

Five-Year Decline: Canadians growing more critical of their provincial governments as unresolved issues linger

Most believe their province is performing poorly on their top two priorities: health care and cost of living

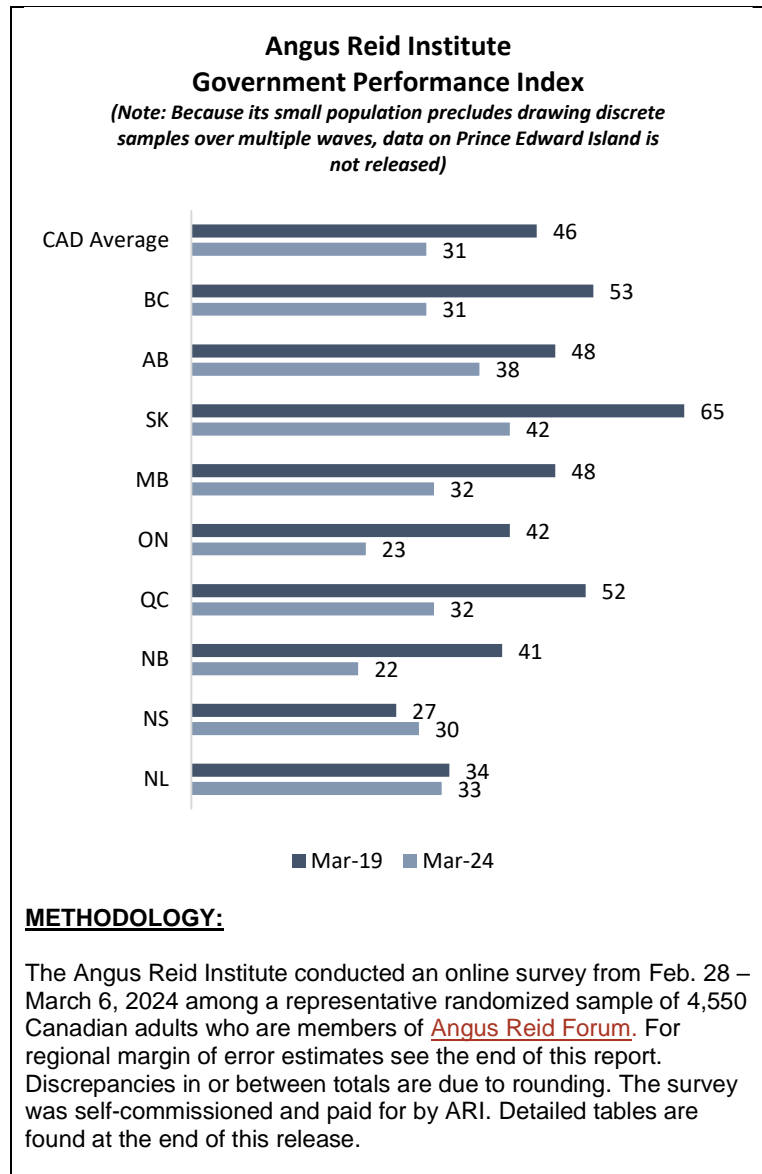
March 13, 2024 – New data from the non-profit Angus Reid Institute finds Canadians in most provinces across the country significantly more critical of their respective provincial government's performance around service delivery and issues management than they were five years ago.

ARI's Government Performance Index – which averages the number of provincial residents who say their government is doing a "good job" on key issues such as health care, inflation, housing affordability, education and more – has seen a 15-point drop on average across the country. Saskatchewan leads the way with a score of 42 – a mark that would have put it sixth in the country five years ago.

This is driven by a perceived lack of progress – and indeed, outright decline – by provinces on persistent issues headlined by [health care](#), a provincial issue of high importance according to respondents both five years ago and today.

A majority in every province in the country believe their provincial government is performing poorly on health care as premiers and health ministers struggle to address the myriad problems facing Canada's health systems.

But health care isn't the only issue provincial governments have struggled with for a half-decade. Tenured governments in B.C., Ontario and Quebec have seen increased criticism over handling of key issues such as housing affordability and education while the new government in Manitoba deals with lingering concerns about public safety.



CONTACT:

Shachi Kurl, President: 604.908.1693 shachi.kurl@angusreid.org @shachikurl
Dave Korzinski, Research Director: 250.899.0821 dave.korzinski@angusreid.org
Jon Roe, Research Associate: 825.437.1147, jon.roe@angusreid.org

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.

INDEX

- **Top provincial issues**
- **Government Performance Index**
- **Provinces going to the polls – B.C., Saskatchewan, New Brunswick**
- **Harsh reviews of multi-term governments from residents in Quebec, Ontario**
- **Kinew, Smith face different priorities from prairie constituents**
- **Criticism of health care performance in Nova Scotia, Newfoundland and Labrador**

Top provincial issues

Canadians' priorities have been clear and evident in recent years. They are concerned with the rising cost of living and with the state of health care. These issues rank foremost in residents' minds in all provinces across the country.

There are some variations behind those top concerns. In B.C., Ontario, and Nova Scotia, at least two-in-five believe housing affordability is a top issue facing their province. Public safety is an elevated concern in Manitoba, while education is a priority for those in Saskatchewan and Quebec, two provinces where labour action from teachers interrupted the current school year.

