

Alberta Spotlight: As dissatisfaction with UCP intensifies, voters say they're ready to take another look at the NDP

Albertans critical of government's handling of health care, economy, and public education

September 14, 2020 – A year and a half of governing appears to be souring Albertans on the UCP. While it swept to victory in the April 2019 election, capturing 63 of the province's 87 legislative seats and 55 per cent of the popular vote, the latest data from the non-profit Angus Reid Institute finds the party now well short of majority territory.

Indeed, 38 per cent of residents say they would support the UCP if an election were held tomorrow – remarkably putting the party in a tie with the Alberta New Democratic Party, which it dispatched to the opposition benches after just one term.

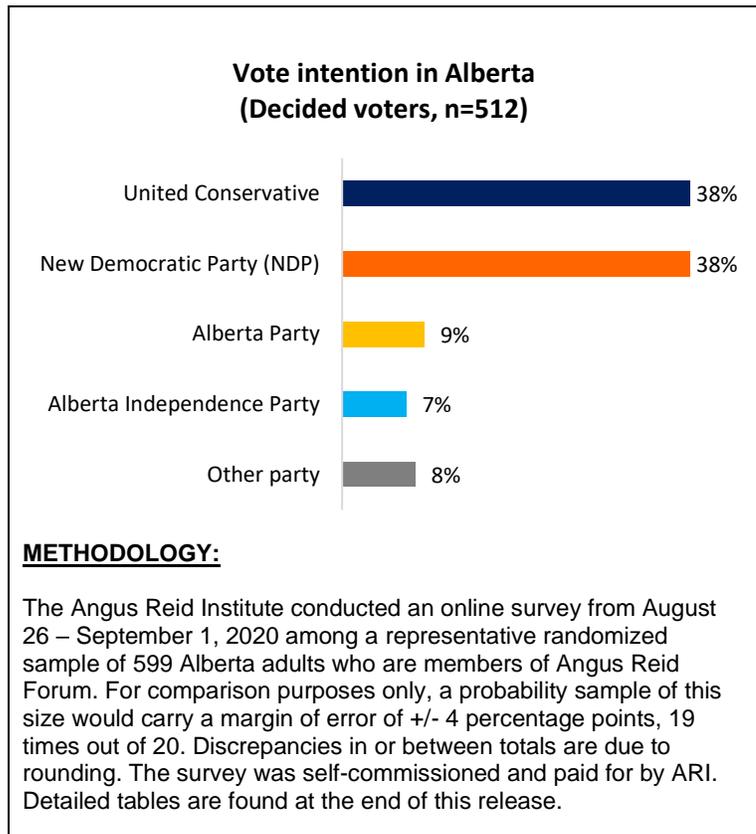
The problems for Kenney's UCP are twofold. The first is that three-in-ten of its party's voters from last year are now parking their vote intent elsewhere. Many of these votes are going to the centre-right Alberta Party and the secessionist Alberta Independence Party.

The second is a widespread dissatisfaction with this government's handling of several core provincial issues. Three-in-five Albertans say the government has done a poor job in handling health care in the province. The government has been in a protracted, intense dispute with doctors over pay and third-party arbitration.

Further, as it posts its largest deficit in history, just one-in-three residents say the government has done a good job in handling government spending and said deficit, as well as the economy more broadly. They are similarly unimpressed with its record on jobs and unemployment, which is higher in Alberta than most other provinces, and public education, following much angst among parents around returning to school during a pandemic.

More Key Findings:

- Support for the UCP has fallen most among middle-aged (35-54) voters: though 55 per cent of them voted for the UCP last year, only 35 per cent would do so if an election were held tomorrow.
- The overwhelming majority (96%) of those who voted for the NDP in the last election say they would do so again.



