



R v Comeau and Interprovincial Free Trade: Canadian Opinion Survey

DRAFT REPORT

February 2019

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Methodology



DATA COLLECTION

- A sample of 1,106 Canadians from the Ipsos I-Say panel was interviewed, including 100 residents of New Brunswick



FIELD DATES

- February 13th to 19th, 2019



ACCURACY

- Quotas and weighting were employed to ensure that the sample's composition reflects the overall population according to census information.
- The precision of online polls is measured using a credibility interval. In this case, the results are accurate to within +/- 3.4 percentage points, 19 times out of 20, of what the results would have been had all Canadian adults been polled.
- Credibility interval are wider among subsets of the population

Executive Summary

R v Comeau

In April of last year, Canada's Supreme Court issued a decision about Gerard Comeau, a New Brunswick man who was stopped and fined by the government of New Brunswick for bringing beer he had bought in Quebec, where it is cheaper, home to New Brunswick. Comeau appealed his fine, and won his case in a New Brunswick court. After Comeau's victory, the province appealed the decision to the Supreme Court.

- Nearly a year out from the Supreme Court ruling in *R v Comeau*, public awareness of the case is showing signs of abating. Nationally, two in ten (21%) say they've heard about the Supreme Court decision, rising to half (49%) in New Brunswick.
 - Awareness is stronger among men than women, and among the university-educated compared to those with less education. Regionally, Atlantic Canadians are most likely to have heard of the case, while fewer are aware elsewhere in the country.
- In 2017, ahead of the Supreme Court appeal hearing, one in four Canadians (24%) were aware of the upcoming case. In New Brunswick, 59% had heard about it.

The Supreme Court ruled unanimously that provinces and territories have the constitutional power to restrict the transport of purchased goods across provincial borders. This effectively meant that the Government of New Brunswick won the Supreme Court appeal.

- However, polling suggests that most Canadians disagree with the Supreme Court's verdict. Nearly three in four (73%) think that Comeau – the man who was fined from bringing beer from Quebec to New Brunswick – should have won the Supreme Court case. By contrast, only 13% think the Government of New Brunswick should have won, as it did. A further 14% are unsure.
 - While Western Canadians are slightly – but not significantly – more likely to think that Comeau should have won the case, the real shift in opinion is by age: Baby Boomers aged 55 and over are by far the most likely to think the Supreme Court should have ruled in Comeau's favour.

Executive Summary

Out-of-Province Purchases and Alcohol Monopolies

- Despite the overturning of Comeau’s New Brunswick court victory by the Supreme Court, Canadians’ attitudes to out-of-province purchases have remained consistent over time. Changes noted vs. 2017 are not statistically significant.
- A majority *agree* that Canadians should be allowed to:
 - Bring any legally purchased product from one province to another: 87% (-2 pts from 2017).
 - Order any legal product from anywhere in the country: 87% (-1 pt)
 - Order wine directly from a winery in another province: 86% (-2 pts)
 - Bring any amount of beer or wine they buy in one province into another province: 75% (-3 pts)
- There has been a slight softening in opinion on alcohol monopolies, however: two in three Canadians (67%) now *disagree* that provinces should be allowed to protect their alcohol monopolies by fining citizens who buy wine or beer from other provinces. This is down 4 points from 2017, indicating a statistically significant shift.

