

Is BC the place to be? Amid affordability woes, one-in-three residents “seriously” consider leaving the province

Plurality, including half with higher incomes, say BC NDP must increase focus on business investment

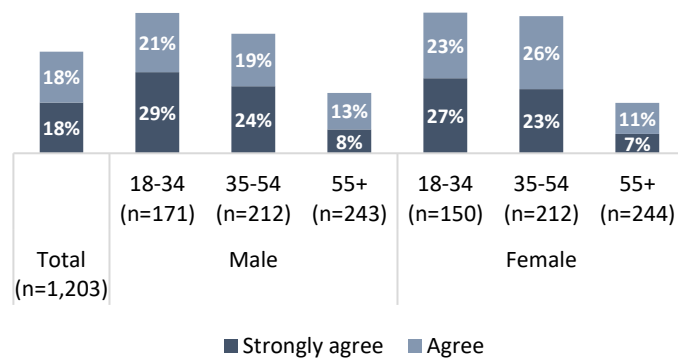
June 10, 2024 – British Columbia is a famously beautiful place to live, but a rising cost of living including unaffordable housing may be enough to send some residents searching for other pastures, even if they're not quite as [green](#).

New data from the non-profit Angus Reid Institute finds residents across the province, indeed, at least half in every region, saying that the BC NDP is not focusing enough on addressing their own housing needs. This is an issue that has been seemingly intractable for two decades, and though new housing supply has been a significant focus in recent years, and B.C. now leads the nation in [housing starts per capita](#), residents continue to face evident challenges. The group most likely to say this are 35- to 54-year-old men and women, those most likely to have children as an added variable in these equations.

Potentially compounding these issues is slower economic growth. After a post-COVID-19 peak in 2021 and 2022, investment levels have dropped in the face of higher interest rates and aren't expected by experts to rise significantly [again until 2025](#). With this as a backdrop, and a [recently downgraded](#) credit rating in the news, many British Columbians are critical of the BC NDP's focus on encouraging investment. More than two-in-five (44%) – rising to half among those with annual household incomes higher than \$100,000 (52%) – say the government should focus more on this aspect of the economy.

The consequences of these challenges, particularly when it comes to housing, are that many British Columbians say they may leave. In 2023, the province lost 8,000 more residents to other provinces than it gained, an inter-provincial net loss not seen in B.C. since 2012. Further, more than one-in-three (36%) say departing B.C. is something they're giving serious consideration to because of housing affordability. Half of those younger than 35, both men and women, say this is the case for them, personally.

Agree vs disagree - "I'm seriously thinking of leaving British Columbia because of the cost of housing here"



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.

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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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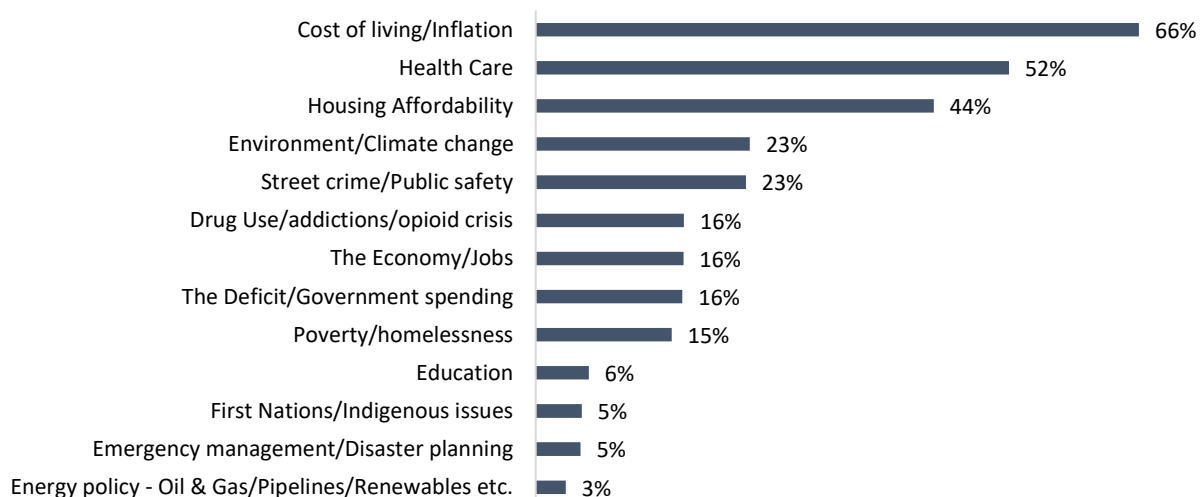
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Part One: Two-in-five say more focus needed on business investment

