

## Ontario Election: Voters, preoccupied with inflation, cost of living worries are unenthusiastic about their choices

*Those concerned about inflation, economic recovery lean heavily toward re-electing PCPO*

**May 27, 2022** – As a general election campaign in Canada's most populous province enters its final week, Ontarians themselves are preoccupied with their costs of living. And on this critical issue, no major party leader appears to have the enthusiastic endorsement of the electorate.

The latest data from the non-profit Angus Reid Institute finds that while nearly two-thirds of Ontarians find PCPO leader Doug Ford unappealing, they don't much care for NDP leader Andrea Horwath or Liberal leader Steven Del Duca, either. Both opposition leaders hold either the same or less appeal than the incumbent.

And while Ford remains the top choice for best premier among Ontarians, only 35 per cent choose him, with Horwath and "Not Sure" statistically tied for second place (21% and 20% respectively) on this measure.

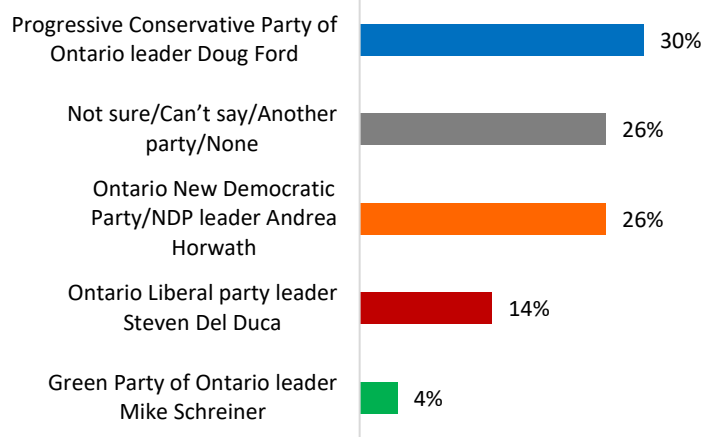
Thus, a government that has left Ontarians largely [dissatisfied in recent months](#) appears poised to earn a second mandate against the backdrop of economic anxiety and uncertainty.

The Ontario Progressive Conservatives hold a comfortable lead over the Liberals and the NDP, with 38 per cent of the decided vote, as the two main opposition parties battle for supremacy among non-Conservative voters (26% and 24% each). Notably, the PCPO advantage is found among people over the age of 55 – a demographic historically [more likely to cast a ballot](#) during the voting period.

### More Key Findings:

- Half of Ontario voters (53%) say they are voting against a party they dislike, while half (47%) are voting for a party they truly want to support. Two-in-five PCPO (43%) and Liberal (40%) voters and three-in-five NDP voters (58%) say they are voting for a party rather than against one.
- No party leader is appealing to more than 34 per cent of Ontario residents (Horwath). Ford is appealing to 33 per cent, while Del Duca is appealing to 21 per cent.

### What about making your life more affordable? Which of these leaders do you think is best suited to handle this? (All respondents, n=1,455)



### **METHODOLOGY:**

The Angus Reid Institute conducted an online survey from May 20 - 25, 2022 among a representative randomized sample of 1,455 adults in Ontario 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 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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- The PCPO's electoral advantage is generated from a competitive race in the 416, a 12-point lead over the Liberals in the 905, and a considerable advantage in the rest of the province.

### **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: Affordability dominates election priorities**

Canada – [and much of the world](#) – is currently dealing with a rash of inflation. The price of Statistics Canada's "basket of goods" used to measure inflation, rose nearly seven per cent [year over year in Ontario](#), while staples such as [groceries and fuel rose even quicker](#).

#### **Related: Interest in Rates: Almost half want BoC to take wait-and-see approach before raising interest rates further**

Little wonder, then, that cost of living is foremost in Ontarians' minds as they prepare to vote. Three-in-five (58%) say inflation and cost of living is among the top three issues they care most about personally. The province's health system is a top concern for two-in-five (43%). Housing affordability (36%), a long-time problem for many in the province, especially in urban centres, and economic recovery (26%) are also top of mind.

The latter is as important personally for as many as climate change and the environment (25%), typically [one of the top issues for swing voters](#).

