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Canadians Divided on Need for New Election During Pandemic; Conservatives More Likely to Agree Election is Necessary

Half (54%) Agree (19% Strongly/34% Somewhat) They Would Be Comfortable Voting In-Person, Higher (70%) Among Decided Conservative Voters

Toronto, ON, April 18, 2021 – To call an election or not – that has been the question on the minds of many in the nation’s capital, with whisperings of an election growing louder since early spring. A recent Ipsos poll conducted on behalf of Global News has found that while half of Canadians believe that an election is necessary for them to show their support or disapproval of the Trudeau government’s handling of the pandemic and subsequent recovery, reservations still remain over its timing in the current context. In addition to the recent example of Newfoundland and Labrador’s paused election serving as a cautionary tale to those contemplating whether to call Canadians to the polls during a public health emergency, this most recent poll also shows that those most likely to show up to vote may not necessarily be there to register their support for the Trudeau government.

A Risky Political Move?

The decision to call an election while COVID-19 cases continue to climb in many parts of the country is a bold political maneuver. Half (53%) agree (18% strongly/35% somewhat) that it is important to have a federal election this year so that Canadians can have a say on the Trudeau government’s handling of the pandemic and its plans for the recovery. This sentiment is higher (70%) among those who have already decided that they will vote Conservative, meaning that calling an election at this time could backfire on the Liberals. Another three in ten (34%) disagree (12% strongly/22% somewhat) that an election is necessary, with older Canadians more likely than other age groups to disagree (47% among 55+ v. 26% among 18-34 and 26% among 35-54). The remaining 14% aren’t sure.

Even if half agree that having a chance to register their approval or disapproval of how the Trudeau government has been handling the pandemic is necessary, nearly six in ten (57%) also agree (17% strongly/40% somewhat) that an election this year would not be fair, given that we are still in a pandemic. Three in ten (33%) take the opposite position and disagree (11% strongly/22% somewhat), with those in Saskatchewan/Manitoba (20%) and British Columbia (19%) more likely to say they “strongly disagree” when compared to Ontario (10%) and Quebec (4%).

In addition, not only do a large proportion of Canadians say that it would be *unfair* to hold a pandemic election, but also that it would be downright *unsafe*. Over half (54%) agree (19% strongly/34% somewhat) that holding a federal election this year would be irresponsible because it could force people to risk their lives to vote in person. Those living in Ontario are more inclined to agree with this sentiment (60% v. 44% in Atlantic Canada and 43% in Alberta), with 28% saying they ‘strongly agree’. Men, traditionally more tuned in to politics, are also more likely to say they strongly agree that holding an election right now would be irresponsible (24% v. 15% among women). But if called to the polls, half (54%) of Canadians agree (21% strongly/33% somewhat) that they’d be ‘completely comfortable’ with voting in person this year. Four in ten (37%) disagree (13% strongly/24%



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somewhat) and the remaining one in ten (10%) are still on the fence, which could be a challenge for Elections Canada to ensure equal access to all registered voters.

In addition to decided Conservative voters being more likely to say that now is the time for an election, they also seem to be the most eager to vote, should a pandemic election be called. A strong majority (70%) of decided Conservative voters are more likely to say they're 'completely comfortable' with voting in person this year. As for decided Liberal voters, they are less keen on an election; nearly seven in ten (67%) say that a pandemic election would not be fair and six in ten (62%) say that an election this year would be irresponsible because it would force people to risk their lives to vote.

Voting During a Pandemic Election

If there were an election called before COVID-19 was brought under control, it seems that most Canadians would be likely to show up to the polls in person, but certain groups are more likely to do so than others. Given a pandemic election, three in ten (27%) say that it is *less likely* (9% much/18% somewhat) they will cast their ballot in-person on election day. Over four in ten (44%) say that the timing would not have an impact on their decision whether to vote in-person, and the remaining three in ten (29%) say they would be *more likely* (14% much/15% somewhat). Those in Alberta are more likely to say they'd vote in-person during a pandemic election (41%), compared to those in other regions such as Quebec (21%) and British Columbia (23%).

Of course, queueing up on election day is not the only way Canadians can choose to participate in an election. Casting a ballot in-person at an advance poll has become an increasingly popular way to have one's say. In fact, four in ten (41%) Canadians say that they are *more likely* (16% much/26% somewhat) to participate in this way, while two in ten (19%) say that it is *less likely* (6% much/13% somewhat) they'd vote in-person at advance polls. For the remaining four in ten (39%), the timing of the election would have no impact either way on their decision to take advantage of this option.

Though mostly used by Canadians living abroad, mail-in ballots have attracted much interest, especially with the large numbers of Americans voting by mail in last year's presidential election (and resulting controversy surrounding those votes). Half (48%) of Canadians say they're *more likely* (21% much/27% somewhat) to vote by mail if an election were to be called during the pandemic, with two in ten (20%) saying they would be *less likely* (9% much/11% somewhat) to participate through this means. The remaining 33% would not be swayed either way. Mail-in ballots seem to be less favoured by older voters, who are not as likely as other age groups to say they'll be more inclined to vote by mail (36% among 55+ v. 51% among 18-34 and 57% among 35-54).

Likelihood of Using Ways of Voting in a Pandemic Election

Method	More likely (Much/somewhat)	Unchanged	Less likely (Much/somewhat)
In-person on election day	29%	44%	27%
In-person at advance polls	41%	39%	19%
Mail-in ballot	48%	33%	20%



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About the Study

These are some of the findings of an Ipsos poll conducted between April 7-9, 2021, on behalf of Global News. For this survey, a sample of 1,001 Canadians aged 18+ was interviewed online. Quotas and weighting were employed to ensure that the sample's composition reflects that of the Canadian population according to census parameters. The precision of Ipsos online polls is measured using a credibility interval. In this case, the poll is accurate to within ± 3.5 percentage points, 19 times out of 20, had all Canadians aged 18+ 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.

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