

October 2019

# ALBERTANS' VIEWS ON SEPARATION

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# ALBERTANS MORE FRUSTRATED FEDERALISTS THAN SEPARATISTS



Resentment toward the federal government – particularly the current one – runs deep in Alberta, but it does not translate into any serious threat of the province separating from Canada. While less than one-quarter of Albertans would actually vote to secede from Canada today, a sizable majority say they understand where these separatist sentiments come from.

## Federal Impact on Quality of Life

As Albertans head to the polls in the federal election, their views about the current federal government are overwhelmingly negative. Over seven-in-ten (71%) say federal policies over the last several years have hurt the quality of life of Albertans, compared to only 15% who believe the federal government has helped the quality of life here.

# SEPARATION MOCK BALLOT



If a provincial referendum on separation were held tomorrow, nearly six-in-ten (59%) Albertans say they would vote for the province to remain in Canada, while 23% would cast a ballot to create a new, independent country, and 17% are undecided on the question.

- Conservative voters – both provincial and federal – are far more likely to consider voting in favour of Alberta separation than other Albertans
- Separatist intentions are least common in Edmonton and more common in central and northern Alberta, but there is no region of the province where it is prevailing
- Men, those aged 55 years or more and those without a university education are modestly more likely to favour separation
- Even among those who believe the federal government has had a negative impact on the quality of life of Albertans, only 32% would vote to have Alberta as an independent country

## SEPARATIST SENTIMENT IN ALBERTA WELL UNDERSTOOD



Although only one-quarter of Albertans would actually vote in favour of independence, two-thirds empathize with the sentiments underpinning separatism.

When asked for their reaction when they hear people talk about Alberta separating from the rest of Canada, nearly four-in-ten (38%) say they “totally understand” those feelings, along with another 31% who “somewhat understand” those views. Only 28% of Albertans say they do not understand the feelings being expressed by those advocating separatism in Alberta.

- Even among those who would vote to remain a part of Canada in a referendum, over one-half (51%) say they at least somewhat understand the feelings of those advocating separation

## IMPLICATIONS



Disdain in the federal government in Alberta is rising and sits alarmingly high today. If the Trudeau Liberals are hoping for any pleasant surprises from Alberta in Monday's election, they shouldn't – According to seven out of ten Albertans, their quality of life has been diminished due to the actions of the current government.

Despite recent rumblings in Alberta about separation and talk of a growing separatist movement, it's clear from these results that Albertans are far more “frustrated federalists” than they are separatists; six-in-ten would never want to exchange their Canadian passport for an Alberta one.

That said, when seven-in-ten Albertans tend to empathize with separatist grievances, there is clearly a problem. For most alienated Albertans, leaving isn't an acceptable answer so we can expect these sentiments to drive political events in other ways. If history is a guide, expect support for a strong provincial government to act as a foil to the feds in Alberta's interests.

