338 Alberta Projection: All Available Data Points to UCP Majority Win

By Philippe J. Fournier, 338Canada.com

At the onset of the 2015 Alberta campaign, the Progressive Conservative Association of Alberta, which then had been in power for more than four decades in Alberta, found itself having to defend its right flank from the surging Wildrose Party and its new leader Brian Jean. The first opinion polls published shortly after Jean was elected leader in the spring of 2015 showed a statistical tie between Jim Prentice's PC and Brian Jean's Wildrose.

The Alberta PC had survived such a scare before. In 2012, opinion polls in the last stretch of the campaign all showed the Wildrose ahead, but the PC turned the tide in the last weekend of the campaign and still won a majority (this combined with probably the [worst polling miss in recent Canadian electoral history](#)).

However, in early April 2015, just days into the campaign, polls from Think HQ, Mainstreet Research and Forum Research all measured increasing support for the NDP across Alberta, polling as high as the mid 20s across the province and in first place in Edmonton (and let us all remember that the NDP had won only 4 seats and received less than 10% of the vote in the previous election, so it certainly was highly unusual).
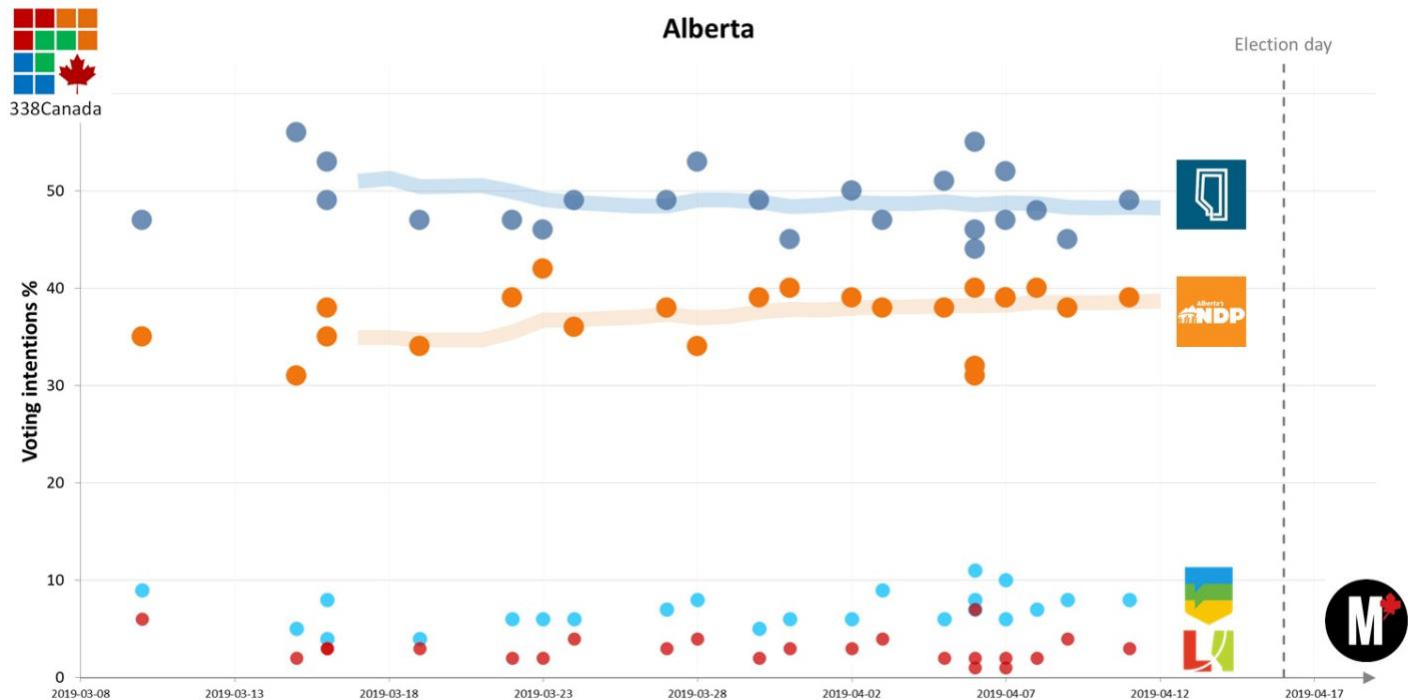
Then the leaders' debate happened. Then the "[I know that math is difficult](#)" happened.

