



Public Opinion on the Federal Budget and the Public Service

Release Date: February 15, 2012

January 31 to February 2, 2012
n=1,209 Canadians, 18 years of age and older

Methodology

The survey was conducted online with 1,209 respondents in English and French using an internet survey platform. A random sample of panelists was invited to participate in the survey from a larger internet representative panel of 150,000 Canadians. The survey was completed from January 31 to February 2, 2012.

Steps were taken to ensure that the survey respondents were representative of the population over 18 years of age. The sample distribution was balanced to match the distribution of actual census data for age, gender, education, and province. Moreover, statistical weighting was applied to the data after the completion of the survey for age, gender, education, region, and previous federal vote.

Since the online survey was not a random, probability based sample, a margin of error could not be calculated. The margin of error for a survey of 1,209 respondents using a probability sample is +/- 2.9%, 19 times out of 20.



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National Survey - n=1,209, January 31 to February 2, 2012

Abacus Poll: Two thirds of Canadians say balancing the federal budget is a high priority

Most Canadians support cutting jobs in the federal bureaucracy but worry about their impact on government services and the economy.

Please refer to the survey as: QMI - Abacus Data Poll

1,209 Canadians were interviewed from January 31 to February 2, 2012

Ottawa – A new survey from Ottawa-based Abacus Data that most Canadians (65%) believe balancing the budget and reducing the federal deficit should be a very high or high priority for the federal government. And while there is less consensus on how the budget should be balanced (cuts versus tax increases) most Canadians prefer a method that leans more towards spending cuts as opposed to tax increases.

When told that the federal government is considering cutting thousands of jobs in the federal public service, six in ten respondents (61%) said they support the plan while 18% said they were opposed. Another 21% neither supported nor opposed the cuts. Support for cutting jobs in the public service was highest among Conservative Party supporters (73%) and lowest among Liberal Party supporters (53%).

Despite majority support for job cuts in the federal bureaucracy, most Canadians said they would be concerned about the impact of those cuts on government services and the economy in general. When asked what would most concern them about the cuts to the public service, 41% identified their impact on government services while 30% pointed to their potential impact on the economy. Another 22% said they were not at all concerned about the impact of the cuts.

When presented with two arguments about public service cuts put forward by the unions representing federal public servants and the federal government, 47% sided with the federal government while 27% sided with the unions. Twenty-seven percent said neither statement came closest to their view.

The rotated arguments presented to the respondents were:

1. The unions representing federal public servants have argued that job cuts in the public service will harm have major negative impacts on government services and will reduce household income and consumer spending hurting businesses and the economy.

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2. The federal government argues that the federal budget deficit must be reduced without raising taxes which would hurt the economy. Cuts to the federal public service are necessary if the budget is going to be balanced.

The results above are not surprising when we consider how public servants are perceived by most Canadians. When asked whether the compensation paid to those working in the federal public service is too high, about right, or too low when compared with private sector employees, 57% of respondents said their compensation was too high while 27% said it was about right.

Additionally, 58% of respondents considered federal public servants to be less productive than private sector employees while 32% said their productivity were about the same. Nine percent of respondents believed that federal public servants were more productive than private sector employees.

The Bottom Line

A strong majority of Canadians want a balanced budget and support reductions in the size of the federal public service. But concerns about the impact of job cuts to government services and the economy will need to be addressed by the government if they move ahead with an aggressive reduction in federal spending.

Methodology

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Since the online survey was not a random, probability based sample, a margin of error could not be calculated. The margin of error for a survey of 1,209 respondents using a probability sample is +/- 2.8%, 19 times out of 20.

These questions were posed as part of the Abacus Data monthly omnibus survey.

For more information about the survey findings, please contact Dr. David Coletto, CEO Abacus Data Inc. at (613) 884-4730 or david@abacusdata.ca

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The table below reports the unweighted and weighted distribution by region or province.

Region/Province	Unweighted Count (All Respondents)	Weighted Count (All respondents)
Atlantic Canada	67	90
Quebec	231	287
Ontario	338	471
Prairies (MB and SK)	59	78
Alberta	398	121
BC	116	158
Total	1,209	1,205

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		The current federal budget deficit is around \$32 billion dollars. In your opinion, how much of a priority should balancing the budget and reducing the deficit be for the federal government?						
		Very high priority	High priority	Medium priority	Low priority	Not a priority at all	Unsure	Count
		Percentage	Percentage	Percentage	Percentage	Percentage	Percentage	Unweighted Count
Region	Canada	26	39	25	4	1	5	1209
	Atlantic	27	38	23	7	0	4	67
	Quebec	29	35	24	5	1	6	231
	Ontario	26	39	26	4	1	5	338
	Central	12	47	30	4	0	7	59
	Alberta	24	43	23	4	1	5	398
	British Columbia	29	38	25	3	1	5	116
Gender	Male	31	35	26	5	1	3	581
	Female	22	43	24	4	1	7	628
Age Group	18 to 29	28	38	20	4	2	8	226
	30 to 44	27	40	21	7	1	5	321
	45 to 60	25	39	28	3	0	5	403
	60 and over	26	38	31	3	1	2	259
Education	High school or less	28	37	22	3	1	8	444
	College or some university	24	40	26	5	0	4	479
	University degree	25	39	28	4	1	2	286
Union household	Yes	28	37	29	4	0	2	356
	No	25	40	23	4	1	7	853
Federal Vote Intention	Conservative Party	32	42	20	2	0	4	468
	Liberal Party	24	38	31	4	1	3	203
	New Democratic Party	22	38	28	9	1	3	283
	Green Party	27	38	24	3	2	7	70
	Bloc Quebecois	24	23	39	7	1	5	61
	Undecided	22	43	16	0	0	20	124

