

Premiers' Performance: Horgan highest, Ford's fall continues, Rankin enters the ranks largely unknown

Alberta's Kenney and Manitoba's Pallister remain among least approved of provincial leaders

March 10, 2021 – As the hot, bright and unyielding spotlight of scrutiny shifts from Ottawa to provincial capitals in the next phase of vaccine distribution, premiers will be judged over the next three months on this key performance indicator, among others.

For now, however, Canadians are still more inclined – for the most part – to give their provincial leaders better assessments than worse in terms of approval.

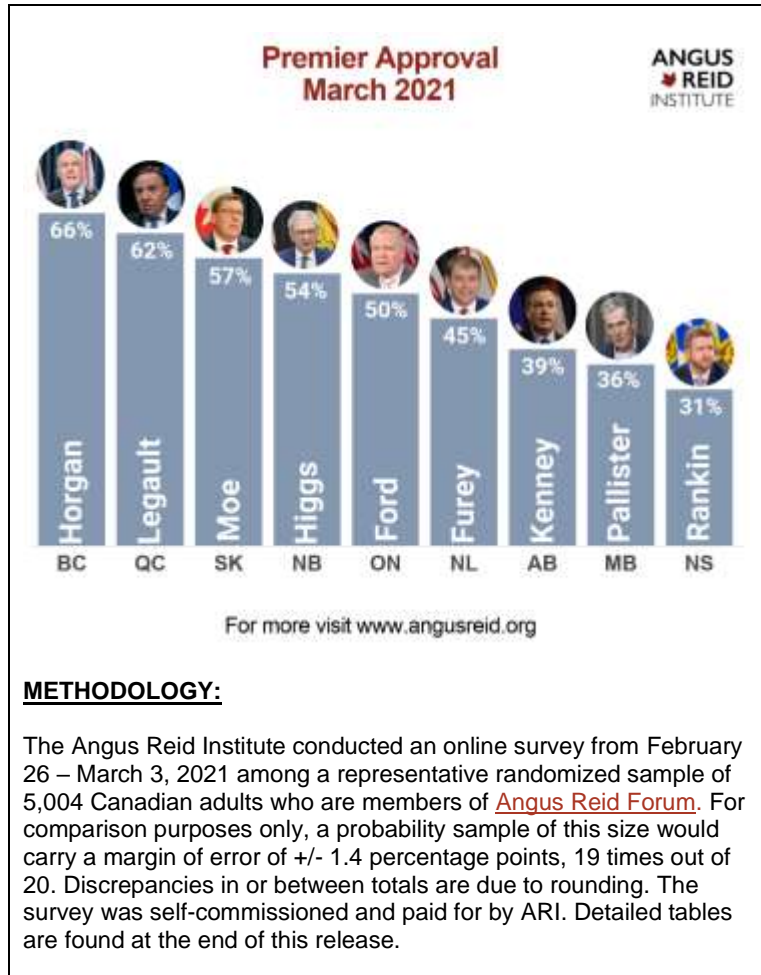
Indeed, five of Canada's premiers receive the endorsement of at least half of their respective provincial constituencies, including BC's John Horgan. Two-thirds (66%) of British Columbians approve of the job he's been doing.

Newfoundland and Labrador's Andrew Furey draws a split review, with as many people in his province affirming his performance (45%) as disavowing it (45%). Nova Scotians, meantime, are still trying to figure out their brand-new premier. While he appears to be the least approved-of premier in the country, this is a function of fully half the province (51%) as yet unable to render an opinion on the job he's doing.

This leaves Manitoba's Brian Pallister and Alberta's Jason Kenney as not only the least-approved of, but the most disapproved of by those in their provinces. Pallister appears to be bouncing back a little, at 36 per cent compared to 32 per cent last quarter. Kenney's approval remains statistically unchanged, currently at 39 per cent.

