

## Saskatchewan: Majority support government's gender & pronoun policy but half also say exceptions needed

*Residents continue to be critical of provincial government performance on cost of living and health care*

**December 6, 2023** – Saskatchewan Premier Scott Moe is making the rounds at the United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP28) this week in Dubai. At home, one of the government's most high-profile policies continues to be a source of contention.

New data from the non-profit Angus Reid Institute finds two large groups in the province at loggerheads over the provincial government's Bill 137, which requires school divisions to seek parental consent in situations where a student younger than 16 wants to be referred to by a pronoun or name different than the one for which they are registered.

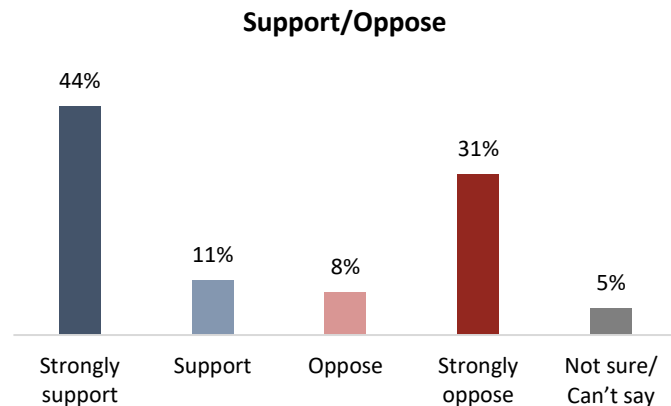
The largest group in the province strongly support this policy (44%), while the second largest strongly oppose it (31%). Overall, a slight majority (55%) are in favour, while two-in-five (40%) push back in opposition.

When asked more broadly how they feel about the government's handling of this issue, 48 per cent say it has done a good job, while 44 per cent disagree and say it has performed poorly. The Moe government [generated headlines](#) after invoking the notwithstanding clause to avoid legal challenges to the bill.

Half of Saskatchewan residents also say that there should be an exception in cases where the school believes the child may be in an abusive household, unreceptive to these changes in identification. Currently in such scenarios, the child is to be referred to a counsellor to come up with a plan to tell their parents.

As the premier and other provincial representatives are abroad, pushing to generate more interest in Saskatchewan's food, fuel, and fertilizer exports with global partners, it is finances and the future of health care that continue to dominate domestic priorities. Cost of living takes top spot – chosen by two-thirds (66%) – while health care rates second (54%). Education is chosen by 24 per cent, while far fewer say that the recent gender and pronoun policy is of heightened importance (14%).

The Saskatchewan gov't passed a bill in October that requires school divisions to seek parental consent if a student younger than 16 wants to be referred to by pronoun or name at school other than the one they are registered as:



### **METHODOLOGY:**

The Angus Reid Institute conducted an online survey from Nov. 24 – Dec. 1, 2023, among a representative randomized sample of 350 Saskatchewan 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 +/- 5 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:

- The Saskatchewan Party holds a 13-point provincial advantage in vote intention, with less than one year remaining until an expected provincial election.
- Residents offer majority praise for the government's handling of both oil and gas (58%) and its approach to climate change (51%).
- On the two top provincial issues, the government receives meagre praise. One-quarter (27%) say the Saskatchewan Party is performing well regarding health care, and one-third say this of its handling of cost-of-living concerns (33%).

## 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: On the Parents' Bill of Rights

#### **Majority support Bill 137; intense views on both sides**

In October, the Saskatchewan government passed Bill 137 or the Parents' Bill of Rights, after 40 hours of emergency debate. This legislation requires schools to obtain parental consent if a student younger than 16 is looking to change their name or pronoun in school. The new bill, which includes the [use of the notwithstanding clause](#) to override court challenges for a period of five years, has been met with a [petition for schools not to follow the law signed by dozens of teachers](#).