CONTACT:

Shachi Kurl, President: 604.908.1693 shachi.kurl@angusreid.org @shachikurl
Dave Korzinski, Research Director: 250.899.0821 dave.korzinski@angusreid.org
Jon Roe, Research Associate: 825.437.1147, jon.roe@angusreid.org

Top provincial issues (Up to three chosen, top eight overall shown; Note: Because its small population precludes drawing discrete samples over multiple waves, data on Prince Edward Island is not released)									
(Unweighted sample sizes)	Province								
	BC (813)	AB (409)	SK (389)	MB (354)	ON (908)	QC (655)	NB (387)	NS (350)	NL (218)
Cost of living/ Inflation	60%	61%	62%	71%	63%	55%	63%	70%	81%
Health Care	50%	51%	58%	58%	57%	63%	74%	67%	66%
Housing Affordability	40%	27%	15%	25%	42%	34%	33%	40%	27%
Education	10%	17%	30%	13%	19%	33%	12%	13%	8%
The Economy/ Jobs	16%	27%	26%	18%	20%	18%	16%	20%	27%
Street crime/ Public safety	26%	20%	16%	28%	23%	8%	13%	10%	12%
Environment/ Climate Change	21%	11%	12%	19%	17%	24%	16%	20%	11%
The Deficit/ Government spending	14%	14%	19%	18%	12%	18%	12%	10%	22%

Government Performance Index

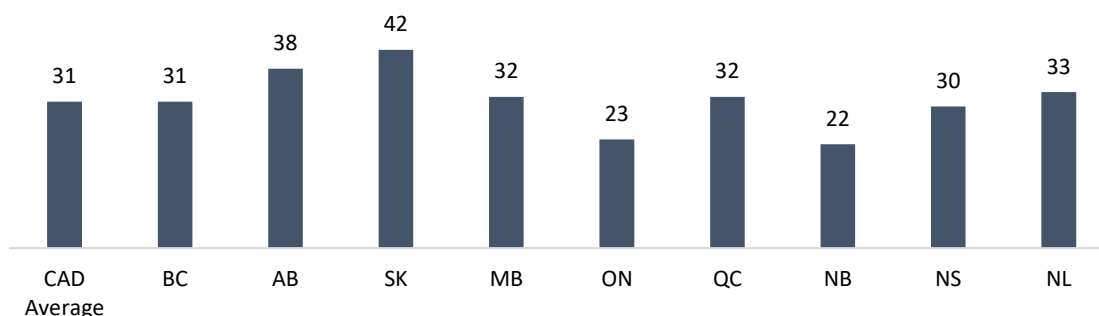
Regardless of which issues residents prioritize, there is a sense that provincial governments across the country are struggling to address the key files of the day. The Angus Reid Institute’s Government Performance Index is an average of the proportion of respondents who believe their provincial government is doing a “good job” on a variety of key issues ([see detailed tables](#)). The Saskatchewan government leads the country on this metric at 42, while New Brunswick is at the bottom with a score of 22. Both provinces are in an election year.

CONTACT:

Shachi Kurl, President: 604.908.1693 shachi.kurl@angusreid.org @shachikurl
 Dave Korzinski, Research Director: 250.899.0821 dave.korzinski@angusreid.org
 Jon Roe, Research Associate: 825.437.1147, jon.roe@angusreid.org

**Angus Reid Institute
Government Performance Index
(March 2024)**

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



Provinces going to the polls – B.C., Saskatchewan, New Brunswick

Saskatchewan

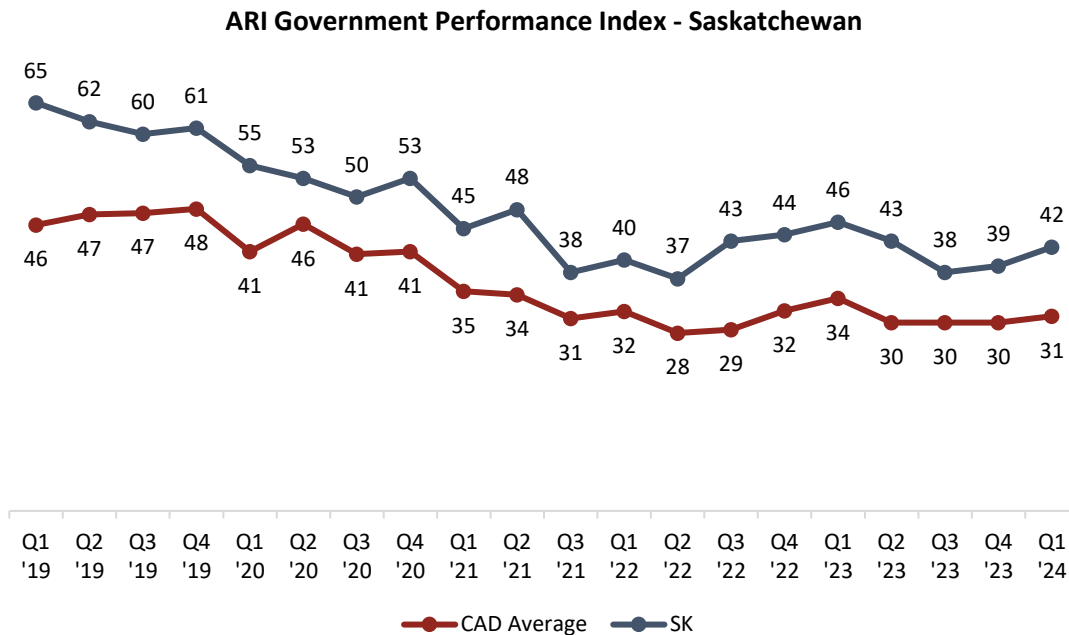
Under Premier Scott Moe and the Saskatchewan party, the Saskatchewan government has consistently outperformed its peers when it comes to residents' assessments of how it is handling key files. However, it has not been immune to the rising tide of criticism facing all provincial governments, especially on the top issues of health care and inflation.

