

TORIES THREE POINTS AHEAD IN PRE-BUDGET POLL

MOST CANADIANS EMPHASIZE INVESTMENT OVER TAX/DEFICIT CUTS

[Ottawa – March 4, 2010] - The Conservatives retained a three-percentage point lead over the opposition Liberals in this week's EKOS Research Associates poll – the last conducted before today's federal budget. The size of the lead is virtually unchanged from last week's poll.

"Although a lead of this size is small – near the edge of statistical significance – the fact that it has held now for two weeks suggests it is real," said Frank Graves, President of EKOS Research Associates. "In any case, it is a substantial fall from the nine-point lead the Conservatives enjoyed in December, just before they prorogued Parliament."

Looking over a shorter timeframe, the Liberals moved into a near-tie with the Conservatives in late January, at the height of the prorogation issue, but the Tory slide stopped as other issues such as the Haiti earthquake dominated the headlines. The Tory lead of the last two weeks may suggest a modest "Olympic bounce" arising from Canadians' positive feeling about the games that just ended.

"We are now moving back into a much more political season, with the throne speech and the budget this week," said Graves. "This will be the real test. The government needs to manage the economy in a difficult time with a leader popular only with his supporters. He faces an opposition leader who has not made a good impression in his first year in the job, and who has failed to identify his party with a clear set of policies."

A few weeks ago, EKOS asked Canadians how they would handle the deficit, and found that many Canadians preferred spending cuts over other measures, such as tax increases or simply continuing to run a large deficit. This week EKOS asked a question that set the deficit in the context of overall budget priorities rather than the other way around. The result was quite different.

More than half of the Canadians we sampled said they favour investment in social areas such as health, education and jobs over keeping taxes low or keeping the deficit as low as possible.

HIGHLIGHTS

- **National federal vote intention:**
 - ☒ **32.4% CPC**
 - ☒ **29.4% LPC**
 - ☒ **15.2% NDP**
 - ☒ **10.5% Green**
 - ☒ **9.4% BQ**
 - ☒ **3.1% other**

- **Direction of government:**
 - ☒ **45% right direction**
 - ☒ **44% wrong direction**
 - ☒ **11% do not know/no response**

- **Preferred government priorities:**
 - ☒ **59% invest in social areas such as health care and education**
 - ☒ **18% keep taxes as low as possible**
 - ☒ **23% keep the deficit as low as possible**

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

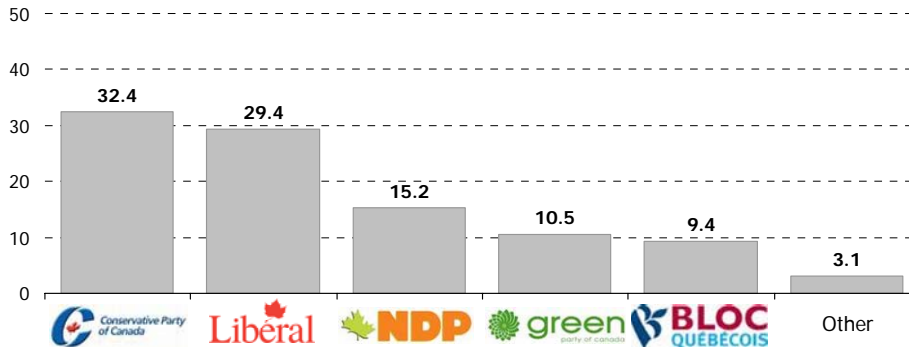
"This result demonstrates the importance of the way in which these difficult fiscal issues are 'framed'," said Graves. "When Canadians are asked about their priorities for government, they are still in a spending mood. The deficit is at the bottom, not the top of their list of concerns. Any attempt to slash spending now to tackle the deficit would meet with resistance if key areas of social spending were threatened."

EKOS samples public opinion every weekday night for vote intention and gathers much larger sample sizes than other published surveys. The polls are conducted for exclusive release by the CBC.

