

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. A key factor in determining the legitimacy and efficacy of a democracy such as Canada is the confidence its population has in the political system.

Confidence in the Political System

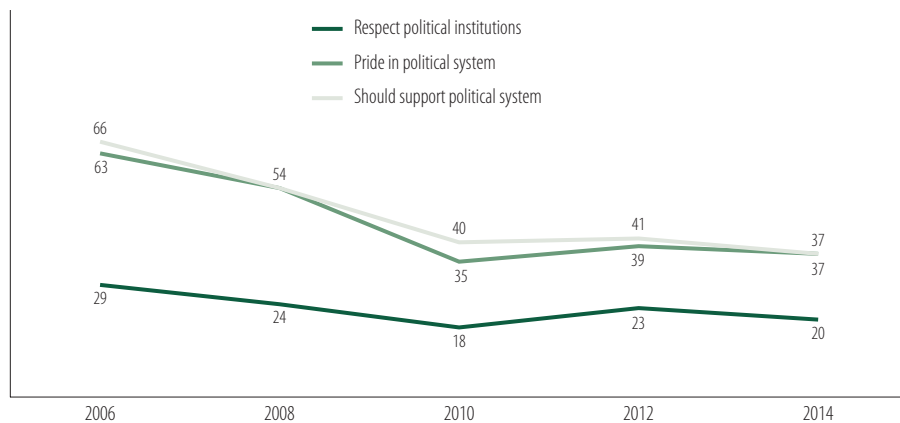
Canadians continue to be more positive than negative about their political system generally but few express clear respect for our political institutions, including political parties and elections. The public is cynical about the extent to which government listens to people like them.

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). Fewer than four in ten (37%) are strongly proud of the Canadian political system (ratings of 6 or 7), compared to half (53%) who are neutral (ratings of 3 to 5), and one in ten (11%) who have little pride in the nation's political system

(ratings of 1 or 2). Canadians' pride in the political system is similar to reported levels in 2012 and 2010, but down sharply from 2006 and 2008.⁶

Across the country, Canadians' sense of pride and support for the political system is strongest among Canadians over 60, federal Conservative Party supporters, those on the political right, and Protestants, while low levels of pride are most evident among those on the political left, Quebec and B.C. residents, and those who do not support any federal political party. Since 2012, strong pride in the system has declined noticeably among Canadians under 30, and those on the political right.

Strong confidence in Canadian political system*



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

⁶ Here is another example where the change in survey mode likely accounts for some of the change in opinions between 2008 and 2010.

Should support the political system. Regardless of how much pride they feel about the country’s political system, Canadians continue to be more likely than not to say the system should be supported. Close to four in ten (37%) feel strongly that “one should support the political system of Canada”, compared to a majority who are neutral (56%), and fewer than one in ten (8%) who think the political system does not deserve support.

Positive opinions have declined modestly since 2012 (down 4 percentage points). As with the question about pride, belief in the importance in supporting the political system is strongest among Canadians 60 plus, those on the political right and Conservative party supporters, but this view has declined noticeably among these groups since 2012.

Respect for political institutions. While Canadians are more likely than not to express confidence in the country’s political system as a whole, opinions are less positive with respect to the institutions that make up this system. Only one in five (20%) of Canadians say they have strong respect for “the political institutions of Canada”, with almost as many (18%) having little or no respect. Opinions have declined marginally since 2012, but comparable to 2010 levels.

Public respect for the country’s political institutions is most evident among older Canadians, those on the political right, federal Conservative supporters, the very religious and those born outside Canada. Respect does not vary by regions, community size or socio-economic status, and is unrelated to level of civic engagement.

International comparison

Canadians continue to be among the most proud of their political system, following citizens of Costa Rica (45%), Nicaragua (42%) and Uruguay (37%). Such pride is least apt to be expressed in Peru (12%), Jamaica (11%), Haiti (13%) and Brazil 12%, where 51% have none at all). Pride in ones political system is down overall since 2012, most noticeably in the USA, Mexico, Venezuela and Jamaica, while the opposite trend has taken place in Honduras, Nicaragua, Costa Rica and Panama.

Canadians are a bit above average in stating the importance of supporting their country’s political system, although less so than Mexicans and citizens of most Central American countries and some in South America (Ecuador, Uruguay, Argentina). Such support is least evident in Brazil (13%) and Haiti (12%). Since 2012, public support for political systems has strengthened significantly in parts of Central America, while more likely than not to be declining in South American and the Caribbean.

In terms of respect for political institutions, Canadians’ relatively low regard is similar to opinions across the hemisphere, although somewhat less likely to be strongly positive or negative. As in 2012, Americans are among the least respectful of their political institutions, while Mexicans are among the most positive (along with citizens in most of Central America, as well as Colombia, Uruguay, Argentina and the Dominican Republic). Over the past two years, respect for political institutions has increased in most of Central America and in Haiti, while declining in Venezuela and Jamaica.

Strong confidence in political system*

	PROUD OF POLITICAL SYSTEM	SHOULD SUPPORT POLITICAL SYSTEM	RESPECT POLITICAL INSTITUTIONS
CANADA	37	37	20
United States	25	32	12
Mexico	20	39	35
Central America	28	35	40
South America	17	21	30
Caribbean	19	23	31

* 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 key institutions? Using the same rating scale (“1” = “not at all” to “7” = “a lot”), trust levels vary noticeably across institutions, with relatively little change since 2012.

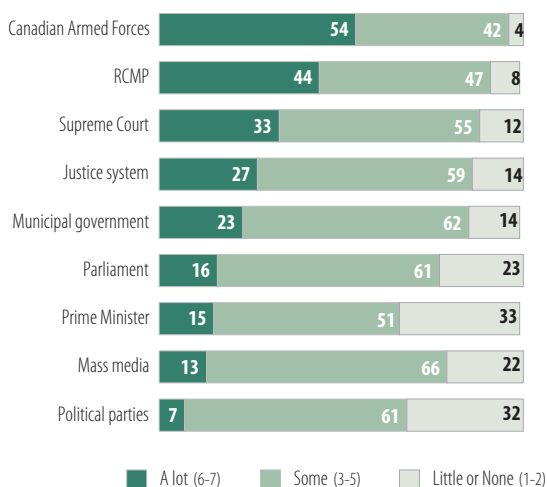
Trust in Canadian Armed Forces. Among the institutions presented, the one garnering the most trust from Canadians is the Canadian Armed Forces. More than half (54%) say they have a lot of trust in the military, compared with only four percent who have little or no trust; these numbers are essentially unchanged since 2012, although up five percentage points since 2010.

Trust in the Armed Forces is widespread across the country but strongest in Ontario and Alberta, among Canadians 60-plus, Conservative party supporters, the political right and mainline Protestants. This view is less apt to be shared among Canadians under 30, the political left and those who do not support any federal party, although positive views greatly exceed negative evaluations across the population. The stability in opinion since 2012 nationally masks some notable shifts within some groups: A favourable view of the Armed Forces has increased in Quebec, Ontario and Vancouver, while declining in Atlantic Canada, Manitoba and Saskatchewan, in smaller town and among rural residents, as well as among Canadians on both the left and right of the political spectrum.

Trust in the RCMP. Like the Armed Forces, the RCMP is among Canada’s most trusted institutions, and despite being the subject of repeated controversies its public image has improved noticeably over the past two years. More than one in four (44%) citizens now express strong trust in the RCMP (up from 36% in 2012), compared with less than one in ten (8%) who have little or no trust.

Higher levels of public trust in the RCMP since 2012 is evident across most groups, except among rural residents, Canadians under 30 and those with a high school diploma (in these groups opinions remain unchanged). The most positive views are expressed by Canadians 60 plus, and mainline Protestants, while less so among B.C. residents, Canadians on the political left, and those who do not support any federal party (26% have a lot of trust, versus 22% who have little or none).

