

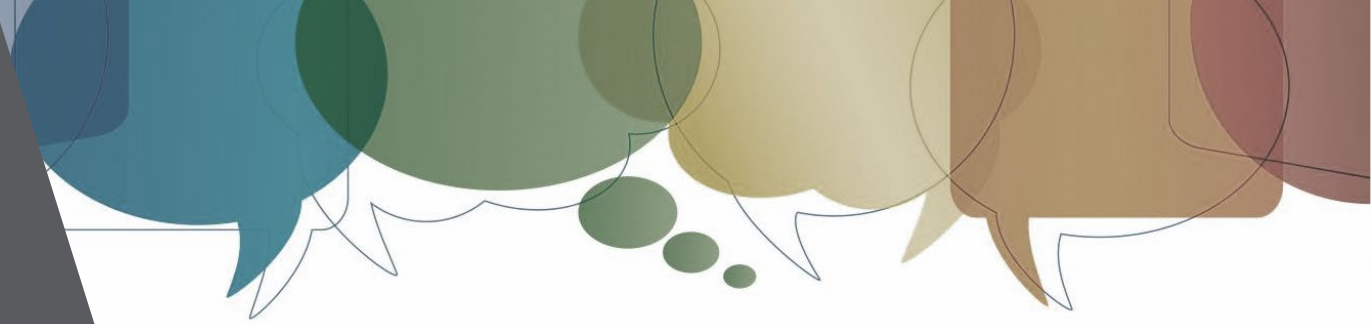


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OCTOBER 2020 RESEARCH

PULSE REPORT ON COVID-19 – REPORT #48

CABINET OFFICE

September 18th 2020



KEY FINDINGS

Key Findings

1 Over the past week, the government's 'right track' scores have slipped back to 74% after bumping up to 83% last week.

2 The rising infections in Ontario have caused a significant drop in the proportion of Ontarians who believe that COVID-19 is under control in the province.

Mirroring the perceptions about whether COVID-19 is under control, over the past two weeks there has been a significant increase in the belief that Ontario is not over the worst of the pandemic.

3 Consistent with the actions of the government this week, preliminary results indicate a plurality of Ontarians support imposing fines on those hosting social events that violate public health regulations, followed by public education and increased enforcement.

Early results suggest that most Ontarians think that the recent increase in infections is expected as a result of the loosening of restrictions and that this is acceptable and not a sign of losing control.

4 There has been a sharp drop over the past five weeks (from 71% to 25%) in the proportion of Ontarians who believe the threat of contracting COVID-19 is much less now.

5 Ontarians remain divided on the current state of the economy. However, there may be some creeping pessimism: there has been an increase in the view that 'the economy continues to get worse', while there is a decline in the view that 'the economy is starting to recover'.

6 'COVID-19' continues to dwarf all issues in terms of what Ontarians want from their government. 'Education' has moved up slightly as schools reopen. The 'economy' is still a secondary issue.

Key Findings

7 Despite the changing COVID-19 infection landscape, there has been no change in the perceptions of the government's performance on key 'education' and 'health' related metrics.

However, positive perceptions toward the government's performance on 'managing the re-opening of the economy' has been declining steadily from 60% in July to 47% this past week.

8 Preliminary results show that Ontarians support the 32% rebate on their electricity bills and that the \$4.8b rebate comes directly from taxpayers' dollars.

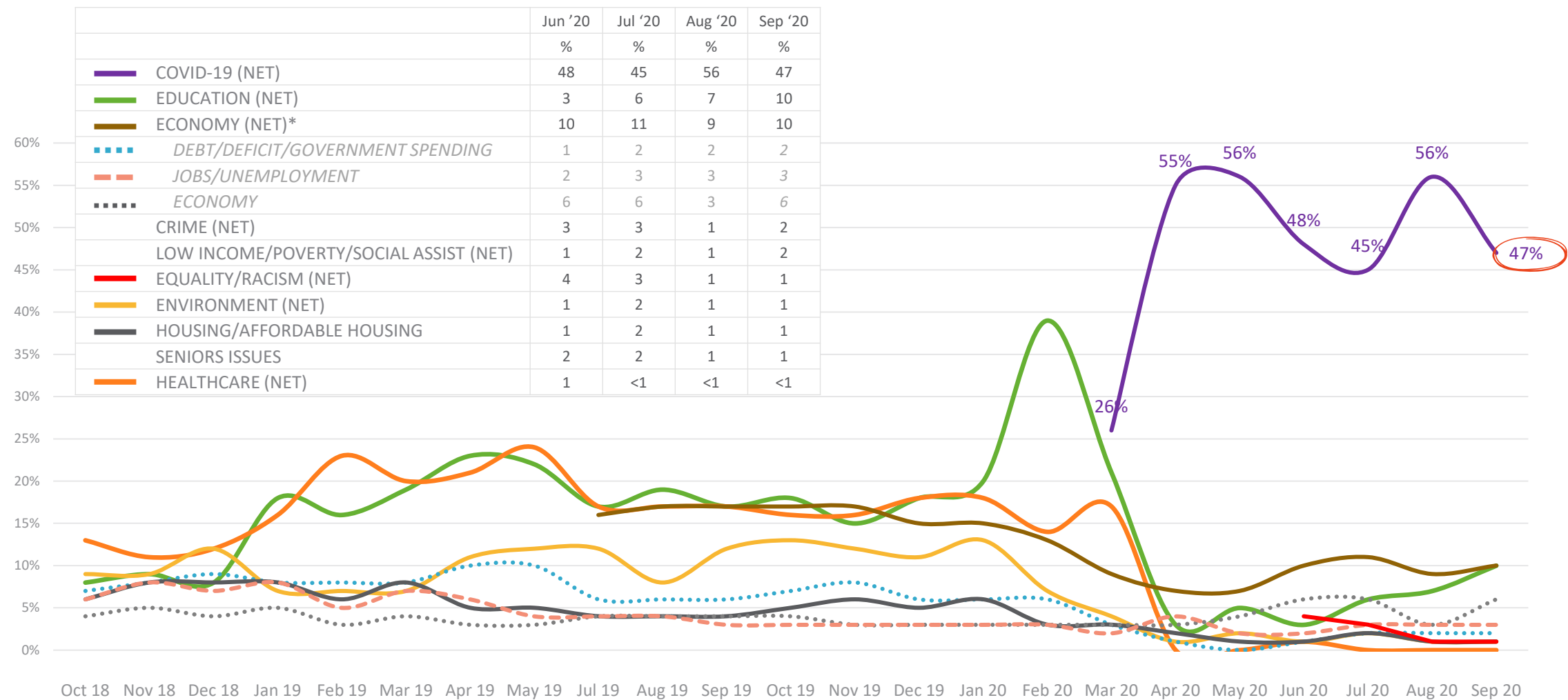
Early results indicate that Ontarians support the 32% rebate being reduced slightly if the funds were allocated to health and education.

TOP ONTARIO GOVERNMENT PRIORITIES



TOP ISSUES REQUIRING ATTENTION FROM THE GOVERNMENT

‘COVID-19’ continues to dwarf all issues in terms of what Ontarians wants from their government. ‘Education’ has moved up slightly as schools reopen. The ‘economy’ is still a secondary issue.



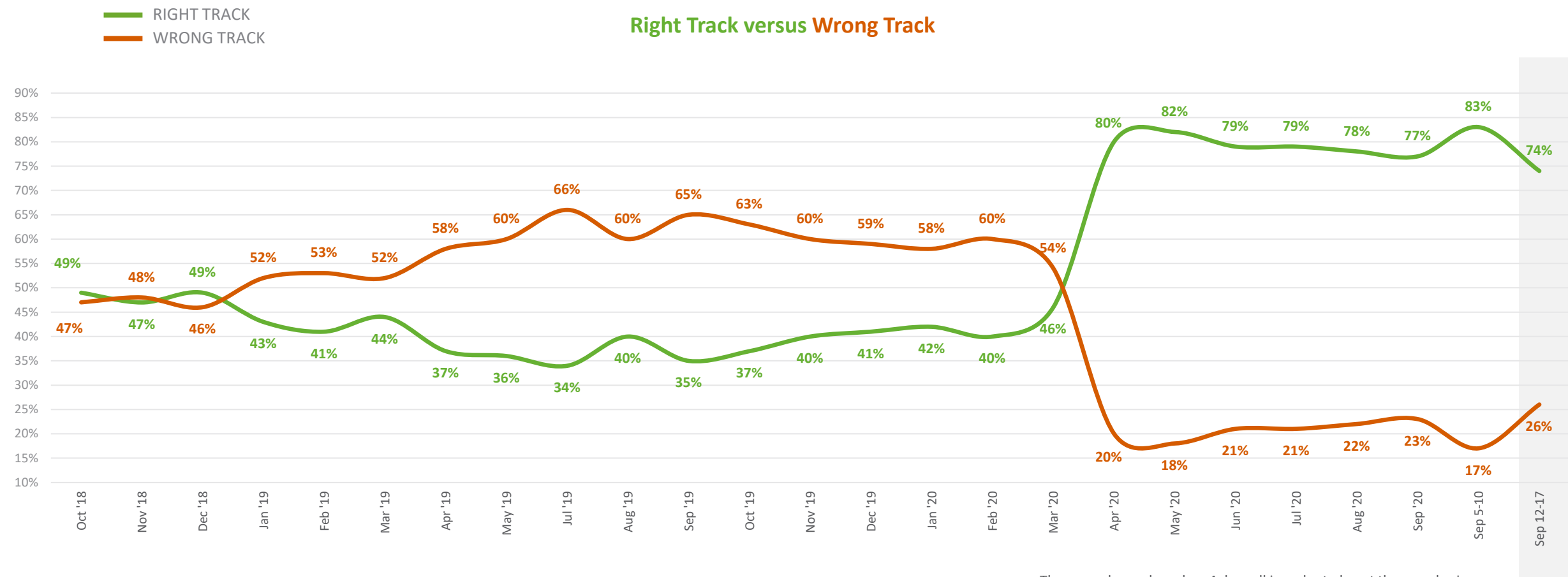
*ECONOMIC (NET) includes: Debt/Deficit/Government spending/Balance budget, Jobs/unemployment, Economy, Taxes

Q1. Thinking about the issues presently facing Ontario, which ONE do you feel should receive the GREATEST attention from the Ontario provincial government? That is, what should be the top priority?

