Canada This Month

Greenbelt Controversy

Public Opinion Research
Release Date: November 10th, 2023
Field Dates: October 12th - October 30th, 2023

About This Study

How often will voters forgive politicians for a big mistake?

Doug Ford is putting that question to the test.

In April 2021, Doug Ford apologized for the government's performance on COVID and went on to win re-election. INNOVATIVE tracked reaction to the controversy and the apology at the time. We have used updated versions of those questions to test reaction to the Premier's apology on the government's latest controversy – the Greenbelt.

INNOVATIVE runs a continuous tracking survey with a new sample every week. The Greenbelt Controversy questions were asked in the last three weeks of October while the final slide on decided vote are the results for the whole month of October.

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Key Findings

1

Fewer have been following the Greenbelt Controversy compared to the COVID-19 Lockdown.
While 3-in-4 (73%) have been following Ford's press conferences on the government's plan to combat COVID-19, just under 3-in-5 (57%) have been following the recent Greenbelt controversy, including the decision of the RCMP to open a criminal investigation.

2

More believe that Ford responded poorly to criticisms on the Greenbelt than to COVID-19.
With a net well score of -19%, more disagree that Ford responded well to criticisms on the Greenbelt controversy compared to the government's response to COVID-19, which had a net well score of -9%. In both situations, NDP partisans were most likely to believe that Ford responded poorly to criticisms.

3

A little over half agreed both that the Greenbelt and COVID controversies are signs of deeper issues.
Over half of respondents believe that the government's handling of the Greenbelt issue and the managing of measures to combat COVID-19 are signs of deeper issues with how the government is managing the province/pandemic. Among Liberal and PC partisans, more believe that the handling of the Greenbelt controversy is a sign of deeper issues compared to the management of COVID-19 measures.

4

Ontarians are divided over whether Premier Ford accepts responsibility and is trying to do better.
Both on COVID (+6%) and the Greenbelt (+2%), slightly more Ontarians agreed than disagreed that "***Doug Ford has accepted responsibility for his mistakes and is taking steps to do better.***"
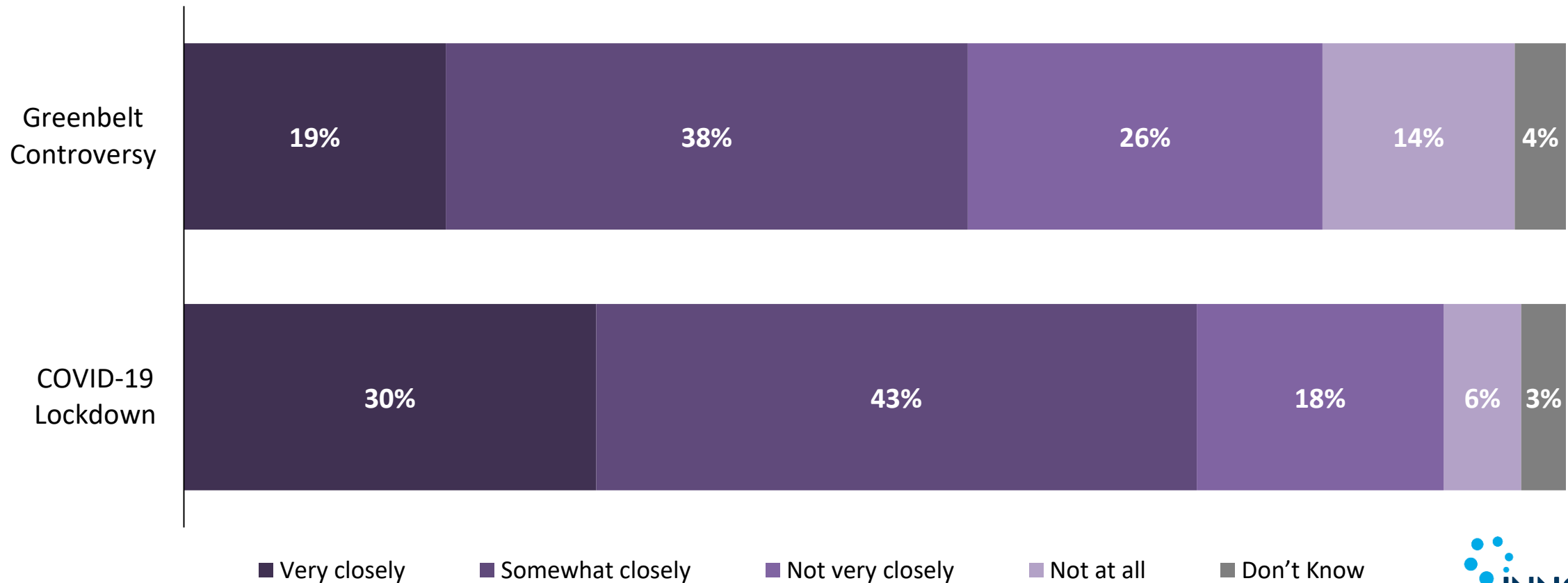
Greenbelt Controversy

Awareness: While 3-in-4 (73%) followed the COVID-19 controversy closely, just under 3-in-5 (57%) are following the Greenbelt response.

