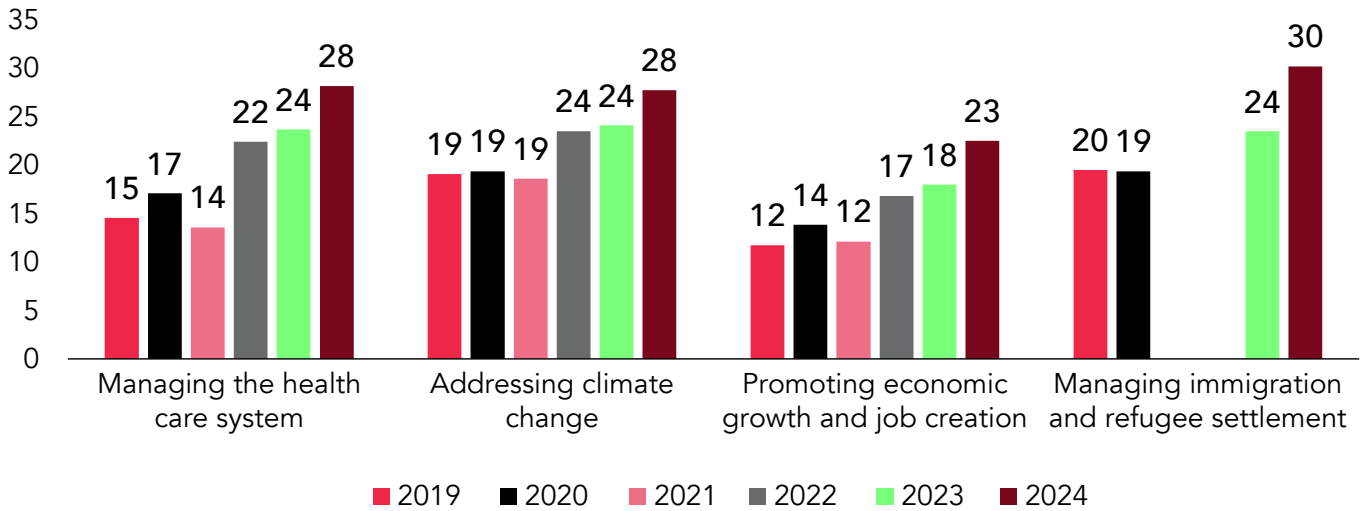
- The proportion trusting neither government to **manage the health care system** has increased from 15 percent in 2019 to 28 percent in 2024;
- The proportion trusting neither government to **address climate change** has increased from 19 percent in 2019 to 28 percent in 2024;
- The proportion trusting neither government to **promote economic growth and job creation** has increased from 12 percent in 2019 to 23 percent in 2024;
- The proportion trusting neither government to **manage immigration and refugee settlement** has increased from 20 percent in 2019 to 30 percent in 2024.

Moreover, this trend is generally consistent across the country.

In each of the 10 provinces, the proportion trusting neither government is significantly higher today than in 2019 when it comes to managing health care and managing immigration.

FIGURE 1

Proportion trusting neither the federal nor their provincial government to make the right decisions in each area, Canada,* 2019 - 2024



Q.25: Which government do you trust more to make the right decisions in the following areas?
*Excluding the territories.

