

National Governance and Federalism

Effectiveness of government

SATISFACTION WITH SYSTEM OF GOVERNMENT.

Despite a considerable amount of bad press on governments across Canada over the past year, public confidence in the system overall has actually shown marginal improvement. Seven in ten Canadians are now very (20%) or somewhat (51%) satisfied with the Canadian system of government, up three percentage points since 2011 and recovering half of the loss recorded over the previous year.

This upward trend is most evident in Ontario and Quebec, while declining in Atlantic Canada, B.C. and Alberta. Saskatchewan residents (86%) are now the most positive overall about the country's system of government, although Ontarians are the most apt to be very satisfied. Quebecers remain the least positive (9% very satisfied, versus 38% dissatisfied). Satisfaction levels increase along with income and education, as well as age, with the gap between the oldest and youngest Canadians widening over the past year.

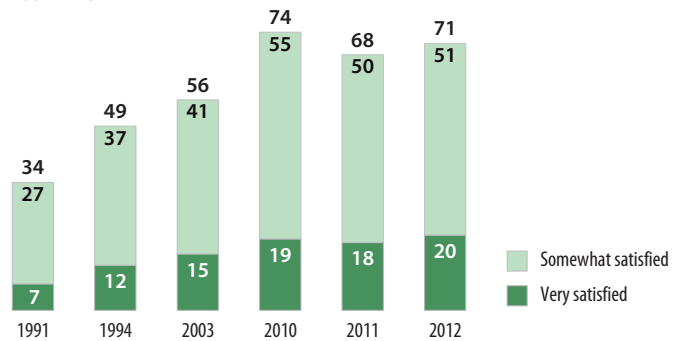
On the political spectrum, satisfaction with our system of government ranges from 85 percent among supporters of the federal Conservatives to 47 percent among Bloc supporters, but levels have improved since 2011 across the board – except among Green Party supporters, who are among the least apt to give positive ratings (53%).

DOES IT MAKE A DIFFERENCE WHICH PARTY IS IN

POWER? Declining voter turnout for elections suggests that Canadians are becoming increasingly apathetic about the political process. And yet, they increasingly believe that it matters which political party runs the government in Ottawa. Two-thirds (67%) of Canadians say this matters, and this proportion has increased marginally over the past two years, continuing an upward trend dating back to 2004.

The view that party differences matter is expressed by a majority across the country, but is most evident in Saskatchewan (73%) and B.C. (71%), as well as among university graduates and immigrants, while least apt to be

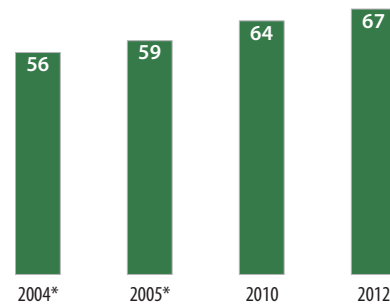
Satisfied with system of government
1991 – 2012



Q.28

Are you very satisfied, somewhat satisfied, somewhat dissatisfied or very dissatisfied with the Canadian system of government?

Makes a difference which party is in power in Ottawa
2004 – 2012



*Tracking data from surveys conducted by Environics for the CBC

Q.55

Do you agree or disagree with the following statement: It makes a big difference which political party is in power in Ottawa?

shared by Atlantic Canadians (55%). Views on this question are notably similar across supporters of federal political parties (the range being 69% among Bloc supporters to 75% among NDP supporters), but much less in evidence among those who do not support any party (49%). Belief in the importance of party differences has increased since 2010 among supporters of the NDP, Bloc and Green parties.

