

## Spotlight on the Provinces: Concerns over health care, economy drive increasing dissatisfaction with governments

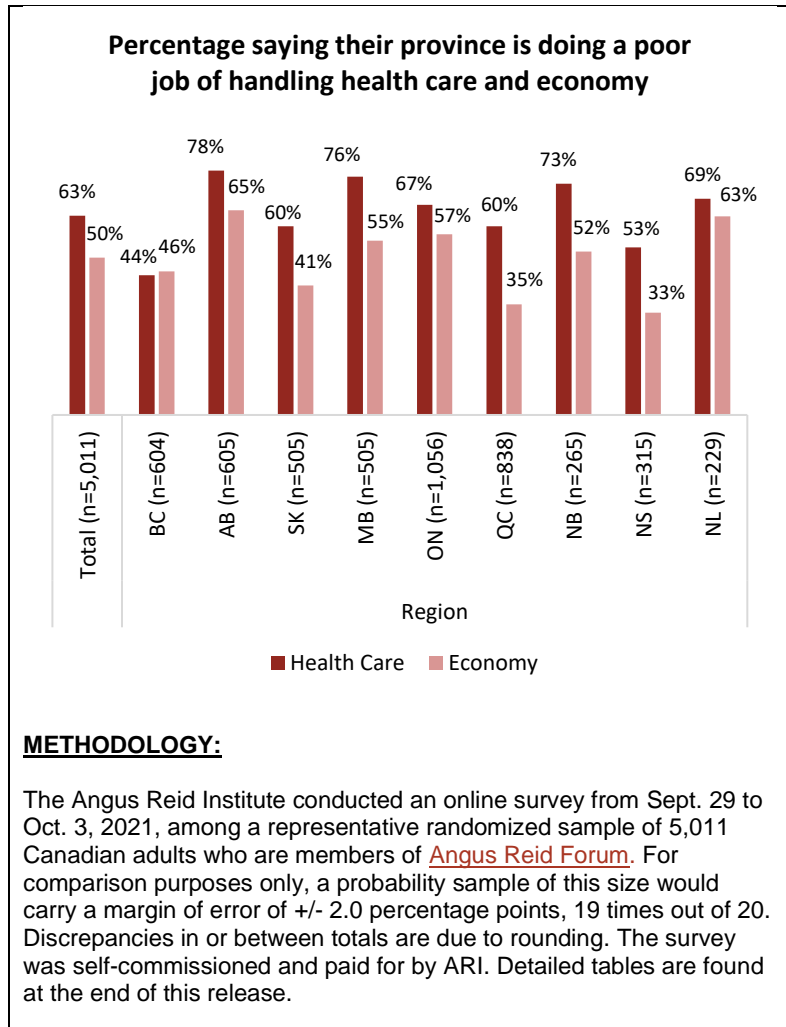
*Just one-in-three say their provincial government is doing a 'good job' handling health care*

**October 27, 2021** – Federal politics has dominated Canadian discourse and headlines in 2021 due to the recently resolved 44th election campaign. For many provincial politicians, that focus may have been a good thing.

A new study from the non-profit Angus Reid Institute finds criticism of provincial governments growing, driven among other things by an apparent diminishing of satisfaction with provincial health care as the weight of the pandemic continues to stress services across the country.

Further, at least half of residents in every region of the country now say their provincial government is doing a poor job in addressing housing affordability, poverty, and seniors' care.

Exacerbating this issue, and amidst rising cost of living concerns for many Canadians, is an economic angst that prevails in much of the nation. Just two-in-five (39%) say that their provincial government is performing well in economic management, down 16 points from both 2019 and 2020 levels. Half now say their government is doing poorly on economic issues (50%).



The drop-off in satisfaction is most evident in Ontario, where just 30 per cent of residents say the government is doing a good job of stewarding the economy, compared to 57 per cent who said this at the same time last year.

### [Related: Cost of living causing considerable pain for Canadians as inflation rate increases](#)

For some parties in power, this overall downward trend in public approval – as measured by the Angus Reid Institute Government Performance Index – has had little effect on its electoral prospects. In others, dissatisfaction with leadership is driving a desire for change.

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Despite a worsening overall level of satisfaction, and the second lowest rate of approval on COVID-19 handling, Scott Moe's Saskatchewan Party has yet to see a significant slip in vote intent. Moe's government is evidently sustained by perceived strong economic performance and holds a 17-point vote intention lead amid growing pandemic criticism.

That is not the case for leadership in Alberta. Jason Kenney's government has been panned for its handling of the pandemic with just 20 per cent of Albertans feeling the UCP has done a good job on that aspect of governance. Meanwhile, 78 per cent say the government in Alberta has performed poorly – the highest mark in the nation by 14 percentage points. Kenney's UCP now trails the opposition NDP, led by former Premier Rachel Notley, by 12 points in vote intention.

### More Key Findings:

- Doug Ford's Progressive Conservative Party continues to tread water in vote intent, holding just a two-point advantage over the opposition Ontario NDP. This, despite having the third worst score on the Government Performance Index in the nation.
- Criticism of provincial governments' handling of the opioid crisis is widespread from coast to coast. François Legault's government receives the highest level of praise on this issue, with a meagre 28 per cent saying the Coalition Avenir Québec is doing well in addressing the crisis.
- John Horgan's BCNDP receives mixed reviews for its government's performance. Two-thirds say the party has handled COVID-19 well, among the highest level in Canada. That said, 85 per cent say it is not adequately addressing the housing issue, while 77 per cent say this of drug use and addictions; both of these marks are the worst of all regions canvassed.
- Responses about government handling of COVID-19 are varied. At least two-thirds in Quebec and British Columbia say their province has done well, while just one-in-five say this in Alberta, and one-third in Saskatchewan

### 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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- **Regional differences on COVID-19 response**
- **Other core areas of discontent**
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**Part Two: Province-by-province breakdown**

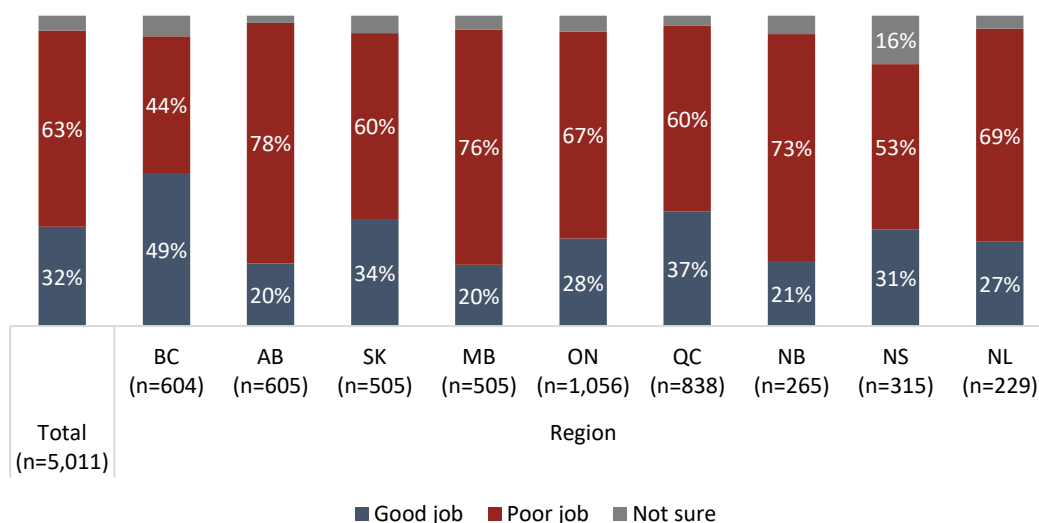
- British Columbia
- Alberta
- Saskatchewan
- Manitoba
- Ontario
- Quebec
- New Brunswick
- Nova Scotia
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**Part One: Criticism of provincial governments continues to grow**

**Health care satisfaction trending downward**

Health-care services across the country have suffered greatly since March 2020, as COVID-19 cases continue to occupy significant medical resources. These effects are beginning to be felt by residents across the country. Consider that British Columbia is the only province to boast more residents saying health care is currently being handled well in their province as opposed to poorly. Criticism is highest in Alberta (78% say poor job) and Manitoba (76%):

**Do you think the current government of your province is doing a good job or a poor job in each of the following areas? [Health care]**



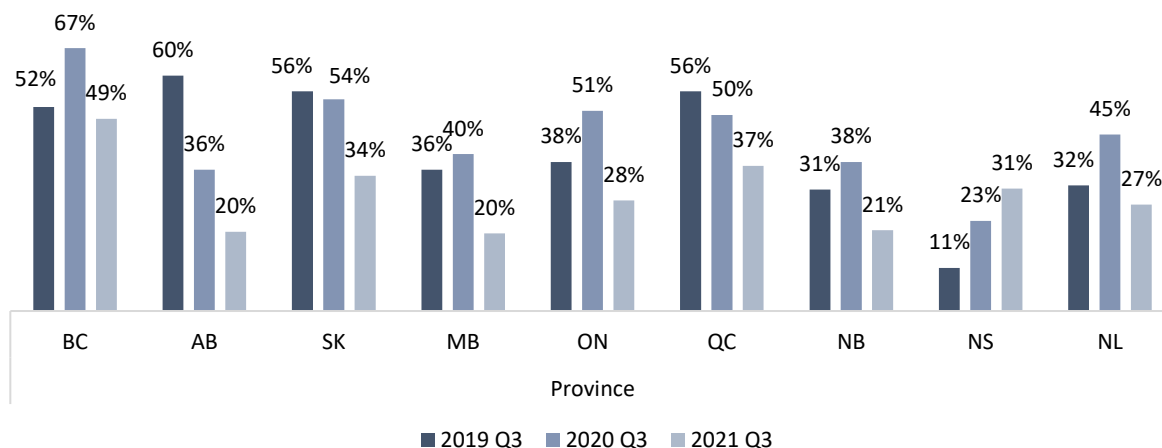
*Because its small population precludes drawing discrete samples over multiple waves, data on Prince Edward Island is not released.*

