

Premiers' Performance: COVID-19 responses prompt massive increases in approval for most, but not all

Only Alberta's Kenney and Manitoba's Pallister have sub-majority approval this quarter

May 28, 2020 – Provincial leaders across the country have had one priority over the past three months: dealing with the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic. Thus far, the reaction of their constituents has been positive – albeit to varying degrees.

Higgs and Legault

The two Premiers with the highest levels of approval this quarter are facing significantly different situations within their provinces when it comes to COVID-19.

In New Brunswick, Blaine Higgs and his Conservative government are overseeing a province with only one current active case and just 121 cases in total. The province is moving into its "yellow phase" which will allow larger gatherings and more economic activity in the coming weeks after undergoing a lockdown similar to the rest of the country. Four-in-five residents of New Brunswick say they approve of Higgs' performance, up 32 points from February.

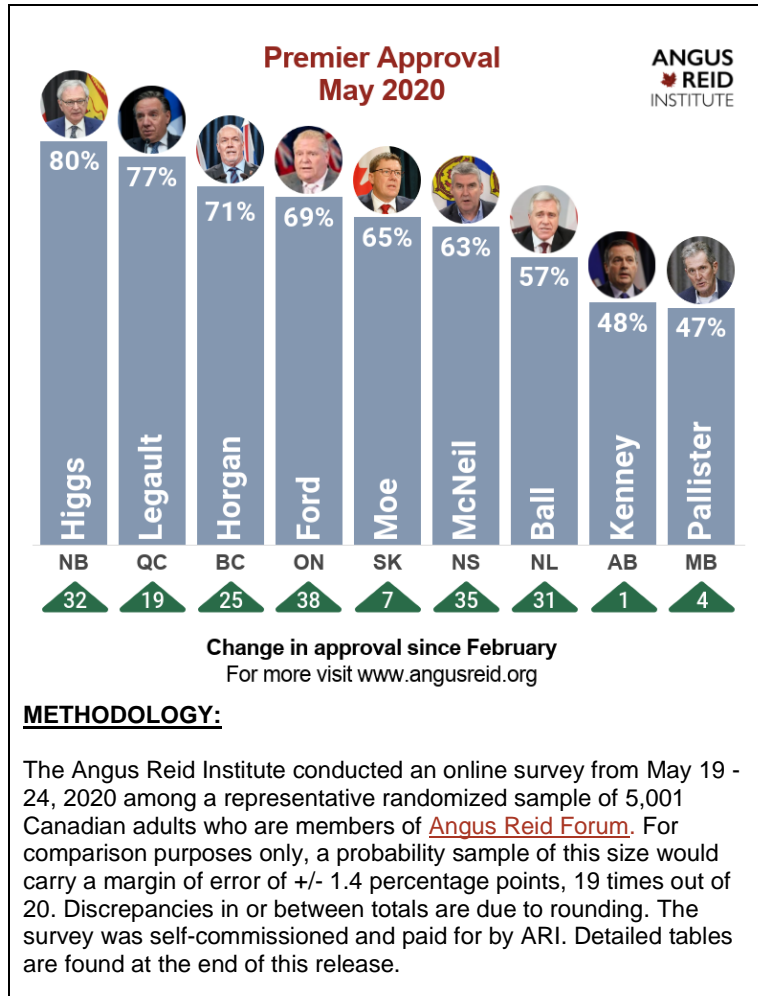
Related: ARI COVID-19 Tracker

The epicentre of the COVID-19 outbreak in Canada has been Quebec, with close to double the number of cases in that province compared to Ontario, despite five million fewer residents. Montreal and surrounding areas have made up the bulk of cases, which has led Quebec to open other areas of the province first while leaving measures in place in its metropolitan core. Concerns over the reopening risks in and around Montreal persist but Quebec residents are positive about the stewardship of Premier Francois Legault. Three-quarters (77%) approve of his performance this quarter, an increase of 19 points over last quarter.

