

Canada's Role in the World

GLOBAL ISSUES. What do Canadians consider the most pressing issue facing the world today (unprompted)? In 2010, no one issue dominates public attention, with equal focus placed on starvation, world hunger or poverty (16%), environment, pollution or global warming (16%), war/lack of peace (14%) and economic conditions/recession/unemployment (14%). Other issues less widely identified include terrorism (6%), social or moral decline (5%), overpopulation (3%) and crime (3%). Canadians' views on this question are largely consistent across the population.

The latest results reflect a significant shift since early 2008, when the top global issue for Canadians was the environment (26%), and economic conditions was considerably lower (5%). Also more salient two years ago were high gas/fuel prices and food prices/scarcity.

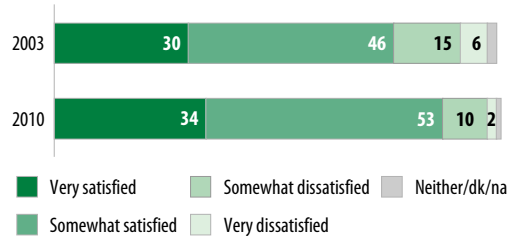
Most important global issue 1993 - 2010

	1993	1995	2000	2002	2004	2006	2008	2010
Environment/pollution	10	8	11	5	7	17	26	16
Starvation/world hunger/poverty	19	16	31	11	14	16	17	16
War/lack of peace	23	24	14	37	28	20	13	14
Economy/recession/unemployment	27	22	5	5	5	3	5	14
Terrorism	–	–	–	20	15	17	3	6

CANADA'S LEADERSHIP IN WORLD AFFAIRS. Most Canadians feel positive about their country's role in the world today, and this view has strengthened over the past few years. Almost nine in ten say they are very (34%) or somewhat (53%) satisfied with Canada's place in the world, up 11 points from 2003; compared with one in ten (12%) who are dissatisfied.

Opinions are similar across the country, with strong satisfaction most evident in Saskatchewan and Alberta, and among Canadians aged 45 plus. Dissatisfaction with Canada's place in the world is marginally higher in Quebec, among Canadians under 45 years of age, and those with a college or university degree.

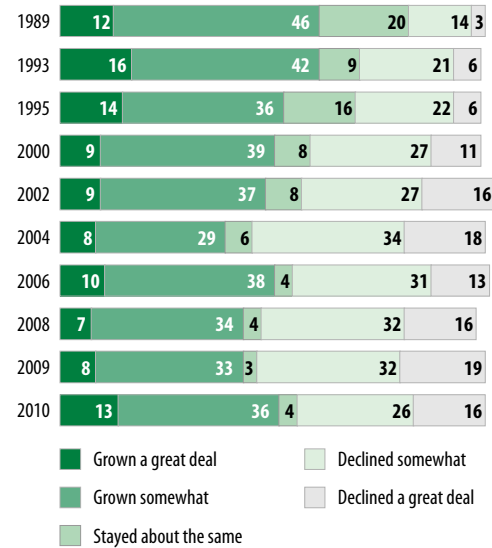
Satisfaction with Canada's place in the world
2003 - 2010



The public's positive view of Canada's role is rooted in part in the belief that Canada is demonstrating leadership on important world issues, and this sentiment has strengthened over the past couple of years. Half (49%) now believe that Canada's leadership in world affairs has grown over the past 10 years, up eight points from 2009. Fewer now say that the country's role has declined (42%, down 9).

This recent trend has taken place across the country, but especially in Ontario, Atlantic Canada and the Prairie provinces, where residents are now the most positive about the country's growing leadership (64%); in contrast, three in ten (28%) Quebecers share this view. Belief that Canada's leadership has declined a great deal is most evident in Montreal, and among Canadians with the most education and income.

