

Wilted Rose: Third party support evaporates leaving NDP, UCP tied in vote intent with divergent supporter priorities

Health care a top issue for twice as many NDP supporters as those who intend to vote UCP

December 8, 2022 – The Premier Danielle Smith era has begun with a bang – the Alberta Sovereignty Act – but the noise and clatter appears to have neither scared off, nor attracted, voters.

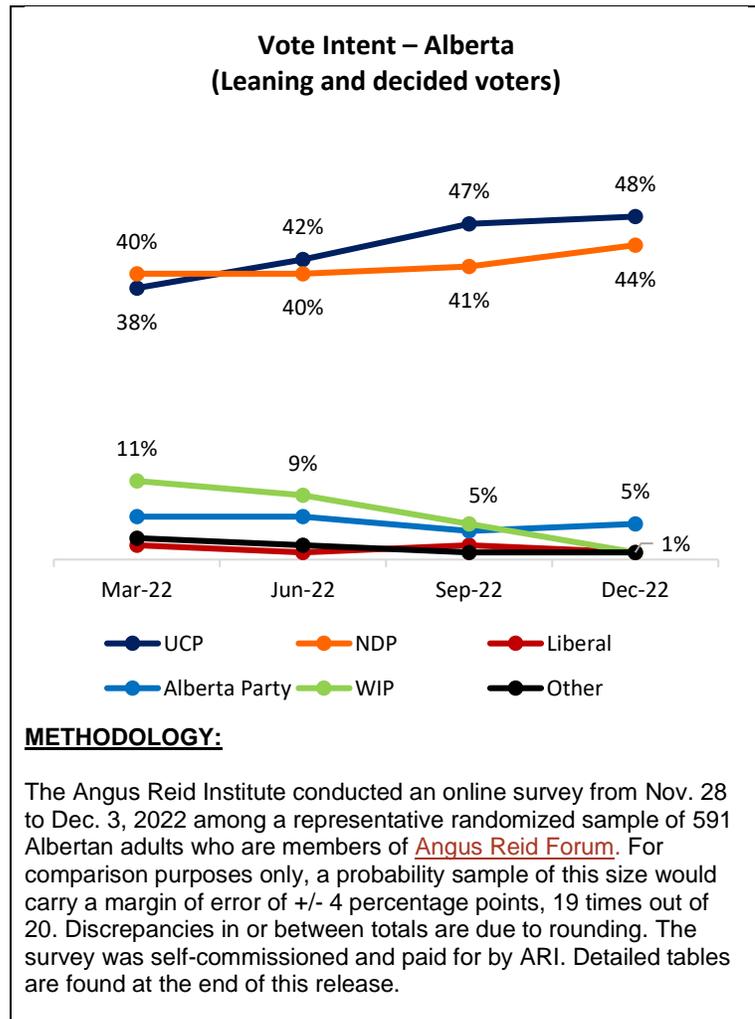
New data from the non-profit Angus Reid Institute finds the United Conservative Party's fortunes holding steady when compared to data from prior to Smith's UCP leadership win. The party is statistically tied in vote intent with Rachel Notley and the NDP, 48 per cent to 44 per cent, as the parties build towards a spring 2023 election.

However, the story of 2022 for the UCP is still one of a 10-point rise in support throughout the year. The UCP's climb has coincided with a 10-point decline in vote intention for the Wildrose Independence Party. The UCP sent former Premier Jason Kenney packing with a [tepid leadership review](#) in May then ran a leadership election dominated by Smith's talking points. With a UCP-led Smith in the mix, only a handful of Albertans (1%) now say they will vote Wildrose.

As the UCP and NDP jockey for position with an election on the horizon, two issues are most prominent in Albertans' minds: cost of living and health care. Three-in-five (63%) Albertans believe the former to be a top concern facing the province, while a majority (56%) say the latter. No other issue is selected by more than three-in-ten Albertans, with the economy (27%), energy policy (25%) and government spending (20%) coming closest.

