



Canadian  
Survey

AmericasBarometer

2025 SERIES

# Attitudes toward social inequality in Canada and the USA



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The Environics Institute for Survey Research was established by Michael Adams in 2006 with a mandate to conduct in-depth public opinion and social research on the issues shaping Canada's future. It is through such research that Canadians can better understand themselves and their changing society.

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## AmericasBarometer

These results are from the Canadian portion of the 2025–26 AmericasBarometer, a regular comparative survey of democratic values and behaviours that covers countries in North, Central and South America, as well as a significant number of countries in the Caribbean (the 2025–26 study will cover 20 countries).

The project is led by the LAPOP Lab at Vanderbilt University's Center for Global Democracy (CGD) and was conducted by the Environics Institute for Survey Research, in partnership with CGD's LAPOP Lab at Vanderbilt University and with the support of the Max Bell Foundation.

The survey was conducted online with a sample of 3,550 Canadians (aged 18 and over) between July 30 and August 7, 2025. The results are weighted by region, age, gender, education and language so as to be fully representative of the Canadian population.

This report also includes results from the companion survey conducted in the United States. This survey was conducted online with a 1,600 Americans, 18 years of age and older, between October 3 and 16, 2025. The results are weighted by region, age, gender, education and ethnicity so as to be fully representative of the American population.

[See our website for more reports from this survey.](#)

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# Introduction

Are Canadians more egalitarian than Americans? Are they more troubled by the existence of various forms of social inequality – such as those between rich and poor, men and women, white and Black – and more inclined to look to government to address them?

There are several reasons to expect this to be the case. First, this is the conclusion of previous research. For instance, Seymour Martin Lipset famously argued that the United States and Canada “remain two nations formed around sharply different organizing principles,” with Canada emphasizing “group rights and benefits for the less privileged” and the U.S. stressing “more concern for the individual” while having “less interest in those who are poor and outcast.”<sup>1</sup> Similarly, Michael Adams’ comparison of social values in Canada and the United States at the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century led him to observe that “north of the 49<sup>th</sup> parallel, we treasure equality; south of it, they treasure freedom.”<sup>2</sup>

A second reason is that, in practice, Americans appear to tolerate a greater degree of social inequality. Governments in Canada, for instance, provide more benefits and services to low-income individuals and families – in addition to providing publicly-funded health care since the 1960s.<sup>3</sup> While the iconic U.S. Bill of Rights preceded Canada’s by 200 years, the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms adopted in 1982 includes clauses explicitly protecting the equality of women and men, acknowledging multiculturalism, recognizing Indigenous rights, and allowing for affirmative action.

1 Seymour Martin Lipset, *Continental Divided: The Values and Institutions of the United States and Canada* (Routledge, 1990), p. 225.

2 Michael Adams, *Sex in the Snow: The Surprising Revolution in Canadian Social Values* (Tenth Anniversary Edition), (Penguin Canada, 2006), p. 192.

3 Joshua McCabe, *Family Benefits in America: An International Perspective* (Niskanen Centre, November 6, 2025); Hilary Hoynes and Mark Stabile, *How do the U.S. and Canadian Social Safety Nets Compare for Women and Children* (Martin Prosperity Institute, June 28, 2017).

A third reason is simply that Canadians are more likely than Americans to express a preference for equality. When asked which is more important – personal freedom or equality – majorities in both countries favour freedom. But the proportion favouring equality is nonetheless 11 percentage points higher in Canada (46%) than in the U.S. (35%).<sup>4</sup>

It is possible to further test the notion that Canadians have a more egalitarian disposition than Americans by exploring opinions on a series of more specific questions relating to social inequality. These questions are drawn from the 2025 AmericasBarometer surveys, conducted in parallel in the two countries.

The results present somewhat of a mixed picture. While there continue to be differences in opinions in the two countries on questions related to equality between men and women, Canadians and Americans have recently moved closer together on the issue of government action to address income inequality. On questions relating to racial equality, Canadians and Americans today express broadly similar views, though citizens are responding to very different social contexts and signals from their respective governments.

Two patterns in the distribution of opinions are apparent on both sides of the border. The first is familiar: in both Canada and the U.S., parties on the political left or in the centre are more supportive of efforts to advance social equality than their counterparts on the right. The second is related to age. In this case, one notable finding is that younger people are less insistent on gender equality than their older counterparts. This finding runs contrary to the expectation that support for equality is typically stronger among younger generations.

4 See *Freedom vs. equality: Canada vs. the United States*.

# Income inequality

Income inequality is more pronounced in the United States than in Canada. For instance, the latest *World Inequality Report* describes the United States as one of the more unequal wealthy countries – whereas, in Canada, “inequality remains moderate by international standards.” In the U.S., the top 10 percent of earners receive almost half of the total income; the comparable share in Canada is a third.

This difference notwithstanding, Canadians and Americans currently share similar opinions about the importance of government action to address income inequality. About two in five Canadians (44%) and Americans (40%) strongly agree that their government should implement strong policies to reduce income inequality between the rich and the poor. And, in each country, about one in two take a middle view between strong agreement and strong disagreement (49% in Canada, and 47% in the U.S.). Only small minorities strongly disagree: seven percent in Canada and 13 percent in the U.S.

