



A NATIONAL SURVEY REPORT

Multiple Solitudes:

What Canadians think about separatism, political representation, democratic reform, and equalization

March 2026

Leger

ARISTOTLE
FOUNDATION FOR PUBLIC POLICY

Executive Summary

The issue of representation within Parliament and the Senate has renewed relevance, with growing separatist tensions in the West and Quebec. This report presents the results of a national survey of 2,710 Canadians, conducted by Léger in early 2026 on behalf of the Aristotle Foundation. It gauges public opinion on issues such as separatist sentiment, representation in Parliament, democratic reform, and equalization payments.

Awareness of Representation

- In terms of House of Commons representation, Westerners are more likely to think they are underrepresented—51 percent in Saskatchewan, 49 percent in Alberta, 41 percent in Manitoba, and 38 percent in BC. Only 25 percent of Quebecers and 15 percent of Ontarians feel underrepresented. The pattern of responses is similar for the Senate.

Separatism in the West and in Quebec

- If separatist sentiment spikes in the West or Quebec and becomes a real threat to Canadian unity, a slightly higher proportion of Canadians would be willing to negotiate with Western demands (55%) than with Quebec demands (49%).
- On unwillingness to negotiate, it is noteworthy that only 26 percent of Canadians are unwilling to negotiate over Western demands, compared to 33 percent unwilling to negotiate Quebec demands.
- In terms of Ontarian reactions to Western versus Quebec separatism, a slightly higher proportion of Ontarians think negotiations should occur to meet Western demands (52%) than Quebec demands (47%).

Reforming Parliament

- Fully 39 percent of Canadians are willing to consider institutional reforms to the House of Commons and the Senate, if separatist sentiment in the West becomes a threat to unity. A slightly smaller proportion (36%) is willing to negotiate in the case of Quebec.
- Fully 66 percent of Canadians think that federal ridings should contain roughly the same number of eligible voters. The highest proportion was in BC (73%), with the lowest in Atlantic Canada (61%).

- When respondents were told that the elected lower houses/parliaments in Great Britain, Australia, and New Zealand have ridings where the member more closely represents the same number of people, only 10 percent said Canada’s House of Commons should be left as is. Fully 37 percent said to freeze the number of seats and remove seats from overrepresented provinces, and 33 percent said the House of Commons should add more MPs to ensure better representation by population.
- As for the Senate, 50 percent believe it should be reformed; just 15 percent want it left as is. However, even fewer (12%) think the Senate should be abolished.

Reforming Federal Transfers

- Fully 43 percent of Canadians are willing to reform federal transfer programs if Western or Quebec separatism becomes a real threat to Canadian unity, with 20 percent opposing any reform. Roughly one-third gave “don’t know” as their answer.
- When asked if they were more likely to support reforming federal transfers when they learned that Alberta “sent”—via the federal government—over \$600 billion on a net basis to other provinces since the 1950s, 40 percent were somewhat or a lot more likely to support reforming federal transfer payments, with 46 percent responding it *did not* make them more likely to support reforming federal transfer payments.

Table of Contents

Introduction	1
Awareness of Representation	1
Negotiating Separatist Demands	4
Reforming Parliament	5
Reforming Federal Transfers	8
Conclusion	10
Appendix A: Methodology	11
Appendix B: Respondent Profiles	12

Introduction

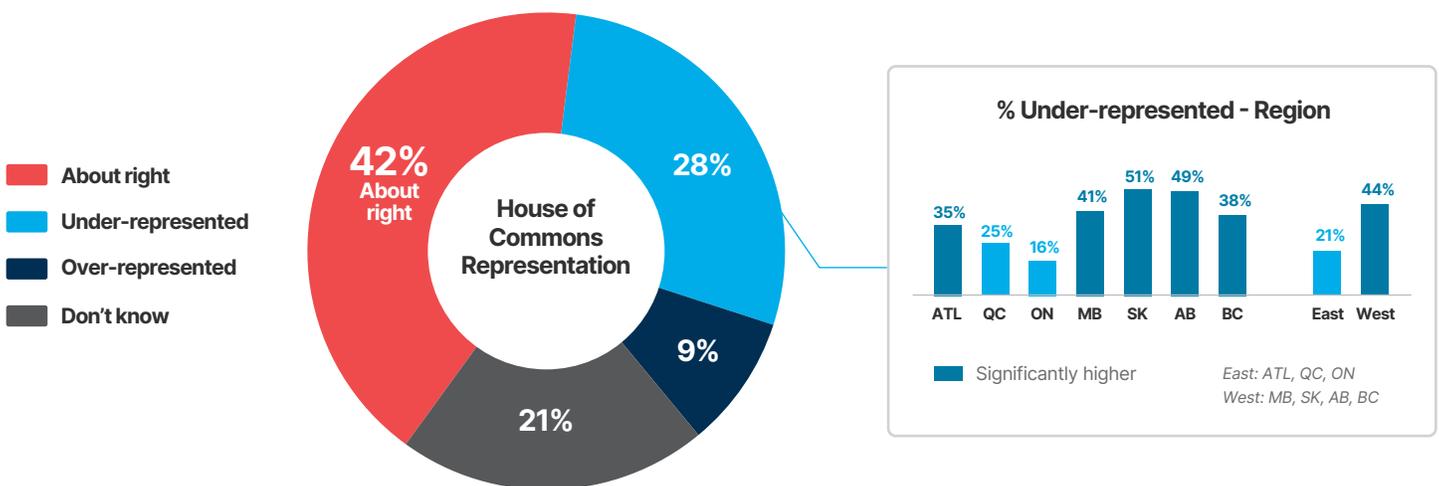
The issue of representation within the federal government has become increasingly relevant, particularly amid growing separatist tensions in the West and Quebec. This report presents the results and key insights of a national public opinion poll conducted by Léger on behalf of the Aristotle Foundation for Public Policy. The nationally representative sample of 2,710 respondents was conducted from January 27 to February 1, 2026, to survey Canadians on issues such as representation in Parliament, separatist sentiment, parliamentary reform, and federal transfer payments. The survey results are arranged by topic and poll-question below.