Related: Nationalization supported after long-term care homes bear brunt of COVID-19 damage

Horgan and Ford

Seven-in-ten residents approve of British Columbia's John Horgan (71%) and Ontario's Doug Ford (69%). Ford, until now, has never held majority approval since his election – an uptick likely attributable to a



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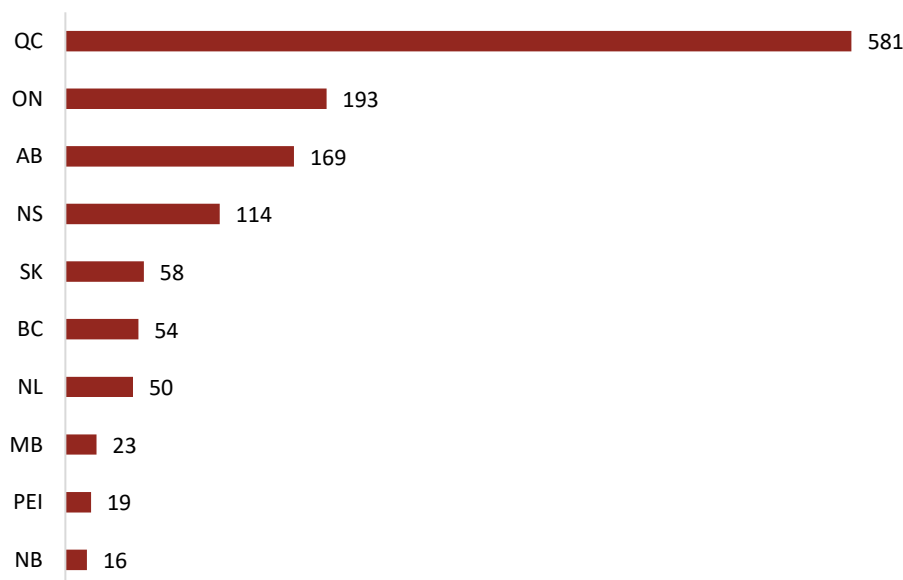
change in character some have dubbed the [“new Doug Ford”](#). From segments aimed to reduce stress during the pandemic, like [“Cooking with Doug”](#), to [auto-tuned songs of his speeches](#), Ontarians have seen a different side of their premier. Perhaps most importantly, [previous ARI polling](#) shows that most Ontarians are satisfied with his coronavirus response, with nine-in-ten saying he has done a “good job”.

Likewise, Horgan’s job performance managing the coronavirus outbreak on the west coast, sees a recovery after a dip in approval due to the Wet’suwet’en protests against the Coastal Gaslink pipeline that [shook his province](#) earlier in the year.

The two provinces, however, appear to be following different trajectories with respect to COVID-19 cases. In Ontario, daily cases have been more volatile, rising in the middle of May, which Health Minister Christine Elliot attributed to residents [not following proper protocols](#) on Mother’s Day two weeks prior. Ford himself [was criticized](#) after seeing members of his family who were not from his household on that weekend. More recently, Toronto [Mayor John Tory apologized](#) for not social distancing alongside thousands of others at Toronto’s Trinity Bellwoods Park. Cases have since dropped [below 300 per day](#) again, but the provincial government decided to [delay an increase](#) in the allowable group size in the province beyond the current five people.

In British Columbia, businesses have begun reopening, though public officials have asked residents to [remain in their communities](#) and keep travel close this summer. B.C. reported [just 12 new cases](#) from the May 23rd weekend. B.C.’s COVID-19 cases per 100,000 are just above 50, while Ontario’s is just over 190. Each are well below Quebec on a per capita comparison:

**Cases of COVID-19 per 100,000 people
(As of 5/25)
Source: NY Times**



Moe, McNeil and Ball

In Saskatchewan, Premier Scott Moe maintains his high approval (65%), though he has more company this quarter than has traditionally been the case. Moe is joined by two Atlantic Canadian Premiers whose approval has jumped more than 30 percentage points this quarter. Nova Scotia's Stephen McNeil is approved of by 63 per cent of residents and Newfoundland and Labrador's Dwight Ball, who had [just weeks](#) before the pandemic announced his resignation, is approved of by 57 per cent.

