



# **B.C. Election Countdown: Key priorities and issues influencing voters**

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A survey of B.C. voters presented by Mustel Group and FleishmanHillard HighRoad



VoteLocalBC.ca

**October 2020**

# Table of Contents

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Analysis ..... 3

Survey Methodology ..... 4

Issues of Concern ..... 5

Campaign Controversies ..... 6

Economic Policies ..... 7

Voting Engagement/US Election ..... 8

Majority vs Minority Government ..... 9

Voting Behaviour ..... 10

# B.C. voters paying close attention to the provincial election, despite hearing more about the U.S. presidential race



In the final week of the campaign leading up to British Columbia's general election on October 24th, residents' top priorities remain unchanged – the economy and COVID-19 – with recent campaign controversies making little impact on voters' decisions.

VoteLocal's second province-wide survey during this campaign found that B.C. voters are paying close attention to this election, and almost half tuned in for the leaders' debates, but 53% of those surveyed say they are hearing more about the U.S. presidential election compared to the provincial election. The survey of 500 British Columbians was completed online from October 15 to 18, 2020.

In the current environment where pandemic precautions are prompting a record number of voters to use mail-in ballots or advance polls, the parties' opportunity to influence voters is waning and few voters remain undecided at this late stage in the campaign.

The parties' signature economic policies announced early in the campaign have varying degrees of support, not necessarily along party lines. Policies targeted at supporting people with lower incomes are more popular than broad-based tax cuts or relief. The Green Party's proposal to introduce a basic income for youth aging out of care and beginning a transition to a universal basic income program is the most popular idea.

**53% of B.C. voters say they are hearing more about the U.S. Presidential election than the B.C. election.**

- The Greens' basic income proposal is strongly supported by 38% of voters, with the highest support among women.
- The BC Liberals' proposal to eliminate the 7% Provincial Sales Tax in its first year and re-introduce it at 3% the second year is strongly supported by 26% of voters, with the highest support among men.
- The BC NDP's offer of a \$1,000 COVID-19 relief payment for families earning up to \$125,000 is strongly supported by 21% of those surveyed.

The leaders' debates, which 46% say they watched or heard, did little to sway voters. Among those who tuned in, 82% say it didn't change who they intended to vote for. Among undecided voters, only 9% say the debates influenced their voting decision.



**83% of voters are aware of sexist or racist incidents reported during the campaign**

There is very high awareness of recent incidents and comments related to sexism, racism and privilege during the campaign, but few people say these are influencing their vote. 83% of voters are aware of sexist or racist incidents reported during the campaign, while 75% are aware of controversial comments by party leaders during the debate. 19% say these issues will have a strong influence on their vote; 34% say they will have some influence; and, 34% say they will have no influence on their vote.

The survey found British Columbians are split on whether they'd like to see a majority or minority government after this election, with 45% hoping for a party to secure a majority, and 42% wishing for another minority government.

## Survey Methodology

This report presents the findings from a second VoteLocal survey conducted after the television and radio debates. The survey was conducted online among a random sample of B.C. adults, 18 years of age or over (n=500) from October 15th to 18th, 2020 (the [first survey](#) was conducted October 1st to 6th).



VoteLocal is a research initiative of Mustel Group and FleishmanHillard HighRoad, aimed at understanding how issues influence elections. Starting with the 2018 municipal election and then the 2019 federal election, we have surveyed the opinions of British Columbians to provide analysis on the issues that will have the biggest impact on voting decisions.



Learn more at [VoteLocalBC.ca](https://VoteLocalBC.ca)

