



**confederation  
of tomorrow**

# 2019 Survey of Canadians

**CANADA: PULLING TOGETHER  
OR DRIFTING APART?**

**Final Report**

APRIL 2019

**Environics  
Institute**  
For Survey Research

**Mowat Centre**  
ONTARIO'S VOICE ON PUBLIC POLICY

**CANADAWEST  
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This study was conducted by the Environics Institute for Survey Research, in partnership with the following organizations:

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# Introduction

## Background

For much of the late 20th century, Canadian politics was dominated by high-stakes attempts to remake or dismantle the country's federation. First ministers met regularly for mega-constitutional deal-making, while successive Quebec and federal governments wrestled with iterations of pre- and post-referendum strategies. The 1990s alone witnessed a national referendum on the Constitution, a second and closely-contested referendum on Quebec independence, and two new regionally-based political parties – Reform and the *Bloc Québécois* – taking turns as Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition.

In recent years, it has appeared that such storms have now finally passed. A new generation of Canadians has come of age with no direct memories of national unity crises. Regional party fragments have once again coalesced around the traditional left-centre-right national options. And as other countries wrestle with the rise of inward-looking nativism, Canada appears to offer hope as a successful example of multiculturalism and multinational federalism capable of reconciling unity and diversity.

In fact, Canada's sesquicentennial in 2017 marked one of the only times the country has been able to celebrate a significant birthday in the absence of a serious national unity crisis. Canada's 50th birthday fell in the midst of the First World War and a crisis over conscription that split the country between British and French. The country's 75th birthday found it fighting another world war, with a second conscription crisis just over the horizon. The centennial, while full of optimism, coincided with the Quiet Revolution, and preceded the founding of the *Parti Québécois* by only one year. The country's 125th birthday, in 1992, was almost forgotten in the run-up to the referendum on the Charlottetown Accord – with the dramatic electoral gains of the *Bloc Québécois* and the Reform Party, and the re-election of a *Parti Québécois* government soon to follow.

Even though such events have receded into the past, the current political agenda remains full of unresolved issues that can easily divide Canadians along the fault lines of region and identity. Controversies over transnational pipelines are pitting erstwhile regional allies against one another, while the country's plan to meet international climate change obligations is at risk from several provinces challenging the wisdom of carbon pricing. As the resource-led boom in and around Alberta turned to bust, Albertans' support, not only for environmental policies, but also for broader wealth-sharing arrangements within the federation have come into question.

Meanwhile, the Quebec government's position paper on its "way of being Canadian" was launched in 2017 without sparking a serious reply from its partners in Confederation. This was followed by the province's only avowedly federalist political party not only losing power but receiving its lowest ever share of the popular vote. Atlantic Canada, for its part, continues to search for ways to offset its declining demographic and economic clout. In the North, the three territories are implementing different forms of devolution of power, both from Ottawa to territorial governments, and from territorial government to forms of Indigenous self-government. And the lack of concrete actions to match verbal commitments toward reconciliation with Indigenous Peoples threatens to undermine the country's harmony at home, as well as its reputation abroad.

In short, as Canada moves past its 150th birthday, once again new dimensions and challenges to the structure and governance of Canada are demanding greater attention. These issues are being considered by governments, think-tanks and universities, but it is also important to hear from the rest of Canadians, who have both a say and a stake in the outcomes. And it is important to hear what a new generation of citizens has to say, both about the unresolved challenges they have inherited and the emerging challenges they are called upon to confront.

## Confederation of Tomorrow 2019 survey

This is the goal of the 2019 Confederation of Tomorrow survey. The name “Confederation of Tomorrow” is taken from the landmark Confederation of Tomorrow conference, convened and hosted in November 1967 by Premier John Robarts of Ontario. The event allowed political leaders from all 10 provinces to share their perspectives on the country’s promising future, and to lay the foundations for a stronger federation amid the energy and excitement of the country’s centennial. It was a conference whose purpose was not to pretend that there were simple solutions to complex problems, but to ensure that there was an opportunity for each region’s distinctive perspectives on the country to be expressed and heard.

It is in that spirit that the 2019 Confederation of Tomorrow survey was conducted with representative samples of Canadians from every province and territory, to hear their perspective on the country’s federal system as it is today and what it might be. The research draws from previous national surveys conducted over the past several decades to understand not only what Canadians think today, but how public perspectives have evolved over time.

The research was conducted by the Environics Institute for Survey Research, in partnership with five leading public policy organizations across the country: the Canada West Foundation, the Mowat Centre, the Centre D’Analyse Politique – Constitution et Fédéralisme, the Institute for Research on Public Policy, and the Brian Mulroney Institute of Government at Saint Francis Xavier University.

The research consisted of a national public opinion survey conducted online (in the provinces) and by telephone (in the territories) with a representative sample of 5,732 Canadians (ages 18 and over) between December 14, 2018 and January 16, 2019. The survey sample was stratified to provide for meaningful representation in all 13 provinces and territories, as well as the country’s Indigenous Peoples (First Nations, Métis and Inuit). Many of the questions included on the survey were drawn from previous national surveys stretching back to the 1980s. This provides the basis for identifying how public opinion has changed (or not) over time. Further details on the survey methodology and previous research are provided in the Appendix.

## About this report

This report is one of three that presents the results of this research, focusing on Canadians' identity within the country, and how they view their province or territory's place in the federation. The two remaining reports will address related themes, and will be published later this year. Additional details are provided under separate cover that provides the results for each survey question by region and jurisdiction, demographic characteristics and other population segments. All results are presented as percentages unless otherwise noted.

## Acknowledgements

This research was made possible with the support from a number of organizations and individuals. The study partners would like to acknowledge the contributions of Erich Hartmann, Kiran Alwani and Stefanie Folgado at the Mowat Centre; Darcy Zwetko and Tom Hatry at Elemental Data Collection Inc.; and Steve Otto, Cathy McKim, and Elaine Stam for their excellent work in the final report production. Finally, much appreciation is expressed to the 5,732 Canadians who took the time to share their perspectives on the Confederation of Tomorrow.

# Executive Summary

## Identity

Most Canadians say that the nation is important to their personal sense of identity. At the same time, it is other identities, rather than the national identity, that have been growing more important over time. Canadians are more likely today than in 2003 to say that their region or province, their language, their ethnicity or race, and their gender are important parts of their identity. And when considering both their national and subnational identities, Canadians are less likely to say they consider themselves to be Canadians only or first, and more likely to say that they are either equally a Canadian and someone from their province, or someone from their province first or only.

The survey, however, highlights the extent to which different identities continue to overlap in Canada. Fewer than one in four Canadians expresses an identity that is either exclusively national or exclusively provincial. The same is true of those who identify as Indigenous: A strong majority say that their Indigenous nation or community is important to their personal sense of identity. But most Indigenous peoples express a mix of Indigenous and Canadian identities, rather than identifying as either exclusively Indigenous, on the one hand, or exclusively Canadian, on the other.

## Place in the federation

Canadians' views on whether their province or territory is treated fairly within the Canadian federal system vary widely across jurisdictions. More than that, one of this survey's main findings is that views and trends on these questions vary not only across regions, but among neighbouring provinces and territories within regions as well. This calls into question the extent to which the concepts of "region" and "regionalism" are germane to an understanding of present-day dynamics within the federation.

**Western Canada.** This survey takes place in the context of a profound economic downturn in the oil and gas sector that is the lynchpin of the economy of parts of Western Canada. This has been accompanied by rising political tensions across

provinces and between provincial and territorial governments about how best to balance the needs of the resource economy with those of the environment. It is therefore not surprising to find that provinces such as Alberta and Saskatchewan are among the jurisdictions least likely to say their province or territory is respected in Canada, has its fair share of influence on national decisions, and receives its fair share of federal spending. The trend in Alberta is particularly notable: there has been a dramatic negative shift in the province in views on these questions. Albertans are now the least likely among all Canadians to say their province receives the respect it deserves, or receives its fair share of federal government spending on different programs and transfers.

The extent of dissatisfaction among residents in Alberta and Saskatchewan is evident in their responses to other questions as well. Albertans and Saskatchewanians are, by a wide margin, the least likely to agree that Canadian federalism has more advantages than disadvantages for their province. And, for the first time (based on surveys going as far back as 1987), majorities in both provinces now agree with the proposition that "*Western Canada gets so few benefits from being part of Canada that they might as well go it on their own.*"

This, however, is only part of the story within Western Canada. Significantly more negative views about the federation in Alberta have been accompanied by an opposing, positive shift in British Columbia. This divergent trend has produced a striking reversal in the relative outlooks of these two neighbouring provinces: whereas in previous surveys, residents of B.C. were slightly less likely than those of Alberta to say their province is treated fairly within the federation, now they are much more likely to hold this view. The two provinces have effectively become "decoupled," in that they can no longer be described as sharing a common Western Canadian view of the federation.

Views in Saskatchewan about its place in the federation have also become slightly less negative since the early 2000s, in contrast to the trend in Alberta – but as negative views

in Saskatchewan were traditionally very high, this modest improvement still leaves it as one of the least satisfied provinces. Manitoba, for its part, has a somewhat distinctive outlook on these questions. While a plurality in the province say that it is not respected, has less than its fair share of influence on national decisions, and receives less than its fair share of federal spending, this sentiment is not nearly as pronounced as with its Prairie neighbours, and has not become noticeably more negative over time.

**Atlantic Canada.** While the term “western alienation” has been attracting attention recently, it remains the case that certain provinces in Atlantic Canada are often equally, if not more dissatisfied, with their place in the federation. Newfoundland and Labrador, in particular, stands alongside Alberta in terms of being among the least likely jurisdictions to believe their province or territory is respected in Canada, has its fair share of influence on national decisions, and receives its fair share of federal spending. In terms of discontent with its place in the federation, Nova Scotia is not that much further behind.

Across the Atlantic region as a whole, however, there are important differences both in the degree of dissatisfaction, and the trend. New Brunswickers typically are not as negative in their assessment as their neighbours to the east. That said, some views in New Brunswick are more negative than in previous surveys, while those in Nova Scotia are slightly more positive (though still predominantly on the negative side). As a result, in contrast to the divergence between neighbouring B.C. and Alberta, there has been somewhat of a convergence between New Brunswick and Nova Scotia: whereas previously New Brunswick was much more satisfied than its neighbour to the east, this is no longer the case. Finally, Prince Edward Islanders continue to stand apart from other Atlantic Canadians: they are among the most likely to believe their province or territory is respected, has its fair share of influence on national decisions, and receives its fair share of federal spending.

The Atlantic provinces – even the least satisfied – differ from Alberta and Saskatchewan, however, in one important regard, which is that their concern about the degree of respect that they receive or influence they have does not translate to the same degree into dissatisfaction with federalism itself. Residents of all four Atlantic provinces are much more likely than those in Alberta and Saskatchewan to agree that Canadian federalism has more advantages than disadvantages for their province. In Newfoundland and

Labrador, two-thirds say that Confederation has been a good thing for them.