Those playing above 500:

British Columbia Premier John Horgan holds the top spot this quarter, approved of by 66 per cent of his constituents, having survived a politically risky announcement that the now \$16-billion Site C hydroelectric dam would indeed **be completed**, and drawing some buoyancy from news last week announcing details for the province's mass immunization plan. The new strategy made headlines across the country for



CONTACT:

Shachi Kurl, President: 604.908.1693 shachi.kurl@angusreid.org @shachikurl
Dave Korzinski, Research Director: 250.899.0821 dave.korzinski@angusreid.org

Extending the time between first and second doses of applicable COVID-19 vaccine to four months. After initial conflict over this timeline, other provinces announced they'd adopt or study the [same four-month spacing](#).

Time will tell if more recent problems – such as Monday's [swamping of a hotline](#) for making vaccination appointments – will have an impact on the level to which British Columbians approve of their premier in the coming months.

Quebec's François Legault is approved of by 62 per cent of Quebec residents. After imposing uniform restrictions and curfews across the province in January, Quebec returned to its colour-coded, regional system of restrictions in February. This has meant the reopening of stores, restaurants, and movie theatres in parts of the province, though not the densely populated red zones.

Legault has [voiced optimism](#) as Quebec has opened up, but he also continues to face criticism for the "[deplorable conditions](#)" in long-term care homes that led to immense losses of life last spring. Just under half of all [COVID-19 deaths](#) in Canada have occurred in Quebec. A [coroner's inquest](#) into the LTC issue started in February.

In Saskatchewan, Premier Scott Moe's approval slips four points over the last quarter to 57 per cent. The Premier who won re-election handily last fall has been under pressure to tell an electorate that skews towards fiscal conservatism when the province will emerge from a period of deficit spending and [return to balanced budgets](#).

Though still above the 50 per cent mark, New Brunswick's Blaine Higgs' current approval level (54%) has dropped a significant nine points over the past three months. The premier has faced [recent criticism](#) over the province's handling of housing affordability, which has been a challenge for renters and low-income residents throughout the pandemic.

Doug Ford's approval also drops this quarter, putting him at 50 per cent. What had been a remarkable renaissance for the Ontario premier over the last year appears to be coming to an end: his approval has dropped 19 points from where it was last May. Ford has been [both praised and criticized](#) for management of the pandemic. Most recently it was reported that he overrode the advice of Ontario's top doctor when he [opened up testing](#) to the general public, which led to backlogs. Ford faces re-election next year.

The sub-500 group:

Manitoba was finally able to reduce its restrictions in February after cases dropped dramatically in the province from where they were in late November. Further loosening of procedures [went into effect](#) on March 5, allowing 10 people to gather in public instead of five, and increasing restaurant capacity from 25 per cent to 50 per cent, among other changes. Although employment in Manitoba has started to recover, the province is still grappling with significant losses from earlier in the pandemic, its unemployment rate still at 8 per cent. Premier Brian Pallister is approved of by just 36 per cent of Manitobans this quarter.

Alberta Premier Jason Kenney has the second lowest approval rating among Canada's premiers this quarter. The COVID-19 crisis, combined with low oil prices, devastated Alberta's economy. The government projected an \$18 billion deficit and a total provincial debt of more than \$115 billion in its budget released in late February. After facing [heavy criticism](#) for its handling of the pandemic early on, Alberta has taken a [cautious approach to reopening](#), and has seen [downward trends](#) in its case numbers over the past two months. Two-in-five Albertans (39%) approve of Kenney's performance.

CONTACT:

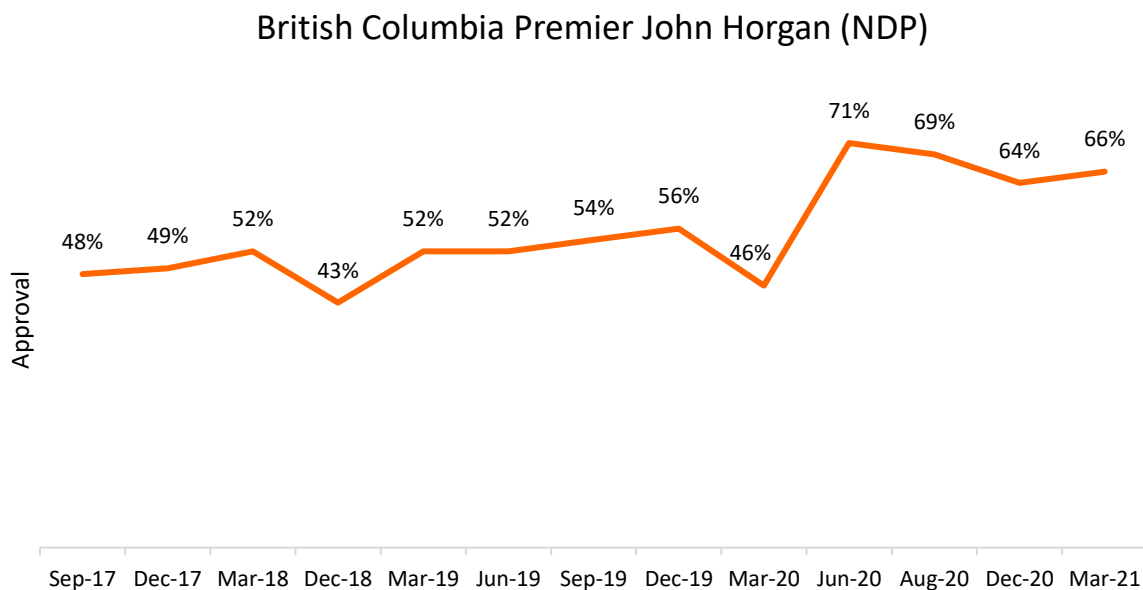
Shachi Kurl, President: 604.908.1693 shachi.kurl@angusreid.org @shachikurl
 Dave Korzinski, Research Director: 250.899.0821 dave.korzinski@angusreid.org

A couple of exceptions:

Newfoundland and Labrador is in the middle of an unorthodox election. Premier Andrew Furey has faced criticism for a winter election call which was to be held on February 13, but was then delayed, and then amended to only accept mail-in ballots, which must now be received by March 25. COVID-19 restrictions have prompted criticism from residents, one-third of whom (36%) now say the result will be illegitimate, regardless of who wins. Furey’s approval rating is 45 per cent this quarter as he and the rest of the province await results, which will be released at an unspecified date. The same number in Newfoundland and Labrador (45%) disapprove of him.

Nova Scotia Premier Iain Rankin was sworn in February 23, succeeding Canada’s longest serving premier, Stephen McNeil. Opinions of Rankin are still developing. Half (51%) of Nova Scotians have no opinion of him, 31 per cent approve. This currently makes him the least-approved of premier in the country, but by no means is he the most *disapproved* of. That distinction is shared by Pallister and Kenney.

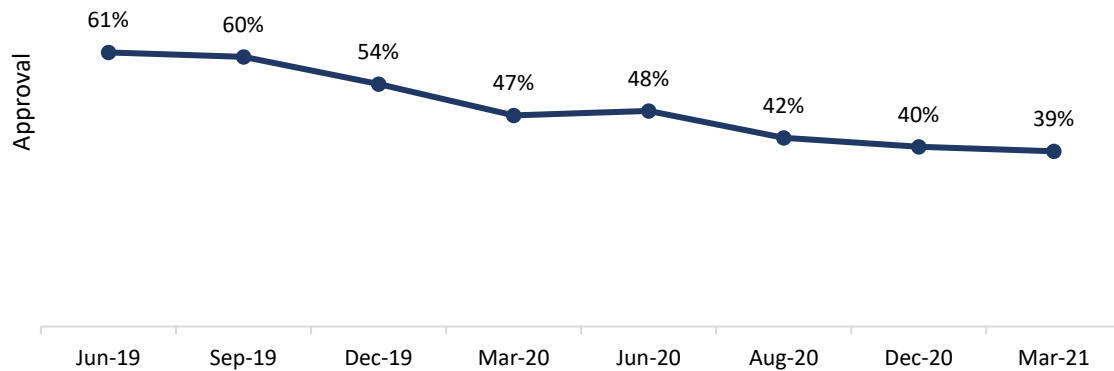
Because its small population precludes drawing discrete samples over multiple waves, data on Prince Edward Island is not released.



