

Provincial Spotlight: As pandemic wears on, governments losing support on economic, COVID-19 management

Political realities in Alberta and Manitoba change over the year with opposition parties gaining strength

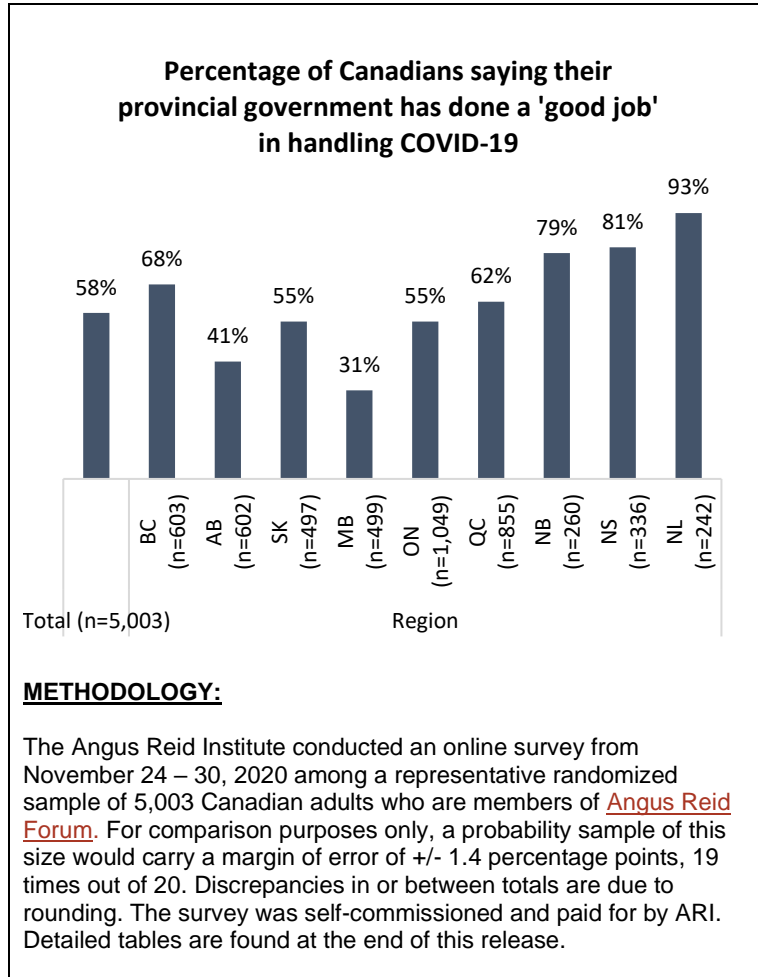
December 10, 2020 – New data from the non-profit Angus Reid Institute finds majorities in most – but not all – provinces saying their respective provincial governments have done a “good job” handling the COVID-19 pandemic. The exceptions: Alberta and Manitoba.

That said, approval of pandemic handling at the provincial level has dropped precipitously from the summer in almost every region. In June, an average of 80 per cent said their provincial government was doing well – now that number is 58 per cent.

As Canadians voice concerns about what the coming year will hold for their own personal finances, satisfaction with management of their respective provincial economies and the deficit has dropped considerably over the past six months.

More Key Findings:

- There are only three provinces where a majority of residents say the government is doing a “good job” on health care - B.C., Saskatchewan and Newfoundland and Labrador.
- As their constituents grow more critical throughout the pandemic, both Alberta’s United Conservative Party and Manitoba’s Progressive Conservative Party find themselves tied with their opposition parties in vote intention.
- Only one provincial government receives a Government Performance Index score of 50 or higher (Saskatchewan - 53). In June, five provinces had a score of this level.



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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

In every province canvassed, COVID-19 response, healthcare and the economy dominate the top provincial priorities list:

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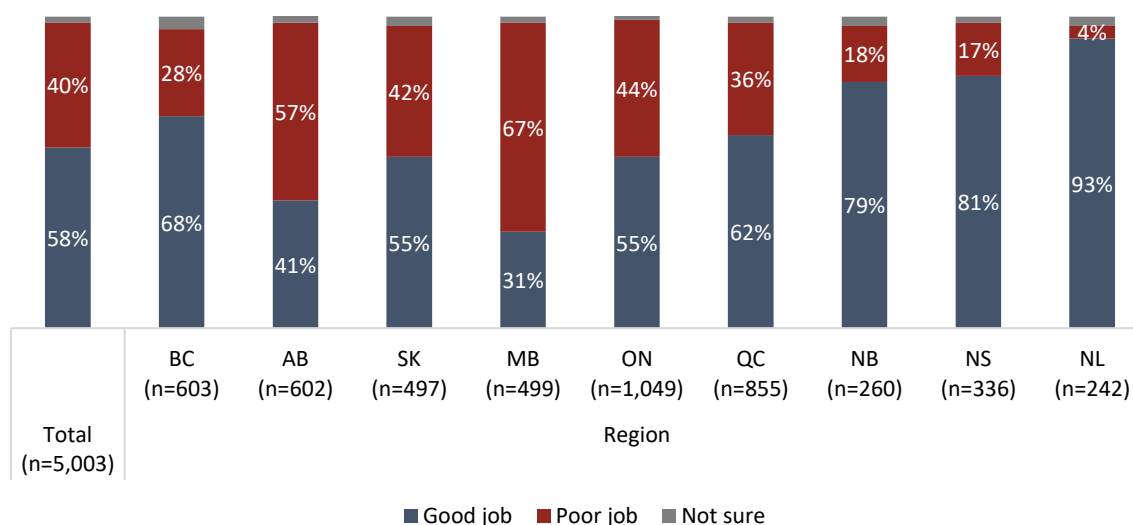
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Top issues by province (Up to three selected)								
BC (603)	AB (602)	SK (497)	MB (499)	ON (1049)	QC (855)	NB (260)	NS (336)	NL (242)
COVID-19 51%	Economy 47%	Economy 45%	COVID-19 55%	COVID-19 52%	Healthcare 53%	Healthcare 45%	Healthcare 56%	Healthcare 56%
Healthcare 37%	Healthcare 43%	COVID-19 44%	Healthcare 53%	Healthcare 42%	COVID-19 46%	COVID-19 43%	COVID-19 51%	COVID-19 53%
Housing costs 32%	COVID-19 39%	Healthcare 41%	Economy 30%	Economy 31%	Seniors care 30%	Economy 30%	Economy 26%	Economy 36%

