

Report of the Initial Results From a Survey Commissioned by
Friends of Canadian Broadcasting

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Executive summary

This report presents initial findings from a national survey on attitudes toward the CBC and public broadcasting in Canada. The report is organized along a number of broad themes:

- Opinion on the trustworthiness of political parties when it comes to matters of culture and of protecting the CBC
- Canadians' views on the performance of the CBC
- A specific analysis of opinion on the CBC and public broadcasting among Conservative supporters
- Canadians' perceptions of the government's plans for the CBC
- Opinion on funding of public broadcasting and opinion on privatization
- Opinion on Canadian content and programming

More Canadians trust the Conservative party than any other to handle matters of national culture and identity. Even on the question of protecting the CBC the Conservative Party is more trusted than the Liberal Party, though well behind the NDP. Overall, the results of the survey indicate continued strong support for the CBC. Three quarters of Canadians give the CBC high marks for its performance in fulfilling its mandate. A majority want to see public broadcaster funding increased or at least maintained at current levels and three-quarters of Canadians are against privatizing the CBC. A majority of Conservative supporters want to maintain or increase funding for the CBC, consider the CBC important to their community and to the maintenance of Canada's culture and identity.

Description of the study and sample

In October 2011, Friends of Canadian Broadcasting commissioned political scientists Peter Loewen (University of Toronto) and Daniel Rubenson (Ryerson University) to design a survey gauging support for public broadcasting in Canada. Loewen and Rubenson commissioned Angus Reid/Vision Critical to field this survey.

From November 4th to November 10th, 2011, an online survey was conducted among a random, stratified sample of 2,022 Canadian adults who are Angus Reid Forum panel members. The margin of error—which measures sampling variability—is ± 2.18 percentage points, 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.

Table 1: Sample demographic statistics

Demographic:	Percent	
Gender	Male	49%
	Female	51%
Age	18–34	42%
	35–54	37%
	55+	21%
Language	English	82%
	French	18%
Region	BC	12%
	AB	10%
	MB/SK	7%
	ON	38%
	QC	25%
	ATL	8%
Education	High school or less	51%
	College/technical school	29%
	University	21%
Household income	<\$50K	38%
	\$50K–\$99K	34%
	>\$100K	12%
	Don't know/refused	16%

Q: Which political party is most trusted to handle Canadian culture and protect the CBC?

Many observers believe the Conservative Party was hurt at the polls during the 2008 election as a result of Prime Minister Harper’s criticism of “taxpayer-subsidized cultural elites.” However, the results of this survey suggest that the Prime Minister’s party leads when it comes to Canadians’ trust on matters of culture and identity.

We asked Canadians:

Which political party do you most trust to handle matters of national culture and identity?

As can be seen in Figure 1, the Conservative Party is trusted by more Canadians than any other party. Twenty-seven percent say the Conservatives are best at handling Canadian culture and identity. The New Democratic Party is ranked second, with 24% of Canadians saying they trust the NDP and Liberal Party is a distant third with 14% of Canadians thinking they are best able to handle matters of culture and identity.

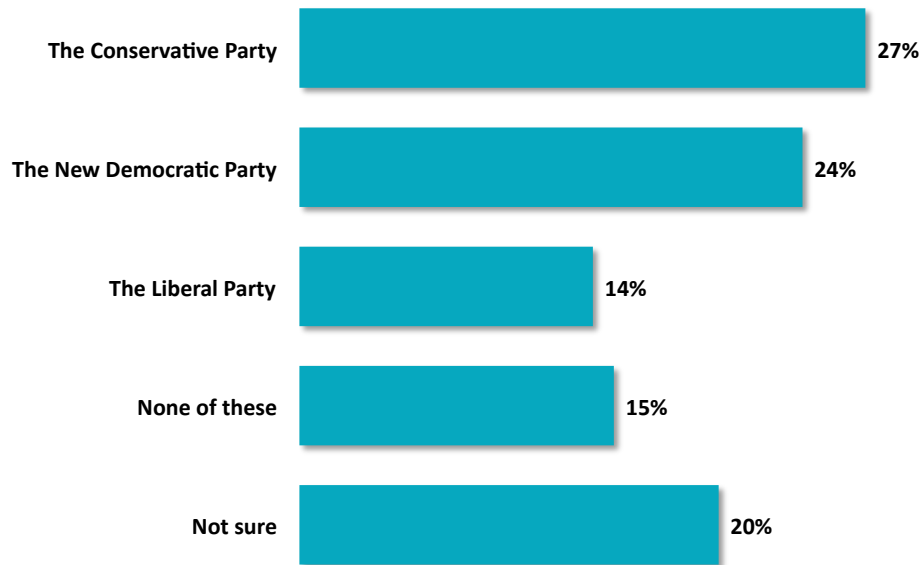


Figure 1: Most trusted party on matters of national culture and identity

We also asked Canadians which political party they most trust to protect the CBC.¹ These findings are reported in Figure 2. Here, the NDP is the clear leader with 46% of Canadians

