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Trust in Government

Action Learning Project

April 2023

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Trust is an essential component of well-functioning democracies and strong public institutions. It is needed for governments to possess the legitimacy to lead, govern, and respond to important challenges. In recent years, citizen trust in government and the use of social media platforms as channels to communicate with Canadians have become the subject of study. What can social media data tell us to better understand the characteristics and changing nature of trust? This summary report presents the findings from a study which examined citizen trust through the lens of social media, using a unique Artificial Intelligence (AI) model which tracked and interpreted Twitter data from December 2020 to December 2022.

The purpose of the study was to measure trust in several ways – over time, by 'component' of trust, across discrete policy areas, and along the ideological spectrum. Rich findings emerged from each of these lines of inquiry.

First, Canadians' trust in government averaged approximately 59% over the two-year period of the study. This is consistent with results presented by several public opinion research firms. While the two-year average is stable and moderate compared with historical changes, there is significant short-term variability when major events occurred, including waves of COVID-19, the occupation of Ottawa, and the invasion of Ukraine. The lasting impact of these individual events on longer term trust is difficult to predict. But the survey period evidence does show that, in some instances, trust fell as events unfolded and did not automatically recover. See the figure below:
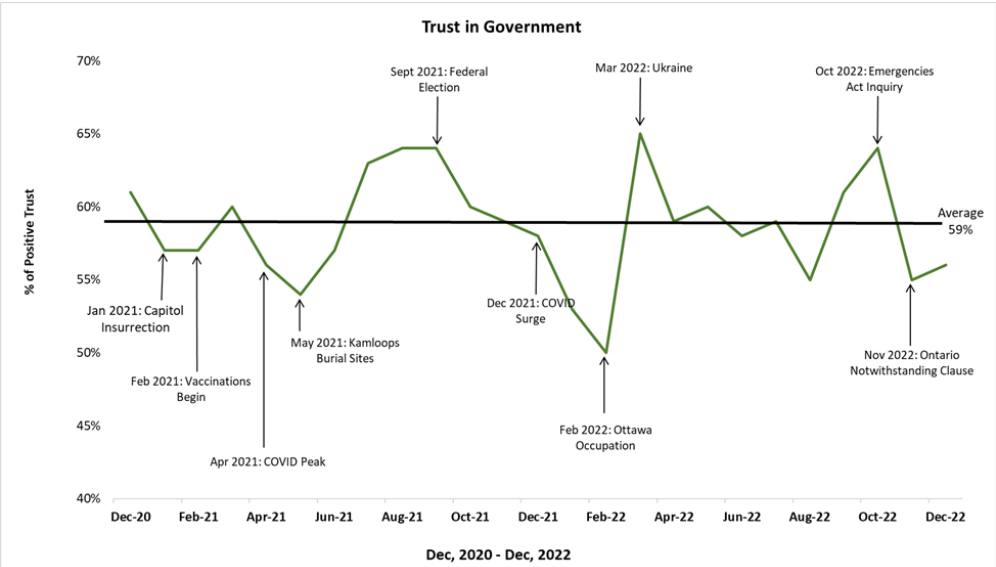
Figure 3 from report: Percentage trust in government (December, 2020 – December, 2022)

The AI model also tracked trust according to five components which are identified by an OECD model of trust: reliability, responsiveness, integrity, openness, and fairness. It found that responsiveness and openness were, by far, of the greatest importance to Canadians. Responsiveness refers to the extent to which government policies and services meet citizen needs, demands, and expectations while openness refers to the accessibility of information. Collectively, they represent 90% of the share of social media engagements. This suggests an opening as to where governments can engage to foster greater trust. See the figure below:
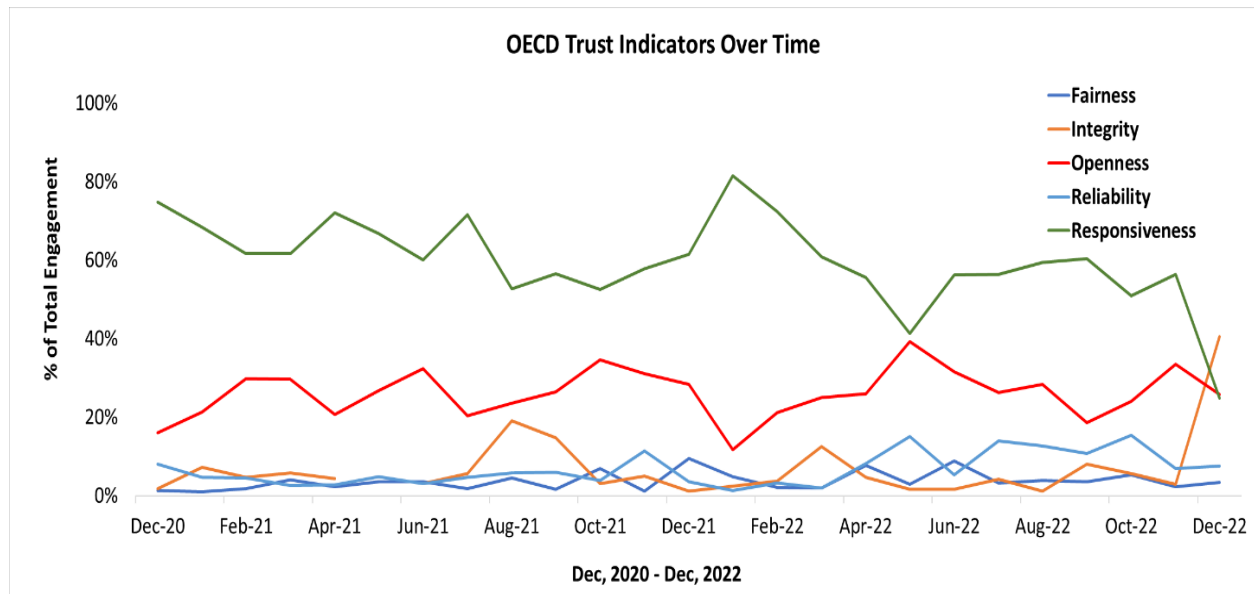
Figure four from report: Percentage total engagement with OECD trust indicators (December, 2020 – December, 2022)

The model further measured trust in relation to five significant issue areas: climate change, the economy, government and expert information, the justice system, and diversity and inclusion. Within these issue areas, variation along and ideological spectrum and differences in amount of engagement across the ideological spectrum were observed. In particular, the following key themes emerged:

- Canadians engaged more often on the subject of the economy than any of the other four issues examined. By contrast, climate change generated only one third as much engagement, and trust levels in government were more polarizing on climate change.

- Trust levels on economic issues and on issues of diversity and inclusion were higher than general levels of trust observed during the same period. Conversely, they were lower than the general levels of trust on issues of climate change, government and expert information, and the justice system.

- Trust varied significantly across the ideological spectrum. Generally, those on the far left and far right were less trusting of government than the centre-left, centre, and centre-right. Importantly, the reasons behind this distrust were different for each of those two cohorts.

- The five per cent of the cohort on the farthest right of the ideological spectrum consistently reported the lowest levels of trust in government. This cohort typically rejected the very premise of an issue or policy and were more extreme and negative in their views of the federal government in particular.

- Individuals at either end of the ideological spectrum were consistently more engaged on social media, yet their trust levels remained consistently low. This suggests an 'echo chamber' effect of social media engagement.

- Individuals sometimes shared a common level of trust but the reasons behind that sentiment were different. For instance, trust in the justice system was negative across the entire ideological spectrum – but those on the left were preoccupied with how those who interact with the justice system are treated and those on the right were concerned with use and invocation of the Emergencies Act.

The paper concludes by identifying and discussing key areas that are central to rebuilding trust. They include fostering:

- Improved service delivery;

- Open and inclusive decision-making processes;

- Science and evidence-informed decision-making processes;

- Political accountability and promise-keeping;

- Institutional humility and support for democratic institutions.

TRUST IN GOVERNMENT: ACTION LEARNING PROJECT

The Institute on Governance's (IOG) Trust in Government: Action Learning Policy Project was a one-year research project specifically designed to explore the issue of trust in government as expressed through the lens of social media, particularly, Twitter. More and more, social media is the channel for Canadians to engage in conversation, debate, and declarations about what government is doing or should be doing. Political leaders and actors are active on social media and often use it to speak directly to Canadians and circumvent traditional media channels. Social media has become a rich, complex, and distinct communications set of networks. Understanding what is said, when, and by whom on social media offers an important perspective on government trust issues.

IOG set out to mine Twitter for trust through an interactive research and learning program with participants from the federal government policy community and Advanced Symbolics Inc (ASI) as its tool. The program used a variety of methods including interactive workshops, group discussion, academic research, AI modelling and data analysis, and expert speakers. Throughout the program, participants actively worked with the IOG to explore the importance of trust, what affects trust, the consequences of low trust, and strategies to improve trust in government.

The following is a summary report resulting from the discussions and analysis from the program. It was prepared by the Institute on Governance with the assistance of Dr. Lori Turnbull from Dalhousie University with the survey results validated by Erin Kelly, President and CEO of Advanced Symbolics Inc. The IOG thanks them for their contribution.

INTRODUCTION

The issue of trust in government has justifiably garnered a lot of attention in recent years as citizens' faith in governments' ability has been openly questioned in a world of 'polycrisis' – multiple crises coming together including a pandemic, war, economic dislocation, and political and social polarization. This has been amplified with the ubiquitous nature of social media and the segmentation of traditional media which tend to divide citizens into like-minded camps with reinforcing information and narratives. While there are many consequences to this dynamic, citizen trust in government and democratic institutions have become particularly vulnerable.

In Canada, the level of trust in government is generally viewed as moderate according to the 2023 Edelman Trust Barometer. As seen in Figure 1, 51% of Canadians report having trust in their government, down two percentage points from the previous year. When compared to other countries that participate in the Edelman Trust Barometer, Canadians report "neutral" trust levels in

government, industry and NGOs. Or, slightly more Canadians report having trust in government, industry and NGOs than do the number of Canadians who don't trust these institutions. The number of Canadians who have trust in their institutions is comparable to countries such as the Netherlands (54%), Brazil (53%), and Italy (50%). Canadians demonstrate higher trust ratings than citizens of countries such as the United Kingdom (43%) and the United States (48%).
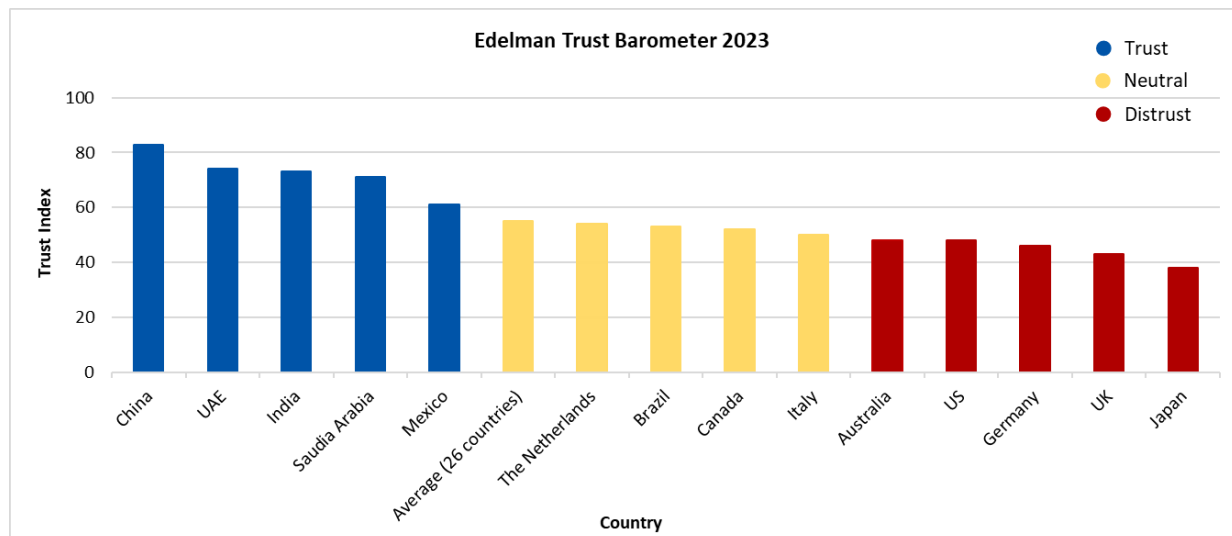
Figure 1: Edelman Trust Barometer 2023 trust index for various countries

Source for data: https://www.edelman.ca/sites/g/files/aatuss376/files/2023-03/2023%20Edelman%20Trust%20Barometer%20EN.pdf

While Canadians' trust in government is slightly better than our peer countries, we do know that public trust in government and democratic institutions has declined over a number of decades in Canada and in other western democracies. Some of the historic decline is a sign of a healthier democracy, resulting from increased public debate, a more knowledgeable and questioning public, increased diversity of perspectives, enhanced accountability and reporting, and the rise of special interest groups. Since public trust is central to the legitimacy of our democracy, any softening of trust in government needs attention.

