

Federal Politics: As inflation fight inflicts pain on the nation, one-third of 2021 Liberals look elsewhere for relief

Conservatives hold eight-point advantage in vote intention (37 CPC, 29 Liberal, 20 NDP)

June 8, 2023 – The Bank of Canada raised its touchstone interest rate 25 basis points to 4.75 per cent this week, the first such hike since January, returning the cost of borrowing to a level not seen in more than 20 years.

The latest increase, made in an ongoing attempt to curb persistent inflation, [is bad news for both mortgage holders and renters](#), and new data from the non-profit Angus Reid Institute also reveals the amount of damage it has been doing to the governing Liberals politically.

This latest public opinion survey finds overwhelming concern among Canadians over the cost of living now correlating with a loss of voter support for the ruling party, particularly among its own support-base. Past Liberal voters appear to be moving elsewhere in search of relief.

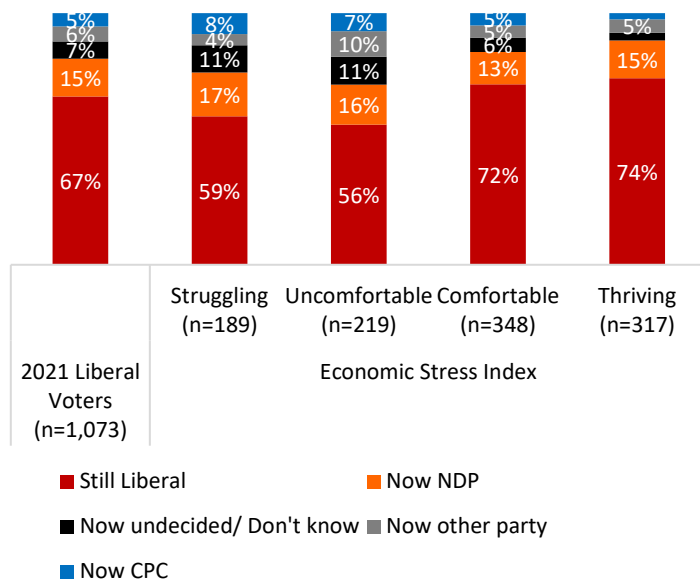
The central bank's rate hike has been called a "[a disaster for many Canadians](#)" by Conservative leader Pierre Poilievre, as he points the finger at government spending and budget deficits for causing the inflation that initiated the BoC's response.

Finance Minister Chrystia Freeland [countered](#) that inflation is global in nature, and highlighted the strength of the Canadian economy overall.

Poilievre's economic message appears to be resonating. Currently, 37 per cent of leaning and decided voters say they would vote for the Conservative candidate in their riding if an election were held, compared to 29 per cent support for the Liberals and 20 per cent for the NDP. Among those faring the worst financially – [those "Struggling" on ARI's Economic Stress Index](#) – half (51%) would vote for the CPC while approximately one-third as many would vote for the Liberals (18%) or NDP (16%).

These economic concerns appear to be driving a dissatisfaction with the incumbent Liberals among its own party supporters. Among those who supported the LPC in 2021 41 per cent of the Struggling would not commit to supporting the party again, alongside 44 per cent of the Uncomfortable.

Liberal vote retention by level of Canadians' Economic Stress



METHODOLOGY:

The Angus Reid Institute conducted an online survey from May 30 – June 3, 2023, among a representative randomized sample of 3,885 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 +/- 1 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.

CONTACT:

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

The overall trend for the Liberals is likely disconcerting to party strategists. In late 2021, after the party had succeeded in winning a minority government, 80 per cent of Liberal voters said they would support the party again if an election were held. This dropped to 72 per cent by the end of 2022 and has dropped to 67 per cent overall this month. Perhaps softening this blow, however, is the fact that the largest portion of these former Liberal supporters say they would vote for the NDP (15%), who have been supporting the minority Liberal government with a confidence-and-supply agreement since the last election.

Meantime, the opposition Conservatives retain much of their 2021 support, with 84 per cent of voters voicing an intention to return to the fold. The party's overall vote intention proportion is largely unchanged over the past 16 months, hovering between 35 and 37 per cent nationally.

