

# A NEW NORMAL

## UNDERSTANDING A NEW THREE-WAY FEDERAL RACE

[Ottawa – May 22, 2015] We have seen the NDP in the lead more than once during the last three years and we have also seen tight three-way races. But we have not seen that since Justin Trudeau assumed leadership of the Liberal Party and today's horserace looks strikingly different than what we saw five months out from the last election. In this update, we are trying to do three things. First, we would like to establish that this is a real and important shift. Second, we will offer some reasoned conjecture as to why it has occurred. Third, we will speculate as to what this means as we enter the next stages of the pre-campaign period.

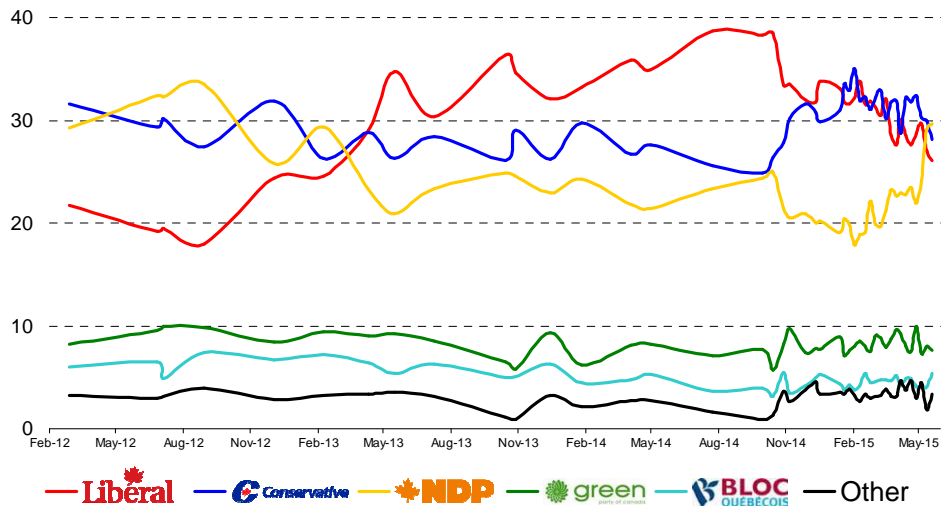
### Federal vote intention

Q. If a federal election were held tomorrow, which party would you vote for?

#### National Results



#### 2011 Election Results



Note: The data on federal vote intention are based on decided and leaning voters only.  
 Copyright 2015  
 No reproduction without permission

BASE: Canadians; May 13-19, 2015 (n=2,675), MOE +/- 1.9%, 19 times out of 20

---

## The NDP rise is real and isn't simply an echo of the Alberta results

For those in denial about the rise of the NDP, we would suggest that they consider abandoning that skepticism. We can question how long it will last, but we are past the point of seeing it as a rogue poll or sampling error. It is real – get over it. The NDP rise began in mid-February and was undoubtedly given a more immediate boost by the election of Rachel Notley in Alberta. This result has been confirmed in every night of polling we have done over the last ten days and we have conducted a totally independent test using our hybrid probability panel and a random experimental test using live interviewers. Guess what? They are all showing the same thing. We will be presenting those tests in the coming weeks.

The overall results show a tight three-way race with the NDP in an insignificant lead over the Conservatives and a marginally significant lead over the Liberals (the Conservatives and Liberals are statistically tied). If we were to summarize across the other results we have been testing, we would probably give the NDP the nod as being in a slight lead over the other two contenders.

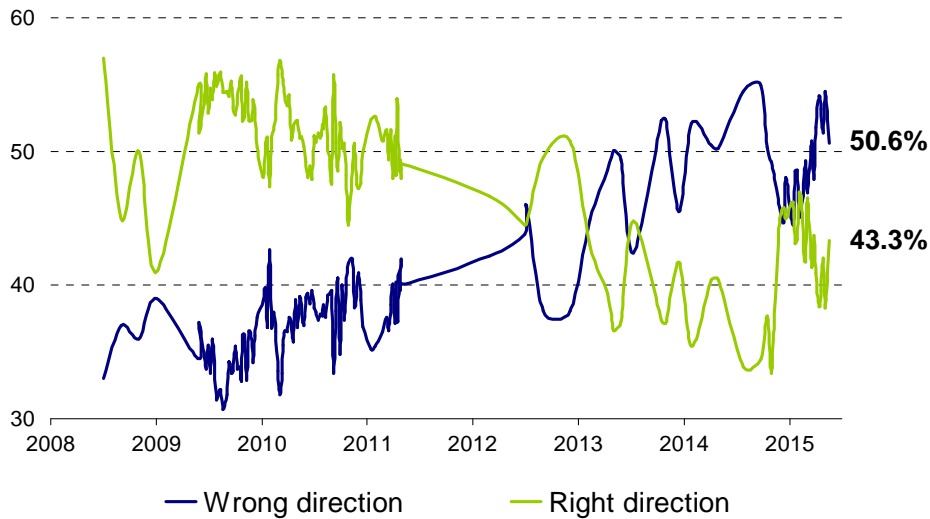
For context, it is helpful to compare these results to the last federal election. The NDP have returned to where they were (shocking as that was at the time). The Liberals are up seven points and the Conservatives are down almost 12 points. Hidden in this very good news for the NDP and mixed-leaning-negative news for the Liberals is really bad news for the Conservatives. Despite pulling out all the advertising and tax incentive stops they could imagine, they are sitting fully twelve points back of where they were on election night in 2011. There isn't much in the approval<sup>1</sup> or directional indicators to suggest that they should be overly sanguine about another majority at this time. So let's colour the NDP very bright, the Liberals grey, and the Conservatives dark grey in terms of what this might mean come October. We could make a reasonable guess that the current results would see the NDP and Liberals winning such a large majority of seats between them that any form of Conservative government would be both unlikely and have the shelf life of a mayfly.

