



ABACUS DATA

Politics in Newfoundland and Labrador

A survey of eligible voters on federal and provincial politics.

Bruce Anderson

David Coletto

March 3, 2015



Methodology

Survey Methodology	<p>653 eligible voters in NL were surveyed using live telephone interviewers and RDD sample.</p> <p>The margin of error for the survey is $\pm 3.9\%$, 19 times out of 20.</p>
Field dates	February 17 to 25, 2015
Statistical Weighting	Data was weighted by age, gender, education and region according to census data from Newfoundland and Labrador
Sample Composition (unweighted counts)	Avalon/St. John's Region 271 Eastern Newfoundland 84 Central Newfoundland 137 Western Newfoundland 92 Labrador 69

Summary

According to a new Abacus Data random telephone survey of 653 eligible voters in Newfoundland and Labrador conducted from February 17 to 25, 2015, the NL Liberals continue to hold a large lead over the PC Party.

The Liberals lead the Tories by 25-points with support for the Liberals at 57% among committed voters compared with 32% for the Tories and 9% for the NDP. Liberal support is up 9-points since August, while the PC support is down 2, and NDP support is down 5.

More concerning for the PC Party is the finding that fewer eligible voters would even consider voting PC. Four in ten eligible voters said they would consider voting PC while 48% said they would not consider voting PC. That is an eleven point decrease from August 2014.. This compared with 65% of eligible voters who said they would consider voting Liberal.

Other findings from the survey include:

- 72% think the Liberals will win the next NL election; 15% picked the PCs and 2% picked the NDP.
- Top provincial issues: economy/jobs (27%), healthcare (20%), budget deficit (13%).
- 39% think NL is headed in the right direction; 40% think it is off on the wrong track.
- Impression of Liberal leader Dwight Ball - 47% positive, 30% neutral, 13% negative
- Impression of PC leader Paul Davis – 32% positive, 36% neutral, 26% negative
- 51% approved of Premier Davis' dispute with the federal government over the CETA.
- 54% approved of the decision to reduce number of seats in House of Assembly from 48 to 40.
- 65% of those who voted PC in 2011, but now support another party or undecided say there is **nothing** the PC Party can do that would make them support it again.

Federally, the Liberal Party of Canada holds a commanding 35-point lead over the Conservative Party in Newfoundland and Labrador among committed voters. 58% of committed voters said they would vote Liberal if an election was held at the time of survey, compared with 23% for the Conservatives and 16% for the NDP.

Near the end of the survey, respondents were asked who – NDP MP Ryan Cleary or Liberal candidate Seamus O'Regan – running in St. John's South – Mount Pearl – would they rather see representing NL 's interests in Ottawa. Cleary edged out O'Regan across the province 40% to 36%. On the Avalon Peninsula and in St. John's Cleary's lead was six-points over O'Regan.



ABACUS DATA

Provincial Leaders, Issues, Direction and Government Performance



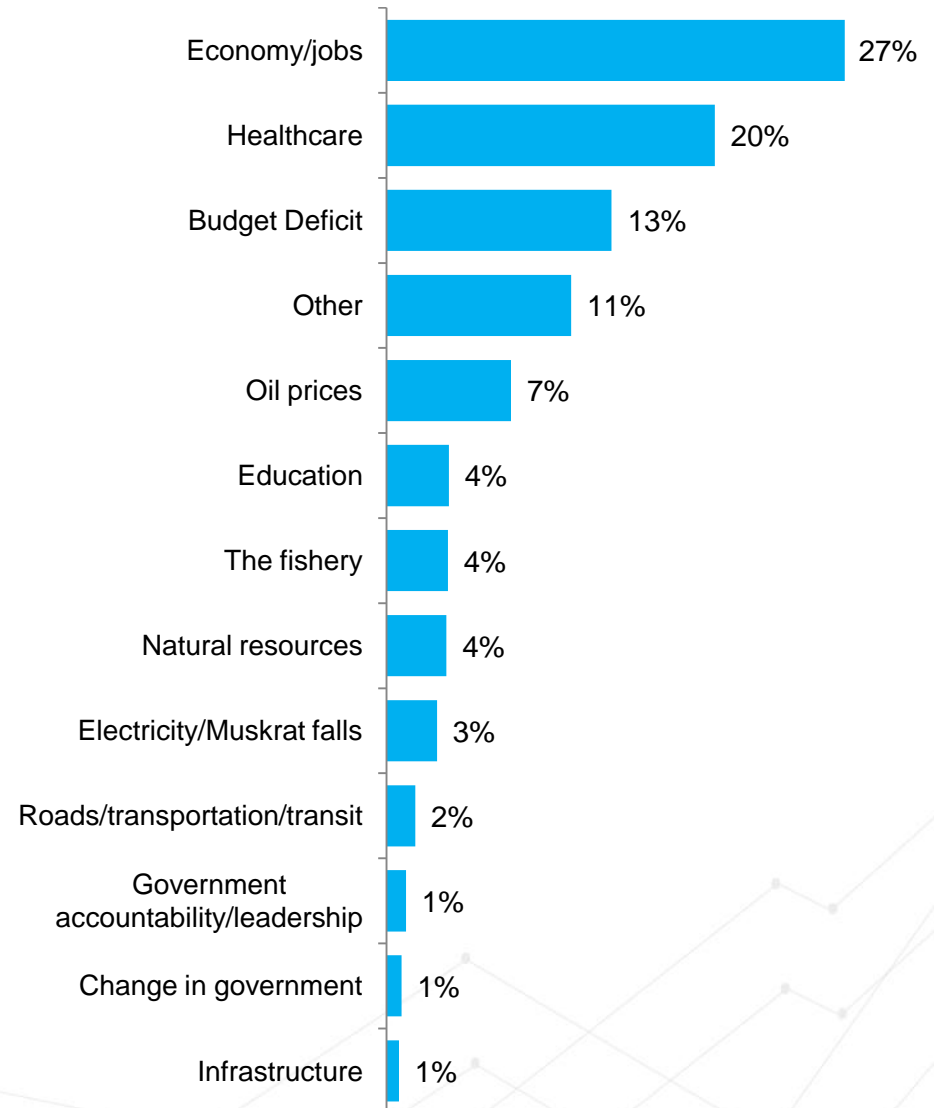
Top Issues

Respondents were asked what the most important issue facing Newfoundland and Labrador was unprompted.

There was no consensus choice but the economy and jobs, health care, and the budget deficit were the top three elected issues.

Other issues identified by respondents included oil prices, the fishery, natural resources, and infrastructure.

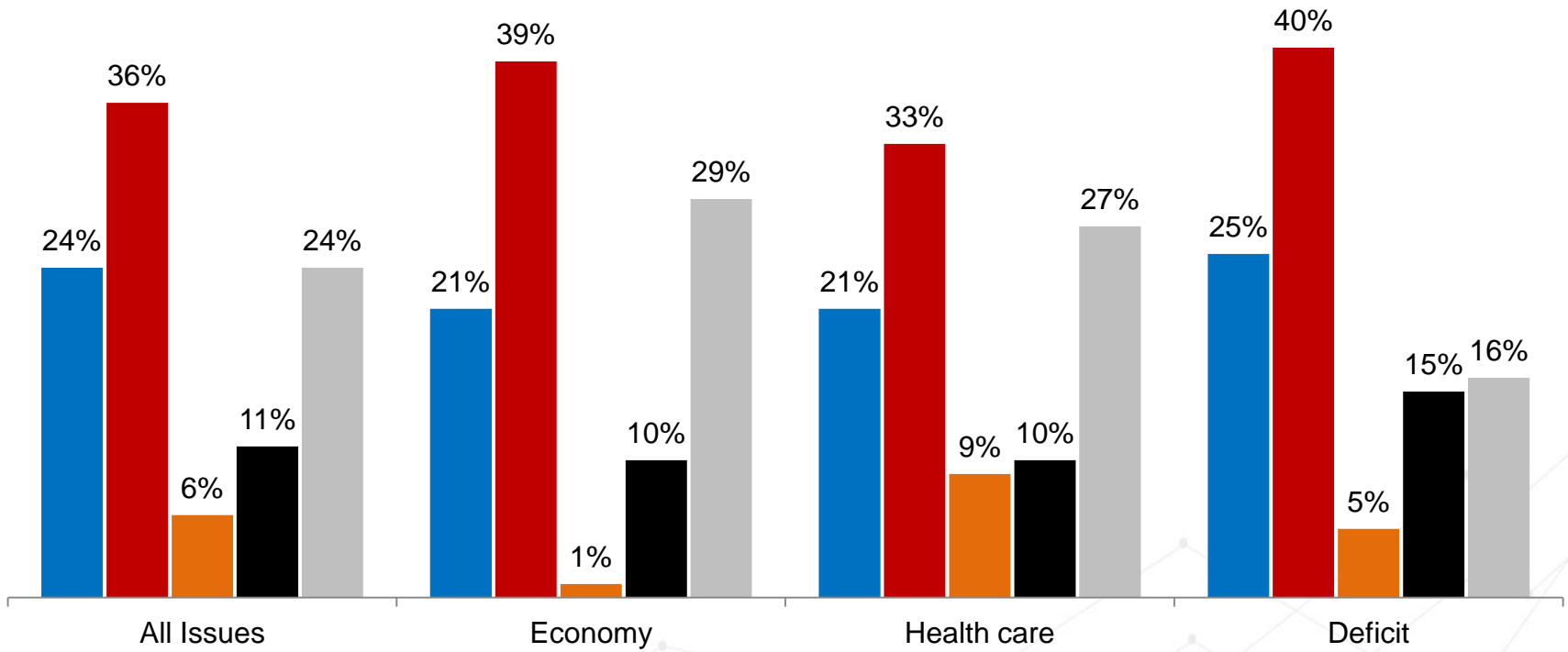
Most Important facing NL today?



