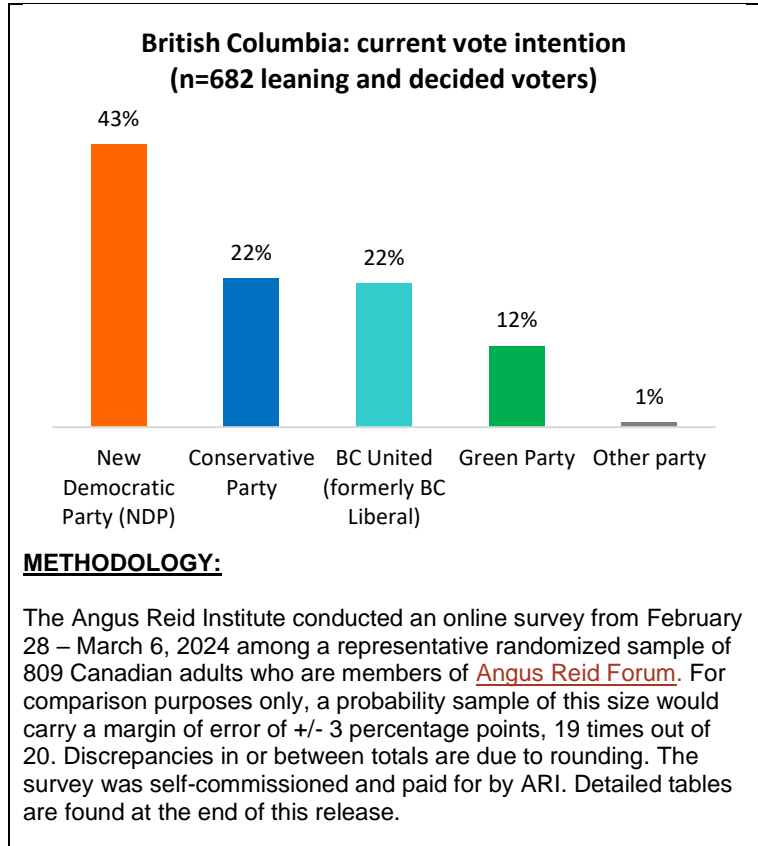


B.C. Spotlight: In the face of heavy criticism on key issues, BC NDP still top choice ahead of October election

In an expected election year, 43% would vote NDP, 22% each back BC Conservatives, BC United

March 18, 2024 – There are no shortage of story lines ahead of an expected October provincial election in British Columbia. Premier David Eby will be looking to win his first elected term, after taking over the position from John Horgan in 2022. BC United will be hoping to overcome a precipitous fall in the polls, and the previously single digit polling provincial Conservative Party will hope to prove that they are indeed more than a spillover choice from the surging federal brand.

New data from the non-profit Angus Reid Institute finds conditions comfortable yet potentially concerning for the governing BC NDP. The good? The party doubles both of its closest rivals in vote intention (43% NDP, 22% BC United, 22% Conservative Party of B.C.) and is the preferred party to lead on a host of top issues facing the province, including the cost of living, and health care. The bad? For four of the five top issues facing the province, at least seven-in-ten residents say the government is doing a poor job on each. Amid this, fully half (51%) of residents say it's time for a change in government.



Nonetheless, a fractured opposition and a muddled political picture has the BC NDP coasting, at least for now. This, as BC United leader Kevin Falcon and Conservative Party of B.C. leader John Rustad both fail to break 25 per cent in favourability. With election talk likely to continue to ramp up, both leaders will have an opportunity to meet and convince voters to make their party *the real* threat to the incumbent BC NDP.

More Key Findings:

- The Lower Mainland/Fraser Valley region is the most competitive in the province. Here, 35 per cent support the BC NDP, 29 per cent support the B.C. Conservatives, and 28 per cent support BC United.
- Metro Vancouver is a BC NDP strength. Half of residents say they would vote for the party in this region, with the B.C. Conservatives a distant second place (20%)

CONTACT:

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

- Men are relatively divided in their vote intention, with two-in-five (38%) saying they would vote for the incumbents and one-quarter supporting each of the Conservatives (26%) and BC United (27%). Women are three times as likely to support the BC NDP than any other party.
- Half of would-be voters say they are voting to block a party they dislike rather than to support one they do like. Even among those support the incumbents, just 55 per cent say they are voting for the party because they like what it stands for, while 45 per cent say they simply dislike the other options more.