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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:

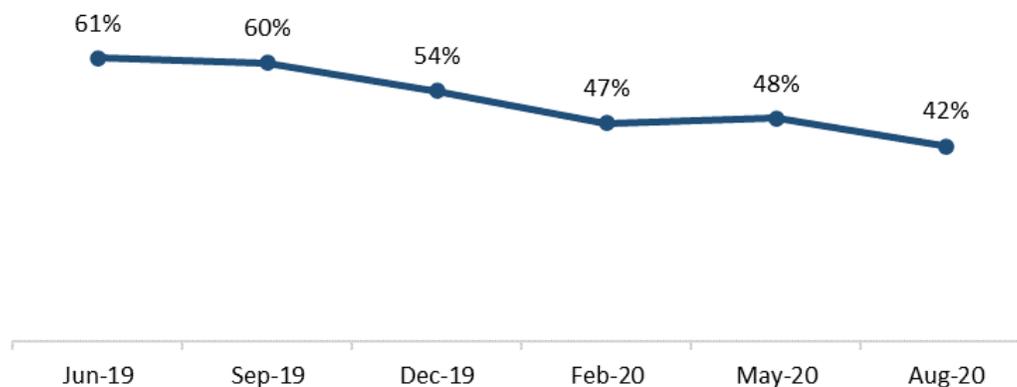
- **Vote intention**
- **Damaged personal finances**
- **Government performance on key issues**
- **Overall government performance score**

Vote intention

When the UCP won the election in April 2019 it was with 55 per cent of the popular vote, more than any winning party in Alberta [since 2001](#). Voters roundly rejected the NDP, which saw the size of its caucus more than halved (from 52 to 24) in an election with the highest voter turnout [since 1982](#). It was the first time an incumbent government in Alberta had failed to win a second term.

Recently, however, it is the UCP that is dealing with increasingly unimpressed Albertans. Premier Jason Kenney has seen his approval rating drop 19 points in less than 18 months:

Alberta Premier Jason Kenney (UCP)



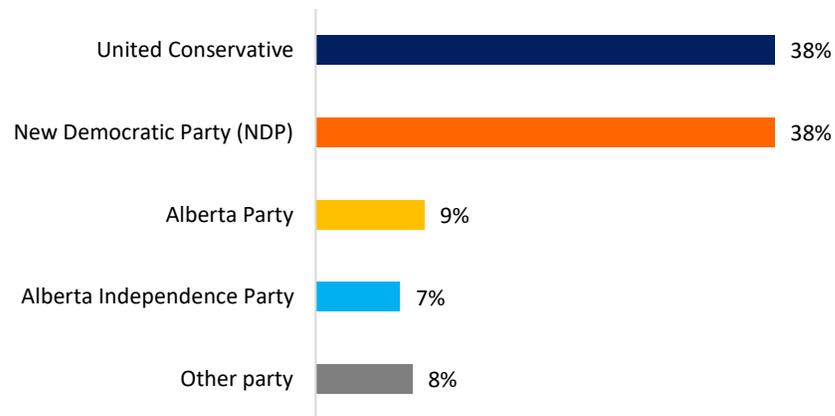
After months of erosion in support for Kenney, opinions have been shifted enough to leave the NDP and UCP tied in the contest for voter support. Notably, the Alberta Party garners support from nine per cent,

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the same number it received in the 2019 election, while other parties have increased their support considerably as voters look for alternatives:

**Vote intention in Alberta
(Decided voters, n=512)**



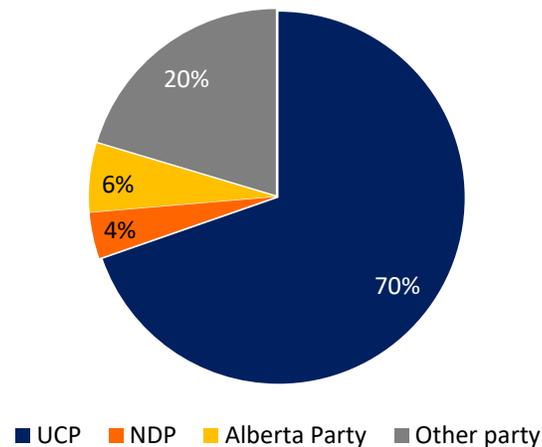
Kenney’s UCP maintains support from a majority of those aged 55 and over, but now trails among younger voters. Most notably, 55 per cent of 35- to 54-year-olds voted for the UCP in April of last year, compared to just 35 per cent who now express this intention.

