

## Alberta Politics: NDP holds slight lead in vote intention over UCP

*Most would-be NDP voters support some form of provincial sales tax*

**March 12, 2021** – The urgency to revive Alberta's ailing economy has once again raised debate over whether the province should continue to hold onto its "Alberta Advantage" as the only province in Canada without a provincial or harmonized sales tax, or whether a PST would generate enough government revenue to stave off belt-tightening or growing deficits.

A new study from the non-profit Angus Reid Institute finds that while a majority of Albertans continue to say "no" to the prospect of a provincial sales tax, political factors may be coalescing in a way that could possibly make the PST a less verboten concept in the future.

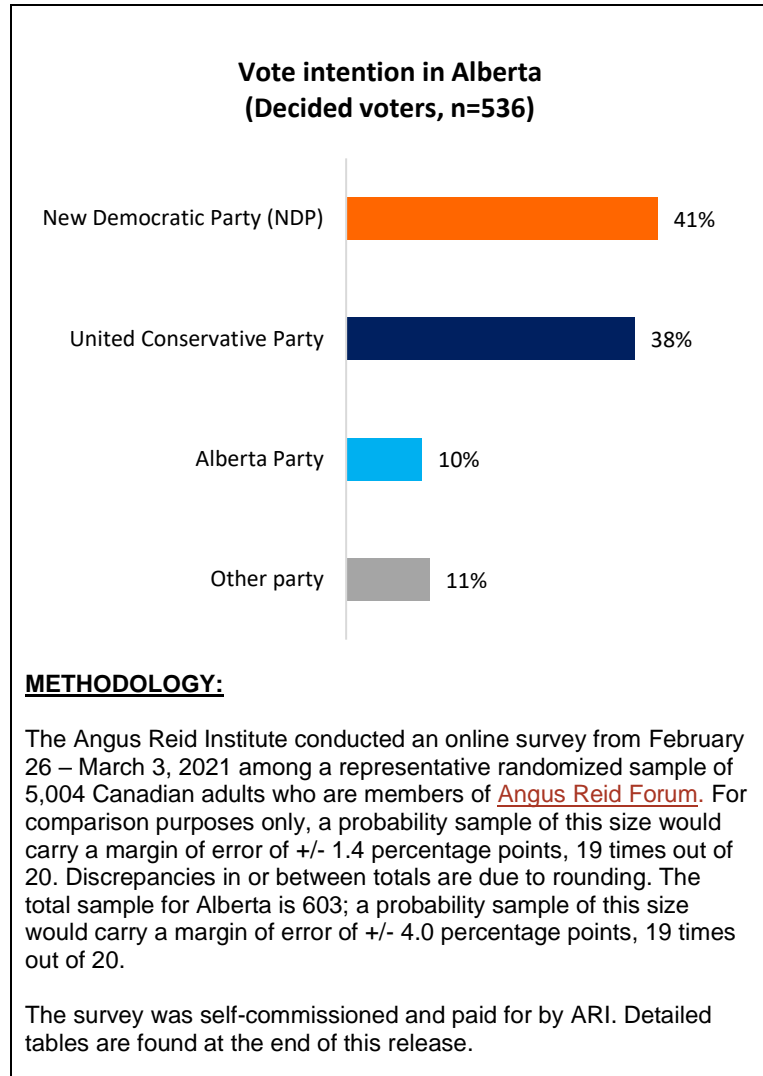
Currently, three-in-five (62%) say the province should not introduce any form of PST. Given that Premier Jason Kenney has previously stated that the PST would not be implemented without [a referendum](#), the policy seems unlikely to be introduced under the UCP.

However, a significant segment of Albertans – 38 per cent – say they would support a tax at various levels, from one per cent to more than five per cent.

The political dynamics of the province add to the complexity of the issue. The opposition NDP under Rachel Notley now leads Kenney's UCP by the slightest of margins in vote intention, 41 to 38 per cent respectively.

Notably, supporters of the NDP, are much more inclined to support the PST. Two-thirds (64%) of those who say they would support Rachel Notley's party if an election were held also say that they would support some version of this tax.

