



# Spotlight on Alberta

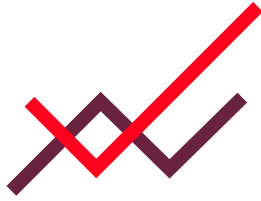


**Environics  
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*Confederation  
of Tomorrow*

2026 SERIES



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The Environics Institute for Survey Research was established by Michael Adams in 2006 with a mandate to conduct in-depth public opinion and social research on the issues shaping Canada's future. It is through such research that Canadians can better understand themselves and their changing society.

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**Secrétariat aux  
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The Confederation of Tomorrow surveys give voice to Canadians about the major issues shaping the future of the federation and their political communities. They have been conducted annually since 2019 by an association of the country's leading public policy and socio-economic research organizations.

The 2026 study consists of a survey of 5,696 adults, conducted between February 14 and March 28, 2026 (92% of the responses were collected between February 19 and March 7); 91 percent of the responses were collected online. The remaining responses were collected by telephone (both landline and cell phone) from respondents living in the North or on First Nations reserves, or from francophone respondents in New Brunswick.

The survey is conducted on behalf of all the survey partners by the Environics Institute for Survey Research. The fieldwork is managed by Elemental DCI. The online portion of the survey drew respondents from the Leger LEO panel; the telephone interviews were conducted by Elemental DCI.

The survey data are weighted in three separate ways, depending on the population of interest. First, the complete survey data are weighted by region, gender, age, education, home language (separately for Quebec, New Brunswick and the rest of Canada) and Indigenous identity, so as to be representative of the Canadian population. Second, the territorial sample (when reported separately) is weighted by gender, age and education. Third, the Indigenous sample (when reported separately) is weighted by gender, age, region and education.

[\*\*View the Confederation of Tomorrow series on our website\*\*](#)



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# Introduction

In recent years, those concerned with national unity in Canada have had to pay increasing attention to developments in Alberta. Typically, public dissatisfaction with how their province is treated within the federation has been higher elsewhere – notably in Saskatchewan, and in Newfoundland and Labrador. And a separatist political party is much more established and closer to forming government at the provincial level in Quebec. But it is the current provincial government in Alberta that has been the most outspoken in criticizing federal policies, with the premier describing herself as “deeply frustrated with the way our province has been mistreated and damaged by successive federal Liberal governments, and... not willing to tolerate the status quo any longer.” In the wake of another Liberal victory in the 2025 federal election, the Alberta government launched a series of public consultations in the province intended to “hear from Albertans on how our province can better protect ourselves from Ottawa’s attacks;” amended legislation to make it easier for citizens in the province to trigger a referendum on secession; and tabled nine other referendum questions, including several on constitutional reform, to be voted on by Albertans this October.

The Confederation of Tomorrow surveys have been tracking public opinion on federalism in Alberta (and across the country) annually since 2019.<sup>1</sup> The results from the latest survey, conducted in February and March of 2026, reveal how Albertans have been reacting to these developments within the province, as well as to the change of federal leadership in Ottawa. These results underpin four major findings.

- Overall opinions among Albertans about their province’s treatment in the Canadian federation have been steadily improving. On average, Albertans are much less likely to express feelings of “Western alienation” today than they were when this annual series of surveys began seven years ago.

1 The survey’s sample size for Alberta in 2026 is 617. Between 2019 and 2025, the Alberta varied ranged between 500 and 610.

- There has, however, also been a steady polarization of opinions in the province. Among supporters of the governing United Conservative Party (UCP), opinions about Alberta’s treatment in the federation have remained unchanged and very negative. Among supporters of the opposition New Democratic Party (NDP), opinions have changed significantly, becoming much more positive. Whatever consensus may previously have existed in the province on this issue has eroded.
- There is evidence that the change of prime minister in 2025 encouraged further improvement in attitudes about federalism or the federal government in Alberta among those who do not support the UCP government. However, there has been no marked improvement among UCP supporters. The policies of the federal government under Mark Carney’s leadership, therefore, have to date not dampened regional discontent among this group of Albertans.
- Support for Albertan independence has not grown in the short term, but remains significant at about one in four.