¹We only report statistics for the Conservative Party, Liberal Party and NDP because the sample does not include enough supporters of the Green Party or Bloc Quebecois.

trusting them above others to protect the CBC. The Conservative Party, trusted on this issue by 29% of Canadians, has a slight edge over the Liberal Party, which again is last among the three major parties. Twenty-five percent of Canadians say they trust the Liberals most when it comes to protecting the CBC.

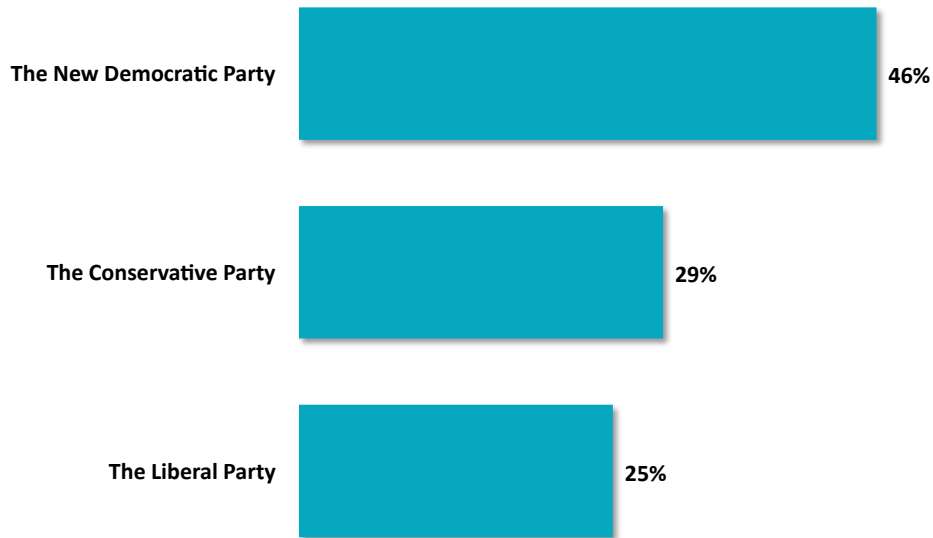


Figure 2: Most trusted party to protect the CBC

Q: What do Conservative supporters think about the CBC and public broadcasting?

There is widespread support for the CBC on a wide range of issues among those who identify themselves as supporters of the Conservative party:

- 57% would tell their MP to maintain or increase funding for the CBC
- 45% think the CBC plays an important or very important role in their community
- 63% think the CBC plays an important or very important role in protecting Canadian culture and identity
- 54% hold the view that the CBC is one of the things that helps distinguish Canada from the US
- 70% believe that the federal government should be somewhat or very responsible for ensuring that Canadian programming and content on television and radio is protected

- 64% give the CBC high marks on its performance in fulfilling its mandate to inform, enlighten and entertain
- 54% give the CBC high marks on its performance in fulfilling its mandate to reflect Canada's diverse regions

Q: What about those who might be leaning to the Conservatives and who have them as their second choice?

Support for the CBC, for Canadian public broadcasting and for the role these play in ensuring the vitality of Canadian culture and identity is very strong among Canadians who indicate the Conservative Party as their second choice party:

- 81% would tell their MP to maintain or increase funding for the CBC
- 65% think the CBC plays an important or very important role in their community
- 78% think the CBC plays an important or very important role in protecting Canadian culture and identity
- 64% hold the view that the CBC is one of the things that helps distinguish Canada from the US
- 75% believe that the federal government should be somewhat or very responsible for ensuring that Canadian programming and content on television and radio is protected
- 84% give the CBC high marks on its performance in fulfilling its mandate to inform, enlighten and entertain
- 76% give the CBC high marks on its performance in fulfilling its mandate to reflect Canada's diverse regions

Q: Is there broad based support for the CBC?

We asked Canadians to rate the performance of the CBC in fulfilling its mandates:

As you may know, as the national broadcaster the mandate of the CBC is to provide radio and television services incorporating a wide range of programming that informs, enlightens, and entertains. Overall, how would you rate the performance of the CBC in fulfilling this mandate to date?