**Quebec.** Traditionally, one of the main objectives of studies of public opinion on federalism in Canada was to track the rise and fall of support for independence in Quebec. This study, however, comes in the wake of the lowest ever levels of popular support for the sovereigntist *Parti Québécois* and *Bloc Québécois* in the most recent provincial and federal elections. But the survey finds the situation in Quebec to be more one of continuity than of change. Quebecers are no more likely today than they were in the wake of the 1995 referendum to say that their province is treated with the respect it deserves in Canada, or to believe Canadian federalism has more advantages than disadvantages for Quebec. And Quebecers are much less likely today to maintain their province has its fair share of influence on important national decisions in Canada.

On the specific issue of sovereignty, a majority of Quebecers say that it is an idea whose time has passed; however, the proportion holding this view is not noticeably higher today than it was 15 years ago. And while only a minority of Quebecers identify as sovereigntist, the proportion identifying as federalist is no higher, and has not increased over time. Finally, the sense that the French language in Quebec is under threat – which is a key factor correlating with support for Quebec nationalism – is even stronger today than previously. Quebecers may no longer be looking for an immediate exit from Confederation, but they remain at best ambivalent or conditional federalists.

**Ontario.** Canada’s largest province (by population) stands out as its most satisfied. Together with PEI, Ontarians are the most likely to say that they are respected, have their fair share of influence on national decisions, and receive their fair share of federal spending. In fact, Ontario is the only province in which a majority says their province gets the respect it deserves, and in which a majority does not say they have less than their fair share of influence on national decisions. And Ontario, along with Quebec, is among the least likely to believe that the federal government favours one region over the others. At the same time, while views in Ontario about its place in the federation remain more positive than those in the West or the East, they are less positive than they were in the early 2000s. It is also notable that, over time, other Canadians have become more likely to single out Ontario as the one province or region that receives favoured treatment from Ottawa.



**The North.** As is the case with provinces in the West and Atlantic regions, the survey shows that the country's three northern territories have distinctive takes on their place in the federation, pointing to the limits of the regional lens on issues of federalism in Canada. Yukon and Nunavut residents appear relatively satisfied, but those living in the Northwest Territories much less so. While Yukoners are the most likely to report that they receive the respect they deserve in Canada, residents of the Northwest Territories stand with those in Alberta and Newfoundland and Labrador as among the least likely. Moreover, as within the West, the pattern in the North is one of divergent trends, with Yukon (like B.C., to the south) becoming much more satisfied on some measures over time, and the Northwest Territories and Nunavut much less so. Taken together, however, residents of the North are among those most likely to agree that Canadian federalism has more advantages than disadvantages for their jurisdiction.

### **Pulling together or drifting apart?**

Despite these divergent views on federalism, there is also a sense of shared values in Canada: close to six in ten agree that we have the same values regardless of which region of the country we live in, and about seven in ten disagree that we have more in common with American neighbours than other Canadians. Moreover, while the results of this

survey clearly show deep divisions across the country on how federalism is working, there is also widespread agreement that a federal-type system is best given Canada's diversity. Seven in ten Canadians agree that *"A federal system of government is the best one for Canada because we are a country made up of many different peoples and nations"*, compared with about one in five who disagrees. And unlike most of the other questions on this survey, agreement about the appropriateness of a federal system of government for Canada is the majority view in all 13 provinces and territories. Finally, two-thirds of Canadians also say they have confidence in the capacity or ability of Canadians to resolve their internal differences, compared with only one in four who has little confidence.

While this last figure seems encouraging, Canadians' confidence in the country's capacity to resolve differences is much lower than in 1977. While in some ways the integrity of the Canadian federation in the early 21st century appears to be less in question than it was in the last decades of the 20th, the results of the 2019 Confederation of Tomorrow survey do not paint a picture of a country that has become more unified. The gradual declines in the proportions of Canadians that see the advantages of federalism and the relevance of the federal government tell us that bridge-building is likely to be a growing challenge in the years ahead.

# Chapter 1: Identity

An important starting point in understanding public perspectives on Confederation is how citizens identify personally, principally in terms of being a Canadian and affiliating with their region or province, but also in reference to other aspects of identity tied to ethnicity, culture, gender, and religion.

## Canadian or not?

The extent to which people identify more closely with the country or their province or territory depends largely on where they live. But overall, identification with province/territory has strengthened since 2003, especially in Ontario and Western Canada.

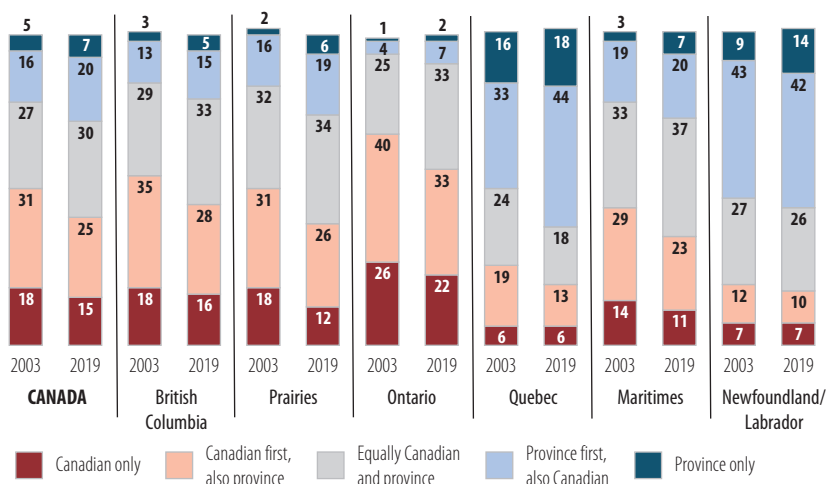
Do Canadians identify more strongly with their country or their province/territory? The survey asked non-Indigenous respondents the extent to which they consider themselves to be Canadian or someone from their province or territory (e.g., a Newfoundlander or Manitoban), or both.

The results reveal a range of perspectives across the continuum. Four in ten consider themselves Canadian only (15%) or as a Canadian first, but also someone from their province or region (25%). By comparison, close to three in ten identify exclusively with their province/territory (7%) or their province/territory first, but also as a Canadian (20%). Most of the remainder (30%) say they identify *equally* with the country and their province/territory.

Not surprisingly, this balance of identities varies noticeably across the country. At one end, affiliation is strongly tilted toward Canada in Ontario (55% first or only Canadian, versus 9% first or only province), Manitoba (55% vs. 18%), British Columbia (44% vs. 20%), and Saskatchewan (44%, vs. 22%).<sup>1</sup> At the other end, majorities identify first or only with their province in Quebec (62% vs. 19%) and Newfoundland/Labrador (56% vs. 17%). Within Quebec, francophones are even more likely to identify with their province first or only (71%).

### Identify as Canadian or someone from your province

2003 – 2019 Non-Indigenous Canadians



Q.3a.

[Non-Indigenous only] People have different ways of defining themselves. Do you consider yourself to be ...?

<sup>1</sup> Because a significant proportion of the population in the Territories is Indigenous, results for the non-Indigenous population in this region are not representative of public opinion, and so are not specifically covered in this discussion.

Comparing 2019 results with those from 2003 shows that provincial or territorial identities have strengthened over the past 16 years. This shift is most evident in Alberta, Manitoba and Quebec, and to a lesser extent in Nova Scotia, Ontario and B.C. At the same time, relatively few Canadians continue to express an exclusive attachment to either country or province/territory (about one in five), as most maintain identities that encompass some balance of both.

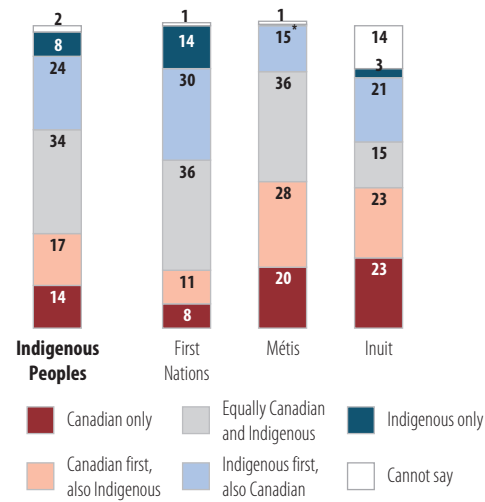
Current identification with country versus province/territory varies less significantly by other characteristics of the population. Across age groups, Canadians under 35 are somewhat more likely than older cohorts to say their connection is equally balanced between country and province/territory.

Identification as Canadian also varies by generation living in Canada, but differently in Quebec in comparison with the rest of the country. In Quebec, close to half of first generation (47%) and second generation (46%) residents identify first or only as Canadian, and this proportion drops to only 14 percent among those who are third-plus generation (with most of this group francophones). Elsewhere, identification with Canada increases among first generation residents the longer they are in the country, peaks with the second generation (50% first or only as Canadian) and then declines marginally for third-plus generations (47%).

Respondents identifying as Indigenous were asked a different version of this question: the extent to which they consider themselves to be Canadian versus an Indigenous person. Perspectives are evenly divided among those who identify first or only as Canadian (31%), exclusively or mostly as Indigenous (32%), and equally Canadian and Indigenous (34%). Identification with Canada is most pronounced among Métis and Inuit Peoples, while Indigenous identity is strongest among First Nations (44%), and especially those living on-reserve (56%)

## Identify as Canadian or Indigenous

2019 Indigenous Peoples



\* Less than one percent

Q.3b.

[Indigenous only] People have different ways of defining themselves. Do you consider yourself to be...?

Across the population as a whole, the shift away from Canadian identity since 2003 is corroborated by results for two other survey questions, which asked respondents about the extent to which their sense of personal identity is connected to their nation, and to their region or province.

The proportion that says their region/province is very or somewhat important to their sense of personal identity increased among Canadians as a whole from 69 percent to 77 percent since 2003. Where this perspective dominated in 2003 it has remained widespread (e.g., Quebec, Atlantic provinces), while strengthening noticeably in Ontario and Western Canada.

By comparison, the proportion of Canadians that place this level of importance on their nation has increased by only two percentage points over the same period of time. These trends notwithstanding, when it comes to what matters to their personal identity, Canadians – in all regions except Quebec – continue to place stronger importance on the nation than region or province.

## Importance of nation and province/region to personal identity

2003 – 2019

	Nation is very/ somewhat important		Region/Province is very/ somewhat important	
	2003	2019	2003	2019
<b>CANADA</b>	<b>85</b>	<b>87</b>	<b>69</b>	<b>77</b>
Atlantic	92	89	81	81
Quebec	87	83	85	86
Ontario	85	89	59	71
Manitoba/Saskatchewan	88	89	60	77
Alberta	84	86	71	77
British Columbia	77	86	67	75
Territories	NA	92	NA	88

Q.4a,c.

