

BRITISH COLUMBIA POLITICAL SCENE

Main Parties Separated by Just Three Points in British Columbia

Both Gordon Campbell (35%) and Carole James (27%) keep low approval ratings, and negative momentum scores.

[VANCOUVER – Apr. 29, 2009] - The two main contenders in British Columbia's provincial election are separated by just three percentage points, despite low approval ratings and negative momentum scores for their respective leaders, a new Angus Reid Strategies / CTV poll has found.

In the online survey of a representative provincial sample of 822 British Columbia adults, the governing BC Liberals are holding on to first place with 42 per cent (-1 since late March), with the opposition New Democratic Party (NDP) nipping at their heels with 39 per cent (+2).

The Green Party remains in third place with 13 per cent (=), followed by the BC Conservative party with three per cent (-1).

The remaining three per cent of decided voters would cast a ballot for an independent candidate in their riding.

A significant gender gap is developing in this campaign. Nearly half of women (48%) are supporting the NDP, while only 35 per cent are planning to vote for the BC Liberals. The governing party holds a 17-point lead over the NDP (48% to 31%) amongst male voters.

KEY FINDINGS

- **Voting Intention Among Decided Voters: BC Liberals 42%, BC NDP 39%, Green 13%, BC Con. 3%**
- **Voting Intention Among Absolutely Certain Voters: BC Liberals 43%, BC NDP 41%, Green 12%, BC Con. 2%**
- **Preferred Premier: Gordon Campbell 40%, Carole James 23%, Jane Sterk 5%, Not sure 32%**
- **Momentum Score: Gordon Campbell -25, Carole James -25, Jane Sterk +7**

Full topline results are at the end of this release

From April 24 to April 26, 2009 Angus Reid Strategies conducted an online survey among a randomly selected, representative sample of 822 adult residents of British Columbia who are Angus Reid Forum panelists. The margin of error—which measures sampling variability—is +/- 3.4%, 19 times out of 20. The results have been statistically weighted according to the most current education, age, gender and region Census data to ensure a sample representative of the entire adult population of British Columbia. Discrepancies in or between totals are due to rounding.

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Young voters—aged 18 to 34—are more likely to vote NDP (41%) and Green (19%) and less likely to support the BC Liberals (32%). Voters between the ages of 35 and 54 are the most likely to back the BC Liberals (48%), while the two main parties are tied among voters aged 55 and over (both at 42%).

Support for the major parties is starkly divided by region. The NDP are ahead in their traditional stronghold of Vancouver Island (44% to 34% for the BC Liberals) and have seen the biggest growth in Northern BC, where the opposition party now holds a four-point edge over the BC Liberals (45% to 41%). This is a region where the BC Liberals came close to getting half of the vote in 2005. The BC Liberal incumbents outside of the Peace River region are in serious trouble.

The BC Liberals are ahead of the NDP in Vancouver and Suburbs (43% to 37%), while in Surrey and the Fraser Valley their lead is larger (48% to 37%). These results are not significantly different from the last election. The BC Liberals still lead in the Interior (41% to 37%), but this is a drop from the 45 per cent they got in the region in 2005. Part of their votes have migrated to the BC Conservatives, who stand at five per cent in the Interior.

A majority of supporters of either of the two main parties claim they are not likely to change their mind before election day, with 57 per cent of BC Liberal voters and 54 per cent of NDP voters planning to stick with their current choice until May 12. However, only 30 per cent of Green Party voters are definitely going to vote for that party. This softness suggests that the Green Party's share of the vote may decline, most likely to the benefit of the NDP.

Issue

The most important issue facing British Columbia continues to be the economy (34%, -2 since late March), followed by Crime/Public Safety (13%, -6) and the environment and health care (both tied at 10%). Among BC Liberal voters, the economy jumps to 36 per cent as the top issue, while poverty is a key concern for NDP voters at 12 per cent.

Turnout

Turnout is going to be vitally important in this election. The proportion of respondents who say they are absolutely certain to vote is down from last month's Angus Reid poll. Amongst these absolutely certain voters, the race gets even tighter with the BC Liberals at 43 per cent, the NDP at 41 per cent and the Greens at 12 per cent. Turnout also varies by region, and could make the difference in several close ridings.

