

# **Electoral Surveys in the 2000 Canadian Campaign; How Did They Really Fare?**

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By Claire Durand,  
dept sociology, University of Montreal

Pre-election Polls in the Fall 2000 Campaigns in  
Canada and in the U.S.

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Claire.Durand@umontreal.ca  
[Http://www.fas.umontreal.ca/socio/durandc](http://www.fas.umontreal.ca/socio/durandc)

## **Political context**

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- One national party well ahead (Liberal Party), 45% nationally
- One regional party on the raise (Canadian Alliance) concentrated in the West, 25% nationally
- One regional party in Quebec (Bloc quebecois), 10% nationally, 40% in Quebec
- Two other national parties (NDP and Progressive Conservative) at around 10% in vote intention

# Legal context of electoral campaign

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- A new law requesting that the media
  - < publish some specific methodological information on the polls they sponsor
    - Identification of pollster
    - Period the survey was in the field
    - Number of persons contacted
    - Margin of error
    - Question wording
  - < Give access to a report giving very detailed information among which
    - Sampling method
    - Size of initial sample
    - Response rate, cooperation rate and refusal rate
    - Adjustment and weighting methods

## Did the Media and the Pollsters comply with the law?

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- More information was provided than in previous elections especially in national media
- Most media/pollsters provided the information on the wording of questions, on adjustment/weighting used and on allocation of vote intention to non disclosers
- Information on various response rates was provided only by 3 pollsters (Leger, Sondagem and Environics)
- Some Media/pollsters almost provided no methodological information

# How did the polls fare ?

## Canada as a whole

- Estimates from the polls published during the last week are very close to the final result (less than 1 percentage point difference for all parties except the Bloc Quebecois (weighted estimate-1.8 perc. point of final result))
- Estimates from two firms who use tracking polls differ from the other estimates and have a larger variance in estimation
- No relationship between error and sample size or square root of sample size