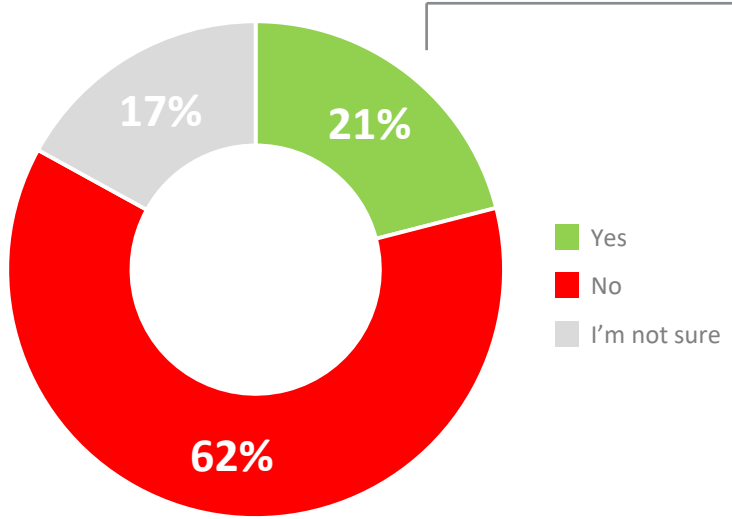
Barriers to Trade

- The most compelling argument for free trade across provincial borders continues to be national unity: nearly nine in ten Canadians (87%) agree there should be free trade between Canadian provinces “because we are one country.” This opinion is strongest in Atlantic Canada (93%) and BC (93%), and weakest in Quebec (84%).
- Most Canadians continue to see reducing interprovincial trade barriers as something positive, agreeing that it would be good for consumers (81%, unchanged) and Canadian businesses (76%, -1 pt).
- Only a minority think that provinces should be allowed to impose restrictions on goods from other provinces, with 19% agreeing it will help provinces protect their own industries (+3 pts) and 14% saying it will allow them to collect more revenues (+2 pts).

DETAILED FINDINGS

Awareness of Supreme Court Decision

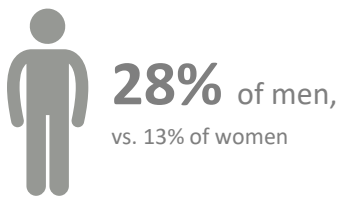
- Two in ten Canadians (21%) and half of New Brunswick residents have heard of the Supreme Court decision. Awareness increases in line with education, and is stronger among men than women. Across Canada, awareness of the Supreme Court decision is lower than in the months leading up to the case, including among New Brunswick residents.



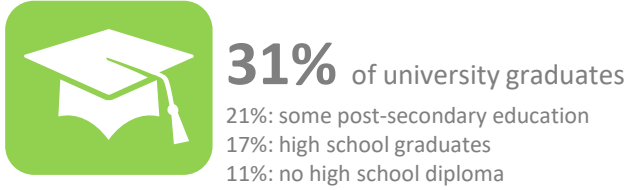
Prior to the Supreme Court case, 24% of Canadians knew of the upcoming case.
(source: Ipsos, Nov. 2017)