Please tell me whether ... is very important, somewhat important, not very important, or not at all important to your own sense of identity?

## Other important identities

Canadians' identity as it relates to language, gender, and ethnicity/race have strengthened since 2003, while religious identity has declined. Except for language among francophones and allophones, these identities remain less important than nation and province or region.

The survey also examined the strength of people's sense of personal identity as it relates to such characteristics as language, ethnicity or race, religion, gender, and Indigenous nation.

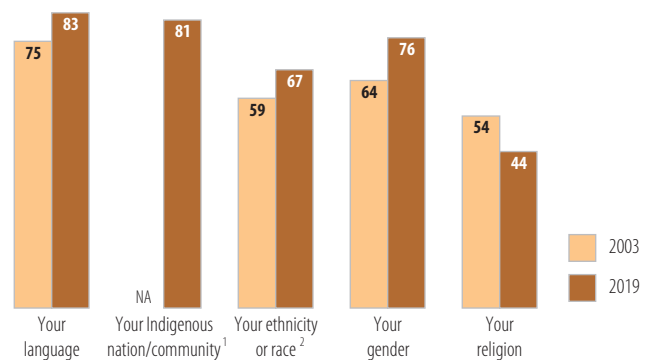
**Language.** Just over eight in ten Canadians say that their language is very (48%) or somewhat (35%) important to their own sense of identity. This has increased from 75 percent who expressed this view in 2003. Such importance is most widespread among francophones (93%) and allophones (86%), but the growth over the past 16 years is almost entirely among anglophones (80%, up 11 percentage points).

The proportion naming language as *very* important to personal identity is most evident among Quebecers (64%) and francophone Quebecers (66%), but is even more widespread among residents of Nunavut (82%) and those who are Inuit (69%). By comparison, this level of importance on language is least apt to be expressed by British Columbians (39%) and Canadians ages 35 to 44 (39%). Notably, strong importance placed on language is equally evident across first, second and third-plus generations living in Canada.

**Gender.** Three-quarters of Canadians say their gender is a very (45%) or somewhat (31%) important part of their identity, up from 64 percent in 2003. This shift has taken place for both genders, but more so among women. Half (51%) of Canadian women now say that gender is very important to their personal identity (up 14 percentage points since 2003), compared with 38 percent of men (up 10). Across the country, strong importance on gender is most widespread among residents of Nunavut (73%) and the Northwest Territories (68%).

**Ethnicity/race.** Two-thirds of non-Indigenous Canadians say their ethnicity or race is very (32%) or somewhat (35%) important to their personal identity, up from 59 percent in

Important to personal identity  
2003 – 2019 Very/somewhat important



<sup>1</sup>Indigenous respondents <sup>2</sup> Non-Indigenous respondents

Q.4b,d,e,f,g.

Please tell me whether ... is very important, somewhat important, not very important, or not at all important to your own sense of identity?

2003. Strong identification with ethnicity or race is most widespread among allophones (39%), as well as among first (35%) and second (37%) generation Canadians, compared with those who are third-plus (29%).

**Indigenous nation/community.** Eight in ten Indigenous respondents indicate their Indigenous nation or community is very (51%) or somewhat (30%) important to their sense of identity.<sup>2</sup> Strong importance is most widely expressed by those who are Inuit (73%), followed by First Nations (57%) and Métis (37%), as well as among Indigenous people ages 55 and over (59%). In all cases, however, at least three-quarters say their Indigenous nation or community is somewhat, if not very, important to who they are.

<sup>2</sup> Comparison data from 2003 are not available as the Indigenous population was not oversampled in this previous survey.

**Religion.** In contrast to language, gender, and ethnicity/race, Canadians' identity as religious has declined over the past 16 years. Fewer than half now say that religion is very (21%) or somewhat (23%) important to who they are, down from 54 percent who expressed this view in 2003. Strong importance on religious identity is more evident among Indigenous (34%) than non-Indigenous (21%) Canadians, and is especially strong in Nunavut (64%) and the Northwest Territories (49%). Quebec stands out as the most secular part of Canada (where only 12% place strong importance on religion).

The strength of religious identity is now roughly the same across age cohorts. This reflects a notable change since 2003, when religious identity was more prominent among older Canadians (the largest decline is recorded among those ages 55 and over; in this cohort, the proportion saying religion is very important to their identity dropped from 62% to 45%).

Finally, there are some notable differences between Quebec (and particularly Quebec francophones) and the rest of

Canada in terms of way in which some aspects of identity vary by age group. Both inside and outside of Quebec, younger people are less likely to say their nation is very important to their own sense of identity.

The patterns differ, however, when it comes to language, region/province, and ethnicity/race. In each case, the differences across age groups in Canada outside of Quebec are minimal, but show striking differences between younger and older francophone Quebecers. The proportion of Quebec francophones saying their region or province is very important to their own sense of identity increases steadily from a low of 25 percent among those ages 18 to 24, to 56 percent among those 55 and older. The same pattern holds for ethnicity/race (increasing from 9% to 35% across these age cohorts), and perhaps most importantly, for language (increasing from 44% to 73%, respectively). In sum, key aspects of identity relating to nation, province, ethnicity, and language are much more important to the older generations of Quebec francophones than to their younger counterparts.

## Shared sense of Canadian values

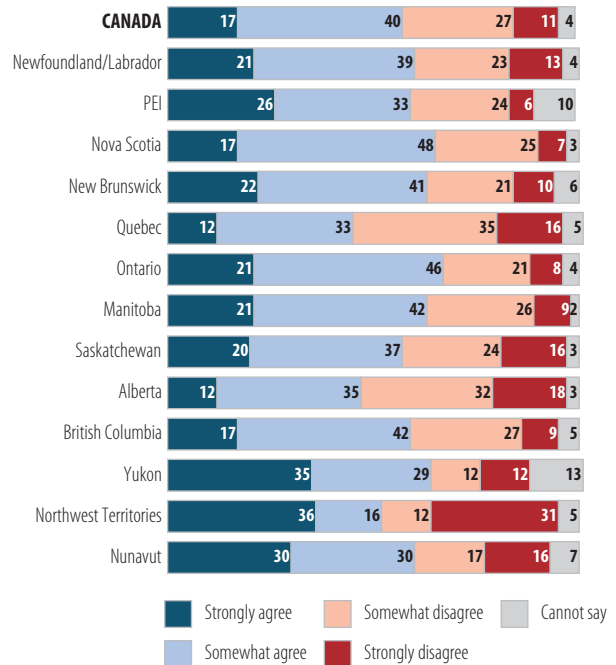
A majority believe Canadians share a common sense of shared values across the country, and this cross-Canada connection is stronger than any connection felt with Americans in the states that border their province.

**Do Canadians share a common set of values across the country?** The survey also examined the extent to which Canadians share a common sense of identity, and this appears to be the case in terms of having a shared set of values. Close to six in ten strongly (17%) or somewhat (40%) agree with the statement: “Canadians basically have the same values regardless of which region of the country they live in”, compared with about four in ten who somewhat (27%) or strongly (11%) disagree.

Opinions on this question vary somewhat across the country, but more often than not there is majority agreement with the statement. Overall, agreement is most widespread in Ontario (67%), Nova Scotia (65%) and Yukon (64%), followed closely by New Brunswick (63%) and Manitoba (63%). This view is shared by fewer than half in Quebec (45%) and Alberta (47%) (although fewer than one in five in either province *strongly* disagrees about shared values). Of note is the fact that opinions about shared national values are not necessarily the same across provinces and territories within the same region, notably those in the Prairies and Territories.

Across the population, agreement with the statement about shared values across regions is most evident among allophones (67%) and first generation Canadians (66%, especially among those with fewer than 10 years in Canada, 72%). Indigenous Peoples are more likely than non-Indigenous Canadians to strongly agree with the statement (26% versus 17%).

## Canadians in all regions share the same values 2019



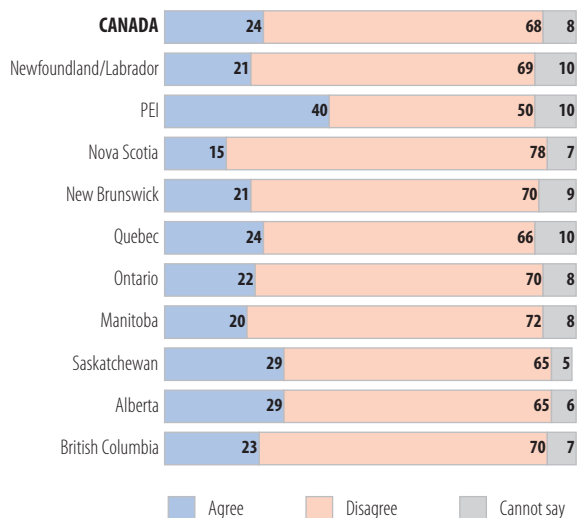
Q.5b.

How much do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements: Canadians basically have the same values regardless of which region of the country they live in.

**Do Canadians have more in common with Americans in border states than with Canadians in other provinces?** While many Canadians have close connections with U.S. border states (e.g., through travel, historic connections, regional economies), few say this connection is stronger than with Canadians in other parts of the country. Only one in four strongly (7%) or somewhat (17%) agrees with the statement: *“I have more in common with Americans living in the States that border my province than I do with Canadians living in other provinces.”* Close to seven in ten somewhat (28%) or strongly (40%) disagree, with another eight percent indicating they cannot say.<sup>3</sup>

Disagreement with the statement about closer ties to U.S. border states is evident in every province, although somewhat less so in PEI (50% disagree). Agreement with the statement is most prevalent among Canadians 18 to 24 years of age (35%; versus only 17% among those 55 and older), recent immigrants (34%), and those who identify as First Nations (34%).

**Canadians have more in common with neighbouring Americans than with other Canadians**  
2019



Q.5c.  
How much do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements:  
*I have more in common with Americans living in the States that border my province than I do with Canadians living in other provinces*

<sup>3</sup> Some respondents who were unable to offer an opinion live in the Territories, two of which do not share a border with the USA.



## Significance of ethnic and religious attachment

Most Canadians reject the notion that attachment to one’s ethnic background or religion makes one less Canadian, but at the same time two-thirds express concerns about too many immigrants not adopting Canadian values.

