

Writ Reaction: Liberal lead fizzles in first week as O'Toole, Singh pick up early campaign momentum

First full week of campaigning sees opinions of Singh, O'Toole improve, while those of Trudeau decline

August 23, 2021 – The battle for the hearts and minds of voters intensified – and evened up – in the first seven days of Canada's 44th federal election campaign.

While commentary surrounding the prelude to the dropping of the writs focused on whether the election would result in a majority or another minority government for the incumbent Liberal Party, new data from the non-profit Angus Reid Institute finds the Liberals in a statistical tie with the opposition Conservatives (33% versus 31% respectively).

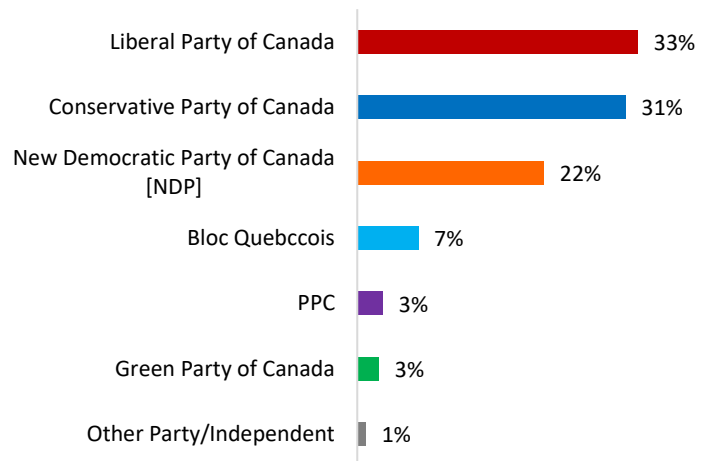
While CPC leader Erin O'Toole has been in the job for a full year, this first week of the campaign has been one of the first focused opportunities many voters have had to assess him, especially as the party released its platform – as yet un-costed – on Aug. 16.

The result: a 13-point increase in the number of people who say their opinion of him has improved in recent days compared to last week. The data also show, however, that O'Toole has a long way to go to win over the electorate. Despite recent improvement, more Canadians still view him unfavourably (59%) than favourably (32%).

By contrast, NDP Leader Jagmeet Singh has not only picked up momentum among voters in the last week with 22 per cent saying their opinion of him has improved, but he is also viewed favourably by more than half the electorate (54%). The news is less encouraging for the man who triggered this election. Opinions of Liberal leader Justin Trudeau have deteriorated over the last week far more than they have improved (7% vs 46%), with more Canadians viewing him unfavourably (59%) than favourably (32%).

Still, the gap has narrowed between the two parties most likely to win the most seats in the house of commons, with a three-point decline for the Liberals in the last week and a meagre one-point increase for the CPC. The NDP also picks up two points.

Vote intention - leaning and decided voters (n=1,584)



METHODOLOGY:

The Angus Reid Institute conducted an online survey from Aug. 20-23, 2021 among a representative randomized sample of 1,692 Canadian 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 +/- 2.5 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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More Key Findings:

- One-in-five women and three-in-ten men over the age of 55 say their opinion of Erin O’Toole has recently improved.
- Jagmeet Singh is viewed favourably by a majority of all age and gender groups other than men over the age of 54. Neither Trudeau nor O’Toole reach 50 per cent among any group.
- A comfortable Liberal lead in Quebec has diminished after the first week of the campaign. The Liberals led the Bloc Quebecois – its key competitor in the province – by 16 points last week. This week the lead is just seven points.

