

Canada's World Survey 2018

Executive Summary
April 2018





Introduction

Background

Canada is a country with strong international connections. Most of the population is comprised of people with roots in other countries, and today Canada welcomes roughly 300,000 immigrants each year from across the globe, most of whom settle in and become citizens while at the same time maintaining strong connections with the communities from which they came. The country's prosperity depends in large part on trade with other countries and maintaining a positive trade balance. And Canadians are ever mindful of their much bigger neighbour to the south, with which they share much in common but also see as distinctly different.

So in many ways we are an outwardly-focused people, yet the dominant narrative around our international connections focuses on government policy – foreign aid, military missions and peace keeping, and international trade pacts. How do Canadians as individuals relate to the broader world?

2008 Canada's World Survey. This question provided the impetus for the inaugural Canada's World survey, which was conducted in early 2008 as part of a national citizen dialogue sponsored by Simon Fraser University's Morris J. Wosk Centre for Public Dialogue that focused on the role that Canada and Canadians can and should play in the world outside our borders.

The survey was the first to ever ask Canadians about how they see their place in the world, and that of their country – not simply what they believe their governments should be doing: What do they see as the top global issues, and how do they orient personally to the world outside of the national borders, in terms of their interests, travel and

personal connections? How do they view Canada's current role in world affairs, and what do they think it should be?

The results revealed many insights (and some notable surprises), and received widespread coverage through media partnerships with the CBC, *The Globe and Mail*, and *Le Devoir*.

2018 Canada's World Survey. A decade later, the Environics Institute conducted a second Canada's World survey, to determine how Canadian public attitudes, priorities and actions have evolved over time, as well as address emerging issues. This research was conducted in partnership with SFU Public Square at Simon Fraser University, the Canadian International Council, and the Bill Graham Centre for Contemporary International History.

The research consisted of a national public opinion survey conducted by telephone with a representative sample of 1,501 Canadians (18 years and older), between October 23 and November 26, 2017. The results from a survey of this size drawn from the population would be expected to provide results accurate to within plus or minus 2.5 percentage points in 95 out of 100 samples (the margin of sampling error will be larger for specific subgroups of the population).

The following sections present results from the research, with an emphasis given to how opinions and actions have changed since 2008, and how they vary across relevant segments of the population (e.g., region, education level, country of birth). Additional details are available under separate cover that provides the results of all survey questions by a range of population segments. All results are presented as percentages unless otherwise noted.



Key stories

Canadians' views on global issues and Canada's role in the world have remained notably stable over the past decade.

In the decade following the first Canada's World Survey (conducted early in 2008), the world experienced significant events that changed the complexity and direction of international affairs: beginning with the financial meltdown and ensuing great recession in much of the world, followed by the continued rise of Asia as an emerging economic and political centre of power, the expansion of global terrorism, increasing tensions with North Korea and risks of nuclear conflagration; and a growing anti-government populism in Western democracies. Despite such developments, Canadians' orientation to many world issues and the role they see their country playing on the international stage have remained remarkably stable over the past decade. Whether it is their perception of top issues facing the world, concerns about global issues, or their views on the direction the world is heading, Canadians' perspectives on what's going on in the world have held largely steady.

As in 2008, Canadians have maintained a consistent level of connection to the world through their engagement in international events and issues, their personal ties to people and cultures in other countries, frequency and nature of their travel abroad, and financial contributions to international organizations and friends and family members abroad. And Canadians continue to view their country as a positive and influential force in the world, one that can serve as a role model for other countries.

This consistency notwithstanding, Canadians have been sensitive to the ebb and flow of international events and global trends.

While Canadians' perspectives on many issues have held steady over the past decade, there have also been some shifts in how they see what's going on in the world and how they perceive Canada's role on the global stage, in response to key global events and issues. This suggests Canadians

are paying attention to what happens beyond their own borders, and that Canadian public opinion is responsive to media coverage of the global stage.

