

Haida Gwaii Agreement: Most say it was right decision, but oppose it as precedent going forward

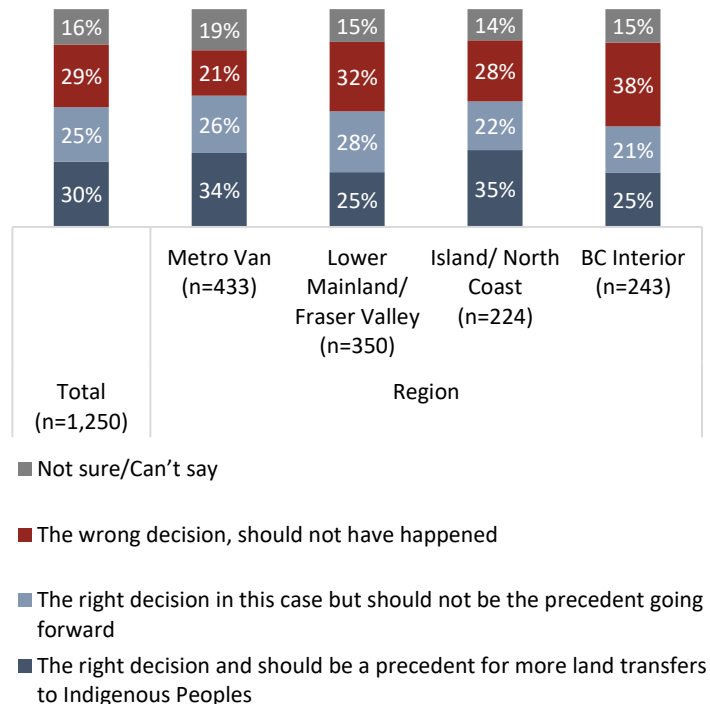
Those living in BC's Interior nearly twice as likely to oppose agreement as those in Metro Vancouver

June 5, 2024 – When the B.C. government announced a historic agreement with the Haida Nation that would see Indigenous title recognized across Haida Gwaii, Premier David Eby said it could provide a template for future land agreements with the provinces' Indigenous Peoples.

New data from the non-profit Angus Reid Institute finds most saying the ground-breaking agreement should be a one-off rather than a standard. While most (55%) believe the government made the "right decision", fewer (30%) also say the Haida Gwaii title agreement "should be a precedent for more land transfers". Instead, a majority say either it was the right decision, but should not be repeated (25%), or it was wrong and should not have happened (29%). One-in-six British Columbians have no firm view of the issue (16%).

As the rhetoric ramps up for the fall election, these data denote disagreement across political lines. A majority (57%) of those who say they would support the BC Conservatives if an election were held believe it was the wrong decision for the provincial government to make the agreement with Haida Nation. Likely BC United supporters are divided between saying it was "right" (48%) and wrong (39%). At the other end of the political spectrum, at least half of likely BC NDP (47%) and BC Green voters (51%) say not only was it the right decision, but it should be a model for future land agreements with Indigenous Peoples.

The B.C. government returning Crown land to the Haida Gwaii nation is...



METHODOLOGY:

The Angus Reid Institute conducted an online survey from May 24-30, 2024 among a representative randomized sample of 1,250 British Columbian 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 +/- 2 percentage points, 19 times out of 20. Discrepancies in or between totals are due to rounding.

ARI also surveyed an additional sample of 99 Indigenous adults living in British Columbia from May 24-30, 2024.

The survey was self-commissioned and paid for by ARI. Detailed tables are found at the end of this release.

This agreement comes as few British Columbians – one-in-20 (5%) – believe Indigenous issues and reconciliation is a top issue the province is facing. Instead, a plurality (42%) believe Eby and the BC NDP are "too focused" on reconciliation, possibly to the detriment of focusing on housing affordability and the

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economy more broadly. More than two-in-five (44%) say the B.C. government has not put enough effort into encouraging investment in the province and half (53%) say it should be focusing more on addressing the province's housing needs.