It is these three core issues that largely define how provincial governments are perceived by their constituents. In the summer, as the first wave of the pandemic began to recede, leaders across the country enjoyed broad support from their constituents on the issue of handling COVID-19, and relatively strong support on economic management. As infections across the country have surged, many Canadians have begun to offer a less rosy view of how their own province has performed.

When it comes to the COVID-19 response, residents in nearly every part of the country have grown more critical of how their province has handled the now ten-month ordeal. Atlantic Canadians continue to offer the highest levels of praise for their leadership. Overall, residents in every region other than Alberta and Manitoba are more positive than negative in their assessments:

Do you think your province is doing a good job or poor job in handling the COVID-19 response?

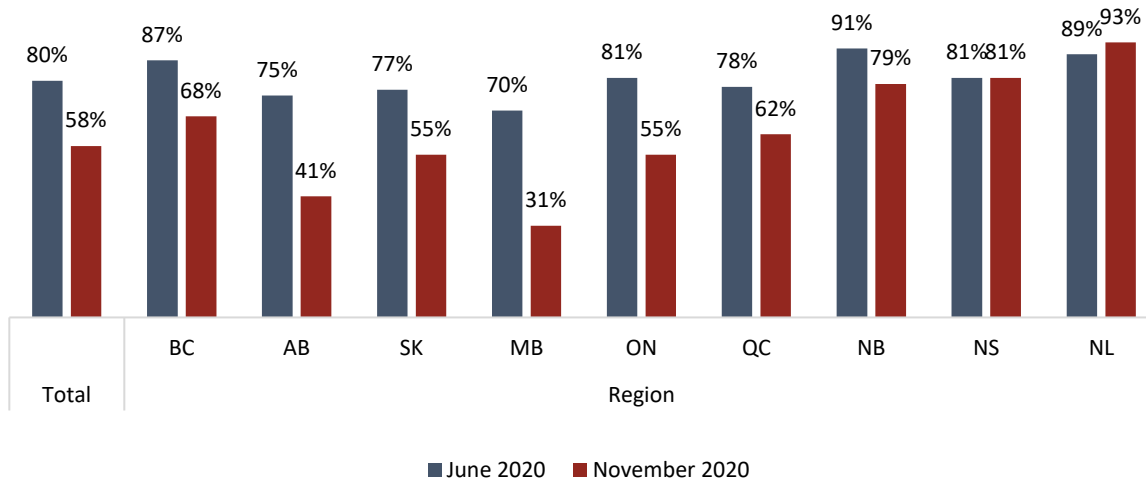


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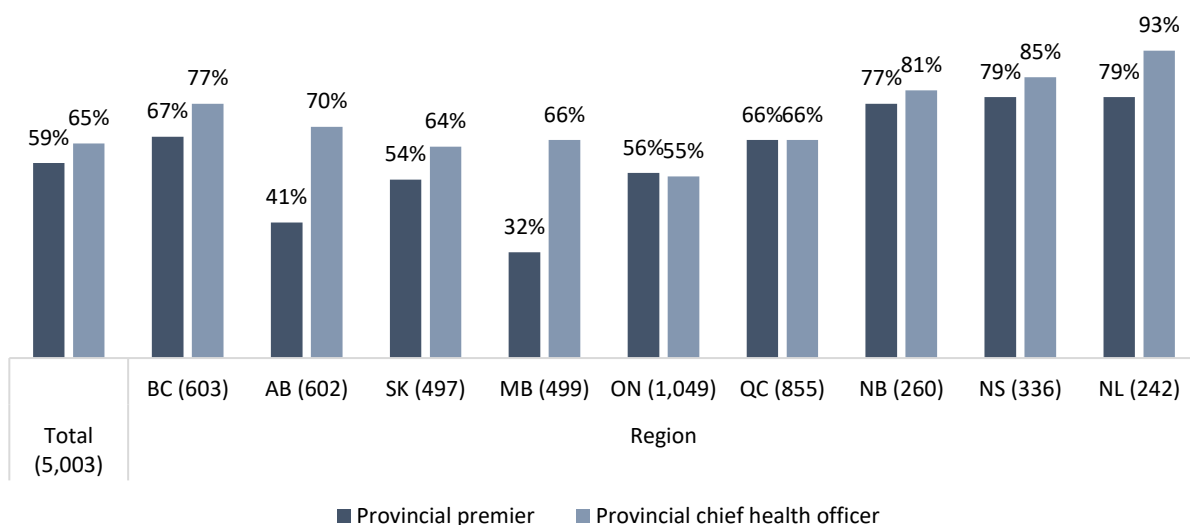
Manitoba and Alberta are alone in sub-majority approval. The Kenney and Pallister governments have seen at least a 34-percentage point drop since June.

