



Ontario Politics in the time of COVID-19

Public Opinion Research
Release Date: May 5, 2021
Field Dates: April 29, 2021 to May 4, 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 fifth week of our April 2021 *Canada This Month* survey. This online survey was in field from April 29th to May 4th with a weighted sample size of 400 Ontario residents. Detailed methodology is provided in the appendix.

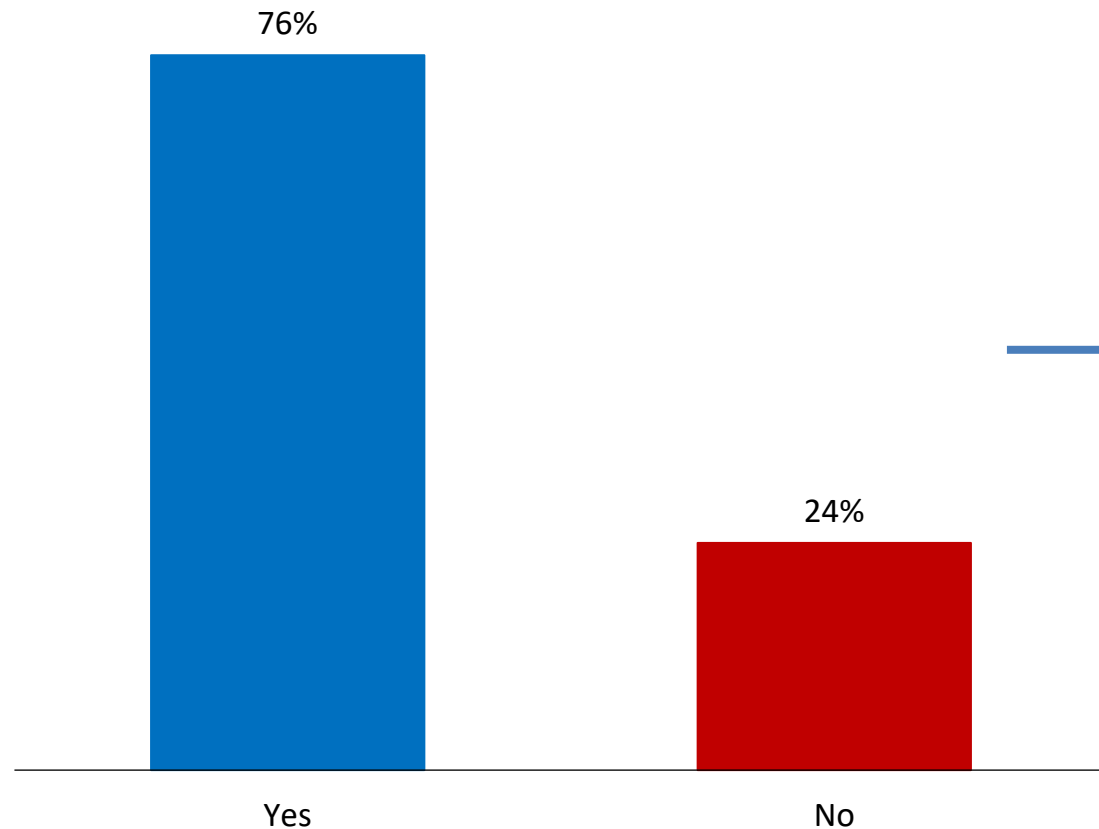
This report covers key results on how Ontarians rate their government's handling of the COVID-19 outbreak, Ontario vote choice, and evaluation of party leaders.

Read, Seen, Heard

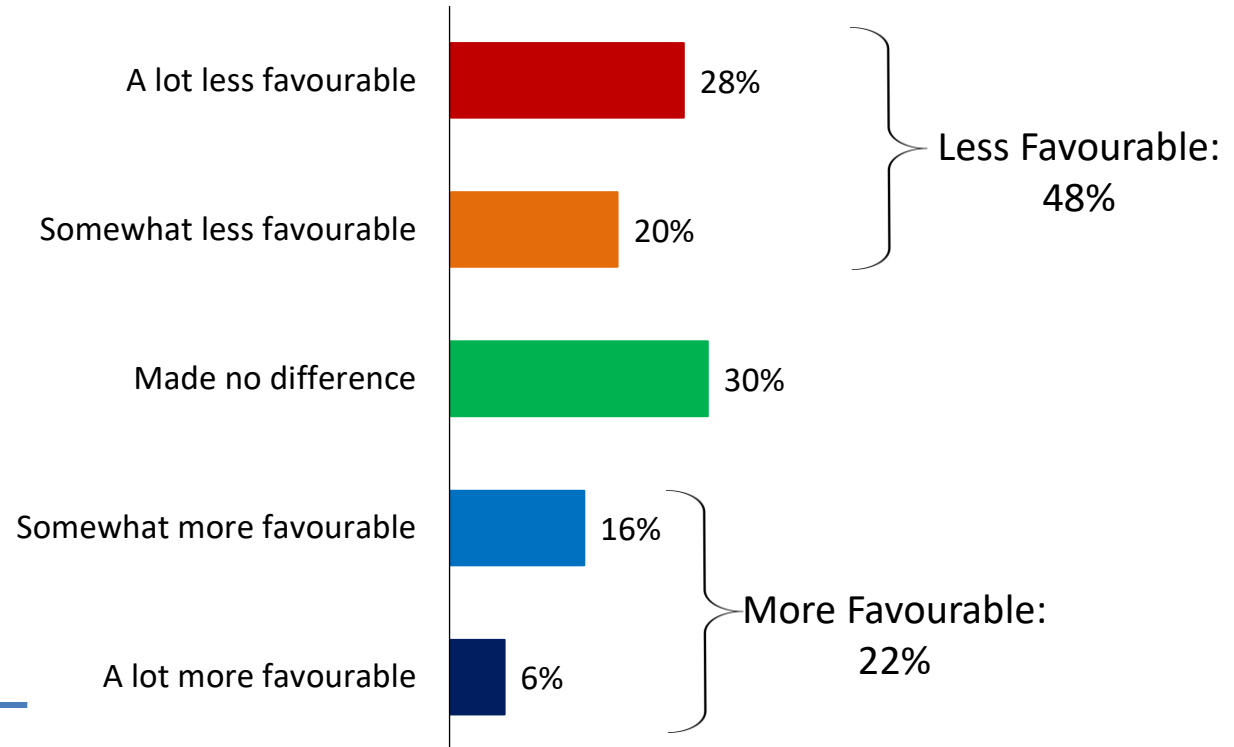
Attention to the Ontario government is steady from last week and remains high with 76% saying they have heard something recently. The net impact of what Ontarians have heard remains strongly negative.

Ontario Read, Seen, Heard: 3-in-4 (76%) have read, seen, or heard something about Doug Ford, 48% were left less favourable

Q Have you read, seen or heard anything about Doug Ford in the last few days?
[Asked of those who have RSH; 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=304]

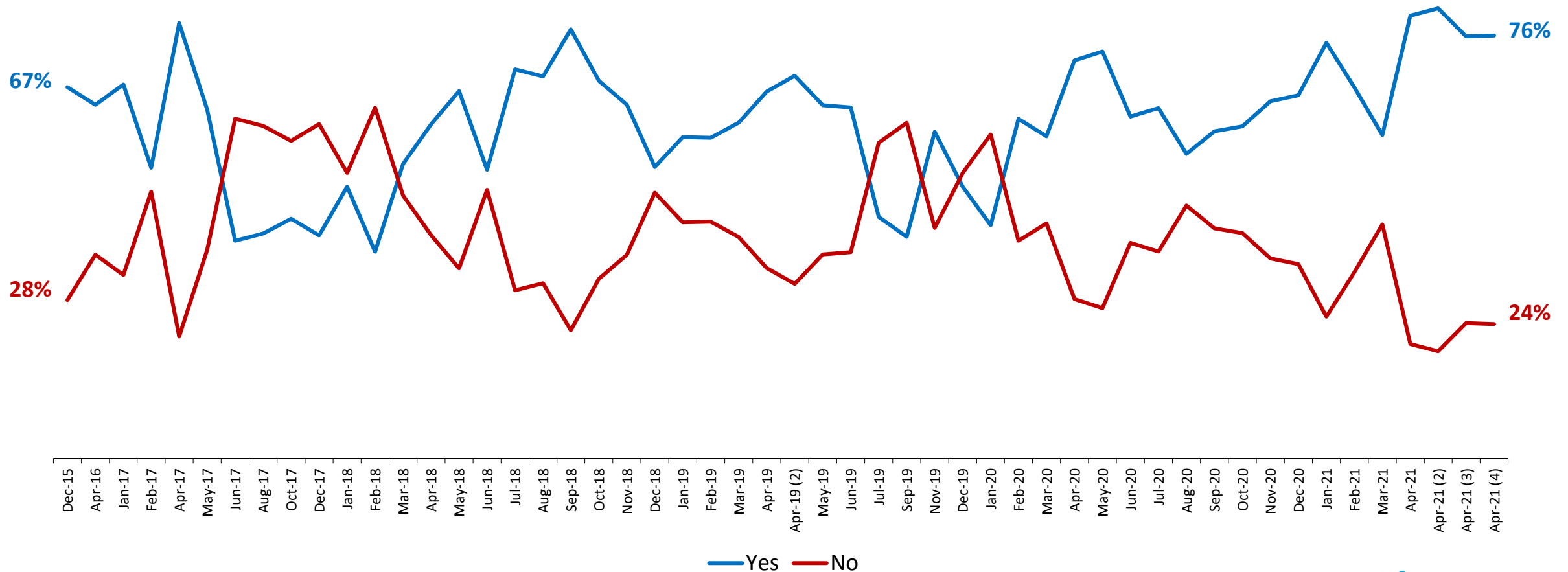


Read, Seen, Heard Tracking: 3-in-4 have read, seen, or heard about Doug Ford in the last few days, consistent with March 21'



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

[asked of all respondents; n=400]

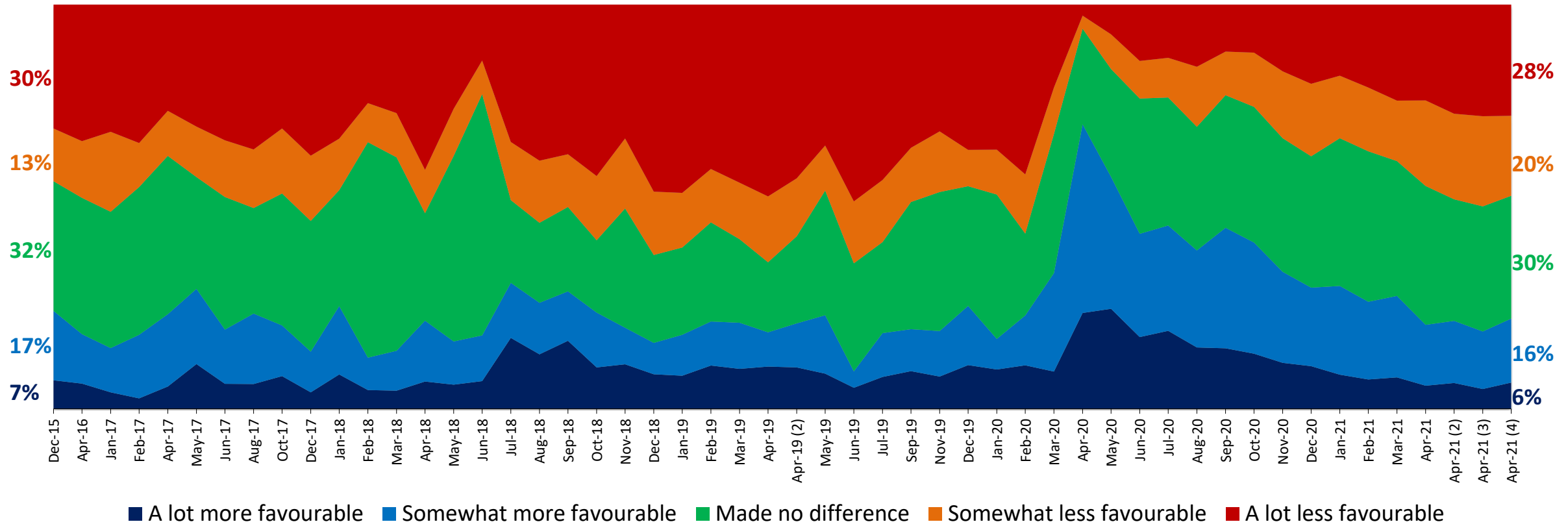


Ontario Read, Seen, Heard, Impact Tracking: Favourability of what was read seen or heard is up slightly since March



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=304]



Government Approval

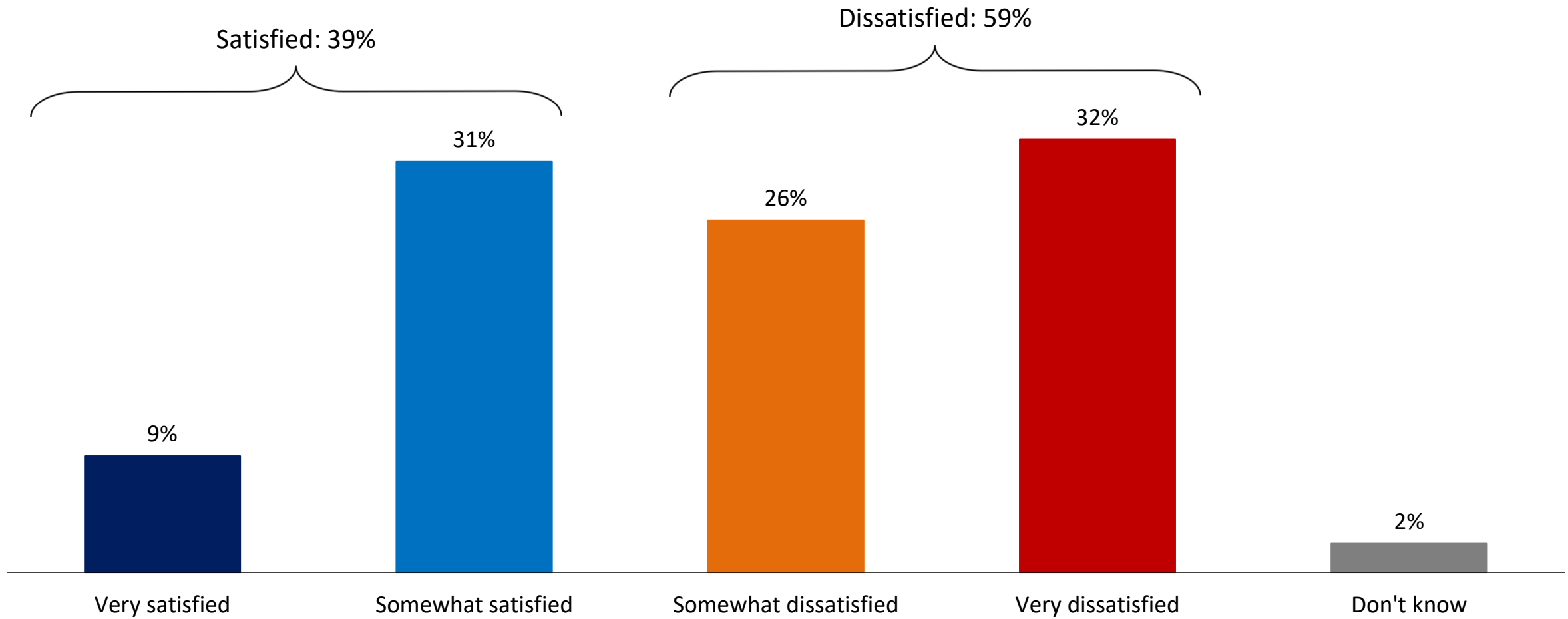
Ontario government's satisfaction is down at 39%, with 59% saying they are dissatisfied with the government.

Ontario Government Approval: 3-in-5 (59%) are dissatisfied with the Ontario government, only 39% are satisfied



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]

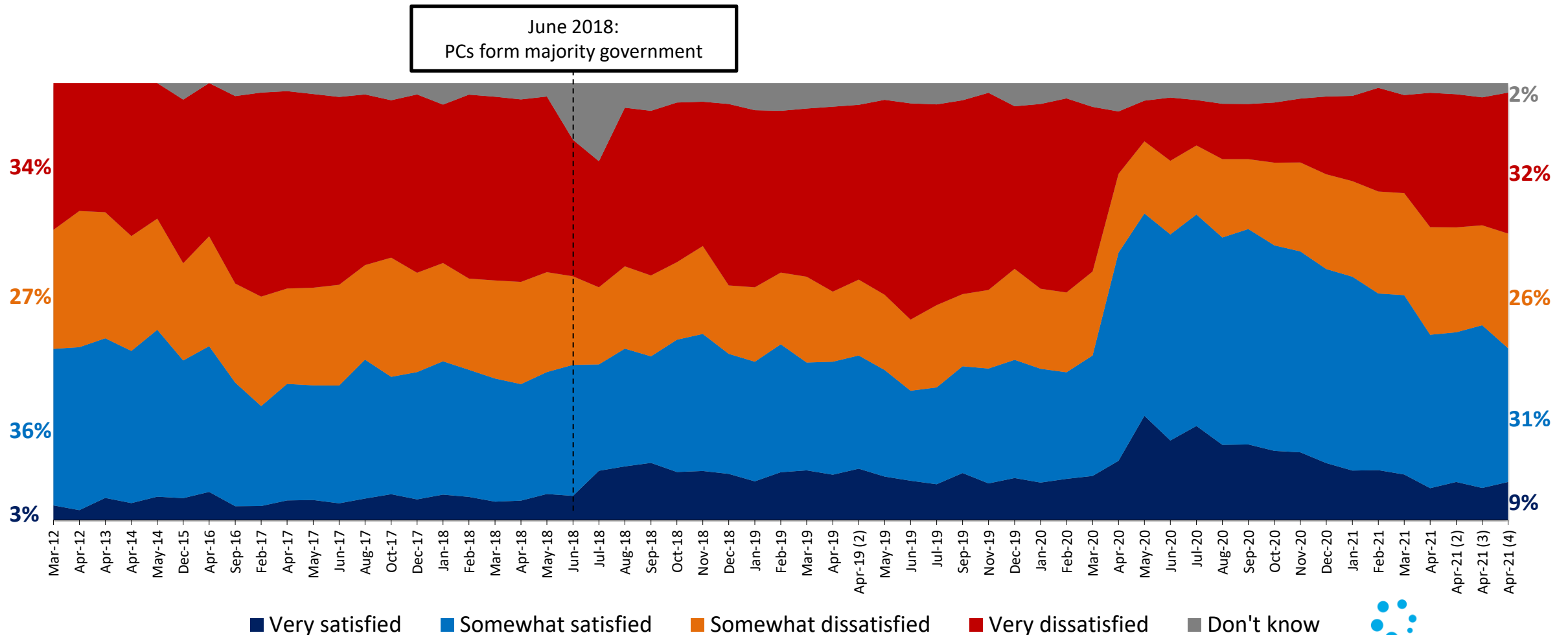


Government Approval Tracking: Overall satisfaction is down directionally, a majority remain dissatisfied



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]



