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THE STATE OF THE NATION:
A 50-STATE COVID-19 SURVEY
REPORT #12: EXECUTIVE APPROVAL UPDATE

USA, September 2020

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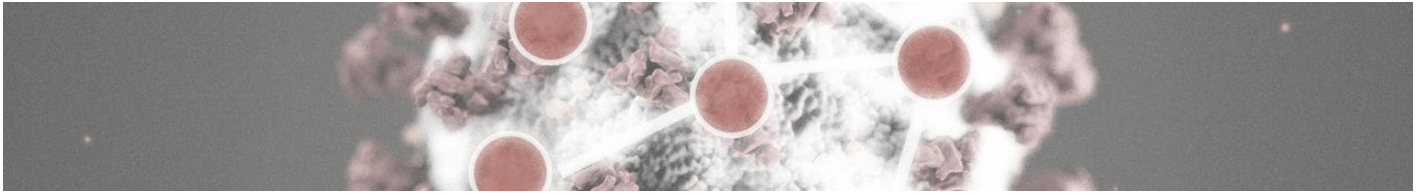Northeastern University Network Science Institute · HARVARD Kennedy School SHORENSTEIN CENTER on Media, Politics and Public Policy · HARVARD MEDICAL SCHOOL · RUTGERS THE STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW JERSEY · Northwestern University

Report of September 8, 2020, v.1

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

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COVER MEMO

Summary Memo— September 8, 2020

The COVID-19 Consortium for Understanding the Public's Policy Preferences Across States
Partners: Northeastern University, Harvard University, Rutgers University, and
  Northwestern University

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From August 7 to 26 we conducted the ninth wave of a large, 50-state survey, some results of which are presented here. You can find previous reports online at www.covidstates.org.

Note on methods:

We surveyed 21,196 individuals across all 50 states plus the District of Columbia. The survey was conducted on 7-26 August 2020 by PureSpectrum via an online, nonprobability sample, with state-level representative quotas for race/ethnicity, age, and gender (for methodological details on the other waves, see covidstates.org). 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. This was the ninth in a series of surveys we have been conducting since April 2020, examining attitudes and behaviors regarding COVID-19 in the United States.

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Or visit us at www.covidstates.org.

Update on executive approval

The August wave of our COVID States survey indicates a continued gradual decline in approval of governors' management of COVID-19, and a small improvement in President Trump's management of COVID-19. **The average governor saw their approval slip another 3 points in the last month, to 48% approval (versus 63% in late April). President Trump, who started from a much lower point, rebounded slightly from his low point of approval of 32% in July to 34% in August.** See *Figure 1* and *Table 1* for trends in approval for governors by state, and *Figure 1* and *Table 2* for trends in approval for President Trump.

The governors of Maryland, Massachusetts, and Connecticut are all at 65% approval or above. States with governors that have notably low approval ratings (below 40%) include Arizona, Florida, Georgia, Iowa, Hawaii, Idaho, Mississippi, Oregon, Oklahoma, Missouri, South Carolina, and Texas.

Governors who have suffered particularly precipitous drops in the last month include the governors of California (Newsom), Virginia (Northam), and Florida (DeSantis). Newsom dropped from 58% approval to 47%, Northam from 59% to 46%, and DeSantis from an already low 40% to 29%. Notably, despite the general stability in presidential approval, Trump's approval in Florida of his management of COVID-19 also dropped sharply, from 39% to 29%.

Approval for governors dropped since April among their co- and anti-partisans; but generally, more so among anti-partisans. Average approval for a Democratic governor among Democrats dropped 8 points since April; and 16 points among Republicans. Approval for Republican governors dropped 12 points among Republicans; and 19 points among Democrats. See *Figure 2* for partisan patterns in approval by state, and *Figures 3 and 4* for averaged approval for Republican and Democratic governors by respondent's party affiliation. (Note that these subsamples are smaller, and thus the trends are noisier at the state level.)

