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# Politics in Newfoundland and Labrador

A survey of eligible voters on provincial politics.

David Coletto

June 29, 2015



# Methodology

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| Survey Methodology                        | <p>722 eligible voters in NL were surveyed using live telephone interviewers and RDD sample.</p> <p>The margin of error for the survey is <math>\pm 3.7\%</math>, 19 times out of 20.</p> |
| Field dates                               | June 17 to 21, 2015   |
| Statistical Weighting                     | Data was weighted by age, gender, education and region according to census data from Newfoundland and Labrador  |
| Sample Composition<br>(unweighted counts) | Avalon/St. John's Region 275<br>Eastern Newfoundland 131<br>Central Newfoundland 133<br>Western Newfoundland 100<br>Labrador 83   |

# Summary

According to a new VOXM-Abacus Data random telephone survey of 722 eligible voters in Newfoundland and Labrador conducted from June 17 to 21, 2015, the NL Liberals continue to hold a large lead in voter support. The survey also finds a surge in support for the NDP, which has jumped into second place ahead of the PCs, who now find themselves in third place, 32-points behind the Liberals.

The Liberals lead the NDP by 28-points with support at 53% among committed voters. The NDP stands at 25% while 21% of committed respondents would vote for the Progressive Conservatives. Support for the Liberals is down 4-points, up 16-points for the NDP, and down 11-points for the PCs since March 2015.

Among all respondents, 19% said they were undecided unchanged from March.

More concerning for the PC Party is the finding that fewer eligible voters would even consider voting PC. Less than four in ten eligible voters said they would consider voting PC while 56% said they would not consider voting PC. Meanwhile, the NDP have seen a surge in popularity, with 50% saying they would consider voting for the party, up 21 points since March.

Other findings from the survey include:

- 66% think the Liberals will win the next NL election; 17% picked the PCs and 7% picked the NDP.
- Top provincial issues: economy/jobs (27%), healthcare (23%), budget deficit (11%).
- 53% think NL is headed in the right direction; 39% think it is off on the wrong track.
- Impression of Liberal leader Dwight Ball - 44% positive, 33% neutral, 16% negative
- Impression of PC leader Paul Davis – 32% positive, 32% neutral, 30% negative
- Impression of NDP leader Earle McCurdy – 36% positive, 34% neutral, 19% negative
- 51% felt the proposed HST increase should be cancelled no matter what.
- 63% felt the Liberals are ready to govern, compared to 37% who said the same about the NDP.



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# Provincial Leaders, Issues, Direction and Government Performance



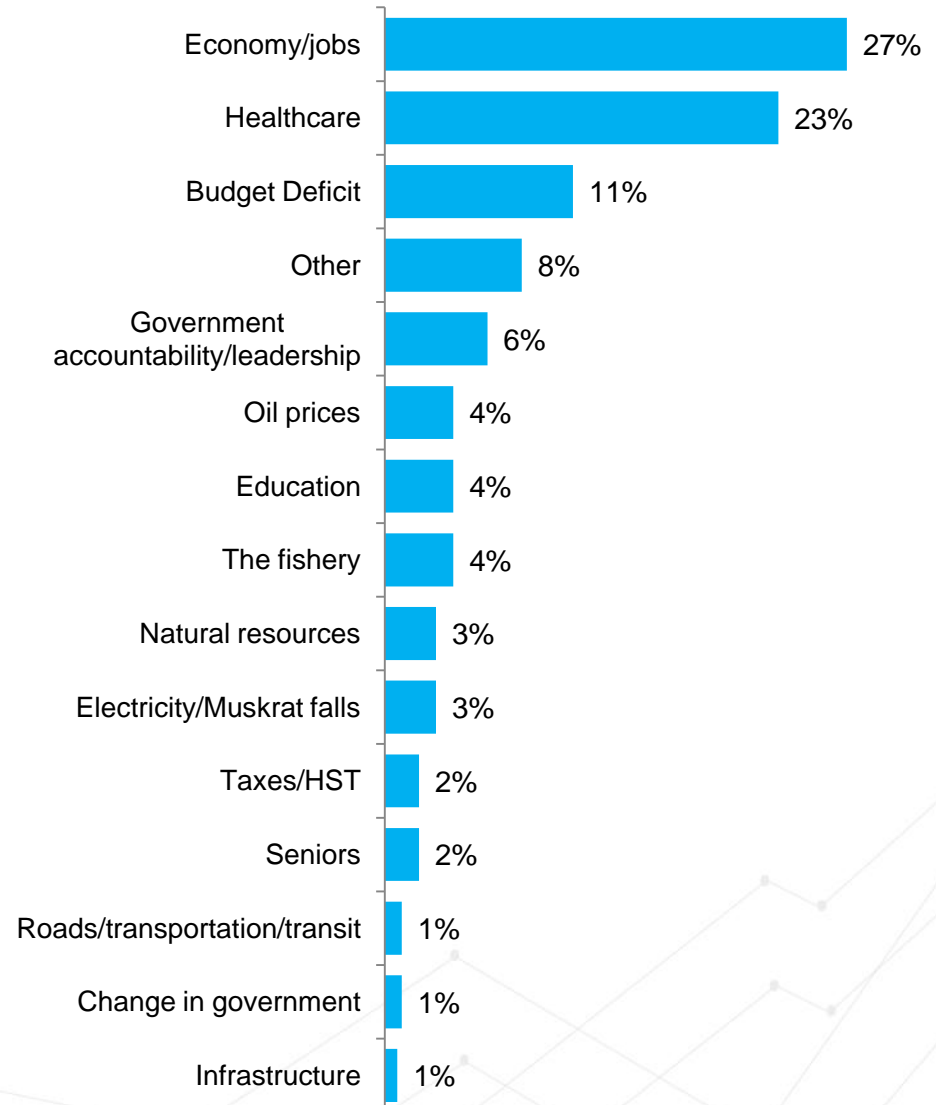
# Top Issues

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.

