

## B.C. Spotlight: Massive lead over opposition may make an election irresistible to the NDP, but risks lie ahead

*BC NDP voters more likely to express discomfort with in-person voting were an election called*

**September 4, 2020** – Premier John Horgan recently suggested an early election could be an “[opportunity](#)” for his BC NDP, though the party was quick to say that he [misspoke](#) and is not intent on calling on residents to head to the polls early.

New data from the non-profit Angus Reid Institute finds that an early election would, indeed, present Horgan and his party with quite the irresistible opportunity, should they choose to take it.

The New Democrats have opened a whopping 19-point lead over the opposition BC Liberals, with half of residents (48%) saying they would cast votes for the party that has helmed a minority government for three years. The BC Liberals take 29 per cent of the decided and leaning vote, while the B.C. Greens are at 14 per cent of current vote intention.

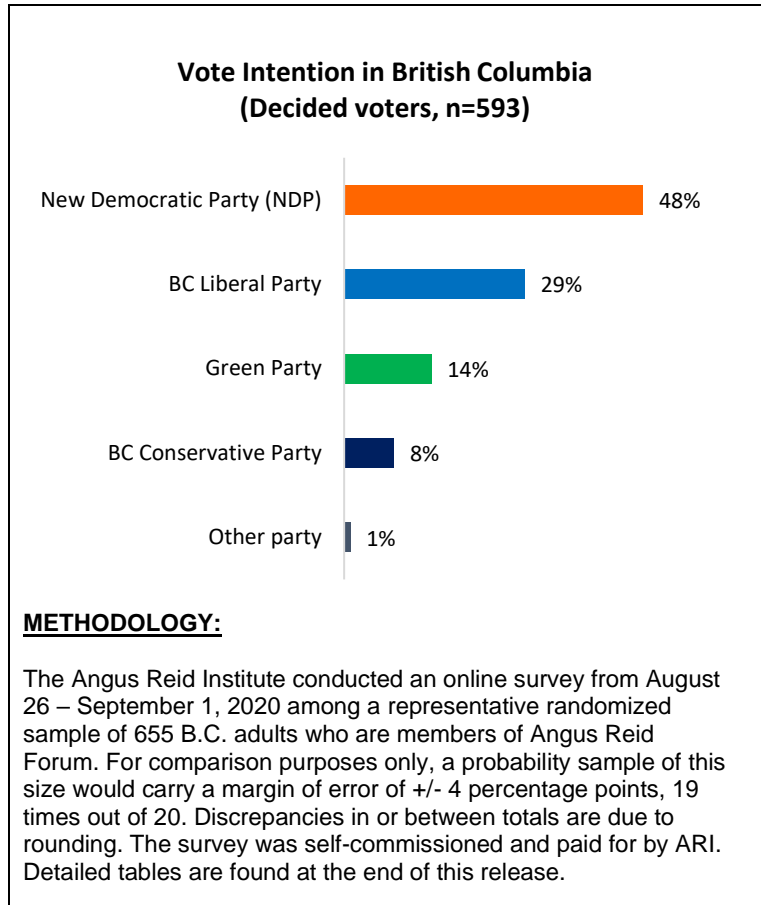
But against these sunny skies, dark clouds are forming on the horizon. The government is fighting a pitched battle with the union representing B.C.

teachers as anxiety mounts over sending children back to school next week. The province is also continuing to fight – [some would argue unsuccessfully](#) – a sustained increase in COVID-19 cases.

Indeed, fully one-in-three B.C. residents say they would not be comfortable heading to the polls in person this fall as they would during a normal year, due to concerns about the coronavirus. BC NDP feel this more acutely than those who support other parties, with two-in-five New Democrat supporters saying they would be uncomfortable going physically to the polls.