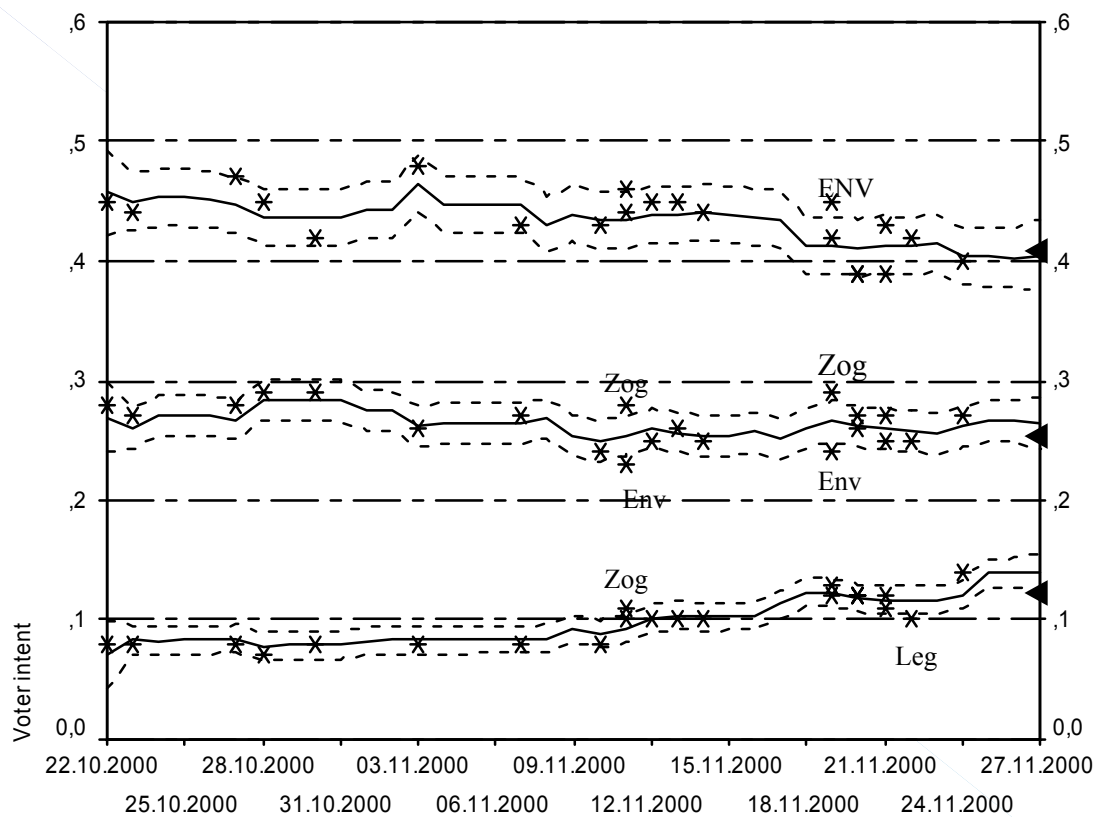
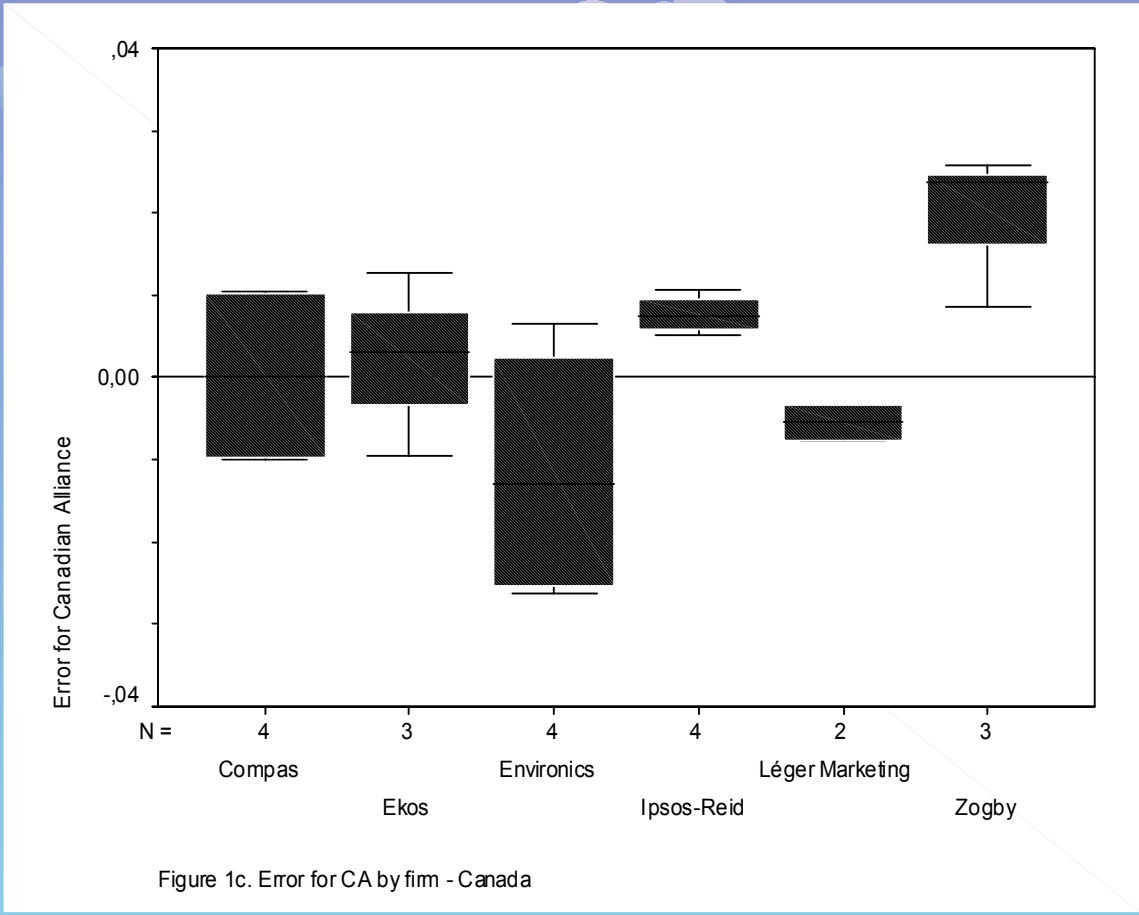
