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## THE RETURN OF IDEOLOGY?

*A STARKLY DIVIDED CANADA*

[Ottawa – March 16, 2012] – For some time, Canadians were relatively unique in the advanced western world by virtue of their aversion to ideological compartmentalization. In an essay in the lead up to the NDP leadership convention and the government's imminent budget, we will be looking at these longer term trends and their implications for the state of politics and democracy in Canada.

We note that the single most powerful predictor of the constellation of values which one adheres to is one's self identified ideological orientation. Therefore, the tracking of this indicator can be a useful proxy for the broader question of values shifts. Are we indeed blueing as some have claimed? Is the traditional, non-ideological centre of Canada shrinking and what does that mean in terms of political opportunities and risks? We will attempt to answer those questions early next week, but here we will lay out the basic empirical ingredients.

This political profile is part of an in-depth examination of how Canadian attitudes to foreign policy and the external world have changed over the past decade which was conducted on behalf of the University of Toronto's School of Public Policy & Governance in preparation for the 2012 Walter Gordon Symposium In Public Policy.

As these indicators were collected before the questions of foreign policy and the world, they can be considered to be unaffected by those issues and reliable tracking indicators. We also used our *ProbIt* panel which is unique in Canada by virtue of having used random selection and pre-telephone interview verification for all members of the panel, which includes non internet and internet households and land line and cell only households. As such, these data are representative within known margins of error. We are badgering our readers on this point because there is a growing laxity to present, even on the front pages of our most reputable main stream media, the data from non-randomly recruited opt-in panels with explicit margin of error estimates or a statement that the margin of error would be X% if it would have been a probability sample (rather like saying if my auntie had wheels she would be a bus). This is not some arcane point of academic fussiness. It is a basic point of fairness and honesty in reporting. All reputable third party sources agree that the reporting of margin of error for non-probability samples is

### HIGHLIGHTS

- **National federal vote intention:**
  - ☒ 35.4% CPC
  - ☒ 29.7% NDP
  - ☒ 19.6% LPC
  - ☒ 8.1% Green
  - ☒ 5.8% BQ
  - ☒ 1.4% other
- **Political ideology:**
  - ☒ 40% liberal
  - ☒ 26% neither
  - ☒ 30% conservative
  - ☒ 5% DK/NR
- **Direction of country:**
  - ☒ 43.6% right direction
  - ☒ 44.7% wrong direction
  - ☒ 11.7% DK/NR
- **Direction of government:**
  - ☒ 39.1% right direction
  - ☒ 48.2% wrong direction
  - ☒ 12.7% DK/NR

*Please note that the methodology is provided at the end of this document.*

misleading and wrong.<sup>1</sup> It costs much more to create a probability sample and there are continued advantages to doing so. The only ones who are claiming that online convenience panels are “as good” and justify margin of error estimates are those selling them or those hired by those selling them to say so (for a more recent update from the top authorities see Yeager and Krosnick<sup>2</sup>).

Back to the more interesting stuff. While there is no horse race, it is useful to look at some directional measures of approval and vote intention, however distant an election. These measures can be considered useful indicators of moral authority and political status. We also look at confidence in national and federal government direction and how these indicators reveal an increasingly divided Canada. The analysis of ideological orientation shows a new division which has evolved in a clear trajectory over the last decade. This reflects the political ecology of an electorate adapting to an unprecedented period where successful politics has been practiced from one end of the ideological spectrum. We will explore what that means in a future essay.

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<sup>1</sup> See “AAPOR Report on Online Panels” by the American Association for Public Opinion Research, published in March 2010. Accessible online at:

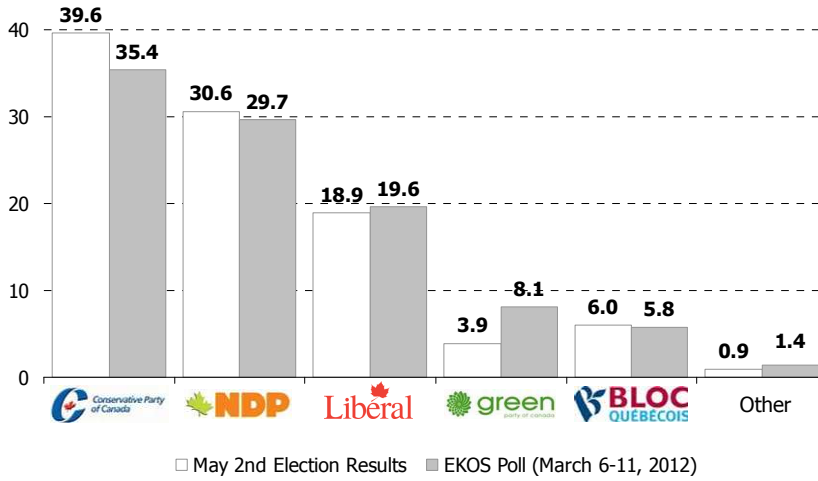
[http://www.aapor.org/AM/Template.cfm?Section=AAPOR\\_Committee\\_and\\_Task\\_Force\\_Reports&Template=/CM/ContentDisplay.cfm&ContentID=2223](http://www.aapor.org/AM/Template.cfm?Section=AAPOR_Committee_and_Task_Force_Reports&Template=/CM/ContentDisplay.cfm&ContentID=2223)

<sup>2</sup> See “Comparing the Accuracy of RDD Telephone Surveys and Internet Surveys Conducted with Probability and Non-Probability Samples” by David Yeager and Jon Krosnick, published October 5, 2012. Accessible online at:

[http://www.sas.upenn.edu/~mleven/Matt%20Levendusky%20Research\\_files/krosnick\\_pog.pdf](http://www.sas.upenn.edu/~mleven/Matt%20Levendusky%20Research_files/krosnick_pog.pdf)

## Federal vote intention

Q. If a federal election were held tomorrow, which party would you vote for?



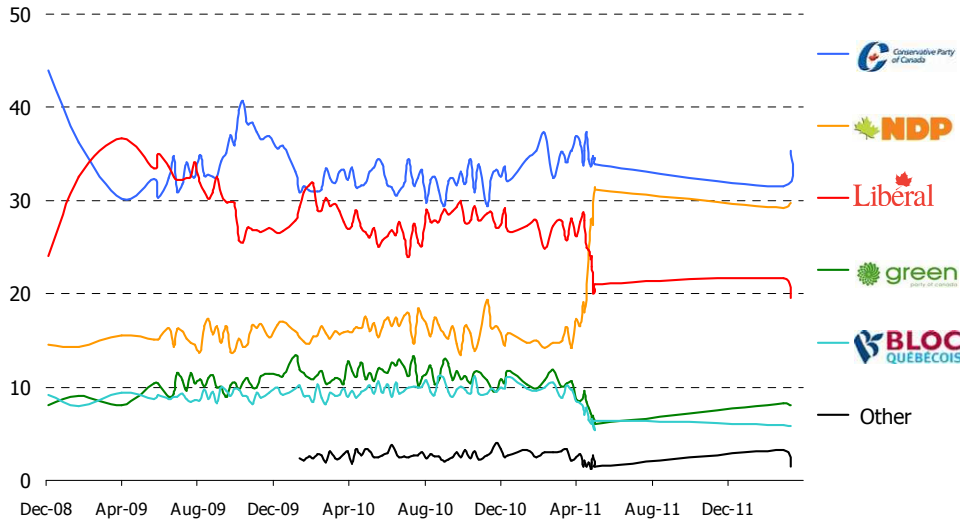
Note: The data on federal vote intention are based on decided and leaning voters only. Our survey also finds that 13.5% of Canadians are undecided/ineligible to vote.

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BASE: Decided voters; March 6-11, 2012 (n=1,894)

## Tracking federal vote intention

Q. If a federal election were held tomorrow, which party would you vote for?



Note: In our most recent survey, the data were weighted to reflect the distribution of 2011 voters (in addition to age, gender, and region). Any changes in federal vote intention between February and March should be interpreted with that in mind.