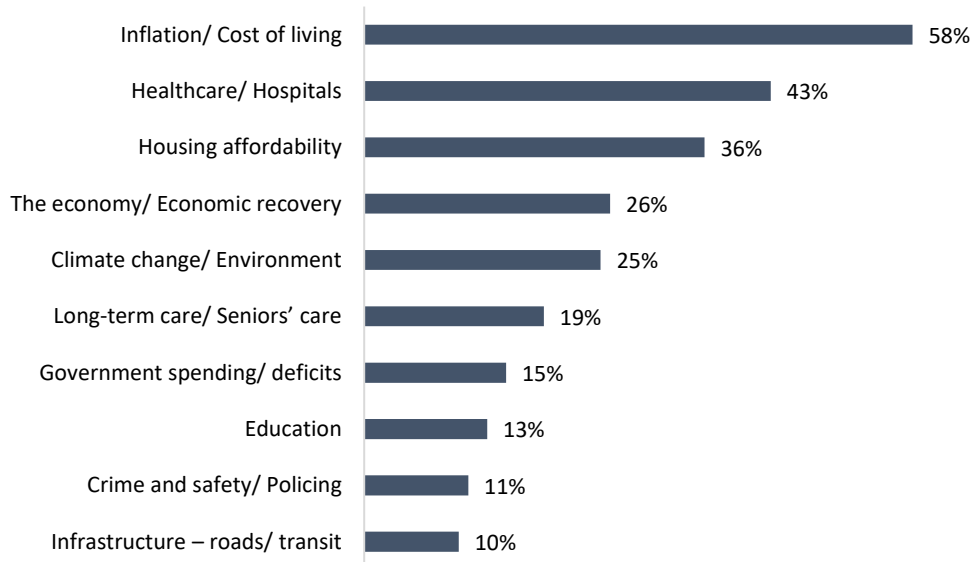
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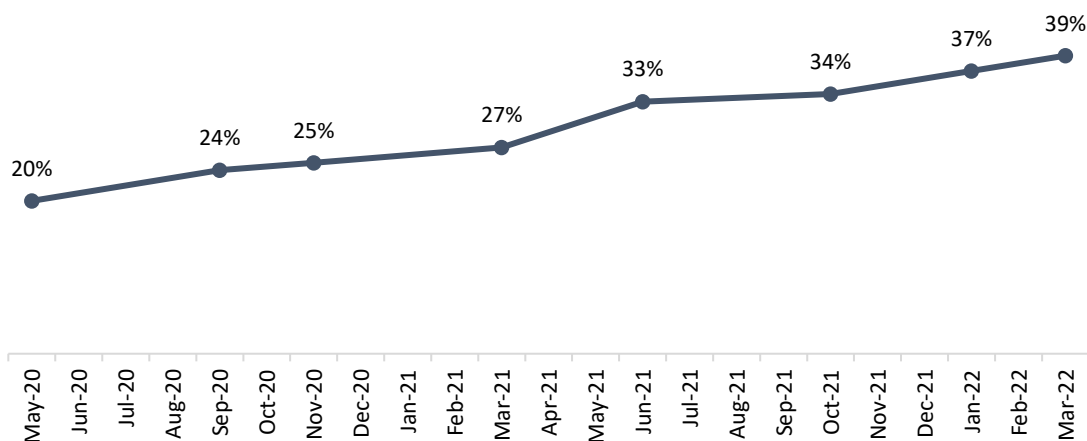
Overall, it appears Ontarians are much more concerned about navigating the turbulent economic waters left in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic than presently handling the virus itself. Fewer than one-in-ten (7%) list managing COVID-19 as a top three issue ([see detailed tables for full list](#)):

**Top issues facing Ontario residents:  
(All respondents, n=1,455; issues over 10% shown)**



Housing affordability for Ontarians has been a rising concern throughout the pandemic. As pandemic-era fiscal policies helped housing prices across the province climb to [unprecedented highs](#), the number of Ontarians concerned about the price of housing has doubled:

**Percentage of Ontarians selecting housing affordability as a top issue over time**



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For those primarily concerned about inflation and the cost of living, the Progressive Conservatives are the top choice by a considerable margin. The same is true of voters who are motivated by the post-COVID-19 economic recovery – here two-thirds have indicated they will vote for the PCPO. There appears to be an aspect of preserving stability with the status quo among both of these groups:

Vote intention by top issue					
(Weighted sample sizes)	Top five issues as chosen by Ontario residents (n=1,455)				
	Inflation/ Cost of living (n=842)	Healthcare/ hospitals (n=633)	Housing affordability (n=517)	The economy/ Economic recovery (n=382)	Climate change/ Environment (n=371)
Progressive Conservative Party of Ontario (PCPO)	44%	34%	31%	65%	11%
Ontario Liberal Party	22%	35%	30%	13%	38%
Ontario New Democratic Party (NDP)	22%	21%	28%	12%	38%
Ontario Green Party	5%	8%	7%	3%	13%
Other party	7%	2%	4%	7%	0%

### Little trust that any leader will make life more affordable

That said, there is no consensus on which of the main party leaders offer the best choice to make life more affordable. Three-in-ten (30%) say PCPO leader Doug Ford is the top option, but nearly as many say NDP leader Andrea Horwath is best to lead on this issue (26%) or that no one is up to the task (26%). Liberal leader Steven Del Duca is the choice to fight inflation for just 14 per cent.