Percentage of Canadians saying their provincial government has done a 'good job' in handling COVID-19 (June vs. November)



The premiers of each province are generally regarded similarly to their broader provincial governments on this issue. The same is not true for provincial health officers however, who in most of the country are more popular than their government or premier. Alberta and Manitoba show the starkest differences, where more than twice as many residents say the chief public health officer has done a good job handling the pandemic as say the same of their premier.

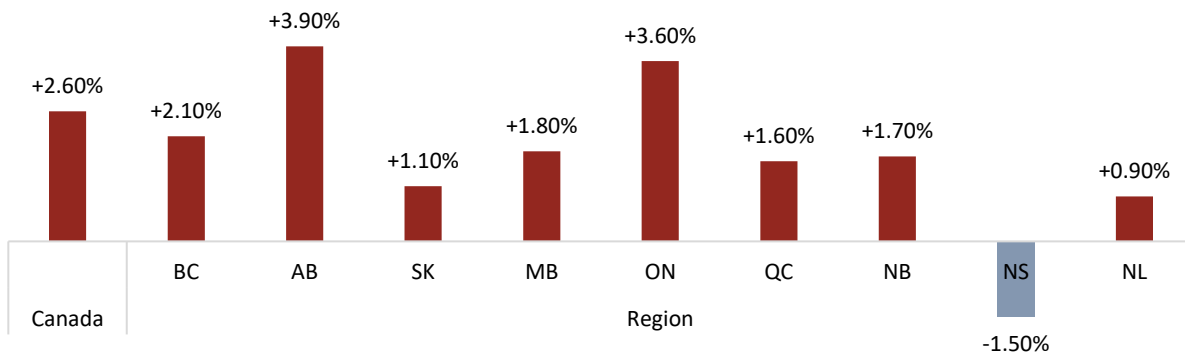
Percentage of residents saying that each of the following have done a "good job" of handling the response to COVID-19



Economic Issues

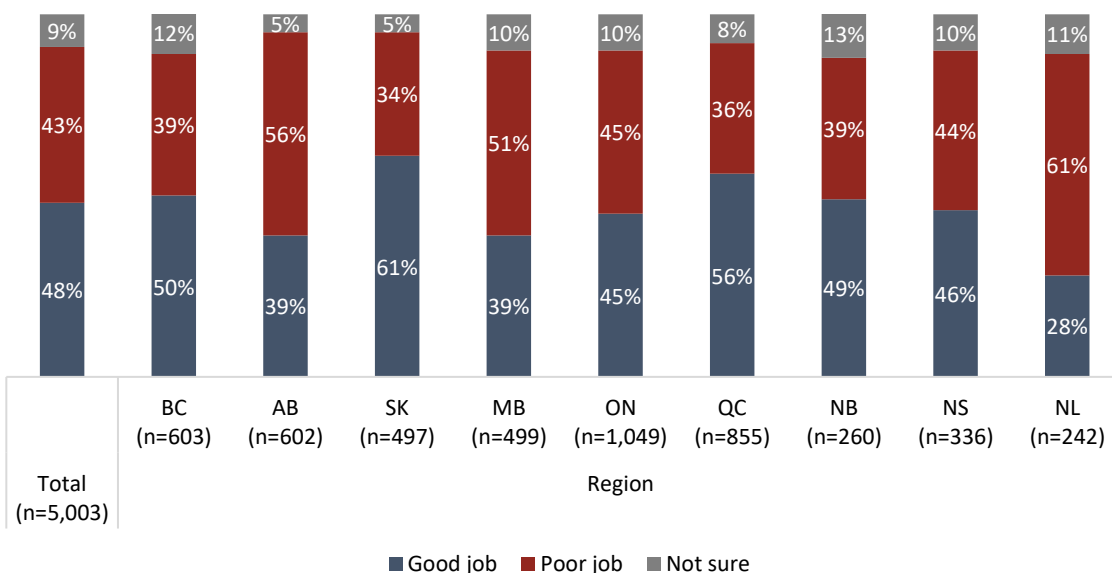
Since the pandemic began, unemployment has hampered every region of the country. Comparing data from this year to last, Alberta and Ontario fare worst. The challenge for Alberta, however, is that unlike Ontario, the province was already struggling with unemployment levels higher than the national average before the pandemic began.

Change in unemployment rate from Nov 2019 to Nov 2020 (Statistics Canada)



Asked how their government is handling the economic file, Albertans are joined by Manitobans as well as Newfoundlanders and Labradorians in voicing the lowest levels of satisfaction. Newfoundland and Labrador holds the highest level of unemployment of the provinces and has been beset by delays to major capital projects that would help to soften the blow dealt by dropping oil prices.

