

# Canadians on Citizenship

*The first national survey on what it means to be a citizen in Canada*



## FINAL REPORT

February  
2012



*This study was conducted by the Environics Institute, in partnership with the Institute for Canadian Citizenship, Maytree Foundation, CBC News and RBC.*

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# Introduction

## Citizenship in Canada

Canada's history is one of successive waves of people arriving on its shores, each having to find their place among those who preceded them. In the early 21<sup>st</sup> century, perhaps Canada's most defining characteristic is the broad diversity of cultures and peoples; this is widely seen elsewhere as a success story, and at home a source of pride for many. But what does it mean to be a citizen of a country that is increasingly populated by people arriving from so many other countries around the world?

Such a country requires a unique definition of citizenship that does not rely on concepts drawn from other countries with a more homogeneous population and deeply-rooted national character. Canada's approach has been to treat this issue with little reflection and notable flexibility, but current trends are raising fundamental questions about the nature of citizenship, and its associated rights and responsibilities.

These trends include increasing apathy towards traditional political institutions and process (especially among youth); new communications technology that allow Canadians to be actively engaged with other parts of the world (including one's country of origin); increasing racial, ethnic and religious diversity; a growing expatriate community (with more than 3 million Canadians now living abroad); and increasing levels of income inequality.

While a national consensus on citizenship may be unattainable, an important step forward is to launch a national dialogue to engage Canadians on the unique meaning of citizenship in Canada today. Such a dialogue was initiated in 2011 as a project spearheaded by five national organizations, including the Environics Institute for Social Research, the Institute for Canadian Citizenship, Maytree Foundation, CBC News and RBC.

Through dialogue with Canadians (via research, local round tables and other engagement initiatives) this project is intended to:

- Ask Canadians and others living in Canada about their experience as 'citizens;'
- Engage permanent residents, citizens, community leaders and experts in debates on citizenship policy; and
- Inspire all people who live in Canada to act as good citizens, based on how Canadians have defined their understanding of citizenship.

## National public opinion survey

The first phase of this project engaged the Canadian population-at-large through the first-ever national public opinion survey to ask Canadians what it means to be a good citizen in this country.

This research was conducted to reveal attitudes and expectations with respect to membership in Canadian society, and explore public opinion in three broad areas:

*What it means to be a good citizen* – What actions define good citizenship in the broadest sense, what makes people feel like good citizens and who can be good citizens in this country?

*The state of citizenship in Canada today* – How the public feels about the current policies and rules about legal citizenship, and what is expected of both newcomers and established society.

*Native- and foreign-born perspectives* – How country of birth shapes opinions and expectations around citizenship and being good citizens in this country

## Research methodology

The research was conducted by the Environics Research Group, and is based on telephone interviews conducted between November 18 and December 17, 2011 with a representative sample of 2,376 Canadian residents (aged 18 and over) living in the 10 provinces. The sampling frame for this survey consisted of all Canadian households with

an operating landline telephone connection. The survey sample was stratified to provide for adequate representation of smaller population subgroups (e.g., regions, urban areas, permanent residents), with the final data weighted so the total results are proportionate to the actual population distribution.

A sample of this size would be expected to produce results accurate to within plus or minus 2.0 percentage points in 95 out of 100 samples (the margin of error is greater for results for regional and other subgroups of the total sample).

Canada-USA comparisons. Comparative data on selected questions were also collected from the American population, based on an omnibus telephone survey conducted January 19 to 22, 2012 by CARAVAN with a representative sample of 1,014 adults (18 years and older) in the continental United

States. This sample consisted of households with landline telephones (764) and cell-phone only (250) service. The total sample drawn from the population would be expected to produce results accurate to within plus or minus 3.1 percentage points (in 95 out of 100 samples).

## Report synopsis

The following sections of this report present results of the research, with a focus on national findings and how they vary by key segments of the population (e.g., by region, demographic characteristics, country of birth and citizenship status). Detailed banner tables presenting the results for all survey questions by population segment are available under separate cover. *All results are presented as percentages unless otherwise noted.*

# Executive Summary

The findings from this survey reveal that Canadians think about citizenship in a variety of ways, but there is an emerging consensus on some of the important attributes of good citizenship and who can be good citizens in this country. Moreover, the public expresses a notable sense of confidence and comfort with the current state of citizenship in this country.

The main conclusions of this research can be summarized as follows:

- 1. Canadians believe being a good citizen means more than having a passport and obeying the law. Just as important are having an active commitment to the community and being accepting of others who are different.**

Canadians' view of what it means to be a good citizen in this country is not confined to one or two defining criteria. Rather, the public thinks about citizenship in a number of ways, which in part encompasses certain civil requirements such as obeying the law and paying taxes, but also as a social responsibility in the form of being an active participant in one's community, tolerating others who are different and helping others.

In some cases, there is public consensus around certain attributes as essential aspects of good citizenship, and at the top of the list is the equal treatment of men and women, as well as obeying the law, being tolerant of others, voting in elections and being environmentally responsible. By comparison, good citizenship is much less apt to be defined by such things as knowing both of Canada's official languages or being an entrepreneur.

This shared perspective on good citizenship likely comes from peoples' own experiences giving back to their communities. Canadians say they are most likely to *feel* like good citizens when volunteering, or being kind and generous to others. Nor do these actions appear to be limited to certain groups because of cost or not knowing what to do; the primary obstacle to being a good citizen is the time pressures Canadians are feeling today.

- 2. Canadians believe that everyone – regardless of where they are born – can be a good citizen. They expect newcomers to adapt to become good citizens, but many also believe society needs to play a greater role in supporting this process.**

The arrival of newcomers into established communities is often a source of tension, but among Canadians there is clear consensus that foreign-born individuals, whether legal citizens or not, are just as likely to be good citizens as those whose families have been here for generations. This suggests a sense of public confidence in the concept of citizenship as currently defined, and is not under threat from immigration and expanding cultural diversity.

At the same time, being a good citizen is not viewed as an automatic right upon arrival, but rather something that is achieved by adapting to Canadian society and its prevailing values, such as obeying the laws, and treating men and women equally. And there is limited support for allowing newcomers to vote in elections before becoming citizens. However, many recognize that established society also has a responsibility to help newcomers through this process and that more needs to be done in this area (e.g., through reaching out, employment and language skills).

- 3. Most Canadians are comfortable with the current rules, responsibilities and requirements surrounding legal citizenship, including those pertaining to dual citizenship and Canadians living abroad.**

Most Canadians are citizens by birth and have limited exposure to the requirements for legal citizenship, but this is clearly not an issue of broad public concern. A majority are comfortable with the current rules for obtaining Canadian citizenship, and the concerns of the minority are as much about who is being admitted into the country as they are about the rules for becoming a citizen (e.g., adequacy of background checks).

Citizenship entails both rights and responsibilities, and most Canadians seem to feel the current balance is about

right. There is broad agreement that citizenship entails sharing broadly-held values (e.g., gender equity), but there is limited support for expanding the responsibilities of citizenship to include new requirements in the form of mandatory voting or community service.

Moreover, globalization is not perceived to be a threat to the country's citizenship. Most Canadians have no problem with the concept of dual citizenship or the fact that millions of Canadians now live abroad; many see these as positive developments in terms of providing opportunities for personal development and strengthening connections between countries. There is, however, an underlying concern about citizens who do not have a history of residency in Canada and take advantage of their status to access benefits without paying taxes or otherwise contributing to the country.

**4. Canadian-born and foreign-born citizens share a remarkably similar vision of how to be a good citizen in this country. While the point at which foreign-born Canadians start to feel like good citizens varies, lack of English or French makes this process more challenging.**

While foreign-born Canadians may arrive in this country with diverse experiences, beliefs and values, by the time they become citizens, their perspective on citizenship is strikingly consistent with that of native-born Canadians. Not only are they as likely to define citizenship as an active commitment and outlook, they are equally likely to *feel* fully like a good citizen of this country. Most foreign-born citizens say they chose to become citizens out of a commitment to be Canadian, and are even more likely than their native-born counterparts to express strong pride in being part of this country.

