



Conservatives Flirt with Majority as Ignatieff Momentum Plummet

The Tories have increased their lead in Ontario, and made significant gains in Quebec.

[TORONTO – Oct. 16, 2009] – The start of the fall season finds the governing Conservative Party with its biggest advantage since the October 2008 election that resulted in a second minority mandate, according to the Canadian Political Pulse, conducted by Angus Reid Strategies in partnership with the *Toronto Star*.

The online survey of a representative national sample of 1,003 adults finds that the views of Canadians on Liberal leader Michael Ignatieff have worsened since the summer, and sees the official opposition party losing ground in the seat-rich provinces of Ontario and Quebec.

Voting Intention

Two-in-five decided voters (41%, +4 since late September) would cast a ballot for the Conservative candidate in their riding if a new federal election took place today. The Liberals are a distant second at 27 per cent, unchanged in two weeks.

KEY FINDINGS

- **Voting Intention: Con. 41%, Lib. 27%, NDP 16%, BQ 8%, Grn. 6%**
- **Momentum: Harper -12, Layton -12, Ignatieff -45.**
- **Preferred Prime Minister: Harper 29%, Ignatieff 12%, Layton 11%**

Full topline results are at the end of this release.

From October 13 to October 14, 2009, Angus Reid Strategies conducted an online survey among 1,003 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.

The New Democratic Party (NDP) is third with 16 per cent (-1), followed by the Bloc Québécois with eight per cent (-3), and the Green Party with six per cent (unchanged).

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Regional Breakdowns

As has been the case throughout the year, the Tories remain popular in their strongholds of Alberta (52%) and Manitoba and Saskatchewan (57%). In British Columbia, the governing party is now within grasp of garnering a majority of all cast ballots (47%), while the NDP (22%) and the Liberals (21%) fight for second place.

In Ontario, support for the Conservatives has increased to 45 per cent, while the Liberals are a distant second with 29 per cent.

Still, Quebec has seen an evident shift since the start of the summer. While the Bloc is still ahead (36%), Grits (26%) and Tories (25%) are virtually tied. The numbers show that the Conservatives have effectively doubled their support in Quebec since June, while the Grits have lost some ground.

Momentum

In April, a few weeks after he was chosen to lead the Liberals, Michael Ignatieff posted a positive momentum score, a feat that was unattainable for either Stephen Harper or Jack Layton. During the summer, Ignatieff maintained a better momentum score than the two other main federal leaders.

In mid-October, the Liberal leader has seen his standing drop dramatically. A majority of Canadians (51%) say their opinion of Ignatieff has worsened over the course of the past month, while only six per cent report an improvement. The Grit leader's momentum score is -45.

Harper has seen his best numbers of the year, with 16 per cent of respondents saying their opinion of the Prime Minister has improved (up seven points since August) and 28 per cent saying it has worsened, for a momentum score of -12.

Layton also has a negative momentum score of -12, but the vast majority of respondents (62%) say their views on the NDP leader have not fluctuated over the course of the past month.

Preferred Prime Minister

Exactly six months ago, Harper and Ignatieff were tied when Canadians were asked who they preferred to lead the federal government, with about three-in-ten Quebecers selecting the Liberal leader, and less than one-in-ten picking the incumbent prime minister.

Now, Harper has opened a 17-point lead on this question at the national level (29% to 12%), with Ignatieff only marginally ahead of Layton (11%).

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In Quebec, Ignatieff is now tied for third place (with Bloc leader Gilles Duceppe), three points behind Layton and six points behind Harper. In Ontario, where Harper and Ignatieff were locked in a close race back in April, Harper is outpacing Ignatieff by a three-to-one margin (32% to 11%).

The Issues

The edge that Harper has held on finances for the entire year has expanded, with 35 per cent of respondents claiming that the sitting prime minister is best suited to deal with the economy, compared to only 19 per cent for Ignatieff. On foreign affairs, Harper is now ahead of the opposition leader by three points.

Crime is the other issue where the prime minister is clearly chosen above his rivals (36%, compared to 12% for Ignatieff and 9% for Layton). Health care finds Harper and Layton virtually tied (23% to 22%), but the NDP leader is regarded as the best environmental steward (26%, followed by Harper with 18% and Ignatieff with 13%).

