

Alberta Referendum: 'Remain' continues to lead by a wide margin but few believe separation issue will end on Oct. 19

Three-in-five 'leave' voters say they would consider voting for a separatist political party in the future

Oct. 16, 2026 – The 'remain' and 'leave' campaigns may be wrapping up as the time nears for referendum ballots to be counted, but few Albertans believe the separatist issue will be buried regardless of how Monday's referendum turns out.

New data from the non-profit Angus Reid Institute finds three-in-five (62%) Albertans believing "there will never be an end to the separatist movement" in the province. One-quarter (24%) disagree.

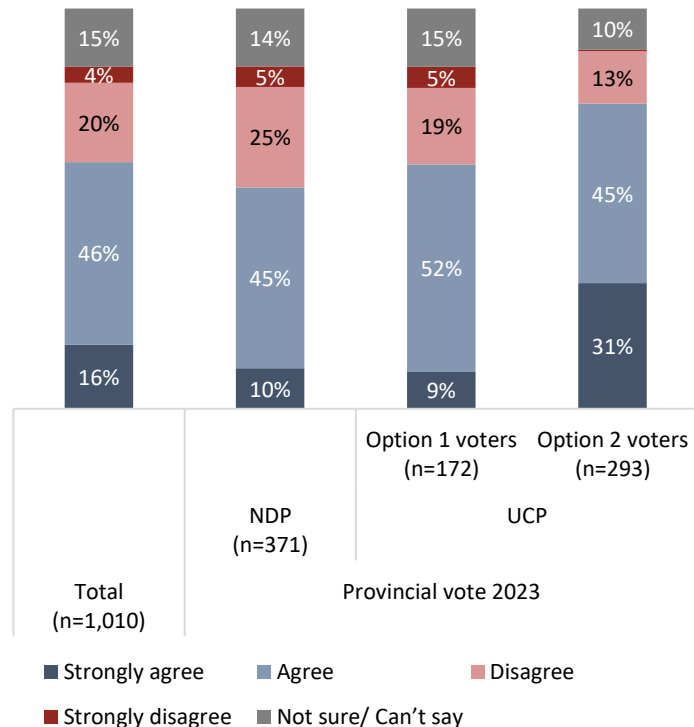
This comes as "remain a province of Canada", otherwise known as Option 1, continues to be the choice of a majority (66%) of Albertans. For the one-third (34%) who support holding a future binding separation referendum, or Option 2, the motivation is less likely separation (37%) and more likely sending a message to Ottawa (60%).

Premier Danielle Smith has come under much criticism for her role in removing the barriers to make the separation referendum happen. A majority (61%) of Albertans say she has handled the issue of separation "poorly".

Her challenge, regardless of the outcome of the referendum, will be to continue to hold separatists (63% of UCP voters) and stay in Canada (37% of UCP voters) supporters under the UCP's big tent. Past UCP voters who support Option 1 are more critical of Smith's handling of the referendum (54% poorly) than those who supported Option 2 (17%).

But those Option 2 voters take issue with Smith's stance on future

Agree vs. disagree - "There will never be an end to the separatist movement in Alberta"



METHODOLOGY:

The Angus Reid Institute conducted an online survey from Oct. 13-15, 2026, among a randomized sample of 1,010 Canadian adults who are residents of Alberta. Respondents are drawn from the [Angus Reid Forum](#), a large-scale online panel developed to include Canadian residents in each of the 343 federal ridings in Canada and representative of the Canadian population by age, gender, family income, ethnic status and education. The sample was weighted to be representative of adults provincewide according to region, gender, age, household income, and education, based on the Canadian census. For comparison purposes only, a probability sample of this size would carry a margin of error of +/- 3 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.

For more information on our polling methods, [click here](#).

CONTACT:

Shachi Kurl, President: 604.908.1693 shachi.kurl@angusreid.org @shachikurl
Dave Korzinski, Research Director: 250.899.0821 dave.korzinski@angusreid.org
Jon Roe, Senior Research Associate: 825.437.1147 jon.roe@angusreid.org

referendums should this one fail on Oct. 19. Half (52%) of UCP voters who support Option 2 disagree with Smith saying that another separation referendum will not happen while she is premier if Option 1 prevails in this referendum.

