The 2010 Walter Gordon Massey Symposium on Public Policy

Massey College in Toronto

Public Perceptions on Politics and Emotion: The Paradox of the Rational Imperative

THE GLOBE AND MAIL 🥍



March 17, 2010

Methodology

This survey was conducted March 5-9, 2010 using EKOS' unique hybrid internet-telephone research panel, Prob*it*. This panel is randomly recruited from the general population, meaning that, the only way to be included in Prob*it* is through random selection. Unlike opt-in internet-only research panels, Prob*it* supports confidence intervals and error testing.

- In total, a random sample of 1,420 Canadians aged 18 and over responded to the survey.
- A sample of this size provides a margin of error of +/- 2.6 percentage points, 19 times out of 20. The margin of error increases when the results are sub-divided (i.e., error margins for subgroups such as regions).

Outline

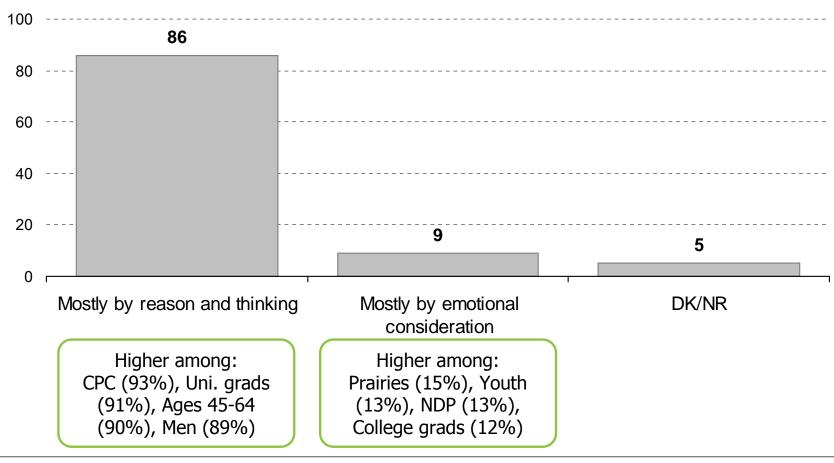
- 1.0 Introductory Comments / Research Issues
- 2.0 The Impacts and Balance of Reason and Emotion on Politics
- 3.0 Positive and Negative Uses of Emotion
- 4.0 Comparing the Leaders on IQ/EQ
- 5.0 Most and Least Desirable Emotion
- 6.0 Conclusions and Implications

2.0 The Impacts and Balance of Reason and Emotion on Politics



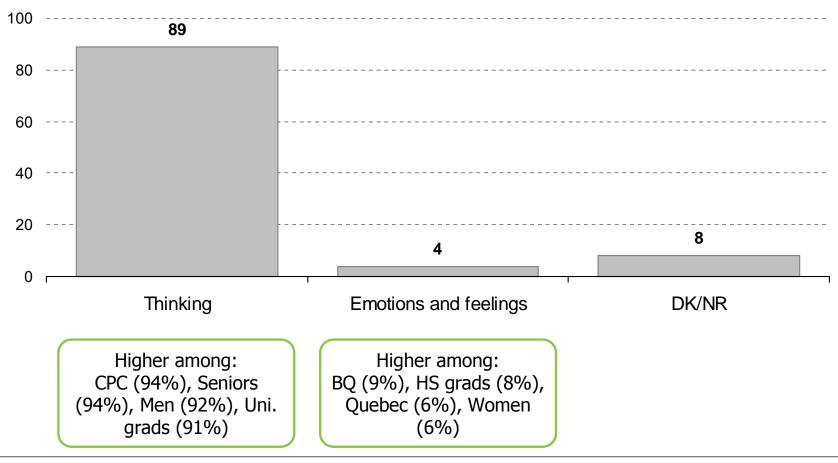
Reason vs. Emotion: Personal voting decisions

Q: When you make your final choice in the ballot booth, do you think it is influenced:



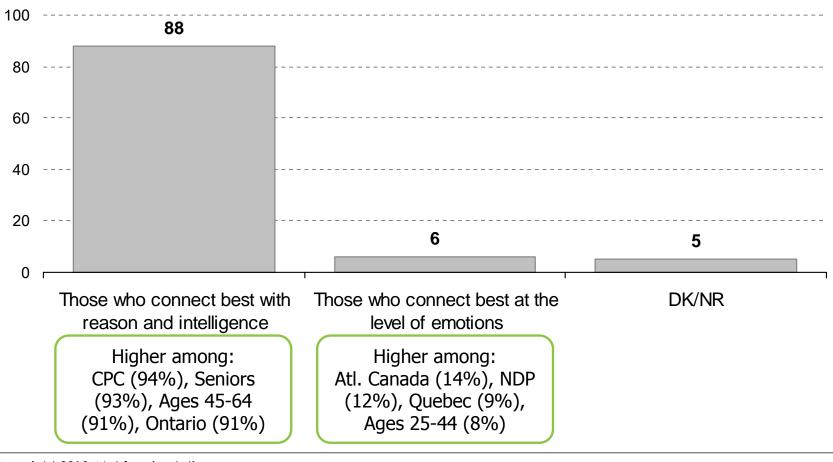
Reason vs. Emotion: Impact on quality of politics

Q: Do you believe that politics would produce better results if voters put more emphasis on thinking or more emphasis on emotions and feelings?