And the wind turned.

After the debate, the NDP polled in the high 30s and low 40s in every survey that was publicly available. In the end, the polling average for the NDP stood between 40% and 43%. On May 5th 2015, 41% of Alberta voters had cast a ballot for the NDP. Rachel Notley broke the 44 year PC dynasty and became the first NDP Premier of Alberta.

Since then however, Alberta conservatives have teamed up under a single tent. Back in 2015, the PC and Wildrose had won a combined 52% of the popular vote, meaning that Rachel Notley's 41%, albeit impressive in 2015, was simply not going be enough to win re-election in 2019.

Here are the Alberta opinion polls published since March 2019:

The complete list of publicly available polls can be found [on this page](#).

As we can see on the graph above, voting intentions have not fluctuated much since the writ was drawn up on March 19th. The gap between the UCP and NDP has narrowed, but not as much as the NDP needed to win re-election.

As was mentioned [by Jason Markusoff on April 11th](#), the numerous allegations of electoral fraud clouding over Jason Kenney have not moved the needle significantly against the United Conservative Party. Most optimistic polls for the UCP measured support from 53% to 56%, but the weighted average of all polling from professional firms stands just at or barely below the 50% mark.

Let's break the numbers down. Here is the [338 Alberta](#) Projection for Monday, April 15th 2019.

Popular Vote Projection

The **United Conservative Party**'s support has slipped modestly early on the campaign, but has held steady for the past two weeks or so. Polls from the last two weeks measured UCP support as low as 45% ([Pollara](#)) and as high as 55% ([Forum](#))

Taking into account all data published as of this writing, the UCP average support stands at **48.5%**, a drop of two and a half points since the campaign began.

338Canada Alberta
Popular Vote Projection
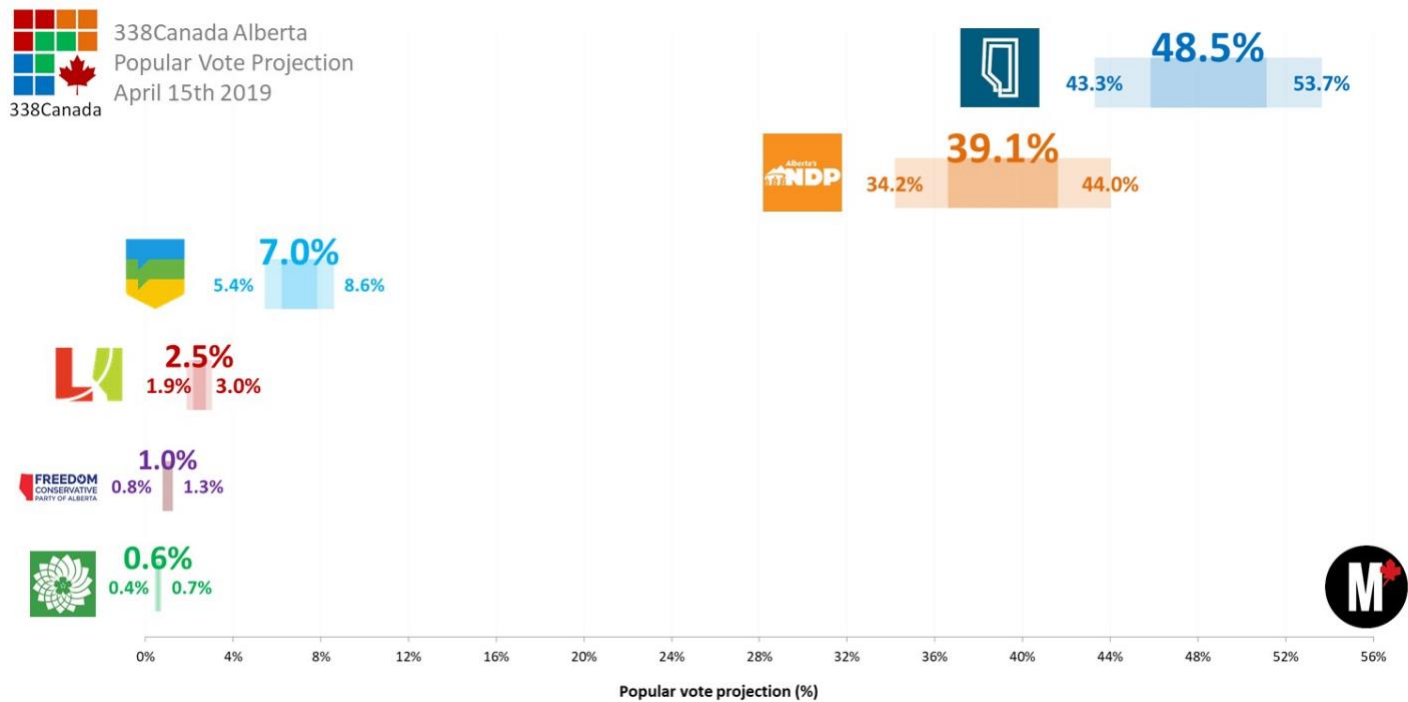April 15th 2019

