

December 2019

# UCP HONEYMOON COMES TO AN END IN ALBERTA

**MEDIA RELEASE: DECEMBER 16, 2019**

**EXCERPTS FROM EYE ON ALBERTA  
ALBERTA'S PUBLIC AFFAIRS MONITOR**

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# UCP HONEYMOON COMES TO AN END IN ALBERTA

-DRIVEN BY HEIGHTENED CONCERNS ABOUT JOBS, THE ECONOMY AND BELT-TIGHTENING



After a contentious fall session of the legislature, Albertans' honeymoon with the governing United Conservative Party is over. Our latest poll shows a considerable slide in public approval for the UCP government over the past two months, propelled by growing concerns about jobs, the economy, and for many voters, unexpected consequences related to budget-tightening by the new Kenney government.

## Provincial Government Approval

Today a majority of Albertans (53%) say they disapprove of the UCP government's performance, compared to just over four-in-ten (44%) who like what they are seeing from the new government. Opposition is considerably more intense than support, with 38% offering strong disapproval vs. only 16% strong approval.

Continued...

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## Provincial Government Approval, continued...

- Approval for the Kenney government has dropped by 12 percentage points since mid-October, with a comparable increase in disapproval. Strictly looking at performance ratings from voters, the new UCP government today is almost identical to the NDP government just prior to the spring election
- Disapproval for the provincial government is particularly high in Edmonton, and although enthusiasm has cooled somewhat in the past few weeks, the UCP remains more popular outside of the two metropolitan centres – particularly in northern and central Alberta
- There is a “gender-gap” in approval for the provincial government, with men offering more favourable ratings than women. As well, approval tends to increase with age
- Fully one-fifth (21%) of those who voted for the UCP during the spring election now say they disapprove of the party’s performance as government

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## Drivers of Dissent

The significant decline in support for the UCP government is attributable to shifting impressions on key issues. Concerns about jobs in particular have spiked over the last two months (up 14 percentage points since October), while approval ratings of government performance on this issue have slipped by 13 percentage points during the same period.

More worrisome for the Kenney government, public concerns for issues like quality of health care and education are also on the rise, with similar trends in declining approval for these issues – likely a reaction to budgetary belt-tightening in the October budget.

- For example, on health care where the government is now at odds with doctors, nurses and other public sector employees due to proposed spending reductions, public concern is up by 7 percentage points since October. Meanwhile, only 39% of Albertans say they approve of the government when it comes to managing health care, a drop of 8 percentage points

## COMMENTARY



### **Commenting on the survey, ThinkHQ President Marc Henry notes:**

“This is a significant drop in support, and likely foreshadows a bumpy start in 2020 for the UCP government. Their honeymoon has been fairly short-lived, and this is driven by not meeting voters’ expectations, on economic and non-economic issues.

Following the provincial election, there was actually a spike in economic optimism among Albertans. The expectation among many voters was that a new government would usher in a speedy economic recovery. That hasn’t happened yet. In fact, looking at employment for instance, the most recent data is bleak. Stats Can’s Labour Force Study show Alberta shed 18,000 jobs in November – one quarter of every lost job in Canada was in Alberta – and unemployment is sitting at 7.2%. Fair or not, governments tend to get more blame for the economy when times are tough than they do credit when times are good.

Continued... 