% YES

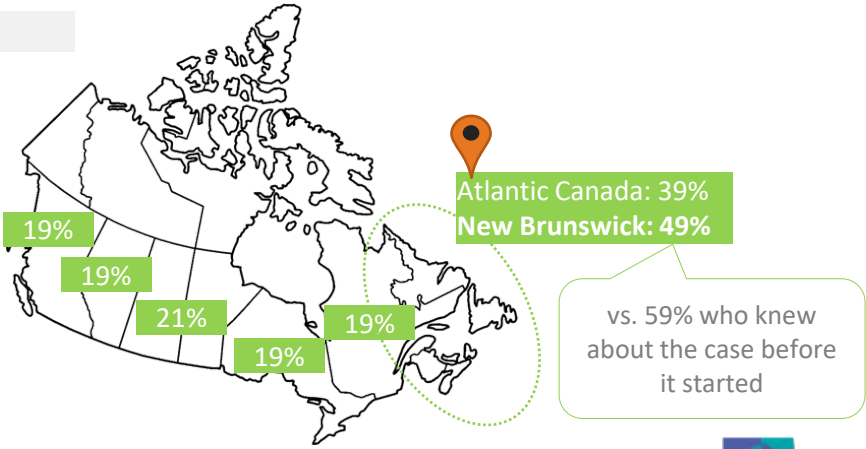
GENDER



EDUCATION



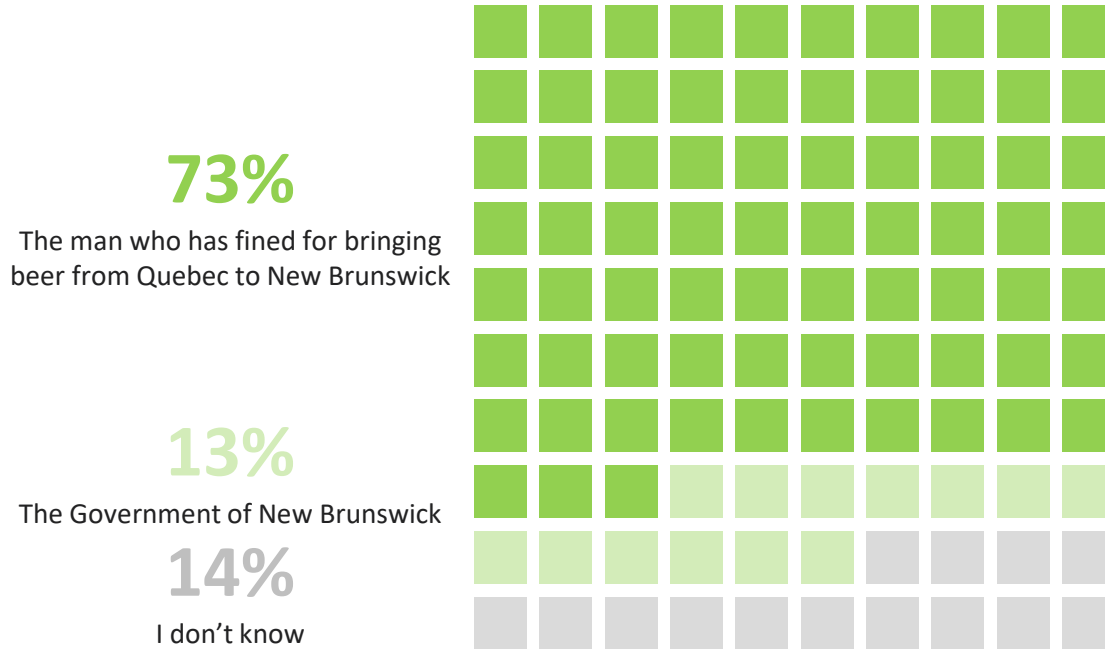
REGION



Q.1. In April of last year, Canada's Supreme Court issued a decision about a New Brunswick man who was stopped and fined by the government of New Brunswick for bringing beer he had bought in Quebec, where it is cheaper, home to New Brunswick. The man appealed his fine, and won his case in a New Brunswick court. After the man's victory, the province appealed the decision to the Supreme Court. Have you heard about the Supreme Court decision? Base: All Respondents (n=1,1106)

Who Should Have Won?

- A majority of Canadians (73%) think Gerard Comeau should have won the case, leaving just over one in ten (13%) who feel the ruling in favour of the Government of New Brunswick was the right outcome. A further 14% aren't sure.



Prior to the Supreme Court case, Canadians also favoured a potential victory for Comeau:

Who should win?

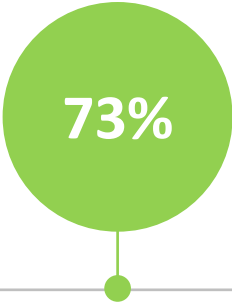
The man who was fined:	78%
The Government of New Brunswick:	7%
I don't know:	15%

(source: Ipsos, Nov. 2017)

