

# Rule of Law, Crime and Corruption

A properly functioning constitutional democracy in a country such as Canada is based on the principle of the rule of law: every citizen is subject to the law, including law makers themselves. Overall, trust and confidence in Canada's justice system exceeds the faith the public has in other aspects of Canadian democracy such as Parliament. This section delves into the justice system, including views on crime and the court system.

## Confidence in the Justice System

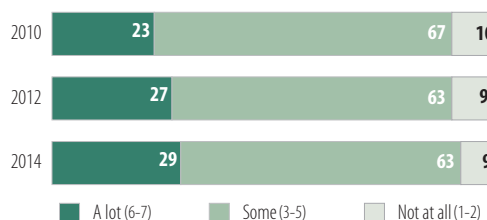
**TRUST IN JUDICIAL PROCESS.** The justice system is a complex process that begins with law making in the country's legislatures, then proceeds to enforcement of criminal law by the police and concludes with prosecution of crimes and the resolution of civil conflicts in the courts. The process of trial in the courts must be seen to be fair, while the courts must also be seen to be delivering appropriate punishment to those deemed guilty of crimes.

**Guarantee of a fair trial.** The right to a fair trial is laid out in the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, and is defined as the right "to be presumed innocent until proven guilty according to law in a fair and public hearing by an independent and impartial tribunal." Belief in the ability of courts to live up to this principle is important to the legitimacy and stability of the Canadian justice system.

Canadians are more likely than not believe the courts in Canada guarantee a fair trial, although their faith in the courts is qualified. Based on the 7 point scale (described earlier where a rating of "7" is "a lot" and "1" is "not at all"), three in ten (29%) of Canadians express a lot of confidence in the court system (rating of 6 or 7), compared with one in ten (9%) who have little or no faith in the system (rating of 1 or 2). Confidence in the courts has risen modestly since 2010.

The level of public confidence in fair trials is similar across the country, but somewhat higher in Ontario, among older Canadians, those with the most education and income, those who are religious (especially mainline Protestants), those on the political right, and those civically engaged. Since 2012, however, this view has increased most noticeably among Atlantic Canadians and citizens with the least education and income. Public attitudes about the guarantee of a fair trial are similar to the public's trust in the justice system as a whole.

## Extent to which courts in Canada guarantee a fair trial

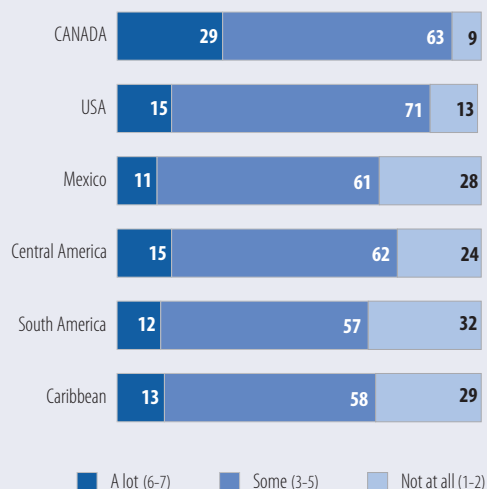


## International comparison

Canadians are now more likely than citizens elsewhere to believe their courts guarantee a fair trial, as this view has declined since 2012 across most of the hemisphere. This downward trend is most widespread in Belize, Guyana, Chile and Jamaica, and confidence in the courts is now lowest in Chile (8%), Peru (7%) and Bolivia (6%). More than four in ten citizens of Venezuela and Paraguay have no confidence in their country's court system.

When it comes to punishing the guilty, Canadians are no more likely than others in the hemisphere to express a lot of confidence, but along with Americans are among the least likely to be strongly negative. The strongest faith in punishing the guilty can be found in Nicaragua (28% have a lot of confidence), followed by the Dominican Republic (21%) (both down from 2012), as well as Panama (22%, up 9 points).

## Extent to which courts guarantee a fair trial



**Faith in punishing the guilty.** The fundamental principle of sentencing is that the sentence fits the crime. However, other factors are often considered in arriving at an appropriate sentence, such as deterring crimes by others, preventing the individual being sentenced from re-offending, the potential for rehabilitation, and providing reparation for harm done to victims. As well those who plead guilty without a trial often receive a reduced sentence.