These findings are elaborated on in this report. A companion set of charts is also available, providing further details.

## Table 1

### Alberta survey sample size

	Alberta total	Provincial vote intention		
		UCP	NDP	Other / undecided / decline
2019	544	218	119	207
2020	500	177	133	190
2021	554	148	211	195
2022	564	126	181	257
2023	533	166	173	194
2024	572	213	176	183
2025	610	213	165	232
2026	617	201	219	197

# Identity

Just over one in two Albertans (53%) consider themselves to be a Canadian only or first, as opposed to an Albertan only or first (16%), or someone who is equally a Canadian and an Albertan (28%).

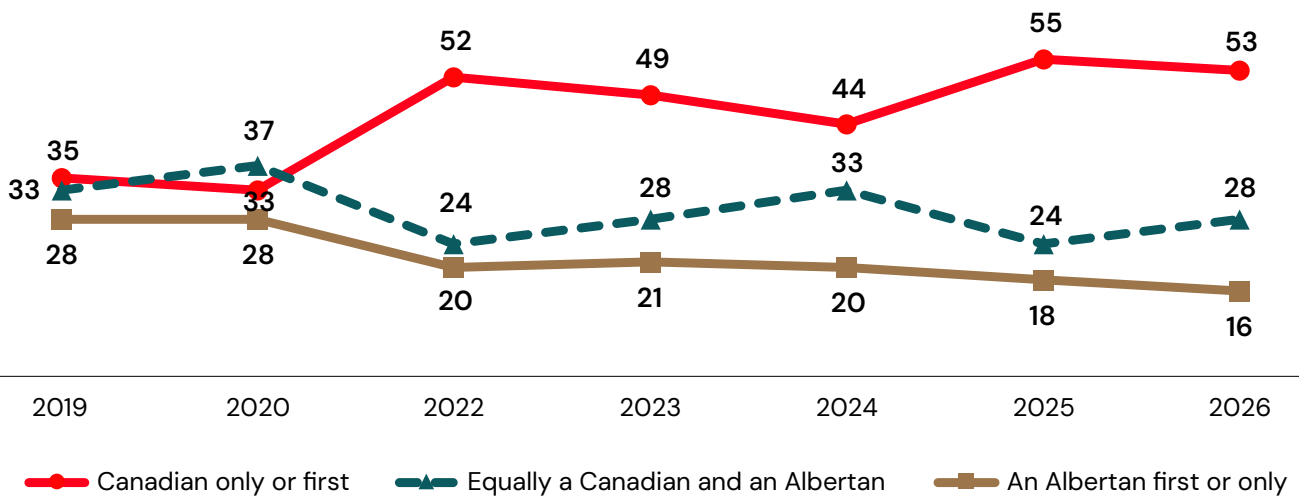
The proportion considering themselves to be a Canadian only or first has fluctuated either side of 50 percent since 2022, but is higher today than in 2019 or 2020. The proportion that considers themselves to be a Canadian *only* is more than twice as high today as in 2019 (24%, compared to 10%).

The proportion with a mainly Albertan identity (Albertan only or first) has been gradually declining, from 28 percent in 2019 to 16 percent today.

### Figure 1

#### Identity: Canadian, provincial or both?

Alberta, 2019 – 2026



*People have different ways of defining themselves. Do you consider yourself to be: A Canadian only; A Canadian first, but also an Albertan; Equally a Canadian and an Albertan; An Albertan first, but also a Canadian; An Albertan only. (Non-Indigenous respondents only)*

The proportion of Albertans who consider themselves to be a Canadian *only* is more than twice as high today as in 2019.

The Canadian identity has strengthened more so for supporters of the provincial NDP than for UCP supporters. Among NDP supporters, the proportion considering themselves to be a Canadian only or first is 31 percentage points higher today than in 2019 (74%, compared to 43%), with the biggest increase occurring between 2020 and 2022 (before and after the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic). Among UCP supporters, the proportion considering themselves to be a Canadian only or first is only seven percentage points higher today than in 2019 (35%, compared to 28%).



