

Health check: Provinces' performance on key file in massive decline

One-quarter believe their province is doing a good job managing health care, the lowest in eight years

June 22, 2022 – As fear over COVID-19 dissipates, Canadians' focus is turning to the health-care system, and most are not impressed by what they see.

New data from the non-profit Angus Reid Institute finds most Canadians – three-quarters (72%) – critical of their respective provincial government's handling of the health-care system. Indeed, the number of Canadians who say their province is managing health well (25%) is at its lowest point in eight years of tracking by ARI. Meanwhile, half (52%) identify health care as a top-three priority for their province.

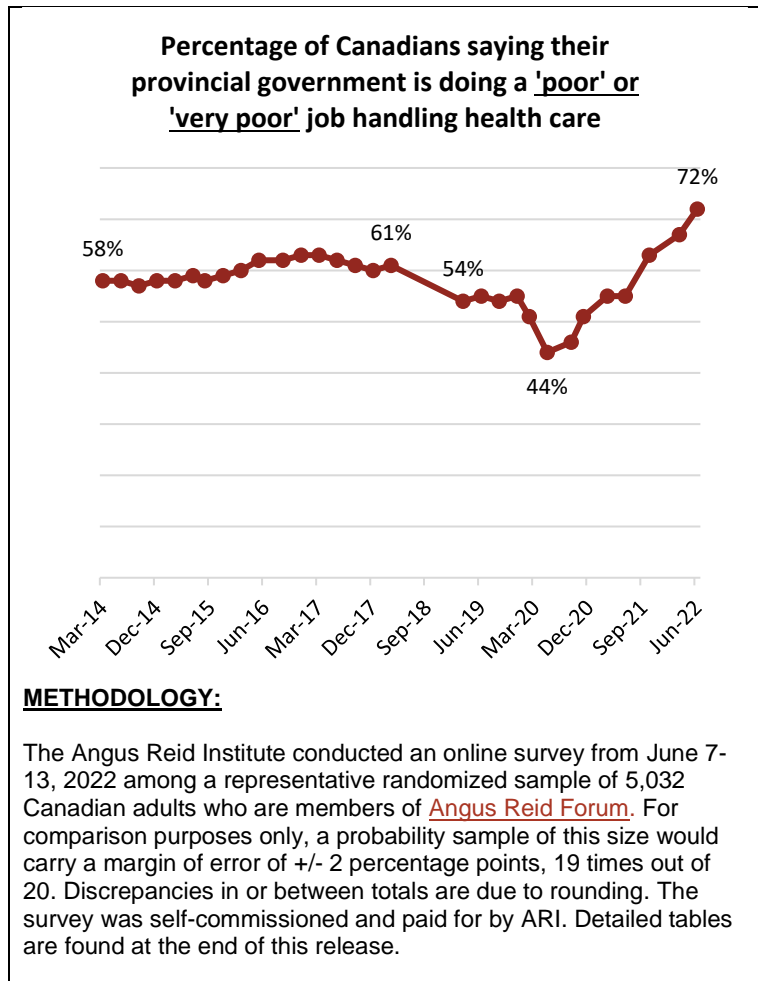
Across the country, at least two-thirds in every province say their government is doing a poor job on health care. The most praise is offered in Saskatchewan (30%) and Nova Scotia (30%), but positive opinions in those two provinces are outnumbered by negative ones by two-to-one.

More Key Findings:

- Fewer than one-in-ten (7%) Canadians now select COVID-19 as a top provincial issue. Last year, one-third (33%) believed handling the pandemic was a top concern for their province.
- A majority of every demographic says their provincial government is handling health care poorly, but women are much more negative than men on the matter. At least three-quarters of women of all ages believe their provincial government has done a poor job on health.
- At least two-in-five in every province believe health care to be a top-three provincial issue. The rising cost of living is the only other issue to be selected at that rate across the country.

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



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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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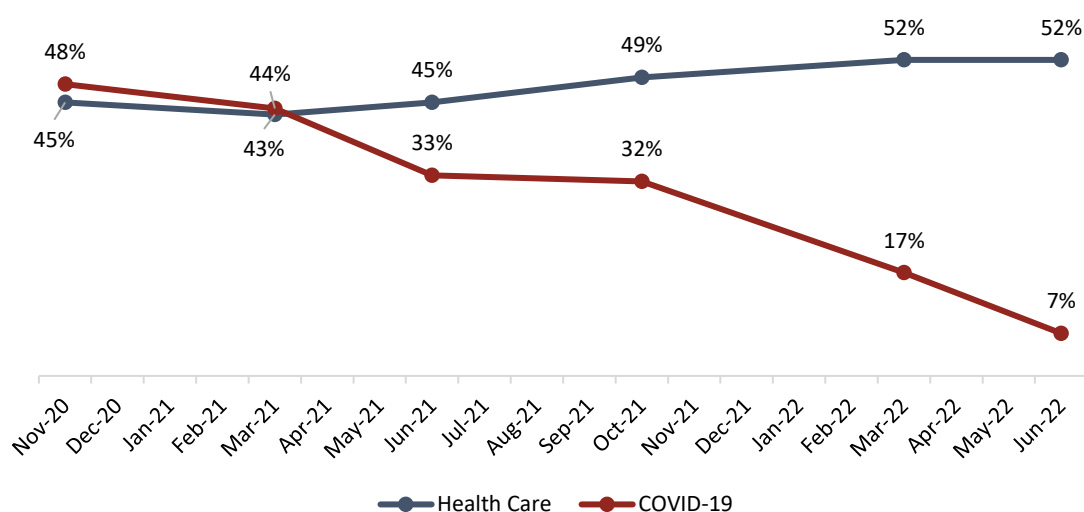
Half of Canadians select health care as a top provincial issue

Health care is consistently a top priority for Canadians. Nationally, it's consistently among the top-three issues when respondents are asked about the top concerns facing Canada.

