

## Alberta Election: UCP still leads by a wide margin, but gap with NDP has narrowed since election call

*Age and educational attainment drive massive differences in vote intention*

**April 12, 2019** – With early voting underway and less than a week until election day, the 2019 Alberta general election is still the United Conservative Party's to lose, but the governing New Democratic Party has the momentum.

This, according to a new public opinion poll from the non-profit Angus Reid Institute, which finds the UCP lead has narrowed by about 12 percentage points [since the beginning of the campaign](#). That said, Jason Kenney's party still leads Rachel Notley's NDP by 13 points.

Underlying this shift are huge advantages for the NDP in Edmonton and among younger and more highly educated voters – especially women – while the UCP finds its strength among older voters and those with lower levels of formal schooling – especially men.

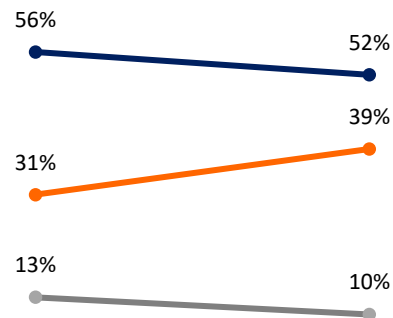
With these trends in place, the question is whether this Alberta election will look more [like 2012](#) – when the Wildrose Party held a polling lead throughout the campaign, but ultimately lost to the long-governing Progressive Conservatives – [or 2015](#) – when Notley's NDP converted its polling lead into a majority government, ending four decades of PC rule.

Late campaign surges for governing parties are hardly unprecedented. In 2013, the BC Liberals trailed the opposition NDP [for weeks](#) leading up to election day, but the deficit shrunk from double digits at the start of the campaign, and it evaporated completely once vote intention became vote reality.

### More Key Findings:

- Economic issues top Albertans' list of key concerns as election day draws near. "Oil and gas/Pipelines" (45%), "the economy" (37%), and "jobs/unemployment" (30%) are seen as the top issues facing the province, dwarfing the next highest concern: "environment/climate change" (16%)

**Vote intention in ARI polling  
(Decided and leaning voters, excluding undecideds)**



March 18 (n=763)

April 8 (n=745)

- United Conservative Party
- Alberta New Democratic Party (NDP)
- Other parties

### METHODOLOGY:

The Angus Reid Institute conducted an online survey from April 5 – 8, 2019, among a representative randomized sample of 807 adult Alberta residents who are members of [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. Detailed tables are found at the end of this release.

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- Jason Kenney and the UCP are seen as the best leader and party to deal with these key economic questions, while most Albertans (57%) say Rachel Notley “hasn’t done enough to stand up for Alberta’s oil and gas industry”
- Whatever the outcome, Albertans overwhelmingly see this election as more important than previous ones. Fully eight-in-ten say this (83%), including six-in-ten who say it is “much more important”

### **About ARI**

*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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#### **Part 1: Vote Dynamics**

##### **NDP leads in Edmonton, trails elsewhere**

The NDP’s historic victory in Alberta’s 2015 election ended a Progressive Conservative dynasty that had been in power in the province since 1971. In its result, it was inarguably the most significant Alberta election in decades. Today, though, Albertans expect the 2019 election to be even more important.

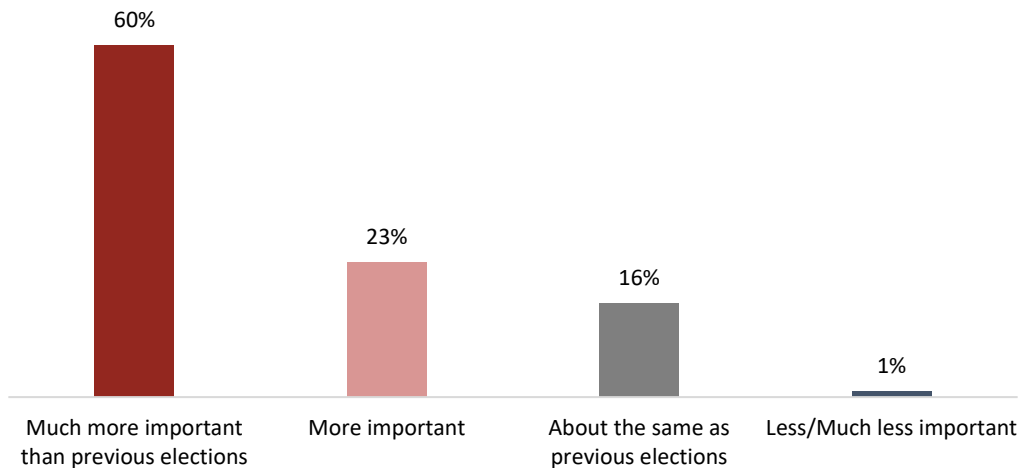
More than eight-in-ten Alberta residents (83%) say the current campaign is more important to them than previous elections, and fully six-in-ten (60%) say it is “much more important.”

