

Election 2015: Canadians profess decline in international reputation in last decade by margin of 2:1

Yet Stephen Harper still seen as best leader to represent this country on the world stage

September 28, 2015 – As Canada's main political party leaders prepare to square off in a debate on foreign affairs and international issues, Canadians themselves are twice as likely to say this country's reputation has worsened over the last decade as improved.

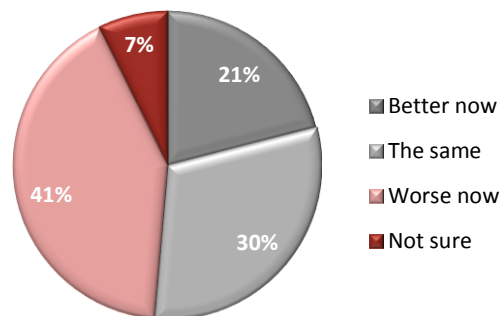
Remarkably, in spite of this view, they still choose Stephen Harper as the leader best suited to represent Canada on a number of key foreign issues, including terrorism and trade.

Those are among the findings of the latest public opinion poll from the Angus Reid Institute canvassing this country's standing on the world stage, political leadership and international priorities.

Key Findings:

- Canadians are split down the middle – and along political lines – when it comes to Keystone XL, the proposed Alberta-to-US Gulf Coast pipeline
- Nearly two-thirds (61%) support a continuation of Canada's participation in the combat mission against the Islamic State (ISIS)
- A notable segment (28%) appears to be experiencing fatigue on the Syrian refugee crisis, saying this country should "do nothing" when asked how Canada should respond
- On the question of what Canada's top foreign priority *should be*, trade trumps foreign aid

All things considered, do you think Canada's reputation around the world is better or worse now than it was ten years ago?



METHODOLOGY:

The Angus Reid Institute conducted an online survey from September 22–24, 2015, among a representative randomized sample of 1,487 Canadian adults who are members of the [Angus Reid Forum](#). For comparison purposes only, a probability sample of this size would carry a margin of error of +/- 2.5 percentage points, 19 times out of 20. Discrepancies in or between totals are due to rounding. The survey was self-commissioned and paid for by ARI. Detailed tables are found at the end of this release.

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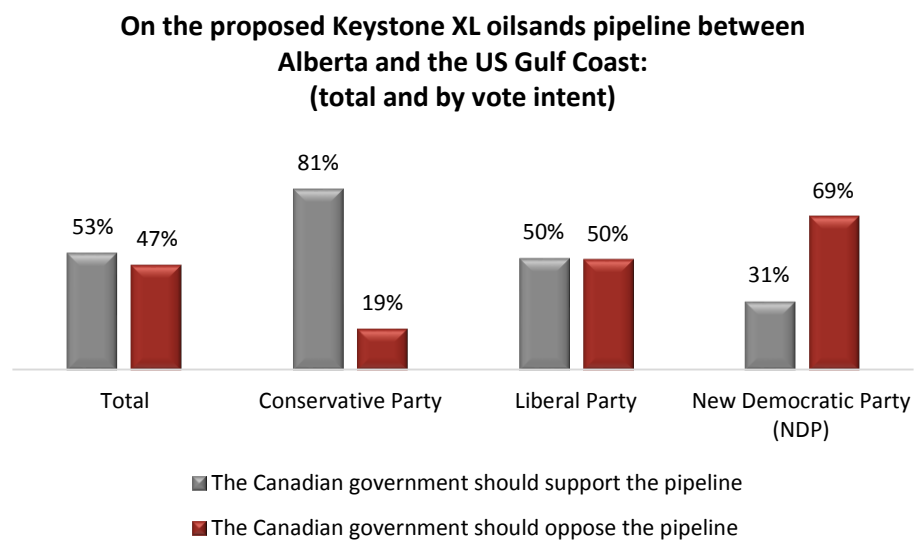
Part 1 – Key Foreign Policy Issues:

Pipeline Politics:

As would-be Democratic nominee Hillary Clinton's rejection of Keystone XL re-ignites debate over the pipeline on this side of the border, this Angus Reid Institute survey finds the country generally divided, with 53 per cent in favour and 47 per cent opposed.