Awareness of Representation

Only four in ten Canadians think their province’s representation in the House of Commons versus population is correct (Question 1). Almost three in ten express their province is underrepresented. One in eleven feel their province is overrepresented, while one in five Canadians are unsure. Breaking down responses by province, residents outside of Ontario and Quebec more often feel they are underrepresented. Moreover, Canadians in Western Canada tend to feel their population is underrepresented (compared to Eastern Canadians) in the House, while Eastern Canadians more often feel they are well represented (46% vs. 34% in the West).

Question 1

Relative to your province’s population and representation in the House of Commons, do you think your province is:

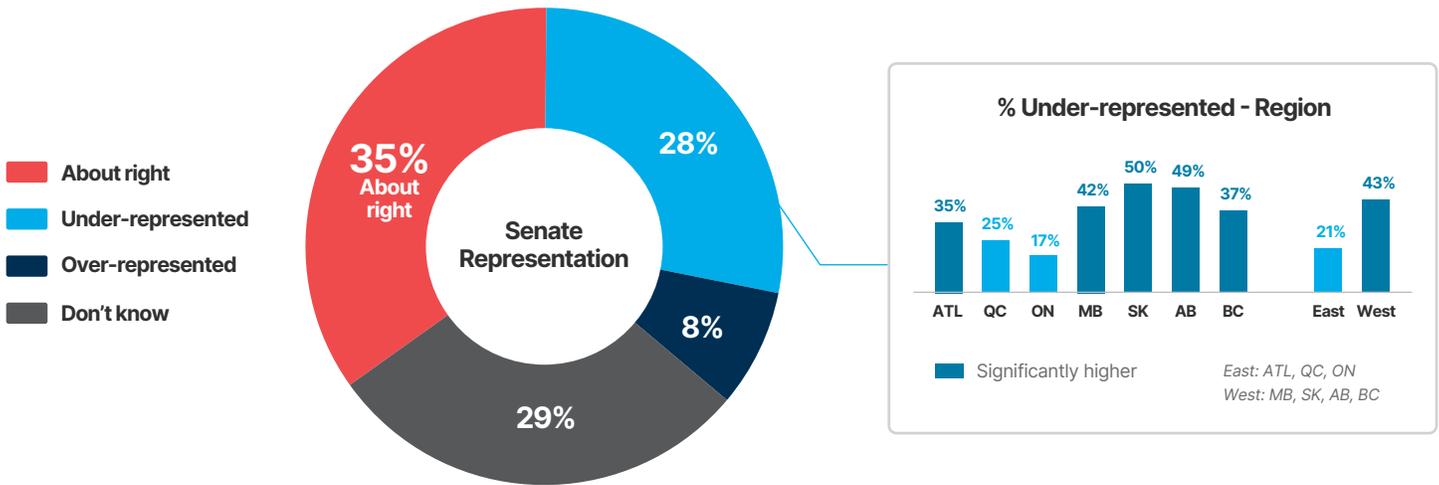


Base: All (2710)

Over a third of Canadians think their province's Senate representation is about right when compared to population (Question 2). There is a higher "Don't Know" response to the Senate versus House of Commons. Similar to the House of Commons, less than three in ten Canadians think their province is under- or overrepresented in the Senate; however, a greater number are unsure (eight points higher than the House). Like the House, residents outside of Ontario and Quebec are more likely to feel underrepresented. Regionally, Western Canadians (compared to Eastern Canadians) tend to feel they are underrepresented in the Senate.