Likely, this is why trust is on the minds of senior public officials in Canada. In May 2022, the Institute on Governance released "Top of Mind: Part One: Interviews; Conversations with Senior Leaders". During the survey, 174 senior public service leaders from all orders of government across the country were asked if declining trust weakens their ability to implement effective policies and programs, 22.4% of senior public service leaders strongly agreed and 58.1 mostly agreed for combined 80.5% (https://iog.ca/projects-initiatives/top-of-mind/).

Trust matters. Recent studies and the academic literature point to a number of risks associated with low levels of trust in government, including a negative effect on:

- Citizen participation in the democratic process

- Support for laws and regulations and adherence to the tax system

- Faith in the legitimacy of democratic institutions and outcomes of elections

- Ability to build consensus on resolving big issues and challenges

- Government's moral suasion authority, and

- Political and social cohesion.

This paper begins by defining trust and its various components and then explores the consequences of declining trust. The paper measures trust in government using a unique Artificial Intelligence (AI) model developed specifically for this research. The model measures how trust varies overtime, across the ideological spectrum, and across several policy areas. Finally, the paper offers suggestions on a path forward to how the trend in trust can be reversed.

WHAT IS TRUST?

Individuals have an inherent understanding of trust as a common, yet complex, human emotion. Typically, trust is the belief that another person or institution will act in good faith and honesty in accordance with socially accepted rules and behaviours. People rely on personal perspectives and lived experiences to inform their sentiments and perceptions of other individuals and institutions.

This paper adopts the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development's (OECD) definition of trust as, "holding a positive perception about the actions of an individual or an organization" (OECD 2021). Underpinning this definition is that social and institutional trust is built relationally, and that our perceptions of others as well as the actions of others are crucial to how we develop, maintain, and stabilize trust.

As noted by the OECD, when citizens trust their government, they are more likely to follow laws and regulations, report and pay taxes, participate more actively in the democratic process, and generally accept policies and directions of government. This results in societal order and stability and a sense of cohesion and common purpose – all important for a stable society as well as a well-functioning democracy. Basically, trust in government flows from citizens' belief that their political leaders and public institutions act and operate in an accepted and reliable manner.

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To draw understanding and insight from what is fundamentally an emotion-based perspective, an analytical framework is required. The OECD has produced a well-accepted framework outlining the components of trust. These components are grouped into: (*1*) competencies (how government performs); and (*2*) value (the government's ethical priorities). See Figure 2.

Components of Trust

Responsiveness   **Reliability**   **Fairness**   **Integrity**   **Openness**

Competencies   **Values**
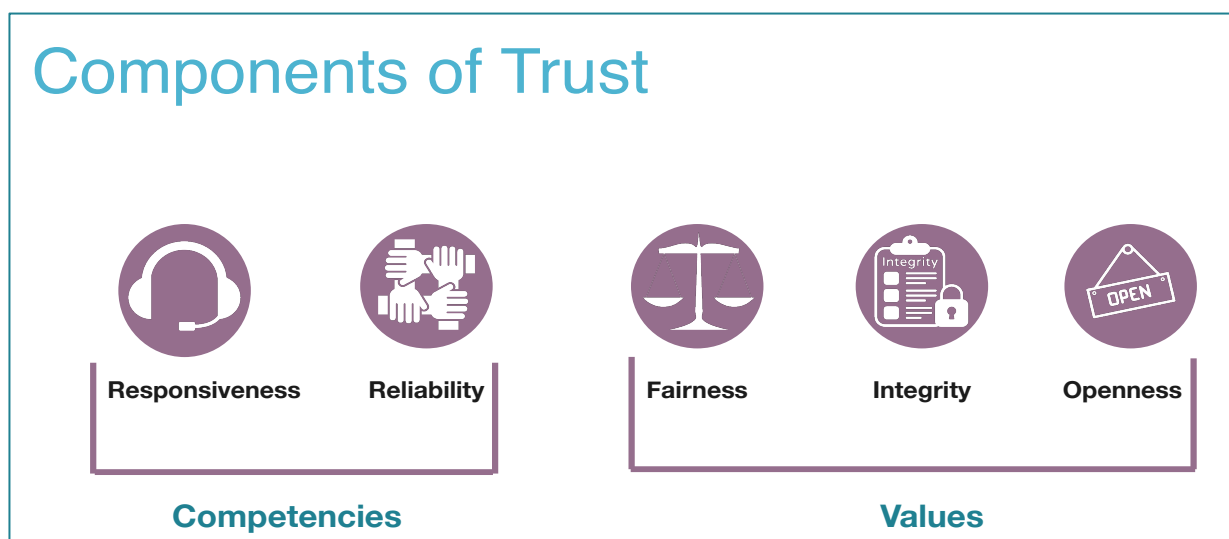
Figure 2: Components of trust

COMPETENCIES

The following five components of trust provide a useful framework to consider and expand our understanding of what can affect trust in government. Trust is a complex emotion involving all of the above components simultaneously. While the relative weight citizens give each component will vary overtime, they will also vary across different policy areas, as the subsequent analysis demonstrates.

1. RESPONSIVENESS

Responsiveness refers to the extent to which government policies and services meet citizen needs, demands, and expectations. Many studies have validated that citizens' trust in government is highly dependent on how they experience government on a regular basis. This also implies dynamism: government policies and services should align with citizens' new demands, anticipated circumstances, and emerging technology.

2. RELIABILITY

Reliability refers to confidence citizens have that government supports them when they need it. This reflects both competence of government in delivering on its commitments and its capacity to

anticipate change and protect citizens against economic, social, and environmental uncertainties. Reliability of government for anticipated events is based on an evaluation of past behaviours.

VALUES
3. INTEGRITY

Integrity refers to government acting in a manner that is consistent with its stated ethical priorities. This is a key driver of public trust. In Canada, integrity can positively affect trust if government is, and or is seen to be, using public resources effectively, prioritizing the public interest over private or party interests, having a neutral civil service, and having a high degree of accountability. Integrity's impact on trust is episodic in western democracies in the sense that it tends to become more pronounced based on individual occurrences of scandal or misdeed as opposed to a chronic failing in countries which are seen to be corrupt.

4. OPENESS

Openness refers to the degree to which the public may access information in order to comprehend the actions of government, and be heard to shape the actions and decisions of government. Open government policies – listening, consulting, engaging, and even co-creating – are seen as having a positive effect on trust. While the public understand some decisions have to be made in private, such as those involving national security or other highly sensitive issues, the public and media tend to demand further openness.

5. FAIRNESS

Fairness refers to whether governments demonstrate bias in their decisions or actions. It is based on the belief that government will act to improve living conditions for all and provide consistent treatment of its citizens regardless of their background and identify (e.g. gender, socio-economic status, religion, racial/ethnic origin). The fairness of institutions is critical for citizen trust, acceptance, and compliance. When policies or behaviours are perceived to **be** unfair, it erodes confidence in the competence of governments and in the values of government.

CONSEQUENCES OF DECLINING TRUST

Trust is the backbone of a well-functioning, representative democracy. It is the basic currency for the legitimacy that impacts the government's ability to lead, govern, and or/to respond to a crisis. Trust facilitates public participation and responsiveness. It enables elected leaders to work effectively with citizens to ensure that Canadian values and interests are converted into effective and accepted policy.

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Of course, a lack of trust in individual governments is nothing new. There has long been a lingering undercurrent of mistrust directed towards those who hold power. In a healthy democracy the recourse always exists to change governments. But declining trust over a longer period in government and democratic institutions is a cause for major concern because trust is the foundational currency of our public institutions.

This raises the question, "What are the consequences of declining or more moderate levels of trust?". The literature includes a myriad of consequences which are often difficult to discern from direct impacts from other factors that are correlated. The OECD provides a useful framework to understand the consequences of lower trust. The benefit of the OECD approach is that it classifies the types of effects; however, because of its broad approach it is difficult to measure the impact of declining trust with absolute precision. The approach nevertheless provides a useful frame to begin to understand the question, "What's at stake?"

The OECD framework identifies three broad implications:

CITIZEN ENGAGEMENT AND PARTICIPATION

As trust declines, citizens are less likely to actively engage, support, or participate with government. This can include a broad array of activities from adherence to laws and regulations and participation in the tax system to general engagement, such as remaining abreast of current events. There are some indications that these effects are more muted in Canada than in countries which have significantly lower levels of trust or are seen to be corrupt. For example, generally Canadians tend to adhere to laws and regulations. While crime is an important issue in Canada, it is more a function of well-documented socio-economic causes, and few would point to moderate levels of trust in government as a cause. Similarly, Canadians support and actively participate in the tax system. Canada's underground economy was estimated at 2.7% of GDP in 2021 by Statistics Canada (https://www.canada.ca/en/revenue-agency/programs/about-canada-revenue-agency-cra/corporate-reports-information/underground-economy-strategy-2022.html) far lower than in countries which are perceived to be corrupt. When it comes to divulging personal information to government, Canadians fill out the census with a 98% response rate, according to Statistics Canada. These broad indicators are reflective of the fact that Canadians remain supportive and compliant with their interactions with government.

FAITH AND TRUST IN THE ELECTORAL SYSTEM AND THE DEMOCRATIC PROCESS

Another implication of moderate or low levels of trust in government is that citizens will have less faith in the electoral and democratic process. Certainly, this impact has become evident in the United States and associated with many anti-intellectual and anti-establishment populist movements in western democracies. In some of these cases, lower levels of trust have actually become somewhat 'institutionalized' in the political process itself. The evolution of the Tea Party from fringe to mainstream within the U.S. Republican Party is one obvious example. Former president Donald Trump's ongoing effort to frame the 2020 election results as illegitimate has made the link between declining trust and lack of faith in elections quite explicit and has rendered the whole democratic process in the United States suspect to many Americans.

In Canada, the link between lower levels of trust and faith in elections is far less evident, but there are worrying signs. Generally, most Canadians have faith in the independence and legitimacy of the electoral process itself, which is administered by Elections Canada and its provincial and territorial counter parts. While a citizen may be disappointed with the results of an election, rarely are the results contested on the grounds that they are illegitimate. Canada's easily understood and generally-accepted electoral system and independent elections watchdogs help keep this the case.

More troublesome is the general decline in election participation. As a general barometer of trust in governments and the political process, federal elections turnout in Canada is now in the low 60% range. The last time a federal election turnout exceeded 70% was 1993. This trend is solidly entrenched, rising or falling slightly depending on the perceived issues at stake in each campaign.

One must be cautious in making a direct link between trust in government and low voter turnout. It may be more of a function of voter attention and apathy, certainly when compared to the U.S. However, revelations of foreign interference in both Canadian and American elections have the potential to undermine faith and legitimacy in the outcomes of our elections. It will be important to understand the extent of intervention to maintain Canadians faith and trust, both for elections themselves as well as for government and democratic institutions.

ABILITY OF GOVERNMENTS TO DEAL WITH MAJOR CHALLENGES

The third implication of declining trust is measured by the perceived ability of governments to deal with major challenges. Trust declines when citizens do not believe that government can effectively deal with major challenges or deliver on major promises. Indeed, low trust hampers governments'

ability and willingness to even confront difficult issues. This speaks to the two of OECD's components of trust: a) responsiveness, which reflects perception of quality of service and programs, and b) reliability or government's ability to deal with large social, economic, or environmental issues, such as climate change, reconciliation, or competitiveness. But even at the operational level, low trust can be felt and have knock-on effects. For example, recent delays in obtaining passports, and long waiting lists for healthcare services have eroded public confidence in the general competency of the federal and provincial governments.

These three implications demonstrate that declining trust manifests itself in different and significant ways. Trust may be conceptualized as a bank account where all governments start out with a trust score – the balance of their trust bank account. Over time, governments may either add to that account by acting in ways that demonstrate trust for citizens or may drawn down the bank account reserves by acting in ways that cause citizens to lose trust or confidence in their government, such as by failing to support citizens during a crisis. But it is hard to build new trust when the trust bank account balance has become too low. In short, one requires trust to get trust; without trust, one does not have the currency to do the things that matter. In the daily life of a government, and over its term in office, trust then becomes a virtuous circle.

While it is difficult to identify a precise tipping point when a society loses trust in its democracy and public institutions, the literature demonstrates that regaining trust is difficult and time consuming. In other words: if government can improve the level of trust of Canadians have in their governments, the government's ability to meet future challenges becomes easier.

MEASURING TRUST IN GOVERNMENT

Social media has become both more ubiquitous in the public square and more influential. Considering how social media reflects trust is an important new insight for governments to gain. The IOG in collaboration with Advanced Symbolics Inc. (ASI) utilized an artificial intelligence model developed by ASI, named Polly, to scan social media and do just that. It was used to measure overall trust in government and provide insight into which of the five OCED components of trust Canadians value most. The model also examined trust over five specific policy areas. Polly is able to measure trust across a defined political ideological spectrum and offers new insights into trust differences and sentiments from the right to the left. Since Polly monitors and measures trust continuously, the findings present insights into the short-term variations in trust rather than through traditional polling which measures snapshots in time.