Provincially, too, health care ranks high among the issues presented to respondents. In the last three years, at least two-in-five said it was a top-three priority for them personally when they consider the various issues facing their province.

As concern over COVID-19 fades, Canadians are renewing focus on the health system. Since October, half selected health care as a provincial top issue, even as COVID-19 concern has dropped precipitously:

Percentage choosing Health Care and COVID-19 as a top provincial issue

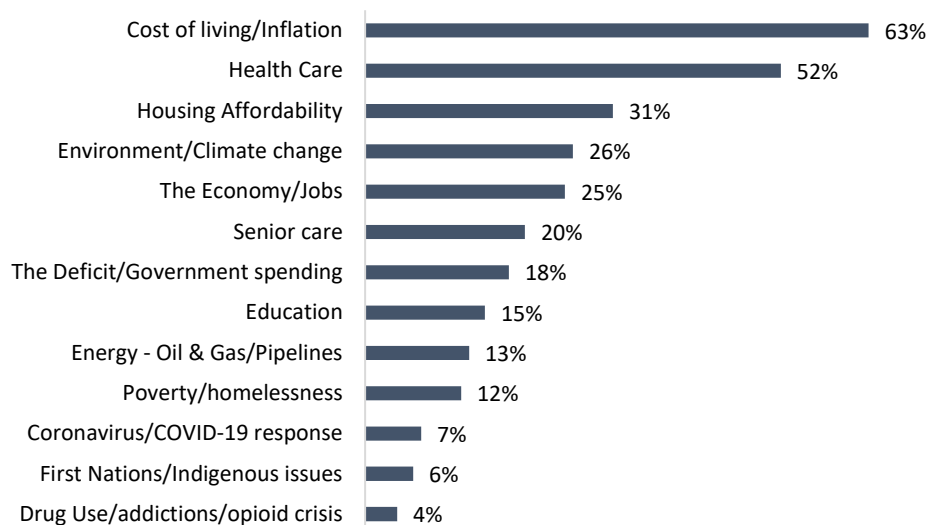


With inflation hitting highs not seen in three decades, cost of living has become the top provincial issue for many Canadians. Still, half select health care as a top-three issue, trumping other pressing concerns such as housing affordability (31%), climate change (26%), and the economy and jobs (25%).

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**Top provincial issues
(Up to three chosen; all respondents, n=5,032)**



While affordability and the rising cost of living is front of mind for many Canadians as rampant inflation increases the price of nearly everything, health care is the only other issue which garners top-three consideration for at least two-in-five in every province.

Top three provincial issues (Up to three chosen)								
Province								
BC (n=615)	AB (n=592)	SK (n=594)	MB (n=468)	ON (n=1,041)	QC (n=814)	NB (n=247)	NS (n=330)	NL (n=201)
Cost of living/ Inflation 61%	Cost of living/ Inflation 66%	Cost of living/ Inflation 68%	Cost of living/ Inflation 67%	Cost of living/ Inflation 63%	Cost of living/ Inflation 63%	Health Care 64%	Health Care 62%	Cost of living/ Inflation 76%
Health Care 47%	Health Care 44%	Health Care 47%	Health Care 55%	Health Care 49%	Health Care 59%	Cost of living/ Inflation 63%	Cost of living/ Inflation 61%	Health Care 68%
Housing Costs 43%	The Economy/ Jobs 36%	The Economy/ Jobs 31%	The Economy/ Jobs 24%	Housing Costs 36%	Climate Change 31%	Housing Costs 33%	Housing Costs 37%	The Deficit 32%

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Older Canadians are much more preoccupied with concerns over health care. Three-in-five men over the age of 54 and more than two-thirds of women that age select health care as a top-three provincial issue.

Related:

- [Access to health care a significant problem for one-in-five Canadians 55 and older](#)
- [Welcome or worry? Aging causes anxiety for some, while others take it in stride](#)
- [As Canadians age, struggles over access to health care extend to prescription drugs](#)

But, with the exception of men aged 18- to 34-years-old, health care is at least the second most selected issue for all demographics:

Top five provincial issues (Up to three chosen)					
Male			Female		
18-34 (n=699)	35-54 (n=825)	55+ (n=924)	18-34 (n=688)	35-54 (n=856)	55+ (n=1,022)
Cost of living/ Inflation 67%	Cost of living/ Inflation 71%	Health Care 62%	Cost of living/ Inflation 68%	Cost of living/ Inflation 67%	Health Care 68%
Housing Affordability 39%	Health Care 41%	Cost of living/ Inflation 54%	Health Care 45%	Health Care 58%	Cost of living/ Inflation 56%
The Economy/ Jobs 39%	The Economy/ Jobs 37%	Senior care 37%	Housing Affordability 44%	Housing Affordability 31%	Senior care 44%

Residents critical of their respective provincial governments' performance on health

The COVID-19 pandemic put the health-care system under considerable strain. For some provinces, an inadequate supply of hospital beds combined with a surge of COVID-19 cases [required patients](#) to be [sent out of province](#) for treatment. While COVID-19 cases are down from hospital-overwhelming peaks, provincial governments are left to deal with [surgical backlogs caused by delayed care throughout the pandemic](#).

