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Public Opinion on the Greenbelt, its Review and Local Food

Poll conducted by:
Environics
in August & September 2015



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Executive Summary

Support:

- Consistent with previous public polling, nine out of ten participants support the Greenbelt.
- Protecting the natural water systems that provide clean drinking water to families in the Greater Golden Horseshoe is still the most important benefit of Greenbelt, followed by preserving productive farmland and irreplaceable green spaces that support clean air, according to participants.
- Strong majorities agree that the Greenbelt should be extended to include urban river valleys to protect natural waterways, that the boundaries of Greenbelt should be preserved from future urban development, and that new highways should not be built in the Greenbelt.

Boundaries:

- Three in four Ontarians surveyed believe that the boundaries of the Greenbelt should be preserved forever.

The 2015 Greenbelt Plan Review:

- A majority of respondents were not aware that the Review was occurring this year.

Activities:

- Majorities have taken part in recreational activities within the Greenbelt, with hiking being the most popular activity.

Voting Intentions:

- More than half of respondents would change their vote if protection for the Greenbelt was reduced or eliminated.



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Methodology

A total of 2,008 interviews were conducted online between August 19 and September 8, 2015.

The breakdown of the sample plan appears below:

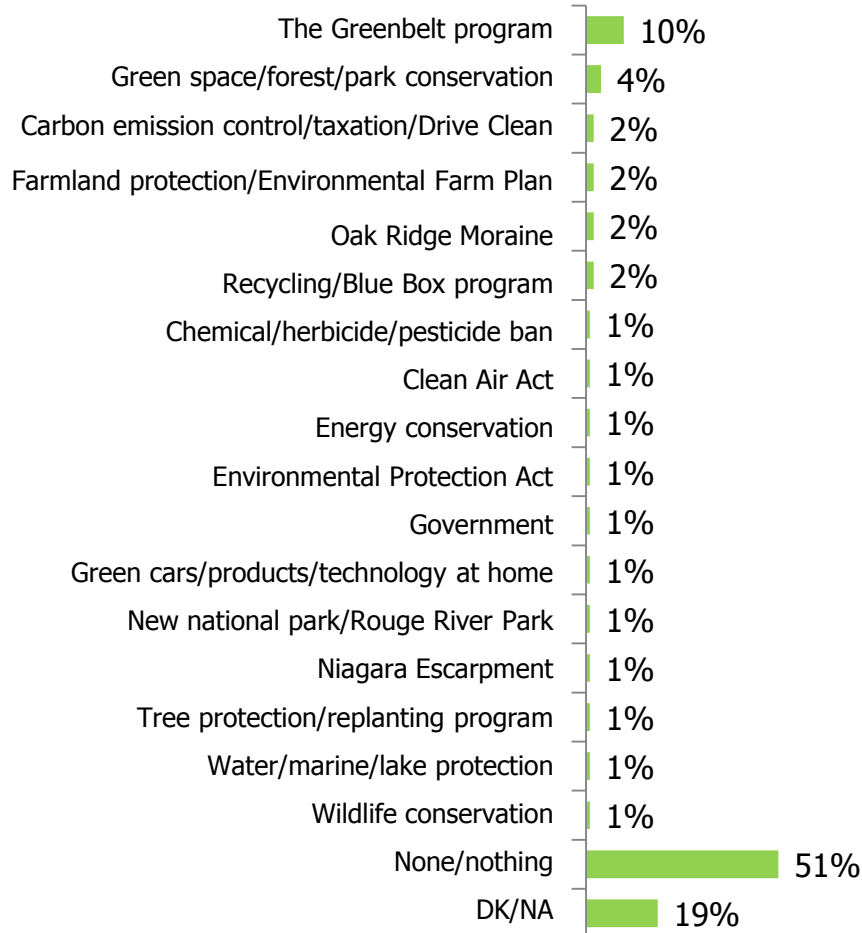
Region:	Sample Size	Urban	Rural
Toronto (416)	287	287	0
York Region	285	245	40
Durham	285	245	40
Peel	291	250	41
Halton	285	245	40
Hamilton	285	245	40
Niagara	290	240	50
TOTAL	2,008	1,757	251

Note: In previous years this survey was conducted via telephone interviews (CATI). For the first time this year, online interviews were used. Lastly, a larger rural sample was employed in this year's study to better capture the voice of Ontarians living in rural regions along the Greenbelt.



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What program, initiatives or government acts have you heard of, if any, that will protect the natural environment....



Findings:

- A majority are unsure about, or have no awareness of, these programs; among those who are able to name any program or initiative, Greenbelt has the most awareness.
- By a wide margin, the Greenbelt has the highest unaided recall at 10%; all other mentions trail far behind. The majority are unsure or have no awareness of these programs (70%).

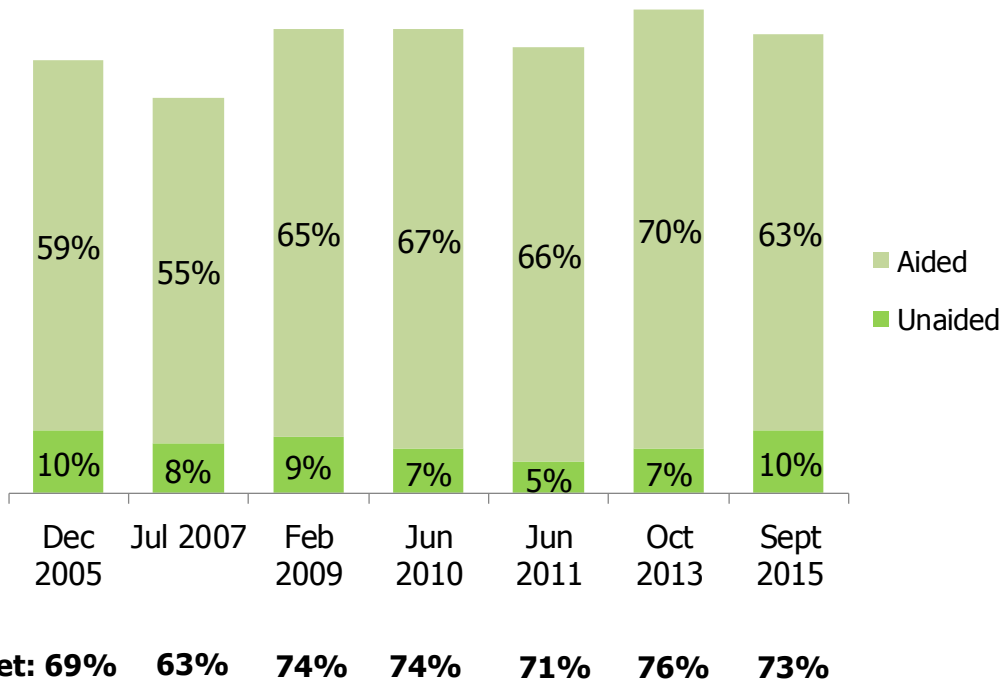


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Before today, have you ever heard of the Greenbelt, the Greenbelt Plan or the Greenbelt Act in Ontario?