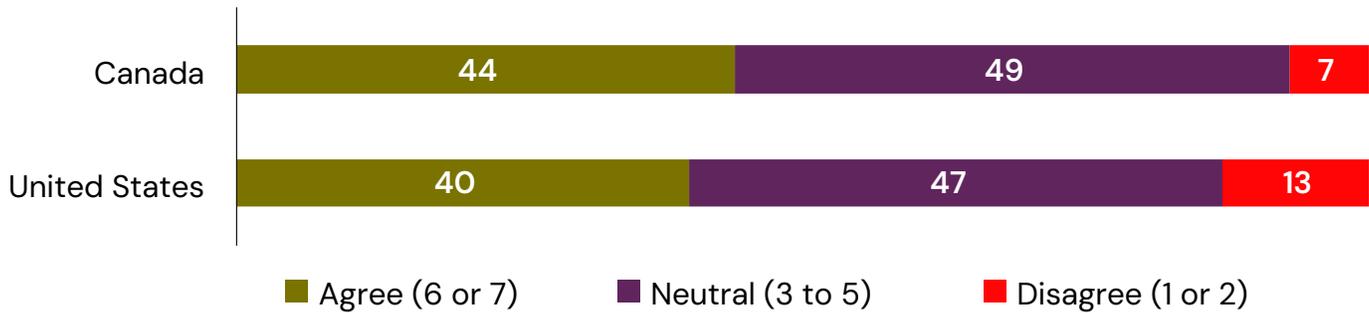


Canadians and Americans currently share similar opinions about the importance of government action to address income inequality. The narrowness of this gap between the proportions that strongly agree that the government should act to reduce income inequality is new.

## Figure 1

Agree or disagree: the government should implement strong policies to reduce income inequality between the rich and the poor

2025



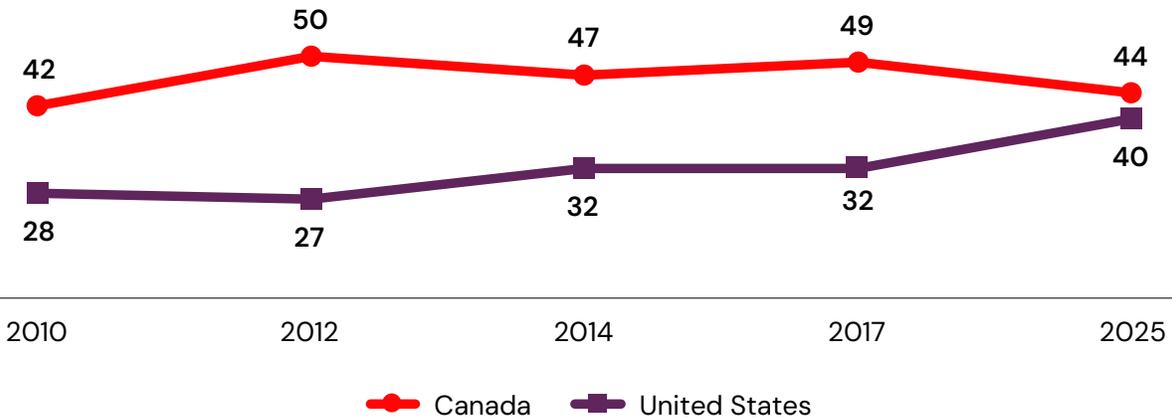
*Do you agree or disagree with: The Canadian / United States government should implement strong policies to reduce income inequality between the rich and the poor. (Using a scale ranging from 1 to 7, where 1 means "strongly disagree" and 7 means "strongly agree.")*

The narrowness of this gap between the proportions that strongly agree that the government should act to reduce income inequality is new. As discussed in more detail in a separate report, the latest U.S. result reflects a major shift in public sentiment over time. Whereas opposition to government action had previously outweighed support in the U.S., this is no longer the case. This means that opinions in the two countries have moved closer together. In 2012, there was a 23 percentage-point difference between the proportions of Canadians and Americans who strongly agree; in 2025, the gap stands at only four points.

## Figure 2

The Canadian / United States government should implement strong policies to reduce income inequality between the rich and the poor

2010 – 2025 (agree: 6 or 7 on a 7-point scale)



*Do you agree or disagree with: The Canadian / United States government should implement strong policies to reduce income inequality between the rich and the poor. (Using a scale ranging from 1 to 7, where 1 means "strongly disagree" and 7 means "strongly agree.")*

Most of this change is due to a sharp drop over the past several years in opposition among supporters of the Republican Party. Whereas in 2019, 60 percent of Republican Party supporters disagreed that the government should act to reduce income inequality, by 2025 this proportion has fallen to only 22 percent.

Despite this change, opinions in both countries continue to vary based on political preferences. In Canada, those who support the Liberal Party (51%) are much more likely than those who support the Conservative Party (29%) to strongly agree that the government should implement strong policies to reduce income inequality between the rich and the poor. Similarly, in the U.S., those who support the Democratic Party (49%) are more likely to strongly agree than those who support the Republican Party (33%).

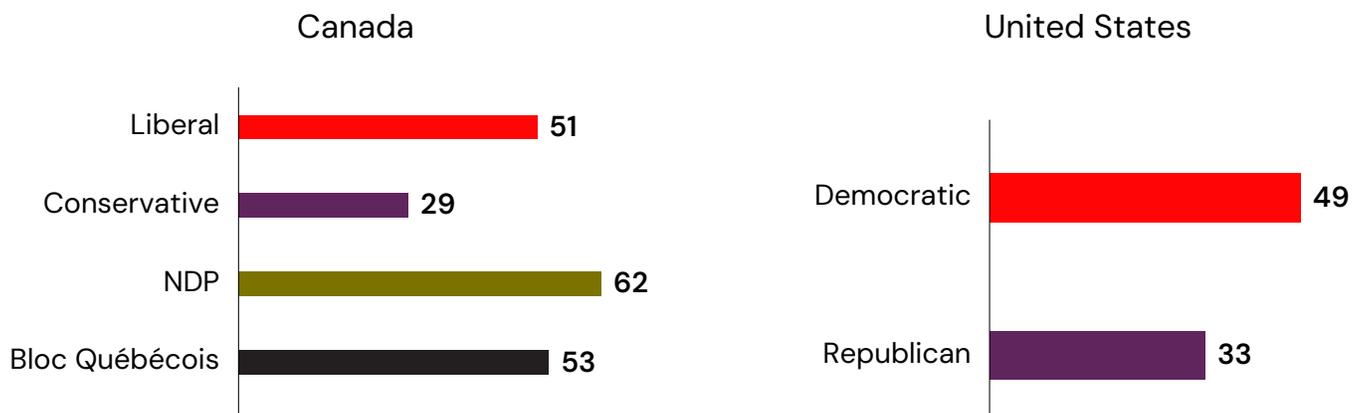


What's different in Canada is that there are two other federal parties in Parliament whose supporters are even more likely to express strong agreement with policies to reduce income inequality: the NDP (62%) and the Bloc Québécois (53%).