### More Key Findings:



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- Younger Albertans are more amenable to a PST. Half (52%) between the ages of 18 and 34 support a PST introduction of at least one to two per cent. A majority of those ages 35-54 (63%) and 55 and older (76%), however, are opposed to it.
- Voter retention is a key story at the midway mark of the UCP term. Just 71 per cent of those who supported Jason Kenney's party in 2019 say they would again at this point, while the NDP has retained 96 per cent of its base.
- The UCP scores more negatively than positively on all 13 areas of government performance canvassed in this survey.

### **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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### **Which issues matter most in Alberta?**

For Albertans, one key aspect of life is prioritized most: economic growth. Asked for their top issues facing the province, both the economy overall and jobs and unemployment are chosen ahead of all others. Notably, COVID-19 response ranks fifth.

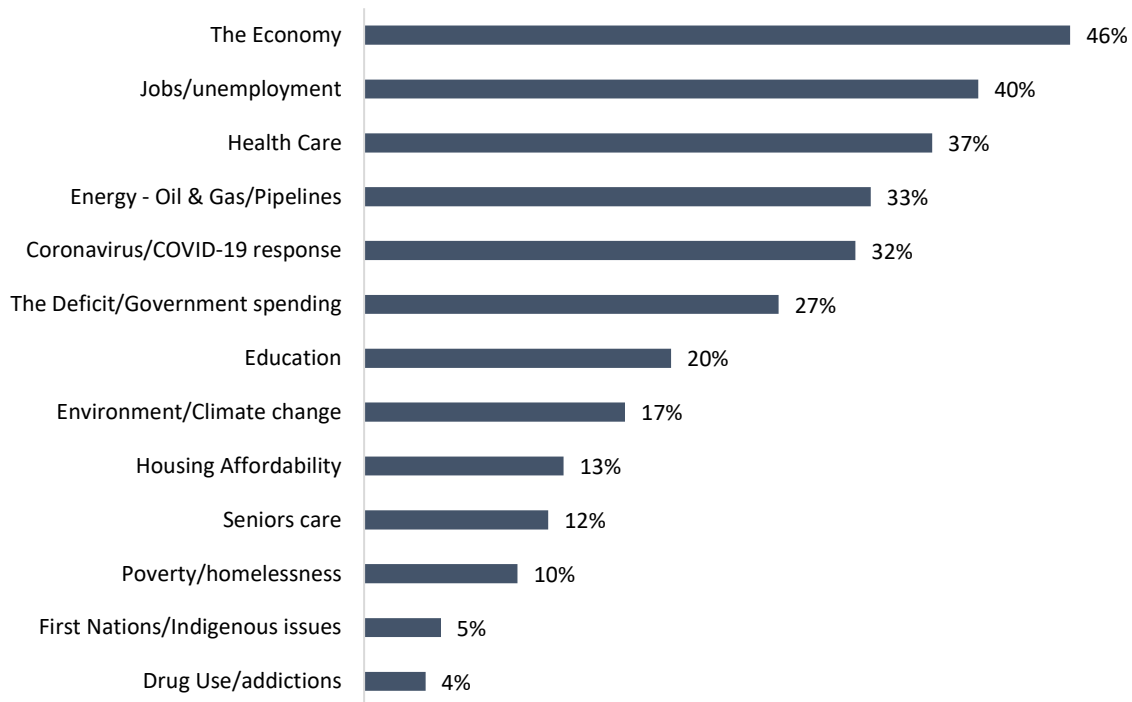
The message is clear from Albertans: do what is needed to boost the economy. Low oil prices and reduced economic activity from the pandemic have wreaked havoc on the economy. The province projects an \$18 billion deficit for this year and the total provincial debt is projected to swell to more than \$115 billion. Only Newfoundland and Labrador currently has a worse [unemployment rate](#) in Canada.

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**Most important issue - choose up to three  
(All Albertans, n=603)**



**UCP government struggles across a number of files**

Albertans have become more critical of Premier Jason Kenney throughout the pandemic, and their assessment of his performance appears to extend to most areas of provincial government.