Federalism and fairness

DOES OTTAWA FAVOUR ONE REGION OVER

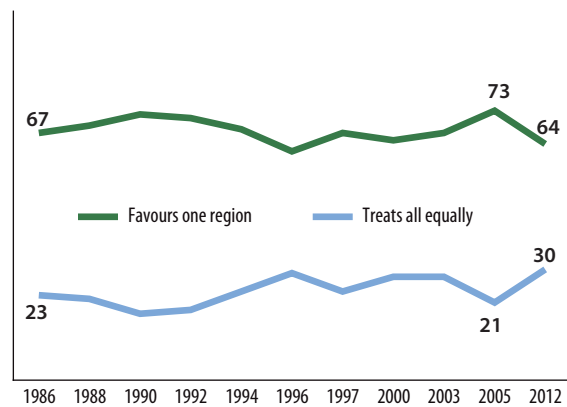
OTHERS? Canada's system of federal transfer payments has long created hard feelings that some provinces have been favoured over others. This view persists, but has declined noticeably since 2005 and is now at its lowest point since 1986 (when this issue was first measured). Fewer than two-thirds (64%) of Canadians now believe that Ottawa favours one region over others (down 9 points since 2005), reversing an upward trend dating back to 2003. By comparison, three in ten (30%) say the federal government treats all regions of Canada equally (up 9), now the highest level recorded.

Since 2005, the declining perception of regional favouritism is most evident in Ontario and western Canada, but most significantly in Alberta (down 28 points), while increasing modestly in Atlantic Canada and Quebec. Ontarians (56%) and Albertans (57%) are now the least likely to believe the federal government plays favourites, while this view is most widely held in Atlantic Canada (78%).

Across the political spectrum, it is Canadians who support the federal NDP (79%) and Bloc Québécois (80%) who are most apt to see regional favouritism by the federal government, and in both cases this view has strengthened somewhat since 2005. In contrast, federal Conservative Party supporters are now much less likely than before to share this opinion (declining from 86% to 49%).

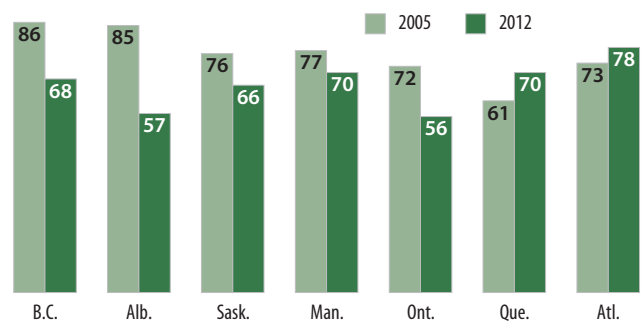
Regional favouritism

1986 – 2012



Ottawa favours one region over others

By province 2010 – 2012



Q.29

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

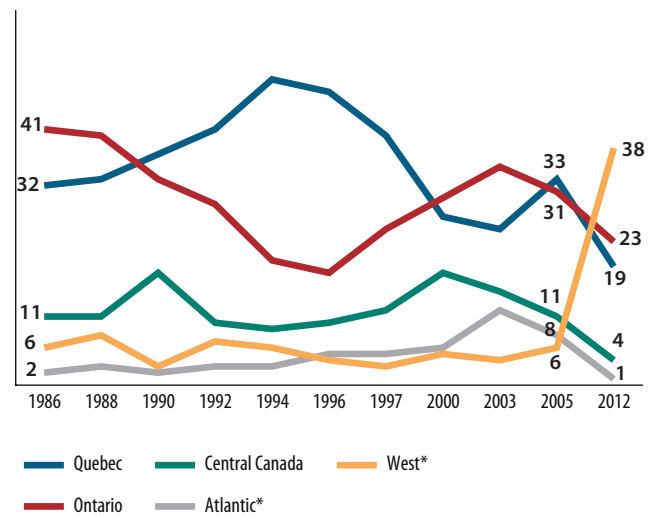
WHICH REGION IS FAVOURED? As always, there are considerable differences of opinion about which region is favoured by Ottawa, and perspectives are dictated in large part by where Canadians happen to live. However, the collective view of regional favouritism has shifted dramatically over the past seven years – which reflects the emergence of western Canada as an economic powerhouse and the base for the ruling Conservative government in Ottawa.

In 2005, the balance of opinion was that central Canada (Ontario and Quebec) was the favoured region (a view held by 75% of Canadians), compared with only six percent who gave this distinction to the west. Seven years later, opinions are now more balanced, with close to four in ten (38%) saying the west receives the most attention from Ottawa (with more than half of this number specifically mentioning Alberta: 22%). A slightly larger, but declining, proportion identify Ontario (23%), Quebec (19%) or Central Canada (4%).