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: The leaders

- **Eby's positives dwarf views of still relatively unknown opposition**
- **Regional strengths and weaknesses**

Part Two: The issues

- **Cost of living, health care, housing affordability cause most pain**
- **Despite poor reviews, NDP still most trusted on top issues**

Part Three: Vote intention

- **Half say it's "time for a change"**
- **Divided opposition gives BC NDP comfortable lead**
- **By region, age**
- **Half voting for a party, half against one**

CONTACT:

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

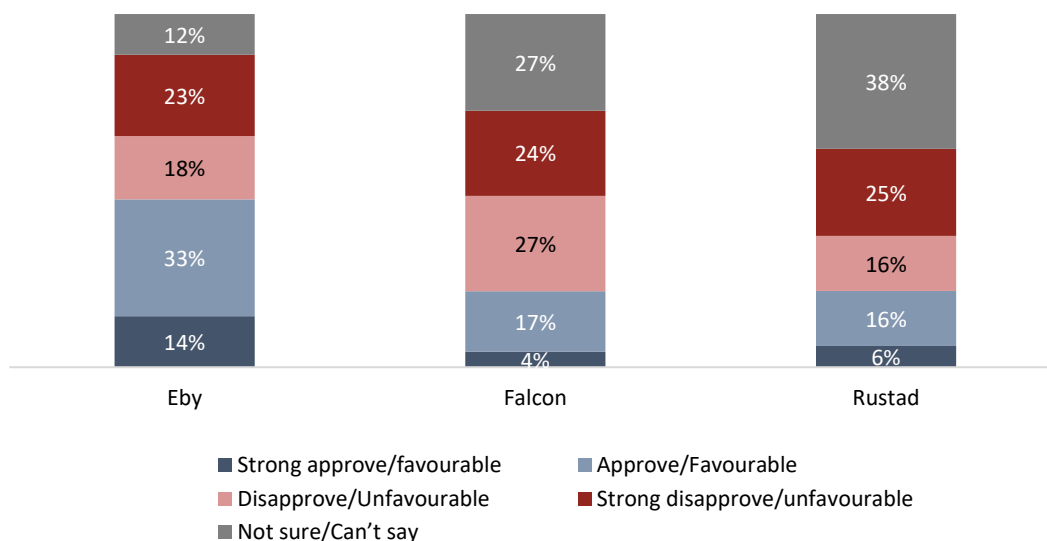
Part One: The leaders

Eby’s positives dwarf views of relatively unknown opposition

When David Eby took over the NDP leadership for his predecessor John Horgan, he had big shoes to fill. Horgan’s personal approval rating remained perennially in majority territory, a tough feat to replicate for most provincial leaders. Eby has yet to reach these levels. Recently, his government has faced pushback over a number of policy proposals. After announcing the implementation of changes to the BC Land Act, Eby announced that would no longer proceed. Some municipalities have also resisted changes to short-term rental rules.

Eby’s personal approval levels have remained consistently between 46 and 48 per cent for more than a year. Opposition leader Kevin Falcon faces a tougher challenge. Between October 2022 and now, his favourability has moved from 17 per cent to 21 per cent. He and Conservative Party leader John Rustad both fail to reach the one-quarter mark on that measure. Rustad and Falcon are no strangers, having served as colleagues for more than a decade, as far back as under Gordon Campbell’s B.C. Liberals. Rustad was removed from caucus in 2022 and left the party after posting climate change denying information on social media. He went on to take over the B.C. Conservative Party shortly thereafter:

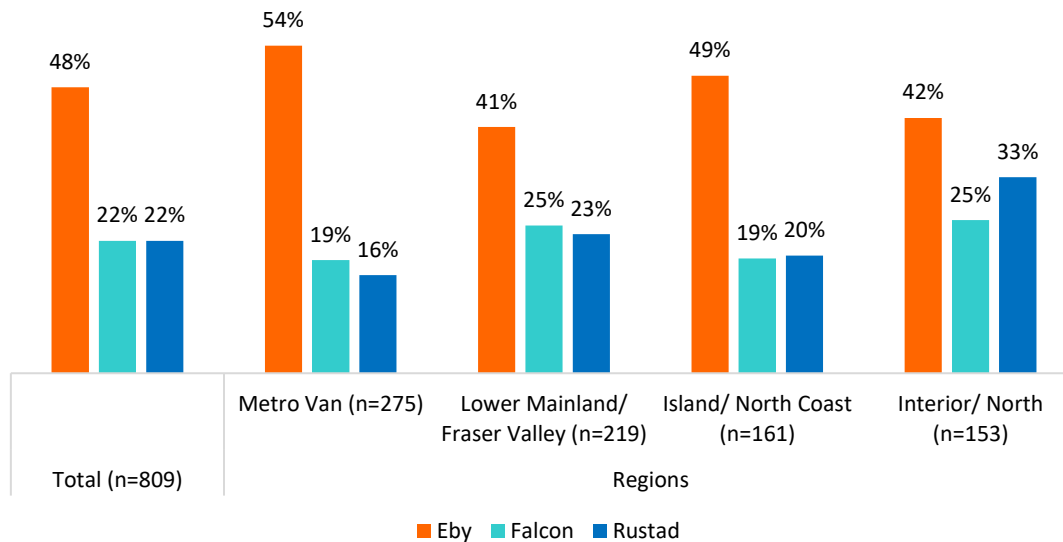
Approval for Eby, Favourability for Falcon, Rustad



Regional strengths and weaknesses

Eby’s strength resides in Metro Vancouver, but it is worth noting that he exceeds two-in-five in approval across the province. John Rustad resonates most in the Interior and North region, where his favourability jumps to 33 per cent:

Approval for Eby, Favourability for Falcon, Rustad



Part Two: The issues

The provincial Conservative Party and opposition BC United have flirted with merger talks, but with just seven months until an expected election, time is running out for cooperation. This, as the BC NDP faces heavy criticism on many of the top issues facing the province.

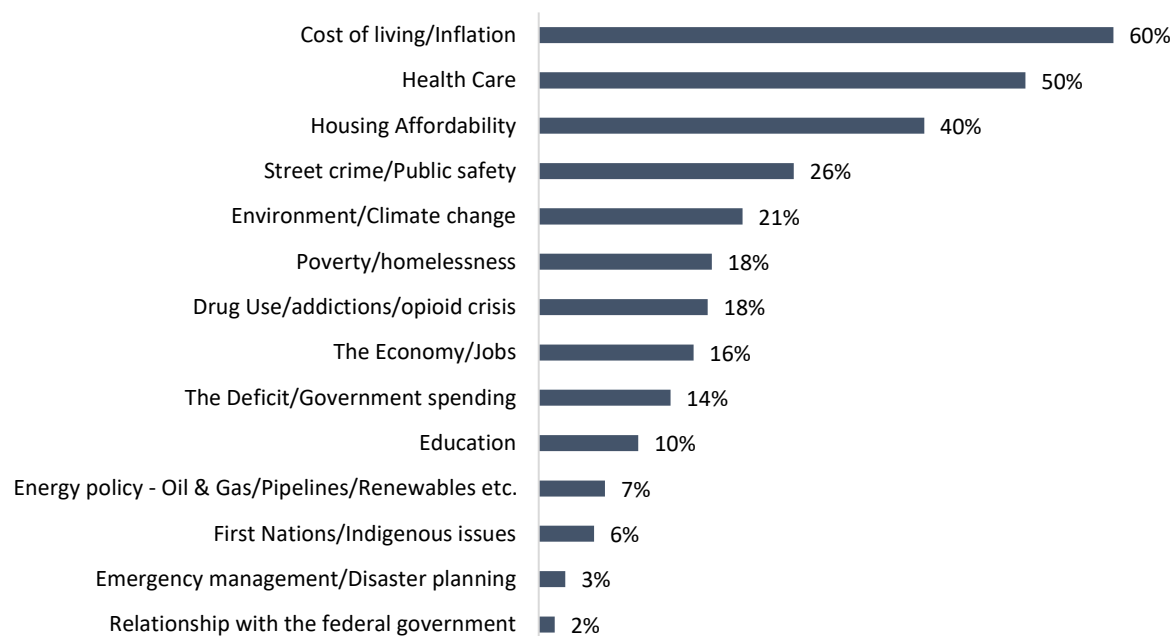
Cost of living, health care, housing affordability cause most pain