As part of its mandate, the CBC is required to provide television and radio content that reflects Canada and its regions to national and regional audiences, and to serve the special needs of Canada’s diverse regions. Overall, how would you rate the performance of the CBC in fulfilling this mandate?

Over three-quarters of Canadians, some 77%, rated the performance of the CBC in fulfilling its “inform, enlighten and entertain” mandate as good, very good or excellent. A similarly large majority of Canadians—68%—gave the CBC high marks for its performance in fulfilling its mandate to reflect and serve Canada’s diverse regions.

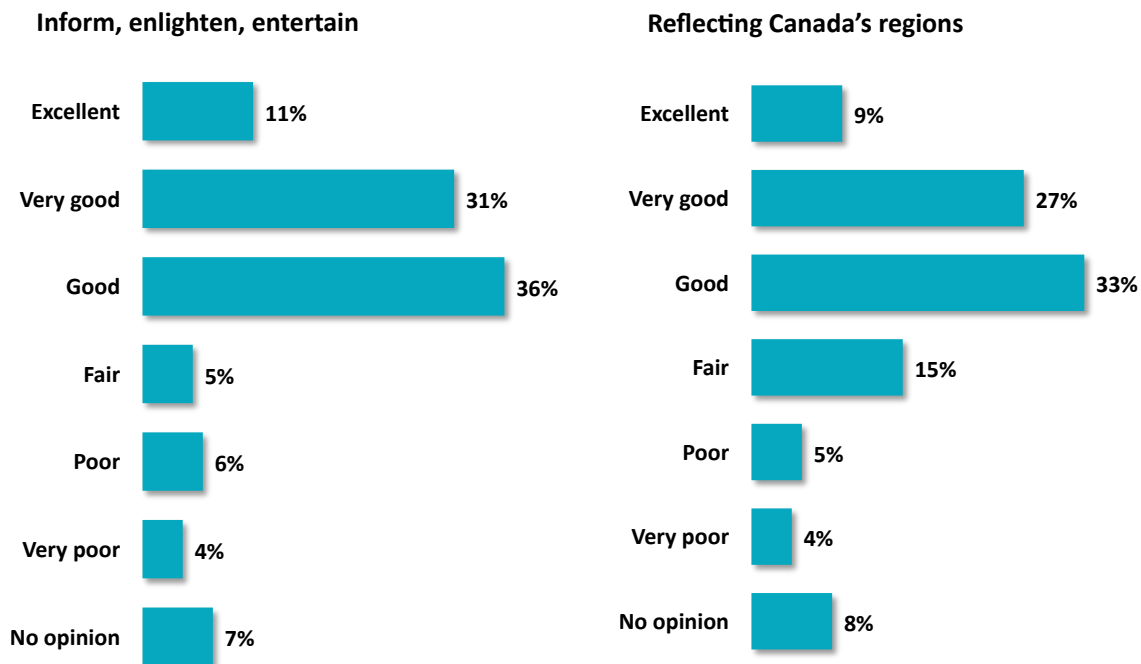


Figure 3: Ratings of the CBC’s mandates

These strong levels of support are evident amongst various demographic subgroups as well. Seventy-nine percent of women and 75% of men give high ratings to the CBC for the job it does “informing, enlightening and entertaining” while the number of women and men who rate the CBC highly for its performance in serving Canada’s diverse regions are 71% and 65%, respectively. Canadians of all age groups rate the CBC highly. Among 18–34 year olds, 80% give the CBC high marks on the “inform, enlighten and entertain” mandate and 70% rate highly the CBC’s performance on its mandate to serve Canada’s diverse regions. For those in the 35–55 age group, the percentages giving high marks for the two mandates are 76% and 67%, respectively

and for those 55 years and older, 74% and 65% consider that the CBC is doing a good, very good or excellent job in fulfilling its two mandates.

When we break down opinion on these questions along party lines, we find consistently high rankings of the CBC. When it comes to the first mandate—to inform, enlighten and entertain—the percentage among different party supporters giving high marks to the CBC is never less than 64% (Conservatives). Likewise, supporters of all parties tend to give high marks to the CBC for the serving Canada’s diverse regions mandate; here the lowest percentage is 54% (Conservatives). Roughly 8 in 10 supporters of the other major parties give high marks to the CBC on these questions.

Respondents to the survey were also asked questions measuring their opinion on various aspects of the CBC and how it performs its functions, including protecting Canadian culture and identity, serving local communities, reporting on important issues, and connecting Canadians across the country.

