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Election 2015: Race narrows to Conservative-Liberal contest with NDP in third place; soft voters still cause for volatility

Trudeau's personal appeal among factors propelling Liberals forward

October 9, 2015 – As the Election 2015 campaign heads into the long weekend and the start of advance voting, the 'Mulcair Momentum' that looked like it could push the New Democratic Party (NDP) into power in Ottawa for the first time in its history is in full reverse, leaving the governing Conservative Party (CPC) the slight favourite to form the next government, with the resurgent Liberal Party (LPC) now running a close second among decided eligible voters surveyed by the Angus Reid Institute.

That said, a volatile and uncommitted electorate may yet bring more changes in this final campaign stretch, as data from ARI's latest public opinion poll shows more than one-in-five eligible voters say they'll make their final decision either right before or on October 19th.

Many of these uncertain voters are younger Canadians – a historically fickle demographic that is largely responsible for the Liberal surge. The outcome of this election may well depend on how well the LPC is able to convert these 18-to-34-year-olds from "soft" supporters into actual votes on Oct. 19.

Federal Vote Intention (Eligible Voters):

Total CPC	33%
Total LPC	31%
Total NDP	25%

Legend: CPC ■ LPC ■ NDP

METHODOLOGY:

The Angus Reid Institute conducted an online survey from October 7 – 9, 2015, among a representative randomized sample of 1,083 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 +/- 3 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.

The party standings & the uncommitted factor:

This ARI online poll of 1,083 eligible Canadian voters shows the Conservatives holding steady at 33 per cent of decided voters, just two points ahead of the Liberals (31%), and well ahead of the NDP, now standing at 25 per cent.

Compared to data released by the Institute at the end of September and at the end of August, these survey findings speak to the continued shift in soft support from the NDP to the Liberals, with the Conservatives maintaining consistent levels of voter support from September.
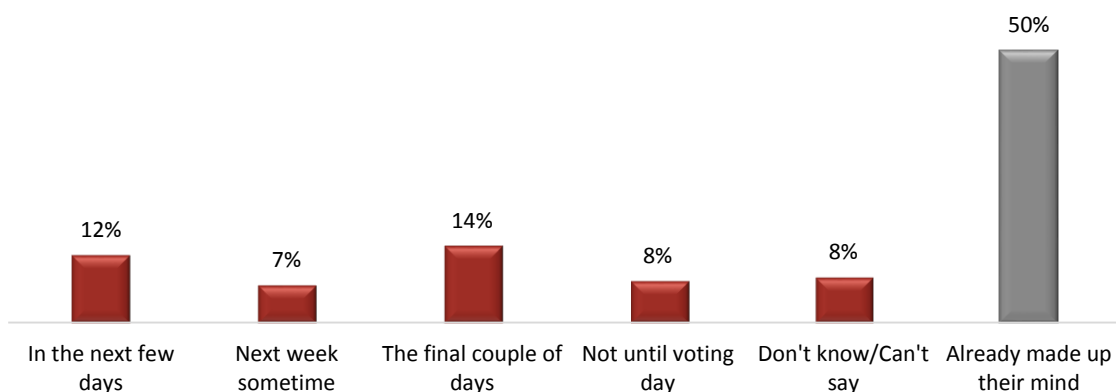
A high-level scan of key regional races shows:
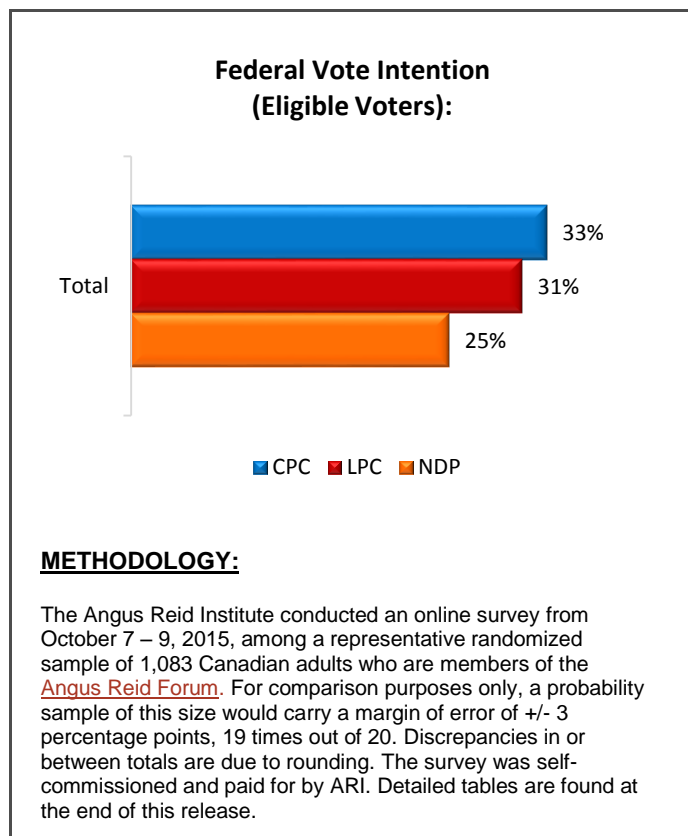
- The NDP's continued slide and stall in Quebec opens up potential gains for the Bloc Quebecois and Liberals (see detailed tables at the end of this release)
- In must-win Ontario – the Liberals and Conservatives are now neck and neck at 36 per cent each, making it tough for the NDP to make a comeback in the most vote-rich province in Canada
- While the NDP does manage to hold its lead in battleground British Columbia, the LPC are making gains too – at the expense of the CPC