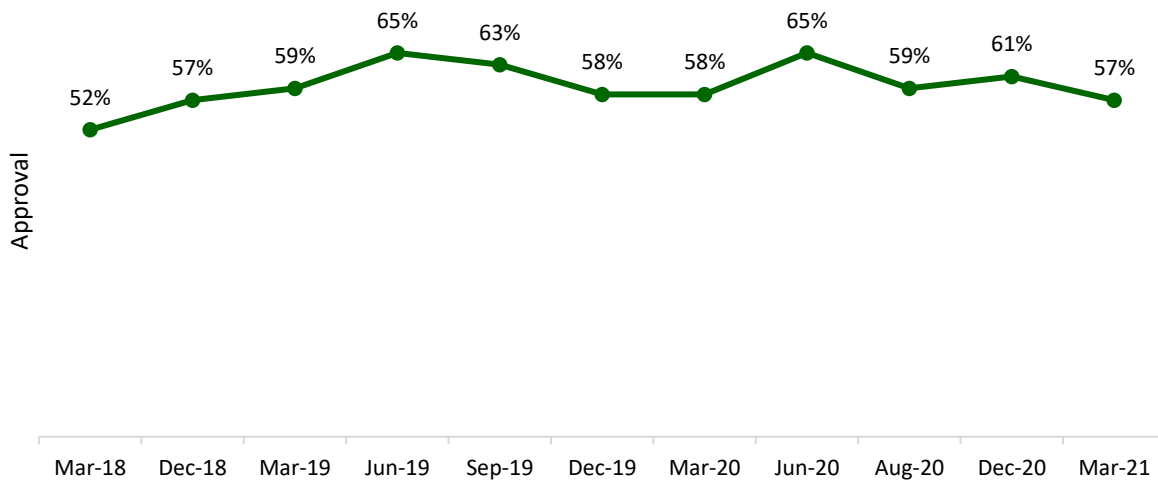
CONTACT:

Shachi Kurl, President: 604.908.1693 shachi.kurl@angusreid.org @shachikurl
 Dave Korzinski, Research Director: 250.899.0821 dave.korzinski@angusreid.org

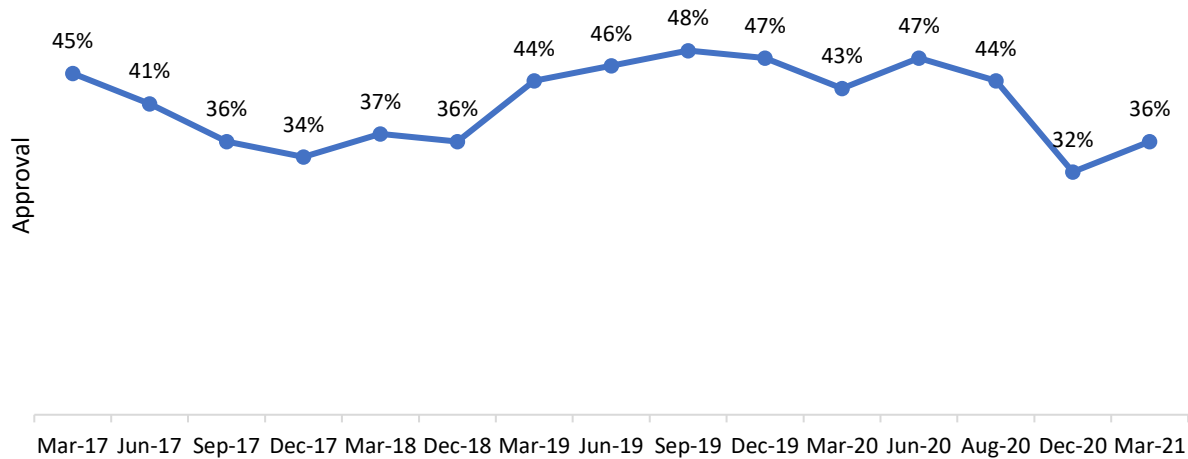
Alberta Premier Jason Kenney (UCP)



