

Federal Politics: Liberals open more daylight over CPC; but opposition leaders seen as better on core issues

Trudeau preferred on COVID-19, O'Toole leads on economic issues, Singh on affordability and poverty

August 5, 2021 – The threat of a fourth wave of COVID-19, driven by the highly contagious Delta variant, has Canadian governments and health officials pulling out all the stops to get their constituents fully vaccinated against the virus.

So far, however, it has had little effect on the march towards what is expected to be a September general election.

The latest data from the non-profit Angus Reid Institute finds the Liberal Party holding a five-point advantage over the opposition Conservatives, as pandemic management rises in the minds of Canadians as an issue critical to them, and the country.

Indeed, COVID-19 management is up nine points since last week as a top priority for Canadians. It now ranks just behind climate change and health-care policy as the clear top three issues facing the nation.

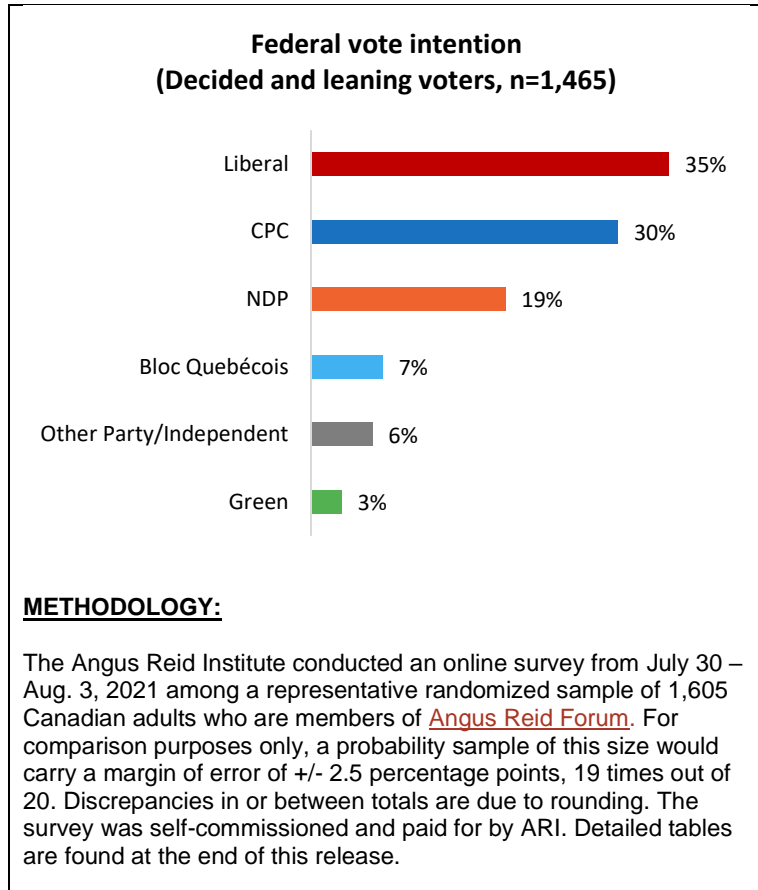
Asked which of the main federal party leaders they prefer on ten core federal issues, Prime Minister Trudeau leads by a considerable margin on COVID-19 management – but holds an advantage in no other area.

For Erin O'Toole, the economy is a strength. While he holds a favourable view among just 27 per cent of Canadians, the opposition leader is the top choice to handle the economy, the deficit and the natural resource file.

Meantime, Canada's most favourably viewed federal leader, the NDP's Jagmeet Singh (48%), is preferred on a number of issues – housing affordability, income inequality, Indigenous affairs and immigration.

