

Premiers' Performance: Ford and Kenney's popularity & political fortunes bear brunt of pandemic management

Ontario, Alberta premiers see declines in leadership approval; opposition parties in those provinces gain

June 9, 2021 – Two of Canada's most prominent Conservative premiers are deep in the depths of the blues this spring, for reasons that have nothing to do with party branding.

Instead, Ontario's Doug Ford and Alberta's Jason Kenney are experiencing notable pandemic-related declines in job performance approval, which in turn are affecting – at least for now – their parties' respective political fortunes.

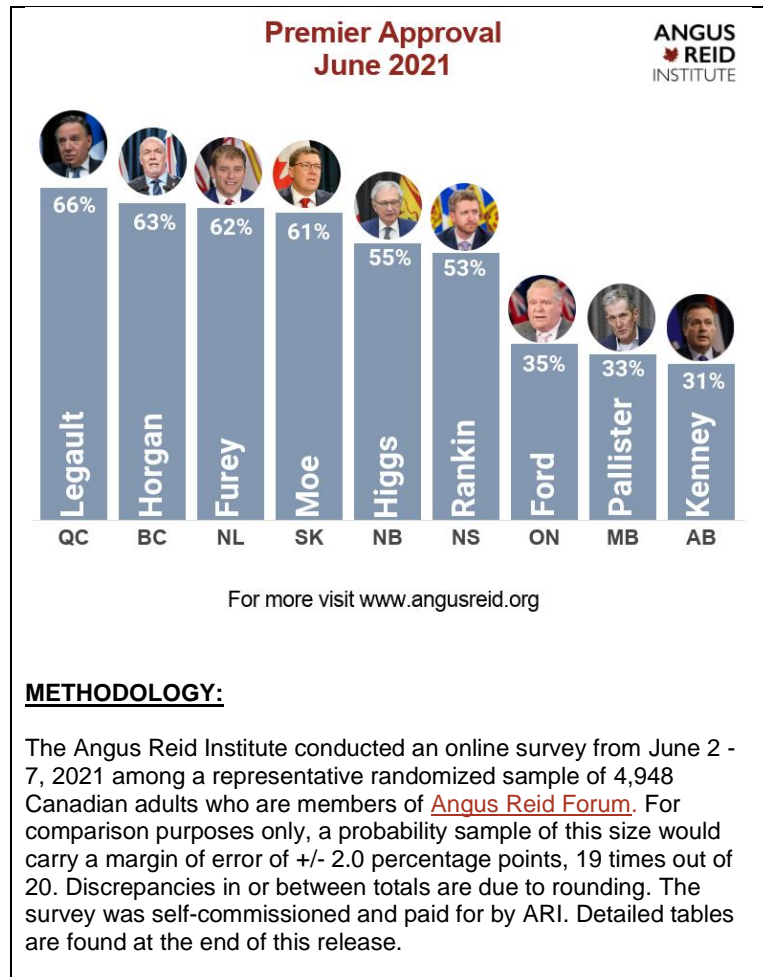
Ford, whose personal approval soared to almost 70 per cent in the spring of 2020, is now at half that level, down 15 points since last quarter. To the west, Albertans are souring on Kenney, fewer than one-third (31%) approve of his performance, off nine points over the last three months.

On the other end of the spectrum, this has been a period of Atlantic Canadians warming to relatively new premiers. Premier Andrew Furey's approval gained 17 points in Newfoundland and Labrador, from 45 per cent in March to 62 per cent. And Iain Rankin, whose performance half of Nova Scotians had no opinion of last quarter, gained 22 points in approval, up to 53 per cent.

About ARI

The **Angus Reid Institute (ARI)** was founded in October 2014 by pollster and sociologist, Dr. Angus Reid. ARI is a national, not-for-profit, non-partisan public opinion research foundation established to advance education by commissioning, conducting and disseminating to the public accessible and impartial statistical data, research and policy analysis on economics, political science, philanthropy, public administration, domestic and international affairs and other socio-economic issues of importance to Canada and its world.

***Note: Because its small population precludes drawing discrete samples over multiple waves, data on Prince Edward Island is not released.**



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Part One: Tougher times for three

Ontario

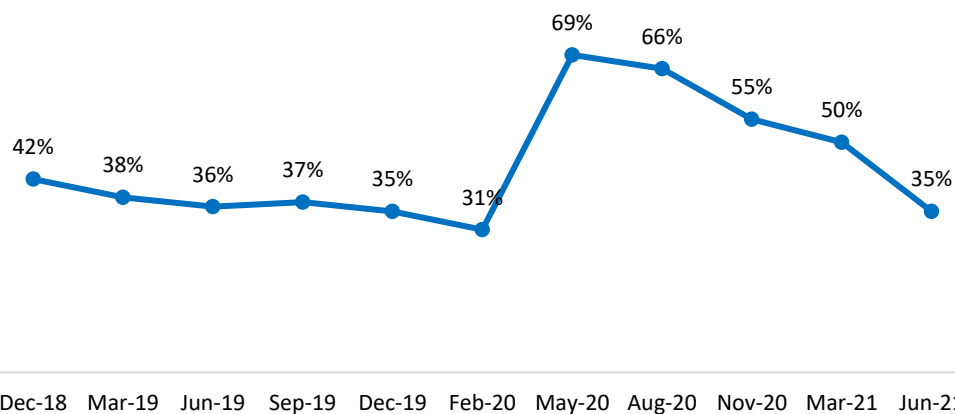
Doug Ford

In Canada, it is not uncommon to compare the trials of political leaders to those of beloved (or loathed) hockey teams. Let this report be no exception. Just as the Toronto Maple Leafs blew a 3-1 series lead over the Montreal Canadiens in the first round of the NHL playoffs, so too has Ontario Premier Doug Ford seen his position of relative political strength in the eyes of Ontarians disintegrate.

His approval levels, at 50 per cent three months ago, have sunk 15 points over the spring to 35 per cent. It has been a turbulent season for the PCPO premier. Ontario has announced plans to re-open on June 11, but Ford’s handling of the COVID-19 pandemic – complete with perceived delays in imposing pandemic-related restrictions as cases surged, challenges with communications over vaccination rollouts, and flip-flops over the closing then re-opening of children’s waterparks – has been widely criticized.

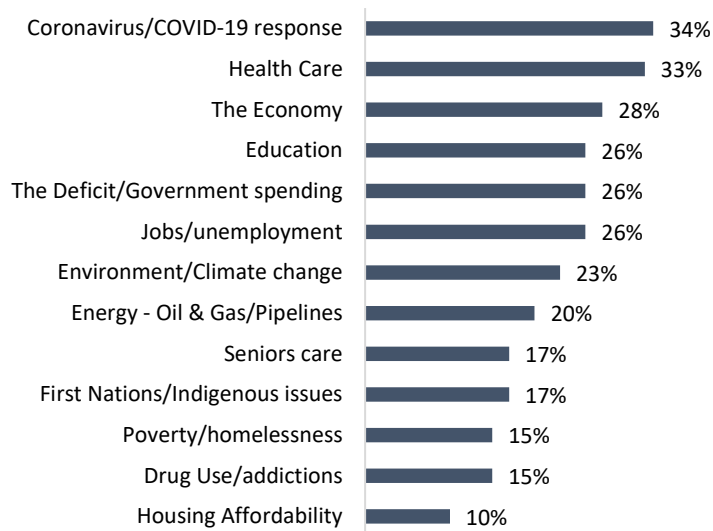
Ford’s attention turned this week to a devastating tragedy, as four members of a Muslim family were killed in London in what is being called a deliberate attack. He announced that the government would ease restrictions in that community to allow for gatherings to mourn this loss.

