

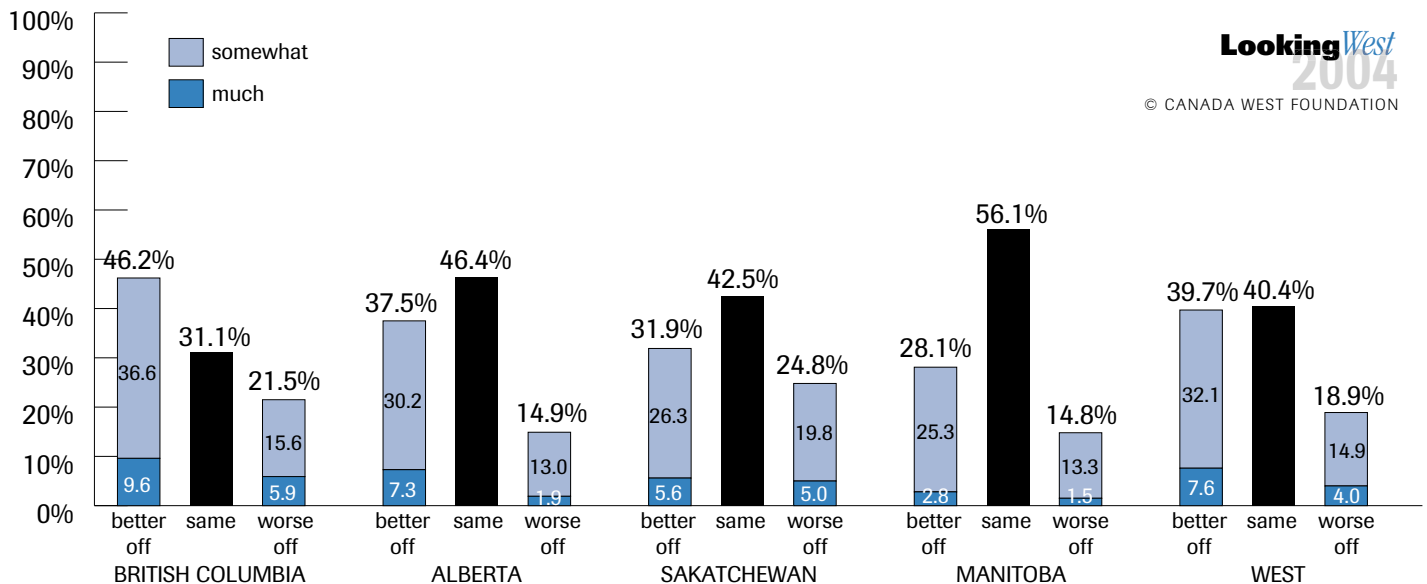


Economic Expectations

Since 2001, the Looking West surveys have explored the extent to which western Canadians feel optimistic about their province's economic and social outlook: are western Canadians generally optimistic or pessimistic about the near future of their province? To assess this, western Canadians were asked, "Overall, five years from now, do you expect that [province] will be much better off than now; somewhat better off than now; about the same as now; somewhat worse off than now; much worse off than now?"

Western Canadians are divided between optimism (39.7% expect their province to be better off) and expectations of the status quo (40.4% expect the province to remain about the same as it is now). Less than two in ten (18.9%) expect their province to be worse off. However, the regional variations on this question are notable. British Columbia respondents stand out with considerably higher levels of optimism, and at the same time with a relatively high percentage of pessimists – an interesting dichotomy. Manitoba respondents are the least likely to expect improvement in the next five years, and the most likely to expect the status quo. Saskatchewan respondents are the most pessimistic, with one in four (24.8%) expecting the province to be worse off in five years. Alberta is the province that most closely mirrors the western Canadian average.

