

Economy Top Issue to Canadians, First Time in Decade

Other Issues Drop as Gas Price Concern Surges

Public Release Date: Friday, May 9, 2008, 6:00 AM EST



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Toronto, ON – A new Ipsos Reid poll finds that for the first time in ten years, the economy has become the top issue that Canadians believe should receive the greatest attention from Canada's leaders. When combining their top-two unaided mentions, one in four (25%) Canadians indicated that the economy was the top issue for them.

Tracking the data every two months over the last two decades reveals that concern for the economy hasn't been this high since 1998 and has risen by 3 points since February (22%), and 13 points since December (12%).

Despite being in first place for much of last year, top-two mentions for the environment have dropped it to second place at 22%, down from 24% in February and 34% in December. Concern for healthcare has dropped to 20%, down 9 points since February. In fact, healthcare is at its lowest point since 1997, and now only ranks as the third-highest issue.

In fourth place, with mentions from 12% of Canadians, is the price of gas and oil (up 11 points since February). Rounding out the top five at 10% is defence/armed forces (down 7 points since February).

Further comparisons with the late 90s also shows that mentions specifically relating to jobs and unemployment remain very low in 2008 (4%) compared to 1997 (49%), for example.

These are the findings of an Ipsos Reid poll conducted on behalf of CanWest News Service and Global Television from April 29 to May 1, 2008. For the survey, a representative randomly selected sample of 1000 adult Canadians was interviewed by telephone. With a sample of this size, the results are considered accurate to within ± 3.1 percentage points, 19 times out of 20, of what they would have been had the entire adult population of Canada been polled. The margin of error will be larger within regions and for other sub-groupings of the survey population. These data were weighted to ensure that the sample's regional and age/sex composition reflects that of the actual Canadian population according to Census data.

By the Regions...

- In **British Columbia**, healthcare remains in the top spot (26%), followed by the economy (22%), the environment (20%), defence/armed forces (15%), and oil and gas prices (10%).
- In **Alberta**, the economy (26%) reigns supreme, with healthcare (22%), the environment (21%), oil and gas prices (10%) and education (9%) following behind.
- In **Saskatchewan and Manitoba**, the economy (26%) has received the most mentions, while healthcare (16%), defence/armed forces (16%), the environment (13%) and oil and gas prices (11%) fall significantly behind.
- In **Ontario**, total mentions for the economy as the issue that should receive the greatest attention from Canada's leaders are the highest at 31%. All other issues, including the environment (20%), healthcare (18%) oil and gas prices (16%) and defence/armed forces (9%) are lagging behind.

- **Quebec** is the only jurisdiction where the environment (31%) is still tops, followed by healthcare (21%), the economy (19%), education (12%), and defence/armed forces (9%).
- In **Atlantic Canada**, oil and gas prices (22%) is the issue receiving the highest proportion of mentions, followed by healthcare (17%), the environment (14%), education (14%), and finally the economy (13%).

Focus on the Economy...

While total mentions for the economy are up across the board, some regions and demographic groups are much more likely to have mentioned that the economy is the top issue which they believe should be the focus of Canada's leaders.

- Residents of Ontario (31%) are more likely than those living in Alberta (26%), Saskatchewan and Manitoba (26%), British Columbia (22%), Quebec (19%) and Atlantic Canada (13%) to say that the economy is the top issue.
- Older Canadians (30%), aged 55 and older, have a much higher propensity to believe that the economy is the number-one issue, followed by middle-aged Canadians (25%), aged 35 to 54, and younger Canadians (19%), aged 18 to 34.
- Men (32%) are considerably more likely than women (18%) to mention that the economy is the primary issue that Canada's leaders should focus on.
- Urban Canadians (26%) are more inclined to mention the economy as their top issue than are rural Canadians (19%).



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- Those whose family earns in excess of \$60,000 a year are more likely (26%) than those who earn \$30,000 to \$60,000 (25%) or less than \$30,000 a year (16%) to think this.

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