Data suggests that even those governments that remain relatively popular, like those in Saskatchewan and Quebec, are not immune to concerns over the stress on the health-care system. Compared to last year, the percentage of residents saying their province is handling health care well has dissipated nearly everywhere:

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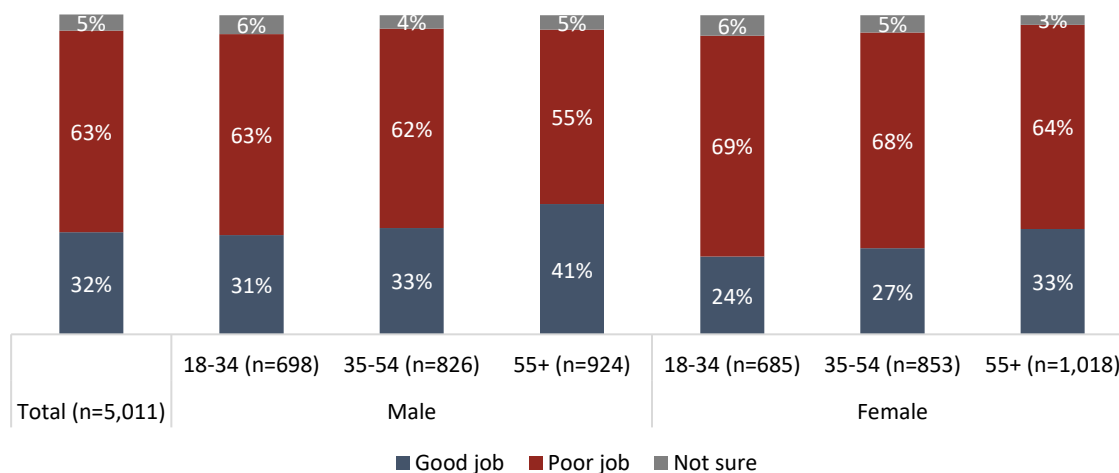
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**Government performance on handling of health care over time  
(Percentage picking 'good job' shown)**



A majority of Canadians across each age and gender group are critical of their provincial government's health-care performance. Horror stories have emerged about patients [dying waiting for care](#) and thousands of Canadians have been impacted by [cancelled surgeries](#) due to a lack of resources over the past 20 months:

**Do you think the current government of your province is doing a good job or a poor job in each of the following areas? [Health care]**



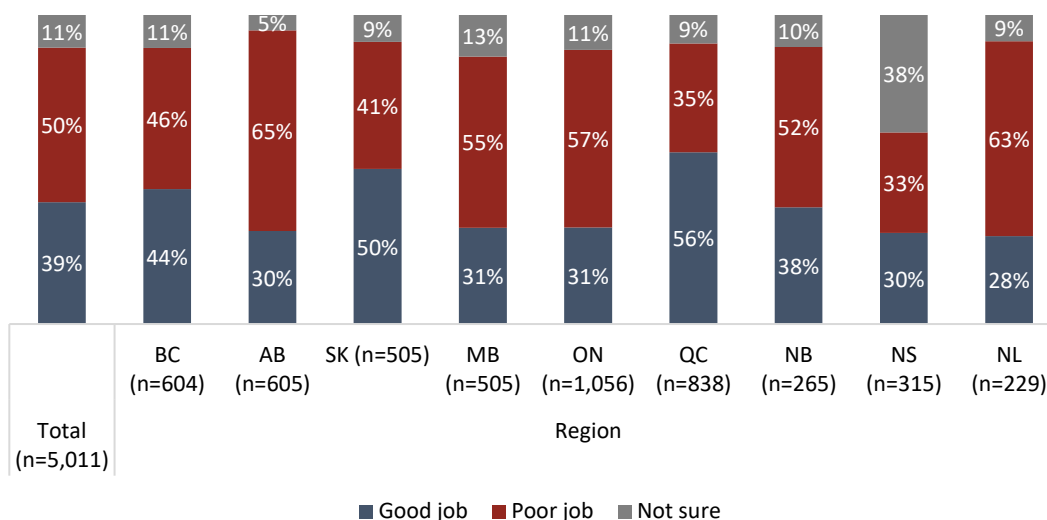
**Praise for economic management in Quebec and Saskatchewan**

Amid pandemic related challenges, only Quebec (56%) and Saskatchewan (50%) residents offer their provincial government majority praise on handling of the economy. Two-thirds in Alberta say the government has done a poor job, while nearly the same number say this in Newfoundland and Labrador.

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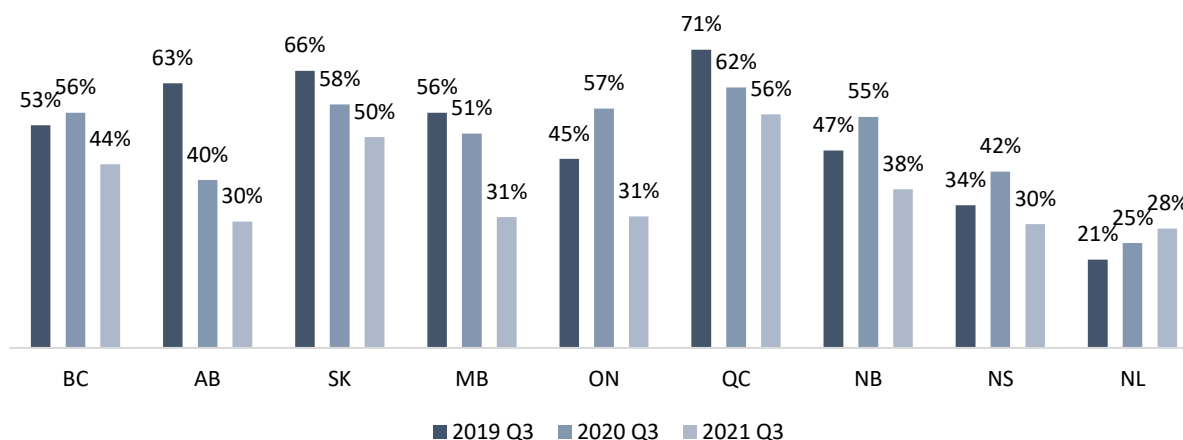
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**Do you think the current government of your province is doing a good job or a poor job in each of the following areas? [The Economy]**



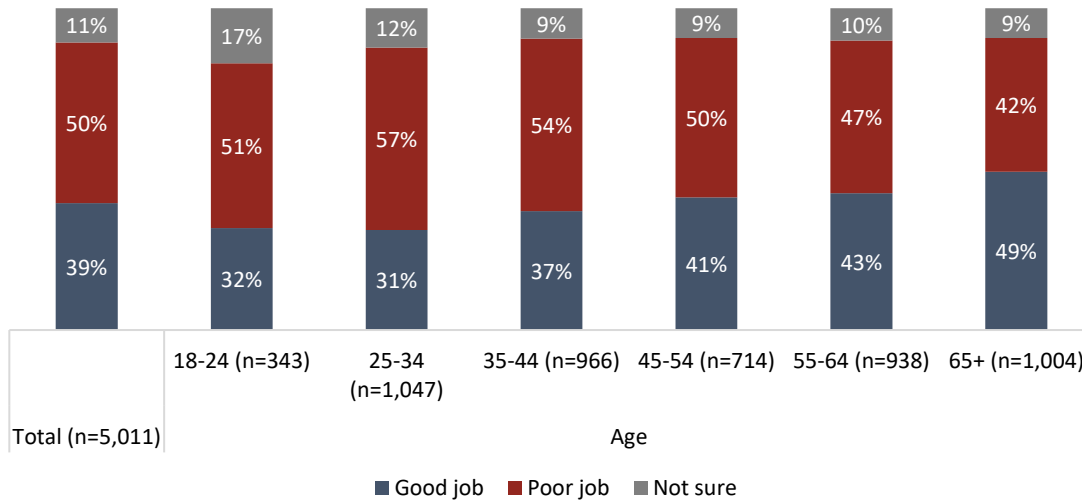
The trend in dissatisfaction is near-ubiquitous across the country. Economic performance assessments have worsened in every region aside from Newfoundland and Labrador, which still garners the worst appraisal in the country with just 28 per cent of residents saying the government is doing a good job:

**Government performance on handling of the provincial economy over time  
(Percentage picking 'good job' shown)**



Importantly, positive views of the economic management of one's province rise with age. Just three-in-ten 18- to-34-year-olds commend their province, rising 17 points to half among those of retirement age, who are less likely to be affected by recent employment shocks:

**Do you think the current government of your province is doing a good job or a poor job in each of the following areas? [The Economy]**



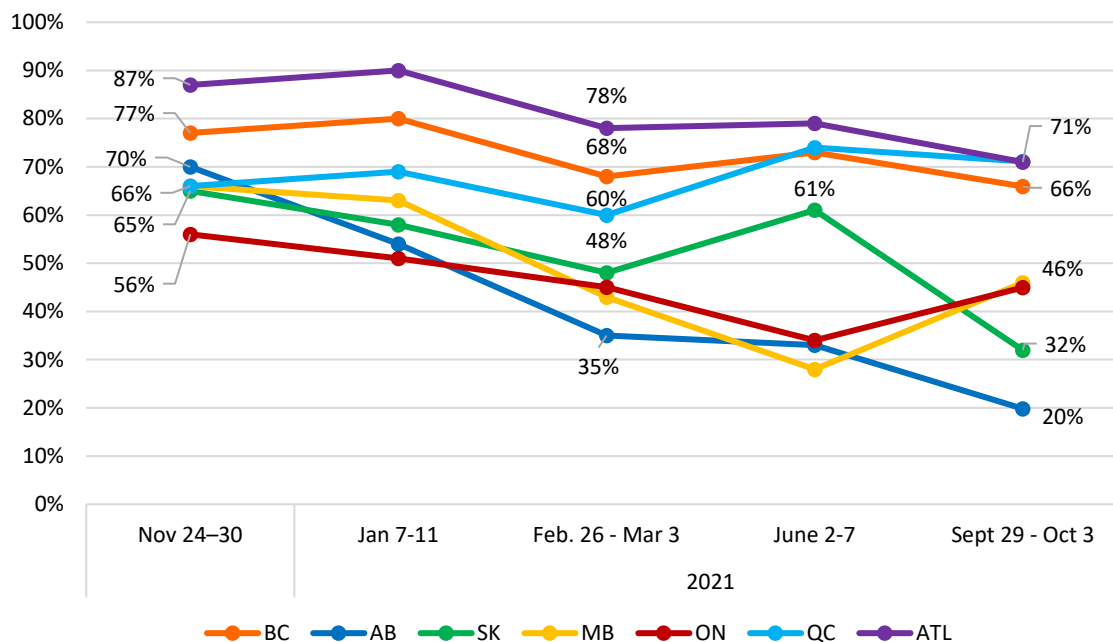
**Regional differences on COVID-19 response**

While Canadians gave nearly all of their provincial leaders kudos and credit for learning on the fly in the early days of this global crisis, there are evidently clearer expectations now from constituents, many of whom have turned to criticism as different outcomes have unfolded in different provinces.

The clearest example of criticism following poor outcomes is in Alberta and Saskatchewan. Both provinces were admittedly late to implement fourth wave restrictions including proof of vaccination programs, and both have seen the highest case and death rates in the country over recent months. Following this, just one-in-three Saskatchewan residents and one-in-five Albertans feel the government has handled COVID-19 well.

While all provinces have seen some attrition in the realm of positive public opinion when it comes to the pandemic, the governments in Alberta and Saskatchewan are enduring among the worst levels thus far. Alberta’s government has reached the lowest level of approval on this issue of any province at any time:

**Percentage of Canadians who believe their government has done a good job handling COVID-19**



**Other core areas of discontent**

Three other issues are particular points of dissatisfaction for constituents. On housing affordability, poverty, and seniors' care, at least half of residents in every region of the country say that their own provincial government is doing a poor job:

Percentage saying provincial government has done a 'poor job' in handling each										
(Unweighted numbers)	Total (n=5,011)	Region								
		BC (n=604)	AB (n=605)	SK (n=505)	MB (n=505)	ON (n=1,056)	QC (n=838)	NB (n=265)	NS (n=315)	NL (n=229)
Housing affordability	75%	85%	60%	54%	69%	83%	67%	81%	71%	69%
Poverty/homelessness	70%	81%	63%	56%	76%	74%	62%	79%	67%	69%
Seniors' care	68%	59%	60%	59%	71%	79%	63%	76%	51%	60%

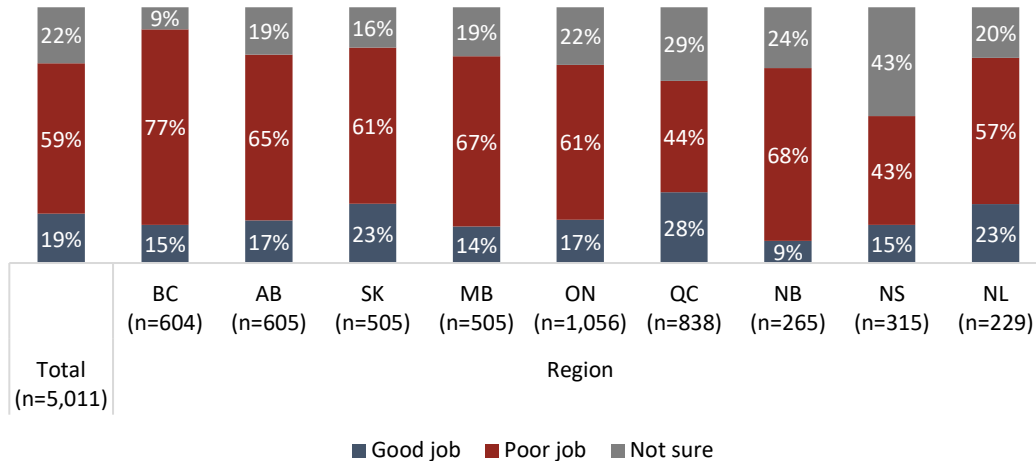
Another issue that bears isolation for analysis is the opioid crisis. Across the country this parallel crisis has taken lives in the shadow of COVID-19 for the past 20 months. Opioid deaths have reached record levels in many parts of the country, and Canadians are overwhelmingly critical of their provincial

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governments' efforts to address the problem. Nationwide, just one-in-five (19%) say their province is doing a good job of handling the crisis, rising to a high in Quebec of just 28 per cent:

**Do you think the current government of your province is doing a good job or a poor job in each of the following areas? [Drug use/addictions]**



**Government Performance Index**

One way to best understand the dissatisfaction that is running rampant in most of the country is using the Angus Reid Institute's Government Performance Index. This measure is a simple average of the responses across all of the issues discussed in the survey. A full list of issues will be shown for each province in the subsequent section.

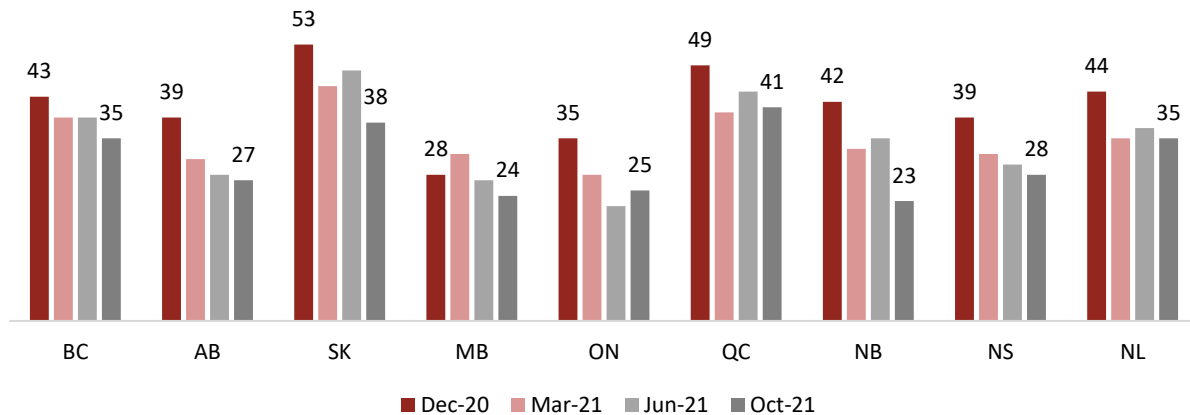
In every region of the country, other than Ontario which already fares among the worst, the percentage of Canadians saying their province is doing a good job has dropped this quarter. In Saskatchewan, the only province to have received a score over 50 in the past year, criticism of the government has ramped up considerably:

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**Government Performance Index**  
(Average number of residents saying their provincial government has done a 'good job' across different issues)



