

British Columbia

Survey of British Columbians' Attitudes on
Infrastructure Spending, Union Affiliation,
and Project Labour Agreements

4th April 2018

Prepared
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MAINSTREET RESEARCH

POLL FINDS BRITISH COLUMBIANS OPPOSE RESTRICTIVE LABOUR AGREEMENTS THAT INFLATE COST OF PUBLIC INFRASTRUCTURE PROJECTS

77 per cent of decided respondents oppose restrictive labour agreements

Vancouver (April 4, 2018) – Upcoming critical public infrastructure projects such as the Pattullo Bridge Replacement Project could cost B.C. taxpayers billions of dollars more than they need to and prove politically costly if they are not handled properly.

A poll out today finds British Columbians strongly favour an open and inclusive approach to bidding on big projects, so as to avoid increasing costs by granting select unions an effective monopoly on the work. The Mainstreet Research poll of British Columbians commissioned by the Progressive Contractors Association of Canada (PCA) found 77 percent of decided respondents don't support restricting who can work on projects through restrictive labour mechanisms such as the Project Labour Agreements (PLA) used by past governments. 92.4 percent of all respondents say it is important the BC government gets good value for investment in public infrastructure.

“With tens of billions of dollars of important public infrastructure projects potentially getting underway in the coming years, it is imperative we get this right the first time,” said Rieghardt van Enter, BC Regional Director for the Progressive Contractors Association of Canada (PCA). “An impressive body of research shows that restricting the number of bidders can drive up the costs of a project by as much as 30 percent. Allowing all workers and companies – regardless of union affiliation or lack thereof – to bid on projects ensures the best value for taxpayers.”

Van Enter added that restrictive PLAs are also discriminatory.

“We applaud the government’s desire to increase the number of women, indigenous workers, and apprentices,” van Enter said. “And that can be accomplished within inclusive PLAs. But restrictive PLAs cut out hundreds of BC companies and many thousands of BC tradespeople from being able to bid and work on public projects.”

“The provincial government has an opportunity to avoid the mistakes of the past that unnecessarily add billions of dollars in costs to projects and unnecessarily prevent many BC companies and workers from providing value to taxpayers on public projects.”

Mainstreet Research surveyed 1511 British Columbians between March 5th and March 6th. The poll has a margin of error of +/- 2.52% and is accurate 19 times out of 20.

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About the Progressive Contractors Association of Canada (PCA)

With offices in B.C., Alberta and Ontario, PCA is the voice of progressive unionized employers in Canada’s construction industry. Our member companies are responsible for 40 percent of energy and natural resource construction projects in British Columbia and Alberta and are leaders in infrastructure construction across Canada. PCA member companies employ more than 25,000 skilled construction workers in Canada, represented primarily by CLAC.

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Executive Summary

A strong majority of British Columbians are decidedly opposed to restrictive tendering and project labour agreements in future publicly funded infrastructure projects, while at the same time feeling strongly that more public investment is needed.

77% of decided respondents do not think that restrictive PLAs are in the interest of all British Columbians. All demographic cohorts do not feel that PLAs are beneficial, including union members. Disapproval of PLAs is strongest among respondents aged 50 to 64 and lowest among the 18-34 age group.

