

Federal Politics: Harper's Conservatives end 2014 with slight lead over Trudeau Liberals; NDP running third

PM's momentum increases slightly over the year, but most Canadians still say it's "time for a change"

December 29, 2014 – The Canadian political landscape heading into election year 2015 suggests the slightest advantage for the governing Conservatives over the Liberal Party among likely voters, with the official opposition New Democrats running third.

These are among the findings of a national online survey of more than 6,000 eligible Canadian voters analyzed and released by the Angus Reid Institute.

The year-end poll also shows Prime Minister Stephen Harper making modest but steady gains in personal popularity. Liberal leader Justin Trudeau's initial appeal appears to be fading a little since he first stepped into the role. Official opposition leader Thomas Mulcair is holding his own but his New Democratic party has some ground to make up.

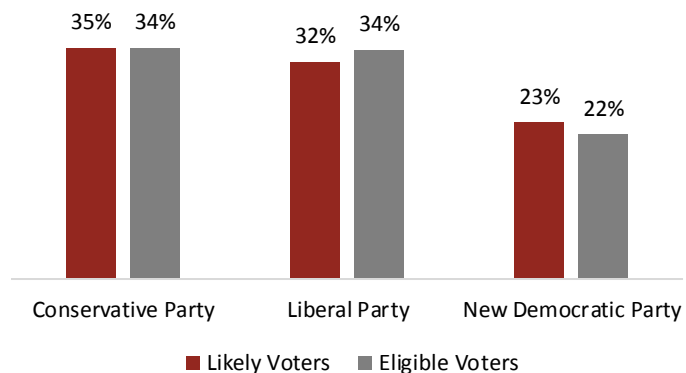
The Party Standings

The poll shows the Conservative Party of Canada (CPC) with 35 per cent of decided support among **likely voters**, putting them three points ahead of the Trudeau Liberals at 32 per cent, and 12 points ahead of the official opposition New Democrats at 23 per cent.

The party standings among the **eligible voters** – with no adjustment for known variations in voter turn-out by age and or adjustment by past propensity to vote – show a dead heat between the CPC and Liberals: 34 per cent each, with the NDP at 22 per cent.

This pattern of the Conservatives doing better among the most likely voters than among the electorate at large has been consistently observed since we first introduced this analytical approach at the beginning of this year. (See the methodological note at the end of this release).

Eligible vs. Likely Voters



METHODOLOGY:

The Angus Reid Institute analyzed results from an online survey of 6325 Canadian adults who are Angus Reid Forum panelists from December 4-13, 2014. The data was 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 carries 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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This largely reflects the Conservatives' relative strength with middle-aged and older voters – who are far more likely than younger Canadians to go to the polls and, hence, more heavily represented in the “likely voter” pool.

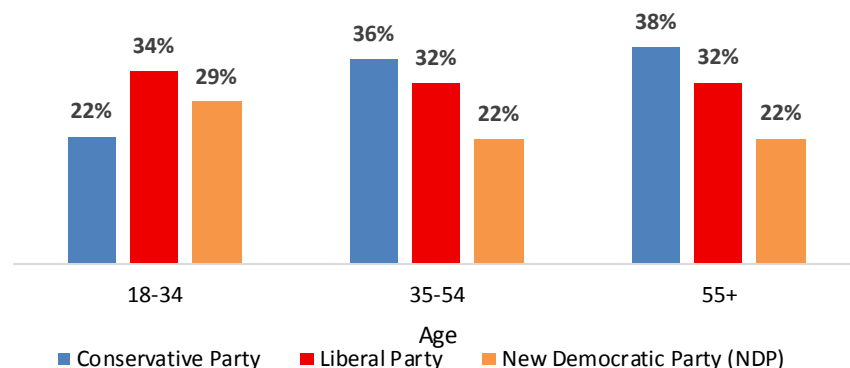
These survey findings indicate Conservative support is only 22 per cent among voters under 35 (putting them in third place among younger Canadians), rising to 36 per cent among those 35 to 54, and 38 per cent among those 55+.

Since the 2011 Vote

The Conservatives have gained some ground over 2014, but are still five crucial points from the 40 per cent of the popular vote that delivered their 2011 majority. The Liberals, meanwhile, are 13 points up from their 19 per cent, third-place showing in 2011. Those gains have come at the NDP's expense: the official opposition now finds itself eight points back from the 31 per cent share that brought “orange crush” of 2011.

