

## The Slim Margin between Love & Hate: Voter motivation, regional battles reveal emerging B.C. campaign picture

*Health care now identified as top issue among voters, possibly re-framing ballot question*

**October 14, 2024** – With hundreds of thousands of voters having already locked in their intentions at advanced polls, the days left for B.C.'s main political parties to not only persuade but pull the province's remaining electorate out to vote are dwindling.

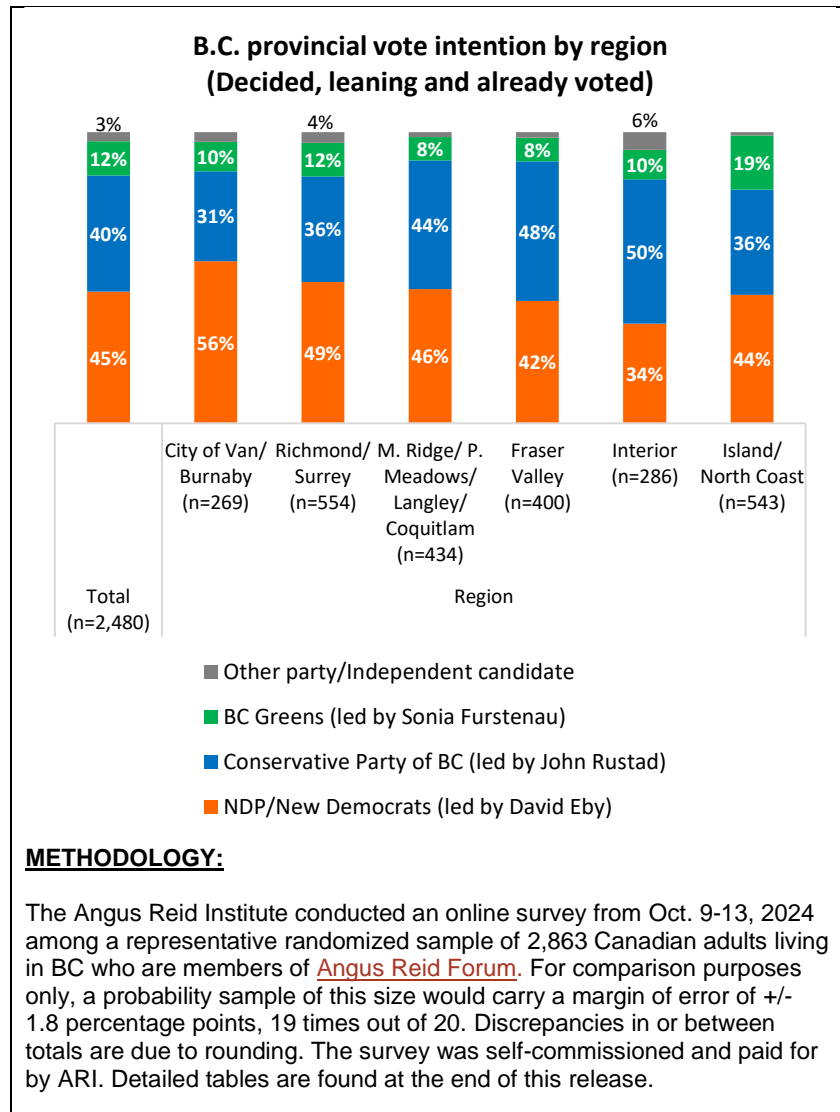
New public opinion data from the non-profit Angus Reid Institute reveal a more complete picture of how the campaign is developing.

The Institute polled 2,863 British Columbians in the five days after [the televised leaders debate Oct. 8](#) with a focus on key vote-rich battlegrounds in and around Metro Vancouver.

While overall provincial vote intention shows a five-point lead for the BC NDP (45%) over the BC Conservatives (40%), a closer look reveals what amounts to a statistical tie in communities north-east of Vancouver, constituencies that were once right-leaning strongholds, but flipped NDP in 2020. The incumbents have been in a fight to hold on here, while the BC Conservatives have been looking to pick up where the now-defunct BC Liberals left off.

In less assuring news for the provincial Conservatives, the party appears to have lost crucial momentum in districts south of the Fraser River, notably Richmond, Surrey and Delta. This has come in the wake of public comments condemned by rivals from two Metro Vancouver Conservative candidates, [who were kept in the race by leader John Rustad](#).

