

# 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

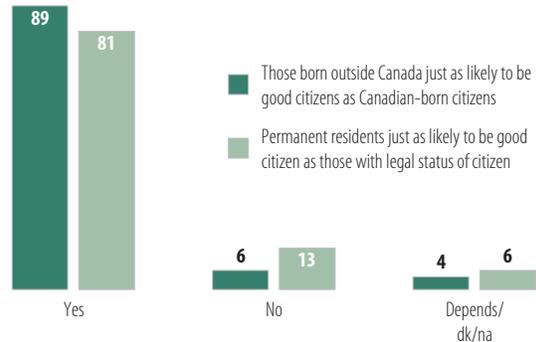
Canadians believe that being born in Canada is a prerequisite for good citizenship, or that newcomers can become good citizens upon their arrival? In fact, there is an overwhelming consensus that immigrants are as likely as native-born individuals to be good Canadian citizens. Nine in ten (89%) say they 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?

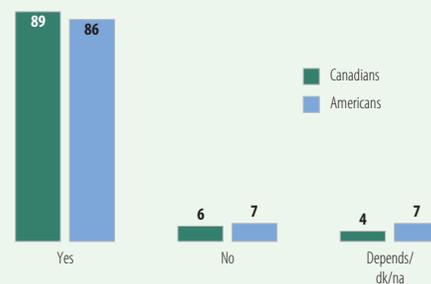


### How Canadians and Americans compare

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.

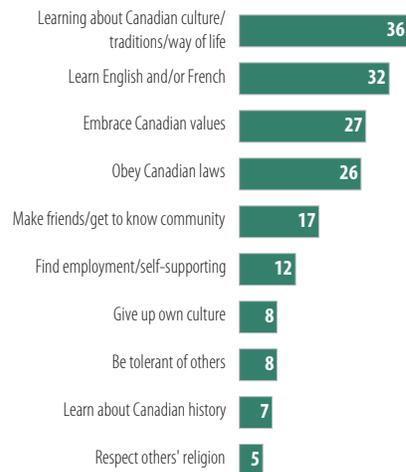
Compared to other parts of Canada, Quebecers are most likely to say that newcomers need to embrace Canadian values (42%) to become good citizens, and are least likely to be concerned that they should learn about Canadian ways of life. The need to learn English or French is mentioned most frequently in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



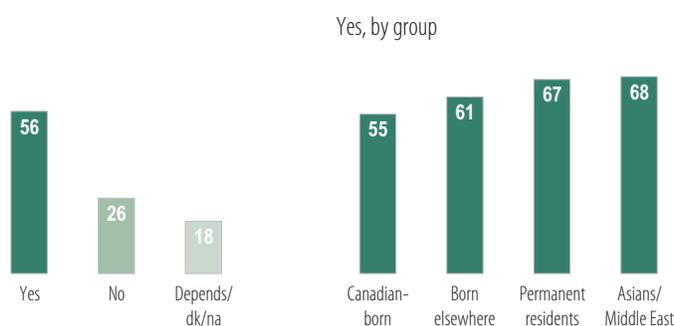
Q.12

*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 be 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%).

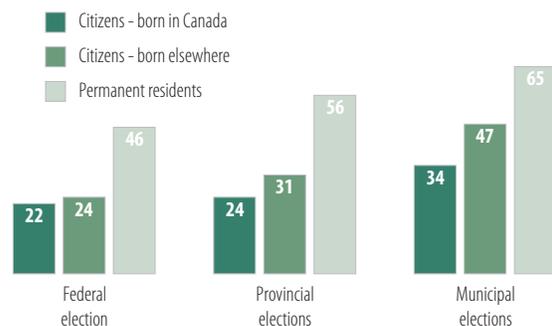
**How should Canadians do more to help newcomers become good citizens?**



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.*

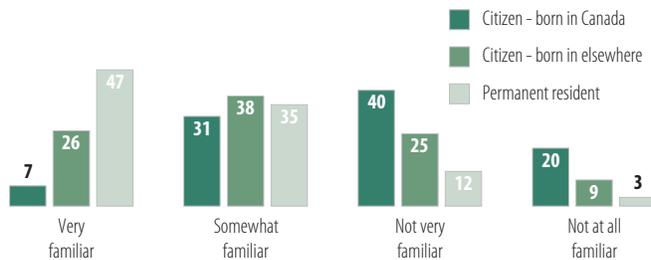
### FAMILIARITY WITH CITIZENSHIP REQUIREMENTS.

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?*

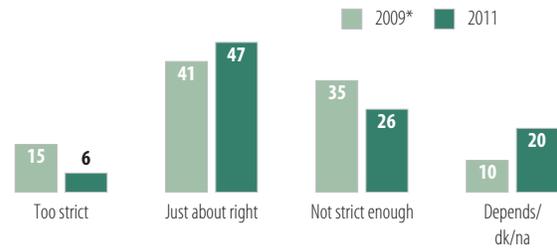
## OPINION OF CITIZENSHIP REQUIREMENTS.