There is also a considerable gender split in vote intention. Men continue to prefer the UCP by a wide margin while women are significantly more likely to support the NDP.

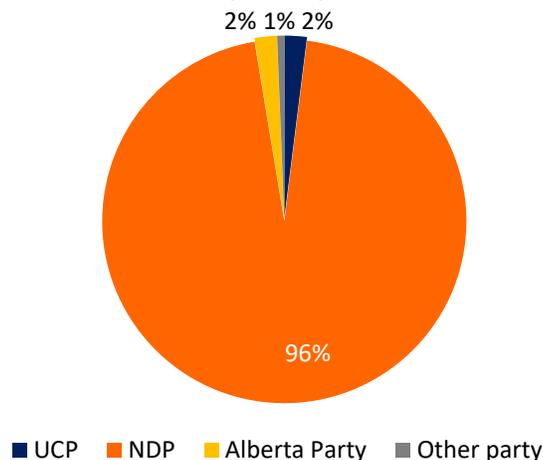
| Vote Intention in Alberta by age (Decided voters) | | | | | | |
|--|------------------|------------------|------------------|----------------|-----------------|-------------------|
| | Total (n=512) | Age | | | Gender | |
| | | 18-34 (n=169) | 35-54 (n=191) | 55+ (n=152) | Male (n=254) | Female (n=257) |
| United Conservative Party | 38% | 29% | 35% | 51% | 41% | 35% |
| New Democratic Party (NDP) | 38% | 47% | 38% | 30% | 29% | 47% |
| Alberta Party | 9% | 13% | 9% | 4% | 10% | 8% |
| Alberta Independence Party | 7% | 3% | 10% | 8% | 11% | 3% |
| Other party | 8% | 8% | 8% | 6% | 9% | 6% |

Notably, an inverse occurrence in vote intention trends occurs in Alberta when it comes to provincial politics. Nationally, the right-of-centre vote is solidly committed to the federal Conservative Party of Canada while those left-of-centre are split between a handful of parties. In Alberta, however, it is the NDP led by Rachel Notley which commands the loyalty of the rock-solid vote base that is as supportive of the party today as it was in the last election. Nearly all (96%) of those who supported her party in 2019 say they would do so again. By contrast, the UCP is bleeding 30 per cent of its past voters to other parties.

**Voting intention - those who supported UCP in 2019
(n=254)**



**Voting intentions - those who supported NDP in 2019
(n=159)**

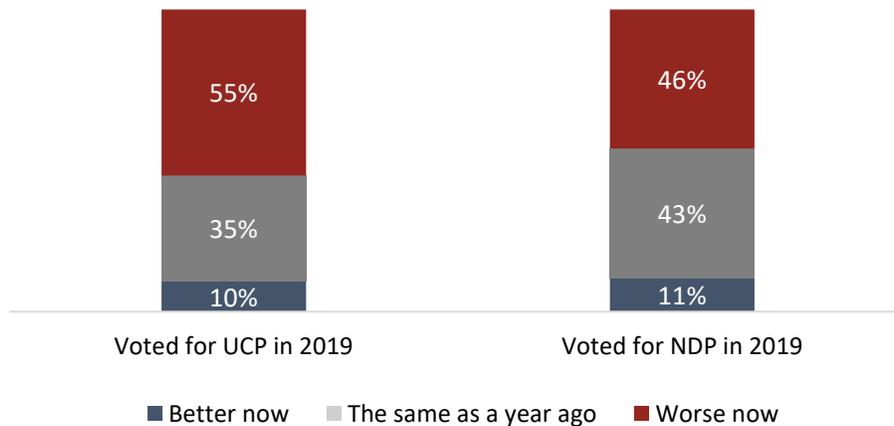


Damaged personal finances

The UCP may be struggling in part because many Albertans have suffered negative financial impacts from the pandemic. Albertans are the most likely in the country to say that their standard of living has