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

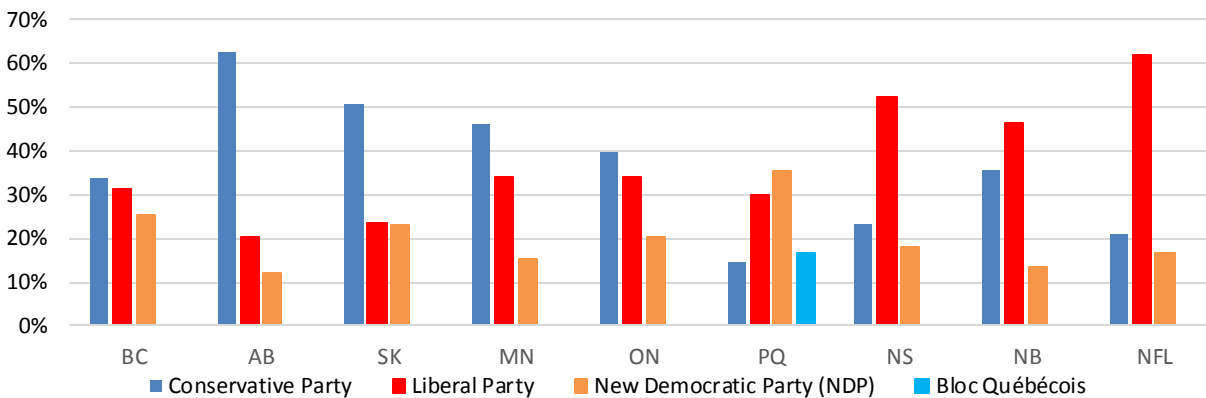
Likely Voters



Party retention rates tell the story: although their 2011 base was smallest among the major parties, the Liberals are holding the vast majority (87%) of their supporters from the previous election and, critically, have attracted a good many 2011 Conservatives (12% of them) and 2011 New Democrats (29%) to their banner.

This leaves the NDP with only 60 per cent of their 2011 base. The Conservatives have a strong retention rate (81% of their 2011 supporters are still with them) but have not made up this deficit for the last election with new supporters from other camps.

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



The Regional Races

The various regional contests are really shaping up, and this latest poll (with its very robust regional sample sizes) shows each party has some regional bright lights and some causes for concern.

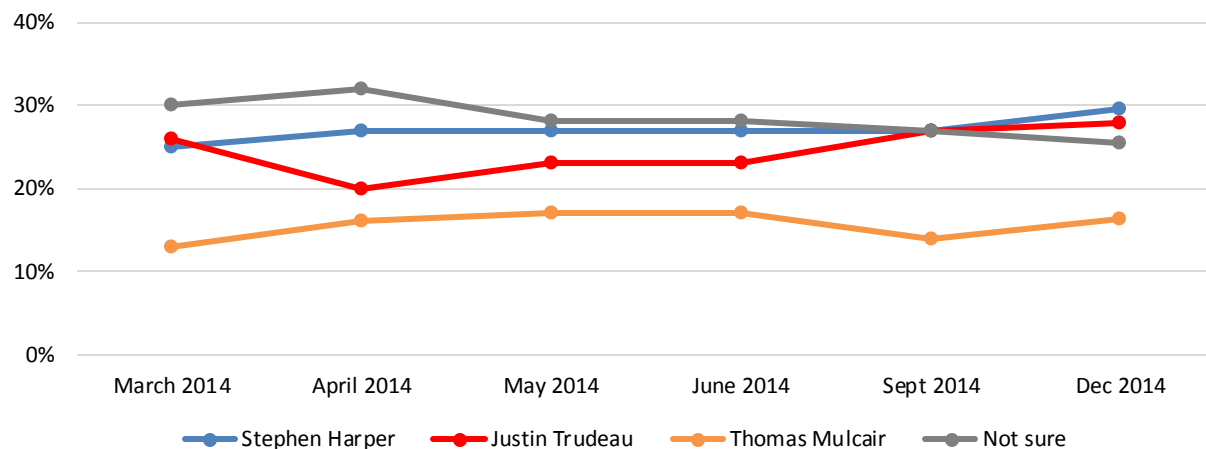
- **BC** continues to look very competitive: 34 per cent for the CPC, 31 per cent for the Liberals and 25 per cent for the NDP. This puts the Liberals almost 20 points up over their weak showing here in 2011, at the expense of both the Conservatives (currently down 12 points in BC) and NDP (down eight points).
- **The prairies** remain solidly Conservative country; with the CPC at 62 per cent in **Alberta**, 51 per cent in **Saskatchewan** and 46 per cent in **Manitoba**.
- In **Ontario**, the Conservatives enjoy the edge as we head into election year. Their current 40 per cent share is almost back at 2011 levels, when the party earned 44 per cent of the vote. The Liberals are in second place at 34 per cent and the NDP trail with 20 per cent, a sharp contrast to their neck-and-neck finish here in 2011.
- In **Quebec**, the New Democrats are holding on to their lead, though it has waned since their historic breakthrough in 2011. This poll shows the NDP with 35 per cent of the decided Quebec vote versus 30 per cent for the Trudeau Liberals (double the party's share in 2011), 14 per cent for the Conservatives, and 17 per cent for the Bloc Quebecois (almost unchanged from their showing in 2011).
- The Liberals enjoy a very strong lead across **the Atlantic provinces**: 54 per cent region-wide versus 24 per cent for the Conservatives and 16 per cent for the New Democrats. This Liberal strength is noted in **Nova Scotia**: 52 percent; **New Brunswick**: 47 percent; and **Newfoundland**

