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Fords drove voters away from Conservatives more than Duffy: Poll

Stephen Harper's appearance at a rally with Doug and Rob Ford proved to be the most overwhelmingly negative factor for swing voters.



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This image of the Fords with Stephen Harper was circulated on social media after the Conservative rally days before the federal election.

By: **Jessica Smith Cross** Metro, Published on Tue Oct 27 2015

The Ford brothers' cameo in Stephen Harper's election campaign drove potential voters away from the Conservative Party more than the Duffy trial did, exit polling has found.

"It was clearly a mistake to be seen with the Fords," pollster Greg Lyle told Metro on Tuesday. "It didn't really rally the base, it pushed away swing voters. Not a good move."

His firm, Innovative Research, conducted polling over the four days following the election, asking voters if certain factors in each party's campaign made them more or less likely to lend their support.

Each factor was assigned a score: the percentage of voters who said it made them more likely to vote for the party, minus the percentage of those who said less likely. The more positive the number, the better that factor played, the more negative the number, the worse.

The poll also identified each party's set of swing supporters — the voters who'd been on the fence before Election Day.

THE CANADIAN PRESS/JONATHAN HAYWARD

Conservative Leader Stephen Harper and former Toronto Mayor Rob Ford, left, leave a campaign rally in Toronto on Saturday, Oct. 17, 2015.

Among the Conservative's swing voters, Harper's appearance at an Oct. 17 event organized by Rob and Doug Ford earned a net score of -33 per cent. It proved the most overwhelmingly negative factor for swing voters regardless of issue or party.

The Duffy trial scored -30 per cent.

Lyle said the information should discourage politicians from buddying up with the Fords in the future. But, he's not sure how closely they'll take heed.

"It's pretty clear the Ford brothers are the third rail of Canadian politics right now. But they never quit, I mean they just keep coming," he said.

The Conservatives had a string of negative scores on the major factors in their campaign, boosting the argument they ran a poor campaign.

"Harper's campaigning" itself was a net negative for swing voters (-11 per cent), as was the "Conservatives' advertising" (-26 per cent).

The party's niqab stance was a net positive (23 per cent). The promise to introduce a "barbaric cultural practices" tip line, however, tipped negative (-2 per cent).

"That divided swing voters," Lyle said about the tip line.

The Liberal Party, meanwhile, had only positives scores.

The promised "tax cuts for middle class/increase for high earners" earned a 56 per cent, followed closely by "Trudeau's campaign" (55 per cent) and "Trudeau's debate performance" (51 per cent).

As for the NDP, its plan to raise corporate taxes was the most positive factor among its swing voters (47 per cent), while the only negative was the party's place in the polls (-8% per cent).