More Key Findings:

- The Interior may prove a key battleground as the province's political landscape shifts. There, half (52%) say the province has focused too much on reconciliation. A plurality on the Island/North Coast (40%) and in the Lower Mainland (44%) agree.
- A majority of British Columbians who identify as Indigenous (54%) want the agreement between Haida Nation and the government to set the precedent for future land agreements. Meanwhile, two-in-five (39%) believe the government is spending the right amount of resources on reconciliation, while one-in-four (23%) disagree and believe the government needs to do more on that file.

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: The Haida Gwaii title agreement

The B.C. government reached a [historic agreement](#) with the Haida Nation, formally recognizing Indigenous title – the inherent hereditary rights that pre-date the arrival of settlers – for the entire land area of Haida Gwaii. The Tsilhqot'in Nation won similar recognition for some of its territory in 2014 through a Supreme Court ruling, while a recent B.C. Supreme Court ruling also affirmed Indigenous title for parts of the territory of the coastal Nuchatlaht First Nation. However, the Gaayhllxid/Gíihlagalgang "Rising Tide" Haida Title Lands Agreement between Haida Nation and the B.C. government is the [first time in Canada](#) that Indigenous title has been granted across an entire nation's traditional territory.

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Over the next two years, Haida laws will replace provincial laws – the federal government has yet to sign the agreement – and Crown land, timber and wildlife will transfer to Haida Nation. The province will continue to deliver public services as before.

Majority say ‘right decision’, but most feel it shouldn’t set precedent

Premier David Eby said this agreement could be a “template for everybody about what the world of the possible is,” and that similar agreements could follow elsewhere in the province.

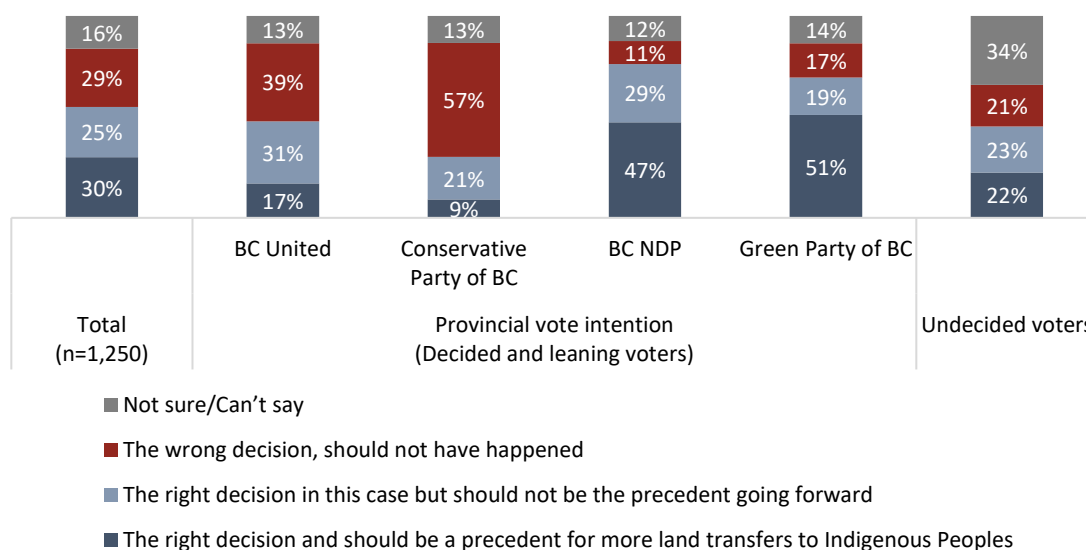
While a majority (55%) believe the Haida Gwaii title agreement is the right decision, fewer – three-in-ten (30%) believe it “should be a precedent for more land transfers”. One-quarter (25%) who agree with the decision, say it was only the right decision in this specific case, while a further three-in-ten (29%) call it the wrong decision.

As the fall election approaches, there is disagreement across partisan lines on this deal between the B.C. government and Haida Nation. Conservative Party of B.C. leader John Rustad said, if elected, his party would repeal the provincial Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act, which provided the foundation for this agreement. Instead, Rustad supports “economic reconciliation” through business deals with individual First Nations. A majority (57%) of those who say they would support the BC Conservatives if an election were held say the Haida Gwaii title agreement was the wrong decision.