Related: Blast radius: Satisfaction with provincial governments crashes after years of COVID-19, cost of living crisis

Five years ago, praise of the Saskatchewan government's performance averaged a majority level across the issues surveyed. Today, while majorities believe Moe's government is performing well on the economy (52%) and energy policy (60%), there is widespread criticism elsewhere.

CONTACT:

Shachi Kurl, President: 604.908.1693 shachi.kurl@angusreid.org @shachikurl
 Dave Korzinski, Research Director: 250.899.0821 dave.korzinski@angusreid.org
 Jon Roe, Research Associate: 825.437.1147, jon.roe@angusreid.org



A majority in Saskatchewan say the government is doing a poor job on health care (66%), inflation (61%), and education (62%, [see detailed tables](#)), residents' top three concerns.

Health care has been a consistent bugaboo for half a decade, growing in prominence as issues in the system mount. The province has made strides by hiring 1,000 nursing graduates to help [fulfill its nursing shortage](#), but there are lingering concerns over health care coverage [in rural areas](#).

Criticism has also built on the affordability file. While the province sent out \$500 cheques to residents in 2022 to help deal with the rising cost of living, critics feel the Saskatchewan government could be doing more – such as [temporarily suspending the gasoline tax](#), a measure taken by Alberta and Manitoba.

On the plus side for Moe and the Saskatchewan Party as it heads towards a fall election, it is viewed as performing well on the economy, an issue that has consistently been at the forefront for provincial residents:

CONTACT:

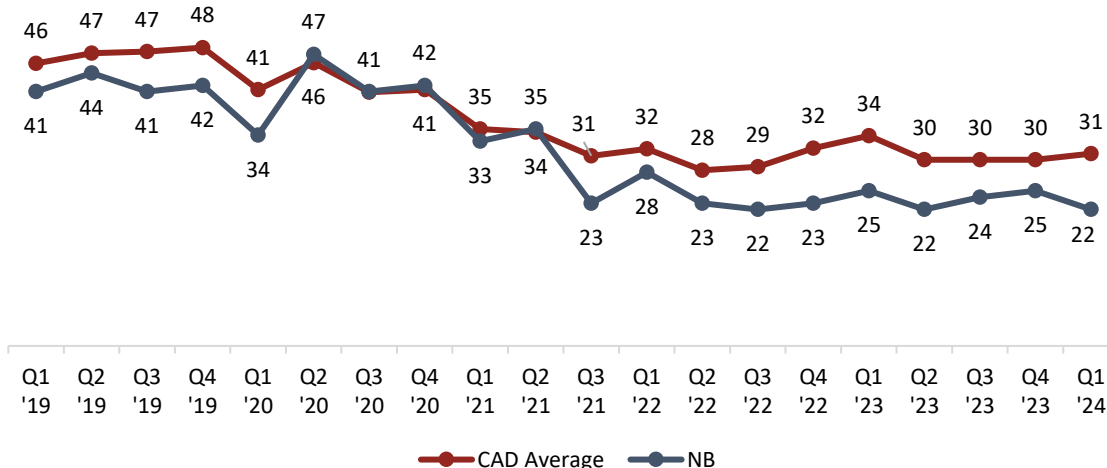
Shachi Kurl, President: 604.908.1693 shachi.kurl@angusreid.org @shachikurl
 Dave Korzinski, Research Director: 250.899.0821 dave.korzinski@angusreid.org
 Jon Roe, Research Associate: 825.437.1147, jon.roe@angusreid.org

Saskatchewan top five provincial issues (Up to three chosen; persistent issues highlighted)					
Mar-19	Health Care 33%	The Economy 32%	Taxes 27%	Jobs/ unemployment 23%	Crime/ Public safety 23%
Mar-24	Cost of living/ Inflation 62%	Health Care 58%	Education 30%	The Economy/ Jobs 26%	The Deficit/ Government spending 19%

New Brunswick

The ruling Progressive Conservatives of New Brunswick enter that province’s election year in a much weaker position than Moe and the Saskatchewan Party. Under Premier Blaine Higgs, the government has performed worse than its peers more often than not over the past half decade. Currently, it fares worst of all provinces canvassed in overall performance satisfaction:

ARI Government Performance Index - New Brunswick



Higgs and the Progressive Conservatives receive the most criticism from residents on their highest priorities: health care, housing affordability and inflation. On each issue, at least four-in-five say the government has done a poor job ([see detailed tables](#)). With an election looming, the government has taken steps to address those priorities. In January, [Higgs announced one-time payments](#) to lower income families and additional benefits for low-income seniors and those living on social assistance, while also making promises about health care and addressing housing affordability.

