



Press Release

Western Alienation on the Rise? Not So Much.

Vancouver BC, October 9, 2018 — British Columbia and the federal government have been in court arguing over the TransMountain pipeline. Alberta has threatened to pull out of the federal government’s national climate change plan in protest of a federal court ruling on the same pipeline. And Saskatchewan’s premier recently told the Prime Minister that the province is strongly opposed to a federally imposed carbon tax and needs the federal government to find a way to get the pipeline built.

Despite these tensions, a new Ipsos online poll of adult Canadians in the four western provinces shows western Canadians are every bit as committed to Canada as they were 20 years ago. Albertans are a little angrier at the moment, but across the west there is little interest in separation and most measures of connection to Canada are consistent with prior polls taken conducted as long ago as 1997.

Ipsos surveyed 1,600 adults in western Canada, including 400 respondents in each of British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan and Manitoba. Results are compared to surveys conducted in 2001 and 1997 (Both n=2,800; 800 BC, 800 AB, 600 SK, 600 MB).

Western Canadian Identity

Western Canadians do believe there is a unique western Canadian identity. Three-quarters (76%) say that they personally think there is a unique western Canadian identity. Belief in this unique identity is consistent in the three most western provinces, but a little lower among Manitobans (67%).

Current belief that there is a unique western Canadian identity is unchanged from 2001, but up 8 points compared to 1997. Manitoba has consistently been the province least likely to believe there is a unique western Canadian identity.

Think there is a unique western Canadian identity.	Total	BC	AB	SK	MB
2018	76%	76%	79%	77%	67%
2001	76%	77%	79%	73%	71%
1997	68%	70%	68%	70%	61%

Belief Views of Western Canadians Represented in Ottawa

One thing that unites many western Canadians is a belief that their views are not adequately represented in Ottawa. Today, only two-in-ten (19%) agree with the statement that *‘I think the views of western Canadians are adequately represented in Ottawa.’* (Agreement for this and other statements is defined as ratings of 5 to 7, on a 7 point scale where 7 is ‘agree completely’ and 1 is ‘disagree completely’.) Manitobans are a little more likely to agree that their views are represented in Ottawa, but still it is only about one-quarter (26%) of residents agreeing with this sentiment.

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These results are essentially unchanged from 2001, when 20% agreed that their views are adequately represented in Ottawa. Provincial level results are also very close to 2001, with the biggest change being a 4 point drop in agreement among Albertans (from 22% to 18%).

Agree (5-7) 'I think the views of western Canadians are adequately represented in Ottawa.'	Total	BC	AB	SK	MB
2018	19%	20%	18%	15%	26%
2001	20%	17%	22%	17%	26%
1997	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a

Belief Province Gets Fair Share from Confederation

Many western Canadians are not pleased with what their province is getting out of Canada. Half (49%) agree with the statement that *'My province does not get its fair share from Confederation.'* This result, however, is consistent with levels of agreement in both 2001 (53%) and 1997 (49%).

There has been a shift in which province is most likely to say it is not getting its fair share. In both 2001 and 1997, BC stood as the province most concerned about not receiving its fair share. Today that concern has shifted to Alberta, where 62% agree that their province is not getting its fair share from Confederation. Since 2001, agreement with this sentiment has increased 13 points in Alberta (from 49% to 62%) and declined 19 points in BC (from 59% to 40%). Results in Saskatchewan and Manitoba are consistent with 2001.

Agree (5-7) 'My province does not get its fair share from Confederation.'	Total	BC	AB	SK	MB
2018	49%	40%	62%	54%	40%
2001	53%	59%	49%	53%	42%
1997	49%	55%	45%	45%	41%

Attachment to Province Over Country

Western Canadians are no more attached to their provinces today than they were in the past 20 years. Currently, 43% of residents agree with the statement that *'I feel more attached to my province than I do to Canada.'* Similar levels of agreement were recorded in 2001 (45%) and 1997 (42%).

Agreement with this sentiment has increased compared to 1997 in both Alberta (up 7 points from 39% to 46%) and Saskatchewan (up 8 points from 39% to 47%), but the change in both provinces compared to 2001 is negligible.

Manitobans are the least likely to agree they are more attached to their province than country, which is consistent with findings in both prior surveys.

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Agree (5-7) 'I feel more attached to my province than I do to Canada.'	Total	BC	AB	SK	MB
2018	43%	43%	46%	47%	31%
2001	45%	47%	44%	45%	40%
1997	42%	45%	39%	39%	37%

Commitment to Canada

There may be tensions and grievances, but most western Canadians say they are as committed to Canada as in the past. Only one-quarter (26%) agree with the statement that *'I feel less committed to Canada than I did a few years ago.'* This result is very close to agreement levels in both 2001 (28%) and 1997 (23%).

At a provincial level, agreement that they are less committed to Canada is higher among residents of Alberta (34%) and Saskatchewan (29%) than among residents of BC (20%) and Manitoba (18%). Compared to 2001, an increase in agreement in Alberta (up 5 points from 29% to 34%) has been offset by decreases in agreement in both BC (down 8 points from 28% to 20%) and Manitoba (down 9 points from 27% to 18%).

Agree (5-7) 'I feel less committed to Canada than I did a few years ago.'	Total	BC	AB	SK	MB
2018	26%	20%	34%	29%	18%
2001	28%	28%	29%	30%	27%
1997	23%	25%	22%	23%	22%

Separation from Canada

Most western Canadians also reject the notion that their province would be better off if it separated from Canada. Slightly less than two-in-ten (18%) agree with the statement that *'My province would be better off if it separated from Canada.'* Agreement with this sentiment is highest in Alberta (25%) and lowest in Manitoba (6%).

Overall agreement is up only 3 percentage points from 2001 (from 15% to 18%). This increase is driven by a 6 point increase in Alberta (from 19% to 25%) and a 5 point increase in Saskatchewan (from 13% to 18%). Results in BC and Manitoba are within one point of results from 2001.

Agree (5-7) 'My province would be better off if it separated from Canada.'	Total	BC	AB	SK	MB
2018	18%	15%	25%	18%	6%
2001	15%	16%	19%	13%	7%
1997	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a

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About the Study

These are the findings of an Ipsos poll conducted between September 11 and 17, 2018. For this survey, a sample of 1,600 western Canadians aged 18+ was interviewed online via the Ipsos I-Say panel and non-panel sources. This sample included 400 residents in each of British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan and Manitoba. Quota sampling and weighting were employed to balance demographics to ensure that the sample's composition reflects that of the western Canadian and provincial adult populations according to Census data and to provide results intended to approximate the sample universe. The precision of Ipsos online polls is measured using a credibility interval. In this case, the overall results are accurate to within ± 2.8 percentage points, 19 times out of 20, had all western Canadian adults been polled. The provincial level results are accurate to within ± 5.6 percentage points, 19 times out of 20. The credibility interval will be wider among subsets of the population. All sample surveys and polls may be subject to other sources of error, including, but not limited to coverage error, and measurement error.

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About Ipsos

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