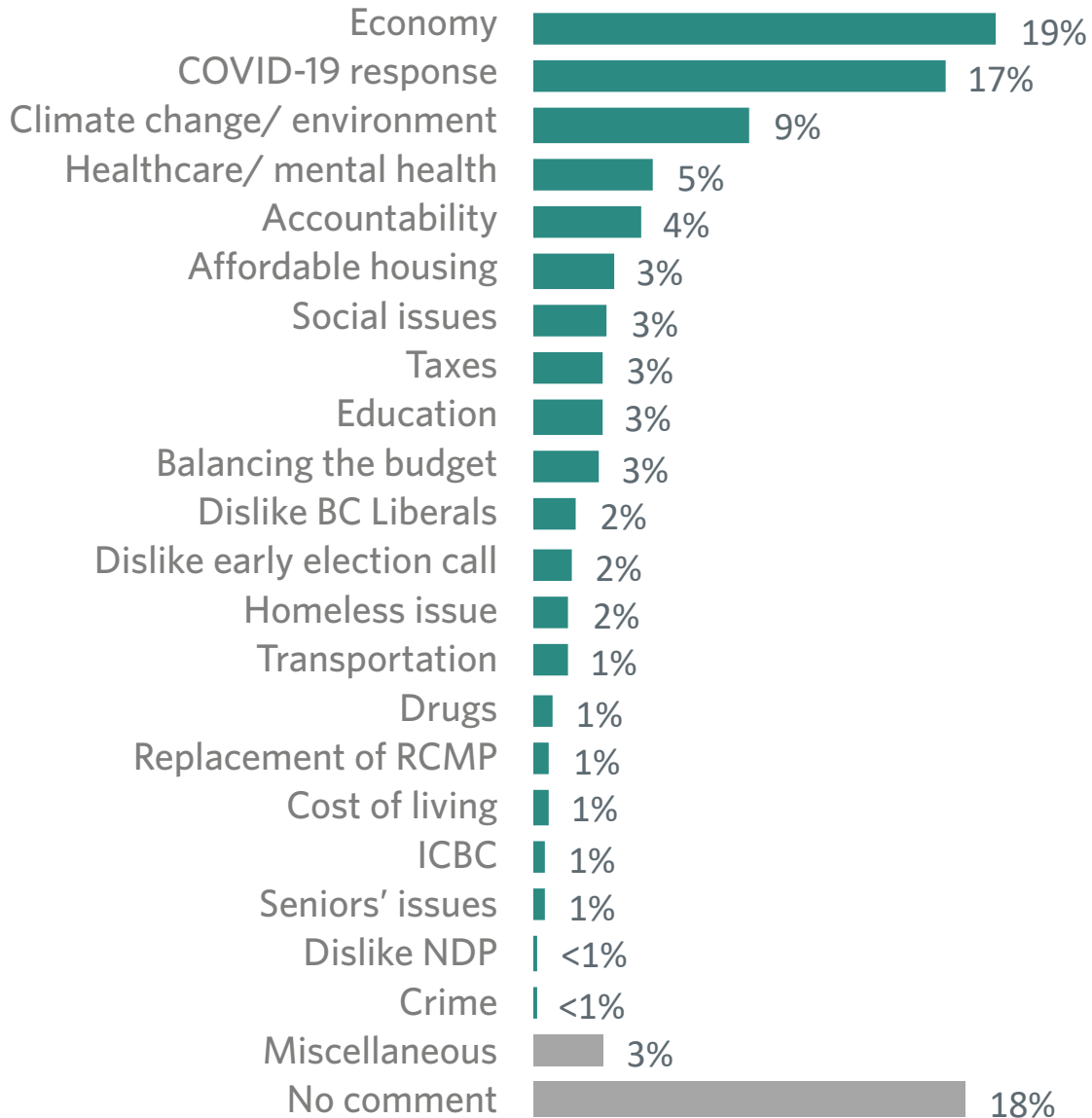
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# Issues of Concern

The two issues, confidence in the handling of COVID and the economy/economic recovery, continue to be the predominant issues that will influence B.C. voters in the provincial election. These are the two key issues in all regions of the province.

Secondary issues include the environment/climate change, healthcare/mental health, fiscal management, affordable housing, homelessness, and a variety of other social issues.

## Most Important Issue (open-ended)



The key issues are of greater importance to certain demographic segments:

**COVID:** Those 45 years or over

**Economy/jobs:** Men, those 45 years +, residents of the Interior

**Environment/climate change:** Women, Metro Vancouver residents, those under 45

**Healthcare:** Interior residents



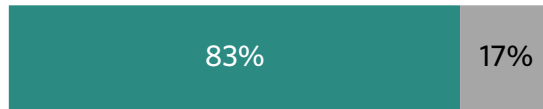
# Campaign Controversies

Most British Columbians, 83%, are aware of incidents related to sexism, racism, and privilege in recent B.C. politics and during this election campaign. And the majority, 75%, are aware of party leader comments during the televised leaders' debate, related to systemic racism and privilege.