Despite the tight race, the campaign is not engaging voters. More than half of British Columbians (55%) say they are following the Canucks playoffs run more closely, while only 45 per cent are paying more attention to the provincial election campaign.

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Time for a Change

Half of British Columbians (50%) believe that it is time for a change in BC and that a different party should be elected into power, while only 37 per cent feel that the BC Liberals should be re-elected.

When Gordon Campbell's name was added to the question, 38 per cent of respondents (+8) thought "Gordon Campbell should be re-elected" while 46 per cent said it was time for a different premier.

Leadership

None of the leaders of the major parties are particularly popular. Only one in three (35%) approve of the performance of Premier and BC Liberal leader Gordon Campbell, while more than half (53%) disapprove, giving him a net approval score of -18. NDP leader Carole James fares no better with the same net approval score. In her case, only a quarter of respondents (27%) approve of her performance and nearly a half (49%) disapprove. Green Party leader Jane Sterk's lack of profile dwarfs her net approval score of -2, as nearly two-thirds (64%) do not have an opinion on her performance.

The leader of the two major parties had the same momentum score of -25. Fully 33 per cent of people say their impression of Gordon Campbell worsened in the last three months, compared to only eight percent who said it improved. Carole James's reputation declined in the eyes of 35 per cent, and improved for only one-in-ten British Columbians (10%). While Jane Sterk should be pleased with the only positive momentum score (+7), her biggest concern is that two-in-five respondents (41%) do not have enough information to form an impression of her.

Voters are also split on which leader they would most like to have dinner with, with 51 per cent preferring James and 49 per cent selecting Campbell.

Despite the relative evenness of their unpopularity, Campbell is clearly ahead of James when British Columbians are asked who would be the best premier. The incumbent head of government was picked by 40 per cent of respondents, with the current opposition leader a distant second at 23 per cent. Sterk was the choice of five per cent. It is worth noting that all party leaders scored lower in being the best premier than their parties did amongst decided voters.

Although Campbell is clearly ahead in the overall best premier contest, he does not dominate when respondents are asked which leader is better equipped to deal with certain issues. Campbell is seen as being best suited to deal with the economy (48%; three times higher than James's 16%), and crime (38% to 15% for James), but James is ahead on education (42% to Campbell's 25%) and health care (41% to 26% for Campbell).

Both leaders are essentially tied on who is best suited to deal with the environment (28% for James, 27% for Campbell). What is striking is that, despite all the effort by both parties on both the environment and

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crime, nearly half of respondents (45% and 47% respectively) do not choose either leader. There is a substantial leadership gap on both of these topics.

British Columbians are split on which leader is most likely to possess certain key attributes of leadership. Gordon Campbell is the popular choice for having a vision for the future of British Columbia (57% to James's 43%), being a strong and decisive leader (54% to James's 21%) and inspiring confidence (29% to James's 19%). On the other hand James is more likely to be regarded as honest and trustworthy (41% to Campbell's 19%), and as a person who understands the problems of people in BC (45% to Campbell's 31%) and generally agrees with people on the issues they care about (35% to 29%).

When it comes to the most important issue, the economy, respondents were asked to select which attribute they would rather have in a premier during the recession, competence or empathy. Three-in-four respondents (75%) choose competence, while only 25 per cent pick empathy.

Carbon Tax

The carbon tax introduced in July 2008 has become an issue in the election. The BC Liberals have been scolded for raising the cost of living in the Interior and Northern BC, while the NDP has been criticized by key figures in the environmental movement for promising to "axe the tax" if they form the next government.

Three-in-ten respondents say that the carbon tax has affected the finances of their household in some way (9% severely, 21% moderately), with this number rising in the Interior to 37 per cent; and to 40 per cent in Northern BC.

As an issue, the carbon tax is driving votes away from the BC Liberals, with three-in-five respondents (62%) saying they are less likely to support the governing party on account of this particular policy. Four-in-five NDP voters (80%) and 57 per cent of Green Party voters say the carbon tax makes them less likely to support the BC Liberals.

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British Columbia Political Scene

If a provincial election were held tomorrow in British Columbia, which one of the following parties would you be most likely to support in your constituency?

