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# THE STATE OF THE NATION: A 50-STATE COVID-19 SURVEY

## REPORT #22: EXECUTIVE APPROVAL UPDATE

USA, October 2020

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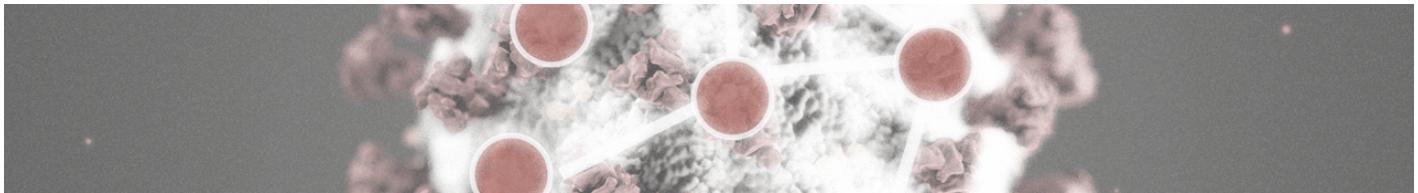
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## Report of November 2, 2020, v.2

**From:** The COVID-19 Consortium for Understanding the Public's Policy Preferences Across States

*A joint project of:*

Northeastern University, Harvard University, Rutgers University, and Northwestern University

**Authors:** David Lazer (Northeastern University); Alexi Quintana (Northeastern University); Ata A. Uslu (Northeastern University); Jon Green (Northeastern University); Katherine Ognyanova (Rutgers University); Matthew A. Baum (Harvard University); Hanyu Chwe (Northeastern University); Matthew Simonson (Northeastern University); Adina Gitomer (Northeastern University); James Druckman (Northwestern University); Mauricio Santillana (Harvard Medical School); Jennifer Lin (Northwestern University), and Roy H. Perlis (Harvard Medical School)

This report is based on work supported by the National Science Foundation under grants SES-2029292 and SES-2029297. Any opinions, findings, and conclusions or recommendations expressed here are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of the National Science Foundation.

This research will also be supported in part by a generous grant from the Knight Foundation.



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## **COVER MEMO**

### **Summary Memo — November 2, 2020**

*The COVID-19 Consortium for Understanding the Public's Policy Preferences Across States*

**Partners:** Northeastern University, Harvard University, Rutgers University, and Northwestern University

**Authors:** David Lazer (Northeastern University); Alexi Quintana (Northeastern University); Ata A. Uslu (Northeastern University); Jon Green (Northeastern University); Katherine Ognyanova (Rutgers University); Matthew A. Baum (Harvard University); Hanyu Chwe (Northeastern University); Matthew Simonson (Northeastern University); Adina Gitomer (Northeastern University); James Druckman (Northwestern University); Mauricio Santillana (Harvard Medical School); Jennifer Lin (Northwestern University), and Roy H. Perlis (Harvard Medical School)

From April through October, we conducted eight waves of a large, 50-state survey, some results of which are presented here. You can find previous reports online at [covidstates.org](https://covidstates.org).

#### **Note on methods:**

Over eight survey waves, we polled 119,755 individuals across all 50 states plus the District of Columbia. The data was collected between April and October 2020 by PureSpectrum via an online, nonprobability sample, with state-level representative quotas for race/ethnicity, age, and gender. In addition to balancing on these dimensions, we reweighted our data using demographic characteristics to match the U.S. population with respect to race/ethnicity, age, gender, education, and living in urban, suburban, or rural areas. The data collection period for each included survey wave follows here. Late April Wave: 4/17/20-4/26/20, Early May Wave: 5/2/20-5/15/20, Late May Wave: 5/16/20-5/31/20, Late June Wave: 6/12/20-6/28/20, Late July Wave: 7/10/20-7/26/20, August Wave: 8/7/20-8/26/20, September Wave: 9/4/20-9/27/20, October Wave: 10/2/20-10/25/20.

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Or visit us at [www.covidstates.org](https://www.covidstates.org).