There are five states (Maryland, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Ohio, and Vermont) with Republican governors that have taken a more aggressive stance in managing the pandemic with a very different partisan pattern in approval. In those five states, approval for the Republican governor among Democrats and Republicans has consistently been high, remarkably, averaged across the five states, a bit higher among Democrats (72%) than Republicans (71%) (see *Figures 5 and 6*). In the remaining 21 states with Republican governors, approval is especially polarized, at 64% among Republicans (dropping 13 points since April), and 25 points among Democrats (dropping 22 points).
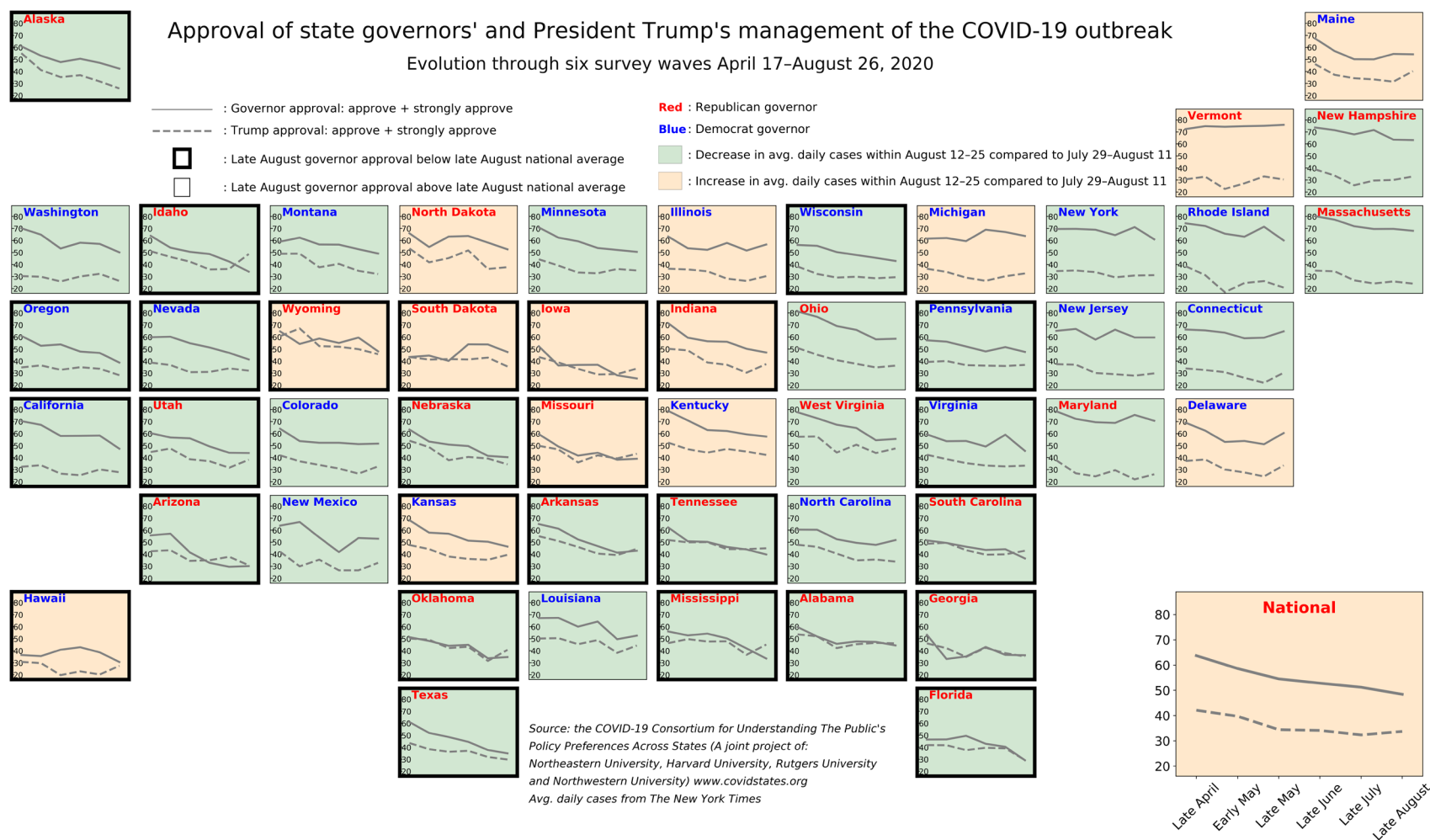
Figure 1: Approval of state governors and President Trump for every state

