

## Alberta Spotlight: Smith and UCP lead as the NDP fights in Calgary to convert warmth for Notley into votes

Majority of Albertans 35 and over say they intend to vote UCP; NDP leads among 18- to 34-year-olds

**March 29, 2023** – The writs have not yet been dropped for Alberta's May election but it's already campaign season on Albertan airwaves as the United Conservatives and New Democrats battle for the province's hearts, minds and votes.

[As attack ads reign](#), new data from the non-profit Angus Reid Institute finds the UCP with a seven-point lead in vote intention over the NDP.

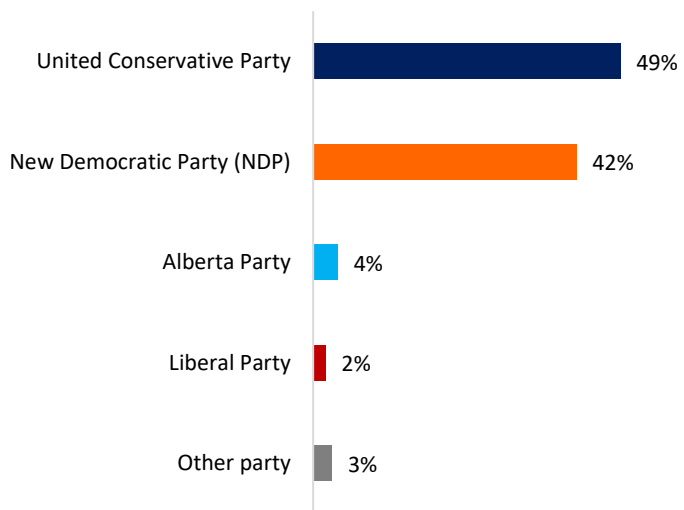
Calgary remains contested ground, as the [infrastructure pledges flow](#) from UCP leader and Premier Danielle Smith, and NDP leader Rachel Notley establishes [her party's campaign headquarters](#) in the city, decamping from the party's traditional stronghold of Edmonton. In Calgary, the two parties are statistically tied in vote intent – 46 per cent for the UCP, 43 per cent for the NDP.

The NDP do hold an advantage in the province's largest city: their leader is viewed more positively than Smith. More than two-in-five (44%) Calgarians say they have a positive impression of Notley while fewer than two-in-five (39%) approve of Smith's performance as premier so far.

In both vote intent and impressions of party leadership, the gap is much wider elsewhere in the province. In Edmonton, the NDP hold an advantage in both, while outside of the two major cities, the UCP are far ahead.

While cost of living remains a dominant issue in the province (70% of Albertans select it as a top issue), there are divergent priorities among likely voters for the two leading parties. Those who say they intend to vote NDP are much more concerned about health care, education and the environment than those who say they would vote UCP if an election were held today. Meanwhile, likely UCP voters prioritize the economy, energy policy and government spending at higher rates.

### Vote Intent - Alberta (Decided and leaning voters, n=728)



#### **METHODOLOGY:**

The Angus Reid Institute conducted an online survey from March 6-13, 2023 among a representative randomized sample of 827 Albertan 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 +/- 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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## More Key Findings:

- Half (51%) of 18- to 34-year-olds say they would vote NDP if the election were today. That is the only age group the NDP are the preferred party, however. The UCP hold a 53% to 38% advantage among Albertans aged 35 to 54 and a 57% to 37% lead among those over the age of 54. Voting turnout is typically lower for younger voters [in Canadian elections](#).
- Approaching three-in-five (57%) men approve of Smith while one-third (34%) hold a favourable view of Notley. Women have a more positive assessment of Notley (48%) than Smith (36%).
- Outside of Calgary and Edmonton, energy policy is believed to be an issue of higher import (28%) than within the province's largest cities (Calgary, 21%; Edmonton, 18%). Those in Calgary and Edmonton select poverty (Calgary, 14%; Edmonton, 16%) and housing affordability (Calgary, 27%; Edmonton, 23%) at higher rates than those elsewhere in the province (poverty, 6%; housing affordability, 15%).

