

Time for a change in Canadian politics? Half say yes, but most don't want an election before September

Despite calls for change, Liberals still hold four-point advantage over opposition Conservatives

March 17, 2021 – At a time when a 2021 election seems likely, and as CPC leader Erin O'Toole continues his so far unsuccessful attempt to break through with the electorate, Conservatives will gather this week for their party's policy convention.

They will do so knowing half of Canadians express a desire for a change in government, yet show little want for an election before fall, and still give the incumbent Liberals a slight edge in vote intention.

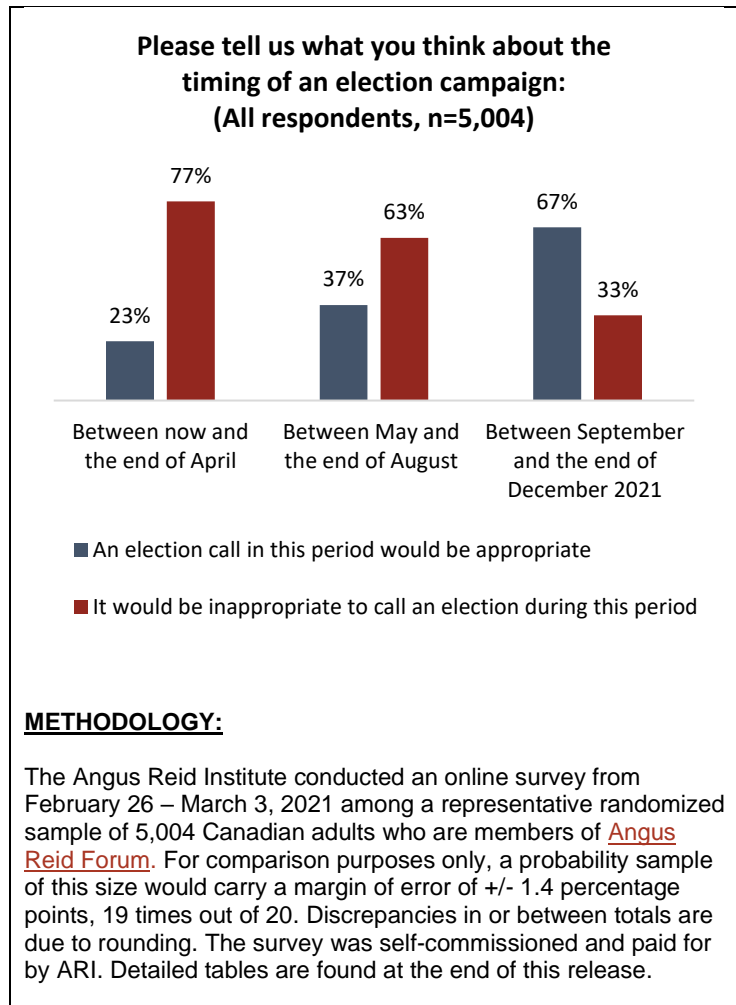
According to the latest data from the non-profit Angus Reid Institute, half of Canadians (49%) say it's time to switch governing parties in Ottawa, led almost entirely by past Conservative voters (88% say this), and at least one-in-three past NDP (39%), Green (35%), and Bloc Quebecois (40%) voters, respectively. Notably, more than one-in-seven (17%) of those who supported the Liberals in 2019 say the same. About a third of the country (35%) disagree.

With COVID-19 vaccinations now underway, the notion of a spring election is overwhelmingly unpopular. As Canadians focus on an end to pandemic life, summer is also considered too soon by 63 per cent. A fall call is palatable to most, however, as two-thirds say an election between September and December would be appropriate.

Whenever an election is called, the priority for the Conservative Party will be figuring out how to endear their leader to a broader subsection of the population. Just 29 per cent of Canadians have a favourable view of Erin O'Toole, while positive perceptions of Justin Trudeau and Jagmeet Singh hover in the mid 40's.

More Key Findings:

- Current vote intention finds the Liberal Party holding a four-point advantage over the CPC (35% to 31%), while the NDP is chosen by 19 per cent.



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- Prime Minister Justin Trudeau has an approval rating of 45 per cent, unchanged from February.
- Erin O'Toole's favourability with 2019 CPC voters is 64 per cent. Comparatively, NDP leader Jagmeet Singh holds a favourability of 85 per cent and Justin Trudeau has an approval rating of 81 per cent among their party's 2019 voters.
- Older Canadians are less inclined to head to the polls this year. Those 65 years of age and older are least likely to say that an election at any point in 2021 would be inappropriate compared to younger residents.
- The Liberal Party has a 15-point vote intention advantage in the Greater Toronto Area and Metro Vancouver. In Greater Montreal, 47 per cent would vote for the Liberals and just 10 per cent for the CPC.

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: Should there be an election in 2021?

Talk of a 2021 federal election began early this year. After [reports](#) that the governing Liberals were targeting an election call for later the spring, a committee in the House of Commons, including Liberal members, [urged the Prime Minister](#) not to send Canadians to the polls until the COVID-19 pandemic has ended. Timelines for vaccination have been moved up for many jurisdictions as the rollout of cross-country inoculation has ramped up, with some now suggesting that June may be the target of such a call, if not the fall. The Liberals decision to delay a 2021 budget has some also questioning whether the

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release of a budget later in the year maybe an [election-related](#) strategy, though the government has claimed that [pandemic-related challenges](#) are the reason for the delay.