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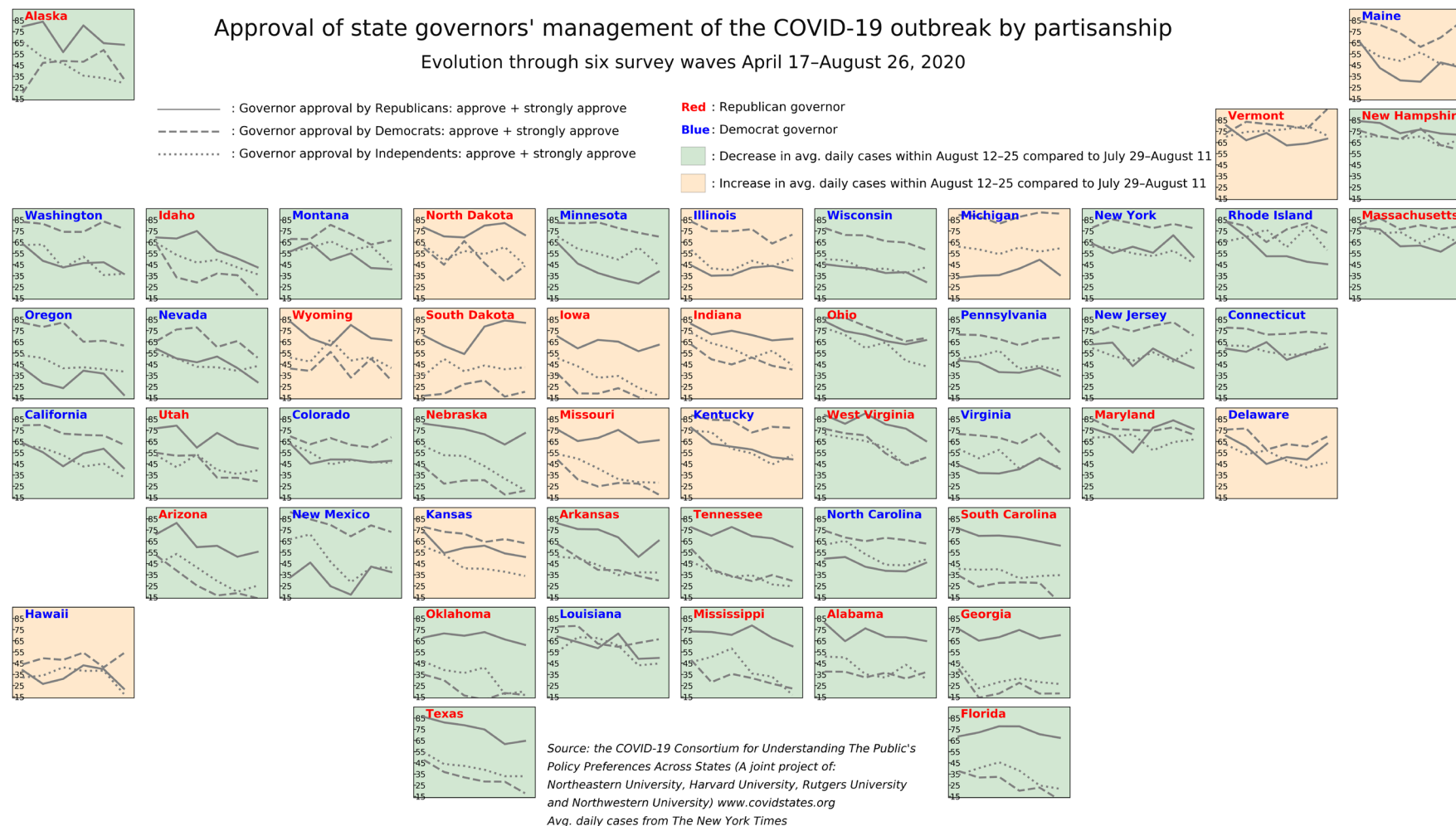
Figure 2: Approval of state governors by partisanship, for every state