Still, while the pandemic may have brought the spotlight that exposed the cracks in the foundation, the health-care system was not on solid ground even before COVID-19 arrived in Canada. As the first COVID-19 shutdowns occurred, Canada had [fewer acute care beds per capita](#) than any other OECD country except Mexico and a [90 per cent occupancy rate for the beds that were there](#). In 1976, Canada had [4.99 beds per 1,000 people](#). There was 1.95 beds per 1,000 people [in 2020](#). In [a prescient March 2020 piece in Policy Options](#), Frances Woolley wrote that the capacity deficit was due to provincial politicians placing a premium on short-term benefits over the long-term investments of building the capital necessary to expand the health-care system.

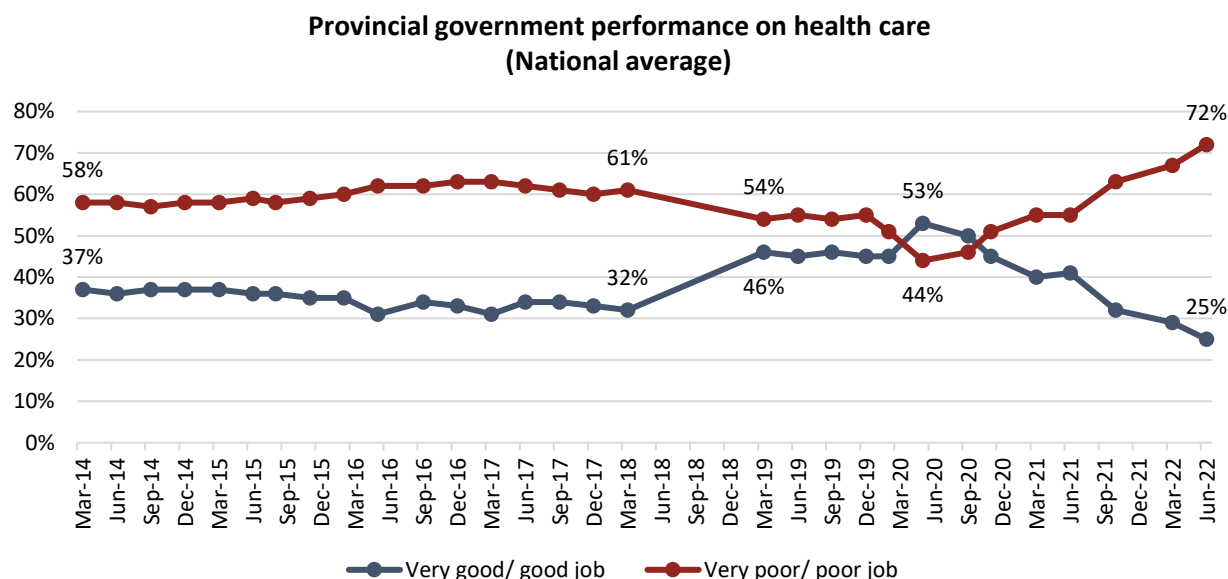
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Related: Twice as many say their province’s health care system has ‘deteriorated’ as say it has improved

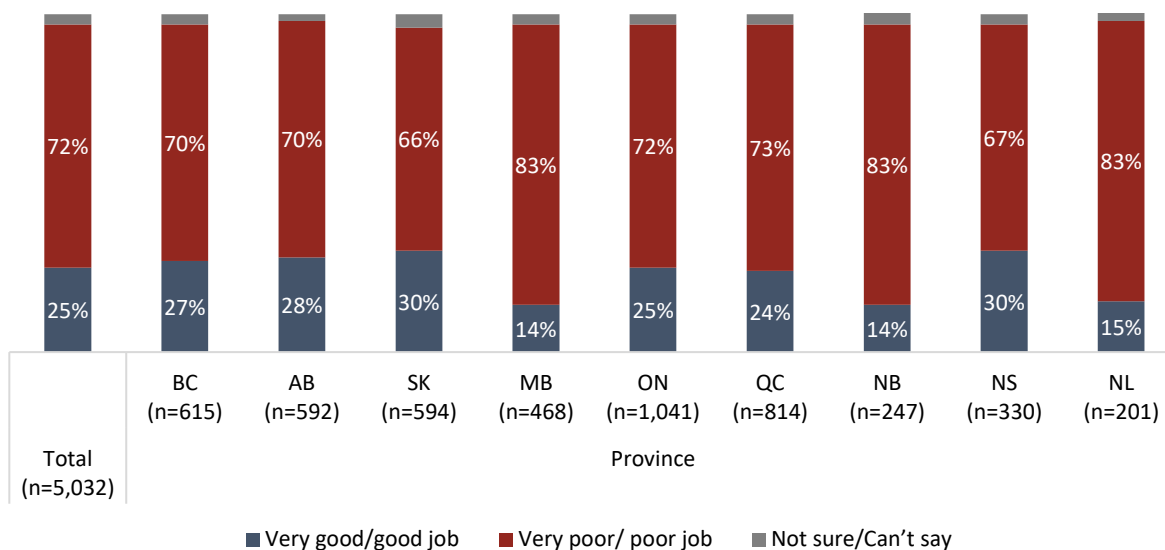
Before the pandemic, there were nearly five million Canadians without a family doctor. The problem has not improved in the interim, as many provinces deal with shortages in family doctors, despite an increasing number of doctors overall.

