



Ontario Politics in the time of COVID-19

Public Opinion Research
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Field Dates: April 22, 2021 to April 26, 2021

Ontario Politics in the time of COVID-19

The COVID-19 outbreak has set off a series of changes in the Canadian political landscape. In Ontario, the impression voters have of Doug Ford has remained negative after a large drop in early April.

Today, INNOVATIVE is releasing results from the fourth week of our April 2021 *Canada This Month* survey. This online survey was in field from April 22nd to April 26th with a weighted sample size of 400 Ontario residents. Detailed methodology is provided in the appendix.

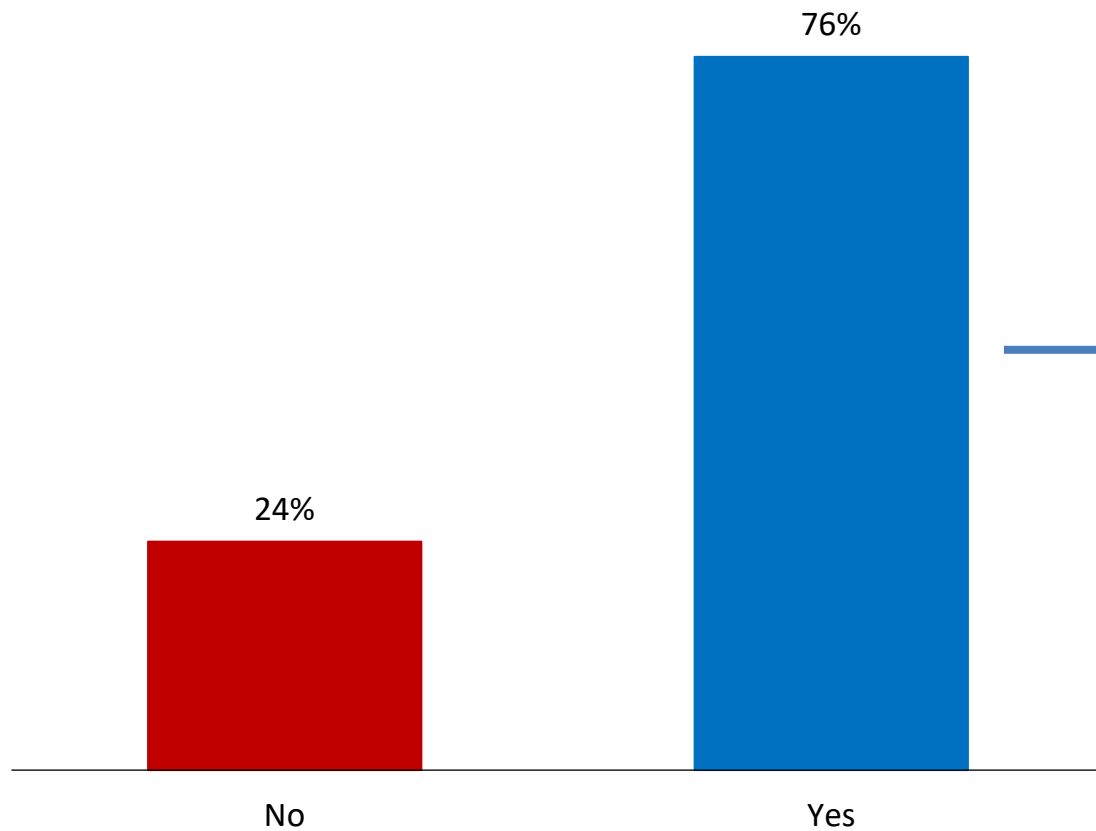
This report covers key results on how Ontarians rate their government's handling of the COVID-19 outbreak, Ontario vote choice, and evaluation of party leaders.

Read, Seen, Heard

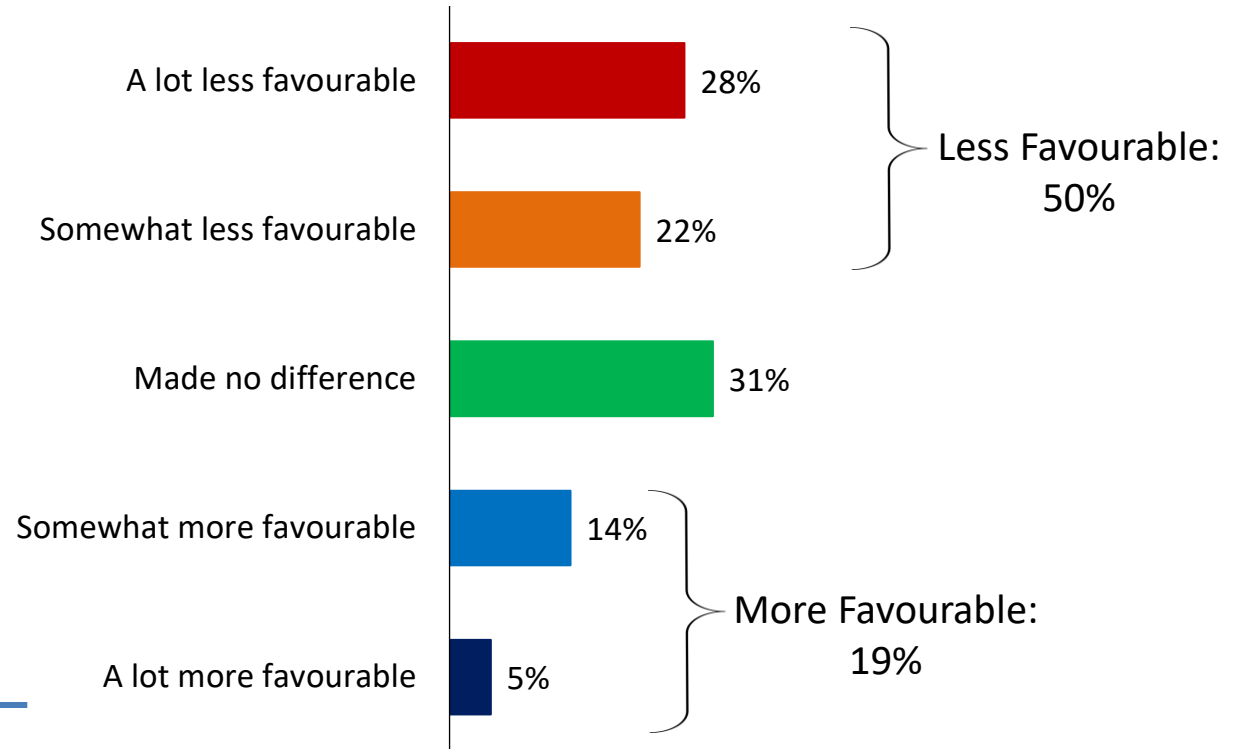
Attention to the Ontario government is down from last week but remains high with 76% saying they have heard something recently. The net impact of what Ontarians have heard remains strongly negative.

Ontario Read, Seen, Heard: More than 3-in-4 (76%) Ontarians have heard something about Ford Recently; the impact is strongly negative

Q Have you read, seen or heard anything about Doug Ford in the last few days?
[Asked of all respondents; n=400]



Q Did what you read, see or hear leave you feeling a lot more favourable, somewhat more favourable, somewhat less favourable or a lot less favourable towards Doug Ford, or did it make no difference?
[Asked of those who have RSH; n=303]

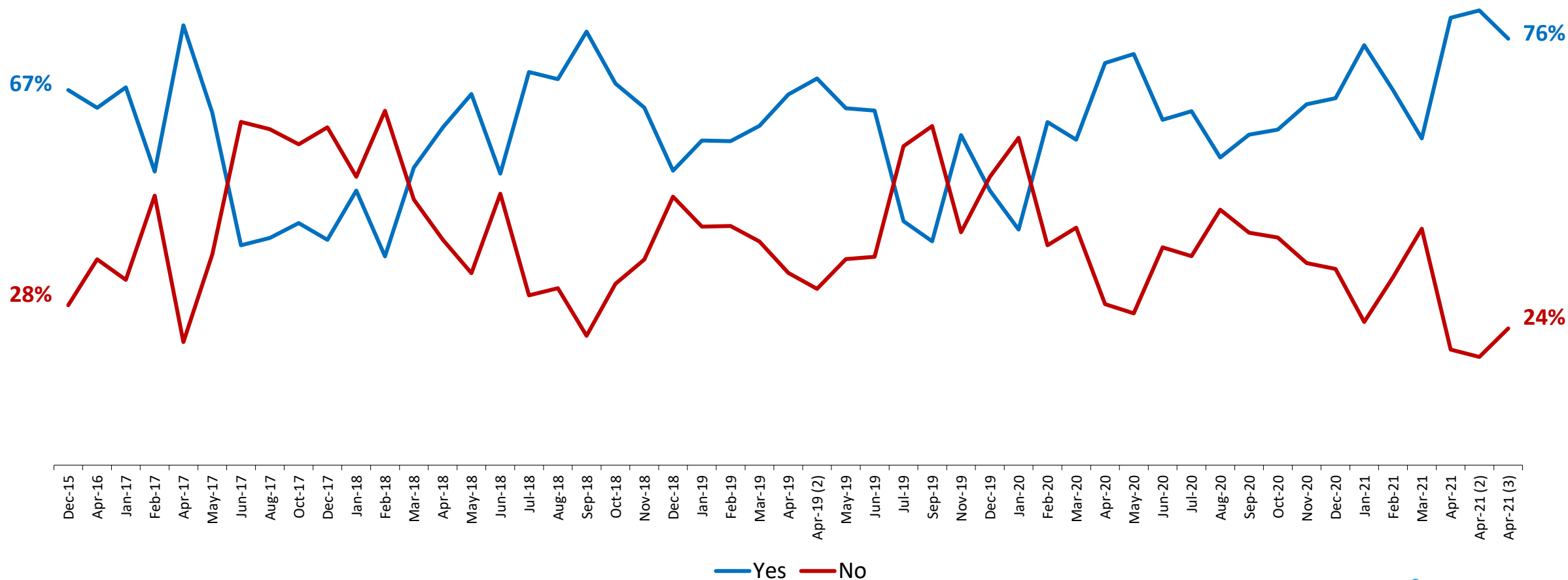


Read, Seen, Heard Tracking: Attention is down from last week but remains high at 76%



Have you read, seen or heard anything about Doug Ford in the last few days?

[asked of all respondents; n=400]



Note: Don't know not shown.

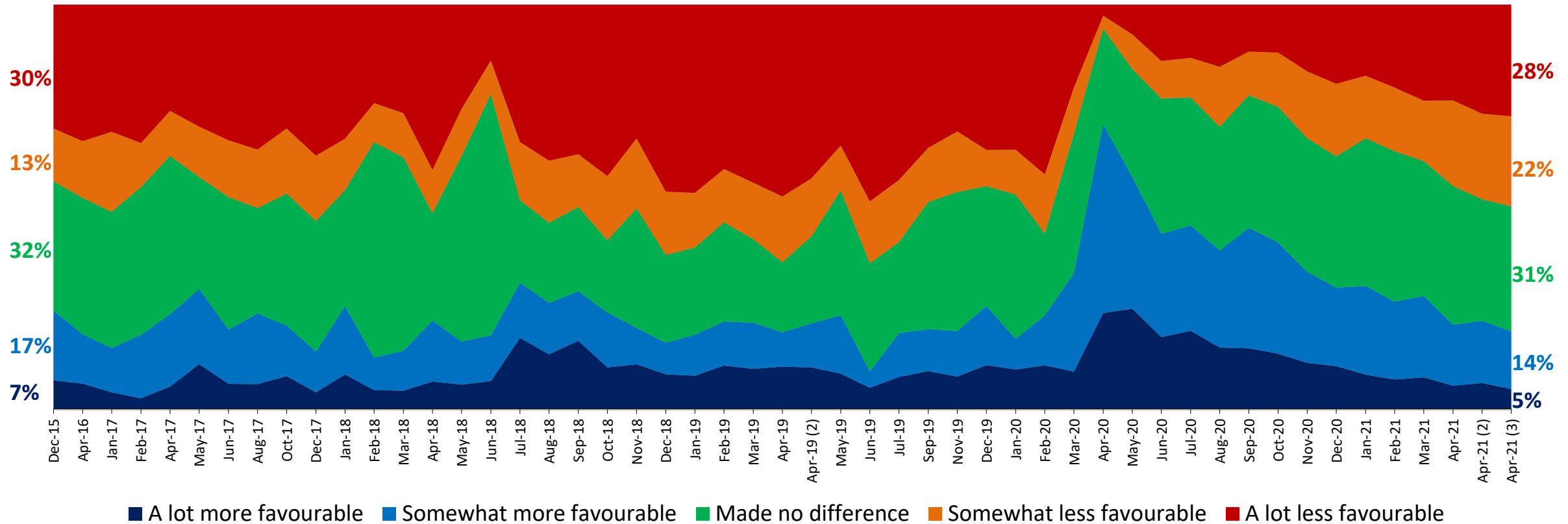
Current data: April 2021

Ontario Read, Seen, Heard, Impact Tracking: The impact of news about Ford remains strongly negative



Did what you read, see or hear leave you feeling a lot more favourable, somewhat more favourable, somewhat less favourable or a lot less favourable towards Doug Ford, or did it make no difference?

[asked of those who have RSH; n=303]



Government Approval

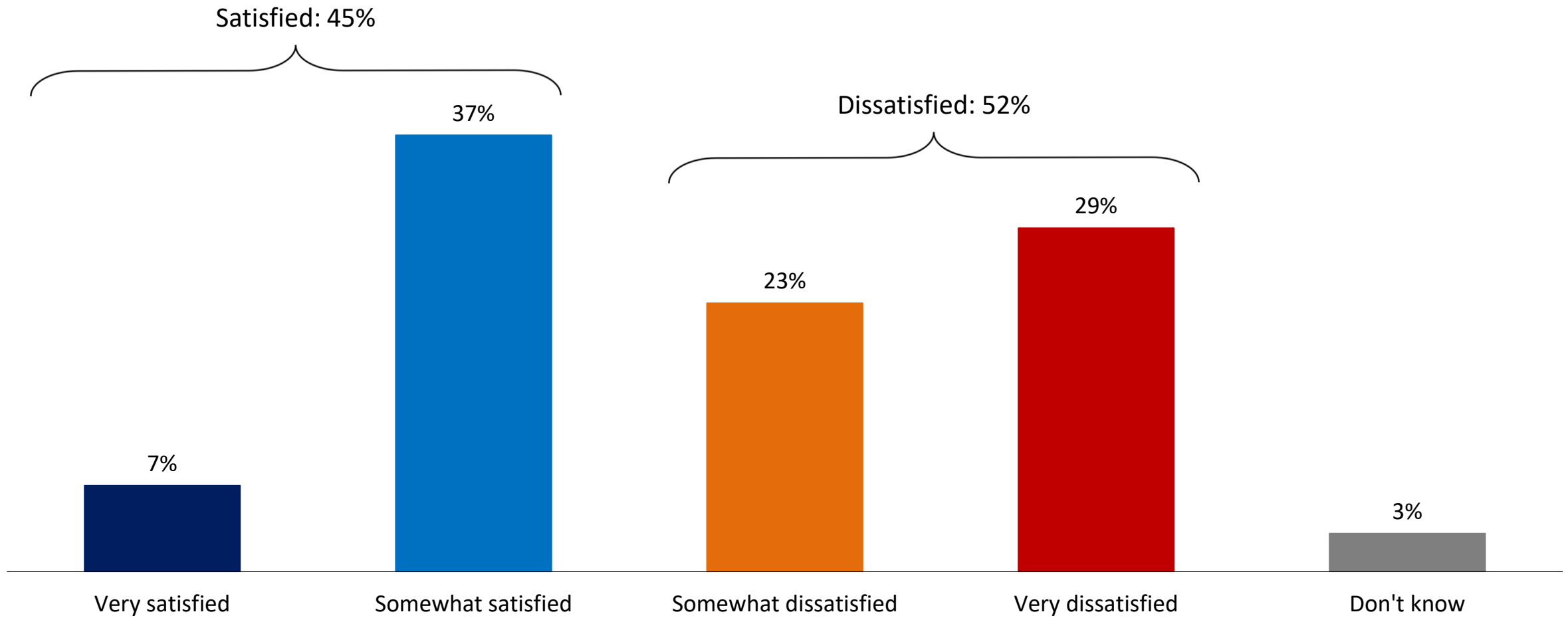
Ontario government's satisfaction remains low at 45%, with 52% saying they are dissatisfied with the government.

