

Backgrounder - Regional Differences – PSI 2003

Traditionally, the PSI has measured personal security at the national level. A breakdown of the PSI by region illustrates how personal security differs across Canada. These regional snapshots reveal the positive and negative indicators which influence the PSI ranking. (Please note that regional indexes should be interpreted with caution due to the smaller sample sizes, particularly with respect to indicators of people's perceptions.)

British Columbia

- The fear of job loss in BC was higher (28%) than the national average (23%) and well above the 16% reported by residents of Quebec. However, the proportion of citizens reporting fear of job loss decreased over the last year in BC, as it did in the rest of the country.
- The proportion of BC residents confident in their employability was also the lowest in Canada (50%). In previous years, Atlantic Canadians had been the least confident.
- British Columbians were least confident that they would receive help from government support programs in times of need (13%, compared to 23% nationally) or from friends, family and neighbours (60%, compared to 72% nationally).
- British Columbians had the sharpest decrease in confidence in their access to the health care system (9 percentage points) over the last year. Only 43% of BC residents surveyed felt they could access health care services when needed, compared to 53% nationally.
- British Columbians were also the least likely to believe that the provincial government would be able to improve the health care system over the next two years.
- BC continues to report the highest incidence of property crime.
- It is difficult to escape the conclusion that the major cuts to provincial programs introduced by the Liberal government in BC continued to play a major role in influencing the perceptions of BC residents. In fact, these pessimistic perceptions brought down the overall Canadian index of perceptions of personal security.

Alberta

- Economic security, as measured by the hard data, decreased very slightly over the year, as did perceptions of economic security.
- But Alberta continued to have the highest percentage of residents who felt that their incomes were adequate: 54% compared to 47% nationally.
- Albertans were second only to residents of Quebec in their confidence about their job security, and they remained the most confident in their employability – 69% compared to 57% nationally.
- There was, however, a considerable drop in Albertans' confidence about the ability of income support programs to support them in times of need: only 17% expressed such confidence in 2002 – a drop of 20% from the year before.
- Albertans also reported the highest level of financial vulnerability – 15% of those surveyed said they could survive for less than one month on their savings.

- Albertans also reported an increase in extreme stress. Residents of the province and those in the Atlantic were the only ones to record an increase in this category.
- Albertans also reported a large decrease in confidence in their ability to access health care services if needed – a drop of 18% from 2001. Fortunately, however, they were the most likely to report being in very good or excellent health – 74%, along with residents of Quebec.
- The violent crime rate for level 3 offences increased in Alberta and their perceptions of safety from violent crime decreased. The proportion of Albertans who felt that they were *not safe* from violent crime in their neighbourhoods grew from 4.4% in 2000 to 7.2% by 2002.

Manitoba & Saskatchewan

- Data indicators of economic security fell compared to the previous year, but Prairie residents' perceptions of their economic security rose.
- There was a noticeable increase in the number of Prairie residents who felt that their income was very adequate: 47% in 2002, a 12% increase over the previous year.
- As in other regions, residents of Saskatchewan and Manitoba felt more confident of their job security compared to the previous year.
- Residents had more negative assessments of their own health than the Canadian average: in 2002, 11% of Prairie residents surveyed said their health was poor or worse, compared to only 8% nationally who gave such ratings.
- The Manitoba government spent more per capita on health expenditures in 2000 – \$3,693 – than all other provinces.
- Both the data and perception indexes for physical safety fell in the Prairies in 2002. Rates of level 3 violent crimes and property crimes both increased, and the proportion of residents who felt very safe dropped by 5% to 6% over the previous year.
- Saskatchewan and Manitoba continued to show the highest overall violent crime rates at 1,802 and 1,620 violent crimes per 100,000 people, respectively.

Ontario

- Despite decreases in the objective data on economic security, Ontarians' surveyed expressed more confidence in their job security in 2002 than they had the year before – 61% in 2002 compared to 56% in 2001 – and slightly more confidence in their employability – 58% in 2002 compared to 57% in 2001.
- Objective measures of health security in Ontario were up modestly in 2002, while citizens' perceptions of their health security fell slightly.
- Ontario (and Alberta) had the highest proportion of residents (24%) who reported feeling extremely stressed.
- Indicators of physical safety fell due to a rise in the property crime rate in Ontario. However, residents' perceptions improved as they felt safer from violent crime in their neighbourhoods.