Question 2

Relative to your province's population and representation in the Senate, do you think your province is:

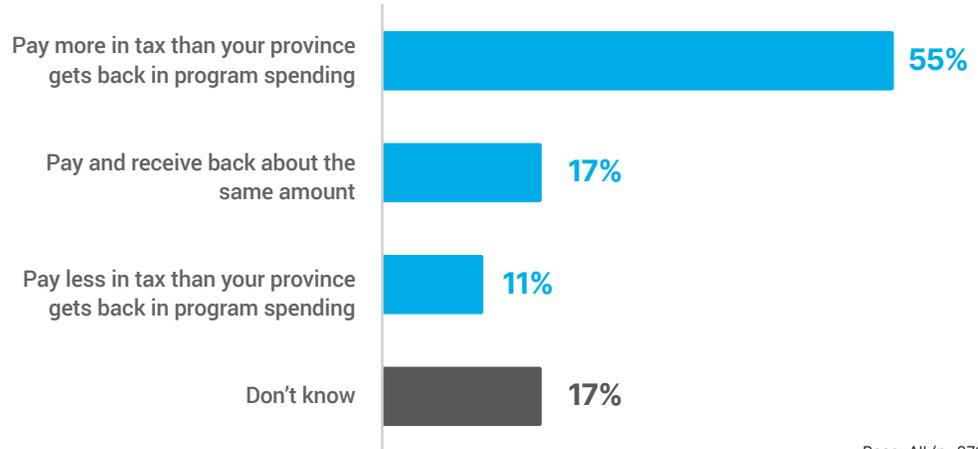


Base: All (2710)

More than half of Canadians say they pay more in tax than their province gets back in program spending (Question 3). About one in six Canadians feel they receive the same amount as they pay; the same share do not know how their spending is allocated. One in nine feel they receive more back from the government than they pay in taxes. Looking at the provinces, those in Saskatchewan and Alberta are more likely than all other provinces besides Ontario to feel they pay more than their province receives.

Question 3

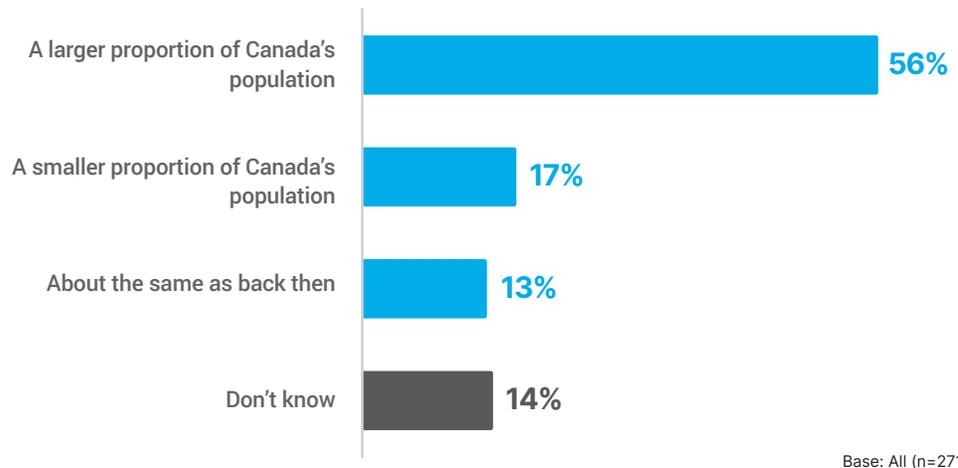
The federal government collects taxes from all Canadians and then distributes that money across the country in the form of program spending. In terms of federal government taxation and spending, do you think people in your province:



Over half of Canadians say their province's share of the country's population has grown since 1949 (Question 4). About one in six Canadians say their province is a smaller portion of the population or about the same as in 1949, while one in seven are unsure. Canadians from Ontario, Alberta, and BC more often think their share of the country's population has increased since 1949.

Question 4

Canada's population has shifted over time since the last province, Newfoundland & Labrador, joined Confederation in 1949. As a proportion of Canada's population now compared to then, do you think your province is:

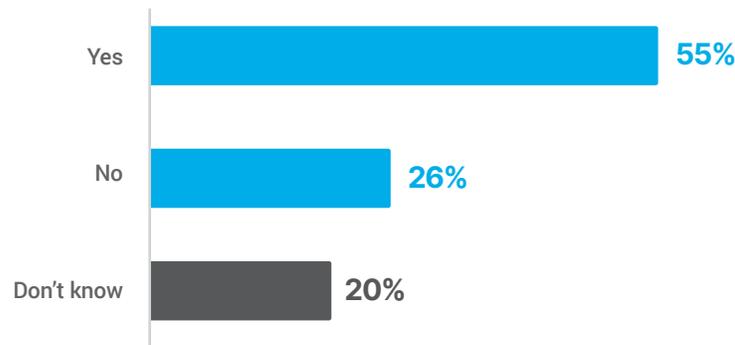


Negotiating Separatist Demands

Most Canadians think negotiations should occur, if Western separatism becomes a real threat to Canadian unity (Question 5). In contrast, a quarter say there should be no negotiations. One in five do not know if negotiations are necessary. Quebecers (compared to other provinces except Saskatchewan) are the most likely to say negotiations should occur.

