

Federal Politics: the 'Mulcair Moment' gains momentum as NDP leader virtually ties Harper on who would make best PM

Latest voting intention numbers put NDP in first place as party to form government as Liberals plunge

June 16, 2015 – With 124 days to go until an expected federal election, the New Democratic Party of Canada (NDP)'s Thomas Mulcair is just about as likely as Conservative (CPC) leader Stephen Harper to be seen as best prime minister.

A national online survey of more than 6,000 eligible Canadian voters, analyzed and released by the Angus Reid Institute, shows the two leaders are statistically tied on this key question, while the Liberal Party of Canada (LPC) and its leader Justin Trudeau may be showing the beginnings of a notable – but still reversible – collapse.

Indeed, the LPC's standing has tumbled, as have personal momentum scores for Trudeau, while in the meantime, Mulcair is receiving serious consideration from Canadians on his leadership abilities.

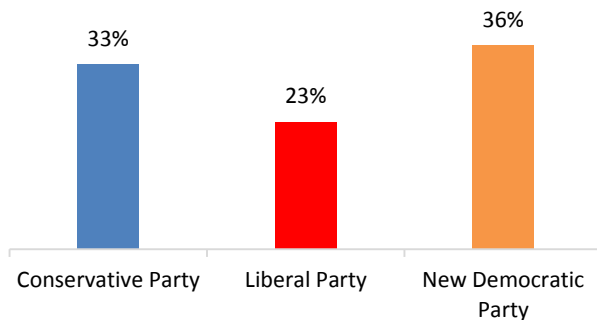
The Party Standings

Nationally, this latest poll shows the NDP slightly edging the CPC, with 36 per cent of decided support among **likely voters** (see notes on methodology at the end of this report), just ahead of the governing Conservatives (33%), while the Liberals pull up third at 23 per cent.

This represents a quantum leap of 13 points for the NDP, since a similar sounding in December showed them with the support of 23 per cent of likely voters. The NDP is reaping this support from the Liberals, who, by contrast, stood at 35 per cent among the most likely to vote in December, 12 points ahead of their standing in this latest poll. The Conservatives, meanwhile, remain essentially unchanged in terms of their national support over the last six months.

These latest survey findings indicate a growing competitiveness on the part of the NDP for the support of older Canadians, and illustrate the Opposition Party's ability to bring back its core base – which for some time had been drifting towards the Liberals.

If an election were held tomorrow, which one of the following parties would you be most likely to support?



METHODOLOGY:

The Angus Reid Institute analyzed results from an online survey of 6005 Canadian adults who are Angus Reid Forum panelists taken from May 26 – June 7, 2015. The survey data were donated by Vision Critical. The sample plan included large over-samples in many provinces, weighted back to provide a representative national picture. A probability sample with this design and sample size would carry a margin of error in the range of +/- 1.2%, 19 times out of 20.

Detailed tables and graphs are found at the end of this release.

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Indeed, the four months remaining before election day, expected October 19, may well be the story of a grudge match between the NDP and LPC for many of the same votes. Consider that the *second choice* for likely voters favour these parties: 23 per cent say the NDP would be their second choice, while 21 per cent choose the Liberals. Conservatives are the second choice of just seven per cent of decided likely voters.

It should also be noted that at present, the proportion of *undecided* voters is significant. Among all eligible voters, one-in-five (20%) say they aren't sure whom they would support.

Since the 2011 Vote

This latest survey data reveals a surge for the NDP that pushes the party's support five points past the 31 per cent share of popular vote that ushered in the so-called "orange crush" and delivered official opposition in 2011 under then-leader Jack Layton.

The Conservatives under Stephen Harper find themselves at a crucial crossroads this summer. Seven points back from the 40 per cent of the popular vote that delivered their 2011 majority, the prime minister remains in first place among Canadians on the crucial question of who is best on the economy. That said, Mulcair is not far behind on this key metric.

Harper and the CPC also head into a long, sweaty summer of campaigning without influential and seasoned members of his front bench, with veterans such as John Baird and Peter MacKay bowing out of politics for opportunities in the private sector (not to mention the resignation of the late Jim Flaherty just days before his sudden death last year). Harper does, however, maintain the high ground on the issue of national security, as evidenced in this poll, and [the Angus Reid Institute survey](#) on Bill C-51 released last month.

Political watchers, meantime, are searching for reasons behind the declining LPC fortunes that put the party just four points ahead of the 19 per cent share of popular vote that earned them a third-place showing in 2011.

Party retention rates illustrate the trend and the shifts from the 2011 election. The Liberals are down to 66 per cent of their support base from 2011. This represents a significant decline in their base retention rate since December. Further, they are bleeding one-in-four (23%) of their 2011 supporters to the NDP.

The NDP, by contrast – has managed to begin wooing back the base that had over the past year abandoned it for a flirtation with the Liberals. Down to six-in-ten of their 2011 supporters in December, New Democrat voter retention now stands at 75 per cent. This is essentially on par with the CPC's support among its 2011 base (72%), though the Tories are spilling almost one-in-five of their 2011 supporters to the undecided column at this point in time.