Ahead of the expected October provincial election, residents will take a hard look at candidates and leaders to see who they trust to handle the reins of B.C. for the next four years. Top among the issues they’ll be assessing are evidently a number of core issues, with the cost of living, health care, and housing affordability standing out among others:

**Top issues - British Columbia
(All respondents, n=1,203)**



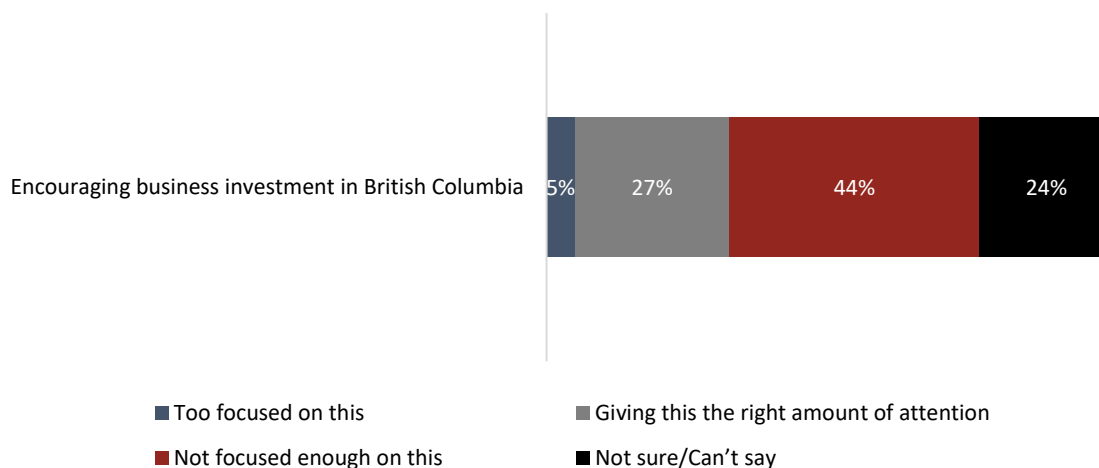
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With economic issues like inflation, jobs, and government spending all important to a significant number of British Columbians, the Angus Reid Institute asked residents how they feel the BC NDP has handled a key aspect of overcoming these challenges: business investment. The COVID-19 pandemic hit the province hard, and subsequent inflation and higher interest rates have evidently slowed investment after a two-year spike in 2021 and 2022. Slow economic growth is expected this year, though some predict investment will pick up again in 2025. Amid a weaker economic forecast, S&P Global downgraded the province’s credit rating from AA to AA- this spring.

For their part, when they consider the priorities of the BC NDP, a plurality of residents say the government is not focused enough on encouraging investment. Equal numbers are unsure (24%) or say the government has given sufficient attention to this file, while five per cent say it is too focused on investment:

**Are David Eby and the BC NDP focused too much, the right amount or not enough on...
(All respondents, n=1,203)**



Half with incomes over \$100K hold this view

After an interest rate cut from the Bank of Canada last week, optimism is growing that investment levels will increase longer-term, though business leaders in British Columbia evidently hold mixed views of the B.C. environment. The Greater Vancouver Board of Trade offered the latest provincial budget a ‘C’ letter grade, but the Canadian Home Builder’s Association of BC was reportedly “pleased”.