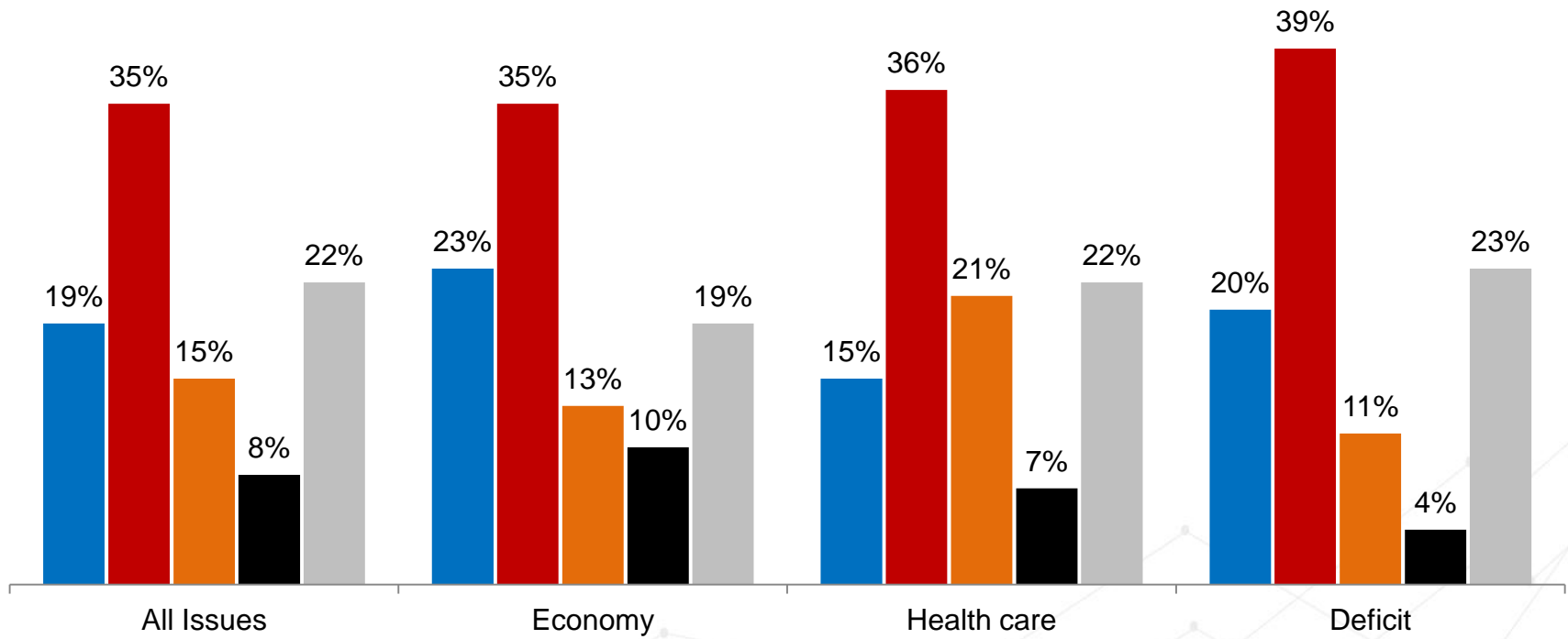
## Most Important facing NL today?



# 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, 35% of respondents believed the Liberals would best handle the issue they thought was most important while 19% selected the PC Party and 15% picked the NDP. 22% were unsure while 8% said none of the parties could handle the issue they thought was most important.

On the top three issues, the Liberals lead on which party is best able to deal with the economy, health care, and the deficit.

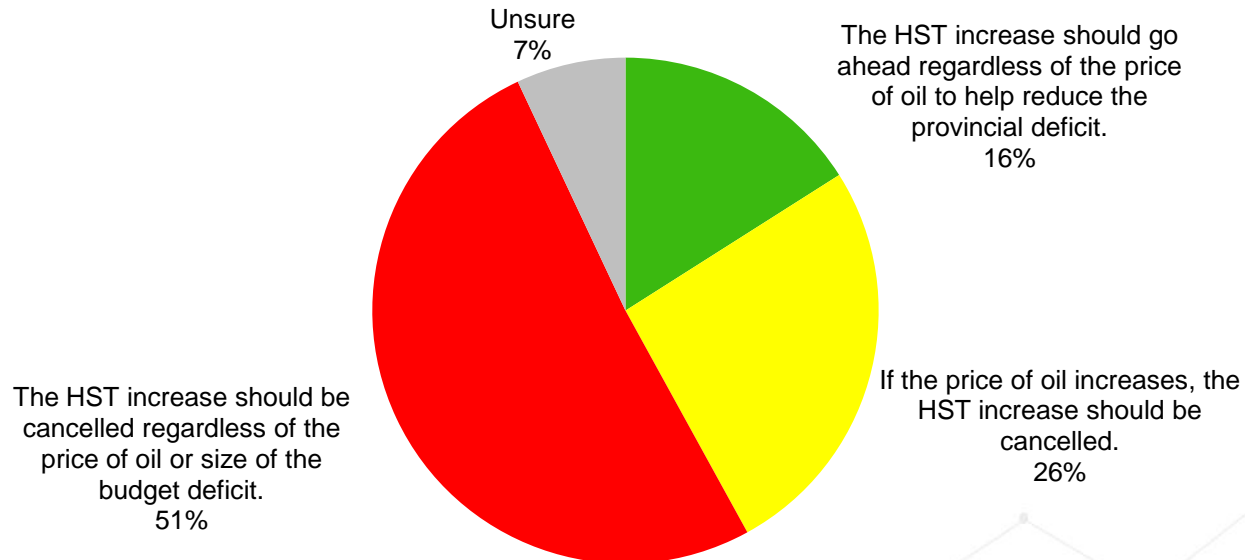


# What to do about the HST increase

The survey also asked respondents whether they felt the proposed HST increase should be cancelled if the price of oil continues to increase. Half of respondents (51%) stated that the increase should be cancelled no matter what happens to oil, while roughly a quarter (25%) felt it should be cancelled if the price of oil does in fact continue to increase. Only 16% felt the HST should increase regardless to help manage the deficit.