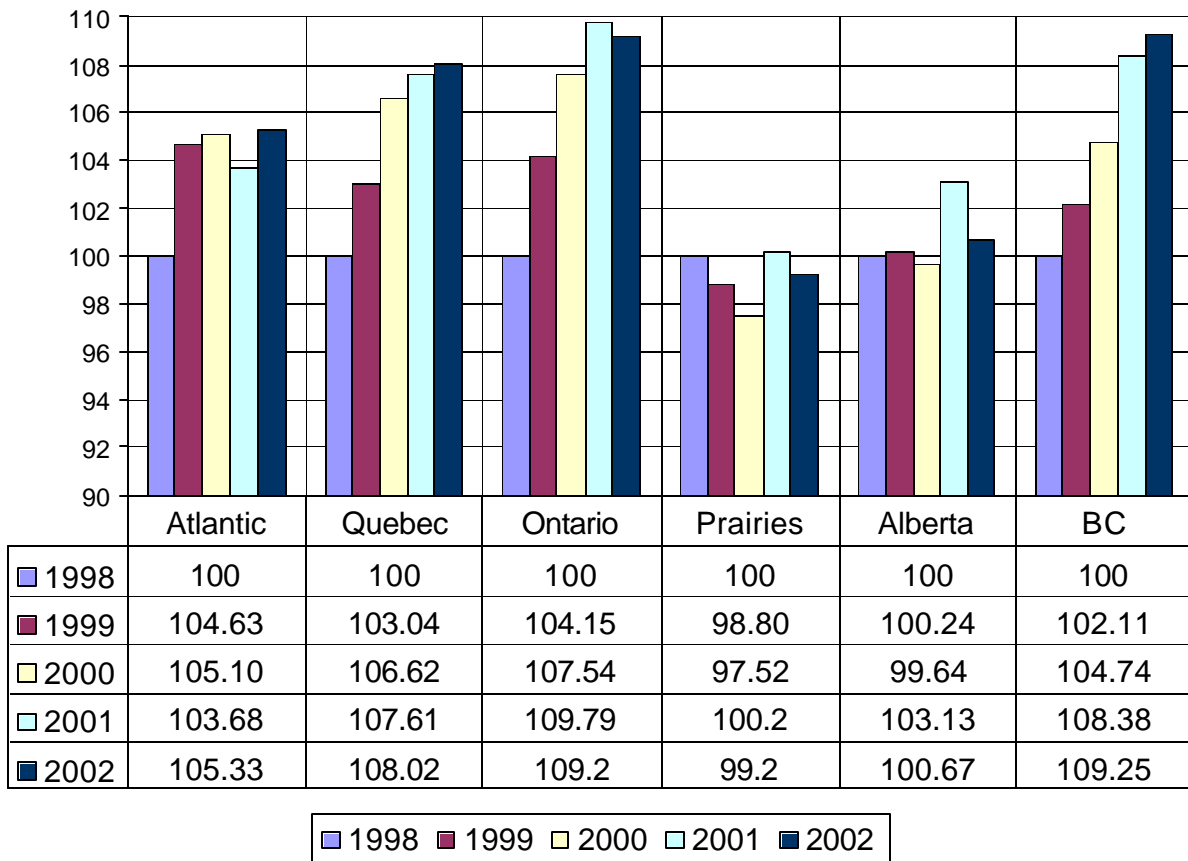
Quebec

- Residents of the province reported more positive assessments of the adequacy of their incomes and more confidence in their job security.
- In fact, compared to the rest of Canadians, Quebecers felt the most certain of their job security. Only 16% of Quebec residents feared losing their jobs, compared to 23% nationally.
- Both the data and perception indicators of health security rose in Quebec. Residents continued to feel good about their health, and 73% of those surveyed rated their health as very good or better, compared to 69% nationally.
- Like the rest of Canadians, Quebecers remained concerned over their access to health care.
- Both violent crime and property crime rates decreased, and likewise fears of violent and property crime decreased. However, residents of Quebec remain the most fearful of crime in their neighbourhoods, whether it is fear of violent crime or property crime.

The Atlantic Provinces

- According to the hard data, economic security increased, but residents' perceptions of their economic security decreased. This was largely due to decreased confidence in government income support programs, with an almost 17% drop in confidence over the previous year.
- Residents of Atlantic Canada were more likely to report that they could rely on friends, family and neighbours if they were in financial need – 78% compared to 72% nationally.
- Atlantic Canada had the lowest percentage (40%) of residents who said their incomes were very adequate.
- Data indicators for health security rose, due to decreases in potential years of life lost and decreases in work and traffic injuries.
- Atlantic residents' perceptions of their health security also rose, with people rating their health status more positively than the previous year and reporting lower levels of stress overall. (They did, however, have a higher number reporting *extreme* levels of stress.)
- Confidence in access to health care services in times of need was highest in the Atlantic region, at 61%.
- Objective indicators of physical safety rose in 2002 due to a decrease in the property crime rate.
- Next to Ontario, residents of Atlantic Canada were the most likely to state that they felt very safe from violent crime and they were the most likely to say they felt safe from property crime. This was supported by the objective data, with the Atlantic region maintaining the lowest incidence of property crime among all regions.

PSI Data Index, by Region 1998-2002



PSI Perception Index by Region, 1998-2002

