

## Premiers' Performance: Smith approval static after election win, Stefanson struggles ahead of October contest

*Manitoba premier's approval remains at one-quarter for sixth consecutive quarter*

**June 7, 2023** – As wildfires ravage the country from coast to coast, the crises in communities are manifold. Emergency responses must be marshalled. Firefighting efforts need to be coordinated. Residents forced from their homes need shelter. Most of these responsibilities rest on the shoulders of provincial governments where the fires are burning. Ultimately, the buck stops with the premier.

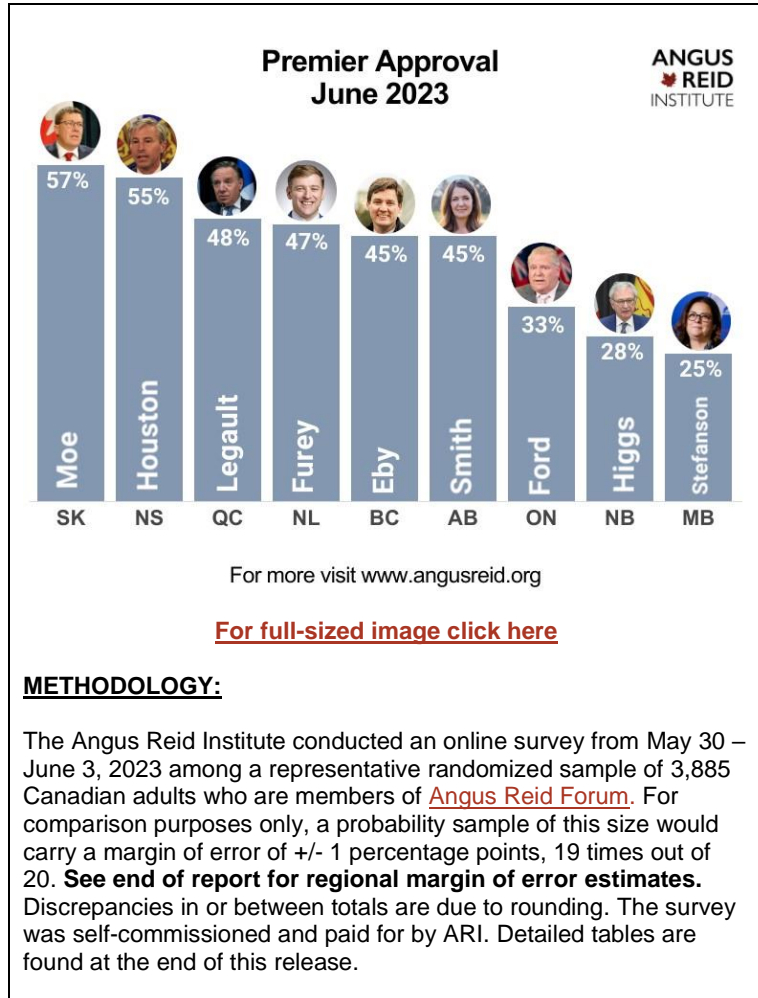
Against this backdrop, provincial leaders are heading into what [climate scientists predict will be a long, hot summer](#) with a general reserve of goodwill from their respective electorate. There are, however, some notable exceptions.

The latest data from the non-profit Angus Reid Institute tracking approval of provincial premiers shows while most garner a positive assessment from at least 40 per cent of their provincial populations, Ontario's Doug Ford, New Brunswick's Blaine Higgs and Manitoba's Heather Stefanson are struggling.

The political risk is most acute for Stefanson, facing re-election this fall. She currently earns the approval of just one-in-four Manitobans (25%). In New Brunswick, three-in-ten (28%) approve of their premier, and though an election looms in 2024, Higgs and the PC government have more time to correct course.

Ford enjoys the luxury of time even as he endures widespread disapproval. The PC government's election victory last June has the party in a majority position for at least three more years. Low approval has become a consistent occurrence for Ford, both before and after his party's re-election. This is the third quarter in a row where only one-third (33%) of Ontarians approve of the premier.