Overall, 58% of Canadians feel that the CBC plays a somewhat or very important role in their community. More than two thirds (67%) of Canadians view the CBC as one of the things that helps distinguish Canada from the US. On the issue of whether the CBC provides good value for taxpayers’ money, agreement outnumbered disagreement by a margin of roughly 2 to 1 among those who express an opinion.

Canadians want to see a strong CBC capable of delivering high quality Canadian programming that both connects people across the country and serves the unique needs of communities and regions. When asked if “We should build a new CBC capable of providing high quality Canadian programming with strong regional content throughout Canada”, two thirds of Canadians (64%) agreed. A similarly strong majority (58%) would like to see the CBC strengthened in their part of the country. Roughly half of those surveyed (49%) believe that Canada needs the CBC in order to survive and prosper. Those holding this opinion outnumber by a margin of 2 to 1 those who disagree that Canada needs the CBC to survive and prosper. Almost three-quarters (74%) of Canadians think the CBC provides good coverage of news and cultural events in their community.

The survey asked Canadians about their views on the CBC and Canadian identity and culture:

Do you feel that the CBC is important in protecting Canadian identity and culture?

Close to three quarters, 74%, think that the CBC is somewhat or very important for protecting Canadian identity and culture. This strong connection between the CBC and Canadian identity

and culture is present among various demographic groups as well as supporters of all major political parties. Seventy-six percent of women and 71% of men feel the CBC is important in protecting Canadian identity and culture. Among Canadians aged 18–34, 75% view the CBC as important in this respect, while the numbers for Canadians aged 35–54 and 55 and over are 73% and 72%, respectively.

A solid majority of supporters of the three major parties think the CBC is important when it comes to protecting Canadian identity and culture. Close to two thirds (63%) of Conservative supporters and roughly 85% of Liberal supporters and NDP supporters take the view that the CBC plays an important role in this respect.

We also asked Canadians how much trust or confidence, on a scale of 1–7, they have in the CBC to protect Canadian identity and culture. Sixty-one percent of Canadians gave a score of 5 or higher. Among men 58% reported high levels of trust in the CBC while 63% of women did so. Sixty-six percent of younger Canadians (18–34), 56% of the 35–54 age group and 58% of those aged 55 or older report having high levels of trust or confidence in the CBC to protect Canadian identity and culture.

Trust in the CBC is generally high across the political spectrum. Among Conservative supporters, 45% have high levels of trust in the CBC while 72% percent of Liberal supporters and 77% of NDP supporters trust the CBC to protect Canadian identity and culture.

Q: What do Canadians think about the level of funding for public broadcasting?

We asked Canadians whether they believe the level of public broadcaster funding in this country is higher, lower or about the same as that in other Western countries. Forty-six percent of Canadians think funding for public broadcasting is either higher than or the same as that in comparable countries. However, public broadcaster funding is in fact considerably lower in Canada, at \$33 per capita, than in most major Western countries.²

After presenting this fact, we next asked Canadians to what extent they agree with the following statement:

Canada’s level of public broadcaster funding is insufficient to maintain a unique and vibrant Canadian identity and culture.

²A recent report prepared for the CBC shows that the average per capita public funding for public broadcasters is over \$80. (Nordicity. 2011. *Analysis of Government Support for Public Broadcasting and Other Culture in Canada.*)

Over half (52%) agree. Levels of agreement were very consistent across different demographic groups. Fifty-three percent of women and 52% of men agreed; 50% of Canadians aged 18–34, 55% in the 35–54 age group and 52% in the 55 and over group agree. The majority of Liberal (64%) and NDP (66%) supporters agree with the statement while 37% of Conservatives agree.