Question 5

If Western separatism becomes a real threat to Canadian unity, do you think that negotiations should occur to meet at least some demands?

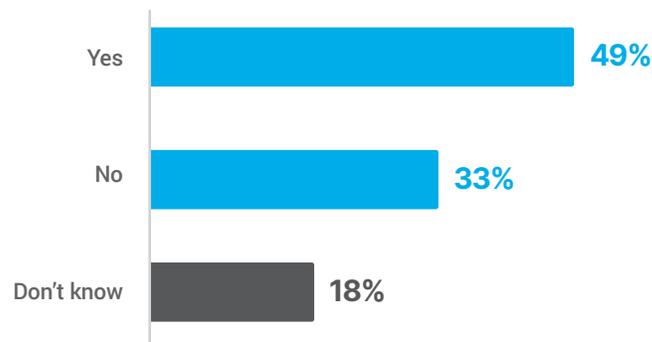


Base: All (n=2710)

Conversely, if Quebec separatism becomes a real threat to Canadian unity, a slightly smaller portion of Canadians—less than half—think negotiations should occur (Question 6). More Canadians are against negotiations for Quebec (one in three, compared to one in four for Western separatism). For both Quebec and the West, a similar amount—one in five—are unsure about negotiations.

Question 6

If Quebec separatism becomes a real threat to Canadian unity, do you think that negotiations should occur to meet at least some demands?



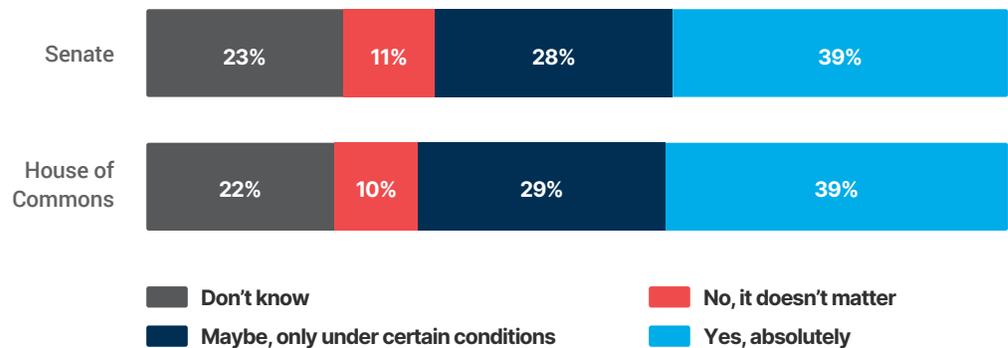
Base: All (n=2710)

Reforming Parliament

Most Canadians are in favour of institutional reform, under certain conditions, to help ease the threat of Western separatism (Question 7). Two in five are in favour of reforming both the House of Commons and the Senate, three in ten under certain conditions, and one in ten oppose. Canadians are equally unsure about reforming both chambers of government. Regionally, Western Canadians are more likely to favour reforming both institutions.

Question 7

If Western separatism becomes a real threat to Canadian unity, do you think that the following institutions should be reformed to better reflect the actual regional populations of Canada in 2026?

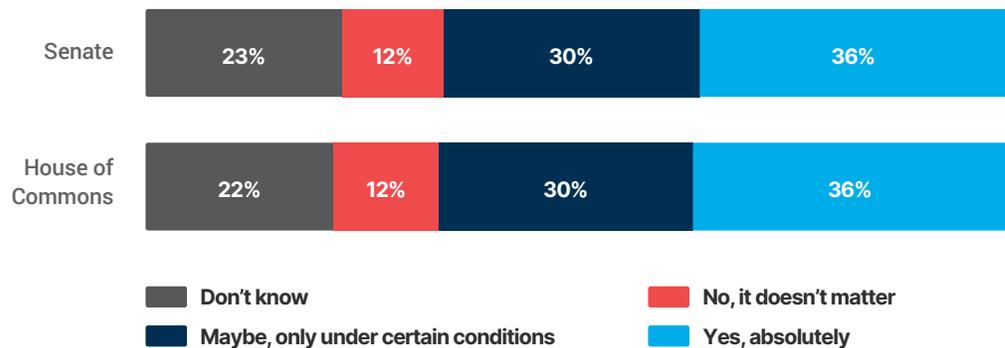


Base: All (n=2710)

A slightly smaller portion of Canadians are in favour of institutional reform to ease the threat of Quebec separatism (Question 8). More than one in three are in favour of reforming both the House of Commons and the Senate, three in ten under certain conditions, and about one in eight oppose. Canadians are equally unsure about reforming both chambers of government.

Question 8

If Quebec separatism becomes a real threat to Canadian unity, do you think that the following institutions should be reformed to better reflect the actual regional populations of Canada in 2026?