When a draft of the agreement was released in March, BC United argued in a statement that the “government is fostering a climate of uncertainty that will deter investment” in the province, describing the agreement as “shrouded in secrecy”. Likely BC United voters are more divided than other political supporters, with half (48%) saying it was the right decision and 39 per cent disagreeing, but still a majority feel it should not set a precedent for future land transfers with Indigenous Peoples.

Half of those who intend to vote BC NDP (47%), and a similar number who would support the Green Party (51%), say not only was it the right decision, but it should provide a template for the province moving forward.

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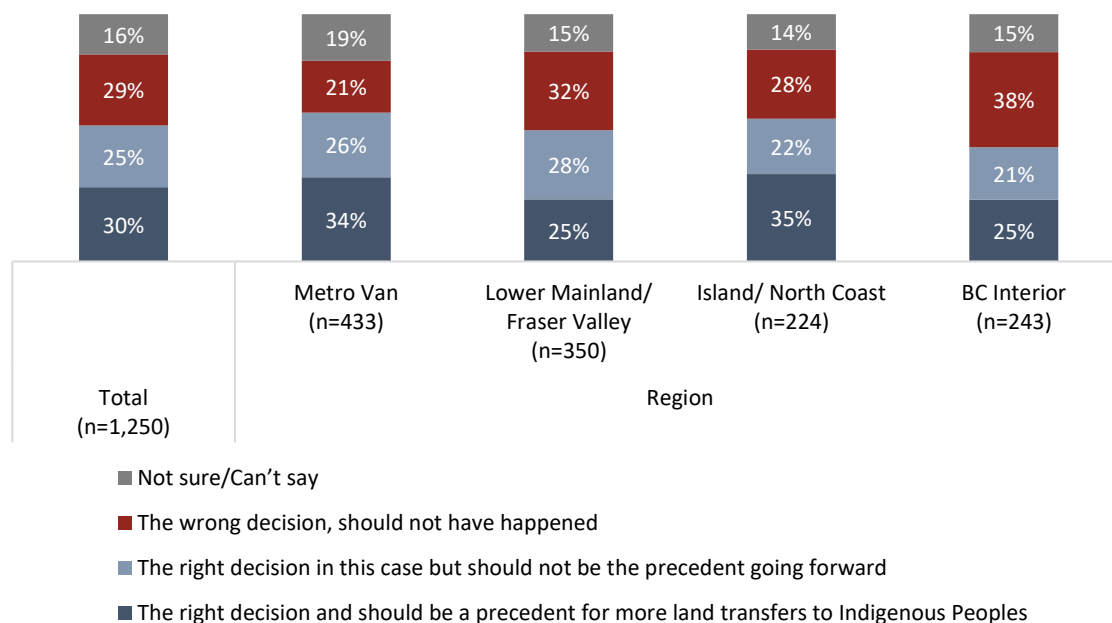
Regional disparity: High support in Metro Van, more opposition in Interior

When the Haida land agreement was announced, B.C. Indigenous relations minister Murray Rankin [noted why it made sense for the Haida Nation](#). The provincial government previously controlled the vast majority of the land, and private properties make up a small percentage of Haida Gwaii, Rankin said. Elsewhere in the province, there are competing land claims between Indigenous groups, such as in [the Interior B.C.](#), where a similar agreement might prove complex.

Notably, while those living in the B.C. Interior lean towards saying the agreement between Haida Nation and the B.C. government was the right one (46%) than wrong (38%), a majority (59%) do not feel it should set a precedent.

Elsewhere in the province, at least half in every region believe it was the right decision, but only a minority believe it should form a template for future land transfer agreements.

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Majority of those who identify as Indigenous want agreement to set precedent