## **Update on executive approval**

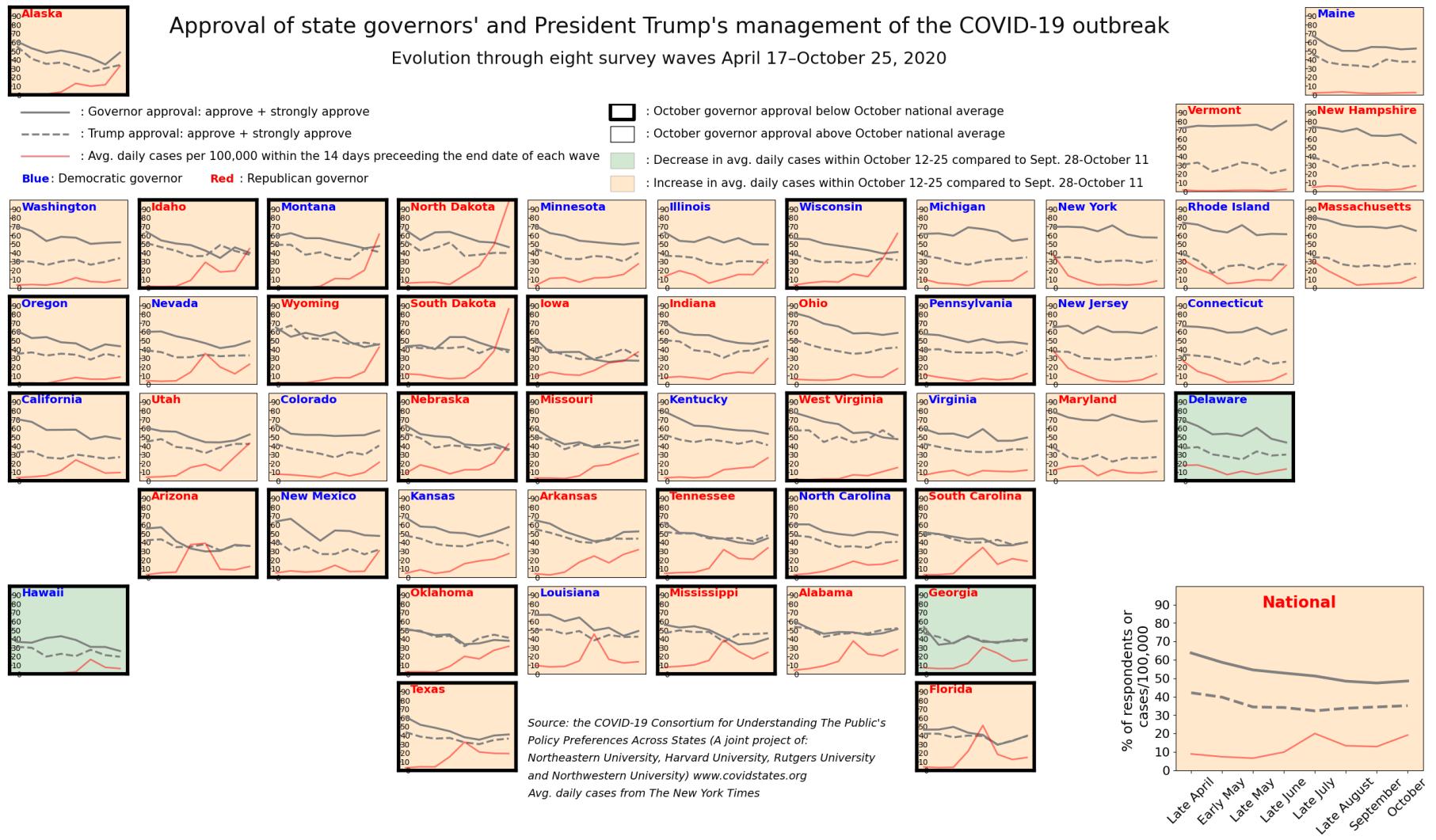
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Despite the headwinds confronting the country in facing COVID-19, approval of most governors' and President Trump's COVID-19 response did not change greatly between September and October in our survey. President Trump's approval has ticked up a point to 35%, which is still problematically low approval for the most salient issue in the 2020 election by far (in 49 out of 50 states, Alaska being the one exception, COVID-19 is ranked as "[the most important problem](#)"). More generally, after suffering a decline in the spring, the President's approval rating has been flatline around his October rating of 35%. (For all approval ratings for the President and all of the governors, see the tables in the appendix.) To compare, governors, as a group, have seen a gradual decline in their approval ratings between late April and September; a 1 point increase from September (47%) to October (48%) marks the first time they have improved, or even held steady since our initial survey wave. Despite this, approval of governors is generally higher than that of the President. In 42 states, the governor has a higher approval level than the President, and in 2 states the levels are the same; in 6 states, the President has a higher approval level, but in no state does the approval of the President exceed that of the governor by more than the margin of error for the survey in that state.<sup>1</sup> Per-state approval of the President roughly tracks partisanship of the state, and the only state where his approval is above 50% is Alabama. In most of the 10 swing states, the President hovers around 35%, from a low of 29% in New Hampshire to a high of 42% in Ohio. Alaska and Iowa stand out as states that he won handily in 2016, but now finds very low approval -- 34% and 32%, respectively. Other states he won in 2016 and now lingers at the national average or below are Michigan and Wisconsin. Pennsylvania --perhaps the most pivotal state in the 2020 election -- runs against the trend somewhat, showing approval ratings below the national level in April, and now several points above (at 38%).

Governors that have robustly low ratings-- 40% or below in September and October-- include those of Arizona, Florida, Georgia, Hawaii, Iowa, Mississippi, Oklahoma, and South Carolina. Out of these states, all but Hawaii have a Republican governor. The governor of Iowa stands out for having an approval level below 30% for four months in a row (only two other governors have had approval levels below 30%-- those of Florida and Hawaii, once each).