### Do ethnic or religious ties present an obstacle to being Canadian?

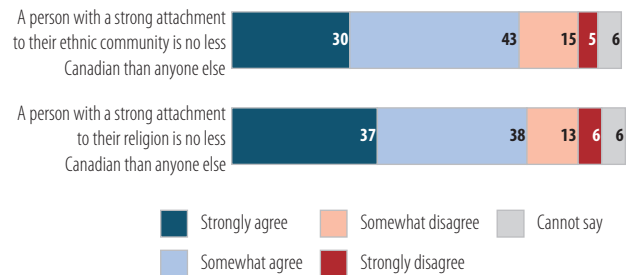
Canada is one of the world’s most multi-ethnic countries, with roughly 300,000 immigrants arriving each year with a diverse range of ethnic backgrounds and religions. While this change poses challenges for both newcomers and native-born, most Canadians express the view that ethnic and religious backgrounds are not in themselves an obstacle to being fully Canadian.

Three-quarters strongly (30%) or somewhat (43%) agree that “A person who has a strong attachment to their own ethnic community is no less Canadian than anyone else”, and a comparable proportion believe the same applies to one’s religion (37% and 38%, respectively).<sup>4</sup>

Views on these questions are notably consistent across the country and population. Even in Quebec, where religious identity is least salient, seven in ten (72%) agree that strong attachment to one’s religion does not make someone less Canadian (with a comparable proportion among Quebec francophones, at 71%).

## Ethnic background and religion do not matter in being Canadian

2019



Q.5d,e.

How much do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements: A person who has a strong attachment to their own ethnic community is no less Canadian than anyone else. / A person who has a strong attachment to their own religion is no less Canadian than anyone else. [Split sample]

<sup>4</sup> Note that a randomly-selected half of the survey sample were asked the question about strong attachment to ethnic community and the other half were asked the question about strong attachment to religion.

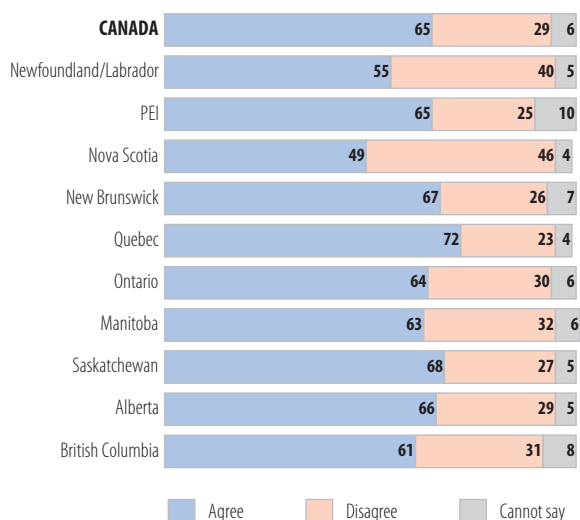
### Are too many immigrants not adopting Canadian values?

That Canadians mostly agree that attachment to ethnic background and religion are not obstacles to being Canadian does not mean that they do not have concerns about some immigrants not fitting in once they arrive. Two-thirds say they strongly (35%) or somewhat (30%) agree that “There are too many immigrants coming into this country who are not adopting Canadian values”, compared with three in ten who somewhat (17%) or strongly (12%) disagree.

Majorities in most provinces and territories agree that too many immigrants are not adopting Canadian values, but this view is most widespread in Quebec (72%; 75% among francophones), followed by Saskatchewan (68%), New Brunswick (67%), and Alberta (66%). This perspective is least apt to be shared in Nova Scotia (49%) and Nunavut (48%).

But more so than region, opinions on this issue are most heavily linked to age and education. Concerns about immigrants not fitting in are most widely voiced by Canadians 55 and over (72%) and those without any post-secondary education (72%), in contrast with those ages 18 to 24 (54%) and with a university degree (56%). Notably, first generation Canadians (63%) are almost as likely as third-plus generation Canadians (68%) to share this view, and the strength of this perspective increases the longer they have been in the country.

### Too many immigrants are not adopting Canadian values 2019



Q.5a.  
How much do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements:  
There are too many immigrants coming into this country who are not adopting Canadian values.

## Chapter 2: Place in the Federation

The survey included a series of questions asking Canadians how they believe their province or territory is currently treated within the federation, in terms of respect, influence on national decisions, and its share of federal government spending, as well as whether some provinces or regions are favoured over others. Also addressed in this section are issues relevant to specific provinces and regions, such as Quebec sovereignty and western alienation. In most cases, the questions are drawn from previous surveys, providing the basis for identifying how opinions have changed (or not) over time.

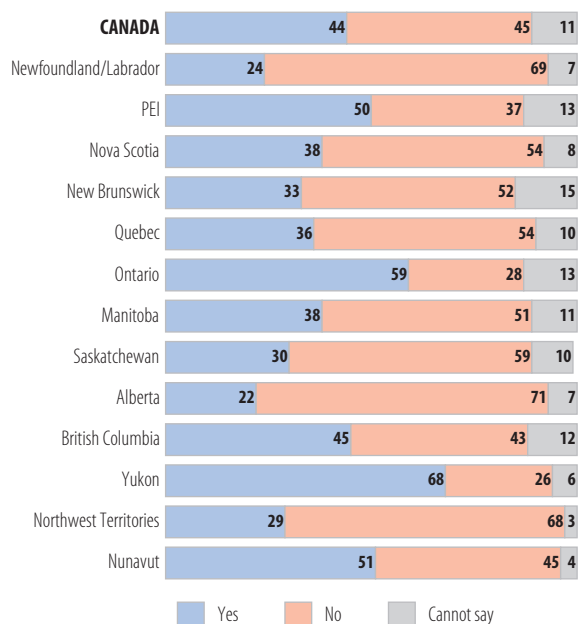
### Provincial/territorial treatment within the federation

Canadians are divided on whether their province or territory is respected, has influence on national decisions, and receives its fair share of federal spending, with significant differences noted across jurisdictions. Opinions have soured most significantly in Alberta, while improving in B.C.

**Respect in Canada.** Do Canadians believe their province or territory is treated with the respect it deserves in Canada? At the national level, opinions are evenly split, with 44 percent saying yes and an equal proportion (45%) saying no, with the remainder (11%) unable to say. But this national result masks substantial differences in views across the country. Only in Ontario (59%) and Yukon (68%) do a clear majority of residents believe their jurisdiction is treated with the proper respect in Canada, with about half in PEI and Nunavut also sharing this perspective. Opinions are noticeably less positive elsewhere, most noticeably in Alberta (71% say their province is not treated with respect) and Newfoundland and Labrador (69%).

For Canadians as a whole, opinions on this question have remained notably stable over the past two decades, but with significant shifts taking place in some parts of the country. In several jurisdictions, there has been relatively little change over this time period apart from some ups and downs in specific years. This applies to Ontario, Quebec, Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, and Manitoba.

Is your province/territory treated with the respect it deserves?  
2019



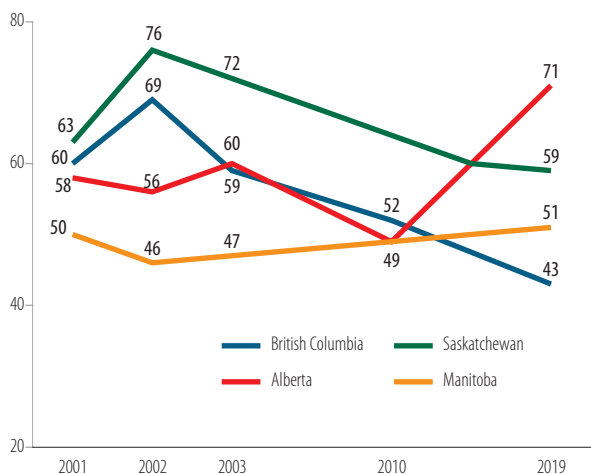
Q.9.

In your opinion, is [PROVINCE/TERRITORY] treated with the respect it deserves in Canada or not?

Among provinces, the most significant change over the past decade has taken place in Alberta, when the proportion saying their province does not get the respect it deserves increased to 71 percent (up from 49% in 2010, and 11 points higher than in 2003). But moving in the opposite direction, the proportion saying their province does not get the respect it deserves declined by 16 points in PEI, 16 points since 2003 in B.C., and seven points Newfoundland and Labrador (no longer the most negative jurisdiction in Canada).

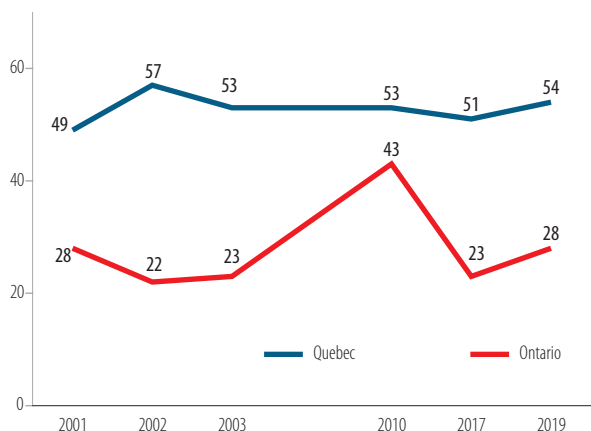
The diverging trends in B.C. and Alberta are striking, given that the “no respect” proportion was essentially the same in these two provinces in the early 2000s.

### Province is not treated with the respect it deserves 2001 - 2019 Western provinces



Q.9.  
In your opinion, is [PROVINCE] treated with the respect it deserves in Canada or not?

### Province is not treated with the respect it deserves 2001 - 2019 Ontario and Quebec



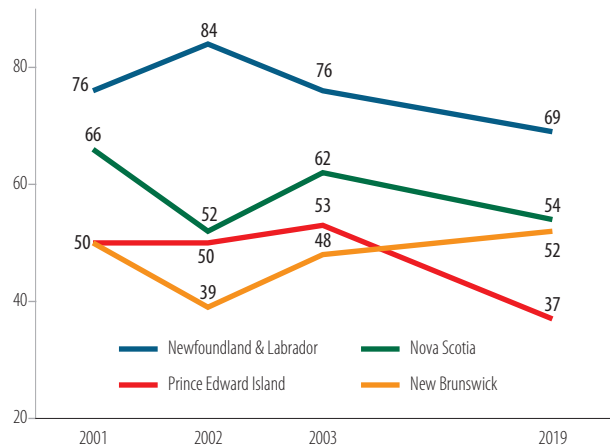
Q.9.  
In your opinion, is [PROVINCE] treated with the respect it deserves in Canada or not?

Finally, there have also been significant swings in opinion among the Territories over the past decade or so, with the proportion saying their territory does not get the respect it deserves increasing in Nunavut (45%, up 14 points) and the Northwest Territories (68%, up 14), while declining in Yukon (26%, down 25).

Opinions about province/territory respect in 2019 vary across the population by age, financial security and generation in Canada. Negative views are least evident among Canadians 18 to 24 years of age (37%), rising steadily through older cohorts to those 55 years of age and older (50%). The effect of age is even more pronounced in Alberta: while half (52%) of Albertans under the age of 34 say their province does not get the respect it deserves, that rises to near unanimity (91%) among those age 55 and over.

