

A B.C. Battle (for second place): NDP hold comfortable lead as surging Conservatives pull into a tie with BC United

Cost of living & healthcare continue to dominate priorities, few in B.C. satisfied with BC NDP performance

October 19, 2023 – In just over one year, it is expected that British Columbians will head to the polls to select their next provincial government, and this time around, it seems as though there may be a new challenger for David Eby and the BC NDP.

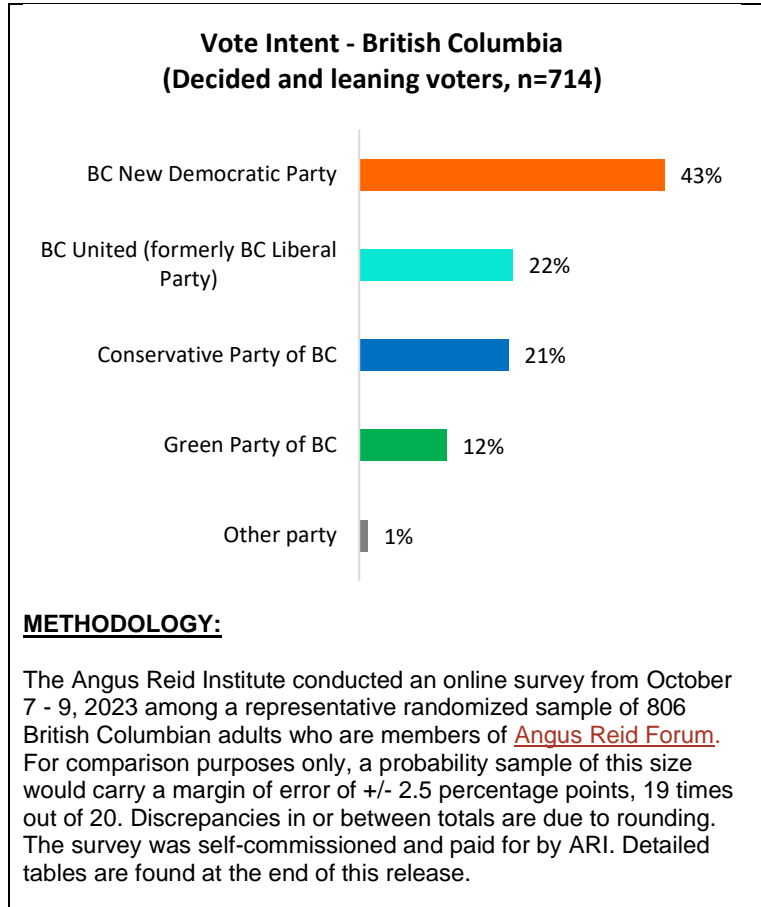
New data from the non-profit Angus Reid Institute finds B.C. residents just as likely to say that they will support the burgeoning Conservative Party of B.C. as the opposition BC United.

The latter has seen its share of the vote projection dip considerably since opting for a name change and rebrand from the BC Liberal Party. Since making that change in April of this year, BC United has dropped nine points from 31 per cent to 22 per cent. Leader Kevin Falcon himself [has recently suggested](#) the name change may have confused some would-be supporters.

The BC Conservatives acclaimed former BC Liberal MLA John Rustad as leader earlier this year and appear to be in the midst of a surge in support. Rustad – who had been sitting as an independent since being expelled from his former party last summer – was joined in September by another party-switching colleague, Bruce Banman, giving the BC Conservatives official party status in the legislature.

While the jockeying for second place is heating up, the BC NDP continue to hold a significant advantage. More than two-in-five British Columbians (43%) say they would support the incumbent party if an election were held, doubling both closest competitors.

And while Premier David Eby continues to be well reviewed in his work, with a 51 per cent approval rating, his government faces significant criticism on top issues in the province. Residents choose the cost of living, health care, and housing affordability as the top three priorities, and offer negative assessments of the government's action on each. Two-thirds (67%) say the BC NDP is performing poorly on health care, while four-in-five say this of both the cost of living (78%) and housing affordability (82%).