### Figure 3

The Canadian / United States government should implement strong policies to reduce income inequality between the rich and the poor

2025, by party support (agree: 6 or 7 on a 7-point scale)



*Do you agree or disagree with: The Canadian / United States government should implement strong policies to reduce income inequality between the rich and the poor. (Using a scale ranging from 1 to 7, where 1 means "strongly disagree" and 7 means "strongly agree.")*

# Gender and sexual orientation

## Gender equality

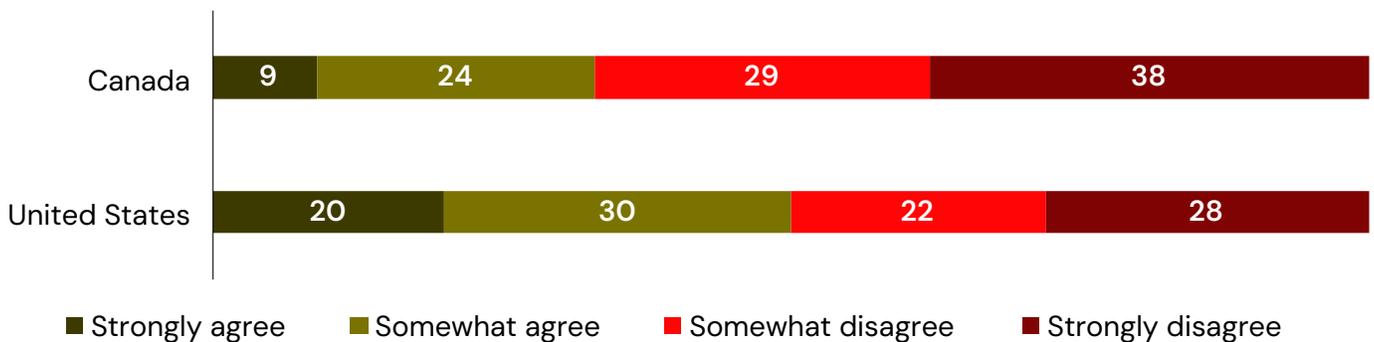
There are wider differences between opinions in the two countries on questions related to equality in men and women.

Americans (49%) are more likely than Canadians (34%) to agree with a standard expression of patriarchal values, namely that “the father of the family must be the master in his own house.” Similarly, Americans (37%) are more likely than Canadians (27%) to agree that, in general, men are better political leaders than women.

### Figure 4

Agree or disagree: the father of the family must be the master of his own house

2025

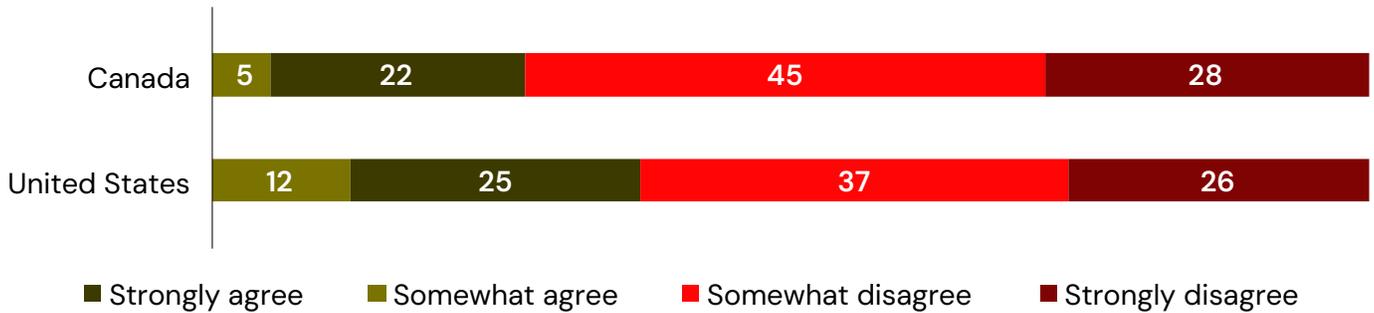


*Do you agree or disagree that: the father of the family must be the master of his own house.*

## Figure 5

### Agree or disagree: in general, men are better political leaders than women

2025



*Do you agree or disagree that: in general, men are better political leaders than women.*

The differences in opinion between Americans and Canadians on these questions hold for both men and women. For instance, American men (61%) are more likely than Canadian men (45%) to agree that “the father of the family must be the master in his own house;” and the same is true for American women (38%), compared to Canadian women (23%). On the question of whether men are better political leaders than women, American men are nine percentage points more likely than Canadian men to agree (45%, compared to 36%); the gap between American and Canadian women is also nine points (28%, compared to 19%).