Q How closely have you been following…
- **[Greenbelt Controversy] The controversy regarding the government's plan for the Greenbelt, including the decision of the RCMP to open a criminal investigation?**
- **[COVID-19 Lockdown] 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=900]

	Very closely	Somewhat closely	Not very closely	Not at all	Don't Know
Greenbelt Controversy	19%	38%	26%	14%	4%
COVID-19 Lockdown	30%	43%	18%	6%	3%

■ Very closely   ■ Somewhat closely   ■ Not very closely   ■ Not at all   ■ Don't Know

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Awareness BY Party ID: While the COVID-19 response was followed closest by NDP, the Greenbelt controversy is most followed by Liberals
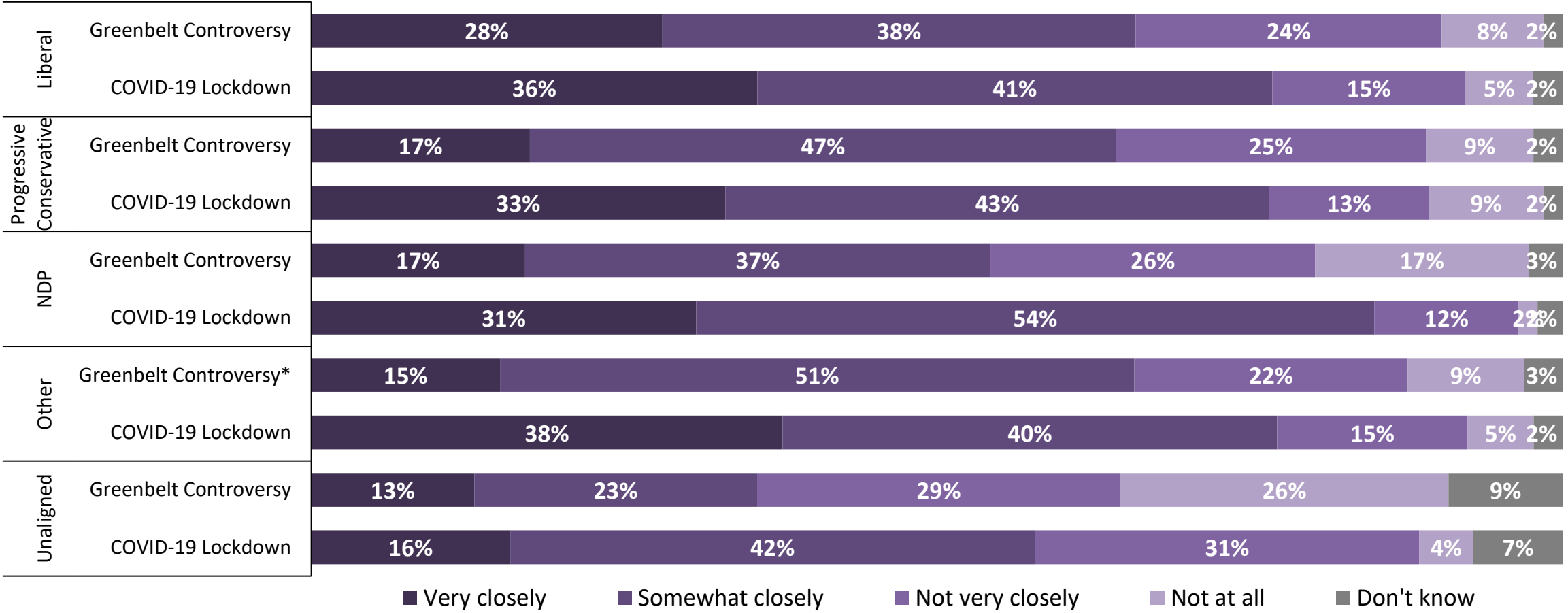
Q How closely have you been following…
- **[Greenbelt Controversy] The controversy regarding the government's plan for the Greenbelt, including the decision of the RCMP to open a criminal investigation?**
- **[COVID-19 Lockdown] The recent press conferences by Premier Doug Ford and the reaction to the government's plans to combat the spread of COVID-19 in Ontario?**

[asked of all respondents; n=900]

Party ID

Party ID		Very closely	Somewhat closely	Not very closely	Not at all	Don't know
Liberal	Greenbelt Controversy	28%	38%	24%	8%	2%
Liberal	COVID-19 Lockdown	36%	41%	15%	5%	2%
Progressive Conservative	Greenbelt Controversy	17%	47%	25%	9%	2%
Progressive Conservative	COVID-19 Lockdown	33%	43%	13%	9%	2%
NDP	Greenbelt Controversy	17%	37%	26%	17%	3%
NDP	COVID-19 Lockdown	31%	54%	12%	2%	2%
Other	Greenbelt Controversy*	15%	51%	22%	9%	3%
Other	COVID-19 Lockdown	38%	40%	15%	5%	2%
Unaligned	Greenbelt Controversy	13%	23%	29%	26%	9%
Unaligned	COVID-19 Lockdown	16%	42%	31%	4%	7%