Personal Circumstances, Political Shifts?

On balance, Canadians remain constant, even circumspect, on the issue of their own personal financial situation. Most say their standard of living is the same today as a year ago -- although one-third (33%)

say they're worse off today than they were this time last year, twice the number who say things are getting better (14%).

This national sentiment is largely unchanged from December, as are the top issues on the minds of Canadians. For them, it's still the Economy (31%), Jobs and Unemployment (22%), and Health Care (22%).

Views of one's personal circumstances do correlate to voter choice. It is of note that Canadians who say their standard of living is in better shape today than a year ago are more likely to support the CPC than the Liberals or NDP (41% versus 20% and 29% respectively). By contrast, those who say their current standard of living is worse now than it was a year ago are twice as likely to support the NDP. (See detailed tables at the end of this release).

Competition heats up in the hunt for Baby Boomers and beyond:

Critically, a party's performance at voting time depends largely on the age of those turning out for their candidates, and it is those aged 55 and older who are twice as likely as younger voters to cast a ballot.

The NDP has largely lagged behind the other parties on support among the aging cohort – until now. A telling trend behind this latest New Democratic surge can be found in the willingness of nearly one-third (33%) of likely voters 55 years and older to support the party. This has traditionally been ground owned by the Conservatives, and indeed, it is still doing better with older voters, but not by much: 38 per cent of those 55+ still put the CPC first.

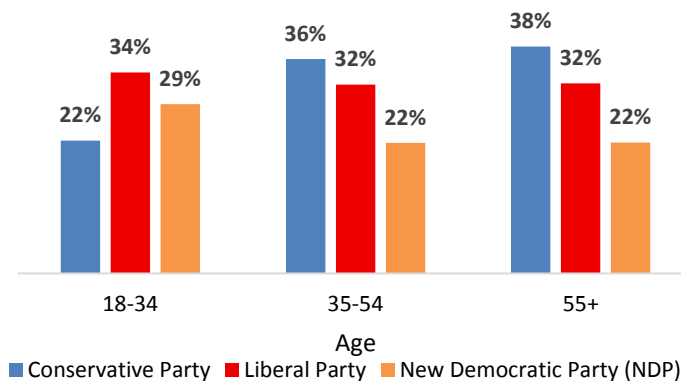
Consider this five point gap between the CPC and NDP on this critical age metric today – compared to where the parties were six months ago.

In December 2014:

- The Conservatives had the support of 38 per cent of voters 55+; unchanged today – it shows the CPC is continuing to hold its own among this key demographic
- The NDP had the support of just one-in-five (22%) of voters 55+, and has picked up 11 points among older likely voters during this period.
- The Liberals have seen their hold on this important segment slip away as voters drift to the NDP: standing at 32 per cent six months ago – it is 22 per cent today.

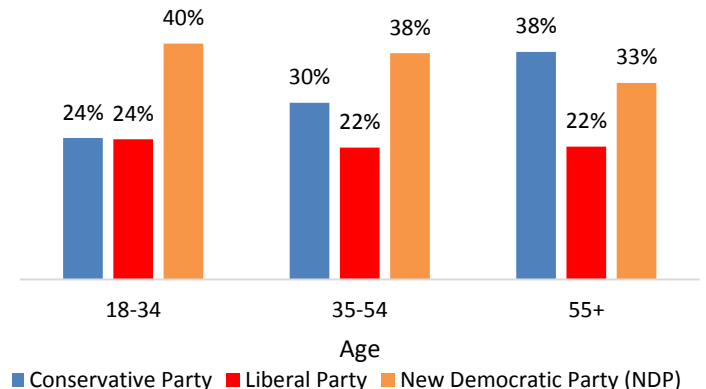
DECEMBER 2014

If an election were held tomorrow, which one of the following parties would you be most likely to support? *Likely Voters*



JUNE 2015

If an election were held tomorrow, which one of the following parties would you be most likely to support? *Likely Voters*



The Regional Picture

Contrary to post-election speculation in Alberta, the stunning majority win for the NDP's Rachel Notley in that province last month has not produced the kind of "NDP bump" large enough to explain the federal party's current standings.

Indeed – the historic win has had an impact in that province in terms of federal support: where just one-in-ten Albertans (likely voters) said they'd vote NDP six months ago (12%), twice as many (25%) say the same today. Impressive, but not a real threat to the CPC, which still claims the vast majority (56%) of the decided likely vote in Alberta.

More significantly, it is the NDP's lead in Quebec (48%) and BC (38%) – and its growing competitiveness in Ontario (34%) that is telling.

The New Democrats today command half (48%) of the decided, likely vote in Quebec, leading by a margin of three-to-one over the Conservatives (16%) Liberals (17%) and the Bloc Quebecois (17%). This also illustrates the Liberal collapse in *la belle province*: the LPC had the support of 30 per cent of decided Quebecers heading into 2015.