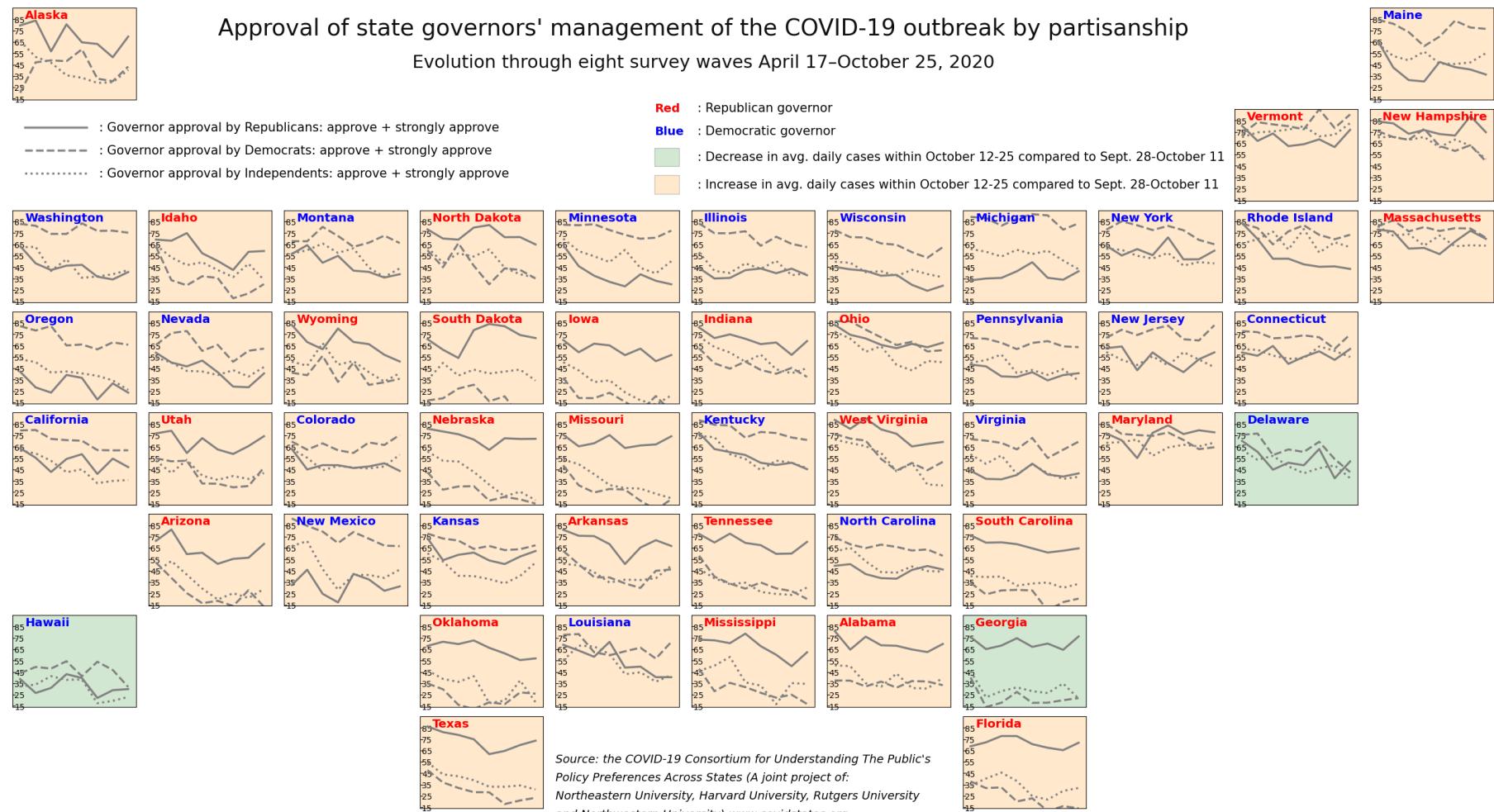
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<sup>1</sup> Note that this is based on point estimates, rounding to the nearest whole number.



**Figure 1: Approval of state governors' and President Trump's management of the COVID-19 outbreak**

[Download high resolution image](#)



**Figure 2: Approval of state governors' management of the COVID-19 outbreak by partisanship**

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Generally, Republicans approve more of Republican governors and Democrats of Democratic governors, where this tendency has been increasing through the waves of the survey. As we have noted [before](#), the exception to this pattern is a group of five Republican governors (of Vermont, New Hampshire, Massachusetts, Ohio, and Maryland) who enjoy high approval ratings from Democrats, and as a result, the highest approval levels of all governors. Three out of five of these governors hold office in New England, reflecting the broader trend in which New Englanders generally approve of their governors. Finally, the only governors to have received approval ratings above 60% every month for the last seven months are those of Vermont, Massachusetts, Maryland, and Rhode Island.

We note that the most recent survey was conducted from October 2nd to 25th. We are in the midst of a large spike of cases in the US, and with enormous geographic variation. The number of daily cases has roughly doubled since we began the survey and has increased by 15% since it concluded. Thus, the question we will address in our next executive approval report is how the current spike in cases will have affected presidential and gubernatorial approval.

