



Confederation  
of Tomorrow

# The Prairies and B.C. in Confederation

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2025 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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The Confederation of Tomorrow surveys give voice to Canadians about the major issues shaping the future of the federation and their political communities. They are conducted annually by an association of the country's leading public policy and socio-economic research organizations.

The 2025 study consists of a survey of 5,391 adults, conducted between May 1 and June 16, 2025 (92% of the responses were collected between May 6 and May 29); 90% 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.

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# Background

One of the main topics of the annual Confederation of Tomorrow surveys is the extent of regionally-based dissatisfaction with the way federalism works in Canada. Residents of the Prairie provinces – most notably of Saskatchewan and Alberta – are typically among the most dissatisfied. While the term “Western alienation” is often used to describe the sense of frustration in the region toward Ottawa, our analysis has come to focus more specifically on the three Prairie provinces, under the heading of “Prairie discontent.” This reflected a change in British Columbia, where residents had become generally less dissatisfied with their province’s place in the federation today than they were in earlier periods.

While dissatisfaction with the region’s treatment within the federation is a regular feature of Canadian politics, it moved into the spotlight in the wake of both the 2019 and 2025 federal elections, which saw the Liberal government re-elected with little representation in Saskatchewan and Alberta. In the months after the 2019 election, some of those most disappointed with the outcome advocated for “Wexit” – a term derived from the Brexit movement in the UK, which campaigned successfully for that country to leave the European Union. This was soon to be displaced from the headlines in early 2020 by the COVID-19 pandemic.

But talk of Western separatism gathered steam again following the 2025 election, in which the Conservative Party, with strong support in the Prairies, failed to win power for a fourth time in a row. In the weeks that followed, the Alberta government passed legislation to make it easier for citizens to initiate a referendum on separation, and appointed a panel to hold public hearings on the province’s future.



While the federal Liberal Party returned to government after the spring 2025 election, it did so with a different and more popular leader. And this unfolded as Donald Trump, newly returned to office as U.S. president, triggered a trade war and exacerbated tensions by expressing a desire to see Canada become an American state. These political developments at home and abroad may have impacted how Canadians in different regions assess the policies of the federal government.

In the wake of these events, this report draws on the most recent Confederation of Tomorrow survey to present an updated picture of how Western Canadians view their province's place in the federation. The survey finds that, rather than growing, levels of dissatisfaction in the three Prairie provinces with how federalism works in Canada declined between 2024 and 2025. Despite this, two in five Westerners continue to agree that the West might be better off on its own. Moreover, while a clear majority in the region wishes to stay in Canada, the proportion that would prefer to leave is higher today than it was in the early 1980s.

*The survey finds that, rather than growing, levels of dissatisfaction in the three Prairie provinces with how federalism works in Canada declined between 2024 and 2025. Despite this, two in five Westerners continue to agree that the West might be better off on its own.*


The trend in British Columbia is somewhat different from that in the Prairies. There has been no similar decline in the past year in dissatisfaction with federalism in B.C. – and, in fact, some of the improvements seen at the beginning of this decade have been reversed.



# Key findings

- Among regions, the Prairie provinces experienced the **biggest drop in dissatisfaction** with the country's direction over the past year.
- The proportion of Prairie residents saying their province is **not respected has fallen to its lowest level** since the Confederation of Tomorrow series of annual surveys began in 2019.
- The proportions of Prairie residents who say that their province has less than its fair share of influence on important national decisions, and receives less than its fair share of federal spending, have both also fallen – and, in both cases, are now at their **lowest levels since 2019**.
- Across the region, there is a significant and consistent difference of opinion on the questions of respect, influence and fairness between those who support the main provincial conservative party in their province and those who support the provincial NDP. Moreover, **the gaps between these two groups have widened over time**.
- The most recent declines in dissatisfaction with federalism seen in the Prairies are **not evident in British Columbia**. And some of the improvements in opinions in B.C. about the province's place in the federation, which took place between 2019 and 2022, have since been partially reversed.
- A comparison of recent survey results with those from the early 2000s shows that, over the longer term, there is **no visible trend toward increasing dissatisfaction with federalism** in Western Canada.
- Along with the drop within the Prairies in a series of measures of dissatisfaction with federalism, there has **a modest decrease** in the proportion of Prairie residents who agree that "Western Canada gets so few benefits from being part of Canada that they **might as well go it on their own**."

*A comparison of recent survey results with those from the early 2000s shows that, over the longer term, there is no visible trend toward increasing dissatisfaction with federalism in Western Canada.*

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- A clear majority of Western Canadians would **prefer that the four Western provinces remain in Canada**. But one in five would prefer that they combine to form an independent country. This minority is nonetheless much larger than it was in the early 1980s.
  - Younger residents of the West are less likely than their older counterparts to **prefer that the four provinces remain in Canada**.
  - In each of the four Western provinces, there is **a significant difference in opinion** between those who would vote for the provincial NDP, who are much more likely to prefer that their province remain in Canada, and those who support the main provincial conservative party.
  - Three in four Albertans, and about seven in ten of those in the rest of the country, say they think **Alberta will probably stay in Canada**.

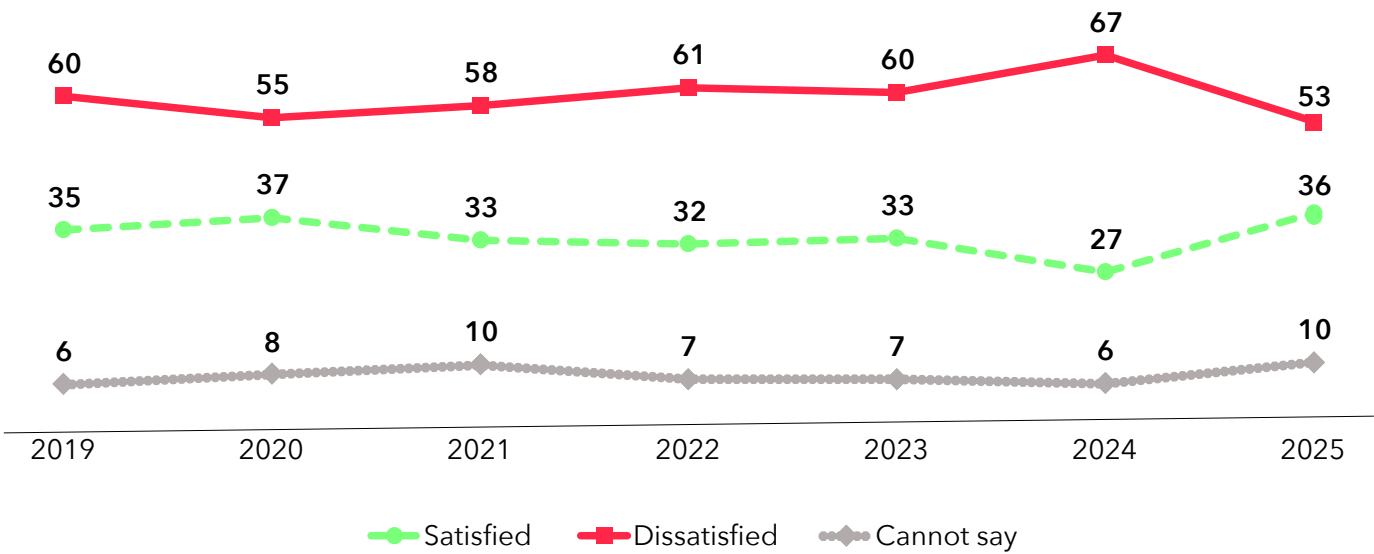


# Overall satisfaction

In Canada as a whole, satisfaction with the way things are going in the country increased between 2024 and 2025, from 36 to 41 percent. However, a plurality of Canadians (48%) remains dissatisfied.

