

## Provincial Spotlight: COVID-19 creates comfort zone for incumbent governments coast to coast

*At least seven-in-ten in every region say their province has done a good job in COVID-19 response*

**June 8, 2020** – While provincial governments cannot yet claim full victory in the long and ongoing fight against the COVID-19 outbreak, their electoral positions are apparently gaining ground.

A new study from the non-profit Angus Reid Institute finds that at least seven-in-ten residents in every region of the country say their province has done a good job in handling COVID-19.

Further, and likely owing in part to that satisfaction, in each of the provinces canvassed, the governing party holds a vote intention advantage of at least six points. In Ontario, British Columbia, and Quebec, the impact has been considerable, with the respective parties of the Ford, Horgan and Legault governments now each enjoying more than a 15-point lead.

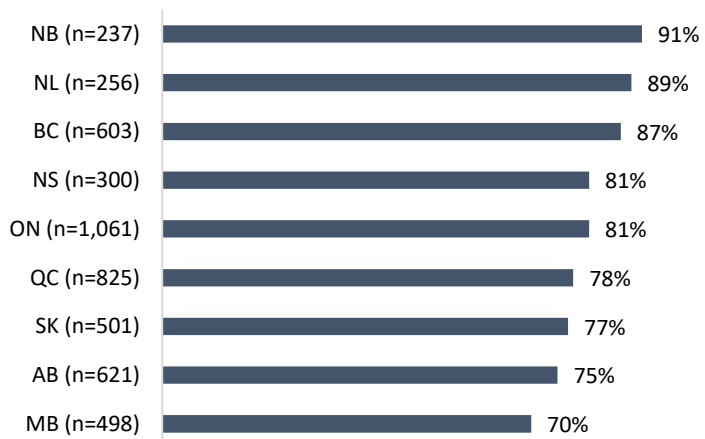
Political fortunes can turn on a dime, however, and longer-term assessments of issues may portend challenges for some governments, even if they are currently the top choice of constituents.

In Alberta, just 43 per cent of residents say the United Conservative Party has done a good job of handling the economy, in Newfoundland and Labrador that number drops to just 32 per cent in assessing Dwight Ball's governing Liberal Party. And while it has dropped down the list of priorities during the pandemic, climate change remains a top issue – one over which few provincial governments appear to be hitting the mark. Just 43 per cent of Canadians say their provincial government has handled climate and environmental issues well, dropping to just 35 per cent in Ontario.

### More Key Findings:

- Provincial governments in New Brunswick (91%), Newfoundland and Labrador (89%) and British Columbia (87%) garner the largest number of residents saying they have responded well to the COVID-19 outbreak

**Percentage of Canadians saying their provincial government has done a 'good job' in handling COVID-19**



### **METHODOLOGY:**

The Angus Reid Institute conducted an online survey from May 19 - 24, 2020 among a representative randomized sample of 5,001 Canadian adults who are members of [Angus Reid Forum](#). For comparison purposes only, a probability sample of this size would carry a margin of error of +/- 1.4 percentage points, 19 times out of 20. Discrepancies in or between totals are due to rounding. The survey was self-commissioned and paid for by ARI. Detailed tables are found at the end of this release.

### CONTACT:

Shachi Kurl, Executive Director: 604.908.1693 [shachi.kurl@angusreid.org](mailto:shachi.kurl@angusreid.org) @shachikurl  
Dave Korzinski, Research Director: 250.899.0821 [dave.korzinski@angusreid.org](mailto:dave.korzinski@angusreid.org)

- Just over one-in-three Canadians (36%) feel their province is acting too quickly to open up businesses and institutions that were shut down to mitigate the spread of COVID-19. This sentiment rises to 45 per cent in Ontario
- Half of Canadians (53%) say their province is doing a good job on health care, but just one-in-three (33%) say this when it comes to the seniors file

### **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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*\*Note that because its small sample size precludes drawing discreet sample across multiple waves of reporting, data for Prince Edward Island is not published*