	Decided Voters	Respondents who are absolutely certain to vote on May 12
BC Liberals	42%	43%
New Democratic Party (NDP)	39%	41%
Green Party	13%	12%
BC Conservative Party	3%	2%
An independent candidate	3%	3%

British Columbia Political Scene - TREND

If a provincial election were held tomorrow in British Columbia, which one of the following parties would you be most likely to support in your constituency? – **Decided Voters**

	November 2008	March 2009	April 2009
BC Liberals	39%	43%	42%
New Democratic Party (NDP)	44%	37%	39%
Green Party	11%	13%	13%
BC Conservative Party	n.a.	4%	3%
An independent candidate	n.a.	n.a.	3%

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	Regional Breakdowns				
	Vancouver and Suburbs	Vancouver Island	Interior	Surrey and Fraser Valley	North
BC Liberals	43%	34%	41%	48%	41%
New Democratic Party (NDP)	37%	44%	37%	37%	45%
Green Party	13%	16%	13%	11%	5%
BC Conservative Party	2%	4%	5%	3%	0%
Other	4%	0%	4%	1%	10%

British Columbia Political Scene

If a provincial election were held tomorrow in British Columbia, which one of the following parties would you be most likely to support in your constituency? – **Decided Voters**

	Gender		Age			Income			Education		
	Male	Female	18-34	35-54	55+	<\$50K	\$50-99K	>\$50K	HS or less	Coll/ Tech	Univ+
BC Liberals	48%	35%	32%	48%	42%	31%	44%	53%	43%	44%	39%
New Democratic Party (NDP)	31%	48%	41%	35%	42%	45%	38%	30%	40%	37%	41%
Green Party	14%	12%	19%	12%	10%	18%	12%	11%	11%	14%	11%
BC Conservative Party	3%	2%	4%	1%	4%	3%	3%	2%	4%	1%	5%
Other	4%	3%	3%	4%	3%	3%	2%	4%	2%	3%	4%

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Approval for Party Leaders			
Do you approve or disapprove of the performance of...?			
	Approve	Disapprove	Not sure
Premier and BC Liberals leader Gordon Campbell	35% (+1)	53% (+2)	13% (-2)
BC New Democratic Party (NDP) leader Carole James	27% (-2)	49% (+6)	25% (-3)
Green Party leader Jane Sterk	17% (=)	19% (-2)	64% (+1)

Momentum for Party Leaders				
Over the course of the past two months, would you say your opinion of the following party leaders and parties has improved, stayed the same or worsened?				
	Improved	Stayed the same	Worsened	Not sure
Gordon Campbell	8% (+2)	54% (+3)	33% (-3)	5% (-1)
Carole James	10% (-4)	48% (-8)	35% (+16)	8% (-3)
Jane Sterk	13% (+7)	40% (-9)	6% (-2)	41% (+1)

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Preferred Premier

Of the following provincial party leaders, which one do you think would be the best Premier of British Columbia?

Gordon Campbell	40% (+4)
Carole James	23% (-2)
Jane Sterk	5% (=)
Not sure	32% (-1)

State of the Province

Overall, do you think British Columbia is on the right track, or the wrong track?

Right track	34% (+2)
Wrong track	36% (+1)
Not sure	31% (-1)

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Time for Change	
Half Sample - Thinking about British Columbia, which one of these two statements comes closest to your own point of view?	
It is time for a change in government in British Columbia—a different provincial party should be elected into power	50% (+2)
It is not time for a change in government in British Columbia—the BC Liberals should be re-elected	37% (-2)
Not sure	14% (+1)

Time for Change	
Half Sample - Thinking about British Columbia, which one of these two statements comes closest to your own point of view?	
It is time for a change in government in British Columbia—a different premier should be elected into power	46% (-8)
It is not time for a change in government in British Columbia—Gordon Campbell should be re-elected	38% (+8)
Not sure	15% (-1)

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The Leaders and the Issues

Which of these leaders is best suited to deal with each of the following issues?