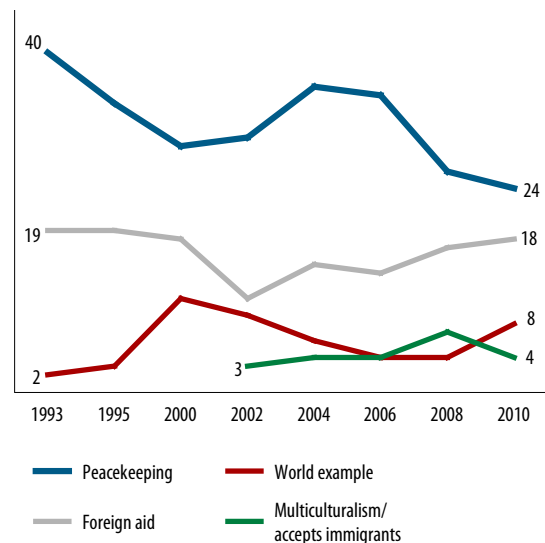
Canada's leadership in world affairs
1989 - 2010



CANADA'S CONTRIBUTION TO THE WORLD. In what areas is Canada seen as making a positive difference in the world today? As in the past, what comes first to mind for Canadians is peacekeeping (24%), although this response continues to gradually diminish over time (in 1993, it was identified by 40% of Canadians). Other contributions include foreign aid (18%), being an example to other countries (8%), support for human rights and democracy (4%), multiculturalism or accepting immigrants (4%) and being the voice of moderation/neutrality (4%) – the emphasis given to these aspects are largely unchanged from 2008.

Opinions are similar across the country, but peacekeeping is most prominent in Ontario, while in Quebec the greatest emphasis is placed on foreign aid.

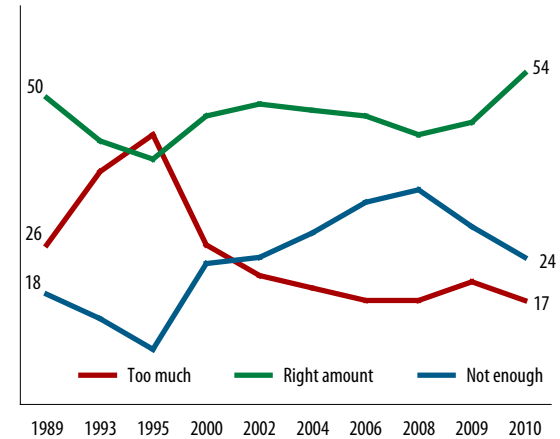
Canada's most positive contribution to the world
1993 - 2010



FOREIGN AID. Given Canadians' views about Canada's leadership position in the world, how do they feel about the amount of financial assistance to poor countries around the world? The public is more likely than not to be comfortable with the level of aid currently being provided, and since 2009 have become more so. Over half (54%) consider the level of spending to be about right (up 8 points from 2009). The proportion who believe the amount of foreign aid is not enough has declined (24%, down 5), while one in six (17%, down 3) continue to maintain that Canada is spending too much.

This trend is evident across the country, but primarily in B.C. and Alberta, where since 2009 there has been a significant shift from spending too little to spending the right amount. It is residents of Saskatchewan, Canadians aged 45 plus and those without a high school diploma who are most likely to feel Canada spends too much on foreign aid, while the opposite viewpoint is most evident in Toronto, among those aged 18 to 29 and Canadians with a university degree.

Canada's spending on foreign assistance
1989 - 2010

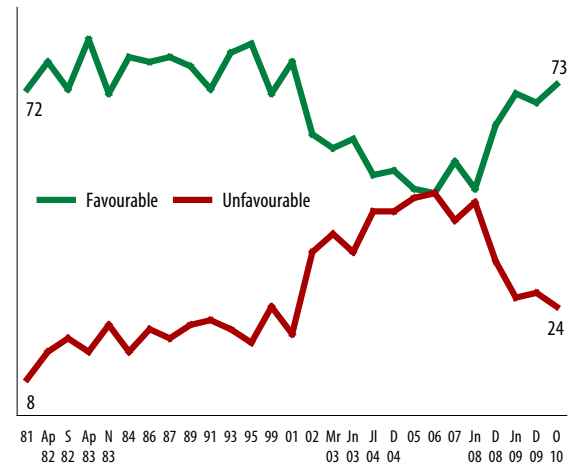


OPINIONS OF THE U.S.A. The 2008 U.S. presidential election marked a significant turning point in Canadians' general opinion of the U.S.A., and Barack Obama has consistently been more popular in this country than his own. This is reflected in the latest trend data showing that three-quarters (73%) of Canadians now have a favourable opinion of the U.S., up four points from December 2009 and now at its highest point since the mid-1990s. This sentiment is largely the same across the country, but strongest among Canadians aged 45 plus, and among those with lower education and higher incomes. Over the past year, opinions have improved most noticeably among residents of Quebec and B.C., and Canadians aged 60 plus.