Approval of Ontario Premier Doug Ford



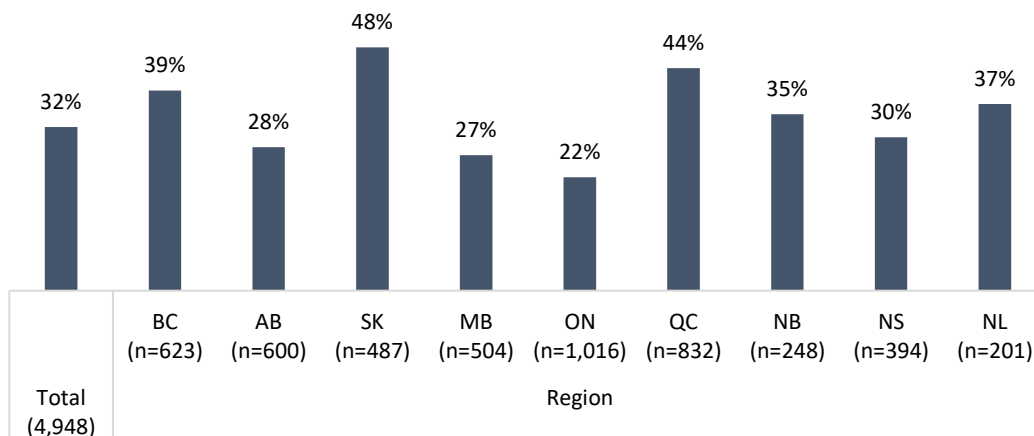
When Ontario residents are asked how the Ford government is performing on a number of key issues, they offer some of the most negative responses of constituents in any province.

**Percentage saying provincial government is doing a 'good job'
in handling each:
Ontario, n=1,016**



Indeed, as an average government performance score across each of the 13 issues, the Ford government ranks as worst in the country by a considerable margin:

**Government performance score
(Average number of residents saying their provincial government has
done a 'good job' across 13 issues)**



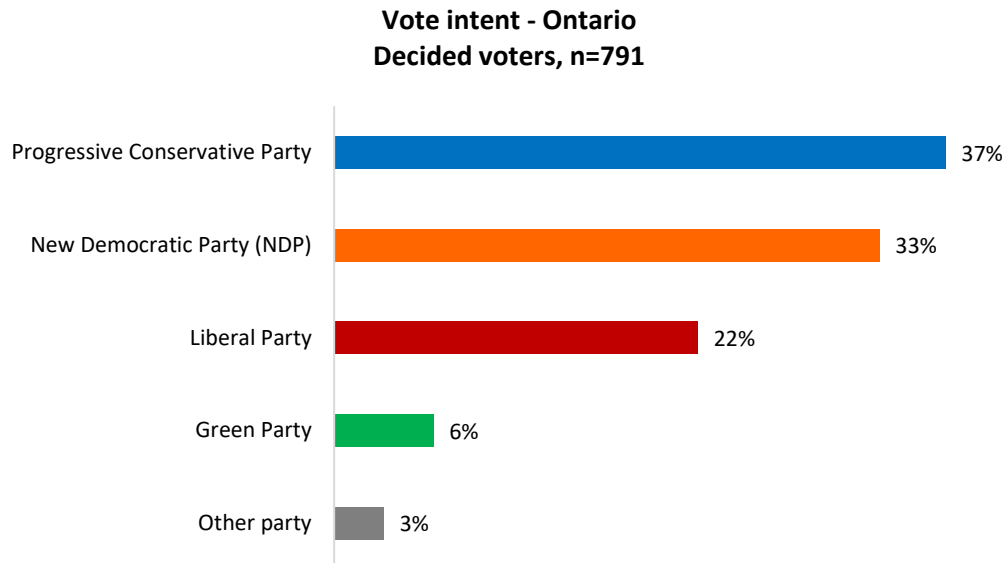
NDP and PCPO neck and neck

The challenges of the past 16 months have put Premier Ford's party in a difficult place politically. With an expected election now less than one year away (June 2, 2022), the incumbent party holds a tight four-

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point lead over the Ontario NDP under opposition leader Andrea Horwath. A lot can change in a year. As it stands today, Ontario Liberal supporters may well hold the outcome in their hands:



Alberta

Jason Kenney

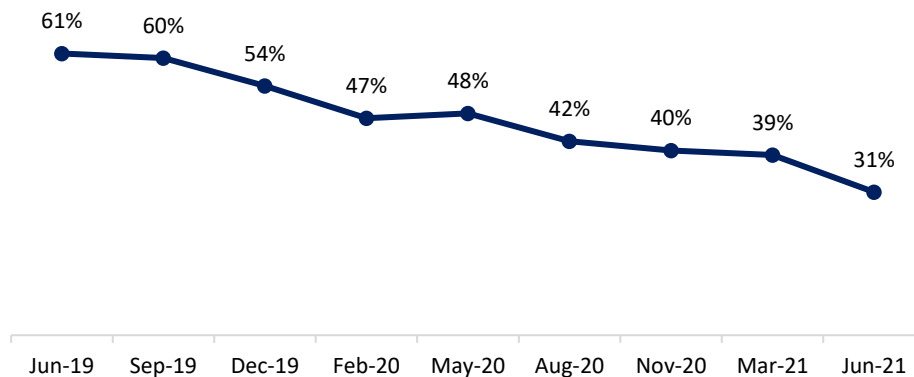
Like Ford, Alberta Premier Jason Kenney has endured months of [criticism and anger](#) – in his case from both sides of the political spectrum – over his handling of pandemic restrictions. Still, three months ago, nearly two-in-five (39%) Albertans approved of him. That number is now 31 per cent, making him the least approved of premier in the country.

Critics have pointed to Alberta’s relatively relaxed approach to restrictions which contributed to the province having the [worst COVID-19 outbreak in North America](#) in May. More recently, Kenney apologized for breaking his own government’s COVID-19 public health rules by having a dinner with members of his party without physically distancing. Kenney admitted that he has tried to observe the rules throughout this difficult period but has not [“always done that perfectly”](#).