#### **Part One: Government performance**

##### **Handling COVID-19 and reopening**

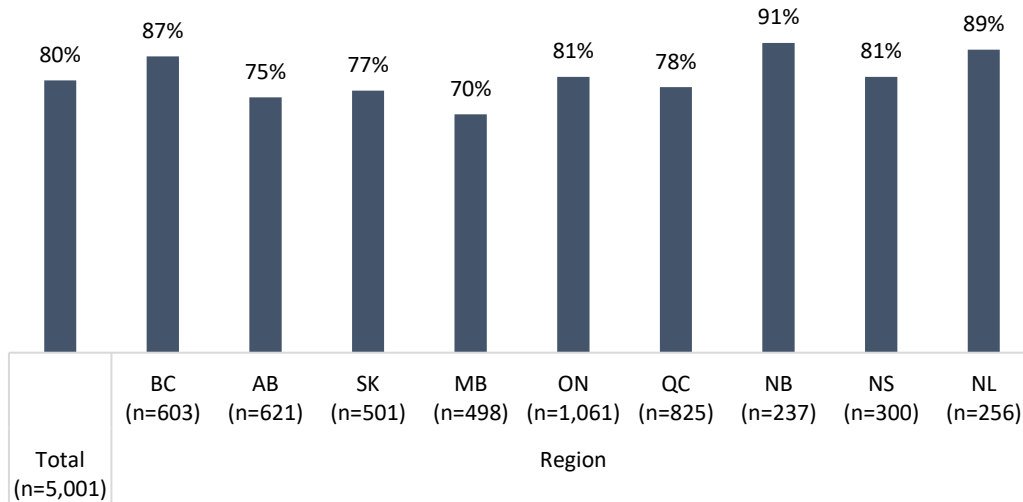
The issue that is top of mind for most Canadians is unsurprisingly government response to the COVID-19 outbreak. It's also an area in which voters give the thumbs up to their provincial governments. At least seven-in-ten residents in each region say that their province has done a "good job" on this issue:

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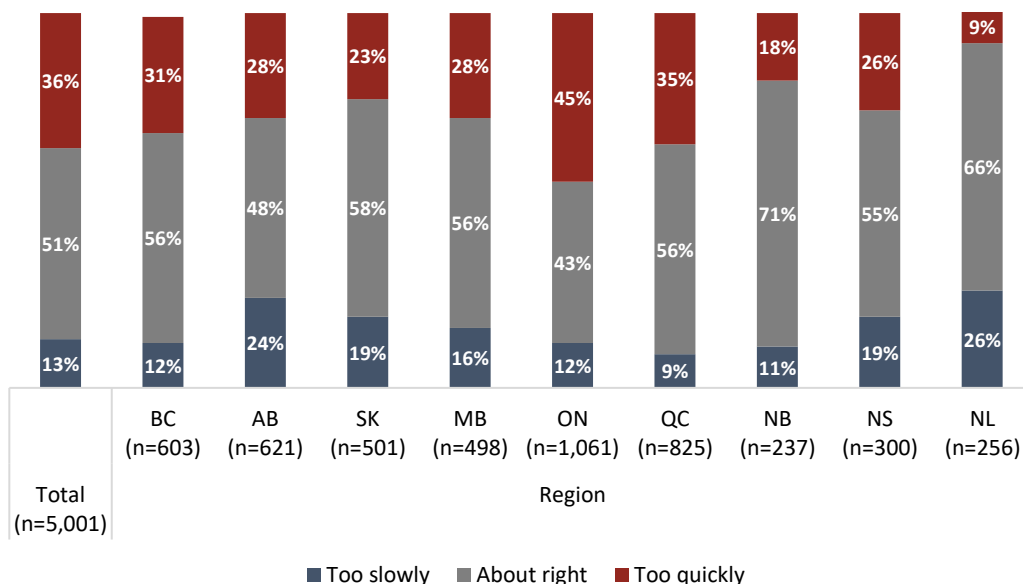
Shachi Kurl, Executive Director: 604.908.1693 [shachi.kurl@angusreid.org](mailto:shachi.kurl@angusreid.org) @shachikurl  
Dave Korzinski, Research Director: 250.899.0821 [dave.korzinski@angusreid.org](mailto:dave.korzinski@angusreid.org)

**Percentage of Canadians saying their provincial government has done a 'good job' in handling COVID-19**



As attention shifts to reopening and restoring economies across the country – Canada’s economy [added 290 thousand jobs in May](#) – many feel it is happening too quickly. In Ontario, 45 per cent of residents say this, the most in any region of the country. Those in Alberta and Newfoundland and Labrador are most likely to say their respective provinces are moving too slowly to re-open businesses and institutions:

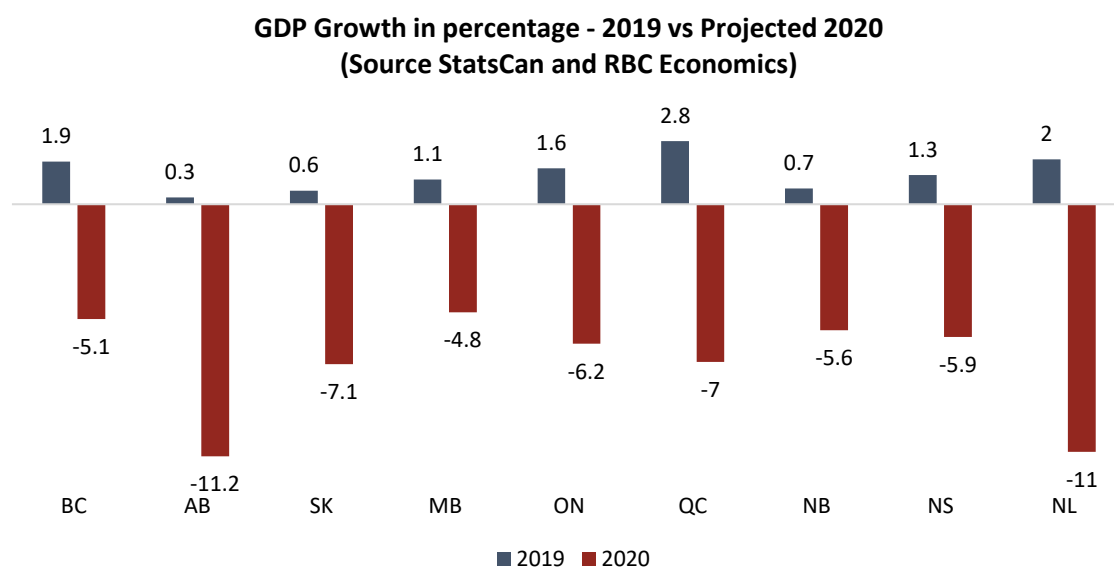
**Provinces have begun to open up activities and businesses such as parks, gyms, restaurants, workplaces, and retail establishments.  
Do you feel that this process of opening up is happening...**



While the COVID-19 response has taken up most of the attention of citizens, other provincial responsibilities are nonetheless relevant to understanding how Canadians are feeling about their representatives. Across the country, respondents were asked whether they felt their provincial government has done a good job or a poor job on 13 important aspects of governance.

### **Economic Issues**

Unfortunately, given the economic shutdown due to the pandemic, even those provinces that are perceived to be doing well will suffer this year. According to recent estimates, every region of the country will face negative GDP growth in 2020:

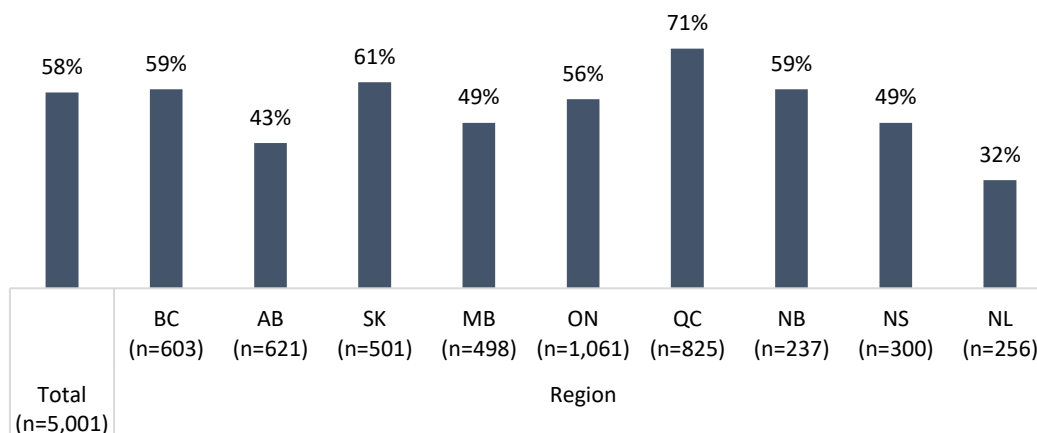


Nonetheless, assessments of provincial government performance on the economy are split. When it comes to the economy, Quebec scores best, with 71 per cent of residents saying their governing Coalition Avenir Quebec has done a good job. Quebec boasted a [\\$4.5 billion surplus](#) last November.