More Key Findings:

- Cost of living is the top issue chosen by 63 per cent of Canadians. Next is health care, chosen by almost half (46%), followed by housing affordability (30%) and climate change (25%).
- Ontario remains competitive between the Liberals and Conservatives. Two-in-five Ontarians (38%) say they would support the CPC if an election were held, while 35 per cent would vote for the Liberals.
- Vancouver and Winnipeg are dead heats, with a near exact number of residents in both saying they would support the CPC, Liberals, and NDP in an election (all receive between 30 and 32 per cent vote intention).
- The Liberals maintain an advantage in the Toronto core (42% LPC, 23% CPC), but are statistically tied with the opposition CPC in the surrounding suburban areas of the 905 (41% LPC, 39% CPC).

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.*

Note: Because its small population precludes drawing discrete samples over multiple waves, data on Prince Edward Island is not released.

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CONTACT:

Shachi Kurl, President: 604.908.1693 shachi.kurl@angusreid.org @shachikurl

Dave Korzinski, Research Director: 250.899.0821 dave.korzinski@angusreid.org

Part One: Top issues

There are three weeks left of sittings in the House of Commons until summer recess and the Liberal government has yet to pass its budget bill. The Conservative opposition, led by Pierre Poilievre, is [threatening to block the budget](#) by introducing hundreds of amendments and filibustering unless the Liberal government led by Prime Minister Justin Trudeau meets its demands – halting increases to the carbon tax and setting out a plan to balance the budget.

Poilievre says Canadians “[cannot afford](#)” any additional increases to the carbon tax, which will affect the prices of gas, heat and groceries. He also says inflation, [a persistent issue](#) since the relaxation of public health restrictions beginning in early 2022, is [being driven by government spending and debt](#). The [Bank of Canada argues](#) inflation is being caused by spikes in commodity prices, a surge in demand, impaired supply chains, and labour shortages as it hiked its key policy rate again this week.

Related: [Economic Outlook: Burdened by debt and rising housing costs, three-in-ten Canadians ‘struggling’ to get by](#)

Amid these ongoing fiscal challenges, a majority (63%) of Canadians believe the rising cost of living to be one of the top issues facing the country. This issue far outpaces health care (46%), housing affordability (30%) and the environment (25%) as a top concern.

This holds true across the country, as the rising cost of living is the top issue selected in every province. From B.C. to Newfoundland and Labrador, at least three-in-five and as many as three-quarters believe inflation is one of the country’s top challenges:

Thinking of the various issues and challenges facing Canada, which ones do you personally care about the most? (Up to three chosen; top five issues shown)										
(Unweighted sample sizes)	Total (3,885)	Region								
		BC (456)	AB (355)	SK (330)	MB (515)	ON (750)	QC (600)	NB (256)	NS (372)	NL (192)
Cost of Living/ Inflation	63%	60%	62%	65%	60%	62%	64%	66%	62%	76%
Health Care	46%	45%	38%	35%	45%	48%	45%	57%	60%	60%
Housing affordability	30%	38%	19%	18%	22%	35%	29%	28%	31%	16%
Environment/ Climate Change	25%	24%	17%	13%	19%	23%	35%	20%	31%	18%
Crime/ Public Safety	18%	22%	23%	18%	24%	20%	13%	14%	7%	11%

Cost of living is selected as the top issue facing the country by men and women of all ages – except women over the age of 54. Men, meanwhile, are more likely to be preoccupied with government spending and the deficit ([see detailed tables for the full list of issues](#)).

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Thinking of the various issues and challenges facing Canada, which ones do you personally care about the most? (Up to three chosen; top five issues shown)							
	Total (n=3,885)	Male			Female		
		18-34 (n=542)	35-54 (n=633)	55+ (n=713)	18-34 (n=533)	35-54 (n=663)	55+ (n=788)
Cost of Living/ Inflation	63%	65%	65%	54%	70%	69%	57%
Health Care	46%	28%	28%	45%	46%	55%	66%
Housing affordability	30%	39%	27%	14%	41%	32%	33%
Environment/ Climate Change	25%	23%	20%	20%	29%	27%	30%
Crime/ Public Safety	18%	14%	17%	25%	10%	17%	23%

At least half of all age groups believe cost of living is a top issue facing the country. There is more disagreement on the issues of health care – which older Canadians are more likely to choose – and housing affordability – selected more commonly by younger Canadians. On the issue of government spending, Canadians over the age of 65 are twice as likely to care about it (17%) than those aged 18 to 24 (8%, [see detailed tables](#)).