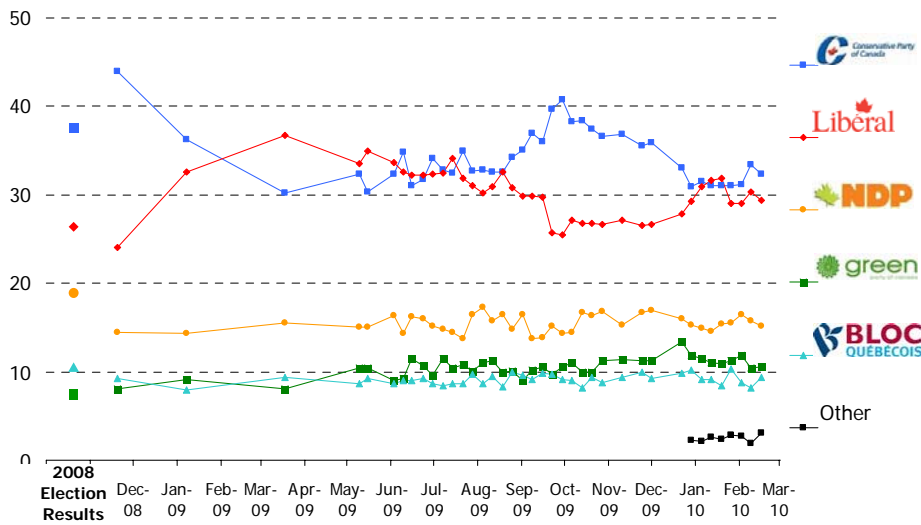
Top Line Results:

Federal vote intention

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



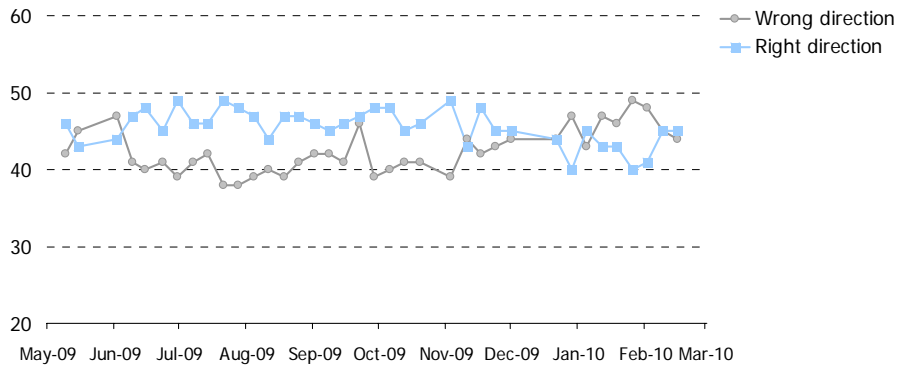
Weekly tracking of federal vote intention



Note: The data on federal vote intention are based on decided voters only. Our survey also finds that 12.6% of Canadians are undecided/ineligible to vote.

Direction of government

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

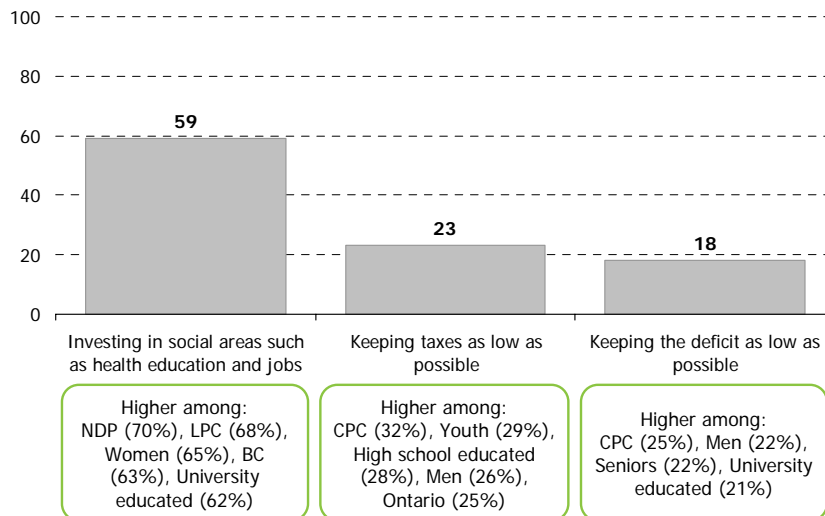


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BASE: Canadians; most recent data point Feb. 24 - Mar. 2 (n=half sample)

Preferred government priorities






Q. The federal government faces major challenges in dealing with its finances. The country also has major ongoing investment needs. Which of the following 3 priorities should be the most important principle for dealing with these challenges?



