

BC Election: New Democrats seen as best on health and social issues, but lag BC Liberals on economic growth

Just two-in-five voters say they're absolutely certain which party they will support

October 6, 2020 – As one of the most unique provincial election campaigns in B.C. history runs through its third week, new data from the non-profit Angus Reid Institute reveals the issues of most importance to British Columbian voters – and the parties that do best – and worst – on those issues.

While its COVID-19 response continues to preoccupy the province most, matters that took precedence before the pandemic are also dominant. Housing affordability, health care, climate change, and economic growth are also ballot issues in this campaign.

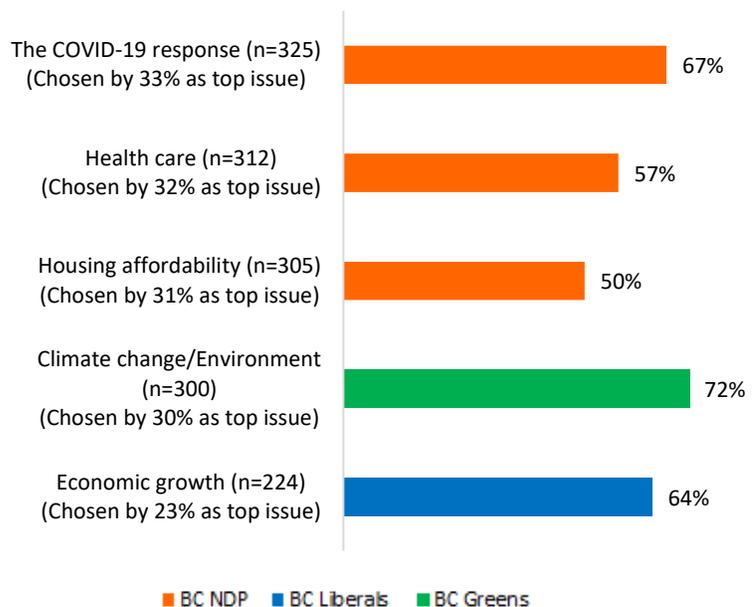
But traditional differences highlight the perceived strengths and weaknesses of each party on these key issues. While the New Democrats are seen as best on social and health issues, the BC Greens continue to hold high ground on climate change, and the BC Liberals are deemed to be the strongest party on economic factors.

At this stage, these dynamics favour the BC NDP, which continues to hold a significant lead over the other opposition parties.

More Key Findings:

- The incumbent BC NDP currently holds an 18-point advantage in pre-debate vote intention. 49 per cent say they will support John Horgan's party, while 31 per cent say they will vote for the BC Liberals and 14 per cent the BC Greens. This dynamic is largely unchanged over the past month.
- Three-in-five British Columbians say that this election is unnecessary and should have been held next year. Notably, even 28 per cent of those who plan to support the NDP feel this way.

Which of these parties do you think would be best on those issues you selected earlier as most important to you in this election? (Among those that selected each as a top issue)



METHODOLOGY:

The Angus Reid Institute conducted an online survey from October 1 – 3, 2020 among a representative randomized sample of 989 B.C. adults who are members of [Angus Reid Forum](#). For comparison purposes only, a probability sample of this size would carry a margin of error of +/- 3.0 percentage points, 19 times out of 20. Discrepancies in or between totals are due to rounding. The survey was self-commissioned and paid for by ARI. Detailed tables are found at the end of this release.

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- While it is early days so far, just one-in-three British Columbians say they are fully engaged in the campaign. Most are aware of it, but not closely following developments

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: Core campaign issues

While it may be too early in the campaign to identify the “ballot question” in this fall’s election, B.C. voters identify four key issues that may hold the keys to electoral success on October 24. The COVID-19 response, health care, housing affordability, and climate change are chosen above all other core issues, each by at least three-in-ten British Columbians. The next tier of issues, economic growth alongside poverty and homelessness, are chosen by close to one-in-five.

Top issues by age and gender

Among different age and gender demographics, unique priorities emerge. For young people (18-34), while COVID-19 is important, housing affordability, and climate change take on heightened priority.

