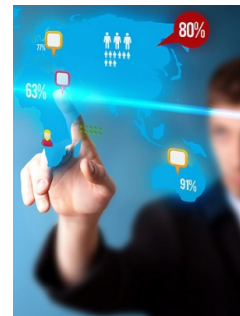


# Canadian Public Opinion on Governance 2016



## FINAL REPORT

June  
2016



Institute on  
Governance  
LEADING EXPERTISE

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EXPERTISE DE POINTE

*This study was conducted by the Environics Institute, in partnership with the Institute on Governance.*

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# Introduction

It is a cliché of Canadian political science that in contrast to the “*life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness*” promised by Thomas Jefferson in the Declaration of Independence in 1776, the fathers of the Canadian Confederation aspired in their *British North America Act*, some ninety years later in 1867 to “*peace, order and good government*.” Personal liberty is the hallmark of the American Dream, while the peace and order that come from good government has been the Canadian way. The signal achievements of our southern neighbour are the products of private enterprise; in Canada, our signal achievements – from the CPR to Medicare – are the products of public enterprise. While Canada has not been immune to the international trend towards privatization of public sector enterprises, government continues to play a large, and in some cases an increasing, role in the lives of Canadians.

At the same time, the world is changing rapidly, due in large part to fundamental transformations brought about by globalization, the digital revolution and social trends. By comparison, the institutions of government in Canada have changed very little; they would easily be recognized by someone living 50 or even 100 years ago. In recent years, there has been growing pressure to reform some of the country’s central institutions of government (e.g., the Senate, electoral system, role of MPs). While there may be broad agreement that our governance institutions are in need of updating, there is no consensus about what changes to make, or even the process by which to decide how this might be accomplished.

Amidst this debate, it is essential to consider the perspective of the Canadian public, which is the central stakeholder in our democratic system. Reforming the country’s system

of governance cannot be accomplished without a certain level of public acceptance or support (a lesson learned two decades ago with the ill-fated Charlottetown Accord). How do Canadians view the country’s current institutions of government, what importance do they place on reform, and what types of changes would they like to see or be prepared to accept?

To answer these questions, the Environics Institute for Survey Research partnered with the Institute on Governance to conduct a national public opinion survey on Canadian democratic governance and reform. The survey focuses on public perceptions about governance at the federal level, and support for reforms across a range of institutions, including Parliament, the electoral system, the Senate, engagement with Canadians, representation of Indigenous peoples, the use of digital technology and governance of the sharing economy. This is the second in a series of surveys on public governance conducted by the Environics Institute and the Institute on Governance, and some of the questions on the first survey (conducted in November 2014) were repeated on this one to identify how opinions may have changed over time.

The research is based on an online survey conducted February 1 to 10, 2016, with a representative sample of 2,000 Canadians, aged 18 and over. The sample was weighted by region, age and gender to match the country’s population. This report presents the results of the survey, including an analysis by region and by key demographic subgroups of the population, including citizens’ level of attention and engagement in public affairs issues. Detailed tables are available under separate cover. All results are presented as percentages unless otherwise noted.



## Executive summary

How do Canadians today view the institutions of their federal government, how much reform do they think is called for, and what types of changes do they believe are needed or would be prepared to accept? In broad terms, the Canadian public is looking for improvements, but stopping short of demanding wholesale changes in the country's governance systems (in sharp contrast with the current political climate in the USA).

A clear majority of the Canadian public currently believes the government in Ottawa today is generally working, rather than broken. This sentiment has strengthened measurably in the space of 18 months (when last measured), most likely as a result of a new government taking office following the October 2015 federal election. This does not mean that everyone is satisfied, and three-quarters of Canadians believe there are problems (if not major ones) with how the country is governed. There is no one focus of primary concern, with Canadians identifying a range of problem areas, first and foremost wasteful spending, but also poor decision-making, and a lack of responsiveness to citizen priorities and needs. By comparison, there is less emphasis given to problems with corruption and the lack of innovation and improvement in how the government operates. Overall, the survey indicates that Canadians would like to see improved governance at the federal level, but more in the form of incremental improvements than sweeping transformation in how the country's democratic institutions function.

**REFORMS TO FEDERAL INSTITUTIONS.** What types of changes or reforms would Canadians like to see made to the country's federal institutions? Among the areas covered in this research, the Canadian Senate is the institution most widely seen by the public as being in need of change. While there is no consensus on what this might look like, there is strong majority support for either major reforms or outright abolishment, and there is broad agreement that reopening the Constitution is justified in order to make something significant happen. There is also widespread public support

for making changes that do not require constitutional change, such as strengthening the rules of conduct for Senators and making the appointment process more transparent.

Canadians express interest in changing the country's electoral system, but this does not reflect widespread or deep-seated desire for reform. Majorities express support for making it possible to vote in federal elections online, and reforming the current election financing laws, while there is considerably less openness to mandatory voting laws (as are now in place in some countries like Australia). In terms of changing the country's longstanding "first past the post" method of electing MPs to Parliament, a majority favours changes, but only one in four Canadians believes that these should be major in scope. None of the alternative voting systems currently under consideration are clearly favoured, although the mixed member proportional method is comparatively more popular than the others tested. The results suggest the public as a whole is not yet engaged in the issue of reforming the federal electoral voting system, and that Canadians will need more information and public discussions to better understand the alternatives.

Canadians believe the federal government should be engaging with citizens in how it governs the country, although this does not mean there is an expectation or desire for consultation on every decision and policy. The balance of opinion tilts toward the middle ground: engagement where the input is most likely to improve decisions and outcomes, as opposed to consulting on most major decisions or, alternatively, in only a few cases. As for how the public would like to be engaged, there is greater preference for some traditional methods (public opinion surveys, public meetings) over the more selectively-used royal commissions or 21st century innovations like social media platforms, such as Facebook and Twitter. This suggests that the federal government has not yet made use of the right social media engagement tools for meeting current expectations about engagement on public policy.

Increased recognition of Indigenous peoples is a central plank in the new government's mandate, and this is reflected in the appointment of several Indigenous MPs to important Cabinet posts such as Justice. Consistent with this new priority, the Canadian public is generally supportive of expanding Indigenous peoples' representation in the country's governing institutions, although this support is not unqualified as many say their opinion depends on what form this representation might take. For instance, when asked about designating a specific number of seats for Indigenous representatives in the House of Commons, in the Senate or on the Supreme Court, opinions are evenly divided as follows: one-third support, one-third oppose, and one-third say it depends or are unsure. Overall, it is significant that two-thirds of Canadians are open to, if not clearly supportive of, mandating the representation of Indigenous peoples in the central institutions of the federal government.

### **GOVERNMENT OVERSIGHT AND ACCOUNTABILITY.**

Public institutions and the people who run them no longer enjoy the level of public confidence and deference they did in previous generations. The Canadian public's trust in MPs and federal civil servants remains qualified at best; most say they have "some" or "little" trust in these actors. Perhaps for this reason, there is widespread public agreement that rules and procedures are necessary to ensure the accountability of those who are governing on its behalf.

At the same time, the research also demonstrates that Canadians consider such rules to be necessary, but by no means sufficient, in guiding those who work in government. Strong majorities agree that accountability should be based on what is accomplished (rather than what procedures have been followed) and on clear principles (rather than on detailed rules). As well, even those who believe there are not enough rules and procedures in the federal government today are not keen to add new ones if such rules lead to less timely decisions, slower innovation or additional costs to taxpayers.

**GOVERNANCE IN THE DIGITAL AGE.** Government agencies and departments are now focusing on determining how best to incorporate digital technologies into policy development and service delivery. There is clear public interest in seeing expanded use of digital technologies, particularly in such areas as providing citizens with government information online, delivery of public services,

direct access to elected officials through online platforms, and new forms of consultation through digital media. Four in ten say they would be interested in being able to communicate directly with governments via text messaging on service-related issues (e.g., tax returns, passport renewals). At the same time, there is no pent-up demand for new digital government services. Only one-third believe governments are currently doing too little in the application of digital technologies, and few can think of particular areas in which they could be doing more. These results suggest that, by and large, Canadians may not yet be familiar with the existing governance-related applications of digital technologies, and therefore unlikely to fully appreciate their current and potential benefits.

Despite expressing interest in digital government, Canadians also have concerns about the potential risks, such as the deliberate or inadvertent leak of personal information. At the same time, it is by no means apparent that such worries represent a significant obstacle to public support and use of expanding digital services offered by government.

Canadians are quickly becoming familiar with the fast-emerging world of "sharing economy" businesses. Four in ten have already used, or know someone who has used, Uber (the app-based taxi-type service) and AirBnB (the web-based service for lodging in private homes). The growth of these services underscores their popularity, but not everyone is yet on board with this business model as a good thing. Most Canadians believe these businesses should be subject to regulation in such areas as insurance, taxation and safety standards, whether this involves the current regulatory structure or a new one that accommodates both traditional and sharing economy businesses.

### **HOW OPINIONS VARY ACROSS THE POPULATION.**

Canadian opinions on the topics covered in this survey are largely similar across the population, and the conclusions articulated above apply regardless of individuals' province, socio-economic status, age group or gender. Attitudes differ to varying degrees among groups on specific issues, but there is no underlying pattern of divergent perspectives, be they regional or socio-economic, on the broad topics of government effectiveness, institutional reform, government accountability or governing in a digital world.