### More Key Findings:

- The BC NDP holds a commanding lead in Metro Vancouver, 53 per cent to 26 per cent over the BC Liberals, and also leads by nine-points in the rest of the province, 42 per cent to 33 per cent
- Four-in-five residents (83%) say the Horgan government's response to the COVID-19 pandemic has been “good”



### CONTACT:

Shachi Kurl, Executive Director: 604.908.1693 [shachi.kurl@angusreid.org](mailto:shachi.kurl@angusreid.org) @shachikurl  
Dave Korzinski, Research Director: 250.899.0821 [dave.korzinski@angusreid.org](mailto:dave.korzinski@angusreid.org)

- By contrast, British Columbians are critical of its response to the opioid epidemic. Only 22 per cent of residents say the government has done a good job on this file, compared to 71 per cent who say they have done a poor job

### **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.*

### **INDEX:**

- **Vote intention**
- **Government performance on key issues**
- **Overall government performance score**
- **One-in-three uncomfortable casting an in-person ballot**

### **Vote intention**

British Columbia Premier John Horgan has enjoyed a sustained period of high personal approval throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. B.C.'s response was initially lauded, with Dr. Bonnie Henry featured in a New York Times article touting her as the "[Top Doctor Who Aced the Coronavirus Test](#)".

As the province battles [rising cases](#) of the virus and attempts to break through to young people to stop the spread, Horgan's popularity endures. The Angus Reid Institute's [Premier Approval ratings](#), published this week, saw Horgan atop the list at 69 per cent.

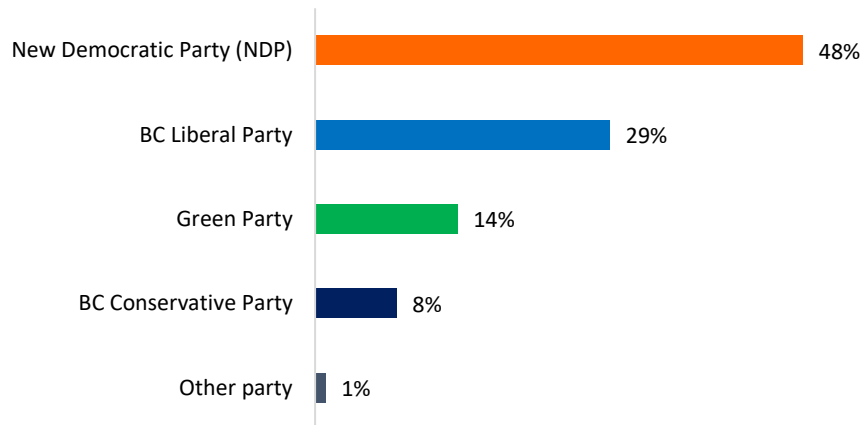
The NDP has been in a Confidence and Supply Agreement with the provincial Green Party since 2017 but appears well-positioned to secure a majority if an election were to be called. Currently, 48 per cent of residents say they would vote for the incumbent party in a provincial election, a 19-point advantage over the opposition Liberal Party.

---

### **CONTACT:**

Shachi Kurl, Executive Director: 604.908.1693 [shachi.kurl@angusreid.org](mailto:shachi.kurl@angusreid.org) @shachikurl  
Dave Korzinski, Research Director: 250.899.0821 [dave.korzinski@angusreid.org](mailto:dave.korzinski@angusreid.org)