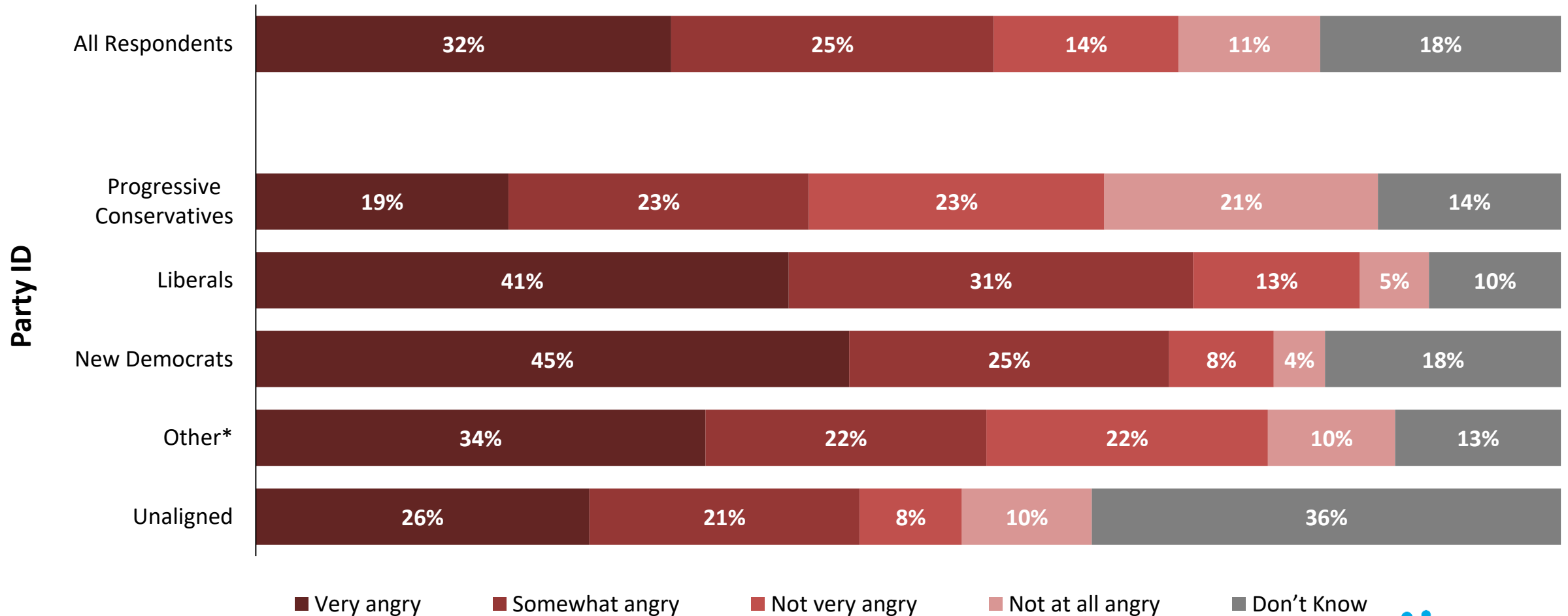■ Very closely ■ Somewhat closely ■ Not very closely ■ Not at all ■ Don't know

Note: * indicates a small n size, interpret results with caution.

Initial Reaction: 3-in-5 (57%) felt angry after hearing about the plan for the Greenbelt; highest among Liberal and NDP partisans

Q How did you feel when you heard about the Ontario government's plan for the Greenbelt?
[asked of all respondents; n=900]

Party ID	Very angry	Somewhat angry	Not very angry	Not at all angry	Don't Know
All Respondents	32%	25%	14%	11%	18%
Progressive Conservatives	19%	23%	23%	21%	14%
Liberals	41%	31%	13%	5%	10%
New Democrats	45%	25%	8%	4%	18%
Other*	34%	22%	22%	10%	13%
Unaligned	26%	21%	8%	10%	36%

■ Very angry   ■ Somewhat angry   ■ Not very angry   ■ Not at all angry   ■ Don't Know

Note: * indicates a small n size, interpret results with caution.
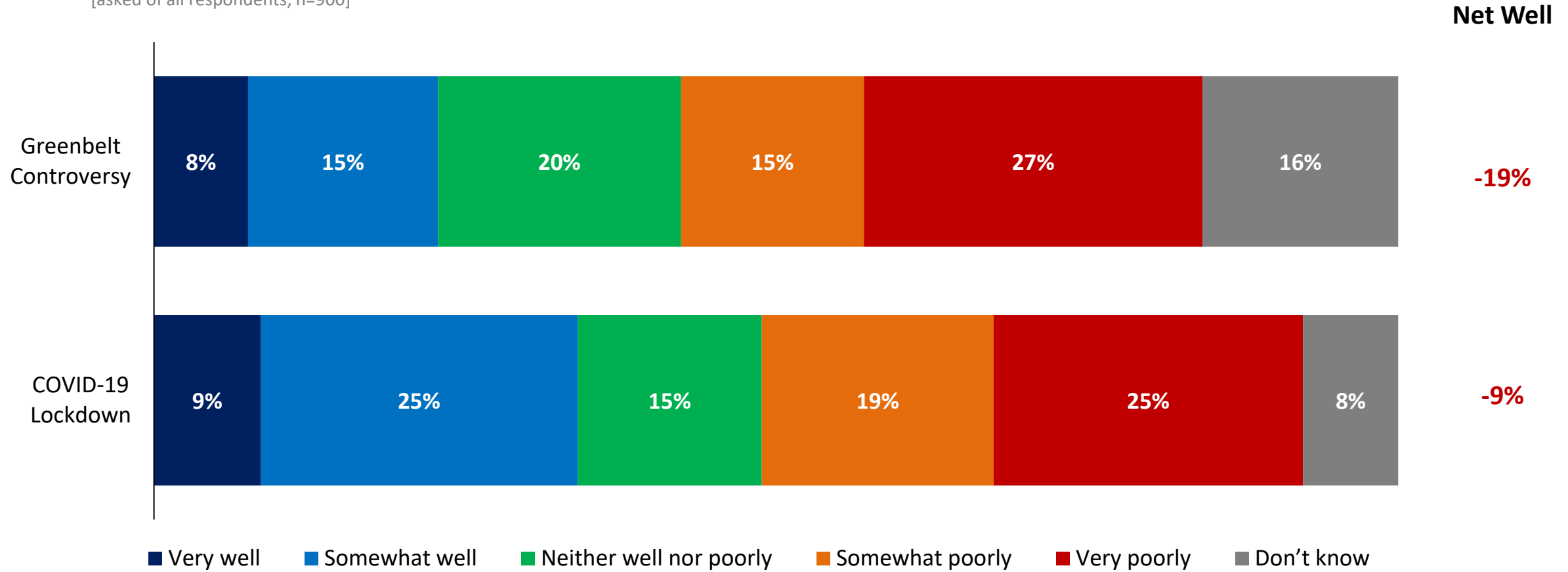
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Ford's Response: Negative reactions on Greenbelt are similar to COVID, but positive reactions are much lower