**Part Two: Province-by-province breakdown**

**British Columbia**

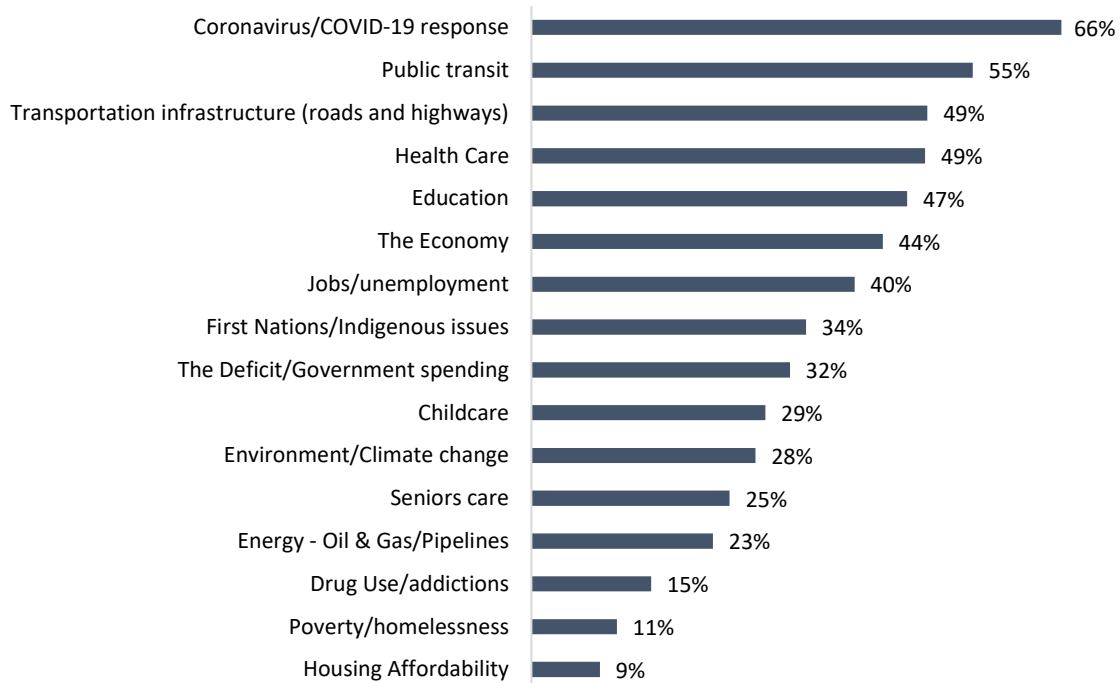
John Horgan's NDP is seen to be continuing to perform well on COVID-19 as assessed by residents of the province. Indeed, two thirds (66%) say the government is doing a good job of handling the pandemic response. While this is among the highest levels in the country, it is nonetheless a drop from three quarters (73%) who [said the same](#) this summer.

The BC NDP also receives relatively strong marks for its stewardship in public transit, which includes a multi-billion dollar investment in the [Surrey Langley SkyTrain](#) extension, which received federal funding commitments this summer. On the negative end of the spectrum, only nine per cent of B.C. residents think the government is doing a good job of addressing housing affordability. Prices [continue to rise](#), despite some government measures intended to help cool the market:

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**Percentage saying provincial government is doing a 'good job' in handling each:  
British Columbia, n=604**

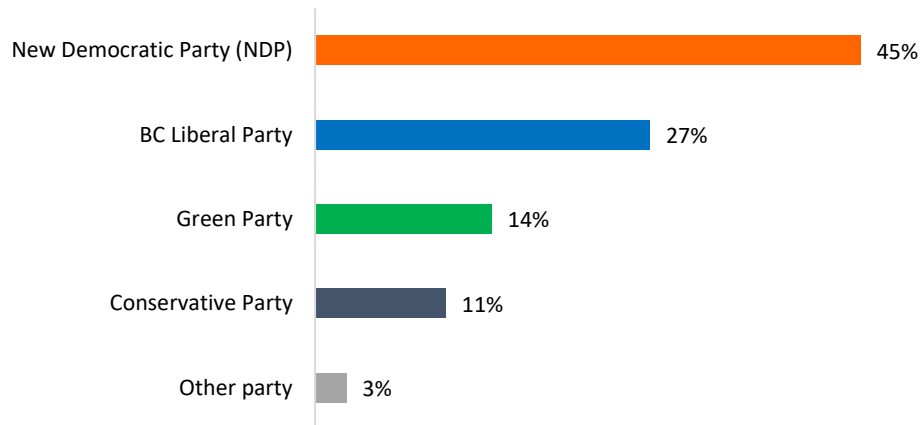


While the gap between the NDP and the opposition BC Liberals continues to shrink, the incumbent party retains a commanding lead. Support for the Green Party has dropped by four points from this June, perhaps a knock-on effect from the chaos that has consumed the federal Green Party in the wake of the national election.

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**Vote intent - British Columbia**  
**Decided voters, n=500**



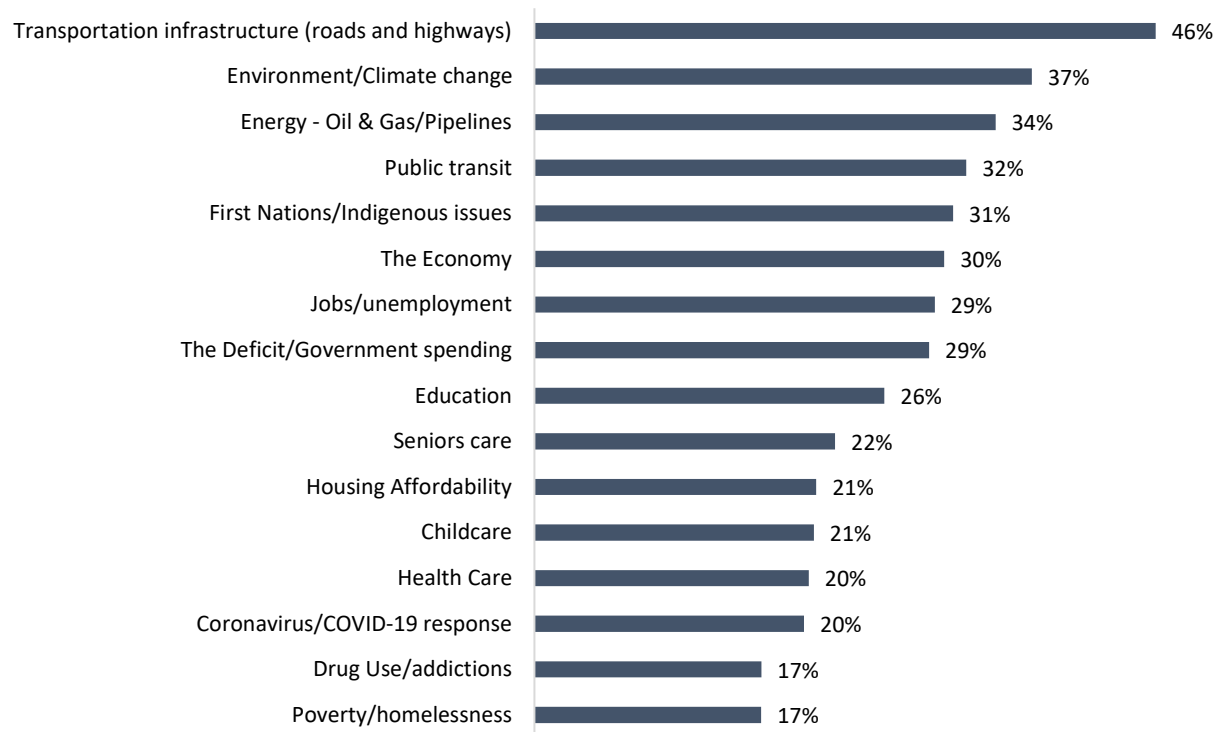
**Alberta**

Alberta's UCP, led by Premier Jason Kenney, does not receive majority commendation on a single issue. The government receives the worst assessment in the country on COVID-19 handling, with just 20 per cent saying Kenney's team has done well. Alberta's challenges have been exacerbated by a [lagging oil and gas sector](#), long the solution to any additional ills the province may be facing. While the unemployment rate has improved throughout the year as Albertans get back to work after pandemic-related restrictions, the province still continues to suffer the worst [employment outlook](#) of non-Atlantic provinces. Few Albertans are happy with the performance of the UCP on economic issues:

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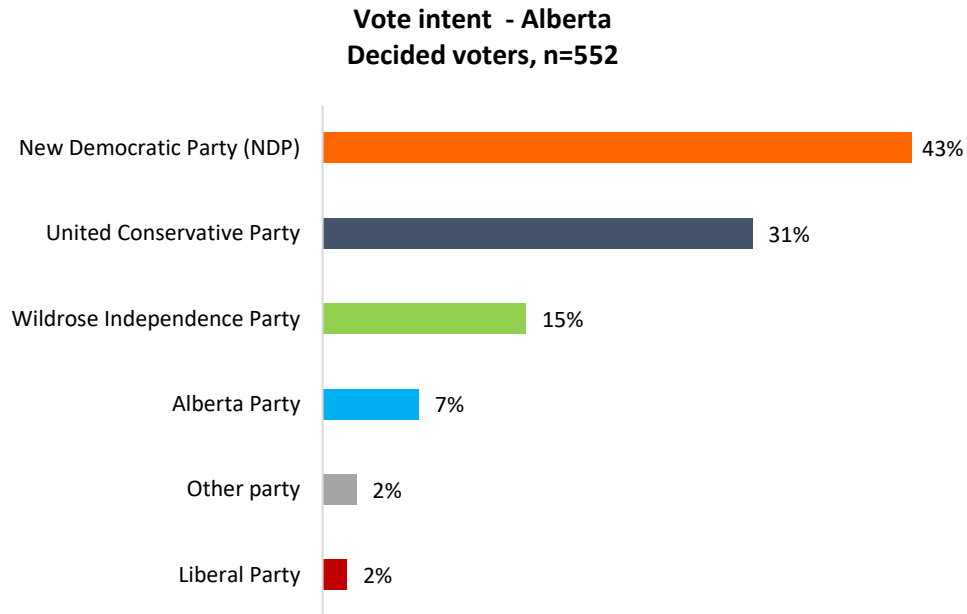
**Percentage saying provincial government is doing a 'good job' in handling each:  
Alberta, n=605**



Amid the tribulations of the current government, former Premier Rachel Notley and her New Democratic Party [continue](#) to hold a double-digit lead in decided voters while just one-in-three (31%) say they will vote for the UCP in the next election, not mandated until spring 2023.

