

Premiers' Performance: Ford continues to fall in approval, Houston rides high on strength of COVID-19 handling

Manitoba's Stefanson garners lowest approval in early months of her tenure

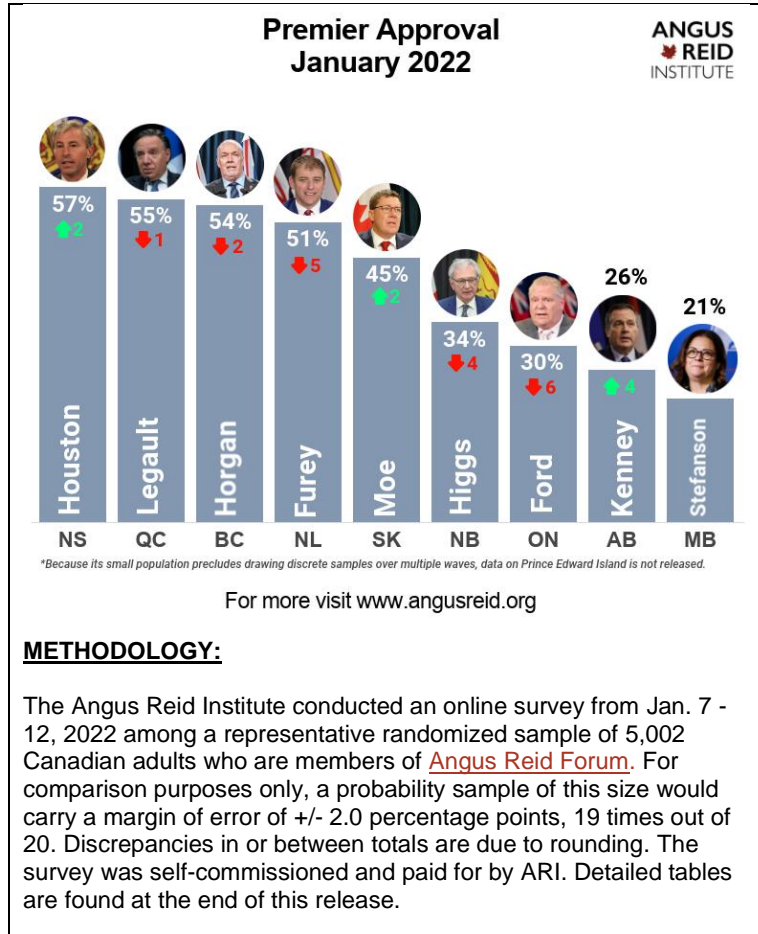
January 17, 2022 – New data from the non-profit Angus Reid Institute finds Ontario Premier Doug Ford down six more points in approval amid frustration in Ontario over his handling of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic.

Fewer than one-in-three (30%) Ontarians approve of him, marking a new low for his tenure at Queen's Park. This, as two-thirds of Ontarians (67%) say he has handled the pandemic poorly. Ford and his Progressive Conservative government are under heavy scrutiny over [recent shortages](#) of rapid tests in the province. Three-quarters of residents say the province has done a poor job in distributing tests where they are needed – the highest number in the country. Ford faces a provincial election in June this year.

Four premiers receive majority approval this quarter – Nova Scotia's Tim Houston, Quebec's François Legault (whose province also has an election scheduled this year), B.C.'s John Horgan, and Newfoundland and Labrador's Andrew Furey. Each is dealing with a unique public opinion landscape, however, when it comes to COVID-19 policy. While Houston and his government receive top marks on testing and vaccination, majorities in each of the other three provinces say their government has done a poor job in supplying the population with sufficient levels of rapid testing.

More Key Findings:

- Despite being overwhelmingly positive about their provincial government's handling of vaccination and testing in Saskatchewan, residents are critical of Premier Scott Moe's pandemic stewardship. Fewer than two-in-five (37%) say he has done a good job himself of handling COVID-19.
- Alberta's Jason Kenney continues to receive criticism over his COVID-19 strategy. Four-in-five (78%) say that he has done a poor job, compared to 19 per cent who offer approval.
- New Manitoba Premier Heather Stefanson garners the lowest level of approval this quarter, with 21 per cent of residents commending her performance.



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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.

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

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B.C. residents approve of Horgan, critical of testing distribution

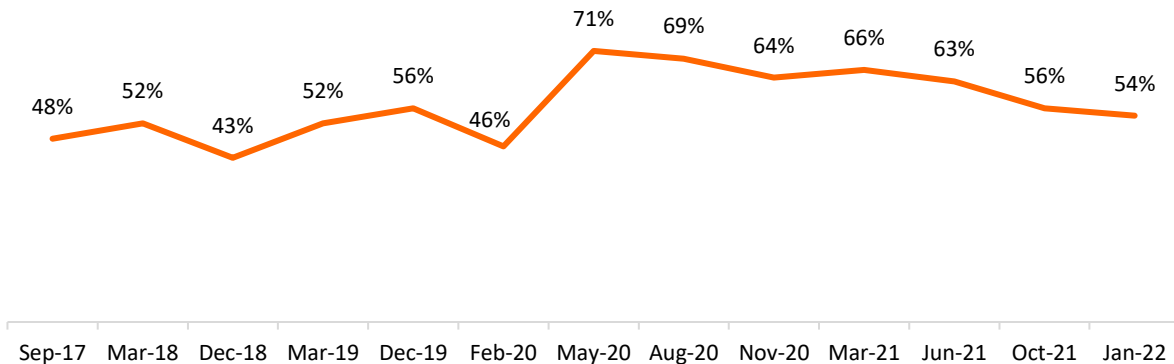
[A summer of fire](#) gave way to a winter of deluges in Canada's westernmost province. While the flow of traffic has resumed on British Columbia's highways after devastating floods, the province will still be under a state of emergency until [at least Jan. 18](#).

Premier John Horgan's approval rating has remained consistent as he guided the province through its weather challenges in the last few months, and the [resurgent spread of COVID-19](#), which has again put the province's health-care system [under immense pressure](#). Slightly more than half (54%) of British Columbians approve of Horgan, a rate consistent with data from the fall.

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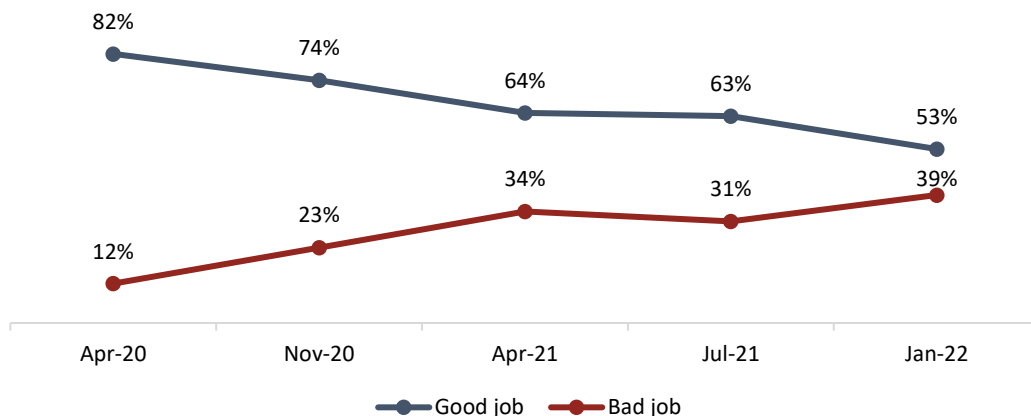
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Approval of British Columbia Premier John Horgan



Still, British Columbians are growing more critical in their assessment of how Horgan has handled the COVID-19 pandemic, as the globe enters a third year of the challenges it has borne. While Horgan still enjoys the approval of half (53%) of British Columbians on the COVID-19 file, his support on this file has consistently declined throughout the course of the pandemic:

British Columbia Premier John Horgan's handling of COVID-19 pandemic

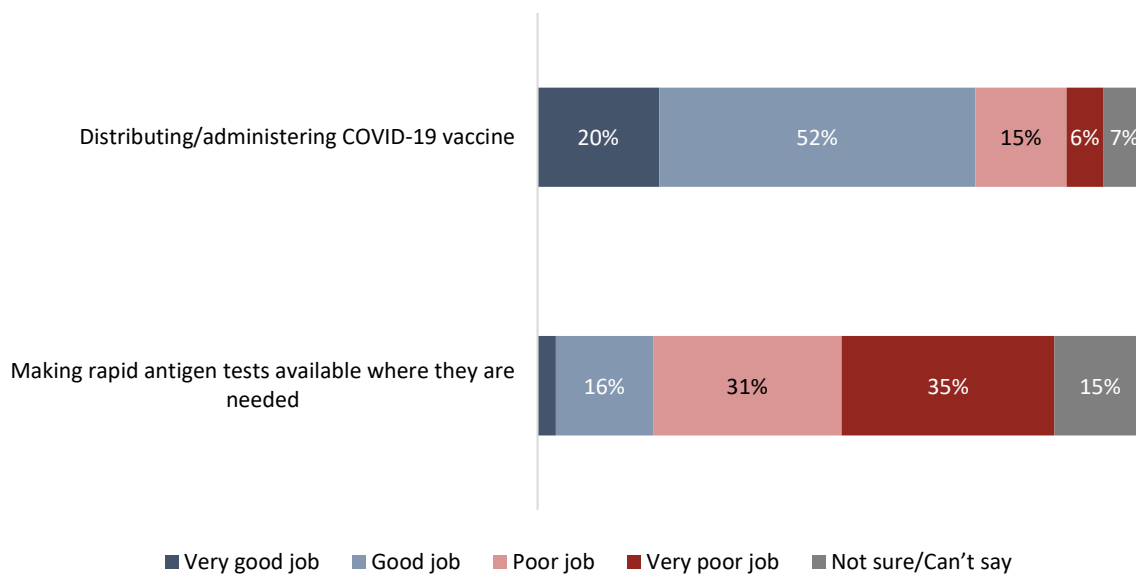


Unlike elsewhere in the country, rapid tests were not handed out widely to the general public in B.C. over the holidays, leading many to wonder what the province has done with [the stockpile](#) it received from the federal government. Health Minister Adrian Dix said most of the tests have been deployed to [“key strategic areas.”](#)

British Columbians are critical in their assessment of the government on this front of the pandemic. Two-thirds (66%) say the province has done a poor job of making rapid tests available where they are needed.

Despite the province being slower than others in the country in [expanding booster shot eligibility](#), overall, B.C. residents say the government has handled itself well in distributing the vaccine. Seven-in-ten (72%) say the NDP government has done a good job getting the population vaccinated, while one-in-five (21%) offer more criticism:

**And, based on what you have read, seen or heard, do you think your province has done a good job or a poor job of...
(British Columbia, n=606)**

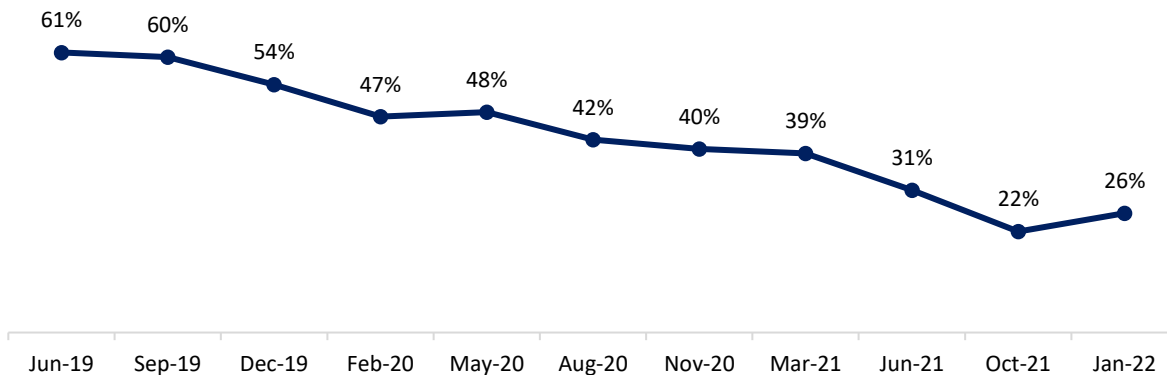


Kenney fares worst in country for COVID-19 handling

Jason Kenney is entering into a critical time during his reign as premier of Alberta. In April, UCP members will hold [a confidence vote on his leadership](#) of the party. If fewer than half of the membership votes for him, he will be forced to step aside. Already, electoral skirmishes are breaking out [at the constituency level](#) between Kenney’s loyalists and his detractors, while former Wildrose leader Brian Jean looks [to break back into the party](#) and challenge for Kenney’s throne.

Meanwhile, Kenney has earned a brief reprieve from his approval’s steady decline since he took over as premier in 2019. In a rare instance, it has increased this quarter – to 26 per cent, from a low of 22 per cent in October:

Approval of Alberta Premier Jason Kenney



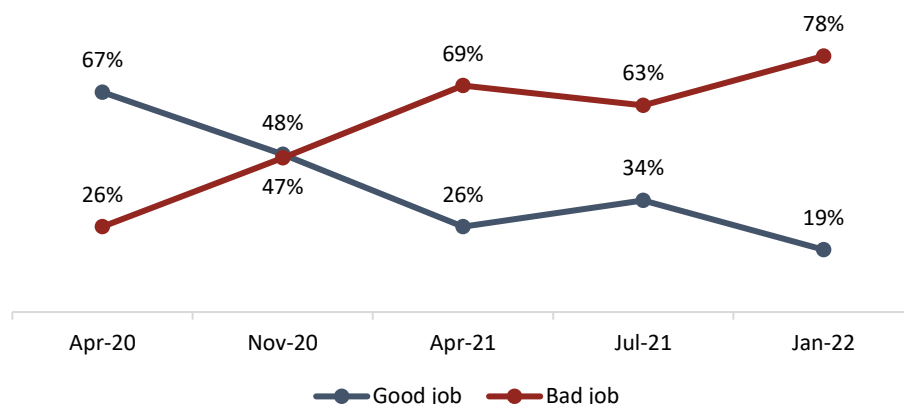
The low approval appears to be reflective of his handling on a key issue: few Albertans offer Kenney a positive assessment of his handling of the ongoing pandemic. In fact, Kenney is given the lowest marks of any premier on the file ([see detailed tables](#)).

Kenney was quick to reopen the province last year for the [“best summer ever.”](#) and then Alberta suffered [one of the worst fourth waves](#) in the country.

Alberta is again experiencing high rates of [COVID-19 infection](#) and has higher deaths from the virus per capita [than B.C. and Ontario](#).

One-in-five (19%) of Albertans say Kenney has done a good job of handling COVID-19, nearly half (48%) say instead he’s done a “very bad job”.

Alberta Premier Jason Kenney's handling of COVID-19 pandemic



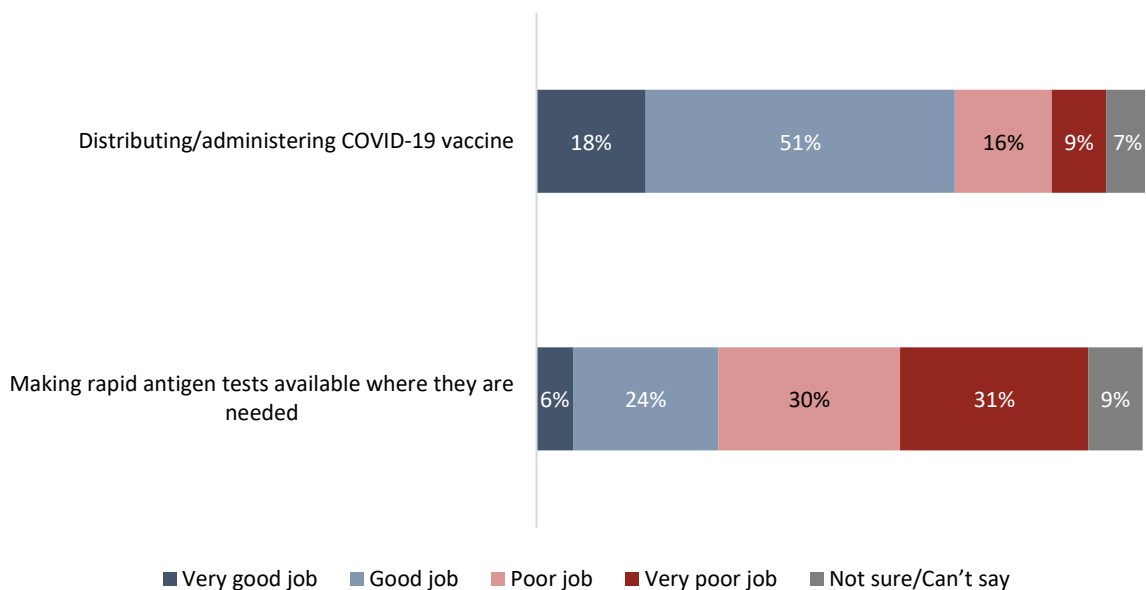
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Albertans are more generous in their appraisal of the provincial government's handling of COVID-19 vaccines. Seven-in-ten (69%) say Kenney's UCP government has done a good job distributing vaccines, though across the country, Alberta bests only Ontario on that matter ([see detailed tables](#)).