The divisions are notably regional: support for the pipeline is highest in Alberta where it has the backing of three quarters of respondents (76%), followed by equally commanding majority support in Saskatchewan (74%). Opposition is greatest in Quebec (57%), BC (49%), and Ontario (48%).

When viewed along political lines, supporters among two out of three main parties are unequivocal in their opinions:



As evidenced above, Conservative Party of Canada (CPC) supporters find themselves in lockstep with party policy: the Harper government has been strongly pro-Keystone XL. It's a stance that at times has been a source of tension between Ottawa and Washington DC, but nevertheless a winner with his party's base.

But pipeline politics get a little trickier on the left-of-centre flank for Liberal (LPC) leader Justin Trudeau and New Democratic Party (NDP) leader Thomas Mulcair:

- Trudeau and the LPC support Keystone XL – putting them at odds with half of their own supporters.

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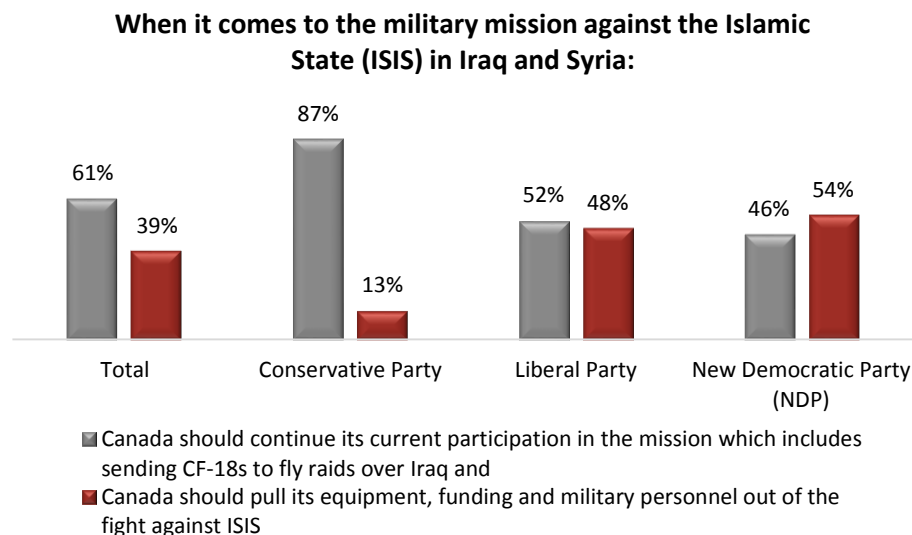
- A strong majority (69%) of those indicating they'll vote NDP voice opposition to the pipeline, but Muclair and his party also offer conditional support. The party's saving grace with its base may well be the particular condition in question: that the pipeline carry oil products refined in Canada – not raw bitumen.

The ISIS Mission:

Parliament first voted to approve Canada's combat mission against the Islamic State (ISIS) nearly one year ago, in October 2014. At the end of March, the Conservatives doubled down – using their majority in the House of Commons to widen the mission to Syria, in addition to Iraq, and extend it for a year. As an election issue – the lines drawn between the parties earlier this spring remain essentially unchanged:

- The CPC, promising to stay the course: sending CF-18 fighters to fly bombing raids over both countries through the remainder of the extension
- The LPC, promising to end the bombing campaign but keep military trainers in the region while boosting humanitarian aid and allowing more refugees
- The NDP's stance mirroring the Liberals' with the main difference being a total withdrawal of military personnel from the zone

Overall, Canadians support continuing the current mission, though once again, the cleavages cut along political lines, indicating a clear winner for the Conservative party among its base and the electorate at large:



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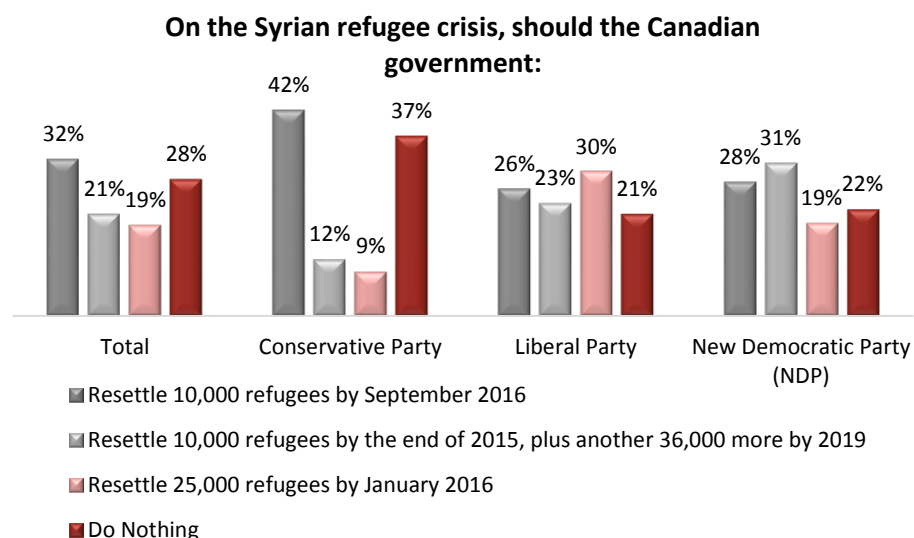
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Syrian Refugee Crisis:

The Angus Reid Institute also asked Canadians to choose their preferred party proposal on Canada's response to the Syrian refugee crisis.

As with all other policy questions, the specific proposals were presented by the Institute to respondents without a party name attached. In this context:

- The Conservative pledge to resettle 10,000 refugees from Syria and elsewhere in the Middle East by September 2016 receives the most support (32% choose this option, including 42% of CPC supporters)
- The Liberal proposal to resettle 25,000 refugees by January 2016 is least popular, with fewer than one-in-five Canadians (19%) choosing it
- The NDP plan to resettle 46,000 refugees by 2019, including 10,000 by the end of this year, fares only slightly better (21%)
- More than a quarter of Canadians say their country should "do nothing" when it comes to the Syrian refugee crisis. This includes 37 per cent of Conservative supporters, and more than a fifth each of Liberals (21%) and New Democrats (22%)



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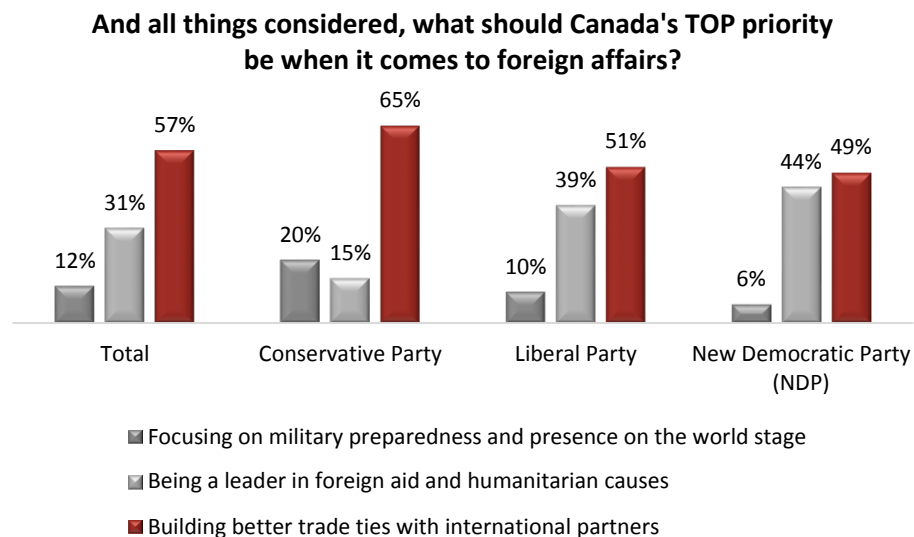
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Part 2 – The Big Face-Off: What should Canadian foreign policy be about?

Canadians have a clear preference when it comes to how their country should approach foreign affairs. When asked to choose between three broad priorities Canada might have in this arena, more than half (57%) choose “building better trade ties with international partners.”

Trade is almost twice as popular as the next most-chosen option: “Being a leader on foreign aid and humanitarian causes” (31%), which is, itself, nearly three times as popular as “focusing on military preparedness and presence on the world stage” (12%).

The preference for trade is strongest among those who intend to vote Conservative (65%), but it crosses party lines:



Given that the public's priority is building better trade ties, it might be expected that the proposed Trans-Pacific Partnership – a 12-nation trade deal currently being negotiated between Pacific Rim countries, including Canada – would command a large amount of popular attention and debate.