Ontario Government Approval: A majority in Ontario (52%) are dissatisfied with the provincial government



Generally speaking, how satisfied are you with the performance of the PROVINCIAL government in Ontario? Would you say you are...?

[asked of all respondents; n=400]

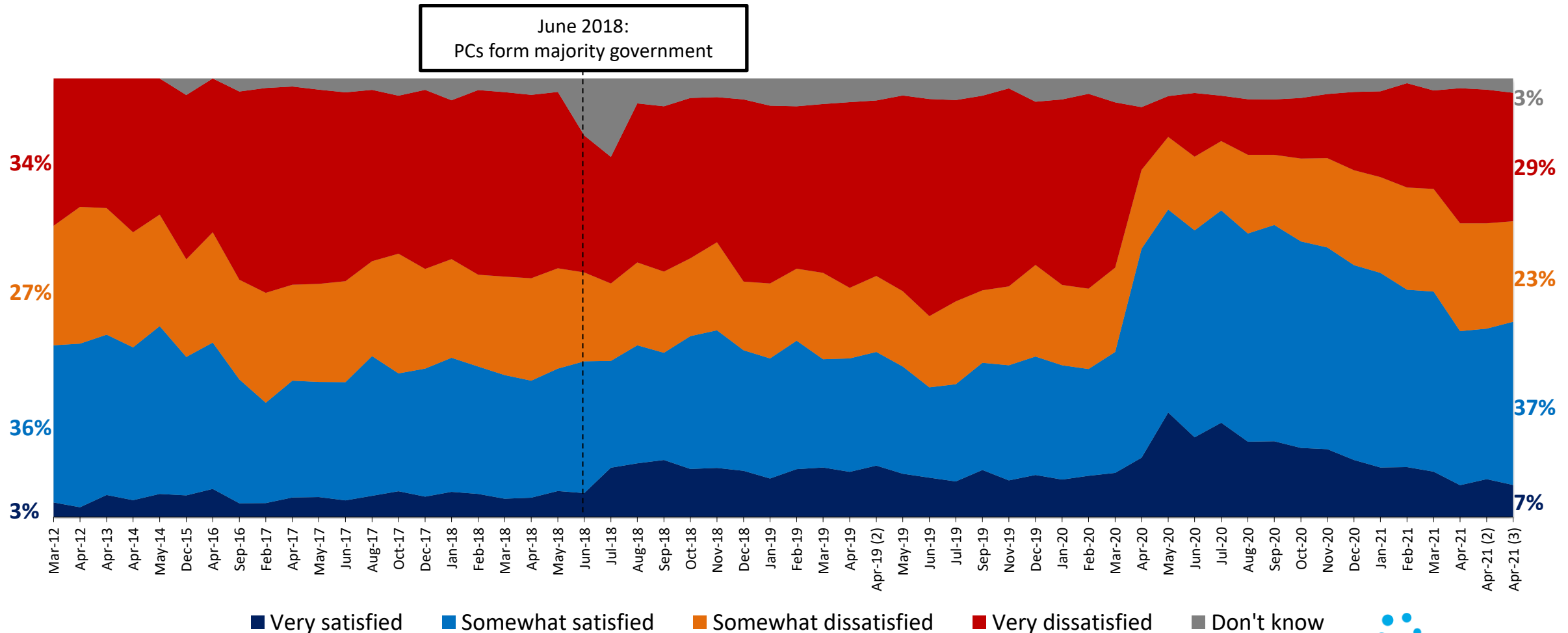


Government Approval Tracking: Satisfaction is up directionally from last week, but a majority remain dissatisfied



Generally speaking, how satisfied are you with the performance of the PROVINCIAL government in Ontario? Would you say you are...?

[asked of all respondents; n=400]



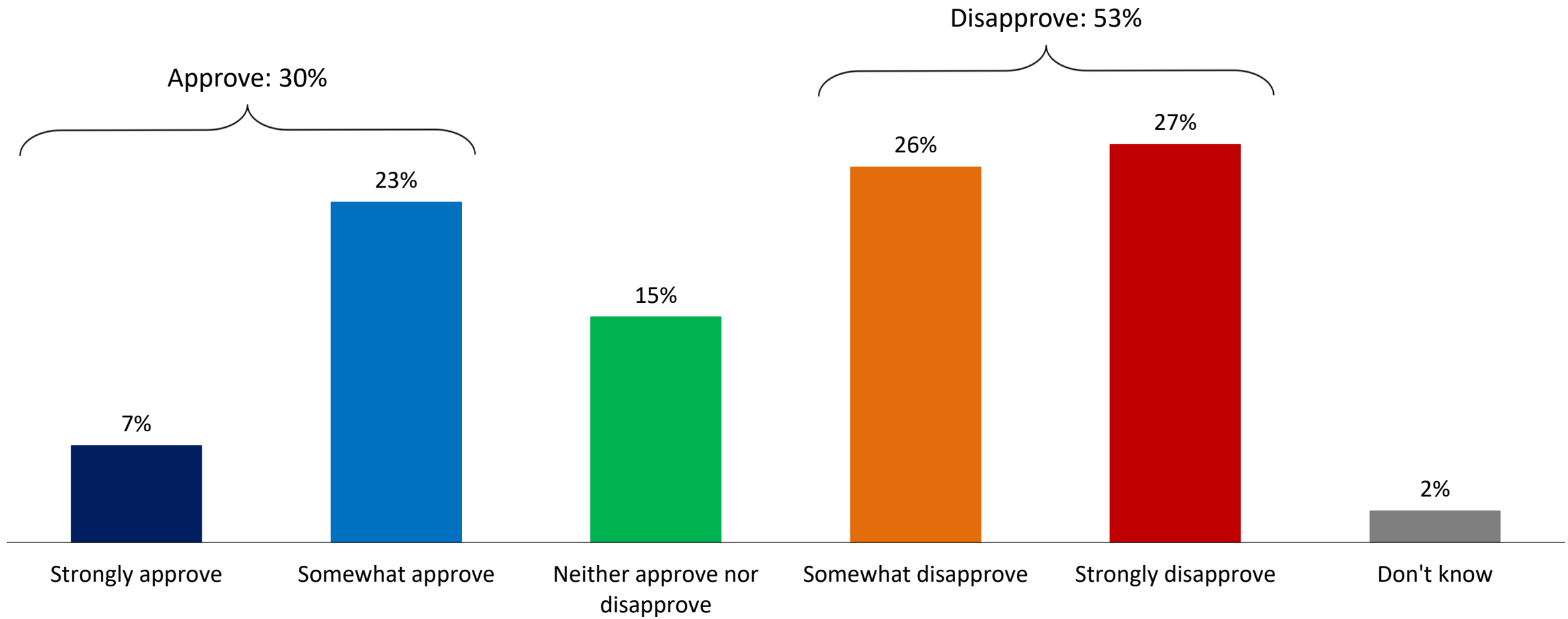
COVID-19 Handling: More than half (53%) of Ontarians disapprove of how the government is handling COVID-19

10



Do you approve or disapprove of the way the Ontario Government has handled the outbreak of COVID-19?

[asked of all respondents; n=400]

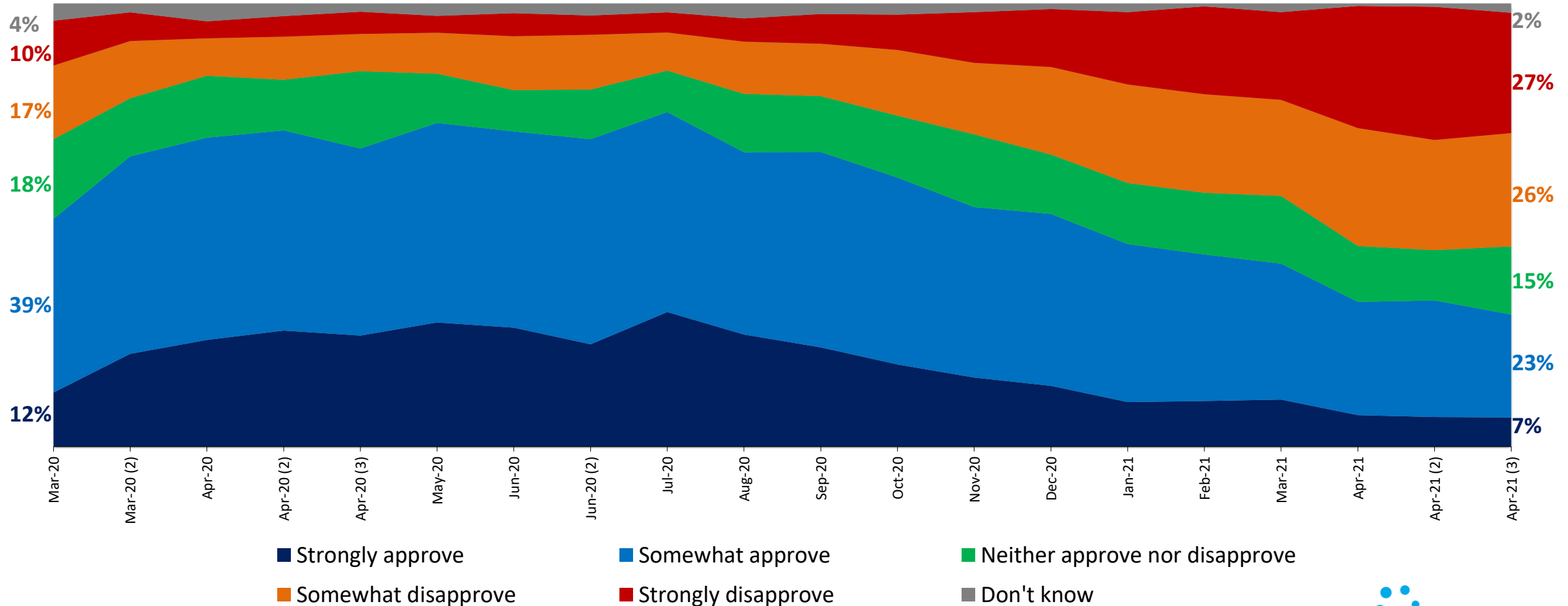


COVID-19 Handling Tracking: Approval of the Ontario governments handling of the pandemic is down to only 30%



Do you approve or disapprove of the way the Ontario Government has handled the outbreak of COVID-19?

[asked of all respondents; n=400]



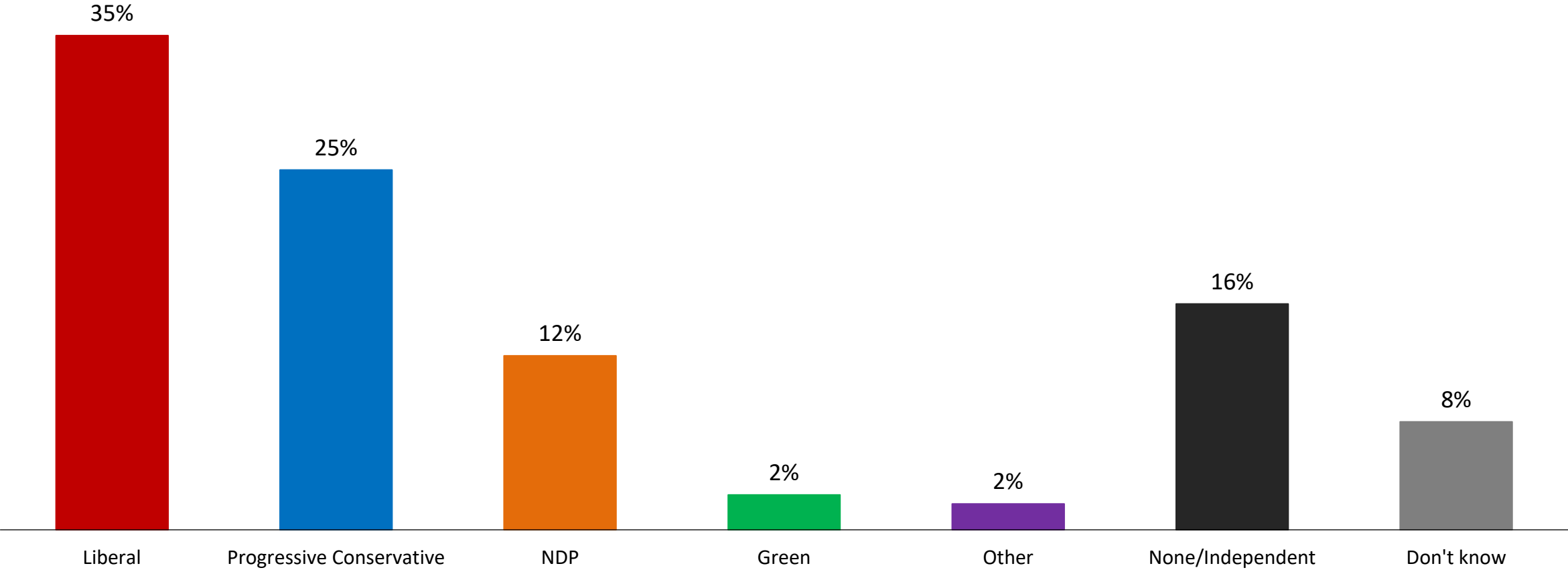
Party Identification

The Ontario Liberal Party continues to hold a strong lead on party ID (35%) while the PCs trail at 25%. We use party ID to understand how voters in each party's base and unaligned voters react to events.