After two years of seeing the health system struggle, Canadians have exited a pandemic honeymoon period when they were more likely to feel provincial governments were handling the health portfolio well. At the onset of the pandemic, 53 per cent said their provincial government was doing a good job managing health care. That number has now fallen to 25 per cent, the lowest figure in eight years of tracking by ARI.



Across the country, at most, three-in-ten believe their provincial government is doing a good job managing health care. Those in Saskatchewan and Nova Scotia are the most approving of their respective governments’ handling of the health system. Still, two-thirds in those provinces would say the provincial government is instead doing a bad job on health:

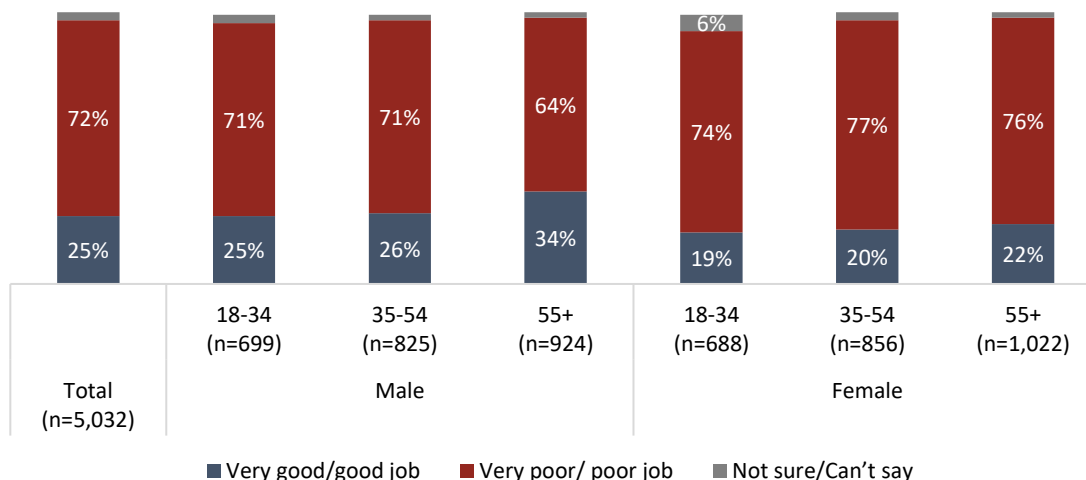
Do you think the current provincial government is doing a good job or a poor job in health care?



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

Negative assessments of provincial governments' performance on health outweigh positive ones across all demographics, as well. However, women are more negative than men in their appraisal of the provinces' handling of health. At least three-quarters of women of all ages believe their provincial government is doing a poor job on the health file; comparatively, two-thirds of men over the age of 54 say the same:

Do you think the current provincial government is doing a good job or a poor job in health care?