**Vote Intention in British Columbia  
(Decided voters, n=593)**

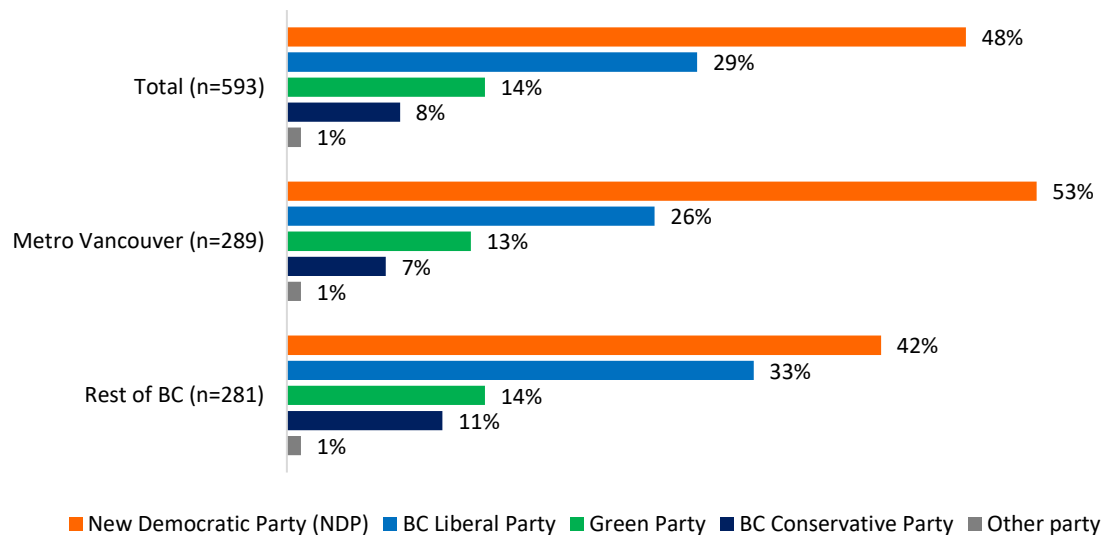


The BC NDP is the top choice across all age groups in the province, though support for the BC Liberals rises with age. The opposition is also more popular with men than women, but trails the NDP among both:

Vote Intention in British Columbia by age (Decided voters)						
	Total (n=593)	Age			Gender	
		18-34 (n=166)	35-54 (n=203)	55+ (n=224)	Male (n=285)	Female (n=303)
New Democratic Party (NDP)	48%	54%	50%	43%	43%	53%
BC Liberal Party	29%	21%	30%	34%	35%	23%
Green Party	14%	18%	11%	14%	11%	17%
BC Conservative Party	8%	6%	8%	9%	10%	6%
Other party	1%	1%	2%	1%	2%	1%

The advantage for the BC NDP extends beyond its stronghold in Metro Vancouver. The party doubles the BC Liberals in that urban centre and leads in the rest of the province by nine points.

**Vote Intention in British Columbia  
Metro Vancouver vs Rest of B.C.  
(Decided Voters, n=593)**

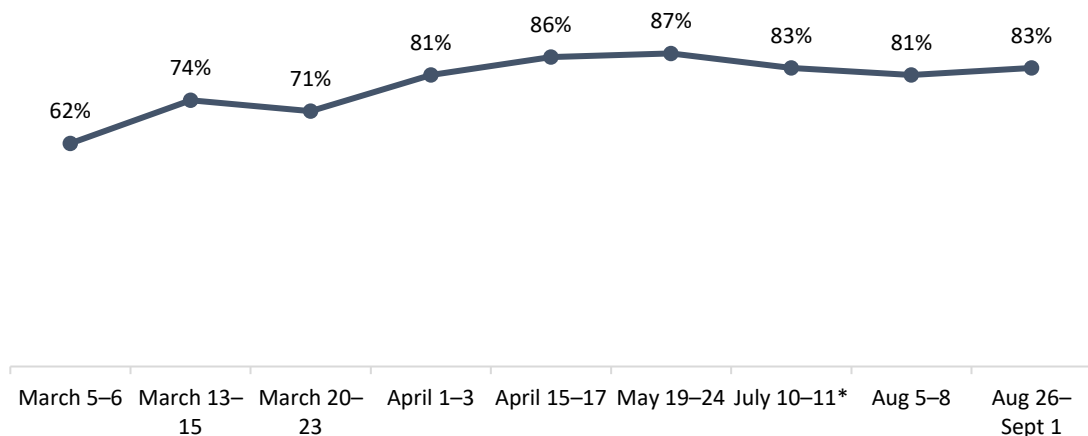


**Government performance on key issues**

The BC NDP has five areas where its performance is relatively highly praised. That is, a full majority of residents say it has done a good job in those areas: COVID-19 response, health care, the economy, education, and handling unemployment.