METHODOLOGY

ASI created a large-scale randomized, representative sample of 300,000 Canadians using data from the online platform Twitter over a two-year period from December 2020 to December 2022. Conversations were captured by training Polly on topic models related to government trust, trust components and trust across five policy areas:

- Climate Change

- Justice

- Economy

- Diversity

- Government and Expert Opinion

The range of topics enabled Polly to generate insights into whether and how trust varies depending upon the topic.

The level of trust in government was measured by assessing Canadians sentiment of trust using a natural language processing technique that categorizes language according to associated emotions. The model was also able to place the representative sample of 300,000 Canadians across a relative ideological spectrum by examining which political elites (politicians, pundits, and media) were followed as well as friends and followers.

TRUST IN GOVERNMENT

As indicated in Figure 3, Canadians' trust in government averaged approximately 59% over the two-year period of this study. This is consistent with results presented by several public opinion research firms (e.g., Edelman, Ipsos). While the two-year average is stable and moderate compared with historical changes, there is significant short-term variability when major events occurred, which are plotted onto Figure 3. As there can be many factors affecting overall trust, ASI used a process of topic discovery to identify the dominant reason for changes in people's sentiment of trust and provide insight into this short-term volatility.
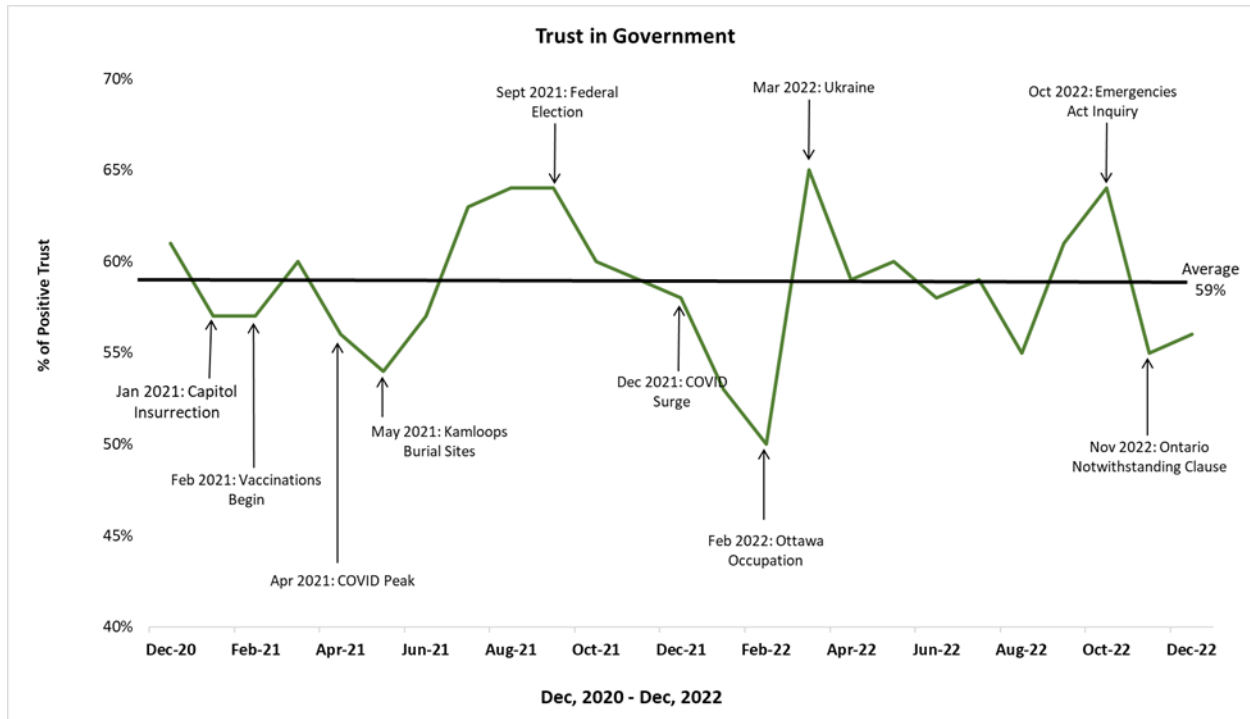
Figure 3: Percentage trust in government (December, 2020 – December, 2022)

Beginning in December 2020, Canadian trust in government stood at 62%. Three major events impacted Canadians' trust levels over the survey period: emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic, the trucker convoy and Ottawa occupation, and the war in Ukraine.

The beginning of COVID-19 vaccinations in February 2021 saw a slight increase in trust in government. But as the third wave of COVID hit in April, trust in government began to slide again. That slide reversed itself and trust rose once more in late spring/ early summer as public health measures began to ease allowing communities and businesses to re-open. The September federal election coincided with higher levels of trust in government. But the increasing presence of the Omicron variant over the autumn and winter and a return of public health restrictions deeply dampened Canadians' expectations that the pandemic was at a close. Trust levels nosedived through December and January, culminating in the arrival of the February 2022 trucker convoy to Ottawa and the subsequent occupation of the national capital. February 2022 marks the lowest level of trust in government during the entire two-year period. Trust levels changed direction rapidly in February and March – from the lowest point in the two-year span to the highest point in the two-year span. This rapid acceleration in trust is attributed to the 'rally around the flag' phenomenon when Canadians demonstrated strong support for Ukraine against Russia's invasion. The rapid change from 50% to 65% in that four-to-six-week period also demonstrate the extreme volatility of this measure. The average trust level during the two-year period was 59%.

COMPONENTS OF TRUST

Polly also tracked the OECD's five components of trust – reliability, responsiveness, integrity, openness, and fairness – over the two-year period December 2020 to December 2022. Figure 4 plots these trust components, expressing each as a percentage share value of total engagements. The higher the value, the greater the share of total engagements. In this manner, it measures the relative importance to Canadians of one component of trust in relation to the other four (i.e. each point along the series will total 100%).
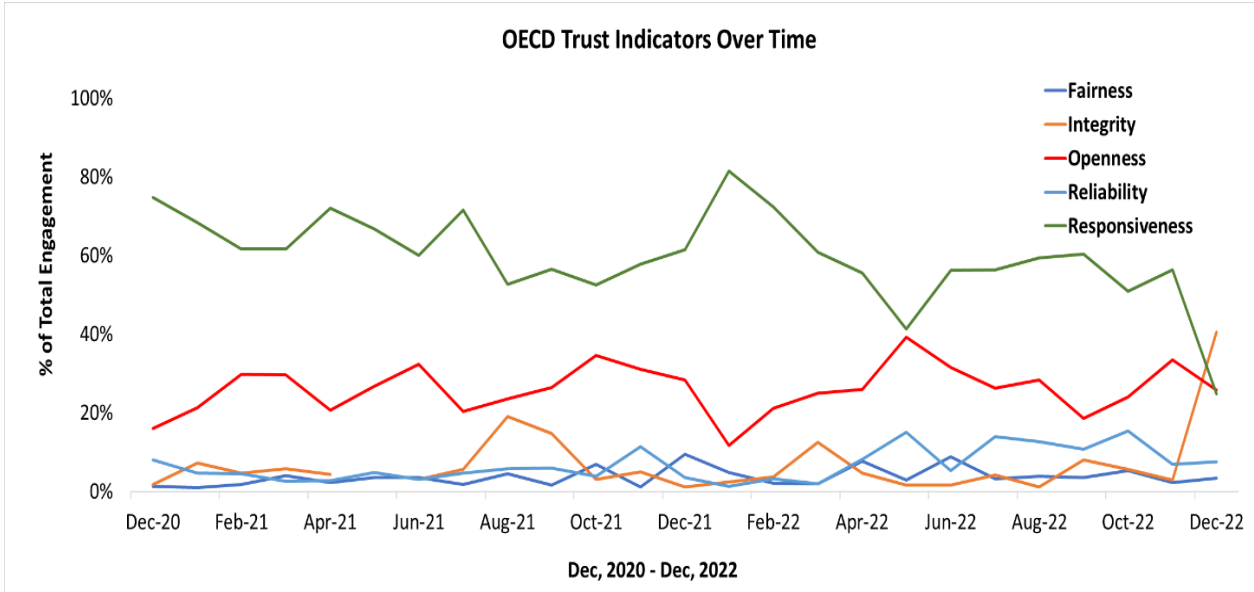
Figure 4: Percentage total engagement with OECD trust indicators (December, 2020 – December, 2022)

Figure 4 demonstrates that the two components of greatest importance to Canadians were responsiveness and openness. Responsiveness refers to the extent to which government policies and services meet citizen needs, demands, and expectations while openness refers to the accessibility of information. Collectively, they represent 90% of the share of social media engagements. The lines in the table suggests that as the share of one component rose, it was at the expense of the other. There is no evidence of an inverse relationship between these two components; instead, it is more of a zero-sum observation.

It is not surprising that these two components were most pronounced over the period as the COVID-19 pandemic continued, and Canada experienced several waves of the virus. Responsiveness reached a 72% per cent relative share in April and July of 2021, peaking at 82% relative share as the first vaccines were becoming available and announced by governments. These peaks mirrored

the latter part of Wave II of COVID-19 as well as Waves III and IV. Openness also dominated over this period, reflecting Canadians' faith and trust that government was being open and transparent.

TRUST BY ISSUE AND IDEOLOGY

While a single measure of trust in government as regularly reported in media is important and provides a good assessment of the overall trust environment, Polly allows for a finer analysis to examine how trust may vary across several key issue areas and how trust will vary across the ideological spectrum. Five significant issue areas are examined: climate change, the economy, government and expert information, the justice system, and diversity.

As mentioned earlier, Polly can distribute the sample of 300,000 Canadians over the ideological spectrum. Once distributed, the sample is split into twenty sub-cohorts. This allows for a finer comparison between Canadians with left-leaning, centrist, and right-leaning political ideologies and identifies if a particularly sub-cohort displays more unique views of trust. It should be noted, while the distribution of the 300,000 Canadians along the ideological spectrum is based on an objective methodology, the labels of "far left, left, centre, right, and far right" are subjective, and simply describes the relative positions along the spectrum.

For each of the five issue areas, three figures are presented:

TRUST BY ISSUE AREA

Measures per cent of positive trust of government for each of the five issue areas over time.

AVERAGE SENTIMENT BY IDEOLOGY

Measures average trust by ideological cohort by distributing the 300,000 sample along the spectrum based on academic research (Barberá, 2015).

ENGAGEMENT BY IDEOLOGY

Measures the extrapolated number of people making social media posts by ideology (activity intensity). The level of engagement will also vary across policy areas as the number of posts will vary depending on the level of interest at any moment of time.

CLIMATE CHANGE
TRUST

For the two-year period December 2020 to December 2022, the average trust in government on climate change averaged 56%, compared to the overall level of trust in government over the same

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period at 59%. As indicated on Figure 5, climate change trust rose in the first half of 2021 with the federal government moving ahead on its Net Zero Emissions Accountability Act. Trust fell during the immediate federal pre-election and election period that summer and into the autumn as floods raged in British Columbia. Trust rose in the final part of 2021 as the federal government released its longer-term climate strategy. The next significant change in trust levels occurred in the autumn of 2022 when the Alberta government introduced its Sovereignty Act, raising questions about progress.
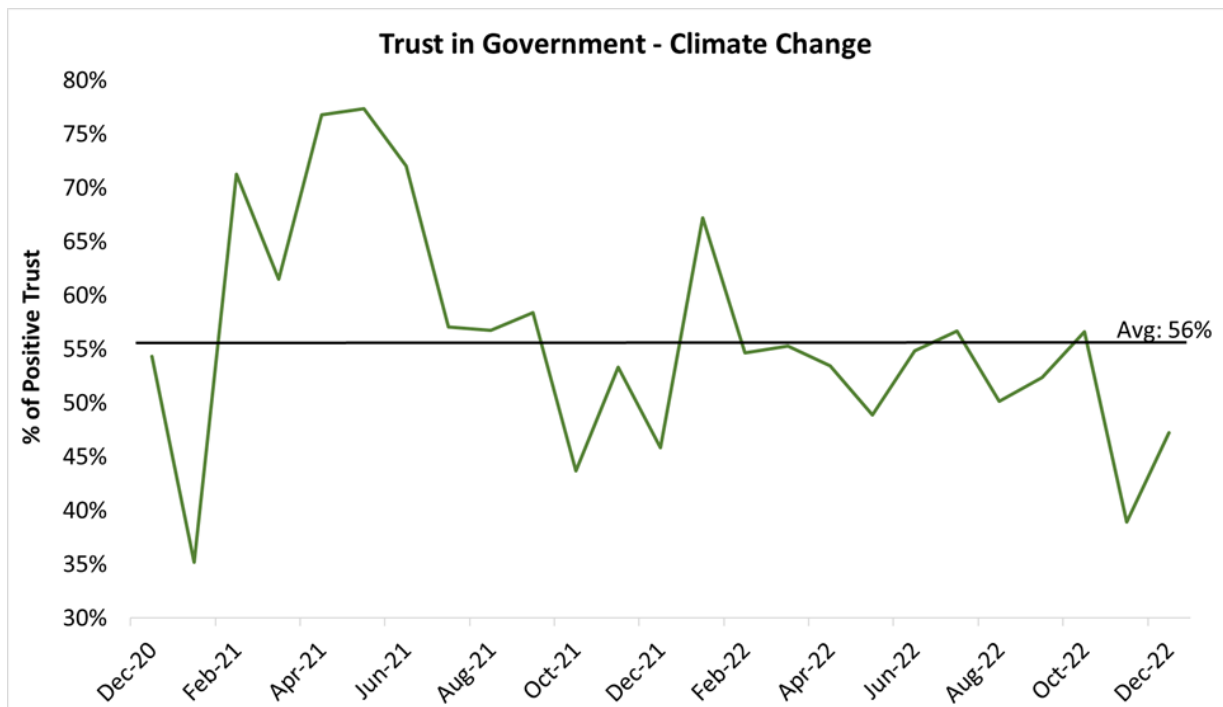
Figure 5: Percentage trust in government – climate change (December, 2020 – December, 2022)

