

# Confidence in Democracy and the Political System

This section shifts the focus from Canadians' participation and engagement to their attitudes and opinions about democracy and the country's political system.

## Confidence in political system

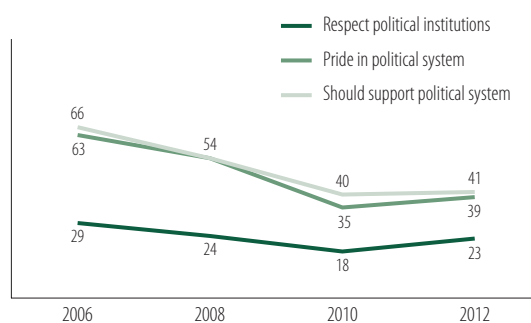
**CONFIDENCE IN POLITICAL INSTITUTIONS.** How do Canadians feel generally about their current political system? The survey posed three questions looking at different aspects of this issue, focusing on pride in the system, belief in the importance of supporting it and respect for the institutions underlying the system. Overall, Canadians are more positive than negative about their political system, but confidence levels are lower than they were four to six years ago.

**Pride in the political system.** Canadians ranked the extent to which they "feel proud of living under the Canadian political system" on a scale ranging from "1" (not at all) to "7" (a lot). Four in ten (39%) express a high level of pride in the political system (ratings of 6 or 7), compared to half (50%) who are neutral (ratings of 3-5), and one in ten (11%) who indicate a low level of pride (ratings of 1 or 2). The public's level of pride in the country's political system has declined significantly since 2006 (when 63% expressed a high level of pride), although there has been a slight rebound since 2010.<sup>5</sup>

**Should support the political system.** Apart from how people feel about their political system, do they believe it requires their support? Similar to the question on pride, four in ten (41%) Canadians feel strongly that "one should support the political system of Canada," compared with fewer than one in ten (8%) who believe this is not the case. Moreover, the trend since 2006 follows the same pattern as with pride in the system: A sharp decline from 2006 through 2010, and then flattening out.

**Respect for political institutions.** When the focus shifts from the overall political system to the underlying institutions, public confidence is significantly lower. Just one in four

## Strong respect, pride and support of Canadian political system\*



\* 6 or 7 on a 7-point scale (1=not at all, 7=a lot)

(23%) Canadians strongly "respect the political institutions of Canada" (ratings of 6-7), compared with six in ten (62%) in the middle, and one in six (15%) who express a low level of respect. The trend line on this question is similar to the two previous ones, with a proportionately smaller decline between 2006 and 2010, and a more noticeable rebound over the past two years.

Across the population, confidence and support for the country's political system is stronger among Canadians 60-plus, and among those who identify with the right side of the political spectrum (who also tend to be older). Opinions are largely similar across regions and socio-economic categories and, more surprisingly, do not vary by level of civic action: This suggests that Canadians' respect or pride in their country's political system and institutions are not linked to their own level of civic and political engagement.

Finally, the decline in opinions about the country's political system and institutions since 2006 appear to be broad-based across the population rather than centred within specific groups (where trend data is available for making such comparisons).

<sup>5</sup> Here is another example where the change in survey mode likely accounts for some of the change in opinions between 2008 and 2010.

## International comparison

Canadians' level of confidence in their political system is as strong as or better than most parts of the western hemisphere. They are among the most likely to express strong pride in their political system (along with Nicaraguans and Uruguayans), and somewhat more so than Americans and Mexicans. Such pride is least evident in Bolivia (16%), Haiti (14%) and Honduras (9%).

Canadians are above average in their belief in the importance of supporting one's political system, and similar to the perspective of Americans and Mexicans. Citizens in other regions are somewhat less apt to share this view, although there is considerable variation across countries (strong agreement in El Salvador, Nicaragua, Uruguay and Suriname, much less so in Honduras, Bolivia and Brazil).

In terms of respect for political institutions, Canadians' relatively low regard is similar to opinions across the hemisphere, although a bit less likely to fall into strongly positive or negative views. In sharp contrast, Americans are among the least respectful of their political institutions, while Mexicans are among the most positive. The other regions are more apt to be positive than negative, with stronger respect in El Salvador (51%), Nicaragua (49%) and the Dominican Republic (44%), and least so in Honduras (12%) and Haiti (17%).

## Confidence in political system\*

	PROUD OF POLITICAL SYSTEM	SHOULD SUPPORT POLITICAL SYSTEM	RESPECT POLITICAL INSTITUTIONS
CANADA	39	41	23
United States	31	39	15
Mexico	28	35	37
Central America	22	28	33
South America	20	24	30
Caribbean	19	28	30

\* 6 or 7 on a 7-point scale (7 = a lot, 1 = not at all)

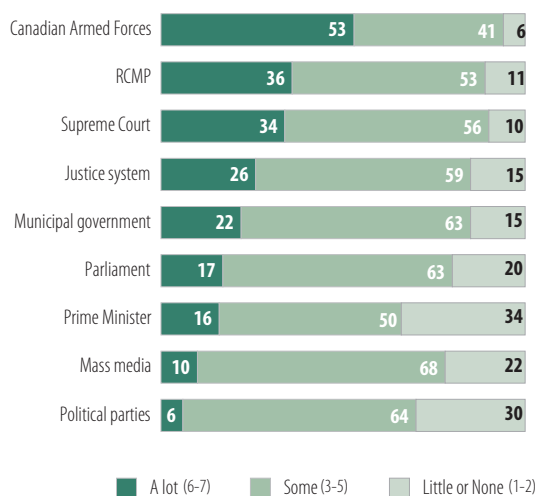
**TRUST IN KEY INSTITUTIONS.** How much do Canadians trust a number of their key institutions related to politics, the media and the uniformed services? The survey measured the level of public trust using the same 1 (not at all) to 7 (a lot) scale referenced in the previous section. Trust levels vary noticeably across institutions, with relatively little change since 2010, but more noticeable declines dating back to 2006.

**Trust in Canadian Armed Forces.** Among the institutions measured, the Canadian Armed Forces enjoy the highest level of public trust. Over half (53%) express a high degree of trust (ratings of 6 or 7) compared to a small minority (6%) who place little or no trust (ratings of 1 or 2). Trust in the Canadian Armed Forces is strong across the country, but most widespread in Atlantic Canada and the Prairies, among older Canadians, and among those who identify with the political right. Such trust is least evident in Quebec, but even here positive views outweigh negative by a four-to-one margin (44% versus 10%). Trust in the Armed Forces declined modestly between 2008 and 2010 (possibly due to mode effects noted elsewhere), but has edged back up over the past two years.

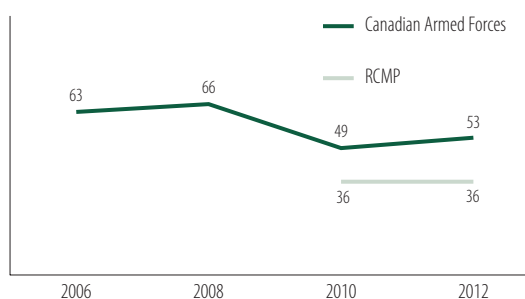
**Trust in the RCMP.** The RCMP continues to be among the most trusted of Canadian institutions, despite several major controversies in recent years. More than one in three (36%) Canadians express a lot of trust in the RCMP, compared with one in ten (11%) showing little or no trust. As with the Armed Forces, trust in the RCMP is somewhat higher among older Canadians and those on the right of the political spectrum; this opinion is least apt to be shared in British Columbia, and especially in Vancouver (25% are positive versus 19% negative). Trust in the RCMP is fairly consistent across community size, socio-economic status and level of civic action.

**Trust in the justice system.** One-quarter (26%) of Canadians say they trust the justice system to a great degree, compared with 15 percent expressing little or no trust. Trust has increased slightly from 2010 (22%), but remains below well below levels recorded in 2006 and 2008 (although the proportion expressing clear distrust has remained consistently low). Trust in the justice system is highest among residents of larger communities, older Canadians (aged 60-plus), those with the highest incomes, those on the right of the political spectrum and those born outside of Canada.