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BASE: Decided voters; most recent data point March 6-11, 2012 (n=1,894)

Let's quickly dispense with vote intention, which we have contended in previous pieces to be next to meaningless. Without retreating from that position, there are some anecdotally curious points to note in our latest numbers, which are within the margin of error of our last poll and very similar to what we saw going into the election last May. First of all, the overall inelasticity of the public to the litany of putative democratic horrors which have been prominently discussed in the mainstream and social media is remarkable. Whether this is just a reflection of a public who are inured to these things, docile, or uninterested is unclear. It may be that the public will react strenuously if and when there is compelling evidence on, for example, the robot calls scandal. But to this point in time the public are unmoved.

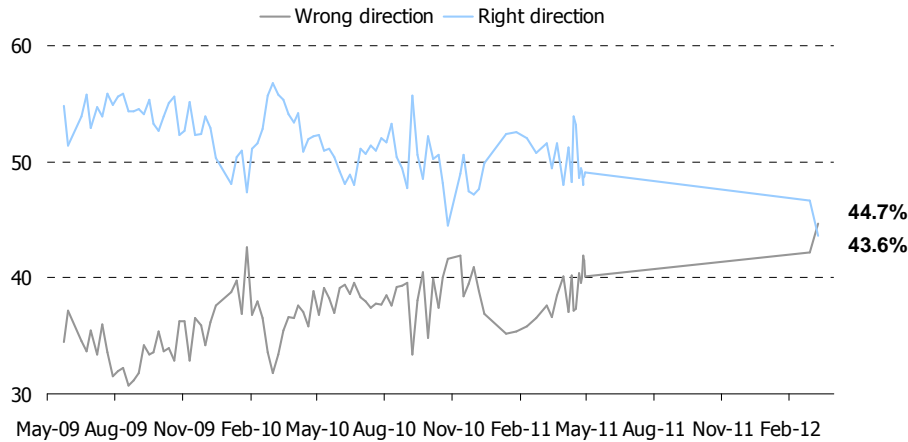
Another interesting finding is the continued strong performance of the NDP. One might think that a leaderless party, with a largely untested caucus, that had vaulted to unimaginable heights, putatively on the charismatic authority of the now departed Jack Layton, would have fallen back to Earth. The fact that they remain squarely in second place, well ahead of the still hapless Liberal Party, and within striking distance of the Conservative Party, suggests that this interpretation was flawed. We will return to this issue in our essay, but the stable strength of the NDP under such inauspicious conditions suggests this movement to the NDP was far more than Jack-o-mania. The real forces lie in understanding the new salience of income inequality as an issue (reflected in the relative income characteristics of NDP versus Conservative supporters) and a longer term shift to a more polarized ideological landscape.

The NDP constituency, not the Liberal's, now tends to be the mirror image of the Conservative Party in terms of both ideology and in terms of demographics and social class. While the Conservatives (at 35 per cent) draw strength from older, male Canada and do very well with upper income and faith based voters, the NDP draws its strength in the more economically vulnerable portions of Canadian society, youth, seculars singles, and the university educated. The Conservative strength in Alberta (even more so than usual) is overwhelming but the NDP are doing very well in Quebec and British Columbia and perhaps showing some strength in Saskatchewan and Manitoba (though the smaller sample suggests caution here). The Conservative Party is showing no real sign of immediate weakness in light of recent controversies and the Liberals seem to be stuck at levels near the last election.

The Green Party is once again doing relatively better which is probably more a measure of disaffection with the mainstream parties and this would undoubtedly collapse in a real election context. Thus concludes the limited highlights we can draw from the highly hypothetical vote intentions of a frankly listless and disengaged electorate.