Among regions, dissatisfaction with the direction of the country is highest in the Prairie provinces (53%), though this is only slightly higher than the national average. However, the Prairie provinces have also experienced the biggest drop in dissatisfaction over last year – a decrease of 14 percentage points, from 67 to 53 percent.

Figure 1  
Overall, are you satisfied or dissatisfied with the way things are going in our country today?  
Prairie provinces, 2019 – 2025



Dissatisfaction in B.C. fell by a smaller amount – by seven points, from 57 to 50 percent.



# Respect, influence and fairness: the Prairies

Three different survey questions measure whether one feels their province is treated fairly within the Canadian federation. These are:

- Is your province treated with the respect it deserves in Canada or not?
- How much influence does your province have on important national decisions in Canada?
- Thinking about all the money the federal government spends on different programs and transfers to the provinces and territories, do you think your province receives more than its fair share, less than its fair share or about its fair share?<sup>1</sup>

Within the Prairies as a region, each of these measures show improvement since 2024 in the short term, as well as a longer-term improvement since 2019.

<sup>1</sup> In the survey, the name of the province in which the respondent lives (e.g., Alberta) replaces the words “your province.”

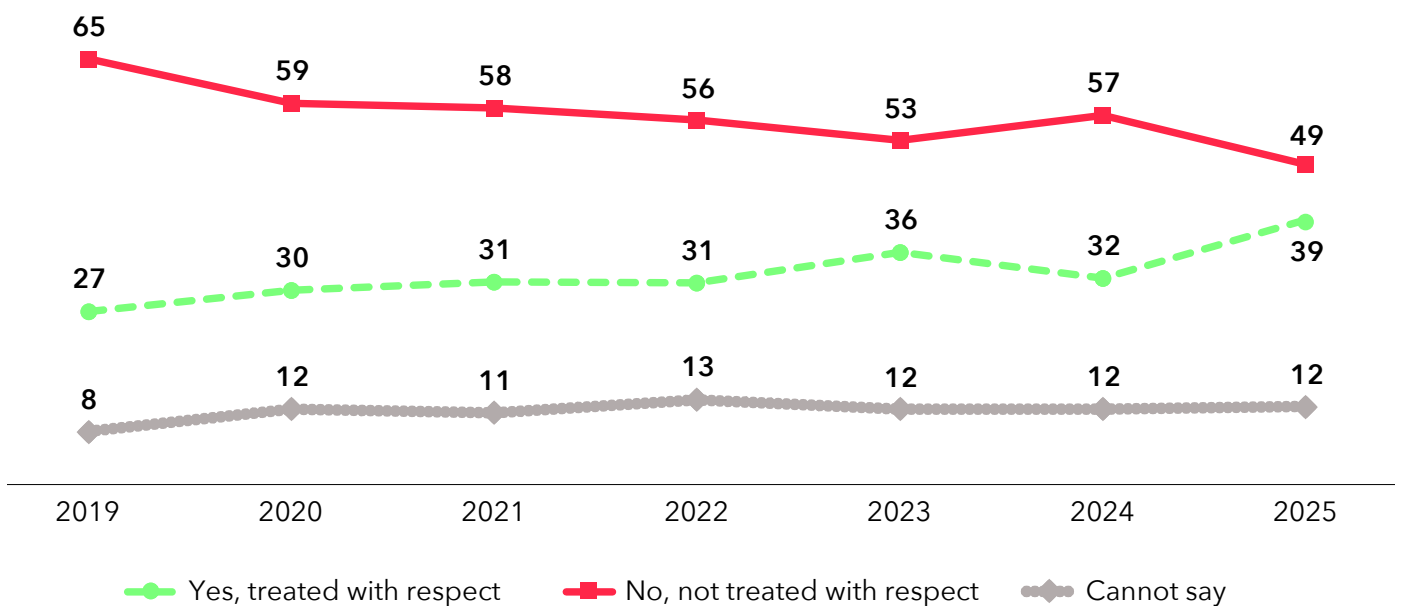
## Respect

Between 2024 and 2025, the proportion of Prairie residents who say their province is treated with the respect it deserves in Canada increased by seven percentage points, from 32 to 39 percent; while the proportion saying their province is not respected fell from 57 to 49 percent. The proportion saying their province is not respected is the lowest since this series of annual surveys began in 2019: since then, the figure has declined by 16 points.

Figure 2

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

Prairie provinces, 2019 - 2025

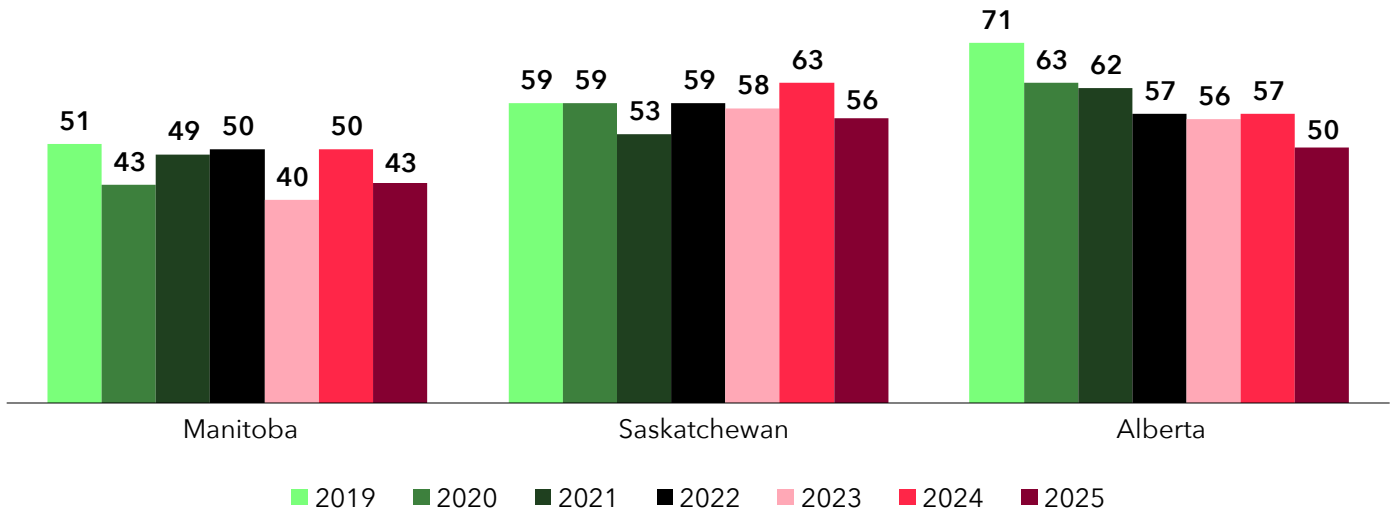


The most recent decline, between 2024 and 2025, is evident in all three Prairie provinces. The proportion saying their province is not respected has dropped by seven points in Manitoba and in Saskatchewan, and by eight points in Alberta.

Figure 3

## My province is not treated with the respect it deserves

Prairie provinces, by province, 2019 – 2025



## Influence

A little more than one in two Prairie residents (55%) say their province has less than its fair share of influence on important national decisions in Canada. Within the region, this proportion is highest in Saskatchewan (63%), and stands at 54 percent in Alberta and 50 percent in Manitoba.