# Effectiveness of the federal government

## Role of government in quality of life

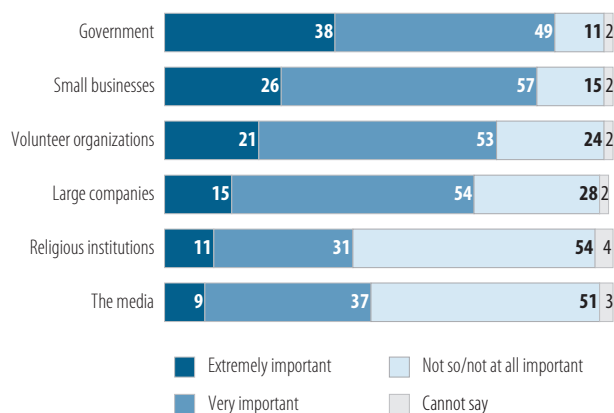
*Canadians see government as essential to ensuring their local quality of life, and more so compared with the private and non-profit sectors, and the media.*

The initial questions on the survey asked about the overall role of government (writ large) in society, and in relation to other major sectors of society. As in 2014, Canadians place considerable importance on government relative to other sectors and institutions. Close to four in ten (38%) say government is “extremely important” in ensuring a good quality of life in their own community, with most of the remainder (49%) indicating the government’s role is “very important.” These results are essentially unchanged from the previous survey conducted in fall 2014.

By comparison, around one in four identify small businesses (26%) or volunteer organizations (e.g., United Way, YMCA) (21%) as having an extremely important role in local quality of life, with fewer assigning this level of importance to large companies (15%), religious institutions (11%) or the media (9%). These proportions are down marginally since 2014 in all cases excepting small business (where it has remained unchanged).

Opinions about the contribution of government to societal quality of life are generally similar across the population, with the importance of government somewhat more evident among immigrants, engaged Canadians,<sup>1</sup> and those who are broadly positive about the role of government in today’s society (see more on this below). No more than one in five from any group express the view that government’s role in local quality of life is of little or no importance (with the exception of those who believe that the federal government is completely broken – comprising 28% of this group, up 6 points from 2014). Opinions on this question are generally consistent across regions, socio-economic status, age cohorts and employment sectors.

Importance in ensuring good quality of life in your community



Q.1

*How important do you believe each of the following sectors is to ensuring a good quality of life in your community... ?*

<sup>1</sup> A variable was created to measure the degree to which Canadians are paying attention to, and engaged with, public policy and public affairs. An index of “engagement” was created based on responses to questions about media use, voting behaviour, and education level. “Engaged Canadians” represent the top 38% of this index.

## Is the federal government working?

*Canadians are twice as likely to believe the federal government is working as opposed to broken, showing improvement since 2014. The public is most apt to say the government is broken because of wasteful spending, poor decision-making, and not being responsive to citizen priorities and needs.*

Canadians were asked a global question about the effectiveness of the federal government today, borrowed from a 2013 survey of Americans conducted by the Public Religion Research Institute and The Brookings Institution, and also included on our 2014 governance survey. Public views about the effectiveness of the federal government are mixed but show significant improvement since 2014. More than six in ten Canadians now say the federal government is generally working (27%) or working but with major problems (36%), up 13 percentage points. One-third are negative, saying the government is “broken, but working in some areas” (25%) or “completely broken” (8%), down eight points. Only five percent are unable to offer an opinion (down 4 points).

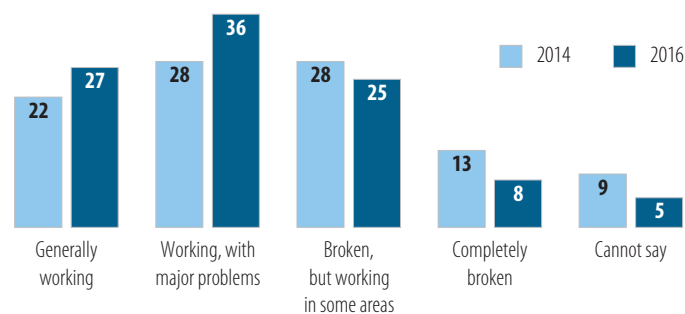
Canadians’ assessment of the federal government’s effectiveness is generally consistent across the country, and the upward trend in ratings is evident in all groups, but most significant in Atlantic Canada and Ontario, as well as among Canadians with lower incomes and francophones, while declining modestly in Alberta (down 6 points).

This pattern suggests that the boost in positive ratings of the federal government’s effectiveness is due in part to the recent change in government after the October 2015 general election.

As was found in 2014, opinions are closely related to direct experience with a federal government agency or service in the previous 12 months: Among those very satisfied with this service experience, 71 percent say that government is generally working; this drops to 34 percent among those somewhat satisfied, and declines further to only seven percent among those who are not satisfied (62% of this group says government is broken). Individuals who have not had any experience with government services in the past year are somewhat more negative than average, but this group has shown the most improvement since 2014 (with positive ratings up 13 points).

It is worth noting that Canadians’ satisfaction with federal government services has improved measurably since 2014, with more than half now saying they are very (9%) or somewhat (44%) satisfied in dealing with federal government agencies or services in the previous 12 months (up 12 percentage points).

### Is the federal government today working or broken?



Q.2

Would you say that the federal government today is ... ?

**How is the federal government broken?** The third of Canadians critical of the federal government's effectiveness were asked in what way it is partially or completely broken. The question offered eight response options, with the opportunity to volunteer additional reasons. As in 2014, Canadians give multiple reasons for their view, with each mentioned by at least four in ten. This group is most likely to say the federal government is broken because of wasteful spending (80%), followed by poor decisions or policies they do not agree with (62%), not being responsive to citizen priorities and needs (61%), and inadequate services to help those in need (52%).

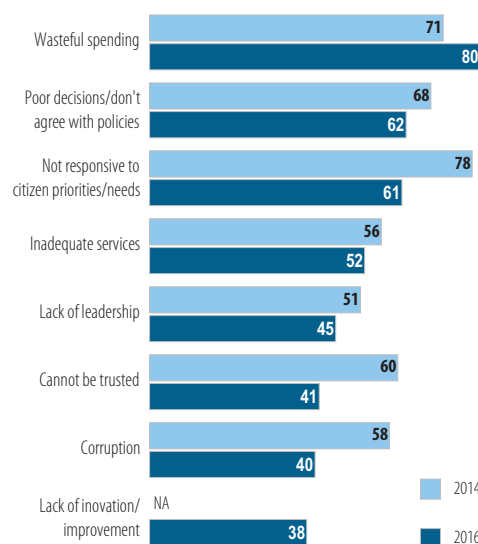
Approximately four in ten criticize the government for a lack of leadership (45%), being untrustworthy (41%), corruption (40%), and a lack of innovation or improvements (38%). Only three percent offer other reasons, and two percent cannot provide any response to the question.

The rank order of reasons for government failure is largely the same as in 2014, but the proportion of Canadians citing them has declined in all cases except for wasteful spending (which increased by 9 percentage points). The most significant declines are in mentions of untrustworthiness (down 19 points), corruption (down 18), and not being responsive to citizen priorities and needs (down 17). The one new item added to the list in 2016 was a lack of innovation and improvements.

The segment of the population identified as "engaged Canadians" are more likely than others to emphasize wasteful spending, poor decision-making, lack of responsiveness to citizen priorities, and a lack of innovation and improvements (the one new item added in 2016).

## How is federal government broken?

Those who say federal government is broken



Q.3

*In what way would you say the federal government is broken?*

## The need for change

*Canadians are more likely to believe the federal government needs to make effective incremental improvements rather than fundamentally change how it operates. The most salient areas of improvement involve better leadership, greater accountability and more efficient spending.*

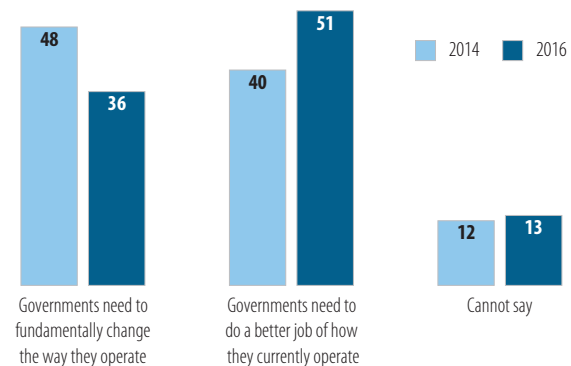
Even those citizens who believe the federal government is working would likely also agree there is room for improvement. The survey asked a general question about the magnitude of change that Canadians might feel is warranted, in terms of how the government serves the needs of the people who elected it to office. On this question there is no consensus: Just over one-third (36%) say the government needs to fundamentally change the way it operates, compared with a larger proportion (51%) who believe it is more a matter of doing a better job of how it currently operates. These results reflect a substantial shift since 2014, when the balance of opinion was almost reversed (48% saying fundamental change versus 40% doing a better job). Such a near-term shift may at least partly reflect a focus on the approach taken by a specific government-of-the-day, rather than on deeper structural issues.

Opinions about this question are remarkably consistent across segments of the Canadian population. The shift away from a perceived need for fundamental change is evident in every identifiable group, including those who had an unsatisfactory experience with federal government services in the past year.

Canadians were asked to identify what they consider to be the single most important change the federal government needs to make to do a better job (asked in an open-ended format, with no response options offered). The public provided a range of responses, but when categorized into conceptual categories, none are expressed by as many as one in five. At the top of this list of desired changes are providing better leadership/representation (17%); being more accountable, honest, open or transparent (10%); providing more efficient spending, reducing deficits (7%); and a number of other priorities none of which are mentioned by more than six percent. Another third (33%) cannot identify anything in particular in response to this question.

These are largely the same types of changes that Canadians identified in 2014, and roughly in the same order. The

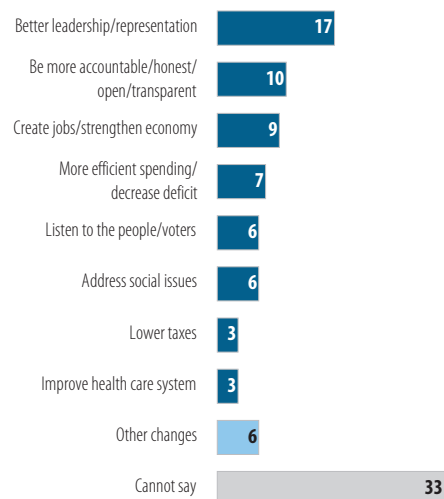
How much do governments need to change to serve the people who elect them?