Predictably, Canadians tend to identify a region other than their own as the one most favoured by the federal government, but there have been some notable shifts in opinion since 2005. Alberta is now most widely seen as the favoured region by Quebecers (who previously bestowed this status on Ontario), while Ontario (and not Quebec) is now the region most widely picked by western Canadians.

The views of Ontarians have shifted the least; they continue to be most likely to see Quebec as the favoured region, but less so than before, along with increased focus on the west. Only in Ontario do more than one in ten Canadians see their own province or region as the one most favoured by the federal government (15%, down 6 points since 2005).

Favoured region
1986 – 2012



* Also includes mention of specific provinces

Q.30

Which region do you feel is favoured the most over the others?

Subsample: Those who feel the federal government favours one region over the others

DO PROVINCES RECEIVE BACK WHAT THEY PAY IN FEDERAL TAXES?

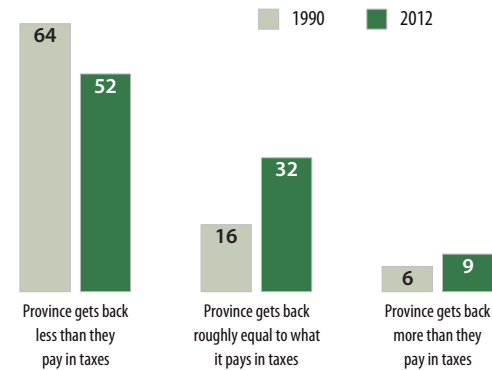
Canadians are still more likely than not to feel their own province gets back less in transfer payments and spending from the federal government than what they pay in, but this view is less widespread than it was two decades ago.

The question asked Canadians to consider the taxes that people in their province pay to the federal government and what the government spends in return through transfer payments, pensions, family allowances, unemployment benefit and other spending. Few (9%) Canadians continue to believe their province gets back *more* than it pays in (up 3 points since 1990), but only half (52%, down 12) now say their province gets back *less*. The balance says their province gets back roughly equal to what it pays in (32%, up 16) or are unable to say either way (7%, down 8).

This shift away from the view that provinces receive back less than they pay in is evident across most of the country, but is most significant in Manitoba, Saskatchewan and B.C., while the opposite trend has taken place in Atlantic Canada. Albertans continue to be the most likely to feel their province loses in the exchange (71%), while residents of Manitoba and Saskatchewan (39% each) are now the least apt to share this view.

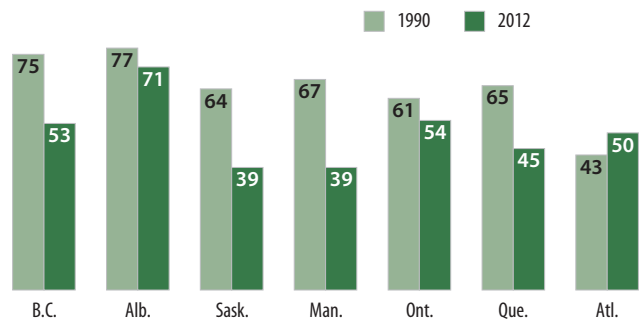
Does your province get back what it pays in federal taxes?

1990 – 2012



Province gets back less than it pays to federal gov't

By province 1990 – 2012



Q.31

I would like you to think for a moment about the taxes which people in your province pay to the federal government and about federal spending returned to the province in the form of transfer payments, pensions, family allowance, government spending and unemployment insurance. Generally speaking, would you say that people of your province get back more than they pay to the federal government, less than they pay or an amount roughly equal to what they pay the federal government?

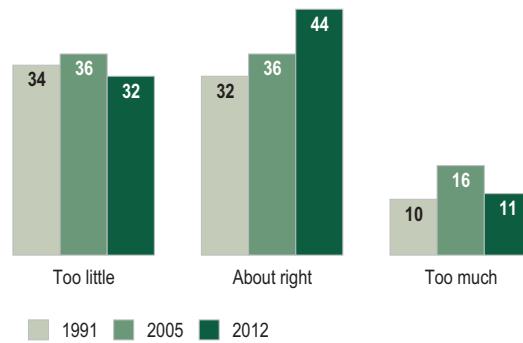
FAIRNESS OF EQUALIZATION PAYMENTS. There is no public consensus on whether the federal government currently transfers too much or too little from better-off to less-well-off provinces, but there is less disagreement with the status quo than in 2005. An increasing plurality (44%, up 8 points) of Canadians believe the transfer amounts are about right, compared with declining proportions who say the better-off provinces give too much (11%, down 5) or give too little (32%, down 4). Just over one in ten (13%, up 1) do not offer an opinion on this question.