There is an appetite among UCP voters to make separatism a fixture of future politics in Alberta. Two-thirds (67%) of UCP voters who support Option 2 say they would “definitely support” (33%) or “consider” supporting (34%) a separatist provincial political party in a future provincial election. Few (4%) rule it out completely.

More Key Findings:

- One-third (36%) of Albertans believe foreign interference has had a “major effect” on the referendum campaign. ‘Remain’ voters (46% major effect) and ‘leave’ voters (57% no effect) are likely to disagree on that matter.
- Four-in-five (78%) Albertans say their “mind was already made up” on the issue of separation before the campaign even begun.

About ARI

*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.*

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Part One: The vote

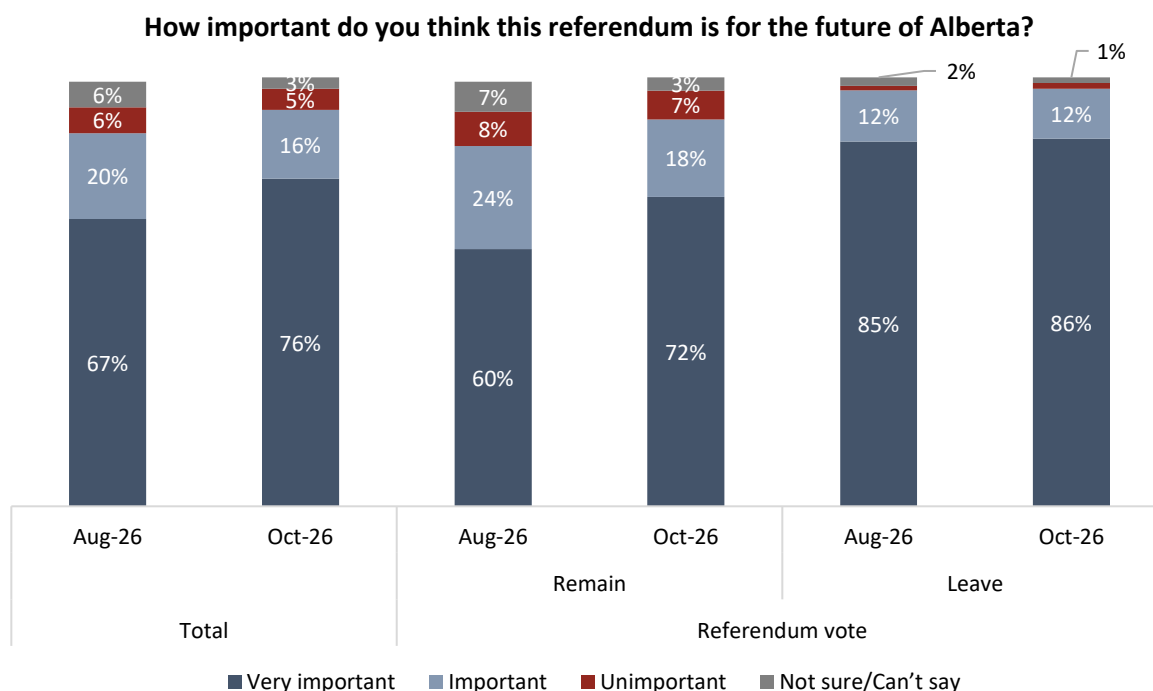
Growing number describe referendum as ‘very important’ for future of province

The marked ballots are starting to pile up in Alberta’s referendum. More than 650,000 Albertans requested mail-in ballots, and hundreds of thousands more have made their way to advance polls across the province. Elections Alberta is anticipating a voter turnout of 80 per cent or more of the province’s nearly three million registered voters, which would far outpace the 55 per cent average turnout of the past five provincial elections.

Voters are being asked to weigh in on 10 total questions, with the consequential referendum on a future separation referendum last in order in the stack of ballots voters will be confronted with at the polls.