Findings:

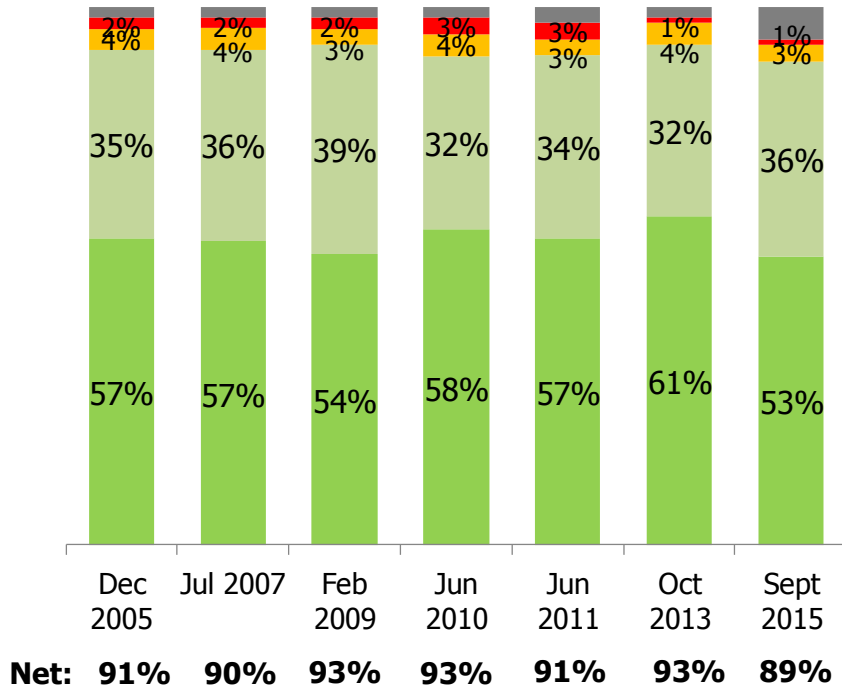
- Three-quarters are aware of Greenbelt; unaided awareness has risen and is the highest this year.
- Total awareness is not as strong as it was in 2013 (73% 2015 vs. 76% 2013), but unaided awareness of the Greenbelt has risen (10% vs. 7%).





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Once a description of the Greenbelt was provided, do you completely support, somewhat support, somewhat oppose or completely oppose the initiative?



Findings:

- **Nine in ten Ontarians surveyed (89%) say that they support the Greenbelt initiative.**
- Four percent still oppose the initiative.

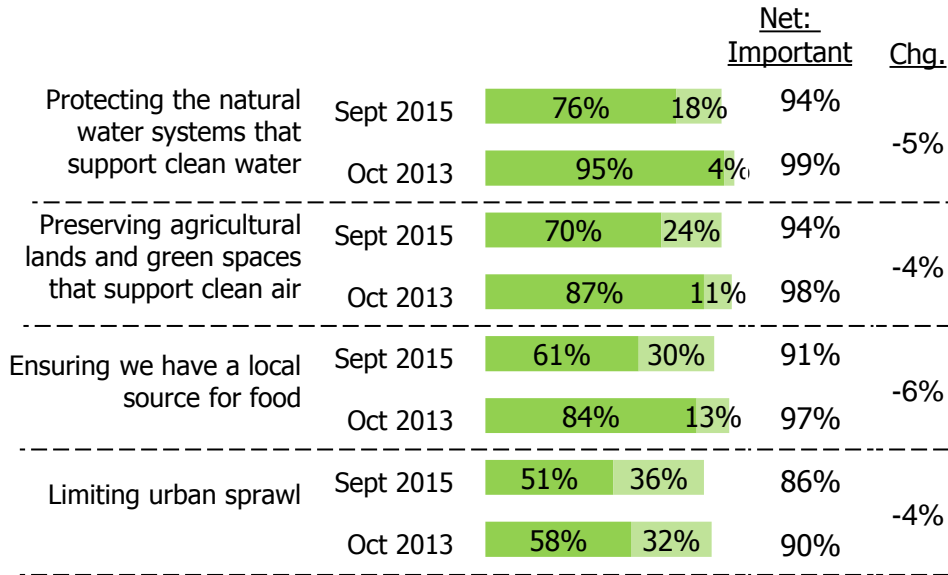
■ Don't know
 ■ Completely oppose
 ■ Somewhat oppose
 ■ Somewhat support
 ■ Completely support



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Please indicate whether each of the following goals or benefits of the Greenbelt is important to you...

Large majorities continue to say the goals and benefits of the Greenbelt are important to them.



■ Very important ■ Somewhat important

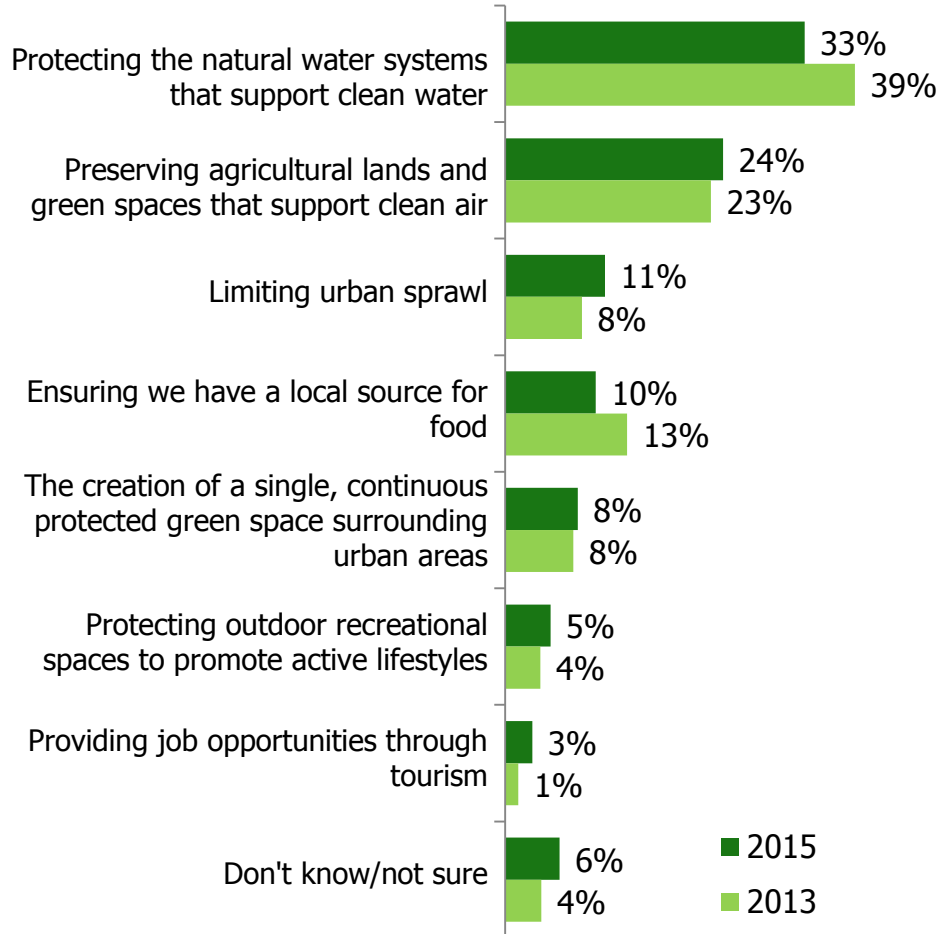
Findings:

- Large majorities continue to say that each of the goals of Greenbelt are somewhat or very important.
- Those in Niagara are more likely to consider limiting urban sprawl important (91%).
- Those living in rural areas are more likely to consider several goals of Greenbelt important, including preserving agricultural lands (97%), protecting the natural water systems (98%), limiting urban sprawl (91%), and ensuring we have a local source for food (94%).



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For you personally, which of the following is the most important benefit of the Greenbelt?



Findings:

- One in three (33%) say protecting the natural water systems that support clean water is the most important benefit of the Greenbelt.
- Preserving agricultural lands and green spaces that support clean air (24%) is mentioned as the next most important.

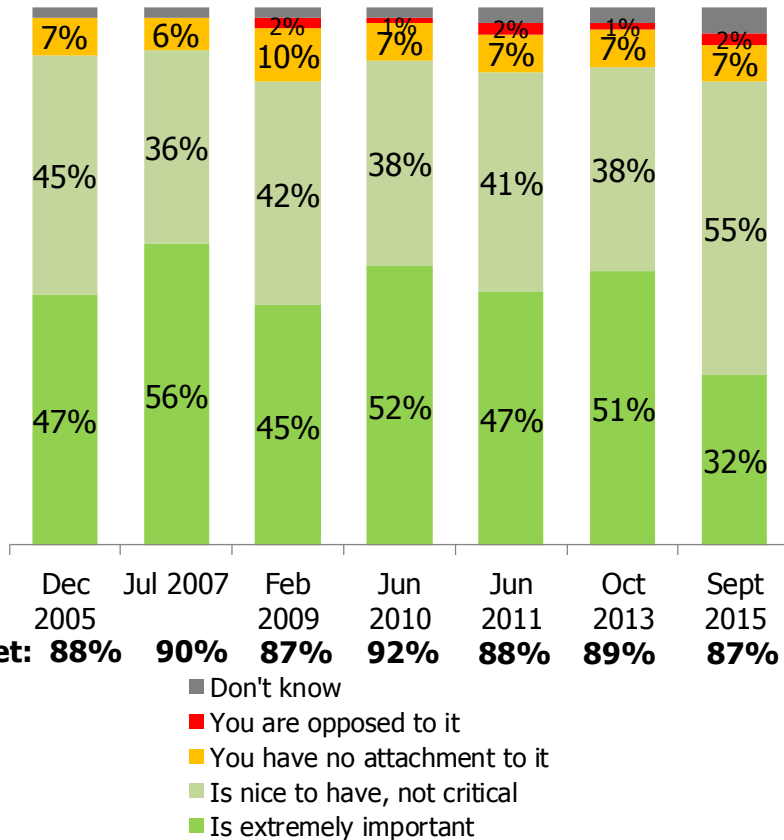


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- Is the Greenbelt something that ...?
- i) is extremely important to you personally
 - ii) is nice to have and know is there
 - iii) you really have no attachment to and no opinion about
 - iv) you are opposed to

Findings:

- Attachment to the Greenbelt (87%) is similar to 2013 (89%), though top 2 box scores have switched this year; one-third (32%) say Greenbelt is extremely important to them personally, while over half (55%) say it is nice to have and know is there.
- The proportion that say they have no attachment to the Greenbelt (7%) remains unchanged since 2010.

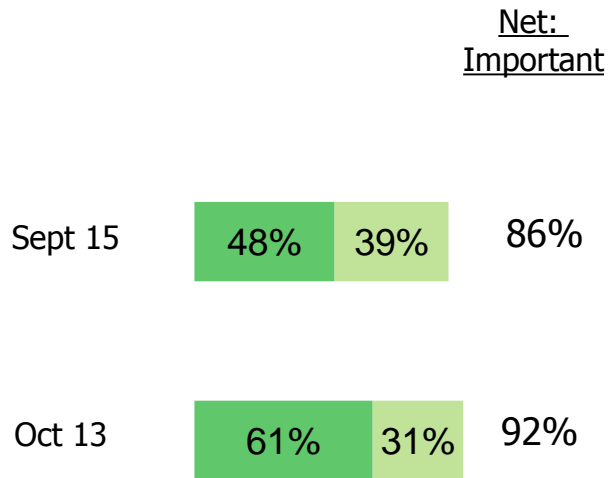




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Please indicate whether you completely agree, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree or completely disagree...

