

Fractured federation: Amid competing priorities, which provinces believe they give & get more from Canada?

Grievances in Western Canada & ambivalence towards Quebec highlight difficult interprovincial dynamics

January 24, 2019 – One of the common threads of Canadian history is the palpable tension between provinces and regions. While violent rebellions in Upper and Lower Canada are left to history, modern domestic turmoil often takes the form of economic debates and policy protests.

The latest study from the Angus Reid Institute – the second in a four-part series exploring and measuring the nature and dynamics of Western Canadian identity – finds a long-held sense of alienation continues to pervade significant segments of Canada's population west of Ontario.

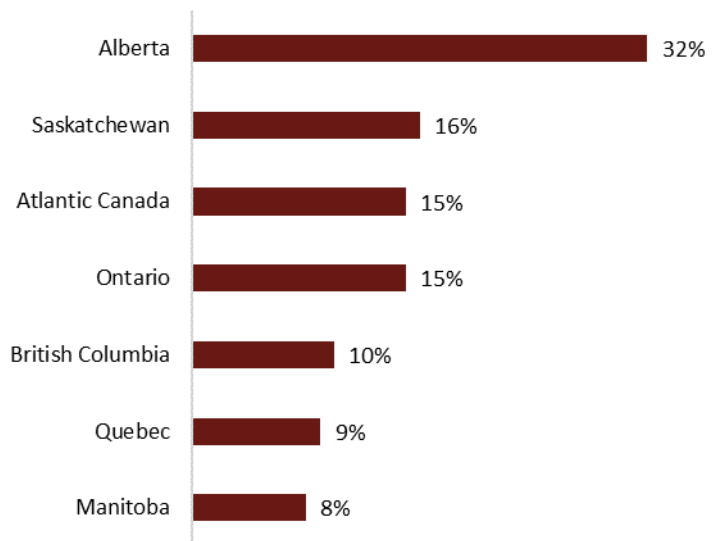
Indeed, the percentage of residents in the West claiming that provinces treat them unfairly is significantly higher than the percentage saying this in the east. A simmering frustration with Ontario – and particularly Ottawa – within Alberta and Saskatchewan drives much of this, while a disconnect between Quebec and the Prairies carries significant import as well.

Half of Canadians (53%), including one-in-five Quebecers themselves (21%), say that Quebec takes more from Canada than it offers in return. On the other end of the spectrum, one-in-three Canadians (32%) say that Alberta is giving more than it receives as a part of confederation.

For its part, Quebec holds the distinction as the province with the least positive sentiment coming from outside its own borders. Even in Ontario, the province four-in-ten Quebecers (44%) say *they* have affection for, just one-in-ten residents (12%) say they feel the same way about Quebec.

Meanwhile, the West is hardly a unified front on the matter of inter-provincial admiration. While Alberta, Saskatchewan and Manitoba each give each other high praise, only one-in-five in each province say they get a fair shake from British Columbia.

Are there any provinces or regions (perhaps including your own) that give more than they get being part of Canada?



METHODOLOGY:

The Angus Reid Institute conducted an online survey from December 21, 2018 – January 3, 2019, among a representative randomized sample of 4,024 Canadian adults who are members of the [Angus Reid Forum](#). The sample plan included large oversamples in some regions that were then weighted back to provide a national snapshot. For comparison purposes only, a probability sample of this size with this sample frame would carry a margin of error of +/- 2.5 percentage points, 19 times out of 20. Discrepancies in or between totals are due to rounding. The survey was self-commissioned and paid for by ARI. Detailed tables are found at the end of this release.