Best Able to Handle Top Issue

After asking respondents to identify their top issue, we asked respondents which NL political party is best able to deal with the issue. Overall, 36% of respondents believed the Liberals would best handle the issue they thought was most important while 24% selected the PC Party. 24% were unsure while 11% said none of the parties could handle the issue they thought was most important.

On the top three issues, the Liberals lead the PCs by 12 to 18 points when respondents are asked which party is best able to manage the issue of concern.



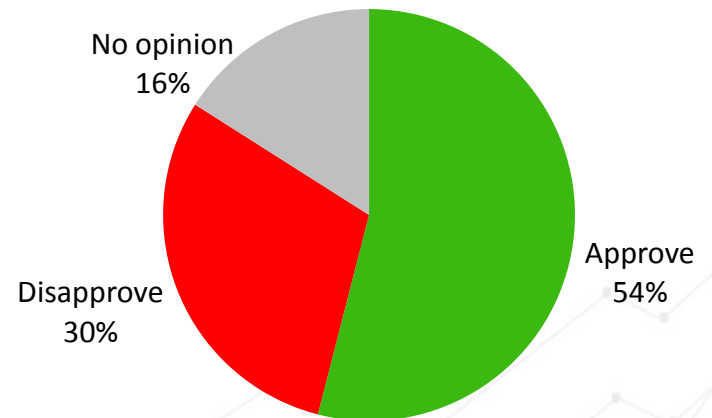
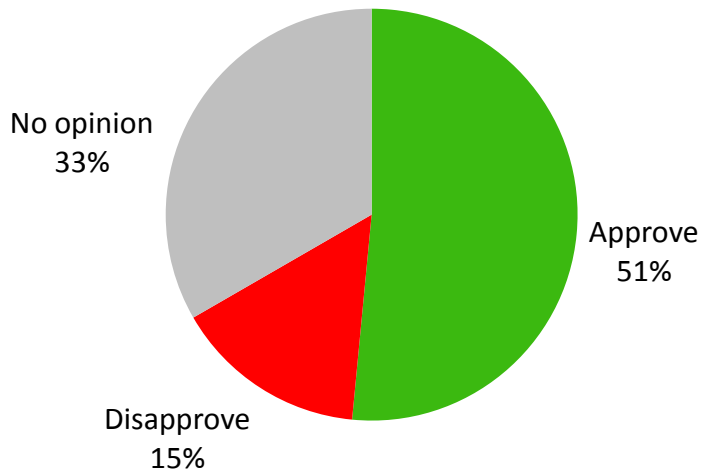
CETA and Reducing Number of Seats in House of Assembly

The survey also asked respondents whether they approved or disapproved of NL Premier Davis' dispute with the federal government over the Canada-Europe free trade agreement and with the government's decision to reduce the number of seats in the House of Assembly from 48 to 40. In both cases, a slight majority of respondents approved with the actions of the Premier and the provincial government.

Approval of the dispute with the federal government crossed all party supporters (PC supporters 59%, Liberal supporters 48%, NDP supporters 53%). Similarly, approval of the decision to reduce the number of seats in the House of Assembly crossed all parties (PC 68%, Liberal 50%, NDP 49%).

Premier Davis' dispute with the federal government over the Canada-Europe free trade agreement.

The provincial government's decision to reduce the number of seats in the House of Assembly from 48 to 40.

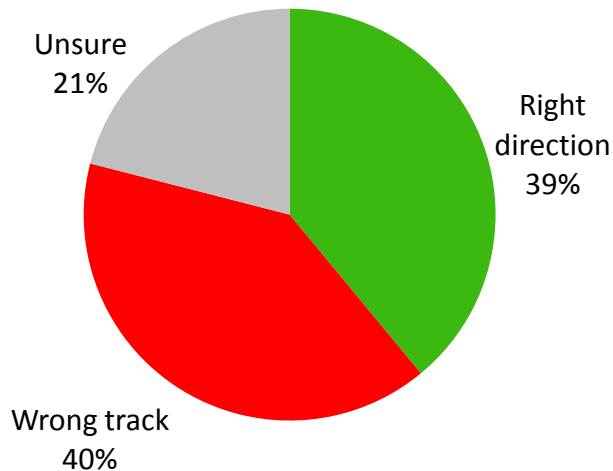


Direction of the Province and Performance of the Government

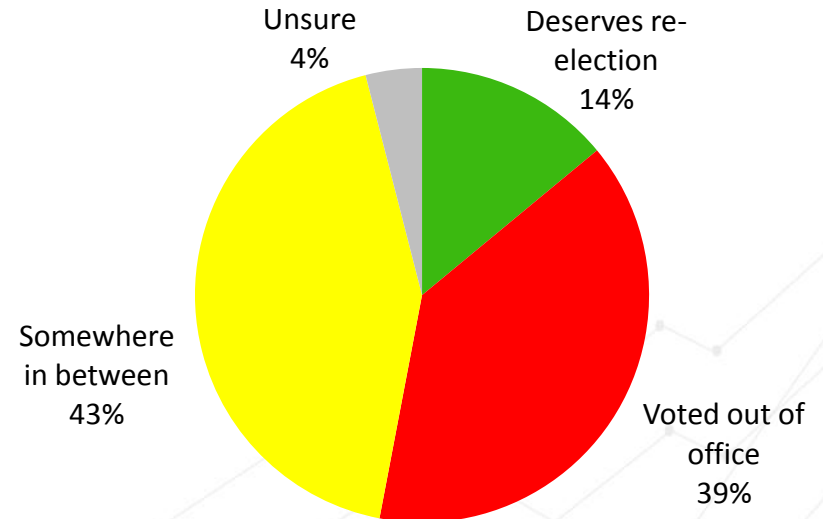
Eligible voters in NL are split about the general direction of the province. Four in ten respondents (39%) think the province is heading in the right direction while 40% think its headed off on the wrong track. There was little variation across demographic or regional subgroups.

When asked whether the provincial government has performed well enough to deserve re-election or performed worse enough to be voted out of office, the plurality of eligible voters believed it was somewhere in between (43%) with another 39% thinking the government should be voted out of office. Only 14% of eligible voters in NL think the government has performed well enough to deserve re-election.

Generally speaking, do you think things in Newfoundland and Labrador are headed in the right direction or are they off on the wrong track?



In terms of how the current provincial government has performed since the last election, in your view have they governed well enough to deserve re-election or poorly enough to be voted out of office, or is your opinion somewhere in between?