Q.5

*In order to properly serve the people who elect them, do you think ... ?*

Single most important change government needs to make



Q.6

*What in your view is the single most important change the federal government needs to make in order to do a better job?*

current survey reveals greater emphasis on addressing social issues (6%, up 2 points), and less focus on accountability and transparency (down 10) and listening to the people (down 8). Priorities for federal government changes are generally similar across the population.

# Democratic governance reform

The federal system of government today is largely the same as when it was established under Confederation almost 150 years ago. Some of the institutions of government are revealing notable limitations in the 21st century, and there is now active discussion about what changes might be needed (e.g., the Senate, how we elect MPs). The survey explored public priorities and level of support for changes to key institutions of the federal government.

## Changes to federal institutions

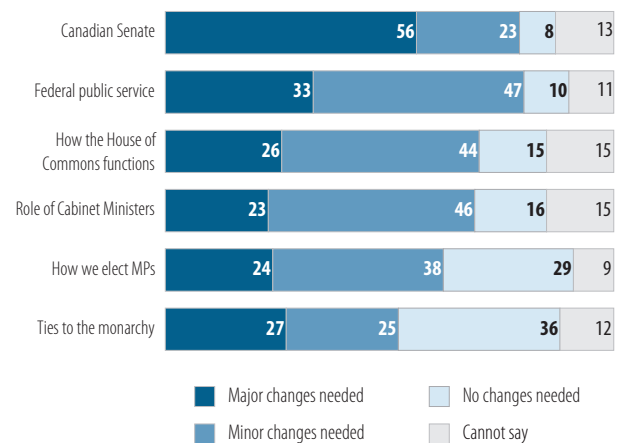
*Among a list of six federal institutions, Canadians are most likely to identify the Senate as in need of major reform. Lesser priority is given to overhauling the federal public service, the functioning of the House of Commons, the role of Cabinet Ministers, the electoral system and ties to the monarchy.*

The survey listed six major federal government institutions, and asked whether each requires major change, minor change or no changes at all (the specific type of change was not included in the question). In almost all cases, a clear majority of Canadians express a desire for change, although there is no consensus on whether this should be major or minor in scope.

Across the list, the Senate is most widely seen as in need of major change (56%, versus 8% who say no changes at all), followed by the federal public service (33% vs. 10%), how the House of Commons functions (26% vs. 15%), the role of Cabinet Ministers (23% vs. 16%), how MPs are elected to Parliament (24% vs. 29%), and the country's tie to the monarchy (27% vs. 36%). In each case, roughly one in ten Canadians cannot offer an opinion about the need for reforming these institutions.

When asked to identify which of these institutions is *most* in need of major change (among those who identified two or more as needing major change), the Canadian Senate again rises clearly to the top (34%), followed by how MPs are elected to Parliament (11%), the federal public service (11%), Canada's tie to the monarchy (5%), how the House of Commons functions (3%) and the role of Cabinet Ministers (2%). Another third (33%) insist that both or all of the institutions named are equally in need of major reform.

Do we need to change federal institutions?



Q.7

Please indicate whether you believe each of the following government institutions is in need of major changes, minor changes, or needs no changes at all...

Opinions about the need for reform of these institutions are generally similar across the population, with a few notable variations:

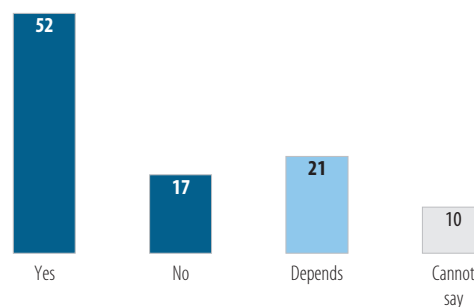
- **Senate reform.** Support for major change is strongest in Atlantic Canada and Quebec, as well as among older Canadians, those with higher incomes, and those who are highly engaged.
- **Federal public service.** Support for major change stands out most in Quebec, among rural and older residents, and those who are highly engaged.
- **House of Commons procedures.** Major change is most widely supported by older Canadians.
- **The role of Cabinet Ministers.** Support for major change is most widespread in Atlantic Canada and Quebec, as well as among rural and less educated Canadians.
- **How MPs are elected.** Major change is most widely supported in Quebec and British Columbia, as well as among rural residents.
- **The country's tie to the monarchy.** Quebecers are far and away the most likely to endorse major change to this institution (52%); this view is least widely shared in Ontario and B.C., as well as among older, and the most educated and affluent Canadians.

In all cases, support for major change is closely tied to the general view of the federal government as currently broken, as well as unsatisfactory experiences with government services in the past year. This connection suggests that opinions about the need to change specific federal institutions are as much about overall feelings about government in general as they are about the specifics of these institutions.

**Free votes in the House of Commons.** In the current parliamentary system, political parties require all of their MPs to vote the “party line,” except in rare cases of “free votes” where MPs are given the opportunity to vote as they choose. There is broad public support for changing this practice, with 52 percent of Canadians saying that MPs should have more opportunity to decide how to vote, compared with 17 percent who believe the current system works best. The remainder say it depends (e.g., on what types of votes would be “free” – 21%) or cannot offer an opinion (10%). Given the force of party discipline in Canada, it is striking that more than half of Canadians appear to support its relaxation.

Support for expanding free votes in Parliament is most likely to be voiced by men, older Canadians, and those with higher levels of education and income, with other groups more likely to be equivocal or unsure how they feel about this issue. Preference for the status quo does not attract more than one-quarter in any identifiable group (the one exception being Canadians very satisfied with their recent service experience, a group that stands out as least interested in changes to government institutions).

Should MPs have more opportunities for free votes in Parliament?



Q.12

*In the current parliamentary system, political parties require all of their MPs to vote the “party line”, except in rare cases of “free votes” when MPs are allowed to vote however they choose. Do you believe this current system works the best or do you believe that MPs should have more opportunities to decide for themselves how to vote?*

## Changing the federal electoral system

*Canadians widely endorse online voting and changing election financing laws, but not mandatory voting. There is modest support for changing the current “first past the post” electoral system. No clear preference emerges on which alternate model would be an improvement.*

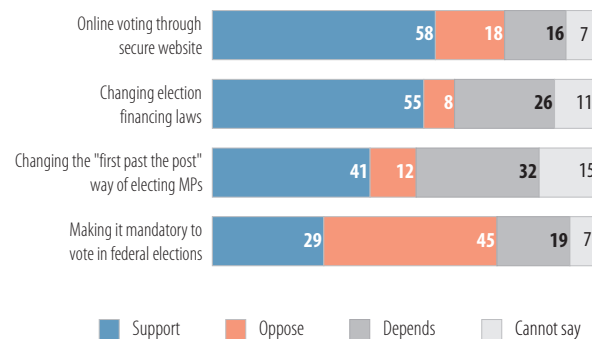
The survey presented four specific areas in which the current federal electoral system might be changed: instituting online voting, changing campaign financing laws, introducing mandatory voting and changing the way MPs are elected to Parliament.

**Online voting.** The most popular change in the list is the opportunity for citizens to vote online in federal elections through a secure website (58% support this change, compared with 18 percent who oppose it). There is majority support for this innovation across the population, but it is most popular in Ontario (63%), and among Canadians with higher levels of education and income, as well as those most engaged. Opposition is most apt to be voiced in Quebec (25%), Manitoba/Saskatchewan (26%) and B.C. (23%). While it is often assumed that online voting would be an effective way of increasing voter participation among younger generations, the appeal of online voting is essentially the same across age cohorts.

**Changing campaign financing laws.** A majority (55%) of Canadians support changing the laws governing how federal political parties finance their election campaigns, compared with only eight percent who oppose this (the remainder say it depends or have no opinion). In this case, support is most widespread in Quebec (61%), among Canadians 60 and older (65%), and those highly engaged (63%). Opposition is low across the country, but is marginally higher in Manitoba and Saskatchewan (13%), Toronto (12%) and among citizens 18 to 29 years of age (13%).

**Changing the way MPs are elected.** There has been considerable public debate about the country’s “first past the post” electoral system, and the new Liberal government in Ottawa has made a commitment to change the system before the next federal election in 2019. Canadians are more likely to support (41%) than oppose (12%) a change in this system, while almost half say it depends (e.g., on what replaces it) or do not offer an opinion. Opinions about this type of change do not vary much across the population: support is most

### Changing the federal electoral system



Q.9

*Would you support or oppose each of the following changes to the way our electoral system works ... ?*

evident among men, Canadians 30 to 44 years of age, those with a post-graduate degree, and those who are highly or moderately engaged, while somewhat lower in Manitoba and Saskatchewan, and those with low engagement. But opposition is weak across the board, and Canadians in all groups are more likely to respond with “depends” or “cannot say.”

**Mandatory voting.** Perhaps it is not surprising that making it mandatory to vote in federal elections (as applies in such countries as Australia) is not a change that is embraced by Canadians. Three in ten (29%) would support such a law (which would carry penalties amounting to a small fine), compared with 45 percent who oppose it. This change does not attract majority support in any group, but is most apt to be well-received in Vancouver (42%), and least so in Manitoba/Saskatchewan (21%, compared with 56% who oppose it).



**Alternative electoral systems.** The survey probed further on how the country's electoral system might be changed by presenting brief descriptions of four electoral voting systems, including the current one (called "single member plurality") and three alternatives in use in other countries. Survey respondents were asked to rank them in order of preference, from the option they like the most to the one they like the least.

