

## Saskatchewan Election: Voters lean heavily toward re-electing Sask Party, disenchanted by lack of third option

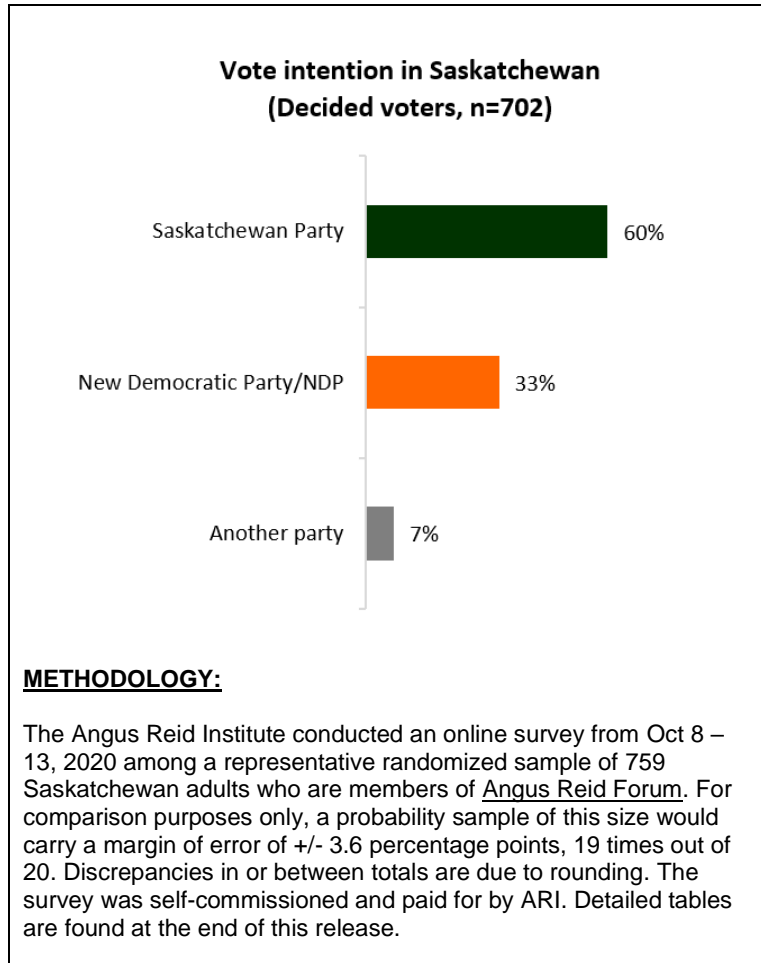
*Premier Scott Moe holds considerable advantage on personal appeal over NDP leader Ryan Meili*

**October 15, 2020** – Advanced voting begins next week in Saskatchewan, with voters heading to the polls to elect their provincial government during a period of immense challenge for many, brought on by the COVID-19 outbreak.

A new study from the non-profit Angus Reid Institute finds residents leaning heavily toward the Saskatchewan Party, which holds a considerable 27-point vote intention advantage over the opposition NDP.

Saskatchewan residents appear to be offering the incumbent government confidence and a new mandate based on both approval of Premier Scott Moe, whose personal appeal nearly doubles that of NDP leader Ryan Meili, 56 per cent to 31 per cent, as well as confidence in key economic issues. The Saskatchewan Party is chosen as best by an overwhelming margin among those who prioritize economic growth, resources, and taxation issues.

There are, however, areas of political dissatisfaction in the province. Half of residents say they would like to see a third alternative, finding a middle ground between the incumbent party and the opposition. Indeed, seven-in-ten (69%) NDP voters feel this way. Further, two-thirds (64%) say the province needs a stronger opposition.



### More Key Findings:

- While voters will be taking advantage of expanded voting options - extended advanced voting and increased mail-in ballots - 43 per cent still say they feel uncomfortable voting in a pandemic.
- The NDP is chosen as best to lead on healthcare by a small margin, 44 per cent to 39 per cent over the Saskatchewan Party. The party is also chosen as best to lead on COVID-19 response by those that prioritize the issue.

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- Younger and older women prioritize healthcare above all issues, while for male voters, economic priorities, such as growth and resources, rise to the top. One-quarter of those between the ages of 18 and 34 say climate change is a top issue.