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Rachel's Notley's **NDP** stands at an average of **39.1%**, a significant increase of almost seven points since mid-March. As we will see below, the NDP leads comfortably in **Edmonton**, and could repeat its 2015 success in the Alberta capital with a quasi-

sweep. In the past week, NDP has polled as high as 55% in Edmonton ([Angus Reid Institute](#)) and as low as 47% ([Ipsos/Global News](#)).

However, Notley's team still trails in **Calgary**, where it appears the UCP has consolidated most of the PC and WRP support. Outside of the two metropolitan areas, the NDP lags behind the UCP by more than twenty-five points on average.
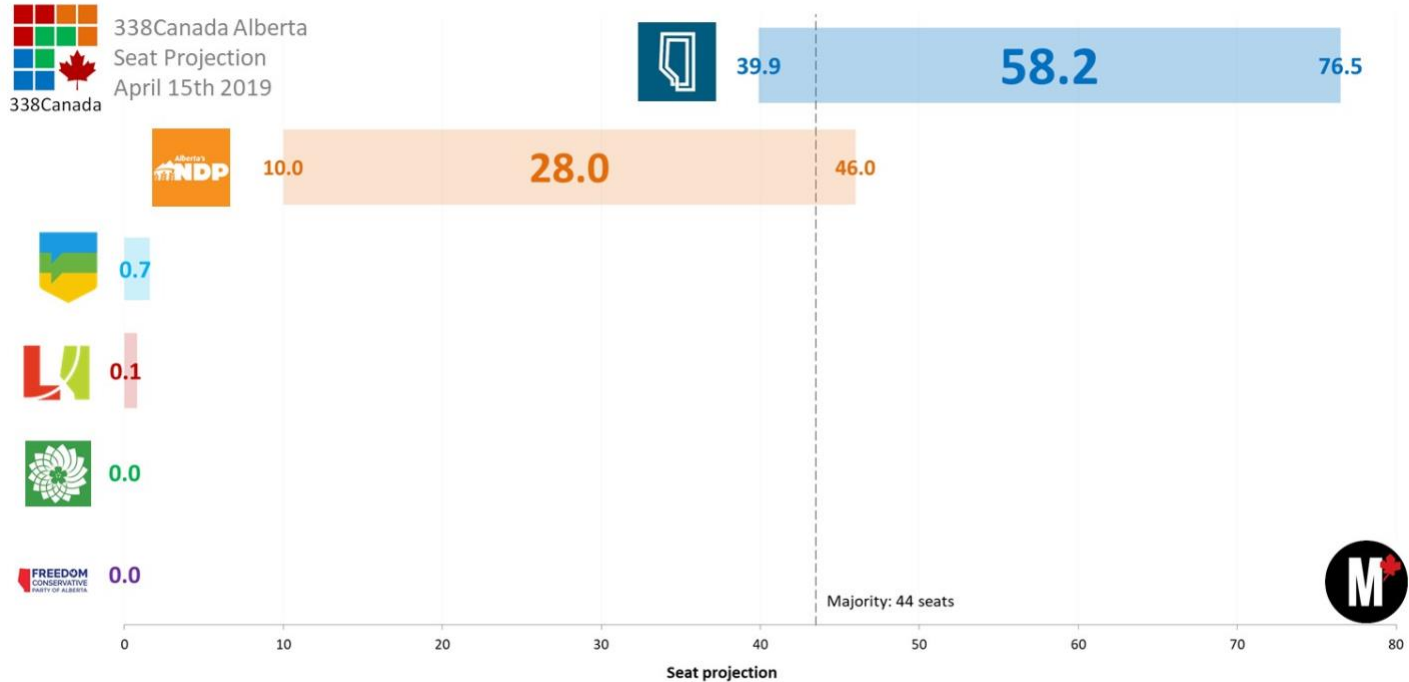
The **Alberta Party** concludes this campaign with an average of **7.0%**.