## Level of trust in key institutions

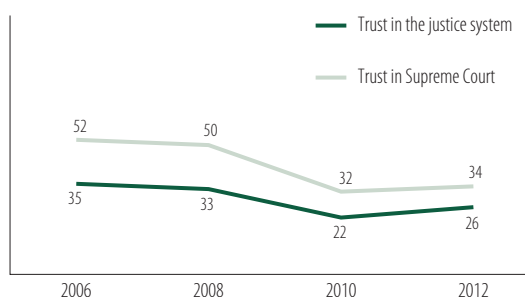


## Strong trust in security and defense institutions\*



\* 6 or 7 on a 7-point scale (1=not at all, 7=a lot)

## Strong trust in Canadian justice\*



\* 6 or 7 on a 7-point scale (1=not at all, 7=a lot)

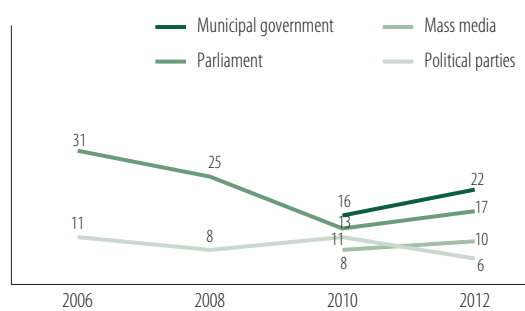
**Trust in the Supreme Court.** Canadians are somewhat more positive in their confidence in the country's Supreme Court. One-third (34%) indicate a high level of trust in the Supreme Court, similar to 2010 (32%) but down from 2006 (52%) and 2008 (50%). Levels of distrust, however, are significantly lower, with only one in ten (10%) indicating little or no trust, a number that has held steady since 2006. As with views of the justice system overall, confidence in the Supreme Court is strongest among residents of larger communities, older age groups, those on the right of the political spectrum and those born outside of Canada.

**Trust in Parliament.** In comparison with the uniformed services and the justice system, Canadians express less confidence in their central political institutions. The public is divided in the degree to which they trust the country's national Parliament, with one in five (17%) expressing strong trust, and a slightly larger percentage (20%) saying they have little or not trust. Trust levels have declined by almost half since 2006 (when 31% expressed strong levels of trust), but have rebounded modestly since 2010 (13%). Across the country, public trust in Parliament is highest among older Canadians, those on the right of the political spectrum and those born outside of Canada, while lowest among those on the left (13% positive versus 31% negative) and those with lower socio-economic status.

**Trust in municipal government.** Canadians appear to have more confidence in local institutions. Just over one in five (22%) express strong trust in their municipal government (and this view has strengthened modestly since 2010), compared with 15 percent who have little or no trust. Trust in local government is most widespread among residents of Manitoba and Saskatchewan, Canadians 60-plus, those on the right of the political spectrum and those high on civic action. Trust in local government does not vary by community size, education or household income.

**Trust in mass media.** Canadians' confidence in the country's mass media is somewhere between that of Parliament and political parties. One in ten (10%) express a high degree of trust in the mass media, compared with twice as many (22%) who have little or no trust. Trust levels are highest in Quebec, among Canadians 60-plus and those with lower socio-economic status, and lowest in B.C., and among Canadians high on civic action and those without a religious affiliation. The level of public trust in the mass media has remained essentially unchanged since 2010.

## Strong trust in political institutions and mass media\*



\* 6 or 7 on a 7-point scale (1=not at all, 7=a lot)

**Trust in political parties.** Political parties are least likely to have earned the trust of Canadians, with only six percent expressing strong trust, compared with 30 percent who say they have little or none. Trust in political parties has consistently been lower than other institutions, and has declined by almost half since 2010 (when 11% expressed strong trust). Confidence in political parties varies most noticeably by political orientation: Those on the right are among the most trusting (13% positive versus 17% negative), while those on the left are least apt to be so (6% positive versus 41% negative). Low trust in political parties is also more evident in eastern Canada, among rural residents, and those without any college or university education.

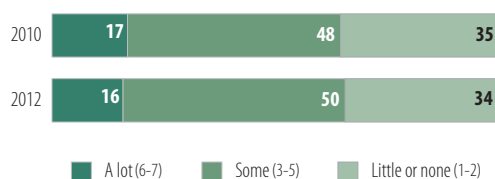
**Trust in the Prime Minister.** In Canada, the Prime Minister is not the Head of State, but is the head of the national government and the leader of the country, making this position and individual a political institution in itself. Comparatively few Canadians express a strong level of trust in Prime Minister Stephen Harper, on par with their trust in Parliament but greater than their trust in political parties. One in six (16%) express a strong level of trust (ratings of 6-7), compared to twice as many (34%) who have little or none (ratings of 1-2). Trust levels are essentially unchanged since 2010.

Public trust in the Prime Minister varies sharply across the country, reflecting well-established political divides. Stephen Harper is most likely to enjoy strong trust levels in Ontario and the west, among Canadians 60-plus, immigrants and those on the right of the political spectrum. But even

among these groups, trust is far from universal; in Alberta, for instance, only 22 percent express a strong level of trust (compared with 17% who have little or none). On the other end of the spectrum, trust levels are least evident in Quebec (8% positive versus 48% negative), left-leaning Canadians (4% versus 63%) and, more surprisingly, among rural residents (9% versus 43%). Trust in the Prime Minister is not closely tied to trust in other political institutions such as Parliament and political parties, but rather can be predicted largely based on political orientation and party affiliation.

Apart from the general degree of trust in the Prime Minister, how well do Canadians believe he is performing in this role? On this question the public is evenly divided: one-third (33%) believe Stephen Harper is currently doing a good job, one-third (33%) say he is doing a bad job, and the remainder (34%) say neither good nor bad. This assessment is essentially unchanged since 2010. As would be expected,

## Trust in the Prime Minister



Canadians' views about the current PM's performance are closely tied to level of trust. Good performance ratings are most widely given in Alberta, by those on the right of the political spectrum and evangelical Christians, while a negative assessments are most evident in Quebec, among Canadians on the left and those high on civic action.

## International comparison

Canadians' degree of trust in their institutions is at or above average for the hemisphere, with a couple of notable exceptions. Canadians are among the most trusting when it comes to their national police (RCMP), Supreme Court and the justice system (with levels of trust comparable to such countries as Suriname and Nicaragua). Canadian trust levels are generally comparable with respect to the Armed Forces, municipal government, Parliament and political parties; in North America, Canadians are more positive than Americans but less so than Mexicans.

Canadians are among the least likely to express strong trust in their Prime Minister or President, similar to opinions expressed in Costa Rica and Peru, and marginally better than Panama and Honduras. Americans are more divided, with greater proportions either strongly positive or strongly negative. The same pattern also applies to public assessment of the Prime Minister's job performance; Stephen Harper's job performance ratings is lower than the average in all regions, and is better than leaders of seven out of the 25 other countries. The lowest leader performance ratings are given in Honduras (17%), Chile (21%), Costa Rica (23%) and Panama (23%), while the highest are in Ecuador (64%), Nicaragua (60%), Brazil (59%) and Argentina (56%).

Finally, Canada is near the very bottom in terms of strong public trust in its mass media, ahead of only the USA which by far scores the lowest (4% strong trust, versus 49% none at all). Trust in mass media is most evident in the Dominican Republic (52%) and Nicaragua (47%).

## Level of trust in key institutions\*

	CANADA	UNITED STATES	MEXICO	CENTRAL AMERICA	SOUTH AMERICA	CARIBBEAN
Armed Forces	53	60	51	39	40	38
National police	36	27	14	19	22	23
Supreme Court	34	20	23	16	21	17
Justice system	26	20	19	16	17	15
Municipal government	22	17	28	24	21	13
Parliament/legislature	17	6	24	15	16	15
Prime Minister/President	16	27	32	24	33	41
Mass media	10	4	29	28	37	36
Political parties	6	2	12	9	9	11

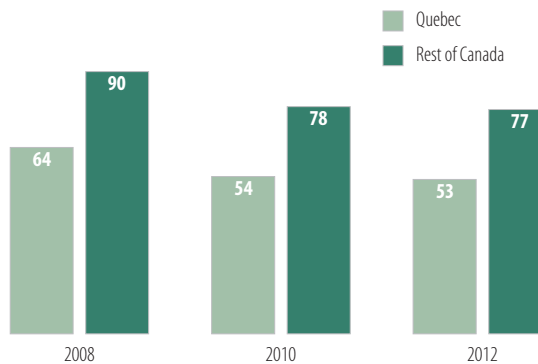
\* 6 or 7 on a 7-point scale (7 = a lot, 1 = not at all)

**PRIDE IN THE COUNTRY.** Canadians have mixed feelings about their political institutions today, but comparatively few are ambivalent about the country overall. A clear majority of the population are proud to be Canadian – and believe that, despite our differences, we are strongly united as a country.