Related: Alberta Referendum Deep Dive: Question wording may overstate support for some government proposals

The gravity of the referendum has apparently increased in voters’ minds as the counting of the ballots nears. In August, two-thirds (67%) of Albertans said the referendum was “very important” to the future of the province; more than three-quarters (76%) say the same now. The increase is fueled by a boost in the percentage of “remain” voters who describe the referendum as “very important” to the future of Alberta:



By two to one, ‘remain’ side outnumbers those who want future referendum

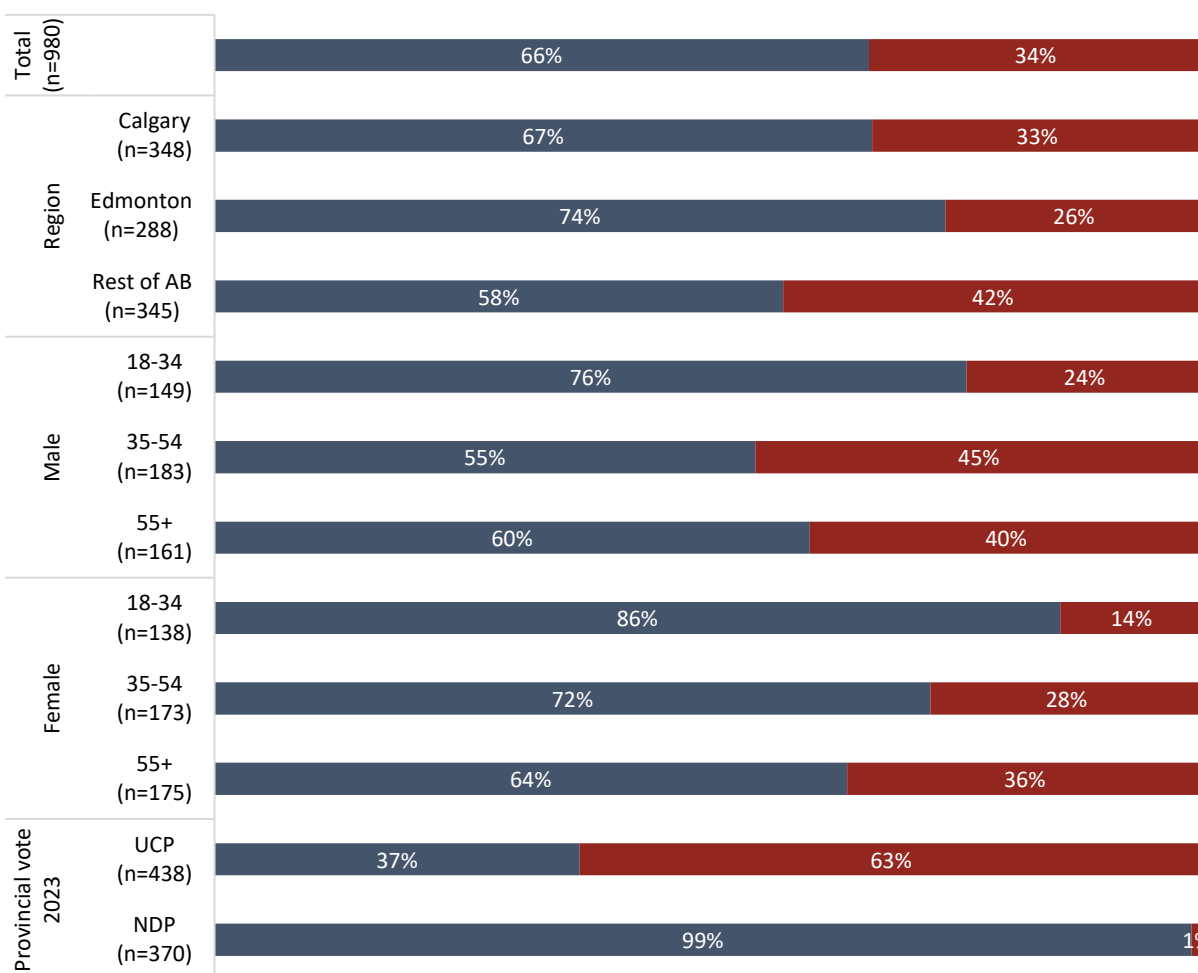
The “remain” side continues to be the majority. Those who say they have, or plan to, vote Option 1, remain in Canada, in the referendum outnumber those who say they support or supported Option 2, start the process on a binding referendum, by two-to-one.

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Option 2 is more popular outside of Calgary and Edmonton and among older Albertans, especially men. A majority of past UCP voters say they support Option 2 as UCP leader and Premier Danielle Smith has reportedly [already begun the legwork](#) to unite the party post referendum.