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More Key Findings:

- British Columbia appears relatively isolated in the federation of Canadian provinces. Three-in-ten say their province has a close relationship with Alberta – the highest number chosen among B.C. residents – but four-in-ten (43%) say their province doesn't have any especially close relationships
- Alberta and Saskatchewan residents feel a kinship with each other and Manitoba, but four-in-ten in each of those provinces say that they feel they get the cold shoulder from Ontario, and three-quarters in each say the same of Quebec
- Atlantic Canadian provinces all voice a significant level of friendliness with each other. Additionally, there is a strong perceived relationship between Alberta and the Atlantic region.
- Discontent in Quebec is driven largely by men. The percentage of men in Quebec who feel hostility from Alberta reaches two-thirds (67%), while it passes one-third (36%) among women

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Part 1: The Friendly and Frosty Factor

As a federation, Canada has long been home to simmering regional tensions. Perhaps the most important example of this historically, the French-English divide, is still felt on a number of issues in the country. In recent decades, sources of angst west of Ontario have been exacerbated by a perceived lack of respect for the relative wealth western provinces provide. This refrain has been echoed loudly in the most recent oil slump, with many in Alberta requesting the government do more to help those suffering as one of Canada's key economic engine sputters.

While they have different reasons for believing so, the sentiment that the eastern provinces often look

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down their noses at the West is widely held within western provinces. Note that for the purposes of this report, the West is defined as the four western-most provinces (B.C., Alberta, Saskatchewan, and Manitoba).

“Western Canada” and BC

Asked which of the provinces they feel are particularly friendly toward *their own* province, residents of the Prairies hold each other in relatively high esteem. Three-quarters of Alberta residents (77%) say Saskatchewan is a buddy, while a similar number in “Rider Nation” say the same of their neighbour to the west. The friendly feelings are slightly more muted in Manitoba when considering Saskatchewan, but still comparatively strong. More than six-in-ten (63%) Manitobans say Saskatchewan is an especially close friend.

The outlier in among the four westernmost provinces is British Columbia. The relationship is not nearly as strong, regardless of whether one is looking from the perspective of B.C. residents, or gauging opinions of that province drawn from the Prairies. Three-in-ten British Columbians (31%) say they believe Alberta is friendly to their province, and one-in-five say this of Saskatchewan (19%).

In each of the other three western provinces, just one-in-five residents say they view B.C. as having a close relationship to their own – a far cry from the strong connection voiced between the three other western provinces to each other.

Are there any of these other provinces that you feel are especially close or friendly towards your own province?							
Opinion of closeness with...	Respondents from Each Province						
	BC (706)	AB (719)	SK (523)	MB (544)	ON (519)	QC (502)	ATL (511)
British Columbia	-	19%	23%	21%	18%	15%	6%
Alberta	31%	-	75%	40%	28%	10%	25%
Saskatchewan	19%	77%	-	63%	19%	3%	7%
Manitoba	13%	39%	62%	-	19%	7%	5%
Ontario	16%	14%	12%	20%	-	44%	14%
Quebec	6%	1%	2%	3%	12%	-	7%
New Brunswick	8%	18%	12%	6%	16%	42%	31%
Nova Scotia	14%	14%	11%	9%	16%	10%	38%
Prince Edward Island	10%	8%	8%	6%	12%	10%	46%
Newfoundland and Labrador	12%	26%	15%	9%	14%	9%	36%
None	43%	10%	10%	18%	41%	30%	18%

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Ontario: its own universe; Quebec: isolated

For the most part, Ontario residents do not view any other province with particular affection, and the same relationship holds when other Canadians consider their province's association with Ontario.

Notably, however, the province with which Ontarians feel the most kinship is Alberta. Canada's oil production epicentre is the only province to hold the affection of more than one-in-five (28%) in Ontario, while all others fall at or below that mark. Ontarians share one commonality with British Columbia – in both provinces, four-in-ten residents choose “none” when asked which provinces they consider to be especially close to their own.

When considering how the rest of Canada feels about Ontario, the level of goodwill is similar. Quebecers are most likely to say they consider their neighbour a close friend – four-in-ten do (44%) – but no other region holds this view among more than 20 per cent of its population.

One of the most notable data trends in this study is the relative lack of connection felt between Quebec and the rest of Canada. As noted, 44 per cent of Quebec residents consider Ontario a friend (but just 12 per cent of Ontarians return that affection).

For their part, Quebec residents also feel that they are close to New Brunswick (42%), whereas the rest of the country generates less enthusiasm. Indeed, three-in-ten Quebecers say that no other province is particularly kind to them (30%). This isolation is more obvious when considering views of Quebec from outside its borders. No region of the country views Quebec as friendly to their province at a proportion higher than one-in-ten.