**Pride in being Canadian.** Seven in ten (72%) say they are proud of being a Canadian (6 or 7, out of 7), compared with only four percent who express little or no pride (1 or 2). As positive as these numbers are, the breadth of agreement on feeling proud is down from 2008, when 84 percent expressed this sentiment.

Across the country, strong pride in being Canadian varies noticeably, but most significantly in the case of Quebec, where only 53 percent express strong pride in being Canadian (similar to 2010, but down from 2008). Pride in being Canadian is also stronger among older Canadians, those with higher incomes (but not higher education) and those with a right-leaning political orientation. Pride in being Canadian is largely consistent by community size, country of birth and level of civic action.

### Strong pride in being Canadian\*

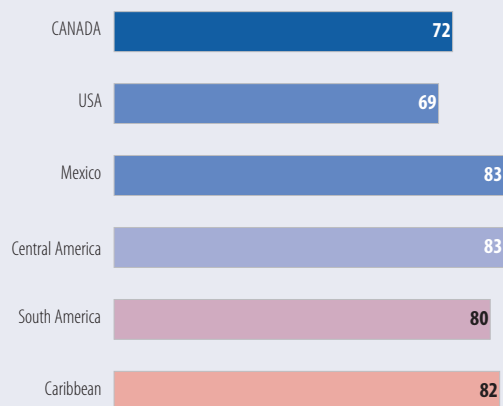


\* 6 or 7 on a 7-point scale (1=not at all, 7=a lot)

### International comparison

While most Canadians express strong pride in their country, the proportion expressing such feelings is actually stronger in most other countries across the hemisphere. Over nine in ten citizens say they are very proud in such countries as Nicaragua, Suriname and the Dominican Republic, with many others in the 80 to 90 percent range. Canada shares the lower end of the list, along with the USA, Brazil, Chile and Haiti.

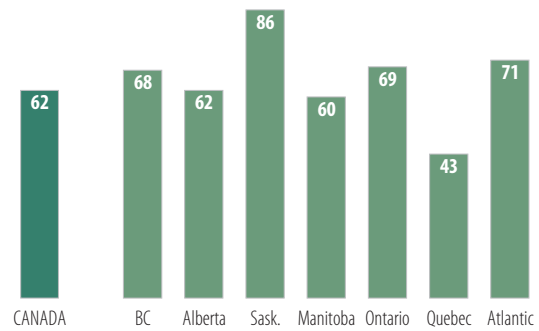
### Strong pride in nationality



**Things that unite Canadians.** Canada is a vast and diverse country, where citizens are divided not only by great distances, but by human elements like culture and language. These differences aside, Canadians are more likely than not to agree there are many things that unite them as a country. Six in ten (62%) strongly agree with the statement “*Despite our differences, we Canadians have many things that unite us as a country,*” compared with only four percent who strongly disagree.

Opinions on this question are similar across the country, with the notable exceptions of Saskatchewan (86% strongly agree) and Quebec (only 43% share this view, versus 10% who strongly disagree). Strong agreement is also most widespread among Canadians aged 60-plus and among those who identify with the right of the political spectrum.

*Despite differences, we Canadians have many things that unite us\**



\* 6 or 7 on a 7-point scale (1=strongly disagree, 7=strongly agree)

## Attitudes about democracy

A central theme of the AmericasBarometer research is how citizens think about democracy, in terms of what it means and how it is practiced in their country.

**MEANING OF DEMOCRACY.** Canadians were asked to describe, in their own words, what “democracy” means to them (no response options were provided on the survey). Three-quarters of Canadians provided a response, most of which fit into three broad themes, and many loosely associated with various aspects of “freedom.”<sup>6</sup>

The most common of the three themes relates democracy to the *right to good government*. Three in ten (30%) define democracy as the ability to vote and participate in electing government, with smaller proportions emphasizing the concept of “majority rules” (5%) and freedom from dictatorship (3%).

The second theme defining democracy refers to *personal freedoms*, including those who say that freedom of speech (24%) and freedom of choice and movement (9%); another one percent specifically refer to freedom of religion.

The third broad theme emphasized by Canadians defines democracy as providing a *good quality of life* for its citizens. This is most likely to encompass the concept of fairness and equality (14%), while small proportions mention the freedom to live a decent life (4%), and the safety and security (4%) that comes with democracy.

Responses are fairly consistent across most groups of Canadians, but with some differences. Residents of Quebec, for instance, are more likely to associate democracy primarily with personal freedom and free speech (33%). Canadians with higher levels of education are more apt to emphasize freedom to vote and elect governments, while those with less education are not as likely to offer any opinion of what democracy means to them.

## What does democracy mean to you?

### Unprompted responses



<sup>6</sup> This question was asked in both 2006 and 2008, but the results are not directly comparable to 2012 findings because of the different survey mode, and also the way in which the unprompted responses were coded.



**DEMOCRACY AS THE BEST FORM OF GOVERNMENT.**

Canadians place declining trust in many of the country's political institutions (see previously), but continue to have confidence in the country's democratic system on which these institutions are founded.

A clear majority (61%) of Canadians agree with the statement "Democracy may have its problems, but it is better than any other form of government" (ratings of 6 or 7 out of 7), while only four percent disagree (ratings of 1 or 2) and one-third (34%) do not have a clear opinion either way (ratings of 3 to 5). The proportion in agreement is up slightly from 2010 (55%), although down from 2006 and 2008 (likely due to survey mode effects). Very few Canadians in any of the waves expressed clear disagreement with the statement.

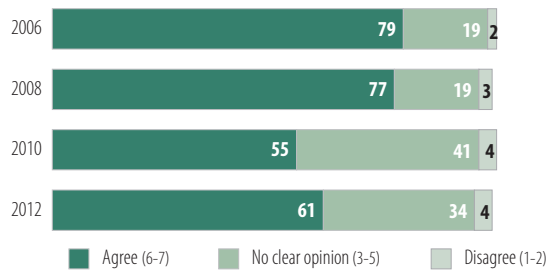
Confidence in democracy as the best form of government is the prevalent view across the country, but most widespread among older Canadians, those with higher levels of education and income, and those on the right side of the political spectrum. This view is shared by less than a majority among Atlantic Canadians, Canadians under 30, those without a high school diploma and those who did not vote in the 2011 federal election.

**SATISFACTION WITH HOW DEMOCRACY WORKS IN CANADA.**

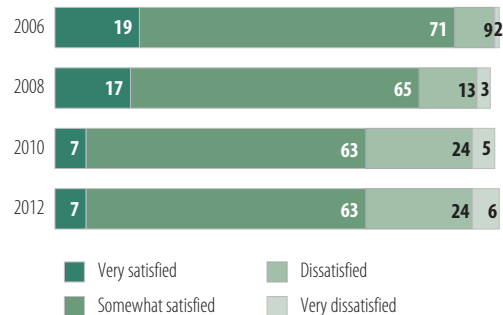
How well do citizens believe their democracy is currently working? Canadians are more positive than negative in their assessment, with few expressing strong feelings either way. Seven in ten are very satisfied (7%) or satisfied (63%), compared with three in ten (30%) who are dissatisfied (24%) or very dissatisfied (6%). Opinions are essentially unchanged from 2010, but down somewhat from 2006 and 2008 (likely due in part to changes in survey mode as described above).

Satisfaction with democracy in Canada today is highest among residents of Ontario (74%) and western Canada (74% to 78%, compared with only 56% in Quebec), as well as among Canadians with higher levels of education and income, and immigrants. Views on this question also vary noticeably across the political spectrum: Canadians placing themselves on the right of the political spectrum (85%) are much more likely to be satisfied with democracy in Canada today than those on the left (54%).

*Democracy is the best form of government*



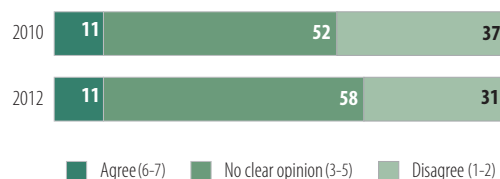
Satisfaction with democracy in Canada



**Do politicians listen?** While Canadians are more likely than not to express satisfaction with their democratic system, this is not because they feel their elected officials are especially attentive to what they care about. Only one in ten (11%) agree with the statement *“Those who govern this country are interested in what people like you think,”* compared with three times as many (31%) who disagree. Opinions have improved modestly since 2010, when a higher proportion (37%) disagreed with this statement.

Opinions on this issue are similar across the country. No more than one in six Canadians in any region or demographic group agree that elected officials care what the public thinks, although disagreement is more evident in eastern Canada, and among rural residents, those with low incomes and those born in the country. The one notable difference is by political orientation: Canadians on the right of the political spectrum are among the most likely to agree with the statement (27% versus 19% disagree), in sharp contrast to those on the left (3% agree versus 53% disagree).