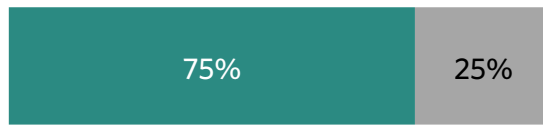
However, in terms of influencing how people will vote, the impact of these discussions or incidents will be limited with only one-in-five reporting they will have a significant impact on their decisions (rating of 8-10 where 10 means 'a lot of influence'). But women will be impacted more than men (27% rating 8-10 versus 11% of men).

## Awareness and Impact of Sexism/Racism/Privilege Incidents

Are you aware of incidents related to sexism, racism and privilege in recent B.C. politics and during this election campaign?

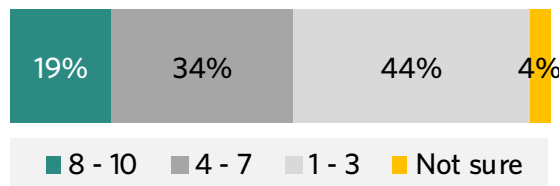


Are you aware of party leader comments during the televised leaders' debate, related to systemic racism and privilege?



■ Yes ■ No

How much will party leaders' responses/ views on these issues influence your vote?



Average  
4.4

Scale: 1=no influence at all, 10= a lot of influence



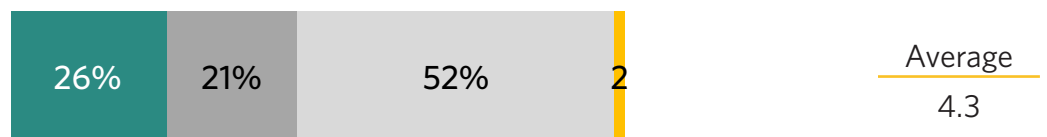
# Economic Policies

There is strong support for the Green Party promise to implement a basic income program for youth aging out of care, and to begin a transition to a basic income program for people eligible for income assistance. Women in particular support such programs.

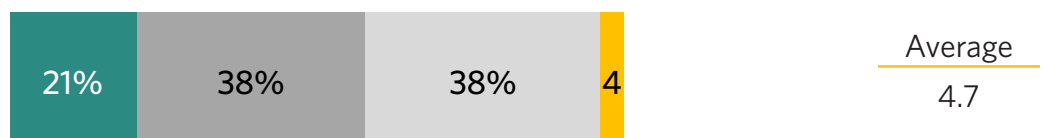
There is slightly stronger support for the BC NDP's one-time \$1,000 direct deposit for families making up to \$125,000 a year (\$500 for single people earning less than \$62,000), than for the BC Liberals' proposal to eliminate the PST for one year (re-introduce at 3% the following year).

## Support for Party Policies

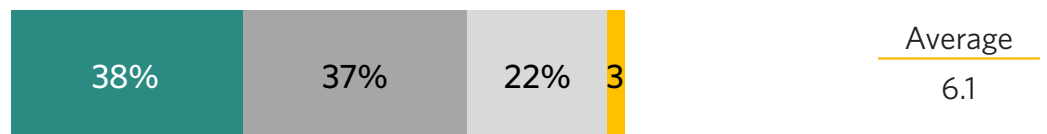
Eliminate the 7% provincial sales tax (PST) for one year, and re-introduce it at 3% the following year.



A one-time \$1,000 direct deposit for families making up to \$125,000 a year, and a one-time \$500 direct deposit to single people earning less than \$62,000



Implement a basic income program immediately for youth aging out of care, and begin a transition to a basic income program for people eligible for income assistance.