IDEOLOGY

The dominant sentiment among left-leaning cohorts is that while climate change is a very important issue, this cohort is concerned the federal government is not doing enough to meet the climate crisis. This accounted for negative sentiments towards the government, despite its actual climate action. A related concern was that the federal government's support for the fossil fuel industry, expressed by the cohort as counter to meeting Canada's goals. In the left and centre cohorts, trust is neutral; support for the government's climate change actions is mixed with concern about the potential negative economic impacts. The centre and immediate right were more positive and content with the federal government's plans put forward and the actions taken to date. The far right, particularly the five per cent on the extreme right, tend to reject the premise of climate change, see it as a waste of money, and are extremely skeptical of the impact of "green plans" on the economy.

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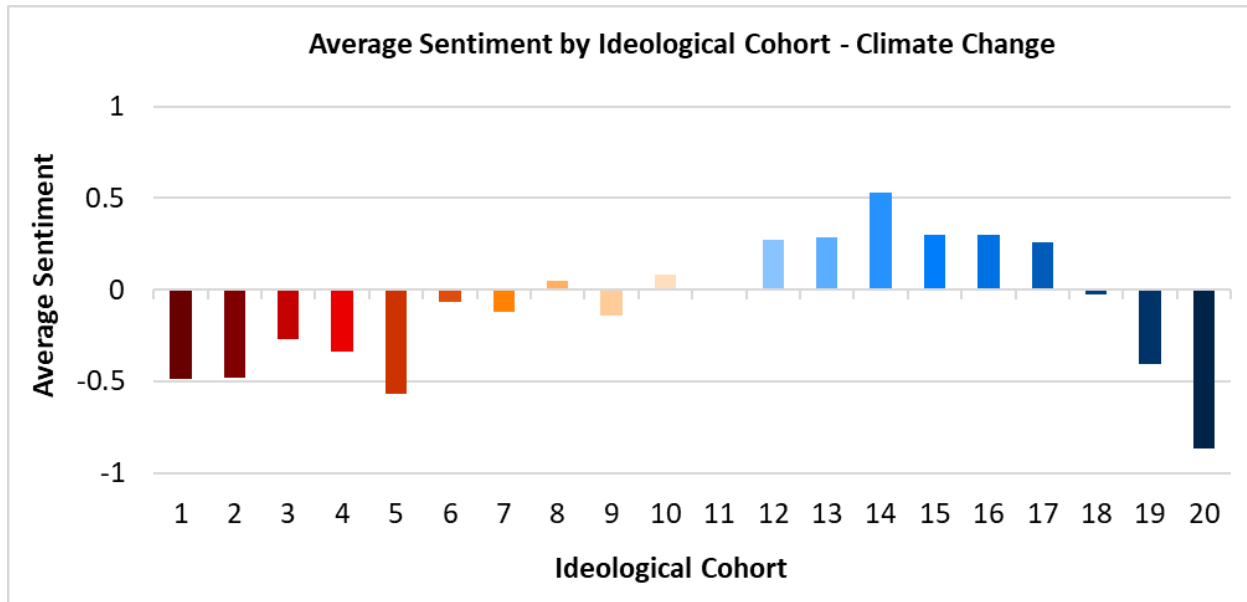
Figure 6: Average sentiment by ideological cohort – climate change (December, 2020 – December, 2022)

ENGAGEMENT

Climate change engagement was highest on the far left and far right of the ideological spectrum. It is noteworthy that the level of engagement for climate change is relatively low during the study period as issues related to COVID dominated engagements, and concerns about the economy.
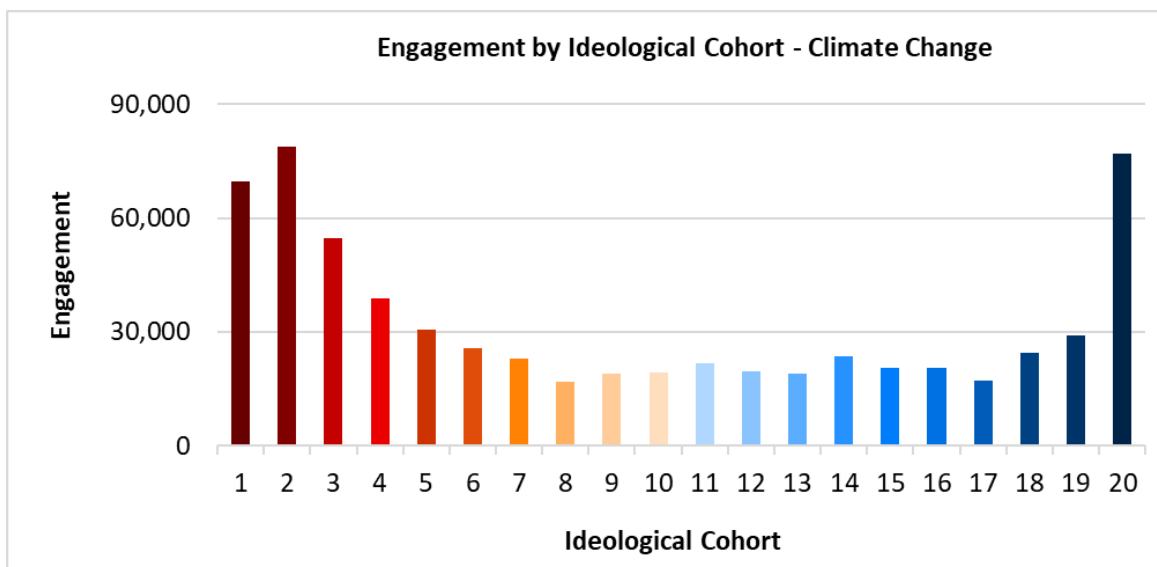
Figure 7: Average engagement ideological cohort – climate change (December, 2020 – December, 2022)

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THE ECONOMY
TRUST

Overall, Canadians trust levels in the government on economic issues is higher on average than general levels of trust in government. 62% of Canadians expressed trust in the government on economic issues when compared to the government overall, where trust levels averaged 59% over the two-year period.
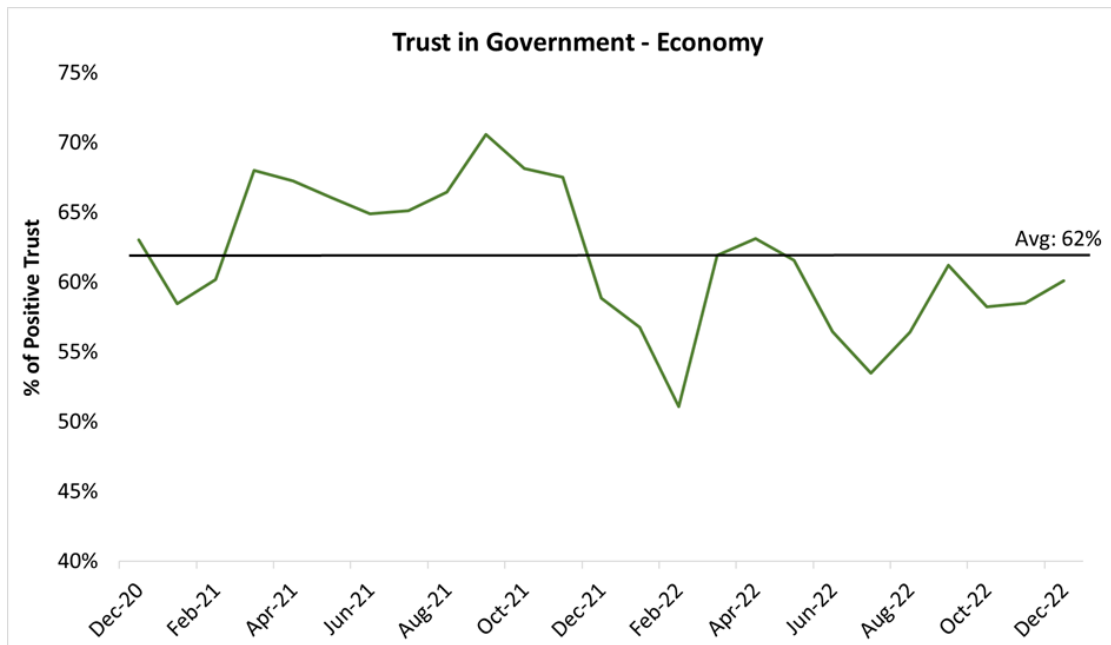
Figure 8: Percentage trust in government – economy (December, 2020 – December, 2022)

Trust was high as economic performance rebounded from the negative effects of the pandemic. However, growing concerns about the economy eroded trust significantly, as it dropped almost 20 points from the summer of 2021 to the winter of 2022. This coincided with rising inflation and a tighter monetary policy from the Bank of Canada, including increased interest rates. A rebound in trust in late winter/early spring 2022 was eliminated as subsequent rate hikes culminated in July 2022 when the Bank of Canada raised its policy rate a full one per cent. Continuing concerns about inflation, steep housing prices, and higher interest rates combined to keep economic trust relatively low.

IDEOLOGY

Trust in government as it relates to the economy was generally positive across the spectrum, except among the far right. This can be attributed to stronger than expected economic performance both during and after COVID-19. However, some key differences are apparent. The left identified

positively with the transition to a green economy while the centre and right focused in general on issues of continued job growth. The far right remained negative overall.

Figure 9: Average sentiment by ideological cohort – economy (December, 2020 – December, 2022)

ENGAGEMENT

Engagement on trust in government on the economy was more pronounced at either end of the ideological spectrum.
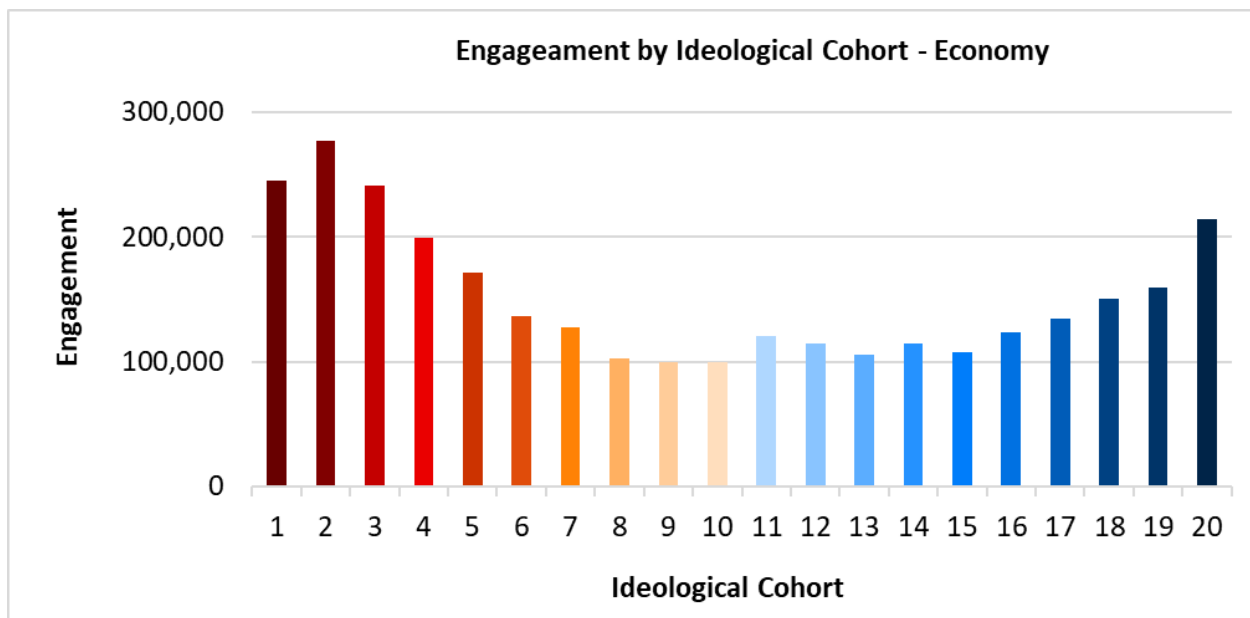
Figure 10: Average engagement by ideological cohort – economy (December, 2020 – December, 2022)