Nearly half of the electorate (44%) – including many who indicate some party preference – has yet to "lock-in", while one-fifth of eligible voters (22%) say they won't make up their mind until the final couple of days or on voting day itself.

With roughly 10 days left until voting day, when do you think you will make up your mind?
(Eligible Voters)

In the next few days	Next week sometime	The final couple of days	Not until voting day	Don't know/Can't say	Already made up their mind
12%	7%	14%	8%	8%	50%

**Leadership appeal and momentum favours Trudeau and the Liberals:**

Mirroring his party's rise in the polls over the last week, Liberal Leader Justin Trudeau is more likely than any other leader to be seen as either "very" or "quite appealing."

Fully half of the electorate (50%) finds Trudeau appealing, compared to 45 per cent who say the same of NDP Leader Thomas Mulcair and 34 per cent who say so of Conservative Leader Stephen Harper.

Regardless of which party you might be supporting in this election, how appealing do you find each of the following people?
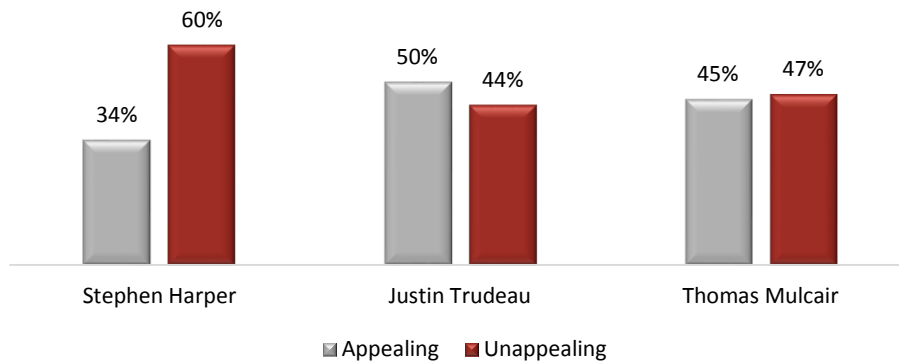
On whether respondents' opinions of the party leaders have improved over the last week, momentum is in Trudeau's corner:

• More than one-quarter (26%) say they think better of Trudeau today than a week ago
• Trudeau's improvement number is more than twice Harper's (12%)
• And more than three times the level of improved opinion for Mulcair (8%)

When looking at this issue with a "momentum score" (subtracting the percentage who say their opinion of each leader has worsened from the percentage who say it has improved), the following graph indicates Trudeau is the only leader with a positive momentum score heading into the election's final stretch:

Leader's Momentum Score

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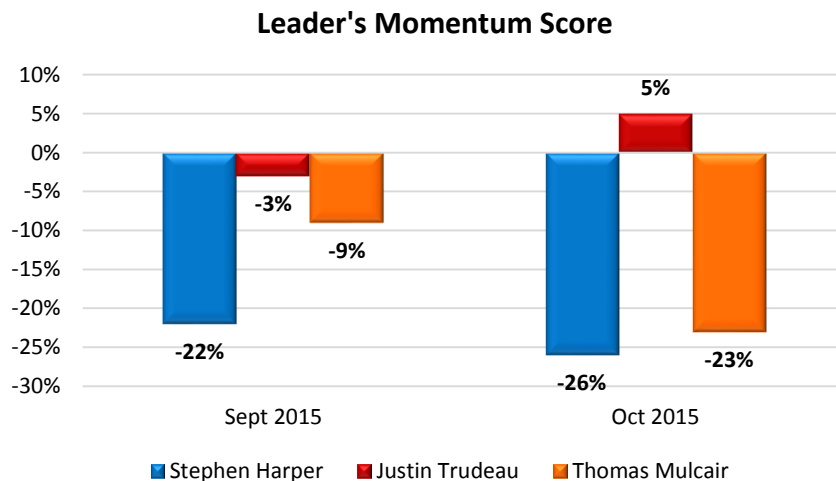
Age demographics and vote certainty favour Harper and the Conservatives:

While political watchers may see lots of good news for the Liberal party in this poll, positive does not equate to victory on Oct. 19. At least, not yet. This is because the Liberal voting base is composed of a disproportionate number of younger eligible voters (those ages 18 – 34). Indeed, the Trudeau Liberals enjoy a substantial lead with voters under 35:

Federal Vote Intention by age
(Eligible Voters):
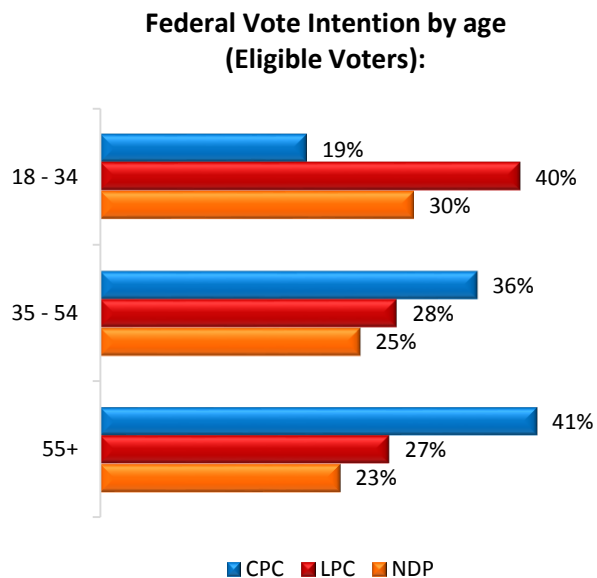
But, historically, younger Canadians have been least likely to actually vote in elections. Turnout is much higher among older Canadians (those aged 55 and older), who skew solidly Conservative in their vote intention.

Relatedly, this poll asked respondents not only *which party* they intend to support, but also *how certain* they are that they will vote for that party – as opposed to changing their mind sometime before election day:

- Seven-in-ten CPC supporters (71%) say they will definitely vote Conservative, and there's no way they could change their minds
- Notably far fewer Liberals express this level of commitment about their voting intentions (52% do)
- Fewer than half of would-be NDP voters (44%) are now certain about their choice

So, if the Liberal Party is to win this election, it will need to ensure that its young supporters actually go to the polls on Oct. 19, and it will need to convince "soft" NDP voters – many of whom indicate that they would consider voting strategically – that the LPC is the best choice to defeat Stephen Harper.

There is still time for the Liberals to make this argument. As previously mentioned, many soft voters say they will make up their minds in either the final couple of days of the campaign or on election day itself.

Bracing for a minority:

Regardless of how respondents themselves indicate they'll vote, their views on which party they think will win the election are of note. A telling sign of the NDP's crumbling over the course of this campaign is that just one-in-ten (10%) expect the New Democrats – the party that came into the campaign as the one to beat – will actually win the election:

As the preceding graph shows, fully one-third of Canadians (33%) expect the Conservatives to win again. Another three-in-ten (30%) are uncertain what the result will be.

Regardless of who you might be supporting, who do you think will win this election and form the next government of Canada?

- Don't know, 30%
- Conservative Party, 33%
- NDP, 10%
- Liberal Party , 27%
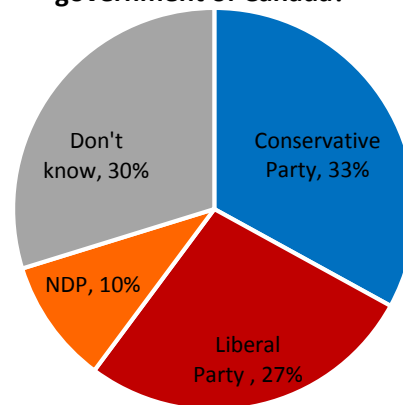
Regardless of how people see the election turning out, they're expecting it to be a close one. Among those who say they expect a particular party to win the election, almost two-thirds (64%) see the winner forming a minority government. Less than one-quarter think any party is bound for a majority.