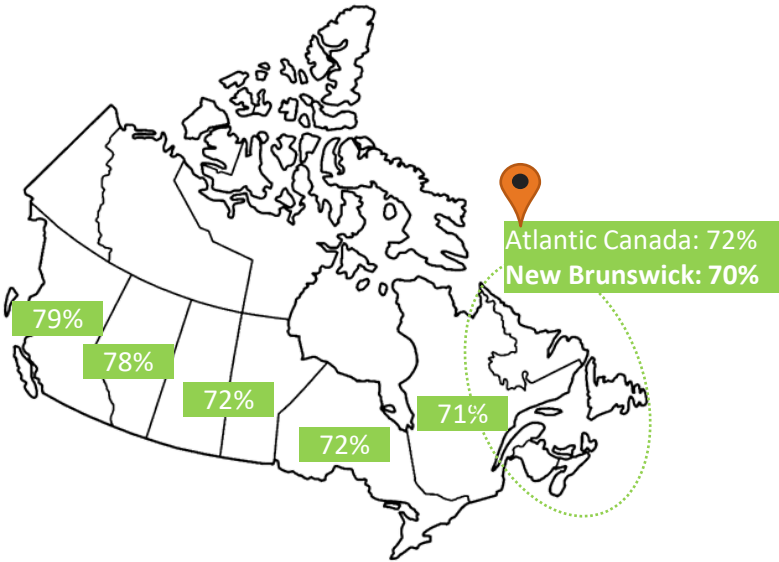
Q2. In the Supreme Court, the man who was fined for bringing beer from Quebec to New Brunswick argued that his province can't stop him from shopping in other provinces and bringing his purchases home. The Supreme Court of Canada ruled unanimously that provinces and territories have the constitutional power to restrict the transport of purchased goods across provincial borders. Who do you think should have won the Supreme Court case?
Base: All Respondents (n=1106)

Who Should Have Won?

- There is very little regional difference of opinion: a majority in all provinces think the man who was fined should have won the Supreme Court case. Opinions vary more strongly by age, with Baby Boomers being the most likely (79%) to think the Supreme Court should have ruled in the man's favour.



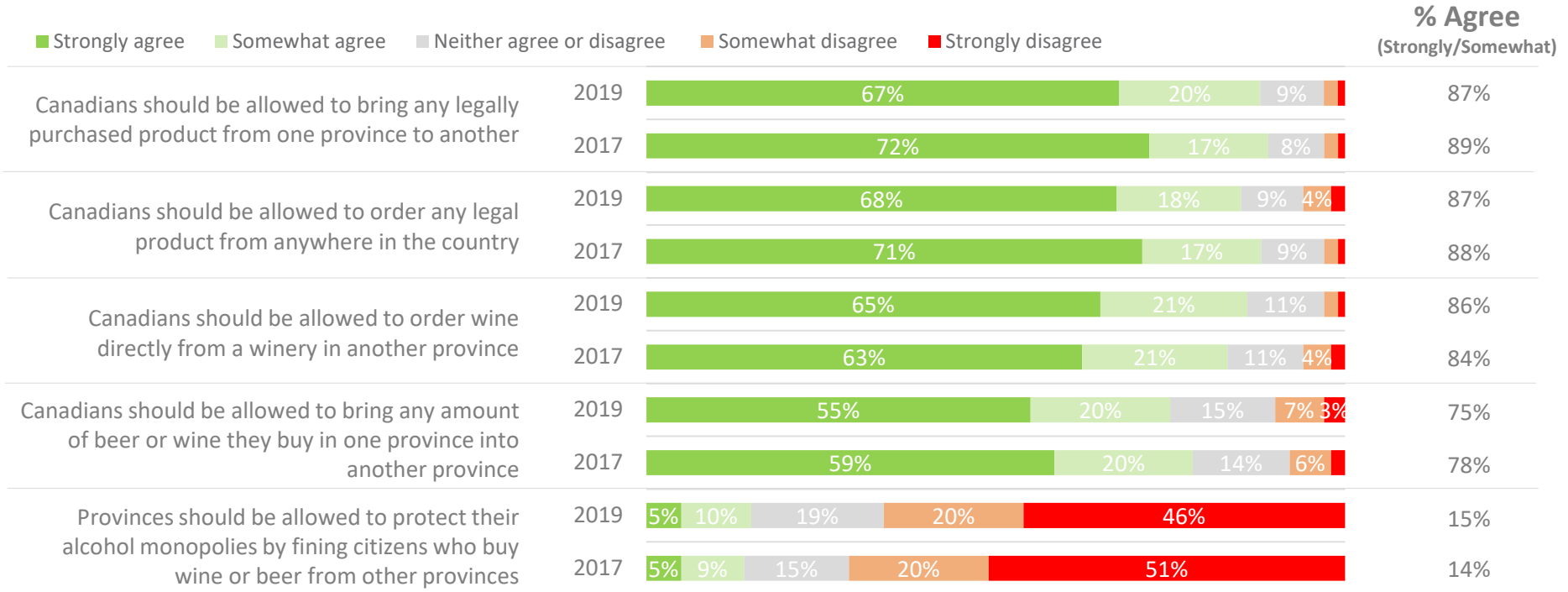
The man who was fined for bringing beer from Quebec to New Brunswick