However, it is perhaps the persistence of the health care issue that will prove problematic for Higgs and the Progressive Conservatives as they begin their campaign for re-election. Five years ago, health care was the top priority, selected by half (48%) of respondents. It is still the top priority, with three-quarters (74%) of those in New Brunswick saying it is a high concern for them. That comes alongside severely negative reviews of the government’s performance on the issue – 90 per cent in the province believe New

CONTACT:

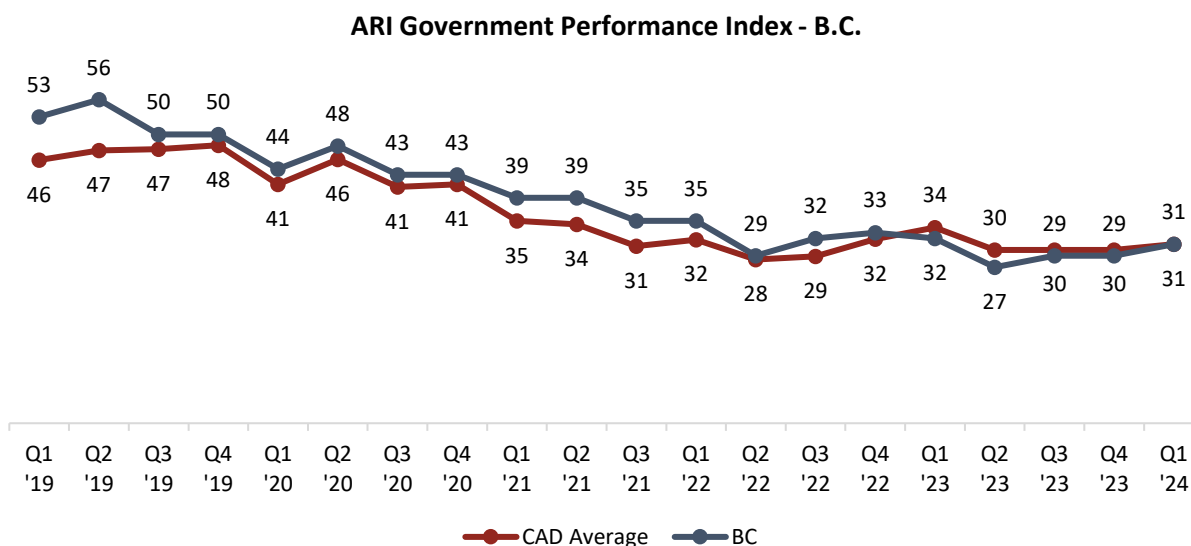
Shachi Kurl, President: 604.908.1693 shachi.kurl@angusreid.org @shachikurl
 Dave Korzinski, Research Director: 250.899.0821 dave.korzinski@angusreid.org
 Jon Roe, Research Associate: 825.437.1147, jon.roe@angusreid.org

Brunswick has done a poor job addressing it. This follows after the government released a previous plan to fix the health-care system but has missed and moved self-imposed deadlines.

New Brunswick top five provincial issues (Up to three chosen; persistent issues highlighted)					
Mar-19	Health Care 48%	The Economy 32%	Taxes 32%	Jobs/ unemployment 32%	Education 22%
Mar-24	Health Care 74%	Cost of living/ Inflation 63%	Housing 33%	Poverty/ homelessness 22%	The Economy/ Jobs 16%

British Columbia

On the opposite coast, Premier David Eby and the BC NDP government also face a re-election battle this year. Overall reviews of the government's performance are poor, but the government has closely tracked with its peers according to the Government Performance Index in recent years:



The New Democrat government dates back to the 2017 election, when it first won a minority under then Premier John Horgan. Eby took over as premier in 2022 after Horgan retired. Throughout its tenure, there have been consistent concerns over health care and housing, with the former rising in prominence in recent years.

While Eby is new to the office of premier, he is a veteran of the housing file after previously serving as the housing minister under Horgan. Eby has used the top role to advance sweeping changes but the effects of the policies won't likely be felt for years. And British Columbians remain critical. Four-in-five (78%) believe the government has done a poor job on housing affordability.

CONTACT:

Shachi Kurl, President: 604.908.1693 shachi.kurl@angusreid.org @shachikurl
 Dave Korzinski, Research Director: 250.899.0821 dave.korzinski@angusreid.org
 Jon Roe, Research Associate: 825.437.1147, jon.roe@angusreid.org

Health care, too, is a source of severe criticism for the B.C. government. Seven-in-ten (69%) say the government has done a poor job handling health care. The government launched a \$1-billion plan to recruit health care professionals to fill shortages in 2022, but residents appear to believe more work needs to be done. In August last year, half of British Columbians said either they didn't have a family doctor or it was difficult to get an appointment with the one they had.

