

## Site C: By margin of two-to-one, BC residents say province made the right call to finish dam project

*Number of residents saying a majority govt. is better for the province jumps in last six months*

**January 12, 2018** – A politically risky call that might have threatened the future of the NDP government in B.C. is being met with the approval of just over half of British Columbians.

Fifty-two per cent say the Horgan government's decision to continue construction of the Site C hydroelectric dam was the "right decision" - twice as many as say it was the wrong one (26%).

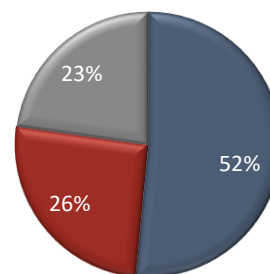
But while the decision on Site C may provide an added spring to the step of this nascent government, it will need to shore up what appears to be softening support for a key campaign promise to introduce proportional representation in B.C.

While a majority of 57 per cent in this province still say this type of electoral system is preferable to the current first-past-the-post structure, the latest public opinion data on BC issues from the Angus Reid Institute notes a [drop in support since September](#), when 65 per cent said the same.

### More Key Findings:

- Four-in-five past BC Liberal supporters (78%) say the government made the right choice with respect to Site C. Much lower support – though still a plurality – is found among past NDP (44%) and Green (42%) voters.
- While there has been a slight uptick in support for the current first-past-the-post voting system among BC NDP and BC Green Party voters, each still voice strong majority support for proportional representation. The largest change in opinion on this issue is among past BC Liberal voters. In September half (52%) preferred PR – that number has dropped to 36 per cent.

Based on what you might have seen, heard or read, including this survey would you say continuing construction of the Site C dam was...



■ Right decision ■ Wrong decision ■ Not sure/Can't say

### METHODOLOGY:

Two waves of data were used to compile this report.

First - The Angus Reid Institute analyzed the results of an online survey conducted from December 7 – 14, 2017, among a representative, randomized sample of 5,413 Canadian adults who are members of the Angus Reid Forum. The BC specific sample was 691 respondents. The survey data were donated by MARU/Matchbox. For comparison purposes only, a probability sample of this size with this sample plan would carry a margin of error of +/- 3.7 percentage points in BC, 19 times out of 20.

A second wave of data was collected from December 19 – 21. The Angus Reid Institute conducted an online survey among a representative randomized sample of 803 BC adults who are members of the Angus Reid Forum. For comparison purposes only, a probability sample of this size would carry a margin of error of +/- 3.5 percentage points, 19 times out of 20. Discrepancies in or between totals are due to rounding. The survey was self-commissioned and paid for by ARI. Discrepancies in or between totals are due to rounding. Detailed tables are found at the end of this release.

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- B.C. residents are evenly split regarding their disposition toward the government to this point. Fifty-one per cent are optimistic when they look at how the government is functioning, while 49 per cent are pessimistic. This is a [notable increase in optimism since June](#), up eight points.

## INDEX:

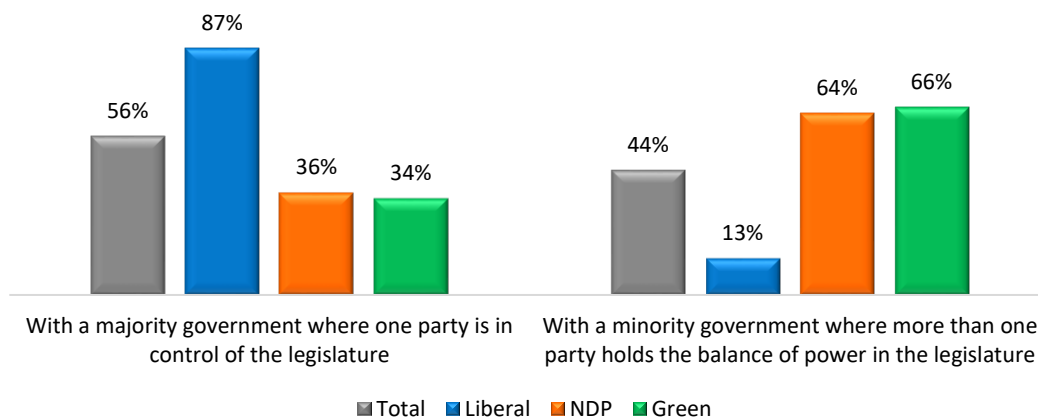
- **Most would now prefer a majority government**
- **Split in opinion about government functioning**
- **The right call on Site C**
- **Economy or environment, which takes precedence?**
- **Majority still support electoral reform**
- **Top issues going forward**

### Most would now prefer a majority government

After the BC NDP and BC Green Party came to a confidence and supply agreement to form a minority government, residents were relatively confident that such a coalition would be good for the province. At the time, the Angus Reid Institute asked British Columbians whether their province was better off with a minority or majority government, and found a [slight majority saying they preferred a minority](#). Fast-forward six months, and enthusiasm for the minority agreement has dampened.