Albertans continue to be the most likely to say better-off provinces contribute “too much” in transfer payments (but are less apt to say so than before), while Atlantic Canadians and Quebecers are most apt to say “too little” (Atlantic Canadians are now less likely to express this view). In both Ontario and Alberta, the trend since 2005 has been toward endorsing the current levels of transfers, away from saying they have been “too much” or “too little.” As in 2005, it is lower-income Canadians and those under 30 who are most likely to think that too little is transferred to poorer provinces.

PROVINCIAL-FEDERAL CO-OPERATION. Ongoing disagreements and grievances notwithstanding, most Canadians continue to think their province is better off working co-operatively with the federal government and supporting the policies and plans it puts forward (63%), rather than working independently to develop separate policies and programs (28%). This is essentially unchanged from the view expressed in 2006 (63% versus 32%), and largely similar to opinions expressed as far back as 1988.

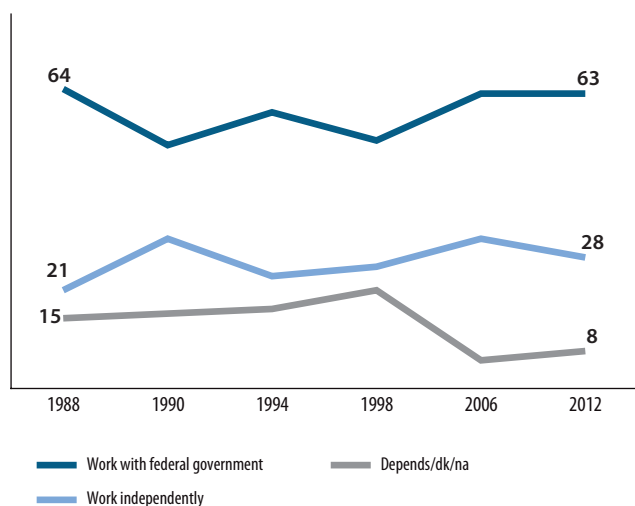
Preference for provincial-federal co-operation is most evident in Ontario (74%), but is the majority view in all provinces except Quebec (where opinions are evenly divided but stable). Since 2006, support for co-operation has strengthened in Alberta, while declining in Atlantic Canada, Manitoba and B.C. Across the political spectrum, a preference for senior government co-operation is strongest among supporters of the federal Liberals (75%) and Conservatives (79%), in sharp contrast to those who support the Bloc Québécois (18%).

Amount of money transferred from richer to poorer provinces
2004 – 2012



Q.32
Do you think that the better-off provinces currently give too much, too little or about the right amount of money to the less well-off provinces?

Should your province work with the federal government or independently?
1988 – 2012



Q.34
Thinking about Canada today, do you think your province would be better off working with the federal government and supporting the policies and plans it puts forward or would your province be better off working independently of the federal government and developing separate policies and plans?

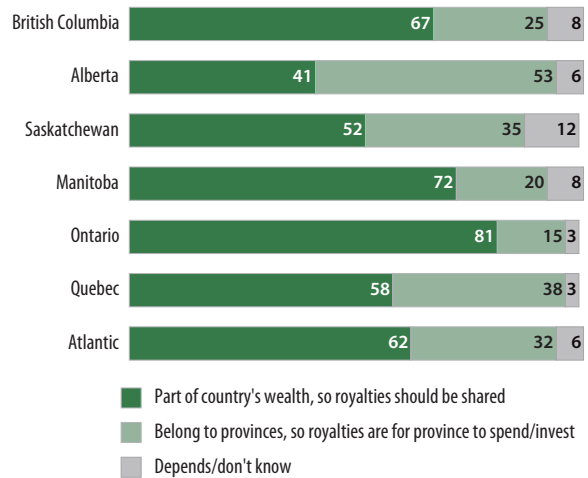
OWNERSHIP OF NATURAL RESOURCES. The country's natural resources are under provincial jurisdiction, but a majority of Canadians believe the benefits they provide should be shared nationally. Two-thirds (67%) agree with the view that natural resources are part of the country's wealth and so the royalties earned should benefit all Canadians, compared with 28 percent who maintain these resources belong to the province where they are found, and this is where the royalties should also be spent or invested.

