

MISSION IN AFGHANISTAN

Canadians Still Oppose Afghan Mission Extension; Reject Talks with Taliban

Three-in-five (62%) believe the Harper government has failed to effectively explain why Canadian soldiers are in Afghanistan.

[VANCOUVER - Apr. 12, 2008] - The views of Canadians on the mission in Afghanistan, and on the way their government has informed the public about the endeavour, have gone through little variation over the past three months, a new Angus Reid Strategies poll has found.

In the online survey of a national representative sample, a majority of respondents (54%) disagree with the decision to extend Canada's mission in Afghanistan for another three years, down four points since March. Quebecers (67%) and women (61%) provide the highest rejection rate for the authorization by the House of Commons. Alberta is the only region where a majority of respondents (55%) endorses the extension.

As has been the case since December 2007, three-in-five Canadians (62%) believe the Harper government has not effectively explained the mission in Afghanistan. Female respondents are once again particularly critical, with just one-in-four (24%) providing a positive assessment of the way the federal administration has informed the public.

More than half of respondents (54%) regard the Canadian effort in Afghanistan as war, including 59 per cent of male respondents, and 60 per cent of Atlantic Canadians. Three-in-four respondents (75%) believe Canadian troops are shouldering too much of the burden of the mission led by the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), and three-in-five (60%) state that the Afghan people are clearly benefiting from Canadian efforts in their country.

KEY FINDINGS

- » **54% of Canadians disagree with extending the mission until 2011**
- » **54% see the mission in Afghanistan as war, not peace effort**
- » **48% disagree with the Canadian government actively negotiating with the Taliban**
- » **75% think Canada continues to shoulder too much of the burden of NATO's mission**
- » **62% say the Harper government has not effectively explained the mission in Afghanistan**
- » **60% believe Afghans benefit from Canadian presence in their country**

Full topline results are at the end of this release.

From May 7 to May 8, 2008, Angus Reid Strategies conducted an online survey among a randomly selected, representative sample of 1,006 adult Canadians. The margin of error for the total sample is +/- 3.1 %, 19 times out of 20. The results have been statistically weighted according to the most current education, age, gender and region Census data to ensure a sample representative of the entire adult population of Canada. Discrepancies in or between totals are due to rounding.

The survey asked Canadians for the first time if Canada should reach out to the Taliban if this helps the peace efforts led by the elected Afghan government. Almost half of respondents (48%) disagree with the Canadian government actively negotiating with the Taliban, including one-in-three (34%) who strongly disagree. While 60 per cent of Albertans believe talking to the Taliban is out of the question, 46 per cent of Atlantic Canadians and 40 per cent of Quebecers would agree to the idea.

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Mission in Afghanistan

As you may know, the House of Commons has authorized an extension of Canada's mission in Afghanistan until the end of 2011, which is conditional on Canada coming up with unmanned aerial vehicles and transport helicopters, and NATO providing an additional 1,000 troops in the south. Do you agree or disagree with the decision to extend Canada's mission in Afghanistan until the end of 2011?

	Total	BC	AB	MB/SK	ONT	PQ	ATL	Male	Female
Agree	41%	39%	55%	43%	46%	26%	48%	51%	31%
Disagree	54%	55%	42%	55%	48%	67%	48%	46%	61%
Not sure	6%	5%	4%	2%	6%	8%	4%	3%	8%

Trend – As you may know, the House of Commons has authorized an extension of Canada's mission in Afghanistan until the end of 2011, which is conditional on Canada coming up with unmanned aerial vehicles and transport helicopters, and NATO providing an additional 1,000 troops in the south. Do you agree or disagree with the decision to extend Canada's mission in Afghanistan until the end of 2011?

	May 2008	March 2008
Agree	41%	37%
Disagree	54%	58%
Not sure	6%	5%

Mission in Afghanistan									
Some people have stated that officials from foreign nations should reach out to the Taliban if this helps the peace efforts led by the elected Afghan government. Would you agree or disagree with the Canadian government actively negotiating with the Taliban?									
	Total	BC	AB	MB/SK	ONT	PQ	ATL	Male	Female
Strongly Agree	13%	9%	12%	11%	10%	20%	10%	16%	10%
Moderately Agree	24%	24%	16%	23%	26%	20%	36%	27%	21%
Moderately Disagree	14%	19%	15%	8%	13%	18%	7%	14%	15%
Strongly Disagree	34%	31%	45%	32%	38%	25%	36%	36%	32%
Not sure	15%	18%	13%	26%	13%	16%	10%	7%	22%

