

Ontario Spotlight: NDP under Marit Stiles opens up gap over Liberals, but new leader still relatively unknown

Ford government's performance panned by Ontarians, but still leads in vote intent

April 4, 2023 – It's a few weeks into spring and it looks like the Ontario NDP has germinated, if not bloomed.

New data from the non-profit Angus Reid Institute finds the NDP as the second-choice party of Ontarians with a 10-point gap over the Ontario Liberal Party, who are still looking to regroup after an election day humbling last year.

The NDP have an advantage over the Liberals because they have found a new leader in Marit Stiles. The party's next step will be to introduce her to the public and past NDP supporters. Half (47%) of Ontarians don't have an opinion of Stiles, including two-in-five (42%) of those who voted NDP in 2022.

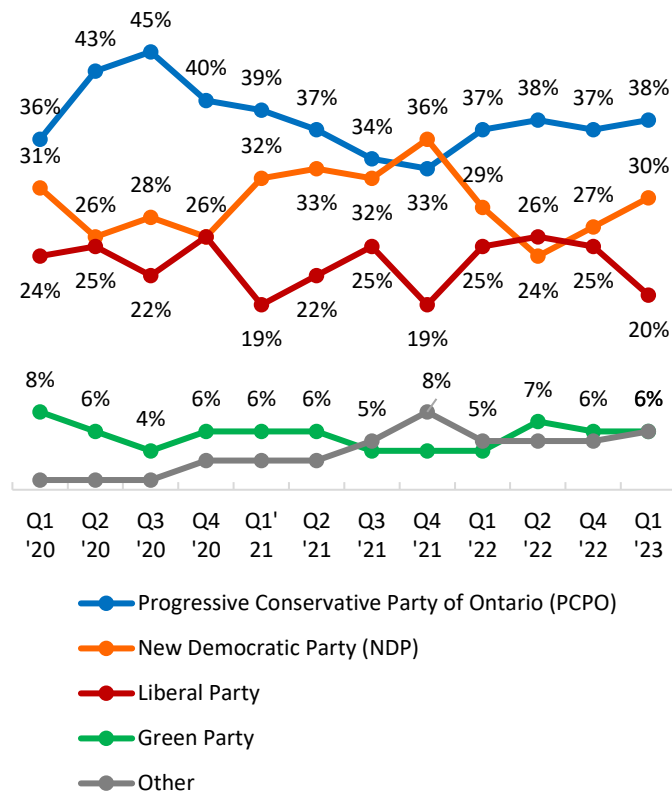
Meanwhile, the governing PC Party under Premier Doug Ford continues to lead in vote intent, as they have consistently in the last year. Two-in-five (38%) Ontarians would vote PC if an election were held today. Despite this, there is overwhelming criticism from Ontarians on nearly every facet of the government's performance.

That criticism is not isolated to the opposition, either. Though past PC voters are less critical of Ford and the government, they do not spare the Ontario government from poor assessments. Majorities of those who voted for the Progressive Conservatives in 2022 believe the governing party has done a bad job on cost of living (69%), health care (65%) and housing affordability (70%).

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*

Vote Intent - Ontario
(Decided and leaning voters)



METHODOLOGY:

The Angus Reid Institute conducted an online survey from March 6-13, 2023 among a representative randomized sample of 861 Ontarian 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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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: The issues and government performance

Ontario faces the two issues plaguing every region in Canada at the moment – a cost of living crisis and a health-care system dealing with tremendous pressure. Ontarians are most likely to believe those are the top issues facing the province.

Trailing those, but still selected by approaching two-in-five, is housing affordability (37%). After a lull in 2022, which saw prices decline from January peaks as interest rates were pushed higher by the Bank of Canada, housing prices increased [across the province in Ontario in February](#). Meanwhile, rent in Ontario has increased significantly in the last year, as the province has some of the [highest rent for one-bedroom apartments in the country](#).

One-in-five Ontarians say each of the environment (21%), the economy more generally (20%) and public safety (18%) are top concerns.