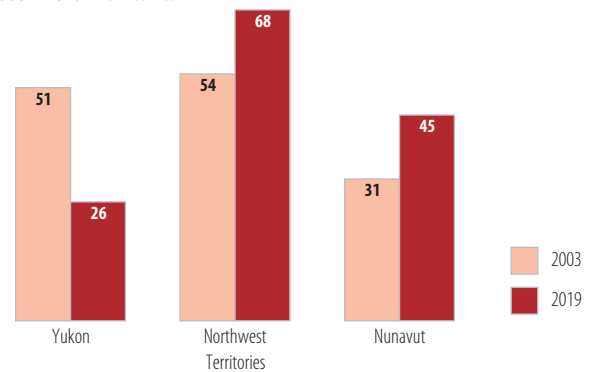
Opinions do not vary by educational attainment and household income, but are linked to financial security: negative views are least prevalent among Canadians whose current income is good enough and they can save from it (38%), and most widespread among those who do not have enough and are struggling (55%). Finally, first generation Canadians hold the most positive perspective about the respect enjoyed by their province or territory, with this view least apt to be shared by those who are third-plus generation.

### Province is not treated with the respect it deserves 2001 - 2019 Atlantic provinces



Q.9.  
In your opinion, is [PROVINCE] treated with the respect it deserves in Canada or not?

### Territory is not treated with the respect it deserves 2003 - 2019 Territories



Q.9.  
In your opinion, is [TERRITORY] treated with the respect it deserves in Canada or not?

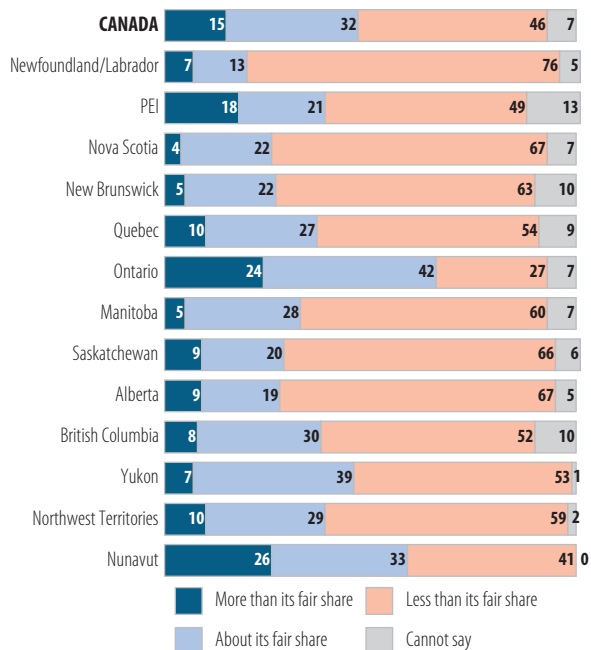
**Influence in national decisions.** Do Canadians believe their province or territory has a fair share of influence on important issues in the country? As with respect, opinions are divided, with divergent perspectives across jurisdictions. At the national level, views are evenly split between those who say their province/territory has a fair share of influence (32%) or more than a fair share (15%), and an equal proportion who insist it has less than a fair share (46%).

In most jurisdictions, the balance of opinion is clearly toward the negative, especially in Newfoundland and Labrador (76% say less than a fair share), Alberta (67%), Nova Scotia (67%) and Saskatchewan (66%). Only in Ontario, PEI and Nunavut, do fewer than half believe their jurisdiction is hard done by when it comes to national decisions affecting the country.

Ontario stands out as the only province or territory where a strong majority believe their jurisdiction enjoys a fair share or more of influence on national decisions affecting the country. At the same time, Ontarians are less apt to hold this view than in the early 2000s.

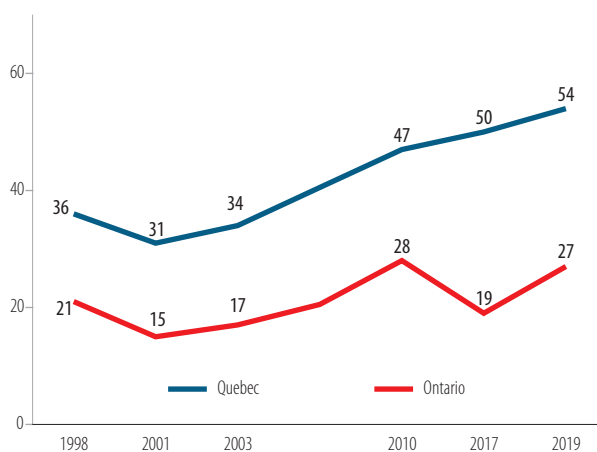
In Quebec, opinions on this question have shifted steadily in a negative direction over the past two decades. In 1998, only 36 percent of Quebecers said their province had less than a fair share of influence, and this view has strengthened steadily ever since, now reaching 54 percent. It may be the case that as the issue of sovereignty has receded from Quebec’s agenda, so too has a sense that it can have an impact on the national agenda.

## How much influence does your province/territory have on important national decisions? 2019



Q.10. In your opinion, how much influence does [PROVINCE / TERRITORY] have on important national decisions in Canada?

## Province has less than fair share of influence 1998 - 2019 Ontario and Quebec

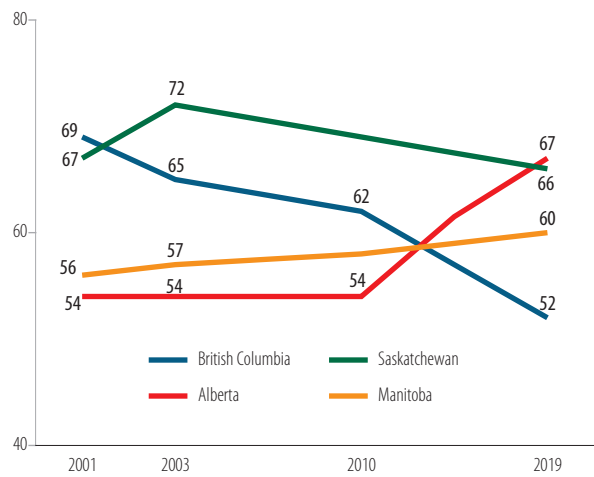


Q.10. In your opinion, how much influence does [PROVINCE] have on important national decisions in Canada?

In the West, views about provincial influence on national decisions have held largely steady (if mostly negative) in Manitoba and Saskatchewan. But in Alberta and British Columbia, the trend has mirrored that observed for attitudes about respect within the federation (presented in the previous section). Prior to 2010, it was British Columbians who were more likely than their neighbours in Alberta to believe they had too little influence on national decisions. This has now flipped, as Albertans have become much more likely to hold this negative view (67% say their province doesn't have a fair share, compared with only 52% in B.C.).

As with attitudes about respect, opinions about influence on national decisions are more positive among younger Canadians, and those who are first generation living in the country.

Province has less than fair share of influence  
2001 - 2019 Western provinces



Q.10.  
In your opinion, how much influence does [PROVINCE] have on important national decisions in Canada?

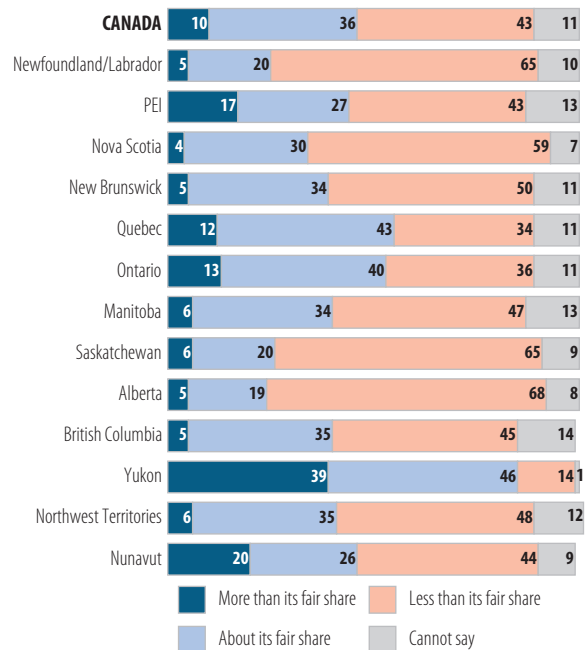
**Share of federal spending.** Do Canadians believe their province or territory receives a fair share of the money the federal government spends on programs and transfers? As with respect and influence, opinions are clearly divided by jurisdiction. Once again, at the national level attitudes are fairly evenly divided between those who say their jurisdiction receives its fair share (36%) or more so (10%), and those who believe it does not (43%). In most jurisdictions, however, a plurality expresses the negative view; only in Ontario, Quebec and Yukon do a clear majority say their province or territory does as well as it should. This view is least apt to be shared in Alberta, Saskatchewan, and Newfoundland and Labrador, where two-thirds say their province receives less than its fair share of federal government spending.

In most jurisdictions, only a handful of residents believe their province or territory receives more than its fair share of federal spending. Those where this percentage is 10 percent or higher include the two largest provinces (Ontario and Quebec) and several of the smallest (Nunavut, PEI and Yukon).

In Quebec, positive opinions about their province receiving its fair share has grown since 2010 (“fair share” responses up by 7 percentage points), unlike the trends in this province for respect and influence.<sup>5</sup> The trends in Alberta and B.C. follow the same pattern as observed for respect and influence. Albertans are now more likely than in 2010 to say their province is receiving less than its fair share (up 16 points), while the proportion in B.C. sharing this view has declined (down 11).

On all three of these measures (respect, influence, and share of federal spending), the views of Canadians are linked to age, financial security, and generation in Canada. The most positive opinions are expressed by Canadians 18 to 24 years of age, those who have incomes that are good enough and they can save from, and first generation in the country (especially those who arrived within the past 10 years). Negative views are most widespread among those 55 years and older, those struggling financially, and those who are third-plus generation Canadians.

## Does your province/territory receive its fair share of federal spending? 2019



Q.13. Thinking about all the money the federal government spends on different programs and transfers to the provinces and territories, do you think [PROVINCE / TERRITORY] receives... ?

<sup>5</sup> On this question there is previous data only for 2010.