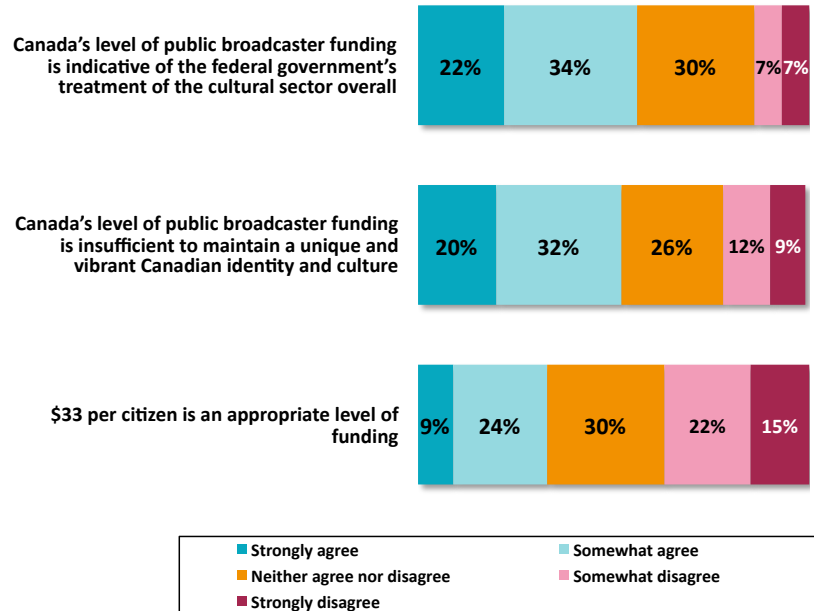


Figure 4: Opinion on funding of public broadcasting

In addition to the statement above, we also asked about the extent to which Canadians agree that:

Canada's level of public broadcaster funding is indicative of the federal government's treatment of the cultural sector overall.

A majority of Canadians (55%) agree. This holds for women (55%) and men (56%) as well as across all age groups. Fifty-three percent of those aged 18–34 agree with the statement. Among the 35–54 and 55 and older groups, 58% and 57%, respectively, agree. Again, the majority of supporters for each party agree with the statement, with the exception of the Conservatives (37%). Two thirds (67%) of Liberal supporters and 70% of NDP supporters view the level of funding for public broadcasting in Canada as indicative of the federal government's treatment of the cultural sector.

Finally, we asked whether Canadians consider \$33 per capita an appropriate level of funding for public broadcasting. One third of Canadians (33%) either somewhat or strongly agree that the current level of public broadcaster funding is appropriate. If we look at opinion among party supporters, we find that 40% of Conservative supporters, 32% of Liberals and 30% of

NDP supporters think \$33 per capita is an appropriate level of funding for Canadian public broadcasting.

Q: What would Canadians tell their MP if there was a vote on CBC funding?

We asked Canadians what advice they would give their MP if there was a vote on funding for the CBC.

Assume for a moment that your federal Member of Parliament asked for your advice on an upcoming vote in the House of Commons on what to do about CBC funding. Which of the following three options would you advise him/her to vote for... increase funding, maintain funding, decrease funding.³

Some 69% of Canadians would advise their Member of Parliament to either maintain or increase funding for the CBC. Across the political spectrum there is broad agreement on this question. Fifty-seven percent of Conservative supporters would tell their MP to increase or, at worst, maintain current levels of CBC funding. The numbers for Liberal and NDP supporters are 84% and 80%, respectively. A clear majority of supporters of all political parties would tell their MP to maintain or increase funding for the CBC.

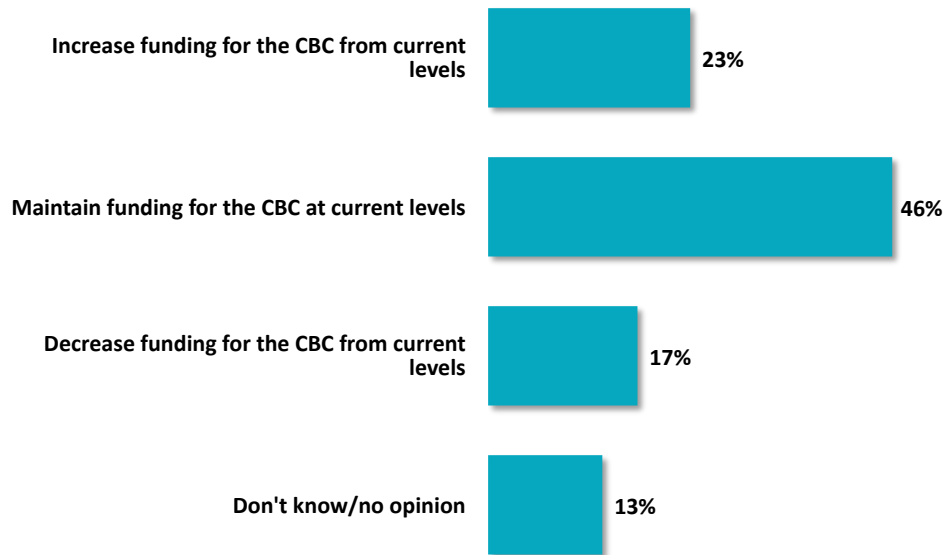


Figure 5: Opinion on funding for the CBC

³The order of these response options was randomized in the survey.

Q: What do Canadians think of Prime Minister Harper’s plans for the CBC? What are their views on privatizing the CBC?

