

A MONOCHROME POLITICAL CULTURE?



EXAMINING THE RANGE OF
ALBERTANS' VALUES AND BELIEFS



Harvey Krahn • Trevor Harrison • Katherine Hancock

Contents

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Harvey Krahn, Trevor Harrison, Katherine Hancock

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Executive Summary

Recently, some Albertans have argued that democracy in Alberta might be better served by a realignment of the current political parties along “natural” ideological lines, into what might perhaps be called right-wing and centre-left-wing “tribes.” While voting preferences can shift with issues and party leaders, values and beliefs tend to be more durable. This report uses polling data from the 2014 Alberta Survey to examine the range of political values and beliefs among Albertans on four dimensions – economic conservatism, traditional values, libertarianism, and political alienation – to see whether these line up in the manner some have suggested.

Public opinion polls conducted by the University of Alberta’s Population Research Laboratory (PRL) between 2012 and 2014 showed a decrease in those identifying a party preference. The same polls also revealed that, among committed voters, the political preferences of Albertans were shifting substantially away from the governing Progressive Conservative (PC) party towards other parties, particularly to the Liberal and Wildrose parties.

The survey results suggest substantial variation in each of the four areas examined across groups of voters with different party preferences. In general, Wildrose supporters are more economically conservative than are PC supporters. For example, they are much more likely to strongly agree that “private industry is always more efficient than government.” Wildrose supporters do resemble PC supporters, however, in their general nonsupport for the libertarian values we asked about in our survey (legalization of prostitution and marijuana).

On budget issues, Wildrose supporters stood out prominently from the other major party respondents in their belief that the province has a spending and not a revenue problem. Less than half of the supporters for the three other major parties, along with the undecided voters, believed this to be the case. By contrast, far less than a plurality of supporters for any party believed that Albertans get a fair return on the royalties charged to oil companies.

With the exception of these libertarian values, the political values and beliefs of PC supporters otherwise resemble as much, if not more, those of Liberal supporters and the uncommitted as they do the values and beliefs of Wildrose supporters. This finding raises the interesting question whether the PCs, instead of welcoming Wildrose members into their “big tent” this past fall, might have gained an equally significant political advantage by attempting to attract more centrist voters.

In contrast, NDP supporters are quite different from Liberal supporters (and also PC and Wildrose supporters) in a number of ways, but in particular with respect to economic conservatism. For example, only slightly more than one in ten NDP supporters felt that Alberta was receiving sufficient royalties for its oil resources, compared to 30% or more of Liberal, PC and Wildrose supporters (even though this is still a small minority). Finally, the values and beliefs of the small group of Green/Alberta Party supporters (predominantly Greens) appear to be more like those of NDP than Liberal supporters. This finding is at variance with suggestions that Green and Alberta Party supporters might find a natural home within the Liberal party.

More generally, the survey results suggest that the spectrum of Albertans' political values and beliefs, far from being monochromatic, reflect rather multiple shades of grey – even, perhaps, glints of genuine colour. Would realignment of the various parties into two achieve the full expression of these values and beliefs? We are somewhat doubtful. The report's findings suggest instead the need to rethink more broadly the political system of representation within which the current political parties engage, and which may blunt the citizenry's expression of difference.

1. Introduction

Amidst a series of recent political development, some Albertans – including, but not exclusively, politicians, pundits, and academics – have argued that democracy in Alberta might be better served by a realignment of the current political parties along “natural” ideological lines, into what might perhaps be called right-wing and centre-left-wing “tribes.” But would this make sense?

While voting preferences can shift with issues and party leaders, values and beliefs tend to be more durable. This report uses polling data from the 2014 Alberta Survey to examine the range of political values and beliefs among Albertans on four dimensions – economic conservatism, traditional values, libertarianism, and political alienation – to see whether these line up in the manner suggested. The authors contend that, far from dividing into two clearly identifiable groups, Albertans in fact hold a range of values and beliefs whose expression is at odds with current suggestions for a two-party alignment.

2. Alberta Politics

Alberta has a long and unbroken record of electing large majority governments. Only four parties have ever governed the province: the Liberals (1905–21), the United Farmers of Alberta (1921–35), Social Credit (1935–71), and the Progressive Conservatives (since 1971). Numerous theories have been advanced over the years for the absence of a competitive party system in the province, among them an homogenous class structure (Macpherson, 1953); the dominance of a single powerful industry, petroleum (Richards and Pratt, 1979; Hudson and Bowness, 2014); the province's first-past-the-post electoral system (Jansen and Young, 2005); overly generous financial contribution limits (Harrison, 2005); and an entrenched corporatist and clientelist political structure (Harrison, 1995; Taft, 1997). Beyond these structural explanations, however, the view is sometimes expressed that Alberta's one-party politics reflect an underlying political culture that is similarly lacking in diversity; one that is predominantly "alienated, conservative, and populist" (Stewart and Archer, 2000–13).