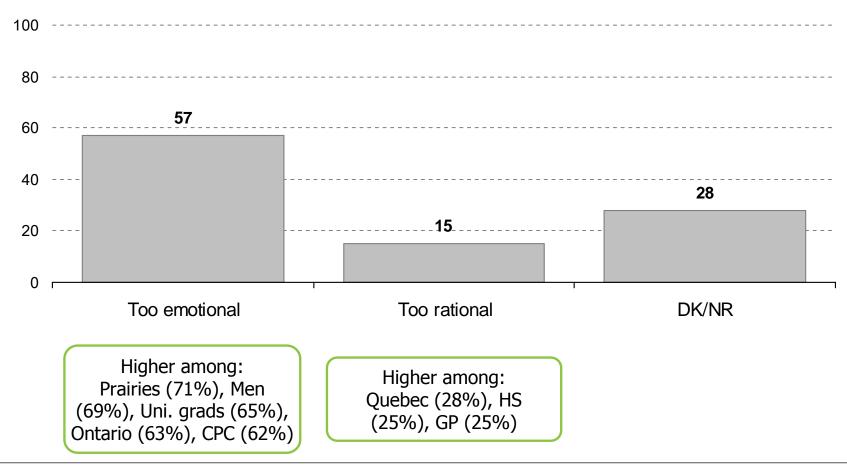
Reason vs. Emotion: Strongest connection to voters?

Q: Do you prefer political leaders who connect with you best at the level of emotions and feelings or those who connect best with their reason and intelligence?



Reason vs. Emotion: Proper balance?

Q: Overall, are Canadian federal politics too emotional or too rational?



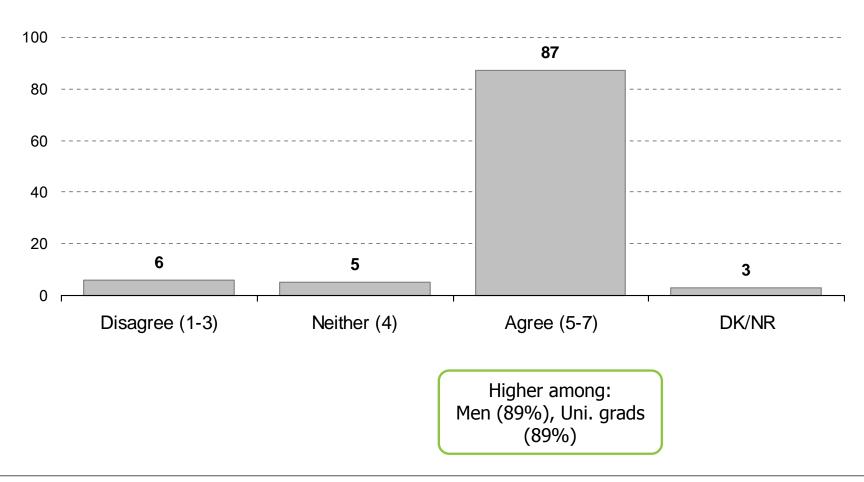
3.0 Positive and Negative uses of Emotion



Perceived emotional manipulation by politicians

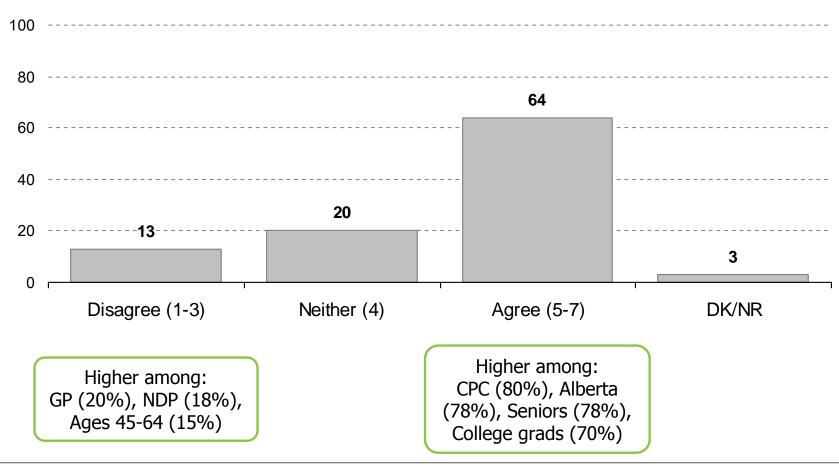
To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements? Please use a 7-point scale where 1 means strongly disagree, 7 means strongly agree and the mid-point 4 means neither agree nor disagree.

