

Ontario Election: Four-in-five, including a majority of PC voters, say election called to serve Ford's interests

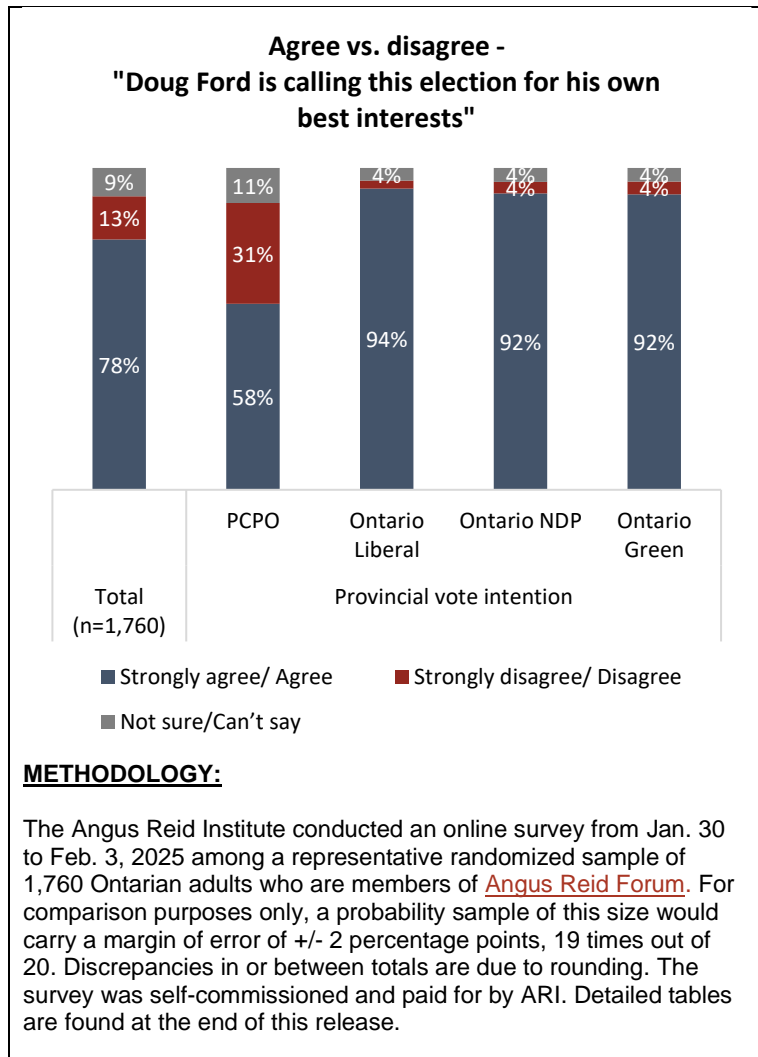
Health care, cost of living loom much larger than Trump in Ontarians' priorities

February 7, 2025 – After meeting with the nation's provincial leaders and the Prime Minister on Jan. 15, Ontario Premier Doug Ford said that it was time to put [Canada first](#), even ahead of provincial interests, in dealing with tariff threats from American President Donald Trump. By Jan. 29 the province had begun an election campaign, after Ford announced an early call in order to garner a stronger mandate over the next four years.

New data from the non-profit Angus Reid Institute finds residents not sold on the timing or motivation of the election. Four-in-five Ontario residents (78%) – and in fact three-in-five who currently say they'll support Ford's party – say that this election call was made to serve Ford's interest and not those of the province. Seven-in-ten (68%) characterize the election as "unnecessary".

This is not to say that Ford and the Progressive Conservatives are suffering the costs of these negative perceptions. As has been the case in the face of [low approval](#) and [low government performance scores](#), his party continues to hold a [commanding lead in vote intention](#).

