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Canadians Across All Regions Feel Country More Divided than Ever

Election Outcome Increases Support for Separation in Alberta and Saskatchewan

Vancouver, BC (November 5, 2019) — A new Ipsos poll shows Canadians from all regions feeling that the country is more divided than ever. Alberta and Saskatchewan residents feel the most negative about the election outcome, pushing support for separation to new highs, above (Alberta) and on par (Saskatchewan) with Quebec. Nevertheless, the mood in Alberta and Saskatchewan is one more of disappointment than outright anger, with most still rejecting that their province would be better off separated from Canada. Moreover, a surge in western alienation is limited to Alberta and Saskatchewan – the mood is far less negative in BC and Manitoba.

A Country Divided

Canadians see a country divided coming out of the recent federal election. Six-in-ten Canadians (59%), including a majority in all regions of the country, agree with the statement that ‘Canada is more divided than ever’ (20% strongly agree, 39% somewhat agree). Three-in-ten Canadians (31%) disagree with the idea that the country is more divided than ever (9% strongly disagree, 22% somewhat disagree), while 10% are undecided.

Agreement that the country is more divided than ever is highest in the two western provinces of Alberta (79%) and Saskatchewan (77%). A majority of residents in the two other western provinces of Manitoba (58%) and BC (54%) also agree the country is divided, but their agreement is aligned with Ontario (56%) and Quebec (54%) and not their western neighbours. Two-thirds (66%) of Atlantic Canadians agree the country is more divided than ever.

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Rising, but Still Moderate, Appetite for Separation in Alberta and Saskatchewan

Alberta and Saskatchewan residents are not happy, and there is rising support for separation in both provinces, although well below majority levels in either province. One-third (33%) of Albertans and slightly more than one-quarter (27%) of Saskatchewan residents agree with the statement that ‘my province would be better off if it separated from Canada’. A belief that Alberta would be better off if it separated is up 8 points from just over a year ago (from 25% to 33%) and up 14 points from 2001 (was 19%). A belief that Saskatchewan would be better off if it separated is up 9 points from just over a year ago (from 18% to 27%) and up 14 points from 2001 (was 13%).

Only Quebecers (26%) rival Alberta and Saskatchewan in the belief that their province would be better off after separation. Very few residents in other regions think their province would be better off (13% BC, 11% Manitoba, 9% Atlantic Canada, 8% Ontario).

Agree (5-7) ‘My province would be better off if it separated from Canada.’	Tracking								
	Total Canada	Total Western Canada	BC	AB	SK	MB	ON	PQ	ATL
October 2019	17%	21%	13%	33%	27%	11%	8%	26%	9%
September 2018	n/a	18%	15%	25%	18%	6%	n/a	n/a	n/a
2001	n/a	15%	16%	19%	13%	7%	n/a	n/a	n/a
1997	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a

Alberta and Saskatchewan More Disappointed than Angry

Half of Alberta (51%) and Saskatchewan (50%) residents agree the outcome of the federal election makes them feel ‘angry’. But this is much lower than the proportion who say the election outcome makes them feel ‘disappointed’ (AB 69%, SK 67%) or ‘worried’ (AB 69%, SK 65%). It is also lower than the proportion who say the election outcome makes them feel ‘sad’ (AB 55%, SK 58%).

Across each of these negative emotions, the rest of the west feels more like Ontario and Atlantic Canada. Quebec residents tend to be the least negative.

- Roughly half of residents feel ‘disappointed’ in Manitoba (55%), BC (53%), Atlantic Canada (50%), Ontario (46%) and Quebec (45%).

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- Roughly half of residents feel ‘worried’ in Atlantic Canada (53%), Manitoba (52%), Ontario (52%) and BC (51%). Quebec residents are less likely to feel ‘worried’ (39%).
- Roughly four-in-ten residents feel ‘sad’ in Manitoba (42%), BC (40%), Atlantic Canada (40%) and Ontario (37%). Quebec residents are less likely to feel ‘sad’ (30%).
- Roughly three-in-ten residents feel ‘angry’ in BC (34%), Manitoba (31%), Ontario (30%) and Atlantic Canada (28%). Quebec residents are far less likely to feel ‘angry’ (18%).

Alberta and Saskatchewan Not Getting Fair Share from Confederation

More than six-in-ten residents of Alberta (65%) and Saskatchewan (62%) agree with the statement that ‘my province does not get its fair share from Confederation’. In Alberta, this is up only 3 points from September 2018 (was 62%), but it is up considerably from earlier Ipsos surveys in 2001 (up 16 points from 49%) and 1997 (up 20 points from 45%). In Saskatchewan, agreement is up 8 points from last year (was 54%) and up 17 points compared to 1997 (was 45%).

Atlantic Canada is the only other region where a majority (54%) of residents agrees their province does not get its fair share from Confederation. Agreement is lower in Manitoba (42%, close to historic levels), BC (36%, down 4 points from 40% a year ago and down more than 20 points from 1997/2001 surveys) and Quebec (34%). Ontario residents are by far the least likely to agree their province doesn’t get it fair share (20%).