Thinking of the various issues and challenges facing Canada, which ones do you personally care about the most? (Up to three chosen; top five issues shown)							
	Total (n=3,885)	Age					
		18-24 (n=227)	25-34 (n=849)	35-44 (n=753)	45-54 (n=549)	55-64 (n=667)	65+ (n=838)
Cost of Living/ Inflation	63%	66%	68%	68%	65%	59%	52%
Health Care	46%	28%	40%	39%	45%	51%	59%
Housing affordability	30%	40%	40%	33%	26%	27%	21%
Environment/ Climate Change	25%	30%	25%	23%	24%	23%	27%
Crime/ Public Safety	18%	15%	11%	16%	20%	23%	25%

In January 2022, the Angus Reid Institute created the Economic Stress Index to measure the financial pressure facing Canadians. It assesses factors such as Canadians' household costs, debt, and self-financial appraisals. The index finds three-in-ten (30%) Canadians to be "Struggling" financially, one-quarter (23%) "Uncomfortable", one-quarter (26%) "Comfortable", and one-in-five (21%) "Thriving" ([see detailed tables](#)).

For those who are Struggling or Uncomfortable in terms of their economic stress level, cost of living rises to even greater prominence, chosen by seven-in-ten among each group. Health care and climate change are both higher priorities for those who are Thriving compared to other groups:

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Thinking of the various issues and challenges facing Canada, which ones do you personally care about the most? (Up to three chosen; top five issues shown)					
	Total (n=3,885)	Economic Stress Index			
		Struggling (n=1,179)	Uncomfortable (n=879)	Comfortable (n=1,017)	Thriving (n=811)
Cost of Living / Inflation	63%	72%	70%	58%	46%
Health Care	46%	36%	47%	49%	56%
Housing affordability	30%	31%	29%	33%	27%
Environment / Climate Change	25%	14%	20%	31%	38%
Crime / Public safety	18%	16%	18%	19%	21%

Part Two: Economic stress and vote intention

Liberal vote retention slides

To fight inflation, the Bank of Canada began a series of interest rate hikes beginning in March 2022. While these increases in the cost of borrowing have had the desired effect of slowing inflation – [more or less](#) – it has also put pressure on mortgage holders and many other Canadians holding consumer debt. Renters, too, have felt the pressure, as their landlords have passed on their own increased borrowing costs.

Related: [Economic Outlook: Burdened by debt and rising housing costs, three-in-ten Canadians ‘struggling’ to get by](#)

After taking a pause for two rate cycles, the Bank of Canada hiked its key policy rate [again this week](#), further increasing the cost of borrowing as the bank continues to attempt to bring inflation in line with its two per cent target. It also signalled that [more rate hikes may be coming](#), a worrying sign for Canadians already struggling with their mortgage payments, credit card balances and other consumer debts.

These financial pressures come into play when it comes to Canadians assessments of the current federal government, and whether or not past supporters of the governing Liberal party would vote for them again now.