The NDP leads eight points over the CPC (30%) in British Columbia, and are 15 points ahead of the LPC (23%) in that province. In Ontario, the Liberals – who had had the backing of 34 per cent of likely voters six months ago – have dropped nine points (25%). Advantage NDP – which has picked up that support (34%), and sits in a statistical tie with the CPC (36%), which sees its fortunes in Canada's most populous province slipping slightly.

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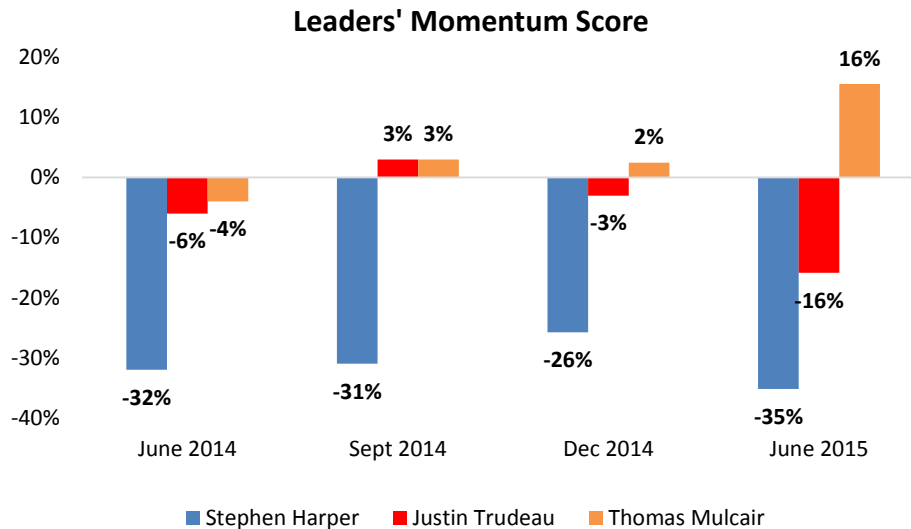
Leadership Approval and Momentum

Approval ratings for each of the three main party leaders – on the same relative plane six months ago – are now notably different:

- Harper's approval has declined to 37 per cent (-5 points)
- Trudeau's approval rating is also down, to 43 per cent (-6 points)
- Mulcair's approval *increases*, and is highest among the leaders today at 54 per cent (+6 points)

The leaders' momentum results show a similar pattern. To facilitate easier comparisons, the Angus Reid Institute uses a simple "momentum score" by subtracting the number reporting a deteriorated opinion over the last three months from those reporting an improved opinion of the main leaders.

- In Stephen Harper's case, the current momentum score is -35. This represents a decline from the -26 he registered in December.
- Justin Trudeau's momentum score has dropped again too, sitting at -16 in this latest poll, and now solidly in the column of turning off more voters than he is impressing. This compares to Trudeau's -3 momentum score at the end of last year.
- Again, it is Mulcair more turning voters on than off. His momentum score is now on the sunny side at +16, improving since December when it was at +2.



Best Prime Minister?

On the significant question of who would make the best Prime Minister, the most popular choice is, in fact “not sure” (27% opted for this). That said, the results on this key measure nonetheless bode well for the opposition leader. Thomas Mulcair finds himself two points back – in a statistical tie – with the current prime minister (24% versus 26%).

These results represent an eight point gain for Mulcair and a four point decline for Harper on this question. As for Justin Trudeau? He is off ten points: today fewer than one-in-five (18%) Canadians say he'd be the best person in the Prime Minister's Office.

Mulcair's Emerging Leadership

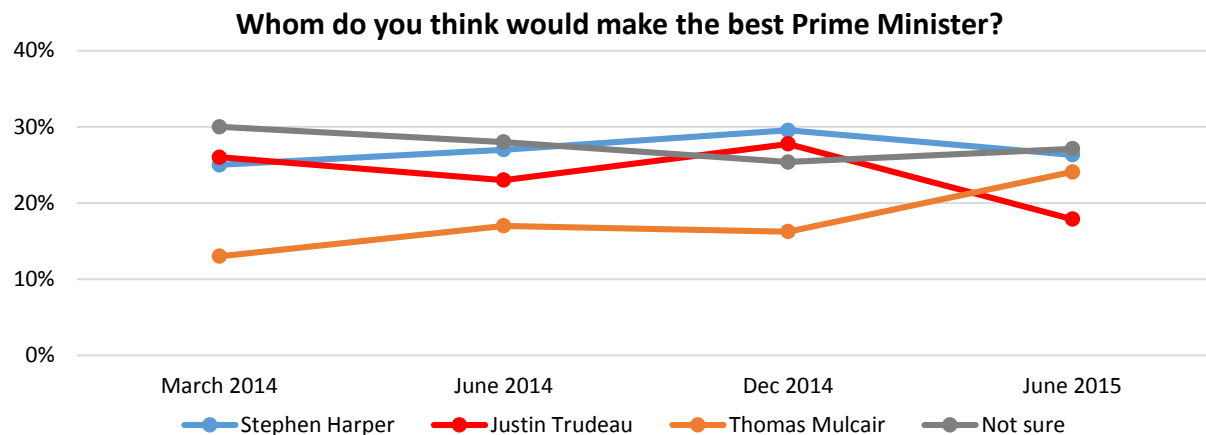
Beyond Mulcair's surging momentum scores – a picture emerges from this wave of data of an Opposition Leader being considered more seriously by Canadians as strong on key governing issues:

- On best leader on the economy, Mulcair gains the confidence of 22 per cent of Canadians – in a still behind Harper (30%) but now well ahead of Trudeau (15%)
- Perhaps unsurprisingly, Mulcair is seen as best on health care (30%), well ahead of Harper (19%) and Trudeau (15%)
- Harper is still seen as best to deal with crime and public safety, capturing the confidence of nearly one-in-three Canadians (29%), well ahead of Mulcair (18%) and Trudeau (14%)

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- The only metric on which Trudeau holds an advantage over Harper and Mulcair is “promoting unity among French and English Canadians” (28% versus 13% versus 19% respectively)



Time for a change?

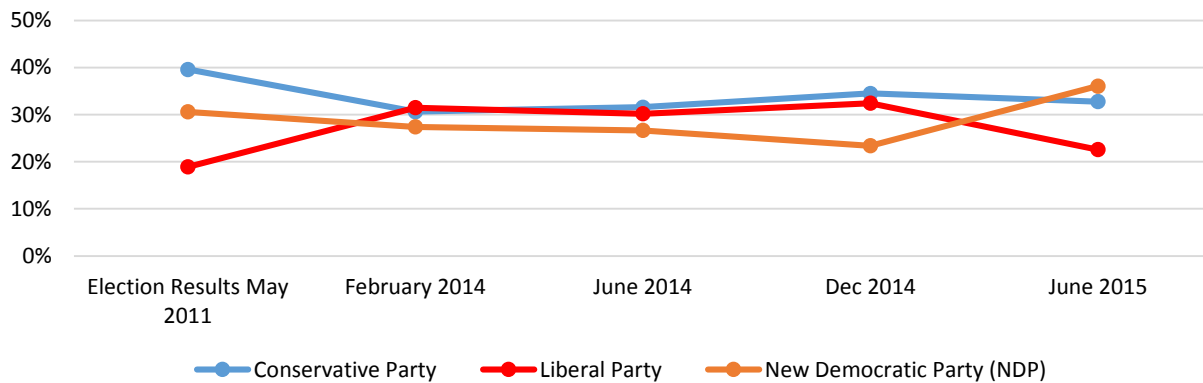
As was the case six months ago, the mood among the Canadian public remains one that is less than enthralled with another four years of Conservative rule. The majority – 58 per cent – say it's time for a change in government”.

That said, the real test of this metric is the election itself. And as the parties round the bases for home over the summer, the Conservative Party has a new enemy to fight: the NDP.

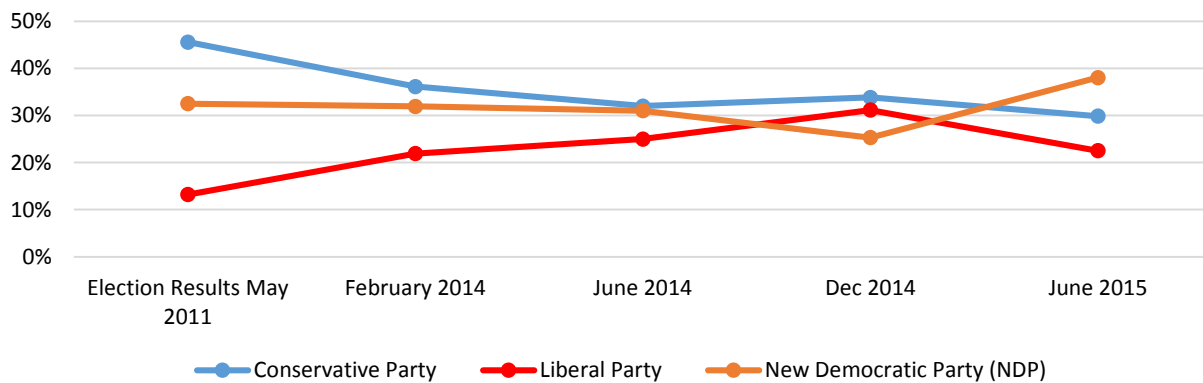
*The **Angus Reid Institute (ARI)** was founded in October 2014 by pollster and sociologist, Dr. Angus Reid. ARI is a national, not-for-profit, non-partisan public opinion research organization established to advance education by commissioning, conducting and disseminating to the public accessible and 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.*

Charts – The Regional Picture:

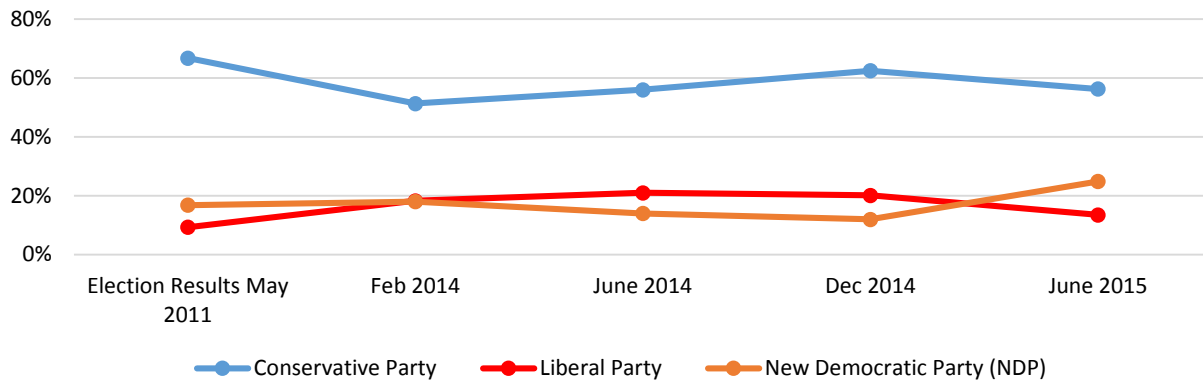
Canada - Likely Voters



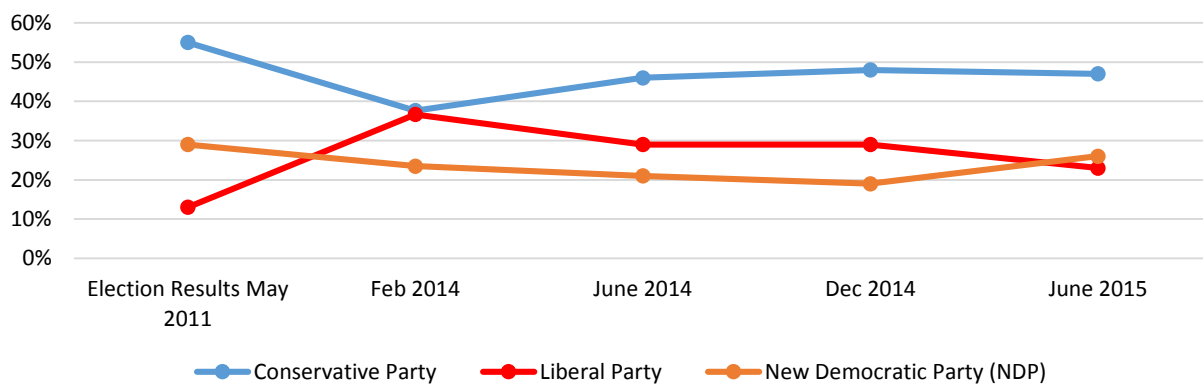
British Columbia - Likely Voters



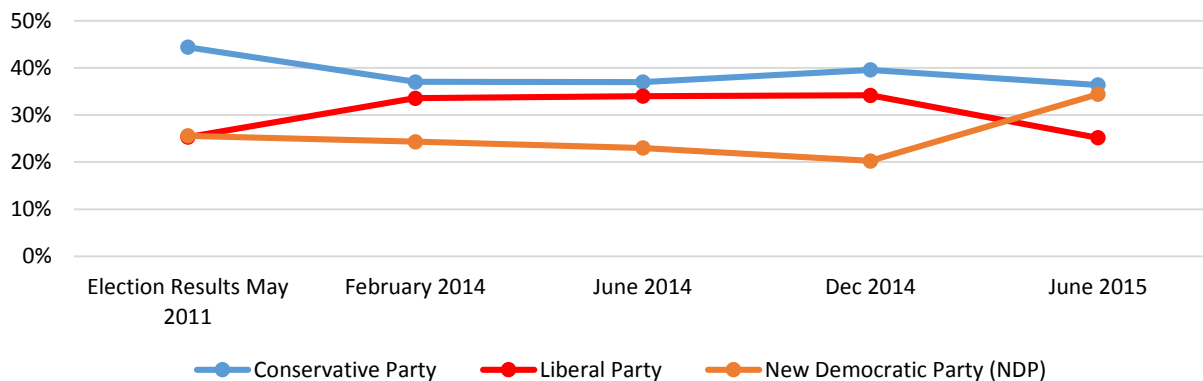
Alberta - Likely Voters



Saskatchewan/Manitoba - Likely Voters



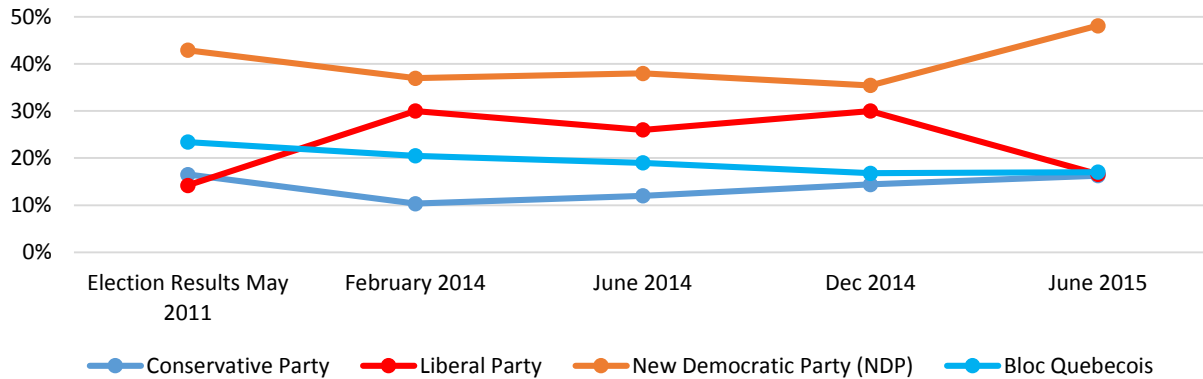
Ontario - Likely Voters



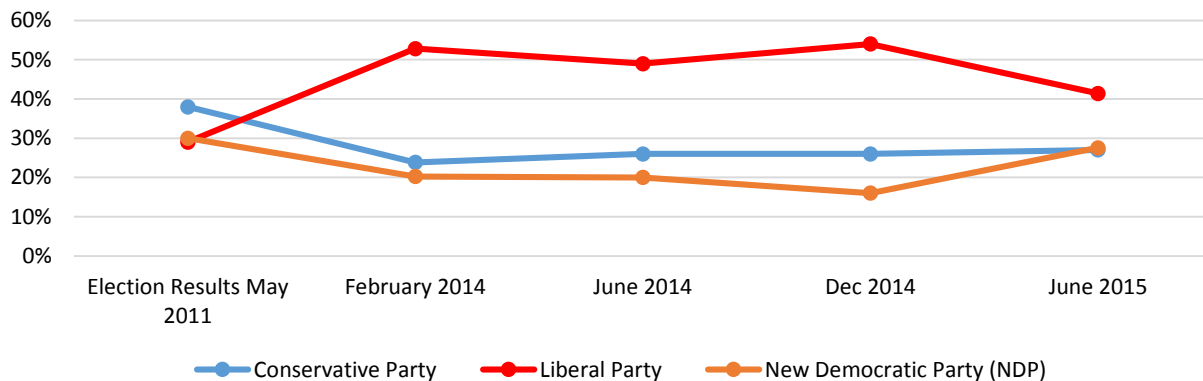
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Quebec - Likely Voters



Atlantic Canada - Likely Voters



A Note on Methodology

ARI has analyzed this political polling data through two sets of filters.

The data from all survey respondents or “**eligible voters**” uses standard census-based targets to ensure a national sample that is representative of the adult Canadian population as a whole by key demographics such as gender, age and education and region. All survey results are reported for this total group.

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For the vote projection numbers, we also report on “**likely voters**” where we’ve applied a weighting structure that further adjusts our sample to reflect known variations in voter turnout – specifically across age groups – while also filtering based on respondents’ own identified reported past voting attendance.