In the recent provincial budget, the PC government announced that it would raise the HST by 2 percentage points starting on January 1, 2016. Earlier this month, Premier Davis said that he would reconsider the HST increase if the price of oil continued to increase.

Which of the following comes closest to your view on the issue?

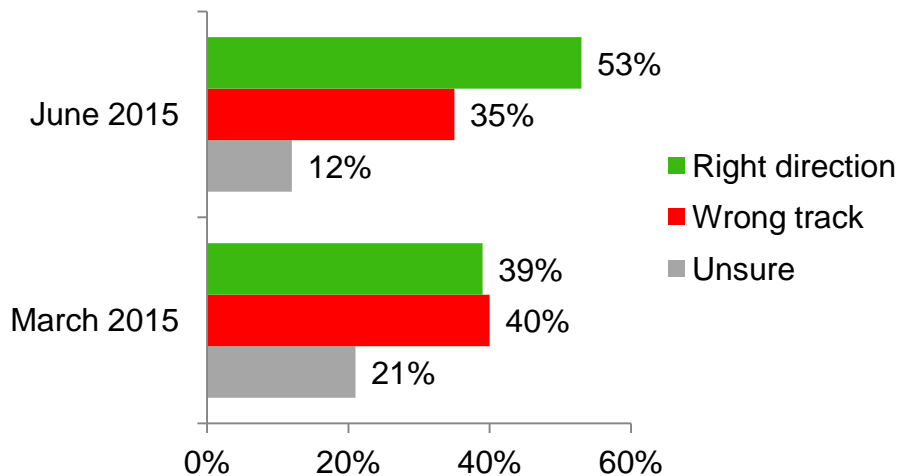


# Direction of the Province and Time for Change

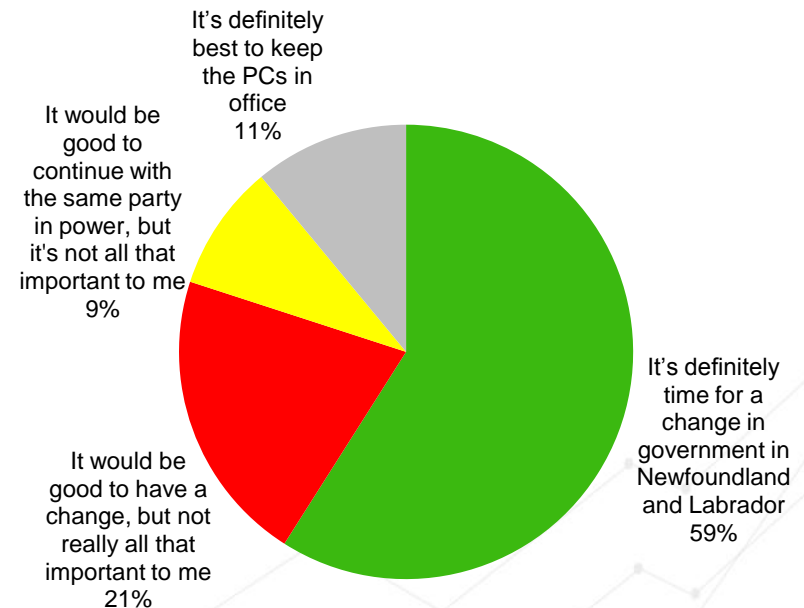
Eligible voters in NL are still split about the general direction of the province although the mood has improved somewhat from March. Half of respondents (53%) felt things are heading in the right direction, up from 39% in March.

However, when about their feelings about a change in government, a majority of voters (59%) felt that it is definitely time for a change in government in Newfoundland and Labrador. Another 21% thought it would be good to have change, but that it was really not that important to them. 20% of respondents thought it was either definitely best to keep the PCs in office or that it would be good to continue with the same party in power, but that it's not that important to them.

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



Which of these views comes closest to yours?