This is not the case, however, as this poll finds that nearly half of Canadians (47%) either don't know enough about the deal or don't have an opinion on it – a total statistically unchanged from April, [when ARI last asked about the TPP](#).

Among those who do have an opinion on the trade deal, support has actually eroded over the last five months, with 33 per cent of Canadians now saying they support it, down from 41 per cent in April. In the same time, opposition to the TPP has roughly doubled, from 11 per cent in April to 21 per cent now.

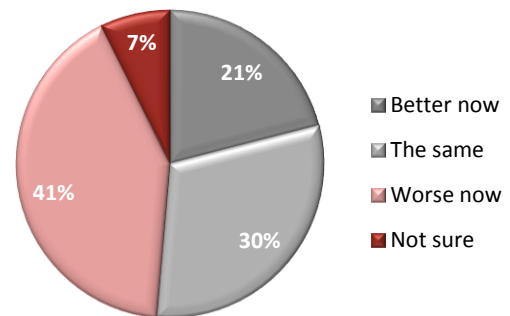
Part 3 – Canada and the World: Reputation and Political Leadership:

Canada's place on the World Stage:

A common narrative when it comes to Canada's standing in the global realm and the long march to Election 2015 has been [opposition party criticism](#) suggesting this country's reputation has been badly tarnished during the Harper years, having become too militaristic and, as former Liberal Prime Minister Jean Chretien recently opined, "[cold hearted](#)".

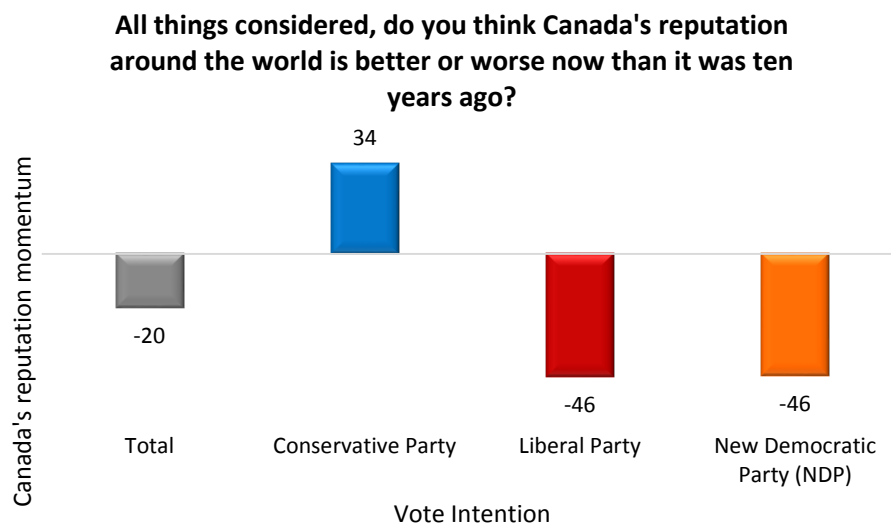
Canadian opinion reflects such sentiment. Indeed, looking back over the last ten years, respondents say this country's reputation is "worse now" than better by a margin of two-to-one (41% versus 21%):

All things considered, do you think Canada's reputation around the world is better or worse now than it was ten years ago?



To facilitate easy comparisons, a "momentum score" subtracts the percentage who say Canada's place in the world has worsened from the percentage who say it has improved. Thus, higher scores denote a more positive assessment, and lower negative scores a more negative outlook.

And once again, we note major differences in opinion by political preference:



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But beyond the simple but telling answer on the issue of “reputation” – how Canadians see their country performing on certain metrics in relation to others in the world represents something of a study in contrasts:

- There is palpable anxiety about Canada’s perceived ebbing of diplomatic influence: nearly half (46%) of respondents feel the country is “falling behind” on this front
- So too on the matter of military power: here slightly more than half (52%) of respondents say Canada is “falling behind”
- On the issue of foreign aid however – an area where even [international media](#) have pointedly questioned whether Canada is lifting its proverbial weight – a notable majority (57%) say this country is “keeping up”

On Leadership, it’s advantage Harper:

While Canadians feel their country’s reputation around the world has gotten worse on Stephen Harper’s watch, they’re not convinced either of his opponents in this election would be a better representative on the global stage.