A firm majority now lean the opposite direction, saying that a majority would be better for the province (56%), while four-in-ten (44%) say the current situation is optimal. Those who supported the BC Liberals have become even more hardened in their view that a majority government would be better, while many past Green and NDP voters, about one-third in each camp, are also leaning farther that way.

#### Is BC better off:



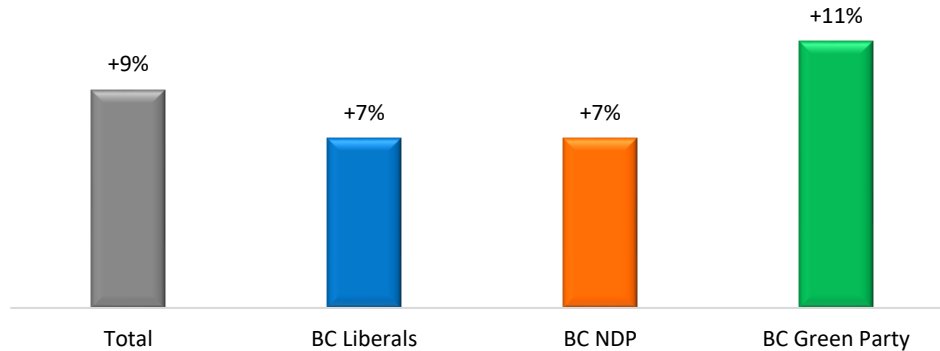
Movement toward a majority is evident across each of the three major parties. The graph below shows the change in opinion over a six-month period:

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### Percentage change in those saying BC is better off with a majority government June to December

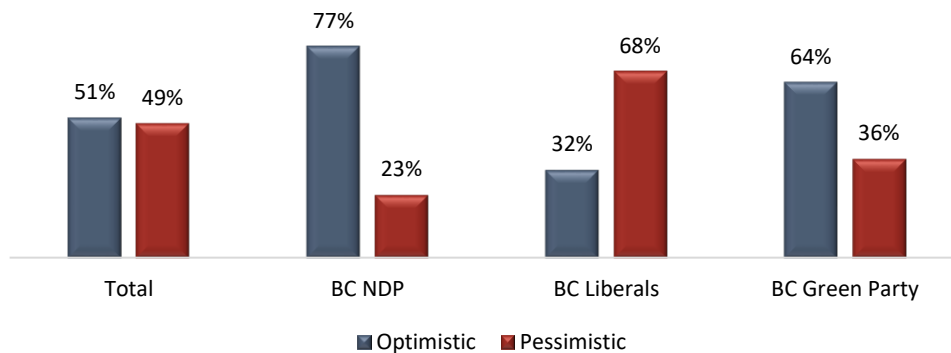


### Split in opinion about government functioning

Some observers have commented that the minority agreement between the NDP and the Greens makes a shaky foundation for government. BC residents themselves have their share of trepidation. Shortly after the election, just 15 per cent said they expect the government to last for more than two years.

Asked now whether they're optimistic or pessimistic about the functioning of the government going forward, British Columbians are split evenly. Half are feeling good about the coalition (51%) while 49 per cent see cause for concern.