and Labrador: 62 percent. (Note that the population of PEI creates too small a sampling base size for individual reporting.)

Best Prime Minister?

On the key question of who would make best Prime Minister, the incumbent, Stephen Harper, now holds a very narrow edge over Liberal leader Justin Trudeau (30% versus 28% among all voters nation-wide), with opposition leader Thomas Mulcair trailing at 16 per cent. Notably, he's the best PM choice of fewer than half of the NDP's 2011 supporters. At the beginning of the year, Trudeau led on this key measure: 36 per cent versus 32 per cent for Harper.

Whom do you think would make the best Prime Minister? Eligible Voters



Leadership Approval

The three main party leaders continue to register similar approval ratings: from 42 per cent for Harper to 48 per cent for Mulcair and 49 per cent for Trudeau.

But, they meet with varying levels of *disapproval*: in Harper's case, a full majority of Canadians (53%) continue to disapprove; for Trudeau, the disapproval figure has nudged closer to his approval level (42% now disapprove) while Mulcair registers lower levels of disapproval (34%, with higher uncertainty at 17%).

Looking at the trends over this year, we see voters' net assessment of Harper has improved fairly substantially (from the 36% versus 57% scored in February) while Trudeau's has slipped (from 51% approval vs 38% disapproval) and Mulcair's has held fairly solid (45% approve vs 35% disapprove in February).

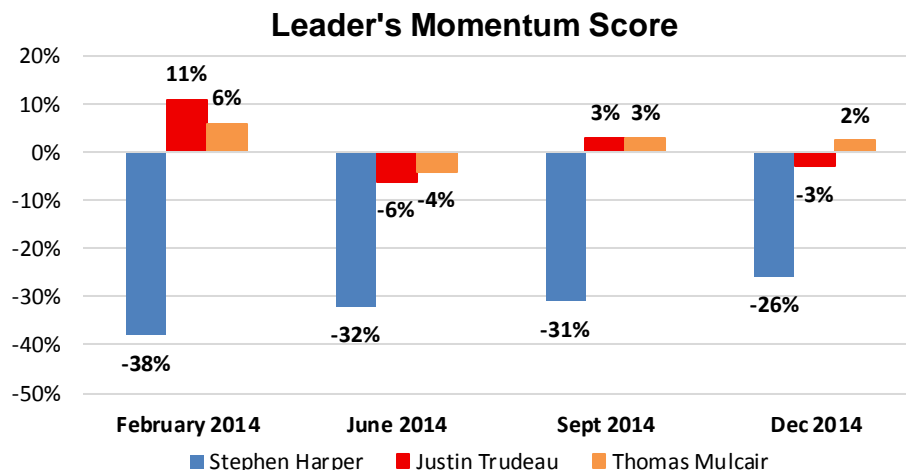
Momentum

The leaders' momentum results show a similar pattern.