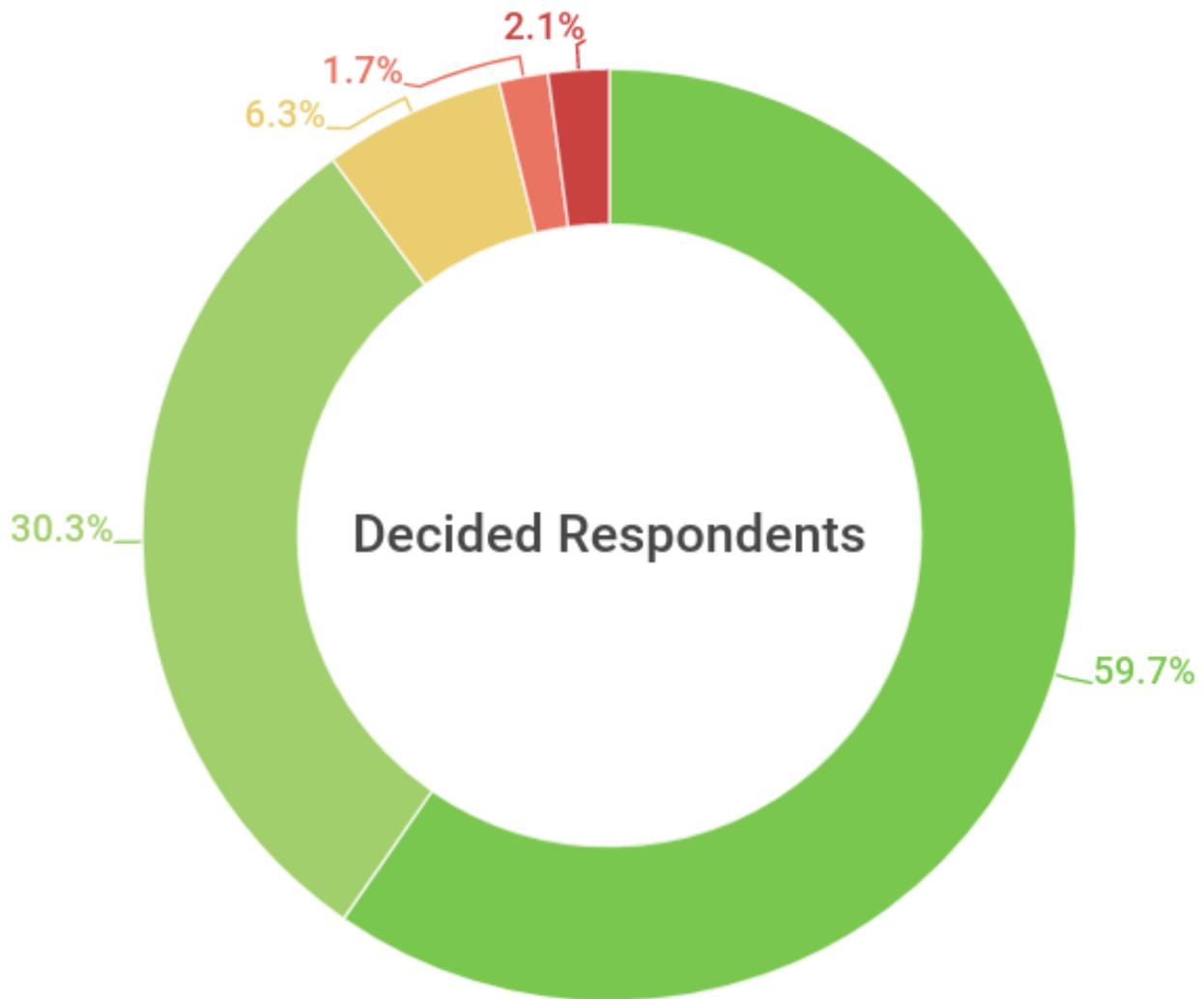
Nearly 59% of decided respondents believe that union affiliation should not be a requirement to build taxpayer-funded infrastructure. Disagreement is over 16% higher among men, and is significantly higher among respondents aged 35 to 49 and the 50-64 age cohort. There are no significant differences among the various regions of BC. Significantly more union members than non-union members believe that affiliation should be a requirement.

Finally, 68% of decided respondents think that the BC government should not consider building public infrastructure through PLAs if it will drive up costs. Once again, support for PLAs is highest among union members.

An overwhelming majority of British Columbia residents believe that more investment is needed in infrastructure, either in new projects or to maintain existing infrastructure. 87% of all respondents would like to see more investment. We find no significant differences among the genders and different age groups. However, we find support to be lower in the interior of BC compared to Greater Vancouver and the Island. Support for more infrastructure is roughly the same among union and non-union members.

