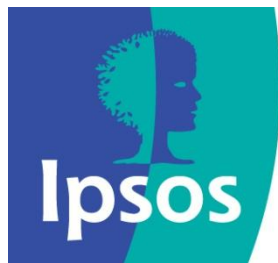


Harper at Halfway Mark of His Majority: Approval Rating (42%) Steady Despite Liberal Resurgence

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Harper at Halfway Mark of His Majority: Approval Rating (42%) Steady Despite Liberal Resurgence

Toronto, ON – At the midway point of Harper's first majority and third mandate, Canadians' approval of the Prime Minister's performance remains relatively consistent, even though many have become enamoured with the presumptive heir of the Liberal Party, Justin Trudeau. According to a new poll conducted by Ipsos Reid on behalf of Postmedia News and Global Television, two in five (42%, down 3 points since last year) 'approve' of the performance of the Conservative government under the leadership of Stephen Harper, while three in five (58%, up 3 points.) 'disapprove' of the Harper government's performance. With approximately two years to go before an election anything is possible, but if those who approve of his performance are prepared to support him in the next election, the Tories could be on their way to a fourth mandate.

In fact, nearly half (45%, up 2 pts. from late 2012) of Canadians 'agree' (16% strongly/29% somewhat) that 'Prime Minister Harper should run for office again during the next election set for 2015', but a majority (55%, down 2 pts.) 'disagree' (33% strongly/22% somewhat) that Harper should run again in hopes of a fourth mandate.

Despite this consistent contentment with the Harper government, the next election is still two years away and will feature a campaign with two new combatants for the reigning and defending Harper Conservatives – Liberal leader Justin Trudeau and NDP leader Thomas Mulcair. With the current Harper mandate at its halfway mark, the issues of today and the ballot questions for the 2015 campaign are far apart, giving all leaders ample time to make their case as to why they are the best choice to govern the nation.

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While Canadians believe that Prime Minister Stephen Harper would be the most effective leader in governing Canada through tough economic times (as revealed in a poll released earlier this weekend), more Canadians in 2013 appear indifferent to this year's federal budget, and less likely to give it a "thumbs up". Just one in ten (13%, down 5 pts. from April 2012) say that the budget overall is 'good and they'd symbolically give it two thumbs up', although slightly less (22%, down 2 pts.) believe the budget is 'bad and they'd symbolically give it two thumbs down'. Two in three (65%, up 10 pts.) cite the budget as being 'neither good nor bad and they'd symbolically just shrug their shoulders'.

In contrast to relatively stable approval ratings is the fact that more Canadians believe that the country is headed down the wrong path compared to a year ago. A majority (54%) believe things in Canada are heading off on the wrong track, (up 6 points) while a minority (46%) think they're going in the right direction (down 6 points).

Another possible hindrance for the Harper Conservatives in the lead up to the next election is their notoriety for being secretive and for pushing their agenda from behind closed doors. Seven in ten (69%) Canadians 'agree' (34% strongly/34% somewhat) that '**the Harper Conservatives are too secretive and have not kept their promise to govern according to high ethical standards**', while just three in ten (31%) 'disagree' (8% strongly/23% somewhat) with this accusation.

In fact, just two in five (37%) 'agree' (7% strongly/30% somewhat) that '**the Harper Conservatives are living up to the promise they made when first elected in 2006 to provide an ethical, open, and transparent government**', while majority (63%) 'disagree' (31% strongly/32% somewhat) with this statement.

Canadians Split on Keystone Strategy

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- 2 -

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Interestingly, when looking at the Harper government through the lens of the Keystone XL pipeline debate, Canadians are split on what the government should do at home and what they should do with Canada's neighbours to the south.

When it comes to dealing with the US, half (52%) 'agree' (13% strongly/38% somewhat) '**they think the federal government is on the right track in urging the US government to approve the proposed Keystone XL pipeline through the country**', while the other half (48%) 'disagree' (19% strongly/30% somewhat).

When it comes to the pipeline's environmental effects on Canada, Canadians are split on whether the government should put the brakes on the Keystone XL project. Half (51%) 'agree' (19% strongly/32% somewhat) that '**they think the federal government should stop promoting the Keystone XL pipeline because the Alberta oil sands will produce too much greenhouse gas emissions and lead to further climate change**', although the other half of the country (49%) 'disagrees' (16% strongly/33% somewhat).

These are some of the findings of an Ipsos Reid poll conducted between March 28th to April 3rd, 2013, on behalf of Postmedia News and Global Television. For this survey, a sample of 1,053 Canadians, from Ipsos' Canadian online panel was interviewed online. Weighting was then employed to balance demographics to 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. The precision of Ipsos online polls is measured using a credibility interval. In this case, the poll is accurate to within +/- 3.4 percentage points had all Canadians adults been surveyed. 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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