**Vote intent on Ballot Question 10
(Among those decided, leaning and already voted)**



■ Option 1: Alberta should remain a province of Canada

■ Option 2: Commence the process for a future binding referendum on separation

Option 2 side more motivated by 'sending message' than separation

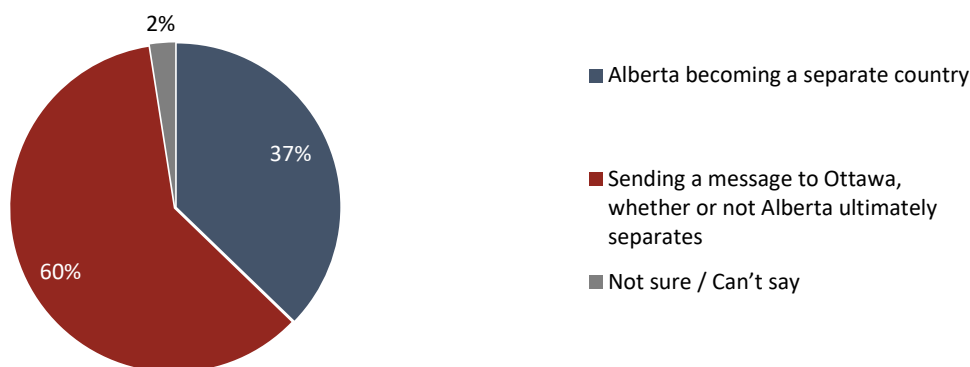
Smith's central argument is that she is already seeing the [tides turn in Ottawa towards a better working relationship with the province](#). Smith and Prime Minister Mark Carney have combined to advance a new oil pipeline to the Pacific. Carney has also [reversed laws](#) enacted by the previous Liberal federal government under Carney's predecessor Justin Trudeau that Alberta's government had opposed, including a proposed oil and gas emissions cap and clean electricity regulations.

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Even in the wake of this sea change, “sending a message to Ottawa” is the motivation for the majority of Option 2 voters more so than actually wanting to see Alberta become a separate country:

Thinking about your reasons for voting for Option 2, which matters more to you?
(Among Option 2 voters, n=332)



Part Two: Assessments of the campaign

Four-in-five say their mind ‘was made up’ prior to campaign

Albertans have been inundated with third-party advertising during the campaign both from those who want the province to remain in Canada and the separatists. More than **\$1.8 million** has been spent during the campaign, one-third of which has come from the pro-separatist organization Let Alberta Decide. Three of the other top spenders – Alberta’s Voice, Vote to Stay and Forever Canadian – are organizations promoting the “stay” side.

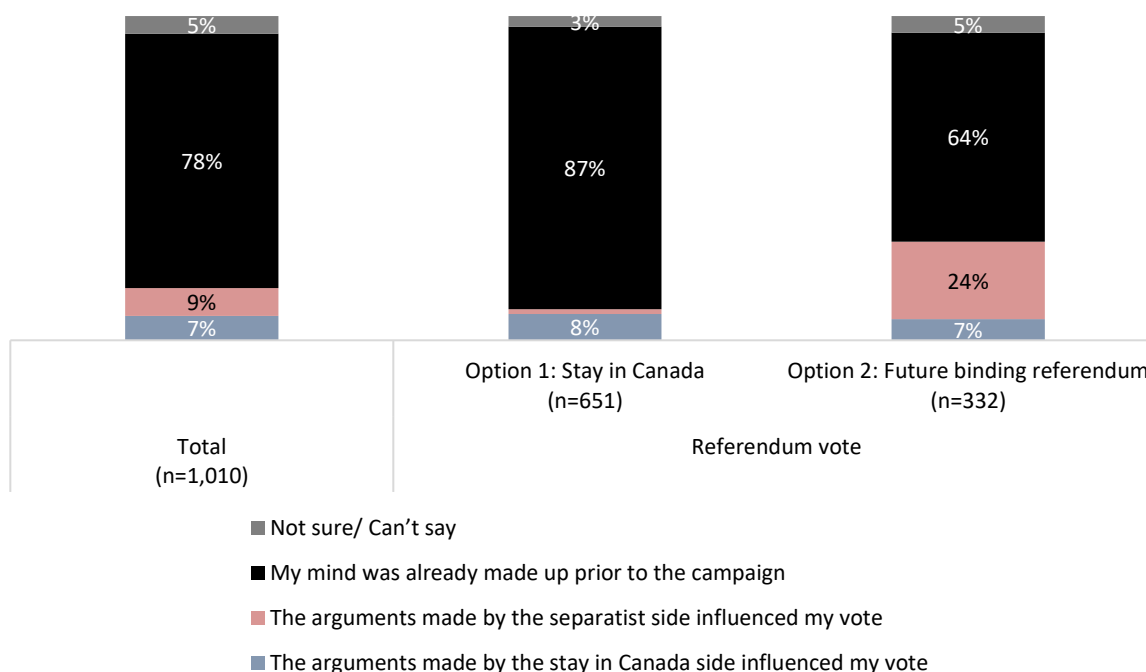
But all that advertising has done apparently little to influence the minds of Albertans, four-in-five of whom say their “mind was already made up” prior to the referendum campaign. One-in-six (16%) say arguments made by either side influenced their vote, with equal numbers in that group saying either the separatists (9%) or the stay in Canada aligned organizations (7%) made arguments that swayed them.

