

THE 2019 CANADIAN ELECTION, SO FAR...



**University
of Victoria**

Retirees
Association

REMARKS TO THE UVRA
ELDER ACADEMY
October 5, 2019
Michael J. Prince

WELCOME

- What are elections and their functions – their intentions, effects and consequences
- Party support and standings
- Opinion polls – trends and what to watch for
- The many types of Candidates
- Ballot Box Questions posed by the political parties
- Important Issues for Canadians
- Electoral volatility and why campaigns matter

THE ACTUAL RACE BEGAN WELL BEFORE THE OFFICIAL CAMPAIGN



WHAT ARE ELECTIONS? – POLITICAL SCIENCE ANSWERS

- “A mechanism for choosing leaders and holding public officials accountable for their actions”
- “markers in a nation’s political history”
- “instances of mass political behaviour”
- “enrich the quality of grassroots democracy”
- “contribute to the number and configuration of political parties”

WHAT ARE ELECTIONS? CANADIAN JOURNALIST'S REMARKS

- “Elections are defining moments for a nation in deciding what it stands for, it also decides who and what it is.” *Andrew Coyne*
- “Elections are for promises, some of which may never be kept, and all of which taxpayers/voters will pay for. There is no government money, only that which government sucks from us.” *Christie Blatchford*
- “Elections divide the political world into friends and enemies.” *Susan Delacourt*
- “Surely this can't be an actual national election campaign in a serious country in dangerous times.” *Paul Wells*

WHAT ARE ELECTIONS? FROM COURT JESTERS

- “A funny time in a country, during which its citizens have a collective illusion that ‘they will get the change they are voting for’.” *Author unknown*
- “Why pay money to have your family tree traced; go into politics and your opponents will do it for you.” *Anonymous*
- “We stand today at a crossroads: One path leads to despair and utter hopelessness. The other leads to total extinction. Let us hope we have the wisdom to make the right choice.” *Woody Allen*

FUNCTIONS OF GENERAL ELECTIONS: THE TEXTBOOK VERSION

1. Expression of citizens' political choices and hold representatives accountable for past (mis)conduct
2. Aggregation of political preferences of population by parties
3. Recruitment of candidates to stand for office (and volunteers to assist)
4. Communication of information to voters and raise public awareness
5. Socialize the electorate about democratic values and practices
6. Convert electoral support perhaps into some legislative and executive presence
7. Confer on winning party a mandate to govern in a certain direction
8. Legitimation of the political process and electoral results

FUNCTIONS OF GENERAL ELECTIONS: REALPOLITIK IN CANADA

1. Generates *cynicism* of politicians, election campaigns and the electoral system itself
2. Targets particular groups and specific interests in the general population
3. *Horserace journalism* and polls simplify campaigns into popularity contests among party leaders
4. Dismissing *controversial party candidates* before and during campaign
5. Political leaders and parties and Internet trolls and bloggers engaging in *media spin, fear mongering, attack ads, mudslinging, disinformation*
6. *Declining voter participation* over last 30 years
7. *Highly regionalized* patterns of support, with under-representation of one or more parties in major regions of the country

HORSERACE ANALYSIS: FLOGGING A LIFELESS METAPHOR



POLITICAL ATTACK AND SPIN : NOT REALLY SO NEW

“There has never been a principle he advocated that he was not willing to set aside and trample in the dust if he could thereby climb over its ruins into office.”

Alexander Mackenzie speaking of John A. Macdonald, 1877

“I offer my opponents a bargain: if they will stop telling lies about us, I will stop telling the truth about them.”