# Respect, influence and fairness

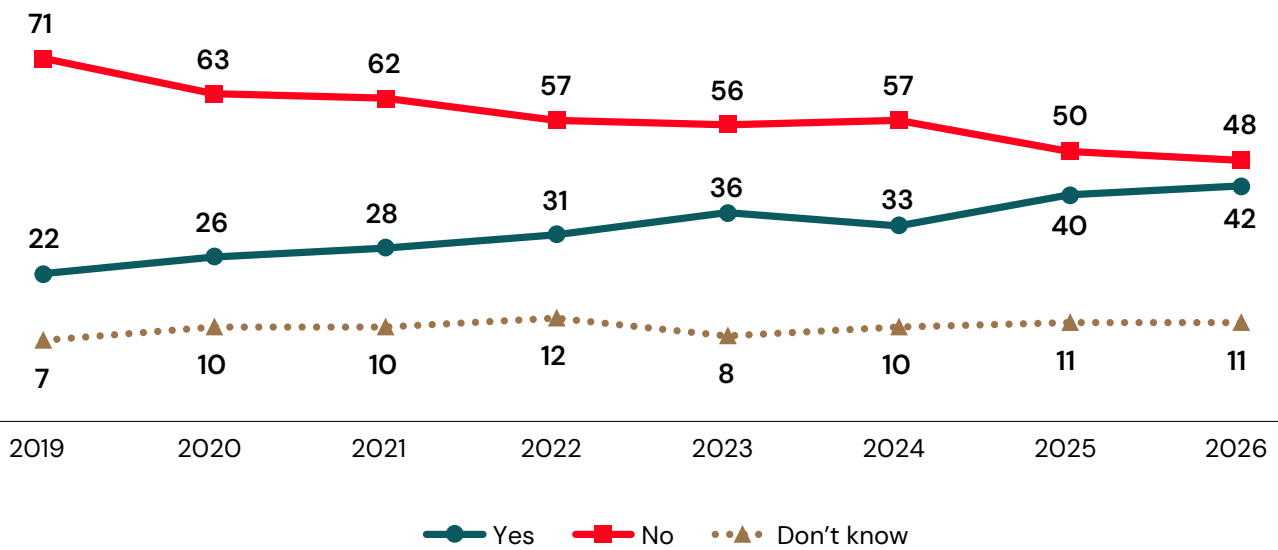
The overall proportions of Albertans who say their province is not treated with the respect it deserves in Canada, has less than its fair share of influence on important national decisions, and receives less than its fair share of federal spending have all steadily declined since 2019:

- The proportion saying that Alberta is not treated with respect has fallen by 23 percentage points, from 71 to 48 percent.
- The proportion saying that Alberta has less than its fair share of influence on important national decisions in Canada has fallen by 17 points, from 67 to 50 percent.
- The proportion saying that Alberta receives less than its fair share of the money the federal government spends on different programs and transfers to the provinces and territories has fallen by 17 points, from 68 to 51 percent.

## Figure 2

Is Alberta treated with the respect it deserves in Canada or not?