Those who currently hold a negative opinion of the U.S.A. offer a number of reasons for this view. In 2010, the predominant basis for negative opinions is what is seen as U.S. arrogance and superiority (26%), followed by U.S. foreign policy generally (15%) – the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan in particular (11%) – unfair economic/trade policies (12%) and domestic/social policies (11%). In June 2009, the predominant basis for negative opinions was American foreign policy (18%) and trade policy (15%), with the proportion criticizing the Obama administration increasing marginally (5%, up 2 points). During the Bush administration, Canadians' predominant criticism of the U.S.A. centred around U.S. foreign policy generally, and the war in Iraq in particular.

The dramatic change in Canadian public opinion of the U.S.A. has not appeared to have much effect on Canadians' view on whether their country is becoming more or less like the U.S. over time. A plurality (45%) now see no change in the similarities between the two countries over the past 10 years (up 4 points from 2006), while a slightly smaller proportion (41%, down 1) feel Canada is becoming more like the U.S. One in ten (11%) maintain the trend is in the opposite direction, but this proportion has been gradually declining since 2004. Opinions are similar across the country, with the decline in becoming more like the U.S. most evident among rural residents. and those with the least education and income (and actually increasing slightly among those with a university degree). Canadians aged 18 to 29 are among those most likely to think the two countries are growing more similar.

Overall opinion of the United States 1981 - 2010



Reasons for unfavourable opinions of the U.S.

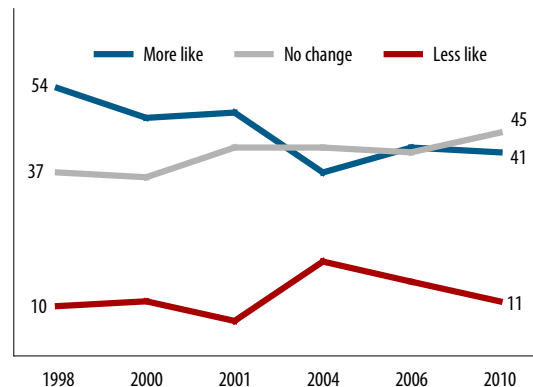
Top mentions 2006 - 2010

	2006	2008	2009	2010
Attitude/arrogance/superiority	5	5	6	26
American foreign policy	33	33	18	15
Unfair trade/economic policies	4	5	15	12
War in Iraq/Afghanistan	13	13	8	11
Domestic/social policies	—	—	—	11
Bush./Obama administration	32	27	3	5
American culture/impact on world	6	11	8	5
American people	4	3	3	4
Too much influence on Canada	3	4	4	4

Subsample: Those who have an unfavourable opinion of the U.S.

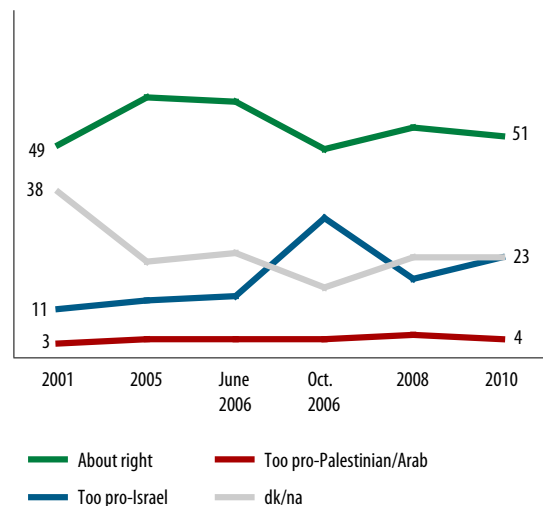
Canada becoming more or less like U.S.?

1998 - 2010



CANADA'S MIDDLE EAST POLICY. Canadians' view of the federal government's foreign policy in the Middle East has shifted marginally over the past two years. Half (51%) continue to believe current policy strikes the right balance (down 2 points from 2008), with an increasing minority (23%, up 5) saying the government is now too pro-Israel (likely reflecting the current government's public expressions of support for Israel). As before, very few (4%) believe the government is too pro-Palestinian or Arab, while one in four (23%) continue to have no clear opinion on this issue.