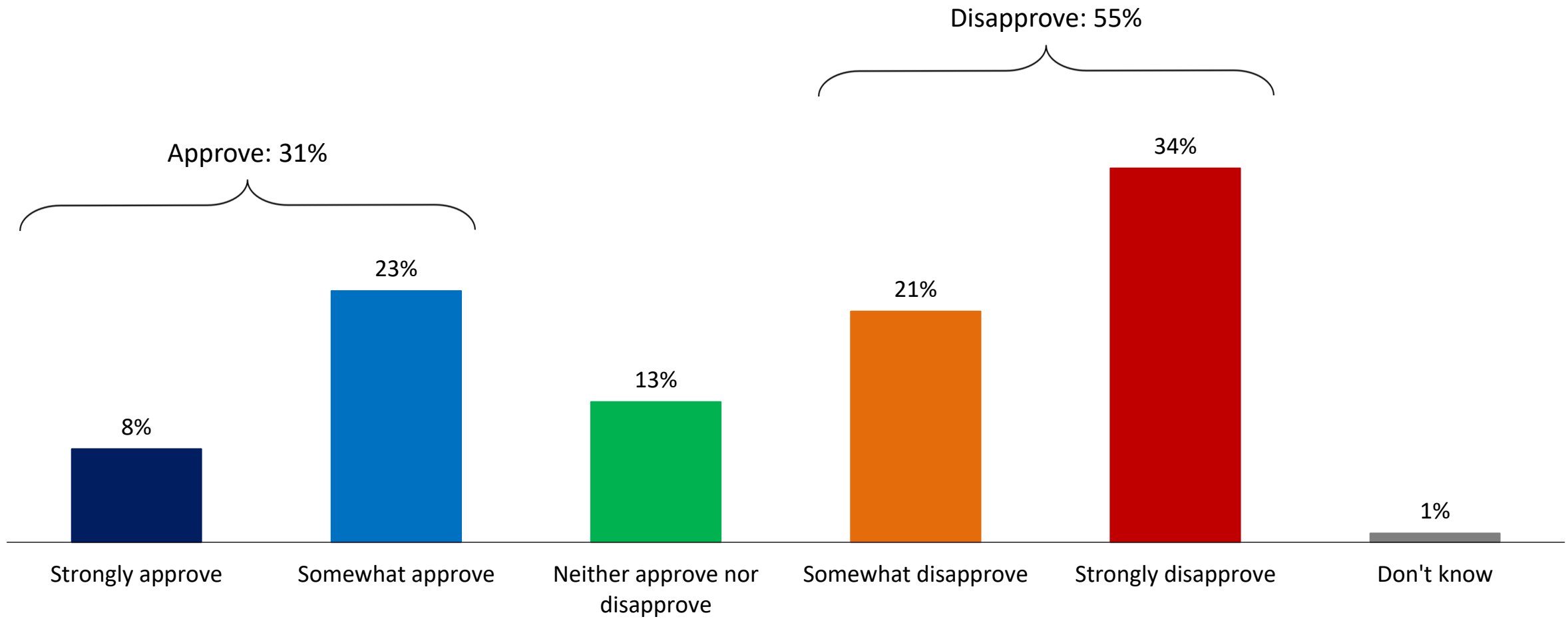
COVID-19 Handling: More than half (55%) disapprove of the way the Ontario gov't has handled the COVID19 pandemic

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]

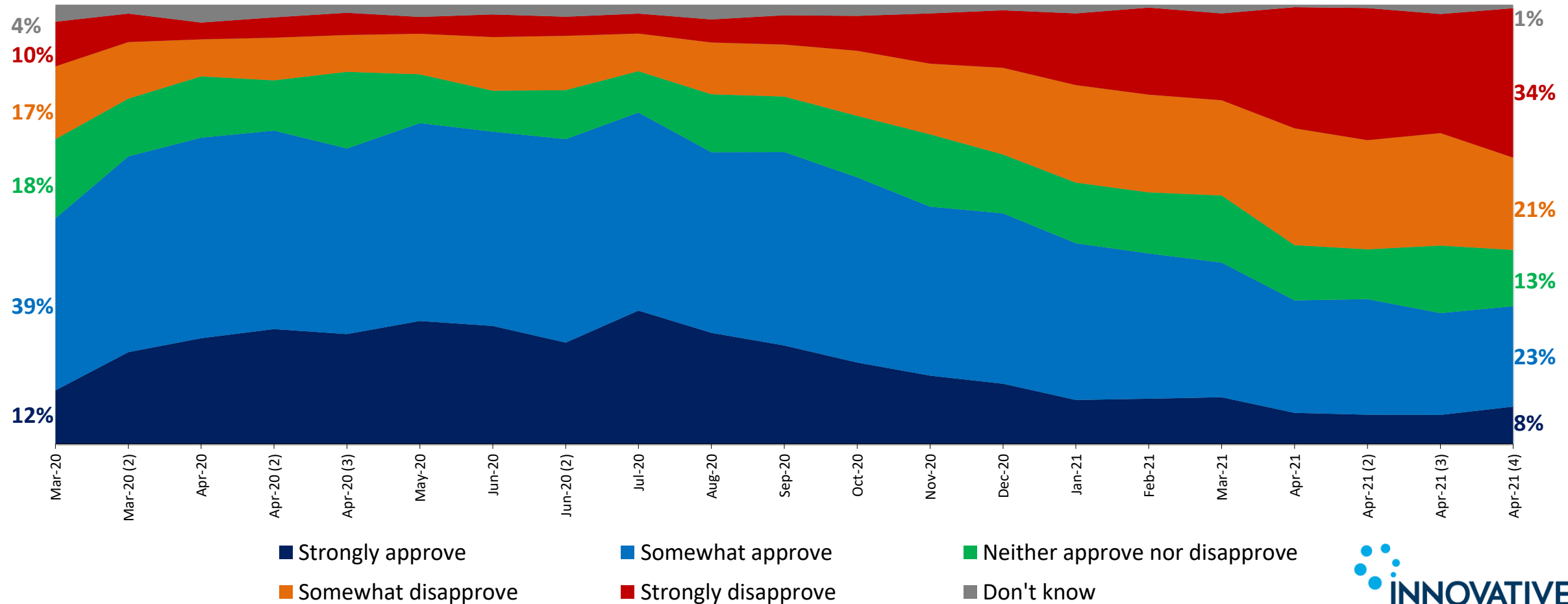


COVID-19 Handling Tracking: Approval of handling COVID-19 is down directionally since July 2020



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

[asked of all respondents; n=400]



Restrictions

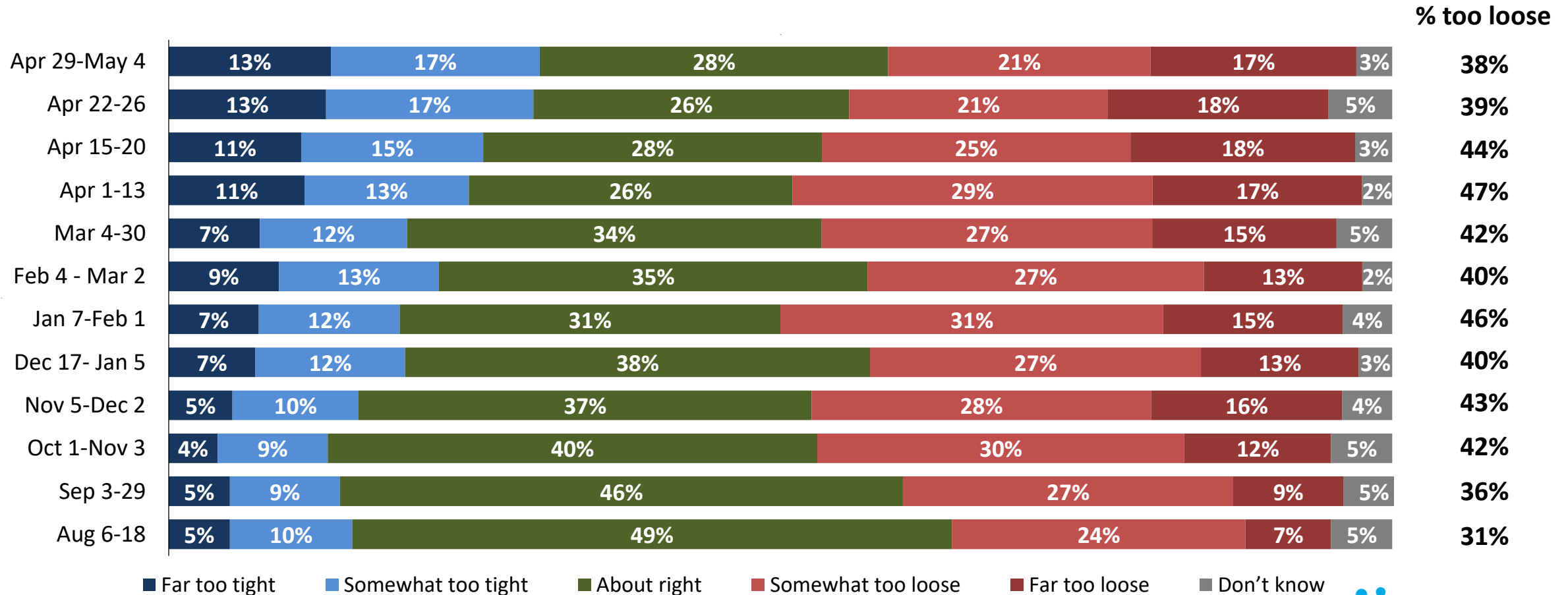
Three-in-ten Ontarians still believe that the restrictions in place in the province are too tight (30%), but a plurality say restrictions are too loose (38%).

Provincial Restrictions: With the COVID-19 restrictions in place, the share of Ontarians claiming restrictions are too tight remains steady

Q

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]



Recent Lockdown

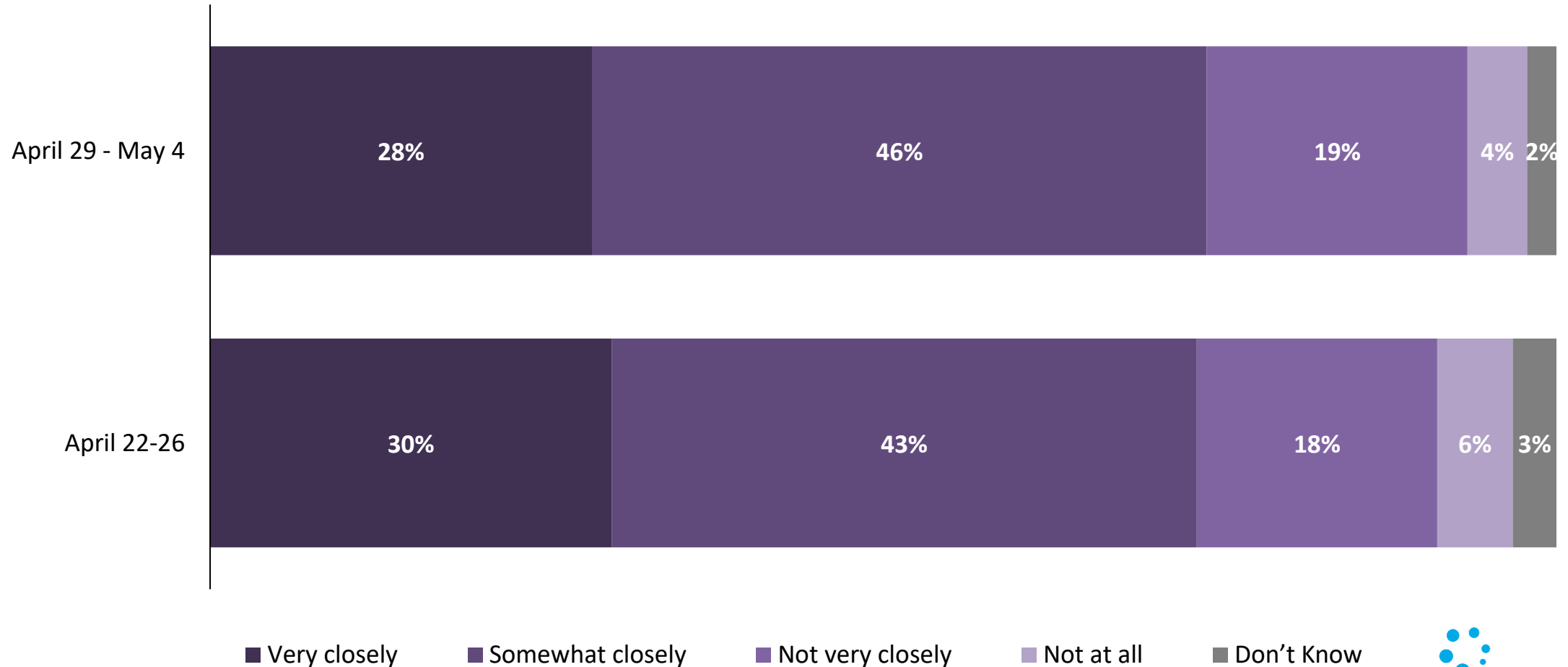
Attention to recent press conferences and restrictions put in place by Doug Ford remains high with 74% following the news at least somewhat closely. A majority in Ontario feel that the way Ford has dealt with the situation is a sign of a deeper problem.

Awareness: 7-in-10 (74%) have been following the recent press conferences by Doug Ford, steady since the last wave of tracking



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]

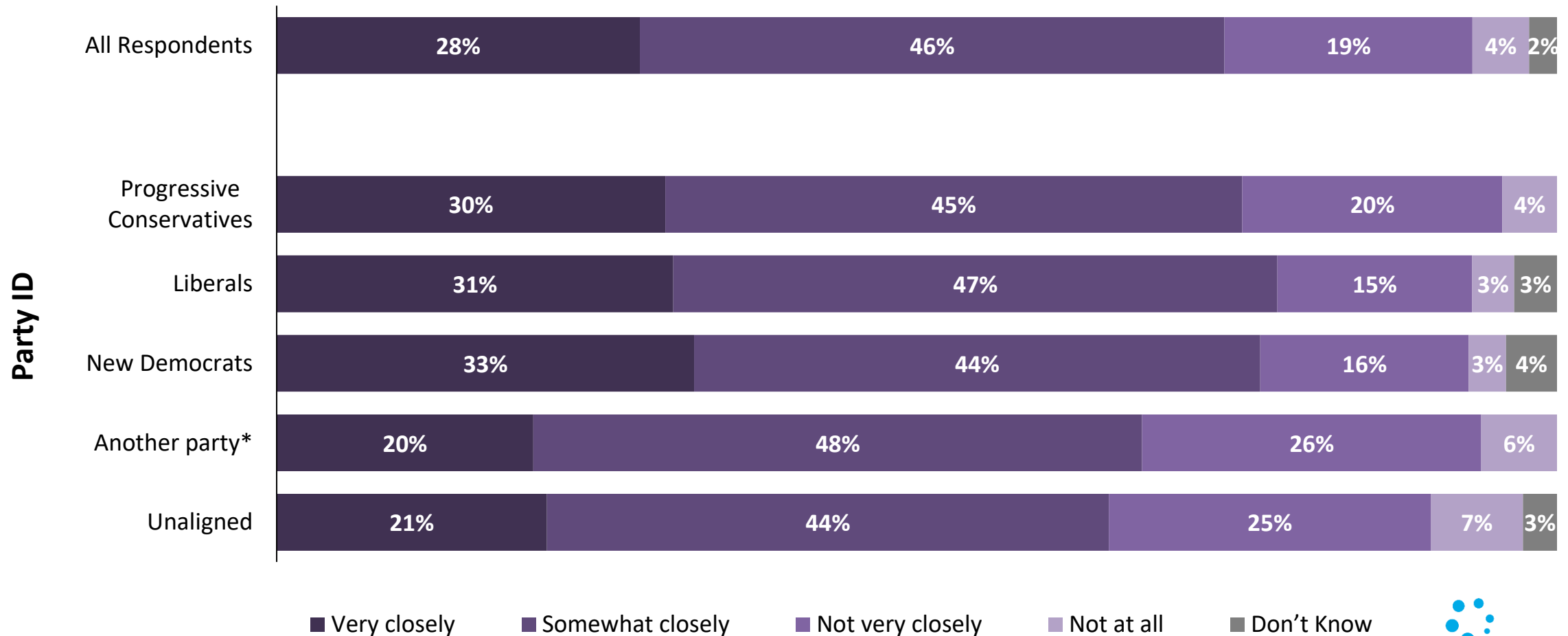


Awareness: Partisans from the 3 main political parties are more likely to follow Ford's press conferences; highest for Liberal partisans



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]

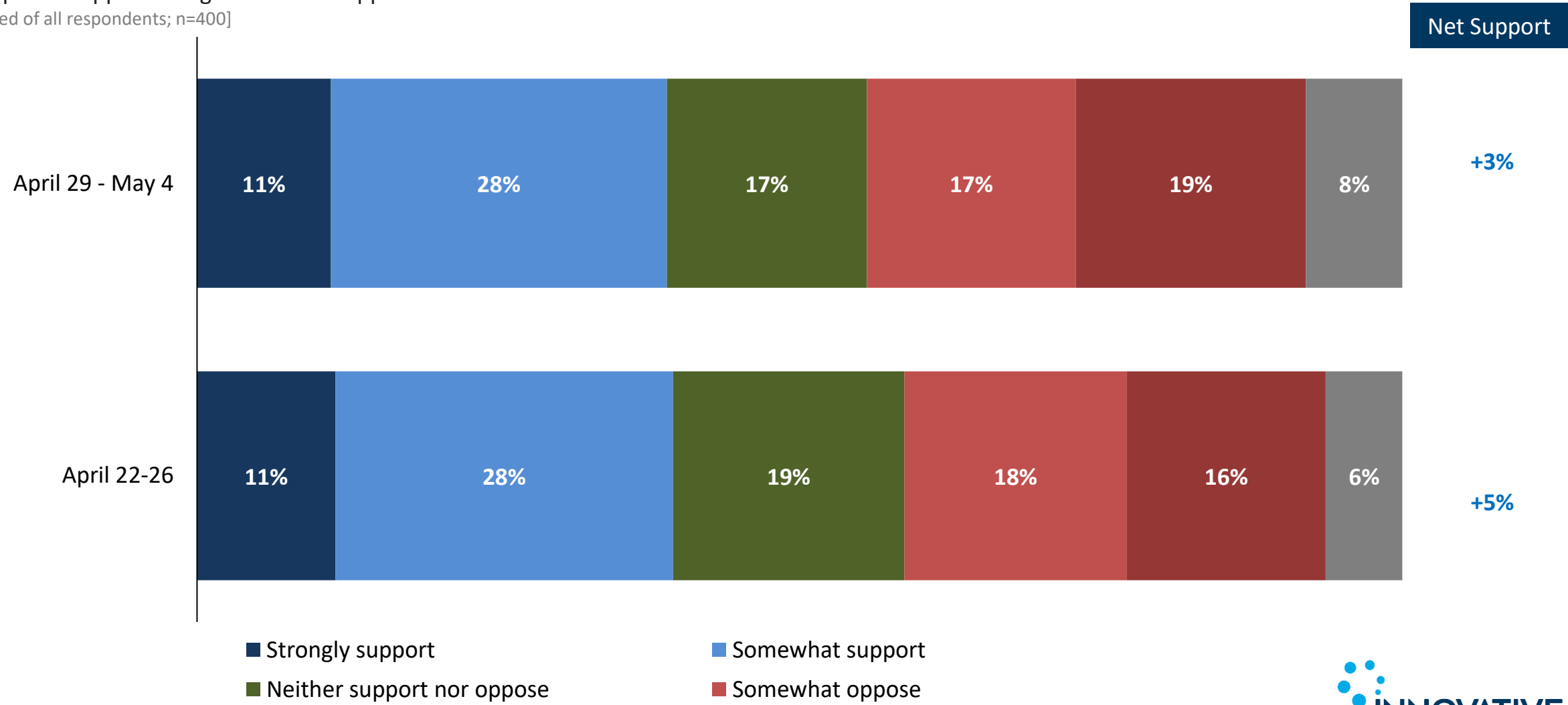


Reaction: 4-in-10 (39%) support the government's approach to combat the spread of COVID-19, steady since the last wave of tracking ¹⁷

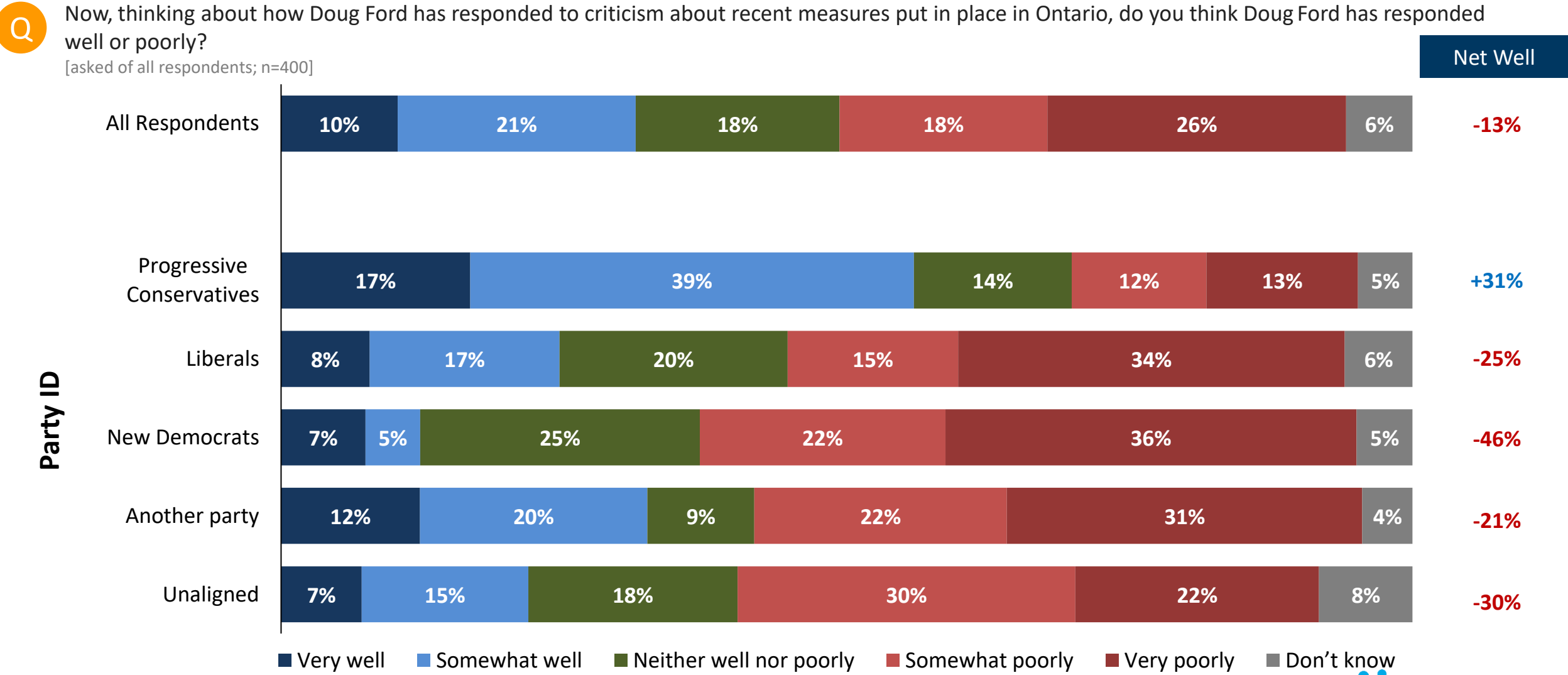


Thinking about the recent press conferences by Premier Doug Ford and the government's plans to combat the spread of COVID-19 in Ontario, do you support or oppose the government's approach?