Q Now, thinking about how Doug Ford has responded to criticism about...
- **[Greenbelt Controversy] the Greenbelt Plan, do you think Doug Ford has responded well or poorly?**
- **[COVID-19 Lockdown] recent measures put in place in Ontario, do you think Doug Ford has responded well or poorly?**
[asked of all respondents; n=900]

Net Well

	Very well	Somewhat well	Neither well nor poorly	Somewhat poorly	Very poorly	Don't know	Net Well
Greenbelt Controversy	8%	15%	20%	15%	27%	16%	**-19%**
COVID-19 Lockdown	9%	25%	15%	19%	25%	8%	**-9%**

■ Very well ■ Somewhat well ■ Neither well nor poorly ■ Somewhat poorly ■ Very poorly ■ Don't know

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Ford's Response BY Party ID: NDP partisans are most likely to believe that Ford responded poorly to criticisms on the Greenbelt (58%)
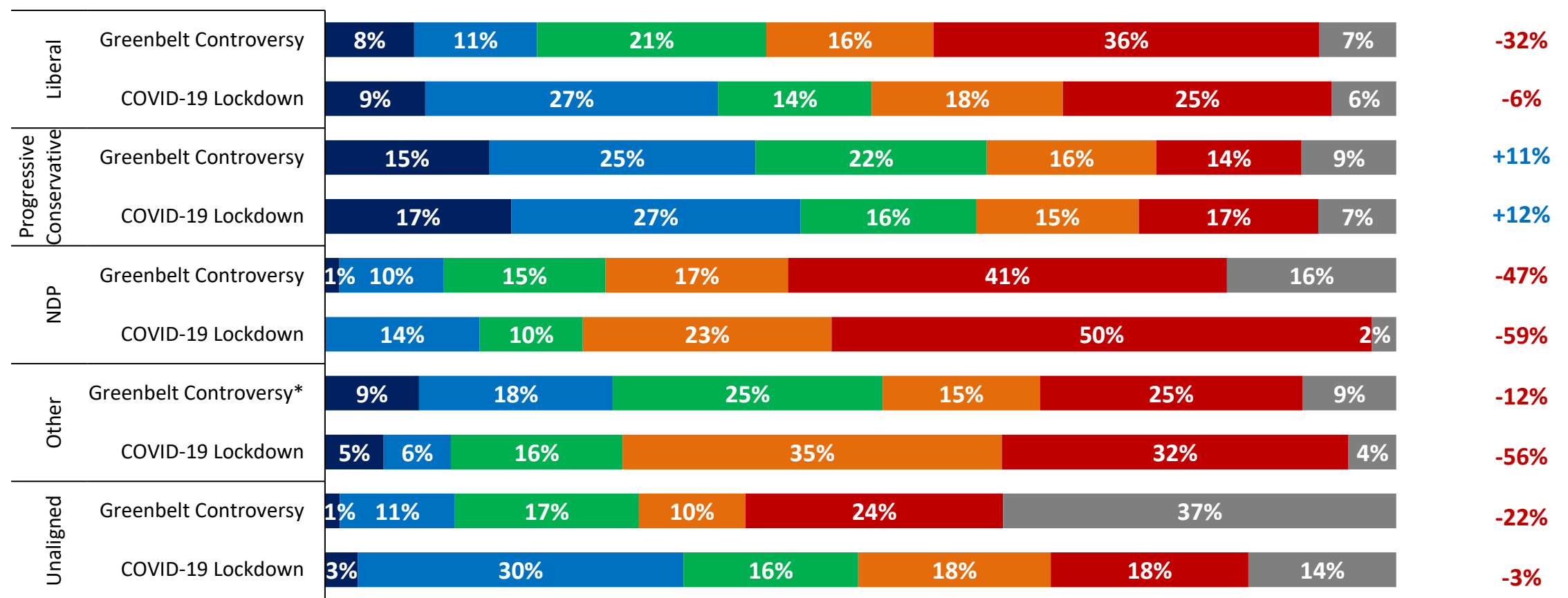
Q Now, thinking about how Doug Ford has responded to criticism about…
- **[Greenbelt Controversy] the Greenbelt Plan, do you think Doug Ford has responded well or poorly?**
- **[COVID-19 Lockdown] recent measures put in place in Ontario, do you think Doug Ford has responded well or poorly?**

[asked of all respondents; n=900]