Those who intend to or already have voted for Option 2 are less likely to say they had already decided how they would vote prior to the campaign:

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And would you say that the arguments made by either side during the campaign changed your mind about how you would vote in the separation referendum?



Most believe Smith handled referendum 'poorly'

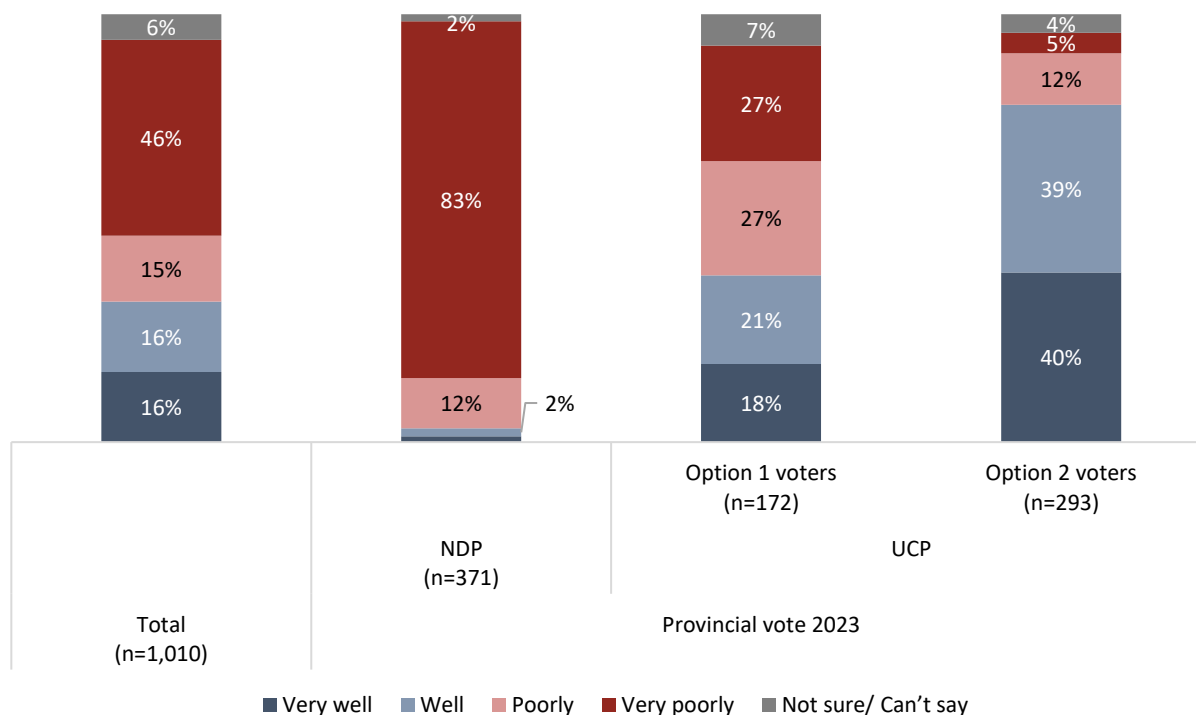
The government and Smith have argued for a “sovereign Alberta within a united Canada” throughout the campaign. Albertans are critical of the premier's performance, however. Three-in-five (61%) say she has handled the issue of separation and the referendum poorly.