Legal citizenship is an important and valued step for most immigrants, but it does not appear to be the principal catalyst for feeling like a good citizen. In fact, a greater proportion felt fully like a citizen the moment they arrived in the country. Overcoming language barriers is seen as the greatest challenge facing newcomers who follow in their footsteps.

# Defining Good Citizenship

## Definition of a “good citizen”

Canadians define “citizenship” as more than having a passport, obeying the law and paying taxes. These are widely seen as key aspects of citizenship, but just as important are being active participants in one’s community, helping others and accepting differences.

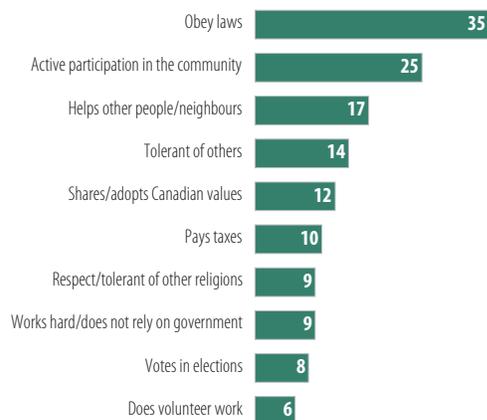
**DEFINING GOOD CITIZENSHIP.** Aside from the legal definition of citizenship, which is based on rules set by the federal government, what does it mean to be a “good” citizen in Canada today? When asked (unprompted), the Canadian public identifies a range of attributes and actions. Some are the basics of obeying the law (35%), paying taxes (10%) and voting in elections (8%). But even more prominent are responses that speak to an active commitment and outlook, such as active participation in one’s community (25%), helping others (17%), being tolerant of others (14%), sharing Canadian values (12%) and respecting other religions (9%).

Canadians’ views on what makes a good citizen are generally consistent across the country and among segments of the population, with a few exceptions. Quebecers, and particularly Montrealers, are more likely than others to cite tolerance of others, religious tolerance and the adoption of Canadian values as attributes of a good citizen. Canadians in the highest socio-economic bracket are most likely to identify active community participation as an integral element of good citizenship.

How do native-born and foreign-born Canadians compare in their definitions of good citizenship? The two groups identify a largely similar set of attributes of a good citizen. The one exception is that foreign-born Canadians (41%) are more likely than native-born (33%) to say good citizenship means obeying laws. Active engagement is more commonly associated with good citizenship among immigrants in Canada for 10 years or longer (30% vs. 13% of those here less than 10 years) and those who have become citizens (29% vs. 14% of permanent residents).

## What makes someone a good citizen?

### Top ten mentions (unprompted)

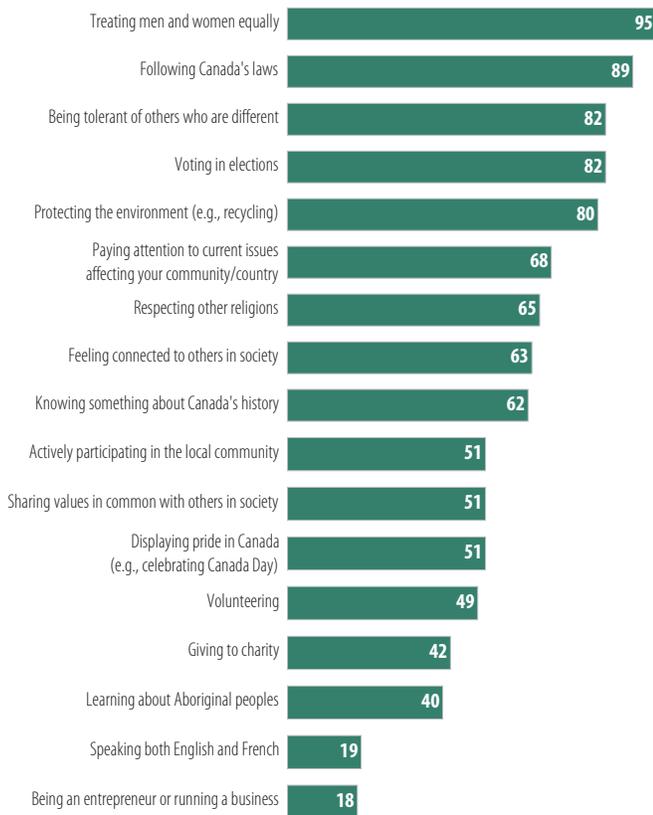


### Q.3

We have a few questions about citizenship. There is the legal definition of a citizen, which is based on rules set by the government. But there is also another way to think about citizenship that has to do with what it means to be a good citizen in Canada today. I'd like to ask you now about this other way of thinking about citizenship. In your opinion, what is it that makes someone a good citizen, in terms of what they do and believe? Anything else?

## Very important to being a good citizen in Canada

% who say very important



Q.7

Please tell me if you think each of the following are very important, somewhat important, not very important or not at all important to being a good citizen in Canada ...

## IMPORTANT ATTRIBUTES OF GOOD CITIZENSHIP.

In addition to a “top-of-mind” definition of citizenship, the survey further explored this topic by presenting a list of 17 candidate attributes and asking respondents the extent to which they believed each is important to being a good citizen in Canada. Some of the same main attributes emerge high on the list, but others also emerge upon prompting.

At the top of the list, there is essentially a consensus among Canadians that good citizenship means treating men and women equally (95% say this is very important to being a good citizen in Canada), obeying Canada’s laws (89%), being tolerant or respectful of others who are different (82%), voting in elections (82%) and protecting the environment (80%).

Majorities of between six and seven in ten each say a good citizen pays attention to current issues (68%), respects other religions (65%), feels connected to others in society (63%) and knows about Canada’s history (62%).

Half of Canadians each say being a good citizen means actively participating in the local community (51%), sharing common values (51%), displaying pride in Canada (e.g., by celebrating Canada Day) (51%) or volunteering (49%), while four in ten each say it includes giving to charity (42%) and learning about Aboriginal peoples (40%). At the bottom of the list are being bilingual (English and French) (19%), and being an entrepreneur or a small business owner (18%).

The perceived importance of these attributes of good citizenship varies in a consistent manner by population segment. In general, many (but not all) are considered more essential to being a good citizen by women and older Canadians, and less essential by Quebecers. A key exception is being bilingual, which Quebecers are much more likely than others to associate with good citizenship in Canada.

Foreign-born Canadians are more likely than native-born to rate several attributes as very important to being a good citizen, including obeying Canada’s laws, being tolerant, protecting the environment, respecting other religions, feeling connected to others, sharing values and learning about Aboriginal peoples.



### How Canadians and Americans compare

How might citizenship be defined in the U.S., where there is a very different set of traditions and identities? In fact, Americans are notably similar to Canadians in the way they define a good citizen. U.S. residents are slightly more likely to say good citizenship means following the rules (i.e., obeying laws, paying taxes and voting in elections). However, they are just as likely as Canadians to characterize a good citizen as someone who actively participates in their community, and even more likely to say it means helping others.

#### What makes someone a good citizen?

Top mentions Canada and U.S.A.

	CANADA	U.S.A.
Obeys laws	35	41
Active participation in the country	25	22
Helps others/neighbours	17	26
Tolerant of others	14	10
Shares/adopts Canadian/U.S. values	12	6
Pays taxes	10	14
Respect/tolerant of other religions	9	6
Works hard/doesn't rely on government	9	6
Votes in elections	8	13
Does volunteer work	6	7
Proud of being Canadian/American	5	8
Honest/integrity/moral	5	7
Religious faith/belief in God	3	7

## Feeling like a good citizen

Canadians emphasize volunteer work and helping others as what makes them feel like a good citizen. Lack of time is identified as the main limitation to doing these things.

**FEELING LIKE A GOOD CITIZEN.** From a more personal perspective, what things do Canadians themselves do that make them *feel* like a good citizen? When asked (without prompting), Canadians are most likely to emphasize doing volunteer work (34%), and being kind and generous to other people (26%); ahead of paying taxes (21%), obeying the law (20%) and voting in elections (17%). Other things that make people feel like a good citizen include being employed (14%), donating to charities (12%), being an active participant in their community (10%), and participating in a religious or faith community (8%).