Provincial Party ID: The Ontario Liberals hold a strong lead on Party ID ¹³ (35%) followed by the PCs at 25%



Thinking about politics in Ontario, generally speaking, do you usually think of yourself as a...
[asked of all respondents; n=400]



Thinking about politics in Ontario, generally speaking, do you usually think of yourself as a...
[asked of all respondents; n=400]

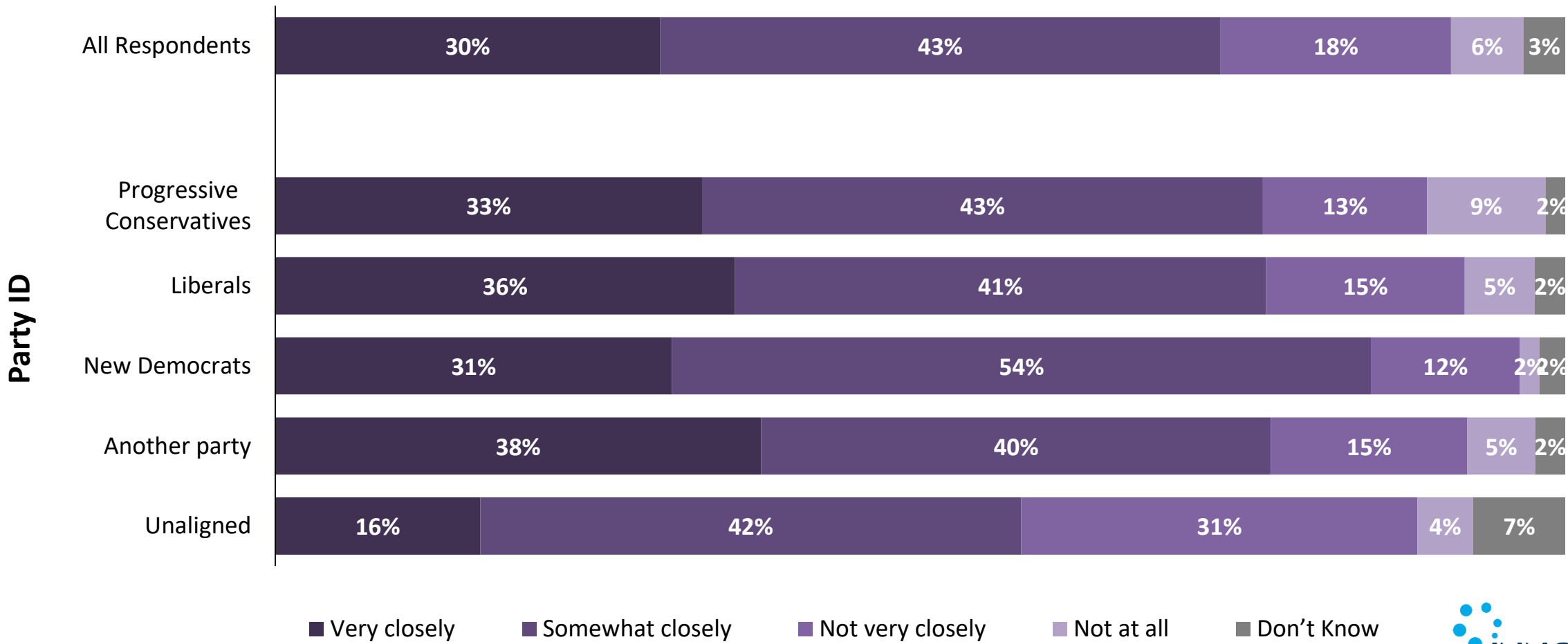


Recent Lockdown

Attention to recent press conferences and restrictions put in place by Doug Ford is high with 73% following the news at least somewhat closely. A majority in Ontario feel that the way Ford has dealt with the situation is a sign of a deeper problem.

Awareness: 3-in-4 (73%) respondents are following Doug Ford's recent press conferences regarding COVID-19; higher among NDP partisans ¹⁶

Q Recently there has been a lot of controversy over the way the Ontario government has been fighting community spread of COVID-19. How closely have you been following the recent press conferences by Premier Doug Ford and the reaction to the government's plans to combat the spread of COVID-19 in Ontario?
[asked of all respondents; n=400]



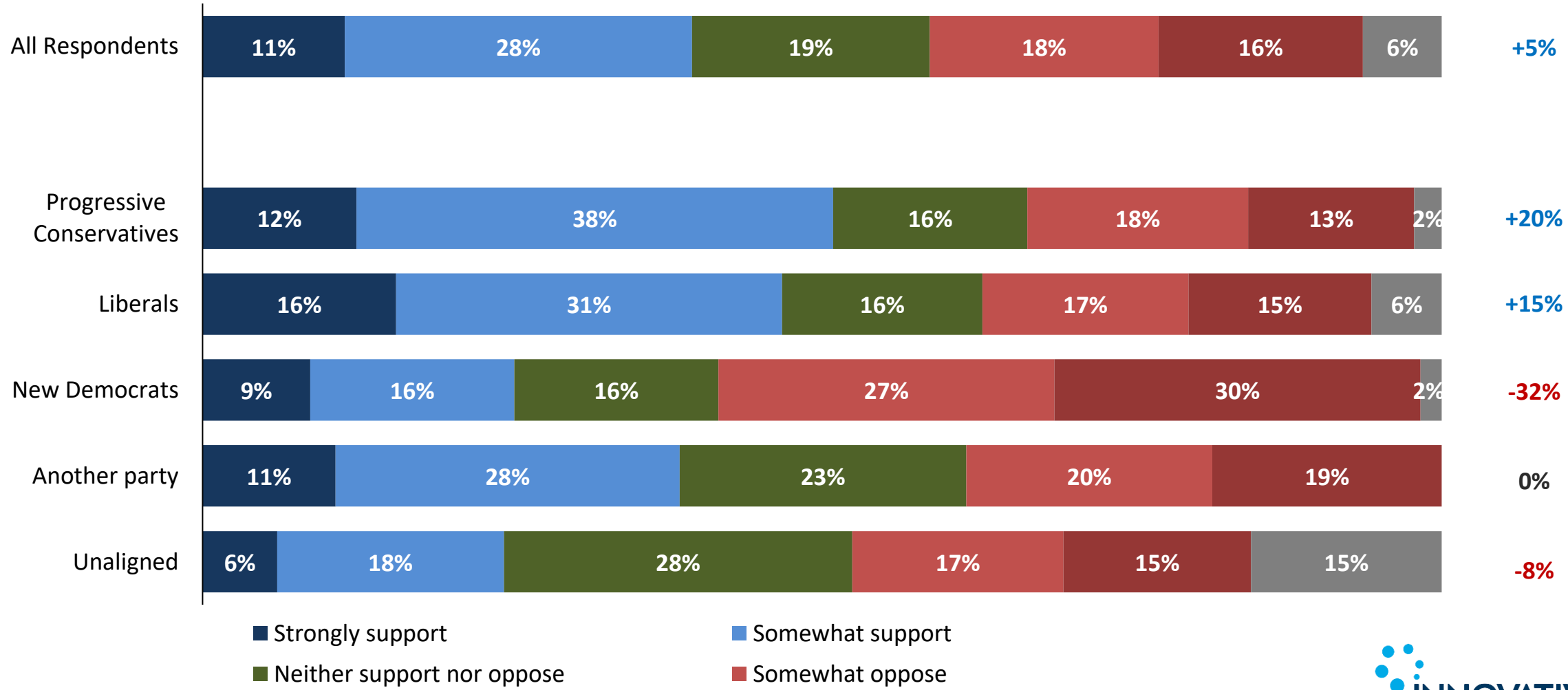
Reaction: More than a third (35%) of the respondents oppose the gov't's¹⁷ approach to combat the virus spread; highest among NDP partisans



Thinking about the recent press conferences by Premier Doug Ford and the government's plans to combat the spread of COVID-19 in Ontario, do you support or oppose the government's approach?
[asked of all respondents; n=400]

Net Support

Party ID



Ford's Response: A plurality (43%) believe Ford has responded poorly to the criticisms; highest among NDP partisans (73%)

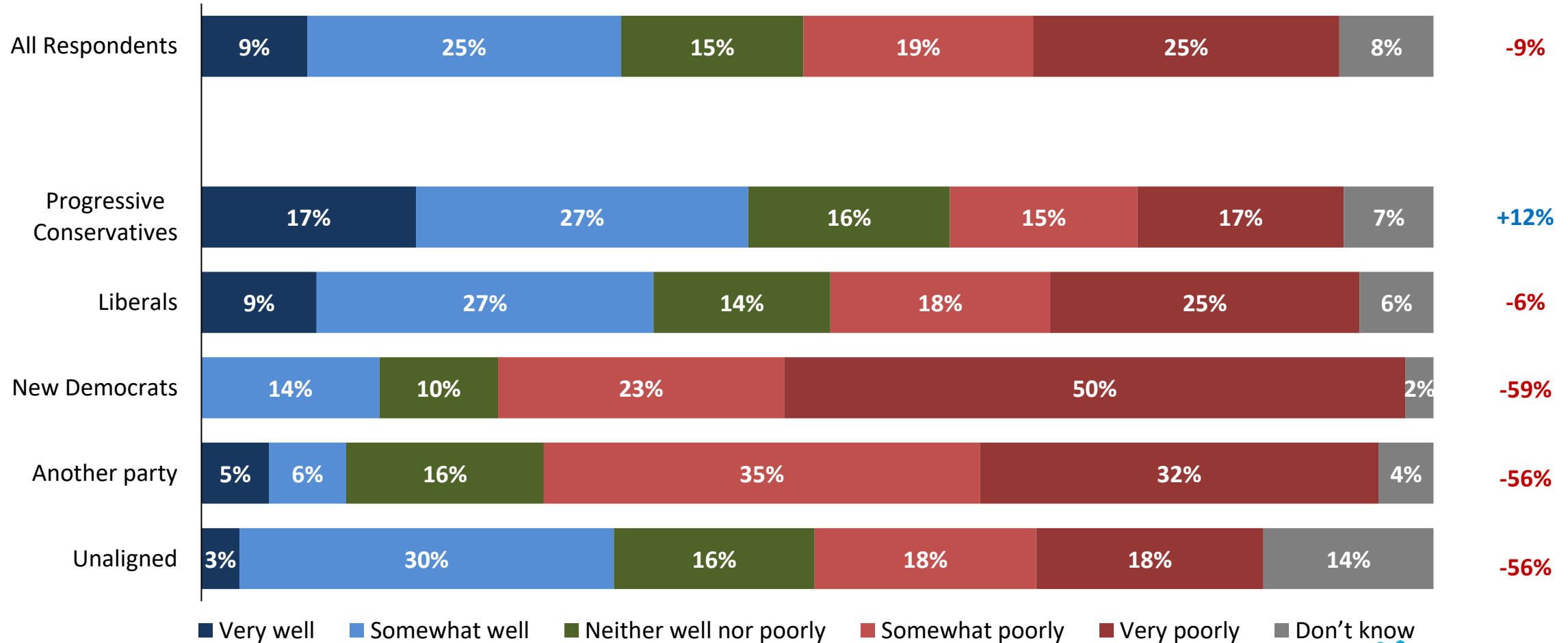


Now, thinking about how Doug Ford has responded to criticism about recent measures put in place in Ontario, do you think Doug Ford has responded well or poorly?

[asked of all respondents; n=400]

Net Well

Party ID

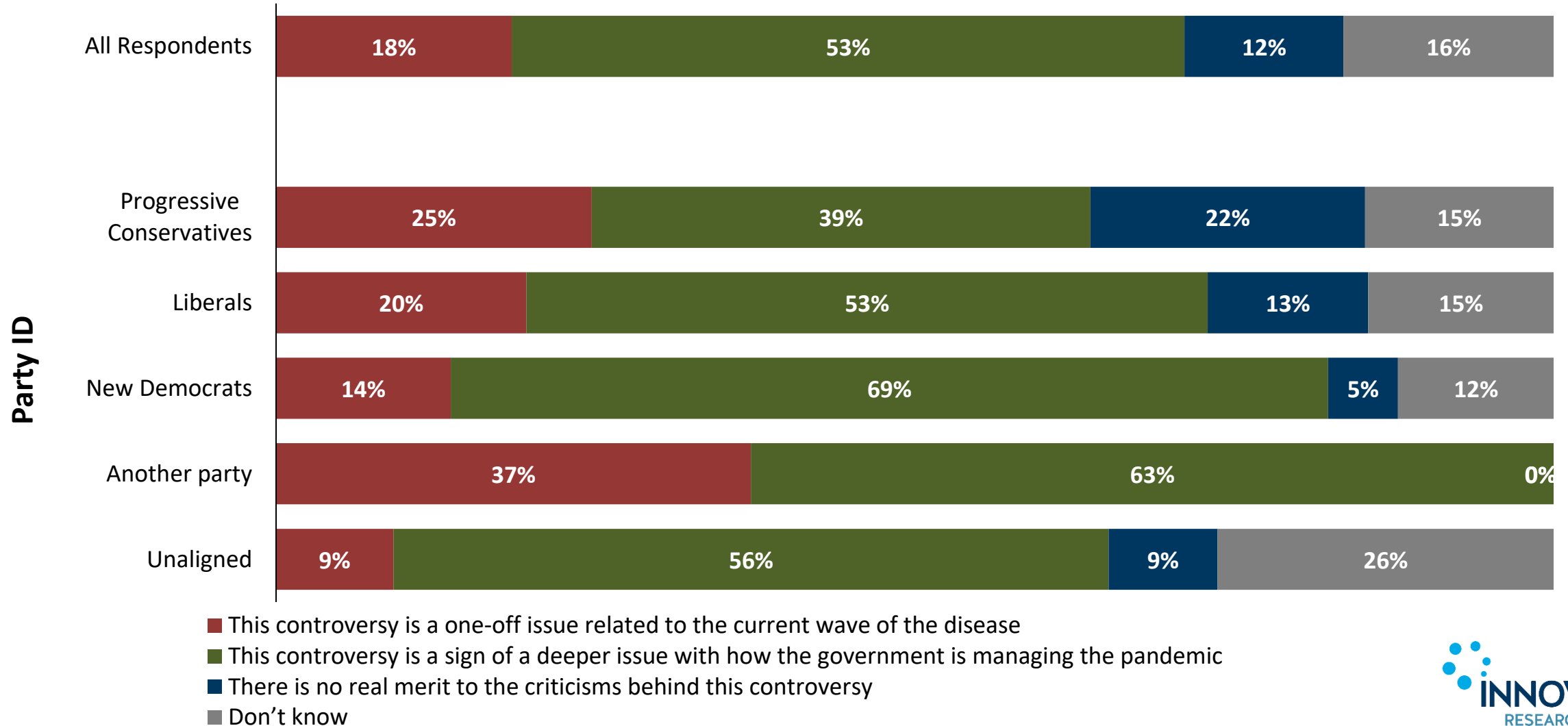


A Deeper Problem?: More than half (53%) believe this controversy is a sign of a deeper issues with how the gov't is managing the pandemic¹⁹



Which of the following statements best reflects your view on the controversy over the way the provincial government is managing measures to combat the spread of COVID-19?