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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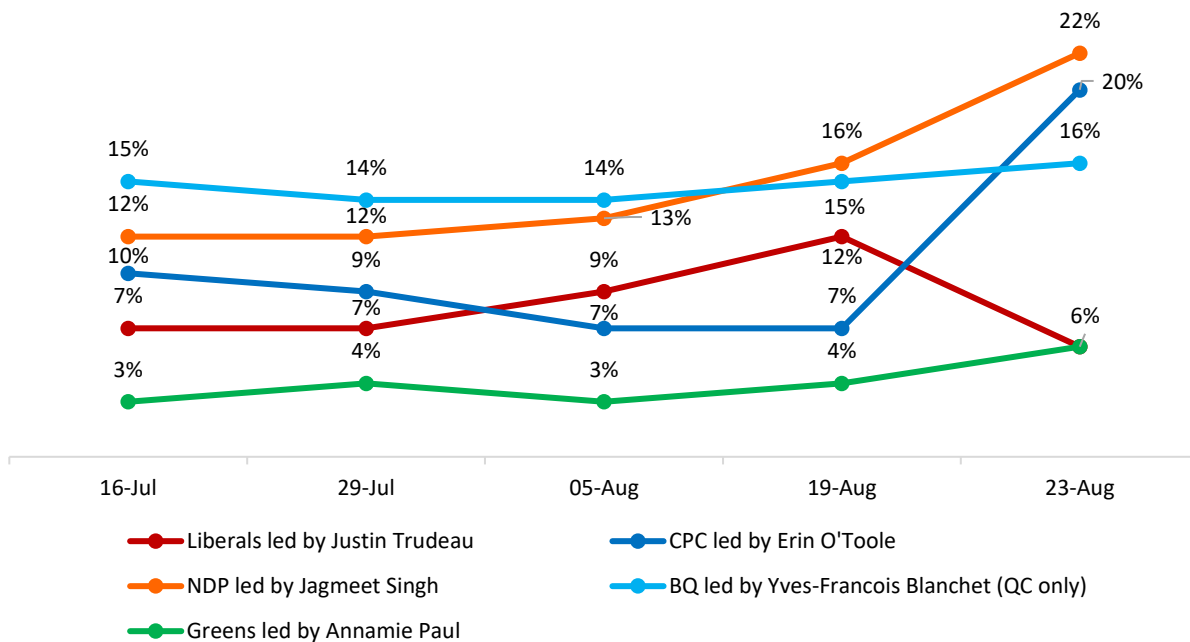
Part One: Momentum

Campaigns are neither won nor lost in the first week, but building momentum is undoubtedly a key component of success. There are signs of improvement for both Conservative leader Erin O’Toole and NDP leader Jagmeet Singh. Canadians were asked how their view of each federal leader has changed in recent weeks. The proportion of those saying their opinion of Erin O’Toole has *improved* has tripled from seven per cent to 20. Singh also enjoys growth on this measure. For Justin Trudeau, the election he called is off to a bumpy start. Just six per cent of Canadians say their view of the prime minister improved in recent days, down significantly from the week before:

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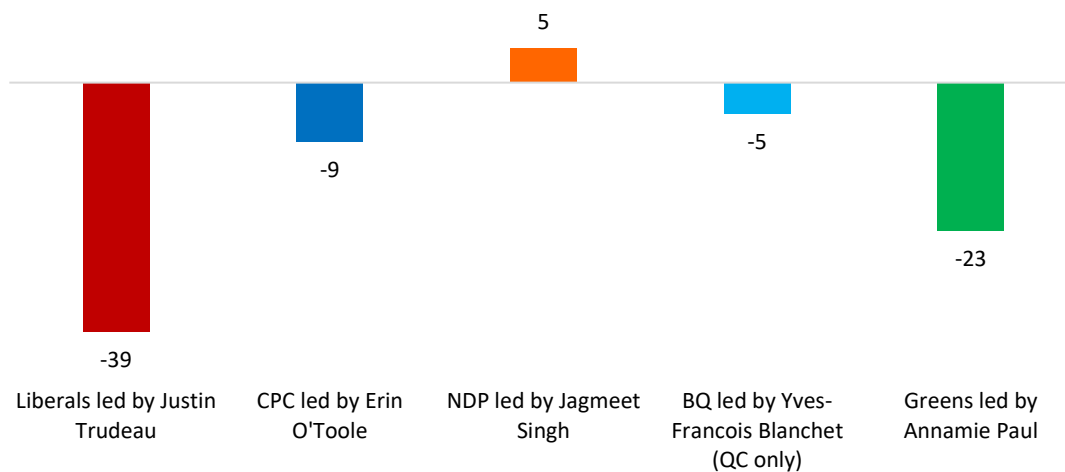
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Over the past few weeks, would you say your opinion of each of the following has improved, worsened or stayed the same?
(Percent choosing 'Improved' shown)