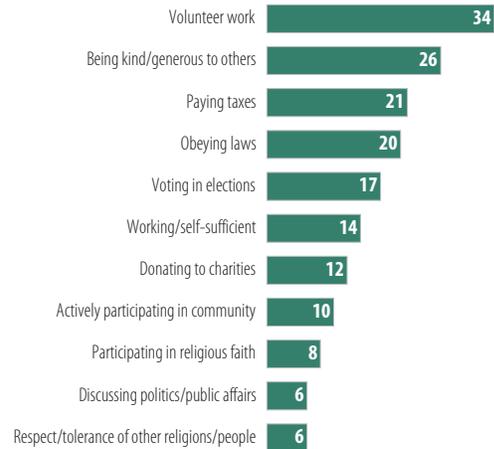
There is some variation across the population. Quebecers are most likely to emphasize that paying taxes and working to support themselves make them feel like good citizens. Canadians with greater socio-economic status (education and income) are more apt to identify several things that make them feel like good citizens. Volunteering and being kind to others are more likely to make women feel like good citizens, while paying taxes is more apt to do the same for men. Being kind and generous, obeying laws and donating to charities are all more commonly mentioned as evidence of good citizenship by older Canadians, while those under 60 are more likely than others to say working to support themselves makes them feel like a good citizen.

Consistent with their general definition of citizenship, foreign-born Canadians are more likely than native-born to say obeying laws makes them feel like good citizens. Immigrants in Canada for 10 years or longer are more likely than newer immigrants to emphasize volunteering and being kind to others as ways they feel like a good citizen.

**BARRIERS.** What makes it difficult for Canadians to be good citizens? In fact, most do not identify major constraints to doing things that make them feel like a good citizen, as they define it. The main obstacle identified (without prompting) is lack of time (21%), followed by cost (9%). No other barrier is identified by more than five percent of Canadians, and more than four in ten (44%) could not identify anything preventing them from feeling like a good citizen.

## What do you do that makes you *feel* like a good citizen?

### Top mentions



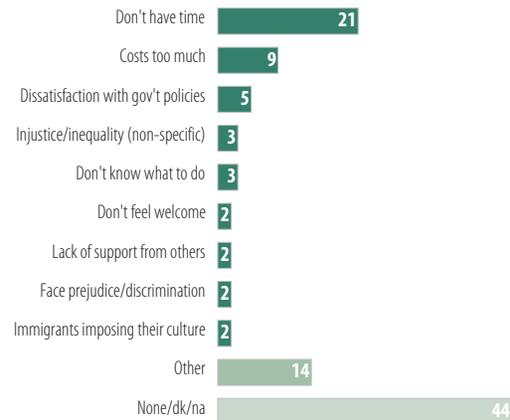
### Q.5

Thinking about this broader definition of citizenship, what kinds of things do you, yourself, do that make you feel like a good citizen? Anything else?

Subsample: Those who feel they are fully or partly a citizen

## Obstacles to feeling like a good citizen?

### Top mentions



### Q.6

In what ways, if any, do you sometimes find it difficult to do the things that make you feel like a good citizen? Anything else?

Subsample: Those who feel they are fully or partly a citizen

Time constraints to feeling like a good citizen are more commonly identified by Canadians under 60, and those with more education and higher incomes. Native-born and foreign-born Canadians identify similar barriers to good citizenship.

# State of Citizenship in Canada

## Immigrants as good citizens

Canadians express a notable degree of confidence in citizenship as they define it, and agree that everyone – regardless of where they are born – can be a good citizen.

### CAN FOREIGN-BORN BE GOOD CITIZENS? Do

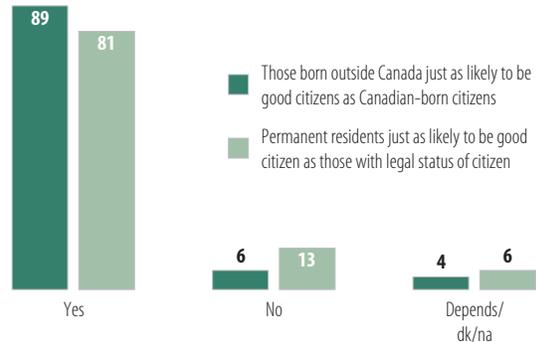
Canadians believe that being born in Canada is a prerequisite for good citizenship, or that newcomers can become good citizens upon their arrival? In fact, there is an overwhelming consensus that immigrants are as likely as native-born individuals to be good Canadian citizens. Nine in ten (89%) say they believe someone born outside Canada is just as likely to be a good citizen as someone born here. This view is notably consistent across the population, but is especially widespread among Canadians under 45 and those with a university education.

In Canada, the small group (6% of the total population) who *disagree* that immigrants can be good citizens are nonetheless more likely than not to believe that the next generation (i.e., their Canadian-born children) can be. More than half (56%) of this group say someone who is the first in their family to be born in Canada is as likely to be a good citizen as someone whose family has been here for generations. One in four (25%) disagree, while the remaining 16 percent say it depends.

### CAN PERMANENT RESIDENTS BE GOOD CITIZENS?

What about permanent residents who have permission to live and work in Canada but are not Canadian citizens? The large majority (81%) of Canadians also believe permanent residents are as likely as immigrants with the legal status of a Canadian citizen to be good citizens in this country. This view is most prominent in Quebec, among those under the age of 45 and among permanent residents themselves.

Can someone born outside Canada be just as likely to be a good citizen as someone born here?



Q.8

Do you believe someone who was born outside Canada is just as likely to be a good citizen as someone born here?

Q.10

The legal definition of a Canadian citizen is a person who is Canadian by birth or who has applied for and received Canadian citizenship through the government. A Permanent Resident is someone who is not a Canadian citizen but who has been granted permission to live and work in Canada without any time limit on his or her stay. Do you believe a permanent resident is just as likely to be a good citizen as someone who has the legal status of citizen?

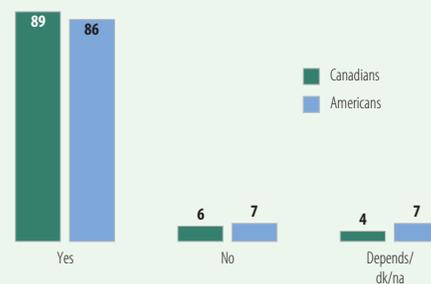


### How Canadians and Americans compare

The conventional belief is that Canada is more welcoming of newcomers than the U.S. Yet, Americans are just as likely as their Canadian counterparts to attribute good citizenship to immigrants. Most Americans (86%) say foreign-born individuals are as likely to be good citizens as native-born residents.

Can someone born outside the country be just as likely to be a good citizen as someone born here?

Canada and U.S.A.



## How immigrants become good citizens

*Canadians expect newcomers to adapt to become good citizens, but many also believe society needs to play a greater role in supporting this process.*

**ADAPTING TO BECOME GOOD CITIZENS.** To what extent do Canadians believe that becoming a good citizen means integrating into mainstream society? There are expectations that newcomers to Canada need to adapt to become good citizens. Canadians identify (without prompting) several important ways in which newcomers need to adapt, in terms of learning about Canada's culture and ways of life (36%), English or French (32%), Canadian values (27%) and Canadian laws (26%). Some also believe that becoming a good citizen means making connections with friends and neighbours (17%), and becoming financially self-sufficient (12%). At the same time, few (8%) say that newcomers need to abandon their culture altogether to become good citizens.

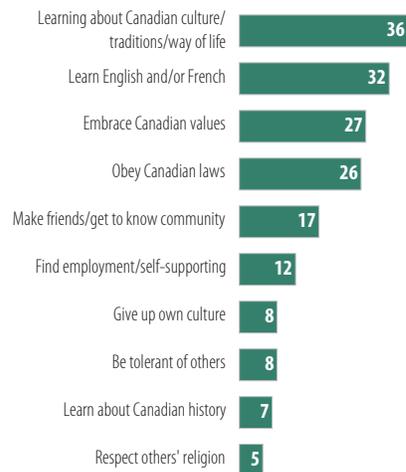
Compared to other parts of Canada, Quebecers are most likely to say that newcomers need to embrace Canadian values (42%) to become good citizens, and are least likely to be concerned that they should learn about Canadian ways of life. The need to learn English or French is mentioned most frequently in Quebec and B.C., and least frequently in Atlantic Canada.