Fewer Albertans are happy with the distribution of rapid tests. Three-in-ten (30%) say the government has done a good job making RATs available after Albertans [quickly depleted](#) the initial shipment of tests – [distributed](#) to pharmacies in Edmonton, Red Deer and Calgary and government sites elsewhere in the province – over the holidays. Few Albertans are happy with the disbursement of the tests, despite more tests being available to the general public than many [other provinces](#).

**And, based on what you have read, seen or heard, do you think your province has done a good job or a poor job of...
(Alberta, n=611)**



Saskatchewan government gets high praise, Moe more criticism

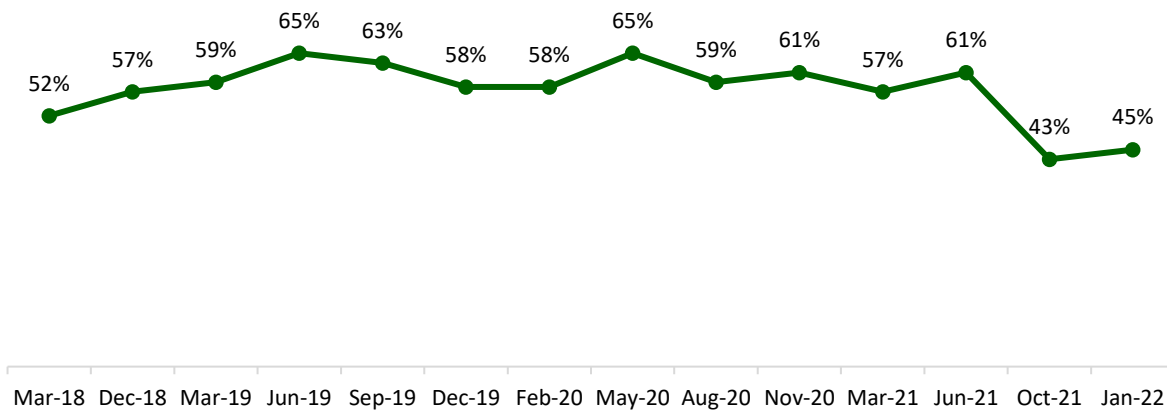
Like the rest of the country, Saskatchewan is dealing with record numbers of infections of COVID-19 due to the highly contagious Omicron variant. Unlike the rest of the country, however, Saskatchewan has [not introduced](#) indoor gathering limits or capacity restrictions. The lack of public health measures may be working against Premier Scott Moe, who himself [tested positive](#) last week. Saskatchewan was one of two provinces where [a plurality of residents](#) want stricter COVID-19 restrictions.

For two straight quarters, fewer than half of Saskatchewanians approve of Moe, after he enjoyed majority approval for previous years in his tenure:

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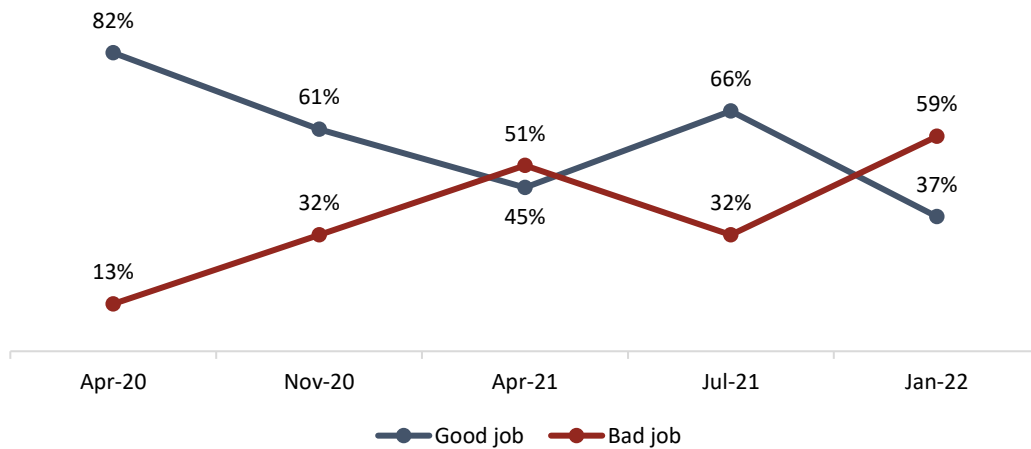
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Approval of Saskatchewan Premier Scott Moe



Meanwhile, perceptions of Moe’s handling of the COVID-19 pandemic have declined to a new low. Two-in-five (37%) say he has done a good job handling the pandemic, a steep decline from the two-thirds who said so in July:

Saskatchewan Premier Scott Moe’s handling of COVID-19 pandemic

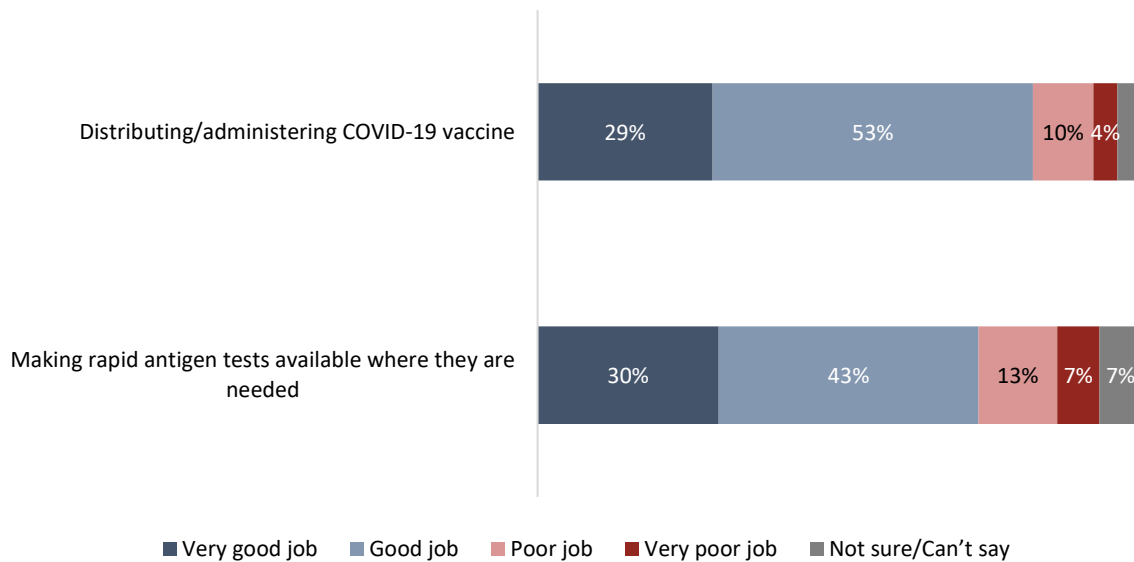


Saskatchewanians are much more positive when it comes to how well Moe’s Saskatchewan Party government has been doing with a few specific aspects of the pandemic: distributing the vaccine and rapid tests. Seven-in-ten (72%) say the government has done well getting rapid tests to where they are needed. Unlike many other provinces, Saskatchewan has not experienced a shortage of the tests. In fact, the province’s residents have been sending them to friends and family across the country.