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.

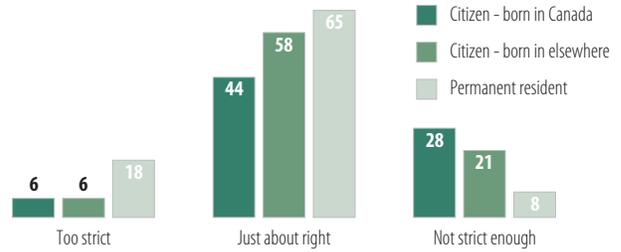
Opinions vary by place of birth and status in a predictable pattern. Native-born citizens are the least certain of the adequacy of the current requirements (44%), compared to foreign-born citizens (58%) and permanent residents (65%). Nonetheless, relatively few (28%) native-born Canadians believe the 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?

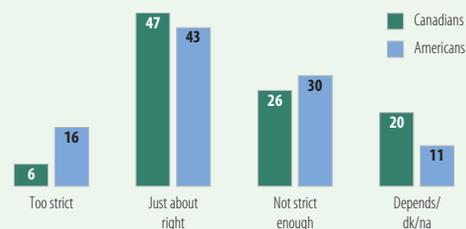
\*2009 data from Environics' Focus Canada 2009-1 report



## 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

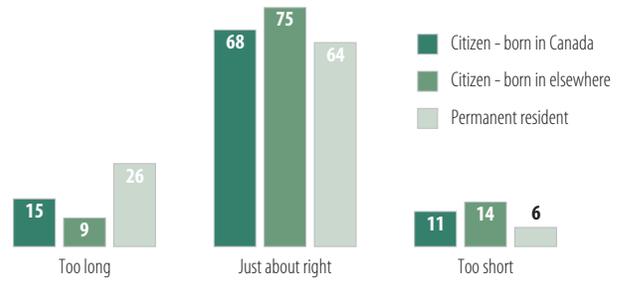
## OPINION OF SPECIFIC CITIZENSHIP

**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%).

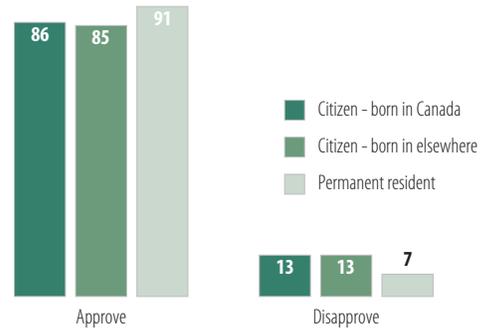
## Current waiting period for Canadian citizenship



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

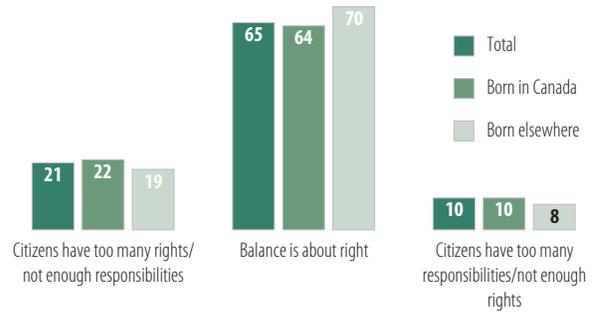
*Most Canadians are comfortable with the current balance between citizens' rights and responsibilities, with only modest support for mandating responsibilities such as voting or volunteering. Support is most widespread for requiring all citizens to abide by Canadian values.*

### 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.

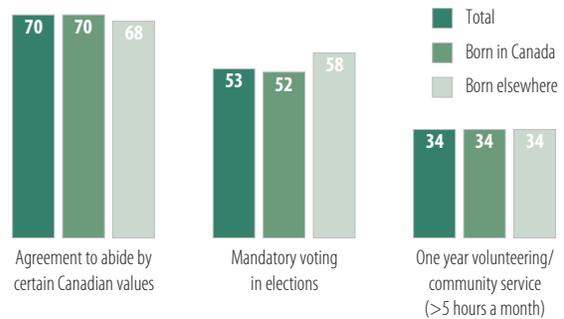
At the same time, there is widespread support for a broader requirement that citizens abide by certain Canadian values (70%). While the survey did not define which values would apply, Canadians' views on what makes a good citizen (e.g., gender equity, respect for others and environmental responsibility)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

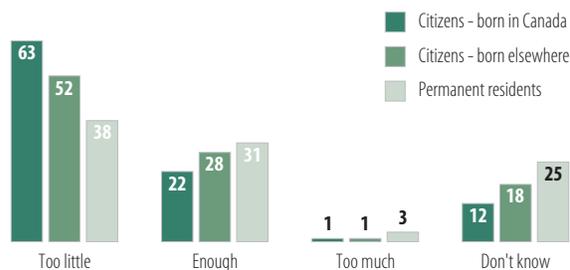


Q.33  
Some people have suggested that there should be additional citizenship requirements for all Canadian citizens, not just those who immigrate here. Do you think each of the following should, or should not, be a requirement for all citizens of the country ...?