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Are there any of these other provinces that you feel are especially close or friendly towards your own province?

Opinion of...	Respondents from Each Province						
	BC (706)	AB (719)	SK (523)	MB (544)	ON (519)	QC (502)	ATL (511)
British Columbia	-	19%	23%	21%	18%	15%	6%
Alberta	31%	-	75%	40%	28%	10%	25%
Saskatchewan	19%	77%	-	63%	19%	3%	7%
Manitoba	13%	39%	62%	-	19%	7%	5%
Ontario	16%	14%	12%	20%	-	44%	14%
Quebec	6%	1%	2%	3%	12%	-	7%
New Brunswick	8%	18%	12%	6%	16%	42%	31%
Nova Scotia	14%	14%	11%	9%	16%	10%	38%
Prince Edward Island	10%	8%	8%	6%	12%	10%	46%
Newfoundland and Labrador	12%	26%	15%	9%	14%	9%	36%
None	43%	10%	10%	18%	41%	30%	18%

Atlantic allies

Among Canada's closest alliances are the Atlantic provinces. Their relative isolation and geographic distinctiveness often necessitates this, and the relationship is reflected in their largely positive view of each other. Outside of their regional neighbours, one-quarter of Atlantic Canadians (25%) say they feel they have a positive relationship with Alberta, a province with which they share an immense trade, natural resource and human relationship. Alberta has been a key source of work-related emigration in times of economic strife in Atlantic Canada.

Notably, New Brunswick residents do not reciprocate the aforementioned affection that they receive from Quebec. While four-in-ten in Quebec say N.B. is a friend, just 13 per cent of New Brunswickers say the same of Quebec. Note that due to the small sample size, Prince Edward Island data is withheld from the report.

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Are there any of these other provinces that you feel are especially close or friendly towards your own province?

Opinion of...	Respondents from Each Province								
	BC (706)	AB (719)	SK (523)	MB (544)	ON (519)	QC (502)	NB (167)	NS (170)	NL (121)
British Columbia	-	19%	23%	21%	18%	15%	3%	8%	8%
Alberta	31%	-	75%	40%	28%	10%	26%	21%	32%
Saskatchewan	19%	77%	-	63%	19%	3%	7%	8%	7%
Manitoba	13%	39%	62%	-	19%	7%	6%	6%	4%
Ontario	16%	14%	12%	20%	-	44%	14%	12%	18%
Quebec	6%	1%	2%	3%	12%	-	13%	6%	2%
New Brunswick	8%	18%	12%	6%	16%	42%	-	57%	24%
Nova Scotia	14%	14%	11%	9%	16%	10%	71%	-	51%
Prince Edward Island	10%	8%	8%	6%	12%	10%	64%	51%	26%
Newfoundland and Labrador	12%	26%	15%	9%	14%	9%	39%	52%	-
None	43%	10%	10%	18%	41%	30%	13%	18%	26%

Who's frosty?

While much of this story can be viewed in terms of positive connections, there is another way to examine Canada's interprovincial relationships: Who feels they have been mistreated by whom?

Put Out on the Prairies

There are two standouts when the question is framed this way: Alberta and Saskatchewan. In both regions, there is a sense that a number of other provinces are either giving them the cold shoulder or working against their interests. More than seven-in-ten in each province say that they feel Quebec is unfriendly. While this opinion of Quebec is not uncommon in other provinces, the proportion saying so in both Alberta (81%) and Saskatchewan (74%) is significantly higher than anywhere else (average = 58%).

This is not to say the Quebec is the only perceived offender for residents of these two provinces. Four-in-ten in each also feel that their province has a less than cozy relationship with Ontario. Further, the tension that hit a fever pitch in 2018 over the TransMountain pipeline project appears to be fueling a schism between B.C. and the rest of Western Canada.

Related: Six-in-ten Canadians say lack of new pipeline capacity represents a crisis in this country

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Six-in-ten Albertans (57%) and one-quarter of Saskatchewan residents (26%) say the province of B.C. has been unfriendly toward their own. By comparison, Manitoba is chosen by only 2 per cent in Alberta and Saskatchewan.

And of those remaining, are there any provinces that you feel are less close or unfriendly towards your province?