Predictably, views are shaped in part by the resource base where people live, although in most provinces the balance of opinion is in the same direction. The view of natural resources as a national treasure is most widespread in Ontario (81%) and Manitoba (72%), with smaller majorities in B.C. (67%), Atlantic Canada (62%), Quebec (58%) and Saskatchewan (52%). Only Albertans take the opposite perspective, by a 53-percent to 41-percent margin.

There is also majority agreement across the political spectrum that natural resources are a national wealth to be shared, with the notable exception of Bloc Québécois supporters (who favour provincial control by a 53% to 44% margin).

Ownership of natural resources

By province 2012



Q.33

Natural resource industries like oil and gas, mining and forestry generate significant financial revenue to governments in the form of royalty payments. Which of the following two statements is closer to your own view ...?

Quebec sovereignty

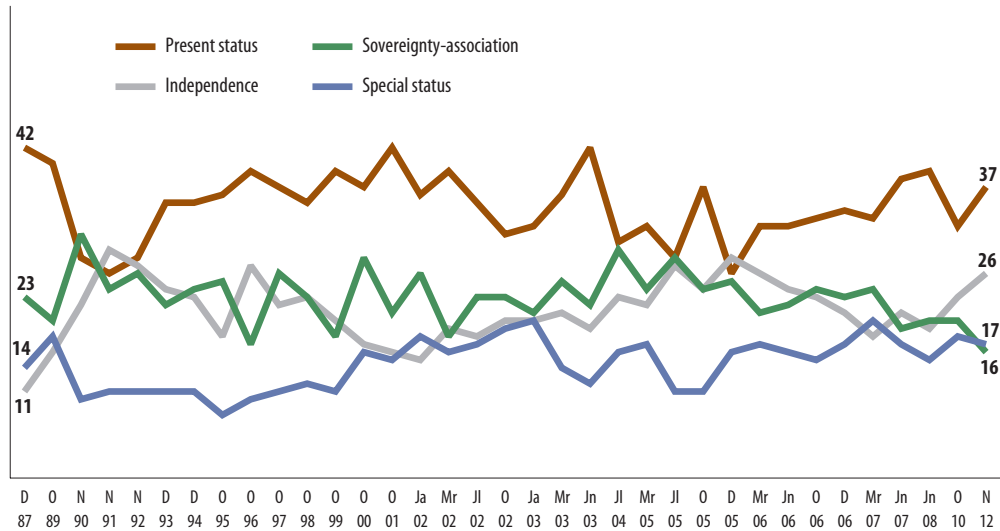
CONSTITUTIONAL OPTIONS FOR QUEBEC.

Quebecers' preferences for their province's place in Confederation have changed relatively little over the past two years, but support has increased marginally for the two clearest constitutional options of maintaining the status quo (37%, up 5 points since 2010) and outright independence (26%, up 3). The two middle options – special status (17%, down 1) and sovereignty association (16%, down 4) – remain less desirable options.

Support for the status quo has partially rebounded from a sharp drop between 2008 and 2010, while support for independence is now at its highest point since March 2006. The independence option increasingly draws its support from Quebecers with the lowest incomes and education, youth and those dissatisfied with the overall direction of the country.

Constitutional options for Quebec

Quebec 1987 – 2012



Q.21

Here are some constitutional options that have been proposed for Quebec. Which one do you think would be best...?

Subsample: Quebec residents

ECONOMIC IMPACT OF QUEBEC SEPARATION.