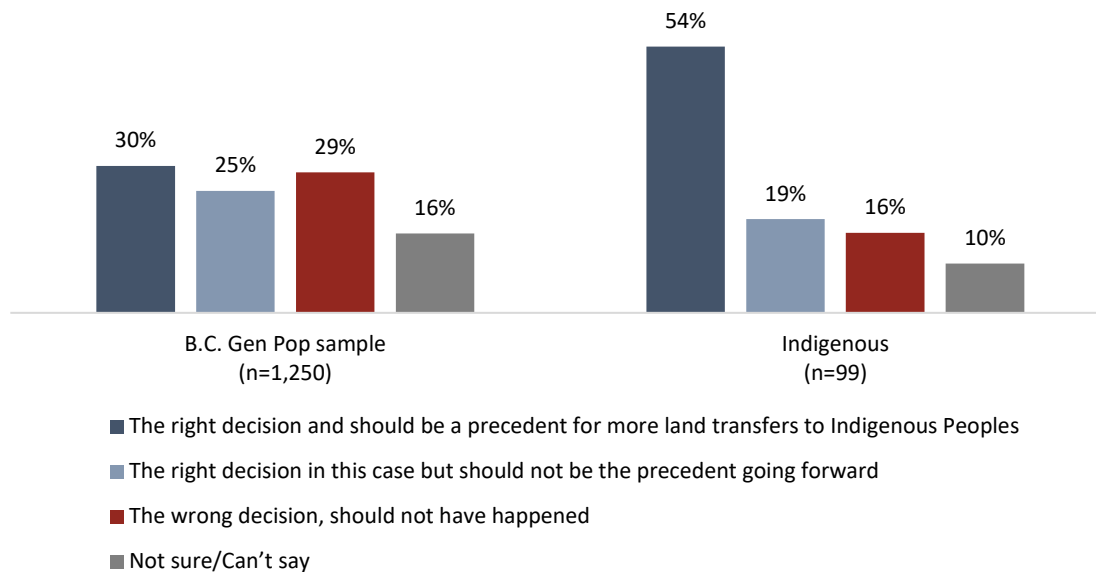
The Angus Reid Institute included an additional sample in this survey of 99 respondents who identify as Indigenous to ensure that Indigenous perspectives on this issue could be analyzed. While the views of self-described Indigenous people are reported here to provide valuable context, it should be noted that this sample is not necessarily representative of the Indigenous population of British Columbia as a whole.

Most (54%) British Columbians who identify as Indigenous say they believe the agreement between the Haida Nation and the B.C. government should set a precedent for future land transfer agreements, with three-quarters saying this was the right decision overall (73%):

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Part Two: Reconciliation in an election year

Cost of living, health care, housing affordability dominate top issues

Inflation may have cooled from recent highs, but British Columbians still cite the rising cost of living as the top issue in the province.

The BC NDP said they have been making “radical change” last year to address an ailing health-care system, as many in the province lack a family doctor and there are lengthy wait times at the province’s hospitals. Half (52%) believe health care is a top issue facing the province.

Related: After a ‘decade of decline’ in health care, Canadians not convinced that money is enough to solve the crisis

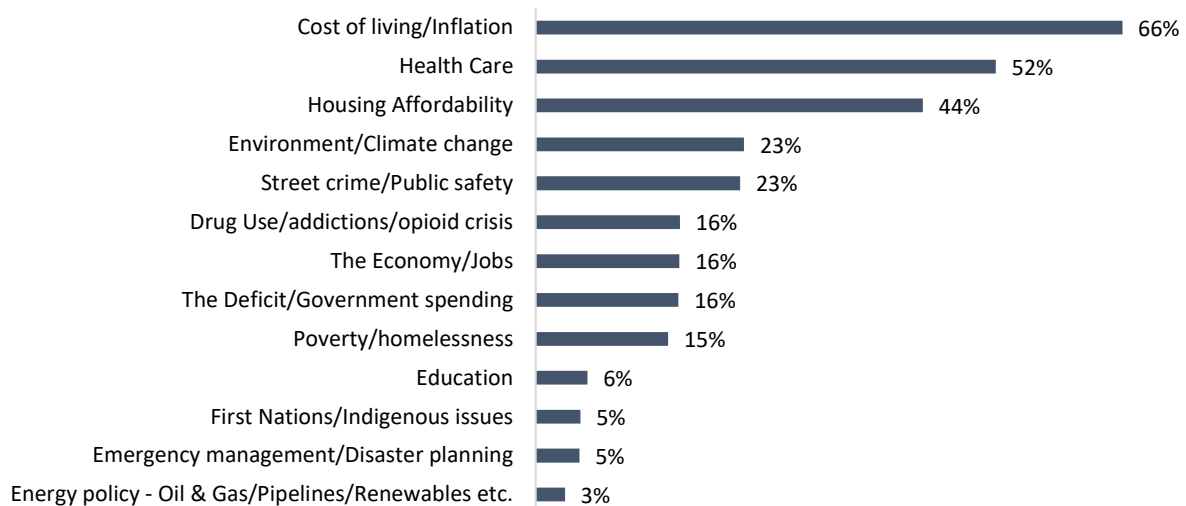
The Royal Bank of Canada estimates that only around 10 per cent of British Columbians earn enough annually to buy a single-family home in the province. More than two-in-five (44%) believe housing affordability is one of the province’s top issues.