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#### **CONTACT:**

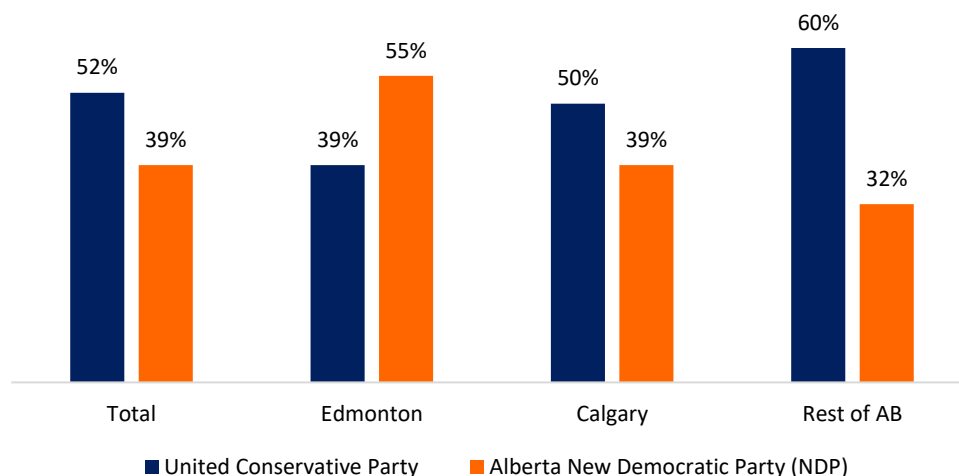
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**In comparison to previous provincial elections, how important would you say this election is to you?**



With less than one week until election day, the United Conservative Party appears poised to form Alberta’s next government. The UCP’s province-wide lead comes primarily from the party’s strength in Calgary and rural areas. The governing NDP, meanwhile, holds a substantial lead in the city of Edmonton, as seen in the graph that follows:

**Vote intention (Decided and leaning voters, n=745)**



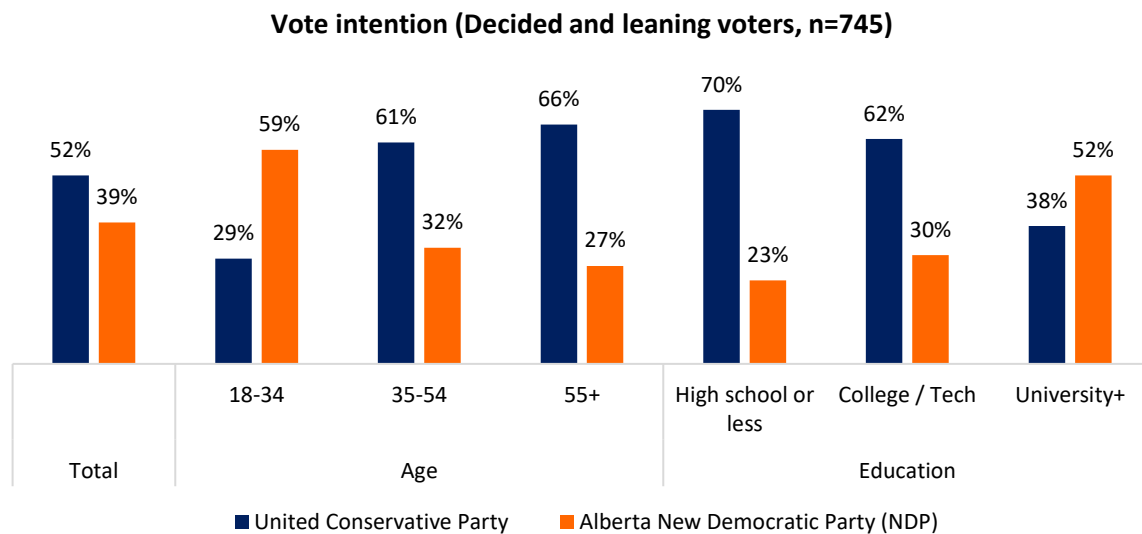
This distribution of votes favours the UCP not only because of the party’s overall lead, but also because of the distribution of seats in the legislature. There are more seats to be had in Calgary (26) than Edmonton (20), and the NDP trails badly outside those two major cities, where the legislature’s remaining 41 seats are located.