The following graph shows how respondents view each of the parties' chances for a majority or minority:

Do you expect them to win a majority or a minority government?

- CPC Majority 11%
- CPC Minority 31%
- Liberal Majority 8%
- Liberal Minority 24%
- NDP Majority 3%
- NDP Minority 10%
- Don't know 13%

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A Note on Methodology

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 region, gender, age and education. All survey results are reported for this total group.

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. For more information on our polling process and methodology, visit _www.angusreid.org/how-we-poll-ari/._

Regardless of which party you might be supporting in this election, how appealing do you find each of the following people?							
Region							
(unweighted sample sizes)	**Total (1083)**	**BC (110)**	**AB (86)**	**SK/MB (95)**	**ON (462)**	**QC (247)**	**ATL (83)**
Stephen Harper							
Appealing	34%	26%	52%	36%	37%	29%	24%
Unappealing	60%	66%	35%	56%	61%	64%	71%
Don't know/Can't Say	6%	8%	13%	7%	3%	7%	5%
Justin Trudeau							
Appealing	50%	51%	28%	48%	50%	55%	64%
Unappealing	44%	41%	60%	44%	46%	38%	31%
Don't know/Can't Say	7%	8%	12%	8%	5%	7%	5%
Thomas Mulcair							
Appealing	45%	47%	21%	32%	45%	60%	41%
Unappealing	47%	46%	65%	58%	49%	33%	45%
Don't know/Can't Say	8%	7%	15%	10%	6%	7%	14%

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Regardless of which party you might be supporting in this election, how appealing do you find each of the following people?						
		Gender		**Age**		
(weighted sample sizes)	**Total (1083)**	**Men (529)**	**Women (554)**	**18 – 34 (313)**	**35 – 54 (378)**	**55+ (392)**
Stephen Harper						
Appealing	34%	37%	32%	28%	34%	39%
Unappealing	60%	59%	61%	60%	62%	58%
Don't know/Can't Say	6%	5%	7%	11%	4%	3%
Justin Trudeau						
Appealing	50%	47%	52%	56%	48%	46%
Unappealing	44%	47%	40%	33%	46%	49%
Don't know/Can't Say	7%	6%	7%	11%	5%	5%
Thomas Mulcair						
Appealing	45%	46%	44%	52%	41%	44%
Unappealing	47%	48%	45%	36%	50%	52%
Don't know/Can't Say	8%	6%	10%	12%	9%	5%

Based on how you feel right now, which party's candidate in your own riding will you be most likely to support in the federal election next month?							
Region							
(unweighted sample sizes)	Total (1083)	BC (110)	AB (86)	SK/MB (95)	ON (462)	QC (247)	ATL (83)
Conservative Party	28%	26%	54%	37%	32%	14%	18%
Liberal Party	26%	19%	17%	21%	31%	20%	47%
New Democratic Party (NDP)	20%	30%	7%	20%	18%	26%	15%
Bloc Quebecois	5%	-	-	-	-	22%	-
Green Party	3%	4%	4%	2%	3%	1%	2%
Other Party	1%	-	1%	1%	1%	0%	-
Not sure/Can't say	17%	22%	17%	19%	14%	17%	18%

Based on how you feel right now, which party's candidate in your own riding will you be most likely to support in the federal election next month?						
		Gender		Age		
(weighted sample sizes)	Total (1083)	Men (529)	Women (554)	18 – 34 (313)	35 – 54 (378)	55+ (392)
Conservative Party	28%	29%	27%	17%	31%	35%
Liberal Party	26%	26%	25%	32%	23%	23%
New Democratic Party (NDP)	20%	21%	20%	21%	21%	20%
Bloc Quebecois	5%	4%	7%	4%	6%	5%
Green Party	3%	2%	3%	4%	2%	2%
Other Party	1%	1%	0%	0%	2%	0%
Not sure/Can't say	17%	16%	17%	21%	15%	14%

Based on how you feel right now, which party's candidate in your own riding will you be most likely to support in the federal election next month? (Including leaners, excluding "not sure")							
Region							
(unweighted sample sizes)	Total (971)	BC (96)	AB (79)	SK (80)	ON (425)	QC (217)	ATL (74)
Conservative Party	33%	31%	59%	46%	36%	17%	25%
Liberal Party	31%	29%	19%	27%	36%	24%	54%
New Democratic Party (NDP)	25%	36%	16%	24%	22%	31%	19%
Bloc Quebecois	6%	-	-	-	-	27%	-
Green Party	3%	4%	5%	2%	4%	1%	2%
Other Party	1%	-	2%	1%	1%	0%	-