More Key Findings:

- 38 per cent of Canadians view Prime Minister Trudeau favourably – unchanged from the previous week. Over half (58%) view him unfavourably ([see detailed tables](#))
- The top five federal priorities for Canadians are climate change (35%), health care (33%), COVID-19 (31%), the deficit (25%) and housing affordability (26%)



CONTACT:

Shachi Kurl, President: 604.908.1693 shachi.kurl@angusreid.org @shachikurl
Dave Korzinski, Research Director: 250.899.0821 dave.korzinski@angusreid.org

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.*

INDEX

Part One: Priorities of Canadians

Part Two: Leadership on important issues

- **Who's best on top issues?**
- **O'Toole best on economic issues**
- **Singh preferred on social governance**

Part Three: Vote intention

- **Four-in-five say they're committed to their vote already**
- **NDP tops 'second choice' preference**

Part One: Priorities of Canadians

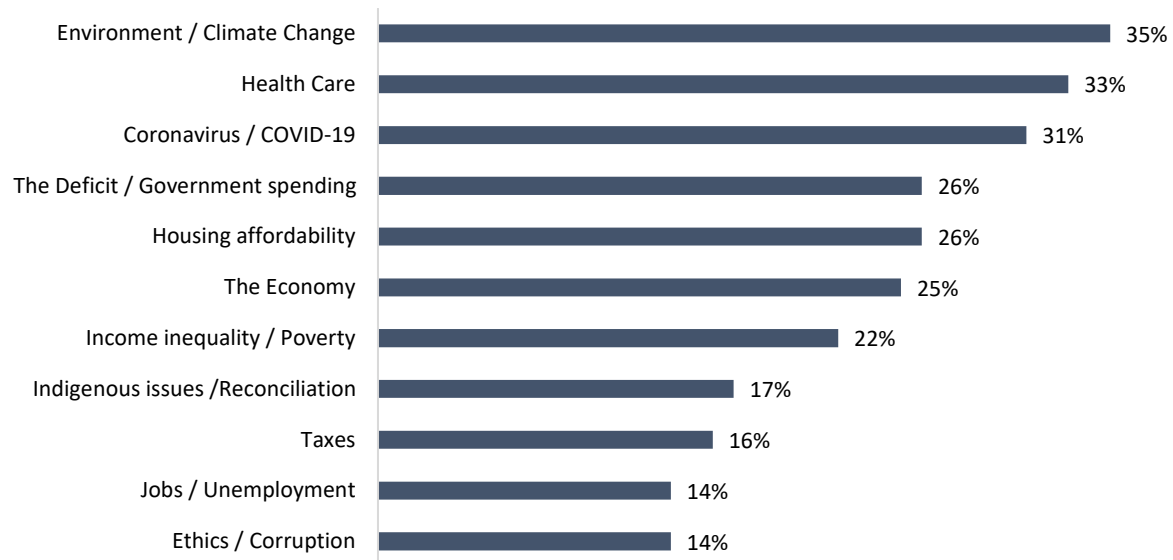
With wildfires raging across the [interior of B.C.](#) and [northwestern Ontario](#), and a fourth wave of COVID-19 threatening communities across the country, many Canadians are likely less keyed into election speculation than pundits and politicians. That said, there are core issues on which the Liberal government and its challengers will be evaluated if and when Canadians head to the polls, which are very much commanding Canadians' attention.

Asked which issues facing the federal government they care most, Canadians identify climate change, health care and the COVID-19 response. Economic issues loom large as well. One-quarter say that the deficit, housing affordability, and the economy are among their top concerns:

CONTACT:

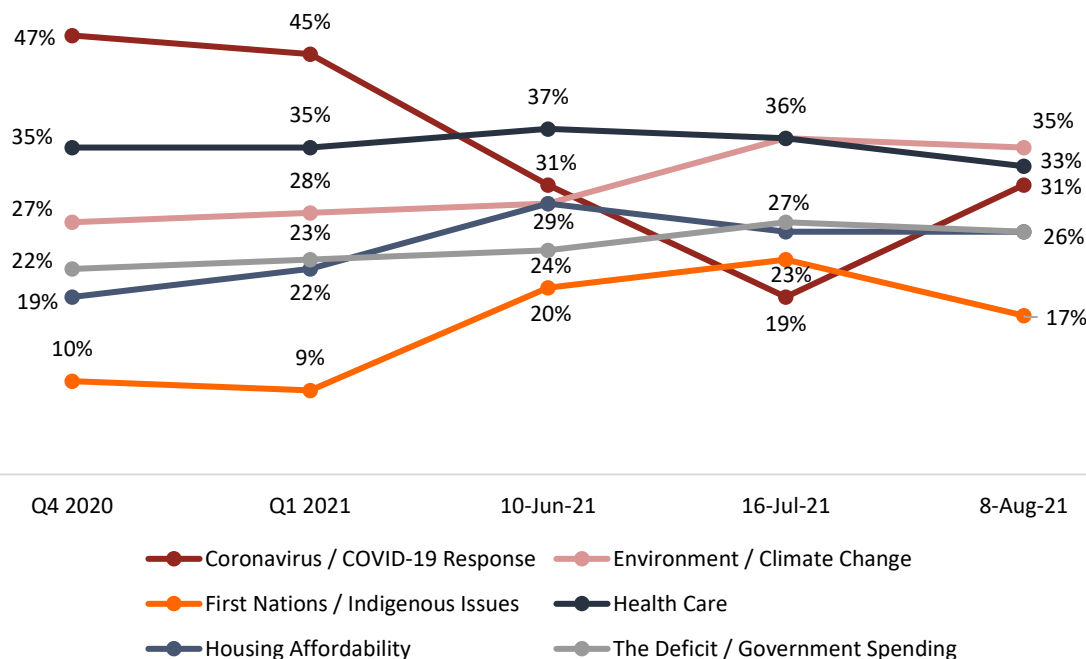
Shachi Kurl, President: 604.908.1693 shachi.kurl@angusreid.org @shachikurl
Dave Korzinski, Research Director: 250.899.0821 dave.korzinski@angusreid.org

**Please rank the issues facing Canada that you care most about
(Up to three selected, items with 10% or greater shown)
(All respondents, n=1,605)**



The biggest change in tracking on these issues is the re-appearance of COVID-19 in the top three, after a brief reprieve. Uncertainty over the impact of the Delta variant, which is running rampant around the globe, is affecting Canadian perspectives:

Canadians' top three issues over time



While health care, COVID-19 and the environment are relatively consistent as top concerns from region to region, residents in Alberta and Saskatchewan are focused on the federal deficit and economic recovery at much higher rates:

Region (Unweighted sample sizes)						
BC (n=185)	AB (n=140)	SK (n=119)	MB (n=119)	ON (n=510)	QC (n=380)	ATL (n=150)
Environment / Climate Change 45%	The Deficit / Government spending 35%	The Deficit / Government spending 41%	Health Care 39%	Environment / Climate Change 36%	Health Care 45%	Health Care 53%
Housing Affordability 36%	The Economy 30%	The Economy 32%	Coronavirus / COVID-19 33%	Coronavirus / COVID-19 36%	Environment / Climate Change 43%	Environment / Climate Change 35%
Coronavirus / COVID-19 29%	Health Care 29%	Taxes 25%	Environment / Climate Change 33%	Housing Affordability 33%	Coronavirus / COVID-19 31%	Coronavirus / COVID-19 32%

Though COVID-19 registers as a major issue everywhere except in Alberta and Saskatchewan, only one party's supporters rank it highly amongst their concerns. It's the top priority for Liberal supporters, who rank the pandemic alongside the environment and health care as their top three. Likely NDP voters are more concerned with housing affordability and income inequality, while likely Conservative voters lean heavily toward economic issues:

Top three issues by current federal vote intention (Weighted sample sizes)			
Liberal (n=517)	CPC (n=437)	NDP (n=276)	Bloc Québécois (n=98)
Coronavirus / COVID-19 46%	The Deficit / Government spending 55%	Environment / Climate Change 54%	Environment / Climate Change 51%
Environment / Climate Change 45%	The Economy 37%	Housing Affordability 39%	Health Care 51%
Health Care 42%	Taxes 31%	Income inequality / Poverty 38%	The Economy 28%

Part Two: Leadership on important issues

Who's best on top issues?