### **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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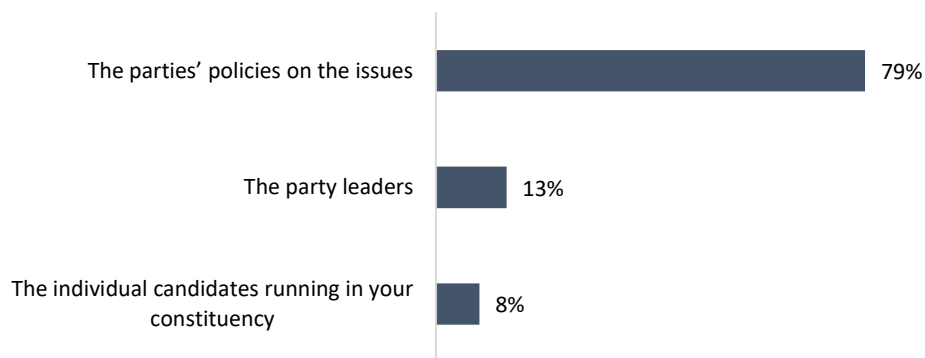
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**Part One: Core campaign issues**

**Policies are paramount**

With less than two weeks until Election Day, and with advanced voting set to start next week, Saskatchewan residents are making their internal calculations ahead of their vote. For four-in-five (79%) this election is about the policy and the party’s stances on the issues.

**As you consider the choices in this election, which of the following considerations is MOST important to you in making up your mind as to who to support?  
(All respondents, n=759)**



**Top issues by age and gender**

If it is indeed the issues that voters are motivated by for this campaign, there are three areas of policy set to define their preferences. Healthcare, economic growth and resources are chosen as the top three by the greatest number of residents. There are, however, notable variations by age and gender.

Younger and older women prioritize healthcare above all else, while for male voters, economic issues like growth, resources, and taxes rise to the top. Notably, one-quarter of those between the ages of 18 and 34 say climate change is a top issue, well outweighing their older peers:

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Most important issues facing Saskatchewan – by age and gender Up to three issues selected by each respondent (Issues receiving 15% or more highlighted)							
	Total (n=759)	Age and Gender					
		Male			Female		
		18-34 (n=113)	35-54 (n=121)	55+ (n=137)	18-34 (n=113)	35-54 (n=121)	55+ (n=153)
Health care	38%	24%	24%	38%	47%	31%	60%
Economic growth	35%	45%	43%	39%	22%	34%	29%
Resource issues – oil & gas	28%	33%	28%	41%	14%	25%	24%
Education/ Schools	22%	13%	19%	10%	44%	26%	20%
Taxes	21%	28%	26%	24%	13%	13%	19%
Government finances/Deficit	20%	16%	24%	26%	7%	23%	20%
Crime and safety	19%	21%	23%	18%	14%	22%	19%
The COVID-19 response	19%	20%	16%	15%	20%	23%	18%
Climate change/ Environment	17%	27%	14%	18%	26%	10%	12%
Unemployment/ Jobs	17%	15%	28%	18%	13%	20%	11%
Poverty/ Homelessness	15%	7%	9%	6%	25%	19%	21%

### **Regional priorities**

Regionally, Saskatchewanians are relatively unified in what they see as the top issues facing the province. Healthcare dominated in all areas of the province. That said, resources hold an elevated importance outside of the two major urban centres:

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Most important issues facing Saskatchewan – by region Up to three issues selected by each respondent				
	Total (n=759)	Region		
		Greater Regina (n=201)	Greater Saskatoon (n=177)	Rest of Saskatchewan (n=381)
Health care	38%	39%	38%	38%
Economic growth	35%	34%	31%	38%
Resource issues – oil & gas	28%	22%	18%	34%
Education/Schools	22%	21%	22%	21%
Taxes	21%	24%	21%	19%
Government finances/Deficit	20%	28%	19%	16%
Crime and safety	19%	12%	25%	20%
The COVID-19 response	19%	24%	23%	15%
Climate change/Environment	17%	17%	18%	17%
Unemployment/Jobs	17%	16%	20%	17%
Poverty/Homelessness	15%	13%	20%	13%

