

Federal Politics: Liberal support continues to drop as left-of-centre voters search for alternatives

Scheer top choice for best PM but May holds highest approval rating of any federal leader

May 3, 2019 – The ongoing fragmentation of Prime Minister Justin Trudeau's 2015 progressive coalition is paying dividends for Canada's other left-of-centre parties.

A new public opinion poll from the non-profit Angus Reid Institute finds that more than four-in-ten (44%) who voted for Trudeau's party in 2015 now disapprove of the Prime Minister, and more than half (51%) now plan to vote for a party other than the Liberals – or are undecided.

While the Conservative Party of Canada (CPC) holds a sizeable lead among decided and leaning voters, it is the Green Party – fresh from a provincial-level breakthrough in Atlantic Canada – that is building up the greatest amount of proportional support.

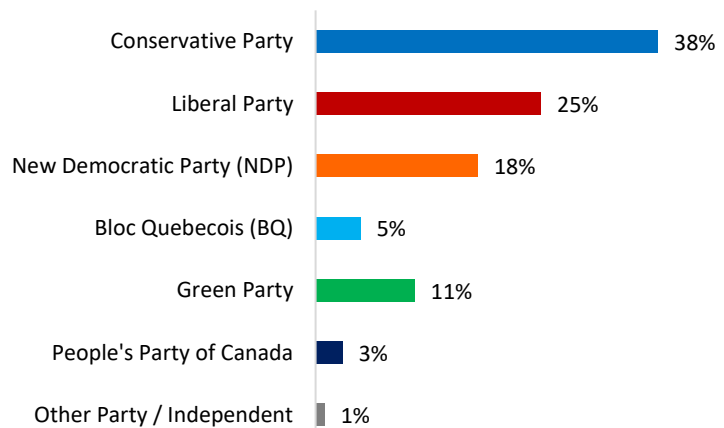
Asked how they would vote in an election were held tomorrow, some 38 per cent of Canadians say they would cast ballots for the CPC, while 25 per cent would choose Trudeau's Liberal Party. The New Democratic Party (NDP) is in third place with 18 per cent of decided and leaning voters backing it.

The Liberals have lost three more points in the last month, and the CPC and NDP sit largely unchanged. The Green Party, meantime, picks up three points among decided voters and now breaks into the double digits at 11 per cent. Fueling the Green surge – and bolstering the NDP outside of Quebec, where it is weakest – are disaffected former Liberal voters.

More Key Findings:

- Currently, one-in-three voters (35%) say that they are planning to vote for a party because they dislike another party even more and want to prevent that party from winning. This sentiment is equally high among Liberals (40%) and Conservatives (40%)
- Conservative leader Andrew Scheer (40% approve, 46% disapprove), NDP leader Jagmeet Singh (34% vs 45%) and Prime Minister Justin Trudeau (28% vs 67) all have negative net

Federal vote intention (including leaners, decided voters only, n=1342)



METHODOLOGY:

The Angus Reid Institute conducted an online survey from April 26 – 30, 2019, among a representative randomized sample of 1,525 Canadian 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 +/- 2.5 percentage points, 19 times out of 20. Discrepancies in or between totals are due to rounding. The survey was self-commissioned and paid for by ARI. Detailed tables are found at the end of this release.

CONTACT:

Shachi Kurl, Executive Director: 604.908.1693 shachi.kurl@angusreid.org @shachikurl
Dave Korzinski, Research Associate: 250.899.0821 dave.korzinski@angusreid.org
Ian Holliday, Research Associate: 604.442.3312 ian.holliday@angusreid.org

approval scores. Only Green Party leader Elizabeth May is approved of by more Canadians than disapprove of her (45% vs 34%)

- Once again, Canadians identify health care (24%) and the deficit (18%) as high priorities heading into the 2019 election, but environmental issues (27%) now top the list of priorities. Priorities vary significantly across generations and by party support