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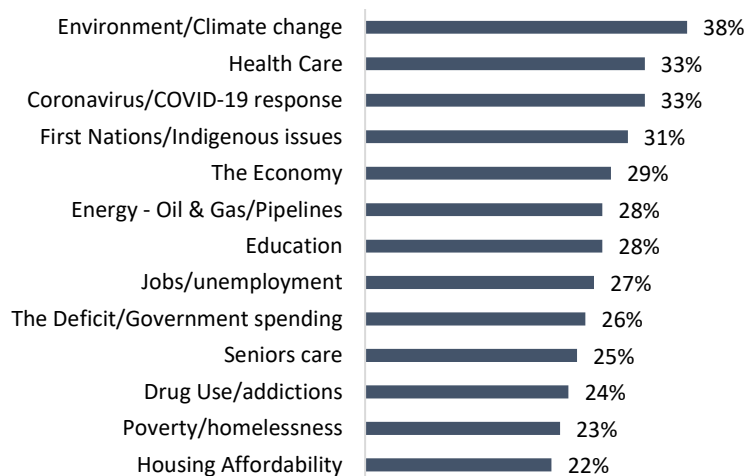
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Approval of Alberta Premier Jason Kenney



Further adding to Kenney’s challenges is his government’s poor appraisal on the key issues beyond the pandemic, though, notably, two-in-five (38%) say the United Conservative Party is handling the environment file well:

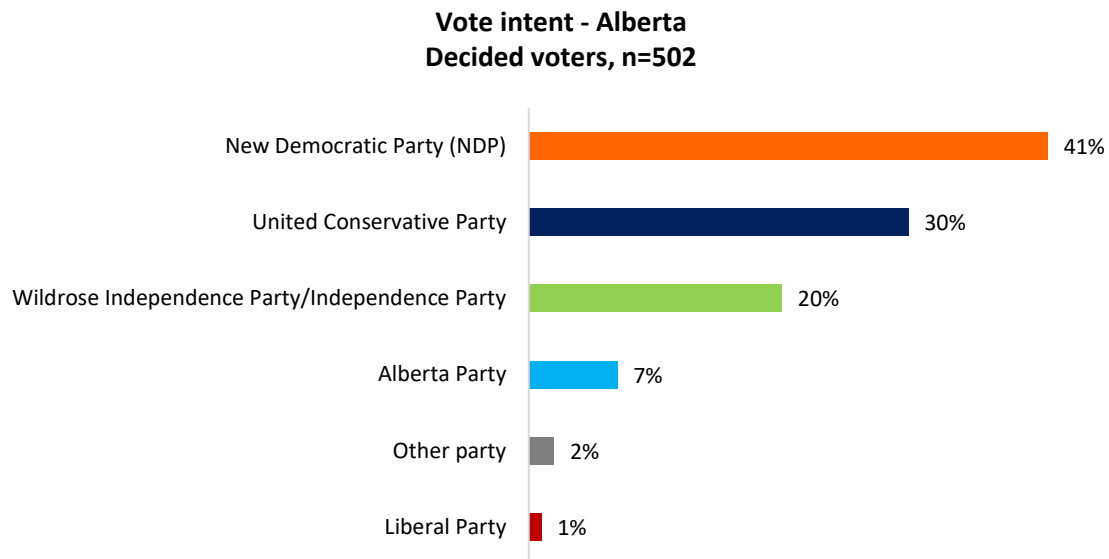
**Percentage saying provincial government is doing a 'good job' in handling each:
Alberta, n=600**



Despite the province’s challenges, Kenney has stated that Alberta is on track for its “best summer ever” and has green-lit the Calgary Stampede in July.

NDP leads in vote intent

Alberta is not mandated to hold an election until the spring of 2023. Thus, the United Conservative Party has time to rebuild a post-pandemic scaffolding with which to climb back up in public opinion. It will need to: the UCP is now running fully 11 points behind the NDP on the left. On the right, support for the Wildrose Independence Party is picking up steam; one-in-five Albertans currently say they would vote for that party.



Manitoba

Brian Pallister

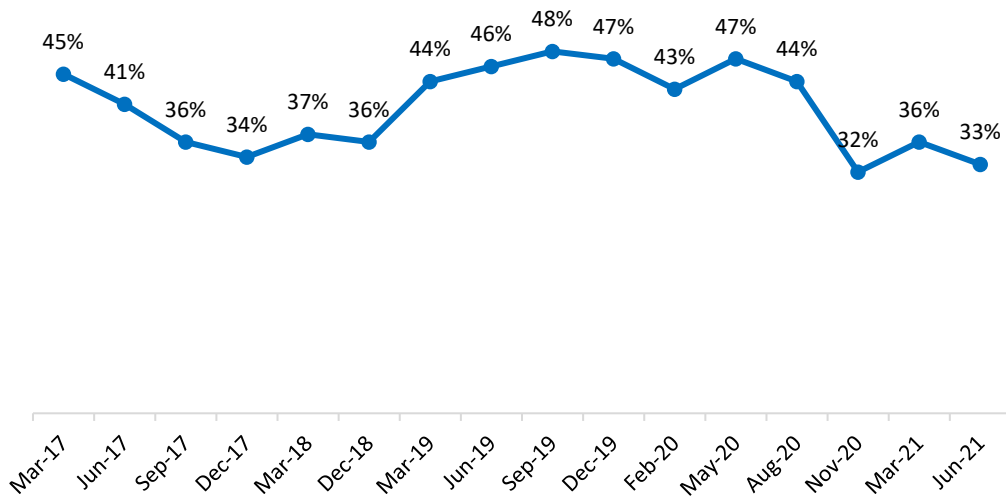
In Manitoba, Premier Brian Pallister also struggles to engender much positive feeling among his constituents. While his drop in approval is not as heavy as Ford's or Kenney's, he is off three points since March. The province met with its third wave of COVID-19 later than others and continues to have tighter restrictions than many other provinces, though cases are on a steep decline.

The provincial government did allow an exception to have approximately 500 health-care workers attend two Winnipeg Jets home games in their second round playoff series against the Montreal Canadiens. Unfortunately for Pallister, his province's team was quickly swept out of the playoffs. His approval rating is second worst in the country, at just 33 per cent.

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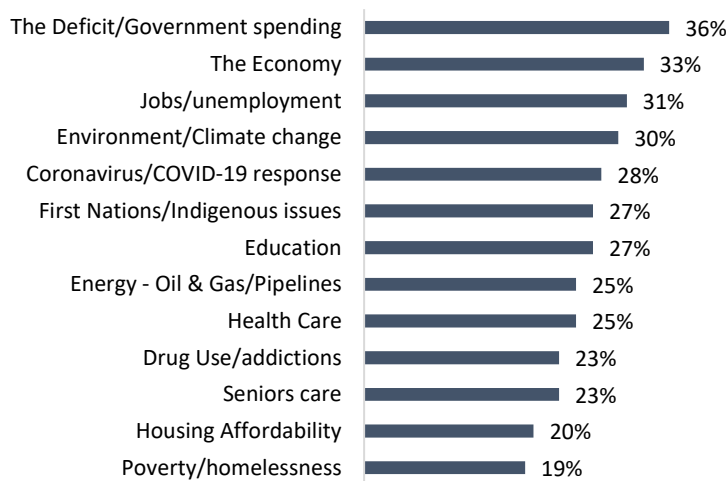
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Approval of Manitoba Premier Brian Pallister



The Manitoba government too earns poor marks for its handling of various issues in the province, lowlighted by just 28 per cent saying Pallister and his team have done a good job in handling COVID-19, the fewest in any province.