## 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: Albertans on the leaders

- **Notley viewed more favourably by women, under 35s**
- **Smith holds edge outside of cities**

### Part Two: The issues

- **Inflation top issue for likely UCP voters; health care for likely NDP voters**
- **Regional variations on issues**

### Part Three: Vote intention

- **By region**
- **By age and gender**
- **Vote retention**

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## Part One: Albertans on the leaders

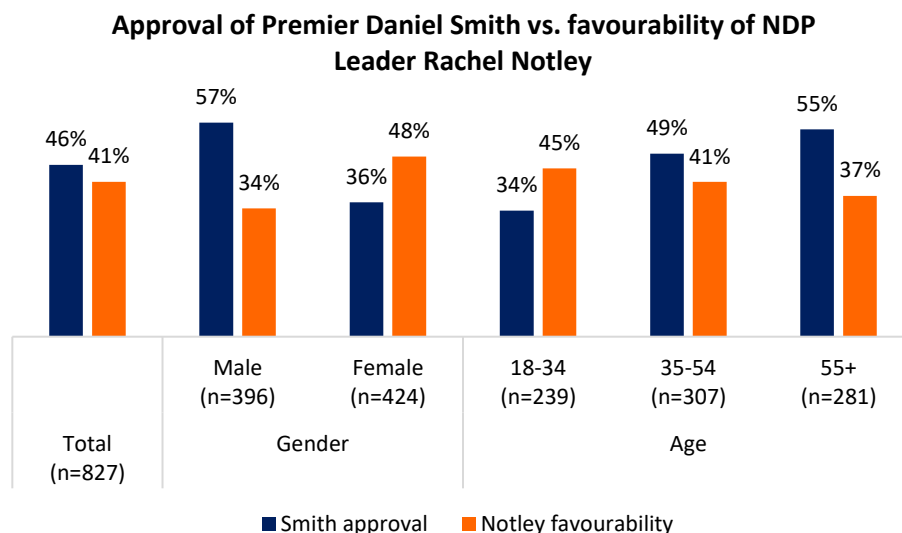
Alberta's election is a battle between two relatively known quantities. Premier and UCP leader Danielle Smith was well established on the province's political scene long before she replaced former Premier Jason Kenney as UCP leader. NDP leader Rachel Notley contested the previous two elections at the helm of her party and served as premier from 2015 to 2019. Indeed, only one-in-20 Albertans say they don't have an opinion on Smith (5%) or Notley (6%).

However, this familiarity is a boon to neither leader. Two-in-five strongly disapprove of Smith (38%) and as many have a very unfavourable (39%) view of Notley ([see detailed tables](#)). In both cases, that proportion of strong negative sentiment is equal or just below those who have positive impressions of the leaders. More than two-in-five (46%) say they approve of Smith so far in her role as premier; two-in-five (41%) say they have a favourable view of Notley.

### Notley viewed more favourably by women, under 35s

The two have different demographic strengths. Smith has the edge in positive assessments among men (57% approval) and Albertans over the age of 54 (55%). Meanwhile, Notley is more positively viewed by women (48% favourable) and those aged 18 to 34 (45% favourable). However, among both groups, the NDP leader has as many positive appraisals as negative ones (women 48% favourable, 45% unfavourable; 18-34 45% favourable, 43% unfavourable, [see detailed tables](#)).

[Historically in Canadian elections](#), younger adults are less likely to vote than older ones. In the last two federal elections in Alberta, turnout was six to seven points higher for those over the age of 55 compared to those under the age of 35.