The perilous post-referendum path Smith travels within her own party is evident when splitting past UCP voters into those who support Option 1 and Option 2 on the separation referendum. A majority (54%) of those who voted UCP in 2023 and voted or intend to vote that Alberta should remain in Canada in the separation referendum say Smith has handled the referendum poorly. The separatist voters in Smith's party are much more likely to offer praise: four-in-five (79%) say she's handled the issue of separation well.

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How would you say Premier Danielle Smith has been handling the issue of separation and the referendum so far?



Foreign interference: more than one-third say it had 'major' effect on campaign

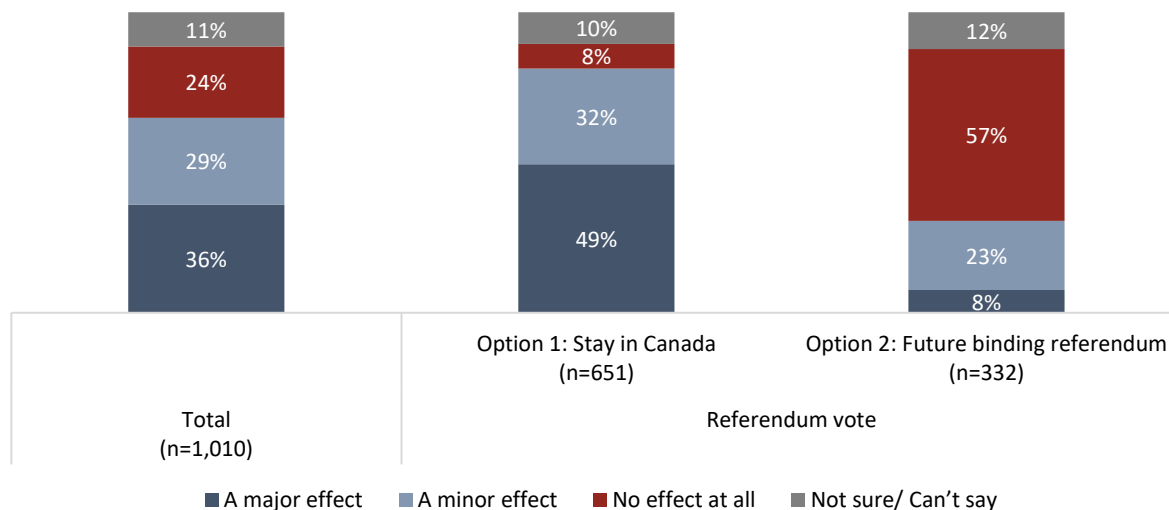
Concerns about foreign interference have also emerged as a dividing line in Alberta's referendum campaign, [amid reports](#) of meetings between separatist leaders and officials in the Trump administration, Russian-linked disinformation networks amplifying separatist narratives online, and Republican political operatives reportedly travelling to Alberta to assist the separatist cause. Canada's Foreign Influence Transparency Commissioner has also [acknowledged concerns](#) about foreign influence surrounding the vote.

Against this backdrop, more than one-third of Albertans (36%) believe foreign interference has had a major effect on the campaign, while another 29 per cent say its impact has been minor. Perceptions differ sharply depending on referendum vote intention. Nearly half (49%) of those intending to vote to remain in Canada believe foreign interference has had a major effect, compared to just eight per cent of those supporting independence. Among the latter group, a majority (57%) believe foreign interference has had no effect at all.

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In your opinion, do you think foreign interference has had a major, minor or no effect at all on the referendum campaign?