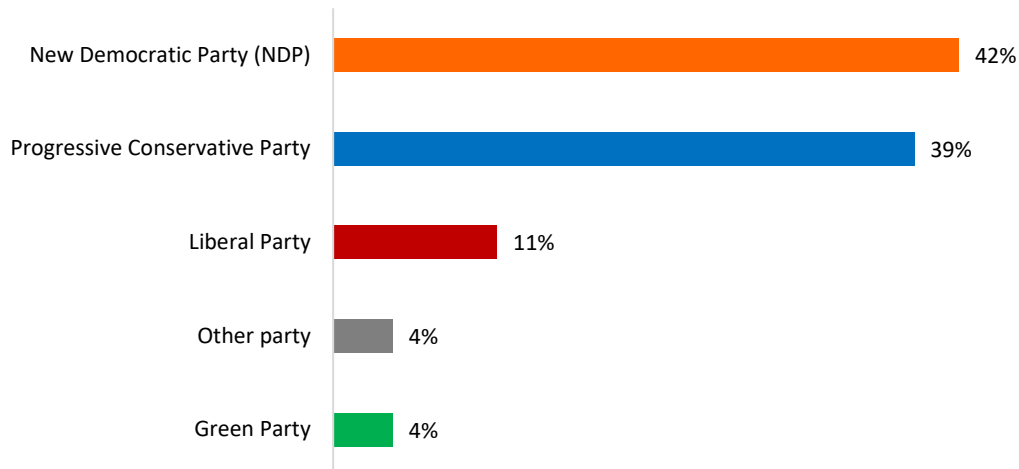
**Percentage saying provincial government is doing a 'good job' in handling each:
Manitoba, n=504**



Slight lead for Manitoba NDP

Current vote intention reflects the dissatisfaction with Pallister’s performance. The Manitoba NDP holds a three-point advantage over the governing Progressive Conservatives.

**Vote intent - Manitoba
Decided voters, n=398**



Part Two: Majority approval for the rest

Quebec

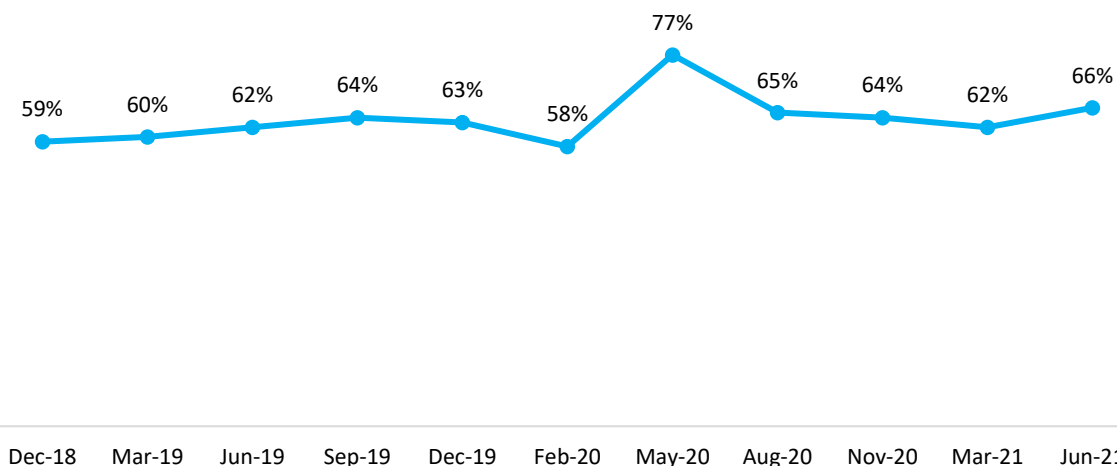
Francois Legault

The situation is much better for Quebec Premier Francois Legault. He leads the nation in approval this quarter at 66 per cent. Quebec's beloved Montreal Canadiens, *Les Habitants*, defeated Winnipeg in the North Division final, to the joy of fans in Quebec and the Rest Of Canada. Legault gave the go ahead to have 2,500 fans in the Bell Centre on May 29, making Quebec the first province to hold a large sporting event with fans since the pandemic began. His 66 per cent approval – up four points since last quarter – is his second highest since he assumed his role in 2018.

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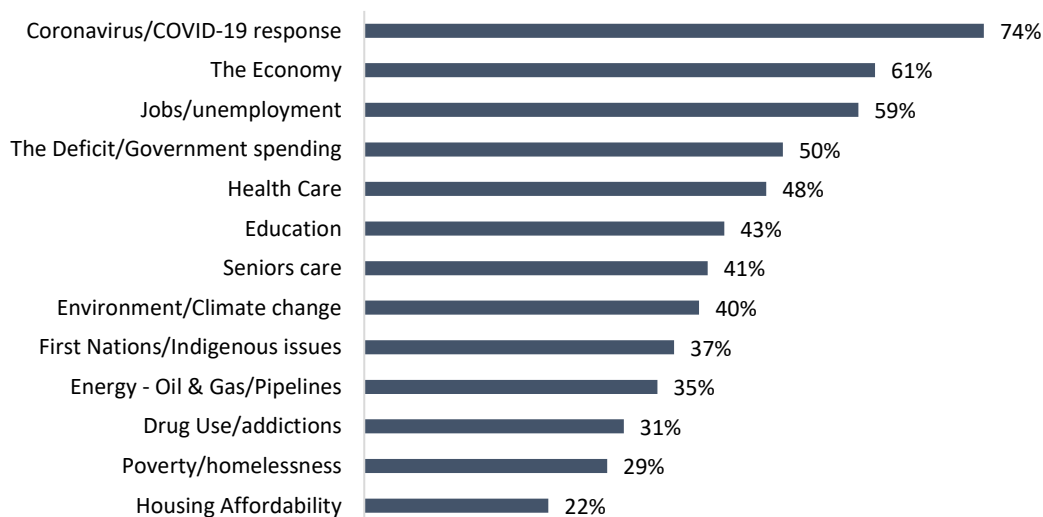
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Approval of Quebec Premier François Legault



The CAQ's strength, from the perspective of Quebecers, is in its handling of COVID-19 and economic issues. In each case it ranks among the highest levels of satisfaction in the country:

**Percentage saying provincial government is doing a 'good job' in handling each:
Quebec, n=832**



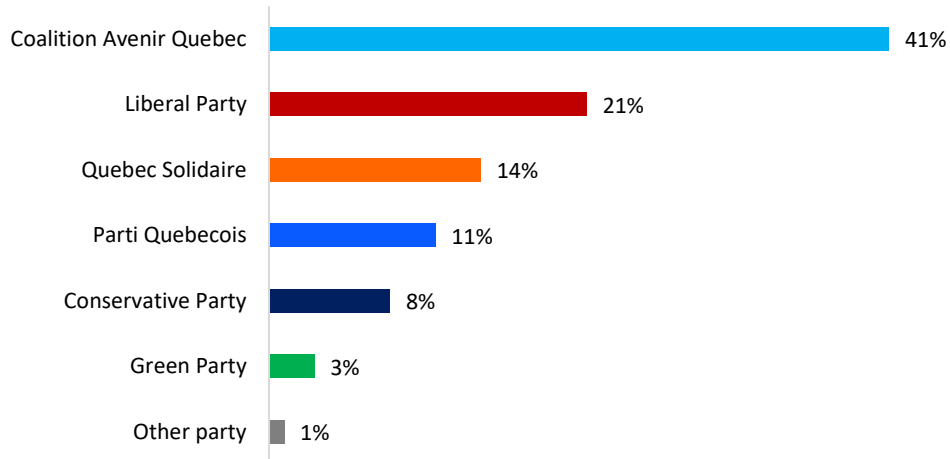
CAQ holds comfortable vote intention lead

The Coalition Avenir Quebec currently holds a significant advantage in vote intention, doubling its next closest rival, the Liberal Party. But will it hold? An election is not expected until the fall of 2022.