The survey includes questions asking Canadians to what extent they agree with the following statements about the Harper government’s plans for Canadian public broadcasting:

The Harper government has a hidden agenda that favours private corporate broadcasters.

The Harper government is underfunding the CBC so that it can turn it into a private, commercial broadcaster.

A majority of Canadians agree with both statements: 52% think the Harper government has a hidden agenda favouring private corporate broadcasters and 50% believe the Harper government is underfunding the CBC in order to privatize it. Supporters of the Liberal Party and the NDP share these views in large numbers. Seventy-three percent of Liberals and 71% of NDP supporters agree with the statement about a Harper hidden agenda favouring private broadcasters.

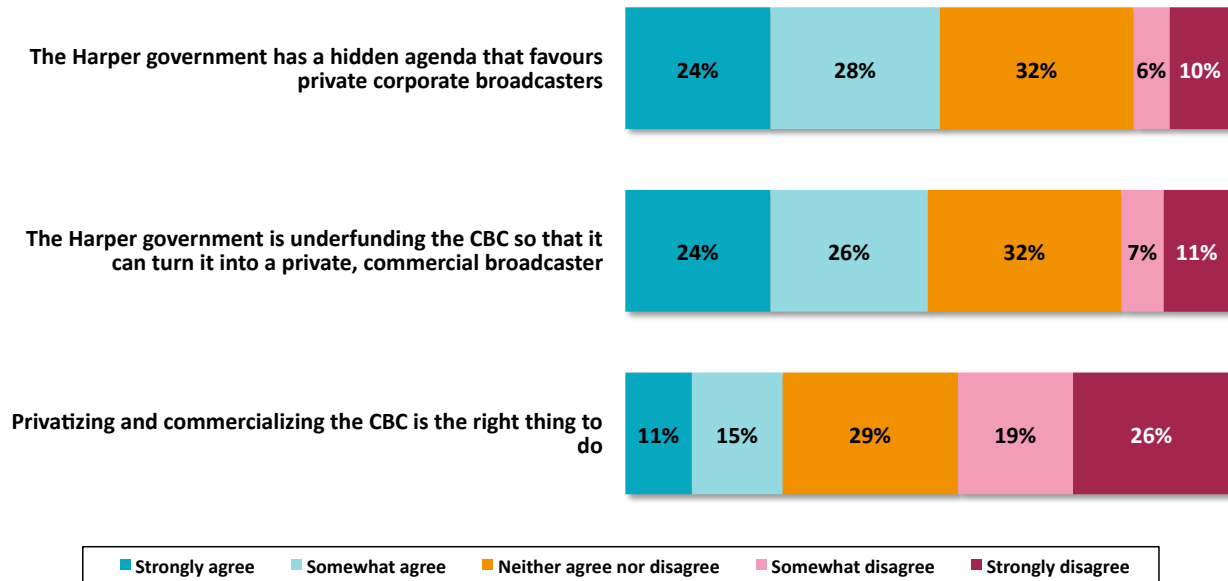


Figure 6: Opinion on privatization and public broadcasting

When it comes to views on Prime Minister Harper’s government’s plans for the CBC, 68% of Liberals and 67% of NDP supporters agree. Significant portions of Conservative Party supporters—over a quarter—also believe that the Harper government favours private corporate broadcasters (28%) and is underfunding the CBC with the aim of privatizing it (26%).

We also asked Canadians for their opinion on whether moving to a private CBC is a good thing. The survey included the following statement and asked whether Canadians strongly agree, somewhat agree, neither agree nor disagree, somewhat disagree, or strongly disagree:

Privatizing and commercializing the CBC is the right thing to do.

Only roughly one quarter of Canadians, 27%, strongly or somewhat agree that privatizing the CBC is the right thing to do. Among men, 33% think a private CBC is a good thing and only 21% of women hold this view. Canadians of all age groups are also skeptical that privatizing the CBC is the right thing. Twenty-three percent of 18–34 year olds, 28% of 35–54 year olds and 32% of those 55 and over agree with the statement.

This skepticism is borne out among partisan supporters across the political spectrum. Fewer than half (45%) of Conservative supporters think a private CBC is the way to go. There is very little appetite for a privatized CBC amongst supporters of any of the other major political parties. Seventeen percent of Liberal and NDP supporters think that the CBC should be privatized.

Q: Do Canadians think Canadian content is important? Who do they think is best suited to provide it?

We asked Canadians:

Is Canadian programming and content on television and radio important in maintaining and developing Canadian culture and identity?