### *Those who govern are interested in what people like you think*



### International comparison

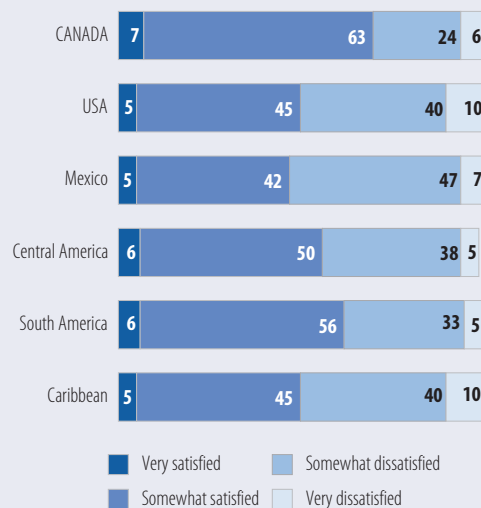
Canadians stand out as being the most satisfied with how democracy is working in their own country, second only to Uruguayans (79%), and comparable to Argentinians (69%). Citizens in other countries tend to be more divided, with fewer than half satisfied in such countries as Mexico, Haiti and Paraguay. Across the hemisphere, few appear to hold strong opinions on this issue: no more than one in ten in any country say they are either very satisfied or very dissatisfied.

Satisfaction with democracy has improved modestly across the hemisphere as a whole between 2006 (51% very/somewhat satisfied) and 2012 (58%), but the trend is moving in the opposite direction in North America, to a smaller degree in Mexico (52% to 47%) and, more dramatically, in the USA (80% to 50%), as well as in Canada.

Canadians and Americans (63%) are among the most confident in the democratic form of government, although this view is the most widespread in Uruguay (79%), Venezuela (76%) and Argentina (72%). By comparison, agreement that democracy is the best form of government is least evident in Peru (35%), Bolivia (33%) and Honduras (31%). Clear rejection of this premise, however, does not exceed one in ten citizens in any country except Honduras (25%).

Attitudes about politicians' interest in what the public thinks are generally similar across the hemisphere, with Canadians no more likely than average to agree with statement, but less apt to disagree. Americans stand out as being the most negative (50% disagree), along with citizens of Costa Rica (58%) and Honduras (50%).

### Satisfaction with democracy in your country



**BELIEF IN DEMOCRATIC PROCESS/LIMITING GOVERNMENT PROCESS.**

Canada is now one of the world's oldest continuous democracies, and has yet to experience serious threats that are common in other parts of the world. The most notable exception was the enactment of the *War Measures Act*, which temporarily suspended civil liberties in response to the October Crisis of 1970. More recently, many felt the country's democracy was under attack when Prime Minister Steven Harper twice prorogued Parliament when faced with a possible loss of confidence vote in the House of Commons.

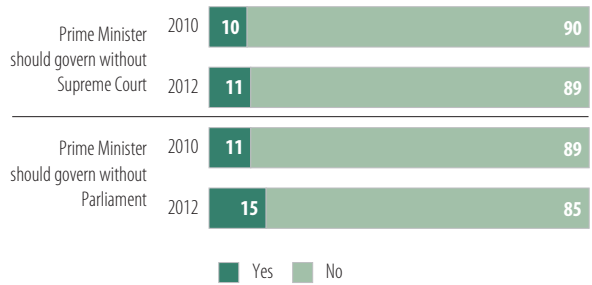
Given this stable historical record, does the public believe that there might be circumstances that would justify suspending the normal functioning of the country's democratic system? Results show that very few Canadians support such actions when the country is facing difficult times, but many do not strongly reject limits on opposition voices.

**Suspension of Parliament and the Supreme Court.** Relatively few Canadians believe there are circumstances that would provide justification for the Prime Minister to close Parliament (15%) or dissolve the Supreme Court (11%), and proceed to govern without these institutions. Support for the former has increased marginally since 2010 (up from 11%; up primarily in western Canada), while essentially unchanged in the case of dissolving the Supreme Court.

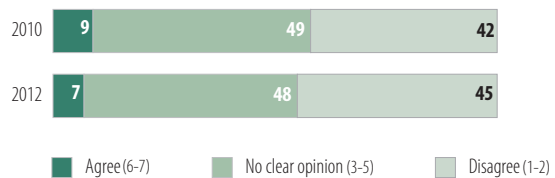
Support for a Prime Minister override does not exceed the 30-percent threshold among any identifiable groups, but is most evident among Vancouver residents, Canadians on the political right and Conservative voters, while least likely to be shared by Quebecers and those on the political left. Younger Canadians are marginally more likely than older ones to feel such action might be justified under difficult times.

**Limiting the voice of opposition parties.** Canadians also do not support the Prime Minister limiting the voice of opposition parties, although this idea is by no means universally rejected. Less than one in ten (7%) agree with the statement: *"It is necessary for the progress of this country that our prime ministers limit the voice and vote of opposition parties,"* compared with close to half (45%) who disagree (with most of this group disagreeing in the strongest terms – 7 out of 7). At the same time, a plurality (48%) of Canadians do not express a clear opinion on this issue (giving ratings of 3 to 5 out of 7). Opinions are largely unchanged from 2010.

**Limiting the democratic process in difficult times**



*Prime minister should limit the voice of opposition parties*



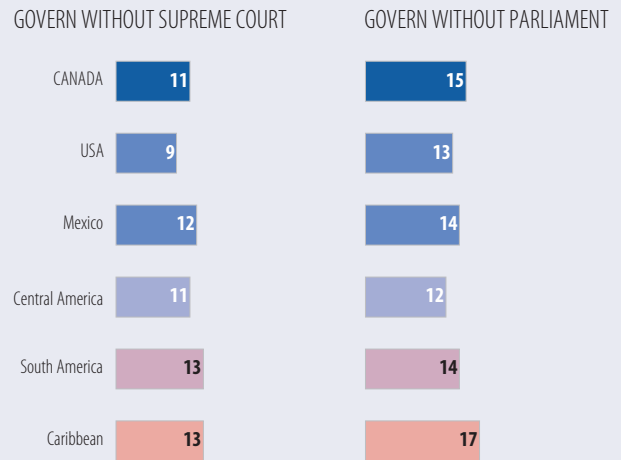
Opposition to limiting opposition parties is widespread across the country, but increases with age and education, and is most pronounced among Canadians on the political left (72%). Support for prime ministerial limits on the opposition is most apt to be expressed by Canadians on the political right (12%) and among evangelical Christians (14%).

### International comparison

Public opinion about the justification for government without legislatures or courts in difficult times is notably similar across the western hemisphere. Support for such measures is somewhat higher in countries such as Ecuador and Paraguay, and least so in Panama and Jamaica. Canadians and Americans, their faith in democracy notwithstanding, do not stand out in rejecting such executive prerogative.

In terms of country leaders limiting the voice of opposition parties, the opinions of Canadians are largely echoed in the sentiments of citizens across the hemisphere. Americans stand out as most opposed to such practice (63%), along with citizens of Guyana (62%) and Trinidad & Tobago (62%). Agreement on the need for limiting opposition voices is most evident in El Salvador (27%), Paraguay (23%) and Ecuador (22%).

### It is preferred to limit democracy in difficult times

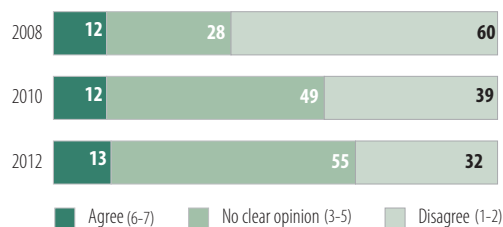


**DIRECT GOVERNANCE BY THE PEOPLE.** Canadian democracy is founded on the principle of governance through elected representatives, but the country has had its share of populist movements championing the right for citizens to have a direct say in important decisions. The most recent example is use of the B.C. referendum legislation, which resulted in the citizenry voting to eliminate the province’s recently introduced Harmonized Sales Tax (HST).

The recent emergence of “government by the people” initiatives notwithstanding, this approach to democracy is not widely endorsed across the population, although opposition appears to be waning. Just over one in ten (13%) Canadians agree that *“The people should govern directly rather than through elected representatives,”* compared with one-third (32%) who disagree. Strong support has held steady since 2008, but the level of disagreement has fallen significantly since 2008, signaling that Canadians are now much less likely than before to reject out of hand this approach to governance.