---

<sup>1</sup> EKOS Research Associates, "Federal Race Transforms into Three-Way Tie", May 14, 2015. Available online at: <http://goo.gl/ezJBmg>

## Direction of country

Q. All things considered, would you say the country is moving in the right direction or the wrong direction?

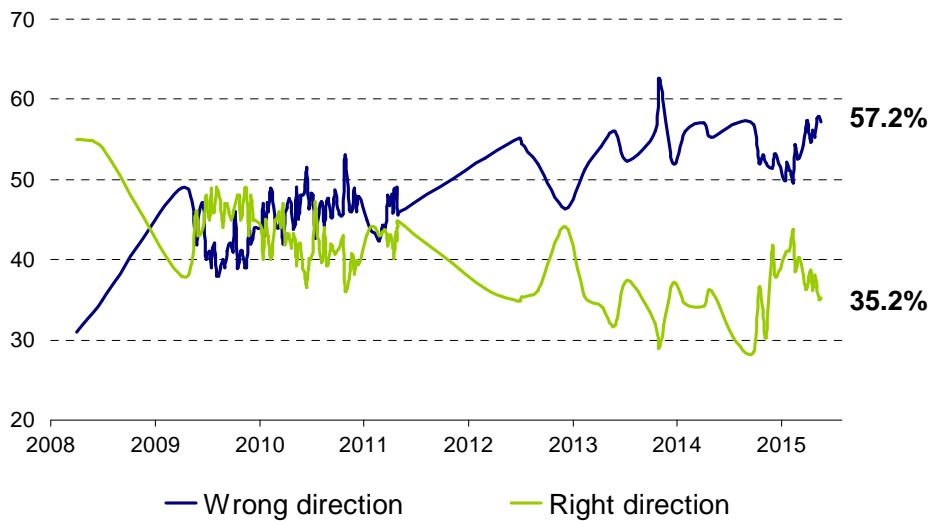


Copyright 2015  
No reproduction without permission

BASE: Canadians (half-sample); May 13-19, 2015 (n=1,302), MOE +/- 2.7%, 19 times out of 20

## Direction of government

Q. All things considered, would you say the Government of Canada is moving in the right direction or the wrong direction?

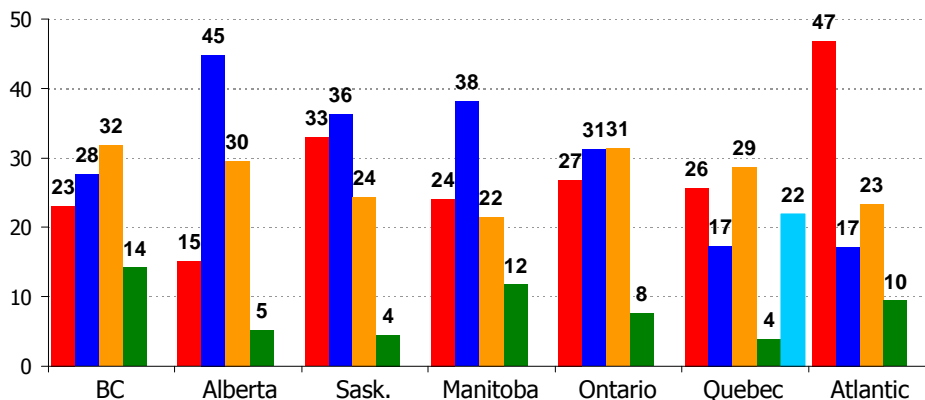


Copyright 2015  
No reproduction without permission

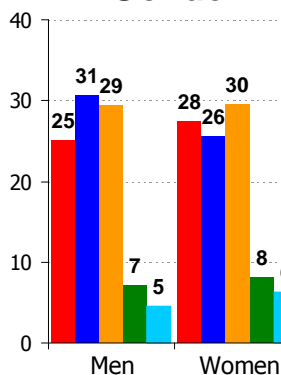
BASE: Canadians (half-sample); May 13-19, 2015 (n=1,373), MOE +/- 2.6%, 19 times out of 20

## Vote intention by key demographics

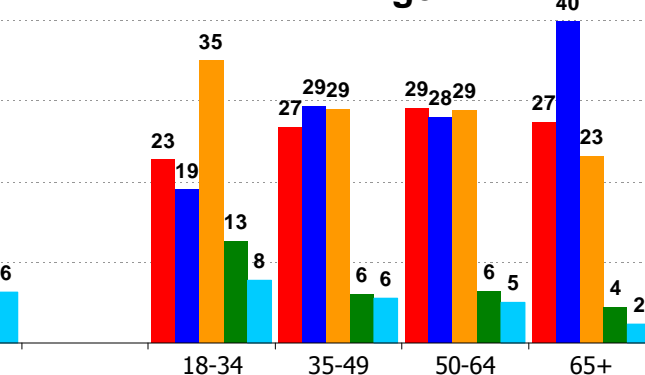
Q. If a federal election were held tomorrow, which party would you vote for?