RIGHT TRACK
WRONG TRACK



Over the past week, the government’s ‘right track’ scores have slipped back to 74% after bumping up to 83% last week.

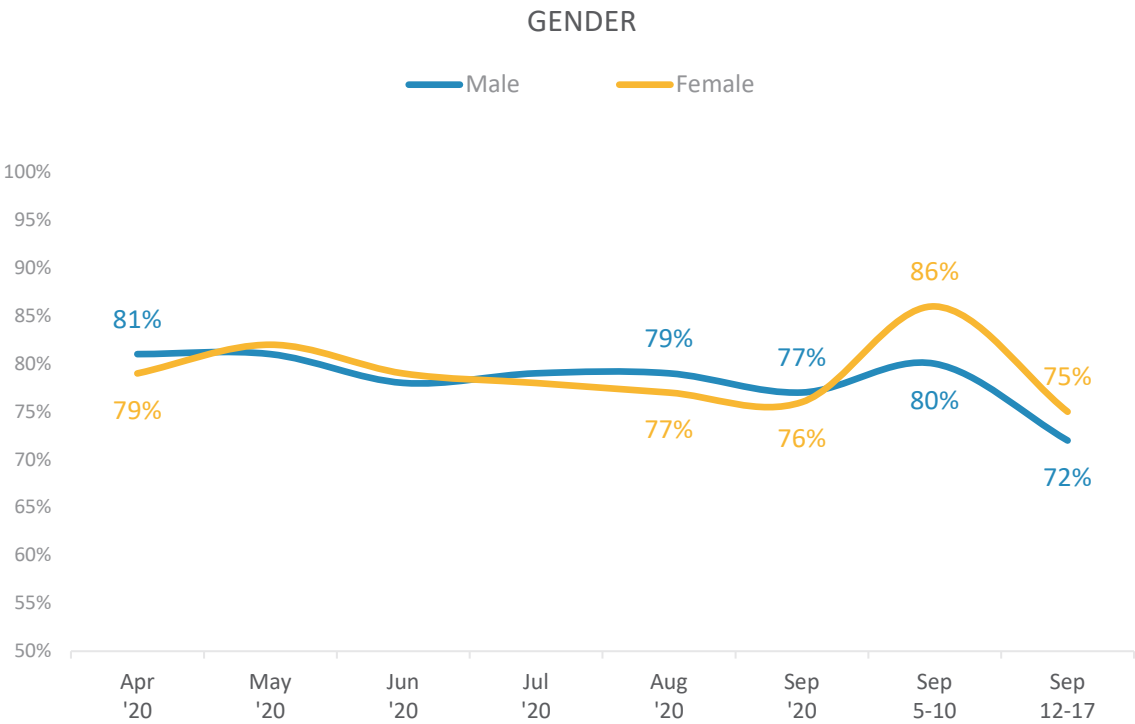
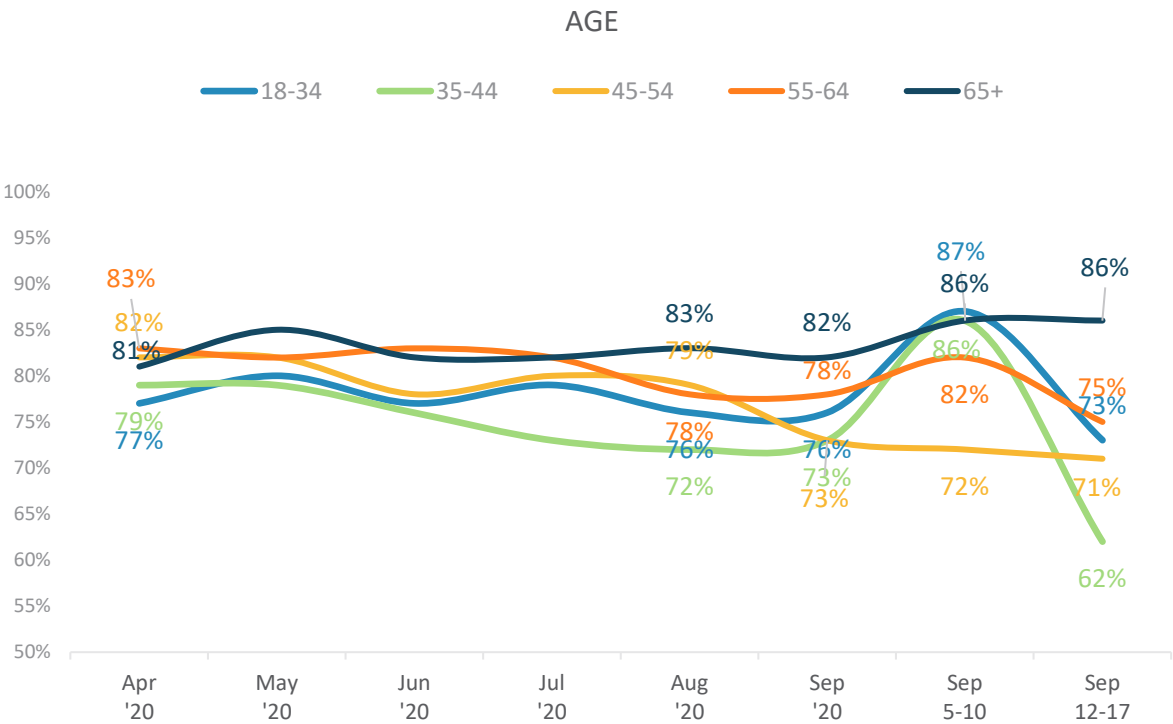


These graphs are based on 4 day roll in order to boost the sample sizes.

Q2. Overall, do you feel that the Ontario provincial government is on the right track or the wrong track, in terms of how it is governing the province? Base: Total sample

The ‘right track’ scores declined among both men and women compared to a week ago. These scores remain stable among those aged 65+ and 45-54.