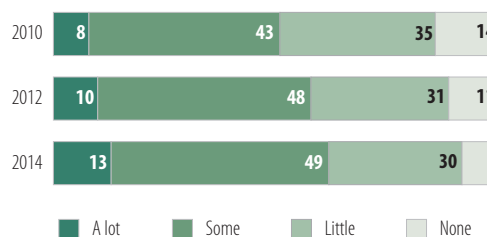
The survey asked: “If you were a victim of a robbery or assault, how much faith do you have that the judicial system would punish the guilty?” As with confidence in fair trials, Canadians’ faith in appropriate sentencing of those convicted of crimes is lukewarm. Just over one in ten (13%) express a lot of faith in the system, with a comparable proportion (9%) having none at all. Most fall somewhere in between, having “some” (49%) or little (30%) faith in the system as it applies to punishment of those who deserve it. As with opinions about fair trials, confidence levels have improved noticeably since 2010.

Faith in punishing the guilty is somewhat more evident in Ontario and Alberta, and least so in Manitoba and Saskatchewan (where opinions have declined marginally over the past two years). Since 2012, confidence in the system has improved modestly across many groups, but more significantly in Atlantic Canada and Quebec, as well as among Canadians with the least education and income.

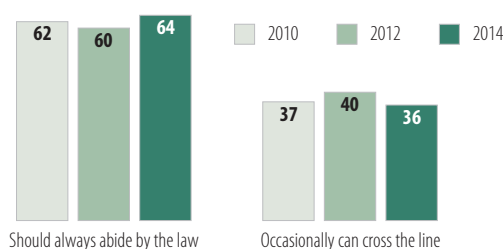
**SHOULD AUTHORITIES ABIDE BY THE LAW?** Since the adoption of the Canadian Charter of Rights there are additional burdens on police in pursuing criminals, including the right to be secure against unreasonable searches, the right not to be arbitrarily detained and the right to be informed of the reason for arrest. Police investigations can be controversial as has recently been the case with the use of “Mr. Big” investigations (a covert investigation technique used by undercover police investigators to gather confessions for prosecution). Do the public believe that authorities should always abide by the law in their pursuit of criminals?

Most, but not all, Canadians believe the authorities should work within the law in catching criminals. A clear majority (64%) want authorities always to abide by the law, with this view strengthening modestly since 2012 when 60 percent expressed this view, and is comparable to 2010 opinions. Fewer than four in ten (36%) now think it would acceptable if authorities occasionally “cross the line” in pursuit of criminals.

## Faith in punishing the guilty



## To catch criminals, authorities ...



Staying within the law to enforce them is the majority view across the population, and is most widespread among Canadians with a university degree, those born in another country, those on the political left, those civically engaged, and those who are evangelical Christians and belong to non-Christian religions. This opinion has strengthened over the past two years most significantly in Alberta and Vancouver, while declining among Canadians 60 years and older (in this group only 54% say authorities should always abide by the law, compared with 46% who say they can occasionally cross the line).

## Crime and Community Safety

A key factor in building strong local communities is individuals feeling safe and secure where they live. The survey explored Canadians' feelings about their sense of safety in their neighbourhood, perceptions of local gang activity, their own experiences with crime and what they have done about it individually and in their community.

**PERSONAL EXPERIENCE WITH CRIME.** Crime statistics are gathered in two ways: police reported crime data, and surveys that allow victims to self-identify. Statistics Canada reported this year that police-identified crime was down for the tenth year in a row in 2013. However, crimes often go unreported to police. This survey asked a number of self-reporting questions about individuals' experience with crime as victims, and the results confirm the reported statistics indicating that victimization is on the decline.

One in ten Canadians (11%) report to have been the victim of a crime in the past year, down marginally from two years ago and the lowest level reported since this question was first asked in 2006. Six percent of also indicate someone else in their household was victimized over this time period. Accounting for the overlap, this translates into 15 percent of Canadian households experiencing some form of crime in the past 12 months; this represents a decline of almost one-third since 2010 when the proportion was 21 percent.

Personal victimization rates have declined in most groups, but most noticeably in Manitoba and Saskatchewan (to 7%, down 9 points). As in 2012, experience with crime is higher among younger Canadians (17% among those under 30), and has declined marginally in all age groups except among those 60 plus (7%). Victimization is somewhat more widely reported among Canadians on the political right (15%) and those who are very religious (16%). There is little difference across income levels or community size (although a bit lower among those living in rural areas).

