

Canadians and the Vices of Politicians



Report

For more information please contact:
Montreal: Danielle St-Onge 514 982-2464
Toronto: Craig Worden 416 815-0330
Edmonton: Janet Brown 780 423-0708



Results

Zero Tolerance for Fraud and Economic Crimes

Canadians can accept that a politician may have had an alcohol or drug consumption problem, but they have zero tolerance when it comes to fraud or economic crimes.

To get a better picture of Canadians' tolerance of the mistakes their politicians can make, Leger Marketing presented 1,547 Canadians with different "sins" and asked them to what extent these could influence their favourite candidate voting intent.

**Question: Would you still vote for your favourite candidate for political or government office if you suddenly learned the following:
(The nine elements are placed in decreasing order of tolerance)**

➤ **... Admitted to having smoked marijuana:**

 **NO: 26%**

Among the transgressions presented, having smoked marijuana is without a doubt the most minor of offences and represents a slight handicap. Overall, 26% of the people surveyed would not vote for a politician who had admitted to having smoked marijuana. Disapproval is highest among the Atlantic Provinces (35%) and Alberta (33%).

➤ **... Admitted to having a drinking problem:**

 **NO: 39%**

Alcohol is legal and generally accepted by society, Canadians, however, reserve harsher judgement for a politician who has confessed to having a drinking problem than one who has admitted to occasionally smoking a joint. In all, 39% of Canadians surveyed said they would not cast their vote for a politician with an alcoholic past. Women are more unforgiving (42%), as are respondents from Ontario (46%) and British Columbia (49%). Respondents from Quebec are more tolerant as only 24% would deny their vote.

➤ **... Helped friends or relatives get hired into government job**

 **NO: 57%**

A majority of Canadians disapprove of using one's position to help relatives or friends get a job. In this context, 57% of respondents would not vote for their favourite candidate. Men (61%), respondents over 55 years of age (68%), respondents from Ontario (64%) and British Columbia (63%), and those with a university education (63%) are less understanding, whereas respondents from Quebec are more tolerant (39%).

➤ ... **Admitted to having used hard drugs, like cocaine or heroin**

NO: 75%

Three-quarters of Canadians (75%) would refuse to support their candidate if they learned he or she had consumed hard drugs. In Quebec, this proportion is significantly lower at 53%. It is in Ontario (82%) and in Alberta (85%) that disapproval is strongest. Furthermore, older respondents seem to be less tolerant (89% among those older than 55), whereas young people seem to be more open (66% among those 35 and younger), though overall the majority disapprove.

➤ ... **Was guilty of drinking and driving**

NO: 75%

According to Canadians, drinking and driving is just as bad as having taken hard drugs. Similarly, 75% of Canadians would not pledge their allegiance to a candidate who had committed such a crime. Among all provinces, only British Columbia shows more tolerance at 68%. Men (69%), professionals (70%) and those with an income of \$80,000 or more (68%) disapprove in lower proportions as opposed to women (82%) who are stricter.

➤ ... **Was arrested for shoplifting**

NO: 80%

Stealing – even something small – is strongly condemned. Only 20% of Canadians would continue to support a candidate who had committed this infraction, against 80% who would withhold their vote. Younger people are more understanding (74% among respondents 35 and younger), while older respondents see the matter as more serious (88% among respondents older than 55). Once again, Quebec is the province with the lowest disapproval rate (71%). The highest disapproval rate is found in the Prairies (88%).

➤ ... **Had cheated on their taxes**

NO: 90%

Stealing from the taxpayer is even worse. Canadians would come down hard on a politician who had cheated on his or her taxes, with no less than 90% withholding their vote. Quebecers would take things a little less seriously (84%) even though the majority still disapprove.

➤ ... **Had accepted illegal campaign donations**

NO: 96%

Canadians would unanimously punish a politician who did not respect electoral financing rules. Ninety-six percent (96%) would refuse to cast their vote for someone who had bypassed the rules in this respect. The level of disapproval is similar in all provinces and among the different socio-demographic sub-groups.

➤ ... Had participated in illegal business practices

NO: 97%

Similarly, 97% would refuse to give their support to a politician who had been caught in illegal business practices. Quebecers post the lowest proportion (94%) and Ontarians the highest (99%).

Question: Would you still vote for your favourite candidate for political or government office if you suddenly learned the following: (% of negative responses)

(n=1454)	Total Population	Atl.	QC	ON	Prairies	Alberta	BC
Admitted to having smoked marijuana	26%	35%	24%	24%	30%	33%	21%
Admitted to having a drinking problem	39%	40%	24%	46%	42%	33%	49%
Helped friends or relatives get hired into government job	57%	52%	39%	64%	60%	64%	63%
Admitted to having used hard drugs, like cocaine or heroin	75%	83%	53%	82%	83%	85%	81%
Was guilty of drinking and driving	75%	79%	74%	77%	80%	75%	68%
Was arrested for shoplifting	80%	86%	71%	80%	88%	87%	84%
Had cheated on their taxes	90%	92%	84%	93%	89%	92%	94%
Had accepted illegal campaign donations	96%	96%	96%	95%	95%	95%	97%
Had participated in illegal business practices	97%	98%	94%	99%	97%	98%	98%

Note: for regional data, results in red are significantly lower and results in blue are significantly higher than the national average.

In short, it seems that Canadians are willing to give a politician a chance for marijuana and alcohol misconduct. They are much more strict with politicians who use their position to the advantage of family or friends or who have taken hard drugs or are guilty of drinking and driving. They are completely unforgiving when it comes to politicians who steal, commit fraud or embezzlement.

Methodology

This study was conducted by Leger Marketing through telephone interviews among a representative sample of 1,547 English- or French-speaking Canadians, 18 years of age or older. The interviews were conducted from October 13 to 16, 2005.

Using data from Statistics Canada, the results were weighted according to region, gender and language spoken at home to ensure a sample representative of the entire Canadian adult population. In the end, the maximum margin of error obtained for a sample of 1,547 respondents is $\pm 2.4\%$, 19 times out of 20.

Questionnaire

Q1. Would you still vote for your favourite candidate for political or government office if you suddenly learned the following:

In rotation

- a. Admitted to having a drinking problem
Yes
No
- b. Was guilty of drinking and driving
Yes
No
- c. Admitted to having smoked marijuana
Yes
No
- d. Admitted to having used hard drugs, like cocaine or heroin
Yes
No
- e. Was arrested for shoplifting
Yes
No
- f. Had accepted illegal campaign donations
Yes
No
- g. Had cheated on their taxes
Yes
No
- h. Had participated in illegal business practices
Yes
No
- f. Helped friends or relatives get hired into government job
Yes
No