Right Track Scores – 6-Day Roll

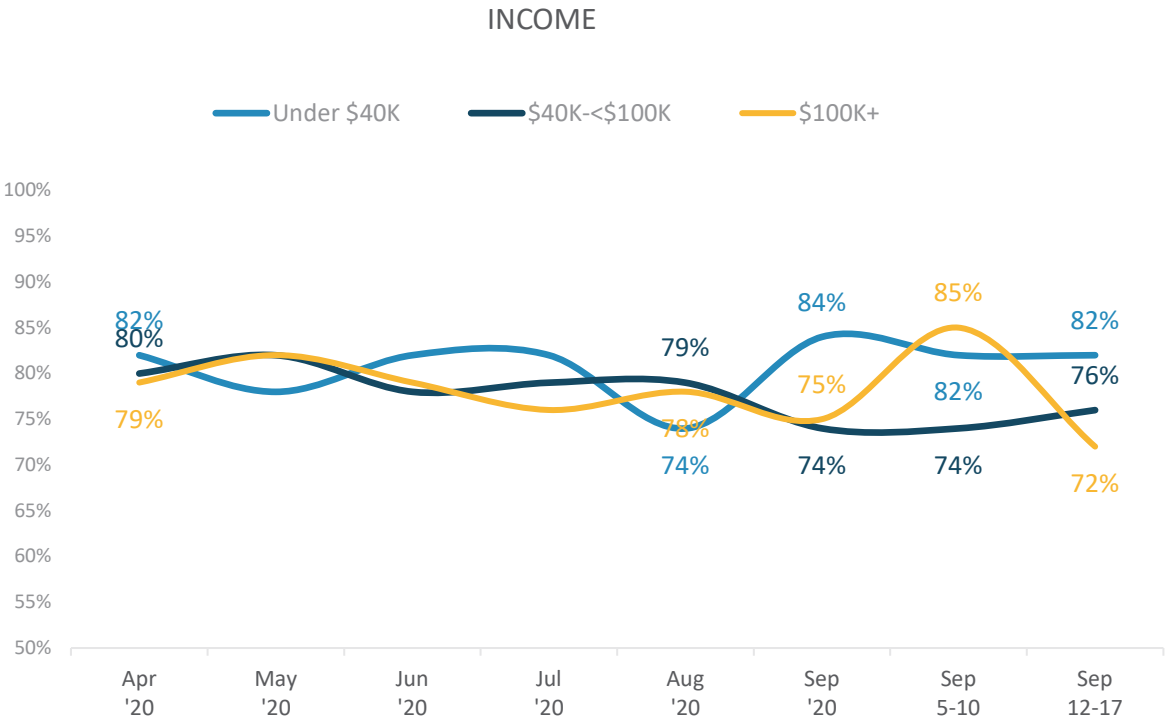
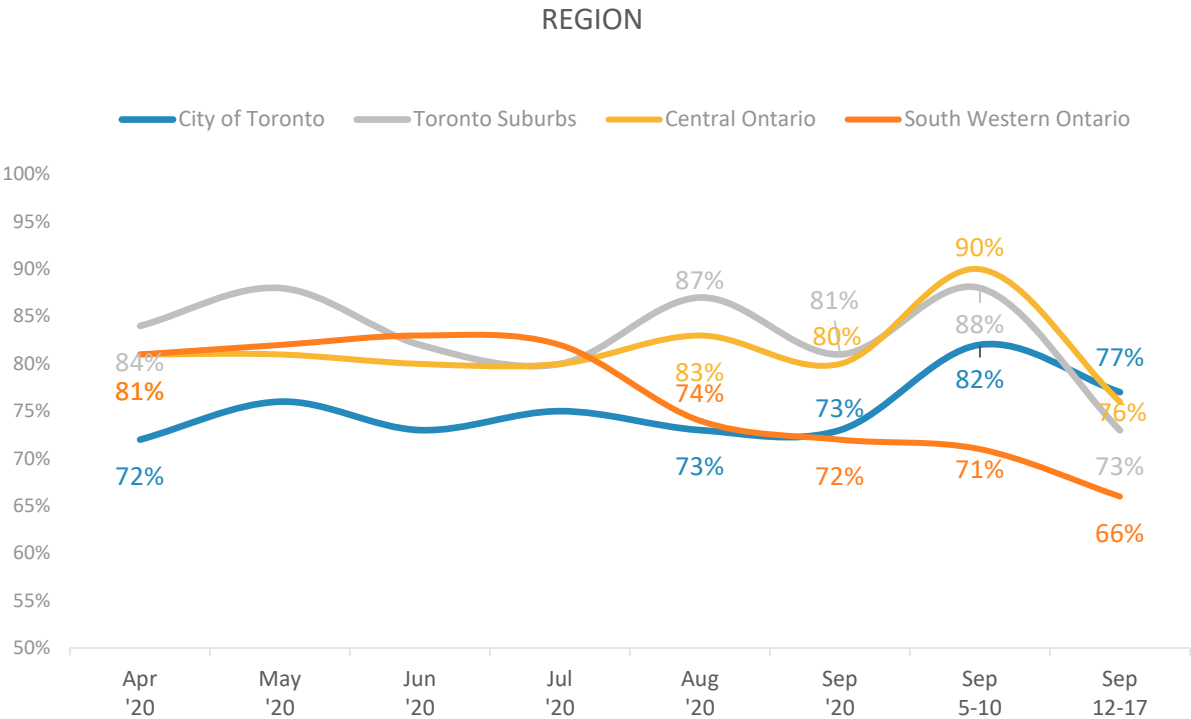


These graphs are based on 5 day roll in order to boost the sample sizes.

Q2. Overall, do you feel that the Ontario provincial government is on the right track or the wrong track, in terms of how it is governing the province? Base: Total sample

The declining ‘right track’ scores are evident in these four regions.

Right Track Scores – 6-Day Roll



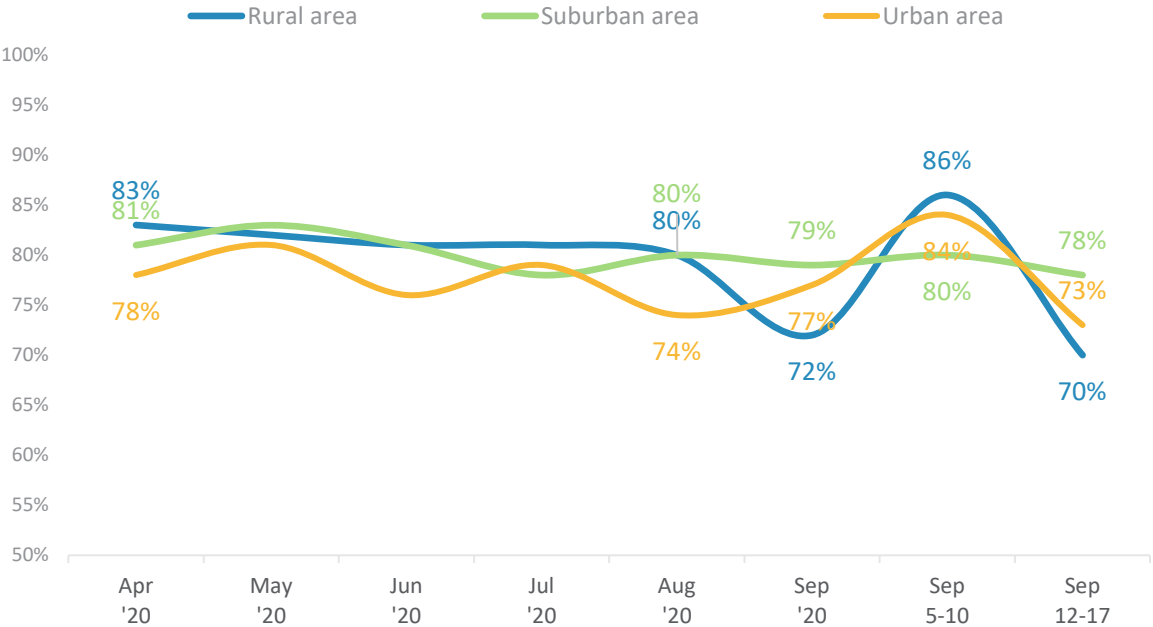
These graphs are based on 5 day roll in order to boost the sample sizes.

Q2. Overall, do you feel that the Ontario provincial government is on the right track or the wrong track, in terms of how it is governing the province? Base: Total sample

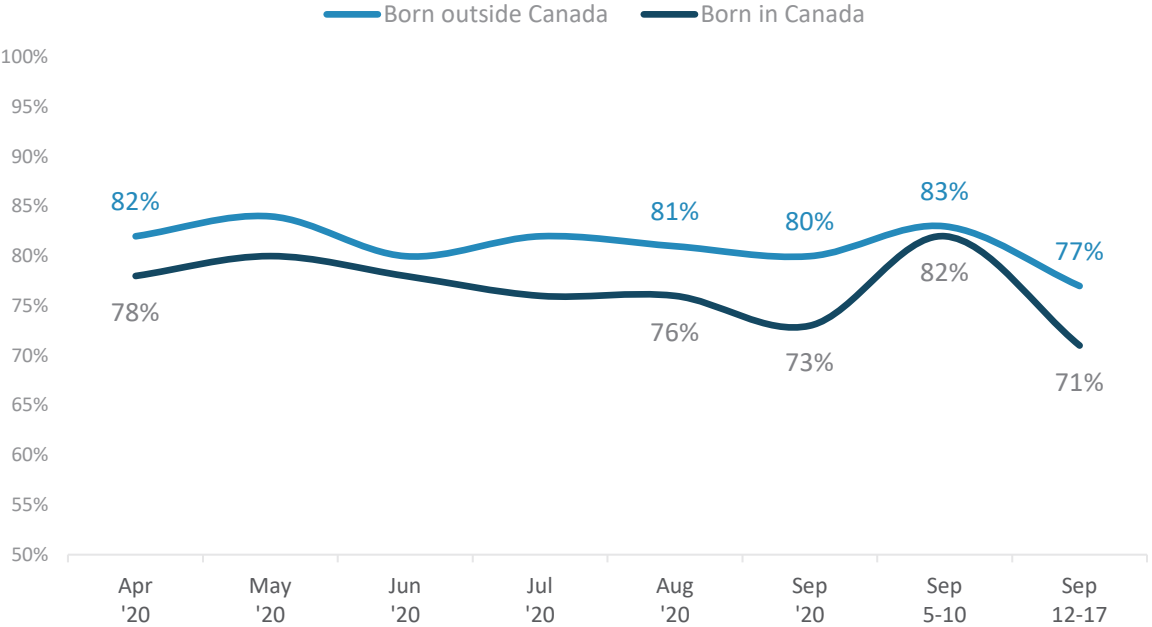
The ‘right track’ scores remain stable in suburban Ontario.

