**ABACUS DATA** Release

# WAS #ELBOWGATE A PIVOT POINT?

By Bruce Anderson & David Coletto

The House of Commons, and it seemed, the entire political ecosystem erupted this week, over an incident involving the Prime Minister losing his temper.  Much ink (or whatever the digital equivalent is) was spilled discussing the consequences of what became known as #elbowgate.

Would this mark a turning point in Canadian politics?  Would the "honeymoon" with Prime Minister Trudeau be over?

We happened to have a new study in the field a couple of days before this incident happened, and decided to stay in field for a couple of days afterward to assess the impact on public opinion.

Our data include 1,367 cases gathered before the event (before 8pm ET on Wednesday) and 633 cases after.  Here's what the numbers showed:

- While Ottawa politicos and media seemed captivated by the incident, just 14% of our respondents followed it very closely.

- The broad majority of those surveyed (71%) said it had no impact on their view of Mr. Trudeau, 23% said it made them feel worse about him; 6% better.

- There was no significant difference between women and men on reaction to the incident.  22% of women said they had a more negative view of Mr. Trudeau while 24% of men felt the same way.

- Most (49%) of the 23% who said the incident darkened their view of Mr. Trudeau said they voted CPC last fall.

- Among those who voted NDP in the fall, 71% said the incident had no impact on their views of Mr. Trudeau.

- Among uncommitted but accessible Liberal voters, 78% said the incident had no impact on their views of Mr. Trudeau, 17% said it made them feel worse, 6% better.
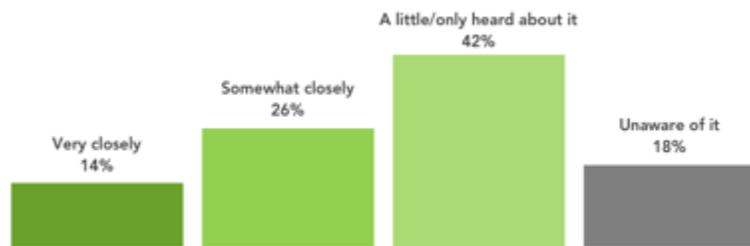
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- Among Liberal voters in October 2015, 11% said their impression of Mr. Trudeau got worse, 81% said it had no impact, and 8% said it got better.

## ATTENTION TO #ELBOWGATE



Very closely
14%

Somewhat closely
26%

A little/only heard about it
42%

Unaware of it
18%

n=586
May 19 to 20, 2016
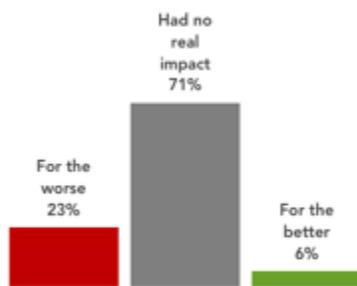
In the House of Commons on Wednesday evening there was an incident that saw tempers rise around a vote on a contentious bill.

At one point there was some physical contact involving the Prime Minister and two opposition MPs.

How closely have you been following it or were you not aware of it before today?

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## IMPACT ON OPINION OF PM TRUDEAU



Had no real impact
71%

For the worse
23%

For the better
6%

n=586
May 19 to 20, 2016

|  | Worse | No impact | Better |
|---|---|---|---|
| LPC voters | 11% | 81% | 8% |
| CPC voters | 45% | 51% | 4% |
| NDP voters | 23% | 71% | 6% |
| Uncommitted, willing to consider LPC | 17% | 78% | 6% |

Based on what you've seen, read or heard about this has this changed your opinion of the pm for the worse, had no real effect on your view of the Prime Minister, or changed your impression of him for the better?

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In short, the event may have dented perceptions of the PM among roughly 10% of his total accessible voter pool, which today is close to 62%. (The number of voters who say they would consider voting LPC)

Will that have lasting or serious electoral consequences?  So far, the evidence is otherwise:

- Would vote Liberal and would consider voting Liberal numbers were identical for the sample before #elbowgate and after.  (Watch for a series of releases over the coming week, with the data in detail).

- Negative feelings about the Prime Minister didn't move a point. (this version is corrected - yesterday's version indicated "favourability towards the PM didn't move a point" rather than "negatives have not shifted a point")

- On the "personal values he brings to the job", the rating did not shift a single point. 19% judged his values negatively before the incident and after.

- Before #elbowgate 81% said the PM "genuinely cares about other people", afterwards, 82% agreed with the same statement.

- Before #elbowgate 76% said the PM "sets a good example for young people in Canada", afterwards, 77% agreed with the statement.

