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This Election is Far from Over: Turnout, Vote Switching, and Mixed Motives all Point to Potentially Volatile Campaign

Two in Ten Canadians Switching their Vote from Last Election; Only 45% Certain of their Choice in 2021

Toronto, ON, August 23, 2021 — The 2021 election is far from a *fait accompli*. Despite the Liberals having held a lead of at least 5 points over the Conservatives since the Spring, all signs point towards a volatile electorate who could be easily swayed one way or the other by a compelling campaign from any of the major parties.

According to a new Ipsos poll conducted for Global News, three in ten (31%) Canadians say they don't know who is going to win the upcoming federal election, meaning that millions of Canadians believe the election will mean something and will help to determine who leads the next government. An Ipsos poll released earlier this week showed that 13% of Canadians remain completely undecided. Among those who do indicate a choice, only 45% are absolutely certain of that choice, reserving the right to switch their vote. Layer on this the unpredictability of turnout in a pandemic election, strategic voting and other motivations, and this election has the potential to present a few surprises to Canadians and pollsters alike.

Voter Turnout – Advantage: Nobody

The key to winning a close race is to motivate one's supporters to actually cast a ballot on election day (or in advance). At the start of the campaign, 65% of Canadians say they are absolutely certain to vote on election day. Traditionally the Tories receive a ballot-box bonus on account of being the favoured party among those aged 55+ who have the highest turnout rates, but Ipsos polling has shown that the Tories possess no such advantage among Boomers this time around. In fact, Tory (67%), Liberal (65%), NDP (64%), Bloc (64%) and Green (68%) voters are all roughly equally as likely to say they are completely certain to vote in this election.

Moreover, feelings of regret, duty and interest are roughly equal across the major parties – something that we will be watching for in the coming weeks, to see if one party is able to motivate its base more than others, thereby producing a ballot-box bonus.

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Statement	% Agree Libs	% Agree Cons	% Agree NDP	% Agree Bloc	% Agree Green
I will regret it if I don't vote <i>(Top 1 Box)</i>	54%	53%	52%	43%	50%
I have a duty/personal responsibility to vote <i>(Top 1 Box)</i>	63%	61%	59%	65%	60%
I have a great deal of interest in following the news and information about the election <i>(Top 2 Box)</i>	50%	44%	44%	32%	33%
My vote will make a difference <i>(Top 1 Box)</i>	41%	28%	28%	31%	27%

If anything, Bloc turnout appears a little less firm, with lower feelings of regret and interest among current voters of that party.

Vote Switching – Advantage: NDP

Many Canadians have already switched their vote since the last election. Two in ten (20%) say that they party they're voting for is not the same as 2019. The primary beneficiaries of this appear to be the NDP (39% of NDP voters say they voted for a different party last time), while the Green Party (36%) is also picking up new votes. Two in ten (20%) Conservative voters say they voted for a different party last time, while just 13% of Bloc and 9% of Liberal voters have been recruited from opposition ranks.

Overall, 45% of declared voters are absolutely certain of their vote choice and will not change their mind between now and election day, leaving a majority of Canadians not nearly as certain: fairly certain (41%), not very certain (11%) or not at all certain (2%). Bloc support is most firm with 56% saying they are absolutely certain of their vote, while supporters of the Liberals (48%), Conservatives (46%), Greens (39%) and NDP (37%) are less certain. Ipsos polling in June showed the NDP as the clear second-choice favourite for vote switchers, with relatively few voters oscillating between the Liberals and Conservatives.

Strategic Voting and Other Motives – Advantage: Liberals

The data reveal that roughly one in three Canadians is voting for a party not because they like it the best, but because they are trying to make a statement or prevent something from happening:

- Nearly two in ten (16%) are **trying to make sure another party doesn't win**. This is a particularly strong sentiment among Conservative voters (23%), a quarter of whom are trying to prevent a Trudeau victory first and foremost. It is a less common motivation for Liberal (16%), Bloc (13%), NDP (9%) and Green voters (6%).

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- One in eight (12%) are wanting to **express their disgust with all of the other parties**, effectively a protest vote, once again more prominent among Conservative (17%) voters but also NDP voters (14%). In fact, four in ten (40%) Canadians agree that they **don't really like any of the parties in this election**, a feeling most strongly held by Green Party (44%) supporters who haven't found a home with any of the other parties.
- One in twelve (8%) voters is **trying to prevent a coalition/minority government**, a more common motivation for Liberal voters (12%) who are trying to secure a Trudeau majority, and avoid another minority.

The prospect of yet another minority government has two in three (64%) Canadians agreeing (31% strongly/33% somewhat) that that they hope somebody wins a majority government so that we don't have another election for a while. Naturally, Liberal (81%) supporters are most likely to want a majority outcome, but a majority of Conservatives (63%), NDP (57%), Green (67%) and Bloc (52%) supporters agree as well.

Conversely, four in ten (43%) agree (11% strongly/32% somewhat) that they would be happy with a minority government as an outcome of this election – but Bloc (34%) voters are least happy with this prospect. Green (49%) and Tory (48%) voters are most accepting of this scenario.

Finally – in a show of strategic thinking – one in four (25%) Canadians says they will vote for a candidate they think can win, but that is not their first choice. Bloc (43%) and Liberal (32%) voters appear most inclined to be voting in this manner while fewer Green (25%), NDP (24%) and Conservative voters (23%) are voting for their second choice in order to back a horse that can win.

Looking Ahead

All told, this election might be more about the future than it is about the past. Throughout the pandemic, the Prime Minister has received strong approval ratings for his handling of the situation. But Canadians are looking forward. Despite being less than enthusiastic about holding an election during the pandemic, three quarters (74%) agree (34% strongly/40% somewhat) that this election is critical for deciding what Canada's future will be like following the pandemic, a belief that is more strongly held by Liberal (84%) and Green voters (84%) than NDP (77%), Conservative (76%) and Bloc (54%) voters.

As Canadians learn more about the parties' plans for the future, we may see a more volatile electorate as Canadians are still far away from locking in their choice.

- Liberal voters, many of whom are voting for their second choice, may struggle with turnout if O'Toole doesn't turn out to be the bad guy the Liberals are trying to paint him as.
- The Conservatives may be missing their traditional ballot-box bonus since they can't seem to break through among the key Boomer demographic.
- The NDP is benefiting from attracting new voters, but whether they'll stick around and actually vote is a different story altogether.



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- The Green Party appears to be more of a protest vote than an actual vote of confidence in the party and its future.
- The Bloc's support is firm, but voter turnout may be low for this group of voters in the absence of a key Quebec-based wedge issue which motivates them to cast their ballot.

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About the Study

These are some of the findings of an Ipsos poll conducted between August 13 and 16, on behalf of Global News. For this survey, a sample of n = 2,001 Canadians aged 18+ was interviewed. A sample of n = 1,501 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. 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 ± 2.5 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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<https://ipsosintelligence.ca/canadiancontext/>

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