Level of trust in key institutions



Strong trust in Canadian Forces and RCMP*



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

Trust in the Supreme Court. One in three (33%) Canadians place a lot of trust in the Supreme Court, compared to one in ten (12%) who have little or no trust. Opinions are essentially unchanged since 2010 at the national level, but have declined since 2012 in Alberta and B.C., among Canadians on the political right, and supporters of the Conservative party, as well as among those who do not support any party (among this group only 18% express clear trust in the Supreme Court, compared with 28% who have little or no trust). Trust levels are strongest among Canadians who have a university education, were born in another country, support the Liberal party, place strong importance on religion and are mainline Protestants. Opinions also vary by generation: Canadians under 30 are considerably less positive toward the Supreme Court (22% positive versus 15% negative) than those 60 and over (46% versus 8%).

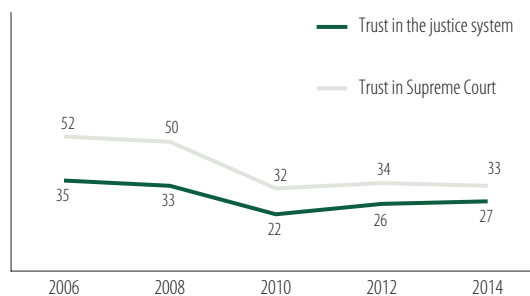
Trust in the Justice system. A little over one quarter (27%) of Canadians express strong trust in the country's justice system, compared to half as many (14%) who express distrust, largely unchanged since 2012, but slightly higher than in 2010.

Opinions vary noticeably across the country: Strong trust outweighs distrust by a clear margin in Ontario, Atlantic Canada and Alberta, while opinions are divided in British Columbia, Manitoba and Saskatchewan (Quebec falls somewhere in between, with 24% positive versus 17% negative). Trust in the justice system is more evident among immigrants, Canadians 45 and older, Canadians on the political right, and supporters of the Conservative and Liberal parties, while weakest among those who do not support any party

Trust in municipal government. Just under a quarter (23%) of Canadians express strong trust in their municipal government, compared to those who have little or no trust (14%), unchanged from 2012, but a marked improvement from 2010.

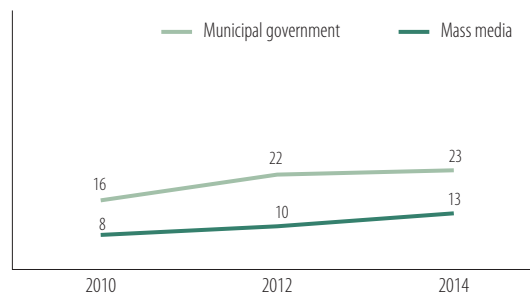
Across the country trust in municipal government is positive in all regions but strongest in Quebec (28% percent, up 5 points from 2012), while more divided in B.C. (18% versus 16%), as well as in Manitoba and Saskatchewan where trust levels have dropped 18 points. Canadians 60 plus are the most positive about their municipal government, along with those without a high school diploma, those on the political right and those who are strongly religious. Views do not vary by community size.

Strong trust in Canadian justice*



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

Strong trust in municipal government and mass media*



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

Trust in mass media. Democratic institutions require a strong and vibrant media in order to flourish. In Canada, such confidence is low with just over one in ten (13%) expressing strong trust in the country's media, compared with almost twice as many (22%) who have little or none. This low standing notwithstanding, Canadians trust levels have increased modestly since 2010 (when only 8% expressed a positive view).

Opinions about the country's mass media are generally similar across the country. Favourable views are somewhat more evident in larger cities, among Canadians on the political right and those who are civically engaged, while most negative among those on the political left (7% strong trust, versus 39% little or none).

Trust in Parliament. Parliament is the country's key legislative political institution, composed of the elected House of Commons and appointed Senate. Public opinion of Parliament has not been strong, but has held steady over the past two years despite a considerable amount of negative attention over the past year due in large part to scandals involving several Senators.

One in six (16%) Canadians place strong trust in the institution, compared to a quarter (23%) who express strong distrust. Trust in Parliament has changed little since 2010.

Across the population, trust in Parliament is somewhat higher in Quebec, among urban residents, those 60 plus and those on the political right (26%, versus 6% among those on the left). Strong distrust is most evident in B.C., among those on the political left, and those who are dissatisfied with their life overall.

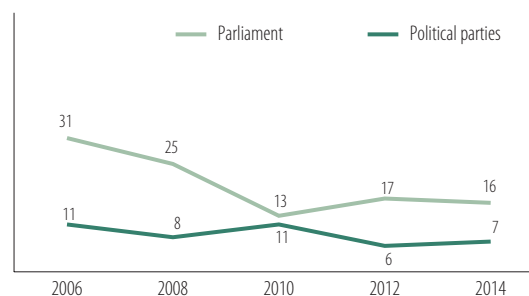
Trust in Prime Minister. Although not head of state, the Prime Minister is the leader of the government, making the office an important Canadian political institution. The current Prime Minister, Stephen Harper, has been among the most polarizing federal leaders since Brian Mulroney in the 1980s and early 1990s.

Canadians' trust in the Prime Minister is similar to their trust in Parliament, with one in six (15%) indicating strong trust, compared with more than twice as many (33%) expressing clear distrust (comparable to the level of distrust of political parties). Trust in the Prime Minister has remained stable since 2010.

As might be expected, trust in the Prime Minister comes primarily from the political right (30%) and among Conservative supporters (35%), compared with his opponents on the political left (5%) and supporters of the NDP (7%; 66% of whom strongly distrust Stephen Harper). Those in the centre of the political spectrum are somewhere in the middle, with 12% expressing strong trust, compared with 31 percent indicating strong distrust. Canadians' views are also divided geographically, with Albertans having the most trust and Atlantic Canadians the least.

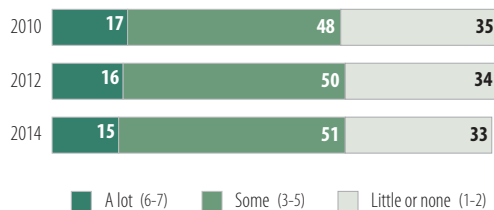
Since 2012, trust in the Prime Minister has increased marginally in Quebec, while declining among Canadians on the political right, residents of Manitoba, Saskatchewan and B.C., in Toronto, among Canadians 60 plus, and those in the top income bracket.

Strong trust in parliament and political parties*

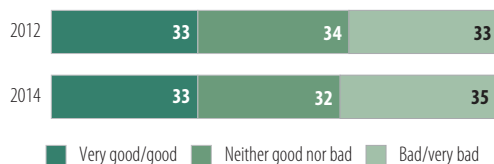


* 6 or 7 on a 7-point scale (1=not at all, 7=a lot)

Trust in the prime minister



Prime minister Harper's job performance



Apart from their degree of trust in the Prime Minister, Canadians are evenly divided in their appraisal of his performance. One in three say he is doing a very good (9%) or good (24%) job, while an equal proportion rate his performance as bad (19%) or very bad (16%). The remaining third (32%) say neither good nor bad. This assessment is unchanged since 2012.

Canadians divide along political lines in their evaluation of the Prime Minister's performance, with Conservatives and the political right assessing Mr. Harper's performance highly, while those on the left, Liberals and New Democrats give him low ratings. The political geography of the country echoes regional divisions with the Prairie provinces rating him highly while a negative view prevails in Quebec and Atlantic Canada. As in 2012, Mr. Harper's performance is more positively rated among immigrants and those with higher incomes. Canadians with high civic engagement split evenly on his performance, with significant percentages giving both positive and negative reviews of his performance, and also showing modest improvement since 2012.

Trust in political parties. Among our most important institutions are political parties and the elections that permit voters to choose among the various parties. While parties may be central to the functioning of our political system, fewer than one in ten (7%) have a lot of trust in them, compared with one-third (32%) who have little or no trust (similar to 2012 levels).