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More Key Findings:

- The BC NDP lead in vote intention among all age and gender groups other than men over the age of 55. Within that group, the party trails by three points to BC United. The BC Conservative Party is most popular with men ages 35 to 54 (30% vote intention).
- Similarly, the BC NDP hold an advantage in all regions of the country. Northern B.C and the Interior are the most competitive, with 38 per cent saying they would vote for Eby's party and 31 per cent voicing support for BC United.
- 28 per cent of residents have a favourable view of BC United leader Kevin Falcon, while 24 per cent say the same of BC Conservative leader John Rustad. BC Green Party leader Sonia Furstenau is viewed favourably by 35 per cent.

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: Top issues and government performance

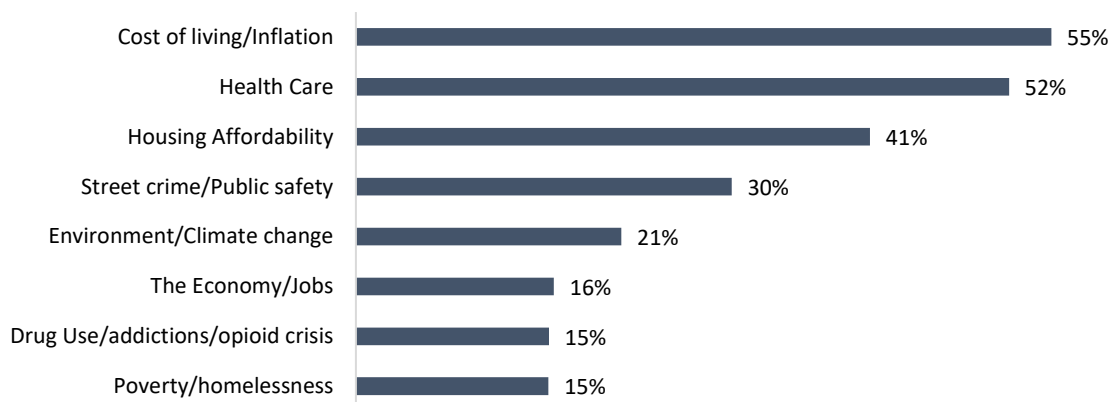
Many British Columbians endured a long summer, with concerns over wildfires adding to ongoing cost of living and inflation challenges. With one year remaining until an expected provincial election, the governing New Democrats have no shortage of challenges to take on before the campaign. For their part, three core priorities continue to garner the attention of residents. More than half say the cost of living (55%) and health care (52%) are most important currently, while 41 per cent choose housing affordability:

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**And which of those issues would you say are the most important to you, personally. (Select up to three)
(B.C., n=806)**



There are areas of strength for the B.C. government, including its relationship with the federal government and its handling of issues involving First Nations and Indigenous Peoples. After portions of the province were ravaged by wildfires, residents are divided evenly over the BC NDP’s handling of emergency preparedness, with 40 per cent saying it is doing well and 43 per cent appraising it poorly.

The government receives its poorest marks on areas considered the most important to residents, and likely key in campaigning for next year’s election. Just 13 per cent say that government is handling housing affordability well, while 16 per cent say this of inflation and the cost of living. Residents are more positive but still overwhelmingly critical of health care management (67% say poor job), the second most important issue in the province currently:

Do you think the current government of B.C. is doing a good job or a poor job in each of the following areas? (B.C., n=806)			
	Good job	Poor job	Not sure/Can't say
Relationship with the federal government	50%	31%	19%
First Nations/Indigenous issues	47%	37%	16%
The Economy/Jobs	43%	49%	9%
Education	41%	49%	10%
Environment/Climate change	41%	48%	12%
Emergency management/Disaster planning	40%	43%	17%
The Deficit/Government spending	32%	52%	16%
Energy policy - Oil & Gas/Pipelines/Renewables etc.	30%	53%	17%
Health Care	29%	67%	4%
Street crime/Public safety	24%	71%	5%
Management of the BC Ferries system	19%	72%	9%
Drug Use/addictions/opioid crisis	19%	76%	5%