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**Percentage that say their provincial government has done a 'good job' in handling the economy**



Those in Alberta, Nova Scotia and Newfoundland and Labrador are least likely to offer positive assessments of their provincial governments' performance on economic issues:

Percentage of residents saying the provincial government has done a "good job" of handling each of the following economic issues										
Responses with 50% or higher and 30% or lower are highlighted										
Unweighted sample sizes	Prov. Avg (5,001)	BC (603)	AB (621)	SK (501)	MB (498)	ON (1,061)	QC (825)	NB (237)	NS (300)	NL (256)
The Economy generally	58%	59%	43%	61%	49%	56%	71%	59%	49%	32%
Jobs/unemployment	52%	51%	38%	55%	41%	49%	69%	52%	38%	31%
Deficit/Government spending	50%	44%	45%	54%	44%	45%	65%	58%	41%	28%

**Health care**

Assessments of COVID-19 response are positive across the country, but less so when it comes to health care more broadly. While two-thirds in British Columbia (67%) and three-in-five in Saskatchewan (59%) say their government has done a good job with health care in their province, other provinces are closer to half, or below that mark. Meanwhile, nearly every region of the country receives poor marks for handling of drug use and addictions, as well as seniors care:

**Related: COVID-19 and the extended care crisis**

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Percentage of residents saying the provincial government has done a “good job” of handling each of the following health care issues										
Responses with 50% or higher and 30% or lower are highlighted										
Unweighted sample sizes	Total (n=5,001)	BC (603)	AB (621)	SK (501)	MB (498)	ON (1,061)	QC (825)	NB (237)	NS (300)	NL (256)
Health care generally	53%	67%	46%	59%	41%	51%	53%	53%	36%	53%
Drug Use/addictions	34%	36%	37%	38%	21%	30%	40%	27%	29%	35%
Seniors care	33%	38%	36%	45%	40%	28%	34%	40%	24%	50%

### Natural resources and environment

Climate change and resource debates have quieted recently but remain a key policy challenge facing the country in the coming months and years.

#### Related: Top issues in Canada June 2020

Climate change is an issue that fewer than half of Canadians feel their provincial government is adequately handling. Illustrating ambivalence on the other side of the debate, about the same number think their respective governments are dealing well with natural resource policy including oil and gas:

Percentage of residents saying the provincial government has done a “good job” of handling each of the following natural resource and environment issues										
Responses with 50% or higher and 30% or lower are highlighted										
Unweighted sample sizes	Total (n=5,001)	BC (603)	AB (621)	SK (501)	MB (498)	ON (1,061)	QC (825)	NB (237)	NS (300)	NL (256)
Environment/ Climate change	43%	52%	51%	55%	40%	35%	45%	44%	49%	45%
Energy - Oil & Gas/Pipelines	41%	33%	52%	61%	37%	38%	43%	37%	33%	46%

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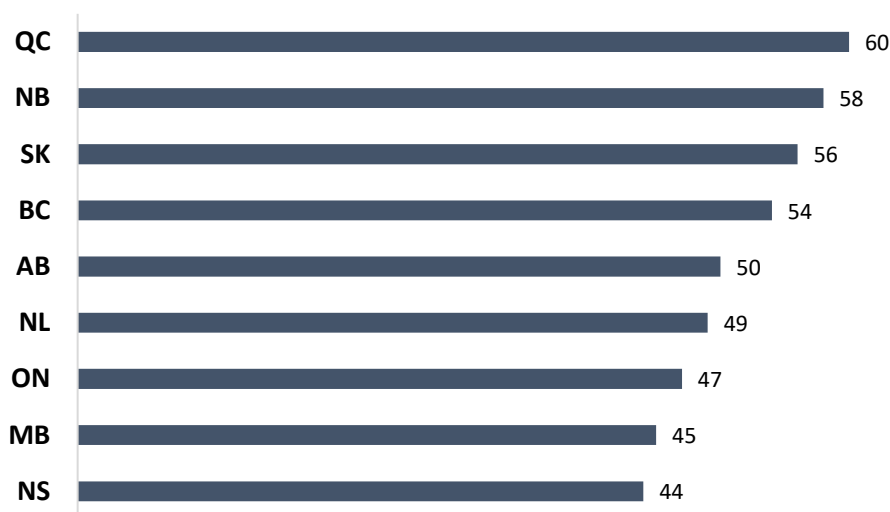
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**Government performance rating**

In order to establish just how positively or negatively Canadians rate the performance of their respective provincial governments, Angus Reid Institute researchers established an index of scores based on responses to the 13 areas respondents were asked to assess.