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**Vote intent - Quebec
Decided voters, n=679**

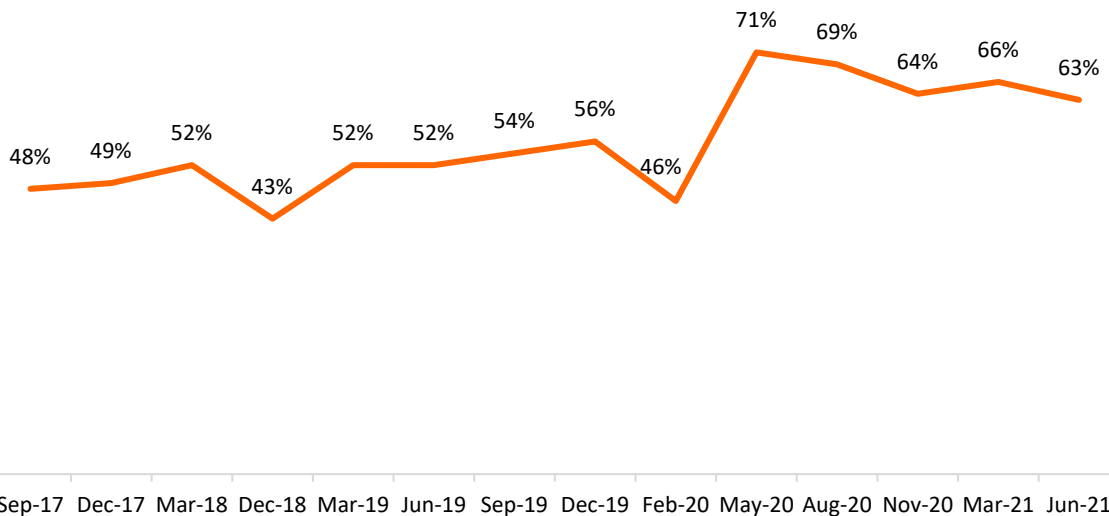


British Columbia

John Horgan

British Columbia's Dr. Bonnie Henry noted that as early as September 7, the province's reopening plan could enter Phase Four, meaning that Canucks fans may be able to watch their team in person when the season kicks off in October. B.C.'s dropping cases and the province's reopening plan have helped Premier John Horgan to generally maintain his approval level at 63 per cent – down three points from last quarter.

Approval of British Columbia Premier John Horgan

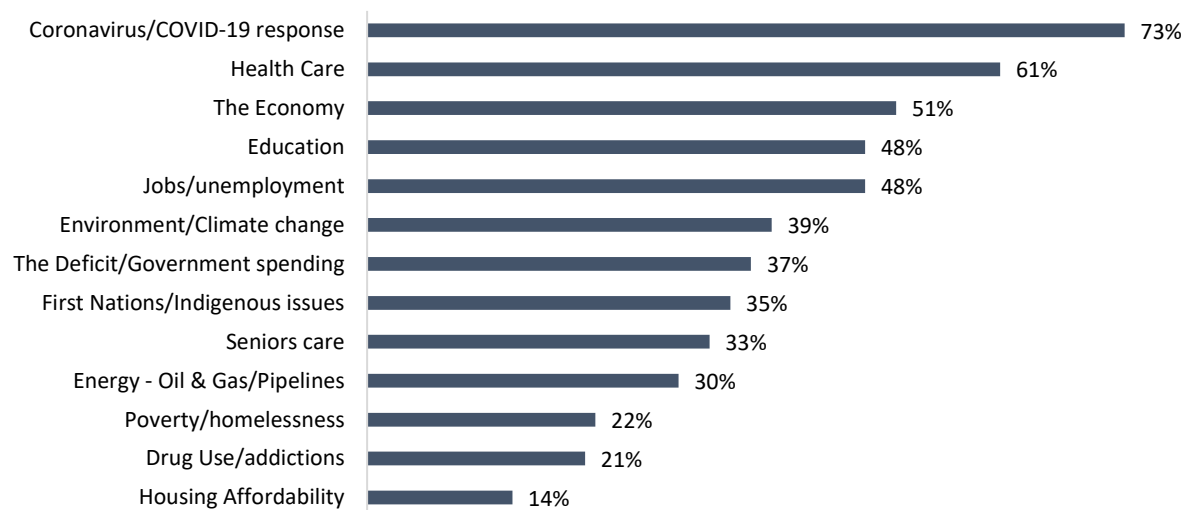


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The B.C. government shines when respondents rate its handling of COVID-19 as well as health care more broadly. That said, there are persistent challenges. The province receives among the worst ratings in the country for both housing affordability and dealing with addiction and drugs. Two-in-five (39%) say the BC NDP is handling the environment well, despite months of ongoing and politically problematic protests on Vancouver Island. At issue: the logging of old-growth forest near [Fairy Creek, B.C.](#):

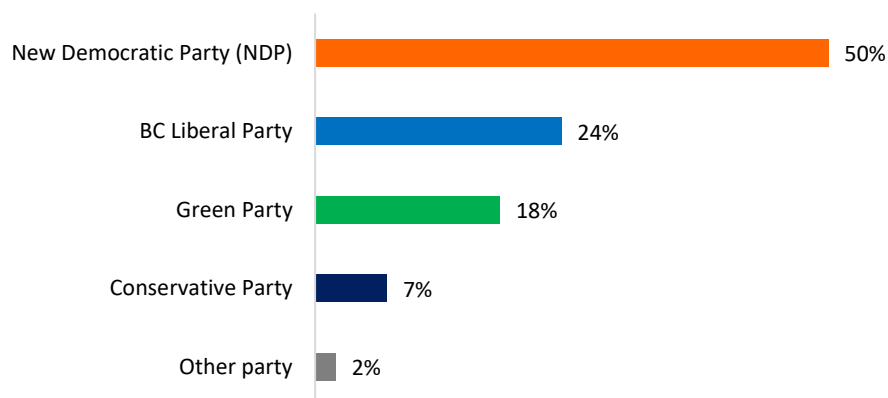
**Percentage saying provincial government is doing a 'good job' in handling each:
British Columbia, n=623**



NDP doubles Liberals

British Columbians went to the polls this past October, handing the BC NDP a majority government, and voter sentiment has changed little in the months since. The opposition BC Liberals are attempting to do something about that, with the party in the midst of a leadership race. One candidate has suggested shedding [the party name](#) altogether.