Men, and especially those over the age of 54, are more likely than women to believe Ford will help bring down the cost of living. Younger Ontarians (and women more likely than men) are more apt to put their faith behind Horwath and the NDP:

And what about making your life more affordable, which of the following leaders do you think is best suited to handle this?							
	Total (n=1,455)	Male			Female		
		18-34 (n=143)	35-54 (n=247)	55+ (n=329)	18-34 (n=140)	35-54 (n=258)	55+ (n=331)

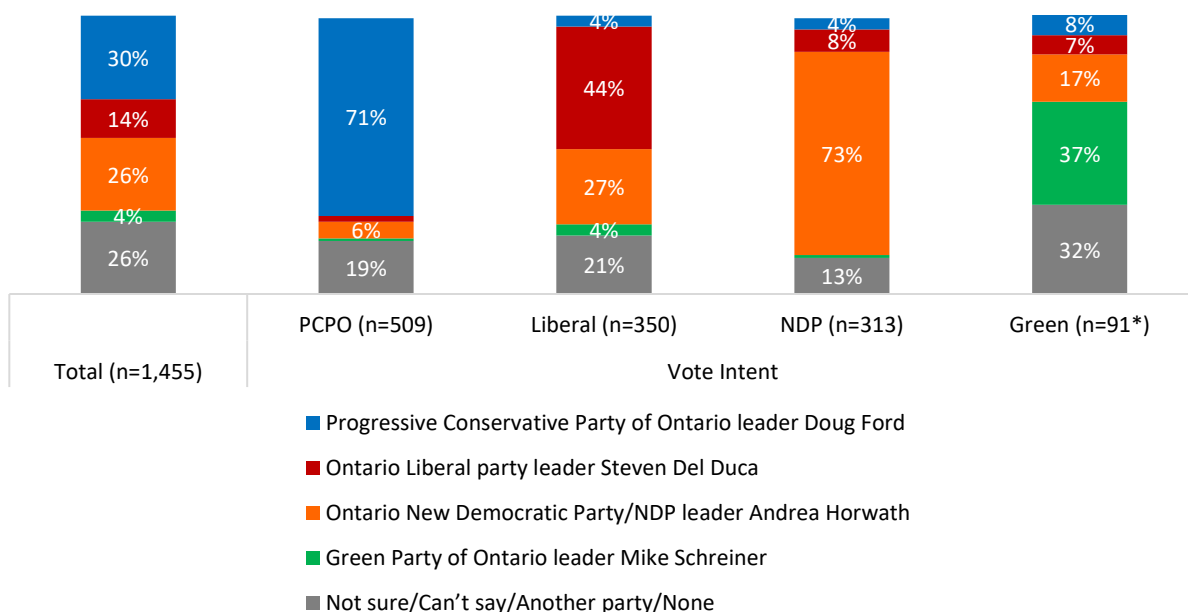
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Progressive Conservative Party of Ontario leader Doug Ford	30%	27%	33%	46%	14%	21%	26%
Ontario Liberal party leader Steven Del Duca	14%	13%	9%	15%	16%	13%	19%
Ontario New Democratic Party/NDP leader Andrea Horwath	26%	31%	26%	15%	42%	31%	26%
Green Party of Ontario leader Mike Schreiner	4%	4%	5%	3%	2%	6%	4%
Not sure/Can't say/Another party/None	26%	26%	28%	22%	26%	30%	24%

For Del Duca, the lack of faith he'll be able to tackle the rising cost of living in the province extends to many of those who say they will vote Liberal in the upcoming election. Fewer than half of likely Liberal voters (44%) say Del Duca is best suited to make life in Ontario more affordable. For likely PCPO and NDP voters, more than seven-in-ten select their own party leader as the top choice on this matter:

**And what about making your life more affordable, which of the following leaders do you think is best suited to handle this?**