Based on how you feel right now, which party's candidate in your own riding will you be most likely to support in the federal election next month? (Including leaners, excluding "not sure")						
		Gender		Age		
(weighted sample sizes)	Total (970)	Men (483)	Women (487)	18 – 34 (276)	35 – 54 (341)	55+ (352)
Conservative Party	33%	34%	32%	19%	36%	41%
Liberal Party	31%	32%	30%	40%	28%	27%
New Democratic Party (NDP)	25%	25%	25%	30%	25%	23%
Bloc Quebecois	6%	5%	8%	6%	7%	6%
Green Party	3%	3%	3%	5%	3%	2%
Other Party	1%	1%	1%	0%	2%	0%

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How certain are you that you'll actually end up voting for this party?

		Region					
(unweighted sample sizes)	Total (971)	BC (96)	AB (79)	SK (80)	ON (425)	QC (217)	ATL (74)
I will definitely vote for this party, no way I could change my mind	56%	46%	63%	64%	59%	55%	50%
I will probably vote for this party	31%	40%	19%	22%	29%	35%	38%
I could change my mind before voting day	13%	14%	18%	14%	12%	10%	12%

How certain are you that you'll actually end up voting for this party?

		Gender		Age		
(weighted sample sizes)	Total (970)	Men (483)	Women (487)	18 – 34 (276)	35 – 54 (341)	55+ (352)
I will definitely vote for this party, no way I could change my mind	56%	60%	52%	47%	57%	63%
I will probably vote for this party	31%	29%	33%	41%	29%	25%
I could change my mind before voting day	13%	10%	15%	12%	14%	12%

How certain are you that you will actually end up voting for this party?

		Federal Vote Intention		
(weighted sample sizes)	Total (970)	CPC (321)	Liberal (302)	NDP (245)
I will definitely vote for this party, no way I could change my mind	56%	71%	52%	44%
I will probably vote for this party	31%	20%	34%	38%
I could change my mind before voting day	13%	8%	14%	18%

With roughly 10 days left until voting day, when do you think you will make up your mind?

				Region			
(unweighted sample sizes)	Total (1083)	BC (110)	AB (86)	SK/MB (95)	ON (462)	QC (247)	ATL (83)
In the next few days	12%	11%	13%	12%	10%	16%	15%
Next week sometime	7%	6%	9%	1%	7%	9%	3%
The final couple of days	14%	17%	12%	7%	13%	15%	23%
Not until voting day	8%	12%	5%	10%	9%	4%	8%
Don't know/Can't say	8%	14%	4%	16%	8%	7%	6%
Already made up their mind	50%	40%	57%	54%	53%	49%	45%

With roughly 10 days left until voting day, when do you think you will make up your mind?

		Gender		Age		
(weighted sample sizes)	Total (1083)	Men (529)	Women (554)	18 – 34 (313)	35 – 54 (378)	55+ (392)
In the next few days	12%	10%	15%	16%	13%	9%
Next week sometime	7%	6%	8%	10%	6%	5%
The final couple of days	14%	14%	14%	16%	14%	13%
Not until voting day	8%	8%	8%	8%	9%	7%
Don't Know/Can't Say	8%	7%	10%	10%	7%	8%
Already made up their mind	50%	55%	46%	41%	51%	57%

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Over the course of the election campaign so far, would you say your opinion of each of the following people has improved, stayed the same, or worsened?							
Region							
(unweighted sample sizes)	Total (1083)	BC (110)	AB (86)	SK/MB (95)	ON (462)	QC (247)	ATL (83)
Stephen Harper							
Improved	12%	14%	25%	8%	11%	11%	9%
Stayed the same	50%	49%	42%	55%	50%	55%	40%
Worsened	38%	38%	34%	37%	39%	34%	52%
Justin Trudeau							
Improved	26%	23%	14%	32%	26%	29%	35%
Stayed the same	53%	57%	58%	53%	52%	49%	51%
Worsened	21%	20%	28%	16%	21%	22%	14%
Thomas Mulcair							
Improved	8%	10%	3%	9%	9%	11%	4%
Stayed the same	61%	64%	53%	62%	65%	52%	69%
Worsened	31%	26%	44%	29%	26%	37%	27%
Gilles Duceppe							
Improved	17%					17%	
Stayed the same	63%					63%	
Worsened	20%					20%	
Elizabeth May							
Improved	10%	18%	10%	6%	10%	6%	11%
Stayed the same	78%	76%	78%	82%	78%	80%	72%
Worsened	12%	6%	13%	12%	11%	14%	17%