- For Stephen Harper, this latest poll shows 11 per cent of Canadians report an improved opinion of him over the past few months versus 37 per cent who say their opinion has worsened (most – 52% -- say their opinion of Mr. Harper has not changed in the past few months).

To facilitate easier comparisons, we can create a simple “momentum score” by subtracting the number reporting a deteriorated opinion from those reporting an improved opinion. In Harper's case, the current momentum score is -26. While still decidedly negative, this represents improvement from the -32 registered for Harper in June and the -38 in February.

- Justin Trudeau's momentum score has slipped negative, registering -3 in this latest poll: the Liberal leader is now turning off narrowly more voters than he is impressing. This compares to Trudeau's +11 momentum score at the beginning of the year.
- NDP leader Thomas Mulcair remains narrowly positive at +2, generally consistent with his net momentum scores over this past year. Almost three-quarters report no recent change in their opinion of Mulcair.



Time for a change?

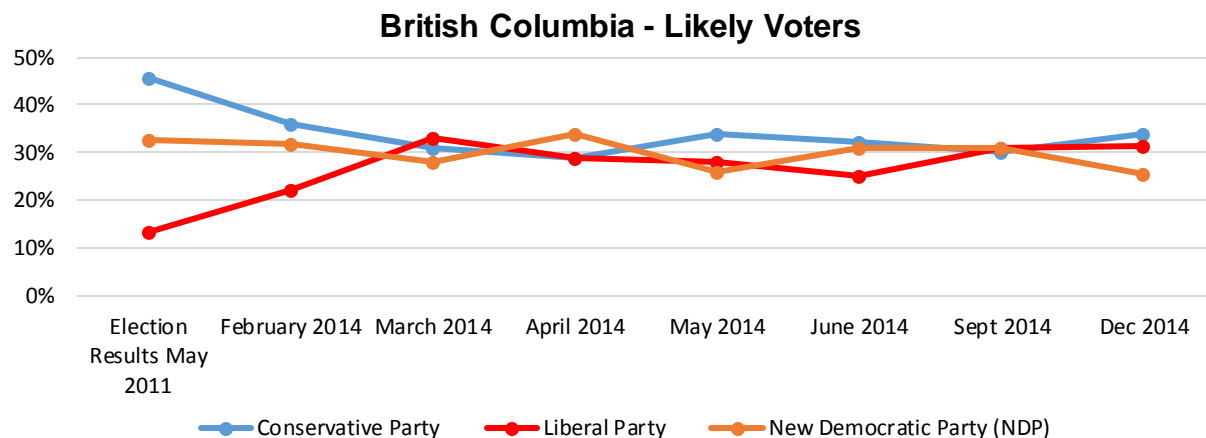
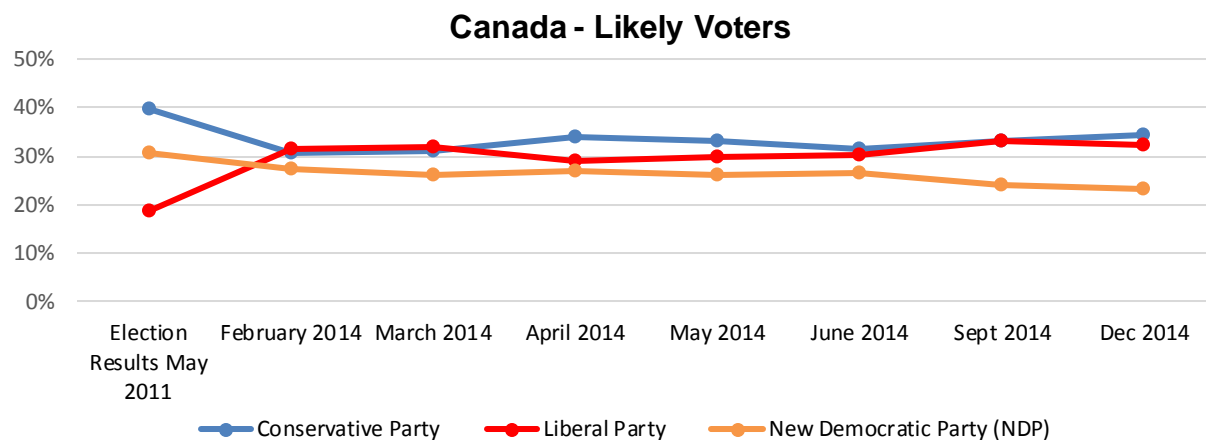
Heading into the expected election year begins, there remains a broadly-based sense among the Canadian public that it is “time for a change in government”. Canadians opt for this overall point of view by a margin of two-to-one: 55 per cent versus 27 per cent who disagree with the remaining 17 per cent unsure.