Nova Scotia has been the hardest hit Atlantic Canadian province, with 114 cases per 100,000, but reported [just one new case](#) of the disease on May 23, 24 and 25. Premier McNeil inspired internet videos and merchandise after he told residents to "[stay the blazes home](#)" in early April.

Kenney and Pallister

Just two premiers fail to break majority approval this quarter. Alberta's United Conservative Party leader and Premier Jason Kenney is approved of by 48 per cent of Albertans, while Manitoba Conservative Party leader and Premier Brian Pallister garners the approval of 47 per cent in his own province.

Alberta is home to what is reportedly the [largest single-facility outbreak](#) of COVID-19 in North America, after more than 1,500 cases were linked to the Cargill meat-packing plant in High River. Kenney's approval has not worsened but has enjoyed the considerable warming in approval that most other premiers enjoyed this quarter.

Meanwhile, Manitoba has among the fewest COVID-19 cases in the country. Premier Pallister has not enjoyed the considerable increase in approval that some other leaders have but enjoys a slight bump, up four points from last quarter.

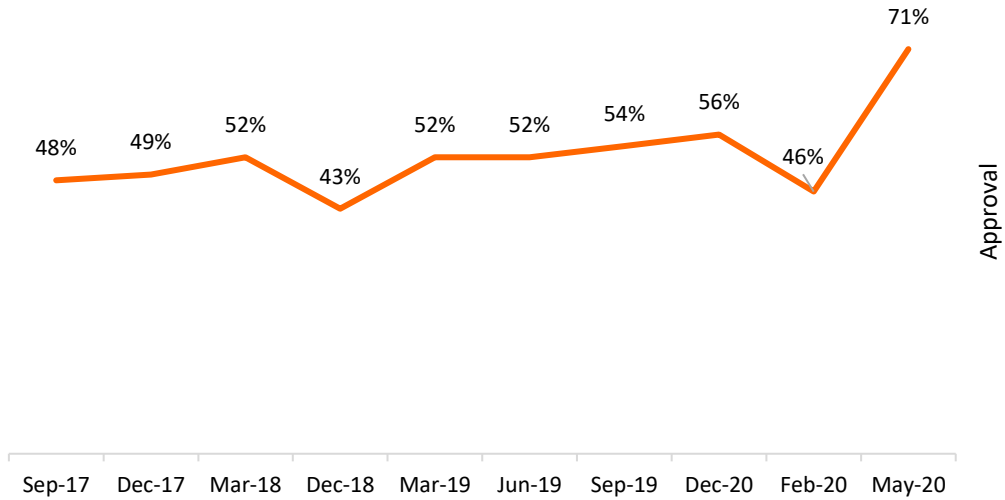
About ARI

*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.*

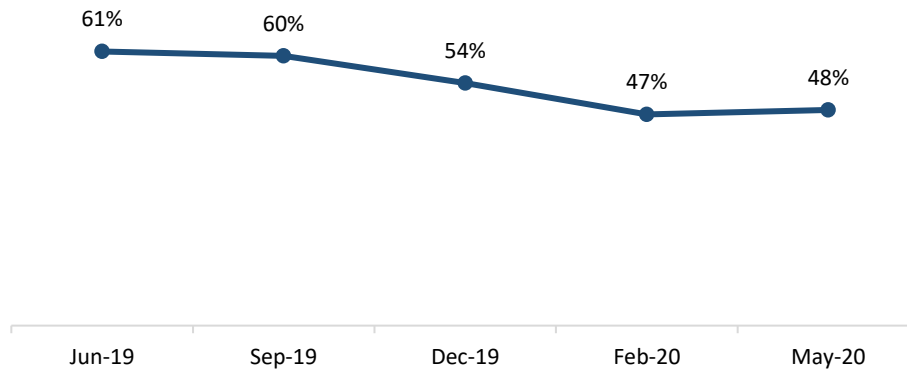
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British Columbia Premier John Horgan (NDP)