Those between the ages of 35 and 54 put near-equal emphasis on the top four issues, but men in this cohort are most likely of any group to say that economic growth is paramount to them. For potential voters 55 years of age and older, health care is the story of this campaign, though other issues still resonate, as seen in the summary table below:

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Most Important Issue facing British Columbia – by Age and Gender Up to three issues selected by each respondent (Issues receiving 40% or more highlighted)							
	Total (n=989)	Age and Gender					
		Male			Female		
		18-34 (n=139)	35-54 (n=161)	55+ (n=184)	18-34 (n=137)	35-54 (n=171)	55+ (n=198)
COVID-19 response	33%	27%	33%	31%	43%	36%	30%
Health care	32%	15%	24%	41%	20%	34%	47%
Housing affordability	31%	41%	28%	18%	43%	29%	31%
Climate change/ Environment	30%	41%	29%	19%	37%	29%	31%
Economic growth	23%	29%	34%	26%	15%	16%	17%
Poverty/ Homelessness	20%	17%	17%	18%	22%	20%	27%
Government finances/ Deficit	16%	16%	22%	28%	10%	11%	11%
Unemployment/Jobs	16%	15%	19%	10%	16%	22%	15%
Addiction/Opioids/ Overdoses	15%	15%	14%	10%	24%	16%	15%
Taxes/ PST	15%	20%	11%	21%	13%	18%	7%
Resource issues – Pipelines/ LNG	15%	14%	17%	26%	5%	9%	14%
Crime and safety	13%	17%	14%	17%	10%	8%	14%
Education/ Schools	12%	9%	9%	7%	14%	29%	5%
Ethics and Integrity	10%	7%	10%	14%	9%	12%	8%

Different regions, different priorities

The importance of COVID-19 as an election issue is relatively stable across most of the province, however, in the Interior, the percentage of residents choosing it as a top issue drops to one-quarter (24%), considerably lower than other regions.

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One of the starkest differences in regional priorities is the importance of housing affordability in Metro Vancouver compared to elsewhere. As prices continue their upward trend, 40 per cent of Metro Vancouverites say it is among their three top concerns.

On Vancouver Island, climate change eclipses other issues, but COVID-19 and health care remain of top of mind.

Most Important Issue facing British Columbia – by Region Up to three issues selected by each respondent					
	Total (n=989)	Region			
		Metro Vancouver (n=296)	Lower Mainland/ Fraser Valley (n=210)	Interior (n=215)	Island/ North Coast (n=197)
COVID-19 response	33%	38%	32%	24%	34%
Health care	32%	29%	34%	33%	32%
Housing affordability	31%	40%	28%	22%	29%
Climate change/ Environment	30%	33%	27%	25%	37%
Economic growth	23%	19%	28%	25%	19%
Poverty/ Homelessness	20%	25%	16%	16%	24%
Government finances/ Deficit	16%	12%	22%	21%	11%
Unemployment/Jobs	16%	14%	17%	20%	14%
Addiction/Opioids/ Overdoses	15%	15%	13%	14%	20%
Taxes/PST	15%	14%	13%	21%	10%
Resource issues – Pipelines/LNG	15%	9%	14%	26%	13%