Figure 3: Governor approval by party, average across all  
Republican governors

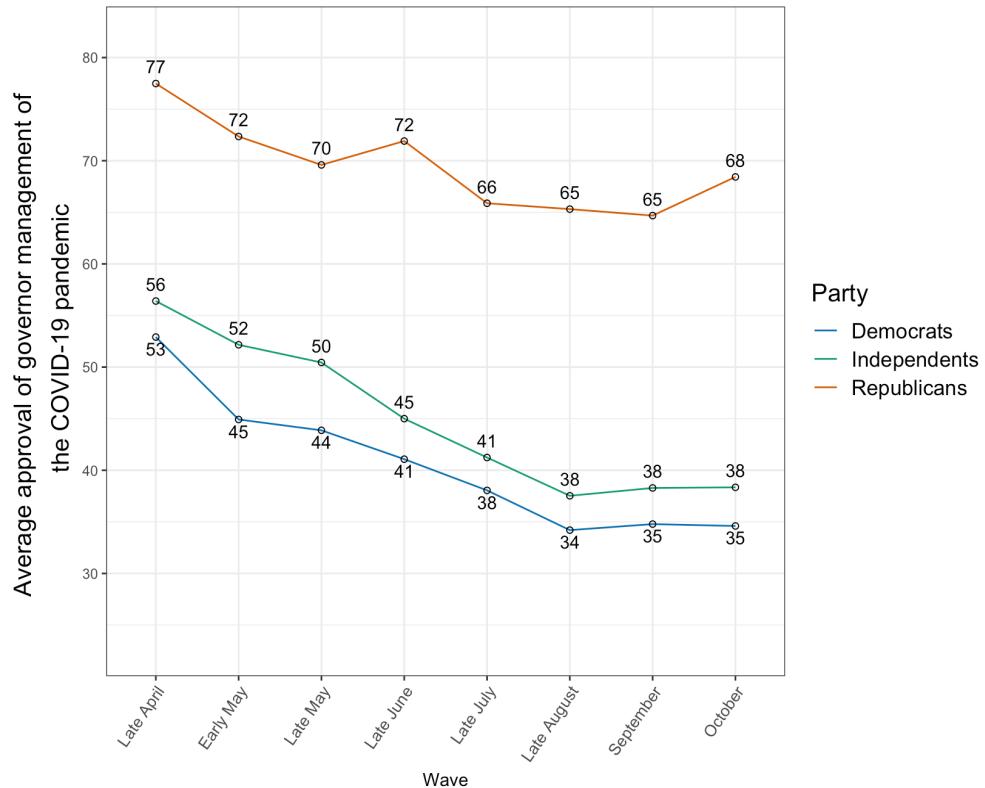


Figure 4: Governor approval by party, average across all Democratic governors

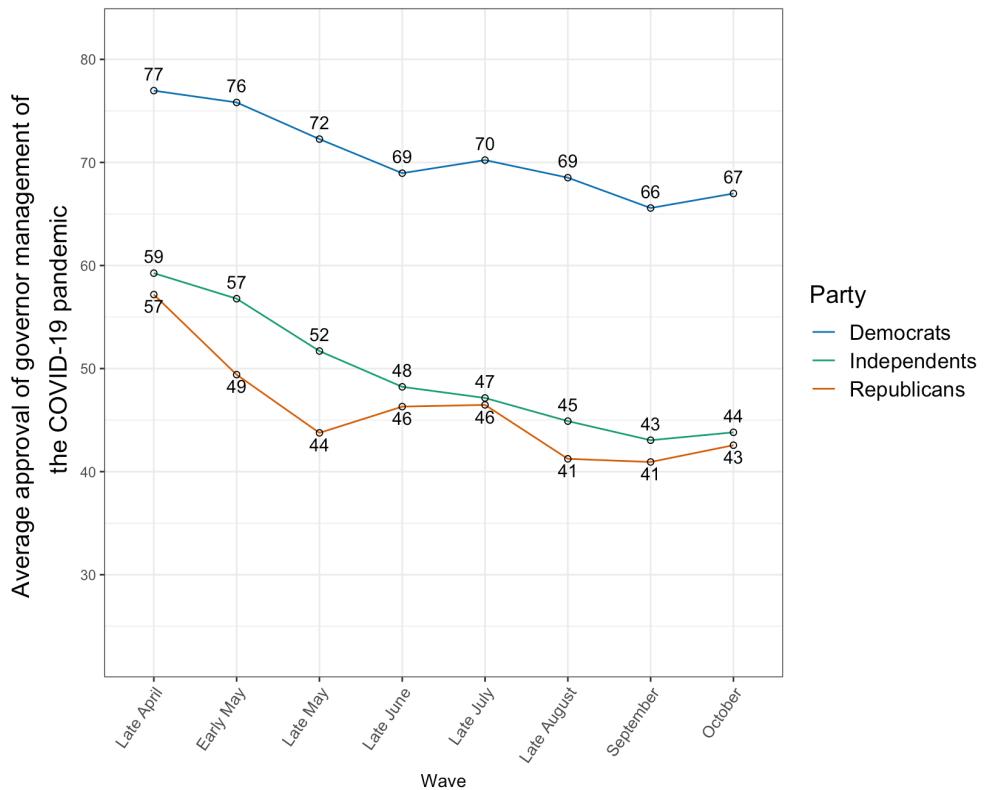


Figure 5: Average governor approval by party across Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Vermont, Maryland and Ohio governors