Individual provincial performance on health care

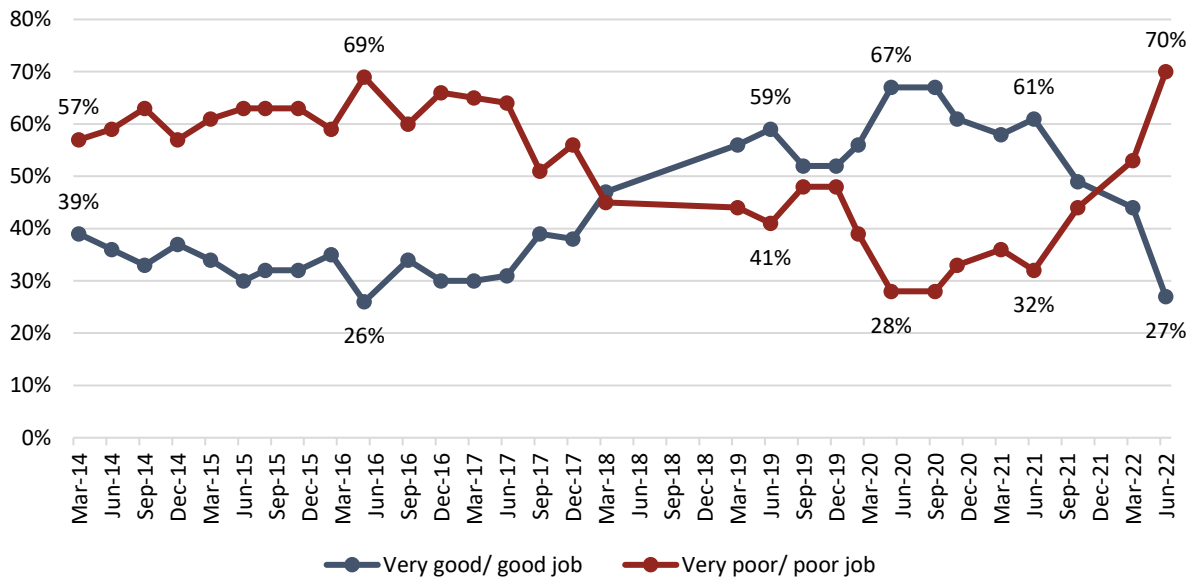
British Columbia

While those who say they will vote for the BCNDP if an election were held today are more likely to say the B.C. government has done well on health care, half (53%) believe the government has done a poor job on that file. Meanwhile, younger British Columbians are more positive than older ones. One-third (35%) of 18- to 34-year-olds believe the government is handling health care well. Comparatively, one-quarter of those over the age of 34 say the B.C. government has done a good job on health. ([See detailed tables.](#))

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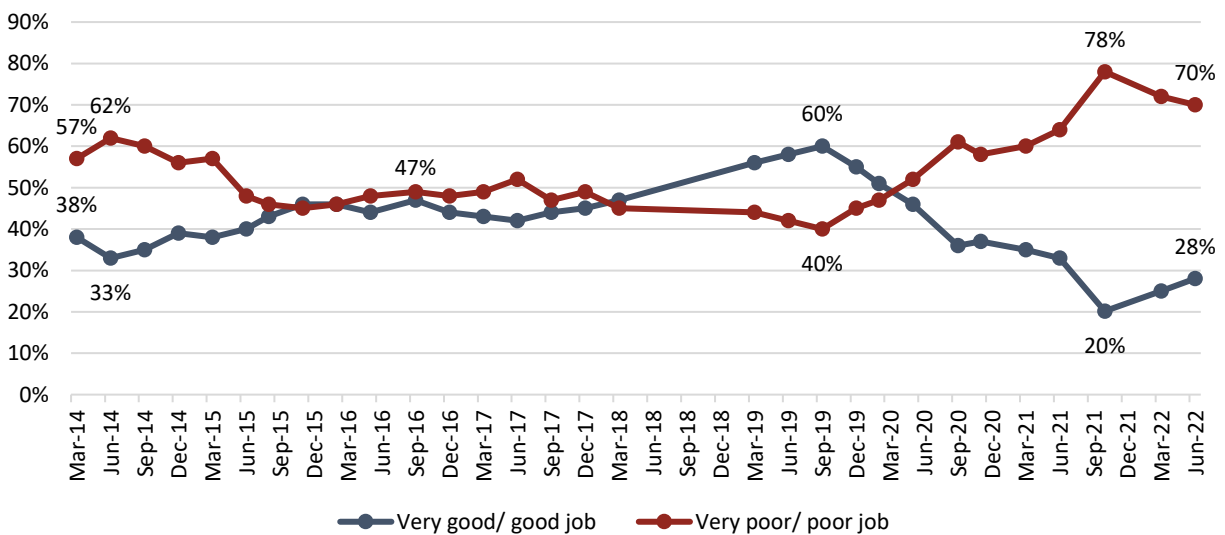
B.C. government performance on health care



Alberta

Men (36%) and older Albertans (55+, 34%) are more likely to believe the UCP government has done a good job on health care. Still, positive appraisal among those groups tops out at one third. Meanwhile, three-quarters of women (77%), 18- to 34-year-olds (72%) and 35- to 54-year-olds (73%) say instead the Alberta government has done poorly managing the health system. ([See detailed tables.](#))

Alberta government performance on health care



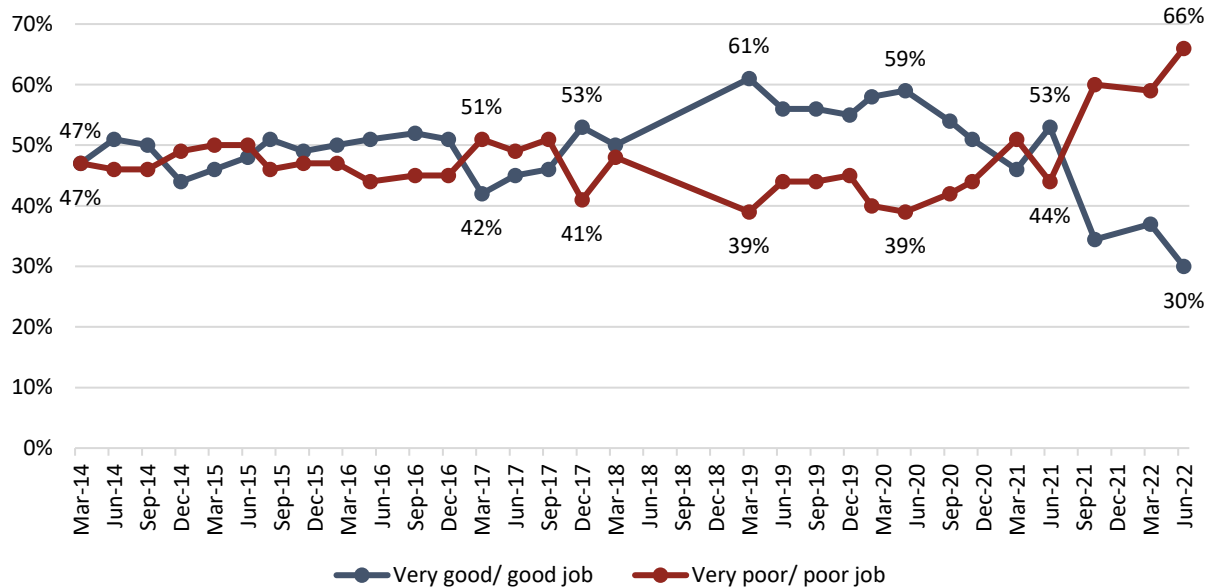
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Saskatchewan