This depiction of Albertans as uniformly sharing a rather limited set of political beliefs and values was most recently voiced in November 2014, shortly after nine members of Alberta's Wildrose Party, including leader Danielle Smith, defected to join the governing Progressive Conservatives.¹ Only a little more than two years before, the Wildrose Party was ahead in polls leading up to the 2012 election; in the end it took 34% of the vote and 17 seats compared to 44% and 61 seats for the PCs. Perhaps even more startling, the Wildrose Party had a substantial lead in polls taken in the spring of 2014 when the Redford administration was in disarray, resulting in Redford's eventual resignation.

In defending the November "floor crossing," Smith argued that – as a consequence of the PCs choosing Jim Prentice as new leader – there were now few essential differences between the two parties. Premier Prentice and long-time conservative mentor Preston Manning, former leader (and founder) of the Reform party, similarly argued that it was necessary for Alberta's conservatives to unite in order to deal with the province's economic downturn (see Braid, 2015). The PC party's absorption of all but a few Wildrose MLAs gave rise almost immediately to a number of other significant political events, perhaps most notably the sudden resignation in January 2015 of Raj Sherman from his position as leader of the Alberta Liberals. Sherman's resignation, in turn, led to renewed calls to unite Alberta's centre-left parties (Wood, 2015). This call was given material substance in mid-March when MLA Laurie Blakeman announced she had secured the Liberal, Green, and Alberta Party nominations for Edmonton-Centre and would run as the unified progressive candidate in any upcoming election – though she would sit, if elected, as a Liberal (Ibrahim, 2015).

¹ Only weeks before, two other Wildrose members had bolted to the PCs. Combined with another former party MLA who had earlier left the party to sit as an independent, the Wildrose Party – which had elected 17 MLAs in 2012 – was thus reduced to only five Legislative members as 2015 began.

But do the values and beliefs of Albertans really reflect those expressed by the political parties and their leaders? And is the suggestion that Albertans could – and even should – divide themselves into right-wing and centre-left-wing “tribes” at all meaningful?

A sizeable research literature suggests that the beliefs of party supporters are often at odds with the policies and perspectives of party leaders (see Ogmundson, 1975; Lambert et al., 1987). Similarly, research has shown that voters’ beliefs are far more diverse than the narrow left-right range offered up by political parties and frequently discussed by academics. As remarked recently by Paul Fairie (2015), a University of Calgary political scientist, “inferring a province’s ideological nature from how it votes is an error.” Fairie adds that, compared to Canada’s other provinces, on a range of issues Alberta “is less conservative than you might think” – a remark backed up by previous studies (see, for example, Gazso and Krahn, 2008).

Between 2012 and 2014, public opinion polls conducted by the University of Alberta’s Population Research Laboratory (PRL)² showed a decrease in those identifying a party preference (Table 1). While the proportion of survey respondents willing to identify the party for which they would vote provincially declined from 65% to 55%, it was not because more study participants refused to answer the question. Instead, the proportion who said they simply didn’t know or were undecided increased from 17% in 2012 to 32% in 2014.

2 The 2012 survey data were collected just after the Alberta election held on April 23 of that year. The 2013 survey was conducted in June and July of that year, two months after the Redford government released a budget that, in the eyes of many, negatively affected those who had voted PC the previous spring. The 2014 survey (completed between late July and early September) took place amidst a growing litany of scandals, including controversy over Redford having spent \$50,000 on a trip to South Africa to attend Nelson Mandela’s funeral and reports her office had ordered the addition of a penthouse to renovations of the Federal Building, that led to increased division within the PC party over her leadership (see Wood, 2014).

Table 1: Voting Intentions – PRL Alberta Survey 2012, 2013, and 2014

	% of Total Sample		
<i>Response to Survey Question</i>	2012	2013	2014
Identified a party preference	65	62	55
Not eligible to vote	2	2	3
Eligible, but would not vote	4	7	4
Don’t know / undecided	17	24	32
No response / refused to answer	12	5	6
Total (N)	100% (N = 1203)	100% (N = 1207)	100% (N = 1208)

This series of three public opinion polls also revealed that among committed voters Albertans' political preferences were shifting substantially away from the governing PC party towards other parties (see Table 2). The Liberal party (up from 9% to 19% of committed voters) was one of the recipients of these shifting votes, while the Wildrose Party (up from 24% to 33%) was the other.

Table 2: Provincial Party Preference – PRL Alberta Survey 2012, 2013, and 2014			
	% of Committed Voters		
Provincial Party Preference	2012	2013	2014
Progressive Conservative	51	40	33
Wildrose Party	24	24	33
New Democratic Party	14	13	11
Liberal	9	16	19
Green party/Alberta Party [#]	1	5	4
Other parties	1	2	<1
Total (N)	100% (N = 780)	100% (N = 751)	100% (N = 671)
# Increase from 2012 entirely due to more Green party supporters			

In Table 2, and in subsequent analyses in this report, we have combined supporters of two centrist parties (the Green party and the Alberta Party) into a single category, even though there are likely some differences in the political beliefs of these two groups. Had we not combined the two groups, we would not have been able to analyze them because of small subsample sizes. It is noteworthy, however, that in both 2013 and 2014, Green party supporters constituted about 80% of this relatively small group. It would seem that all of the centre-left parties might think a bit more about how they might attract potential voters with “green” sympathies who are a small but likely growing group.