There are notable demographic differences as to what's on the minds of Ontarians. Four-in-five (79%) Ontarians aged 55 or older select health care as a top concern. Meanwhile, half (48%) of Ontarians between the ages of 18 and 34 are worried about housing affordability:

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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 10% overall shown)						
	Total Ontario (n=861)	Gender		Age		
		Male (n=416)	Female (n=442)	18-34 (n=231)	35-54 (n=311)	55+ (n=319)
Cost of living/ Inflation	62%	61%	63%	65%	66%	56%
Health Care	61%	56%	68%	43%	58%	79%
Housing Affordability	37%	37%	37%	48%	39%	26%
Environment/ Climate Change	21%	18%	24%	27%	16%	22%
The Economy/ Jobs	20%	25%	15%	19%	26%	17%
Street crime/ Public safety	18%	18%	19%	13%	16%	25%
Education	17%	14%	20%	19%	18%	14%
Poverty/ Homelessness	16%	15%	16%	17%	11%	18%
The Deficit/ Government Spending	14%	18%	9%	12%	14%	15%

Concerns vary among past voters. While at least half of those who voted Liberal, NDP and PC say inflation and health care are top issues facing the province, those who voted PC are much more worried about the former than the latter. Few past PC voters (8%) say they believe climate change is a key problem. They are more likely to be worried about the economy, street crime, and the deficit.

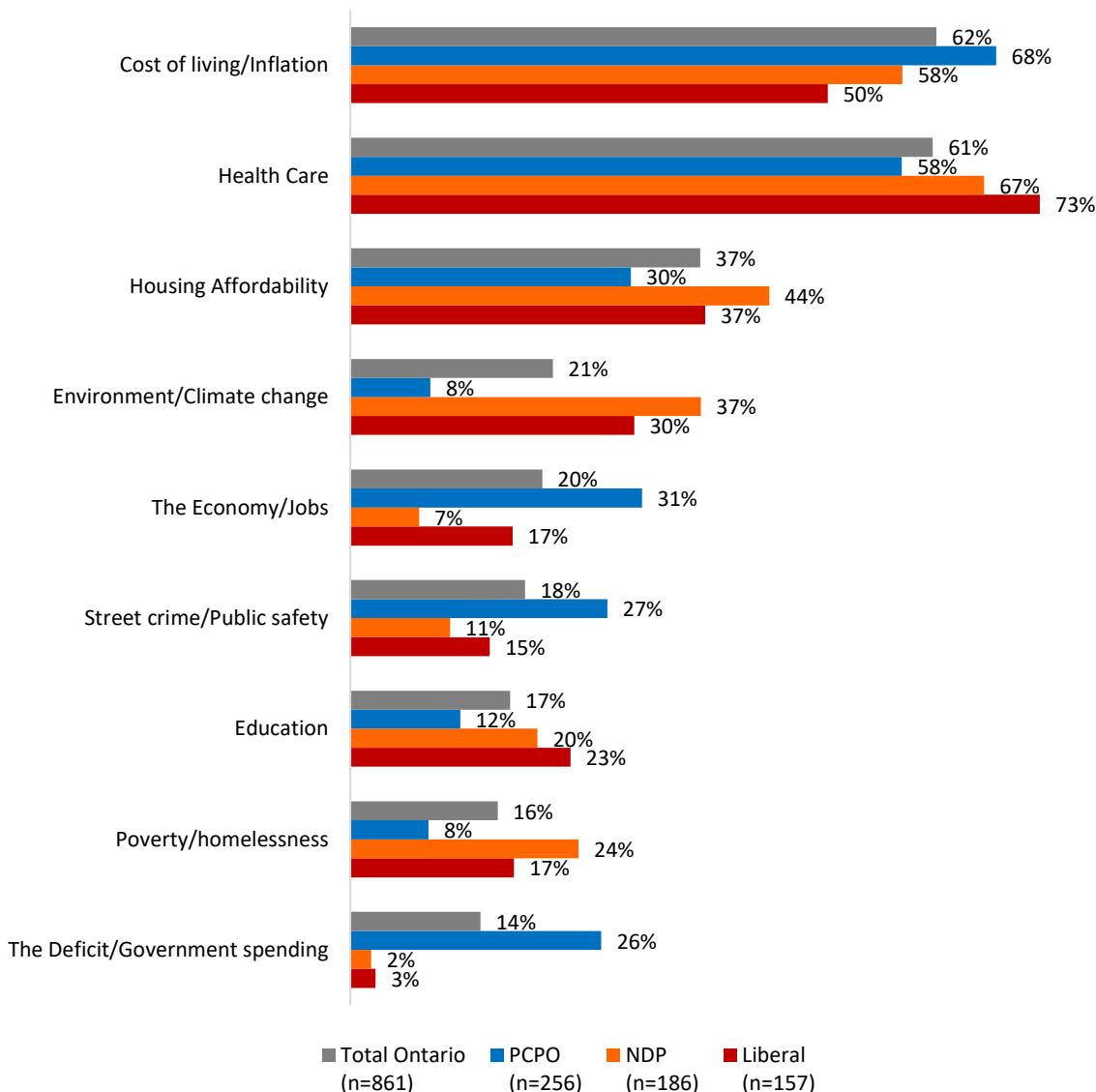
On the latter note, Premier Doug Ford and the PC government [tabled a budget](#) in March which runs a \$1.3 billion deficit for this fiscal year, but forecasts surpluses starting the year after.

