



Exploring issues that will shape the 2020 B.C. Provincial Election

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



VoteLocalBC.ca

October 2020

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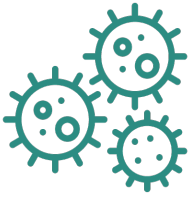
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Pandemic Relief and Economic Recovery Are Top Issues Influencing B.C. Voters



As British Columbians prepare to vote in the October 24th provincial election, the COVID-19 pandemic and concerns about the economy top the list of issues shaping voters' decisions, according to the latest VoteLocal survey.

Just one year ago in the lead up to the 2019 federal election, climate change and the economy topped the list of concerns among the B.C. electorate, but the global pandemic has eclipsed other issues and put voters' focus squarely on which provincial party has the best plan to deal with its devastating impacts. With 500 British Columbians surveyed October 1-6, the top issues influencing voters are:

- Response to COVID-19
- Economy & jobs
- Healthcare
- Support for vulnerable people
- Mental health & addiction
- Environment & climate change

British Columbians are less interested in parties' track record in handling COVID-19 so far, compared to proposals for confronting the challenges that lie ahead. Eight-in-ten voters say they will decide how to vote based on parties' plans for the future, with less than two-in-ten focused on how parties have dealt with the pandemic to date. This suggests an opportunity exists for the BC Liberal and Green parties to compete with the BC NDP on the basis of their policy proposals related to pandemic relief and recovery.

This will be a 'crisis election.' The ballot-box question will not be about who to trust, parties' values or their vision for the future, as is often the case in elections. Instead, voters are looking for clarity on parties' immediate plans, such as how they will prevent further spread of COVID-19, provide ongoing relief to residents and businesses, get people back to work and ensure our healthcare system can weather the crisis.

With respect to specific actions to address the pandemic, survey respondents say they want to see the government prioritize enforcement of current COVID-related restrictions and invest in economic growth, above other measures such as increasing COVID testing or adding new restrictions to prevent its spread.

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Affordability, which was the top issue in VoteLocal's survey ahead of the 2018 municipal elections, is not as prominent in this campaign but remains a key issue, with three-in-ten B.C. residents saying they have considered moving out of their community or region due to affordability or quality of life concerns. Within Metro Vancouver, 39% report considering a move, compared to 41% one year ago and 46% two years ago.



Only 36% of British Columbians support the early election call.

This is an election few British Columbians want (only 36% support the early election call). It will be only the second provincial election to take place in Canada since the onset of the pandemic in early spring 2020, and COVID is influencing not only voters' priorities but also how they will cast their ballots. Most people plan to avoid polling stations on election day, with 39% intending to submit a mail-in ballot and 27% going to advance polls. This may be in part because most people believe the severity of the pandemic will increase, with 62% believing COVID cases will continue to rise in the lead up to election day.

In the absence of in-person gatherings or opportunities to meet candidates face-to-face, people will rely on the news media for information, followed by social media and party websites. 53% say they will watch the televised leaders' debate on October 13th (whereas 48% said they watched a debate in the last election).

Survey Methodology

The VoteLocal survey was conducted online among a random sample of B.C. adults, 18 years of age or over (n=500) from October 1st to 6th, 2020.



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.