Some of this can be attributed to the party's key strengths, as Ford and the Conservatives have two clear advantages when it comes to the top issues facing the province. On economic stewardship and dealing with the threat posed by Donald Trump, Ford and his party are chosen at a much higher rate than the Liberals or NDP. The PCs also hold a small edge as the preferred party to tackle cost of living challenges. On health care and housing affordability, the NDP, Liberals, and Conservatives split close to evenly. This magnifies the Conservatives other key advantage – a divided opposition. Neither Marit Stiles' NDP nor Bonnie Crombie's Liberals have been able to create any clear advantages over the PCs early in the campaign, instead splitting the large number of non-PC voters between themselves.



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What this generates is a situation where Ford's Progressive Conservatives are chosen as both the "best" party for one's overall quality of life in Ontario (30% vs 25% NDP, 20% Liberal) and also the "worst" on this same metric (40% vs 17% Liberal, 16% NDP).

More Key Findings:

- Three-in-five Ontarians say Doug Ford has done well in standing up to Donald Trump in recent weeks. Four-in-five PC voters feel this way, while Liberals are divided (44% agree, 41% disagree) and NDP voters lean toward disagreeing (55%)
- Three-in-five say Ontario is on the wrong track, while 17 per cent say it is on the right track. One-quarter (24%) say they don't know.
- Climate change is chosen as a top issue for more than three-in-10 of all non-PC voters, while within Ford's base just five per cent say this is an important issue.

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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Three-in-five say Ontario is on the wrong track

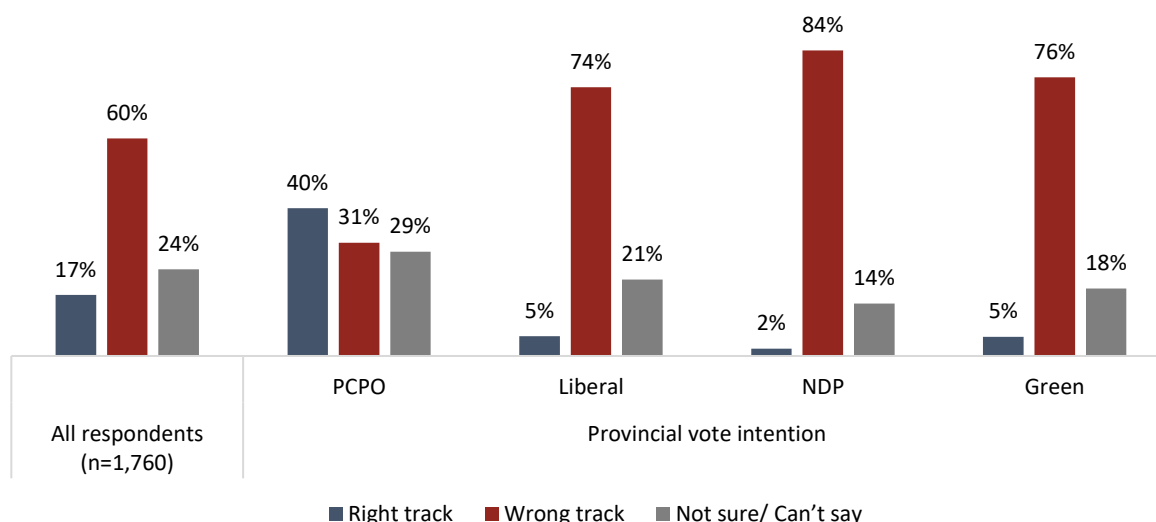
Premier Doug Ford has propelled Ontario into an election because he says he needs a four-year mandate to deal with the [tariff threat posed by U.S. President Donald Trump](#), despite [Ford's admitted jubilation](#) at Trump's victory. While the economic effects of a trade war with the United States might be the most pressing concern for the Ontario government, the election also comes with the province struggling with issues in [health care, housing affordability, and the rising cost of living](#). Consistently, Ford's government has received [poor marks from Ontarians](#) on those fronts.