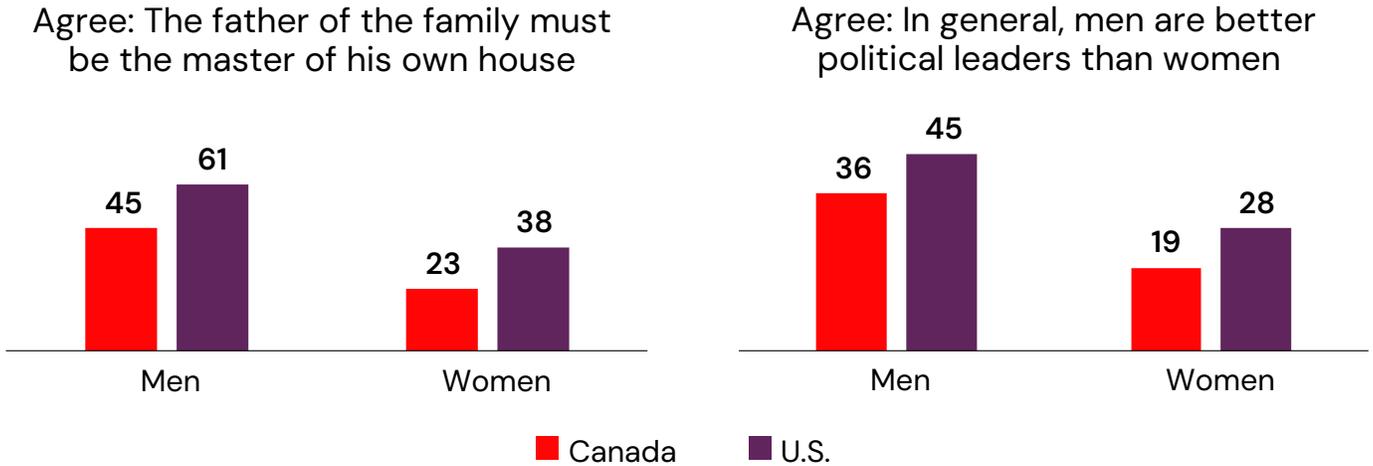


Americans are more likely than Canadians to agree with a standard expression of patriarchal values.

## Figure 6

### Opinions on gender equality: men and women

2025, by gender



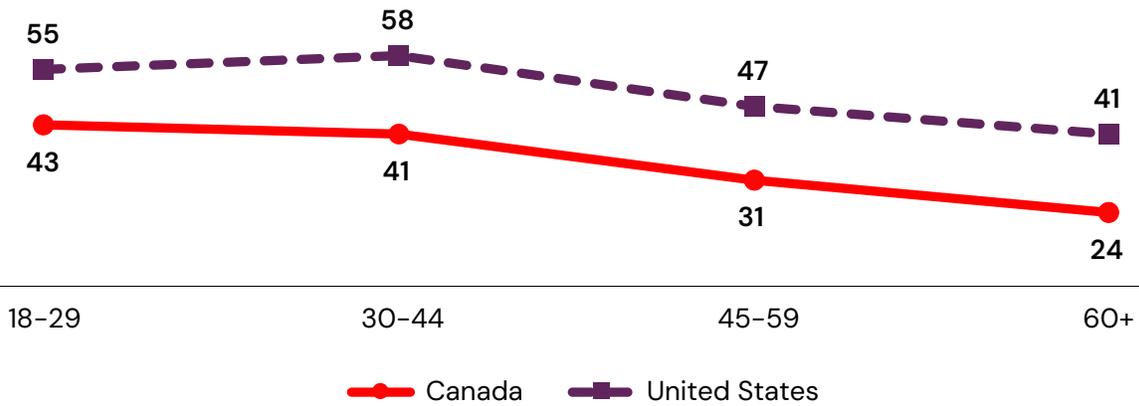
In both countries, it is striking that younger people are more likely than their older counterparts to agree – both that the father should be the master in his house, and that men are better political leaders than women. These findings go against the expectation that support for equality is typically stronger among younger generations.<sup>5</sup>

5 For more discussion of this point, see [“Three statements on inequality,”](#) and [“Older and wiser... and more feminist.”](#)

**Figure 7**

Agree: the father of the family must be the master of his own house

2025, by age group

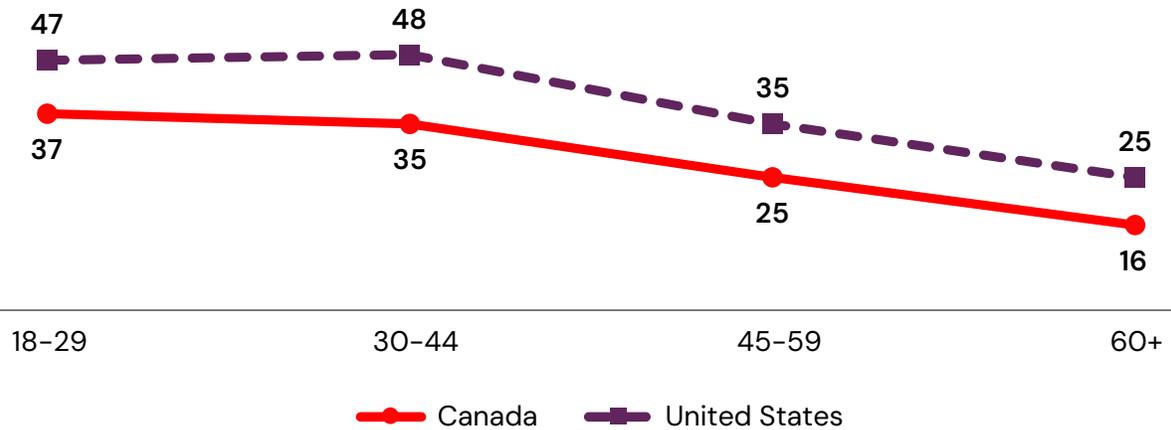


*Do you agree or disagree that: the father of the family must be the master of his own house.*

**Figure 8**

Agree: in general, men are better political leaders than women

2025, by age group



*Do you agree or disagree that: in general, men are better political leaders than women.*