### Smith holds edge outside of cities

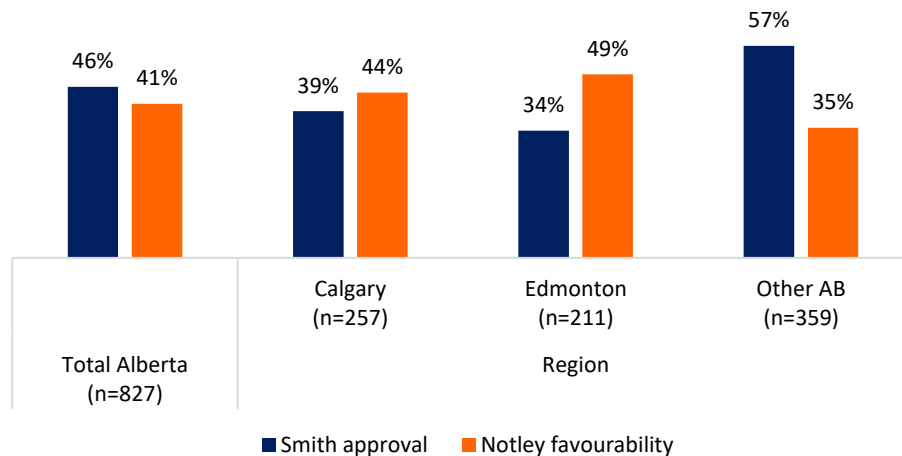
The NDP typically have performed strongly in Edmonton. Nineteen of the party's current 23 seats in the legislature are in Edmonton (including one in the Edmonton-adjacent St. Albert). There, Notley holds a

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significant advantage in appraisal over Smith. She also holds a slight edge in Calgary, where the NDP will be looking to reclaim some of the seats it won in 2015 but lost in 2019. Outside of the province's two largest cities, however, Smith is viewed much more favourably than her opponent:

**Approval of Premier Daniel Smith vs. favourability of NDP  
Leader Rachel Notley**



## Part Two: The issues

### Inflation top issue for likely UCP voters; health care for likely NDP voters

Though inflation has shown signs of abating in recent months, it remains a top issue for Albertans. Seven-in-ten (70%) believe it to be a top-three concern facing the province. Cost of living is far more selected than health care (49%) and the economy (29%), the next closest issues.