## COMMENTARY, CONTINUED...



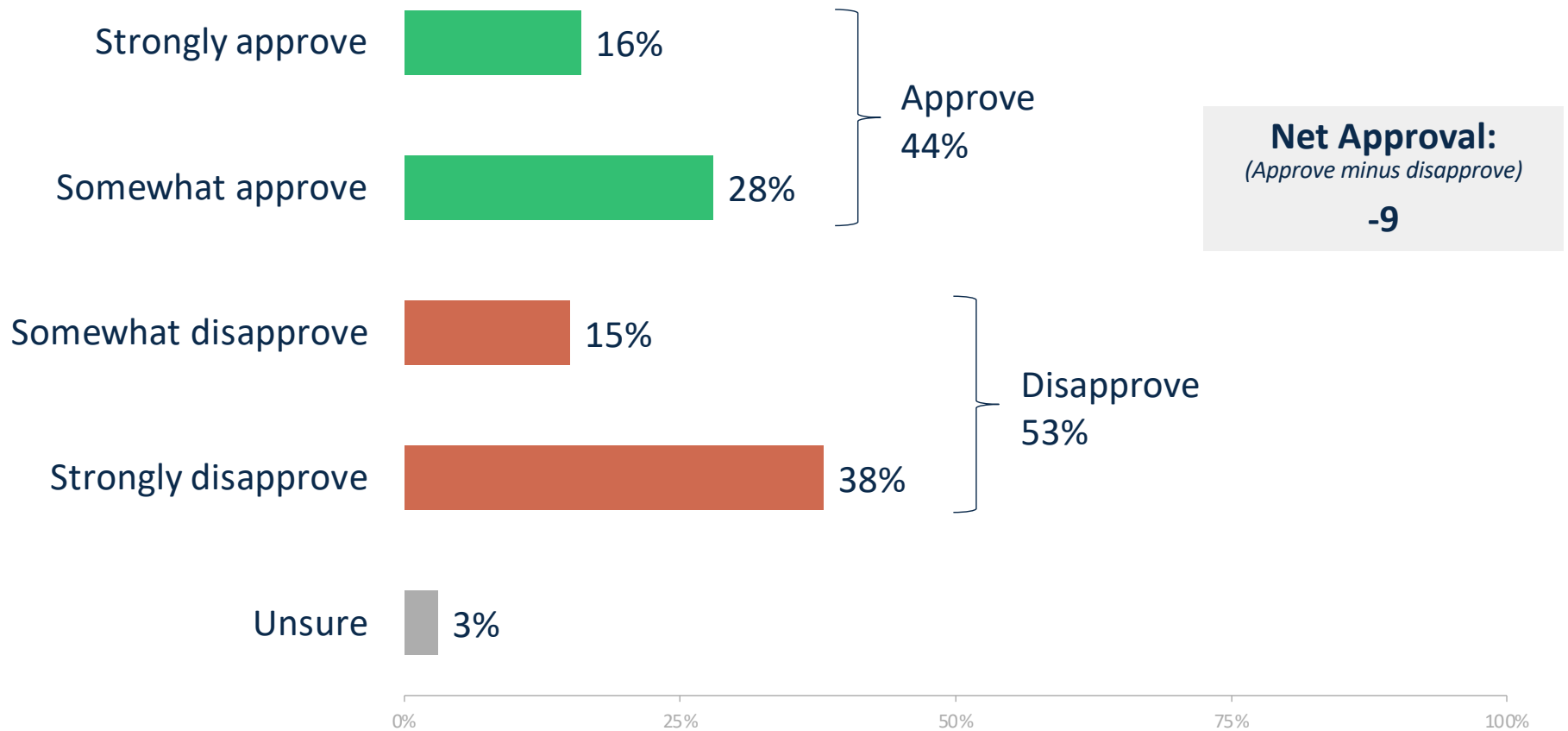
But there is something else emerging in these numbers, more to do with non-economic issues and the approach that the UCP are taking to their budget-making. We're seeing an increase in concerns about issues like health care as budget tightening is signalled, and stakeholders in the system talk about the implications for services. For many voters, particularly a substantial segment of UCP voters, this is out of step with what they heard during the campaign. For these voters, they believed that budgets would be balanced with little or no pain inflicted on services like health care and education and are now perhaps feeling a bit of buyer's remorse.

Of note is the finding that 21% of those who voted for the UCP only a few months ago now disapprove of the government's performance – this is a dangerous number for any government. If this persists and these voter's feel as though they were misled, it impacts trust and makes them awfully difficult to win back.”

# PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENT PERFORMANCE



*“The United Conservative Party was elected as Alberta’s new provincial government on April 16th, 2019.  
Generally speaking, would you say that you personally approve or disapprove of their performance as government since then?”*



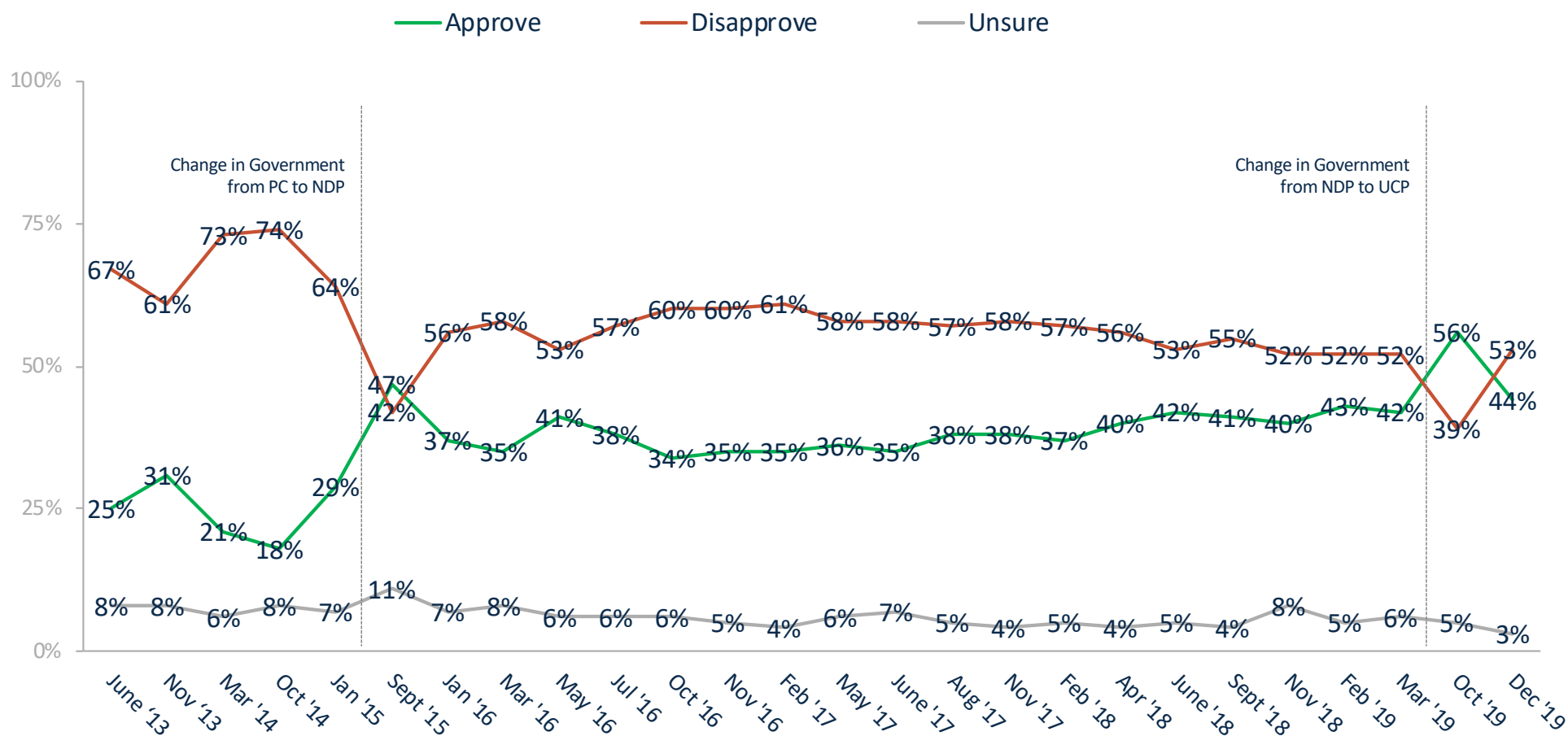
Base: All respondents (n=1,206)

# PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENT PERFORMANCE

## -TRACKING



*“The United Conservative Party was elected as Alberta’s new provincial government on April 16th, 2019. Generally speaking, would you say that you personally approve or disapprove of their performance as government since then?”*



Base: All respondents



# PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENT PERFORMANCE

## -BY KEY DEMOGRAPHICS



*"The United Conservative Party was elected as Alberta's new provincial government on April 16th, 2019. Generally speaking, would you say that you personally approve or disapprove of their performance as government since then?"*

	Total	Age (Years)			Last Provincial Vote		
	Alberta (n=1,206)	<35 (n=369)	35-54 (n=426)	55+ (n=411)	UCP (n=570)	NDP (n=353)	AB Party (n=97)*
Approve	44%	35%	40%	56%	77%	4%	27%
Disapprove	53%	62%	56%	42%	21%	95%	73%
Unsure	3%	3%	4%	2%	3%	1%	--

	Total	Gender		Region				
	Alberta (n=1,206)	Male (n=600)	Female (n=605)	Calgary CMA (n=421)	Edmonton CMA (n=381)	North (n=146)	Central (n=134)	South (n=124)
Approve	44%	51%	37%	44%	28%	62%	62%	50%
Disapprove	53%	47%	59%	53%	68%	36%	35%	47%
Unsure	3%	2%	4%	3%	3%	3%	3%	4%

□ Significantly higher    ○ Significantly lower

Base: All respondents | \*Caution: Small sample size

# SHIFTING VIEWS ON KEY PROVINCIAL ISSUES

-CONCERNS INCREASING, APPROVAL DECLINING



ISSUE	ISSUE PRIORITY % Saying 'Very Concerned' about each issue			RATED GOA PERFORMANCE % saying 'Approve' of GOA performance on each issue		
	OCT '19	DEC '19	CHANGE (% pts.)	OCT '19	DEC '19	CHANGE (% pts.)
Managing the provincial economy	60%	66%	↑6	55%	46%	↓9
Encouraging job creation	44%	58%	↑14	56%	43%	↓13
Ensuring quality of healthcare	46%	53%	↑7	47%	39%	↓8
Ensuring quality of education	34%	40%	↑6	47%	42%	↓5
Being a government you can trust	60%	67%	↑7	49%	39%	↓10

Base: All respondents

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY



- Study fielded via online research panel
  - Field dates: December 3 – 6, 2019
  - Panel source: ThinkHQ Connect & MARU
- n=1,206
- Weighted to reflect gender, age and region of Alberta population according to Stats Canada
- A random stratified sample of panelists was invited to complete the survey from several on-line research panel sources. The margin of error for a comparable probability-based random sample of this size is +/- 2.8 percentage points, 19 times out of 20
- Accuracy of sub-samples of the data decline based on sample sizes

# REGIONAL SAMPLE SIZES AND MARGINS OF ERROR



	<b>Total Interviews</b> (Unweighted) (n)	<b>Total Interviews</b> (Weighted) (n)	<b>Margin of Error</b> (Associated with a probability sample of this size)
<b>ALBERTA TOTAL</b>	1,206	1,206	+/- 2.8
<b>Calgary</b>	461	421	+/- 4.6
<b>Edmonton</b>	360	381	+/- 5.2
<b>North</b>	84	146	+/- 10.7
<b>Central</b>	134	134	+/- 8.5
<b>South</b>	167	124	+/- 7.6



## **WANT TO HAVE YOUR SAY ABOUT TOPICS & ISSUES THAT AFFECT ALBERTANS?**

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**JOIN AND HAVE YOUR SAY:**

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