79% of Baby Boomers, vs. 71% of Gen X'ers and 68% of Millennials.

Out-of-Province Purchases and Alcohol-Sale Monopolies

- Canadians' views on out-of-province purchases have held steady since 2017, but fewer now *disagree* with provinces fining citizens to protect their alcohol monopolies (though overall agreement with this practice has not grown significantly). A strong majority remain in favour of being allowed to buy beer, wine and other legal products in any province and transport them from one province to the next.



Data <3% not labelled

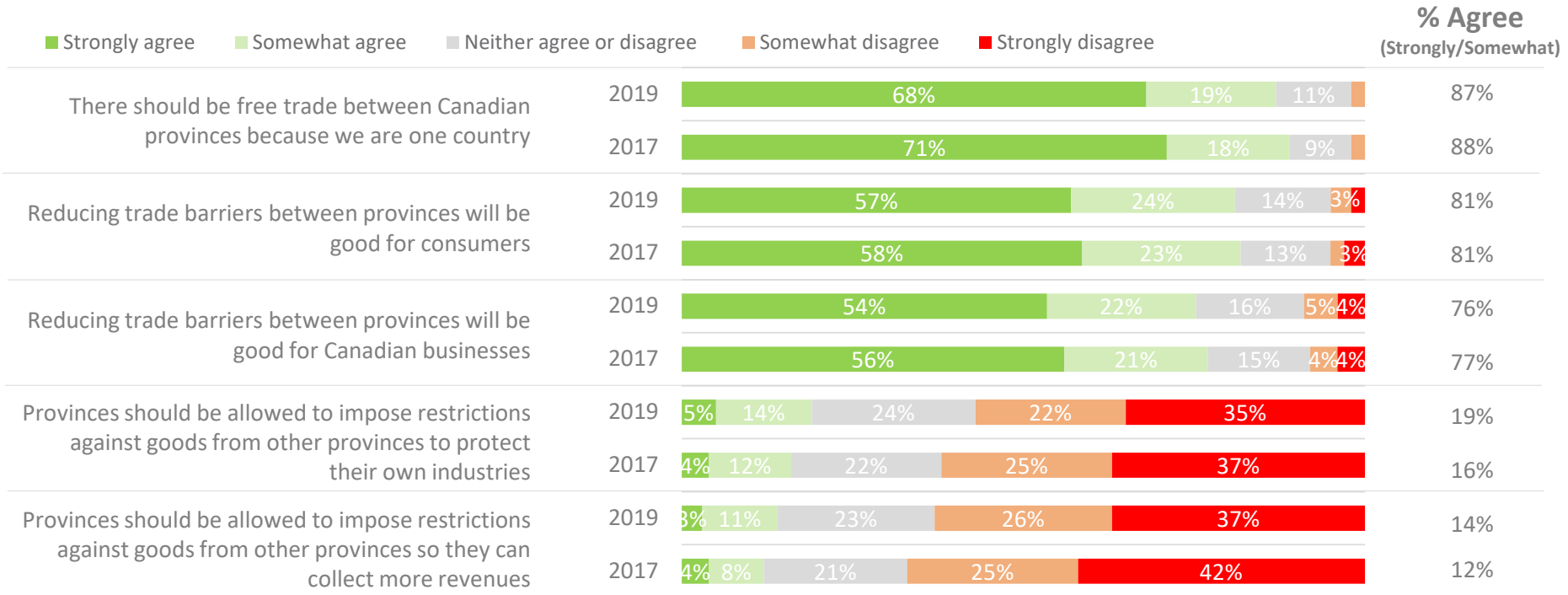
Out-of-Province Purchases and Alcohol-Sale Monopolies