GOVERNMENT AND EXPERT INFORMATION
TRUST

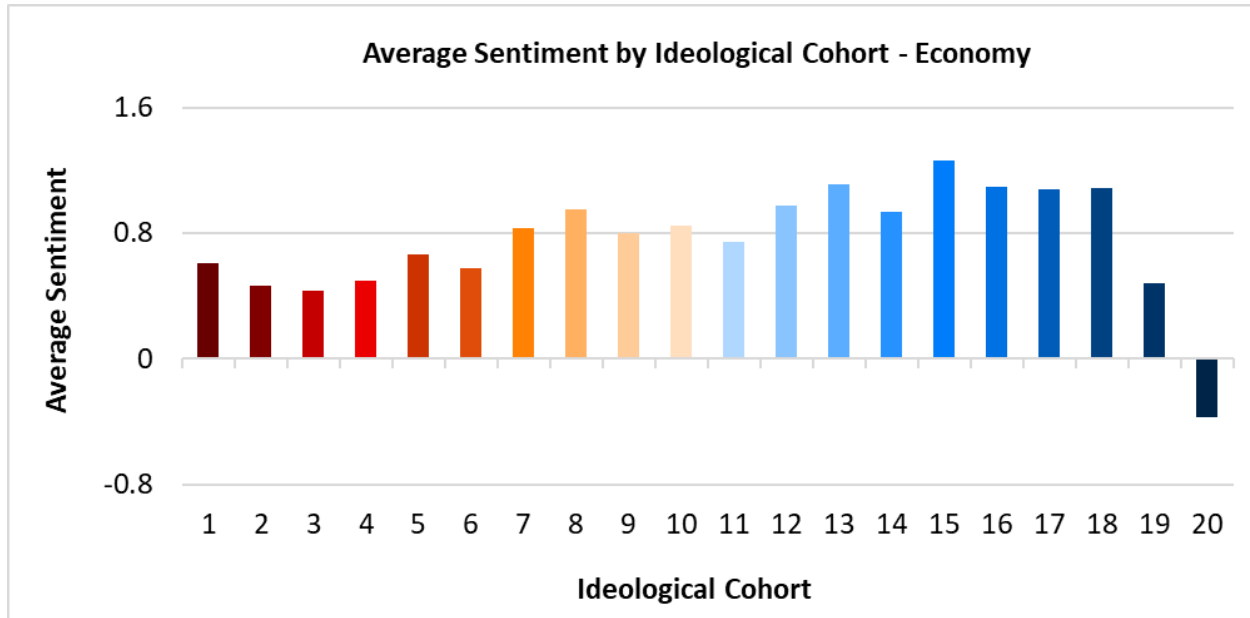The pandemic remains the key variable in government and expert information trust over the survey period. Canadians trust in government and expert information averaged 52% over the two-year period from December 2020 to December 2022, lower than the 59% average in trust in government over the same period. Part of the reason for the more muted level is that while Canadians may have positive trust in the data and information itself, some felt that the government was not following the expert advice as closely as it should. Not surprisingly, as the graph below indicates, the level of government and expert information trust was affected by changes in the number and type of COVID cases. For example, entering the study period, trust was just below average as the second wave of COVID began to dissipate. Trust increased significantly during the third wave of COVID up to June 2021, then fell and rose once more as summer re-openings began and the issues of COVID passports and essential workers vaccination reared themselves and questions of Omicron's virulence occurred. Government and expert information trust never rebounded to those 2021 summer highs as the fourth COVID wave took root and expectations of an early end to the pandemic, particularly through vaccination, dissipated. Trust levels more or less levelled off.
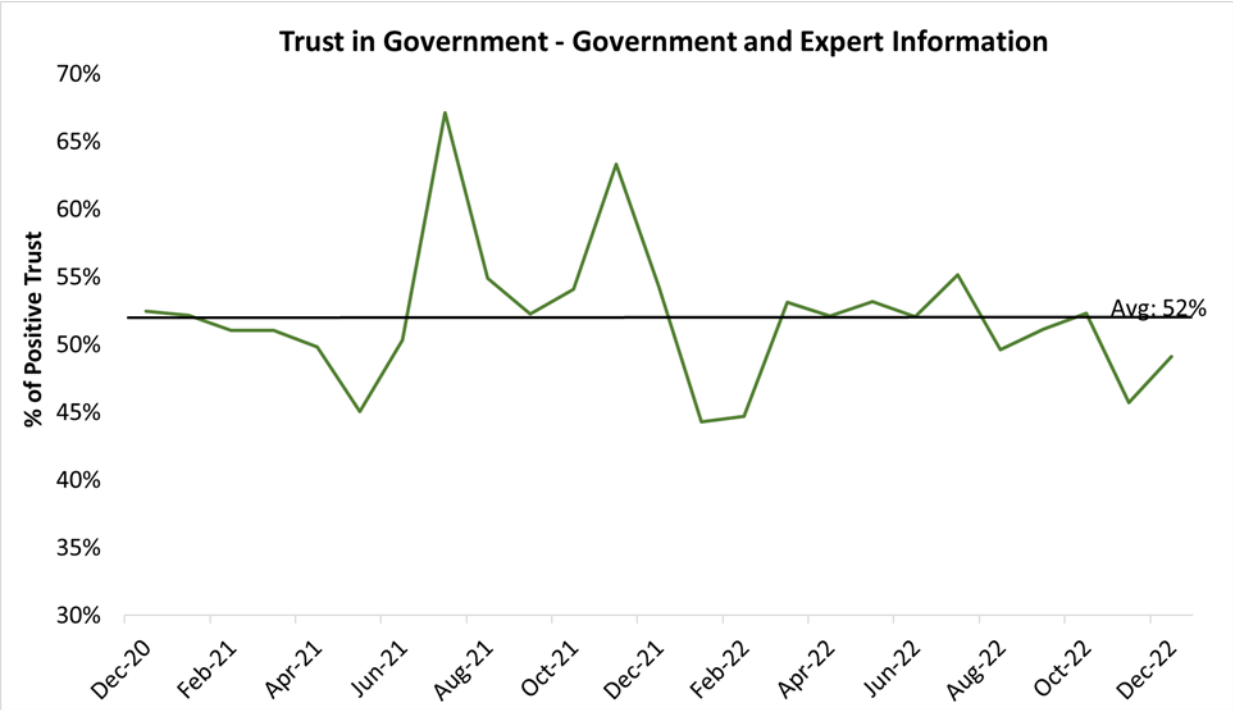
Figure 11: Percentage trust in government – government and expert information (December, 2020 – December, 2022)

IDEOLOGY

Trust in government and expert information was muted across the ideological spectrum. Trust was slightly negative on the left centre and left; however, this did not reflect a lack of trust in the information itself. Rather, it reflected a belief that governments were not prioritizing expert medical information in their decisions on public health measures related to COVI-19. The centre right and right were concerned that there were limitations on the amount and type of information being made available to the public. Trust on the far right was particularly negative about the reliability and motives underlying government and expert information.
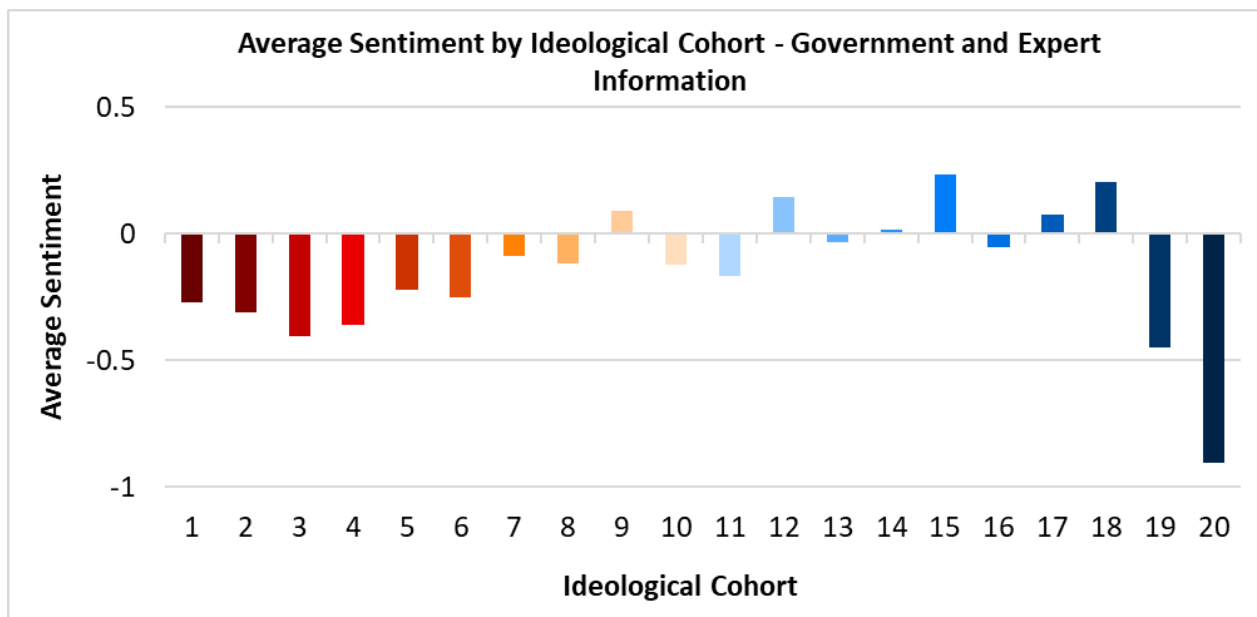
Figure 12: Average sentiment by ideological cohort – government and expert information (December, 2020 – December, 2022)

ENGAGEMENT

The level of engagement was far more pronounced at either end of the ideological spectrum.
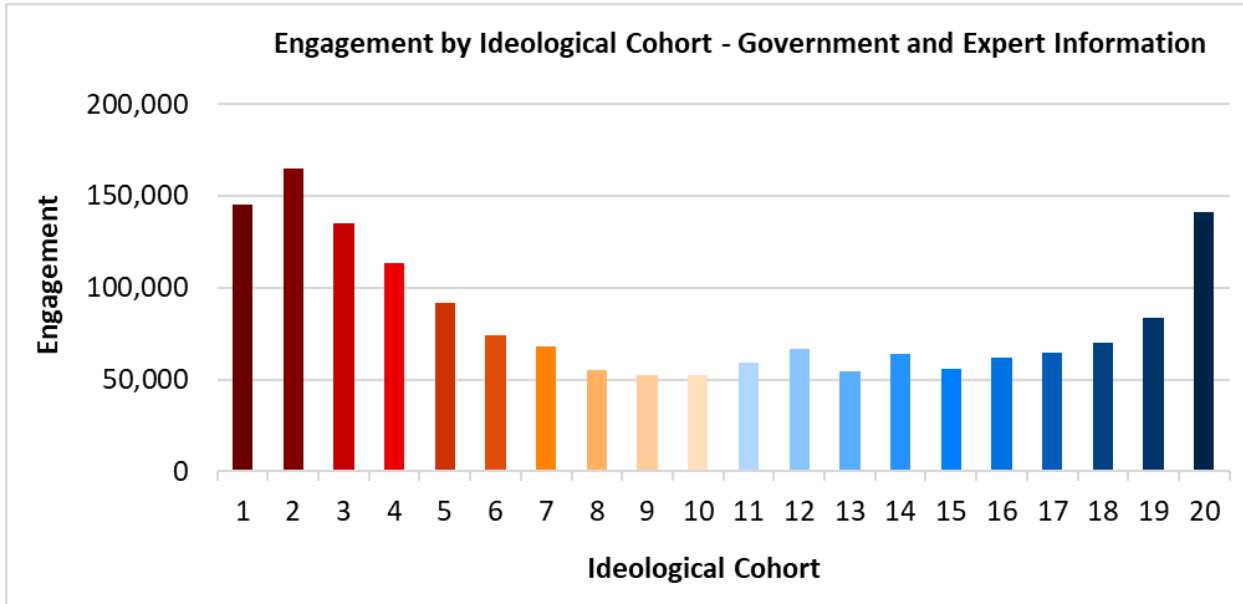
Figure 13: Average engagement by ideological cohort – government and expert information (December, 2020 – December, 2022)

JUSTICE
TRUST

Over the two-year period, Canadians' trust in government on matters pertaining to the justice system averaged just 41%, compared to the overall level in trust in government at 59%. It was by far the lowest of the five issue areas examined. Indeed, at several points, trust dropped as low as 30%.