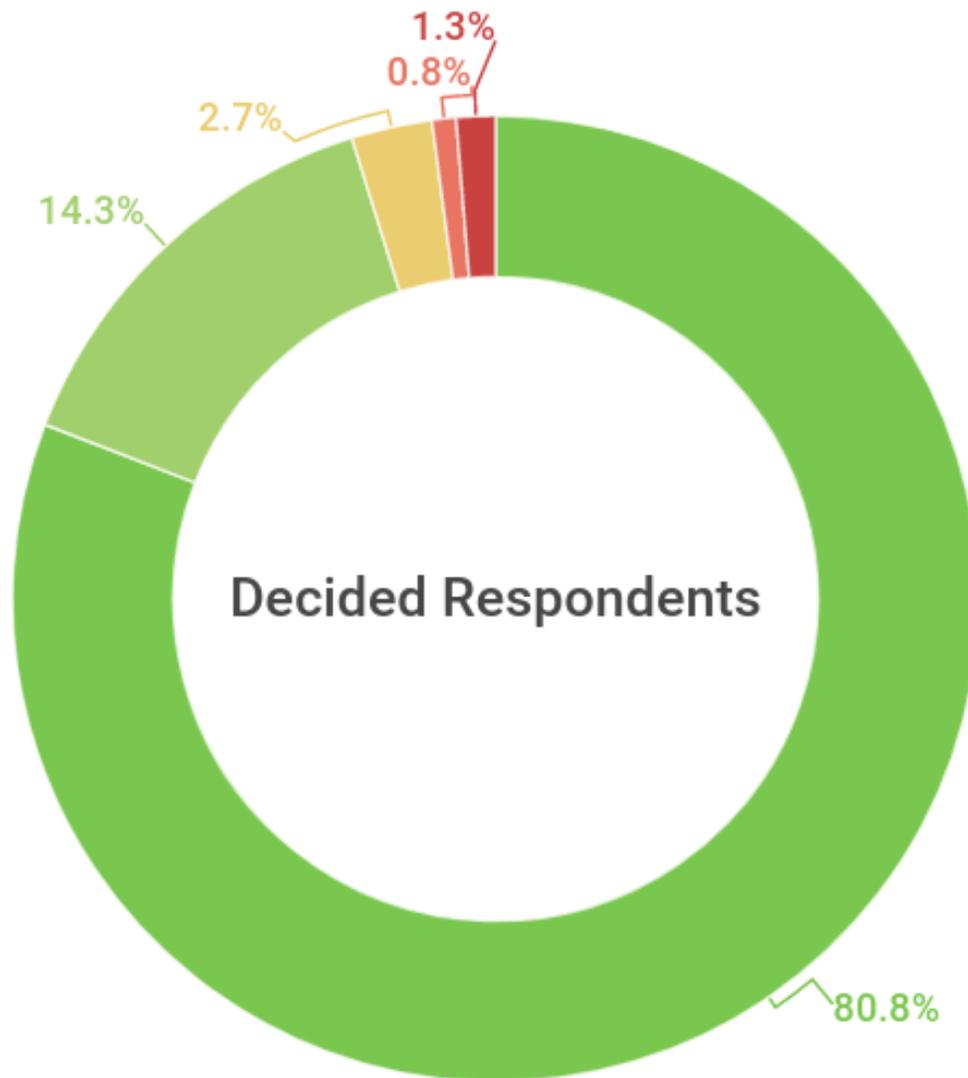
Similarly, 92.4% of all respondents think it is important that the BC government get good value for public infrastructure investments, with 78.5% saying that it is very important. We find no significant differences between age, gender, region, or union membership in this question.

We've been hearing more about infrastructure in the news, with the provincial government planning to spend billions of dollars on infrastructure over the next several years. That includes everything from highway upgrades to building new bridges and expanding public transit. In your view, how important is it to invest in infrastructure to maintain what we have or build new projects?