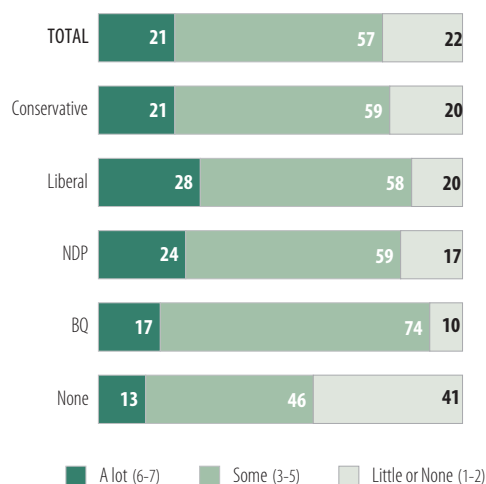
Confidence in political parties varies by political orientation, with strong confidence more evident among those on the political right (14%) than those in the middle (6%) or on the left (3%; with another 47% saying little or none). However, since 2012 the proportion with low levels of trust has increased among Canadians both on the right and left of the political spectrum.

Trust in elections. Elections are an important symbol and manifestation of democracy, and have rarely been a source of controversy in this country. However, the current survey reveals that Canadians' trust in elections is relatively weak. Just one in five (21%) express strong trust in the country's elections, with an equal proportion (22%) having little or no trust (57% are in the middle on this question).

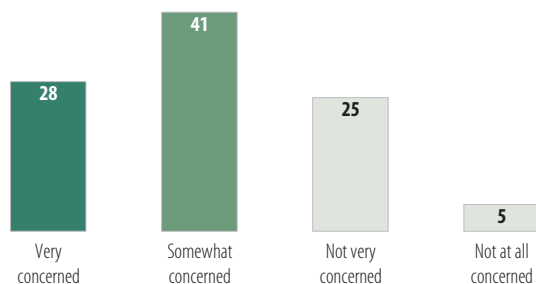
Trust in elections is strongest in Quebec (31% have a lot of trust), among urban residents, Canadians 60 plus, those with a university degree, and high on civic action, while lowest in Manitoba and Saskatchewan (11%) and among rural residents. Such trust is most widespread among Canadians on the political right (30%), compared with those on the left (21%) and in the middle (19%). Opinions are similar across the three main political parties, but lower among those who do not support any party (41% of this group have a high level of distrust of elections).

Do you trust elections in this country?

By federal party support



Concern about political parties illegally manipulating election outcomes



The 2014 survey also asked Canadians how concerned they are that political parties might attempt "to manipulate the outcome of future elections through illegal activities", and found a significant majority who are very (28%) or somewhat (41%) concerned about this possibility.

This may reflect concern arising from the so-called "robocalls" scandal that made headlines in Canada during the 2011 Federal Election. To date one person has been convicted of illegal activities, with other cases still pending.

Public concern about potential election fraud is evident across the country, but most pronounced among Canadians on the political left (42% are very concerned), as well as among older Canadians, those with lower incomes, and high levels of civic engagement.

International comparison

As in 2012, Canadians' level of trust in their institutions is at or above average for the hemisphere, with some notable exceptions. Canadians are among the most trusting of their Armed Forces, national police (RCMP) and justice system. Canadian trust levels are comparable to those expressed elsewhere for municipal government, Parliament, elections, and political parties.

As in 2012, Canadians' trust in their national leader is below that of most other countries in the Americas, ahead of Guyana (12%), Costa Rica (11%), Peru (10%) and Trinidad and Tobago (9%). Since 2012, public trust in national leaders has fluctuated significantly across countries, marking significant improvement in some countries (Honduras, Bolivia, Chile, Dominican Republic), and substantial decline in others (Mexico, Belize, Venezuela, Colombia, Brazil, Argentina, Jamaica, and Trinidad and Tobago). The most trusted national leaders are now in Nicaragua (46%), Ecuador (48%), Haiti (46%) and the Dominican Republic (55%).

Strong trust in key institutions*

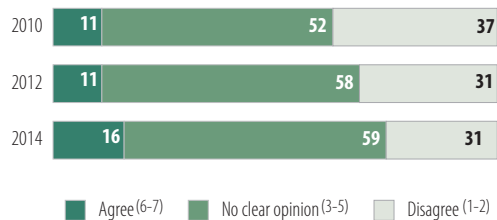
	CANADA	UNITED STATES	MEXICO	CENTRAL AMERICA	SOUTH AMERICA	CARIBBEAN
Armed Forces	54	55	45	49	36	32
National police	44	25	14	21	21	21
Justice system	27	13	13	19	14	13
Municipal government	23	14	21	23	17	15
Elections	21	20	14	23	17	12
Parliament/legislature	16	5	17	16	12	15
Prime Minister/President	15	22	16	24	21	47
Political parties	7	4	8	9	6	9

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

Do politicians listen? Lack of public trust in the political system and institutions may be in part because citizens are skeptical about how well their elected officials pay attention to citizens' view and priorities. Only one in six (16%) of Canadians agree that "those who govern this country are interested in what people like you think", although this percentage is higher than the level recorded in 2012 (up 5 percentage points). One in four (24%, down 7 points) disagree with this statement, while six in ten continue to be somewhere in the middle.

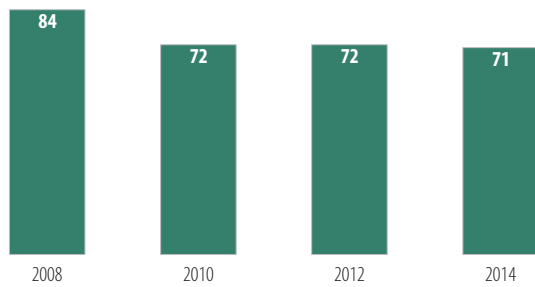
Opinions are largely similar across the country, although somewhat more positive among Canadians with a post-secondary education, immigrants, and those with some religious affiliation. As in 2012, the strongest predictor is political orientation: those on the right agree that politicians care (by a 29% to 15% margin), in sharp contrast with those on the left (8% versus 43%). Canadians high on civic engagement are more likely to have either a positive or negative view, but have shown the most improvement of any group in the past two years.

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



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

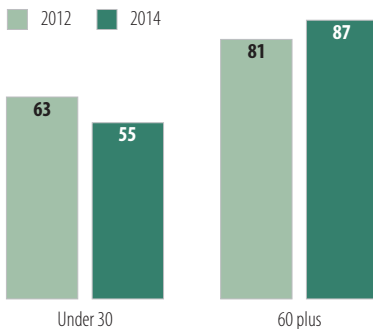
Strong pride in being Canadian*



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

Strong pride in Canada

By age cohort



Pride in the Country

Canadians may have lack full confidence in many of the country's important political institutions, but most continue to be proud of being Canadian and believe that, despite our differences, we are united as a country.

Pride in being Canadian. While Canadians do not tend to think of themselves as especially patriotic as a nation (at least in comparison with their American neighbours to the south), most feel a clear sense of pride in their country.

Seven in ten (71%) state they have a lot of pride in being a Canadian, compared with very few (4%) who feel little or no pride. Opinions are unchanged since 2010, and somewhat lower than in 2008 (when the survey was conducted by telephone, which might account for a higher proportion expressing strong pride).

As before, Quebecers are much less likely than other Canadians to express strong pride in their national citizenship (54%, and only 49% among francophones), although this level has held steady since 2012. A sense of pride is equally strong across the other parts of the country, and is now equally the case between native born and immigrant Canadians.

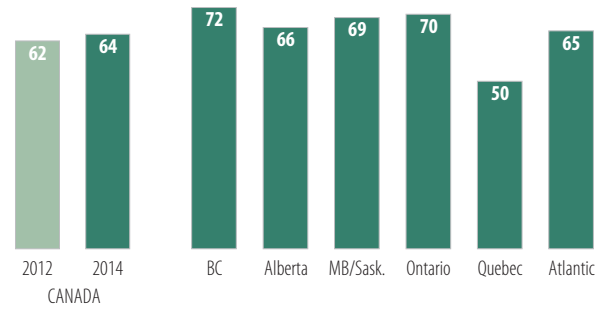
The most notable difference on this measure is by generation: Pride in being Canadian increases significantly by age cohort, and this gap has widened noticeably over the past two years (strong pride is now expressed by 87% of Canadians 60 plus, compared with just 55% of those under 30).

Things that unite Canadians. Canadians live in a diverse nation with significant cultural and linguistic differences, and a vast landscape with five and a half time zones. Nonetheless, more than six in ten (64%) continue to strongly agree that despite Canada’s differences “there are many things that unite us as a country”, while just three percent disagree, essentially unchanged from 2012.

