

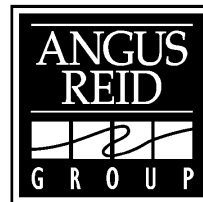
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# **CTV / GLOBE AND MAIL / NATIONAL ANGUS REID GROUP POLL**

**- FEDERAL POLITICAL SCENE AND THE PUBLIC AGENDA -  
- CANADIAN CONSUMER CONFIDENCE -**

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CANADA'S NATIONAL NEWSPAPER  
**THE GLOBE AND MAIL**



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This National Angus Reid Poll was conducted by telephone between November 20<sup>th</sup> and 25<sup>th</sup>, 1997 among a representative cross-section of 1,516 Canadian adults.

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 1,516, one can say with 95 percent certainty that the results are within  $\pm 2.5$  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.

## THE FEDERAL POLITICAL SCENE AND THE PUBLIC AGENDA

The latest National Angus Reid Poll, conducted between November 20<sup>th</sup> and 25<sup>th</sup> among 1,516 Canadians, looked at the federal parties' popularity and the public's policy priorities, as well as consumer confidence among Canadians. The poll highlights include:

### ***THE FEDERAL POLITICAL SCENE***

#### ***Party Support***

The Chretien Liberals look to be beginning a second honeymoon with the Canadian electorate. This poll finds the Liberals holding 47 percent of the decided vote nationally, up from the 38 percent of the popular vote they received on June 2<sup>nd</sup>. Reform is at 16 percent (versus 19% on election day), while the PCs are at 14 percent (also versus 19%). The NDP is at 11 percent (unchanged), and the Bloc Quebecois is at 11 percent nationally (43% in Quebec). (See Table 1). A total of 10 percent of Canadians polled were undecided/refused or said they would not vote in a federal election, a figure that was 14 percent before a follow-up "leaning" question was asked.

The regional results show:

- ◆ In B.C., the Liberals and Reform are neck-and-neck (37% and 38% respectively).
- ◆ Reform remains well ahead in Alberta (but their 44% is 10 points below their share on election day).
- ◆ The Liberals have moved up to 43 percent and a lead in Manitoba/Saskatchewan, while Reform has moved ahead of the NDP for second place (36% versus 17%).
- ◆ The Liberals enjoy a very solid 59 percent of the decided vote in their Ontario stronghold, leaving the other three parties in a three-way tie for a very distant second place.
- ◆ Quebec remains competitive, with the BQ at 43 percent (5 points up since the election) and the Liberals at 39 percent. The Charest Conservatives have slipped to 12 percent in Quebec (down 10 points since election day).
- ◆ Finally, in Atlantic Canada, the Liberals have recovered some of the support that was missing on election day: they are up 13 points to 46 percent, leaving the PCs (down to 27%) and NDP (21%) well behind. (Table 1)

#### ***Party Approval***

The governing Liberals are also well out in front in terms of their overall approval ratings:

- ◆ By a margin approaching two to one – 62 percent versus 35 percent – the voters polled in late November voiced approval of the federal Liberal government's overall performance

(still, only 9% strongly approved versus 16% who strongly disapproved). Voters in all major regions of the country give the Liberals a “thumbs up”, ranging from 69 percent in Ontario to 54 percent in Quebec. (Table 2) This approval rating is almost as high as early in their first mandate (69%), and a half- dozen points higher than it was a few months before their re-election last summer (55%).