Equally interesting, Liberal party support had grown to 19% of committed voters by early 2014, perhaps because some were returning to the fold after voting PC in 2012. Meanwhile, Wildrose support had also increased from 24% to 33%. We cannot know for certain the direction of voter shifts, that is, where PC (or, for that matter, NDP) supporters were moving their allegiance. Nonetheless, it is worth asking in hindsight whether Premier Prentice, who appeared to be moving to the right in accepting Wildrose MLAs into the PC fold in late 2014, might have alternatively improved his re-election chances by moving towards the centre of the political spectrum with his proposed policies and budget hints. While the premier's actions likely reflect his

own assessment of Alberta's political culture, might he have also achieved real benefits – and perhaps greater space for political maneuvering – by attempting to attract Liberal-sympathetic voters who now (in 2015) are looking at a Liberal party without a leader?

Turning from party preferences to political values and beliefs, did the greater differentiation in political party preference highlighted in Table 2 reflect a more general fragmentation of political and economic values and beliefs among the electorate? Or, as those calling for parties to merge or at least work together have argued, are there really two basic groups of potential voters in Alberta: those with right-wing values and beliefs, and those with centre-left (i.e., progressive) values and beliefs?

These are the two primary questions addressed in this report,³ which analyses province-wide survey data from the PRL's 2014 Alberta Survey (see Appendix 1 for additional methodological information). In Section 3 below, we discuss the way in which we measured political values and beliefs, and report the extent to which Albertans, as a whole, espoused them. In Section 4, we examine differences across party preference groups in the same beliefs and values.

3 The report is the third in a series of recent reports produced for the Parkland Institute which examine issues related to democratic politics in Alberta. The earlier reports were *Governing Alberta: Citizens' Views* (May 2013) and *Less Exclusion: More Engagement: Addressing Declining Voter Turnout in Alberta* (April 2014).

3. Albertans' Political Values and Beliefs

In this study, we have focused on three broad political value orientations – economic conservatism, traditional or moral conservatism, and libertarianism – and their respective support among residents of the province.

Regarding *economic conservatism*, we asked respondents (using a 5-point scale, strongly agree to strongly disagree) to respond to two general statements intended to measure support for free-enterprise capitalism. These items, and those employed to test support for traditional values (below), have been regularly asked in PRL surveys and were previously analyzed in an academic paper coauthored by two of the current authors (Harrison et al., 1996):

- *Private industry is always more efficient than government.*
 - 39% of all Albertans agreed, including 22% who strongly agreed
- *Allowing business to make good profits is the best way to improve everyone's standard of living.*
 - 43% agreed, including 19% who strongly agreed

Using the same response scale, we asked for responses to two more specific questions about Alberta's budget:

- *Alberta has a spending problem and not a revenue problem.*⁴
 - 52% of all Albertans agreed, including 30% strongly agreeing
- *Alberta gets a fair return on the royalties it charges oil companies.*
 - 32% agreed, with 13% strong agreement

Given widespread depictions of Alberta as a conservative province, and again using the same scale, we included two opinion statements focusing on support for traditional values:

- *We need more respect for authority in Canada.*
 - 52% agreed, with half of those (26%) strongly agreeing
- *We would all be better off if we returned to traditional values.*
 - 43% agreed, with 23% strongly agreeing

4 Only half of the sample members (about 600 in total) were invited to respond to this statement, since we were experimenting with item wording and included a parallel statement (offered to the other half of the sample) proposing that Alberta had a revenue problem rather than a spending problem. Examination of the data led us to conclude that the "revenue problem" statement was likely not well understood, perhaps because this idea has not been part of the political discourse in the province in recent decades.

We also provided survey respondents with two statements designed to tap into the degree of support for libertarian values among Albertans. After all, Danielle Smith has presented herself as staunchly libertarian, one of the reasons she chose to leave the Wildrose Party. Libertarianism has grown as a political force in the United States, and perhaps also in Alberta. While the two issues addressed (marijuana use and prostitution) technically fall under federal jurisdiction, our rationale for asking about them was that they do address social issues on which libertarians frequently focus. We realize, of

course, that with these two issues there also may be some overlap between libertarian beliefs and support for traditional values.

The statements we used were adapted from questions used by Jones et al. (2013) to examine libertarian values in the United States. A 5-point response scale was again employed.

