

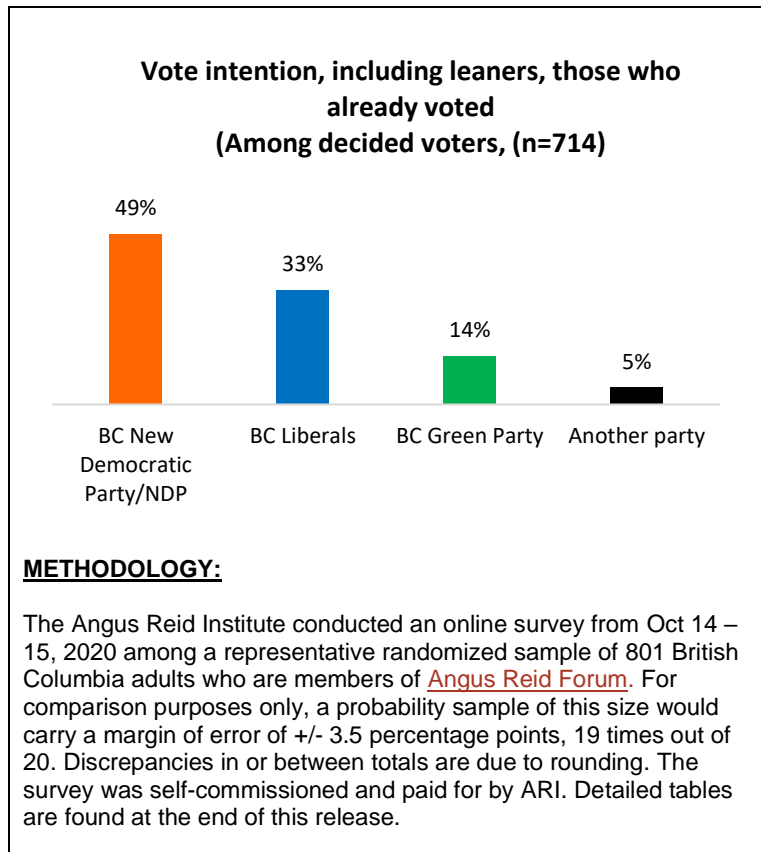
NDP holds lead in BC campaign; voters divided between picking the party they want, blocking the party they don't

NDP maintains comfortable lead; BC Greens may be the party to watch in final week

Friday, October 16, 2020 – As British Columbians weigh in on the only televised debate in the BC election campaign, the latest public opinion survey from the non-profit Angus Reid Institute suggests the story of a play in three acts.

The first, a frontrunner with the most to lose who appears to have emerged unscathed after an unsteady performance on a key question. The second, a political underdog who did not find a much-needed breakthrough with voters. And finally, a relatively unknown candidate whose introduction to the electorate is resulting in personal admiration, but crucially, no surge in vote intention.

Beyond the debate, these new data reveal an electorate hardly enthralled by the options available to them. As the province enters this last week of the campaign, voters are motivated equally by blocking the party they dislike (52%) versus a party they truly support (48%).



With a week to go before the final day of voting on October 24, the BC NDP continues to hold a double-digit lead (49%) over the second-place BC Liberals (33%). The Greens, at 14 per cent, remain stuck in third place with a less committed vote base than the other parties. However, with the Green leader's momentum surging, it is worth noting the party is the most common second choice for voters who have not yet locked in their choice.

More Key Findings:

- Among those who saw the debate or read about it and watched clips afterward, NDP leader John Horgan was chosen as having performed best by the largest number (29%). Green Party leader Sonia Furstenau was seen as best by 23 per cent, while 15 per cent chose Andrew Wilkinson, the leader of the BC Liberals.
- John Horgan continues to be most appealing to voters. More than half of potential voters view Horgan this way (54%) compared to 46 per cent for Furstenau and just 24 per cent for Wilkinson.

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- Half of voters say they will support the BC NDP (49%) while one-in-three will vote for the BC Liberals (33%). Despite BC Green leader Sonia Furstenu's strong showing Tuesday night, just 14 per cent say they will vote for her party, unchanged from before the debate.