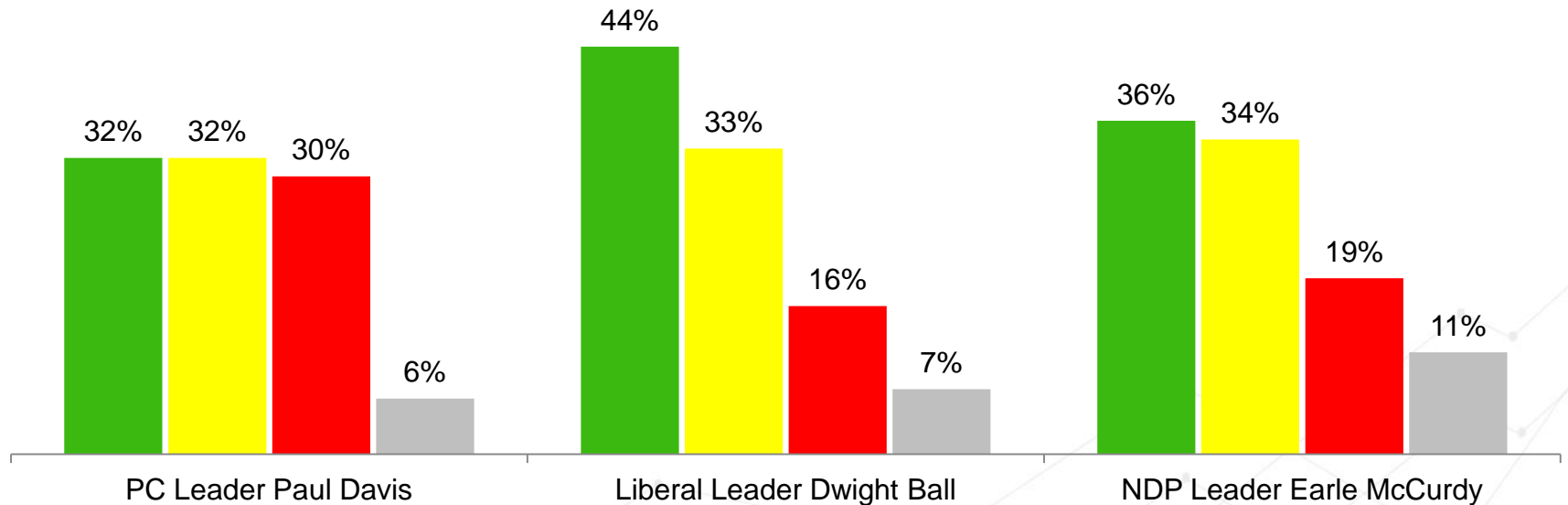
# Leadership Favourability

Liberal Leader Dwight Ball is viewed much more positively than PC Leader and Premier Paul Davis and somewhat more positively than NDP Leader Earle McCurdy. Over four in ten eligible voters in NL have a positive impression of the NL Liberal Leader while only 16% view him negatively. His net +28 rating is significantly better than the net +2 rating for the Premier, Paul Davis and the net +17 for NDP Leader Earle McCurdy.

In his own right, Paul Davis' personal numbers remain positive although they have softened since March.

The new NDP Leader Earle McCurdy is viewed positively by many voters. Thirty-six percent have a positive impression of him compared with 19% who view him negatively. Although 11% are unsure about him, that is relatively low considering the short time he has been NDP leader.

Since our last survey in March 2015, Mr. Ball's personal numbers have only changed slightly with his positive rating down three points (from 47% to 43%) and his negatives only up three percentage points. In contrast, Mr. Davis' personal numbers are have worsened somewhat. While his positive numbers are unchanged, his negative numbers are up four percentage points since March.





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# Provincial Vote Intention

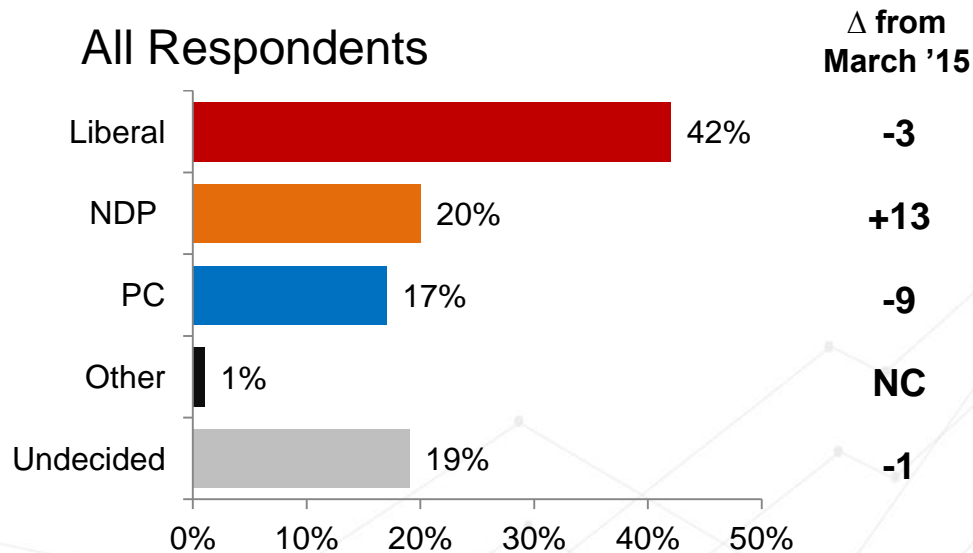
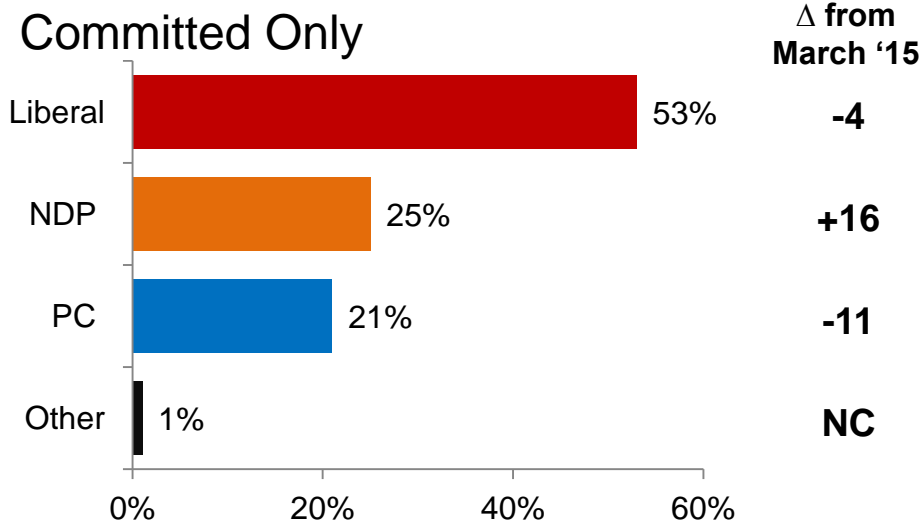


# Provincial Horse Race

The NL Liberals continue to hold a large lead in voter support. Our survey finds a surge in support for the NDP, which has jumped into second place ahead of the PCs, who now find themselves in third place, 32-points behind the Liberals.

The Liberals lead the NDP by 28-points with support at 53% among committed voters. The NDP stands at 25% while 21% of committed respondents would vote for the Progressive Conservatives.

Support for the Liberals is down 4-points, up 16-points for the NDP, and down 11-points for the PCs since March 2015.

