

FEDERAL POLITICAL SCENE

Conservative Lead Dwindles After Liberals Settle on New Leader

Twenty-point advantage drops to six points; Ignatieff ties Harper as the preferred Prime Minister for Canadians.

[TORONTO – Dec. 13, 2008] – The governing Conservative Party remains ahead in Canada's federal political scene, but the Liberal Party has made significant gains after officially choosing a new leader, a new *Toronto Star* / Angus Reid poll has found.

In the online survey of a representative national sample, 37 per cent of respondents (-5) say they would vote for the Tories in the next federal election, followed by the Liberals with 31 per cent (+9), the New Democratic Party (NDP) with 15 per cent (-3), the Bloc Québécois with nine per cent (-1), and the Green Party with eight per cent (+1).

Earlier this month, the Conservatives held an imposing twenty-point advantage over the Liberals (42%-22%), which has dropped to six points after Michael Ignatieff became the new leader of the official opposition.

While the Tories command strong support in Alberta, Manitoba and Saskatchewan, the Liberals are now clearly the second choice for voters in Quebec (28%, behind the Bloc at 35%) and British Columbia (also 28%, behind the Conservatives at 38%). In Ontario, the Tories hold a six-point lead over the Grits.

KEY FINDINGS

- **Voting Intention: Con. 37%, Lib. 31%, NDP 15%, BQ 9%, Grn. 8%**
- **Preferred Prime Minister: Ignatieff 28%, Harper 27%, Layton 10%, May 3%, Duceppe 2%**
- **Momentum Scores: Harper -39, Layton -27, May -10, Duceppe -3, Ignatieff -1**
- **Harper leads Ignatieff in several qualities and characteristics**

Full topline results are at the end of this release.

From December 11 to December 12, 2008 Angus Reid Strategies conducted an online survey among 1,004 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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Preferred Prime Minister and Momentum Score

For the first time in two years, Conservative leader and Canadian Prime Minister Stephen Harper has fallen below the 30 per cent mark when respondents are asked which of the five federal party leaders would make the best head of government.

Liberal leader Ignatieff is at the top of the list with 28 per cent, followed by Harper with 27 per cent, and NDP leader Jack Layton with 10 per cent. Green Party leader Elizabeth May and Bloc Québécois leader Giles Duceppe are in single-digits.

The results of this particular question reveal a major breakthrough for the Grits. Former Liberal leader Stéphane Dion was unable to reach the 20 per cent mark as the preferred prime minister in two years, and trailed Layton in several surveys conducted during the last federal electoral campaign.

Still, many Canadians appear upset with their political leaders. None of them was able to garner a positive momentum score this week. A majority of respondents (51%) say their opinion of Harper worsened over the course of the past month, and 39 per cent feel the same way about Layton. May posted a negative momentum score of -10, while Ignatieff stands at -1.

Qualities and Characteristics

In the poll, respondents were provided with nine qualities and characteristics usually associated with politicians, and asked to state whether each of them applied to Canada's three main federal party leaders.

While Ignatieff posted significantly higher numbers than his predecessor, Harper continues to dominate as being a strong and decisive leader (45%), an effective economic manager (35%), and a person who understands complex issues (42%).

Layton is still regarded as a man who cares about the environment (57%), has a vision for Canada's future (47%), understands the problems of Canadians (44%), is honest and trustworthy (39%), and who generally agrees with Canadians on issues they care about (32%).

Ignatieff holds the upper hand over his two rivals as a politician who inspires confidence (34%).

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Federal Political Scene - TREND

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

	Dec. 11-12	Dec. 5-6	2008 Election
Conservative Party	37%	42%	37.6%
Liberal Party	31%	22%	26.2%
New Democratic Party	15%	18%	18.2%
Bloc Québécois	9%	10%	10.0%
Green Party	8%	7%	6.8%
Other	0%	1%	1.2%

Federal Political Scene

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	37%	38%	69%	52%	42%	15%	26%
Liberal Party	31%	28%	19%	21%	36%	28%	40%
New Democratic Party	15%	21%	8%	13%	15%	11%	31%
Bloc Québécois	9%	0%	0%	0%	0%	35%	0%
Green Party	8%	12%	4%	14%	7%	10%	2%
Other	0%	1%	0%	0%	0%	0%	2%

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Federal Political Scene							
Which of these leaders would make the best Prime Minister of Canada?							
	Region						
	Total	BC	AB	MB/SK	ON	PQ	ATL
Michael Ignatieff	28%	27%	18%	15%	25%	37%	29%
Stephen Harper	27%	28%	53%	34%	31%	11%	21%
Jack Layton	10%	14%	7%	4%	9%	11%	11%
Elizabeth May	3%	8%	1%	1%	4%	1%	2%
Giles Duceppe	2%	0%	0%	0%	0%	8%	0%
None of these	16%	11%	13%	16%	17%	17%	17%
Not sure	15%	12%	8%	29%	13%	15%	20%

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Federal Political Scene

Thinking about the following qualities and characteristics, do you think they apply to Stephen Harper / Michael Ignatieff / Jack Layton?

("Apply" listed)

	Stephen Harper	Michael Ignatieff	Jack Layton
Is honest and trustworthy	27%	28%	39%
Has a vision for Canada's future	44%	35%	47%
Understands the problems of Canadians	34%	29%	44%
Can manage the economy effectively	35%	26%	16%
Is a strong and decisive leader	45%	28%	33%
Understands complex issues	42%	39%	34%
Generally agrees with you on issues you care about	29%	21%	32%
Inspires confidence	26%	34%	31%
Cares about the environment	20%	23%	57%

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Federal Political Scene

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?

	Improved	Stayed the same	Worsened	Not sure
Prime Minister and Conservative Party leader Stephen Harper	12% (=)	32% (+1)	51% (-3)	6% (+3)
Liberal Party and Official Opposition leader Michael Ignatieff	26%	28%	27%	18%
New Democratic Party (NDP) leader Jack Layton	12% (-5)	42% (+5)	39% (-3)	6% (+2)
Bloc Québécois leader Gilles Duceppe [Québec Only]	20% (-3)	46% (+2)	23% (-3)	11% (+5)
Green Party leader Elizabeth May	8% (-1)	54% (-1)	18% (-2)	21% (+4)

Federal Political Scene

Do you approve or disapprove of the performance of each of the following federal political parties?

	Approve	Disapprove	Not sure
Conservative Party	32% (-1)	54% (-1)	14% (+2)
Liberal Party	26% (+1)	54% (-3)	20% (+2)
New Democratic Party (NDP)	28% (-1)	50% (-3)	22% (+3)
Bloc Québécois [Québec Only]	45% (+5)	36% (-4)	20% (=)
Green Party	30% (=)	30% (-4)	40% (+3)

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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 six 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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