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 One: Who won the debate?

As with everything defined and affected by the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, this fall's provincial election campaign has been like no other. So far, Elections BC has sent out roughly 700,000 vote-by-mail packages. The silence from the lack of big political rallies has been deafening and candidates have largely avoided the door-to-door campaign canvassing that has been a staple of the electoral process for decades.

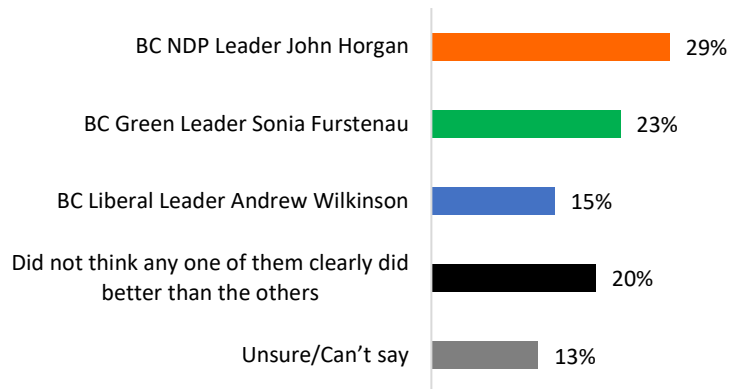
In the absence of all this, the only televised leaders' debate, produced by the BC Broadcast Consortium, became a key focal point. Hundreds of thousands watched the entire program live in real time, watched sections online or on social media, or read or heard news coverage about it after the fact. Among this group, three-in-ten say NDP leader John Horgan performed the best, followed by nearly one-quarter who said it was BC Green leader Sonia Furstenu.

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Overall, which candidate do you think performed best in the debate?

(Among those that followed the debate, n=577)



The result is of note, given that Horgan spent the better part of 36 hours immediately following the debate [apologizing for, and trying to reframe](#) a widely-criticized answer to a key question on unconscious bias and privilege asked of all three leaders.

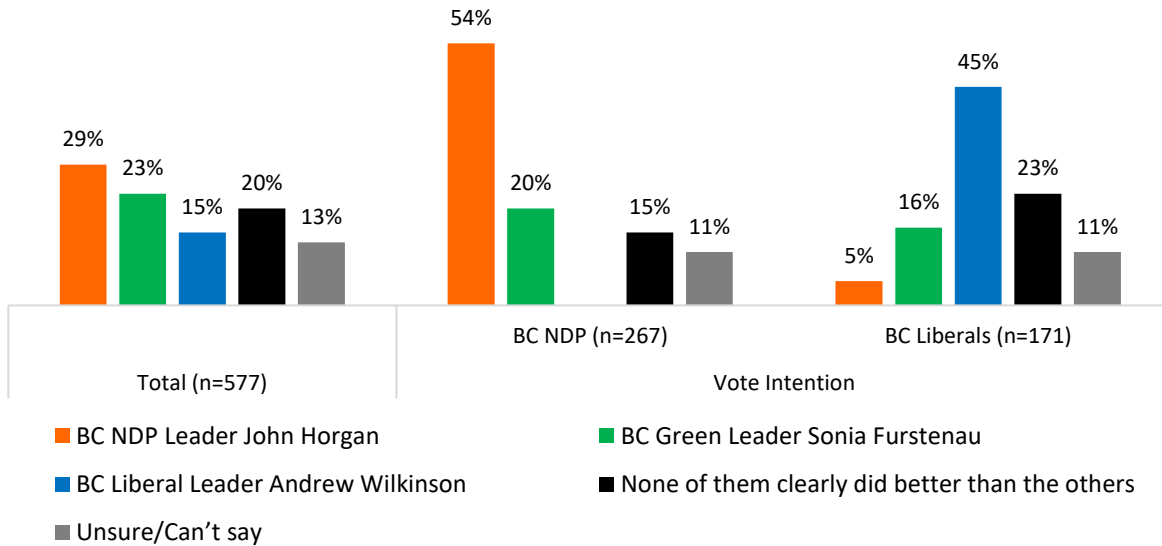
Also of note: the relatively tough grades meted out by supporters of the two main parties – the NDP and the BC Liberals – to their own leaders. While just over half of declared NDP supporters were of the view Horgan won the debate – almost as many gave the victory to the Green’s Furstenau (20%), “none of the above” (15%) or weren’t sure (10%).

