

BC Provincial Election Survey 2009

Summary of Findings

May, 2009

Survey Highlights

- ▶ Agency Research Consultants' BC Provincial Election survey attracted 186 participants from April 27th to May 7th, 2009. The bulk of these participants (77%) were concentrated in the Capital Regional District.
- ▶ Well over half (60%) of intended voters had decided on their vote at the time of the survey.
- ▶ Among participants who indicated they intended to vote, 48% declared their intention was to vote for the NDP, 25% planned to vote Liberal, while 7% of voters indicated that they would vote for the Green Party. A total of 20% of intended voters remained either undecided or undeclared (preferring not to state their voting choice).
- ▶ Overall, 75% indicated they intended to vote for the same party as they had in the 2005 election. Green Party and NDP supporters were more likely to indicate that they had switched their vote to these parties compared to 2005.
- ▶ The strength of the party platform was rated the most important factor for determining how to vote with 87% of participants rating this as important.
- ▶ Survey participants indicated they felt that Gordon Campbell and the BC Liberals would be best suited to tackle issues regarding the economy, while Jane Sterk and the BC Green Party inspired the highest level of confidence regarding issues on the environment. For all other topics mentioned (education, health care, crime and public safety, and promoting arts and culture), survey participants placed their confidence in Carole James and the BC NDP.
- ▶ The majority of participants indicated they were aware of the single transferable vote with nearly half (46%) indicating they were very aware and 38% mentioning somewhat aware.
- ▶ 64% indicated they supported the single transferable vote while 36% preferred to stay with the existing (first-past-the-post) system.
- ▶ The largest number of respondents (45% of those who supplied comments) indicated that the priority for the newly elected government should be on social programs, including health care, education, housing, and poverty. Over one third (35%) of participants indicated they felt the economy should be a priority, while the environment was a priority was just over one quarter (26%).

Introduction

Agency Research Consultants' BC Provincial Election survey explored the voting intentions and opinions of local residents in the May 12th, 2009 British Columbia provincial election. Participants provided information on their voting choices, the importance of various factors when choosing how to cast their vote, their levels of confidence in the provincial party leaders on key election issues, and their opinions regarding the referendum on electoral reform.

The survey was administered online via the Agency Research Consultants website at www.agencyresearch.ca from April 27th to May 7th, 2009. A total of 186 persons participated in the survey with the bulk of these participants (77%) located in ridings in the Capital Regional District.

Participants self-selected to be part of this online sample and, as such, no claims can be made in terms of the representativeness of results and comparisons to the greater population. Indicators of statistical significance have not been presented. Respondents were invited to participate through a variety of means, including email notices to previous survey participants and announcements on a variety of websites.

Survey Results

Voting intentions

Among the participants who completed this survey, the majority (87%) indicated that they definitely plan on voting, and well over half (60%) of intended voters had decided on their vote at the time of the survey. One quarter of voters (26%) indicated they were somewhat certain, while only 14% indicated they were uncertain.

Table 1: Voting certainty among those who intended to vote

	Number	%
Very certain	108	60%
Somewhat certain	47	26%
Somewhat uncertain	11	6%
Very uncertain	14	8%
Total	180	100%

Among survey participants who indicated they were likely to vote, 48% declared their intention was to vote for the NDP, with 25% indicating they planned to vote Liberal. A total of 7% of voters indicated that they would vote for the Green Party, while 20% were either undecided or undeclared (preferring not to state their voting preference on the survey).