Right Track Scores – 6-Day Roll

RURAL/URBAN/SUBURBAN



BORN OUTSIDE/WITHIN CANADA



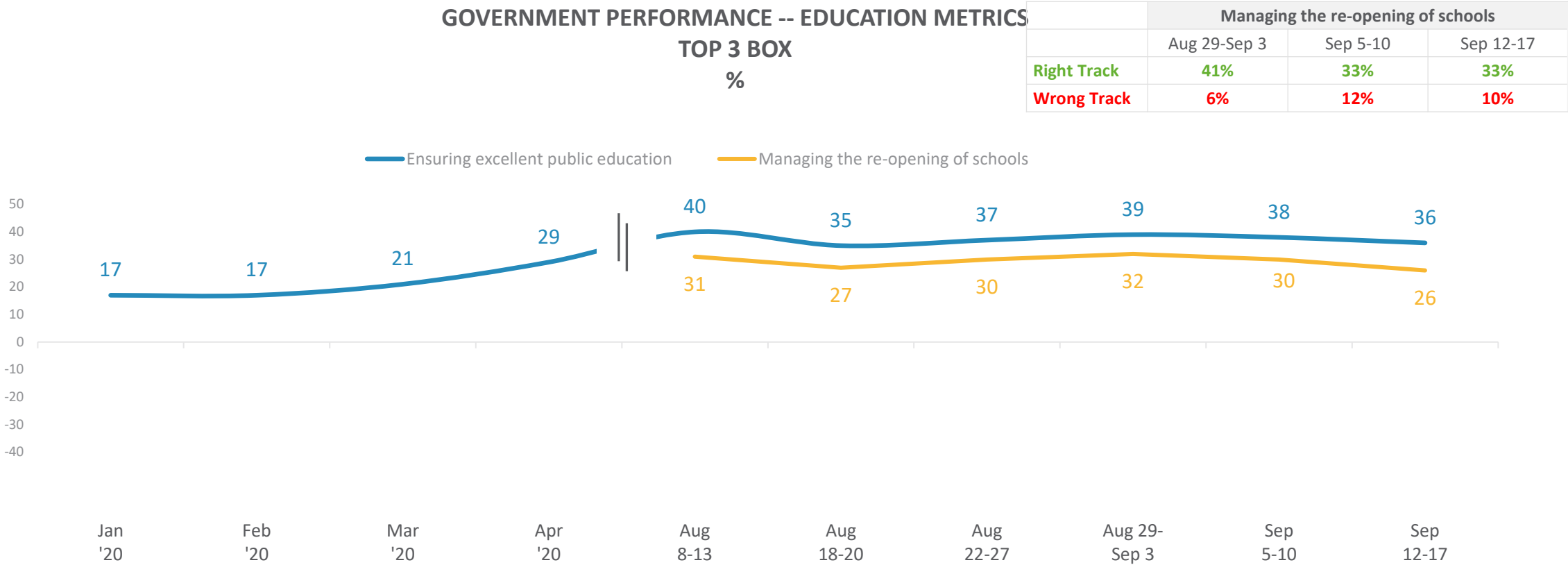
These graphs are based on 5 day roll in order to boost the sample sizes.

Q2. Overall, do you feel that the Ontario provincial government is on the right track or the wrong track, in terms of how it is governing the province? Base: Total sample

PERCEPTIONS OF GOVERNMENT PERFORMANCE DURING COVID-19 PANDEMIC



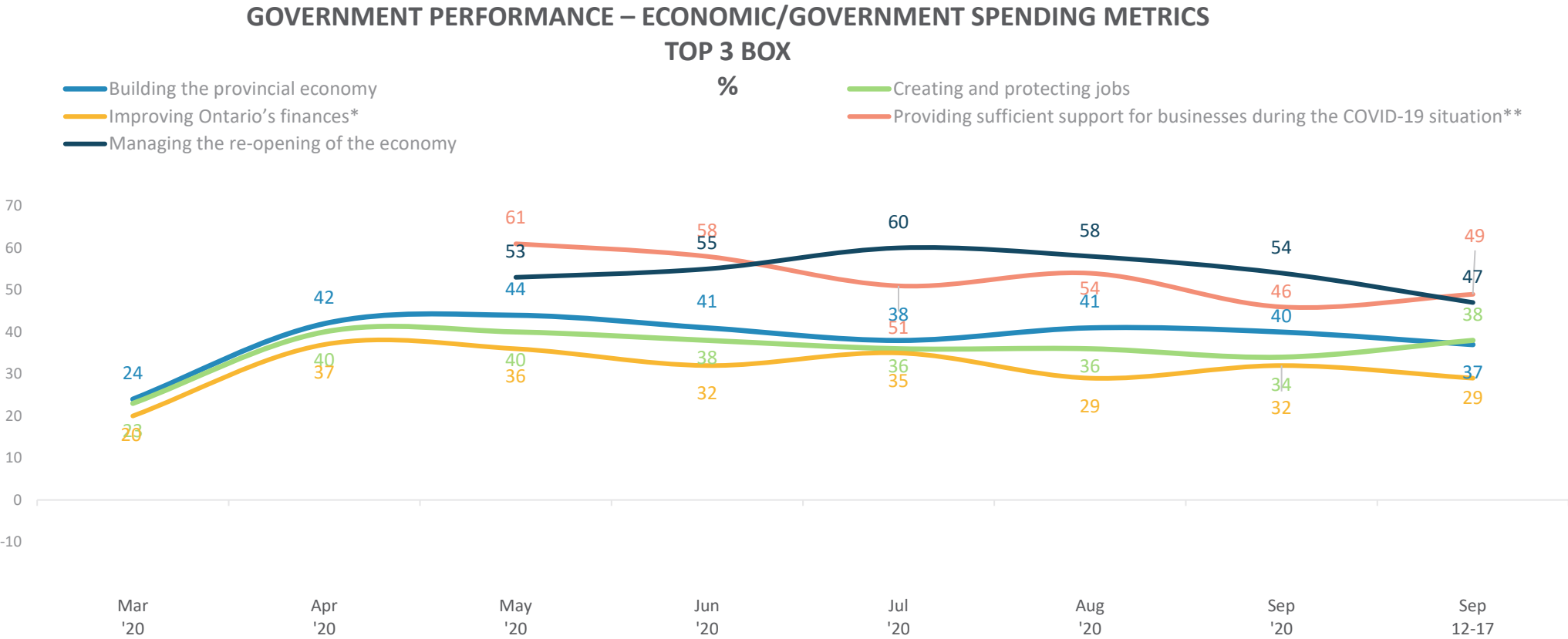
Positive perceptions toward the government’s performance on ‘ensuring excellent public education’ and ‘managing the re-opening of schools’ remains stable.



Q5. Using a scale where, where 1 means “poor” and nine is “excellent”, how would you rate the performance of Ontario government at managing each of the following? Bases vary

Perceptions toward the government’s performance on ‘managing the re-opening of the economy’ has been declining steadily from 60% in July to 47% this past week.

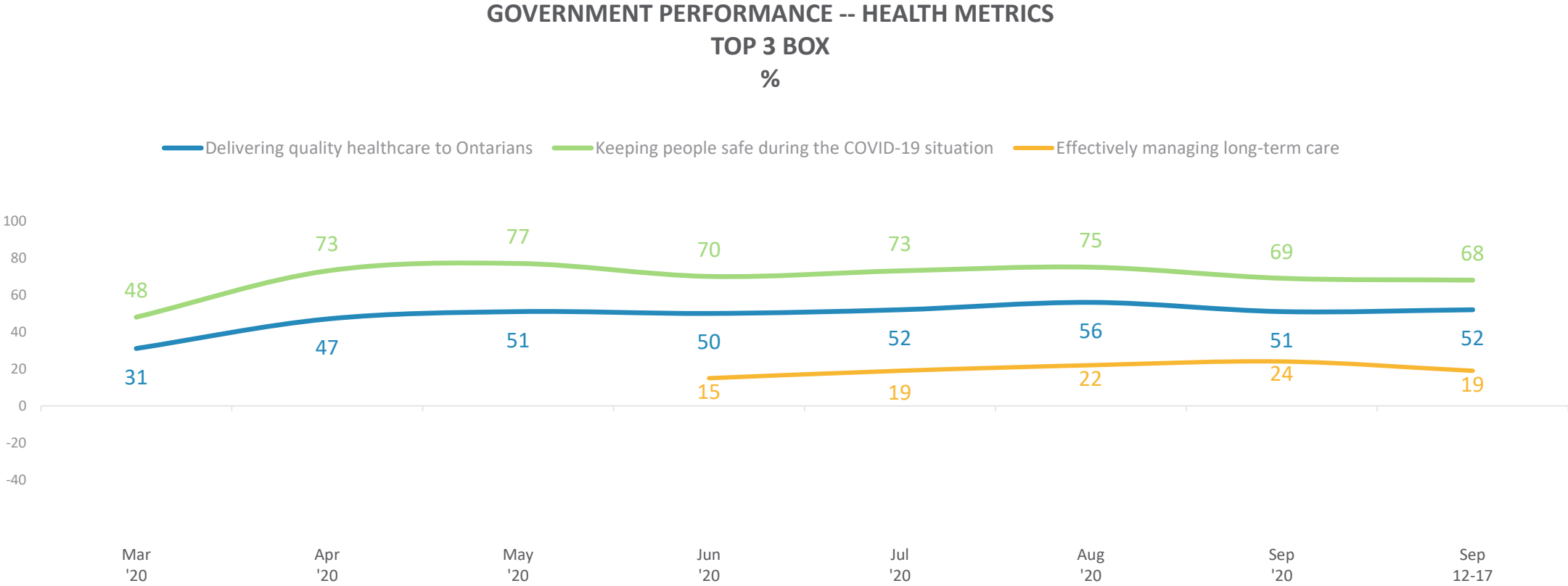
- Plus, at the same time, there has been a decline in the number of Ontarians who think the government is ‘providing sufficient support for business during the COVID-19 situation’.