The endorsement of BC Liberal leader Andrew Wilkinson by Liberal supporters themselves was even more milquetoast. Fewer than half thought he won the debate, while the rest similarly offered praise to Furstenau (16%), Horgan (5%) or declined to pick an individual winner (note that the sample size for Green Party voters is too small to analyze their responses to this question in detail):

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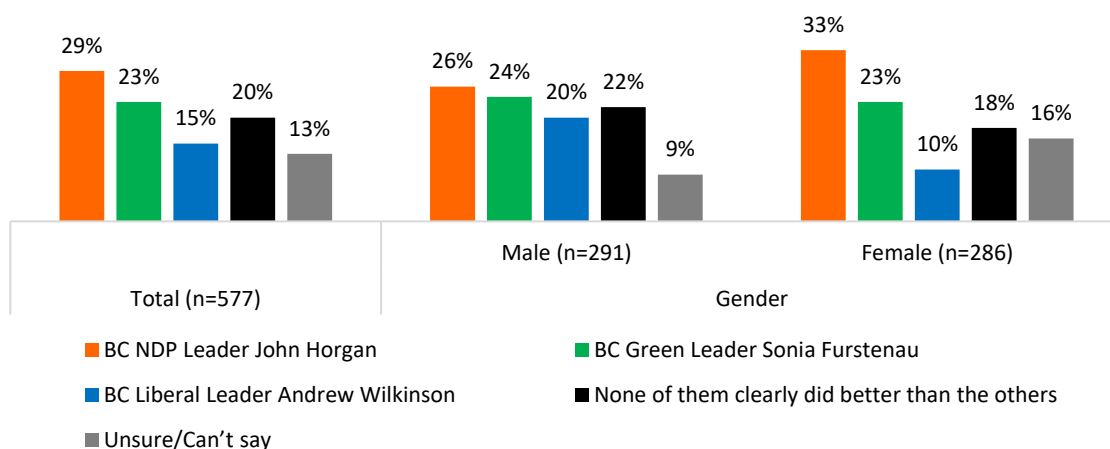
**Overall, which candidate do you think performed best in the debate?
(Among those that followed the debate n=577*)**



**due to small sample sizes, detailed analysis among Green supporters on this question is not included*

Men who watched the debate are divided almost evenly over which of the three candidates did best, while women give the advantage to John Horgan, with Sonia Furstenau also chosen by one-quarter (23%):

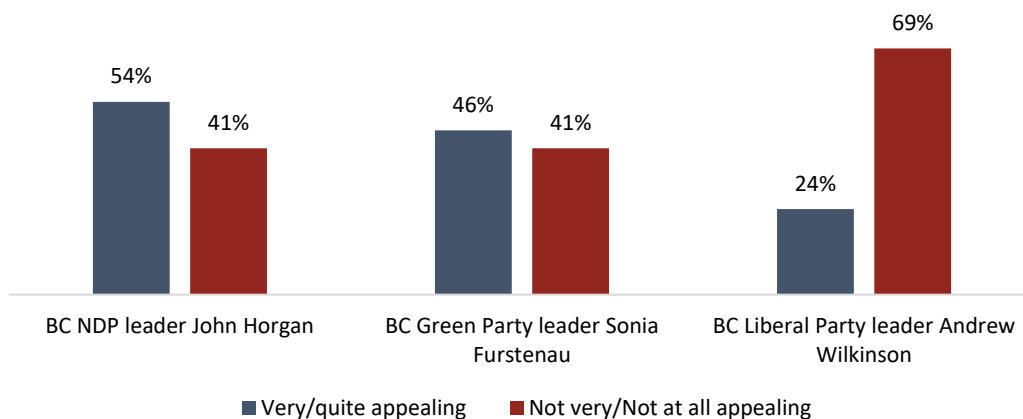
**Overall, which candidate do you think performed best in the debate?
(Among those that followed the debate)**