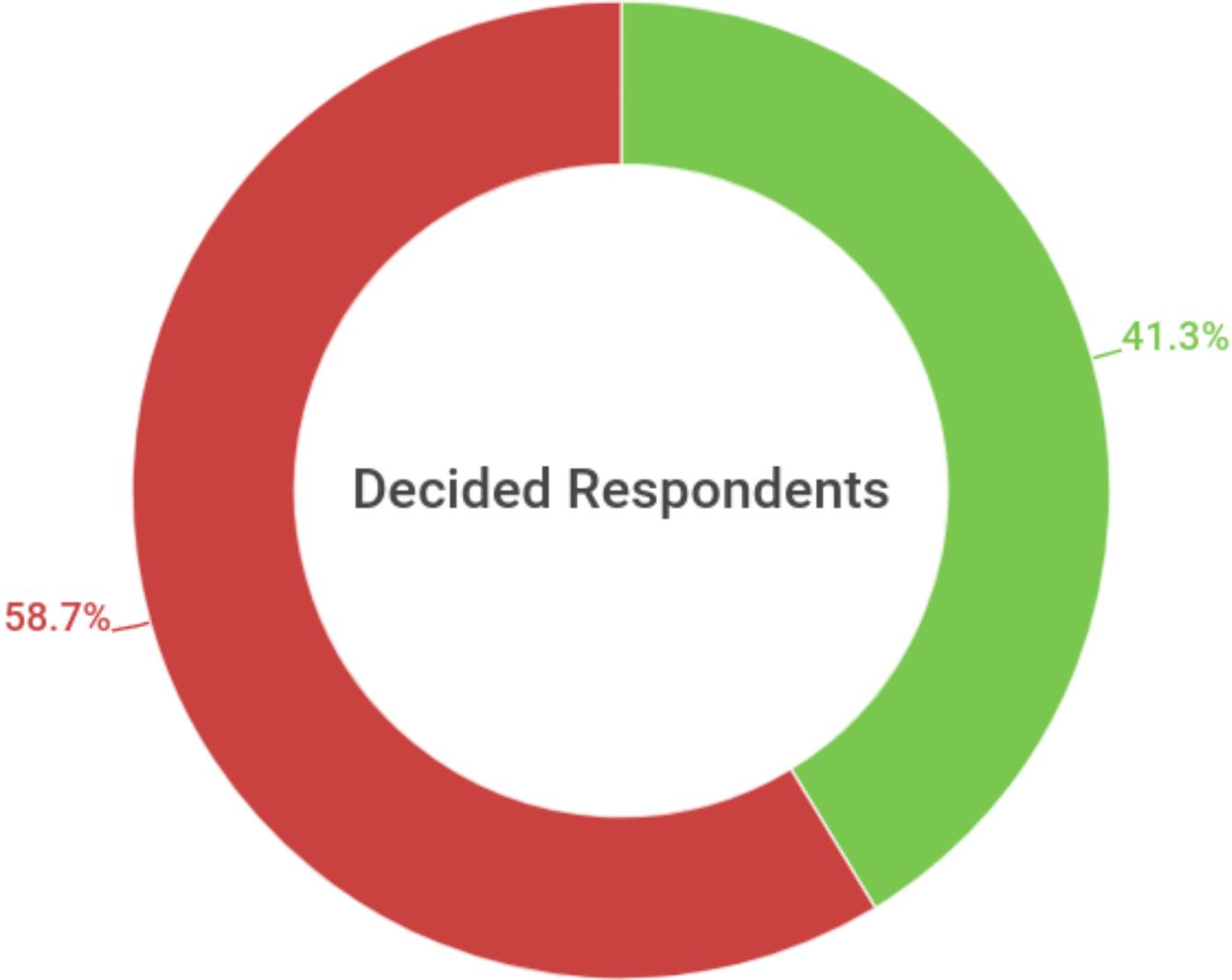
- Very Important
- Somewhat Important
- Not too Important
- Somewhat Unimportant
- Very Unimportant

As you know public tax dollars are used to build and repair infrastructure such as roads, bridges and public transit. In your opinion, how important is it that the BC government makes sure taxpayers are getting good value for public infrastructure investments?