As with other policy areas, short term changes reflect specific events. However, in the area of justice, there are a myriad of daily news stories that affect trust in the justice system. Polly tends to pick up events that are related to justice broadly, and not only the specific institutions of justice. In addition, the justice area is unique compared to other policy areas. Individual events in the justice area tend to be controversial and will often cause trust to fall before returning to average levels.

For example, trust in the justice system reached a peak of 52% in April and May 2021 (during the two-year study period). Trust in the justice system then fell almost 10 percentage points in May 2021 with the discovery of the Kamloops Residential School burial site. From June 2021 to June 2022, trust in the justice system was affected by the onset of the third (June 2021) and fourth waves of COVID-19 (Dec/21 to June/22). Enforcement issues were more topical during this period. The most pronounced issue that contributed to declining levels of trust was the trucker convoy to and occupation of downtown Ottawa in February 2022. Enforcement issues and ineffective police action to deal with the protest contributed to low levels of trust in the justice system.

Trust in Government - Justice System

Avg: 41%
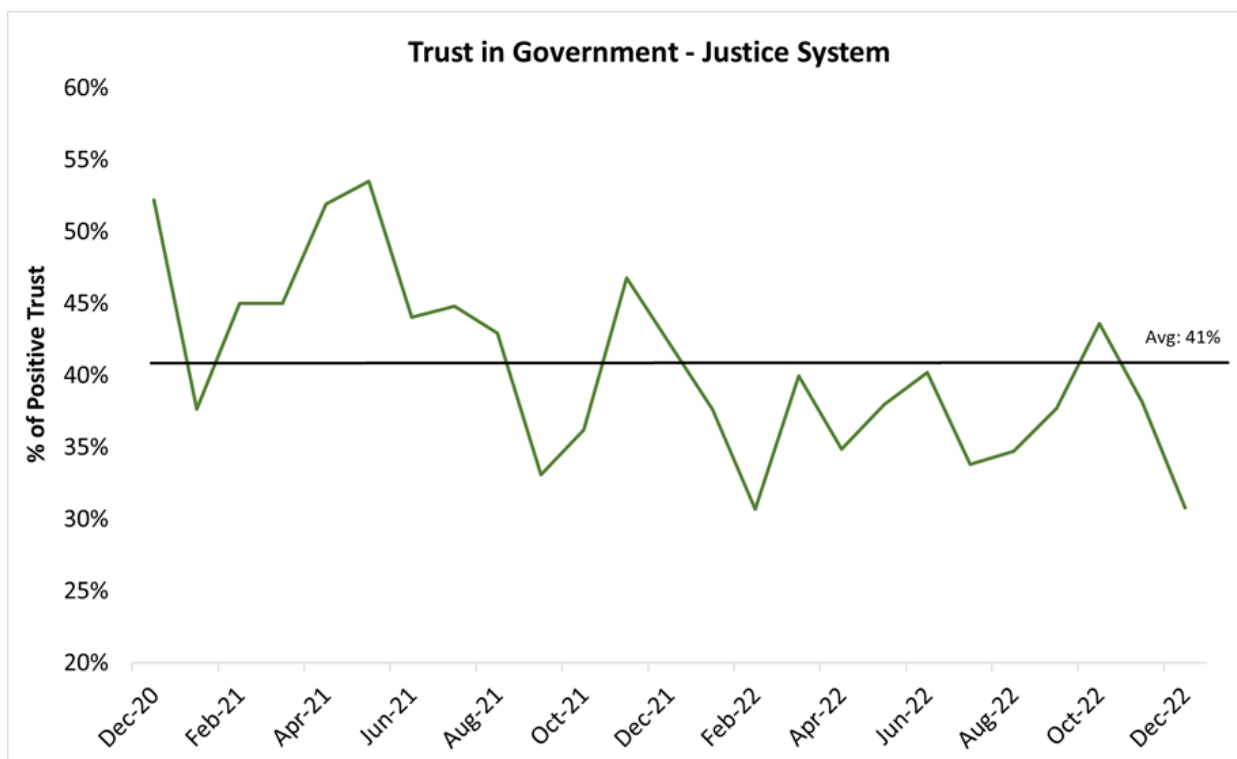
Figure 14: Percentage trust in government – justice system (December, 2020 – December, 2022)

IDEOLOGY

Unlike the other issues examined, the sentiment of trust in the justice system is negative across the entire ideological spectrum, though the reasons as to why trust levels are low vary. Negative views on the left tend to be dominated by how the justice system treats those who interact with law enforcement and the justice system. The right was concerned with multiple issues, but in particular, questioned the use and invocation of the Emergencies Act as it related to the trucker protest in February 2022. Those on the far right felt more strongly questioned the Emergencies Act and used terms such as "martial law" and "cover-up".

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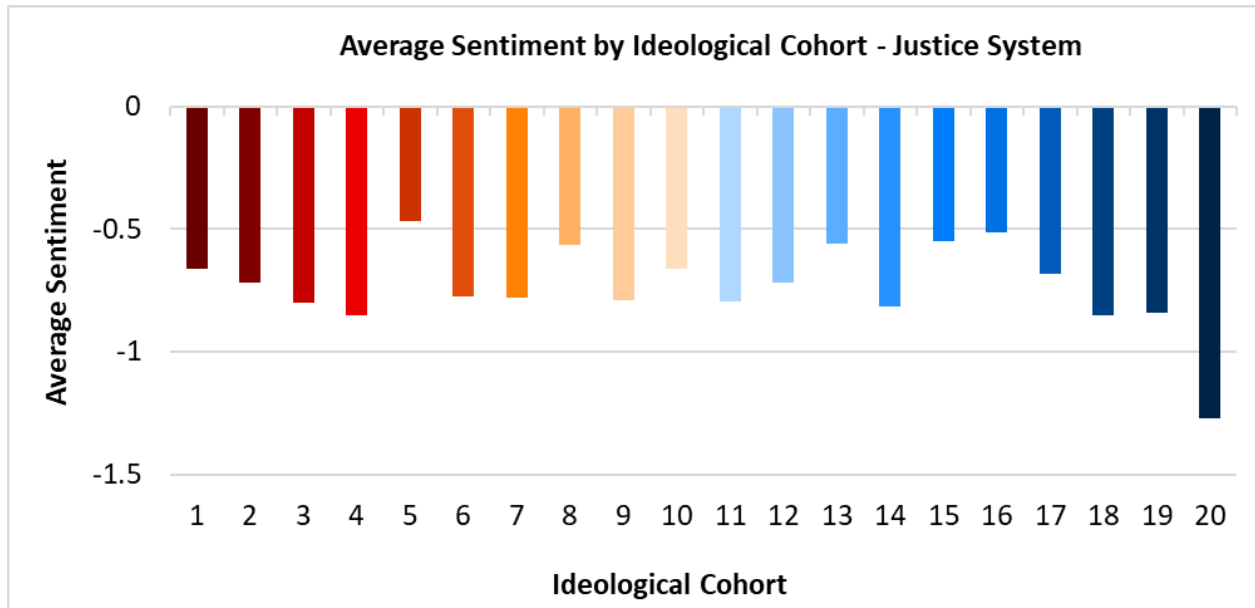
Figure 15: Average sentiment by ideological cohort – justice system (December, 2020 – December, 2022)

ENGAGEMENT

Consistent with the other issues areas, the level of engagement was far more pronounced at both ends of the ideological spectrum. Notably, the furthest cohort on the right accounted for twice as much engagement compared to its most immediate companion cohort.
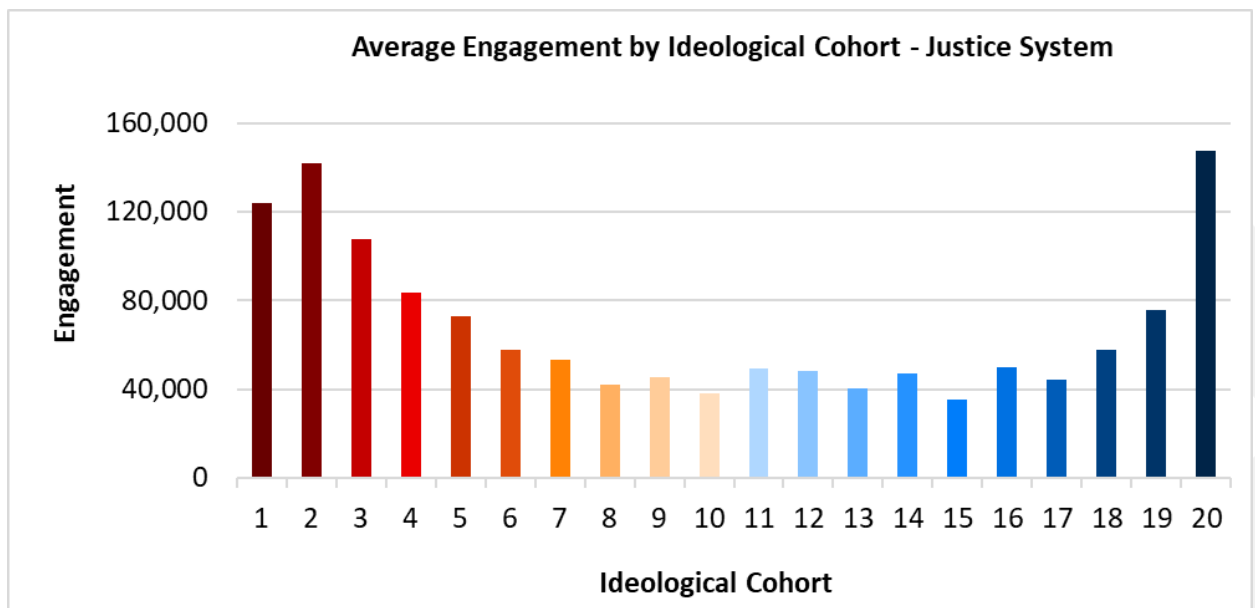
Figure 16: Average engagement by ideological cohort – justice system (December, 2020 – December, 2022)

DIVERSITY & INCLUSION
TRUST

Over the two-year period, Canadians trust in government as it related to issues of diversity and inclusion was the highest of any policy area, averaging 80%, and it was significantly higher than the overall trust in government average of 59%. Unlike more specific policy areas, the topic of diversity and inclusion is influenced by as number of factors and isolating individual influences in the short term was harder to discern. There was significant upward movement in trust from April 2021 to the federal election in September 2021, with the exception of a decline in May 2021 coinciding with the discovery of the Kamloops residential school burial site. Canadians trust in government related to diversity and inclusion remained in the mid to high 80%e in the run up to the federal election and the post-election period.
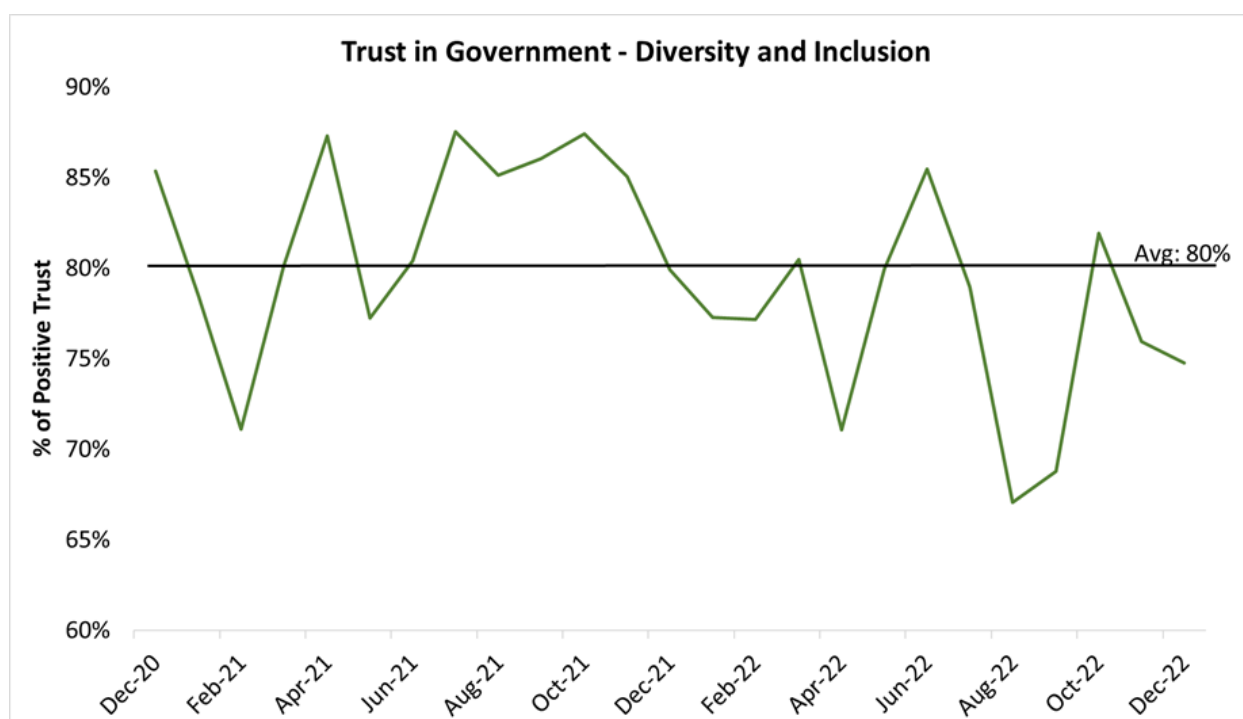
Figure 17: Percentage trust in government – diversity and inclusion (December, 2020 – December, 2022)