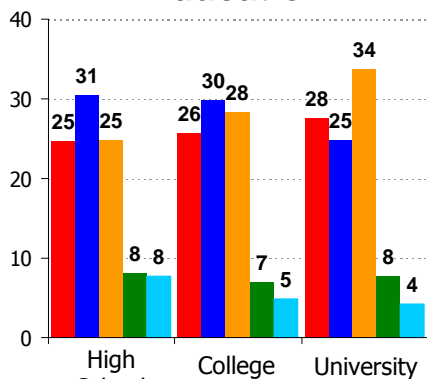
### Gender



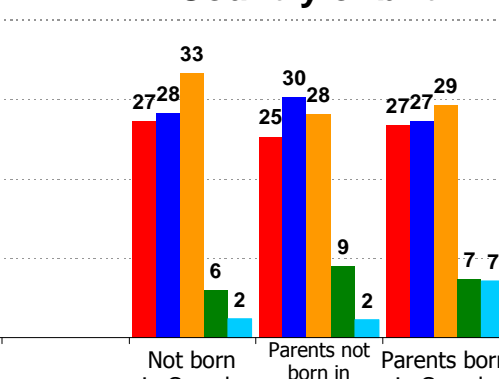
### Age



### Education



### Country of birth



■ Liberal 
 ■ Conservative 
 ■ NDP 
 ■ Green 
 ■ BLOC 
 ■ Other

Copyright 2015  
No reproduction without permission

BASE: Canadians; May 13-19, 2015 (n=2,675), MOE +/- 1.9%, 19 times out of 20

## The regional and demographic figures

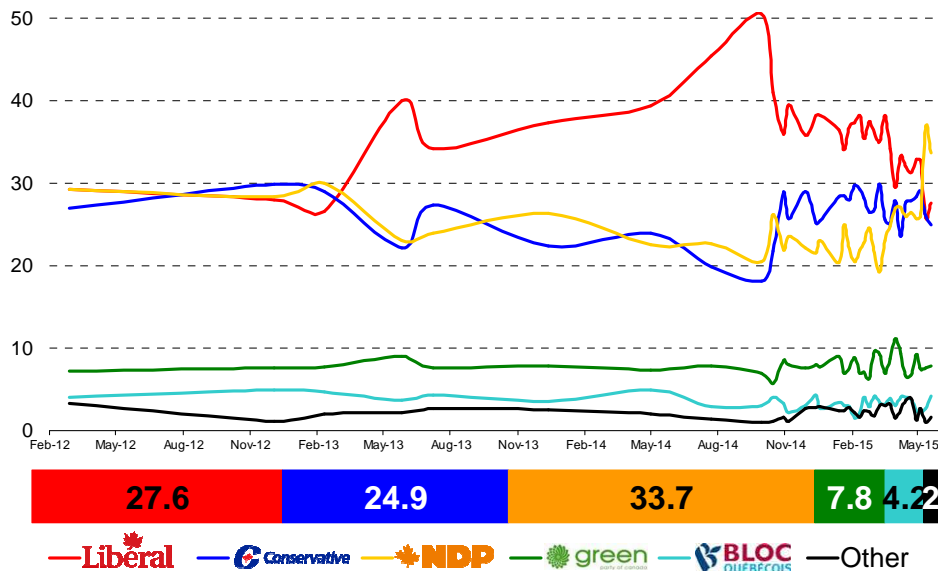
Ontario is very much a three-way race, which is good news for the Conservative Party, despite their erosion in support since 2011. The near-parity of NDP and Liberal raises the possibility of vote splitting and the prospect a narrow Conservative victory with small pluralities of the vote.

Meanwhile, the Liberals and the NDP have become the key contestants in Quebec, while the Conservative Party and Bloc Québécois have been largely squeezed out of this race. The Liberals and NDP both rely on different segments of the Quebec voter base (for example, the Liberals do well with Anglophone and Allophone voters, while the NDP does better with Francophones), so the Conservatives are unlikely to benefit from vote-splitting to the same degree as in Ontario.

The NDP continue to lead with university graduates, although their advantage here has weakened since last week. Interestingly the NDP have dramatically improved their standing with the college educated, which is reminiscent of the convergence of university and college graduates that led the Alberta NDP to victory earlier this month.

## Tracking vote intention: University

Q. If a federal election were held tomorrow, which party would you vote for?



Note: The data on federal vote intention are based on decided and leaning voters only.