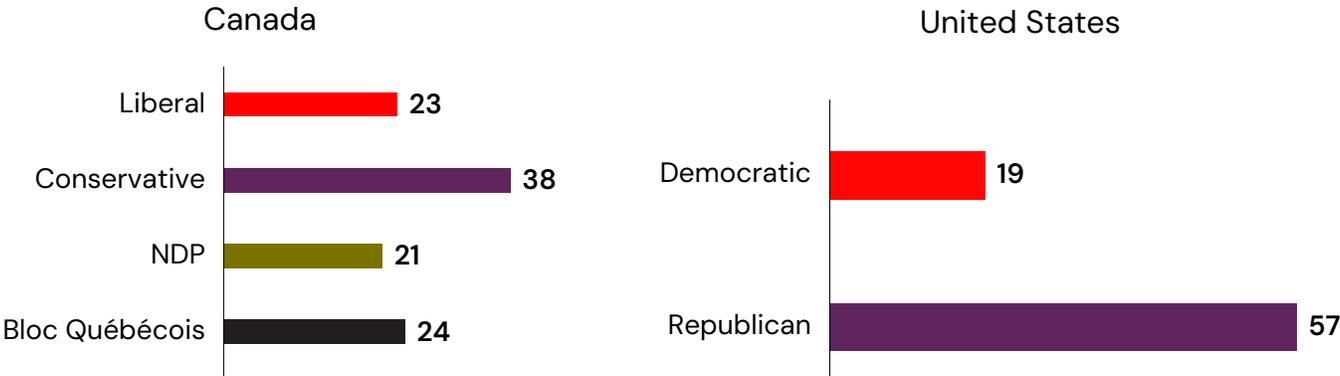
On both of these questions, the gap in opinions between those who support right-of-centre parties in the two countries is larger than the gap between the supporters of more centrist parties.

There is no significant difference between the proportions of Liberal Party supporters in Canada (32%) and U.S. Democratic Party supporters (35%) who agree that the father must be the master in his own house. Similarly, only 23 percent of Liberal Party and 19 percent of Democratic Party supporters agree that men are better political leaders than women.

In contrast, the gap between voters who support the main parties on the right is substantial: 64 percent of Republican Party supporters in the U.S. agree that the father must be the master in his own house, compared with 43 percent of Conservative Party supporters in Canada (a gap of 21 percentage points). Similarly, 57 percent of Americans who would vote Republican agree that men are better political leaders, compared to 38 percent of Canadians who would vote Conservative (a 19-point gap).

**Figure 9**

**Agree: in general, men are better political leaders than women**  
2025, by party support



*Do you agree or disagree that: in general, men are better political leaders than women.*

In Canada, supporters of the New Democratic Party (28%) and Bloc Québécois (24%) are even less likely than Liberal Party supporters to agree to with the statement about the father being master in his own house. And comparatively few supporters of the New Democratic Party (21%) and the Bloc Québécois (24%) agree that men are better political leaders than women.

## Same-sex marriage

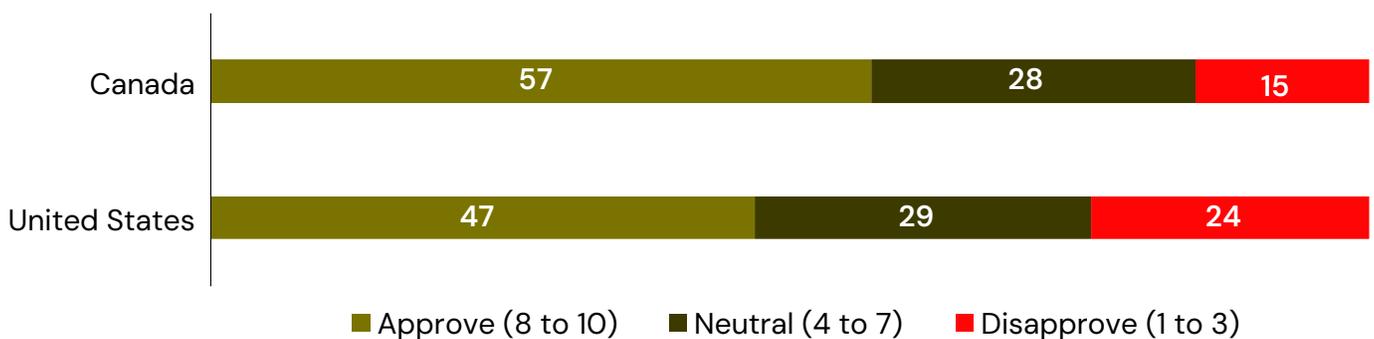
In addition to being more likely than Americans to express support for gender equality, Canadians are also more likely to support equal rights regardless of sexual orientation. Specifically, Canadians are more likely than Americans to approve of same-sex couples having the right to marry.

This question uses a scale from 1 (strongly disapprove) to 10 (strongly approve). Overall, Canadians (57%) are much more likely than Americans (47%) to strongly approve (answering between 8 and 10 on the scale); conversely, Americans (24%) are more likely than Canadians (15%) to strongly disapprove (1 to 3 on the scale). In Canada, the difference between those who approve most strongly (a “10” on the scale) and those who disapprove most strongly (a “1” on the scale) is 30 points; in the U.S., it is 15 points.

### Figure 10

Same-sex couples having the right to marry: approve or disapprove?

2025

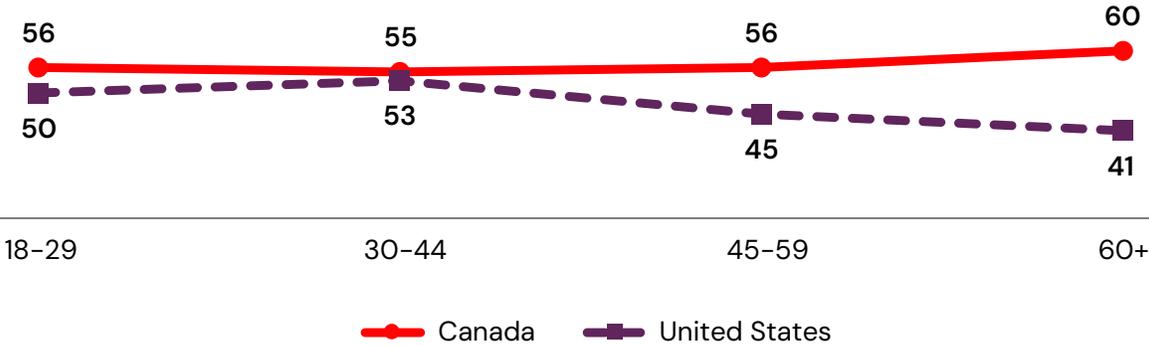


*How strongly do you approve or disapprove of same-sex couples having the right to marry? (Using a scale ranging from 1 to 10, where 1 means “strongly disapprove” and 10 means “strongly approve.”)*

In this case, the patterns relating to age differ between the two countries. In Canada, approval of same-sex marriage is relatively consistent across age groups, and even slightly higher among those aged 60 and older. In contrast, in the United States, approval is lower among those age 45 and older. While the opinions of younger Canadians and Americans on this question are somewhat similar, there is a 19 percentage-point gap in approval between those aged 60 and older.