The provincial government, too, receives a thumbs-up from most residents on its handling of the COVID-19 vaccine rollout. Four-in-five (81%) say the government has done well getting jabs into the arms of

people across the province, this despite Saskatchewan having the second lowest vaccination rate of any province:

**And, based on what you have read, seen or heard, do you think your province has done a good job or a poor job of...
(Saskatchewan, n=474)**



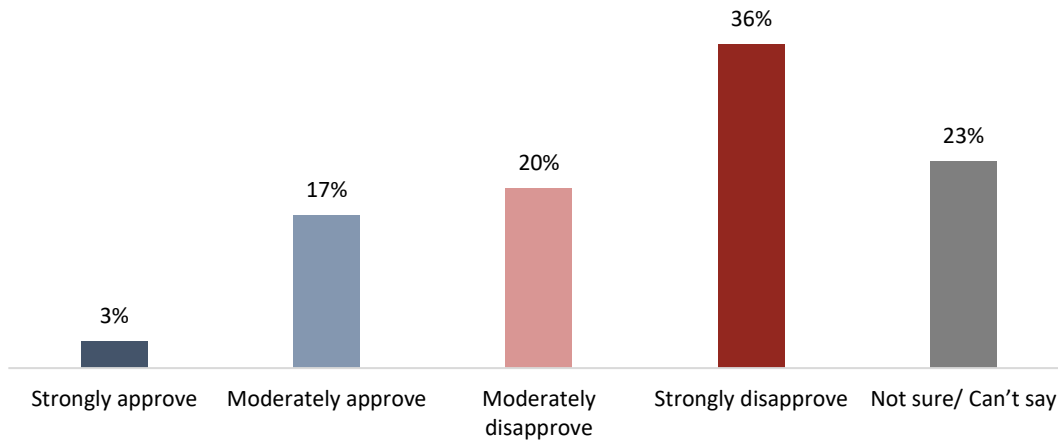
Newcomer Stefanson faces uphill climb in Manitoba

The early returns from Manitobans on new Premier Heather Stefanson are not positive. More than half (56%) say they disapprove of her less than three months into her stint as premier, and fewer offer positive assessments (21%) than who offer none at all (23%):

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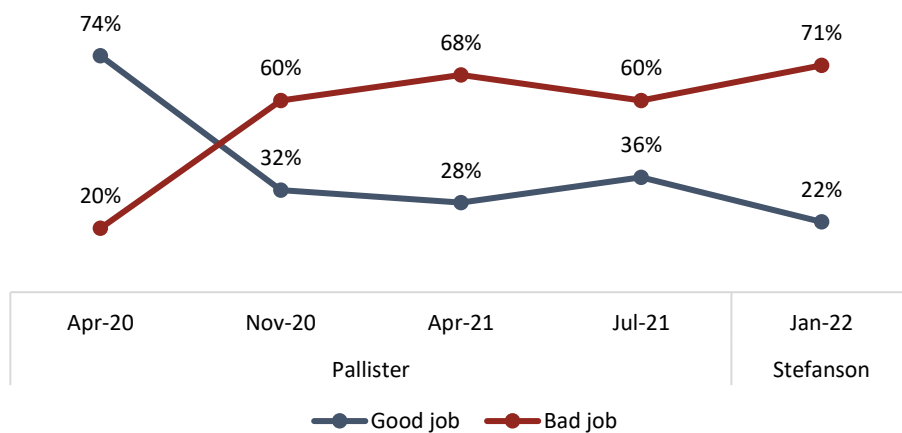
**Approval of Manitoba Premier Heather Stefanson
(Manitoba, n=482)**



Stefanson inherited a government viewed by constituents as doing a poor job of handling every key file in October. One-in-five (22%) say she's done a good job of handling the pandemic, a number lower than any assessment offered to her predecessor Brian Pallister.

Two-in-five Manitobans have said they want more restrictions, while Stefanson has told the province to "learn to live with the virus" as the province experiences record case numbers.

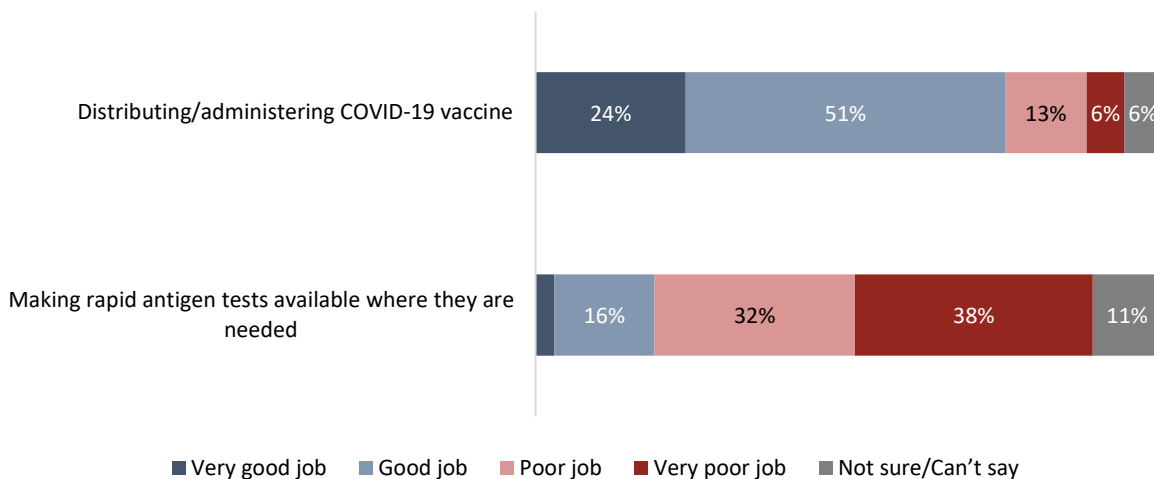
Manitoba premiers' handling of COVID-19 pandemic



In the province, PCR testing hit capacity over the holidays and health workers sent Manitobans home with rapid tests instead. Much like B.C., there has been no widespread public distribution of rapid tests. Instead, Manitoba has targeted them towards critical workers.

The strategy is receiving a negative grade from most Manitoba residents. Seven-in-ten (70%) say the province has done a bad job getting the rapid tests to where they are needed. Manitobans are much happier with the vaccine rollout, however – three-quarters (75%) say the provincial government has done well on that file:

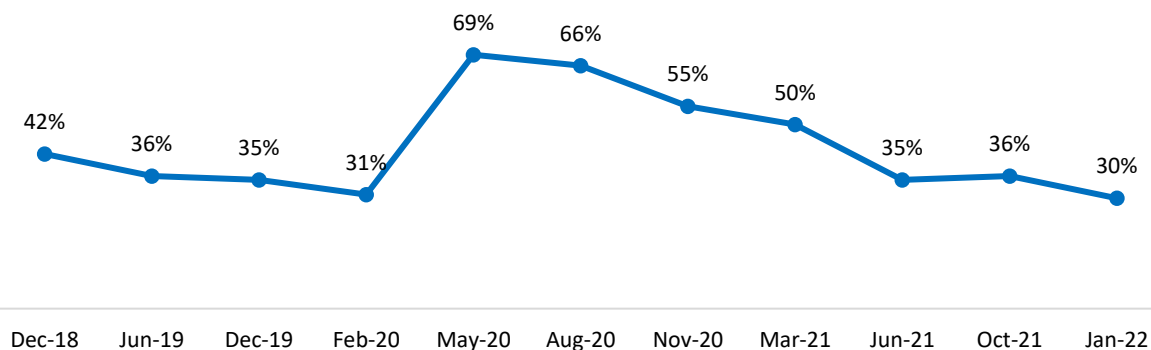
**And, based on what you have read, seen or heard, do you think your province has done a good job or a poor job of...
(Manitoba, n=482)**



Ford's personal approval drops, pandemic policy panned

Premier Doug Ford begins an election year at an all-time low for his approval. Three-in-ten (30%) of Ontarians offer a positive assessment of Ford, matching the nadir of his approval seen before the pandemic:

Approval of Ontario Premier Doug Ford



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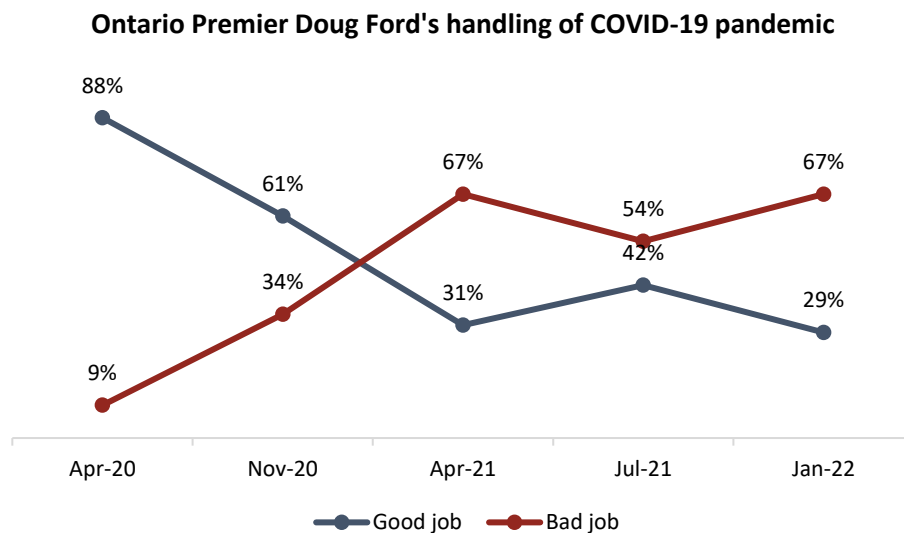
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Ontario delayed the reopening of schools by two weeks after the winter break, continuing a pattern of closures that are wearing on the province's parents. Children in Ontario have spent [more time in online school](#) throughout the pandemic than other students across the country, as parents express a desire for [a more balanced approach](#) leaning towards keeping schools open for in-class learning.

Related: [Parents stress balance of physical and mental health for children, lean toward keeping schools open](#)

Meanwhile, [business owners and workers](#) are upset with renewed restrictions on indoor dining, gyms, theatres and large events, and health-care workers are dealing with [surging hospitalizations](#) once again.

All of this likely influences the negative assessment Ontarians offer Ford on his handling of the pandemic. Three-in-ten (29%) say he has done well on his approach to COVID-19, a decline from the two-in-five (42%) who said so in July:

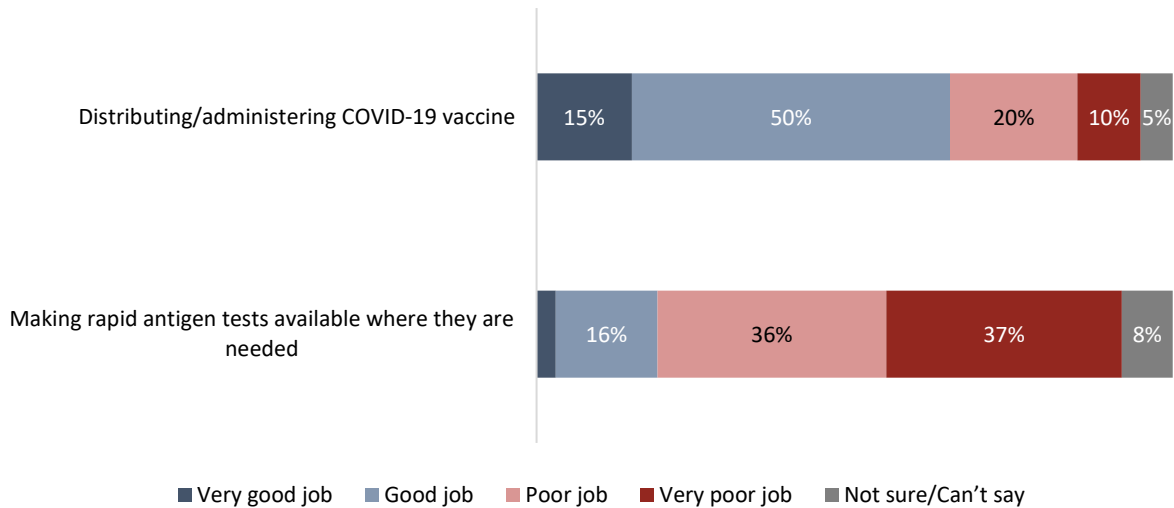


While most Ontarians are happy with how the vaccination effort has gone in the province – two-thirds (65%) say the provincial government has done well distributing COVID-19 vaccines – few are satisfied with the distribution of rapid tests. Some have been handed out to the general public – attracting lineups of [thousands of people](#) in some cases – but [more](#) have been distributed to high risk settings. One-in-five (19%) are supportive of the PCPO government's strategy so far, but many more (73%) say the province has done a bad job getting the tests to where they need to go:

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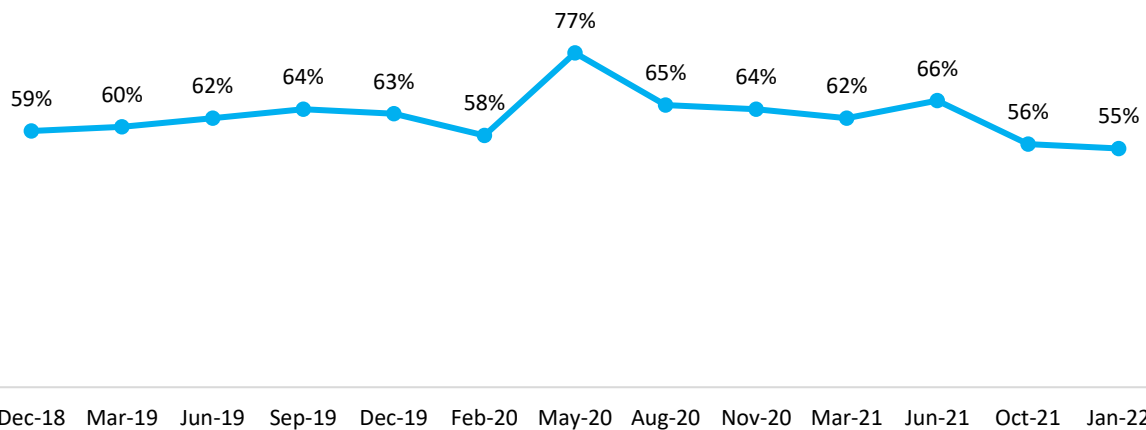
**And, based on what you have read, seen or heard, do you think your province has done a good job or a poor job of...
(Ontario, n=1,081)**



Quebecers critical of testing, supportive of Legault

Despite reaching a new personal low in approval this quarter, François Legault still enjoys praise from the majority of Quebecers. Legault has garnered considerable national attention recently for his province’s [plan to tax](#) those who remain unvaccinated. However, most responses to this survey were gathered prior to this announcement. Legault’s personal standing has remained consistent in recent months as he, much like Ford, enters an election year.

Approval of Quebec Premier François Legault

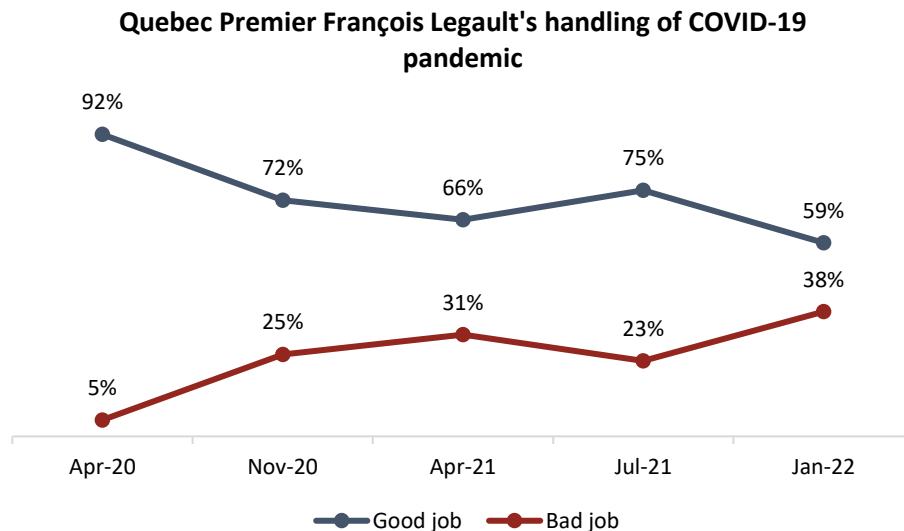


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Quebec endured some of the strictest public health restrictions in the country: a curfew, [to be lifted today](#), which barred Quebecers from leaving their home after 10 p.m. starting the day before New Year's Eve. Bars, gyms, and indoor dining were also closed as cases skyrocketed over the holidays.

Quebecers have grown much more critical of Legault's COVID-19 handling over the course of the pandemic. Three-in-five (59%) say he is doing a good job, but this represents a 16-point decline compared to the summer.