Alberta Premier Jason Kenney (UCP)

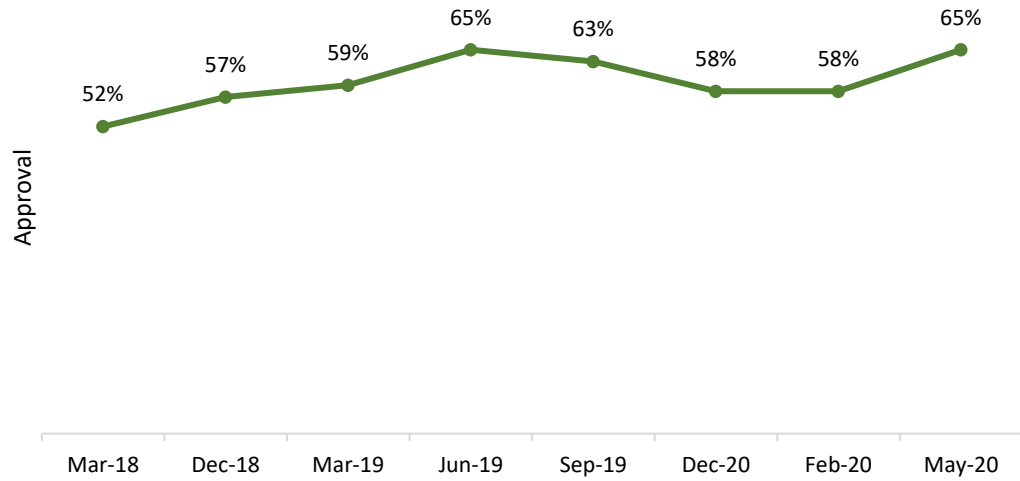


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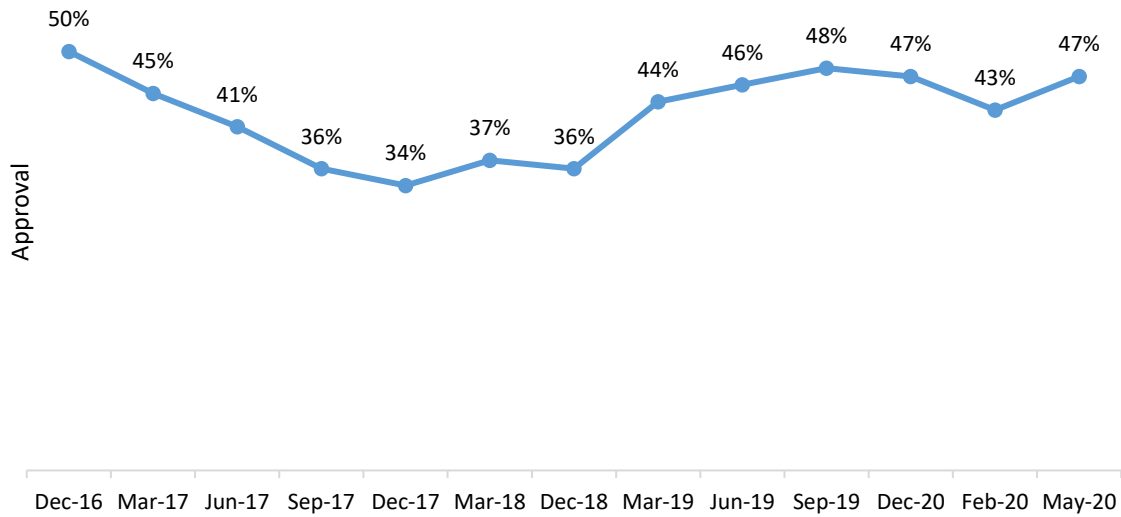
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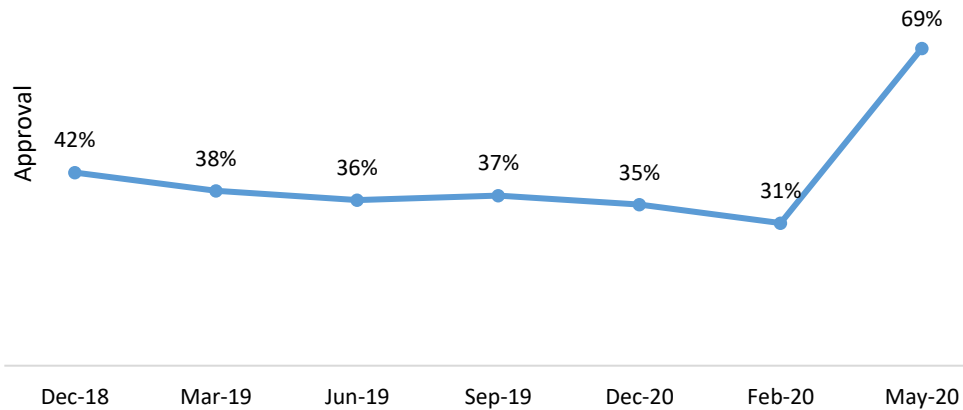
Saskatchewan Premier Scott Moe (Saskatchewan Party)