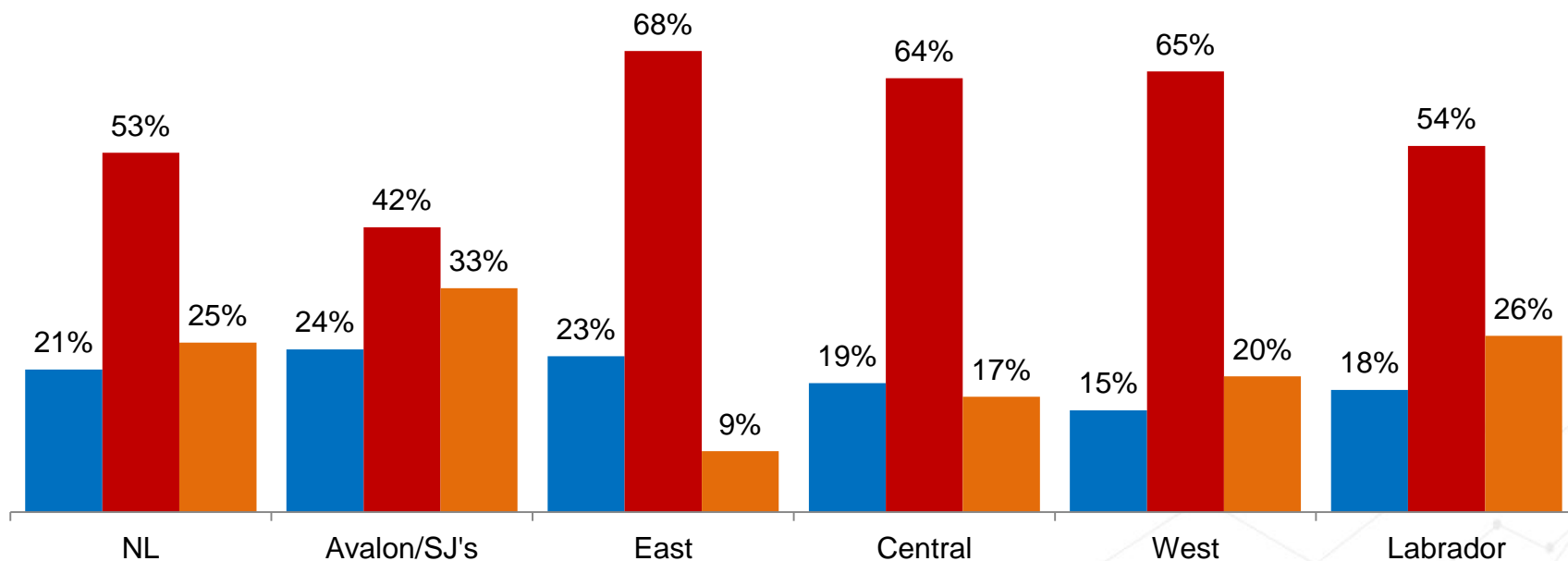


# Provincial Horse Race - Regional

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

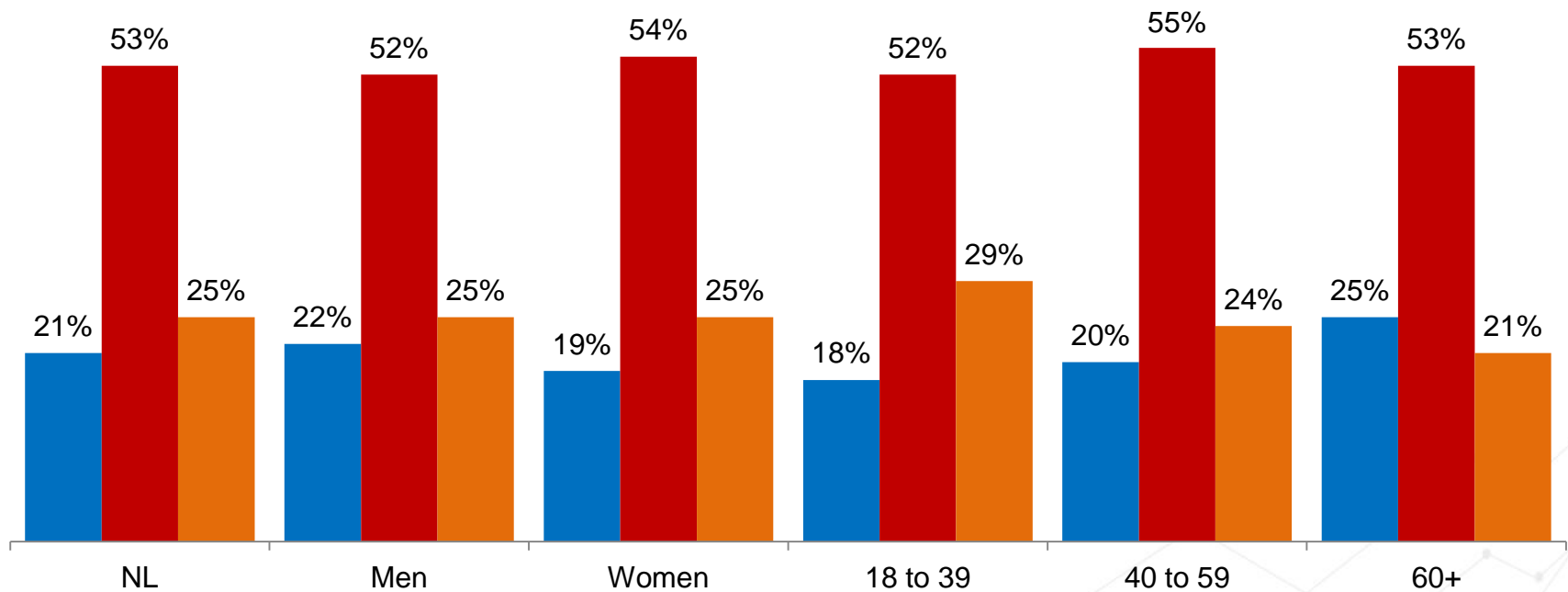
In Avalon and St. John's, the race is closer with the Liberals ahead of the NDP by 9-points.