The government performance score below measures the percentage of residents who offered an overall positive score based on their answers (more on methodology is found at the end of the report). The Quebec government scores highest on this measure:

**Government performance score**



**Part Two: Vote intention**

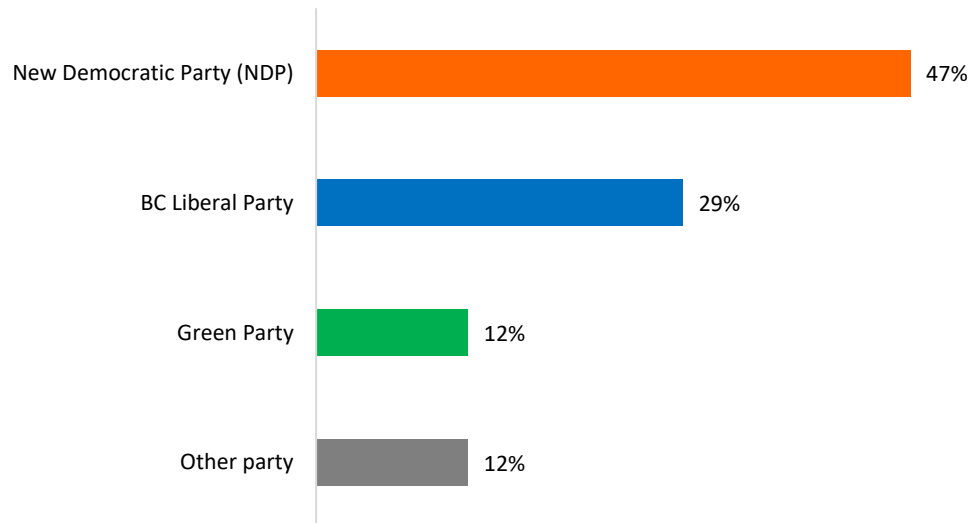
While they are assessed differently on various issues, as seen throughout this report, in every region of the country, each incumbent provincial government has a comfortable lead in vote intention.

For vote intention trends, visit our [Provincial Vote Tracker here](#).

**British Columbia**

The BC NDP has been sustained since 2017 in a Confidence and Supply agreement with the provincial Green Party. With an election scheduled to be held next year, the NDP has opened up its [largest lead](#) since forming government:

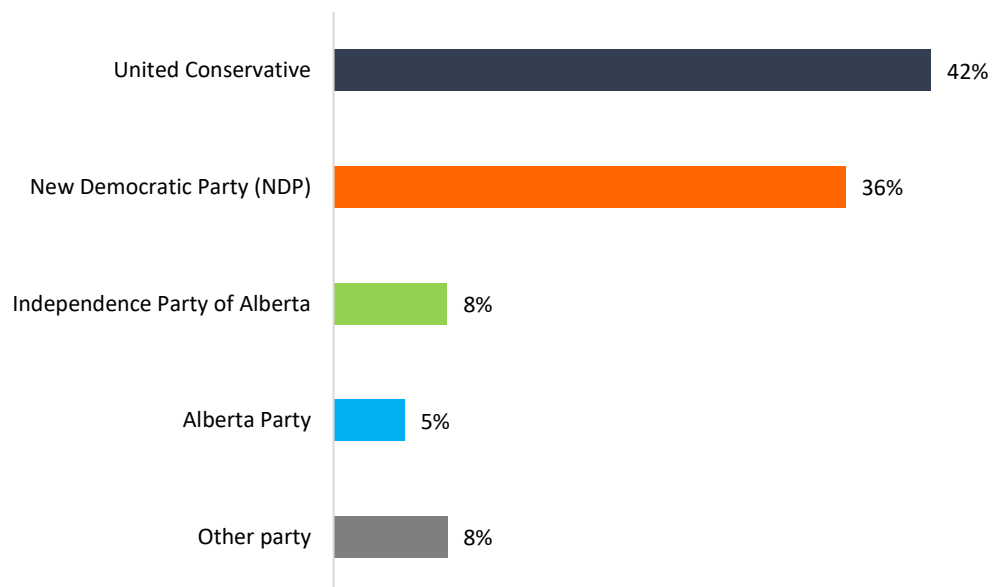
**Vote intention in British Columbia**  
Decided voters, n=528



**Alberta**

The smallest lead for a government in power is found in Alberta, where Jason Kenney's United Conservative Party leads Rachel Notley's NDP by six points.