Do you think your province is doing a good job or poor job in handling the economy?

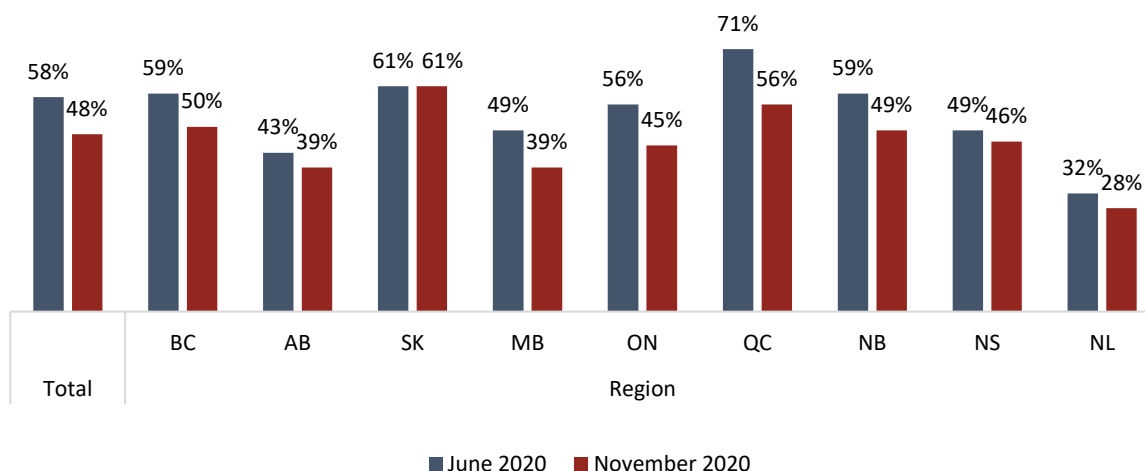


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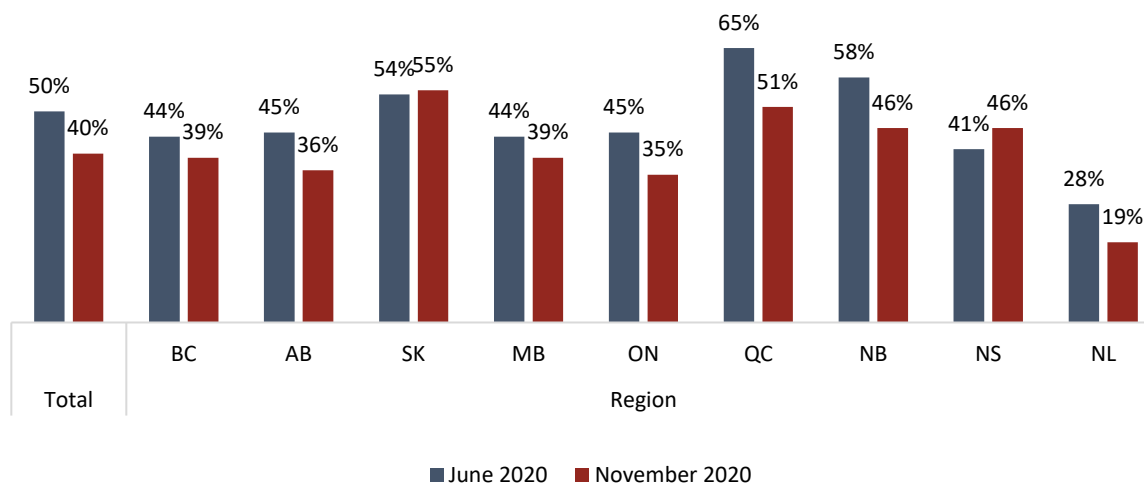
As with perceptions of the response to COVID-19, assessments of how well provincial governments are managing their economies have also turned more negative since the summer. Saskatchewan is the exception, where the same proportion, three-in-five (61%), currently say the government is doing a good job.

Percentage of Canadians saying their provincial government has done a 'good job' in handling the economy (June vs. November)



As COVID-19 related restrictions on businesses continue, provinces continue to spend money to sustain their populations. What this means is a projected deficit for every province in 2021, something that has not happened [since 1995](#). With this in mind, concerns over provincial deficits appear to be intensifying in most of the country:

Percentage of Canadians saying their provincial government has done a 'good job' in handling the deficit/government spending (June vs. November)



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On the issues of housing affordability and poverty, both of which have been [further illuminated](#) by the financial struggles brought on by the pandemic, Canadians are particularly critical. The government of Saskatchewan gets the highest marks on each issue, yet even there just two-in-five (41%) approve of the handling of housing affordability, and less than one-in-three (31%) say they have done a good job dealing with poverty and homelessness. In Ontario, just 16 per cent of residents say the provincial government is handling housing affordability well:

Percentage of residents saying the provincial government has done a “good job” of handling each of the following affordability issues										
Unweighted sample sizes	Total (5,003)	BC (603)	AB (602)	SK (497)	MB (499)	ON (1,049)	QC (855)	NB (260)	NS (336)	NL (242)
Housing Affordability	23%	23%	26%	41%	26%	16%	29%	18%	21%	33%
Poverty/homelessness	23%	23%	25%	31%	19%	19%	30%	15%	17%	30%

Health care

Looking at performance on health care generally, the provinces get mixed reviews. The Canadian Medical Association sent a letter to the federal government stating that the health care system, stressed even before the pandemic, is at [a tipping point](#). In B.C. (61%), Newfoundland and Labrador (54%) and Saskatchewan (51%), a majority say their province is doing a good job.