One item did show a material shift:

- Before #elbowgate, 83% thought Mr. Trudeau "handles stress well", afterward, that number dropped to 74%.
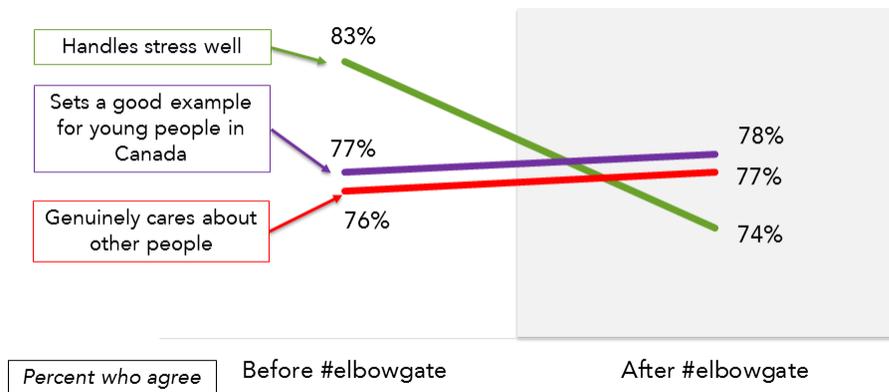
## BEFORE AND AFTER #ELBOWGATE

| | BEFORE #ELBOWGATE (n=1,367) | | AFTER #ELBOWGATE (n=633) | | CHANGE |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Agree | Disagree | Agree | Disagree | |
| He handles stress well | 83% | 17% | 74% | 26% | -9 |
| He sets a good example for young people in Canada | 76% | 24% | 77% | 23% | NS |
| He genuinely cares about other people | 81% | 19% | 82% | 18% | NS |

*NS = not statistically different*

Thinking of Prime Minister Trudeau, please indicate if you strongly agree, agree, disagree or strongly disagree with each of the following statements?

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Because several indicators were stable pre and post the incident, but one (a logical one) showed a 9-point shift, allows greater confidence that these two partial samples are telling us something reliable.

## BEFORE AND AFTER #ELBOWGATE



| | |
|---|---|
| Handles stress well | 83% |
| Sets a good example for young people in Canada | 77% |
| Genuinely cares about other people | 76% |

78%
77%
74%

*Percent who agree*     Before #elbowgate     After #elbowgate

Thinking of Prime Minister Trudeau, please indicate if you strongly agree, agree, disagree or strongly disagree with each of the following statements?

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What do these patterns reveal in a nutshell?

The reaction inside the 'Ottawa bubble' was disproportionate to the reaction in the country at large.  It was not, so far anyway, a moment that transfixed voters and shifted the political landscape.

Some of those who already disliked the Liberal Party and the Prime Minister were upset by the events. Most barely took notice, let alone shifted their views.

Arguably, always, a lasting impact may only be revealed over time.  But often, the reverse happens, and events dissipate, meaning "peak #elbowgate" may well have come and gone.

According to Bruce Anderson "None of this is to say the PM acted appropriately, or that voters have no business being unhappy with the way he handled the situation.  But the data are an important reminder of

the risk of overestimating the degree to which regular voters are drawn in and moved by political skirmishing in the nation's capital".

## Methodology

Our survey was conducted online with 2,000 Canadians aged 18 and over from May 17 to 20, 2016. A random sample of panelists was invited to complete the survey from a large representative panel of over 500,000 Canadians.

Within the release, we refer to interviews completed before and after the incident involving the Prime Minister and opposition MPs in the House of Commons as before elbow and after elbow. A total of 1,367 interviews were completed prior to 8pm ET on Wednesday May 18, 2016.  Another 633 interviews were completed after 8pm on Wednesday May 18, 2016. On Thursday morning, we added two additional questions at the end of our survey about what had transpired the prior evening.  A total of 583 individuals completed those questions.

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 2,000 is +/- 2.2%, 19 times out of 20.  The margin of error of for a comparable probability-based random sample of 1,367 interviews is +/- 2.7%, 19 times out of 20.  The margin of error for a comparable probability-based random sample of 633 interviews is +/- 4.0%, 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.

The table below compares the two samples by key demographic and regional subgroups.  The differences between the group profiles are minor and expected considering the sample sizes.

| Demographic/Regional Group | Before #elbowgate n=1,367 | After #elbowgate n=633 |
|---|---|---|
| Male | 48% | 50% |
| Female | 52% | 50% |
|  |  |  |
| 18 to 29 | 20% | 19% |
| 30 to 44 | 27% | 25% |
| 45 to 59 | 29% | 31% |
| 60+ | 24% | 25% |
|  |  |  |
| High school or less | 36% | 31% |
| College | 36% | 38% |
| University | 31% | 31% |
|  |  |  |
| Atlantic Canada | 8% | 8% |
| Quebec | 28% | 21% |
| Ontario | 36% | 41% |
| MB/SK | 6% | 6% |
| Alberta | 9% | 10% |
| BC | 13% | 13% |

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