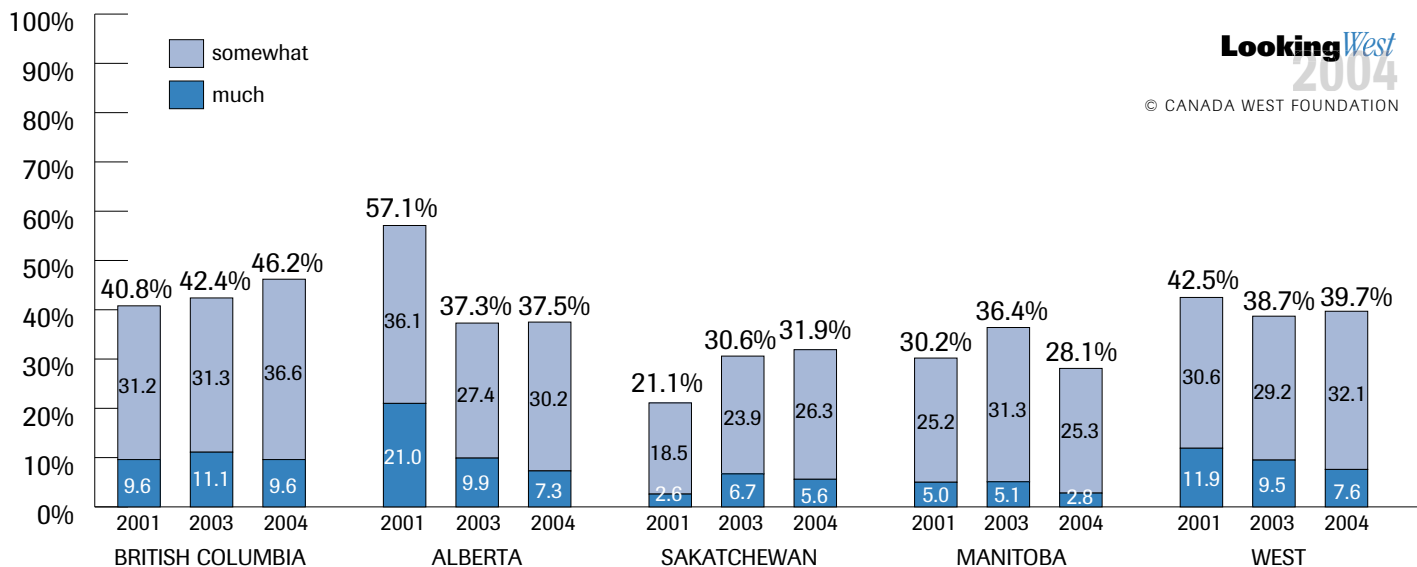
Figure 1:
Provincial Expectations in Five Years



Overall, five years from now, do you expect that [province] will be much better off than now; somewhat better off than now; about the same as now; somewhat worse off than now; much worse off than now?

How have provincial expectations changed since 2001? For the West as a whole, expectations have remained relatively consistent, with approximately four in ten westerners in each year expecting their province to be better off in five years. But again, the provincial variations demonstrate greater diversity. In BC, optimism levels have been consistently rising, with 2004 levels five percentage points higher than 2001 levels. In Alberta, optimism levels dropped considerably – a full 20 percentage points! – between 2001 and 2003, but held constant between 2003 and 2004. Saskatchewan has experienced the opposite pattern: optimism levels were very low in 2001, jumped nine percentage points in 2003, and have witnessed a very modest increase in 2004. Finally, Manitoba is the only province to have its lowest optimism levels in 2004; while the 2003 showed an increase over 2001 in the percentage of respondents expecting Manitoba to be better off, expectations have dropped off.

Figure 2:
Expect Province to be Better Off in Five Years, 2001, 2003, 2004



Looking West
2004
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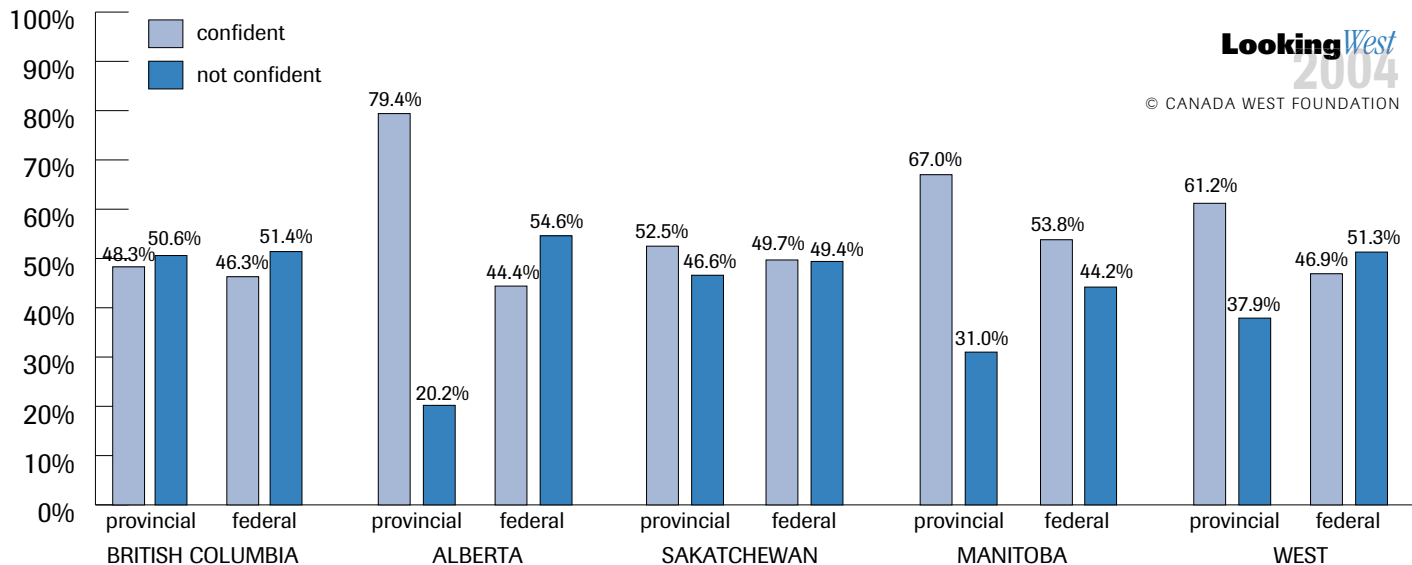
Overall, five years from now, do you expect that [province] will be much better off than now; somewhat better off than now; about the same as now; somewhat worse off than now; much worse off than now?

