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ANALYSIS | Polls show Justin Trudeau, Stephen Harper in tight Ontario race

Ontario will likely be an important electoral battleground in 2015

By [Éric Grenier](#), for CBC News Posted: Dec 10, 2014 5:00 AM ET | Last Updated: Dec 10, 2014 7:46 PM ET



Eric Grenier on Battleground Ontario 3:52

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The latest polls suggest the province that almost single-handedly gave Stephen Harper a majority government in 2011 could see a tight contest between the Conservatives and Justin Trudeau's Liberals in 2015.

Though the Liberals still lead in [ThreeHundredEight's weighted polling averages](#) in Ontario with 38 per cent support, that puts them only two points up on the Conservatives. In the past seven polls carried out in Ontario, the Liberals have registered 40 per cent or less in all of them — and that after managing 40 per cent or more in 10 of the previous 12 polls.

The [latest poll from Ipsos Reid](#), which sampled more than 8,000 people nationwide and over 2,000 in Ontario alone, put the two parties dead even at 37 per cent apiece.

The New Democrats trail in third place with 20 per cent in the weighted average, and have shown little life in Ontario since slumping in May. The Greens are in fourth with five per cent support.

Support appears to be shifting in Ontario, and the consequences could be significant. In September, the Liberals enjoyed a 10-point lead over the Conservatives in the polling average with 43 to 33 per cent support, enough to ensure a healthy share of the 121 seats up for grabs in the province next year. But with the gap narrowed to just two points, many seats could be decided by very slim margins.

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About The Author



Éric Grenier

Polls

Éric Grenier is founder of ThreeHundredEight.com, a website dedicated to political polling in Canada and electoral forecasts. He has previously written for The Globe and Mail, Huffington Post Canada and The Hill Times, and has worked with Le Devoir and L'actualité during the most recent provincial and federal election campaigns in Quebec.

■ Follow Éric on Twitter at @308dotcom

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- [ThreeHundredEight's federal polling averages](#)
- [Ipsos Reid federal poll](#)
- [Nanos Research Ontario poll](#)

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Ontario is certainly the most important prize in 2015. The Conservatives won 73 seats there in 2011, a gain of 22 over their performance in 2008 and an increase that accounts for the party moving from minority to majority status in the House of Commons.

The last time the Liberals won an election, in 2004, Ontario was responsible for sending 75 Liberal MPs to Ottawa, and during the Jean Chrétien years the party nearly swept the province in every riding.

So the stakes could not be higher for Trudeau and Harper in Ontario. While the federal election could be decided in the province, it could be the Greater Toronto Area that decides which way Ontario swings.

The poll from Ipsos Reid shows how close things are in the region. After winning Toronto by only a handful of points in 2011, the Liberals are again in a strong position there with 46 per cent support, 20 points up on the second place New Democrats. But in the wider 905 area code that surrounds the city, the Conservatives hold a narrow four-point lead over the Liberals, with 41 to 37 per cent support.

Trudeau, Harper and Wynne

While voting intentions for the two parties may be moving to a tie provincially, Trudeau does hold a narrow personal advantage over Harper. The most recent polls have shown the Liberal Party leader enjoying a higher approval rating in Ontario than the prime minister, and [the latest survey by Léger](#) found Ontarians narrowly preferring Trudeau over Harper for the top job.

Nevertheless, the popularity contest between the two leaders remains close enough that it would not take much to flip the results.

It puts into some context the ongoing spat between Harper and Ontario Premier Kathleen Wynne. The prime minister might be calculating he has more to lose than to gain in meeting with Ontario's Liberal leader, though the polls suggest he is taking a risk.

While the Ontario Liberals are still relatively unpopular outside of the GTA, Wynne does boast better personal numbers than Harper in the province. Her [latest approval ratings](#) were a few points up on the prime minister's, while [Nanos Research](#) recently found that she was the top choice of 45 per cent of Ontarians as the best person to be premier. That is up significantly from the 32 to 34 per cent support she had in the spring.

In any case, unless federal support shifts dramatically it appears likely Ontario will deprive Harper of the majority he won in 2011, rather than renew it. But as long as the Conservatives continue to put pressure on the Liberals in the province, and in particular in the seat-rich area around Toronto, the prospects of a Trudeau victory in 2015 will also be greatly diminished.

[ThreeHundredEight.com's weighted poll averages](#) include all publicly released polls, weighing them by date, sample size, and the pollster's track record. [Click here to read about ThreeHundredEight.com's methodology.](#) The sample size, field dates, and methodologies of the polls included in the average vary and have not been individually verified by the CBC.



Justin Trudeau, left, joined Ontario Premier Kathleen Wynne for a campaign stop in Toronto in May during the provincial election. (Nathan Denette/Canadian Press)

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The **poll by Ipsos Reid** for Global News was conducted between Nov. 10 and Dec. 1 and interviewed 8,268 Canadians via the Internet. As the poll was conducted online, a margin of error does not apply. Ipsos Reid reports a 'credibility interval' of +/- 1.2 per cent, 19 times out of 20.

The **poll by Nanos Research** was conducted between Nov. 14 and 16 and interviewed 503 Ontarians via telephone. The margin of error associated with the survey is +/- 4.4 per cent, 19 times out of 20.



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• brenton18 Guest

Yea, God forbid we vote for a proven leader who carried a Country through the worst economic time since the 1930's

Shame on anyone who would vote for a Prime Minister who has done nothing but strengthened our country on an international stage and is trying to make our country live up to its potential as an energy superpower.