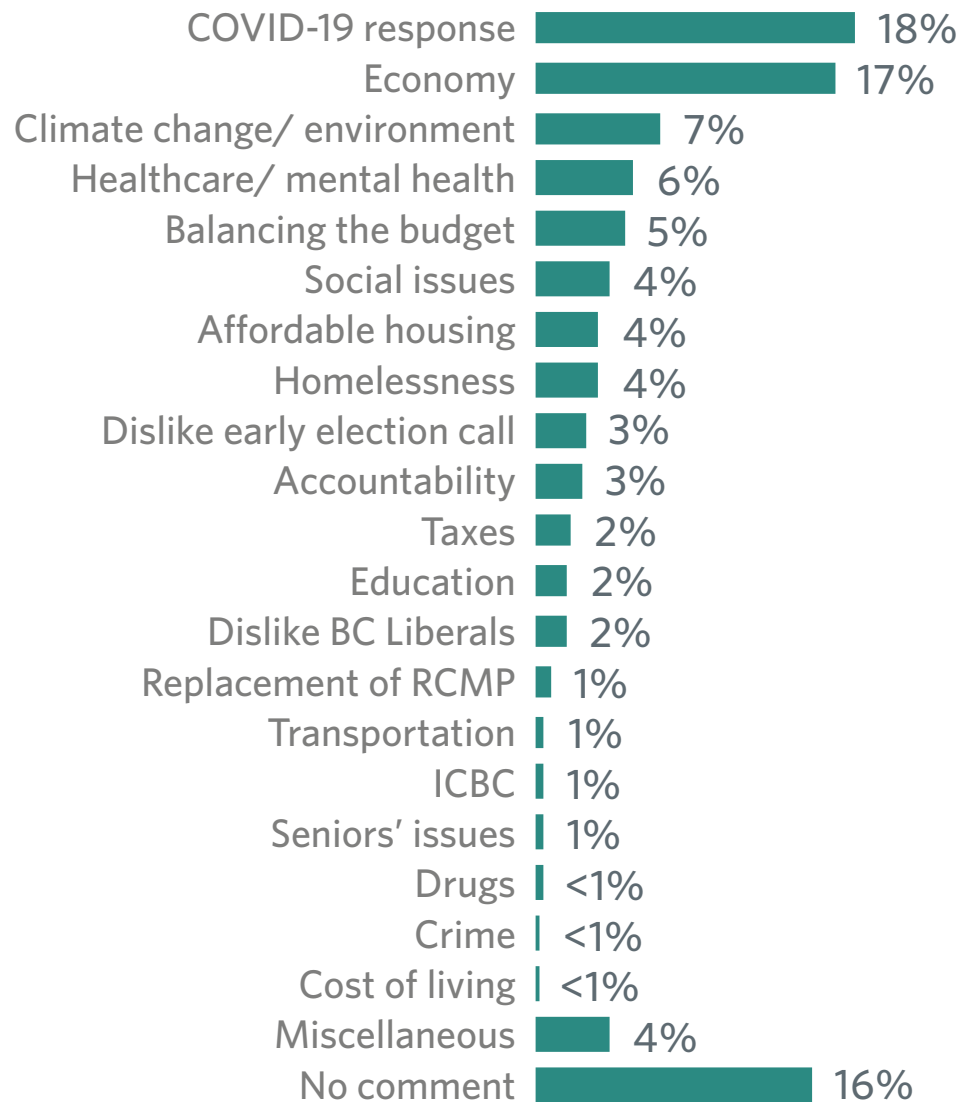
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Issues of Concern

Two issues, confidence in the handling of COVID and the economy/economic recovery, will equally influence B.C. voters in the provincial election. These are the 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.

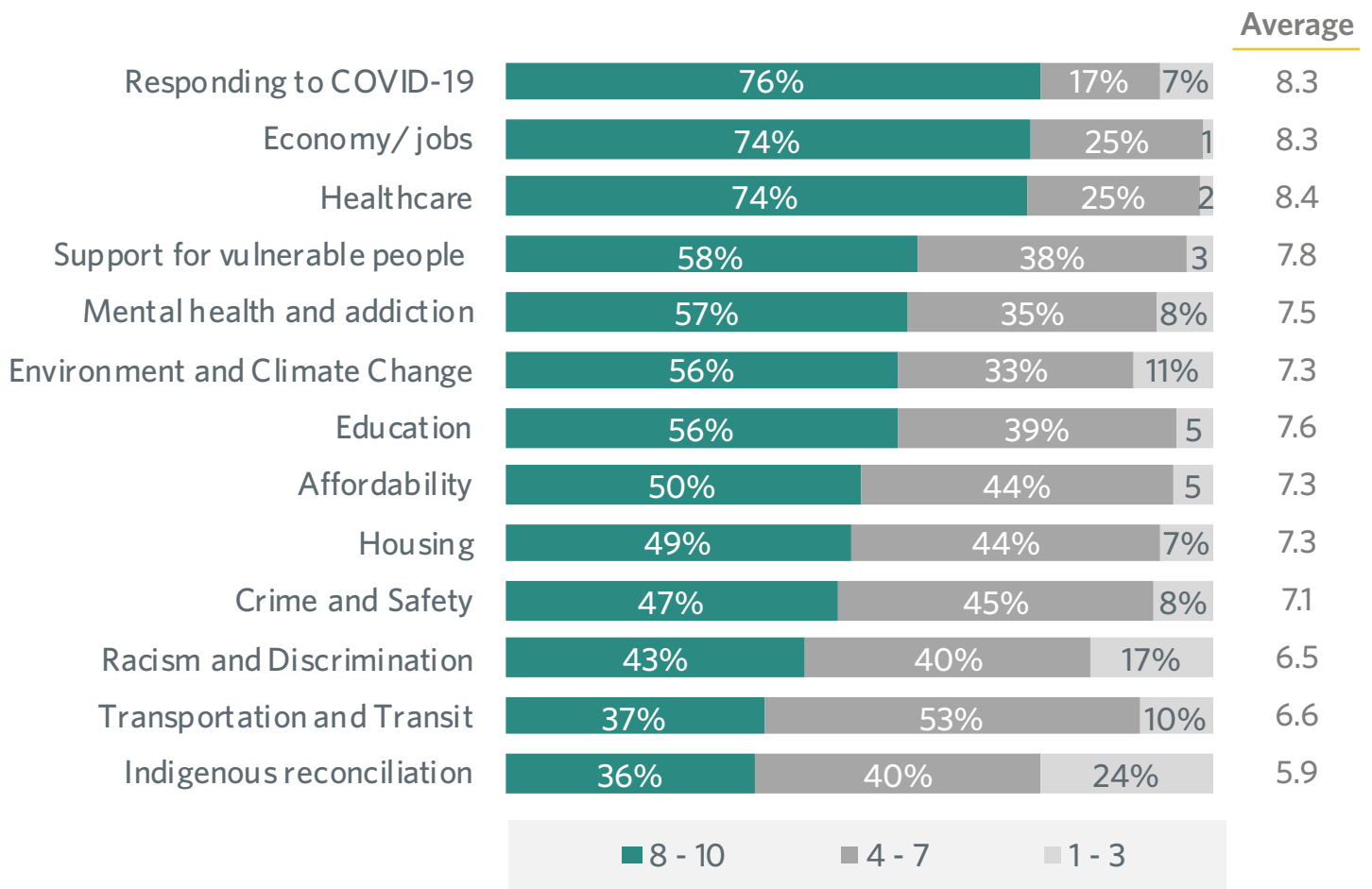
Most Important Issue (open-ended)