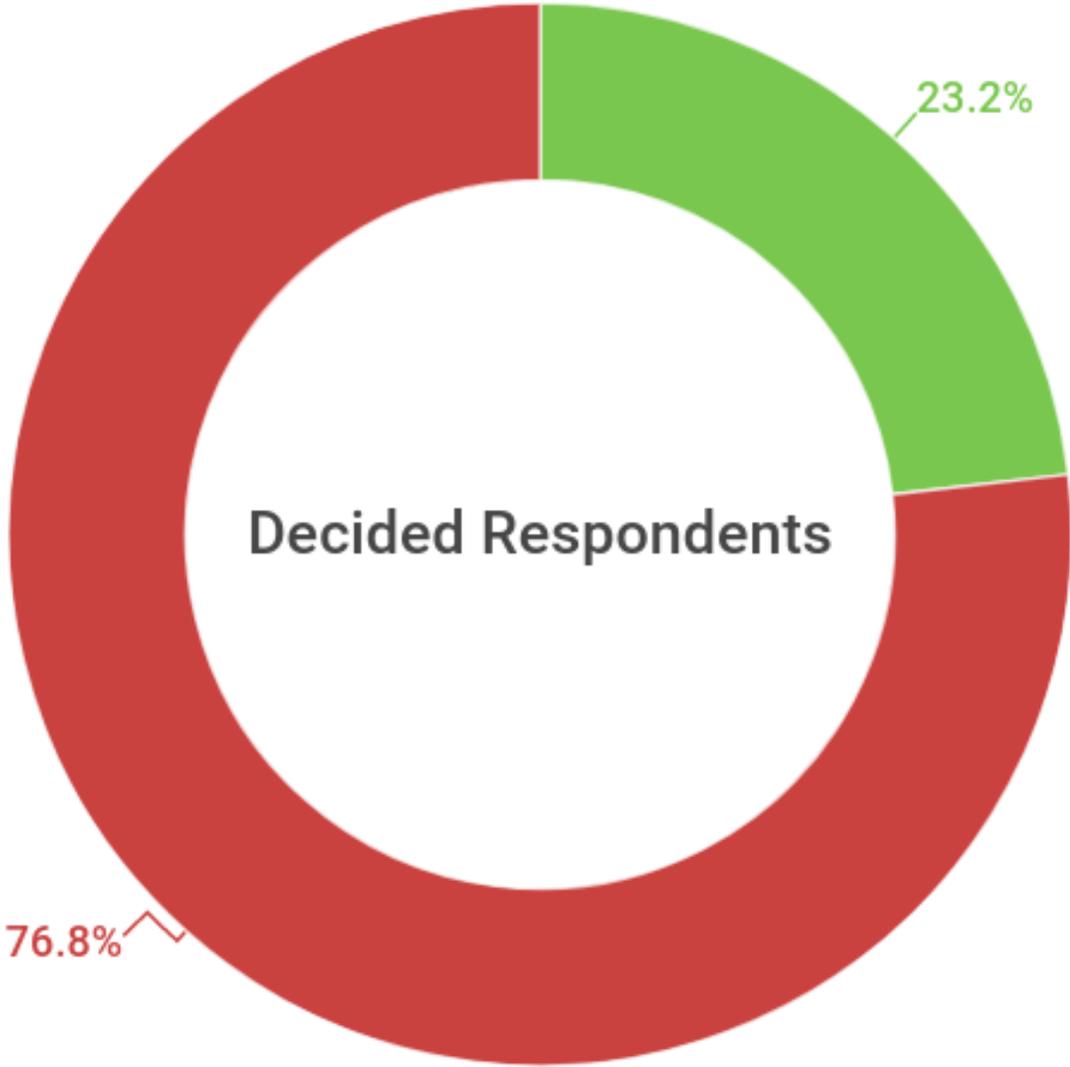
- Very Important
- Somewhat Important
- Not too Important
- Somewhat Unimportant
- Very Unimportant

As the BC government considers how to build publicly funded infrastructure projects, do you believe that affiliation with certain unions should be a requirement for companies and workers who want to build taxpayer-funded infrastructure in BC?