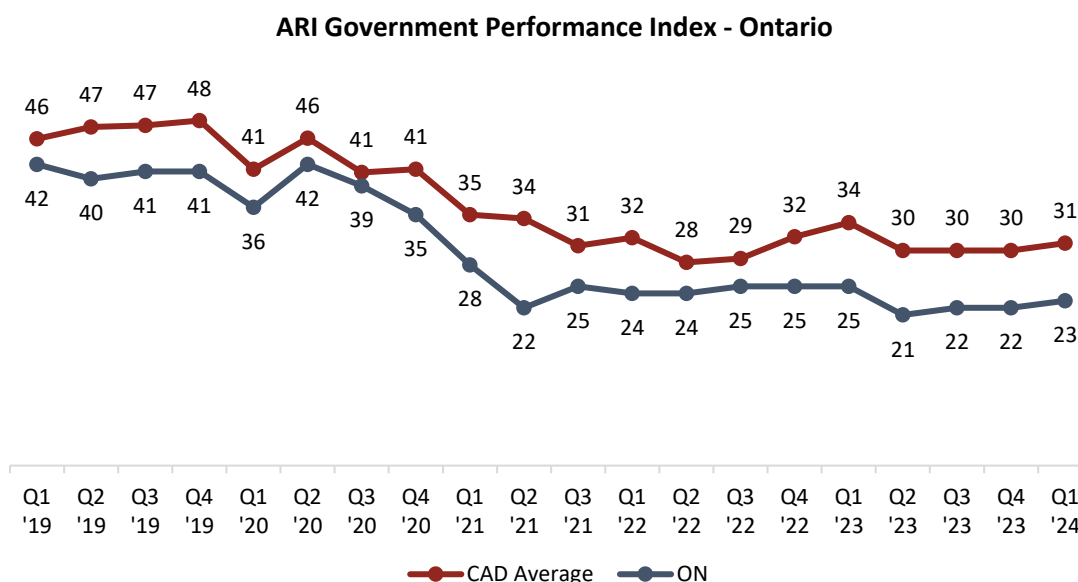
Related: [After a 'decade of decline' in health care, Canadians not convinced that money is enough to solve the crisis](#)

British Columbia top five provincial issues (Up to three chosen; persistent issues highlighted)					
Mar-19	Housing 40%	Health Care 28%	Environment/ Climate change 27%	Energy – Oil & Gas/ Pipelines 24%	Taxes 21%
Mar-24	Cost of living/ Inflation 60%	Health Care 50%	Housing 40%	Street crime/ Public safety 26%	Environment/ Climate change 21%

Harsh reviews of multi-term governments from residents in Quebec, Ontario

Ontario

Ontarians have had a poor opinion of the performance of the government of Premier Doug Ford for much of the period since the beginning of the pandemic of 2020. That did not stop Ford from cruising to a second majority in the 2022 election. Ford's government ranks ahead of only the provincial government of New Brunswick on ARI's Government Performance Index:



Ford and the PC government is seen as performing poorly on all issues by a majority of constituents with the exception of three – energy policy, their relationship with the federal government and disaster

CONTACT:

Shachi Kurl, President: 604.908.1693 shachi.kurl@angusreid.org @shachikurl
 Dave Korzinski, Research Director: 250.899.0821 dave.korzinski@angusreid.org
 Jon Roe, Research Associate: 825.437.1147, jon.roe@angusreid.org

planning, the top concerns of five per cent or fewer of the population ([see detailed tables](#)). At least four-in-five believe the government is performing poorly on cost of living (81%), health care (79%) and housing affordability (85%), the top three issues of Ontarians.

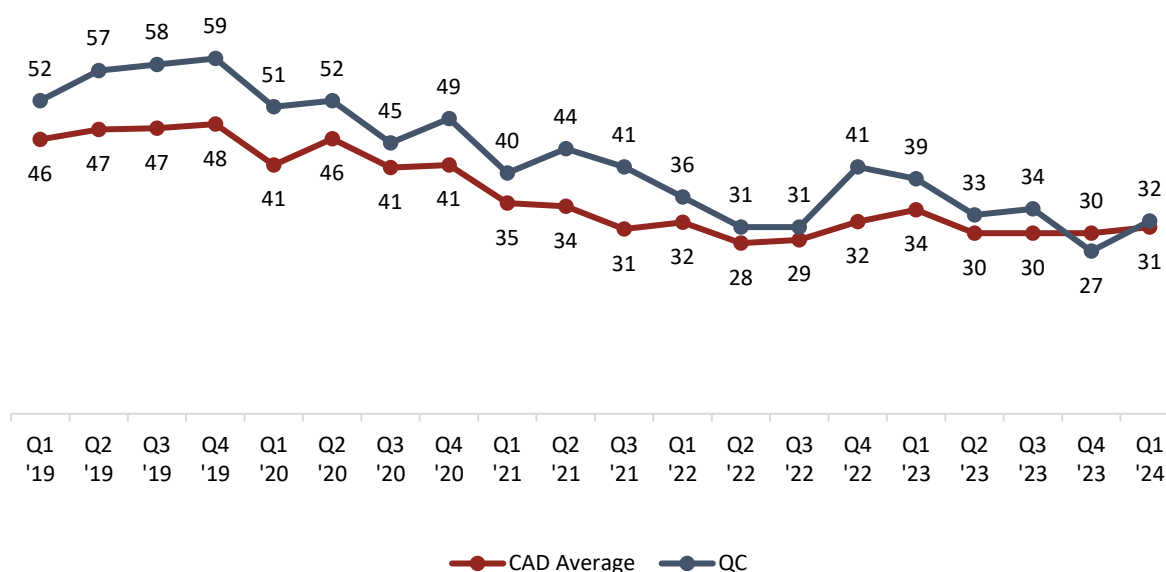
Health care continues to be a particular sore spot for Ford's government. Opposition parties have called for [more investment in the system](#) ahead of the province's budget amid accusations Ford's government is [intentionally withholding resources to benefit private health delivery](#). In a half decade, the issue has only grown in importance.

