

ANGUS REID POLITICAL WATCH – AUGUST 2008

Difficult Road Ahead for Dion; Tories Would Get Fresher Minority

Conservative Party would begin campaign next week with an eight-point lead; Harper continues to defeat Dion in qualities.

[VANCOUVER – Aug. 30, 2008] – Following Stephen Harper's hints that an early election is imminent, the ruling Conservative Party is leading Canada's federal political scene, as Stéphane Dion continues to have a hard time connecting with voters, a new *Toronto Star* / Angus Reid poll has found.

In the online survey of a representative national sample of 1,012 adults, 36 per cent of decided voters say they will cast a ballot for the Tories in the next federal election, up one point since June. Support for the Conservative Party is exactly the same as its share of the actual vote in the January 2006 ballot (36.3%).

The Liberal Party is second with 28 per cent (-2), slightly below its 2006 election total (30.2%). The New Democratic Party (NDP) is third with 18 per cent (+1), followed by the Bloc Québécois with nine per cent (=), and the Green Party with eight per cent (=).

The provincial breakdown shows the Grits with a slight advantage in Ontario (37% to 34%), and the NDP at 12 per cent. In Quebec, the Bloc is barely ahead with 32 per cent, followed by the Conservatives with their best showing of the year (30%) and the Liberals as a distant third (19%). The Tories are also first in Alberta (51%), Manitoba and Saskatchewan (53%), Atlantic Canada (38%), British Columbia (33%).

KEY FINDINGS

- **Voting Intention: Con. 36%, Lib. 28%, NDP 18%, BQ 9%, Grn. 8%**
- **Approval Ratings: Harper 32%, Dion 11%**
- **Preferred Prime Minister: Harper 36%, Dion 13%, Neither 35%**
- **Momentum Score: Harper -20, Dion -19**
- **52% do not want to hold an early election this year**
- **Harper defeats Dion on seven qualities and characteristics**

Full topline results are at the end of this release

From August 27 to August 28, 2008 Angus Reid Strategies conducted an online survey among a randomly selected, representative sample of 1,012 adult Canadians. The margin of error for the total sample 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.

Approval Ratings, Momentum and Preferred Prime Minister

The approval rating for Stephen Harper remains remarkably stable (32% since June), while Stéphane Dion dropped by two points (11%). The two main federal party leaders maintain a negative momentum score.

The Conservative leader's momentum score for the month of August is -20 (11% of respondents say their opinion of Harper has improved, while 31% say it has worsened). The Prime Minister's negative momentum reached the 20-point mark for the fourth time this year.

The Grit leader's momentum score for the month of August is -19 (10% of respondents say their opinion of Dion has improved, while 29% say it has worsened). Dion reached double-digits in the "improved" category for the second consecutive month.

The survey also gauged the approval ratings for three other federal party leaders. Three-in-ten Canadians (30%, -3) provide a positive assessment of the job Jack Layton is doing as leader of the NDP. The approval rating for Bloc Québécois leader Gilles Duceppe stands at 39 per cent (-1) in Quebec. Green Party leader Elizabeth May gets good marks from 21 per cent of respondents in Canada (+1), but more than half (59%) cannot provide an assessment of her performance.

As has been the case throughout 2008, Canadians are not enthused by either of the two main federal party leaders. More than a third of respondents (36%, =) prefer Harper as Prime Minister, while only 13 per cent (-1) favour Dion. Still, 35 per cent of Canadians (-4) pick neither man for the job, and 16 per cent (+4) are undecided. Harper remains unable to reach the 41 per cent mark he garnered in March 2007, while Dion stands below his all-time high of 17 per cent in February 2008.

Qualities and Characteristics: Harper vs. Dion

In the poll, respondents were provided with nine qualities and characteristics usually associated with political leaders, and asked to state whether each of them applied to Canada's two main federal party leaders. Harper retains a large lead over Dion as being a strong and decisive leader (45% to 10%), managing the economy effectively (38% to 14%), understanding complex issues (36% to 27%), understanding the problems of Canadians (33% to 23%) and inspiring confidence (30% to 11%).