Urban growth can be accommodated by making more efficient use of existing lands rather than allowing encroachment on the Greenbelt lands



- Completely agree
- Somewhat agree

Findings:

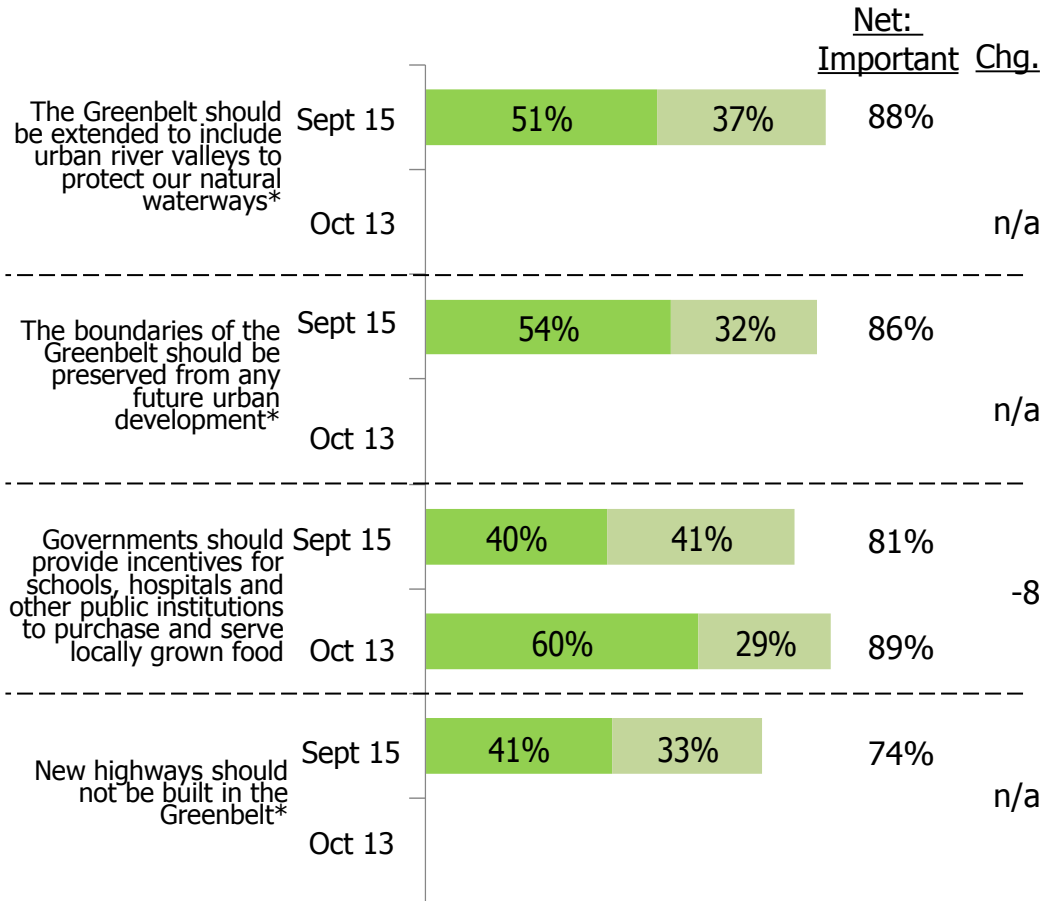
Key Differences:

- Those in rural regions are more likely to agree that urban growth can be accommodated by making more efficient use of existing urban lands (91%).



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Please indicate whether you completely agree, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree or completely disagree...



Key Findings:

- Majorities agree with the new dimensions measured this year regarding waterways, boundaries preservation and highways.
- Agreement is strongest for the statements that Greenbelt should be extended to include urban river valleys to protect natural waterways (88%), and that the boundaries of Greenbelt should be preserved from any urban development (86%).

* New dimension in 2015 or changed since 2013, thus no comparison is made

■ Completely agree
■ Somewhat agree

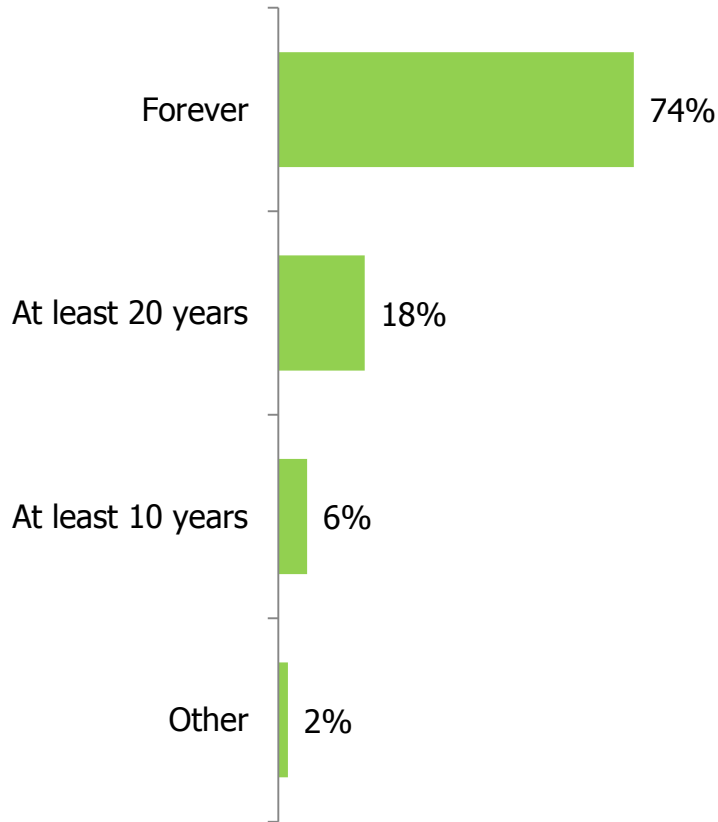


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For how long do you believe that the boundaries of the Greenbelt should be preserved?

Findings:

- **Three in four believe the boundaries of the Greenbelt should be preserved forever.**