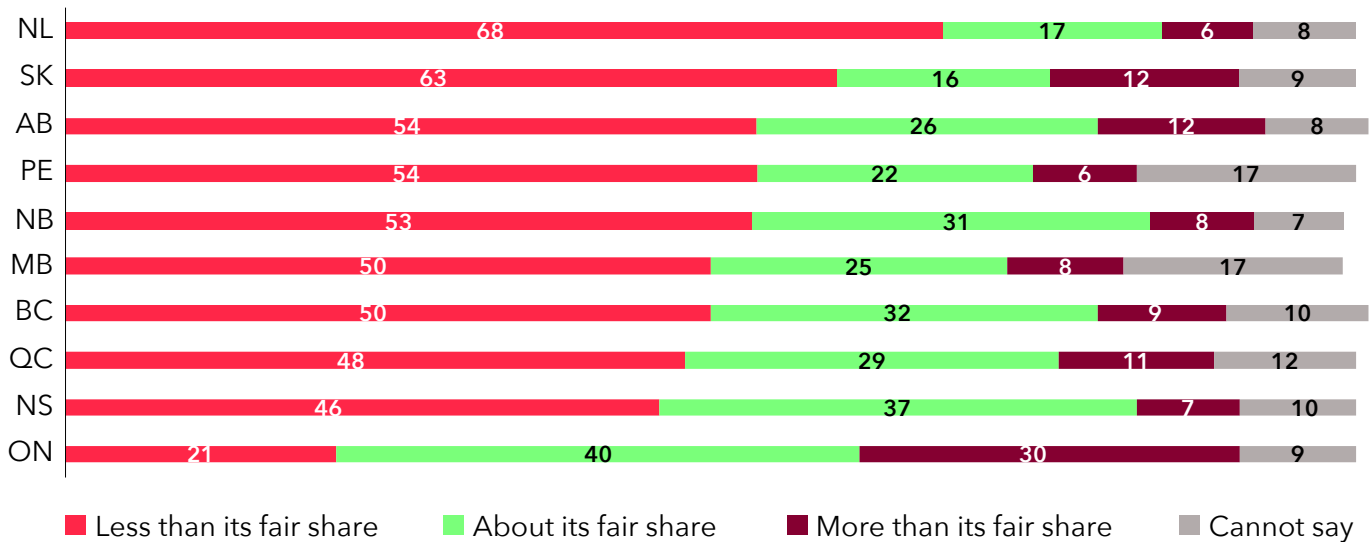
*A little more than one in two Prairie residents (55%) say their province has less than its fair share of influence on important national decisions in Canada.*

Among all provinces, Saskatchewan has the second highest proportion of residents who feel their province has less than its fair share of influence, after Newfoundland and Labrador (68%). Manitoba and Alberta are both part of a group of seven provinces where this proportion falls within a narrow range between 46 and 54 percent.

Figure 4

## How much influence does your province have on important national decisions in Canada?

2025, by province



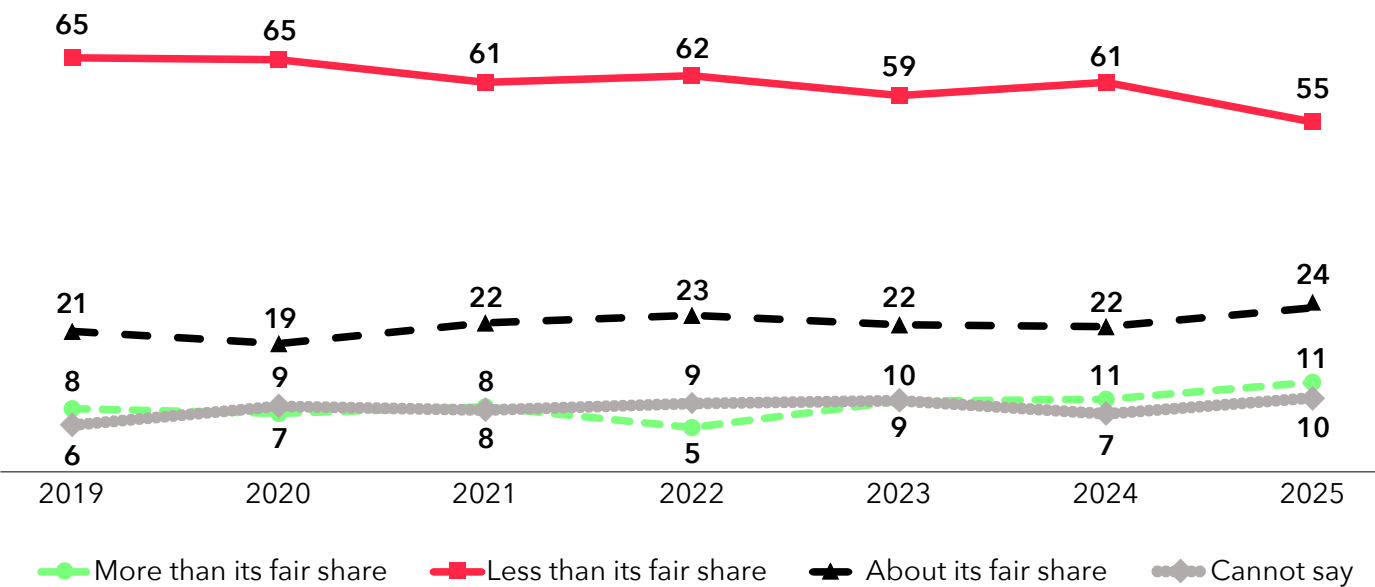
What is most notable, however, is that the proportion of Prairie residents who say that their province has less than its fair share of influence has fallen by six percentage points since 2024 (from 61% to 55%), and is now at its lowest level since this series of annual surveys began in 2019. Since 2024, this proportion has fallen by 11 points in Manitoba, and by five points in both Saskatchewan and Alberta.



Figure 5

How much influence does your province have on important national decisions in Canada?