### How optimistic are you about the functioning of the BC government going forward:



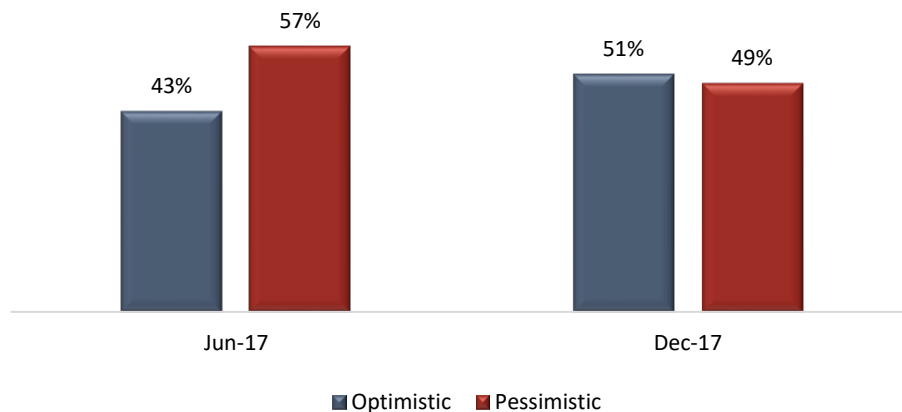
This split tends to hold across age, income and gender, though women and wealthier residents are most positive (see summary tables at the end of the release). What is most notable about this finding is the change in opinion over six months.

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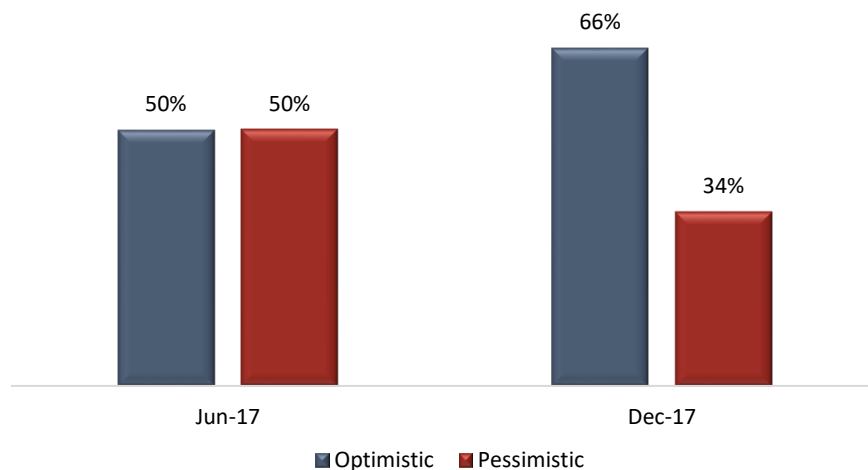
When asked about the functioning of a Green-supported NDP minority in June, slightly more than four-in-ten said they were optimistic. Now, some of that trepidation appears to have subsided, with fully half (51%) now saying they are optimistic.

### How optimistic are you about the functioning of the BC government going forward:



In the broader picture, two-thirds overall and a majority across each party and each generation, say they're optimistic about the future of BC overall (see summary tables). This also represents a significant rise from the 50 per cent who said the same in June. The province continues to have the lowest unemployment rate in the country at just 4.4 per cent, and perhaps has settled after some early uncertainty over the NDP-Green agreement.

### How optimistic are you about the future of BC overall?



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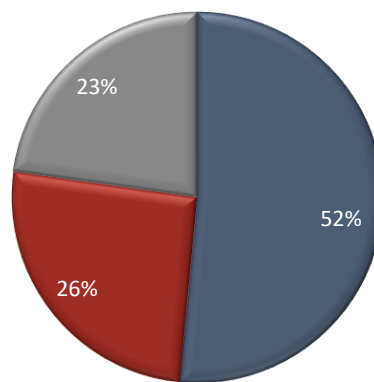
## The right call on Site C

Much of the action in B.C. politics in the second half of 2017 centered around the province's ever-polarizing energy and resource sector and the debate over the Site C dam.

The project itself has been [hampered by delays](#), which have reportedly raised the cost of the project to roughly \$10.7 billion. John Horgan announced in December that after review, his government would allow the project to continue.

Data collected after the announcement finds that half (52%) of British Columbians say the government ultimately made the right choice in continuing with Site C. This represents two-to-one support over opposition, when compared with the one-quarter (26%) who say the government made the wrong choice:

**Based on what you might have seen, heard or read, including this survey would you say continuing construction of the Site C dam was...**



■ Right decision ■ Wrong decision ■ Not sure/Can't say

Those most inclined to agree with the decision are not supporters of the NDP-Green arrangement. Rather, they are BC Liberals. Four-in-five (78%) who voted for the party last May say the decision was the correct one. A plurality of Horgan's supporters say the same (44%):