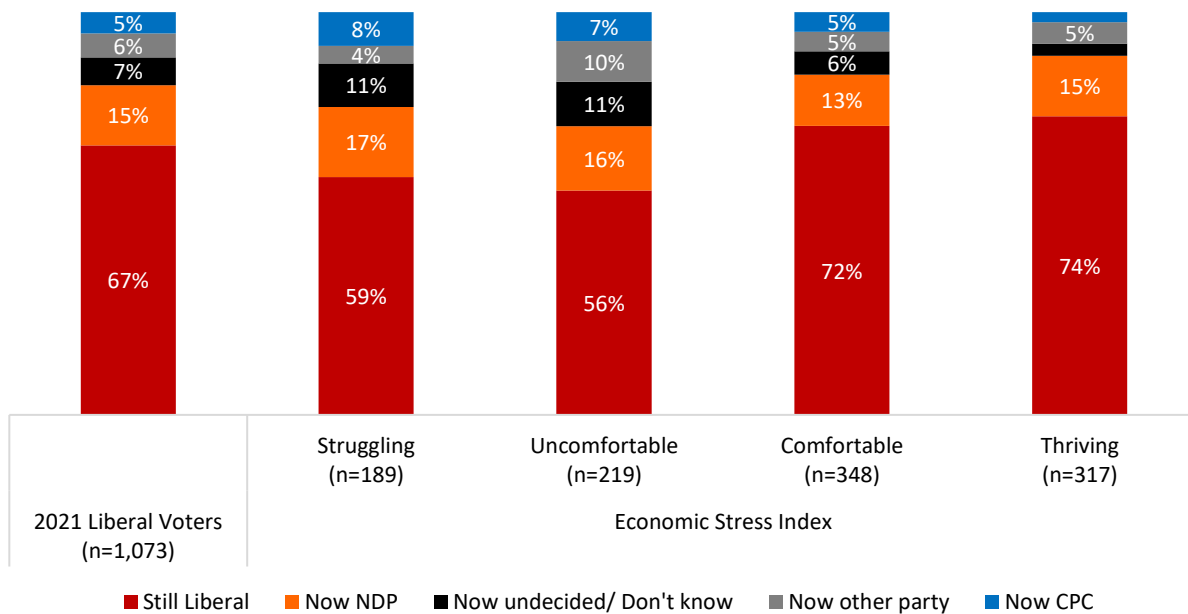
Past Liberal voters are much more likely to endorse the party again if they are in a better financial situation. Three-quarters (74%) of those who voted Liberal in 2021 and are Thriving financially say they would vote again for the Liberals. This falls to below three-in-five among the Struggling (59%) and Uncomfortable (56%).

Overall, two-thirds (67%) of those who voted Liberal in 2021 say they would vote Liberal again if there were an election today. Of the one-third who say they would place their vote elsewhere, half (15%) say they would vote NDP, while equal proportions would vote CPC (5%) or another party (6%). Approaching one-in-ten (7%) say they are undecided how they would vote:

CONTACT:

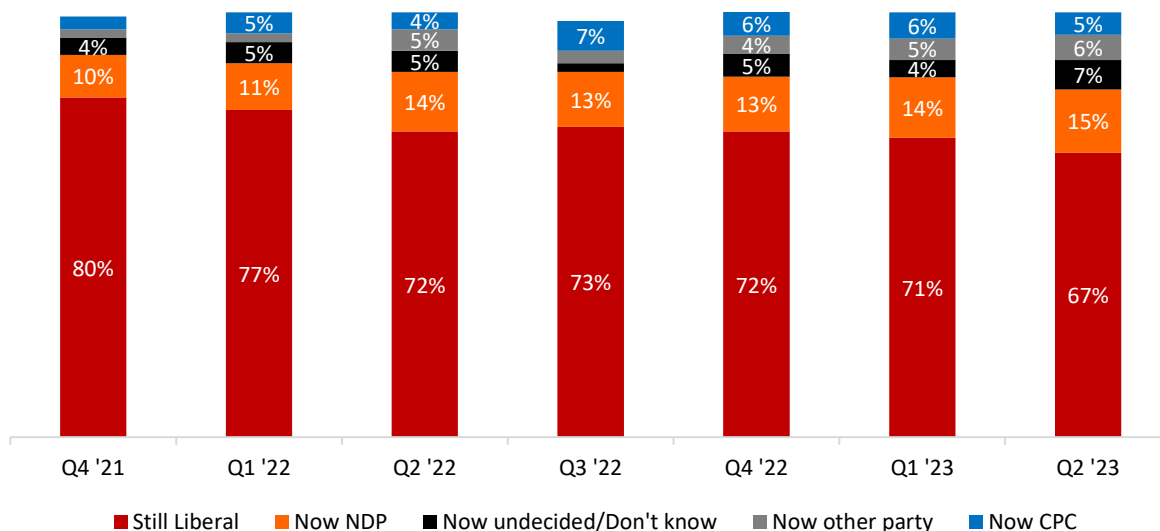
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Liberal vote retention by Economic Stress Index



Since the 2021 federal election, Liberal voter retention has been steadily declining. While the NDP have benefitted the most from this movement away from the governing party, there is an increase in the number of past Liberal voters who say they would vote CPC or another party, and among those who aren't sure:

Liberal vote retention since 2021 federal election

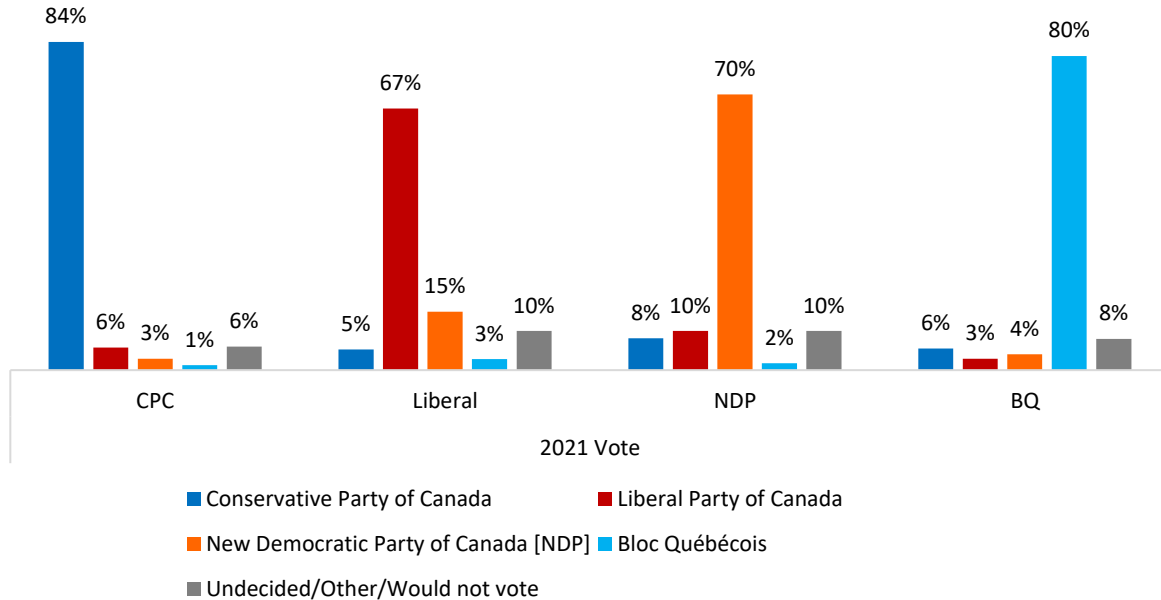


Compared to the Liberals, the CPC boast a significant advantage in vote retention. Among those who supported the CPC in 2021, 84 per cent say they would vote for the party again. The New Democrats would retain 70 per cent support, while the Bloc Québécois retention rate is closer to the CPC level at 80 per cent.

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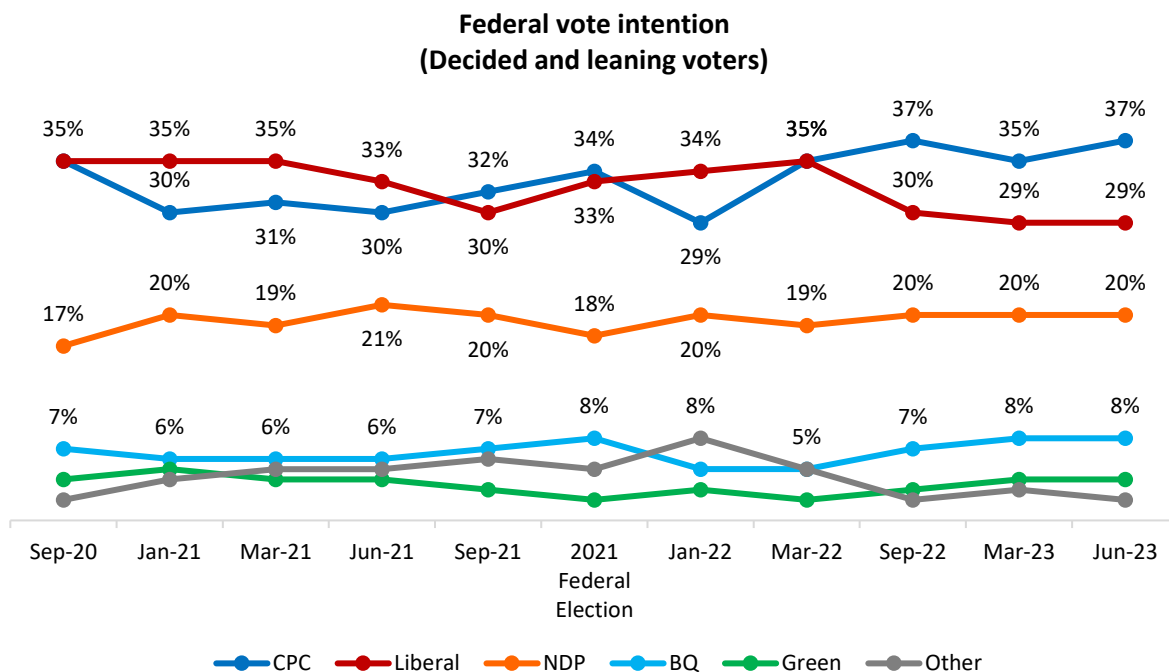
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Retention rate by party - 2021 vote vs current vote intention