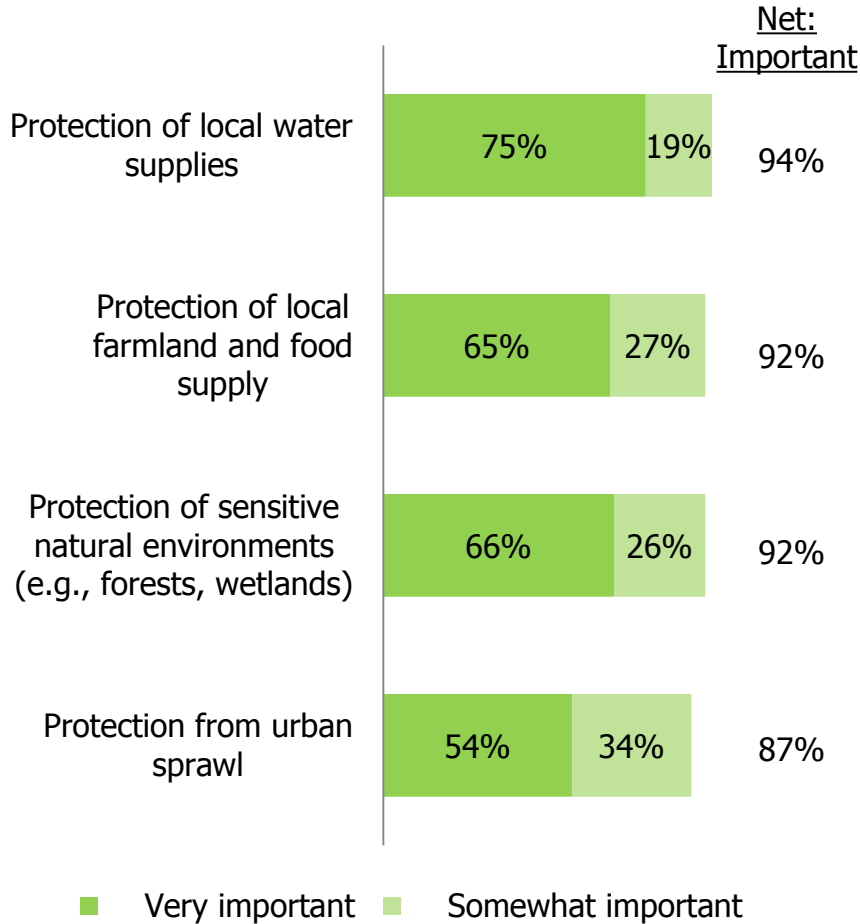
New question this year



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How important do you feel it is to continue to grow Ontario's Greenbelt to provide each of the following:

All aspects of Greenbelt's growth are important to the majority of Ontarians surveyed.



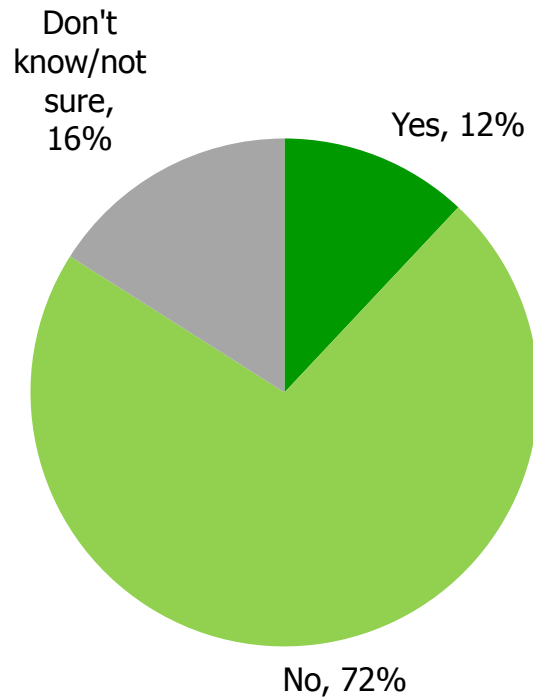
Findings:

- **About nine in 10 or more feel all aspects of Greenbelt's growth are important.**



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Are you aware that the Ontario government is in the process of reviewing four provincial land use plans including the Greenbelt?



Findings:

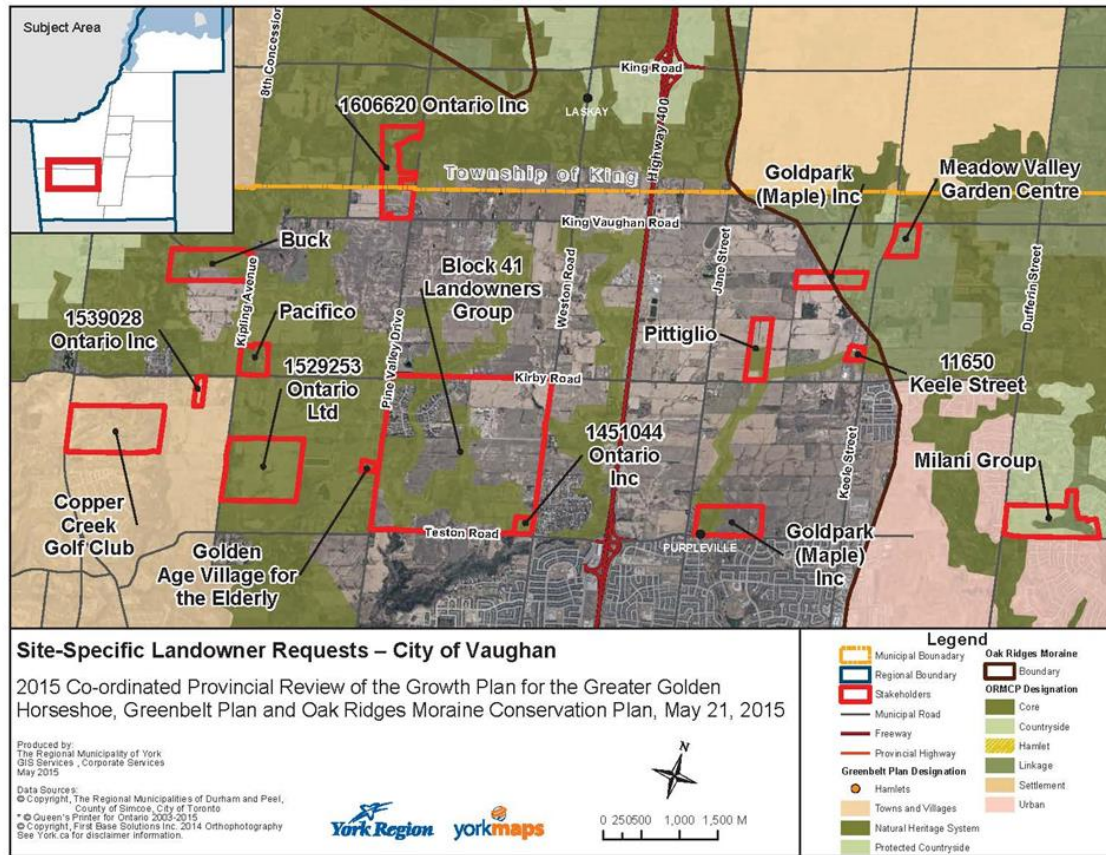
- **The majority are not aware of the Greenbelt Review this year.**
- The vast majority (88%) are not aware that Greenbelt was under review (72%) or are unsure about this process (16%).
- Only one in ten (12%) claim to be aware.