As with pride, Quebecers (50%) are less likely than other Canadians to agree with this statement, although the gap has narrowed since 2012 (when only 43% shared this view). Agreement is most widespread among Vancouverites (up 10 points since 2012), and least so among those who do not support any federal political party. Once again, age is an important factor, with belief in a common identity expressed by 81 percent of Canadians 60 plus (up 6 points since 2012), compared with 52 percent among those under 30 (unchanged).

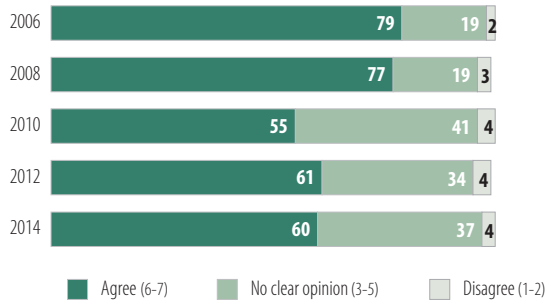
Opinions are consistent by education level, community size and country of birth.

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



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

Democracy is the best form of government



Attitudes about Democracy

DEMOCRACY AS BEST FORM OF GOVERNMENT.

While the public's trust in some of Canada's institutions has been in decline, Canadians retain a strong faith in democracy as the best form of government whatever its difficulties.

Asked whether they agree or disagree on a seven point scale (where "7" represents "strong agreement" and "1" is "strong disagreement"), a clear majority of six in ten (60%) endorse the statement: "Democracy may have problems, but it is better than any other form of government", while only four percent disagree. This support is nearly identical to 2012 and somewhat stronger than in 2010.

Confidence in the democratic ideal prevails across Canada, in communities large and small, as well as along the political spectrum. This opinion strengthens along with level of education, household income and age, with the gap between young and old increasing modestly over the past two years (now 84% among those 60 plus, compared with 44% among those under 30).

Consistent with this view, three-quarters (74%) of Canadians agree that democracy is preferable to any other form of government, with the remainder split between those who say it doesn't matter to them whether a government is democratic or not (14%), and those who believe that under some circumstances an authoritarian government might be preferable (11%). Opinions are unchanged from 2012.

Preference for democracy is the norm across the country, but also rises along with education, income and age group. This view is now most widely held by Canadians on the political left (81%), compared with those on the right (74%) where this sentiment has softened since 2012.

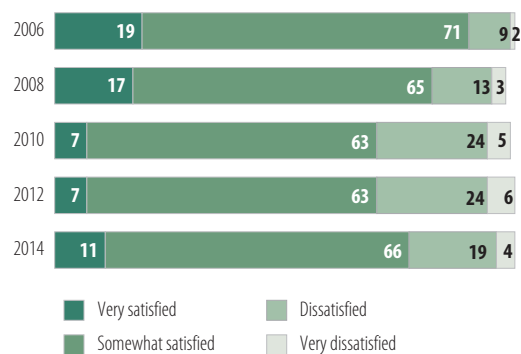
SATISFACTION WITH HOW DEMOCRACY WORKS IN CANADA.

Beyond the aspirational principles of what democracy means, how well do Canadians believe it is working in their country today? The lack of confidence in key institutions such as Parliament and political parties notwithstanding, three-quarters of Canadians are very (11%) or somewhat (66%) satisfied, with this proportion up seven percentage points from 2012 and 2010 (higher percentages in 2006 and 2008 are likely a function of the different survey mode used for those surveys).

Overall satisfaction with the country's democracy is fairly consistent across the country, but has increased most noticeably since 2012 in Quebec (up 18 points), among Canadians 60 plus (up 13) and those without a high school diploma (up 15), while declining marginally in B.C. (down 4).

Satisfaction is more widespread among Canadians on the political right (83%, versus those on the left at 62%), but is now marginally lower than two years ago. Supporters of the Conservative and Liberal parties are most apt to express satisfaction, followed by NDP supporters, and those who do not endorse any party.

Satisfaction with democracy in Canada

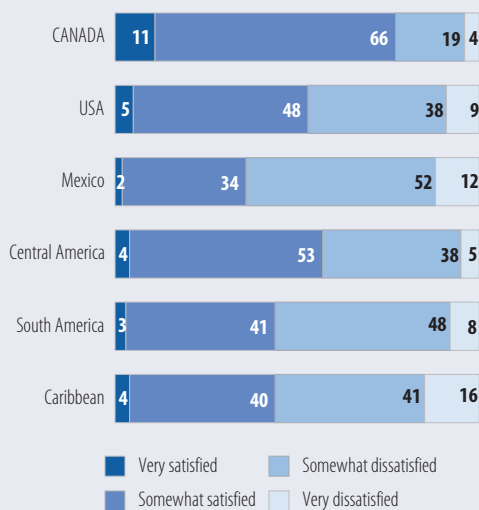


International comparison

Canada stands out as being the most satisfied people in the Americas in terms of how its democratic system is working, and this lead has widened since 2012 as many countries have witnessed a worsening view of their democracy. Satisfaction in one's democracy has declined by 10 percentage points or more in South America, most noticeably in Venezuela (down 31 points), Brazil (down 25), Colombia (down 19), Peru (down 15), Argentina (down 10), as well as Jamaica (down 17), Belize (down 16) and Mexico (down 11). The opposite trend has taken place to a more modest degree in Bolivia, Chile and Guyana. Satisfaction in democratic system is now lowest in Venezuela (31%), Mexico (36%), Guyana (35%) and Peru (37%).

Canadians are also among the most likely to see democracy as the best form of government, despite its problems, second only to Argentina (69%). Agreement with this viewpoint has declined across much of the Americas, especially in Panama, Jamaica, Venezuela and Guyana. It is now least apt to be expressed among those living in Panama (32%), Peru (35%) and Jamaica (38%).

Satisfaction with democracy in your country



Balance of Powers in Canadian Democracy

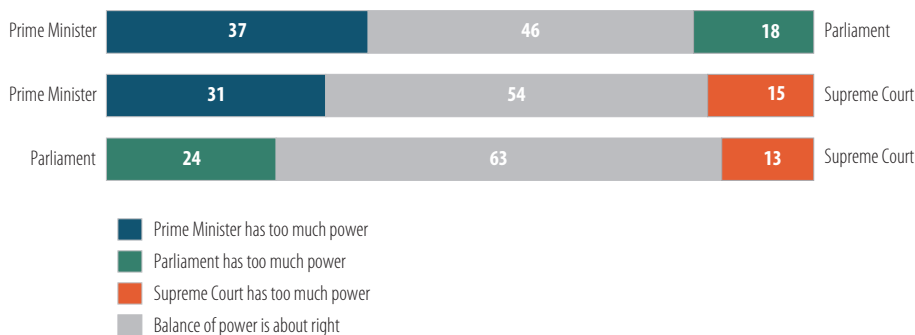
The 2014 survey explored the views of Canadians on the relative powers of the Prime Minister, Parliament and the Supreme Court within the Canadian political system. Since the adoption of the Constitution Act, 1982 (including the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms), the Supreme Court has ruled on a number of cases that invoked the Charter that have overturned legislation and effectively limited the powers of Parliament.

At the same time some scholars and commentators have documented the growing concentration of power within the Prime Minister’s Office over the past several decades, and the limits this has placed on the effectiveness of individual members of Parliament and the institution itself. Prime Minister Harper has come into conflict with the Supreme Court in response to an unsuccessful bid to appoint a justice of the Federal Court of Appeal to sit on the Supreme Court

as one of the three Quebec justices. Moreover, the Supreme Court has also stymied government efforts to enact Senate reform and a national securities regulation regime. Amidst this debate among opinion leaders, how do Canadians view the current balance of powers in Ottawa?