For a majority of residents in the province, the cost of living and health care are the most pressing issues. Two-in-five also choose housing affordability, while street crime and public safety also eclipses the quarter mark:

CONTACT:

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

Most important issues (choose up to three)



In terms of provincial performance, the government has few bright spots. Relationships with the federal government and Indigenous groups are the two most highly applauded areas of governance (neither area identified as a top priority by British Columbians, however), while residents are divided over provincial performance on fighting climate change.

More troubling for the incumbents, on the other four top issues in the province (outside of climate change) at least 68 per cent say the government is performing poorly:

Provincial government performance on each issue (top five issues highlighted in green)		
	Good job	Poor job
Relationship with the federal government	52%	27%
First Nations/Indigenous issues	48%	34%
Environment/Climate change	42%	43%
The Economy/Jobs	39%	50%
Emergency management/Disaster planning	38%	42%
Education	36%	53%
Energy policy - Oil & Gas/Pipelines/Renewables etc.	29%	54%
Health Care	27%	68%
The Deficit/Government spending	25%	56%
Street crime/Public safety	23%	68%
Drug Use/addictions/opioid crisis	19%	76%

CONTACT:

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

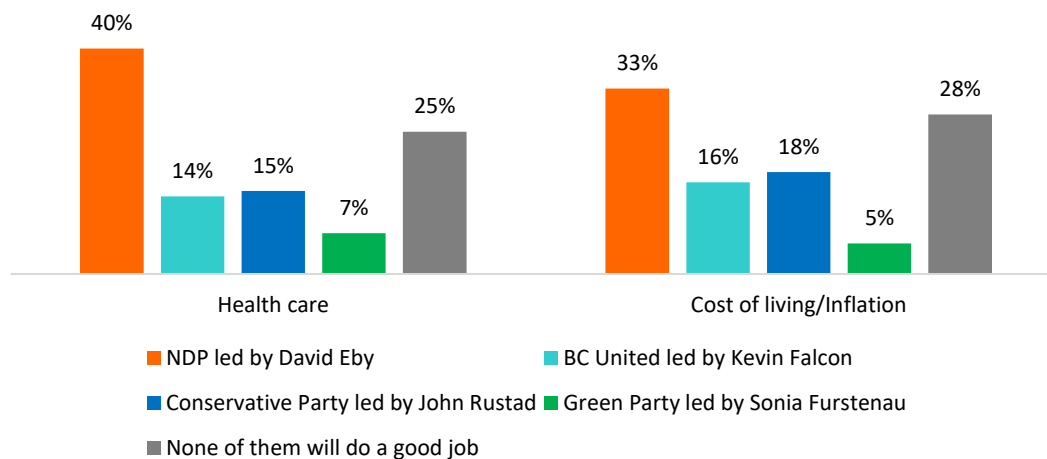
Cost of living/Inflation	17%	78%
Housing Affordability	17%	78%
Poverty/homelessness	17%	78%

Despite poor reviews, NDP still most trusted on key issues

With the cost of living and health care dominating British Columbians' priorities, it is notable that the BC NDP remains the top choice on both issues. Two-in-five say they trust the government most on health care, which has been a significant budgetary focus in recent years. Despite investments, wait times and access continue to challenge residents.