Direct government by the people is not strongly endorsed by any identifiable segment of the population; no more than one in five agree with the statement. Support is most evident among Canadians without a high school diploma, those high on civic action and those on the political left, while opposition is most widespread among those 60-plus and those on the political right.

*The people should govern directly rather than through elected representatives*

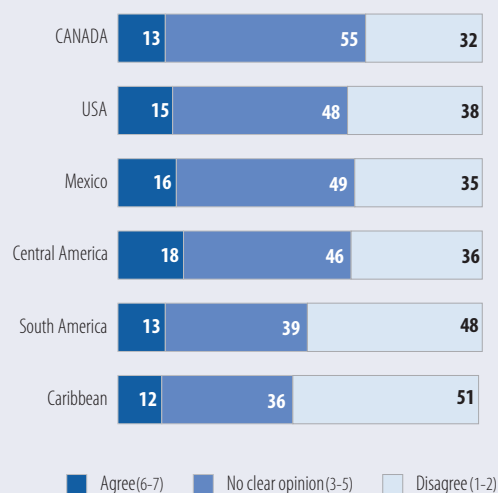


**International comparison**

Direct governance by the people rather than through elected representatives is not a popular concept anywhere in the hemisphere, with disagreement outweighing agreement by a wide margin in every country. Canadians, along with fellow North Americans in the USA and Mexico, are about average in their likelihood of supporting this concept, although somewhat less apt to strongly oppose it.

Support for government by the people is most apt to be voiced by citizens of Nicaragua (33%) and El Salvador (29%), while strong opposition is most evident in Uruguay (63% strongly disagree).

*The people should govern directly rather than through elected representatives*



## Parliamentary politics

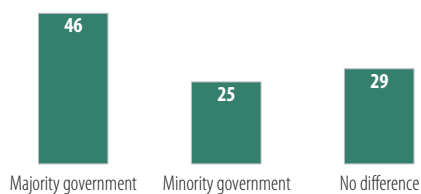
Canada has one of the most stable parliamentary systems in the world, but the last several years have witnessed an unprecedented period of turbulence, including four general elections in relatively quick succession, prorogation of Parliament on two separate occasions when the ruling minority government faced defeat in the House, opposition parties openly discussing formal coalitions, and an increasingly polarized political culture both on and off Parliament Hill. What do Canadians make of these developments?

### MAJORITY VERSUS MINORITY GOVERNMENT.

Canada's parliamentary system has typically produced majority governments for most of its 145-year existence, but also periods of minority governments. The last federal election (May 2011) marked the end of an extended run of minorities dating back to 2004 (first led by the Liberals and then the Conservatives). Does the public believe one form of government is better for the country than the other? There is no public consensus on this issue, but overall, Canadians believe it is better to have a majority government (46%) over a minority government (25%), with the remainder (29%) indicating it makes no difference.

Views on the relative merits of majority versus minority governments vary most noticeably along partisan political lines. Preference for majority governments is strongest among those supporting the current government, including Conservative voters (67%) and Canadians on the political right (71%), while minority governments are most apt to be favoured among those on the left (44%) and BQ supporters (47%). Those least apt to believe it makes a difference include Canadians under 45, those with the least education and income, and those who didn't vote in the 2011 federal election. Preference for majority governments is also higher among Canadians who have more trust and respect for the country's political institutions.

### Which form of government is best?



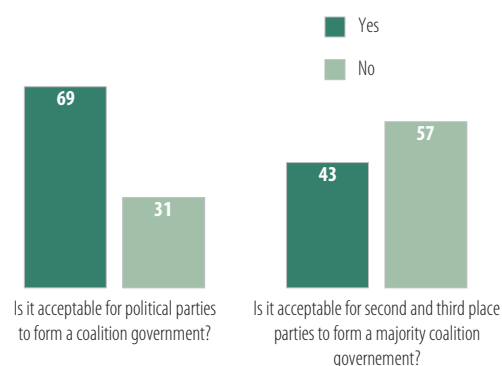
**COALITION GOVERNMENT.** Coalition governments have made rare appearances at the provincial level (e.g., Ontario in 1985, Saskatchewan in 1999), but have only been part of federal politics twice in Canada’s history (the last one occurring in 1917). In December 2008, the three opposition parties signed an agreement to form such a coalition upon defeating the then-current minority Conservative government. This arrangement was effectively attacked by the government, which then succeeded in avoiding defeat through prorogation of Parliament. Since that time, coalition governments have been successfully formed in both the United Kingdom and Australia.

Whatever misgivings Canadians may have had about political coalitions in 2008, the general principle now appears to be broadly accepted. Seven in ten Canadians (69%) say that political parties should consider the option of forming a coalition government if none wins a majority in an election, compared with 31 percent who take reject this approach. This perspective reflects the majority view across the country, including among Conservative party voters (61%), those on the political right and even non-voters. The legitimacy of such a coalition is most widespread among Canadians on the left of the political spectrum (84%), those 60-plus and those with a university degree, while lowest in Alberta (58%) and among Canadians without a high school diploma (53%).

This support for the general principle of government coalitions notwithstanding, Canadians are much less likely to endorse such arrangements when it does not include the party winning the most seats in a general election. Just over four in ten (43%) support the formation of a coalition government by the parties finishing second and third in a general election that together have a majority of seats; by comparison, a majority (57%) say coalition governments must include the party winning the most seats.

As with opinions about coalitions generally, public attitudes on this question are reflective of the current political climate in Canada. Support for second-third party coalition governments is widespread among Canadians on the political left (71%) and much less so among those on the right (30%). Acceptance of such coalitions is also higher among younger Canadians and those with more education.

## Coalition government in Canada



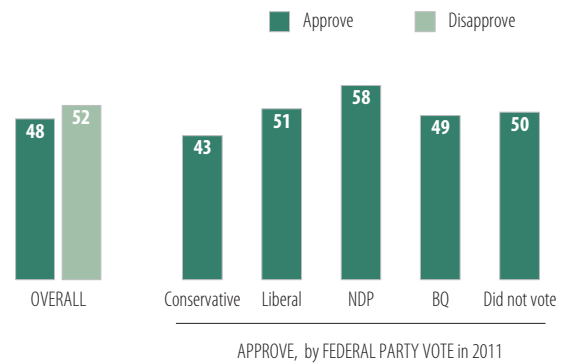
### PUBLISHING STRATEGIC VOTING INFORMATION.

The confluence of closely fought elections and the Internet age has given birth to a new election campaign strategy of publishing riding-specific information to help Canadians make strategic decisions about where to place their vote (e.g., if their primary aim is to defeat a particular party rather than to elect one). The last two federal elections featured grassroots initiatives designed to support strategic voting among those wishing to defeat the current Conservative government.

Such initiatives are legal, but do not currently enjoy broad public support. Canadians are evenly split between those who approve (48%) and disapprove (52%) of advocacy organizations publishing information during federal elections to help voters determine which party in their riding has the best chance of defeating a party they do not want to see elected.

Support for publishing strategic voting information is mixed across the country, but is most likely to be endorsed by Vancouverites, younger Canadians, those with the most education and income, and those on the political left. In contrast to other questions about federal politics, opinions on this issue vary only modestly by federal party support.

### Advocacy groups publishing information during federal election





## Tolerance for political dissent

Tolerance for minority opinions is not how most Canadians think of democracy, but it is in fact one of the fundamental principles dating back to its 18th century roots. Canada in the 20th century has had a reputation for tolerance of political dissent, which seems to be tested every decade or so (October crisis in the 1970s, APEC protests in the 1980s and most recently the Toronto G20 protests in 2010). How accepting are Canadians today of those who express views that go against established norms?

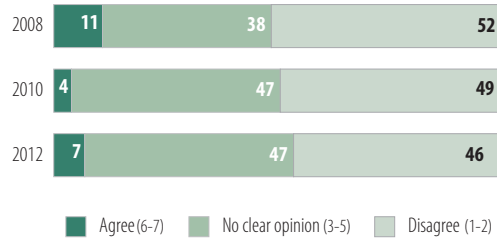
### DO MINORITY VIEWS THREATEN THE COUNTRY?

Few Canadians believe dissent, in itself, is a threat to the country's stability. Fewer than one in ten (7%) agree with the statement "Those who disagree with the majority represent a threat to the country," while close to half (46%) disagree. This sentiment is largely unchanged since 2008, although opinions are now marginally less polarized.

The public's level of comfort about minority views extends across the country. Clear disagreement about minority views posing a threat is most evident among Canadians with a university education, those on the left of the political spectrum, those high on civic action and those without religious affiliation. No more than one in six from any group express agreement, with this view most evident among Canadians on the right (14%), those 60-plus (12%) and those without a high school diploma (14%).