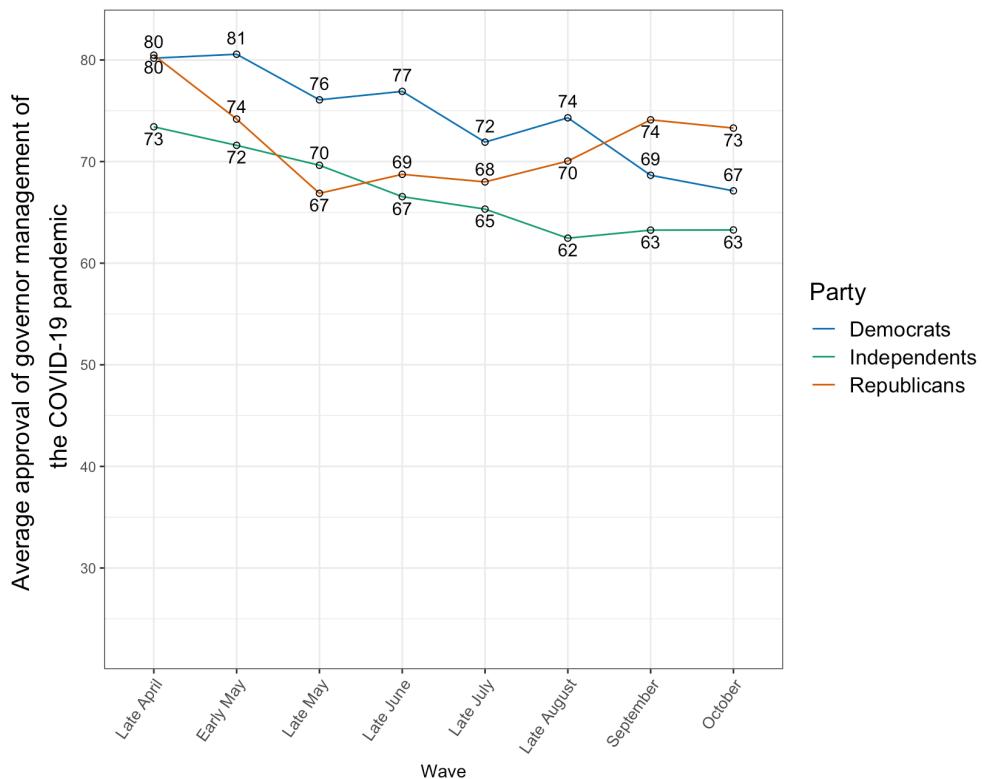
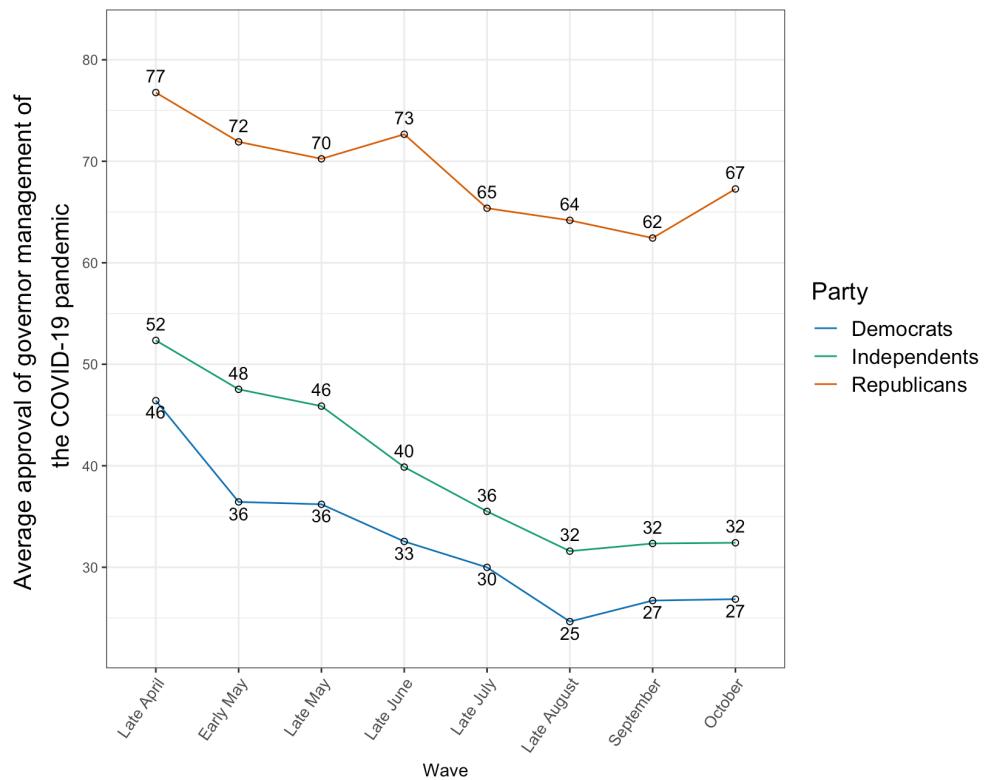