- Boomers and BC residents are more in favour of interprovincial free trade, while Millennials are more likely to support provinces protecting alcohol monopolies through fines (though only a quarter of them agree with the practice). New Brunswick residents remain the most likely to support the use of fines to protect provincial monopolies.

% Agree (Strongly/Somewhat)	Total	AGE			REGION						
		18-34	35-54	55+	BC	AB	SK/MB	ON	QC	ATL	New Brunswick
<i>Base: All Respondents</i>	1106	302	376	428	121	101	100	354	232	198	100
		C	D	E	A	B	C	D	E	F	G
Canadians should be allowed to bring any legally purchased product from one province to another	87%	85%	86%	90%	93% CD	91%	81%	84%	88%	89%	88%
Canadians should be allowed to order any legal product from anywhere in the country	87%	82%	88%	89% c	93% D	96% CDEFG	84%	83%	85%	88%	85%
Canadians should be allowed to order wine directly from a winery in another province	86%	83%	86%	87%	92% G	85%	85%	85%	83%	88% G	80%
Canadians should be allowed to bring any amount of beer or wine they buy in one province into another province	75%	68%	76% c	78% c	84% CD	74%	68%	71%	77%	75%	79%
Provinces monopolies should be allowed to protect their alcohol monopolies by fining citizens who buy wine or beer from other provinces	15%	24% DE	13%	10%	11%	10%	22% BE	17%	12%	19%	30% ABDEF

Trade Barriers in Canada

- Views on trade barriers are also consistent with those seen in 2017. Nearly nine in ten (87%) continue to find national unity a compelling reason for free trade between provinces, and a strong majority see reduced trade barriers as good for consumers and Canadian business.



Data <3% not labelled

Trade Barriers in Canada

- The benefits of free interprovincial trade are seen most clearly by Canadians aged 55+. Regionally, BC residents are somewhat more likely to agree, particularly when compared to Quebecers. Though still a minority view, Millennials and New Brunswick residents are the most likely to feel provinces should be allowed to restrict goods coming from other provinces in order to protect their local industries and collect more revenues.

% Agree (Strongly/Somewhat)	Total	AGE			REGION						
		18-34	35-54	55+	BC	AB	SK/MB	ON	QC	ATL	New Brunswick
<i>Base: All Respondents</i>	1106	302	376	428	121	101	100	354	232	198	100
		C	D	E	A	B	C	D	E	F	G
There should be free trade between Canadian provinces because we are one country	87%	84%	86%	91% CD	93% E	86%	88%	87%	84%	93% E	93%
Reducing trade barriers between provinces will be good for consumers	81%	75%	79%	86% CD	89% DEF	84%	86%	78%	78%	78%	80%
Reducing trade barriers between provinces will be good for Canadian businesses	76%	68%	76%	81% C	82% E	75%	77%	76%	71%	74%	80%
Provinces should be allowed to impose restrictions against goods from other provinces to protect their own industries	19%	27% DE	16%	16%	14%	22%	24%	18%	21%	21%	32% ADEF
Provinces should be allowed to impose restrictions against goods from other provinces so they can collect more revenues	14%	22% DE	10%	12%	5%	17% A	18% A	13% A	18% A	17% A	26% ADF

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