Agree (5-7) ‘My province does not get its fair share from Confederation.’	Tracking								
	Total Canada	Total Western Canada	BC	AB	SK	MB	ON	PQ	ATL
October 2019	35%	50%	36%	65%	62%	42%	20%	34%	54%
September 2018	n/a	49%	40%	62%	54%	40%	n/a	n/a	n/a
2001	n/a	53%	59%	49%	53%	42%	n/a	n/a	n/a
1997	n/a	49%	55%	45%	45%	41%	n/a	n/a	n/a

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In particular, Alberta and Saskatchewan residents are troubled with the system of equalization payments in Canada. Seven-in-ten residents of both Alberta (71%) and Saskatchewan (68%) agree with the statement that ‘Canada’s program of equalization payments is unfair to my province’.

Concerns about equalization are much lower in the rest of the country. Four-in-ten agree the system is unfair to their province in BC (42%), Manitoba (39%) and Atlantic Canada (39%). Only three-in-ten agree in Ontario (30%) and only one-quarter agree in Quebec (26%).

Some Sympathy for Alberta/Saskatchewan in Rest of Country

As would be expected, a strong majority of Alberta (76%) and Saskatchewan (79%) residents agree with the statement that ‘Alberta and Saskatchewan have good reason to be mad about how they are treated by the federal government’. Manitoba is the only other region where a majority agree with this statement and even there it is a slim majority of 54%. Close to half of Atlantic Canadians (47% agree) and Ontarians (45%) agree that Alberta and Saskatchewan have good reason to be mad. BC is a little less sympathetic at 41% agreement, while Quebecers are the least sympathetic (33% agree).

Attachment to Province Over Country

Slightly more than four-in-ten (42%) Canadians agree with the statement that ‘I feel more attached to my province than I do to Canada’. On this measure, Alberta and Saskatchewan residents do not stand out from other regions. A slim majority are more attached to their province than country in Quebec (55%), Atlantic Canada (53%) and Alberta (52%). It is just less than half in Saskatchewan (48%) and BC (45%). A provincial attachment over country is much lower in Manitoba (32%) and Ontario (30%).

Except for Alberta, an attachment to one’s province is generally consistent in western Canada compared to historic tracking. Albertans are 6 points higher for provincial attachment compared to a year ago (was 46%) and 13 points higher than in 1997 (was 39%).

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Agree (5-7) <i>'I feel more attached to my province than I do to Canada.'</i>	Tracking								
	Total Canada	Total Western Canada	BC	AB	SK	MB	ON	PQ	ATL
October 2019	42%	46%	45%	52%	48%	32%	30%	55%	53%
September 2018	n/a	43%	43%	46%	47%	31%	n/a	n/a	n/a
2001	n/a	45%	47%	44%	45%	40%	n/a	n/a	n/a
1997	n/a	42%	45%	39%	39%	37%	n/a	n/a	n/a

Belief Views of Region Represented in Ottawa

One thing that unites Canadians from across all regions is a belief that their regional views are not adequately represented in Ottawa. Today, only two-in-ten (20%) western Canadians agree with the statement that 'I think the views of western Canadians are adequately represented in Ottawa.' This result is fairly even across all western provinces and generally unchanged from tracking back to 2001.

Atlantic Canadians match western Canadians, with only 20% agreeing that the views of Atlantic Canadians are adequately represented in Ottawa. The results are better, but still well below majority agreement for believing the views of Ontarians (44%) or Quebecers (36%) are adequately represented in Ottawa.

Agree (5-7) <i>'I think the views of western Canadians are adequately represented in Ottawa.'</i>	Tracking								
	Total Canada	Total Western Canada	BC	AB	SK	MB	ON	PQ	ATL
October 2019	33%	20%	22%	18%	21%	15%	44%	36%	20%
September 2018	n/a	19%	20%	18%	15%	26%	n/a	n/a	n/a
2001	n/a	20%	17%	22%	17%	26%	n/a	n/a	n/a
1997	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a

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Commitment to Canada

Alberta and Saskatchewan residents once again stand out when it comes to agreement with the statement that ‘I feel less committed to Canada than I did a few years ago.’ Four-in-ten Alberta residents (38%) and Saskatchewan residents (42%) agree that they are less committed to Canada. For Alberta, this is an increase of just 4 points from 2018 (was 38%), but an increase of 16 points from 1997 (was 22%). For Saskatchewan, this is an increase of 13 points from 2018 (was 29%) and 19 points from 1997 (was 23%).

Quebec residents (29%) are the next most likely to agree that they are less committed to Canada than a few years ago, followed by Atlantic Canadians (22%), Manitobans (20%), Ontarians (18%) and British Columbians (17%).

Agree (5-7) ‘I feel less committed to Canada than I did a few years ago.’	Tracking								
	Total Canada	Total Western Canada	BC	AB	SK	MB	ON	PQ	ATL
October 2019	24%	27%	17%	38%	42%	20%	18%	29%	22%
September 2018	n/a	26%	20%	34%	29%	18%	n/a	n/a	n/a
2001	n/a	28%	28%	29%	30%	27%	n/a	n/a	n/a
1997	n/a	23%	25%	22%	23%	22%	n/a	n/a	n/a

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About the Study

These are the findings of an Ipsos poll conducted October 24 to November 1, 2019. For this survey, a sample of 1,516 adult Canadians (18+ years) was interviewed online via the Ipsos I-Say panel and non-panel sources. These data have been weighted by region, gender and age to reflect the population of Canada according to Census figures. The precision of Ipsos polls conducted online is measured using a credibility interval. In this case, the overall results are accurate to within ± 2.0 percentage points, 19 times out of 20, had all adult Canadians been polled. 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. Ipsos abides by the disclosure standards established by the CRIC, found here:

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About Ipsos

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