More Canadians saying their opinion of Singh has improved than those who say it has worsened in the last week. The news is worst for the prime minister, who scores a negative 39 on this measure.

Over the past few weeks, would you say your opinion of each of the following has improved, worsened or stayed the same?
(Net improved shown; all respondents, n=1,692)



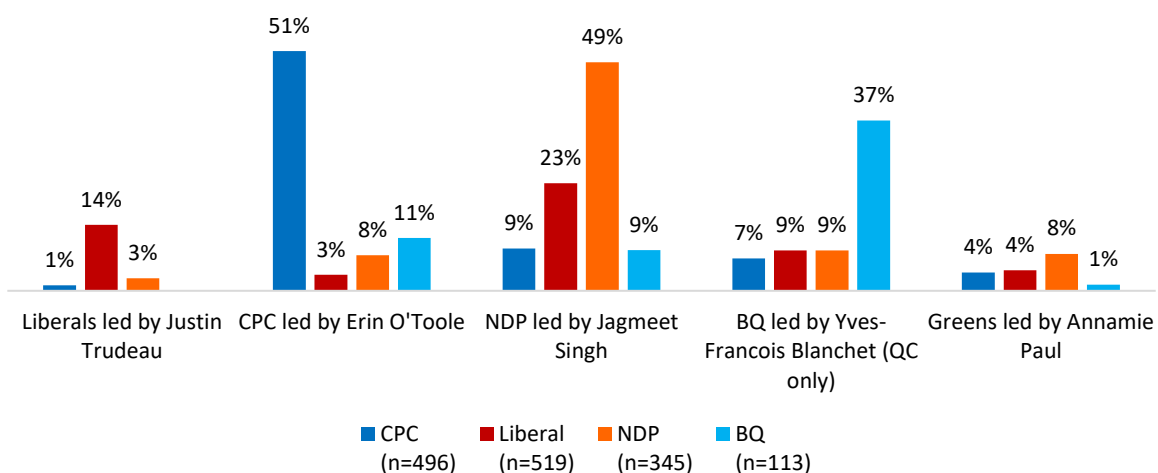
Justin Trudeau and the Liberals didn't even wait until the writ officially dropped before they attempted to drive a wedge between themselves and the Conservatives. Trudeau announced on Aug. 13 — two days before visiting the Governor General Mary Simon to ask her to dissolve parliament — that the COVID-19 vaccine would be mandatory for public servants and most air and rail travellers across Canada by October. Conservative leader Erin O'Toole has said he wouldn't [uphold that mandate](#) if the Conservatives were elected, and instead would employ rapid tests for federal employees and travellers.

The first week of campaigning also saw the two main contenders separate themselves on [child care](#). Trudeau and the Liberals have reached agreements with seven of the ten provinces so far on their way to a goal of reaching an average cost of \$10 a day for child care across the country, while O'Toole and the Conservatives have said they would scrap that plan and instead offer a refundable tax credit of between \$4,500 and \$6,000.

Week two of campaigning turned to a familiar — and consistently highly prioritized — issue for Canadians: health care. Both the Liberals and the Conservatives have pledged [more money](#) to the public health system, while the Liberals accused O'Toole of wanting to bring in privatized, for-profit healthcare in an edited clip flagged as ["manipulated media"](#) on Twitter. O'Toole said he supported Canada's universal healthcare system as the Conservatives asked for Elections Canada to [investigate the tweet](#).