**Vote intent - British Columbia
Decided voters, n=488**



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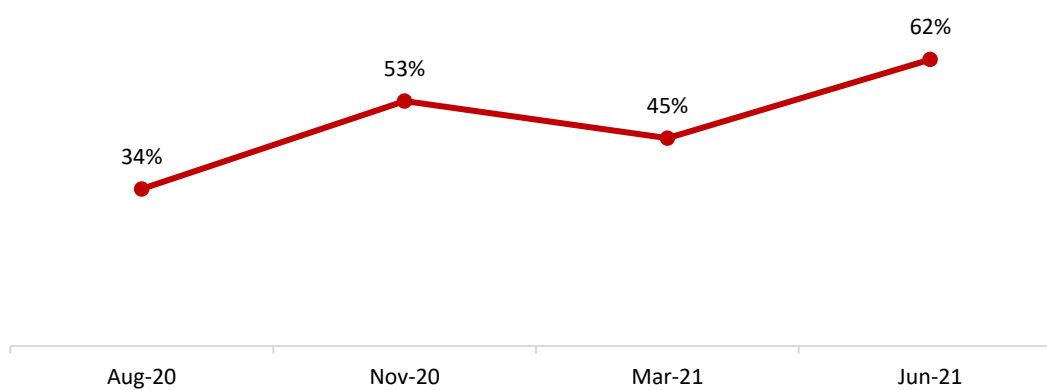
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Newfoundland and Labrador

Andrew Furey

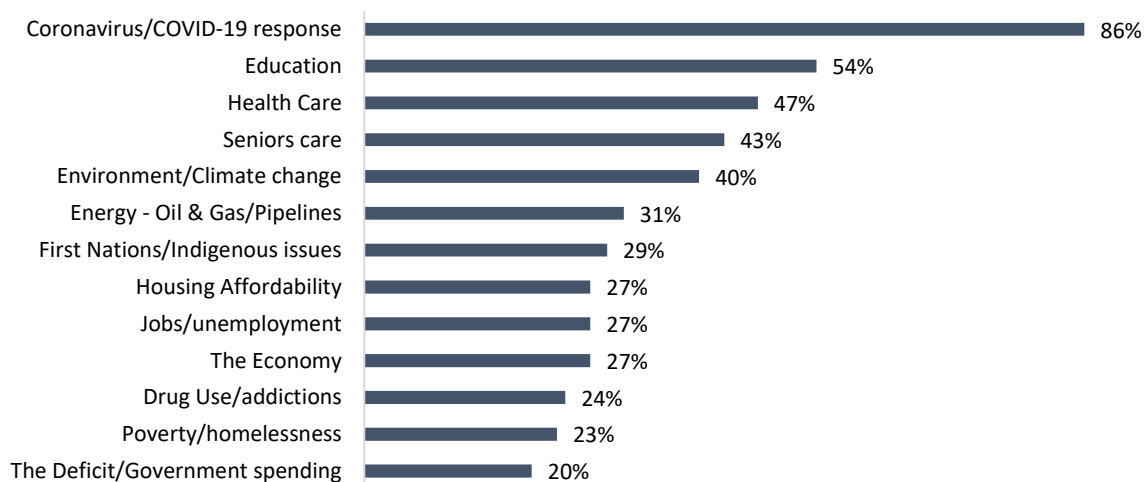
After facing criticism for a pandemic election call in Newfoundland and Labrador, Premier Andrew Furey narrowly won a majority government in March. The province has announced its re-opening plan, which will have a transition phase beginning June 15 and Step 1, which reopens much of the province, on July 1. Furey's personal approval has jumped considerably this quarter to 62 per cent.

Approval of Newfoundland and Labrador Premier Andrew Furey



The N.L. Liberal government receives the best marks in the nation for its handling of COVID-19 but will have to contend with a difficult economic reality for which residents offer little praise. Just 27 per cent say the government is doing well when it comes to the economy, while 20 per cent say this of the deficit. N.L. currently has the worst unemployment rate in Canada at more than 12 per cent:

**Percentage saying provincial government is doing a 'good job' in handling each:
Newfoundland and Labrador, n=201**



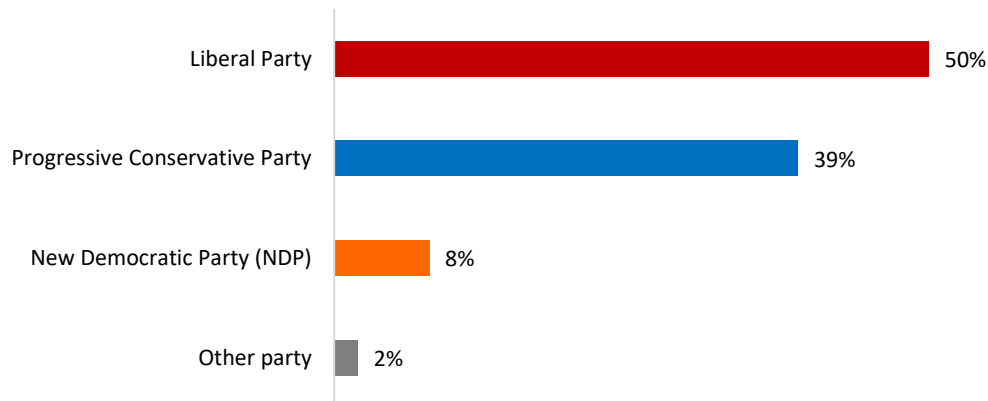
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Comfortable lead for Liberals

The Newfoundland and Labrador Liberal Party currently holds an 11-point advantage in vote intention over the opposition Conservatives:

**Vote intent - Newfoundland and Labrador
Decided voters, n=153**

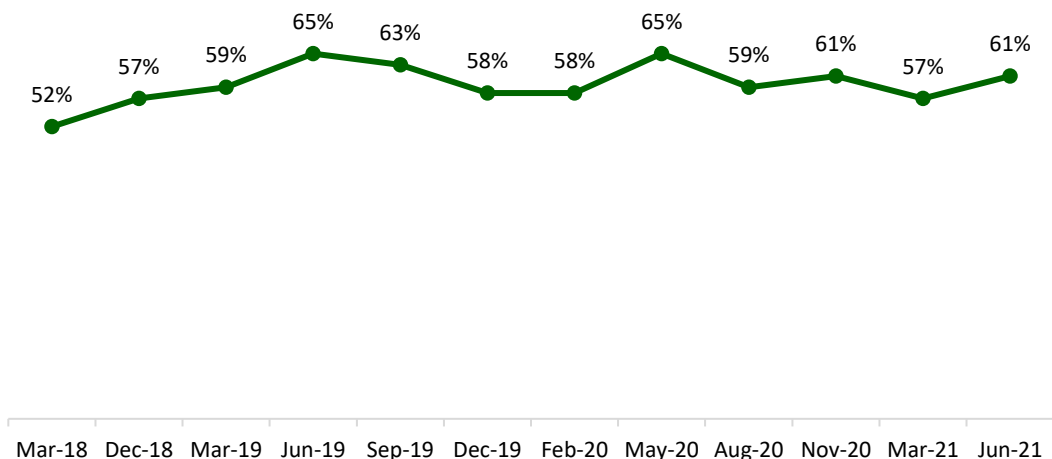


Saskatchewan

Scott Moe

In Saskatchewan, Scott Moe is approved of by 61 per cent of residents in his province. Addressing the higher levels of vaccine hesitancy that have become evident in his province, Moe told the people of Saskatchewan at the end of May those defending a “[misguided notion](#)” of their personal freedom should step up and help end the pandemic by doing their part and getting the job. The Saskatchewan Party leader re-enters the 60 per cent club in terms of this public approval, a place that has been relatively familiar to him over the past few years.