Older people and those with more education are more likely to identify several ways in which newcomers need to adapt, including learning English or French, and about Canadian values. However, younger people (under 45) are more likely than older ones to identify making friends as an important way to adapt.

Native-born and foreign-born Canadians hold notably similar views on what newcomers should do to become good citizens. Immigrants who have become Canadian citizens are more likely than permanent residents to say it is important for newcomers to learn about Canadian culture (39% vs. 25%) and to give up their own culture (9% vs. 4%).

## Most important ways for newcomers to become a good citizen?

### Top ten mentions



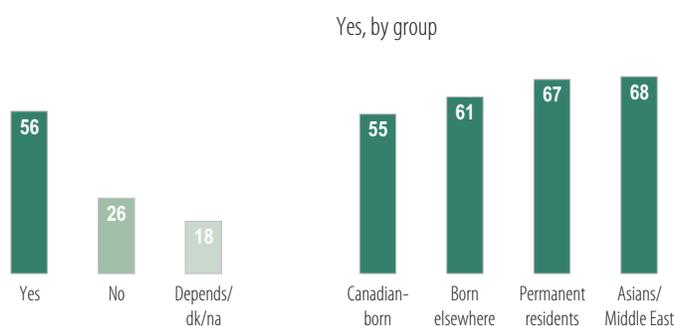
Q.12

*What do you think are the most important ways, if any, in which newcomers to Canada need to adapt to become good citizens? Anything else?*

**ROLE OF CANADIAN SOCIETY.** While it is widely held that newcomers need to adapt to become good citizens, do Canadians consider mainstream society a help or a hindrance? Views are divided about the extent of support offered to newcomers to become good citizens. A slight majority (56%) believe that Canadian society currently does enough to help them through this process. Nonetheless, a strong minority do *not* believe society is providing sufficient support to newcomers (26%) or are uncertain of what extent such support is offered (18%).

The view that society provides newcomers with the help they need to become good citizens is lower among native-born Canadians (55%) and higher among foreign-born Canadians (61%), particularly those born in Asia or the Middle East (68%), and permanent residents (67%). Canadians without a university education and men are also more likely than others to say that society is providing adequate support to newcomers to become good citizens.

### Does Canadian society do enough to help newcomers become good citizens?



Q.13  
Does Canadian society do enough to help newcomers become good citizens?

**WAYS TO HELP NEWCOMERS BECOME GOOD CITIZENS.**

The minority who do not believe Canadian society is doing enough to help newcomers become good citizens (26% of the total sample) were asked about the ways in which more should be done (without prompting). The top suggestion is simply to reach out and include newcomers (33%). Others suggestions include helping them find jobs (17%), helping them develop the necessary language skills (17%), mentoring or volunteering with them (13%), helping them learn about Canadian history and culture (13%), and recognizing their educational and professional credentials (12%).

Immigrants themselves are more likely than native-born Canadians to suggest employing newcomers as a way to help them become good citizens, and less likely to mention teaching them about Canadian culture.

**VOTING ELIGIBILITY FOR NON-CITIZENS.** People living in Canada who are not yet citizens are not currently eligible to vote in elections in Canada, and there is no overwhelming public support for extending them such rights. A minority of Canadians support voting rights for non-citizens at the federal (23%) and provincial (27%) levels, although such support is moderately higher in the case of municipal elections (38%).

Support is higher for external voting rights in each jurisdiction among foreign-born Canadians, but only reaches majority level in the case of municipal elections (52%). Not surprisingly, permanent residents are the most likely to back voting rights for non-citizens. A majority would support extending the vote to people without citizenship at the municipal (65%) and provincial (56%) level, while almost half (46%) would also want this right in a federal election.

Across the population, support for this idea is higher for all three jurisdictions among younger Canadians (aged 18-29) and those in the lower income bracket, and lowest in Quebec. Notably, support for municipal voting rights for non-citizens is higher in cities of 100,000 or more (39%), and particularly in Toronto (46%) and Vancouver (44%).

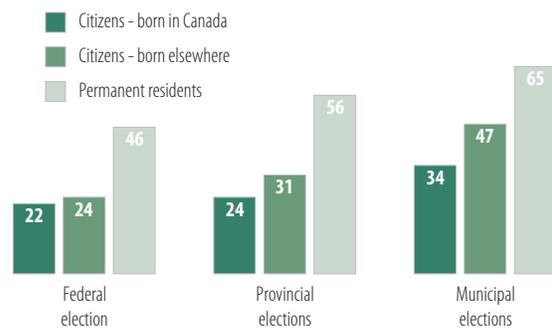
**How should Canadians do more to help newcomers become good citizens?**



Q.14  
In what ways should Canadian society do more to help newcomers become good citizens? Anything else?

Subsample: Those who think that Canadian society doesn't do enough to help newcomers become good citizens

**Voting eligibility for non-citizens**



Q.42  
And in your opinion, should people who are living in Canada but who are not yet citizens be eligible to vote in elections at each of the following levels ...?

## Legal citizenship requirements

*Most Canadians are comfortable with the current requirements for legal citizenship, and there is no particular demand for change.*

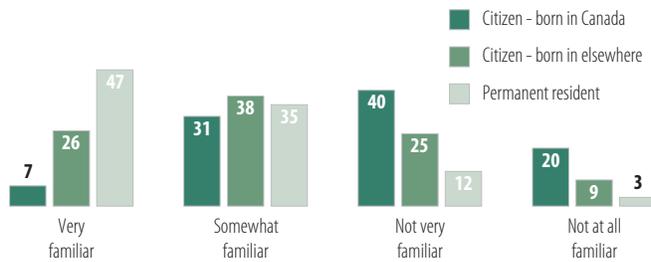
### FAMILIARITY WITH CITIZENSHIP REQUIREMENTS.

There are several requirements to be eligible for Canadian citizenship, including permanent resident status, time lived in Canada, language abilities, no criminal history and knowledge of Canada. Overall, Canadians report limited familiarity with the current requirements to become a legal citizen of Canada. More than four in ten (44%) say they are very or somewhat familiar with these requirements, while more than half (54%) say they are not very or not at all familiar.

Familiarity with citizenship requirements increases with proximity to the citizenship process, from a low of four in ten (38%) among native-born citizens, to more than six in ten (64%) among foreign-born citizens, to a high of eight in ten (82%) among permanent residents.

Across the country, residents of Ontario (55%) are most likely to be familiar with citizenship requirements, while this is least common among residents of Quebec (28%). Reported familiarity is also higher among Canadians aged 60 and older, and those with a university education.

### Familiarity with citizenship requirements



Q.26

*Would you say you are very familiar, somewhat familiar, not very familiar or not at all familiar with the current requirements to become a legal citizen of Canada?*

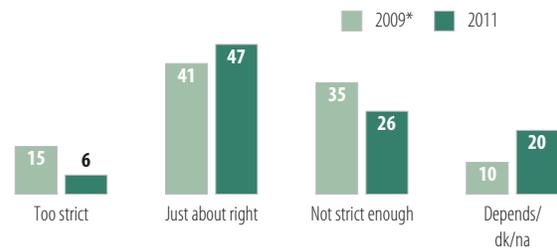
## OPINION OF CITIZENSHIP REQUIREMENTS.

Regardless of what they know or have heard, Canadians are more likely than not to feel the current requirements for legal citizenship are appropriate, and this proportion has grown over the past two years. Close to half now believe the rules are just about right (47%), compared to one-quarter who believe they are not strict enough (26%) and six percent who believe they are too strict; 20 percent cannot provide an opinion. Compared to a FOCUS CANADA survey conducted in 2009, the views that citizenship requirements are too strict or not strict enough have declined, while a greater number of Canadians than before believe the requirements are adequate or are unable to say.

