

BC and National Electoral Reform

As you might know, this fall there will be a referendum in British Columbia regarding the way MLA's are elected in the province. We'd like your views about this.

[BALLOT INTRO SCREEN]

According to Elections BC, registered voters will get a voting package in the mail between October 22 and November 2.

The text of the first question will be as follows:

Which should British Columbia use for elections to the Legislative Assembly?
(Vote for only one.)

- The current First Past the Post voting system
- A proportional representation voting system

Q1. Based on how you feel right now, if you were to receive a voting package, which way would you vote on the first question? Would you choose:

The current First Past the Post voting system
A proportional representation voting system
Undecided/Not sure
Would not vote on this particular question
Would ignore the voting package altogether

[BALLOT INTRO SCREEN 2]

The text of the second question will be as follows:

If British Columbia adopts a proportional representation voting system, which of the following voting systems do you prefer? (Vote for the voting systems you wish to support by ranking them in order of preference. You may choose to support one, two or all three of the systems.)

- Dual Member Proportional (DMP)
- Mixed Member Proportional (MMP)
- Rural-Urban PR

[DO NOT ASK THOSE WHO WOULD "IGNORE THE VOTING PACKAGE ALTOGHETHER" in Q1]

Q2. Based on how you feel right now, if you were to receive a voting package, how would you vote on this second question?

Rank your preferred systems in order from 1 to 3, keeping in mind that you are not required to indicate a second or third choice, or to respond to the question at all.

[RANK ORDER – ALLOW UP TO 3 RANKS, BUT ACCEPT FEWER]

Dual Member Proportional
 Mixed Member Proportional
 Rural-Urban PR
 [EXCLUSIVE]Undecided/Not sure
 [EXCLUSIVE]Would not vote on this particular question

Q3. Thinking more generally about the referendum, how much attention would you say you have been paying to it? Have you been ...

Seeing a lot of media coverage and discussing it with friends and family
 Seeing some coverage and having the odd conversation
 Just scanning the headlines
 Haven't seen or heard anything about it except for in this survey

[stand alone screen – show to all]

Broadly speaking, there are two options for British Columbia's electoral system:

B.C. could keep the current system, called First Past the Post (FPTP), in which political parties run one candidate per riding and voters in that riding cast one vote for the candidate they like best. The candidate with the most votes – even if it's less than 50 per cent of the total number of votes cast – wins the riding. It also means a single political party that receives less than 50 per cent of the popular vote could form government.

Alternatively, B.C. could adopt a new system that allocates seats in the legislature roughly in proportion to the total number of votes a party receives, meaning a party that received 30 per cent of the popular vote would also win approximately 30 per cent of the seats. Systems that do this are called, collectively, proportional representation (PR) systems.

[ASK ONLY THOSE UNDECIDED AT Q1 AND/OR Q2]

Q4. You've indicated you're not sure how you plan to vote on at least one of the questions in the referendum. Given that there are ten weeks before the deadline, how likely are you to actually vote by completing and mailing back your ballot in time? Would you say you:

Probably won't vote
 Might vote if the campaign really gets your interest
 Will probably vote
 Are 100% certain you will vote

[exclude those who say they haven't seen or heard anything in Q1]

Q5. Regardless of your own vote, and thinking about what you've seen, read or heard about these arguments – would you say you have...

[ROTATE]

Seen more messages in favour of keeping the current FPTP system

Seen more messages in favour of changing to a PR system

[FIX] Seen equal amounts of messaging from both sides

[FIX] note sure/can't really say

Q6. [ASK THOSE WHO INDICATED A VOTING PREFERENCE ON Q1]

You've already indicated your preference for first past the post or proportional representation, but how certain are you regarding your choice?

Very Certain – There's no way I will change my mind

Fairly Certain – I know how I'll vote, but there's still a chance I could change my mind

Uncertain – I'm not locked in, I could definitely change my mind

[Skip those who say " would ignore the voting package altogether" in q1]

Q7. The voting period lasts from October 22 to November 30. When do you think you'll most likely complete and mail in your ballot?

As soon as I get my ballot

I plan to wait a while but send it in well before the voting deadline

I'm going to wait until the end

Q8. How do you currently receive your mail at home? Is it:

Delivered to my door

At a central mailbox in the lobby of my apartment/condo

At a community mailbox in my neighbourhood

Other

I don't receive mail at home

Q9. How much do you use the mail? Let's say in an average month – and not during the Christmas season – how many individual pieces (letters/cards/small parcels) would you yourself buy postage for and send out in the mail?

None/Almost none/Very rarely

Less than one a month

2-4 times a month

5-9 times a month

10 or more pieces of mail a month

Q10. Do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements?

[ROWS – RANDOMIZE]

A system that more closely reflects the parties' actual popular support would increase voter turnout

I don't like the idea of British Columbia having more minority and/or coalition governments

This referendum is low priority to me, there are more important issues facing BC today

It's important to have this referendum before making a major change to the electoral system

[COLUMNS]

Strongly Disagree
Moderately Disagree
Moderately Agree
Strongly Agree
Not sure/Can't say

[RANDOMIZE PRESENTATION OF Q10 AND Q11]

Q11. Suppose B.C. voters choose to keep the current First Past the Post system. If that were the case, would you be:

Very pleased
Moderately pleased
Neutral
Moderately upset
Very upset

Q12. Suppose BC voters choose to change to a new system to proportional representation. If that were the case, would you be:

Very pleased
Moderately pleased
Neutral
Moderately upset
Very upset

Q13. Which party's candidate did you vote for in the last provincial election, held in May 2017?

[RANDOMIZE LIBERALS AND NDP]
[ANCHOR]I did not vote
BC Liberal Party
BC New Democratic Party (NDP)
[ANCHOR]BC Green Party
[ANCHOR]Other party
[ANCHOR]Rather not say

Changing topics now, we have some questions about the voting system in your province. By "voting system," we mean things like how the ballot works, how votes are counted to decide who forms government, and whether it's a majority or a minority government.

Q14. Broadly speaking, there are two options for your province's voting system:

Your province could keep the current system, called First Past the Post (FPTP), in which political parties run one candidate per riding and voters in that riding cast one vote for the candidate they like best. The

candidate with the most votes – even if it's less than 50 per cent of the total number of votes cast – wins the riding. It also means a single political party that receives less than 50 per cent of the popular vote could form government.

Alternatively, your province could adopt a new system that allocates seats in the legislature roughly in proportion to the total number of votes a party receives, meaning a party that received 30 per cent of the popular vote would also win approximately 30 per cent of the seats. Systems that do this are called, collectively, proportional representation (PR) systems.

Based on what you know, please indicate which of these two broad options you would prefer for your province:

The current First Past the Post system
A new system of Proportional Representation

Q15. Do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements?

[ROWS – RANDOMIZE]

A system that more closely reflects the parties' actual popular support would increase voter turnout
I don't like the idea of my province having more minority and/or coalition governments
It's important to have a referendum before making a major change to the voting system

[COLUMNS]

Strongly Disagree
Moderately Disagree
Moderately Agree
Strongly Agree
Not sure/Can't say

Q16. Over the years, some provinces have discussed the possibility of changing their voting systems. We'd like to know how you feel about changing the voting system in **your province**. Do you ...

Strongly favor **keeping** the current system
Moderately favor **keeping** the current system
Undecided/Don't really care either way
Moderately favor **changing** to a different system
Strongly favor **changing** to a different system

Q17. Putting this another way, how much of a priority do you personally consider changing your province's voting system to be? Would you say it is a ...

Very high priority
High priority
Lower priority
Very low priority