Prairie provinces, 2019 - 2025



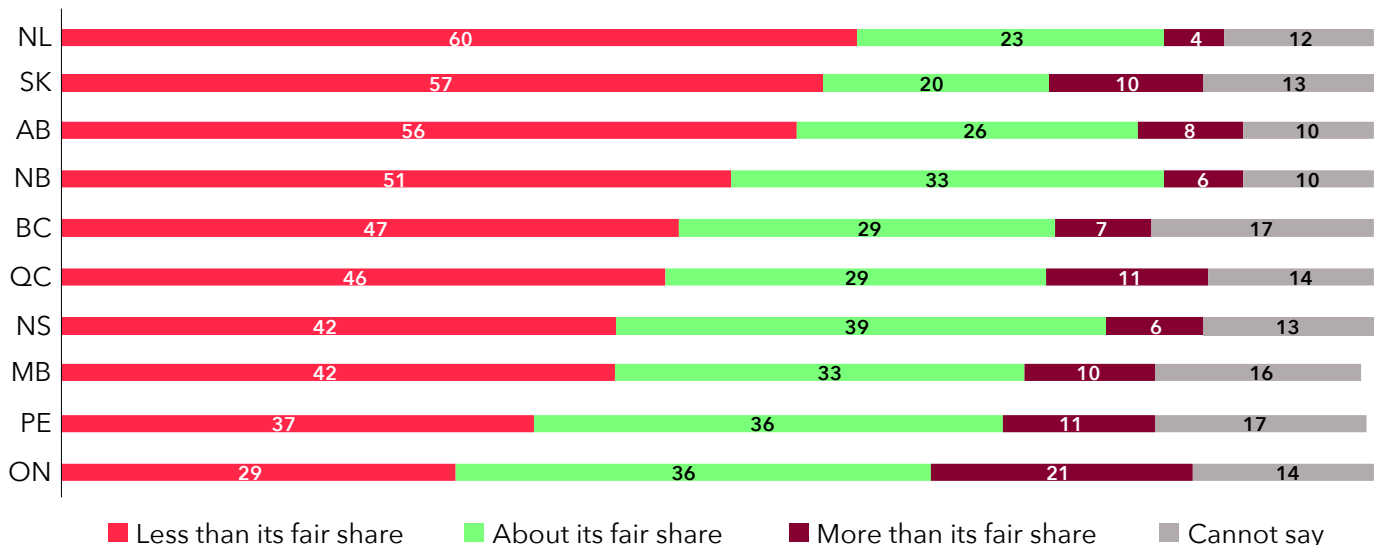
## Federal spending

Pluralities of residents in most provinces believe their province receives less than its fair share of federal spending on programs and transfers. The exceptions are Ontario, where the proportion saying their province receives about its fair share edges out the proportion saying it is short-changed, and Prince Edward Island and Nova Scotia, where these two proportions are just about equal.

Figure 6

Does your province receive its fair share of the money the federal government spends on different programs and transfers?

2025, by province

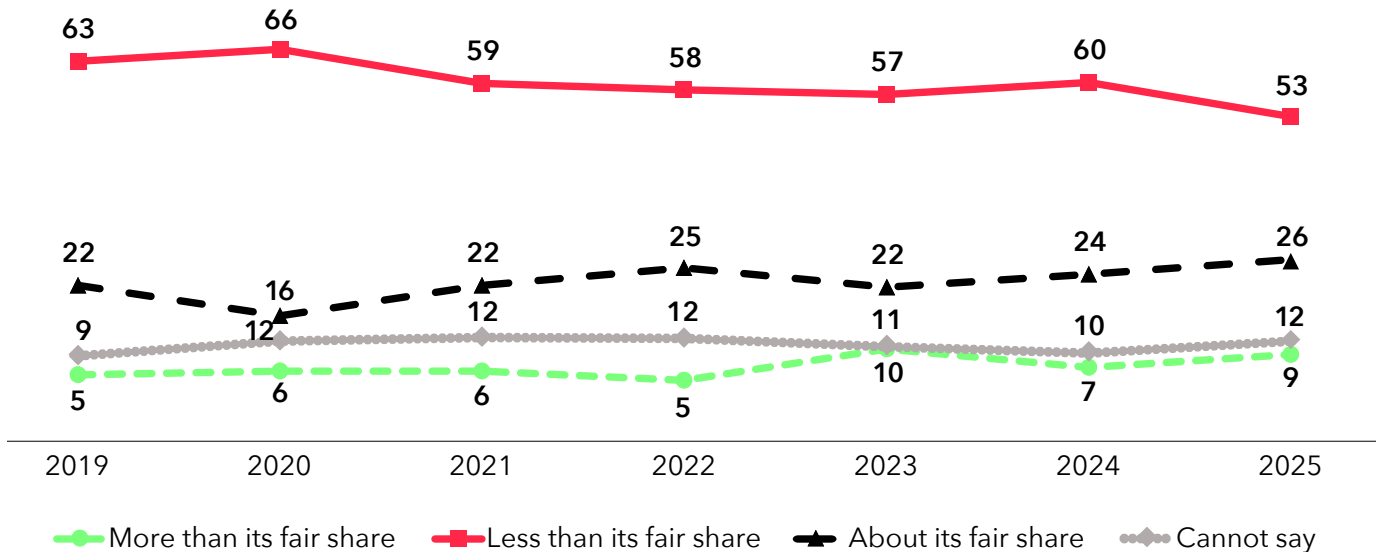


Saskatchewanians (57%) and Albertans (56%) are the next most likely to say their province receives less than its fair share of federal spending, after Newfoundlanders and Labradorians (60%). As with the question about respect and influence, however, the proportion of Prairie residents feeling unfairly treated in terms of federal spending has dropped in the past year, from 60 to 53 percent. And once again, this proportion within the region in 2025 is lower than at any point since this current series of annual surveys began in 2019. Since 2024, this proportion has fallen by 10 points in Manitoba, by seven points in Saskatchewan and by five points in Alberta.

Figure 7

Does your province receive its fair share of the money the federal government spends on different programs and transfers?

Prairie provinces, 2019 - 2025



## The partisan divide within the Prairies

One development that is driving the decline of dissatisfaction with federalism in the region over the longer term is a growing divide between supporters of the main provincial political parties in the region.

Across the region, there is a significant and consistent difference of opinion on these questions between those who support the main provincial conservative party in their province – the United Conservative Party in Alberta, the Saskatchewan Party in Saskatchewan or the Progressive Conservative Party in Manitoba – and those who support the provincial NDP. Moreover, in each case, the gap between these two groups has widened over time. This has occurred because dissatisfaction has declined faster among provincial NDP supporters than among supporters of the conservative parties:

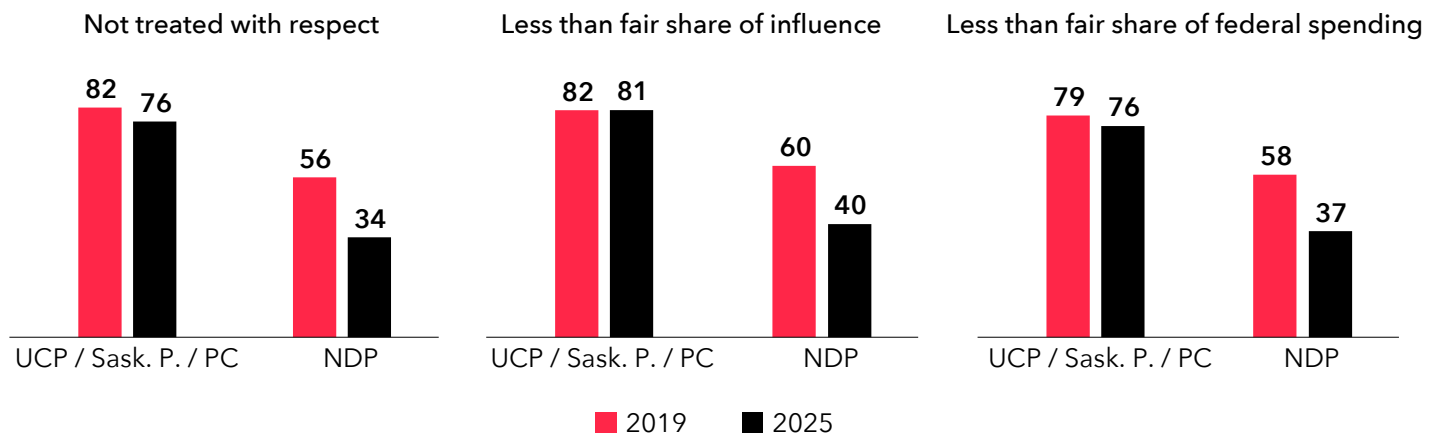
- The proportion of provincial NDP supporters in the Prairies who say their province is **not treated with respect** has fallen from 56 percent in 2019 to 34 percent in 2025 (a 22-point change). This compares with a drop from 82 percent to 76 percent for those who would support the UCP / Sask. Party / PCs (a 6-point drop).