- *The government should make the use of marijuana legal.*
 - 38% of Albertans agreed, with 21% agreeing strongly
- *The government should legalize prostitution.*
 - 28% agreed, with only 12% strongly agreeing

Finally, survey participants were invited to respond to two statements gauging their degree of political alienation from the provincial government:⁵

- *The provincial government does not care about what people like me think.*
 - 37% agreed, with 19% agreeing strongly
- *People like me don't have any say about what the provincial government does.*
 - 38% agreed, with 16% strongly agreeing

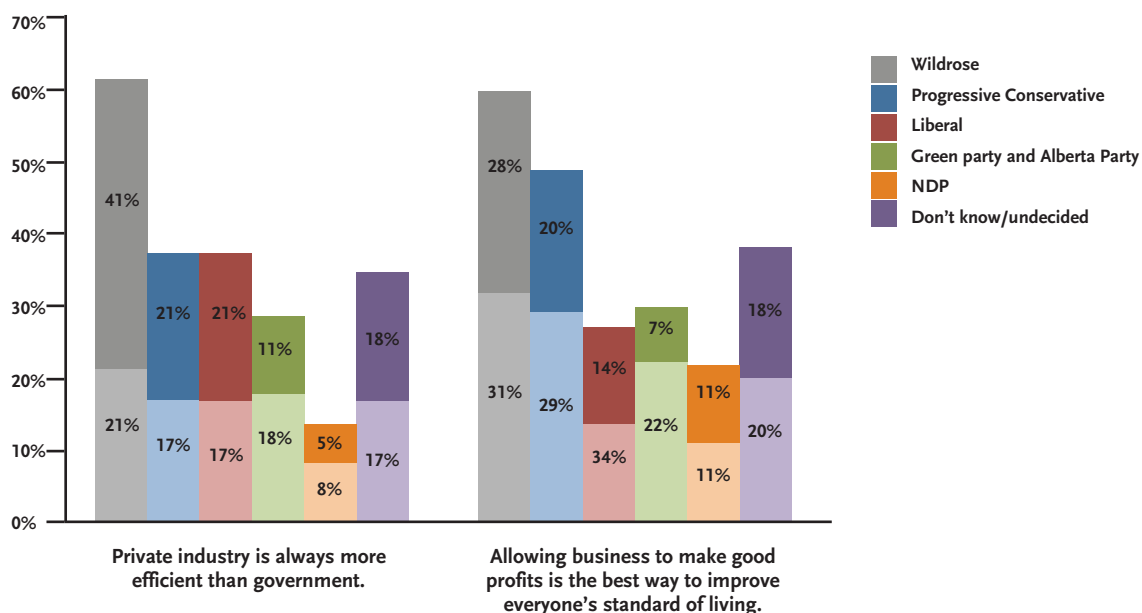
5 Because the survey included parallel questions about alienation from the federal government (not analyzed in this report), only half of the sample of respondents (about 600 instead of 1200) were asked each of these questions.

4. Comparing Political Values and Beliefs Across Party Preference Groups

Economic Conservatism

Chart 1 reveals that in 2014 Wildrose supporters (62%) were much more likely than supporters of any other provincial party to agree that “private industry is always more efficient than government.” In fact, 41% of Wildrose supporters agreed strongly with this statement. Between 29% and 38% of Progressive Conservative (PC), Liberal, Green/Alberta Party, and uncommitted potential voters agreed, compared to only 13% of NDP supporters. On this particular measure of economic conservatism, there are three distinct groups of Albertans: Wildrose supporters on the right, New Democrats on the left, and everyone else, including PC supporters, in the middle.

Chart 1: Economic Conservatism*



* Scores of 4 (bottom of column) and 5 (top of column) on a 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree) response scale. Sample sizes ranged from 1146 to 1156.

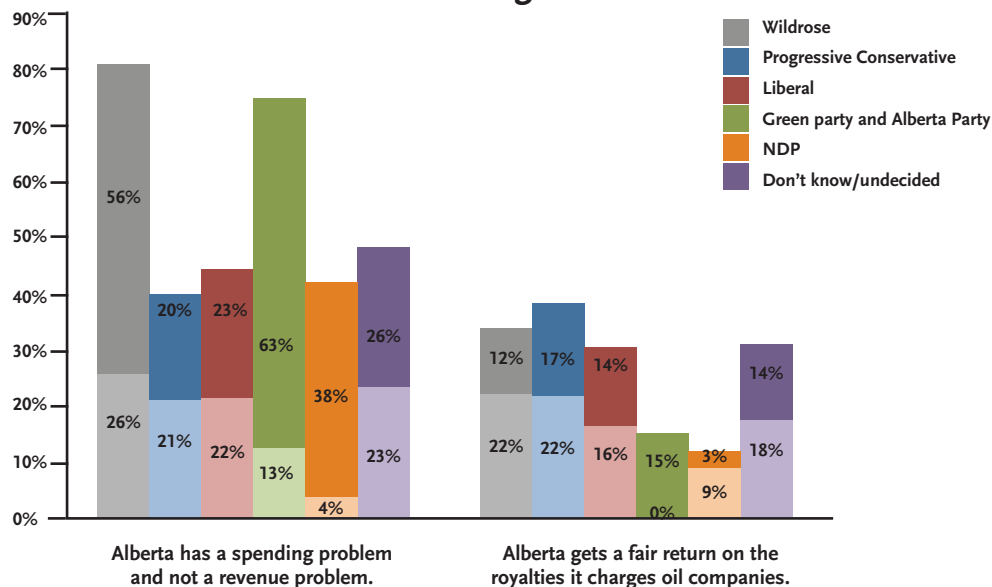
When asked if they agreed that “allowing business to make good profits is the best way to improve everyone’s standard of living,” Wildrose supporters were again the most likely to agree (59%), but for this political belief, PC supporters were almost as likely to agree (49%). In contrast, less than 30% of Liberal, Green/Alberta Party, and NDP supporters agreed. Uncommitted potential voters were midway between. Based on this specific political belief, we might see ballot-box merit in the PCs and the Wildrose Party aligning themselves, and the three centre-left parties doing the same.