Q: Political parties and their operatives exploit and manipulate emotions of voters in order to advance their own interests.



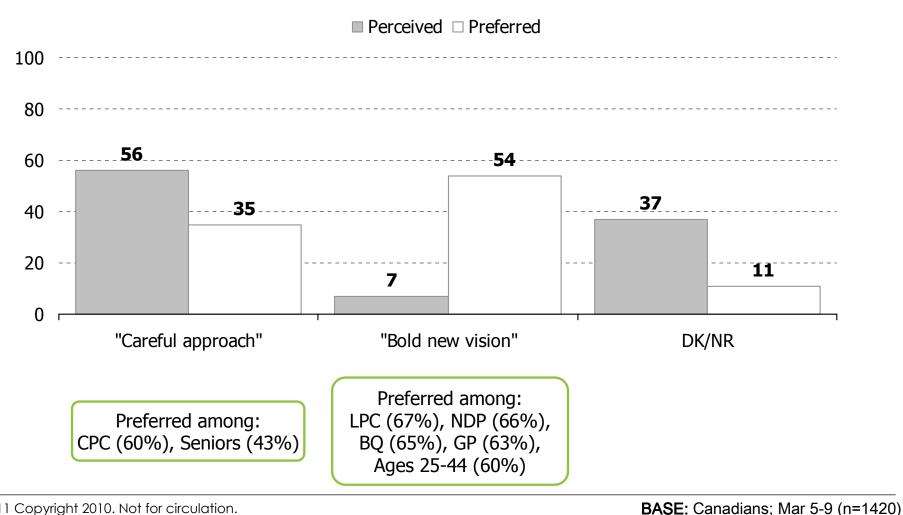
Impact of expressions of patriotism among politicians

Q: During the recent Winter Olympics, I found the enthusiastic expression of patriotism and pride from our political leaders to be a very positive thing.



Perceived vs. preferred government approach

Q: Which of the following BEST describes the way the Government of Canada is CURRENTLY operating? And which way would you PREFER the Government of Canada to operate? 1) Following a careful, steadyas-she-goes approach, or 2) Providing a bold new vision for the future of the country.



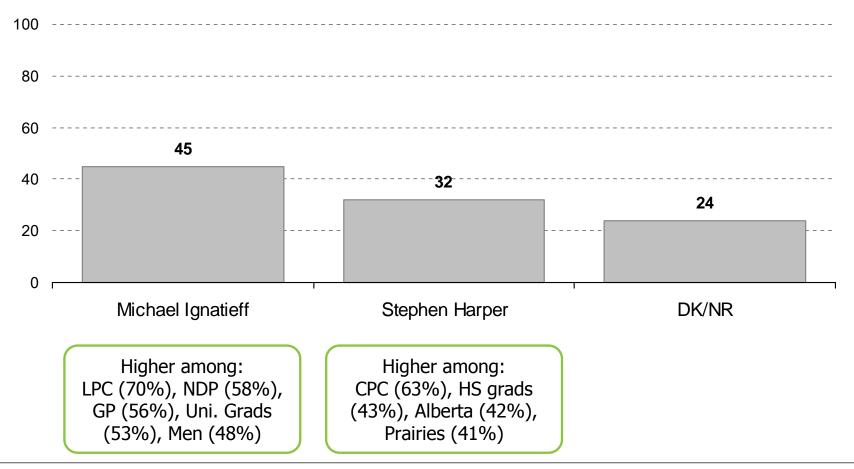
4.0 Comparing the Leaders on IQ/EQ



Perceived intelligence of leaders

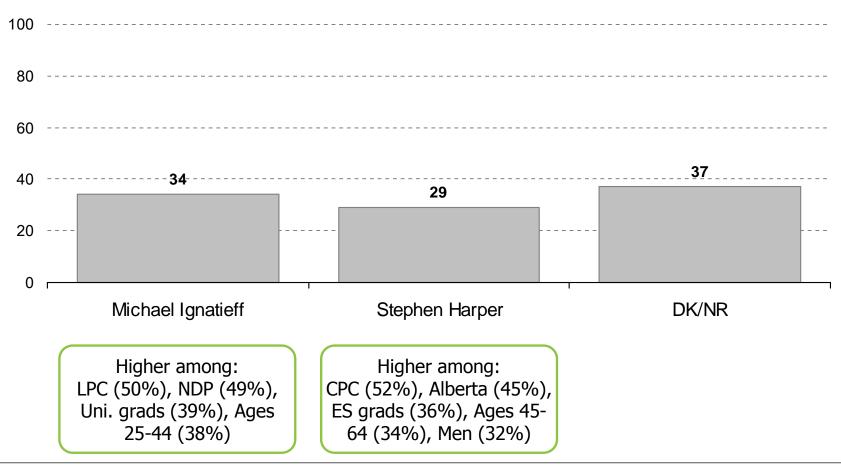
We all know about the notion of intelligence, measured by IQ. Others have spoken of the equal importance of good emotional capacity, measured by EQ.