The province’s handling of the pandemic in particular has been consistently graded positively – even as the summer wore on and more cases were diagnosed. This positivity may well be tested in the coming weeks and months:

**Percentage of B.C. residents saying their provincial government has done a 'good job' handling COVID-19**



**CONTACT:**

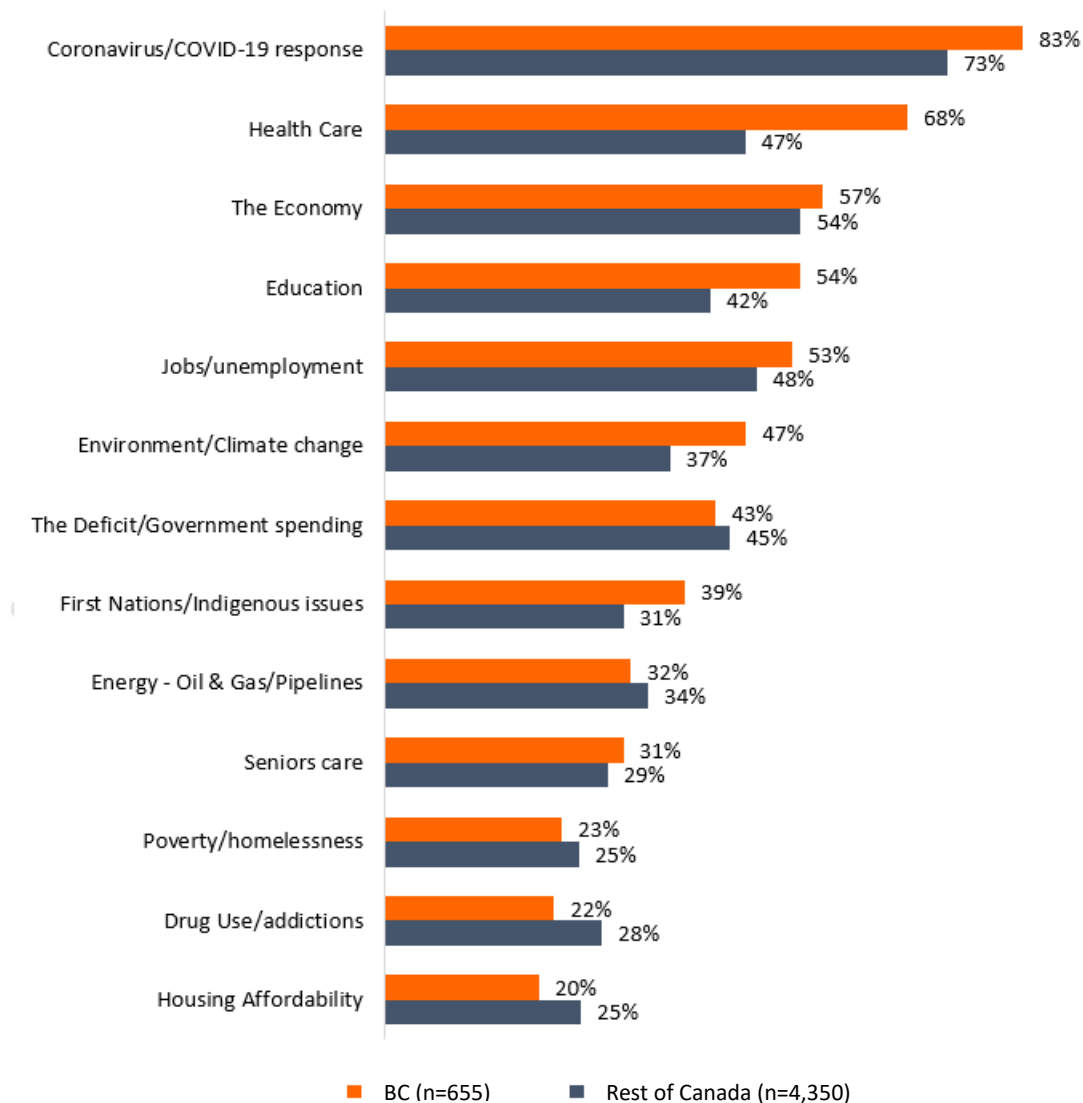
Shachi Kurl, Executive Director: 604.908.1693 [shachi.kurl@angusreid.org](mailto:shachi.kurl@angusreid.org) @shachikurl  
 Dave Korzinski, Research Director: 250.899.0821 [dave.korzinski@angusreid.org](mailto:dave.korzinski@angusreid.org)

