

## Alberta's election was more about change, less about the NDP, say voters.

By Bruce Anderson & David Coletto

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We've just completed a major, in depth survey among 1,000 residents of Alberta. The second tranche of results is described here, and more of the data will be available in the coming weeks. Our first release, from earlier this week, can be found by clicking [here](#).

### WHAT HAPPENED?

We offered respondents a series of choices and asked them to pick which of the options best accounts for what happened in the election that resulted in an historic shift in the political landscape.

Here's what the results show:

- The vast majority (91%) said the result had nothing to do with preferring a female Premier. Only 9% overall and only 10% among women, said it was about electing a woman.
- Overwhelmingly, those surveyed say the result was more about a desire for change (93%) rather than a preference for the NDP (7%). NDP voters were as likely as everyone else to say it was more about change.
- Two thirds (67%) say the leaders' debate mattered; only 34% felt it was not that important. To underscore just how critical it was, those who voted NDP voters were 9 points more likely to say the debate mattered.
- More felt the result was about "cooling on Jim Prentice" (63%), than "warming to Rachel Notley" (37%). NDP voters were 14 points more likely to say it was about warming to Rachel Notley, while Wildrose voters were 14 points more likely to say it was about cooling towards Jim Prentice.
- More say this election was about anger (62%) than about "hope" (38%). Wildrose voters were more likely than others to say it was about anger, while NDP voters were more likely to say it was about hope.
- Most say the election had more to do with leadership (58%) than the economy (42%). Given the economic pressures faced by Alberta in recent months, this is well worth noting.

- The provincial budget was a prominent backdrop for the election call, and almost half (44%) said the result was about the budget. More (56%) said the election was about other things.
- The election was almost equally seen as an expression of “mood” (52%) as it was a choice made around “issues and policy” (48%). NDP supporters were far more inclined to see it as a issues based result, while PC and Wildrose voters said it was about mood.
- Finally, Albertans are equally divided on whether the result was about the province becoming united (51%) or being divided (49%). Perhaps, given the nature of the result, what is most remarkable is that so many people saw the result as having a unifying element or at least being about a shared feeling.

### What Caused this Result?

People wanted change	93%	7%	People like the NDP
Nothing to do with gender	91%	9%	About electing a woman
The leaders debate mattered	67%	34%	Debate not that important
People cooled on Prentice	63%	37%	People warmed to Notley
It was about anger	62%	38%	It was about hope
It was about leadership	58%	42%	It was about the economy
It was a vote for change	58%	42%	It was a vote about arrogance
It was about other things	56%	44%	It was about the budget
A vote about mood	52%	48%	It was about issues & policy
Albertans became united	51%	49%	Albertans were divided

### What Happened? – Difference from Average

	NDP voters	PC voters	Wildrose voters
People wanted change	ND	ND	+3
People like the NDP	ND	ND	-3
Albertans became united	+22	-22	-20
Albertans became divided	-22	+22	+20
It was about the budget	ND	-4	ND
It was about other things	ND	+4	ND
It was a vote about issues and policy	+19	-18	-17
It was a vote about mood	-19	+18	+17
The leaders debate mattered	+9	-10	-4
Debate not that important	-9	+10	+4

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When you think about what happened in the provincial election, which best describes what happened.

### What Happened? – Difference from Average

	NDP voters	PC voters	Wildrose voters
People cooled on Jim Prentice	-14	+6	+15
People warmed to Rachel Notley	+14	-6	-15
It was about leadership	+3	ND	+10
It was about the economy	-3	ND	-10
It was a vote for change	+5	ND	-14
It was a vote against arrogance	-5	ND	+14
It was about anger	-17	+13	+17
It was about hope	+17	-13	-17
Nothing to do with gender	ND	ND	+6
It was about electing a woman	ND	ND	-6

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When you think about what happened in the provincial election, which best describes what happened.

There were also interesting opinion differences by age, such as:

- Young people were more likely to say it was a vote about issues, older people more likely to say it was about mood.

- Young people were more likely to say it was about the economy, while older people were more likely to say it was about leadership.
- Older people were more likely to say it was a vote about anger and a reaction to arrogance, while younger people were more likely to say it was about hope and change.

## What Happened? – Difference from Average

	18 to 29	30 to 44	45 to 59	60+
It was a vote about issues and policy	+5	+6	-7	-4
It was about the economy	+16	+4	-7	-13
It was a vote for change	+11	+6	-8	-9
It was about hope	ND	+7	-3	-6
It was a vote about mood	-5	-5	+7	+4
It was about leadership	-16	-4	+7	+13
It was a vote against arrogance	-11	-6	+8	+9
It was about anger	ND	-7	+3	+6

### The Upshot?

This election is one of the most fascinating ones to have happened in Canada in recent times. These results indicate it was less about the economy than one might have expected, and while it resulted in the election of a female Premier, gender per se did not appear to play a big role in the outcome.

It was a “change from something” rather than a “change to something” election, and also more about the qualities people were looking for in a leader than specific policy ideas. Those who voted NDP clearly warmed to Rachel Notley, while many others who left the PC’s for the Wildrose were expressing disappointment in Jim Prentice.

While there was a fair bit of anger, there was also a considerable measure of hope. Inasmuch as 60% didn't vote NDP but only 25% are unhappy with the outcome, this challenges any notion that Alberta is today a place where partisanship and ideology are deeply rooted: most seem quite open to trying a different approach. Clearly, WRP and NDP voters had different priorities, but for most voters, if not for the most partisan of voters, these seem to be differences of degree more than fundamental direction.

## **Methodology**

Our survey was conducted online with 1,000 Alberta residents aged 18 and over from May 6 to 11, 2015. A random sample of panelists was invited to complete the survey from a large representative panel of Albertans, recruited and managed by Research Now, one of the world's leading provider of online research samples.

The Marketing Research and Intelligence Association policy limits statements about margins of sampling error for most online surveys. The margin of error for a comparable probability-based random sample of the same size is +/- 3.1%, 19 times out of 20. The data were weighted according to census data to ensure that the sample matched Alberta's population according to age, gender, educational attainment, and region of the province. Totals may not add up to 100 due to rounding.

### Sample Composition

Group	Weighted Count	Unweighted Count
Calgary CMA	367	367
Edmonton CMA	314	314
North	65	65
Central	147	147
South	109	109
Men	495	504
Women	507	498
18 to 29	236	127
39 to 44	264	314
45 to 59	291	332
60+	211	229
High school or less	388	175
College	303	398
University	311	429

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