The opposition parties, meanwhile, meet with a divided assessment at best: (Table 3)

- ◆ For Reform in the role of official opposition, 47 percent disapproved versus 41 percent who approved. Regional differences are predictably profound: Reform wins majority approval from western Canadians but leaves two-thirds of Quebecers unimpressed.
- ◆ In the case of the Bloc Quebecois, Quebec voters are split on their performance (45% approve versus 48% disapprove), while over four in five ROC voters disapprove of the Bloc Quebecois.
- ◆ For the resuscitated NDP, 45 percent disapprove while 39 percent approve (17% are unsure). The New Democrats receive their best ratings where they won seats – in Manitoba/Saskatchewan and the Atlantic region.
- ◆ Finally, voters are split on the performance of the resurrected Conservatives under Jean Charest: 44 percent approve versus 42 percent who disapprove. The PCs receive plurality approval or better in central and eastern Canada but do worse in the West. (Table 3)

### ***THE PUBLIC AGENDA***

This late-November poll also included the Angus Reid Group's ongoing monitor of Canadians' public policy priorities by asking those surveyed to highlight the most important issues facing Canada today. Issues highest on the public agenda include: (Table 4)

- ◆ **Jobs/Unemployment** was cited “top-of-mind” by 38 percent of Canadians polled as a key issue facing Canada today. This is the same as last month but is down from 40 percent in September, 49 percent in July and fully 60 percent in May. Unaided mentions are up near the 50 percent mark in Quebec and the Atlantic region.
- ◆ **National unity/Quebec/Constitution** was highlighted by 35 percent of those polled this month. While this puts the unity issue on the forefront of the public’s agenda, mentions are down from 45 percent earlier this fall.
- ◆ **The economy** in general is next with mentions totaling 21 percent.
- ◆ **Health care** was named by 19 percent of Canadians as a critical issue for the country today. There continues to be a major gender gap, with “top-of-mind” mentions twice as high among women than men (26% versus 11%).

- ◆ **Education** was cited by 17 percent in the wake of the Ontario teachers' strike. (Mentions totaled 23% in Ontario.)
- ◆ The **deficit/debt** was singled out by 16 percent of those polled, down a half-dozen points from earlier this fall.
- ◆ **Labour issues/Strikes** were highlighted by 7 percent of those polled as the postal strike got underway.
- ◆ **Poverty/Homelessness** was cited by 6 percent of surveyed Canadians as a major issue facing the country.
- ◆ The **environment** was also pinpointed by 6 percent.
- ◆ **Taxes** were similarly cited by 6 percent.
- ◆ Five percent highlighted other **social services** as needing utmost attention right now.
- ◆ **Crime and justice** issues were cited by one in twenty (5%) polled Canadians.
- ◆ A number of other issues were highlighted by smaller numbers of respondents, including: trade (4%); immigration/refugees (3%); international issues (3%); and others mentioned by still fewer respondents.

## **CANADIAN CONSUMER CONFIDENCE**

Amidst volatility on the stock markets and the prospect of higher interest rates, Canadian consumers' outlook for the national economy has moderated somewhat from the high hit in September, although the outlook remains largely optimistic and most consumers continue to feel the time is right to make a big-ticket purchase. Also encouraging, "job anxiety" has subsided over the course of this year and, in turn, Canadians' outlook for their own financial prospects is now more positive than it has been since the late 1980s.

As for the provincial economies, residents of Alberta continue to set themselves apart from their counterparts elsewhere in the country for their highly optimistic one-year outlook for their own province's economic prospects.

### ***OUTLOOK FOR THE NATIONAL ECONOMY***

- ◆ Canadian consumers' outlook for the national economy has moderated somewhat since September. A slim plurality (43%) of surveyed Canadians said they expect the national economy to improve during the coming year, while just as many (42%) predicted it will stay the same. Only 15 percent thought the health of Canada's economy will worsen over the next 12 months. Optimists still outnumber pessimists by almost a three-to-one margin: however, the proportion forecasting improvement in the Canadian economy has slipped 7 points since September, when the level of optimism peaked at 50 percent after having risen steadily since the beginning of 1997. (Table 1)
- ◆ Confidence in the national economy's prospects remains highest among Albertans (58% foresee improvement), and is also fairly strong among residents of Ontario (46%) and Atlantic Canada (47%). Optimism also exceeds pessimism by a significant margin in British Columbia, Manitoba/Saskatchewan and Quebec, but one-half of residents in each of these regions now expect the status quo to prevail with respect to the Canadian economy.