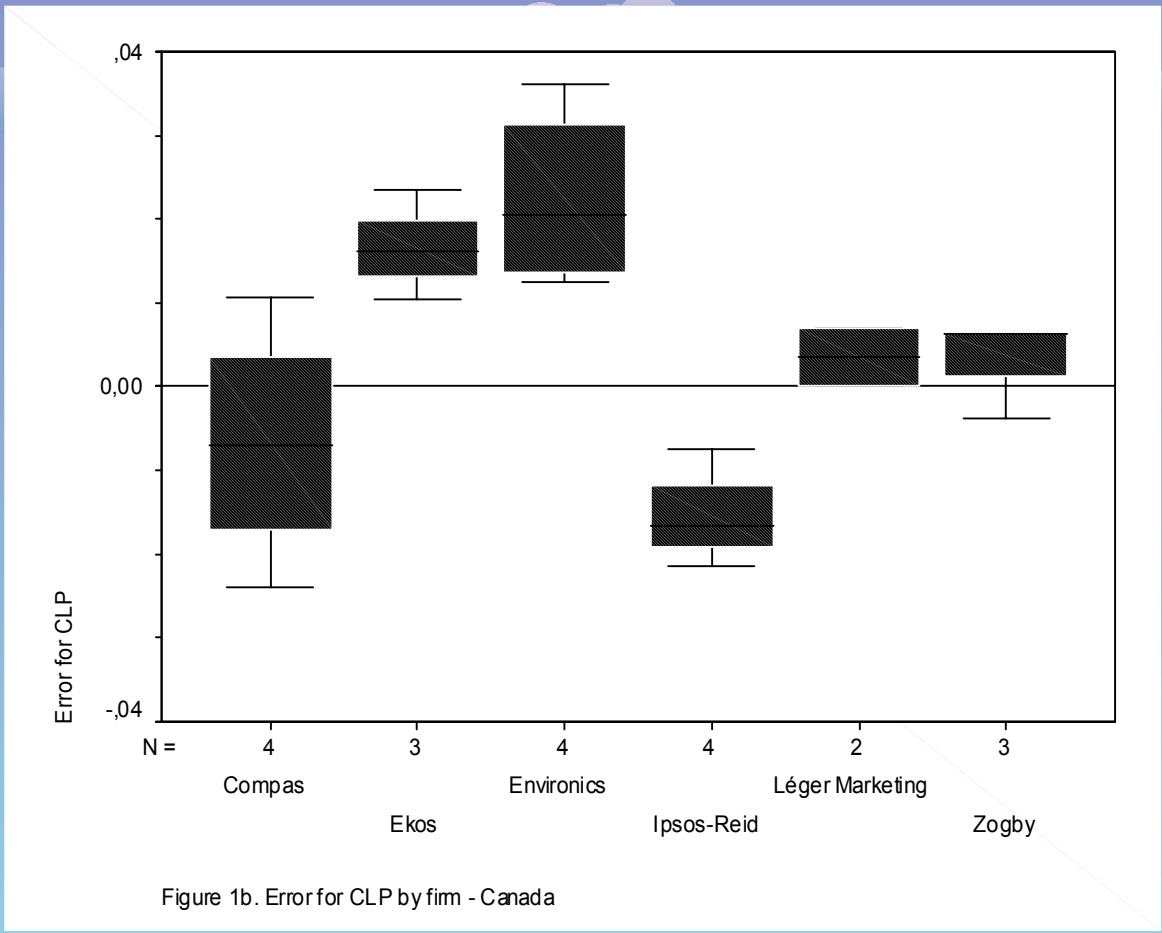