Ontario top five provincial issues (Up to three chosen; persistent issues highlighted)					
Mar-19	Health Care 46%	Environment/ Climate change 24%	Education 23%	Taxes 21%	The Economy 21%
Mar-24	Cost of living/ Inflation 63%	Health Care 57%	Housing 42%	Crime/ Public safety 23%	The Economy/ Jobs 20%

Quebec

In neighbouring Quebec, residents are less critical of their provincial government, but have become more negative than at previous points of Premier François Legault and the Coalition Avenir Quebec's two-term tenure. Five years ago, during Legault's first majority, the government was one of the better reviewed in the country. That gap in performance has eroded in Legault's second term:

ARI Government Performance Index - Quebec



CONTACT:

Shachi Kurl, President: 604.908.1693 shachi.kurl@angusreid.org @shachikurl
 Dave Korzinski, Research Director: 250.899.0821 dave.korzinski@angusreid.org
 Jon Roe, Research Associate: 825.437.1147, jon.roe@angusreid.org

The spotlight has been on education in the province in recent months after [job action by teachers as they sought a new contract](#) halted learning at many schools in the province. However, it has been persistent concern for Quebecers – five years ago one-third also selected it as a top priority. Even after resolving the strike in December last year, two-thirds (66%) in the province believe Legault’s government is performing poorly on the issue, one of four issues where the government receives a thumbs down on its performance by two-thirds or more of residents ([see detailed tables](#)).

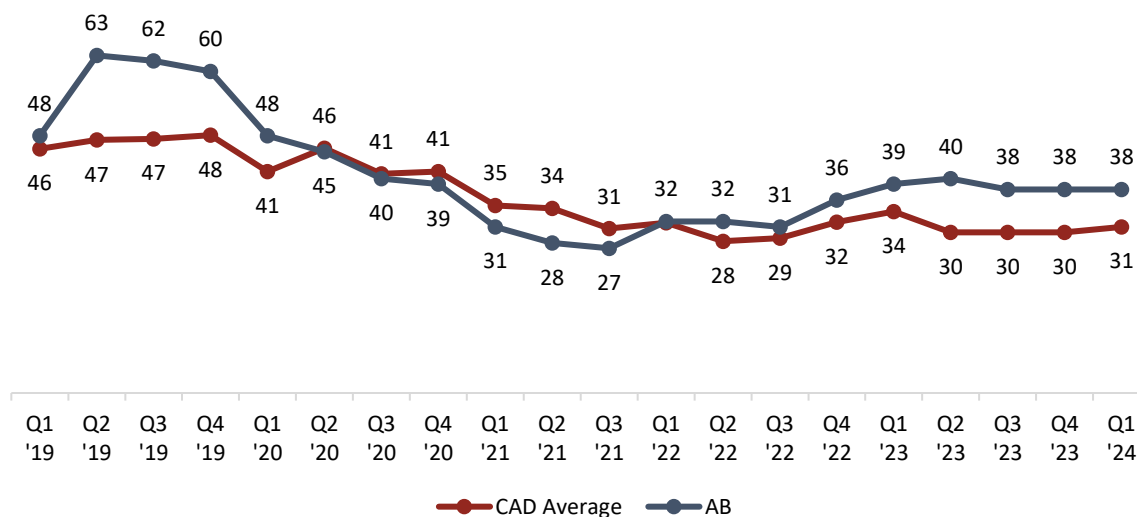
Quebec top five provincial issues (Up to three chosen; persistent issues highlighted)					
Mar-19	Health Care 56%	Environment/ Climate change 38%	Education 35%	Seniors care 27%	The Economy 19%
Mar-24	Health Care 63%	Cost of living/ Inflation 55%	Housing 34%	Education 33%	Environment/ Climate change 24%

Kinew, Smith face different priorities from prairie constituents

Alberta

The early years of UCP government in Alberta brought high praise from constituents, but acclaim turned to criticism throughout the pandemic. Danielle Smith replacing Jason Kenney as premier has coincided with an increase in positivity from Albertans towards their government – it trails only Saskatchewan on ARI’s Government Performance Index – but there is evidently much work to be done to ascend back to the highs of the early years of Kenney’s term:

ARI Government Performance Index - Alberta



In 2019, Kenney and the UCP rode a wave of dissatisfaction with the governing NDP to a majority government. The province had suffered through a period of lower oil prices, [hurting the economy and the provincial budget](#). With [higher oil prices and more royalty revenue coming in](#), five years later, concerns

CONTACT:

Shachi Kurl, President: 604.908.1693 shachi.kurl@angusreid.org @shachikurl
 Dave Korzinski, Research Director: 250.899.0821 dave.korzinski@angusreid.org
 Jon Roe, Research Associate: 825.437.1147, jon.roe@angusreid.org