As residents assess the state of Ontario heading into the election, most (60%) believe the province is on the wrong track. This is the majority opinion of those who are supporting the Progressive Conservative Party of Ontario's rivals. However, even among PCPO supporters, the belief that the province is heading in the right direction under the PCs is not overwhelming – a slim plurality of Ford backers (40%) believe Ontario is on the right track:

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Overall, do you feel Ontario is on the right track or the wrong track?



The election largely comes down to a few top issues

Those aforementioned issues – health care, cost of living and housing affordability – have been consistent bugaboos for provinces across the country in the post-pandemic era. A majority of Ontarians (54%) currently select health care as the top issue facing the province, while half (50%) believe it's persistent cost of living challenges. Housing affordability (32%), the economy generally (27%) and Trump's threats (26%) make up a second tier of issues chosen by at least one quarter.

But there is divergence among those who would vote for the incumbents if the election were held today and those who are looking at opposition parties. For PCPO supporters, the economy (40%) and public safety (34%) are higher priority issues. Those who would vote Ontario Liberal, Ontario NDP or Ontario Green are more likely to select health care while also placing a higher importance on the environment and climate change:

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Top provincial issues – Ontario (Up to three chosen)					
	All respondents (n=1,760)	Current vote intention			
		PCPO	Liberal	NDP	Green
Health Care	54%	47%	59%	61%	65%
Cost of living challenges	50%	50%	45%	50%	44%
Housing Affordability	32%	26%	31%	41%	32%
The Economy	27%	40%	22%	10%	16%
Dealing with Donald Trump/U.S. trade	26%	27%	34%	24%	20%
Street crime/Public safety	21%	34%	13%	9%	16%
Environment/Climate change	20%	5%	30%	33%	42%
Poverty/homelessness	15%	7%	16%	25%	19%
Jobs/unemployment	13%	14%	11%	9%	10%
Education	11%	6%	18%	11%	13%
Infrastructure – including highways, bike lanes, etc.	8%	9%	6%	11%	7%
Energy policy - Oil & Gas/Pipelines/Renewables etc.	5%	9%	3%	3%	2%
Drug Use/addictions/opioid crisis	5%	7%	3%	5%	5%
The provincial deficit	5%	8%	3%	1%	5%

Who's best to lead on each?