RELATIVE BALANCE OF POWERS AMONG THREE BRANCHES OF GOVERNMENT. The survey presented each pair of these three institutions, and in each case asked if either one has too much power, or if the balance is about right. Overall, Canadians are more likely than not to say the the balance is about right in each case. Among those who do not share this view, the Prime Minister is more likely seen as having too much power in comparison with both Parliament and the Supreme Court. One-quarter believe Parliament has too much power over the Supreme Court, while just over one in ten hold the opposite opinion.

How do you see the current balance of power in the federal government?



Prime Minister versus Parliament. Just under half of Canadians (46%) regard the current balance of power as appropriate, compared with 37 percent who perceive that the Prime Minister has too much power, and just under one in five (18%) who believe Parliament has too much power.

This issue appears to be viewed mainly through the lens of political preferences. The impression that the Prime Minister has too much power is held more strongly by residents

of Atlantic Canada, the political left, and NDP supporters, as well as by Canadians over 60 and those highly civically engaged. Those most likely to see Parliament has having the greater power include younger Canadians and those with lower incomes (in each case by no more than one in four). By comparison those more likely to see the balance as about right include residents of the Prairie provinces, federal Conservatives, higher income Canadians, immigrants and rural residents.

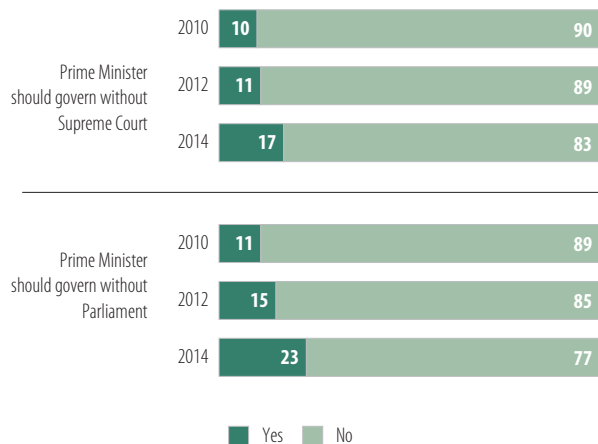
Prime Minister and Supreme Court. More than half of Canadians (54%) believe that the balance of power between the Prime Minister and the Supreme Court is about right. The remainder are twice as likely to see the Prime Minister as having too much power (31%) compared with those who place this emphasis on the Supreme Court (15%).

As with Parliament, it is the political left, supporters of the NDP and those high on the civic action index who are most likely to say the Prime Minister wields the upper hand over the Supreme Court, although a majority of New Democrats see the balance as about right. By comparison, the political right are twice as likely as the population-at-large to believe the Supreme Court as being too powerful (31%), with this view shared to a lesser extent among the very religious and Canadians 60-plus. Conservatives, immigrants and higher income Canadians are among those most likely to see the balance as about right. Views on this issue do not vary by province of residence, community size or education.

Supreme Court and Parliament. Canadians are most likely to be satisfied with the current balance of powers between Parliament and the Supreme Court (63%). The remainder are split between those who say it is Parliament that has too much power (24%) and those who give the edge to the Supreme Court (13%). This comparison is less closely linked to political orientation, but the political right is more likely than others to see the Supreme Court as having too much power. Conservatives, older Canadians, residents of Toronto and those with higher incomes are most likely to see the balance as right, and less likely to perceive Parliament as having too much power.

When the results of the three questions are combined, they reveal that one-quarter (23%) of Canadians believe the Prime Minister has too much power over both Parliament and the Supreme Court, while no more than one in ten say that either Parliament (10%) or the Supreme Court (7%) has too much power over the other two institutions. One-third (35%) of the population is satisfied with the current balance of power across all three institutions.

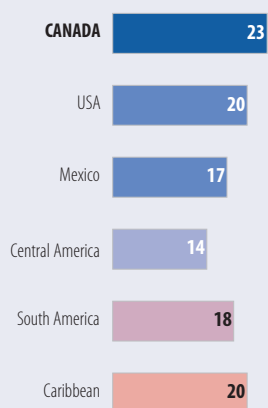
Limiting the democratic process in difficult times



International comparison

The increase in support for silencing legislatures in difficult times is not limited to Canada, although Canadians are now among the most likely to endorse such a scenario (behind Paraguay (29%), Peru (27%) and Haiti (26%)). This sentiment has grown since 2012 in many countries, most noticeably in Panama (up 17 points), while declining in Ecuador, and Trinidad and Tobago. Support for leaders to close down legislatures in times of crisis is lowest Belize (8%), Venezuela (7%), Guyana (8%) and Uruguay (9%).

It is justifiable for Prime Minister/President to govern without parliament/legislature in difficult times



SUSPENDING DEMOCRATIC PROCESS IN DIFFICULT TIMES.

Canada is one of the world's oldest democracies, although the extension of full voting rights for all citizens dates only from 1960 when the restriction on voting rights for Aboriginal people in national elections was removed. In comparison to many other countries, Canada has experienced very few threats to civil order, the most recent being when the Canadian government temporarily suspended civil liberties when it imposed the War Measures Act, in response to the October crisis of 1970.

Given the country's stable historical record as a democracy, there would appear to be little prospect of witnessing a suspension of civil liberties or the normal functioning of the democratic system. But would Canadians be prepared to accept such a scenario under certain circumstances? Most would not, but the minority who sees justification has increased in recent years.

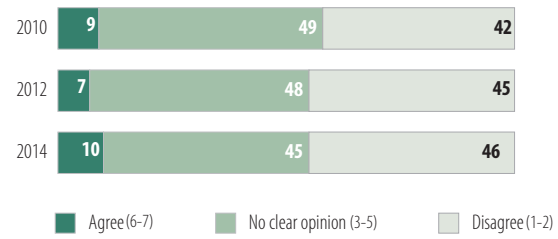
Suspension of Parliament and the Supreme Court. A small but growing minority (23%) of Canadians believe it would be justified for the Prime Minister to close down Parliament when the country is facing very difficult times, up from 15 percent who expressed this view in 2012, and 11 percent in 2010. Similarly, one in six (17%) would accept the Prime Minister dissolving the Supreme Court under such circumstances, up from 11 percent in 2012.

Acceptance of justification for closing down Parliament and the Supreme Court are minority views across the population, but this sentiment is somewhat higher among Canadians on the political right, Conservative Party supporters, those without a high school diploma, and immigrants. This view has increased since 2012 among most groups, but notably among younger Canadians, those without a high school diploma, immigrants, and those on the middle and right of the political spectrum.

Limiting the Voice of Opposition Parties. There is little public support for the Prime Minister placing limits on opposition parties. One in ten (10%) agree strongly (6 or 7 on the seven point scale discussed previously) that “It is necessary for the progress of this country that our prime ministers limit the voice and vote of opposition parties”, compared with almost half (46%) who strongly disagree (34% disagree in the strongest possible terms, with a rating of 1). Opinions on this question are largely unchanged from 2010.

Opposition to limiting the opposition is the prevailing view across the country, but there are noticeable differences based on political philosophy and partisan preferences. The strongest opinions come from those on the political left, with an overwhelming majority (76%) strongly disagreeing with limiting the opposition, while slightly higher support for limits can be seen among those on the political right (19%, up from 12% in 2012). Greater disagreement can also be found in Atlantic Canada and British Columbia, and among Canadians over 60. Those who are civically engaged are more likely to have polarized views (either in strong agreement or strong disagreement).

Prime minister should limit the voice of opposition parties



COALITION GOVERNMENT. A “first past the post” electoral system such as Canada’s is more likely than others to permit parties with only a plurality of the popular vote to gain majority control of the government. This means that coalition governments, especially at the federal level, have been rare in Canada.

Shortly after the 2008 Federal Election, a bid to form a coalition among the opposition parties that would seek office following a vote of non-confidence in the government failed when the Prime Minister secured a prorogation, and the proposed coalition did not sustain itself once Parliament resumed sitting. This produced heated debate on whether a coalition is legitimate under Canada’s democratic system. Since 2008, coalition governments have been formed successfully in the United Kingdom and Australia.

A growing majority of Canadians are comfortable with the principle of a coalition government when no party wins a majority in a general election. Three quarters (74%) believe it is an option that should be considered, up from 69 percent who expressed this view in 2012.