Though neither is more positive than negative, there are differing opinions between residents of the province's two biggest cities on how well the Saskatchewan Party is handling health care. More people (33%) in Saskatoon than in Regina (21%) believe the government is doing a good job. ([See detailed tables.](#))

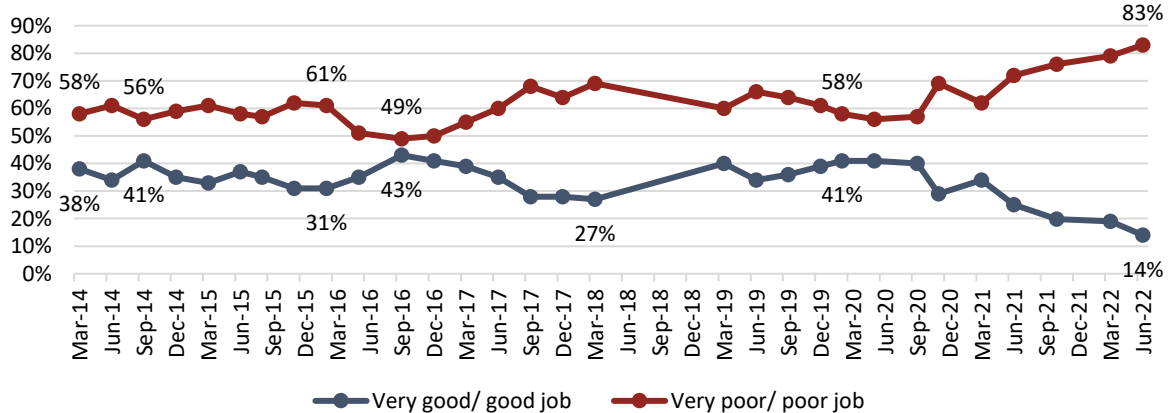
Saskatchewan government performance on health care



Manitoba

The opinions of the Manitoba government's performance on health care are overwhelmingly negative across all demographics, but women are more negative than men. Approaching nine-in-ten (87%) of women in Manitoba believe the government has done poorly on health; fewer men – four-in-five (79%) – agree. ([See detailed tables.](#))

Manitoba government performance on health care



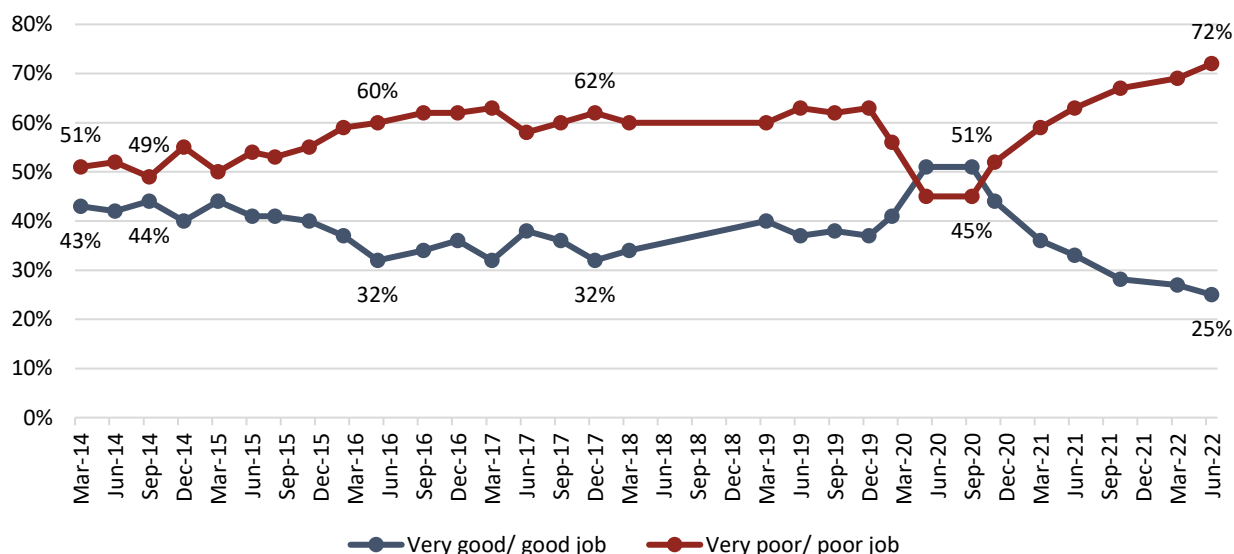
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Ontario