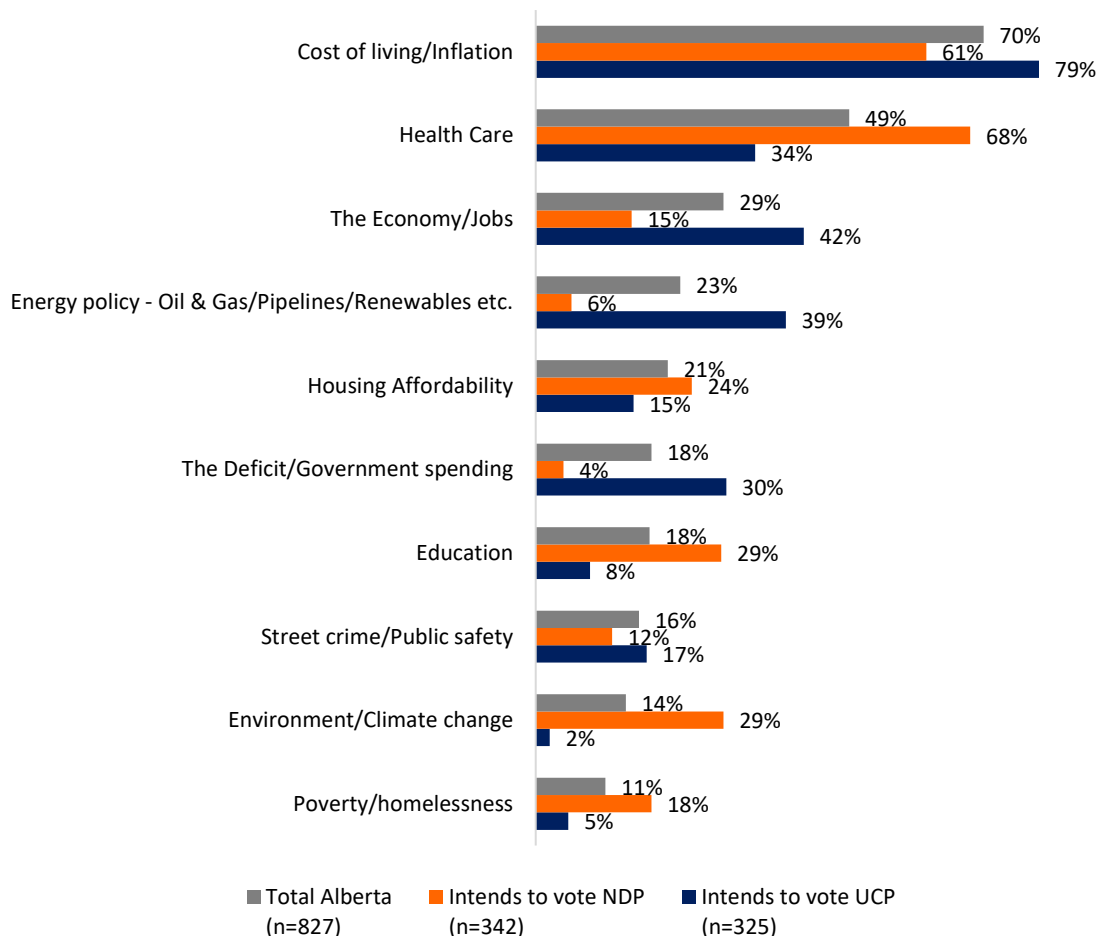
Already, both campaigns are looking to paint the other as the party Albertans can't afford in attack ads. The NDP label the UCP as the party of health care privatization, which will cost Albertans money "out of pocket". Meanwhile, those who say they would vote NDP if they election were held today are more likely (68%) to select health care as a top issue facing the province than those who are leaning UCP (34%).

There are other divergent priorities among the two groups of likely voters. Likely NDP voters select education, the environment and poverty as top issues at much higher rates than likely UCP voters, who are more likely to say the economy more generally, energy policy and government spending:

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**And which of those issues would you say are the most important to you, personally. Please select up to three (Those with more than 10% overall shown)**



Across all demographics, the top issue is inflation and the second most selected concern is health care. However, there is variation on the latter – women more than men, and older Albertans more than younger ones, believe health care to be a top issue.

Below those two dominating priorities there is more variation among demographics. There is a gender divide on education (13% men, 22% women), energy policy (29% men, 17% women), and government spending (25% men, 12% women). Meanwhile, there is disagreement among age groups on the pressing nature of the environment, energy policy and housing affordability:

And which of those issues would you say are the most important to you, personally. Please select up to three  
(Those with more than 10% overall shown)

	Total Alberta (n=827)	Gender		Age		
		Male (n=396)	Female (n=424)	18-34 (n=239)	35-54 (n=307)	55+ (n=281)
Cost of Living/ Inflation	70%	70%	71%	69%	73%	68%
Health Care	49%	39%	58%	39%	49%	60%
The Economy/ Jobs	29%	34%	25%	29%	34%	24%
Energy policy – Oil & Gas/ Pipelines/ Renewables	23%	29%	17%	18%	20%	30%
Housing Affordability	21%	22%	19%	29%	19%	14%
The Deficit/ Government spending	18%	25%	12%	13%	21%	20%
Education	18%	13%	22%	17%	21%	14%
Street crime/ public safety	16%	16%	17%	14%	14%	21%
Environment/ Climate Change	14%	13%	15%	22%	10%	10%
Poverty/ homelessness	11%	10%	12%	14%	9%	10%