**Figure 11**

**Approve of same-sex couples having the right to marry**  
2025, by age group



*How strongly do you approve or disapprove of same-sex couples having the right to marry? (Using a scale ranging from 1 to 10, where 1 means “strongly disapprove” and 10 means “strongly approve.”)*

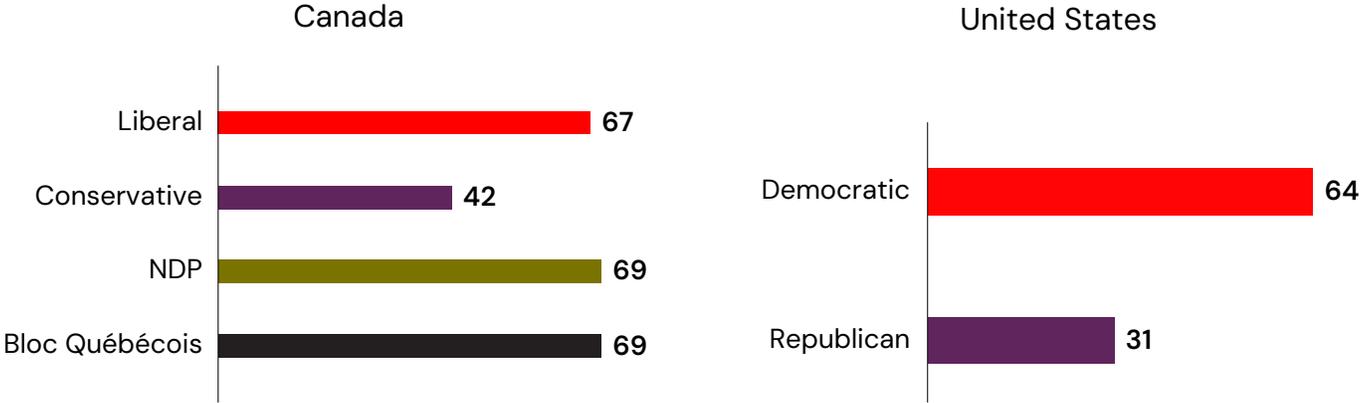
As with the questions relating to gender equality, the difference in opinion between the two countries is wider among supporters of more right-of-centre parties. Supporters of the Liberal Party in Canada and the Democratic Party in the U.S. tend to share similar views on same-sex marriage, with 67 percent and 64 percent strongly approving, respectively. But there is an 11-point gap in strong approval of same-sex marriage between supporters of the Conservative Party in Canada (42%) and supporters of the U.S. Republican Party (31%).

Supporters of the New Democratic Party (69%) and Bloc Québécois (69%) are the most supportive of same-sex marriage.

**Figure 12**

**Approve of same-sex couples having the right to marry**

2025, by party support



*How strongly do you approve or disapprove of same-sex couples having the right to marry? (Using a scale ranging from 1 to 10, where 1 means "strongly disapprove" and 10 means "strongly approve.")*



# Racial minorities

Canada the United States have very different histories relating to relations with racial minorities. Canada's history may not be as edifying as we sometimes like to believe: slavery existed in the British North American colonies, and segregation was tolerated well into the 20<sup>th</sup> century. But racial division was not as central to the development of Canada as it was in the United States, where efforts to retain a slave-based economy drove the country to civil war; where entrenched segregation endured until forcefully confronted by the civil rights movement in the 1960s; and where relations between white and Black citizens remain a central political cleavage.

Given these different histories, it is perhaps surprising that, on questions relating to equality between racial groups, Canadians and Americans today express broadly similar views.

About three in four in both countries agree that "the government should do more to make sure racial minorities are treated fairly." Overall agreement is slightly higher in the U.S. (78%) than in Canada (72%). But there is a bigger difference when it comes to the proportion that strongly agrees: 40 percent of Americans strongly agree with this statement, 13 percentage points higher than Canadians (27%). Canadians (45%) are more likely than Americans (38%) to somewhat agree.

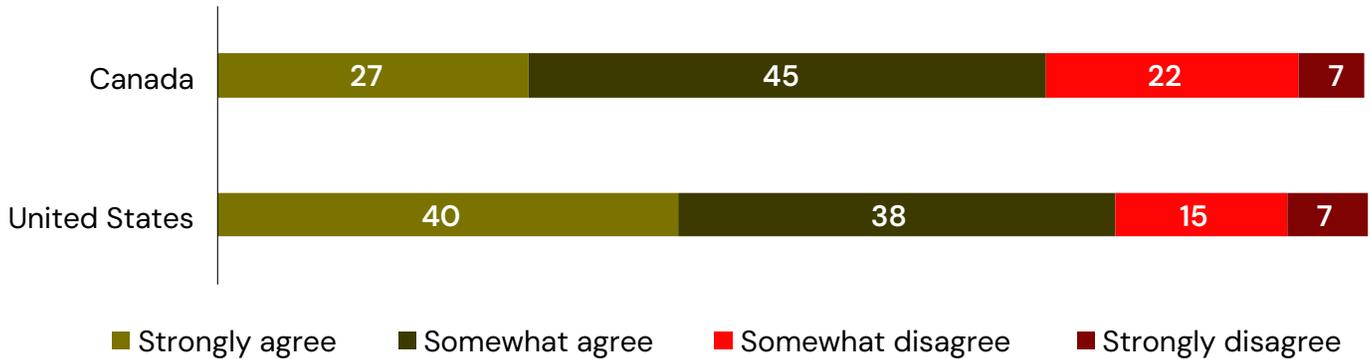


The context in each country matters in interpreting these results: what it would mean for a government to "do more" is arguably different today in the U.S. than in Canada.