Figure 6: Average governor approval by party across Republican governors except Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Vermont, Maryland and Ohio



## Appendix: State tables

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**Table 1: Do you approve or disapprove of the way your state governor is handling the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak?**

(Approve + Strongly approve, margin of error is in parentheses, italic rows show gubernatorial elections)

State	Late April	Early May	Late May	Late June	Late July	Late August	September	October
<b>National</b>	64 (1)	59 (1)	54 (1)	53 (1)	51 (1)	48 (1)	47 (1)	48 (1)
<b>AK</b>	61 (14)	53 (10)	48 (13)	50 (11)	47 (11)	42 (13)	34 (11)	48 (8)
<b>AL</b>	60 (6)	52 (6)	46 (7)	48 (6)	47 (6)	44 (5)	46 (6)	51 (6)
<b>AR</b>	65 (6)	61 (7)	52 (7)	47 (7)	41 (7)	43 (6)	52 (8)	52 (9)
<b>AZ</b>	56 (6)	57 (7)	41 (5)	33 (5)	30 (7)	30 (5)	37 (6)	36 (6)
<b>CA</b>	70 (5)	67 (4)	58 (4)	58 (4)	58 (6)	47 (4)	51 (4)	48 (4)
<b>CO</b>	64 (5)	54 (6)	52 (6)	52 (6)	51 (7)	52 (5)	52 (7)	57 (7)
<b>CT</b>	66 (6)	66 (6)	64 (8)	59 (6)	59 (6)	65 (6)	57 (6)	62 (7)
<b>DE</b>	69 (7)	62 (4)	53 (5)	54 (6)	51 (8)	60 (8)	48 (8)	44 (8)
<b>FL</b>	46 (5)	46 (5)	50 (6)	43 (4)	40 (6)	29 (4)	34 (4)	40 (4)
<b>GA</b>	53 (5)	33 (9)	35 (8)	43 (5)	36 (6)	36 (5)	38 (5)	39 (5)
<b>HI</b>	36 (8)	36 (6)	41 (7)	43 (6)	39 (7)	31 (8)	31 (8)	26 (6)

<b>IA</b>	52 (6)	36 (6)	37 (6)	37 (6)	28 (6)	26 (7)	27 (7)	27 (6)
<b>ID</b>	64 (6)	54 (5)	50 (5)	49 (6)	42 (6)	34 (8)	46 (7)	40 (8)
<b>IL</b>	63 (5)	54 (6)	52 (6)	58 (5)	52 (6)	57 (5)	50 (5)	49 (5)
<b>IN</b>	71 (5)	59 (6)	56 (8)	56 (6)	50 (7)	47 (5)	46 (6)	50 (6)
<b>KS</b>	68 (6)	58 (5)	57 (7)	51 (7)	50 (6)	46 (6)	51 (7)	57 (8)
<b>KY</b>	79 (4)	71 (6)	63 (7)	62 (6)	59 (6)	58 (5)	57 (7)	54 (6)
<b>LA</b>	67 (6)	67 (4)	60 (5)	64 (7)	50 (7)	52 (6)	43 (8)	49 (7)
<b>MA</b>	80 (4)	77 (5)	72 (6)	70 (5)	70 (6)	68 (5)	71 (5)	65 (6)
<b>MD</b>	78 (5)	72 (6)	69 (6)	69 (5)	76 (5)	71 (5)	67 (6)	68 (5)
<b>ME</b>	67 (6)	57 (5)	50 (5)	50 (6)	54 (7)	54 (7)	52 (7)	53 (6)
<b>MI</b>	62 (5)	62 (6)	59 (6)	69 (5)	67 (6)	64 (5)	53 (6)	56 (5)
<b>MN</b>	71 (5)	62 (5)	59 (6)	54 (5)	52 (6)	50 (5)	49 (8)	51 (7)
<b>MO</b>	60 (5)	49 (7)	42 (9)	44 (5)	38 (6)	39 (5)	37 (6)	41 (5)
<b>MS</b>	56 (7)	53 (7)	54 (11)	50 (7)	42 (7)	34 (7)	35 (8)	40 (7)
<b>MT</b>	59 (8)	62 (5)	57 (5)	56 (7)	53 (7)	49 (8)	45 (8)	47 (6)
<b>NC</b>	60 (5)	60 (9)	52 (9)	49 (5)	48 (6)	52 (5)	51 (6)	48 (5)
<b>ND</b>	66 (11)	54 (8)	63 (10)	64 (9)	58 (9)	53 (9)	52 (9)	46 (8)
<b>NE</b>	63 (7)	53 (5)	51 (6)	50 (6)	41 (6)	40 (7)	42 (9)	36 (6)
<b>NH</b>	74 (6)	71 (5)	68 (5)	72 (5)	64 (6)	63 (8)	65 (7)	55 (7)
<b>NJ</b>	65 (5)	67 (10)	58 (11)	66 (5)	60 (7)	60 (5)	58 (5)	65 (5)