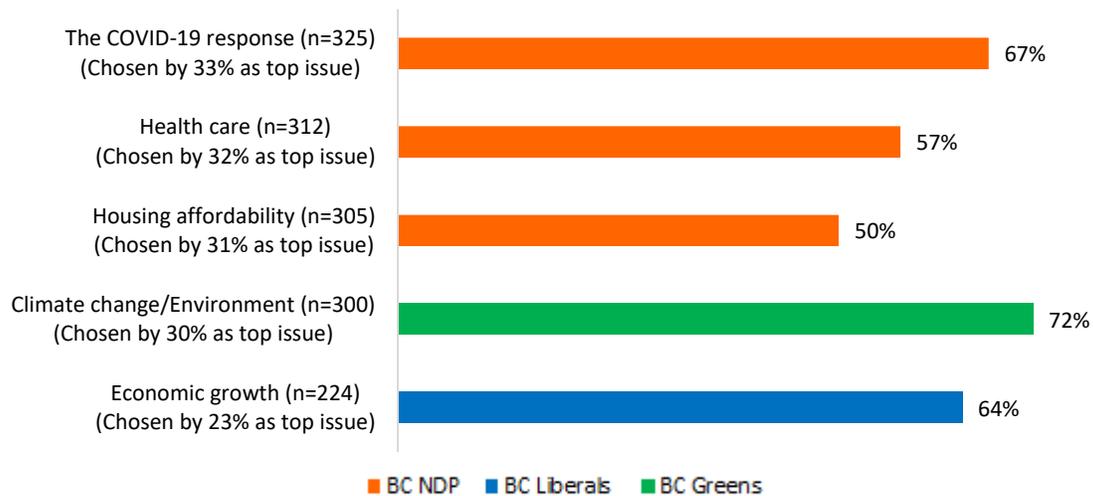
Which parties do best on British Columbians' top issues?

Having identified which three issues they care about most in this election, those same respondents were then asked which party they trust most on each. The results show the wide difference in perceived strength that both the BC NDP and BC Liberals have on certain issues, and the entrenchment of the BC Green Party as a 'one issue' option.

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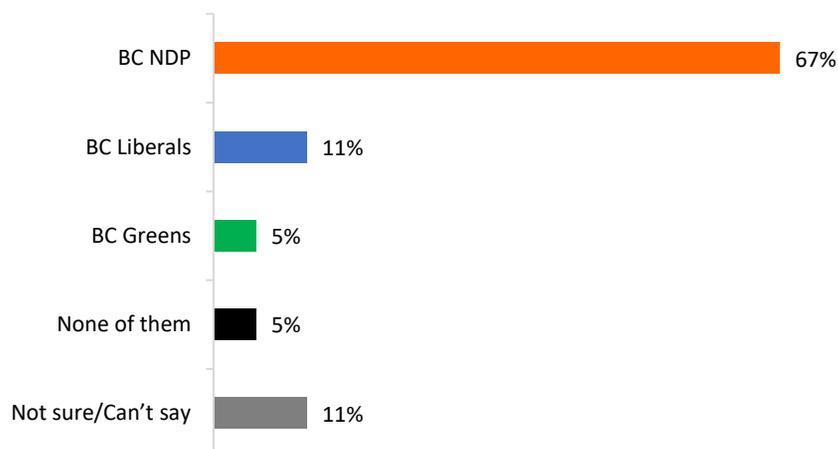
**Which of these parties do you think would be best on those issues you selected earlier as most important to you in this election?
(Among those that selected each as a top issue)**



COVID-19 Response

The top issue facing the province, and the one defining the past year of the BC NDP's governance, is the response to the coronavirus outbreak. Premier John Horgan has received among the [highest praise](#) in the country for his work on this file, and his party is trusted by two-thirds (67%) of those who said this is important to them. Just 11 per cent among this group say the BC Liberals would be better:

**Which of the major BC political parties do you think would be best on the COVID-19 Response?
(Among the 33% of all respondents who chose it as a top issue, n=325)**



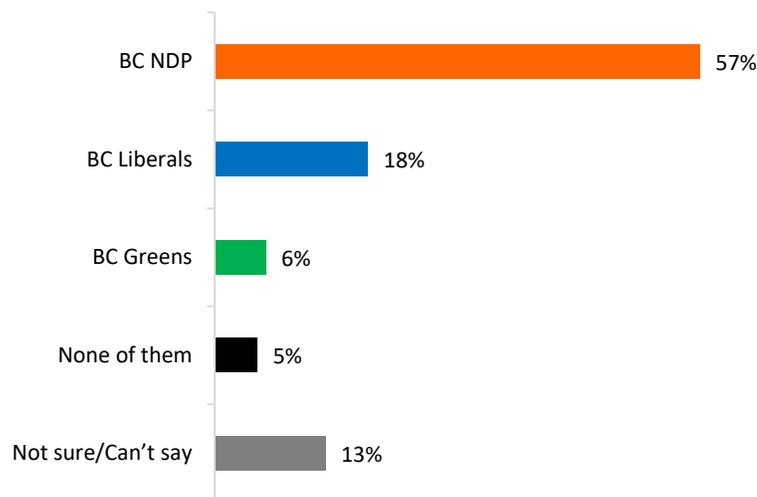
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Health care