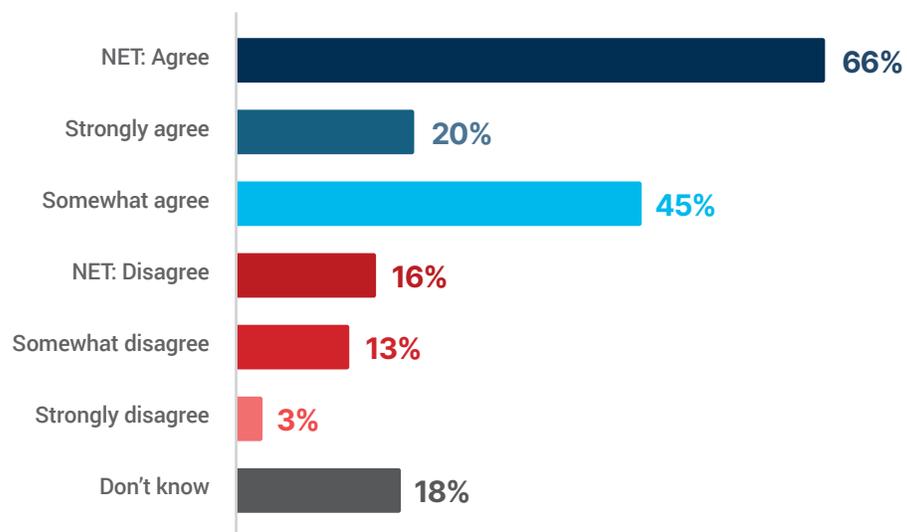


Base: All (n=2710)

Two-thirds of Canadians agree ridings should consist of a similar number of eligible voters (Question 9). In contrast, less than one in six Canadians disagree or are unsure. Regionally, Western Canadians are more likely to agree overall and strongly agree with ridings having equal representation, while Eastern Canadians tend to disagree more.

Question 9

When it comes to the House of Commons do you agree or disagree with the principle that all Members of Parliament should represent approximately the same number of people? That is, federal ridings across Canada should have about the same amount of people living in them.

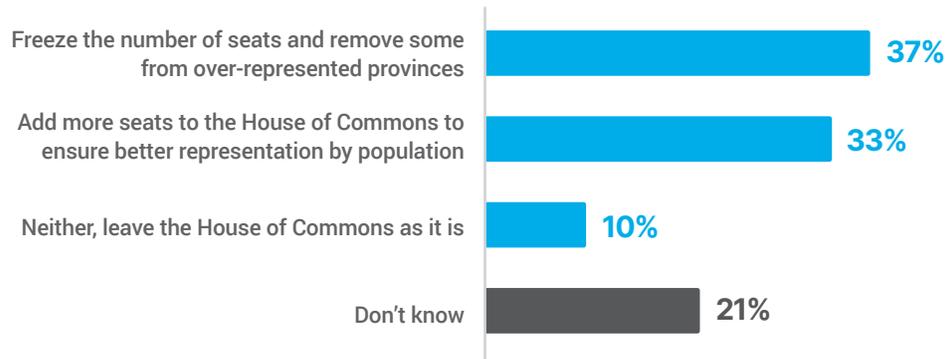


Base: All (n=2710)

Canadians are divided on how to reform the House of Commons, although few Canadians suggest leaving things as they are (Question 10). Almost two in five prefer freezing the number of seats and removing seats from overrepresented provinces, while a third prefer adding more seats, to ensure better representation. One in ten prefer neither option. And one in five are not sure which is best. Western Canadians, especially in Saskatchewan, prefer freezing and removing seats from overrepresented provinces.

Question 10

In some other countries such as Great Britain, New Zealand, and Australia, members in the elected parliaments more closely represent about the same number of people across all ridings. To reform the House of Commons to ensure this is the case in Canada, which option would you prefer?

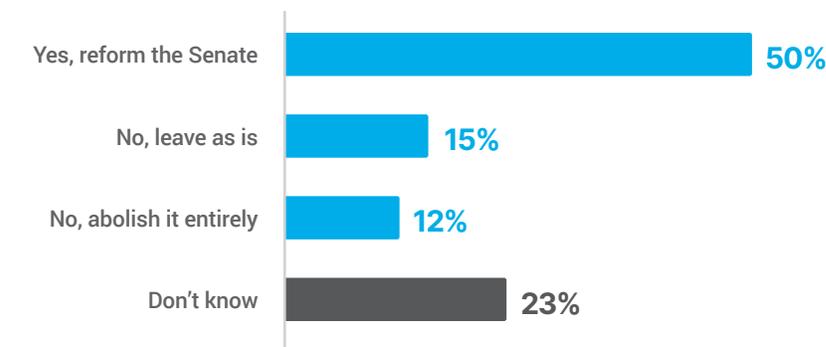


Base: All (n=2710)

There is a greater consensus among Canadians about reforming the Senate (Question 11). Less than one in six think the Senate should remain as is. But that does not mean Canadians want to abolish it; less than one in eight hold the abolitionist view. About one in five are unsure. Regionally, Western Canadians are more in favour of reforming the Senate.