We have developed this approach because we feel strongly that it is the responsible thing to do when reporting on electoral projections. With declining voter turnout, there exists an increasingly important divergence between general public opinion – which still includes the still valid views of the almost 40 per cent of Canadian adults who don’t vote -- and the political orientation of the 60 per cent of likely voters whose choices actually decide electoral outcomes.

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

Region								
Base: Decided Voters	Total (4551)	BC (594)	AB (622)	SK (624)	MB (649)	ON (717)	QC (574)	ATL (771)
Conservative Party	33%	30%	56%	47%	47%	36%	16%	27%
Liberal Party	23%	23%	14%	19%	26%	25%	17%	41%
New Democratic Party (NDP)	36%	38%	25%	30%	23%	34%	48%	28%
Bloc Québécois	4%	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	17%	N/A
Green Party	4%	9%	3%	4%	3%	3%	1%	4%
Other party	1%	1%	2%	0%	1%	1%	1%	0%

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

		Gender		Age		
Base: Decided Voters	Total (4551)	Men (2721)	Women (2356)	18 – 34 (1036)	35 – 54 (1940)	55+ (2101)
Conservative Party	33%	34%	32%	24%	30%	38%
Liberal Party	23%	23%	22%	24%	22%	22%
New Democratic Party (NDP)	36%	35%	37%	40%	38%	33%
Bloc Québécois	4%	4%	5%	4%	5%	3%
Green Party	4%	3%	4%	7%	4%	2%
Other party	1%	1%	0%	1%	1%	0%