## Figure 13

Agree or disagree: The government should do much more to make sure racial minorities are treated fairly

2025



*How much do you personally agree or disagree with the following statements? The government should do much more to make sure racial minorities are treated fairly.*

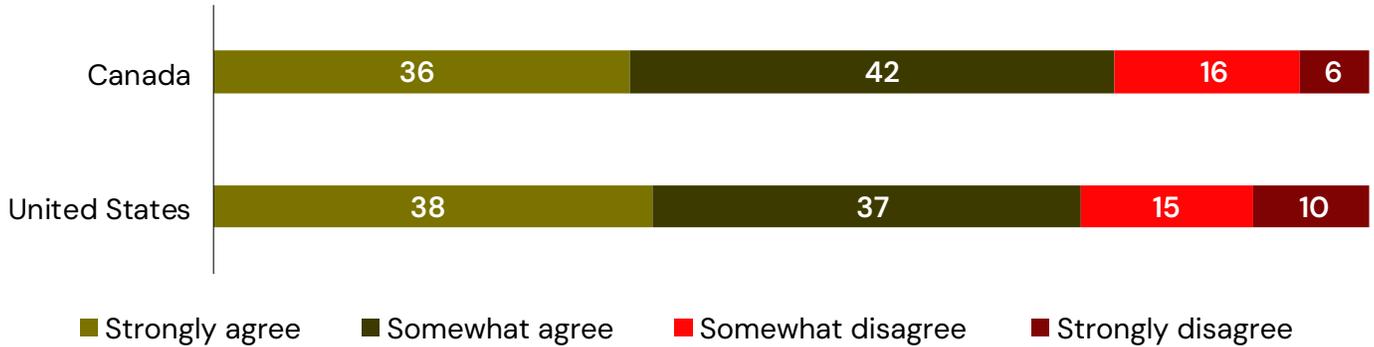
The context in each country matters in interpreting these results: what it would mean for a government to “do more” is arguably different today in the U.S. – where the sitting president is leading the charge against policies to promote diversity, equity and inclusion – than in Canada.

A second question relating to equality between racial groups asks whether someone would be happy if a family member married a person of a different race. As with the previous question, there is little difference in opinions between the two countries: about three in four in both Canada (78%) and the United States (75%) agree. In this case, the level of strong agreement is also similar in both countries (36% and 38%, respectively).

**Figure 14**

**Agree or disagree: I would be happy if someone in my family married someone of a different race**

2025



*How much do you personally agree or disagree with the following statements? I would be happy if someone in my family married someone of a different race.*

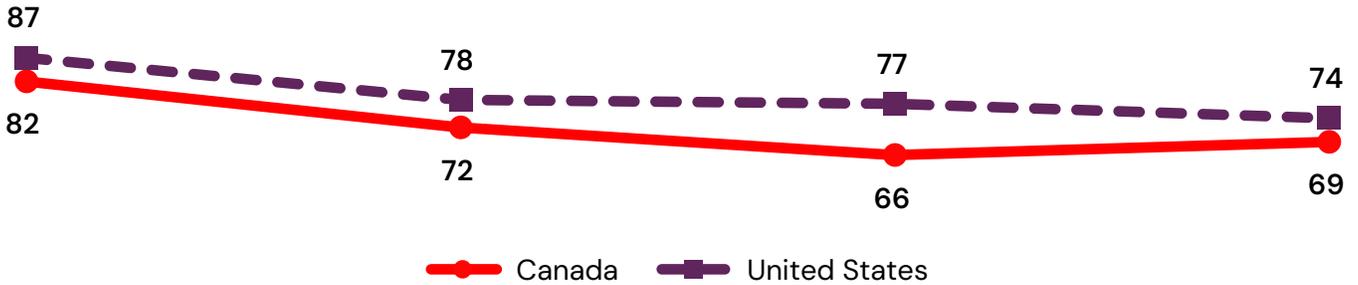
In both countries, those who identify as Black are among the most likely to agree. Agreement that “the government should do more to make sure racial minorities are treated fairly” reaches 94 percent among Black Canadians, and 89 percent among Black Americans. This is significantly higher than their white counterparts, with 67 percent of white Canadians and 74 percent of white Americans agreeing. Those identifying as Black also express greater openness to having a mixed-race relative than any other ethnic group within their respective countries. Black Canadians (87%) and Black Americans (78%) agree with the statement, while agreement is somewhat lower (though still high) among white Canadians (77%), white Americans (74%) and Latino Americans (74%).

In both countries, younger people are more likely to agree with both statements than their older counterparts – though majorities across all age groups are in agreement.