Net Well

Party ID

Liberal
| Greenbelt Controversy | 8% | 11% | 21% | 16% | 36% | 7% | **-32%** |
| COVID-19 Lockdown | 9% | 27% | 14% | 18% | 25% | 6% | **-6%** |

Progressive Conservative
| Greenbelt Controversy | 15% | 25% | 22% | 16% | 14% | 9% | **+11%** |
| COVID-19 Lockdown | 17% | 27% | 16% | 15% | 17% | 7% | **+12%** |

NDP
| Greenbelt Controversy | 1% | 10% | 15% | 17% | 41% | 16% | **-47%** |
| COVID-19 Lockdown | | 14% | 10% | 23% | 50% | 2% | **-59%** |

Other
| Greenbelt Controversy* | 9% | 18% | 25% | 15% | 25% | 9% | **-12%** |
| COVID-19 Lockdown | 5% | 6% | 16% | 35% | 32% | 4% | **-56%** |

Unaligned
| Greenbelt Controversy | 1% | 11% | 17% | 10% | 24% | 37% | **-22%** |
| COVID-19 Lockdown | 3% | 30% | 16% | 18% | 18% | 14% | **-3%** |

■ Very well   ■ Somewhat well   ■ Neither well nor poorly   ■ Somewhat poorly   ■ Very poorly   ■ Don't know

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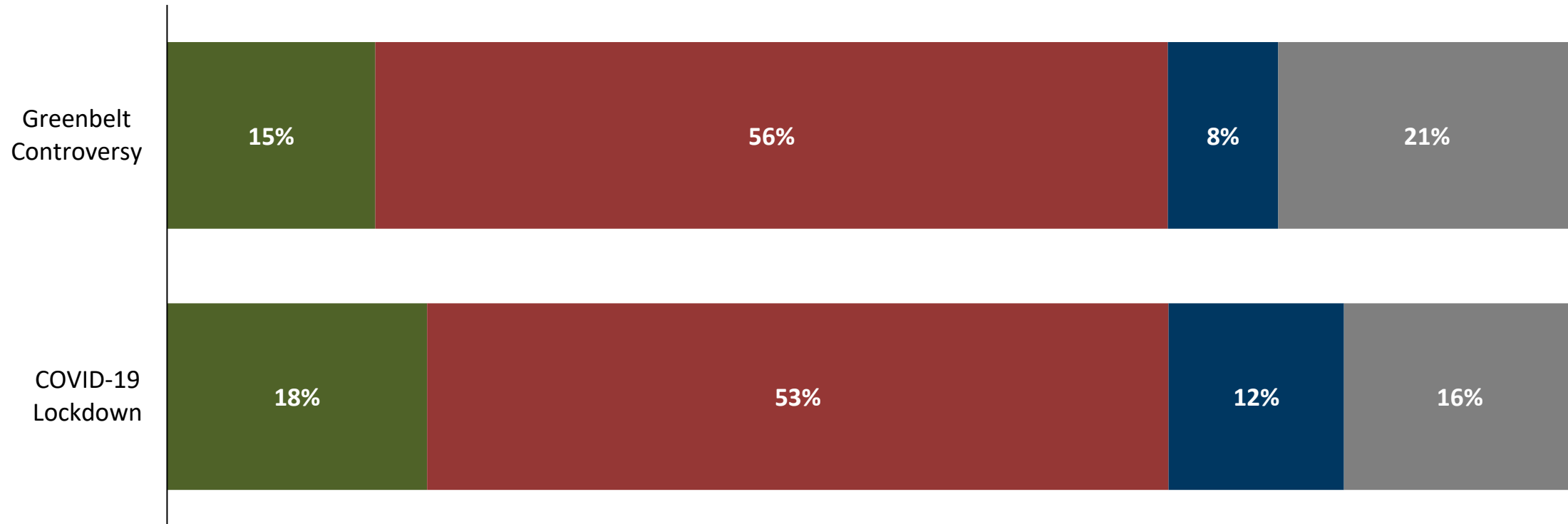**Note:** * indicates a small n size, interpret results with caution.

A Deeper Problem?: Just over half felt COVID <u>and</u> the Greenbelt controversies are signs of deeper issues with the government

Q Which of the following statements best reflects your view on the controversy over...
- **[Greenbelt Controversy] the way the Ontario provincial government is handling the Greenbelt issue?**
- **[COVID-19 Lockdown] the way the provincial government is managing measures to combat the spread of COVID-19?**
  [asked of all respondents; n=900]