Adlai Stevenson

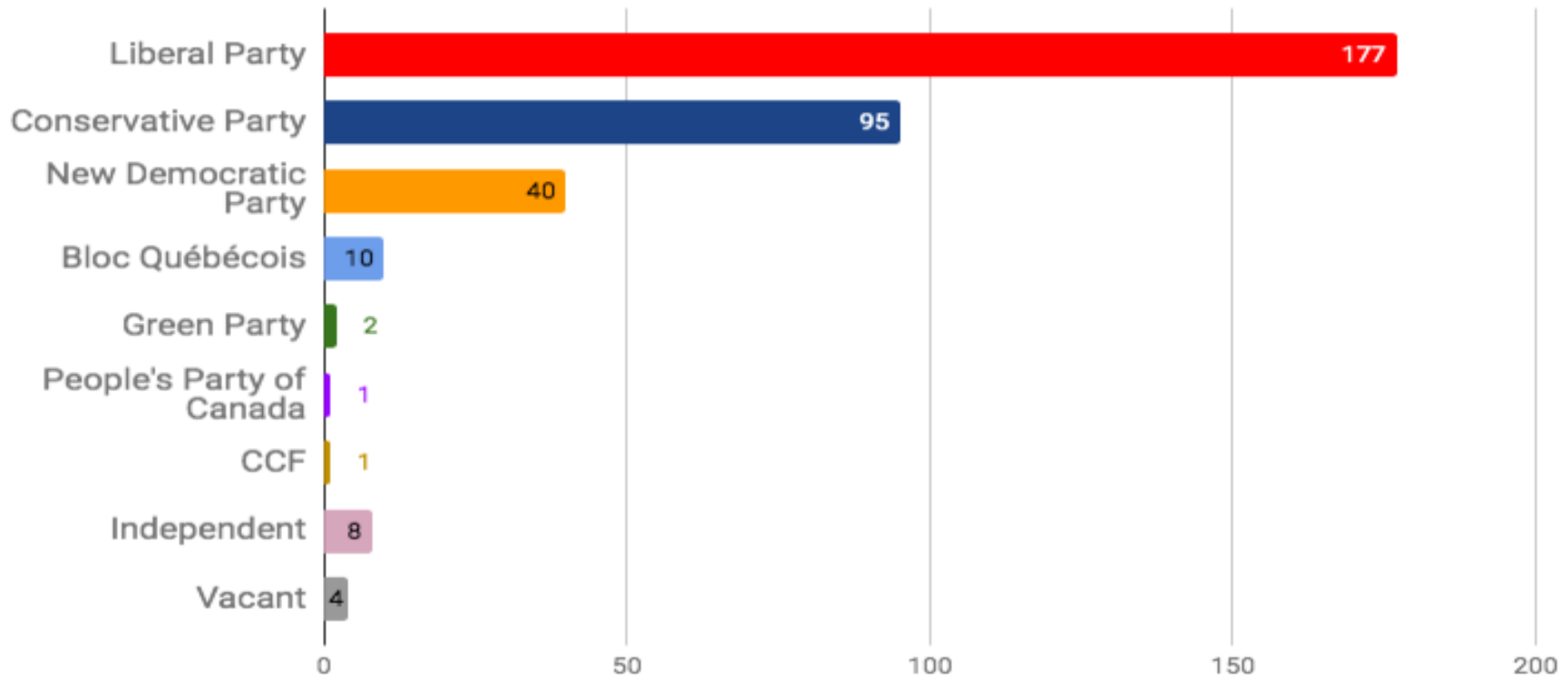
Democratic Party nominee for president in the 1952 and 1956 US elections