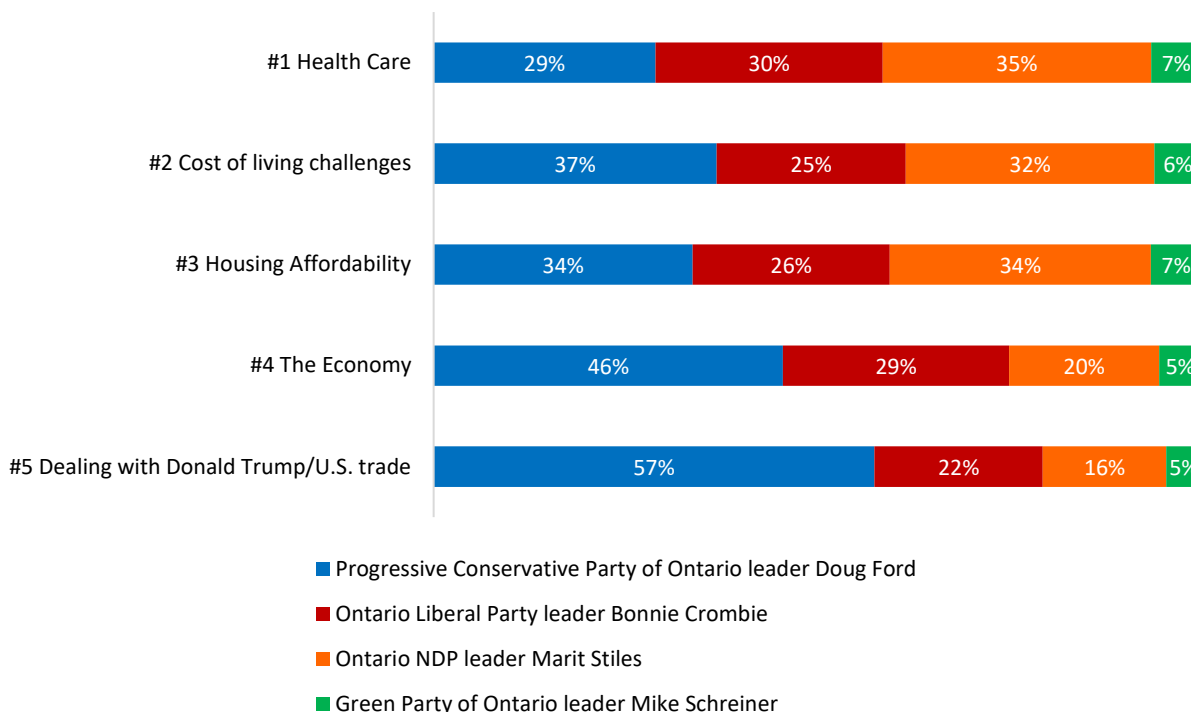
The Trump issue promises to remain at the forefront throughout the campaign, as Canada's secured 30-day reprieve period from the tariffs extends past Feb. 27, the final day for voting. For Ford, not only is it a driving force of the reason for the election, it also represents one of his greatest strengths in the eyes of potential voters. A majority (57%) of Ontarians believe Ford and the PCPO are the best choice for dealing with Trump and the issue of U.S. trade – the only issue of the 14 included in the survey where that is the case. Perhaps relatedly – given the U.S. market's importance when it comes to [Ontario's manufacturing sector](#) – approaching half (46%) believe Ford's party is the best to handle the economy more generally.

On issues that fall higher on Ontarians' priorities, there is less certainty. A plurality (37%) believe the PCPO would be best to deal with cost of living challenges, but one-third (32%) select the NDP when it comes to that issue. On health care, the PCPO fall behind the NDP (35%) and are chosen at the same rate as the Ontario Liberals (30%):

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**Thinking back to those top issues in the province, which party and leader do you feel is best to handle each of these in the coming years?
(Top five issues shown; all respondents, n=1,760)**



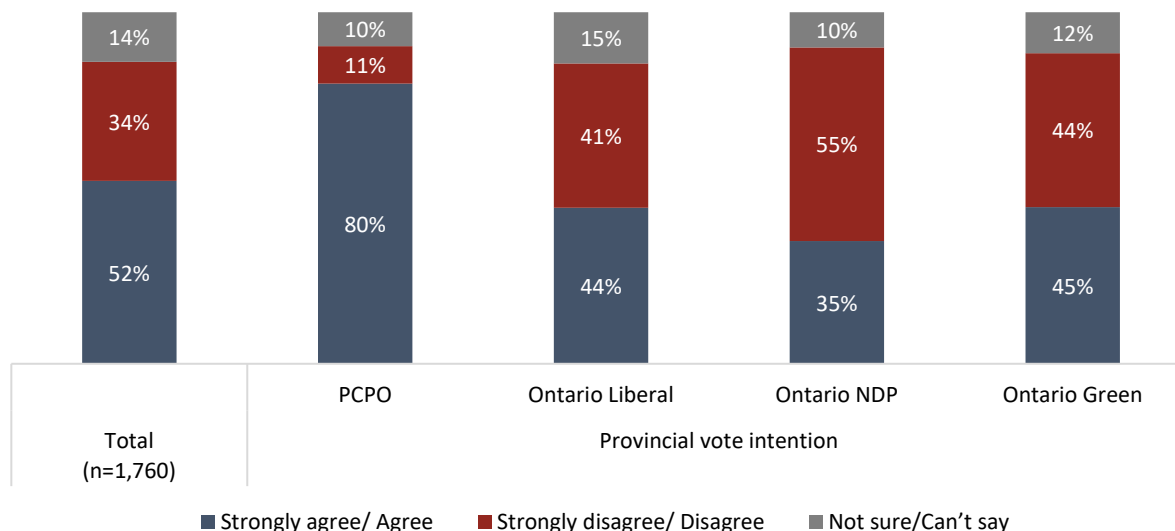
PCPO voters say Ford has done well with Trump, others more divided