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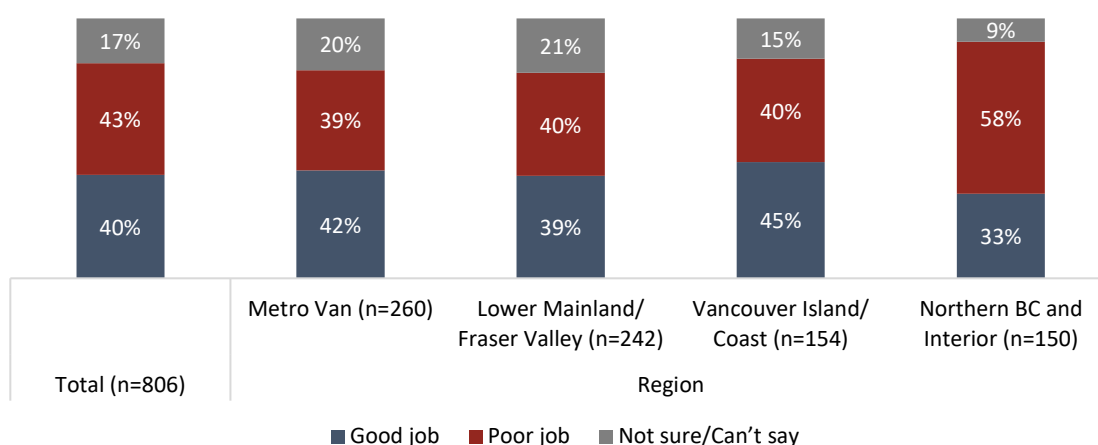
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Cost of living/Inflation	16%	78%	6%
Housing Affordability	13%	82%	4%
Poverty/homelessness	13%	83%	4%

Notably, the emergency preparedness file is most criticized by Northern and Interior residents, for whom one-in-three respond positively and 58 per cent negatively.

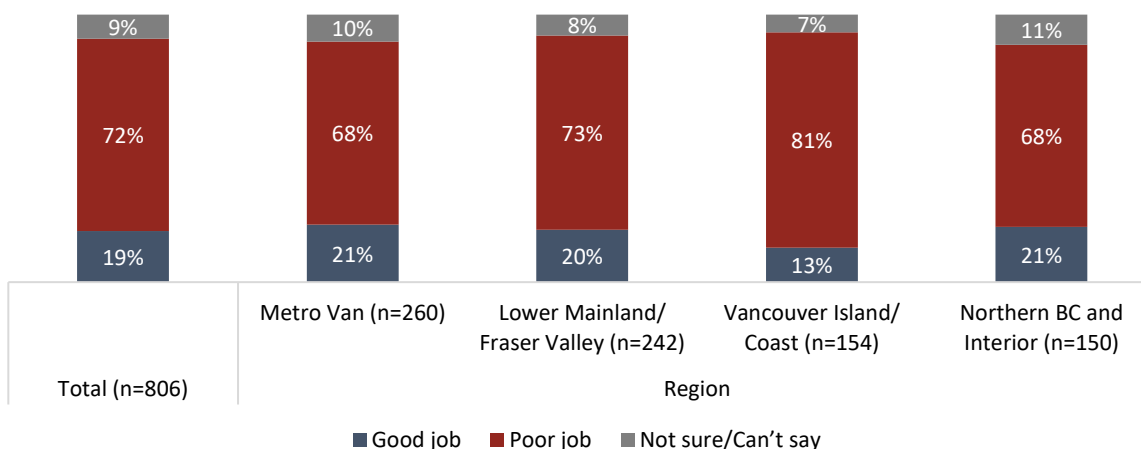
Do you think the current government of B.C. is doing a good job or a poor job in each of the following areas?