**Vote intention in Alberta**  
Decided voters, n=580



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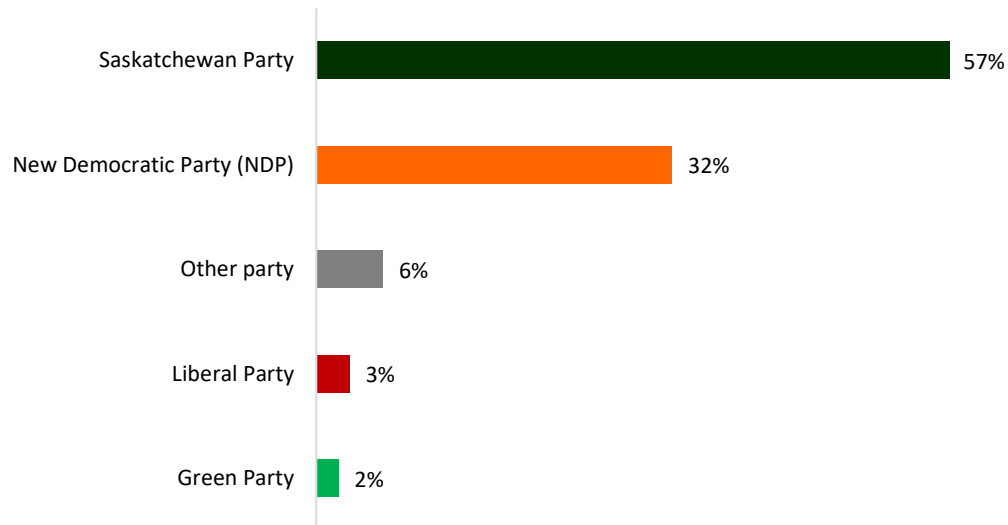
Shachi Kurl, Executive Director: 604.908.1693 [shachi.kurl@angusreid.org](mailto:shachi.kurl@angusreid.org) @shachikurl  
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**Saskatchewan**

In Saskatchewan, where an election is to be held no later than October 26 of this year, the Saskatchewan Party holds a commanding lead over the NDP.

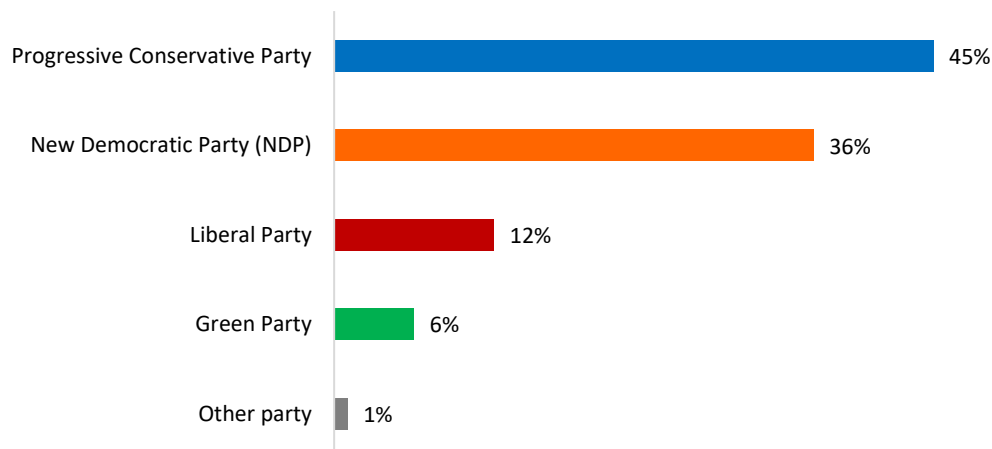
**Vote intention in Saskatchewan**  
Decided voters, n=459



**Manitoba**

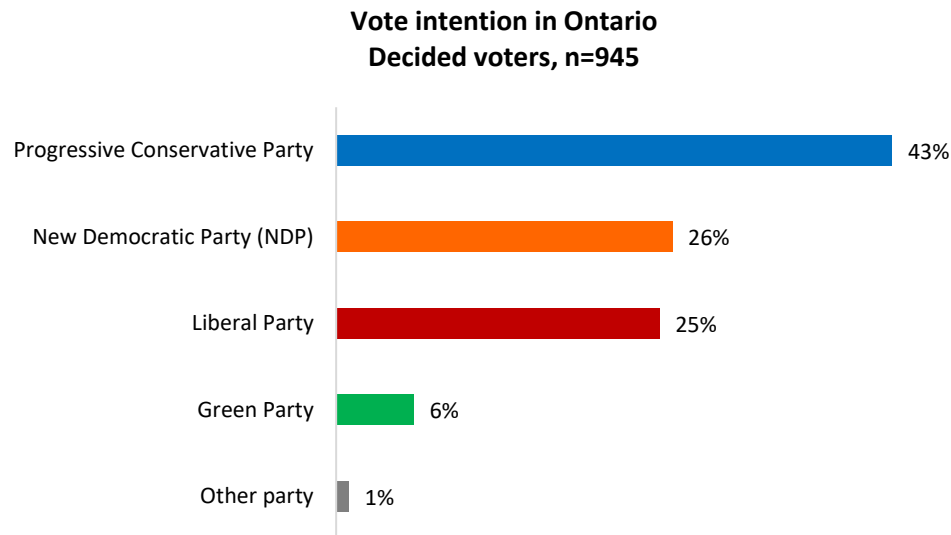
The Progressive Conservative's won a second majority in Manitoba's provincial election in September of last year, and hold a nine-point advantage over the provincial New Democrats:

**Vote intention in Manitoba**  
Decided voters, n=430



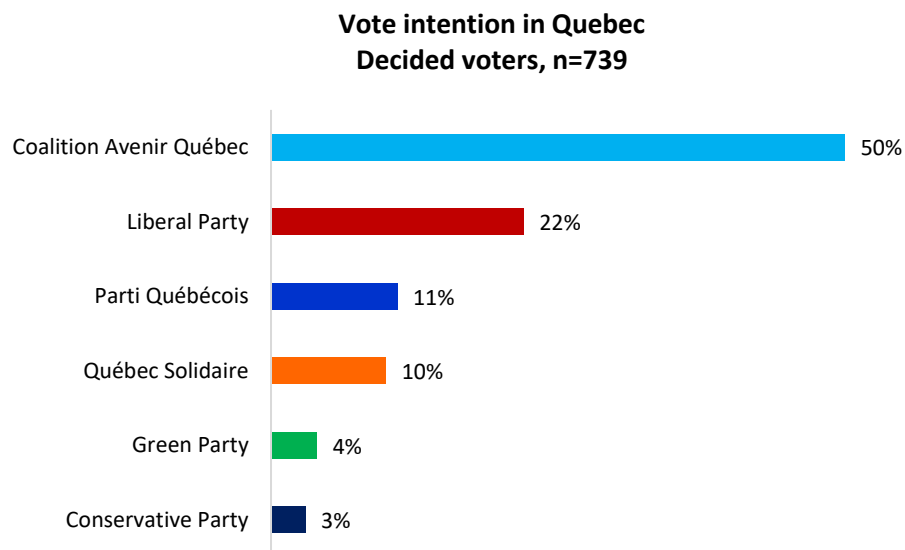
**Ontario**

The “[new Doug Ford](#)” has seen his approval numbers rise precipitously during the COVID-19 outbreak, and with it, his party now holds a 17-point vote intention advantage over the NDP, which is in a statistical tie with the provincial Liberals:



**Quebec**

The province with the least competitive vote intention race currently is Quebec. The Coalition Avenir Québec is the choice of half of residents, more than double the vote intention garnered by the second place Liberal Party:



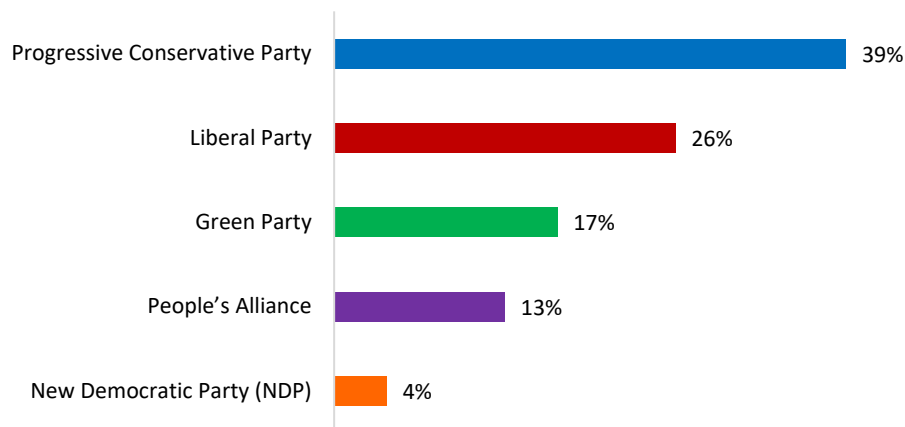
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**New Brunswick**

Premier Blaine Higgs has earned praise for his government’s handling of the COVID-19 crisis. Higgs leads all premiers in [approval this quarter](#), and his minority governing Conservatives are in a much better picture based on vote intention than they were in 2018 when his party won one more seat than the opposition Liberals, but lost the popular vote by six points.