The Angus Reid Institute asked respondents to assess 13 separate areas of provincial governance. As seen in the table below, there is no issue where the UCP receives a more positive than negative assessment:

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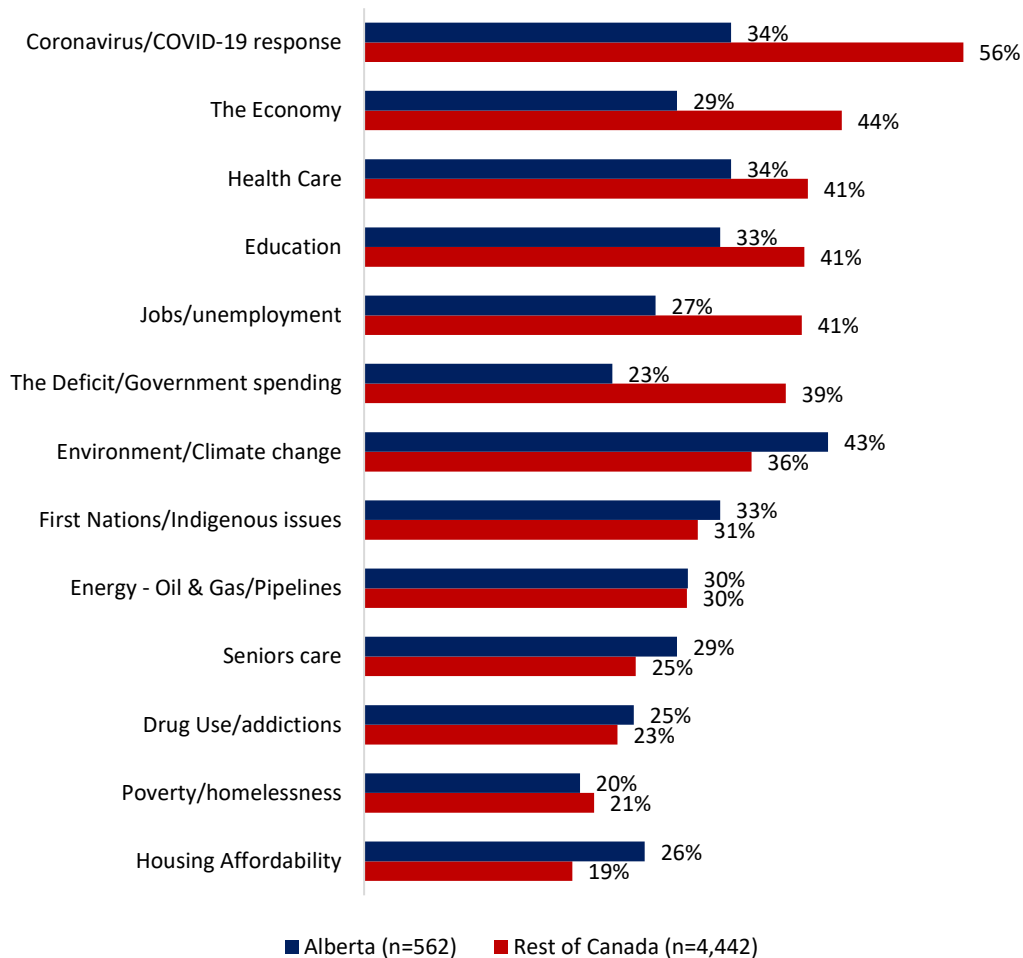
<b>Is the provincial government doing a good job or poor job in each of the following areas? (All Albertans, n=603)</b>			
	<b>Good job</b>	<b>Poor job</b>	<b>Not sure</b>
Environment/Climate change	43%	49%	9%
Health Care	34%	62%	4%
Coronavirus/COVID-19 response	34%	63%	4%
Education	33%	60%	7%
First Nations/Indigenous issues	33%	47%	20%
Energy - Oil & Gas/Pipelines	30%	65%	6%
The Economy	29%	66%	5%
Senior's care	29%	59%	12%
Jobs/unemployment	27%	66%	7%
Housing Affordability	26%	55%	19%
Drug Use/addictions	25%	59%	16%
The Deficit/Government spending	23%	70%	7%
Poverty/homelessness	20%	63%	16%

Indeed, Albertans are among the most negative appraisers in the country as to their provincial government's handling of their aforementioned top five priorities. Relative to the way Canadians in other provinces view their respective provincial government's performances, the UCP government performs second worst on the economy and on jobs and unemployment, and worst on COVID-19 response (see summary tables at end of release).