	Gordon Campbell	Carole James	None of these / Not sure
Economy	48%	16%	36%
Environment	27%	28%	45%
Health Care	26%	41%	32%
Education	25%	42%	33%
Crime	38%	15%	47%

Qualities and Characteristics

Thinking about the following qualities and characteristics, please say whether you think they apply to Gordon Campbell / Carole James? – Apply listed

	Gordon Campbell	Carole James
Has a vision for the future of British Columbia	57% (+4)	43% (+1)
Is a strong and decisive leader	54% (+9)	21% (-2)
Understands the problems of BC residents	31% (=)	45% (=)
Generally agrees with you on issues you care about	29% (+1)	35% (+1)
Inspires confidence	29% (+2)	19% (-4)
Is honest and trustworthy	19% (=)	41% (=)

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Issues	
Which of the following would you rather have dinner with?	
Carole James	51%
Gordon Campbell	49%

Issues	
Which is the best attribute for a premier to have in a recession?	
Competence – The ability to do what is necessary to help the economy	75%
Empathy – The ability to understand the needs and feelings of ordinary people	25%

Issues	
Which are you following more closely?	
The Canucks playoff run	55%
The provincial election campaign	45%

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Carbon Tax

On July 1, 2008, a carbon tax was implemented in British Columbia. After nearly a year with the carbon tax, which of these statements comes closest to your own point of view?

The carbon tax has severely affected the finances of my household	9%
The carbon tax has moderately affected the finances of my household	21%
The carbon tax has slightly affected the finances of my household	35%
The carbon tax has not affected the finances of my household at all	35%

Carbon Tax

Has the Carbon Tax made you more or less likely to vote for the BC Liberal Party?

Much more likely	8%
Moderately more likely	29%
Moderately less likely	33%
Much less likely	29%

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Most Important Issue Facing BC	
What do you think is the most important issue facing British Columbia today?	
The Economy	34% (-2)
Crime / Public Safety	13% (-6)
Health Care	10% (+2)
Environment	10% (+5)
Poverty	6% (+2)
Leadership	5% (-1)
Homelessness	5% (=)
Drug Traffic / Drug Use	3% (-2)
Education	3% (+1)
Tax relief	2% (-1)
Housing	2% (-1)
Aboriginal affairs	1% (=)
Municipal Funding, Services, & Powers	1% (=)
Day Care / Child Care	1% (=)
Energy / Electricity	1% (+1)
Other	4% (+1)

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Angus Reid Strategies is a full-service polling and market research firm which is a leader in the use of the Internet and rich media technology to collect high-quality, in-depth insights for a wide array of clients. Dr. Angus Reid and the Angus Reid Strategies team are pioneers in online research methodologies, and have been conducting online surveys since 1995.

Angus Reid Strategies, along with its sister company, Vision Critical, is now the largest Canadian-owned market research enterprise. In addition to its five offices in Canada—located in Vancouver, Calgary, Regina, Toronto, and Montreal—the firm also has offices in San Francisco, Chicago, New York, London, Paris and Sydney. Its team of specialists provides solutions across every type and sector of research, and currently serves over 200 international clients.

Angus Reid Strategies polls are conducted using the Angus Reid Forum online panel (www.angusreidforum.com), which is recruited via an industry-leading process that incorporates a randomized, widespread invitation approach and a triple opt-in screening procedure. The panel is maintained through state-of-the-art sampling techniques and frequent verifications of personal identity, contact information, and demographic characteristics. This premier online survey platform presents respondents with highly visual, interactive, and engaging surveys, ensuring that panel members provide thoughtful and reliable responses.

Angus Reid Strategies, the only public opinion firm to exclusively use online methods to follow the views of the electorate during the 2008 federal campaign, offered the most accurate prediction of the results of Canada's 40th election.

http://angusreidstrategies.com/uploads/pages/pdfs/2008.10.15_Election.pdf

Since 2006, Angus Reid Strategies has covered six provincial elections in Canada—more than any other pollster in the country—and the results have accurately predicted the outcome of each of these democratic processes.

*http://angusreidstrategies.com/uploads/pages/pdfs/2008.03.28_Anniversary_1.pdf
http://www.angusreidstrategies.com/uploads/pages/pdfs/2008.12.09_QuebecElection.pdf*

More information on the way Angus Reid Strategies conducts public opinion research can be found at <http://www.angusreidstrategies.com/uploads/pages/pdfs/ARS.ARF.WP.pdf>

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**For more information, please contact
our spokesperson listed in the footnote.**

**Copies of this poll are available on our website:
www.angusreidstrategies.com**

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