## IMPLICATIONS, CONTINUED



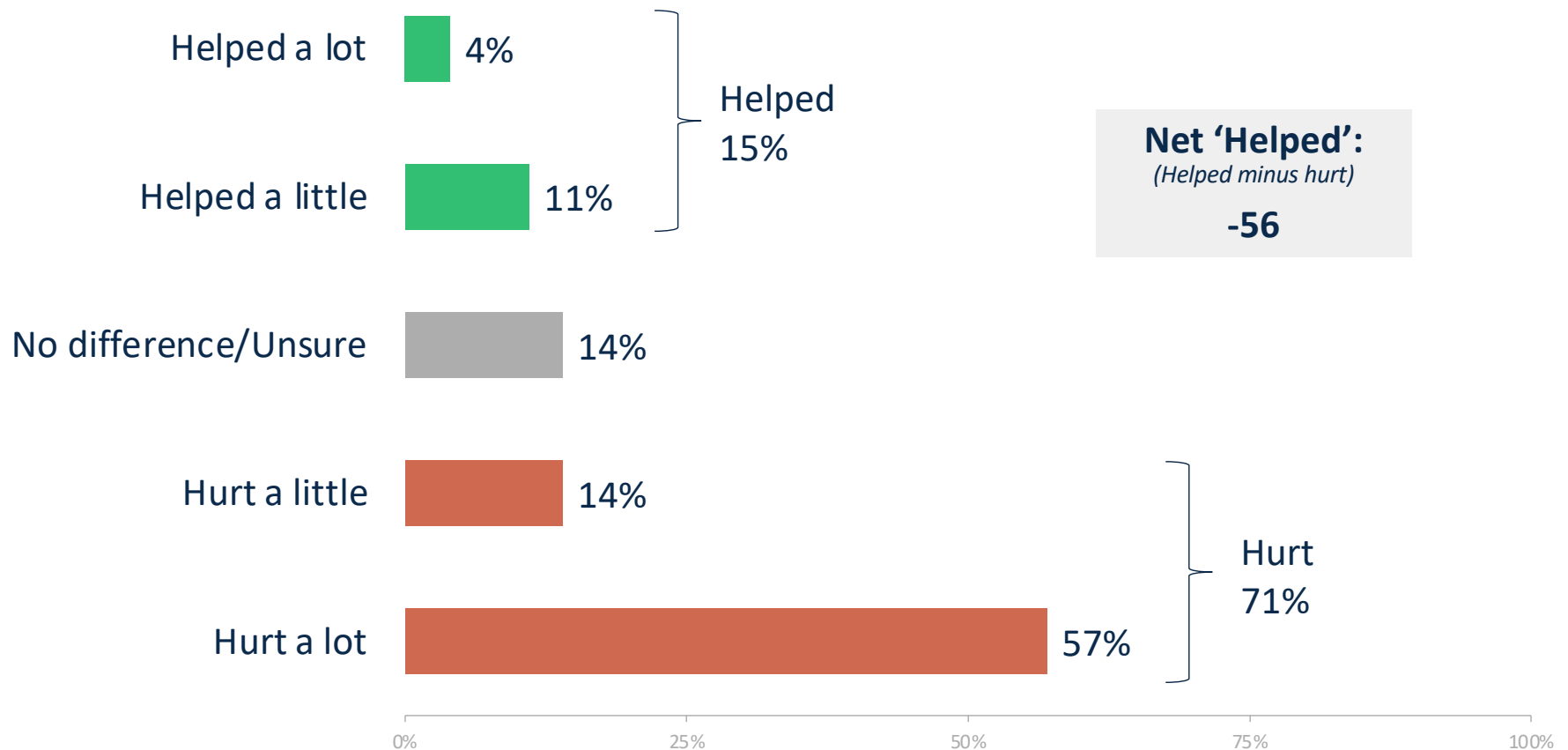
It will be interesting to see the outcome of next week's federal election and how that either abates or exacerbates feelings of alienation in Alberta. A re-elected Liberal government would likely stoke Albertans negative impressions of the federation, or at the very least a second term for Trudeau would be unlikely to ease frustrations here.

A Conservative government may help ease Albertans' anxieties, but it would depend on a new government's abilities to address growing concerns about Alberta's place in confederation. If a Conservative Party government is unable or unwilling to address feelings of alienation in Alberta, it would likely be a catalyst for a new federal party, in the style of the Reform Party.