Opinion of...	Respondents from Each Province						
	BC (706)	AB (719)	SK (523)	MB (544)	ON (519)	QC (502)	ATL (511)
British Columbia	-	57%	26%	20%	25%	22%	20%
Alberta	47%	-	6%	15%	31%	51%	25%
Saskatchewan	12%	4%	-	4%	11%	28%	10%
Manitoba	6%	2%	2%	-	9%	19%	7%
Ontario	34%	42%	40%	31%	-	24%	26%
Quebec	41%	81%	74%	57%	56%	-	54%
New Brunswick	4%	4%	5%	5%	6%	6%	2%
Nova Scotia	5%	5%	6%	4%	5%	8%	1%
Prince Edward Island	4%	5%	5%	5%	5%	7%	2%
Newfoundland and Labrador	6%	5%	5%	6%	6%	19%	2%
None	18%	8%	15%	21%	23%	26%	23%

The Quebec factor

As noted, Quebec is perceived as unfriendly at significant levels in Alberta and Saskatchewan. This trend however, generally extends across the country. At least four-in-ten Canadians from every province canvassed hold the same view.

Meanwhile, a significant number of Quebecers also view much of the rest of the country as unfavourable toward their own province. In fact, half (51%) say that they believe Alberta to be hostile (see table below).

Significant portions of Canadians across the country also believe B.C., Ontario and Alberta to be unfriendly.

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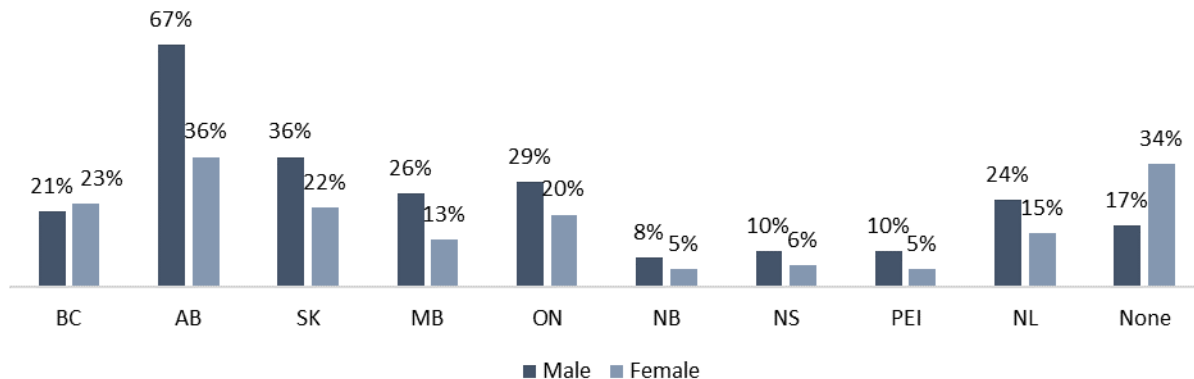
On the other side of this conversation, in Manitoba and Atlantic Canada, very few residents have a negative perspective when it comes to their own province's relationship with the others.

And of those remaining, are there any provinces that you feel are less close or unfriendly towards your province?							
Opinion of...	Respondents from Each Province						
	BC (706)	AB (719)	SK (523)	MB (544)	ON (519)	QC (502)	ATL (511)
British Columbia	-	57%	26%	20%	25%	22%	20%
Alberta	47%	-	6%	15%	31%	51%	25%
Saskatchewan	12%	4%	-	4%	11%	28%	10%
Manitoba	6%	2%	2%	-	9%	19%	7%
Ontario	34%	42%	40%	31%	-	24%	26%
Quebec	41%	81%	74%	57%	56%	-	54%
New Brunswick	4%	4%	5%	5%	6%	6%	2%
Nova Scotia	5%	5%	6%	4%	5%	8%	1%
Prince Edward Island	4%	5%	5%	5%	5%	7%	2%
Newfoundland and Labrador	6%	5%	5%	6%	6%	19%	2%
None	18%	8%	15%	21%	23%	26%	23%

One of the key demographics driving the negative opinion in Quebec is gender. Men are much more likely to say that their province receives unfriendly treatment from others, including massive differences on Alberta, Saskatchewan and Manitoba:

Responses from Quebec

Are there any provinces that you feel are less close or unfriendly towards your province?