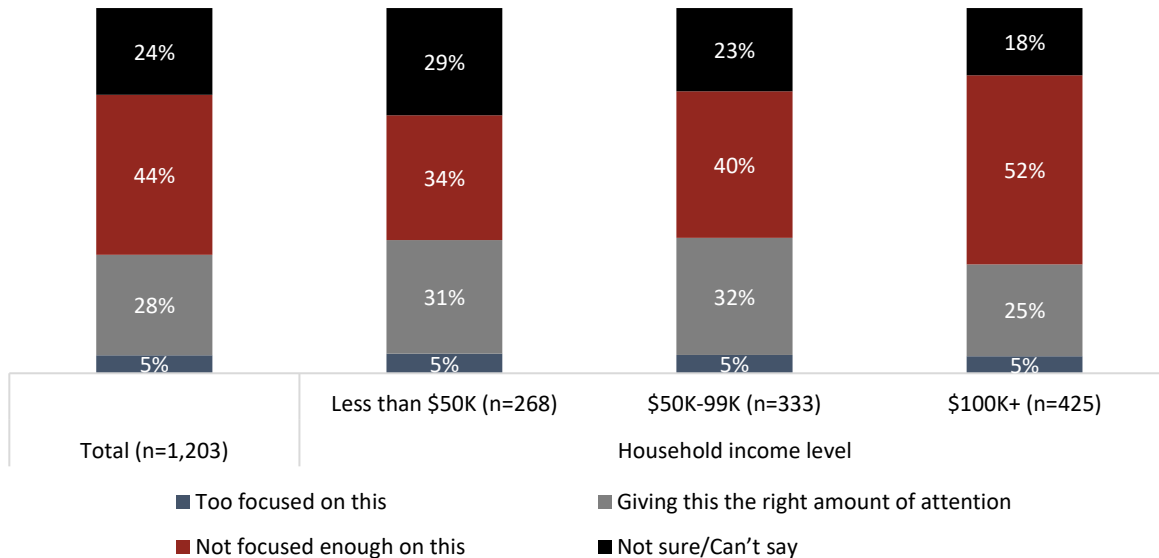
Those with higher income levels in the province are more likely to have a view of this issue and more likely to be critical of the provincial government. Half among this higher income group say more focus on investment is needed, while lower-income residents (sub-\$50K) are divided between satisfaction, criticism, and uncertainty:

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Do you think David Eby and the BCNDP have focused too much, the right amount, or not enough for each.

"Encouraging business investment in British Columbia"



NDP voters less concerned, centre-right voters unified

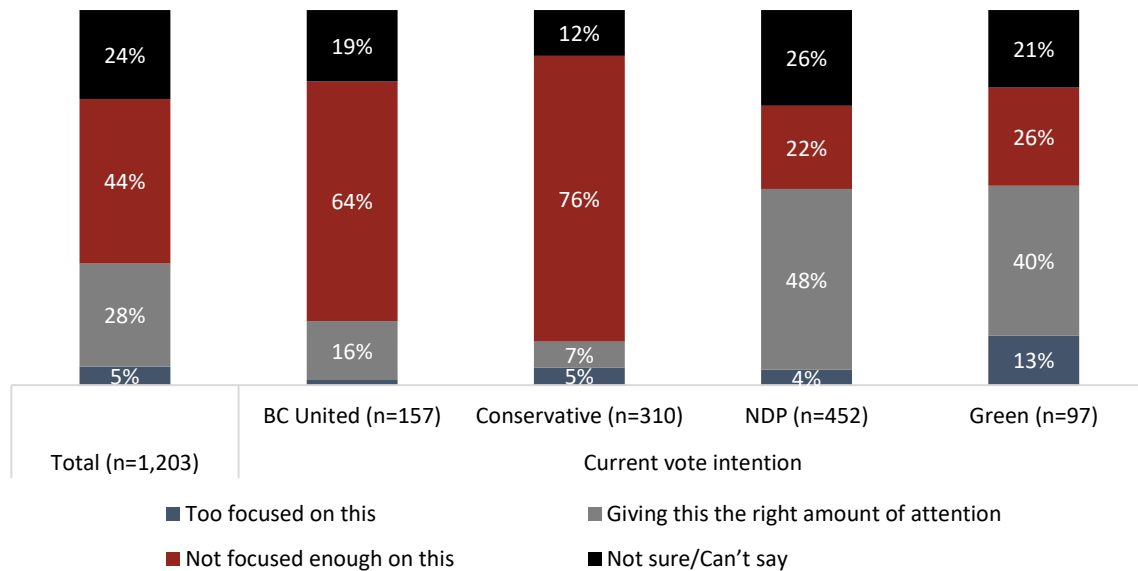
For the BC NDP, much of this year's budget is tied to the selling voters ahead of the expected fall election. The province's policies reportedly aimed at [helping working and middle-class families](#) is projected to result in the largest deficit in B.C. government history. On the investment question, one-in-five of those who say they would support the incumbents (22%) say the government needs to do more, but this pales in comparison to views among BC United or Conservative Party of B.C. voters, who tend to be much more critical:

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"Encouraging business investment in British Columbia"



Part Two: Housing affordability woes

Housing affordability challenges are nothing new to many British Columbians. Vancouver, Burnaby, Victoria, and Kelowna all rank among the 12 [most expensive cities to rent](#) in across the country, while purchase prices follow a similar trend. Home prices have been [rising precipitously](#) since the turn of the century.

Majority say more effort needed on housing file

While the BC NDP has announced [a series of actions](#) on home affordability, and Metro Vancouver now leads the nations in [new housing starts](#), residents continue to grapple with the reality of costs. Half (53%) say the government needs to focus more on taking steps to address their housing needs. One-quarter (24%) are satisfied, and seven per cent say the focus has been too heavy.

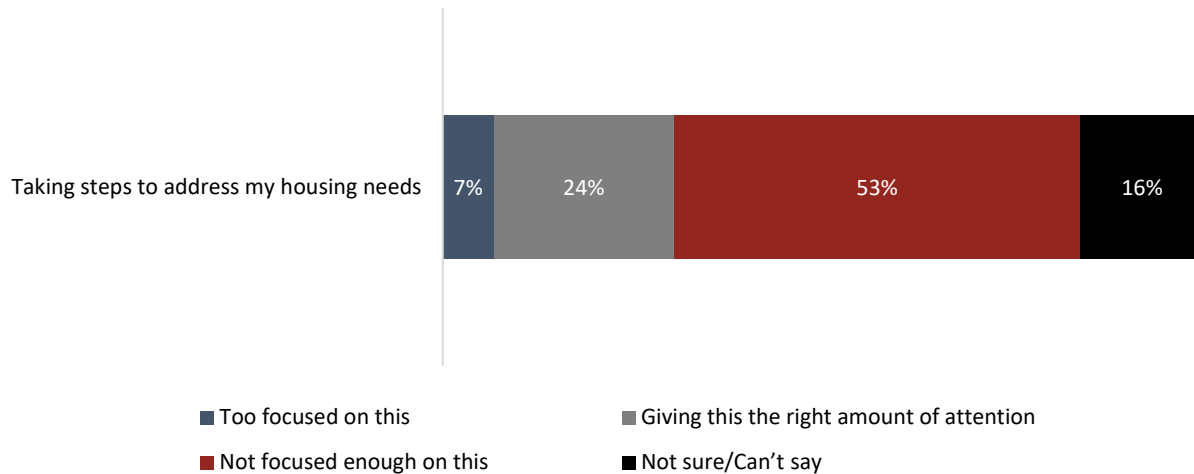
Related: One-in-three would give province say on housing, but plurality prefer housing decisions stay local

This latter group may be reacting to [short-term rental restrictions and increasing provincial say in municipal home building](#), which have ruffled many feathers in recent months:

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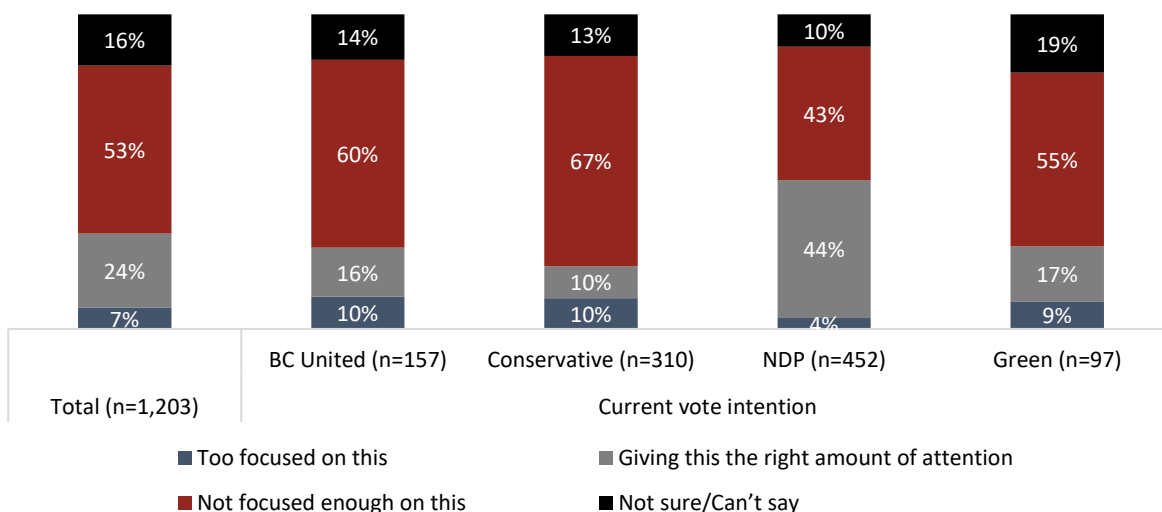
**Are David Eby and the BC NDP focused too much, the right amount or not enough on...
(All respondents, n=1,203)**



NDP supporters divided whether government has done enough

On this file, those who would support the BC NDP in October are more bullish about the government's efforts, though still two-in-five (43%) say more is needed. Majorities of all other would-be voters agree with the latter sentiment:

**Do you think David Eby and the BCNDP have focused too much, the right amount, or not enough for each.
"Taking steps to address my housing needs"**

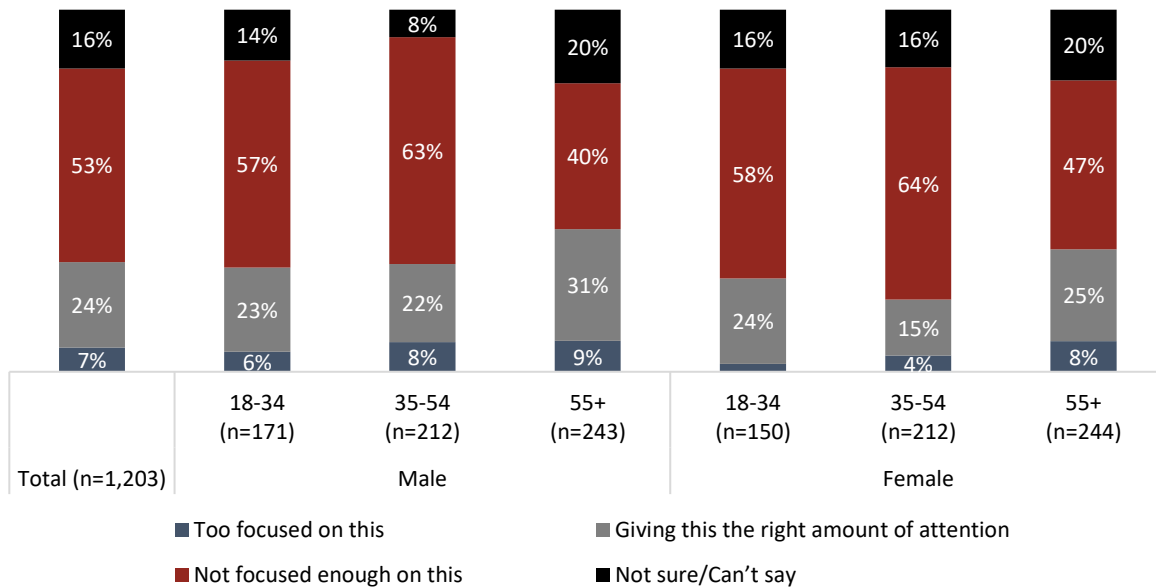


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Notably, 35- to 54-year-olds, those most likely to be in the throes of mortgage payments or be providing for children in addition to themselves, are most likely to say that more focus on housing affordability must be part of the government's plans. More than three-in-five men and women in this age group say so:

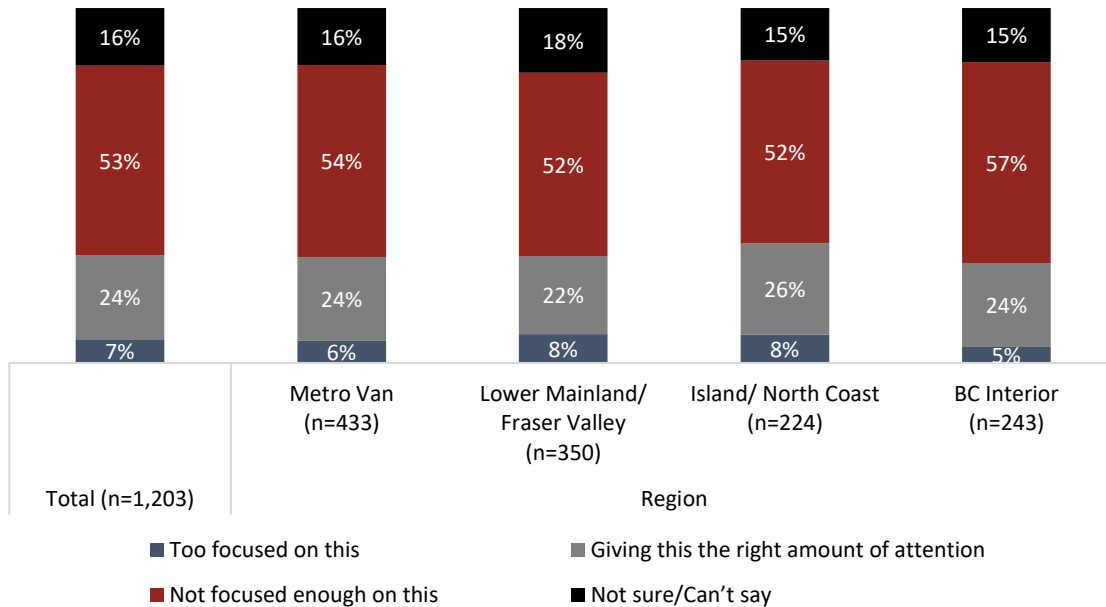
**Do you think David Eby and the BCNDP have focused too much, the right amount, or not enough for each.
"Taking steps to address my housing needs"**



These acute challenges are evident in every region of the province. Indeed, at least 52 per cent in all areas say their housing needs should be more of a focus:

Do you think David Eby and the BCNDP have focused too much, the right amount, or not enough for each.

"Taking steps to address my housing needs"



One-in-three residents “seriously considering” moving out of province due to cost