- 6 The 2015/16 Alberta budget, released on March 26, dealt partially with the two questions examined here. While focusing to a degree on both revenues and expenditures, it ignored any discussion of raising the province’s royalty rate.
- 7 The authors note that the aforementioned series of government spending scandals, prominent in the news during this period, may have influenced the level of agreement that government spending was a problem.
- 8 The very high level of agreement with this statement among Green/Alberta Party supporters is based on only eight responses (because this group is small to begin with, and only half the sample was asked this question; see endnote 5). Hence, the large difference between this very small group and the other larger groups is not statistically significant.

Alberta’s Budget⁶

In Chart 2, we see that four out of five (82%) Wildrose supporters agreed that “Alberta has a spending problem and not a revenue problem,” with 56% strongly agreeing. It is very interesting to note that Progressive Conservative supporters were virtually no different than Liberal and NDP supporters in responses to this statement, and little different from uncommitted potential voters. Less than half (between 41% and 49%) of these four groups of survey respondents believed that Alberta has a spending rather than a revenue problem.⁷ If, when proposing to curtail government spending Premier Prentice has been moving to the right to try to attract Wildrose supporters, he might also be risking losing support from longtime PC supporters.⁸

Chart 2: Alberta Budget*



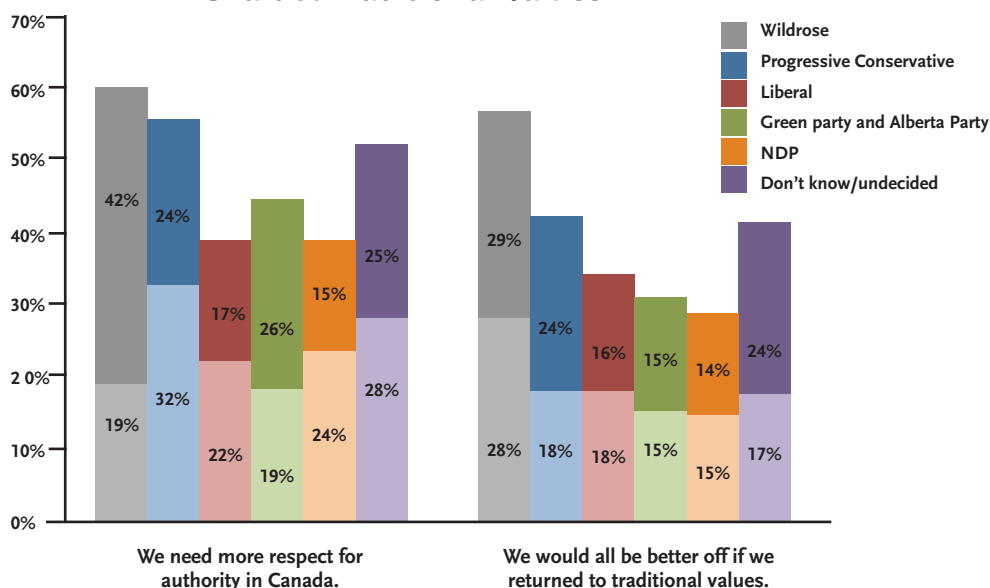
* Scores of 4 (bottom of column) and 5 (top of column) on a 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree) response scale. Sample sizes ranged from 517 to 987.

Overall, only about one-third of Albertans agreed that “Alberta gets a fair share on the royalties it charges oil companies” (Chart 2). Conservative (39%) and Wildrose supporters (34%) were marginally more likely to agree than were Liberal supporters (30%) and uncommitted potential voters (32%). But overall these four groups were quite similar in their response, in contrast to NDP and Green/Alberta Party supporters, very few of whom agreed (12% and 15%, respectively). While the composition of these two groupings is interesting, what is more telling is that, overall, only one in three Albertans feel that their province is being adequately compensated by the oil companies for the natural resource they are exploiting.