Emergency management/Disaster planning



Further, those critical of BC Ferries management, while well-represented across the province, tend to be most concentrated on Vancouver Island and the coast:

Do you think the current government of B.C. is doing a good job or a poor job in each of the following areas? Management of the BC Ferries system



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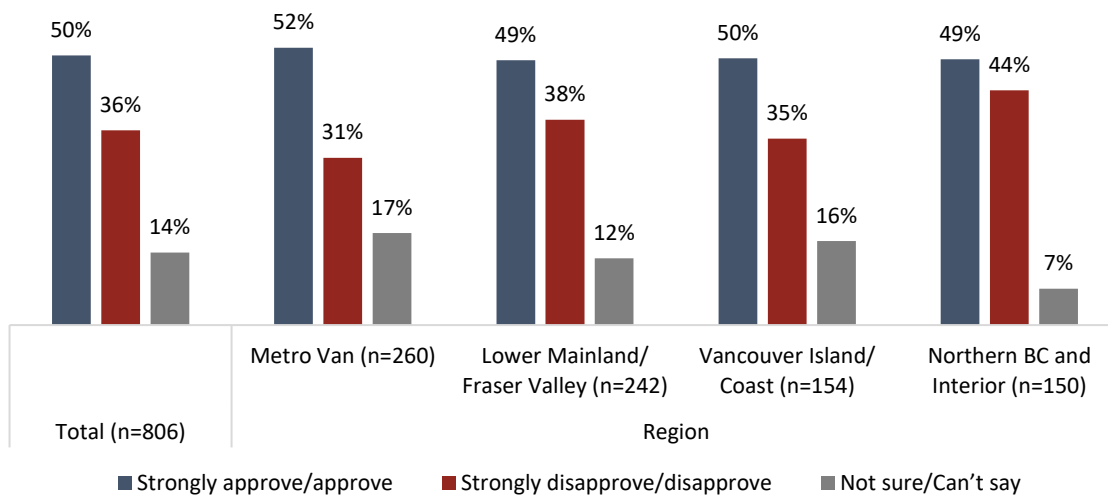
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Part Two: Leadership and a burgeoning challenge?

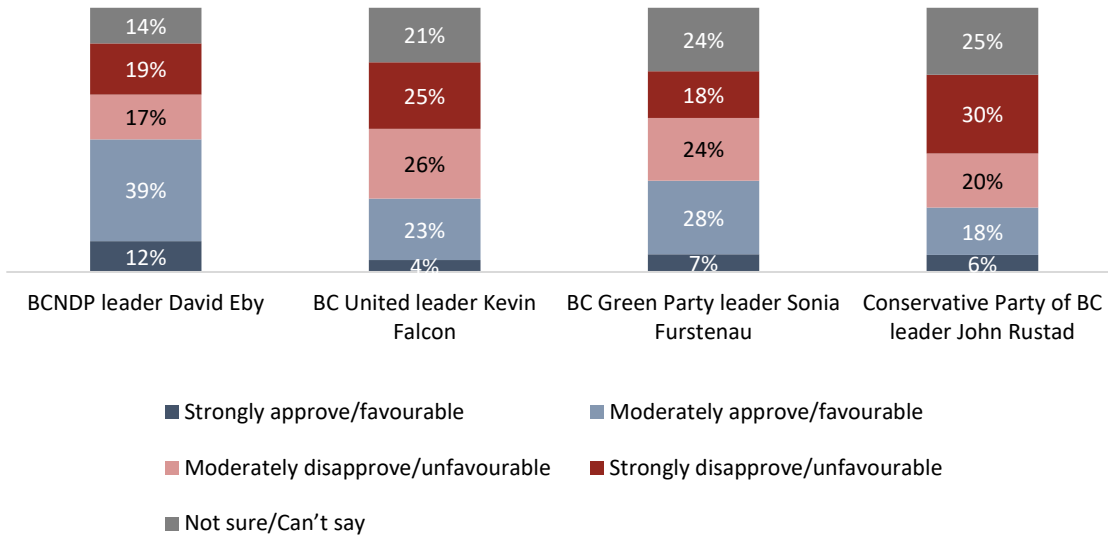
Premier David Eby continues to be well reviewed in his performance, despite criticism on key files. Eby’s personal resonance remains consistent across the province, hovering at the majority line. His net rating of plus 21 in Metro Vancouver is, however, much stronger than the plus five he receives in the North and Interior:

Do you approve or disapprove of the performance of Premier and BC NDP leader David Eby?