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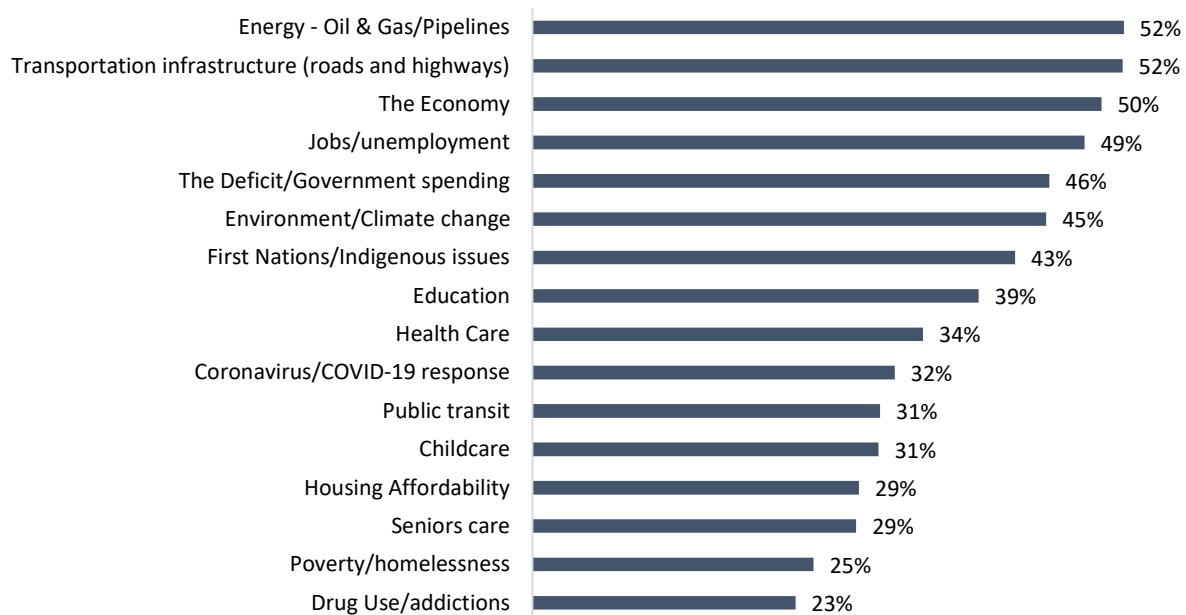
### **Saskatchewan**

While two-thirds of Saskatchewanians (64%) believe Scott Moe and his government are doing a poor job handling the COVID-19 response, this is not the file where the government performs worst. Instead, fewer have positive assessments of the Saskatchewan Party government's handling of drug use, homelessness, seniors care, housing affordability, childcare, and public transit. Those in Saskatchewan offer the best assessments of the government's handling of energy, transportation, and the economy in general.

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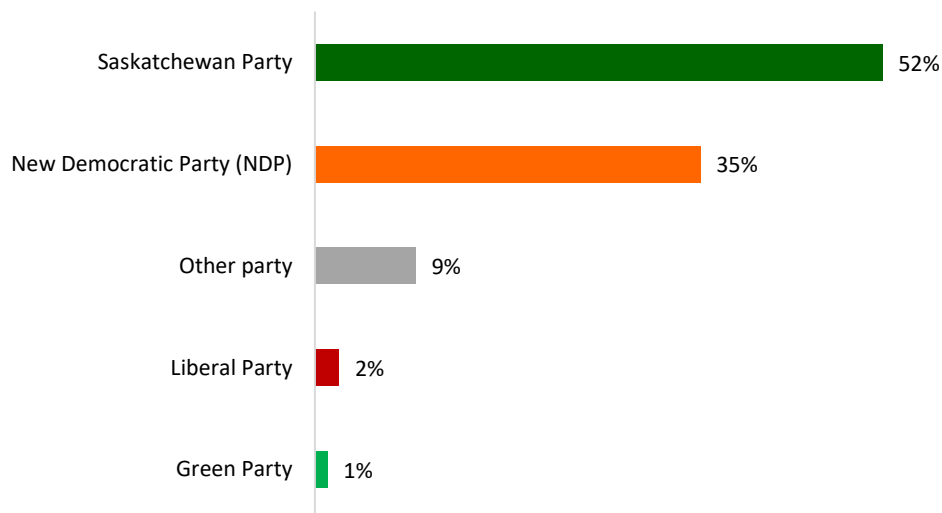
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**Percentage saying provincial government is doing a 'good job' in handling each:  
Saskatchewan, n=505**



Moe's dip in approval does not appear to be souring people on the Saskatchewan Party. Half (52%) intend to support the premier's party in the next election — scheduled for 2024 — while one-in-three (35%) say they will vote NDP. This proportion is [little changed](#) since June:

**Vote Intent - Saskatchewan  
Decided voters, n=440**



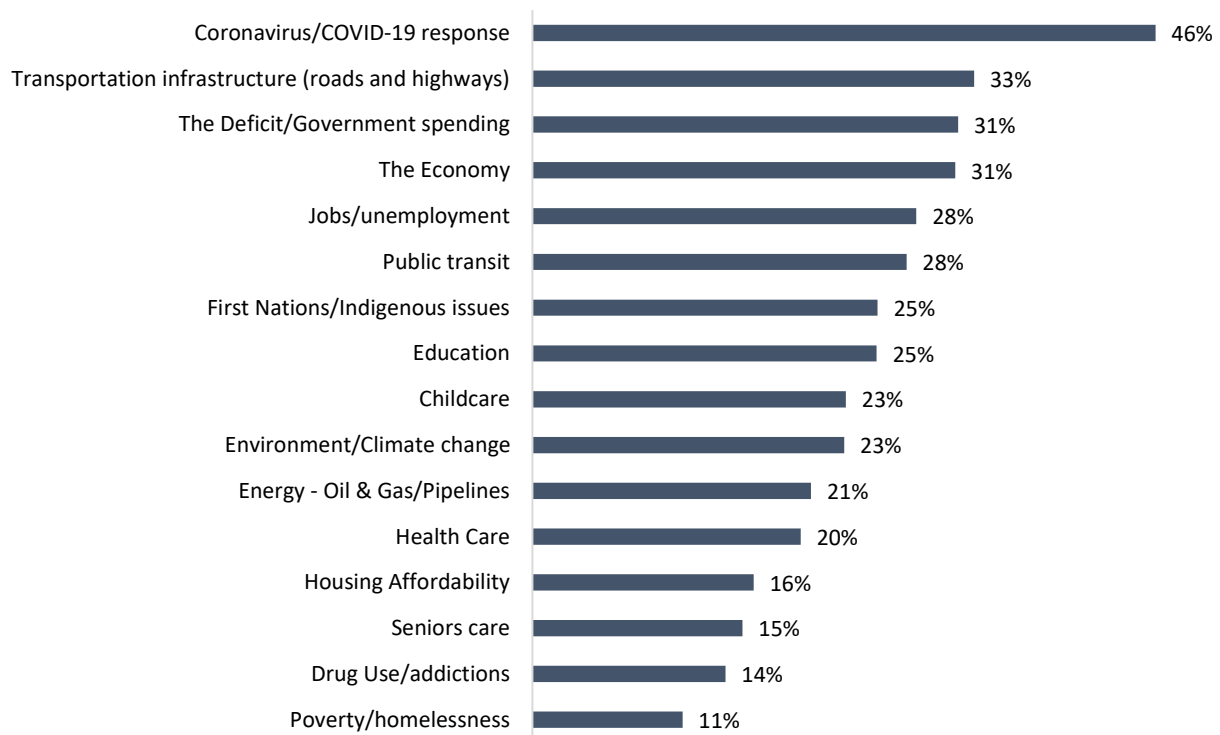
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**Manitoba**

The Progressive Conservative Party of Manitoba will hold its leadership contest on Oct. 30 to decide the next premier. Whether [Shelly Glover](#) or [Heather Stefanson](#) take the helm, they will step into the role with a majority of Manitobans dissatisfied with the government’s handling of every key file in the province. With the exception of COVID-19, approval of the government’s handling of various key issues tops out at 33 per cent.

