

CPC Leadership: MacKay leads. O'Leary has some appeal but a polarizing impact.

By Bruce Anderson & David Coletto

In our latest poll we asked people which of 8 possible candidates for the leadership of the Conservative Party of Canada they think would make the best choice.

Here are the highlights of our findings:

- Peter MacKay leads this field by 15 points, at 33% followed by Kevin O'Leary at 18%, Lisa Raitt at 12%, and Maxime Bernier at 10%. Tony Clement (9%), Jason Kenney (8%), Michael Chong (6%), and Kellie Leitch (3%) round out the field with less than 10% support.
- Among those who say they would vote Conservative today, Mr. MacKay's lead over Mr. O'Leary shrinks to 9-points and Jason Kenney jumps to third place at 12%. All the other candidates are in single digits.
- Among voters who self describe as "right" on the political spectrum, MacKay (29%) and O'Leary (25%) are neck and neck with Bernier (10%) and Raitt (10%) cracking double digits.
- Among those who self-identify as "centre-right", the results are MacKay 36%, O'Leary drops back to 15%, followed by Kenney 14% and Raitt and Clement at 9%.
- Among those who self-identify as "centre", the results are MacKay 33%, O'Leary 20%, followed by Raitt at 12%, Bernier at 11% and Clement and Kenney at 8%.

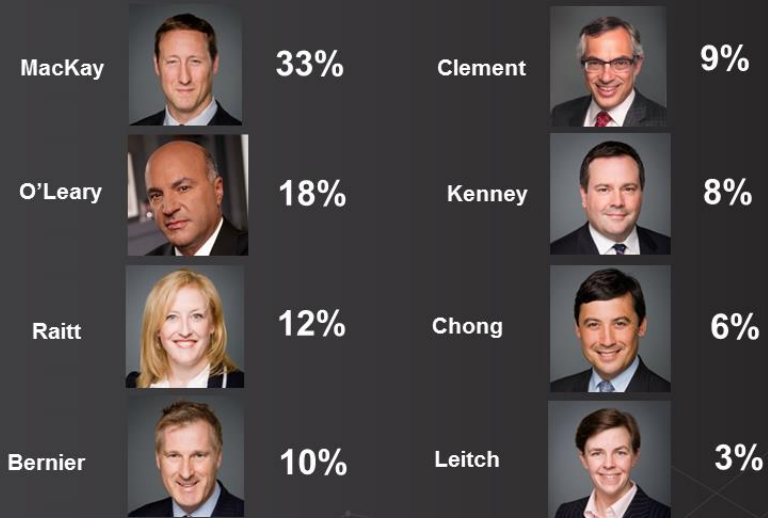
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WHO WOULD MAKE BEST CONSERVATIVE LEADER?

AMONG ALL RESPONDENTS

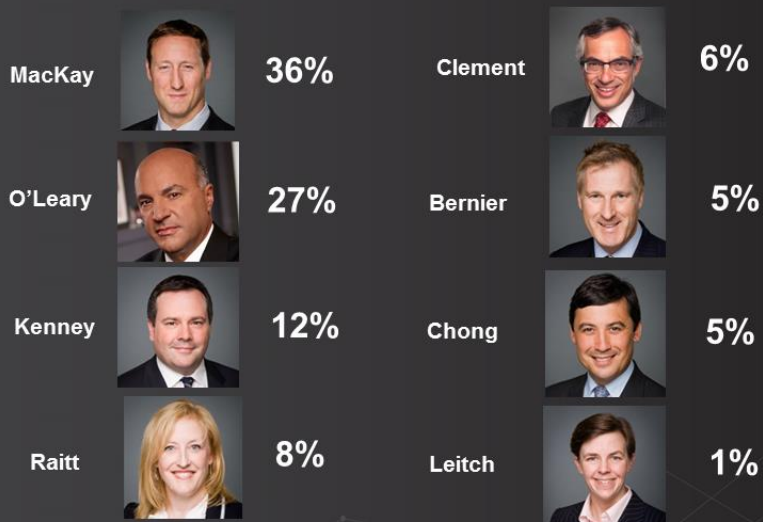


ABACUS DATA

Which would make the best future leader of the Conservative Party?

WHO WOULD MAKE BEST CONSERVATIVE LEADER?

AMONG THOSE WHO WOULD VOTE CPC TODAY



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Which would make the best future leader of the Conservative Party?

WHO WOULD MAKE BEST CONSERVATIVE LEADER?