Part Two: Leader Appeal and Momentum

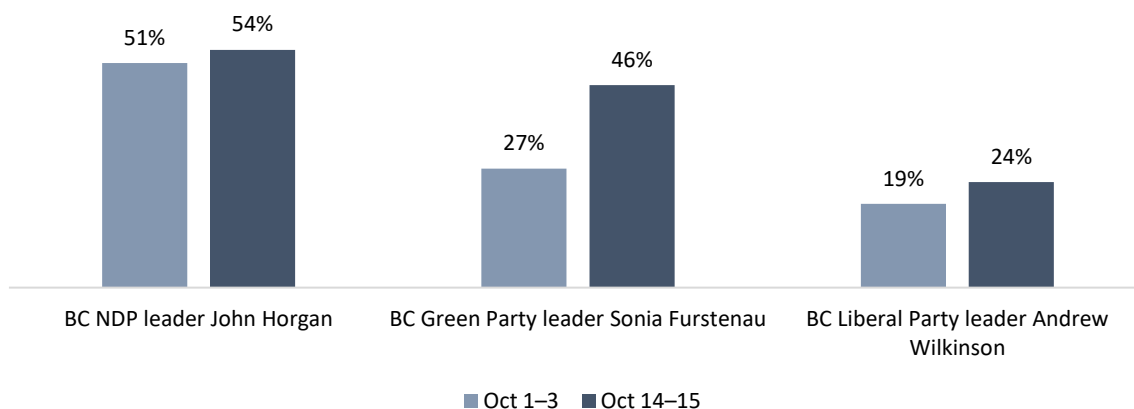
While the debate was likely informative and helpful for many, the appeal of each leader also tells an important story. The narrative for the BC Liberals is particularly damaging. Just one-quarter of British Columbians say they find Andrew Wilkinson appealing, half as many as who say the same of Sonia Furstenau, and far fewer than John Horgan.

**Regardless of which party you might be supporting in the provincial election, how appealing do you find each of the following people?
(All respondents, n=801)**

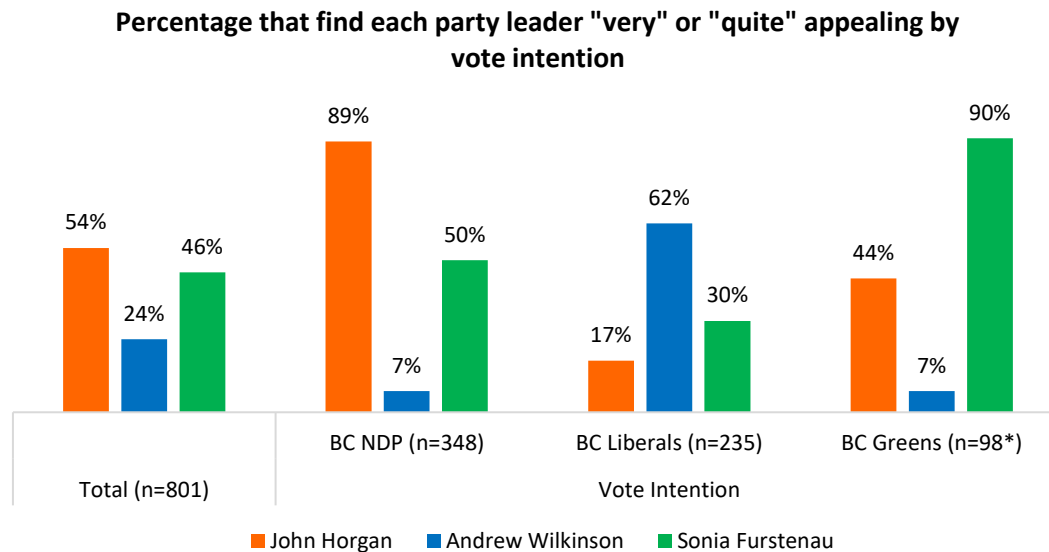


While British Columbians have softened towards all of the main party leaders over the last two weeks, the overall appeal of Horgan and Wilkinson is largely unchanged since before the televised debate. By contrast, Furstenau has made a significantly better impression on voters:

Percentage that find each party leader "very" or "quite" appealing over time

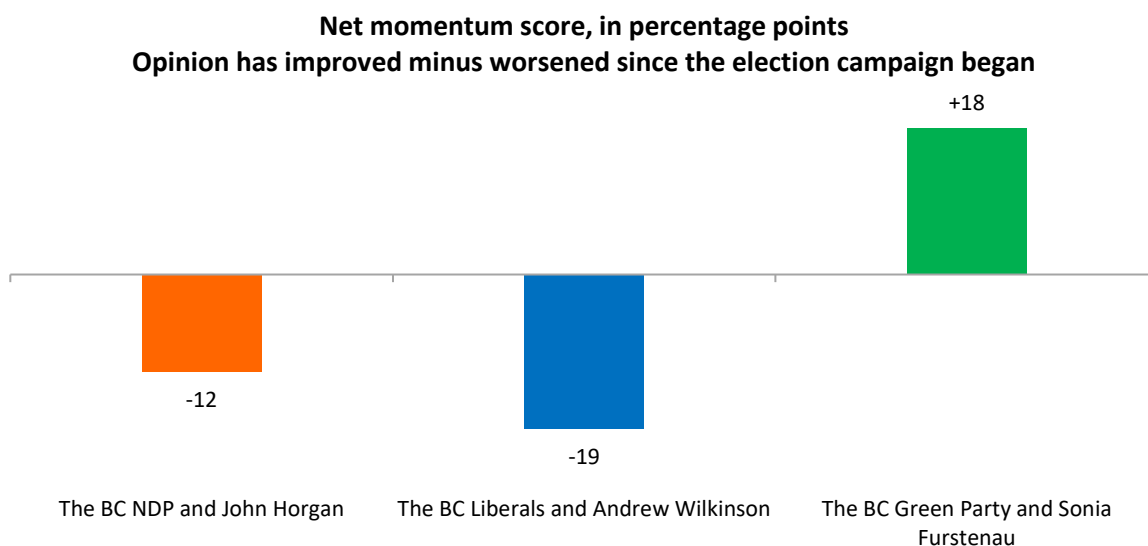


Wilkinson also faces the challenge of improving his standing among his party's base. Just three-in-five BC Liberal voters (62%) say he appeals to them. For comparison, nine-in-ten among the BC NDP and Green Party view their own respective party leaders this way:



** indicates small sample size, interpret with caution*

British Columbians also say their opinions of Furstenau have improved overall since the beginning of the campaign. To facilitate easier comparisons, the Angus Reid Institute uses a simple "momentum score" by subtracting the number reporting a deteriorated opinion of a leader since September 21 from those reporting an improved opinion of the main leaders. Only impressions of Furstenau have changed comprehensively for the better:



Part Three: Vote Dynamics and Intention

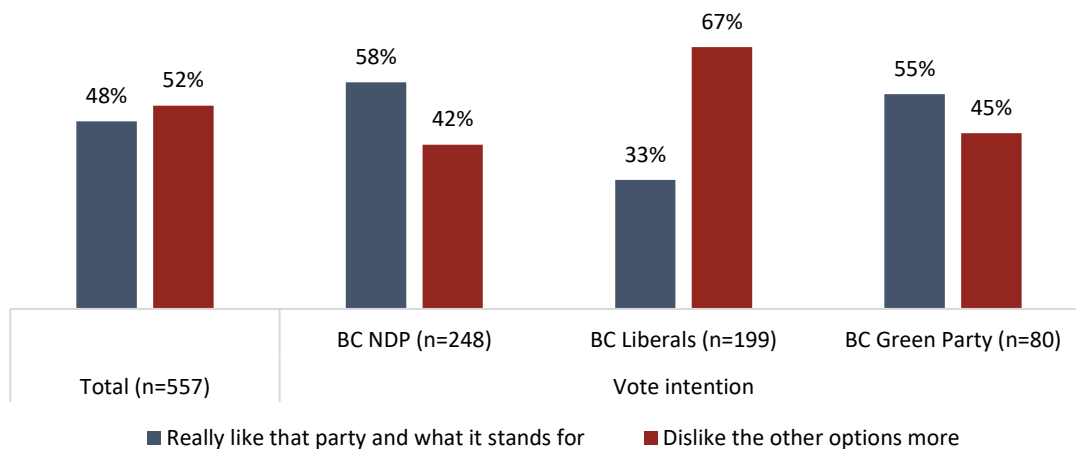
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Support a party for what they stand for vs dislike others