Part Three: Vote intention

Since Poilievre has taken over the Conservative party leadership, the CPC have held a lead in vote intent. Two-in-five (37%) Canadians say they would vote Conservative if an election were held today. Three-in-ten (29%) say they would vote Liberal, while one-in-five (20%) would vote NDP. These figures have been consistent since September last year:



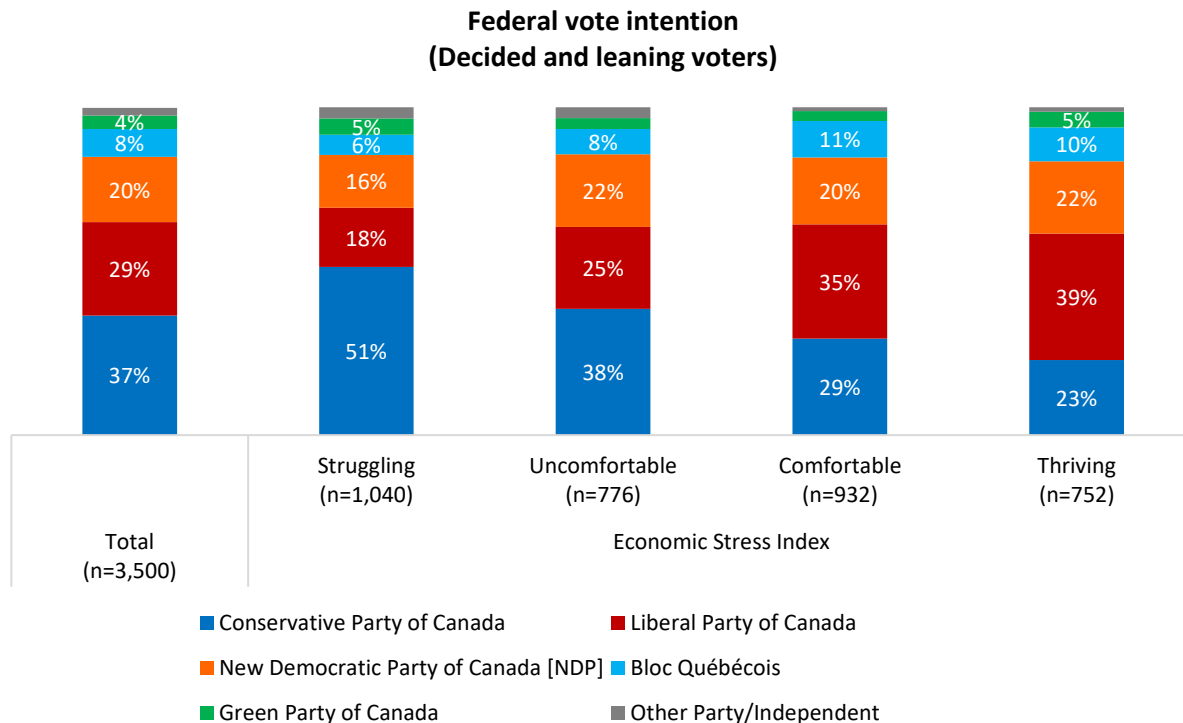
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Vote by Economic Stress Index

Canada's economic picture may be playing a significant factor as Canadians weigh where they would place their vote in a potential election. Poilievre's messaging around inflation, and warnings around the effects of further carbon tax increases, appear to be resonating with Canadians who are under financial pressure. Half (51%) of the Struggling by the Economic Stress Index say they would CPC if an election were held. The CPC hold a lead, too, among those who are Uncomfortable. Meanwhile, a plurality of the Comfortable and the Thriving would vote for the governing Liberal party:



Vote by region

In three key battleground provinces, the Liberals trail in current vote intention. The CPC leads the NDP by 10 points in B.C., while holding a slight edge over the Liberals in Ontario. The Bloc Québécois are the preferred party of a plurality of Quebecers.