## Direction of country

Q. All things considered, would you say the country is moving in the right direction or the wrong direction?



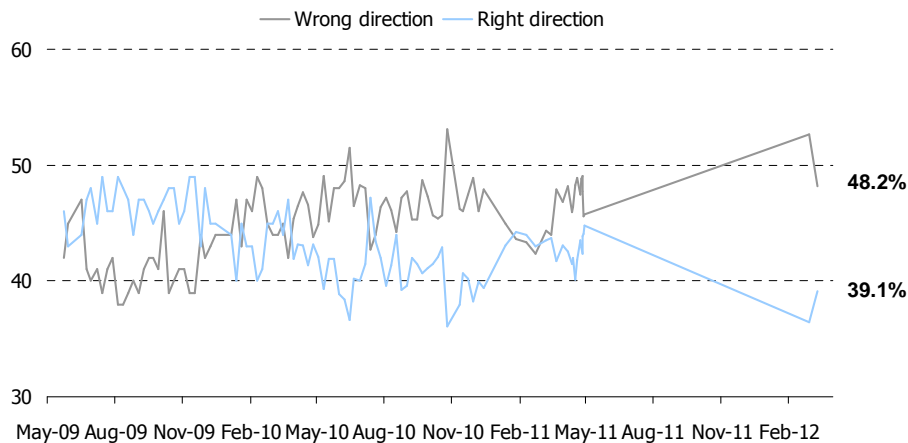
Note: In our most recent survey, the data were weighted to reflect the distribution of 2011 voters (in addition to age, gender, and region). Any changes in direction of country between February and March should be interpreted with that in mind.

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**BASE:** Canadians; most recent data point March 6-11, 2012 (half-sample) (n=978)

## Direction of government

Q. All things considered, would you say the Government of Canada is moving in the right direction or the wrong direction?



Note: In our most recent survey, the data was weighted to reflect the distribution of 2011 voters (in addition to age, gender, and region). Any changes in direction of government between February and March should be interpreted with that in mind.

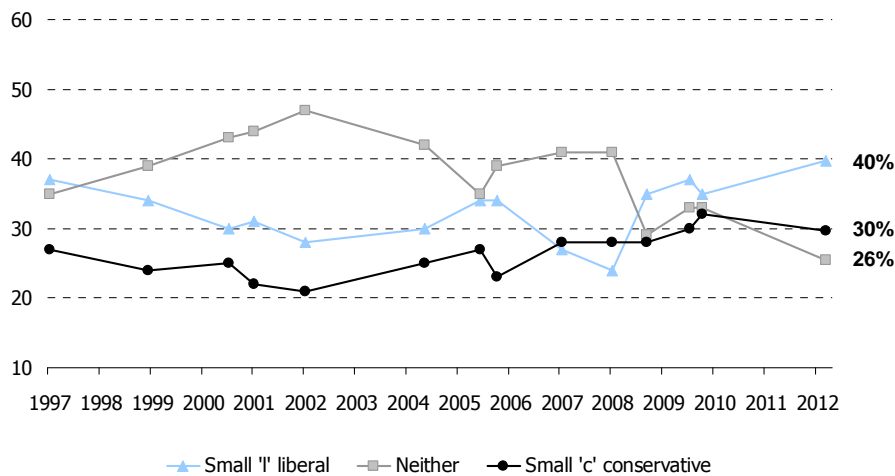
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**BASE:** Canadians; most recent data point March 6-11, 2012 (half-sample) (n=1,023)

Looking at how Canadians feel about the direction in which the country is heading, we come across a rather shocking finding. For the first time since we began measuring national direction in the late 90s, those who feel the country is going in the wrong direction now outnumber those who believe it is going in the right direction (albeit insignificantly). Indeed, national direction now lays divided along party lines: Conservative supporters are thrilled with where the county is heading while those outside the party base are utterly disheartened. Direction of government follows a similar pattern, though this is consistent with our findings in the past.

### Political ideology

Q. Do you consider yourself a small "c" conservative or a small "l" liberal?



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BASE: Canadians; most recent data point March 6-11, 2012 (n=2,001)

Lastly, we turn the question of how values and ideology might be evolving in Canada. We will deal with two aspects. First, we examine the degree of ideological orientation, which has increased sharply in a more polarized landscape. Second, are we in fact tilting either left or right?. In this survey, we asked respondents whether they considered themselves to be small-l liberals or small-c conservatives. What is perhaps most striking here is the growing polarization between those who see themselves on the left and those who see themselves on the right. At the turn of the millennium, the simplified dichotomy of left versus right or conservative versus liberal had much less meaning in this country – nearly half of Canadians opted not to categorize themselves with either label. Now, ten years later, seven in ten Canadians decisively define themselves as being on one side of the fence or the other. In addition to be more ideologically fragmented, it appears that the ballyhooed blueing of Canada is inconsistent with these data (and other tests). In fact, the pattern shows that while conservative ideology is up slightly since the Conservative took office, the incidence of those espousing liberal ideology is at its highest point since we started recording it 15 years ago.