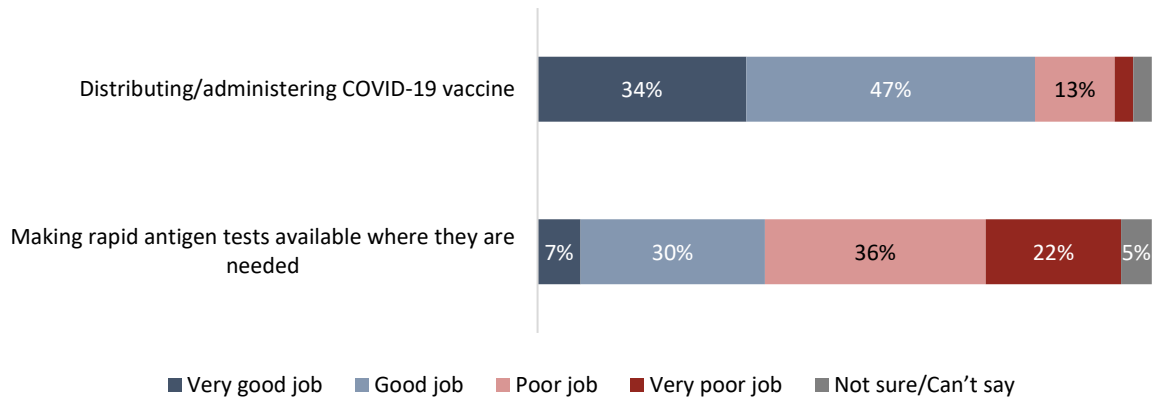
Most Quebec residents are satisfied with the province's vaccination efforts; four-in-five (80%) say the province has done a good job on that front.

Residents are more dissatisfied with the distribution of rapid tests, as they faced [long queues](#) to snag the initial handout of testing kits over the holidays. Two-in-five (37%) say the provincial government has done well to allocate the rapid tests, more (57%) give the province a thumbs-down:

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**And, based on what you have read, seen or heard, do you think your province has done a good job or a poor job of...
(Quebec, n=867)**

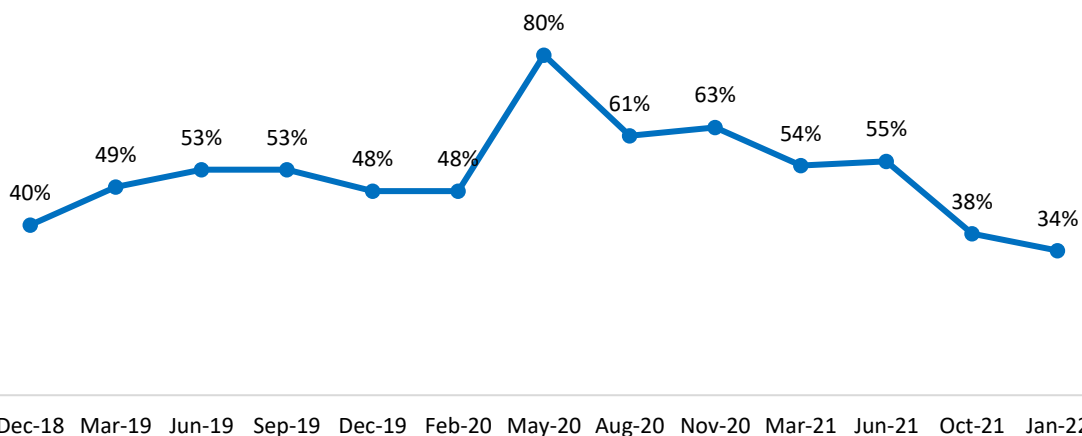


Higgs approval continues to diminish in New Brunswick

New Brunswick has struggled with the infectious Omicron variant of COVID-19, instituting a [16-day](#) lockdown on Friday to control the spread. The sudden stringent measures follow record high cases which blew past the province's [December modelling](#), projections which failed to [account for Omicron's virality](#).

Premier Blaine Higgs' approval appears to be suffering as his province becomes a cautionary tale after avoiding widespread infection earlier in the pandemic. One-third (34%) of New Brunswickers offer positive assessments of the premier, his lowest total since taking office over three years ago:

Approval of New Brunswick Premier Blaine Higgs

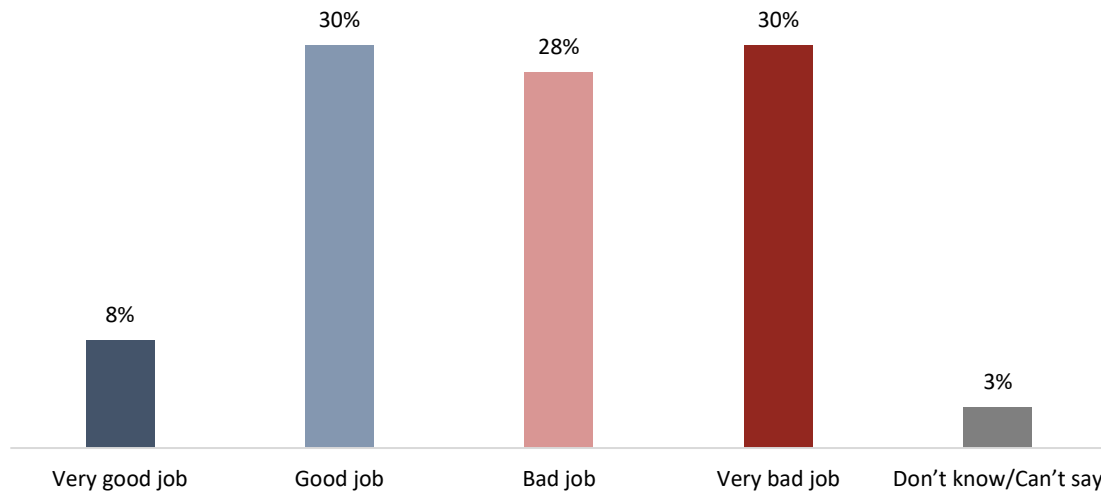


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As the province enters a lockdown to prevent the hospitals from being overwhelmed with COVID-19 cases, three-in-five (58%) say Higgs has done a bad job handling the pandemic. Higgs is the only premier in the Atlantic provinces where negative grades outweigh positive ones on this file ([see detailed tables](#)).

**New Brunswick Premier Blaine Higgs' handling of the COVID-19 pandemic
(New Brunswick, n=256)**



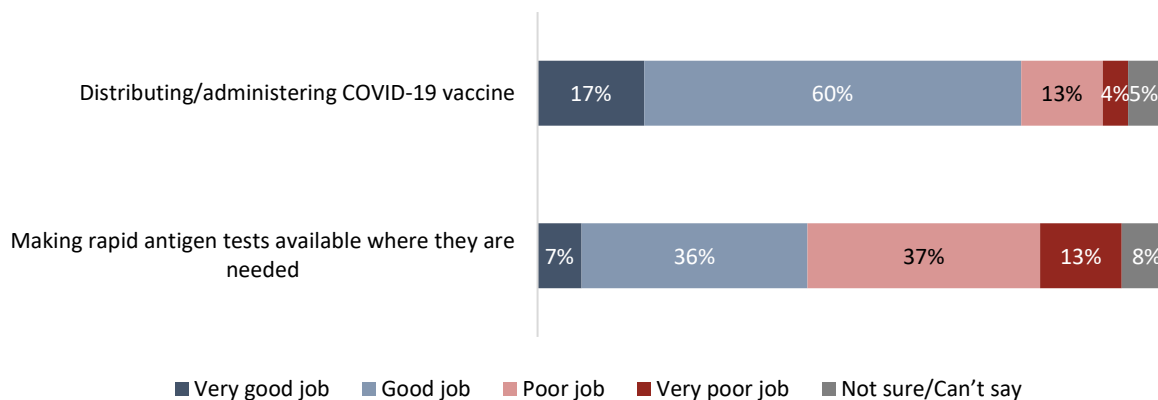
The provincial government, overall, receives much higher praise on its handling of COVID-19 vaccines. Four-in-five (78%) say the New Brunswick PC government has done well administering doses. On the rapid tests file, New Brunswickers are more negative in their evaluation.