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

Region								
Base: All Respondents	Total (6005)	BC (813)	AB (807)	SK (759)	MB (806)	ON (1011)	QC (802)	ATL (1007)
Conservative Party	27%	24%	46%	38%	42%	31%	13%	22%
Liberal Party	20%	19%	13%	21%	23%	21%	16%	35%
New Democratic Party (NDP)	31%	33%	24%	26%	22%	28%	39%	25%
Bloc Québécois	4%	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	16%	N/A
Green Party	4%	8%	4%	4%	3%	3%	2%	5%
Other party	1%	1%	3%	0%	1%	1%	1%	0%
Not sure/Can't say/Would not vote	14%	14%	11%	11%	8%	17%	13%	13%

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

		Gender		Age		
Base: All Respondents	Total (6005)	Men (2916)	Women (3089)	18 – 34 (1715)	35 – 54 (2244)	55+ (2046)
Conservative Party	27%	30%	24%	20%	25%	35%
Liberal Party	20%	21%	19%	19%	20%	20%
New Democratic Party (NDP)	31%	31%	30%	33%	30%	29%
Bloc Québécois	4%	4%	4%	4%	4%	3%
Green Party	4%	3%	4%	6%	4%	2%
Other party	1%	1%	1%	2%	1%	0%
Not sure/Can't say/Would not vote	14%	10%	18%	16%	15%	11%

Suppose you chose not to vote for your first choice, which party would then be your second choice?
LIKELY VOTERS

Region								
Base: Decided Voters	Total (4551)	BC (594)	AB (622)	SK (624)	MB (649)	ON (717)	QC (574)	ATL (771)
Conservative Party	7%	8%	5%	5%	5%	6%	8%	7%
Liberal Party	21%	21%	15%	21%	23%	21%	22%	19%
New Democratic Party (NDP)	23%	19%	18%	16%	20%	28%	19%	33%
Bloc Québécois	3%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	14%	0%
Green Party	12%	18%	9%	11%	12%	14%	9%	10%
Other party	4%	4%	9%	4%	4%	2%	4%	1%
Not sure/Can't say	30%	30%	44%	42%	37%	28%	23%	29%

Suppose you chose not to vote for your first choice, which party would then be your second choice?
LIKELY VOTERS

		Gender		Age		
Base: Decided Voters	Total (4551)	Men (2721)	Women (2356)	18 – 34 (1036)	35 – 54 (1940)	55+ (2101)
Conservative Party	7%	7%	7%	8%	7%	6%
Liberal Party	21%	21%	21%	25%	21%	19%
New Democratic Party (NDP)	23%	24%	22%	27%	23%	22%
Bloc Québécois	3%	4%	3%	3%	3%	4%
Green Party	12%	13%	11%	15%	13%	11%
Other party	4%	4%	3%	4%	5%	3%
Not sure/Can't say	30%	27%	32%	18%	28%	35%

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

Federal Vote Last					
Base: All respondents	Conservative Party	Liberal Party	New Democratic Party	Bloc Québécois	Green Party
Conservative Party	72%	4%	4%	1%	3%
Liberal Party	10%	66%	14%	4%	12%
New Democratic Party (NDP)	8%	23%	75%	27%	25%
Bloc Québécois	0%	0%	2%	58%	0%
Green Party	2%	2%	2%	1%	56%
Other party	1%	1%	1%	1%	1%
Would not vote	11%	8%	7%	16%	6%
Not sure/Can't say	6%	4%	3%	9%	3%

**Which of these leaders would make the best Prime Minister of Canada?
ELIGIBLE VOTERS**

Region								
Base: All respondents	Total (6005)	BC (813)	AB (807)	SK (759)	MB (806)	ON (1011)	QC (802)	ATL (1007)
Stephen Harper	26%	23%	46%	37%	39%	30%	14%	21%
Justin Trudeau	18%	18%	12%	18%	22%	18%	16%	27%
Thomas Mulcair	24%	24%	13%	17%	16%	20%	38%	20%
Not sure	27%	29%	25%	22%	19%	28%	27%	27%

Which of these leaders would make the best Prime Minister of Canada? ELIGIBLE VOTERS

Base: All respondents	Total (6005)	Gender		Age		
		Men (2916)	Women (3089)	18 – 34 (1715)	35 – 54 (2244)	55+ (2046)
Stephen Harper	26%	30%	23%	20%	24%	34%
Justin Trudeau	18%	19%	17%	20%	19%	15%
Thomas Mulcair	24%	26%	22%	21%	23%	28%
Not sure	27%	20%	34%	32%	29%	20%

Overall, do you approve or disapprove of each of the leader's performance? ELIGIBLE VOTERS

Base: All respondents	Stephen Harper	Justin Trudeau	Thomas Mulcair	Elizabeth May	Mario Beaulieu (Quebec only)
Approve	37%	43%	54%	33%	30%
Disapprove	57%	47%	30%	38%	41%
Don't know	6%	10%	16%	29%	30%