[asked of all respondents; n=400]



Attitudes: 63% believe the Ontario gov't was warned in Feb. that unless²⁰ they took strong action quickly, COVID cases would skyrocket in April



Do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

[asked of all respondents; n=400]

Net
Agreement

The Ontario government was warned in February that unless they took strong action right away, COVID cases would skyrocket by April.



+63%

The Ontario government's decision to loosen restrictions when its health advisors were recommending it tighten restrictions is directly responsible for the spike in COVID-19 cases we are seeing today.



+39%

The Ontario government health measures seem more focused on scoring political points than fighting COVID-19.



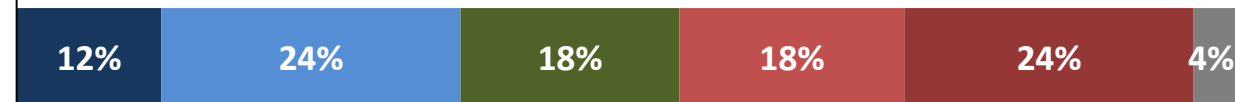
+27%

Doug Ford has accepted responsibility for his mistakes and is taking steps to do better.



+6%

Doug Ford has done his best to balance public health concerns with economic needs.



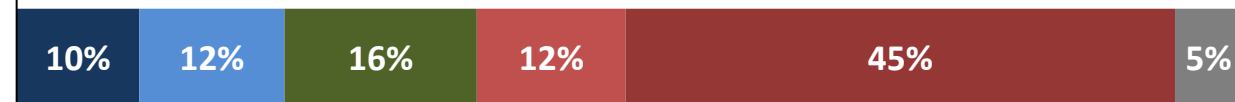
-6%

Ontario has implemented one of the tightest public health lockdowns in the world to fight COVID-19.



-10%

The Ontario government has been exaggerating the risk of COVID-19 to scare us so they can remove our rights and freedoms.



-35%

Strongly agree

Somewhat disagree

Somewhat agree

Strongly disagree

Neither agree nor disagree

Don't know

Attitudes: Liberal and NDP partisans are more likely to believe that the ON gov't didn't take a strong action in Feb to prevent high cases in Apr.



Do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

[asked of all respondents; n=400]

Showing Net Agreement	The Ontario government was warned in February that unless they took strong action right away, COVID cases would skyrocket by April.	The Ontario government's decision to loosen restrictions when its health advisors were recommending it tighten restrictions is directly responsible for the spike in COVID-19 cases we are seeing today.	The Ontario government health measures seem more focused on scoring political points than fighting COVID-19.	Doug Ford has accepted responsibility for his mistakes and is taking steps to do better.	Doug Ford has done his best to balance public health concerns with economic needs.	Ontario has implemented one of the tightest public health lockdowns in the world to fight COVID-19.	The Ontario government has been exaggerating the risk of COVID-19 to scare us so they can remove our rights and freedoms.
Progressive Conservatives	+54%	+13%	0%	+30%	+21%	+13%	-21%
Liberals	+69%	+48%	+25%	+7%	-2%	-16%	-50%
New Democrats	+76%	+59%	+42%	-31%	-55%	-33%	-49%
Other	+50%	+50%	+49%	0%	-7%	+1%	-29%
Unaligned	+60%	+41%	+46%	-1%	-14%	-17%	-22%

Warned: 7-in-10 (69%) believe that the ON gov't was warned in Feb. that if they don't take a strong action, cases will skyrocket in April

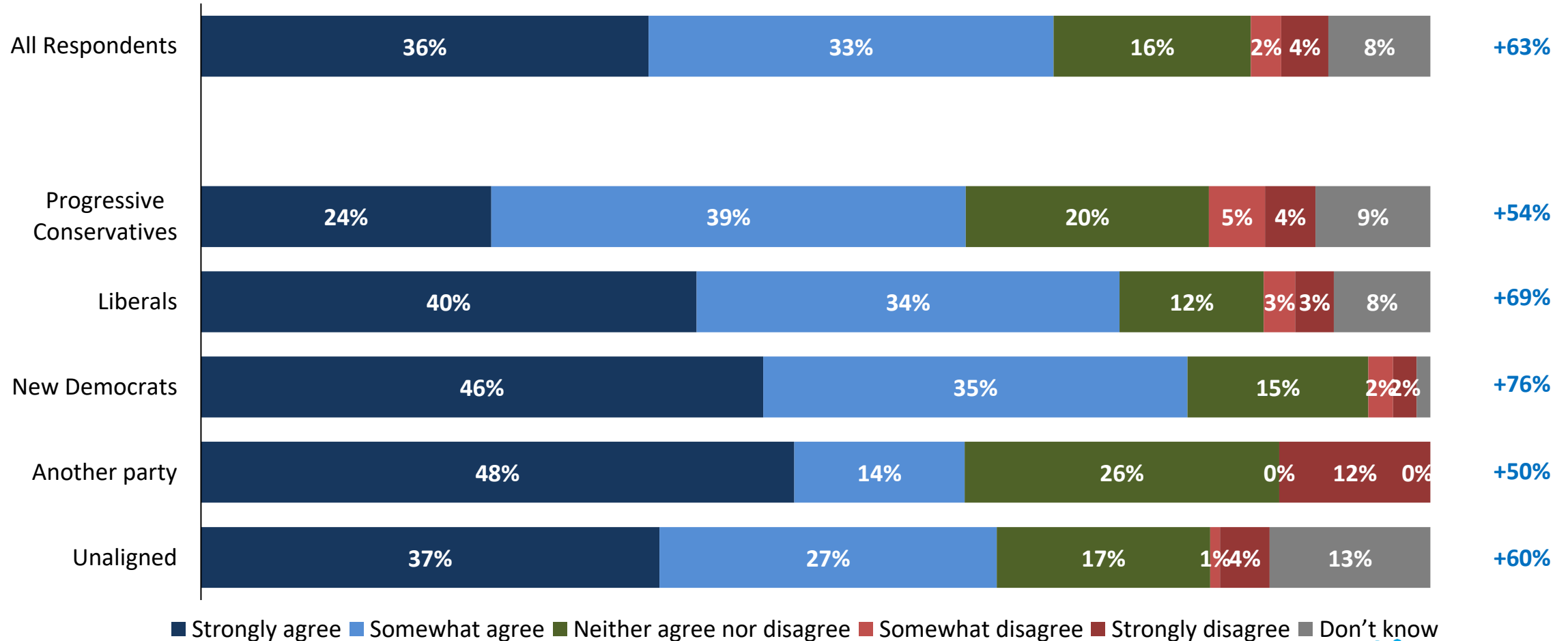


Do you agree or disagree with the following statements? *The Ontario government was warned in February that unless they took strong action right away, COVID cases would skyrocket by April.*

[asked of all respondents; n=400]

Net
Agreement

Party ID



Government Responsible: 40% of PC partisans agree that the government is directly responsible for the current spike

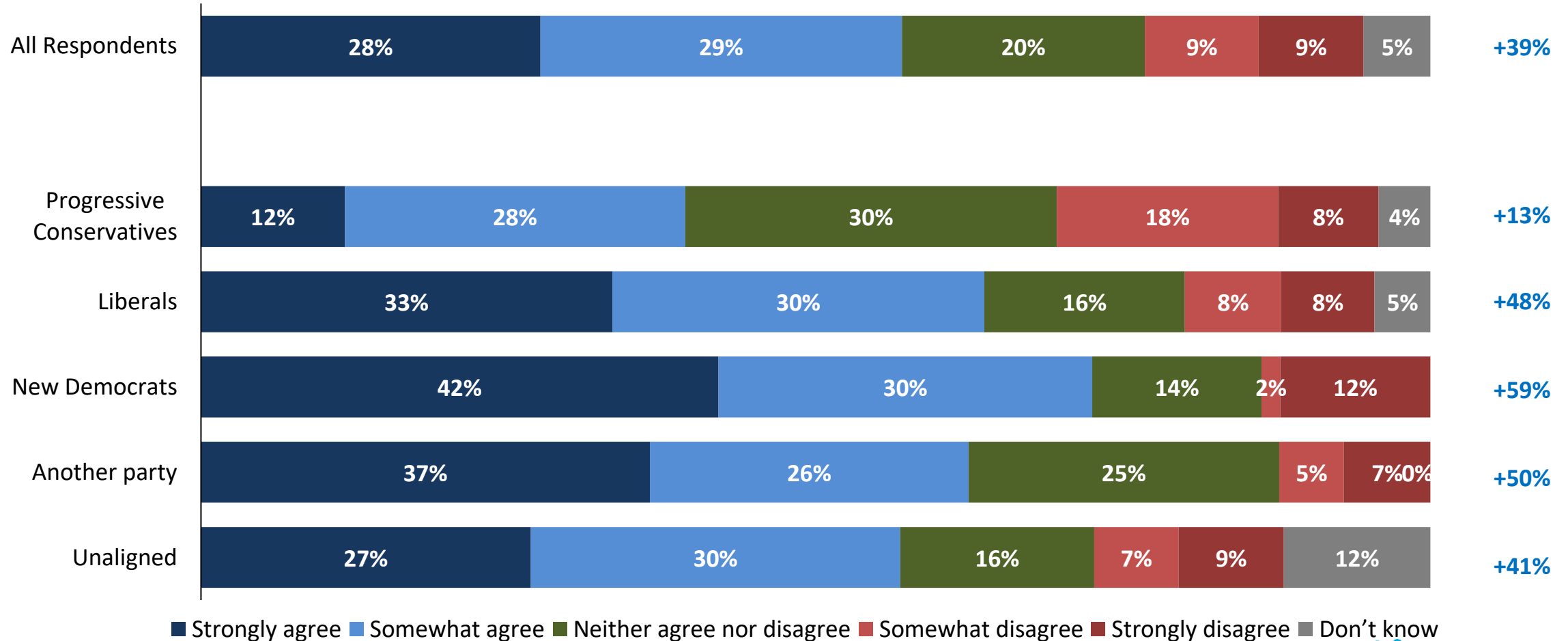


Do you agree or disagree with the following statements? *The Ontario government's decision to loosen restrictions when its health advisors were recommending it tighten restrictions is directly responsible for the spike in COVID-19 cases we are seeing today.*

[asked of all respondents; n=400]

Net Agreement

Party ID



Political Points: A majority agree the government's health measures seem more focused on scoring political points than fighting COVID-19

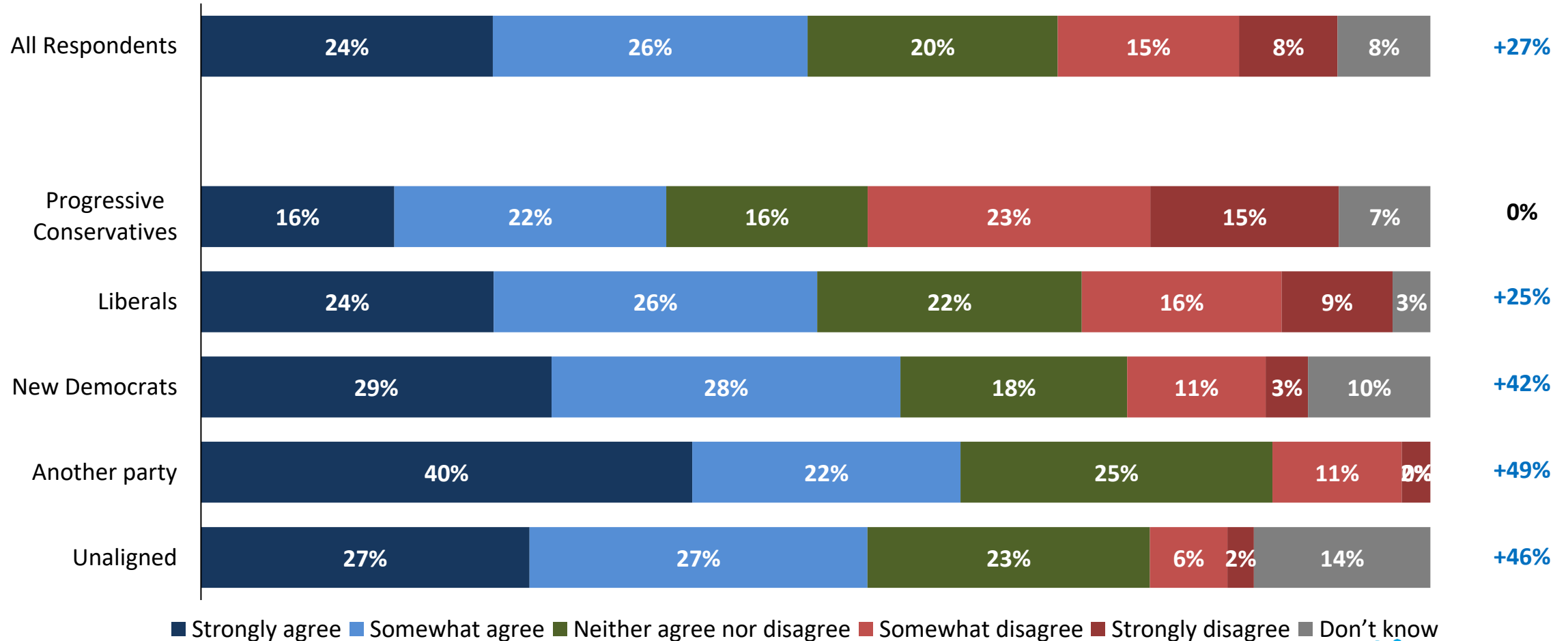


Do you agree or disagree with the following statements? *The Ontario government health measures seem more focused on scoring political points than fighting COVID-19.*

[asked of all respondents; n=400]

Net
Agreement

Party ID



Responsibility: More agree than disagree that Doug Ford has accepted responsibility for his mistakes and is taking steps to do better ²⁵

