

CANADA'S CURRENT ROLE IN THE WORLD

Canada's influence in the world today

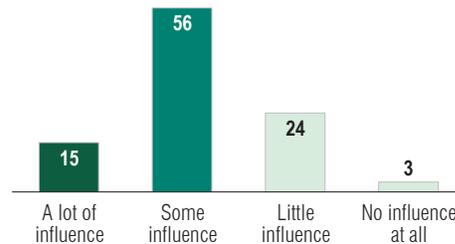
Most Canadians believe their country exerts at least some influence in world affairs today, and that it has grown over the past 20 years, largely because of its peacekeeping and/or military activities focusing on fighting terrorism. Those who see a diminishing influence point to less peacekeeping or declining independence from the U.S on foreign policy.

How do Canadians view the impact their country has in today's world? Most believe Canada exerts "some" influence in the world today (56%), although few (15%) would say Canada exerts "a lot of influence." The remainder say the country exerts little influence (24%) or none at all (3%) on the world stage.

Perhaps more notably is the fact that most Canadians believe Canada's role in the world is now stronger than in the past. Almost two-thirds hold the view that Canada's role in world affairs has increased a great deal (20%) or at least somewhat (43%), compared with one in four who say it has declined somewhat (20%) or a great deal (7%). One in ten believe Canada's influence on world events has stayed more or less the same since the 1980s (4%) or are unable to say either way (5%).

Age cohort. Young people aged 15 to 24 express greater confidence about Canada's sway on the international scene, with 25 percent believing Canada has a lot of influence globally and 72 percent indicating this role has strengthened in the past two decades. There is little difference in viewpoints across the three older age cohorts.

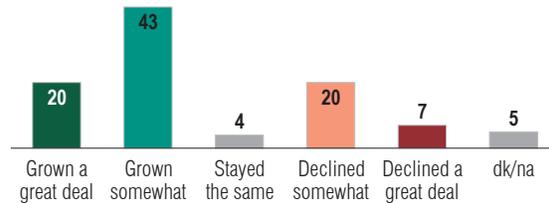
Canada's influence in the world today



Q.24

How much impact or influence do you believe Canada has today in world affairs generally? Would you say Canada has ...?

Canada's role in world affairs during past 20 years



Q.25

Do you think Canada's role in world affairs has grown or declined during the past 20 years? Would that be a great deal or somewhat?

Place of birth. Foreign-born Canadians are as likely as native-born to say that Canada yields a lot of influence on world affairs today (16%), but are more apt to say it has little or no influence (33%), and are somewhat less likely to believe the country's role has strengthened a great deal since the 1980s (17%).

Region. Views on this issue are similar across the country, but residents of Saskatchewan/Manitoba (80%) and the North (82%) are most apt to feel Canada has at least some influence in world affairs. Atlantic Canadians are most likely to believe this role has strengthened (72%), while this view is least apt to be shared by Quebecers (58%, although more likely than most to say it has grown a great deal). Quebecers are less likely than other Canadians to cite peacekeeping and humanitarian efforts as examples for the country's increased influence.

How Canada's role has grown

Those who believe Canada's influence has grown in recent decades are most likely to point to peacekeeping and humanitarian efforts (27%) or military efforts and

support for the war on terror (26%) as examples of ways in which the country's influence has increased. Others cite general helpfulness and global awareness (14%), increased economic support to other countries (13%), increased global popularity (11%) and augmented diplomatic influence (10%). Another 15 percent of Canadians who say Canada's influence has grown in recent decades are unable to name any specific examples.

How Canada's role has declined

Those who see Canada's influence as having declined over the past 20 years are most likely to cite the decline in peacekeeping support to other countries as the major reason for this decline (37%). Others mention a lack of independence and leadership (17%), Canada's failure to differentiate itself from the United States (16%), overall poor governance by the federal government (16%) and support for the war on terror (14%) as reasons for a loss of influence in world affairs.

NOTE: Sample sizes are too small to allow meaningful group comparisons on this question.

Canada's contributions to the world today

Canadians see peacekeeping as their country's most important contribution to the world, while the environment is most apt to be viewed as its greatest missed opportunity for global leadership. Many events are identified as Canada's most significant historical moment on the world stage, but the list is dominated by military conflict, led by participation in World War II.

Most important contribution

Despite changes in the deployments and priorities of Canada's armed forces, a quarter of Canadians (26%) continue to believe that peacekeeping is the most important contribution Canada makes to the world. Foreign-aid is the second most commonly named Canadian contribution (17%), followed by support for multiculturalism/immigration (a total of 7%) and human rights (5%).

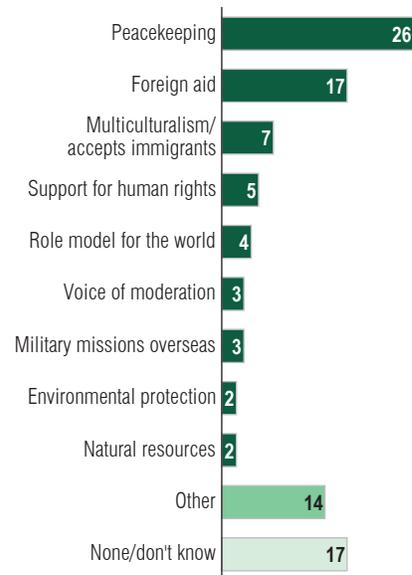
Smaller proportions of Canadians believe that their country's greatest contributions are to serve as an example to other countries (4%), to serve as a voice of moderation in global discourse (3%) and significantly—given our current role in Afghanistan—to support allies in military campaigns, including the war on terror (3%). One in six (17%) are unable to name anything as the country's most important contribution to the world.