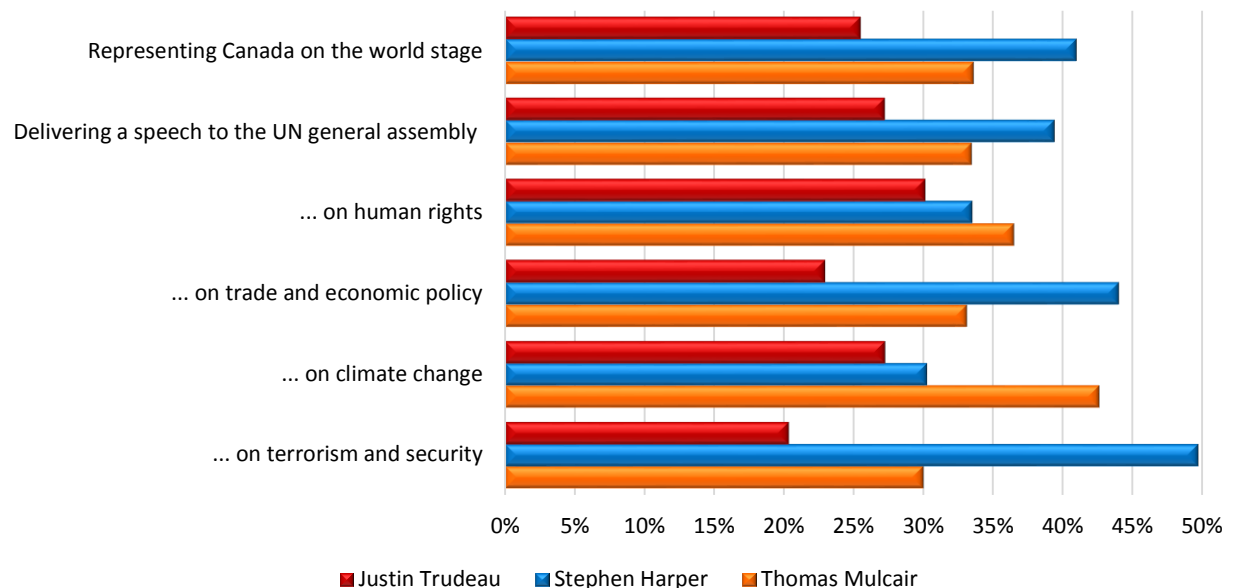
Asked to choose which leader would best represent Canada at a variety of international gatherings, respondents are more likely to choose Harper on each of the following:

- “Representing Canada on the world stage” generally
- “An international meeting on terrorism and security”
- “An international meeting on trade and economic policy”
- “Delivering a policy speech to the general assembly of the United Nations”

Mulcair is the choice of more Canadians than the other leaders on:

- “An international meeting on climate change”
- And “an international meeting on human rights”

Who do you think is best suited to represent Canada at each of the following international gatherings:



Some of Harper's appeal on these questions can be attributed to the strength of his base. In each of the scenarios in which he leads, more than 90 per cent of those who intend to vote Conservative choose him as the best leader. In contrast, Mulcair and Trudeau are the choice of fewer than 80 per cent of their own partisans on each of these questions.

That said, in an election where the Conservatives have painstakingly built a campaign narrative on Harper's strength on the economy – and where he has arguably failed to claim the high ground – one may wonder if his party and strategists chose the wrong issue to highlight.

Part 4 – Foreign Policy Showdowns

In addition to the ballot question on Canada's foreign policy focus, this ARI study asked a series of either/or questions relating to foreign policy and party promises offered up in this election campaign. Here is how Canadians respond (for findings by age, region etc., please see detailed tables at angusreid.org):

When it comes to the military mission against the Islamic State (ISIS) in Iraq and Syria:	
Canada should continue its current participation in the mission which includes sending CF-18s to fly raids over Iraq and Syria	Canada should pull its equipment, funding and military personnel out of the fight against ISIS
61%	39%

On the question of Canada's involvement in the bombing campaign against ISIS, three-in-five respondents (61%) believe the country should continue sending its CF-18s to the region. Conservative Party supporters are overwhelmingly in favour of continuing the mission (87% choose this option), while Liberal and NDP supporters are split on the issue (52% LPC in favour; 54% NDP opposed).

