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Deficit outranks jobs in poll

Most voters opt to hang tough

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OTTAWA – Although job creation has become a central issue in the election campaign, Canadians don't want government-sponsored solutions if it means increasing the deficit, a new *Globe and Mail*/ComQuest Research Group Poll shows.

Asked to choose between an economic approach that concentrated on deficit reduction and one that stressed training and job programs, even if it means an increase in the deficit, most respondents opted for a hang-tough policy on deficits rather than programs to stimulate the economy.

This caution – expressed in the poll of 1,446 eligible voters taken in the first week of the election campaign – may explain why neither the Liberals nor the New Democrats have been able to make political mileage with their job creation proposals, even though they have targeted the issue that voters say is uppermost in their minds.

A proposed investment of $6-billion over two years to improve municipal infrastructure such as roads, bridges and sewage-treatment and water plants is a part of the economic platform Liberal Leader Jean Chrétien revealed on Wednesday. The New Democrats have also proposed a job-creation plan to stimulate the economy.

But the attitudes expressed in *The Globe* Poll explain why, when they revealed their platform, the Liberals put so much stress on their assertion that their overall program will reduce rather than increase the deficit.

In the sample as a whole, 52 per cent of respondents chose the deficit-cutting option while only 39 per cent chose job creation (a slight hardening of opinion since a *Globe* Poll in March). The rest were undecided.

The survey also showed that people who identified themselves as Liberal supporters are almost evenly divided on the question, with 45 per cent wanting to hang tough on deficit policies and 47 per cent favouring a more interventionist policy.

As might be expected, more Conservative supporters (62 per cent) and Reform Party supporters (72 per cent) want continued emphasis on deficit reduction. Even 38 per cent of the New Democrats opted for deficit cutting over job creation.

Responses on these policy choices were also influenced by region, job status, income level and education. Respondents from Atlantic Canada and Quebec were more disposed toward job creation, as were unemployed respondents. But people with full-time jobs, especially in the upper income and education brackets, were more concerned about the deficit.

The overall results of the poll suggest there is some ambiguity among voters on this issue in the election campaign, an ambiguity that seems related to whether job-creation programs would increase the deficit.

When asked what was the single most important policy or issue that will determine how they would vote on election day, three times as many respondents said unemployment and job-creation policies as cited the deficit. And an even smaller proportion cited taxes, the issue that is usually linked to deficits.

The results suggest that Liberal and NDP strategists have targeted the right election issue, but so far they have had difficulty linking their parties and leaders to it in a positive way, at least during the early part of the campaign. (*The Globe* survey was completed before the Liberals' major platform announcement.)

Conservative Leader Kim Campbell, who has insisted that the deficit must be reduced before jobs can be created, is still outscoring Mr. Chrétien and NDP Leader Audrey McLaughlin in voter perceptions of their ability to manage the economy. When attitudes on the broader economic questions are combined with the specific responses to election issues, the strategic challenge facing the Liberals becomes especially clear. The Liberals will have to do a better job of associating their leader with a non-inflationary job-creation approach in order to make electoral gains.

HOW TO IMPROVE THE ECONOMY

As you probably know, Canada is facing some choices about which directions to take regarding the economy. Which one of the following two approaches is closest to your view?

- The government should invest money in job programs and training to improve the economy, even if it means increasing the deficit, OR
- The government should concentrate on reducing the deficit and leave it to private business and investors to create jobs.

	Invest in jobs	Cut the deficit	Neither	Don't know
All of Canada	39%	52%	6%	3%
Men	32	60	6	2
Women	45	45	6	4
Age: 18-34	44	52	4	1
35-44	36	57	6	1
45-54	37	54	7	2
55-64	43	44	7	7
65+	30	50	11	10

If a federal election were being held today, which one of the following parties would you vote for?
(If undecided): Is there a party you are leaning toward?

	Invest in jobs	Cut the deficit	Neither	Don't know
29% who would vote PC	34	62	2	2
26% voting Liberal	47	45	5	3
9% voting Reform	22	72	5	1
8% voting BQ	44	48	7	1
6% voting NDP	53	38	6	3
1% voting National	33	41	20	6
20% who wouldn't vote or were still undecided	37	44	10	8

Columns may not add to 100% because of rounding.
Source: Globe Poll, September, 1993.

The Globe Poll is a survey of 1,446 Canadian citizens 18 years old and over in the 10 provinces, conducted from Sept. 8 to 14 by ComQuest Research Group, a division of BBM Bureau of Measurement.

The sample for the poll is based on listed telephone numbers. Homes were selected randomly from this list and one person was randomly selected within each household to be interviewed. No substitutions were allowed. Data from the interviews were adjusted to reflect the age, sexual and regional composition of Canada, based on the 1991 census.

The size of the sample is expected to yield a reflection of all Canadian voters to an accuracy of plus or minus 2.6 percentage points 19 times out of 20.

The article EM9335 reprinted above is used in Figure 8.8c of the STAT 220 Course Materials, in Figure 3.5c of the STAT 332 Course Materials and in Statistical Highlight #12.