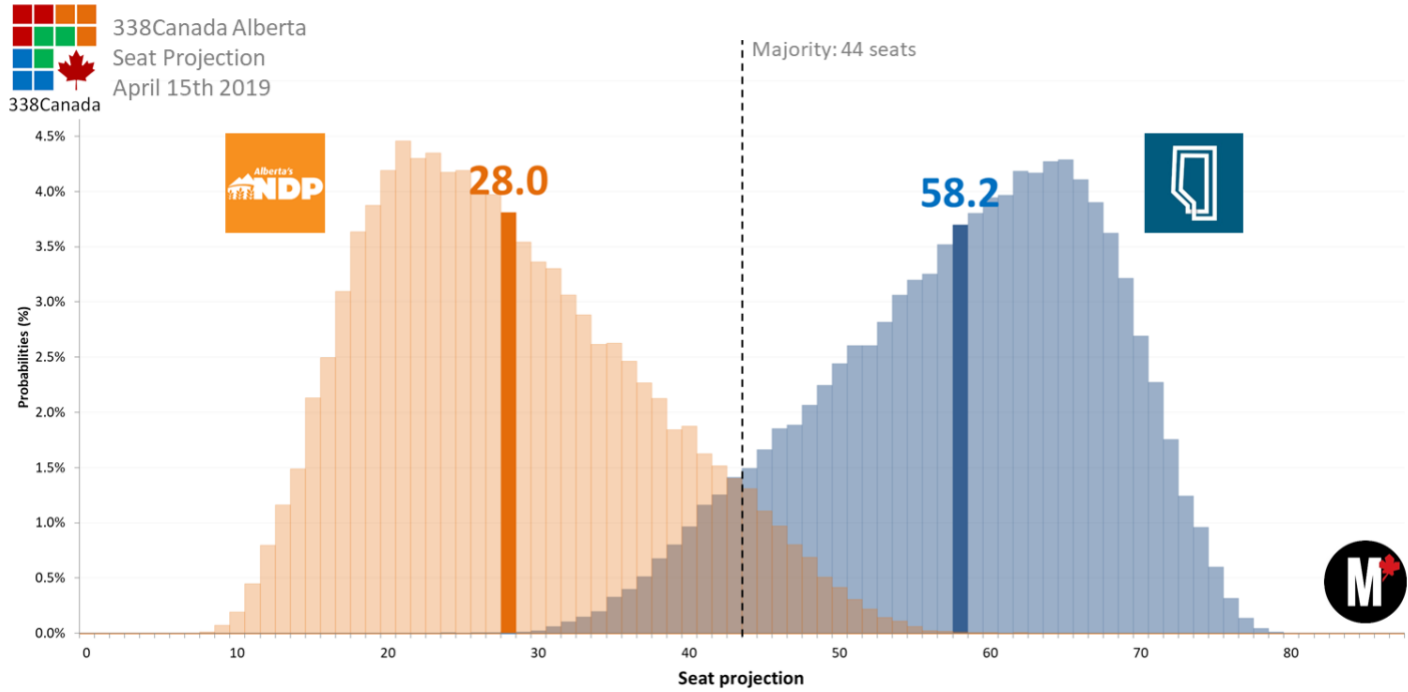Here are the popular vote projections with 95% confidence intervals:

338Canada Alberta
Popular Vote Projection
April 15th 2019
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48.5% (43.3% — 53.7%)
39.1% (34.2% — 44.0%)
7.0% (5.4% — 8.6%)
2.5% (1.9% — 3.0%)
1.0% (0.8% — 1.3%)
0.6% (0.4% — 0.7%)

Popular vote projection (%)

Seat Projection

With such levels of support, the **United Conservative Party** is leading the NDP in the seat projection by a significant margin. As of this writing, the UCP seat projection average stands at **58** seats per simulation performed by the 338 electoral model. The threshold for a majority at the Legislative Assembly of Alberta is 44 seats.
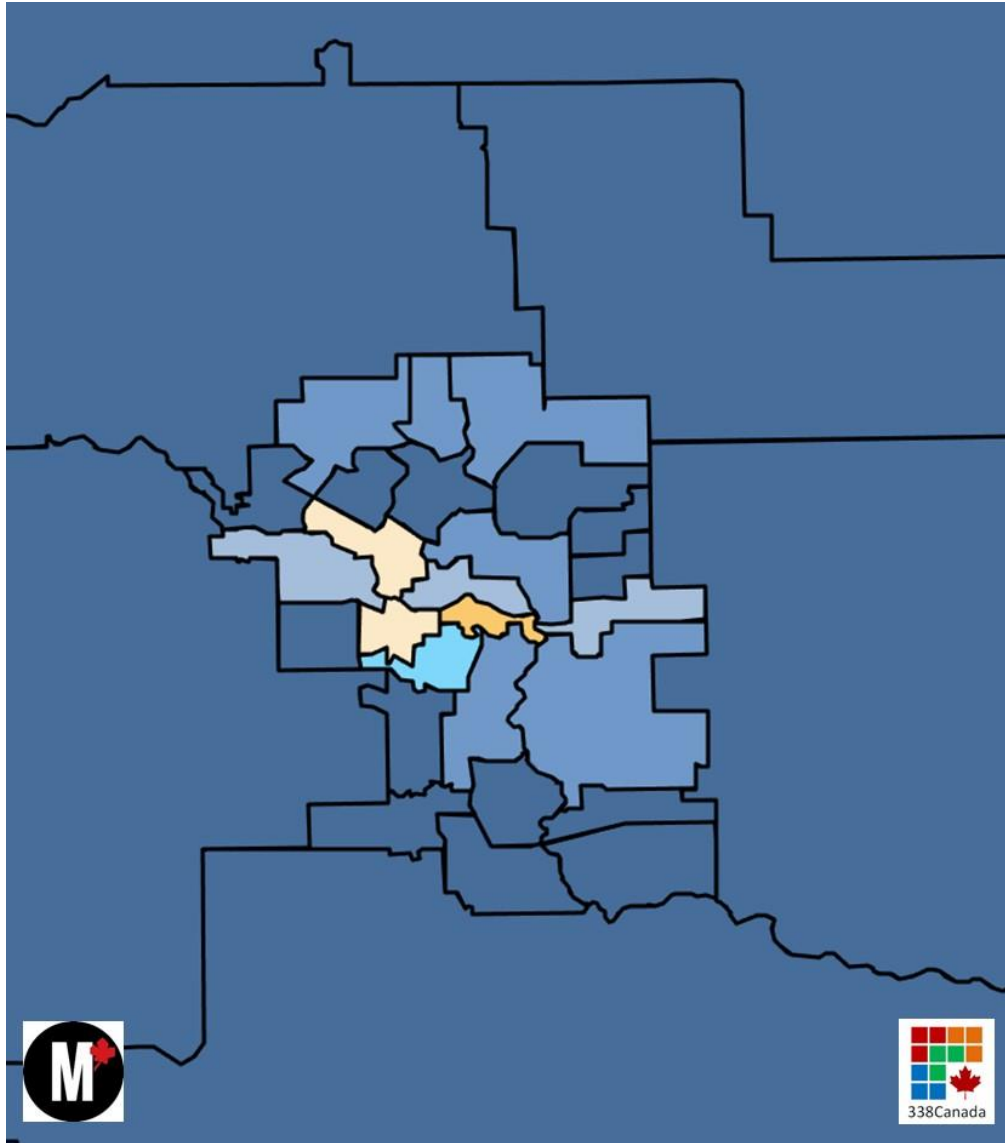
338Canada Alberta
Seat Projection
April 15th 2019