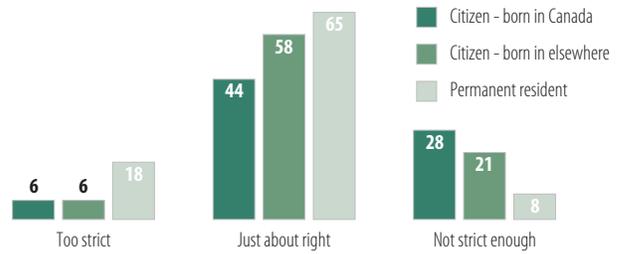
Opinions vary by place of birth and status in a predictable pattern. Native-born citizens are the least certain of the adequacy of the current requirements (44%), compared to foreign-born citizens (58%) and permanent residents (65%). Nonetheless, relatively few (28%) native-born Canadians believe the rules should be stricter, and a similar proportion are unable to give an opinion at all (21%).

The balance of opinion in most population segments is that the current rules are adequate; nonetheless, the view that the requirements are not strict enough is higher among older Canadians (45 and older) and those without a university education. The view that the current rules are adequate is higher among Canadians most familiar with the requirements; in turn, those who are less familiar with the requirements are also less likely to have an opinion about their fairness.

## Current rules for obtaining Canadian citizenship 2009 – 2011



## By citizen group



Q.27

From what you know or have heard about what is required for immigrants already living in Canada to obtain Canadian citizenship, do you think the rules are too strict, not strict enough or just about right?

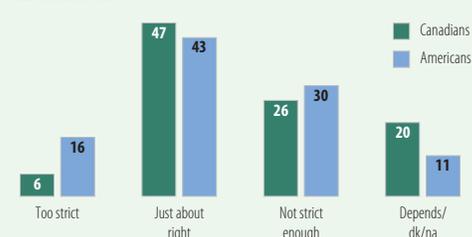
\*2009 data from Environics' Focus Canada 2009-1 report



## How Canadians and Americans compare

How do the perspectives of Canadians and Americans compare about the suitability of current citizenship requirements in their respective countries? In fact, Americans and Canadians hold very similar views on this issue. A plurality of Americans (43%) believe U.S. citizenship requirements are about right, compared to three in ten (30%) who say they are not strict enough and 16 percent who feel they are too strict.

## Current rules for obtaining citizenship Canada and U.S.A.



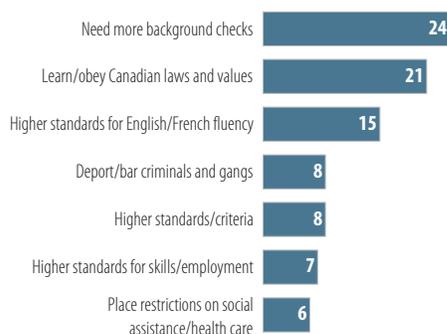
### WHY RULES ARE TOO STRICT/NOT STRICT ENOUGH.

The minority of Canadians looking for *stricter citizenship* requirements (26% of the total sample) were asked what changes they believe should be made to the rules. They emphasize more background/security checks (24%), stronger adherence to Canadian laws and values (21%), and higher standards for language skills (15%), all of which have as much to do with immigration as with citizenship.

The small group of Canadians who feel the rules are *too strict* (6% of the total sample) were also asked how they would like to see the rules changed. They would prefer more lenient requirements to increase the number of immigrants admitted (19%), a shorter waiting period (17%), reducing requirements related to knowledge about Canada (16%), relaxing professional accreditation requirements (15%) and extending citizenship to family members more easily (12%).

### How current citizenship rules are *not strict enough*

#### Top mentions



Q.28b

What changes do you think should be made to the rules?

Subsample: Those who think citizenship rules are not strict enough

### How current citizenship rules are *too strict*

#### Top mentions



Q.28a

What changes do you think should be made to the rules?

Subsample: Those who think citizenship rules are too strict

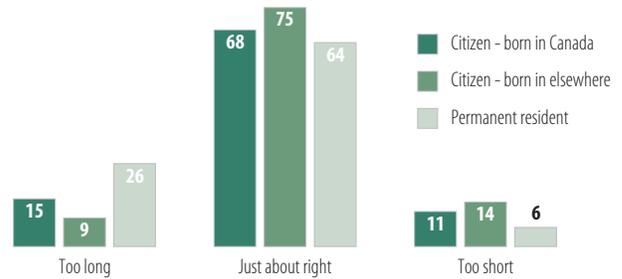
## OPINION OF SPECIFIC CITIZENSHIP

**REQUIREMENTS.** The current waiting period and language requirements for citizenship were described to respondents, to gauge the extent to which they consider each of these to be appropriate. Based on the information provided, strong majorities of Canadians say both requirements are adequate, and these views are notably consistent across the population.

Seven in ten (69%) Canadians say the *minimum three-year waiting period* to apply for citizenship is about right, while the remainder are divided about whether this is too long (15%) or too short (12%). Majorities in all population segments support the existing waiting period. The view that it is too long is higher in the Atlantic provinces, among women and Canadians under 30. It is also most common among permanent residents (26%), some of whom are in the midst of their own waiting period, and lowest among foreign-born citizens (9%), who have already met these requirements.

With regard to the *requirement to speak and understand basic English or French*, more than eight in ten (86%) Canadians approve of this eligibility requirement. Widespread support for this language requirement is evident among all population segments, including permanent residents (91%).

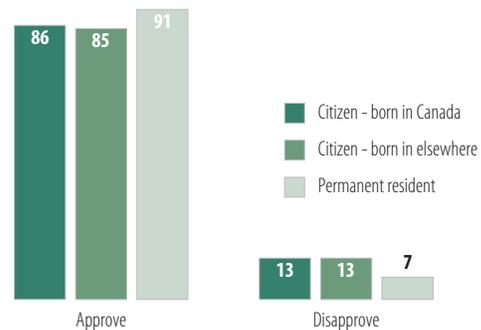
## Current waiting period for Canadian citizenship



Q.29

The current waiting period to apply for citizenship is at least three years living in Canada out of the past four years. Do you think this waiting period is too long, too short or about right?

## Current language requirement for knowledge of English/ French



Q.30

Currently, it is required that applicants for citizenship must have an adequate knowledge of either English or French? Do you approve or disapprove of this language requirement?

## Citizenship rights versus responsibilities

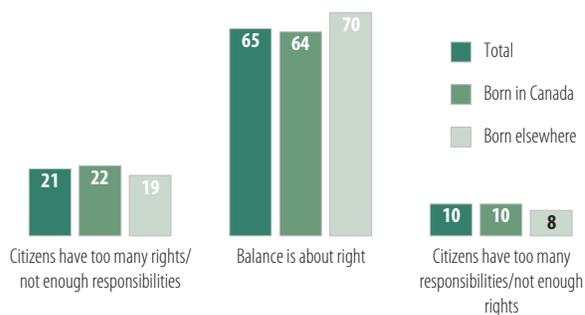
*Most Canadians are comfortable with the current balance between citizens' rights and responsibilities, with only modest support for mandating responsibilities such as voting or volunteering. Support is most widespread for requiring all citizens to abide by Canadian values.*

### BALANCE BETWEEN RIGHTS AND

**RESPONSIBILITIES.** Much of the public debate about Canadian citizenship has focused on whether the current balance between rights and responsibilities is appropriate. When asked, most Canadians believe there is a good balance those two elements of citizenship. Two-thirds (65%) say the current balance is about right, compared to two in ten (21%) who say citizens have too many rights and one in ten (10%) who say they have too many responsibilities.

There is majority approval of the current balance between rights and responsibilities in all population segments, but this opinion is particularly widespread among foreign-born Canadians (70%), compared to those born in Canada (64%). Support for the current balance is also higher in the Atlantic provinces, and among those with a university education and household incomes of \$30,000 or more. The view that Canadian citizens do not have enough responsibilities is more common among those in the highest income bracket.

### Current balance of citizen's rights and responsibilities



Q.32

*Canadian citizens have rights that are guaranteed by law as well as responsibilities and obligations. Which of the following three statements is closest to your point of view...?*

**SUPPORT FOR ADDITIONAL CITIZENSHIP REQUIREMENTS.**

Some commentators have argued that Canadian citizens have more legal rights than responsibilities and for the need to add new responsibilities for all citizens (not just immigrants), such as mandatory voting or voluntary service. However, there is no widespread demand among the Canadian public for additional, mandatory citizenship requirements. A modest majority (53%) would support mandatory voting, while only one-third (34%) endorse the concept of requiring at least one year of voluntary or community service as a citizenship requirement of all citizens.