- The proportion of provincial NDP supporters in the Prairies who say their province **has less than its fair share of influence** on important national decisions has fallen from 60 percent in 2019 to 40 percent in 2025 (a 20-point change). This compares to no real change for those who would support the UCP / Sask. Party / PCs (82% and 81%).
- The proportion of provincial NDP supporters in the Prairies who say their province **receives less than its fair share of federal spending** has fallen from 58 percent in 2019 to 37 percent in 2025 (a 21-point change). This compares with a drop of only three points, from 79 percent to 76 percent, for those who would support the UCP / Sask. Party / PCs.

Figure 8

### Respect, influence and federal spending

Prairie provinces, by provincial vote intention, 2019 and 2025



It is notable that, at the beginning of this period (2019), a majority of provincial NDP supporters in the region took the negative position on each question (saying their province was not treated with respect, had less than its fair share of influence and received less than its fair share of spending) – but this is no longer the case. It appears that efforts by provincial conservative party leaders to champion the case that their province, or the West in general, is treated unfairly within the federation has had, as one of its consequences, the effect of gradually pushing opinions among their NDP opponents in the opposite direction.





# Respect, influence and fairness: British Columbia

Twenty-five years ago, British Columbians were among those most likely to say that their province is not treated fairly within the federation; however, this is no longer the case. This change was noted in the report from the 2022 Confederation of Tomorrow survey, which observed that: “over time, attitudes in British Columbia have become increasingly dissimilar from those in the three Prairie provinces: unlike in the Prairies, discontent with federalism in B.C. has been steadily declining.”

Three years later, the pattern appears to be shifting. It is striking that the most recent decline in dissatisfaction seen in the Prairies is not evident in B.C. Between 2024 and 2025:

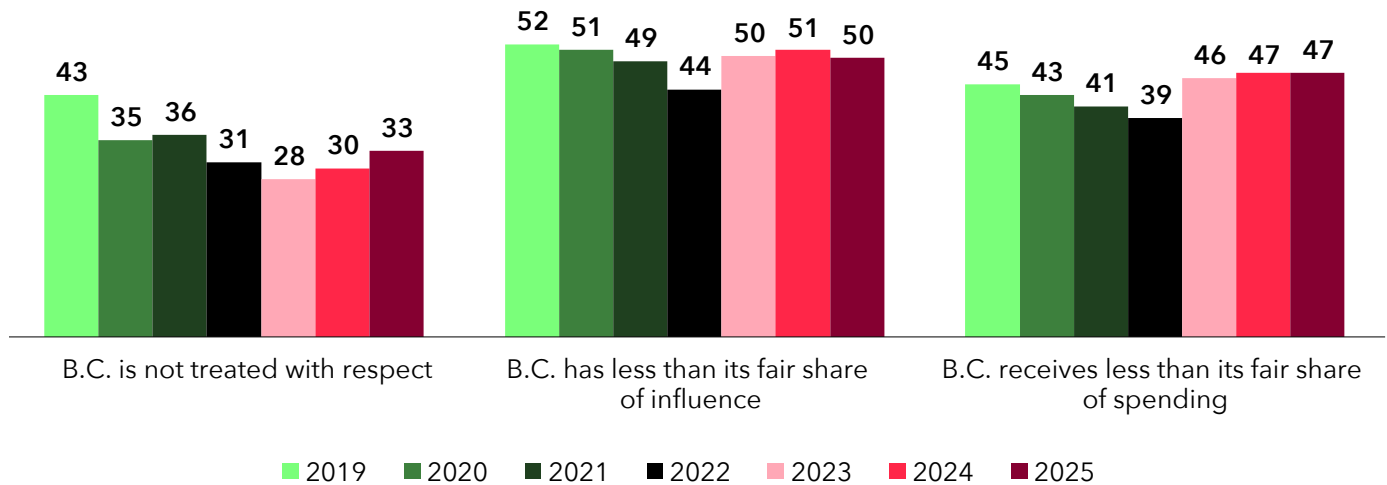
- The proportion of Prairie residents who feel their province is not respected fell by seven percentage points, compared to a three-point increase in B.C.
- The proportion of Prairie residents who feel their province has less than its fair share of influence fell by six percentage points, compared to only an insignificant one-point drop in B.C.
- The proportion of Prairie residents who feel their province receives less than its fair share of federal spending fell by six percentage points, compared to no change in B.C.



Figure 9

## Respect, influence and federal spending

British Columbia, 2019 - 2025



British Columbians remain less likely than Albertans and Saskatchewanians to express a negative opinion on each of these three questions. However, the improvements in opinions about B.C.'s place in the federation, which took place between 2019 and 2022, have since been partially reversed. This, combined with recent improvements in the Prairies, means that the gap between opinions in B.C. and those of its Prairie neighbours on these questions has narrowed.

# A look at the longer term

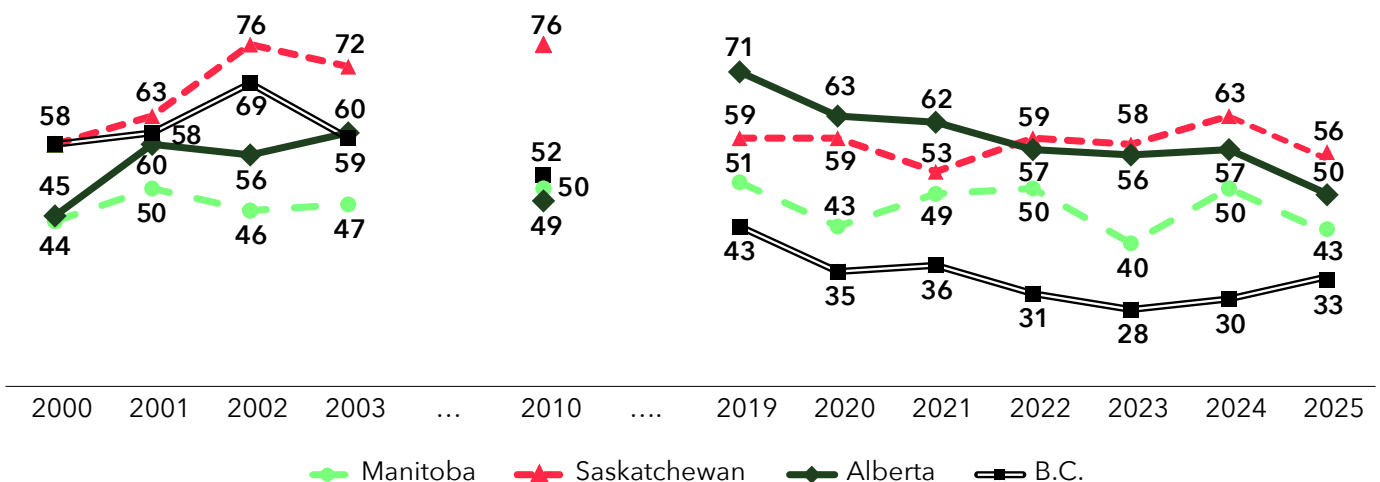
The question of whether dissatisfaction with federalism in Western Canada (or “Western alienation”) is growing can also be answered by comparing results from the Confederation of Tomorrow surveys with those from similar surveys conducted two or more decades ago.

The Portraits of Canada surveys conducted in the early 2000s included the same questions about respect and influence. The 2003 survey found that 59 percent of Western Canadians said their province is not treated with the respect it deserves, and 61 percent said their province does not have its fair share of influence. Both of these figures are much higher than the proportions recorded in 2025 (42% and 53%, respectively). They are similar to, but not greater than, the results from the 2019 Confederation of Tomorrow survey (56% and 60%, respectively).