That said, the NDP's advantage is not necessarily predicated by strong enthusiasm for the party that has been in power seven years. Against the backdrop of [increasing voter frustration](#) on key files such as cost



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of living, the addictions crisis, public safety and health care, fully half of New Democrat supporters say they are backing the party because they “really dislike” the other options available to them.

### **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: Regional vote intention**

##### **NDP leads by five points overall**

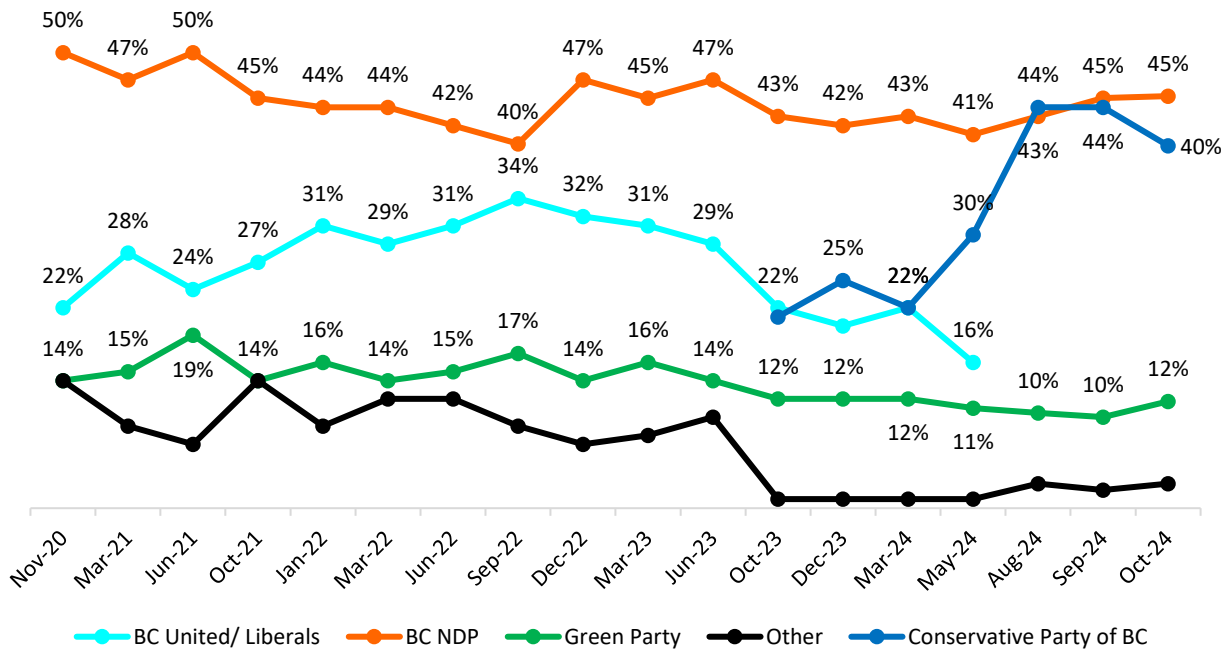
Entering the final week of the 43rd election campaign in British Columbia, David Eby and the BC NDP hold a five-point province-wide lead, with 45 per cent of vote intention. Support for the Conservatives, which matched the incumbents earlier in the race, has declined to 40 per cent. One-in-eight intend to vote for the BC Greens:

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**B.C. provincial vote intention over time**



**Regional story suggests close race**

The five-point advantage for the BC NDP may suggest to some that the race is close to being won, but regional analysis suggests plenty of drama on Saturday when the final votes are tallied.