As with the COVID-19 response, the BC NDP is heavily preferred on health care. Three-in-five (57%) of those who choose this as a top issue say they prefer the incumbent party, while one-in-five (18%) prefer the BC Liberals. The two parties have recently sparred over health care, specifically the return of monthly medical services plan fees.

**Which of the major BC political parties
do you think would be best on health care?
(Among the 32% of all respondents who chose it as a top issue, n=312)**



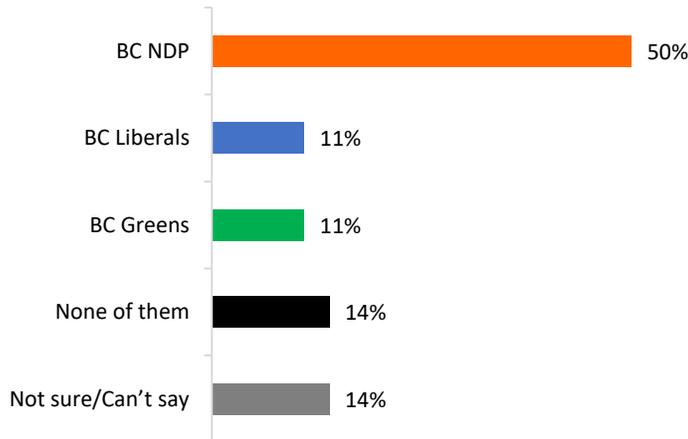
Housing affordability

The ballot question of the 2017 election, the cost of and access to housing continues to keep thousands of British Columbians up at night. Three years ago, the BC NDP made the case it was better positioned to handle the issue. But with a mixed record on this file, it is notable that half of those who are most concerned about housing affordability say the governing party is the best option, though 14 per cent say no party is able to do a good job and 14 per cent are unsure. This, as housing sales and prices continue to rise in Metro Vancouver, despite the pandemic. Premier John Horgan's government has implemented a vacancy tax and speculation tax since the previous provincial election. Wilkinson's BC Liberals have promised to end both taxes:

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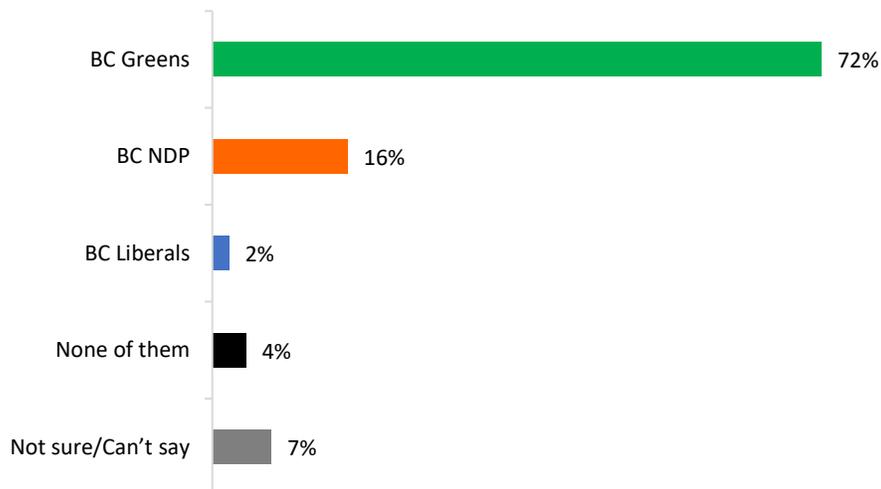
**Which of the major BC political parties
do you think would be best on housing affordability?
(Among the 31% of all respondents who chose it as a top issue, n=305)**