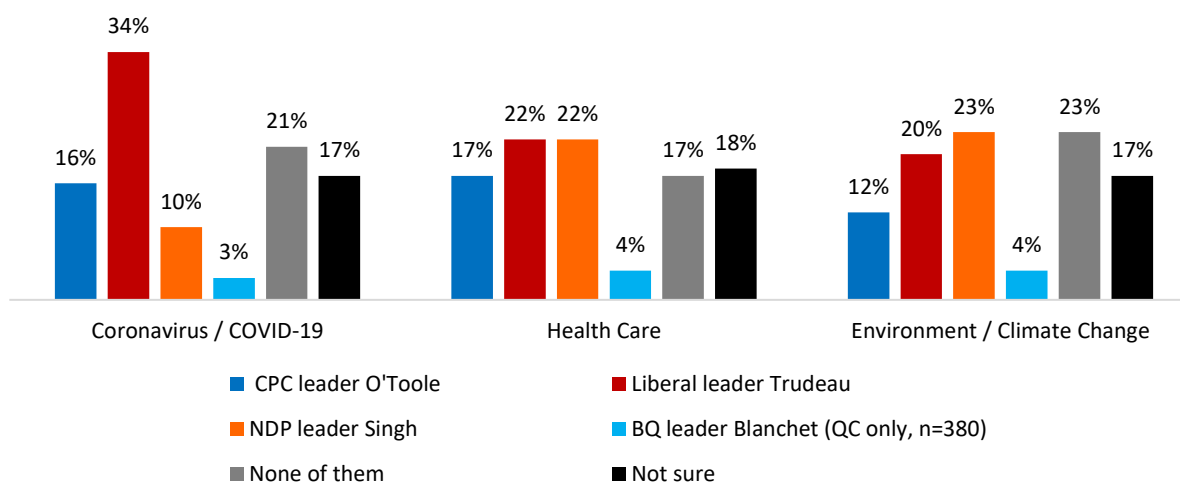
One key aspect of a potential federal election campaign for the Liberal Party will be its pandemic management. Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, alongside top doctor Theresa Tam and Health Minister Patty Hajdu, have been the national face of the response over the past year and a half. Asked which federal party leader is best suited to deal with COVID-19, Trudeau is the clear preference. Trudeau doubles his closest contender on this file – Erin O’Toole (34% to 16%).

That’s the good news for Justin Trudeau. The bad news is that this is the only file among ten canvassed on which the prime minister leads. On health care, Trudeau is in a deadlock with NDP leader Jagmeet Singh as to who is best. Singh holds a small advantage on climate change – though notably, he is tied with “none of them” as best to lead on this file:

CONTACT:

Shachi Kurl, President: 604.908.1693 shachi.kurl@angusreid.org @shachikurl
 Dave Korzinski, Research Director: 250.899.0821 dave.korzinski@angusreid.org

**Which of these leaders is best suited to deal with each of the following issues?
(All respondents, n=1,605)**



O'Toole best on economic issues

While his favourability ratings remain low overall, Erin O'Toole has emerged as the top choice among Canadians for handling energy and economic issues – traditionally a Conservative Party strength, and notably, as detailed above, a top concern amongst the party's likely supporters.

One-in-three Canadians (32%) believe that the CPC leader is best suited to managing the national deficit and government spending. For his part, Erin O'Toole has promised that the Conservative Party would [balance the budget over the next decade](#). This will be an immense challenge as the nation's projected debt ballooned to [record levels](#) this year.

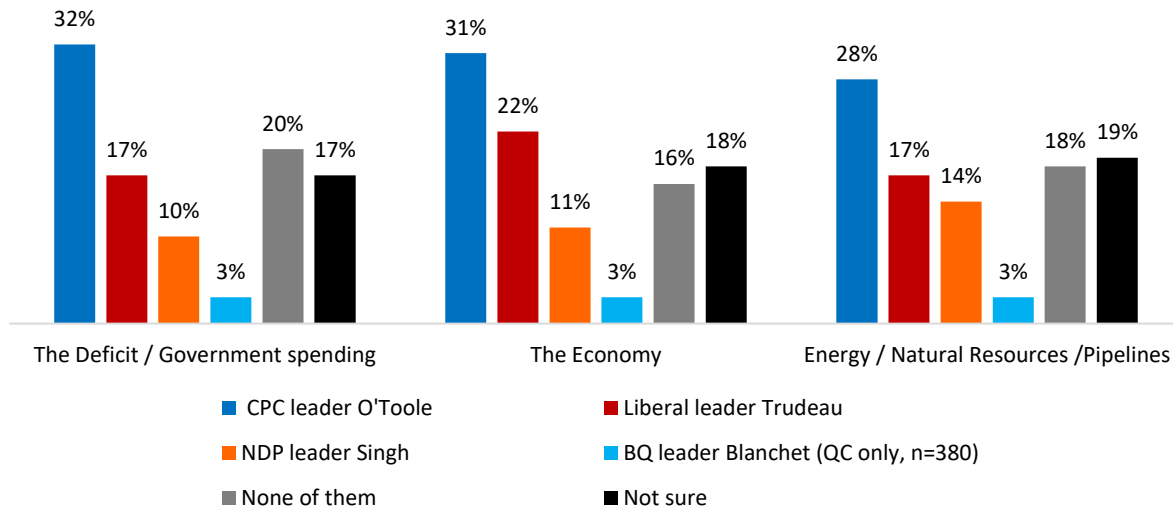
O'Toole has made the economy a central part of his pre-campaign pitch — including proposing significant fiscal reforms aimed at ending the [“mistreatment of Western Canadians.”](#)