Not surprisingly, support for government coalitions is strongest among Canadians who support the federal parties that attempted to form one in 2008 (those on the political left, and supporters of the Liberals and NDP), and weakest among those who support the Conservative party and those on the political right. Since 2012, support has increased primarily among those in the political middle and right, among Conservative and NDP supporters (as well as those

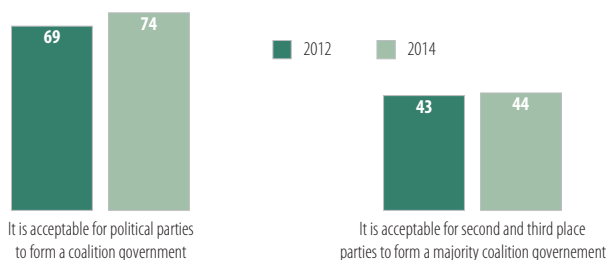
who do not like any of the parties), while declining among those who support the Federal Liberal Party.

A coalition government could hypothetically be formed in two ways. The party that finishes first could find a coalition partner to form a majority, as happened when British Conservatives and Liberal Democrats negotiated their 2010 coalition agreement. The other alternative is something like the 2008 Canadian failed effort at coalition where the parties that finished in second (Liberals) and fourth (NDP) place in seats (albeit second and third in popular vote) formed the coalition with the support of the Bloc Québécois, which controlled the third largest number of seats.

Broad public support for government coalitions notwithstanding, Canadians are less likely to be comfortable when it does not include the party winning the most seats. A small majority of Canadians (56%) say a coalition should only be permitted if it includes the party that holds the most seats after an election while fewer (44%) say it would be acceptable if parties winning the second and third largest shares of seats were to form a coalition, results that are essentially unchanged from 2012.

Not surprisingly, support for permitting only a first place party to form a coalition is most widely expressed by the political right and federal Conservatives, while there is majority support for allowing second and third place parties to form coalitions among Canadians on the political left, those who would vote NDP, and Canadians under 30 .

Support for coalition government in Canada



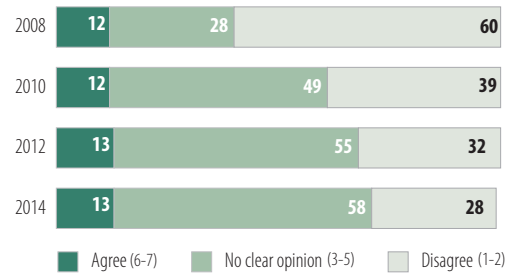
Representation by the People

DIRECT GOVERNANCE BY THE PEOPLE. Canada's democracy is based on representative government; members of Parliament are selected in democratic elections and then are authorized to govern. It is not a form of direct democracy although reforms such as recall and referendum have been promoted by populist movements to give citizens a more direct role in government. British Columbia has enacted both recall and citizen-initiated referendum legislation, the latter being used to overturn the B.C. government's Harmonized Sales Tax law.

Public support for direct democracy in Canada has yet to blossom, although resistance to the concept continues to wane. Just over one in ten (13%) Canadians agree strongly with the statement: "The people should govern directly rather than through elected representatives", compared with more than twice as many (28%) who strongly disagree, and a majority (58%) falling in the middle. Disagreement with this statement has been steadily declining since 2008 when 60 percent held this position.

Opinions about direct democracy are largely consistent across the country, but support has increased since 2012 among Canadians under 30, those born outside the country, and those on the political right. This view is most apt to be expressed among Canadians without a high school diploma (23%) and those who are highly civically engaged (21%). Disagreement is most prominent among Canadians 60 and older (47%).

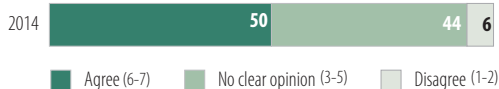
The people should govern directly rather than through elected representatives



MPs should vote according to what they believe, even if this may not reflect the majority view of their constituents



MPs should be allowed to vote according to what they believe, even if it is not consistent with their party's position



Role of Members of Parliament. Edmund Burke, an 18th century member of the British House of Commons (long viewed as a key figure in the development of modern conservatism), made a famous 1774 speech to his electors in Bristol in which he addressed the proper role of a member of Parliament, noting “to live in the strictest union, the closest correspondence, and the most unreserved communication with his constituents.” However, he did not believe MPs should necessarily respect their wishes. He further said: “Your representative owes you, not his industry only, but his judgment; and he betrays, instead of serving you, if he sacrifices it to your opinion.”

Canadians are more likely than not to endorse Burke’s perspective. Three in ten (30%) agree with the statement: “MPs should vote in Parliament according to what they believe is right, even if this may not reflect the majority view in the community they represent.” By comparison, one in five (19%) disagrees with just over half (51%) falling somewhere in the middle.

Perhaps not surprisingly, strongest agreement with this sentiment comes from those on the political right (40%) in comparison with those on the left (23%), although there is little difference in the opinions by federal party support. Agreement with Burke’s perspective is also more evident among Canadians who are very religious and those with high civic engagement.

A reform bill introduced by Conservative backbencher Michael Chong that would enhance the independence of ordinary MPs vis-à-vis their party leadership is consistent with public opinion. Half of Canadians (50%) strongly agree with the statement: “Political parties should allow MPs to vote in Parliament according to what they believe is right, even if this is not consistent with their party’s position”, with very few (6%) who strongly disagree.

There is clear support for greater MP autonomy across the country, but especially in Atlantic Canada and BC (the two outlying regions of the country), as well as among men, older Canadians, those born in Canada, and those who are civically engaged. No more than one in ten from any group expresses clear disagreement.

Tolerance for Political Dissent

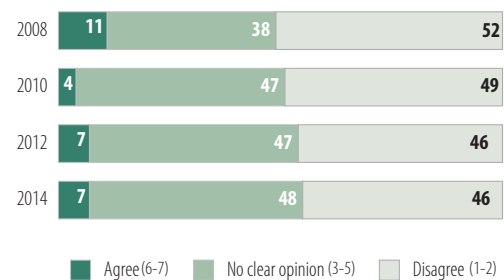
Free speech is a cornerstone of Canadian democracy. What makes it more than an aspirational phrase is when it is applied in the context of tolerating dissent. Canada has a reputation for freedom of speech but this has at times been tested, for example, by the animated Quebec “maple spring” demonstrations in 2012 against rising tuition fees, and the protests in Toronto in 2010 at the G20 summit of international leaders. How well do Canadians accept those who may dissent against established norms?

DO MINORITY VIEWS THREATEN THE COUNTRY?

Few Canadians perceive dissent as a threat to the country, and this sentiment has held steady at least since 2008. Fewer than one in ten (7%) agrees with the statement: “Those who disagree with the majority represent a threat to the country”, with close to half (46%) expressing clear disagreement. Views on this question are largely unchanged since 2008.

Public comfort with dissent is the majority view across most of Canada. But those on the political left are by far the most likely to support the right to dissent (76%), strengthening since 2012 (up 8 points) and widening the gap with those on the political right (35%). Over the past two years, support for public dissent has increased modestly among residents of Manitoba, Saskatchewan and B.C., residents of smaller towns and rural areas, among older Canadians and those with the least education and income. The opposite trend is evident among those with higher socio-economic status, Albertans, residents of major urban centres, and those civically engaged.

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



APPROVAL OF POLITICAL ACTION. Canadians may express tolerance of dissenting opinions in general terms, but what actions by dissenters to pursue their political objectives are acceptable? Public approval rests primarily on whether such actions are legal and non-violent. As in past years, the survey tested Canadians' acceptance of six forms of political action on a 10-point scale ranging from "1" ("strongly disapprove") to "10" ("strongly approve"). Public acceptance of political actions have nudged upwards over the past two years, and in one case increased noticeably.

Working with organizations to solve community problems. Among the actions tested, Canadians are most comfortable with people taking action within the context of working with established organizations on local issues. Two thirds (66%) approve initiatives of this nature, with almost no disapproval. This opinion is held across Canada, but most widely among those on the political left (87%) and those high on the civic action index (80%). Support for this type of political action is stable since 2012 at the national level, but has increased modestly among older Canadians and those on the political left, while declining among those under 30.