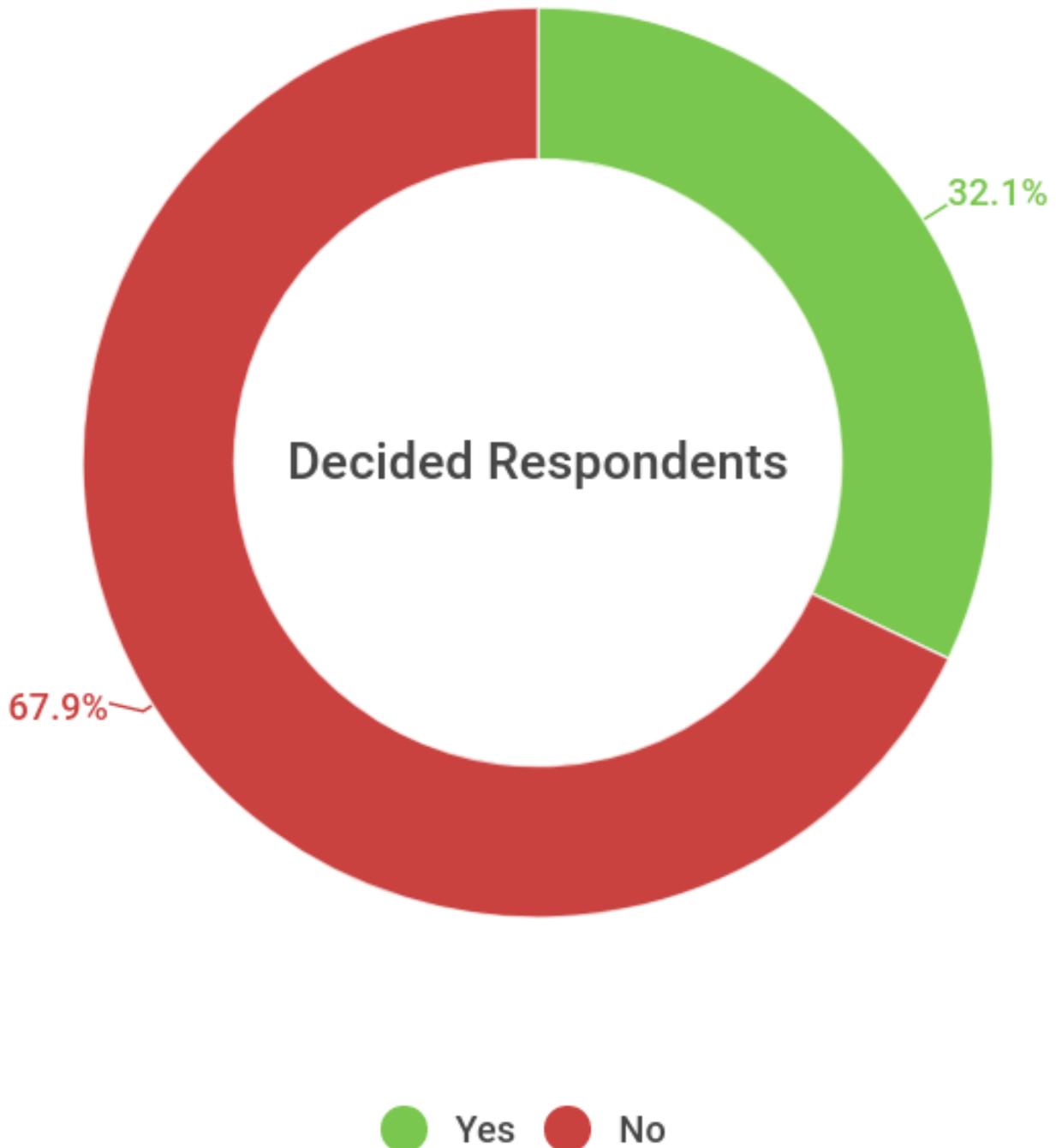
● Yes ● No

The BC government is currently considering how to secure labour to get its public infrastructure projects built. One option under consideration in BC is what are called Project Labour Agreements, or PLAs. Some labour groups in the province advocate restrictive PLA's where only companies and workers affiliated with certain unions are allowed to bid for government contracts and build those projects. Do you believe that restrictive PLA's would be in the interests of all British Columbians?



● Yes ● No

In those jurisdictions, where only companies and workers affiliated with certain unions are allowed to work on government construction projects, research shows those projects are between 20 and 30 percent more expensive. In your view, should the BC government consider building public infrastructure through Project Labour Agreements if there's a risk that this will drive up costs?



Breakouts

Displaying All Respondents

In your view, how important is it to invest in infrastructure to maintain what we have or build new projects?