Despite general stability in opinions since 2010, views have polarized across the political spectrum, with left-leaning Canadians strengthening in their disagreement about this type of threat (rising from 62% to 68%), and those on the right now less likely to share this perspective (declining from 50% to 37%; compared with 14% who strongly agree with the statement).

### Those who disagree with the majority represent a threat to the country

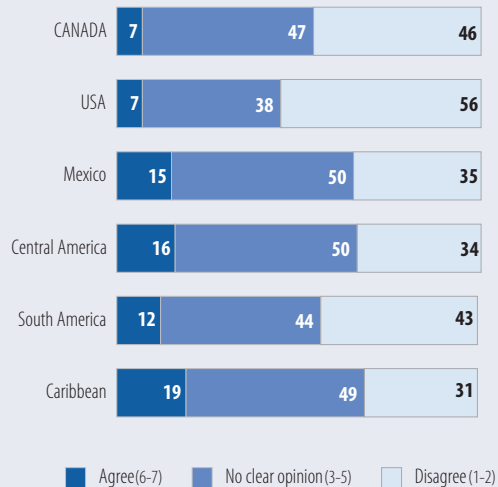


### International comparison

Canadian opinion on the threat posed by minority opinions is average for the hemisphere. Americans are somewhat more likely to disagree with the statement, while Mexicans are less apt to do so. The variation across countries is modest, with the belief that minority views pose a threat most evident in Nicaragua (24%), Paraguay (23%) and Haiti (22%).

For the hemisphere as a whole, public discomfort with political dissent has declined, from 22 percent in 2008 to 13 percent in 2012.

### Those who disagree with the majority represent a threat to the country



**APPROVAL OF POLITICAL ACTION.** Canadians may be tolerant of dissenting opinions, but what about when dissenters take action to pursue their political aims? Public approval rests primarily on whether such actions are legal and non-violent. The survey tested Canadians' acceptance of seven forms of political action on a 10-point scale ranging from strongly disapprove (1) to strongly approve (10).

**Working with organizations to solve community problems.** Almost everyone accepts the legitimacy of furthering political objectives through participation in organizations or groups trying to solve community problems. Two-thirds (64%) voice clear approval (ratings of 8-10), compared with just two percent who clearly disapprove (ratings of 1-3). Opinions are commonly held across the country, although most widely among Canadians with a university education, those on the political left and those high on civic action. No more than four percent from any identifiable group express disapproval on this action. Opinions are stable since 2010, except for a polarizing trend between those on the left (where approval has strengthened) and those on the right (where such approval has declined).

**Working on political campaigns.** The traditional outlet for political action in Canada has been through established political parties, and this remains widely accepted, although less so than working through local community groups. Four in ten (38%) Canadians approve of people working for campaigns for a political party or candidate, compared with only six percent who disapprove.

Public approval of such action is similar across the country, but since 2010 has increased in Quebec (to 45%), and declined in Atlantic Canada (28%) and Alberta (32%). Clear approval of working on political campaigns is also more widespread among those 45 and older, those with a college or university education, and those high on civic action. Canadians on the left and right of the political spectrum are equally likely to voice approval, but this reflects a notable shift since 2010, when those on the right were more apt to approve of working through the political system.

**Participation in legal demonstrations.** Canadians are now almost as likely to approve of people who participate in legal political demonstrations, with one-third (35%) voicing clear approval, compared with 13 percent who clearly disapprove. Public approval of legal demonstrations is most widespread and rising in Quebec (56%, up 5 points since 2010), where

## Approval of people's actions to achieve political goals



student-led street demonstrations have dominated the political agenda for much of 2012. Acceptance is considerably less evident elsewhere across the country, notably in Ontario (29%) and Manitoba/Saskatchewan (19%), where approval levels have declined since 2010. Public approval of legal demonstrations has strengthened over the past two years among men, Canadians 18 to 29 and those on the political left. Disapproval is most apt to be voiced by those 60-plus (24%).

**Vigilante justice.** Public acceptance drops precipitously once political actions stray outside of an established legal framework. Only one in ten (10%) Canadians voice approval for vigilante justice – people taking the law into their own hands when the government doesn't punish criminals – with more than half (57%) disapproving. This is the majority view across the country, and has held steady since 2006 (although somewhat fewer now assign a 10, the strongest disapproval rating). Disapproval is most widespread among women, older Canadians, those in the top income bracket and mainline Protestants. Approval is most apt to be expressed by those without a high school diploma (18%), but also among those high on civic action (20%).

**Blocking roads.** Similarly, few (8%) approve of people participating in the blocking of roads to protest, versus six in ten (59%) who disapprove. Age appears to be the greatest predictor of views about this type of political action, and this gap has widened since 2010: Canadians 18 to 29 are least likely to voice disapproval (38%), with this rising to 80 percent among those 60-plus. Opinions about blocking roads in protest are now similar across regions of the country, reflecting a jump in strong disapproval among Quebecers (up 17 points to 63%), and stable to declining disapproval elsewhere. Across the political spectrum, those on the right are most disapproving and those on the left least so, although this sentiment has declined modestly on both sides since 2010.

**Seizing private property or land.** Public resistance is even greater when it comes to seizing private property or land as a form of protest, with seven in ten (70%) expressing clear disapproval, up marginally from 2010. Once again, age is major factor in shaping opinions on this type of political action (disapproval rising to 47% among 18-29 and to 88%

among those 60-plus). Quebecers have stood out as being more accepting of such action, but have become much less so in the past two years (64% now disapprove, compared with 48% in 2010). Disapproval with seizures of private property is also most widespread among Canadians on the right side of the political spectrum and mainline Protestants.

**Violent overthrow of the government.** Finally, three-quarters of Canadians (74%) reject the legitimacy of people participating in a group to violently overthrow an elected government (with 53% assigning the strongest possible disapproval rating of 10). This sentiment is consistent with that expressed in 2010, and is a strong majority view among all identifiable groups. As with seizure of property, Quebecers – who in 2010 were more to approve of such actions – are now more likely to be in line with other Canadians (whose disapproval has dropped marginally in the past two years). Disapproval increases with age, although 60 percent of Canadians 18 to 29 disapprove of people working to overthrow an elected government.

### International comparison

Public opinion about acceptable forms of public protest is notably consistent across the hemisphere. Canadian attitudes are close to the average in all cases except participating in legal demonstrations where Canada is among the lowest (perhaps in response to the recent student protests in Quebec). Americans are among the most approving for those actions that are legal.

There is considerable variation across countries. Among the legal forms of action, approval tends to be highest in such countries as Uruguay, Nicaragua,

Guyana and Belize, and lowest countries such as Honduras and Haiti. There tends to be more consistency in the level of approval of non-legal actions, although there are significant differences in the proportions who clearly disapprove. Citizens of Belize stand out as being among those most likely to voice approval of non-legal political actions, while vigilante justice is also considered acceptable by a quarter of those living in Nicaragua, Suriname and the Dominican Republic.

### Approve of actions to achieve political goals\*

	CANADA	UNITED STATES	MEXICO	CENTRAL AMERICA	SOUTH AMERICA	CARIBBEAN
Participate in organization to solve community problems	64	71	57	58	61	63
Work on campaign for political party/candidate	38	53	45	38	38	40
Participate in legal demonstrations	35	53	44	41	49	47
Take law into own hands when government doesn't punish criminals	10	6	11	16	10	16
Participate in blocking roads to protest	8	12	10	13	13	15
Seize private property/land in protest	6	6	4	6	5	4
Participate in group to violently overthrow elected government	6	5	6	5	5	5

\* 8-10 on a 10-point scale (1 = strongly disapprove, 10 = strongly approve)

## RIGHTS FOR THOSE CRITICIZING THE GOVERNMENT.

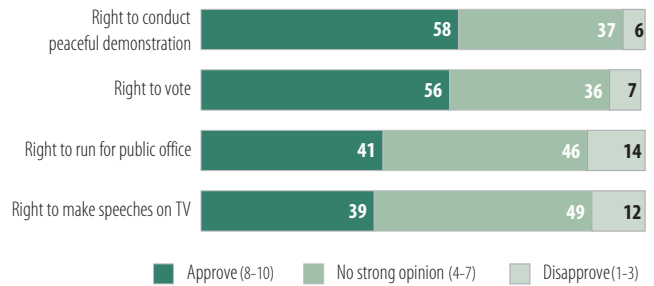
The 2012 AmericasBarometer also explored tolerance for political dissent by asking about the rights of individuals who live in Canada and say bad things about the Canadian form of government (using the same 10 point approval-disapproval scale). In all cases, the public is approving rather than disapproving of the rights of such dissenters, although more so in some cases than in others.