### ***OUTLOOK FOR THE PROVINCIAL ECONOMIES***

- ◆ In terms of the provincial economies, Alberta residents also continue to hold the most bullish expectations – nearly three-quarters (72%) foresee even better times ahead for the Alberta economy over the next year. (Table 2)
- ◆ Residents of Ontario also remain optimistic about their province's economic prospects for the coming year (44% improve versus 16% get worse). In Manitoba/Saskatchewan, the number expecting things to get better still surpasses the proportion anticipating a downturn (33% versus 17%), but this represents a more muted outlook compared to a couple of

months ago. Quebecers' outlook for their province's economic fortunes also leans toward optimism (33% versus 22%): in fact, the percentage expecting improvement has been inching upwards since the start of 1997, and the optimism/pessimism picture is now the reverse of what it was in January.

- ◆ In British Columbia, on the other hand, the mood has soured. A plurality (43%) of surveyed residents now believe the B.C. economy will deteriorate over the course of the coming year (an 18-point increase since the September sounding), which is more than twice as many as think their province's economy will get healthier (19%, down from 30% two months ago).
- ◆ Meanwhile, Atlantic Canadians have very mixed expectations for the performance of their respective provincial economies in the year ahead – one in three foresee improvement, a similar number envision worse economic conditions, and another one-third predict no change.

### ***OUTLOOK FOR PERSONAL FINANCES***

- ◆ Canadians are more optimistic about their personal financial prospects than they were a year ago, consistent with their heightened confidence in the Canadian economy compared to this time last year. One in three (32%) survey respondents said they expect their own economic situation to improve within the next year, double the number who thought their finances would take a turn for the worse (15%). A majority (53%) continue to expect essentially no change on this front. (Table 3)
- ◆ The current level of optimism for personal economic well-being – in addition to being 5 points higher than was measured the last time this question was asked in November 1996 – is the highest recorded by the Angus Reid Group since April of 1988 (37%), prior to the prolonged economic recession of the 1990s.
- ◆ Alberta residents (49%) remain the most confident that their own financial situation will get better during the next 12 months or so, contrasting most sharply with their counterparts in Quebec and Atlantic Canada (26% each).
- ◆ Generational perspectives are also quite variable. Whereas one-half (49%) of younger respondents (18 to 34) expected their personal finances to improve in the year ahead, this figure dropped to 30 percent among the middle-aged and down to only 14 percent among those 55 and older (two-thirds of whom anticipated no change).

### ***CANADIANS AND "JOB ANXIETY"***

- ◆ In addition to the improved outlook for personal finances, "job anxiety" among Canadians has decreased over the course of this year. One-quarter (25%) of those surveyed said they or someone else in their household is worried about losing their job or being laid off. This figure has declined by 6 percentage points since our previous sounding of this question in

March. Furthermore, “job anxiety” has not been this low since the Angus Reid Group began tracking this economic indicator in November 1990. (Table 4)

- ◆ The level of “job anxiety” is generally consistent across population segments, albeit slightly higher among Atlantic Canadians (29%) and those aged 35 to 54 (32%).

### ***GOOD OR POOR TIME TO MAKE A PURCHASE?***

- ◆ Consumers continue to feel that the time is right to buy a big-ticket item. A large majority (70%) of those surveyed in late November offered a positive assessment of the current consumer climate – one in ten (9%) felt it is a “very good” time now to make a major purchase, with another six in ten (61%) opting for “good”. This compares to one-quarter (27%) who said it is a bad time to make a big purchase (22% “poor”, 5% “very poor”). Canadians’ appraisal of the economic climate for consumers has not changed since the summer. (Table 5)
- ◆ Most Canadian consumers from all major regions say now is a “good/very good” time to make a big purchase, although the majority is slimmer in Atlantic Canada (55%). This positive view also becomes more pronounced with higher levels of household income – from 55 percent of less affluent consumers to fully 85 percent of the most well-off.

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