



NEWS RELEASE

THE NATIONAL ANGUS REID POLL

- THE PUBLIC AGENDA -

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THE PUBLIC AGENDA

The unemployment situation continues to hold the No. 1 spot on the public agenda, with more than one-half of Canadians singling it out as the most important issue currently facing the country – a 7-point increase in "top-of-mind" concern since this spring.

National unity remains a solid second on the public's priorities list. Indeed, the number of Canadians naming this as a pressing issue for the country has doubled since February.

The late-June National Angus Reid Poll included an ongoing monitor of Canadians' public issues agenda. Those surveyed were posed an "open-ended" question at the beginning of the interview asking them to name the most important issues for Canada today. This probing yielded the following responses, presented here in descending order of their total mentions: (Table 1)

- Jobs/Unemployment – This post-election sounding finds the jobs issue at its highest level of "top-of-mind" public concern so far in 1997. Over one-half (53%) of surveyed Canadians cited unemployment, on an unaided basis, as the issue currently warranting the most serious attention from the country's leaders, an increase of 7 percentage points since April. Mentions of the unemployment situation were highest among Atlantic Canadians (63%).
- National Unity/Quebec's Future/The Constitution – National unity/Quebec's future continues to climb up the public's agenda. This issue was mentioned by 40 percent of those interviewed in late June, up from 30 percent in April and 21 percent in February. Regionally, mentions of this issue ranged from 31 percent in Atlantic Canada to a high of 49 percent in Alberta.
- Deficit/Debt – One in five (22%) survey respondents pointed to the deficit/debt as a serious issue facing Canada right now, echoing the level of mentions received by this issue this spring but down from this year's peak of 34 percent recorded in a post-budget poll. Of all major population segments, Albertans (33%) were the most likely to single out Canada's fiscal situation as a pressing concern.

- Health Care/Medicare – A similar number (19%) of those polled said the availability and/or quality of health care is an issue requiring utmost attention from the country today. Women were twice as likely as men to name health care (26% versus 12%).
- The Economy – Sixteen percent of respondents cited the state of the economy in general.
- Education – The education system was named by one in ten (10%) surveyed Canadians as an issue needing to be addressed by the country's leaders at this time.
- Poverty – Issues relating to poverty were cited by 7 percent.
- Taxes – Six percent said the issue of taxes/taxation requires top priority right now.
- Other Social Services – The same number (6%) mentioned other social services.
- Crime/Justice – Issues concerning crime and the justice system were also offered by 6 percent of those surveyed as highly important for Canada today.
- Environment – Another 6 percent said the environment/pollution should currently be a high priority for Canada.

A number of other issues were mentioned by smaller numbers of surveyed Canadians, including: government/politics (3%); immigration/refugees (3%); defence/military/Somalia Inquiry (2%); among others cited by fewer respondents.

Survey Methodology

This National Angus Reid Poll was conducted by telephone between June 23rd and 30th, 1997 among a representative cross-section of 1,512 Canadian adults.

The actual number of completed interviews in each region was as follows: B.C. - 202; Alberta - 135; Manitoba/Saskatchewan - 120; Ontario - 525; Quebec - 410; Atlantic - 122. These data were statistically weighted to ensure the sample's regional and age/sex composition reflects that of the actual Canadian population according to the 1991 and 1996 Census data.

With a national sample of 1,512, one can say with 95 percent certainty that the results are within ± 2.5 percentage points of what they would have been had the entire adult Canadian population been polled. The margin of error will be larger within regions and for other sub-groupings of the survey population.

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