John Rustad was removed from the former BC Liberal Party in August 2022 after publicly questioning climate change science. At that time, he chose to sit as an independent in the legislature. In February of this year, he decided to join the provincial Conservative Party, previously considered “irrelevant”. He was acclaimed leader of that party shortly thereafter, and has had his public profile boosted by the party’s ascension to official status in the legislature, which the Conservatives achieved by drawing a second BC United member across the aisle this fall. Rustad now joins BC United leader Kevin Falcon in searching for relevance among British Columbians. Both leaders fail to reach the three-in-ten mark in favourability, and are viewed unfavourably by half:

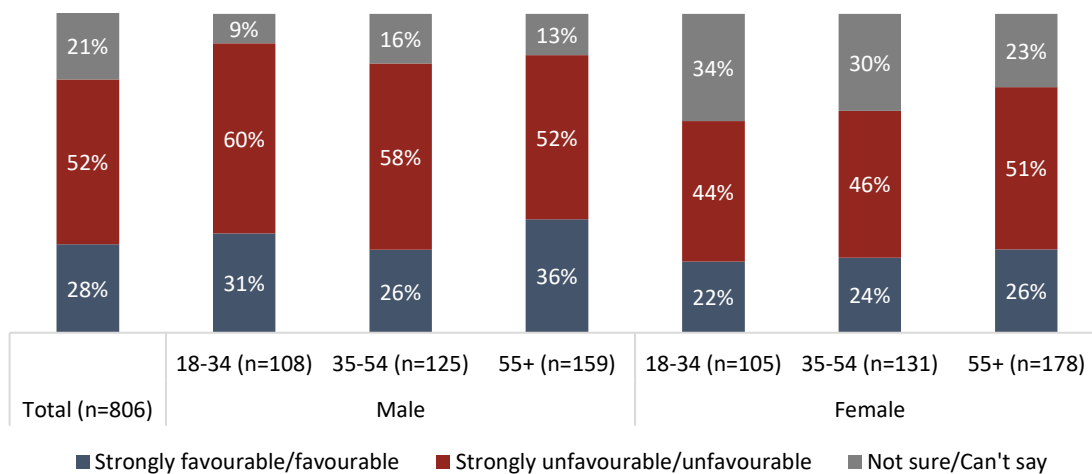
**Views of B.C. provincial leaders
Approval for David Eby, Favourability for others**



Falcon, Rustad jockey for resonance

Falcon has held his leadership position since the spring of 2022 but remains unknown to one-in-five British Columbians (21%). He fares best among men over the age of 54, but generates negative opinion among far more residents regardless of age and gender:

And do you have a favourable or unfavourable view of each of these other provincial party leaders: BC United Leader Kevin Falcon



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Rustad appears to have more of a foothold among men between the ages of 35 and 54, but is an unknown quantity to many women, including a key voting group – women over the age of 54:

And do you have a favourable or unfavourable view of each of these other provincial party leaders: BC Conservative Party leader John Rustad



Part Three: Vote intention one year from Election Day

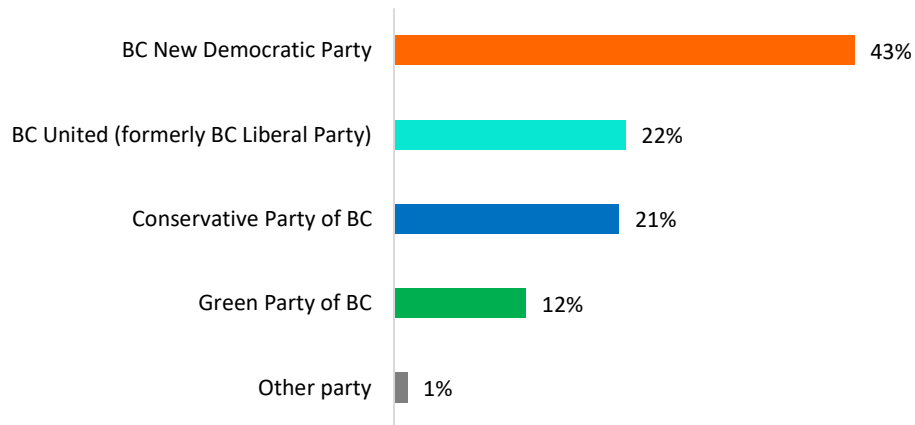
Targeting disgruntled BC United and BC NDP voters is not a new strategy for the BC Conservatives; more than a decade ago that was the stated goal of then party leader Jim Cummins. The party itself has not held power in more than 70 years, but appears to have some momentum. Currently, the same number of British Columbians – approximately one-in-five – say they would support BC Conservatives as would support BC United. Both parties have much work to do to mount a significant challenge to the BC NDP next October, as the incumbents are chosen by twice as many residents as their top vote choice:

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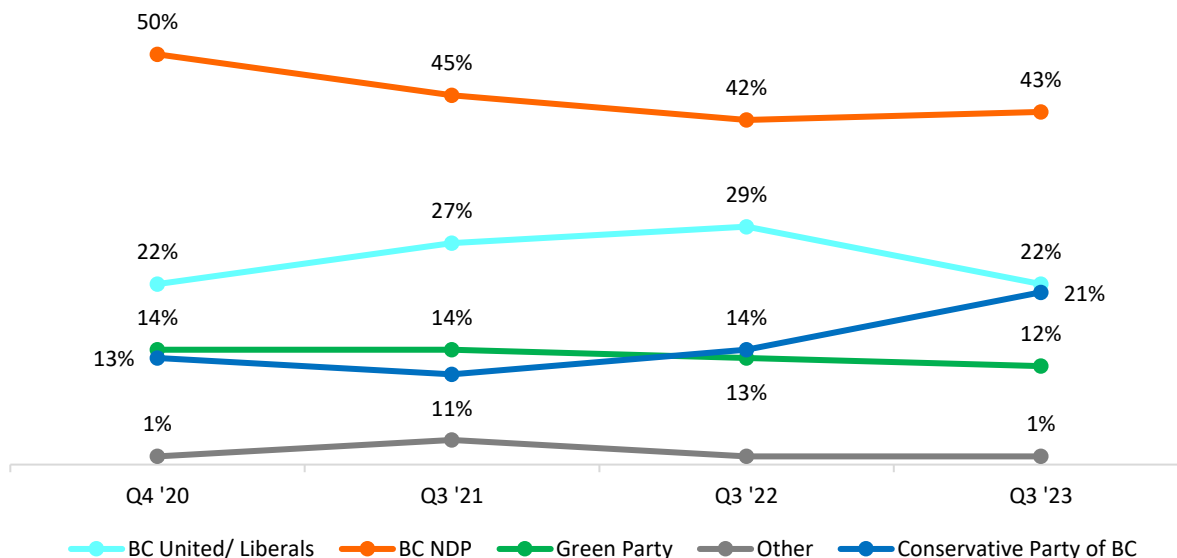
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**Vote Intent - British Columbia
(Decided and leaning voters, n=714)**