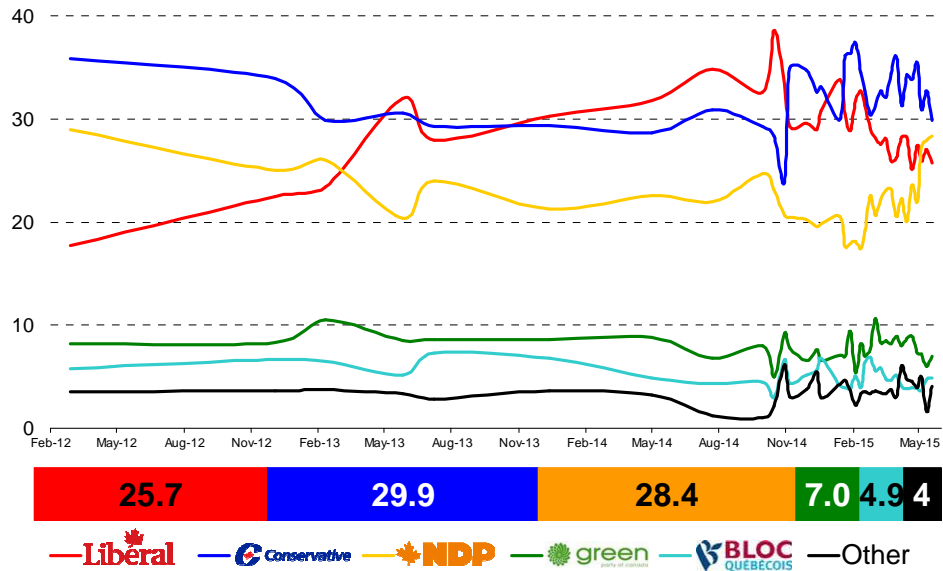
Copyright 2015

No reproduction without permission

BASE: University graduates; May 13-19, 2015 (n=1,022), MOE +/- 3.1%, 19 times out of 20

## Tracking vote intention: College

Q. If a federal election were held tomorrow, which party would you vote for?



Note: The data on federal vote intention are based on decided and leaning voters only.  
 Copyright 2015  
 No reproduction without permission

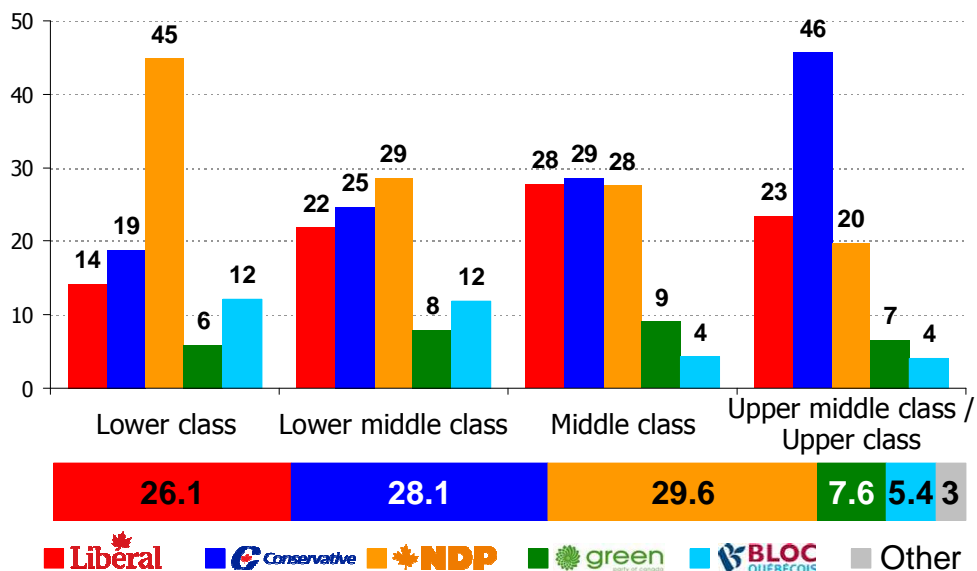
BASE: College graduates; May 13-19, 2015 (n=853), MOE +/- 3.4%, 19 times out of 20

Finally, we also see evidence of two distinct faultlines emerging between Conservative and NDP supporters. The first runs along age. The NDP base is disproportionately younger and support for the party declines with age; they have a sizeable advantage with youth but are reduced to third place among seniors. Conservative support, in contrast, progresses in the opposite direction; they lead handily with seniors but have relatively little support with those under 35.

Second, we are beginning to see something of a class conflict between the NDP and the Conservatives. The NDP draws its strength more from the vulnerable, such as those who are not employed. More than two-fifths of NDP supporters define themselves as lower class or lower middle class, while barely one in seven classify themselves as upper middle or upper class. Among Conservative supporters, however, we see the exact opposite trend and their support rises dramatically as we move into the upper classes. Liberal support, meanwhile, is more heavily concentrated among Canada's middle class. Interestingly, these trends have not spilled over into educational attainment.