The most liberal parts of Canada appear to be Quebeckers, British Columbians, women, those under the age of 45, university graduates, those who are unmarried or come from non-traditional households, visible minorities, social media aficionados, the upper-middle class (but not the upper class itself), and those holding valid passports. The small-c conservative camp, meanwhile, is made up of Albertans, Saskatchewanians, Manitobans, men, those over the age of 45, the high school and college educated, those who are married, religious service attendees, and the parochial non-passport holders. Those who haven't yet been dragged into the left-right discord include Green, Bloc, and undecided voters (suggesting a certain level of disillusionment with mainstream politics), seniors, and those of low social economic status.

In the end, however, there is mixed evidence to suggest that Canada is increasing leaning to one side or the other, but it is clearly shifting *away* from the centre. The proportion of Canadians who call themselves small-c conservative has indeed grown slightly, but the expansion of the small-l liberal base is even larger. We will end with one remarkable novelty. For the first time, we now see more small-l liberals in the NDP camp than in the Liberal camp. The slight proliferation of small-l liberals will do little to reduce the success of the conservative wave which has swept to power in Canada as long as the liberal choices are ineffectually arrayed across four rather than one choice.

## Detailed Tables:

<b>National Federal Vote Intention</b>								
<i>Q. Which party do you intend to vote for on May 2nd?</i>								
						Other	Sample Size	Margin of Error (+/-)
<b>NATIONALLY</b>	<b>35.4%</b>	<b>29.7%</b>	<b>19.6%</b>	<b>8.1%</b>	<b>5.8%</b>	<b>1.4%</b>	<b>1894</b>	<b>2.3</b>
REGION								
British Columbia	35.3%	33.2%	16.3%	14.3%	0.0%	0.9%	199	7.0
Alberta	61.2%	18.6%	10.6%	5.3%	0.0%	4.3%	160	7.8
Saskatchewan/Manitoba	45.9%	39.2%	12.1%	2.7%	0.0%	0.0%	98	9.9
Ontario	34.6%	31.0%	26.3%	7.4%	0.0%	0.7%	879	3.3
Quebec	22.9%	30.6%	15.1%	6.0%	24.5%	0.9%	437	4.7
Atlantic Canada	31.9%	22.9%	26.1%	15.0%	0.0%	4.1%	121	8.9
GENDER								
Male	40.0%	24.6%	18.7%	9.1%	5.9%	1.6%	1068	3.0
Female	30.6%	35.0%	20.5%	7.0%	5.7%	1.2%	826	3.4
AGE								
<25	26.6%	37.6%	17.7%	11.5%	6.1%	0.5%	116	9.1
25-44	32.6%	28.1%	20.5%	10.0%	6.5%	2.2%	699	3.7
45-64	37.6%	28.9%	17.6%	8.3%	6.1%	1.6%	700	3.7
65+	44.7%	26.6%	22.1%	1.9%	4.4%	0.2%	318	5.5
EDUCATION								
High school or less	40.9%	29.2%	11.0%	9.9%	7.1%	1.9%	273	5.9
College or CEGEP	42.0%	23.6%	18.7%	9.8%	4.8%	1.0%	496	4.4
University or higher	29.8%	32.9%	23.9%	6.5%	5.7%	1.2%	1118	2.9
VOTE IN MAY 2 <sup>ND</sup> ELECTION								
Liberal Party of Canada	3.7%	16.3%	77.1%	2.7%	0.0%	0.2%	447	4.6
Conservative Party of Canada	88.9%	3.5%	4.7%	1.6%	0.3%	1.0%	547	4.2
NDP	3.6%	74.4%	13.7%	4.9%	3.4%	0.2%	560	4.1
Bloc Quebecois	0.5%	10.1%	10.9%	2.8%	74.3%	1.4%	113	9.2
Green Party	1.2%	14.5%	12.8%	69.0%	0.0%	2.5%	91	10.3
Other	14.9%	21.5%	10.1%	0.0%	0.0%	53.5%	25	19.6