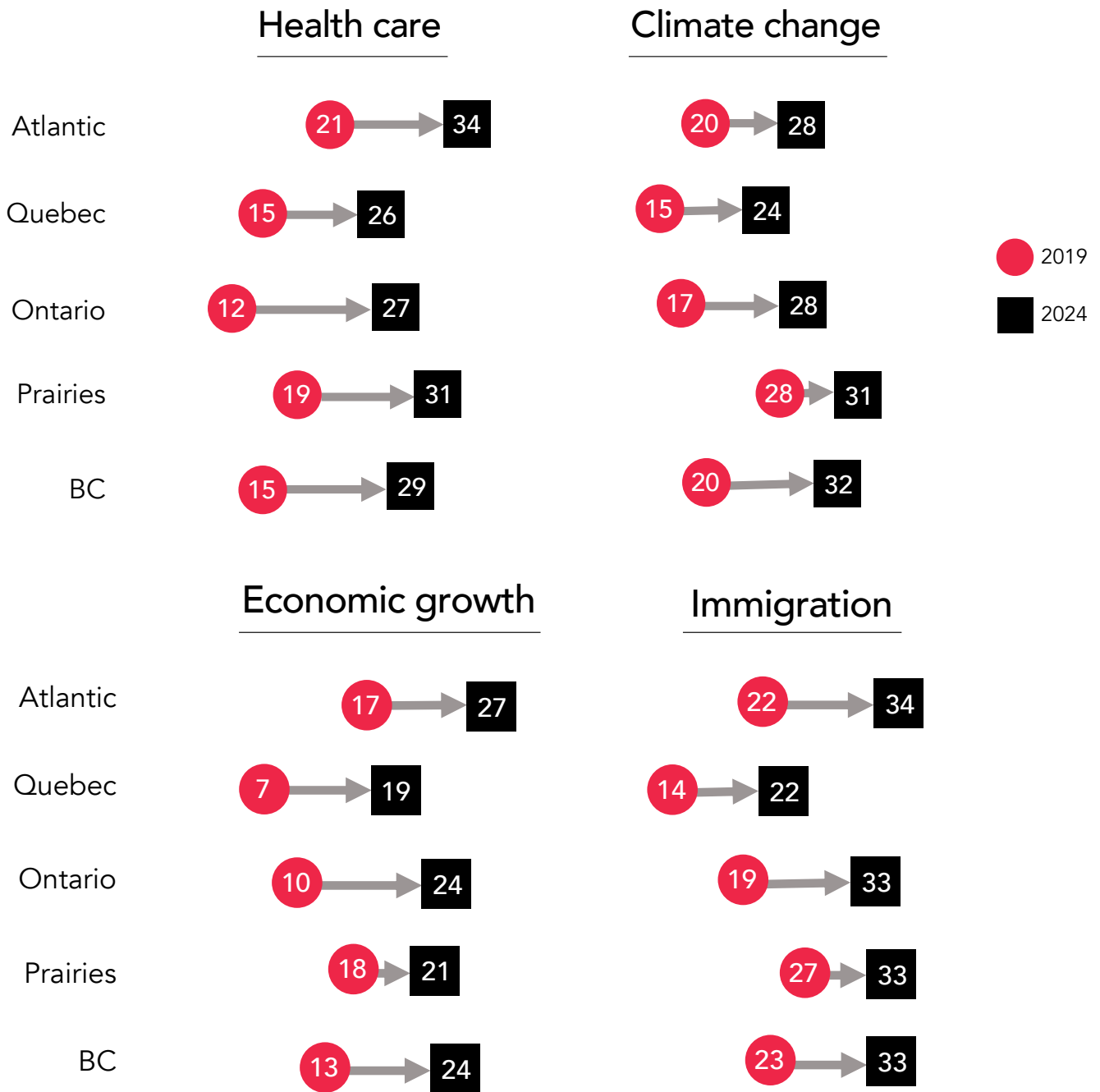
It is also higher today than in 2019 in nine of 10 provinces in the case of addressing climate change and promoting economic growth. The exception is Alberta, where the proportion trusting neither government in these two areas was already comparatively high in 2019 and has held more or less steady since then.

The proportion trusting neither government to manage health care is currently highest in Atlantic Canada, where it was increased from 21 percent in 2019 to 34 percent today. The proportion trusting neither to addressing climate change is currently highest in the Prairies (31%) and in British Columbia (32%), but the change since 2019 has been greater in B.C. (an increase of 12 percentage points).

In the case of managing immigration, the proportion trusting neither government has increased from 19 percent in 2019 to 33 percent in 2024 in Ontario, from 23 percent to 33 percent in British Columbia, and from 22 to 34 percent in the Atlantic provinces.

FIGURE 2

Proportion trusting neither the federal nor their provincial government to make the right decisions in each area, by region, 2019 - 2024



Q.25: Which government do you trust more to make the right decisions in the following areas?