Among Canadians reporting personal experience with crime over the past 12 months, most (63%) say this happened to them once during this period, with another 18 percent reporting two such incidents, and a small proportion (5%) indicating five or more times (this group represents about one-half of one percent of the adult Canadian population).

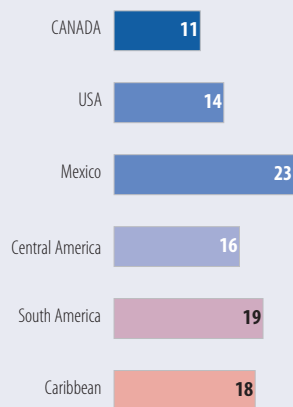
### Victimized by crime in last 12 months



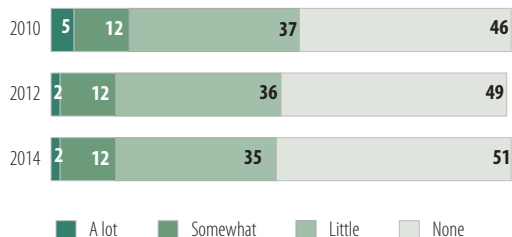
### International comparison

Canadians' personal experience with crime is among the lowest in the hemisphere, comparable with the USA and several Latin American countries (Costa Rica, Chile and Trinidad and Tobago). Victimization rates are most varied in South America, ranging from highs in Peru (31%), Ecuador (28%) and Argentina (24%) to lows in Guyana (7%) and Chile (11%). Variation is also evident in the Caribbean, ranging from 23 percent in the Dominican Republic to only seven percent in Jamaica. Since 2012, crime victimization has increased by four percentage points or more in Venezuela, Nicaragua and the Dominican Republic, while declining in Guatemala, Costa Rica, Bolivia and Haiti.

### Self victimized by crime in last 12 months



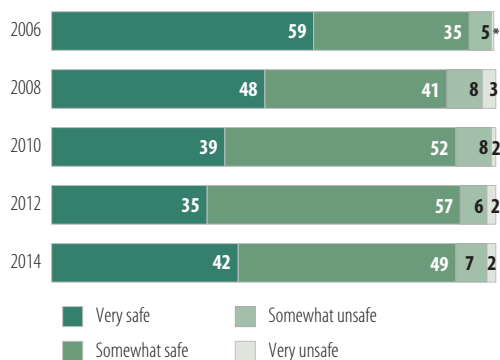
## Neighbourhood affected by gangs



**LOCAL GANG ACTIVITY.** In many Canadian cities the presence of gangs, particularly youth gangs, has been associated with criminal activity. About one in six Canadians report their neighbourhood is affected by gang activity either “a lot” (2%) or “somewhat” (12%), with roughly a third (35%) saying there was “a little” gang activity. Overall perceptions of gang activity are similar to 2012 and down marginally from 2010.

The stability in perceptions nationally notwithstanding, there have been notable shifts. Since 2012, reports of local gang activity have jumped in Quebec (doubling in Montreal from 12% to 24%), while declining in the Prairie provinces and B.C (halving in Vancouver, from 30% to 15%). The lowest rate of reported gang activity is now in Atlantic Canada and Alberta (7% respectively in each), while highest in the major urban centres (20%). Opinions have shifted over the past two years by political orientation: Canadians on the left are now less apt to report local gang issues (10%, down 6 points), while those on the right are more apt to do so (21%, up 9).

## Safety of neighbourhood where you live



\* Less than one percent

**NEIGHBOUR SAFETY.** How safe do Canadians feel about their neighbourhoods, in terms of the possibility of being assaulted or robbed? Most Canadians believe they live in a safe area, and this sense has strengthened in the past two years, reversing a downward trend. More than four in ten (42%) now report feeling very safe in their neighbourhood, up from 35 percent who reported this in 2012, although below the levels recorded in 2006 and 2008 which were based on telephone rather than online surveys.<sup>8</sup> Another half (49%) feel “somewhat” safe, while fewer than one in ten feel somewhat (7%) or very (2%) unsafe.

Feelings of safety in ones neighbourhood have increased in all groups since 2014, but most significantly in Alberta and BC, and in major urban centres. Very safe neighbourhoods are most widely reported among Canadians 60 plus (51%), those in the top income bracket (54%) and mainline Protestants (55%), while this is least evident in Quebec (29%), and lower among those living outside Montreal (35%). Unsafe neighbourhoods are most apt to be identified by Canadians without a high school diploma (16%). Notably, the gender gap in perceptions of living in a very safe neighbourhood has almost disappeared (44% of men, compared with 41% of women).