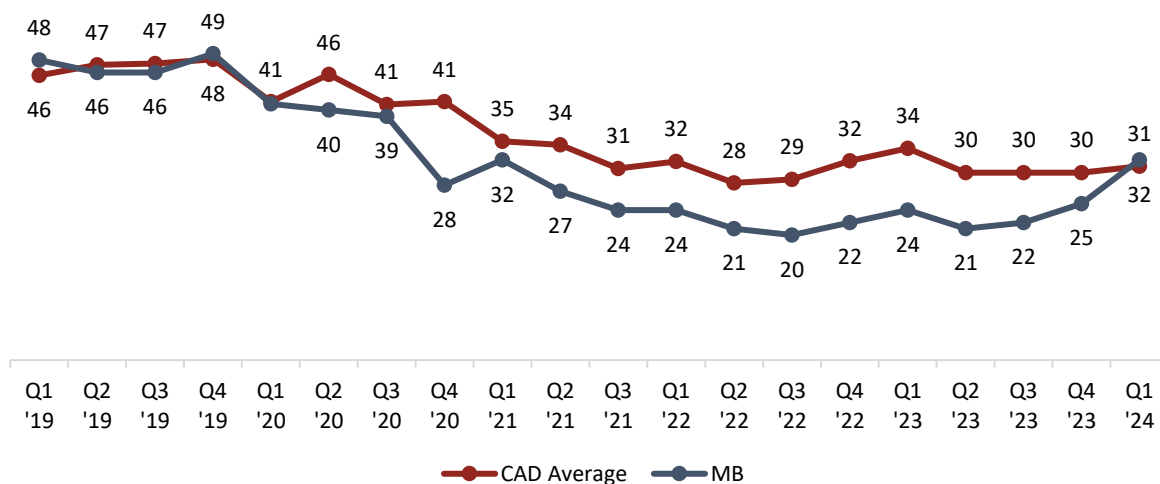
over the economy have been replaced by worry over health care. Albertans are critical of government performance on that file – 61 per cent say it is doing poorly. Smith and the UCP are in the midst of [major surgery on the health-care system](#), but issues – [dissatisfaction among health-care workers](#), [criticism of the handling of laboratory services](#), [rural emergency room closures](#) – persist.

Alberta top five provincial issues (Up to three chosen; persistent issues highlighted)					
Mar-19	Energy – Oil & Gas/ Pipelines 48%	Jobs/ unemployment 42%	The Economy 39%	Health Care 26%	The Deficit/ Government spending 23%
Mar-24	Cost of living/ Inflation 61%	Health Care 51%	Housing 27%	The Economy/ Jobs 27%	Energy policy – Oil & Gas/ Pipelines 16%

Manitoba

Further east, dissatisfaction with provincial government performance likely played a role in the defeat of former Premier Heather Stefanson and the Progressive Conservative government in the 2023 Manitoba election. Stefanson was plagued by poor reviews from Manitobans during her two-year stint in office. Assessments have rebounded in the first months of Premier Wab Kinew and the NDP's government:

ARI Government Performance Index - Manitoba



Prior to the pandemic, health care was the top issue in the province. Five years later, it has been surpassed by inflation, but has continued to grow in importance in the eyes of Manitobans. Kinew is assessing the province's health authorities with [the goal of improving patient experience](#). Manitobans remain critical of government performance on the file, but one-in-six (15%) are withholding assessment in these early days for the Kinew regime ([see detailed tables](#)).

CONTACT:

Shachi Kurl, President: 604.908.1693 shachi.kurl@angusreid.org @shachikurl
 Dave Korzinski, Research Director: 250.899.0821 dave.korzinski@angusreid.org
 Jon Roe, Research Associate: 825.437.1147, jon.roe@angusreid.org

Public safety is another persistent concern in the province, one that the NDP government is hoping to address by [reforming the bail system](#).

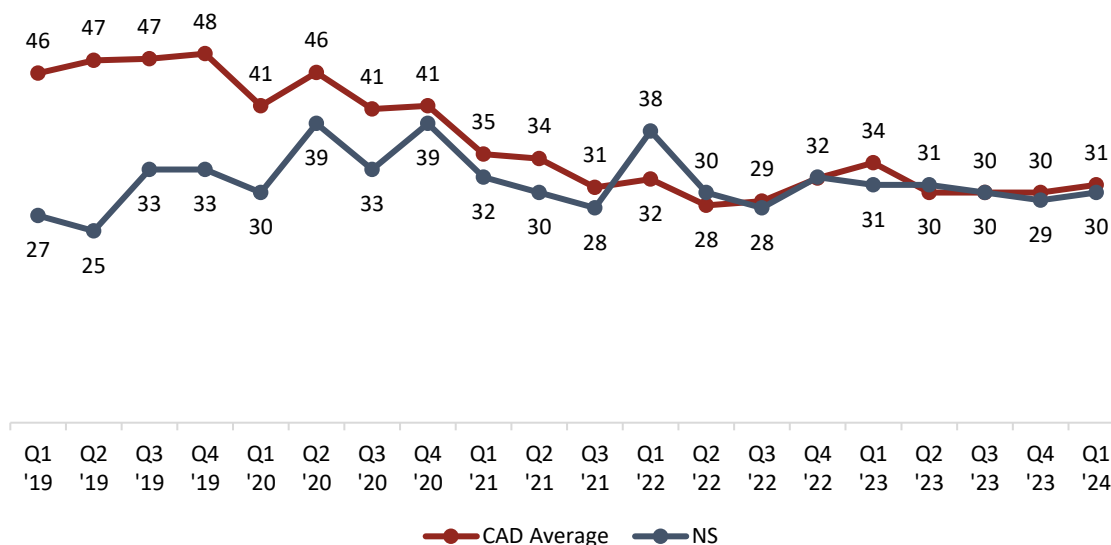
Manitoba top five provincial issues (Up to three chosen; persistent issues highlighted)					
Mar-19	Health Care 47%	Taxes 27%	Crime/ Public safety 26%	Drug use/ addictions 23%	The Economy 21%
Mar-24	Cost of living/ Inflation 71%	Health Care 58%	Crime/ Public safety 28%	Housing 25%	Poverty/ homelessness 20%

Criticism of health care performance in Nova Scotia, Newfoundland and Labrador

Nova Scotia

The Nova Scotia government had received poorer than average grades from residents leading into the 2021 election, which saw power in the province transfer from a two-term Liberal majority to a Progressive Conservative one under Premier Tim Houston. Overall, assessments from Nova Scotians have varied little between the two regimes as Canadians across the country have become more critical of their provincial governments elsewhere:

ARI Government Performance Index - Nova Scotia



Health care remains a top concern and a source of criticism for Nova Scotians. Two-thirds (65%) say Houston’s government is performing poorly on the issue. [Wait times are high](#) and [there is a shortage of family doctors](#) among other concerns. The province [has increased health care spending under Houston](#) but residents have yet to see the fruits from the PC party’s labour to reform the health-care system.