IDEOLOGY

Over the two-year period, average sentiment was extremely positive across the ideological spectrum, apart from the 5% on the far right which had a much lower but still positive rate. As a result, the prevailing sentiment across the spectrum showed strong trust in government, with some minor areas of emphasis. For example, according to ASI's topic discovery, those on the centre-left and left were supportive of the government's progress, feeling that the government can intervene as

a force for good to promote diversity and inclusion. Those on the centre-right and right held similarly positive views of government performance, and focused more on issues of pay equity, with some minor concern over regulations. While those on the far right were positive on average, the level was much lower than 95 per cent of the spectrum. The far right focused on what they felt was the hypocrisy of the policy, feeling the promotion of diversity and inclusion is, in their view, racist.
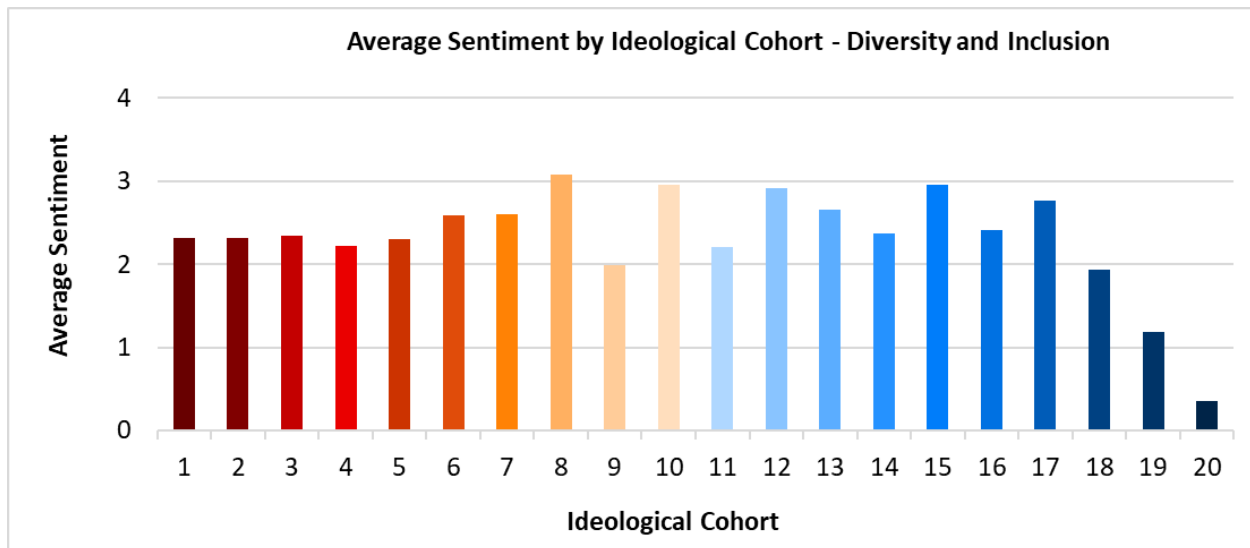
Figure 18: Average sentiment by ideological cohort – diversity and inclusion (December, 2020 – December, 2022)

ENGAGEMENT

In terms of level of engagement, diversity and inclusion issues generated much more activity at each end of the ideological spectrum.
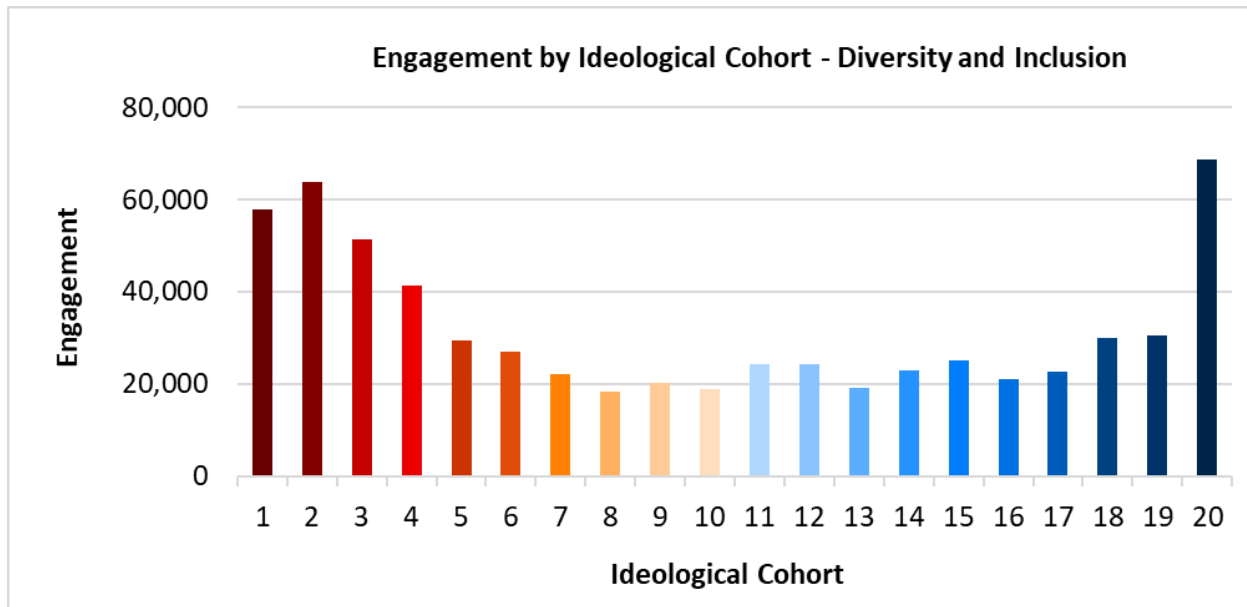
Figure 19: Average engagement by ideological cohort – diversity and inclusion (December, 2020 – December, 2022)

OBSERVATIONS FROM AI TRUST MODELLING

The AI modelling measured overall trust in government, individual trust components, as well as trust in the five issue areas along the ideological spectrum. While each measure offers unique insights, taken as a whole, a few general observations can be made about Canadians' trust in government:

- Overall, trust in government has been relatively stable over the past two years but is significantly affected by major events as they occur. The lasting impact of these individual events on longer term trust is difficult to predict. But the survey period evidence does show that, in some instances, trust fell as events unfolded and did not automatically recover. A longer-term study is necessary to determine whether single issue events translate into a lasting pattern.

- While examining the overall trust levels of Canadians in government is important to assess the general trust environment, an individual's trust (or distrust) will vary significantly across policy issues and areas.

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- Trust varies significantly across the ideological spectrum. Generally, those on the far left and far right will be less trusting of government than the centre-left, centre, and centre-right. Importantly, the reasons behind this distrust will be different for each of those two cohorts.

- Individuals at either end of the ideological spectrum are consistently more engaged on social media, yet their trust levels remain consistently low. This suggests an 'echo chamber' effect of social media engagement.

- Individuals may share a common level of trust but the reasons for that trust and the sentiment behind them may vary. This includes a perceived response to whether the government is acting when it should not, or not acting sufficiently or as desired, when it does act.

- The five per cent of the cohort on the farthest right of the ideological spectrum consistently reports the lowest levels of trust in government. This cohort typically will reject the very premise of an issue or policy and are more extreme and negative in their views of the federal government in particular.

- Responsiveness and openness were the two most important trust attributes for Canadians during the period of this study. This suggests an opening as to where governments can engage to foster greater trust.

- Analyzing Canadians' engagement levels helps to understand the impact of trust in individual policy issues and areas. Canadians engaged more often on the subject of the economy than any of the other four issues examined. By contrast, climate change generated only one third as much engagement, and trust levels in government were more polarizing on climate change.

A PATH FORWARD

Trust is a complex phenomenon, both at a personal and at an institutional level. It is affected by many factors, including the OECD's five components, and by world events that, when formative, can have a lasting effect on attitudes towards public institutions. Trust in government varies according to issue; it is not an inherently homogenous concept. For example, a voter might trust a government on health care and not foreign policy. Similarly, two individuals might hold similarly low levels of trust on the same issue but for different reasons.

Public trust in government is not simply a "nice to have." Governments rely on a reservoir of public trust to tackle the most complex problems facing society. In Canada, this includes, but is not limited

to health care, affordable housing, and climate change. Therefore, there is a common interest in building and maintaining a healthy relationship between citizens, politicians, and the public service.

This section offers some observations for rebuilding trust in public institutions in Canada. The areas have been identified though the work of the Action Learning Program. They are based on research, participant input and discussions, and expert speakers at workshops. Each is broad in nature and inter-related.

This paper proposes that rebuilding trust will require the following elements: improved service delivery; open and inclusive decision-making processes; science and evidence-informed decision-making processes; political accountability and promise-keeping; institutional humility, and support for democratic institutions. These respond most directly to the two key components of trust identified through the AI data: responsiveness and openness.

BETTER SERVICE DELIVERY

As demonstrated by the OECD, a key determinant of citizens' trust in government is their own experience of government on a daily basis. How people perceive the reliability and quality of their interactions not only affects trust in the services they engage with, but it also shapes how citizens perceive the overall level of competency of government to deal with larger issues. This directly refers to a citizen's view of a government's responsiveness.

Responsiveness was by far the most cited trust component during the survey period. Important enough in normal times, it became particularly important during the pandemic when Canadians relied on government for regular and credible information, timely and accessible financial supports, and appropriate and effective public health measures. While government actions during COVID-19 improved perceptions of responsiveness by Canadians, other events such as passport backlogs and airport delays as the pandemic waned, engendered the opposite effect.

It follows that if government wants to improve or maintain trust, a key focus should be on enhancing a citizen's day-to-day experience with government. Therefore, the public service should work on a priority basis to ensure government programs are well-managed, easily accessible, and reliable for citizens. Meeting the needs and expectations of citizens in the services governments provide must become 'job one' of public servants.

Digital government – including the provision of services and programs online – offers opportunities to make public administration more reliable, seamless, and 'citizen-friendly' for Canadians with internet access. While there are few service delivery areas where the public sector and private sector directly

compete, there are nonetheless many opportunities for Canadians to compare the customer service they receive from the public versus the private sector in their daily lives. The emergence and maturation of technology has made the customer experience extremely efficient in the private sector and opportunities exist to improve public sector service delivery accordingly. For example, Canadians have become accustomed to performing sophisticated financial transactions via online banking or being able to shop for goods or services with ease online. The public sector can also improve citizen experiences online by undertaking regular 'consumer experience audits' to fine tune the aspects of online service delivery which Canadians find most challenging and cumbersome.

OPEN DIALOGUE AND INCLUSIVE DECISIONS

AI modeling of the OECD components of trust demonstrated that that Canadians value openness second only to responsiveness. This is reflected in Canadians' reliance on government to announce and implement public measures to contain the spread of the COVID-19 virus and to protect Canadians.

During the pandemic, all levels of government worked around the clock to provide regular information updates on the epidemiology of the virus. This included dedicated websites with data on active cases, testing, contract tracing and vaccination rates and regular updates by public health officials on the potential health implications of the virus, and the rationale for sweeping public health measures. For several months, the Prime Minister, Premiers, Mayors, and Chief Medical Officers and Chief Public Health Officers at all levels of government participated in daily briefings to Canadians, to present the latest clinical data and public health advice. As difficult public health measures were introduced – from restrictions on personal behavior to closing a significant portion of the economy – all levels of government were clear that they were acting on the best available scientific evidence. This openness helped generate understanding of, and support for, the various measures being taken.

But even in the early days of the pandemic, the seeds for later dissension were being sown. The many voices of science were diverse, opinionated, and often conflicting. The individuals delivering the messages varied greatly in their ability to present the facts, to explain risk, and to separate their personal opinions from the evidence being presented. As a result, early communications about the virus lacked clarity, plain language, and appropriate context for those receiving the message. In addition, misaligned/varying interpretations of messaging across local, provincial or territorial, national, and international jurisdictions created confusion for citizens, and perpetuated the challenges of building and maintaining trust in science and evidence.