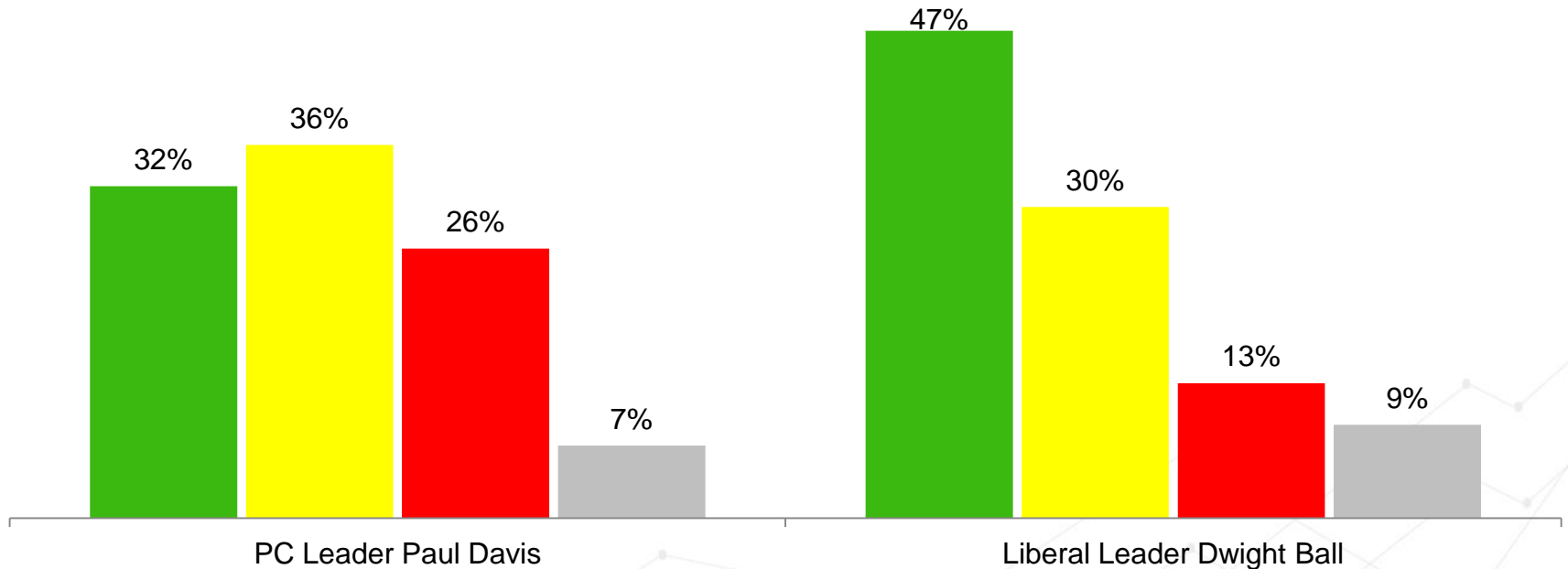
All Respondents, n= 653

Leadership Favourability

Liberal Leader Dwight Ball is viewed much more positively than PC Leader and Premier Paul Davis. Almost a majority of eligible voters in NL have a positive impression of the NL Liberal Leader while only 13% view him negatively. His net +34 rating is significantly better than the net +6 rating for the Premier, Paul Davis.

In his own right, Paul Davis' personal numbers are still relatively good. More people in NL have a positive impression of him than a negative impression.

Since our last survey in August 2014, Mr. Ball's personal numbers have only changed slightly with his positive rating down six points (from 53% to 47%) and his negatives only up one percentage point. In contrast, Mr. Davis' personal numbers are down sharply since he became premier. In August 2014, 46% of respondents had a positive impression of Mr. Davis, a difference of 14-points from our most recent survey.





ABACUS DATA

Provincial Vote Intention



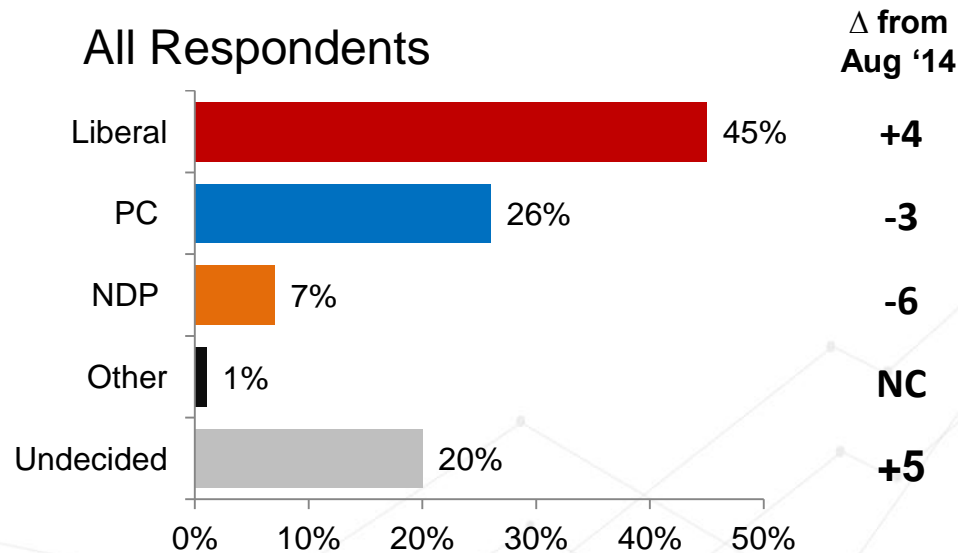
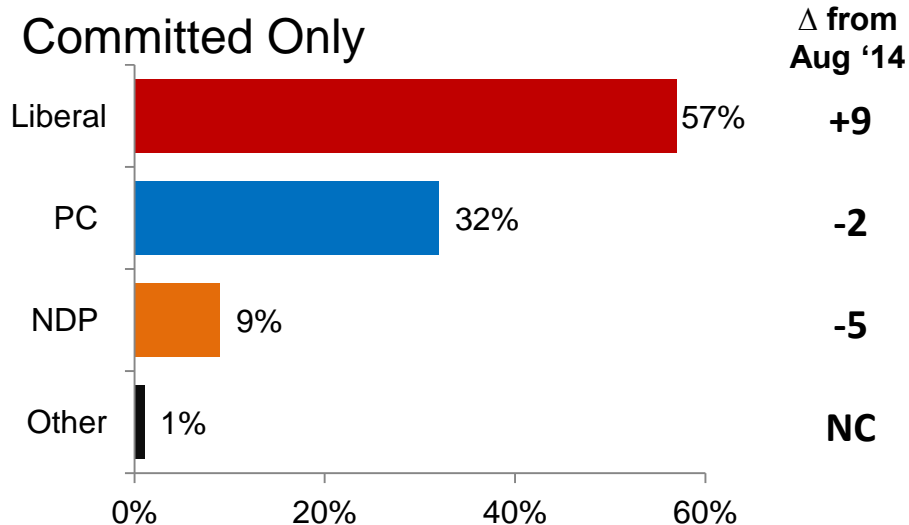
Provincial Horse Race

The NL Liberal Party leads the PC Party by 25 points in our most recent survey. The Liberals have the support of 57% of committed voters, up nine points from our survey in August 2014.

The PCs have the support of 32% of committed voters, down slightly since August (down 2).

The NDP has seen the largest drop in its support, going from 16% in August 2014 to 9% in our most recent survey.

Currently, 20% of eligible voters say they are undecided, up five points since August 2014.

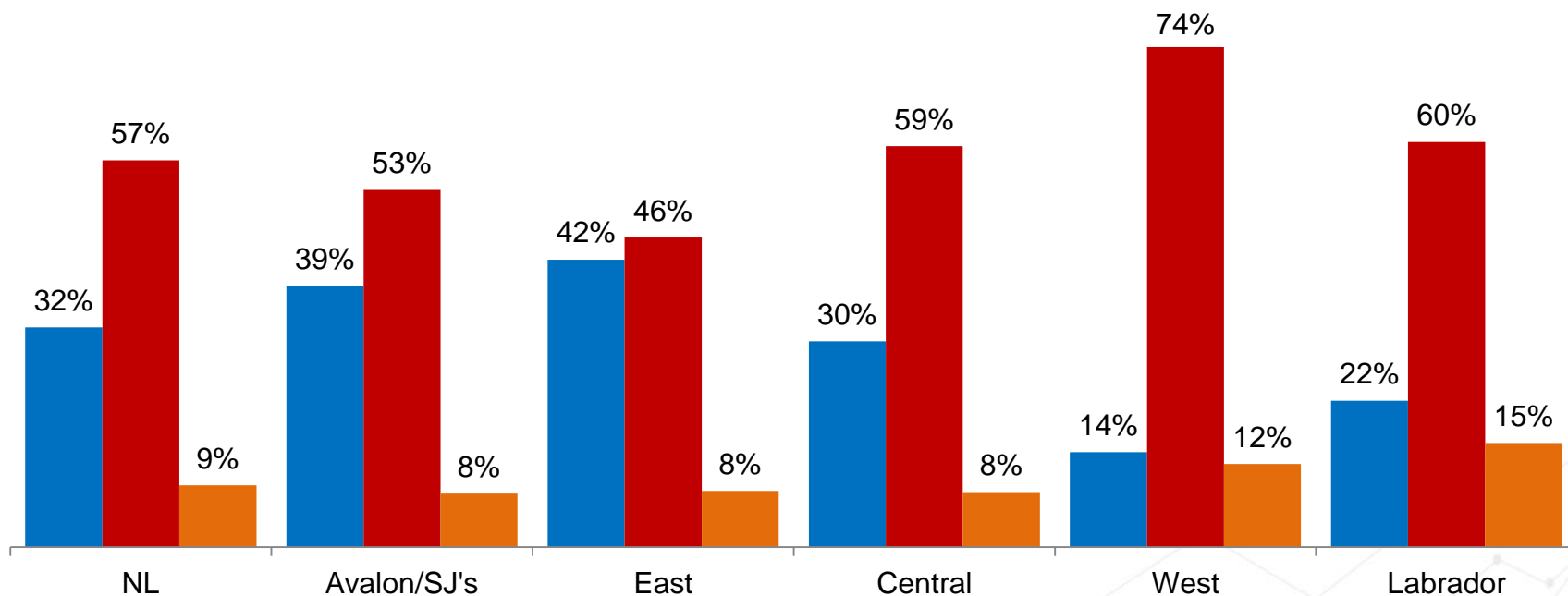


Provincial Horse Race - Regional

Regionally, the NL Liberals lead in every region of the province however, the race is much closer in eastern Newfoundland and on the Avalon Peninsula and in St. John's.

