

Coalition Government Acceptable To Most Canadians: Survey

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A new survey conducted by global marketing and public opinion research firm TNS Canada shows that despite all the talk about coalitions, they aren't as daunting a prospect to Canadians as they have been made out to be.

The survey asked Canadians about a number of plausible scenarios in the event that no party wins a majority of seats in the upcoming Federal election.

The most "acceptable" scenario would be a similar situation to how government has worked for the last several years, i.e. the party with the most seats forms a government and seeks support on a case-by-case basis. This scenario is considered "completely" or "somewhat" acceptable by 72% of Canadians.

However, when asked about the possibility of parties forming a coalition, a majority of Canadians (57%) would find it completely or somewhat acceptable if the party with the most seats forms a coalition government with another party.

In addition, even in the absence of perfect knowledge of parliamentary tradition, 1 in 2 Canadians (49%) would find it acceptable if two or more parties, none of which obtained the most seats individually, would form a coalition in order to form a majority government.

This is compared to only one in three (33%) would find this scenario completely or somewhat unacceptable.

"Clearly, while Canadians' preference is for the party with the most seats to govern with the cooperation of the others, these results show that most Canadians aren't that apprehensive about a coalition scenario", indicated Norman Baillie-David, Vice President of TNS and Director of Public Opinion Research. "These results also show that Canadians want the parties to work together in the event that no one party wins a majority, and that most would accept a coalition if that's what it takes to achieve that."

In terms of which parties Canadians would prefer to see form a coalition, a prospective Liberal "NDP coalition garnered the highest preference, at 28%, followed by a prospective Conservative "NDP coalition (24%).

Preference drops dramatically for any prospective coalition which includes the Bloc Qu'Appelle:

- * Liberal-NDP-Bloc : 8%
- * Liberal-Bloc " 5%
- * Conservative " Bloc " 3%
- * Conservative " NDP- Bloc " 3%

One-in-five (20%) of Canadians indicated that they wouldn't prefer any of these coalition scenarios.

Acceptance of Coalitions Differs along Party and Regional Lines

As might be expected, the level of acceptance for different coalition scenarios differs along both party and regional lines. Interestingly, a majority of Conservative supporters feel a coalition formed by the party which wins the most seats is acceptable (51%).

However, Conservative supporters are also the ones most strongly opposed to a scenario in which parties which did not obtain the most seats form a coalition, with 55% finding this scenario unacceptable.

In terms of regional views, acceptance of two parties not having the most seats forming a coalition government hovers around the 50% mark in all regions except the Prairies¹, where only 39% would see this scenario as acceptable, compared to 44% who would view it as unacceptable.

¹Manitoba, Saskatchewan and Alberta

Overall Voting Intention

In terms of voting intention, the Conservatives lead at 36% of decided voters, compared to 25% for the Liberals, 18% for the NDP, 9% for the Green Party, and 9% (nationally) for the Bloc Qu'Appelle. In Quebec, the Bloc Qu'Appelle leads at 35%, followed by the NDP at 22%, the Liberals and Conservatives in a dead heat at 18% and 17% respectively, and the Green Party at 6%.

While it appears that the NDP may be strong in Quebec, we caution that the results are subject to a wide margin of error (+/- 7.2%) due to the Quebec sample size of 183.

About the Survey

A telephone survey of 1,015 Canadians was conducted between April 4 and April 8, 2011. The margin of error on national results is +/- 3.1%, 19 times out of 20. Margins of error on regional results are significantly higher, ranging from +/- 5.4% (Ontario) to +/- 9.6% (Atlantic).

The full report can be viewed at www.tns-cf.com .

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