Meanwhile, First Nations and Indigenous issues is chosen only by one-in-20 (5%), behind 10 other issues selected by respondents:

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**Top issues - British Columbia
(All respondents, n=1,250)**



Plurality say BC NDP focus too much on reconciliation

Perhaps that's why many British Columbians believe the BC NDP and Eby are "too focused" on addressing reconciliation. Two-in-five (42%) say this, while one-third (32%) say the current government is paying "the right amount of attention" to the issue, and one-in-eight (12%) believe it needs to pay more attention to it. This follows not only the agreement between the government and Haida Nation on recognizing Indigenous title, but also [now-cancelled plans](#) to amend the B.C. Land Act to bring that law in line with the province's Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act.

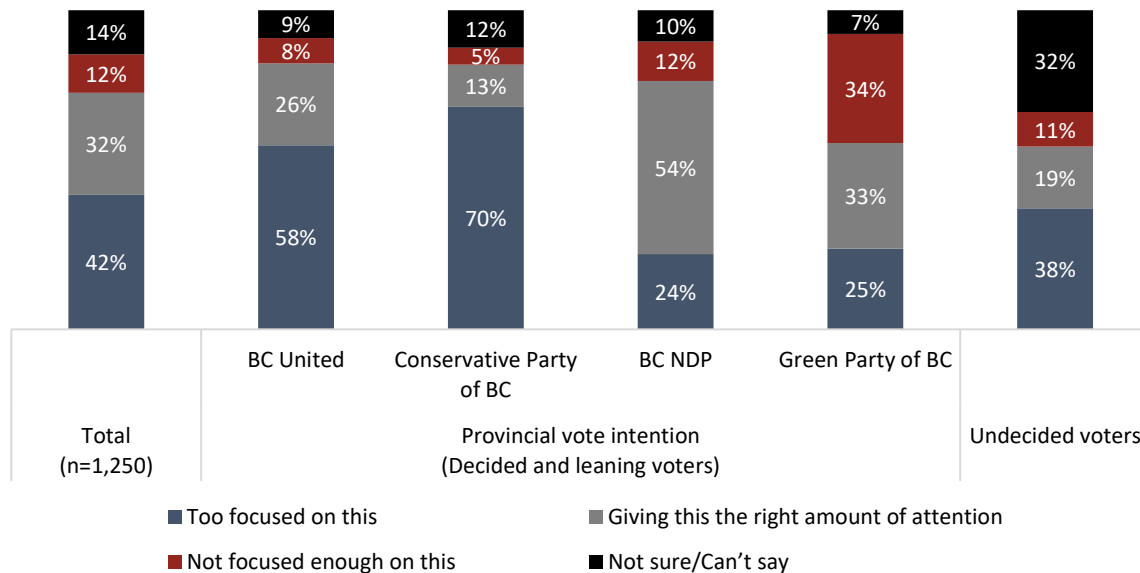
Related: B.C. Land Act: Voters divided over increased decision-making authority for Indigenous governments

On this issue, however, there are clear delineations along political lines. Majorities of BC United (58%) and BC Conservative (70%) supporters believe the government is too focused on reconciliation. One-quarter (24%) of likely BC NDP voters agree, but most (54%) feel the government has paid the right amount of attention to Indigenous concerns.

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Are David Eby and the BC NDP focused too much, the right amount or not enough on addressing reconciliation with Indigenous Peoples/ First Nations?



