

## Ontario Spotlight: Bill 7 divides Ontarians as government moves ahead to free up hospital beds

*Significant segment of PCPO voters unhappy with Ford government's performance on health care*

**October 5, 2022** – The pressures on the health-care system over the past two-and-a-half years have led some governments to make difficult and, at times, unpopular decisions.

Enter Bill 7 in Ontario.

The government recently introduced this bill to amend the 2021 “Fixing Long-Term Care Act”. The provision authorizes hospital staff to move elderly patients waiting for long-term care spots out of hospital and into nursing homes they did not choose.

New data from the non-profit Angus Reid Institute finds Ontarians divided as to whether the measure was necessary (47%) or should not have been considered (53%).

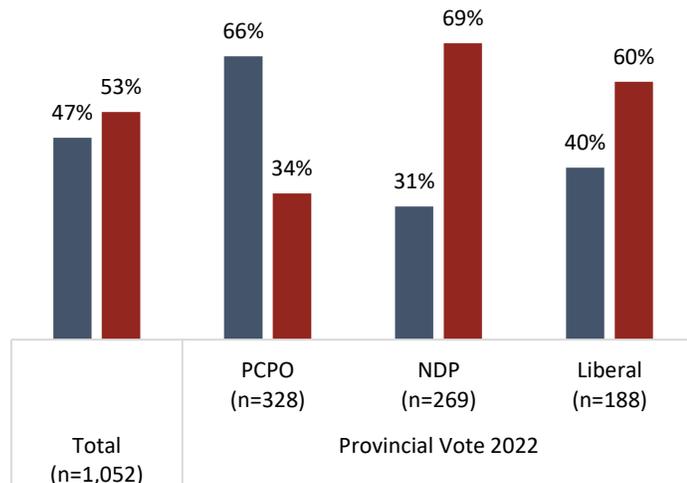
While those who voted for Premier Doug Ford and the PCPO in the June election are more likely to support Bill 7, one-third (34%) among that group do not. Similar proportions of Ontario NDP and Ontario Liberal voters say this is the right move by the government, while most disagree.

Bill 7 was one step taken by Ford and the PCPO government to help a struggling Ontario health-care system. Indeed, three-in-five (58%) Ontarians say this is a top priority facing the province, as many who say the same of cost of living (58%). Those two concerns dwarf all others.

Four-in-five (80%) believe the provincial government is handling health care poorly, including three-in-five (62%) recent PCPO voters.

Health is not the only measure on which Ontarians are critical of their government. At least seven-in-ten say the PCPO government is mishandling the other two other top priorities for the province – cost of living (72%) and housing affordability (79%). In fact, for all measures except the response to COVID-19 and the

### Which of these statements is closest to your view, even if you don't agree with either entirely:



- The government should try to free up acute care beds in hospital, even if it means moving patients into long-term care homes that they did not choose
- Moving patients out of acute care beds in hospital and into long-term care homes is a violation of the patients' rights and should not be considered

#### METHODOLOGY:

The Angus Reid Institute conducted an online survey from Sept. 19 - 22, 2022 among a representative randomized sample of 1,052 Ontarian adults who are members of Angus Reid Forum. For comparison purposes only, a probability sample of this size would carry a margin of error of +/- 3 percentage points, 19 times out of 20. Discrepancies in or between totals are due to rounding. The survey was self-commissioned and paid for by ARI. Detailed tables are found at the end of this release.

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province's relationship with the federal government, Ontarians are more likely to believe Ford's government is doing a bad job than a good one.

### **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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#### **Part One: Ontarians split on Bill 7**

The Ford government encountered controversy almost immediately into its second mandate with Bill 7. The legislation, [subtitled the More Beds, Better Care Act](#), was designed to open up beds in the province's overflowing hospitals by temporarily forcing patients awaiting long-term care spots into available nursing homes not of their choosing. If a patient refused, they could be charged \$400 daily to stay in hospital.