Q5. Using a scale where, where 1 means “poor” and nine is “excellent”, how would you rate the performance of Ontario government at managing each of the following?
*Former phrasing: “Improve Ontario’s finances”
**Former phrasing: “Sufficient business support during the COVID-19 situation”

Bases vary

Even with rising infections, perceptions toward the government’s performance on key health metrics remains highly positive and stable.



Q5. Using a scale where, where 1 means “poor” and nine is “excellent”, how would you rate the performance of Ontario government at managing each of the following? Bases vary

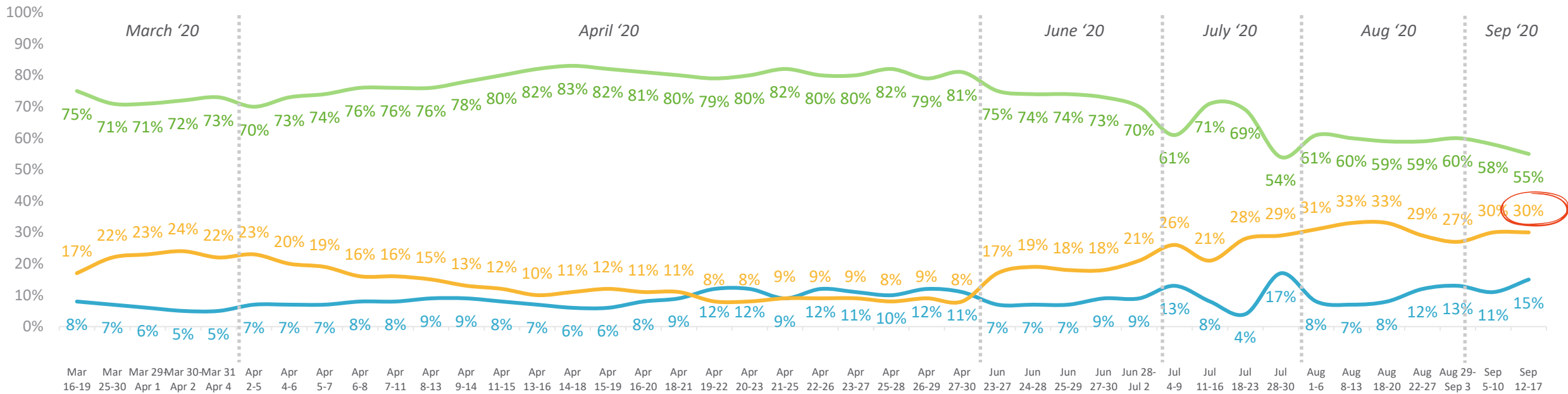
About 3-in-10 continue to feel the government is ‘not doing as much as they should’. There has been a steady drop in the proportion of Ontarians who think the government is ‘doing what is required’.

	Doing more than is necessary									Doing what is required									Not doing as much as they should								
	Jul 18-23	Jul 28-30	Aug 1-6	Aug 8-13	Aug 18-20	Aug 22-27	Aug 29- Sep 3	Sep 5-10	Sep 12-17	Jul 18-23	Jul 28-30	Aug 1-6	Aug 8-13	Aug 18-20	Aug 22-27	Aug 29- Sep 3	Sep 5-10	Sep 12-17	Jul 18-23	Jul 28-30	Aug 1-6	Aug 8-13	Aug 18-20	Aug 22-27	Aug 29- Sep 3	Sep 5-10	Sep 12-17
Right Track	5%	10%	7%	8%	7%	13%	13%	12%	17%	74%	67%	70%	68%	70%	66%	67%	66%	67%	21%	23%	23%	24%	23%	22%	20%	21%	16%
Wrong Track	-	34%	13%	3%	10%	9%	12%	7%	11%	50%	22%	26%	25%	34%	37%	35%	30%	23%	50%	44%	61%	73%	56%	55%	53%	63%	66%

Doing more than is necessary

Doing what is required

Not doing as much as they should



QCV-6. Thinking about the measures that the Government of Ontario has already taken to limit the spread of the virus, including advising the public and businesses about prevention measures, gradually reopening the province, and planning for the return to school in the fall, at this time would you say they are ...
(previous phrasing) Thinking about the measures that the Government of Ontario has already taken to limit the spread of the virus, including issuing a Declaration of Emergency, ordering non-essential businesses to close, advising the public and businesses about prevention measures and closing publicly funded schools, at this time would you say they are ... (READ LIST. RANDOMIZE ACCEPT ONE RESPONSE ONLY.) (previous phrasing) Thinking about the measures that the Government of Ontario has already taken to limit the spread of the virus, including advising the public and businesses about prevention measures and closing publicly funded schools, at this time would you say they are ...

‘Planning for the return to school in the fall’ continues to be the one key area where many Ontarians feel the government is ‘not doing as much as they should’.

	% DOING MORE THAN IS NECESSARY			% DOING WHAT IS REQUIRED			% NOT DOING AS MUCH AS THEY SHOULD*		
	Aug '20	Sep '20	Sep 12-17	Aug '20	Sep '20	Sep 12-17	Aug '20	Sep '20	Sep 12-17
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Advising the public and businesses about the measures they should take to prevent the spread of the virus	15	16	13	70	70	70	13	12	14
Managing the process of gradually re-opening the province	10	11	9	72	70	76	16	17	13
Taking the necessary actions to prevent the spread of the virus	11	13	11	71	68	63	17	17	22
Planning for the return to school in the fall	9	9	12	39	37	35	45	46	43

DECLARING TEACHERS ESSENTIAL WORKERS



There is strong support for teachers being declared essential workers. The intensity of support for this action is high.

	Aug 29-Sep 3	Sep 5-10	Sep 12-17
n=	varies		
	%	%	%
<i>Teachers should be declared essential workers</i>			
TOTAL AGREE	70	71	69
Strongly agree	50	49	43
Somewhat agree	20	22	26
Neither agree nor disagree	6	4	7
Somewhat disagree	10	11	9
Strongly disagree	13	12	12
TOTAL DISAGREE	23	23	21
Not applicable	-	<1	-
Don't know	1	2	3
<i>During the pandemic, there have been a number of occupations which have been declared essential workers, including grocery clerks, pharmacists and truck drivers. Do you agree or disagree that teachers should also be classified essential workers?</i>			
TOTAL AGREE	70	69	75
Strongly agree	52	46	52
Somewhat agree	19	23	23
Somewhat disagree	10	13	8
Strongly disagree	15	14	13
TOTAL DISAGREE	26	27	21
Don't know	4	4	4

QCV-14. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

Base: Total sample, base varies

QCV-123 During the pandemic, there have been a number of occupations which have been declared essential workers, including grocery clerks, pharmacists and truck drivers.

Do you agree or disagree that teachers should also be classified essential workers?

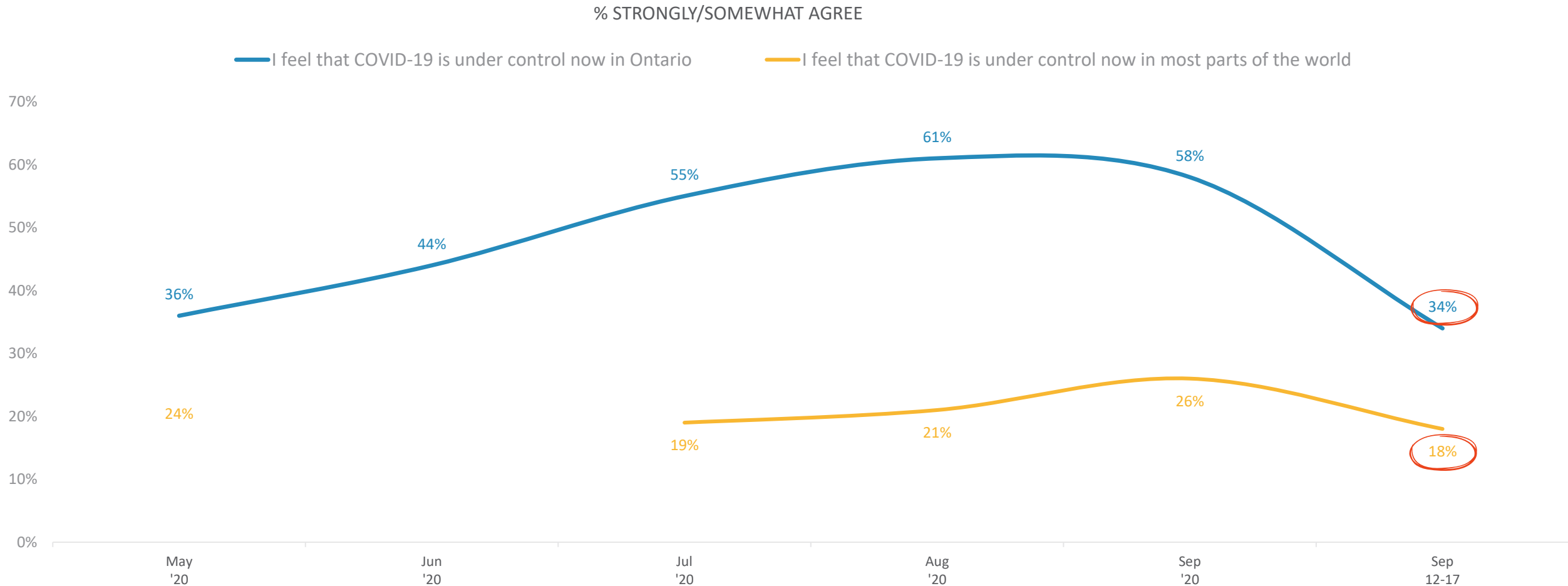
Base: Total sample, base varies

COVID-19 INFECTIONS



PERCEPTIONS ABOUT WHETHER COVID-19 IS UNDER CONTROL

The rising infections in Ontario has caused a significant drop in the proportion of Ontarians who believe that COVID-19 is under control in the province.