CONTACT:

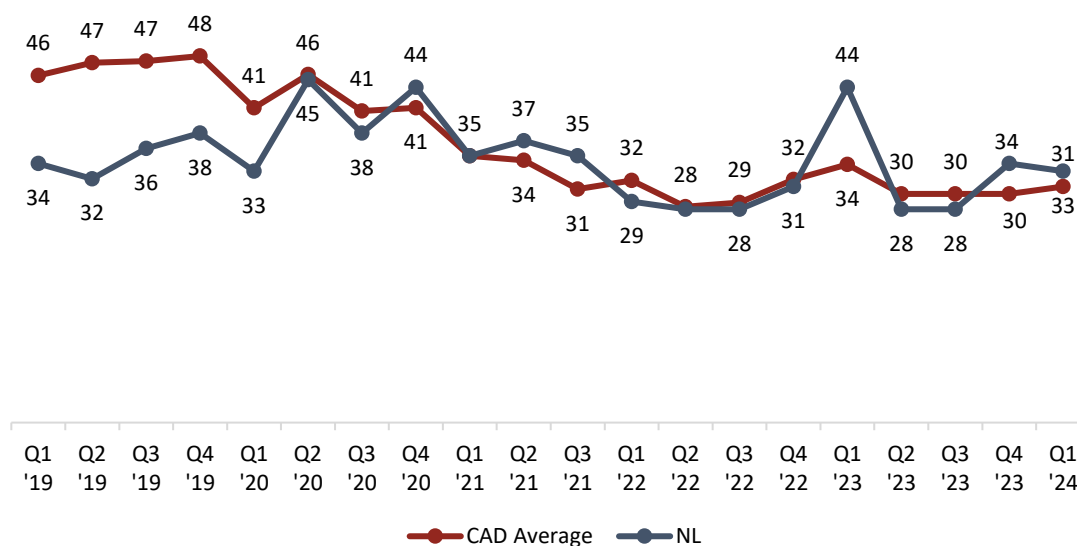
Shachi Kurl, President: 604.908.1693 shachi.kurl@angusreid.org @shachikurl
 Dave Korzinski, Research Director: 250.899.0821 dave.korzinski@angusreid.org
 Jon Roe, Research Associate: 825.437.1147, jon.roe@angusreid.org

Nova Scotia top five provincial issues (Up to three chosen; persistent issues highlighted)					
Mar-19	Health Care 79%	The Economy 22%	Jobs/ unemployment 22%	Taxes 21%	Seniors care 21%
Mar-24	Cost of living/ Inflation 70%	Health Care 67%	Housing 40%	Poverty/ homelessness 25%	Environment/ Climate change 20%

Newfoundland and Labrador

This is the ninth year the provincial Liberals have been in power in Newfoundland and Labrador, making it the longest tenured government after the Saskatchewan Party. The past five years have seen both praise and criticism for the government's performance from residents, but it has mostly tracked to the Canadian average on the Government Performance Index:

ARI Government Performance Index - Newfoundland and Labrador



Far and away, health care and inflation are the top two issues in Canada's easternmost province. Four-in-five (78%) residents say the government is performing poorly on the former, while a similar number (80%) believe it has mishandled the latter. To address a lack of family doctors, the province has been expanding virtual care, but the move has been criticized for [further increasing privatization in the health-care system](#). The province has [struggled to fill health care vacancies](#) while coming under fire for [paying private nurses elevated hourly rates as stop gaps](#).

CONTACT:

Shachi Kurl, President: 604.908.1693 shachi.kurl@angusreid.org @shachikurl
 Dave Korzinski, Research Director: 250.899.0821 dave.korzinski@angusreid.org
 Jon Roe, Research Associate: 825.437.1147, jon.roe@angusreid.org

Newfoundland and Labrador top five provincial issues (Up to three chosen; persistent issues highlighted)					
Mar-19	The Economy 39%	Health Care 38%	Taxes 33%	Energy/ Electricity 31%	Jobs/ unemployment 30%
Mar-24	Cost of living/ Inflation 81%	Health Care 66%	Housing 27%	The Economy/ Jobs 27%	The Deficit/ Government spending 22%

Provincial margins of error (Note: Because its small population precludes drawing discrete samples over multiple waves, data on Prince Edward Island is not released.)								
BC (813)	AB (409)	SK (389)	MB (354)	ON (908)	QC (655)	NB (387)	NS (350)	NL (218)
+/- 3%	+/- 5%	+/- 5%	+/- 5%	+/- 3%	+/- 4%	+/- 5%	+/- 5%	+/- 7%

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

CONTACT:

Shachi Kurl, President: 604.908.1693 shachi.kurl@angusreid.org @shachikurl
 Dave Korzinski, Research Director: 250.899.0821 dave.korzinski@angusreid.org
 Jon Roe, Research Associate: 825.437.1147, jon.roe@angusreid.org