# EFFECT OF FEDERAL GOVERNMENT PRIORITIES ON ALBERTANS' QUALITY OF LIFE



*“Over the past couple of years, do you think the policies of the federal government have helped, hurt or have not made much of a difference to the overall quality of life of Albertans?”*

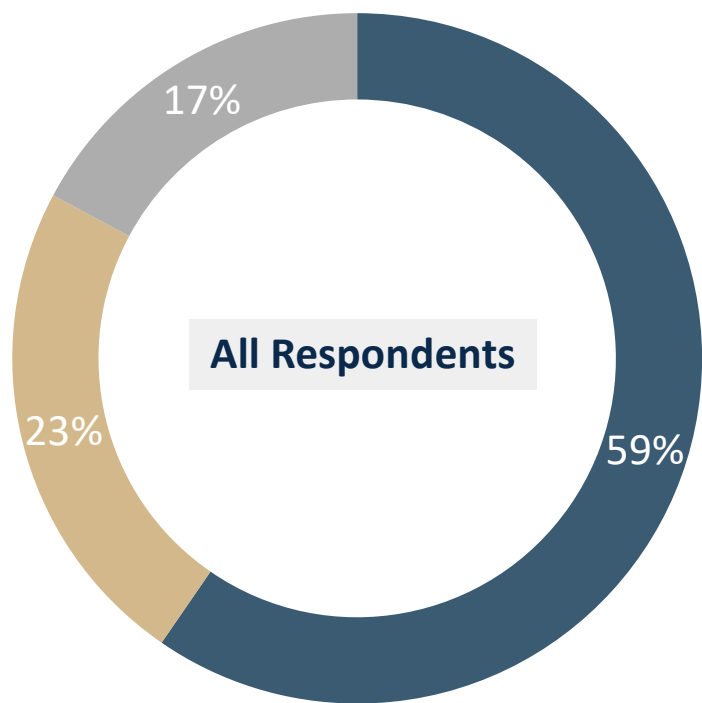


Base: All respondents (n=1,236)

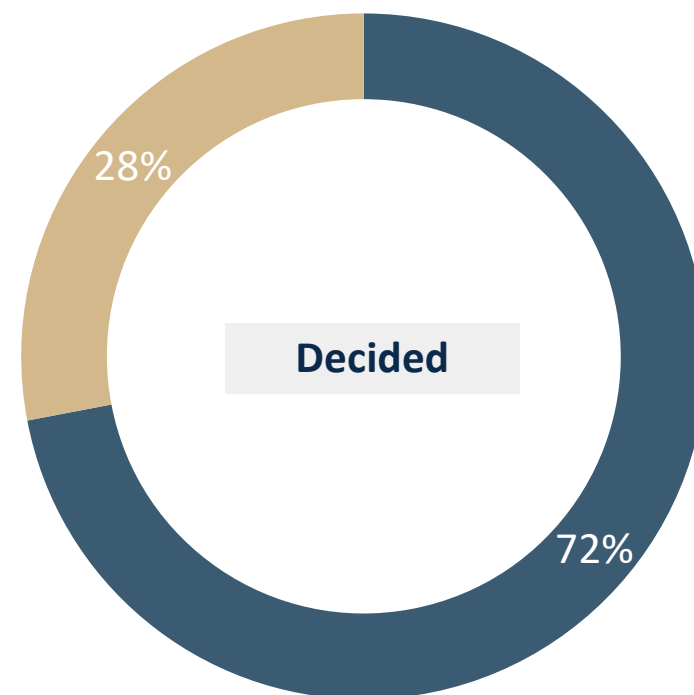
# HYPOTHETICAL PROVINCIAL SEPARATION REFERENDUM VOTE



*"If a provincial referendum were held tomorrow asking Albertans if they would like Alberta to remain in Canada or to become an independent country, how would you most likely vote?"*



- For Alberta to remain a part of Canada
- For Alberta to become an independent country
- Undecided



Base: All respondents (n=1,236)

Base: Decided (n=1,023)



# HYPOTHETICAL PROVINCIAL SEPARATION REFERENDUM VOTE

## -BY KEY DEMOGRAPHICS



*“If a provincial referendum were held tomorrow asking Albertans if they would like Alberta to remain in Canada or to become an independent country, how would you most likely vote?”*