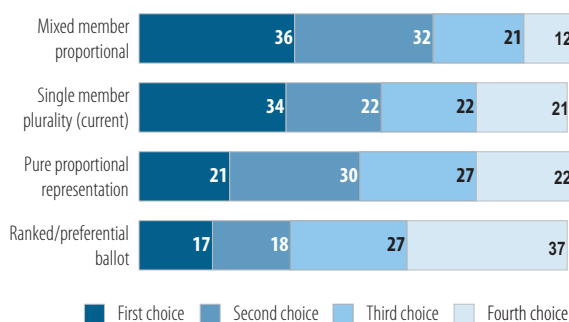
None of the four options is a clear favourite with Canadians, but an order of preference is evident. The "mixed member proportional" option attracts the most support, with 36 percent selecting it as their first preference, and only 12 percent selecting it as their least favourite. The "single member plurality" (the current system) was the second most favoured system (34% selected as a first choice, versus 21% as the least preferred option). The other two options receive less support: the "pure proportional representation" system (21% versus 22%), and the "ranked or preferential ballot" (17% versus 37% as least favourite).

When the results are considered just for those Canadians who express overall support for changing the way MPs are elected, a clearer preference emerges. For this group, the mixed member proportional option emerges as the clear favourite (37%), well ahead of the other three options, each garnering around 20 percent who select it as their first choice.

Across the population, the mixed member proportional system is most widely preferred in Quebec (40% choose it as their first choice), as well as by women and Canadians aged 30 to 59. Support for the status quo (the single member plurality system) is strongest in Atlantic Canada (44%), among Canadians 60 plus (40%), those with a post-graduate degree (40%), immigrants (40%) and those who are highly engaged (36%). The ranked/preferential ballot is the last choice among most groups, but is most apt to be liked by men and Canadians in the top income bracket.

Finally, the absence of any clear preference among optional voting systems is most evident among women, rural residents, those with lower levels of education and income, those with low engagement, and those who believe the federal government is broken.

## Support for federal electoral voting systems

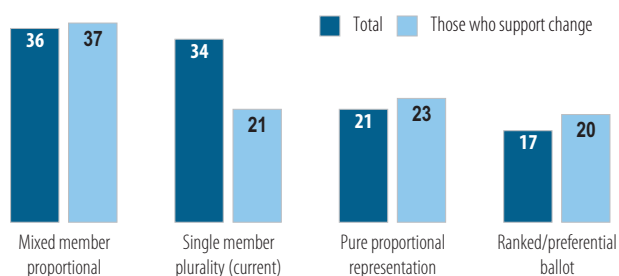


Q.10

Here are descriptions of our current voting system for Parliament, and three possible alternatives (ones used in other countries). Please rank these four options in order, from the one you like the most, to the one you like the least.

## Preferred federal voting system

First choice preference



Q.10

Here are descriptions of our current voting system for Parliament, and three possible alternatives (ones used in other countries). Please rank these four options in order, from the one you like the most, to the one you like the least.



## The Canadian Senate

*Most Canadians would like to see changes to the Senate even if it means reopening the Constitution, although opinion is divided on whether it should undergo major reform or be abolished. The public also supports strengthening the rules of conduct and making Senate appointments more transparent.*

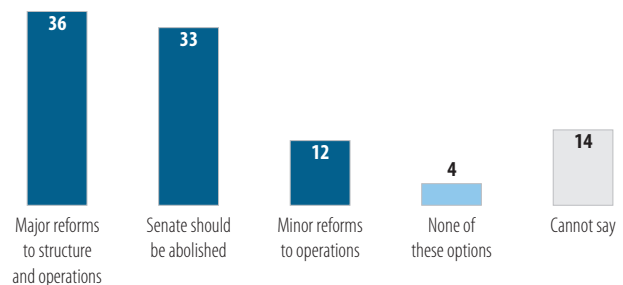
The Canadian Senate has been a source of controversy for the past few decades, partly because of the spending patterns of Senators, but also due to questions about its effectiveness as an unelected chamber of Parliament filled with politically-appointed members. Results presented previously reveal that Canadians identify the Senate as the federal institution most in need of change. The survey explored further what types of changes might be supported.

**Senate reform or abolition?** Much of the public debate has centred on whether the Senate should be reformed or simply abolished. Canadian public opinion is divided on this question, but the balance of opinion is in favour of significant change. Over one-third (36%) believe the Senate should undergo major reforms in how it is both structured and operates, while a slightly smaller proportion (33%) advocates that it be abolished. Others say the Senate should undergo *minor reforms* in how it operates (12%), while the remainder does not endorse any of these options (4%) or have no opinion to offer (14%).

Support for major Senate reforms is most evident among residents of Atlantic Canada (41%) and B.C. (41%; 46% in Vancouver), and among Canadians with higher levels of education and income. Abolition is the most popular option in Quebec (46%), among men (39%), Canadians 60 plus (48%), and those who believe the federal government is completely broken (47%). Highly engaged Canadians are the principal advocates of both major reforms (43%) and abolition (38%), while those less engaged are least able to offer any opinion. Minor reform is the least favoured option among most groups, but is most apt to be the choice of younger Canadians.

**Reopening the Constitution.** Major structural reforms or abolition of the Senate would involve changing the Canadian Constitution. Because this would require the consent of a majority of the provinces, it is widely considered to be politically untenable given the divergent positions across provinces (some strongly endorse abolition, while

What should be done with the Canadian Senate?

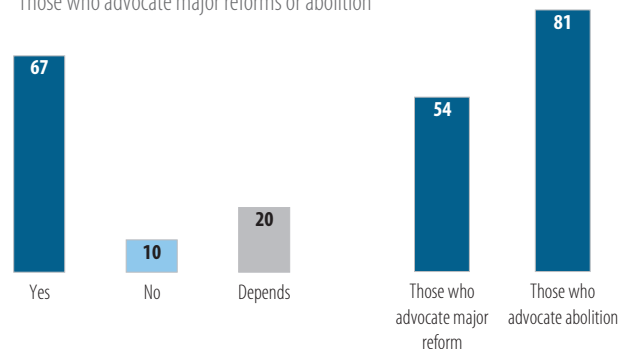


Q.13

*Thinking now about the Canadian Senate, which one of the following options is closest to your own view ... ?*

Should the Constitution be reopened to change or abolish the Senate?

Those who advocate major reforms or abolition



Q.14

*[Abolishing/Major reforms] to the Senate can only be done by formally changing the Canadian Constitution, which would legally require the consent of a majority of provinces. Do you believe that major Senate reform is important enough to justify reopening up the constitution?*

others just as strongly oppose this). The survey asked those who advocate major reforms or abolition whether this is an important enough priority to justify reopening a serious discussion about constitutional change.

While pundits are invariably quick to dismiss constitutional change as a nonstarter and something that Canadians would just as soon avoid, two-thirds of Canadians in favour of major reform or abolition believe it would be justified to do so in order to fix the Senate. By comparison, only one in ten (10%) disagree, while another 20 percent say it would depend (e.g., on the type of Senate change being considered).

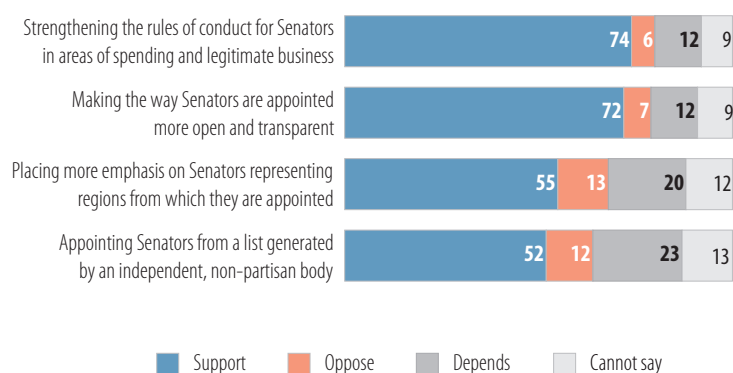
Support for reopening the Constitution to reform the Senate is the majority view across the country, but especially in Atlantic Canada (74%), among those 60 plus (76%), and those highly engaged (74%). Not surprisingly, reopening the Constitution is more widely supported by those advocating abolition (81%) than among those who would like to see major reforms (54%).

**Senate reform without Constitutional change.** The survey also presented four types of Senate reform that would not require Constitutional changes. All four are endorsed by a majority of Canadians, with the most popular being strengthening the rules of conduct in areas of spending and what constitutes legitimate Senate business (74% support, versus 6% oppose), and making the way Senators are appointed more open and transparent (72% support, versus 7% oppose).

Smaller majorities favour placing more emphasis on Senators representing the regions from which they are appointed (55%) and appointing Senators from a list generated by an independent, non-partisan body (52%); in these cases opposition is low, but a significant proportion say it would depend or cannot offer an opinion.

Support for reform measures is generally consistent across the country. Quebecers are most in favour of appointments by an independent, non-partisan body, while support in all four cases increases with age and level of engagement. Placing greater emphasis on Senators representing their regions is more widely endorsed by those favouring major reforms (68%) than by those in support of abolishing the Senate (51%).

## Changes to the Senate that do not require Constitutional change



Q.15

Some changes to the Senate can be made without Constitutional change. Would you support or oppose each of the following changes ... ?

## Engaging Canadians in governance

*Canadians are most likely to endorse public engagement in policy development and service delivery where it will improve decision-making and outcomes. Public opinion surveys, public meetings and citizen referenda are preferred methods over advisory boards, royal commissions and social media.*

What priority do Canadians place on the federal government engaging with citizens when developing policies and programs, and how extensive do they believe such consultation should be? Not surprisingly, the public supports (and likely expects) meaningful engagement on issues that matter, but there is no consensus that the federal government consult with Canadians on every decision it makes.