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Figure 3: Governor approval by party, average across all Republican governors
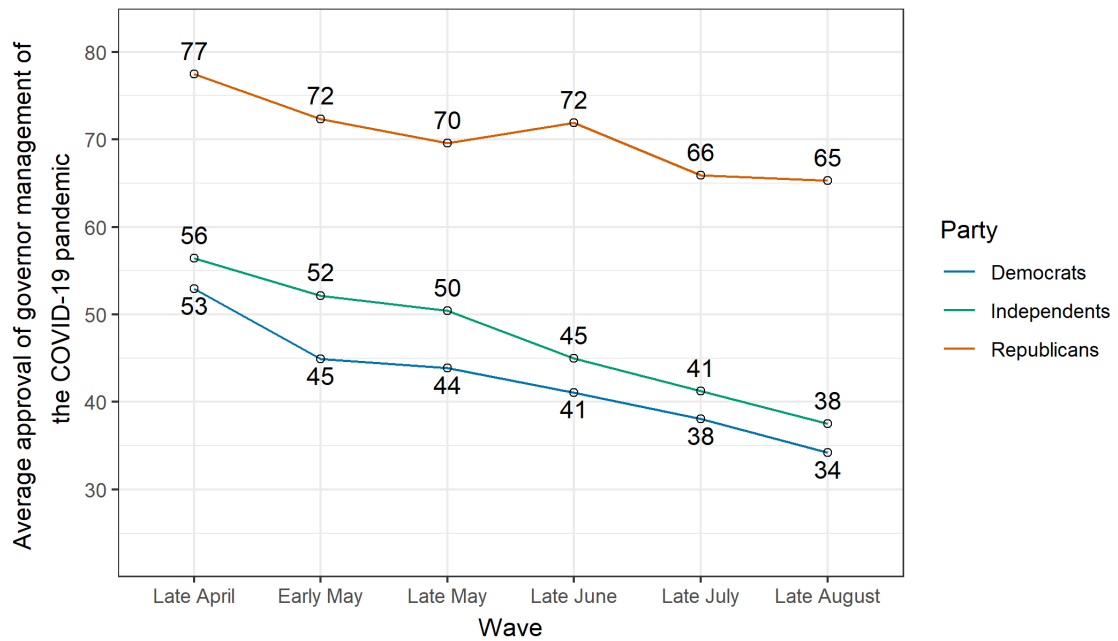
Figure 4: Governor approval by party, average across all Democrat governors
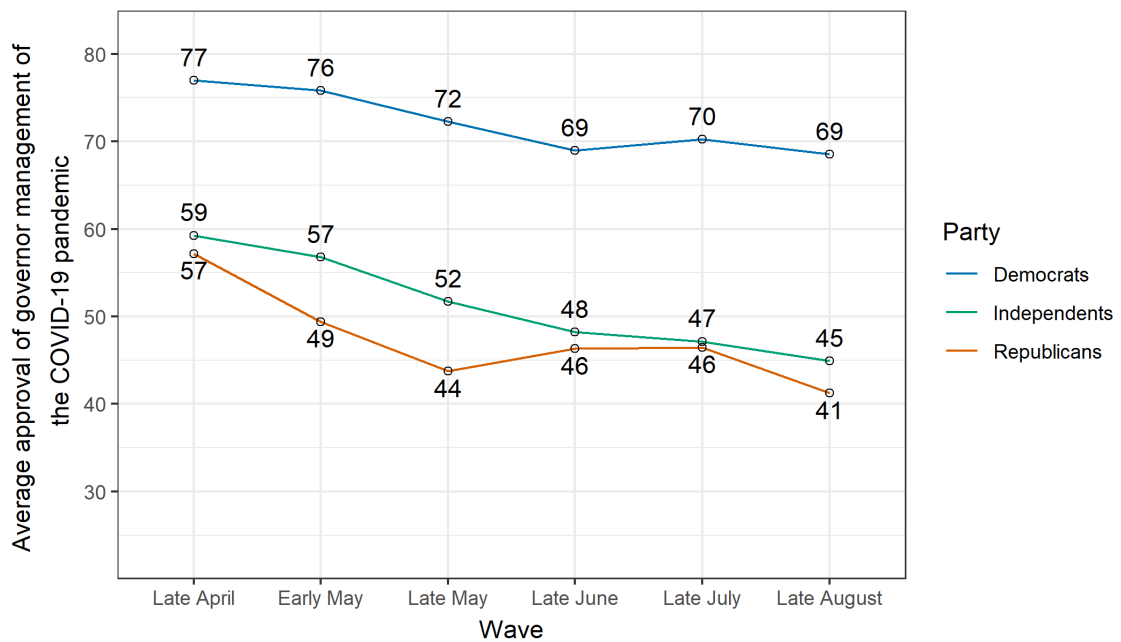
Figure 5: Average governor approval by party across Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Vermont, Maryland and Ohio governors
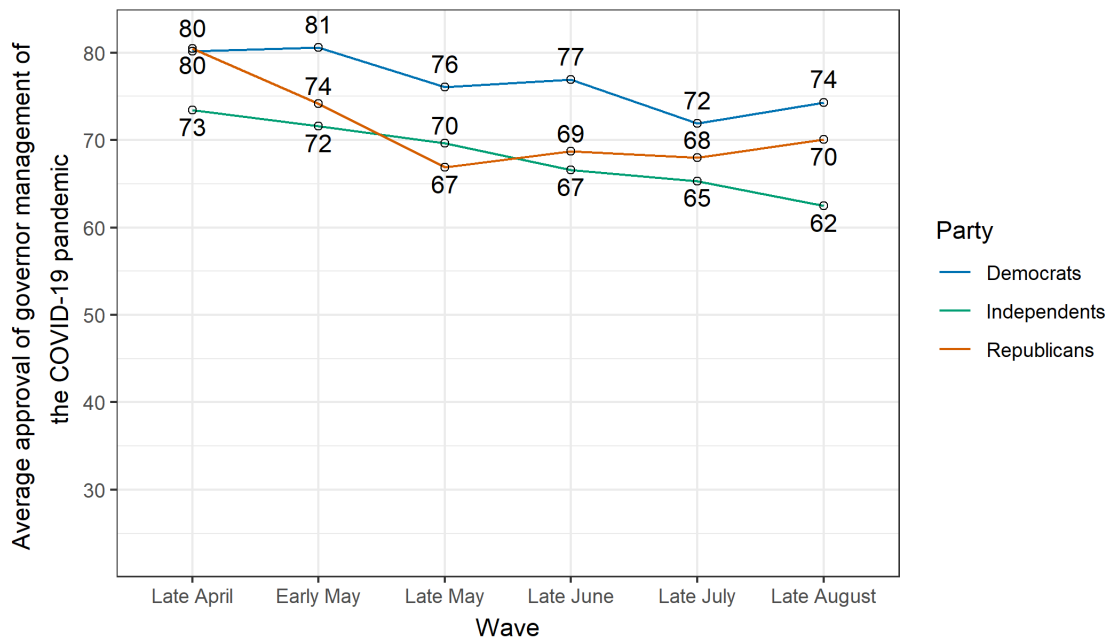
Figure 6: Average governor approval by party across Republican governors except Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Vermont, Maryland and Ohio
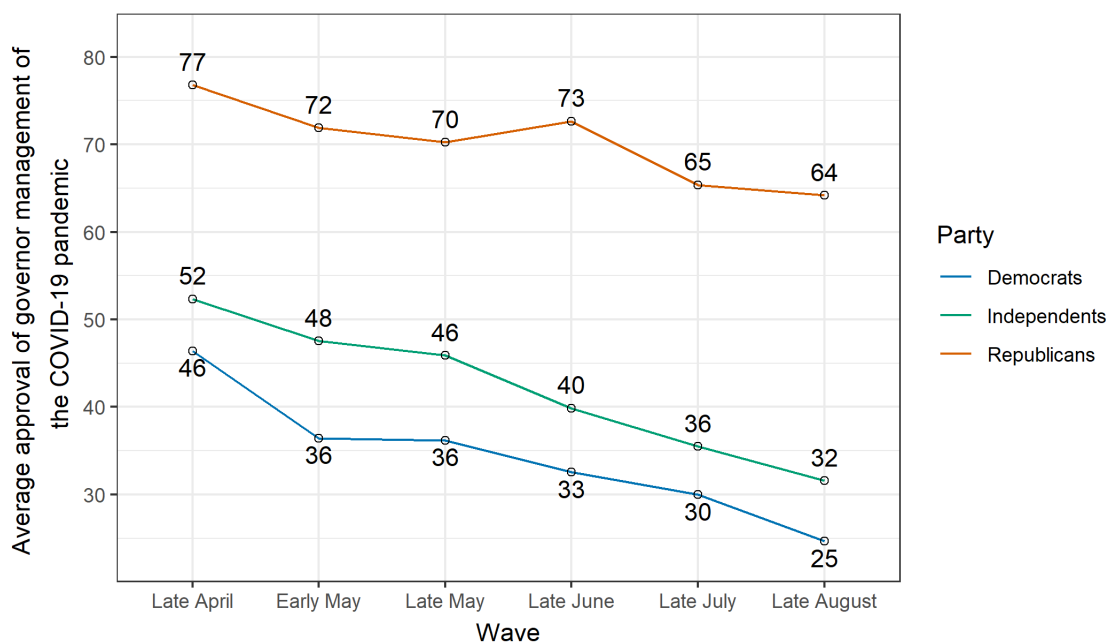
Appendix: Executive approval tables