	Total	Next Federal Vote					Last Provincial Vote		
	Alberta (n=1,236)	CPC (n=654)	LIB (n=169)	NDP (n=126)	Green (n=67)*	Unsure (n=97)*	UCP (n=576)	NDP (n=359)	AB Party (n=97)*
Remain	59%	41%	97%	93%	97%	73%	39%	87%	68%
Separate	23%	37%	2%	3%	2%	6%	37%	7%	20%
Undecided	17%	22%	2%	4%	1%	22%	24%	5%	13%

	Total	Region				
	Alberta (n=1,236)	Calgary CMA (n=431)	Edmonton CMA (n=391)	North (n=149)	Central (n=138)	South (n=127)
Remain	59%	61%	69%	55%	42%	52%
Separate	23%	23%	16%	31%	36%	25%
Undecided	17%	16%	16%	14%	22%	23%

□ Significantly higher    ○ Significantly lower

Base: All respondents | \*Caution: Small sample size

# HYPOTHETICAL PROVINCIAL SEPARATION REFERENDUM VOTE

## -BY KEY DEMOGRAPHICS



*“If a provincial referendum were held tomorrow asking Albertans if they would like Alberta to remain in Canada or to become an independent country, how would you most likely vote?”*

	Total	Age (Years)			Gender	
	Alberta (n=1,236)	<35 (n=389)	35-54 (n=437)	55+ (n=410)	Male (n=615)	Female (n=620)
Remain	59%	67%	62%	50%	52%	66%
Separate	23%	12%	25%	32%	31%	15%
Undecided	17%	22%	13%	18%	16%	18%

	Total	Education			Federal Gov. Effect on Albertans' Quality of Life		
	Alberta (n=1,236)	HS or less (n=146)	Some PS (n=251)	Uni Grad+ (n=839)	Helped (n=185)	Hurt (n=876)	No difference (n=174)
Remain	59%	55%	54%	62%	97%	47%	84%
Separate	23%	26%	25%	22%	2%	32%	3%
Undecided	17%	19%	20%	16%	2%	21%	13%

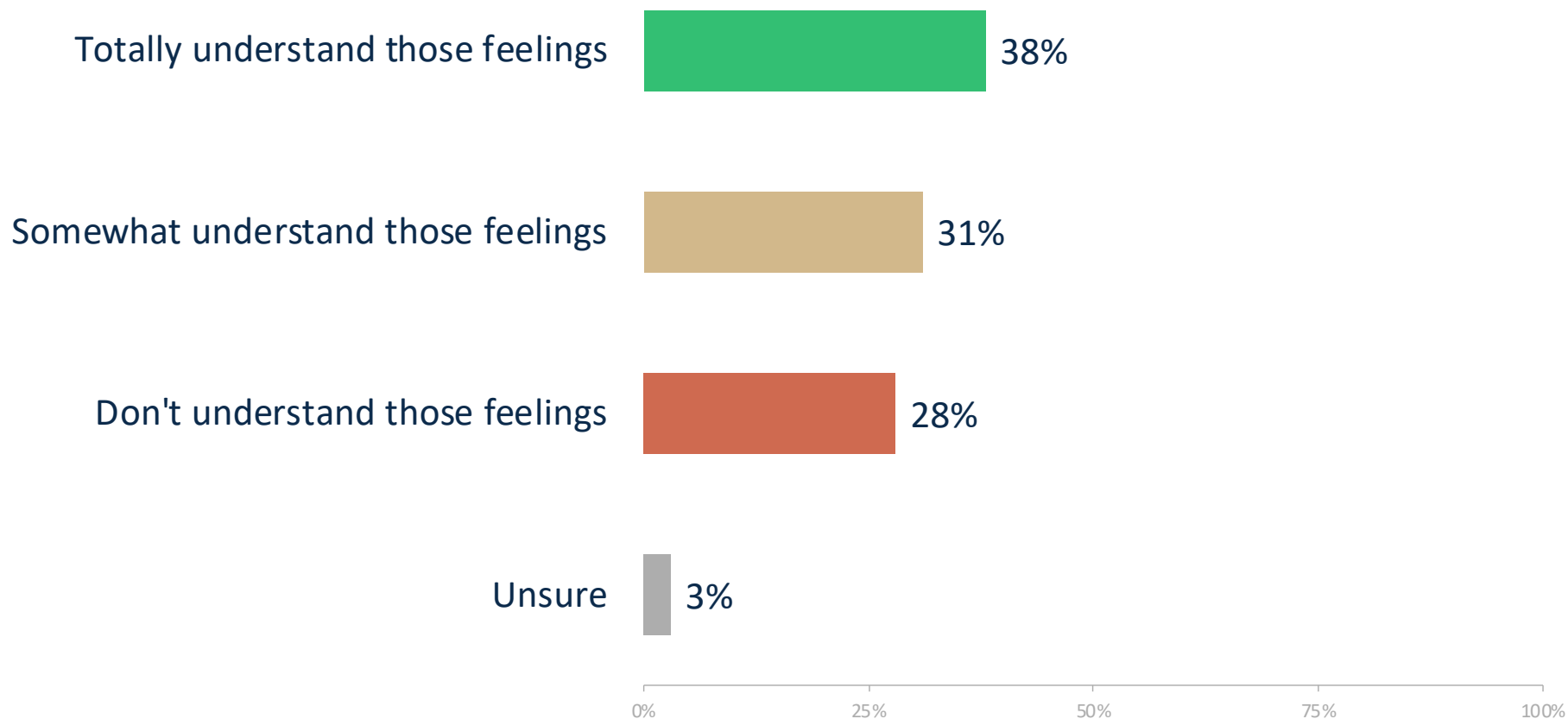
□ Significantly higher    ○ Significantly lower