## Vote intention by social class

Q. If a federal election were held tomorrow, which party would you vote for?



Copyright 2015  
No reproduction without permission

BASE: Canadians (half-sample); May 13-19, 2015 (n=1,298), MOE +/- 2.7%, 19 times out of 20

## What happened?

There are a broad range of factors underpinning the latest attraction to the NDP. First, there is a rising backlash coming from the highly educated portions of the electorate (particularly the university educated) who seem to be bridling over the Harper government's perceived

---

indifference – if not outright hostility – toward expertise, professionalism, science, reason, and evidence. They are expressing mounting dissatisfaction with what they see as an anti-intellectual, populist governing style and the NDP has come out as the key beneficiary. Could this be the revenge of the latte-sipping elites?

Second, the party's fortunes appear to be linked to the Alberta NDP's recent victory. Indeed, if something so seemingly implausible – in this case, a sweeping NDP victory in the heartland of Conservative Canada – can happen, frustrated progressive voters may now be looking more closely at the NDP as the best option to depose Stephen Harper.

Finally, there may be some backlash over the Liberal Party's position on Bill C-51, which has been widely rejected by voters outside the Conservative base.<sup>2</sup> While we have no direct evidence that Bill C-51 is a major factor in the NDP's success, the party's position lines up much more closely with that of Canada's university educated, which may at least partially explain the party's success with this group.

---

<sup>2</sup> EKOS Research Associates, "If Canada is so down, why is Stephen Harper so up?", April 2, 2015. Available online at: <http://goo.gl/WYAiuk>

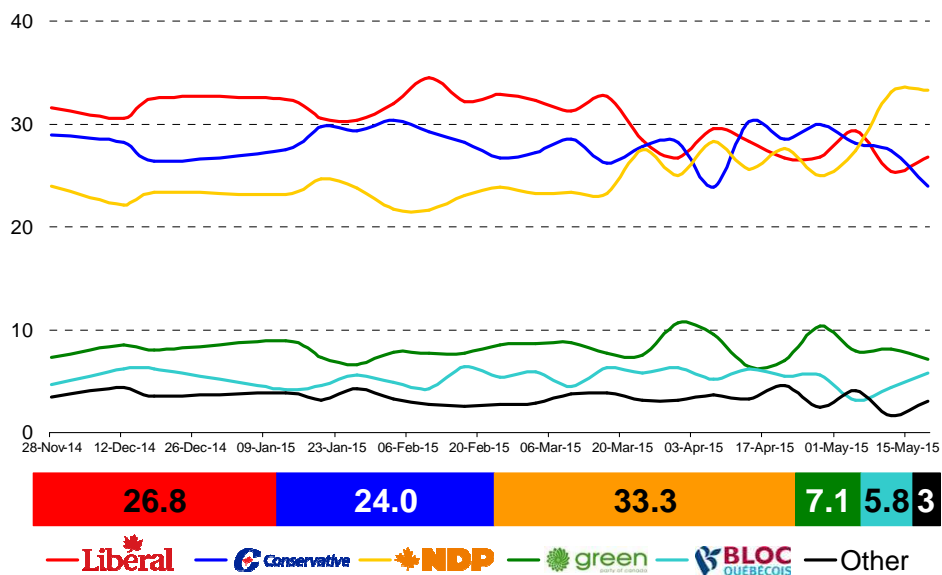


## Rise of the labour vote?

One of the factors that was key to the success of the Alberta NDP on May 5<sup>th</sup> was the convergence of the union vote. Indeed, our final poll showed that the party held a clear majority with union members, while the race was drastically tighter outside of this group.<sup>3</sup> We are now seeing a similar situation at the federal level (albeit less vividly) where the NDP is now benefiting significantly from the labour vote. Indeed, one-third of union members (both current and former) now support the NDP, compared to 27 per cent for the Liberals and just 24 per cent for the Conservatives, who have seen their fortunes within Canada's labour movement dwindle in recent weeks.

### Vote intention: Union members

Q. If a federal election were held tomorrow, which party would you vote for?



Note: The data on federal vote intention are based on decided and leaning voters only.

Copyright 2015

No reproduction without permission

BASE: Union members; May 13-19, 2015 (n=1,236), MOE +/- 2.8%, 19 times out of 20

<sup>3</sup> EKOS Research Associates, "Alberta NDP Headed to a Win, Likely a Majority", May 4, 2015. Available online at: <http://goo.gl/bvmW6H>

## Best/Clearest Plan

Given recent NDP fortunes, it is perhaps not surprising that the NDP's plan for the future is increasingly resonating with Canadians. Indeed, they lead in terms of both holding the best plan for the country as a whole and, to a lesser extent, in terms of presenting the best plan for individual citizens.

### Party that presents the best plan

Q. Which party has the best plan or ideas for...

#### ...improving the country?



#### ...you personally?



■ Conservative Party
 ■ Liberal Party
 ■ NDP
 ■ Other
  Skip

---

## Concluding remarks

While we don't see much that would disrupt in these figures in the short-term, this is still very much an unclear and open race. NDP prospects are looking bright and they now find themselves on the upswing. The Liberals are stuck and their outlook is leaning negative. The Conservatives, meanwhile, are facing an increasingly improbable challenge of re-capturing their majority mandate.