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 1: The vote landscape

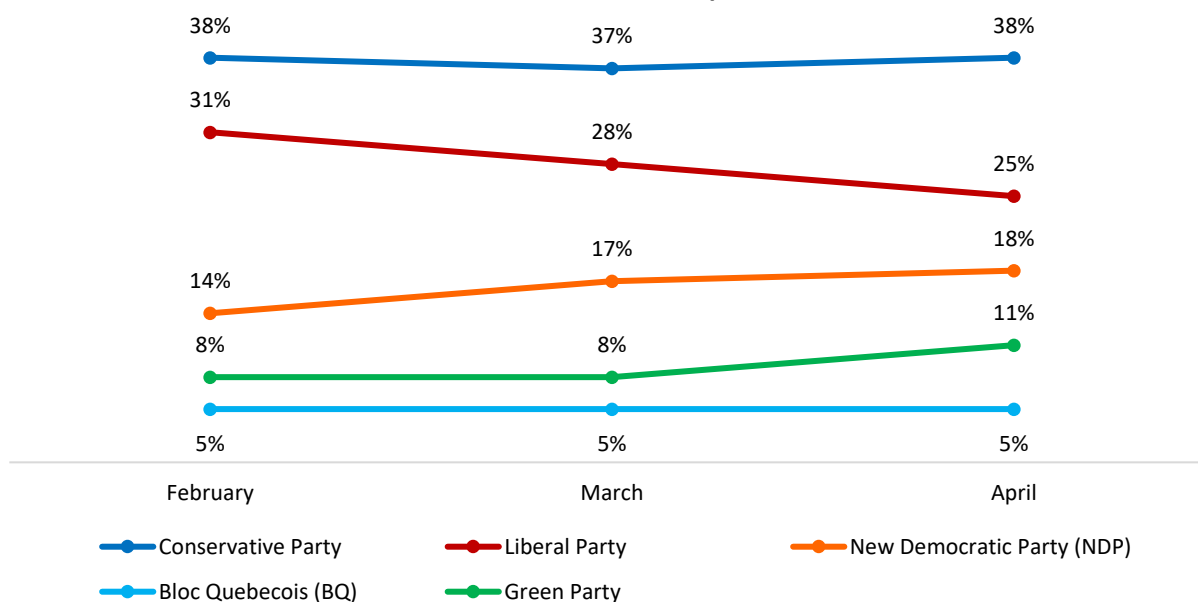
Liberals lead in Quebec; nowhere else

The Conservatives hold an overall lead, but haven't been gaining ground in 2019 as the Liberals have slipped:

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Federal vote intention in ARI polls in 2019:



The Conservative lead in vote intention holds in every region of the country except Quebec, where the CPC is in a tight three-way race with the Liberals and the Bloc Quebecois.

In provinces west of Ontario, the Liberal Party trails not only the Conservatives, but the NDP as well, a finding that may in part reflect a widespread dissatisfaction with Ottawa [seen across Western Canada](#) today:

Federal vote intention (including leaners, decided voters only, n=1342)							
(Unweighted sample sizes)	Total (1342)	Region					
		BC (170)	AB (147)	SK/MB (179)	ON (417)	QC (339)	ATL (85*)
Conservative Party	38%	39%	60%	49%	37%	26%	28%
Liberal Party	25%	19%	12%	14%	32%	28%	22%
New Democratic Party (NDP)	18%	29%	24%	22%	14%	11%	24%
Bloc Quebecois (BQ)	5%	-	-	-	-	22%	-
Green Party	11%	11%	1%	10%	12%	10%	22%
People's Party of Canada	3%	2%	2%	6%	4%	3%	1%

*small sample size

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As seen in the preceding table, the Liberals are strongest in the two provinces with the most seats in Parliament: Ontario and Quebec. That said, the party would need an extremely efficient distribution of votes in those provinces in order to win the most seats with its current level of support.

The NDP has the opposite strengths, performing worst in Ontario and Quebec, and best in regions with smaller seat totals.

Significant differences by age and gender

Age and gender continue to tell the story of vote intention in Canada. Younger people – especially young women – are more likely to express an intention to vote for the NDP, while older respondents of both genders prefer the CPC by a wide margin.

There is also notable disagreement between men and women in the middle age group. Men aged 35-54 look almost identical to older men (those 55 and older) in their vote intentions, while women this age are split three ways, backing the CPC, Liberals and NDP almost equally:

Federal vote intention (including leaners, decided voters only, n=1342)							
(Weighted sample sizes)	Total (1342)	Men			Women		
		18-34 (197)	35-54 (233)	55+ (253)	18-34 (182)	35-54 (231)	55+ (246)
Conservative Party	38%	28%	52%	54%	10%	29%	43%
Liberal Party	25%	22%	20%	22%	32%	29%	27%
New Democratic Party (NDP)	18%	19%	7%	7%	40%	27%	12%
Bloc Quebecois (BQ)	5%	6%	5%	6%	5%	3%	5%
Green Party	11%	17%	10%	7%	12%	10%	10%
People's Party of Canada	3%	9%	3%	3%	1%	2%	2%

Education and income:

Education and income provide further contours to the current Canadian political environment. These two variables are often generally correlated with one another. Those who have higher levels of formal education earn – on average – more money than their less-educated counterparts.

And yet, looking at vote intention by these two variables finds them trending in opposite directions. Those with higher household incomes are much more likely to say they would vote Conservative in an election held tomorrow, while those with higher levels of education prefer the Liberals and are more bullish on the NDP, as seen in the following table.

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Federal vote intention (including leaners, decided voters only, n=1342)							
(Weighted sample sizes)	Total (1342)	Household Income			Education		
		Less than \$50,000 (449)	\$50,000 - \$99,999 (381)	\$100,000 or more (377)	High school or less (531)	College / Tech (425)	Univ+ (386)
Conservative Party	38%	24%	38%	49%	42%	42%	26%
Liberal Party	25%	24%	25%	28%	22%	22%	32%
New Democratic Party (NDP)	18%	25%	19%	9%	18%	13%	22%
Bloc Quebecois (BQ)	5%	7%	5%	3%	6%	6%	3%
Green Party	11%	15%	7%	8%	9%	11%	13%
People's Party of Canada	3%	4%	3%	3%	3%	4%	3%

The Green Party's moment – will it last?