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The map below accompanied with this description was shown to respondents for the next question:

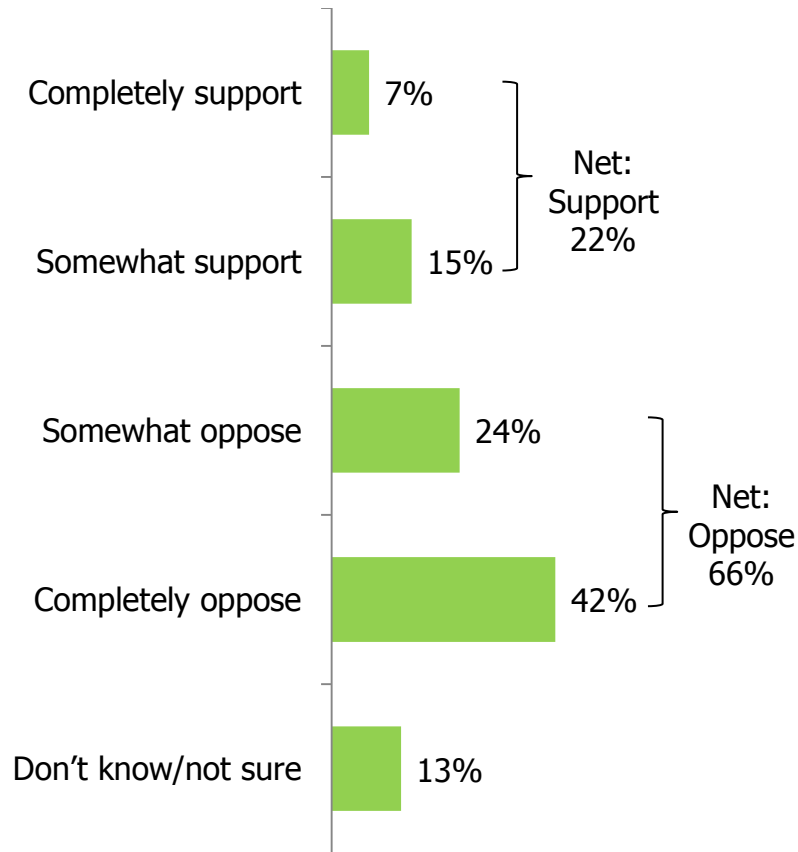
Some landowners have asked to be allowed to develop parcels of land that are now currently protected by the Greenbelt. As an example from York Region, the areas below outlined in red represent some of the land currently protected by Greenbelt that the region is requesting be removed from the Greenbelt's protection and allow development on the land.





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...To what extent do you do you support the removal of space like this from the Greenbelt's protection?



Findings:

- **Two-thirds are opposed to the removal of the outlined space from Greenbelt's protection, including four in ten who say they completely oppose this.**
- Two-thirds (66%) are opposed to the land removal, including four in ten (42%) who completely oppose this.

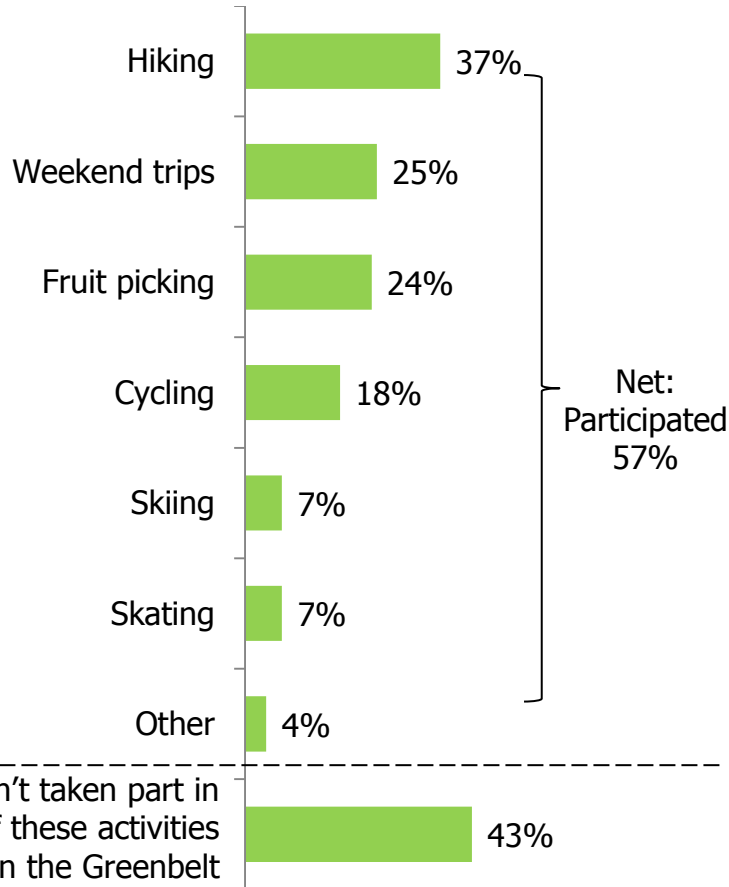


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Have you taken part in any of the following recreational activities within the Greenbelt?

Findings:

- **More than half have taken part in some form of recreational activity within the Greenbelt, with the largest proportion saying they have hiked within the Greenbelt.**
- A majority (57%) have taken part in recreational activities within the Greenbelt, with hiking (37%), weekend trips (25%) and fruit picking (24%) being most popular.

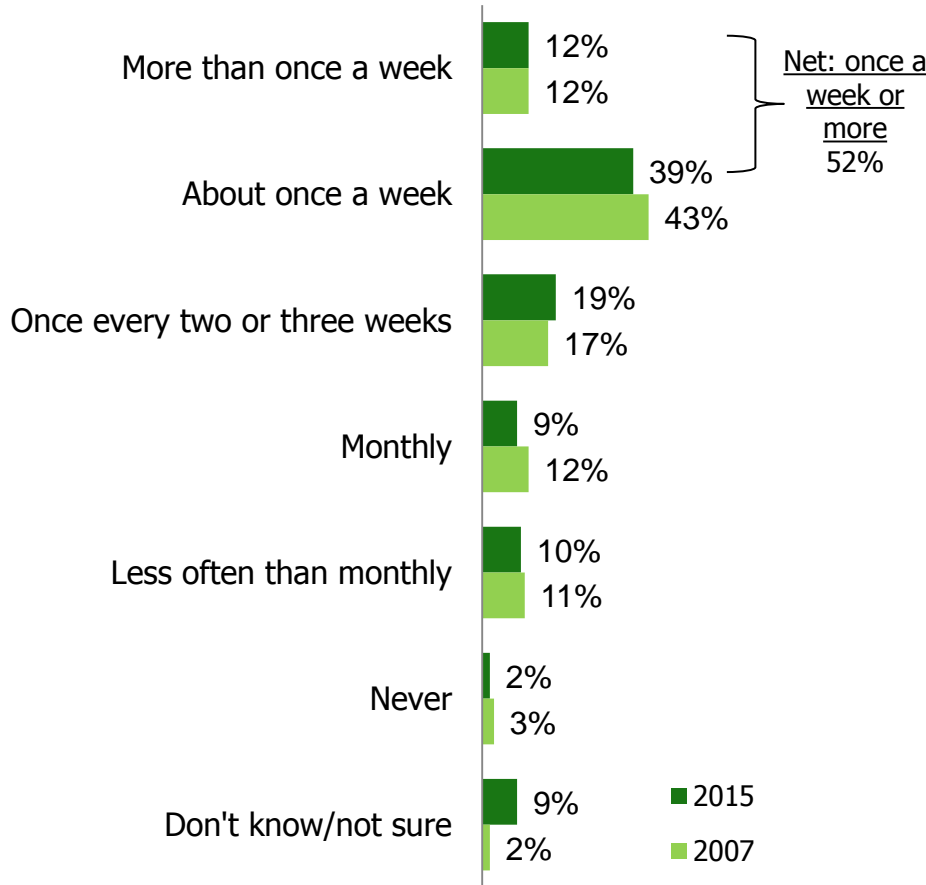




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How often do you buy locally-grown fruits, vegetables or meats?