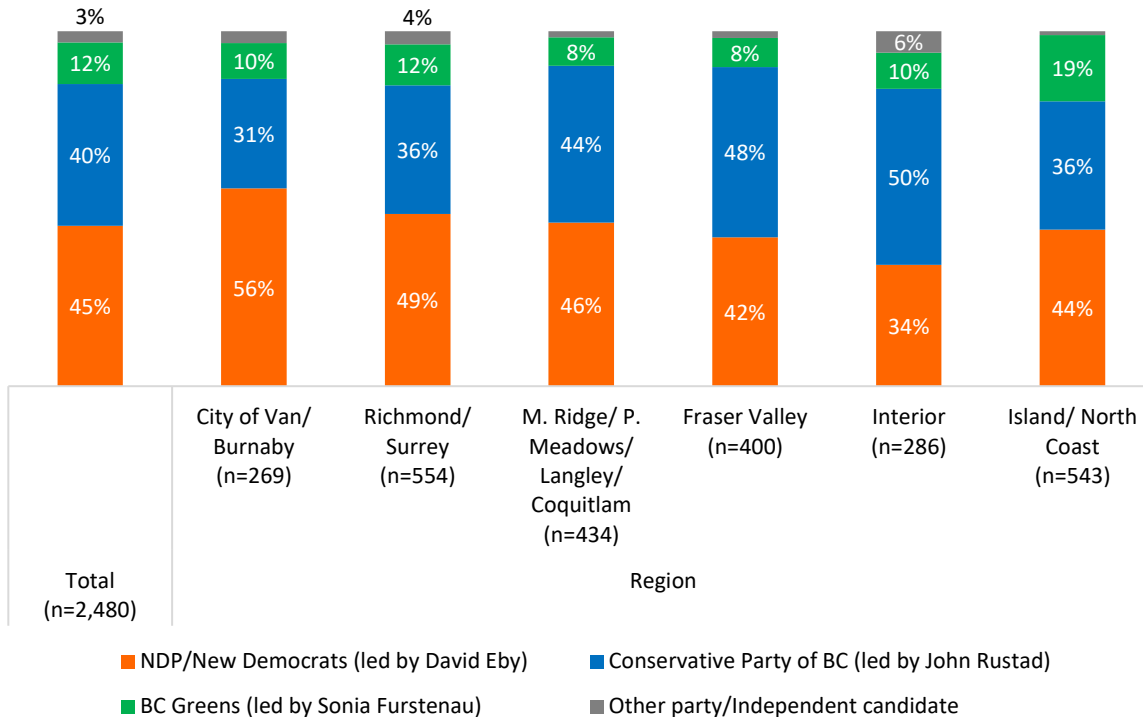
The BC NDP holds a commanding lead in the Vancouver-Burnaby region, where it will hope to garner most of the 17 seats and set up the foundations of forming government. A smaller, but still key lead for Eby and his party is noted in Richmond-Surrey, where a number of competitive races are expected, including Richmond-Steveston and Surrey-Cloverdale. On Vancouver Island and the North Coast all three parties expect to compete, where the BC NDP lead with 44 per cent vote intention currently compared to 36 per cent for the B.C. Conservatives and 19 per cent for the BC Greens.

The Conservative path to victory lays in winning key races in those above regions while sweeping most of the Interior-North region, and the Fraser Valley. The party is strongest in the both those portions of the province, receiving approximately half of vote intention in each. In the Tri-Cities and extending out to Abbotsford and Langley the vote intention showdown shows little daylight:

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**B.C. provincial vote intention by region  
(Decided, leaning and already voted)**



**Momentum swings in Metro Vancouver**

When it comes to the two key players hoping to form government, these data reflect a picture of one party holding ground and another ceding support. Compared to polling early in the campaign, between Sept. 20-22, support for the BC Conservatives has fallen in all six regions. A portion of this appears to have gone to the BC NDP while some has bolstered the Greens. The latter party, after a strong performance by leader Sonia Furstenau in the leadership debate (see subsequent section for more) has seen its support rise, but still falls short of 2020 levels. Overall however, the four-year change is one of loss of support for the NDP since October of 2020's actual vote:

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Comparing actual vote, Oct. 2020 vs vote intent Oct. 2024							
	Total	Region					
		City of Vancouver/ Burnaby	Richmond/ Surrey	Maple-Pitt, Langley, Coquitlam	Interior	Island/ North Coast	Fraser Valley
BC NDP Actual 2020*	48%	55%	50%	53%	35%	50%	39%
BC NDP Sept. 2024	45%	57%	47%	41%	33%	46%	38%
BC NDP Oct. 2024	45%	56%	49%	46%	34%	44%	42%
Change: Oct. 2020 - Oct. 2024	-3	+1	-1	-7	-1	-6	+3
BC Liberal plus BC Conservatives Actual 2020	34%	30%	38%	36%	50%	23%	44%
BCC Sept. 2024	44%	33%	42%	49%	56%	38%	52%
BCC Oct. 2024	40%	31%	36%	44%	50%	36%	48%
Change: Oct. 2020 - Oct. 2024	+6	+1	-2	+8	-	+13	+4
Green Actual 2020	15%	13%	11%	10%	13%	25%	11%
BC Greens Sept. 2024	10%	7%	11%	8%	7%	15%	8%
BC Greens Oct. 2024	12%	10%	12%	8%	10%	19%	8%
Change: Oct. 2020 - Oct. 2024	-3	-3	+1	-2	-3	-6	-3

\*Actual vote data from Elections BC

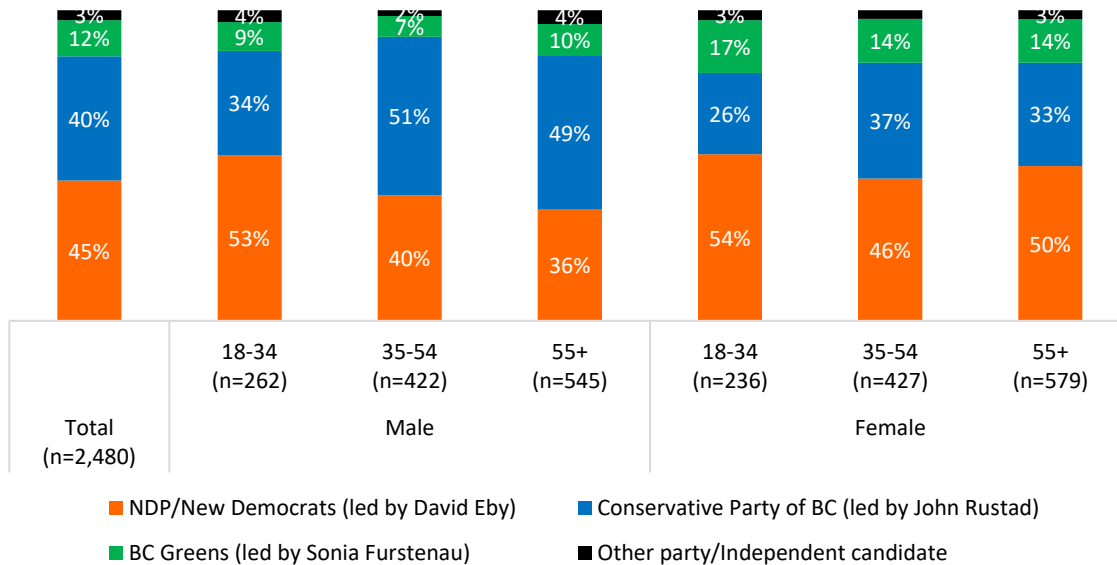
### **The age and gender split**

Rustad and the Conservatives' support is strongest among men older than 34, but the party suffers from a significant gap among women, half of whom say they will be voting for the BC NDP. And while majorities of both younger men and women – part of the largest cohort of voters in BC – say they are backing the incumbent New Democrats, they are known to traditionally have [a lower propensity to vote](#):

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**B.C. provincial vote intention by age and gender  
(Decided, leaning and already voted)**



**Part Two: Voter motivation**

During election campaigns, a question arguably equally as important as *how* the electorate votes, is *why* it votes the way it does. On this, the issue of B.C. voter motivation is telling. Neither the New Democrats, nor the BC Conservatives, can claim the high ground of attracting support bases out of pure enthusiasm or keen political interest.