In Avalon and St. John's, the Liberals have a 14-point lead over the Tories, leading 53% to 39% among committed voters. The Liberal lead is only 4 points in eastern Newfoundland.

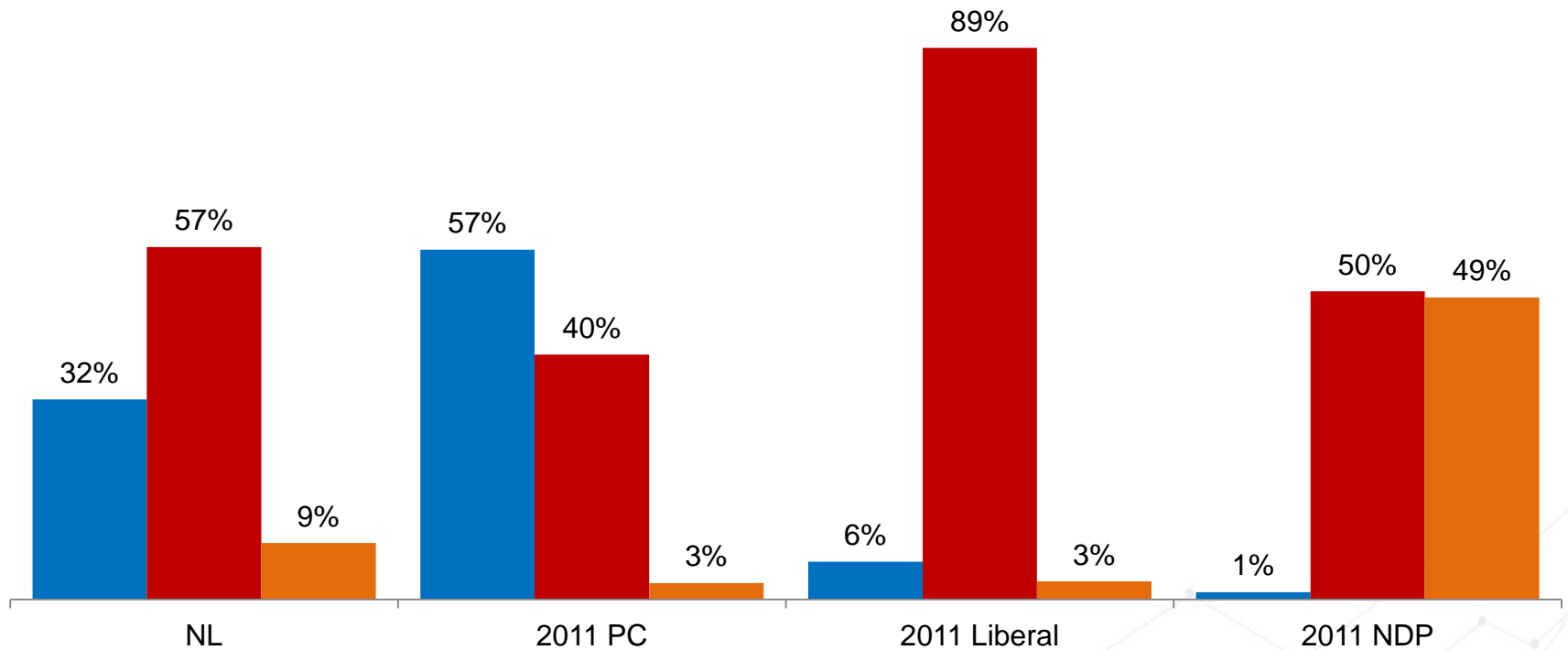
Heading west, the Liberal lead grows substantially to 29 points in central Newfoundland, 60 points in western Newfoundland, and to 38% in Labrador. Note, the sample size in these regions are small so caution should be used when making conclusions about the state of the race in each.



Provincial Horse Race – Past Vote

The Liberals hold such a large lead because they have effectively taken a significant number of supporters from each of their competitors. When we compare current vote intention and past vote choice we find that the Liberals have held 89% of their past support while the Tories and NDP have held only about half of their previous support.

Among those who voted PC in 2011, 57% say they would vote PC today but 40% say they would vote Liberal. Similarly, among those who voted NDP in 2011, 49% would stay with the NDP while 50% would vote Liberal.



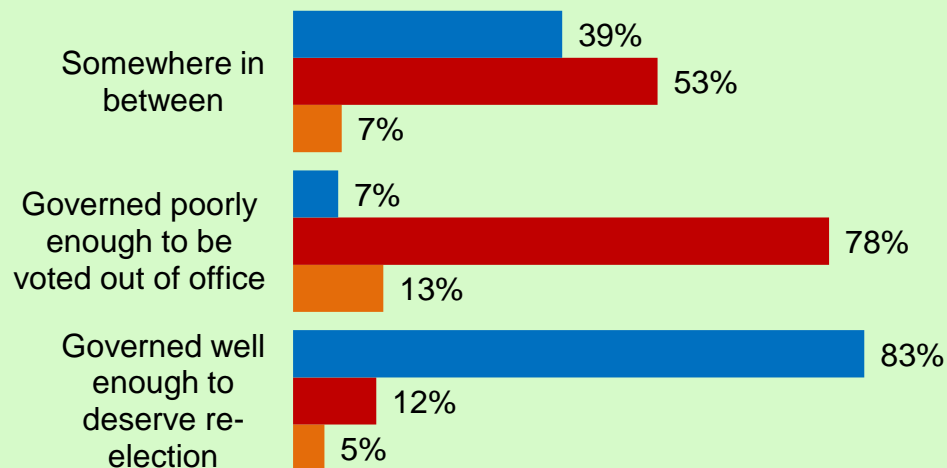
Provincial Horse Race – Drivers

Another reason the NL Liberals have opened up such a significant lead is that they lead the Tories among those who believe the provincial government's performance is somewhere between well enough to deserve re-election and poorly enough to be voted out of office. A majority of those who believe the government's performance has been somewhere in between say they will vote Liberal.

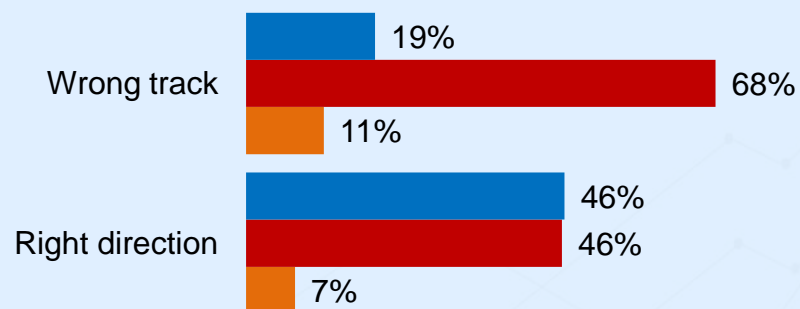
This indicates that the desire for change and affinity towards Dwight Ball are pushing people in the direction of the Liberals, even though many people have a positive impression of Paul Davis and are not angry at how he has performed as Premier.

Further evidence of this problem for the PCs comes in the finding that less than half of committed voters who think the province is headed in the right direction would vote PC. Among committed voters who think NL is heading in the right direction (39%), 46% would vote PC and 46% would vote Liberal.

Vote by Performance of Provincial Government



Vote by Direction of Province



If a provincial election was held today, which party would you vote for in your electoral district? Would you vote?