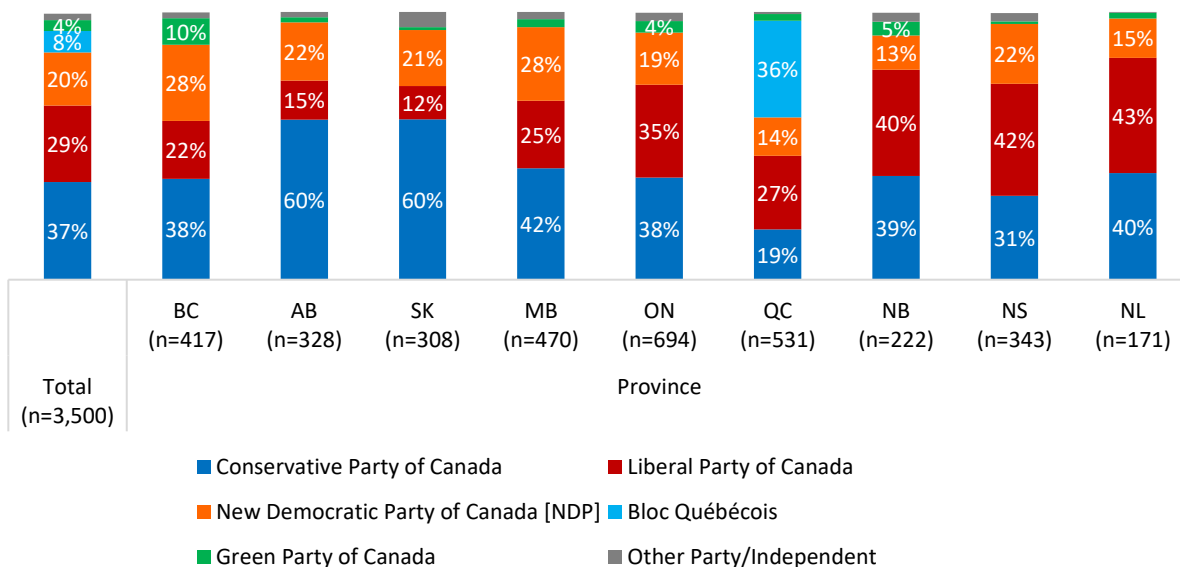
Elsewhere, the CPC hold the lead in all three prairie provinces, while the Liberals are tied for the lead in vote intention, or hold it outright, in three of the Atlantic provinces:

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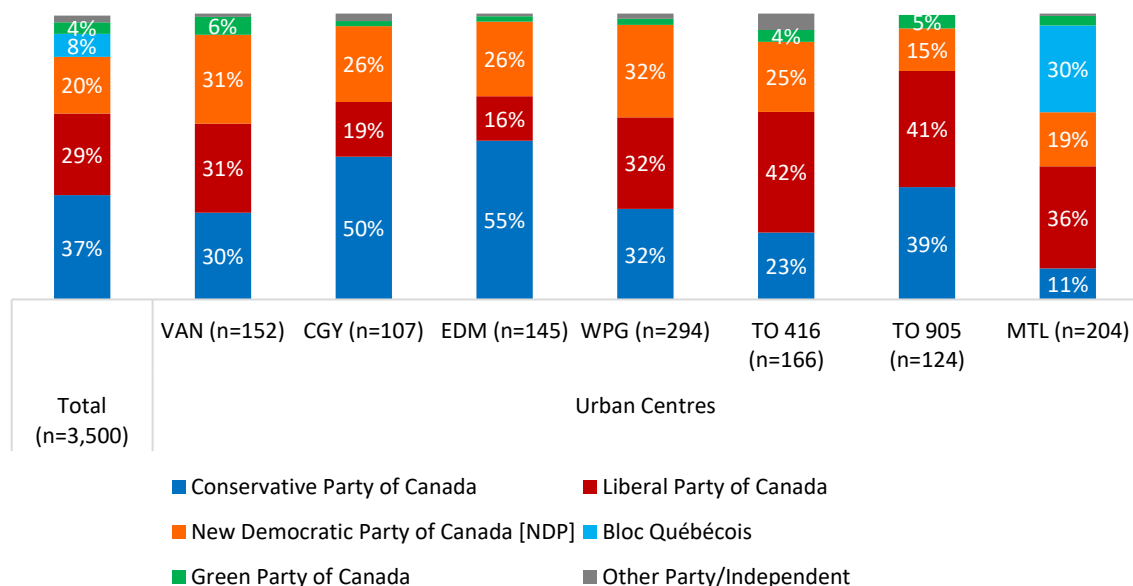
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Federal vote intention (Decided and leaning voters)