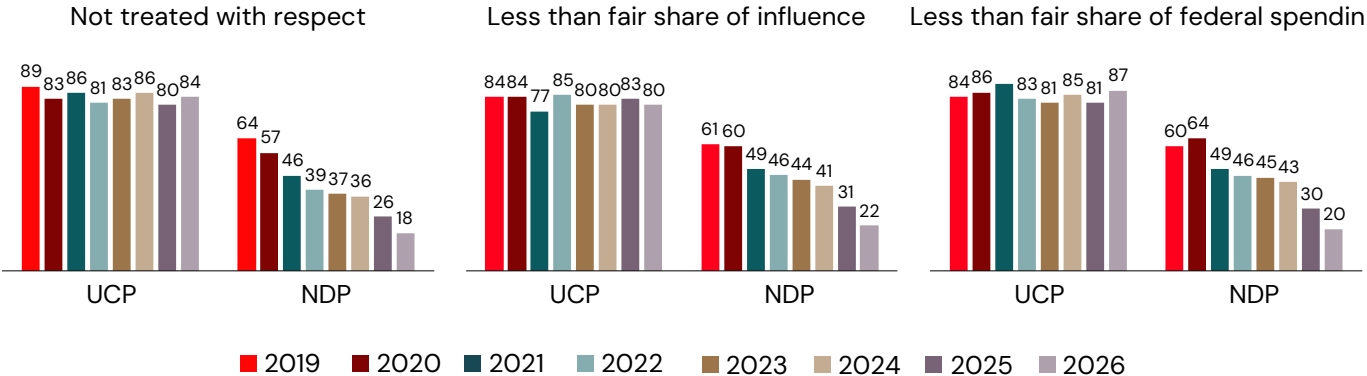
Alberta, 2019 – 2026



The extent of change in opinions, however, is dramatically different between supporters of the government and of the opposition. Among those who would vote UCP in a provincial election, there has been no significant change: more than eight out of ten continue to say the province is not respected, has less than its fair share of influence, and receives less than its fair share of federal spending. But among those who would vote NDP, the proportions holding these views have dropped steadily and significantly since this series of surveys began in 2019.

As a result, there is no longer anything resembling a consensus in the province on these questions. At the beginning of this period, majorities of both UCP and NDP supporters agreed that Alberta was not treated fairly within the federation; now, very few NDP supporters agree. On the issue of lack of respect, a 25-point gap separated UCP and NDP supporters in 2019; today, the gap has widened to 66 points.

**Figure 3**  
**Respect, influence and federal spending**  
 Alberta, 2019 – 2026, by provincial vote intention



*Not treated with respect, Less than fair share of influence, Less than fair share of federal spending.*



# Federalism

Over a period of four years, from 2021 to 2024, Albertans were evenly split between those who agreed and those who disagreed that Canadian federalism has more advantages than disadvantages for their province. But agreement began to outpace disagreement in 2025 (after the change of prime minister). In 2026, Albertans are 23 percentage points more likely to agree than to disagree (49%, compared to 26%). But this change is much more pronounced among NDP supporters than UCP supporters. The proportion agreeing that federalism has more advantages than disadvantages for Alberta has increased by 23 points among NDP supporters since 2024 (from 54% to 77%), compared to only a five-point increase among UCP supporters (from 26% to 31%).

Albertans have traditionally been among those most likely in Canada to favour a more decentralized federation – saying that the government of their province should take charge of many of the things the federal government currently does. But the proportion favouring this option dropped significantly over the past year, from 43 to 30 percent. While Albertans continue to be more likely to favour a shift of powers to the province than a shift of powers to Ottawa, the margin has eroded significantly: preference for decentralization outweighed that for centralization by 38 points in 2019, but by only seven points in 2026.

Albertans have traditionally been among those most likely to favour a more decentralized federation. But the proportion favouring this option dropped significantly over the past year.

Supporters of the provincial NDP are 31 points more likely to support a shift of powers to Ottawa today than in 2019 (an increase from 15% to 46%); among UCP supporters, there has been no change (7% in both 2019 and 2026).



## More from this series

For more on how Albertans and other Canadians view the state of federal-provincial relations in Canada, see the previous report from this survey.



### Building Faster? Public Expectations for Collaboration in the Canadian Federation





# Which government is the best representative?

Albertans, like other Canadians, are more likely to say their provincial government is the one that best represents their interests than they are to say it is the federal government. But the proportion holding this view has dropped over the past year, from 40 percent to 28 percent.

The proportion saying the federal government is the best representative of their interests did not change between 2025 and 2026. However, the proportion choosing their municipal government increased slightly (from 9% to 13%), as did the proportion that says that no government best represents them (from 19% to 24%), and the proportion not expressing an opinion (from 8% to 11%).