■ 8 - 10   ■ 4 - 7   ■ 1 - 3   ■ Not sure

Scale: 1= not at all in favour, 10 = strongly in favour

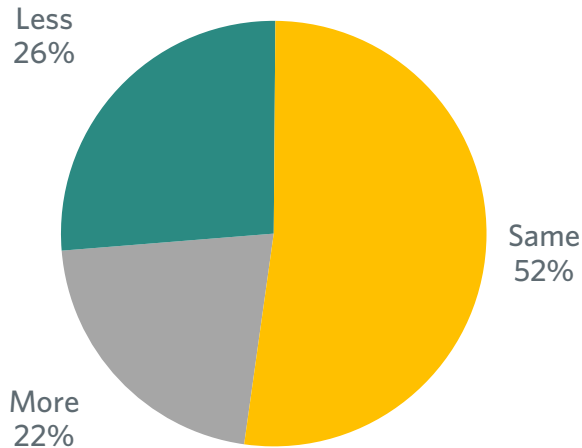
Survey respondents were provided descriptions of policies but not the names of political parties that proposed each policy.



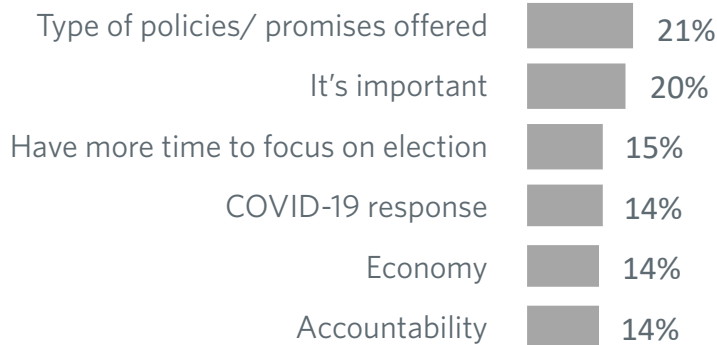
# Voter Engagement/US Election

British Columbians appear to be as engaged in this provincial election, as previous elections. Those who are more engaged are concerned about COVID response, the economy and government accountability and are interested in the party policies or promises. Those less interested than in past elections primarily cite the early election call as the reason.

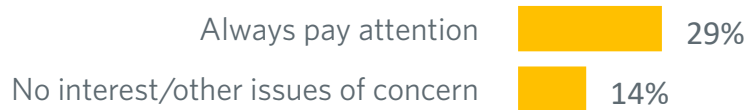
## Attention Paid to Election in Comparison to Past Elections



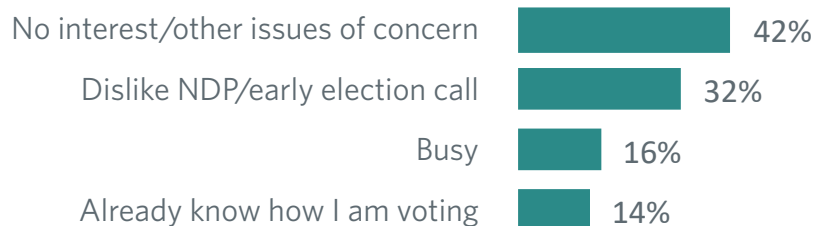
### Reasons for following more



### Same



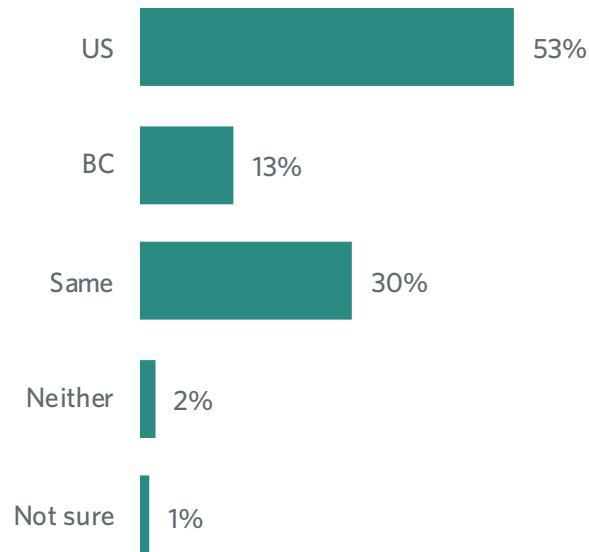
### Reasons for following less





Voters are being distracted to some extent by the US election with 53% saying they are following the US election more than the B.C. election

