

CENSUS

# Canadians Believe the Federal Government Should Retreat on Census

*A majority of Canadians believe the long form census yields important data and should remain mandatory.*

[TORONTO – Jul. 24, 2010] – Many Canadians disagree with their government's move to scrap the mandatory long form census, and are calling on the federal government to reverse its recent decision, a new Angus Reid Public Opinion poll has found.

In previous years, the census included a short form mailed to 80 per cent of Canadian households, and a longer, more detailed form mailed to the remaining households. Last month, the federal government decided to eliminate the mandatory long form census and replace it with a voluntary survey that will be mailed to one-in-three Canadian households beginning next year.

In the online survey of a representative sample of 1,012 Canadians, almost half of respondents (47%) oppose the federal government's decision to scrap the mandatory long form census, while 38 per cent support it. Opposition to the federal government's move is highest in Ontario (54%) and British Columbia (53%).

The federal government has argued that the long form census is intrusive and Canadians should not be forced to answer it. Only one-in-four Canadians (24%) agree with this assessment, while a large majority (58%) think the long form census yields data that is important to make policy decisions in all areas of public service, and should remain mandatory.

## KEY FINDINGS

- **47% oppose scrapping the long form census**
- **58% think the long form census yields data that is important to make policy decisions in all areas of public service, and should remain mandatory**
- **52% want the federal government to reverse its decision and keep the mandatory long form census**

*Full topline results are at the end of this release.*

*From July 22 to July 23, 2010, Angus Reid Public Opinion conducted an online survey among 1,012 randomly selected Canadian adults who are Angus Reid Forum panelists. The margin of error—which measures sampling variability—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.*

**CONTACT:**

Jodi Shanoff, Senior Vice President, Public Affairs, 416-642-7699, [jodi.shanoff@angus-reid.com](mailto:jodi.shanoff@angus-reid.com)

The decision to scrap the mandatory long form census has been criticized by several provincial premiers, and ultimately led the head of Statistics Canada, Munir Sheikh, to leave his post.

More than half of Canadians (52%) believe the federal government should reverse its decision and keep the mandatory long form census. Conversely, 27 per cent of respondents want the federal government to stick by its assessment and carry on with the voluntary survey.

### **Political Allegiance**

A large proportion of Canadians who voted for the Liberal Party (72%) and the New Democratic Party (NDP) (71%) believe that the federal government should reverse its decision and keep the mandatory long form census. Respondents who voted for the Conservative Party are almost evenly divided on this issue, with 42 per cent wanting the government to reverse its move, and 39 per cent arguing that the decision should stand.

While respondents who voted for the Conservatives are more likely to side with the government's argument that the long form census is intrusive (31%, compared to 19% for both Liberal and NDP voters), a majority of Tory supporters (53%) believe that the long form census yields data that is important to make policy decisions in all areas of public service, and should remain mandatory.

*For all our polls, go to our [website](#) / Follow us on [Twitter](#)*

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## Census

As you may know, every five years Statistics Canada conducts a nationwide census. Canadians are compelled by law to respond to the census and face penalties if they fail to do so. In previous years, the census included a short form mailed to 80 per cent of Canadian households, and a longer, more detailed form mailed to the remaining households. Last month, the federal government decided to eliminate the mandatory long form census and replace it with a voluntary survey that will be mailed to one-in-three Canadian households beginning next year. Every Canadian household will still receive the short form. For what you have seen, read or heard about this issue, do you support or oppose the federal government's decision to scrap the mandatory long form census?