[asked of all respondents; n=400]



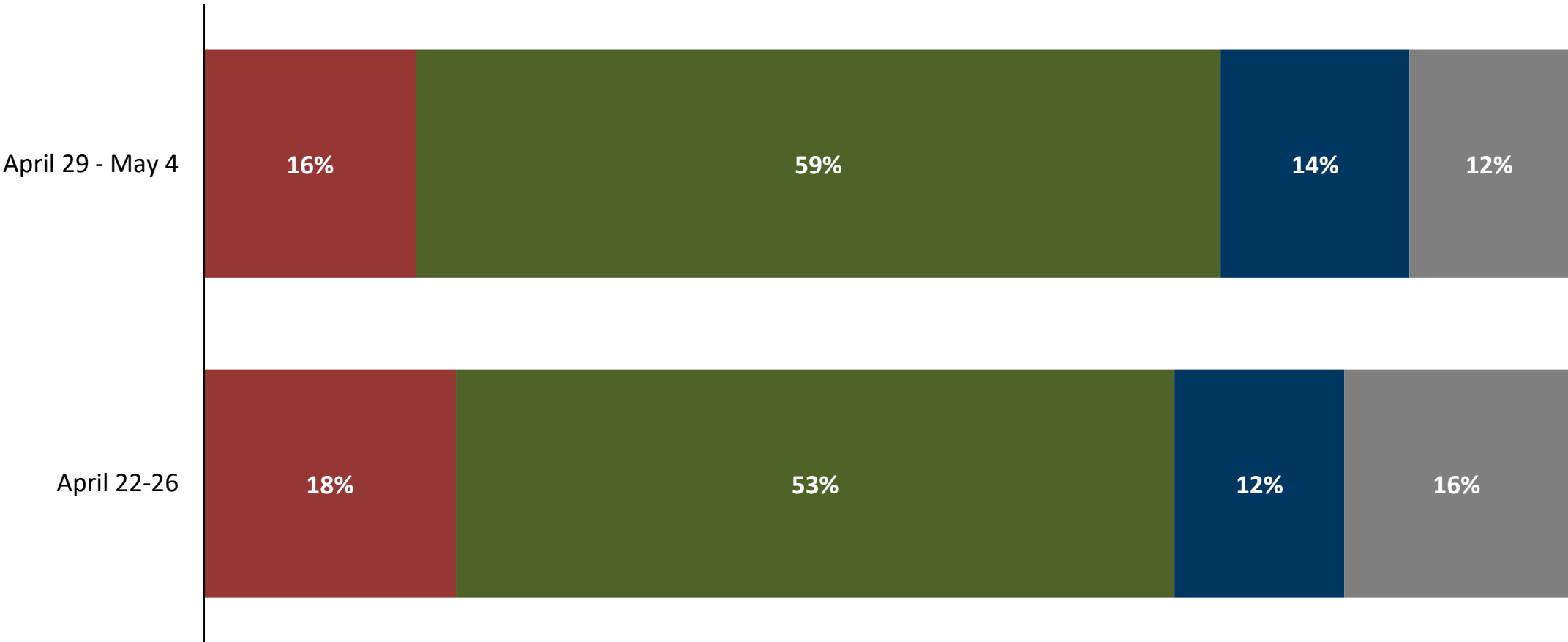
Ford's Response: 45% of respondents believe that Ford has responded poorly to the criticisms, highest among NDP partisans (58%)¹⁸



A Deeper Problem?: The majority (59%) believe the controversy is a sign of a deeper issue with how the government is handling the pandemic



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]



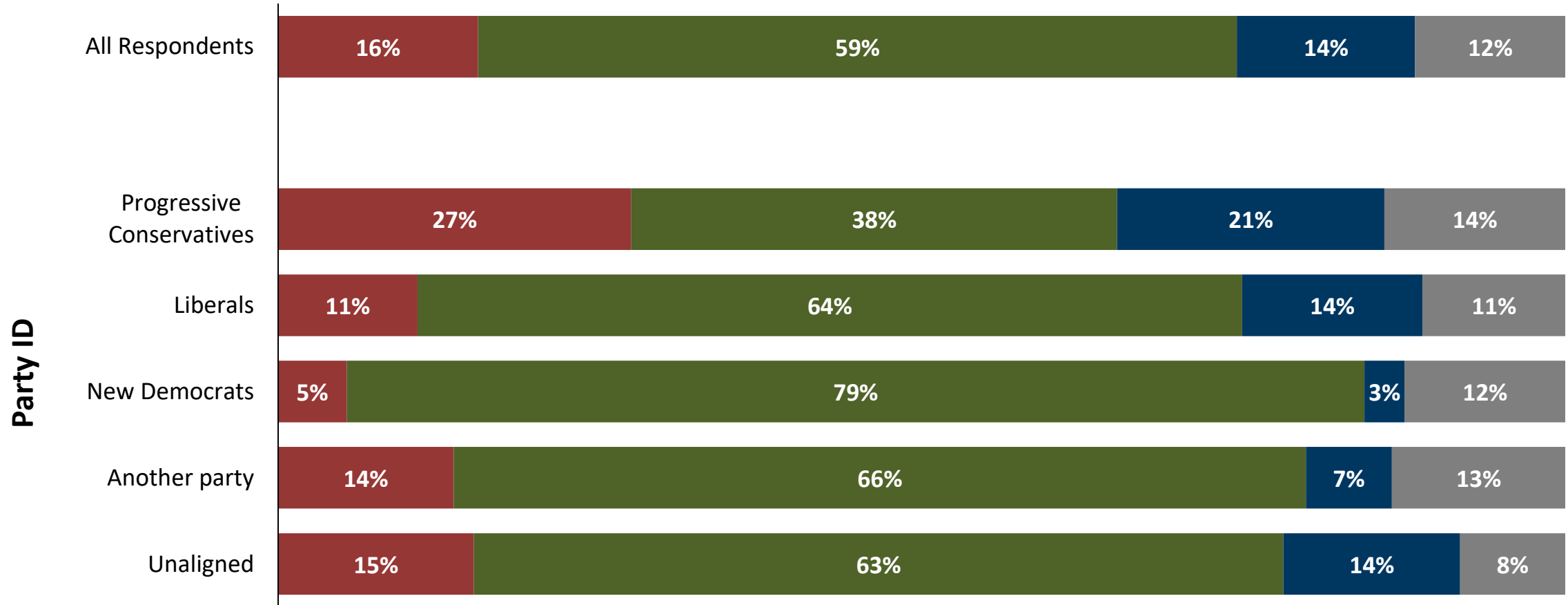
- This controversy is a one-off issue related to the current wave of the disease
- This controversy is a sign of a deeper issue with how the government is managing the pandemic
- There is no real merit to the criticisms behind this controversy
- Don't know

A Deeper Problem?: A significant minority of PC identifiers see a deeper issue with how the government is handling the pandemic



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]



- This controversy is a one-off issue related to the current wave of the disease
- This controversy is a sign of a deeper issue with how the government is managing the pandemic
- There is no real merit to the criticisms behind this controversy
- Don't know

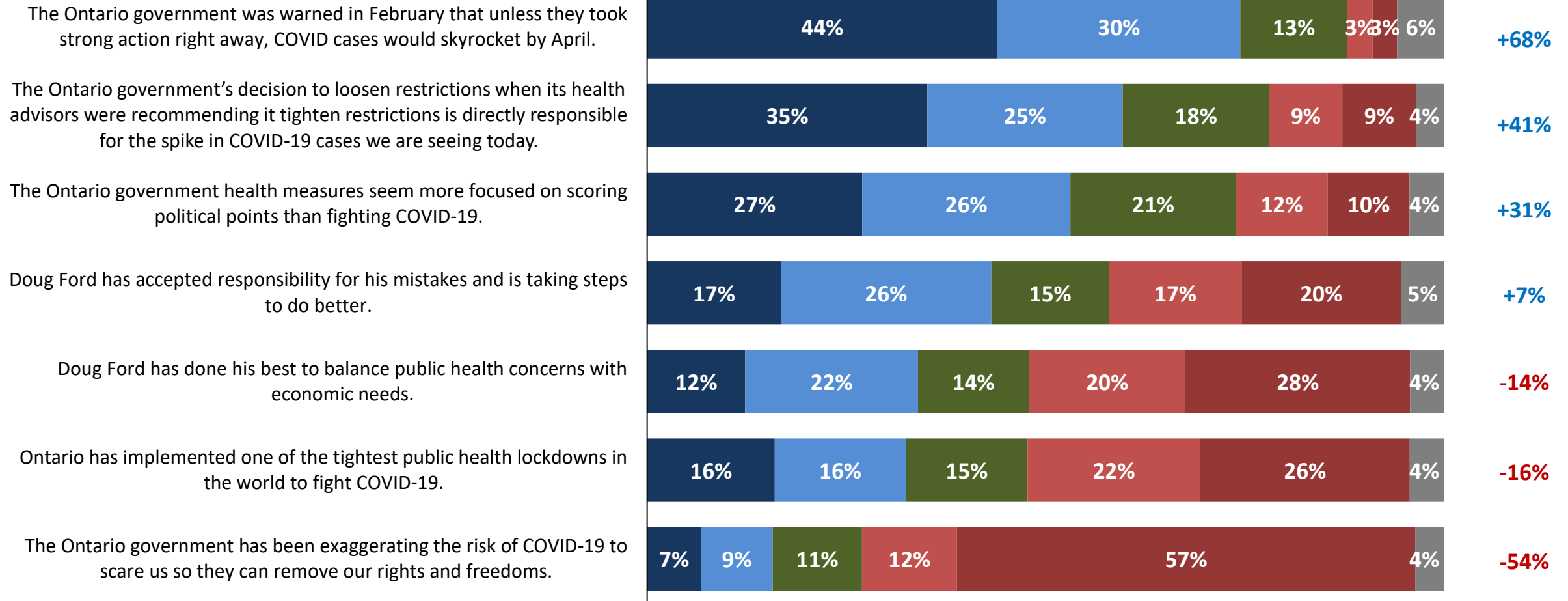
Attitudes: 74% believe the Ontario gov't was warned in February that unless they took prompt action, COVID cases will skyrocket in April



Do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

[asked of all respondents; n=400]

Net Agreement



Strongly agree

Somewhat disagree

Somewhat agree

Strongly disagree

Neither agree nor disagree

Don't know

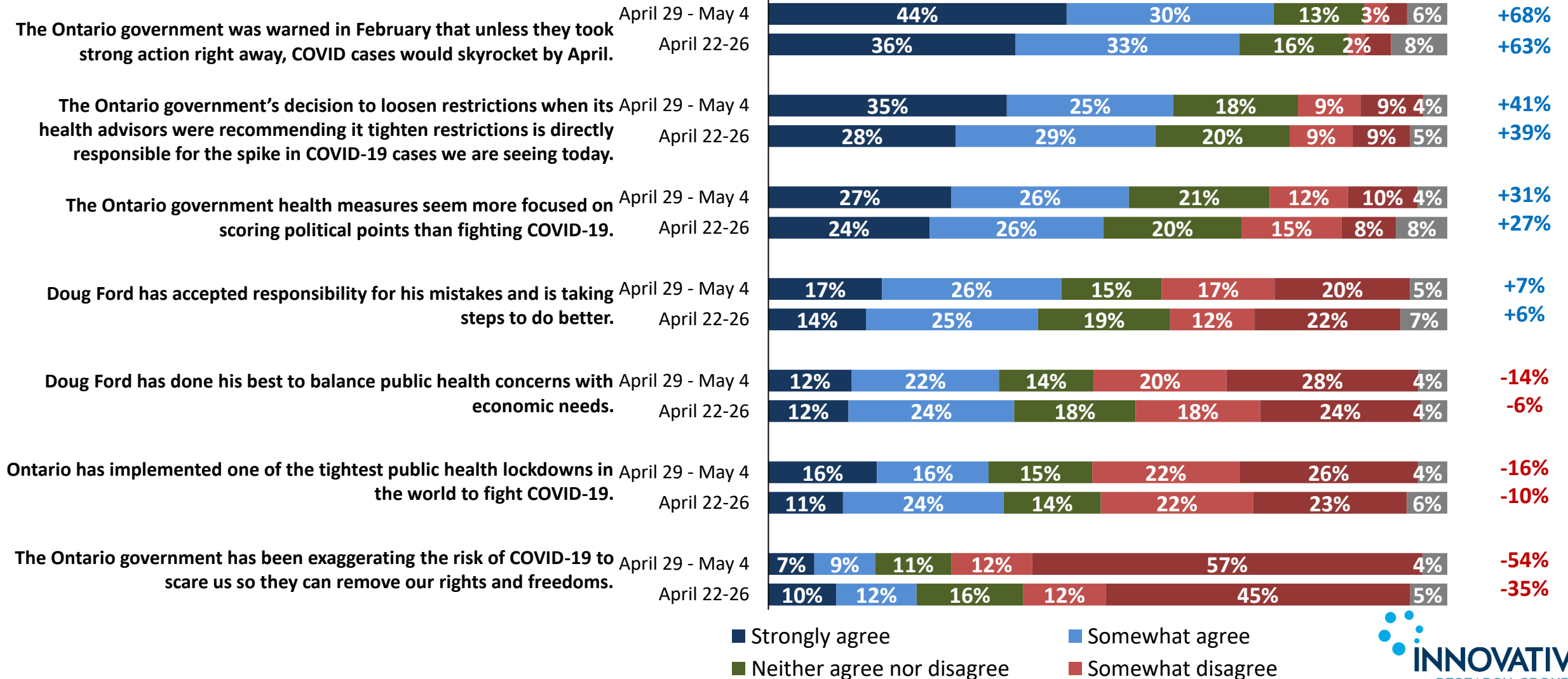
Attitudes: Respondent's belief about the Ontario gov't being warned in Feb. to take immediate action so cases don't skyrocket is up by 5 points



Do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

[asked of all respondents; n=400]

Net Agreement



Strongly agree

Neither agree nor disagree

Somewhat agree

Somewhat disagree

Attitudes: Unaligned blame Ford but feel he is trying to do better now



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	+60%	+11%	+4%	+49%	+29%	+27%	-43%
Liberals	+77%	+65%	+40%	-13%	-27%	-42%	-71%
New Democrats	+77%	+70%	+64%	-26%	-61%	-43%	-68%
Other	+52%	+39%	+35%	-2%	-6%	-24%	-51%
Unaligned	+62%	+20%	+30%	+9%	-20%	-3%	-28%

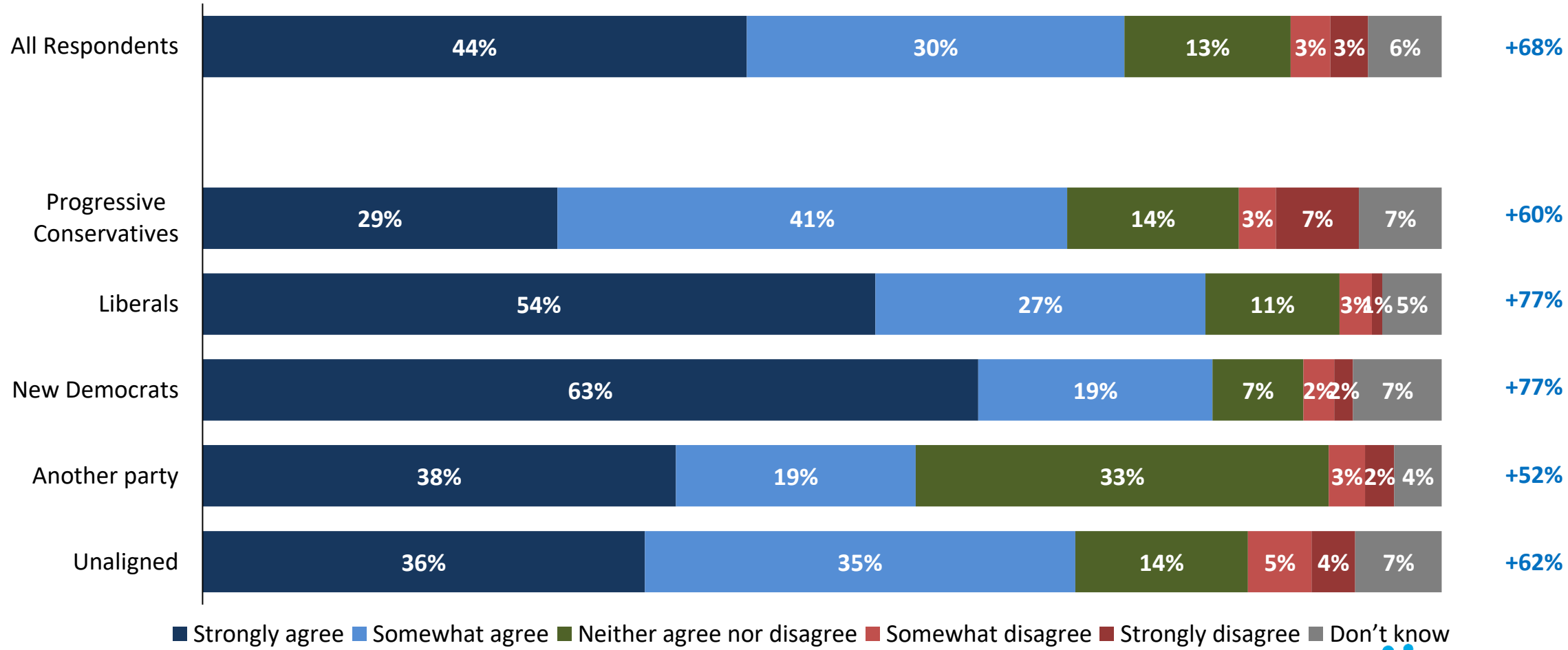
Warned: A majority of the PC's own supporters agree they were warned²⁴ in February that stronger action was needed



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: A plurality of PC supporters feel the government is directly responsibility for the spike in COVID cases