Those who voted for the NDP and Liberals select housing affordability, the environment, education, and poverty at higher rates than past PC voters:

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Top issues facing Ontario by provincial vote in 2022
(Up to three chosen; those with more than 10% overall shown)



Ontarians critical of Ford government's performance

Ontarians find few bright spots when it comes to assessing the Ontario government's performance across a broad spectrum of issues. Half (50%) say it has done well responding to COVID-19, an issue that has faded completely from prominence ([see detailed tables](#)). That is the only issue on which Ontarians are more likely to be positive than negative.

Two-in-five (39%) believe the PC government has navigated the relationship with the federal government well and as many (37%) say it has done well with the economy and job creation. This, after the province announced [a Volkswagen "gigafactory"](#) would open in St. Thomas, Ont. In 2027. For all other concerns, fewer than three-in-ten laud Ford's government.

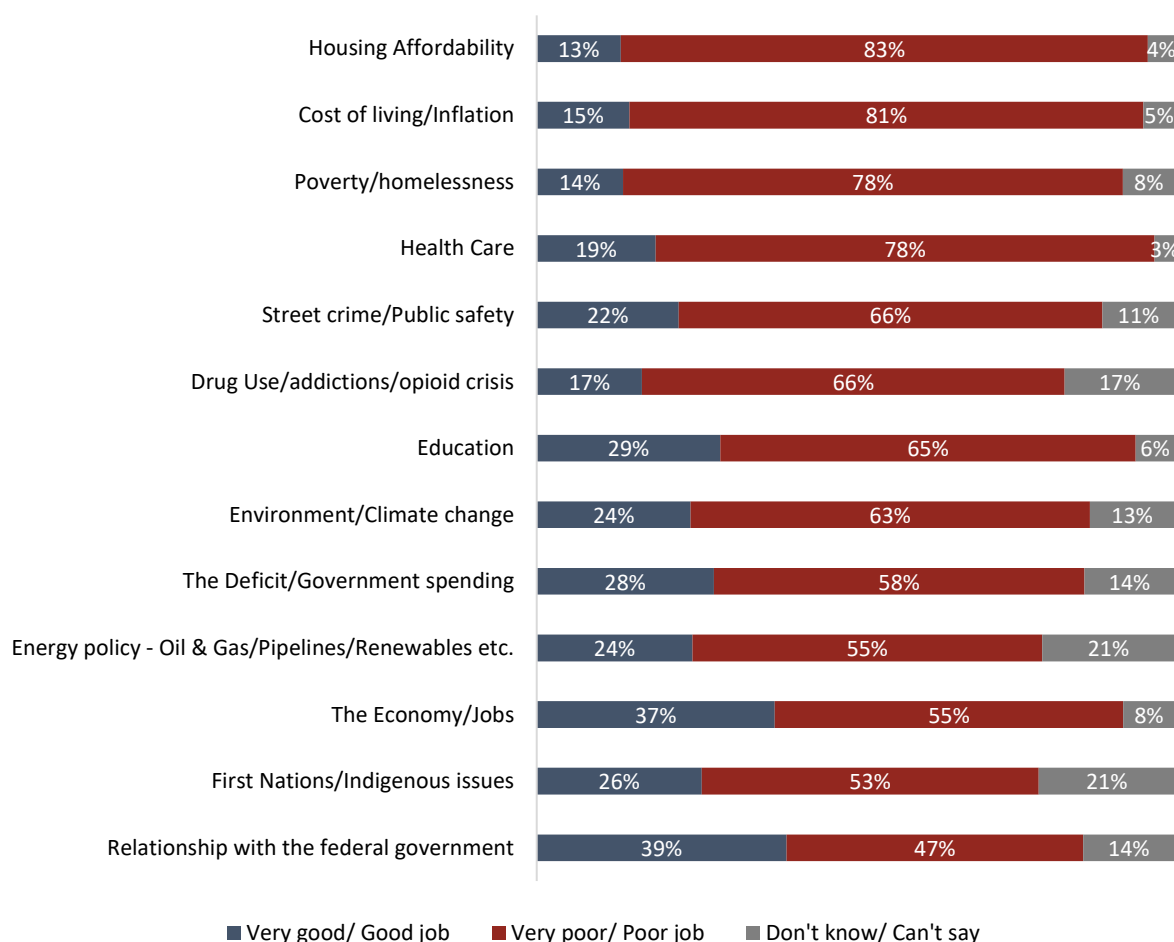
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Criticism of the Ontario government's performance on health care outweighs praise by four (78%) to one (19%). This comes as the government "surprised" physicians by ending a program that provided health care for those without health insurance. Doctors have been critical of the change, saying it will be "detrimental to the livelihood of marginalized Ontarians."