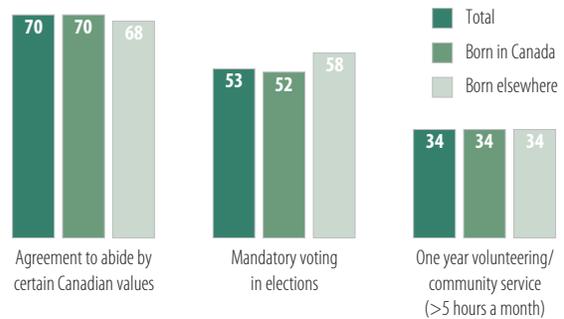
At the same time, there is widespread support for a broader requirement that citizens abide by certain Canadian values (70%). While the survey did not define which values would apply, Canadians' views on what makes a good citizen (e.g., gender equity, respect for others and environmental responsibility) are indicators of the types of values to which they are likely referring.

Foreign-born Canadians (58%) voice greater support for mandatory voting than do native-born Canadians (52%), while views on the other potential citizenship requirements are similar between the two groups.

Across the country, Quebecers and older Canadians (60 and up) stand out as particularly supportive of requiring citizens to abide by certain Canadian values. Quebecers express more interest in mandatory voting, and less interest in mandatory volunteering, than do residents of other provinces.

Women are more likely than men to support both mandatory voting and volunteering. Support for all three additional citizenship requirements is higher among those with less education.

**Support for new citizen requirements**

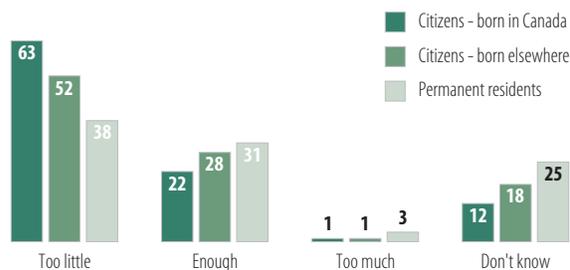


Q.33  
Some people have suggested that there should be additional citizenship requirements for all Canadian citizens, not just those who immigrate here. Do you think each of the following should, or should not, be a requirement for all citizens of the country ...?

**TEACHING CITIZENSHIP IN SCHOOLS.** To what extent do Canadians think schools provide students with opportunities to learn about what it means to be a citizen? A majority believe the current educational system is not doing enough in this regard. Six in ten (60%) Canadians say schools do too little in terms of teaching students about citizenship, its rights and responsibilities, compared to one-quarter (23%) who say they do enough and one percent who say they do too much (14% cannot provide an opinion).

The view that schools are providing insufficient teaching about citizenship is highest among native-born citizens (63%), compared to foreign-born citizens (52%) or permanent residents (38%), with the latter two groups less apt to have an opinion on the topic. Across Canada, the perceived need for greater citizenship education in schools is higher in the Atlantic provinces, and among Canadians with more education and higher incomes.

### Do schools do enough to teach students about citizenship and its rights/responsibilities?



Q.43

*Do you think that schools in Canada today do too much, do enough or do too little, in terms of teaching students about citizenship and its rights and responsibilities?*

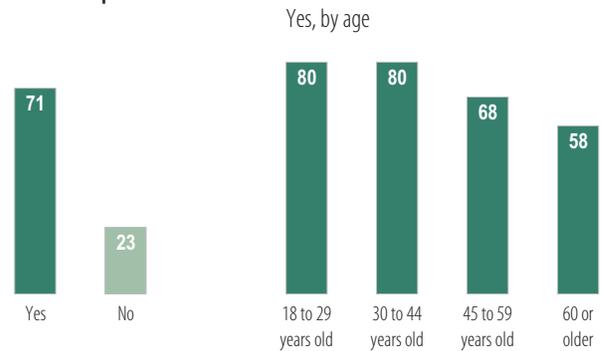
## Dual citizenship and Canadians living abroad

*Most Canadians have no problem with dual citizenship or Canadians living abroad who have some residency history in the country.*

**DUAL CITIZENSHIP.** Canada is one of many countries that allows citizens to also be a citizen of another country. Do Canadians see dual citizenship in a positive or negative light? Most Canadians are comfortable with dual citizenship, with seven in ten (71%) who say it should be allowed. Support for dual citizenship is higher among younger Canadians, reaching eight in ten (80%) of those under 45, compared to six in ten (58%) of those aged 60 or older. Support is also higher among those with more education and income, and those born outside Canada. Not surprisingly, support is particularly strong among Canadians who currently have dual citizenship with another country (89%).

Those who think dual citizenship *should be allowed* are most likely to say this is because dual citizenship encourages a sense of belonging to both countries (34%), that it represents freedom of choice for Canadians (26%) and that it is not seen as harmful to Canada (13%). Foreign-born Canadians are more likely to cite the sense of belonging promoted by dual citizenship, while native-born Canadians are more apt to mention freedom of choice and that it doesn't cause Canada any harm.

## Should Canadian citizens be allowed to hold dual citizenship?

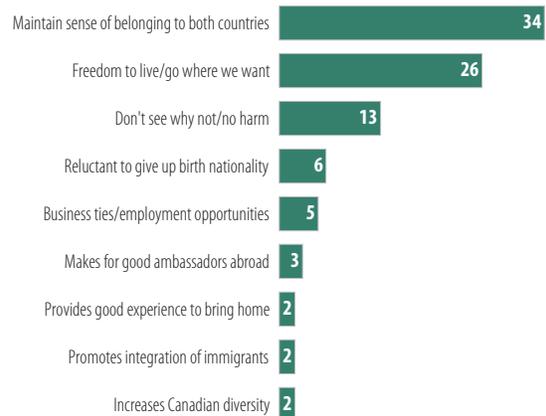


Q.35

*Do you think Canadian citizens should or should not be allowed to hold dual citizenship, that is, to also be a legal citizen of another country?*

## Why dual citizenship should be allowed

### Top mentions



Q.36a

*Why do you say that?*

*Subsample: Those who think dual citizenship should be allowed*

The minority of Canadians who feel dual citizenship should *not be allowed* (23% of total sample) are most apt to say this is because it weakens loyalty or commitment to Canada (mentioned by 48%). Fewer feel that citizens should be required to live in Canada (14%) or believe that they are taking advantage of services without paying their fair share (14%).

### Why dual citizenship should be *not* be allowed Top mentions



Q.36b  
Why do you say that?

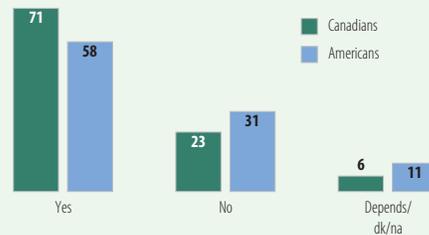
Subsample: Those who think dual citizenship should not be allowed



### How Canadians and Americans compare

Of the opinions compared between Canadians and Americans on this survey, dual citizenship was the only topic where slightly different views were evident. Canadians are moderately more supportive of dual citizenship than Americans: six in ten (58%) Americans think U.S. citizens should be allowed to be a legal citizen of another country.

### Should citizens be allowed to hold dual citizenship? Canada and U.S.A.



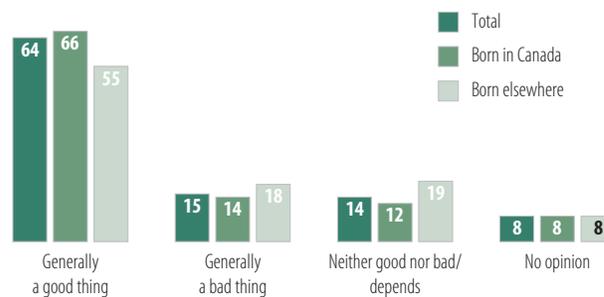
**CANADIANS LIVING ABROAD.** There are an estimated three million Canadians currently living abroad in other countries. As with dual citizenship, most Canadians are comfortable with Canadians living overseas. More than six in ten (64%) say this is generally a good thing for Canada, compared to only 15 percent who say it is a problem (an additional 22% do not have a clear view either way). A positive outlook on Canadians living abroad is more common among Canadians under 60. Notably, Canadians born abroad are less accepting of this right (55%) than those born in Canada (66%), which is counter-intuitive.