Since 2017, provincial Green parties in Canada have elected their first Ontario MPP, formed their first multi-seat caucuses in British Columbia and New Brunswick, and formed their first Official Opposition in Prince Edward Island.

The party's momentum is reflected in the popularity of its leader: Elizabeth May is Canada's most widely-approved federal party leader, and the only one for whom approval outpaces disapproval (see Part 3 of this report).

Likewise, her party has reached double-digit support (11%) in an Angus Reid Institute poll for the first time since the institute was founded in October 2014.

That said, current Green support comes largely from past Liberal voters, as does much of the NDP's current support. What remains to be seen is whether this large block of left-of-centre voters settles on a party – as it did with Jack Layton's NDP in 2011 and Trudeau's Liberals in 2015. If they do, will the Greens – who have yet to elect more than a single MP in any federal election – be the winners or losers of strategic voting?

Part 2: Vote dynamics

The strategic voting factor

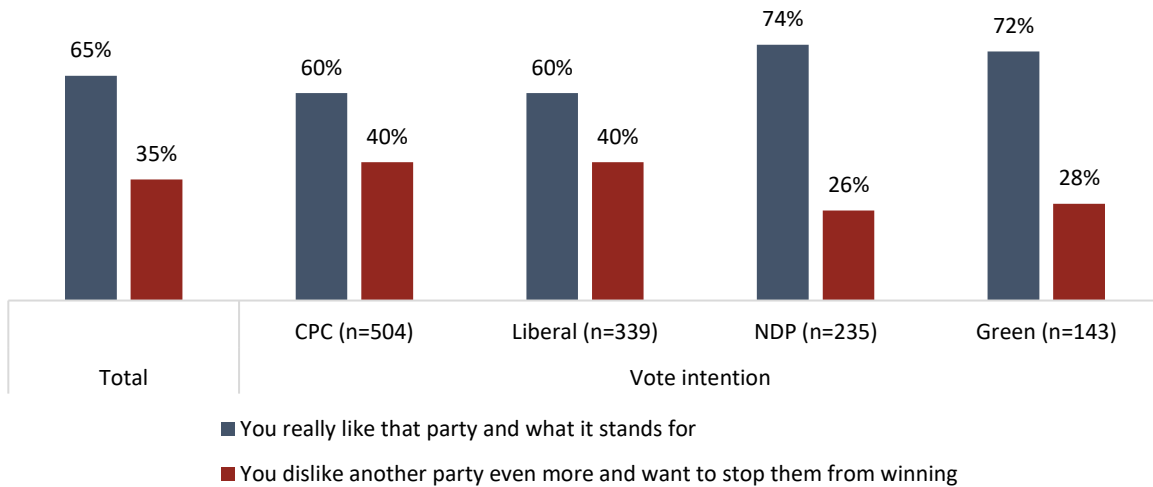
Roughly one-third (35%) of decided and leaning voters say they are planning to vote for a party not because its policy platform appeals to them, but because they dislike another party even more.

Some four-in-ten would-be Conservatives and Liberals say this, while fewer than three-in-ten NDP and Green voters say the same:

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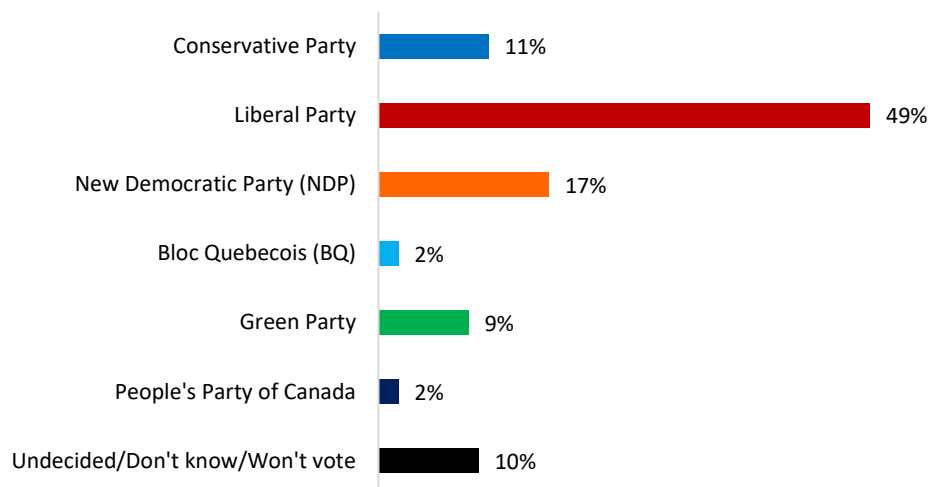
You indicated you support (or are leaning towards) [party]. Would you say you support that party mostly because:



The fact that voters who support the NDP and the Greens do so more out of love for those parties than out of a desire to block others may be encouraging to partisans, but it also represents a potential weakness. If the 2019 election appears to be a choice between the Conservatives and one left-of-centre party, will these individuals put aside their favourite party and vote strategically in order to prevent an even-less-desirable outcome?