\*% represents response for “your provincial premier”

While health care overall and economic stewardship are also areas identified as areas of strength for this government, there are also areas of weakness. The BC NDP’s grading on housing affordability, for example, is lowest in the nation, and just one-in-three residents are convinced the government has handled the pipeline file well. Though it may seem eons ago, the province was embroiled in a pipeline dispute just this past February, as Wet’suwet’en solidarity protesters [blocked railways](#) across the country to oppose the Coastal Gaslink pipeline running through Northern B.C.

Another item over which the government is more dimly viewed is its handling of the opioid problem. Deaths related to drug use have reached [record levels](#) in the province since the COVID-19 outbreak began, and just 22 per cent of British Columbians say the government is doing a good job in response.

**B.C. government performance vs. Rest of Canada**

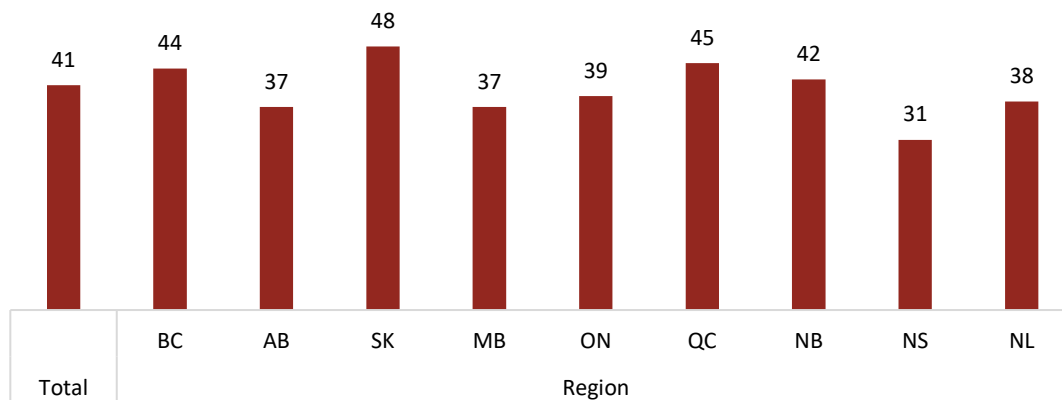


For full demographic details, [view tables here](#).

**Overall government performance score**

In terms of overall government performance, B.C. trails only Saskatchewan and Quebec in the way it is seen to be handling top issues (see methodology at the end of this report for more on this score):