On the proposed Keystone XL oilsands pipeline between Alberta and the US Gulf Coast:	
The Canadian government should support the pipeline	The Canadian government should oppose the pipeline
53%	47%

Would-be CPC voters overwhelmingly would prefer for the government to support the Keystone XL pipeline (81%), while NDP supporters almost as overwhelmingly say the government should be opposed (69%). On this question, Liberals occupy the middle ground, with 50 per cent saying government should support the pipeline and 50 per cent opposed.

Regionally, support for Keystone is strongest in the oil-producing provinces of Alberta (76%) and Saskatchewan (74%). Quebecers are least supportive, with 43 per cent saying government should support the pipeline and 57 per cent saying it should be opposed.

This question also splits along gender and age lines. Majorities among women (53%) and young Canadians (57% of those aged 18 to 34) say government should oppose the pipeline. Men (59%) and older Canadians (62% of those over age 55) say government should support its construction.

On our position regarding the Middle East:	
Canada should stand out as one of Israel's main allies	Canada should instead emphasize the peaceful co-existence of two independent states (Israel and Palestine)
22%	78%

The idea that “Canada should stand out as one of Israel’s main allies” is [part of the Conservative election platform](#), but even a majority of CPC supporters (58%) choose the other option in this face-off. Liberals (88%) and New Democrats (86%) overwhelmingly prefer Canada emphasizing the peaceful coexistence of Israel and an independent Palestine to Canada standing out in its support for Israel.

On military priorities in general:	
Canada should be focused on peacekeeping	Canada should be focused on combat preparedness
74%	26%

The role of the Canadian Forces should be primarily related to peacekeeping, according to roughly three-quarters (74%) of respondents. This sentiment is strongest in Quebec, where 84 per cent feel this way. It’s weakest in Alberta, but still a robust 62 per cent preference for peacekeeping to combat.

Among Conservatives, the split is more even, with 53 per cent preferring peacekeeping and 47 per cent favouring combat preparedness. Liberals and New Democrats strongly prefer peacekeeping (82% and 84% choose it, respectively).

When it comes to foreign aid should Canada:	
Raise foreign aid to 0.7% of GNI	Keep foreign aid at 0.24% of GNI
27%	73%

The NDP is proposing to raise Canada’s foreign aid contributions from 0.24 per cent of Gross National Income, to 0.7 per cent, or about \$15 billion a year. This is a non-starter with most Canadians, as evidenced by the three-quarters (73%) who think the contributions should stay as they are. That said, the move is more popular among younger people, and those with university educations (see comprehensive tables online at www.angusreid.org/election-2015-foreign-policy).

*The **Angus Reid Institute (ARI)** was founded in October 2014 by pollster and sociologist, Dr. Angus Reid. ARI is a national, not-for-profit, non-partisan public opinion research organization established to advance education by commissioning, conducting and disseminating to the public accessible and impartial statistical data, research and policy analysis on economics, political science, philanthropy, public administration, domestic and international affairs and other socio-economic issues of importance to Canada and its world.*

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What should the federal government focus on when it comes to international issues? [Top 2]				
(weighted sample size)	Total (1487)	Federal Vote Intention		
		CPC	Liberal Party	NDP
Climate change	39%	14%	45%	56%
Terrorism	32%	46%	25%	20%
Trade relations with other countries	31%	38%	28%	28%
The current refugee crisis	27%	16%	34%	32%
Canada's mission against ISIS	24%	41%	15%	18%
Canada's relationship with the US	19%	22%	22%	16%
Fighting against human rights abuses in other countries	18%	10%	23%	22%
Canada's relationship with Asia-Pacific countries	7%	9%	4%	6%
Russia's occupation of Ukraine	3%	4%	3%	2%

[Trade competitiveness]Thinking about Canada's standing in the international community which of the following is closest to your opinion in each of the following areas:				
(weighted sample size)	Total (1487)	Federal Vote Intention		
		CPC	Liberal Party	NDP
We are falling behind	38%	25%	47%	45%
We are keeping up	45%	64%	38%	36%
Not sure	17%	11%	15%	19%

[Foreign Aid]Thinking about Canada's standing in the international community which of the following is closest to your opinion in each of the following areas:

(weighted sample size)	Total (1487)	Federal Vote Intention		
		CPC	Liberal Party	NDP
We are falling behind	27%	5%	39%	41%
We are keeping up	57%	84%	48%	45%
Not sure	16%	10%	13%	14%