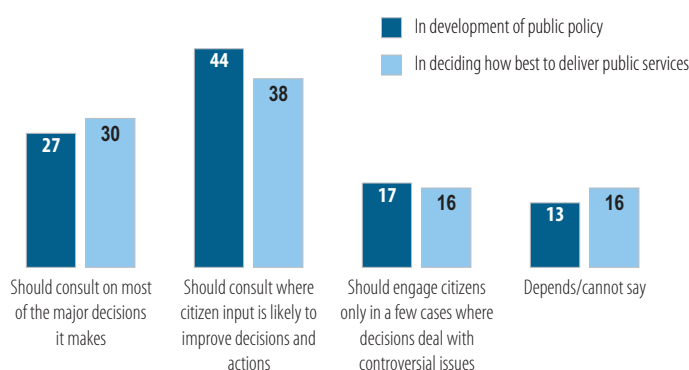
The survey posed a question asking about the extensiveness of federal government engagement with citizens, both in the development of public policies and in deciding how best to deliver public services. In both cases, the balance of opinion tilts toward a middle alternative. Pluralities say it is important for governments to consult with Canadians on a range of issues where citizen input is likely to improve decisions and

outcomes (44% in the case of policy development, and 38% in the case of delivering public services).

The next favoured option entails the most extensive level of engagement: consulting with citizens on most of the major decisions it makes about public policy (27%) or in how best to deliver public services (30%). The third option, entailing the least amount of public engagement, receives the lowest level of support: just one in six believe that governments should engage citizens only in a few cases where the decisions deal with controversial issues (17% in the case of public policy, 16% in the case of delivering public services).

Views on the extensiveness of citizen engagement in the development of public policy are similar across the country. The desire for consultation on most major decisions increases with age cohort, and with the view that the government is broken rather than working. In the case of public service delivery, the desire for more extensive consultation is most evident among rural residents and those with the lowest incomes.

How extensively should the federal government actively engage with Canadians?



Q.16

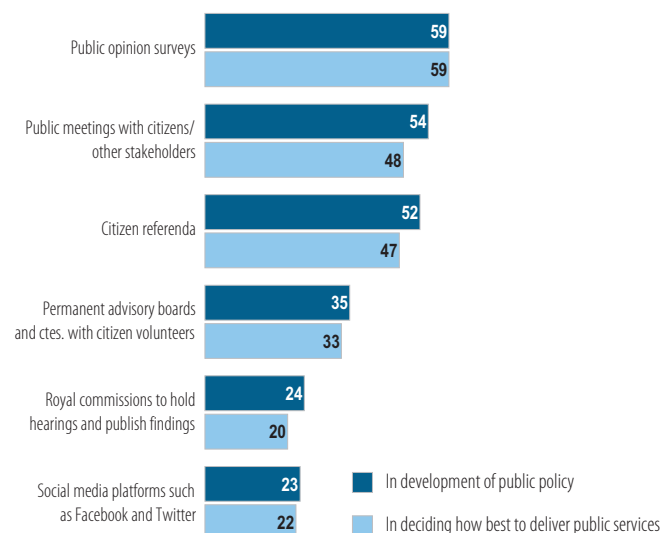
*Which of one of the following statements best describes your own view about how extensively the federal government should actively engage Canadians in the [SPLIT SAMPLE: the development of public policies/deciding how best to deliver public services] ... ?*

**Methods of public engagement.** The survey asked respondents about each of six different means by which the federal government can meaningfully engage citizens in the development of policy or in how best to deliver public services. Canadians are most likely to endorse public opinion surveys (59% for policy development and for service delivery, respectively), followed by public meetings (54% and 48%), citizen referenda (52% and 47%), and permanent advisory boards and committees composed of citizen volunteers (35% and 33%). Comparatively less confidence is placed on royal commissions (24% and 20%), and on using social media platforms such as Facebook and Twitter (23% and 22%). This suggests that governments may not yet have hit on the right way to engage Canadians using these methods.

In terms of engaging the public in policy development, public opinion surveys is the most widely endorsed method across the population, but is especially popular in Atlantic Canada and Alberta. Older Canadians are the most enthusiastic about citizen referenda and permanent advisory boards, while younger Canadians are the ones who endorse social media platforms. Support for public meetings, referenda and permanent advisory boards increases with level of education, while Quebecers are less enamoured with all six of the options presented.

There is less regional and socio-demographic variation in the case of consultation on service delivery, although it is youth who are most apt to express confidence in social media as a form of meaningful engagement, while support for public meetings increases with level of education.

## Ways by which the federal government can meaningfully engage with Canadians



Q.17

*In which of the following ways do you think the federal government can meaningfully engage with citizens in [SPLIT SAMPLE-MATCH WITH Q.16: the development of policy/deciding how best to deliver public services] ... ?*

## Representation for Indigenous peoples

*Canadians are open to mandating Indigenous peoples' representation in federal institutions, through such measures as guaranteed seats in Parliament and on the Supreme Court. Many remain uncertain pending further specifics about these types of changes.*

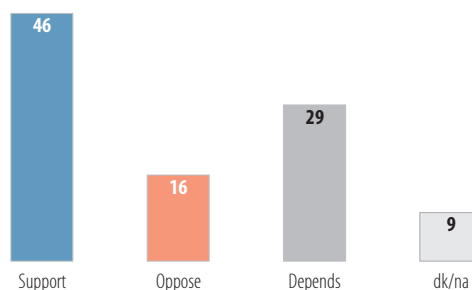
Currently, there are no formal mechanisms for ensuring that the country's Indigenous peoples are formally represented in federal institutions. The newly-elected federal government has made a commitment to give greater recognition to Indigenous peoples, and Prime Minister Justin Trudeau has named several Indigenous MPs to important posts in his cabinet.

How open are Canadians to ensuring Indigenous peoples have formal representation in the country's governing institutions? There is no public consensus, but the balance of opinion is clearly in favour. Close to half (46%) support such a change, compared with only 16 percent who oppose. The remainder say it depends (e.g., how this might be accomplished) (29%) or have no opinion to offer (9%).

Support for expanding Indigenous representation in the federal government is most widespread in eastern and central Canada, especially in Quebec (56%), as well as among Canadians earning less than \$60K in household income (54%) and those who believe the federal government is generally working (56%). Opposition to this idea is the minority view across the country, but is most evident in Manitoba and Saskatchewan (26%), among those in the top income bracket (23%) and those who say the federal government is completely broken (34%).

When those who oppose giving Indigenous peoples more representation in the country's governing institutions were asked (unprompted) why they do so, the most common reason given is that all Canadians are equal and that no group should be given preferential consideration (32% of this group, or 5% of the total population). Fewer gave as reasons that the current level of Indigenous representation is adequate (10%), that Indigenous peoples are currently over-represented (9%), that they are not responsible and might abuse the system (9%) or that representation should be based on qualifications, not background (5%). Nearly three in ten (28%) of this group cannot offer a specific reason for their opposition. (Note: The subsample size of this group who oppose the idea is too small to provide for valid analysis of regional or demographic groups.)

Support for giving Indigenous peoples more representation in governing institutions



Q.18

*The federal government has made a commitment to giving greater recognition to Indigenous peoples in Canada as political entities that should be formally represented in our country's institutions. Would you support or oppose giving Indigenous peoples more representation in the country's governing institutions?*

**Specific measures for expanding representation.** The survey further explored this issue by testing public support for five hypothetical steps for formalizing Indigenous representation at the federal level. None of the five specific measures presented on the survey has been publicly proposed or widely discussed, and this likely reflects the lack of clear opinions among many Canadians.

Of the five options presented, the public is most clearly supportive of establishing a permanent Cabinet Committee on Indigenous Affairs that would directly advise the Prime Minister; 50 percent support this idea, compared with 18 percent who oppose it. The remainder says it depends (23%) (e.g., on knowing more details about how it would be structured or operate) or have no opinion to offer (10%).

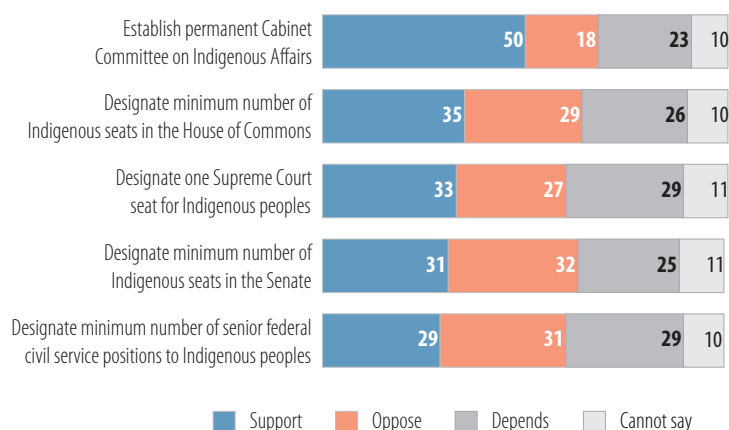
The other four measures for incorporating Indigenous representation into federal institutions receive a more mixed response, although well over half are open if not supportive. One in three Canadians support designating for Indigenous people a minimum number of seats in the House of Commons (35%) or a guaranteed single seat on the Supreme Court of Canada (33%), with most of the remainder evenly divided between those who oppose and those who say it would depend on the details. Support levels are marginally lower for reserving for Indigenous people

a minimum number of seats in the Canadian Senate (31%, versus 32% oppose) and designating a minimum number of senior federal civil service positions (e.g., deputy minister or executive director level) (29% support, versus 31% oppose).

Taken as a whole, these results indicate that a majority of Canadians are at least open to, if not in support of, these types of institutional changes to boost Indigenous representation in the federal government. Because none of these provisions has been previously proposed, they represent new ideas that the public will not yet have had time to give thought to.

Opinions vary only modestly across the country. As with the overall concept, support for expanding Indigenous representation through these five specific steps is higher in the east than the west (strongest in Quebec, weakest in Manitoba and Saskatchewan), higher among low income than high income Canadians, higher among women than among men, and higher among those who believe the federal government is working than among those who say it is broken. Beyond this, support for guaranteed Indigenous seats in the Senate is strongest among youth (ages 18 to 29), while support for a permanent Cabinet Committee is most evident among Canadians 60 plus, as well as those with higher levels of education.