It's clear that the Liberals are losing 2015 supporters to parties across the political spectrum, but twice as many of these 2015 Liberal voters are going to parties on the left as are going to the Conservatives:

How are 2015 Liberals planning to vote this time? (Asked of those who voted Liberal in the 2015 election, n=525)

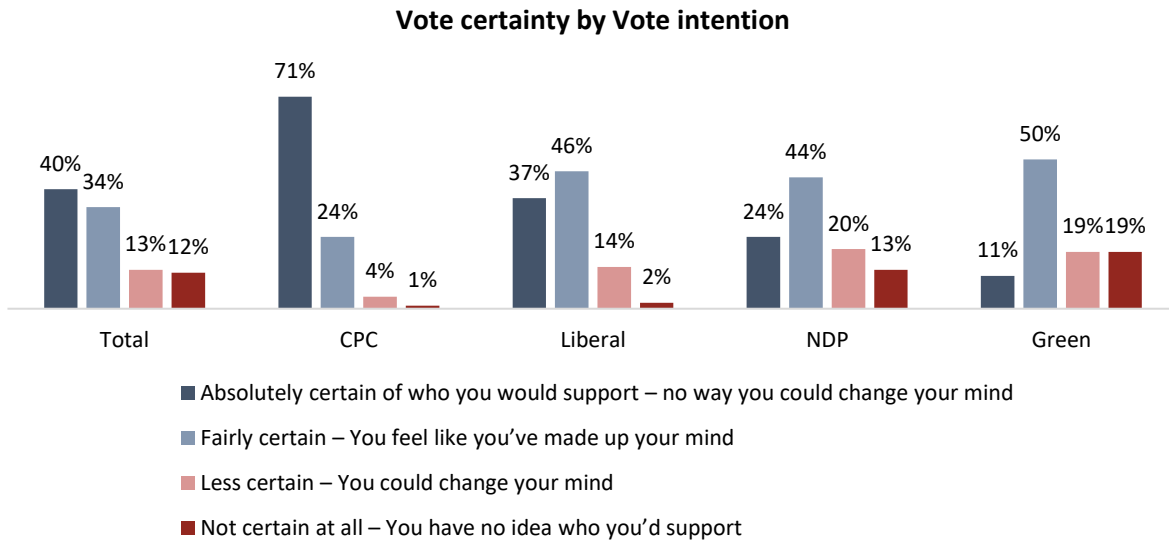


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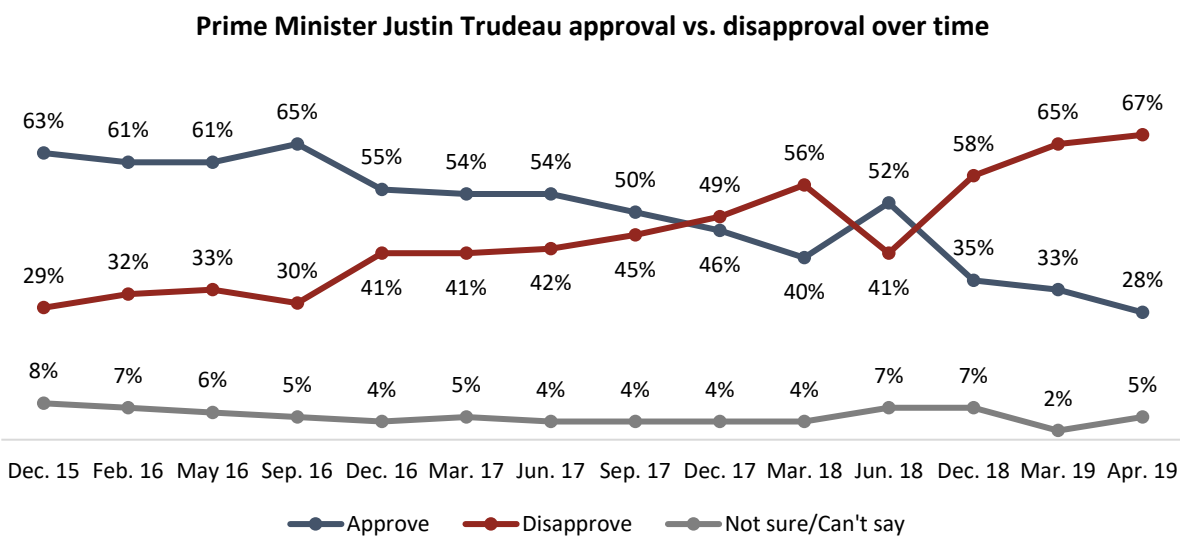
Vote certainty

