

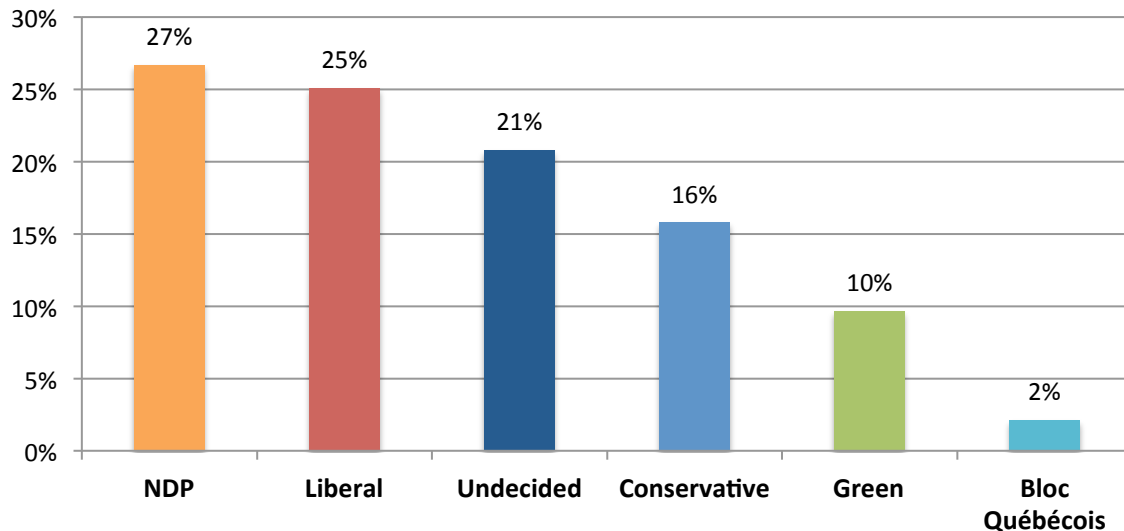
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## **NDP SUPPORT GROWING AMONG STUDENTS; LIBERALS GAIN GROUND BUT MANY REMAIN UNDECIDED**

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As Canadians head to the polls on Monday, survey data compiled during the past year by Higher Education Strategy Associates' Canadian Education Project sheds light on the voting intentions and priorities of Canadian university students. According to a survey of 1,314 students conducted between April 21<sup>st</sup> and 27<sup>th</sup>, 2011, the New democratic Party has edged ahead of the Liberals as the most popular party among students, with 27% and 25% planning to vote for each (respectively). Sixteen percent of students plan to vote Conservative, and 10% plan to vote green. More than one in five remain undecided with the election just days away.<sup>1</sup> Among the 1,314 respondents, 76% said they were very likely and another 10% said they were somewhat likely to vote. The results are demonstrated in Figure 1.

**Figure 1 – Student Vote Intention for the May 2<sup>nd</sup> Federal Election**



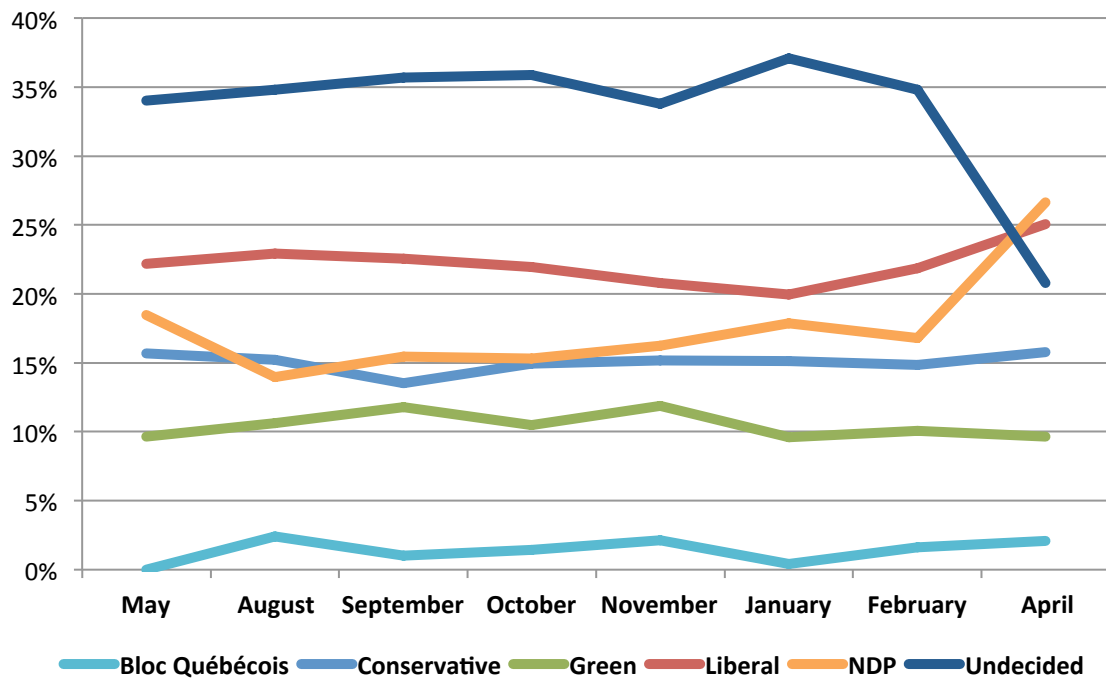
**Note:** Responses are limited to those who reported being somewhat or very likely to vote.  
**Source:** CanEdProject/HESA Student Research Panel