QCV-8B. Do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements about the effects of COVID-19. The first is ...
Base: Total sample, bases vary

IS WORST OF THE PANDEMIC OVER IN ONTARIO?

Mirroring the perceptions about whether COVID-19 is under control, over the past two weeks there has been a significant increase in the belief that Ontario is not over the worst of the pandemic.

I believe Ontario is over the worst of the pandemic

	Aug 18-20	Aug 22-27	Aug 29-Sep 3	Sep 5-10	Sep 12-17
n=	varies				
	%	%	%	%	%
TOTAL AGREE	44	40	44	30	29
Strongly agree	14	21	27	14	8
Somewhat agree	30	19	17	15	21
Neither agree nor disagree	5	7	9	3	9
Somewhat disagree	19	21	16	30	29
Strongly disagree	28	30	28	35	30
TOTAL DISAGREE	47	51	43	65	59
Don't know	3	1	3	3	4

There has been a sharp drop over the past five weeks (from 71% to 25%) in the proportion of Ontarians who believe the threat of contracting COVID-19 is much less now.

- There has also been a significant decline in the proportion of Ontarians who see people everyday not following social distancing guidelines.

% STRONGLY/SOMEWHAT AGREE	June 10-14	June 11-15	June 13-16	June 14-17	June 15-18	June 16-20	June 17-21	June 18-22	June 20-23	June 21-24	June 22-25	June 23-27	June 24-28	June 25-29	June 27-30	June 28-July 2	Jul 4-9	Jul 11-16	Jul 18-23	Jul 24-30	Aug 1-6	Aug 8-13	Aug 18-20	Aug 22-27	Aug 29-Sep 3	Sep 5-10	Sep 12-17
n=	varies																										
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
I think the threat of contracting COVID-19 is much less now than it was a month ago	54	54	57	60	61	65	63	62	59	60	60	61	63	59	60	58	64	64	67	56	60	71	58	57	52	43	25
I am doing my best to get <u>back</u> to living a normal pre-COVID-19 life	70	71	72	70	69	67	69	72	74	71	70	70	69	71	73	72	76	70	78	72	78	79	75	76	82	72	75
I see people everyday not following the social distancing guidelines	72	75	75	76	78	79	81	81	83	82	79	78	77	78	77	77	84	76	77	71	67	73	68	72	70	66	68

MASK WEARING PERCEPTIONS



FREQUENCY OF FACE MASK WEARING

Perhaps in response to growing concerns about the spread of the virus, there has been an increase in face mask wearing: about 87%, a high point since June, say they wear a mask ‘all of the time’ or ‘most of the time’.

- Now, about 61% (another high point) claim they are wearing a face mask ‘all of the time’ when away from home.

	June 18-22	June 20-23	June 21-24	June 22-25	June 23-27	June 24-28	June 25-29	June 27-30	June 28- July 2	Jul 4-9	Jul 11-16	Jul 18-23	Jul 28-30	Aug 1-6	Aug 8-13	Aug 18-20	Aug 22-27	Aug 29- Sep 3	Sep 5-10	Sep 12-17
n=	313	400	400	410	410	410	410	410	410	300	300	300	300	260	310	300	310	310	300	300
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
TOTAL ALL/MOST OF THE TIME	52	52	52	52	54	55	58	58	60	60	72	76	77	73	81	80	84	81	87	87
All of the time	26	27	27	23	25	25	25	29	29	22	45	42	47	48	56	49	55	54	61	61
Most of the time	26	25	26	29	29	31	33	29	32	38	27	34	29	24	25	30	29	28	26	26
Some of the time	26	26	28	28	26	25	24	26	24	20	20	17	15	17	13	14	11	12	12	9
Rarely	19	18	15	17	17	16	15	12	13	18	5	7	7	9	5	4	4	5	1	3
Never	4	3	4	3	3	4	3	3	3	3	2	1	1	1	1	2	1	1	<1	1
RARELY/NEVER	23	21	20	20	20	20	18	15	16	21	7	8	8	10	6	6	5	6	1	4

QD1B. As a result of COVID-19 and thinking about your daily activities when you are away from home, how often do you wear a face mask or covering?
Base: Total sample

Most Ontarians disagree with the idea of relaxing the COVID-19 mitigation methods. The strength of disagreement (‘strongly’ disagree) is strong, too.

I feel it is now safe to relax most of the COVID 19 control measures, such as mask wearing and social distancing

	Aug 18-20	Aug 22-27	Sep 12-17
n=	varies		
	%	%	%
TOTAL AGREE	27	19	19
Strongly agree	11	8	9
Somewhat agree	16	11	9
Neither agree nor disagree	2	1	4
Somewhat disagree	13	14	13
Strongly disagree	57	65	64
TOTAL DISAGREE	70	80	76
Don't know	<1	-	1

Many Ontarians (65%) are not tired of the COVID-19 mitigation measures, with 44% ‘strongly’ disagreeing with the idea that they are tiring of these measures.

I am getting very tired of all the COVID-19 control measures, such as mask wearing and social distancing

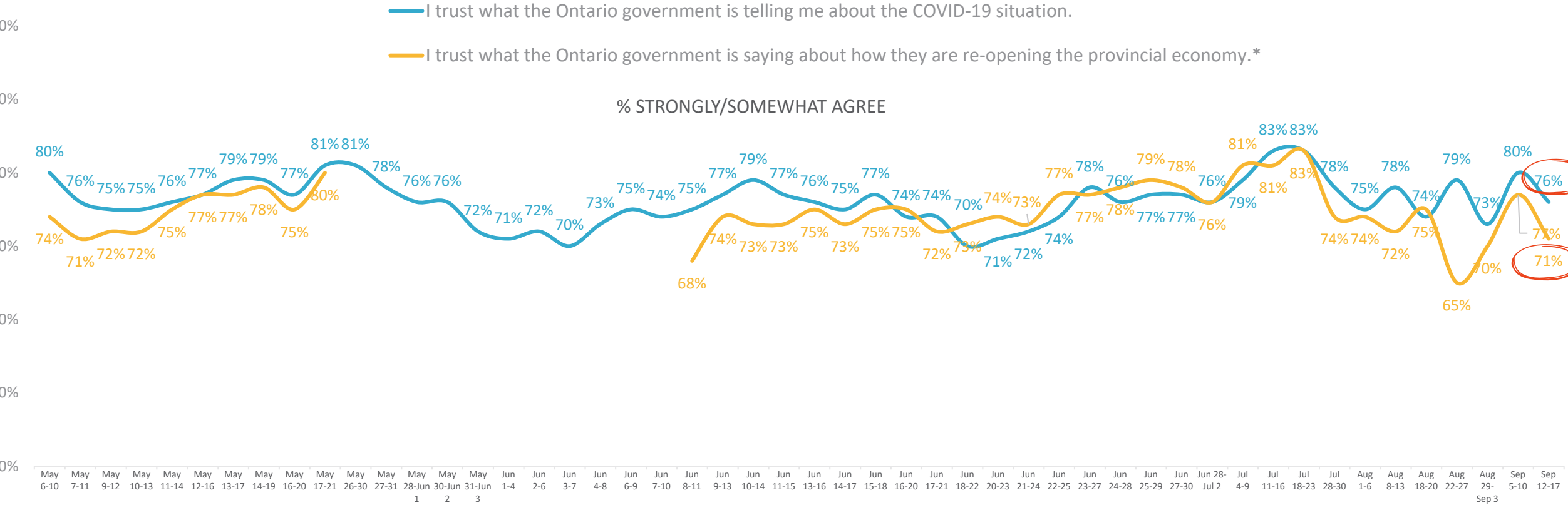
	Aug 18-20	Aug 22-27	Sep 12-17
n=	varies		
	%	%	%
TOTAL AGREE	37	26	30
Strongly agree	21	16	15
Somewhat agree	16	10	15
Neither agree nor disagree	4	3	5
Somewhat disagree	15	21	21
Strongly disagree	44	49	44
TOTAL DISAGREE	59	70	65
Don't know	-	1	-

CONFIDENCE IN GOVERNMENT COVID-19 MESSAGING



TRUST IN THE GOVERNMENT’S COMMUNICATIONS ABOUT COVID-19

As the COVID-19 landscape has changed quickly, Ontarians’ trust in the government’s messaging about the general ‘COVID-19 situation’ and the ‘re-opening of the provincial economy’ has become bouncy. However, trust remains high.