Q: Thinking about the current Prime Minister, Stephen Harper, and the current leader of the Official Opposition, Michael Ignatieff, who do you think has the better intelligence quotient?



Perceived emotional balance of politicians

Q: Thinking about the current Prime Minister, Stephen Harper, and the current leader of the Official Opposition, Michael Ignatieff, who do you think has the better emotional quotient?

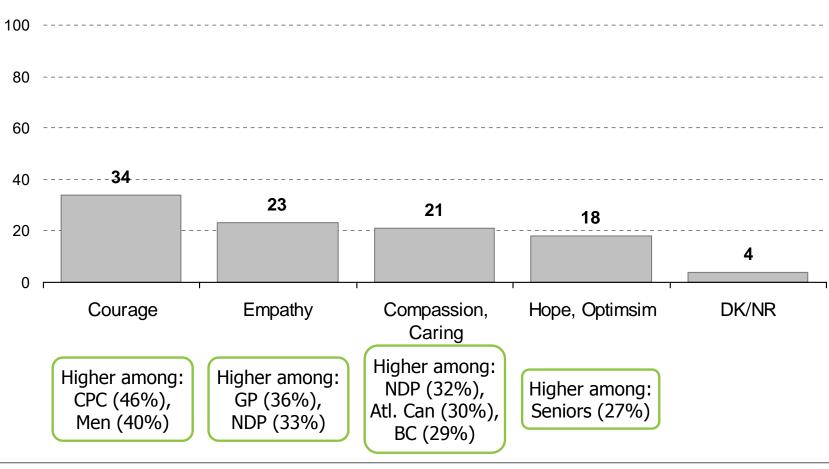


5.0 Most and Least Desirable Emotion



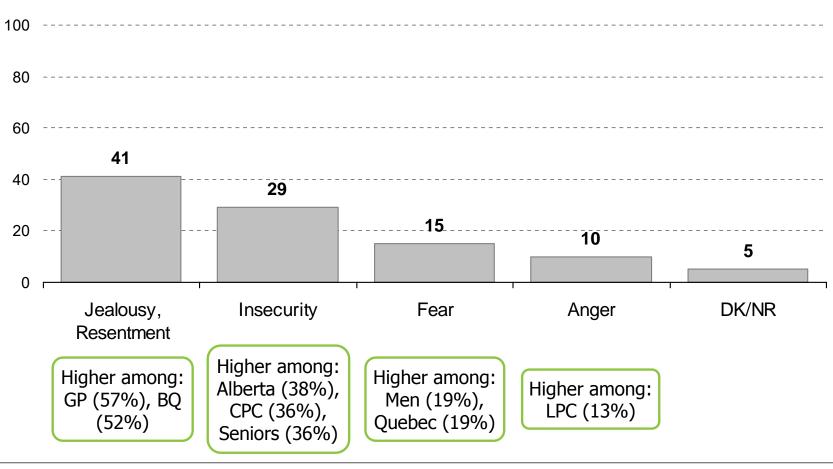
Preferred emotion of politicians

Q: Which of the following emotions would you **most** like to see in a politician?



Least preferred emotion of politicians

Q: Which of the following emotions would you **least** like to see in a politician?



6.0 Conclusions and Implications



Conclusions

- Strong surface lean to reason over emotion
- Emotions seen as source of
 - Manipulation
 - —Faulty decision-making
- Positive emotions diminished by demographics and recent history
- Preference for a more rational politics is more rooted in the relative urgency of more reason vs. more emotion
- Michael Ignatieff judged both more intelligent and (slightly) better EQ
- So why is Steven Harper the PM and perceived better leader?
- Solving some of the puzzle lies in
 - —Disentangling ends/means
 - Disentangling which emotions
 - -Breaking Down social divisions
 - Generation / gender

Public Guidance

- Public Guidance
 - Emotional life of a country should not be limited by irrational choices or strategies.
 - Demand for authenticity and balance
 - —Shift from focus on negative to positive? Will anticipate and solve looking generational storm

FOR MORE INFORMATION:



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