At the top of heap remain two persistent faces: Saskatchewan's Scott Moe (57%) and Nova Scotia's Tim Houston (55%), both who enjoy approval from a majority of constituents. The middle of the pack is crowded and features two relative newcomers – David Eby in B.C. (45%) and Danielle Smith (45%) in Alberta, who received a renewed mandate last month – as well as more seasoned leaders in Quebec and Newfoundland and Labrador. In the case of the latter two, assessments have dropped in recent months.



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Quebec Premier François Legault's approval (48%) dips below a majority level as the final protocols of the controversial Bill 96 are enacted. Meanwhile, Newfoundland and Labrador's Andrew Furey's approval (47%) tumbles as his government faces economic headwinds with the delay of the Bay du Nord offshore oil project.

### **Danielle Smith – Alberta**

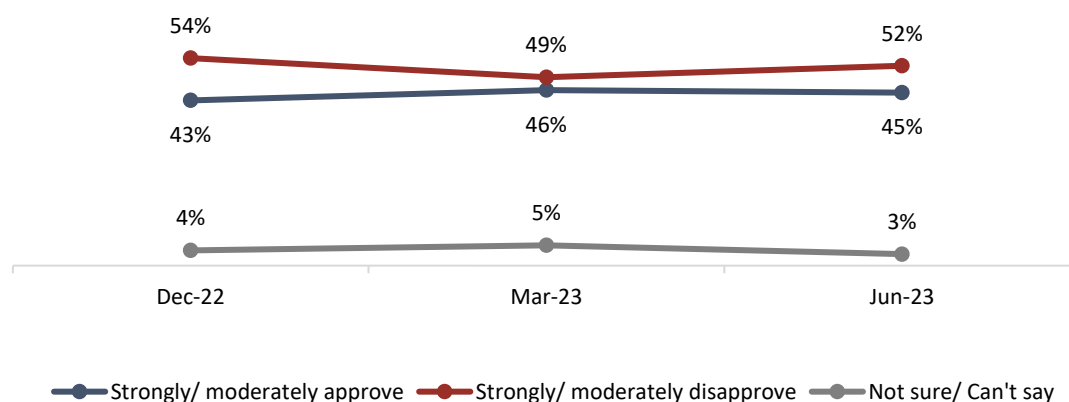
In May, Alberta's Danielle Smith became the second premier to lead her incumbent party to a majority election victory this year, defeating Rachel Notley's New Democrats by a close but comfortable margin.

### **Related: Alberta Election Poll**

Smith's campaign was a successful yet bumpy one, but relatively strong economic indicators will offer her a foundation to launch the UCP's agenda for the coming months and years. Inflation, housing affordability, and other cost of living challenges will continue to loom large in Albertans' provincial priorities.

And while Smith's personal appeal remains unchanged this quarter, she has earned additional time to improve her profile. Overall, 45 per cent of Alberta residents approve of Smith's performance – a number largely similar to that noted for the premier in each previous wave of polling. As was also the case in previous data, those disapproving of her work thus far outweigh those with a positive assessment:

**Approval of Alberta Premier Danielle Smith**



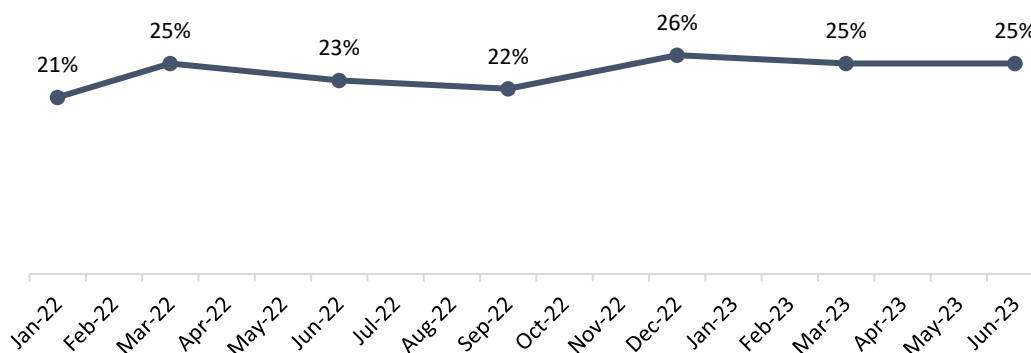
### **Heather Stefanson – Manitoba**

The same electoral success is not a given for Manitoba's Heather Stefanson. Manitobans are expected to head to the polls in October, with the incumbent Progressive Conservative government trailing in (to this point sparse) election polling, and Stefanson's personal appeal remaining among the worst in the country for more than a year. Stefanson will have a full campaign to turn this situation around, but a staggering two-thirds (66%) of Manitobans disapprove of her at this point. With pride month underway, Stefanson recently announced an increase in funding for LGBTQ2+ programs, and said that she would walk in this year's march, after speaking last year but not taking part in the parade.

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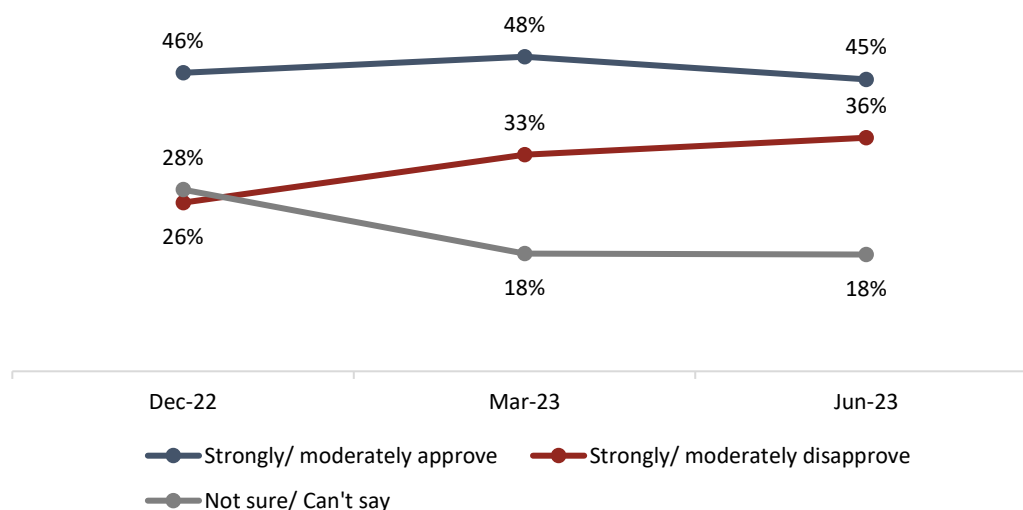
### Approval of Manitoba Premier Heather Stefanson



### David Eby – British Columbia

NDP leader and Premier David Eby is wrapping up a two-week trade mission to Asia, meeting with representatives from South Korea, Japan, and Singapore. Eby and his delegation have not met with Chinese officials, B.C.'s second largest trade partner. One notable proposal from [Japanese firm Daito](#) would see that company build and operate rental housing in British Columbia. With homeowners and renters both struggling in the province, Eby said this is something [he would support](#). Eby is approved of by 45 per cent of constituents, with 18 per cent remaining uncertain:

### Approval of B.C. Premier David Eby



### CONTACT:

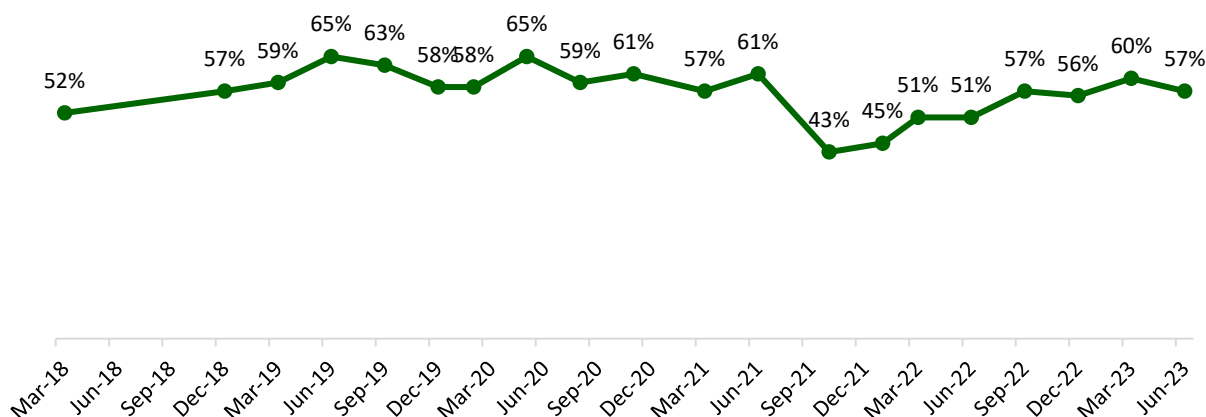
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## Scott Moe – Saskatchewan

Premier Scott Moe once again sits atop the premier approval leaderboard, with approximately three-in-five residents (57%) offering a positive assessment of his performance. Moe [professed a satisfaction](#) with Smith's victory to his west, hoping that he and the UCP leader can formulate [an alliance](#) to take on the federal government to his east. Both Alberta and Saskatchewan operate resource-intensive economies and each government has taken umbrage with Ottawa's carbon pricing and broader climate goals in recent years.

### Approval of Saskatchewan Premier Scott Moe



## Doug Ford – Ontario

Now is the summer of Ontario Premier Doug Ford's discontent. Dissatisfaction with Ford and his PC government has lingered one year after the party was re-elected with a majority mandate. It has culminated [with rallies at Queen's Park and in cities across the province](#) as protesters demanded action from the government on numerous fronts – affordable housing, cost of living, education, health care.

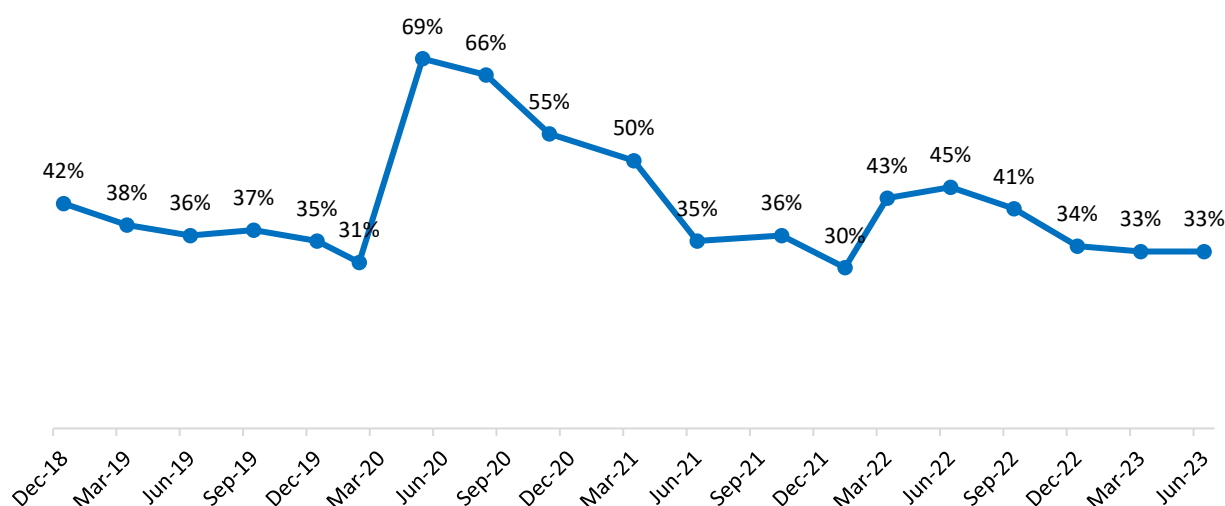
On the latter issue, Ontario has moved further [towards privatization](#) to help ease the province's surgical backlog. Critics have said it will lead to a "two-tiered" system and worry about the potential for [upselling patients](#) for unnecessary services on top of what's covered by the government.