Canadians recognize that the Canadian programming and content is important in maintaining Canadian culture and identity. Indeed, 85% of Canadians believe that Canadian programming and culture is very or somewhat important in this vital role. Just 12% believe it does not play a very important or not at all important role. This view is widely shared across age groups, with no less than 80% of Canadians in any age group feeling that this role for Canadian programming is very important or somewhat important.

The broad-based belief in the importance of Canadian content in maintaining Canadian identity and culture is also evident across party lines. Seventy-eight percent of Conservative voters view this role as important or very important. This percentage climbs to 89% among Liberal voters and 91% among NDP voters.

Given that Canadians feel that this is an important role, who do they believe is most responsible for ensuring this programming and content? We asked respondents to indicate how responsible the CRTC, Television and radio networks, the federal government, and Cable and satellite companies are for programming and content on television and radio.

Our results suggest that Canadians view the responsibility for this as shared across all four entities, but especially among the CRTC and the federal government. Half of Canadians (52%) view the CRTC as very responsible for this function, while a third (34%) view the federal government as very responsible. The attribution of very responsible falls to 25% for networks, and just 13% for cable providers.

The view that the CRTC and the federal government are very responsible for ensuring Canadian content on television and radio is shared across political lines. Thirty-one percent of Conservative voters view the federal government as very responsible, and 49% view the CRTC as very responsible. Thirty-eight percent of Liberals and 41% of NDP voters view the federal government as very responsible, while 62% and 57% respectively view the CRTC as very responsible.

Q: Who is responsible for ensuring Canadian content on radio and TV is protected?

We asked Canadians about their views on Canadian content on radio and television:

In your opinion, who is best suited to provide Canadian programming on television?
CBC, Private broadcasters, Both, Neither, Not sure?

Canadians view the CBC as more suited to providing Canadian content than private broadcasters. Twenty-nine percent responded “CBC” while only 11% think private broadcasters are best suited for this purpose. Forty-nine percent see both the CBC and private broadcasters together as best able to provide Canadian radio and television programming. Roughly equal portions of women (28%) and men (30%) think the CBC is best at delivering Canadian content while there are gender differences in views on private broadcasters’ delivery of Canadian programming with 6% of women thinking private broadcasters are best suited, compared to 16% of men.

Among none of the parties is it the case that more supporters view private broadcasters than the CBC as best suited to provide Canadian programming. For Conservative supporters, equal numbers (23%) rate the CBC and private broadcasters as best. Thirty-six percent of Liberal supporters and 38% of NDP supporters say the CBC is most suited for Canadian programming while 4% of Liberals and 7% of NDP supporters answer private broadcasters. It is the case that among all the groups, a plurality takes the view that the CBC and private broadcasters together are best suited to providing Canadian programming on radio and television.

We also asked Canadians about their views on which institutions are most responsible for protecting Canadian content on radio and television:

Who is most responsible for ensuring Canadian programming and content on television and radio is protected?

- The CRTC
- Television and radio networks
- The federal government
- Cable and satellite companies

A large majority of Canadians hold the view that the CRTC, television and radio networks and the federal government all have a high degree of responsibility for protecting Canadian programming and content on radio and television. Seventy-eight percent say the CRTC is somewhat or very responsible, 73% think television and radio networks have a responsibility in this area and 70% take the view that the federal government ought to play an important role in protecting Canadian content and programming. Slightly fewer than half (49%) answered that they think cable and satellite companies are responsible for protecting Canadian content on television and radio.

Conclusion

The survey reveals a confidence among Canadians that the Conservative Party can be trusted to handle matters of national culture and identity. Indeed, more Canadians trust the Conservatives on these issues than any other party. Even on the question of protecting the CBC, the Conservative Party is more trusted than the Liberal Party, though well behind the NDP.

A general conclusion is that the results of this survey demonstrate that the CBC enjoys high levels of support among Canadians across a range of demographic and political groups. Over three quarters of Canadians give the CBC high marks for its performance in fulfilling its mandates to inform, enlighten and entertain, and to reflect Canada's diverse regions. Most Canadians want to see funding for the CBC either increased or maintained at current levels. There is also a broad-based belief that Canadian programming and content on television and radio is important for maintaining Canadian culture and identity.

Support for the CBC and for public broadcasting is high among all Canadians, but it is also the case that Canadians who support the Conservative Party tend to in large numbers hold the CBC in high esteem. When it comes to levels of funding, the role of the CBC in protecting Canadian

culture and its role in the local community, Conservatives and Conservative leaners (those who have the party as their second vote choice) hold views that are overwhelmingly positive toward Canada's national public broadcaster.