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BASE: Canadians; Feb. 24 - Mar. 2 (n=2796)

Detailed Tables:

| <u>National Federal Vote Intention</u> | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|-------------|-------------|-----------------------|
| <i>Q. If a federal election were held tomorrow, which party would you vote for?</i> | | | | | | | | |
| |  |  |  |  |  | Other | Sample Size | Margin of Error (+/-) |
| NATIONALLY | 32.4% | 29.4% | 15.2% | 10.5% | 9.4% | 3.1% | 2466 | 2.0 |
| REGION | | | | | | | | |
| British Columbia | 28.5% | 28.7% | 25.6% | 13.7% | 0.0% | 3.4% | 367 | 5.1 |
| Alberta | 59.5% | 18.9% | 5.2% | 13.0% | 0.0% | 3.5% | 272 | 5.9 |
| Saskatchewan/Manitoba | 45.6% | 22.1% | 19.9% | 9.8% | 0.0% | 2.6% | 161 | 7.7 |
| Ontario | 34.9% | 38.0% | 14.3% | 9.7% | 0.0% | 3.2% | 882 | 3.3 |
| Quebec | 15.9% | 22.1% | 12.2% | 9.4% | 37.8% | 2.6% | 598 | 4.0 |
| Atlantic Canada | 32.7% | 32.1% | 22.0% | 9.9% | 0.0% | 3.3% | 186 | 7.2 |
| GENDER | | | | | | | | |
| Male | 36.0% | 27.0% | 13.5% | 10.3% | 9.5% | 3.7% | 1269 | 2.8 |
| Female | 28.8% | 31.8% | 17.0% | 10.7% | 9.2% | 2.4% | 1197 | 2.8 |
| AGE | | | | | | | | |
| <25 | 22.4% | 23.1% | 16.7% | 24.1% | 12.1% | 1.7% | 186 | 7.2 |
| 25-44 | 29.9% | 27.7% | 14.6% | 12.3% | 11.6% | 4.0% | 736 | 3.6 |
| 45-64 | 32.7% | 31.8% | 16.5% | 7.2% | 8.7% | 3.2% | 1054 | 3.0 |
| 65+ | 42.8% | 31.9% | 13.2% | 5.5% | 4.7% | 1.9% | 490 | 4.4 |
| EDUCATION | | | | | | | | |
| High school or less | 33.2% | 26.0% | 15.3% | 10.7% | 11.4% | 3.5% | 715 | 3.7 |
| College or CEGEP | 34.9% | 24.5% | 17.7% | 10.2% | 9.4% | 3.2% | 832 | 3.4 |
| University or higher | 29.4% | 36.8% | 12.9% | 10.6% | 7.7% | 2.6% | 919 | 3.2 |
| METROPOLITAN CANADA | | | | | | | | |
| Vancouver | 31.1% | 33.1% | 22.3% | 10.2% | 0.0% | 3.4% | 138 | 8.3 |
| Calgary | 64.0% | 23.7% | 2.0% | 8.1% | 0.0% | 2.2% | 82 | 10.8 |
| Toronto | 33.4% | 44.3% | 11.8% | 8.6% | 0.0% | 1.9% | 267 | 6.0 |
| Ottawa | 48.4% | 27.9% | 15.7% | 6.9% | 0.0% | 1.2% | 147 | 8.1 |
| Montreal | 12.2% | 25.5% | 10.0% | 11.6% | 37.3% | 3.5% | 268 | 6.0 |





Federal Vote Intention – British Columbia

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

| |  |  |  |  | Other | Sample Size | Margin of Error (+/-) |
|----------------------|---|---|---|--|-------------|-------------|-----------------------|
| OVERALL | 28.5% | 28.7% | 25.6% | 13.7% | 3.4% | 367 | 5.1 |
| GENDER | | | | | | | |
| Male | 33.0% | 28.5% | 19.8% | 13.7% | 5.0% | 197 | 7.0 |
| Female | 23.8% | 29.0% | 31.8% | 13.6% | 1.8% | 170 | 7.5 |
| AGE | | | | | | | |
| <25 | 17.5% | 15.7% | 32.1% | 34.8% | 0.0% | 32 | 17.3 |
| 25-44 | 29.1% | 31.2% | 20.9% | 15.2% | 3.7% | 108 | 9.4 |
| 45-64 | 30.6% | 31.2% | 28.1% | 7.0% | 3.1% | 161 | 7.7 |
| 65+ | 29.7% | 27.7% | 26.3% | 10.5% | 5.8% | 66 | 12.1 |
| EDUCATION | | | | | | | |
| High school or less | 29.2% | 22.8% | 26.1% | 19.2% | 2.7% | 91 | 10.3 |
| College or CEGEP | 26.8% | 24.3% | 33.7% | 12.0% | 3.2% | 131 | 8.6 |
| University or higher | 29.3% | 36.2% | 18.6% | 11.8% | 4.1% | 145 | 8.1 |