Traditional Values

In general, Wildrose (61% and 57%) and Progressive Conservative (56% and 42%) supporters, along with the uncommitted potential voters (53% and 41%) expressed the most support for traditional values and respecting authority (Chart 3), though we note that Wildrose supporters were more likely to “strongly agree” in their responses. Liberal, NDP and Green/Alberta Party supporters were somewhat less likely to agree with this statement. Interestingly, for both items highlighted in this chart, the uncommitted potential voters’ responses closely matched those of the Progressive Conservative supporters. This may not be surprising given the PC party’s wide support in Alberta; uncommitted potential voters may have attitudes more in line with the majority of provincial voters.

Chart 3: Traditional Values*



* Scores of 4 (bottom of column) and 5 (top of column) on a 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree) response scale. Sample sizes ranged from 1127 to 1144.

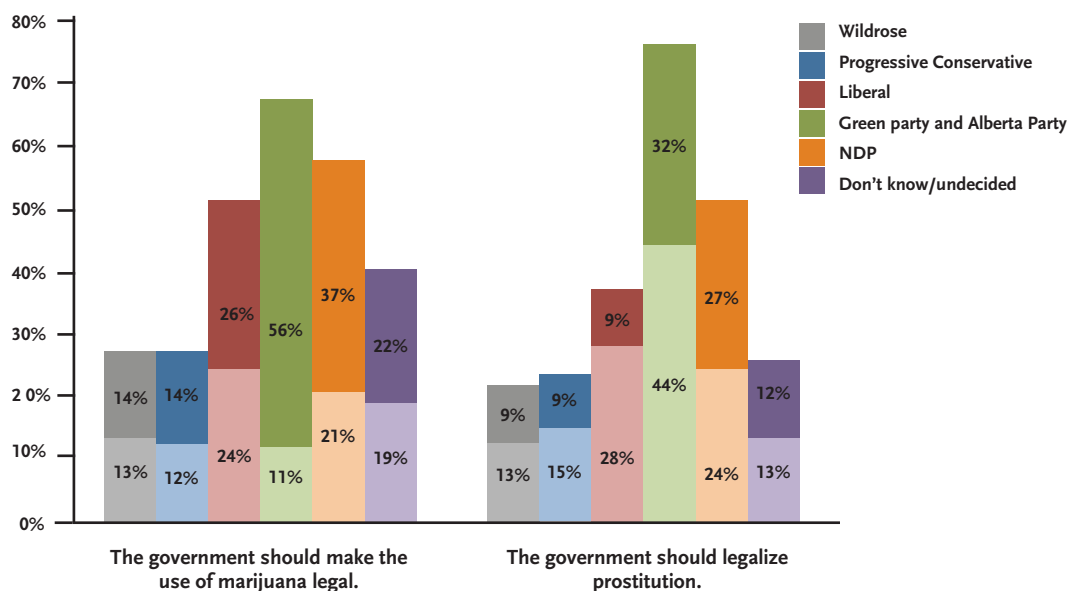
The Wildrose and Progressive Conservative supporters' agreement with the statement "We need more respect for authority in Canada" is consistent with the tone of the criminal justice and policing platforms of each of these parties.⁹ Interestingly, while Wildrose and Progressive Conservative supporters both show high overall agreement for the respecting authority item (61% and 56%, respectively), Wildrose supporters are more likely to strongly agree (42% strongly agree compared to 19% who simply agree) than Progressive Conservative supporters (24% strongly agree, 32% agree). Somewhat predictably, Wildrose supporters may have more socially conservative beliefs than Progressive Conservative supporters. Liberal and NDP supporters show similar responses for both of the traditional value statements.

Libertarianism

Only about one in four Wildrose and Progressive Conservative supporters supported the legalization of marijuana (27% and 26%, respectively) and prostitution (22% and 24%, respectively). Although libertarianism has been associated with political conservatism (Mehrabian, 1996) and has been officially embraced by the Wildrose leadership (Kleiss, 2012), Alberta's centre and left-leaning party supporters were considerably more likely to agree with both of our libertarian value statements. This might be due to the particular libertarian social issues we addressed (legalizing marijuana and prostitution) being more out of line with the social conservatism (i.e., an emphasis on traditional values) of Wildrose and Progressive Conservative supporters.

9 There are multiple examples of former police chiefs and other criminal justice system actors running for conservative political positions in Canada. Most recently, on March 14, 2015, the former Calgary police chief, Rick Hansen, announced he would be running for the provincial Tories in the next election (Bell, 2015).