AMONG SELF-IDENTIFIED RIGHT

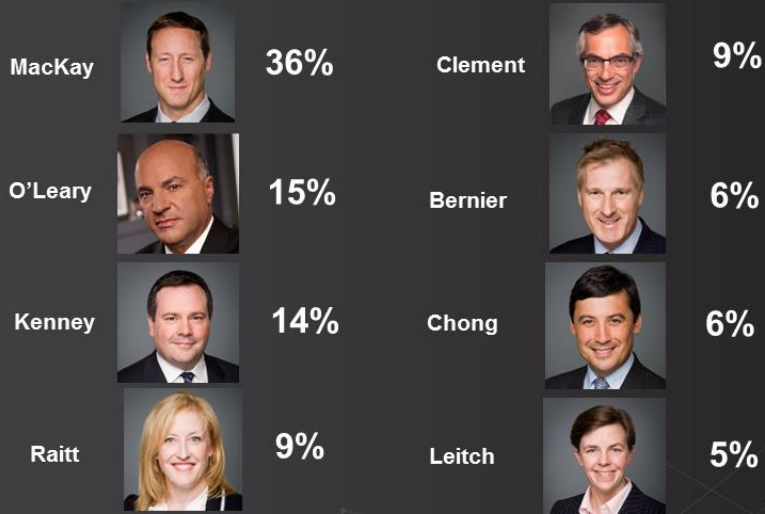


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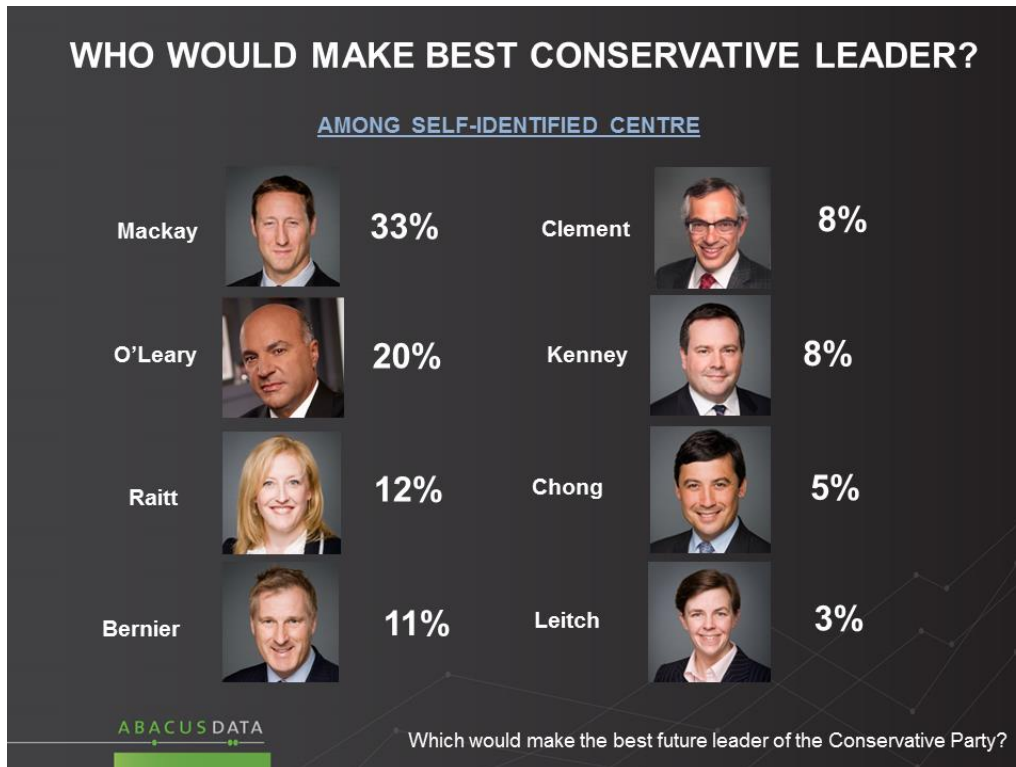
WHO WOULD MAKE BEST CONSERVATIVE LEADER?

AMONG SELF-IDENTIFIED CENTRE-RIGHT



ABACUS DATA

Which would make the best future leader of the Conservative Party?



We also asked whether the choice of any of these candidates would make people more or less likely to vote Conservative. Here's what we found:

- Among all respondents, only Peter MacKay had a net positive effect on Conservative support – that is more people said they would be more inclined to vote Conservative (20%) than those saying less inclined (13%). Kevin O'Leary had the second largest percentage of Canadians saying they would be more inclined to vote Conservative if he was leader (15%) but also the highest number saying they would be less inclined (23%).
- Among current Conservative supporters, all candidates except for Maxime Bernier, Michael Chong, and Kellie Leitch would have a net positive impact on support for the party. O'Leary is the most polarizing potential candidate – pulling 32% but pushing 18%.

WOULD YOU BE MORE OR LESS INCLINED TO VOTE CPC IF...

AMONG ALL RESPONDENTS

POTENTIAL CANDIDATE	MORE INCLINED	NO EFFECT	LESS INCLINED	NET BENEFIT
Peter MacKay	20%	67%	13%	+7
Kevin O'Leary	15%	63%	23%	-8
Jason Kenney	8%	80%	12%	-4
Tony Clement	8%	77%	15%	-7
Maxime Bernier	7%	76%	17%	-10
Lisa Raitt	6%	80%	14%	-8
Michael Chong	5%	82%	13%	-8
Kellie Leitch	3%	85%	12%	-9

If each of the following were picked, would it make you feel more inclined to consider the Conservative Party in the next election, less inclined or would it have no effect on your inclination to consider voting for the Conservatives in the next election?