However, nothing is fixed and we still have five months until the next federal election. Seventy per cent of Canadians do not plan to vote Conservative, but many have made no final decision as to where they are going to go. We have seen a lot of fluidity over the last five years across the progressive voters searching for some kind of solution to end the stranglehold that the minority of unified Conservative voters have exerted over the federal landscape. The Alberta election vividly underlines the potency of a unified progressive vote, but the new-found strength of the NDP complicates the political calculus of those wishing to vote strategically, particularly given the new parity between the NDP and Liberals in Ontario (and elsewhere).

In the end, we believe that this race will be determined by whichever party forges the strongest connection to voters in terms of values and interests and that game is still very much up in the air.

## Detailed tables:

<b>National Federal Vote Intention (decided and leaning voters only)</b>								
<i>Q. If a federal election were held tomorrow, which party would you vote for? [If undecided] Even if you do not have a firm idea, are you leaning towards a party? [If yes] As it stands, towards which party are you leaning?</i>								
	Liberal Party	Conser- vative Party	NDP	Green Party	Bloc Québécois	Other	Sample Size	Margin of Error (+/-)
<b>NATIONALLY</b>	<b>26.1%</b>	<b>28.1%</b>	<b>29.6%</b>	<b>7.6%</b>	<b>5.4%</b>	<b>3.3%</b>	<b>2233</b>	<b>2.1</b>
REGION								
British Columbia	23.1%	27.6%	31.8%	14.2%	–	3.4%	354	5.2
Alberta	15.0%	44.9%	29.5%	5.2%	–	5.3%	272	5.9
Saskatchewan	33.0%	36.2%	24.4%	4.4%	–	2.0%	85	10.6
Manitoba	24.1%	38.1%	21.5%	11.8%	–	4.5%	80	11.0
Ontario	26.8%	31.2%	31.4%	7.6%	–	3.2%	813	3.4
Quebec	25.7%	17.3%	28.6%	3.9%	21.9%	2.6%	363	5.1
Atlantic Canada	46.9%	17.2%	23.4%	9.5%	–	2.9%	260	6.1
GENDER								
Male	25.1%	30.6%	29.4%	7.2%	4.5%	3.3%	1038	3.0
Female	27.5%	25.6%	29.6%	8.1%	6.3%	3.0%	1178	2.9
AGE								
<35	22.6%	19.0%	35.0%	12.5%	7.7%	3.3%	163	7.7
35-49	26.7%	29.3%	28.9%	6.0%	5.6%	3.5%	351	5.2
50-64	29.0%	28.0%	28.8%	6.4%	5.0%	2.8%	788	3.5
65+	27.3%	39.8%	23.1%	4.4%	2.4%	2.9%	911	3.3
EDUCATION								
High school or less	24.7%	30.5%	24.9%	8.1%	7.7%	4.0%	555	4.2
College or CEGEP	25.7%	29.9%	28.4%	7.0%	4.9%	4.1%	720	3.7
University or higher	27.6%	24.9%	33.7%	7.8%	4.2%	1.7%	932	3.2
COUNTRY OF BIRTH								
Not born in Canada	27.2%	28.2%	33.3%	6.0%	2.4%	2.8%	349	5.3
Parents not born in Canada	25.2%	30.3%	28.1%	9.0%	2.3%	5.2%	606	4.0
Both parents born in Canada	26.8%	27.3%	29.2%	7.4%	7.1%	2.3%	1257	2.8
UNION MEMBERSHIP (CURRENT AND FORMER)								
Both private and public	26.8%	24.0%	33.3%	7.1%	5.8%	3.0%	1082	3.0
Private sector	25.8%	24.1%	33.5%	7.0%	5.5%	4.0%	622	3.9
Public sector	28.4%	23.7%	33.0%	7.2%	6.3%	1.4%	460	4.6

### **Direction of Country**

*Q. [Half-sample only] All things considered, would you say the country is moving in the right direction or the wrong direction?*