**Right to conduct peaceful demonstrations.** Close to six in ten (58%) Canadians clearly approve of dissenters' right to conduct peaceful demonstrations in order to express their views (versus 6% who disapprove), consistent with 2010 (58%) but modestly below 2006 (65%) and 2008 levels (64%).<sup>7</sup> Approval of this right is somewhat stronger among younger Canadians (with the age gap widening since 2010), among those with more education, those with high civic action, and especially among those on the political left (81%).

**Right to vote.** A majority (56%) of Canadians approve of government critics' right to vote, up from 50 percent in 2010, although below the proportion expressing this view in 2006 (67%) and 2008 (65%). Opinions are largely similar across the country, but rising approval since 2010 is most evident in Eastern and Central Canada. Such approval is also more evident among Canadians with higher socio-economic status, those on the left of the political spectrum, and those high on civic action.

**Right to run for public office.** Four in ten (41%) approve of those critical of the Canadian form of government being permitted to run for public office, compared with 14 percent who

## Protection of the rights of people critical of the Canadian form of government



disapprove. As with the other items in this series, opinions are unchanged from 2010 (40%), but below 2006 (60%) and 2008 (60%) levels. Approval of this right is most pronounced in Quebec (52%), where it has increased since 2010 (along with the Prairies), while this view is now less widespread in Alberta (37%) and B.C. (35%). Rejection of dissenters' right to run for office is most evident among Canadians 60 plus (23%) and evangelical Christians (24%).

**Right to make speeches on TV.** Four in ten (39%) also approve of government critics appearing on TV to make speeches, consistent with 2010 (38%), but below 2006 (53%) and 2008 (54%) levels. Once again, Quebecers are the most accepting of such rights (50%) – and they have become more so over the past two years, with residents in most other regions becoming less supportive. Across the population, clear approval of dissenters being permitted to make TV speeches is strongest among men, Canadians with higher levels of education, those on the left and those high on civic action.

### International comparison

Public attitudes about the rights of those who criticize their country's form of government vary noticeably across the region. Canadians' views are somewhat above the average, and Americans stand out as the most protective of such rights. By comparison, Mexicans and citizens of many Central American countries are least apt to share this perspective. Honduras

stands out, where only nine percent approve of critics' right to vote and 18 percent believe they should be allowed to hold peaceful demonstrations. Support for protection of criticism is also notably lower in countries such as El Salvador, Haiti, Ecuador, Bolivia and Peru, while very high in Guyana, Uruguay, and Trinidad and Tobago.

### Protection of the rights of people critical of the national form of government\*

	CANADA	UNITED STATES	MEXICO	CENTRAL AMERICA	SOUTH AMERICA	CARIBBEAN
Right to conduct peaceful demonstration	58	76	34	29	37	42
Right to vote	56	66	30	25	35	32
Right to run for public office	41	53	19	19	29	21
Right to make speeches on TV	39	50	22	20	30	23

\* 8-10 on a 10-point scale (1 = strongly disapprove, 10 = strongly approve)

<sup>7</sup> Another likely example of mode effects described earlier in the report.

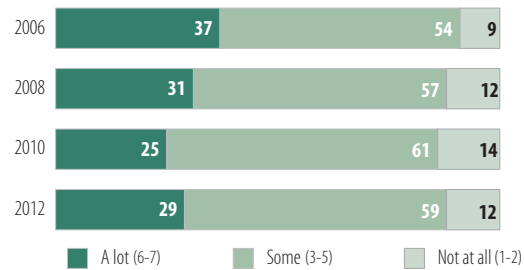
## Democratic and human rights

Another hallmark of democracies is the protection of the civil and human rights of its citizens. Perhaps the most telling indicator is how well countries protect the rights of minority populations, especially those that are marginalized or visibly different from the majority.

**PROTECTION OF CITIZENS' BASIC RIGHTS.** Canadians are more likely than not to believe basic citizen rights are protected under the country's political system, but few feel strongly that this is the case. Three in ten (29%) firmly believe that such basic rights are well-protected (ratings of 6 or 7 out of 7), compared with 12 percent who say this is not the case (ratings of 1 or 2), with most (59%) somewhere in the middle. The degree of public confidence in the protection of basic human rights is largely unchanged from 2010, but lower than in 2006 and 2008 (likely due in part to mode effects described previously).

Belief that Canada does a good job of protecting the rights of its citizens is most evident in Alberta (38%, up noticeably since 2010) and Toronto (36%), as well as among immigrants (38%), and those on the right of the political spectrum (42%). Household income appears to be a clear factor on this question, with strong confidence expressed by 41 percent of those in the top income bracket, compared with only 24 percent in the bottom bracket. In addition to low-income Canadians, low confidence in human rights protection is most prevalent among Atlantic Canadians, those on the political left, those without religious affiliation and those high on civic action.

## Extent to which citizens' basic rights are protected

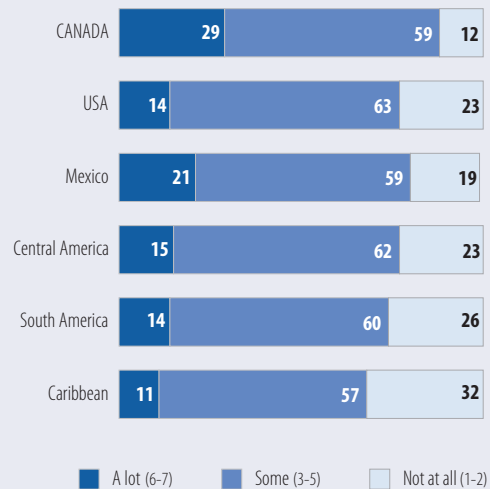


### International comparison

Although only a minority of Canadians feel strongly about the protection of basic rights, they are among the most positive of any country in the hemisphere, second only to Nicaraguans (32% of whom say their rights are well-protected). Americans, by comparison, are less apt to share this view, with Mexicans somewhere in between.

In other regions, there is wide variation in opinions, with reasonably positive views in such countries as Venezuela and Belize, and negative ones in countries such as Honduras, Peru, Bolivia, Haiti and the Dominican Republic.

## Extent to which citizens' basic rights are protected



**PROTECTING THE RIGHTS OF SPECIFIC GROUPS.** The survey addressed issues pertaining to the rights of particular groups in society that have experienced discrimination and/or have been marginalized in some way.

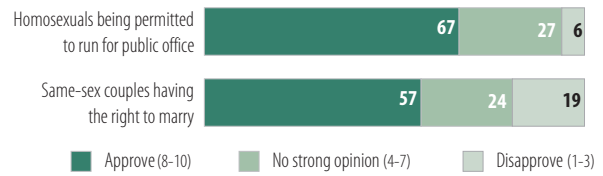
**LGBT community.** The gay-lesbian-bisexual-transgendered (LGBT) community in Canada has made great strides over the past decade, in terms of gaining legal rights and public acceptance. Openly gay and lesbian politicians have been elected at all levels of government, and this fact now seems to be accepted by most Canadians. Two-thirds (67%) now strongly approve of homosexuals being permitted to run for public office, compared with just six percent who strongly disapprove.<sup>8</sup> Opinions on this question are largely stable since 2006, although strong disapproval is now at an all-time low.

Acceptance of LGBT politicians is the majority view across the country, but more so among Atlantic Canadians and Quebecers, women, Canadians with higher levels of education and income, and those born in the country.

The two principal predictors of attitudes are political orientation and religion. Those on the political left (86%) are more likely to voice approval than those in the middle (65%) or the political right (68%) – 74 percent of those on left give the highest possible approval rating (10 out of 10), compared with 38 percent on the right. But since 2010, approval has increased most noticeably among Canadians on the political right. Across religious faiths, approval of gay politicians is the majority view among mainline Protestants (70%), Catholics (63%) and non-Christian religions (66%), but drops to 33 percent among evangelical Christians (with 21% of this group strongly disapproving).

