

NEWLY VOLATILE ELECTORATE REELS IN CONSERVATIVE LEAD

[Ottawa – February 23, 2011] – In an interesting but not entirely surprising movement, the race has tightened back to the locked in pattern of last year in one fell swoop. The Conservatives have bled nearly five points of support back to 32.4 and the Liberals have moved up more slightly to 27.3. But a 12.5 point lead is now 5.1 points, which is a huge and highly significant shift (well beyond mere “noise”).

Based on 2,811 cases, there has been a whiplash-like reversal to the last poll's near Conservative majority. Therein may lie the explanation. Not only our poll, but three closely timed polls showed the Conservatives moving into near-majority territory. The Government may have broken its policy of “never” commenting on polls with our breaking poll from 2 weeks ago not because they really thought it was wrong, but because they knew that there is always a recoil effect when they are reported in majority territory. The cumulative weight of four highly consistent polls made it impossible to maintain that they weren't in majority territory or closing in.

The demographics show that the same unhinged voters who had moved to the Conservatives (possibly over the ads) may have blanched at the prospect of a majority and jumped offside (women and Ontarians in particular). This sudden narrowing of the gap is a manifestation of an electorate which is paying more attention than some experts have claimed. After a moribund period of stasis, the electorate have become basically unhinged. For those who question the substantive and statistical significance of this dramatic change, there is about a one in one thousand chance that they are right and that this is mere random play.

Although the survey doesn't have direct evidence on this point, it is possible that this recoil effect, which is a recurring pattern of the past five years, was magnified by the Bev Oda affair. In a familiar pattern of voter recoil and government missteps, the tantalizing majority of a fortnight ago has evaporated into the narrow rut advantage of the last year. Zap! You've been Odasized!

HIGHLIGHTS

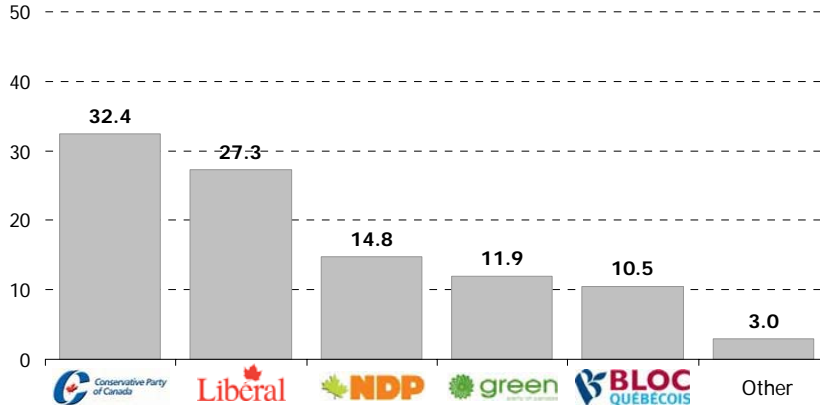
- **National federal vote intention:**
 - ☒ **32.4% CPC**
 - ☒ **27.3% LPC**
 - ☒ **14.8% NDP**
 - ☒ **11.9% Green**
 - ☒ **10.5% BQ**
 - ☒ **3.0% other**
- **Direction of country:**
 - ☒ **50.8% right direction**
 - ☒ **36.5% wrong direction**
 - ☒ **12.8% DK/NR**
- **Direction of government:**
 - ☒ **43.0% right direction**
 - ☒ **42.4% wrong direction**
 - ☒ **14.5% DK/NR**

Please note that the methodology is provided at the end of this document.

Top Line Results:

Federal vote intention

Q. If a federal election were held tomorrow, which party would you vote for?



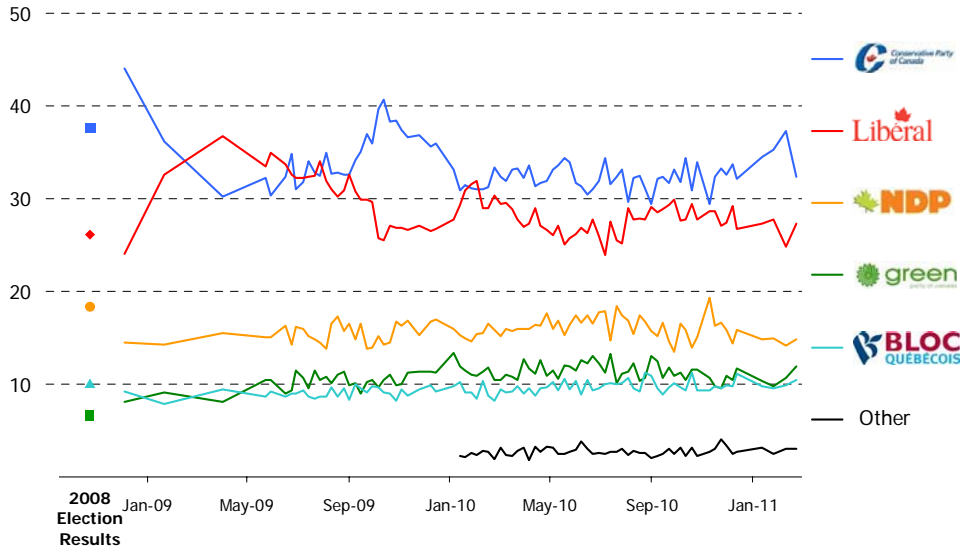
Note: The data on federal vote intention are based on decided and leaning voters only. Our survey also finds that 17.5% of Canadians are undecided/ineligible to vote.