Half (47%) of those who voted for Doug Ford and the PCPO party in the recent election say the government has done well on health. Still, half (50%) disagree. Meanwhile, nearly all who voted NDP (90%) and Liberal (86%) believe the PCPO government has mishandled the province’s health system. There is also a regional difference in Ontarians’ appraisal of the PCPO performance on health care. Four-in-five in the Toronto core (416 area code) say the government has done poorly on health. In the Toronto outskirts, in the 905, two-thirds (67%) say the same. ([See detailed tables.](#))

Ontario government performance on health care



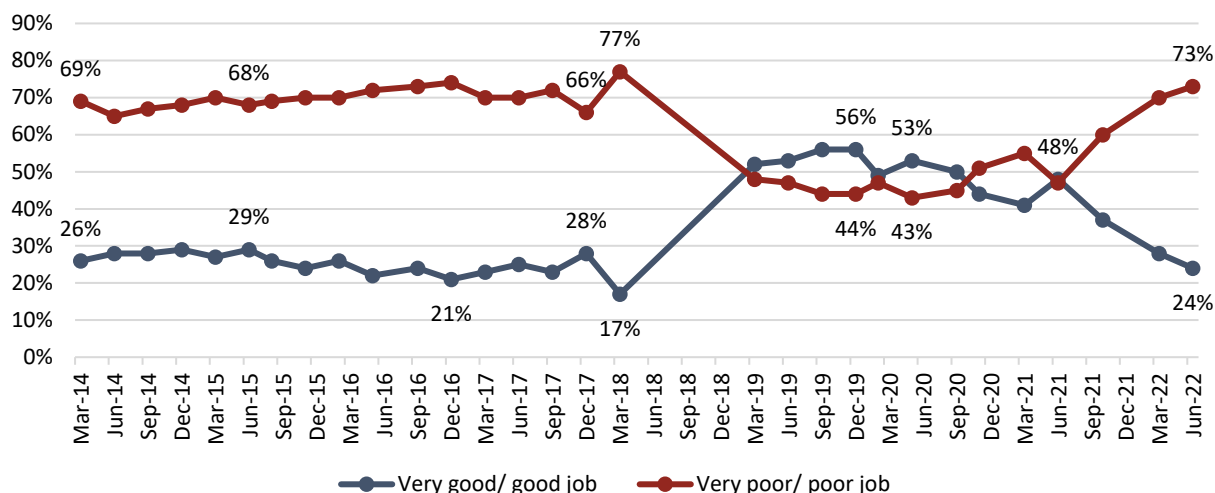
Quebec

Those who intend to vote Coalition Avenir Québec if an election were held today are much more likely than other party supporters to believe the CAQ and Premier François Legault has done a good job managing health care in the province – a majority (57%) say this. Those who intend to vote Parti Québécois (25% good or very good job), Québec Solidaire (18%), Liberal (6%), and Conservative (3%) are much more critical. ([See detailed tables.](#))

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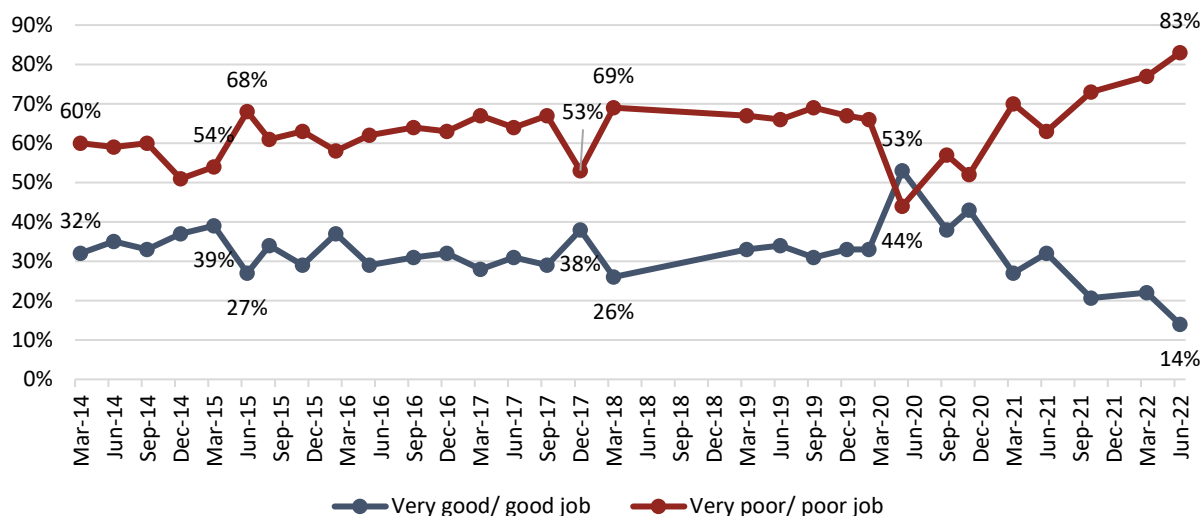
Quebec government performance on health care



