

ANGUS REID POLITICAL WATCH – APRIL 2008

Tory Loss is Liberal Gain; Parties Separated by Just Three Points

Harper edges Dion on seven leadership qualities, but more Canadians regard the Liberal leader as honest and trustworthy.

[VANCOUVER – Apr. 26, 2008] - The governing Conservative Party has lost public support over the past four weeks, with Canadian voters taking a second look at the Liberals and New Democrats, according to the *Toronto Star* / Angus Reid poll. In addition, Stephen Harper holds the upper hand on qualities and characteristics over Stéphane Dion, and Canadians are not looking forward to an early federal election.

In the online survey of a representative national sample of 1,007 adults, 33 per cent of decided voters say they will cast a ballot for the Tories in the next federal election, down three points since March. Support for the Conservative Party is below its share of the actual vote in the January 2006 ballot (36.3%).

The Liberal Party is second with 30 per cent, up four points in a month and matching its 2006 election total (30.2%). The New Democratic Party (NDP) is third with 20 per cent, followed by the Green Party with eight per cent, and the Bloc Québécois also with eight per cent.

The provincial breakdown shows the Grits with a seven-point advantage over the Tories in Ontario, and both parties tied for second place in Quebec, where the Bloc leads with 30 per cent. The Tories are ahead in British Columbia and Alberta, while the NDP is clearly connecting with voters in Manitoba and Saskatchewan (46%).

KEY FINDINGS

- » **Voting Intention: Con. 33%, Lib. 30%, NDP 20%, BQ 8%, Grn. 8%**
- » **Approval Ratings: Harper 33%, Dion 11%**
- » **Preferred Prime Minister: Harper 37%, Dion 10%, Neither 41%**
- » **Momentum Score: Harper -24, Dion -23**
- » **50% do not want the opposition to force an early election**
- » **Harper defeats Dion on seven qualities and characteristics**

More results are at the end of this release.

From April 22 to April 23, 2008 Angus Reid Strategies conducted an online survey among a randomly selected, representative sample of 1,007 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

While there was no change in the approval ratings for both Stephen Harper (33%) and Stéphane Dion (11%) this month, the momentum scores for the two politicians did experience a shift.

The Conservative leader's momentum score for the month of April is -24 (9% of respondents say their opinion of the prime minister has improved, while 33% say it has worsened). The Prime Minister's negative momentum had not reached 20 points since December 2007.

The Grit leader's momentum score for the month of April is -23 (7% of respondents say their opinion of Dion has improved, while 30% say it has worsened). This is a welcome development for Dion, whose negative momentum reached 32 points just last month.

This survey also gauged the approval ratings for three other federal party leaders. Three-in-ten Canadians (31%) provide a positive assessment of the job Jack Layton is doing as leader of the NDP. The approval rating for Bloc Québécois leader Giles Duceppe stands at 36 per cent in Quebec. Green Party leader Elizabeth May gets good marks from one-in-five respondents in Canada (20%), but a majority (59%) cannot provide an assessment of her performance.

Canadians remain uninspired by the two main federal party leaders. More than a third of respondents (37%) prefer Harper as Prime Minister, while only 10 per cent favour Dion. Still, more than two-in-five Canadians (41%) pick neither man for the job. Harper remains unable to reach the 41 per cent mark he garnered exactly in March 2007.

Qualities and Characteristics: Harper vs. Dion

In the poll, respondents were provided with eight 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 amassed large advantages as being a strong and decisive leader (51% to 8%), having a vision for Canada's future (47% to 30%), managing the economy effectively (42% to 14%), understanding complex issues (41% to 29%), and inspiring confidence (32% to 10%).

However, barely a third of respondents (34%) think the current prime minister understands the problems of Canadians (23% for Dion), and 30 per cent say Harper generally agrees with them on issues they care about (24% for Dion). The Liberal leader holds the upper hand on Harper on one indicator: being honest and trustworthy (38% to 33%).

Minority Government and Early Election

The survey shows very little movement on the way Canadians relate to the administration of Stephen Harper. One-in-five respondents (21%) believe the Conservative government has performed well and deserves a majority in the House of Commons, while 28 per cent think the Tories have handled matters adequately and deserve to stay in office with a minority. A third of Canadians (34%) say the Harper

administration has performed poorly and does not deserve to form a government after the next election. The results are very similar to a poll conducted in February.

When asked whether the opposition parties should try to topple the Conservative minority government, 50 per cent of respondents disagree with forcing an early federal election, while 28 per cent would welcome a nationwide ballot.

Top Issue Facing Canada

When asked about the most important issue facing the country, Canadians rank health care (21%) and the environment (20%) as their main concerns, followed by the economy (15%).

Respondents were also given a list of ten issues and asked which one would be the most important if an early federal election were to take place this year. Health care was clearly the top option with 28 per cent, followed by the environment with 17 per cent, the national economy with 15 per cent, and government accountability with 11 per cent.

Female respondents are more prone to think about health care (25%) as an electoral issue than male respondents (11%), while men are more worried about the national economy (19%) than women (11%). Both genders were equally concerned over the environment and government accountability.

