

Split Decision: Half Of Canadians Support Coalition (48%), Half Oppose Coalition (52%)

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Majority (54%) Would Prefer a Liberal-NDP Coalition To a Harper Majority Government (46%), Split 50%/50% When Bloc is Added to the Coalition

The country is split on whether they support or oppose the idea of a coalition government, though a majority (54%) would prefer to see a Liberal-NDP coalition government rather than a Conservative majority government (46%), according to a new Ipsos Reid poll conducted exclusively for Global National and Postmedia News.

There is a chance that this election could result in none of the parties winning enough seats to form a majority government. In that case, the opposition Liberals could get together with the NDP and perhaps the Bloc to form a coalition to stop Stephen Harper and the Conservatives from forming the next government.

While the Conservatives are trying to paint a coalition as a threat to economic stability, one half (48%) of Canadians actually "supports" (20% strongly/28% somewhat) the idea of a coalition of opposition parties forming the government, while the other half (52%) "opposes" (36% strongly/16% somewhat) the opposition parties forming a coalition to take power from the Tories.

Michael Ignatieff has said that he will not form a coalition government, but Stephen Harper has said that is exactly what the Liberals will attempt to do after the next election. In the midst of these two conflicting messages, a majority (62%) of Canadians more closely believe Stephen Harper when he says the Liberals will try to form a coalition government, compared to just four in ten (38%) who more closely believe Mr. Ignatieff.

If Stephen Harper is correct, as a majority of Canadians believe, and the opposition parties do intend to form a coalition government after Election Day, the choice for Canadians in this election is ostensibly between a coalition of the opposition parties and a majority Harper government.

Given the choice between a Conservative majority and a Liberal-NDP coalition government, a majority (54%) would prefer to see a Liberal-NDP coalition government, compared to 46% who would rather see the Conservatives winning a majority government.

Support for a coalition decreases slightly when Gilles Duceppe and the Bloc are brought into the coalition, although fully one half (50%) of Canadians would still prefer to see the "Liberals, NDP and Bloc forming a coalition to take over from Stephen Harper and the Conservatives", rather than "Harper and the Conservatives winning a majority government" (50%).

But with the relative Conservative strength in the polls, the most likely outcome for a coalition would include the Bloc.

If the Liberals, NDP and Bloc get together to form a coalition government, a solid majority (59%) of Canadians would prefer to see Jack Layton as the leader of that coalition, compared to just 27% who believe that Michael Ignatieff should become Prime Minister of a coalition government and 14% who would like Gilles Duceppe to lead that coalition.

Even in Quebec, Jack Layton (50%) is chosen to lead that coalition, compared to three in ten (29%) for Duceppe and two in ten (21%) for Ignatieff.

Economy vs. Accountability

Coming out of election starting gate, the two competing narratives of the campaign, thus far, are on one side the Conservatives presenting themselves as the steady hand on the wheel of the economy, and, on the other side, the Liberals stressing the need for a party that can provide open, responsible and ethical government:

* When it comes to managing Canada's economy, nearly one half (47%) of Canadians most trust Stephen Harper and the Conservatives to perform this task, compared to fewer Canadians who most trust Michael Ignatieff and the Liberals (23%), Jack Layton and the NDP (23%) or Gilles Duceppe and the Bloc (7%) to manage the economy.

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* Thinking about who can provide open, responsible and ethical government, four in ten (39%) Canadians most trust Stephen Harper and the Conservatives to provide this kind of government, while Jack Layton and the NDP (34%) are in a close second place. Trailing behind are Michael Ignatieff and the Liberals (19%) and Gilles Duceppe and the Bloc (9%).

When a person enters a voting booth, they have to make a choice: does the government deserve re-election, or should another party take over. While only a minority of Canadians, 44% of Canadians are closer to the opinion that "the Conservative Party under Stephen Harper has done a good job and deserves re-election."

If this positive assessment of the government by 44% of Canadians translates into a vote for the Conservative Party, the Tories would have a good chance of forming a majority government.

Conversely, nearly six in ten (56%) Canadians are closer to the opinion that “the Conservative Party does not deserve to be re-elected and it’s time for another party to be given a chance to govern the country”. The trouble for the opposition parties is that these votes are split between all three major opposition parties.

Helping to explain the relative success of the Conservative Party in the polls, nearly six in ten (57%) Canadians believe that Canada is “moving in the right track”, compared to four in ten (43%) who more closely believe that Canada is “headed in the wrong direction”.

These are some of the findings of an Ipsos Reid poll conducted between March 29 to 31, 2011, on behalf of Postmedia News and Global National. For this survey, a sample of 1,070 adults from Ipsos’ Canadian online panel was interviewed online.

Weighting was then employed to balance demographics and political composition to ensure that the sample's composition reflects that of the adult population according to Census data and to provide results intended to approximate the sample universe.

A survey with an unweighted probability sample of this size and a 100% response rate would have an estimated margin of error of +/-3.0 percentage points, 19 times out of 20, of what the results would have been had the entire population of adults in Canada been polled.

All sample surveys and polls may be subject to other sources of error, including, but not limited to coverage error, and measurement error.

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