Characteristics

As part of this survey, respondents were provided with a list of 18 words people may use to describe Harper and Ignatieff, and asked to choose up to six to define either politician.

When assessing Harper, 46 per cent of respondents brand him as *secretive*, 44 per cent believe he is *arrogant*, 41 per cent regard him as *intelligent*, 38 per cent think he is *out of touch*, 38 per cent say he is *boring*, and 34 per cent believe he is *uncaring*.

While the list of words used the most by respondents has remained almost the same throughout the year, Harper managed to increase his standing as open, efficient, in touch and intelligent since August, while dropping markedly as a person who is uncaring, weak and boring.

As far as Ignatieff, 49 per cent of respondents believe he is *arrogant*, 44 per cent say he is *intelligent*, 42 per cent brand him as *out of touch*, 37 per cent believe he is *boring*, 32 per cent say he is *inefficient*, and 27 per cent brand him as *secretive*.

Since August, views on Ignatieff have increased dramatically—by at least five points—on being arrogant, inefficient, dishonest, weak, out of touch, and foolish.

Analysis

The Conservative Party had not reached the 40 per cent plateau since a survey conducted in December 2008, immediately after Liberal leader Stéphane Dion signed a coalition agreement with the NDP and the Bloc. Now, after a fortnight that featured a defeated no-confidence motion in the House of Commons and

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the prime minister's impromptu performance at an Ottawa gala, the Tories now see their elusive majority mandate within grasp.

For the Liberals, the situation is much tougher than it was at the start of the summer. The latest survey shows a drastic drop for Michael Ignatieff, particularly when compared with a poll that was conducted just days before he withdrew the party's support for the Tory minority government. The Grit leader is markedly seen as more arrogant and inefficient than he was two months ago.

The NDP appears to be successfully weathering the storm. Despite the suggestion that Layton would be chastised for his decision to prop up the Tories—by ordering the caucus to abstain during the no-confidence vote—perceptions of Jack Layton have remained practically unchanged since the summer.

Previous Issues

August 2009 Canadian Political Pulse

http://www.angusreidstrategies.com/uploads/pages/pdfs/2009.08.28_Politics.pdf

June 2009 Canadian Political Pulse

http://www.angusreidstrategies.com/uploads/pages/pdfs/2009.06.24_Political.pdf

April 2009 Canadian Political Pulse

http://www.angusreidstrategies.com/uploads/pages/pdfs/2009.04.25_FederalSceneENG.pdf

December 2008 Canadian Political Pulse

http://www.angus-reid.com/uppdf/2008.12.07_FederalScene.pdf

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Canadian Political Pulse - TREND

If a federal election were held tomorrow, which one of the following parties would you be most likely to support in your constituency?

	Oct. 13-14	Sept. 29-30	2008 Election
Conservative Party	41%	37%	37.6%
Liberal Party	27%	27%	26.2%
New Democratic Party	16%	17%	18.2%
Bloc Québécois	8%	11%	10.0%
Green Party	6%	6%	6.8%
Other party	1%	1%	1.2%

Canadian Political Pulse - REGIONS

If a federal election were held tomorrow, which one of the following parties would you be most likely to support in your constituency?

	Region						
	Total	BC	AB	MB/SK	ON	PQ	ATL
Conservative Party	41%	47%	52%	57%	45%	25%	28%
Liberal Party	27%	21%	21%	17%	29%	26%	42%
New Democratic Party	16%	22%	11%	23%	19%	8%	20%
Bloc Québécois	8%	0%	0%	0%	0%	36%	0%
Green Party	6%	9%	12%	1%	6%	4%	6%
Other party	1%	1%	4%	2%	1%	1%	3%

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Canadian Political Pulse - MOMENTUM

Over the course of the past month, would you say your opinion of each of the following people has improved, stayed the same or worsened? (*Change since August*)