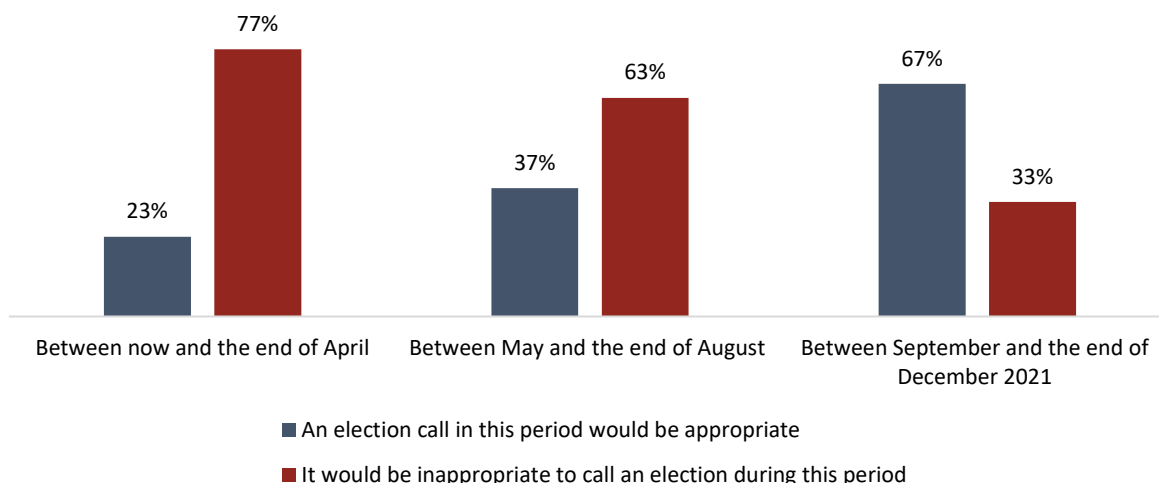
Pre-autumn election seen as inappropriate by most Canadians

For most Canadians, any election timeline that aims for the spring or summer would be inappropriate. Just one-quarter (23%) say that they would be comfortable with an election call before May, while slightly more than one-in-three (37%) say that a May to August date would be fine with them.

With the current timeline for vaccinations in place, each of these first two scenarios would entail some risk, as many Canadians would potentially be unvaccinated. Three provinces held relatively successful elections, B.C., Saskatchewan, and New Brunswick, under such circumstances. The more recent election in Newfoundland and Labrador has shown the [potential for massive problems](#). After cases of COVID-19 rose in the province, the election was delayed and ultimately shifted to mail-in ballots only. The voting period has now been extended multiple times.

These opinions change considerably when Canadians are asked about an election in the fall. In this case, two-thirds (67%) feel that prospect would be appropriate:

**Please tell us what you think about the timing of an election campaign:
(All respondents, n=5,004)**

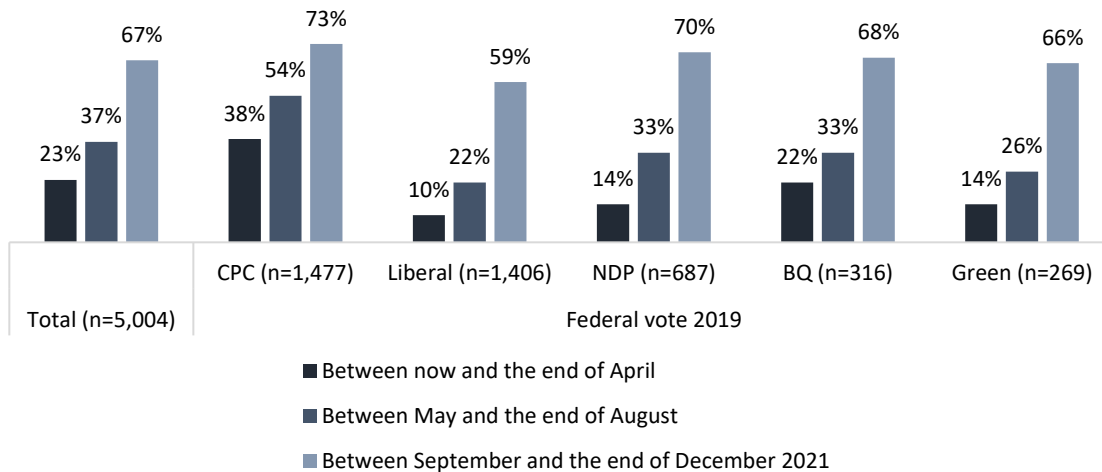


Past Conservative voters are more anxious to get to the polls than others. Indeed, on each of the proposed timelines those who supported the CPC in 2019 are most likely to say each is appropriate. More than half (54%) would be accepting of an election during the late spring or summer, while three-quarters say a fall call is acceptable. New Democrats are closely behind in enthusiasm for an autumn vote at 70 per cent, while notably lukewarm in their support for all timelines are past Liberal voters:

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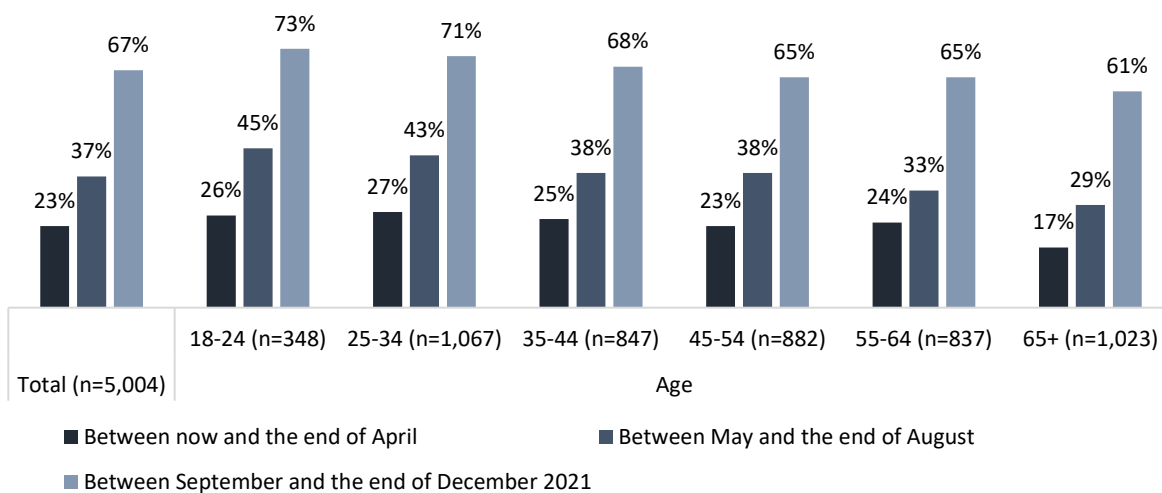
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Percentage that say "An election call in this period would be appropriate" for each (All respondents)



Also important in these discussions are the opinions of those most at risk from the coronavirus – older Canadians. On all three of the proposed timelines, those over the age of 64 are more hesitant to say an election call would be acceptable. Three-in-five (61%) say that the fall would be fine, when initial timelines from the federal government have stated that all Canadians who want a vaccination will have had one:

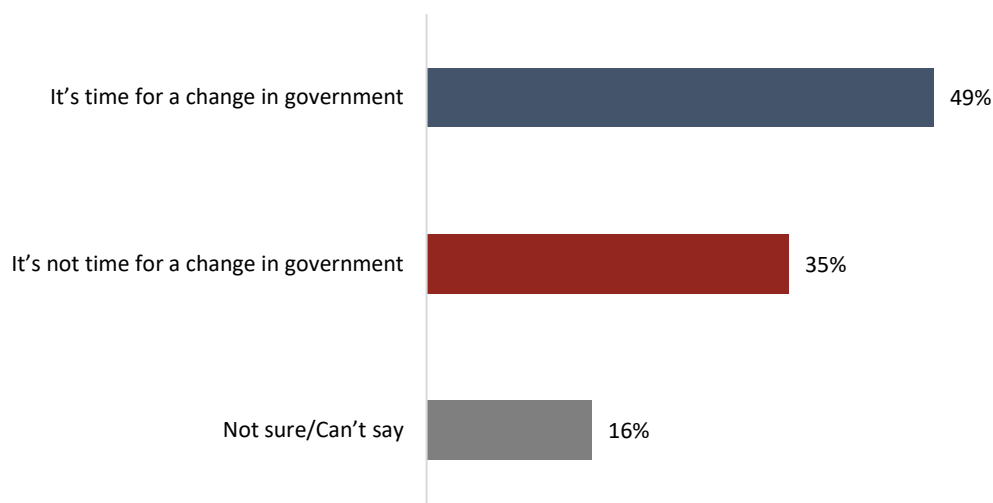
Percentage saying each "an election call in this period would be appropriate" for each



Half say it's time for a change in government, whenever an election is called

While the appetite for an election in the coming months is varied, half of the population (49%) now says that it is time for a change in government. This opinion is partially counteracted by one-in-three (35%) who disagree:

**Which of the following two statements best reflects how you feel today when it comes to the federal political picture?
(All respondents, n=5,004)**



There are pronounced regional divisions on this issue, which speak to the relative satisfaction with the federal government. In Alberta (71%) and Saskatchewan (73%), seven-in-ten residents say it's time for the Liberals to go. In Quebec, 47 per cent say a change in government is not needed.