While Canadians themselves may have not been directly part of the decision-making process, it was sufficiently open, and trade-offs and choices were mostly made clear, based on the scientific information and data available in this uncertain period. This was key to building Canadians' trust in the first waves of the pandemic. The pandemic's duration challenged this approach as months wore on. The virus traveled across the country at different speed with some uniformity of response by governments but also with significant differences as governments adapted their responses to their local contexts by considering health care system impacts, demographic variations, and perceived levels of risk tolerance in each province. Trust in the data and, more importantly, the decisions flowing from it became questioned as Canadians witnessed a range of approaches within and across the provinces and territories.

Engaging Canadians in more open dialogue with shared information as decisions are being made will lead to enhanced trust and increase government's ability to build consensus and gain support for decisions. While governments have historically consulted on discrete issues, this has tended to be both limited and often dominated by stakeholder groups and experts. Citizens are not typically consulted in an ongoing formal way that builds them into the decision-making process. Addressing this will strengthen buy-in for decisions by Canadians, which in turn can lead to greater legitimacy in decision-making and increased levels of trust. Of course, many decisions made by government must be made in real time. However, that does not preclude more organized, open dialogue in government policy development. Governments have at their disposal a wide range of tools and technologies to promote information sharing and effective knowledge translation to ensure the messages that Canadians receive are relevant for their individual context. Such tools, strategies, and technologies can in turn offer new and novel means to solicit input from Canadians in decision-making.

INCREASED USE OF SCIENCE IN DECISION-MAKING

Scientists are the most trusted group of societal leaders in Canada; 75% of Canadians trust scientists (Edelman, 2023). Canadians trust scientists more than their coworkers (72%), national health authorities (65%), and government leaders (43%). How can government leaders benefit from a high degree of trust in scientists to in turn increase levels of trust in government and government leaders? Released in December 2022, IOG's Government Science and Innovation in the New Normal (GSINN) explores the decades old relationship between science and society and proposes elements of a new governance framework to make that relationship stronger still.

Canadians live in a science-based society, though much of how scientific information is produced and how it helps to govern our lives – from underpinning our education system, to informing regulatory systems that ensure our food is safe to eat, etc. – are hidden from plain view. In addition,

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and as the COVID-19 pandemic demonstrated, most Canadian adults have low science literacy rates; they are unfamiliar both with how the scientific method works and how scientific information is translated to inform government decision-making. Yet some of the most pressing challenges facing Canadian society – health care, climate change – will require science to be a part of the solution.

As a first step, government has an opportunity to be more open about the ways in which government science contributes to improve the lives of Canadians every day. From research and development to produce new vaccines to regulatory frameworks that ensure a safe food supply, drug supply, and energy supply, government scientists are an integral part of Canada's economy. Greater openness about the role of government science and how it works to support the Canadian economy and the health and safety of Canadians can help to demonstrate the role of science in our everyday lives.

Second, is to be open about the values that inform the scientific process. According to a 2020 Pew research study, 74% of Canadians on the left say they have a lot of trust in scientists to do what is right, compared with just 35% of Canadians with right-leaning political views. Science is not value free, but value-responsive. It is our societal values that determine the type of science in which we invest. For example, climate change is a growing concern for a majority of Canadians. Scientific research both helped to identify our changing climate more than 50 years ago and is helping to identify ways to adapt to climate change and mitigate its effects. These are value-based decisions that Canadians have made to identify priorities and to fund scientific research to address them. Building on earlier discussions about opportunities to be more open about decision-making, governments have an opportunity to illustrate the type of evidence - scientific and other - that informs decisions on issues that are important to Canadians. More openness in the types of evidence, the values behind it, and how it is used will help Canadians feel a part and better informed of major decisions.

Finally, government should seek to increase scientific literacy levels among Canadians. Increased familiarity with the scientific process, how new information is created, and the pace at which science operates can lead to improved trust in governments' use of scientific information. This means being humble and open about uncertainty in scientific decision making. Such an approach to improved scientific literacy should be designed to inform and educate Canadians about the use and limits of science in government decision-making, not to convince them of a particular course of action.

POLITICAL ACCOUNTABILITY AND PROMISE-KEEPING

Governments make promises, particularly when seeking a mandate from citizens during an election, and the public does not forget broken promises. The ability of government to keep its promises, which often comes down to a matter of political will in the face of changing circumstances, directly

affects trust and speaks to one of the OECD's key components of trust: reliability. As noted earlier, reliability reflects citizens' perception of both the competence of government in delivering on its commitments and its capacity to anticipate change and protect citizens against economic, social, and environmental uncertainties.

A government keeping its promises is akin to an individual keeping their word. If someone gains a reputation for not keeping their word, the likelihood of maintaining trust is greatly diminished. The same holds true at an institutional level. This not only affects trust levels directly, but also affects a government's ability to deliver on its promises, particularly if this is dependent on building consensus and public support. In other words, while keeping promises influences the level of trust a government enjoys, that same level of trust influences how well a government can keep its promises (i.e., low trust makes it harder to deliver on promises, and unfulfilled promises lead to even lower trust).

At the same time, not all promises are created equal. An argument can be made that it may be more important to keep some key promises, as opposed to keeping a higher percentage of promises overall. According to Mellon et al, the public understands that governments cannot keep all their promises, so it is important that they understand which ones are central. There is always the possibility of a disconnect between which promises governments deem central and which the public does. Again, this points to the important role communication and openness plays. It also suggests that there is a role for being open when commitments must be adjusted in scope or timeframe, or cannot be delivered, given that openness is a key component of trust. It is the duty of citizens to decide whether and how broken promises will affect governments at the ballot box. Though it is a blunt instrument with which to communicate the complexity of political preferences, elections are our most fundamental measure of accountability through which citizens may exercise their right to maintain support for or demand a change in government.

The lesson here is that if governments want to maintain or build the trust of citizens, it should deliver on key promises, regularly report on progress, and when circumstances dictate that promises have to be changed or abandoned, be clear about the rationales.

INSTITUTIONAL HUMILITY

Institutional humility, like individual humility, refers to recognizing and acknowledging the limitations and fallibility of institutions. The concept of humility can also be applied to government when it comes to decision-making and public policy development. It also speaks to how governments communicate and relate to Canadians who may have concerns over policy or direction.

Perhaps the result of political polarization and of the rise in social media and segmented traditional media, governments increasingly advocate for their policies in the starkest of terms, often refusing to recognize trade-offs, negative consequences, or the validity of alternative choices. As any practitioner of public policy development well knows, there is no such thing as "the perfect policy" – one in which the policy entirely solves the challenge at hand, has only pros and no cons, results in a better situation for all, and is one in which there are no other legitimate alternatives. Yet, when it comes to communicating public policy, governments increasingly communicate in a zero-sum manner as if a public policy is perfect, or at least near perfect.

This approach to communicating policy choices presents important considerations for trust in government. For example, the AI modelling for this research shows that Canadians have varying levels of trust across several policy areas and even within a policy area. Canadians may well be supportive of actions in a certain area, such as climate change, but still be concerned over the economic impact of climate change policies. Instead of defending each policy as if it were an existential electoral issue, governments may be more effective in building trust if they recognized legitimate alternatives and made the case for a particular course of action. This includes being explicit about trade-offs and choices. This will allow Canadians, who may not agree with a policy, to at least feel their position or perspective has been considered and recognized in the decision-making process. Again, this speaks to more open and inclusive decision-making and demonstrating empathy for the concerns of Canadians.

SUPPORT FOR DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTIONS

Finally, the existence of well-functioning democratic institutions is linked to trust in government. The quality of the institutions matters and is readily discernible to the public. Also, to make progress on complex policy goals, particularly those that require a medium to long term commitment, public trust is essential. Therefore, it is in the government's interest to support and uphold these democratic institutions by participating in trust-building activities and reinforcing their integrity. Trust-building exercises could include: actively reducing the toxic, partisan rhetoric that erodes trust in the system; keeping political promises; abiding by the principles of transparency and accountability in government decision-making; making data-informed decisions; showing compassion and fairness in policy decisions; and providing explanations rather than just messaging to Canadians.

As stated, the observations to rebuild trust in government are complex and inter-related. They are broad areas in which further research and discussion will be required to develop clear and meaningful strategies to maintain trust of Canadians.

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NEXT STEPS

This research project has shown the complex but real relationship between trust and social media. It also showed that trust, while broad, is highly responsive to individual issues, situations, and ideological preferences. Social media is a both a trust transmitter and, more importantly, a trust amplifier. Understanding how Canadians engage on social media, their sources of information, and how they characterize both an issue and that information, is crucial for governments to act in a trustworthy manner. Trust is government's most important currency. Without trust and without understanding what is behind trust, governments will either not act on what are difficult but critical issues or will act in a way that erodes trust in our society and democratic institutions.

There are three next steps research streams the Government of Canada could contemplate:

TRUST AND SOCIAL MEDIA

The pervasive and pernicious nature of social media and its effect on trust requires a more comprehensive examination, particularly around user behaviour and influence. Expanding the research to encompass more social media platforms and their propensity for enhancing or eroding trust would give the government a better understanding of how to engage on social media to build trust and forestall its erosion.

TRUST SOLUTIONS FOR GOVERNMENT

Knowing what is driving trust – higher or lower – is one thing. Developing and implementing active solutions and responses another. Focusing research and developing responses by and for individual government departments or agencies to meet the most impactful trust issues would take government into a positive trust-building mode. Focusing on responsiveness and openness appear to be the most profitable components of trust building.

TRUST AND ISSUES

Since not all issues have equal impact as 'trust issues' either for government or for citizens, selecting one or two and undertaking a deeper dive into understanding 'trust drivers' would assist government into crafting responses.

Beyond this menu of future trust research, there is benefit in convening public servants and experts around the results of this research to understand it more completely and draw action lessons from it. A second cohort of action learning on trust would be an effective way to do this. Helping public servants learn about what drives trust in what they do for Canadians is essential to then addressing it. This is an institutional necessity for the public service and government.

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Appendix 1

TRUST IN GOVERNMENT: AN ACTION LEARNING PROGRAM

Action Learning is a process that involves a group working on problems, developing solutions, and learning as individuals, as a team, and as an organization. The IOG Trust in Government Action Learning Program had participants from a number of federal departments and included the following components:

- 7 Interactive Workshops

- Literature Review and research

- AI Model and data analysis

- Expert presentations and moderated discussions

- Topic exploration

- Group discussions

- Individual contributions

- Team analysis and research

7 Workshops were led by Dr. Lori Turnbull and Brad Graham with a number of expert guests:

- **The Importance of Trust in Government**: Senator Tony Dean

- **Detoxing Democracy**: Sabreena Delhon, The Samara Centre for Democracy

- **OECD Research on Trust in Government**: Dr. Monica Brezzi, Governance Indicators and Performance, OECD

- **Media and Trust**: Stephen Maher, Contributing Editor to Maclean's Magazine

- **AI Model (Polly) Results**: Erin Kelly, President and CEO, ASI

- **The Public's Trust**: Mike Colledge, President, Ipsos Public Affairs

- **Cohesion and Trust**: Geoff Norquay, Principle, Earnscliffe Strategies

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Appendix 2

THE INSTITUTE ON GOVERNANCE'S TOP OF MIND REPORT

Institute on Governance released "Top of Mind: Part One: Interviews; Conversations with Senior Leaders" in May 2022 (https://iog.ca/projects-initiatives/top-of-mind/) . During the survey, 174 senior public service leaders from all orders of government across the country were asked which social impacts and trends impact Canadians democracy and governments.

When asked if declining trust weakens their ability to implement effective policies and programs, 22.4% of senior public service leaders strongly agreed and 58.1 mostly agreed for combined 80.5%. The full results from the question are outlined below.

Question 1: To what extent do recent social issues and trends impact Canadian democracy and governments? As a senior public service executive, indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements (n=174):

Key Statements	Strongly Agree	Mostly Agree	Neither Agree / Disagree	Mostly Disagree	Strongly Disagree
A] Information conveyed via traditional media (print, radio, tv) supports effective public debate and democratic processes.	8.1%	51.2%	17.8%	20.1%	2.9%
B] Information conveyed via social and digital media supports effective public debate and democratic processes.	0.6%	19.6%	19.5%	48.3%	12.1%
C] Misinformation is increasing and contributes to social polarization and tensions.	54.0%	40.2%	3.5%	1.2%	1.2%
D] Trends related to misinformation, international interference, populism, social polarization, and tensions impede effective democratic processes and trust in governments.	49.4%	44.3%	5.2%	1.2%	0.0%
E] Canada's democratic institutions and governance remain robust despite emerging social issues and possible threats (such as identified in D]).	9.2%	63.8%	17.9%	8.1%	1.2%
F] Declining trust in governments weakens their ability to implement effective policies and programs to achieve better results and address major challenges.	22.4%	58.1%	12.1%	7.5%	0.0%
G] Actions of elected officials and their governments can either aggravate or mitigate adverse social issues and trends.	47.7%	43.1%	6.3%	2.9%	0.0%
H] The public service—at all orders of government— should play a more active role supporting democratic governance and mitigating the impacts of adverse social trends.	29.9%	48.9%	14.9%	5.8%	0.6%

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