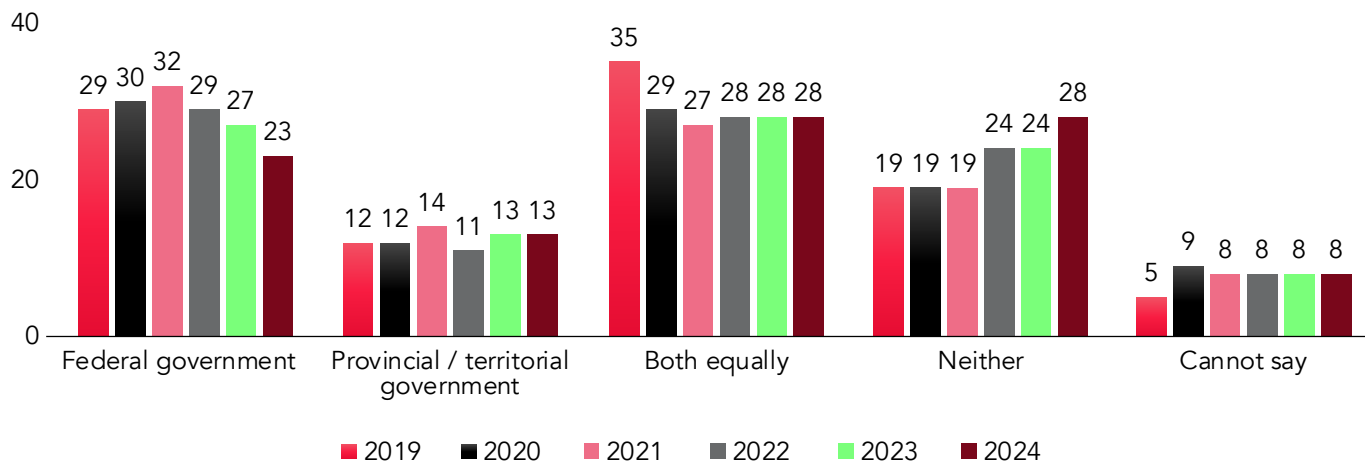
Trusting the federal government more

In two of the four policy areas - addressing climate change and managing immigration and refugee settlement - Canadians are more likely to say they trust the federal government more than to say they trust their provincial government more. However, in both cases, the proportion trusting the federal government more has declined.

- The proportion trusting the federal government more to **address climate change** has dropped from 32 percent in 2021 to 23 percent in 2024;
- the proportion trusting the federal government more to **manage immigration and refugee settlement** has dropped from 34 percent in 2020 to 23 percent in 2024.

FIGURE 3

Which government do you trust more to make the right decisions in addressing climate change? Canada,* 2019 - 2024



Q.25c: Which government do you trust more to make the right decisions in the following areas: Addressing climate change?

*Excluding the territories.

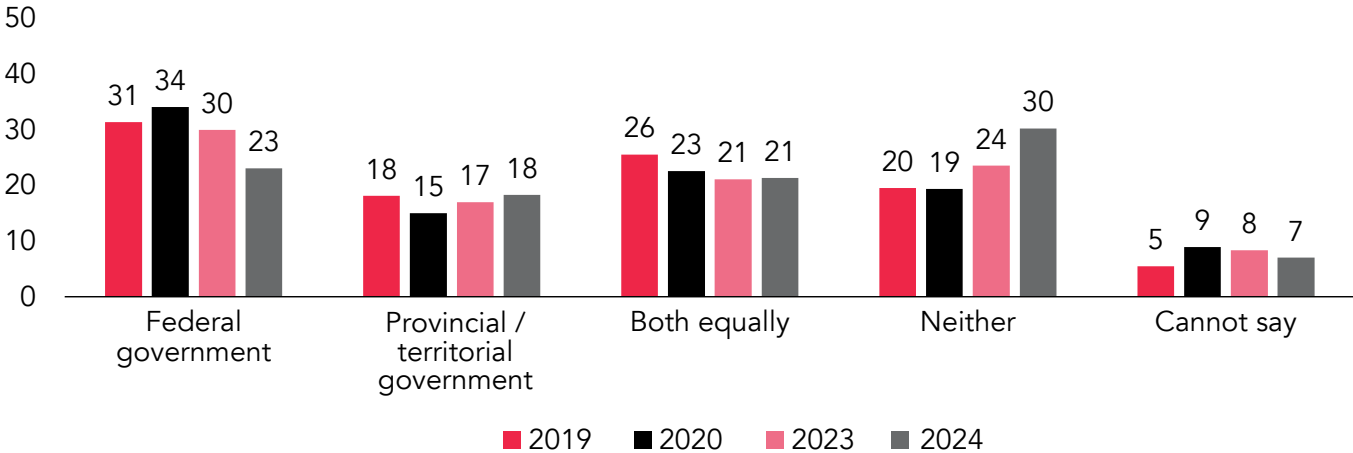
The proportion trusting the federal government more to address climate change has declined since 2021 in every province. This decline has been most pronounced in Manitoba (down 17 percentage points), Saskatchewan (down 16 points) and Alberta (down 16 points), and more modest in British Columbia (down 5 points) and Quebec (down 4 points).