### **Sask Party dominates on economic issues, NDP favoured on healthcare, COVID-19**

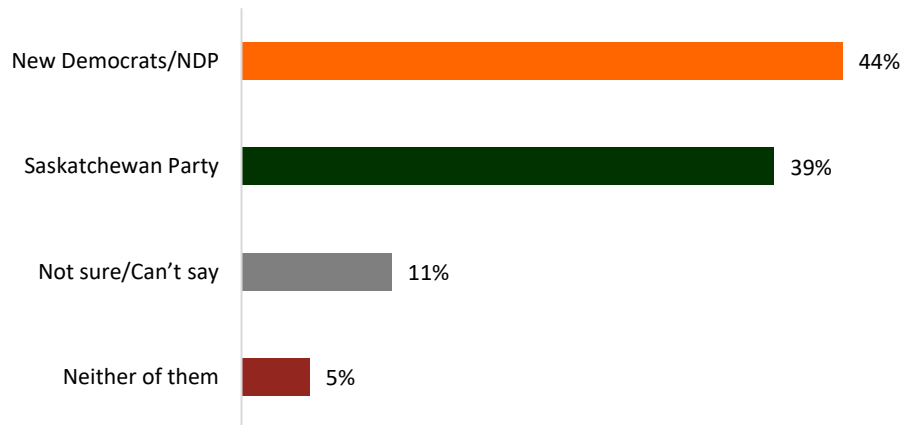
So which parties perform best on which issues?

The Saskatchewan NDP leads on the issue that is of highest concern to residents – healthcare. Here, more than two-in-five (44%) choose Ryan Meili’s party as best to govern by a small margin.

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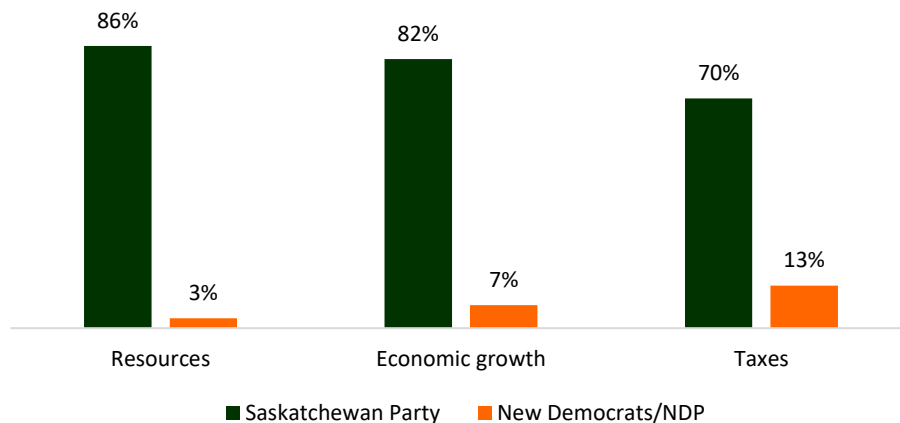
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**Which party would be best to lead on healthcare?  
(Among those who chose it as a top issue, 38%, n=290)**



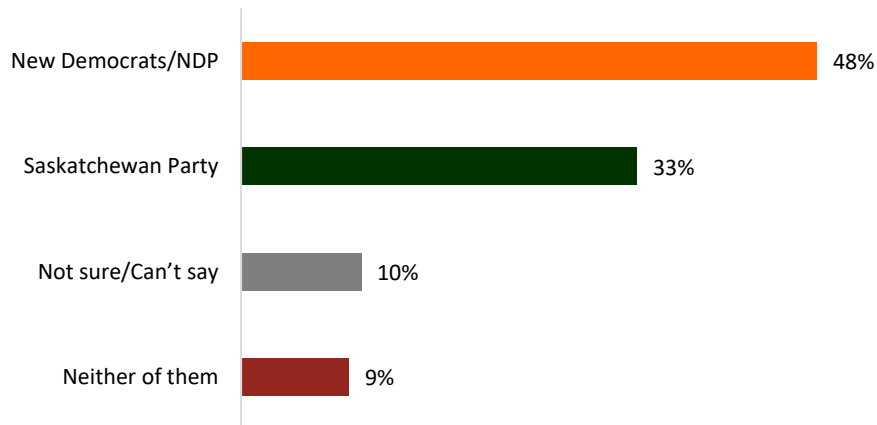
That said, the NDP's small advantage on this key issue is dwarfed by the preference for the Saskatchewan Party on economic issues. On resources, economic growth, and taxes, Scott Moe's party distinguishes itself with a massive advantage:

**Which party would be best to lead on each of the following:  
(Among those who chose it as a top issue)**



Notably, while it is only a core issue for one-in-five potential voters, the NDP is trusted as best to lead on the COVID-19 response.