**Percentage saying provincial government is doing a 'good job' in handling each:  
Manitoba, n=505**

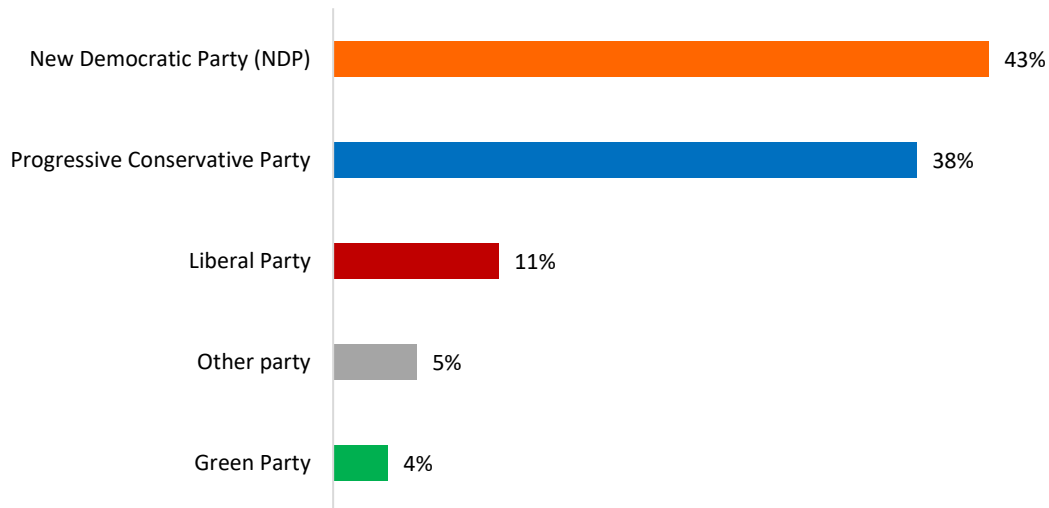


As things stand, whoever ends up leading the PCPM will face an NDP opposition with currently bolstered support in the next election, scheduled to happen Oct. 2023 at the latest. Two-in-five decided voters (43%) say they intend to support the NDP, while slightly fewer (38%) say they will vote PC.

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**Vote Intent - Manitoba**  
**Decided voters, n=435**



**Ontario**

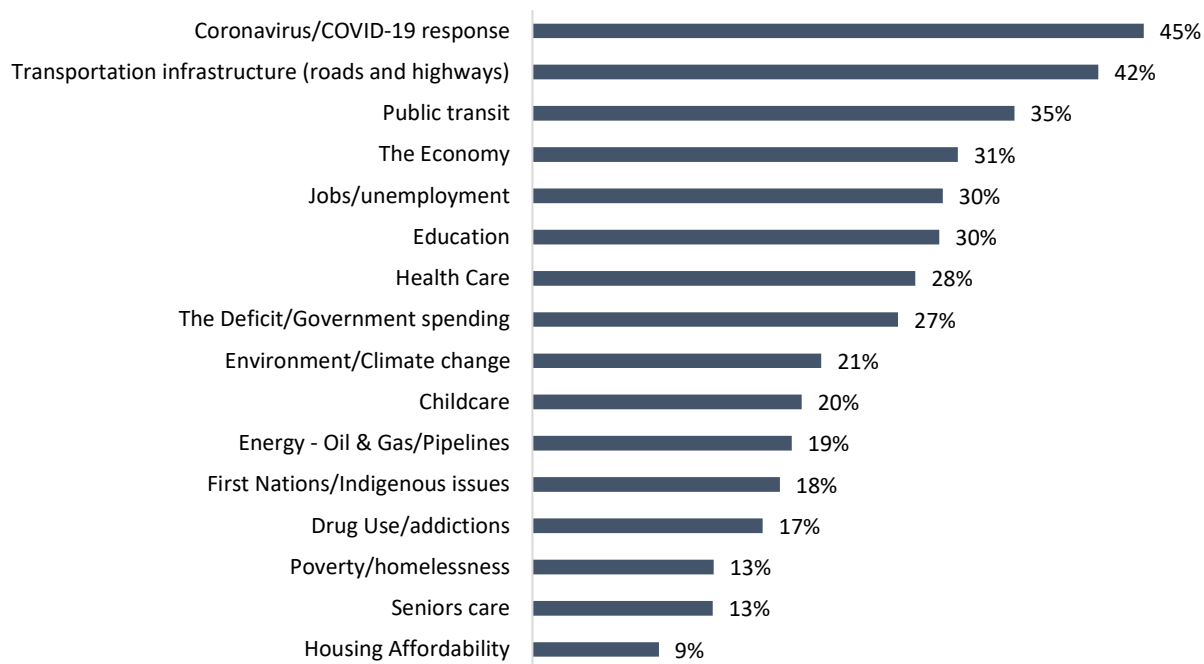
Premier Doug Ford has kept [a low profile](#) in recent months. And while this has appeared to [stabilize his waning personal popularity](#), his government receives little praise on any issue in its purview. Few offer positive assessments of the Ontario government's handling of housing affordability as prices climb to record highs in [the province's largest city](#). Ontarians also give a thumbs down to Ford's handling of seniors' care, this after optometrists withdrew insured services in a funding dispute with the province, leaving millions, including seniors, across the province [without access to eye care](#). Ford [recently stated](#) his government's plan to end all COVID-19 related restrictions by March of next year:

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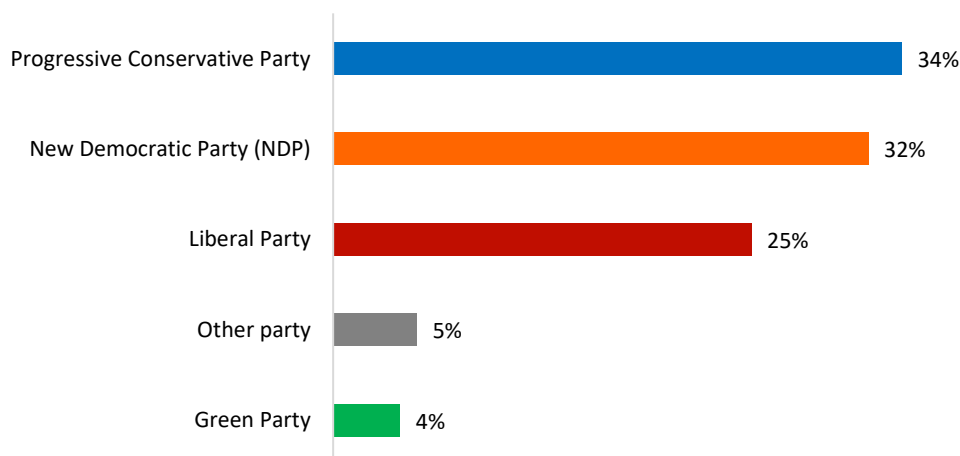


**Percentage saying provincial government is doing a 'good job' in handling each:  
Ontario, n=1,056**



Ford and the PCPO will face a challenge from Andrea Horvath and the NDP in next year's election. The two parties are statistically tied with decided voters, while one-in-four say they will vote for the Liberals and new leader Steven Del Duca.

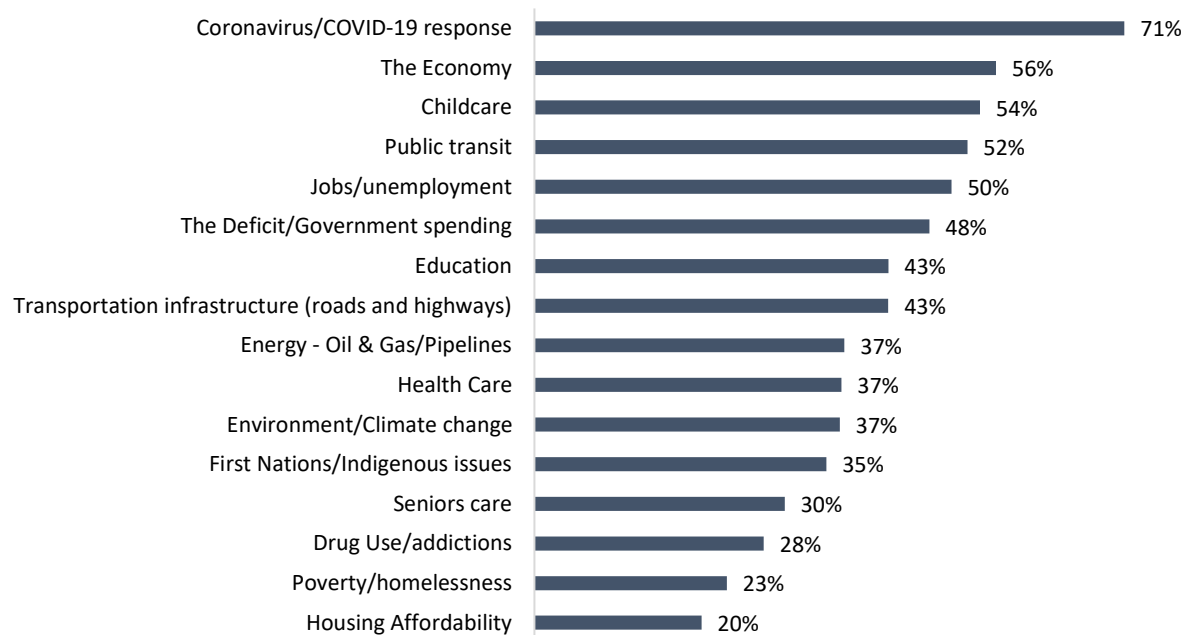
**Vote Intent - Ontario  
Decided voters, n=910**