In the rest of the province, the Liberals have very large leads over their rivals. In Eastern Newfoundland, the Liberals led by 45-points over the Tories (L 68, PC 23, NDP 9). In Central Newfoundland, the Liberal lead is 45-points over the Tories (L 64, PC 19, NDP 17), while in Western Newfoundland, the Liberals lead by 45-points over the NDP (L 65, NDP 20, PC 15). In Labrador, the Liberal lead is 28-points over the NDP (L 45%, NDP 26%, PC 18%).



# Provincial Horse Race - Demographics

There was very little variation in vote choice across key demographic subgroups. Though the Liberals have a commanding lead in each case, the NDP has pulled ahead of the Tories in all subgroups save those over 60 years of age, with the largest spread being among those aged 18 to 39, where 11 points separates the NDP and PCs.

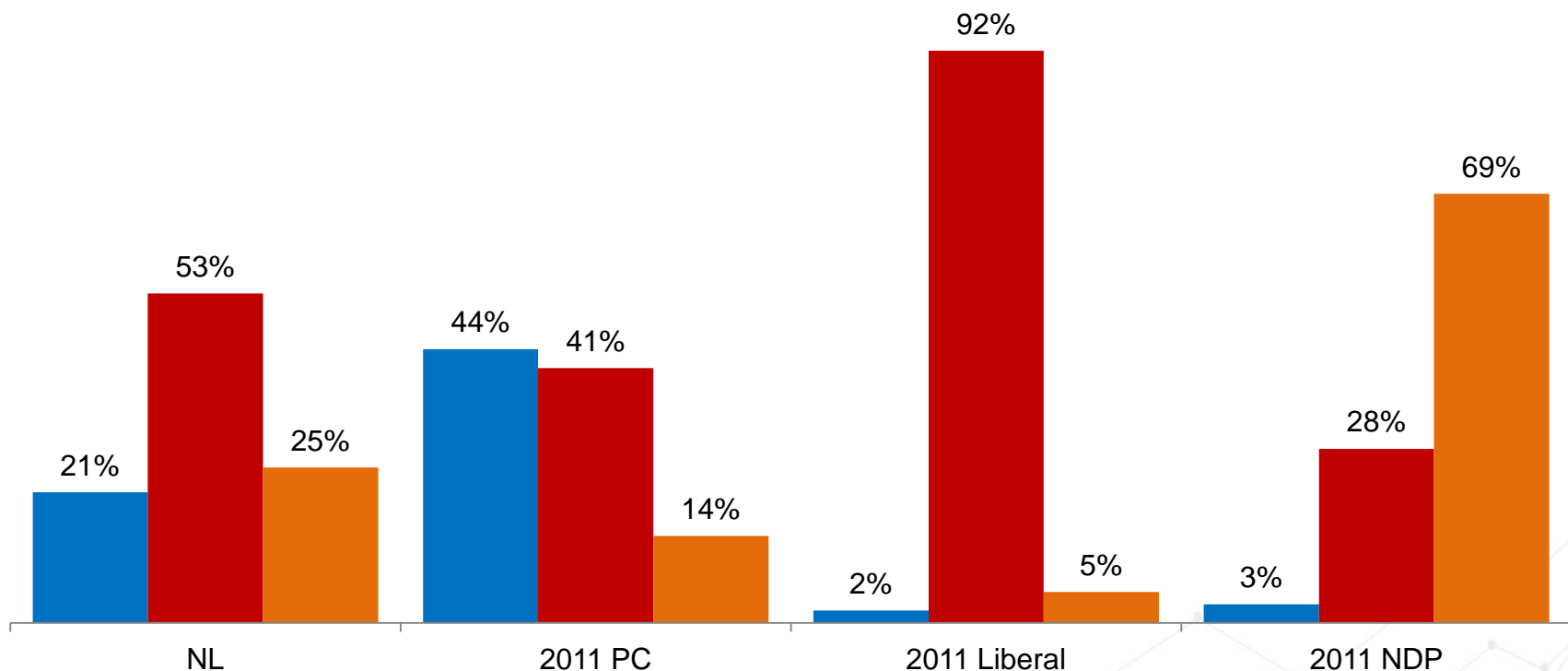


# Provincial Horse Race – Past Vote

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 92% 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, 44% say they would vote PC today but 41% say they would vote Liberal.

Among those who voted NDP in 2011, 69% would stay with the NDP while 28% would vote Liberal.