Figure 10

## My province is not treated with the respect it deserves

Western provinces, by province, 2000 – 2025



Source for 2000 to 2003: CRIC, Portraits of Canada; for 2010: Mowat Centre.

A more detailed comparison of all years of available data for the question on respect shows that there is no visible trend toward increasing dissatisfaction. Results vary from year to year in Manitoba – but, in general, have remained stable. In B.C., results today are clearly more positive than in the early 2000s. In both Saskatchewan and Alberta, feelings of not being respected have often been higher than they are today.

# The advantages of federalism

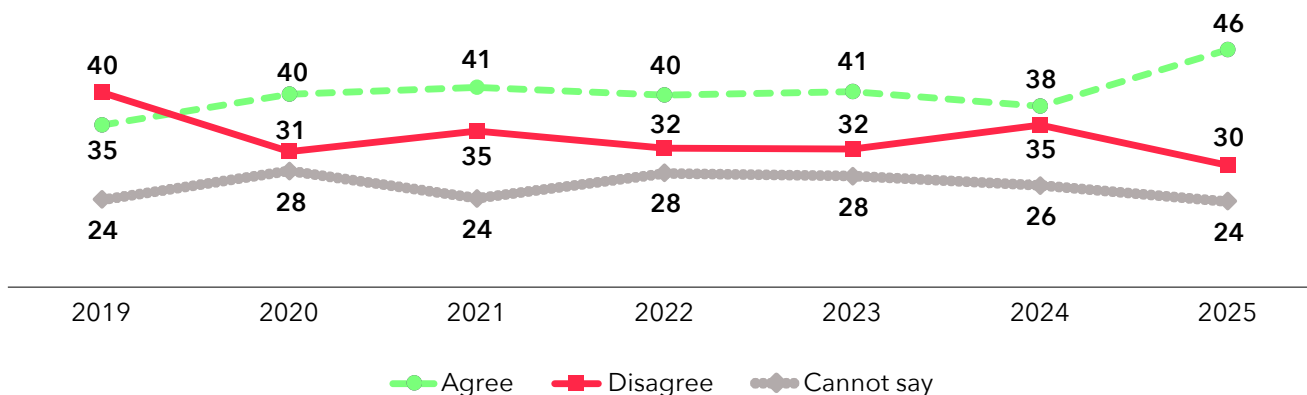
On average, one in four Canadians (26%) disagree with the proposition that “Canadian federalism has more advantages than disadvantages for your province.” This proportion is somewhat higher in Saskatchewan (30%), Quebec (31%) and Alberta (32%), and somewhat lower in New Brunswick (19%) and Prince Edward Island (15%). There is a considerable degree of uncertainty of this question: while 50 percent of Canadians agree that Canadian federalism has more advantages than disadvantages for their province, 24 percent do not express an opinion either way.

In the Prairie provinces, disagreement with the statement has declined by five percentage points since 2024 (from 35% to 30%), while agreement has increased by eight points (from 38% to 46%). Since 2024, disagreement has fallen by four points in Manitoba, by 10 points in Saskatchewan and by five points in Alberta.

Figure 11

**Agree or disagree: Canadian federalism has more advantages than disadvantages for your province?**

Prairie provinces, 2019 - 2025



The current level of disagreement within the Prairies is only slightly below that registered between 2020 and 2023; however, it is 10 points lower than in 2019. In 2019, disagreement in the region edged out agreement by five points; in 2025, agreement outweighs disagreement by 16 points.

Once again, the trend is different in British Columbia, as there has been no similar change over this period (although disagreement in B.C. has been consistently lower than in the Prairies). Between 2019 and 2025, roughly one in four British Columbians disagreed that federalism has more advantages than disadvantages for their province.

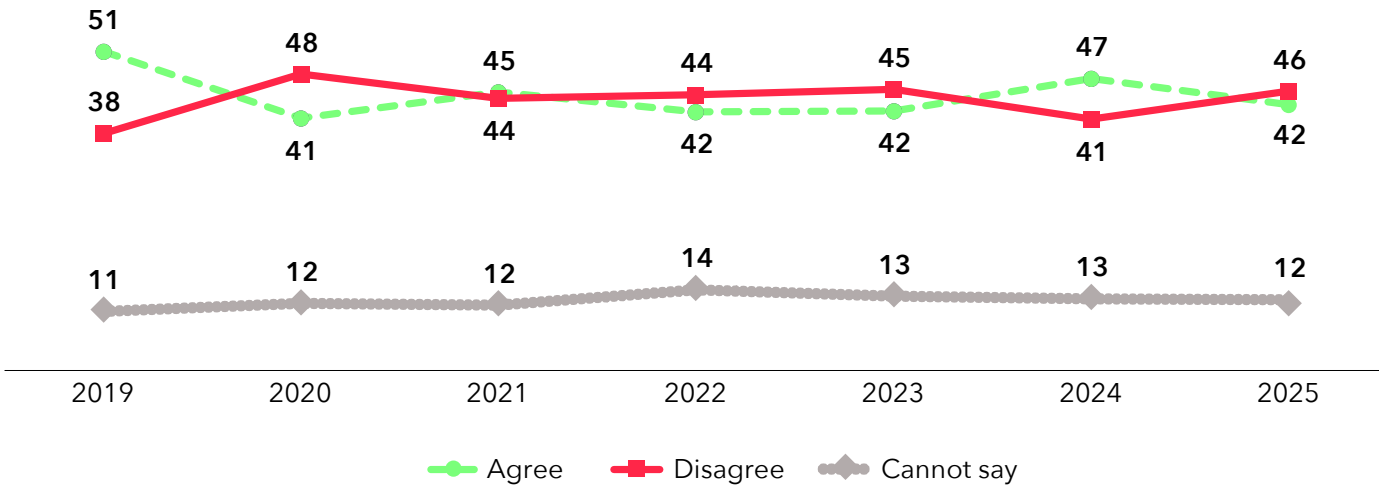
# Inside or outside of Canada

## Going it alone?

This report has documented a decline within the Prairies in a series of measures of dissatisfaction with federalism, including the sense of not being respected, not having enough influence and not receiving fair treatment. There has also been a modest decrease in the proportion of Prairie residents who agree that “Western Canada gets so few benefits from being part of Canada that they might as well go it on their own.”

Overall, in 2025, opinions in the region on this question are fairly evenly divided: 42 percent agree that “Western Canada gets so few benefits from being part of Canada that they might as well go it on their own,” while 46 disagree (an additional 12% do not express an opinion either way). Since 2024, agreement has dropped by five percentage points, from 47 to 42 percent. But unlike the questions on respect, influence and fairness, agreement (the negative opinion in this case) has *not* reached a new low (since 2019).