The future expectation of Ford and the PCPO's ability to handle Trump is perhaps fueled by the premier's recent performance on the issue. Half (52%) of Ontarians believe Ford has handled the threat of trade war with Trump and the United States well. PCPO supporters are most likely to hold this belief, while other party supporters are more likely to disagree. However, only among Ontario NDP supporters do a majority (55%) believe Ford has done a poor job in the face of Trump:

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**Agree vs. disagree -
"Doug Ford has gone a great job of standing up for Canada against Trump"**



Four-in-five say election called for Ford's own interests (including 58% of his voters)

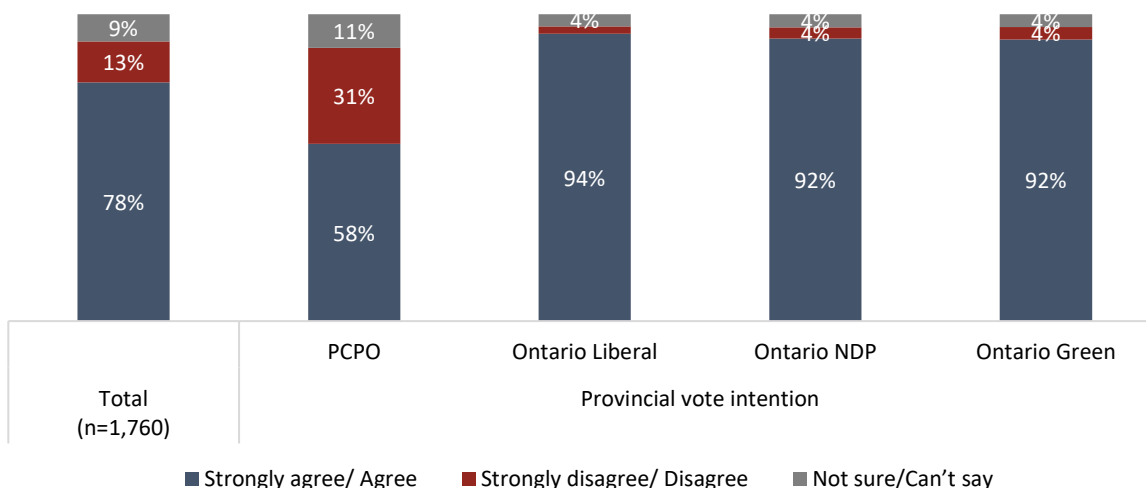
The speculation that Ontario was heading for an early election had been building since [last spring](#) after Ford accelerated plans to expand alcohol sales in the province. Some have dismissed Ford's use of the threat of Trump tariffs as justification as ["pretext" for a "cynical election call"](#).

There are many in Ontario who would appear to agree with the cynical part. Four-in-five (78%), including a majority (58%) of PCPO supporters, believe this election is about Ford's best interests:

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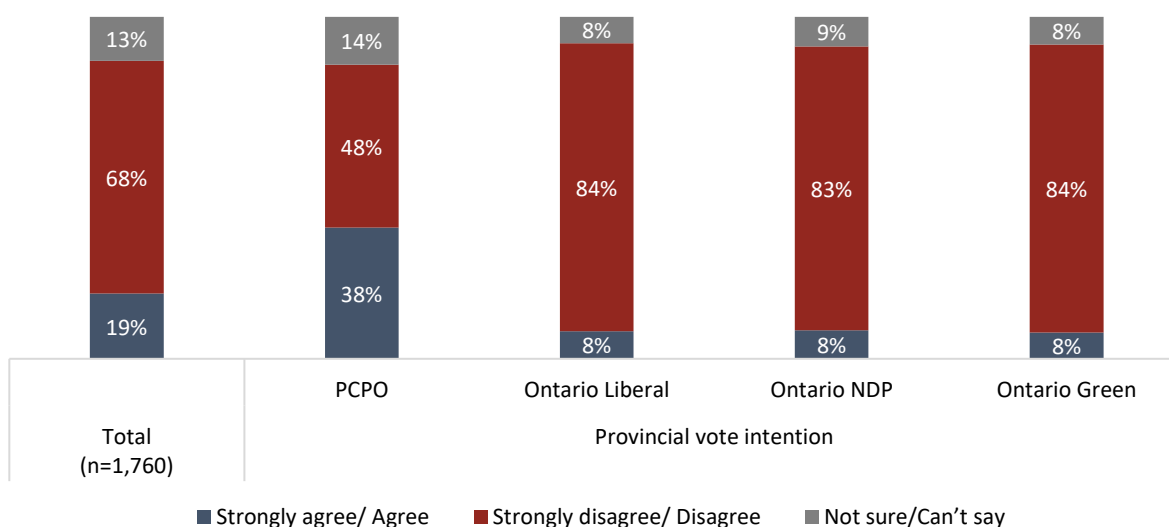
**Agree vs. disagree -
"Doug Ford is calling this election for his own best interests"**



Majority say it wasn't necessary to go to the polls early

Further, those who believe the early election was necessary (19%) are outnumbered by a more than three-to-one ratio by those who believe it was not (68%). Even among PCPO supporters, those who believe the early election was unnecessary (48%) outweigh those who believe it was required (38%):

**Agree vs. disagree -
"It was necessary to call this election earlier than scheduled"**



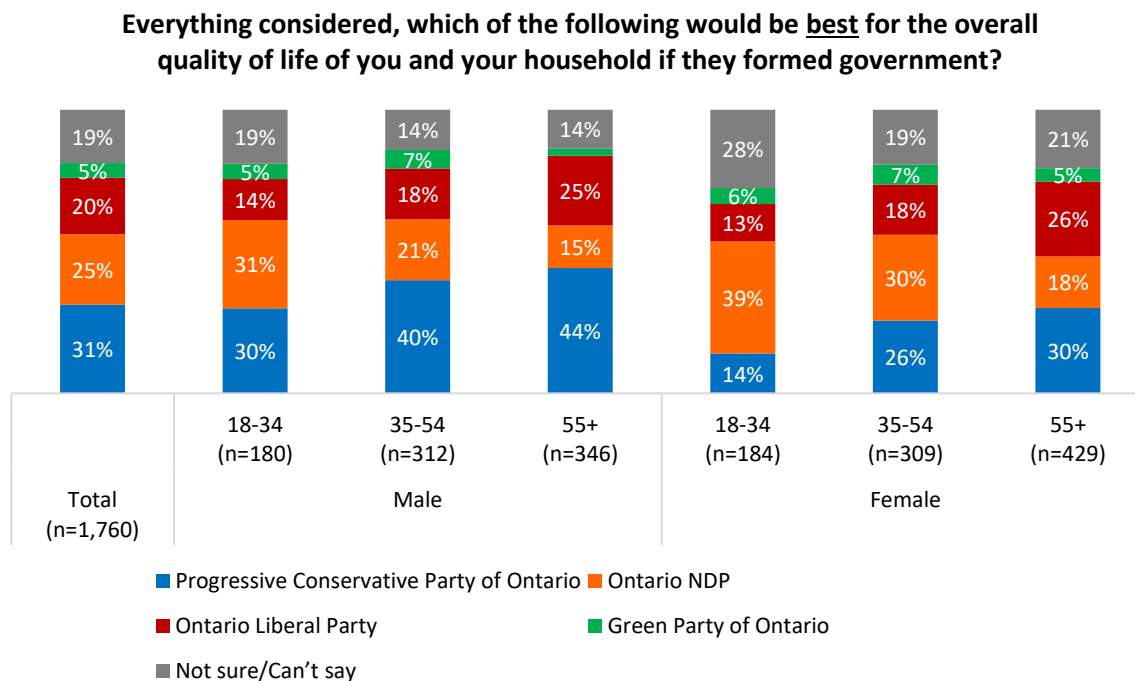
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Conservatives most likely to be viewed as best and also worst for Ontario