Canadians today are more concerned than a decade ago about such world issues as terrorism, the spread of nuclear weapons, and global migration/refugees. And the public has adjusted its perceptions of specific countries as having a positive (e.g., Germany) or negative (e.g., North Korea, Russia) impact in the world today. Canadians are also shifting their opinions about their country's influence in world affairs, placing stronger emphasis on multiculturalism and accepting refugees, our country's global political influence and diplomacy, and the popularity of our Prime Minister.

Canadians increasingly define their country's place in the world as one that welcomes people from elsewhere.

Multiculturalism, diversity and inclusion are increasingly seen by Canadians as their country's most notable contribution to the world. It is now less about peacekeeping and foreign aid, and more about who we are now becoming as a people and how we get along with each other. Multiculturalism and the acceptance of immigrants and refugees now stand out as the best way Canadians feel their country can be a role model for others, and as a way to exert influence on the global stage.

Moreover, Canadians are paying greater attention to issues related to immigration and refugees than they did a decade ago, their top interest in traveling abroad remains learning about another culture and language; and they increasingly believe that having Canadians living abroad is a good thing, because it helps spread Canadian culture and values (which include diversity) beyond our shores. Significantly, one in three Canadians report a connection to the Syrian refugee sponsorship program over the past two years, either through their own personal involvement in sponsoring a refugee family (7%) or knowing someone who has (25%).

Young Canadians' views and perspectives on many aspects of world affairs have converged with those of older cohorts, but their opinions on Canada's role on the world stage have become more distinct when it comes to promoting diversity.

It is young Canadians (ages 18 to 24) whose level of engagement with world issues and events has evolved most noticeably over the past decade, converging with their older counterparts whose level of engagement has either not changed nor kept pace with Canadian youth. Young people are increasingly following international issues and events to the same degree, they are as optimistic about the direction of the world as older Canadians, and they are close to being as active as travelers. At the same time, Canadian youth now hold more distinct opinions on their country's role in the world as it relates specifically to diversity. They continue to be the most likely of all age groups to believe Canada's role in the world has grown over the past 20 years, and are now more likely to single out multiculturalism and accepting immigrants/refugees as their country's most positive contribution to the world.

Foreign-born Canadians have grown more engaged and connected to world affairs than native-born Canadians, and are more likely to see Canada playing an influential role on the global stage.

Foreign-born Canadians have become more involved in what's going on outside our borders over the past decade, opening a noticeable gap with their native-born counterparts. They continue to follow international news and events more closely than people born in Canada, but have developed a much greater concern for a range of issues since 2008, while native-born Canadians' views have not kept pace. Canadians born elsewhere have grown more optimistic about the direction in which the world is heading, while those born in the country have turned more pessimistic. And Canadians born in other countries have also become more positive about the degree of influence Canada has on world affairs, and the impact the country can have on addressing a number of key global issues.



Survey findings

The Canada's World 2018 research reveals a Canadian population that, as a whole, continues to be deeply engaged with the world outside our borders, and is still keen to be even more so. Consistent with trends over the past decade, significant numbers of Canadians closely follow world events, have personal or family connections to other countries and regions, provide financial assistance to organizations and family members overseas, travel to many parts of the globe for a variety of reasons, and are interested in doing more. Most Canadians maintain a positive view of their country's role in world affairs, and remain convinced it can do more in demonstrating leadership in such areas as global migration, human rights, and the environment.

Compared to a decade ago, Canadians' views of the world have remained remarkably stable despite the range of socio-political and economic issues and events that have shaped the global order since 2008. Still, some important shifts have occurred. Canadians today are more sensitive to terrorism and the spread of nuclear weapons, with North Korea and Russia increasingly seen as negative forces in the world. Meanwhile, Canadian policies of multiculturalism and the acceptance of immigrants and refugees from around the world have emerged as a key component of Canadians' perspectives on Canada's influence on the global stage, and the role Canada can play in shaping the future direction of world affairs.

The following are highlights from the research.

HOW CANADIANS SEE THE WORLD TODAY

Global warming and the environment, and war/conflict, continue to be the most salient global issues on the minds of Canadians. But there is rising concern about terrorism, hunger and famine, and the spread of nuclear weapons, as the salience of the environment and war/conflict has waned over the past decade for Canadians.