Already there are clear delineations in priorities for supporters of the top two parties. For those that say they would support UCP if an election were held today, inflation (69%), energy policy (45%) and the economy generally (40%) outpace health care (38%) as top challenges. For likely NDP supporters, it's health care (78%) far and above all else, with inflation (52%), education (34%) and climate change (29%) trailing as top issues.

Likely UCP and NDP supporters also hold differing views as to how the government has performed on these top issues. As Smith has begun to make reality leadership campaign promises, those who say they



CONTACT:

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

will vote UCP offer the government net positive marks on health care (59% good job, 34% poor job) and inflation (66% good job, 27% poor job). NDP supporters, meanwhile, are far more negative: nearly all are critical of the government's performance on health care (98% poor job) and inflation (90%).

More Key Findings:

- The NDP hold an advantage over the UCP in Calgary (51% to 40%) and Edmonton (50% to 43%), but that is dwarfed by the deficit the party faces in the rest of the province (30% to 59%).
- Three-in-five (61%) Albertans believe Smith's cost of living benefit package is a good policy, but there is less certainty as to whether it was targeted at the right people (28%) or should have been given to everybody (33%). Three-in-ten (30%) call it bad policy.
- Half (47%) believe the firing of the board of Alberta Health Services will worsen the health-care system in the province. One-third (35%) disagree.

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: Vote intent

Part Two: Issues and government performance

Part Three: Early returns on Smith policies

Part One: Vote intent

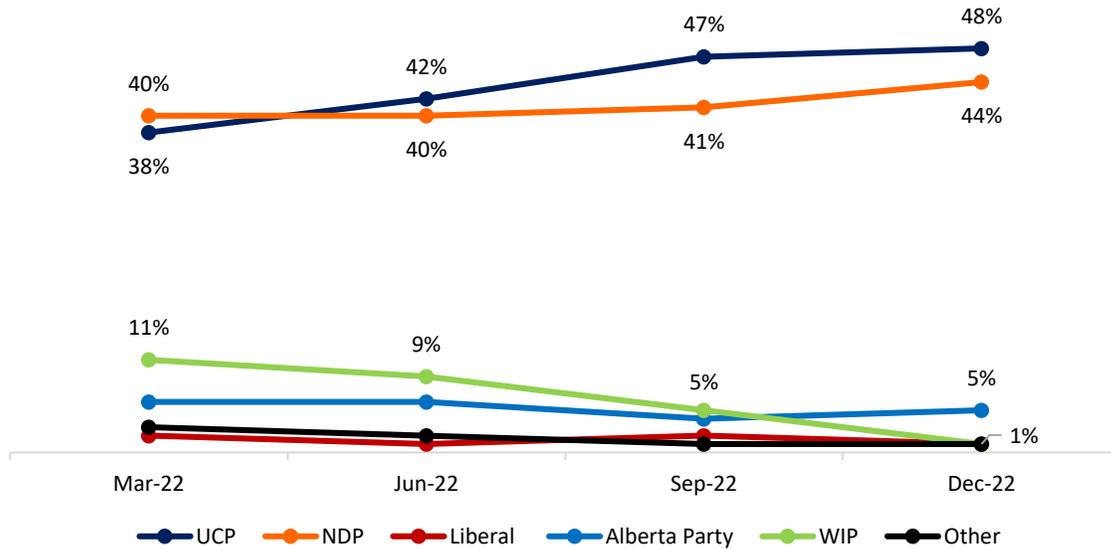
As the 2022 calendar nears closure, Alberta's spring 2023 election date looms. After two months with Danielle Smith at the helm of the UCP, the party's vote intention has remained stable. Approaching half (48%) of Albertans say they would vote UCP if an election were held today, similar to the proportion seen in September (47%). Support for the NDP is statistically identical to that seen in September, at two-in-five (44%).