Despite the larger drop in the proportion trusting the federal government more on this issue in the three Prairie provinces, this proportion is no lower than the proportion in the region trusting their provincial government more (20% regionally in each case).

The proportion trusting the federal government more to manage immigration also has declined over this period in every province. This decline has been somewhat more pronounced in Newfoundland and Labrador (down 15 percentage points), Prince Edward Island (down 14 points), Ontario (down 14 points) and British Columbia (down 14 points), and somewhat more modest in Manitoba (down 5 points), New Brunswick (down 5 points) and Quebec (down 4 points).

FIGURE 4

Which government do you trust more to make the right decisions in managing immigration and refugee settlement? Canada,* 2019 - 2024



Q.25d: Which government do you trust more to make the right decisions in the following areas: Managing immigration and refugee settlement?

*Excluding the territories.



Trusting provincial governments more

In two of the four policy areas - managing the health care system and promoting economic growth and job creation - Canadians are more likely to say they trust their provincial government more than to say they trust the federal government more.

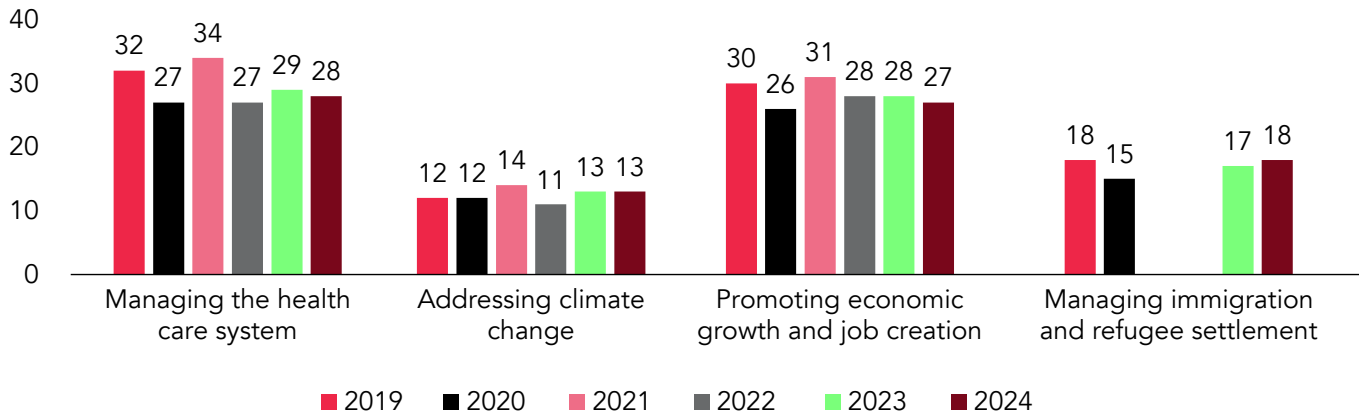
- 28 percent of Canadians currently say they trust their provincial government more to make the right decisions in **managing the health care system**, compared to 16 percent who trust the federal government more;
- 27 percent of Canadians currently say they trust their provincial government more to make the right decisions in **promoting economic growth and job creation**, compared to 14 percent who trust the federal government more.