Many British Columbians have looked at the slate of options available to them in this election with disappointment. Overall, half of residents say they are ultimately voting for one party because they dislike the others more, not because they are overly drawn to their chosen party. This sentiment reaches two-thirds among BC Liberals and drops closer to two-in-five among the other two major party's voters:

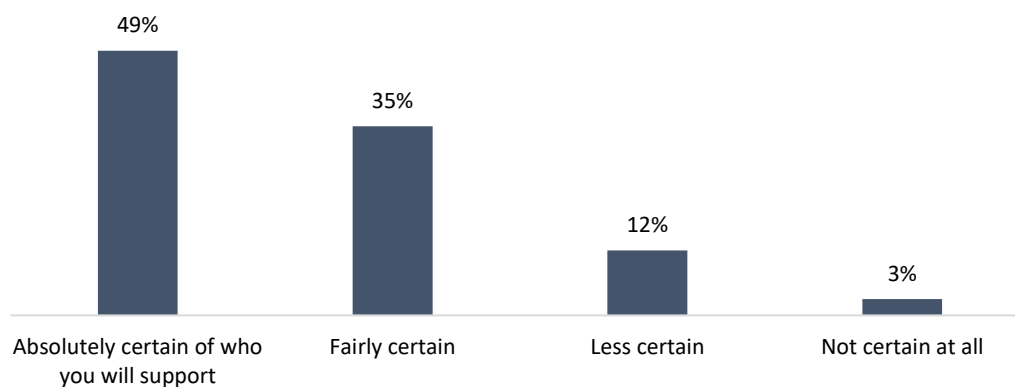
**Thinking of the party you are currently supporting, would you say you...
(Among those who have a party preference and have not voted)**



Vote dynamics

As the campaign moves along, more British Columbians are locking in their choices. The proportion of those saying they are absolutely certain who they will vote for has increased from 41 per cent to 49 per cent over the past two weeks, though half of the electorate remains less certain:

**How certain are you about which party you will support?
(Among those who have a party preference and have not voted, n=557)**



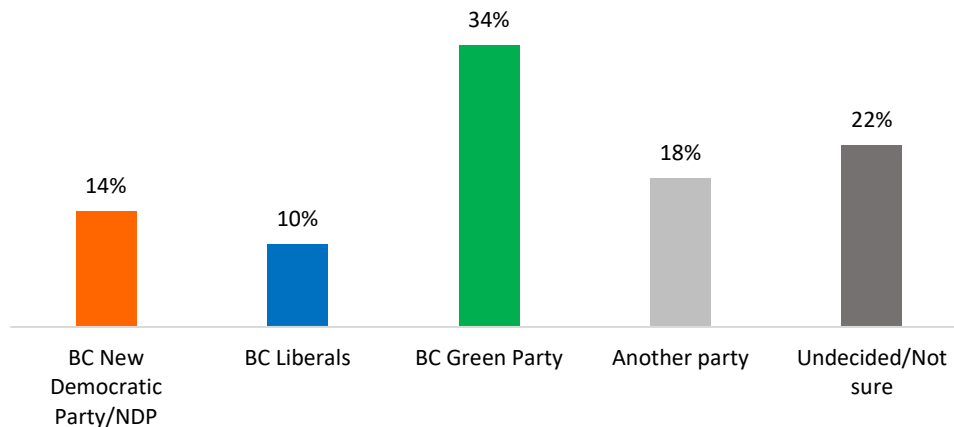
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Second choice