Canada was one of the first countries to formally recognize same-sex marriages, in 2005 – and at that time, this law divided Canadians. Over the past several years, however, public opinion has shifted decisively in support of such unions.<sup>9</sup> Strong approval (57%) now outweighs strong disapproval (19%) by a three-to-one margin. There is majority approval across the country (including among Catholics and Canadians 60-plus), with the exceptions of immigrants (49% approve versus 24% disapprove), Canadians on the political right (49% versus 27%), and

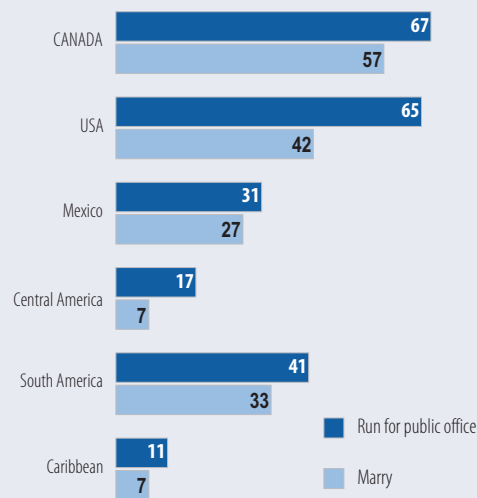
## Approval of LGBT rights



### International comparison

LGBT rights are one issue which sharply divides Canada and USA with most other countries in the hemisphere. Canadians (along with Uruguayans) are the most supportive of such rights, followed by Americans. Very few citizens in Central America and the Caribbean approve, especially Haiti and Jamaica (where more than 90% disapprove of same-sex marriage). Opinions are somewhat more varied in South America, with support for same-sex marriage ranging from five percent in Guyana, to 61 percent in Uruguay, 38 percent in Brazil and 39 percent in Argentina.

### Approve LGBT rights\*



\* 8 to 10 on a 10 point scale (1=strongly agree, 10=strongly disagree)

those who voted Conservative in the 2011 federal election (42% versus 34%). The one outlying group is evangelical Christians, with only 21 percent approving of same-sex marriage, compared with 53 percent who disapprove.

<sup>8</sup> The term “homosexual” was used in the survey question to be consistent with the language used in the other 25 countries for the 2012 AmericasBarometer.

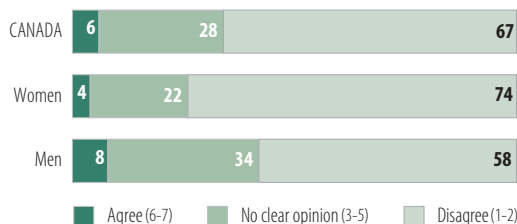
<sup>9</sup> Based on the Environics Institute Focus Canada 2010 report (see [www.environicsinstitute.org](http://www.environicsinstitute.org)).

**Women.** Women make up at more than half of the population, but have not shared equal status with men in most societies for much of human history. The 20th century witnessed a revolution in correcting this imbalance – and in countries like Canada, gender equality is now an established legal and cultural norm. Yet, full equality has yet to be realized, and women continue to be underrepresented in politics at all levels.

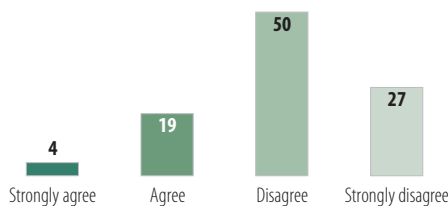
Gender equality may not yet be fully achieved in the workplace, but Canadians soundly reject the idea that when there is not enough work, men should have a greater right to jobs than women. Two-thirds (67%) strongly disagree with this paternalistic sentiment, compared with just six percent who strongly agree. This reflects a broadly normative view across the country, but is most strongly articulated by women (74%, versus 58% of men), Canadians on the left of the political spectrum (85%) and those without religious affiliation (79%), but no more than one in ten from any group voice agreement (strong disagreement is least apparent among evangelical Christians – 46%).

Public sentiment about gender equality extends to opinions about political leadership. Three-quarters strongly disagree (27%) or disagree (50%) that men are better political leaders than women, compared with one in four who agree (19%) or strongly agree (4%). Rejection of the superiority of men as political leaders is the majority view across the country, including among men (69%, versus 85% of women). Those most apt to agree with the superiority of men as political leaders include Canadians on the political right (36%) and those affiliated with non-Christian religions (37%). Opinions vary somewhat by age in a counterintuitive pattern: Canadians aged 18 to 29 (31%) are more likely than those aged 45 or over (18%) to endorse the idea that men make better political leaders.

*When there is not enough work, men should have a greater right to jobs than women*

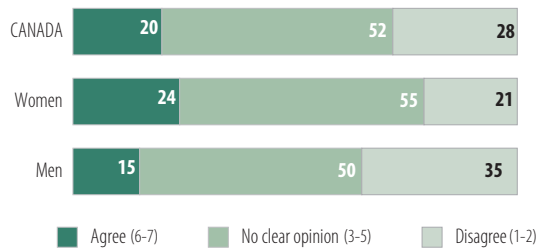


*Men are better political leaders than women*



Is gender equality in politics important enough to legislate it? On this question, there is no public consensus. One in five (20%) Canadians agree that *“The Canadian government should require that political parties reserve some space on their lists of candidates for women, even if they have to exclude some men,”* with 28 percent who strongly disagree and another 52 percent with no strong opinion either way. This absence of a clear position is evident across most groups, even among women (24% strongly agree versus 21% strongly disagree) and those on the political left (26% versus 26%). Opposition is most evident among Canadians who voted Conservative in the last federal election (43%) and Canadians in the top income bracket (40%).

*Political parties should be required to reserve candidate spaces for women*

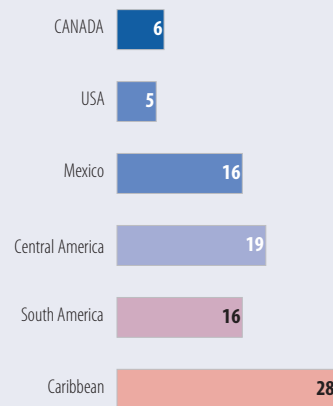


**International comparison**

Gender politics is another issue that divides the hemisphere. Americans share Canadians’ rejection of the idea that men have a greater right to employment when jobs are scarce, but this view has somewhat more credence in other regions, especially in the Caribbean. At least three in ten citizens agree with the statement in the Dominican Republic (39%), Guyana (33%) and Nicaragua (31%). Views about men making better politicians than women follow a similar pattern.

Paradoxically, support for gender equality does not translate into support for political parties reserving space for women to become candidates. Canadians are less likely than citizens of any other country to endorse this approach (note: this question was not asked in the USA). Support for reserving space for women is at 40 percent or higher in Mexico and every other region, and is especially widespread in El Salvador (72%), Uruguay (68%) and the Dominican Republic (65%).

*When there is not enough work, men should have a greater right to jobs than women\**



\*6 or 7 on a 7 point scale (1=strongly disagree, 7=strongly agree)



**Affirmative action for ethnic minorities.** Education is widely considered to be the most effective means of promoting the economic and social integration of ethnic minorities who may be marginalized. In some countries (notably the U.S.), specific policies are adopted to reserve spaces in universities for members of ethnic minorities who might not otherwise meet all of the necessary requirements for admission.

Such policies are not prevalent in Canada and this approach is not widely supported. Only six percent of Canadians strongly agree that *“Universities ought to set aside openings for students who are racial or ethnic minorities, even if that means excluding other students,”* with 51 percent who strongly disagree. There is minimal support for affirmative action policies is evident throughout the country, even among immigrants and Canadians on the left of the political spectrum. Opposition is most widely voiced in Alberta, among Canadians in the top income bracket and those who voted Conservative in the last federal election.

**Individuals with physical disabilities.** Another group within society fighting marginalized status are those with physical handicaps (e.g., with impaired sight, hearing, mobility). In Canada, there are clear signs of progress in acknowledging and supporting the participation of individuals from this community, ranging from “signed” broadcasts of Parliamentary sessions, and citizens with readily apparent disabilities now serving in high profile positions (e.g., MP Stephen Fletcher, Ontario Lieutenant Governor David Onley).

Physical disabilities may once have been seen as a barrier to serving in public office, but no more. Eight in ten Canadians now approve of such individuals running for public office (58% of whom give the strongest rating of 10), compared with only one percent who disapprove. This view is expressed by clear majorities across the country, with the strongest sentiment expressed by Atlantic Canadians, those with higher socio-economic status, those without religious affiliation, and in particular those on the political left (81% of whom give 10 out of 10).

### International comparison

This type of affirmative action policy is largely rejected by Canadians and Americans, but has considerably more support elsewhere in the hemisphere, and is endorsed by three in ten or more in Central America (33%), South America (31%) and the Caribbean (38%). Support is especially widespread in Paraguay (57%), followed by Uruguay (49%), Nicaragua (45%) and Honduras (42%).

*Universities should set aside openings for students from racial/ethnic minorities*