Approval of Saskatchewan Premier Scott Moe

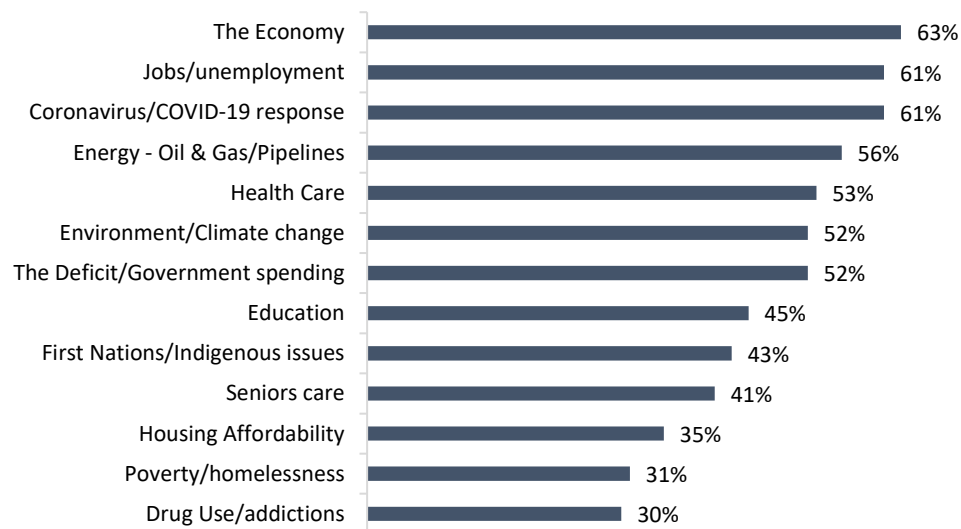


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The government performs very well – in fact, the best in the nation – when looking at all 13 issues. That said, concerns about the overdose crisis and rising housing prices are both significant:

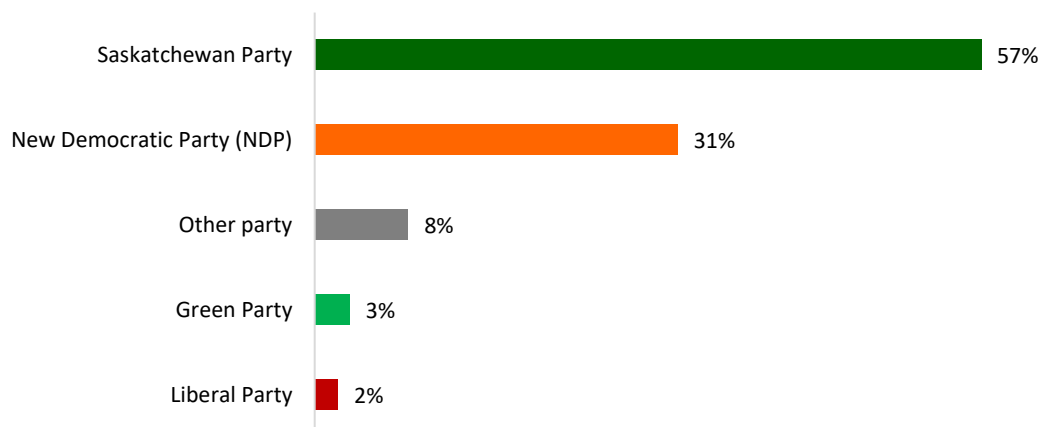
**Percentage saying provincial government is doing a 'good job' in handling each:
Saskatchewan, n=487**



Saskatchewan Party dominates

Alongside his high level of personal approval, Moe's Saskatchewan Party is favoured by nearly three-in-five at this point, well ahead of the Saskatchewan NDP. The SP won re-election last October:

**Vote intent - Saskatchewan
Decided voters, n=412**



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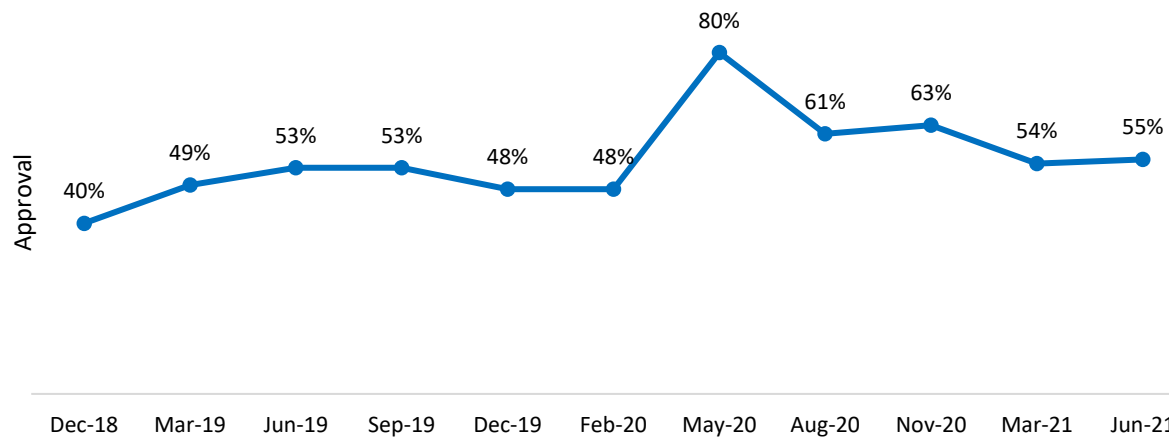
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New Brunswick

Blaine Higgs

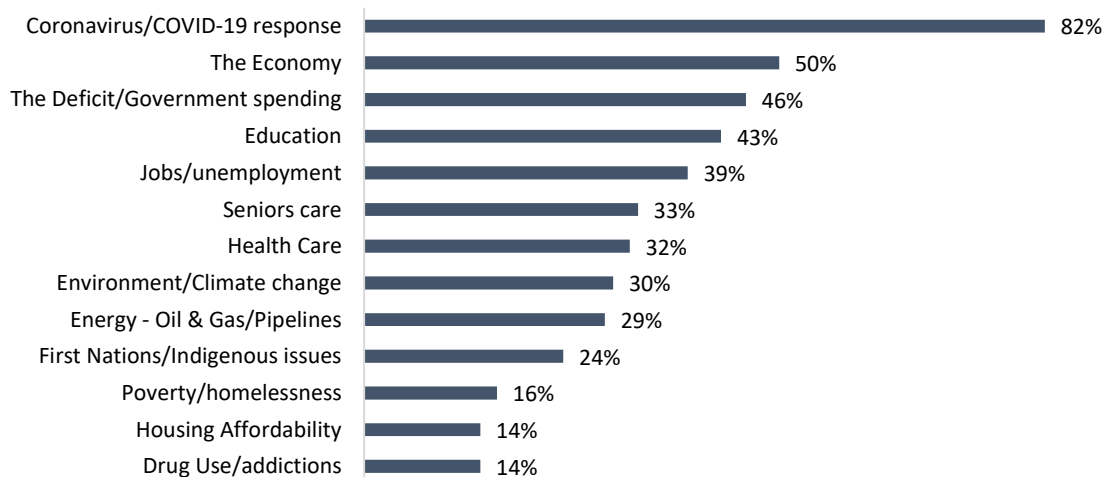
Premier Blaine Higgs is approved of by 55 per cent of people in New Brunswick. Higgs expressed that he remains confident after his province failed to reach its initial vaccination targets this week and delayed its reopening phase. The government has stated that a minimum of 75 per cent of residents 12 and older must have received their first vaccine dose before it will reopen to travel with other provinces.

