

**The Return of Canadian Soldiers from Afghanistan:  
Canadians Deeply Divided on the Mission and Outcome**  
*Vast Majority Support PM Harper's Decision to Bring Troops Home Amidst  
Deep Pessimism About the Future of Afghanistan*

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**Ipsos Reid**

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## **The Return of Canadian Soldiers from Afghanistan: Canadians Deeply Divided on the Mission and Outcome**

*Vast Majority Support PM Harper's Decision to Bring Troops Home Amidst Deep  
Pessimism About the Future of Afghanistan*

**Toronto, ON** – After just over 12 years of having Canadian military forces stationed in Afghanistan to fight the Taliban and train new Afghani troops, the last remaining Canadian troops stationed in Afghanistan have come home.

On reflection of the decade-long mission, a new CTV/Ipsos Reid poll indicates that Canadians are deeply divided on the mission and outcome and while the vast majority support Prime Minister Harper's decision to bring the troops home, there is deep pessimism about the future of Afghanistan and its stability in the aftermath of the war.

### *Canada's Afghan Mission: A Necessary Response to Terrorism?*

Canadians are deeply split on whether sending military personnel to the region was a necessary response to the terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center Towers.

Half (51%) of Canadians indicate that the war in Afghanistan was a necessary response after the attacks on September 11<sup>th</sup>, 2001 because of the threat of terrorists being trained and harboured, while the remaining half (49%) see it as an unnecessary and wrong response to the attacks on the World Trade Center Towers.

- Older Canadians are more likely to believe sending military personnel to the region was a necessary response, while younger Canadians (61%) are most likely to think the response was wrong and unnecessary

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- Men (55%) are slightly more likely than women (48%) to believe this was a necessary response, while women (52%) edge men (45%) in thinking it was unnecessary
- Residents of Alberta (59%) and British Columbia (55%) are most likely to believe this response was necessary, compared to those from Saskatchewan/Manitoba (55%) and Quebec (53%) who are most likely to see this response as unnecessary

### *Canada and NATO in Afghanistan: A Success or Failure?*

Reflecting on the past 12 years in Afghanistan, half (48%) of Canadians see it as a success for Canada and its NATO allies, while the remaining half (52%) see it as a failure. Those most likely to see the mission as a success are middle-aged Canadians (ages 35-54, 53%) and Canadians with a high school education (52%). Comparatively, those most likely to see the mission as a failure are university graduates (58%) and younger Canadians (ages 18-34, 56%). Seeing the mission as a success decreases going from East to West with British Columbians (53%) and Albertans (54%) most seeing it as a success, while Quebecers (54%) and Atlantic Canadians (54%) most see it as a failure.

### *The Aftermath of Canada's Sacrifices...*

During the course of Canada's mission in Afghanistan, 158 Canadian Forces members died during service. Now that all of Canada's military forces are home, Canadians are starkly divided on whether or not those who fell died unnecessarily for small accomplishments or perished as part of a worthwhile effort that accomplished a great deal for many people in Afghanistan.

Half (53%) of Canadians believed these soldiers will be remembered as having died unnecessarily and in vain for little that was accomplished, the remaining half (47%) saying these fallen troops will be remembered as people who gave their lives for a necessary and worthwhile effort that accomplished a great deal for the people of Afghanistan.

- Quebecers (59%) most believe that Canada's fallen soldiers died unnecessarily, while Albertans (56%) are most likely to think that these men and women gave their lives for a necessary and worthwhile effort
- Men (53% died for little accomplished/47% accomplished a great deal) and women (53% died for little accomplished/47% accomplished a great deal) are on equal footing when it comes to their opinions about Canada's military response to the attacks of 9/11
- Middle-aged (55%) Canadians are slightly more likely than their senior (53%) and younger (52%) counterparts to believe fallen Canadian Forces members died in vain for little accomplished

### *Canadians Say PM's Decision to Bring Troops Home Now is Right...*

A full majority (82%) of Canadians believe that now is the right time for Prime Minister Stephen Harper and his government to pull all Canadian troops from the region, sticking to the mission's original agenda. One in five (18%), however, think Canadian troops should have stayed longer in order to protect the Afghani civilians and maintain stability.

- Women (85%) are significantly more likely to believe that now is the right time to pull our troops from the region (compared to 80% of men), while men (20% vs. 15% of women) are significantly more likely to believe that our troops should stay longer
- Quebecers (87%) are more likely than Canadians from any other region to believe that now is the right time to bring Canada's troops home, while British Columbians (24%) are most likely to think that our troops should have stayed a little longer

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- The older Canadians are, the more likely they are to believe that the Canadian Forces should have stayed in Afghanistan longer, with younger Canadians (86%) thinking the decision to pull out now was right more than their older cohorts

### *Canadians Deeply Pessimistic About the Future Stability of Afghanistan...*

A major concern among the international community about removing international military personnel from the region is whether or not stability will remain or if it will deteriorate back to the way it was as a place for terrorism training and potential war and a full majority (75%) of Canadians share this worry.

Three quarter (75%) Canadians believe that Afghanistan will deteriorate back to its old ways after international military personnel vacate the region, compared to a quarter (25%) who thinks the country will remain stable on its own.

- Interestingly, while younger Canadians are most likely to consider the Afghan mission a failure, they are most likely to think that the region will remain stable (33%) compared to their middle-aged (28%) and senior (16%) counterparts. Seniors (84%) are most pessimistic in believing Afghanistan will deteriorate
- Men (75%) and women (74%) similarly believe the state of Afghanistan will deteriorate once international military personnel vacate
- Albertans (34%) are most likely to be optimist about the region remaining stable, compared to their Prairie neighbours (SK/MB – 80%) who most believe the region will deteriorate



*These are some of the findings of an Ipsos Reid poll conducted between March 14<sup>th</sup> to 18<sup>th</sup>, 2014 on behalf of CTV News. For this survey, a sample of 1,014 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 +/- 3.5 percentage points had all Canadians adults 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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