**Related: [Notwithstanding Clause: Majority see increased use problematic, would pursue abolition](#)**

The policy has proven divisive among residents in the province. More than half (55%) say they support the bill, including 44 per cent strongly. Two-in-five (40%) oppose Bill 137, including 31 per cent who do so strongly.

Men (63%) are more in favour of the bill than women (48%). Half (51%) of those under 35 oppose the bill, while three-in-five of those older than 34 support it:

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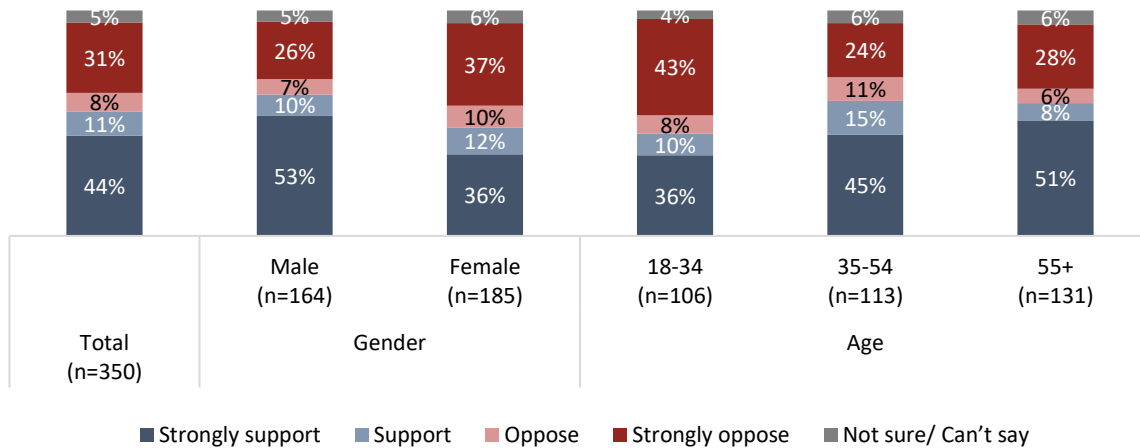
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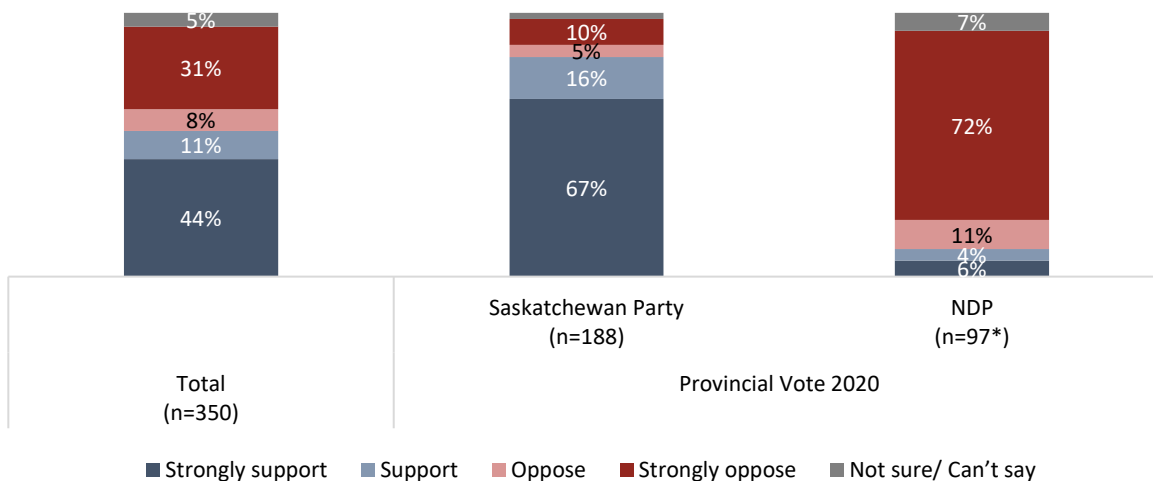
Support/Oppose



