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Healthcare (35%), Cost of Living (27%), Climate Change (25%) Top Voter Issues as Campaign Season Kicks Off

Immigration, Issue #7, Poised to Stay Top of Mind with Bernier Now in Debates

Toronto, ON, September 19, 2019 — The federal election campaign is barely a week old, but Canadians already have a clear idea of the issues that matter to them; issues that will make the difference to which party receives their vote on October 21st. The latest Ipsos poll for Global News finds that, come Election Day, half of Canadians who are eligible to vote (50%) say a party's stance on the issues is the primary factor in determining how they will cast their ballot – ahead of the Party and its leader (34%) or their local candidate (16%).

Issues Determining Voter Choice

The poll takes a closer look at the issues on voters' minds. Asked to pick the three issues that are most important in determining how they will vote at the election, Canadians are most likely to pick health care (35%, up 3 points since June), affordability and cost of living (27%, up 1 point), climate change (25%, up 3 points), the economy (24%, up 4 points), and taxes (22%, down 2 points). There are several ties among the top ten, including poverty/social inequality and seniors' issues (both at 13%), and corruption and ethics in government, education, deficits, and unemployment (all at 12%):

Most Important Issues in Determining Vote		
	Among Top 3 Most Important	**Change vs. June 2019**
Health care	35%	+3 pts
Affordability and cost of living	27%	+1 pt
Climate change	25%	+3 pts
The economy	24%	+4 pts
Taxes	22%	-2 pts
Housing (e.g., affordability, availability)	15%	-2 pts
Immigration	14%	-2 pts
Poverty and social inequality	13%	-2 pts
Seniors' issues/aging population	13%	+1 pt
Corruption and ethics in government	12%	+5 pts
Education	12%	-3 pts
Government deficits/debt	12%	+1 pt
Unemployment/jobs	12%	Unchanged
Energy, including pipeline, gas prices	11%	-2 pts

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The survey delves deeper into some of the top issues of importance for Canadians, including health care, climate change, the economy, taxes, and immigration. The results show that Canadians who see certain issues as decisive to them on Election Day have specific areas of concern for each one:

- The 35% of Canadians who say **healthcare** is a top issue in determining how they will vote on election day are most likely to be concerned about services covered through universal healthcare (19%), followed by access to doctors (16%), wait times in hospitals (14%), wait times to see doctors (13%), and the quality of care (11%). Fewer are worried about access to specialists (6%), pharmacare (6%), long-term care (5%), infrastructure in hospitals and clinics (3%), or advancements in medical technology (3%).
- The 25% of Canadians who say **climate change** is a top issue in determining how they will vote on election day are most likely to be concerned about the fact that government is not doing enough to combat climate change (46%), getting individual Canadians to change their behaviour (30%), natural disaster prevention and management (13%), and getting other countries to change their behaviour (9%).
- The 24% of Canadians who say **the economy** is a top issue in determining how they will vote on election day are most likely to be concerned about economic growth or the fear of recession (49%), followed by affordability (21%), creating jobs (15%), or trade (8%). Few are concerned about stock market volatility (2%) or international taxation (2%).
- The 22% of Canadians who say **taxes** are a top issue in determining how they will vote on election day are most likely to feel that personal taxes are too high and should be cut (62%). Fewer feel that the tax system isn't working and needs an overhaul (16%), that corporate taxes should be raised (11%), that they should be cut (5%), or that personal taxes should be raised (2%).
- The 14% of Canadians who say **immigration** is a top issue in determining how they will vote on election day are most likely to say that Canada takes in too many immigrants (49%) or are concerned about preventing migrants from crossing into Canada illegally (31%). Fewer are concerned about Canada doing its part to help with the world refugee/migrant crisis (6%), providing more support for new immigrants (6%), or feel that Canada needs more immigration (5%).

Best Party to Deal with the Issues

When it comes to having an edge on the issues that count, the Tories and Liberals are neck and neck. The Liberals have a clear lead on three issues including the top issue, healthcare (they also are seen as the best party to deal with housing and seniors' issues), while the Tories have the upper hand on four (the economy, taxes, immigration, and corruption and ethics in government). The two parties are in a statistical dead heat when it comes to who is seen as best to deal with the cost of living, while the Green Party has them both beat when it comes to climate change.