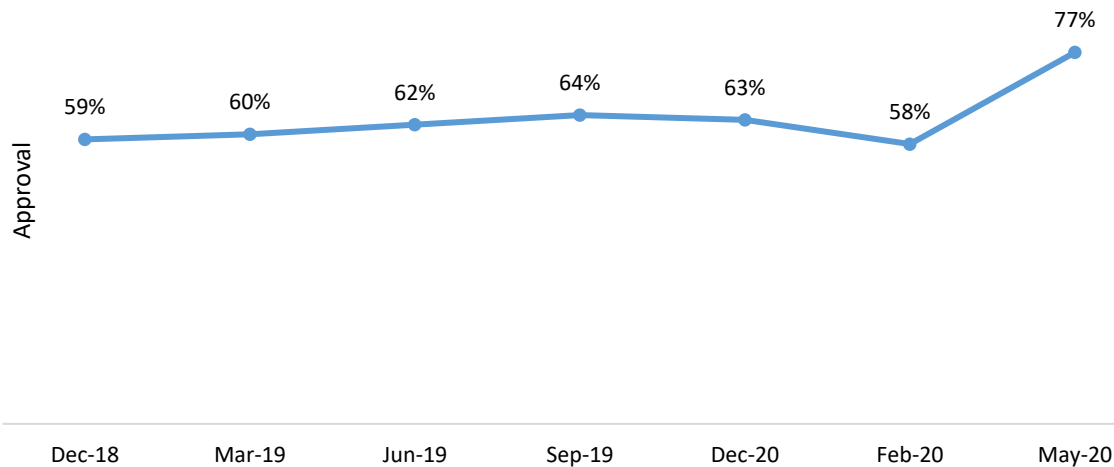
Manitoba Premier Brian Pallister (Progressive Conservative)