THE MAIN LEADERS



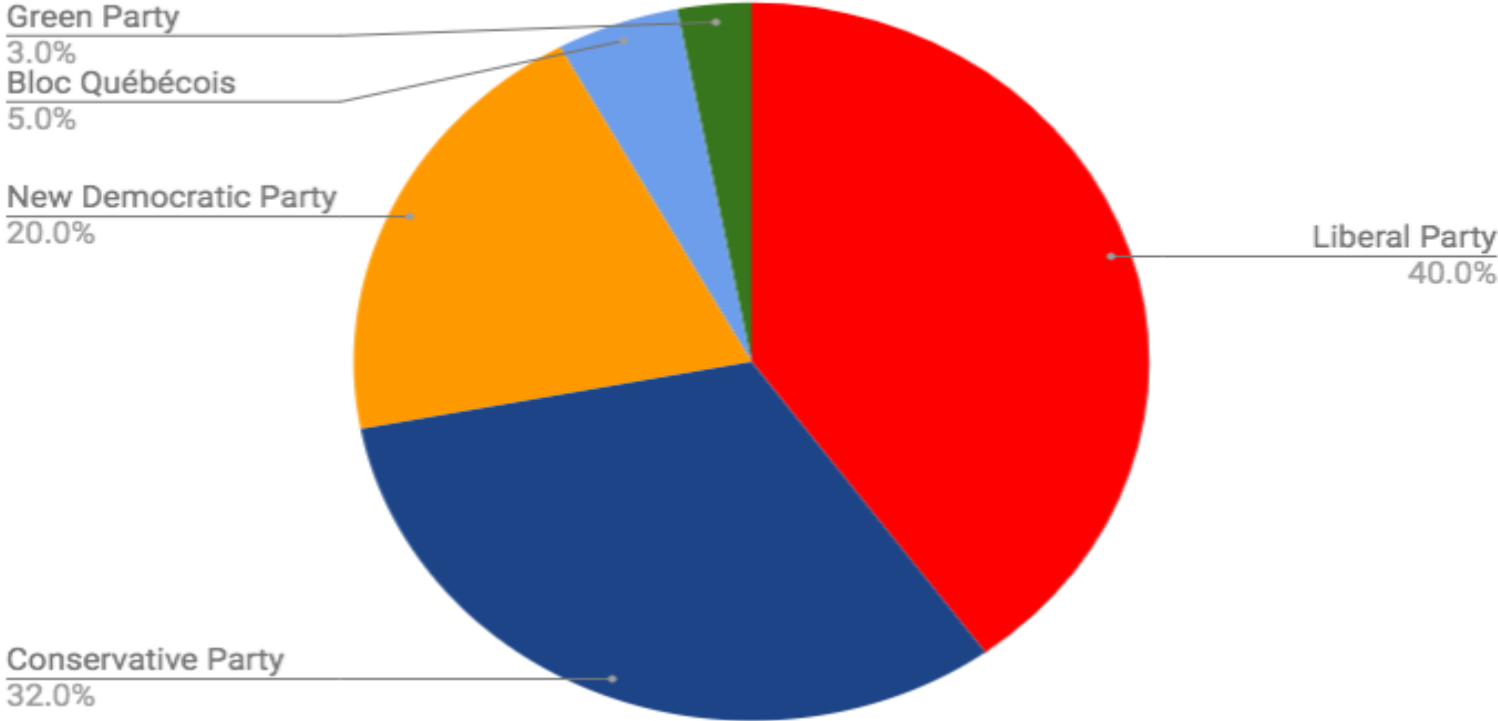
COMPOSITION OF THE HOUSE BY PARTY AT THE CAMPAIGN START

House of Commons: Seats across Canada as of September 2019



POPULAR VOTE BY PARTY IN 2015 ELECTION

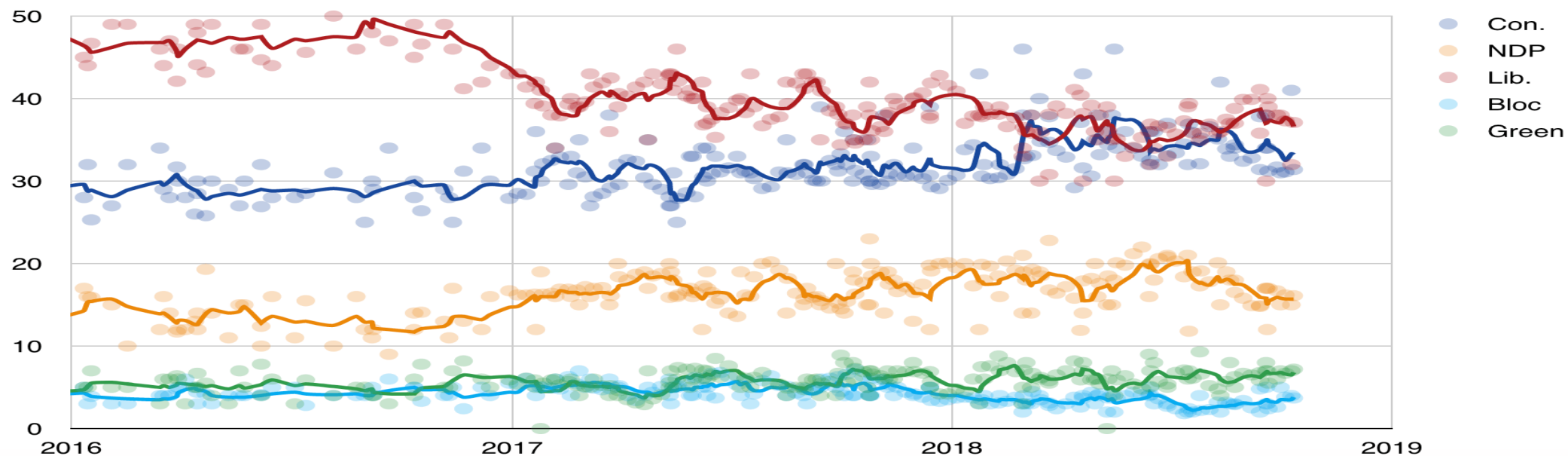
2015 federal election: popular vote in Canada



PARTY SUPPORT SINCE THE LAST ELECTION

Trend line of all national polls published

last updated: October 21, 2018 at 14:42 (Eastern Daylight Time)



BEWARE THE POLLS: OCTOBER 1, 2019 HEADLINE

NEWS

Conservatives open up nearly 3 point lead in latest Mainstreet numbers

By Marco Vigliotti. Published on Oct 1, 2019 3:20pm



Conservative leader Andrew Scheer makes an announcement during a campaign stop at the Abilities Centre in Whitby, Ont., Monday, September 30, 2019. THE CANADIAN PRESS/Jonathan Hayward

THE WONDERFUL WORLD OF CANDIDATES

- **Status quo** – incumbents and repeat candidates
- **Stalwarts** – party faithful candidates
- **Stars** – local celebrities, leaders, and other big names
- **Soloists** – independents with no party affiliation
- **Switchers** – candidates change from one party to run for another
- **Sovereignists** – **present:** Bloc Quebecois candidates, of course, and **past:** candidates for other parties who have advocated for Quebec independence
- **Sacrificial lambs** – no hope of winning, but showing the party banner
- **Sillies** – colorful and fringe candidates
- **Slip-ups** – “bozo candidates” who resign often over social media indiscretions

IS THERE A BALLOT BOX QUESTION?

- Political parties try to frame a ballot box question – the issue or topic they want voters to have uppermost in their minds when casting their ballot; how each party frames what the federal election is really about
- **Conservatives:** “This is about your future. Will this be a country where you struggle to get by, or a country where life is affordable?”
- **Liberals:** “Will we continue forward or will we go back to the Harper years?”