Federal Vote Intention – Alberta

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

| |  |  |  |  | Other | Sample Size | Margin of Error (+/-) |
|----------------------|---|---|---|--|-------------|-------------|-----------------------|
| OVERALL | 59.5% | 18.9% | 5.2% | 13.0% | 3.5% | 272 | 5.9 |
| GENDER | | | | | | | |
| Male | 68.1% | 16.4% | 3.4% | 8.7% | 3.3% | 140 | 8.3 |
| Female | 51.5% | 21.2% | 6.6% | 17.2% | 3.5% | 132 | 8.5 |
| AGE | | | | | | | |
| <25 | 52.7% | 21.1% | 5.7% | 20.6% | 0.0% | 19 | 22.5 |
| 25-44 | 59.4% | 17.7% | 4.1% | 16.0% | 2.7% | 77 | 11.2 |
| 45-64 | 56.4% | 20.3% | 8.4% | 10.0% | 4.9% | 124 | 8.8 |
| 65+ | 71.4% | 16.4% | 0.0% | 8.2% | 4.0% | 52 | 13.6 |
| EDUCATION | | | | | | | |
| High school or less | 55.8% | 17.0% | 3.3% | 21.5% | 2.4% | 65 | 12.2 |
| College or CEGEP | 65.0% | 12.5% | 6.5% | 11.5% | 4.5% | 101 | 9.8 |
| University or higher | 57.2% | 26.4% | 4.6% | 8.8% | 3.0% | 106 | 9.5 |





Federal Vote Intention – Saskatchewan/Manitoba

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

| |  |  |  |  | Other | Sample Size | Margin of Error (+/-) |
|----------------------|---|---|---|--|-------------|-------------|-----------------------|
| OVERALL | 45.6% | 22.1% | 19.9% | 9.8% | 2.6% | 161 | 7.7 |
| GENDER | | | | | | | |
| Male | 46.6% | 18.3% | 16.5% | 13.5% | 5.2% | 82 | 10.8 |
| Female | 40.8% | 24.9% | 23.4% | 10.9% | 0.0% | 79 | 11.0 |
| AGE | | | | | | | |
| <25 | 31.5% | 24.6% | 13.6% | 30.3% | 0.0% | 10 | 31.0 |
| 25-44 | 34.3% | 20.6% | 25.0% | 15.6% | 4.5% | 38 | 15.9 |
| 45-64 | 54.8% | 16.9% | 18.3% | 8.7% | 1.2% | 72 | 11.6 |
| 65+ | 47.1% | 30.1% | 19.0% | 0.0% | 3.8% | 41 | 15.3 |
| EDUCATION | | | | | | | |
| High school or less | 45.5% | 20.3% | 22.8% | 11.4% | 0.0% | 49 | 14.0 |
| College or CEGEP | 52.7% | 11.2% | 16.6% | 13.9% | 5.6% | 49 | 14.0 |
| University or higher | 33.9% | 32.2% | 20.6% | 11.3% | 2.0% | 63 | 12.4 |






Federal Vote Intention – Ontario

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

| |  |  |  |  | Other | Sample Size | Margin of Error (+/-) |
|----------------------|---|---|---|--|-------------|-------------|-----------------------|
| OVERALL | 34.9% | 38.0% | 14.3% | 9.7% | 3.2% | 882 | 3.3 |
| GENDER | | | | | | | |
| Male | 39.6% | 34.5% | 11.4% | 10.5% | 4.0% | 453 | 4.6 |
| Female | 29.3% | 41.6% | 17.3% | 9.4% | 2.4% | 429 | 4.7 |
| AGE | | | | | | | |
| <25 | 29.8% | 31.8% | 12.7% | 20.7% | 5.0% | 58 | 12.9 |
| 25-44 | 33.6% | 36.2% | 14.8% | 11.0% | 4.3% | 251 | 6.2 |
| 45-64 | 32.1% | 43.5% | 14.3% | 7.6% | 2.6% | 373 | 5.1 |
| 65+ | 43.2% | 34.7% | 14.8% | 6.1% | 1.2% | 200 | 6.9 |
| EDUCATION | | | | | | | |
| High school or less | 37.3% | 31.3% | 17.8% | 8.4% | 5.1% | 208 | 6.8 |
| College or CEGEP | 35.5% | 35.2% | 14.8% | 11.0% | 3.5% | 293 | 5.7 |
| University or higher | 31.6% | 44.6% | 11.9% | 10.0% | 1.9% | 381 | 5.0 |