Bill 137 is much more popular among those who voted for Moe and the Saskatchewan Party in the 2020 election, than those who placed their vote elsewhere. Approaching three-quarters (72%) of past NDP voters say they are strongly opposed to the bill:

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Support/Oppose



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*\*Smaller sample size, interpret with caution*

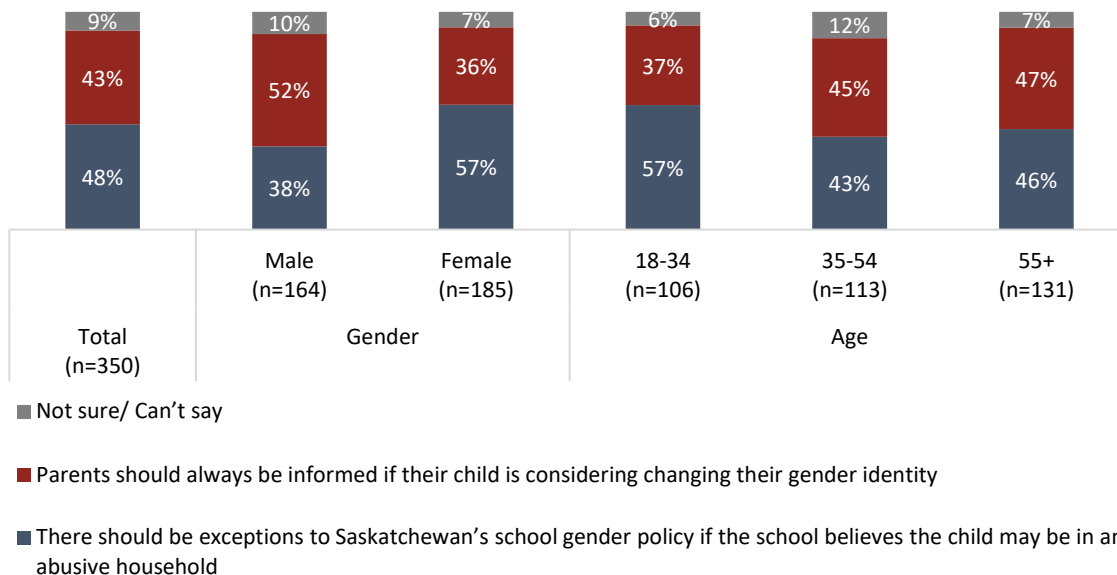
**But half believe there should be exceptions to protect children from abusive households**

The controversial bill passed after 40 hours of debate, including hours of NDP MLAs voicing concerns that the policy would out children to their parents against their will and that vulnerable transgender youth will be put at risk. Some human rights’ groups argue that children’s rights are being violated in Saskatchewan, arguing that schools might out transgender kids to parents who may not accept them.

According to the bill, if the school believes obtaining parental consent “is likely to result in physical, mental or emotional harm”, the school’s principal should direct the student to “appropriate professionals”, expected to be school counsellors, to develop a plan to address the student’s request with the student’s parents.

Half of those living in Saskatchewan (48%) believe there should be exceptions to the policy if the school believes the child may be in an abusive household, while two-in-five (43%) disagree and believe the parents should always be informed if their child is considering their gender identity at school. Majorities of men and women find themselves on opposite sides of this matter. Younger Saskatchewan residents are more likely to believe there should be exceptions while older ones are more divided:

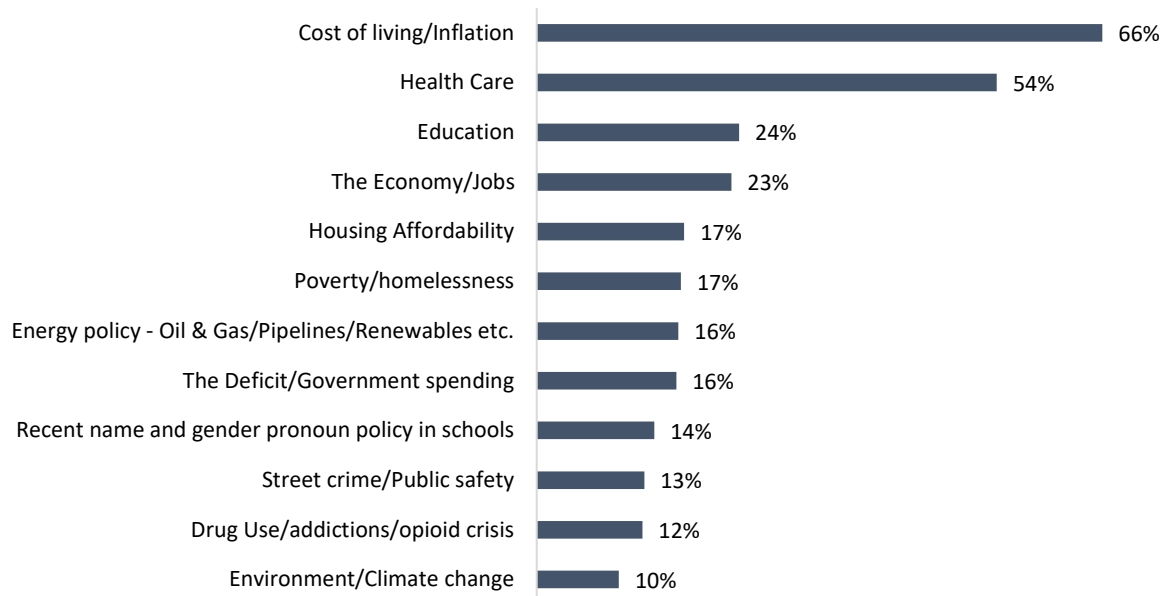
**Which of these statements is closer to your view (even if you don’t agree with either entirely)?**



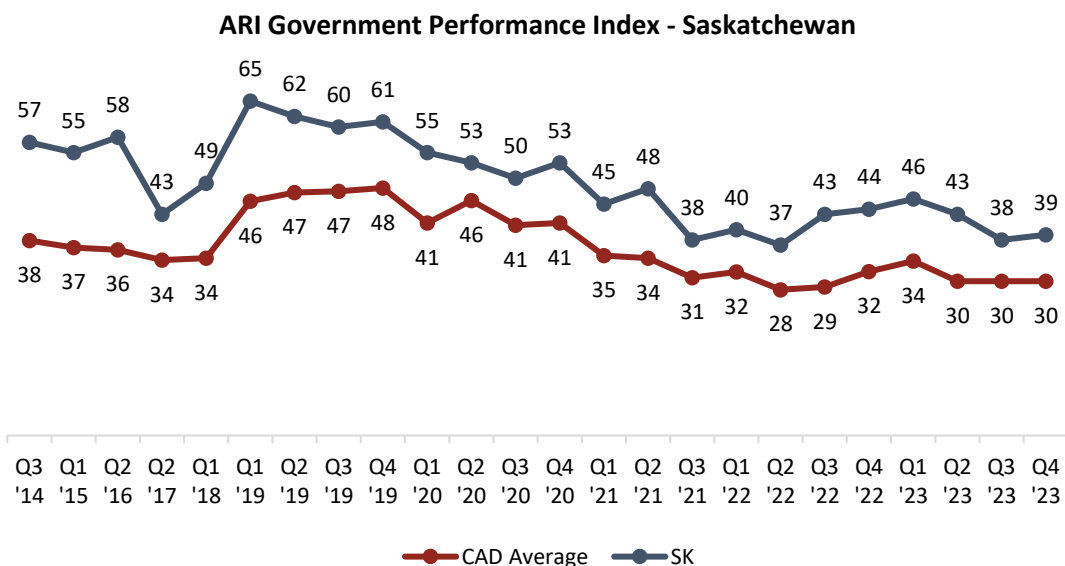
**Part Two: Top issues and government performance**