	All	Male	Female	18-34	35-49	50-64	65+	Vancouver CMA	Vancouver Island	Rest of BC	Union Members	Non-Union Members
Very Important	57.7%	59.8%	55.8%	58.4%	54.3%	62.5%	54.7%	65.5%	53.5%	49.6%	59.4%	57.2%
Somewhat Important	29.3%	28.4%	30.2%	29.8%	31.4%	26.1%	30.5%	24.7%	35.9%	31.8%	27.3%	30%
Not too Important	6.1%	6.2%	6.1%	5.4%	6.3%	5.4%	8%	4.6%	4.1%	9.3%	8%	5.5%
Somewhat Unimportant	1.6%	2.2%	1%	2.3%	1.5%	1.3%	1.2%	1.2%	1.3%	2.3%	1.5%	1.7%
Very Unimportant	2%	2%	2%	2%	3.4%	1.6%	1.1%	1.5%	1.4%	3%	1.3%	2.2%
Don't Know	3.2%	1.4%	4.9%	2.2%	3.1%	3.1%	4.5%	2.4%	3.8%	3.9%	2.5%	3.4%
Unweighted Frequency	1511	823	688	166	320	494	531	676	317	518	372	1139
Weighted Frequency	1511	744	767	407	368	417	319	699	290	522	377	1134

How important is it that the BC government makes sure taxpayers are getting good value for public infrastructure investments?

	All	Male	Female	18-34	35-49	50-64	65+	Vancouver CMA	Vancouver Island	Rest of BC	Union Members	Non-Union Members
Very Important	78.5%	79.6%	77.5%	80.9%	72.7%	81.1%	78.9%	78.9%	77.9%	78.4%	78.5%	78.6%
Somewhat Important	13.9%	13.5%	14.3%	12.5%	17.1%	12.7%	13.8%	15%	15.3%	11.7%	13.2%	14.2%
Not too Important	2.6%	2.5%	2.6%	2.3%	3.3%	1.9%	2.9%	2.70%	1.8%	2.8%	4.5%	1.9%
Somewhat Unimportant	0.8%	1%	0.5%	0.5%	1.5%	0.5%	0.7%	0.9%	0.7%	0.6%	0.9%	0.7%
Very Unimportant	1.3%	1.1%	1.5%	0.7%	2.6%	1.3%	0.7%	0.8%	1%	2.1%	0.8%	1.5%
Don't Know	2.9%	2.2%	3.5%	3.0%	2.9%	2.6%	3.0%	1.6%	3.4%	4.3%	2.2%	3.1%
Unweighted Frequency	1511	823	688	166	320	494	531	676	317	518	372	1139
Weighted Frequency	1511	744	767	407	368	417	319	699	290	522	377	1134

Do you believe that affiliation with certain unions should be a requirement for companies and workers who want to build taxpayer-funded infrastructure in BC?

	All	Male	Female	18-34	35-49	50-64	65+	Vancouver CMA	Vancouver Island	Rest of BC	Union Members	Non-Union Members
Yes	28.6%	31.2%	26%	25.7%	29.3%	28.8%	31%	28.7%	28.6%	28.4%	40.3%	24.7%
No	40.7%	49%	32.7%	37.3%	45.3%	43.5%	36.2%	41.1%	40.4%	40.4%	31.3%	43.9%
Don't Know	30.7%	19.9%	41.2%	37.1%	25.4%	27.6%	32.8%	30.2%	31.1%	31.2%	28.4%	31.5%
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Weighted Frequency	1511	744	767	407	368	417	319	699	290	522	377	1134

Do you believe that restrictive PLA's would be in the interests of all British Columbians?

	All	Male	Female	18-34	35-49	50-64	65+	Vancouver CMA	Vancouver Island	Rest of BC	Union Members	Non-Union Members
Yes	18.2%	21%	15.6%	25.9%	16.4%	14.4%	15.6%	18.2%	17%	19%	25.2%	15.9%
No	60.1%	63.3%	56.9%	48.2%	62.5%	65.8%	65%	59.5%	60.1%	60.9%	52.1%	62.7%
Don't Know	21.7%	15.7%	27.5%	25.9%	21.1%	19.8%	19.4%	22.3%	22.9%	20.2%	22.7%	21.4%
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Weighted Frequency	1511	744	767	407	368	417	319	699	290	522	377	1134

In your view, should the BC government consider building public infrastructure through Project Labour Agreements if there's a risk that this will drive up costs?