### Regional variations on issues

Cost of living and health care rank as the top two issues across all regions of the province. However, energy policy ranks as much more important outside of the two urban centres (28%) than within (Calgary, 21%; Edmonton, 15%). Meanwhile, issues of poverty and housing affordability are believed to be of greater import in Calgary and Edmonton than outside of them:

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And which of those issues would you say are the most important to you, personally. Please select up to three (Those with more than 10% overall shown)				
	Total Alberta (n=827)	Region		
		Calgary (n=257)	Edmonton (n=211)	Other Alberta (n=359)
Cost of Living/ Inflation	70%	64%	70%	75%
Health Care	49%	45%	53%	50%
The Economy/ Jobs	29%	30%	28%	30%
Energy policy – Oil & Gas/ Pipelines/ Renewables	23%	21%	15%	28%
Housing Affordability	21%	27%	23%	15%
The Deficit/ Government spending	18%	15%	12%	24%
Education	18%	17%	20%	17%
Street crime/ public safety	16%	19%	18%	13%
Environment/ Climate Change	14%	16%	16%	12%
Poverty/ homelessness	11%	14%	16%	6%

### Part Three: Vote intention

As the election nears, the UCP has widened its lead over the rival NDP. Half of Albertans (49%) say they would vote UCP if the election were held today, seven points more than those who say they would vote NDP (42%). Third-party options – such as the Alberta Party (4%), Wildrose Independence Party (2%) and Liberal Party (2%) – are all selected by fewer than one-in-20 Albertans.

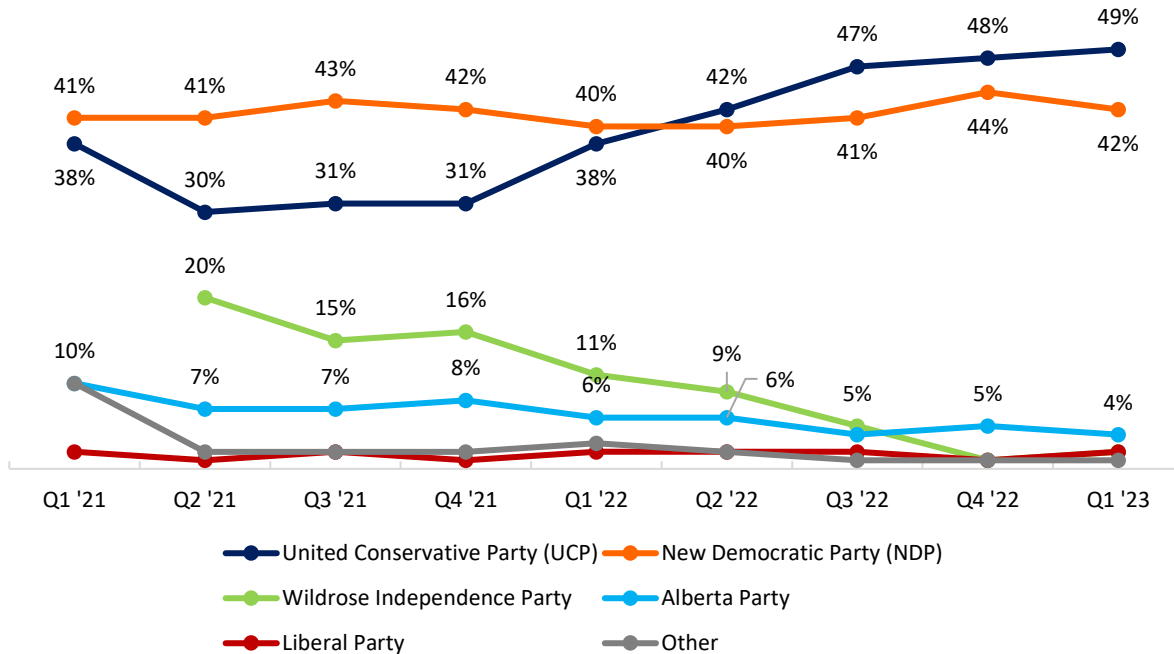
Vote intention for the NDP has remained relatively consistent since March 2021, at about two-in-five. Meanwhile, Albertans have warmed up to the UCP since Kenney announced he was stepping down in May last year. Since Smith has been UCP leader, approaching half of Albertans profess support of the UCP:

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**Vote Intent - Alberta  
(Decided and leaning voters)**

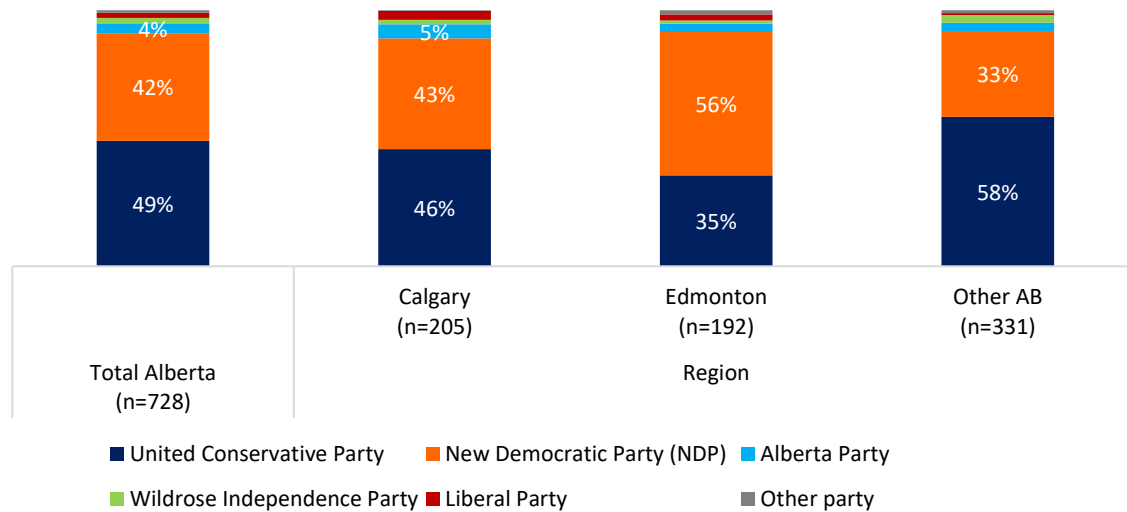


**By region**

Former [Premier Ralph Klein described Alberta as a three-legged stool](#) when it comes to elections: one leg for Calgary, one for Edmonton and one for the rest of the province. To form government, he believed you needed to win two of the three legs. As it stands, the UCP and NDP are sawing the Calgary leg in half. Vote intent is statistically tied in Alberta’s largest city at 46 per cent for the UCP and 43 per cent for the NDP. Elsewhere, the NDP hold majority support (56%) in Edmonton and the UCP majority support (58%) outside of the two major cities:



**Vote Intent - Alberta  
(Decided and leaning voters)**



**By age and gender**

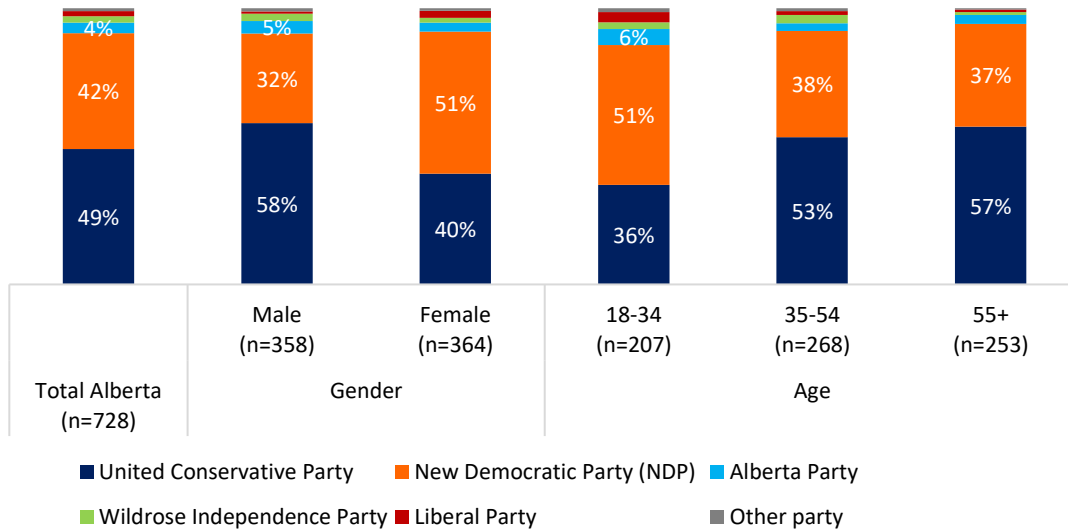
The UCP are the preferred party of a majority of men (58%), while half (51%) of women say they would vote NDP if the election were held today. Notably, the gap between the UCP and the NDP among men (+26 UCP) is much larger than the gap between the two among women (+11 NDP).

The NDP trail among Albertans over the age of 34, including by 20 points among those over the age of 54. Notley and her party perform best among 18- to 34-year-olds, half (51%) of whom say they intend to vote NDP:

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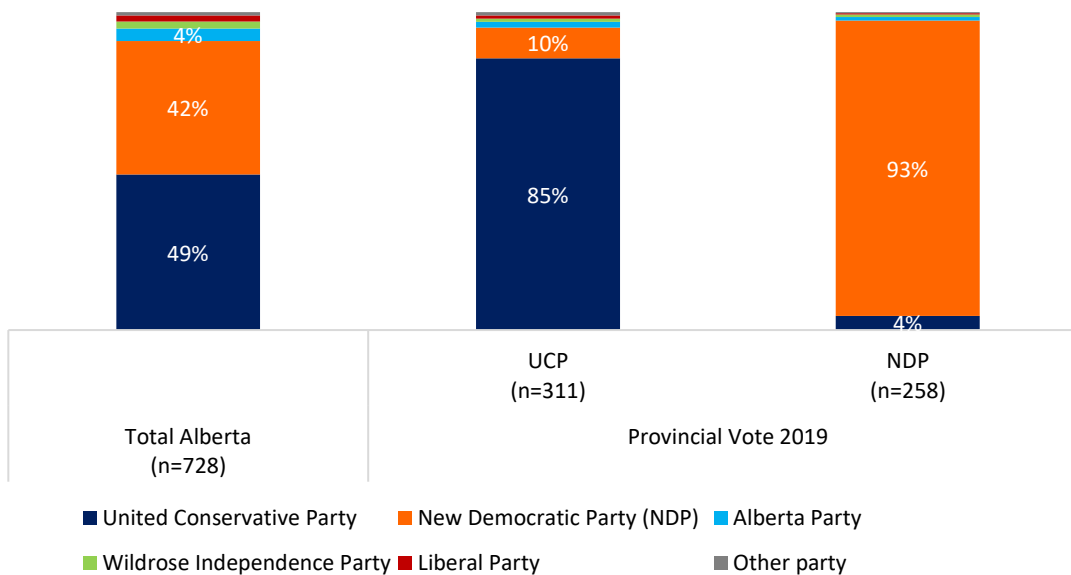
**Vote Intent - Alberta  
(Decided and leaning voters)**



**Vote retention**

Among those who voted in 2019, the NDP are retaining a higher proportion of their support than the UCP. Indeed, one-in-ten (10%) past UCP voters say they would vote NDP today, double the rate of past NDP voters who say they would vote UCP (4%):

**Vote retention  
(Decided and leaning voters)**



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

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