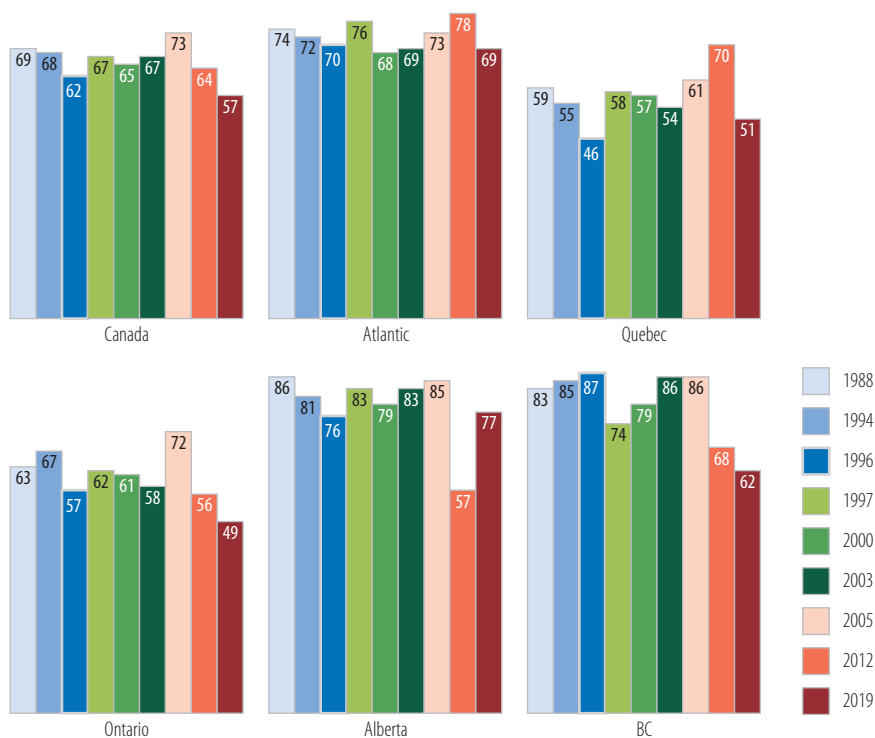


**Which region is favoured in Canada?** Given that so many Canadians believe their province or territory does not enjoy the respect, influence or federal spending it deserves, it is no surprise that most believe Ottawa favours one region over others (although there is little agreement about which is so favoured). A clear majority (57%) say that the federal government favours one region over the others, with half as many (27%) maintaining that all are treated the same, and another one in six (15%) unable to say either way.

Belief in a favoured region is most widespread in Nova Scotia (77%), Alberta (77%), and Saskatchewan (74%), as well as the Northwest Territories (88%) and Yukon (71%), while this view is least apt to be shared by the two largest provinces of Ontario (49%) and Quebec (51%), along with PEI (55%) and Nunavut (51%).

Data from previous surveys dating back to 1988 show that Canadians have long held the view that one province or region is favoured over others, but the prevalence of this view has actually declined noticeably since 2005 when it peaked at 73 percent. This downward trend is evident across most of the country, with the significant exception of Alberta, where residents are now more likely to say that one region is favoured (up 20 points since 2012), although proportion was even higher between 1988 and 2005. This distinctive trend in Alberta may be explained in part by having had a “native son” as Prime Minister in Stephen Harper between 2006 and 2015, thereby accounting for the 2012 downward blip. A similar pattern is observed in Saskatchewan, but to a lesser extent (with the one region favoured percentage climbing by 8 points between 2012 and 2019).

**Federal government favours one region over others**  
1988 - 2019



Q.11.

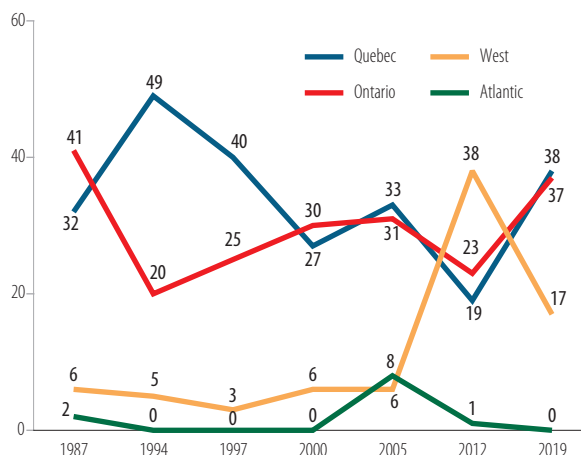
*In your opinion, does the current federal government treat all regions in Canada equally, or does it favour one region over the others?*

When those who say one region is favoured by the federal government were asked which region, the most common responses are Quebec (38%) or Ontario (37%), followed by Alberta (12%) and British Columbia (5%). This pattern has held throughout most of the past three decades, with Quebec standing out in the 1990s, and Western Canada shooting up to first place in 2012 (38%) during Stephen Harper’s term as Prime Minister.<sup>6</sup> Quebec remains one of the regions Canadians are most likely to single out, but not to the extent that it was in the 1990s when the country was faced with the prospect of Quebec separation.

Attitudes about which region is favoured are mostly a function of where people live. Residents of Ontario and Western Canada tend to identify Quebec, while Quebecers mostly point to Ontario (50%) or Alberta (32%), and Atlantic Canadians are most likely to point to Ontario (42%) or Quebec (32%). But age also appears to play a role in such opinions: Canadians outside of Quebec ages 18 to 24 identify Ontario (56%) over Quebec (20%) or Alberta (7%), while those 55 and older – with direct memories of the era dominated by referendums and constitutional debates – are most apt to name Quebec (66%).

## Which region is favoured?

1987 - 2019 Those who say one region is favoured



Q.12.

(IF FAVOURS ONE REGION) Which one province or territory do you feel is favoured the most over the others?

<sup>6</sup> For some of the previous surveys, “the West” was one of the response categories used (as an unprompted response), and cannot be broken down by province.

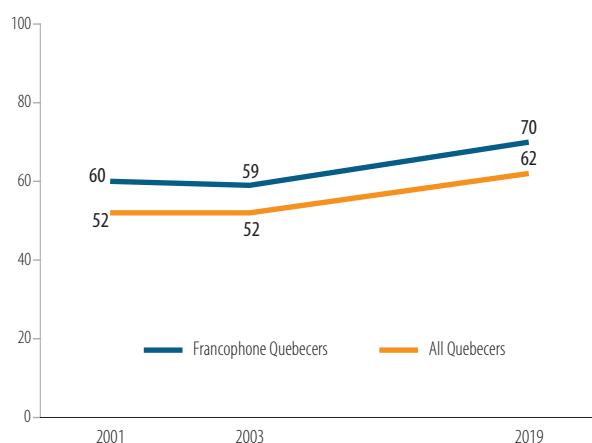
## Quebec sovereignty

A majority of Quebecers (and Quebec francophones) agree that the time for sovereignty for their province has passed, and few consider themselves mainly as sovereigntists. At the same time, there has been no growth in the number who identify as federalists, and concern about the future of French in Quebec is now higher than ever.

**Is the French language under threat?** French is the official language of Quebec and a large majority of residents are francophone. At the same time, being a linguistic minority in Canada and North America more generally has contributed to a prevailing sense that French is under threat. In 2019, six in ten (62%) Quebecers believe that the French language in their province is under threat (with this rising to 70% among francophones). This opinion is now more prevalent than in the early 2000s, when it was expressed by about half of the province's population.<sup>7</sup>

Previously, the sense of threat had been more prevalent among younger francophones, and this difference has largely evaporated. It is now older Quebecers who are most likely to believe the French language in their province is under threat. Views on the security of the French language continue to be strongly linked to opinions about Quebec's place in the federation. For instance, among francophones, those who say their language is threatened are twice as likely as those who disagree to believe their province is not treated with the respect it deserves in Canada (71% versus 36%).

The French language in Quebec is threatened  
2001 – 2019 Quebec



Q.6.  
*In your opinion, is the French language in Quebec threatened or not?*

<sup>7</sup> The comparison must be qualified in that the earlier surveys were conducted by telephone, and so some portion of the difference with the 2019 results may be due in part to differences in how people respond to telephone and online surveys.

**Federalist or sovereigntist?** Positions on the core question of Quebec sovereignty have long divided Quebecers, and this remains the case today. In 2019, the population is distributed among those who consider themselves mainly to be a federalist (23%), mainly a sovereigntist (23%), something in between these two identities (29%), or neither (19%), with another six percent unable to offer any response to the question. Francophones in the province are only marginally more likely to consider themselves a sovereigntist (26%).

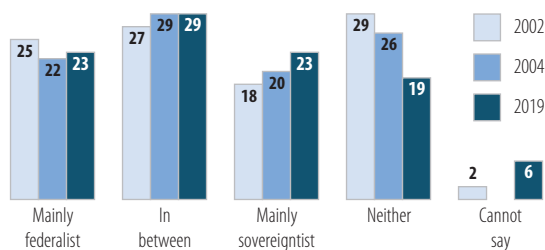
There have been relatively few changes in responses to this question since 2002. Quebecers are a bit more likely to identify as sovereigntists and less apt to say they are neither, and this is equally the case for francophones. It is notable that at a time when the electoral fortunes of the both the PQ and the BQ are at all-time lows, there is little evidence that Quebecers are shifting their allegiance to a federalist perspective.<sup>8</sup>

As before, younger Quebec francophones remain less likely to identify as either federalist or sovereigntist. Close to three in four francophones 18 to 24 years of age place themselves somewhere in between these two identities or neither; the remainder of this age cohort considers themselves mainly a federalist (14%) or a sovereigntist (18%). By comparison, the majority of Quebec francophones ages 55 and older identify with either one of the two traditional sides of the debate, whether federalist (31%) or sovereigntist (32%). Not surprisingly, Quebec francophones who believe the French language is under threat are more than three times as likely to consider themselves mainly a sovereigntist (33%) as those who do not hold this view (9%).

**Has the time for sovereignty passed?** The question of Quebec sovereignty has been off the “front burner” in provincial politics, with the collapse of both the PQ and BQ in recent years. While some may speculate that the time for this political movement has come and gone, many are not ready to accept this judgement. Just over half of Quebecers strongly (31%) or somewhat (24%) agree that “*Quebec sovereignty is an idea whose time has passed*”, while one in three somewhat (22%) or strongly (13%) disagree, and another 10 percent cannot say either way. Views vary by language group, with *strong* agreement much more prevalent among anglophones (57%) and allophones (49%).

## Identify as a federalist or sovereigntist?

2002 – 2019 Quebec

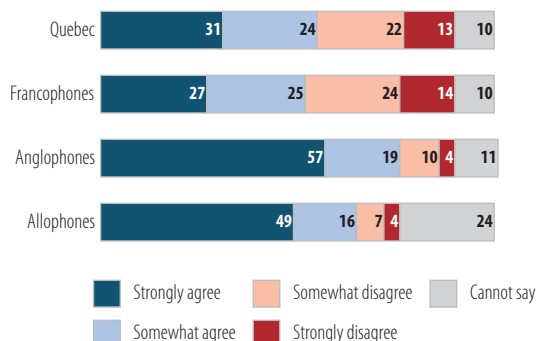


Q.29.

Do you consider yourself to be mainly a federalist, mainly a sovereigntist, someone who is in between the two, or someone who is neither one nor the other?

## Quebec sovereignty an idea whose time has passed

2019 Quebec



Q.30.

Do you strongly agree, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree or strongly disagree with the following statement: “*Quebec sovereignty is an idea whose time has passed*”?