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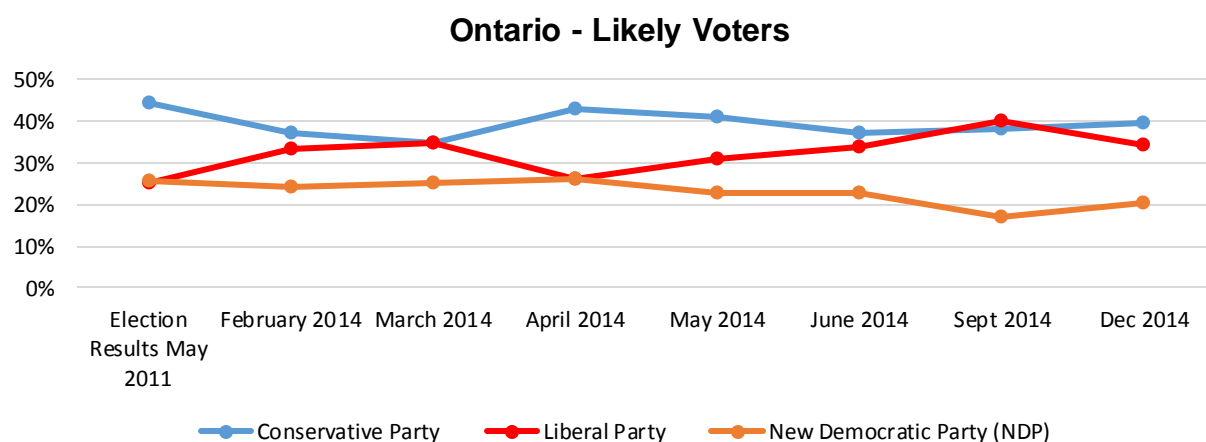
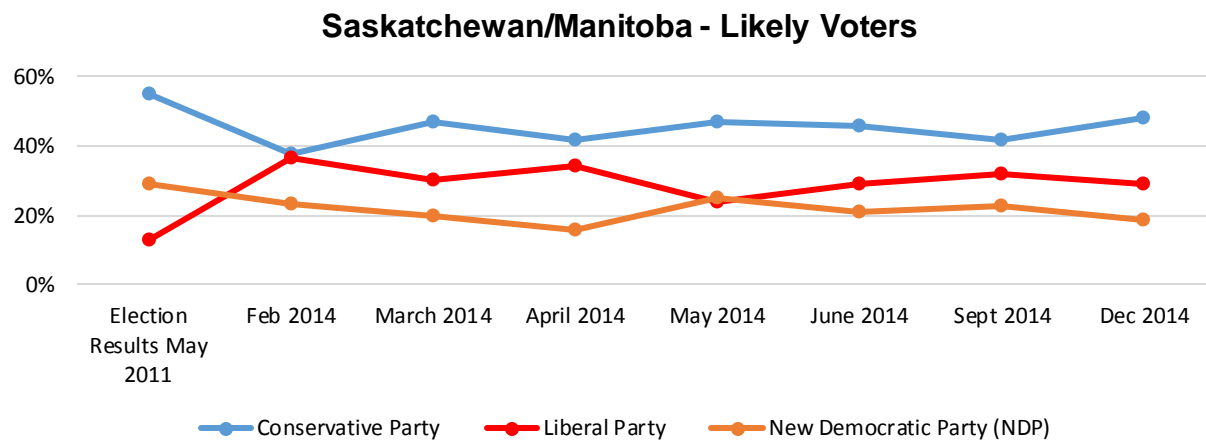
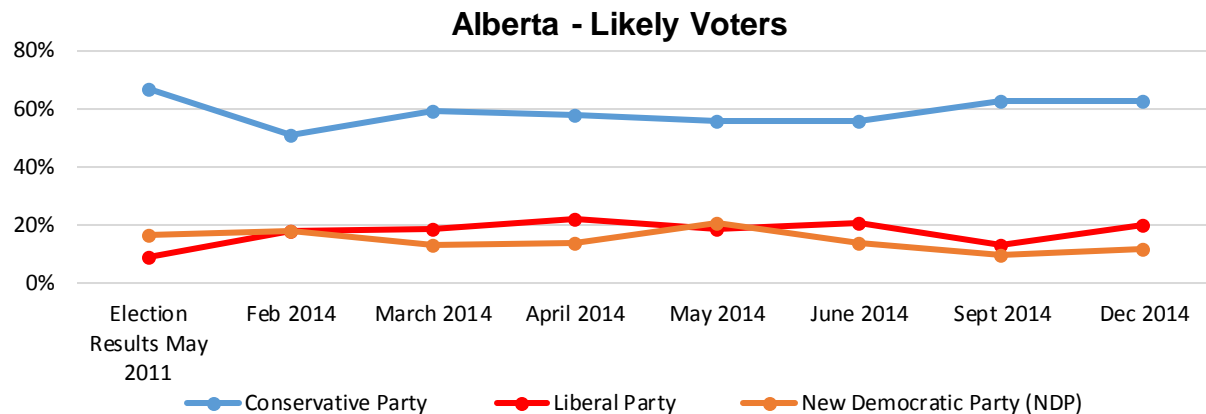
The **Angus Reid Institute (ARI)** was founded in October 2014 by pollster and sociologist, Dr. Angus Reid. ARI is a national, not-for-profit, non-partisan public opinion research organization established to advance education by commissioning, conducting and disseminating to the public accessible and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

