

Maine politicians take popularity hit despite late-pandemic optimism, new poll shows (click [here](#) to view online)



by [Jessica Piper](#) June 9, 2021 Updated June 11, 2021



Gov. Janet Mills, left, Sen. Susan Collins, center, and Sen. Angus King, right, sit at the unveiling of a Nautilus Data Technologies' data center at the site of the former Great Northern Maine Paper Company mill on Saturday. Credit: David Marino Jr. / BDN

Maine's high-profile politicians saw approval ratings decline this spring, according to a new survey.

The drop in popularity came even as more Mainers believed the country is moving in the right direction and indicated a historic level of optimism about the economy, according to a [survey](#) conducted in March and April and released Wednesday by Digital Research Inc., a Portland-based polling firm.

The poll is based on a survey of 789 registered Maine voters contacted online or by phone, and results were weighted based on demographics. The margin of error is 3.9 percent.

Maine's highest profile positions all saw their approval ratings drop this spring



Source: [Digital Research Inc](#) • Chart by Jessica Piper for the Bangor Daily News

Gov. Janet Mills, a Democrat, saw her approval rating drop from 62 percent last fall to 57 percent this spring, the survey found. But that is still above her pre-pandemic approval rating of 47 percent and left her as the most popular political figure in Maine.

Sen. Susan Collins, who won reelection last fall with 51 percent of votes after a bruising campaign, saw her approval rating drop further, from 38 percent to 31 percent, the survey found, while 50 percent disapproved. Notably, Collins' approval dropped sharply among fellow Republicans from 68 percent last fall to 43 percent while improving slightly among Democrats.

The Republican senator irked some in her party earlier this year when she voted to convict former President Donald Trump in an impeachment trial over charges of inciting the Jan. 6 riot at the U.S. Capitol. Two county parties voted to censure Collins, though the state party opted not to by a wide margin.

U.S. Reps. Chellie Pingree and Jared Golden, both Democrats, and Sen. Angus King, an independent who caucuses with Democrats, all saw their approval ratings drop as well but maintained net positive ratings on the whole.

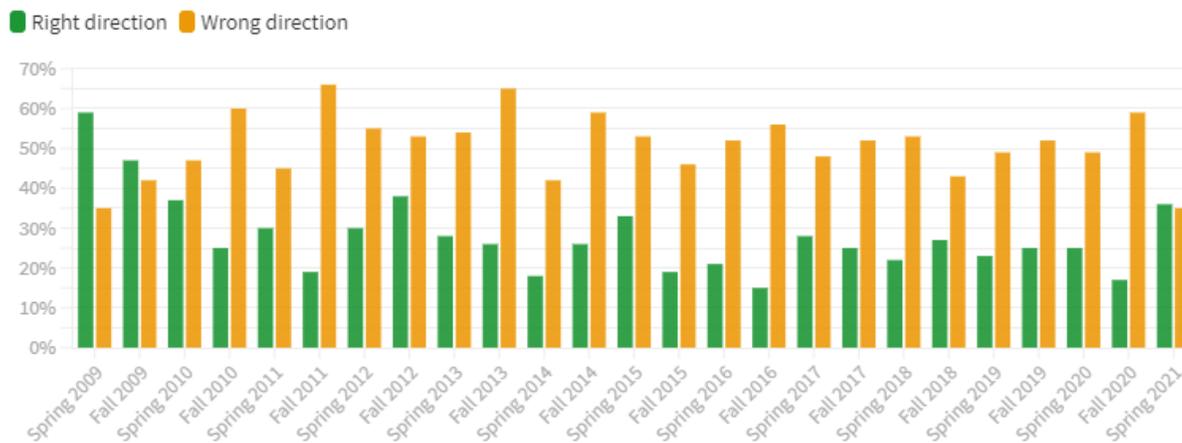
Golden, a target for national Republicans next year in the 2nd District, which Trump won by seven points last fall, saw the biggest drop from 56 percent in the fall to 41 percent this spring, while just 29 percent disapproved of his work. The congressman, who won reelection in 2020 with 53 percent of votes, saw the least partisan divide in support of any figure surveyed, with 48 percent of Democrats approving of his performance compared to 36 percent of Republicans.

Approval of the Democratic-led Maine Legislature also dropped sharply, from 52 percent in the spring of 2021 to 37 percent this spring. Just over half of Democrats approve of the Legislature’s performance compared to only 17 percent of Republicans, the survey found.

The across-the-board declines in popularity among Maine figures came as more Mainers said the U.S. is on the right track than the wrong track for the first time since 2009, the survey found. Bob Domine, president of Digital Research, Inc., characterized the shift as a “boomerang effect” coming out of the pandemic that left people with many reasons to be optimistic even if they did not feel confident in elected leaders.

“I think it’s easy to be optimistic about the future and still not very happy about the people we’ve elected to lead us into that future,” Domine said.

For the first time in more than a decade, Mainers think the U.S. is moving in the right direction



Source: Digital Research Inc. • Chart by Jessica Piper for the Bangor Daily News

The optimism could have to do with a politician not from Maine as well. Fifty-five percent of people surveyed said they approved of President Joe Biden’s job performance so far, compared to only 38 percent of Mainers who said they approved of Trump’s performance during his last two years in office.

Fifty-one percent of people also predicted the economy would be better a year from now than it is right now, the highest level of optimism about the economy since the firm began asking that question in 2000.