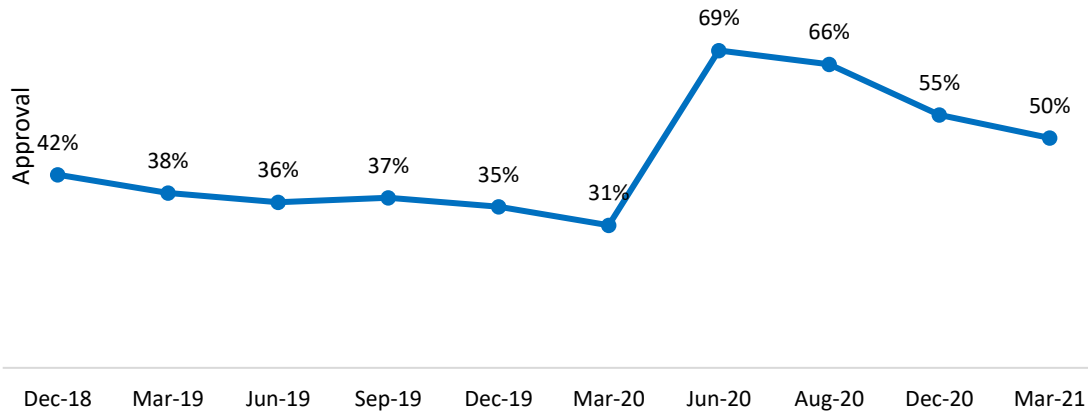
Saskatchewan Premier Scott Moe (Saskatchewan Party)



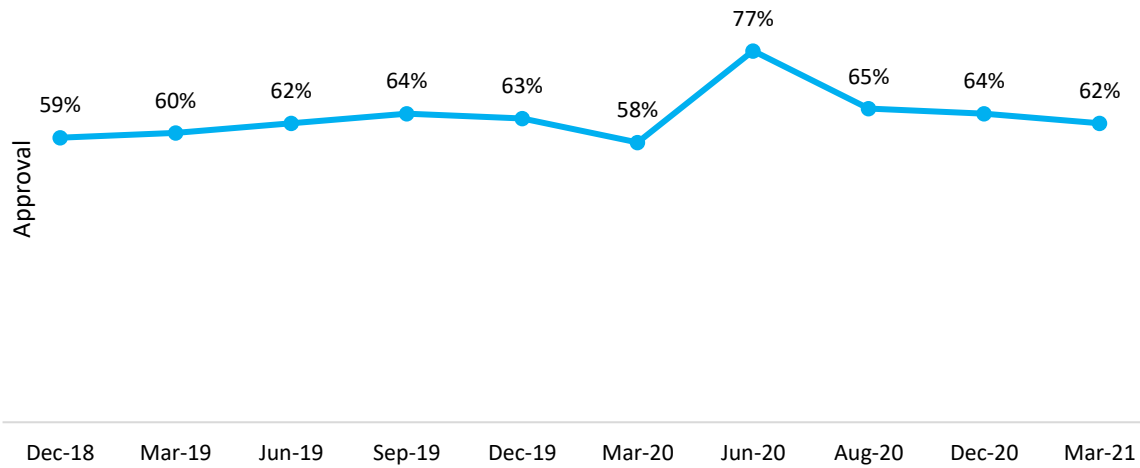
Manitoba Premier Brian Pallister (Progressive Conservative)



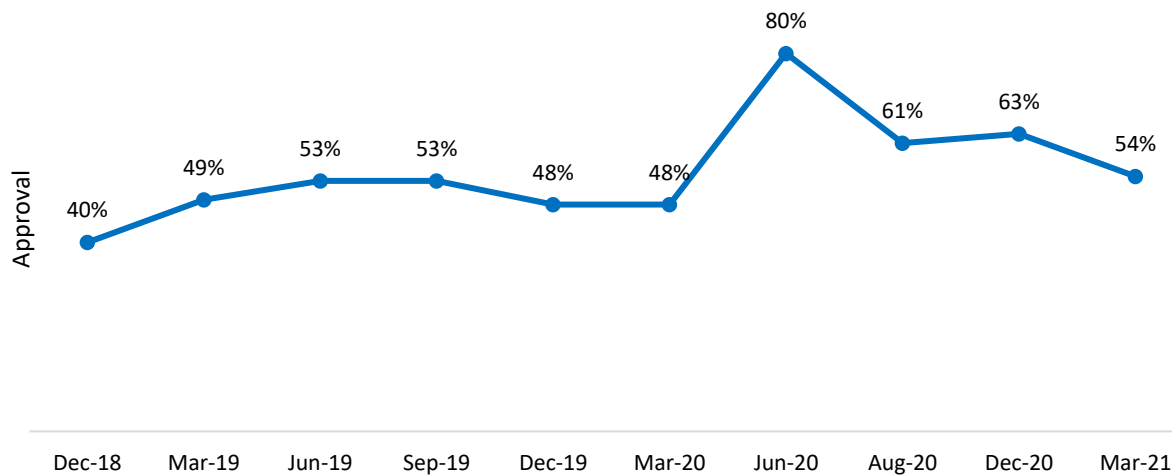
Ontario Premier Doug Ford (Progressive Conservative)