Trend analysis from Environics' FOCUS CANADA surveys reveals that Canadians' emphasis on peacekeeping has declined noticeably since 2006, when 35 percent identified it as the country's number one contribution to the world. Focus on foreign aid has increased modestly over the past two years (up 3 points) while there is little change in other mentions.

Age cohort and place of birth. Young people and foreign-born Canadians do not differ substantially from the Canadian average in their views on this question.

Region. Quebecers stand out in being more likely to see foreign-aid (27%) as Canada's greatest contribution to the world, while less likely to name peacekeeping (20%) (as was the case in 2006).

Canada's most positive contribution to the world



Q.27

In your opinion, what is the most positive contribution that Canada, as a country, makes to the world?

Greatest historical moment on the world stage

What would Canadians consider to be the country's finest historical moment, in terms of demonstrating leadership on the world stage? When asked (unprompted), a wide range of answers are offered but the public tends to think of events involving war and conflict. Canadians see their countries' greatest moments on the world stage as having come through military endeavour, specifically participation in the World Wars and the Korean War: one in five Canadians (19%) name one of these conflicts as marking the country's most positive moments of global leadership. World War II is the single most commonly mentioned campaign, named by 14 percent of Canadians, followed by Vimy Ridge (4%).

Eight percent of Canadians name moments associated with peacekeeping and the United Nations as periods of outstanding Canadian leadership, while six percent name Prime Minister Lester Pearson's Nobel Peace Prize as a highlight of Canada's history in the world. Three percent of Canadians cite the country's refusal to join the war in Iraq as a great moment of global leadership for Canada, while two percent say that participating in the war on terror has been Canada's most positive international effort.

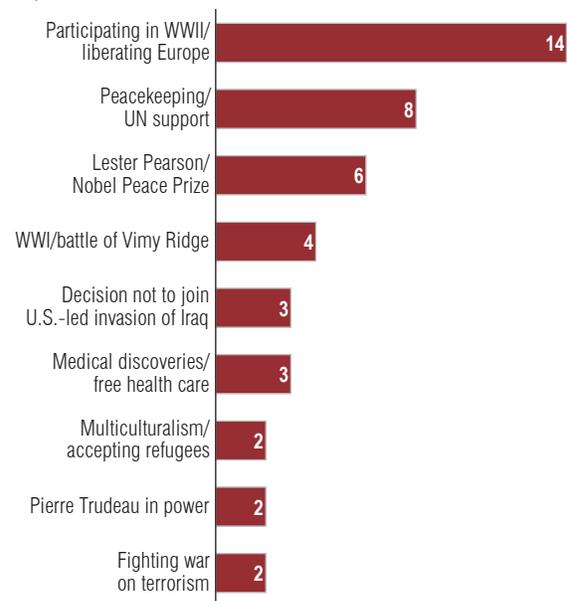
By comparison, few cite events of a non-military nature, such as medical discoveries or the country's health care system (3%), multiculturalism and immigration policies (2%), the Constitution or Charter of Rights and Freedoms (1%), signing the North American Free Trade Agreement (1%) or the Kyoto Protocol (1%). Of significance is the fact that over four in ten (44%) Canadians cannot think of any historical moment as the country's finest on the world stage.

Age cohort. Youth are least able to identify any event as the country's finest international moment. Canadians 60 and over are most apt to remember World War Two, and Lester Pearson winning the Nobel Peace Prize.

Place of birth. Foreign-born Canadians give responses similar to those of native-born on this question, although somewhat less likely to name participation in the World Wars and the Korean war as Canada's best moments on the world stage (15%).

Canada's greatest historical moment on the world stage

Top mentions



Q.29

Thinking about Canada's role in the world since it became a country 140 years ago, what, in your view, has been Canada's finest historical moment in terms of demonstrating positive leadership on the world stage?

Region. Residents of Quebec and Manitoba/Saskatchewan are least able to identify any event as Canada's finest international moment.

Missed opportunities

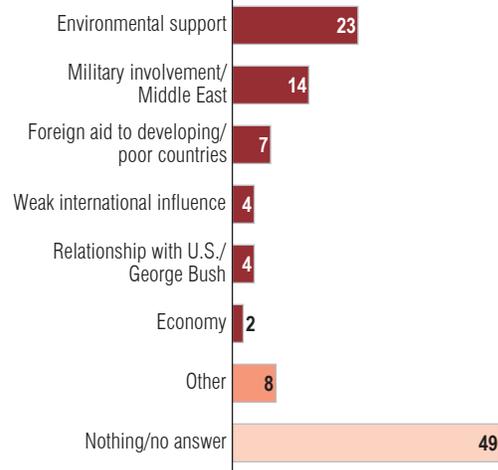
Canadians were also asked to identify any areas in which they felt Canada has missed an important opportunity to make a positive contribution to the world. Half name such a missed opportunity, the most common responses being demonstrating more leadership on environmental issues (23%) and in its military activity in the Middle East (not playing a more active role) (14%), while others cite more that could have been done with foreign aid (7%), having more influence on other countries (4%), and the country's relationship with the U.S. and President Bush (4%). The other half of Canadians (49%) cannot identify any significant missed opportunities for positive contribution in the world.

Age cohort. Youth are least able to identify any missed opportunities (56%).

Place of birth. No differences emerge in responses to this question

Region. Quebecers are most likely to name environmental leadership (29%) and military activities in the Middle East (17%) as Canada's missed opportunities for global contribution.

Canada's biggest missed opportunity for global leadership



Q.28

And in what areas, if any, do you think Canada has missed an important opportunity to make a positive contribution to the world?