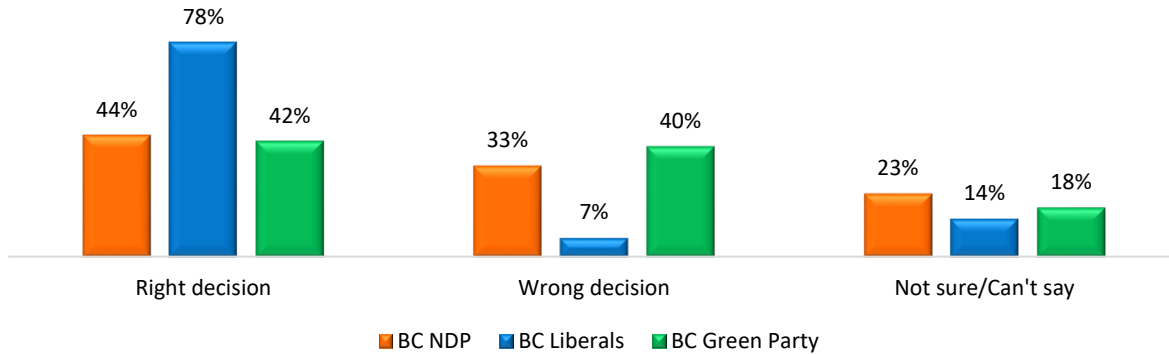
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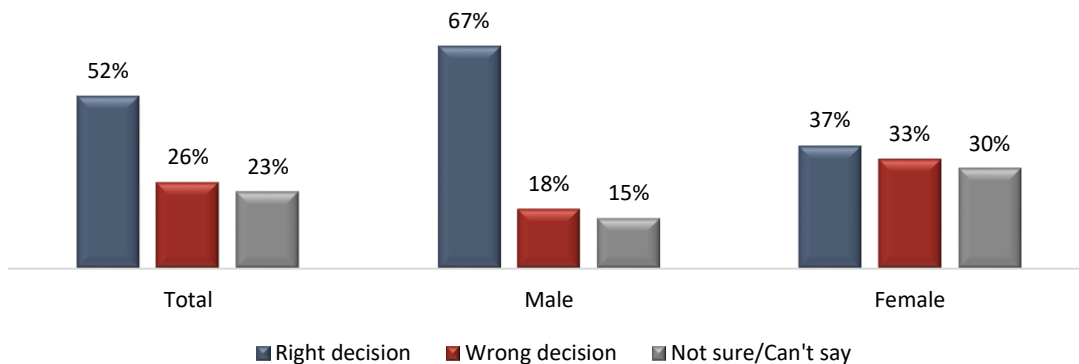
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**Based on what you might have seen, heard or read, including this survey would you say continuing construction of the Site C dam was...**



Those living inside and outside of Vancouver do not appear to differ in opinion. Within Metro Vancouver 51 per cent agree with the decision, while in the rest of BC, 52 per cent say the same. There are, however, significant gender divides on this question. Two-thirds of men (67%) say the government made the right call, while fewer than two-in-five women (37%) agree.

**Based on what you might have seen, heard or read, including this survey would you say continuing construction of the Site C dam was...**



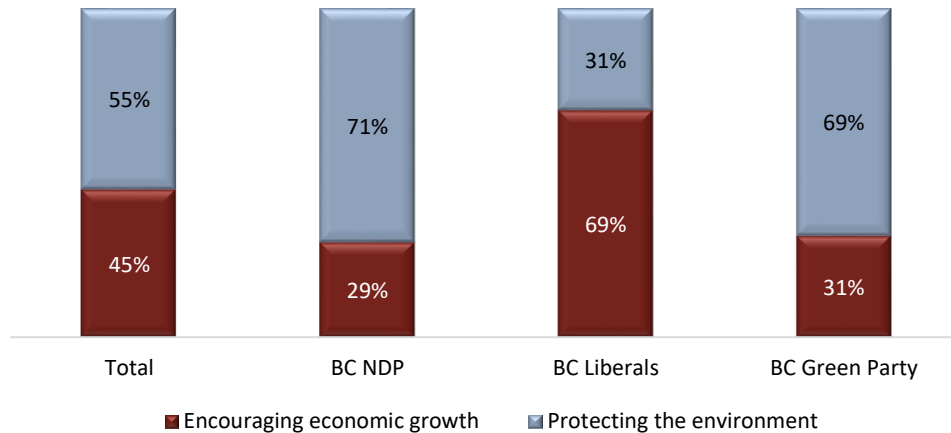
**Economy or environment, which takes precedence?**

These resource debates illustrate the difficulties in balancing economic and environmental interests in British Columbia. When asked whether the province should prioritize economic concerns or environmental protection, a small majority (55%) say protecting the environment is paramount, while the rest (45%) choose the economy. This, perhaps a view that competes with the aforementioned support for Site C. Here, again, NDP and Green supporters are in lockstep, while Liberals take the opposing view.

