

## Citizenship and Federalism in Canada Is the Debate Shifting West?

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Analysis by **Jack Jedwab**  
(Executive Director, Association for Canadian Studies / 514-987-7784 or 514-502-7784)  
and **Chris Baker**  
Environics Research Group (613-230-5089)

The Association for Canadian Studies commissioned this poll from Environics Research Group/Focus Canada. The survey of 2,002 Canadians 18 years of age and over looks at issues of citizenship and federalism in Canada. The ACS-Environics survey was carried out by telephone from March 15-23, 2003. Results are accurate to within plus or minus 3.5%, 19 times out of 20.

**IN THE YEARS AHEAD**, will concerns over national identity shift away from Quebec and toward Alberta? Recent surveys conducted by Environics and released by the Association for Canadian Studies suggest that this may be an important trend to follow. With the election of the Charest Liberal government, the national unity question appears less contentious in Quebec at this time.

Since 1997 national attachment has diminished across the country and there is a growing identification with the provinces. This is particularly apparent in Alberta, where between 1997 and 2003 there has been a 17- point increase in attachment to province. If current trends continue, Albertans may become more attached to their province than Quebecers are to their own.

As observed below there has been a 13-point increase in provincial attachment in British Columbia and even Ontario has not escaped the growing provincialism as it too has witnessed a 10-point increase in this regard since 1997.

### Do you feel that you are more a citizen of Canada, or more a citizen of (respondent's province)?

	Alberta			Quebec			Ontario			BC		
	2003	2000	1997	2003	2000	1997	2003	2000	1997	2003	2000	1997
Citizen of Canada	53	58	63	35	40	40	70	75	74	58	63	63
Citizen of Province	46	35	29	51	48	46	28	22	18	38	29	25
Both Equally	1	6	7	12	10	10	2	2	6	3	5	10

On the basis of party preference, the decline in national sentiment is seen most widely amongst Conservatives, Canadian Alliance and Liberal supporters. Only amongst supporters of the NDP has there been a rise in national attachment since 2000.

**Do you feel that you are more a citizen of Canada, or more a citizen of (respondent's province)?**

	Liberals		Cons		NDP		Can Alliance		Bloc Québécois	
	2003	2000	2003	2000	2003	2000	2003	2000	2003	2000
Citizen of Canada	68	75	58	71	63	59	57	66	7	7
Citizen of Province	28	18	39	27	34	37	41	30	87	86
Both Equally	4	6	2	2	3	4	2	4	6	6
DK/NA	-	1	1	1	-	-	-	1	1	1

Finally, the decline in national attachment has been more pronounced amongst older than younger Canadians, though in each instance there has been a rise in provincial identification.

**Do you feel that you are more a citizen of Canada, or more a citizen of (respondent's province)?**

	18-29		60 and over	
	2003	2000	2003	2000
Citizen of Canada	48	50	65	71
Citizen of Province	47	41	29	22
Both Equally	3	6	5	6
DK/NA	1	2	1	1

**Do Westerners want out?**

The increasing provincialism identified above also manifests itself through a growing rise in the extent to which Western Canadians feel that "...they get few benefits and should go it alone". This is a view now held by some 40% of Westerners – as opposed to 35% in the year 2000.

As observed below, there has also been a reduction in the last few years in the extent to which it is felt that Quebec receives *too much* attention. While this finding may not be surprising in Quebec, the fact that it has also declined in the rest of Canada further suggests that the focus of the national unity debate may increasingly be shifting westward.

**Thinking about the current federal government, do you think it is giving too much attention to Quebec, not enough attention to Quebec, or is its approach to Quebec about right?**

Year	Canada		Quebec		Rest of Canada	
	2003	2000	2003	2000	2003	2000
Too Much	37	43	10	15	45	52
About Right	45	45	40	39	47	41
Not Enough	15	6	48	42	5	4
DK/NA	3	4	2	3	3	3

As Canada is preparing major celebrations for the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Alberta's entry into the federation in the year 2005 it will likely need to give greater thought to strengthening the attachment of residents of the province to Canada.