Though the government has formed a task force to tackle housing affordability, few (13%) believe the PC government has performed well on that file. More than four-in-five (83%) believe it has done poorly. Ontario has recently set home building targets for the province's largest municipalities. However, there is doubt this will fix the housing affordability crisis in the province as prices could be on the rise again.

**Do you think the current government of Ontario is doing a good job or a poor job in each of the following areas?
(Ontario, n=861)**



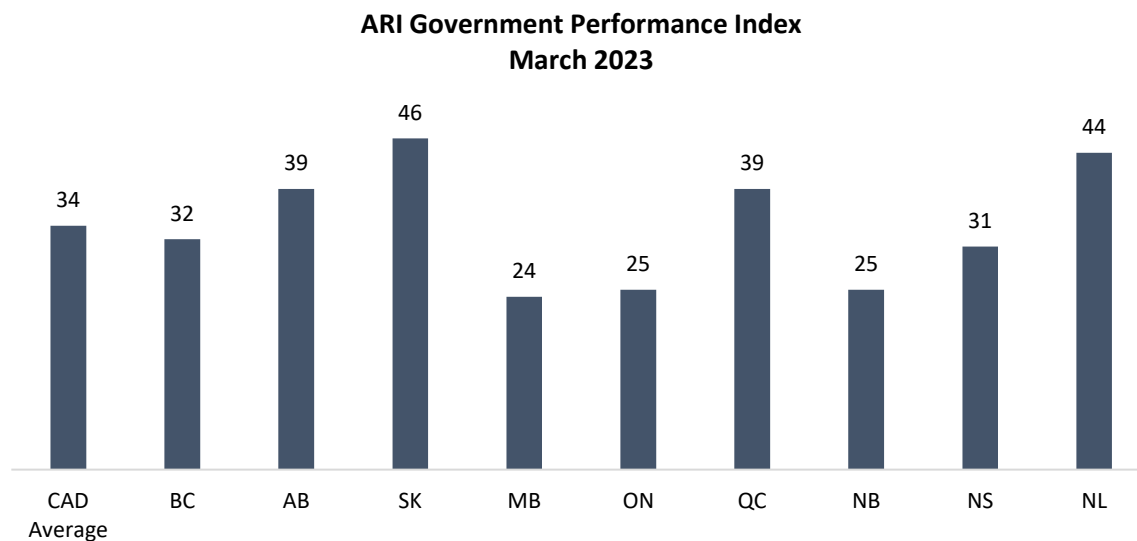
The Ontario government also performs poorly when it comes to comparing it to assessments of other provincial governments across the country. The Angus Reid Institute Government Performance Index averages the percentage of respondents who say the government has done a good job on the issues surveyed. The PC government in Ontario scores a 25 on this metric, below the provincial average of 34,