The proportion of supporters of the provincial NDP who say the government of Alberta best represents their interests is very low (typically about one in ten) and has changed very little over the past few years. However, since 2024, the proportion of NDP supporters who say no government best represents them has fallen by 20 percentage points (from 39% to 19%), while the proportion choosing the federal government increased by 18 points (from 28% to 46%). In other words, the change of prime minister in

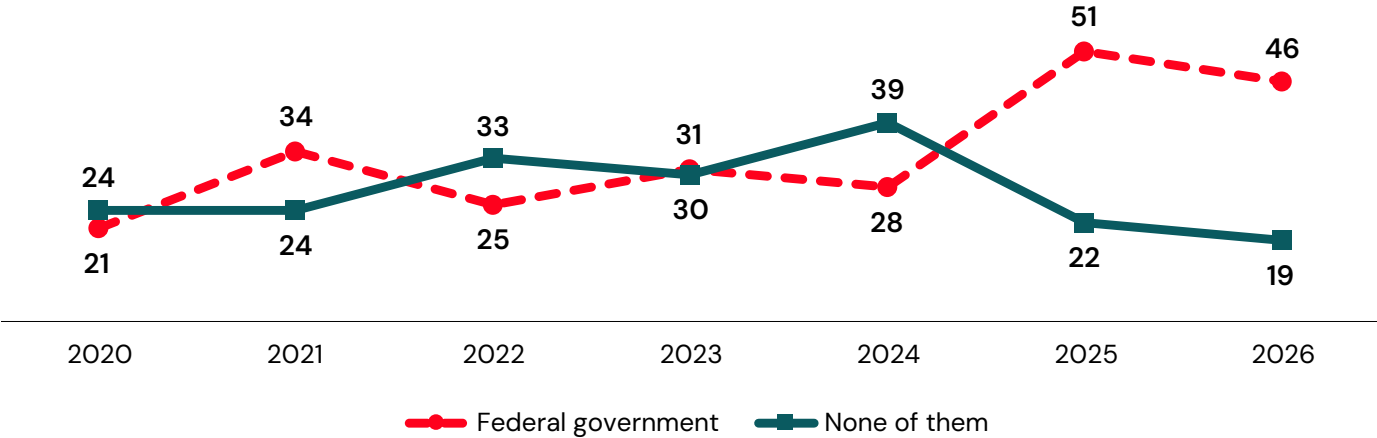
2025 encouraged a number of opposition party supporters in the province who felt poorly represented by all governments to switch to expressing more comfort with the representation they received from Ottawa.

Albertans are more likely to say their provincial government is the one that best represents their interests than they are to say it is the federal government. But the proportion holding this view has dropped over the past year.

**Figure 4**

Which government do you believe best represents your interests?

Alberta, 2020 – 2026, by provincial vote intention, NDP supporters





# Remaining in or leaving Canada

In 2019, a majority of Albertans (56%) agreed with the notion that “Western Canada gets so few benefits from being part of Canada that they might as well go it on their own.” Over the following six years (from 2020 to 2025), opinions were more evenly split – with roughly equal proportions agreeing and disagreeing. Over the past year, however, agreement dropped by 10 percentage points, falling to 34 percent – the lowest level since this series of surveys started in 2019. For the first time in the Confederation of Tomorrow surveys, a majority of Albertans (53%) now reject the notion that Western Canada might as well go it on their own.

Among supporters of the provincial UCP government (62%), the proportion agreeing that “Western Canada gets so few benefits from being part of Canada that they might as well go it on their own” was unchanged between 2025 and 2026.

However, it fell by 10 percentage points (from 20% to 10%) among supporters of the opposition NDP.