Part Three: Future of separation in province

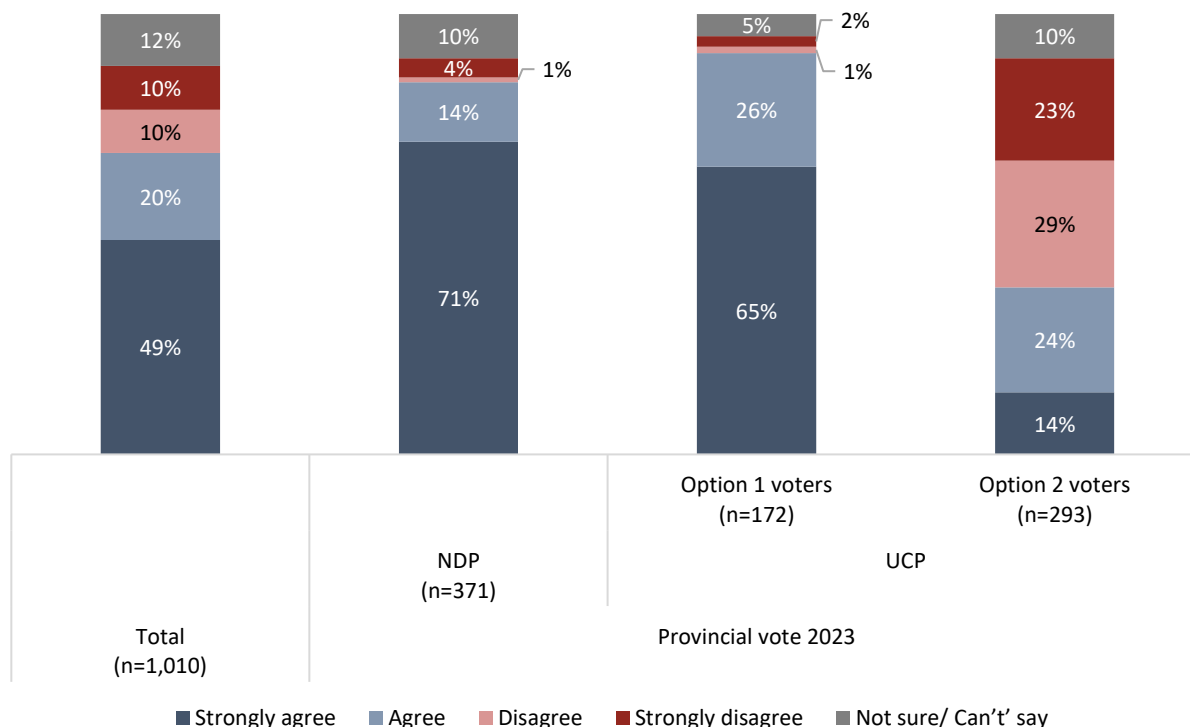
Seven-in-ten say no more separation referendums if this one fails

Smith said that Alberta would not hold another separation referendum if this one fails on Oct. 19 “not as long as I’m premier”. Seven-in-ten (69%) Albertans agree, while one-in-five (20%) disagree. The latter group is mostly comprised of Option 2 voters, including half (52%) of past UCP voters who intend to or have voted for Option 2. There are two-in-five (38%) past UCP voters who support holding a future binding referendum that say if this one fails there should not be a second attempt:

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Premier Danielle Smith has ruled out any more referendums on Alberta separation if this vote on October 19 fails. Do you agree or disagree with her stance?



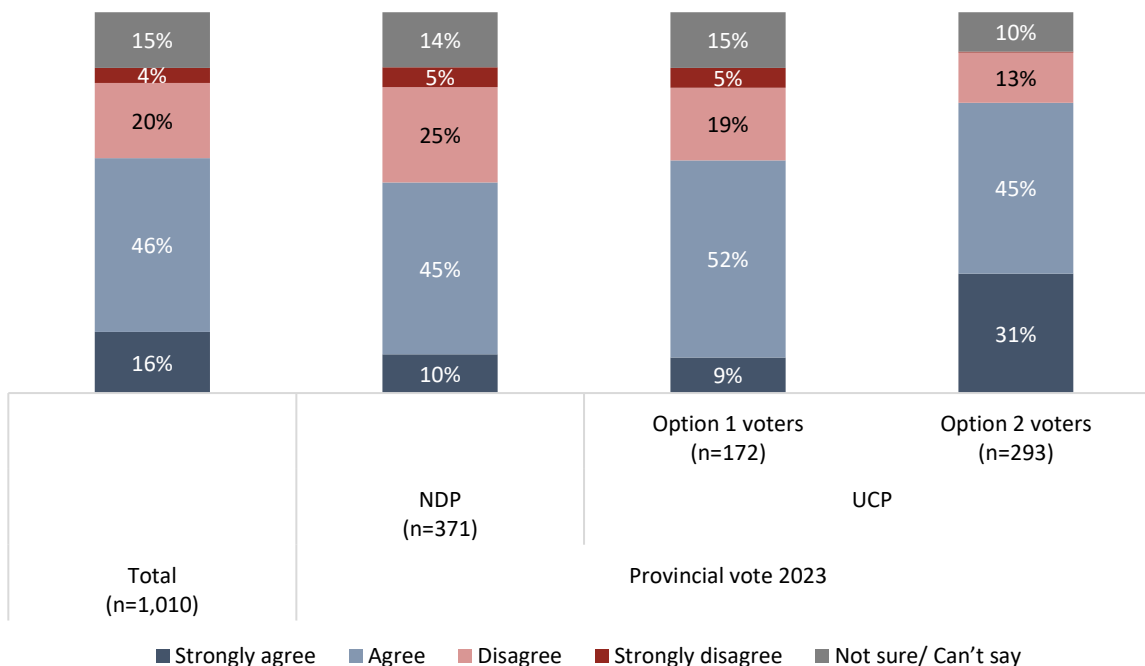
But few expect separation issue to go anywhere