When asked to rate the importance of specific issues, again handling of COVID and the economy/economic recovery are rated as the most important issues, along with healthcare.

The next tier of issues include: support for vulnerable people, mental health and addiction, environment/ climate change, and education.

Rating of Key Issues



Scale: 1= not at all important, 10 = extremely important

Key issues are of greater importance to certain demographic segments:

COVID: Women, those 55 years or over

Economy/jobs: those 55 years +, residents of Metro Vancouver suburbs (outside City of Vancouver)

Healthcare: Women, those 45+

Support for vulnerable people: Women, those 55+

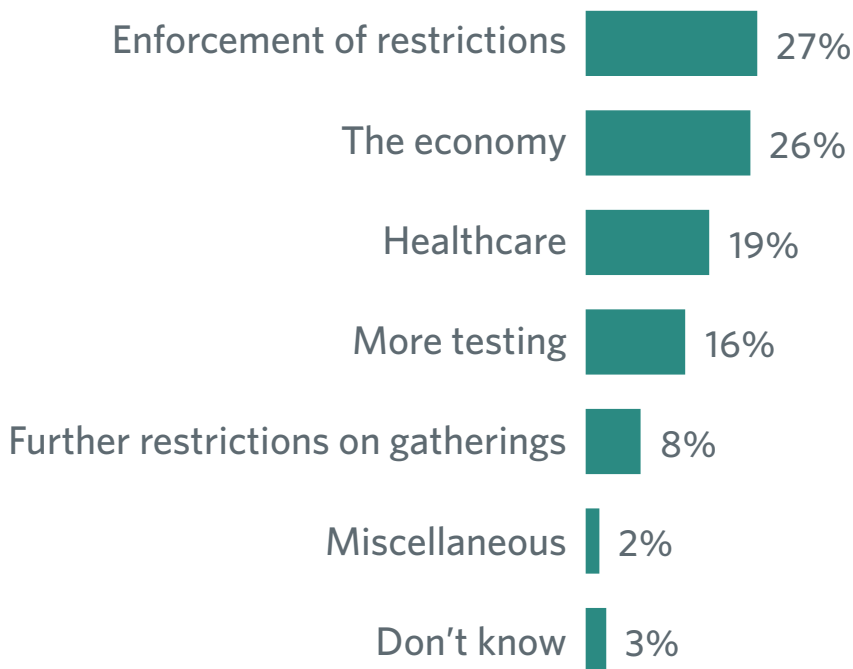
Mental health and addiction: Women

Environment/climate change: Women, Vancouver Island residents

Education: Women, families, Metro Vancouver residents (outside City of Vancouver)

Residents were further asked what the provincial government should focus on at this stage in responding to COVID. **Equal proportions respond enforcement of restrictions and the economy**, further demonstrating the balance voters are seeking in dealing with the pandemic. Healthcare ranks third.