The fluidity of the left-of-centre vote can also be seen in responses to a question about certainty asked at the start of this survey. Seven-in-ten CPC supporters (71%) say they are “absolutely certain” to vote for that party, while fewer than four-in-ten would-be Liberals (37%) and just one-quarter (24%) of would-be New Democrats say the same:



Leader approval and best PM

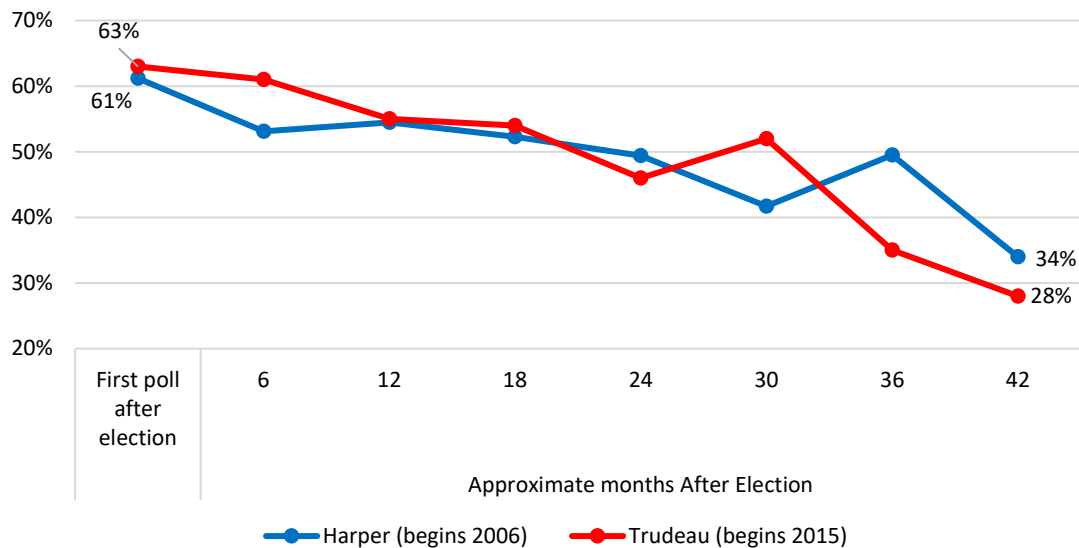
Save for a brief boost after a [G7 Summit spat](#) with President Donald Trump, Trudeau has seen his approval steadily decreasing for almost two years:



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Historically speaking, Trudeau's approval has followed a remarkably similar path when compared to his predecessor, Stephen Harper. Each began with the support of six-in-ten Canadians and dropped closer to half that after their first 3.5 years.

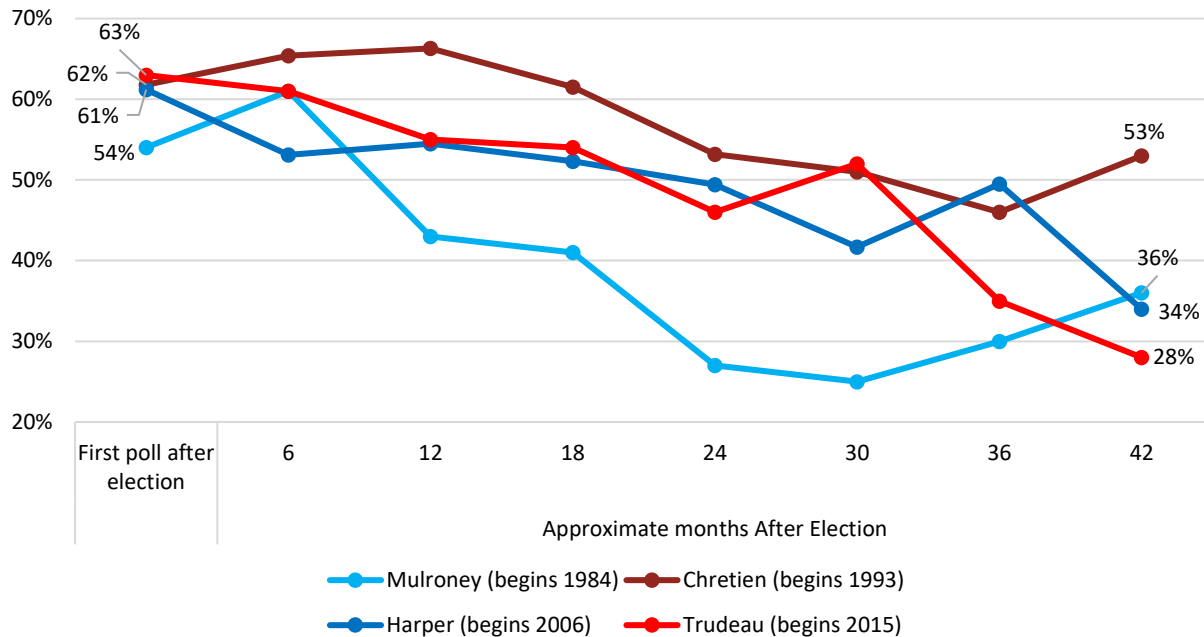
Approval Rating of Harper, Trudeau after becoming Prime Minister



While approval can be an important indicator of public sentiment, it is not a predictor of a party's future electoral support. Harper's Conservatives won a minority government in 2008 with his approval [in the mid-40s](#), as well as a majority government in 2011, a year he began with approval [in the mid-20s](#).

