

The French-Speaking Leaders' Debate:



COMPAS Inc.
Public Opinion and Customer Research
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Chretien and Duceppe Battle to a Draw

Chretien Wins on Technicality but Duceppe Did at Least as Well in Swaying Voters

In a debate that was watched at least in part by 61% of French-speaking Quebecers, the Prime Minister and the Bloc Quebecois leader appear to have battled to a draw. That is the general conclusion drawn from a representative sample poll of 468 French-speaking Quebecers interviewed November 9th and 10th by professional interviewers using computer-assisted telephone interview technology.

The best news for Jean Chretien is that he was the first choice in responses to the question, "Who won the debate?"—26% vs. 15% for Duceppe, 15% for PC leader Joe Clark, 2% for Alliance leader Stockwell Day, and no votes for NDP leader Alexa McDonough. On the pure merits of the debate, viewers thought that Chretien did best and that Clark did well, virtually as well as the Bloc leader.

Viewers-Listeners Judgements about "Who Won the Debate"

	French-QC only
Jean Chretien	26
Stockwell Day	2
Joe Clark	15
Alexa McDonough	0
IF FRENCH LANGUAGE INTERVIEW: Gilles Duceppe	15
DON'T PROMPT: No one or everyone	0
DON'T PROMPT: Other (volunteered)	8
DNK	34

In practice, Chretien could not transform his technical win into greater support or good will. Approximately two-thirds of those who saw the debate (68%) said that their feelings about the parties and leaders had not changed (62%) or they did not know how they might have changed (6%). Duceppe did best in that 10% of viewers said that their feelings had become more favourable to him while virtually none said that their feelings had become less favourable. Joe Clark's strong, almost second place, finish in terms of "who won the debate" did not affect voter feelings towards him or the PCs. Only 2% said that they became more favourably inclined to Clark or his party while 1% said that they had become less favourably inclined.

Debate's Impact on Viewers-Listeners Feelings towards Leaders/Parties



Report on the French-Speaking Leaders' Debate, Fielded Nov. 9-10, 2000
COMPAS Poll for National Post, Southam News, and Global Television

	French-QC only
Pro-Jean Chretien or pro-Liberal	10
Anti-Jean Chretien or anti-Liberal	6
Pro-Stockwell Day or pro-Alliance	2
Anti-Stockwell Day or anti-Alliance	1
Pro-Joe Clark or pro-PC	2
Anti-Joe Clark or anti-PC	1
Pro-Alexa McDonough or pro-NDP	0
Anti-Alexa McDonough or anti-NDP	1
QUEBEC ONLY: Pro-Gilles Duceppe or pro-Bloc Quebecois	10
QUEBEC ONLY: Anti-Gilles Duceppe or anti-Bloc Quebecois	*
NEVER PROMPT: No change, the same	62
NEVER PROMPT: DNK/ Refused	6

Chretien and Duceppe are equal in terms of eliciting more favourable feelings—10% each. But Chretien also elicited a lot of negative feeling—6% vs. virtually no negative feeling towards the Bloc leader.

For any leader in a debate, the ideal outcome is to elicit more positive than negative reaction, especially among supporters of other parties. No party leader earned much goodwill among supporters of the other parties. Chretien did arouse a certain amount of positive passion among Liberal voters—39% said that they had become more favourable towards him or his party as a result of the debate. Duceppe did not succeed in arousing as much passion among Bloc voters, perhaps because he did not need to. Among Bloc voters, 75% said that they had either experienced no change of heart (66%) or had become more anti-Liberal (9%) while 19% said that the debate had made them become more favourably inclined to the Bloc.

In order to identify what drove the feelings of viewers, respondents were asked not only how their feelings had been affected by the debate but also which aspects of the debate had affected them the most. Comparing the answers by cross-tabulation can help explain how the debate affect voters.

Those who became more favourable towards Chretien or the Liberals were motivated in about equal measure by Chretien as leader (35%) and the policies of the Liberals (27%). Those who became more anti-Chretien or anti-Liberal were motivated by Clark and partly by Bloc policies.

Those who became more favourably inclined towards Duceppe were motivated by a variety of factors, including his own performance (22%) and Bloc policies (16%).

Viewers-listeners were asked if they had also been exposed to information on the debate from the press, radio, television, and the internet. As illustrated below, most had



also seen TV reports. When viewers-listeners of the debate were compared according to whether they had also been exposed to TV reports on the debate, there is no evidence that any of the media had affected the feelings of those who had witnessed the debate directly.

	YES	NO	DNK/REF
See newspaper reports on the debate...PROMPT ONLY IF NECESSARY yes, no, dnk/ref	35	65	1
Hear radio reports on the debate...PROMPT ONLY IF NECESSARY yes, no, dnk/ref	47	51	1
See TV reports on the debate...PROMPT ONLY IF NECESSARY yes, no, dnk/ref	71	29	0
Read Internet reports on the debate...PROMPT ONLY IF NECESSARY, yes, no, dnk/ref	4	96	0

Methodology

The sample of French-Quebecers of n=468 is deemed accurate to within approximately 4.3 percentage points 19 times out of 20 while the sub-sample who watched or listened to the debate (n=331) is deemed accurate to within approximately 5.7 percentage points 19 times out of 20.