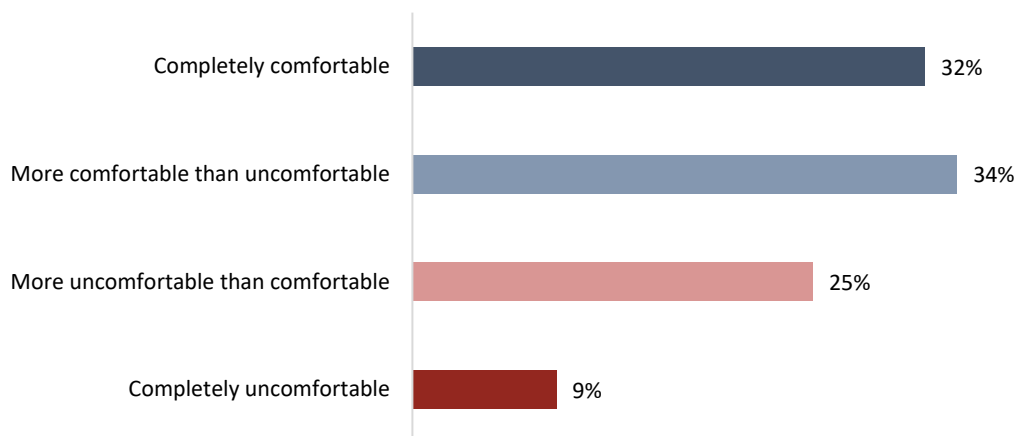
**Overall government performance rating**



**One-in-three would be uncomfortable voting in-person during pandemic**

If, indeed, an election were called, there are a number of logistical issues posed by the ongoing pandemic. Voting places would need to operate within social distancing guidelines, and some have suggested that [mail-in ballots](#) may be utilized to minimize risk to voters. For reference, just [0.3 per cent](#) of ballots in the 2017 provincial election were cast by mail. Asked if they feel comfortable going to a polling station as they normally would for a provincial election, one-third say they would feel uncomfortable:

**If a provincial election were held this fall, given COVID-19, how comfortable would you be going to a polling place to cast your ballot?  
(B.C. residents, n=655)**

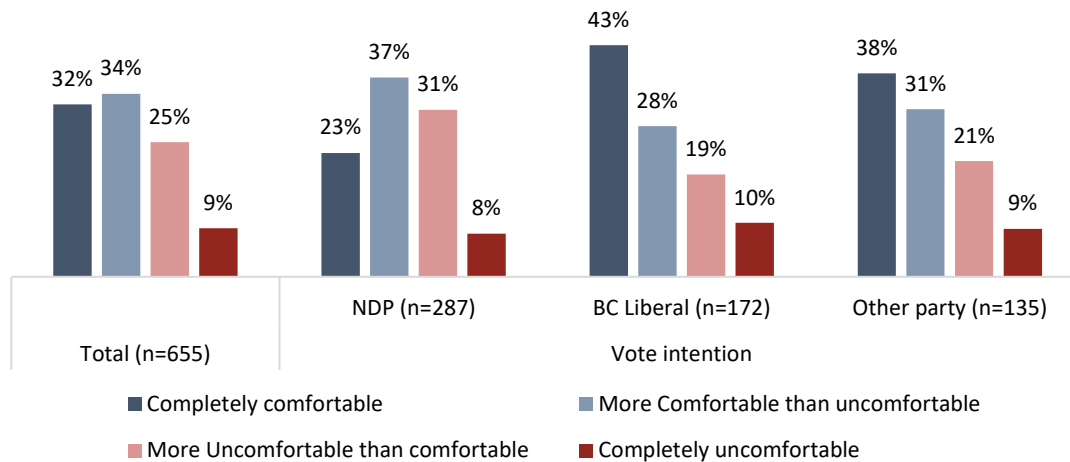


**CONTACT:**

Shachi Kurl, Executive Director: 604.908.1693 [shachi.kurl@angusreid.org](mailto:shachi.kurl@angusreid.org) @shachikurl  
 Dave Korzinski, Research Director: 250.899.0821 [dave.korzinski@angusreid.org](mailto:dave.korzinski@angusreid.org)

Interestingly, those who say they would support the BC NDP are most likely to say they would be uncomfortable going out to vote in person. Fully two-in-five of the party's supporters say this (40%):

**If a provincial election were held this fall, given COVID-19, how comfortable would you be going to a polling place to cast your ballot?  
(BC residents, n=655)**



**Note on methodology: Provincial Government Performance Score**

This score is the average number of Canadians saying the government is doing a 'good job' plus a 'very good job' across 13 different issues.