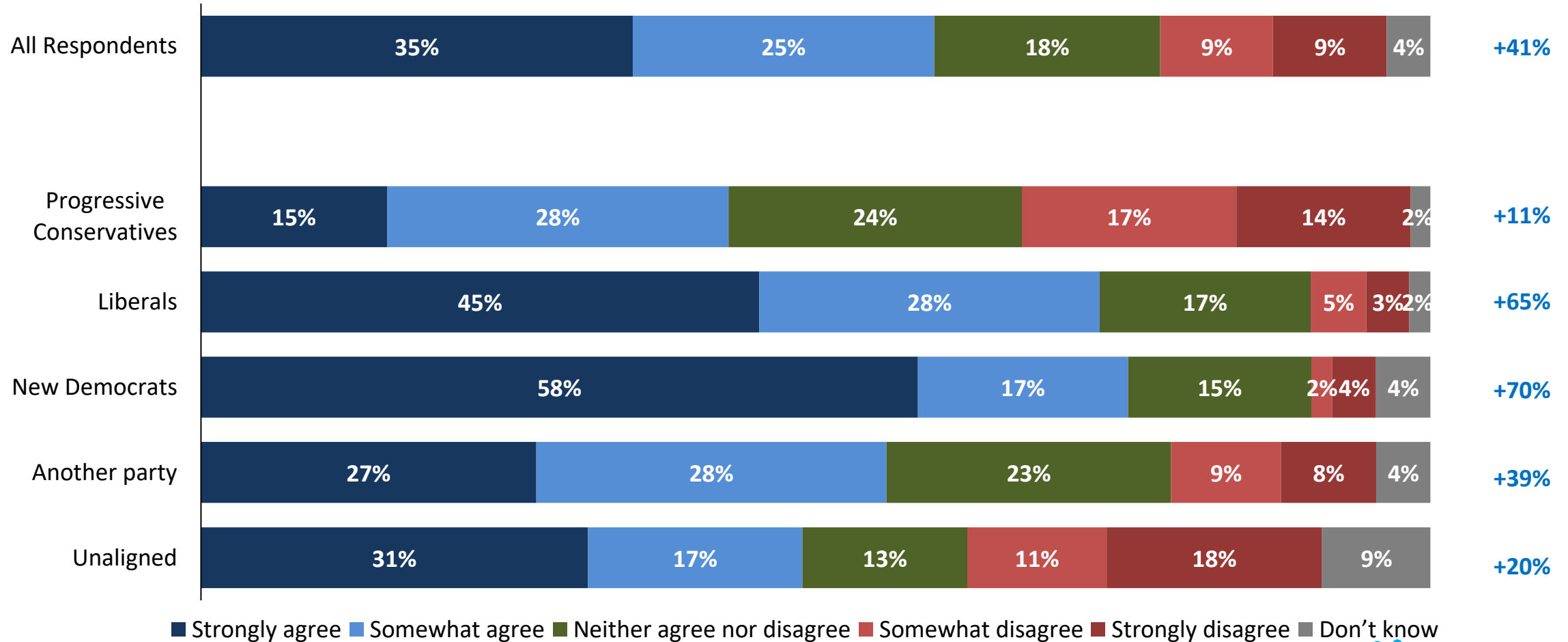


Do you agree or disagree with the following statements? *The Ontario government's decision to loosen restrictions when its health advisors were recommending it tighten restrictions is directly responsible for the spike in COVID-19 cases we are seeing today.*

[asked of all respondents; n=400]

Net Agreement

Party ID



Political Points: NDP more likely to agree that the ON gov't health measures focuses more on scoring political points than fighting COVID

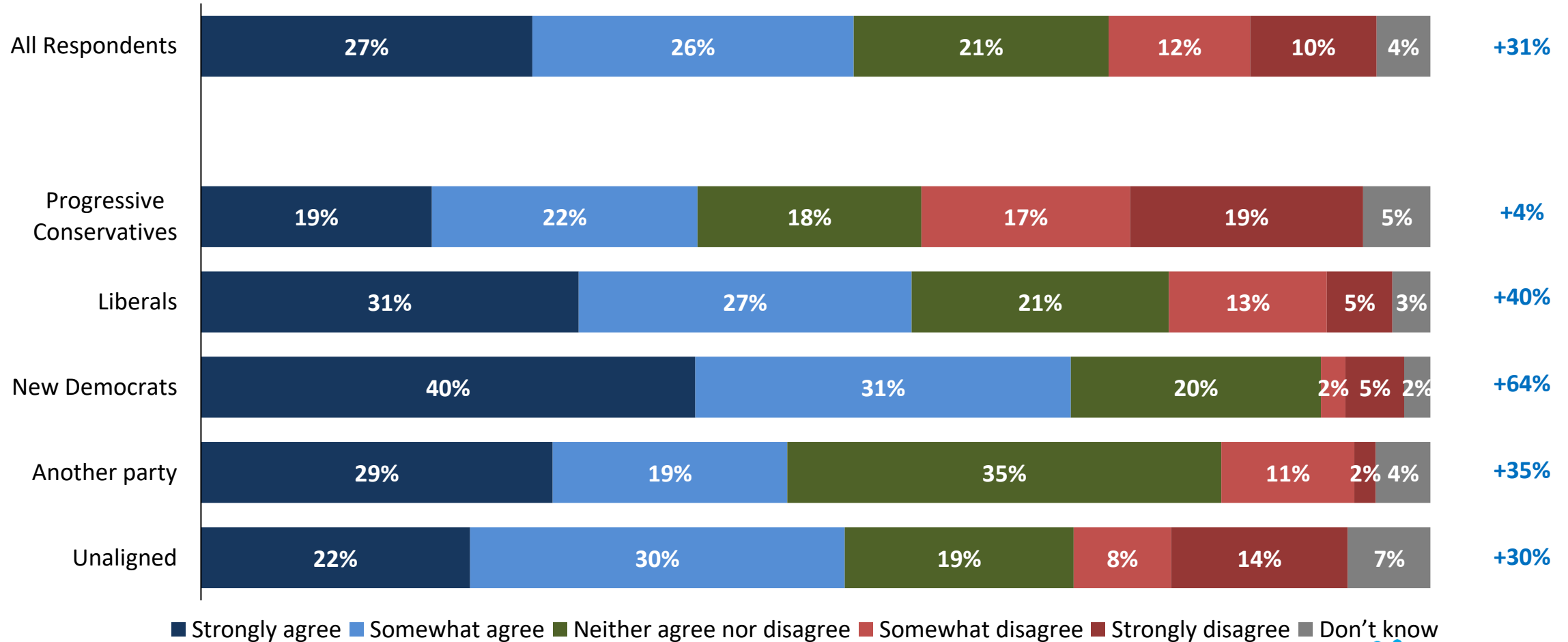


Do you agree or disagree with the following statements? *The Ontario government health measures seem more focused on scoring political points than fighting COVID-19.*

[asked of all respondents; n=400]

Net Agreement

Party ID



Responsibility: PC partisans are more likely to agree that Ford has accepted responsibility for his mistakes; NDP least likely to agree

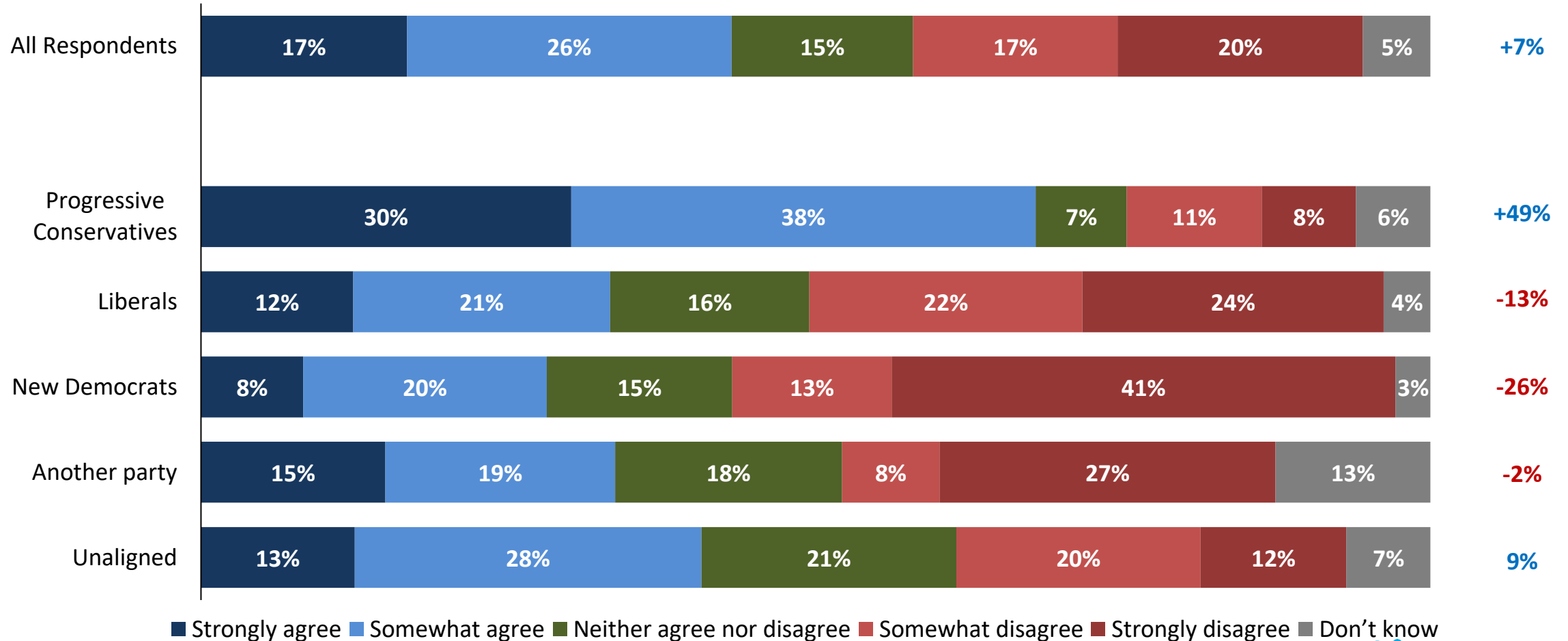


Do you agree or disagree with the following statements? *Doug Ford has accepted responsibility for his mistakes and is taking steps to do better.*

[asked of all respondents; n=400]

Net Agreement

Party ID



Balance Health and the Economy: A significant minority (28%) of PCs disagree Ford did his best to balance health & economic concerns

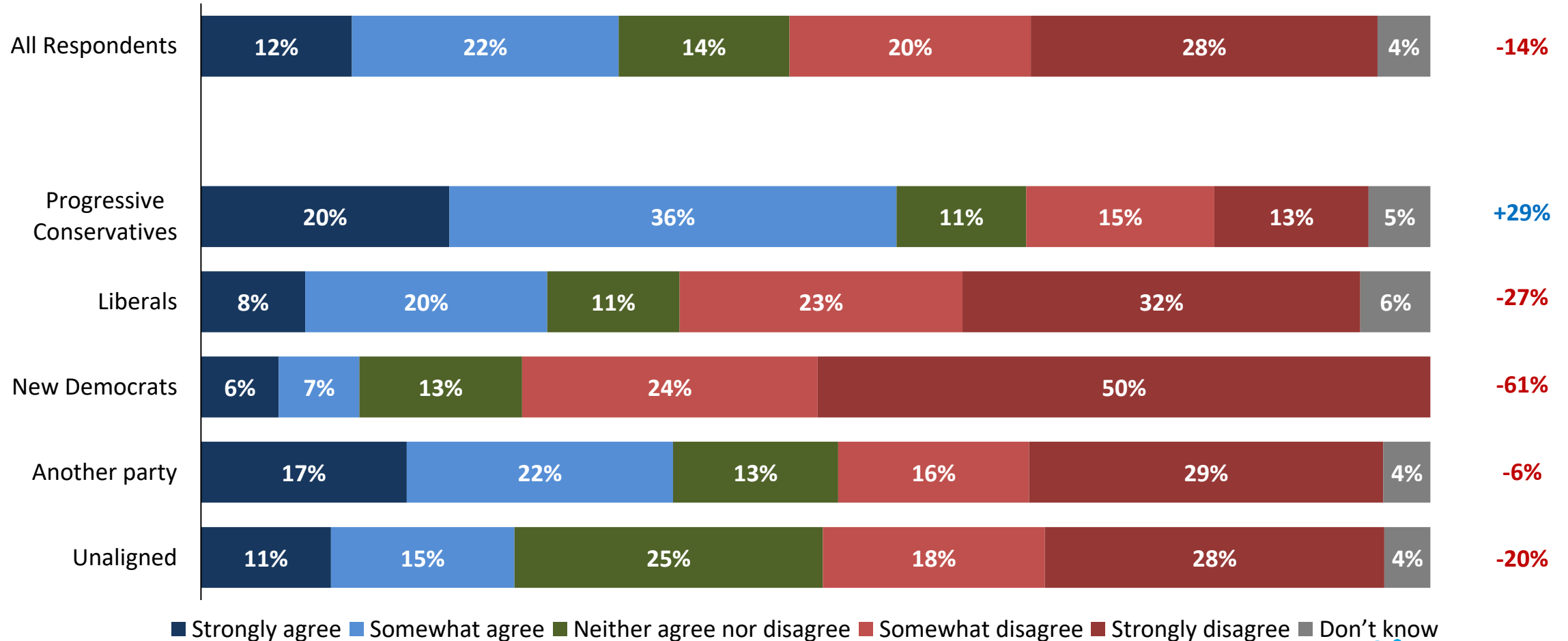


Do you agree or disagree with the following statements? *Doug Ford has done his best to balance public health concerns with economic needs.*

[asked of all respondents; n=400]

Net Agreement

Party ID



Tightest lockdown: Again, a significant minority of PCs disagree that ON²⁹ implemented one of the tightest public health lockdowns

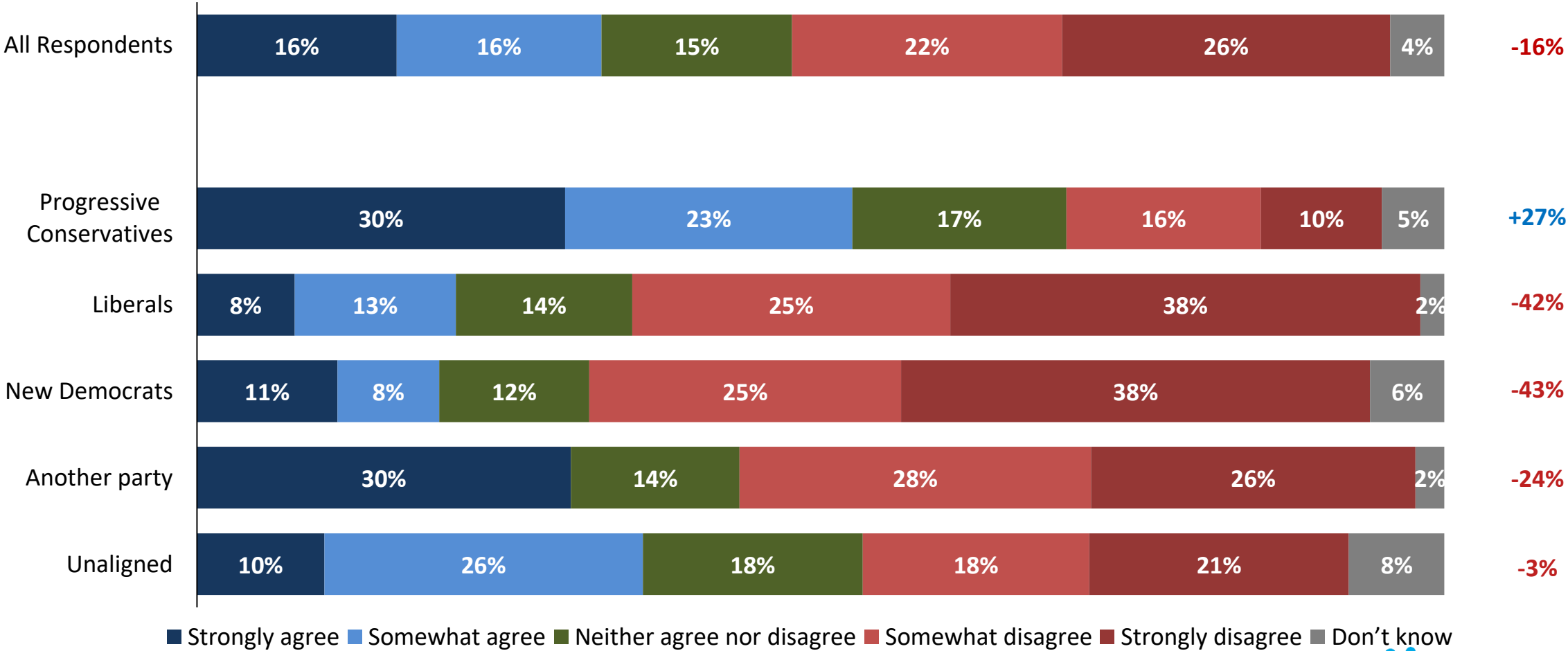


Do you agree or disagree with the following statements? *Ontario has implemented one of the tightest public health lockdowns in the world to fight COVID-19.*

[asked of all respondents; n=400]

Net Agreement

Party ID



COVID-19 is Exaggerated: Limited support from all parties that ON gov't has been exaggerating the risk of COVID-19, Unaligned and PCs highest

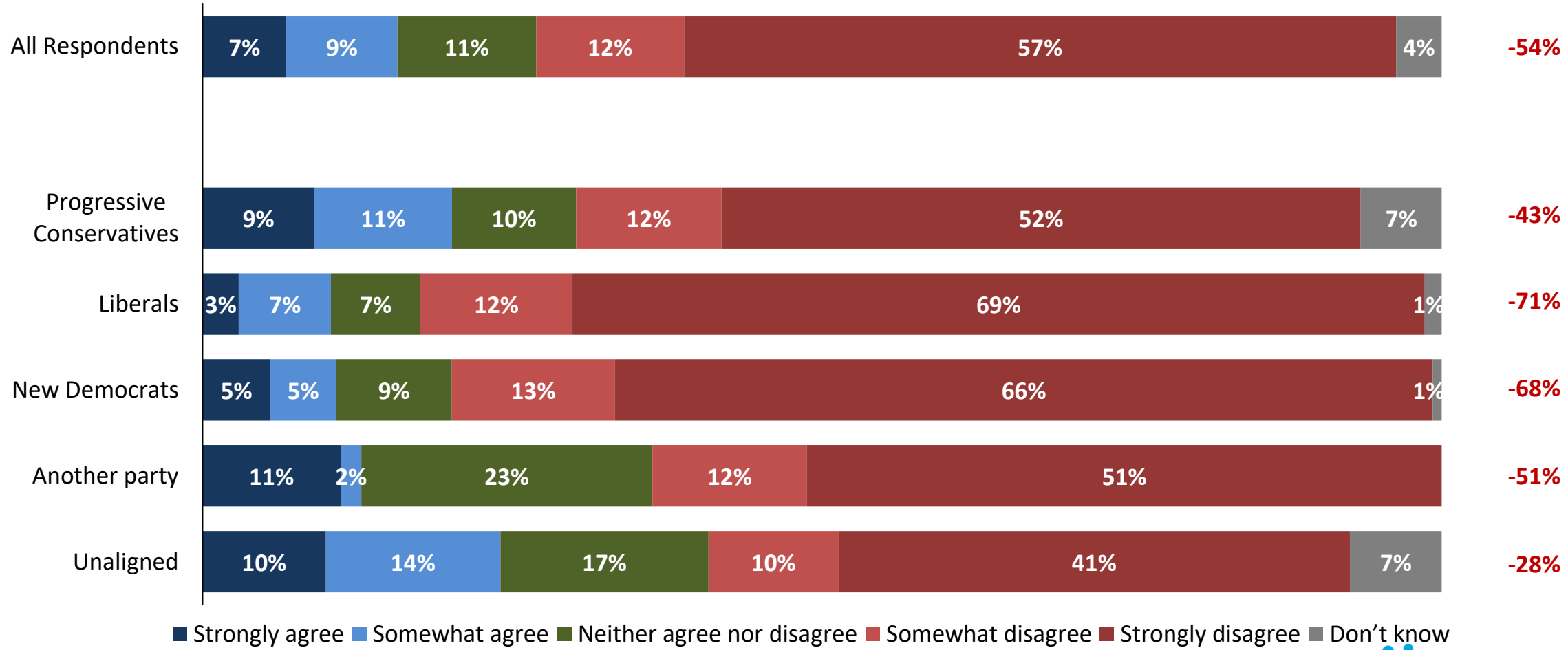


Do you agree or disagree with the following statements? *The Ontario government has been exaggerating the risk of COVID-19 to scare us so they can remove our rights and freedoms.*

[asked of all respondents; n=400]

Net Agreement

Party ID



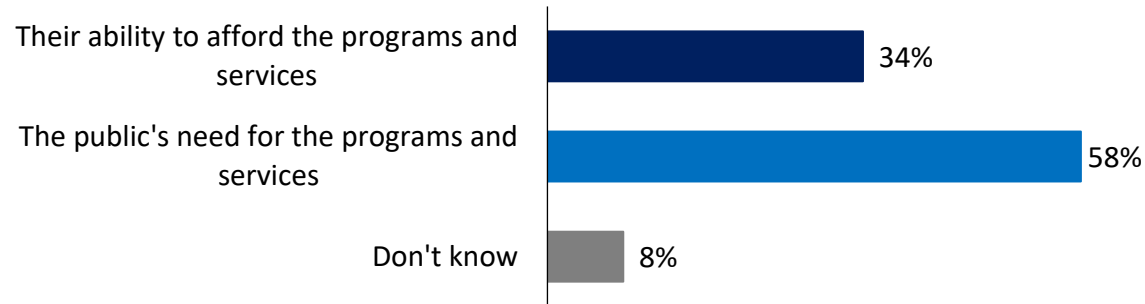
We group individuals into segments based on key political and economic values and attitudes

We use these segments throughout the remainder of the report to analyze vote and leadership results.