**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?*

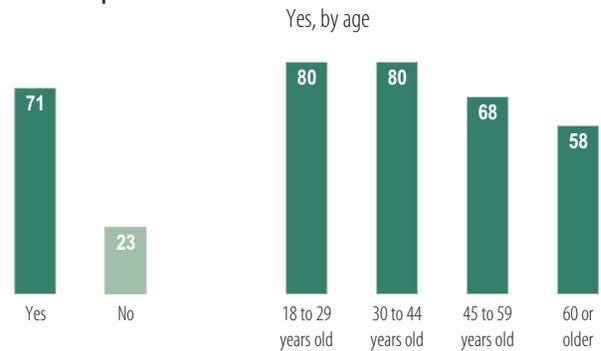
## Dual citizenship and Canadians living abroad

*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



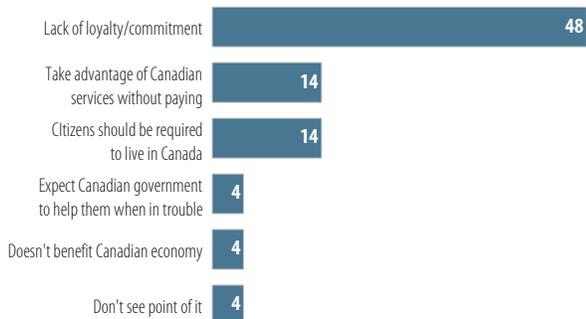
Q.36a

*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?

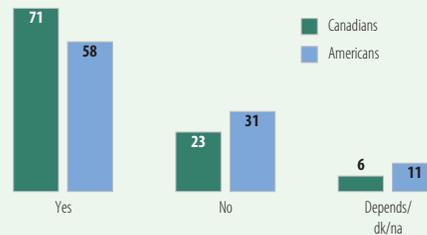
Subsample: Those who think dual citizenship should not be allowed



### 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.



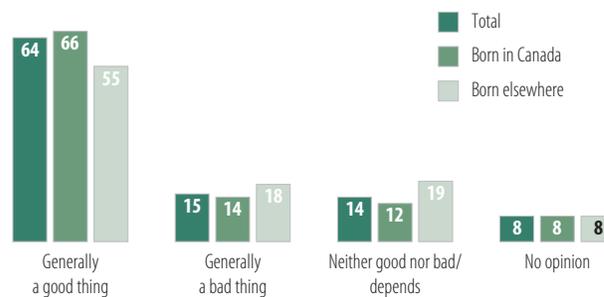
**CANADIANS LIVING ABROAD.** There are an estimated three million Canadians currently living abroad in other countries. As with dual citizenship, most Canadians are comfortable with Canadians living overseas. More than six in ten (64%) say this is generally a good thing for Canada, compared to only 15 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?

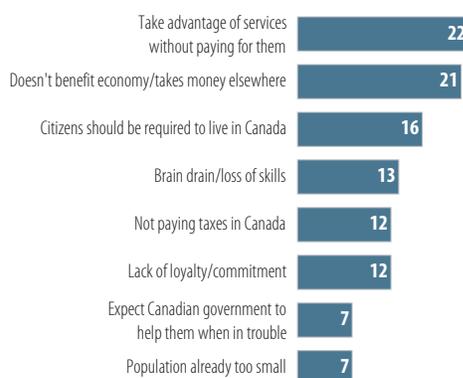
## Why is 3 million Canadians living abroad a *good thing*?

### 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

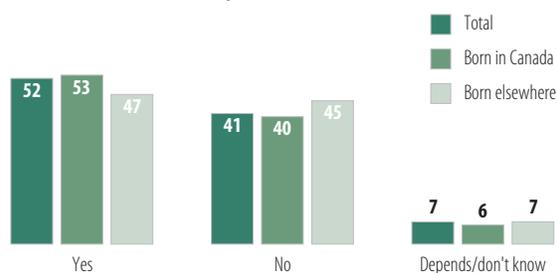
**RESIDENCY REQUIREMENTS.** Despite majority support for dual citizenship and living abroad, Canadians also believe there should be conditions on living abroad, such as requiring citizens to live in Canada on some kind of regular basis (rather than living permanently in another country). A slim majority (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.

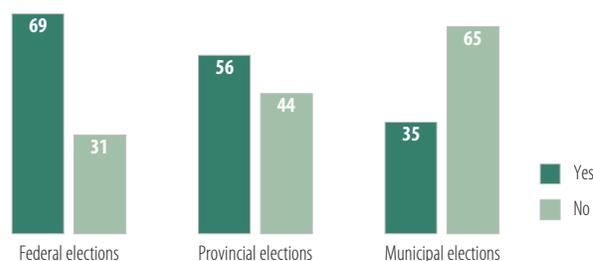
Foreign-born Canadians are more likely than native-born to support voting rights in all three jurisdictions (federal, provincial and municipal) for Canadians living abroad.

### 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 ...?