Canadians are largely split on whether they are optimistic or pessimistic about the direction they think the world is heading over the next 10 years. More than four in ten say they are basically optimistic about the direction the world

is heading, compared with slightly more who say they are basically pessimistic; the balance is essentially unchanged from a decade ago despite the serious challenges now confronting many parts of the world.

Canadians see their own country first and foremost as a positive force in the world, consistent with views held a decade ago. Among other countries mentioned, the most prominent now include Germany (top-of-mind for many more Canadians than in 2008), followed by Great Britain, Sweden, and the United States. On the other side of the ledger, the USA is once again singled out by Canadians as a negative force in today's world, with increasing focus also now given to North Korea and Russia.

CANADIANS' PERSONAL ORIENTATION TO THE WORLD OUTSIDE CANADA

Canadians pay attention to world events, and follow them as closely as they do local and national issues; this has not changed over the past 10 years. War and conflict (particularly in the Middle East) still hold the most interest, but less so than a decade ago. Growing attention is now paid to human rights, politics, nuclear weapons, and immigration/refugees, while interest in the environment and poverty/global hunger has declined.

Much like a decade ago, Canadians express a personal interest in countries and regions in many parts of the world, but their strongest connections continue to be with those countries that share the closest historic ties with Canada, namely Western Europe and the United States. Fewer Canadians express strong interest in Northeastern Asia (e.g., China, Japan, Korea, Philippines, Taiwan), the Middle East, Australia and New Zealand, or Eastern Europe and Russia.

Eight in ten Canadians have travelled outside Canada and the U.S., with the frequency of such trips higher than in 2008; three in ten have taken more than 10 trips in their life time. Tourism continues to be the most common reason for travel, but increasing proportions are also taking trips to see friends and family, and to visit places of birth or ancestry. Fewer travel for business or as part of a job, education, or to

do volunteer work. Canadians continue to express strong interest in travelling abroad for new experiences, especially to become immersed in another culture, language and people, but also to do volunteer work, to seek employment and to study.

Four in ten Canadians report making financial donations to organizations that address global issues, and one in five has sent money to family and friends living abroad, mostly but not exclusively by those who were born in another country. This pattern is similar to that found in 2008. Among those who have given money, the average two-year donation has increased modestly from 10 years ago, with total donations to organizations and family now totaling approximately \$26 billion. By comparison, the Canadian government's official development assistance in 2014-16 totalled just over \$11 billion.

Two-thirds of Canadians have travelled to the U.S. in the past five years, but one in four reports changing or reconsidering plans for future visits because of the current political climate. Canadians' overall opinion of the United States has worsened significantly since Donald Trump became the President, but a majority believe US-style populism is unlikely to come to Canada.

Canadians view of their country as a trading nation has strengthened over the past decade. There is a strong and growing consensus that international trade is important for Canadian jobs and the quality of life in the country; close to three-quarters of the population now hold this view. Close to two-thirds believe NAFTA has helped rather than hurt the Canadian economy, a sentiment that has also become more widespread since 2008.

CANADA'S CURRENT AND POTENTIAL ROLE IN THE WORLD

The majority of Canadians believe (as they did in 2008) their country exerts at least some influence in world affairs today, and that its impact has grown over the past 20 years. This is largely because of its peacekeeping and/humanitarian efforts, but also increasingly due to its multiculturalism and acceptance of immigrants, and its political influence and diplomacy. The quarter of Canadians who feel Canada's global influence has declined over time continue to attribute this to what they see as their country's limited influence over (or support to) other countries, and a lack of independence or leadership.

Canadians now see multiculturalism and the acceptance of immigrants as their country's most positive contribution to the world, a change from a decade ago when peacekeeping topped the list. It is no longer just about making war or peace, but rather who we are now becoming as a people and how we get along with each other. This shift is also reflected in the finding that six in ten Canadians support accepting an increased number of refugees into the country and by the fact that seven percent of Canadian adults – close to two million people – report being personally involved in helping Syrian refugees come to and settle in our country.