Question 11

The make-up of the Senate of Canada is not based on the population distribution of the country. Should the Senate be reformed to better reflect the actual population distribution across regions?



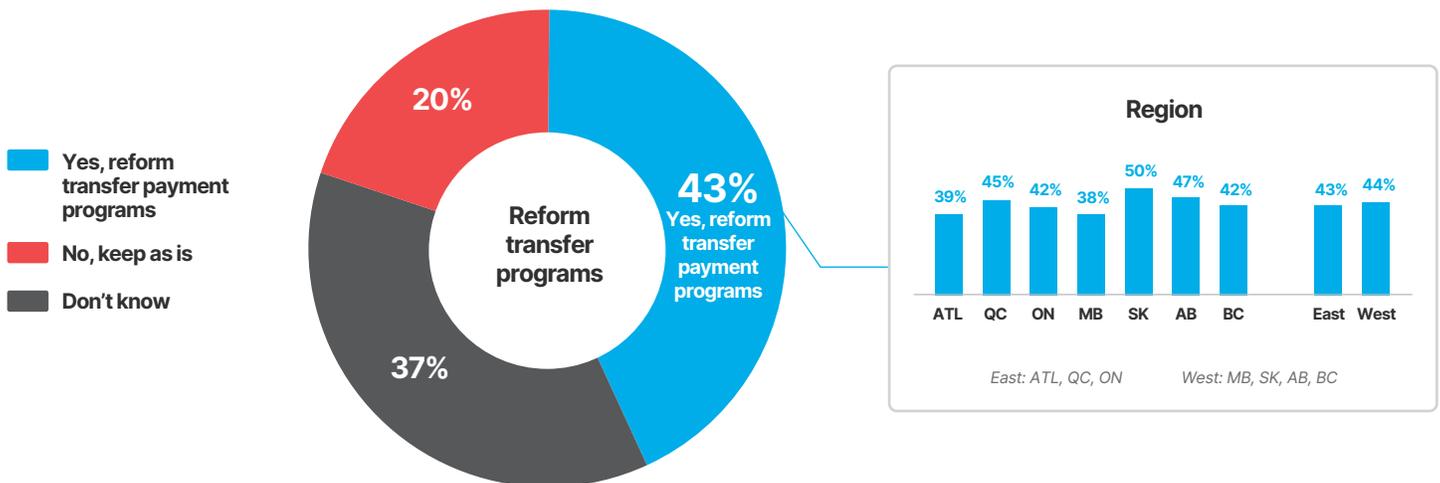
Base: All (n=2710)

Reforming Federal Transfers

Slightly more than two in five Canadians support reforming transfer programs—i.e., equalization payments—in the face of Western separatism, while slightly less than two in five oppose such reforms (Question 12). One-fifth are unsure. Across demographics, including provinces that have contributed to equalization (AB, SK, BC) versus those who have not (ON, QC, MB, ATL), sentiment follows the overall totals.

Question 12

If Western separatism becomes a real threat to Canadian unity, should federal fiscal transfer payment programs such as equalization be reformed to end federal transfers that claim to be based on need, and instead be funded on a per-person basis only?

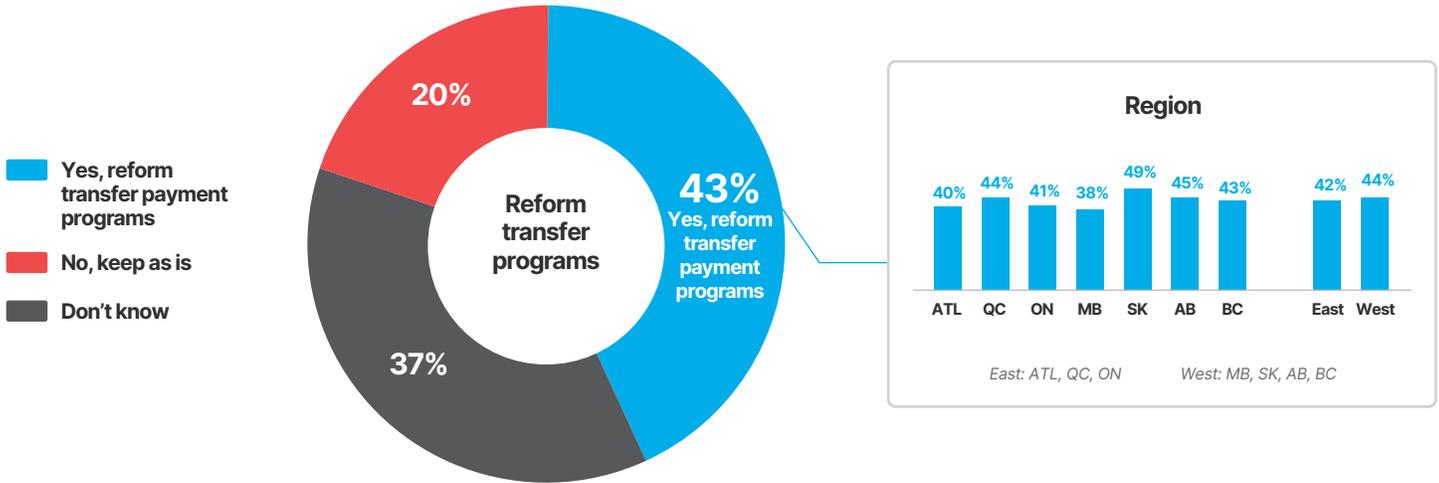


Base: All (2710)