# Vote Consideration

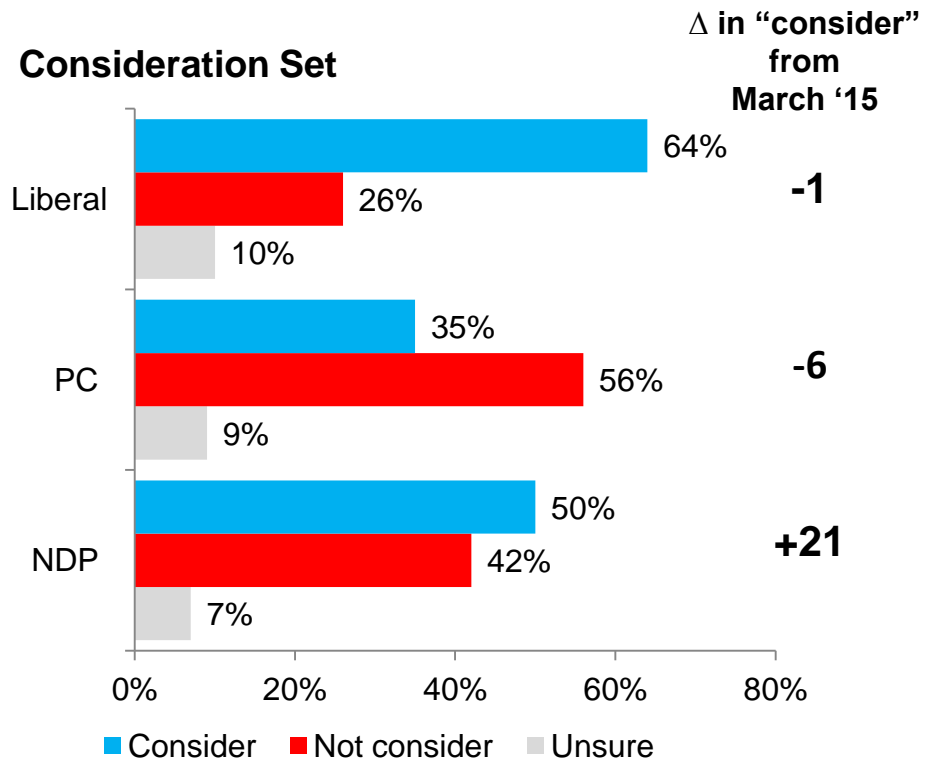
We also asked respondents whether they would consider voting for the three main political parties in Newfoundland and Labrador.

Overall, the NL Liberals have the largest pool of accessible voters with 64% of eligible voters saying they would consider voting Liberal. Considering that 53% of eligible voters would vote Liberal, the party's conversation rate is an impressive 61%.

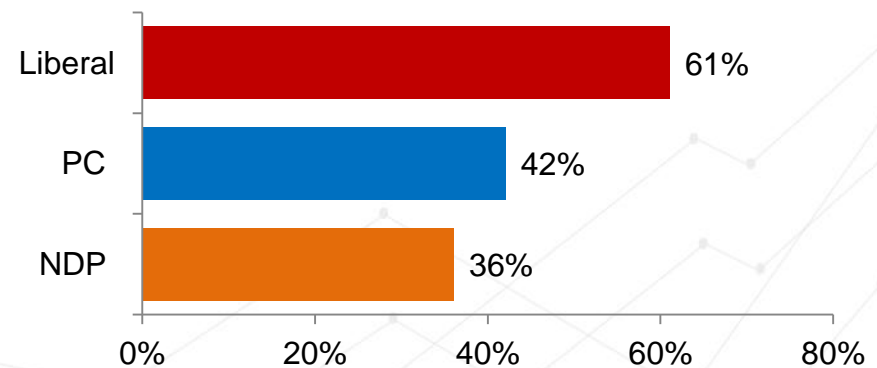
For the incumbent PCs, they not only trail the Liberals in vote intention, but they have a much smaller pool of potential supporters than the Official Opposition and that pool is shrinking. Nearly four in ten eligible voters said they would consider voting PC while 56% said they would not consider voting PC. The PC Party's conversion rate is 42% indicating that there is a shrinking opportunity to recruit new voters

In fact, more eligible voters now say they would consider voting NDP than PC – a marked change from only a few months ago. Half of eligible voters in NL say they would consider voting NDP, an astonishing 21 point increase from March.

Despite this larger pool of potential voters, the NDP still has the lowest conversion rate meaning it still has grow to grow if the Liberals falter between now and the November election.



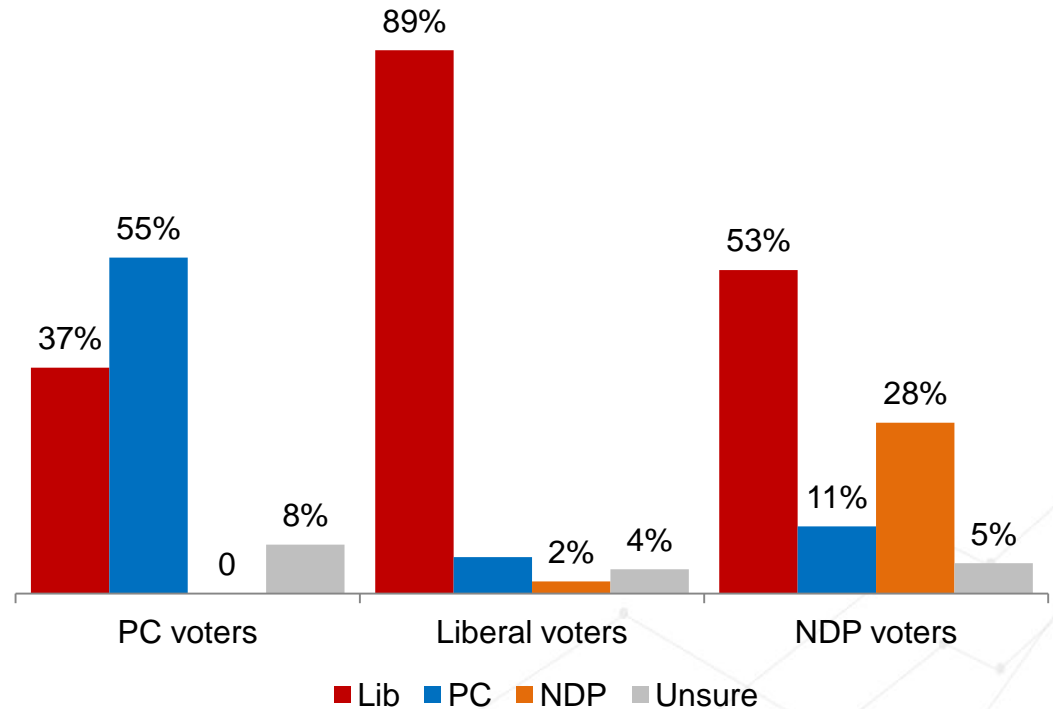
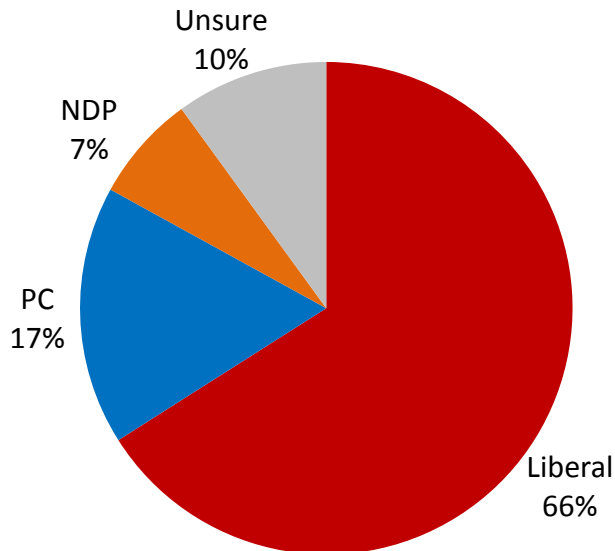
### Conversion Rate: Consider to Voter