FURTHER BALLOT BOX QUESTIONS

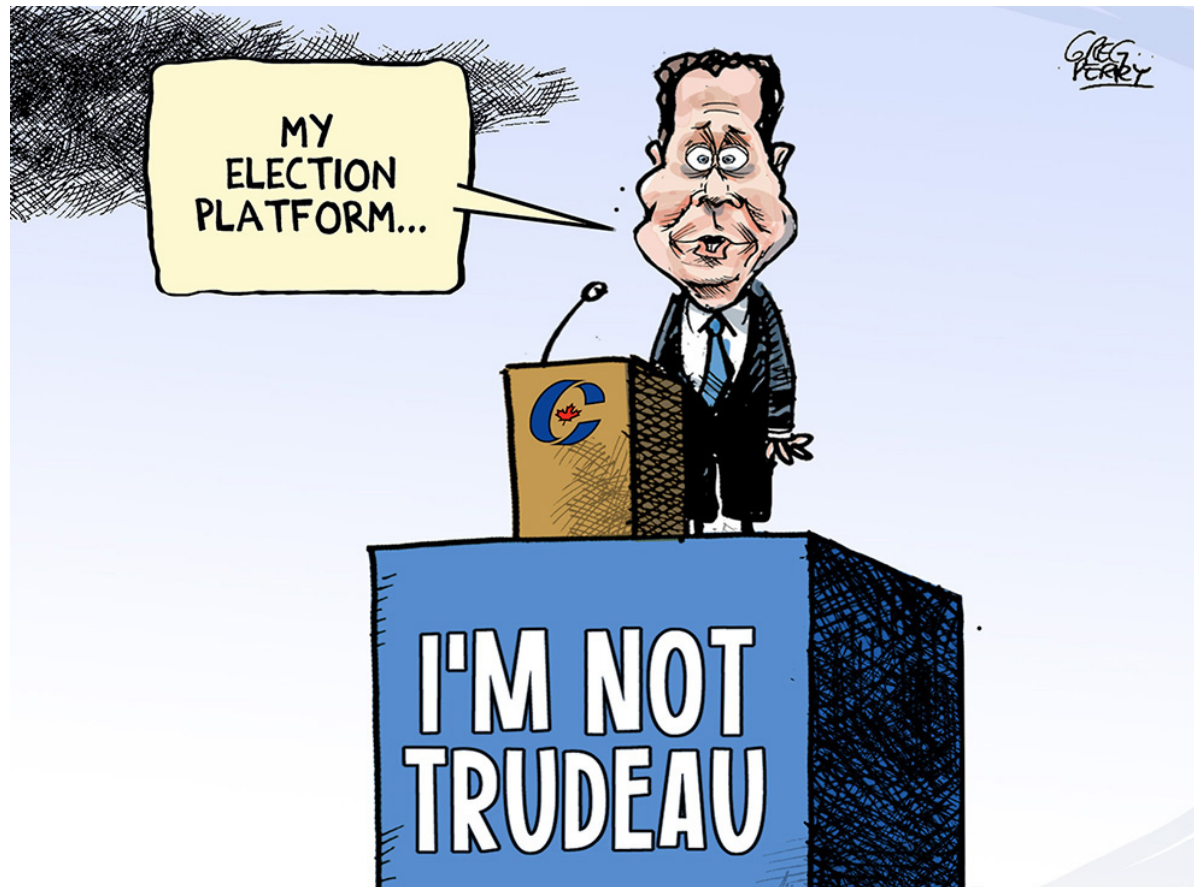
- **NDP:** “We're going to bring a hopeful message to Canadians that we can build a country of our dreams, a country where everyone has a place to call home, health care when they need it, clean water to drink, and clean air to breathe, good jobs and bright future”
- **Greens:** “This election is about telling the truth to Canadians about how serious the climate emergency really is – and we do that in order not to create fear, we do that in order to give everyone hope. We have a plan.”
- **People’s Party:** “There is no political correctness with us. We are listening to the people.”