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**Percentage saying their provincial government has done a good or very good job in each area**



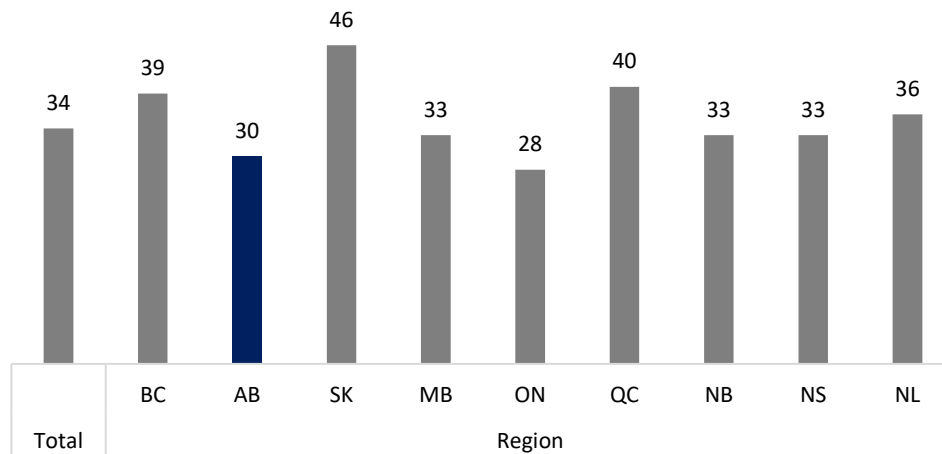
**Overall government performance score**

According to the Angus Reid Institute’s ‘Government Performance Index’, the Alberta government falls below the national average on satisfaction with government. Only Ontario’s government fares worse on this aggregating scale. This index is a measure of the average number of respondents saying that their government has done a good or very good job on each of the 13 issues mentioned above. See summary tables at the end of this release for contributing data.

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**Overall government performance rating**

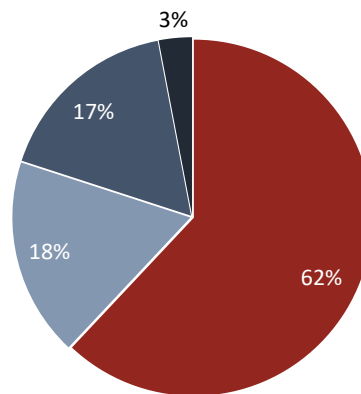


**Most are against a PST, but younger people are on the fence**

The challenges of the past year have necessitated the Kenney government to stray from its political north star. Government spending has greatly increased to both sustain and stimulate the economy.

Springing forth from this tenuous period is the renewal of the debate over a provincial sales tax. Alberta has long been the only province in the country with neither a PST nor a harmonized sales tax. Premier Jason Kenney has previously stated that he would not introduce such a tax without a referendum. For now, it appears that such a referendum would maintain the status quo, as a firm majority of residents are against it. That said, a near-plurality are inclined to say this is a good idea, at various levels of cost:

**What is your opinion? Should the Alberta government:**



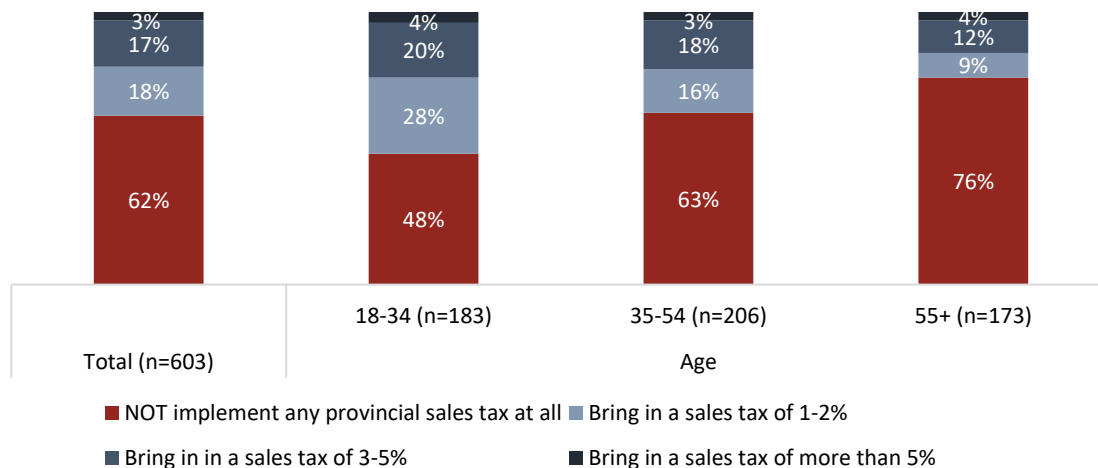
- NOT implement any provincial sales tax at all
- Bring in a sales tax of 1-2%
- Bring in a sales tax of 3-5%
- Bring in a sales tax of more than 5%