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BASE: Decided voters; February 10-22, 2011 (n=2,358)

Weekly tracking of federal vote intention

Q. If a federal election were held tomorrow, which party would you vote for?



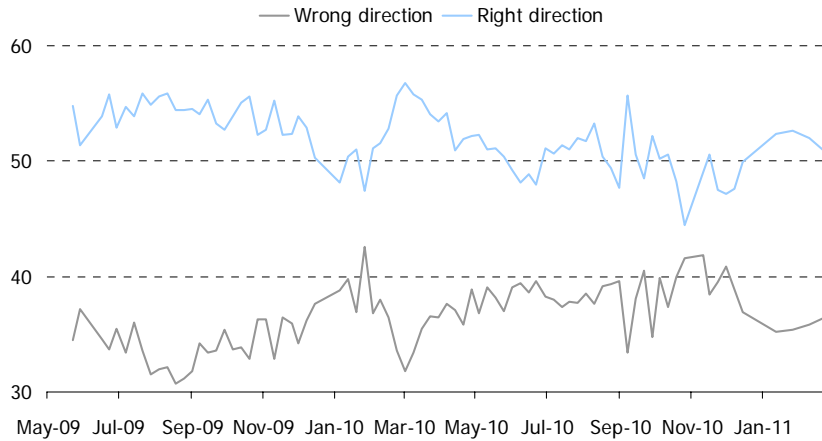
Note: The data on federal vote intention are based on decided and leaning voters only. Our survey also finds that 17.5% of Canadians are undecided/ineligible to vote.

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BASE: Decided voters; most recent data point February 10-22, 2011 (n=2,358)

Direction of country

Q. All things considered, would you say the country is moving in the right direction or the wrong direction?

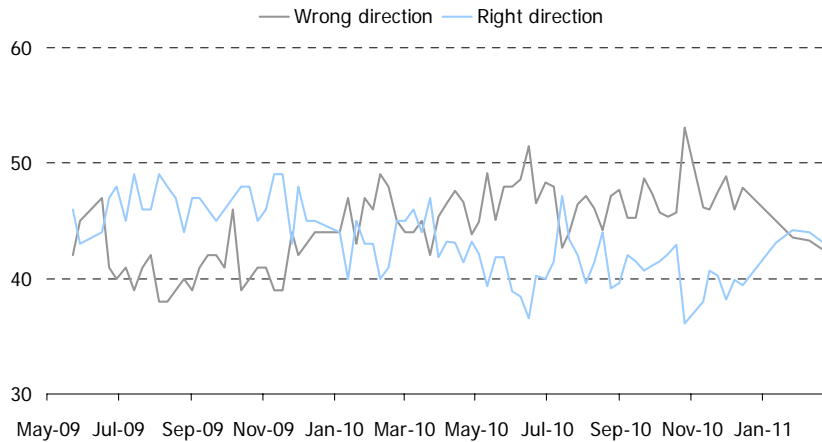


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BASE: Canadians; most recent data point February 10-22, 2011 (n=half sample)

Direction of government

Q. All things considered, would you say the Government of Canada is moving in the right direction or the wrong direction?



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BASE: Canadians; most recent data point February 10-22, 2011 (n=half sample)

Methodology:

EKOS' weekly tracking polls are conducted using Interactive Voice Recognition (IVR) technology, which allows respondents to enter their preferences by punching the keypad on their phone, rather than telling them to an operator.

In an effort to reduce the coverage bias of landline only RDD, we created a dual landline/cell phone RDD sampling frame for this research. As a result, we are able to reach those with both a landline and cell phone, as well as cell phone only households and landline only households. This dual frame yields a near perfect unweighted distribution on age group and gender, something almost never seen with traditional landline RDD sample or interviewer-administered surveys.

The field dates for this survey are February 10-22, 2011¹. In total, a random sample of 2,811 Canadians aged 18 and over responded to the survey (including a sub-sample of 2,358 decided voters). The margin of error associated with the total sample is +/-1.9 percentage points, 19 times out of 20.

Please note that the margin of error increases when the results are sub-divided (i.e., error margins for sub-groups such as region, sex, age, education). All the data have been statistically weighted to ensure the samples composition reflects that of the actual population of Canada according to Census data.

¹ Please note that these dates are not inclusive of weekends, as we do not survey on Saturday or Sunday.