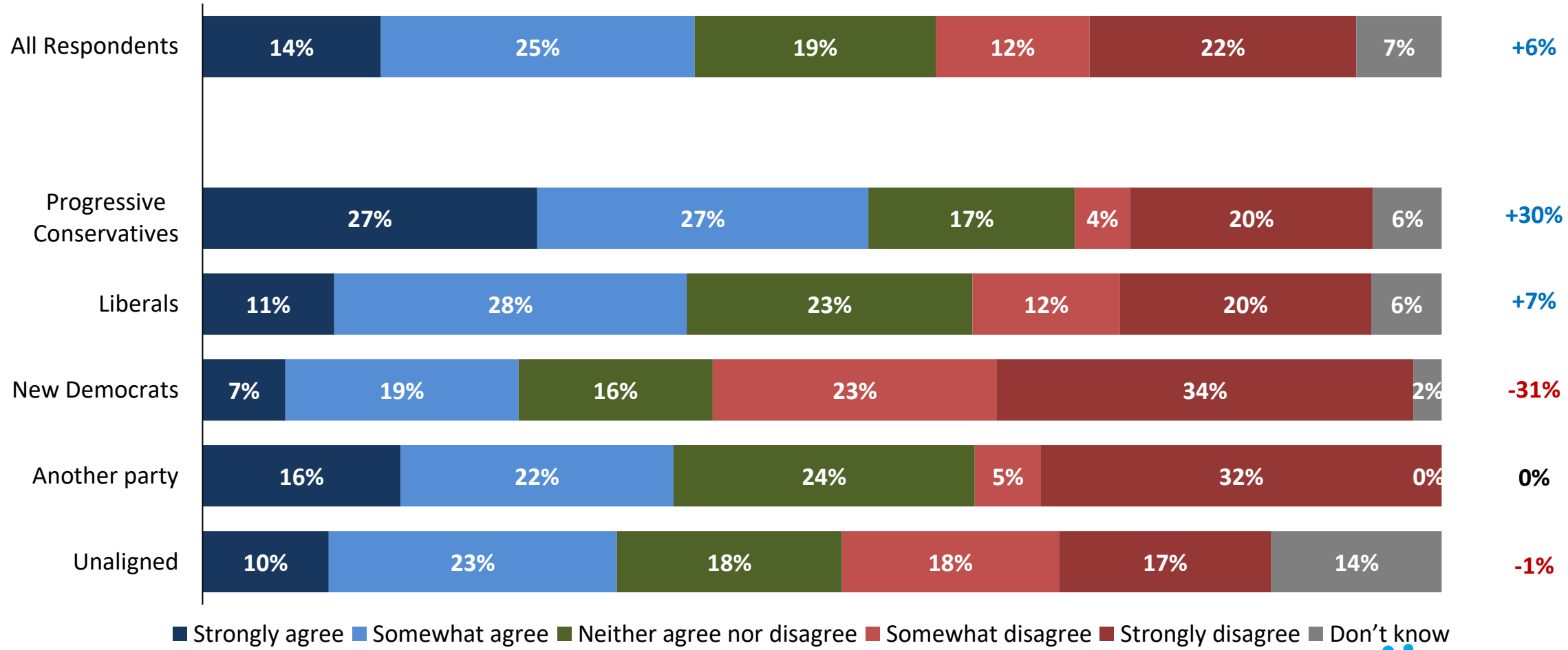


Do you agree or disagree with the following statements? *Doug Ford has accepted responsibility for his mistakes and is taking steps to do better.*

[asked of all respondents; n=400]

Net Agreement

Party ID



Balance Health and the Economy: A majority of PC partisans agree Ford has done his best to balance the economy and public health

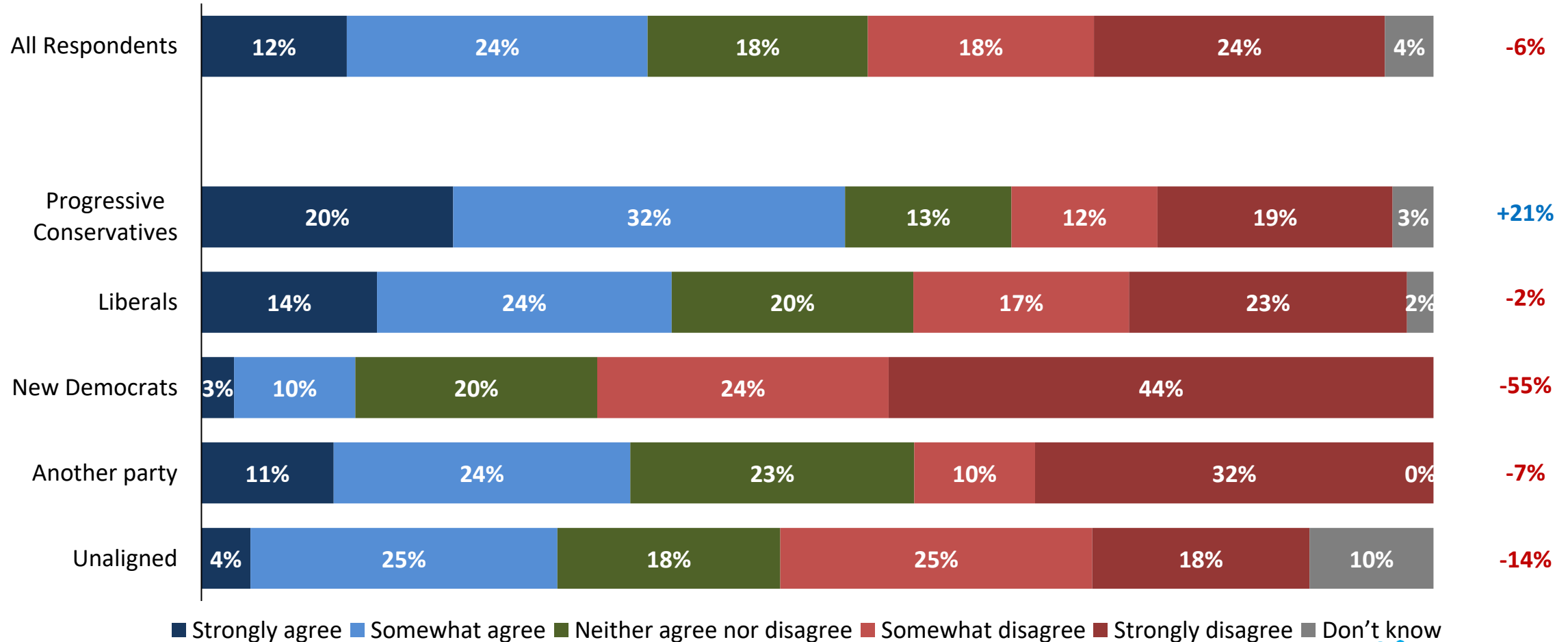


Do you agree or disagree with the following statements? *Doug Ford has done his best to balance public health concerns with economic needs.*

[asked of all respondents; n=400]

Net Agreement

Party ID



Tightest lockdown: More than one third (35%) believe that Ontario has implemented one of the tightest COVID restrictions in the world

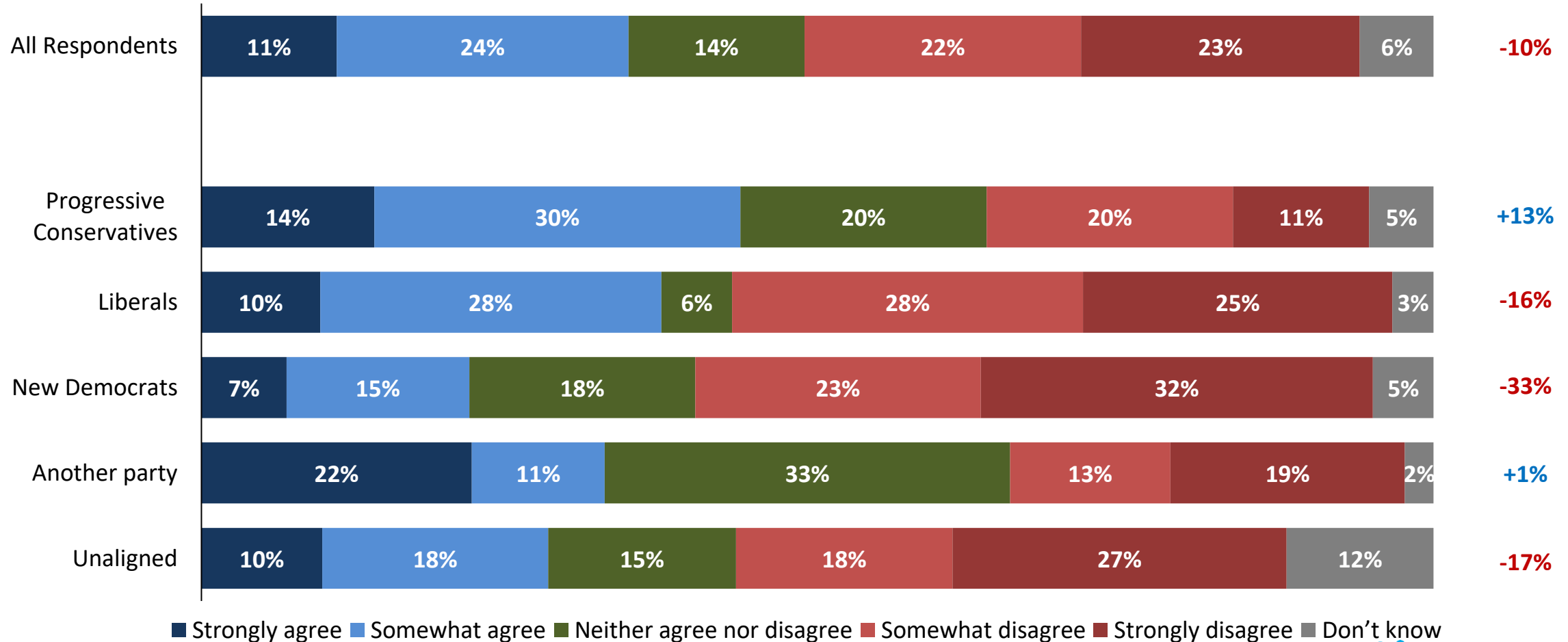


Do you agree or disagree with the following statements? *Ontario has implemented one of the tightest public health lockdowns in the world to fight COVID-19.*

[asked of all respondents; n=400]

Net Agreement

Party ID



COVID-19 is Exaggerated: More than 1-in-5 in Ontario agree the government has been exaggerating the risk of COVID-19

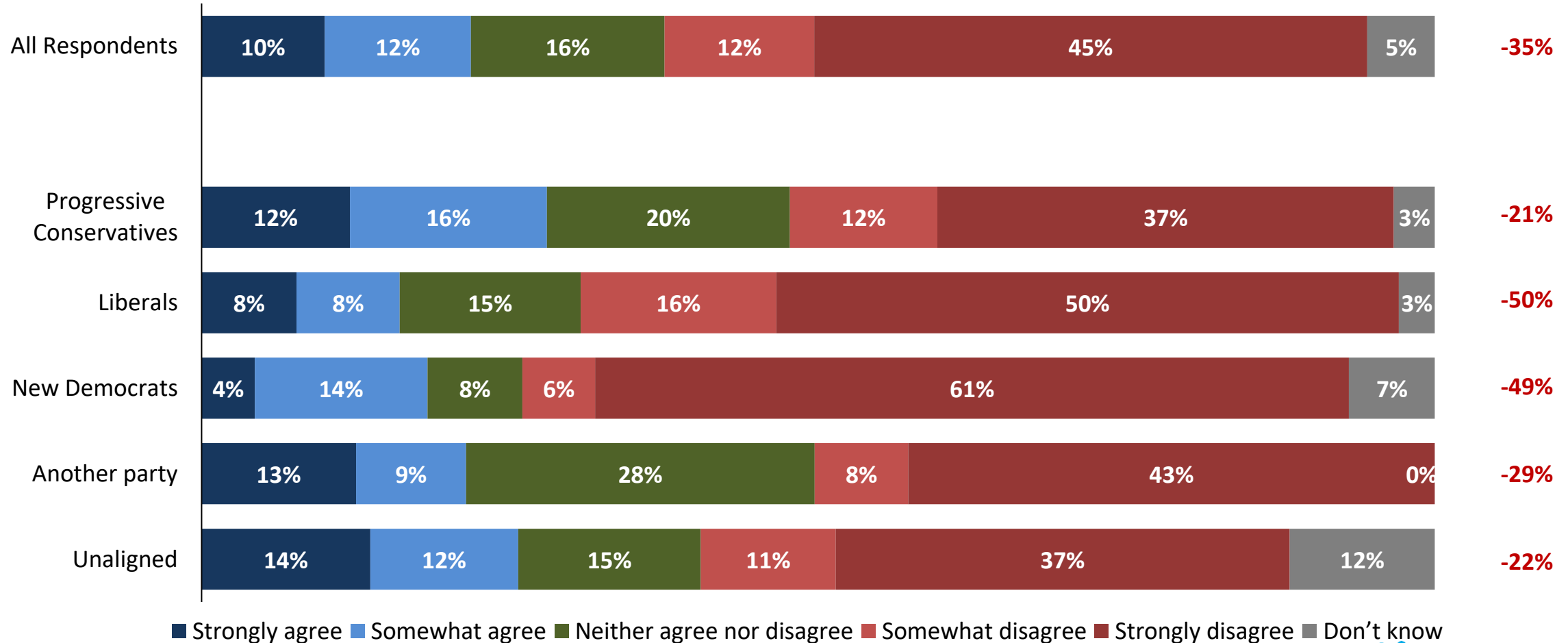


Do you agree or disagree with the following statements? *The Ontario government has been exaggerating the risk of COVID-19 to scare us so they can remove our rights and freedoms.*

[asked of all respondents; n=400]

Net
Agreement

Party ID



Restrictions

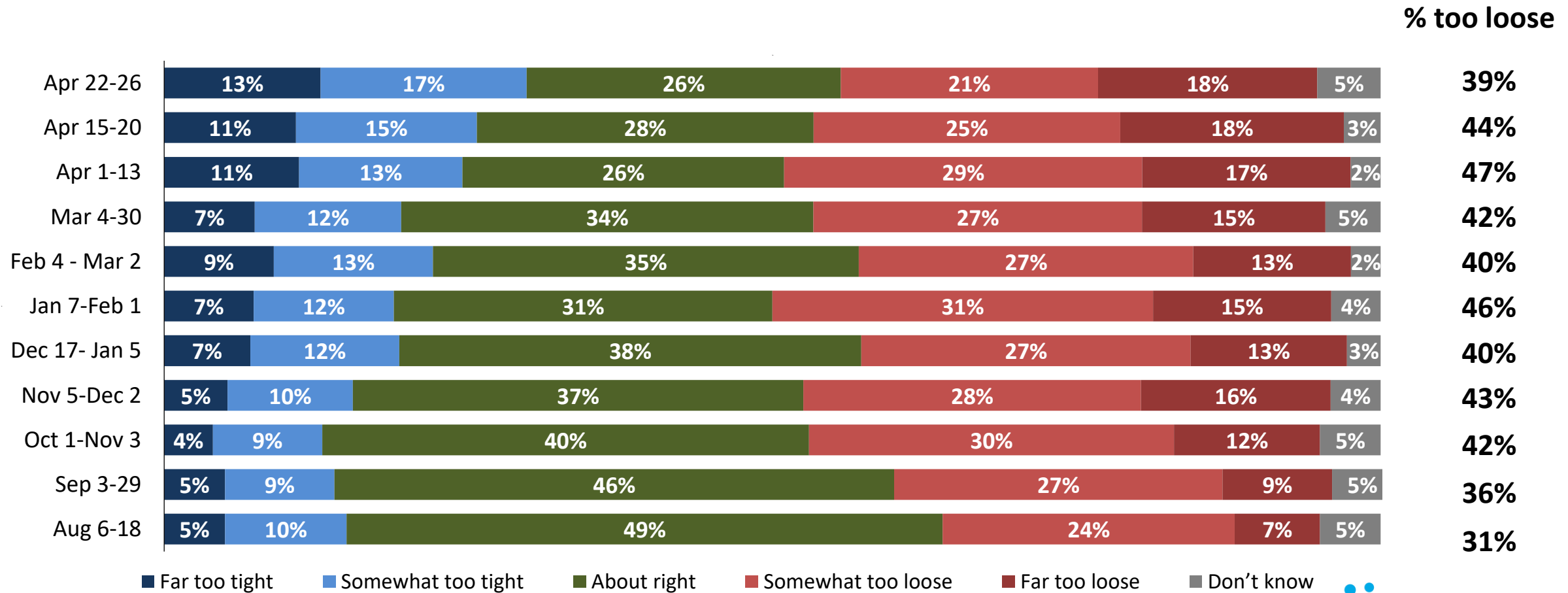
More Ontarian's than ever say restrictions in place in the province are too tight (30%), but a plurality still say restrictions are too loose (39%).