	Right Direction	Wrong Direction	DK/NR	Sample Size	Margin of Error (+/-)
<b>NATIONALLY</b>	<b>43.3%</b>	<b>50.6%</b>	<b>6.0%</b>	<b>1302</b>	<b>2.7</b>
<b>REGION</b>					
British Columbia	34.1%	58.1%	7.8%	207	6.8
Alberta	57.5%	33.1%	9.3%	158	7.8
Saskatchewan	59.7%	35.3%	5.0%	52	13.6
Manitoba	39.5%	53.0%	7.5%	43	14.9
Ontario	43.1%	51.1%	5.8%	492	4.4
Quebec	43.5%	53.5%	3.0%	196	7.0
Atlantic Canada	34.3%	61.2%	4.5%	151	8.0
<b>GENDER</b>					
Male	45.3%	52.1%	2.7%	561	4.1
Female	44.7%	52.1%	3.2%	685	3.7
<b>AGE</b>					
<35	41.1%	56.2%	2.7%	98	9.9
35-49	49.1%	48.7%	2.2%	183	7.2
50-64	39.1%	58.1%	2.8%	438	4.7
65+	52.6%	41.7%	5.7%	529	4.3
<b>EDUCATION</b>					
High school or less	55.5%	41.7%	2.8%	325	5.4
College or CEGEP	43.8%	53.2%	3.0%	407	4.9
University or higher	38.3%	58.1%	3.6%	513	4.3
<b>COUNTRY OF BIRTH</b>					
Not born in Canada	51.8%	45.3%	2.9%	189	7.1
Parents not born in Canada	43.8%	52.6%	3.6%	353	5.2
Both parents born in Canada	43.3%	53.5%	3.2%	708	3.7
<b>CURRENT VOTE INTENTION</b>					
Liberal Party	38.9%	59.0%	2.1%	302	5.6
Conservative Party	81.5%	15.6%	2.9%	358	5.2
NDP	25.5%	72.2%	2.4%	290	5.8
Green Party	22.8%	73.1%	4.1%	70	11.7
Bloc Québécois	12.0%	88.0%	0.0%	23	20.4

### **Direction of Government**

*Q. [Half-sample only] All things considered, would you say the Government of Canada is moving in the right direction or the wrong direction?*

	Right Direction	Wrong Direction	DK/NR	Sample Size	Margin of Error (+/-)
<b>NATIONALLY</b>	<b>35.2%</b>	<b>57.2%</b>	<b>7.7%</b>	<b>1373</b>	<b>2.6</b>
<b>REGION</b>					
British Columbia	40.1%	55.2%	4.8%	207	6.8
Alberta	38.0%	54.4%	7.6%	156	7.9
Saskatchewan	55.1%	40.9%	4.0%	48	14.1
Manitoba	47.7%	48.8%	3.5%	53	13.5
Ontario	37.3%	53.4%	9.2%	498	4.4
Quebec	27.2%	64.5%	8.2%	235	6.4
Atlantic Canada	27.1%	66.9%	5.9%	169	7.5
<b>GENDER</b>					
Male	41.7%	54.4%	3.9%	604	4.0
Female	31.1%	63.1%	5.8%	713	3.7
<b>AGE</b>					
<35	33.3%	60.0%	6.7%	96	10.0
35-49	31.4%	63.0%	5.5%	215	6.7
50-64	38.7%	58.7%	2.7%	483	4.5
65+	44.9%	50.7%	4.4%	522	4.3
<b>EDUCATION</b>					
High school or less	42.5%	51.5%	6.0%	353	5.2
College or CEGEP	36.0%	59.0%	5.0%	446	4.6
University or higher	31.2%	65.6%	3.2%	509	4.3
<b>COUNTRY OF BIRTH</b>					
Not born in Canada	43.1%	47.2%	9.6%	218	6.6
Parents not born in Canada	38.3%	58.5%	3.1%	355	5.2
Both parents born in Canada	34.4%	62.0%	3.6%	741	3.6
<b>CURRENT VOTE INTENTION</b>					
Liberal Party	23.2%	73.2%	3.6%	330	5.4
Conservative Party	85.6%	11.3%	3.1%	358	5.2
NDP	13.7%	84.7%	1.6%	314	5.5
Green Party	24.4%	70.9%	4.7%	74	11.4
Bloc Québécois	10.9%	78.8%	10.2%	45	14.6

### **Best Plan for Improving the Country**

*Q. [THIRD-SAMPLE ONLY] Which party has the best plan or ideas for IMPROVING THE COUNTRY?*

	Liberal Party	Conservative Party	NDP	Other	DK/NR	Sample Size	Margin of Error (+/-)
<b>NATIONALLY</b>	<b>19.5%</b>	<b>24.2%</b>	<b>28.8%</b>	<b>16.3%</b>	<b>11.2%</b>	<b>885</b>	<b>3.3</b>
<b>REGION</b>							
British Columbia	16.8%	16.4%	33.7%	23.4%	9.7%	143	8.2
Alberta	10.9%	33.6%	25.5%	19.8%	10.2%	115	9.1
Saskatchewan	30.2%	34.8%	19.9%	8.8%	6.3%	36	16.3
Manitoba	7.7%	33.6%	8.0%	21.0%	29.7%	27	18.9
Ontario	18.6%	28.5%	26.1%	13.0%	13.9%	312	5.6
Quebec	20.3%	17.4%	36.6%	18.0%	7.7%	150	8.0
Atlantic Canada	44.2%	19.3%	20.3%	9.2%	7.0%	97	10.0
<b>GENDER</b>							
Male	19.1%	30.5%	29.9%	15.9%	4.7%	401	4.9
Female	21.1%	19.2%	29.4%	17.5%	12.7%	454	4.6
<b>AGE</b>							
<35	10.5%	20.8%	43.8%	15.6%	9.4%	65	12.2
35-49	22.4%	22.8%	27.9%	18.1%	8.8%	139	8.3
50-64	24.4%	24.9%	21.8%	18.8%	10.1%	312	5.6
65+	24.8%	33.5%	22.0%	13.3%	6.4%	337	5.3
<b>EDUCATION</b>							
High school or less	19.4%	25.9%	20.8%	22.3%	11.5%	236	6.4
College or CEGEP	21.0%	24.2%	30.0%	16.9%	7.9%	282	5.8
University or higher	19.9%	24.7%	36.5%	12.0%	6.9%	337	5.3
<b>COUNTRY OF BIRTH</b>							
Not born in Canada	21.7%	24.7%	27.5%	11.9%	14.2%	127	8.7
Parents not born in Canada	18.0%	26.8%	23.5%	21.5%	10.3%	243	6.3
Both parents born in Canada	20.9%	24.1%	33.4%	15.3%	6.3%	486	4.5
<b>CURRENT VOTE INTENTION</b>							
Liberal Party	68.8%	5.4%	14.3%	5.1%	6.4%	216	6.7
Conservative Party	3.9%	79.3%	5.4%	6.3%	5.0%	219	6.6
NDP	4.4%	6.4%	76.8%	9.2%	3.2%	214	6.7
Green Party	18.1%	3.5%	13.6%	57.5%	7.3%	48	14.1
Bloc Québécois	4.5%	8.3%	27.6%	52.9%	6.7%	26	19.2