	Region							Party supported in the 2008 election				
	Total	BC	AB	MB/SK	ON	PQ	ATL	Con	Lib	NDP	BQ	Green
<b>Strongly support</b>	13%	9%	22%	15%	8%	19%	10%	19%	10%	7%	19%	8%
<b>Moderately support</b>	26%	29%	29%	25%	24%	23%	33%	29%	22%	18%	20%	21%
<b>Moderately oppose</b>	18%	17%	21%	18%	19%	12%	24%	19%	15%	17%	19%	22%
<b>Strongly oppose</b>	30%	36%	15%	24%	35%	27%	25%	18%	46%	50%	33%	42%
<b>Not sure</b>	14%	9%	13%	17%	14%	18%	7%	15%	7%	7%	8%	7%
<b>Support – net</b>	38%	38%	51%	40%	32%	42%	43%	49%	32%	25%	39%	29%
<b>Oppose – net</b>	47%	53%	36%	43%	54%	39%	50%	37%	61%	68%	53%	63%

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**Census**

Thinking about the census situation, which of the two following statements comes closest to your own point of view?

	Region							Party ID				
	Total	BC	AB	MB/SK	ON	PQ	ATL	Con	Lib	NDP	BQ	Green
The long form census is intrusive and Canadians should not be forced to answer it	24%	30%	39%	33%	19%	24%	22%	31%	19%	19%	21%	20%
The long form census yields data that is important to make policy decisions in all areas of public service, and should remain mandatory	58%	59%	46%	49%	64%	56%	57%	53%	71%	70%	67%	75%
Not sure	18%	12%	16%	18%	17%	21%	20%	16%	10%	11%	12%	5%

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**Census**

As you may know, some provincial premiers have criticized the federal government's decision to eliminate the mandatory long form census, and the head of Statistics Canada has quit his post. Thinking about this, what do you think the federal government should do?

	Region							Party ID				
	Total	BC	AB	MB/SK	ON	PQ	ATL	Con	Lib	NDP	BQ	Green
<b>Reverse its decision and keep the mandatory long form census</b>	52%	56%	44%	46%	57%	47%	62%	42%	72%	71%	61%	75%
<b>Stick by its decision and carry on with the voluntary survey</b>	27%	34%	38%	43%	20%	28%	23%	39%	15%	17%	27%	12%
<b>Not sure</b>	20%	10%	18%	12%	23%	25%	15%	19%	13%	12%	12%	12%

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*Angus Reid Public Opinion is a practice of Vision Critical—a global research and technology company specializing in custom online panels, private communities, and innovative online methods. Vision Critical 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 Public Opinion team are pioneers in online research methodologies, and have been conducting online surveys since 1995*

*Vision Critical is now one of the largest market research enterprises in the world. In addition to its five offices in Canada—located in Vancouver, Calgary, Regina, Toronto, and Montreal—the firm also has offices in San Francisco, Chicago, New York, London, Paris and Sydney. Its team of specialists provides solutions across every type and sector of research, and currently serves over 200 international clients.*

*Angus Reid Public Opinion polls are conducted using the Angus Reid Forum ([www.angusreidforum.com](http://www.angusreidforum.com)), Springboard America ([www.springboardamerica.com](http://www.springboardamerica.com)) and Springboard UK ([www.springboarduk.com](http://www.springboarduk.com)) online panels, which are recruited via an industry-leading process that incorporates a high-quality, multi-streamed approach and an in-depth screening procedure.*

*The panels are highly engaged communities with industry leading response rates and are researched with state-of-the-art sampling techniques, combined with deep profiling on demographic, behavioural and attitudinal characteristics. These premier online survey platforms present respondents with highly visual, interactive, and engaging surveys, ensuring that panel members provide thoughtful and reliable responses. Each survey is actively sampled and weighted to model that characteristics of the universe required and employs the latest in quality control techniques to ensure data validity.*

*Since 2006, Angus Reid has covered eight provincial 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.*

*Angus Reid, the only public opinion firm to exclusively use online methods to follow the views of the electorate during the 2008 federal campaign, offered the most accurate prediction of the results of Canada's 40th election. More information on our electoral record can be found at:*

*<http://www.visioncritical.com/record-of-accuracy>*

*More information on the way Angus Reid conducts public opinion research can be found at <http://www.visioncritical.com/what-we-do/practices/angus-reid-public-opinion/>*

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

**Copies of this poll are available on our website:**

**<http://www.visioncritical.com/category/global-opinions-and-trends>**

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