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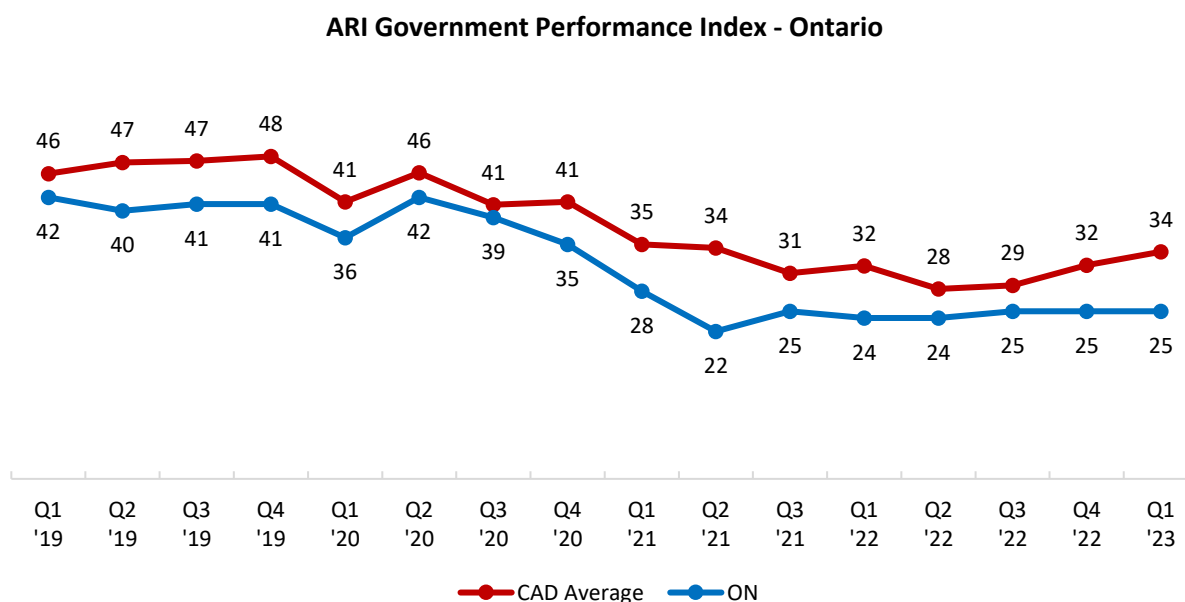
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and near the bottom of the country with the provincial governments of Manitoba (24) and New Brunswick (25):



Since Ford was elected premier in 2018, the Ontario government has been below average when it comes to constituent report cards on its performance. And in every quarter in the last two years, it has scored 25 or below on the ARI Government Performance Index:



Past PC voters less critical, but still pan performance on top issues

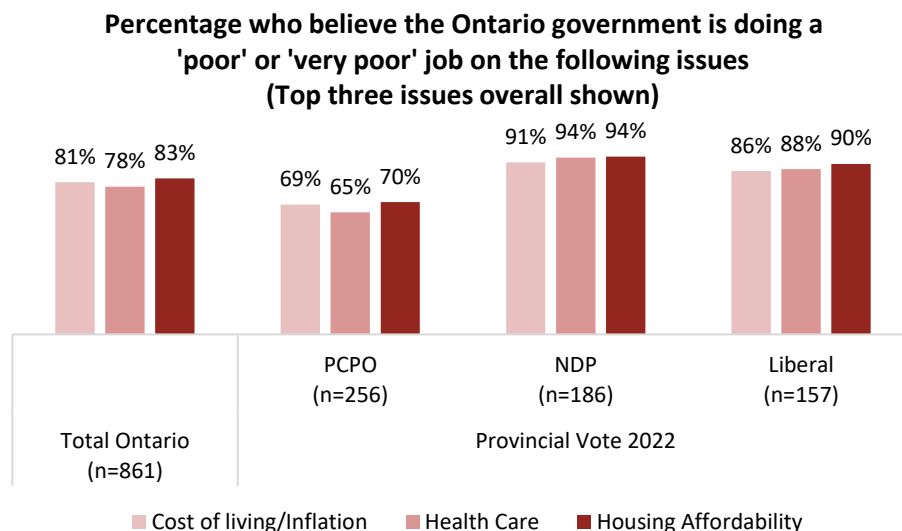
Though in general those who voted for Ford and the PC party in the 2022 election are less critical of the government's performance than those who voted NDP or Liberal, majorities still believe it is doing poorly

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on inflation (69%), health care (65%), and housing affordability (70%), the top three issues in the province as selected by Ontarians:



Part Two: Vote intent

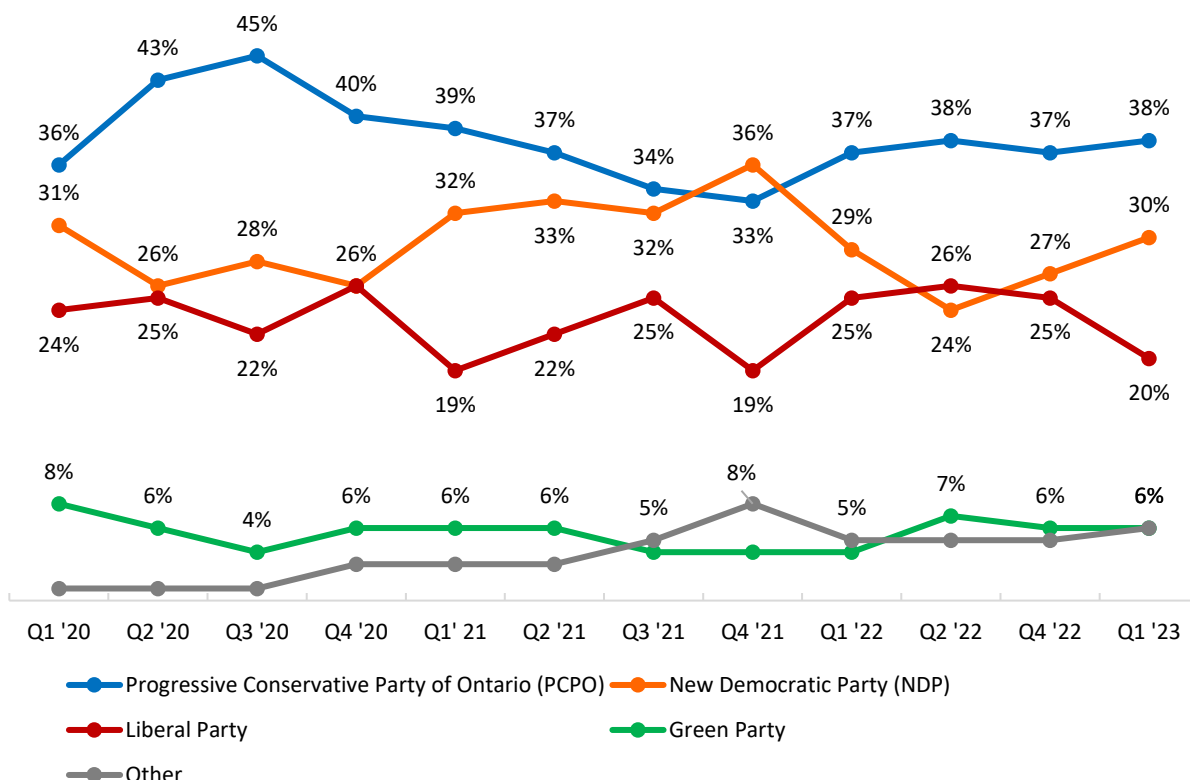
It has been nine months since Ford and company were re-elected with a majority government and vote intent for the governing party has moved little since then. Two-in-five (37%) Ontarians say they would vote for the PC party if an election were held today, near the total (41%) which voted for them in June 2022.

In the meantime, the NDP has gained more separation from the Liberals. Three-in-ten (30%) Ontarians say they would vote NDP if a provincial election were held today compared to the one-in-five (20%) who would vote Liberal:

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Vote Intent - Ontario (Decided and leaning voters)



New NDP leader largely unknown

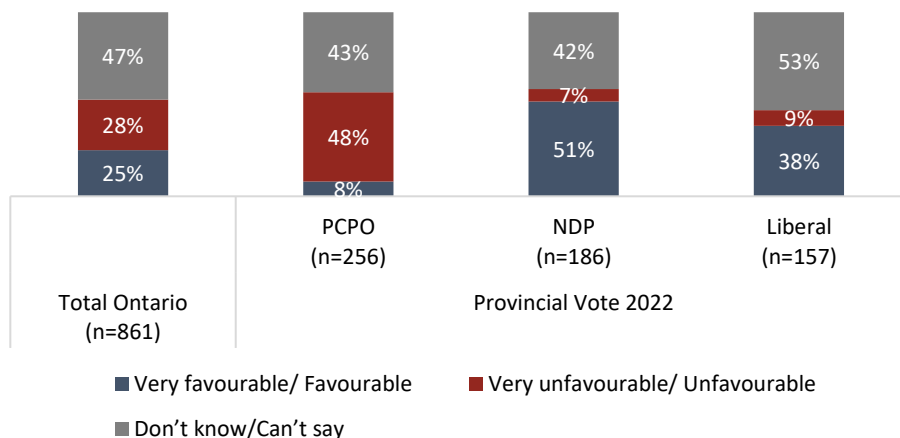
The NDP have perhaps an advantage over the Liberals in Ontario at the moment: they have selected a new leader, Marit Stiles, who became the official leader of the opposition in February. The Liberals have decided on a format but have not yet set a date for its leadership election as the party looks to recover from a poor showing in the 2022 election.