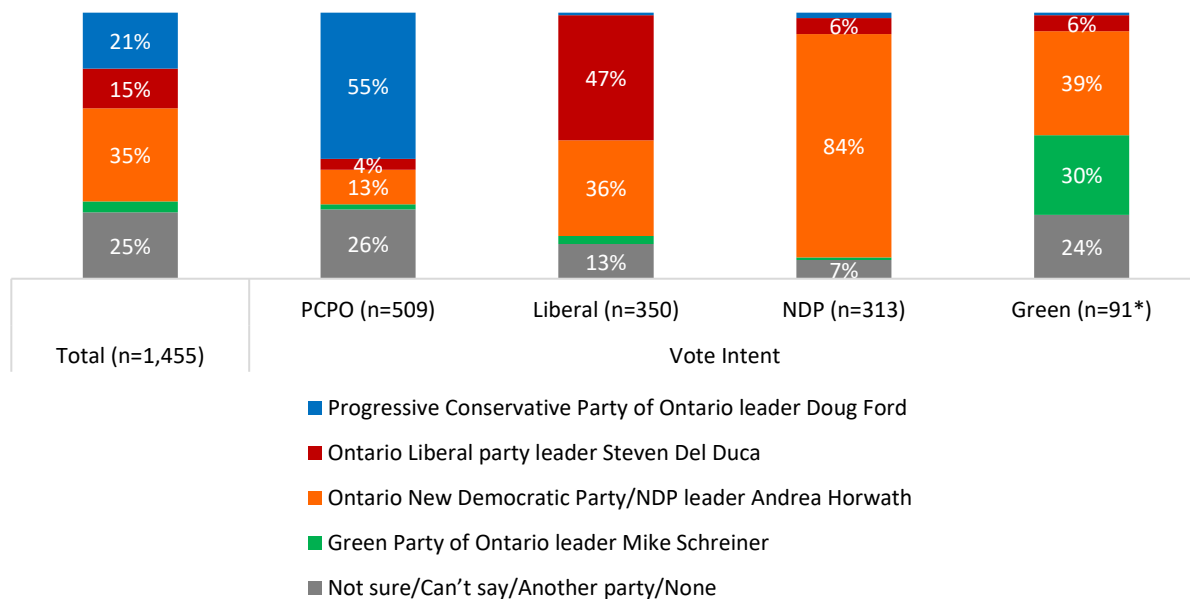
*\*Smaller sample size, interpret with caution*

**Horwath top choice on health care, Ford for job growth**

As shown above, healthcare is also an issue personally important to a significant proportion of Ontarians. When asked who would be best suited to improve the province’s healthcare system, Horwath is the top choice (35%) followed by none of the above (25%). One-in-five (21%) believe Ford is the best option on this matter, while 15 per cent say the same of Del Duca.

Among likely voters for the province’s mainstream parties, those who intend to vote NDP are the most likely to put faith in their leader to improve healthcare in Ontario at more than four-in-five (84%).

**Finally, what about for improving Ontario’s healthcare system, which of the following leaders do you think is best suited to handle this?**



*\*Smaller sample size, interpret with caution*

Again, reinforcing the advantage Ford holds on economic issues, he and his party are the clear favourite when it comes to creating new jobs for Ontarians. That said, unemployment is now at a near 50-year low, so this may not be a key driver of electoral support:

Thinking specifically about creating new jobs for Ontarians, which of the following leaders do you think is best suited to handle this?			
	Total (n=1,455)	Male	Female

		18-34 (n=143)	35-54 (n=247)	55+ (n=329)	18-34 (n=140)	35-54 (n=258)	55+ (n=331)
Progressive Conservative Party of Ontario leader Doug Ford	38%	31%	44%	58%	16%	28%	37%
Ontario Liberal party leader Steven Del Duca	16%	13%	13%	12%	20%	17%	19%
Ontario New Democratic Party/NDP leader Andrea Horwath	18%	22%	16%	10%	29%	20%	18%
Green Party of Ontario leader Mike Schreiner	3%	4%	2%	3%	4%	4%	4%
Not sure/Can't say/Another party/None	25%	30%	25%	17%	31%	31%	23%

## Part Two: Uninspiring leadership

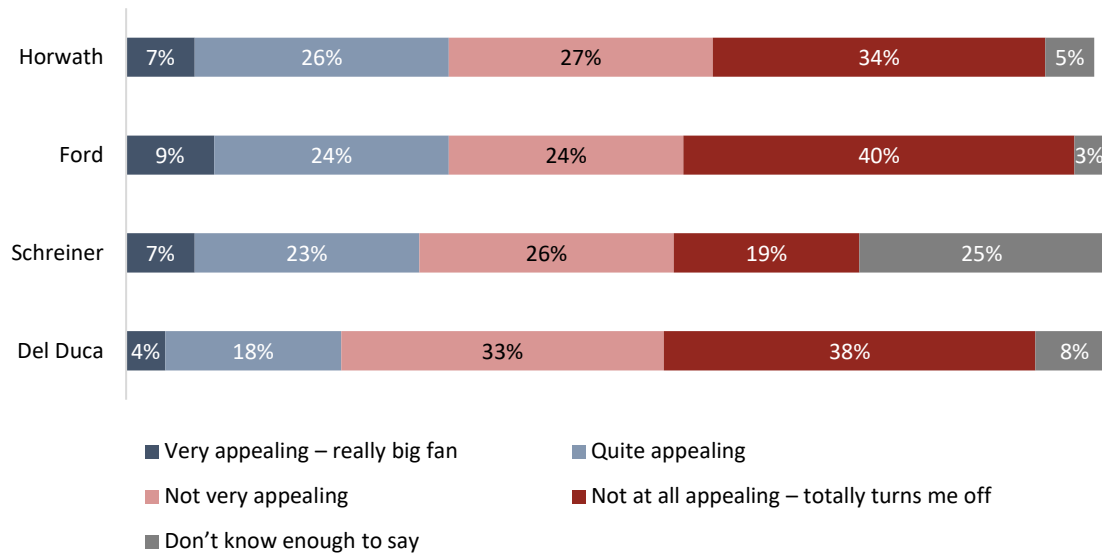
Overall, Ontarians are more negative than positive on their potential options for premier. Horwath (34%) and Ford (33%) are the candidates respondents found most appealing, though for both, almost twice as many say they aren't fans (61% Horwath, 64% Ford). Despite the party's elevated standing compared to the 2018 election, Del Duca has been unable to connect with potential voters. One-in-five (21%) find Del Duca an attractive electoral option, but they are significantly outweighed by those who say the opposite (70%):