All Respondents, n= 653

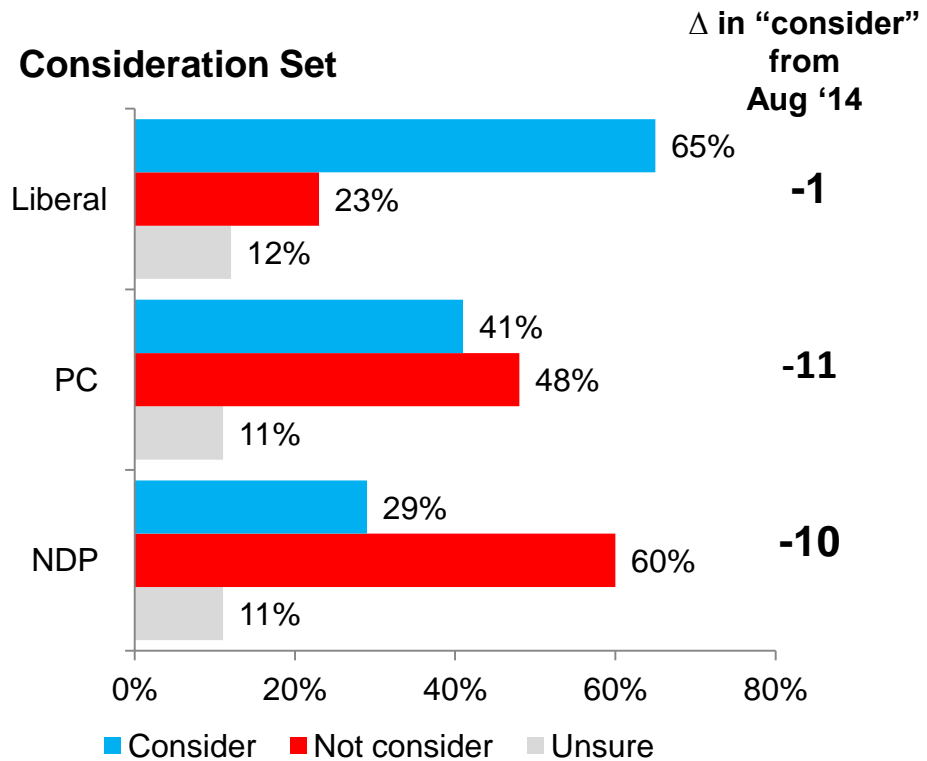
Vote Consideration

We also asked respondents whether they would consider voting for the three main political parties in Newfoundland and Labrador.

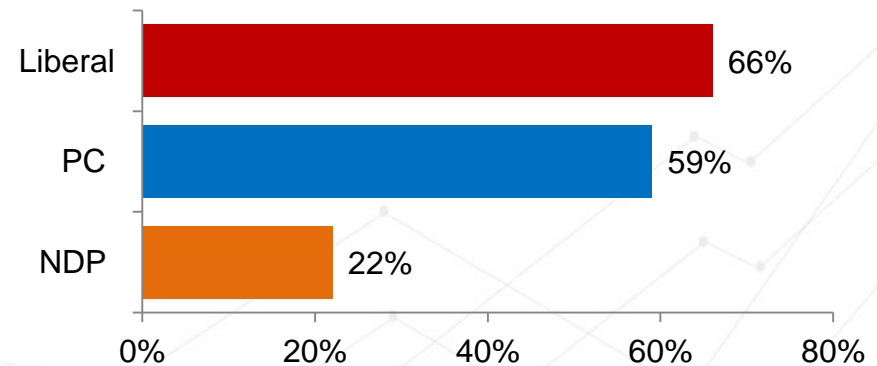
Overall, the NL Liberals have the largest pool of accessible voters with 65% of eligible voters saying they would consider voting Liberal. Considering that 45% of eligible voters would vote Liberal, the party's conversation rate is an impressive 66%.

For the incumbent PCs, they not only trail the Liberals in vote intention, but they have a much smaller pool of potential supporters than the Official Opposition and that pool is shrinking. Four in ten eligible voters said they would consider voting PC while 48% said they would not consider voting PC. That is an eleven point decrease from August 2014. The PC Party's conversion rate is 59% indicating that there is still an opportunity for the party to convert potential supporters into actual supporters.

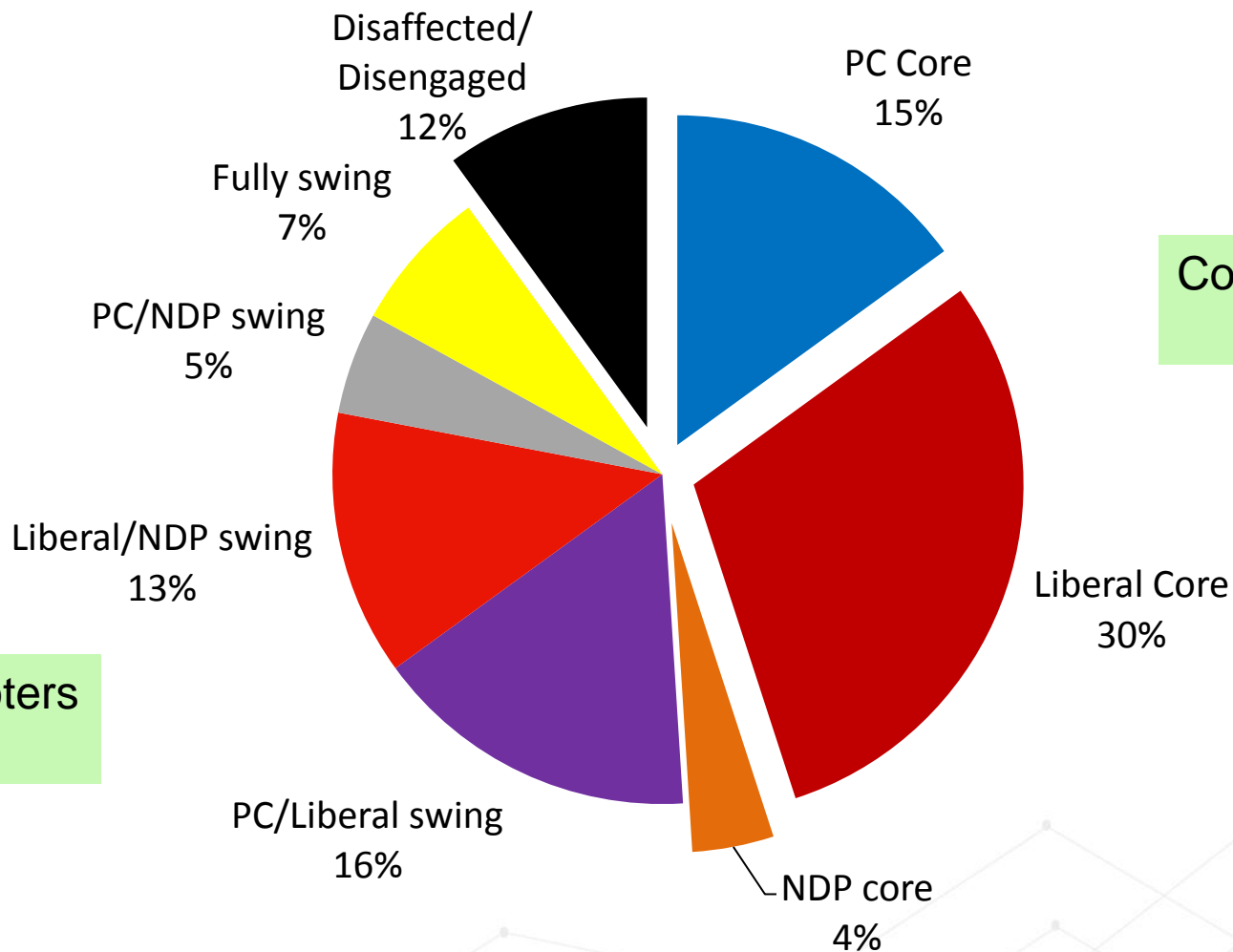
For the NDP, the situation is more challenging. Only 29% of eligible voters in NL would consider voting NDP and the party's conversion rate is 22%. This may change once the party selects a new leader but for now, the NDP has fallen in both vote intention and vote consideration.