<sup>8</sup> Comparisons between telephone-based and online-based surveys must be treated with caution because they can elicit slightly different responses to the same questions. Telephone surveys have been shown to elicit somewhat more “socially desirable” responses to certain types of questions.

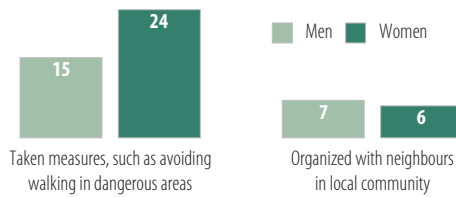
**STEPS TAKEN TO IMPROVE PERSONAL SAFETY.** The 2014 survey asked Canadians about steps they may have taken in the past 12 months out of concerns about crime and personal safety in their community.

One in five (20%) Canadians report having taken some type of measure(s) to protect themselves, such as avoiding walking through some areas of their neighbourhood because they perceive them as dangerous. A smaller proportion (6%) indicate they organized with their neighbours out of concerns about crime.

Personal actions to keep oneself safe are most commonly reported by women (24%), residents in communities of 100,000 or more (22%) Canadians under 30 (29%), those in households earning under \$30K per year (27%), those on the political right (26%), those civically engaged (34%), and those who belong to non-Christian religions (28%). This is least apt to be the case for rural residents (7%)

Organizing with neighbours out of fear of local crime is most evident among francophones (12%), Canadians on the political right (12%), those civically engaged (18%), and non-Christians (14%).

## Steps taken to protect self from local crime

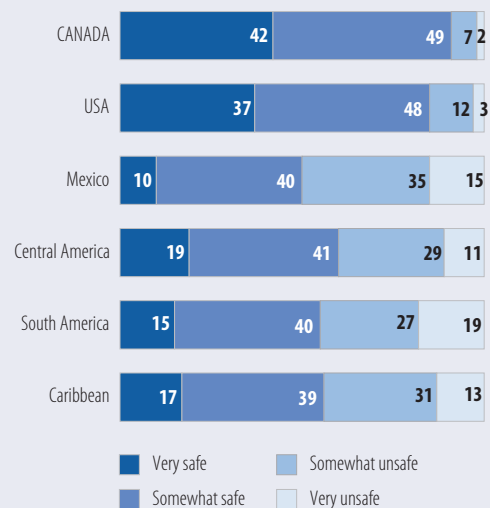


### International comparison

Canadians stand out as feeling the most secure in terms of personal safety in their neighbourhood, and are among only a handful of countries where this comfort has strengthened over the past two years. Perceptions of safe neighbourhoods have declined almost everywhere else, most noticeably in Costa Rica, Panama, Paraguay and the Dominican Republic. After Canada, it is Jamaicans (39%) and Americans (37%) who are most apt to feel they live in safe neighbourhoods. Unsafe neighbourhoods are most prevalent in Venezuela (67%), Peru (60%), the Dominican Republic (56%) and Bolivia (55%).

Given perceptions of safety, it is not surprising that Canadians and Americans are among the least likely to report having taken measures to protect themselves from crime. Such actions are most widely reported in South America, notably Venezuela (71%), Brazil (56%) and Peru (53%), along with the Dominican Republic (59%) and Costa Rica (54%). This is least apt to be reported in Haiti (19%) and Guyana (21%). Organizing with neighbours to address local crime is most widespread in Peru (28%), Bolivia (28%) and the Dominican Republic (28%)

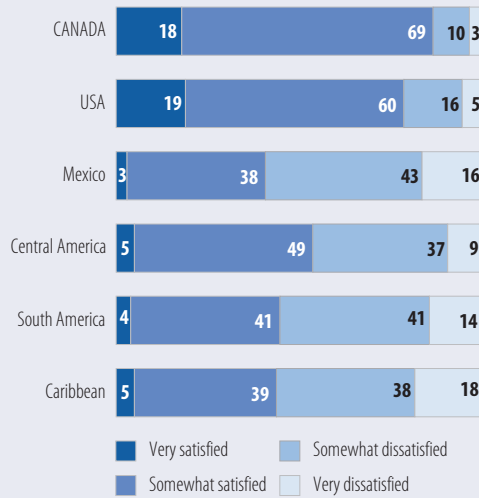
### Safety of neighbourhood where you live



### International comparison

As with perceptions of safety, Canadians and Americans are the most satisfied with the protection provided by their local police. Fewer than one in ten from every other country say they are very satisfied, and dissatisfaction is widespread, especially in Venezuela (71%), Peru (69%), Bolivia (68%) and Haiti (65%).