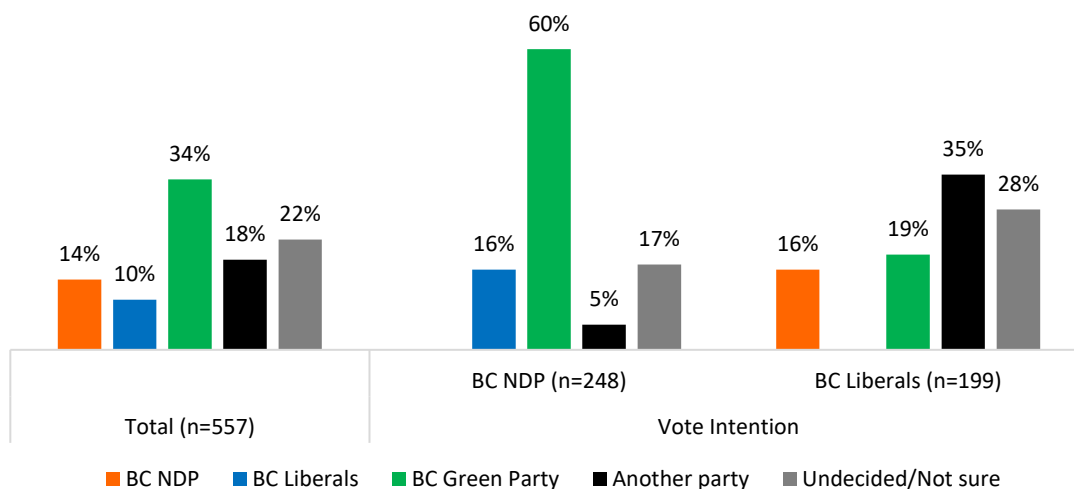
The Green Party held the balance of power during the previous government, having been in a Confidence and Supply Agreement with the BC NDP since 2017. In third place when it comes to voters' first choice, the Greens loom large as most popular second choice by a significant margin. One-in-three voters (34%) say they would support the Greens if they couldn't cast a ballot for the party they are leaning towards:

**Which party would be your second choice?
(Have a party preference and have not voted, n=557)**



The challenge for Sonia Furstenau and the Green Party is clear over the final week – convince BC NDP supporters to shift their allegiance. Three-in-five whose first choice is John Horgan's party say they would vote for the Greens as their backup:

**Which party would be your second choice?
(Have a party preference and have not voted)**



Vote intent

With the backing of half of British Columbians (49%), the BC NDP enjoys a 16-point lead in voter support over the BC Liberals (33%). Much of this is built on the party’s strength in Metro Vancouver, where 60 per cent of residents say they will vote for the incumbents.

The BC Green Party is preferred by 14 per cent of voters, with less support in the Fraser Valley (9%) and more (22%) in the Island and North Coast region.

B.C. Vote Intention, including leaners/already voted, decided voters only:					
	Total (n=714)	Region			
		Metro Vancouver (n=240)	Lower Mainland/ Fraser Valley (n=181)	The Interior (n=144)	Island/ North Coast (n=150)
BC New Democratic Party/NDP	49%	60%	43%	39%	49%
BC Liberals	33%	24%	42%	43%	25%
BC Green Party	14%	14%	9%	13%	22%
Another party	5%	2%	7%	5%	4%

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There are notable demographic differences as well. Men aged 35-54 (35%) are less likely than the rest of the population to support the NDP. However, women of the same age are *more* likely to support them. The inverse is true of the Liberals, who have the support of nearly half (46%) of men aged 35-54, but only one-quarter (23%) of women that age.

The Greens are slightly less popular with men 55 and older, with one-in-ten planning to vote for them. By contrast, one-quarter of women aged 18-34 support the Greens, nearly twice the overall average.

B.C. Vote Intention, including leaners/already voted, decided voters only:							
	Total (n=714)	Age and Gender					
		Male			Female		
		18-34 (n=104)	35-54 (n=123)	55+ (n=145)	18-34 (n=99)	35-54 (n=103)	55+ (n=139)
BC New Democratic Party/NDP	49%	51%	35%	45%	50%	58%	56%
BC Liberals	33%	32%	46%	41%	23%	23%	28%
BC Green Party	14%	13%	12%	10%	25%	12%	12%
Another party	5%	4%	7%	4%	2%	7%	4%

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

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