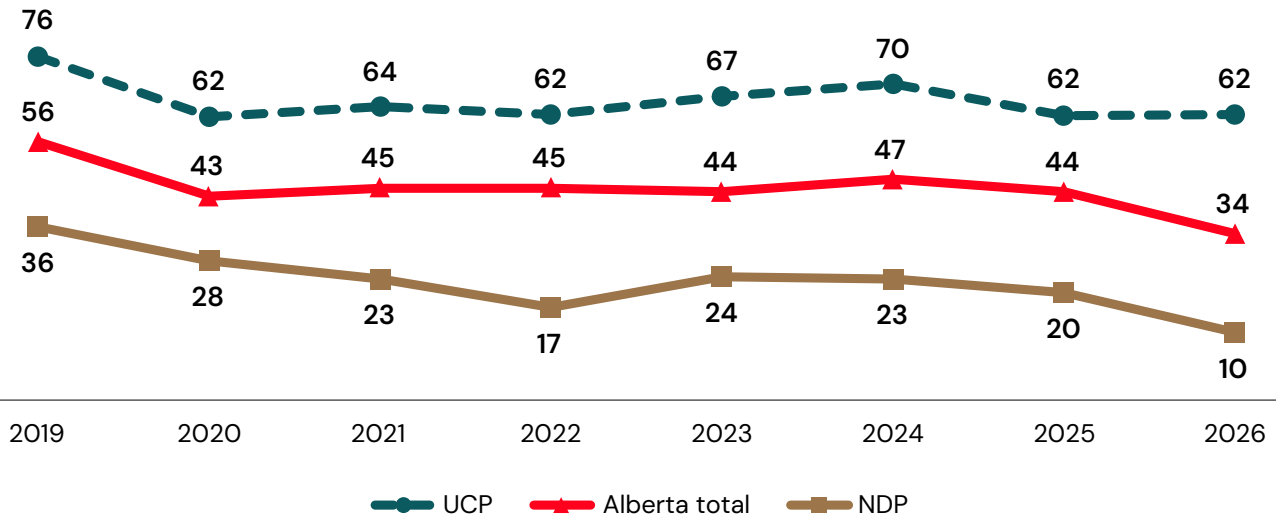
It fell by an even larger amount (from 41% to 26%) among those who would support another party, are undecided or decline to answer how they would vote in a provincial election.

For the first time in the Confederation of Tomorrow surveys, a majority of Albertans now reject the notion that Western Canada might as well go it on their own.

## Figure 5

### Agree: Western Canada gets so few benefits from being part of Canada that they might as well go it on their own

Alberta, 2019 – 2026, by provincial vote intention



In 2025, the Confederation of Tomorrow reintroduced a different question – one that had been previously asked in the early 1980s.<sup>2</sup> This question asked people to choose among three options for the four Western Canadian provinces: combine to form a country independent from Canada; join the United States; or remain as four individual provinces of Canada.

A majority of Albertans prefer that the four Western provinces remain in Canada: 66 percent currently hold this view, a slight increase from 2025, when the figure stood at 62 percent. Far fewer prefer that these provinces combine to form an independent country: 16 percent today prefer this option (down slightly from 22% in 2025). Seven percent would prefer that the four Western provinces join the United States and 12 percent do not pick any of these options.

2 The earlier results were reported in the report on [The Prairies and B.C. in Confederation](#), based on the 2025 Confederation of Tomorrow survey.

Supporters of the provincial NDP are almost unanimous in preferring that the four Western provinces remain in Canada: 90 percent currently hold this view. Supporters of the UCP, however, are more divided on this question: almost one in two (47%) favour remaining in Canada, while 30 percent would prefer that these provinces combine to form an independent country, and 12 percent would like to see these provinces join the U.S. There has been little change among either group of supporters in these preferences since last year.

A final question asks more succinctly whether Albertans favour or oppose their province becoming an independent country. Two in three oppose (66%) independence, compared to one in four (25%) who are in favour (an additional 8% do not express an opinion either way). A majority in the province (57%) are strongly opposed to independence for Alberta.

A question asked in the 2021 edition of this survey was worded slightly differently, but produced an almost identical result: at the time, 65 percent of Albertans said no, their province should not separate from Canada and form an independent country, while 21 percent said yes, it should; and 13 percent were undecided.