	Improved	Stayed the same	Worsened	Not sure
Prime Minister and Conservative Party leader Stephen Harper	16% (+7)	48% (-11)	28% (=)	7% (+3)
Liberal Party and Official Opposition leader Michael Ignatieff	6% (-5)	35% (-17)	51% (+23)	8% (-1)
New Democratic Party (NDP) leader Jack Layton	9% (+3)	62% (+1)	21% (-4)	8% (=)

Canadian Political Pulse - PREFERRED PRIME MINISTER

Which of these leaders would make the best Prime Minister of Canada? (*Change since August*)

	Region						
	Total	BC	AB	MB/SK	ON	PQ	ATL
Stephen Harper	29% (+2)	37%	39%	35%	32%	19%	21%
Michael Ignatieff	12% (-5)	12%	8%	8%	11%	13%	16%
Jack Layton	11% (-1)	7%	10%	12%	6%	16%	15%
Giles Duceppe	4% (+2)	0%	1%	0%	1%	13%	3%
Elizabeth May	4% (+2)	3%	8%	3%	6%	1%	2%
None of them	24% (+3)	31%	24%	8%	26%	22%	25%
Not sure	17% (-1)	10%	10%	34%	17%	16%	18%

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Canadian Political Pulse - ISSUES

Which of these leaders is best suited to deal with...? *(Change since August)*

	Economy	Environment	Health Care	Foreign Affairs	Crime
Stephen Harper	35% (+4)	18% (=)	23% (=)	29% (=)	36% (+1)
Michael Ignatieff	19% (-2)	13% (-2)	14% (-3)	26% (-1)	12% (-1)
Jack Layton	9% (-1)	26% (+1)	22% (+1)	8% (-1)	9% (-4)
Giles Duceppe	5% (+1)	6% (+2)	8% (+3)	5% (+1)	5% (+2)
Not sure	32% (-2)	36% (-2)	33% (-1)	32% (=)	37% (+2)

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Canadian Political Pulse - LEADERS

Here are some words that people may use to describe Stephen Harper / Michael Ignatieff. Please choose up to six words that you think describes him. *(Change since August)*

	Stephen Harper	Michael Ignatieff
Down to earth	20% (+2)	10% (-1)
Arrogant	44% (+1)	49% (+9)
Open	11% (+3)	15% (-1)
Secretive	46% (-1)	27% (+4)
Efficient	24% (+3)	10% (-8)
Inefficient	26% (=)	32% (+10)
Compassionate	9% (+1)	9% (-3)
Uncaring	34% (-5)	24% (+2)
Honest	18% (-2)	16% (+1)
Dishonest	26% (=)	23% (+5)
Strong	24% (+1)	13% (-6)
Weak	14% (-6)	23% (+6)
Exciting	2% (+1)	5% (-3)
Boring	38% (-5)	37% (+4)
In touch	17% (+3)	11% (-3)
Out of touch	38% (-2)	42% (+5)
Intelligent	41% (+3)	44% (-8)
Foolish	13% (-2)	20% (+6)

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Angus Reid Strategies is the public opinion practice of Vision Critical—a global research and technology company specializing in custom online panels, private communities, and innovative online methods. Vision Critical 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

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 (www.angusreidforum.com), Springboard America (www.springboardamerica.com) and Springboard UK (www.springboarduk.com) online panels, which are carefully recruited to ensure representation across all demographic and psychographic segments of these populations. Panel members pass through rigorous screening and a double opt-in process ensuring highly motivated and responsive members. These premier online survey platforms present respondents with highly visual, interactive, and engaging surveys, ensuring that panel members provide thoughtful and reliable responses. Each survey is actively sampled and weighted to model that characteristics of the universe required and employs the latest in quality control techniques to ensure data validity.

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://angusreidstrategies.com/uploads/pages/pdfs/2008.10.15_Election.pdf

Since 2006, Angus Reid Strategies has covered eight 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.

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http://www.angusreidstrategies.com/uploads/pages/pdfs/2008.12.09_QuebecElection.pdf

http://www.angusreidstrategies.com/uploads/pages/pdfs/2009.05.13_BCElection.pdf

http://www.angusreidstrategies.com/uploads/pages/pdfs/2009.06.10_NSElection.pdf

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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