Climate change/Environment

The BC Green Party continues to hold an important position in portions of the province where climate change and environmental concerns are paramount. For those who chose this as their top issue, the Greens are the runaway first choice. The BC NDP are chosen by 16 per cent:

**Which of the major BC political parties do you
think would be best on climate change?
(Among the 30% of all respondents who chose it as a top issue, n=300)**



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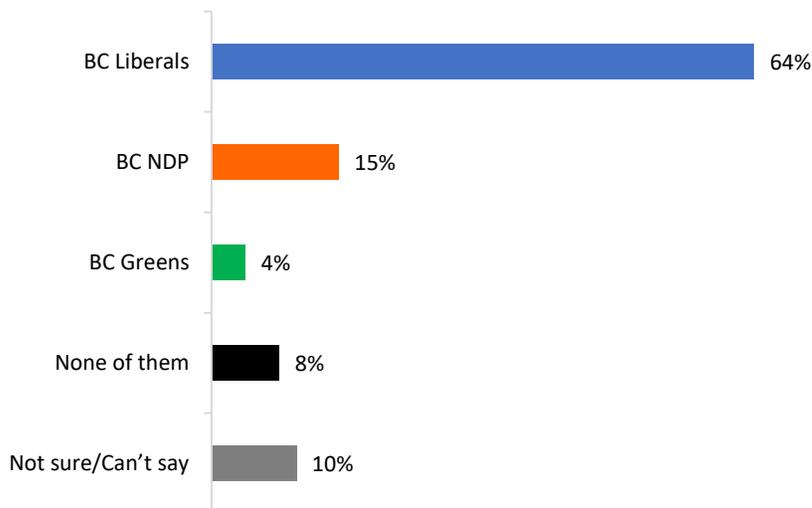
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Economic growth

The BC Liberals have so far promoted a campaign with the tagline “Restore Confidence. Rebuild B.C.” The party hopes to highlight the devastating economic damage done by the COVID-19 outbreak, which is [projected](#) to reduce growth by 6.7 per cent this year, and lead to a \$13 billion deficit.

The economy is the issue that the BC Liberals are most trusted on among those who are concerned about it. Nearly two-thirds who chose this as a top three issue (64%) say that the Liberals would handle it best, while just 15 per cent say this of the incumbent NDP.

**Which of the major BC political parties
do you think would be best on economic growth?
(Among the 23% of respondents who chose it as a top issue, n=224)**



Part Two: Voter sentiment and motivations

Was calling the election fair or power grab?

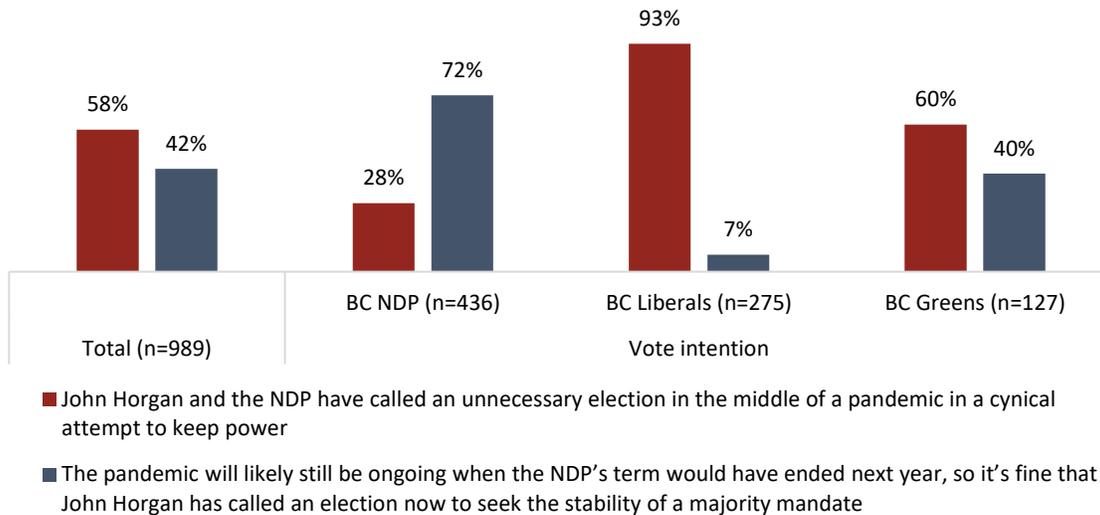
One of the inescapable criticisms of the Horgan government has been the timing of the election call. Critics say this was unnecessary and could have waited until a scheduled election next October. Voting during the coronavirus pandemic has indeed been [a source of anxiety](#) for many voters, and one that Elections BC is attempting to overcome with [unprecedented mail-in ballot requests](#).