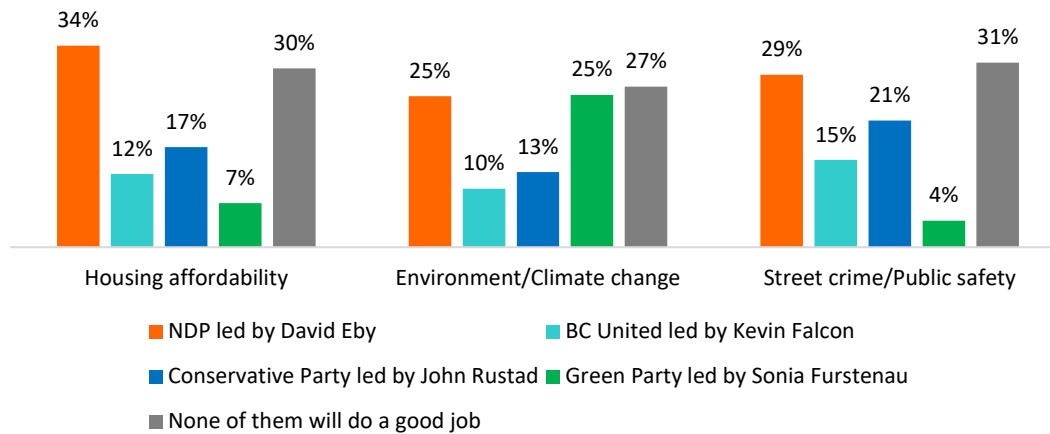
The growing cost of living has also been a top-of-mind concern in the post-pandemic environment. On this issue, one-in-three prefer to have the BC NDP continue to govern. Similar numbers of residents prefer both the BC Conservatives and BC United, while many are disenchanted with all options:

Which party and leader do you think is best suited to handle each for the next four years?



On other top issues, residents offer slight preference to the BC NDP, but are much more divided between the four major parties or outright dismissal of all options:

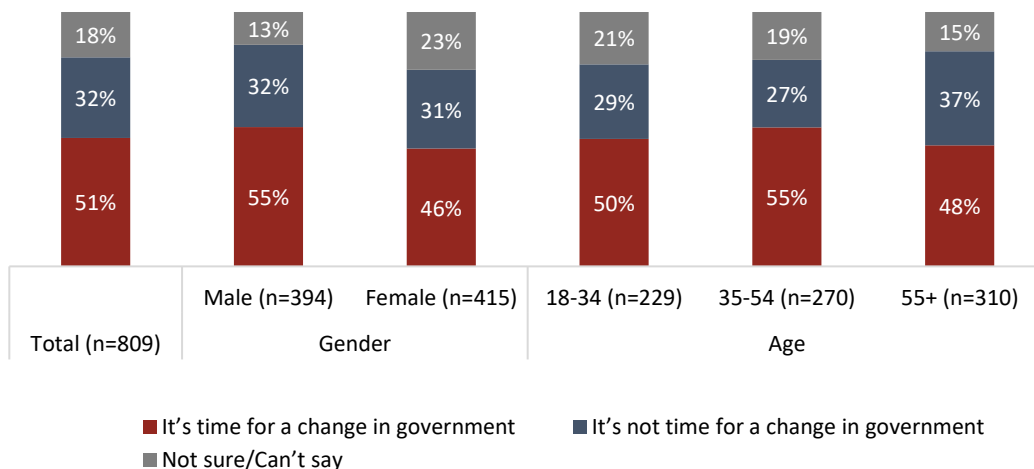
Which party and leader do you think is best suited to handle each for the next four years?



Part Three: Vote intention

If there is any sign in these data that portend a challenge in October for the BC NDP, it may be this: half of the province feels that it is “time for a change” in government. Governments have sustained their position in power with this sentiment, with Ontario perhaps the best recent example, but it does exemplify the threat a merger between BC United and the BC Conservatives would pose.