This largely positive opinion has remained stable over the past four years: a 2007 survey conducted by Environics for Canada's World found 67 percent of Canadians viewed the number of citizens living in other countries as a good thing for Canada.

Among those who see large numbers of Canadians living abroad as *a good thing*, most say it is because they believe these people are positive ambassadors for Canada (32%) and its values (22%). Other reasons include the belief that these Canadians will bring home valuable experiences (19%), that it provides valuable learning (17%) and business/employment (9%) opportunities, that they should have the freedom to live or travel wherever they want (16%), and that it strengthens Canada's role in the world (14%).

The small group who think Canadians living abroad is *a bad thing* cite two main reasons. The first is that they are not contributing to Canada, either economically (21%), or in terms of a knowledge, educational or skills drain (13%). The second concern is about free-ridership, including worries that they are taking advantage of services without paying for them (22%), they are not paying taxes (12%) or expect the government to help when they are in trouble (7%).

## Opinion about 3 million Canadians living abroad



Q.37

There are an estimated three million Canadians currently living abroad in other countries. Do you believe having this number of Canadians living in other countries is generally a good thing or a bad thing for Canada?

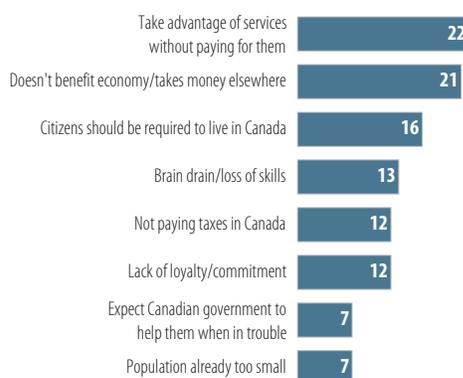
## Why is 3 million Canadians living abroad a *good thing*?

### Top mentions



## Why is 3 million Canadians living abroad a *bad thing*?

### Top mentions



Q.38ab

Why do you say that?

Subsample: Those who think that three million Canadians living abroad is a good thing/bad thing for Canada

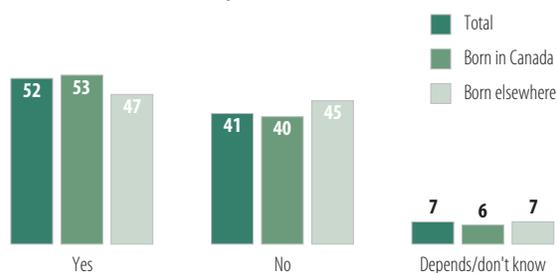
**RESIDENCY REQUIREMENTS.** Despite majority support for dual citizenship and living abroad, Canadians also believe there should be conditions on living abroad, such as requiring citizens to live in Canada on some kind of regular basis (rather than living permanently in another country). A slim majority (52%) believe such conditions should be in place, versus four in ten (41%) who do not. Support for residency requirements is higher among older Canadians (60 and up), those without a university education and those born in Canada.

**ELIGIBILITY TO VOTE.** Canadian citizens living abroad are currently eligible to vote in federal elections (provided they have been outside the country for no more than five years). Most (69%) approve of this policy, but there is less noticeably less support for Canadians living abroad being able to vote in provincial (56%) or municipal (35%) elections.

Support for external voting is higher in Canada's largest urban centres (Montreal, Toronto and Vancouver) and among Canadians with a university education when it comes to federal and provincial elections, but not for municipal elections. Support for external voting in federal elections is also higher among men and those in the highest income bracket.

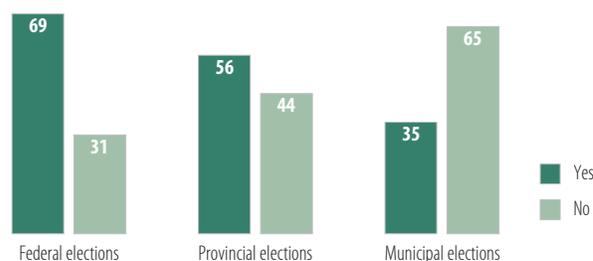
Foreign-born Canadians are more likely than native-born to support voting rights in all three jurisdictions (federal, provincial and municipal) for Canadians living abroad.

### Should conditions be placed on Canadians living abroad to retain their citizenship?



Q.39  
Should there be conditions placed on Canadians who live abroad in order to keep their citizenship, such as requiring them to return to live in Canada on a regular basis?

### Canadians living abroad should be allowed to vote in elections in Canada?



Q.41  
Currently, some Canadian citizens living outside Canada can vote in Canadian elections. In your opinion, should Canadians living abroad be eligible to vote in elections at each of the following levels ...?

# Native-born and Foreign-born Perspectives

## Feeling Canadian

*Foreign-born citizens are as likely as native-born to feel fully like a good citizen of the country, and even prouder to be Canadian.*

**FEELING FULLY LIKE A CITIZEN.** Do Canadians consider themselves “good citizens who are active members of their community, province, territory or country?” When provided with this definition, most (76%) Canadians say they feel fully like a good citizen of Canada. Two in ten (20%) feel they are partly a good citizen while two percent feel they are not.

The view that they are fully a good citizen is equally true for both native-born (78%) and foreign-born (75%) citizens. By comparison, 45 percent of permanent residents feel fully like a good citizen. Across the country, residents of the Prairie provinces are most likely to feel like good citizens. This view also increases with age and household income. Anglophones and francophones are equally likely to feel like good citizens.

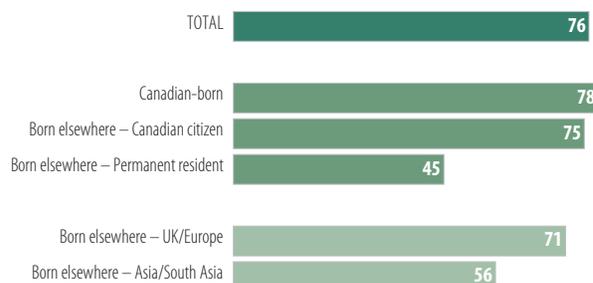
**PRIDE IN CANADA.** Canadians express great pride in their country. A strong majority of citizens (82%) feel very proud to be Canadian, and notably this is more widely felt among foreign-born citizens (88%) than native-born (81%). Likewise, most permanent residents (75%) are very proud to be a resident of Canada.

There is also strong pride expressed by all in being a resident of their province (72%) and a member of their local community (69%), both of which are equally the case for native-born and foreign-born citizens. By comparison, six in ten (58%) foreign-born Canadians describe themselves as very proud of being from their country of birth.

Among citizens, pride in being Canadian increases with age, and is higher among those in the lowest income bracket. It is lowest in Quebec (53%), where a larger proportion (69%) report strong pride in being a resident of their province.

## Do you feel like you are fully a citizen\*?

By citizen group and place of birth

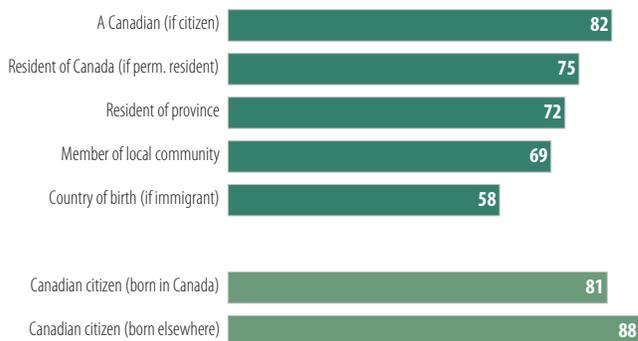


\* Active member of one’s community, province/territory or country

Q.4

*For the next few questions, we’d like to use a broader definition of citizenship than the legal status given by the government. This broader definition of a citizen is someone who is an active member of their community, province, territory or country. Thinking about this definition of citizenship, do you feel like you are fully, partly or not a citizen?*

## Very proud to be ...



Q.17

*Would you say you are very, somewhat, not very, or not at all proud to be each of the following ...?*

**WHY PROUD OF CANADA.** What is it about Canada that gives people the greatest sense of pride? First and foremost, Canadians say (unprompted) it is because Canada is free and democratic (28%). Other reasons include that Canadians are humanitarians and caring people (11%), Canada is respected by other countries (8%), the quality of life (7%) and sense of tolerance (6%).