Greenbelt Controversy: 15% | 56% | 8% | 21%

COVID-19 Lockdown: 18% | 53% | 12% | 16%

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

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A Deeper Problem? BY Party ID: More Liberal and PC partisans say the Greenbelt controversy is a sign of a deeper issue compared to COVID-19
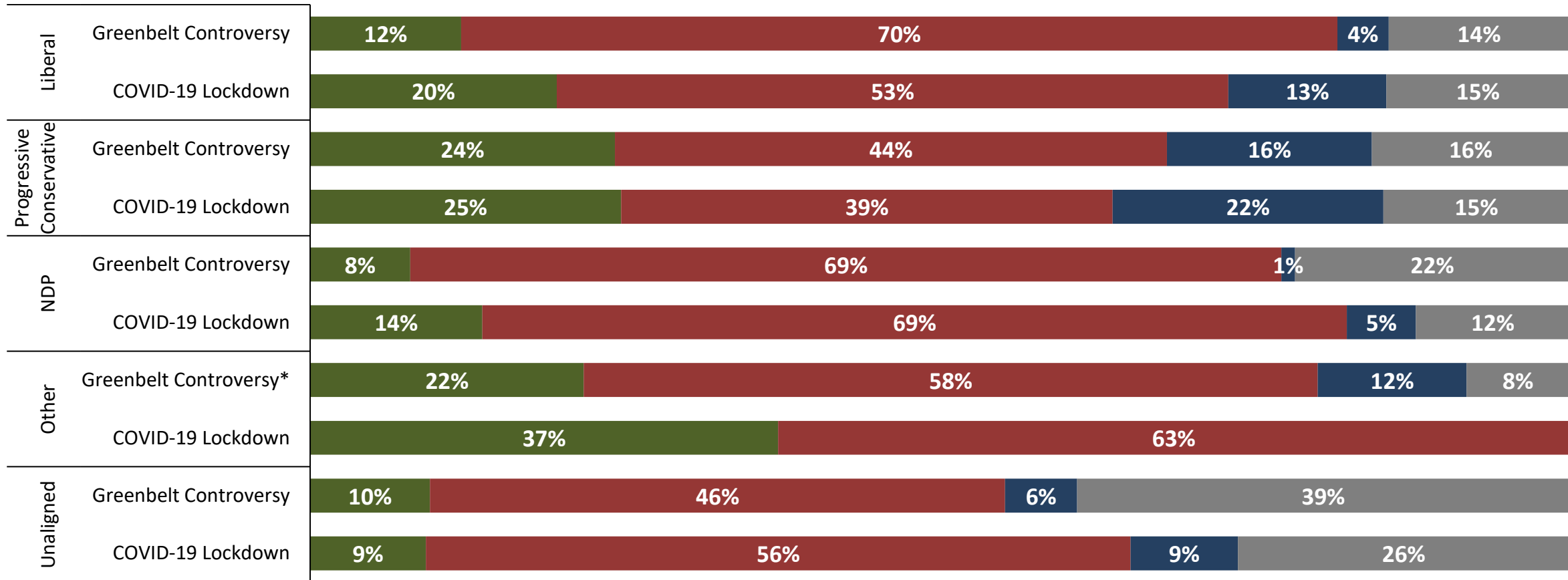
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- **[Greenbelt Controversy] the way the Ontario provincial government is handling the Greenbelt issue?**
- **[COVID-19 Lockdown] the way the provincial government is managing measures to combat the spread of COVID-19?**
[asked of all respondents; n=900]

Party ID

Party	Statement	One-off issue	Deeper issue	No real merit	Don't know
Liberal	Greenbelt Controversy	12%	70%	4%	14%
Liberal	COVID-19 Lockdown	20%	53%	13%	15%
Progressive Conservative	Greenbelt Controversy	24%	44%	16%	16%
Progressive Conservative	COVID-19 Lockdown	25%	39%	22%	15%
NDP	Greenbelt Controversy	8%	69%	1%	22%
NDP	COVID-19 Lockdown	14%	69%	5%	12%
Other	Greenbelt Controversy*	22%	58%	12%	8%
Other	COVID-19 Lockdown	37%	63%		
Unaligned	Greenbelt Controversy	10%	46%	6%	39%
Unaligned	COVID-19 Lockdown	9%	56%	9%	26%

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

Note: * indicates a small n size, interpret results with caution.