Which of the following two statements best reflects how you feel today when it comes to the federal political picture? (All respondents)										
	Total (5,004)	Region								
		BC (607)	AB (562)	SK (496)	MB (500)	ON (1,058)	QC (833)	NB (261)	NS (326)	NL (241)
It's time for a change in government	49%	47%	71%	73%	57%	50%	36%	45%	47%	41%
It's not time for a change in government	35%	37%	18%	20%	27%	34%	47%	38%	37%	36%
Not sure/Can't say	16%	16%	11%	8%	16%	16%	17%	17%	16%	23%

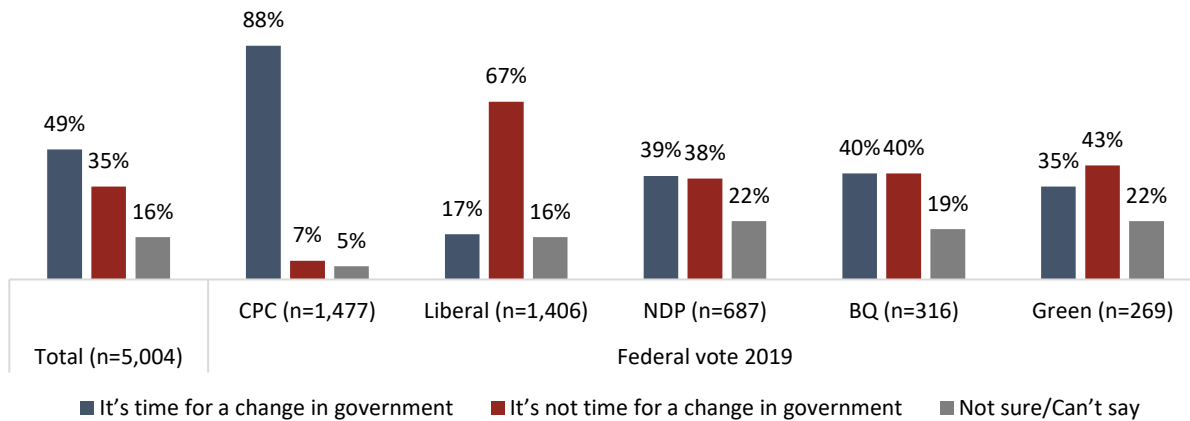
Age is less of a source of division on this question. Close to half of Canadians across all age groups say that a change is needed, though older Canadians are more opposed to that notion ([see detailed tables](#)).

Notably, more than one-in-seven (17%) past Liberal voters indicate it's time to switch out the party they supported in 2019, while at least one-in-three past NDP, Bloc Quebecois, and Green voters agree. Past CPC voters are near unanimous:

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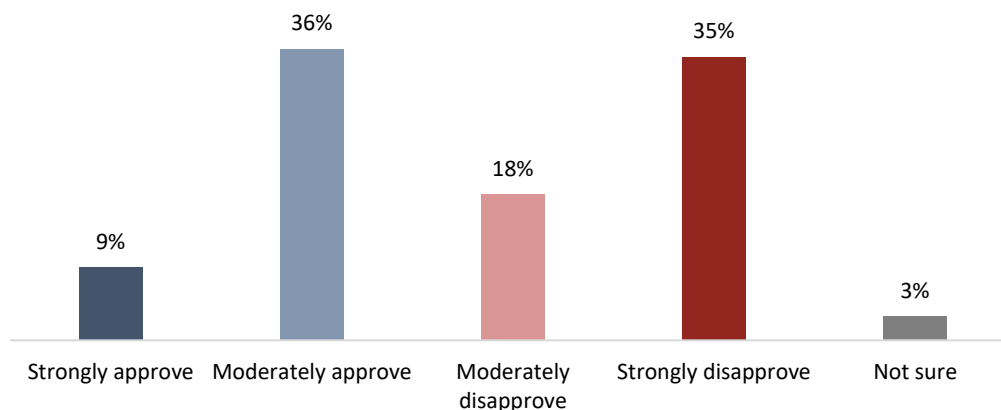


Part Two: Leadership

Trudeau approval

Opinions of the Prime Minister's performance this month are largely the same as last. One-in-ten (9%) say they strongly approve, while 36 per cent moderately approve. One-in-three (35%) strongly disapprove of the work done by Trudeau:

**Do you approve or disapprove of the performance of Prime Minister and Liberal Party leader Justin Trudeau?
(All respondents, n=5,004)**

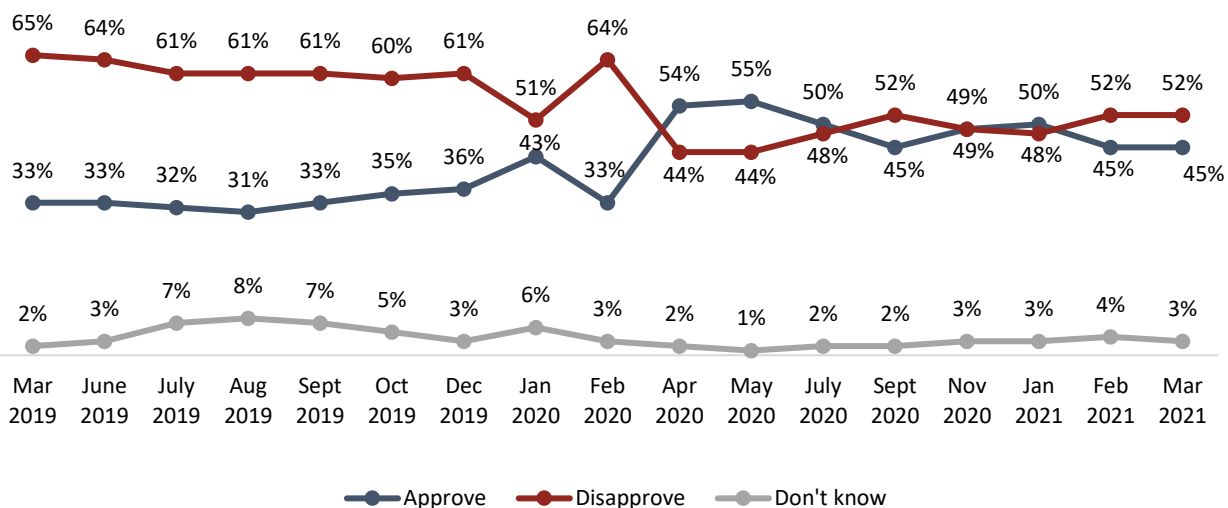


As mentioned, at 45 per cent Trudeau's approval is unchanged from last month, and down nine-points from last year at close to this time (April).