### **Direction of Country**

*Q. All things considered, would you say the country is moving in the right direction or the wrong direction?*

	Right Direction	Wrong Direction	DK/NR	Sample Size	Margin of Error (+/-)
<b>NATIONALLY</b>	<b>43.6%</b>	<b>44.7%</b>	<b>11.7%</b>	<b>978</b>	<b>3.1</b>
<b>REGION</b>					
British Columbia	46.6%	49.9%	3.5%	98	9.9
Alberta	62.4%	31.5%	6.1%	87	10.5
Saskatchewan/Manitoba	36.7%	31.8%	31.4%	52	13.6
Ontario	46.4%	43.3%	10.3%	446	4.6
Quebec	30.9%	52.7%	16.4%	226	6.5
Atlantic Canada	33.5%	53.6%	13.0%	69	11.8
<b>GENDER</b>					
Male	47.7%	43.3%	8.9%	536	4.2
Female	40.1%	45.9%	14.1%	442	4.7
<b>AGE</b>					
<25	40.5%	44.6%	14.9%	59	12.8
25-44	41.0%	46.4%	12.6%	370	5.1
45-64	48.8%	40.6%	10.6%	350	5.2
65+	43.4%	47.2%	9.4%	161	7.7
<b>EDUCATION</b>					
High school or less	42.7%	46.3%	10.9%	143	8.2
College or CEGEP	58.8%	31.6%	9.6%	254	6.2
University or higher	36.4%	50.4%	13.2%	578	4.1
<b>CURRENT VOTE INTENTION</b>					
Liberal Party of Canada	26.8%	65.1%	8.2%	240	6.3
Conservative Party of Canada	79.9%	10.7%	9.5%	289	5.8
NDP	17.9%	69.3%	12.8%	279	5.9
Bloc Quebecois	24.3%	73.3%	2.4%	54	13.3
Green Party	28.5%	53.2%	18.3%	53	13.5
Other	8.9%	63.4%	27.7%	17	23.8
Undecided	57.0%	27.5%	15.6%	41	15.3

### **Direction of Government**

*Q. All things considered, would you say the Government of Canada is moving in the right direction or the wrong direction?*

	Right Direction	Wrong Direction	DK/NR	Sample Size	Margin of Error (+/-)
<b>NATIONALLY</b>	<b>39.1%</b>	<b>48.2%</b>	<b>12.7%</b>	<b>1023</b>	<b>3.1</b>
<b>REGION</b>					
British Columbia	35.4%	44.8%	19.8%	109	9.4
Alberta	67.2%	23.8%	9.0%	77	11.2
Saskatchewan/Manitoba	47.5%	49.9%	2.5%	50	13.9
Ontario	35.8%	49.4%	14.8%	489	4.4
Quebec	35.9%	55.0%	9.1%	239	6.3
Atlantic Canada	36.7%	49.4%	13.9%	59	12.8
<b>GENDER</b>					
Male	46.1%	46.9%	7.0%	582	4.1
Female	32.2%	49.5%	18.2%	441	4.7
<b>AGE</b>					
<25	40.3%	56.7%	3.0%	61	12.6
25-44	33.5%	49.5%	17.0%	367	5.1
45-64	41.6%	42.4%	16.0%	388	5.0
65+	45.1%	49.3%	5.7%	174	7.4
<b>EDUCATION</b>					
High school or less	49.2%	37.0%	13.8%	163	7.7
College or CEGEP	40.0%	43.1%	16.9%	266	6.0
University or higher	32.4%	57.8%	9.8%	590	4.0
<b>CURRENT VOTE INTENTION</b>					
Liberal Party of Canada	16.0%	75.3%	8.7%	272	5.9
Conservative Party of Canada	90.6%	4.7%	4.7%	272	5.9
NDP	17.0%	71.7%	11.3%	269	6.0
Bloc Quebecois	4.8%	91.2%	4.0%	62	12.5
Green Party	37.6%	48.8%	13.6%	76	11.2
Other	35.9%	58.7%	5.4%	11	29.6
Undecided	16.8%	47.4%	35.8%	57	13.0