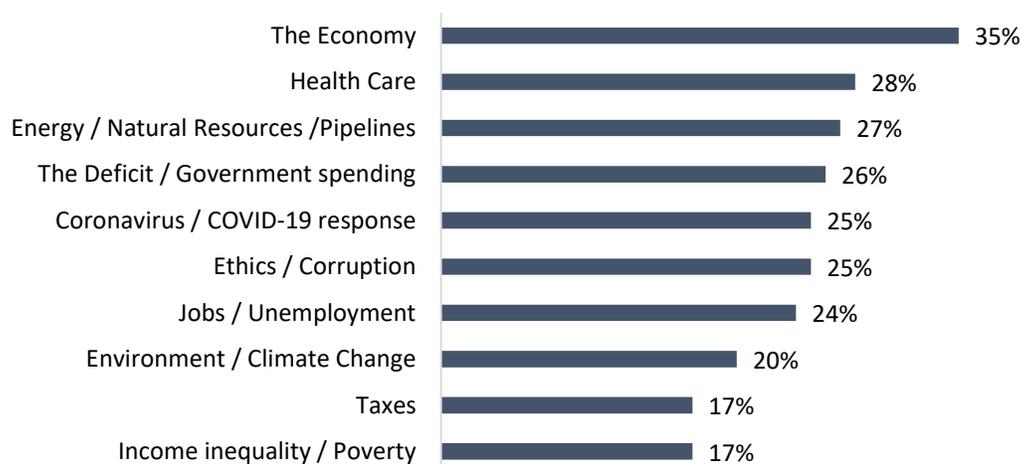
worsened over the past year. More than half of past UCP voters feel this way, alongside 46 per cent of those who supported the NDP:

Financial situation compared to one year ago



Given that only one-quarter of Albertans (24%) expect to be better off a year from now, many seem to be expecting lasting impacts and a longer-term recovery. While economic shocks from COVID-19 are being felt across Canada and the globe, Alberta is facing a concurrent problem in depressed oil prices, which affect it more than most of the rest of the country. Unfortunately for the UCP, the economy is the most likely issue to be picked by Albertans as the one they care about most:

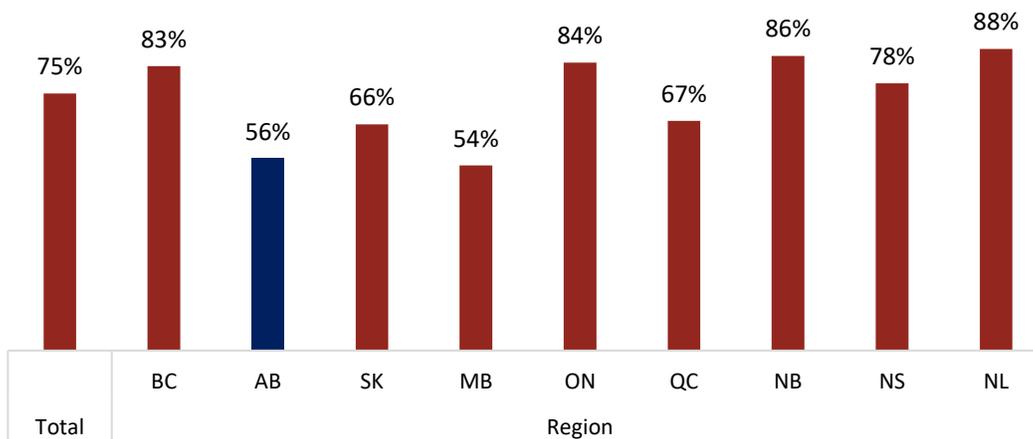
Issues facing Canada that Albertans care about the most (Up to three selected, items with 10% or greater shown)