Only 33 per cent of respondents think Canada is headed in the right track—down 10 points since March—while 37 per cent 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 – Tory Loss is Liberal Gain							
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					
	APR 2008	MAR 28, 2008	MAR 2, 2008	FEB 2008	DEC 2007	OCT 2007	2006 Election
Conservative	33%	36%	34%	34%	33%	34%	36.3%
Liberal	30%	26%	28%	31%	28%	29%	30.2%
New Democratic Party	20%	18%	18%	17%	17%	17%	17.5%
Green	8%	9%	9%	8%	10%	9%	4.5%
Bloc Québécois	8%	9%	10%	9%	10%	9%	10.5%
Other	1%	1%	1%	1%	2%	2%	1.0%

Voting Intention – Tory Loss is Liberal Gain							
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					
	MAR 28, 2008	BC	Alta.	Prai.	Ont.	Que.	Atl.
Conservative	33%	37%	58%	32%	31%	23%	36%
Liberal	30%	28%	20%	16%	38%	23%	37%
New Democratic Party	20%	20%	9%	46%	19%	17%	24%
Green	8%	14%	11%	4%	10%	4%	3%
Bloc Québécois	8%	0%	0%	0%	0%	30%	0%
Other	1%	0%	1%	1%	1%	3%	0%

Stephen Harper's approval rating at 33%

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

	Latest	Past surveys					
	APR 2008	MAR 2008	FEB 2008	DEC 2007	OCT 2007	AUG 2007	JUL 2007
Approve	33%	33%	34%	30%	29%	31%	29%
Disapprove	40%	44%	46%	45%	45%	42%	47%
Not sure	27%	23%	19%	25%	27%	27%	23%

Stephen Harper's momentum score at -24

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					
	APR 2008	MAR 2008	FEB 2008	DEC 2007	OCT 2007	AUG 2007	JUL 2007
Improved	9%	11%	10%	11%	13%	12%	11%
Stayed the same	52%	56%	55%	51%	51%	57%	52%
Worsened	33%	27%	28%	31%	23%	25%	28%
Not sure	6%	5%	7%	7%	12%	6%	10%
Momentum Score	-24	-16	-18	-20	-10	-13	-17

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					
	APR 2008	MAR 2008	FEB 2008	DEC 2007	OCT 2007	AUG 2007	JUL 2007
Approve	11%	11%	17%	14%	11%	14%	14%
Disapprove	56%	57%	50%	51%	46%	40%	43%
Not sure	33%	32%	33%	35%	43%	46%	43%

Stéphane Dion's momentum score at -23

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					
	APR 2008	MAR 2008	FEB 2008	DEC 2007	OCT 2007	AUG 2007	JUL 2007
Improved	7%	4%	13%	10%	4%	6%	7%
Stayed the same	51%	48%	50%	53%	46%	60%	53%
Worsened	30%	36%	27%	24%	30%	16%	21%
Not sure	12%	12%	10%	13%	19%	17%	19%
Momentum Score	-23	-32	-14	-14	-26	-10	-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 Giles 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	31%	33%	36%
Giles Duceppe [National Sample]	18%	40%	42%
Giles Duceppe [Quebec Only]	36%	31%	32%
Elizabeth May	20%	22%	59%

Qualities and Characteristics

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

	Stephen Harper	Stéphane Dion
Is a strong and decisive leader	51%	8%
Has a vision for Canada's future	47%	30%
Can manage the economy effectively	42%	14%
Understands complex issues	41%	29%
Understands the problems of Canadians	34%	23%
Is honest and trustworthy	33%	38%
Inspires confidence	32%	10%
Generally agrees with you on issues you care about	30%	24%

The Conservative Minority Government

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

	APR 2008	FEB 2008
The Conservative government has performed well, and deserves a majority in the House of Commons	21%	22%
The Conservative government has performed adequately, and deserves to stay in office with a minority	28%	26%
The Conservative government has performed poorly, and does not deserve to form a government after the next election	34%	36%
Not sure	17%	17%

Appetite for an early election

Do you think the opposition parties should try to topple the Conservative minority government and force an early federal election?

	Canada
Yes	28%
No	50%
Not sure	22%

Preferred Prime Minister – Neither

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

	Latest	Past surveys					
	APR 2008	MAR 2008	FEB 2008	DEC 2007	OCT 2007	AUG 2007	JUL 2007
Stephen Harper	37%	36%	34%	33%	31%	32%	33%
Stéphane Dion	10%	9%	17%	12%	9%	12%	14%
Neither	41%	42%	37%	41%	46%	41%	40%
Not sure	12%	13%	11%	14%	14%	15%	13%

Canada on the right track for 33%

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

	Latest	Past surveys					
	APR 2008	MAR 2008	FEB 2008	DEC 2007	OCT 2007	AUG 2007	JUL 2007
Right track	33%	43%	40%	38%	39%	45%	39%
Wrong track	37%	29%	34%	32%	32%	26%	35%
Not sure	30%	28%	26%	30%	29%	29%	26%

Environment and Health Care are top issues

Q. What do you think is the most important issue facing Canada today?

	APR 2008	MAR 2008	FEB 2008
Environment	21%	21%	23%
Health Care	20%	25%	20%
Economy	15%	16%	14%
Poverty	9%	11%	10%
Tax relief	6%	4%	5%
Ethics / Accountability	6%	4%	4%
Crime	5%	5%	7%
Energy / Electricity	5%	2%	1%
Afghanistan	3%	4%	6%
Unemployment	2%	3%	1%
Terrorism	2%	2%	2%
Education	1%	2%	2%
National Unity	1%	1%	1%
Or, some other issue	3%	2%	3%

Health Care is top electoral issue

Q. If an early federal election were to take place this year, which one of the following issues would be the most important when you cast your vote?

	Gender		
	Total	Men	Women
Health Care	18%	11%	25%
The environment	17%	17%	17%
The national economy	15%	19%	11%
Government accountability	12%	12%	12%
Tax relief	9%	9%	9%
Leadership	8%	10%	6%
The mission in Afghanistan	6%	6%	6%
Financial help for cities	4%	4%	3%
Senate reform	2%	4%	0%
Child care	2%	0%	3%
Other	7%	7%	7%

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>

- 30 -

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**Copies of this poll are available on our website:
www.angusreidstrategies.com**