Chart 4: Libertarian Values*



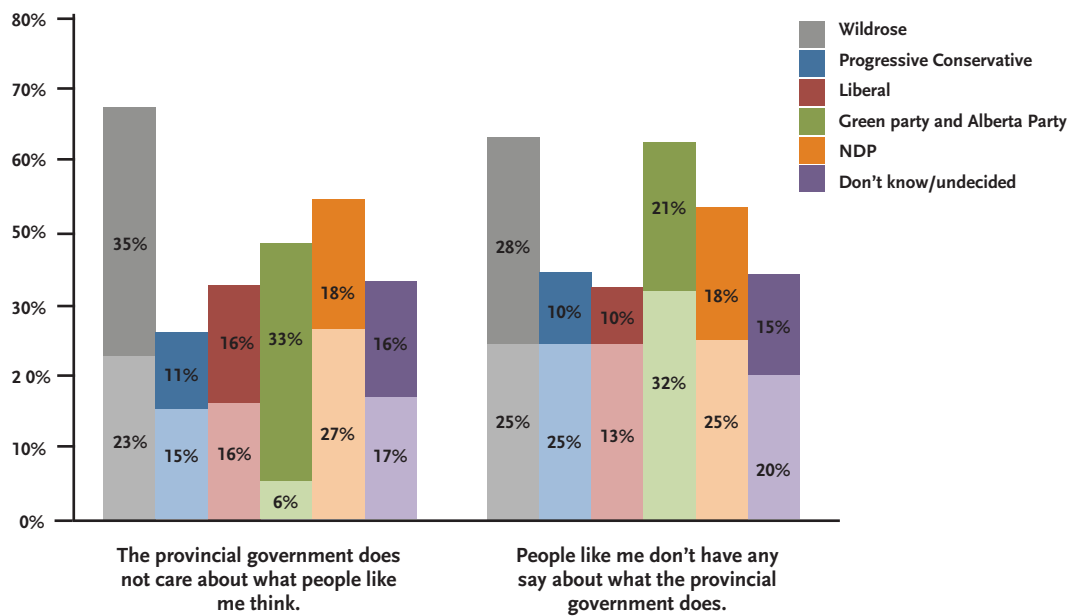
* Scores of 4 (bottom of column) and 5 (top of column) on a 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree) response scale. Sample sizes ranged from 1113 to 1150.

Green/Alberta Party supporters were significantly more likely to strongly agree with the legalization of marijuana (56%) and prostitution (32%) than were any other party supporters. Liberal and NDP supporters stood midway between the Greens and the Wildrose/PC groupings on these two issues. While most party supporters were slightly less likely to agree with the legalization of prostitution than they were with that of marijuana use, Green and Alberta Party supporters actually supported legalized prostitution more (however, they were less likely to strongly agree).

Political Alienation

As seen in Chart 5, Wildrose and Progressive Conservative supporters were notably divergent in their responses to the political alienation measures. Given the longstanding majority Progressive Conservative government in Alberta, we would expect Progressive Conservative supporters to express less alienation from the current government than other party supporters. Accordingly, only one out of four Progressive Conservative supporters agreed that the government did not care about what they think, the lowest of all parties. Conversely, Wildrose supporters were most likely to express agreement with the same statement (58%). This discordance might be indicative of the greater support for “small government” among Wildrose conservatives relative to Progressive Conservatives under a succession of recent premiers (Kleiss, 2012).

Chart 5: Political Alienation*



* Scores of 4 (bottom of column) and 5 (top of column) on a 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree) response scale. Sample sizes ranged from 592 to 595.

It is noteworthy that, next to the PC supporters, Liberal supporters expressed the least alienation from the provincial government on both statements highlighted in Chart 5. Did this lower level of alienation reflect a relatively greater comfort among Liberal supporters than Wildrose supporters with the Progressive Conservative party's values or approach? We cannot tell from the data. However, we find ourselves again wondering whether Premier Prentice might have gained more future voters by shifting his policies to the political centre (to attract Liberal supporters) rather than to the right (to attract Wildrose supporters). It will be interesting to observe whether, with the PC party moving to the right (as indicated by their welcoming of former Wildrose MLAs into their caucus), Liberal party supporters will begin to feel more alienated than they were in 2014.

5. Conclusion

This report was prompted by the mass defections of opposition Wildrose members of the Alberta Legislature to the governing Progressive Conservatives in the fall of 2014, and subsequent calls by some supporters of the other political parties for a more unified opposition. Several years of examining the voting preferences and political attitudes of Albertans led us to believe that the electorate was far more diverse than these simple calculations might warrant, that the political values and beliefs of Albertans, irrespective of how the party system squeezes citizens into their respective supporter boxes, are more diverse and complicated. To test this assumption, we examined the results of a province-wide survey conducted in the spring of 2014 that asked Albertans about their political values and beliefs on four dimensions: economic conservatism, traditional values, libertarianism, and political alienation.