Half in Interior say Eby paying too much attention to reconciliation

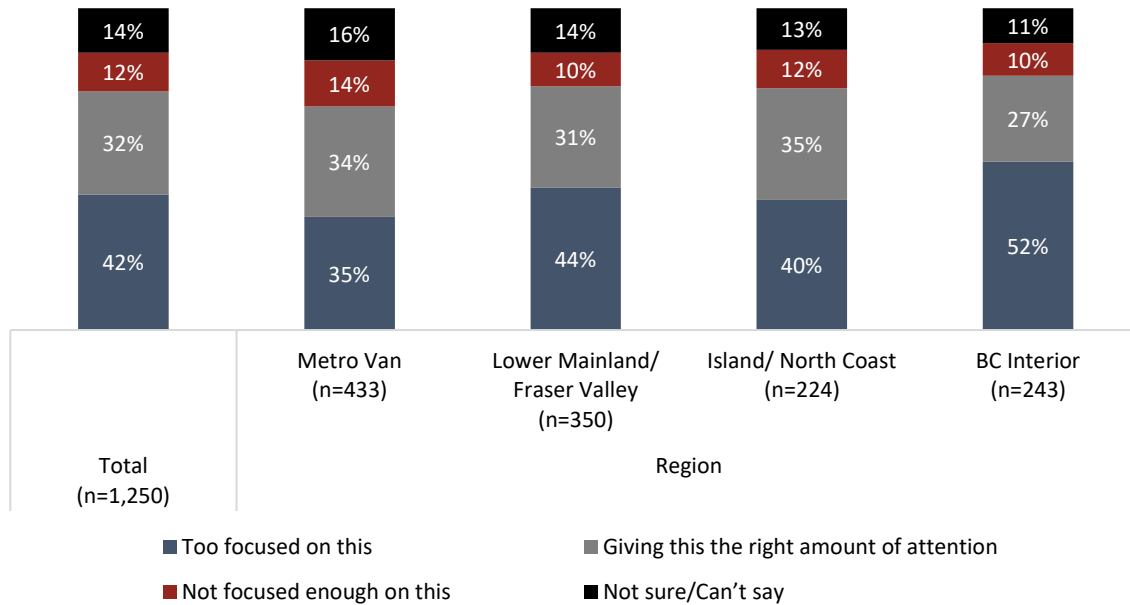
The political situation in B.C. is fluid, to say the least, as the ranks of the incumbent opposition BC United dwindle with [prominent MLA defections](#). The primary opponent for the BC NDP in many races may be blue rather than the aqua and pink of BC United. The Interior may prove to be the source of significant BC Conservative gains, with two-in-five (40%) in that region saying they would support the party if an election were held today.

Half (52%) in the Interior believe the government has focused too much on reconciliation, the highest proportion of any region in the province. However, a plurality in every region except Metro Vancouver also believe that to be the case. In the province's largest city, as many believe the government has paid the right amount of attention (34%) as too much (35%):

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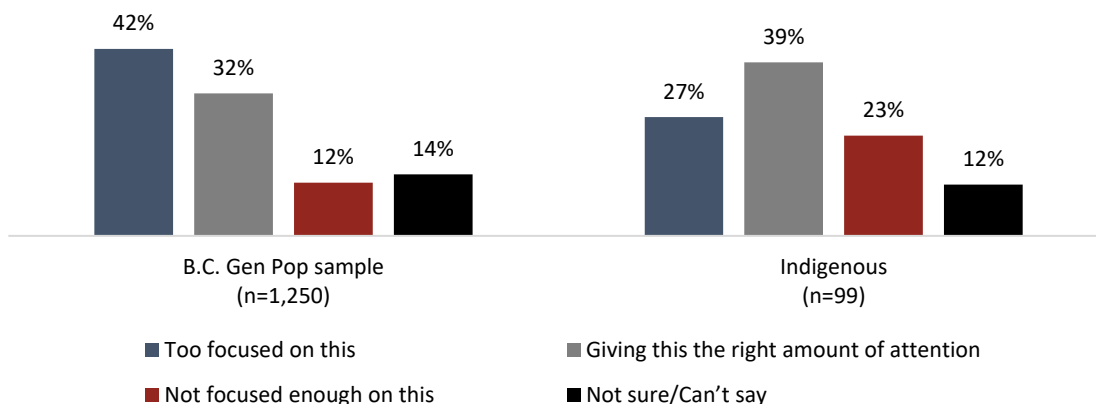
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Those who identify as Indigenous are twice as likely (23%) as others (12%) to believe the government has not put enough resources into addressing reconciliation, but more believe Eby and the BC NDP have given the issue the right amount of attention (39%):

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

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