<b>NM</b>	64 (13)	67 (6)	54 (7)	42 (9)	53 (8)	53 (8)	48 (8)	47 (9)
<b>NV</b>	60 (6)	60 (4)	55 (4)	51 (6)	47 (7)	41 (6)	44 (8)	49 (7)
<b>NY</b>	70 (5)	70 (4)	69 (5)	64 (4)	71 (5)	61 (5)	58 (4)	57 (4)
<b>OH</b>	81 (4)	77 (7)	69 (7)	66 (4)	58 (5)	58 (5)	56 (5)	59 (4)
<b>OK</b>	51 (6)	48 (5)	44 (5)	45 (7)	34 (7)	35 (6)	39 (7)	38 (7)
<b>OR</b>	61 (5)	53 (5)	54 (5)	48 (6)	47 (6)	39 (5)	46 (7)	43 (6)
<b>PA</b>	57 (5)	56 (6)	52 (9)	48 (4)	52 (6)	48 (5)	48 (5)	46 (4)
<b>RI</b>	74 (6)	72 (6)	66 (6)	63 (6)	71 (6)	60 (8)	62 (8)	61 (7)
<b>SC</b>	51 (6)	49 (8)	46 (9)	44 (6)	44 (6)	36 (6)	36 (6)	40 (5)
<b>SD</b>	43 (9)	44 (6)	40 (6)	54 (7)	54 (8)	48 (10)	42 (10)	39 (6)
<b>TN</b>	62 (5)	51 (5)	50 (5)	46 (6)	44 (6)	40 (5)	38 (5)	45 (5)
<b>TX</b>	61 (5)	52 (7)	48 (8)	44 (4)	38 (6)	35 (4)	40 (4)	41 (4)
<b>UT</b>	60 (6)	57 (5)	56 (5)	49 (7)	44 (6)	44 (8)	46 (7)	53 (10)
<b>VA</b>	59 (5)	54 (7)	54 (8)	49 (5)	59 (6)	46 (5)	46 (5)	49 (5)
<b>VT</b>	72 (8)	75 (5)	74 (5)	75 (7)	75 (7)	76 (9)	70 (11)	80 (6)
<b>WA</b>	70 (6)	65 (5)	53 (6)	58 (6)	57 (6)	50 (5)	51 (5)	52 (5)
<b>WI</b>	56 (5)	56 (6)	50 (9)	48 (5)	46 (5)	43 (5)	39 (6)	41 (5)
<b>WV</b>	78 (5)	73 (13)	67 (11)	65 (7)	54 (7)	56 (7)	50 (8)	48 (5)
<b>WY</b>	65 (11)	54 (1)	59 (1)	55 (10)	60 (10)	48 (11)	42 (11)	46 (8)

**Table 2: Do you approve or disapprove of the way President Trump is handling the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak?**

(Approve + Strongly approve, margin of error is in parentheses. italic rows show swing states)

<b>State</b>	Late April	Early May	Late May	Late June	Late July	Late August	September	October
<b>National</b>	42 (1)	40 (1)	34 (1)	34 (1)	32 (1)	34 (1)	34 (1)	35 (1)
<b>AK</b>	55 (14)	41 (10)	35 (13)	37 (10)	32 (10)	26 (12)	30 (10)	34 (8)
<b>AL</b>	54 (6)	52 (6)	42 (7)	45 (6)	46 (6)	46 (5)	50 (6)	52 (6)
<b>AR</b>	55 (6)	51 (7)	46 (7)	40 (7)	39 (7)	44 (6)	44 (8)	44 (9)
<b>AZ</b>	42 (6)	43 (7)	34 (5)	35 (5)	38 (7)	31 (5)	36 (6)	36 (6)
<b>CA</b>	32 (5)	34 (4)	27 (4)	25 (4)	30 (5)	28 (4)	25 (3)	27 (4)
<b>CO</b>	42 (6)	37 (6)	34 (6)	31 (5)	27 (6)	33 (5)	30 (6)	40 (7)
<b>CT</b>	34 (6)	32 (6)	31 (8)	26 (5)	22 (5)	30 (5)	23 (5)	26 (6)
<b>DE</b>	37 (7)	38 (6)	30 (7)	28 (6)	24 (7)	34 (8)	29 (7)	30 (7)
<b>FL</b>	42 (5)	42 (4)	38 (5)	40 (4)	39 (5)	29 (4)	34 (4)	39 (4)
<b>GA</b>	46 (5)	42 (5)	35 (6)	42 (5)	38 (6)	35 (5)	39 (5)	37 (5)
<b>HI</b>	31 (7)	30 (8)	20 (6)	23 (5)	20 (6)	27 (8)	21 (7)	20 (5)
<b>IA</b>	43 (6)	39 (6)	34 (7)	29 (6)	29 (6)	34 (7)	40 (8)	32 (6)
<b>ID</b>	51 (7)	46 (6)	42 (6)	36 (6)	36 (6)	49 (8)	42 (7)	38 (8)
<b>IL</b>	36 (5)	36 (5)	34 (4)	28 (4)	26 (5)	30 (4)	30 (4)	28 (4)
<b>IN</b>	50 (6)	49 (6)	39 (6)	37 (6)	30 (6)	38 (5)	39 (6)	44 (6)
<b>KS</b>	48 (6)	44 (6)	38 (8)	36 (6)	35 (6)	39 (6)	42 (7)	36 (7)