**Big differences by age, gender and education**

While the regional differences in vote intention are significant, this survey finds even more dramatic schisms in the electorate by age and education.

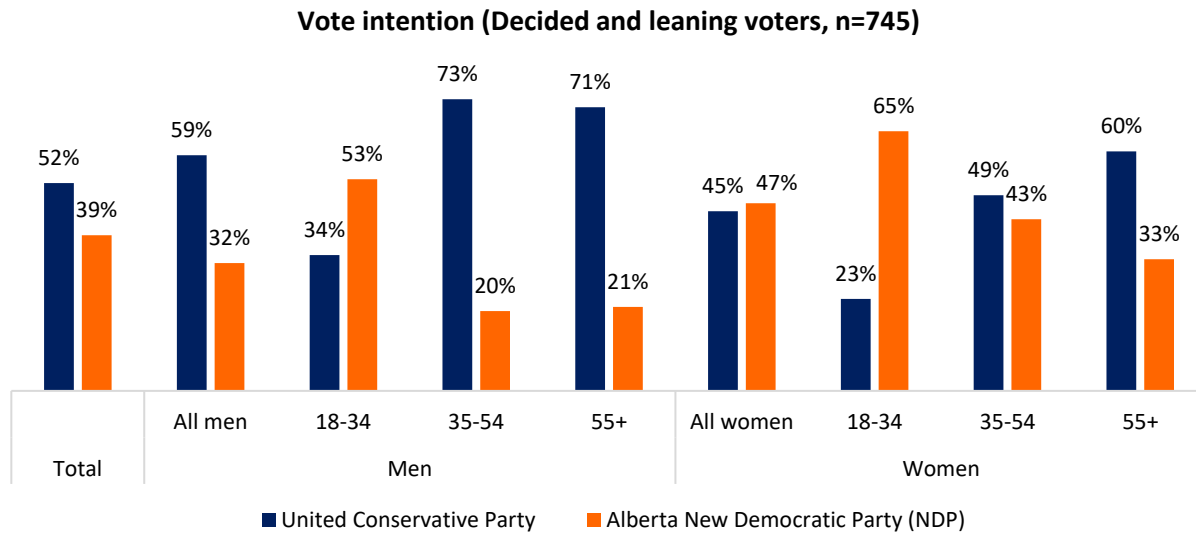
Albertans ages 35 and older intend to vote for the UCP at a rate of more than six-in-ten, while those under 35 lean nearly as strongly toward the NDP, as seen in the graph that follows.

Likewise, those with university degrees prefer the NDP, while large majorities of those with lower levels of formal education say they will cast their ballots for the UCP:



Gender is also a significant factor in Albertans' vote intentions. Among women, the NDP holds a narrow lead over the UCP (47% to 45%), while the UCP leads among men by more than 25 points (59% to 32%).

Both genders are divided along age lines, with younger respondents preferring the New Democrats and older ones preferring the United Conservatives. That said, the UCP's lead among men ages 35 and older is particularly striking, as is the NDP's lead among women under 35:

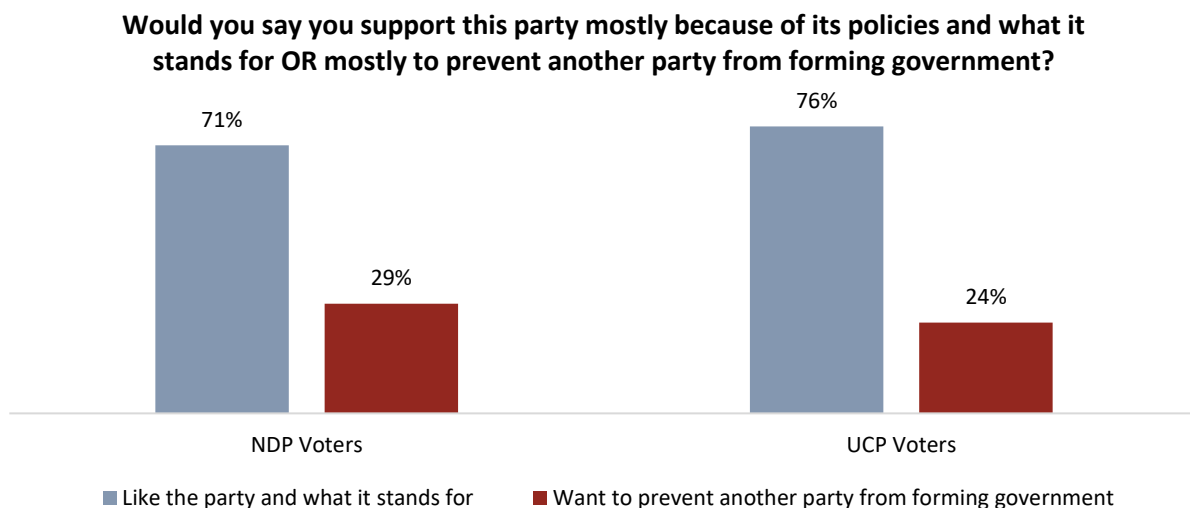


**Like the party or hate the alternative?**

Often, polarized electorates are primed for strategic voting, with voters as likely to decide who to vote for based on a desire to block another party from winning as they are to make their choice based on the party or candidate they like best.

In the U.S. in 2016, for instance, half of Donald Trump’s supporters [told the Angus Reid Institute](#) they planned on voting for him to block Hillary Clinton from becoming president, rather than because they liked him. Likewise, half of Clinton supporters said they were voting for her because of antipathy toward Trump.

In this Alberta election, this type of strategic voting doesn’t seem to factor into the plans of most voters. More than seven-in-ten of each party’s supporters say they like that party and what it stands for, rather than saying they want to prevent another party from forming government:

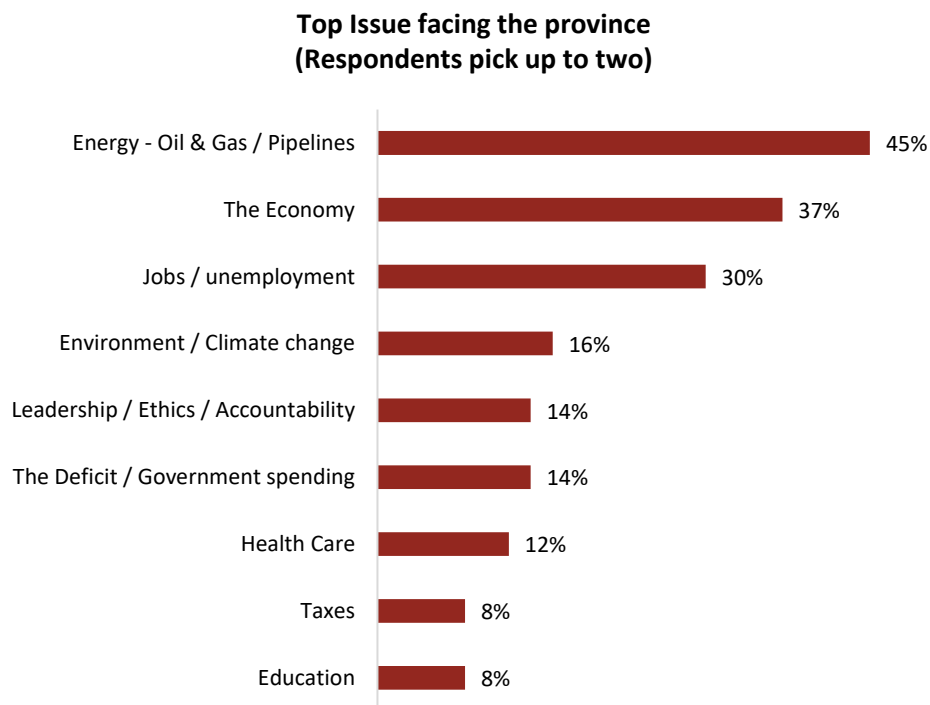


**Part 2: Leadership**

**Kenney viewed as best on economic issues**

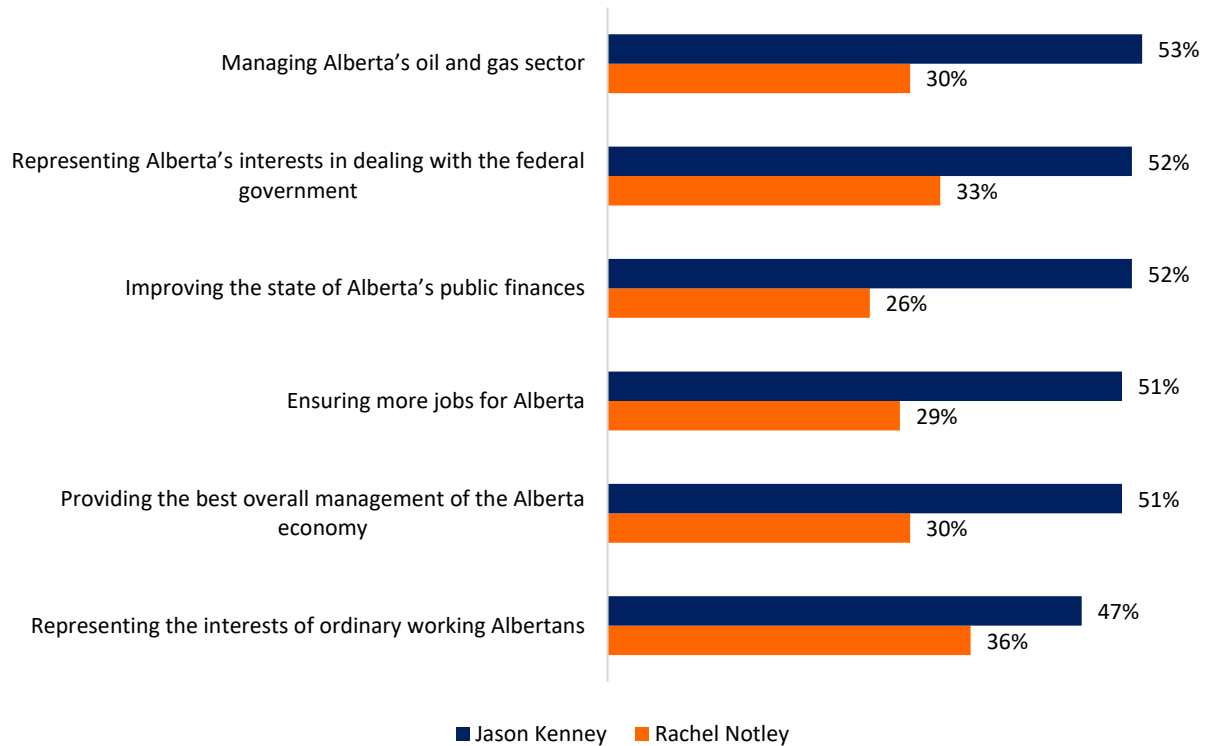
The economy is by far the most important issue in this Alberta election. With a struggling economy and stalled pipeline projects, anxiety is high in Canada’s resource epicentre.

Asked to choose their top two priorities for their province, Albertans lean heavily to economic issues, with unemployment, resources and the economy more broadly topping their list:



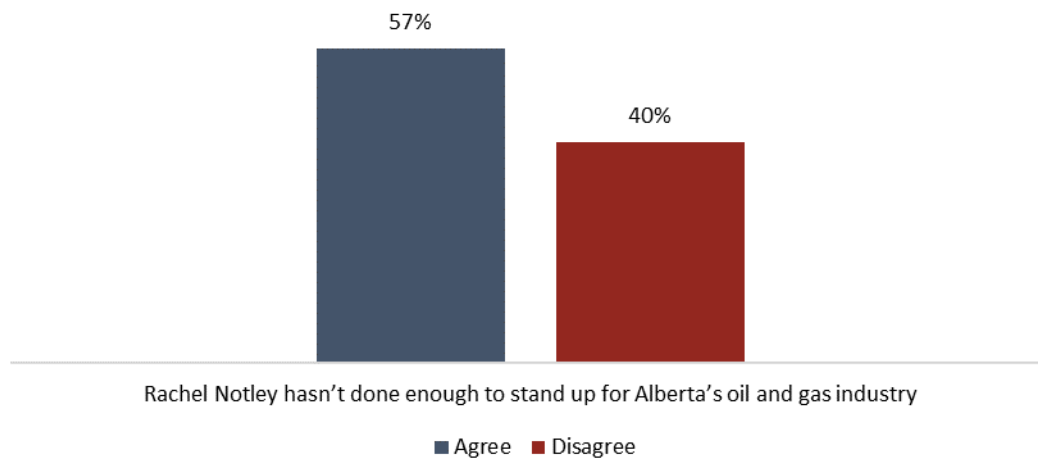
The priority Albertans place on these issues represents good news for Jason Kenney. The UCP leader is seen as best on economic issues over Rachel Notley by a wide margin. Half of respondents say that Kenney is the best choice to manage Alberta’s oil and gas sector (53%), improving the province’s finances (52%), ensuring more jobs (51%), and providing the best management for the economy overall (51%). This represents a significant margin over Rachel Notley on each issue:

**Who is the best choice for to manage each of these areas of the province:**



Perhaps helping to build this advantage for Kenney and the UCP is the palpable frustration with the NDP when it comes to resource issues. Nearly six-in-ten residents say that Rachel Notley has not done enough to stand up for Alberta's oil and gas industry.