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Using the scale slider below, how do you think the federal government should reduce the deficit. Should it only raise taxes on individuals and businesses and keep spending the same or should it keep your taxes the same and only cut spending. You can move the slider in between the two options.

		0 - Raise taxes only	1	2	3	4	5 - Even split	6	7	8	9	10 - Cut spending only	Count
		Percentage	Percentage	Percentage	Percentage	Percentage	Percentage	Percentage	Percentage	Percentage	Percentage	Percentage	Unweighted Count
Region	Canada	0	1	1	3	4	33	10	14	13	7	14	1209
	Atlantic	0	0	0	6	3	48	9	15	5	8	6	67
	Quebec	0	1	0	2	3	26	8	13	12	9	26	231
	Ontario	1	3	1	2	4	35	9	14	14	7	11	338
	Central	0	0	2	2	7	37	17	12	12	2	10	59
	Alberta	0	1	2	3	2	27	13	16	15	7	13	398
	British Columbia	1	1	2	3	4	33	14	13	13	4	11	116
Gender	Male	1	2	1	3	4	29	9	14	14	6	16	581
	Female	0	1	1	2	3	37	12	13	12	7	13	628
Age Group	18 to 29	1	2	1	3	5	35	13	14	14	3	10	226
	30 to 44	0	2	1	2	2	33	10	15	14	6	15	321
	45 to 60	0	1	1	3	4	31	9	14	13	8	16	403
	60 and over	1	1	0	2	4	35	13	10	10	9	15	259
Education	High school or less	0	0	0	1	2	35	9	13	11	8	19	444
	College or some university	1	2	1	3	3	31	11	15	14	6	13	479
	University degree	0	2	2	3	6	33	12	12	13	5	11	286
Union household	Yes	1	2	1	2	5	34	10	12	12	6	14	356
	No	0	1	1	3	3	33	11	14	13	7	15	853
Federal Vote Intention	Conservative Party	0	1	0	1	2	30	9	17	17	7	16	468
	Liberal Party	1	1	1	1	6	39	14	11	9	6	11	203
	New Democratic Party	1	3	2	5	4	30	12	12	9	6	16	283
	Green Party	0	0	2	5	4	39	7	13	19	7	4	70
	Bloc Quebecois	2	0	2	4	5	27	7	14	15	8	16	61
	Undecided	0	0	0	2	2	39	8	12	12	7	19	124

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As you may know, the federal government is planning to introduce a budget that will make deep cuts to spending by the federal government while not raising taxes.

Much of the spending cuts will come from cutting thousands of jobs in the federal public service.

Do you support or oppose cutting jobs in the federal bureaucracy?

		Strongly support	Somewhat support	Neither support nor oppose	Somewhat oppose	Strongly oppose	Count
		Percentage	Percentage	Percentage	Percentage	Percentage	Unweighted Count
Region	Canada	26	35	21	11	7	1209
	Atlantic	26	26	17	18	14	67
	Quebec	26	36	25	8	5	231
	Ontario	24	35	21	12	9	338
	Central	20	47	16	12	5	59
	Alberta	28	32	19	13	7	398
	British Columbia	31	34	20	9	7	116
Gender	Male	32	30	18	11	9	581
	Female	20	39	24	11	6	628
Age Group	18 to 29	17	31	29	16	7	226
	30 to 44	26	38	21	9	6	321
	45 to 60	27	35	21	10	8	403
	60 and over	32	34	14	12	9	259
Education	High school or less	30	33	25	7	5	444
	College or some university	24	33	19	14	9	479
	University degree	22	40	18	12	9	286
Union household	Yes	22	31	23	12	12	356
	No	27	37	20	11	5	853
Federal Vote Intention	Conservative Party	34	39	16	8	2	468
	Liberal Party	18	35	22	15	10	203
	New Democratic Party	22	33	20	11	13	283
	Green Party	21	46	16	10	7	70
	Bloc Quebecois	26	25	29	13	5	61
	Undecided	26	24	33	12	5	124

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If the federal government were to announce major public service jobs, what would you be most concerned about, if at all, about the impact of the job cuts?

