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Up 10 Points since Start of Campaign*

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***Three in ten Canadians (31%) discussed policy and politics on social and
news media spaces online in the past week,
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Toronto, ON – More Canadians are using social media to engage in discussion about policy and politics than before the campaign started, according to a new Ipsos Reid study conducted for Postmedia News and Global Television. Three in ten Canadians (31%) say they have logged on to social networking sites or media news sites in order to discuss public policy and political issues at least once in the past week. These results, obtained during the fourth week of the campaign (April 18 through 20), represent a significant increase from the 21% who said they went online to discuss policy or politics at least once in the past week immediately before the onset of the campaign (March 22 through 24).

Those who say they have engaged online on a daily basis has also increased to 10%, up 4 points.

Who are most likely to be engaged online on a weekly basis?

By age, younger respondents (18 to 34 years: 51%) are most likely to say they've engaged online at least a couple times over the last week, while middle aged (35 to 54 years: 24%) and

older respondents (55 years and older: 20%) are less likely to say they have done so on at least a weekly basis.

By gender, men (36%) are much more likely than women (25%) to say they have engaged in the past week.

Regionally, Albertans (40%) and Ontarians (34%) are more likely than British Columbians (27%), Quebecers (28%), Atlantic Canadians (28%) and residents of Saskatchewan and Manitoba (21%) to say they've engaged online on at least a weekly basis.

Those who say they would vote for the New Democratic Parties (38%), Liberal (36%) if an election were held tomorrow are most likely to say they've engaged online at least a couple times over the last week, while fewer Green voters (30%), Conservative voters (28%) and Bloc voters (22%) say they have done so.

Traditional media remains the go-to source of information about the election for most Canadians...

When asked which of several means they have relied upon for information about the federal election, most Canadians (87%) say they have turned to traditional news media (such as television news, newspaper or radio programs) for their information. One in five (21%) say they have turned to the online websites of traditional news media, while one in ten say they have turned to either online news websites like MSN or Yahoo! (11%) or to social media (9%) for information about the federal election.

When asked which one of these sources they consider to be the most important source of information about the election, nearly four in five (79%) say traditional media sources are most important, followed distantly by one in ten (9%) who say the online websites of traditional news media are most important. Just five percent consider social media websites

to be the most important sources of information about the election, while two percent consider online news websites such as MSN or Yahoo! to be the most important sources.

The majority (65%) of those who say they discussed policy or politics at least once in the past week still consider traditional media sources to be the most important source of information about the campaign, though they are significantly less likely to say this than are those who have not engaged online in the past week (85%). Those who have discussed policy or politics online at least once in the past week are more likely than those who have not done so to consider the online websites of traditional news media (18% vs. 5%) and social media websites (8% vs. 4%) to be the most important sources of information about the election.

There is little difference between Conservative (79%), Liberal (80%), NDP (77%) or Bloc (84%) voters in the proportions who consider traditional news media to be the most important source of information about the election. Liberal voters (13%) are just slightly more likely than average (9%) to say they view the online websites of traditional news media to be the most important source of information about the election.

These are some of the findings of the Social Media and Political Engagement Study conducted by Ipsos Reid from April 18-20, 2011. For the survey, a representative randomly-selected sample of 1,000 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. 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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