**Quebec**

The Coalition Avenir Québec receives the highest levels of praise in the country on aggregate. This, led by seven-in-ten (71%) Quebecers saying that the government is doing a good job of handling the COVID-19 response. Economic stewardship and childcare are also areas of strength for François Legault and his party, though even the CAQ are not free from the universal criticism of provincial governments over housing affordability, poverty, and the opioid crisis:

**Percentage saying provincial government is doing a 'good job' in handling each:  
Quebec, n=838**

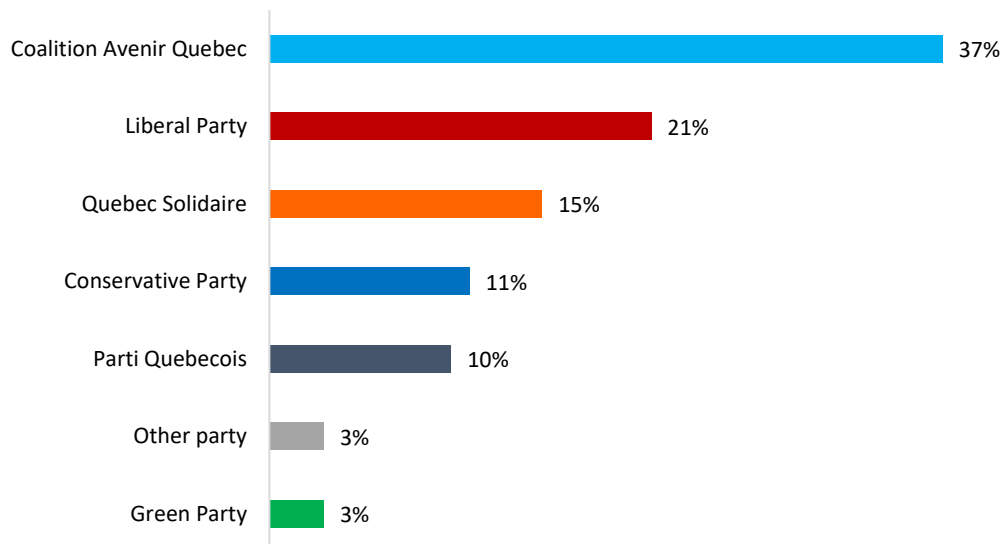


The Coalition Avenir Québec continue to hold a commanding lead ahead of the opposition Liberal Party. Notably this survey was conducted prior to Legault’s controversial decision to prorogue parliament – [a plan opposition parties have decried](#) as “window dressing” for the 2022 election.

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**Vote Intent - Quebec  
Decided voters, n=716**



**New Brunswick**

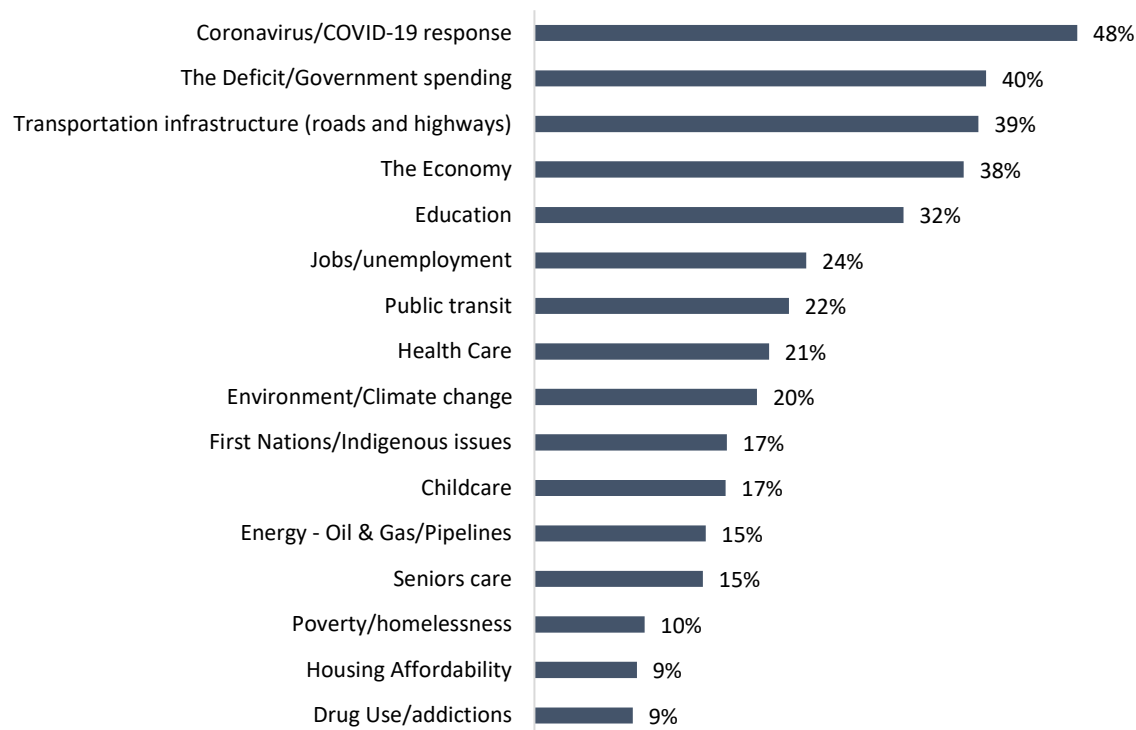
Despite a recent spike of COVID-19 cases, half (48%) of New Brunswickers still say that the government has done a good job managing the pandemic. Paralleling Premier Blaine Higgs' [approval ratings](#), however, this represents a sharp decline from this summer when four-in-five (82%) said Fredericton was handling the pandemic well.

Of note, this is not limited to the pandemic response: there has also been a decline in those who say the government is doing a good job across all other issues surveyed when [compared with June this year](#):

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**Percentage saying provincial government is doing a 'good job' in handling each:  
New Brunswick, n=265**

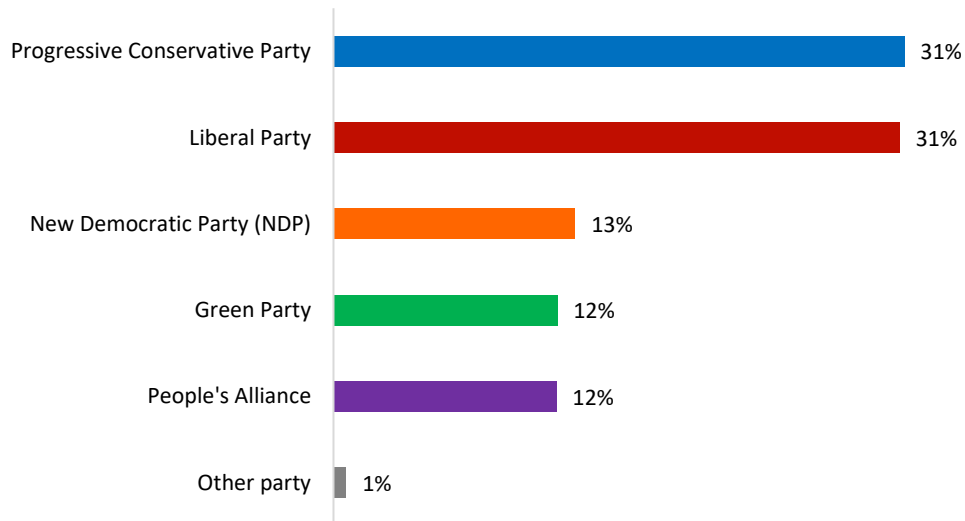


When it comes to the provincial horserace, the lead enjoyed by the incumbent Progressive Conservatives has evaporated while support for the Liberals remains steady. In what may reflect the failure of the federal Green Party to [win back the seat they lost](#) after Fredericton MP Jenica Atwin crossed the aisle to the Liberals, support for the provincial branch of the party has waned while the number intending to vote for the NDP has grown.

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**Vote Intent - New Brunswick**  
**Decided voters, n=265**