Provincial Restrictions: The share of Ontarians who say restrictions are too tight it up to 30% from 26% last week



Now, thinking about the restrictions the provincial government in Ontario currently has in place to reduce social contacts and combat the spread of COVID-19, do you think the restrictions are too tight, too loose, or are they about right?

[asked of all respondents; n=400]



Leadership

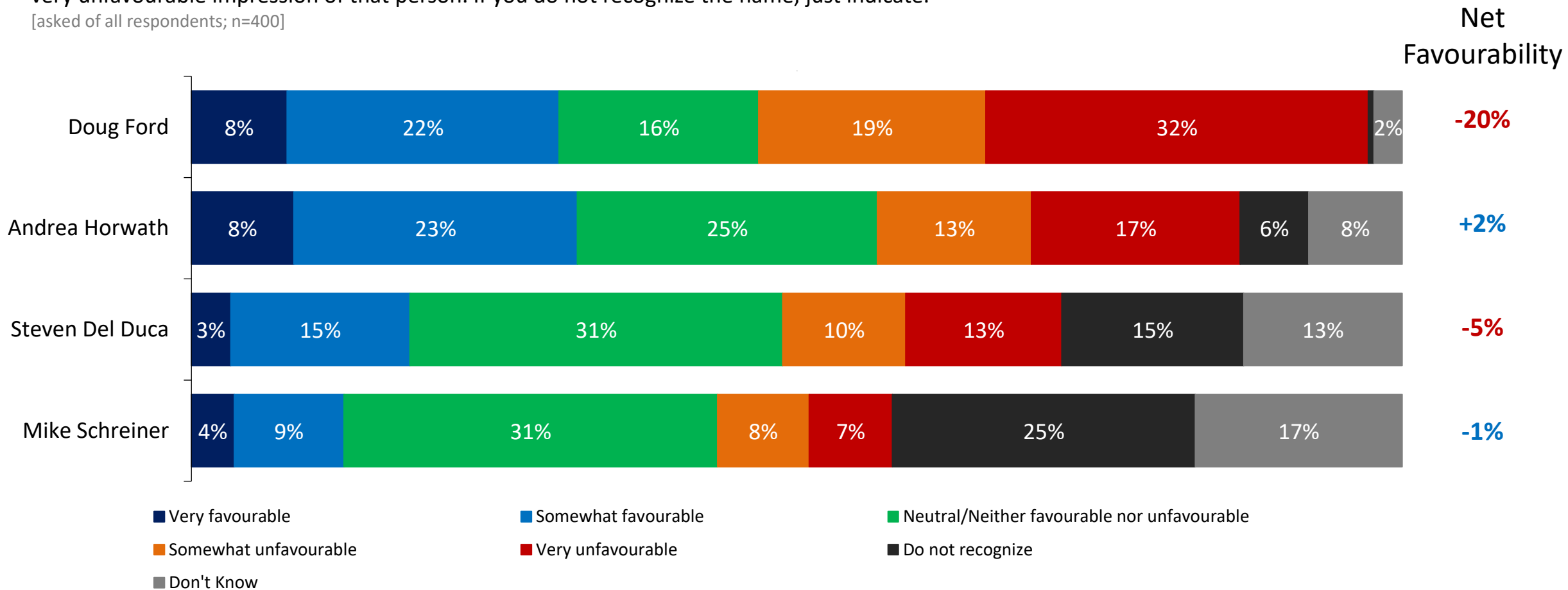
Doug Ford remains the leader with the lowest net favourability, down to -20% on net. However, he remains the top choice for Premier at 27% followed by Horwath at 21%.

Leader Favourables: Doug Ford has the lowest net favourability at -20%⁸² with 32% saying they have a very unfavourable impression of him



Below are the names of several individuals who have been mentioned in the news recently. For each one, please indicate whether you have heard of that person and, if so, whether you have a very favourable, somewhat favourable, neither favourable or unfavourable, somewhat unfavourable or very unfavourable impression of that person. If you do not recognize the name, just indicate.

[asked of all respondents; n=400]

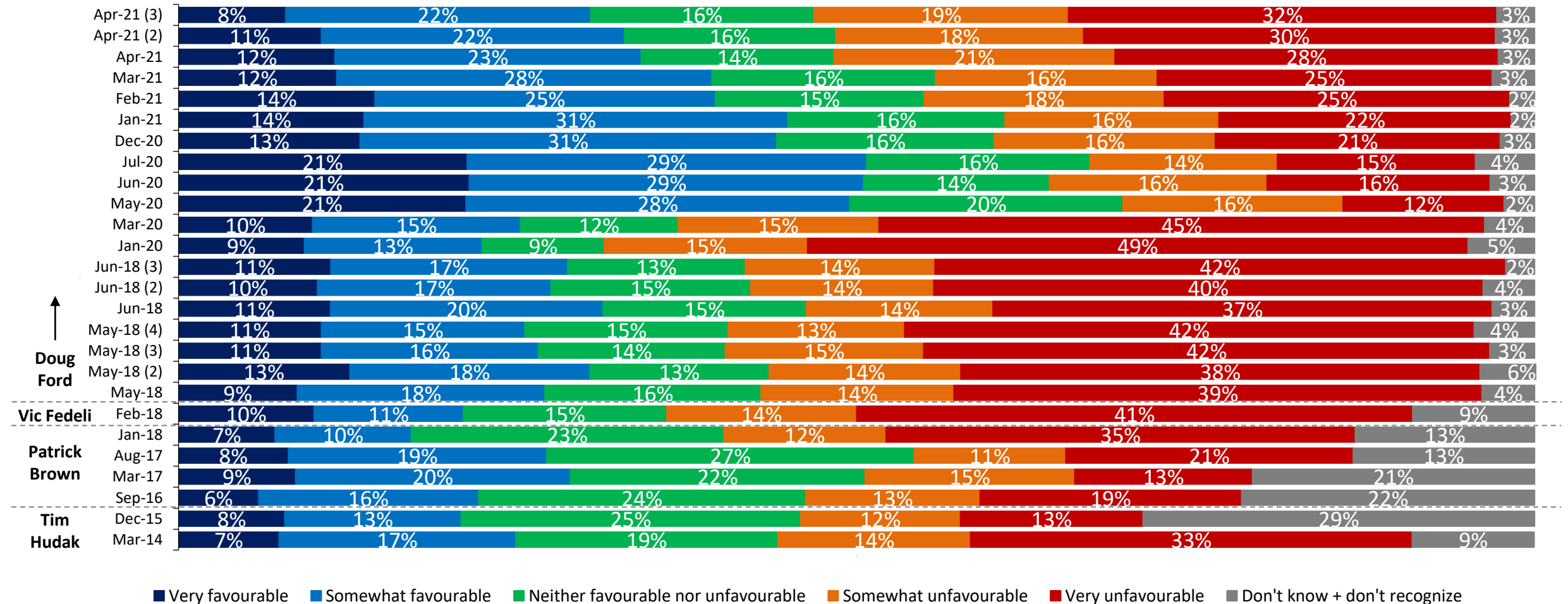


Doug Ford Favourability: Only 30% say they have a favourable impression of Doug Ford, down from a high of 50% in July



Below are the names of several individuals who have been mentioned in the news recently. For each one, please indicate whether you have heard of that person and, if so, whether you have a very favourable, somewhat favourable, neither favourable or unfavourable, somewhat unfavourable or very unfavourable impression of that person. If you do not recognize the name, just indicate.

[asked of all respondents; n=400]

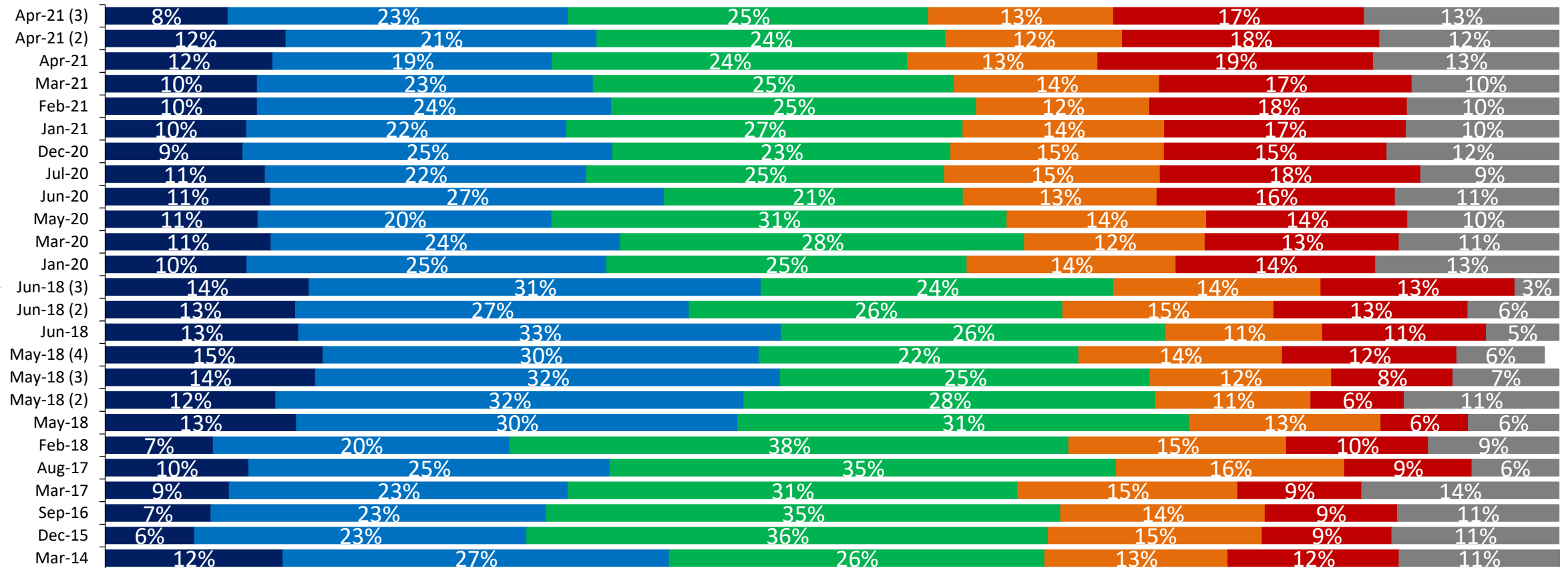


Andrea Horwath Favourability: The share of Ontarian's who have a positive impression of Horwath is down directionally

Q

Below are the names of several individuals who have been mentioned in the news recently. For each one, please indicate whether you have heard of that person and, if so, whether you have a very favourable, somewhat favourable, neither favourable or unfavourable, somewhat unfavourable or very unfavourable impression of that person. If you do not recognize the name, just indicate.

[asked of all respondents; n=400]



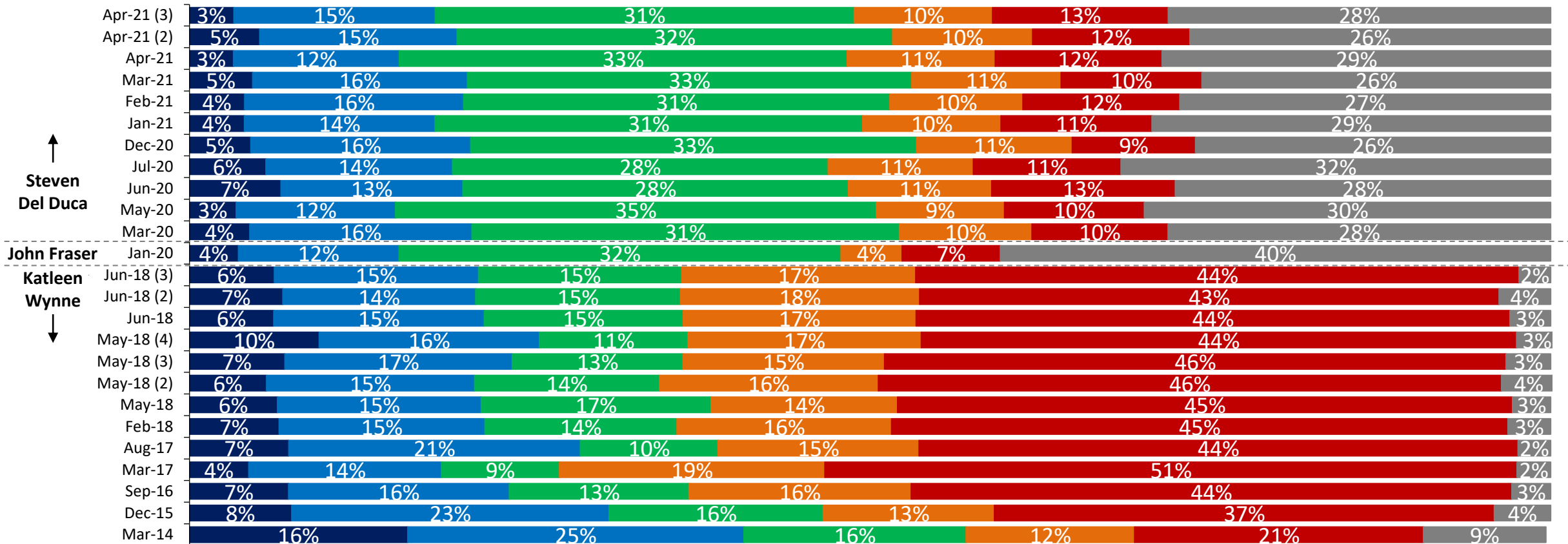
■ Very favourable ■ Somewhat favourable ■ Neither favourable nor unfavourable ■ Somewhat unfavourable ■ Very unfavourable ■ Don't know + don't recognize

Steven Del Duca Favourability: A majority either have no opinion of Del Duca or have a neutral impression of him



Below are the names of several individuals who have been mentioned in the news recently. For each one, please indicate whether you have heard of that person and, if so, whether you have a very favourable, somewhat favourable, neither favourable or unfavourable, somewhat unfavourable or very unfavourable impression of that person. If you do not recognize the name, just indicate.