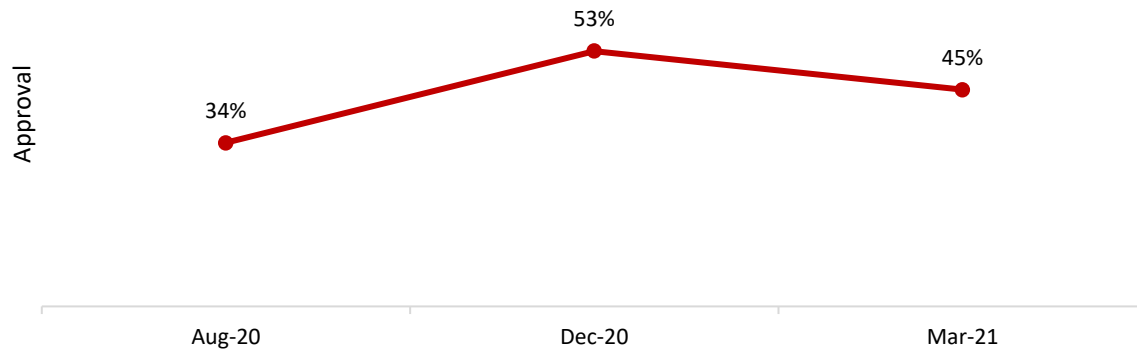
Quebec Premier François Legault (Coalition Avenir Quebec)



New Brunswick Premier Blaine Higgs (Progressive Conservative)



Newfoundland and Labrador Premier Andrew Furey (Liberal)



Margins of error								
BC (607)	AB (603)	SK (496)	MB (500)	ON (1058)	QC (833)	NB (261)	NS (326)	NL (241)
+/- 4%	+/- 4%	+/- 4%	+/- 4%	+/- 3%	+/- 3%	+/- 6%	+/- 5%	+/- 6%

Do you approve or disapprove of each of the following people?			
(unweighted sample sizes)	Approve	Disapprove	Not sure
British Columbia (n=607): Premier and New Democratic Party leader John Horgan	66%	28%	6%
Alberta (n=603): Premier and United Conservative Party leader Jason Kenney	39%	59%	3%
Saskatchewan (n=496) Premier and Saskatchewan Party leader Scott Moe	57%	41%	2%
Manitoba (n=500) Premier and Progressive Conservative leader Brian Pallister	36%	59%	4%
Ontario (n=1058) Premier and Progressive Conservative leader Doug Ford	50%	47%	3%
Québec (n=833) Premier and Coalition Avenir Québec leader François Legault	62%	36%	3%
New Brunswick (n=261) Premier and Progressive Conservative leader Blaine Higgs	54%	43%	3%
Nova Scotia (n=326) Premier and Liberal Party leader Iain Rankin	31%	18%	51%
Newfoundland and Labrador (n=241) Premier and Liberal Party leader Andrew Furey	45%	45%	10%

Which statement most closely reflects your opinion? (Newfoundland and Labrador only)	
(unweighted sample size)	Total (n=241)
Whatever the outcome, NL's election results will be legitimate	64%
Whatever the outcome, NL's election results will NOT be legitimate	36%

CONTACT:

Shachi Kurl, President: 604.908.1693 shachi.kurl@angusreid.org @shachikurl
 Dave Korzinski, Research Director: 250.899.0821 dave.korzinski@angusreid.org