## Expanding Indigenous representation in federal institutions



Q.20

Would you support or oppose ensuring Indigenous peoples have greater representation through each of the following ways ... ?

# Government accountability and oversight

Public confidence in government institutions depends in large part on trusting that laws and policies are adhered to, that resources are expended in an efficient and honest way, and that institutions in every way act in the best interests of the citizens they represent. The survey explored several aspects of government accountability and oversight.

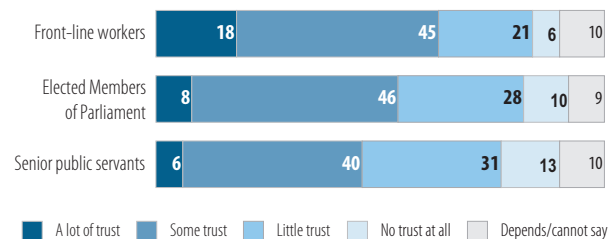
## Trust in government accountability

*More than six in ten Canadians trust front-line workers delivering public services to do the right thing when they have the power to do so. Somewhat fewer place this level of trust in elected members of Parliament and senior public servants.*

The survey asked respondents about their level of trust in three types of federal actors in terms of doing the right thing when they have the authority and resources to do so. Canadians are most likely to say they have a lot of trust (18%) or some trust (45%) in front-line workers who deliver public services. Another quarter have little (21%) or no trust (6%) in this group. Just over half have a lot of trust (8%) or some (46%) trust in elected members of Parliament, while somewhat fewer feel this way about senior public servants (e.g., managers and policy experts) (46% have a great deal or some trust, versus 44% have little or none).

Trust levels across the three sets of actors vary somewhat in a consistent pattern across population subgroups. Higher levels of trust (a lot or some) are most widespread among Canadians 60 years and older, those with higher levels of education and income, those who are highly engaged, those who have had a positive experience with government service in the past year, and those who think the federal government is generally working. Not surprisingly, the most negative sentiment is expressed by those who believe the government is completely broken – 54 percent in this group have little or no trust in front-line workers, 73 percent have little or no trust in elected members of Parliament, 77 percent in the case of senior public servants. In addition, trust in senior public servants is higher in urban areas and lower in Quebec, while trust in front-line workers is higher among men and those born in Canada.

### Trust in government actors to do the right thing



Q.21

To what extent do you trust each of the following individuals in the federal government to do the right thing when they have the authority and resources to do so ... ?

## Perceptions about government oversight and accountability

*There is widespread public agreement that rules and procedures are essential to government workers properly doing their jobs, but Canadians also say accountability should be based mainly on principles rather than detailed rules, and on what is accomplished rather than what procedures are followed.*

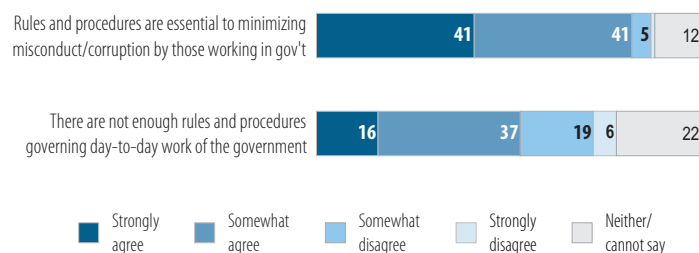
The public expects there to be clearly defined rules and procedures governing the work of people in government, but how much emphasis should there be on rules and procedures as opposed to principles and what gets accomplished in the end? The survey reveals conflicting public attitudes on this issue.

On the one hand, there is near consensus among Canadians about the need for rules and procedures in federal government operations. More than eight in ten strongly (41%) or somewhat (41%) agree with the statement “Rules and procedures are essential to minimizing misconduct and corruption by those working in government,” compared with

just six percent who disagree. And a small majority also strongly (16%) or somewhat (37%) agree that “There are not enough rules and procedures governing the day-to-day work of the [federal] government,” versus less than half as many (25%) who disagree and an almost equal proportion (22%) who cannot say either way.

Responses to these two statements are similar across the country. Agreement is stronger in the east than in the west (Quebecers are most apt to strongly agree, with British Columbians least apt to do so). Strong agreement is also more widespread among Canadians with lower levels of education, those who believe the federal government is broken, and those who say that government needs to change fundamentally. Belief in the necessity of rules in government increases with age cohort (31% among those 18 to 29 strongly agree, rising to 55% among those 60 plus). But on the need for *more* rules, it is Canadians 60 plus who are least apt to strongly agree.

### The importance of rules and procedures in guiding those working in government



Q.22a,d

Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with each of the following statements about the federal government ...



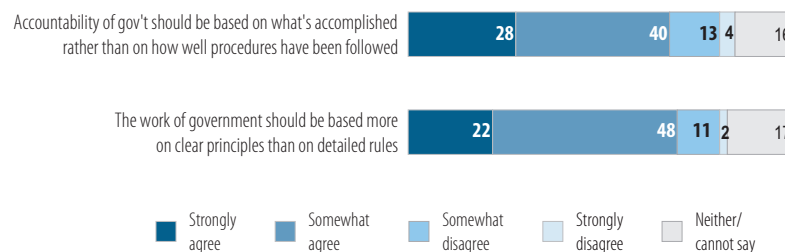
While Canadians may say that rules and procedures to guide those working in government are necessary, they also believe they are not in themselves sufficient. Seven in ten strongly (22%) or somewhat (48%) agree that *“The work of government should be based on more clear principles than detailed rules,”* and a comparable proportion strongly (28%) or somewhat (40%) agree that *“The accountability of the government should be based on what is accomplished rather than how well procedures have been followed.”* On both statements, fewer than one in five disagree, with a comparable number saying they neither agree nor disagree, or have no opinion.

Moreover, the perspective expressed in these statements is not considered at odds with the previous statements about the need for rules and procedures; most Canadians adhere

to both (e.g., 63% agree both with the statement about rules being essential *and* the statement about the importance of outcomes over procedures). This suggests that the public believes that rules and procedures are necessary, but not sufficient for good governance and, by implication, that care should be taken to ensure that rules do not serve as obstacles to the achievement of results.

Opinions on these statements are generally consistently held across the population. Quebecers are somewhat more likely than others to express strong agreement about importance of clear principles and outcomes over procedures. This latter view is also more widely shared by Canadians 60 plus, and those who say the federal government is broken and needs fundamental change.

### The importance of rules and procedures in guiding those working in government



Q.22b,c

Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with each of the following statements about the federal government ...

## Trade-offs in expanding rules and procedures in government operations

*Canadians who believe there are not enough rules and procedures in government are divided on whether more rules are justified if it reduces the timeliness of decisions and service delivery. Even fewer would like to see more rules if it meant slower innovation or additional costs to taxpayers.*

Those Canadians who agree there are not enough rules and procedures governing the day-to-day work of government (53% of the population) were also asked if they believe there should be more rules and procedures with four specific caveats. The purpose of these questions is to assess the strength of public opinion around government oversight, and to identify where the concept of more rules in government might become less desirable given certain consequences.

All four of the caveats presented in the survey do in fact make a significant difference in Canadians' belief in the need for more rules and procedures in government operations. Among those who previously said there are not enough rules, fewer than half say that more should be added if it meant reducing the timeliness of government decision-making and delivery of public services (47%), or reducing the flexibility of public servants to make decisions and adjust to circumstances (42%). In both cases, about one-third indicate that such a trade-off would not be desirable, while roughly

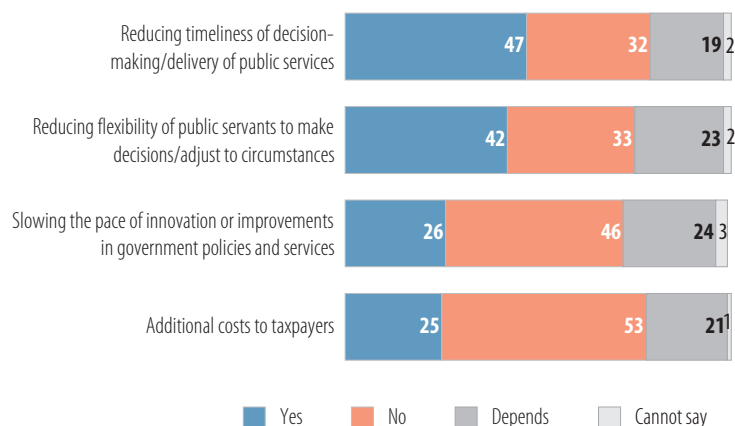
one in five say it would depend (e.g., on the specifics of the rules and what areas of government might be affected).

Even fewer in this group advocate for more rules and procedures in government if it meant slowing the pace of innovation or improvements in government policies and services (26%), or additional costs to taxpayers (25%). In both cases, about half say such rules would not be justified, with another one in five feeling it would depend on the specifics.

Opinions about these trade-offs are generally consistent across the population. Support for more rules even if it meant less timeliness of decisions and service delivery is somewhat more evident among highly engaged Canadians and much lower in Quebec (where only 29% share this view). Quebecers, however, are keener than others to endorse adding rules at the expense of reducing public servant flexibility, as are Canadians with lower levels of education and income. Youth (18 to 29) are most apt to say more rules would be in order at the expense of innovation, with no difference in opinions by socio-economic status. As for incurring additional costs to taxpayers, support for more rules even at a higher cost is greater among men, urban residents and Canadians 18 to 29, and lowest in Alberta, among rural residents and those with less education.