Bill 7 was [welcomed by some of the province's hospitals](#), but panned by critics, [who argued](#) moving the elderly into nursing homes away from families could have a significant toll on their mental and physical health. Patients [could be moved](#) within 70 kilometres in southern Ontario and 150 kilometres – or more, if beds aren't available – in northern Ontario.

Ontarians are divided on Bill 7: half (47%) say this is a needed measure to free up acute care beds in hospital, while half (53%) say the Bill is a violation of patients' rights.

Along political lines, two-thirds of recent PCPO voters support the move to open up hospital beds, while one-third disagree. Meanwhile, recent NDP (69%) and Liberal (60%) voters are more likely to believe Bill 7 was a measure that should not have been considered. That said, considerable portions within each of these groups disagree, and say the government made the right choice:

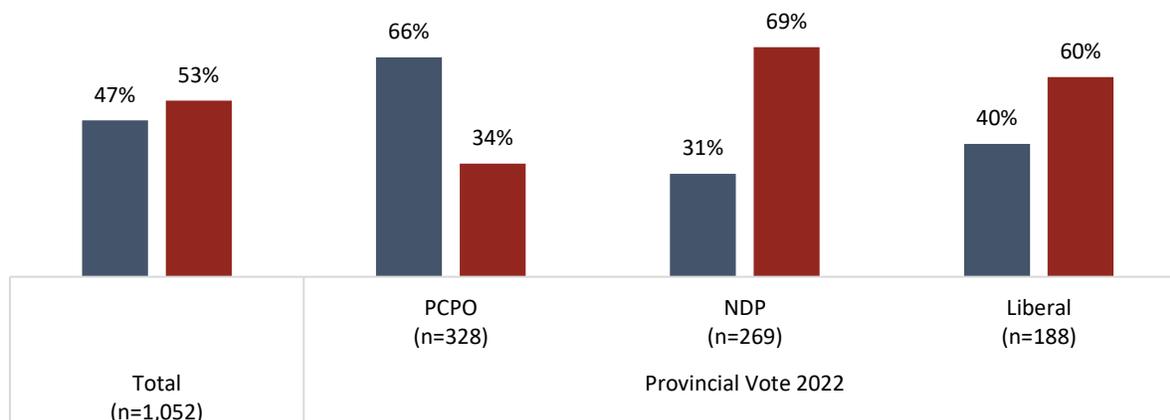
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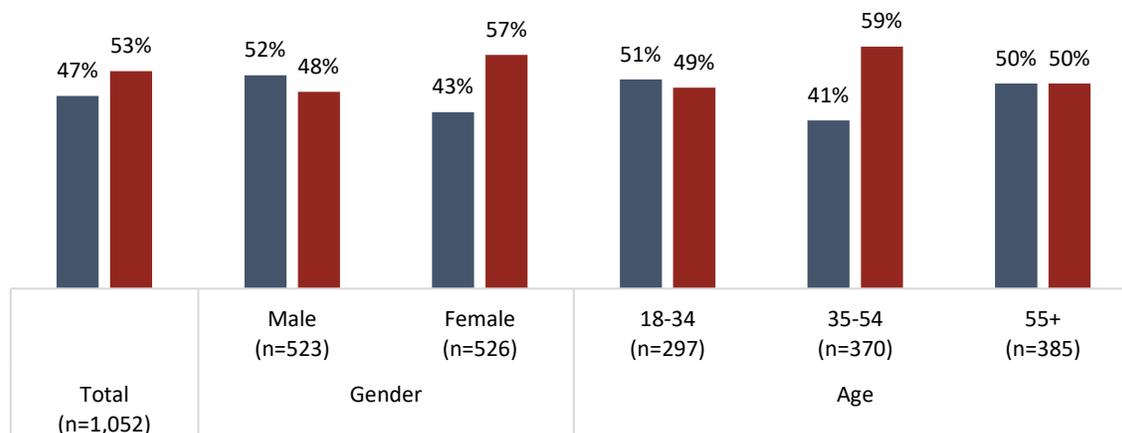
**Which of these statements is closest to your view, even if you don't agree with either entirely:**