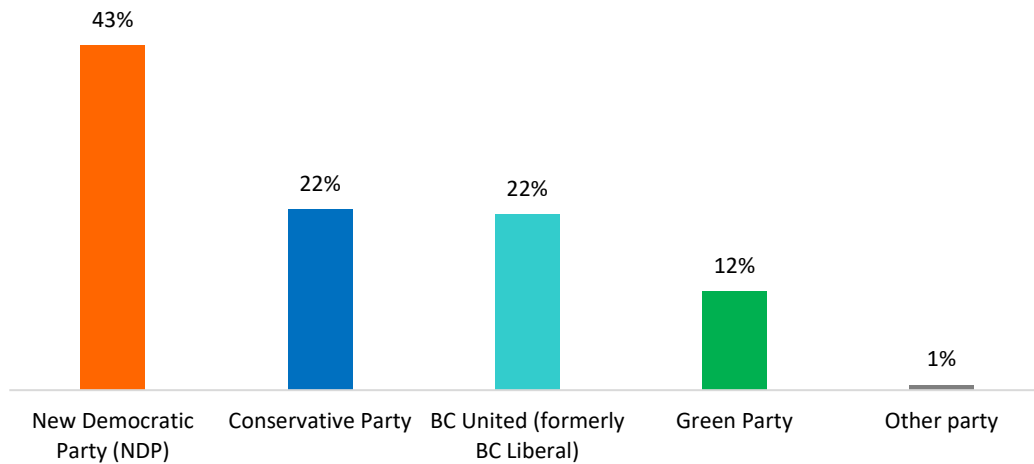
Which of the following two statements best reflects how you feel today when it comes to the provincial political picture?



Divided opposition gives BC NDP comfortable lead

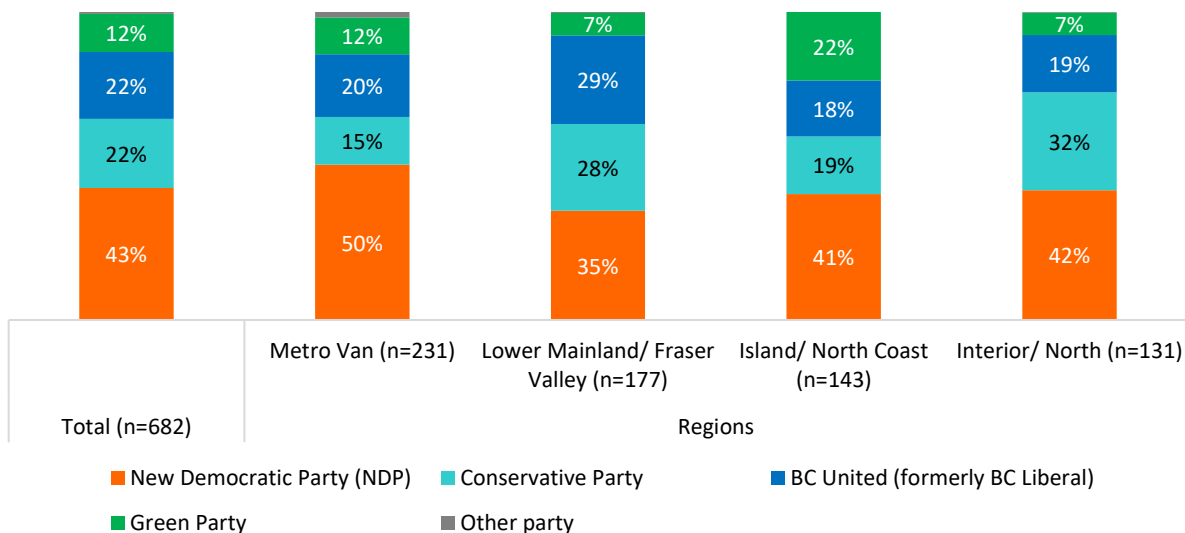
If this is, indeed, the slate of parties and leaders to run in an expected October election, the BC NDP appears in a comfortable position. Currently the incumbent party doubles both of its closest rivals:

Current vote intention (n=682 leaning and decided voters)



Regional projections are particularly interesting in the Lower Mainland/Fraser Valley region where three parties receive 28 per cent or more of the vote share. The BC NDP stronghold appears to be Metro Vancouver, but it also holds a double-digit lead in both the Island/North Coast and Interior regions:

Current vote intention (n=682 leaning and decided voters)