[asked of all respondents; n=400]



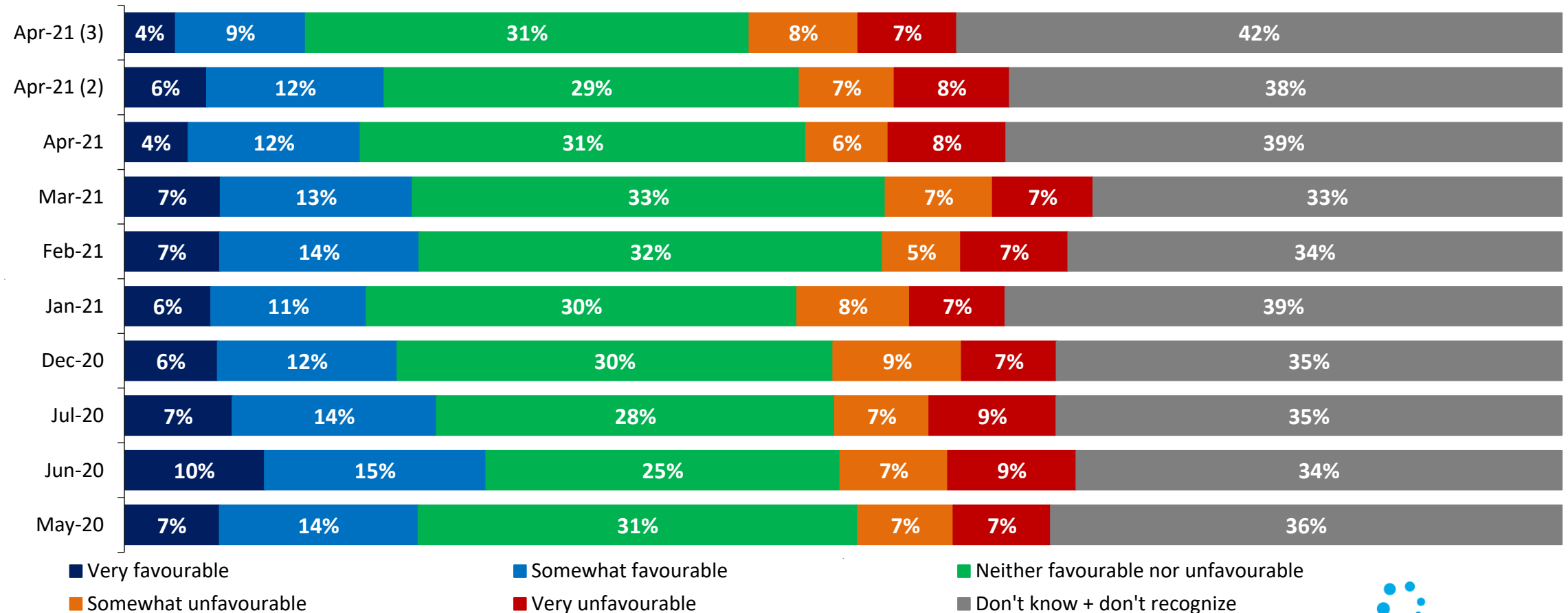
Very favourable Somewhat favourable Neither favourable nor unfavourable Somewhat unfavourable Very unfavourable Don't know + don't recognize

Mike Schreiner Favourability: More than 7-in-10 either have no impression of Schreiner or have a neutral view



Below are the names of several individuals who have been mentioned in the news recently. For each one, please indicate whether you have heard of that person and, if so, whether you have a very favourable, somewhat favourable, neither favourable or unfavourable, somewhat unfavourable or very unfavourable impression of that person. If you do not recognize the name, just indicate.

[asked of all respondents; n=400]

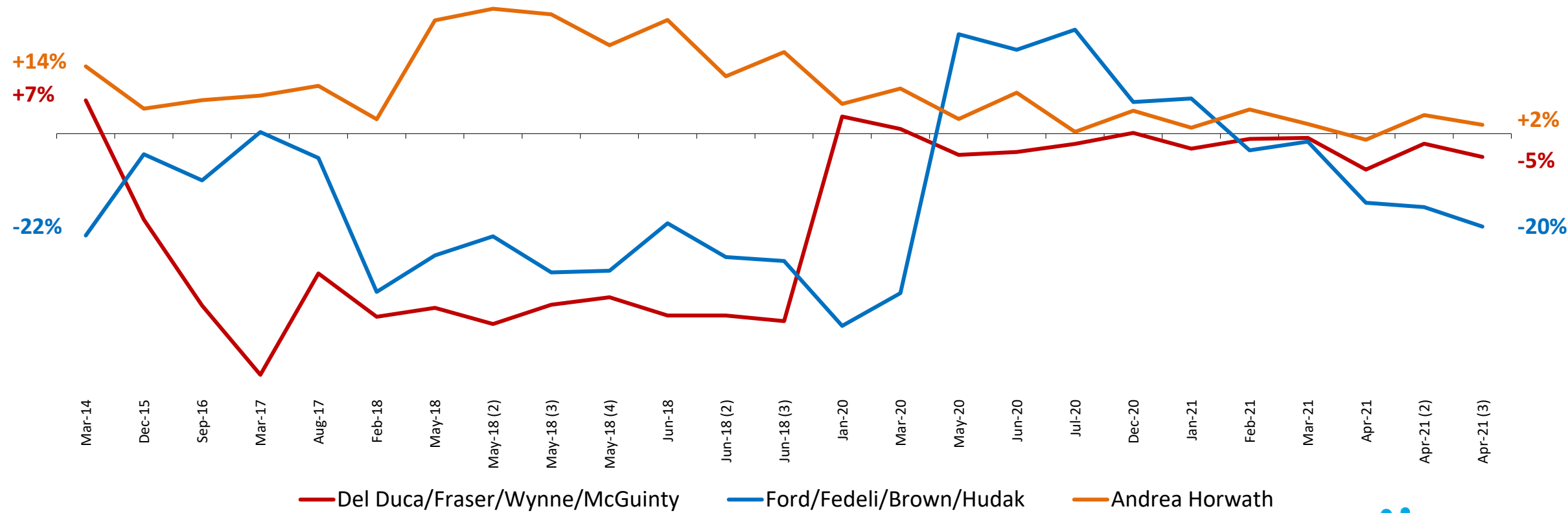


Ontario Party Leader NET Favourables Tracking: Horwath remains the most popular leader on net with a slightly positive net impression



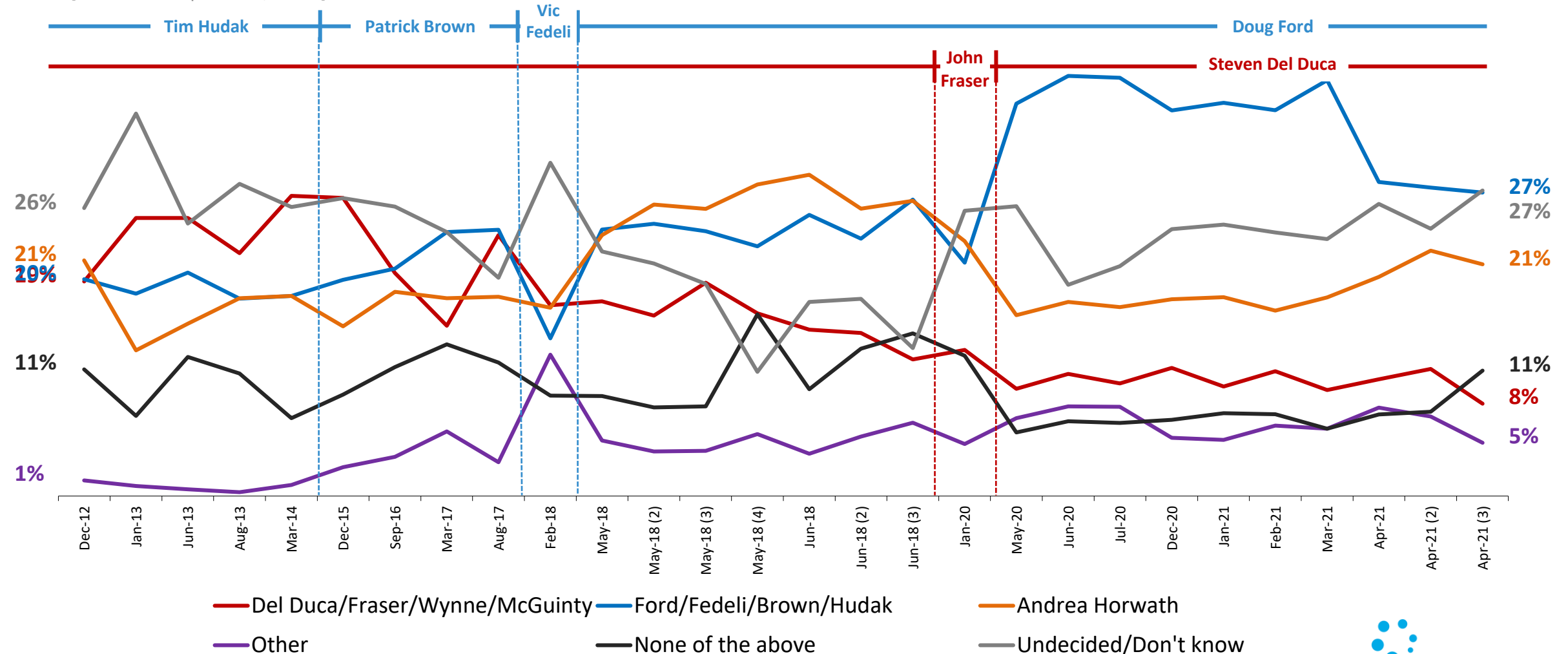
Below are the names of several individuals who have been mentioned in the news recently. For each one, please indicate whether you have heard of that person and, if so, whether you have a very favourable, somewhat favourable, neither favourable or unfavourable, somewhat unfavourable or very unfavourable impression of that person. If you do not recognize the name, just indicate.

[asked of all respondents; n=400]



Best Premier Tracking: Ford remains the top choice for best Premier but is down from a high in March '21

Q Which of the following leaders would make the best Premier of Ontario?
[asked of all respondents; n=400]



The Liberals hold their lead over the PCs in Ontario.

Innovative reports on vote intention in two ways.

When we ask people who they would vote for if an election were held today, and who they lean towards if they are unsure, we call those results Combined vote. This accounts for the views of everyone in the population including decided voters, undecided voters, and non-voters.

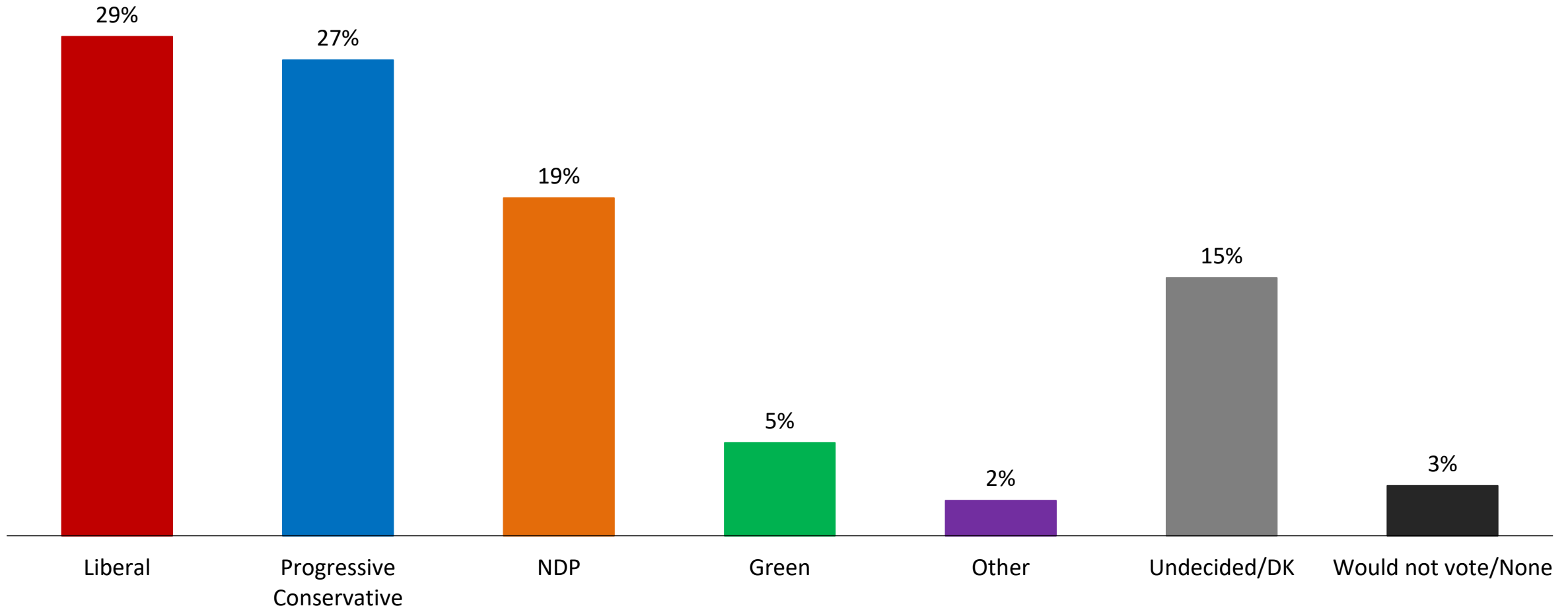
When we look at the results among *only* decided voters, we call that Decided vote. These results most tell us what the election results would be like if the survey results matched the election exactly.