		Not at all concerned about the cuts	Impact to government services	Bureaucrats losing their jobs	Impact on the economy	Other	Count
		Percentage	Percentage	Percentage	Percentage	Percentage	Unweighted Count
Region	Canada	22	41	5	30	2	1209
	Atlantic	16	43	3	36	3	67
	Quebec	26	36	11	25	1	231
	Ontario	20	43	5	30	3	338
	Central	23	33	2	42	0	59
	Alberta	26	37	4	30	3	398
	British Columbia	20	48	2	29	2	116
Gender	Male	28	37	6	28	2	581
	Female	16	44	5	32	2	628
Age Group	18 to 29	21	41	8	29	1	226
	30 to 44	22	40	6	31	2	321
	45 to 60	22	42	4	29	3	403
	60 and over	23	41	5	29	2	259
Education	High school or less	26	35	5	32	1	444
	College or some university	20	42	5	30	3	479
	University degree	20	47	6	25	2	286
Union household	Yes	20	38	6	33	2	356
	No	23	42	5	28	2	853
Federal Vote Intention	Conservative Party	29	35	4	31	1	468
	Liberal Party	16	45	6	31	2	203
	New Democratic Party	18	50	6	24	2	283
	Green Party	17	45	7	26	6	70
	Bloc Quebecois	25	33	11	31	0	61
	Undecided	23	31	5	38	3	124

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Which of the following two statements, if either, come closest to your view on cutting jobs in the federal public service? [rotate statements]

		The unions representing federal public servants have argued that job cuts in the public service will harm have major negative impacts on government services and will reduce household income and consumer spending hurting businesses and the economy.	The federal government argues that the federal budget deficit must be reduced without raising taxes which would hurt the economy. Cuts to the federal public service are necessary if the budget is going to be balanced.	Neither	Count
		Percentage	Percentage	Percentage	Unweighted Count
Region	Canada	27	47	27	1209
	Atlantic	39	36	25	67
	Quebec	21	53	26	231
	Ontario	27	49	24	338
	Central	27	41	32	59
	Alberta	21	47	31	398
	British Columbia	31	38	31	116
Gender	Male	25	51	24	581
	Female	28	43	29	628
Age Group	18 to 29	26	42	31	226
	30 to 44	26	47	27	321
	45 to 60	27	47	26	403
	60 and over	27	50	24	259
Education	High school or less	21	50	29	444
	College or some university	31	43	27	479
	University degree	28	48	24	286
Union household	Yes	38	38	24	356
	No	21	51	28	853
Federal Vote Intention	Conservative Party	14	63	23	468
	Liberal Party	35	39	27	203
	New Democratic Party	37	37	25	283
	Green Party	31	44	25	70
	Bloc Quebecois	32	44	24	61
	Undecided	19	36	45	124

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		Compared with private sector employees, do you think the compensation (wages and benefits) paid to those working in the federal public service?				
		Too high	About right	Too low	Unsure	Count
		Percentage	Percentage	Percentage	Percentage	Unweighted Count
Region	Canada	57	27	4	12	1209
	Atlantic	46	31	8	15	67
	Quebec	58	28	5	9	231
	Ontario	59	24	3	14	338
	Central	62	31	2	5	59
	Alberta	59	24	5	12	398
	British Columbia	53	29	3	14	116
Gender	Male	57	30	4	9	581
	Female	58	23	5	15	628
Age Group	18 to 29	45	26	5	24	226
	30 to 44	60	25	5	10	321
	45 to 60	59	27	4	10	403
Education	60 and over	61	28	3	7	259
	High school or less	63	20	3	14	444
	College or some university	53	30	5	13	479
Union household	University degree	55	31	5	9	286
	Yes	45	36	7	13	356
	No	63	22	3	12	853
Federal Vote Intention	Conservative Party	68	24	2	7	468
	Liberal Party	55	31	4	10	203
	New Democratic Party	50	29	7	15	283
	Green Party	46	35	2	17	70
	Bloc Quebecois	48	35	7	10	61
	Undecided	59	10	5	26	124

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Compared with private sector employees, how productive (amount that gets done in time spent working) are those working in the federal public service?

		Much more productive	Somewhat more productive	About the same	Somewhat less productive	Much less productive	Count
		Percentage	Percentage	Percentage	Percentage	Percentage	Unweighted Count
Region	Canada	3	6	32	36	23	1209
	Atlantic	2	11	40	32	16	67
	Quebec	2	6	31	35	25	231
	Ontario	3	6	32	35	25	338
	Central	7	7	29	39	19	59
	Alberta	2	5	31	37	25	398
	British Columbia	3	7	30	41	19	116
Gender	Male	3	6	28	37	26	581
	Female	2	7	35	36	20	628
Age Group	18 to 29	2	10	36	32	20	226
	30 to 44	4	8	29	34	24	321
	45 to 60	2	5	31	38	24	403
	60 and over	2	3	32	41	22	259
Education	High school or less	4	7	29	35	25	444
	College or some university	3	6	32	38	22	479
	University degree	2	6	35	36	22	286
Union household	Yes	2	6	39	34	18	356
	No	3	6	28	37	25	853
Federal Vote Intention	Conservative Party	4	5	24	40	26	468
	Liberal Party	2	4	35	37	22	203
	New Democratic Party	3	8	36	34	19	283
	Green Party	0	9	41	31	19	70
	Bloc Quebecois	0	15	33	31	22	61
	Undecided	3	4	32	34	28	124