Core Political Values: A majority (59%) say the main role of government is to create equal opportunity

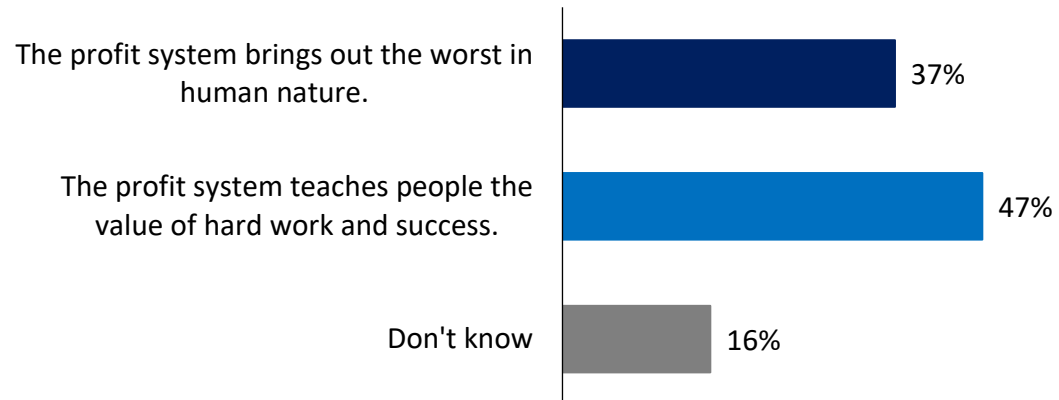
Q Now we would like to ask a few questions about basic values and society...When governments make major decisions concerning spending on programs and services, do you think they should be basing their decisions mainly on...?

[asked of all respondents; n=400]



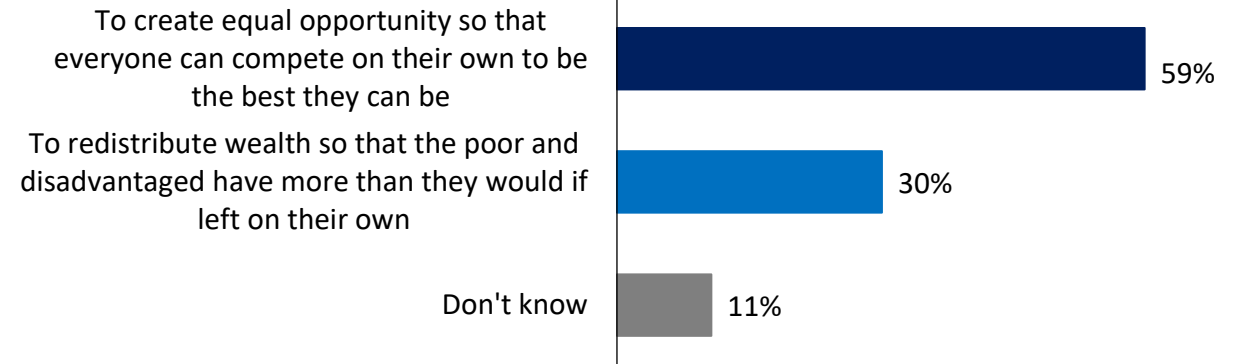
Q Which of the following statements comes closest to your view?

[asked of all respondents; n=400]



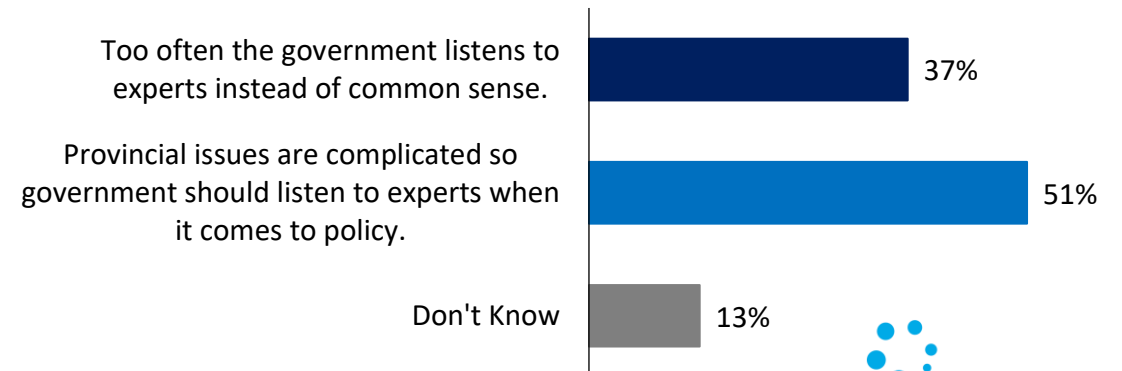
Q Is the main role of government to...?

[asked of all respondents; n=400]



Q When it comes to government decision making, which of the following statements is closest to your view?

[asked of all respondents; n=400]

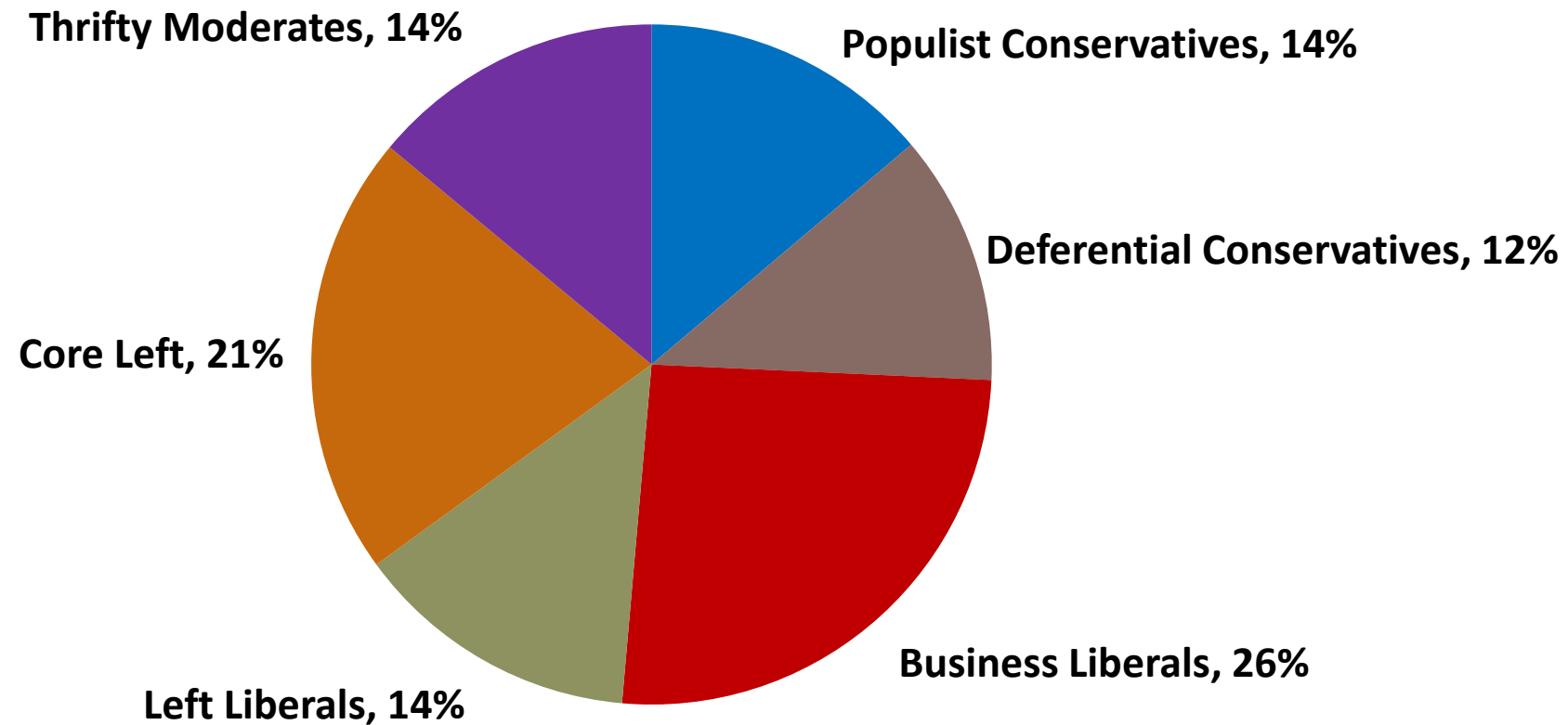


Value Clusters: 1-in-4 (26%) are Business Liberals, while 14% are Left Liberals, Thrifty Moderates, and Populist Conservatives



Clusters are based on 4 basic values: equal opportunity versus redistribution; trust in the profit system; whether spending should be based on ability to afford or public need; and whether government should listen to experts or common sense.

[asked of all respondents; n=400]



Defining Value Clusters

Core Political Values by Value Clusters

Column %		Populist Conservatives	Deferential Conservatives	Business Liberals	Left Liberals	Core Left	Thrifty Moderates
Governments should base decisions on...	Ability to afford	98%	97%	0%	0%	0%	65%
	Public Need	0%	0%	97%	94%	95%	0%
Is the main role of government to .?	Create equal Opportunity	100%	86%	75%	94%	0%	25%
	Redistribute wealth	0%	9%	19%	0%	92%	33%
When it comes to government decision making...	Rely on common sense	100%	0%	29%	39%	18%	46%
	Listen to experts	0%	96%	63%	38%	75%	14%
The profit system...	Brings out the worst in human nature	0%	0%	0%	77%	90%	54%
	Teaches value of hard work and success	94%	79%	89%	0%	0%	9%

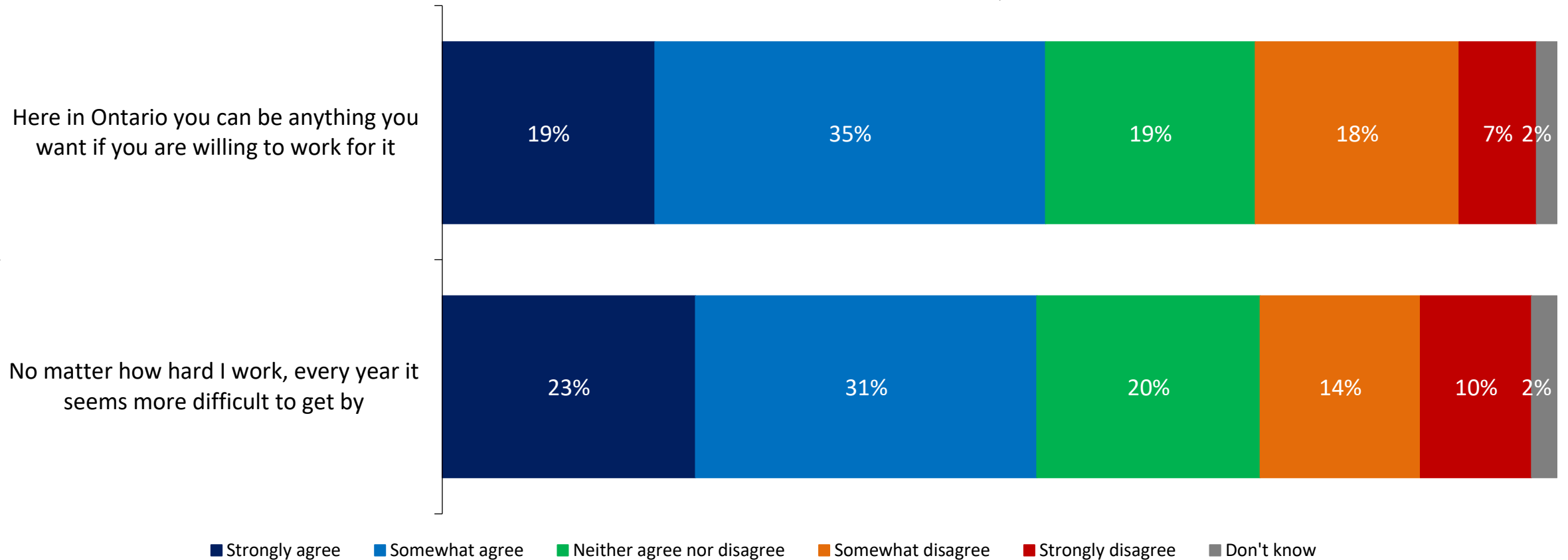
Note: Current data: April 2021

Segmentation Attitudes: More than half (54%) say that in Ontario you can be anything you want if you are willing to work for it



Do you agree or disagree with the following statements? -

[asked of all respondents; n=400]

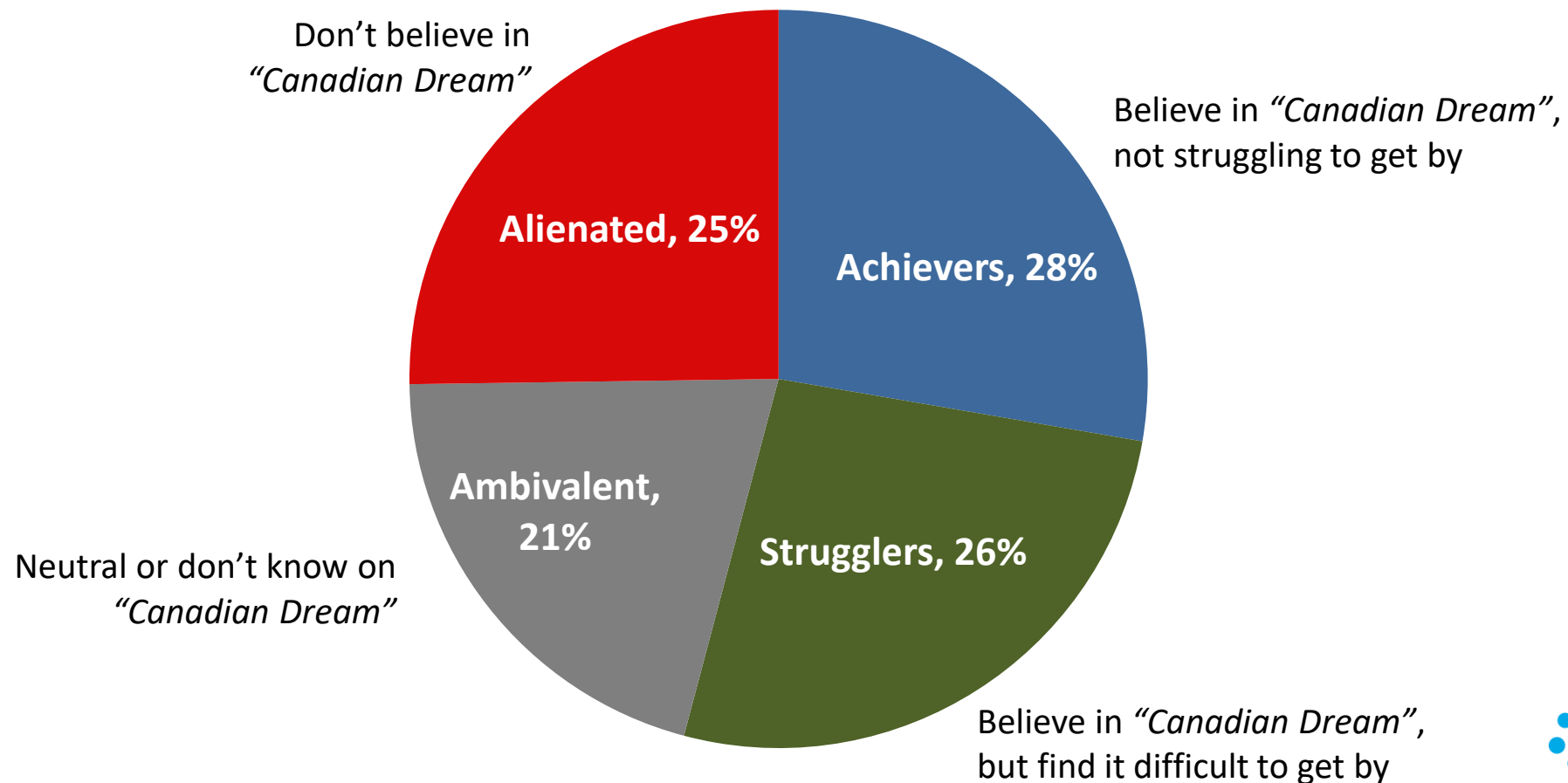


Economic Gap Segmentation: Over half are either Canadian Dream Achievers (28%) or Strugglers (26%)



Gap segmentation: Agree with 'Here in Ontario you can be anything you want if you are willing to work for it' BY Agree with 'No matter how hard I work, every year it seems more difficult to get by'.

[asked of all respondents; n=400]

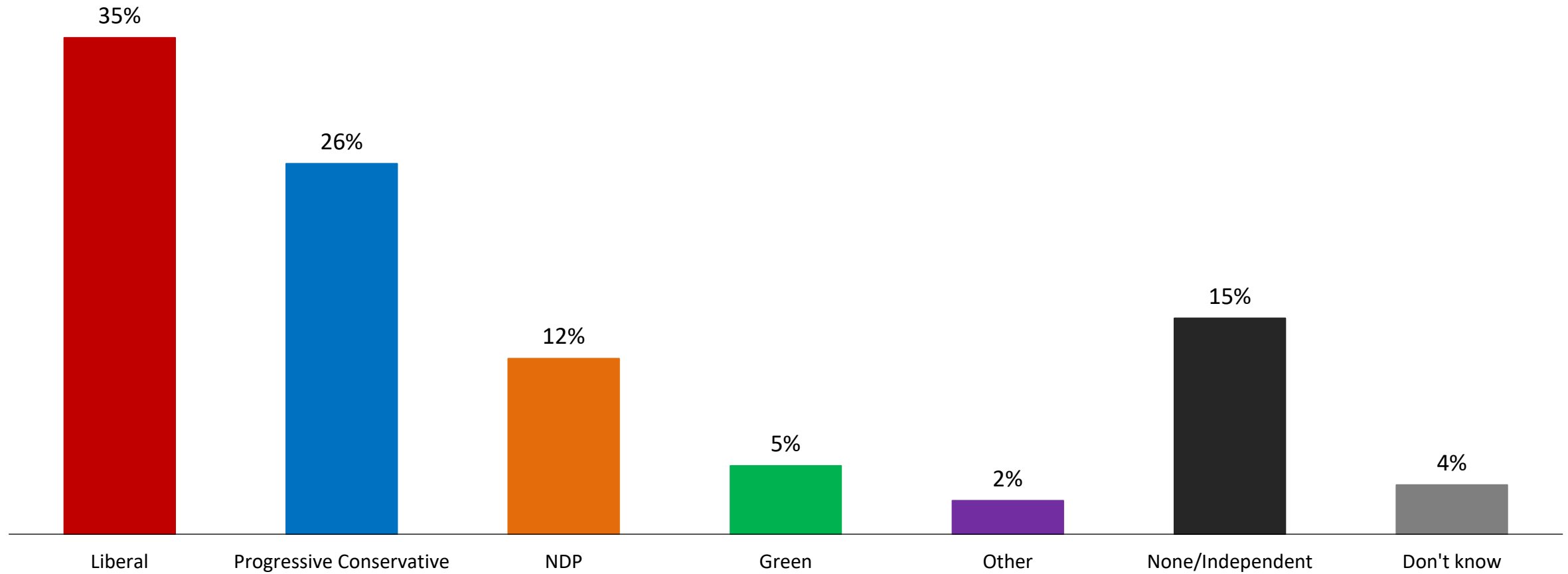


Provincial Party ID: The Ontario Liberals hold a strong lead on Party ID (35%) followed by the PCs at 26%



Thinking about politics in Ontario, generally speaking, do you usually think of yourself as a...