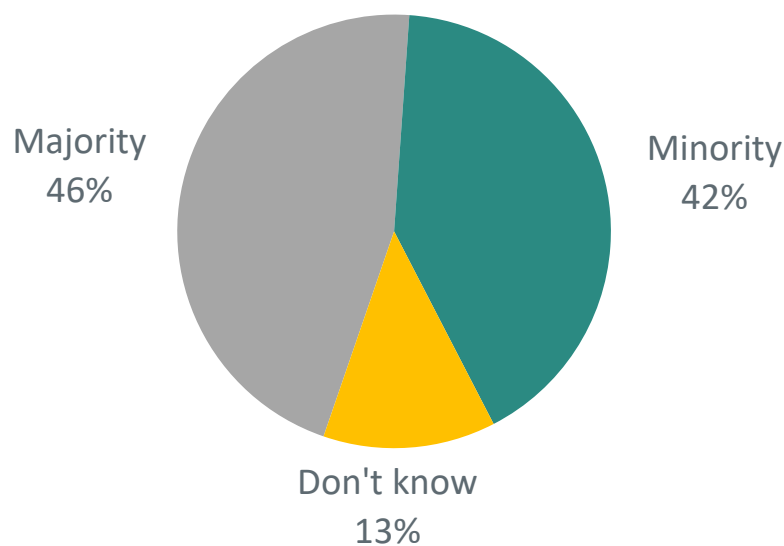
### Hearing more about B.C. or U.S. election



## Majority versus Minority Government

Voters are somewhat divided in their preference for a majority government and a minority government where parties need to collaborate to pass legislation.

### Prefer Majority or Minority Government

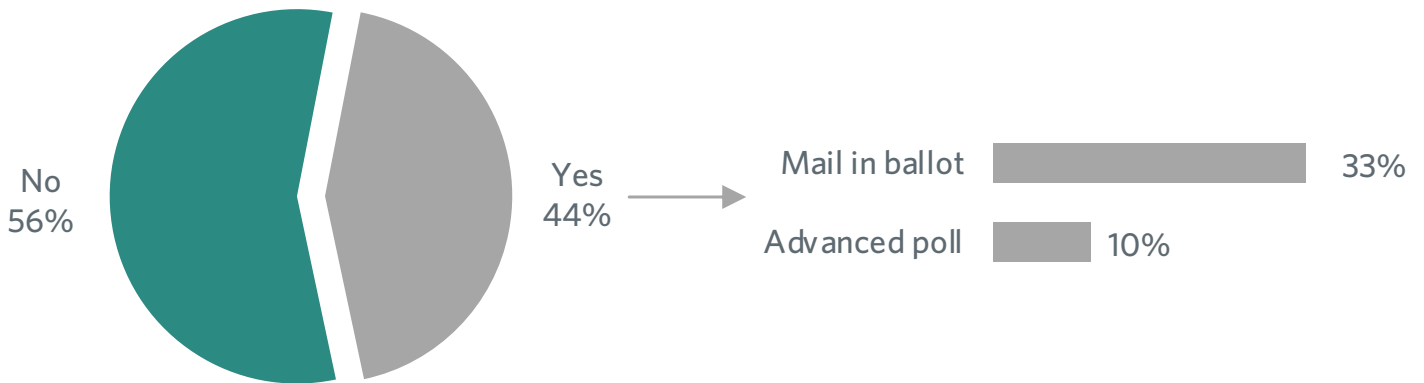




# Voting Behaviour

Over four-in-ten (44%) at the time of the survey had already voted; 33% had voted by mail ballot and another 12% at an early polling station.

## Have Already Voted



Approximately half (46%) report they watched the leaders' debate with older voters more likely to have done so.

## Watched Debate



Few believe their vote was influenced by the debate, with younger voters most likely to have been impacted.

## Debate Changed Vote