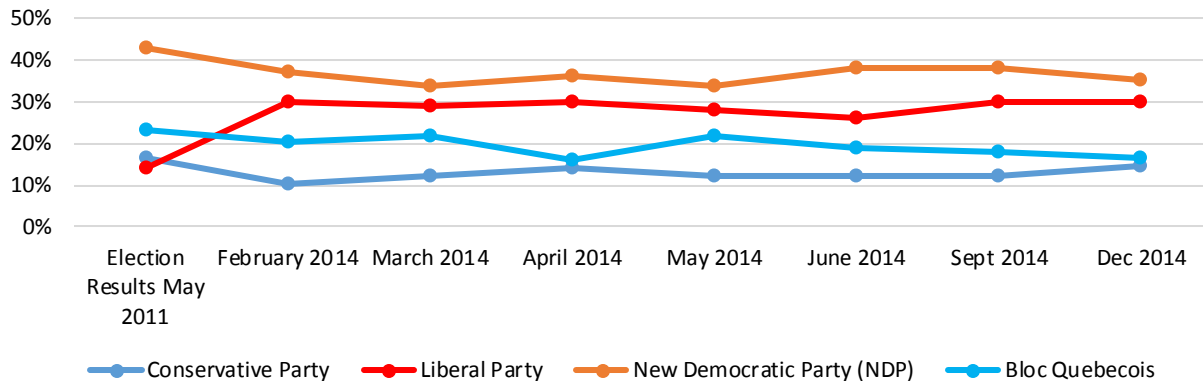


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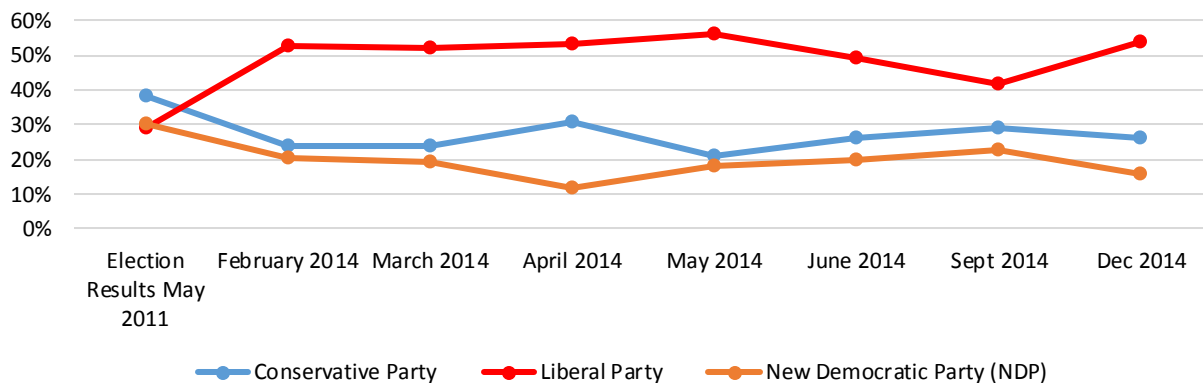
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Quebec - Likely Voters



Atlantic Canada - Likely Voters



A Note on Methodology

ARI has analyzed this political polling data through two sets of filters, as has been our practice for the past year.