Federal Vote Intention – Quebec

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

| |  |  |  |  |  | Other | Sample Size | Margin of Error (+/-) |
|----------------------|---|---|---|--|---|-------------|-------------|-----------------------|
| OVERALL | 15.9% | 22.1% | 12.2% | 9.4% | 37.8% | 2.6% | 598 | 4.0 |
| GENDER | | | | | | | | |
| Male | 16.7% | 23.1% | 14.6% | 7.6% | 36.0% | 2.0% | 318 | 5.5 |
| Female | 16.5% | 23.4% | 9.7% | 9.3% | 38.1% | 3.0% | 280 | 5.9 |
| AGE | | | | | | | | |
| <25 | 5.7% | 12.2% | 15.5% | 25.0% | 41.6% | 0.0% | 50 | 13.9 |
| 25-44 | 15.3% | 19.7% | 10.0% | 11.0% | 39.8% | 4.2% | 216 | 6.7 |
| 45-64 | 17.8% | 21.6% | 15.1% | 4.1% | 38.6% | 2.7% | 239 | 6.3 |
| 65+ | 23.0% | 39.6% | 8.8% | 2.8% | 25.9% | 0.0% | 93 | 10.2 |
| EDUCATION | | | | | | | | |
| High school or less | 18.4% | 26.2% | 9.0% | 7.1% | 36.3% | 3.1% | 222 | 6.6 |
| College or CEGEP | 19.3% | 16.0% | 17.4% | 7.7% | 37.6% | 1.9% | 195 | 7.0 |
| University or higher | 11.3% | 27.7% | 10.3% | 11.0% | 37.3% | 2.4% | 181 | 7.3 |

Federal Vote Intention – Atlantic Canada

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

| |  |  |  |  | Other | Sample Size | Margin of Error (+/-) |
|----------------------|---|---|---|--|-------------|-------------|-----------------------|
| OVERALL | 32.7% | 32.1% | 22.0% | 9.9% | 3.3% | 186 | 7.2 |
| GENDER | | | | | | | |
| Male | 31.9% | 25.2% | 23.2% | 14.8% | 4.9% | 79 | 11.0 |
| Female | 32.4% | 35.7% | 22.9% | 7.0% | 2.0% | 107 | 9.5 |
| AGE | | | | | | | |
| <25 | 18.8% | 36.4% | 22.9% | 22.0% | 0.0% | 17 | 23.8 |
| 25-44 | 26.3% | 27.5% | 31.2% | 12.6% | 2.4% | 46 | 14.5 |
| 45-64 | 28.6% | 32.8% | 22.6% | 8.8% | 7.2% | 85 | 10.6 |
| 65+ | 63.6% | 29.5% | 4.6% | 2.3% | 0.0% | 38 | 15.9 |
| EDUCATION | | | | | | | |
| High school or less | 36.6% | 31.0% | 16.2% | 11.4% | 4.8% | 80 | 11.0 |
| College or CEGEP | 38.7% | 26.6% | 24.0% | 8.7% | 2.1% | 63 | 12.4 |
| University or higher | 17.1% | 35.3% | 32.2% | 12.3% | 3.0% | 43 | 14.9 |