Part 2: The cost and benefit of the federation

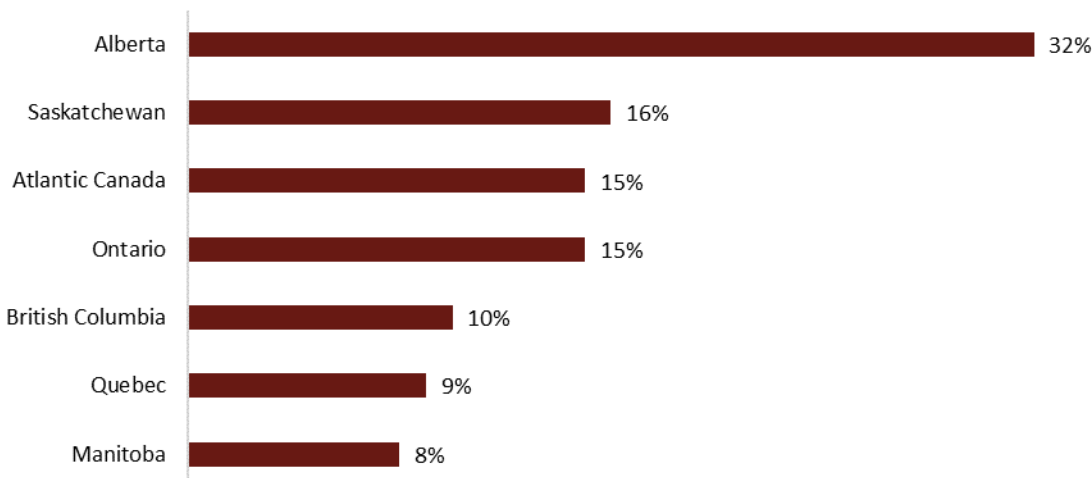
Who gives more than they get?

One of the primary criticisms of Canada’s federal system from residents of [Alberta](#) and [Saskatchewan](#) is that those provinces do not gain as much benefit from Canada as they provide to it. The reasons often cited come in the form of excessive bureaucracy and regulation for resource projects and unfair equalization formulas that cost rather than aid each province.

Equalization in particular has been under the microscope in recent months, with Alberta United Conservative Party leader Jason Kenney [threatening to hold a referendum](#) in that province to remove non-renewable resource revenue from the equalization formula if he wins the 2019 election. Saskatchewan Premier Scott Moe has also [recently stoked the fire](#) of equalization discontent.

One-in-three Canadians say that Alberta gives more than it gets, well ahead of the next regions – Saskatchewan, Atlantic Canada, and Ontario:

Are there any provinces or regions (perhaps including your own) that give more than they get being part of Canada?



Unsurprisingly, the number of Canadians who choose their own province in response to this question is relatively high, but Alberta is recognized as receiving a raw deal by significant numbers across the country, including three-in-ten in B.C., Manitoba and Ontario:

Are there any provinces or regions (perhaps including your own) that you think get a particularly raw deal – that is, they give more than they get being part of Canada?

Opinion of...	Respondents from Each Province						
	BC (706)	AB (719)	SK (523)	MB (544)	ON (519)	QC (502)	ATL (511)
Alberta	31%	76%	53%	31%	30%	16%	23%
Saskatchewan	13%	42%	57%	23%	14%	5%	9%
Ontario	2%	3%	2%	3%	31%	11%	5%
Atlantic Canada	12%	6%	11%	16%	17%	10%	46%
British Columbia	39%	7%	10%	7%	5%	5%	4%
Quebec	2%	1%	2%	2%	3%	30%	3%
Manitoba	6%	12%	15%	30%	7%	4%	4%