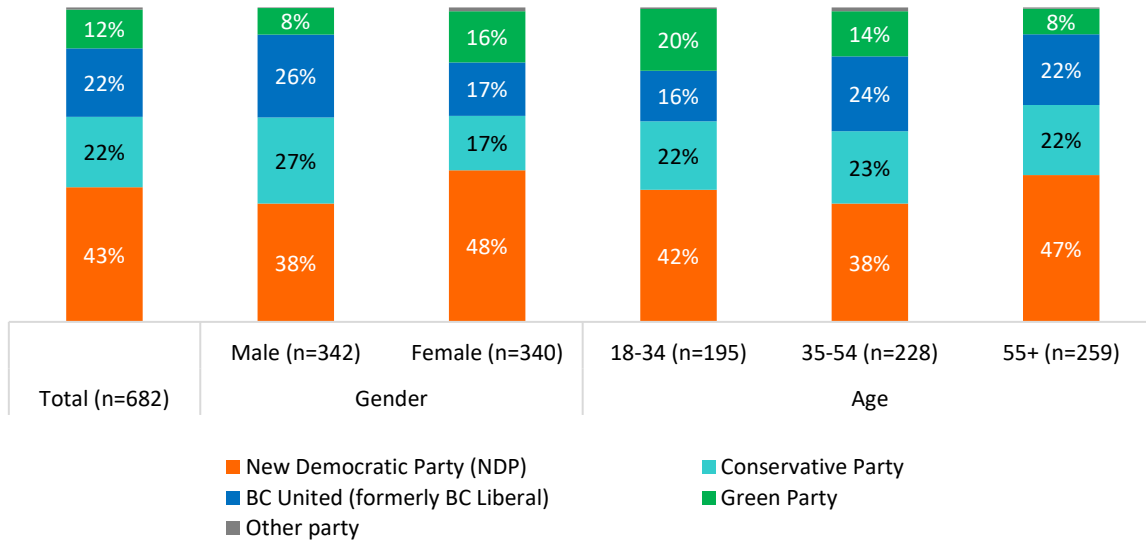


The BC NDP lead across all ages and among both men and women. Men, however, are much more divided than women, with more than one-quarter of each supporting the B.C. Conservative Party and BC United respectively.

CONTACT:

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

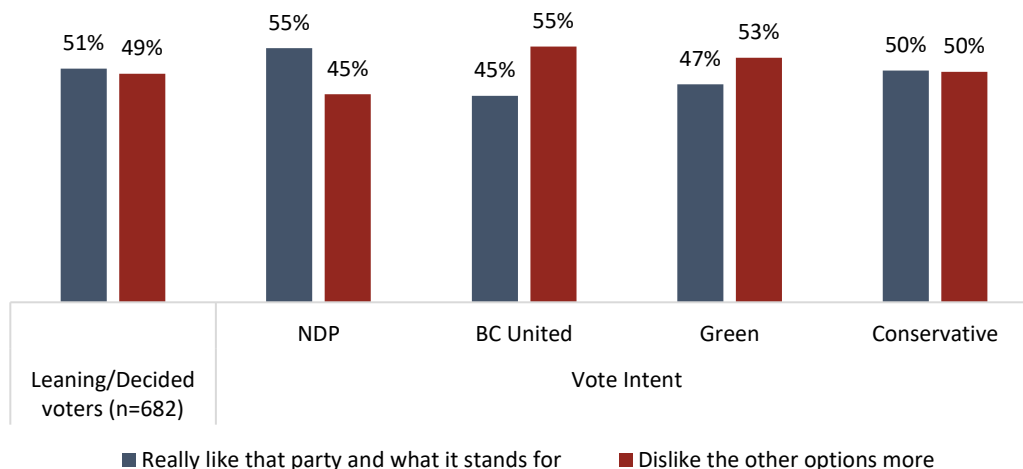
Current vote intention (n=682 leaning and decided voters)



Half voting for a party, half against one

One trend appears to unite British Columbians across all political affiliations. At least 45 per cent of all voters say they are voting against a party rather than for one. Those most enthusiastic about their own choice are New Democrats, but even that party’s supporters are relatively divided on this question:

Thinking about your current choice for provincial vote, would you say you are supporting this party you...



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

CONTACT:

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