Still, the electoral fortunes of the UCP have risen by 10-points in 2022. Notably, as support for the UCP has swelled, support for the Wildrose Independence Party has evaporated. One per cent of Albertans now say they intend to vote Wildrose:

CONTACT:

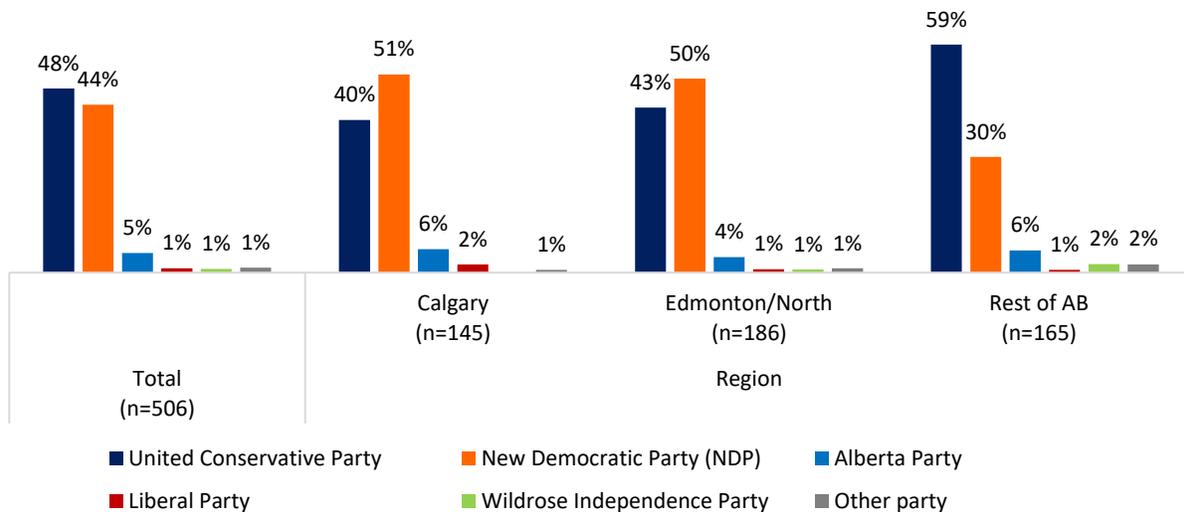
Shachi Kurl, President: 604.908.1693 shachi.kurl@angusreid.org @shachikurl
Dave Korzinski, Research Director: 250.899.0821 dave.korzinski@angusreid.org

Vote Intent – Alberta



The NDP is outperforming the UCP in Calgary and Edmonton, but face a significant deficit in support in the rest of the province, where three-in-five (59%) say they intend to vote UCP:

**Vote Intent – Alberta
(Leaning and decided voters)**



The NDP also trail the UCP in support among men. More than half (55%) of men in Alberta say they would vote UCP if an election were held today; one-third (33%) say they would support the NDP. Women

are much more likely to vote for the NDP, though the gap between the two parties among that gender is narrower.

UCP support is much higher than the NDP's among Albertans older than 34, while the NDP holds more favour with 18- to 34-year-olds:

Vote Intent – Alberta (Leaning and decided voters)						
	Total (n=506)	Gender		Age		
		Male (n=243)	Female (n=261)	18-34 (n=169)	35-54 (n=179)	55+ (n=158)
United Conservative Party	48%	55%	42%	33%	52%	59%
New Democratic Party (NDP)	44%	33%	53%	57%	38%	35%
Alberta Party	5%	8%	3%	5%	6%	4%
Liberal Party	1%	1%	1%	1%	1%	1%
Wildrose Independence Party	1%	1%	1%	0%	2%	1%
Other party	1%	2%	1%	3%	0%	1%

Part Two: Issues and government performance

Nationally, 2022 has become a year shaped by two issues: rampant inflation fueling a cost of living crisis and a [“broken”](#) health-care system struggling to serve those who need it.

Related:

- [Holiday hurt: Inflation realities deflate Christmas shopping plans, two-in-five cut back on charitable giving](#)
- [Access to Health Care: Free, but for all? Nearly nine million Canadians report chronic difficulty getting help](#)

Alberta has not been immune to either issue. Provincially, inflation has been [above six per cent](#) for most of the year. Smith made addressing the rising cost of living an early priority by providing [\\$2.4-billion worth of relief](#) to Albertans.