Conversion Rate: Consider to Voter



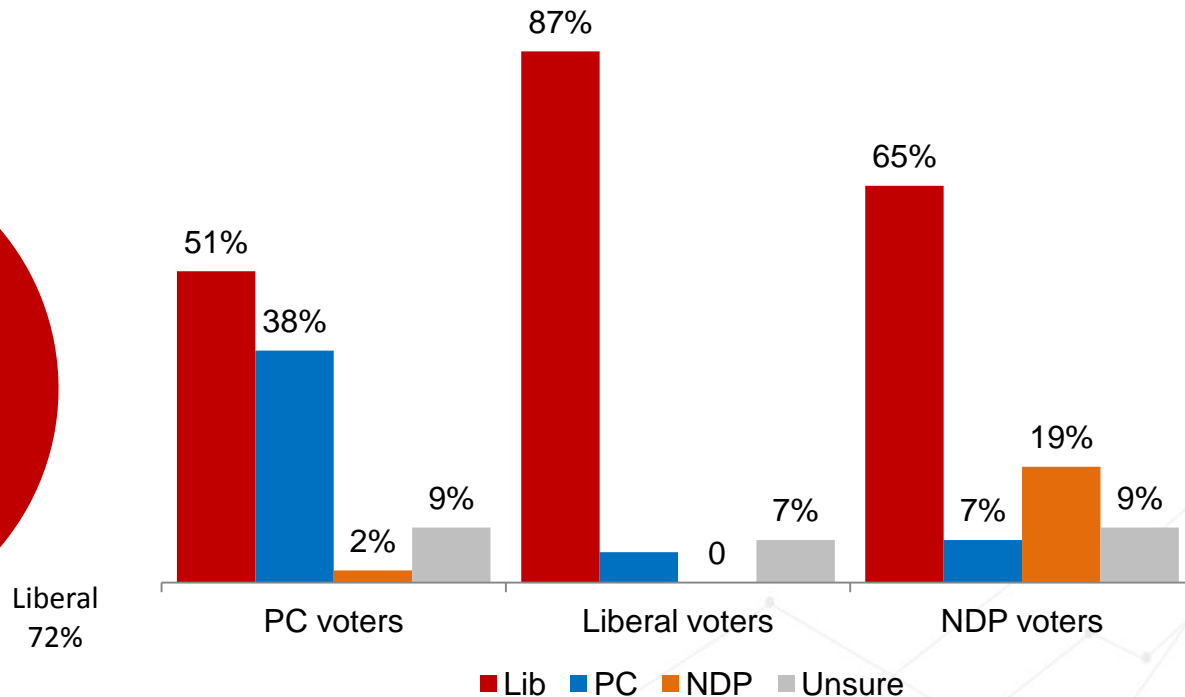
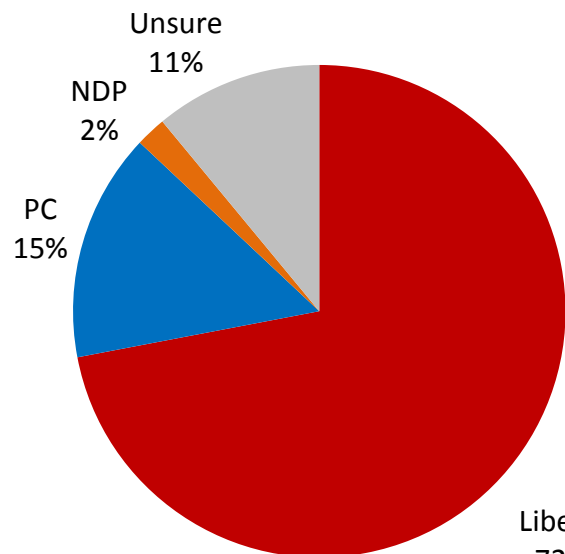
The Provincial Electorate in NL



Who will win the next PROVINCIAL election?

Perhaps most troubling for the NL PC Party is the fact that only 15% of eligible voters think it will win the next provincial election. The Liberals are clear favourites with seven in ten predicting that it will win the next provincial election.

Even among PC supporters, a majority think the Liberals will win the next election while just over one in three think the PC Party will win.



Which party do you think will win the next provincial election in Newfoundland and Labrador?

All Respondents, n= 653



ABACUS DATA

Federal Politics in NL



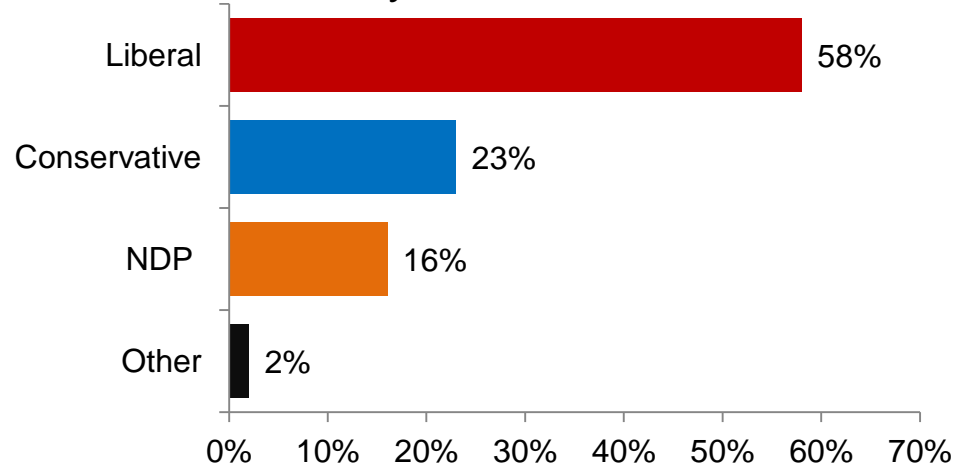
Federal Horse Race

The federal Liberal Party holds a commanding 35-point lead over the Conservative Party in Newfoundland and Labrador among committed voters.

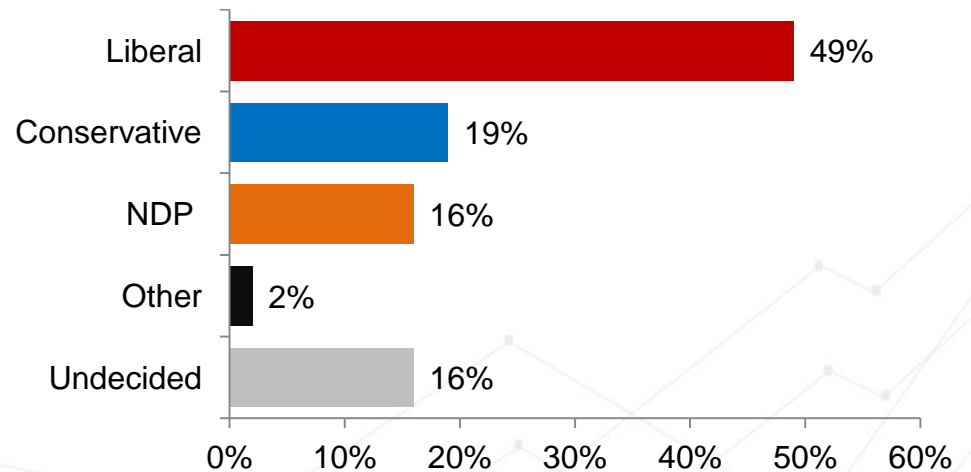
58% of committed voters said they would vote Liberal if an election was held at the time of survey, compared with 23% for the Conservatives and 16% for the NDP. 16% of respondents were undecided.

The Liberals led among men and women, and among all age groups.