### **Best Plan for Individual Citizens**

*Q. [THIRD-SAMPLE ONLY] Which party has the best plan or ideas for YOU PERSONALLY?*

	Liberal Party	Conservative Party	NDP	Other	DK/NR	Sample Size	Margin of Error (+/-)
<b>NATIONALLY</b>	<b>20.4%</b>	<b>24.2%</b>	<b>26.4%</b>	<b>21.0%</b>	<b>8.0%</b>	<b>886</b>	<b>3.3</b>
<b>REGION</b>							
British Columbia	15.6%	25.3%	27.9%	18.9%	12.2%	129	8.6
Alberta	7.0%	34.9%	33.2%	15.8%	9.0%	115	9.1
Saskatchewan	31.2%	36.3%	14.1%	7.8%	10.5%	28	18.5
Manitoba	26.2%	37.3%	18.6%	15.3%	2.6%	37	16.1
Ontario	18.1%	24.1%	25.7%	23.5%	8.6%	329	5.4
Quebec	29.5%	13.8%	26.7%	25.3%	4.7%	138	8.3
Atlantic Canada	28.6%	23.9%	22.5%	16.9%	8.1%	109	9.4
<b>GENDER</b>							
Male	19.7%	27.4%	31.0%	18.0%	3.8%	398	4.9
Female	22.3%	23.1%	24.2%	24.9%	5.5%	451	4.6
<b>AGE</b>							
<35	15.5%	11.5%	35.5%	30.3%	7.2%	62	12.5
35-49	21.7%	32.0%	24.7%	18.7%	2.9%	125	8.8
50-64	24.7%	25.4%	25.1%	20.4%	4.4%	298	5.7
65+	23.1%	34.3%	22.9%	15.4%	4.3%	367	5.1
<b>EDUCATION</b>							
High school or less	16.0%	25.9%	26.7%	24.1%	7.3%	233	6.4
College or CEGEP	20.1%	26.2%	29.3%	21.4%	2.9%	289	5.8
University or higher	25.8%	23.3%	26.5%	19.8%	4.5%	323	5.5
<b>COUNTRY OF BIRTH</b>							
Not born in Canada	22.8%	19.6%	27.9%	26.7%	3.0%	146	8.1
Parents not born in Canada	25.4%	26.9%	24.2%	15.9%	7.6%	233	6.4
Both parents born in Canada	18.9%	26.2%	27.9%	23.6%	3.4%	469	4.5
<b>CURRENT VOTE INTENTION</b>							
Liberal Party	77.1%	3.3%	13.1%	4.1%	2.4%	193	7.1
Conservative Party	3.4%	83.5%	7.5%	4.3%	1.3%	251	6.2
NDP	8.2%	4.2%	75.5%	9.1%	3.0%	204	6.9
Green Party	9.7%	0.0%	19.1%	69.1%	2.2%	39	15.7
Bloc Québécois	15.4%	0.0%	17.6%	67.0%	0.0%	21	21.4



---

## Methodology:

This study was conducted using High Definition Interactive Voice Response (HD-IVR™) technology, which allows respondents to enter their preferences by punching the keypad on their phone, rather than telling them to an operator. In an effort to reduce the coverage bias of landline only RDD, we created a dual landline/cell phone RDD sampling frame for this research. As a result, we are able to reach those with a landline and cell phone, as well as cell phone only households and landline only households.

The field dates for this survey are May 13-19, 2015. In total, a random sample of 2,675 Canadian adults aged 18 and over responded to the survey. The margin of error associated with the total sample is +/-1.9 percentage points, 19 times out of 20.

Please note that the margin of error increases when the results are sub-divided (i.e., error margins for sub-groups such as region, sex, age, education). All the data have been statistically weighted by **age, gender, region, and educational attainment** to ensure the sample's composition reflects that of the actual population of Canada according to Census data.