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Men are more supportive of Bill 7 than women, while those aged 35- to 54-years-old are more likely to see it as a violation of patients' rights than other age groups:

**Which of these statements is closest to your view, even if you don't agree with either entirely:**



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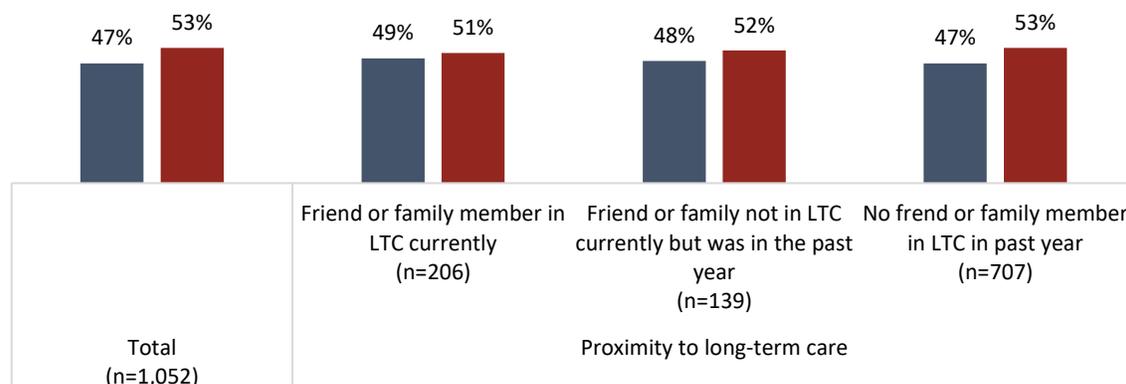
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Opinions are split on Bill 7 among those who know someone in long-term care currently or recently. Nearly as many in both groups believe the government should be freeing up acute care beds even if it requires moving seniors into long-term care homes they didn't choose as believe it should not have been considered:

**Which of these statements is closest to your view, even if you don't agree with either entirely:**



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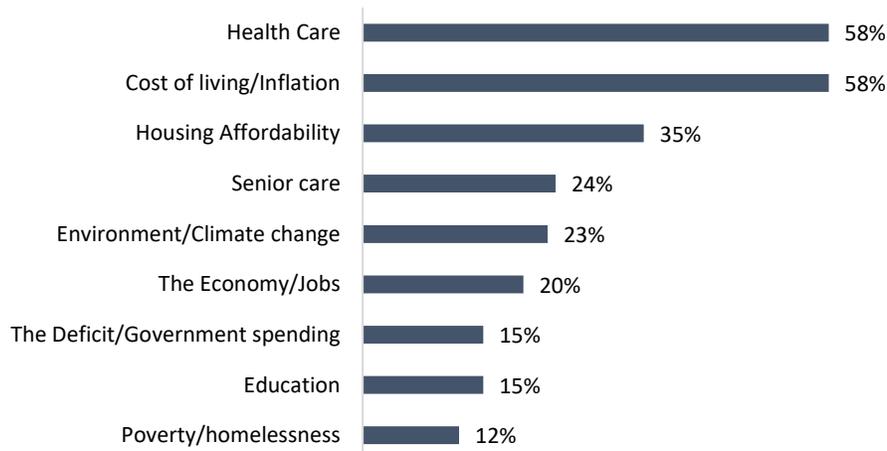
**Part Two: Top issues: Health care, cost of living lead the way**

The division over Bill 7 is perhaps best explained by the overwhelming concern about what can be done to improve health care in the province and the willingness of residents to search for solutions, even if they're not necessarily optimal. In addition to limited beds and delays in accessing care, Ontario hospitals are struggling with staff shortages leading to closures. Perhaps unsurprisingly, Ontarians choose health care as one of their top two issues. Three-in-five (58%) say this, tying it for top issue in the province alongside the cost of living:

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**Top Issues**  
**(Up to three chosen, those with more than 10% shown)**  
**(Ontario, n=1,052)**



Even among divergent political camps there is some agreement on the challenges the province is facing. Those who voted for the Ontario NDP and Ontario Liberals in June join PCPO voters in saying health care and cost of living are the top two issues facing Ontario.