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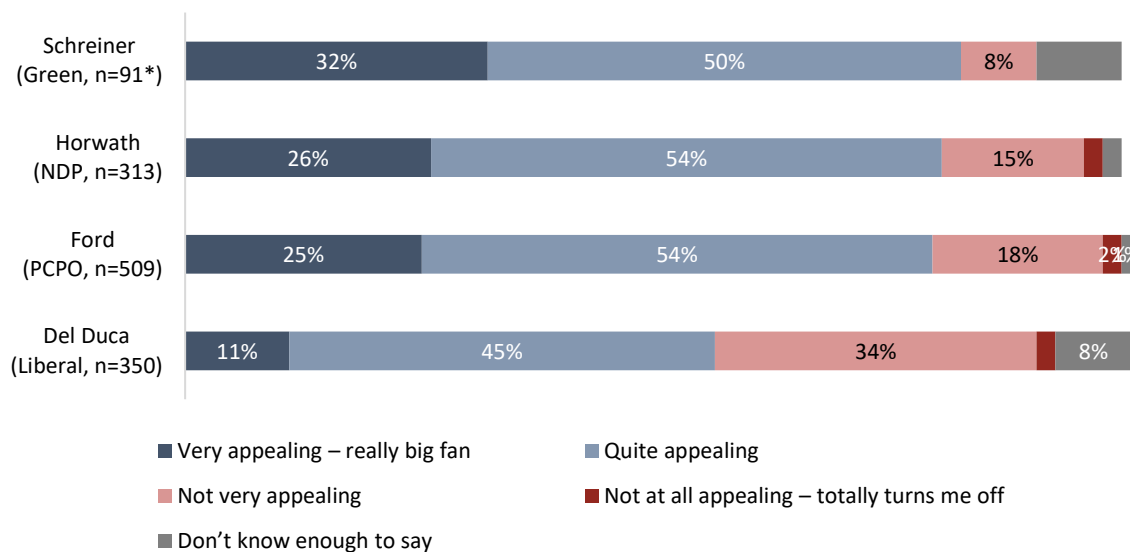
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**How appealing do you find:  
(All respondents, n=1,455)**



Just over half (56%) of those who say they will be voting Liberal in the election say they find Del Duca as an appealing choice. That figure is much less than the attraction professed by other party supporters for their leaders. Indeed, at least four-in-five likely PCPO and NDP voters are fans of their leaders. This muted interest in the Liberal leader is characteristic of the soft support found on a number of different issues for that party:

**How appealing do you find:  
(Among those who intend to vote for that leader's party)**



*\*Smaller sample size, interpret with caution*



### Leader momentum nowhere to be found

Green party leader Mike Schreiner [received positive reviews](#) for his performance during the only leader debate of the election as he looks to add Parry Sound-Muskoka to Schreiner's Guelph seat in Queen's Park. One-quarter (24%) say their impression of Schreiner has improved since the election was called, the highest measure among the mainstream party leaders. As well, Schreiner is the only leader for whom rising assessments outweigh declining ones.

For all other leaders, more Ontarians are likely to say their opinion of them has worsened over the election period than improved.

Since the election was officially called early this month, would you say your opinion of each of the following has improved, stayed the same, or worsened? (Net improved shown)							
	Total (n=1,455)	Male			Female		
		18-34 (n=143)	35-54 (n=247)	55+ (n=329)	18-34 (n=140)	35-54 (n=258)	55+ (n=331)
Progressive Conservative Party of Ontario leader Doug Ford	-18%	-16%	-20%	-5%	-30%	-28%	-17%
Ontario Liberal party leader Steven Del Duca	-15%	-10%	-23%	-36%	0%	-12%	-2%
Ontario New Democratic Party/NDP leader Andrea Horwath	-13%	-7%	-15%	-30%	6%	-3%	-11%
Green Party of Ontario leader Mike Schreiner	10%	16%	7%	1%	14%	11%	20%

### Ford top choice for premier – but not for many

Despite a net worsening opinion of him by the electorate, and [poor approval for much of his term](#), Ford still finds himself at the top of a rather flat heap when it comes to who Ontarians believe will be the best premier. One-third (35%) say this. Horwath is a distant second at 21 per cent, a rate nearly equal to “not sure” (20%). The same number of Ontarians believe Del Duca would be the best premier (12%) as Schreiner (12%).