[asked of all respondents; n=400]

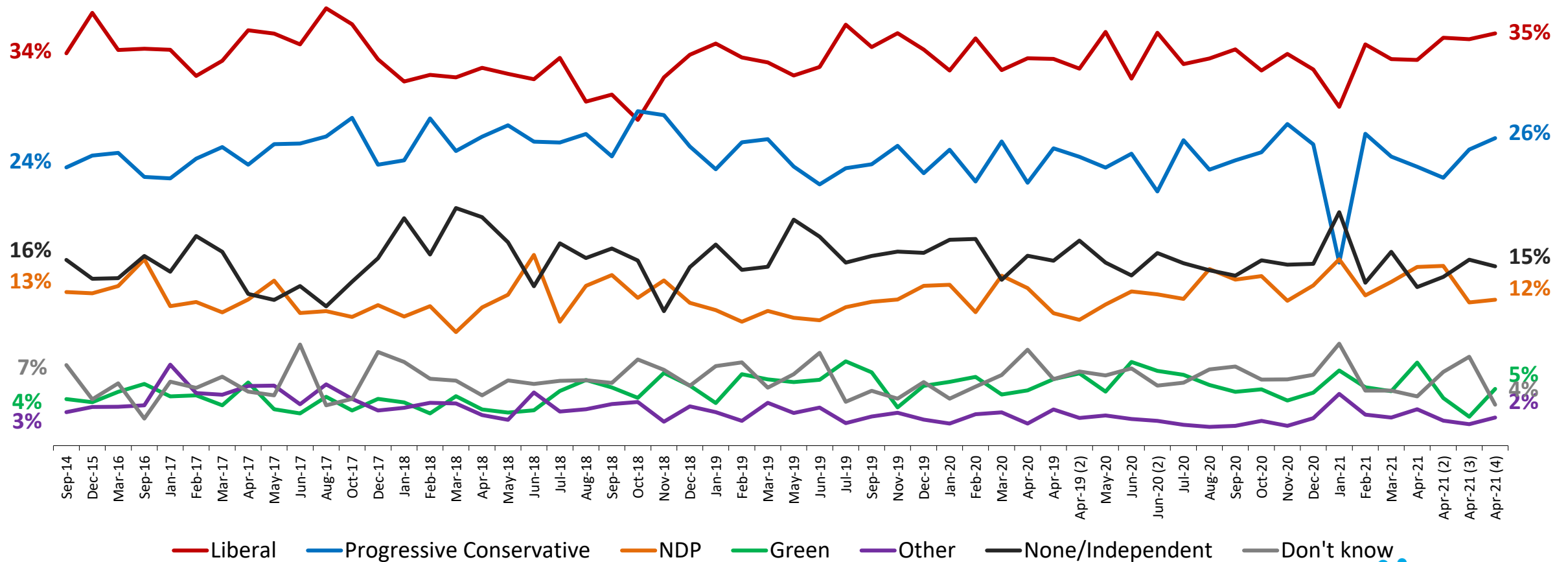


Provincial Party ID Tracking: The Ontario Liberals continue to hold a strong lead on Party ID with the PCs in a distant second



Thinking about politics in Ontario, generally speaking, do you usually think of yourself as a...

[asked of all respondents; n=400]



Leadership

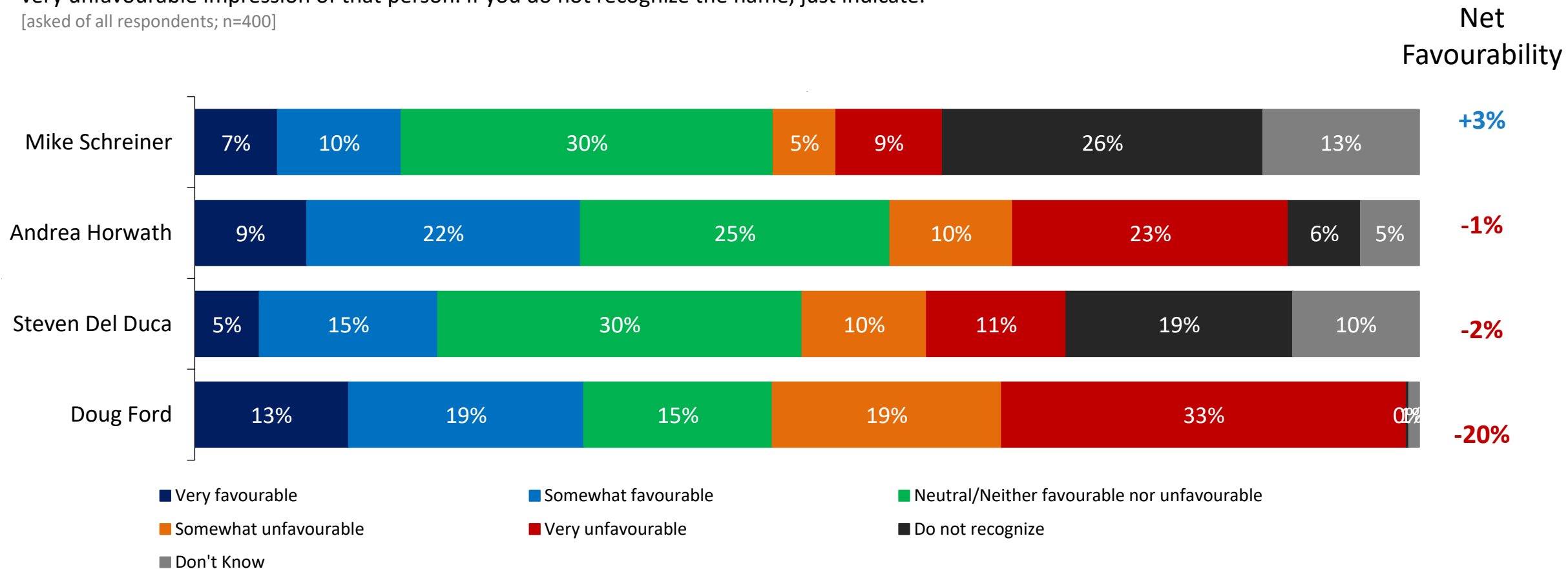
Doug Ford remains the leader with the lowest net favourability, down to -20% on net. He no longer remains the top choice for Premier, with the plurality now saying they do not know or are undecided on who would be best.

Leader Favourables: Doug Ford has the lowest net favourability at -20% with 33% 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.

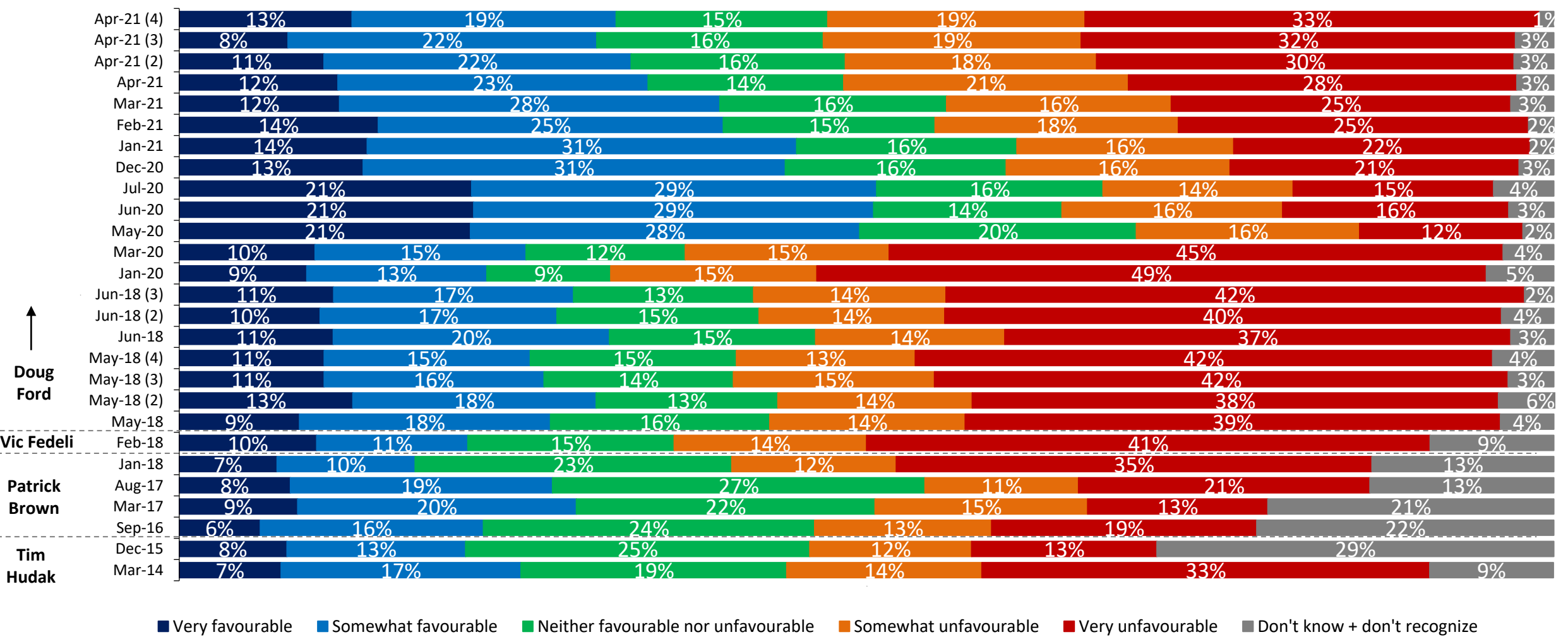
[asked of all respondents; n=400]



Doug Ford Favourability: Ford favourables bounce back from last week but remain at second lowest level since late Spring

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]

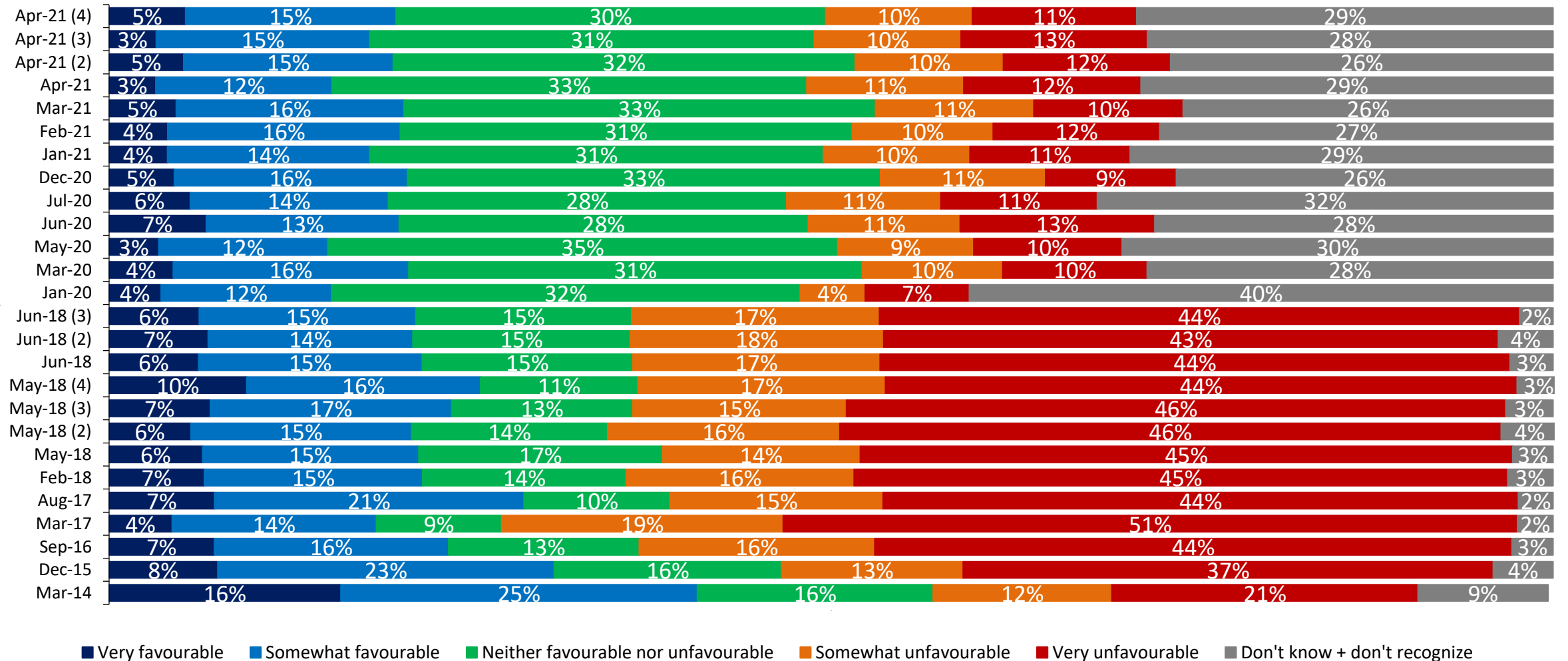


Steven Del Duca Favourability: A majority either have no opinion of Del Duca or have a neutral impression of him



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]

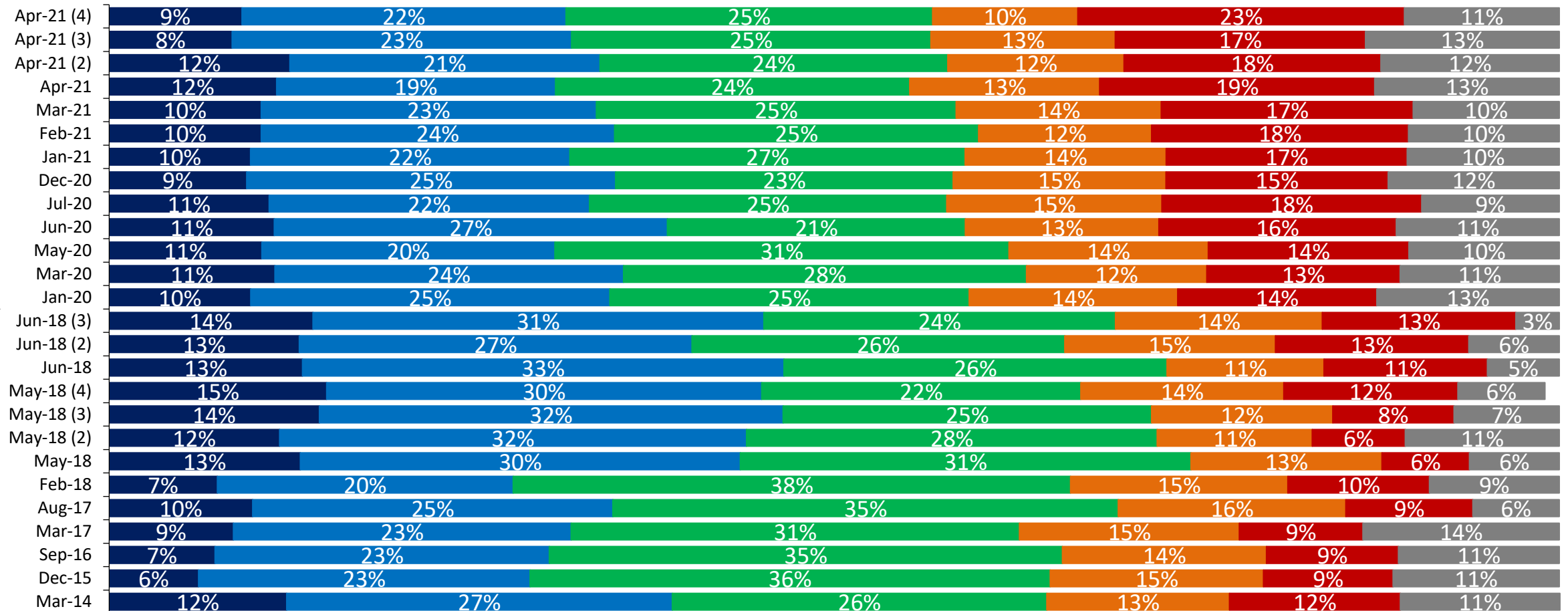


Andrea Horwath Favourability: Horwath strong negatives creep up

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]



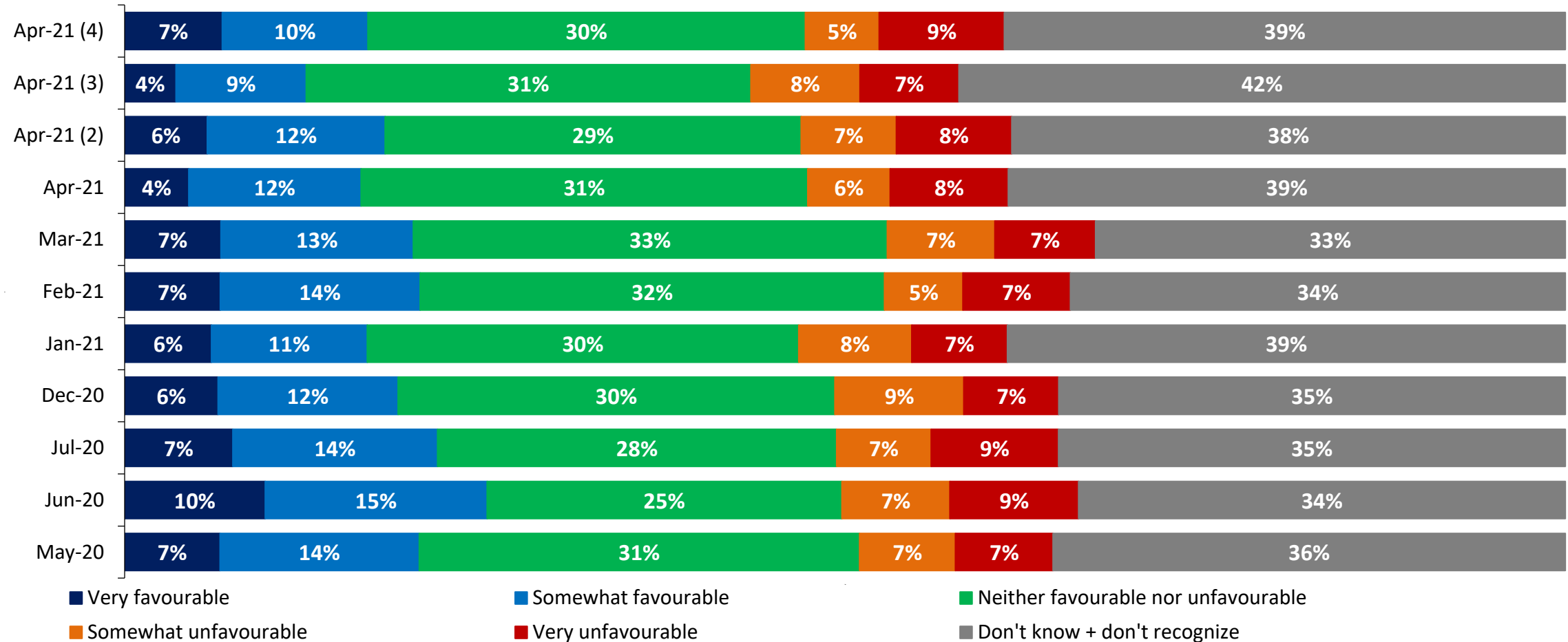
■ Very favourable ■ Somewhat favourable ■ Neither favourable nor unfavourable ■ Somewhat unfavourable ■ Very unfavourable ■ Don't know + don't recognize