Over the course of the past three months would you say your opinion of each of the following people has: ELIGIBLE VOTERS

Base: All respondents	Stephen Harper	Justin Trudeau	Thomas Mulcair	Elizabeth May	Mario Beaulieu (Quebec only)
Improved	8%	16%	27%	7%	8%
Stayed the same	49%	52%	62%	70%	66%
Worsened	43%	32%	11%	22%	27%

Which of the following two statements best reflects how you feel today? ELIGIBLE VOTERS

Region								
Base: All respondents	Total (6005)	BC (813)	AB (807)	SK (759)	MB (806)	ON (1011)	QC (802)	ATL (1007)
It is time for a change in government	58%	60%	42%	49%	50%	54%	69%	67%
It is not time for a change in government	25%	22%	43%	34%	35%	28%	16%	20%
Not sure	16%	18%	15%	17%	15%	18%	15%	13%

Which of the following two statements best reflects how you feel today? ELIGIBLE VOTERS

		Gender		Age		
Base: All Respondents	Total (6005)	Men (2916)	Women (3089)	18 – 34 (1715)	35 – 54 (2244)	55+ (2046)
It is time for a change in government	58%	58%	59%	61%	57%	56%
It is not time for a change in government	25%	30%	21%	21%	24%	31%
Not sure	16%	12%	20%	18%	19%	13%

Which of these leaders is best suited to deal with each of the following issues?

Base: All respondents	Economy	Health Care	Crime	Promoting unity between French and English
Stephen Harper	30%	19%	29%	13%
Justin Trudeau	15%	15%	14%	28%
Thomas Muclair	22%	30%	18%	19%

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

Standard of living					
Base: All Respondents	Total (6005)	Better now	The same as a year ago	Worse now	Not sure
Conservative Party	31%	41%	36%	20%	15%
Liberal Party	23%	20%	23%	25%	17%
New Democratic Party (NDP)	35%	29%	34%	41%	45%

What do you feel are the most important issues facing Canada today?

Region								
Base: All Respondents	Total (6005)	BC (813)	AB (807)	SK (759)	MB (806)	ON (1011)	QC (802)	ATL (1007)
Crime / Public safety	3%	5%	2%	5%	5%	3%	2%	3%
Economy	31%	29%	44%	27%	28%	33%	25%	33%
Education / Post-secondary training	4%	6%	5%	2%	2%	6%	3%	2%
Energy / Natural Resources	6%	8%	10%	5%	2%	5%	6%	3%
Environment / Pollution	16%	19%	9%	9%	9%	16%	21%	9%
Ethics / Accountability	12%	14%	14%	17%	18%	11%	7%	13%
Health Care	21%	27%	22%	28%	24%	17%	20%	30%
National Unity (Quebec and Quebec separation)	2%	0%	0%	0%	1%	1%	6%	1%
Income inequality	11%	10%	6%	6%	7%	12%	13%	8%
Taxes	9%	9%	9%	8%	14%	11%	7%	10%
Terrorism / Security	10%	7%	11%	11%	11%	9%	14%	8%
Jobs / Unemployment	20%	13%	13%	7%	12%	28%	15%	26%

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Public Interest Research

For Immediate Release
Canadian Public Opinion Poll

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First Nations issues / Aboriginal Affairs	4%	4%	3%	9%	10%	5%	3%	2%
The Senate	6%	5%	7%	13%	10%	4%	9%	6%
The Deficit / Government spending	12%	8%	16%	17%	17%	12%	12%	13%
Other (specify)	4%	5%	3%	5%	5%	3%	3%	3%

What do you feel are the most important issues facing Canada today?

		Gender		Age		
Base: All Respondents	Total (6005)	Men (2916)	Women (3089)	18 – 34 (1715)	35 – 54 (2244)	55+ (2046)
Crime / Public safety	3%	3%	3%	4%	2%	4%
Economy	31%	34%	29%	32%	32%	30%
Education / Post-secondary training	4%	3%	6%	11%	4%	2%
Energy / Natural Resources	6%	6%	5%	8%	5%	6%
Environment / Pollution	16%	14%	17%	22%	16%	13%
Ethics / Accountability	12%	13%	10%	10%	12%	12%
Health Care	21%	18%	25%	14%	21%	24%
National Unity (Quebec and Quebec separation)	2%	1%	2%	1%	1%	3%
Income inequality	11%	12%	9%	15%	10%	9%
Taxes	9%	10%	9%	10%	11%	8%
Terrorism / Security	10%	10%	11%	5%	8%	14%
Jobs / Unemployment	20%	17%	22%	24%	22%	16%
First Nations issues / Aboriginal Affairs	4%	3%	5%	5%	3%	5%
The Senate	6%	7%	5%	2%	4%	9%
The Deficit / Government spending	12%	12%	12%	10%	12%	13%
Other (specify)	4%	4%	3%	4%	4%	3%

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