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Do you approve or disapprove of Justin Trudeau?



Much of the PM's decline in the last few months has largely been driven by dissatisfaction over delays and uncertainty over the progress of COVID-19 vaccination. With jabs now being administered at a brisker pace (some provinces have [moved up](#) their timelines for the population to receive their first doses in recent weeks), it is as yet unknown whether Trudeau's fortunes stand to improve.

Will CPC convention provide a kick-start for O'Toole?

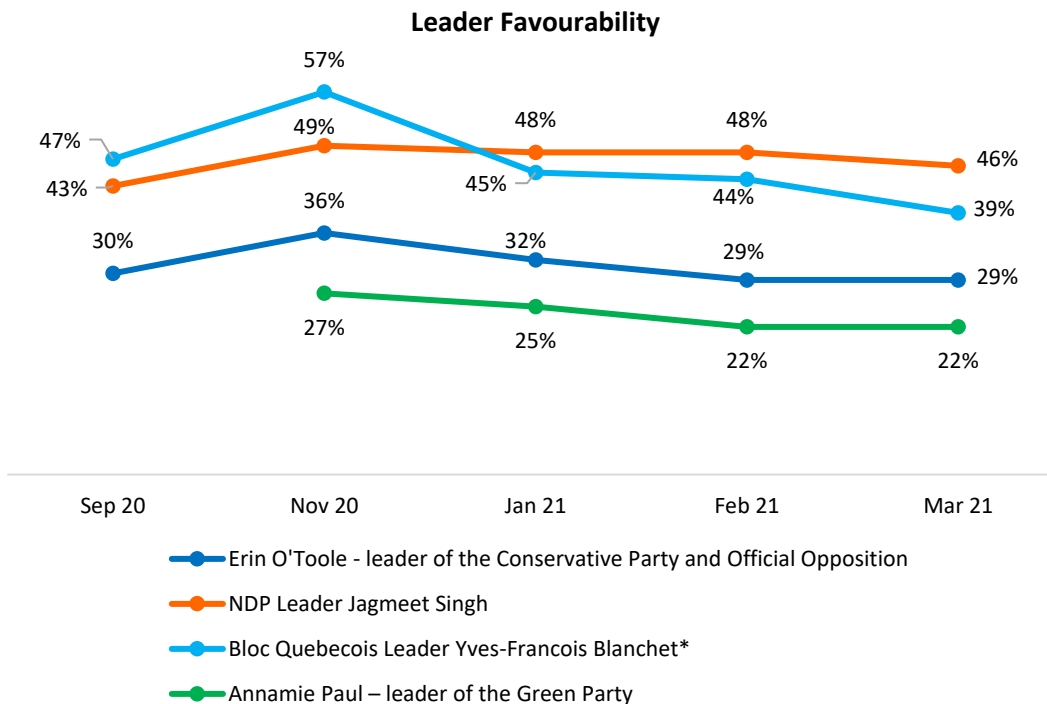
Ahead of the Conservative Party's Policy Convention, a three-day virtual event, the data show the CPC has more work to do convincing all but the converted to consider the Conservatives. Leader Erin O'Toole continues to lag behind other party leaders in public opinion. More than six months into the job, just 29 per cent of Canadians view him favourably, while half (51%) feel differently. For New Democratic Party leader Jagmeet Singh, the story is more positive. Nearly half (46%) view him favourably. Singh recently committed that he [would not vote](#) to bring down the current government as long as the pandemic continues:

Do you have an overall favourable or unfavourable view of the following people? Note, differences in total approval or disapproval in release is due to rounding. (All respondents, n=5,004)				
	Erin O'Toole – leader of the Conservative Party and Official Opposition	Jagmeet Singh – leader of the NDP	Yves-François Blanchet – leader of the Bloc Québécois (QC only, n=833)	Annamie Paul – leader of the Green Party
Very favourable	6%	11%	13%	3%
Favourable	23%	35%	33%	19%
Unfavourable	25%	22%	18%	14%
Very unfavourable	26%	20%	21%	15%
Don't know/Can't say	19%	11%	15%	49%