The results, obtained from the CanEdProject/HESA Student Research Panel, suggest that support for most of the parties has remained constant since last summer – with the exception of the NDP and the Liberal Party, both of which experienced an upswing in support in the April survey. The proportion of undecided voters has declined substantially since April, and the increase in support for the Liberal and NDP may be the result of previously undecided voters choosing to support one of these parties, as Figure 2 demonstrates.

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<sup>1</sup> Another 2% plan to vote for the Bloc Québécois. Since the sample includes very few university students at Francophone institutions in Quebec, the survey likely underrepresents the support for the Bloc.

**Figure 2 – Vote Intention, May 2010 to April 2011**



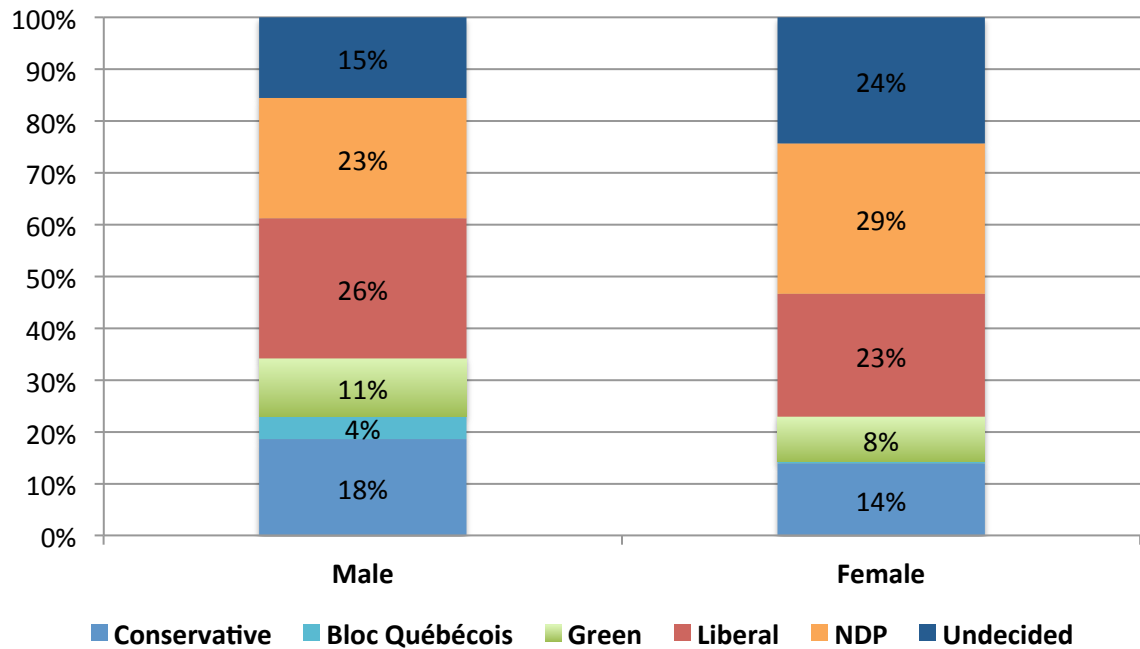
**Note:** April responses are limited to those who reported being somewhat or very likely to vote (the question was not asked on previous waves of the survey).

**Source:** CanEdProject/HESA Student Research Panel

Voting preferences appear to vary somewhat by sex and by region, as Figures 4 and 5 demonstrate. Female students are somewhat more likely to be undecided or prefer the NDP, while males are somewhat more likely than females to prefer the Liberals, the Greens, the Bloc and the Conservatives. Regionally, Alberta is perhaps the most interesting province, with relatively strong support at both ends of the ideological spectrum: both the NDP and the Conservatives have higher levels of support in Alberta than in any other province.<sup>2</sup> The Liberals do best in Atlantic Canada and vote-rich Ontario, while students in Manitoba and Saskatchewan are most likely to be undecided. In B.C., the four major parties are neck and neck, with the Conservatives a few points ahead of the pack.