Canada's major metropolitan centres are home to some astonishingly close races. Consider that in both Metro Vancouver and Winnipeg – within ARI's boundary definitions, home to 22 federal ridings – almost exactly three-in-ten residents in each say they would vote for the CPC, Liberals or NDP. The Liberals maintain a key advantage in Toronto core, while tied with the CPC in the surrounding suburban 905 region:

Federal vote intention (Decided and leaning voters)

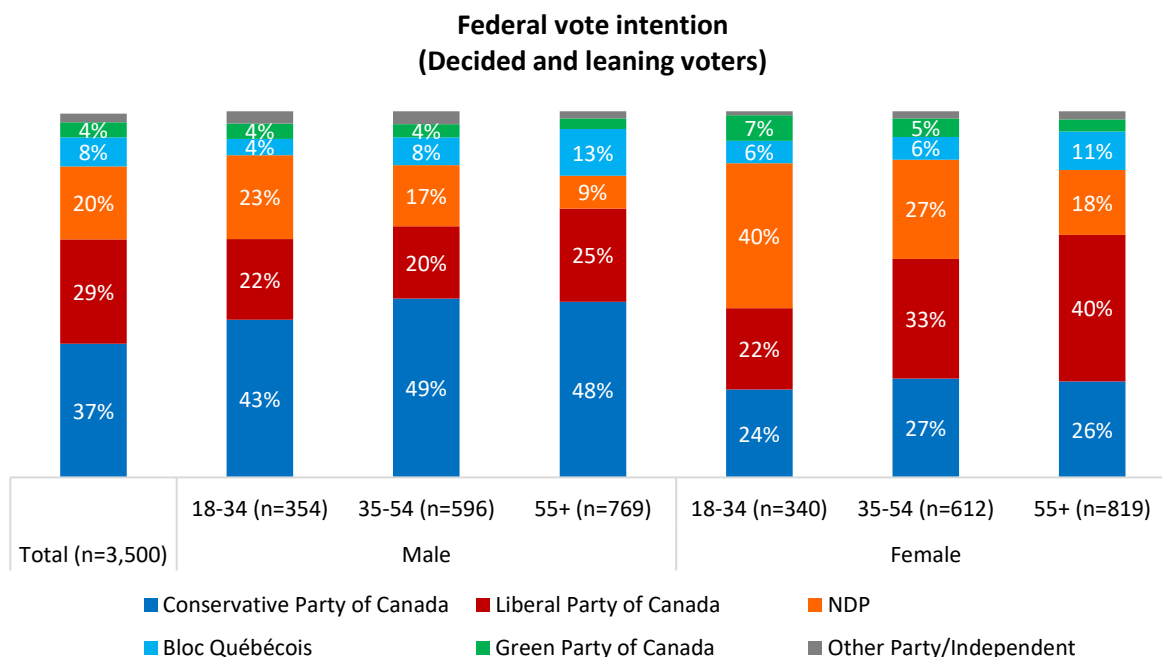


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Vote by age and gender

Men prefer the Conservatives by wide margins. Women aged 35 and older are the most likely to say they would vote Liberal if an election were held today. Two-in-five women aged 18 to 34 say they would vote NDP, the only demographic where the NDP hold a lead in vote intention:



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

For detailed results by the Economic Stress Index, [click here](#).

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