Meanwhile, Alberta's health-care system is under pressure from myriad of problems, including [ambulance shortages](#), [long wait-times](#) for emergency care, and, most recently, [overflowing children's hospitals](#).

With all this in the background, three-in-five (63%) Albertans believe inflation is the top challenge facing the province, while more than half (56%) say the same of health care. Those issues are selected at much higher rates than the economy more generally (27%), energy policy (25%), government spending (20%) and education (19%).

Notably, as Smith forges ahead on the UCP leadership campaign-defining [Sovereignty Act](#), few (11%) believe Alberta's relationship with the federal government to be a top issue.

CONTACT:

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

Those who say they would vote UCP if an election were held today differ in their views of the province's top issues from those who would vote NDP. Four-in-five likely NDP voters (78%) say health care is a top-three issue; half the number of prospective UCP voters (38%) agree. Instead, UCP voters are more likely to say inflation (69%), energy policy (45%), and the economy more generally (38%) are top concerns.

Those who say they will vote NDP are much more likely to highlight climate change (29%) and education (34%) than those who say they will vote UCP (2%, 7% respectively):

Top Issues facing the province: select up to three			
	Total (n=548)	Vote Intention	
		UCP (n=242)	NDP (n=220)
Cost of living/Inflation	63%	69%	52%
Health Care	56%	38%	78%
The Economy/Jobs	27%	40%	12%
Energy policy - Oil & Gas/Pipelines/Renewables etc.	25%	45%	5%
The Deficit/Government spending	20%	37%	4%
Education	19%	7%	34%
Housing Affordability	16%	11%	19%
Environment/Climate change	14%	2%	29%
Street crime/Public safety	14%	20%	7%
Relationship with the federal government	11%	13%	10%
Poverty/homelessness	9%	1%	18%
Coronavirus/COVID-19 response	8%	3%	15%
First Nations/Indigenous issues	5%	2%	9%
Drug Use/addictions/opioid crisis	5%	5%	5%

On the top two issues, cost of living and health care, the provincial government is seen as performing poorly by majorities of Albertans. The government receives higher grades on issues surrounding energy policy, government spending, and the economy/jobs, though at best Albertans are as likely to say the government has done a good job as a bad one:

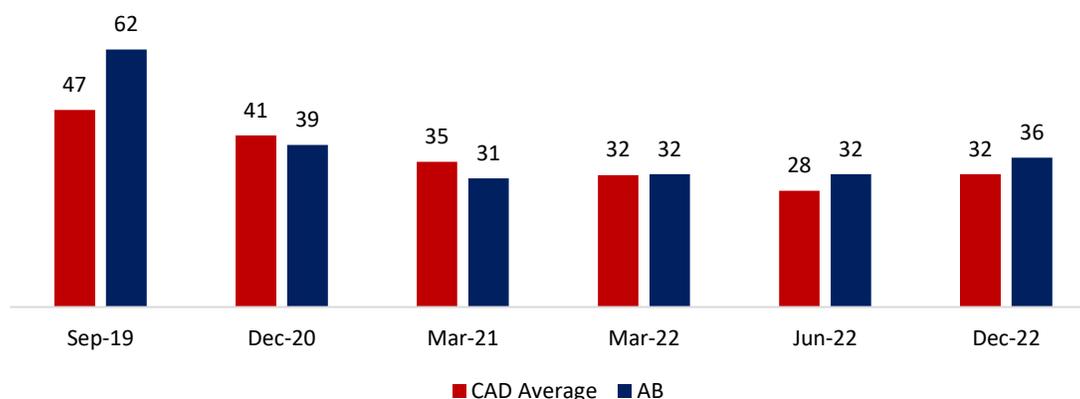
CONTACT:

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

Is the provincial government doing a good job or poor job in each of these areas: (Alberta, n=548)			
	Good job	Poor job	Not sure
Energy policy - Oil & Gas/Pipelines/Renewables etc.	45%	43%	11%
The Deficit/Government spending	44%	44%	12%
Coronavirus/COVID-19 response	44%	50%	6%
The Economy/Jobs	44%	47%	10%
Environment/Climate change	41%	48%	12%
Education	36%	56%	9%
First Nations/Indigenous issues	35%	42%	22%
Relationship with the federal government	35%	56%	8%
Cost of living/Inflation	35%	59%	6%
Health Care	29%	67%	4%
Street crime/Public safety	28%	58%	15%
Housing Affordability	26%	59%	15%
Poverty/homelessness	23%	61%	16%
Drug Use/addictions/opioid crisis	23%	58%	19%

When compared to evaluations of other provincial governments across the country, Albertans are more likely to say the government is doing a good job on the issues surveyed than other provincial constituents across the country. However, overall, appraisal of the Alberta government has been consistently poor throughout the UCP government's term:

Government Performance Index - Alberta
(Average number of respondents saying provincial government has done a "good job" across all issues)



The political divide is evident when it comes to evaluating the government's performance on top issues. Likely UCP voters offer high levels of praise for most of the issues canvassed. Those who say they would

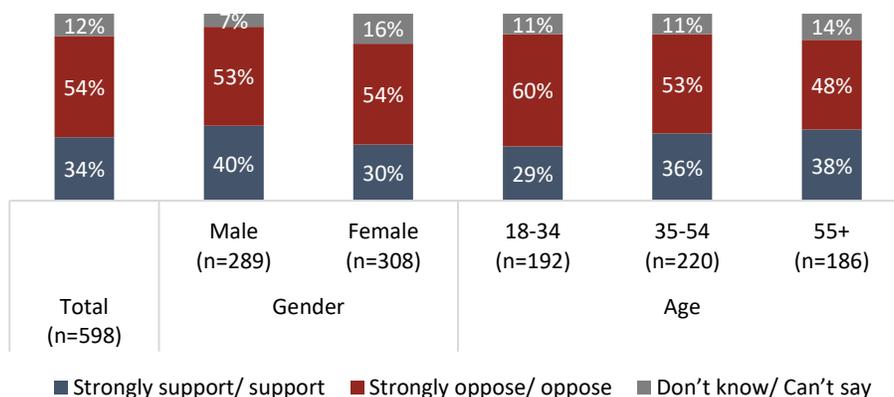
vote NDP if an election were held today have much more critical views of how the UCP government has performed:

Percentage who say the province is doing a 'good job' in each of these areas:			
	Total (n=548)	Vote Intention	
		UCP (n=242)	NDP (n=220)
Energy policy - Oil & Gas/Pipelines/Renewables etc.	45%	80%	13%
The Deficit/Government spending	44%	75%	13%
Coronavirus/COVID-19 response	44%	79%	8%
The Economy/Jobs	44%	77%	11%
Environment/Climate change	41%	78%	5%
Education	36%	69%	3%
First Nations/Indigenous issues	35%	64%	6%
Relationship with the federal government	35%	69%	4%
Cost of living/Inflation	35%	66%	7%
Health Care	29%	59%	1%
Street crime/Public safety	28%	50%	7%
Housing Affordability	26%	52%	4%
Poverty/homelessness	23%	48%	2%
Drug Use/addictions/opioid crisis	23%	43%	4%

Part Three: Early returns for Smith agenda

Smith's first two months as UCP leader and premier have not been quiet. She has moved quickly to bring the policies she campaigned on to reality, including the controversial Alberta Sovereignty Act. In September, prior to Smith's election as UCP leader, half of Albertans (54%) opposed the passing of the Sovereignty Act:

Do you support or oppose the passing of a so-called Alberta Sovereignty Act? (Sept. 2022)



CONTACT:

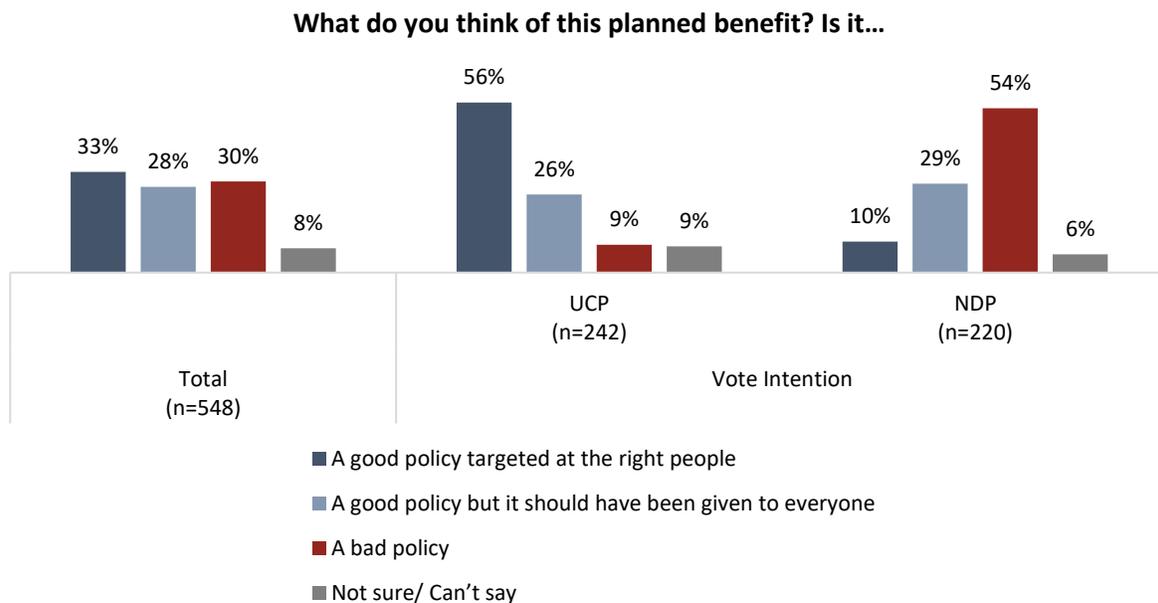
Shachi Kurl, President: 604.908.1693 shachi.kurl@angusreid.org @shachikurl
 Dave Korzinski, Research Director: 250.899.0821 dave.korzinski@angusreid.org

In Smith's first televised address as premier, she announced **\$2.4-billion worth** of cost of living relief for Albertans, including payments to seniors and families with children, the abolishment of the provincial fuel tax, and the reindexing of income supports for those living with disabilities.

Albertans are more likely to believe the \$600 cost of living benefit to be a good policy than not – three-in-five (61%) say this – but there is less certainty over whether the benefit is going to the right people. One-third (33%) believe the money is going to the people who need it most, while three-in-ten (28%) say it should have been given to everyone.

A majority (56%) of likely UCP voters say the benefit was both a good policy *and* it was given to the right people. Meanwhile, more than half (54%) of those who say they will vote NDP call it bad policy.

As noted above, three-in-five Albertans (59%) believe the government is performing poorly on inflation even after this policy announcement, suggesting many believe there is more work to be done on this matter.