	All	Male	Female	18-34	35-49	50-64	65+	Vancouver CMA	Vancouver Island	Rest of BC	Union Members	Non-Union Members
Yes	24.3%	26.9%	21.8%	34.1%	20.8%	20.5%	20.9%	25.8%	23.4%	22.9%	30.6%	22.2%
No	51.5%	55%	48%	44.3%	55.4%	55.5%	50.9%	50.9%	49.3%	53.4%	43.7%	54%
Don't Know	24.2%	18.1%	30.2%	21.7%	23.8%	24%	28.2%	23.3%	27.4%	23.7%	25.7%	23.7%
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Weighted Frequency	1511	744	767	407	368	417	319	699	290	522	377	1134

Full Questionnaire

We've been hearing more about infrastructure in the news, with the provincial government planning to spend billions of dollars on infrastructure over the next several years. That includes everything from highway upgrades to building new bridges and expanding public transit. In your view, how important is it to invest in infrastructure to maintain what we have or build new projects?

- Very Important
- Somewhat Important
- Not Too Important
- Somewhat Unimportant
- Very Unimportant
- Don't Know

As you know public tax dollars are used to build and repair infrastructure such as roads, bridges and public transit. In your opinion, how important is it that the BC government makes sure taxpayers are getting good value for public infrastructure investments?

- Very Important
- Somewhat Important
- Not Too Important
- Somewhat Unimportant
- Very Unimportant
- Don't Know

As the BC government considers how to build publicly funded infrastructure projects, do you believe that affiliation with certain unions should be a requirement for companies and workers who want to build taxpayer-funded infrastructure in BC?

- Yes
- No
- Don't Know

The BC government is currently considering how to secure labour to get its public infrastructure projects built. One option under consideration in BC is what are called Project Labour Agreements, or PLAs. Some labour groups in the province advocate restrictive PLA's where only companies and workers affiliated with certain unions are allowed to bid for government contracts and build those projects. Do you believe that restrictive PLA's would be in the interests of all British Columbians?

- Yes
- No
- Don't Know

In those jurisdictions, where only companies and workers affiliated with certain unions are allowed to work on government construction projects, research shows those projects are between 20 and 30 percent more expensive. In your view, should the BC government consider building public infrastructure through Project Labour Agreements if there's a risk that this will drive up costs?

- Yes
- No
- Don't Know

What is your gender?

- Male
- Female

What age group do you fall into?

- 18 to 34 years of age
- 35 to 49 years of age
- 50 to 64 years of age
- 65 years and older

Methodology

The analysis in this report is based on a survey conducted between March 5th, 2018 and March 6th, 2018, among a sample of 1511 adults, 18 years of age or older, living in the province of British Columbia. The survey was conducted using Interactive Voice Recording. Respondents were interviewed on both landlines and cellular phones. The survey is intended to represent the voting population of British Columbia.

This survey was conducted by Mainstreet Research and was sponsored by the Progressive Contractors Association.

The sampling frame for the survey was derived from both a national telephone directory compiled by Mainstreet Research from various sources and random digit dialing. The survey that dialed from the directory was conducted as a stratified dial of Vancouver CMA, Vancouver Island, and the rest of British Columbia. In the case of random digit dials, respondents were asked the additional question of what region of the country they resided in. In each case, respondents were dialed at random.

At least two attempts were made to complete an interview at every sampled telephone number. In the case of the first survey, the calls were staggered over times of day and two days to maximize the chances of making contact with a potential respondent. The previous statement also applies to the second and third surveys except these surveys were conducted over one day. Interviewing was also spread as evenly as possible across the field period.

The sample of the survey was weighted by population parameters from the Canada 2016 Census for adults 18 years of age or older in Canada. The population parameters used for weighting are age, gender, and region.

The margin of error for the poll is +/- 2.52% at the 95% confidence level. Margins of error are higher in each subsample.

Totals may not add up 100% due to rounding.

In addition to sampling error, one should bear in mind that the wording of questions and practical difficulties in conducting surveys can introduce error or bias into the findings of opinion polls. Moreover, all sample surveys and polls may be subject to other sources of error, including, but not limited to coverage error, and measurement error.