The proportion trusting their provincial government more to manage the health care system increased at the start of the pandemic (between 2020 and 2021), but has declined since then (an overall drop of six percentage points, from 34% in 2021 to 28% in 2024). This drop has occurred in every province except Alberta and British Columbia. The drop since 2021 in the proportion trusting their provincial government more to manage the health care system is especially steep in Quebec (down 17 percentage points) and Prince Edward Island (down 13 points).

In none of the three other policy areas has the overall proportion trusting their provincial government more changed significantly since 2019.

FIGURE 5

Proportion trusting their provincial government more to make the right decisions in each area, Canada,* 2019 - 2024



Q.25: Which government do you trust more to make the right decisions in the following areas?
*Excluding the territories.

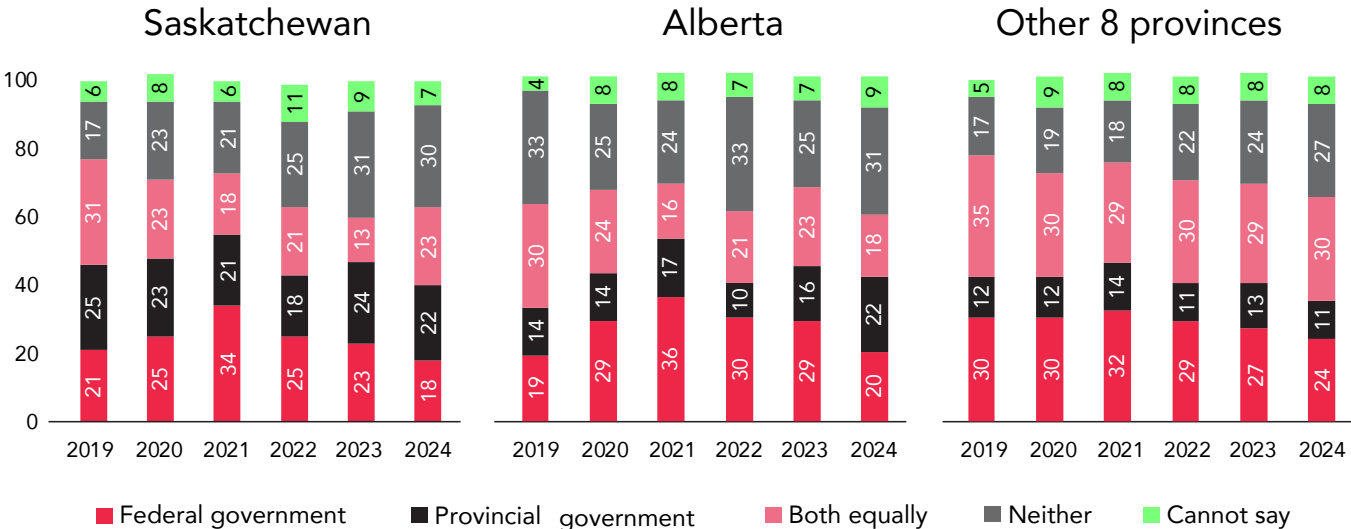
While a number of provincial governments are currently opposed to the federal government’s “price on pollution” approach to addressing climate change, the overall proportion of Canadians trusting their provincial government more on this issue has not increased over time. However, the proportion trusting their provincial government more has increased since 2019 in Alberta (up 8 percentage points, from 14% to 22%). Despite this increase, a greater share of Albertans (31%) continue to say they trust neither government on this issue.

In every province east of Saskatchewan, residents in 2024 are more likely to say they trust the federal government more to address climate change than they are to say they trust their provincial government more. The federal government in this regard holds an advantage of 13 percentage points in Atlantic Canada, 13 points in Quebec, 19 points in Ontario and eight points in Manitoba. In Saskatchewan, Alberta

and British Columbia, residents are more likely to say they trust their provincial government more on this issue than they are to say they trust the federal government more, but the margin is relatively modest. The provincial government holds an advantage of four percentage points in Saskatchewan, and of only two points in Alberta and two points in B.C.