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Best Party to Deal with Most Important Issues in Determining How Canadians Will Vote								
Issues	**The Conser-vatives**	**The Liberals**	**The NDP**	**The PPC**	**The Green Party**	**The BQ**	**Some Other Party**	**None, they're all the same**
Health care	17%	33%	16%	2%	7%	2%	0%	23%
Affordability and cost of living	24%	23%	18%	2%	5%	1%	0%	27%
Climate change	5%	30%	8%	1%	44%	2%	0%	10%
The economy	43%	29%	4%	3%	3%	2%	1%	16%
Taxes	41%	22%	7%	2%	3%	2%	1%	22%
Housing	15%	30%	19%	4%	8%	0%	0%	23%
Immigration	42%	16%	9%	11%	2%	4%	2%	13%
Poverty and social inequality	9%	28%	28%	5%	9%	3%	1%	19%
Seniors' issues/aging population	22%	36%	14%	1%	8%	2%	1%	16%
Corruption and ethics in government	38%	6%	7%	6%	15%	4%	1%	23%

Canadians' voting considerations are far from static, and many report having seen a shift in their likelihood to vote for a particular party over the past few weeks. On balance, fewer Canadians are considering a vote for the Liberals, NDP and People's Party. Three in ten (28%) say that they've become more likely to vote Conservative over the past few weeks, the highest among all parties.

	Likelihood to vote for party	
	More Likely	**Less Likely**
The Conservative Party	28%	28%
The Liberal Party	24%	34%
The New Democratic Party	19%	32%
The Green Party	22%	25%
The People's Party of Canada	11%	32%
The Bloc Quebecois	5%	7%
Some other party	5%	20%

Those who say their likelihood to vote for a party has changed at least somewhat in the past few weeks were asked if any issues in particular have influenced their party voting decision over the same period of time. The issues most likely to be driving voting decisions closely mirror those that matter most to Canadians overall: the economy (39%), healthcare (36%), climate change (32%), taxes (32%) and immigration (28%).

Overall, fewer say their voting decision has been influenced by the Ethics Commissioner's report on SNC-Lavalin (20%), or by issues like abortion (12%) or same-sex marriage (12%). Yet these issues, which have dominated the headlines at various points in recent weeks, are influencing some voters more than others.

- **Those who are now *more* likely to vote Tory** are being driven by concerns about the economy (48%) and taxes (44%)
- **Those who are *less* likely to vote Tory** are most likely to be concerned about climate change (42%), with comparatively few citing issues like same-sex marriage (16%) or abortion (14%).
- **Those who are *more* likely to vote Liberal** are being driven by concerns about healthcare (45%) and climate change (42%).
- **Those who are *less* likely to vote Liberal** are driven by concerns about the economy (42%), taxes (35%), healthcare (32%), and immigration (32%). The Ethics Commissioner's report about SNC-Lavalin (31%) is also a driving force.

The poll reveals several issues where one of the two main contenders in the election is bleeding votes to another:

- **Healthcare:** cited as vote-influencing issue for 43% of those who are now *less* likely to vote Conservative, and 45% of those who are now *more* likely to vote Liberal;
- **Climate change:** 42% of those *less* likely to vote Tory, and 42% of those *more* likely to vote Liberal;
- **Ethics Commissioner's report on SNC Lavalin:** 31% of those *more* likely to vote Tory, and 31% of those *less* likely to vote Liberal;
- **Same-sex marriage:** 16% of those *less* likely to vote Tory, and 15% of those *more* likely to vote Liberal.

Support for Provincial Legislation on Religious Symbols

Canadians are divided on whether to support legislation that restricts religious symbols worn by public servants. A little more than half (52%) say they oppose (29% strongly/23% somewhat) a provincial law to restrict or disallow public servants (including police officers, teachers, lawyers in provincial court, etc.) from wearing religious clothing and symbols, such as a crucifix, turban, hijab, etc., while they are at work. This leaves close to have (48%) who say they support such a law (23% strongly/25% somewhat).

- Support for this type of provincial law is strongest in Quebec (63%), where the secularism law known as Bill 21 has been in effect since the summer (and where 36% strongly support it), followed by Saskatchewan and Manitoba (53%), Alberta (45%), Atlantic Canada (45%), British Columbia (43%), and Ontario (42%).
- Men (52%) are more likely than women (45%) to support such a law.
- Support increases in line with age, from 39% of those 18-34, to 48% of those 35-54, and 55% of those aged 55 and over.