| Direction of Government | | | | | |
|--|-----------------|-----------------|------------|-------------|-----------------------|
| <i>Q. All things considered, would you say the Government of Canada is moving in the right direction or the wrong direction?</i> | | | | | |
| | Right Direction | Wrong Direction | DK/NR | Sample Size | Margin of Error (+/-) |
| NATIONALLY | 45% | 44% | 11% | 1421 | 2.6 |
| REGION | | | | | |
| British Columbia | 45% | 44% | 10% | 203 | 6.9 |
| Alberta | 63% | 28% | 9% | 171 | 7.5 |
| Saskatchewan/Manitoba | 50% | 32% | 18% | 98 | 9.9 |
| Ontario | 46% | 42% | 12% | 512 | 4.3 |
| Quebec | 35% | 56% | 9% | 327 | 5.4 |
| Atlantic Canada | 42% | 45% | 12% | 110 | 9.3 |
| GENDER | | | | | |
| Male | 49% | 42% | 9% | 731 | 3.6 |
| Female | 41% | 45% | 14% | 690 | 3.7 |
| AGE | | | | | |
| <25 | 50% | 39% | 11% | 116 | 9.1 |
| 25-44 | 45% | 48% | 7% | 446 | 4.6 |
| 45-64 | 42% | 45% | 13% | 581 | 4.1 |
| 65+ | 48% | 34% | 18% | 278 | 5.9 |
| EDUCATION | | | | | |
| High school or less | 46% | 37% | 17% | 439 | 4.7 |
| College or CEGEP | 49% | 43% | 8% | 487 | 4.4 |
| University or higher | 40% | 50% | 10% | 495 | 4.4 |
| CURRENT VOTE INTENTION | | | | | |
| Conservative Party of Canada | 83% | 12% | 5% | 421 | 4.8 |
| Liberal Party of Canada | 32% | 58% | 10% | 376 | 5.1 |
| NDP | 25% | 62% | 13% | 193 | 7.1 |
| Green Party | 34% | 53% | 13% | 127 | 8.7 |
| Bloc Quebecois | 22% | 68% | 10% | 108 | 9.4 |
| Undecided | 24% | 54% | 22% | 36 | 16.3 |

Preferred government priorities

Q. The federal government faces major challenges in dealing with its finances. The country also has major ongoing investment needs. Which of the following 3 priorities should be the most important principle for dealing with these challenges?

| | Investing in social areas such as health education and jobs | Keeping taxes as low as possible | Keeping the deficit as low as possible | Sample Size | Margin of Error (+/-) |
|-------------------------------|---|----------------------------------|--|-------------|-----------------------|
| NATIONALLY | 59% | 23% | 18% | 2796 | 1.9 |
| REGION | | | | | |
| British Columbia | 63% | 18% | 18% | 415 | 4.8 |
| Alberta | 57% | 24% | 19% | 300 | 5.7 |
| Saskatchewan/Manitoba | 54% | 23% | 23% | 183 | 7.2 |
| Ontario | 57% | 25% | 17% | 1001 | 3.1 |
| Quebec | 60% | 23% | 18% | 679 | 3.8 |
| Atlantic Canada | 63% | 18% | 18% | 218 | 6.6 |
| GENDER | | | | | |
| Male | 52% | 26% | 22% | 1401 | 2.6 |
| Female | 65% | 20% | 15% | 1395 | 2.6 |
| AGE | | | | | |
| <25 | 56% | 29% | 15% | 229 | 6.5 |
| 25-44 | 60% | 24% | 16% | 845 | 3.4 |
| 45-64 | 59% | 21% | 20% | 1178 | 2.9 |
| 65+ | 56% | 22% | 22% | 544 | 4.2 |
| EDUCATION | | | | | |
| High school or less | 54% | 28% | 17% | 833 | 3.4 |
| College or CEGEP | 60% | 24% | 16% | 965 | 3.2 |
| University or higher | 62% | 17% | 21% | 998 | 3.1 |
| CURRENT VOTE INTENTION | | | | | |
| Conservative Party of Canada | 42% | 32% | 25% | 833 | 3.4 |
| Liberal Party of Canada | 68% | 15% | 17% | 722 | 3.7 |
| NDP | 70% | 18% | 12% | 374 | 5.1 |
| Green Party | 63% | 22% | 15% | 240 | 6.3 |
| Bloc Quebecois | 65% | 18% | 17% | 222 | 6.6 |
| Undecided | 55% | 28% | 16% | 75 | 11.3 |

Methodology:

EKOS' weekly tracking polls are conducted using Interactive Voice Recognition (IVR) technology, which allows respondents to enter their preferences by punching the keypad on their phone, rather than telling them to an operator.

In an effort to reduce the coverage bias of landline only RDD, we created a dual land-line/cell phone RDD sampling frame for this research. As a result, we are able to reach those with both a landline and cell phone, as well as cell phone only households and landline only households. This dual frame yields a near perfect unweighted distribution on age group and gender, something almost never seen with traditional landline RDD sample or interviewer-administered surveys.

The field dates for this survey are February 24 – March 2, 2010.¹ In total, a random sample of 2,796 Canadians aged 18 and over responded to the survey (including a sub-sample of 2,466 decided voters). The margin of error associated with the total sample is +/-1.9 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.

¹ Please note that these dates are not inclusive of the weekends, as we do not survey on Saturday or Sunday.