<b>KY</b>	52 (5)	47 (6)	44 (7)	47 (6)	45 (6)	42 (5)	46 (7)	41 (6)
<b>LA</b>	50 (6)	50 (7)	45 (7)	49 (7)	38 (7)	44 (6)	42 (8)	42 (7)
<b>MA</b>	35 (5)	34 (5)	27 (5)	24 (5)	26 (5)	24 (4)	27 (5)	28 (5)
<b>MD</b>	38 (6)	27 (5)	24 (5)	30 (5)	22 (5)	26 (4)	26 (5)	27 (5)
<b>ME</b>	46 (6)	37 (6)	34 (6)	33 (6)	31 (6)	40 (7)	38 (7)	38 (6)
<b>MI</b>	36 (5)	34 (5)	29 (5)	26 (5)	30 (6)	32 (5)	33 (6)	35 (5)
<b>MN</b>	44 (5)	39 (6)	33 (6)	33 (5)	36 (6)	35 (5)	30 (7)	40 (6)
<b>MO</b>	50 (5)	47 (5)	36 (5)	42 (5)	39 (6)	43 (5)	44 (6)	46 (6)
<b>MS</b>	46 (7)	50 (7)	48 (9)	48 (7)	37 (7)	45 (7)	45 (8)	46 (7)
<b>MT</b>	49 (8)	49 (8)	38 (11)	40 (7)	35 (7)	32 (8)	45 (8)	41 (6)
<b>NC</b>	48 (5)	46 (5)	40 (5)	35 (5)	36 (6)	34 (5)	40 (5)	40 (5)
<b>ND</b>	53 (11)	42 (8)	45 (9)	52 (9)	36 (8)	38 (9)	40 (9)	40 (7)
<b>NE</b>	54 (7)	49 (8)	38 (10)	40 (6)	39 (6)	34 (7)	38 (8)	35 (6)
<b>NH</b>	39 (6)	34 (5)	26 (5)	30 (5)	30 (6)	33 (8)	28 (6)	29 (6)
<b>NJ</b>	37 (5)	37 (5)	30 (4)	29 (5)	28 (6)	30 (5)	30 (5)	32 (5)
<b>NM</b>	42 (13)	30 (10)	35 (11)	26 (8)	26 (7)	33 (7)	26 (7)	32 (9)
<b>NV</b>	39 (6)	37 (6)	31 (7)	31 (6)	34 (6)	32 (6)	33 (7)	33 (6)
<b>NY</b>	34 (5)	35 (4)	34 (4)	29 (4)	31 (5)	31 (5)	28 (4)	31 (4)
<b>OH</b>	51 (5)	45 (5)	41 (5)	38 (4)	35 (5)	36 (5)	41 (5)	42 (4)
<b>OK</b>	50 (6)	49 (7)	42 (7)	43 (7)	32 (7)	41 (6)	45 (7)	41 (7)
<b>OR</b>	35 (5)	36 (5)	33 (5)	35 (6)	34 (6)	28 (5)	35 (6)	32 (6)
<b>PA</b>	39 (5)	40 (4)	37 (4)	36 (4)	36 (6)	37 (5)	33 (4)	38 (4)
<b>RI</b>	39 (7)	31 (6)	17 (7)	25 (6)	26 (6)	21 (7)	27 (7)	26 (6)

<b>SC</b>	49 (6)	50 (6)	43 (6)	40 (6)	40 (6)	43 (6)	37 (6)	40 (5)
<b>SD</b>	43 (9)	41 (8)	42 (9)	41 (7)	43 (8)	36 (10)	42 (10)	36 (6)
<b>TN</b>	52 (6)	50 (6)	50 (6)	44 (6)	44 (6)	45 (5)	41 (5)	48 (5)
<b>TX</b>	44 (5)	38 (5)	36 (5)	37 (4)	32 (6)	30 (4)	35 (4)	36 (4)
<b>UT</b>	45 (6)	48 (7)	39 (8)	37 (7)	32 (6)	38 (7)	42 (7)	42 (9)
<b>VA</b>	42 (5)	39 (5)	35 (5)	33 (5)	33 (6)	33 (5)	36 (5)	36 (5)
<b>VT</b>	30 (8)	33 (7)	22 (7)	27 (7)	33 (8)	30 (10)	20 (9)	25 (7)
<b>WA</b>	30 (6)	30 (5)	26 (4)	30 (5)	32 (5)	26 (5)	30 (5)	34 (5)
<b>WI</b>	38 (5)	32 (5)	29 (5)	30 (5)	28 (5)	29 (5)	34 (6)	32 (5)
<b>WV</b>	57 (6)	58 (7)	44 (9)	51 (7)	44 (7)	48 (7)	58 (8)	47 (5)
<b>WY</b>	61 (11)	67 (12)	52 (11)	52 (10)	50 (10)	46 (11)	48 (11)	45 (8)