Close to half of Canadians are confident that Canada can definitely strengthen its influence in the world, although they are less confident of this than a decade ago. Areas of greatest potential impact include dealing with global migration and refugees, discouraging human rights abuses, tackling hunger and famine in the developing world, reducing the spread of infectious diseases, and showing leadership on environmental issues.

A strong majority of Canadians believes their country can make a difference in the world by setting an example at home, especially in terms of its policies on multiculturalism, immigration and refugees, a view that is now more prominent than a decade ago. Support for human rights at home and for strong environmental policies are also considered important areas that Canada can act upon as a role model for other countries.

Canadians continue to have the most confidence in activities of their country's NGOs and Canadian post-secondary institutions working abroad to make a positive difference in the world, and to a lesser extent the Canadian government and businesses. This is unchanged from a decade ago.

Meanwhile, an increasing majority considers the estimated three million Canadians currently living abroad to be a positive benefit to the country, and as a positive influence on Canada's role in the world. These expatriates are seen to be good ambassadors and spread Canadian culture and values through their volunteering, work, and education activities. The few who express concern about Canadians living abroad worry about economic-related issues such as not paying taxes, not benefitting the Canadian economy, and taking advantage of services without paying for them – reasons more widely cited than in 2008.

HOW OPINIONS VARY ACROSS THE COUNTRY.

While conclusions about public opinion described above hold true across the Canadian population, there are notable differences in viewpoints across the country by age, country of birth, and education level. The key variations are as follows:

Age. Young Canadians' have grown more engaged with the world outside of Canada over the past decade; in many respects their connections to the world are now much closer to their older counterparts whose level of engagement has remained largely unchanged or not kept pace with Canadian youth. For example, Canadians 18 to 24 years of age are now as likely to follow international news and events as those 60 plus, and they display increasing optimism about the direction in which the world is heading, while older Canadians have become more pessimistic. This shift in perspectives may be due to the fact that young people are traveling abroad more than ever, increasingly as tourists and volunteers, but also to visit family and friends or their place of ancestry.

Older Canadians (60 plus), by comparison, have slowed the pace of their international travel, with little change in the reasons they go abroad. Further, Canadian youth embrace the idea of living abroad for work, study, or volunteer opportunities and do so more enthusiastically than their older counterparts, a pattern unchanged from 2008.

A majority of Canadians young and old continue to believe Canada plays an influential role in world affairs. However, they hold moderately different perspectives on Canada's role in international affairs. Like a decade ago, Canadian youth remain the most likely of all age groups to believe Canada's position in the world has grown over the past 20 years, to feel Canada can be an effective role model for other countries, and to be confident the Canadian government can make a positive difference overseas. Unlike a decade ago, however, young people today are more likely than older Canadians to single out multiculturalism and accepting immigrants/refugees as the main reason for Canada's increased standing on the global stage, and to see this as where their country can make a positive contribution to the world. Young Canadians are also more likely to contend that Canada can make a difference in the world by addressing issues related to global migration and refugees, religious and ethnic hatred, hunger and famine in the developing world, and human rights abuses.

Country of birth. Foreign-born Canadians are more connected to, and engaged in, what's going on outside our borders than native-born Canadians. They follow international news and events more closely than those born in Canada, and remain more active as travelers for tourism, work, education, or volunteer opportunities. Perhaps not surprisingly, they are also more likely than native-born Canadians to give financial support – and in more significant amounts – to family members or others they know living in another countries.

Foreign-born Canadians also express greater concern than native-born Canadians about a range of issues (e.g. hunger and famine in the developing world, the spread of infectious diseases, global warming/environmental problems, and terrorism); ten years ago both groups displayed the same level of concern about these issues in 2008. Moreover, those born outside Canada display increasing optimism about the direction the world is heading while those born in the country have become slightly more pessimistic over the past decade.

Foreign-born Canadians are now more likely to believe Canada has a lot of influence in world affairs, and that this influence has grown over the past 20 years; native-born Canadians are less likely to hold these views than in 2008. Of note, Canadians born outside the country are more apt to single out multiculturalism and accepting immigrants as the main reason for Canada's increased standing on the global stage. While both groups feel this is the most positive contribution Canada can make to the world, it is those born outside the country who are now most likely to believe that Canada can make a big difference in addressing key policy issues such as global warming and environmental problems, growing income inequality, terrorism, human rights abuses, and global migration.