### Should there be more rules governing day-to-day work of government if it meant ...?

Those who say that there aren't enough rules and procedures



Q.23

*Do you believe there should be more rules and procedures governing the day-to-day work of the government if it meant ... ?*

# Use of digital technologies by government

## Government use of digital technology

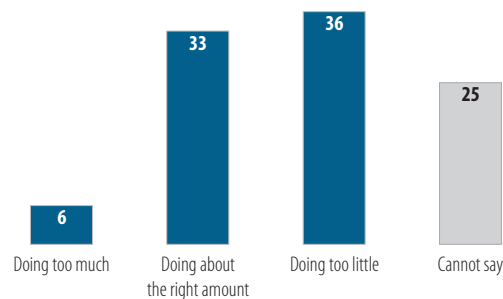
*There is modest level of public interest in governments making greater use of digital technologies, especially in terms of access to information, delivery of public services, access to elected officials and consultation.*

One of the hallmarks of the early 21st century is the rapid spread of digital technologies throughout all spheres of society and life. The primary impetus is coming from the private sector, but what about the way in which governments utilize digital technologies in their operations and delivery of services?

Are governments in Canada today doing enough to integrate digital technologies in the way they operate? There is no public consensus on this question, but most Canadians are divided between those who say governments are not doing enough (36%) and those who believe they are doing about the right amount (33%). Very few (6%) believe governments are making too much use of such technologies, while another one in four (25%) are unable to offer an opinion.

This balance of opinion largely applies across the country. Those who say governments are doing too little to adopt such technologies tend to be men (43%), Canadians who are highly engaged (42%), and those who believe governments are completely broken (46%). Few in any group believe governments are doing too much in this area, but this view is most apt to be expressed by Canadians 18 to 29 (10%; versus 4% of those 45 years and older) and those with the lowest incomes. Having no opinion on this question is the most prevalent response among women, Canadians 60 plus and those with the lowest engagement.

Use of digital technologies by governments in Canada today



Q.24

*Do you believe governments in Canada today are doing too much, doing too little, or doing about the right amount in using digital technologies?*

**Expanding government use of digital technologies.** Where might governments expand their use of digital technologies? Those who say governments are doing too little were asked (unprompted) to identify areas where they would like to see governments do more. Fewer than half could come up with any suggestions, the top responses being electronic voting (9%), better websites (e.g., security) (6%), communications with the public (6%), soliciting public opinion (3%), and health care or medical services (3%). Six in ten (60%) are unable to offer any ideas. This suggests that the Canadian public may not be fully aware of the potential governance applications of digital technologies (e.g., providing more effective means to gather public input, analyze policy implications, harness data, etc.) and their possible benefits for governance.

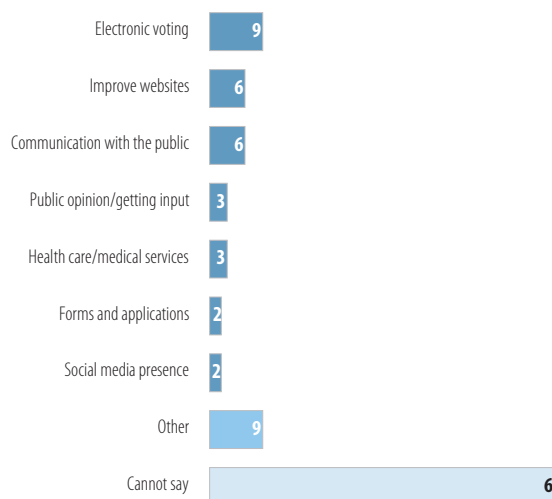
While many Canadians may not have given much thought to areas where governments might expand their use of digital technologies, most have opinions about specific areas when prompted. The survey presented five ways in which governments might do more with such technologies, and all are well-received, although some more widely than others.

Among the five areas, there is the strongest public support for governments to expand their use of digital technologies to provide citizens with access to government information and data (73% support, versus only 6% who oppose). Almost as many endorse expanded digital technologies for the delivery of public services in such areas as employment, taxation and social services (69%), providing citizens with more direct access to elected officials through online platforms (69%), and expanding consultation with citizens through digital media (62%). Very few oppose any of these ideas, with another one in five saying it would depend on the details. Support is somewhat lower for governments expanding the information provided by governments and elected officials through social media; half (51%) endorse this idea, compared with 13 percent who oppose it.

Public support for these forms of expanded government use of digital technologies is strong across the population, with few in any group opposing any of them. Support is generally stronger among Canadians with higher levels of education and income (which also includes most with high engagement). Support for expanding access to government information and more access to officials through online platforms increases with age, while it is the youngest cohort

## Where governments should make greater use of digital technologies

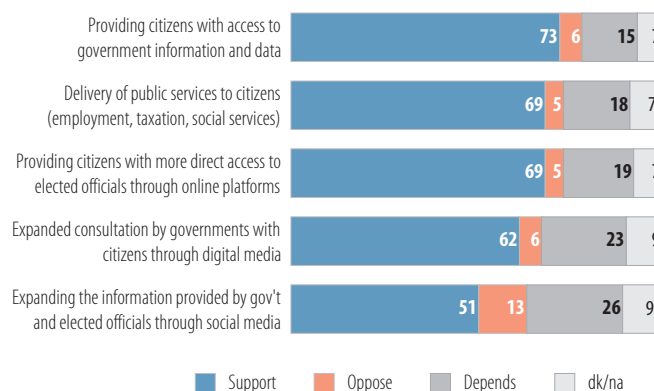
Those who say governments doing too little



Q.26

*In what specific areas or type of services, if any, would you like to see governments make greater use of digital technologies?*

## Expanding use of digital technologies in specific areas



Q.27

*Would you support or oppose greater use of digital technologies by governments in each of the following areas ... ?*

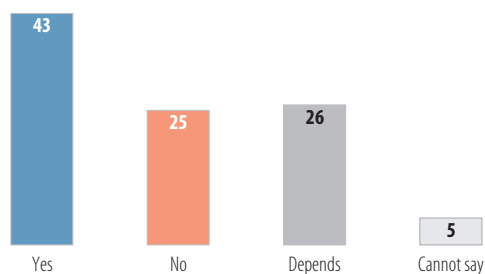
(ages 18 to 29) expressing the most interest in getting more information from governments and elected officials through social media. Use of digital technologies in the delivery of public services is somewhat more apt to be favoured by urban residents than those living in rural communities.

**Text messaging by government.** In some other countries (e.g., Great Britain), citizens are offered the opportunity to communicate directly with government agencies using text messaging, for services such as tax returns, employment insurance and passport renewals. This type of service has not yet been introduced or even widely discussed in Canada, and the initial public reaction is positive.

More than four in ten (43%) Canadians say they would be personally interested in using text messaging to communicate with government agencies, compared with 25 percent who say no; the balance say it depends (e.g., which services) (26%) or have no opinion (5%).

While text messaging has become an almost ubiquitous form of communication for youth, interest in government text messaging services is only marginally higher among Canadians 18 to 29 (52%) than among those 30 to 59 (44%) or those 60 plus (38%). Interest is also marginally higher in Quebec (50%) and among Canadian men (48% versus 39% of women).

#### Personally interested in text message communications for government services



Q.28

*In other countries such as Great Britain, citizens can communicate directly with government agencies using text messaging for services in such areas as tax returns, employment insurance and passport renewals. Would you be personally interested in using text messaging to communicate with government agencies in Canada?*

## Concerns about potential risks

*Public interest in expanded use of digital technologies by governments notwithstanding, most also express concerns about potential risks to the privacy of their personal information from deliberate or unintentional leaks, and to a lesser extent from government intrusiveness and poor policy decisions.*

The survey confirms broad public interest in governments making greater use of digital technologies in a number of ways. Are there also concerns about potential risks associated with how governments use such technologies? The survey explored this question by asking about four specific types of risks.

Canadians are most likely to say they would have a big concern with the risks to privacy of their personal information from outside hackers (57%), and to a lesser extent when it comes to the privacy of this information that might be

compromised through unintentional leaks (51%). There is somewhat less concern about the integrity of their personal information being threatened by governments becoming overly intrusive (43% say this is a big concern) or that governments will end up making poor decisions because of the undue influence of social media (42%). In all four cases, very few (no more than one in ten) say the risk would be of no concern.

Public concerns across the four types of risks are more apt to be emphasized by women, by older Canadians, those with lower levels of education and income, and those who believe the federal government is broken. For instance, strong concern about outside hackers increases from 50 percent among Canadians 18 to 29, to 71 percent among those 60 plus.

### Concerns about risks with government use of digital technology



Q.29

To what extent, if at all, do you have any of the following concerns about the use of digital technologies by governments in Canada ... ?

## Regulating the sharing economy

One of the most disruptive business model innovations in the past several years has been the emergence of new companies offering services on a peer-to-peer basis through app-based digital platforms. This new “sharing economy” business model has emerged from three key trends: a shift in customer behaviour for some goods and services from ownership to sharing, the now ubiquitous nature of online social networks and electronic markets that easily connect individuals, and the market saturation of mobile and electronic devices that serve as always available tools for access.

New sharing economy businesses like AirBnB (for rental accommodations) and Uber (for personal transportation) have expanded exponentially in just a few years, and are now well-established in Canada. Because such businesses are providing primarily a digital connection between buyers

and sellers, they have largely avoided the existing regulatory requirements of the industries they operate within, thereby giving them a substantial competitive advantage over established businesses, allowing them to offer substantially lower prices than their competitors for comparable services. In Canada, the success of Uber in a number of cities such as Toronto, Montreal and Edmonton has prompted the taxi industry to aggressively lobby local governments to regulate ridesharing businesses, and governments have been struggling to determine the best course of action.

Whatever the outcome of the current disputes between emerging and established businesses, digitally-based shared economy services are here to stay, and present new challenges to governments responsible for economic development, public safety and competitive markets. The survey included an initial exploration of this issue.