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										
	Total (6325)	Region								
		BC (810)	AB (801)	SK (1098)	MB (795)	ON (1001)	PQ (816)	NS (300)	NB (304)	NFL (300)
Conservative Party	35%	34%	62%	51%	46%	40%	14%	23%	36%	21%
Liberal Party	32%	31%	20%	23%	34%	34%	30%	52%	47%	62%
New Democratic Party (NDP)	23%	25%	12%	23%	15%	20%	35%	18%	13%	17%
Bloc Québécois	4%	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	17%	N/A	N/A	N/A
Green Party	4%	8%	4%	3%	4%	5%	2%	6%	4%	0%
Other party	1%	2%	1%	0%	1%	1%	1%	0%	1%	0%

*The sample size in Prince Edward Island is too small to report on

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

	Total (6325)	Region								
		BC (810)	AB (801)	SK (1098)	MB (795)	ON (1001)	PQ (816)	NS (300)	NB (304)	NFL (300)
Conservative Party	34%	31%	59%	42%	42%	43%	14%	20%	32%	18%
Liberal Party	34%	33%	23%	29%	38%	36%	31%	53%	44%	64%
New Democratic Party (NDP)	22%	24%	12%	21%	14%	16%	36%	16%	17%	16%
Bloc Québécois	4%	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	15%	N/A	N/A	N/A
Green Party	5%	10%	4%	7%	5%	4%	3%	9%	5%	0%
Other party	1%	2%	2%	0%	1%	1%	1%	2%	2%	1%

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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?
LIKELY VOTERS

	Total (6325)	Federal Vote Last					
		Conservative Party	Liberal Party	New Democratic Party	Bloc Québécois	Green Party	Other
Conservative Party	35%	81%	5%	4%	3%	6%	13%
Liberal Party	32%	12%	87%	29%	14%	33%	18%
New Democratic Party (NDP)	23%	5%	6%	60%	20%	6%	3%
Bloc Québécois	4%	0%	0%	2%	60%	1%	4%
Green Party	4%	1%	1%	4%	2%	53%	5%
Other party	1%	1%	0%	1%	1%	1%	58%

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

	Total (6325)	Region								
		BC (810)	AB (801)	SK (1098)	MB (795)	ON (1001)	PQ (816)	NS (300)	NB (304)	NFL (300)
Stephen Harper	30%	29%	51%	36%	34%	34%	15%	17%	26%	15%
Justin Trudeau	28%	28%	17%	22%	30%	31%	24%	41%	32%	46%
Thomas Mulcair	16%	14%	7%	15%	10%	10%	33%	13%	14%	15%
Not sure	25%	28%	25%	27%	26%	24%	26%	29%	27%	25%

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

	Stephen Harper	Justin Trudeau	Thomas Mulcair	Elizabeth May	Mario Beaulieu (Quebec only)
Approve	42%	49%	48%	33%	21%
Disapprove	53%	42%	34%	38%	58%
Don't know	5%	9%	17%	29%	22%

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

	Stephen Harper	Justin Trudeau	Thomas Mulcair	Elizabeth May	Mario Beaulieu (Quebec only)
Improved	11%	22%	16%	7%	5%
Stayed the same	52%	52%	71%	84%	62%
Worsened	37%	26%	13%	9%	33%

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Which of the following two statements best reflects how you feel today? ELIGIBLE VOTERS										
	Total (6325)	Region								
		BC (810)	AB (801)	SK (1098)	MB (795)	ON (1001)	PQ (816)	NS (300)	NB (304)	NFL (300)
It is time for a change in government	55%	57%	34%	51%	51%	48%	71%	70%	54%	71%
It is not time for a change in government	27%	27%	45%	33%	31%	30%	15%	15%	26%	13%
Not sure	18%	15%	21%	16%	18%	22%	14%	15%	20%	16%

*The sample size in Prince Edward Island is too small to report on