Second generation Canadians - those born in Canada of one or both immigrant parents – are increasingly more connected to and engaged in world affairs, in comparison with those whose family has been in the country for two or more generations. Like a decade ago, second generation Canadians travel more frequently abroad, and are more likely to do so as tourists, volunteers, or for visits to friends and family or their places of ancestry. However, over the past 10 years, they have turned the tables on third plus generation Canadians to more enthusiastically embrace the idea of traveling abroad to work, study, volunteer, or learn another

language or culture. Similarly, second generation Canadians are now more likely than third plus generation Canadians to give financial support to causes or organizations working to address problems in other countries, a reversal of positions from a decade ago. More second generation Canadians were also involved directly in the Syrian refugee program or knew someone who was involved.

Region. Being connected to or engaged with the world does not happen in a consistent fashion across all regions of the country. Residents of B.C. and Ontario (where there are a proportionately greater number of immigrants and second generation Canadians) are among the most likely to follow global issues and events, as was the case a decade ago. Yet, the issues Canadians follow or are concerned about depends on the province: B.C., Alberta, and Ontario residents are most likely to focus on the economy and finances, Quebecers express greater interest in the environment, while people living in Manitoba or Saskatchewan pay more attention to poverty and nuclear weapons.

B.C., Ontario, and Quebec residents are more frequent travelers outside of Canada than those living in other provinces, with Quebecers becoming more frequent travelers than a decade ago. Further, it is B.C., Alberta, and Ontario residents, more than others, who provide financial support to causes or organizations working to address issues in other countries; this remains unchanged from 2008.

Perceptions of Canada's role in the world are largely consistent across the country. However, Ontarians are among those most convinced of Canada's potential impact on a wide range of global issues (e.g. nuclear weapons, spread of infectious diseases, global warming, gap between rich and poor, global migration and refugees, and cyber security), while Atlantic Canadians believe more than residents elsewhere that Canada's most positive contribution to the world is its multiculturalism policies and acceptance of immigrants/refugees.

Education. Education appears to be a defining factor in how engaged Canadians are with the world, and in their views of Canada's position in addressing global issues. Like a decade ago, university graduates follow world issues and events more closely than others, particularly as they relate to politics, the environment, and human rights. They also remain the most active travelers, more likely to travel abroad as tourists or volunteers, or to visit family, friends or their places of ancestry. Canadians with college or university experience also express greater levels of interest in traveling abroad for work, study, volunteering, or living in another country to learn another language or culture. But while university graduates are the most convinced of Canada's potential influence in world affairs, it is Canadians who have not completed a high school education who are most convinced of Canada being able to make a big difference on such key global issues as the spread of nuclear weapons, the decline of democracy, and the loss of jobs due to automation.

This study was conducted by the Environics Institute for Survey Research, in partnership with the following organizations:

SFU PUBLIC SQUARE is a signature initiative at Simon Fraser University, designed to spark, nurture and restore community connections, establishes the university as the go-to convener of serious and productive conversations about issues of public concern. More than a single place or program, SFU Public Square assembles the hearts, minds, and talents of diverse communities to promote inclusive, intelligent, and inspiring dialogue.

CANADIAN INTERNATIONAL COUNCIL is Canada's foreign relations council. It is an independent, non-partisan membership organization and think tank dedicated to advancing constructive dialogue on Canada's place in the world and providing an incubator for innovative ideas on how to address the world's most pressing problems.

BILL GRAHAM CENTRE FOR CONTEMPORARY INTERNATIONAL HISTORY promotes the study of recent international events from a historical perspective. We also bring together the world of the scholar and that of the policymaker and practitioner. Its activities include undergraduate and graduate teaching, conferences and public lectures by scholars and policymakers, and publications based on original research.

ENVIRONICS INSTITUTE FOR SURVEY RESEARCH sponsors relevant and original public opinion and social research related to issues of public policy and social change. It is through such research that organizations and individuals can better understand Canada today, how it's been changing, and where it may be heading.

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