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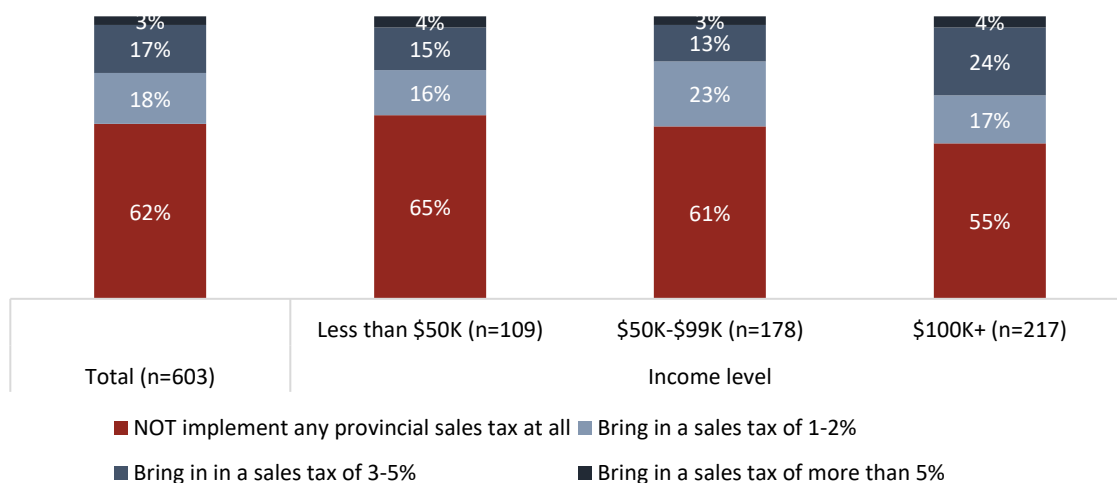
There are significant pockets of the province where this debate is much more hotly contested. Young people are far more inclined than their older counterparts to support a PST introduction of at least one to two per cent. In fact, half (52%) say the province should do this. Three-quarters of those over the age of 54 disagree:

**What is your opinion? Should the Alberta government:**



There are additional divisions based on income level. Those who are most supportive of a PST are from households with an income level of more than \$100 thousand. Close to half (45%) say they would like to see a provincial sales tax implemented and one-quarter would like to see it set at three to five per cent. Lower income Albertans lean more toward opposition. Two-thirds with household incomes of less than \$50 thousand are opposed. It is notable that sales taxes tend to be regressive, meaning they are disproportionately impactful for lower income households. Some sales tax policies are designed to avoid being applied to basic goods that are needed by lower-income families in order to overcome some of this regressive quality:

**What is your opinion? Should the Alberta government:**



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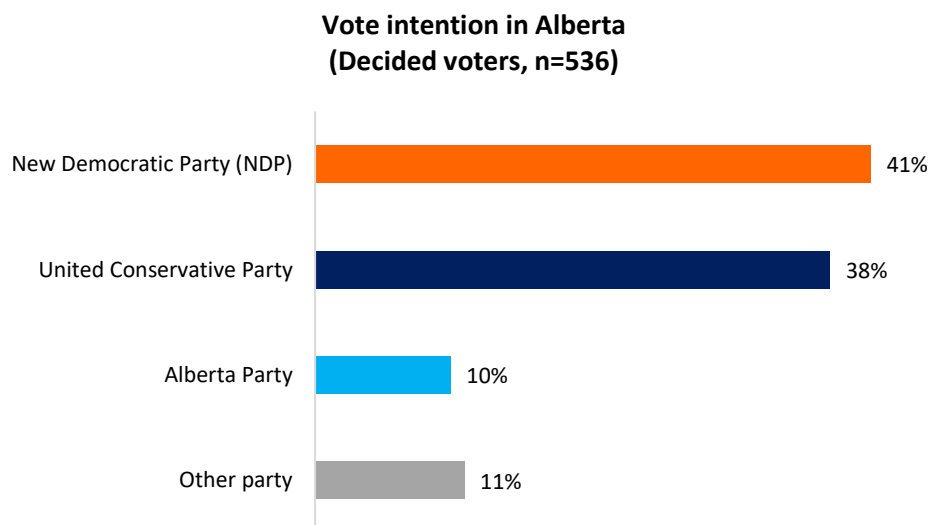
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While the PST may be unlikely under a UCP government, it is notable that those who currently support the Alberta NDP offer majority support for the tax. Just 36 per cent of those who say they would vote for Rachel Notley’s party say they are opposed to any form of PST:

Should the government of Alberta...				
	Total (n=603)	Provincial Vote Intent		
		UCP (n=189)	NDP (n=205)	Other (n=106)
NOT implement any provincial sales tax at all	62%	76%	36%	78%
Bring in a sales tax of 1-2%	18%	16%	26%	9%
Bring in in a sales tax of 3-5%	17%	7%	33%	8%
Bring in a sales tax of more than 5%	3%	2%	6%	3%

### **NDP makes gains, leads by three points in vote intention**

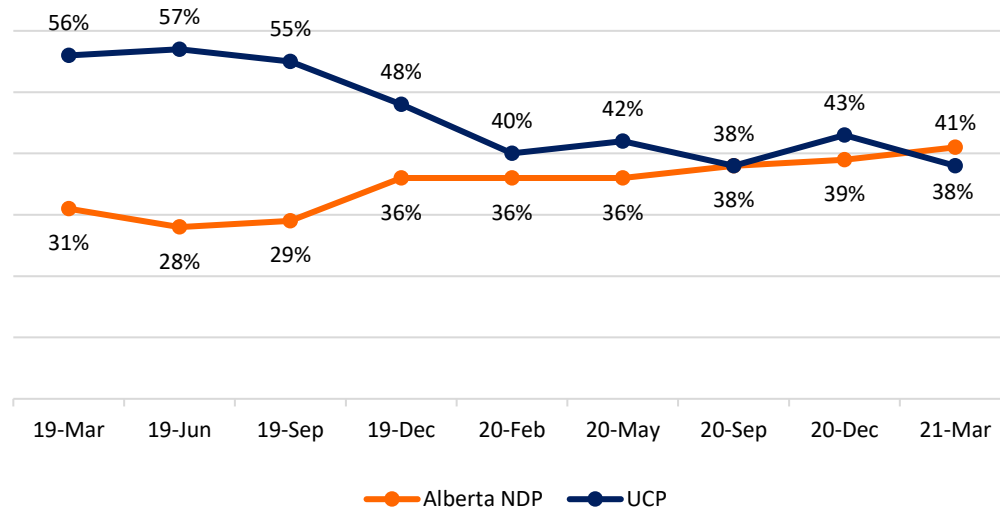
A look at the current vote intention picture in Alberta sheds additional light on just why those New Democratic supporters’ opinions are so important. That party now holds a three-point vote intention advantage over the incumbent United Conservative Party. This represents the first time the NDP have had an advantage in vote intent since 2015 ([view our vote intention tracker for all provinces here](#)).



The vote intention picture has become increasingly tightened since the pandemic began, after the UCP spent 2019 with a relatively large lead:



### Provincial Vote Intention in Alberta



One of the keys to the NDP's success in 2015 was winning in and around Calgary. Though at the time the party had benefitted from vote-splitting between the Wildrose Party and Progressive Conservatives, Rachel Notley and her team won 9 of the 12 seats in Central Calgary and were competitive in the Calgary suburbs. Now, the NDP hold a nine-point advantage in Calgary, alongside a considerable lead in their more traditional support base of Edmonton:

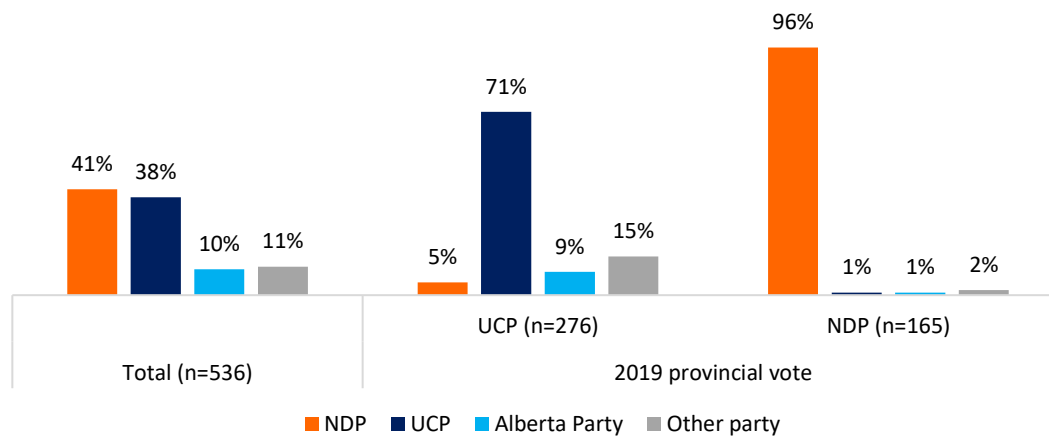
Vote intention in Alberta (Decided voters)					
(unweighted sample sizes)	Total (n=536)	Region			
		Calgary (n=163)	Edmonton (n=114)	Central-North (n=105)	South (n=151)
New Democratic Party (NDP)	41%	45%	59%	36%	26%
United Conservative Party (UCP)	38%	36%	25%	43%	45%
Alberta Party	10%	8%	5%	10%	14%
Other party	11%	11%	10%	12%	13%

For the UCP, [support among men](#) in particular has diminished since the last election. Jason Kenney's party still leads by a small margin among male voters, but trails among women and those under the age of 35 by a sizeable gap:

Vote intention in Alberta (Decided voters)						
(weighted sample sizes)	Total (n=536)	Gender		Age		
		Male (n=251)	Female (n=248)	18-34 (n=167)	35-54 (n=182)	55+ (n=150)
New Democratic Party (NDP)	41%	36%	46%	61%	33%	29%
United Conservative Party (UCP)	38%	42%	34%	26%	40%	48%
Alberta Party	10%	11%	8%	6%	13%	9%
Other party	11%	10%	12%	7%	13%	14%

While an election is still two years away, vote retention appears to be an important theme at the halfway mark of the UCP term. Close to one-in-three (29%) 2019 UCP voters have gone elsewhere, while the NDP has retained 96 per cent of its support:

**Vote intention in Alberta by 2019 provincial vote  
(Decided voters)**



**Summary tables follow**

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

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Percentage saying their provincial government has done a good job or very good job in each area										
	Total (n5004)	Region								
		BC (n607)	AB (n603)	SK (n496)	MB (n500)	ON (n1058)	QC (n833)	NB (n261)	NS (n326)	NL (n241)
Health care	41%	57%	34%	47%	35%	37%	41%	28%	27%	48%
Economy	43%	49%	29%	58%	38%	36%	55%	45%	45%	21%
COVID-19 response	53%	67%	34%	48%	43%	46%	60%	77%	80%	82%
Deficit	38%	38%	23%	54%	42%	33%	49%	49%	36%	17%
Jobs/ Unemployment	39%	44%	27%	55%	37%	31%	54%	37%	35%	23%
Housing Affordability	20%	14%	26%	38%	29%	16%	24%	18%	12%	29%
Poverty/ homelessness	21%	18%	20%	28%	21%	17%	29%	15%	14%	31%
Environment/ Climate change	37%	46%	43%	54%	36%	29%	37%	32%	42%	42%
Education	40%	49%	33%	49%	36%	37%	40%	41%	44%	56%
Drug Use/ addictions	24%	20%	25%	30%	22%	20%	31%	15%	18%	28%
Energy - Oil & Gas/ Pipelines	30%	31%	30%	56%	30%	24%	38%	24%	22%	25%
First Nations/ Indigenous issues	32%	38%	33%	41%	32%	22%	39%	28%	32%	38%
Senior's care	26%	30%	29%	40%	23%	19%	30%	23%	24%	33%

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