Provincial Combined Vote: The Ontario Liberals have a 2-point lead over the Progressive Conservatives among all voters



If a provincial election were held today, which party would you vote for? In that case, which party do you lean toward slightly? **[Vote + Lean]**

[asked of all respondents; n=400]

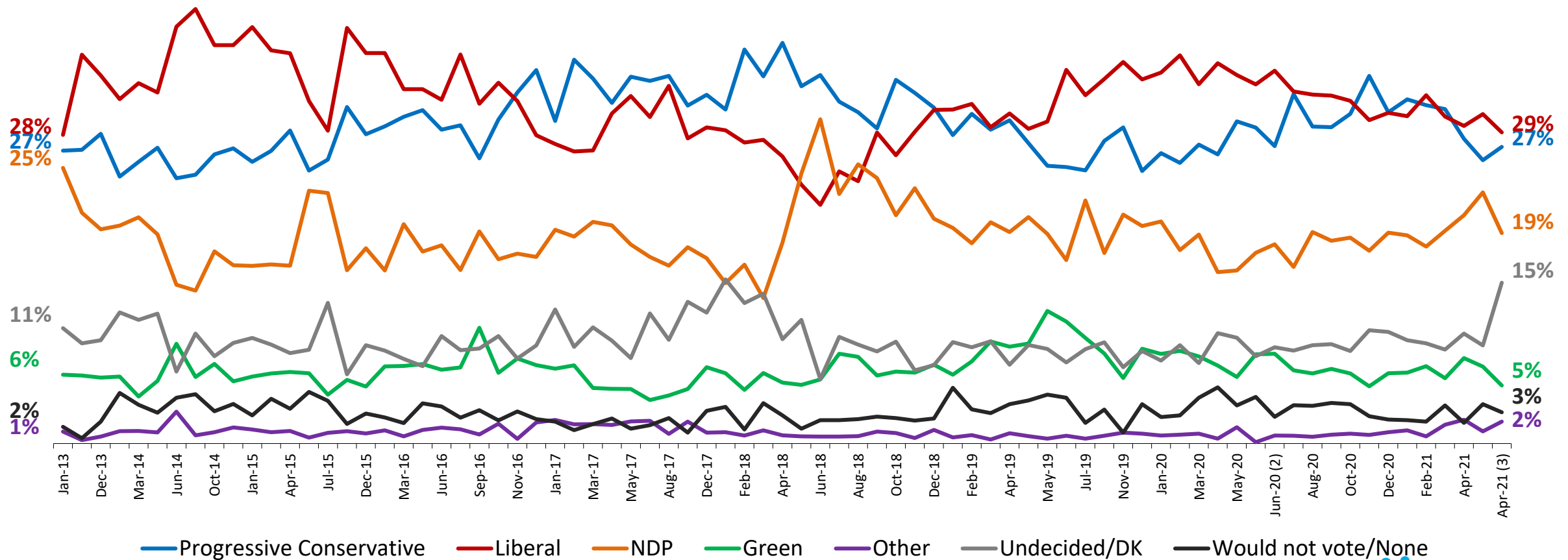


Provincial Vote Tracking: The Ontario Liberals (29%) maintain their narrow lead over the Progressive Conservatives (27%)



If a provincial election were held today, which party would you vote for? In that case, which party do you lean toward slightly? **[Vote + Lean]**

[asked of all respondents; n=400]

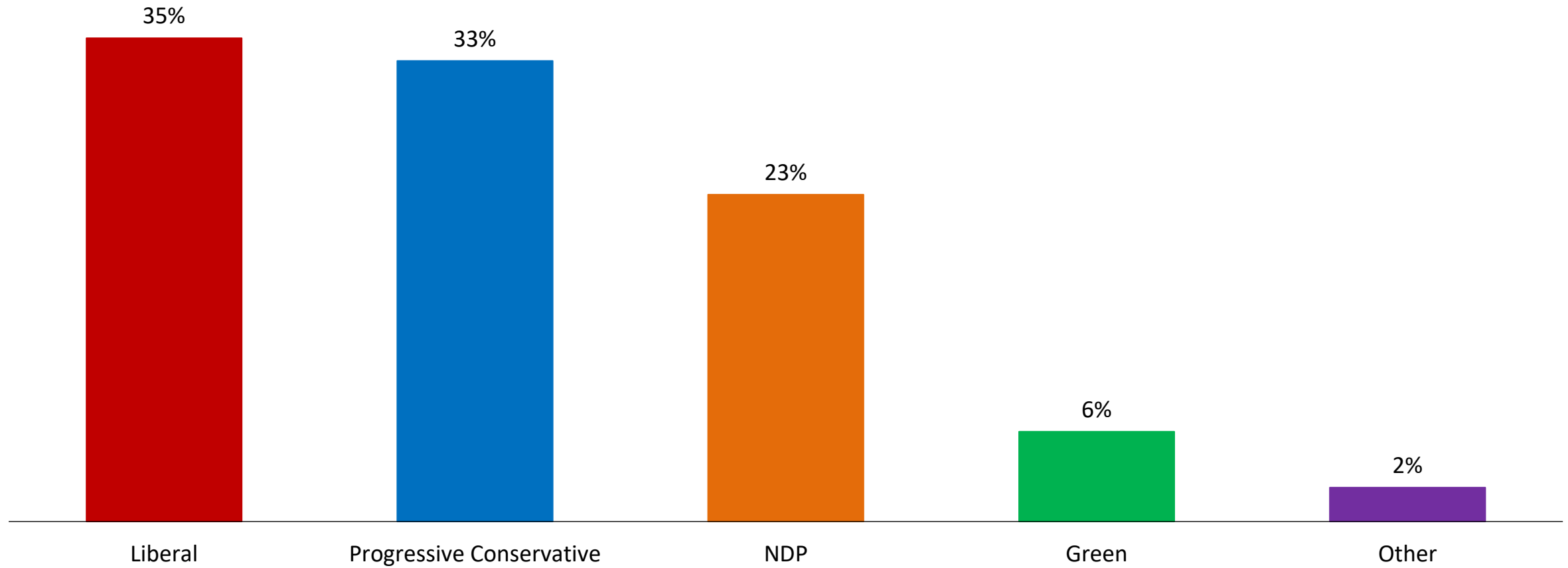


Provincial Decided Vote: Among decided voters, the Liberals (35%) lead the PCs (33%) by 2 points



If a provincial election were held today, which party would you vote for? In that case, which party do you lean toward slightly? **[DECIDED]**

[decided voters only; n=330]



If a provincial election were held today, which party would you vote for? In that case, which party do you lean toward slightly? **[DECIDED]**

Line chart showing the percentage of Canadians identifying with various political parties from 2013 to 2021. The chart tracks five parties: Progressive Conservative (blue), Liberal (red), NDP (orange), Green (green), and Other (purple). The y-axis represents the percentage, ranging from 1% to 32%. The x-axis shows dates from January 2013 to April 2021. The Liberal party shows a significant increase from 29% to 35%, while the Progressive Conservative party decreases from 31% to 33%. The NDP fluctuates between 23% and 31%. The Green party remains relatively stable around 6%, and the Other category stays below 1%.

Date	Progressive Conservative	Liberal	NDP	Green	Other
Jan-13	31%	29%	23%	6%	1%
Apr-13	30%	32%	23%	6%	0.5%
Dec-13	31%	31%	23%	6%	0.5%
Jan-14	30%	31%	24%	6%	0.5%
Mar-14	31%	31%	24%	5%	0.5%
Apr-14	31%	31%	24%	6%	0.5%
Jun-14	29%	32%	23%	7%	1%
Sep-14	30%	33%	23%	6%	0.5%
Oct-14	31%	32%	24%	7%	0.5%
Dec-14	31%	33%	24%	6%	0.5%
Jan-15	30%	34%	24%	6%	0.5%
Mar-15	31%	33%	24%	6%	0.5%
Apr-15	31%	32%	24%	6%	0.5%
May-15	29%	31%	28%	6%	0.5%
Jul-15	31%	30%	31%	5%	0.5%
Nov-15	32%	33%	23%	6%	0.5%
Dec-15	31%	33%	24%	6%	0.5%
Feb-16	31%	33%	23%	7%	0.5%
Mar-16	32%	31%	26%	7%	0.5%
Apr-16	32%	31%	24%	7%	0.5%
Jun-16	31%	32%	24%	7%	0.5%
Aug-16	30%	33%	23%	7%	0.5%
Sep-16	29%	31%	26%	8%	0.5%
Oct-16	31%	33%	24%	6%	0.5%
Nov-16	32%	31%	24%	7%	0.5%
Dec-16	33%	30%	24%	7%	0.5%
Jan-17	31%	30%	26%	7%	0.5%
Feb-17	32%	29%	24%	7%	0.5%
Mar-17	31%	30%	26%	6%	0.5%
Apr-17	30%	32%	26%	6%	0.5%
May-17	31%	33%	24%	6%	0.5%
Jun-17	32%	32%	24%	5%	0.5%
Aug-17	32%	33%	23%	6%	0.5%
Oct-17	31%	31%	26%	7%	0.5%
Dec-17	32%	31%	24%	7%	0.5%
Jan-18	33%	30%	23%	6%	0.5%
Feb-18	32%	31%	24%	5%	0.5%
Mar-18	33%	29%	23%	7%	0.5%
Apr-18	32%	28%	26%	6%	0.5%
May-18	31%	29%	29%	6%	0.5%
Jun-18	30%	26%	31%	6%	0.5%
Jul-18	29%	30%	28%	7%	0.5%
Aug-18	28%	27%	29%	7%	0.5%
Sep-18	27%	31%	27%	6%	0.5%
Oct-18	32%	29%	24%	6%	0.5%
Nov-18	30%	31%	26%	6%	0.5%
Dec-18	29%	32%	24%	6%	0.5%
Jan-19	28%	33%	24%	6%	0.5%
Feb-19	30%	32%	23%	7%	0.5%
Mar-19	29%	30%	25%	7%	0.5%
Apr-19	30%	31%	24%	7%	0.5%
Apr-19 (2)	29%	30%	26%	7%	0.5%
May-19	28%	31%	24%	8%	0.5%
Jun-19	27%	33%	23%	7%	0.5%
Jul-19	26%	31%	28%	6%	0.5%
Oct-19	31%	33%	23%	7%	0.5%
Nov-19	31%	33%	24%	5%	0.5%
Dec-19	30%	33%	24%	7%	0.5%
Jan-20	31%	33%	24%	6%	0.5%
Feb-20	30%	35%	23%	6%	0.5%
Mar-20	31%	33%	23%	6%	0.5%
Apr-20	32%	35%	23%	6%	0.5%
May-20	31%	33%	23%	6%	0.5%
Jun-20	30%	32%	24%	7%	0.5%
Jun-20 (2)	31%	33%	24%	7%	0.5%

Combined Vote by Party ID: NDP and PC voters are the most loyal, while only 63% of Liberal Partisans would vote for their party

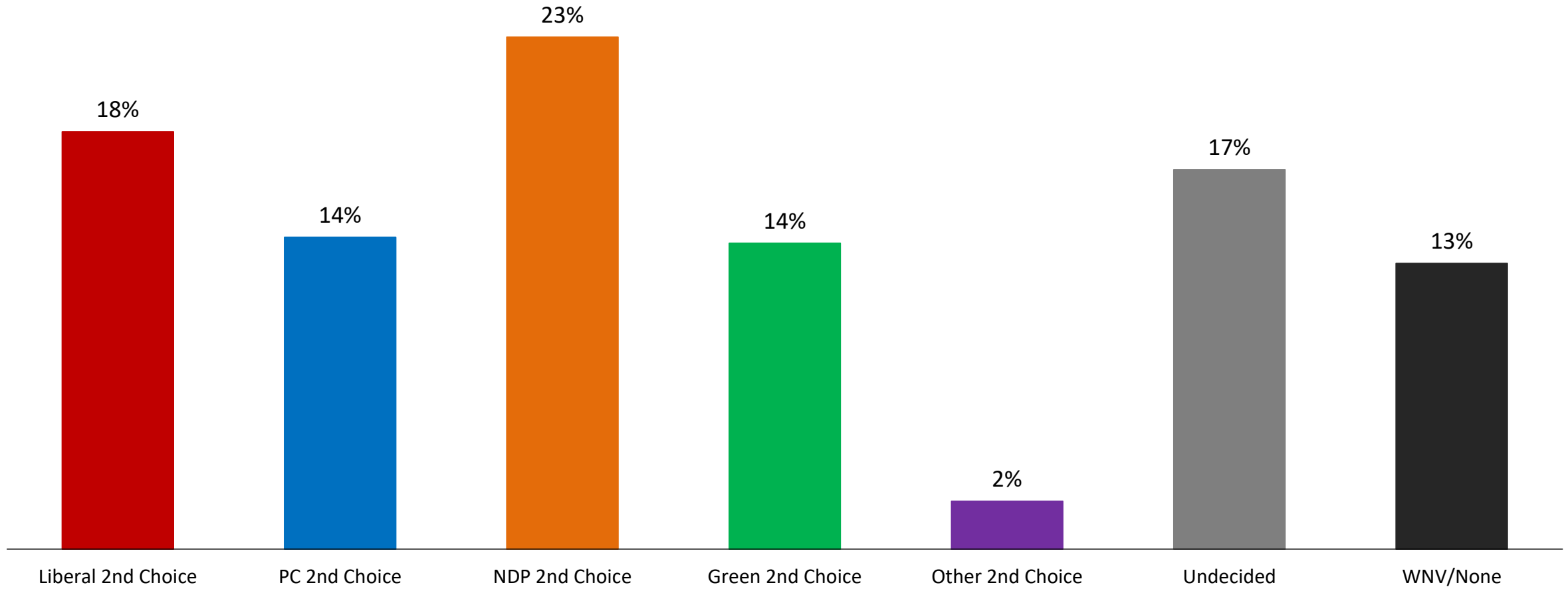
		Provincial Party Identification			
Combined Vote		Liberal	Progressive Conservative	NDP	Unaligned
		(N=139)	(N=101)	(N=49)	(N=94)
	Liberal	63%	8%	3%	16%
	Progressive Conservative	6%	77%	6%	20%
	NDP	13%	4%	80%	15%
	Green	5%	1%	6%	2%
	Other	0%	2%	1%	2%
	Undecided/DK	12%	9%	4%	34%
	Would not vote/None	1%	0%	0%	11%

Provincial 2nd Choice: The NDP are the top 2nd choice with 23% of voters saying they are their second choice



And which party would be your second choice?

[only decided voters; n=330]



Provincial 2nd Choice: Nearly half of NDP and Liberal voters have the other party as their 2nd choice

And which party would be your second choice? BY [Vote+Lean]

Second Choice	First Choice			
	Liberal 1st Choice	PC 1st Choice	NDP 1st Choice	Green 1st Choice
	(N=114)	(N=109)	(N=77)	(N=21)
	Liberal 2nd Choice	16%	44%	41%
	PC 2nd Choice	22%	15%	15%
	NDP 2nd Choice	19%		16%
	Green 2nd Choice	6%	26%	
	Other 2nd Choice	3%	2%	4%
	Undecided	24%	10%	16%
	WNV/None	31%	3%	8%

Methodology

Survey Methodology

These are the results of an online survey conducted between April 22nd and April 26th, 2021.

Method: This online survey was conducted using INNOVATIVE's Canada 20/20 national research panel with additional respondents from Dynata, a leading provider of online sample. Each survey is administered to a series of randomly selected samples from the panel and weighted to ensure that the overall sample's composition reflects that of the actual Ontario population according to Census data to provide results that are intended to approximate a probability sample.

Sample Size: n=413 Ontario residents, 18 years or older. The results are weighted to n=400 based on Census data from Statistics Canada.

Field Dates: April 22nd to April 26th, 2021.

Weighting: Results for Ontario are weighted by age, gender, and region to ensure that the overall sample's composition reflects that of the actual population according to Census data; in order to provide results that are intended to approximate a probability sample. Weighted and unweighted frequencies are reported in the table.

Margin of Error: This is a representative sample. However, since the online survey was not a random probability based sample, a margin of error cannot be calculated. Statements about margins of sampling error or population estimates do not apply to most online panels.

Note: Graphs may not always total 100% due to rounding values rather than any error in data. Sums are added before rounding numbers.

	Unweighted (n)	Unweighted (%)	Weighted (n)	Weighted (%)
Men 18-34	54	13.2%	55	13.9%
Men 35-54	58	14.1%	66	16.7%
Men 55+	62	15.1%	70	17.6%
Women 18-34	69	16.8%	55	13.9%
Women 35-54	83	20.2%	70	17.7%
Women 55+	84	20.5%	80	20.2%
Toronto	86	21.0%	85	21.3%
Rest of GTA	78	19.1%	103	25.9%
South/West	110	26.9%	102	25.7%
North/East	135	33.0%	108	27.1%

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Building Understanding.