Canada's Middle East policy
2001 - 2010



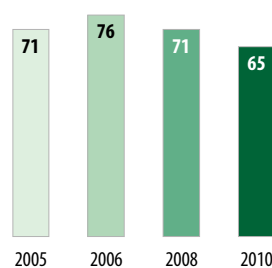
This modest shift in seeing the policy as too pro-Israel is evident across the country except in Manitoba and Saskatchewan (where opinion shifted to seeing the right balance). This view of Canadian policy being too pro-Israel is most pronounced among Quebecers and Canadians with a university education, while least so in Atlantic Canada and the Prairie provinces. Despite this latest trend, Canadians are much more likely to see government policy as balanced than they did during the 2006 conflict between Israel and Hezbollah in Lebanon.

In keeping with the Canadians' generally rosy view about their country's leadership on world issues, a majority continue to believe that Canada can play a constructive role in promoting peace in the Middle East, although this majority is down from 2008. Two-thirds (65%) believe Canada can play such a role, compared with 71 percent in 2008 and 76 percent in 2006.

Such optimism has tracked downward across the country, but most notably in Saskatchewan and among older Canadians. Atlantic Canadians and Manitobans are now most confident in Canada's Middle East role, while this view is least apt to be shared in Quebec and Saskatchewan.

Canada can play a role in promoting
Middle East peace

2005 - 2010

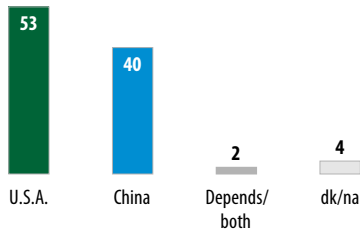


OPINIONS OF CHINA. How do Canadians view China, which is the next emerging superpower and factory to the world? Public opinion is decidedly mixed; half say their opinion of China is very (7%) or somewhat (41%) favourable, while four in ten are somewhat (31%) or very (10%) unfavourable (the remaining 12% are unable to say either way). Canadians' opinions of China have declined moderately since 2005 when 58 percent expressed a positive view.

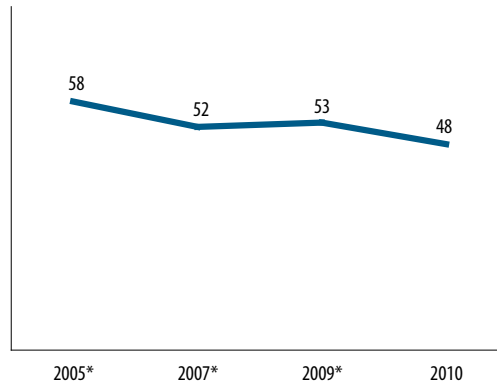
Opinions are similarly split across most of the country, with somewhat more positive views among allophones, men and Canadians aged 18 to 29, and less positive among British Columbians. Internationally, Canadians' opinions about China are in the middle of the pack, well below the very positive sentiments expressed in such countries as Kenya, Pakistan, Nigeria and Russia, and similar to opinions held in the U.S.A., Spain and Britain.

Which superpower will prove to be more important to Canada over the next 10 years? Public opinion is divided, but Canadians are more likely to believe it is the U.S.A. (53%) rather than China (40%). The emphasis on China is most evident among Quebecers and Canadians aged 18 to 29, while U.S.A. backers are most apt to live in Atlantic Canada and Manitoba.

Which country will be more important to Canada 10 years from now?

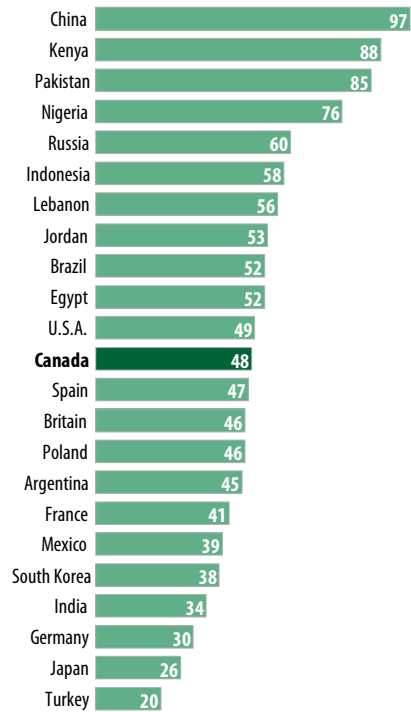


Favourable opinion of China 2005 - 2010



* Source: Pew Research Center

Favourable opinion of China International



Note: International data from Pew Research Center