## Consumer experience with shared economy services

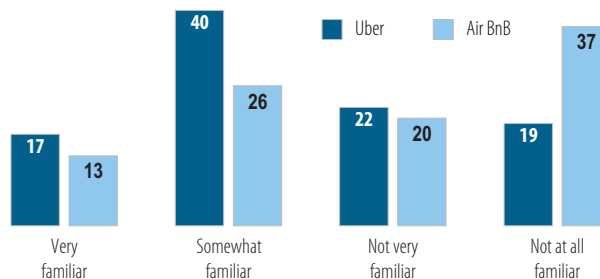
*Sharing economy businesses like Uber and AirBnB are now well-known among Canadians, and about one in ten have personally used each of these services in the past two years. They are most popular among younger, more educated consumers, but use extends to all parts of the population.*

Before gauging public sentiment about regulations, it is first important to understand the extent of Canadians' current familiarity and use of sharing economy services. The survey focused on the two best examples, AirBnB (a web-based service for people to list, find and rent lodging) and Uber (an app-based service that connects people looking for a taxi-type service with drivers using their own private vehicles).

**Familiarity.** Canadians are most familiar with Uber. More than half say they are very (17%) or somewhat (40%) familiar with this ride sharing service. Somewhat fewer are very (13%) or somewhat (26%) familiar with AirBnB, with an equivalent proportion (37%) having no familiarity at all.

For both services, familiarity is partly a function of community size, and is much higher in major urban centres (where these services are most likely to be offered) than in smaller towns and rural areas. There are also regional differences, with both services better known in Ontario, Alberta and B.C., and least so in Quebec (especially in the case of Uber), Atlantic Canada, Manitoba and Saskatchewan. These differences notwithstanding, at least a majority of the population in every identifiable group claims to have at least a passing familiarity with these services. It is largely the same people who know about both Uber and AirBnB (61% of those who know about Uber also know about AirBnB).

Familiarity with sharing economy services



Q.30

*How familiar are you with the following digital technology services ... ?*



**Use.** Beyond familiarity, to what extent are Canadians making use of these services? Among those who know about them, a significant minority report either having used the service in the past two years, or knowing someone who has.

Of this group, one in six (15%) have personally used AirBnB in the past two years, which translates into nine percent of the Canadian population (aged 18 and over). One in ten (12%) of those familiar with Uber have used this service over the same time frame, translating to nine percent of the total adult population. When factoring both those having used the service and knowing someone who has, these population figures rise (to 24% and 32%, respectively). This represents a significant market penetration for services that have been offered for only a few years.

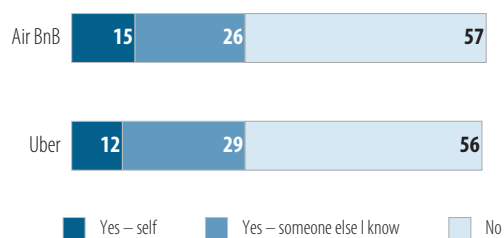
Use of Uber across the country largely reflects where the service is offered, and is highest in Ontario (48% personal

use or know someone who has used it) and Alberta (49%), and is largely, but not exclusively, servicing urban residents (55% in major urban centres, compared with 25% among those living in rural communities), in part because use of Uber is not limited to one's own community of residence. This service is also most popular among younger and more educated Canadians (25% of those 18 to 29 have used the service personally in the past two years, compared with just 2% of those 60 plus).

The market for AirBnB is also slanted toward urban dwellers, but more evenly distributed across the country, except being lower in Atlantic Canada (where only 29% have used it or know someone who has). As with Uber, AirBnB is more popular among younger Canadians, but not to the same degree (17% of those 18 to 29 have used it, versus 11% of those 60 plus).

## Use of sharing economy services – past two years

Those familiar with services



Q.31

*Have you or someone you know used this service in the past two years?*

## General opinion of shared service businesses

*Canadians are more likely than not to say the sharing economy business model is a good thing than a bad thing, but half the population has not yet formed a clear opinion. Positive views are most widely expressed by those with familiarity or experience with Uber and AirBnB.*

Apart from using specific sharing economy services, how do Canadians feel about the new sharing economy business model? Based on their own experience of what they have heard (including controversies with established businesses and service issues), is it a good thing or a bad thing?

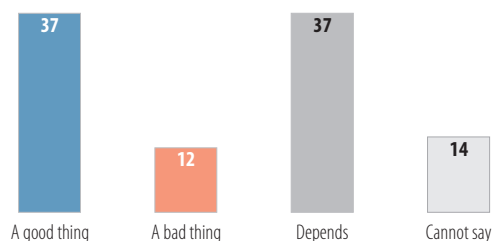
The balance of opinion is largely positive, although not overwhelmingly so. Just under four in ten (37%) say the sharing economy model is a good thing, three times more than say it is a bad thing (12%). However, more than half say it depends (37%) or do not have a clear opinion either way (14%).

What distinguishes those who think these businesses are a good thing from those who say they are bad? A positive view is most closely associated with familiarity and use of Uber and/or AirBnB: the most positive views are given by those who have personally used these services (78% of Uber users, 69% of AirBnB users), followed by those who haven't done so, but know someone who has (51% and 56%, respectively), and least apt to be given by those with no direct or indirect experience (23% and 38%, respectively).

But the absence of such experience does not translate into more negative opinions, but rather a skeptical one of saying their view of these services depends or is uncertain. These results suggest that many Canadians do not yet have enough experience (first- or second-hand) with the sharing economy to form a clear opinion about this model, and are looking for assurances that it would include appropriate regulatory safeguards both for workers and consumers.

Across the country, a positive opinion of the sharing economy business model is most common in Alberta (50%) and Toronto (45%), among men (43%) and Canadians 18 to 29 (52%). The proportion that labels it a bad thing is relatively constant across the population, but highest in Quebec (18%; 21% in Montreal) and among Canadians 60 plus (20%).

### Overall opinion of new sharing economy business model



Q.32

*Companies such as AirBnB and Uber represent a new type of "sharing economy" business model that connects individuals offering a service directly to those looking for the service. What makes these companies different from traditional businesses is that the only service they provide is the digital connection between buyers and sellers. Based on your own experience and what you have heard, do you believe this new sharing economy business model is a good thing or a bad thing?*

**Why this is a good business model.** When those who say the sharing economy business model is a good thing are asked to say why (unprompted), a number of reasons are given, although none predominate. The top mentions are that it lowers costs or reduces waste (10%), is more accessible (10%), promotes competition (9%), offers another option for consumers (8%), is generally good for the economy (7%), because the concept of sharing is good (7%), is a simple, direct way of meeting consumer demand (5%), and addresses a need (5%). One-third of this group cannot offer a reason why they like this business model.

**Why this is a bad business model.** The much smaller group who dislike the shared economy business model is most likely to say this is because they believe it is exploitative or open to abuse because it is not regulated the same way as other businesses (30%; this represents 4% of the total population). Others in this group say these businesses are bad for the economy (13%), mean a loss of tax revenue (9%), or they are distrustful of the model in part because of its reliance on digital technology (6%). One-third of this group is unable to articulate a reason for their negative opinion of the shared economy business model.

*(Note: The sample sizes for these questions is too small to support analysis by subgroup.)*

## Regulation of sharing economy businesses

*Most Canadians believe that sharing economy businesses should be regulated, either under the requirements currently in place for traditional companies, or through a new regulatory approach that works for both types of businesses.*

Regulatory issues do not figure prominently in the public's perspective on sharing economy services, but Canadians do appear to appreciate that this is an issue that needs to be addressed. The survey outlined the fact that shared economy businesses are not currently subject to the same regulations as traditional businesses in such areas as insurance, taxation, licensing and safety standards, and then asked which of three regulatory approaches would be most appropriate.

There is no public consensus on this question, but most Canadians believe that some form of regulatory structure is needed for shared economy businesses. Three in ten (30%) favour applying the same regulations that now apply to traditional businesses, while one-third (34%) support the creation of a new regulatory approach that works effectively for both traditional and sharing businesses.

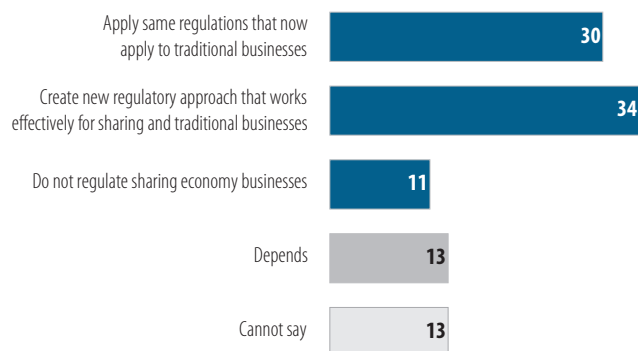
In contrast, only one in ten (11%) endorse the view that sharing economy businesses offer a different type of service that does not require regulations the way traditional

businesses do. One in four say it would depend (e.g., on the specific industry) or cannot offer a view.

Opinions on this question do not vary significantly across the population. Support for the creation of a new regulatory model is the plurality choice among most groups, but especially among older Canadians, those with more education and income, and those who are highly engaged. Canadians 60 plus (40%) are most likely to be proponents of subjecting shared businesses to the same regulations as traditional businesses. Requiring no regulations for sharing economy businesses is the least favoured option across the country, but most apt to be voiced by urban residents (16%), men (14%) and Canadians under 45 years of age (15%).

Direct experience has a modest effect on views about the appropriate regulatory approach for shared service businesses. Among Uber users, one-quarter (26%) say such businesses should not be subject to current regulations, but a larger proportion (31%) of this group favours a new regulatory scheme. Among AirBnB users, a no-regulation approach is the least favoured option (24%), compared with a new regulatory scheme (36%) and subjecting shared businesses to the current regulations (27%).

### Favoured approach to regulations for sharing economy business



Q.34

*Sharing economy companies are currently not subject to the same regulations as traditional businesses in such areas as insurance, taxation, licensing and safety standards. Given that these companies are now rapidly expanding in Canada and abroad, which one of the following approaches would you most favour ... ?*



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