In the aggregate, Canadians are consistent in their support, opposition, or uncertainty for reforming federal transfers (Question 13). The distribution of responses is identical, whether the threat of separatism comes from the West or Quebec. There are minor regional differences, but across demographics, including provinces that have contributed to equalization (versus those who have not), sentiment follows the overall totals.

Question 13

If Quebec separatism becomes a real threat to Canadian unity, should federal fiscal transfer payment programs such as equalization be reformed to end federal transfers that claim to be based on need, and instead be funded on a per-person basis only?

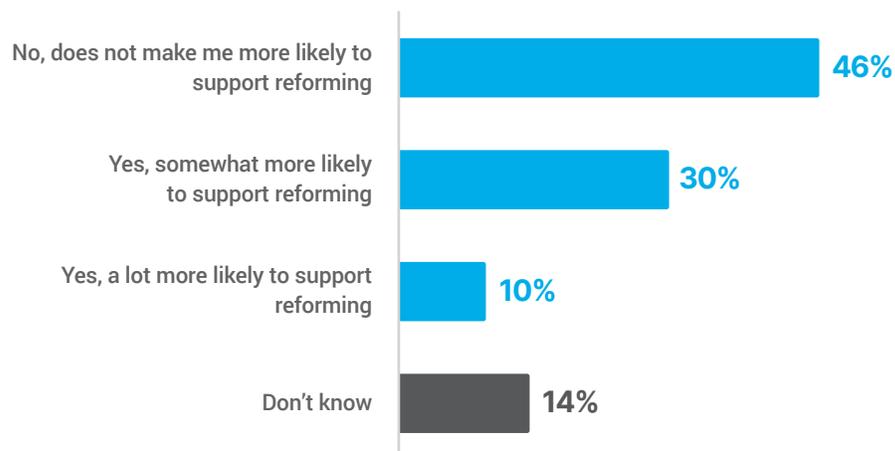


Base: All (2710)

Exactly two in five Canadians are more likely to support reforming federal transfers after learning about Alberta’s net contribution (Question 14). Note that the 46 percent who responded “No” may include respondents who already support reform, and the “more likely” might have previously opposed reform.

Question 14

Would it make you more likely to support reforming the federal transfer system knowing that one province, Alberta, “sent”—via the federal government—\$600 billion on a net basis to other provinces since the 1950s?



Base: All (n=2710)

Conclusion

Provincial disparities in parliamentary representation and what provinces give versus receive from Confederation remain contentious issues and pressing concerns. Our national survey collected polling data on Canadians' views on these issues, as well as their appetite for navigating reforms and negotiating separatist demands. In summary:

- Half of Albertans and Saskatchewanians feel underrepresented in Canada's federal government, compared to one in four Quebecers and about one in seven Ontarians.
- Two-thirds of Canadians think that federal ridings should contain roughly the same number of eligible voters.
- When respondents were told that the elected lower houses (i.e., parliaments) in Great Britain, Australia, and New Zealand have ridings where the member more closely represents the same number of people, only one in ten think Canada's House of Commons should be left as is.
- As for the Senate, most Canadians believe it should be reformed; less than one in six want it left as is.
- There is less demand for reforming equalization; albeit, 43 percent of Canadians are willing to reform federal transfer programs, if Western or Quebec separatism becomes a real threat to Canadian unity. Only one in five oppose any reform to federal transfer programs.
- However, when informed that Alberta has given \$600 billion more to other provinces than it's received (since the 1950s), two in five Canadians are more likely to support reforming federal transfer payments.
- If separatist sentiment spikes in the West or Quebec and becomes a real threat to Canadian unity, more Canadians would be willing to negotiate with Western demands (55%) than with Quebec demands (49%).
- On unwillingness to negotiate, it is noteworthy that only 26 percent of Canadians are unwilling to negotiate over Western demands, compared to 33 percent unwilling to negotiate Quebec demands.

The polling data reveal important regional differences that warrant sober consideration and further unpacking—beyond the scope of this report.

Appendix A: Methodology

Method

Online survey among respondents 18 years of age or older (National sample: n= 2710).

When

Data collection from January 27 to February 1, 2026.

Rounded data

The numbers presented have been rounded up. However, the numbers before rounding were used to calculate the sums presented and might therefore not correspond to the manual addition of these numbers.