Those first two groups are, however, much more likely to voice concern about climate change when compared to past PCPO voters. For those who supported Premier Doug Ford's party in the June election, economic concerns including jobs and the deficit are also highlighted:

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Top Issues (Up to three chosen, top three highlighted)				
	Total (n=1,052)	Provincial Vote 2022		
		PCPO (n=328)	NDP (n=269)	Liberal (n=188)
Health Care	58%	49%	64%	76%
Cost of living/ Inflation	58%	65%	57%	47%
Housing Affordability	35%	30%	39%	35%
Senior care	24%	23%	22%	29%
Environment/ Climate change	23%	7%	39%	36%
The Economy/ Jobs	20%	32%	9%	15%
The Deficit/ Government spending	15%	30%	2%	1%
Education	15%	11%	18%	19%
Poverty/ homelessness	12%	6%	16%	12%

### Top issues by gender and age

Ontarians over the age of 54 are much more worried about health care and senior care than their younger counterparts. For those aged 18- to 34-years-old, housing affordability is a much more pressing concern:

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Top Issues (Up to three chosen, top three highlighted)							
	Total (n=1,052)	Male			Female		
		18-34 (n=151)	35-54 (n=182)	55+ (n=190)	18-34 (n=146)	35-54 (n=185)	55+ (n=195)
Health Care	58%	37%	48%	70%	50%	62%	72%
Cost of living/ Inflation	58%	59%	67%	47%	72%	63%	48%
Housing Affordability	35%	49%	34%	20%	54%	38%	24%
Senior care	24%	1%	8%	43%	5%	16%	56%
Environment/ Climate change	23%	28%	17%	19%	33%	22%	21%
The Economy/ Jobs	20%	29%	30%	24%	10%	21%	10%
The Deficit/ Government spending	15%	18%	21%	26%	8%	8%	8%
Education	15%	14%	16%	12%	18%	20%	11%
Poverty/ homelessness	12%	7%	11%	10%	10%	16%	16%

### Part Three: Voters' remorse? Ontarians overwhelmingly believe PCPO handling top issues poorly

Four months into Ford's second mandate, Ontarians are generally negative about his government's performance. Praise is about equal to criticism on only two measures – the response to COVID-19 and relationship with the federal government. Notably, neither of these issues rises high on the priority scale.

For all other issues of provincial governance, Ontarians are more likely to give the government a thumbs-down than a thumbs-up. This criticism is overwhelming when it comes to the province's top two issues as chosen by residents. Four-in-five say the government is doing a poor job with respect to health care, while approaching three-quarters say the same on the cost of living:

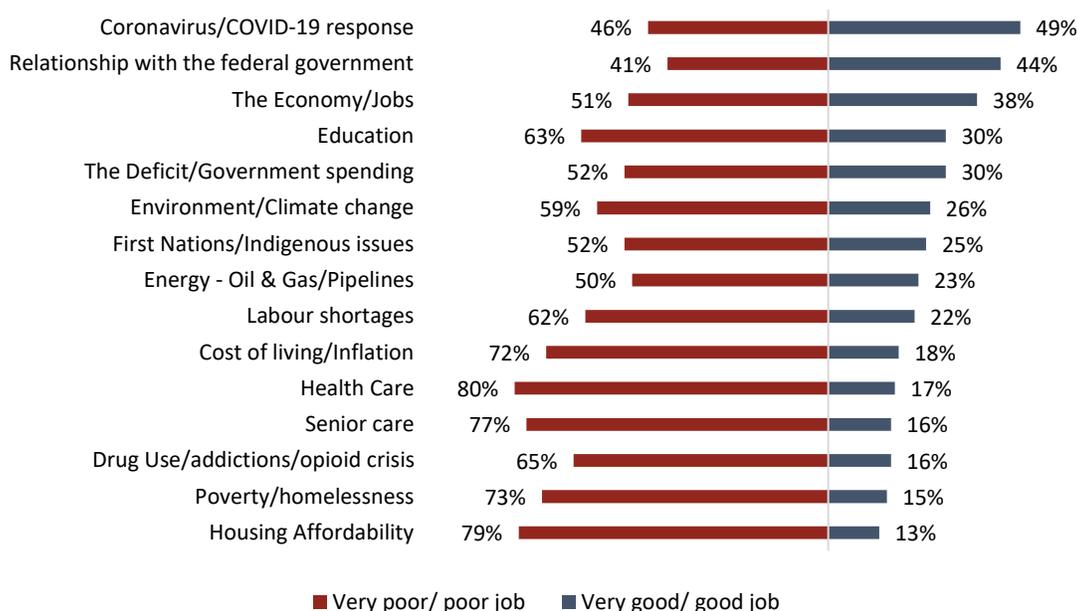
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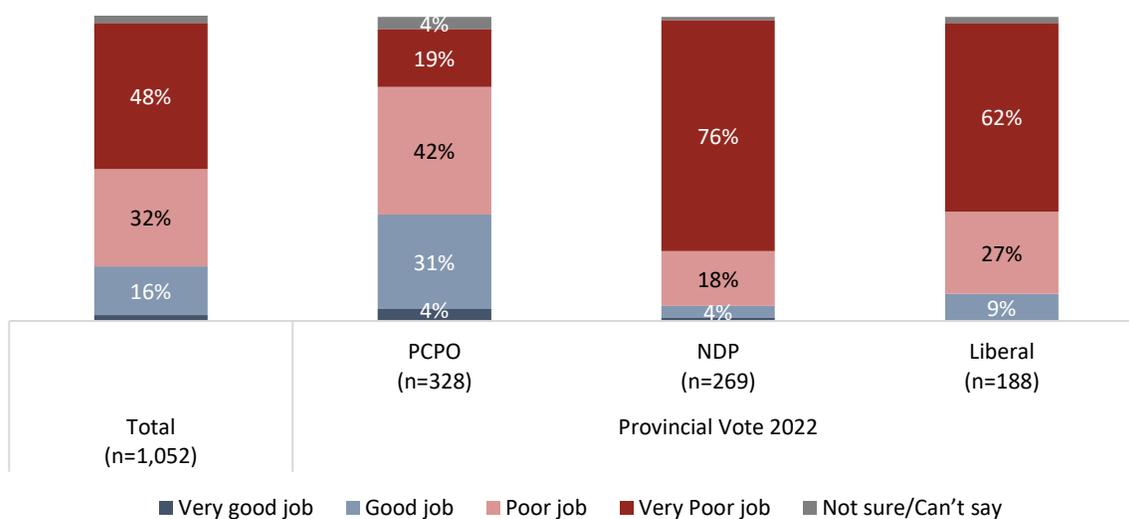
**Do you think the current government of Ontario is doing a good job or a poor job in each of the following areas?**