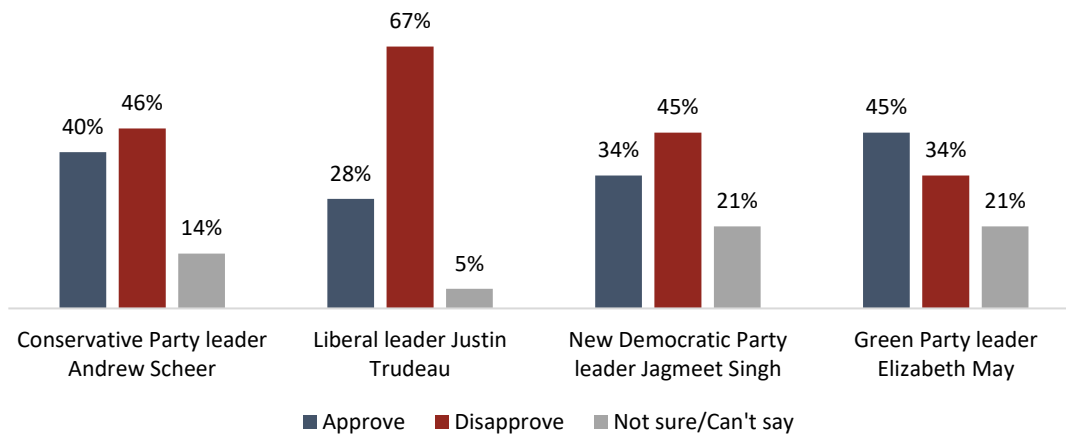
Further, Brian Mulroney's personal approval rating dropped to 25 per cent in September of 1987, before his Progressive Conservative Party won a second majority in the following year.

Approval Rating of Mulroney, Chretien, Harper, Trudeau after becoming Prime Minister



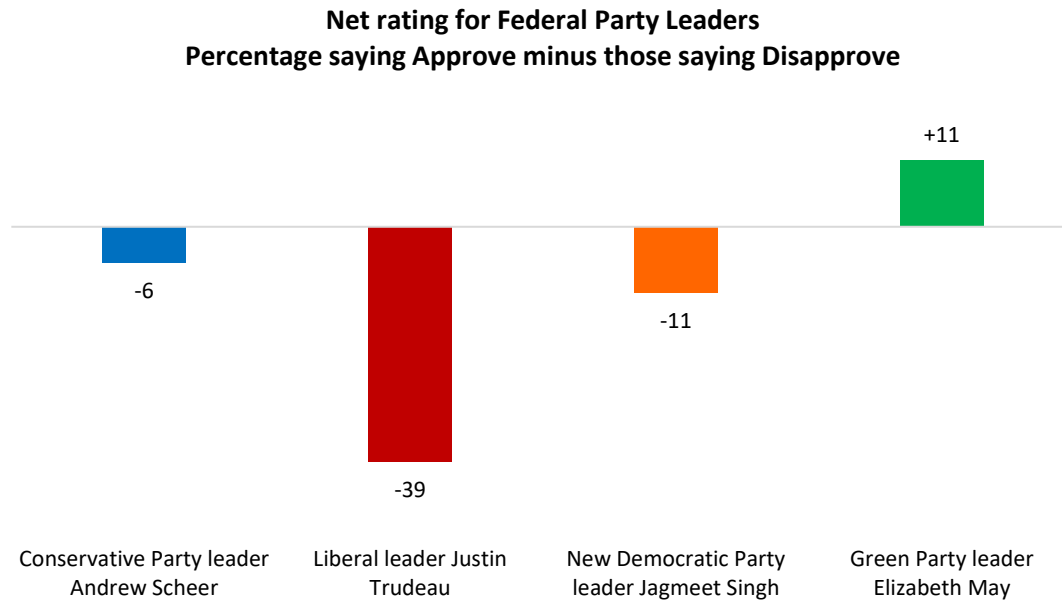
While the past year has been a bad one for Trudeau, his rival party leaders have, in large part, failed to capitalize on his woes. Only Green Party leader Elizabeth May holds the approval of more than four-in-ten Canadians:

Approval of Federal Party Leaders



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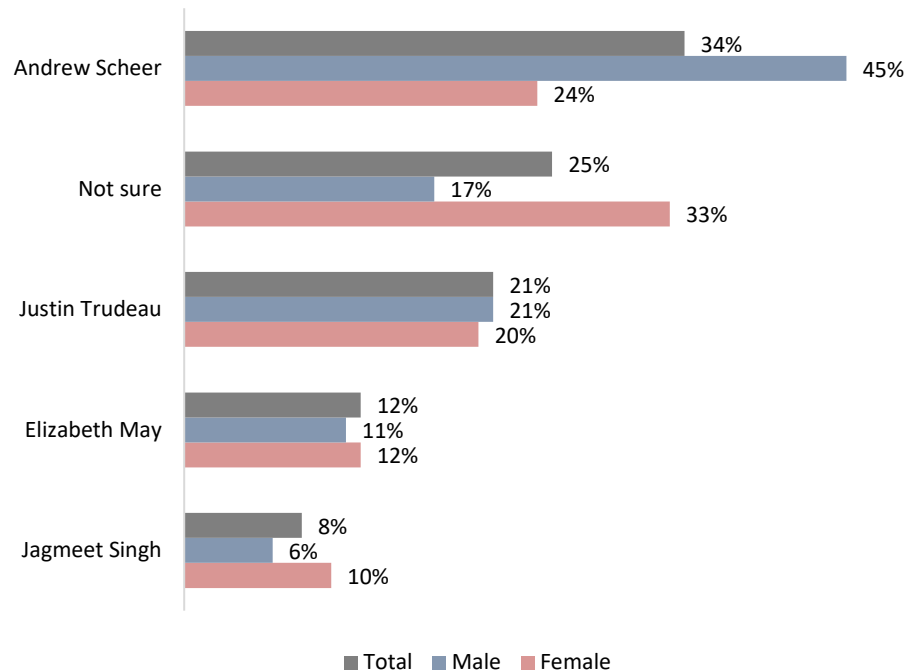
May is also the only leader who boasts a greater number of Canadians saying they approve rather than disapprove of her performance:



One area where Andrew Scheer has distinguished himself from the other leaders is on the question of who would make the best Prime Minister. One-in-three Canadians (34%) say the Conservative leader is best suited to hold the nation's top job, compared to 21 per cent who say this of Trudeau. One-quarter of Canadians (25%) say they remain unsure at this point.

Scheer again benefits from strong support among men, while women are more likely to remain uncertain:

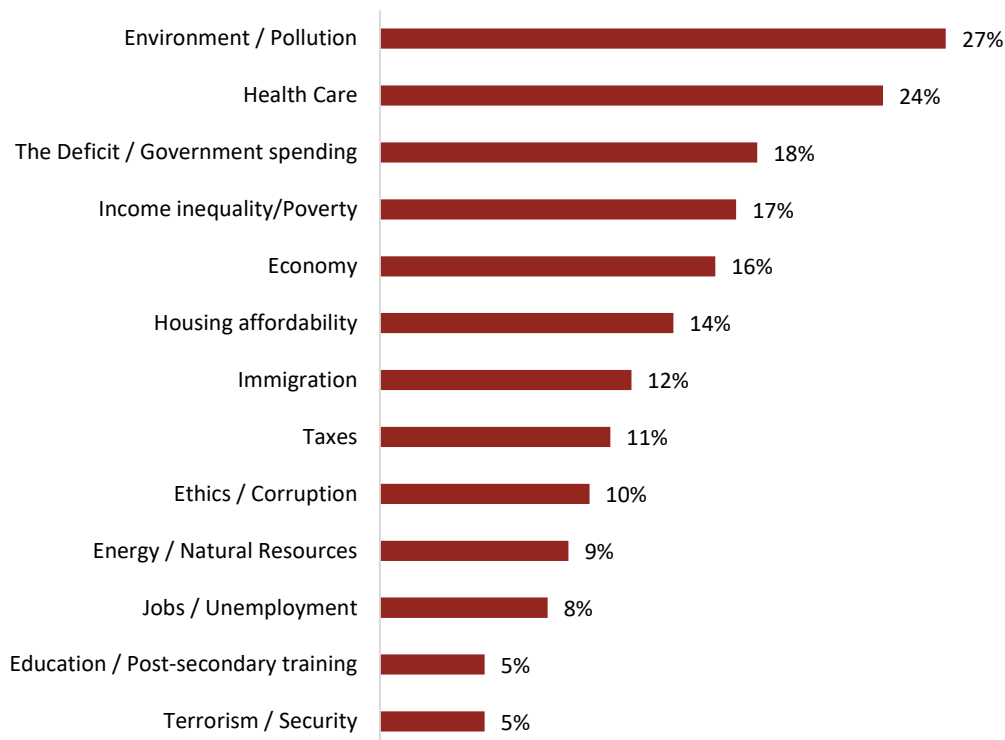
And, which of these leaders would make the best Prime Minister of Canada?