Working on political campaigns. Elections and political campaigns are the conventional means of political participation in Canada. However, the low reputation of political parties (see elsewhere in this report) may explain why working in political campaigns meets with less approval than working with community organizations.

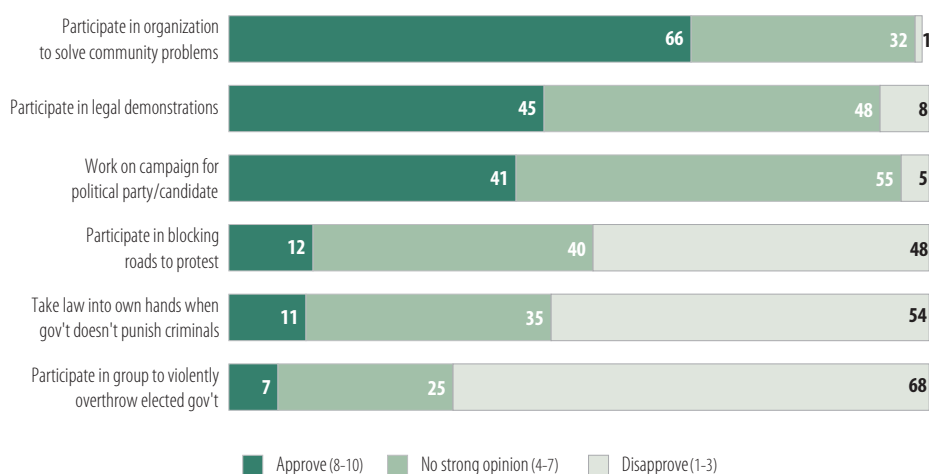
Four in ten (41%) Canadians express strong approval of political campaign work, compared to only five percent who disapprove. This reflects a marginal improvement since 2012 when 38 percent expressed approval.

Predictably, public approval for working on political campaigns is stronger among Canadians on both the political right and left, as well as among those civically engaged (58%), while least evident among those who do not support any federal party. A positive view of such activity also increases with age, and this gap has widened over the past two years (28% among those under 30, versus 51% among those 60 plus). Support also increases with education, although the gap has narrowed since 2012.

Participating in legal demonstrations. More than four in ten (45%) Canadians now express approval of legal demonstrations as a way voicing dissent, up from 35 percent who stated this view in 2012. Fewer than one in ten (8%) now disapprove (down 5 points).

Public acceptance of legal protests has increased across most of the country since 2012, but notably not in Quebec (54%, where support remains higher than elsewhere) and among Canadians under 30 (39%). Support continues to be strongest among those on the political left (70%), those civically engaged (68%), and least evident among Conservative party supporters (34%) and those who do not support any party (25%).

Approval of people's actions to achieve political goals



Vigilante justice. Most Canadians do not accept that citizens are entitled to ignore the rule of law and initiate punitive measures against law breakers if they believe the government has failed to punish criminals. More than half (54%) disapprove of such actions, compared with one in ten (11%) who think it is justified. This sentiment is largely unchanged since 2006, although disapproval is down marginally since 2012, with this shift most evident among Canadians on the political right and Liberal Party supporters. Disapproval of vigilante justice is strongest among older Canadians, those in the top income bracket, those on the political left, and mainline Protestants.

Blocking roads. Blocking roads has been a protest tactic used by some environmental and Aboriginal protests in Canada, although there has been little activity over the past couple of years. Few (12%) Canadians express approval of this form of political action, compared to nearly half (48%) who disapprove. However, public disapproval has declined noticeably since 2012 (when 59% disapproved), with this decline evident across much of the population but most significantly in B.C. and among those on the political right.

Disapproval in blocking roads is now most widespread in Manitoba and Saskatchewan (62%), among Canadians 60 plus (67%), and those supporting the Federal Conservative Party (63%), although levels are down in each case since 2012. Approval is most evident among Canadians on the political left and those who are civically engaged.

Violent overthrow of government. Canadians are mostly in agreement that political violence aimed at overthrowing governments is not a legitimate form of political action, although disapproval has declined over the past two years. Just under seven in ten (68%) strongly disapprove of such action (down from 74% in 2012), compared with seven percent who voice approval.

This type of action is rejected by clear majorities across the population, but most noticeably among older Canadians, those on the political left, and Conservative party supporters, a view shared by a much smaller majority of Canadians under 30 (53%). Since 2012, disapproval of violent actions against governments has declined across most of the population, but most noticeably among Canadians on the political right and Liberal Party supporters, while increasing over this time period among those on the political left.

International comparison

Canadian opinion on the acceptability of political actions is comparable to most other parts of the hemisphere. Canadians' support for participation in legal demonstrations is now on par with the hemispheric average, as such support has declined noticeably in Mexico, most of Central America and to a lesser extent across South America. Acceptance of this type of action is now most widespread in Uruguay (67%) and Venezuela (64%).

Public support for blocking roads in protest is up marginally since 2012, primarily in South America and the Caribbean. This view is most prevalent in

Paraguay (41%, up 13 points) and Colombia (24%, up 7), and least so in Guyana (7%), El Salvador (7%), Panama (6%) and Ecuador (6%). Support for vigilante justice also remains low, but has increased marginally over the past two years, but most significantly in Paraguay (31%, up 16) and Honduras (26%, up 13).

Finally, few in any country advocate for groups working to violently overthrow an elected government, but this sentiment is up since 2012 in Venezuela (8%, up 6), Brazil (11%, up 4), Paraguay (14%, up 10), and Jamaica (8%, up 4).

Approve of actions to achieve political goals*

	CANADA	UNITED STATES	MEXICO	CENTRAL AMERICA	SOUTH AMERICA	CARIBBEAN
Participate in legal demonstrations	45	55	32	30	48	51
Participate in blocking roads to protest	12	14	9	10	16	18
Take law into own hands when government doesn't punish criminals	11	11	16	19	14	21
Participate in group to violently overthrow elected government	7	6	6	5	8	5

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

RIGHTS FOR THOSE CRITICIZING THE GOVERNMENT.

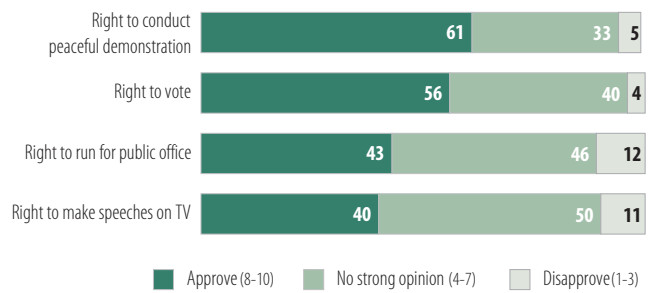
One test of a democratic system is the extent to which it tolerates the rights of those who criticize it. The survey asked Canadians how they felt about the rights of citizens who say bad things not just about the current government but the Canadian system of government (using the same 10 point approval-disapproval scale). Overall Canadians approve of the rights of dissenters but to a greater degree for some forms of political expression than others.

Right to conduct peaceful demonstrations. Six in ten (61%) Canadians approve of the right of those critical of the system of government to conduct peaceful demonstrations, while just five percent disapprove. Approval is marginally higher than in 2012 and 2010. Support for this form of free speech is strongest among Canadians who are civically engaged, the political left, and those who support the NDP.

Right to vote. A modest majority of Canadians (56%) approve of the right of those who criticize the system of government to vote (versus 4% who disapprove), unchanged from 2012 but up from 2010. Approval is consistent across the population, but most widespread among Canadians on the political left and those who are civically active.

Right to run for public office. Public support for expressions of dissent is weaker when it comes to running for public office. Just over four in ten (43%) Canadians say they believe those who criticize the Canadian form of government have a right to run for public office, compared with one in ten (12%) who disapprove, unchanged from 2012. Once again, support for

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



this right is strongest among Canadians on the political left and those civically active, as well among as those under 30 and those with a university degree.