Overall, three-in-five residents voice some resentment about the issue, saying this election is unnecessary and an attempt by the BC NDP to concentrate its power. Perhaps unsurprisingly, nearly all of those who intend to vote for the BC Liberals feel this way (93%), but they are joined by 28 per cent of those who say they will support the incumbent party anyway, and 72 per cent of Green voters.

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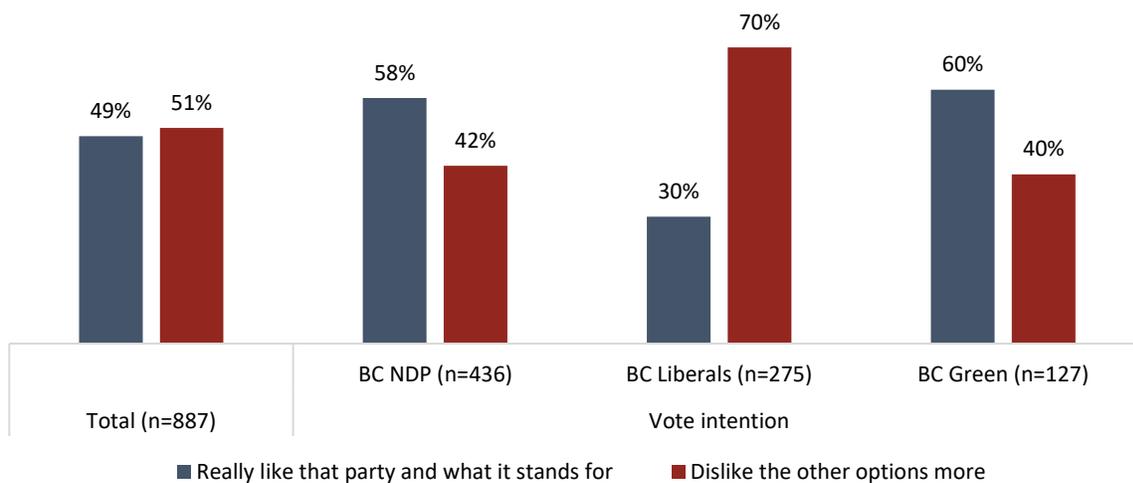
There's been some discussion about the timing of this election call, being one year ahead of schedule. What's closest to your own view on this? (All respondents)



Voters divided on whether they like their party or dislike the other more

For many, their vote is less motivated by supporting a candidate they love, and more by voting against a candidate they do not care for. Indeed, half of B.C. residents say they like the party they are supporting and what it stands for (49%) but half say they dislike the other options more. BC Liberal voters are by far the most likely to say their vote is intended to block a different outcome:

And thinking of the party you are currently supporting, would you say you: (Decided voters only)