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Party	Low	Average	High
UCP	39.9	58.2	76.5
NDP	10.0	28.0	46.0
		0.7	
		0.1	
		0.0	
FREEDOM CONSERVATIVE PARTY OF ALBERTA		0.0	

Majority: 44 seats

Seat projection

The **NDP**'s seat projection average stands at **28**. As mentioned above, the NDP is projected to win most seats in Edmonton and is competitive, although not projected leading, in several seats in Calgary. Outside of the two urban centres, the UCP dominates the seat projection and the NDP is projected leading only in **Lethbridge-West** (**Lethbridge-East** is projected as a toss up).
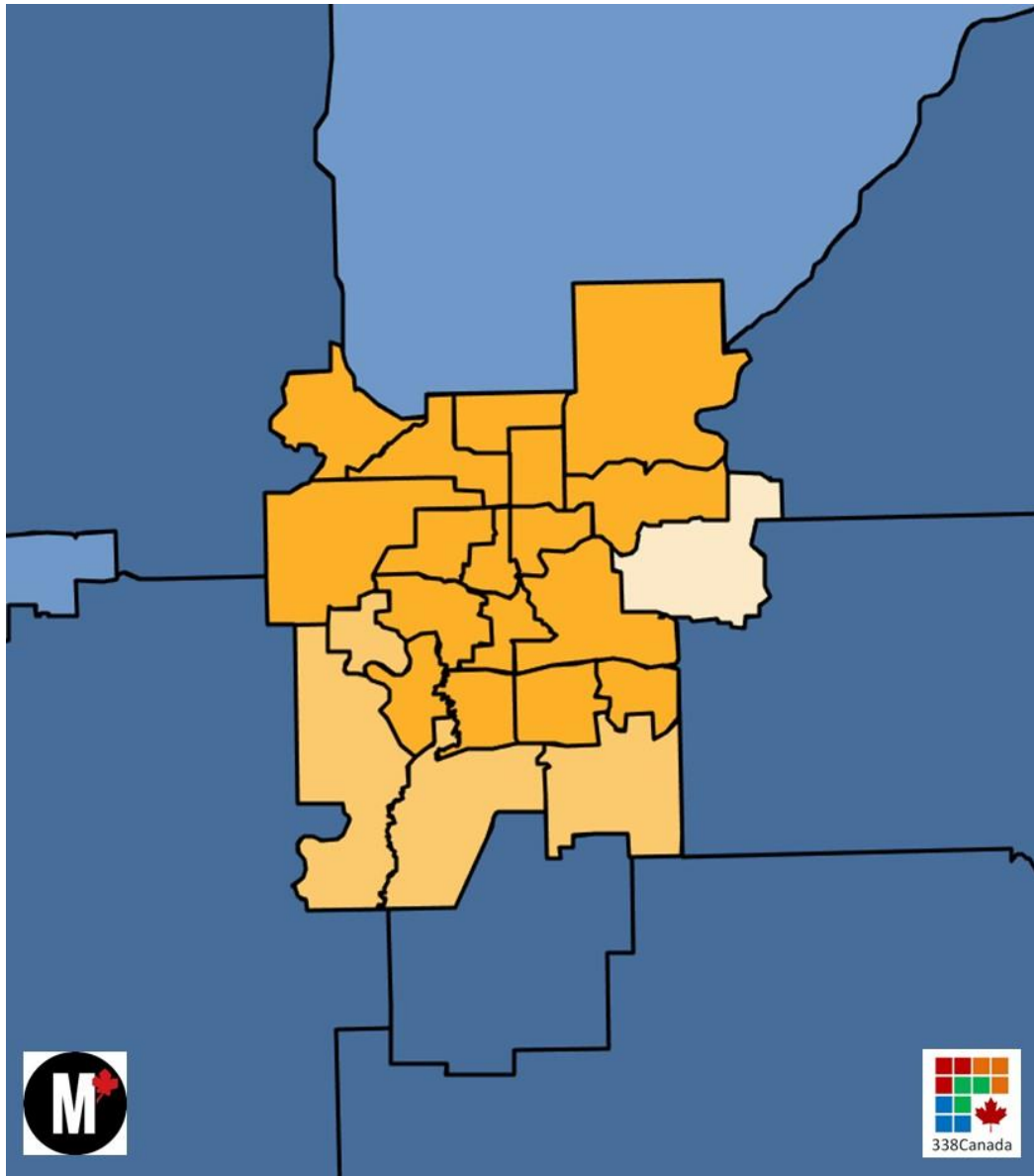
Here are the seat projection probability densities (the higher the columns, the more probable the results). The darker lines indicate the seat projection averages.

338Canada Alberta Seat Projection April 15th 2019

Majority: 44 seats

NDP: 28.0

58.2

Here below is the projection map for Calgary and its surroundings. The districts of paler colours are projected as "leaning" or "toss ups". Hence, the data currently available strongly favours the UCP in Calgary.