ARE POLLING BOOTHS A SCENT-FREE ENVIRONMENT? HOLDING YOUR NOSE WHILE VOTING

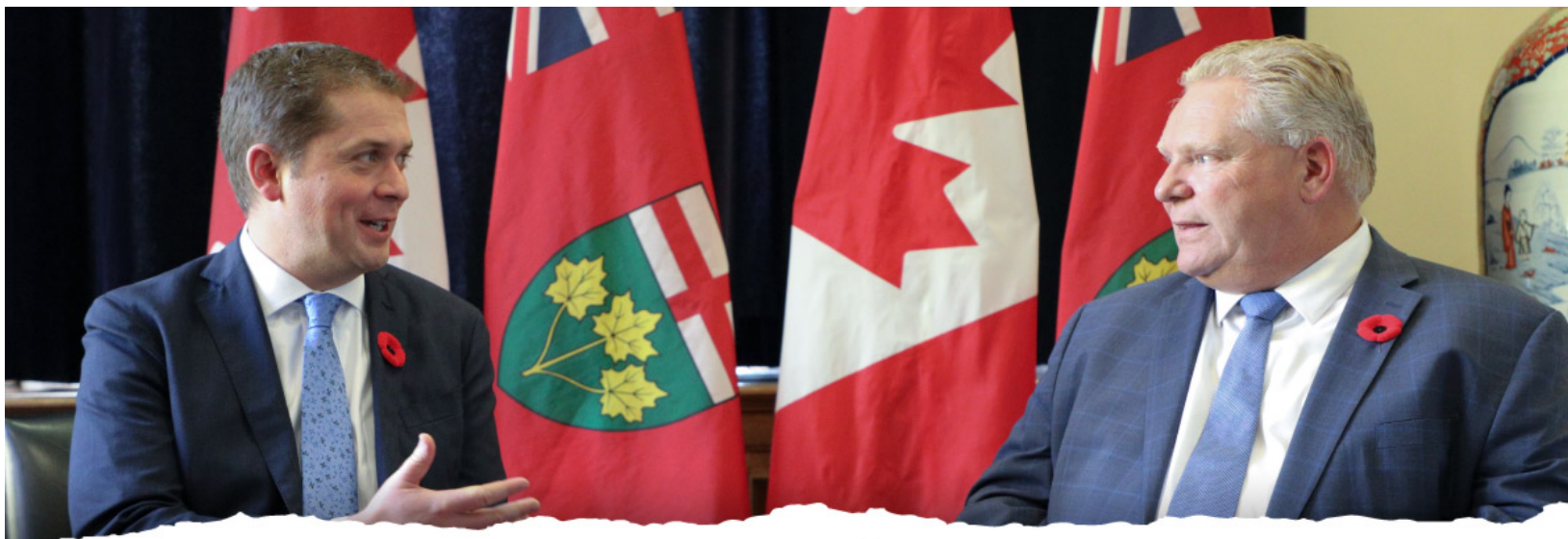
‘Choose your poison’: that’s the ballot question for most Canadians in Oct. 21 federal election, says pollster Nanos

- None of the national parties appear to be connecting to a majority of Canadians
- “People will go to the ballot box, look down at the choices, and they will probably vote for the party they dislike the least.” *Nik Nanos, Nanos Research, September 9, 2019*