Right to make speeches on TV. The importance of television stems from its potential to have a significant political impact. Four in ten (40%) of Canadians approve of the right of those criticizing the Canadian form of government to make speeches on TV, versus one in ten (11%) who disagree, unchanged since 2010. Such approval is strongest among Canadians on the political left, NDP supporters, those civically active, and French-speaking Canadians, and least so among residents of Manitoba and Saskatchewan, and Canadians 60-plus.

International comparison

As in 2012, public approval of these different forms of political dissent varies noticeably across the Americas. Canadians are among the most accepting, second only to Americans. By comparison, such approval is significantly lower in Central America where acceptance of these forms of dissent has

declined noticeably over the past two years (except in Honduras). Approval levels are now lowest in Panama and Guatemala. In South America, acceptance of dissent has increased noticeably in Venezuela, while declining in Brazil and Argentina.

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	61	73	34	25	36	45
Right to vote	56	66	33	23	33	32
Right to run for public office	43	51	19	12	26	20
Right to make speeches on TV	40	48	20	13	26	19

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

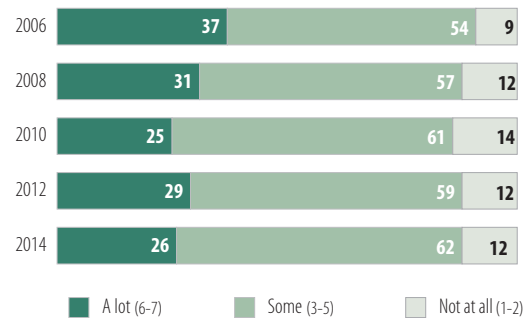
Democratic and Human Rights

PROTECTION OF CITIZENS' BASIC RIGHTS. Another central principle of democracy is the protection of civil and human rights for its citizens and (as Canada's Supreme Court has confirmed) respect for minorities.

Citizens' basic rights protected by political system. Canadians were asked to what extent they believe citizens' basic rights are well protected by the country's political system (responding on a 7 point scale, where "7" means "a lot" and "1" means "not at all"). The public is more likely than not to see basic rights as well protected in Canada, but just a quarter (26%) believe this strongly (a rating of 6 or 7), while one in ten (12%) think such rights are not protected (a rating of 1 or 2), with the remainder falling in the middle. Public confidence in Canada's protection of basic rights is down marginally from 2012, and comparable to 2010 results.

Confidence in rights protections is generally consistent across the population, but somewhat stronger among urban residents, Canadians with a university degree, those born in another country, those on the political right, and those who support the Conservative party. This view is least apt to be shared by Atlantic Canadians and British Columbians, rural residents and those who do not support any federal party. Notably, there is little variation in views across age cohorts and income groups.

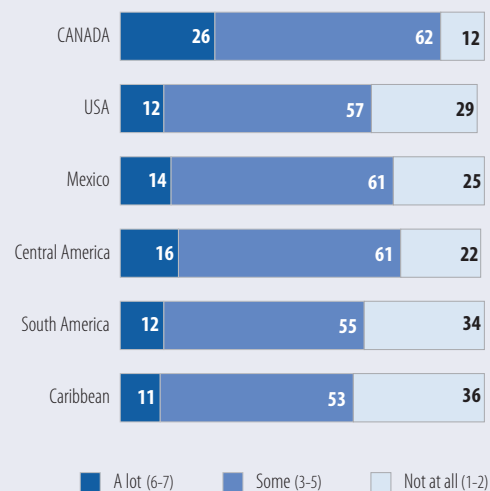
Citizens' basic rights are well-protected in Canada



International comparison

While relatively few Canadians express strong confidence in the protection of basic rights, they are in fact the most positive of any country in the hemisphere. They are now more than twice as likely as are citizens of the USA, Mexico, and many other countries to believe their rights are protected. Positive views are also expressed in Nicaragua and Argentina. Since 2012, opinions on this question have declined in some countries (Mexico, Belize, Nicaragua, Venezuela, and Chile), while improving in others (Honduras and Panama).

Extent to which citizens' basic rights are protected



Private property rights. Property rights are not current enshrined in the country's Constitution, although there has been some discussion of changing this, off and on for years. The survey reveals that the lack of such legal protection is not a widespread concern for most citizens. Canadians are more likely (24%) than not (15%) to agree that the Canadian government currently respects the private property of its citizens, with a majority (60%) somewhere in the middle.

Belief in current protection of private property results is stronger among Canadians on the political right, supporters of the federal Conservatives, Torontonians, foreign born residents, as well as those with a university education. This view is least apt to be shared by Atlantic Canadians and British Columbians, as well as rural residents.

LGBT rights. The survey also explored public attitudes about rights of individuals who make up the LGBT community, who have been gaining recognition of its civil rights over the past decade. The latest survey reveals gradual but steady public acceptance of these rights.

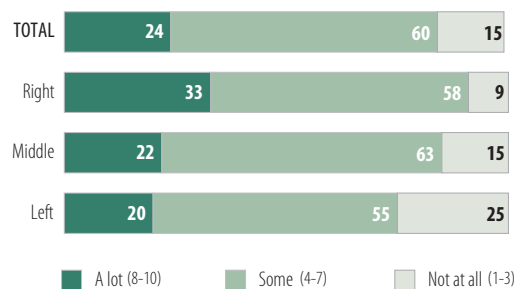
Seven in ten (70%) Canadians approve of the right of homosexuals to run for public office, compared with just six percent expressing disapproval.⁷ Public support is up marginally from 2012 (67%) and 2010 (65%). Endorsement of this civil right for LGBT individuals is now highest among rural residents (81%), those on the political left (88%) and those with no religion (80%). This view is least apt to be shared by evangelical Christians (50%), but this reflects a significant jump from 2012 when only 33 percent supported this right for LGBT individuals.

In 2005, Canada became one of the first nations to recognize same-sex marriages when the House of Commons enacted legislation redefining marriage as no longer applying to just one man and one woman. A clear majority (60%) of Canadians now approve same-sex marriage (up 3 points since 2012), while about one in seven (15%) still disapproves, a reflection of the general acceptance and recognition of the LGBT community noted earlier.

Majority approval of same-sex marriage is evident across the country, but most widespread among those on the political left (83%) and those with no religion (74%). The few groups where less than a majority share this view include the political

The Canadian government respects the private property rights of its citizens

By political orientation



Acceptance of LGBT rights



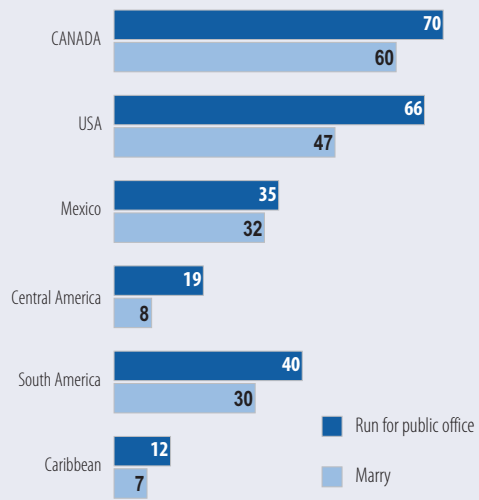
right, federal Conservatives and the very religious. About half (49%) of evangelical Christians remain opposed to same sex marriage, but somewhat less so than in 2012. Approval levels have increased over the past two years among most groups, except for declines in B.C., among Canadians born in another country, followers of non-Christian religions, and supporters of the Liberal Party and NDP.

⁷ The term "homosexual" is now outdated, but has been used on AmericasBarometer surveys across the hemisphere since their inception.

International comparison

As in 2012, LGBT rights are an issue that sharply divides Canada and the USA from most of the other countries in the Americas. Canadians (along with Uruguayans) continue to be the most supportive of LGBT persons running for public office and marrying, followed by Americans. By contrast, this view is shared by few in Central America and the Caribbean, with 80 to 90 percent disapproval in some countries. Opinions are somewhat more varied in South America where, in addition to Uruguay, acceptance is more prevalent in Brazil, Chile and Argentina. Since 2012, public support for LGBT rights have made modest gains in a few countries (Venezuela, Chile, Mexico, Honduras and Argentina).

Support for LGBT rights*



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