

ELECTORAL SYSTEMS

Almost Half of Canadians Are Open to Proportional Representation

A third of respondents believe the current electoral system—first-past-the-post—is best for the country.

[TORONTO – Dec. 11, 2008] – Following two weeks of political turmoil in Ottawa, Canadians are taking a second look at their existing electoral regulations, and almost half of them believe the implementation of a proportional representation system would be good for the country, a new Angus Reid Strategies poll has found.

In the online survey of a representative national sample, 33 per cent of respondents believe the current first-past-the-post system, where candidates win seats by getting more votes than any other rival in a specific constituency, is the best one for Canada.

However, 47 per cent of Canadians would be open to trying different guidelines. Almost three-in-ten (28%) would switch to a proportional representation system, where parties win seats in accordance with their share of the national vote, and one-in-five (19%) prefer a mixed-member proportional voting system, which would allocate some seats on a constituency basis, and others by proportional representation.

Respondents who voted for the Conservative Party in the last federal election are the staunchest defenders of the first-past-the-post system (47%), while more than 60 per cent of those who supported the New Democratic Party

KEY FINDINGS

- **33% believe the current first-past-the-post electoral system is best for Canada**
- **47% would prefer a different electoral system (28% proportional representation; 19% mixed-member)**
- **Conservative voters more likely to endorse first-past-the-post; NDP and Greens more likely to support changes**
- **57% like current parliamentary system, less than one-in-four would change to presidential or semi-presidential governance**

Full topline results are at the end of this release.

From December 5 to December 6, 2008 Angus Reid Strategies conducted an online survey among 1,005 randomly selected Canadian adults who are Angus Reid Forum panelists. The margin of error—which measures sampling variability—is +/- 3.1%, 19 times out of 20. The results have been statistically weighted according to the most current education, age, gender and region Census data to ensure a sample representative of the entire adult population of Canada. Discrepancies in or between totals are due to rounding.

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(NDP) or the Green Party believe it is time to change the system.

The recent political crisis in the nation's capital has led to some discussions about governance in Canada. More than half of respondents (57%) are satisfied with the current parliamentary system, with the prime minister and cabinet exercising power.

A considerably lower proportion would prefer to have a presidential system, with an executive branch that is separate from the legislature (15%) or a semi-presidential system, with a president in charge of foreign policy and a prime minister in charge of domestic policy (8%).

Bloc Québécois supporters are more likely to voice support for a presidential (14%) or semi-presidential system (23%), while clear majorities of respondents who voted for any of the remaining four parties back the status quo.

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Electoral Systems						
Which of these electoral systems do you think would be best for Canada?						
Party support in 2008 federal election						
	Total	Con.	Lib.	NDP	BQ	Grn
The current first-past-the-post system, where candidates win seats by getting more votes than any other rival in a specific constituency	33%	47%	35%	21%	26%	20%
A proportional representation system, where parties win seats in accordance with their share of the national vote	28%	21%	29%	37%	30%	40%
A mixed-member proportional voting system, which would allocate some seats on a constituency basis, and others by proportional representation	19%	15%	21%	26%	23%	24%
Not sure	21%	17%	15%	16%	20%	16%

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Electoral Systems						
Which of these political systems do you think would be best for Canada?						
Party support in 2008 federal election						
	Total	Con.	Lib.	NDP	BQ	Grn
The current parliamentary system, with the prime minister and cabinet exercising power	57%	60%	69%	64%	41%	58%
A semi-presidential system, with a president in charge of foreign policy and a prime minister in charge of domestic policy	8%	4%	9%	7%	23%	13%
A presidential system, with an executive branch that is separate from the legislature	15%	20%	3%	17%	14%	15%
Not sure	20%	15%	18%	13%	22%	14%

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Angus Reid Strategies is a full-service polling and market research firm which is a leader in the use of the Internet and rich media technology to collect high-quality, in-depth insights for a wide array of clients. Dr. Angus Reid and the Angus Reid Strategies team are pioneers in online research methodologies, and have been conducting online surveys since 1995.

Angus Reid Strategies, along with its sister company, Vision Critical, is now the largest Canadian-owned market research enterprise. In addition to its five offices in Canada—located in Vancouver, Calgary, Regina, Toronto, and Montreal—the firm also has offices in San Francisco, Chicago, New York, London, Paris and Sydney. Its team of specialists provides solutions across every type and sector of research, and currently serves over 200 international clients.

Angus Reid Strategies polls are conducted using the Angus Reid Forum online panel (www.angusreidforum.com), which is recruited via an industry-leading process that incorporates a randomized, widespread invitation approach and a triple opt-in screening procedure. The panel is maintained through state-of-the-art sampling techniques and frequent verifications of personal identity, contact information, and demographic characteristics. This premier online survey platform presents respondents with highly visual, interactive, and engaging surveys, ensuring that panel members provide thoughtful and reliable responses.

Angus Reid Strategies, the only public opinion firm to exclusively use online methods to follow the views of the electorate during the 2008 federal campaign, offered the most accurate prediction of the results of Canada's 40th election.

<http://www.angusreidstrategies.com/index.cfm?fuseaction=news&newsid=349>

Since 2006, Angus Reid Strategies has covered five provincial elections in Canada—more than any other pollster in the country—and the results have accurately predicted the outcome of each of these democratic processes.

<http://www.angusreidstrategies.com/index.cfm?fuseaction=news&newsid=194>

More information on the way Angus Reid Strategies conducts public opinion research can be found at <http://www.angusreidstrategies.com/uploads/pages/pdfs/ARS.ARF.WP.pdf>

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**For more information, please contact
our spokesperson listed in the footnote.**

**Copies of this poll are available on our website:
www.angusreidstrategies.com**

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