Appendix — Survey questions

1. Which political party do you most trust to handle matters of national culture and identity?

The Conservative Party
The New Democratic Party
The Liberal Party
None of these
Not sure

2. Is Canadian programming and content on television and radio important in maintaining and developing Canadian culture and identity?

Very important
Somewhat important
Not very important
Not at all important
Don't know

3. In your opinion, who is best suited to provide Canadian programming on television?

CBC
Private broadcasters
Both
Neither
Not sure

4. Do you feel that the CBC plays an important role in your community?

Very important
Somewhat important
Not very important
Not at all important
Don't know

5. Do you feel that the CBC is important in protecting Canadian identity and culture?

Very important
Somewhat important
Not very important
Not at all important
Don't know

6. How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements about the CBC?

[ROWS – RANDOMIZE]

The CBC is one of the things that helps distinguish Canada from the US

The CBC provides value for taxpayers' money

We should build a new CBC capable of providing high quality Canadian programming with strong regional content throughout Canada

I would like to see CBC strengthened in my part (region) of Canada

To survive and prosper, Canada needs the CBC

Strongly agree

Somewhat agree

Neither agree nor disagree

Somewhat disagree

Strongly disagree

Don't know

7. As you may know, as the national broadcaster the mandate of the CBC is to provide radio and television services incorporating a wide range of programming that informs, enlightens, and entertains. Overall, how would you rate the performance of the CBC in fulfilling this mandate to date?

Excellent

Very good

Good

Fair

Poor

Very poor

No opinion

8. As part of its mandate, the CBC is required to provide television and radio content that reflects Canada and its regions to national and regional audiences, and to serve the special needs of Canada's diverse regions. Overall, how would you rate the performance of the CBC in fulfilling this mandate?

Excellent

Very good

Good

Fair

Poor

Very poor

No opinion

9. How much confidence or trust do you personally have in the CBC to protect Canadian culture and identity on television? Please use a scale of 1 to 7 where 1 means “Very low trust and confidence” and 7 means “Very high trust and confidence.”

SCALE:

0 – Very low trust/confidence

1

2

3

4

5

6

7 – Very high trust/confidence

10. Assume for a moment that your federal Member of Parliament asked for your advice on an upcoming vote in the House of Commons on what to do about CBC funding. Which of the following three options would you advise him/her to vote for. . .

Increase funding for the CBC from current levels

Maintain funding for the CBC at current levels

Decrease funding for the CBC from current levels

Don't know/no opinion

11. Who is most responsible for ensuring Canadian programming and content on television and radio is protected?

Very responsible

Somewhat responsible

Not very responsible

Not at all responsible

Don't know

[ROWS — RANDOMIZE]

The CRTC

Television and radio networks

The federal government

Cable and satellite companies

12. What do you think Canada's level of public broadcaster funding is relative to the level at which other Western countries fund their public broadcasters? Is it:

Lower
About the same
Higher
Don't know

13. Canada ranks 16th out of 18 major Western democracies in per capita annual funding of its public broadcaster in a recent survey, at \$33 per citizen, compared to an average of \$80 per citizen.

To what extent do you agree with each of the following statements?

Strongly agree
Somewhat agree
Neither agree nor disagree
Somewhat disagree
Strongly disagree
Don't know

[ROWS — RANDOMIZE]

Canada's level of public broadcaster funding is insufficient to maintain a unique and vibrant Canadian identity and culture

Canada's level of public broadcaster funding is indicative of the federal government's treatment of the cultural sector overall.

\$33 per citizen is an appropriate level of funding

14. When he was the Leader of the Opposition, Stephen Harper recommended radical changes to CBC TV and Radio Two: "When you take a look at things like main-English language television and probably to a lesser degree Radio Two, you could look there (sic) at putting those on a commercial basis."

To what extent do you agree with the following statements?

Strongly agree
Somewhat agree
Neither agree nor disagree
Somewhat disagree
Strongly disagree

[ROWS — RANDOMIZE]

The Harper government has a hidden agenda that favours private corporate broadcasters

The Harper government is underfunding the CBC so that it can turn it into a private, commercial broadcaster

Privatizing and commercializing the CBC is the right thing to do

15. Which political party do you most trust to protect the CBC?

The Conservative Party

The New Democratic Party

The Liberal Party

16. If a federal election were held today, which party would be your first choice?

Conservative

Liberal

NDP

Green

Bloc

Not sure

I would not vote

17. And which party would be your second choice?

Conservative

Liberal

NDP

Green

Bloc

Not sure