Committed Only

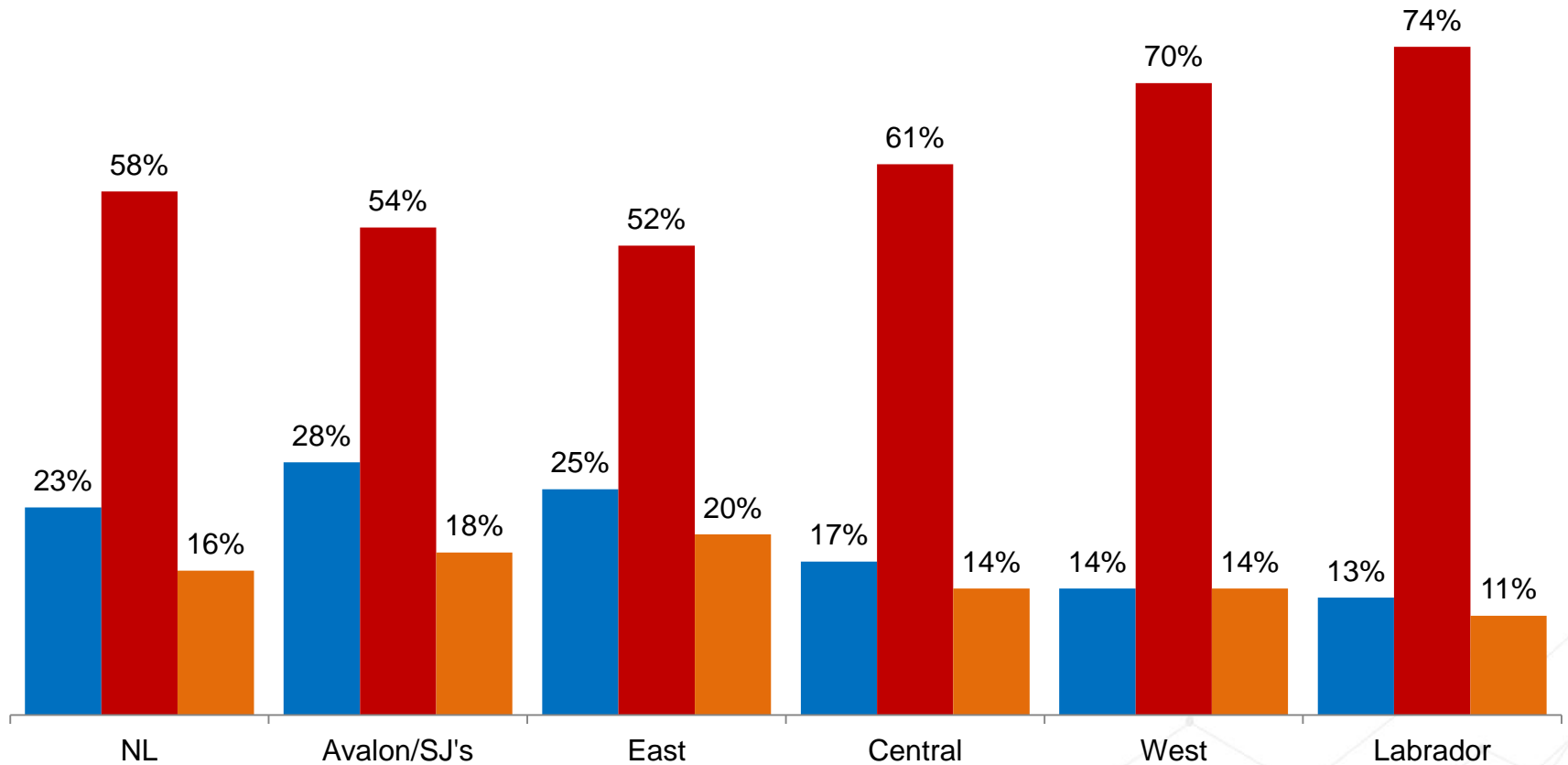


All Respondents



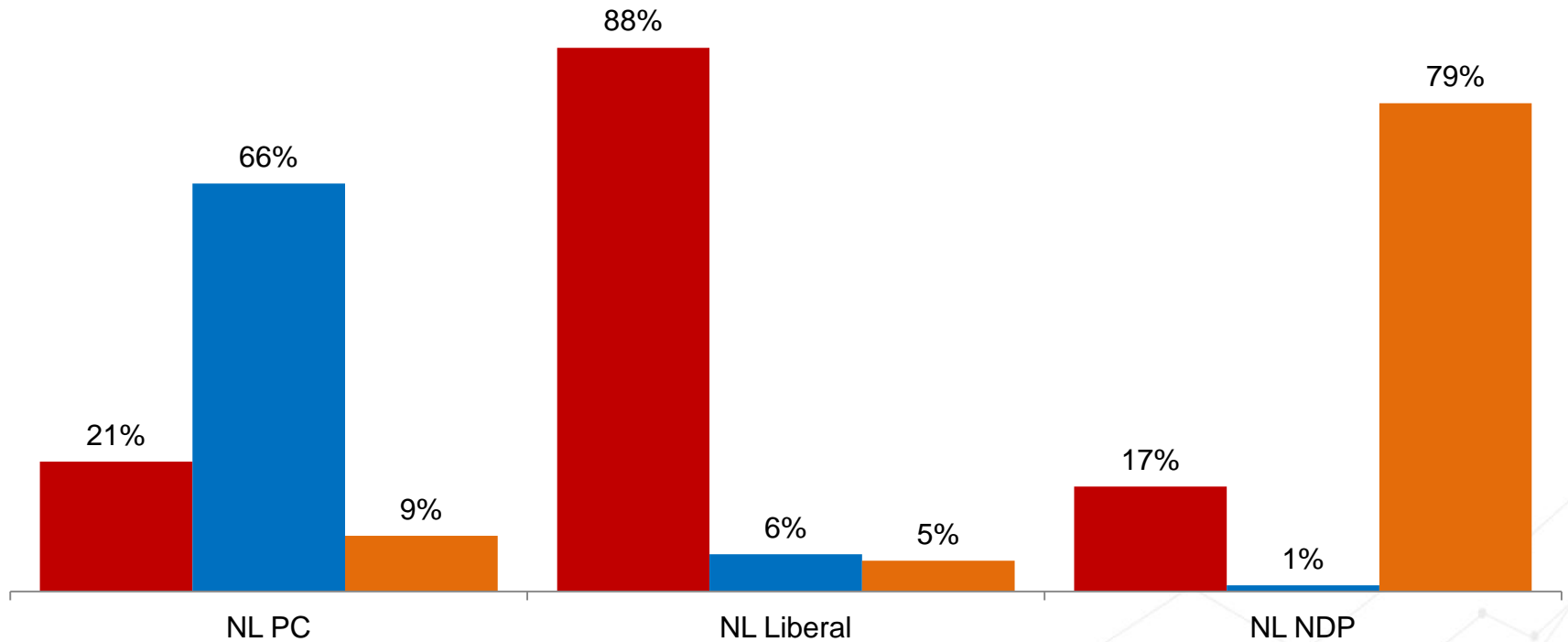
Federal Horse Race - Regional

Regionally, the Liberals lead in every region of Newfoundland and Labrador. The race is closest in Eastern Newfoundland and on the Avalon Peninsula and in St. John's.



Federal/Provincial Vote Choice Overlap

When we compare provincial and federal vote choices among committed voters we find significant overlap among provincial Liberal and NDP supporters. 88% of those who support the NL Liberal Party also would support the Federal Liberal Party. While two thirds of NL PC Party supporters would vote for the federal Conservative, a large percentage say they support the federal Liberal Party (21%) or the federal NDP (9%).

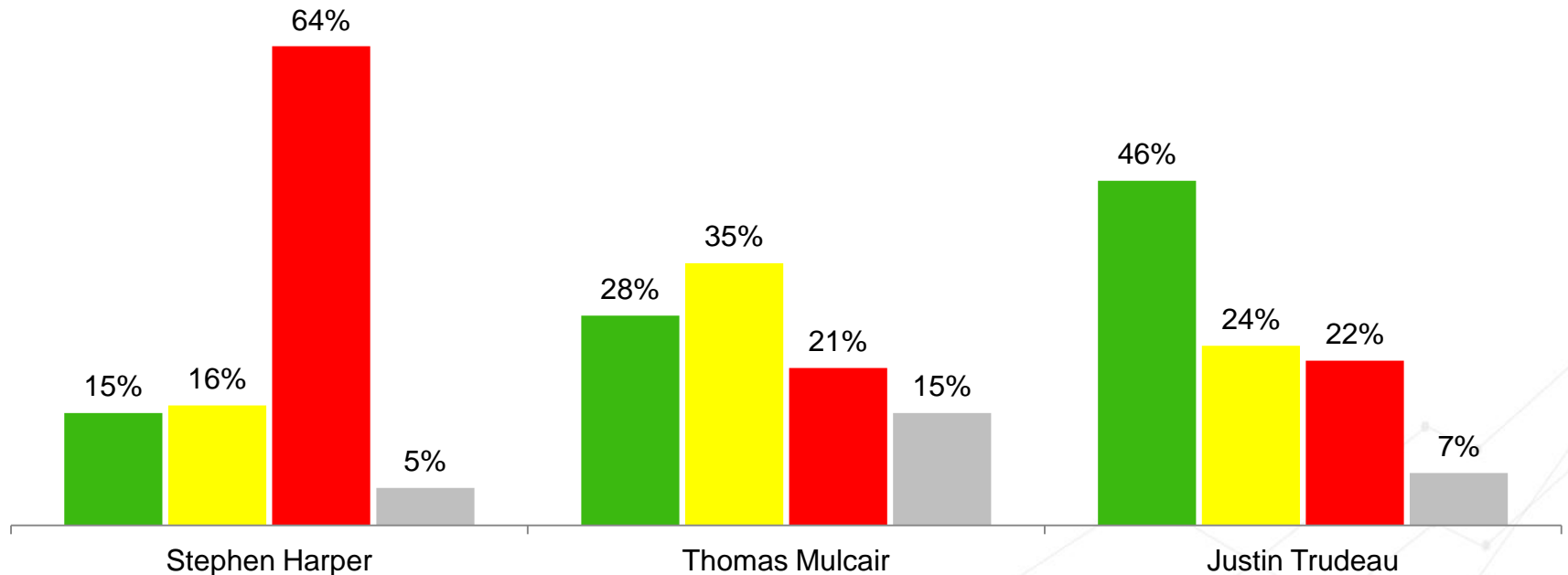


Federal Leadership Favourability

Justin Trudeau is the most popular federal leader in Newfoundland and Labrador. Overall, almost a majority of eligible voters say they have a positive impression of the Liberal leader compared with 22% who say they have a negative impression of him.