[Military power]Thinking about Canada's standing in the international community which of the following is closest to your opinion in each of the following areas:

(weighted sample size)	Total (1487)	Federal Vote Intention		
		CPC	Liberal Party	NDP
We are falling behind	52%	57%	58%	46%
We are keeping up	31%	31%	29%	35%
Not sure	17%	12%	13%	19%

[Diplomatic influence]Thinking about Canada's standing in the international community which of the following is closest to your opinion in each of the following areas:

(weighted sample size)	Total (1487)	Federal Vote Intention		
		CPC	Liberal Party	NDP
We are falling behind	46%	26%	58%	60%
We are keeping up	34%	57%	25%	24%
Not sure	20%	17%	17%	16%

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And, all things considered, do you think Canada's reputation around the world is better or worse now than it was ten years ago?

(weighted sample size)	Total (1487)	Federal Vote Intention		
		CPC	Liberal Party	NDP
Better now	21%	48%	12%	11%
The same as 10 years ago	30%	34%	25%	25%
Worse now	41%	14%	58%	57%
Not sure	7%	5%	6%	7%

Would you say you support or oppose the idea of Canada joining the Trans-Pacific Partnership?

(weighted sample size)	Total (1487)	Federal Vote Intention		
		CPC	Liberal Party	NDP
Support	33%	52%	32%	23%
Oppose	21%	9%	25%	30%
Can't say/Don't know	46%	39%	43%	47%

[Excluding Don't know] Would you say you support or oppose the idea of Canada joining the Trans-Pacific Partnership?

(weighted sample size)	Total (1487)	Federal Vote Intention		
		CPC	Liberal Party	NDP
Support	61%	85%	56%	43%
Oppose	39%	15%	44%	57%

[Summary of Agree] Tell us whether you agree or disagree with the following statements.				
(weighted sample size)	Total (1487)	Federal Vote Intention		
		CPC	Liberal Party	NDP
The US can be counted on as a dependable ally to Canada	79%	85%	78%	76%
The US does the right thing when it comes to world affairs	38%	46%	35%	31%
The US bullies Canada into doing what it wants this country to do	58%	47%	62%	63%
The US just doesn't see Canada as a priority on any issue	73%	71%	76%	73%
The US and Canada have a special relationship	81%	85%	81%	77%
Canada worries too much about its relationship with the United States	55%	46%	55%	60%

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When you think about Canada's overall relationships with the following nations, including trade, culture, diplomacy etc. which TWO countries do you think Canada should put more effort into?				
(weighted sample size)	Total (1487)	Federal Vote Intention		
		CPC	Liberal Party	NDP
Eurozone countries, e.g. Germany, Italy, France, Spain etc.	42%	39%	45%	44%
The US	34%	35%	33%	29%
China	29%	30%	32%	29%
The UK	21%	23%	21%	22%
Australia	13%	14%	11%	14%
Japan	13%	10%	15%	13%
India	12%	15%	12%	12%
Mexico	11%	11%	11%	11%
Russia	6%	4%	8%	5%
Israel	5%	11%	2%	3%
Brazil	5%	4%	4%	6%
Other	4%	1%	3%	6%
Saudi Arabia	2%	2%	2%	3%
Philippines	2%	2%	1%	2%
Turkey	1%	0%	1%	2%

And all things considered, what should Canada's TOP priority be when it comes to foreign affairs?				
(weighted sample size)	Total (1487)	Federal Vote Intention		
		CPC	Liberal Party	NDP
Focusing on military preparedness and presence on the world stage	12%	20%	10%	6%
Being a leader in foreign aid and humanitarian causes	31%	15%	39%	44%
Building better trade ties with international partners	57%	65%	51%	49%

When it comes to the military mission against the Islamic State (ISIS) in Iraq and Syria:				
(weighted sample size)	Total (1487)	Federal Vote Intention		
		CPC	Liberal Party	NDP
Canada should continue its current participation in the mission which includes sending CF-18s to fly raids over Iraq and Syria	61%	87%	52%	46%
Canada should pull its equipment, funding and military personnel out of the fight against ISIS	39%	13%	48%	54%