Initially, rapid tests were freely available at [pop-up sites](#) throughout the province. The province [changed the rules](#) after the holidays, limiting them to only people between the ages of two to 49 with symptoms and only by appointment. Two-in-five (42%) still say New Brunswick has done a good job distributing rapid tests to where they are needed; half (50%) say instead it has done a poor job:

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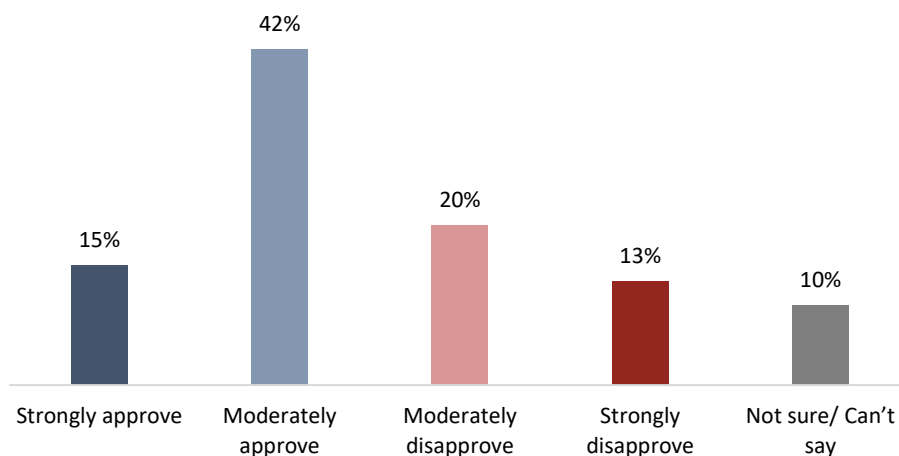
**And, based on what you have read, seen or heard, do you think your province has done a good job or a poor job of...
(New Brunswick, n=256)**



Houston and his government receive high marks in Nova Scotia

Things are much rosier next door in Nova Scotia, where Premier Tim Houston – approaching the six-month mark of his tenure – enjoys approval from three-in-five (57%) of Nova Scotians, the highest mark in the country:

**Approval of Nova Scotia Premier Tim Houston
(Nova Scotia, n=385)**



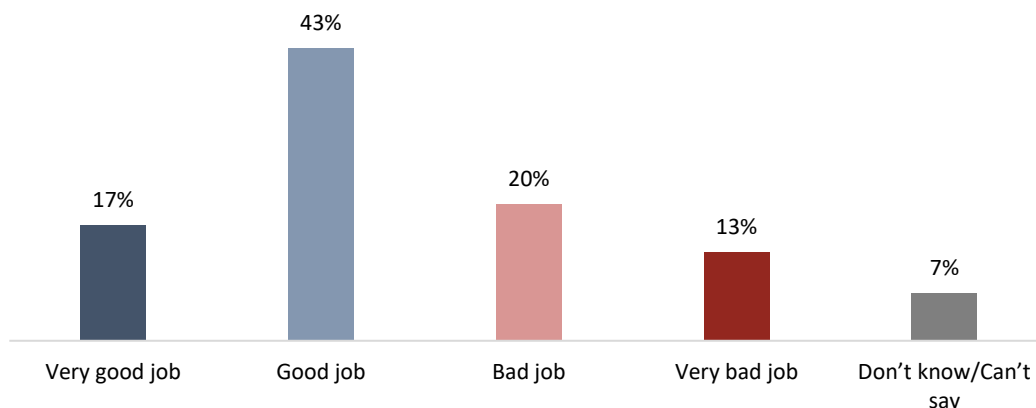
Nova Scotia, too, is suffering from record cases of COVID-19, and the [province's top doctor](#) warned of the pressures on the health-care system caused by the Omicron variant. The province [tightened restrictions](#) heading into the holidays, and Houston indicated the government won't hesitate to take [further steps as necessary](#).

Most Nova Scotians are happy with what they've seen so far from Houston on the pandemic. Three-in-five (60%) say he's done a good job of handling COVID-19 nearly double the number (33%) who instead say he's done a bad job:

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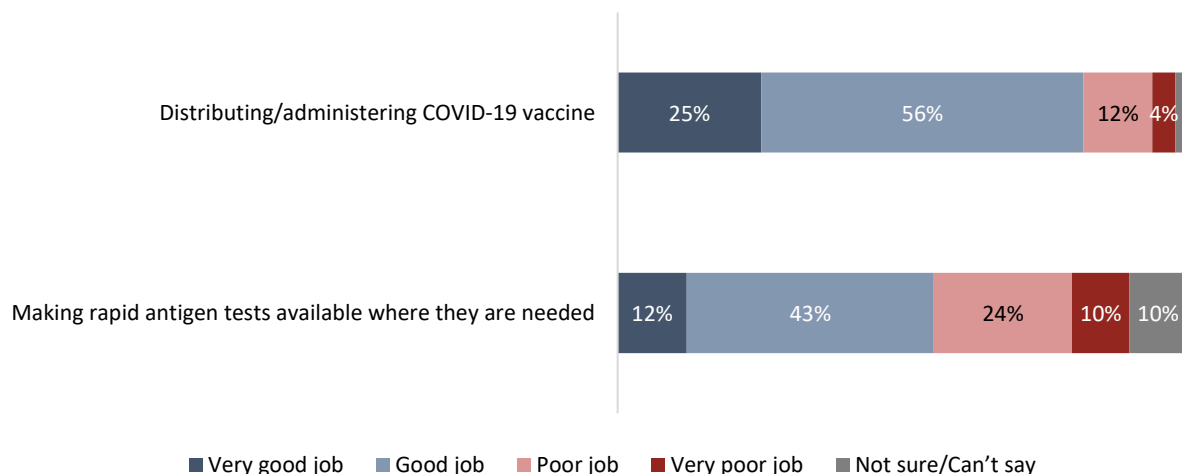
**Nova Scotia Premier Tim Houston's handling of the COVID-19 pandemic
(Nova Scotia, n=385)**



Houston's provincial government is also only one of two in the country which has more positive evaluations than negative when it comes to the distribution of rapid tests ([see detailed tables](#)). More than half (56%) say Nova Scotia has done well on that file. More than one million rapid tests were distributed across the province ahead of the holidays in December before the province [switched](#) to handing them out by appointment only to those with symptoms.

Most Nova Scotians are also satisfied with the continuing rollout of COVID-19 vaccines. Four-in-five (80%) say the government has done a good job inoculating residents:

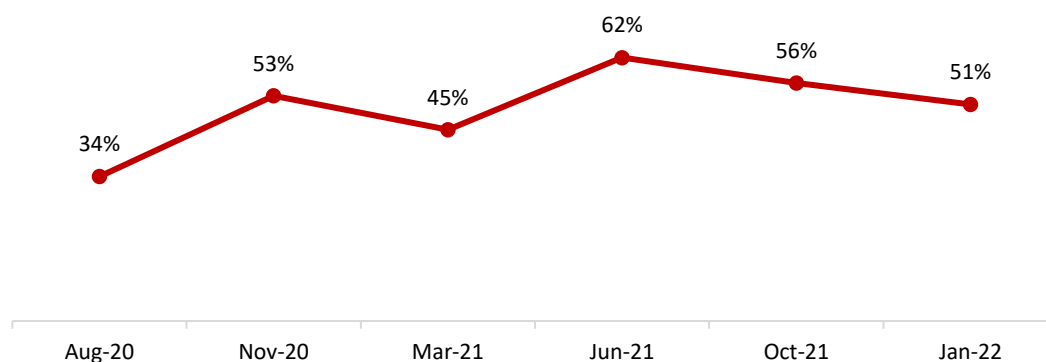
**And, based on what you have read, seen or heard, do you think your province has done a good job or a poor job of...
(Nova Scotia, n=385)**