*Summary tables follow*

*For detailed tables with age, gender, and more, [click here.](#)*

*For detailed tables by region, [click here.](#)*

**CONTACT:**

Shachi Kurl, Executive Director: 604.908.1693 [shachi.kurl@angusreid.org](mailto:shachi.kurl@angusreid.org) @shachikurl  
 Dave Korzinski, Research Director: 250.899.0821 [dave.korzinski@angusreid.org](mailto:dave.korzinski@angusreid.org)

Do you think the current government of British Columbia is doing a good job or a poor job in each of the following areas? (B.C. residents, n=655)					
	Very good job	Good job	Poor job	Very poor job	Not sure/ Can't say
Health Care	10%	58%	19%	8%	5%
The Economy	5%	53%	20%	10%	13%
Coronavirus/ COVID-19 response	34%	49%	9%	6%	2%
The Deficit/ Government spending	4%	38%	23%	13%	21%
Jobs/unemployment	2%	50%	23%	10%	13%
Housing Affordability	1%	19%	45%	27%	8%
Poverty/Homelessness	2%	21%	43%	28%	6%
Environment/Climate change	3%	44%	30%	10%	14%
Education	4%	50%	26%	10%	11%
Drug Use/addictions	2%	20%	41%	30%	7%
Energy – Oil & Gas/Pipelines	3%	28%	32%	24%	12%
First Nations/ Indigenous issues	2%	37%	28%	13%	20%
Seniors care	3%	29%	38%	15%	15%

Vote Intention (Decided voters in B.C., n=593)								
	Total (n=593)	Region		Age			Gender	
		Metro Van (n=289)	Rest of B.C. (n=281)	18-34 (n=166)	35-54 (n=203)	55+ (n=224)	Male (n=285)	Female (n=303)
New Democratic Party (NDP)	48%	53%	42%	54%	50%	43%	43%	53%
BC Liberal Party	29%	26%	33%	21%	30%	34%	35%	23%
Green Party	14%	13%	14%	18%	11%	14%	11%	17%
Conservative Party	8%	7%	11%	6%	8%	9%	10%	6%
Other party	1%	1%	1%	1%	2%	1%	2%	1%

**CONTACT:**

Shachi Kurl, Executive Director: 604.908.1693 [shachi.kurl@angusreid.org](mailto:shachi.kurl@angusreid.org) @shachikurl  
 Dave Korzinski, Research Director: 250.899.0821 [dave.korzinski@angusreid.org](mailto:dave.korzinski@angusreid.org)



If a provincial election were held this fall, given COVID-19, how comfortable would you be going to a polling place to cast your ballot? (B.C. residents, n=655)								
	Total (n=655)	Region		Age			Gender	
		Metro Van (n=318)	Rest of B.C. (n=310)	18-34 (n=182)	35-54 (n=220)	55+ (n=253)	Male (n=310)	Female (n=341)
Completely comfortable	32%	26%	41%	23%	34%	36%	40%	24%
More comfortable than uncomfortable	34%	34%	33%	37%	33%	33%	31%	38%
More uncomfortable than comfortable	25%	31%	18%	29%	26%	22%	21%	29%
Completely uncomfortable	9%	9%	8%	11%	7%	8%	8%	10%

**CONTACT:**

Shachi Kurl, Executive Director: 604.908.1693 [shachi.kurl@angusreid.org](mailto:shachi.kurl@angusreid.org) @shachikurl

Dave Korzinski, Research Director: 250.899.0821 [dave.korzinski@angusreid.org](mailto:dave.korzinski@angusreid.org)