Three-in-ten respondents (29%) say Harper generally agrees with them on issues they care about (20% for Dion). When Canadians are asked to assess if the two politicians have a vision for Canada's future, Harper holds a 12-point lead over Dion (43% to 31%).

The Liberal leader is virtually tied with Harper on one indicator: being honest and trustworthy (31% for Harper, 30% for Dion). Dion leads Harper as a politician who cares about the environment (45% for Dion, 27% for Harper).

Minority Government and Early Election

The survey shows little movement on the way Canadians relate to the administration of Stephen Harper. One-in-four respondents (24%, +2) believe the Conservative government has performed well and deserves a majority in the House of Commons, while 22 per cent (-4) think the Tories have handled matters adequately and deserve to stay in office with a minority. A third of Canadians (34%, -3) say the Harper administration has performed poorly and does not deserve to form a government after the next election.

When asked whether Canada should hold an early federal election this year, 52 per cent of respondents disagree with the notion, while 29 per cent would welcome a nationwide ballot.

Only 32 per cent of respondents (=) think Canada is headed in the right track, while 36 per cent (-4) believe the country is off on the wrong track.






The Angus Reid Political Watch is released monthly by Angus Reid Strategies, and includes the following questions:

- Federal Voting Intention
- Approval Rating and Momentum Score for the Prime Minister
- Approval Rating and Momentum Score for the Opposition Leader
- Preferred Prime Minister
- Top Issue Facing Canada
- Right Track / Wrong Track

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Voting Intention – Difficult Road Ahead for Dion

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

	Latest	Past surveys					
	AUG 2008	JUL 2008	JUN 2008	MAY 2008	APR 2008	MAR 2008	2006 Election
	36%	35%	33%	34%	33%	36%	36.3%
	28%	30%	30%	27%	30%	26%	30.2%
	18%	17%	19%	18%	20%	18%	17.5%
	9%	9%	9%	11%	8%	9%	10.5%
	8%	8%	7%	8%	8%	9%	4.5%
Other	1%	1%	1%	2%	1%	1%	1.0%

Voting Intention – Difficult Road Ahead for Dion

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

	Latest	Provincial Breakdown					
	AUG 2008	BC	Alta.	Prai.	Ont.	Que.	Atl.
	36%	33%	51%	53%	34%	30%	38%
	28%	19%	21%	18%	37%	19%	29%
	18%	25%	16%	25%	20%	12%	24%
	9%	0%	0%	0%	0%	32%	0%
	8%	20%	12%	2%	9%	7%	9%
Other	1%	2%	0%	2%	0%	1%	0%

Stephen Harper's approval rating at 32%

Do you approve or disapprove of Stephen Harper's performance as Prime Minister?

	Latest	Past surveys					
	AUG 2008	JUL 2008	JUN 2008	MAY 2008	APR 2008	MAR 2008	FEB 2008
Approve	32%	32%	32%	32%	33%	33%	34%
Disapprove	43%	46%	42%	42%	40%	44%	46%
Not sure	24%	22%	26%	26%	27%	23%	19%

Stephen Harper's momentum score at -20

Over the course of the past month, would you say your opinion of Stephen Harper has improved, stayed the same, or worsened?

	Latest	Past surveys					
	AUG 2008	JUL 2008	JUN 2008	MAY 2008	APR 2008	MAR 2008	FEB 2008
Improved	11%	10%	10%	8%	9%	11%	10%
Stayed the same	49%	54%	54%	53%	52%	56%	55%
Worsened	31%	31%	29%	29%	33%	27%	28%
Not sure	9%	5%	7%	9%	6%	5%	7%
Momentum Score	-20	-21	-19	-21	-24	-16	-18

Stéphane Dion's approval rating at 11%

Do you approve or disapprove of Stéphane Dion's performance as leader of the opposition?

	Latest	Past surveys					
	AUG 2008	JUL 2008	JUN 2008	MAY 2008	APR 2008	MAR 2008	FEB 2008
Approve	11%	13%	12%	10%	11%	11%	17%
Disapprove	54%	58%	56%	60%	56%	57%	50%
Not sure	35%	30%	33%	30%	33%	32%	33%

Stéphane Dion's momentum score at -19

Over the course of the past month, would you say your opinion of Stéphane Dion has improved, stayed the same, or worsened?