**Which party would be best to lead on COVID-19 response?  
(Among those who chose it as a top issue, n=142)**

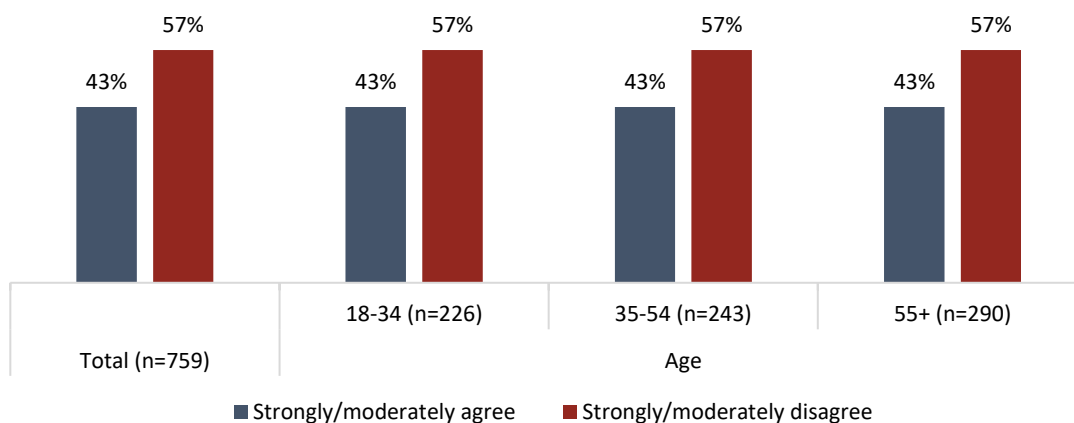


**Part Two: Voter sentiments and leadership**

**Voting during the pandemic**

Elections Saskatchewan has set out to make voting as easy and safe as possible, with expanded early voting and mail-in ballots. This appears to be of utmost importance as all residents share concerns about voting during a pandemic. Across all generations, two-in-five (43%) say they are concerned about voting during the COVID-19 outbreak:

**Agree vs disagree:  
"I am concerned about voting in person during the COVID-19 pandemic"**

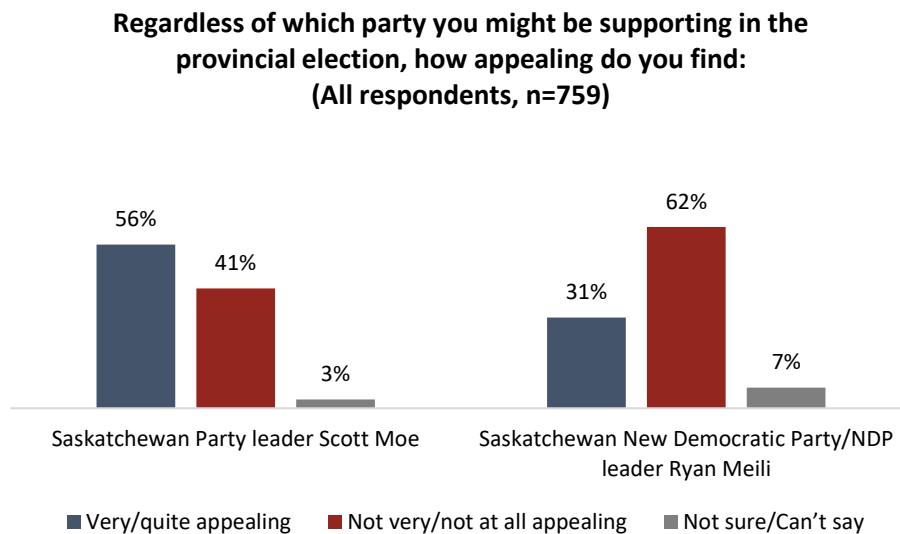


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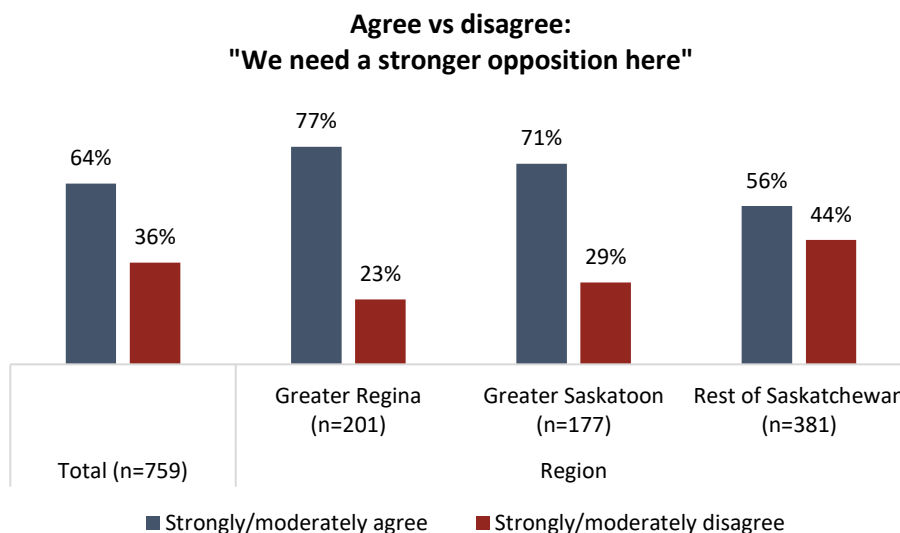
**Moe most appealing by a wide margin**

When they do go to cast their ballots, whether through the mail or in person, many are informed by their opinion of the two party leaders. This is a place where Premier Scott Moe holds an immense advantage. More than half of residents find the incumbent appealing (56%) compared to just 31 per cent who say the same of NDP leader Ryan Meili:



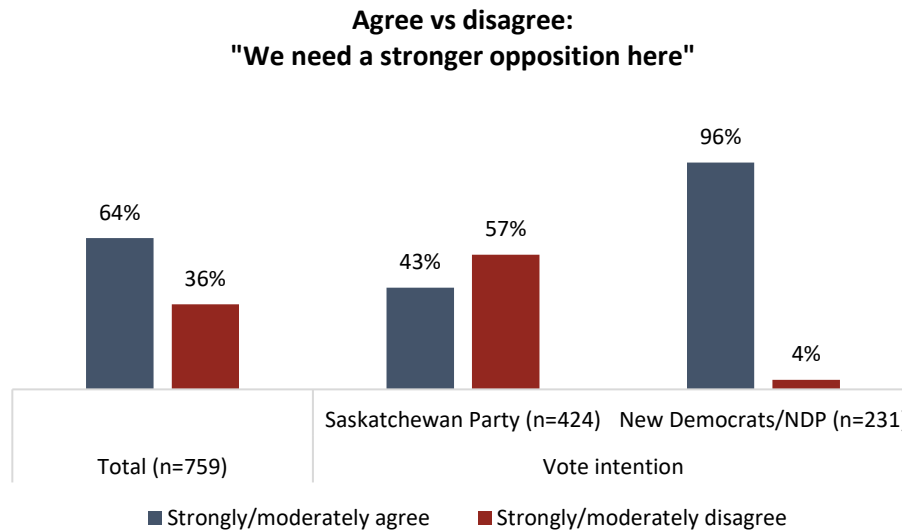
**Two-thirds say Saskatchewan needs a strong opposition**

Despite Moe's personal appeal and overall advantages in the election, there is an undercurrent in Saskatchewan politics to consider for the future. Two-thirds of residents say that the province needs a stronger opposition party. This sentiment is even higher in the province's urban centres:



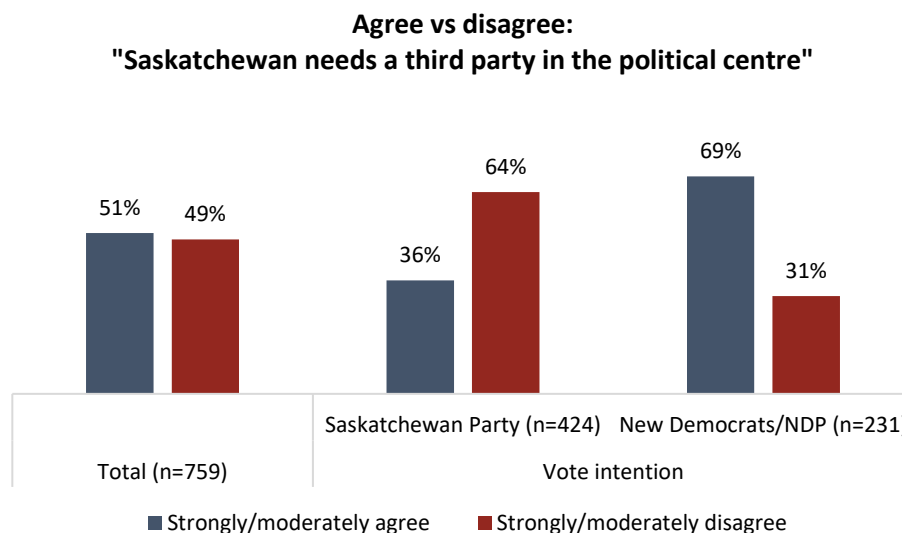


Perhaps most notably here is that two-in-five Saskatchewan Party voters, despite voting for the incumbent party to return to power, would also like to see a stronger opposition:



### Half want an alternative between NDP and Incumbents

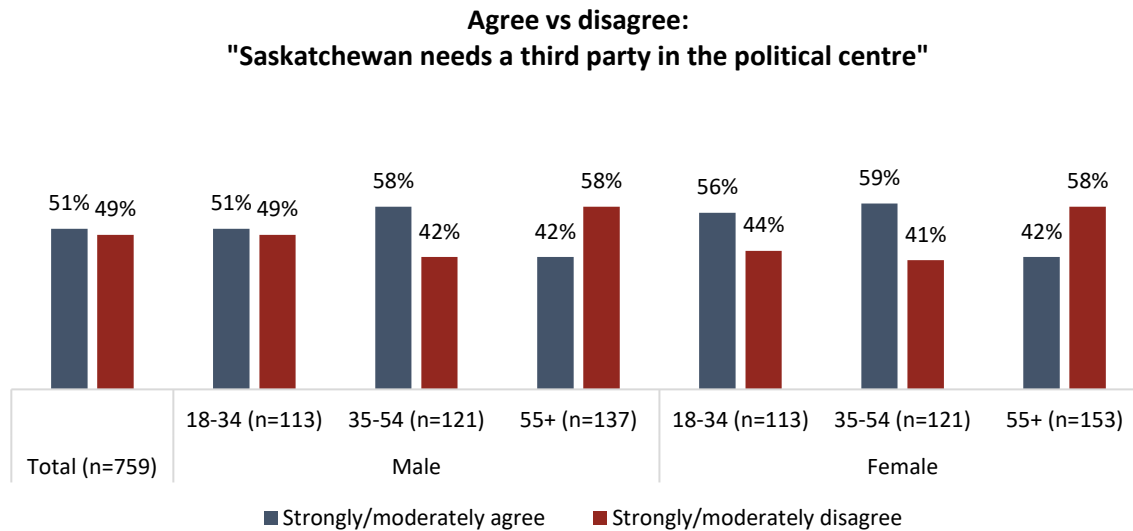
This suggests that among many residents there is an underlying dissatisfaction with the party alternatives, or at least the lack of options available. The Angus Reid Institute asked residents if they felt that a third party, located in the centre of the more conservative Saskatchewan Party and the left-leaning NDP would be a viable option. For half (51%) this would be a welcome development. More than one-in-three Saskatchewan Party voters would like to see a third party, as would seven-in-ten who plan to support the NDP:



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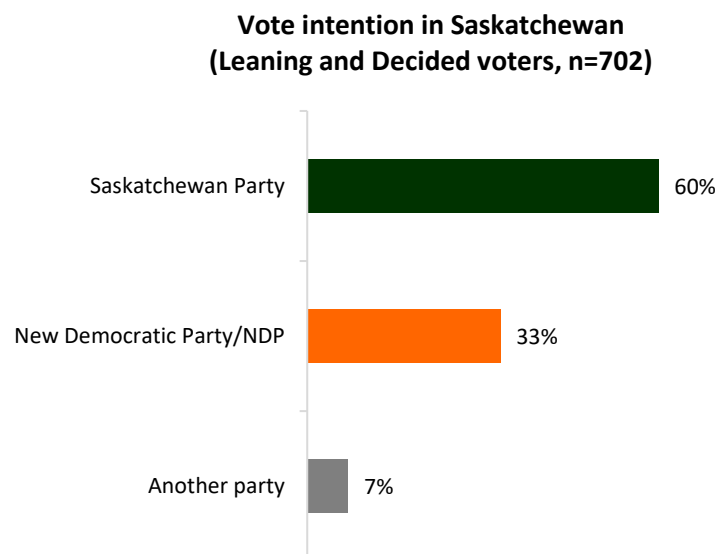
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Older residents tend to disagree with this notion, though it is supported by a majority of those under the age of 55 across both genders:



### Part Three: Vote intention

The Saskatchewan Party looks positioned for a relatively smooth course to maintaining its majority government on October 26. Among decided voters, 60 per cent say they will support that party, while one-in-three intend on supporting the Saskatchewan NDP:

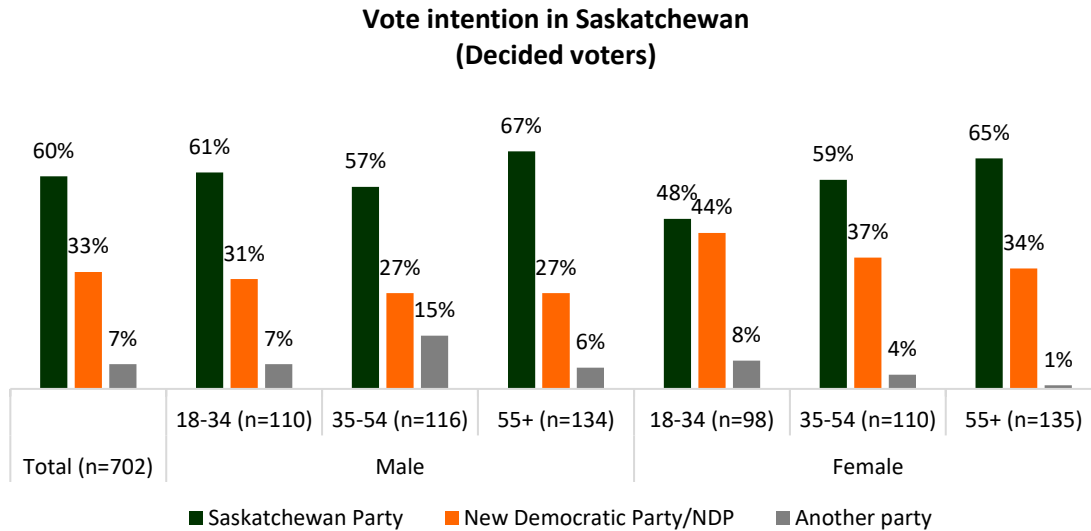


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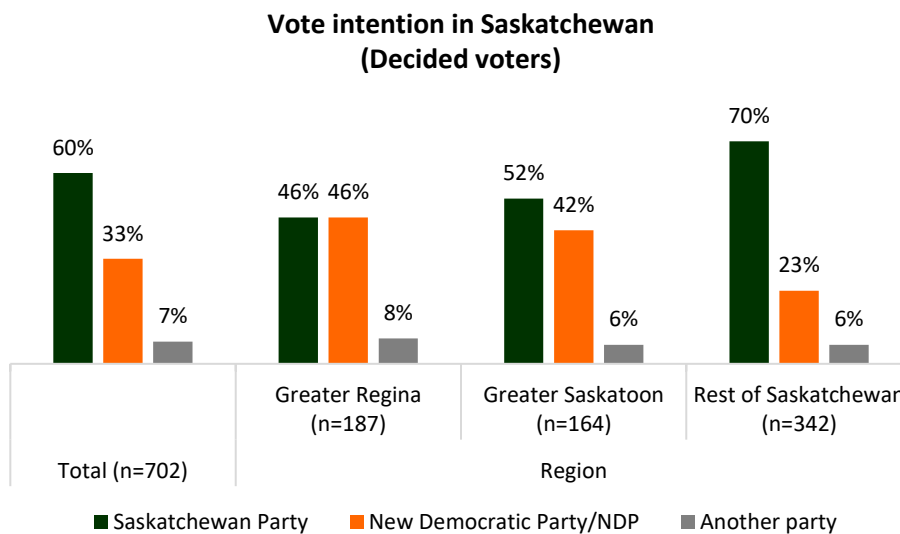
**Age and gender**

Young women are most likely to prefer the opposition in this election, but even among that group the Saskatchewan Party holds a small advantage. The NDP trails by 31 points among older women and 40 points among older men:



**Region**

The regional story is more competitive than the overall picture. In Regina, vote intention is even, with 46 per cent supporting each party. In Saskatoon, the advantage for the Saskatchewan Party is just 10 points, while outside of those two centres the party leads by nearly 50 points:



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

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