# Who will win the next PROVINCIAL election?

Perhaps most troubling for the NL PC Party is the fact that only 17% 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.

The inevitability of a Liberal win in November is so strong that even a third of PC voters and half of NDP supporters think the Liberals and Dwight Ball will win the next provincial election.



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

All Respondents, n= 722

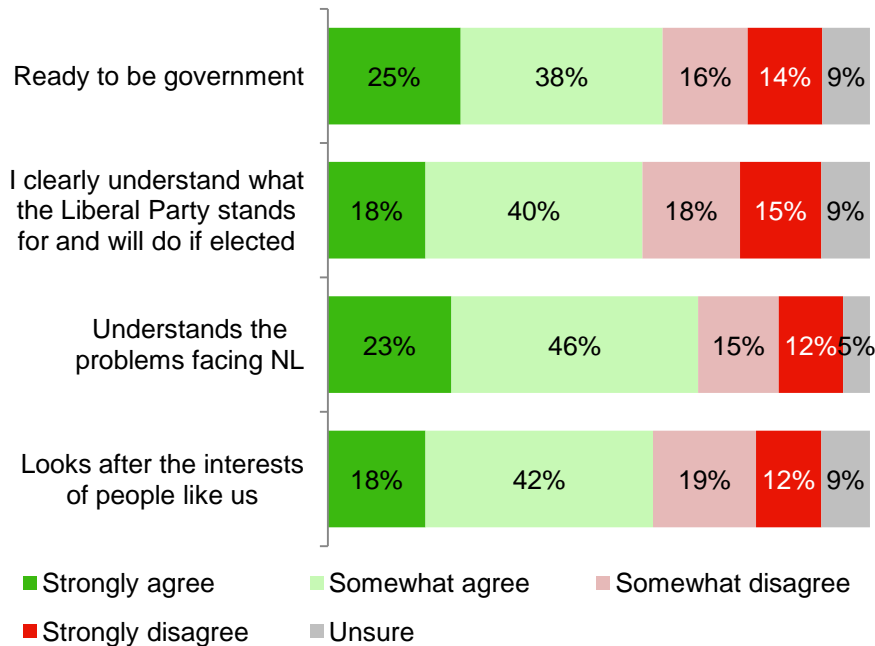


# Assessing the Opposition Parties

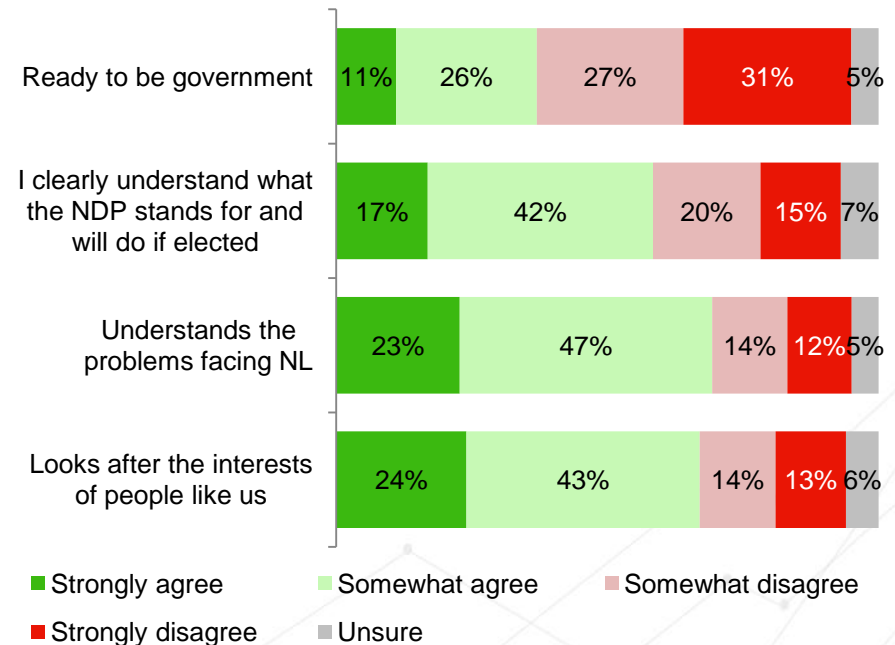
Although the provincial Liberals and NDP scored similarly across most of the tested statements regarding how they would handle themselves in office, there was a key difference in how they were perceived as leaders.

While 63% of respondents felt the Liberals were ready to be government, just 37% felt the same about the NDP.

## NL Liberal Party



## NL NDP



Now thinking about the provincial Liberal Party/NDP led by Dwight Ball/Earle McCurdy, I am going to read a list of statements about the Liberals/NDP and I'd like you to tell me whether you strongly agree, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree, or strongly disagree with each statement.

All Respondents, n= 722



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