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Over the course of the election campaign so far, would you say your opinion of each of the following people has improved, stayed the same, or worsened?						
		Gender		Age		
(weighted sample sizes)	Total (1083)	Men (529)	Women (554)	18 – 34 (313)	35 – 54 (378)	55+ (392)
Stephen Harper						
Improved	12%	13%	12%	9%	12%	16%
Stayed the same	50%	49%	50%	47%	52%	49%
Worsened	38%	38%	38%	44%	36%	35%
Justin Trudeau						
Improved	26%	28%	24%	28%	24%	27%
Stayed the same	53%	48%	57%	59%	54%	47%
Worsened	21%	24%	19%	13%	22%	26%
Thomas Mulcair						
Improved	8%	9%	8%	12%	6%	8%
Stayed the same	61%	58%	64%	66%	62%	55%
Worsened	31%	33%	28%	22%	32%	36%
Gilles Duceppe						
Improved	17%	15%	19%	18%	12%	21%
Stayed the same	63%	59%	67%	63%	66%	60%
Worsened	20%	26%	14%	19%	21%	18%
Elizabeth May						
Improved	10%	12%	8%	8%	9%	12%
Stayed the same	78%	74%	82%	84%	77%	74%
Worsened	12%	13%	11%	8%	14%	13%

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Which of the three major party leaders do you think would make the best Prime Minister of Canada?							
Region							
(unweighted sample sizes)	Total (1083)	BC (110)	AB (86)	SK/MB (95)	ON (462)	QC (247)	ATL (83)
Stephen Harper	30%	23%	58%	39%	33%	20%	19%
Justin Trudeau	25%	23%	14%	21%	29%	22%	39%
Thomas Mulcair	22%	30%	9%	17%	19%	33%	13%
Not Sure	22%	24%	19%	23%	19%	25%	29%

Which of the three major party leaders do you think would make the best Prime Minister of Canada?						
		Gender		**Age**		
(weighted sample sizes)	Total (1083)	Men (529)	Women (554)	18 – 34 (313)	35 – 54 (378)	55+ (392)
Stephen Harper	30%	33%	28%	19%	33%	37%
Justin Trudeau	25%	26%	24%	31%	23%	22%
Thomas Mulcair	22%	23%	21%	26%	23%	19%
Not Sure	22%	18%	27%	24%	21%	22%

Regardless of who you might be supporting, who do you think will win this election and form the next government of Canada?							
Region							
(unweighted sample sizes)	Total (1083)	BC (110)	AB (86)	SK/MB (95)	ON (462)	QC (247)	ATL (83)
Conservative Party	33%	32%	47%	38%	34%	30%	17%
Liberal Party	27%	22%	25%	17%	29%	26%	40%
New Democratic Party (NDP)	10%	13%	6%	5%	6%	18%	7%
Don't know/Can't say	30%	33%	22%	39%	31%	26%	35%

Regardless of who you might be supporting, who do you think will win this election and form the next government of Canada?						
		Gender		Age		
(weighted sample sizes)	Total (1083)	Men (529)	Women (554)	18 – 34 (313)	35 – 54 (378)	55+ (392)
Conservative Party	33%	36%	30%	29%	35%	35%
Liberal Party	27%	28%	26%	32%	29%	22%
New Democratic Party (NDP)	10%	10%	10%	12%	9%	9%
Don't know/Can't say	30%	26%	33%	27%	28%	34%

Do you expect them to win a majority or a minority government?						
	Region					
(unweighted sample sizes)	Total (1083)	BC (110)	AB (86)	SK/MB (95)	ON (462)	QC (247)	ATL (83)
Majority	23%	16%	14%	29%	25%	21%	33%
Minority	64%	65%	63%	61%	61%	71%	56%
Don't know/Can't say	13%	18%	23%	9%	13%	8%	11%

Do you expect them to win a majority or a minority government?						
		Gender		Age		
(weighted sample sizes)	Total (1083)	Men (529)	Women (554)	18 – 34 (313)	35 – 54 (378)	55+ (392)
Majority	23%	25%	20%	22%	28%	17%
Minority	64%	67%	62%	58%	62%	72%
Don't know/Can't say	13%	8%	19%	20%	10%	11%