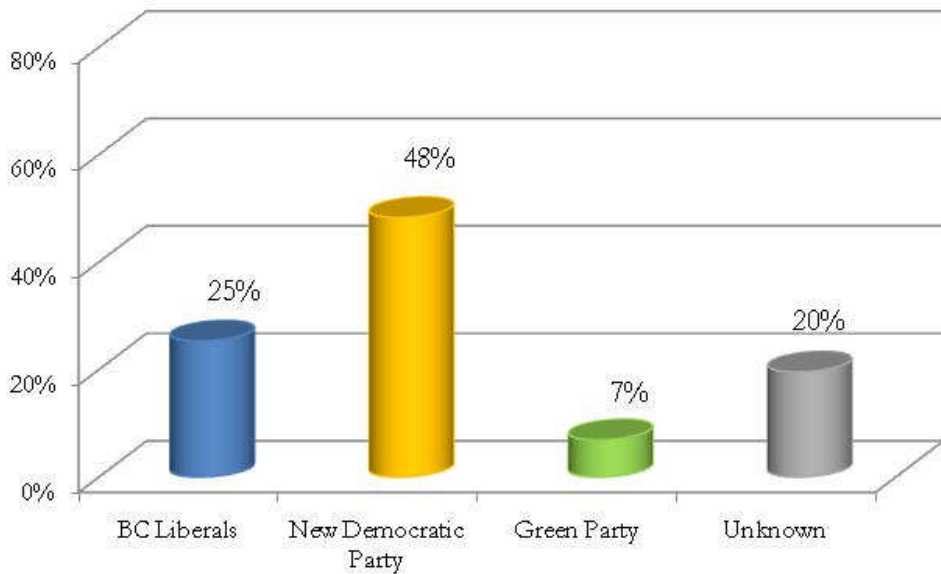


Figure 1. Voting intention among likely voters (n=174). Participants who indicated they probably or definitely would not vote have been removed from this analysis.

Participants in the survey were asked to indicate whether they planned on voting for the same party as they did in the 2005 provincial election or whether they were switching their vote to another party this time around. Overall, 75% indicated they intended to vote for the same party as they had previously. There were, however, some patterns in this selection by party preference. Among those who planned to vote for the BC Liberal party in the current election, 88% indicated they would be voting the same as they did in 2005, while 12% declared they intended to switch their vote to the Liberal party. Among current NDP supporters, the percentage who indicated they had switched their vote to the NDP increased to 28%, while 73% of NDP voters indicated there was no change from how they had voted last time. BC Green Party supporters were the most likely to have switched to this party with 46% changing their vote from the previous election to the Green Party and 54% showing continuous support. Caution should be noted, however, as sample sizes among Green Party supporters was quite small.

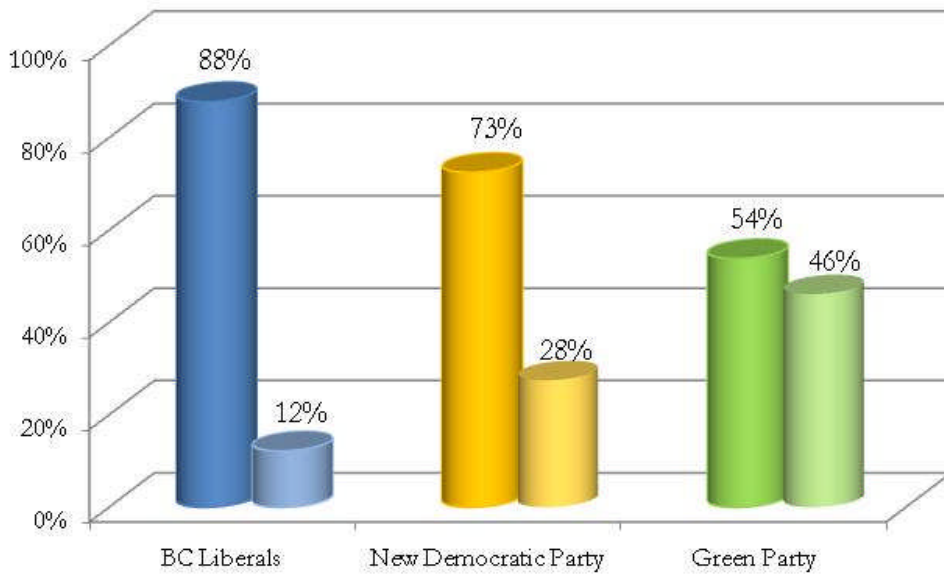


Figure 2. Responses to the question, “Will you be voting for the same party as you did in the 2005 provincial election?” The first of the two columns represents voters for each party who stated they will be voting the same as previous, while the second represents those who will be changing their vote from the last election. Percentages are based on total sample voting for each party (BC Liberals n=41; New Democratic Party n=80; Green Party n=13).