**Love vs. Hate**

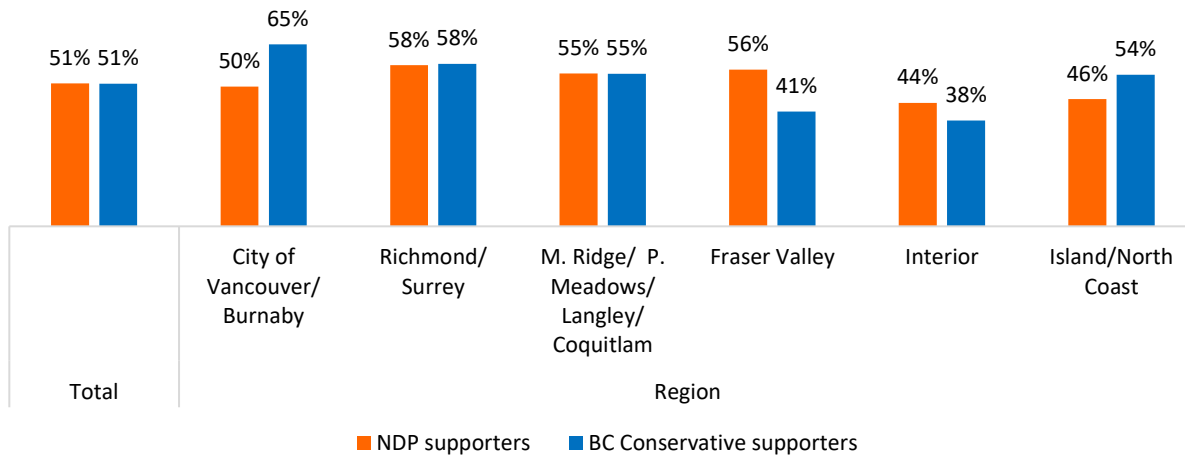
Indeed, NDP voters are evenly split between professing support for the party led by Eby because they “really like” the New Democrats and what they stand for – half say this – and because they “really dislike” the other options available to them. It’s the mirror image to the motivations of BC Conservative voters. These dynamics represent a significant factor of why both parties have focused a major amount of their campaign communications “going negative” rather than focusing on their own platforms, policies, and candidates.

In Fraser Valley and the Interior, Conservative supporters are much more likely to support the BC Conservatives for what they stand for. Closer to Metro Vancouver, the opposite is true. Notably, voters in the key battleground ringing Metro Vancouver are much more likely to say they dislike the opposition parties than say they like their own choice:

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**Percentage of current party supporters who say they are supporting their party because "they dislike the other options more"**

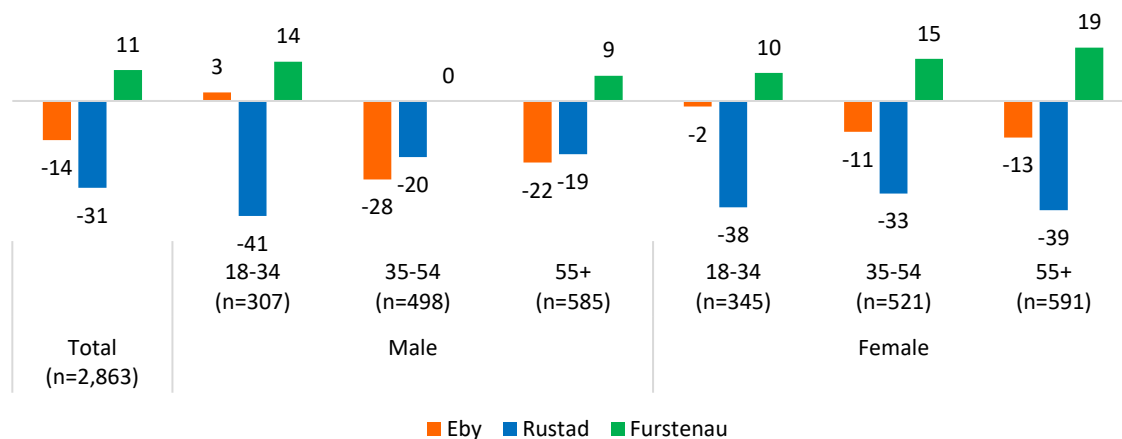


**Part Three: Leadership**

**Leader momentum**

Opinion of Rustad is trending in the wrong direction as the campaign comes to a close. All demographics are more likely to say their opinion of the BC Conservative leader has worsened, but that is especially true among women. Eby performs better by this metric. But, with the exception of men aged 18 to 34, men and women of all ages are more likely to say their opinion of the premier has worsened. Furstenau is the only leader to have generated positive momentum in the past week of the campaign:

**Leader momentum  
(Those who say their opinion has improved minus those who say their opinion has worsened)**



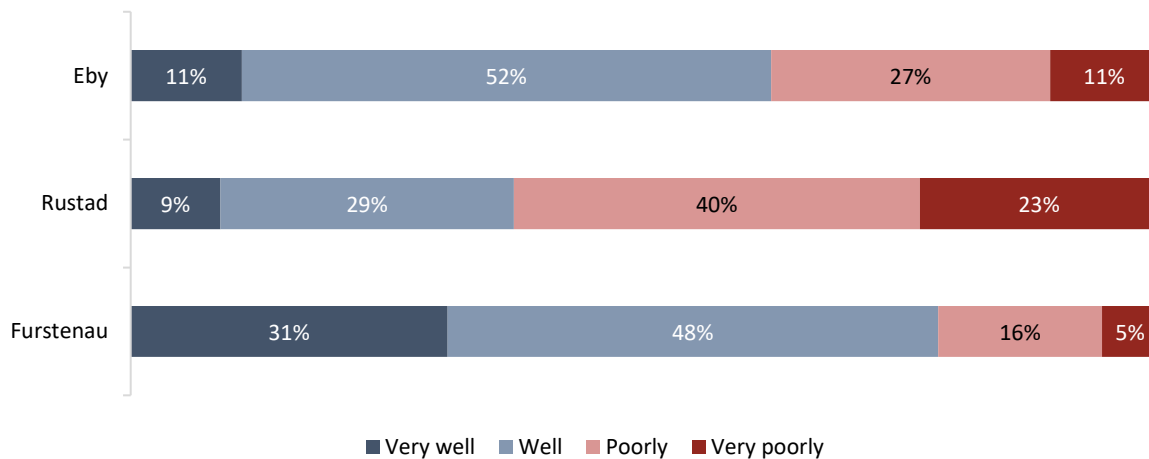
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**Evaluations of debate performance**

Furstenau is perhaps buoyed by her [well-received debate performance](#), while Rustad is perhaps dragged down by his, which was criticized by many including one assessment calling his performance “[cadaverous](#)”. A majority (63%) of those who watched the debate or consumed some of the post-debate analysis believe Rustad performed “poorly” during the leaders’ debate. Furstenau is viewed as having done the best, with three-in-10 (31%) saying she performed “very well” – although notably, this has failed to translate into meaningful vote momentum. A majority also praised Eby (63%):

**Overall, do you think each performed well or poorly?  
(Among those who watched the debate or seen, heard or read analysis of  
debate, n=1,991)**



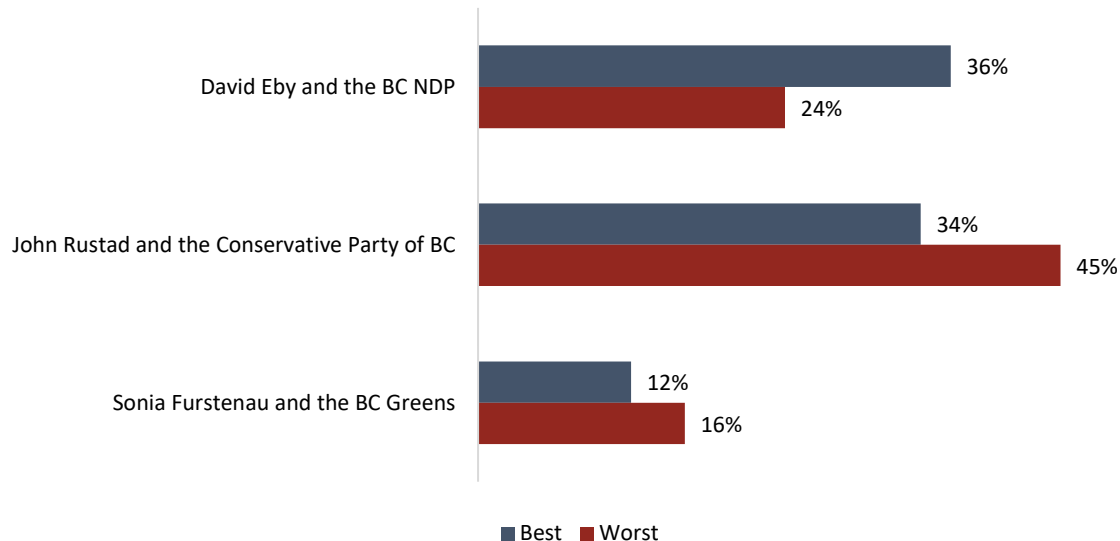
**The risk factor**

There is little separating the two main parties and their leaders when it comes to which British Columbians believe would be best for their household overall: 36 per cent say the BC NDP and Eby and 34 per cent say the BC Conservatives and Rustad.