### **Political Ideology**

*Q. Forgetting about your current party choice, do you consider yourself a small 'l' liberal or a small 'c' conservative? Note: This question refers to overall political beliefs or ideology, not support for political parties.*

	Liberal (1-3)	Neither (4)	Conservative (5-7)	DK/NR	Sample Size	Margin of Error (+/-)
<b>NATIONALLY</b>	<b>39.7%</b>	<b>25.5%</b>	<b>29.7%</b>	<b>5.1%</b>	<b>2001</b>	<b>2.2</b>
<b>REGION</b>						
British Columbia	45.4%	24.9%	27.3%	2.5%	207	6.8
Alberta	34.1%	24.2%	40.9%	0.8%	164	7.7
Saskatchewan/Manitoba	23.0%	21.1%	54.2%	1.6%	102	9.7
Ontario	38.7%	24.4%	29.6%	7.3%	935	3.2
Quebec	47.1%	31.1%	18.4%	3.4%	465	4.5
Atlantic Canada	32.3%	20.9%	34.2%	12.6%	128	8.7
<b>GENDER</b>						
Male	37.6%	22.8%	36.9%	2.8%	1118	2.9
Female	41.6%	28.1%	23.1%	7.2%	883	3.3
<b>AGE</b>						
<25	52.6%	22.3%	20.2%	5.0%	120	9.0
25-44	42.5%	26.8%	25.7%	5.0%	737	3.6
45-64	36.3%	22.1%	34.7%	6.9%	738	3.6
65+	31.4%	31.6%	35.5%	1.5%	335	5.4
<b>EDUCATION</b>						
High school or less	27.9%	34.8%	31.1%	6.2%	306	5.6
College or CEGEP	26.9%	29.6%	36.3%	7.2%	520	4.3
University or higher	52.9%	18.3%	25.5%	3.3%	1168	2.9
<b>CURRENT VOTE INTENTION</b>						
Liberal Party of Canada	72.0%	18.9%	8.5%	0.6%	512	4.3
Conservative Party of Canada	11.4%	14.9%	72.0%	1.7%	561	4.1
NDP	60.6%	28.9%	7.6%	3.0%	548	4.2
Bloc Quebecois	55.5%	36.0%	7.7%	0.8%	116	9.1
Green Party	29.1%	37.7%	25.5%	7.8%	129	8.6
Other	8.2%	51.1%	12.8%	28.0%	28	18.5
Undecided	25.2%	41.1%	13.9%	19.9%	98	9.9

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## Methodology:

This survey was conducted using *Probit*, EKOS's unique, hybrid online/traditional random digit dialling (RDD) panel. Our panel offers complete coverage of the Canadian population (i.e., internet, phone, cell phone), random recruitment (in other words, participants are recruited randomly, they do not opt themselves into our panel), and equal probability sampling. All respondents to our panel are recruited by telephone using random digit dialling and are confirmed by live interviewers. Unlike opt-in online panels, survey results from our panel are generalizable to the broader Canadian population, and allow for margins of error to be associated with results

For more information about *Probit*, visit our website at <http://www.probit.ca/>.

The field dates for this survey are March 6-11, 2012. In total, a random sample of 2,001 Canadians aged 18 and over responded to the survey (including a sub-sample of 1,894 decided voters). The margin of error associated with the total sample is +/-2.2 percentage points, 19 times out of 20.

Please note that the margin of error increases when the results are sub-divided (i.e., error margins for sub-groups such as region, sex, age, education). All the data have been statistically weighted to ensure the samples composition reflects that of the actual population of Canada according to Census data. The data have also been weighted to reflect the distribution of voters in the federal election held on May 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2011.