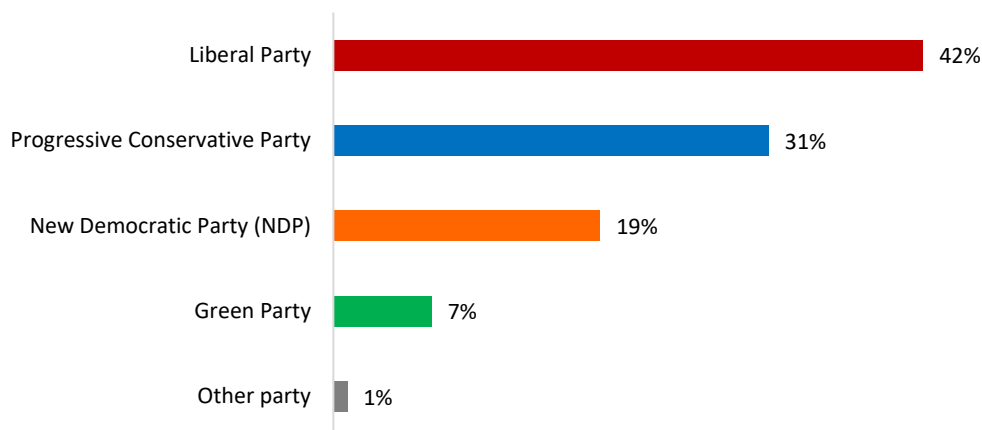
**Vote intention in New Brunswick**  
Decided voters, n=199



**Nova Scotia**

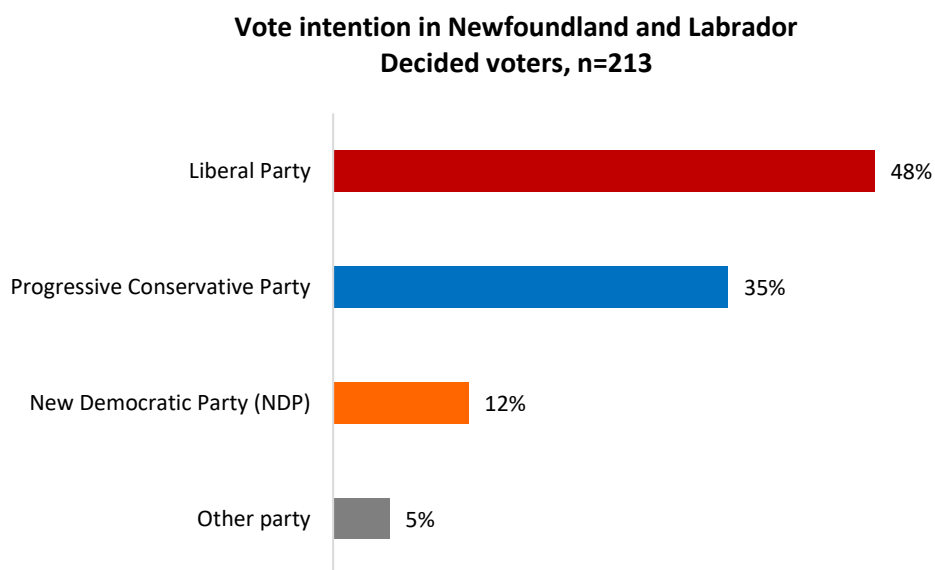
Stephen McNeil’s Liberal Party holds a significant 11-point advantage in Nova Scotia. The party’s fortunes have improved considerably after [trailing in polls](#) last year:

**Vote intention in Nova Scotia**  
Decided voters, n=262



## Newfoundland and Labrador

Premier Dwight Ball was on his way out, having resigned from his position in February. The pandemic, however, paused the leadership race between Andrew Furey and John Abbott. That race will now resume on June 8, with a leader to be [chosen in August](#). The Liberal Party of Newfoundland and Labrador holds a 13-point advantage over the Progressive Conservatives:



## Notes on Methodology – Government Performance Index

Each individual respondent was assigned a score based on their responses. If they chose 'very good' as a response to how the government has handled an issue they received three points. A 'good' response was worth one point, while 'bad' and 'very bad' were scored the opposite. Respondents who chose 'don't know' were given zero points. A maximum score on this index would yield a 39 while a minimum would yield -39. The percentage shown in the graph of the Government Performance Scores is the percentage of residents in each province who score positively on the index.

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

*For Government Performance Index summary, [click here](#).*

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