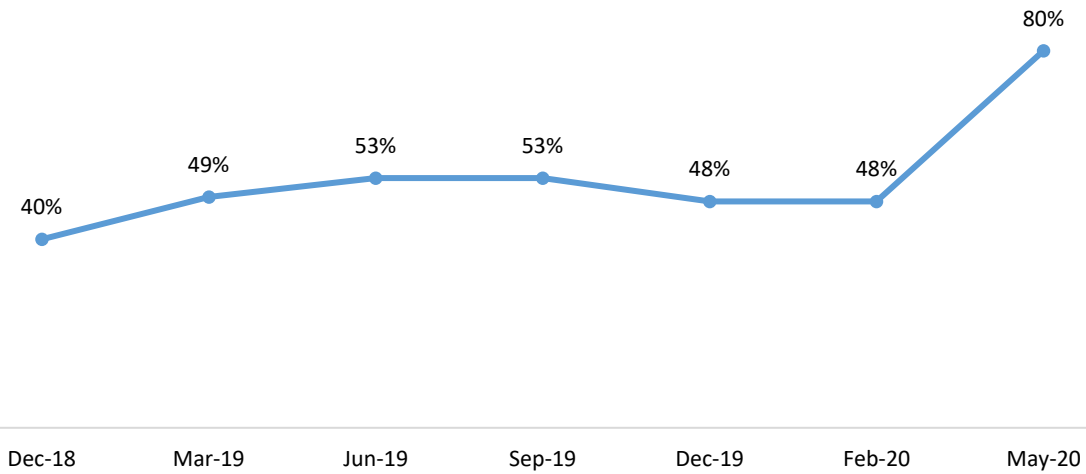
Ontario Premier Doug Ford (Progressive Conservative)



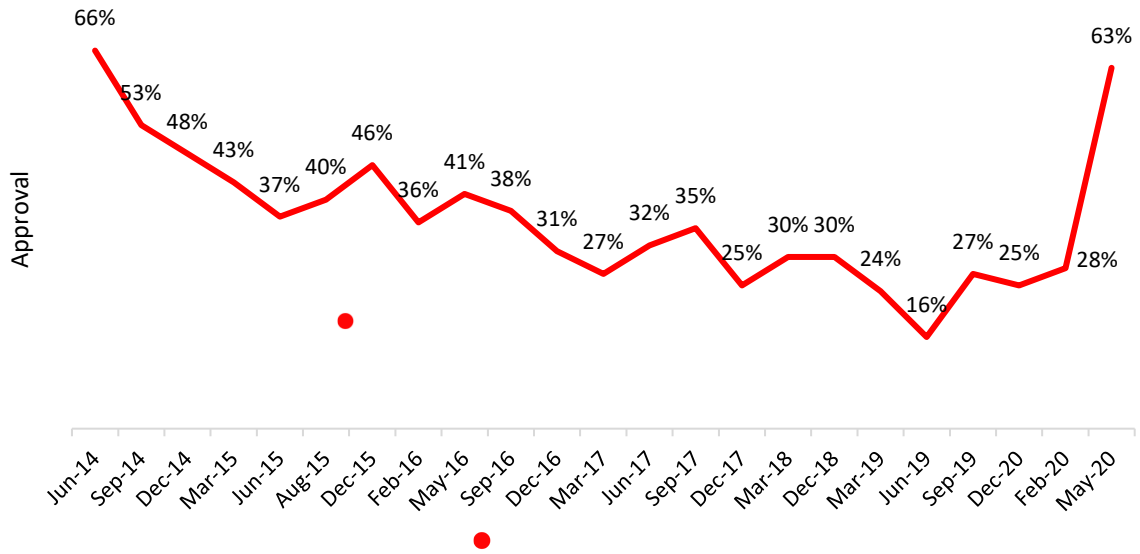
Quebec Premier François Legault (Coalition Avenir Quebec)