Voting Considerations

Survey participants were asked to indicate the level of importance of a number of factors when deciding how to vote. Generally, voters looked to the strengths of the party leader and the party platform to determine how to cast their vote. The strength of the party platform was most important, with 87% of participants rating this as either somewhat or very important. In terms of strengths, the strength of the local candidate was rated lowest in importance with 63% stating this was an important factor to them. Slightly more importance was awarded to weaknesses in the platforms of opposing parties with 65% stating this was an important consideration. Weaknesses of opposing local candidates was rated lowest in importance with 21% indicating this was not important at all.

Table 2: Importance of factors in relation to voting decisions

	1 - Not important at all	2	3	4	5 - Very important	Important - Sum of (4 & 5)
Strengths of local candidate	6%	7%	23%	29%	34%	63%
Strengths of party leader	5%	6%	18%	32%	39%	72%
Strengths of party platform	3%	2%	8%	28%	59%	87%
Weaknesses of opposing local candidates	21%	18%	32%	14%	15%	29%
Weaknesses of opposing party leaders	12%	11%	19%	19%	40%	58%
Weaknesses of opposing party platforms	9%	9%	17%	20%	46%	65%

Participants were asked to express their views regarding the strengths of the party leaders and platforms by indicating which of the three primary party leaders they had the most confidence in on specific topics. Survey participants indicated they felt that Gordon Campbell and the BC Liberals would be best suited to tackle issues regarding the economy, while Jane Sterk and the BC Green Party inspired the highest level of confidence regarding issues on the environment. For all other topics mentioned (education, health care, crime and public safety, and promoting arts and culture), survey participants placed their confidence in Carole James and the BC NDP. The margin, however, did vary, particularly in terms of issues in crime and public safety.