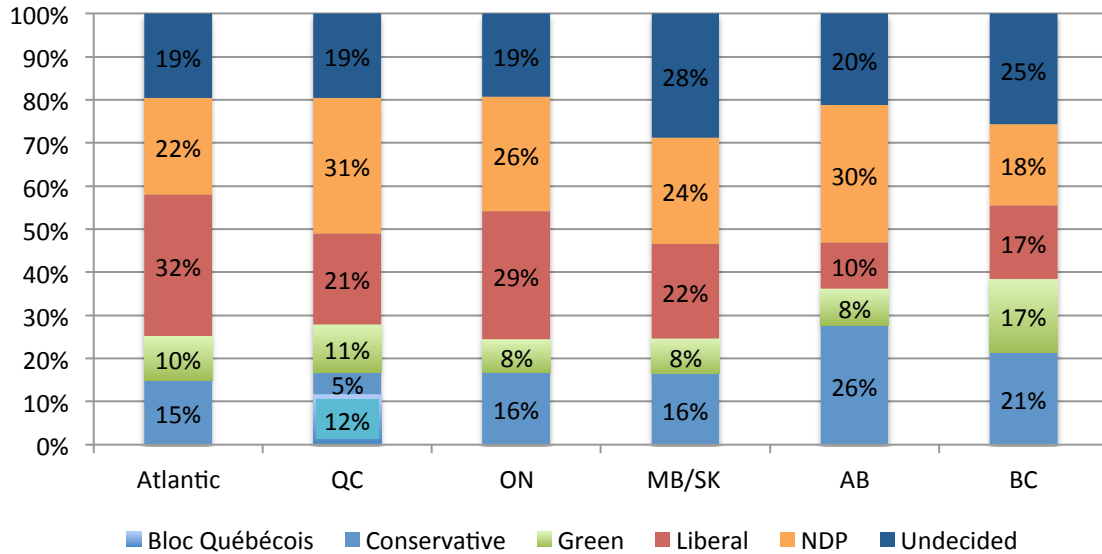
<sup>2</sup> NDP support in Quebec is technically higher, though the Quebec sample is not representative of the province's student population.

**Figure 3 – Student Vote Intention for the May 2<sup>nd</sup> Federal Election by Sex**



Note: Responses are limited to those who reported being somewhat or very likely to vote.  
Source: CanEdProject/HESA Student Research Panel

**Figure 4 – Student Vote Intention for the May 2<sup>nd</sup> Federal Election by Region**

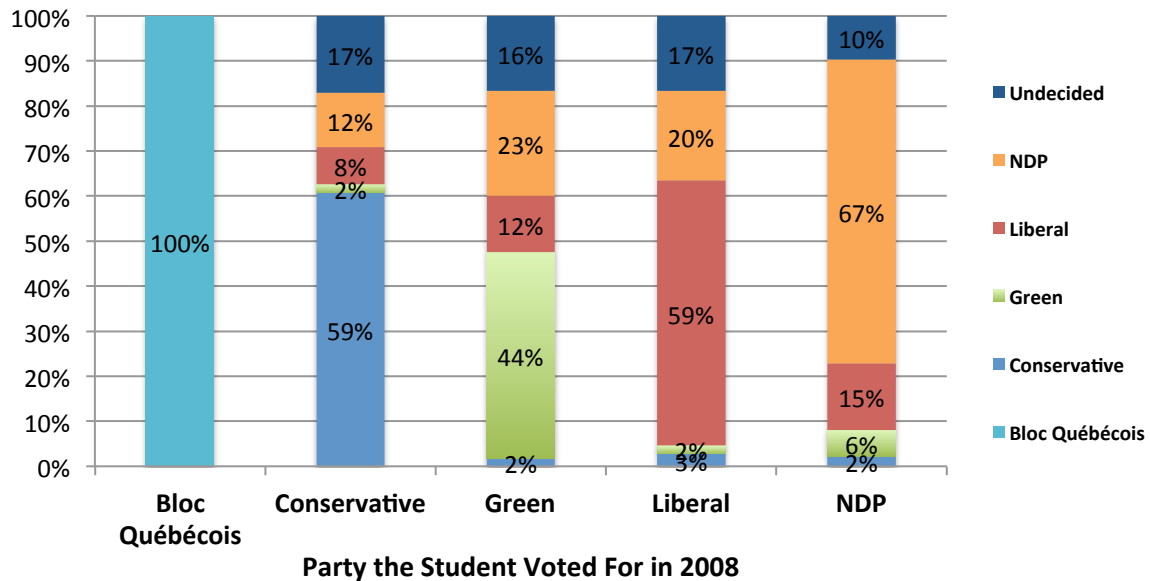


Note: Responses are limited to those who reported being somewhat or very likely to vote.  
Source: CanEdProject/HESA Student Research Panel