Though the Saskatchewan government’s recent legislation on names and pronouns in school has attracted much controversy, few select it as one of the top issues facing the province at the moment. Two-thirds (66%) instead select the rising cost of living, while a majority (54%) believe health care is top concern. Other issues trail behind those two dominant ones:

**Top issues - Saskatchewan**  
(Up to three chosen; those selected by more than 10% overall shown; n=350)



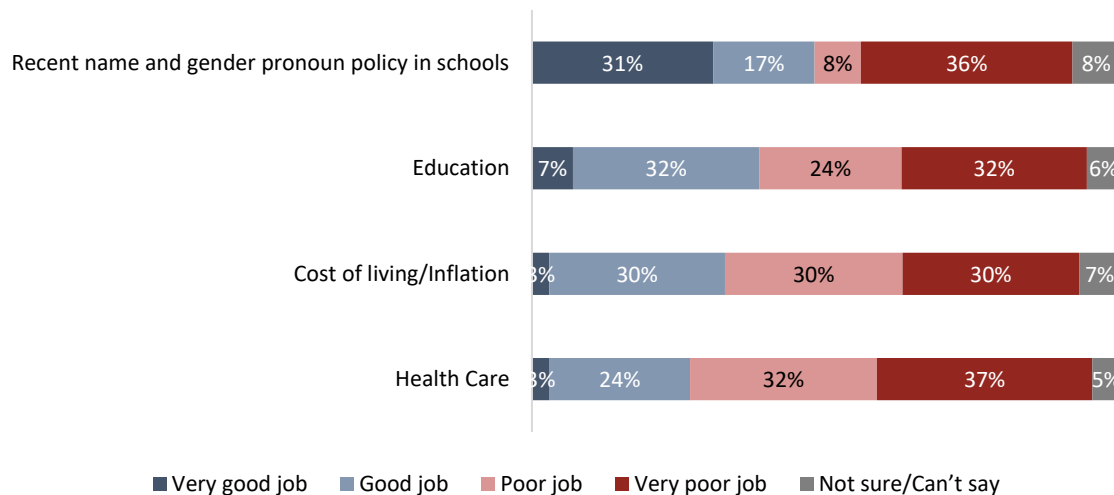
The Angus Reid Institute tracks assessments of provincial governments via the Government Performance Index, which averages how many respondents believe the government is doing a good job on more than a dozen different issues (excluding ones that are unique to each province). By this metric, the Saskatchewan government has consistently outpaced its peers across the country, but has fallen significantly from earlier days of the Moe government:



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Majorities believe Moe and the Saskatchewan Party government is performing poorly on the top three issues as selected by residents – health care (68% believe it is doing a poor job), inflation (60%) and education (56%). On the controversial name and gender pronoun policy, half (48%) believe the government has done well, while more than two-in-five (44%) are critical:

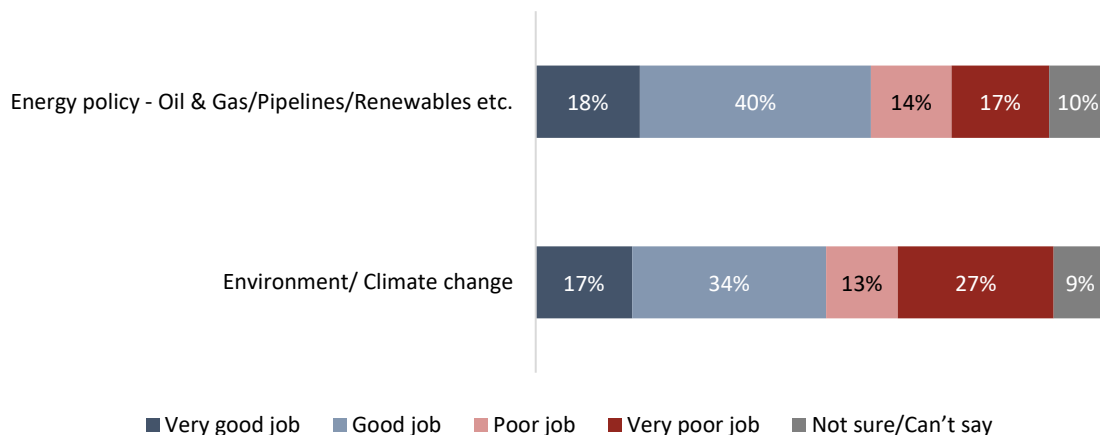
**Government performance on selected issues  
(Saskatchewan, n=350)**