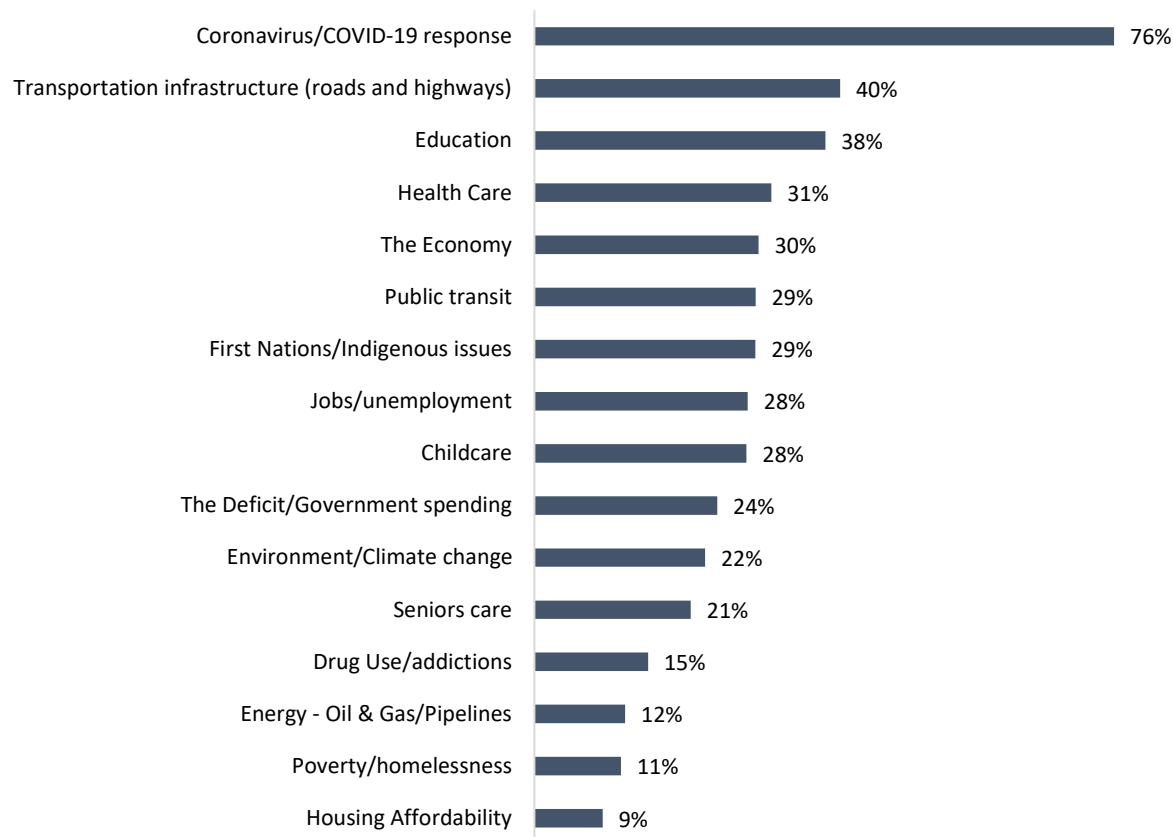
**Nova Scotia**

Tim Houston and his Progressive Conservatives formed a majority government in August. Three-quarters say the Nova Scotia government is handling the pandemic response well, but no other file receives a majority positive assessment. At the bottom of the list is housing affordability, as Nova Scotia has seen a jump in [out-of-province home buyers](#) during the pandemic, adding heat to [the real estate market](#).

**CONTACT:**

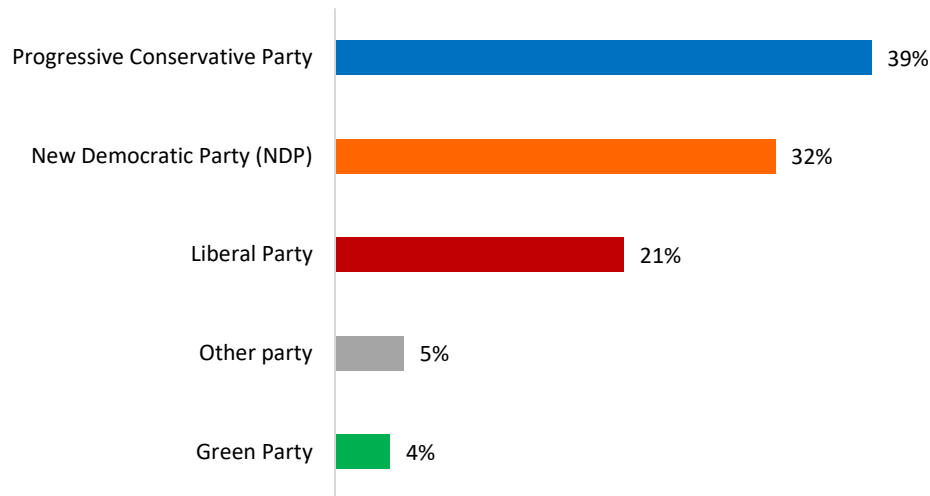
Shachi Kurl, President: 604.908.1693 [shachi.kurl@angusreid.org](mailto:shachi.kurl@angusreid.org) @shachikurl  
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**Percentage saying provincial government is doing a 'good job' in handling each:  
Nova Scotia, n=315**



As mentioned, Nova Scotia's August election saw the defeat of incumbent Premier Iain Rankin and his Liberal Party by Houston and the PCs. Support for the Liberals has declined significantly in the last few months, with just one-in-five (21%) saying they'd vote for the party in the next election, a drop of 16 points from the election two months ago. The NDP appear to have benefitted and now enjoy the support of one-in-three decided voters:

**Vote Intent - Nova Scotia  
Decided voters, n=264**



**Newfoundland and Labrador**

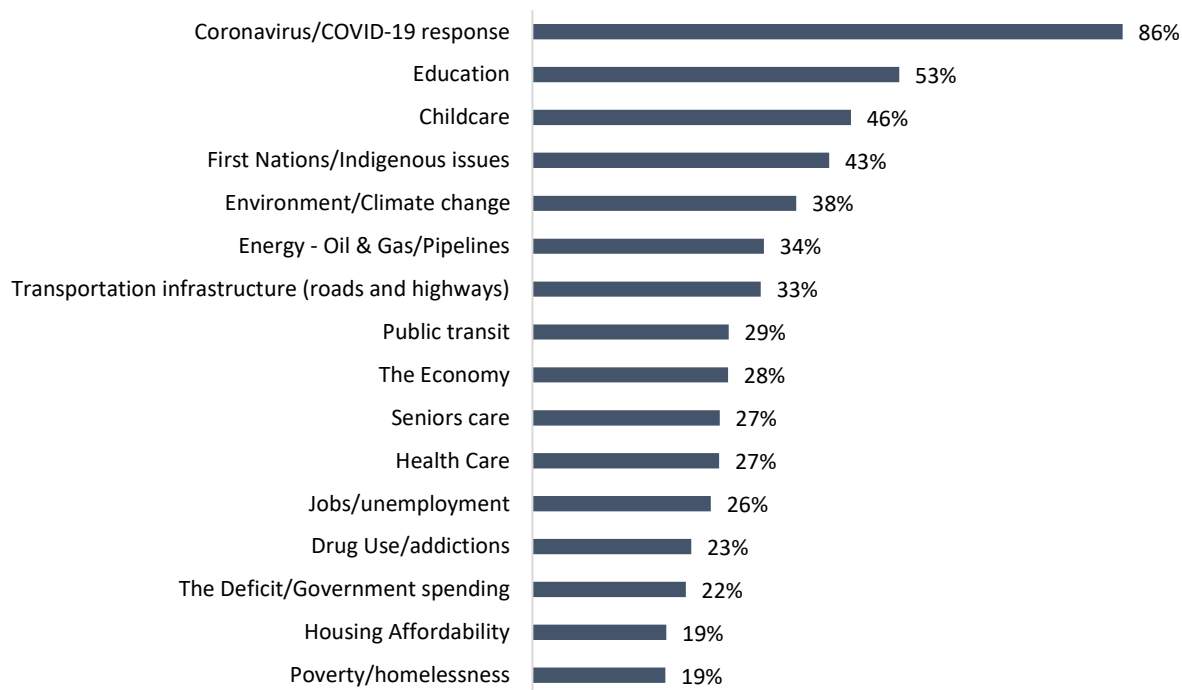
The provincial Liberal government in Newfoundland and Labrador receives top grades for its handling of the pandemic response, with 86 per cent saying the government has done a good job. This in spite of recent clusters of cases which have exacerbated existing shortages of medical professionals in the province.

Respondents are less pleased with how the government has handled the economy with only a quarter (28%) saying that the government had done a good job. The province's unemployment rate remains the highest in the country at 13.1 per cent and the growth forecast the lowest at 2.4% of real GDP.

**CONTACT:**

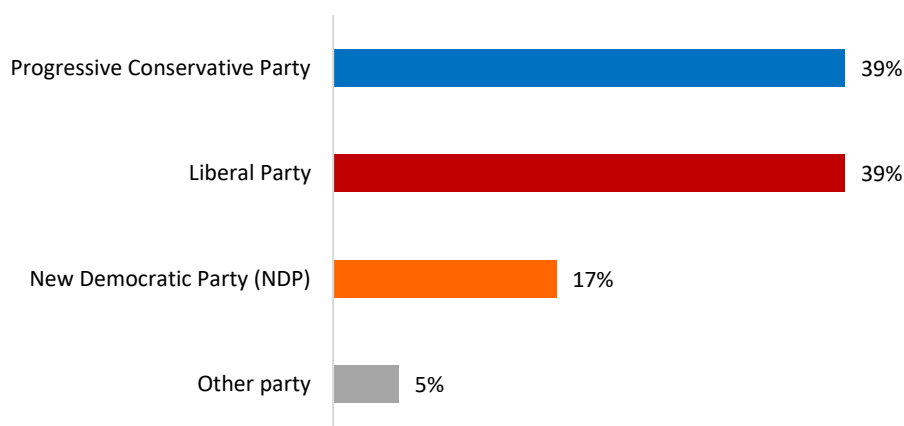
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**Percentage saying provincial government is doing a 'good job' in handling each:  
Newfoundland and Labrador, n=229**



The lead enjoyed by the Liberals over summer has slipped away and they now find themselves locked in a tie with the opposition. Of note, this is not due to increasing support for the Conservatives – [support has remained steady](#) – but instead Liberal voters defecting to the NDP who now sit at 17 per cent.

**Vote Intent - Newfoundland and Labrador  
Decided voters, n=203**



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

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