The prospect of Alberta separatism fading away appears unlikely in the minds of many Albertans, regardless of the referendum's outcome. Three-in-five (62%) agree with the statement that "there will never be an end to the separatist movement in Alberta", while one-quarter (24%) disagree. This sentiment extends across political lines, with majorities of both UCP and NDP voters agreeing:

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Agree vs. disagree - "There will never be an end to the separatist movement in Alberta"



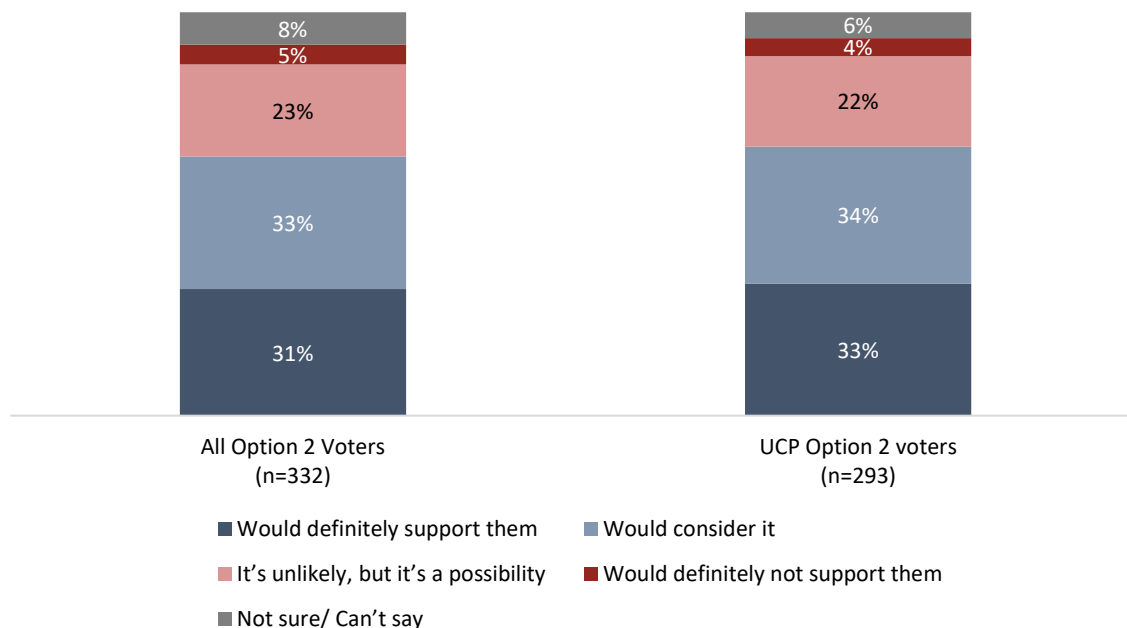
A future separatist party? Three-in-five Option 2 voters would consider it

Regardless of the outcome of the referendum, Alberta's separatist movement may remain a force in provincial politics. With the next provincial election scheduled for 2027, a hypothetical political party focused on achieving Alberta's independence could attract significant support among those voting to leave Canada. Nearly two-thirds (64%) of Option 2 voters say they would either definitely support such a party (31%) or consider voting for it (33%), while another 23 per cent say their support is unlikely but remains a possibility. Notably, this appetite extends to supporters of Premier Danielle Smith's United Conservative Party:

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How likely are you to support this hypothetical separation-focused party in the next provincial election?



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

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