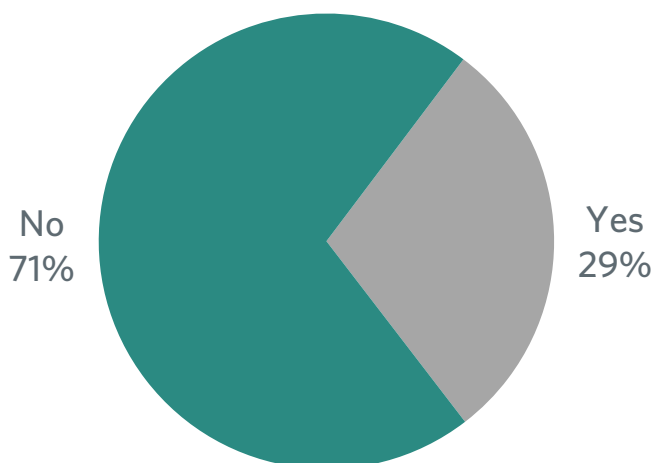
Government Focus in Responding to Pandemic



On the topic of affordability, which is still a key issue, **three-in-ten B.C. residents have considered moving out of their community or region due to affordability or quality of life concerns.** This level is similar in Metro Vancouver to a measure taken a year ago in this region indicating that few gains have been made in dealing with the issue.

The proportion is even higher among Metro Vancouver residents (39%), those under 44 years of age (39%) and families (38%).

Considered Moving Due to Affordability

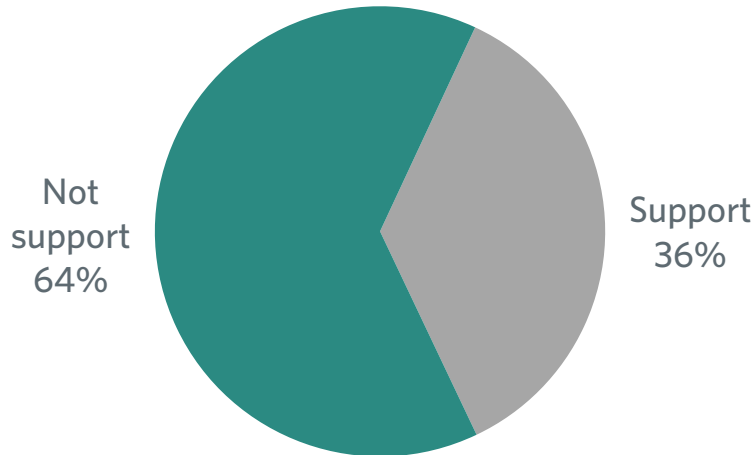




Voting Intentions/Behaviours

The majority do not support having an early election call.

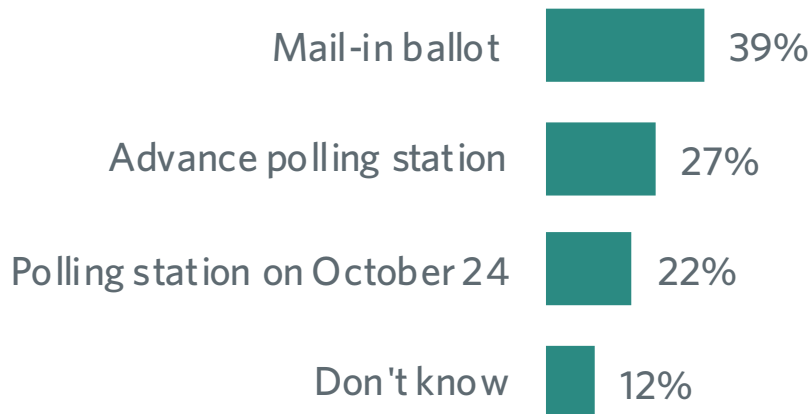
Support Early Election Call



But the vast majority expect to vote in the up-coming provincial election, with nine-in-ten saying they are 'very likely' to do so.

Only a small group expect to actually visit a polling station on election day (22%). Four-in-ten likely voters (39%) expect to mail in a ballot, and another quarter (27%) plan to use an advance polling station. It will be interesting to see if those who intended to vote by mail or in advance will go to a polling station on election day if they have not yet voted. Voter turnout could be impacted.