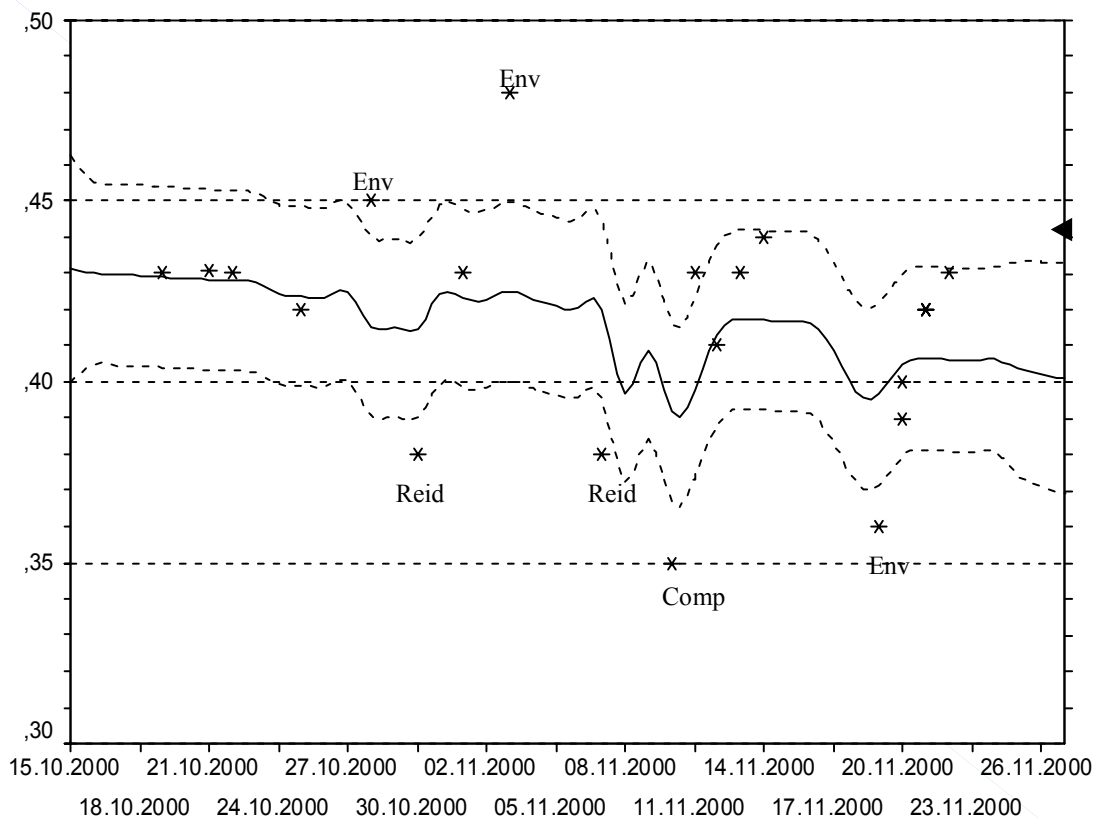
Figure 1. Series for CLP, CA & PC - Canada