The handling of two key public health issues also draws criticism. On average just one-in-four Canadians say they are doing a good job handling both the opioid crisis and seniors care. In light of long-term care homes becoming [COVID-19 deathtraps](#), and drug overdoses rising to the point of being labelled as a [parallel epidemic](#), the administrations of each province have immense challenges ahead.

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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 highlighted

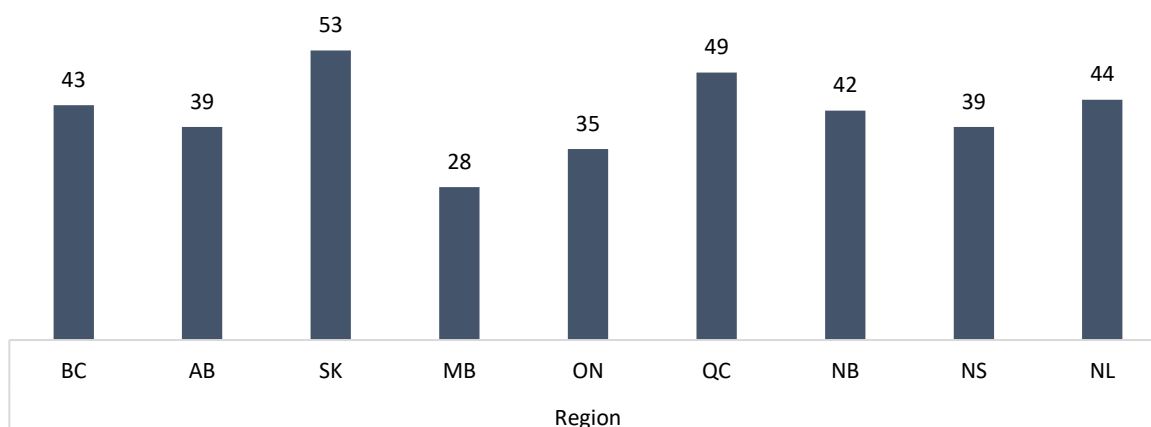
Unweighted sample sizes	Total (5,003)	BC (603)	AB (602)	SK (497)	MB (499)	ON (1,049)	QC (855)	NB (260)	NS (336)	NL (242)
Health care generally	45%	61%	37%	51%	29%	44%	44%	43%	34%	54%
Drug Use/addictions	27%	24%	33%	28%	20%	22%	34%	18%	24%	27%
Seniors care	26%	30%	26%	36%	18%	21%	33%	28%	22%	38%

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. For a list of all areas please [view the detailed tables here](#).

The government performance score below measures the percentage of residents who offered an overall positive score based on their answers to all 13 questions (more on methodology is found at the end of the report). Saskatchewan scores highest on this measure, the only province where more than half of residents view the government positively. Quebec is second with a score of 49.

Government performance score

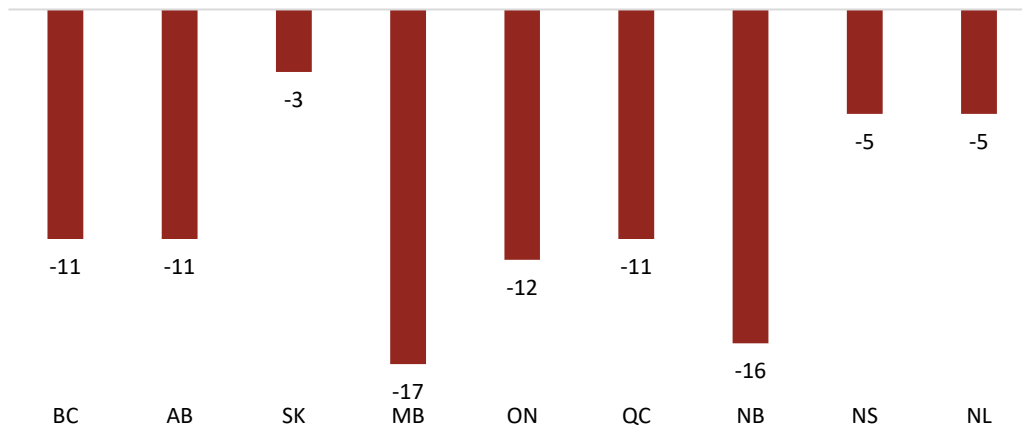


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Notable is the decline in scores from June. During that previous wave of data, five provinces scored a 50 or above, compared to just one now. Below is the change in score over the past six months:

Change in government performance index - June to December



Part Two: Vote Intention Summary

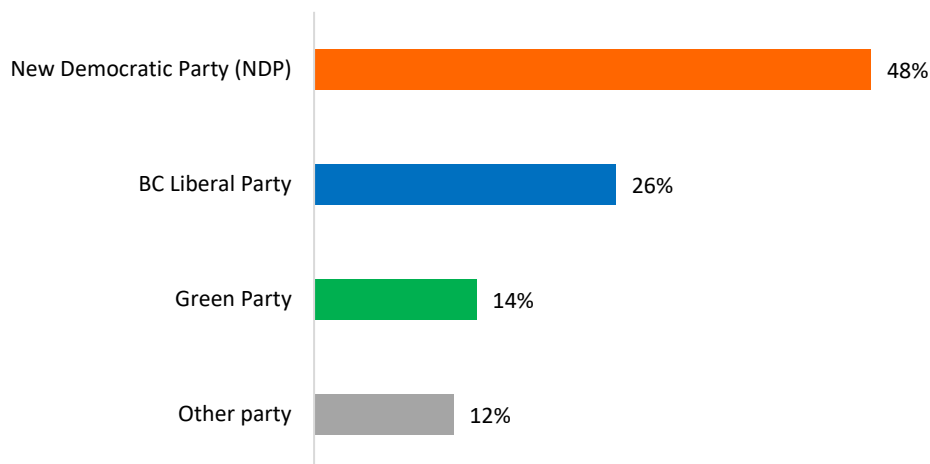
Three provinces went to the polls in 2020, and all three returned the incumbents. There are no provincial elections scheduled for 2021.

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

British Columbia

As John Horgan kicks off his second term as Premier with a [new cabinet](#), the BC NDP maintains a strong lead over the BC Liberal Party.

Vote intention in British Columbia
Decided voters, n=551

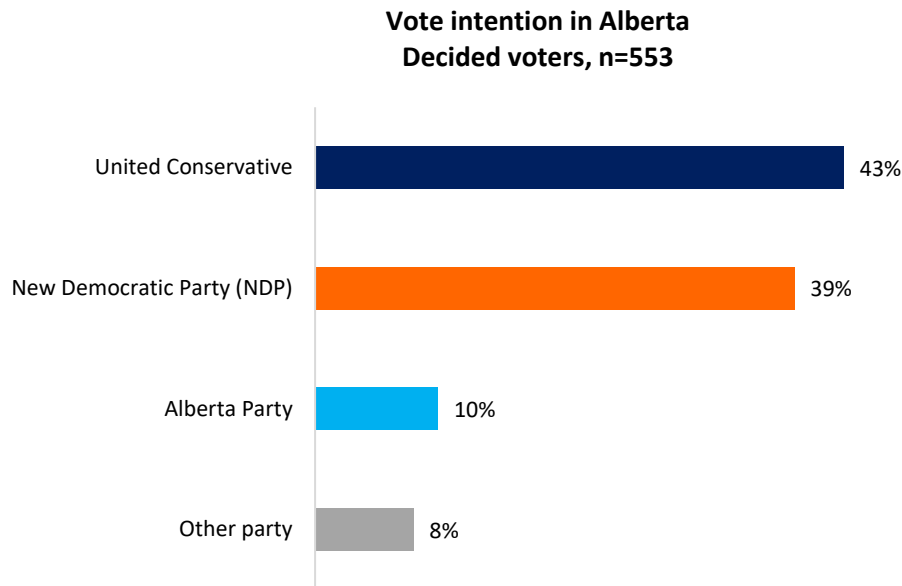


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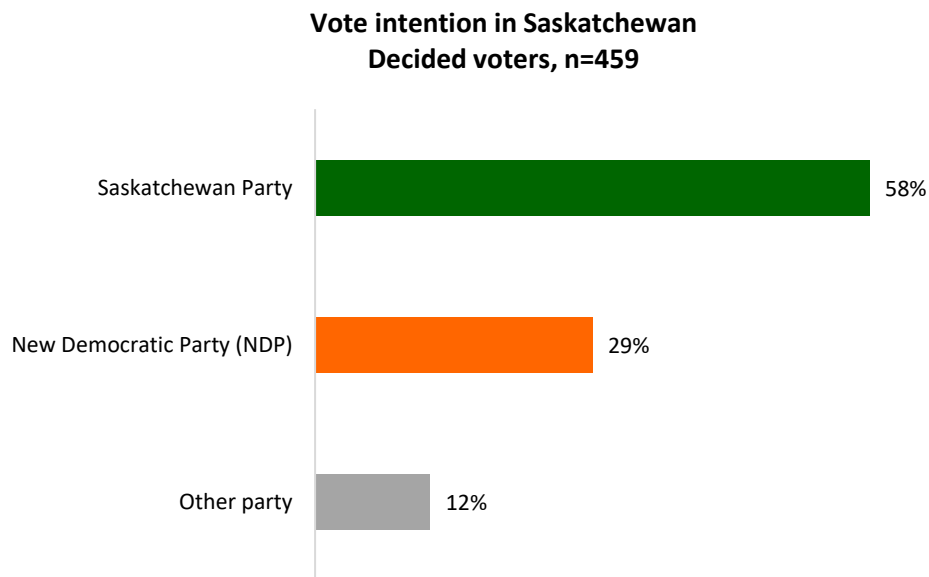
Alberta

In Alberta, the vote intention race between Jason Kenney’s United Conservatives and Rachel Notley’s NDP continues to be close. Today, the incumbent UCP holds a slight four-point advantage over the opposition NDP:



Saskatchewan

The largest lead for the incumbent party is found in Saskatchewan, where support for the Saskatchewan Party remains high:

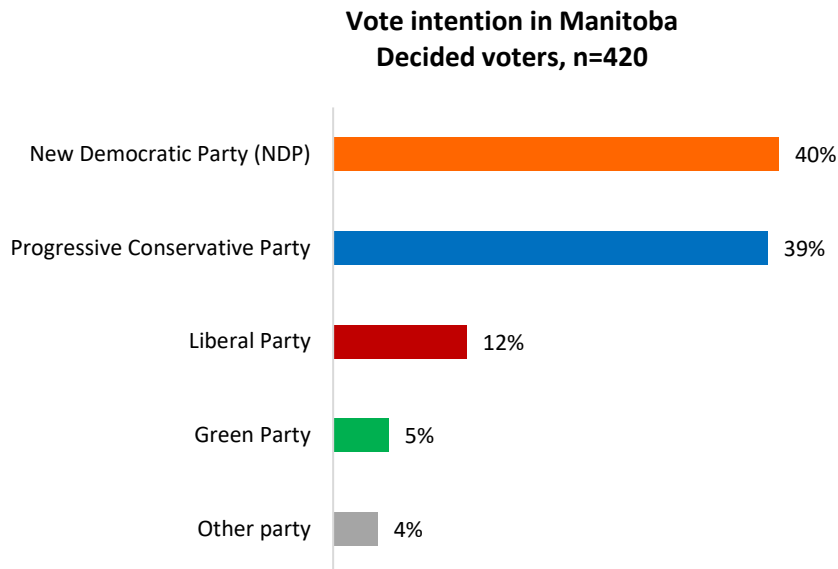


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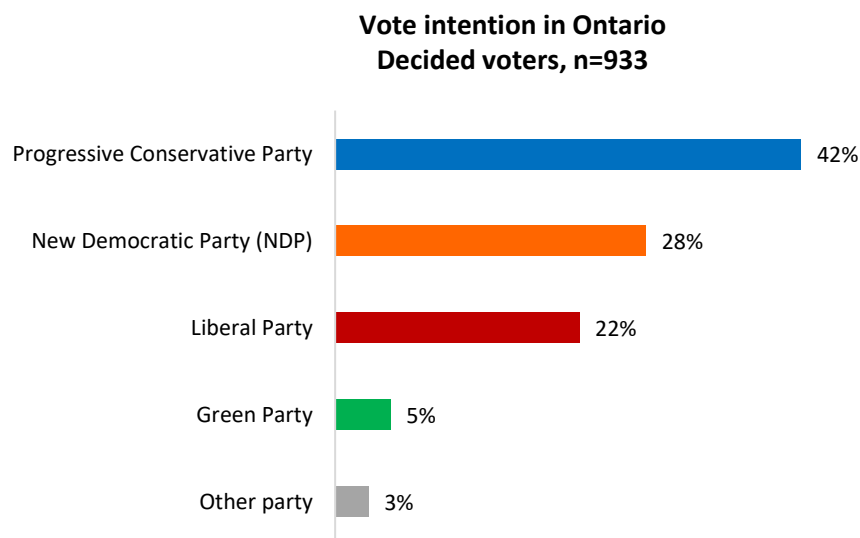
Manitoba

As Brian Pallister receives the lowest premier approval rating in the country, the percentage of decided voters that would support his party if an election were held tomorrow has also declined in recent months. The Progressive Conservatives are now locked in a statistical tie with the NDP. Notably, this is the closest margin between the two parties recorded by ARI since the Progressive Conservatives first formed a government in 2016.



Ontario

The Progressive Conservative Party of Ontario under Premier Doug Ford continues to hold a considerable lead in vote intention. The NDP are in second place, followed by the Liberal Party:



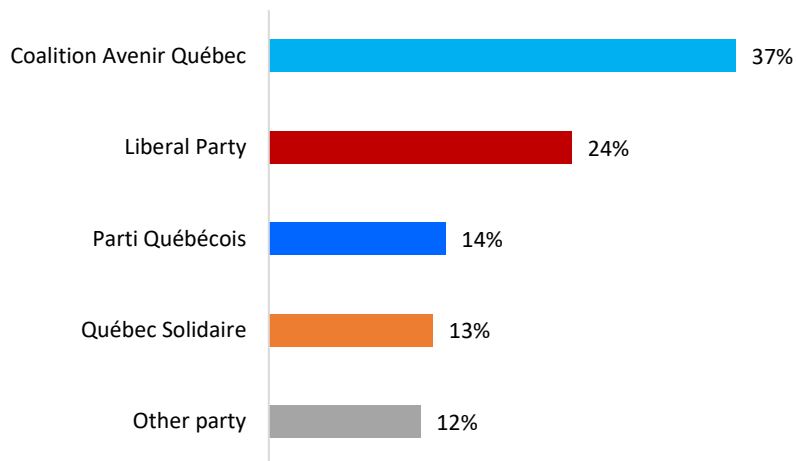
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Quebec

The incumbent Coalition Avenir Québec now holds a 13-point advantage over the Liberal Party. Vote intention for the CAQ has declined from a record high in May but remains at a level consistent with previous waves.

