

Half (51%) of Canadians Believe Khadr Should Serve All (25%) or Some (26%) of his Sentence in Canada

*But Seven in Ten (69%) Believe Khadr is Probably Guilty and
Plea Bargain is Too Generous*

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Toronto, ON – Canadians are evenly split on whether Omar Khadr should serve at least part of his sentence in Canada, according to a new Ipsos Reid poll exclusively for Postmedia News and Global Television. While one half (49%) of Canadians believe that Khadr should serve ‘none’ of his time in Canada, the other half (51%) of Canadians believe he should be able to serve ‘all’ (25%) or at least ‘some’ (26%) of his sentence in Canada.

The country is split along regional lines as well, with a majority of those living in Alberta (58%), British Columbia (54%) and Ontario (52%) believing he should serve ‘none’ of his sentence in Canada, while a majority of those living in Atlantic Canada (61%), Saskatchewan and Manitoba (59%) and Quebec (57%) believe he should be able to spend ‘some’ or ‘all’ of his time in Canada.

Omar Khadr is a Canadian citizen who was captured by U.S. troops after a firefight in Afghanistan and held in Guantanamo Bay for the last seven years. After maintaining his innocence since being captured, as part of a plea bargain he has recently pleaded guilty to being a member of al-Qaeda, participating in acts of terrorism and murdering an American soldier. The plea bargain was agreed upon by both the Canadian and American governments and includes a provision which could allow him to serve some of his sentence in Canada,

where prison conditions are better than in Guantanamo Bay and the minimum amount of time served before being eligible for parole is much lower than in the United States.

In what came as a surprise to many, Omar Khadr appeared to experience a change of heart having pleaded guilty after vehemently asserting his innocence since being incarcerated. Perhaps looking at the plea bargain with a sceptical eye, three in ten (31%) Canadians believe that 'Omar Khadr probably is not guilty and was forced into the plea bargain as his only option to be released someday after serving his sentence, and that the Canadian Government should have been offering him more assistance prior to this point'.

However, the majority (69%) of Canadians more closely believe that 'Khadr probably is guilty and this plea bargain is too generous, and that the Canadian government was right not to have offered him any assistance up to this point'.

These are some of the findings of an Ipsos Reid poll conducted between October 29 and November 1, 2010, on behalf of Postmedia News and Global Television. For this survey, a sample of 1,046 adults from Ipsos' Canadian online panel was interviewed online. Weighting was then employed to balance demographics and 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. A survey with an unweighted probability sample of this size and a 100% response rate would have an estimated margin of error of +/-3.1 percentage points, 19 times out of 20, of what the results would have been had the entire population of adults in Canada been polled. 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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