For those who say they will be voting Conservative or NDP, so far, they are liking what they see in their leaders; half of each group say their opinion of their respective party chief has improved. What is worrying for the Liberals is that only 14 per cent of their supporters say the same of Trudeau. In fact, Liberal voters are more likely to say their opinion of Jagmeet Singh has improved (23%) than Trudeau:

Percentage who say their opinion of each leader has improved over the past week



Three-in-ten older men say their opinion of Erin O'Toole is improving, while one-in-five women older than 54 say the same. Those were the [two largest voting groups](#) in the 2019 election. For Trudeau, these groups represent the lowest number of people, just four per cent in each case, who say their opinion of him has recently improved:

Over the past few weeks, would you say your opinion of each of the following has improved, worsened, or stayed the same? (Percentage choosing 'Improved' shown)							
(Weighted sample sizes)	Total (n=1,692)	Age and Gender					
		Male			Female		
		18-34 (n=184)	35-54 (n=297)	55+ (n=332)	18-34 (n=199)	35-54 (n=321)	55+ (n=359)
Singh – NDP	22%	23%	23%	16%	25%	23%	25%
O'Toole – CPC	20%	20%	21%	30%	12%	13%	21%
Blanchet – BQ (QC only)	16%	21%	14%	21%	10%	10%	16%
Trudeau – Liberal	6%	7%	5%	4%	5%	9%	4%
Paul – Green	6%	7%	7%	3%	9%	6%	5%

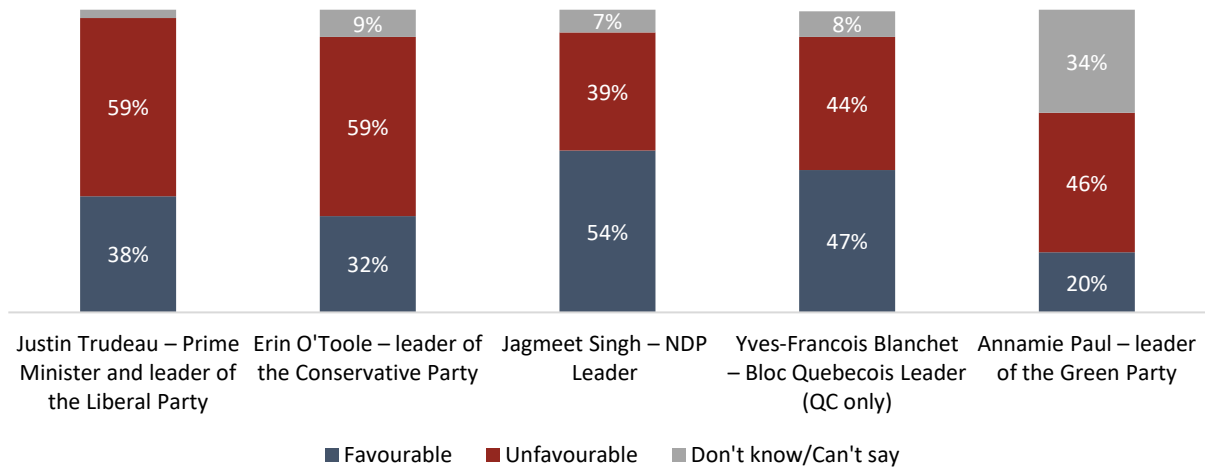
Part Two: Favourability

While there are indications that political conditions are improving for Erin O'Toole, his overall favourability remains well below that of his competitors. Just three-in-ten Canadians (32%) say they view him favourably at this point, while two-in-five say this of Prime Minister Justin Trudeau (38%). The clear winner on this measure is the NDP's Jagmeet Singh, for whom fully half of Canadians (54%) now offer a positive appraisal:

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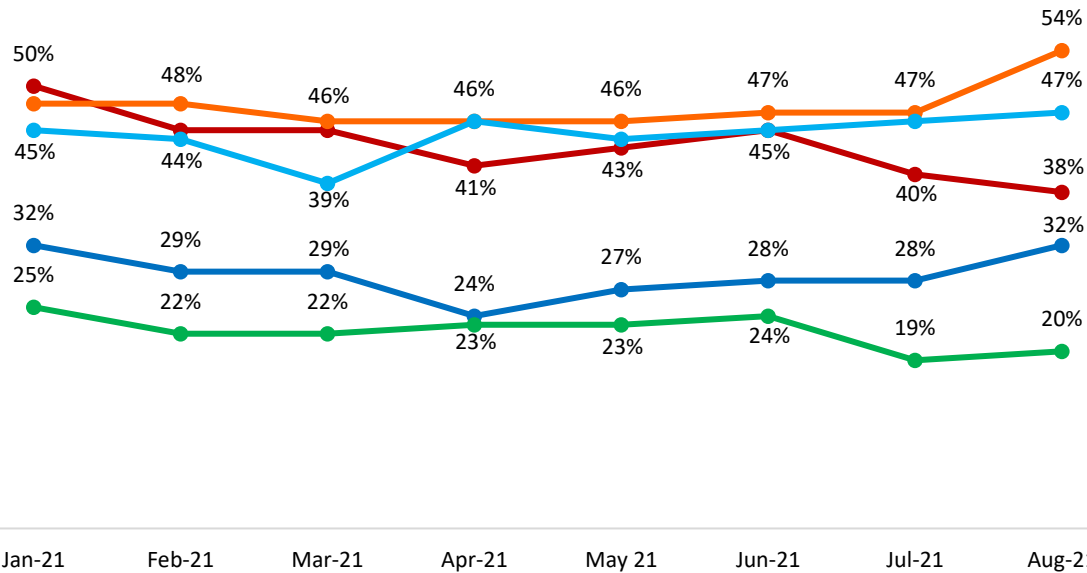
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**Do you have an overall favourable or unfavourable view of the following people?
(All respondent, n=1,692)**



For Singh, 54 per cent represents a new high for favourability in 2021 while O'Toole matches his previous high achieved in January. On the other hand, Trudeau's 38 per cent favourability represents a new low after enjoying 50 per cent approval to start the year:

Leader favourability over time



- Justin Trudeau – Prime Minister and leader of the Liberal Party
- Erin O'Toole – leader of the Conservative Party
- Jagmeet Singh – NDP Leader
- Yves-Francois Blanchet – Bloc Quebecois Leader (QC only)
- Annamie Paul – leader of the Green Party

Trudeau’s highest approval is among women aged 35 to 54, while his lowest is among men over the age of 55. O’Toole enjoys near majority approval among older men, while only one-in-five of women aged 18 to 34 say they approve of the Conservative leader. A majority of all age groups — except men 55 and over — approve of Singh:

Leader favourability							
(Weighted sample sizes)	Total (n=1,692)	Age and Gender					
		Male			Female		
		18-34 (n=184)	35-54 (n=297)	55+ (n=332)	18-34 (n=199)	35-54 (n=321)	55+ (n=359)
Singh – NDP	54%	54%	52%	39%	61%	64%	55%
Blanchet – BQ (QC only)	47%	47%	50%	62%	37%	39%	45%
Trudeau – Liberal	38%	31%	41%	28%	39%	49%	40%
O'Toole – CPC	32%	28%	36%	47%	20%	25%	30%
Paul – Green	20%	18%	22%	14%	31%	21%	16%

Though the trend in his favourability is concerning for Trudeau, his best results come from the country's two largest provinces, where O'Toole receives some of his lowest marks. Just one-quarter (27%) of Quebecers view O'Toole favourability compared to 44 per cent who say the same of Trudeau:

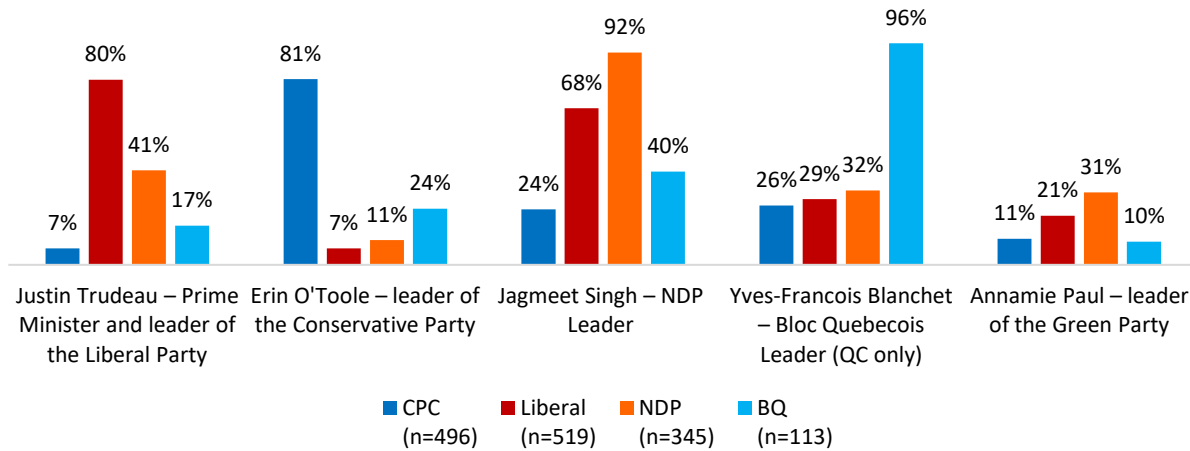
Leader favourability								
(Unweighted sample sizes)	Total (n=1,692)	Region						
		BC (n=294)	AB (n=158)	SK (n=120)	MB (n=113)	ON (n=459)	QC (n=395)	ATL (n=150)
Singh – NDP	54%	56%	41%	34%	50%	59%	49%	62%
Blanchet – BQ (QC only)	47%	-	-	-	-	-	47%	
Trudeau – Liberal	38%	34%	24%	19%	27%	43%	44%	41%
O'Toole – CPC	32%	32%	38%	48%	45%	32%	27%	25%
Paul – Green	20%	21%	18%	6%	14%	21%	21%	16%

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The vote swing between the NDP and Liberal Party also plays a role in determining the outcome of federal elections. Both parties' bases have warmer feelings for one another's leaders than any other party leaders, but Liberal voters look more kindly on Singh than NDP voters look on Trudeau.

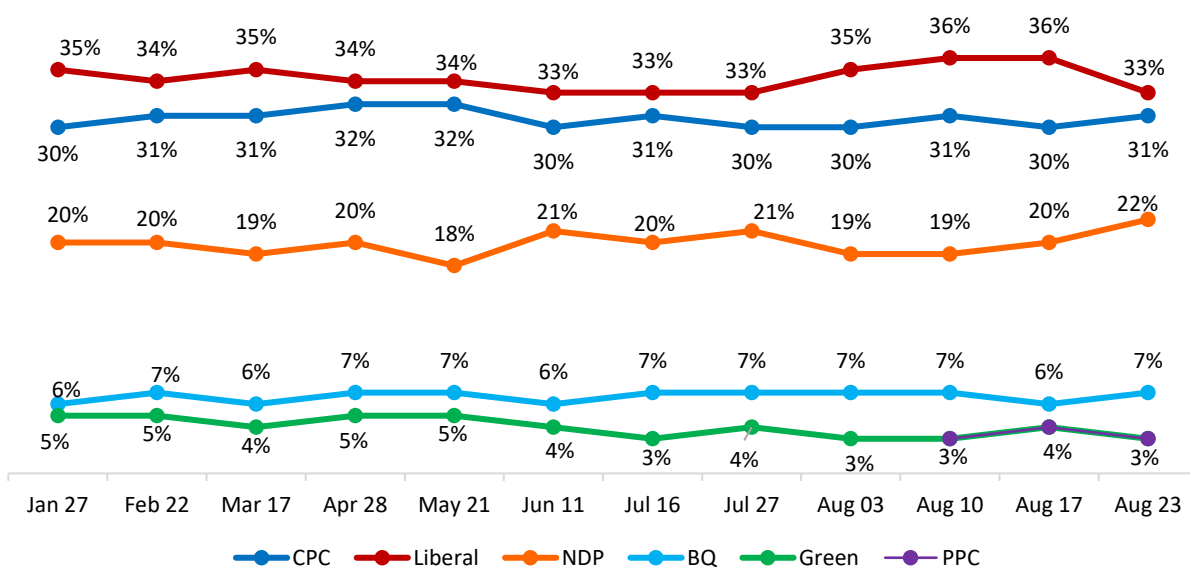
Leader favourability by current vote intention