New Brunswick

There are no bright spots for the New Brunswick government in residents’ appraisal of its performance on the health file. At least four-in-five men and women, and every age group, believe the government has handled the health system poorly. ([See detailed tables.](#))

New Brunswick government performance on health care



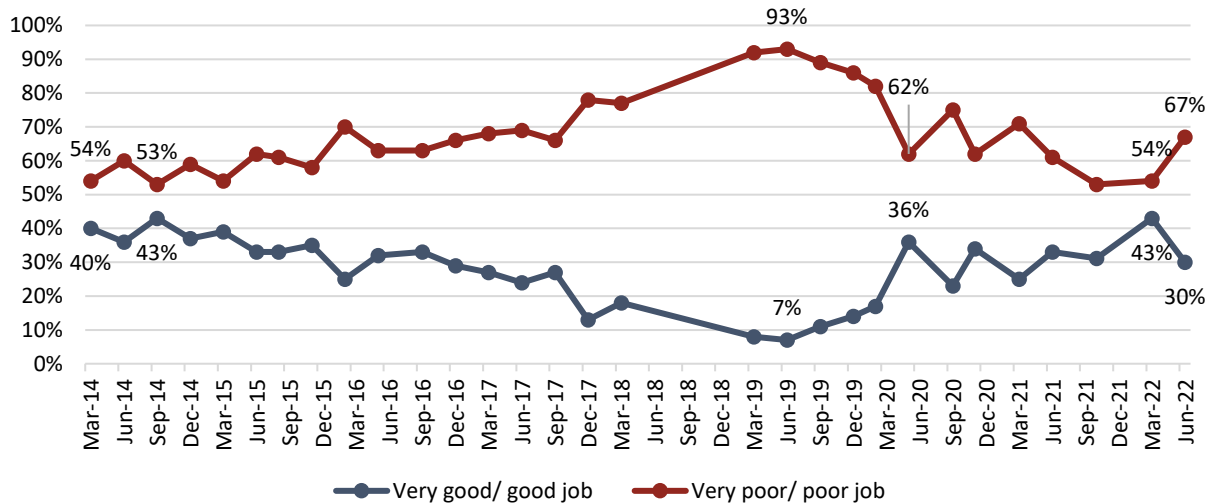
Nova Scotia

Men (40%) are nearly twice as likely as women (21%) to believe the Nova Scotia government has done a good job on health. Still, a majority (56%) of men would disagree. ([See detailed tables.](#))

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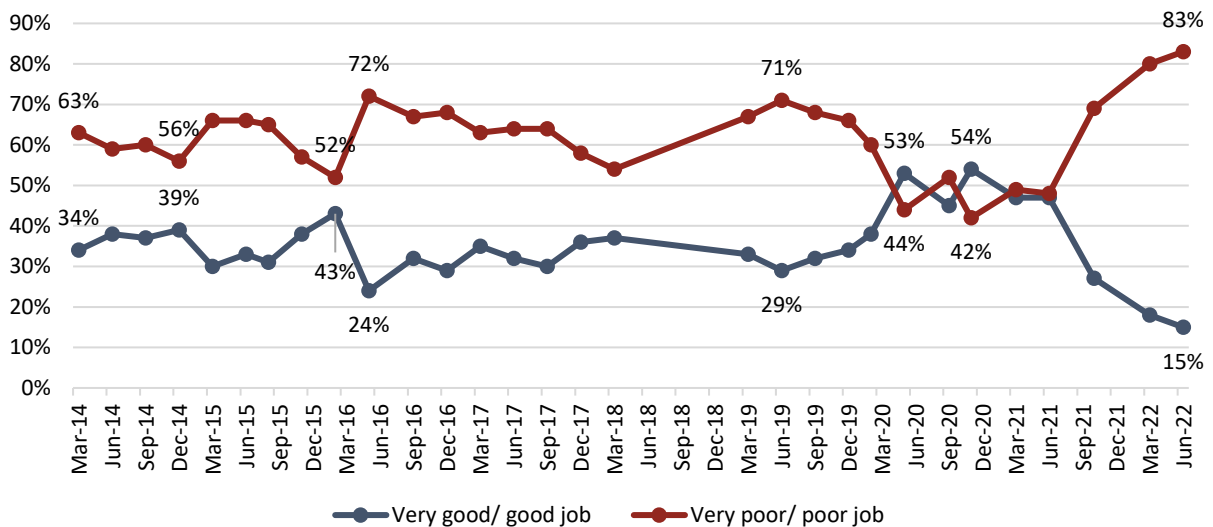
Nova Scotia government performance on health care



Newfoundland and Labrador

Negative opinions of the Liberal government's performance on health dominate all demographics in Newfoundland and Labrador. ([See detailed tables.](#))

Newfoundland and Labrador government performance on health care



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Margins of error								
BC (615)	AB (592)	SK (594)	MB (468)	ON (1,041)	QC (814)	NB (247)	NS (330)	NL (201)
+/- 4%	+/- 4%	+/- 4%	+/- 5%	+/- 3%	+/- 3%	+/- 6%	+/- 5%	+/- 7%

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

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

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

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