But there is much more separation when it comes to who is viewed as worst: 45 per cent say the Conservative Party of BC would be worst for their household overall, while one-quarter (24%) say the same of the BC NDP:



Everything considered, which of the following would be best/worst for the overall quality of life of you and your household if they formed government?  
(All respondents, n=2,863)



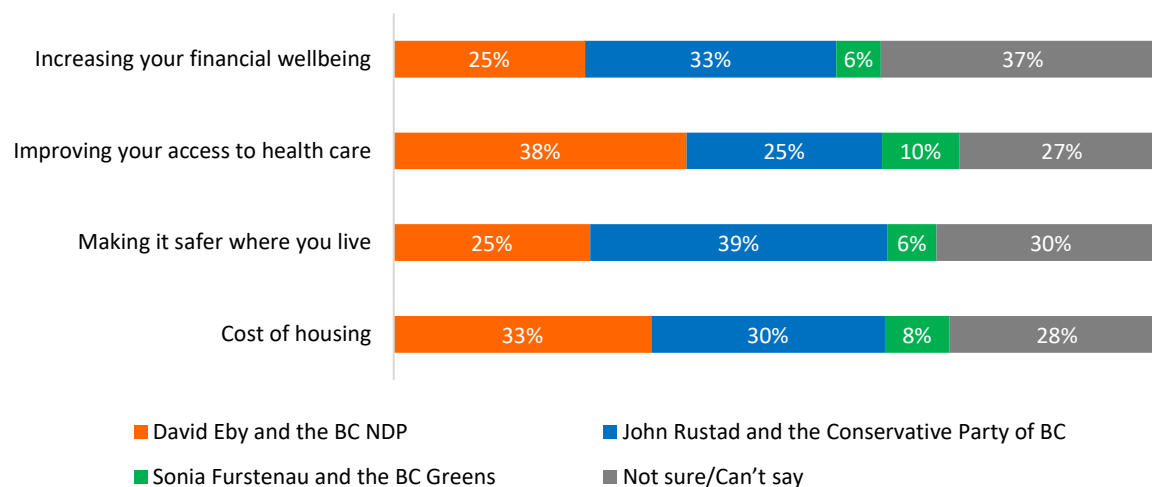
### **Best on issues? Eby’s only advantage is health care**

British Columbians are more likely to view Rustad and the Conservative Party than the BC NDP under Eby as capable of addressing their household’s financial wellbeing (33% vs. 25%), and safety in their communities (39% vs 25%). Eby and the BC NDP are seen as the better choice to improve health care (38% vs. 25%), while there is not much separating the two parties in the eyes of British Columbians when it comes to housing affordability (33% vs. 30%):

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Which of the main parties do you believe are most capable of improving the following aspects of your own life?  
(All respondents, n=2,863)



British Columbians are more concerned about the Conservatives' ability to manage health care than other top issues. Two-in-five (40%) say Rustad and the Conservatives are "least capable" at improving health care access for their household ([see detailed tables](#)).