Weighting

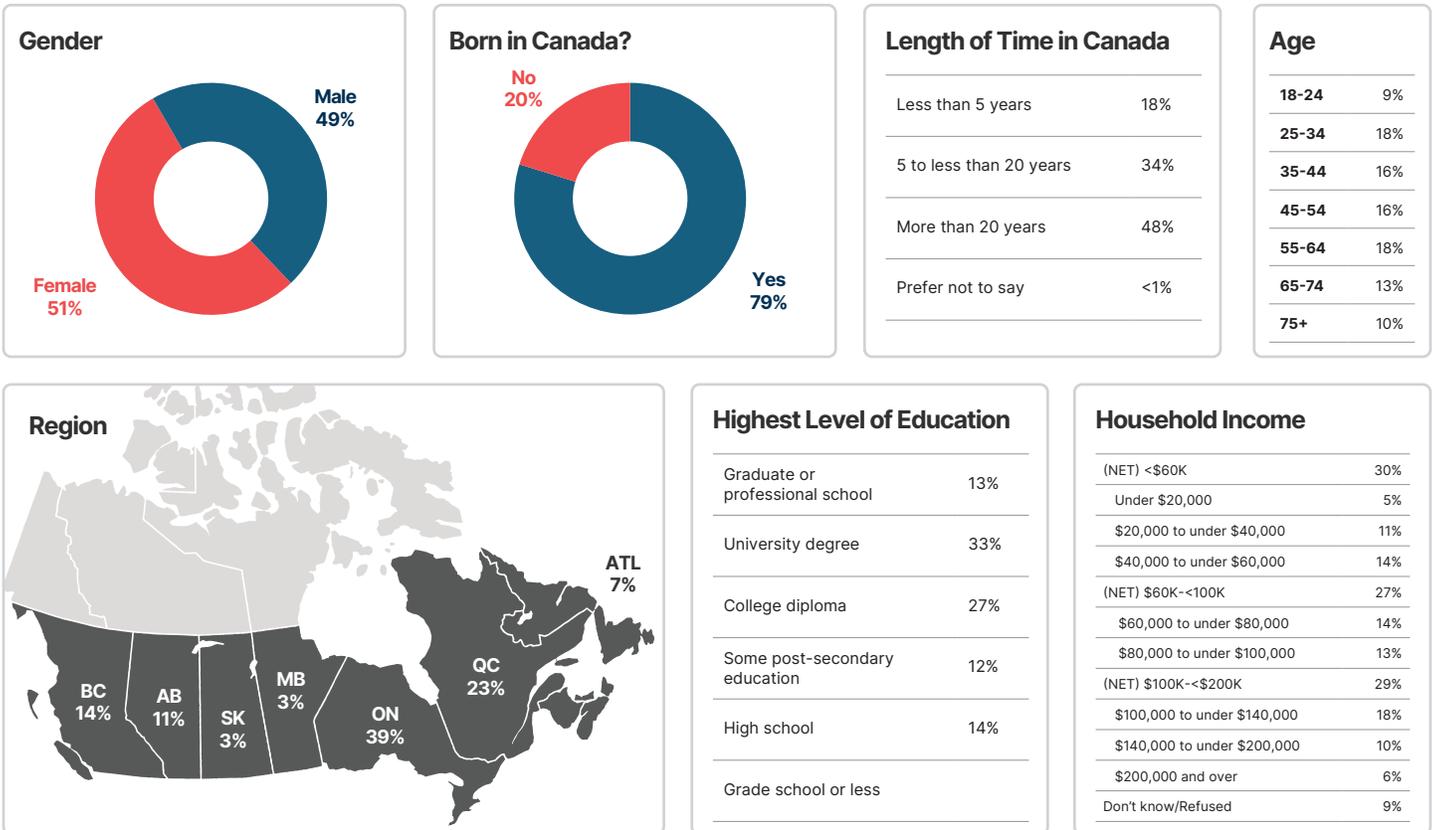
Results were weighted according to age, gender, and region, per the latest Canadian Census information in order to ensure a representative sample of the population.

An over-sampling of some provinces and regions occurred with the results weighted in the overall sample to ensure the total sample is representative of Canada's population. The over-sampling provides greater confidence when examining provincial results.

Margin of error

For comparison purposes, a probability sample of this size yields a margin of error no greater than $\pm 1.9\%$.

Appendix B: Respondent Profiles



About the Aristotle Foundation for Public Policy

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Our vision

A Canada where the sacrifices and successes of past generations are cherished and built upon; where citizens value each other for their character and merit; and where open inquiry and free expression are prized as the best path to a flourishing future for all.

Our mission

We champion reason, democracy, and civilization so that all can participate in a free, flourishing Canada.

Our theory of change: Canada's idea culture is critical

Ideas—what people believe—come first in any change for ill or good. We will challenge ideas and policies where in error and buttress ideas anchored in reality and excellence.

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