QCV-8B. Do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements about the effects of COVID-19. The first is ...
Base: Total sample, base varies * Previous phrasing: I trust what the Ontario government is saying about how they plan to re-open the provincial economy

ONTARIO ECONOMY



Most Ontarians consistently agree that it was necessary to double the provincial deficit to fight COVID-19. Again, the strength of the agreement (‘very’ necessary) is strong.

	Aug 18-20	Aug 22-27	Aug 29-Sep 3	Sep 5-10	Sep 12-17
n=	varies				
	%	%	%	%	%
TOTAL NECESSARY	85	89	83	91	83
Very necessary	56	47	52	53	50
Somewhat necessary	29	42	31	38	33
Not too necessary	6	2	8	5	5
Not at all necessary	5	5	4	1	6
TOTAL NOT NECESSARY	11	7	12	6	11
Not sure/Don't know	4	4	5	3	6

Ontarians remain divided on the current state of the economy. However, there may be some creeping pessimism: there has been an increase in the view that ‘the economy continues to get worse’, while there is a decline in the view that ‘the economy is starting to recover’.

	Aug 18-20	Aug 22-27	Aug 29-Sep 3	Sep 5-10	Sep 12-17
n=	varies				
	%	%	%	%	%
The economy continues to get worse	10	12	15	12	18
The economy is not worsening, but is also not recovering	43	42	38	36	42
The economy is starting to recover	44	41	43	49	34
Don't know/not sure	3	5	4	3	5

QCV-117. Thinking about the state of the provincial economy, which of the following best reflects your own experience?

Base: Total sample

This week, about 1-in-2 are confident about the economic recovery over the next year. However, those saying ‘very’ confident has declined from 16% to 7%.

	Aug 18-20	Aug 22-27	Aug 29-Sep 3	Sep 5-10	Sep 12-17
n=	varies				
	%	%	%	%	%
TOTAL CONFIDENT	49	60	46	55	49
Very confident	16	15	10	13	7
Somewhat confident	33	45	36	42	42
Not too confident	34	20	29	24	33
Not at all confident	16	19	24	19	17
TOTAL NOT CONFIDENT	50	39	53	43	50
Not sure/Don't know	1	1	1	2	1

QCV-118. How confident or not are you that the economy will recover fully by some time next year?

Base: Total sample

Ontarians are very cautious about the expected length of an economic recovery: about 63% expect it will take at least 24 months for the economy to recover.

	Aug 18-20	Aug 22-27	Aug 29-Sep 3	Sep 5-10	Sep 12-17
n=	varies				
	%	%	%	%	%
6 months or less	5	2	1	3	2
9 months	2	4	5	5	2
12 months	18	12	11	13	15
18 months	9	13	12	12	11
24 months	25	26	25	25	28
36 months or more	30	31	38	33	35
The economy will never fully recover	8	8	5	2	4
Don't know/not sure	3	5	3	6	3

QCV-119. Overall how long from now do you think it will take for the economy to fully recover?

Base: Total sample

When asked about specific initiatives, Ontarians seem to prefer a range of infrastructure projects followed closely by tax relief to Ontario manufacturers, lower personal and business taxes, and financial assistance to Ontario companies to undertake R&D.

% VERY/SOMEWHAT EFFECITVE	Aug 29-Sep 3	Sep 5-10	Sep 12-17
n=	310	300	227
	%	%	%
A series of infrastructure projects such as highways, bridges, community centres, parks, hospitals across the province	-	-	79
Providing financial assistance to Ontario companies to undertake R&D	70	75	77
Giving tax relief to Ontario manufacturers	74	72	75
Lowering personal taxes for Ontario taxpayers	74	70	71
Lowering taxes for Ontario businesses	72	74	71
Expanding public transit infrastructure systems	58	61	65
Initiating a buy-Ontario advertising campaign	54	61	51

SUPPORT FOR
OPENING UP THE
CANADIAN BORDER
TO NON-ESSENTIAL US VISITORS



Ontarians continue to overwhelmingly oppose the opening up of the Canadian border to non-essential US visitors. The strength of the opposition remains striking: 70% are ‘strongly’ opposed to this idea.

	June 25-29	June 27-30	June 28- July 2	Jul 4-9	Sep 12-17
n=	294	410	410	300	300
	%	%	%	%	%
TOTAL SUPPORT	16	17	14	13	14
Strongly support	5	7	7	6	9
Somewhat support	10	10	7	7	5
Neither support nor oppose	3	3	3	5	5
Somewhat oppose	13	13	13	11	11
Strongly oppose	66	66	69	71	70
TOTAL OPPOSE	79	78	82	81	81
Don't know/not sure	2	2	1	1	<1

QCV-100B2. To what extent do you support or oppose the opening up of the Canadian border to non-essential US visitors?

Base: Total sample

ELECTRICITY REBATES



Preliminary results show that Ontarians support the 32% rebate on their electricity bills and that the \$4.8b rebate comes directly from taxpayers’ dollars.

	Sep 12-17
n=	300
	%
TOTAL SUPPORTIVE	67
Strongly supportive	38
Somewhat supportive	30
Somewhat opposed	13
Strongly opposed	9
TOTAL OPPOSED	22
Don’t know	10

QER1. As you many know, all households in Ontario receive a 32% rebate on their electricity bills and this rebate is coming directly from taxpayers’ dollars. This rebate is costing about \$4.8 billion a year to provide every family, small business and farm with a 32% rebate on their electricity bill. How supportive or opposed are you to this program continuing?

Early results indicate that Ontarians support the 32% rebate being reduced slightly if the funds were allocated to health and education.

	Sep 12-17
n=	300
	%
TOTAL SUPPORT	64
Strongly support	29
Somewhat support	35
Somewhat oppose	12
Strongly oppose	17
TOTAL OPPOSE	29
Don't know/unsure	7

QER2. If the 32% rebate were reduced slightly and households saw a slight increase in their monthly electricity bills, how would you feel about paying higher electricity rates, if the money saved was spent on health care and education services?
Base: Total sample

COVID-19 ENFORCEMENT



HOW SHOULD ONTARIO DEAL WITH THOSE VIOLATING PUBLIC HEALTH REGULATIONS?

Consistent with the actions of the government this week, preliminary results indicate a plurality of Ontarians support imposing fines on those hosting social events that violate public health regulations followed by public education and increased enforcement.

	Sep 12-17
n=	Varies
	%
Increase fines on those hosting these social events	37
Increase public awareness about the number of people allowed to attend social... for such infractions	20
Increase enforcement of public health guidelines prohibiting events with over 100 people	17
Move parts of the province back to Stage 2 and close down some businesses again	14
Take no action at present	10
Don't know/not sure	2

QCV124. As you may know, current health regulations limit the number of people attending social events such as weddings to 100 people. However, across Ontario, there have been a series of such events where an excess of 100 people have attended. Public health authorities have expressed concern that these events may help the spread of the COVID-19 virus. Which one of the following actions, if any, do you believe the government should take regarding these events?

Base: Total sample

Early results suggest that most Ontarians think that the recent increase in infections is expected as a result of the loosening of restrictions and that this is acceptable and not a sign of losing control.