Figure 12  
Agree or disagree: Western Canada gets so few benefits from being part of Canada that they might as well go it on their own?  
Prairie provinces, 2019 – 2025

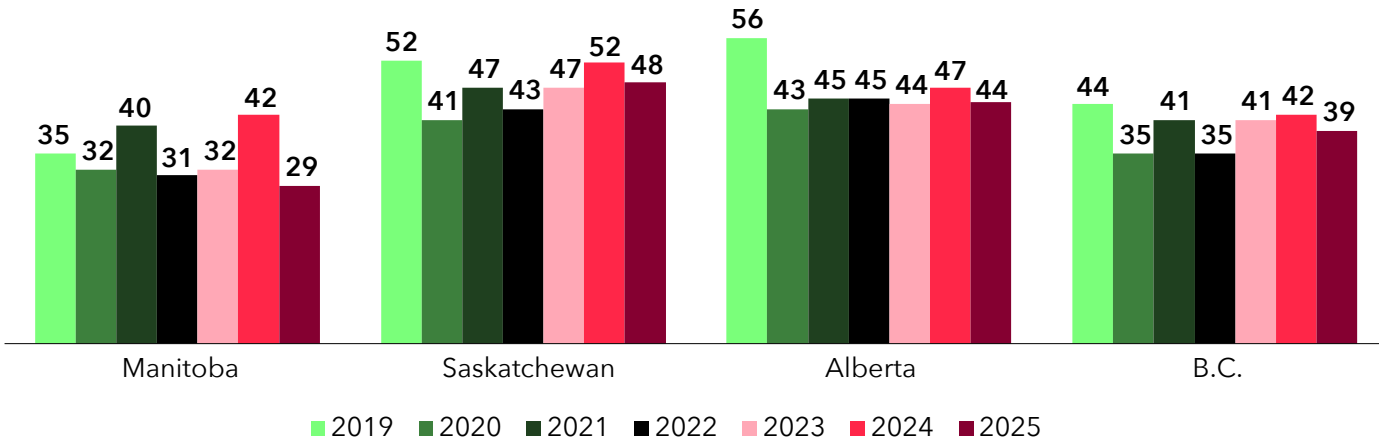


Most of this regional change since 2024 is due to a larger drop in Manitoba – by 12 points (from 42% to 29%). Opinions have changed much less in Saskatchewan (from 52% to 48%) and Alberta (from 47% to 44%). There has also been little change in B.C., where two in five residents (39%) currently agree that Western Canada “might as well go it on their own.”

Figure 13

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

Western Canada, by province, 2019 – 2025



**Remain or leave?**

For the first time, the Confederation of Tomorrow survey included a question that asks more directly about the status of the Western provinces within Confederation. Western Canadians were asked whether they would personally prefer that the four provinces of Western Canada combine to form a country independent from Canada, join the United States or remain as four individual provinces of Canada.

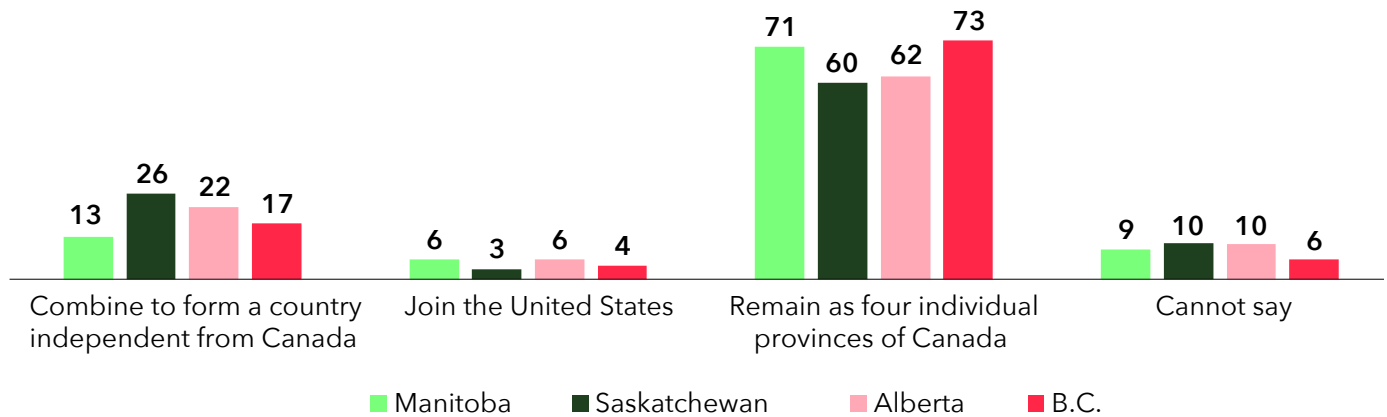
A clear majority (68%) would prefer that the four Western provinces remain in Canada. This figure is slightly higher in British Columbia (73%) and Manitoba (71%), and slightly lower in Alberta (62%) and Saskatchewan (60%).



Figure 14

## Preferred option for the future of Western Canada

Western provinces, by province, 2025



The least popular option is joining the United States: this appeals to only five percent of Western Canadians, with little variation across the four provinces.

Overall in the region, one in five (19%) would prefer that the four provinces of Western Canada combine to form a country independent from Canada. This proportion is lower in Manitoba (13%) and B.C. (17%), and higher in Alberta (22%) and Saskatchewan (26%).

Across the region, an additional eight percent do not express a preference either way.

Preferences about the future status of the four Western provinces vary significantly by age and by political partisanship or ideology.

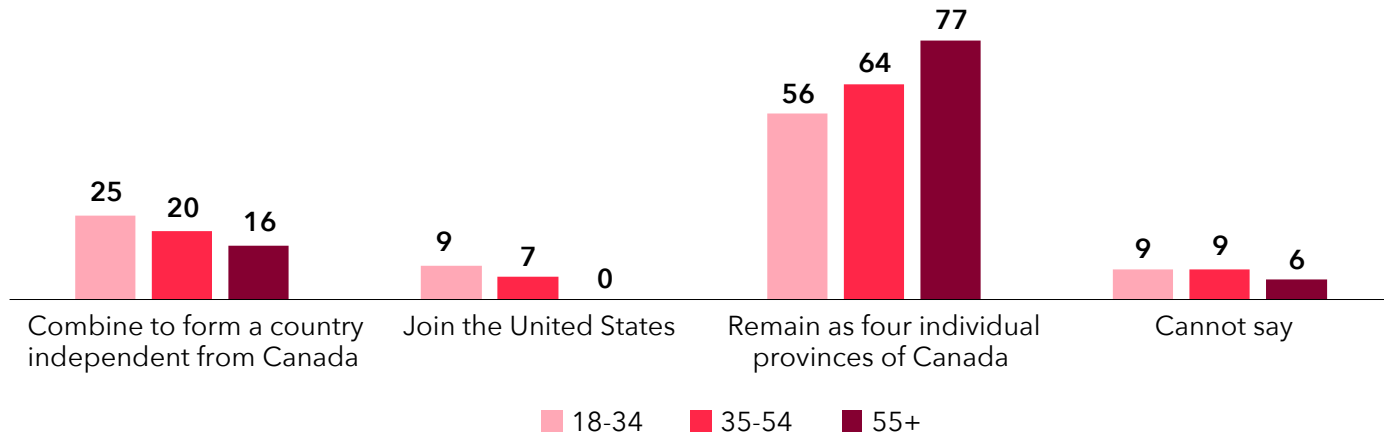
Younger residents of the West are less likely than their older counterparts to prefer that the four provinces remain in Canada. The proportion expressing this preference rises from 56 percent among 18- to 34-year-olds, to 64 percent for those age 35 to 54, and to 77 percent for those age 55 and older. These proportions are roughly similar within the three Prairie provinces (57%, 60% and 72%, respectively).

Within the West as a whole, younger residents (age 18 to 34) are more likely to favour the region either leaving Canada (25%) or joining the United States (9%). (The figures are the same when looking only at the three Prairie provinces).