**Figure 15**

**Agree: The government should do much more to make sure racial minorities are treated fairly**

2025, by age group

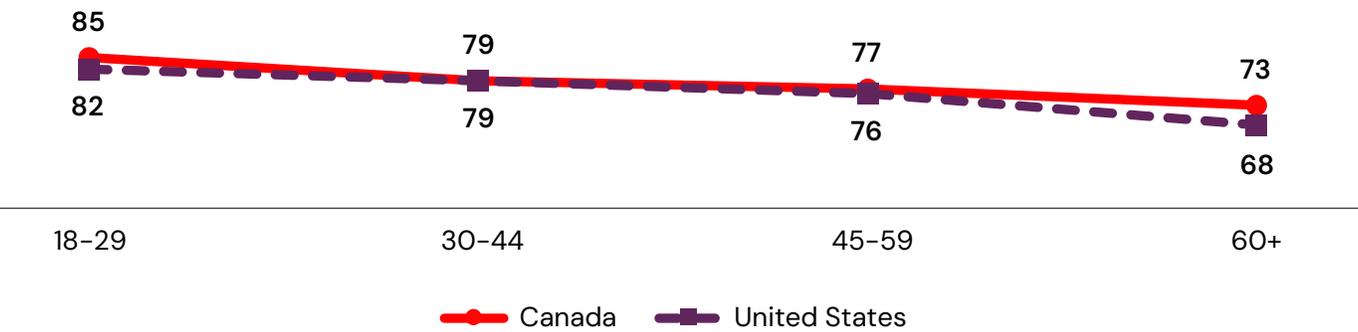


*How much do you personally agree or disagree with the following statements? The government should do much more to make sure racial minorities are treated fairly.*

**Figure 16**

**Agree: I would be happy if someone in my family married someone of a different race**

2025, by age group



*How much do you personally agree or disagree with the following statements? I would be happy if someone in my family married someone of a different race.*

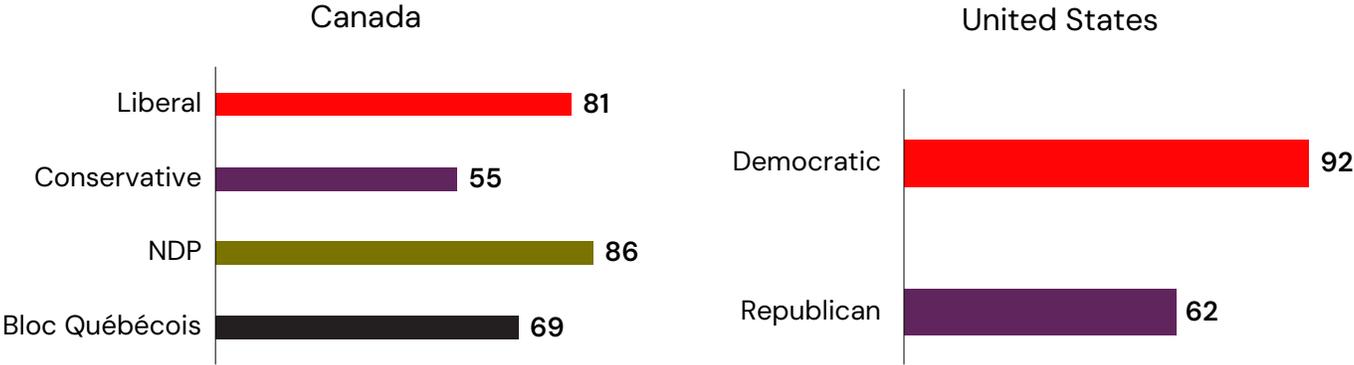
Finally, on this issue, there are also differences in both countries by party support. Agreement that the government should do more to make sure racial minorities are treated fairly is higher among Americans who would vote for the Democratic Party (92%), and Canadians who would vote for the NDP (86%) or the Liberal Party (81%). Agreement is lower among Americans who would vote for the Republican Party (62%), and Canadians who would vote for the Bloc Québécois (69%) or for the Conservative Party (55%).

Similarly, supporters of the NDP (89%) or the Liberal Party in Canada (82%), and the Democratic Party in the U.S. (84%), share high levels of agreement on the question about someone in their family marrying a person of a different race. Agreement is somewhat lower among supporters of the Conservative Party and the Bloc Québécois in Canada (71% in both cases) in Canada and the U.S. Republican Party (66%).

**Figure 17**

**Agree: The government should do much more to make sure racial minorities are treated fairly**

2025, by party support



*How much do you personally agree or disagree with the following statements? The government should do much more to make sure racial minorities are treated fairly.*

# Conclusion

The results of this series of survey questions relating to income inequality, gender, sexual orientation and racial minorities reveal some Canada–U.S. differences in opinion, but fewer than some might expect. Canadians are more likely than Americans to express support for the equality of men and women, and for the right of same–sex couples to marry. Canadians had also previously been more likely to call for government action to reduce income inequality, but this difference has almost disappeared due to a dramatic shift of opinions among Americans who support the Republican Party. Republican supporters in the U.S. had traditionally overwhelmingly rejected government action to reduce the gap between rich and poor, but this is no longer the case. Finally, on questions relating to the treatment of racial minorities, there is little overall difference in opinions between the two countries – though the contexts in which these opinions are expressed are arguably quite different.

On each of these issues, parties on the political left or in the centre in both countries are more supportive of equality than their counterparts to the right. In this context, it is noteworthy that Canada has a greater number of parties with representation in the federal legislature. Supporters of the NDP and the Bloc Québécois, in particular, also tend to be more supportive of measures to promote equality than their right–of–centre counterparts.

At the same time, there are often cross–border similarities between groups of partisans. Notably, the opinions of Canadians who support the Liberal Party, and Americans who support the Democratic Party, are more or less the same. On questions relating to gender and sexual orientation, however, there is some distance between the opinions of supporters of the two right–of–centre parties. Compared to Canadians who support the Conservative Party, for instance, supporters of the Republican Party in the U.S. are more supportive of patriarchal gender roles, and less supportive of same–sex rights.

As mentioned, people in the two countries respond to survey questions such as these in their own particular contexts, including the extent to which progress has been made toward various forms of social equality. The same question – for instance, asking if governments should do “much more” to ensure racial minorities are treated fairly – may elicit similar responses, but those answering the question on either side of the border may have different pictures in mind of how much their governments have already done, and how much inequality remains to be addressed.

Finally, to the extent that the absence of wider differences might puzzle some Canadians, the findings point to the importance of factors beyond public opinion in explaining policy outcomes. Differences in history, social structure, forms of government and party politics can lead to very different types of government action – even if the populations in question are similarly in favour, in principle, of greater social equality.





# Canadian Survey

AmericasBarometer

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