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WOULD YOU BE MORE OR LESS INCLINED TO VOTE CPC IF...

AMONG CURRENT CPC SUPPORTERS

POTENTIAL CANDIDATE	MORE INCLINED	NO EFFECT	LESS INCLINED	NET BENEFIT
Peter MacKay	43%	50%	7%	+35
Kevin O'Leary	32%	50%	18%	+15
Jason Kenney	21%	73%	7%	+14
Tony Clement	19%	71%	10%	+9
Lisa Raitt	12%	76%	11%	+1
Maxime Bernier	10%	74%	16%	-6
Michael Chong	8%	79%	14%	-6
Kellie Leitch	6%	86%	9%	-3

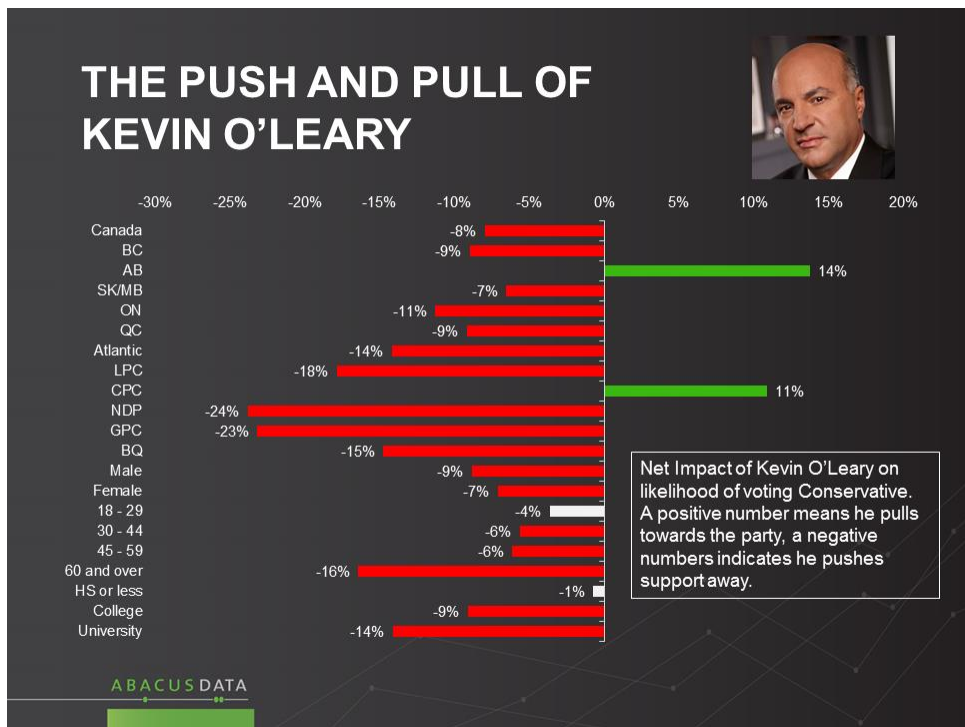
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The Push and Pull of Kevin O’Leary

We looked specifically at the potential impact Kevin O’Leary would have on likelihood to vote Conservative.

Overall, he has a net negative impact (that is more people say they would be less likely to vote Conservative than more likely to) with every demographic, political, and regional group except for past Conservative voters and Albertans.



The Upshot

Peter MacKay has strong name recognition and a considerable level of public support, although a number of other candidates would likely start with a critical mass of support, making for a competitive race.

The patterns show that within the Conservative Party there will be some drawn towards the candidate who has the most pronounced small c conservative views, while others will be attracted to a more moderate style

of conservatism. These tensions will likely only start to play out once some candidates begin to declare an intention to run, and stake their claim to a place as “tent expanders” or “base rallyers”

If Kevin O’Leary decides to enter the fray, these results suggest he has the potential to be a somewhat polarizing force. Choosing Mr. O’Leary as leader would appeal to some of the most conservative party members, but would mean making the process of broadening the party’s appeal more difficult, not easier, at least initially.

Methodology

Our survey was conducted online with 1,500 Canadians aged 18 and over from March 16 to 18, 2016. A random sample of panelists was invited to complete the survey from a large representative panel of over 500,000 Canadians.

The Marketing Research and Intelligence Association policy limits statements about margins of sampling error for most online surveys. The margin of error for a comparable probability-based random sample of the same size is +/- 2.6%, 19 times out of 20. The data were weighted according to census data to ensure that the sample matched Canada’s population according to age, gender, educational attainment, and region. Totals may not add up to 100 due to rounding.

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