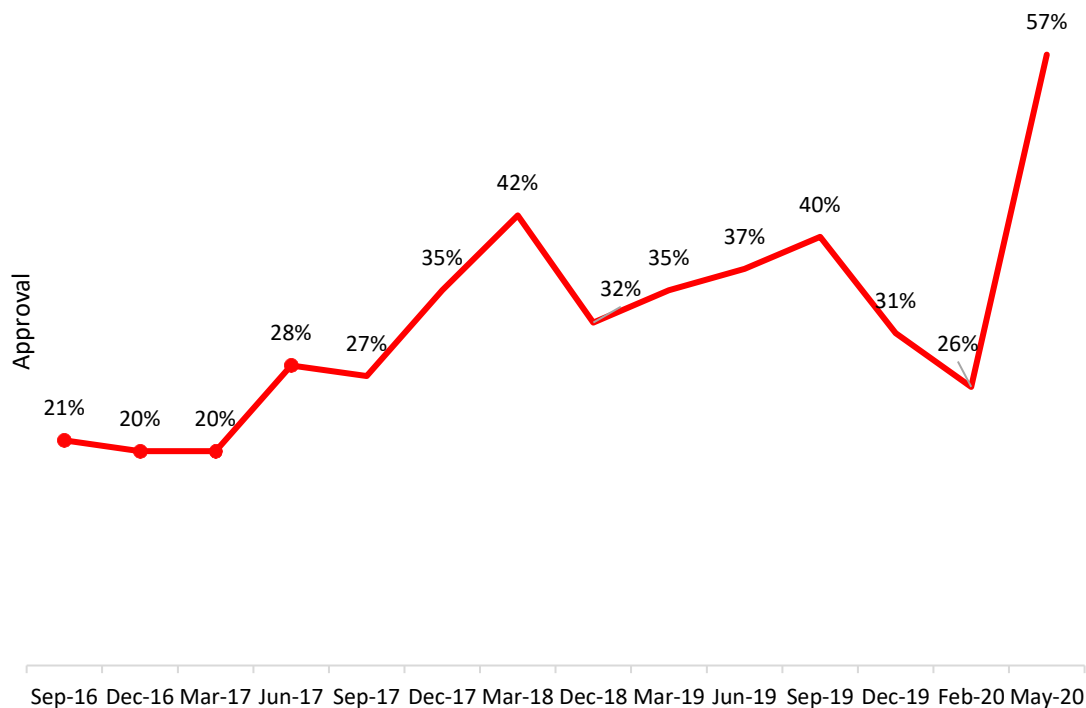
New Brunswick Premier Blaine Higgs (Progressive Conservative)



Nova Scotia Premier Stephen McNeil (Liberal)



Newfoundland and Labrador Premier Dwight Ball (Liberal)



| Margins of error | | | | | | | | |
|------------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|---------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| BC (603) | AB (621) | SK (501) | MB (498) | ON (1,061) | QC (825) | NB (237) | NS (300) | NL (256) |
| +/- 4.0% | +/- 3.9% | +/- 4.4% | +/- 4.4% | +/- 3.0% | +/- 3.4% | +/- 6.4% | +/- 5.7% | +/- 6.1% |

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

| Do you approve or disapprove of each of the following people? (Percent Approval) | | | | | |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------|-----------------------|----------------------|----------------------|-----------------|
| (unweighted sample sizes) | June 2019 | September 2019 | December 2019 | February 2020 | May 2020 |
| British Columbia (N=603): Premier and New Democratic Party leader John Horgan | 52% | 54% | 56% | 46% | 71% |
| Alberta (N=621): Premier and United Conservative Party leader Jason Kenney | 61% | 60% | 54% | 47% | 48% |
| Saskatchewan (N=501) Premier and Saskatchewan Party leader Scott Moe | 65% | 63% | 58% | 58% | 65% |
| Manitoba (N=498) Premier and Progressive Conservative leader Brian Pallister | 46% | 48% | 47% | 43% | 47% |
| Ontario (N=1,061) Premier and Progressive Conservative leader Doug Ford | 36% | 37% | 35% | 31% | 69% |
| Québec (N=825) Premier and Coalition Avenir Québec leader François Legault | 62% | 64% | 63% | 58% | 77% |
| New Brunswick (N=237) Premier and Progressive Conservative leader Blaine Higgs | 53% | 53% | 48% | 48% | 80% |
| Nova Scotia (N=300) Premier and Liberal Party leader Stephen McNeil | 16% | 27% | 25% | 28% | 63% |
| Newfoundland and Labrador (N=256) Premier and Liberal Party leader Dwight Ball | 37% | 40% | 31% | 26% | 57% |

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