Top Issues for Canadians

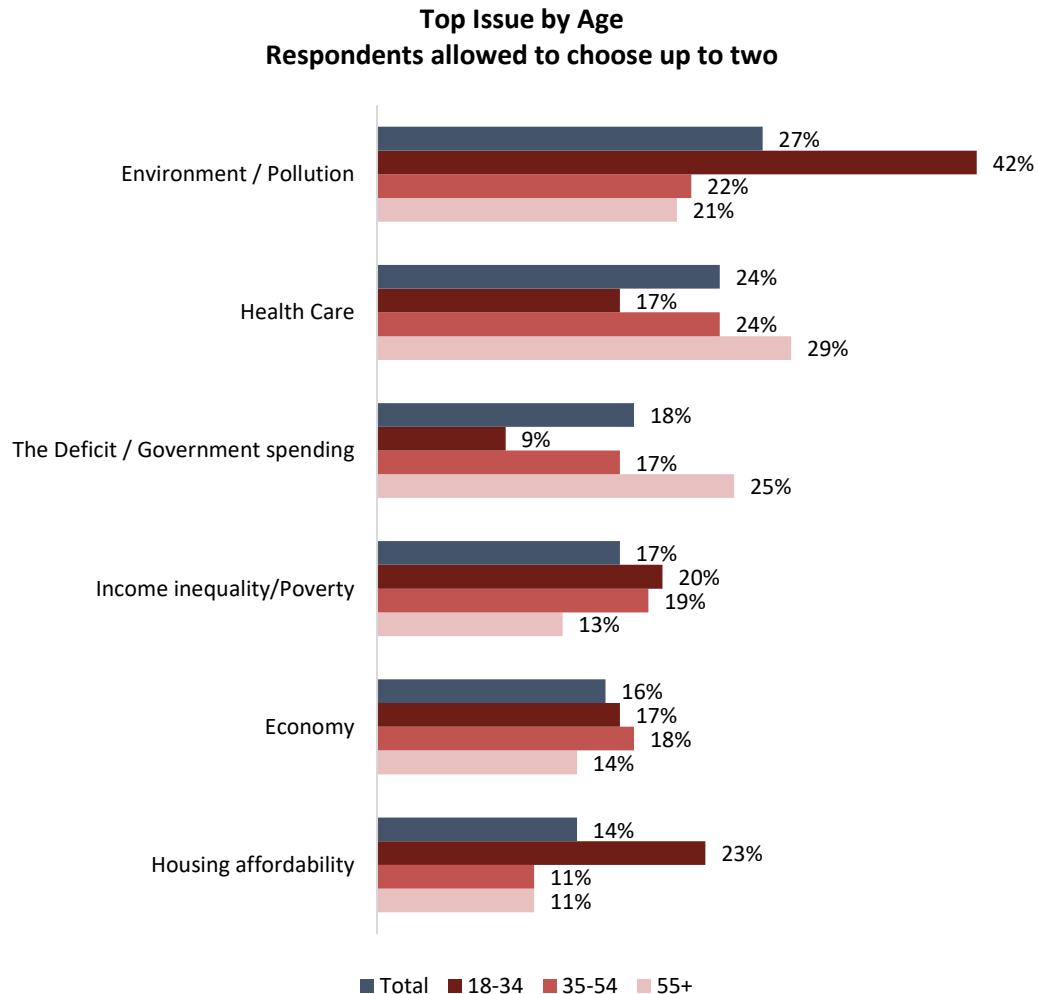
Canadians' priorities for the country over the past year have remained relatively constant. The environment and health care have taken precedence, alongside concerns over the deficit and the economy more broadly. Notably, however, while the environment has hovered at the top of the Angus Reid Institute's issues list, this is the first time it has sat alone in the top spot:

**Top issues for Canadians
Respondents allowed to choose up to two**



One of the keys to the 2019 election will be voter turnout, and much of this may depend on campaign issues and messaging. The previous election saw a surge in young voters – a 17.7-point increase from 2011 to 58.3 per cent. (This increase must still be contrasted against the 78.8 per cent of voters between the ages of 55 and 74 who turned out.)

Millennials are twice as likely as older voters to prioritize the environment and housing affordability, while those 55 and older are significantly more focused on health care and the deficit:



In an environment where the centre-left vote is relatively fluid, with voters not entirely committed to their current party choice, the treatment of key issues will play a role in drawing soft voters. Further, the top concerns for non-Conservatives are closely aligned. For example, environmental issues are currently the top concern for all non-Conservatives, while health care, income inequality and housing affordability are all high priorities for those who plan to vote Liberal, New Democrat or Green.

For would-be Conservatives, the focus is clearly on economic issues above all others:

Top Issue by Vote Intention					
	Total (1,525)	Vote Intention for 2019			
		CPC (504)	Liberal (339)	NDP (235)	Green (143)
Environment / Pollution	27%	5%	47%	40%	54%
Health Care	24%	13%	31%	23%	30%
The Deficit / Government spending	18%	38%	3%	4%	10%
Income inequality/Poverty	17%	5%	24%	33%	23%
Economy	16%	24%	12%	11%	13%
Housing affordability	14%	6%	17%	27%	18%
Immigration	12%	18%	5%	9%	4%
Taxes	11%	20%	5%	4%	5%
Ethics / Corruption	10%	17%	3%	5%	13%
Energy / Natural Resources	9%	15%	6%	7%	5%
Jobs / Unemployment	8%	9%	6%	7%	3%

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