How People Intend to Vote

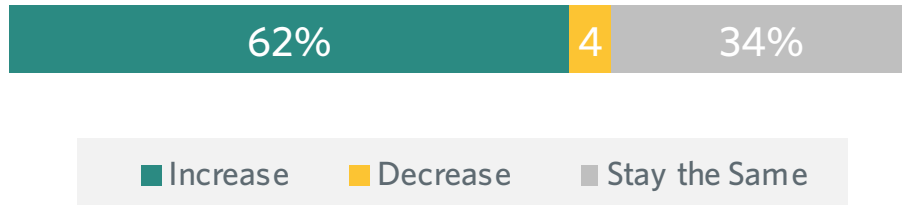




Impact of Pandemic on Voting Behaviour

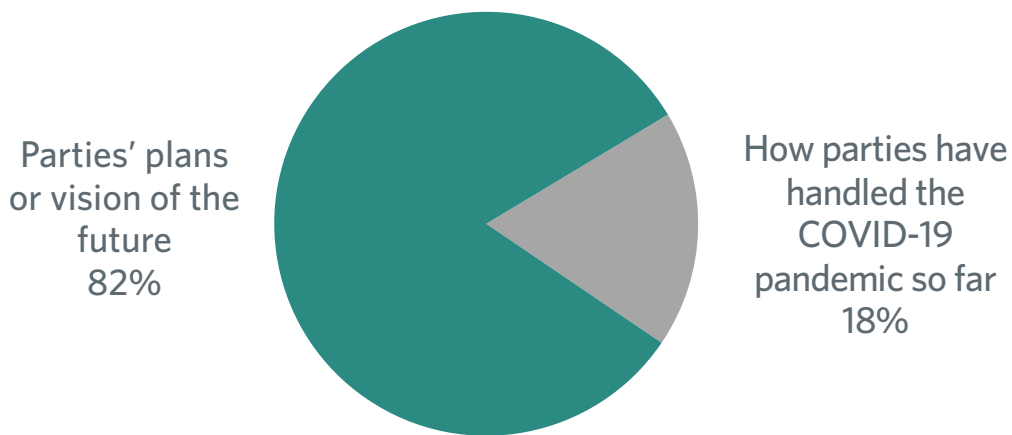
Between now and election day, the majority (**62%**) expect the number of COVID-19 cases and the severity of the pandemic in B.C. to increase. Residents of Victoria/Vancouver Island are particularly concerned.

Severity of Pandemic Before Election



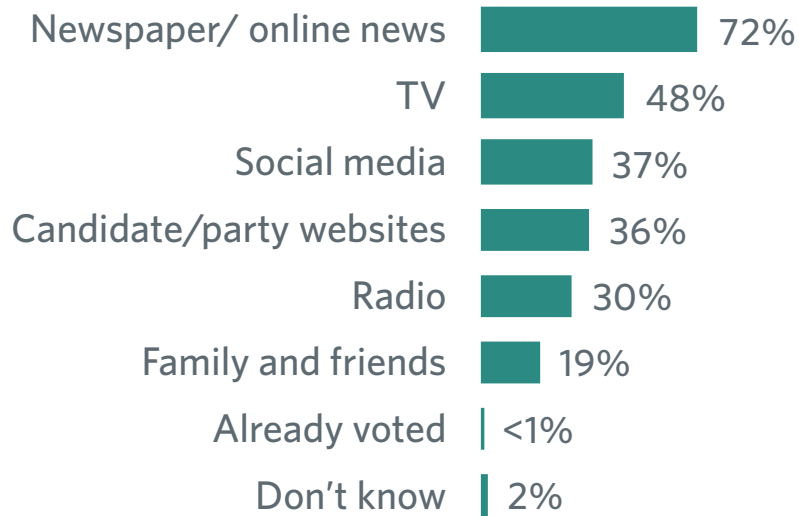
But voters say that a **party's plans/vision for the future will have more influence** on their voting decisions than how a party has handled the pandemic so far. Families in particular feel this way.

What Will Influence How People Vote



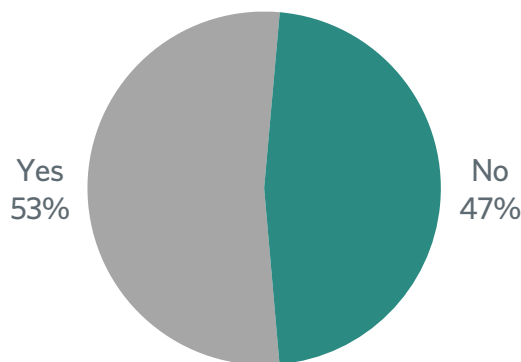
Since in-person meetings or gatherings with candidates will be limited, voters from all demographic groups are most inclined to get engaged or get information about their local candidates through newspapers or online news. TV, social media, candidate/party websites and radio are secondary sources. TV, social media, candidate/party websites and radio are secondary sources.

How Voters Plan to Engage



About **half of B.C. residents plan to watch a televised leaders' debate**, and close to half say they have watched debates in previous elections.

Plan to Watch Televised Leader's Debate



Watched Debates in Past Elections