Native-born and foreign-born individuals share similar reasons for their pride in Canada, although foreign-born are more likely to mention the quality of life here.

The reasons given for pride in Canada are largely similar across the population, although older Canadians (60 and up) and those with less education are more likely to attribute it to a free and democratic Canada.

**WHY LEAST PROUD OF CANADA.** And what makes people *least* proud about Canada? The most common complaint (unprompted) is about politicians and the state of government leadership (20%). Other concerns include Canada’s environmental record (6%), treatment of Aboriginal peoples (5%), presence of racism and discrimination (4%), and a lack of assertiveness internationally (4%).

Native-born individuals are more likely than foreign-born to say they are least proud of Canada’s politicians, while other concerns raised are similar for the two groups.

The state of government leadership is the most common concern raised in all provinces and population segments, but is particularly prominent in Quebec, among men and those with a university education. Concerns about Canada’s environmental record are also more common in Quebec, among Canadians under 60, and those with more education and higher incomes.

## Greatest sense of pride in being Canadian/Canadian resident

Top 5 mentions By place of birth

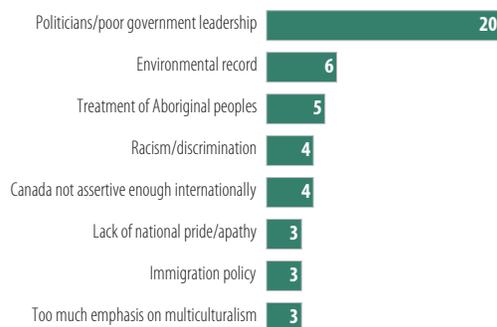


Q.18

What is it that gives you the greatest sense of pride about being Canadian/a resident of Canada?

Subsample: Those who are very or somewhat proud to be Canadian/xa resident of Canada

## What makes you *least* proud about being Canadian?



Q.19

[If Canadian-born/legal citizen] And what, if anything, makes you least proud about being Canadian?

[If not legal citizen] And what, if anything, makes you least proud about being a resident of Canada?

## Becoming a citizen

*Most foreign-born citizens became citizens out of a commitment to be Canadian. The point at which they begin to feel like a good citizen varies, but a lack of English or French makes this process more challenging.*

### REASONS FOR BECOMING A CANADIAN CITIZEN.

Why do newcomers to Canada choose to become legal citizens? When asked (unprompted), Canadian citizens born outside of the country suggest a number of reasons. The most common reasons are because they want to stay permanently (26%) or to confirm that they belong here (17%). For some, parents made the choice when they were young (25%). Other reasons for becoming a legal citizen are because their family lives in Canada (10%), to vote (9%) or to qualify for a passport (6%), or so their children will be Canadian (6%).

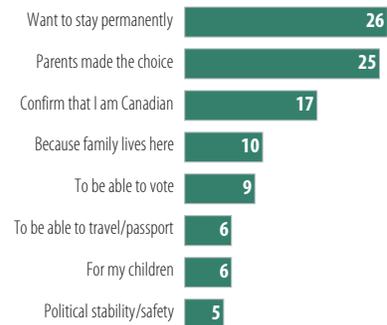
Reasons for becoming a legal citizen are largely consistent across the population of foreign-born Canadians, with the exception that those born in Europe, and those who have lived here for 10 years or longer are more apt to say their parents made the decision for them.

**CITIZENSHIP PROCESS.** How do foreign-born Canadians view the process they went through to become legal citizens? Most foreign-born citizens say the official citizenship process was not problematic. Eight in ten say it was very (59%) or somewhat (22%) easy, compared to one in ten who say it was somewhat (8%) or very (4%) difficult.

However, this process was not the same for everyone. Immigrants from Europe report an easier time than do those coming from Asia or the Middle East (62% and 48%, respectively, say the citizenship process was very easy). Similarly, those with English for French as their mother tongue (70%) find the process easier than do allophones (51%).

## Main reason you became a legal citizen in Canada?

### Top mentions

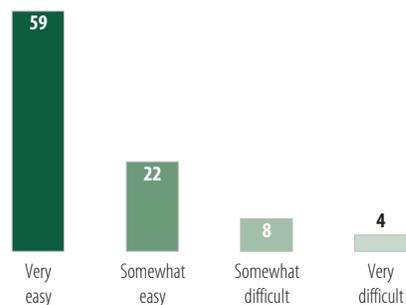


Q.22

*What was the main reason you decided to become a legal citizen of Canada?*

*Subsample: Those who are legal citizens born outside Canada*

## Process of becoming a citizen was ...



Q.23

*Was the process of becoming a citizen very easy, somewhat easy, somewhat difficult or very difficult for you?*

*Subsample: Those who are legal citizens born outside Canada*

**POINT AT WHICH FEEL LIKE A CITIZEN.** Aside from the official process of becoming a citizen, when do immigrants begin to *feel* like they are a good citizen in Canada, in terms of being an active member of their community, province, territory or country? This feeling happened at different stages, but notably one in four (25%) say they started to feel like a citizen the moment they arrived in the country.

Some say they felt like a citizen at specific milestones such as at their citizenship ceremony (16%), when they first voted (9%) or when they got their first passport (5%). Others refer to times when they became involved in Canadian society, such as finding a job (11%), started learning about Canadian culture (5%), becoming comfortable in English or French (4%), or becoming involved in the community (4%).

Notably, foreign-born Canadians with English as their mother tongue are more likely than allophones (i.e., whose mother tongue is neither English nor French) to feel like a Canadian upon arrival (32% vs. 22%). Immigrants born in Asia or the Middle East, and allophones are more apt than other immigrants to say they began to feel like a citizen when they first voted.

**OBSTACLES TO FEELING LIKE A CITIZEN.** Aside from their own experiences, what obstacles do foreign-born citizens believe *other* newcomers face in feeling fully like a citizen in Canada? Among those identified, first and foremost are language barriers (40%). Other barriers include physical isolation or difficulty getting around (20%), culture shock (19%), prejudice and discrimination (14%), and not feeling welcome or included (10%).

There is a relationship between perceptions of the obstacles facing newcomers and age. Language barriers are more commonly mentioned by younger immigrants (under 45). Those under 30 are also more likely than others to identify culture shock as a barrier, and least likely to mention prejudice or discrimination.

Physical isolation is more commonly cited as a barrier to feeling like a citizen by immigrants born in Asia or the Middle East, while mentions of prejudice/discrimination are higher among immigrants from Europe.

## At what point did you start feeling like a good citizen of Canada?

### Top mentions

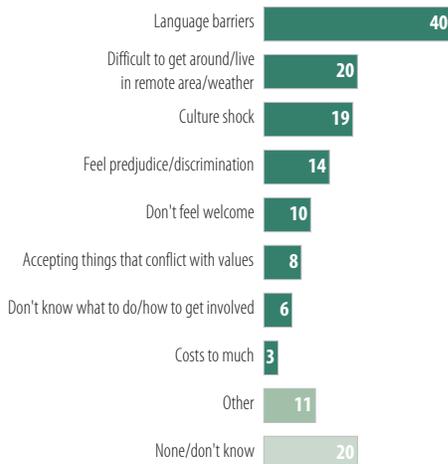


Q.24

*Thinking again of the broader definition of a citizen, which is being an active member of a community, province, territory or country, at what point did you start to feel like a citizen in Canada?*

*Subsample: Those who are legal citizens born outside Canada and who feel like a citizen*

## Obstacles others face in feeling like a citizen



Q.25

*Aside from your own personal experience, what obstacles, if any, do you think other newcomers face in feeling fully like a citizen in Canada? Anything else?*

*Subsample: Those who are legal citizens born outside Canada*







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