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



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]

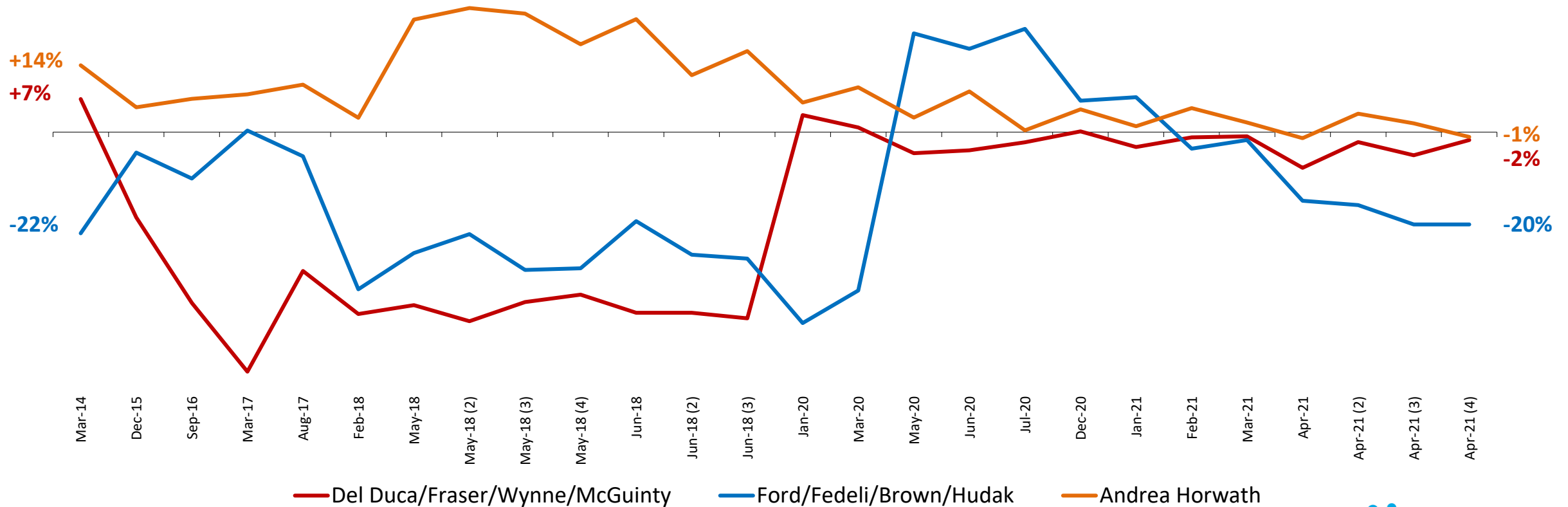


Ontario Party Leader NET Favourables Tracking: Horwath and Del Duca are now neck-in-neck while Ford remains well behind

Q

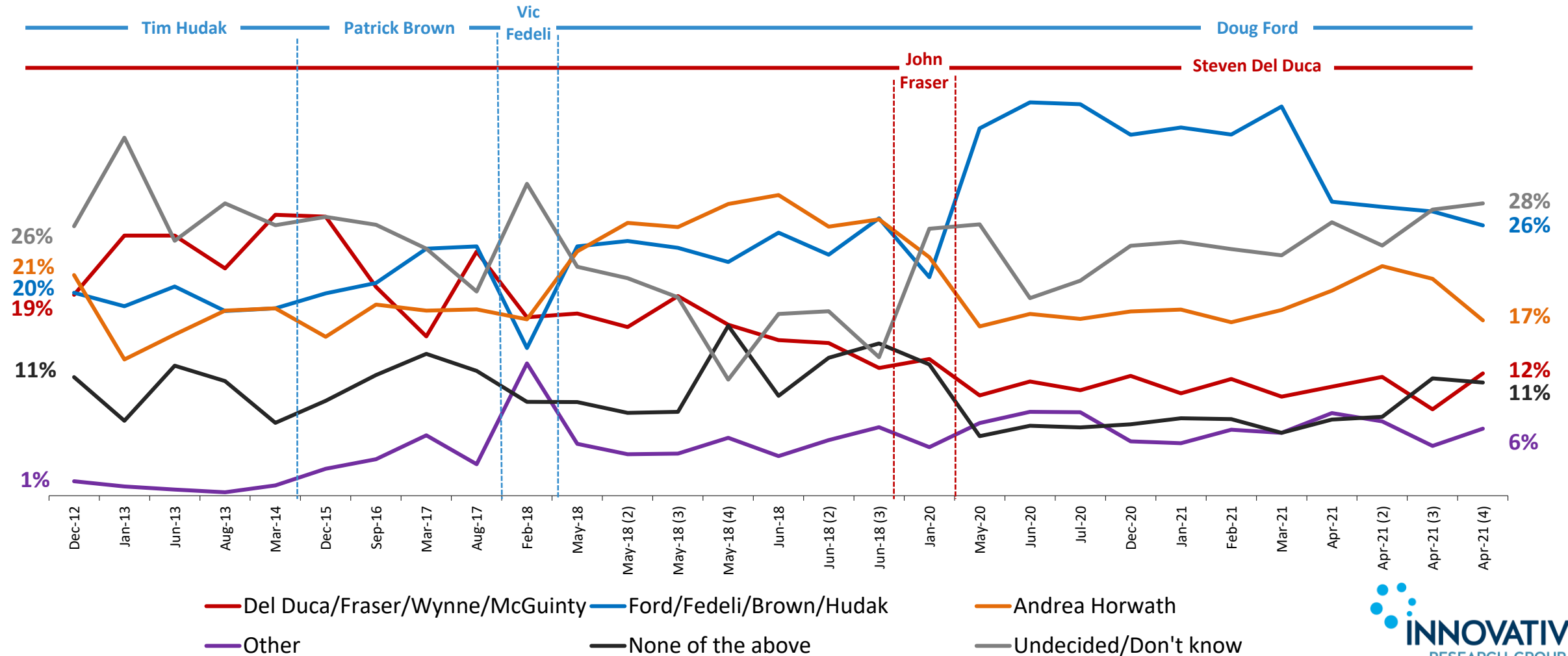
Below are the names of several individuals who have been mentioned in the news recently. For each one, please indicate whether you have heard of that person and, if so, whether you have a very favourable, somewhat favourable, neither favourable or unfavourable, somewhat unfavourable or very unfavourable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

[asked of all respondents; n=400]



Best Premier Tracking: The plurality now don't know or are undecided on which leader would make the best Premier

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.

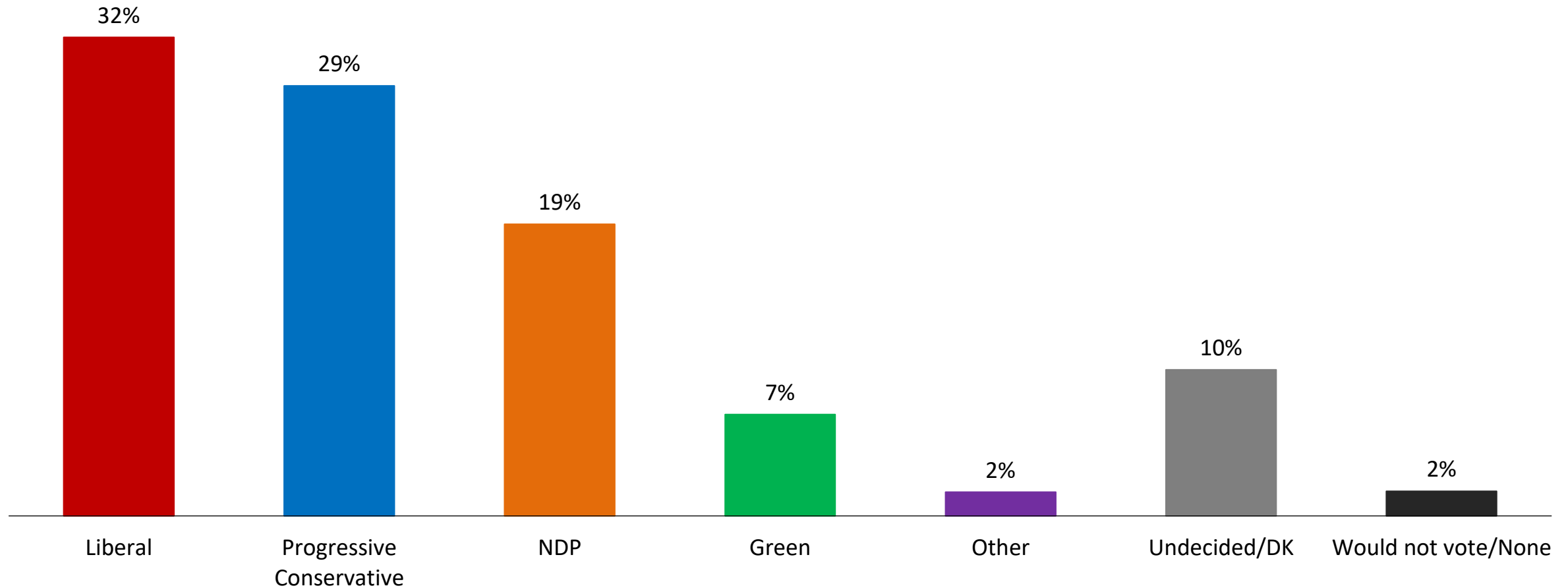
When we look at the results among *only* decided voters, we call that Decided vote. These results most tell us what the election results would be like if the survey results matched the election exactly.

Provincial Combined Vote: The Ontario Liberals have a 3-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]

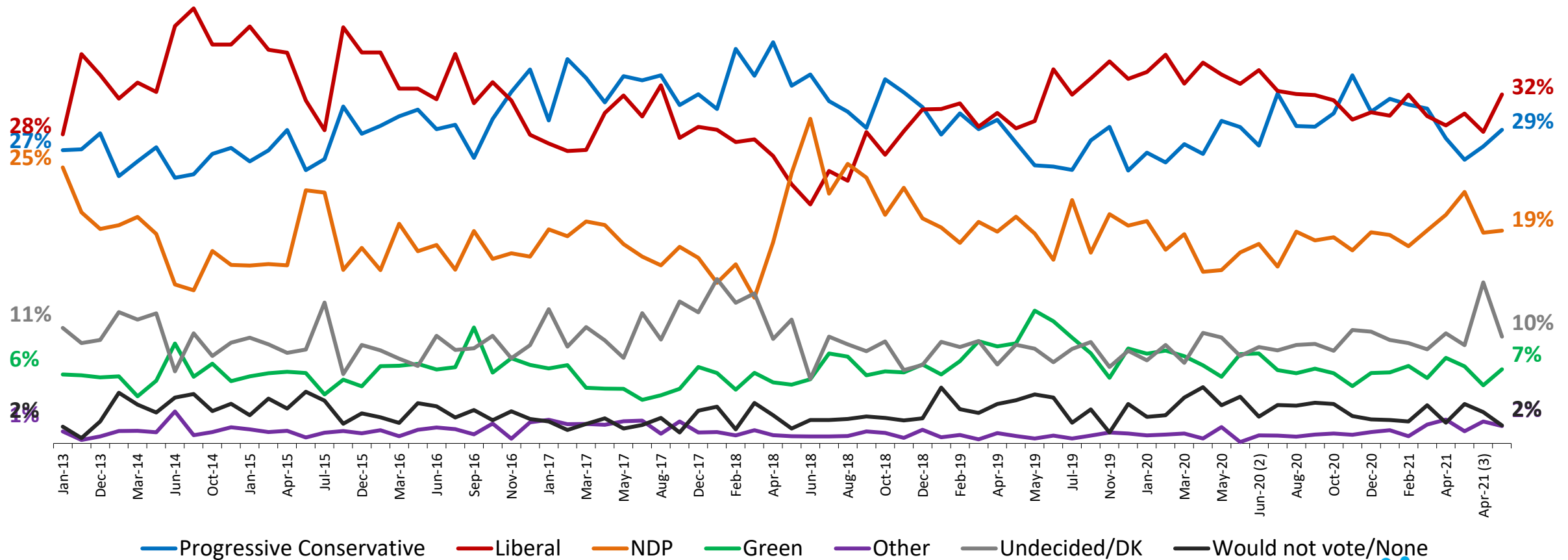


Provincial Vote Tracking: The Ontario Liberals (32%) maintain their narrow lead over the Progressive Conservatives (29%)



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]



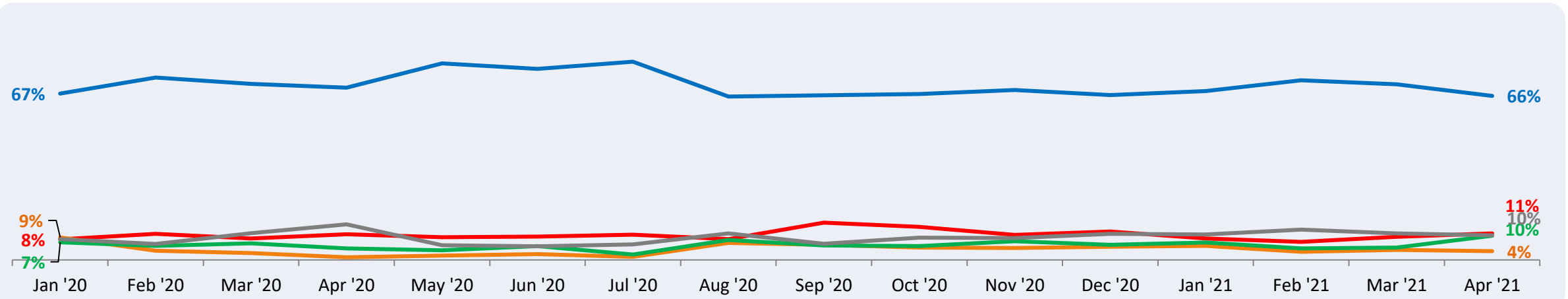
Combined Vote by Party ID: NDP and Green voters are the most loyal, while only 70% of Liberal Partisans would vote for their party

		Provincial Party Identification					
		Liberal	Progressive Conservative	NDP	Green	Other	Unaligned
		(N=141)	(N=105)	(N=50)	(N=19)	(N=10)	(N=75)
Provincial Combined Vote	Liberal	70%	7%	3%	20%	23%	18%
	Progressive Conservative	7%	78%	2%	0%	35%	25%
	NDP	12%	4%	93%	0%	7%	12%
	Green	3%	3%	0%	80%	17%	3%
	Other	0%	1%	0%	0%	13%	5%
	Undecided/DK	7%	5%	3%	0%	5%	30%
	Would not vote/None	0%	2%	0%	0%	0%	6%

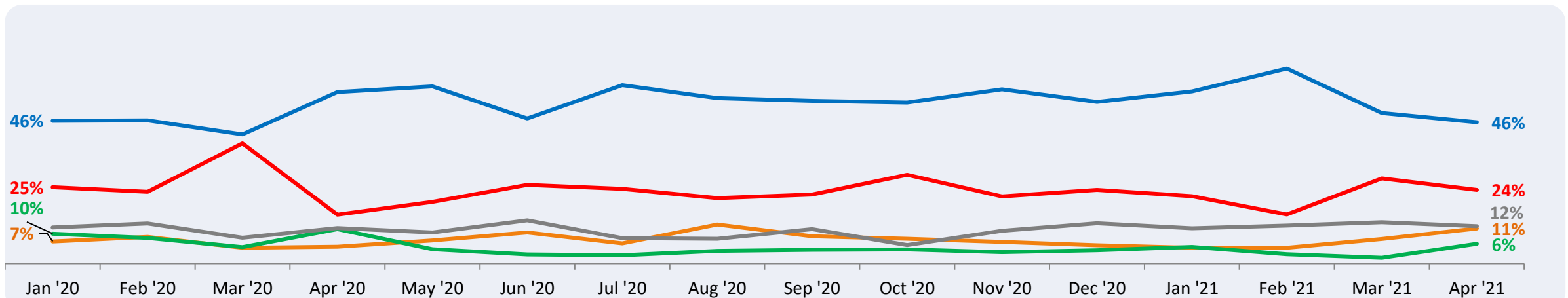
Note: Current data: April 2021

Provincial Combined Vote by Value Cluster: PCs now have the support of just under half of the Differential Conservatives

Populist Conservatives



Differential Conservatives



Combined vote:

Liberal

PC

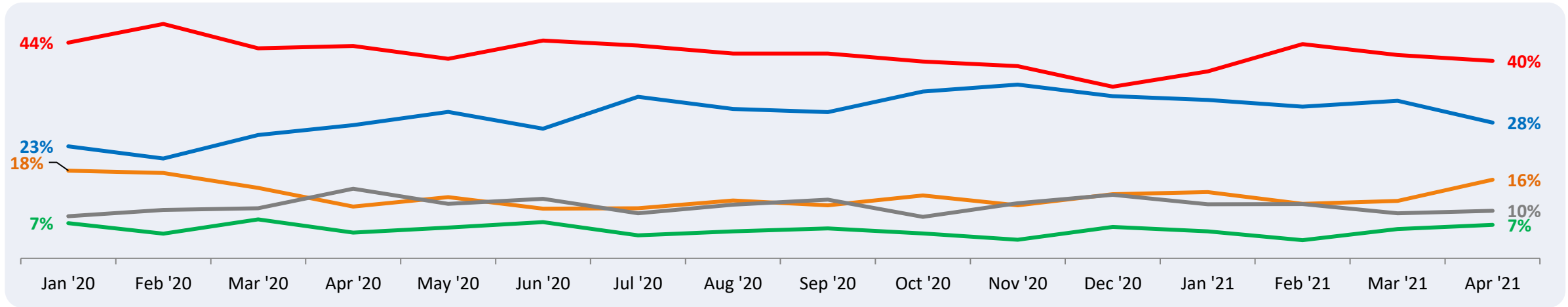
NDP

Green/Other

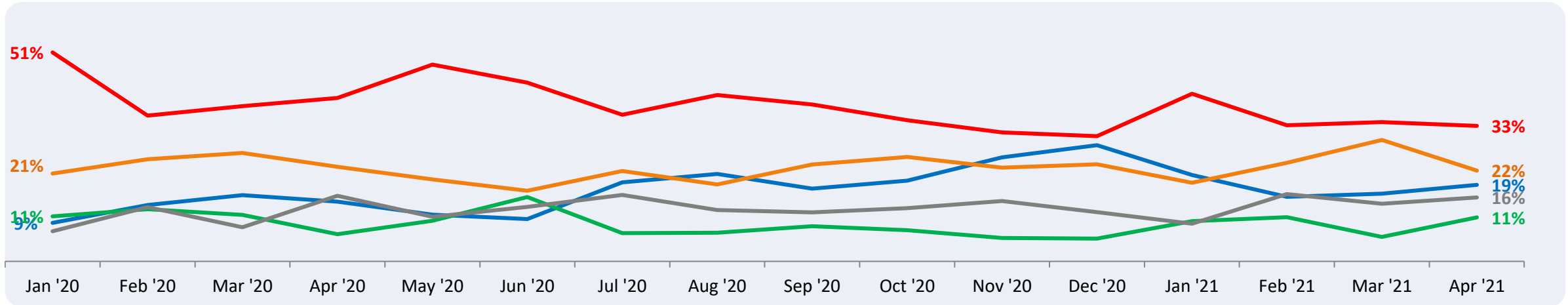
Undecided/
Would not Vote

Provincial Combined Vote by Value Cluster: Liberals continue to lead by a large margin among Business and Left Liberals⁵²

Business Liberals



Left Liberals



Combined vote:

Liberal

PC

NDP

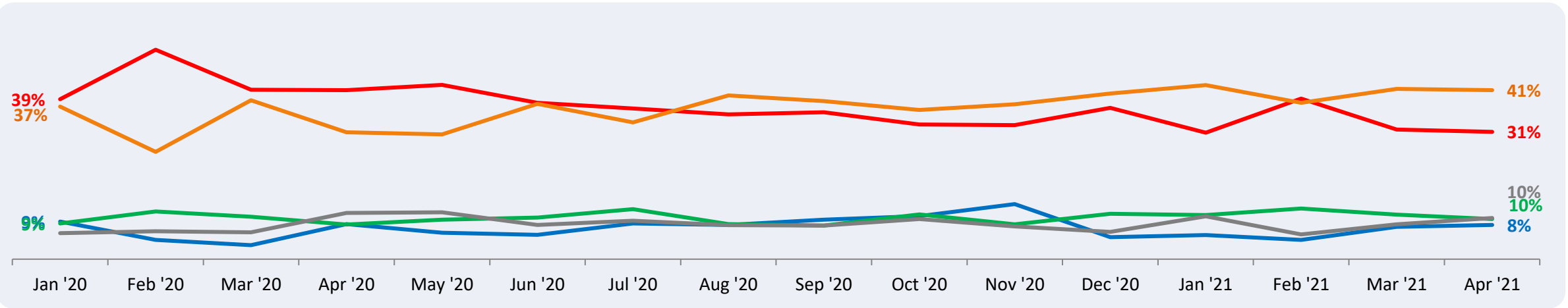
Green/Other

Undecided/
Would not Vote

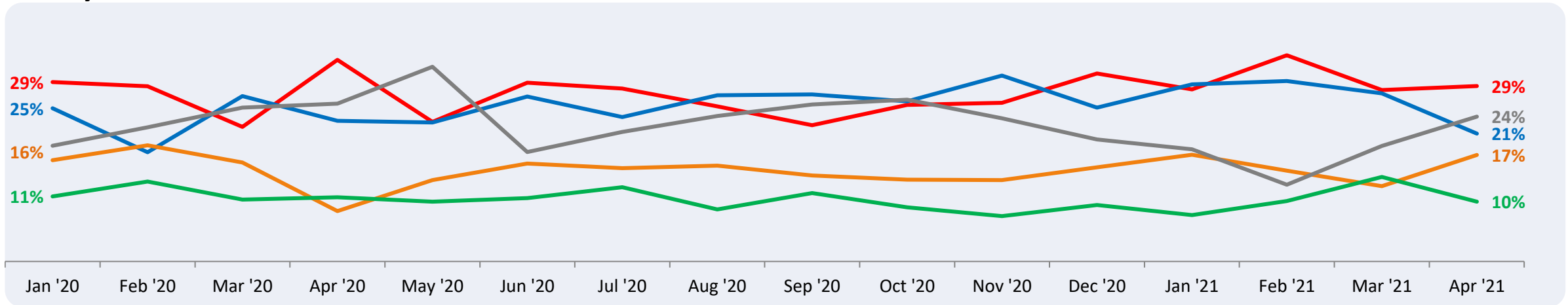
Note: Current data: April 2021

Provincial Combined Vote by Value Cluster: Liberals lead among Thrifty⁵³ Moderates as PCs slide

Core Left



Thrifty Moderates



Combined vote:

Liberal

PC

NDP

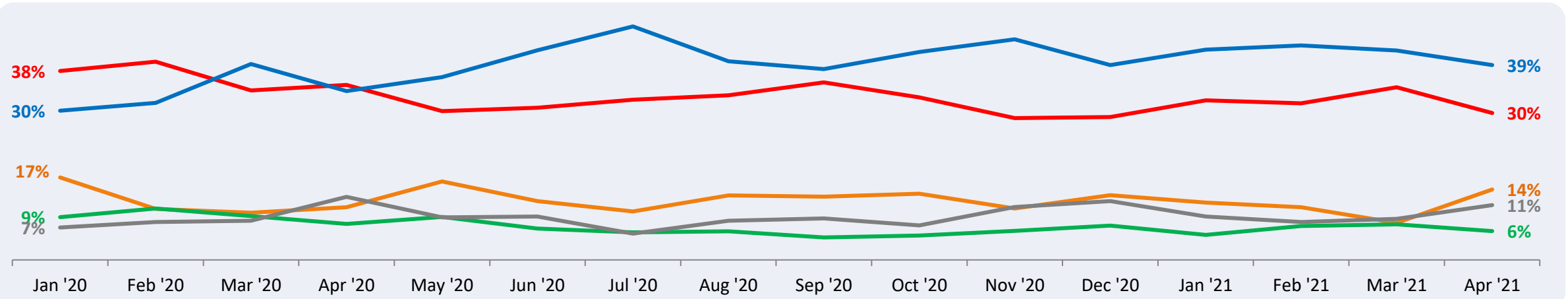
Green/Other

Undecided/
Would not Vote

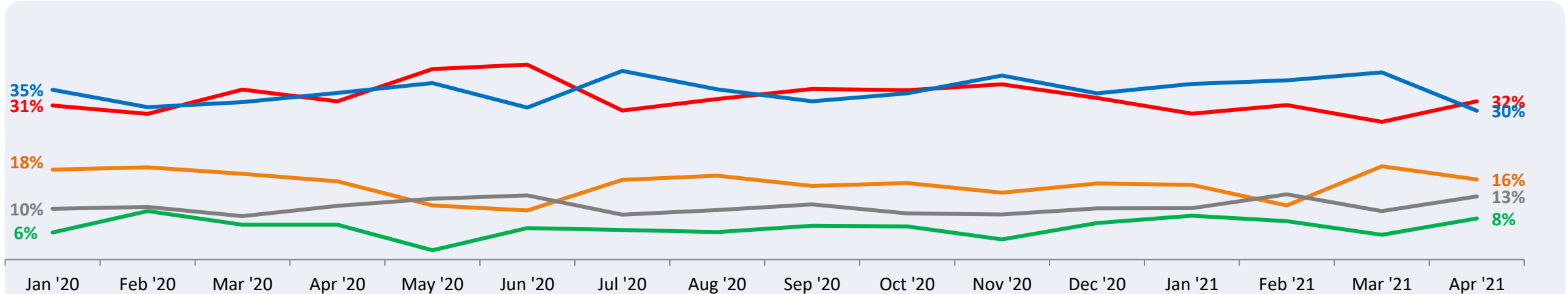
Note: Current data: April 2021

Provincial Combined Vote by Economic Gap: PCs lead the Liberals among Achievers but are on par with Liberals among Strugglers

Canadian Dream Achievers



Canadian Dream Strugglers



Combined vote:

Liberal

PC

NDP

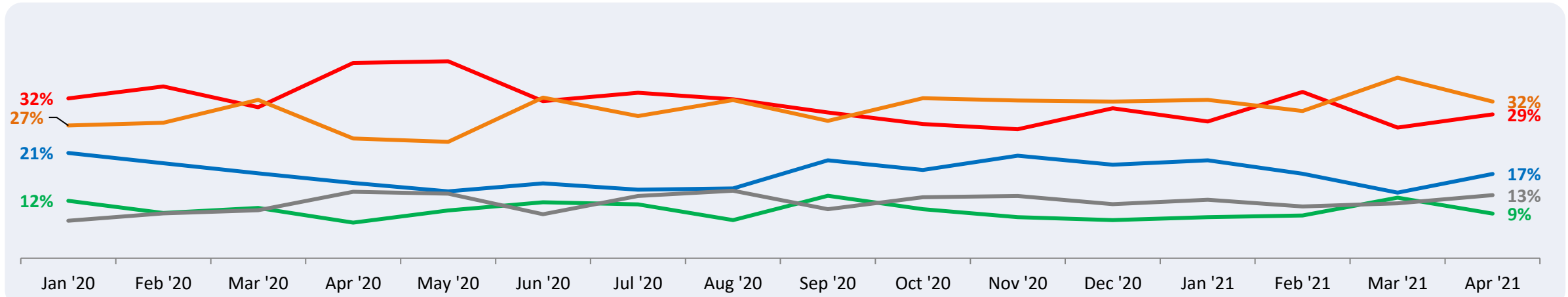
Green/Other

Undecided/
Would not Vote

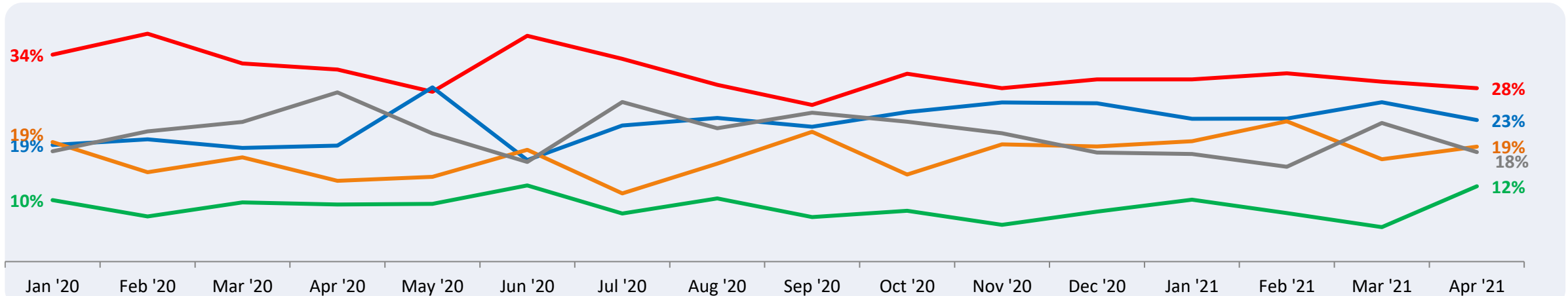
Note: Current data: April 2021

Provincial Combined Vote by Economic Gap: NDP leads the others among the Alienated but Liberals have the lead among the Ambivalent

Alienated



Ambivalent



Combined vote:

Liberal

PC

NDP

Green/Other

Undecided/
Would not Vote

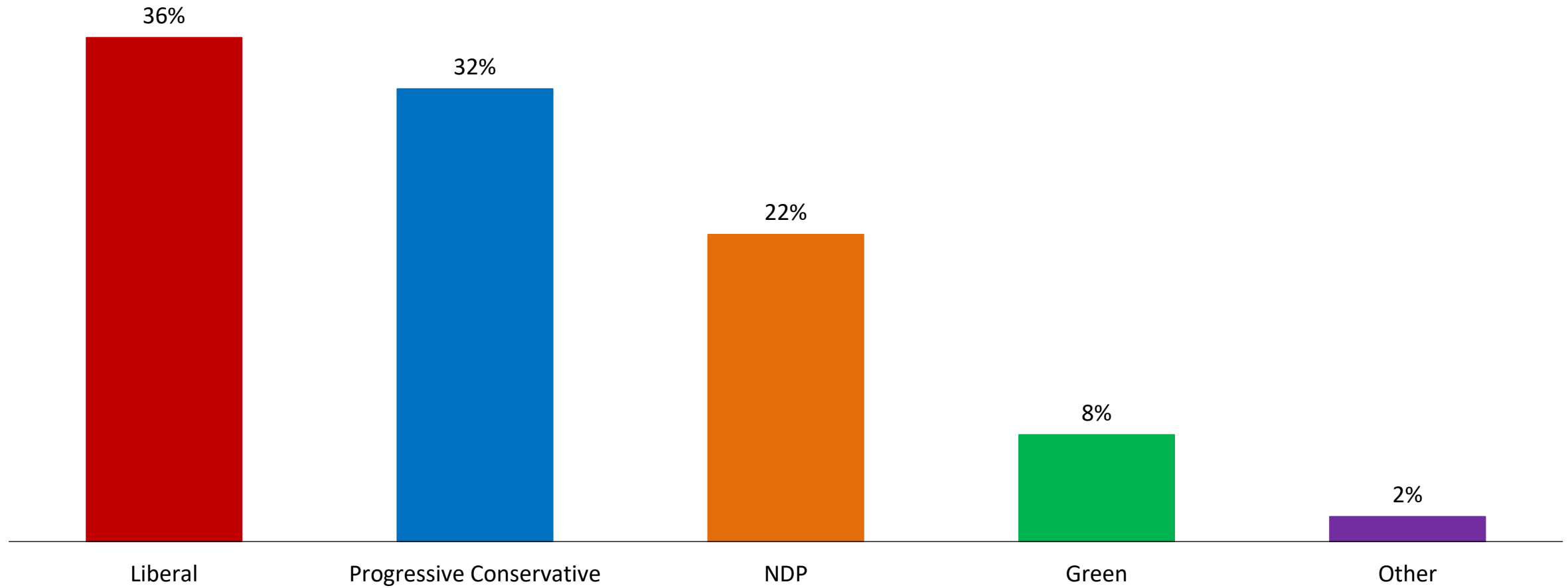
Note: Current data: April 2021

Provincial Decided Vote: The Ontario Liberals (36%) maintain their narrow lead over the Progressive Conservatives (32%)



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=354]

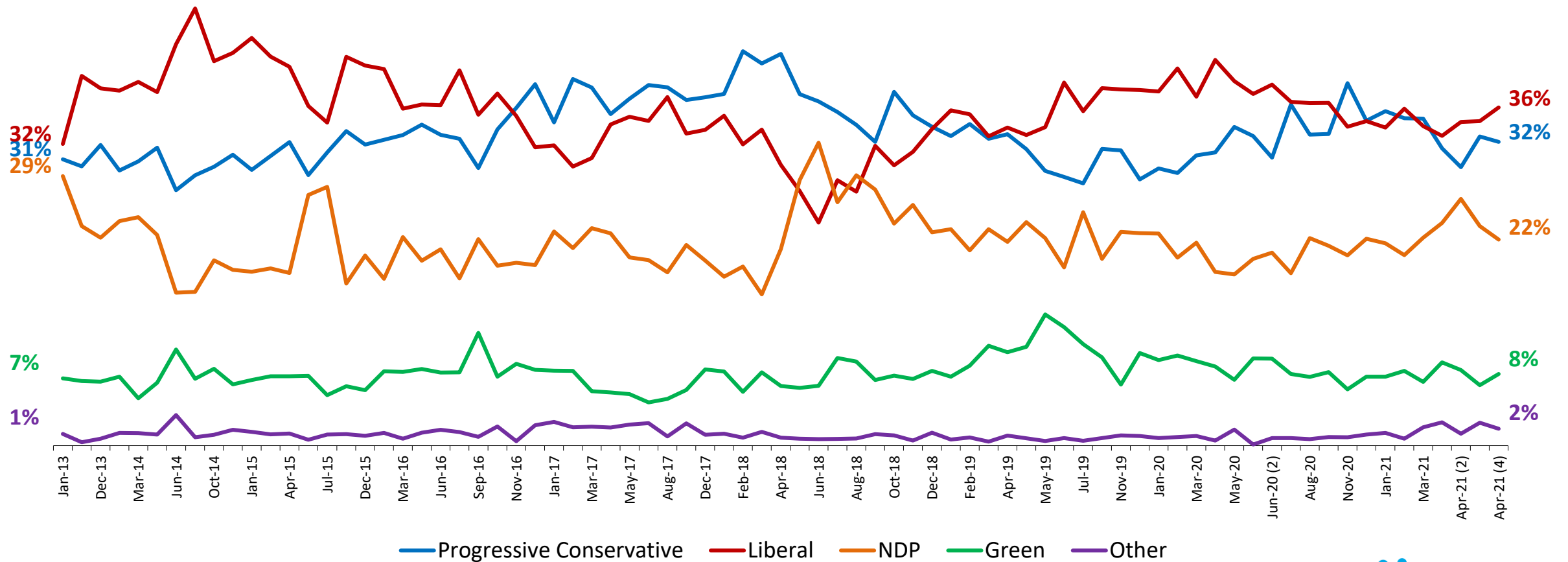


Provincial Decided Vote Tracking: The Ontario Liberals continue to lead among decided voters



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

[only decided voters; n=354]



Decided Vote by Region: The Ontario Liberals hold a 12-point lead in Toronto over the PC's, but the PC's narrowly lead in the rest of the GTA

Decided vote by Region

		Region			
		Toronto	Rest of GTA	South/West	North/East
		(N=71)	(N=90)	(N=92)	(N=101)
Decided Vote	Liberal	40%	39%	27%	39%
	Progressive Conservative	28%	41%	29%	31%
	NDP	19%	16%	33%	20%
	Green	12%	4%	9%	6%
	Other	1%	0%	1%	4%

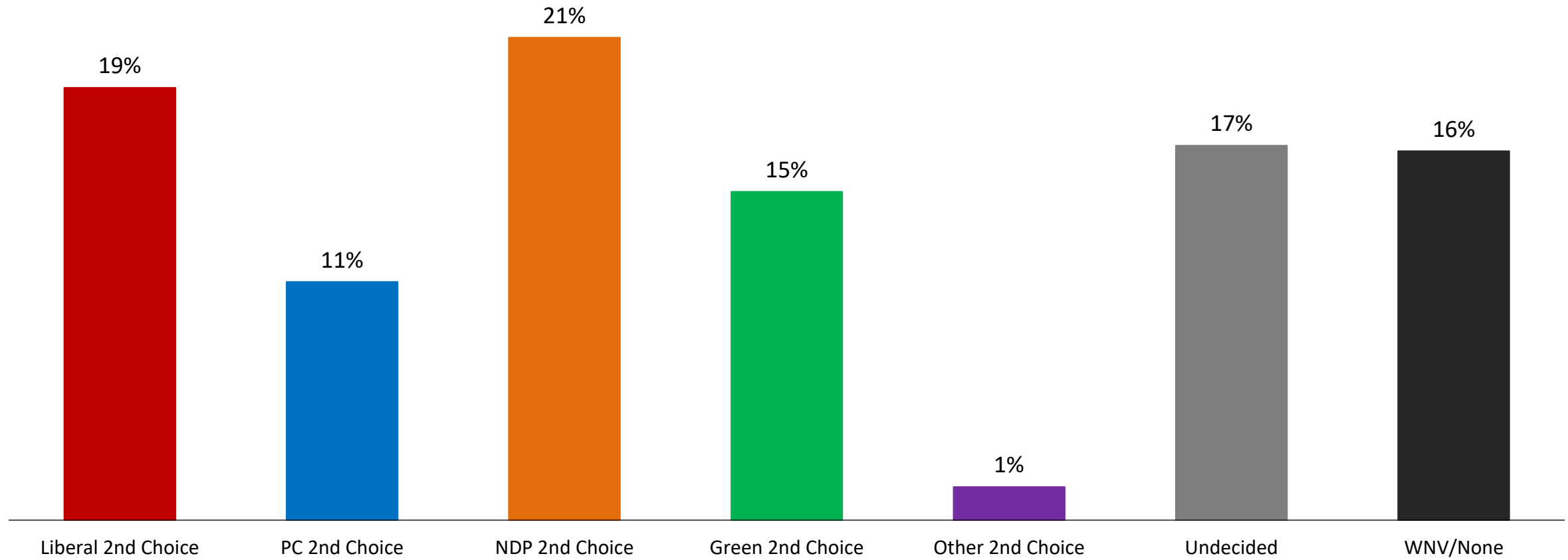
Note: Current data: April 2021

Provincial 2nd Choice: The NDP are the top 2nd choice with 21% of voters saying they are their second choice



And which party would be your second choice?

[only decided voters; n=354]



Provincial 2nd Choice: Nearly half of NDP voters have Liberal as their second choice, 38% of Liberal voters have NDP as their second choice

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

		First Choice			
		Liberal 1st Choice	PC 1st Choice	NDP 1st Choice	Green 1st Choice
		(N=128)	(N=115)	(N=78)	(N=27)
Second Choice	Liberal 2nd Choice		20%	51%	19%
	PC 2nd Choice	19%		11%	9%
	NDP 2nd Choice	38%	16%		32%
	Green 2nd Choice	20%	12%	16%	
	Other 2nd Choice	1%	3%	0%	2%
	Undecided	15%	16%	14%	36%
	WNV/None	7%	34%	8%	1%

Note: 'Other' in Combined Vote not shown due to insufficient sample size.

Current data: April 2021

Methodology

Survey Methodology

These are the results of an online survey conducted between April 29th and May 4th, 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=481 Ontario residents, 18 years or older. The results are weighted to n=400 based on Census data from Statistics Canada.

Field Dates: April 29th to May 4th, 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	65	13.5%	55	13.8%
Men 35-54	39	8.1%	67	16.6%
Men 55+	119	24.7%	71	17.7%
Women 18-34	89	18.5%	55	13.8%
Women 35-54	41	8.5%	71	17.8%
Women 55+	128	26.6%	81	20.3%
Toronto	135	28.1%	84	20.9%
Rest of GTA	95	19.8%	104	26.0%
South/West	125	26.0%	103	25.8%
North/East	126	26.2%	109	27.3%

For more information, please contact:

Greg Lyle

President

(t) 416-642-6429

(e) glyle@innovativeresearch.ca

Building Understanding.