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)

| State	Late April	Early May	Late May	Late June	Late July	Late August
National	64 (1)	59 (1)	54 (1)	53 (1)	51 (1)	48 (1)
AK	61 (14)	53 (10)	48 (13)	50 (11)	47 (11)	42 (13)
AL	60 (6)	52 (6)	46 (7)	48 (6)	47 (6)	44 (5)
AR	65 (6)	61 (7)	52 (7)	47 (7)	41 (7)	43 (6)
AZ	56 (6)	57 (7)	41 (5)	33 (5)	30 (7)	30 (5)
CA	70 (5)	67 (4)	58 (4)	58 (4)	58 (6)	47 (4)
CO	64 (5)	54 (6)	52 (6)	52 (6)	51 (7)	52 (5)
CT	66 (6)	66 (6)	64 (8)	59 (6)	59 (6)	65 (6)
DE	69 (7)	62 (4)	53 (5)	54 (6)	51 (8)	60 (8)
FL	46 (5)	46 (5)	50 (6)	43 (4)	40 (6)	29 (4)
GA	53 (5)	33 (9)	35 (8)	43 (5)	36 (6)	36 (5)
HI	36 (8)	36 (6)	41 (7)	43 (6)	39 (7)	31 (8)
IA	52 (6)	36 (6)	37 (6)	37 (6)	28 (6)	26 (7)
ID	64 (6)	54 (5)	50 (5)	49 (6)	42 (6)	34 (8)

IL	63 (5)	54 (6)	52 (6)	58 (5)	52 (6)	57 (5)
IN	71 (5)	59 (6)	56 (8)	56 (6)	50 (7)	47 (5)
KS	68 (6)	58 (5)	57 (7)	51 (7)	50 (6)	46 (6)
KY	79 (4)	71 (6)	63 (7)	62 (6)	59 (6)	58 (5)
LA	67 (6)	67 (4)	60 (5)	64 (7)	50 (7)	52 (6)
MA	80 (4)	77 (5)	72 (6)	70 (5)	70 (6)	68 (5)
MD	78 (5)	72 (6)	69 (6)	69 (5)	76 (5)	71 (5)
ME	67 (6)	57 (5)	50 (5)	50 (6)	54 (7)	54 (7)
MI	62 (5)	62 (6)	59 (6)	69 (5)	67 (6)	64 (5)
MN	71 (5)	62 (5)	59 (6)	54 (5)	52 (6)	50 (5)
MO	60 (5)	49 (7)	42 (9)	44 (5)	38 (6)	39 (5)
MS	56 (7)	53 (7)	54 (11)	50 (7)	42 (7)	34 (7)
MT	59 (8)	62 (5)	57 (5)	56 (7)	53 (7)	49 (8)
NC	60 (5)	60 (9)	52 (9)	49 (5)	48 (6)	52 (5)
ND	66 (11)	54 (8)	63 (10)	64 (9)	58 (9)	53 (9)
NE	63 (7)	53 (5)	51 (6)	50 (6)	41 (6)	40 (7)
NH	74 (6)	71 (5)	68 (5)	72 (5)	64 (6)	63 (8)
NJ	65 (5)	67 (10)	58 (11)	66 (5)	60 (7)	60 (5)
NM	64 (13)	67 (6)	54 (7)	42 (9)	53 (8)	53 (8)
NV	60 (6)	60 (4)	55 (4)	51 (6)	47 (7)	41 (6)

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

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)

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

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

OK	50 (6)	49 (7)	42 (7)	43 (7)	32 (7)	41 (6)
OR	35 (5)	36 (5)	33 (5)	35 (6)	34 (6)	28 (5)
PA	39 (5)	40 (4)	37 (4)	36 (4)	36 (6)	37 (5)
RI	39 (7)	31 (6)	17 (7)	25 (6)	26 (6)	21 (7)
SC	49 (6)	50 (6)	43 (6)	40 (6)	40 (6)	43 (6)
SD	43 (9)	41 (8)	42 (9)	41 (7)	43 (8)	36 (10)
TN	52 (6)	50 (6)	50 (6)	44 (6)	44 (6)	45 (5)
TX	44 (5)	38 (5)	36 (5)	37 (4)	32 (6)	30 (4)
UT	45 (6)	48 (7)	39 (8)	37 (7)	32 (6)	38 (7)
VA	42 (5)	39 (5)	35 (5)	33 (5)	33 (6)	33 (5)
VT	30 (8)	33 (7)	22 (7)	27 (7)	33 (8)	30 (10)
WA	30 (6)	30 (5)	26 (4)	30 (5)	32 (5)	26 (5)
WI	38 (5)	32 (5)	29 (5)	30 (5)	28 (5)	29 (5)
WV	57 (6)	58 (7)	44 (9)	51 (7)	44 (7)	48 (7)
WY	61 (11)	67 (12)	52 (11)	52 (10)	50 (10)	46 (11)