The proportion of Quebecers that believe that sovereignty is an idea whose time has passed is largely unchanged from the early 2000s, reflecting a small shift from those who “disagree” to those who have no opinion. In the early 2000s, younger Quebecers were less apt to agree that the time for sovereignty had passed, but this gap has narrowed. As might be expected, agreement with the statement is significantly less evident among Quebec francophones who believe the French language is threatened (45% versus 72% among those who say there is no such threat).

<sup>8</sup> It should be pointed out that, historically, sovereignty identity tends to rise when the PQ is out of power because it is when the stakes of this identity are lower since the prospects for a referendum is least at play.

## Western alienation

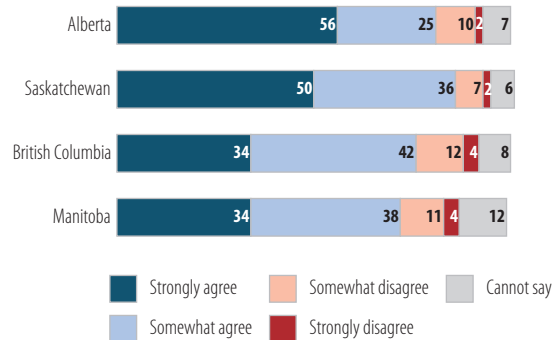
Most Western Canadians believe their region is ignored in national politics, as they have for decades. Since 2010, there have been growing opinions that the West would be better off outside of Canada, with this sentiment strengthening most significantly in Alberta and Saskatchewan.

**Being ignored in national politics.** Since their entry into Confederation, Western Canadian provinces have felt left out of national political considerations, even as their populations and economic roles steadily expanded over time. This sentiment has undergone cycles and is once again on the upswing, this time fueled by a major downturn in the oil and gas industry. Close to eight in ten Western Canadians strongly (43%) or somewhat (35%) agree with the statement “The West usually gets ignored in national politics because the political parties depend upon Quebec and Ontario for most of their votes”, compared with fewer than one in five who disagree (14%) or are unable to offer an opinion (8%).

This view is prevalent across the West, but strong agreement is most pronounced in Alberta (56%) and Saskatchewan (50%), as well as among older residents (55% among those 55 and older, compared with only 30% among those 18 to 24 years of age).

Western Canadians’ feeling of being ignored in national politics has been remarkably stable for more than three decades, as confirmed by the results for this question on a number of previous surveys stretching back to 1987. The proportion of westerners agreeing with this statement has remained between 80 and 90 percent in most provinces throughout most of this period. Since 1997, such agreement has declined modestly in Manitoba (down 8 percentage points) and British Columbia (down 6); these are the lowest values yet recorded in these provinces, but still reflect a strong majority view about the West being ignored by Central Canada.

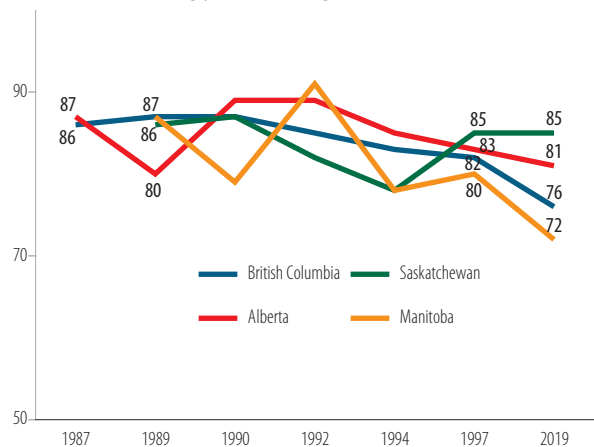
### The West usually gets ignored in national politics 2019 Western provinces



Q.22c.

Please tell me whether you strongly agree, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree or strongly disagree with the following statement: The West usually gets ignored in national politics because the political parties depend upon Quebec and Ontario for most of their votes.

### The West usually gets ignored in national politics 1987 – 2019 % strongly/somewhat agree



Q.22c.

Please tell me whether you strongly agree, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree or strongly disagree with the following statement: The West usually gets ignored in national politics because the political parties depend upon Quebec and Ontario for most of their votes.

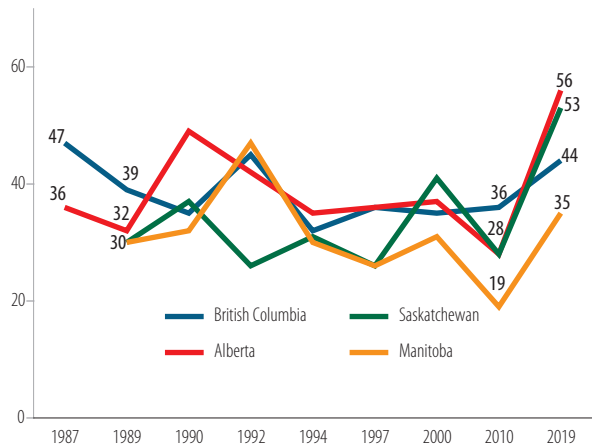
**Going it alone.** Given the sense of alienation from the rest of the country, it is no surprise that many Western Canadians believe their region or province may be better off on their own. Close to half of residents in this region strongly (19%) or somewhat (29%) agree that “*Western Canada gets so few benefits from being part of Canada that they might as well go it on their own*”, compared with four in ten who somewhat (23%) or strongly (18%) disagree, and another 11 percent who cannot say. Westerners’ agreement with this statement has strengthened significantly since 2010, and is now at the highest level recorded since 1987.

As with sentiments about being ignored in national politics, support for going it alone is strongest in Alberta and Saskatchewan, where the proportions agreeing with the statement have jumped 28 and 25 percentage points, respectively, since 2010. Manitobans are less likely than other westerners to share this perspective, but even in this province support for going it alone has increased by 16 points.

Unlike with views about the region being ignored, support for separation from Canada is equally strong among younger and older westerners. This represents a significant shift since 2010, when it was older residents who were most likely to express this sentiment.

## Western Canada gets so few benefits that it may as well go it on its own

1987 – 2019 % strongly/somewhat agree



Q.22b.

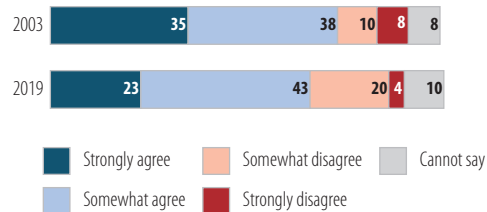
Please tell me whether you strongly agree, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree or strongly disagree with the following statement: *Western Canada gets so few benefits from being part of Canada that they might as well go it on their own.*

## Newfoundland and Labrador

Two-thirds of Newfoundlanders believe that joining Confederation has been good for their province, although this proportion is a bit lower than that found in 2003.

Newfoundland and Labrador was the last province to join Confederation (in 1949) and at the time it was a highly controversial decision. Seventy years later, how do residents of this province feel about the decision? In 2019, two-thirds of Newfoundlanders strongly (23%) or somewhat (43%) agree that Confederation has been a good thing for their province, compared with one in four who somewhat (20%) or strongly (4%) disagree. This endorsement for becoming part of Canada is a bit lower than in 2003, when close to three in four agreed with this statement. Newfoundlanders are less likely in 2019 than in 2003 to have strong opinions about this question either way.<sup>9</sup>

### Confederation has been good for Newfoundland & Labrador 2003 – 2019



Q.14.

*All things considered, do you agree or disagree that Confederation has been a good thing for Newfoundland and Labrador?*

<sup>9</sup> It is possible that the difference in strength of opinion is due in part to the effect of the two surveys being conducted using different modes and/or a different size of provincial subsamples (the 2003 survey was conducted by telephone with 1,001 respondents).

## Is federalism worth the trouble?

Canadians are more likely than not to endorse the country's federal system of government, but opinions are less positive than in past decades. As on other measures, regional differences stand out – with residents in Alberta and Saskatchewan generally the most negative.

**Advantages of federalism.** Apart from the specific strengths and limitations afforded by Canada's system of government, do Canadians think the benefits outweigh the costs? At a national level, opinions are more positive than negative, but with the usual divergence of views along regional lines. Half of Canadians strongly (14%) or somewhat (36%) agree that "Canadian federalism has more advantages than disadvantages", twice the proportion that somewhat (19%) or strongly (7%) disagree, with a sizeable minority (24%) who cannot say either way. While the balance of opinion is positive, it is less so than in previous years, with a modest decline since 2010, and a more noticeable one prior to that.

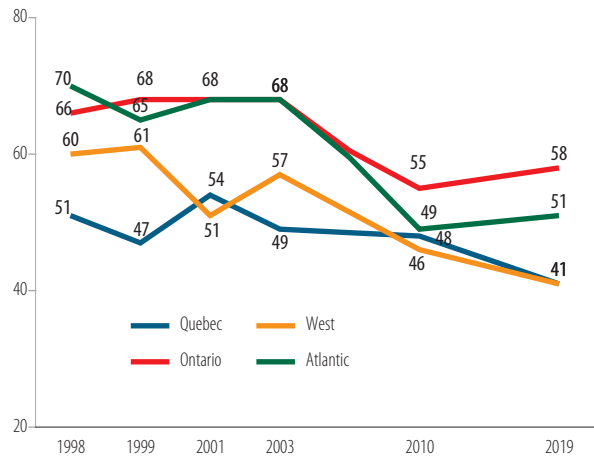
Across the country, views about federalism are largely in line with those related to opinions about how one's own province or region is treated in the federation. Agreement that federalism has more advantages than disadvantages is most widespread in Prince Edward Island (62%), Ontario (58%), and Newfoundland and Labrador (56%), with this view least evident in Saskatchewan and Alberta (33% each).<sup>10</sup>

The downward trend is apparent in all regions and provinces, with the most notable declines since 2003 in Saskatchewan (down 27 points), Manitoba (down 26), and Nova Scotia (down 23). Quebecers have been among the least positive about the advantages of federalism, but opinions have declined much less noticeably in this province over time.

In 2019, support for federalism increases along with education level and household income, and is also most evident among first generation Canadians. Relatively few in any region or subgroup of the population has a strong opinion on this question, with many unable to offer an opinion.