### Satisfaction with the performance of police in your neighbourhood



**PROTECTION BY LOCAL POLICE.** One in five (18%) Canadians are very satisfied with the performance of the local police in protecting their neighbourhood. Most (69%) are somewhat satisfied, while just over one in ten are somewhat (10%) or very (3%) dissatisfied.

Opinions are similar across the country, although strong satisfaction is somewhat lower in rural communities (14%). This view is most evident among Canadians 60 plus, those on the political right and Conservative supporters. Dissatisfaction is most prevalent among Canadians with no federal vote preference (23%) and those generally dissatisfied with their life overall (30%). Those civically engaged are among those most likely to be either very satisfied or dissatisfied (with fewer in the “somewhat” category).

## Corruption in Government

Corruption in government, including bribery of officials, is an ongoing concern around the world as it delegitimizes democratic governance. The United Nations believes corruption diverts public resources to private gain and thereby reduces access to public services. While evidence of corruption is low in Canada by international standards, there are many current examples on today's front pages, including a major municipal corruption scandal in Quebec, the conviction of the Mayor of London Ontario for misuse of public funds, and spending irregularities by several of the country's Senators.

**BRIBERY REQUESTS FROM PUBLIC SERVANTS.** In some countries petty bribery is relatively common, either to expedite access to public services or to avoid sanctions such as traffic tickets. While such transactions may occur from time to time in Canada, they are not common.

Three percent of Canadians report having been **asked for a bribe by a police officer** during the past year, (similar to findings from 2012 and 2010). The reported frequency of such bribery requests is similar across the country, but marginally higher among Canadians born in another country (6%), those civically engaged (8%), and the very religious (6%), as well as by those with the least and most education (6% each, respectively).

Similarly, three percent of Canadians report that they had been **asked for a bribe by a government employee** in the past 12 months, comparable to findings dating back to 2006.

This experience is marginally higher in Manitoba and Saskatchewan (6%), among younger Canadians (7%), those with less than a high school education (7%), those born outside the country (6%), those on the political right (6%), the very religious (8%), and those high on the civic action index (8%).

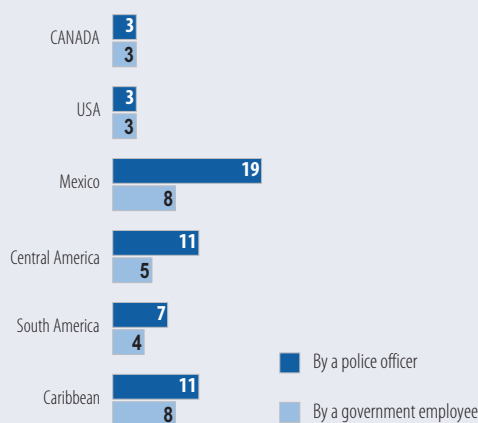
There is some overlap between those who were asked for bribes from police officers and government officials; about six in ten reporting either type of bribery request report both of them.

### International comparison

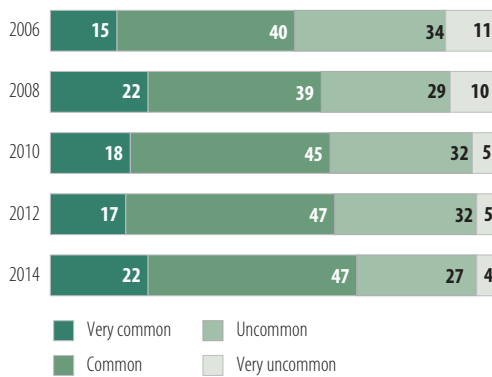
As in 2012, Canadians and Americans are among the least likely in the hemisphere to have been asked for a bribe from police or government officials, along with residents of Chile and Uruguay. This experience is most common in Mexico, Bolivia and Paraguay (in each country about one in five report requests from police in the past year), and also above the average in Guatemala, Honduras, Peru and the Dominican Republic.