**(Ontario, n=1,052)**



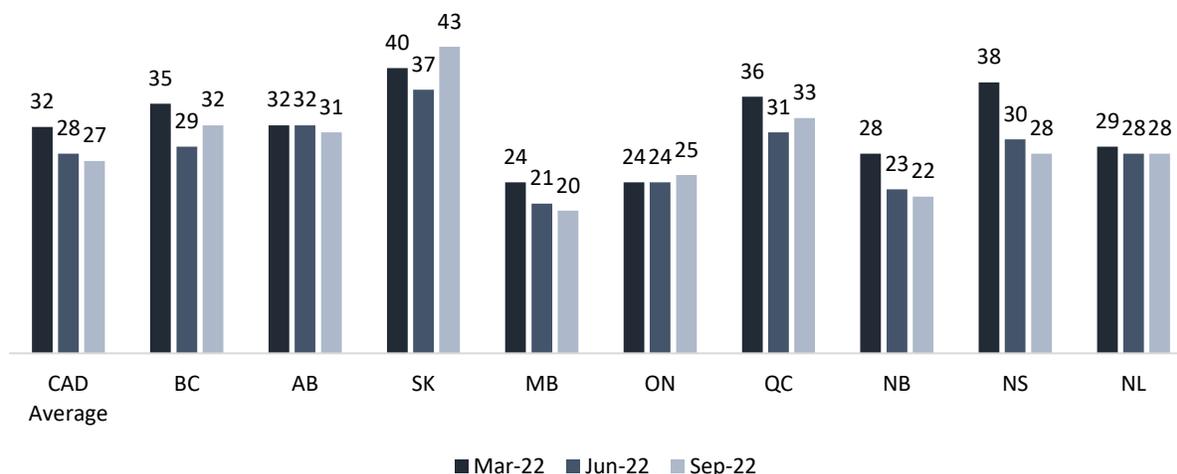
Notably, even among those who voted PCPO in June, a majority believe the government is doing a poor job with health care (62%). Half (52%) of recent PCPO voters are critical of the government’s handling of inflation ([see detailed tables](#)).

**Do you think the current government of Ontario is doing a good job or a poor job on... health care?**



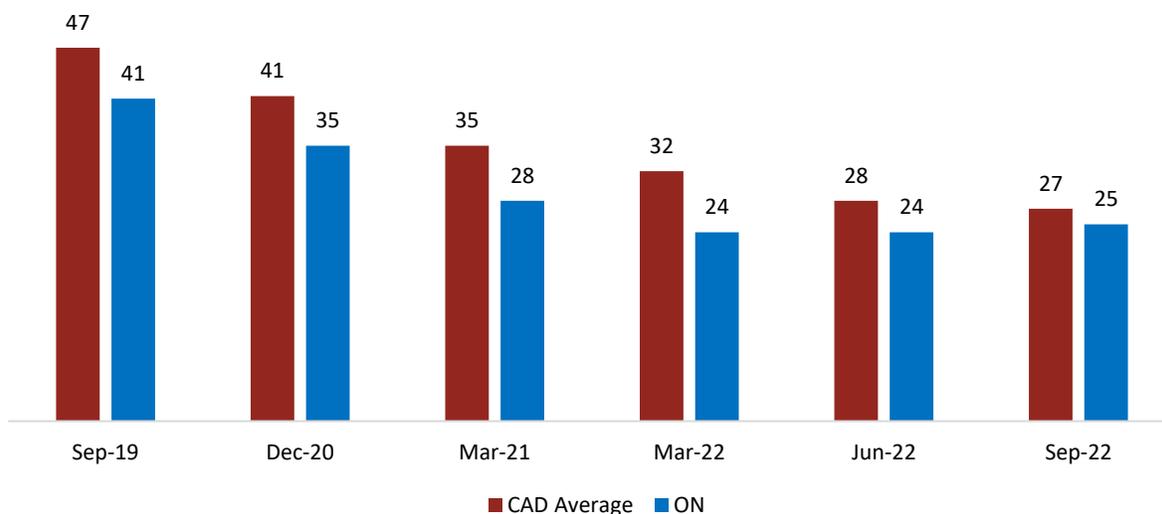
The Ford government's score on the Government Performance Index – a measure of the average level of satisfaction across all issues canvassed – comes in at 25. This score ranks third worst in the country, ahead of only the provincial governments in New Brunswick (22) and Manitoba (20):

**Government Performance Index (Average number of respondents saying provincial government has done a "good job" across all issues)**



Scores on the Government Performance Index continue to drop across the country as concerns about health care and the cost of living loom without exception in every region.

**Government Performance Index (Average number of respondents saying provincial government has done a "good job" across all issues)**



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

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