Overall, there is no consensus from Ontarians on which of the party's offers the best option for their household's quality of life. Three-in-ten (31%) believe the PCPO would be the best choice on that front, but that is little more than the one-quarter (25%) who select the Ontario NDP.

Men are more likely to believe the PCPO are the best choice for their household, while the NDP performs better among women on this metric:

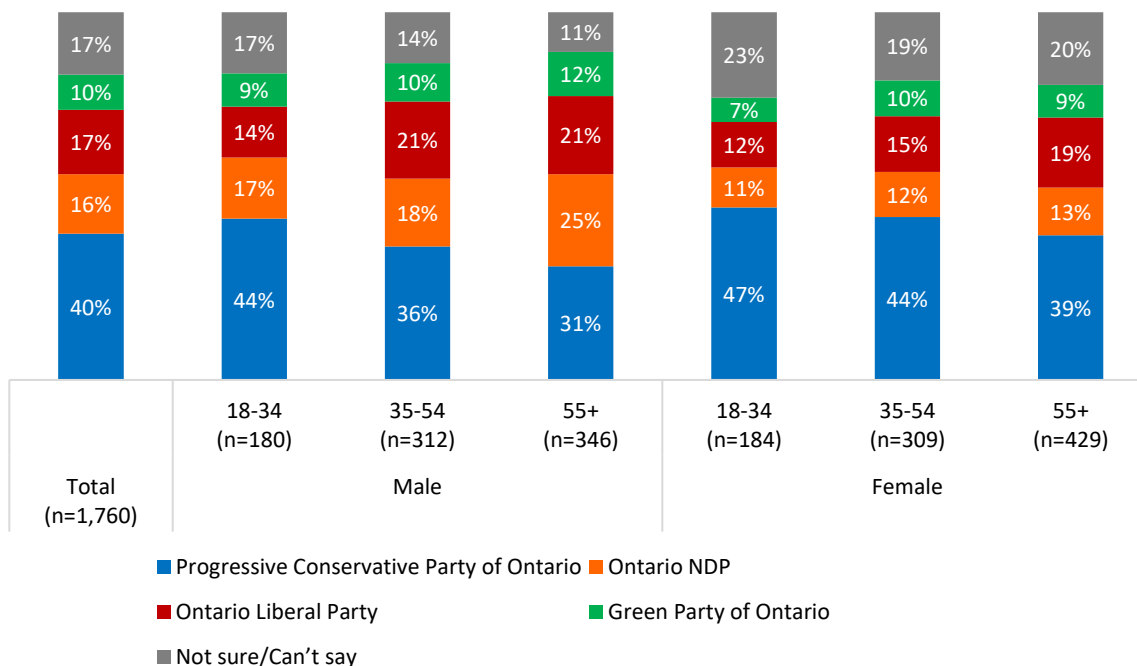


There is more certainty on who would be worse. Two-in-five (40%) Ontarians believe the PCPO would worsen their overall quality of life if they would return to government, more than doubling the number who say the Ontario NDP (16%) or the Ontario Liberals (17%). While a plurality of all demographics believe the PCPO would be the worst government for their household's quality of life, women are more likely than men to say this:

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Everything considered, which of the following would be worst for the overall quality of life of you and your household if they formed government?



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

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