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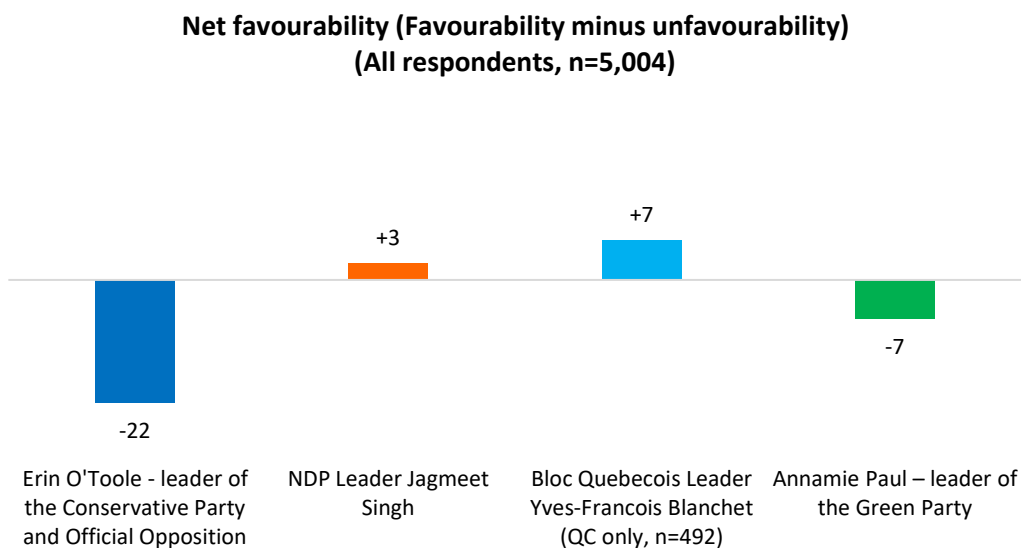
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Thus far, O’Toole has only lost ground among the Canadian public, down seven points from his high mark, recorded shortly after his successful leadership campaign:



*Quebec only

O’Toole’s lack of public connection is perhaps most evident when looking at his net favourability. Subtracting those who view him unfavourably from those who view him favourably, he garners a -22. This ratio is by far the worst of the major federal party leaders:

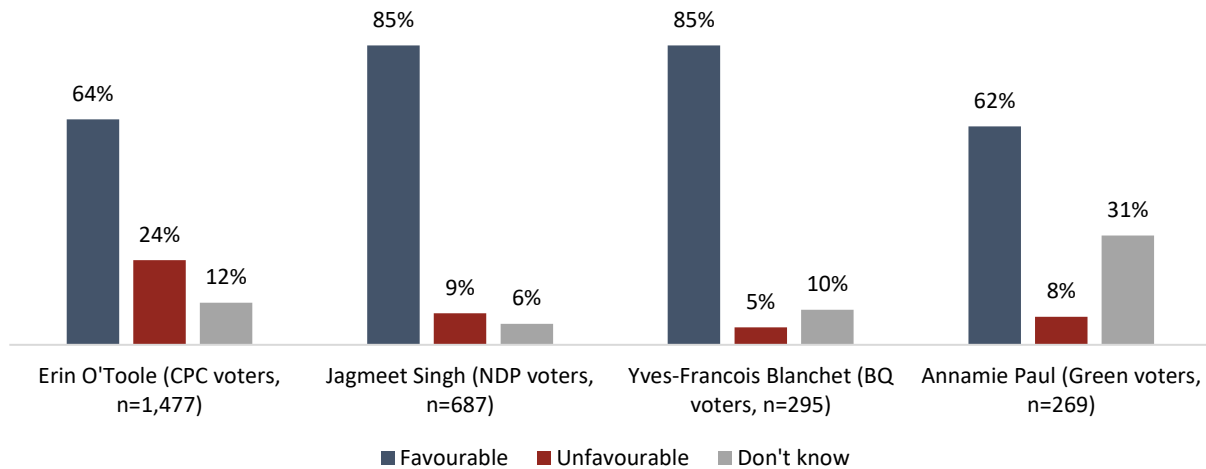


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The Conservative Party convention may provide an opportunity to feature Erin O'Toole in order to bring around 2019 CPC supporters and shore up the Conservative base. Just two-thirds (64%) of the party's past voters view him favourably while one-quarter (24%) do not. Comparing these to other parties' partisan supporters, one can see the deficit this portends:

**Do you have an overall favourable or unfavourable view of the following people?
(Based on 2019 federal vote)**

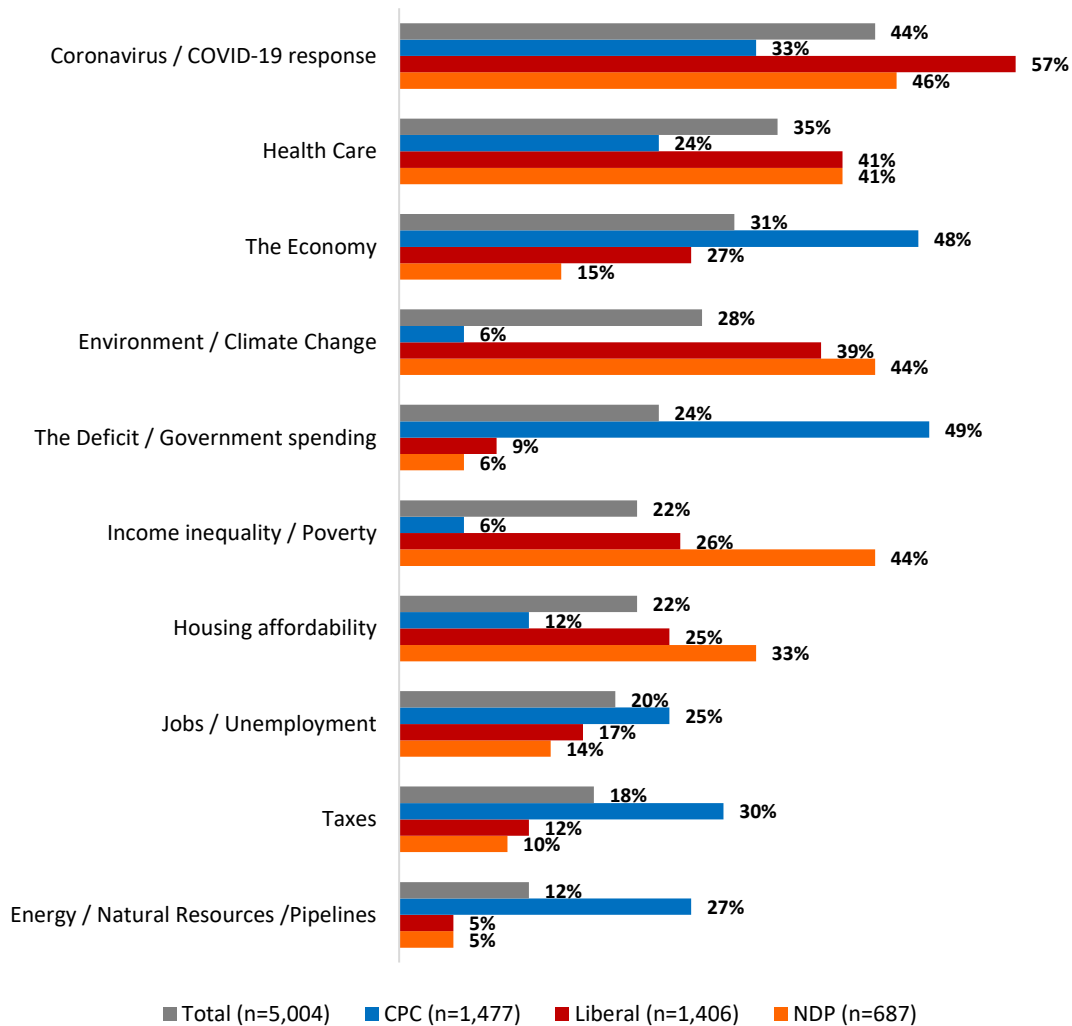


The economy and government spending are by far the highest priorities for those aforementioned 2019 Conservative Party supporters. Half (49%) say that the deficit is the biggest federal issue currently, while the same number say this of the economy (48%) more broadly. Past Conservatives are notably far less concerned about the coronavirus and health care than past NDP and Liberal supporters:

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**Top issue facing the country (choose up to three)
By 2019 federal vote**



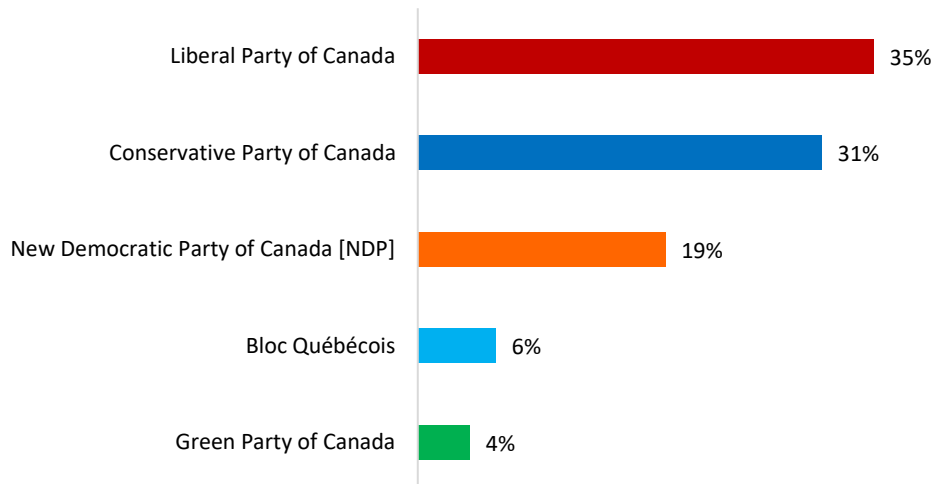
Part Three: Vote intention

While the Conservative Party formalizes its new agenda and the Liberals build an upcoming budget, both parties appear well shy of a majority if an election were held in the near term. The Liberals lead in vote intention at 35 per cent, four points ahead of the opposition CPC at 31 per cent. The NDP finds itself in a familiar position, the preferred party of one-in-five Canadians (19%).