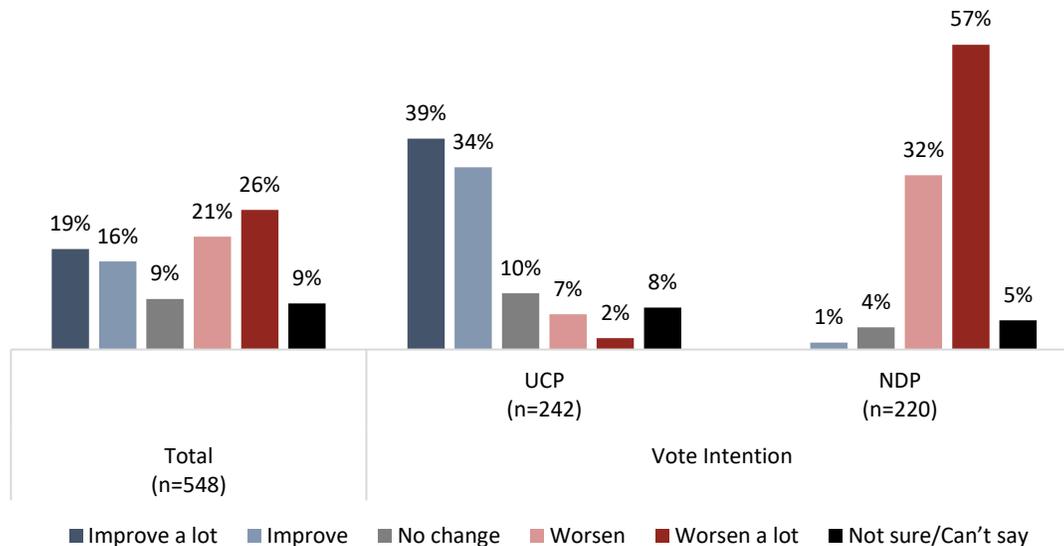


On Nov. 17, Smith made good on **a promise** during the UCP leadership campaign to fire the board of Alberta Health Services. She said the province's health management authority **"manufactured"** staffing shortages during the COVID-19 pandemic and **failed to ensure** there were enough intensive care spaces in hospitals when they were needed.

Albertans are more likely to believe firing the board of AHS will worsen the health-care system than improve it. Half (47%) believe replacing the board with a commissioner will only exacerbate problems, one-third (35%) disagree.

This policy is seen by different lenses across party lines. Most (89%) of potential NDP voters say firing the board will damage Alberta's health-care system. Three-quarters (73%) of those who say they will vote UCP say the opposite:

In your opinion, will the firing the board of Alberta Health Services improve or worsen the health-care system in Alberta?



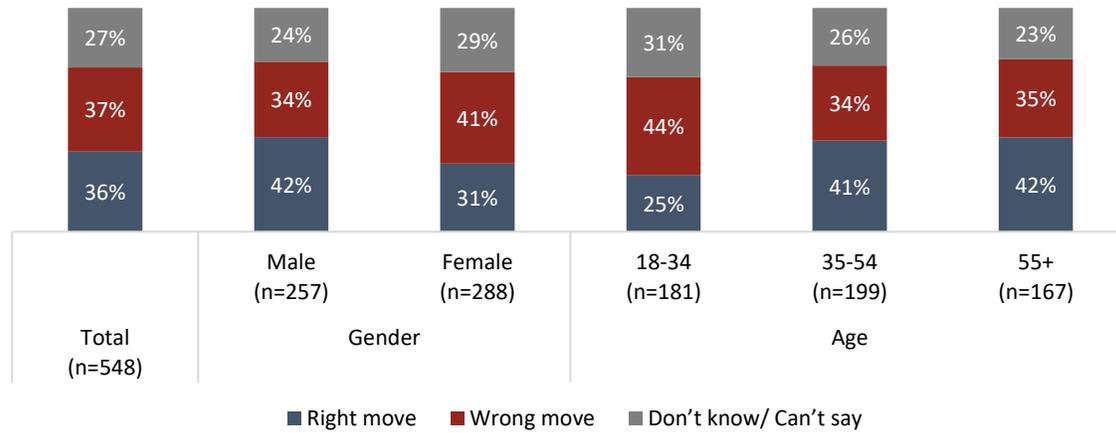
Perhaps the most prominent doctor in the province during the pandemic, chief medical officer of health Dr. Deena Hinshaw was the face of Alberta’s COVID-19 response, for better and worse. On her first day in office as premier, Smith announced she was showing Hinshaw the door. After being replaced by Dr. Mark Joffe, Hinshaw left quietly a month later, getting off a roller coaster of public opinion which saw her initially lauded with T-shirts and eventually criticized for both doing too much and too little to stop the spread of COVID-19.

Related: COVID at Two: Managing the pandemic – Assessments of leaders and governments

Albertans are split as to whether Smith should have replaced Hinshaw – equal numbers say it was the right move (36%) as say it was the wrong one (37%). More than one-quarter (27%) are unsure.

Men are more supportive than women of Hinshaw’s dismissal, while younger Albertans are more likely than older ones to believe it was incorrect to find a new chief medical officer of health:

**What do you think?
Was it the right move or the wrong move to replace Dr. Hinshaw?**



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