**Agree versus Disagree on each statement**



**Albertans divided on ethical leadership and climate change**

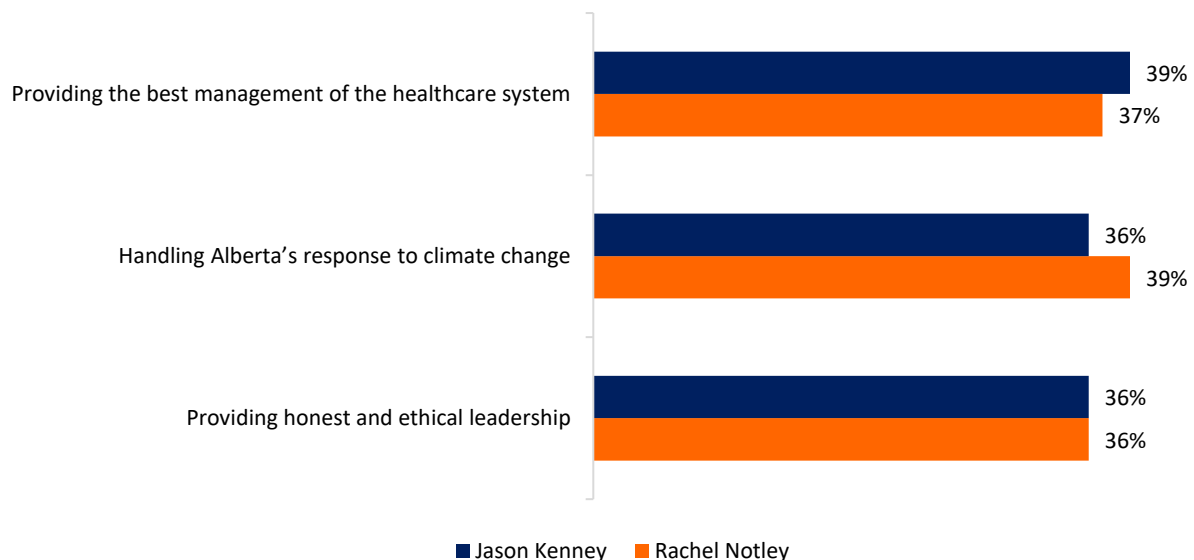
There are, however, areas where the choice between the two front-runners is not so clear. Notley and Kenney are statistically tied on who would best manage the province’s health care system.

When it comes to addressing climate change, Albertans are divided. While the NDP plans to continue its Climate Leadership Plan – which has reduced emissions by 16 per cent since implementation – if re-elected, the UCP says it will dismantle the plan and end the province’s carbon tax. Moreover, Jason Kenney has stated that he will challenge the federal government’s carbon plan – which would take effect in the province if it dropped its existing plan – in court.

A close-to-equal number of residents choose Notley (39%) and Kenney (36%) as best to lead on this issue.

Albertans are also split over who would provide the most ethical leadership for the province:

**Who is the best choice for to manage each of these areas of the province:**

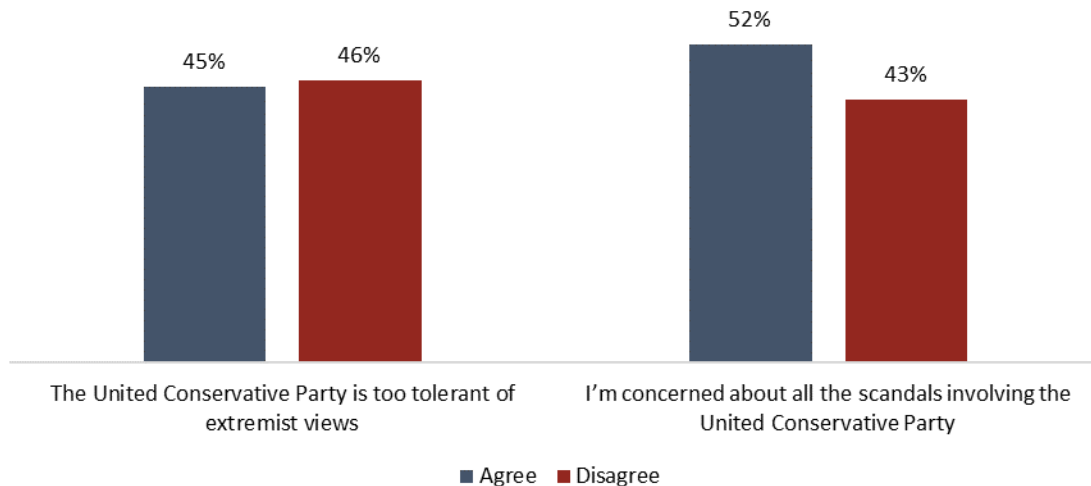


This question of honest and ethical leadership is particularly relevant given the ongoing scandals involving UCP candidates. Two candidates recently resigned after comments about white supremacists, and racist and homophobic remarks, while another – Mark Smith – was embroiled in controversy over comments he made in 2013 regarding homosexuality.

Amid these headlines, 45 per cent of respondents say they believe the UCP is too tolerant of extremist views, and 52 per cent say they are concerned about the scandals:



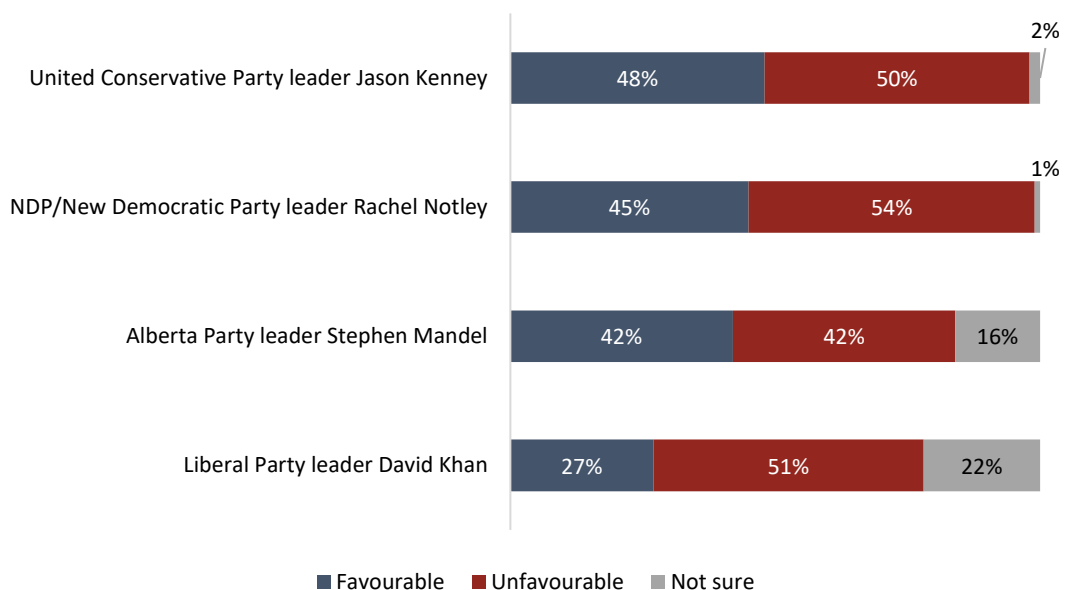
**Agree versus Disagree on each statement**



**Both Notley and Kenney viewed unfavourably**

In a provincial race dominated by competing messaging about the two main party leaders, Notley and Kenney hold similar appeal in the minds of potential voters. Asked whether they view each party leader favourably or unfavourably, a similar number of Albertans take a positive view of Kenney (48%) and Notley (45%). That said, the gap between favourable and unfavourable is worse for the Premier (-9) than for the opposition leader (-2):