The version of this question used in the current survey was asked in earlier Environics surveys in the late 1990s and early 2000s.<sup>3</sup> Opposition to independence among Albertans was higher in 1997 and 2000, reaching almost 90 percent. It then fell to 75 percent by 2005, which is higher than where it stands today (66%).<sup>4</sup> About one in ten Albertans were in favour of independence for their province in 1997 and 2000. However, this proportion grew to one in four (25%) by 2005, the same level as today.

In short, while support for independence in Alberta was lower in the late 1990s, there appears to have been no increase in support over the two decades between the last Environics survey in 2005 and the current Confederation of Tomorrow survey in 2026.

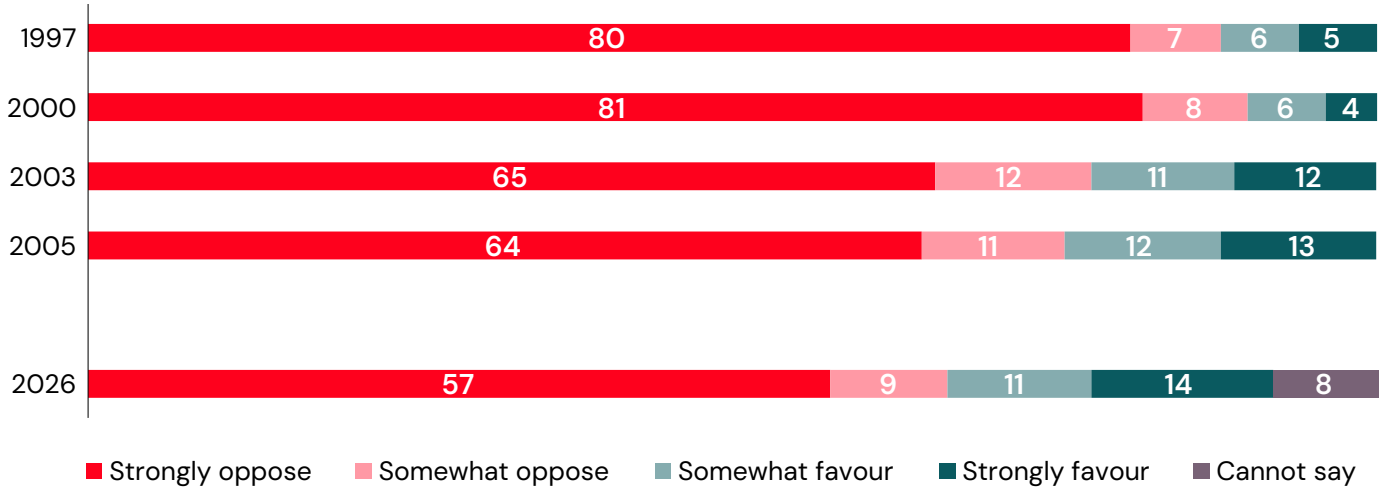
3 Note that the sample size for Alberta for the earlier surveys (approximately 200) was smaller than that for the Confederation of Tomorrow surveys.

4 The comparison with the earlier surveys is imperfect because of the change in survey method. The earlier surveys were conducted either in person or by telephone. This method generally results in fewer undecided responses compared with surveys conducted online, since “don’t know” option in response to a question is not initially offered by the interviewer.

## Figure 6

### Alberta: Favour or oppose independence

Alberta, 1997 – 2026



*Thinking about your own province, do you strongly favour, somewhat favour, somewhat oppose or strongly oppose Alberta becoming an independent country? Source for earlier years: Environics, Focus Canada.*

As with the previous questions relating to independence, current opinions on this question differ significantly according to provincial party allegiances. As expected, supporters of the NDP are almost unanimous in rejecting independence: only eight percent are in favour and 91 percent are opposed (including 88% who are strongly opposed). UCP supporters, by contrast, are more evenly split, with 48 percent in favour and 45 percent opposed. An equal share of UCP supporters (30%) are either strongly in favour or strongly opposed. Those who support another provincial party, or who do not know or state how they would vote in a provincial election, fall in between NDP and UCP supporters, with only 18 percent in favour of independence and 66 percent opposed.



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