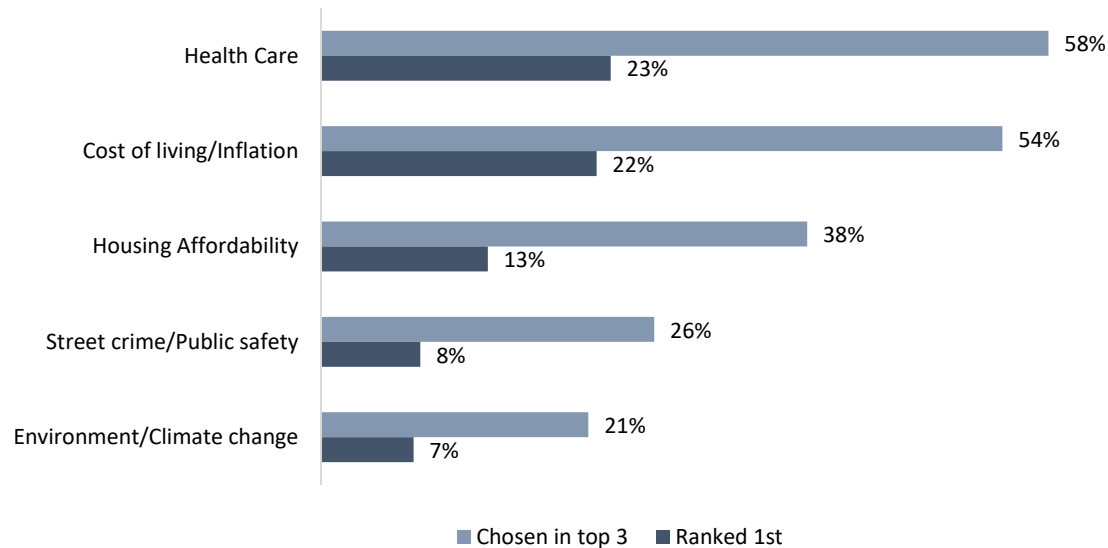
**Health care overtakes cost of living as top issue**

The re-emergence of the importance of access to health care in the minds of BC voters is something of a political saving grace, then, for Eby and the New Democrats. Early in the race, cost of living hands-down the top issue for British Columbians. [In May](#), two-thirds (66%) selected it as a top issue facing the province. Since then, concern over health care has grown while worry over inflation has fallen away, leaving health care in the top spot, selected by approaching three-in-five (58%). The high cost of living still outpaces other concerns, such as housing affordability, public safety and climate change.

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**Thinking about the issues facing British Columbia, which of those issues would you say are the most important to you personally?  
(Top five issues overall shown, all respondents, n=2,863)**



**On best premier, Eby holds five-point edge**

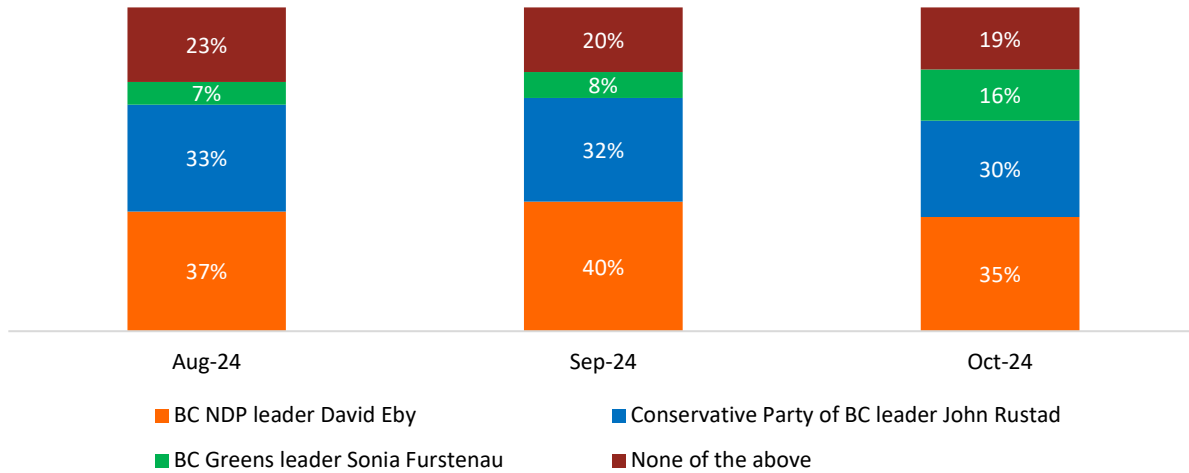
Perhaps due to her success on the debate stage, those who view Furstenuau as the best choice for premier have doubled since the end of September. However, she still trails Rustad (30%) and Eby (35%) on this measure.

Eby is viewed as the best choice for premier by 18- to 34-year-olds (41%) and women (37%), while two-in-five men older than 34 believe Rustad is the best choice to lead the province ([see detailed tables](#)).

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Who of the following would make the best premier of British Columbia?



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

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