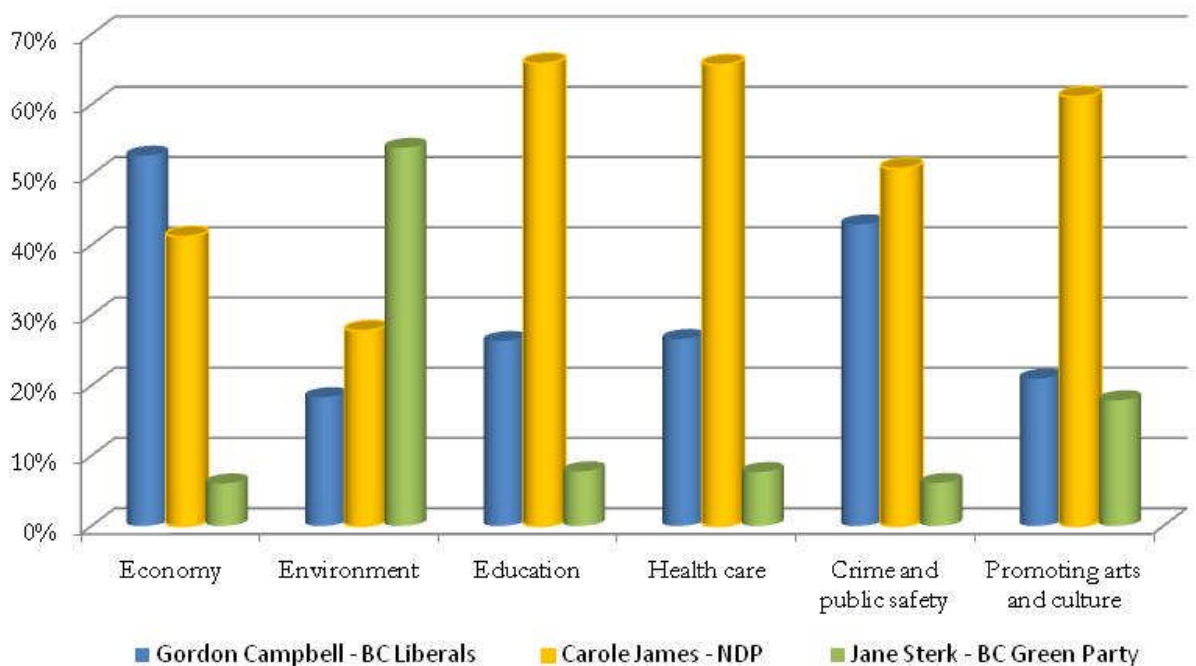


Figure 3. Responses to the question, “Which of the following party leaders do you have the most confidence in when it comes to issues in each of the following areas?” Percentages represent valid responses in each area. Sample sizes in each area ranged from a high of 169 to a low of 162.

Single Transferable Vote

Survey participants then turned their attention to the referendum question that will face BC voters on electoral reform. The majority of participants indicated they were aware of the single transferable vote with nearly half (46%) indicating they were very aware and 38% mentioning somewhat aware. Only 16% indicated they were not very or not at all aware of BC-STV. When asked which electoral system they believed British Columbians should use to elect members to the Provincial Legislative Assembly, 64% indicated they supported the single transferable vote while 36% preferred to stay with the existing (first-past-the-post) system.

Interestingly, among those who stated they voted against BC-STV in the 2005 referendum, 14% indicated they planned to switch their vote and support it this year, while only 9% who voted in support of BC-STV in 2005 decided to support the first-past-the-post electoral system in the current referendum. The bulk of voters have not changed their opinion and plan to vote similar to how they did in the past.

Table 3: Electoral system preference by support for BC-STV in 2005 referendum

	First-Past-the-Post	BC-STV
Yes	9%	91%
No	86%	14%
Can't recall	42%	58%
Did not vote in the previous referendum	50%	50%
Total	36%	64%

Exploring support for electoral reform by current voting intentions revealed clear patterns with 70% of Liberal supporters indicating they planned to vote to maintain the current electoral system and nearly the reverse (72%) among NDP voters stating they intended to support BC-STV. Support for BC-STV among Green Party supporters was even higher with 92% indicating they planned to vote for electoral reform.

Table 4: Electoral system preference by current party voting preference

	First-Past-the-Post	BC-STV
BC Liberals	70%	30%
New Democratic Party	28%	72%
Green Party	8%	92%
Total	36%	64%

Most important priority for the newly elected government

Survey participants were given the opportunity to indicate, in their own words, what they felt should be the priority for the newly elected provincial government over the next four years. The largest number of respondents (45% of those who supplied comments) indicated that the priority should be on social programs, including health care, education, housing, and poverty. Over one third (35%) of participants indicated they felt the economy should be a priority, while the environment was a priority was just over one quarter (26%).

Table 5: Most important priority for the new government

	Number	% ¹
Economy	57	35%
Environment	42	26%
Social programs (Health care, education, housing, etc)	72	45%
Honesty in government	15	9%
Other	34	21%

1. Total does not sum to 100% as participants could select multiple responses. Comments received n=161.

Overview of survey participants

The results for age, gender and region are presented below.

Table 6: Demographics

Gender	Frequency	%
Man	64	34%
Woman	106	57%
Refused / non-response	16	9%
Age	Frequency	%
Under 25	3	2%
25-34	44	24%
35-44	44	24%
45-54	33	18%
55-64	32	17%
65 or over	14	8%
Refused / non-response	16	9%
Region	Frequency	%
Saanich and the Peninsula	45	24%
Central	71	38%
Western Communities	28	15%
Other	17	9%
Unknown	25	13%

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