Government performance on key issues

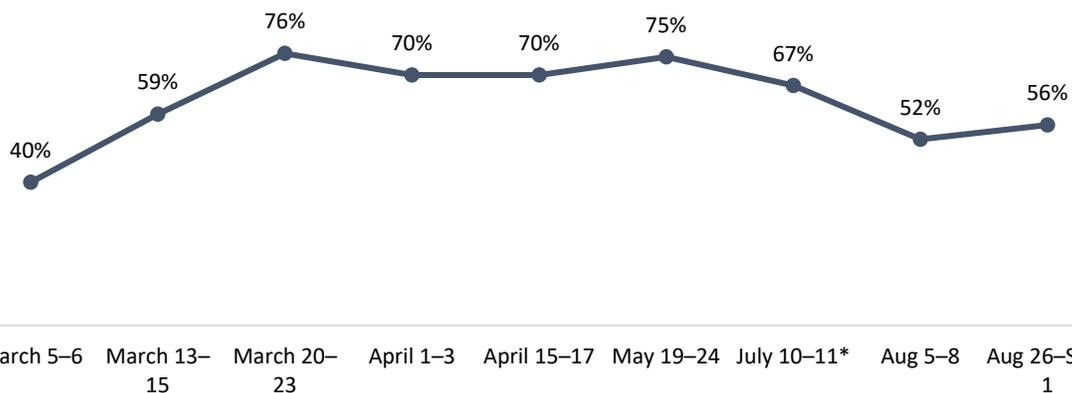
Though a majority of Albertans currently say that their provincial government has handled the COVID-19 pandemic well, it has created a less favourable impression than almost all other provincial governments with their own respective populations:

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



Approval on this file has dropped as the pandemic was worn on. Alberta has the second highest case numbers in the country per capita behind only Quebec:

Percentage of Alberta residents saying their provincial government has done a 'good job' handling COVID-19



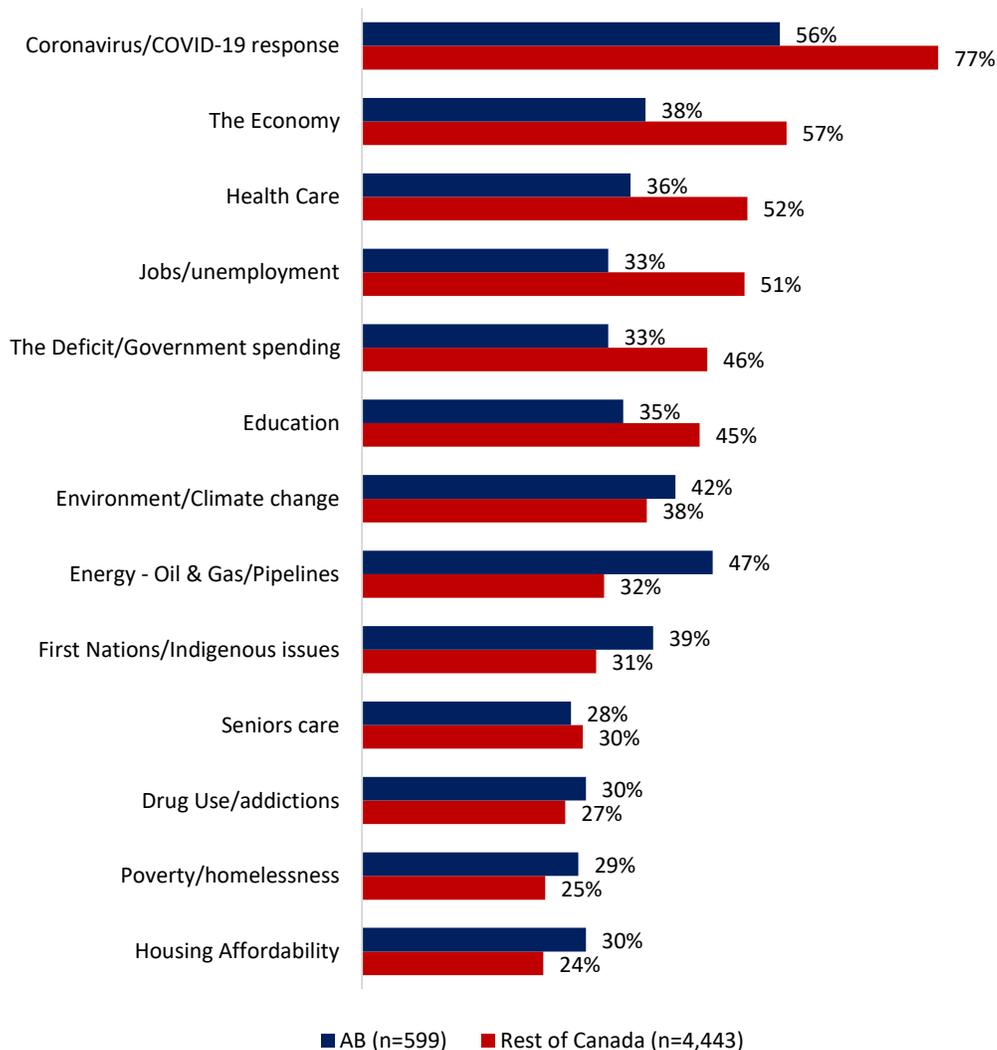
*% represents response for "your provincial premier"