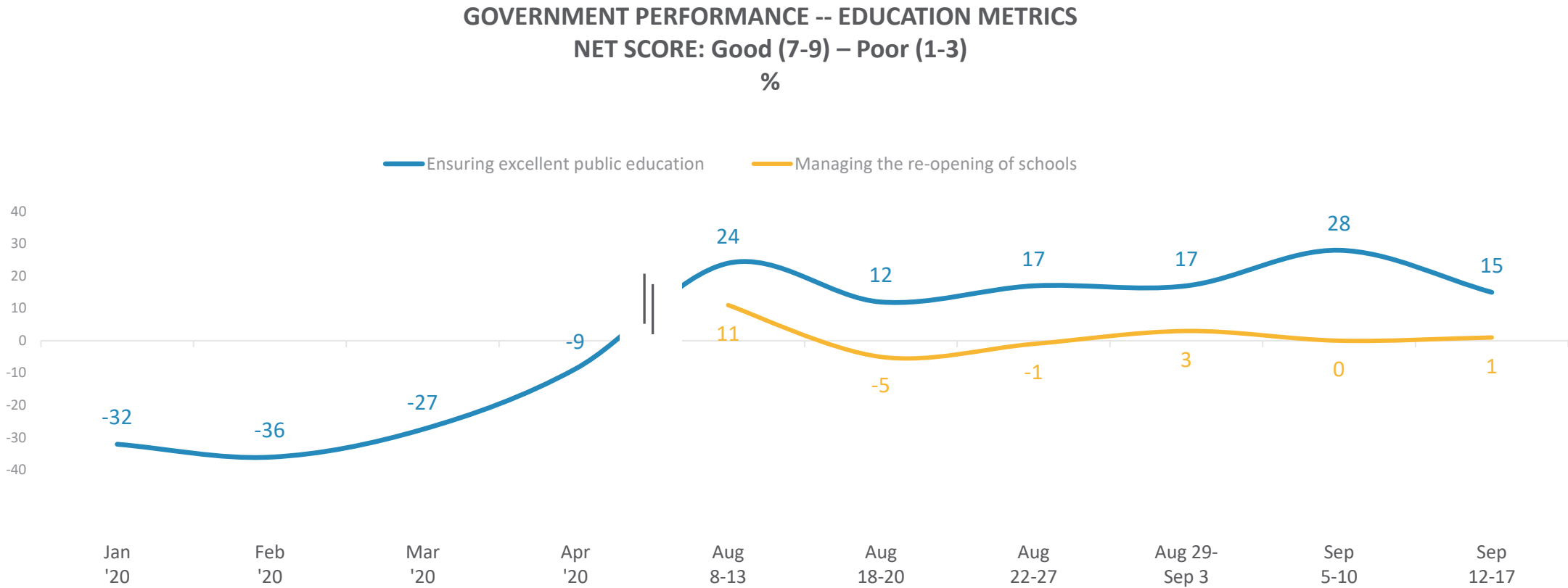
	Sep 12-17
n=	Varies
	%
Some people say they are worried about this and it is a sign that Ontario is losing control of the situation and more increases can be expected.	34
Other people say that some increase is to be expected as a result of the loosening of restriction and that this is acceptable and not a sign of losing control	61
Don't know	5

QCV125. As you may know, there has been a slight uptick in the number of reported COVID-19 cases in Ontario in the last few days. Thinking of these two points of view, which one closest to your own?

Base: Total sample

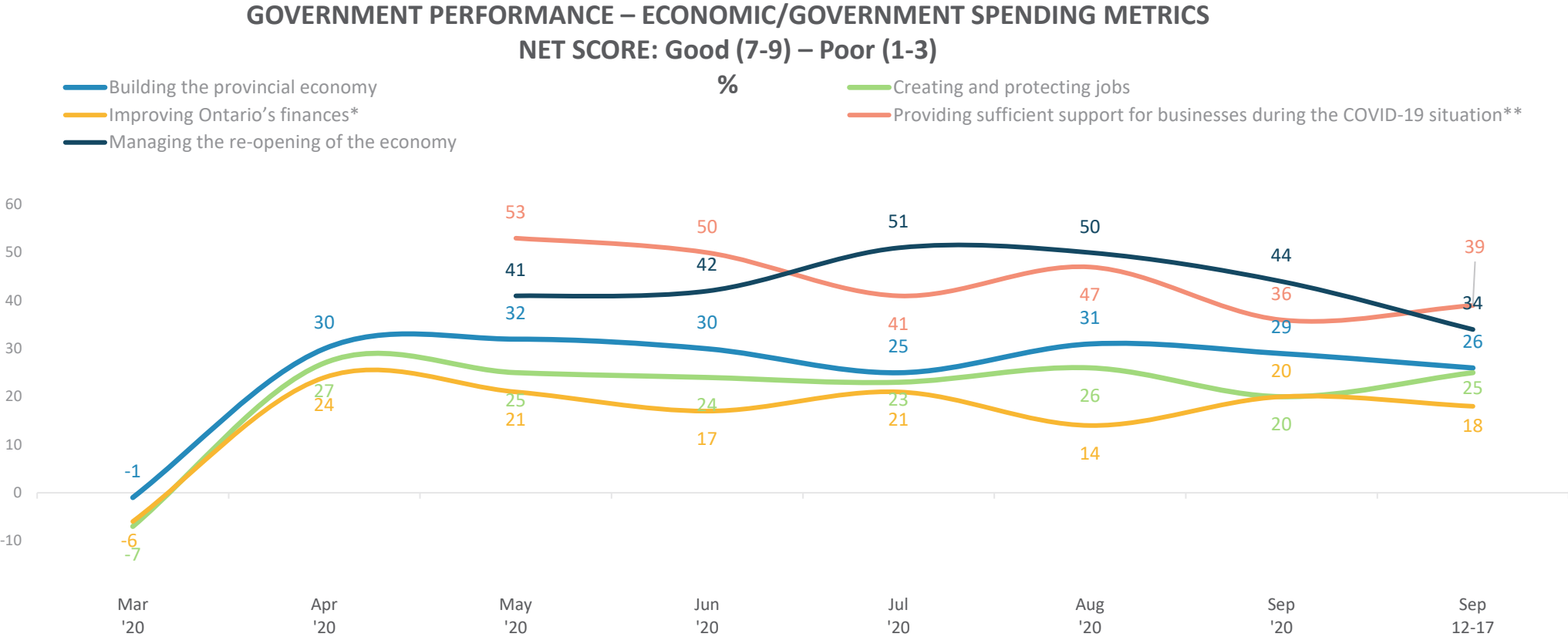
APPENDIX

Perceptions toward the government’s performance on ‘ensuring excellent public education’ has slipped t, while views on ‘managing the re-opening of schools’ remains stable.



Q5. Using a scale where, where 1 means “poor” and nine is “excellent”, how would you rate the performance of Ontario government at managing each of the following? Bases vary

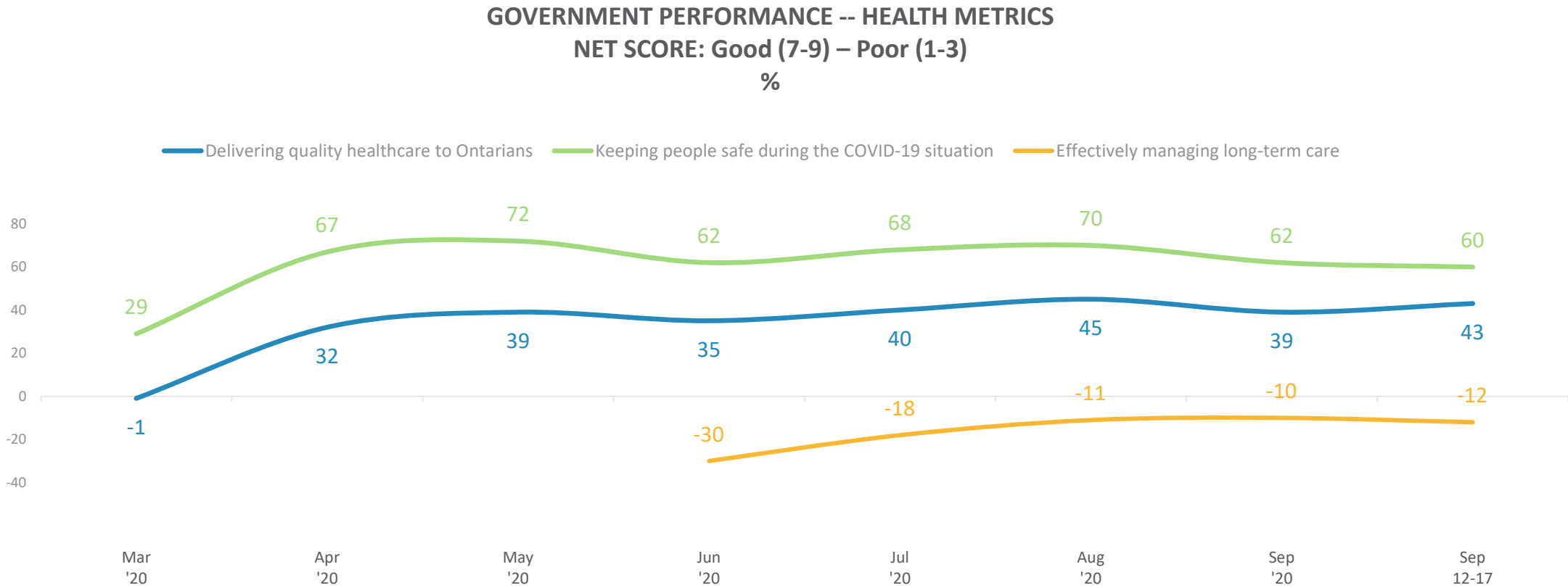
Perceptions toward the government’s performance on ‘managing the re-opening of the economy’ is dipping, while public views on ‘sufficient support for businesses during the COVID-19 situation’ and ‘creating/protecting jobs’ have improved.



Q5. Using a scale where, where 1 means “poor” and nine is “excellent”, how would you rate the performance of Ontario government at managing each of the following?
*Former phrasing: “Improve Ontario’s finances”
**Former phrasing: “Sufficient business support during the COVID-19 situation”

Bases vary

Perceptions toward the government’s performance on ‘keeping people safe during the COVID-19 situation’ and on ‘delivering quality healthcare’ are stable, while there has been trending upwards on ‘managing long-term care’.



Q5. Using a scale where, where 1 means “poor” and nine is “excellent”, how would you rate the performance of Ontario government at managing each of the following? Bases vary