

# Why This Time is Different in Ontario

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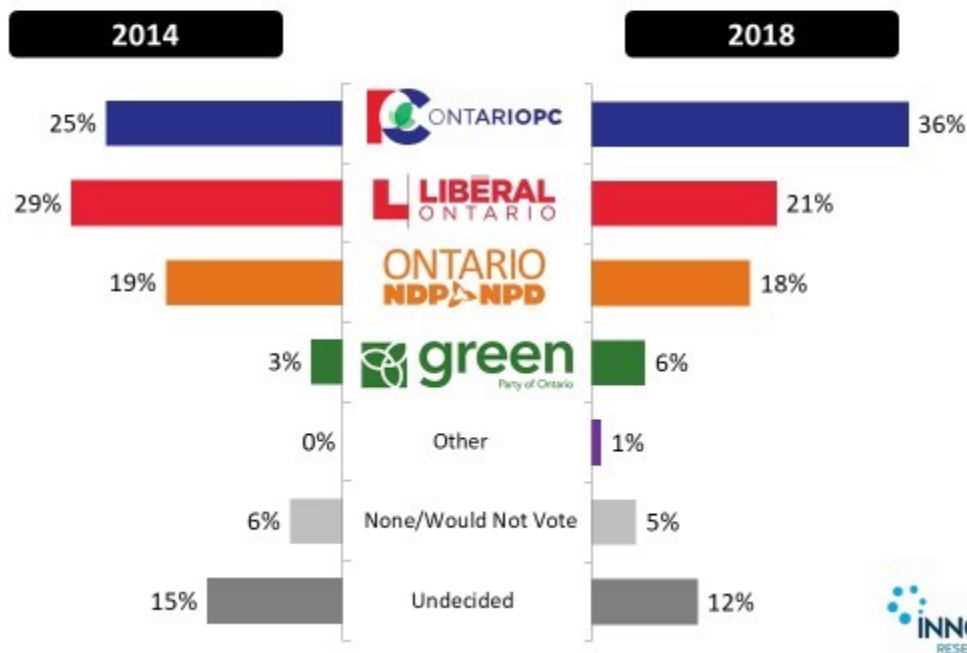
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**Recent polls show Ontario's political parties face a starkly different reality in 2018 compared to 2014 with Doug Ford's PC Party firmly in the driver's seat.**

## Provincial Vote: With an 11-point gain since 2014, PCs now have a 15-point advantage over the Liberals

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**Q** If a provincial election were held today, which party would you vote for: the Progressive Conservative Party, the Liberal Party, the New Democratic Party, the Green Party or another party?  
... In that case, which party's candidate do you lean toward slightly? [Vote + Lean]  
[asked of all respondents; n=600]



Today Innovative Research Group Inc. (INNOVATIVE) released a summary of key findings on Ontario politics. The results come from INNOVATIVE's monthly Ontario telephone omnibus survey and from the Ontario portion of INNOVATIVE's monthly national online omnibus survey. INNOVATIVE relies on telephone surveys in which all Ontarians have a known probability of

being sampled for our horserace results and use online surveys to track trends and to probe on underlying dynamics. Methodology is detailed in the pdf download.

At 44% of the decided vote, the PC party is well ahead of the Liberals at 26% and the NDP at 22%. Roughly one in six Ontarians is either undecided (12%) or said they would not vote or share their views (5%).

At INNOVATIVE, we recognize that opinion is dynamic. While voters underlying attitudes such as party identification and values anchor their opinions, voting preference is strongly influenced by the constantly changing winds of public debate and the strength of the anchors depends on each voter's level of political engagement.

The anchors of public opinion show some dramatic changes. While in 2014 the Liberals enjoyed a 10 point lead in party identification, the PCs were ahead by 4 points in our last 2018 telephone poll. Where in 2014 Kathleen Wynne was preferred as Best premier by nine points over both Tim Hudak and Andrea Horwath, today she trails Doug Ford by 21 points and Andrea Horwath by two.

While the Ontario PC's enjoy a strong lead today, more than six in ten voters (62%) say they would like to hear more before they finally make up their minds. However, the winds of public debate are still blowing firmly against the Liberals.

Among the 60% who report hearing something about the Liberal government, 52% say the information left them less favourable while just 22% said more favourable. This is particularly striking because the things people report hearing are the Ontario Liberals proactive announcements such as the budget and daycare.

When we look specifically at the budget, we find 59% have heard something about it with 54% less favourable and only 23% more favourable. That said, while the budget was not successful with PC and minor party identifiers as well as the unaligned, it did appeal, to some degree, to core Liberals and New Democrats.

The polls also dug deeper into reactions to the new PC leader, Doug Ford. Economic alienation plays a key role in Doug Ford's appeal. While 55% of Ontarians agree "Here in Ontario, you can be anything if you are willing to work for it", we also find 50% agree that "No matter how hard I work, every year it seems more difficult to get by". Doug Ford does best with Struggling Strivers, people who believe in the Canadian dream but struggle to get by. His support is lowest among the "haves" who are the one group who support the Liberals.

The polls also looked at awareness and reaction to the 2013 Globe and Mail report that Ford had sold Hashish for several years in the 1980s. Only 43% say they are familiar with the story and, of that, only 14% say very familiar. Those more familiar with the story are much more likely to say Doug Ford is unsuitable to be Premier (65%) compared to those who are less familiar with the story (42%). However, as the poll dug deeper, it found just 47% feel the story is at least probably true with only 13% saying definitely true. And only 26% say the story leaves them less likely to vote for the PCs while 11% say more likely. Among core PCs, the net impact is slightly positive (+10%) while among swing PC voters the reported impact is just slightly negative (-10%).

Looking at the overall situation, we see the PCs with a potential pool of support of 60% with firm support from 31%. The NDP have a similar sized pool of potential support (59%) but with a much smaller amount of firm support (9%). The Liberals have the smallest poll of potential support (47%) with only 12% firm support. Compared to 2014, the Liberal pool of potential support has declined by 19 percentage point while the firm PC support has almost doubled. The NDP show only marginal changes from 2014.

The PC party clearly begins this election in a much stronger position than in 2014. However, with 62% of the electorate open to new information, they cannot take their current lead for granted.

You can get the detailed results by filling in the form here [http://innovativeresearch.ca/ontario-politics-on-the-eve-of-the-election/?utm\\_campaign=Sample%20-%20My%20first%20inbound%20campaign%20in%20HubSpot&utm\\_source=facebook&utm\\_medium=social](http://innovativeresearch.ca/ontario-politics-on-the-eve-of-the-election/?utm_campaign=Sample%20-%20My%20first%20inbound%20campaign%20in%20HubSpot&utm_source=facebook&utm_medium=social)