Do you buy it...?



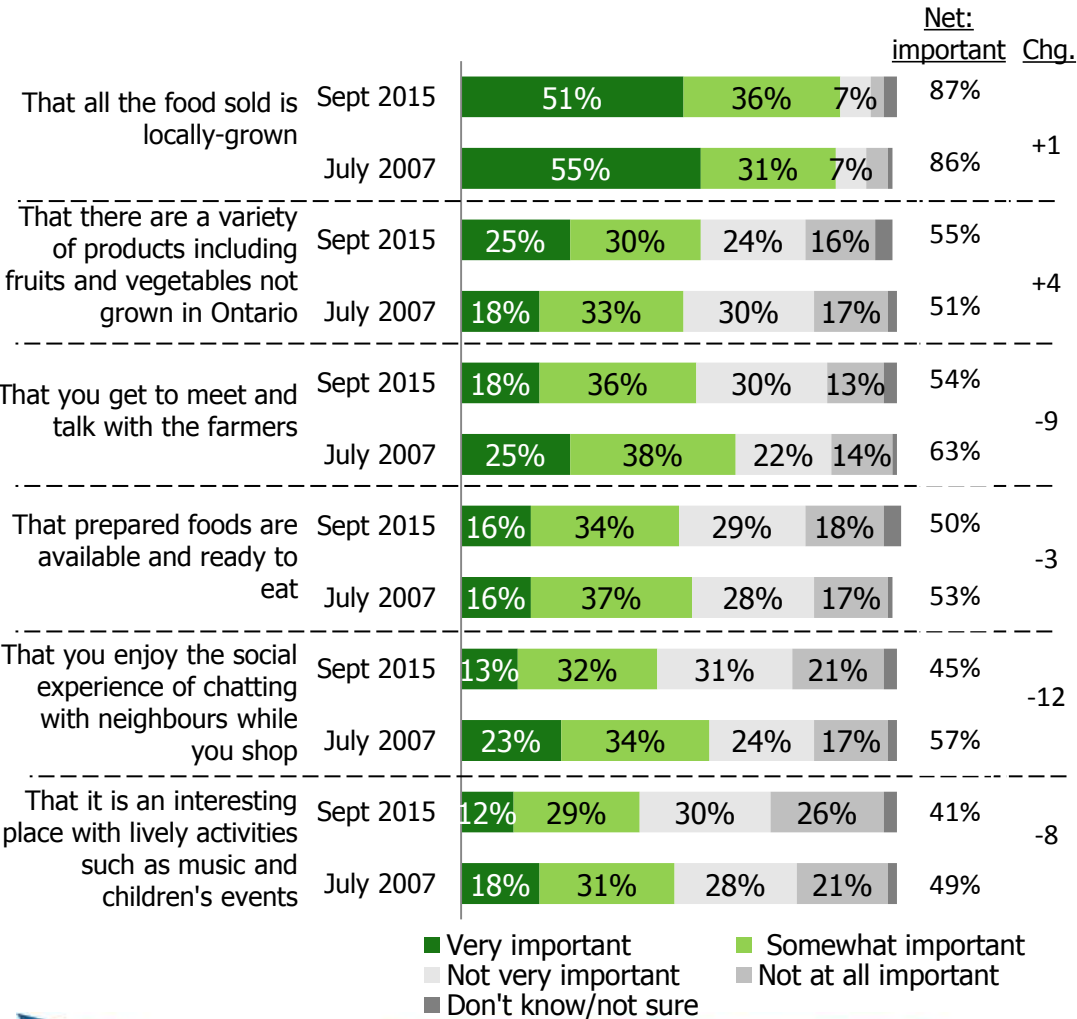
Findings:

- Purchase of locally grown and raised food is similar to that found in 2007; most Ontarians surveyed buy locally-grown produce and meat about once a week.
- Half (52%) purchase local food once a week or more, with most saying they buy it about once a week (39%) and 12% saying they buy it more than once a week.



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Thinking of farmers' markets, please tell me whether each of the following is very important, somewhat important, not very important, or not at all important to you personally?



Findings:

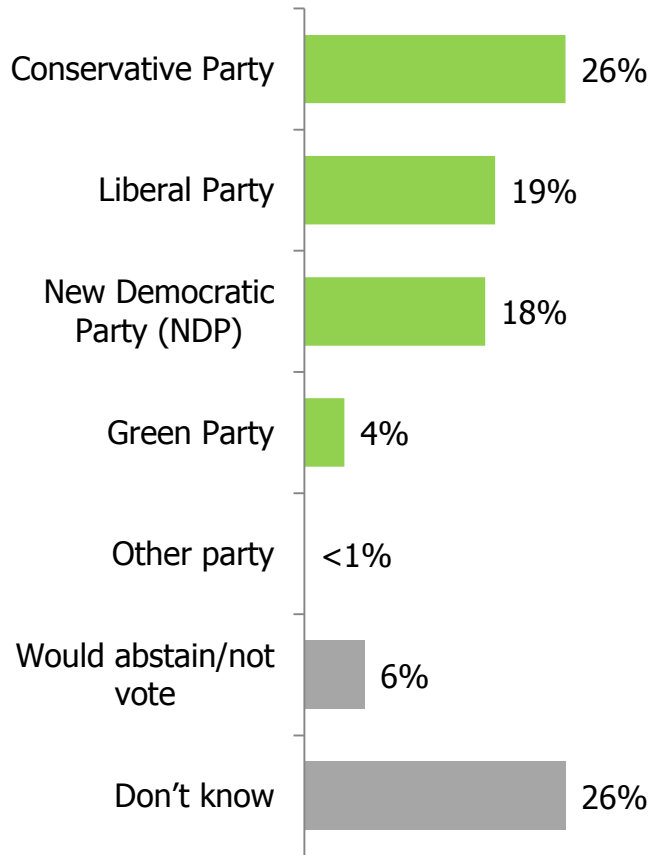
- **That food sold at farmers' markets is locally-grown is still the most important aspect, but this year, variety of products has become significantly more important, whether or not they are grown in Ontario.**
- At farmers' markets, that food is locally grown (87%) is most important, followed by having a variety of products (55%, up from 51%). Fewer want the chance to meet farmers (54%, down from 63%) or enjoy the social experience of chatting to neighbours (45%, down from 57%).