The Looking West 2004 survey also asked two questions specific to the provincial economies. First, respondents were asked, “How confident are you that the [province] government’s policies will help the [province] economy over the next five years? Very confident; somewhat confident; not very confident; not at all confident.” Second, respondents were asked, “How confident are you that the federal government’s policies will help the [province] economy over the next five years? Very confident; somewhat confident; not very confident; not at all confident.”

The data indicate that, overall, western Canadians have greater confidence in their provincial government’s policies to help their province’s economy than they do in the federal government’s policies. Leading the pack in confidence is Alberta: almost eight in ten Alberta respondents are confident that provincial policies will help the economy over the next five years. This confidence level is significantly higher than all of the other western provinces. Manitoba respondents also have considerable confidence in their provincial government’s policies, with two-thirds stating that they are very or somewhat confident that the province’s policies will help Manitoba’s economy over the next five years. Saskatchewan respondents are more divided between confidence and a lack of confidence, with a slim majority stating that they are very or somewhat confident that the Saskatchewan government’s policies will help the economy. BC respondents are as divided as the Saskatchewan respondents, but in BC the very slim majority expresses a lack of confidence. Overall, for the West as a whole, western Canadians are more likely than not to be confident in their provincial government’s policies.

The same cannot be said for the federal government: a slim majority of western Canadians indicate that they lack confidence in the ability of federal policies to help their province's economy. In all provinces, respondents are near-equally divided between expressing confidence or a lack of confidence.

Figure 3:
Provincial and Federal Government Policies to Help Economy



Looking West
2004
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How confident are you that the [province] government's policies will help the [province] economy over the next five years? Very confident; somewhat confident; not very confident; not at all confident. How confident are you that the federal government's policies will help the [province] economy over the next five years? Very confident; somewhat confident; not very confident; not at all confident.

BRITISH COLUMBIA

BC government

very confident	10.6%
somewhat confident	37.7%
not very confident	31.0%
not at all confident	19.6%

federal government

very confident	4.5%
somewhat confident	41.8%
not very confident	38.9%
not at all confident	12.5%

ALBERTA

AB government

very confident	24.6%
somewhat confident	54.8%
not very confident	15.6%
not at all confident	4.6%

federal government

very confident	3.6%
somewhat confident	40.8%
not very confident	41.9%
not at all confident	12.7%

SASKATCHEWAN

SK government

very confident	7.4%
somewhat confident	45.1%
not very confident	31.6%
not at all confident	15.0%

federal government

very confident	3.3%
somewhat confident	46.4%
not very confident	39.6%
not at all confident	9.8%

MANITOBA

MB government

very confident	6.3%
somewhat confident	60.7%
not very confident	23.4%
not at all confident	7.6%

federal government

very confident	2.5%
somewhat confident	51.3%
not very confident	36.3%
not at all confident	7.9%

WEST

prov. government

very confident	14.3%
somewhat confident	46.9%
not very confident	25.1%
not at all confident	12.8%

federal government

very confident	3.8%
somewhat confident	43.1%
not very confident	39.6%
not at all confident	11.7%



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