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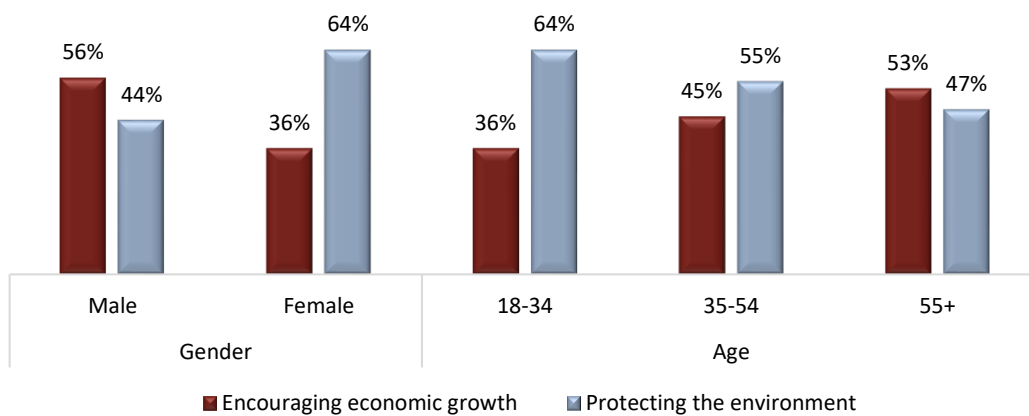
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## In shaping British Columbia's energy policy, what do you see as the biggest priority?



The largest demographic factors in diverging opinion on this question appear to be age and gender. Men are substantially more likely to lean toward the economy than women, and younger residents put a greater priority on environmental protection than their elders:

## In shaping British Columbia's energy policy, what do you see as the biggest priority?



### Majority still support electoral reform

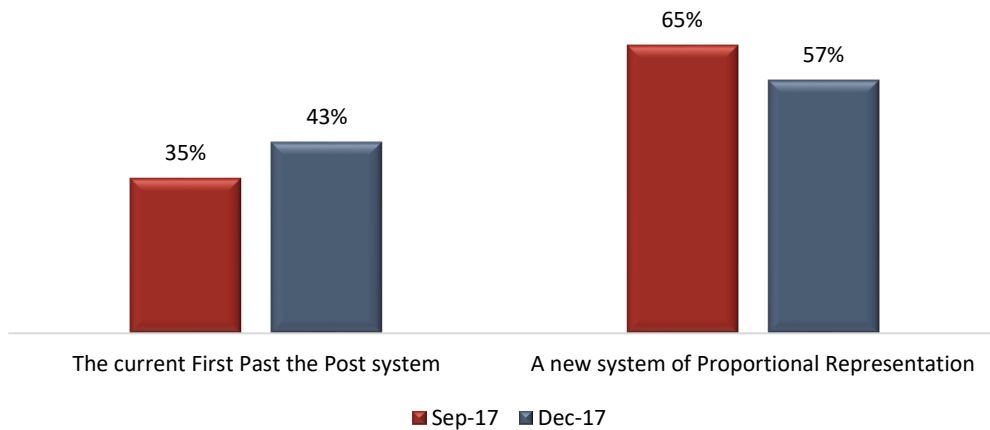
At the time Premier John Horgan announced a referendum on electoral reform, a change in electoral system was supported by a firm majority of residents. Now, with that reality pending, enthusiasm appears to be diminishing slightly. In September two-thirds (65%) of residents said they preferred a move to a