Key Attitude: Slightly more believed Ford accepted responsibility for his mistakes in COVID than the Greenbelt, but the numbers are close
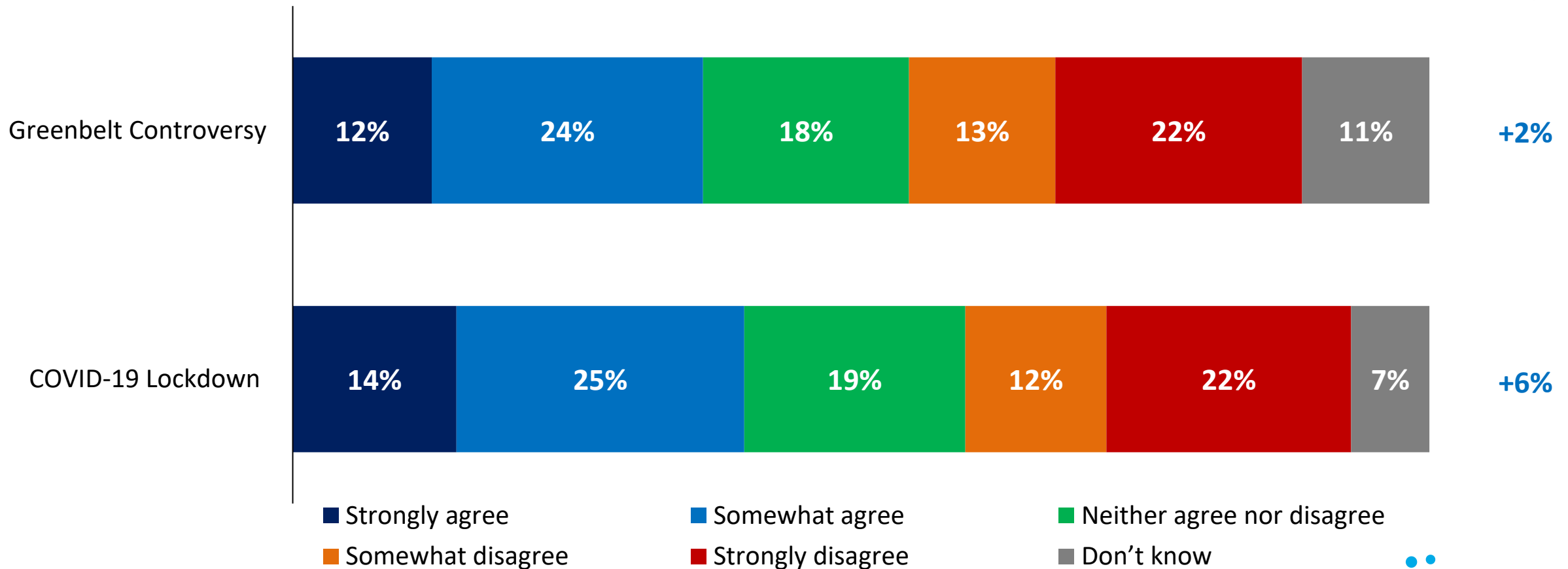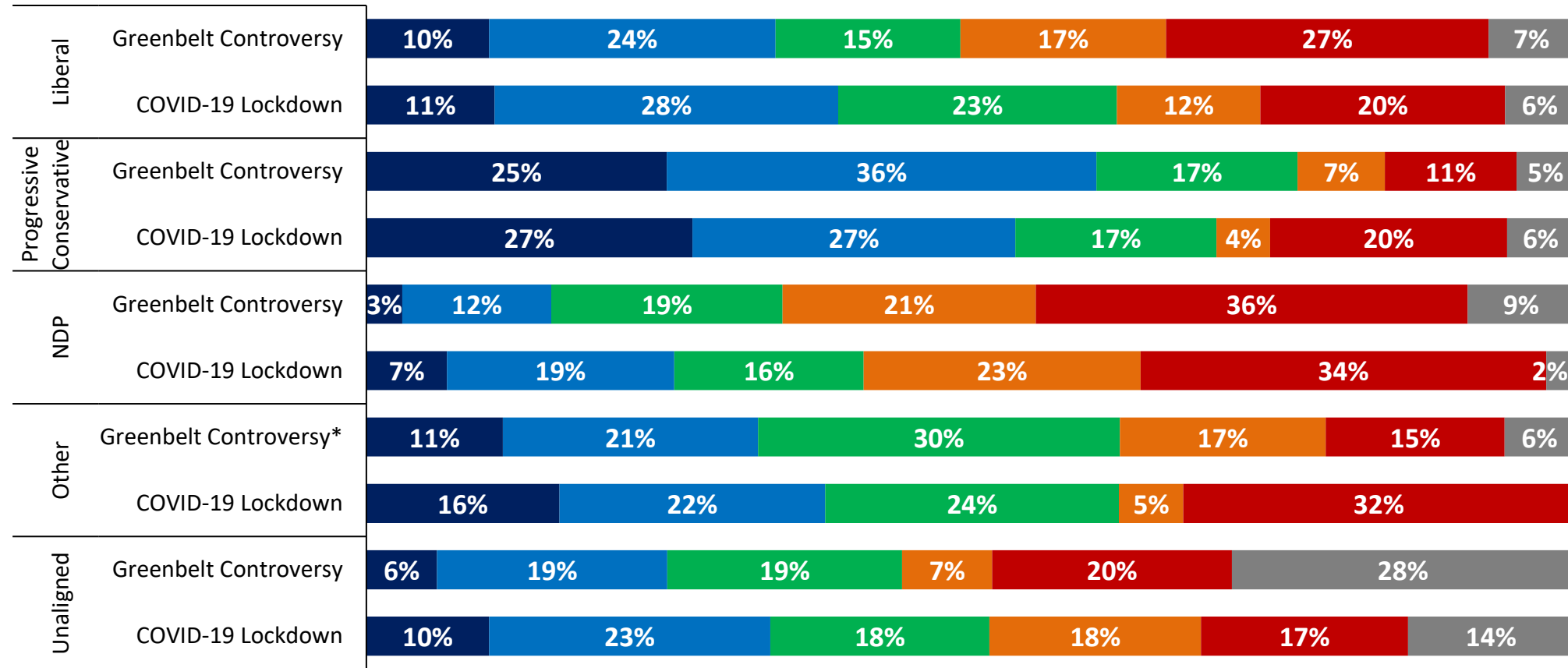
Q Please indicate how strongly you agree or disagree with the following statement:

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

[asked of all respondents; n=900]

Net Agree

	Strongly agree	Somewhat agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know	Net Agree
Greenbelt Controversy	12%	24%	18%	13%	22%	11%	+2%
COVID-19 Lockdown	14%	25%	19%	12%	22%	7%	+6%

■ Strongly agree   ■ Somewhat agree   ■ Neither agree nor disagree
■ Somewhat disagree   ■ Strongly disagree   ■ Don't know

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Ford's Response BY Party ID: Conservative partisans more forgiving on Greenbelt than they were on COVID

Q Please indicate how strongly you agree or disagree with the following statement:

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

[asked of all respondents; n=900]

Net Agree

Party ID

Liberal
| Greenbelt Controversy | 10% | 24% | 15% | 17% | 27% | 7% | **-10%** |
| COVID-19 Lockdown | 11% | 28% | 23% | 12% | 20% | 6% | **+7%** |