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- Among decided voters and those leaning toward a party, support for this type of law is strongest among Bloc Quebecois voters (85%), followed by People's Party voters (76%), and Conservative Party voters (62%). Fewer than half of those who intend to voter Liberal (39%), NDP (35%), or Green (35%) say they would support such a law.
- Rural Canadians (62%) are significantly more likely to support such a law than those living in urban areas (46%).

Immigration: A Potential Wedge Issue?

Though only 14% of Canadians point to immigration as an important issue that will influence their voting decision, its perceived importance varies dramatically depending on who is asked. The importance of immigration as a ballot-box issue is significantly higher among Tory supporters (22%) and Bloc Quebecois supporters (24%). Among the relatively small number of voters who lean toward the People's Party, immigration is an even more important issue, cited as such by 40%.

Immigration has traditionally been a regional wedge issue in Canada. Though this dynamic looks set to hold in the current campaign, the differences by region are not yet drastically pronounced. While fewer than two in ten in any region see it as a decisive issue when voting, those in Quebec are the most likely to rank immigration in their top three issues of importance (17%), ahead of Ontario, the Prairies (14%), Alberta (13%), BC (11%), and Atlantic Canada (9%).

Asked which party is best to deal with immigration, those who see the issue as important are most likely to point to the Conservatives (42%) – an opinion shared by 45% in Ontario compared to just 29% in Quebec.

However, there is undeniable link between support for a provincial ban on religious symbols worn by public servants and concern about immigration. Canadians who support a provincial law restricting these symbols are twice as likely as those who do not support a provincial law (20% vs. 9%) to say immigration is a top issue in determining how they will vote on October 21st.

Focus on Quebec

Given Quebec's importance in helping to determine the outcome of the election, *La Presse* and Global News teamed up to conduct an oversample of Quebec voters, yielding a sample of 1,004 Quebecers with which to analyze the province's unique dynamics during the campaign.

Healthcare and Climate Change Top Issues in Quebec

When Quebecers head to the ballot box on October 21st, their vote choice will be influenced by a similar mix of issues as voters elsewhere in Canada. However, one key difference is that climate change (34%) is on par with healthcare (35%) as the most important issue in determining how Quebecers will vote in the upcoming federal election, while it stood 10 points behind healthcare at the national level. Following these two top issues are taxes (25%), the economy (25%), affordability and the cost of living (21%), poverty and social inequality (19%) and immigration (17%).

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Liberals Have the Edge on Most Quebec Issues

Another key difference between Quebec and other regions is that the Liberal party tends to have the upper hand over the Conservatives on most key issues driving the vote – except for immigration, where the Tories do have a definite lead:

- Healthcare: The Liberals (34%)
- Climate change: The Greens (46%), followed distantly by the Liberals (24%)
- Taxes: The Conservatives (30%) or the Liberals (28%)
- The economy: The Liberals (37%), with the Conservatives nipping at their heels (33%)
- Affordability and cost of living: The Liberals (26%)
- Poverty and social inequality: The Liberals (27%)
- Immigration: The Conservatives (29%), with the Liberals in second place (22%)

Likewise, the Liberals seem to be faring better than most parties when it comes to Quebecers' consideration: overall likelihood to vote Liberal has not changed in Quebec over the past few weeks, while for other parties, more Quebecers say they are now less likely to vote for them than they were.

	Quebec: Likelihood to vote for party	
	More Likely	**Less Likely**
The Liberal Party	30%	29%
The Conservative Party	23%	29%
The Green Party	20%	27%
The Bloc Quebecois	20%	28%
The New Democratic Party	18%	29%
The People's Party of Canada	9%	34%
Some other party	5%	19%

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About the Study

These are some of the findings of an Ipsos poll conducted between September 11 and 13, on behalf of Global News and La Presse. For this survey, a sample of n = 2562 Canadians aged 18+ was interviewed. A sample of n = 2062 was interviewed online, via the Ipsos I-Say panel and non-panel sources, and respondents earn a nominal incentive for their participation. A sample of n = 500 Canadians aged 18+ was interviewed by live-interview telephone interviewers by landline and cellphone, using random-digit dialing. Quotas and weighting were employed to balance demographics 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 (weighting efficiency = 62.9%). The precision of Ipsos polls which include non-probability sampling is measured using a credibility interval. In this case, the poll is accurate to within ± 2.2 percentage points, 19 times out of 20, had all Canadians been polled. The credibility interval will be wider among subsets of the population. All sample surveys and polls may be subject to other sources of error, including, but not limited to coverage error, and measurement error. Ipsos abides by the disclosure standards established by the CRIC, found here:
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