**Overall opinion of party leaders**



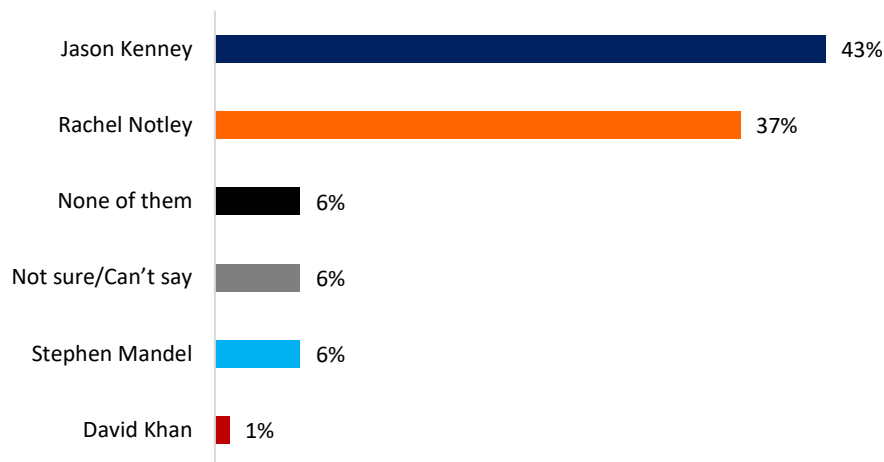
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**Tighter race for Best Premier**

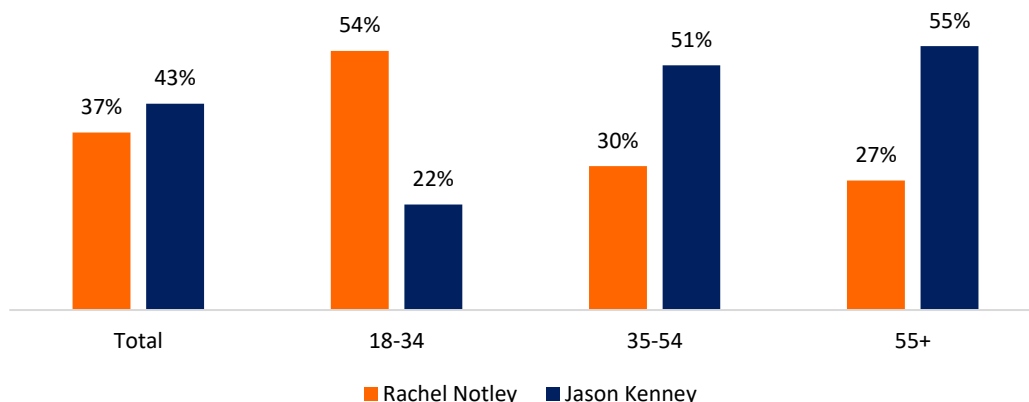
Further, while the UCP holds a significant advantage in vote intention (as outlined in part one of this report), Jason Kenney himself has less personal appeal as the leader of the province. Four-in-ten Albertans say that he would make the best choice for Premier (43%), a six-point advantage over current Premier Rachel Notley (37%). A handful of residents remain unsure (6%) or say that they are not impressed with any of the leaders available (6%).

**Who would make the Best Premier for Alberta**



The age divide is again exemplified by this question about the province’s leader going forward. A full majority of 18-to-34-year-olds say Notley is the best option for Alberta, while most older respondents choose her opponent:

**Best Premier, by age**



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

*One summary table follows, showing data not included at the link above.*

<b>Vote intention (Decided voters, including leaners, excluding undecideds)</b>							
	<b>Total (745)</b>	<b>Age + Gender</b>					
		<b>Men 18-34 (133)</b>	<b>Men 35-54 (134)</b>	<b>Men 55+ (116)</b>	<b>Women 18-34 (107)</b>	<b>Women 35-54 (143)</b>	<b>Women 55+ (113)</b>
<b>Alberta New Democratic Party (NDP)</b>	<b>39%</b>	<b>53%</b>	<b>20%</b>	<b>21%</b>	<b>65%</b>	<b>43%</b>	<b>33%</b>
<b>United Conservative Party</b>	<b>52%</b>	<b>34%</b>	<b>73%</b>	<b>71%</b>	<b>23%</b>	<b>49%</b>	<b>60%</b>
<b>Alberta Liberal Party</b>	<b>1%</b>	<b>0%</b>	<b>0%</b>	<b>1%</b>	<b>3%</b>	<b>0%</b>	<b>0%</b>
<b>Alberta Party</b>	<b>6%</b>	<b>11%</b>	<b>3%</b>	<b>2%</b>	<b>7%</b>	<b>6%</b>	<b>6%</b>
<b>Other party</b>	<b>3%</b>	<b>2%</b>	<b>3%</b>	<b>5%</b>	<b>3%</b>	<b>2%</b>	<b>1%</b>

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