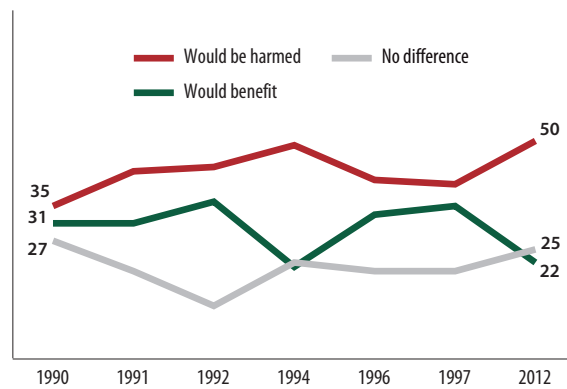
Whatever Quebecers may wish for their future place within Canada, they increasingly see independence as bad for the Quebec economy. Half (50%) now believe that independence would harm the Quebec economy, up 10 points from 1997, and now the highest level since 1994. The remainder are split between those who maintain independence would benefit the provincial economy (22%, down 13) and those who think it would not change much either way (25%, up 7).

The view outside of Quebec is more definitive, with three-quarters (76%) of Canadians in other provinces predicting independence would be bad for Quebec's economy (although down 10 points from 1997), compared with 16 percent who think it would make no difference and three percent who think it would strengthen that province's economy.

What impact would Quebec independence have on the Canadian economy? Citizens outside of Quebec are increasingly concluding that separation would not damage the country's economy; only four in ten (41%) anticipate a negative impact (down 15 points from 1997 and now at its lowest point since 1990). An equal proportion (42%, up 14) expect it would have no impact, while 15 percent (up 6) say it would benefit the Canadian economy. Quebecers share a similar view, but are even less likely than other Canadians to think separation would harm the Canadian economy (36%, down 13).

Effect of independence on Quebec economy

Quebec 1990 – 2012

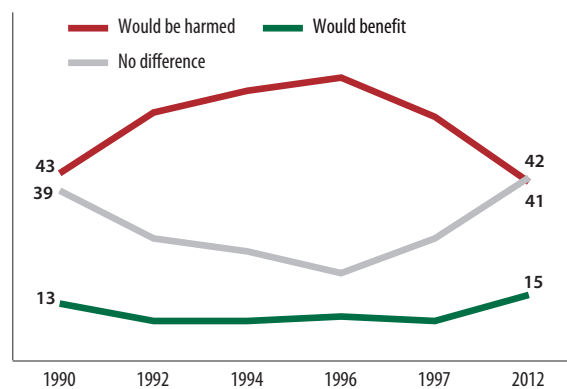


Q.22

If Quebec were to become an independent country, do you think Quebec's economy would benefit, be harmed or would it make no difference?

Effect of independence on Canadian economy

Rest of Canada 1990 – 2012



Q.23

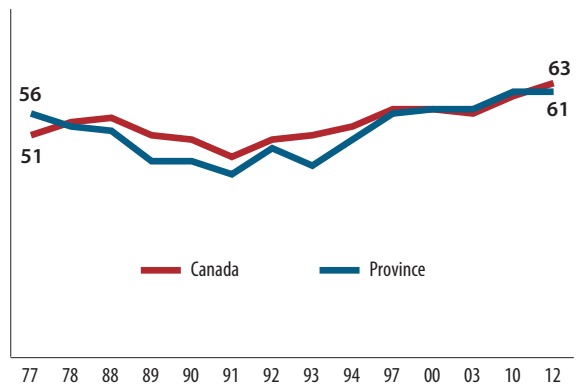
If Quebec were to become an independent country, do you think the economy of the rest of the Canada would benefit, be harmed or would it make no difference?

BILINGUALISM. Bilingualism has been an official national policy in Canada for more than 40 years, but the vision of a truly bilingual country has yet to be realized. Despite its mixed history, public support for the concept of bilingualism is now at an all-time high. More than six in ten (63%) Canadians now say they are personally in favour of bilingualism *for all of Canada*, up from 60 percent in 2010 and at the highest level since Focus Canada began asking this question in 1977.

Support for a national policy of bilingualism continues to be most widespread in Quebec (94%, up 4 points since 2010), but has increased most noticeably over the past two years in B.C. (60%, up 15). Cutting against this trend is Alberta, where support for bilingualism nationally has declined (to 41%, down 10) and is now the lowest in the country. Across the country, support for bilingualism continues to be stronger among Canadians aged 18 to 29 (79%), while lowest among supporters of the federal Conservative Party (46%).