Progressive Conservative
| Greenbelt Controversy | 25% | 36% | 17% | 7% | 11% | 5% | **+42%** |
| COVID-19 Lockdown | 27% | 27% | 17% | 4% | 20% | 6% | **+30%** |

NDP
| Greenbelt Controversy | 3% | 12% | 19% | 21% | 36% | 9% | **-41%** |
| COVID-19 Lockdown | 7% | 19% | 16% | 23% | 34% | 2% | **-31%** |

Other
| Greenbelt Controversy* | 11% | 21% | 30% | 17% | 15% | 6% | **+1%** |
| COVID-19 Lockdown | 16% | 22% | 24% | 5% | 32% | | **0%** |

Unaligned
| Greenbelt Controversy | 6% | 19% | 19% | 7% | 20% | 28% | **-2%** |
| COVID-19 Lockdown | 10% | 23% | 18% | 18% | 17% | 14% | **-1%** |

■ Strongly agree ■ Somewhat agree ■ Neither agree nor disagree ■ Somewhat disagree ■ Strongly disagree ■ Don't know
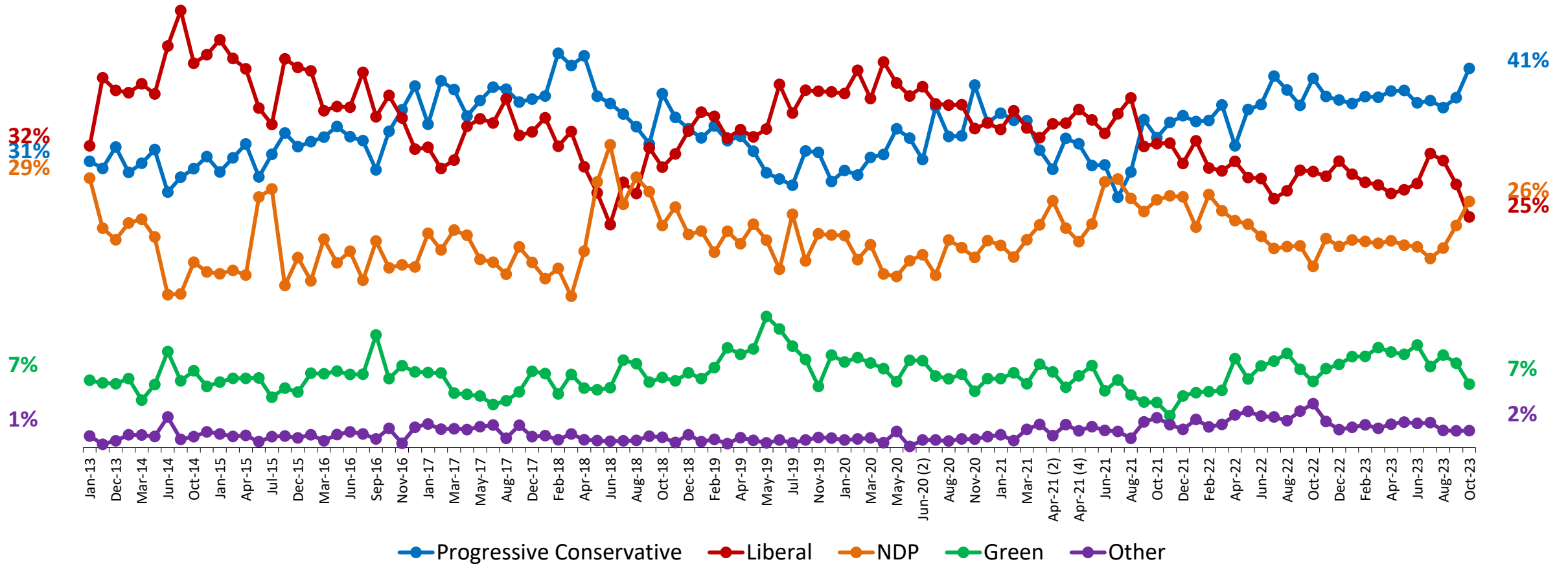
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Note: * indicates a small n size, interpret results with caution.

Provincial Decided Vote Tracking: Despite the Greenbelt Controversy, Progressive Conservatives remain in the lead

Current data: October 2023

Methodology

Survey Methodology

These are the results of an online survey conducted between October 12th and October 30th, 2023.

Method: This online survey was conducted using INNOVATIVE's Canada 20/20 national research panel with additional respondents from Lucid, a leading provider of online samples. 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=1,360 Ontario residents, 18 years or older. The results are weighted to n=900 based on Census data from Statistics Canada.

Field Dates: October 12th - October 30th, 2023.

Weighting: Results for Canada are weighted by age, gender, region, and self-reported past federal vote 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. The decided vote tracking numbers are based on results for the whole month of October while results for the Greenbelt Controversy are of the last three weeks.

	Unweighted (n)	Unweighted (%)	Weighted (n)	Weighted (%)
Men 18-34	121	8.9%	126	14.1%
Men 35-54	156	11.5%	139	15.5%
Men 55+	355	26.2%	170	18.9%
Women 18-34	177	13.1%	122	13.6%
Women 35-54	198	14.6%	148	16.5%
Women 55+	349	25.7%	193	21.5%
Toronto	297	21.8%	183	20.3%
Rest of GTA	336	24.7%	235	26.1%
South/West	358	26.3%	236	26.2%
North/East	369	27.1%	247	27.4%

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