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If a provincial election were held today, which party would you be most likely to vote for?

Base: All voters



Findings (all voters):

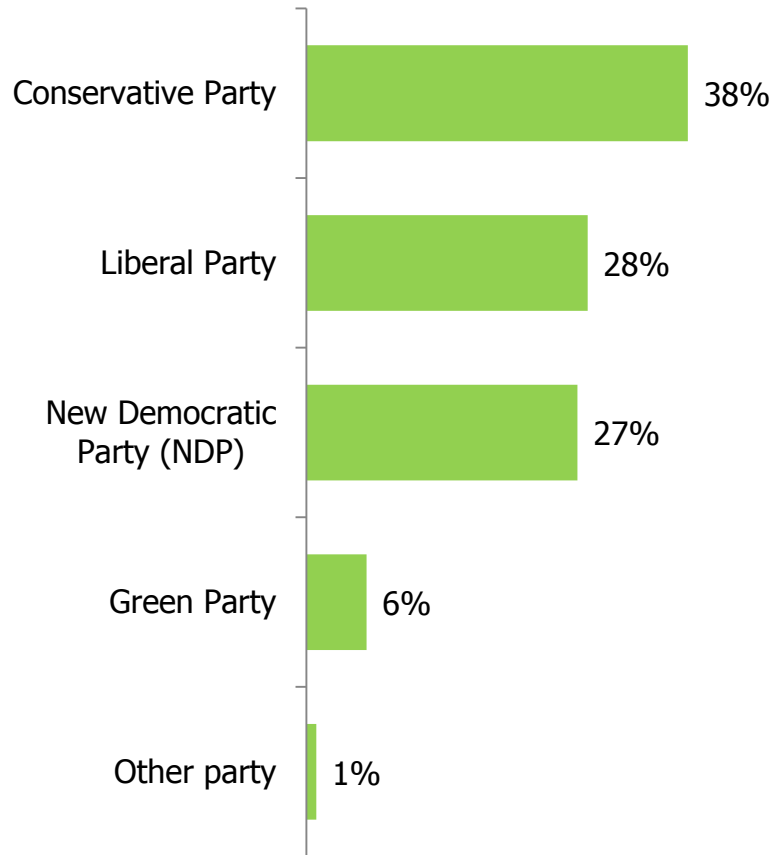
- **Equal proportions of voters say they would vote for the Conservative party or don't know' who they would vote for (26% each).**
- One in four (26%) would vote Conservative if a provincial election were held today; the same proportion (26%) say they do not know who they would vote for.
- Support for the Liberal Party (19%) and the NDP (18%) are statistically the same.



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If a provincial election were held today, which party would you be most likely to vote for?

Base: Decided voters (n=1,371)



Findings (decided voters):

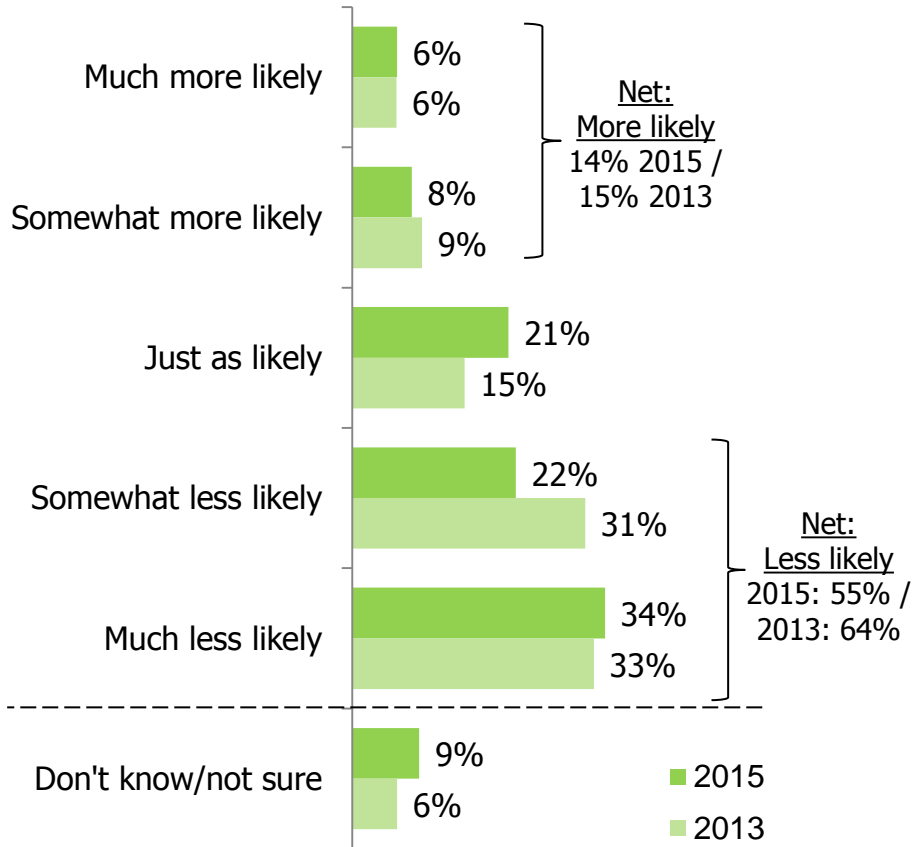
- **Among decided voters, the Conservative Party is well ahead in first place, with the Liberals and the NDP tied for second.**
- Among decided voters, four in ten (38%) choose the Conservatives, placing them well ahead in first place.
- The Liberals (28%) and the NDP (27%) are tied for second place among decided voters.



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Would you be...to vote for that party if they were to reduce or eliminate protection for the Greenbelt?

Base: Decided voters who selected one of the four main parties (n=1,362)



Findings:

- **More than half would consider changing their vote if protection for the Greenbelt was reduced or eliminated.**
- Fifty-five percent would be somewhat less likely (22%) or much less likely (34%) to vote for their chosen party if it were to reduce or eliminate protection for the Greenbelt.