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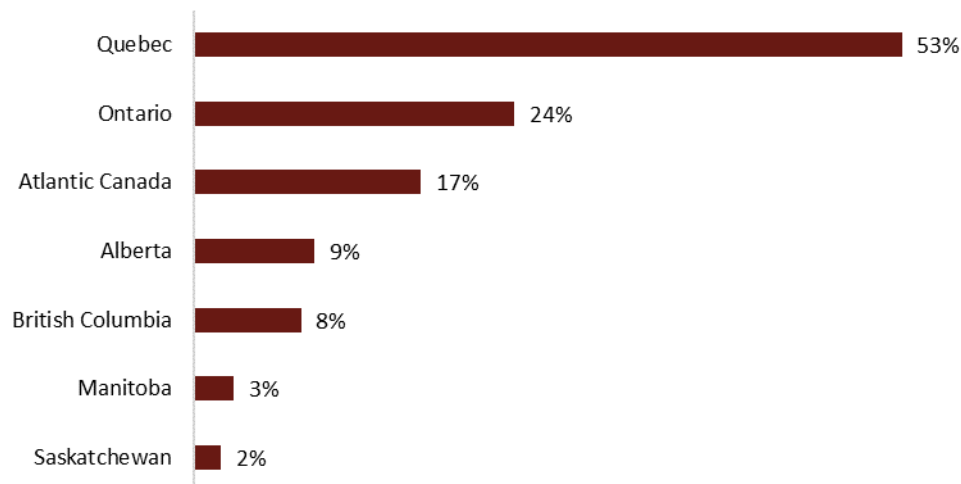
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Who gets more than they give?

On the other end of the spectrum, Canadians largely see the eastern provinces as gaining an unfair advantage over other regions. This sentiment helps to excavate the deeper alienation that many western Canadians have felt for decades.

Fully half of Canadians say that Quebec gets more than it gives as a province, more than twice as high as the number of those choosing second-place Ontario. Fewer than one-in-ten Canadians say that any western province gets more than it gives:

Are there any provinces (or regions) in Canada (perhaps including your own) that you think get an extra advantage being part of Canada?



Interestingly, the sense that Quebec gets more than it gives from confederation is relatively abundant in Quebec itself. One-in-five residents say this (21%), twice as high as any other province’s residents saying this of their home region. Across the rest of the country, at least six-in-ten residents in each region also feel Quebec is getting an extra advantage. Provinces west of Ontario are also critical of how much benefit that province gains relative to others:

Are there any provinces (or regions) in Canada (perhaps including your own) that you think get an extra advantage -- that is, they get more than they give being part of Canada?

Opinion of...	Respondents from Each Province						
	BC (706)	AB (719)	SK (523)	MB (544)	ON (519)	QC (502)	ATL (511)
Quebec	60%	83%	73%	62%	59%	21%	59%
Ontario	44%	37%	41%	43%	11%	19%	28%
Atlantic Canada	14%	24%	12%	9%	16%	19%	7%
Alberta	12%	2%	5%	15%	10%	10%	12%
British Columbia	4%	9%	6%	12%	8%	7%	9%
Manitoba	2%	3%	2%	4%	2%	6%	2%
Saskatchewan	2%	1%	2%	3%	1%	4%	2%

What's next?

These findings reveal a nation with massive differences of opinion regarding which provinces work well together, which are at odds, and which are benefiting or suffering more given their place in the federation. Part 3 looks more deeply at one aspect of this discussion – Western Identity. What is the west? Do western values differ from those in Ontario, Quebec and Atlantic Canada? And do institutions in this country properly represent each region?

*The **Angus Reid Institute (ARI)** was founded in October 2014 by pollster and sociologist, Dr. Angus Reid. ARI is a national, not-for-profit, non-partisan public opinion research foundation established to advance education by commissioning, conducting and disseminating to the public accessible and impartial statistical data, research and policy analysis on economics, political science, philanthropy, public administration, domestic and international affairs and other socio-economic issues of importance to Canada and its world.*

For detailed results by age, gender, region, education, and other demographics, [click here](#).

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Are there any provinces that you feel are less close or unfriendly towards your province? (Responses from Quebec, n=502)										
	Opinion of...									
	BC	AB	SK	MB	ON	NB	NS	PEI	NFLD	None
Male	21%	67%	36%	26%	29%	8%	10%	10%	24%	17%
Female	23%	36%	22%	13%	20%	5%	6%	5%	15%	34%