Furey leads all in COVID-19 handling, holds on to majority approval

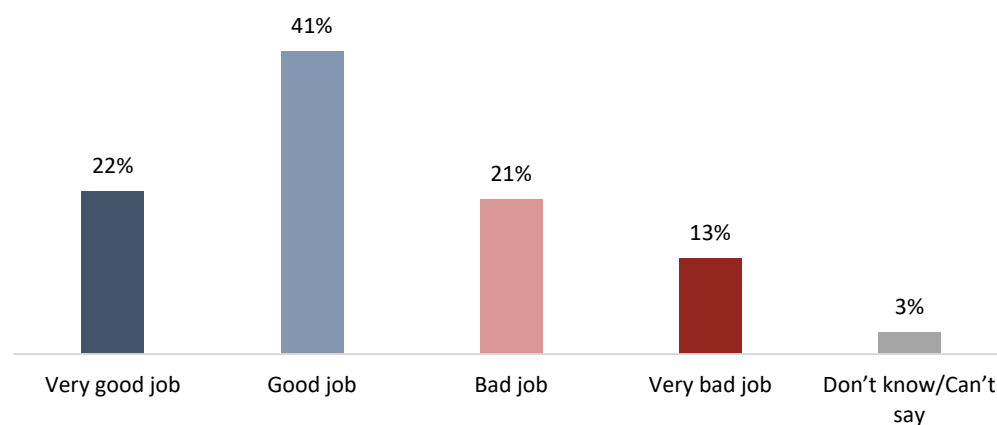
Newfoundland and Labrador Premier Andrew Furey continues to be part of the small club of premiers with approval of at least half of his constituents. Still, his approval has declined steadily in two reporting periods from a high of 62 per cent in July:

Approval of Newfoundland and Labrador Premier Andrew Furey



Furey does enjoy robust approval on his handling of COVID-19. Three-in-five (63%) say he has done well navigating the pandemic, the highest mark in the country. Though the province has reported record high cases as it deals with the Omicron variant, Newfoundland and Labrador have experienced fewer COVID-19 cases per capita than any of its [Atlantic neighbours](#) and lower deaths per capita than Nova Scotia or New Brunswick.

Newfoundland and Labrador Premier Andrew Furey's handling of the COVID-19 pandemic (Newfoundland and Labrador, n=190)

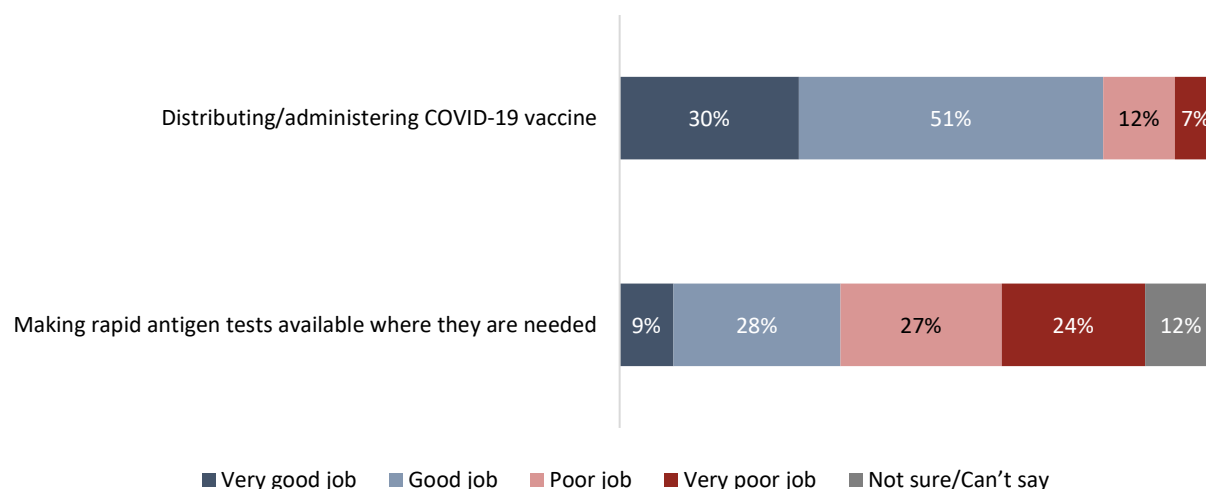


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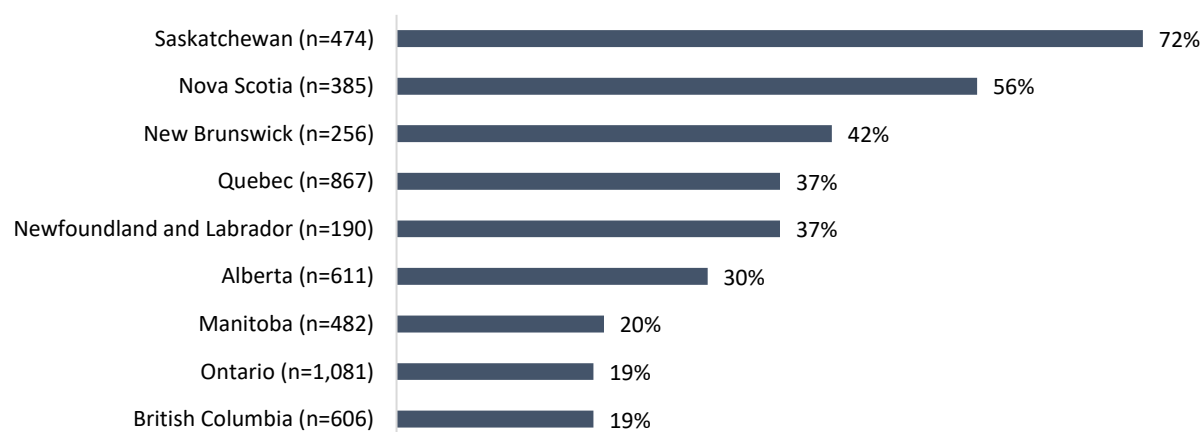
Four-in-five (81%) residents of Canada's easternmost province are satisfied with the vaccine distribution effort, but half (51%) have issues with the availability of rapid tests in the province. Despite considering making them more widely available in December, so far, the provincial government has been deploying rapid tests more strategically.

**And, based on what you have read, seen or heard, do you think your province has done a good job or a poor job of...
(Newfoundland and Labrador, n=190)**



Summary graphs

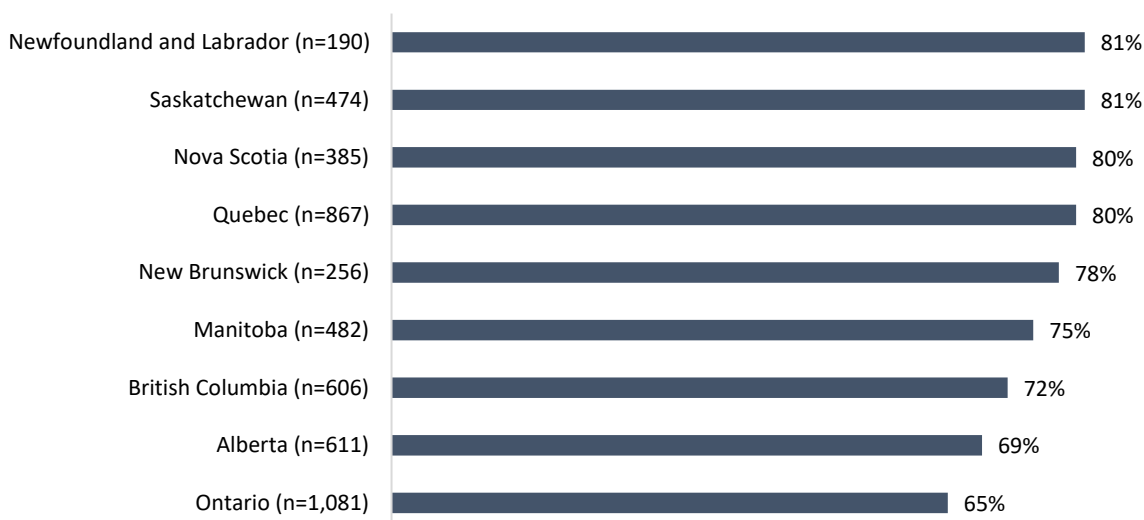
**[Making rapid antigen tests available where they are needed] And, based on what you have read, seen or heard, do you think your province has done a good job or a poor job of...
(% selecting 'good job' shown)**



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**[Distributing/administering COVID-19 vaccine] And, based on what you have read, seen or heard, do you think your province has done a good job or a poor job of...
(% selecting 'good job' shown)**



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

Margins of error								
BC (606)	AB (611)	SK (474)	MB (482)	ON (1,081)	QC (867)	NB (256)	NS (385)	NL (190)
+/- 4%	+/- 4%	+/- 5%	+/- 4%	+/- 3%	+/- 3%	+/- 6%	+/- 5%	+/- 7%

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

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