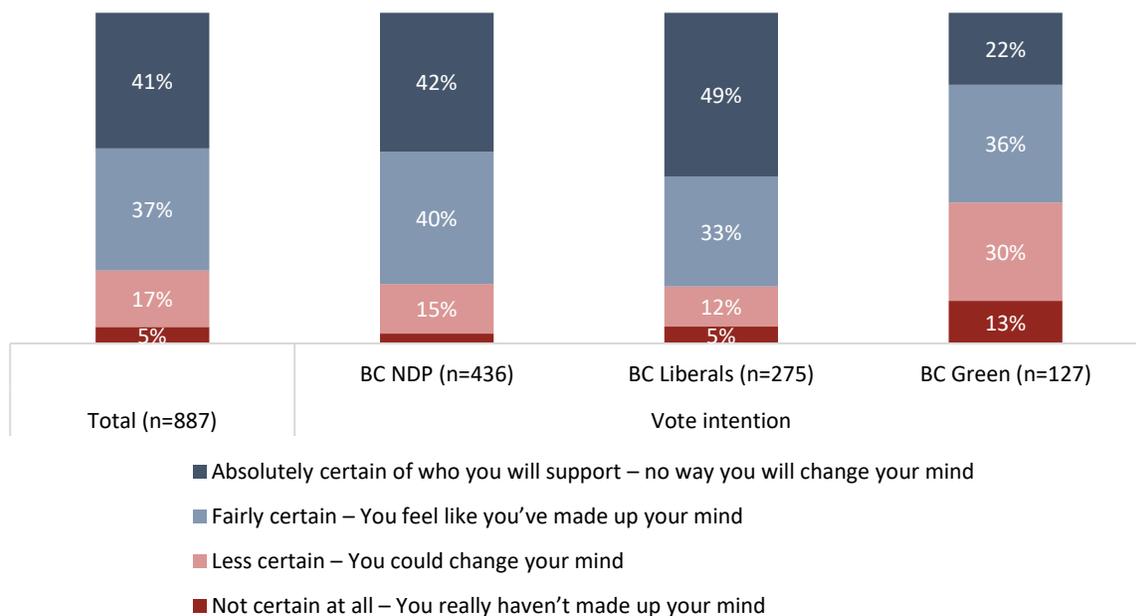
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Just two-in-five voters say choice is locked in

Ahead of the scheduled leadership debate between John Horgan, Andrew Wilkinson and Sonia Furstenuau, fewer than half of BC voters voice absolute certainty about their choice. Two-in-five (41%) say they are locked in and will not change their vote. For a similarly sized group (37%) the feeling is fairly certain but less absolute. For one-in-five voters (22%) the decision is subject to change. Notably, 43 per cent of those who are leaning toward the Green Party say that their vote could change:

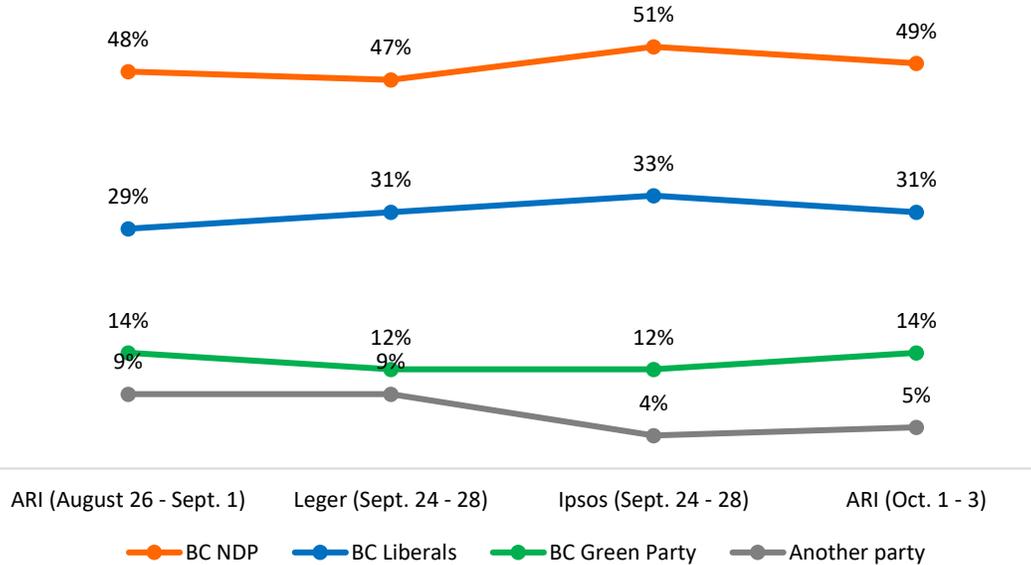
**How certain are you about which party you will support in this election?
(Decided voters only)**