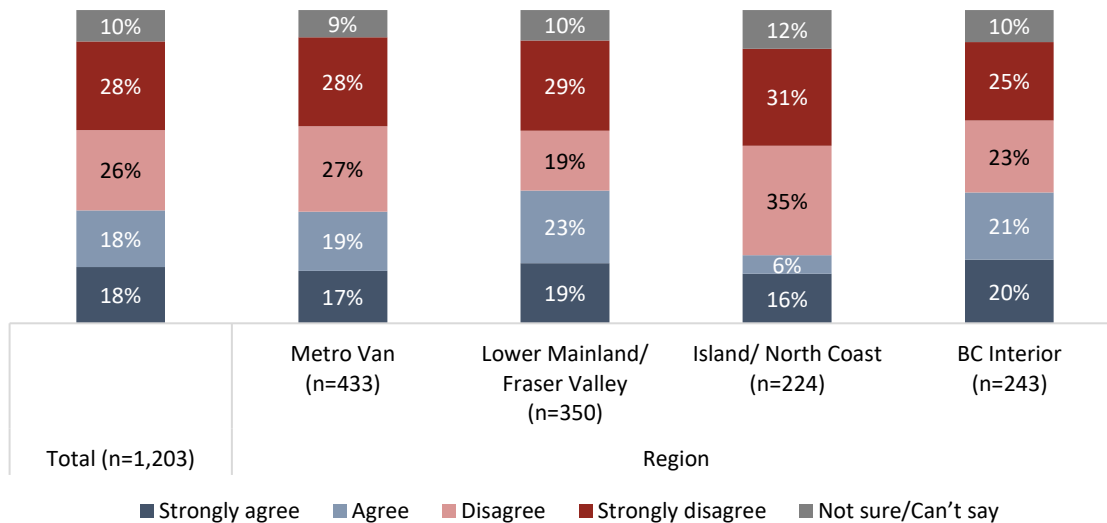
In 2023, [for the first time in more than 10 years](#), B.C.’s had a negative net interprovincial migration – that is the number of people who moved to B.C. from other provinces minus those who left for elsewhere in the country. Despite this outflow, the province’s population still grew, but the exodus of British Columbians to other provinces is perhaps emblematic of the affordability challenges the province faces. A study released in Nov. 2023 showed that B.C. had the [highest cost of living](#) of any province in the country.

More than one-third (36%) British Columbians say they are contemplating leaving the province because of the high cost of housing, while a majority (54%) say that is not a consideration. Those in the Lower Mainland (42%) and Interior (41%) are more likely to say they are seriously thinking of leaving the province than those in Metro Vancouver (36%) and on the Island or North Coast (22%):

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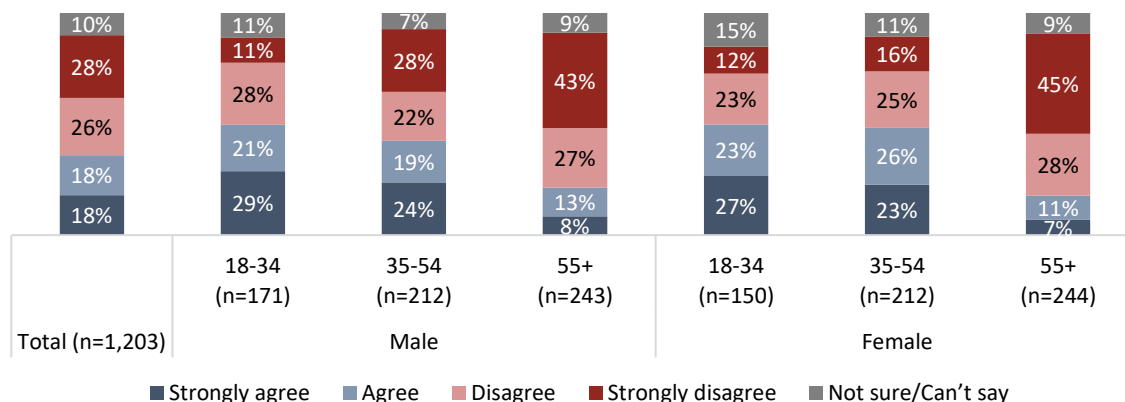
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**Agree vs. disagree -
"I'm seriously thinking of leaving British Columbia because of the cost of housing here"**



This sentiment is consistent across income levels ([see detailed tables](#)) but is not shared equally by British Columbians of all ages. Half of 18- to 34-year-olds and more than two-in-five 35- to 54-year-olds say they are seriously thinking of leaving the province because of the cost of housing. For older British Columbians, who are more likely to be more established perhaps with a home that they've paid off, leaving is less of a consideration:

**Agree vs disagree -
"I'm seriously thinking of leaving British Columbia because of the cost of housing here"**



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