All this adds up to persistent low approval ratings for Ford. One-third of Ontarians assess him positively:

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### Approval of Ontario Premier Doug Ford



### François Legault – Quebec

The final provisions of Quebec's controversial Bill 96 came into effect this month, including [much criticized restrictions](#) on English communication from government agencies. The law is [subject to a number of legal challenges](#) as critics worry about the potential effect the bill will have on the province's [English-speaking minority](#).

The government of Premier François Legault, too, has faced criticism over its decision to break [a campaign promise](#) to build a highway tunnel connecting Quebec City to Lévis. Meanwhile, the government tabled a bill to raise the salaries of legislators in the province, [making members of the national assembly the highest paid provincial politicians in Canada](#). This decision has been subject to scrutiny from the province's ethics commissioner, who says [MNAs are in a conflict of interest](#) to set their own salaries.

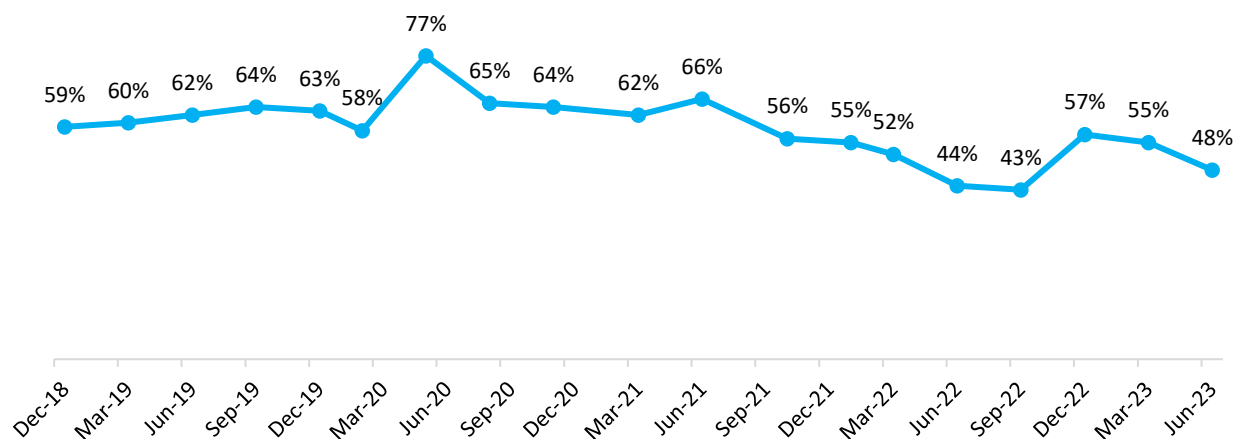
All this likely contributes to a declining approval rating for Legault. Half of Quebecers (48%) approve of the Coalition Avenir Québec leader, a dip from a premier who usually enjoys majority approval.

Still, Legault remains more popular among his party, receiving [a 98.6 per cent confidence vote](#) at the CAQ's recent policy convention.

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### Approval of Quebec Premier François Legault



### Blaine Higgs – New Brunswick

New Brunswick Premier Blaine Higgs continues to be one of the least approved-of premiers in the country. Three-in-ten (28%) in New Brunswick approve of Higgs.