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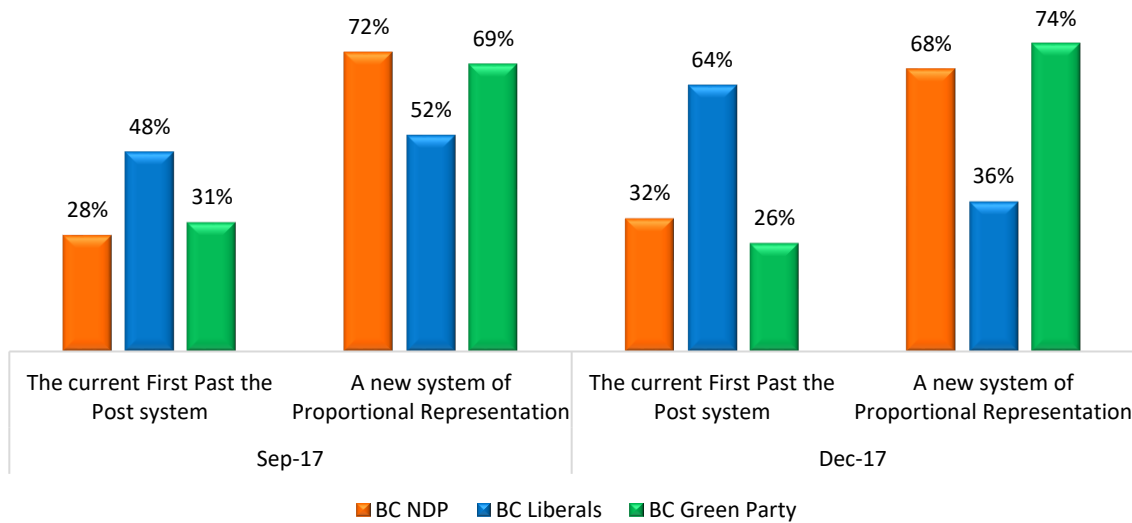
proportional representation voting system. Now, just a few months later, that number has dropped to 57 per cent.

**Based on what you know, please indicate which of these two options you prefer:**



The clear driver of that decline is among past supporters of the BC Liberals, who were previously split on the choice between PR and first-past-the-post, and now show a clear preference for maintaining the status quo. [All of the candidates](#) in the leadership race for the party have voiced opposition to the referendum and a change in electoral system.

**Based on what you know, please indicate which of these two options you prefer:**

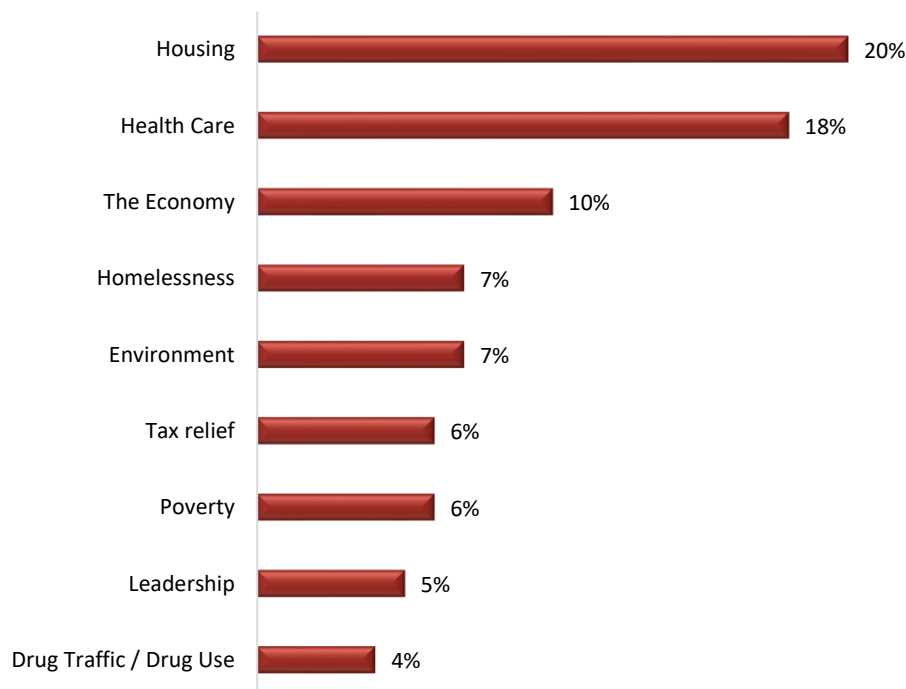




## Top issues going forward

So, what do British Columbians prioritize for the coming year? With a February budget looming, the province holds one clear distinction with respect to the rest of the country: one-in-five BC residents say 'housing' is the top issue, four times the number who say that in the next closest province (Ontario – 5%). Healthcare is the other issue chosen by one-in-five (18%).