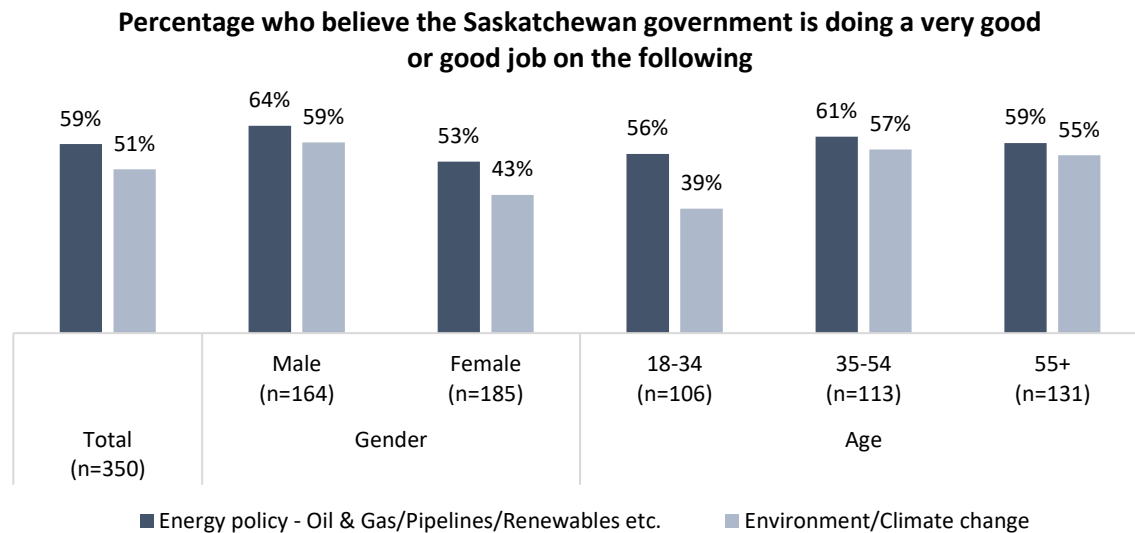
Moe and 52 delegates from the province are currently in Dubai at the 2023 United Nations Climate Change Conference otherwise known as COP28 to promote Saskatchewan as a sustainable source of fuel and potash. Climate change is viewed as a top issue by 10 per cent in Saskatchewan, while one-in-six (16%) believe energy policy is one of the province’s top concerns, as noted above.

On those two measures, the government is seen as performing well by a majority of residents:

**Government performance on selected issues  
(Saskatchewan, n=350)**

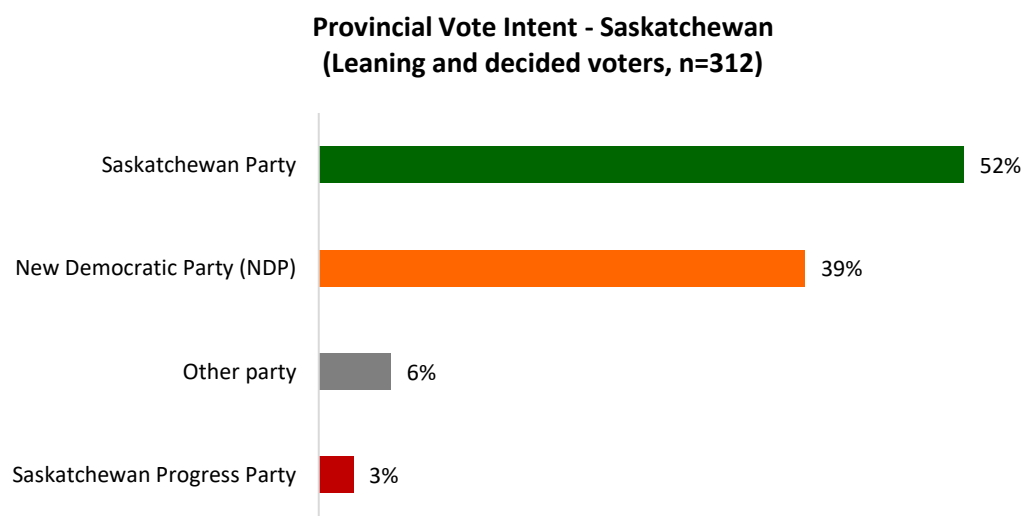


Assessments vary by demographics, however. On both, women, and those under 35, are more critical of the government's performance than others. Still, a majority across all demographics believe the government is performing well on energy policy:



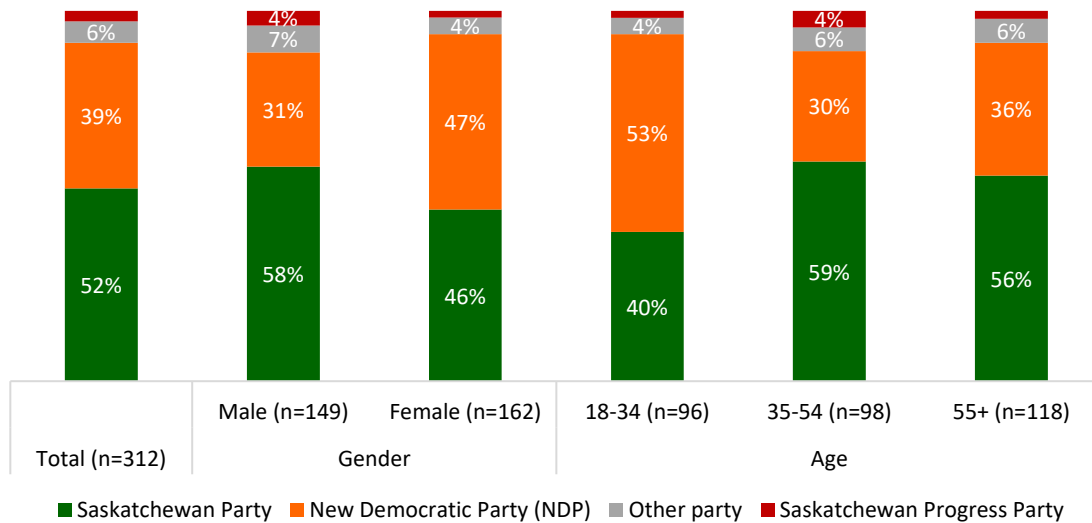
### Part Three: Vote intention

The governing Saskatchewan Party evidently has its strengths and weaknesses and is importantly buoyed by a consistently popular premier in Scott Moe. With less than a year to go until a scheduled election (expected for October 28, 2024) the party is in a comfortable place when it comes to vote intention. Half (52%) of leaning and decided voters would choose the incumbent party, while two-in-five (39%) would opt for the Saskatchewan NDP:



While vote intention appears closer currently than in the previous election, where the Saskatchewan Party won by 29 points provincially, much of the NDP's success will hinge upon younger voters, which, though [a growing population](#) in the province, are still comparatively small compared to those over 55.

**Provincial Vote Intent - Saskatchewan  
(Leaning and decided voters, n=312)**



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

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