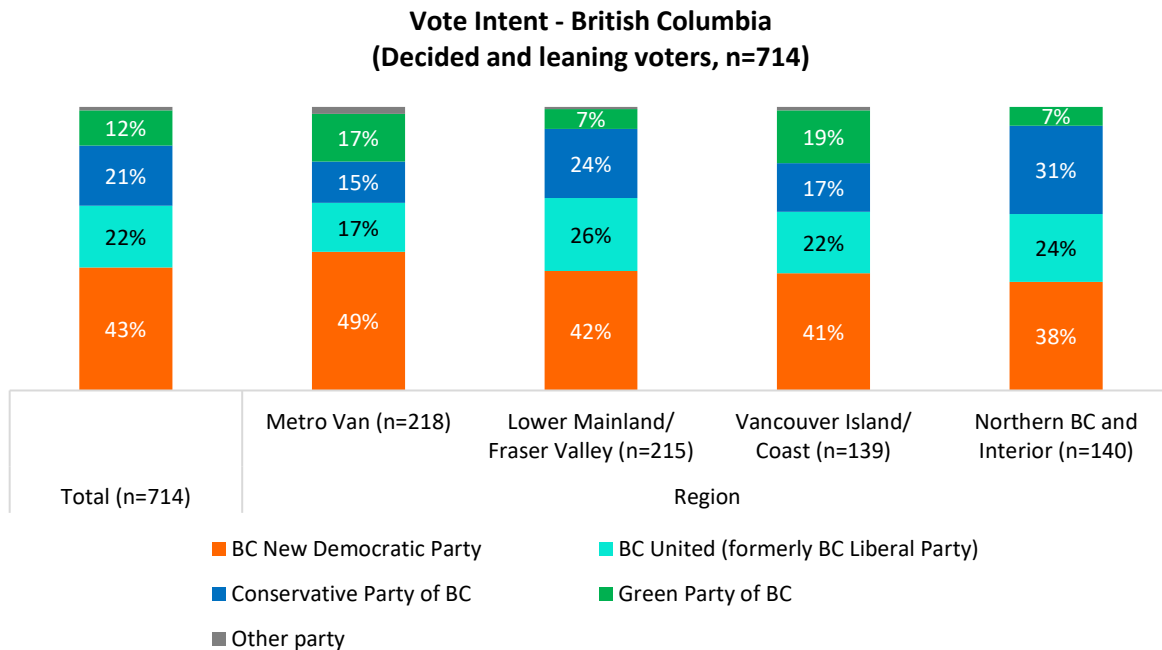


Given the recent surge in attention, official status in the legislature, and a tailwind provided by the federal Conservative Party’s recent improvement in its own polling projections, the BC Conservatives’ headquarters is likely emboldened. Conversely, BC United has dropped considerably since what some have called a “[confusing](#)” name change earlier this year. United leader Falcon himself [suggested](#) that voters may be confused in their support of the Conservatives. The political ground in B.C. feels unstable, with much to shake out over the next 12 months.

**Vote Intent - British Columbia
(Decided and leaning voters)**

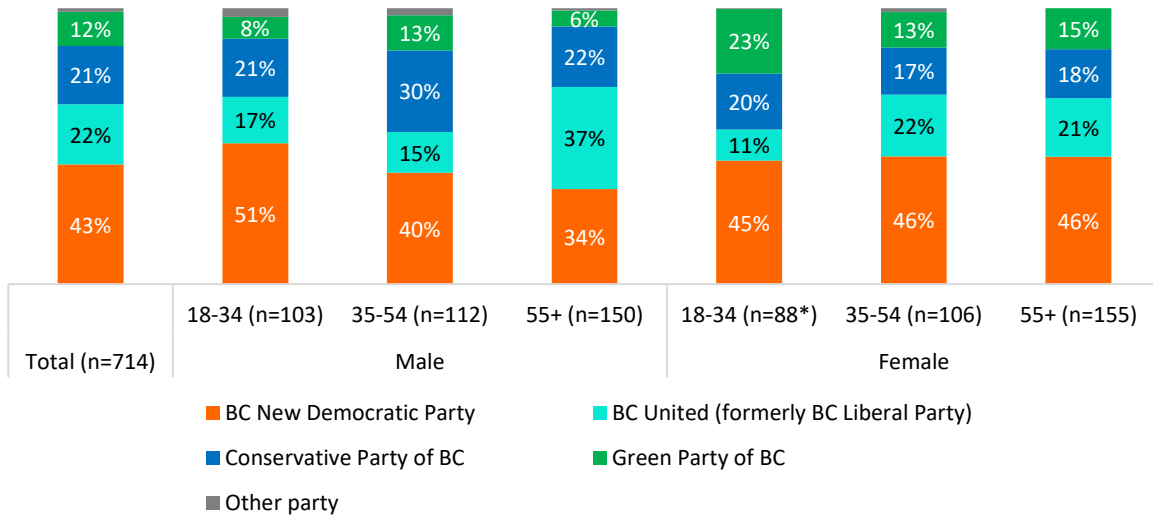


Regionally, the BC NDP hold significant and comfortable advantages in Metro Vancouver and Vancouver Island. In both regions the party outpaces the Conservatives and BC United *combined*. More uncertainty surrounds the picture in North B.C. and the Interior, where the Conservatives have jumped to second place and trail the BC NDP by single digits:



Younger voters continue to be overwhelmingly in support of the BC NDP, with young women also offering significant support to the BC Greens and Conservatives. The most intense competition for votes appears to be among men over the age of 35, where each of the three leading parties garner significant support:

**Vote Intent - British Columbia
(Decided and leaning voters, n=714)**



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