As for Edmonton, even though the NDP is not projected as high as its 2015 results (it received over 60% of the popular vote), most districts in the Alberta capital are projected "safe" or "likely" NDP.
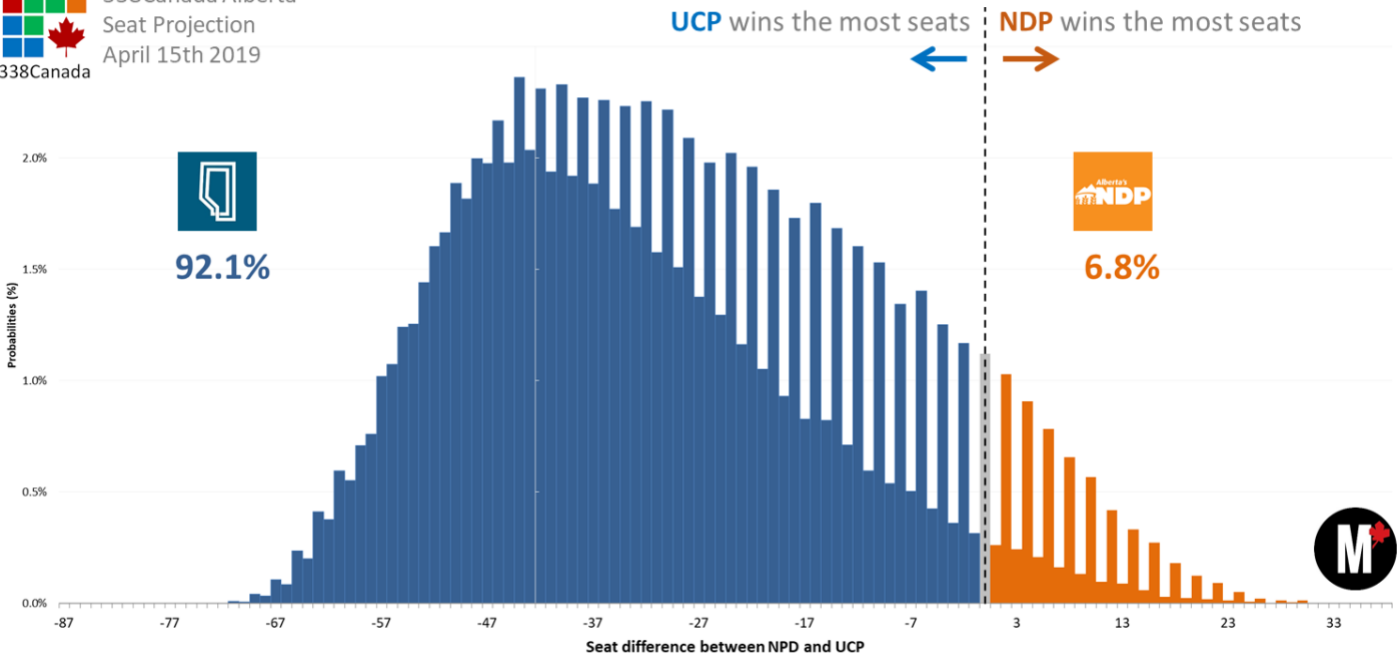
Odds of Winning the Most Seats

With such levels of support, the **UCP** wins the most seats in **92.1%** of all 250,000 general election simulations performed by the 338 electoral model.

The **NDP** wins the most seats in only **6.8%** of simulations. Therefore, the **UCP is still, as of this writing, considered a strong favourite to win the election**.

The UCP and NDP are tied for the most seats in 1.1% of simulations.

In Conclusion

Opinion polls are scientific experiments. However, unlike the cases of stars or electrons, the subjects of these experiments are human beings who have varying moods and may hold contradicting opinions. After all, humans beings are far more complex and mysterious than stars or electrons, which makes the study of their behaviour all the more uncertain.

As a scientist whose career it is to teach the scientific method to young adults, I created the Qc125 and 338Canada models with the scientific method in mind. René Descartes' rules for acquiring knowledge may date back to almost four hundred years, but they still ring true today: *don't judge without proper evidence*, *don't judge based on preconceived ideas*, and *don't let your judgement go beyond the evidence*. While it is true that polls contain uncertainty, when conducted properly, polls also hold precious information about the mood of voters. As a rule, the 338 model sees a poll as

but a tiny piece of a giant puzzle, and it is only by assembling these pieces together that we may fully understand the big picture.

And the data collected and made available about Albertan voters this spring is abundantly clear: **Jason Kenney will most likely become the 18th Premier of Alberta**. Moreover, since the likelihood of third parties winning more than one or two seats is slim, the odds of a majority government are overwhelming.

Does Rachel Notley have a path to victory?

The answer to that question is simple: **Yes, she does, but the data would have to be wrong.** The NDP would have to sweep Edmonton (which is likely), gain at least three quarters of Calgary seats (which is not), and win pockets of districts in smaller cities such as Lethbridge and Red Deer.

Polling data is right more often than it is wrong the same way meteorologists, in the long run, get their forecasts right more often than not. But the Alberta polling miss of 2012 still hovers over forecasters' minds.

Polls may capture the general mood of an electorate, but they do not cast votes. Only voters do. We shall see which party Albertan voters will have chosen tomorrow to lead their government for the next four years.