The survey results suggest substantial variety in each of these areas across groups of voters with different party preferences. In general, Wildrose supporters are more economically conservative than the PC supporters. For example, they are much more likely to strongly agree that “private industry is always more efficient than government.” Wildrose supporters do resemble PC supporters, however, in their general nonsupport for the libertarian values we asked about in our survey (legalization of prostitution and marijuana); here the two groups are virtually identical. With the exception of these libertarian values, the political values and beliefs of PC supporters otherwise resemble as much, if not more, those of Liberal supporters and the uncommitted (some of whom, we surmise, may be disaffected Progressive Conservatives or former Liberals) as they do the values and beliefs of Wildrose supporters.

This finding raises the interesting question, as we have noted, whether the Progressive Conservatives, instead of welcoming Wildrose members into their big tent, might have gained significant political advantage by attempting to attract more centrist voters.

In contrast, NDP supporters are quite different from Liberal supporters (and also PC and Wildrose supporters) in a number of ways, but in particular with respect to economic conservatism. For example, only slightly more than one in ten NDP supporters felt that Alberta was receiving sufficient royalties for its oil resources, compared to 30% or more of Liberal, PC and Wildrose supporters (even though this is still a small minority). Finally, the values and beliefs of the small group of Green/Alberta Party supporters (predominantly Greens) appear to be more like those of NDP than Liberal supporters. This finding is at variance with suggestions that Green and Alberta Party supporters might find a natural home within the Liberal party.

More generally, however, the survey results suggest that the spectrum of Albertans' political values and beliefs, far from being monochromatic, reflect rather multiple shades of grey – even, perhaps, glints of genuine colour. Would realignment of the various parties into two, as in the traditional Republican-Democrat pattern seen in the United States, achieve the full expression of these values and beliefs? We are somewhat doubtful.

The report's findings may suggest, rather, the need to rethink more broadly the political system of representation within which the current political parties engage and which too often blunts the citizenry's expression of difference. We wonder, for example, whether some form of proportional representation, rather than the current first-past-the-post system of electing legislative members would provide a more useful mechanism for democratic voice than realignment. Such speculation is beyond the scope of this study, however.

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Appendix 1

Research Design and Sample Characteristics

Since 1987, the Population Research Laboratory (PRL) at the University of Alberta has conducted an annual Alberta Survey, an omnibus study in which a number of different researchers share the costs of data collection by pooling their specific questions on a single survey. In 2014, the PRL created two separate questionnaires, Survey A and Survey B, to maintain an average interview length of less than 30 minutes. The data analyzed in this report were collected in Survey B.

The PRL used a Random-Digit Dialing (RDD) approach to ensure that respondents had an equal chance to be contacted whether or not their household was listed in a telephone directory. The PRL has developed a database of eight-digit telephone banks covering the Edmonton and Calgary metropolitan areas, as well as the remainder of the province. By area, the identified working banks are randomly selected, with replacement, and a randomly generated set of two digits between 00-99 is appended to each selection. Duplicate telephone numbers are purged from the computer list.

Within selected households, one eligible adult (age 18 or older) was selected as the respondent. A quota sampling system was used to obtain equal numbers of female and male respondents. To ensure regional representation, a disproportionate stratified sampling approach was employed, with targets of 400 interviews each in Edmonton, metropolitan Calgary, and the rest of the province.

Data collection occurred between July 24, 2014 and September 8, 2014, with the assistance of trained and supervised professional interviewers. The final Survey B sample contained 1208 respondents, with a response rate of 19%. Since previous assessments of Alberta Survey samples (e.g., Bladon, 2009) have shown that both older and more educated Albertans are more likely to respond, the 2014 data were weighted by both age (six categories) and educational attainment (three categories), based on 2011 National Household Survey data, to make the sample representative of the provincial population. The estimated sampling error, at the 95% confidence level, for an area sample of 1,208 households assuming a 50/50 binomial percentage distribution is plus or minus 2.8 percentage points.

Based on weighted data, the average age of sample members was 45 years. Four out of five (80%) had been born in Canada and, on average, sample members had lived in Alberta for 32 years. Two-thirds (65%) were married or co-habiting, and 44% indicated that they were involved in raising a child or children. Over half (55%) of the survey respondents had completed some level of post-secondary education, including 26% who had acquired

at least one university degree. Fifty percent were employed full-time, 16% were employed part-time, 16% were retired, and only 3% were unemployed (the rest were out of the labour force, either attending school or not in paid employment for various reasons).

Political values and beliefs were measured by presenting survey respondents with a declarative statement (e.g., “We need more respect for authority in Canada”) and asking them to agree or disagree on a 5-point scale (1 = strongly disagree; 5 = strongly agree). In the five graphs in this report, responses of “4” and “5” have been combined to report the percentage of the sample sub-group that agreed. Chi-square tests revealed that the overall pattern of differences across political party preference groups for each statement in each of the five graphs was statistically significant ($p < 0.05$). To determine whether one subgroup (e.g., Wildrose supporters) was significantly different from another (e.g., Progressive Conservative supporters), we conducted analyses of variance (ANOVA) for each item using the full 5-point scale, and conducted post-hoc tests to determine whether mean differences were statistically significant ($p < 0.05$).



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