## Canadian federalism has more advantages than disadvantages

1998 – 2019 % strongly/somewhat agree



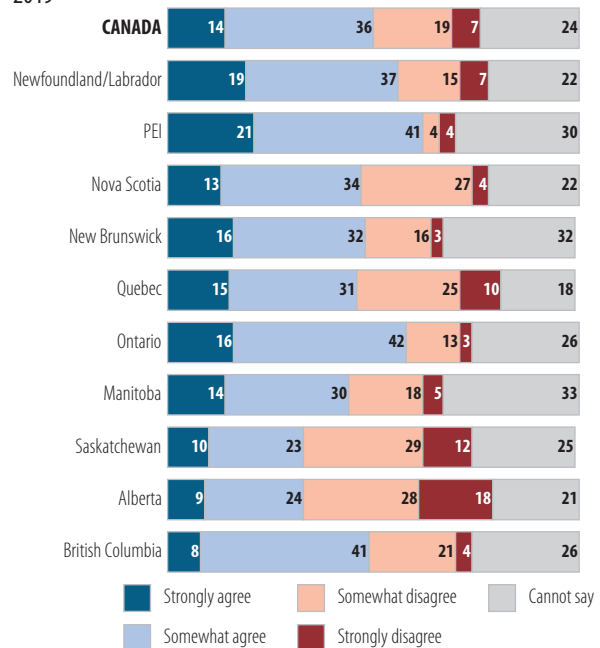
Q.22d,e.

Please tell me whether you strongly agree, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree, or strongly disagree with the following statement: Canadian federalism more advantages than disadvantages/more disadvantages than advantages\* for [PROV/TERR] [Split sample]

\*Split sample

## Canadian federalism has more advantages than disadvantages

2019



Q.22d,e.

Please tell me whether you strongly agree, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree, or strongly disagree with the following statement: Canadian federalism more advantages than disadvantages/more disadvantages than advantages\* for [PROV/TERR] [Split sample]

\*Split sample

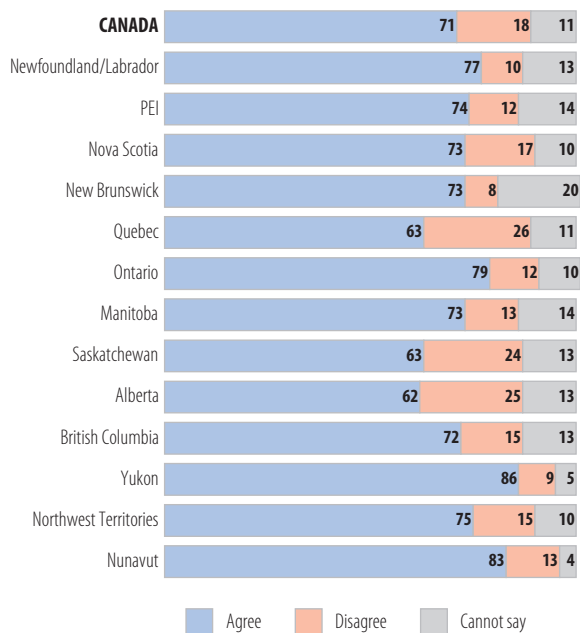
<sup>10</sup> The results for the Territories are not reported because this question was asked of only 50% of the survey sample, and so the Territory subsamples are too small to report.



**Federalism is best because of the country's diversity.** While the results of this survey clearly show deep divisions across the country on how federalism is working, there is also widespread agreement that a federal-type system is best given Canada's diversity. Seven in ten Canadians strongly (25%) or somewhat (46%) agree that "A federal system of government is the best one for Canada because we are a country made up of many different peoples and nations", compared with about one in five who somewhat (13%) or strongly (5%) disagrees.<sup>11</sup>

Unlike most of the other questions on this survey, agreement about the appropriateness of a federal system of government for Canada is the majority view in all 13 provinces and territories, although this is more widely the case in the Territories (80%), Ontario (79%) and Newfoundland and Labrador (77%), and somewhat less so in Quebec (63%), Saskatchewan (63%) and Alberta (62%), as well as among Indigenous Peoples (61%) and Canadians who are struggling financially (61%).

### A federal system is best because Canada is such a diverse country 2019



Q.22f.  
Please tell me whether you strongly agree, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree, or strongly disagree with the following statement: A federal system of government is the best one for Canada because we are a country made up of many different peoples and nations.

<sup>11</sup> This question was asked in 2019 for the first time, so there is no comparable data from previous surveys.

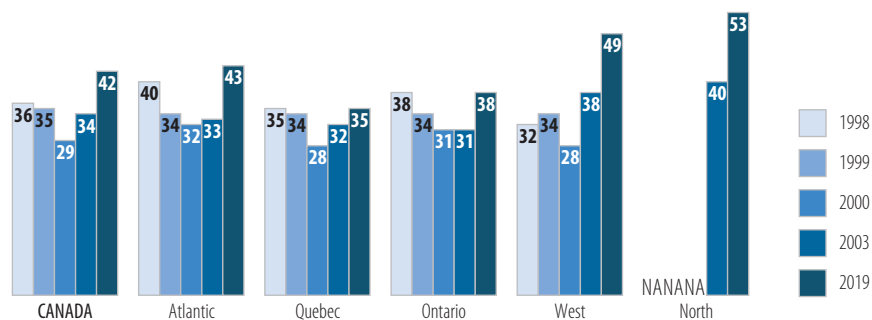
**Is the federal government still relevant?** How much importance do Canadians place on the federal government as an institution that makes a difference in their lives? Four in ten strongly (13%) or somewhat (29%) agree with the statement “The federal government has become virtually irrelevant to me”, compared with one-half who somewhat (31%) or strongly (18%) disagree, and another 10 percent who cannot say either way. The proportion that views the federal government as irrelevant has increased steadily since 2000, when the proportion of Canadians who agreed with this statement bottomed out at 29 percent.

Opinions vary noticeably across the country, with majorities saying the federal government has become personally irrelevant in PEI (56%), Alberta (57%), Saskatchewan (57%), the Northwest Territories (60%) and Nunavut (60%). This view is least apt to be shared in Quebec (35%), Ontario

(38%) and Yukon (27%; another 48% in this territory *strongly* disagree with this statement). The proportion that agrees with the statement has increased in every region and province, with the exception of Yukon. The most significant upward trend since 2003 has taken place in the Northwest Territories (up 27 points), PEI (up 25), Saskatchewan (up 15), and Alberta (up 15). Strong agreement with the statement is most prominent in the Northwest Territories (35%) and PEI (28%).

Across the population, belief in the federal government as personally irrelevant is more prevalent among Indigenous Peoples (56% strongly or somewhat agree), anglophones (44%, versus 35% of francophones and 37% of allophones), Canadians 18 to 24 years of age (48%), those with no post-secondary education (47%), and those who are financially insecure (48%).

The federal government has become virtually irrelevant to me  
1998 – 2019



Q.22a.

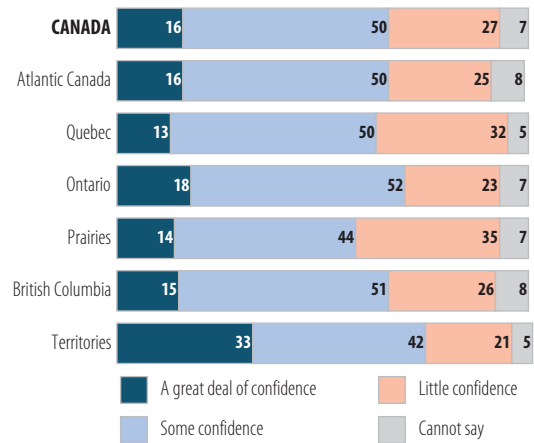
Please tell me whether you strongly agree, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree, or strongly disagree with the following statement: The federal government has become virtually irrelevant to me.

**Confidence in accommodation.** Canada owes its existence to a series of compromises and accommodations over the course of its history as a nation. How confident are Canadians in 2019 that the country can work out its differences? Two-thirds say they have a great deal of confidence (16%) or at least some confidence (50%) in the capacity or ability of Canadians to resolve their internal differences, while one in four (27%) have little confidence and another seven percent cannot say. While these results are more positive than negative on balance, Canadians are much less likely than in 1977 to say they have a great deal of confidence in such an outcome.

Public confidence in resolving differences is largely similar across all regions, but somewhat more evident in the Territories (75% a great deal or some confidence), and Ontario (70%), and less so in the Prairies (58%), notably Alberta (where 37% have little confidence). The level of confidence has declined in all regions since 1977.

Confidence in resolving the country's differences is somewhat stronger among Canadians ages 18 to 24 (73%), but not appreciably lower among older generations. Indigenous Peoples (63%) and non-Indigenous Canadians (66%) are equally likely to share this view. Such confidence is least evident among those who are struggling financially (49%), and those are dissatisfied with the direction of the country overall (54%).

### Confidence in Canadians to resolve their internal differences 2019



Q.32.  
Would you say you have a great deal of confidence, some confidence or little confidence in the capacity or ability of Canadians to resolve their internal differences?

# Appendix

## Source material

This research references a number of previous public opinion surveys, from which the current survey draws comparisons. The details of this previous research is presented below.

**Surveys conducted by the Centre for Research and Information on Canada (CRIC).** Between 1998 and 2006, CRIC conducted a series of public opinion studies on a range of national unity issues, including the evolution of support for federalism and sovereignty in Quebec, regionalism, relations with Aboriginal peoples, Canadian identity, bilingualism, multiculturalism, Canada-U.S. relations, globalization, and civic engagement. The specific surveys cited in this report are Portraits of Canada, an annual survey on attitudes toward the federation, and the New Canada survey on Canadian identity, conducted in 2003. Many of the reports and questionnaires for these surveys are available online from the Carleton University library at <https://library.carleton.ca/find/data/centre-research-and-information-canada-cric>. Selected data tables are available upon request from the authors.

**Surveys conducted by Environics Research and the Environics Institute for Survey Research.** Focus Canada is an ongoing public opinion research program that has been surveying Canadians on public policy and social issues since 1977. Between 1977 and 2009, Focus Canada was conducted on a quarterly basis as a syndicated research project by Environics Research (available to subscribers for an annual fee). Starting in 2010, Focus Canada has been conducted as a non-profit, public interest research study several times a year by the Environics Institute for Survey Research, and is available online at [www.environicsinstitute.org](http://www.environicsinstitute.org).

**Surveys conducted by the Mowat Centre.** Since its inception, the Mowat Centre has conducted two studies on the evolution of attitudes to the federation. The first, entitled *The New Ontario: The Shifting Attitudes of Ontarians Toward the Federation*, was a national survey conducted in 2010. The second, entitled *Portraits 2017*, was a survey of Ontario and Quebec that focused on a range of issues, including the federation. Survey reports are available from the Mowat Centre at [www.mowatcentre.ca](http://www.mowatcentre.ca).

**A provincial opinion study** conducted in Newfoundland and Labrador in 2003 by Ryan Research and Communications for that province's Royal Commission on Renewing and Strengthening Our Place in Canada. This study can be accessed online at <https://www.exec.gov.nl.ca/royalcomm/research/pdf/ryan.pdf>.

**The Searching Nation**, a national survey on attitudes toward federalism and national unity, conducted for Southam News in 1977 by Goldfarb Consultants Limited. A copy of the results of this survey was accessed through the University of Toronto library.



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