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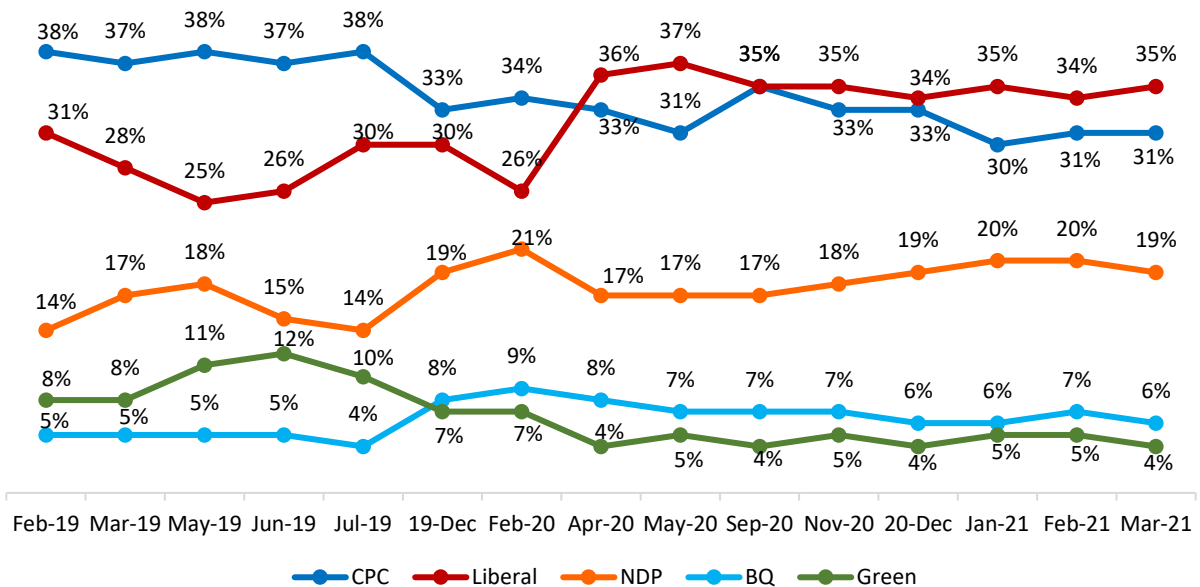
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**Federal vote intention
(Decided voters, n=4,630)**



This represents little change in vote intention since the beginning of the year:

**Federal vote intention over time
Leaning and decided voters**



Region and major urban areas

All three parties generate significant but not overwhelming support in British Columbia. The CPC dominates eastward until reaching Ontario, where the Liberals garner a six-point advantage. The Liberals hold an important 10-point advantage over the Bloc Québécois in Quebec and a significant advantage in Atlantic Canada.

Federal vote intention, including leaners, decided voters only:										
(unweighted sample sizes)	Total (4,630)	Region								
		BC (572)	AB (567)	SK (465)	MB (458)	ON (972)	QC (769)	NB (238)	NS (293)	NL (219)
Liberal Party	35%	33%	19%	17%	26%	38%	37%	39%	44%	50%
Conservative Party	31%	31%	53%	56%	43%	32%	17%	29%	27%	29%
NDP	19%	24%	16%	15%	23%	22%	13%	14%	20%	20%
Bloc Québécois	6%	-	-	-	-	-	27%	-	-	-
Green Party	4%	7%	1%	2%	4%	4%	3%	10%	6%	1%
Other Party	5%	5%	11%	10%	4%	3%	3%	8%	4%	-

**Because its small population precludes drawing discrete samples over multiple waves, data on Prince Edward Island are not released.*

Checking in on the vote picture in Canada's urban centres, the Liberals hold large leads in Metro Vancouver, the GTA and Montreal, while larger cities in Alberta and Saskatchewan lean heavily Conservative. Perhaps most interesting is Winnipeg, where all three major parties garner at least 29 per cent of the intended vote:

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Federal vote intention, including leaners, decided voters only:										
(unweighted sample sizes)	Total (4,630)	Major City								
		VAN (292)	CGY (174)	EDM (185)	REG (117)	SSK (112)	WPG (245)	GTA (391)	MTL (313)	HFX (140)
Liberal Party	35%	40%	23%	21%	21%	20%	34%	43%	47%	43%
Conservative Party	31%	25%	51%	46%	53%	43%	32%	28%	10%	22%
NDP	19%	25%	18%	22%	17%	27%	29%	21%	16%	26%
Bloc Québécois	6%	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	20%	-
Green Party	4%	7%	2%	1%	1%	2%	3%	5%	4%	5%
Other Party	5%	3%	7%	10%	8%	8%	2%	2%	3%	4%

Age and gender

Importantly for the CPC, the party is first choice for all male age groups. Meanwhile, young women prefer both the NDP and Liberals over the Conservatives, while women over the age of 34 offer high levels of support to the incumbents:

Federal vote intention, including leaners, decided voters only:							
(weighted sample sizes)	Total (4,630)	Age and Gender					
		Male			Female		
		18-34 (634)	35-54 (779)	55+ (835)	18-34 (647)	35-54 (832)	55+ (903)
Liberal Party	35%	28%	30%	28%	33%	40%	45%
Conservative Party	31%	33%	41%	43%	18%	24%	28%
NDP	19%	25%	14%	10%	38%	22%	13%
Bloc Québécois	6%	4%	6%	11%	4%	5%	8%
Green Party	4%	5%	3%	3%	6%	5%	3%
Other Party	5%	6%	6%	5%	3%	5%	3%

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

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

For detailed results by fine age groups, [click here.](#)

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