	Latest	Past surveys					
	AUG 2008	JUL 2008	JUN 2008	MAY 2008	APR 2008	MAR 2008	FEB 2008
Improved	10%	12%	9%	6%	7%	4%	13%
Stayed the same	46%	47%	44%	51%	51%	48%	50%
Worsened	29%	31%	35%	28%	30%	36%	27%
Not sure	16%	10%	12%	14%	12%	12%	10%
Momentum Score	-19	-19	-26	-21	-23	-32	-14

Approval for Other Party Leaders

*Do you approve or disapprove of Jack Layton's performance as leader of the NDP?
Do you approve or disapprove of Gilles Duceppe's performance as leader of the Bloc Québécois?
Do you approve or disapprove of Elizabeth May's performance as leader of the Green Party?*

	Approve	Disapprove	Not sure
Jack Layton	30% (+3)	30% (-6%)	40% (+3)
Gilles Duceppe [National Sample]	19% (+1)	41% (-4)	41% (+3)
Gilles Duceppe [Quebec Only]	39% (-1)	35% (+1)	27% (+1)
Elizabeth May	21% (+1)	20% (+2)	59% (-5)

Preferred Prime Minister – Neither

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

	Latest	Past surveys					
	AUG 2008	JUL 2008	JUN 2008	MAY 2008	APR 2008	MAR 2008	FEB 2008
Stephen Harper	36%	36%	37%	33%	37%	36%	34%
Stéphane Dion	13%	14%	10%	11%	10%	9%	17%
Neither	35%	39%	39%	44%	41%	42%	37%
Not sure	16%	12%	14%	12%	12%	13%	11%

Qualities and Characteristics

Thinking about the following qualities and characteristics, please say whether you think they apply to Stephen Harper?

	Apply	Does not apply	Not sure
Is a strong and decisive leader	45%	31%	24%
Has a vision for Canada's future	43%	30%	27%
Can manage the economy effectively	38%	31%	30%
Understands complex issues	36%	33%	32%
Understands the problems of Canadians	33%	39%	27%
Is honest and trustworthy	31%	40%	29%
Inspires confidence	30%	45%	25%
Generally agrees with you on issues you care about	29%	46%	25%
Cares about the environment	27%	44%	29%

Qualities and Characteristics

Thinking about the following qualities and characteristics, please say whether you think they apply to Stéphane Dion?

	Apply	Does not apply	Not sure
Cares about the environment	45%	21%	34%
Has a vision for Canada's future	31%	31%	38%
Is honest and trustworthy	30%	32%	38%
Understands complex issues	27%	33%	40%
Understands the problems of Canadians	23%	39%	39%
Generally agrees with you on issues you care about	20%	46%	34%
Can manage the economy effectively	14%	40%	46%
Inspires confidence	11%	54%	35%
Is a strong and decisive leader	10%	54%	36%

The Conservative Minority Government

Which of these statements comes closer to your own point of view?

	AUG 2008	JUL 2008
The Conservative government has performed well, and deserves a majority in the House of Commons	24%	22%
The Conservative government has performed adequately, and deserves to stay in office with a minority	22%	26%
The Conservative government has performed poorly, and does not deserve to form a government after the next election	34%	37%
Not sure	20%	15%

Appetite for an early election

Canada is not supposed to hold a federal election until October 2009. Do you think Canada should hold an early federal election this year?

	AUG 2008
Yes	29%
No	52%
Not sure	20%

Canada on the right track for 32%

Overall, do you think Canada is headed in the right track, or the wrong track?

	Latest	Past surveys					
	AUG 2008	JUL 2008	JUN 2008	MAY 2008	APR 2008	MAR 2008	FEB 2008
Right track	32%	32%	34%	32%	33%	43%	40%
Wrong track	36%	40%	33%	42%	37%	29%	34%
Not sure	32%	28%	34%	26%	30%	28%	26%

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 four offices in Canada—located in Vancouver, Calgary, Toronto, and Montreal—the firm also has offices San Francisco, New York and London, England. 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.

Over the last year, Angus Reid has covered five 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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**Copies of this poll are available on our website:
www.angusreidstrategies.com**