In contrast, almost two thirds of eligible voters in NL have a negative impression of Stephen Harper, with 45% indicating they have a very negative impression. Only 15% of NL voters have a positive impression of the Prime Minister.

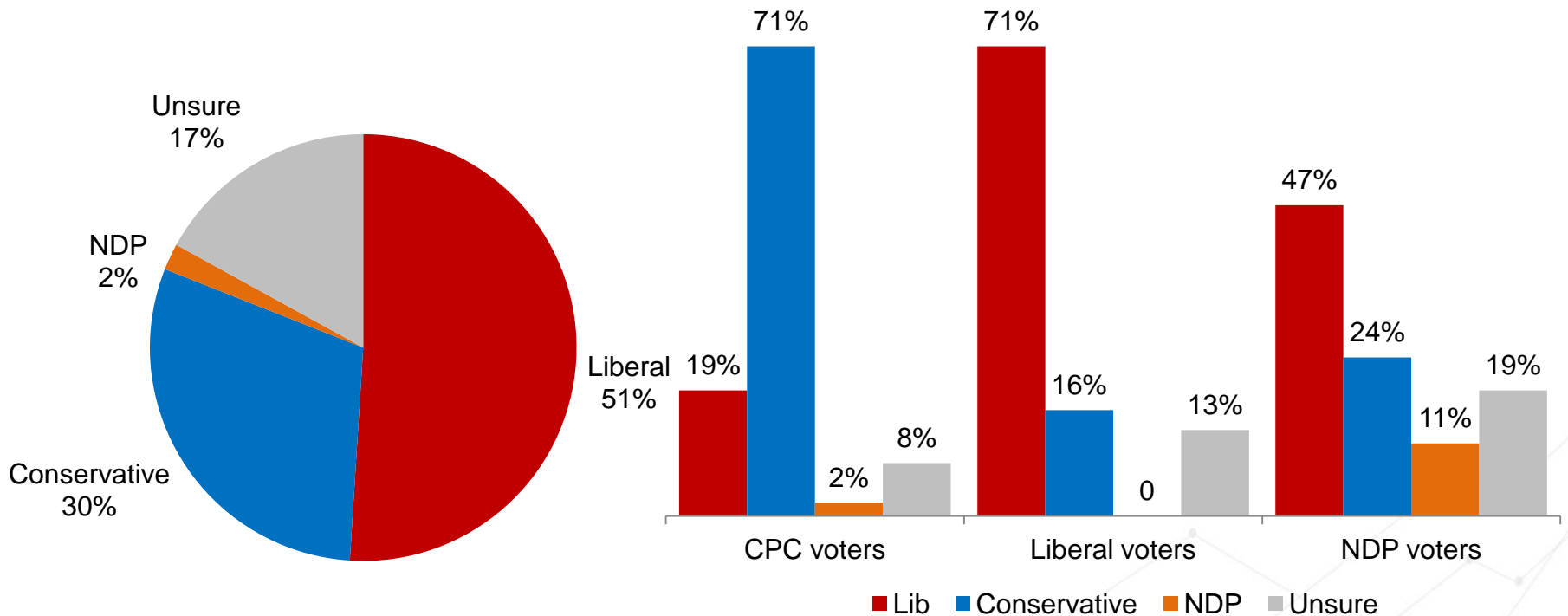
Thomas Mulcair's reputation in the province is fairly strong with more eligible voters having a positive impression than a negative impression. However, his numbers in NL mirror those in other parts of Canada in that a large number either have a neutral impression or don't know enough to rate him.



Who will win the next FEDERAL election?

When asked who will win the next federal election, 51% of eligible voters picked the Liberal Party while 30% picked the Conservative Party. Only 2% of eligible voters picked the NDP while 17% were unsure.

There was a strong correlation between vote choice and expected winning among Liberal and Conservative Party supporters. However, among NDP supporters, a plurality believed that the Liberals would win and only 11% thought the party they support would win the election.



Which party do you think will win the next provincial election in Newfoundland and Labrador?

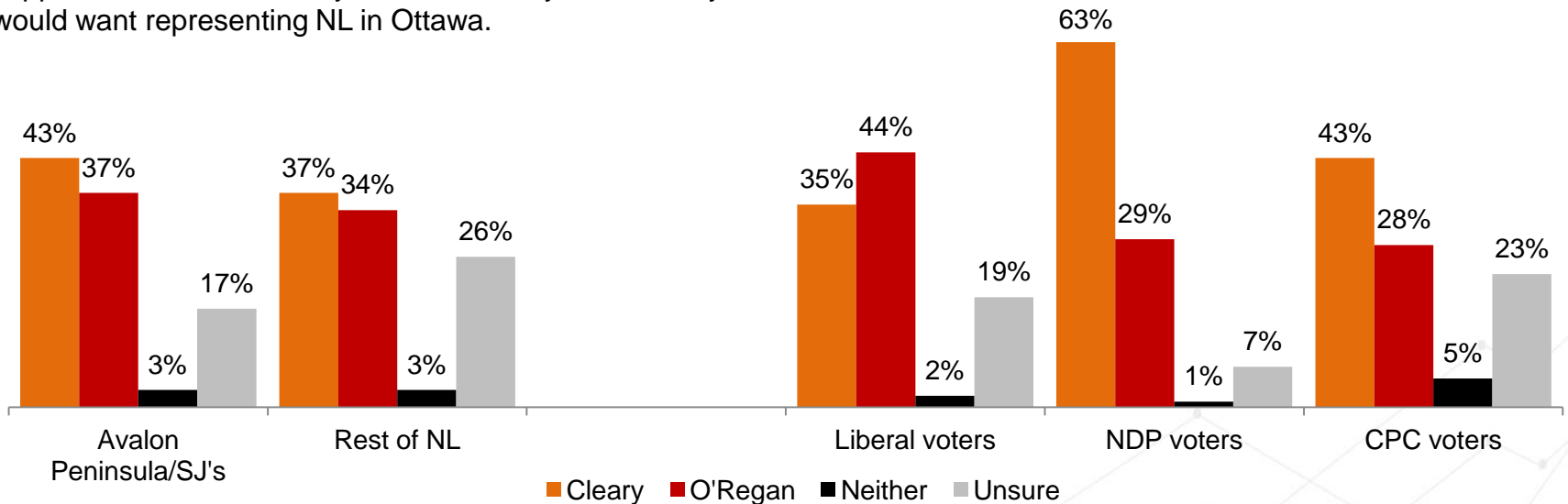
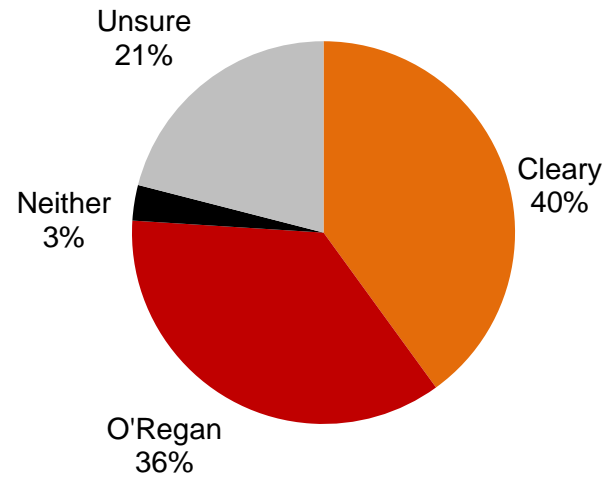
All Respondents, n= 653

Cleary vs. O'Regan: Who is better for NL?

Near the end of the survey, respondents were asked who – NDP MP Ryan Cleary or Liberal candidate Seamus O'Regan – running in St. John's South – Mount Pearl – would they rather see representing NL 's interests in Ottawa.

Cleary edged out O'Regan across the province 40% to 36%. On the Avalon Peninsula and in St. John's Cleary's lead was six-points over O'Regan.

Federal Liberal supporters were more likely to choose O'Regan (44% to 35%) while NDP and Conservative Party supporters were more likely to select Cleary as who they would want representing NL in Ottawa.



In St. John's South - Mount Pearl, NDP MP Ryan Cleary is being challenged by Seamus O'Regan who is running for the Liberal Party. Who would you rather seeing representing Newfoundland and Labrador's interests in Ottawa?

All Respondents, n= 653



ABACUS DATA

CONTACT INFO

Bruce Anderson
Chairman

banderson@abacusdata.ca

613-232-2806

www.abacusdata.ca

David Coletto
CEO

david@abacusdata.ca

613-232-2806

www.abacusdata.ca