The belief in Ford being the best premier is highest among men over the age of 54, more than half (54%) believe he is the best choice to lead the province. Horwath is more likely to be the choice of women than men while Del Duca is the third or worst choice among all age-gender groups:

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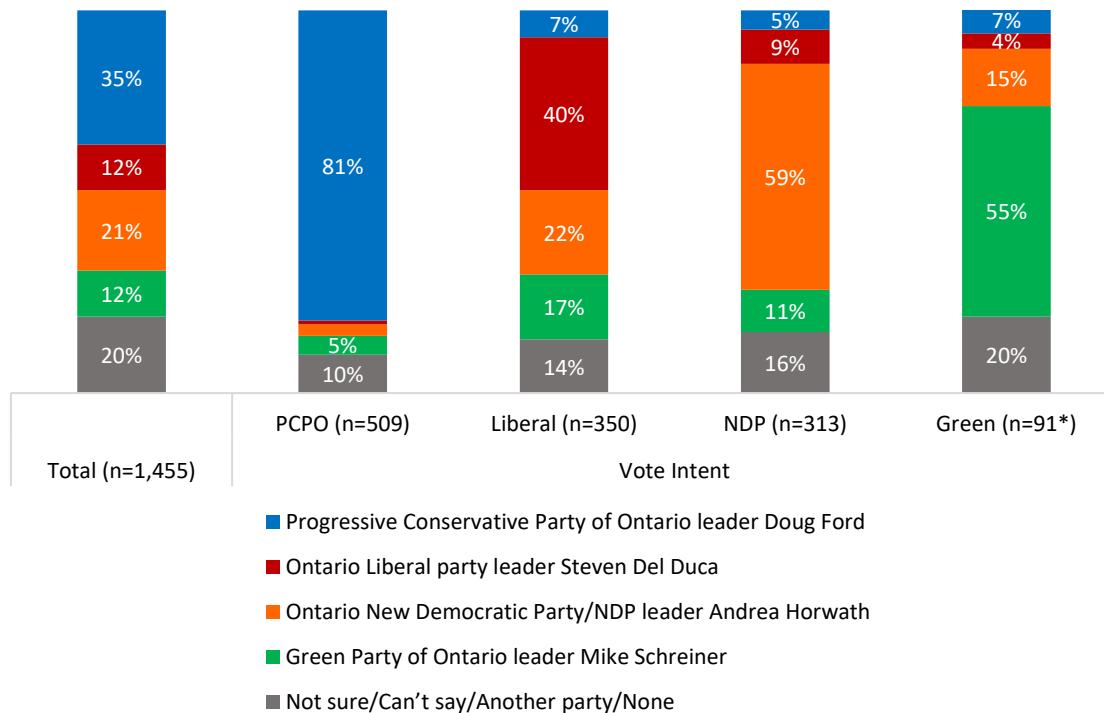
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And setting aside your party preference for a moment, which of the main political party leaders do you think would be the best Premier of Ontario?							
	Total (n=1,455)	Male			Female		
		18-34 (n=143)	35-54 (n=247)	55+ (n=329)	18-34 (n=140)	35-54 (n=258)	55+ (n=331)
<b>Doug Ford</b>	35%	29%	35%	54%	11%	29%	35%
<b>Steven Del Duca</b>	12%	12%	10%	10%	12%	13%	16%
<b>Andrea Horwath</b>	21%	20%	21%	11%	34%	24%	22%
<b>Mike Schreiner</b>	12%	16%	12%	12%	12%	9%	12%
<b>Not sure</b>	20%	22%	22%	13%	31%	24%	15%

*\*Smaller sample size, interpret with caution*

In fact, Del Duca isn't the choice for best premier among a majority of those who say they will be voting Liberal in the election. Three-in-five pick one of the other party leaders or none of the above. Meanwhile, for likely NDP voters, three-in-five (59%) believe Horwath is the best potential premier of the options. Those who say they will vote PCPO are more bullish on their own leader – four-in-five (81%) in that group believe Ford is the best to lead the province:

**Best premier by current vote intention**



*\*Smaller sample size, interpret with caution*

**One quarter say no leader would make them proud as premier**

Ontarians’ pride in their potential premiers appears to be in short supply. One-third say they would be proud of a Premier Horwath if the NDP were to win the election. As many say the same of a repeat Premier Ford if the PCPO emerged victorious. One-quarter (23%) would be proud to call Del Duca their premier were the Liberals to win, but he again faces muted enthusiasm, as two-in-five of his party’s potential voters say they would not be proud to call him premier:

And would you be proud to say each of the following were premier if their party were to win the election?					
	Total (n=1,455)	Vote Intent			
		PCPO (n=509)	Liberal (n=350)	NDP (n=313)	Green (n=91*)
Progressive Conservative Party of Ontario leader Doug Ford	32%	78%	6%	7%	8%
Ontario Liberal party leader Steven Del Duca	23%	3%	61%	27%	7%

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Ontario New Democratic Party/NDP leader Andrea Horwath	33%	7%	42%	80%	36%
Green Party of Ontario leader Mike Schreiner	23%	8%	34%	33%	74%
None of them	25%	20%	18%	13%	15%

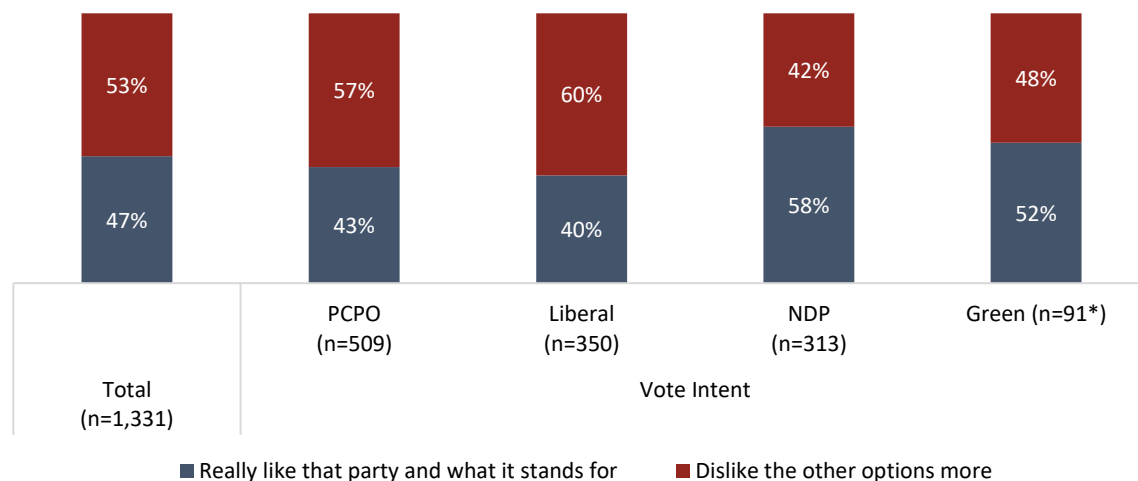
*\*Smaller sample size, interpret with caution*

### Part Three: Vote landscape

#### Half voting for a party they like, half voting against a party they dislike

For half (53%) of Ontarians, this election is about holding their nose and selecting the least-worst option than it is about voting for a party in which they believe. Only for likely NDP voters does belief in their own party (58%) outweigh disliking the other options (42%). Three-in-five of those who say they will vote PCPO (57%) and Liberal (60%) say their vote is more motivated by distaste for the alternative:

#### And thinking of the party you are currently supporting, would you say you: (Among decided voters)



*\*Smaller sample size, interpret with caution*

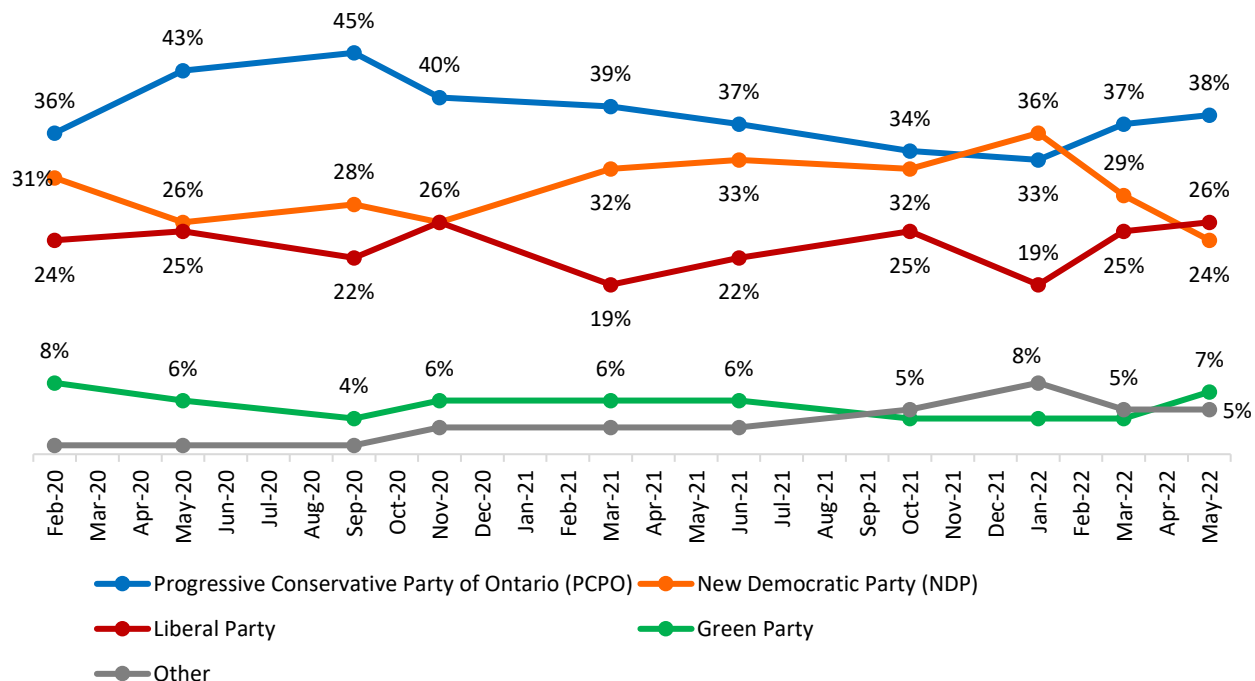
#### Vote intention

In January, Ford was under heavy criticism for his handling of the pandemic – especially in [distributing rapid tests](#) at the height of the Omicron wave – and faced an all-time low in [approval of his job as premier](#). Then, the NDP led in vote intent as voters appeared to favour Horwath’s party over their Liberal rival on the left. In the intervening months, the NDP’s fortunes have declined and the Liberals’ have climbed, but the gap between them and the PCPO has only increased. Two-in-five (38%) say they will vote PCPO in the upcoming election, with the Liberals (26%) and NDP (24%) trailing by double digits in vote intention:

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**Vote Intent - Ontario  
(Decided voters)**



**Age and gender**

This gulf between the PCPO and the two left-of-centre contenders is most significant among men over the age of 55. Three-in-five of men that age say they will vote PCPO, almost quadruple the number of that demographic who say instead they will vote Liberal (16%) or NDP (16%). Women under the age of 35 are the only age group to favour the NDP over the other options, while the Liberals are statistically tied with the PCPO among women 35 and older:

Vote intent (Among decided voters)							
	Total (n=1,331)	Male			Female		
		18-34 (n=133)	35-54 (n=222)	55+ (n=307)	18-34 (n=123)	35-54 (n=236)	55+ (n=304)
Progressive Conservative Party of Ontario (PCPO)	38%	31%	41%	59%	14%	30%	35%
Ontario Liberal Party	26%	25%	22%	16%	35%	32%	32%

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Ontario New Democratic Party (NDP)	24%	26%	23%	16%	42%	23%	23%
Ontario Green Party	7%	7%	7%	7%	5%	9%	6%
Other Party	5%	11%	7%	2%	3%	6%	4%

### Income level

The PCPO lead in vote intent among all income brackets except for those in households earning less than \$25,000 annually. Among that group, one-third (36%) say they will vote for Horwath and the NDP, the most of any income bracket. The NDP's support, however, tails off significantly among the highest earning households. Meanwhile, support for the Liberals is relatively consistent for all income levels.

Vote intent (Among decided voters)							
	Total (n=1,331)	Household Income					
		<\$25K (n=101)	\$25K-\$49K (n=199)	\$50K-\$99K (n=438)	\$100K-\$149K (n=278)	\$150K-\$199K (n=111)	\$200K+ (n=77*)
Progressive Conservative Party of Ontario (PCPO)	38%	24%	39%	40%	35%	47%	55%
Ontario Liberal Party	26%	23%	23%	25%	29%	29%	26%
Ontario New Democratic Party (NDP)	24%	36%	26%	23%	27%	11%	9%
Ontario Green Party	7%	11%	7%	6%	4%	8%	8%
Other Party	5%	6%	5%	6%	4%	5%	2%

*\*Smaller sample size, interpret with caution*

### Regional

At least one-third of voters in all regions of Ontario say they will be voting for the PCPO, though support is lowest in the 416 area code, the downtown core of Toronto. Those in the 905 (18%) and Toronto's outskirts, are less likely than downtown residents (27%) to support the NDP. Support for the NDP, too, is higher in the southwest of the province (28%) than in other regions (21%). Meanwhile, the Liberals have much stronger support in both Toronto's core and suburbs than elsewhere in the province:

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Vote intent (Among decided voters)					
(Unweighted sample sizes)	Total (n=1,331)	Region			
		416 (n=262)	905 (n=258)	Southwest (n=375)	Other regions (n=439)
Progressive Conservative Party of Ontario (PCPO)	38%	32%	43%	36%	40%
Ontario Liberal Party	26%	32%	31%	20%	25%
Ontario New Democratic Party (NDP)	24%	27%	18%	28%	21%
Ontario Green Party	7%	7%	4%	9%	7%
Other Party	5%	2%	3%	7%	7%

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

*For detailed results by the top five issues as chosen by Ontarians, [click here](#).*

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