**“Justin Trudeau is not as advertised,
he’s not what you thought he was”**



**“OKAY, BUT YOU MIGHT BE A LOT
LIKE SOMEONE ELSE”**

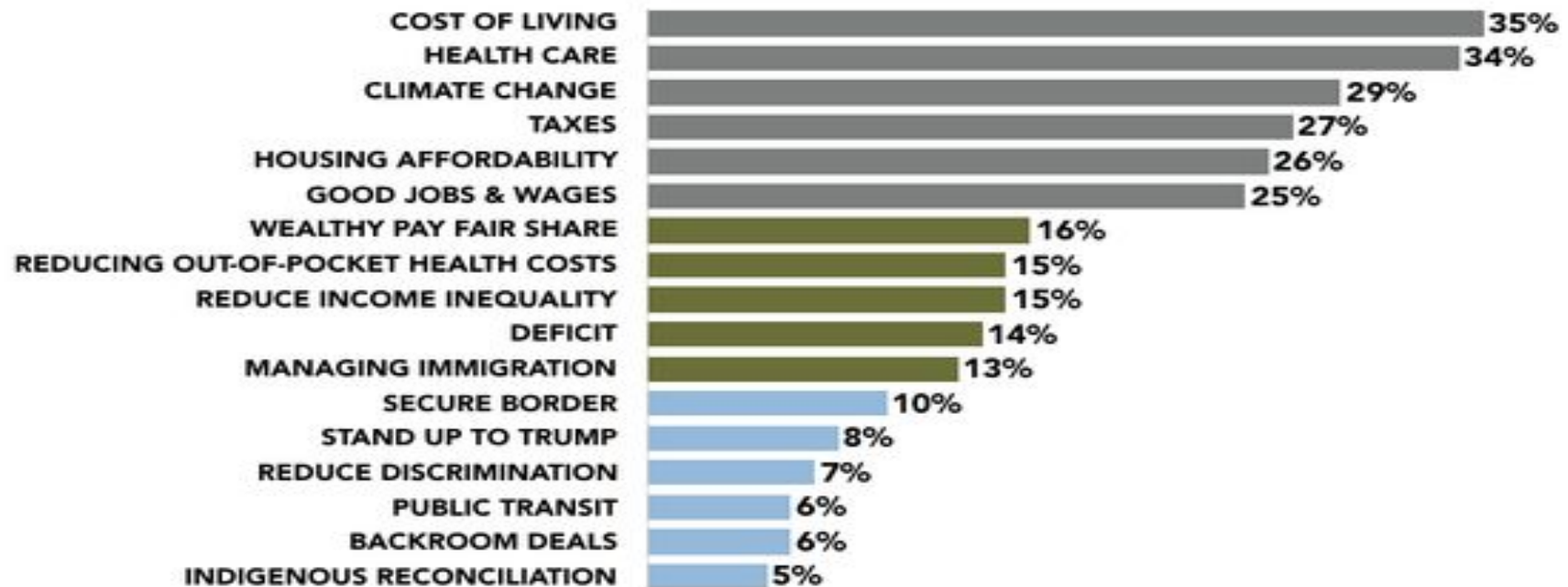


Stop Conservative cuts



MOST IMPORTANT ISSUES IN THE 2019 ELECTION

TOP 3 ISSUES IMPACTING YOUR VOTE



Thinking to the next election, which THREE issues are most likely to impact how you will vote?

EXTRA VOLATILITY IN THE ELECTORATE THIS YEAR?

- **Party base voters:** About half of Canadians vote for the same party over successive federal elections; core party loyalists (*LeDuc and Pammett, 2016*)
- **Vote switching:** About 25% change preferences due to weak partisan attachments
- **Newly eligible voters:** attain voting age, acquire citizenship, ex-pats regaining the right to vote this year (about another 25%)
- **Strategic voting:** voting not necessarily for your top choice in order to stop the party they disagree with the most
- A recent Mainstreet Research poll found that 62% of Canadians would consider voting strategically in the 2019 federal election

CAMPAIGNS DO MATTER

Electoral uncertainty and volatility underscore the importance of short-term factors over a campaign:

- Leadership image and performances: four new national leaders (Bernier, Blanchet, Scheer, and Singh)
- Political issues and party promises
- Networks of family members and friends
- Media coverage headlines and stories
- Leader's debates
- Party organization on the ground to get the vote out
- Surprise events, scandals, annoyances
- Presence/absence of incumbents in ridings

VOTE % OF WINNING PARTY IN RECENT FEDERAL ELECTIONS

Federal Election	Overall Turnout	Vote % of winning party	Majority Government	Minority Government
1988	75.3	42.9	Mulroney (PC)	
1993	69.6	41.3	Chrétien (L)	
1997	67.0	38.4	Chrétien (L)	
2000	61.2	40.8	Chrétien (L)	
2004	60.9	36.7		Martin (L)
2006	64.7	36.3		Harper (C)
2008	58.8	37.6		Harper (C)
2011	61.1	39.6	Harper (C)	
2015	68.0	39.5	Trudeau (L)	
2019				

THANK YOU

VOTE 2019