FIGURE 6

Which government do you trust more to make the right decisions in addressing climate change? 2019 - 2024

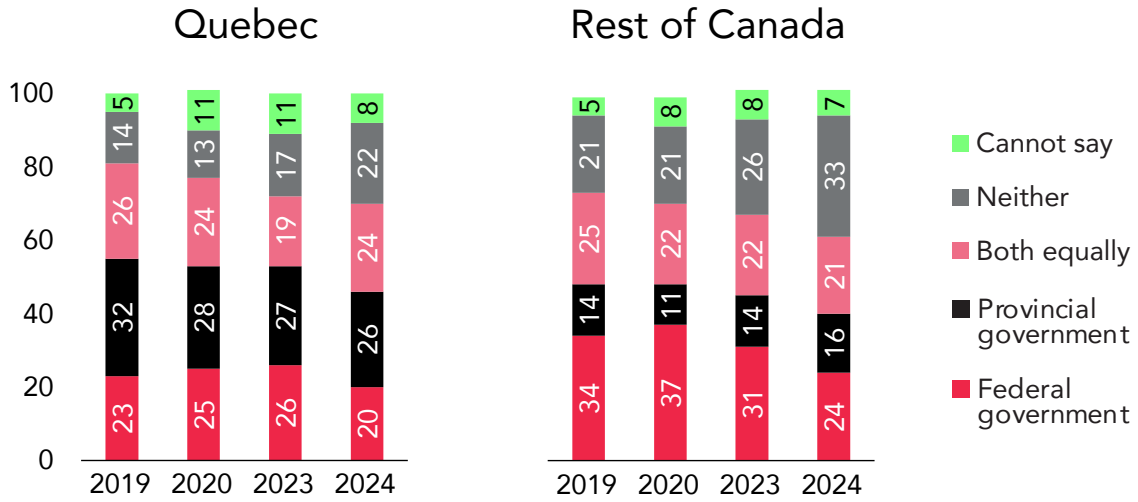


Q.25c: Which government do you trust more to make the right decisions in the following areas: Addressing climate change?

On immigration, Quebec remains the only province where the proportion trusting their provincial government (26% in 2024) more is significantly greater than the proportion trusting the federal government more (20%) - which may reflect the fact that the Quebec government plays a greater role than other provincial governments do in immigration selection and settlement. However, since 2019, the proportion of Quebecers trusting their provincial government more on this issue has declined by six percentage points, while the proportion trusting the federal government more has declined by three points.

FIGURE 7

Which government do you trust more to make the right decisions in managing immigration and refugee settlement? 2019 - 2024



Q.25d: Which government do you trust more to make the right decisions in the following areas: Managing immigration and refugee settlement?



Trusting both governments equally

As the proportions of Canadians saying they trust neither government has risen in each of the four areas covered in the survey, the proportions saying they trust both the federal and their provincial government equally has declined.

The decline since 2019 in the proportions trusting both governments equally has been steepest in the case of promoting economic growth and job creation (down 10 percentage points) and managing the health care system (down 9 points). The decline has been more modest in the case of addressing climate change (down 7 points) and managing immigration and refugee settlement (down 5 points).

Despite these declines, trusting both governments equally is still the most common choice of Canadians when it comes to promoting economic growth (29% choose this option, virtually tied with the 27% who trust their provincial government more); and it is tied for first place when it comes to addressing climate change (28% choose this option and 28% trust neither government).

Implications

While, in principle, the federal and provincial governments operate in their respective areas of jurisdiction, in practice they both have a role to play in most major policy areas. This could create a situation where, over time, citizens shift their support from one level of government to the other: approval of what their provincial government is doing to address an issue might increase when the public doesn't like what it is getting from Ottawa, or vice versa.

In recent years, however, these types of shifts have not been taking place. Canadians have become less likely to trust their provincial governments more to manage the health care system, and they have become less likely to trust the federal government more to address climate change or to manage immigration and refugee settlement. But neither the federal government nor the provincial governments has gained ground in any of these areas. Rather, it is the proportion trusting neither government that has increased.

It is inevitable that, from time to time, political leaders will disagree with the policies of their federal or provincial counterparts. But these leaders should take note that, in the current period at least, these disagreements are not generating greater public support for their own positions. Public opinion has been shifting only in one direction, namely toward greater public dissatisfaction with the federal government on some issues, and with provincial governments on others.

Additional tables and charts to accompany this report are available on the [Environics Institute website](#).



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