Base: All respondents | \*Caution: Small sample size

# PUBLIC REACTION TO SEPARATIST SENTIMENTS



*“Regardless of how you would vote in a referendum on separation, when you hear people saying that Alberta should separate from the rest of Canada, what is your reaction personally? Do you...?”*



Base: All respondents (n=1,236)

# PUBLIC REACTION TO SEPARATIST SENTIMENTS

## -BY REFERENDUM VOTE



*“Regardless of how you would vote in a referendum on separation, when you hear people saying that Alberta should separate from the rest of Canada, what is your reaction personally? Do you...?”*

	Total	Hypothetical Referendum Vote		
	Alberta Total (n=1,236)	Remain in Canada (n=735)	Alberta Separate (n=288)	Unsure (n=213)
<b>Totally understand</b> those feelings	38%	14%	85%	58%
<b>Somewhat understand</b> those feelings	31%	37%	15%	30%
<b>Don't understand</b> those feelings	28%	46%	-	12%

Base: All respondents

# METHODOLOGY

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY



- Study fielded via online research panel
  - Field dates: October 4 to 7, 2019
  - Panel source: ThinkHQ Connect & MARU
- n=1,236
- Weighted to reflect gender, age and region of Alberta population according to Stats Canada
- A random stratified sample of panelists was invited to complete the survey from several on-line research panel sources. The margin of error for a comparable probability-based random sample of this size is +/- 2.8 percentage points, 19 times out of 20
- Accuracy of sub-samples of the data decline based on sample sizes

# REGIONAL SAMPLE SIZES AND MARGINS OF ERROR



	Total Interviews (Unweighted) (n)	Total Interviews (Weighted) (n)	Margin of Error (Associated with a probability sample of this size)
<b>ALBERTA TOTAL</b>	1,236	1,236	+/- 2.8
<b>Calgary</b>	464	431	+/- 4.6
<b>Edmonton</b>	368	391	+/- 5.1
<b>North</b>	106	149	+/- 9.5
<b>Central</b>	145	138	+/- 8.1
<b>South</b>	153	127	+/- 7.9



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