Part Three: Pre-debate vote intention

Many British Columbians have yet to truly key into the campaign. Indeed, just one-in-three say they are following news closely and having discussions with friends and family about it at this point ([see detailed tables for more](#)). That, combined with potential vote fluidity, means that much of the result remains unsettled. At this point, however, the incumbent BC NDP holds a considerable 18-point advantage among leaning and decided voters. These vote intention figures are largely unchanged over the past month, across multiple polling firms:

Recent Vote Intention



Age and gender

The BC NDP’s strength is its breadth of appeal. In every age and gender category, it holds a lead and dominates among women of all ages.

B.C. Vote Intention, including leaners, decided voters only:							
	Total (n=887)	Age and Gender					
		Male			Female		
		18-34 (n=130)	35-54 (n=138)	55+ (n=175)	18-34 (n=118)	35-54 (n=147)	55+ (n=179)
BC New Democratic Party/NDP	49%	42%	44%	45%	57%	48%	58%
BC Liberals	31%	32%	34%	41%	24%	22%	30%
BC Green Party	14%	17%	13%	10%	17%	22%	10%
Another party	5%	9%	8%	4%	2%	7%	2%

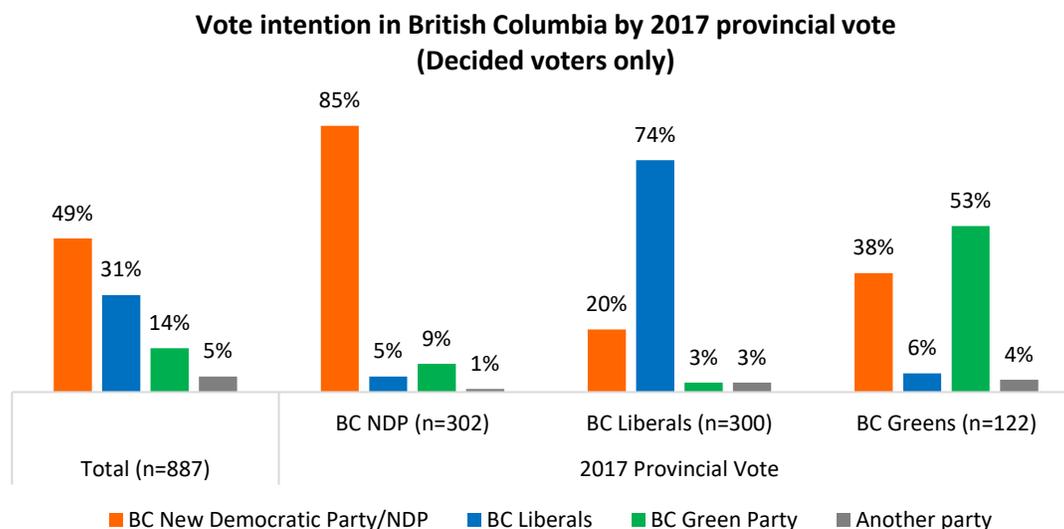
Region

The BC NDP lead in all regions outside of the Interior, where the BC Liberals hold an 11-point advantage. Meanwhile, the BC Green Party will be looking to secure important votes on Vancouver Island in order to

maintain its seat count. In that region, 27 per cent of voters say they will support the Greens, their highest proportion in the province.

B.C. Vote Intention, including leaner, decided voters only:					
	Total (n=887)	Region			
		Metro Vancouver (n=296)	Lower Mainland/ Fraser Valley (n=210)	The Interior (n=196)	Island/ North Coast (n=185)
BC New Democratic Party/NDP	49%	59%	48%	35%	50%
BC Liberals	31%	24%	36%	46%	20%
BC Green Party	14%	13%	10%	10%	27%
Another party	5%	3%	7%	9%	3%

Another strength that the BC NDP brings into this election the party's vote retention. More than four-in-five (85%) of those who cast a vote for John Horgan's party in 2017 say they will do so again. This is the case for three-quarters of BC Liberal voters but just 53 per cent of BC Green supporters:



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

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

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