Figure 15

## Preferred option for the future of Western Canada

Western provinces, by age group, 2025



Preferences also vary according to political ideology, federal vote intention and provincial vote intention:

- Clear majorities of both those who place themselves on the left of the political spectrum (91%) and in the centre (75%) would prefer that the four Western provinces remain in Canada. But this is the preference of only 41 percent of those who place themselves on the right. Forty-one percent of Westerners on the right prefer that the region's four provinces combine to form a country independent from Canada and nine percent prefer that they join the U.S.
- Similarly, 84 percent of those who voted for the Liberal Party in the 2025 federal election, and an identical proportion of those who voted NDP, prefer that the four provinces remain in Canada, compared to 54 percent of those who voted for the Conservative Party. Among Conservative Party voters, 33 percent prefer that the region's four provinces combine to form a country independent from Canada and seven percent prefer that they join the U.S.
- In each of the four Western provinces, there is a significant difference in opinion between those who would vote for the provincial NDP and those who support the main provincial conservative party. Among NDP supporters, the proportion preferring to remain in Canada ranges from 76 percent in Saskatchewan, to 91 percent in Manitoba. But this proportion is only 50 percent among Alberta UCP supporters, 52 percent among Manitoba PC Party supporters, 54 percent among Saskatchewan Party supporters and 58 percent among BC Conservative Party supporters.

Table 1

## Preferred status of the Western provinces

By provincial vote intention

*Personally, would you prefer that the four provinces of Western Canada ...? (%)*

Province	Provincial vote intention	Subsample size	Combine to form a country independent from Canada	Join the United States	Or remain as four individual provinces of Canada	Cannot say
Manitoba	NDP	135	4	2	91	3
	PC	84	24	15	52	9
Saskatchewan	NDP	108	19	0	76	5
	Sask. Party	133	33	5	54	8
Alberta	NDP	165	5	1	87	8
	UCP	213	33	9	50	9
B.C.	NDP	225	10	0	85	5
	B.C. Cons.	163	29	10	58	4
Prairies (combined)	NDP	408	7	1	87	6
	UCP / Sask. P. / PC	430	32	9	51	9

The proportion of Western Canadians who agree that “Western Canada gets so few benefits from being part of Canada that they might as well go it on their own” (41%) is twice as high as the proportion that say they would prefer that the four provinces of Western Canada combine to form a country independent from Canada (19%). This is not surprising, as the first statement invites Westerners to express frustration rather than make a choice about the future status of their province in Confederation. However, it does mean that many who agree that Western Canada “might as well go it on their own” nonetheless would prefer that their province remain in Canada.

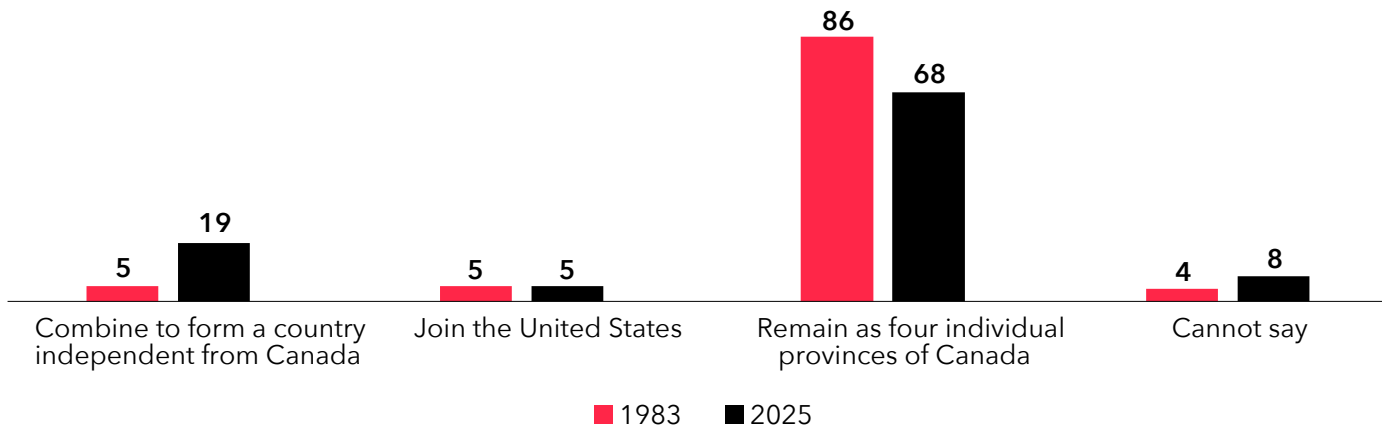
In fact, staying in Canada is the plurality choice of those who agree that Western Canada “might as well go it on their own.” Among those who agree, 45 percent would prefer that the four provinces remain in Canada, compared to 39 percent who would prefer that they form a separate country and nine percent who would prefer that they join the U.S. Among those who *strongly* agree, however, only 30 percent favour remaining in Canada, compared to 55 percent who favour independence and 12 percent who favour union with the United States.

The question about the future status of Western Canada was also asked over four decades ago, in a series of Environics Focus Canada surveys.<sup>2</sup> A comparison shows that, since 1983, the proportion of Western Canadians who prefer that the region's four provinces remain in Canada has fallen by 18 percentage points, from 86 percent to 68 percent. The proportion favouring the four provinces leaving Canada to form an independent country has increased, from five to 19 percent. The proportion favouring union with the United States has remained unchanged (5%), while the proportion without an opinion has increased from four to eight percent.

**Figure 16**

### Preferred option for the future of Western Canada

Western provinces, 1983 and 2025



Source for 1983: *Environics Focus Canada*.

In 1983, there was little difference in opinion either among age groups or among the supporters of the different federal parties: close to nine in ten of those across all groups favoured remaining in Canada. Opinions have changed most since then among the two groups that are less likely to favour this option today – younger Westerners and Conservative Party supporters:

- Among those age 18 to 34, the proportion that prefers remaining in Canada has dropped by 31 points, from 87 to 56 percent. This compares to only a seven-point drop (from 84% to 77%) among those age 55 and older.

<sup>2</sup> Several surveys conducted in successive years showed similar results. The 1983 survey is used as the point of comparison as it is the most recent of these earlier surveys conducted with the full sample of residents of Western Canada.

- In 1983, only four percent of 18- to 34-year-olds in the region favoured the four provinces forming an independent country and five percent wanted them to join the United States. This compares to today's figures of 25 percent and nine percent, respectively.
- In 1983, 86 percent of Westerners who intended to vote for the federal Progressive Conservative Party preferred that the four Western provinces remain in Canada. In 2025, this proportion (among those who voted for the Conservative Party in the 2025 federal election) has fallen to 54 percent.

## The future of Alberta

The 2025 Confederation of Tomorrow survey also asked Canadians whether they expect Alberta to one day become an independent country.

Overall, seven in ten (69%) say they think that Alberta will probably stay in Canada, compared to 16 percent who think it will probably become an independent country (an additional 15% do not express an opinion either way).

Interestingly, the proportion of Canadians who expect that Alberta will one day leave Canada is the same as the proportion who also expect that the same will happen with Quebec (16%).

Albertans (75%) are more likely than other Canadians (68%) to expect their province to remain in Canada. Canadians outside the province are less certain, with 16 percent expressing no opinion (compared to 8% in Alberta). The proportions expecting Alberta to one day form an independent country are similar inside (17%) and outside (16%) the province.

Within Alberta, 27 percent of those who would vote for the UCP in a provincial election think the province will probably become an independent country one day, compared to only three percent of those who would vote NDP.

Finally, among Albertans whose preference is for the four Western provinces to form their own country separate from Canada, 52 percent also think that Alberta will one day become independent. Among those who prefer that the four Western provinces remain in Canada, only four percent expect that Alberta will leave.





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