After the economy, health care and the response to COVID-19 are two of the most important issues to Albertans. Impressions of both may be dented by the very public conflict between the Alberta Medical Association and Health Minister Tyler Shandro. Though the tone from both sides has mellowed lately, it

was presumably jarring to many in the province that the relationship between the province’s doctors and the UCP government was overtly hostile while the pandemic ramped up in Alberta.

Another heated debate the conservatives are entangled in is hardly unique to Alberta: when and how to get students safely back to school. Some parents and teachers have protested against a back-to-school plan which they see as lacking in safety and supportive measures. Just over one-third of Albertans approve of their government’s performance on education:

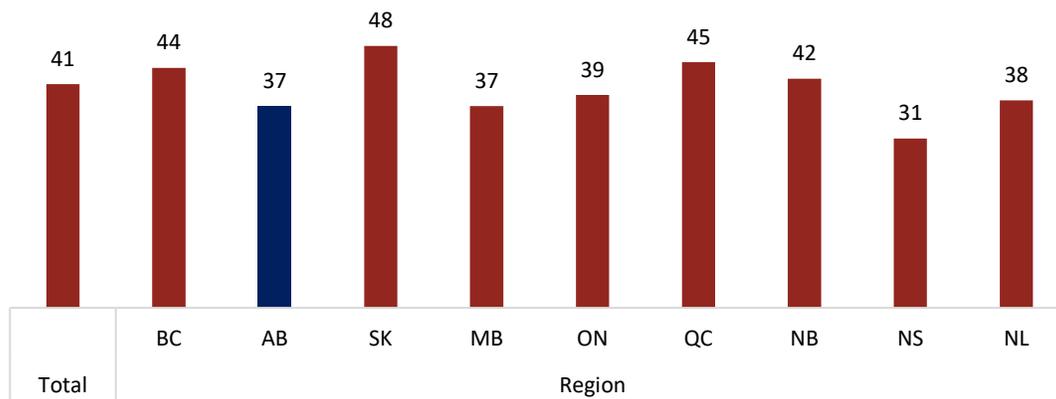
Alberta government performance vs. Rest of Canada



Overall government performance score

All told, perceptions of the UCP’s handling of top issues leaves it ahead only of Nova Scotia in how well it is believed to be addressing the challenges facing the province:

Overall government performance rating



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.

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

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