Overall, reports of bribe requests have remained relatively stable since 2012. Requests from police have increased in Panama, Belize, Venezuela and Paraguay, while requests from government officials have gone up in Panama, while declining in Haiti.

### Asked for a bribe in the last 12 months



## Corruption among public officials



**CORRUPTION AMONG PUBLIC OFFICIALS.** Canadian citizens report little direct experience with corruption among public officials, but read or hear about such activities in the media on almost a daily basis. To what extent does the public believe corruption takes place among public officials who are elected or hired to represent their interests as citizens and taxpayers?

Seven in ten Canadians believe that such corruption is very common (22%) or common (47%), compared with one in four (27%) who say uncommon, and a mere four percent who maintain it is very uncommon. Public perceptions of corruption are on the rise since 2012, when only 17 percent thought it was very common, reversing a marginal decline dating back to 2008.

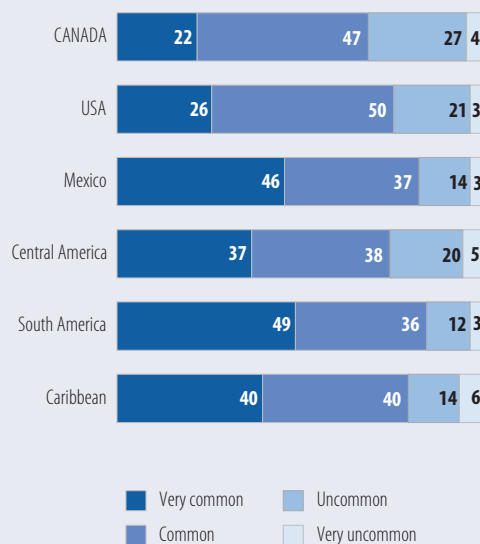
A majority of Canadians across the country and in every population group perceive that corruption is either common or very common. However, this perspective is particularly widespread in Quebec (34% say very common), where a commission of inquiry into allegations of municipal corruption has been underway since 2011. However, the increased belief in corruption among public officials has increased most significantly since 2012 in provinces from Manitoba and west (by roughly 10 points), while declining in Atlantic Canada (where only 14% now say corruption is very common). This view has also jumped in Montreal (to 38%, up 13 points), but not elsewhere in the province (nor among francophones).

Perception of corruption among public officials is somewhat more evident among Canadians on the political left, federal NDP supporters and those civically engaged, while less so among Conservative Party supporters and mainline Protestants.

### International comparison

Canadians (along with Haitians) are the least likely across the hemisphere to believe that corruption among public officials is very common in their country. Perceptions of widespread corruption are most widespread in Colombia (59%), Paraguay (56%), the Dominican Republic (53%) and Venezuela (52%). Since 2012 this view has increased noticeably in Belize, Honduras, Venezuela and Paraguay, while declining in Panama and Haiti.

### Corruption among political officials

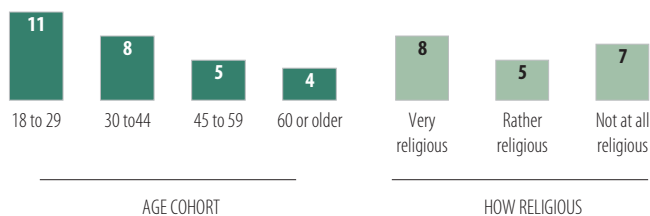




**ARE BRIBES JUSTIFIED?** Apart from the prevalence of corruption in society, do Canadians believe it is acceptable behaviour to engage in under some circumstances? Few (7%) believe that “given the way things are, sometimes paying a bribe is justified”, with nine in ten (91%) saying it is not (the remaining 3% declined to answer the question).

The public’s acceptance of bribery as sometimes justifiable is somewhat higher in Toronto (11%), among Canadians under 30 (11%), those without a high school diploma (12%) or a university degree (10%), those on the political right (10%), and those civically engaged (10%). This view is least apt to be shared in B.C. (2%) and among rural residents (3%). Notably, responses to this question about what constitutes in part a moral issue are not linked to the importance people place on religion.

### Sometimes paying a bribe is justified



### International comparison

Canadians and Americans are the least apt to say that paying bribes is sometimes justified. This view is most commonly expressed in Haiti (43%), followed by Jamaica (32%), Guyana (26%) and the Dominican Republic (22%), Nicaragua (20%) and Mexico (19%).

### Sometimes paying a bribe is justified