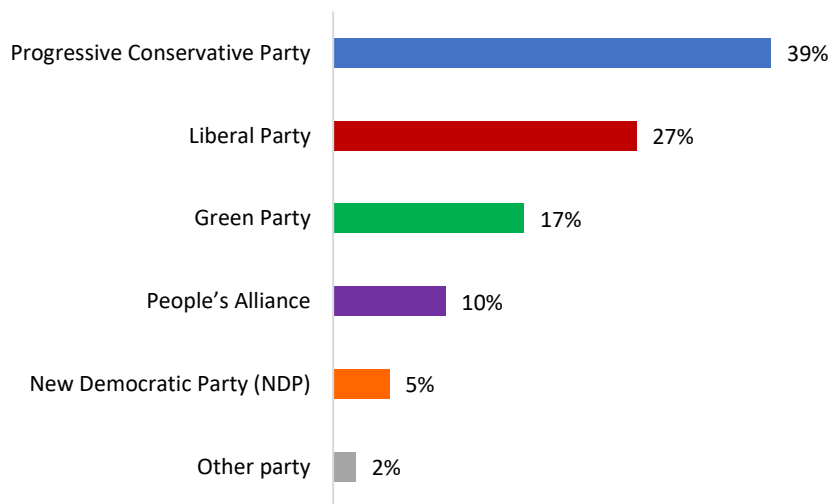
**Vote intention in Quebec
Decided voters, n=768**



New Brunswick

After governing for two years under a minority government, the Progressive Conservative Party won a majority this September. The PCP of New Brunswick maintains its lead over the Liberals:

**Vote intention in New Brunswick
Decided voters, n=215**

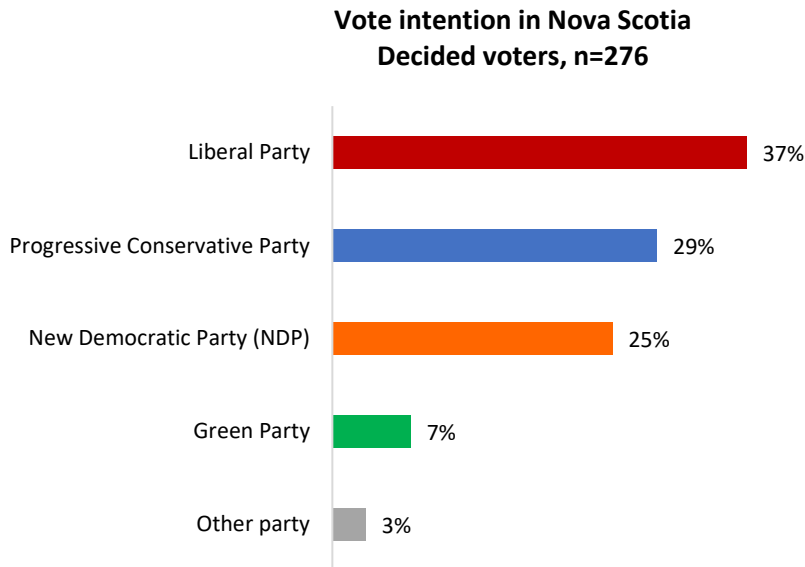


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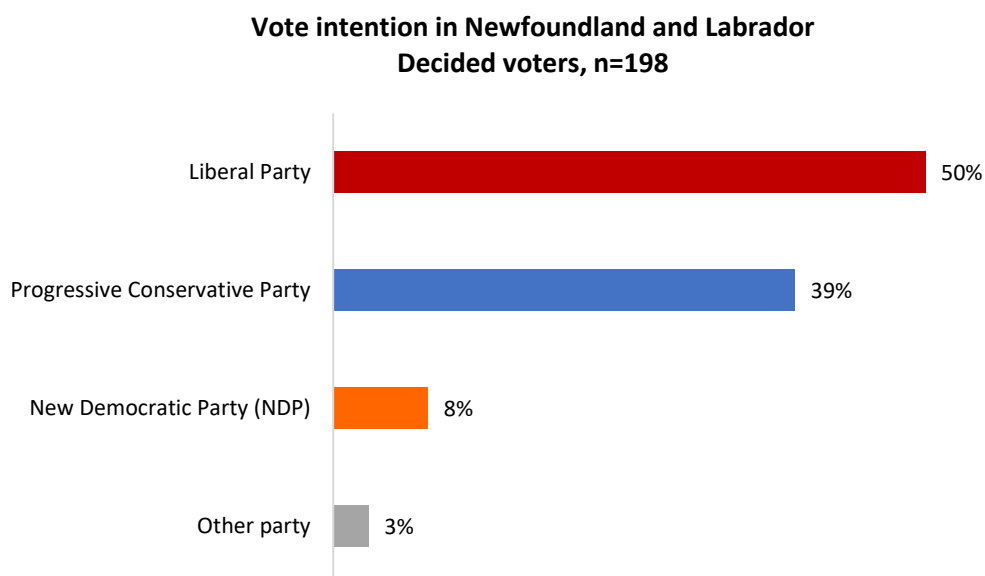
Nova Scotia

Nova Scotia’s governing Liberal Party under Premier Stephen McNeil also holds an advantage over the Progressive Conservative Party in that province:



Newfoundland and Labrador

The Liberal Party of Newfoundland and Labrador maintains its lead over the Progressive Conservative Party, now an advantage of 11 points:



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

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

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