Related: [What unites & defines the “West”?](#)

CONTACT:

Shachi Kurl, President: 604.908.1693 shachi.kurl@angusreid.org @shachikurl
 Dave Korzinski, Research Director: 250.899.0821 dave.korzinski@angusreid.org

**Which of these leaders is best suited to deal with each of the following issues?
(All respondents, n=1,605)**



Singh preferred on social governance

Each of the three main federal party leaders evidently has his strengths and weaknesses. For NDP leader Jagmeet Singh, he is seen as the best equipped to tackle a range of socio-economic issues.

When it comes to housing affordability, a top concern in key ridings in British Columbia and Ontario, over a quarter (27%) of Canadians think Jagmeet Singh would do the best job.

Singh also emerges as a clear favourite on questions of income inequality and poverty. One-in-three Canadians (34%) tap the leader of the NDP as the top person for the job, fully 20 percentage points above either Erin O'Toole or Justin Trudeau.

While details on exactly how the NDP might approach these issues remain scarce, they have promised to bring in an [excess profit tax on large corporations](#) and to use this money to support small businesses.

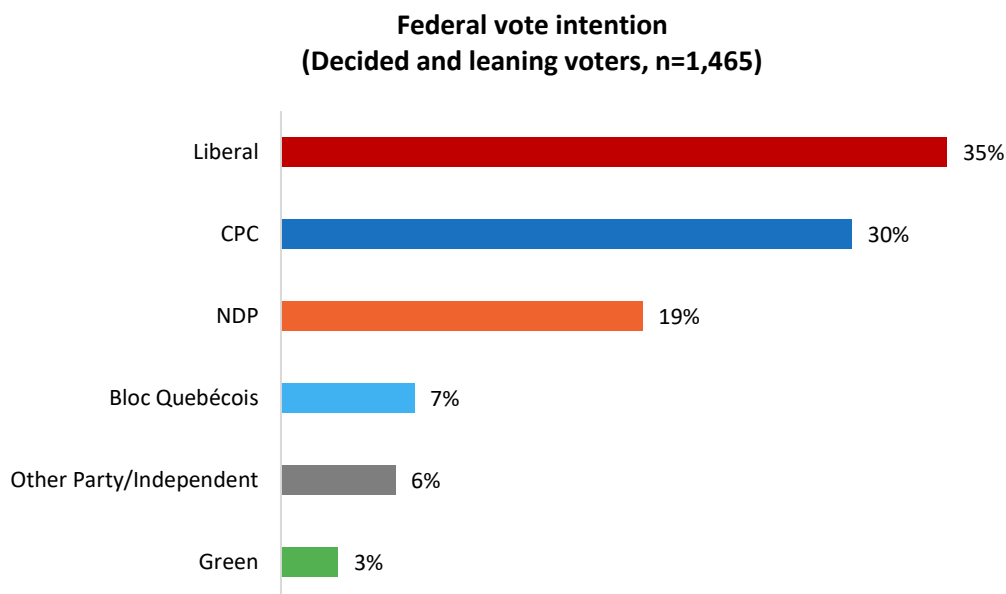
CONTACT:

Shachi Kurl, President: 604.908.1693 shachi.kurl@angusreid.org @shachikurl
 Dave Korzinski, Research Director: 250.899.0821 dave.korzinski@angusreid.org

Which of these leaders is best suited to deal with each of the following issues?						
(All respondents, n=1,605)						
	CPC Leader Erin O'Toole	Liberal Leader Justin Trudeau	NDP Leader Jagmeet Singh	BQ Leader Yves- François Blanchet (QC only, n=380)	None of them	Not sure
Housing affordability	16%	12%	27%	5%	20%	20%
Income Inequality / Poverty	14%	14%	34%	3%	18%	17%
Indigenous issues /Reconciliation	11%	19%	26%	3%	22%	18%
Immigration / Refugees	21%	21%	25%	3%	14%	17%

Part Three: Vote intention

The Liberal Party holds a five-point advantage in vote intention over the opposition Conservatives. Thirty-five per cent of Canadians currently say they will vote for Justin Trudeau's party, while three-in-10 say they will support the Conservatives. The NDP continue to garner support from one-in-five intended voters:

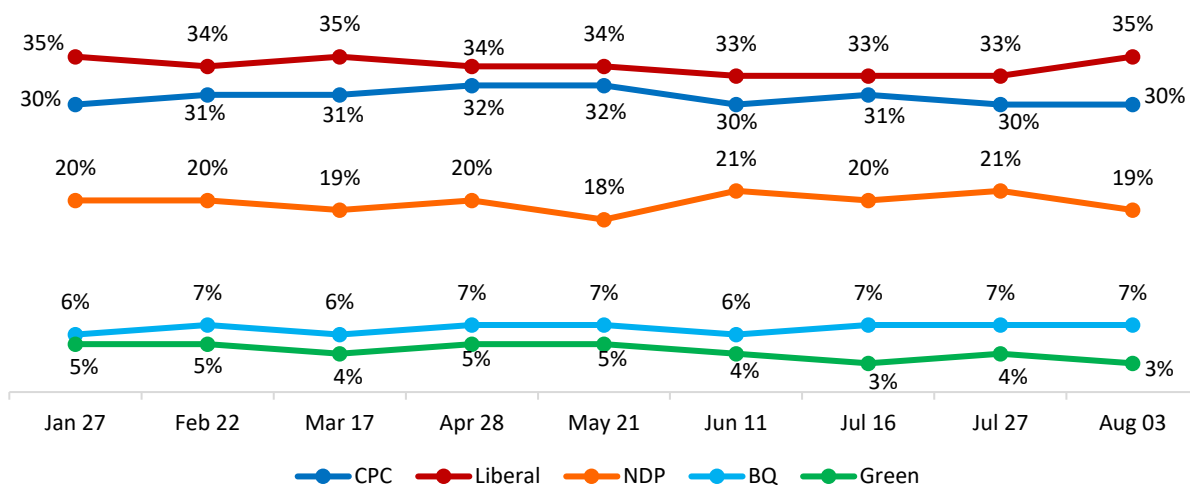


The five-point gap between the Liberals and the Conservatives is the largest noted since January. Since March, when the gap was four points, the two parties have been separated by no more than three per cent of intended voters:

CONTACT:

Shachi Kurl, President: 604.908.1693 shachi.kurl@angusreid.org @shachikurl
 Dave Korzinski, Research Director: 250.899.0821 dave.korzinski@angusreid.org

Federal vote intention over time leaning and decided voters



Across the country, the picture looks similar to [recent ARI snapshots](#): B.C. remains a tight race between the three major federal parties, a majority in Alberta and Saskatchewan and a plurality in Manitoba intend to vote Conservative, and the Liberals enjoy key support in Ontario, Quebec and the Atlantic provinces:

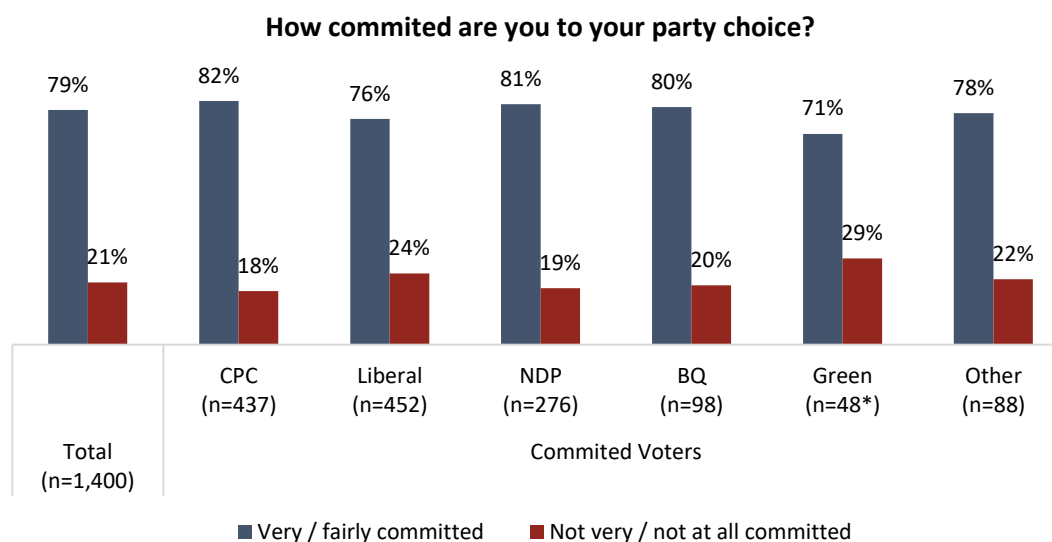
Federal vote intention, including leaners, decided voters only:								
(Unweighted sample sizes)	Total	Region						
	(n=1,465)	BC	AB	SK	MB	ON	QC	ATL
		(n=185)	(n=140)	(n=119)	(n=119)	(n=510)	(n=380)	(n=150)
Liberal Party	35%	33%	18%	18%	27%	41%	38%	40%
Conservative Party	30%	31%	50%	52%	39%	29%	19%	26%
NDP	19%	25%	16%	20%	24%	22%	10%	22%
Bloc Québécois	7%	-	-	-	-	-	28%	-
Green Party	3%	6%	1%	-	1%	3%	3%	7%
Other Party	6%	4%	15%	10%	8%	6%	3%	5%

The youngest voters are the most split. At least one-quarter of men aged 18-to-34 support each of the Liberals, Conservatives and NDP, while women aged 18-to-34 show equal preference for the Liberals (35%) and the NDP (36%). The older demographics show clearer preferences: men 35 and over prefer the CPC while women 35 and over prefer the Liberals:

Federal vote intention, including leaners, decided voters only:							
(Weighted sample sizes)	Total (n=1,465)	Age and Gender					
		Male			Female		
		18-34 (n=163)	35-54 (n=251)	55+ (n=290)	18-34 (n=161)	35-54 (n=277)	55+ (n=322)
Liberal Party	35%	29%	27%	32%	35%	39%	44%
Conservative Party	30%	26%	42%	39%	15%	25%	27%
NDP	19%	25%	15%	11%	36%	20%	17%
Bloc Québécois	7%	4%	7%	10%	3%	4%	9%
Green Party	3%	4%	3%	3%	4%	4%	3%
Other Party	6%	12%	6%	6%	7%	8%	1%

Four-in-five say they're committed to their vote already

Voters who have picked a party are fairly committed. Four-in-five say they are either “very” or “fairly” committed and are unlikely to switch votes. Liberal voters are the least committed of the major parties; one-in-four who are voting Liberal say they are “not very” or “not committed at all”:

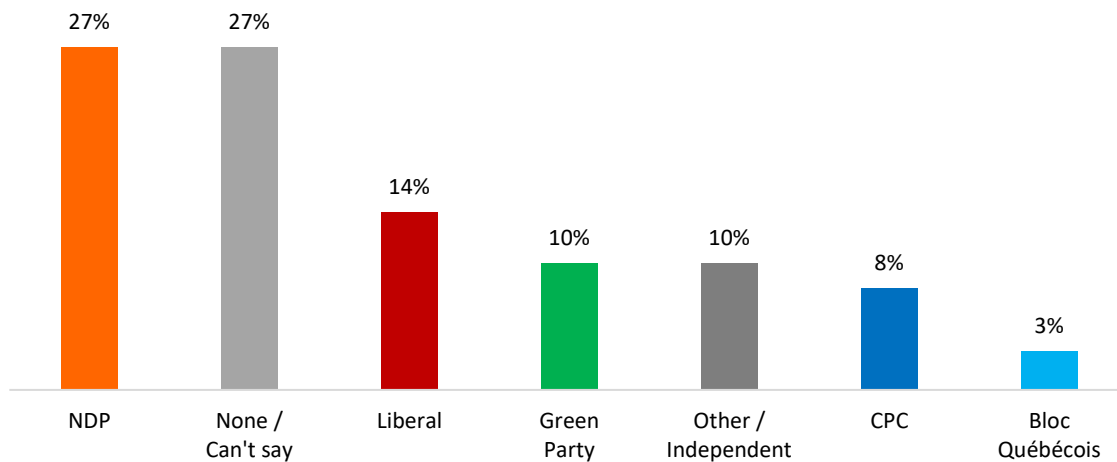


**Small sample size, interpret with caution*

NDP tops ‘second choice’ preference

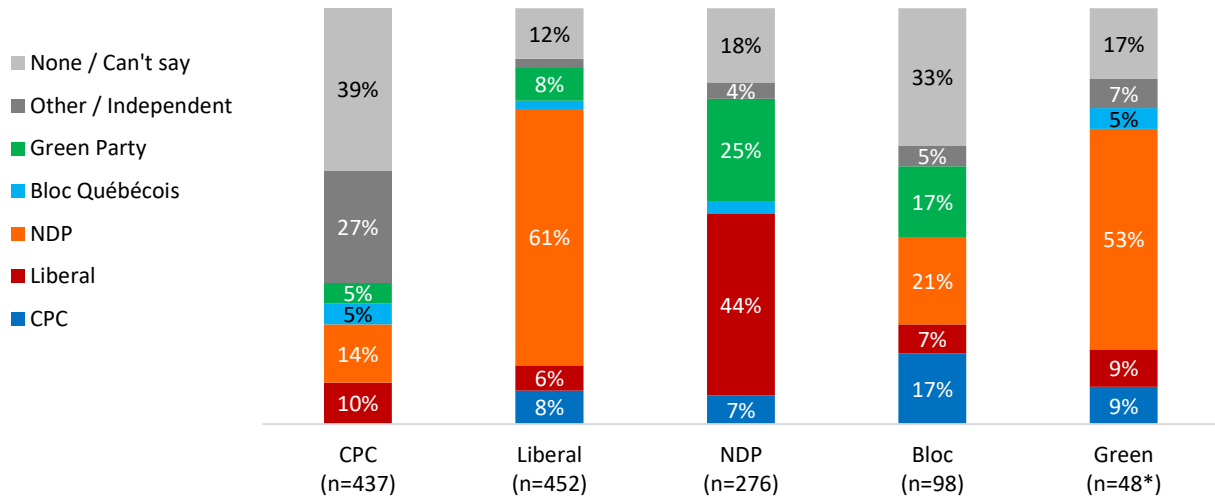
When it looked like Andrew Scheer and the Conservatives could form government during the 2019 election, many NDP supporters voted Liberal to keep him out. In an election this fall, the NDP appear once again to be positioned as a second choice. Over one-quarter of committed voters (27%) say Jagmeet Singh’s party is their second choice, while only 14 per cent say the same of the Liberals and less than one-in-10 would select the Conservatives:

**If you had to choose, which party would be your second choice?
(Committed voters, n=1,444)**



It’s clear there is a significant number of swing voters between the major centrist and left-wing Canadian parties. Three-in-five Liberal voters say their second choice is the NDP and 44 per cent of NDP voters pick the Liberals as their second choice. Conservatives aren’t sure where to turn for their second option: two-in-five have no second option, one-quarter would pick an independent party and slightly more would pick the NDP over the Liberals:

**If you had to choose, which party would be your second choice?
(Committed voters, n=1,444)**



**Small sample size, interpret with caution*

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