Still while the NDP have a leader, Stiles remains relatively unknown even to past NDP voters. Half (47%) of Ontarians, including two-in-five (42%) who voted for the NDP in 2022, say they don't have an opinion of Stiles. However, she is garnering more positive than not impressions among past supporters of her party and those who voted for the Liberals last year. The bulk of her negative reviews so far come from those who voted for Ford and the PC party:

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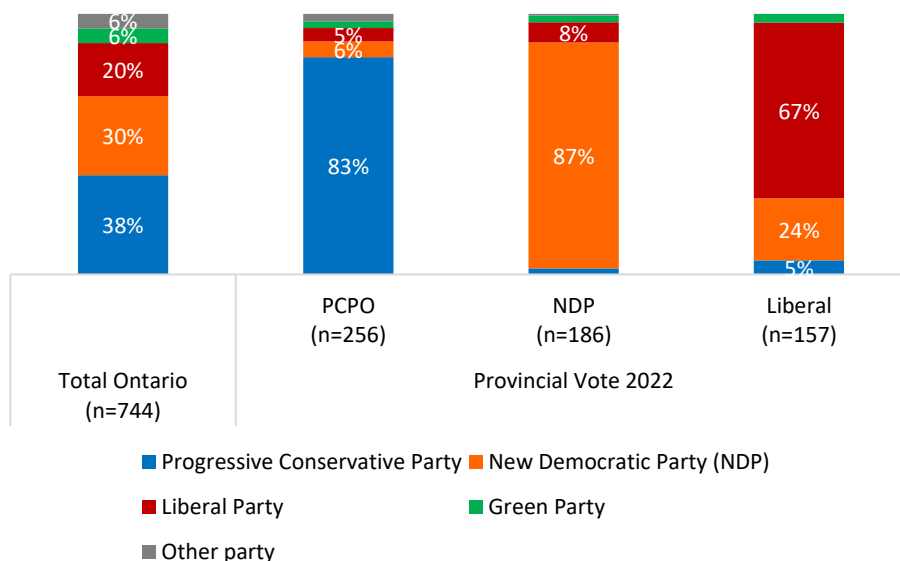
And what about the opposition, do you have a favourable or unfavourable view of NDP leader Marit Stiles?



Vote retention

The potential appeal of Stiles to past Liberal voters is perhaps apparent in the current vote retention data. One-quarter (24%) of those who voted Liberal in 2022 say they would now vote NDP if an election were held. Retention for the other two parties surpasses four-in-five:

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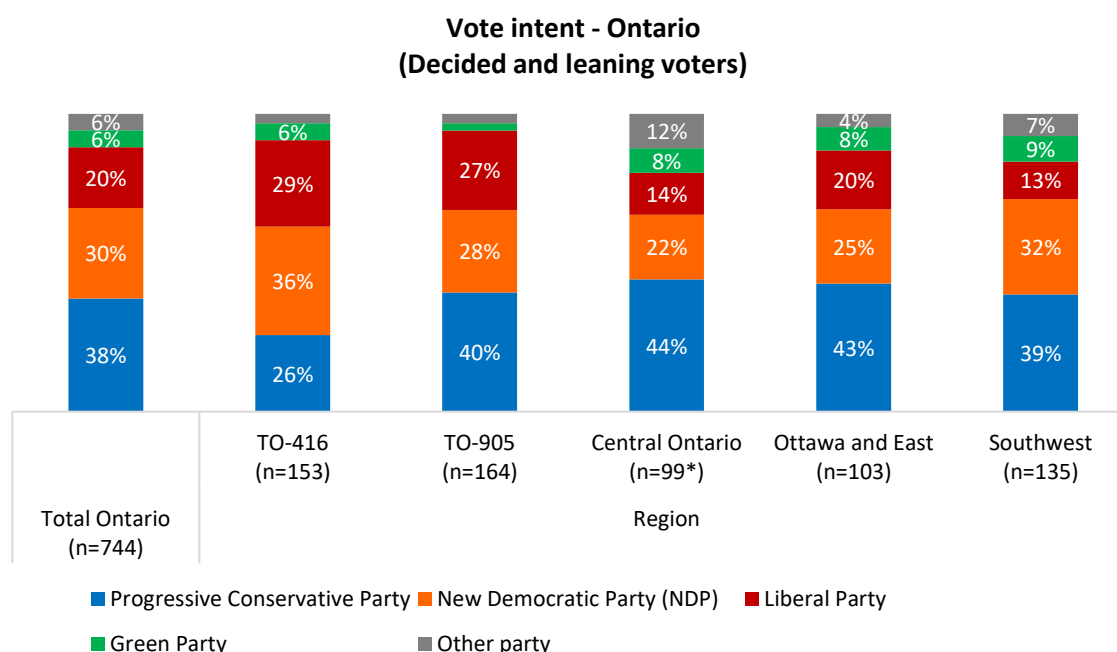