### What do you think is the most important issue facing BC today?



*The **Angus Reid Institute (ARI)** was founded in October 2014 by pollster and sociologist, Dr. Angus Reid. ARI is a national, not-for-profit, non-partisan public opinion research foundation established to advance education by commissioning, conducting and disseminating to the public accessible and impartial statistical data, research and policy analysis on economics, political science, philanthropy, public administration, domestic and international affairs and other socio-economic issues of importance to Canada and its world.*

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For detailed results by age, gender, region, education, and other demographics, [click here](#).

Summary tables follow

| Is BC better off:  |             |               |               |           |                          |                           |                         |           |             |
|--|-------------|---------------|---------------|-----------|--------------------------|---------------------------|-------------------------|-----------|-------------|
| (weighted sample sizes)  | Total (691) | Age           |               |           | Household Income         |                           |                         | Gender    |             |
|  |             | 18 - 34 (181) | 35 - 54 (283) | 55+ (227) | Less than \$50,000 (246) | \$50,000 - \$99,000 (214) | \$100,000 or more (143) | Men (343) | Women (349) |
| With a majority government where one party is in control of the legislature                        | 56%         | 40%           | 60%           | 65%       | 46%                      | 62%                       | 68%                     | 64%       | 50%         |
| With a minority government where more than one party holds the balance of power in the legislature | 44%         | 60%           | 40%           | 35%       | 54%                      | 38%                       | 32%                     | 36%       | 50%         |

| Is BC better off:  |             |                      |               |                  |
|--|-------------|----------------------|---------------|------------------|
| (weighted sample sizes)  | Total (691) | Provincial Vote Last |               |                  |
|  |             | NDP (227)            | Liberal (231) | Green Party (97) |
| With a majority government where one party is in control of the legislature                        | 56%         | 36%                  | 87%           | 34%              |
| With a minority government where more than one party holds the balance of power in the legislature | 44%         | 64%                  | 13%           | 66%              |

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## How optimistic are you about the functioning of the BC government going forward?

| (weighted sample sizes) | Total (691) | Age           |               |           | Household Income         |                           |                         | Gender    |             |
|-------------------------|-------------|---------------|---------------|-----------|--------------------------|---------------------------|-------------------------|-----------|-------------|
|                         |             | 18 - 34 (181) | 35 - 54 (283) | 55+ (227) | Less than \$50,000 (246) | \$50,000 - \$99,000 (214) | \$100,000 or more (143) | Men (343) | Women (349) |
| Optimistic              | 51%         | 52%           | 47%           | 55%       | 47%                      | 49%                       | 56%                     | 45%       | 56%         |
| Pessimistic             | 49%         | 48%           | 53%           | 45%       | 53%                      | 51%                       | 44%                     | 55%       | 44%         |

## How optimistic are you about the functioning of the BC government going forward?

| (weighted sample sizes) | Total (691) | Provincial Vote Last |               |                  |
|-------------------------|-------------|----------------------|---------------|------------------|
|                         |             | NDP (227)            | Liberal (231) | Green Party (97) |
| Optimistic              | 51%         | 77%                  | 32%           | 64%              |
| Pessimistic             | 49%         | 23%                  | 68%           | 36%              |

## How optimistic are you about the future of BC overall?

| (weighted sample sizes) | Total (691) | Age           |               |           | Household Income         |                           |                         | Gender    |             |
|-------------------------|-------------|---------------|---------------|-----------|--------------------------|---------------------------|-------------------------|-----------|-------------|
|                         |             | 18 - 34 (181) | 35 - 54 (283) | 55+ (227) | Less than \$50,000 (246) | \$50,000 - \$99,000 (214) | \$100,000 or more (143) | Men (343) | Women (349) |
| Optimistic              | 66%         | 67%           | 62%           | 70%       | 59%                      | 72%                       | 68%                     | 64%       | 67%         |
| Pessimistic             | 34%         | 33%           | 38%           | 30%       | 41%                      | 28%                       | 32%                     | 36%       | 33%         |

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| How optimistic are you about the future of BC overall? |             |                      |               |                  |
|--|-------------|----------------------|---------------|------------------|
| (weighted sample sizes)                                | Total (691) | Provincial Vote Last |               |                  |
|  |             | NDP (227)            | Liberal (231) | Green Party (97) |
| Optimistic   | 66%         | 80%                  | 56%           | 81%              |
| Pessimistic  | 34%         | 20%                  | 44%           | 19%              |

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