

Electoral Reform Questionnaire

Field Dates: October 12-18, 2016

Note: The questions below were part of a more extensive survey.

1. A [ALTERNATE WITH B – HALF-SAMPLE EACH] All things considered, would you say the country is moving in the right direction or the wrong direction?

Right direction 1
 Wrong direction 2
 Don't know/No response 0

B [ALTERNATE WITH A – HALF-SAMPLE EACH] All things considered, would you say the Government of Canada is moving in the right direction or the wrong direction?

Right direction 1
 Wrong direction 2
 Don't know/No response 0

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

Liberal Party 1
 Conservative Party 2
 New Democratic Party 3
 Green Party 4
 [QUEBEC ONLY] Bloc Québécois 5
 Other 6
 Undecided 7
 Not eligible to vote 8
 Don't know/No response 0

3. [IF Q2=7] Even if you do not have a firm idea, are you leaning towards a party?

Yes 1
 No 2
 Don't know/No response 0

4. [IF Q3=1] As it stands, towards which party are you leaning?

Liberal Party 1
 Conservative Party 2
 New Democratic Party 3

Green Party.....	4
[QUEBEC ONLY] Bloc Québécois	5
Other	6
Undecided.....	7
Don't know/No response.....	0

5. How much do you trust the government in Ottawa to do what is right?

Almost always	1
Most of the time	2
Some of the time.....	3
Almost never	4
Don't know/No response.....	0

6. Please rate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements:

	STRONGLY DISAGREE		NEITHER AGREE NOR DISAGREE		STRONGLY AGREE	DON'T KNOW/ NO RESPONSE		
a. I don't think the government cares much about what people like me think	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	0
b. I see no reason to make major changes in how democracy in Canada works.....	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	0

7. Which of the following views comes closest to your own?

Canada's electoral system does a good job in representing the will of voters and doesn't need to be changed.....	1
Canada's electoral system does not do a good job in representing what voters want and needs to be changed	2
Don't know/No response.....	0

8.A [ALTERNATE WITH B – HALF-SAMPLE EACH] Under Canada's **first-past-the-post** system, Canada is divided into 338 ridings. In every riding, the candidate that wins the most votes wins the right to represent that riding in the House of Commons, regardless of whether they received a majority of the votes.

An alternative system is called **proportional representation** where a party's share of seats in the House of Commons reflects the percentage of votes it received. For example, if a party wins 40 per cent of the vote, it would receive roughly 40 per cent of the seats.

Another alternative is called **preferential voting** where voters rank their preferences instead of voting for a single party. One by one, the least popular candidates are dropped and the votes are redistributed to other candidates based on these preferences. A candidate wins when they have obtained more than half the votes.

Please rank these three systems from best to worst in terms of how beneficial you think they would be for Canada.

[ALLOW ONLY ONE RESPONSE PER CATEGORY]

	[1 ONLY] BEST OPTION FOR CANADA	[1 ONLY] SECOND-BEST FOR CANADA	[1 ONLY] WORST OPTION FOR CANADA	DON'T KNOW/ NO RESPONSE
a. Canada's existing first-past the post-system	1	2	3	0
b. Some form of proportional representation	1	2	3	0
c. A preferential voting system	1	2	3	0

B [ALTERNATE WITH A – HALF-SAMPLE EACH] During the 2015 federal election, the Liberal Government promised to reform Canada’s electoral system to ensure that representation in Parliament reflects the wishes of voters. This was also a major plank in the platforms of both the NDP and the Green Party.

Doing so would involve significant changes to the way that Members of Parliament are elected. There are three basic approaches under discussion: the “first-past-the-post” system (the status quo), proportional representation, and preferential voting (ranked ballot).

Canada’s **first-past-the-post** system is the current system. Canada is divided into 338 ridings. In every riding, the candidate that wins the most votes wins the right to represent that riding in the House of Commons, regardless of whether they received a majority of the votes.

- **Pros:** The first-past-the-post system is easy to understand and makes it easier for a party to win a majority of seats and govern on the basis of its platform, rather than having to form a coalition government with other parties. It also provides clear, local representation: each riding has its own representative in Ottawa.
- **Cons:** It doesn’t require a majority of the vote to win a majority of the seats. Both the Trudeau majority in 2015 and the Harper majority in 2011 were won on the basis of about 40% of the vote. In a multi-party system, there may be an imbalance in the main ideological options (for example, the conservative vote used to be split across the Progressive Conservative and Reform parties; today, the progressive vote is split across the Liberal Party, NDP, Green Party, and Bloc Québécois). This can result in vote splitting and a Parliament which does not fairly reflect voter preferences.

An alternative system is called **proportional representation** where a party’s share of seats in the House of Commons reflects the percentage of votes it received overall – not just in geographical ridings. For example, if a party wins 40% of the vote nationwide, it would receive roughly 40% of the seats no matter where those votes come from.

- **Pros:** This alternative ensures that the number of seats a party has in Parliament is equal to the percentage of votes cast overall. This system would foster a government of many smaller parties and could encourage co-operation across party lines.
- **Cons:** Representation isn’t necessarily local as MPs are selected on the basis of a national proportion of the vote rather than on contests within ridings. Having more parties elected can make governing more difficult. Proportional representation can also give voice to fringe parties.

Another alternative is called **preferential voting** where voters rank their preferred candidates in their riding instead of choosing a single candidate from a single party. One by one, the least popular candidates are dropped and the votes are redistributed

11. In your opinion, which of the following would be the best way of improving democratic health in Canada?

Moving to proportional representation.....	1
Moving to preferential ranked ballot.....	2
Introducing mandatory voting.....	3
Allowing Canadians to vote online	4
Regular government consultation with Canadian citizens that is informed, reflected, and representative.....	5
Don't know/No response	0

12. Please rate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements:

	STRONGLY DISAGREE			NEITHER AGREE NOR DISAGREE			STRONGLY AGREE	DON'T KNOW/ NO RESPONSE
a. Electoral reform is crucially important and should not be delayed for another election cycle.....	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	0
b. Electoral reform is something the Liberal Party campaigned on, so they should deliver on this promise	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	0
c. Electoral reform is too important to be rushed; the process should be slowed down and subjected to more public consultations	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	0

Demographics

The following questions will be used for statistical purposes only

13. Are you...?

Male	1
Female	2
No response.....	0

14. In what year were you born?

[OPEN].....	1
No response.....	0

15. What is the highest level of schooling that you have completed?

Grade 8 or less	1
Some high school	2
High School diploma or equivalent.....	3
Registered Apprenticeship or other trades certificate or dip	4
College, CEGEP or other non-university certificate or diploma.....	5
University certificate or diploma below bachelor's level	6
Bachelor's degree	7
Post graduate degree above bachelor's level	8
No response.....	0