Similar levels of support are also expressed for bilingualism *in one's own province* (61%, unchanged from 2010). Not surprisingly support is strongest in Quebec (82%), followed by Atlantic Canada (65%) and Manitoba (62%). Since 2010, support for provincial bilingualism is up noticeably in B.C. (51%, up 9 points), while declining in Alberta (37%, down 6).

Support for bilingualism in ...
1977 – 2012



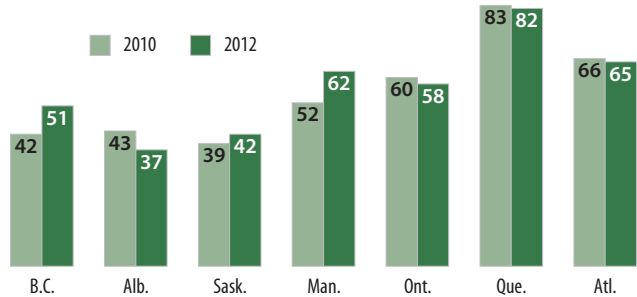
Q.24

As you know, English and French are Canada's two official languages. Are you, personally, in favour of bilingualism for all of Canada?

Q.25

Are you in favour of bilingualism for your province?

Support for bilingualism in own province
By province 2010 – 2012



Q.25

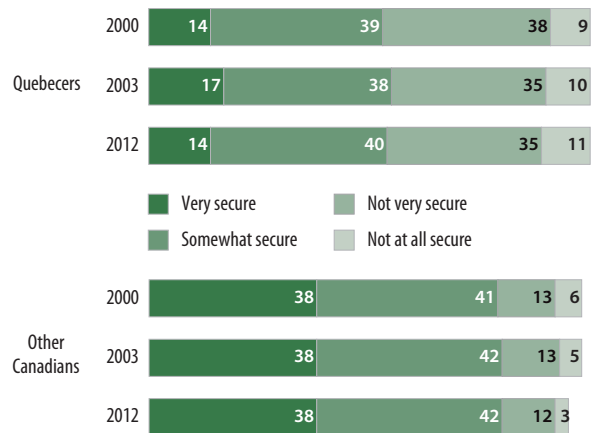
Are you in favour of bilingualism for your province?

SECURITY OF FRENCH LANGUAGE AND CULTURE.

It should perhaps be no surprise that Quebecers and other Canadians have very different perspectives on the future of French language and culture in the country. Just over half of Quebecers feel the security of language/culture *in their province* is very (14%) or somewhat (40%) secure, and this view has held largely steady since 2000. This compares with eight in ten Canadians living in other provinces (38% and 42%, respectively), also essentially unchanged for more than a decade.

There is a similar divide on the question of the future of French language and culture *outside of Quebec*, although both parts of the country are considerably more pessimistic in comparison with the security within Quebec. Among Quebecers, only one in five believe French language and culture are very (3%) or somewhat (17%) secure outside of their province, compared with close to half of those living elsewhere in the country (9% and 38%, respectively). Once again, opinions have remained stable since 2000.

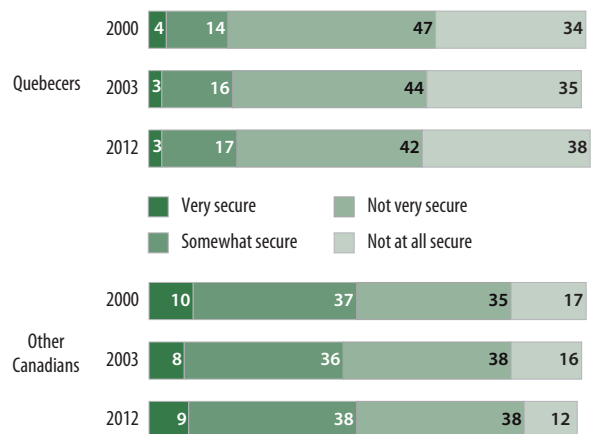
Security of French language and culture in Quebec 2000 – 2012



Q.26

Do you think the future of the French language and culture in Quebec is very secure, somewhat secure, not very secure or not at all secure?

Security of French language and culture outside Quebec 2000 – 2012



Q.27

Do you think the future of the French language and culture outside of Quebec is very secure, somewhat secure, not very secure or not at all secure?