Approval of New Brunswick Premier Blaine Higgs



Alongside its COVID-19 response, economic performance and handling of the deficit are strong points for the Conservative government.

**Percentage saying provincial government is doing a 'good job' in handling each:
New Brunswick, n=248**

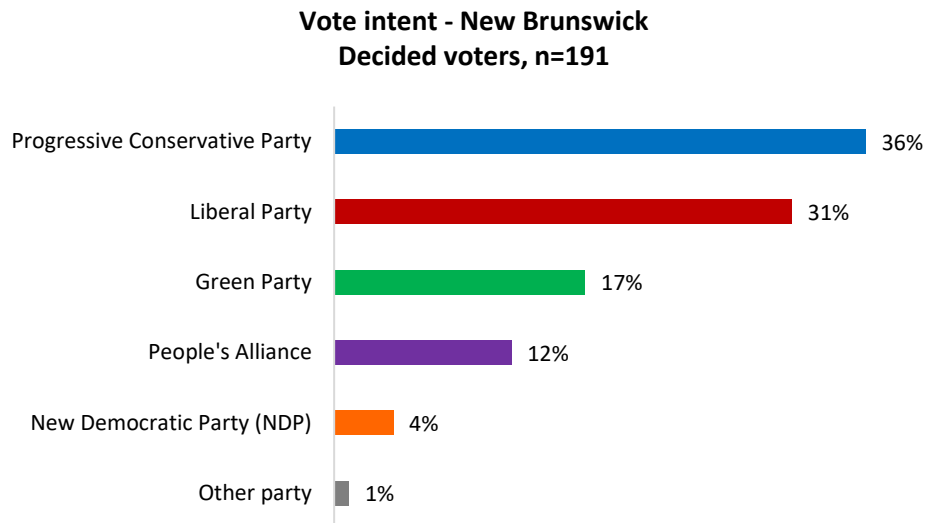


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Slight advantage for incumbent Conservatives

The vote intention picture in New Brunswick is relatively competitive, despite Higgs’ personal popularity. Four different parties receive double-digit support, while the Conservatives hold a five-point lead over the Liberals.

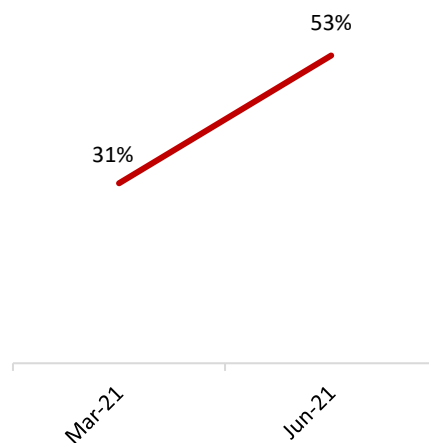


Nova Scotia

Iain Rankin

For Nova Scotia Premier Iain Rankin, uncertainty has transformed into majority approval in just his second quarter in power. In March, 51 per cent of residents had yet to form an opinion of him. Rankin’s province has endured the worst COVID-19 cases per capita among the four Atlantic Canadian provinces, twice the level overall compared to the next closest (New Brunswick). That said, the trend has been reversed and cases continue to be low heading into the summer and its reopening plan.

Approval of Nova Scotia Premier Iain Rankin

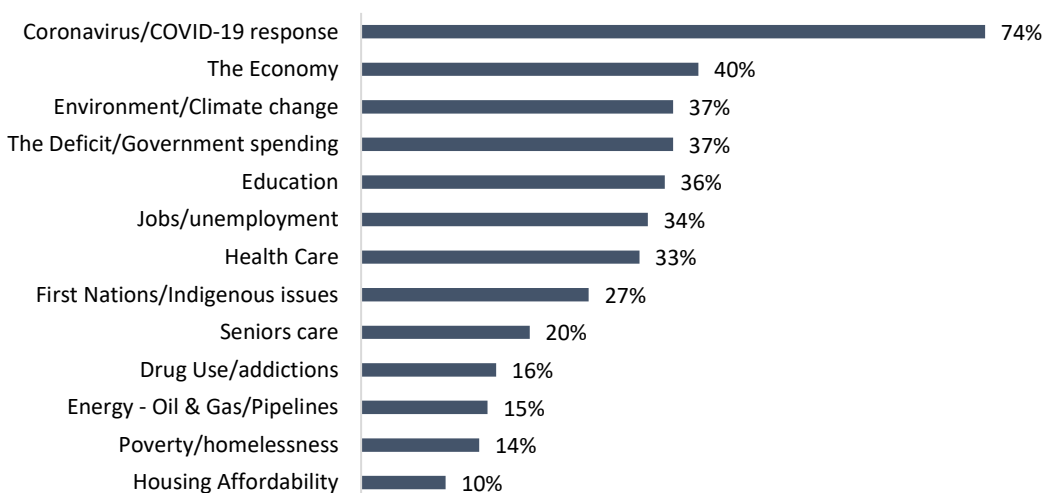


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More than half of residents in the province are critical of the government's performance on nearly every issue other than its COVID-19 response. This includes just one-in-five (20%) saying the Liberals have done a good job on seniors' care and just 10 per cent saying they have handled housing affordability well:

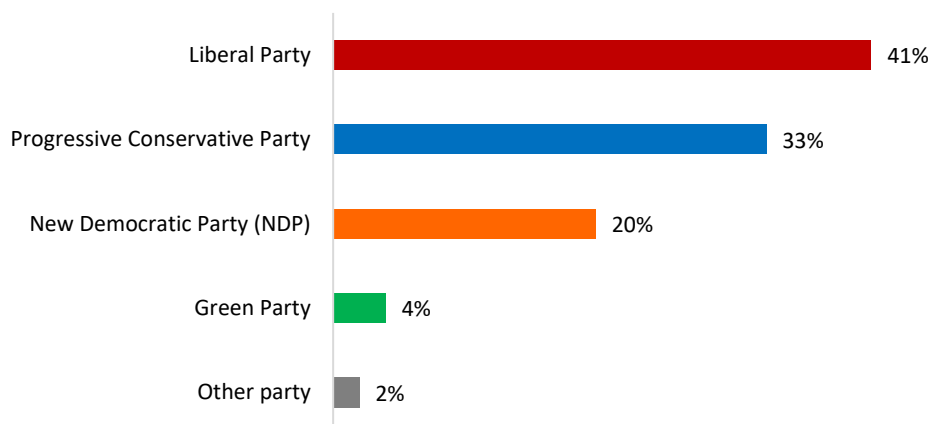
**Percentage saying provincial government is doing a 'good job' in handling each:
Nova Scotia, n=394**



Liberals lead

Eight points separate the Liberal Party from the Progressive Conservatives, while one-in-five Nova Scotians (20%) say they would vote for the NDP if an election were held:

**Vote intent - Nova Scotia
Decided voters, n=302**



For detailed results by age, gender, region, education, and other demographics, [click here](#).

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Margins of error								
BC (623)	AB (600)	SK (487)	MB (504)	ON (1016)	QC (832)	NB (248)	NS (394)	NL (201)
+/- 4%	+/- 4%	+/- 4%	+/- 4%	+/- 3%	+/- 3%	+/- 6%	+/- 5%	+/- 6%

****Note: Because its small population precludes drawing discrete samples over multiple waves, data on Prince Edward Island is not released.***