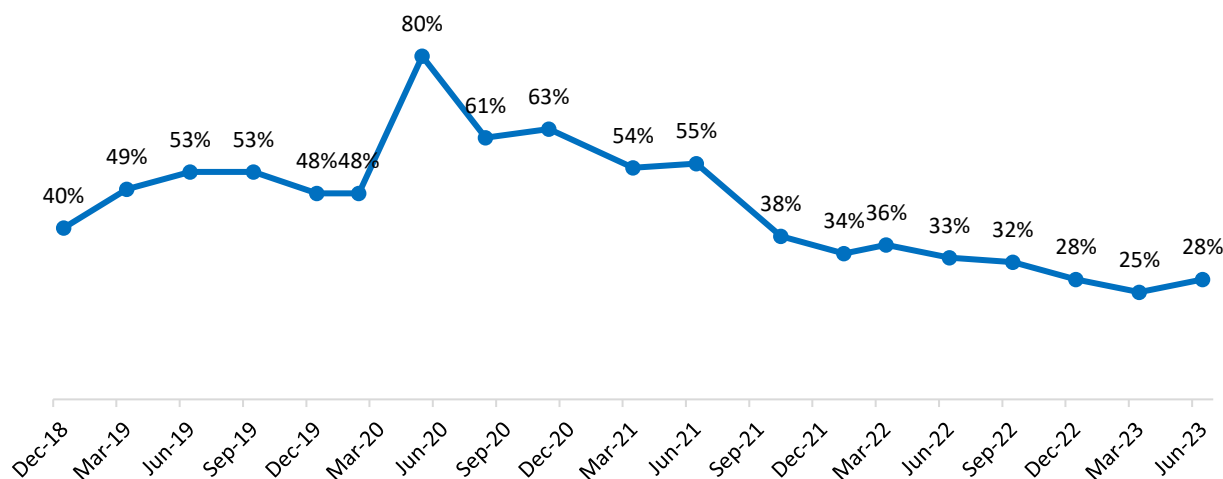
April brought a poor omen for Higgs and the Progressive Conservatives in the form of a trio of [by-election losses](#) in the francophone northern region of the province. Higgs was [quick to dismiss](#) the losses as expected in the traditionally Liberal ridings, but one of the party's candidates received just 8.6 per cent of the vote, [a near historic low for the PC party](#). There has been much criticism of the PC government's linguistic policy, including [a controversial overhaul of French-language education](#) that Higgs and the PCs retreated from.

Meanwhile, there are other issues for the PC government in the area of education. The province is reviewing [its policy](#) on LGBTQ students at school, including a section related to students adopting new pronouns or names without their parents being made aware. Higgs is against that provision, and has faced [dissent from his cabinet](#) on the proposed review.

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### Approval of New Brunswick Premier Blaine Higgs



### Tim Houston – Nova Scotia

Thousands of residents have been forced from their homes as wildfires have burned across Nova Scotia. There has been [some relief](#) in recent days, but the province has needed the help of firefighters from [neighbouring provinces, the United States and Costa Rica](#) to help fight the blazes. Premier Tim Houston has become a regular fixture on Nova Scotians screens throughout the crisis, providing updates on the fires and [scolding those violating the province's burn ban](#).

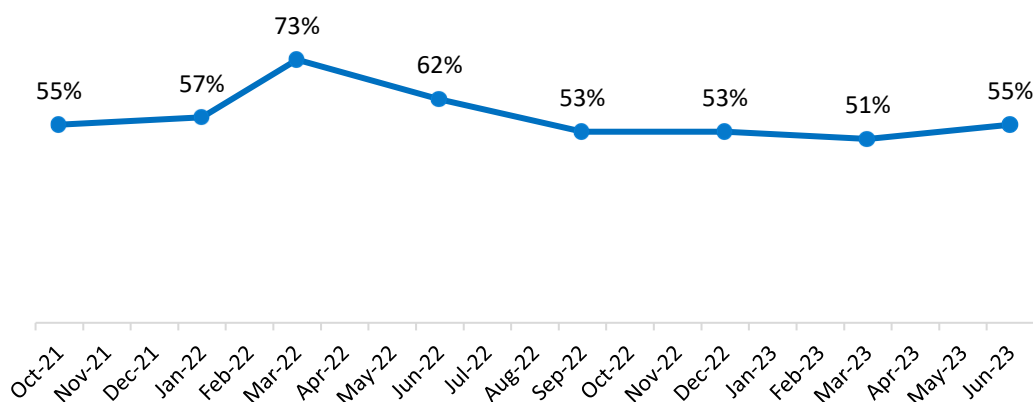
Houston continues to be a positively appraised premier with majority (55%) approval from constituents:

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### Approval of Nova Scotia Premier Tim Houston



### Andrew Furey – Newfoundland and Labrador

While Andrew Furey's westernmost counterpart Eby was in Asia this quarter, Furey and his team visited the Netherlands to "sell, sell, sell" the province's hydrogen capacity. Furey and Energy Minister Andrew Parsons visited with delegates from 75 countries, signing a declaration to explore opportunities involving a hydrogen-to-ammonia process, considered a key [green-hydrogen](#) technology for the province. This memorandum of understanding on hydrogen comes as the province faces a hefty setback, as the Bay Du Nord offshore oil project was delayed three years by Norwegian developer Equinor. The company cited [changing market conditions](#) for the adjusted timeline.

After a brief bump in approval in March, Furey settles back at a familiar level of approval this quarter – close to half (47%):

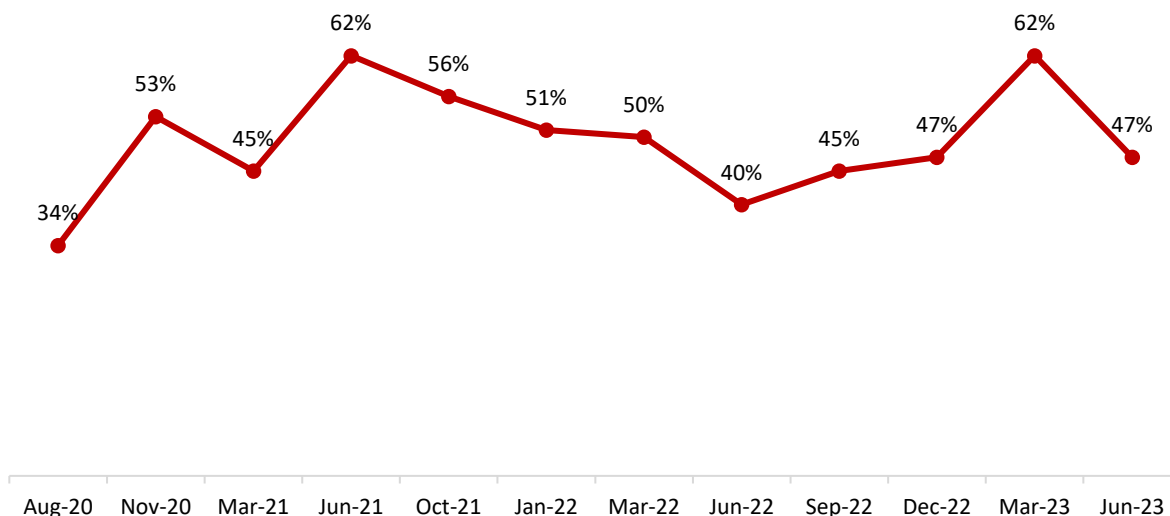
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### Approval of Newfoundland and Labrador Premier Andrew Furey



Provincial margins of error								
BC (456)	AB (355)	SK (330)	MB (515)	ON (750)	QC (600)	NB (256)	NS (372)	NL (192)
+/- 5%	+/- 5%	+/- 5%	+/- 4%	+/- 3%	+/- 4%	+/- 6%	+/- 5%	+/- 7%

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

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**Summary tables to follow**

Approve/Disapprove by Province									
(Unweighted sample sizes)	Province								
	BC (456)	AB (355)	SK (330)	MB (515)	ON (750)	QC (600)	NB (256)	NS (372)	NL (192)
Strongly Approve	8%	23%	25%	3%	6%	16%	7%	15%	7%
Moderately approve	37%	22%	32%	22%	27%	32%	21%	40%	40%
Moderately disapprove	18%	13%	12%	24%	19%	17%	24%	24%	21%
Strongly disapprove	18%	39%	27%	42%	45%	29%	43%	15%	24%
Not sure	18%	3%	4%	9%	4%	6%	5%	6%	7%

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