# How did they really fare?

## Quebec

- The polls systematically underestimated the Liberal party share by 3.4% for the weighted estimate and 4.2% if we take the mean estimation from surveys carried during the last week.
- This is coupled with a slight overestimation of the Bloc quebecois and of the Canadian Alliance.
- Most Environics and Ipsos-Reid polls as well as Compas were far from the other polls' estimates.
- No relationship between error in estimation and sample size or square root of sample size



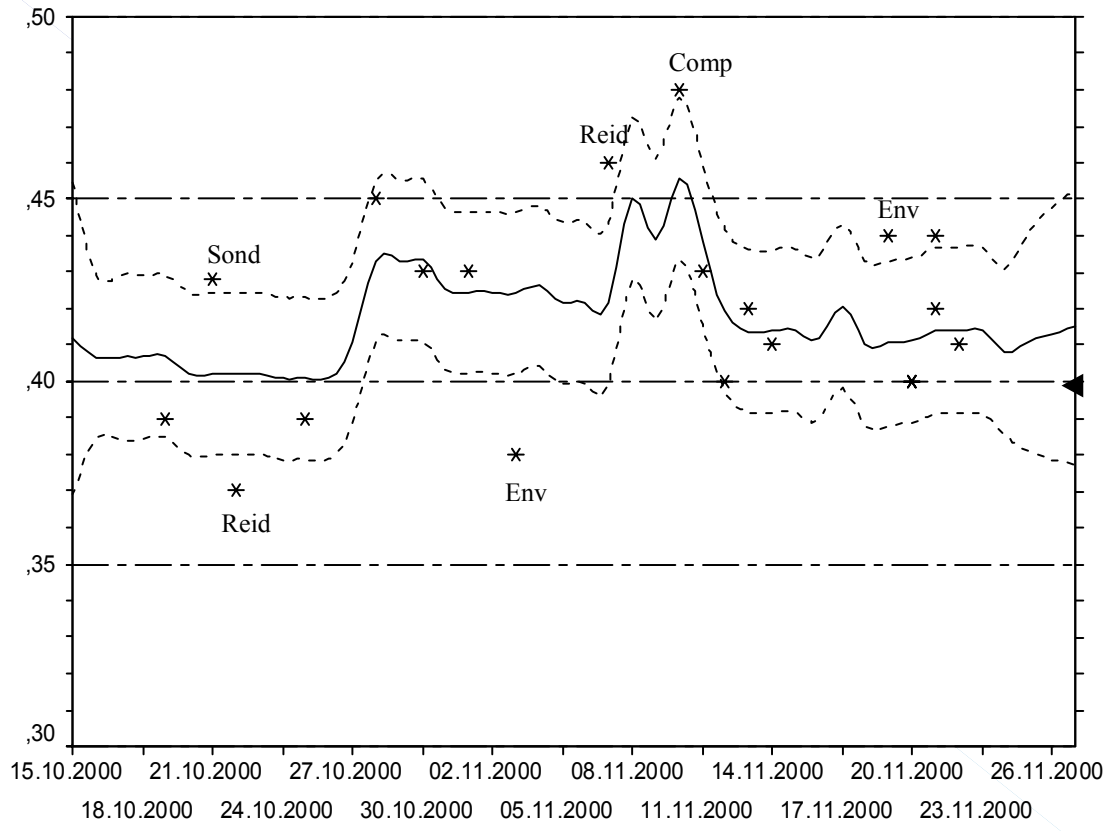


Figure 3. Series for BQ -Quebec

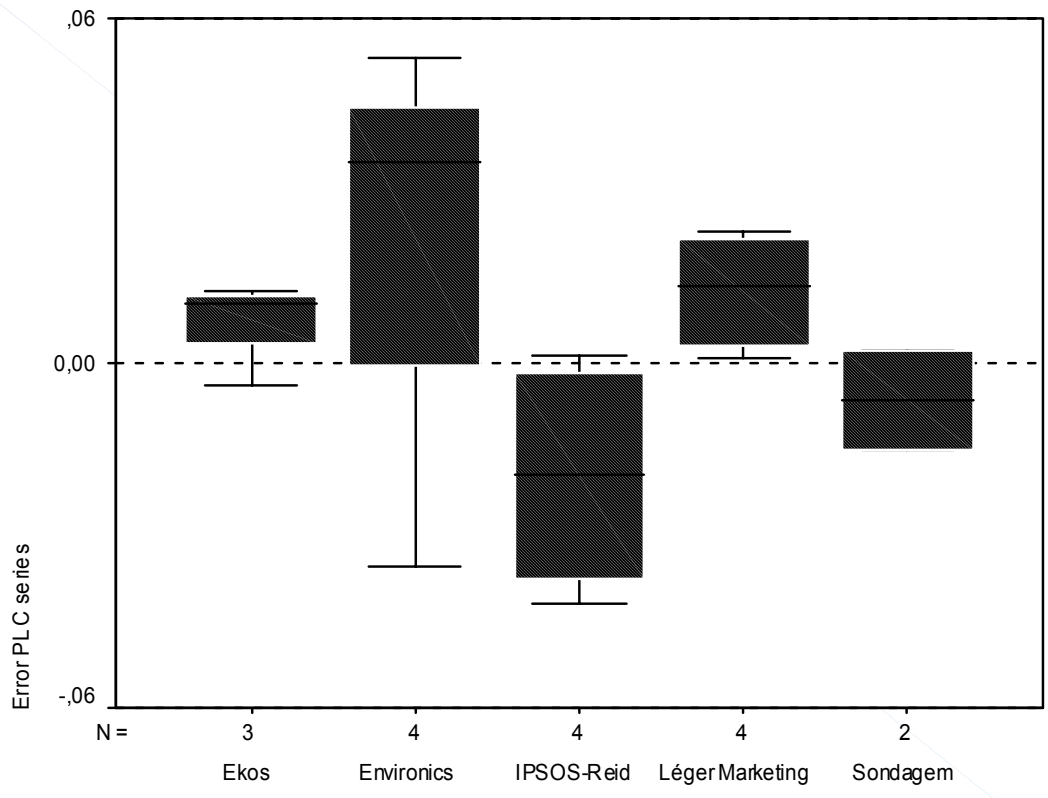


Figure 4.

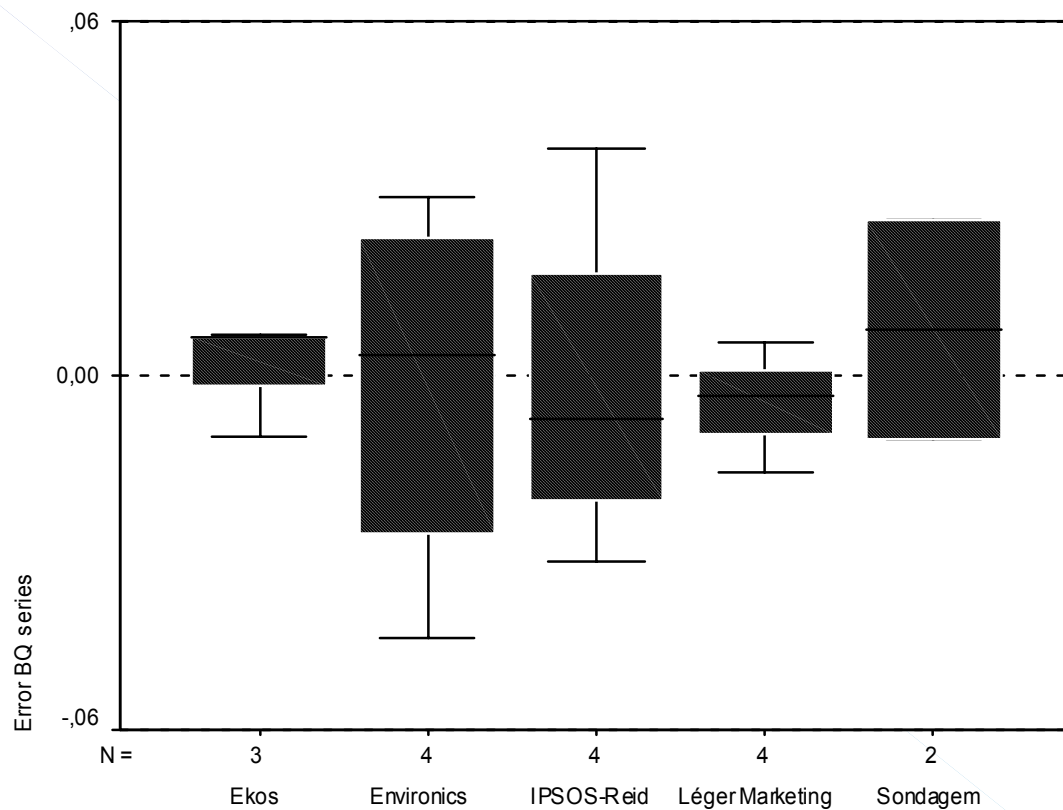


Figure 5.

## Conclusion

- More methodological information was made available than before following the rather recent new law. Polls and Media are likely to adjust to the law, thus permitting to examine the possible reasons of discrepancies and help inform the population
- As elsewhere, the tracking polls usually presented more error and more variance in estimates than other types of polls. It would be interesting to examine this situation and try to find out a plausible explanation.

# Conclusion

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- In Quebec, the same underestimation of the Liberals than in the recent Quebec election (Quebec Liberal party in that case) occurred.
- Estimates of vote intention for the Liberals range from 36% to 43% during the last week (final result of 44.2%) and from 35% to 48% during the campaign (from 37% to 48% for the BQ), a much too high variation in estimates.