

Methodology:

Results are based on an online study conducted from December 18 to December 20, 2018, among 803 adults in British Columbia. The data has been statistically weighted according to Canadian census figures for age, gender and region in British Columbia. The margin of error—which measures sample variability—is +/- 3.5 percentage points, nineteen times out of twenty.

As you may know, the 2018 Referendum on Electoral Reform took place this year in British Columbia. A voting package was mailed to you between October 22 and November 2. Did you vote in this referendum?

To keep First Past the Post – 49%

To move to Proportional Representation – 31%

Did not vote – 20%

Regardless of the outcome of the Referendum on Electoral Reform in British Columbia, do you agree or disagree with this statement? – “Politicians are in a conflict of interest when it comes to making decisions about how we vote, so any future proposals should involve an independent, non-partisan citizens’ body.”

Agree - 76%

Disagree – 11%

Not sure – 12%

Confusion Influenced Referendum Voters in British Columbia

Almost half of those who did not vote in the referendum say they did not feel informed about the issue.

Vancouver, BC [December 14, 2018] – A majority of British Columbians say confusion with the options offered in the Referendum on Electoral Reform influenced their final choice, a new Research Co. poll has found.

In the online survey of a representative provincial sample, 49% of residents say they voted to keep the First Past the Post system for provincial elections, while 31% voted in favour of Proportional Representation and 20% did not cast their ballot.

Almost half of British Columbians who did not vote in the referendum (48%) say they did not feel informed enough to vote.

“Almost half of non-voters felt uninformed about the task at hand, even with a ballot that arrived at their home,” says Mario Canseco, President of Research Co. “Among those who voted, support for the status quo was decidedly higher among older voters, while younger voters favoured a move to proportional representation.”

Across the province, 90% of voters say they are “very confident” or “moderately confident” in their selection on the referendum.

More than a third of voters (35%) say they did not vote in the second question—a proportion that reaches 53% among those who supported the First Past the Post system.

When asked about issues that influenced the way they voted, majorities of British Columbians mention the details of the three options on the second question not being fully fleshed out (59%), the three options listed on the second question being confusing and not clearly explained (55%), the notion of smaller parties holding the balance of power (55%), MLAs being appointed from party lists (53%) and coalition deals being worked out “in the back room” (50%).

In addition, 49% of respondents were concerned over fringe or extremist parties winning seats, urban centres having disproportionate influence over future governments, and the details of the chosen proportional representation option being left to an all-party committee.

Slightly smaller proportions of voters were influenced by the notion that voters from rural areas might lose local representation (45%)



or the government possibly rigging the process for partisan gain (41%).

Almost four-in-five British Columbians (78%) agree that politicians are in a conflict of interest when it comes to making decisions about how we vote, and would like any future proposals to involve an independent, non-partisan citizens' body. This includes 77% of those who voted for Proportional Representation and 82% of those who voted to keep the First Past the Post system.

British Columbians were also asked about possible actions in the event the First Past the Post system was retained after the referendum. A majority (55%) agrees with setting up an independent, non-partisan process to reflect on the results of this vote and recommend what British Columbia should do next, but 52% also think that no further steps should be taken at this time aimed at changing our electoral system.

Just over two-in-five British Columbians (44%) would like to set up a Citizens' Assembly after the next election and any resulting recommendations for change to be voted on in the legislature.

British Columbians were also asked to imagine a scenario where an arms-length review panel recommended that British Columbia hold another referendum on electoral reform at the time of the next election with guarantees addressing the major concerns that arose in the recent referendum.

The ballot question would be: "British Columbia is proposing to elect our MLAs by Proportional Representation. This means that the MLAs elected in each region would accurately reflect the diversity of political views in each region. The number of MLAs in each region of BC would stay the same and voters would vote for individual candidates, not for party lists. There would be a moderate threshold to encourage parties to have broad policy platforms. If voters endorse Proportional Representation, an independent citizens' panel with representatives from around the province would deliberate on and recommend a final system that would be voted on in the legislature in a free vote. If accepted, there would be a confirmation referendum after we have used the new system at least twice."

If they were asked to vote on this question, 41% of respondents would select Proportional Representation, while 36% would cast a ballot to keep First Past the Post.

More than two thirds of British Columbians believe voters should be able to vote for their top candidate without worrying about





'splitting the vote" (75%), that a party should only win majority power if its candidates won a majority of the votes (70%), and that the voting system should not disadvantage independent candidates (70%).

Majorities of British Columbians also endorse other concepts, such as almost all votes helping elect an MLA (64%), a party not holding majority power if its candidates won fewer than 40% of the votes (63%), voters being able to choose among different candidates from their preferred party (58%), MLAs being elected from different parties in close proportion to how voters voted in each region voted (57%), and voters being able to make their vote count for a more popular candidate rather than having it ignored (52%).

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About Research Co.

Simply put, we are curious about what people think and the decisions they will make. Some call it public opinion, others call it polling or public affairs. We never compromise facts for profit. Our agenda is the truth.

We have a global network of partners in the qualitative, data collection and data visualization specialities.

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Media contact:

Mario Canseco, President, Research Co.
[c] 778.929.0490
[e] mario.canseco@researchco.ca

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mario.canseco@researchco.ca



mario_canseco



778.929.0490



Mario Canseco