Oh right the environment! Those darn tarsands. Give it a rest, anyone with a job and a level head doesn't care. You think Trudeau would magically put a stop to the oil... » [more](#)

• 8 hours ago

• 13 Likes

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• politics in the blood Guest

@brenton18

The only reason we made it through "...through the worst economic time since the 1930's..." was because of the protections of Liberal governments....made to insure that OUR banks were NOT deregulated into American nightmares.

Harper happened to be there.....and spent the previous Liberal Surplus on non-Canadian ideological legislative poison.....so proud.....

The rest of your rant just proves you are a Harperite....bought and paid for.

• 8 hours ago

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- brenton18 Guest

@politics in the blood

Yes clearly evident I would choose Harper over the other candidates. Broke that code quickly. I wish you were right about me being paid for.

- 8 hours ago
- 3 Likes

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- caring canuck Guest

One thing is sure, we need to get rid of the Harper government. Canada simply cannot take four more years of the most autocratic and poisonously partisan government we've ever known.

For the good of Canada, support the candidate in your riding that has the best chance of defeating the Conservative.

- 10 hours ago
- 16 Likes

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- Joshua Slocum Guest

@caring canuck

Yes yes, pay no attention to what she represents, vote for her if you think she can beat the Conservative candidate. Such wise council. No wonder the Liberals are not even the official opposition.

- 10 hours ago
- 7 Likes

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- Bill Gates Guest

I didnt think any leader could have been worse than Mulroney the conservative.

That was before Harper the reformer.

Fortunately Harper and his reform cronies will get the boot next election.

- 10 hours ago
- 18 Likes

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- Joshua Slocum Guest

@Bill Gates

And in his place who'd you recommend I should vote for? Name please.

- 10 hours ago
- 4 Likes
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- Caring Person Guest

@Bill Gates (the real one) - do you get responses emailed to you that are to the fake account as well?

- 9 hours ago
- 5 Likes
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- pendlehill37 Guest

The fact that a very small (less than 40) third place party can even be anywhere near to a sitting, majority government is a great accomplishment in itself. Mr Mulcair is the Leader of the Official opposition. There is no excuse for them to be as low as they are in the polls.

At the same time, Mr Harper 's government can go across the country, promising, unicorns and fairy dust, but he is still struggling to get ahead of Mr Trudeau! 2015 is going to be very interesting.

- 10 hours ago
- 11 Likes
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- Localman Guest

Harper keeps to himself and has few confidants. Let's hear from someone that Harper knew well enough to trust with Canada's security secrets.

Arthur Porter wrote "the way to Harper's heart was through his party. In my view, he put party first, country second."

- 10 hours ago
- 9 Likes
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- christoph Guest

... Look Trudeau seems like a friendly happy guy, Mulcair is shrewd and articulate however, Harper is the best leader of the three.

- 11 hours ago
- 4 Likes
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- CalgarySucks Guest

@christoph

HI THERE!.....It's ME AGAIN!...You still spewing BULL? Now STOP THAT CHILDISH BEHAVIOUR!

- 10 hours ago
- 5 Likes
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- Macanta Guest

@christoph

Mulcair is shrewd and Christopherson did a great job on the "Unfair" Elections Act. Trudeau is also shrewd and takes an approach to politics that Harper can't touch. Harper is a complete dud who has short-changed this country for 8 years. He doesn't deserve any more chances. It's time for a change.

- 10 hours ago
- 8 Likes
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- christoph Guest

Harper's also very hard working; when's the last time you saw HIM play golf.... once and while he plays his piano!

- 11 hours ago
- 3 Likes
- [Like](#)
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- Localman Guest

@christoph Captive audience for that piano thing. That must have been painful!

- 10 hours ago
- 12 Likes
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- christoph Guest

Harper's not perfect and not terribly congenial, however, Canadians get the sense that he'll maintain an economically stable and secure Canada.

- 11 hours ago
- 2 Likes
- [Like](#)
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- Localman Guest

@christoph He wastes our tax money in \$550,000,000 increments.

The ship contracts without any spending controls on the contractors are scary.

- 10 hours ago
- 12 Likes
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- Macanta Guest

@christoph

Harper has bungled everything that he has "attempted" to do. His legislation is all for show, not results. Canada's defense infrastructure is in a shambles. He has not supported Veterans. The EI administration is in disarray. All his government has done is make promises and put on a big show that had no substance. It's long past time for a change.

- 9 hours ago
- 11 Likes
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- christoph Guest

Ah yes... they said Harper was finished....THEY WERE WRONG!

- 11 hours ago
- 1 Like
- [Like](#)
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- Localman Guest

@christoph Better hide because THEY are out o get you.

- 10 hours ago
- 9 Likes
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- Bill Gates Guest

You'd of thought after Dion and Ignatieff that the Liberals would have been more discerning when choosing their leader. Instead of an astronaut or a lawyer or a professor, they selected a drama teacher.

- 11 hours ago
- 6 Likes
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- Jerry Salt Guest

@Bill Gates

They tried those types already. Apparently they didn't resonate with Canadians.

The current plans seems to be working quite well.

- 11 hours ago
- 9 Likes
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- Macanta Guest

@Bill Gates

Trudeau meets and talks to Canadians. He's an intelligent and balanced person. He has already taken actions on Senate reform as a third party leader that Harper has only exploited and bungled. He has formed a qualified team and has a positive vision for Canada. Trudeau will make a great PM. Anyone who relies on the opinion of a paid poster on a CBC comments board is a fool.

- 9 hours ago
- 8 Likes
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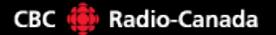
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