Party loyalty from one election to the next does not appear particularly strong for most Canadian students. Among those who voted in the last election, as many as 56% would vote for a different party on May 2<sup>nd</sup>, depending on the party they supported last time. The NDP can expect to retain the largest proportion of its vote from 2008 (leaving aside the BQ, due to the

small sample size), with 67% of former supporters planning on casting their ballot for the New Democrats during this election. The Conservatives can expect to retain 61% of votes, while the Liberals should hang on to 59% of votes. Only 44% of Green voters plan on voting Green again. High levels of support for the NDP is partially due to the fact that it can expect to pick up a relatively large number of votes from former Green and Liberal voters. The largest proportion of former Conservative voters who are no longer planning on voting for the Tories are undecided, as illustrated below in Figure 5.

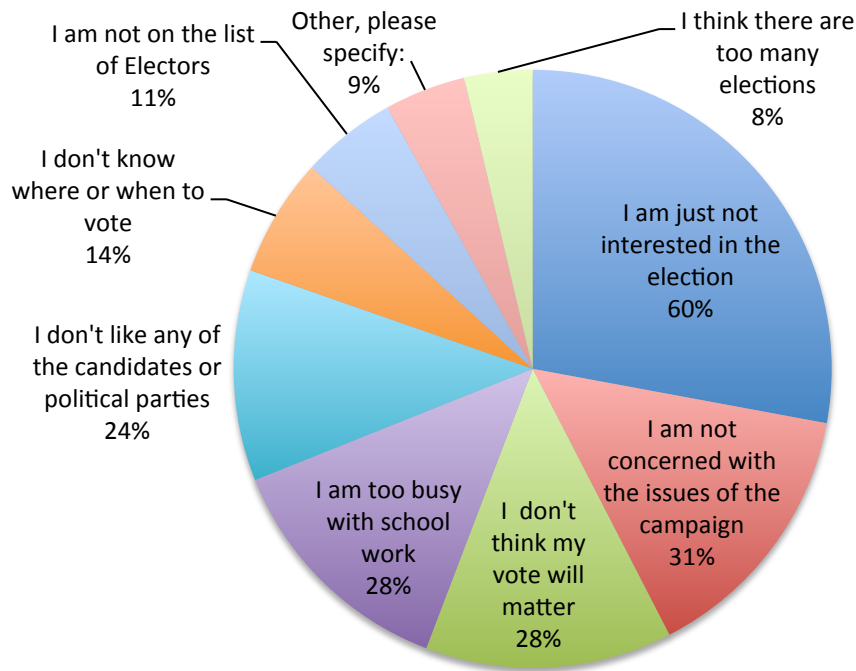
**Figure 5 – May 2<sup>nd</sup> Vote Intention by Party the Student Voted For in 2008**



**Note:** Responses are limited to those who reported being somewhat or very likely to vote.  
**Source:** CanEdProject/HESA Student Research Panel

Among those who will not be voting on May 2<sup>nd</sup>, a majority say their decision is based on general disinterest in the election. Other reasons include not being concerned with the campaign's issues, believing that their vote will not matter, and being too busy with school work, as Figure 6 illustrates.

**Figure 6 – Reasons for Not Voting**



Source: CanEdProject/HESA Student Research Panel

In addition to asking about vote intentions, the survey asked respondents to rank the three most important issues facing Canada today. As Table 1 demonstrates, students are most concerned with health care, the economy and the environment. Higher education emerged as the fourth most important issue facing Canadians for students, along with open and accountable government and social welfare/poverty alleviation. Defence/war in Afghanistan came last.

**Table 1 – Biggest Issues Facing Canada Today**

Health Care	14%
Economy	14%
Environment	10%
Higher Education	8%
Open and Accountable Government	8%
Social Welfare and Poverty Alleviation	8%
Debt/Deficits	7%
Primary/Secondary Education	6%
Research and Innovation	5%
Crime/Public Protection	5%
Political Leadership	5%
Immigration	4%
Employment Insurance	4%

Defence/War in Afghanistan	3%
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**Note:** Students were asked to rank their top three issues among a list of 14. We have weighted the results such that a first place selection was worth three points, a second two points and a third one point. The percentages represent each issues point total divided by the total number of points.

**Source:** CanEdProject/HESA Student Research Panel