On the proposed Keystone XL oilsands pipeline between Alberta and the US Gulf Coast:				
(weighted sample size)	Total (1487)	Federal Vote Intention		
		CPC	Liberal Party	NDP
The Canadian government should support the pipeline	53%	81%	50%	31%
The Canadian government should oppose the pipeline	47%	19%	50%	69%

On our position regarding the Middle East:				
(weighted sample size)	Total (1487)	Federal Vote Intention		
		CPC	Liberal Party	NDP
Canada should stand out as one of Israel's main allies	22%	42%	12%	14%
Canada should instead emphasize the peaceful co-existence of two independent states (Israel and Palestine)	78%	58%	88%	86%

On military priorities in general:				
(weighted sample size)	Total (1487)	Federal Vote Intention		
		CPC	Liberal Party	NDP
Canada should be focused on peacekeeping	74%	53%	82%	84%
Canada should be focused on combat preparedness	26%	47%	18%	16%

When it comes to foreign aid should Canada:				
(weighted sample size)	Total (1487)	Federal Vote Intention		
		CPC	Liberal Party	NDP
Raise its foreign aid contributions to 0.7% of Gross National Income (about \$15B/year)	27%	10%	36%	37%
Keep the current plan that sets foreign aid contributions at 0.24% of Gross National Income (about \$5B/year)	73%	90%	64%	63%

On the Syrian refugee crisis, should the Canadian government:				
(weighted sample size)	Total (1487)	Federal Vote Intention		
		CPC	Liberal Party	NDP
Resettle 10,000 refugees by September 2016	32%	42%	26%	28%
Resettle 10,000 refugees by the end of 2015, plus another 36,000 more by 2019	21%	12%	23%	31%
Resettle 25,000 refugees by January 2016	19%	9%	30%	19%
Do Nothing	28%	37%	21%	22%

[Representing Canada on the world stage]Who do you think is best suited to represent Canada at each of the following gatherings:				
(weighted sample size)	Total (1487)	Federal Vote Intention		
		CPC	Liberal Party	NDP
Thomas Mulcair - NDP leader	34%	3%	14%	78%
Stephen Harper - Conservative leader	41%	94%	12%	10%
Justin Trudeau - Liberal leader	25%	3%	74%	12%

[An international meeting on terrorism and security]Who do you think is best suited to represent Canada at each of the following gatherings:				
(weighted sample size)	Total (1487)	Federal Vote Intention		
		CPC	Liberal Party	NDP
Thomas Mulcair - NDP leader	30%	2%	13%	72%
Stephen Harper - Conservative leader	50%	96%	26%	20%
Justin Trudeau - Liberal leader	20%	1%	60%	9%

[An international meeting on climate change]Who do you think is best suited to represent Canada at each of the following gatherings:

(weighted sample size)	Total (1487)	Federal Vote Intention		
		CPC	Liberal Party	NDP
Thomas Mulcair - NDP leader	43%	16%	25%	81%
Stephen Harper - Conservative leader	30%	77%	6%	5%
Justin Trudeau - Liberal leader	27%	8%	69%	14%

[An international meeting on trade and economic policy]Who do you think is best suited to represent Canada at each of the following gatherings:

(weighted sample size)	Total (1487)	Federal Vote Intention		
		CPC	Liberal Party	NDP
Thomas Mulcair - NDP leader	33%	2%	17%	76%
Stephen Harper - Conservative leader	44%	97%	14%	14%
Justin Trudeau - Liberal leader	23%	1%	69%	10%

[An international meeting on human rights]Who do you think is best suited to represent Canada at each of the following gatherings:

(weighted sample size)	Total (1487)	Federal Vote Intention		
		CPC	Liberal Party	NDP
Thomas Mulcair - NDP leader	36%	10%	16%	77%
Stephen Harper - Conservative leader	33%	84%	7%	6%
Justin Trudeau - Liberal leader	30%	5%	78%	16%

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[Delivering a policy speech to the general assembly of the United Nations]Who do you think is best suited to represent Canada at each of the following gatherings:

(weighted sample size)	Total (1487)	Federal Vote Intention		
		CPC	Liberal Party	NDP
Thomas Mulcair - NDP leader	33%	4%	16%	75%
Stephen Harper - Conservative leader	39%	91%	12%	9%
Justin Trudeau - Liberal leader	27%	5%	72%	16%

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