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Vote intent by region

Ford and the PCs are the favoured party in every region of Ontario except Toronto's downtown core. There the NDP lead, but all three of the major parties receive potential support from at least one-quarter. In other regions, at least two-in-five say they would vote PC if an election were held, including in Central Ontario, where those who intend to vote PC are twice as numerous as those who would vote NDP:



**Smaller sample size, interpret with caution*

Vote intent by age and gender

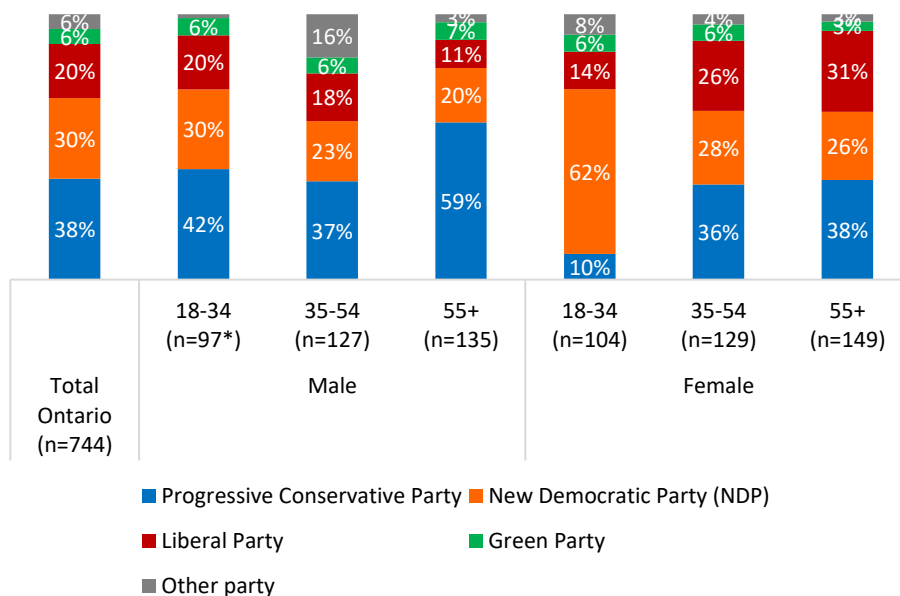
Three-in-five women (62%) under the age of 35 say they would vote NDP, the one demographic where the NDP find themselves leading. For all others, at least a plurality, if not a majority in the case of men over the age of 54 (55%), say they will vote PC. The Liberals perform best among women over the age of 54 (31%).

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Vote intent - Ontario (Decided and leaning voters)



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Vote by income

Notably as well, those who say they intend to vote Liberal are more likely to come from higher income households. Vote intent for the NDP outnumber the Liberals by two-to-one or more among those whose household income is less than \$100,000. Among those live in households earning six figures annually or more, the NDP and Liberals are statistically tied.

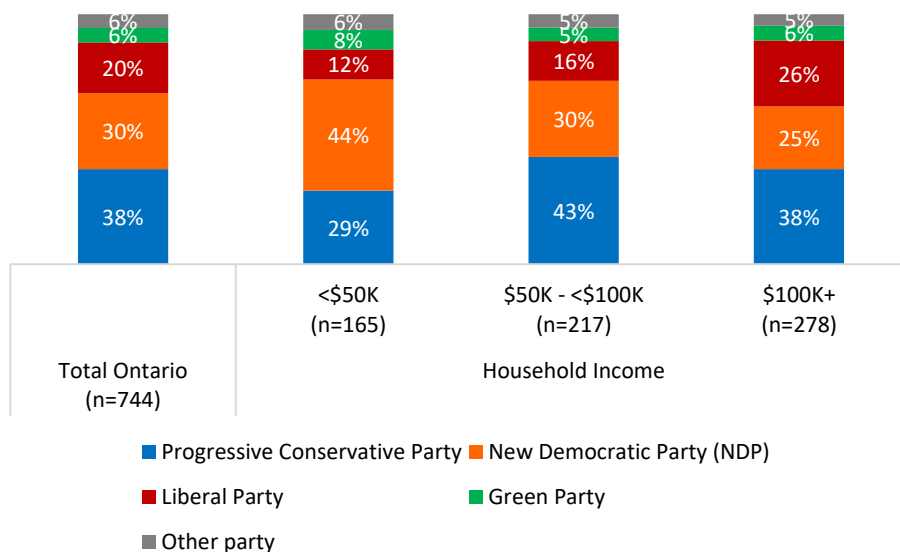
However, the PCs are the preferred party of households earning \$50,000 or more annually:

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

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