Mission in Afghanistan									
In your view, is the Canadian mission in Afghanistan...									
	Total	Region						Gender	
		BC	AB	MB/SK	ONT	PQ	ATL	Male	Female
A peace mission	30%	32%	36%	31%	32%	23%	28%	30%	29%
A war mission	54%	44%	52%	52%	53%	58%	60%	59%	48%
Not sure	17%	24%	12%	17%	15%	19%	13%	11%	22%

Trend – In your view, is the Canadian mission in Afghanistan...				
	May 2008	March 2008	January 2008	December 2007
A peace mission	30%	29%	29%	28%
A war mission	54%	54%	57%	47%
Not sure	17%	18%	14%	24%

Mission in Afghanistan									
Do you agree or disagree with this statement? – The Harper government has effectively explained the mission in Afghanistan									
		Region						Gender	
	Total	BC	AB	MB/SK	ONT	PQ	ATL	Male	Female
Agree	32%	30%	43%	32%	33%	29%	28%	40%	24%
Disagree	62%	63%	52%	65%	62%	61%	66%	58%	65%
Not sure	6%	7%	6%	3%	5%	10%	6%	2%	11%

Trend – The Harper government has effectively explained the mission in Afghanistan				
	May 2008	March 2008	January 2008	December 2007
Agree	32%	31%	32%	31%
Disagree	62%	61%	61%	60%
Not sure	6%	7%	8%	9%

Mission in Afghanistan									
Do you agree or disagree with this statement? – Canada is shouldering too much of the burden of NATO's mission in Afghanistan									
		Region						Gender	
	Total	BC	AB	MB/SK	ONT	PQ	ATL	Male	Female
Agree	75%	75%	78%	84%	74%	74%	73%	77%	73%
Disagree	15%	14%	13%	11%	14%	18%	19%	17%	13%
Not sure	10%	11%	9%	5%	12%	8%	8%	6%	13%

Trend – Canada is shouldering too much of the burden of NATO's mission in Afghanistan				
	May 2008	January 2008	December 2007	July 2007
Agree	75%	75%	76%	71%
Disagree	15%	15%	15%	19%
Not sure	10%	9%	9%	11%

Mission in Afghanistan									
Do you agree or disagree with this statement? – The Afghan people are clearly benefiting from Canadian efforts in their country									
	Region							Gender	
	Total	BC	AB	MB/SK	ONT	PQ	ATL	Male	Female
Agree	60%	52%	68%	62%	62%	56%	66%	63%	58%
Disagree	28%	27%	23%	27%	27%	34%	27%	32%	25%
Not sure	11%	21%	9%	11%	11%	10%	8%	5%	17%

Trend – The Afghan people are clearly benefiting from Canadian efforts in their country				
	May 2008	March 2008	January 2008	December 2007
Agree	60%	59%	59%	57%
Disagree	28%	27%	27%	26%
Not sure	11%	14%	14%	17%

Angus Reid Strategies is a full-service polling and market research firm which is a leader in the use of the Internet and rich media technology to collect high-quality, in-depth insights for a wide array of clients. Dr. Angus Reid and the Angus Reid Strategies team are pioneers in online research methodologies, and have been conducting online surveys since 1995.

Angus Reid Strategies, along with its sister company, Vision Critical, is now the largest Canadian-owned market research enterprise. In addition to its four offices in Canada—located in Vancouver, Calgary, Toronto, and Montreal—the firm also has offices San Francisco, New York and London, England. Its team of specialists provides solutions across every type and sector of research, and currently serves over 200 international clients.

Angus Reid Strategies polls are conducted using the Angus Reid Forum online panel (www.angusreidforum.com), which is recruited via an industry-leading process that incorporates a randomized, widespread invitation approach and a triple opt-in screening procedure. The panel is maintained through state-of-the-art sampling techniques and frequent verifications of personal identity, contact information, and demographic characteristics. This premier online survey platform presents respondents with highly visual, interactive, and engaging surveys, ensuring that panel members provide thoughtful and reliable responses.

Over the last year, Angus Reid has covered five elections in Canada—more than any other pollster in the country—and the results have accurately predicted the outcome of each of these democratic processes. <http://www.angusreidstrategies.com/index.cfm?fuseaction=news&newsid=194>

More information on the way Angus Reid Strategies conducts public opinion research can be found at <http://www.angusreidstrategies.com/uploads/pages/pdfs/ARS.ARF.WP.pdf>

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**For more information, please contact
our spokesperson listed in the footnote.**

**Copies of this poll are available on our website:
www.angusreidstrategies.com**