Part Three: Vote intention

The upshot of the first week of the campaign is a tightening of vote intention, which now sees the Liberal and Conservative Parties statistically tied after the Liberals held at least a five-point advantage throughout the first three weeks of August:

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



Moving west to east, the vote intention picture varies vastly across the nation.

- In British Columbia, a consistently tight race remains so, with all three parties generating between 27 and 32 per cent of vote share
- In Alberta, Saskatchewan, and Manitoba, the Conservative Party looks poised to gain a comfortable majority of seats
- In Ontario, the Liberals lead by six points over the opposition CPC, while 23 per cent say they will support the NDP
- In Quebec, the Liberal Party leads the CPC by 20 points, but holds just a seven-point edge over the Bloc Québécois
- In Atlantic Canada, the Liberals lead the CPC by six points, and the NDP by 10

Federal vote intention, including leaners, decided voters only:								
(Unweighted sample sizes)	Total (n=1,584)	Region						
		BC (n=178)	AB (n=134)	SK (n=120)	MB (n=113)	ON (n=424)	QC (n=371)	ATL (n=127)
Liberal Party	33%	27%	19%	10%	25%	38%	36%	37%
Conservative Party	31%	32%	46%	62%	46%	32%	17%	31%
NDP	22%	30%	24%	19%	26%	23%	13%	27%
Bloc Québécois	7%	-	-	-	-	-	29%	-
People's Party of Canada	3%	4%	6%	4%	2%	3%	2%	3%
Green Party	3%	6%	1%	-	2%	3%	2%	-
Other Party	1%	1%	5%	5%	-	-	1%	2%

The age and gender story is one with competition in nearly every group. Consider that five points separate the three main parties among young men, with the NDP leading at just 31 per cent. The CPC and LPC split votes close to evenly among men between the ages of 35 and 54, while older men show a clear preference for the Conservatives.

Among young women, the Liberals and New Democrats are in a tie. Women older than 34 lean toward the incumbent Liberals, but nonetheless, show considerable support for all three of the leading parties:

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Federal vote intention, including leaners, decided voters only:							
(Weighted sample sizes)	Total (n=1,470)	Age and Gender					
		Male			Female		
		18-34 (n=161)	35-54 (n=267)	55+ (n=290)	18-34 (n=171)	35-54 (n=272)	55+ (n=310)
Liberal Party	33%	26%	31%	22%	36%	42%	38%
Conservative Party	31%	28%	33%	46%	17%	27%	29%
NDP	22%	31%	20%	15%	35%	22%	18%
Bloc Québécois	7%	3%	6%	12%	4%	5%	9%
People's Party of Canada	3%	7%	5%	3%	5%	2%	2%
Green Party	3%	4%	2%	2%	3%	1%	3%
Other Party	1%	-	2%	1%	-	1%	1%

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

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