

# Canada's Role in the World

## Global issues

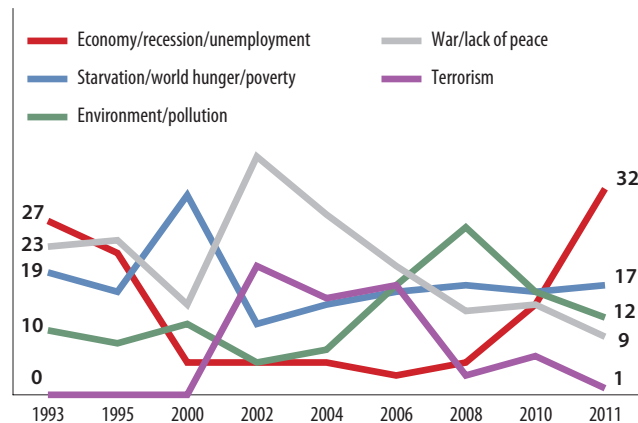
**MOST IMPORTANT GLOBAL ISSUE.** What do Canadians consider the most pressing issue facing the world today (unprompted)? In 2010, no one issue dominated public attention, but in 2011 it is now about the global economy. One-third (32%) identify economic issues (e.g., recession, global markets) as the world's most pressing issue (up 18 points from last year). By comparison, stable or declining proportions now mention starvation/world hunger (17%, up 1), environment or pollution (12%, down 4), or war/lack of peace (9%, down 5), with no other issue attracting more than three percent of responses.

These results reflect a substantial change from early 2008, when the environment was at the top of the list (26%) and the economy trailed well behind (5%). Attention on terrorism as a top global threat has almost disappeared (now at 1%), returning to pre-September 11 levels.

Global economic issues are now the top issue across the country, standing out most prominently in Ontario and B.C., as well as among Canadians with higher levels of education and income, men, non-European immigrants and Conservative supporters.

### Most important global issue

1993 - 2011



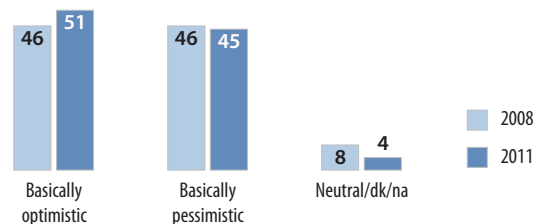
### OPTIMISTIC OR PESSIMISTIC ABOUT THE FUTURE?

Despite global concerns, Canadians are more likely than not to be positive about the direction they feel the world is heading over the next 10 years. Half (51%) are basically optimistic about where they see the world heading (up 5 points from 2008), compared with 45 percent who are basically negative (down 1).

Optimism has spread in all provinces except Quebec (where it has held steady), with this trend most pronounced in Alberta and B.C. The most optimistic view of global trend is now expressed in Alberta, while least evident among NDP supporters, Evangelical Christians and followers of non-Christian religions, as well as those dissatisfied with the direction of the country today (although at least 40% in each of these groups expresses optimism).

### Direction the world is heading

2008 - 2011



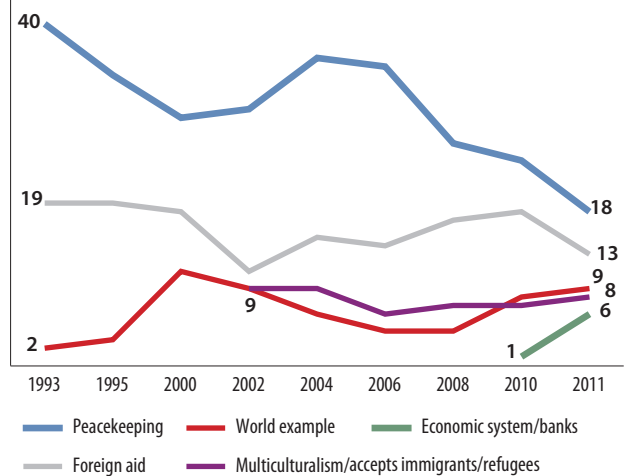
Note: 2008 data from Environics Institute's Canada's World survey

## Canada's place in the world

**MOST POSITIVE CONTRIBUTION.** In what areas is Canada seen as making a positive difference in the world today? When asked unprompted, the most common responses continue to be peacekeeping (18%) and foreign aid (13%), but both categories continue to diminish in salience (down 6 points and 5 points, respectively, since 2010), with the former now at an all-time low.

Other noted areas of contribution continue to be setting an example for other countries (9%, up 1 point) and multiculturalism/accepting immigrants (8%, up 4), while for the first time an appreciable number (6%) refer to the country's strong banking system. At the same time, an growing proportion (25%, up 5) cannot identify any positive contribution that Canada makes to the world, with this view up most noticeably in Quebec (37%, up 10). Quebecers and allophones continue to place comparatively greater emphasis on foreign aid.

Canada's most positive contribution to the world  
1993 - 2011



**PERSONAL FINANCIAL SUPPORT OVERSEAS.** Many Canadians feel strongly connected to the world outside the country's borders, and in ways not limited to passively following global issues or watching their own government's foreign policy. For an increasing number, this focus inspires financial support, to organizations working in other countries or friends and family members in need of support.

Close to half (46%) report that in the past two years they *have donated money to one or more organizations that address problems or issues in other countries*, which is up from 39 percent who did so in early 2008. Of this group, Canadians were most likely to report donations of under \$250 (41%) in the past 12 months, but another 17 percent report donations of \$1,000 or more, with the average donation of \$794. This figure is marginally lower than the \$860 average reported in 2008, due in part to a larger donation base and in part to the recent economic downturn. Projected to the country's population (aged 18 and over), this translates into almost 10.6 million Canadians contributing approximately \$8.4 billion over the past year (up from \$7.3 billion in 2008).

The increased incidence of giving financial assistance to such organizations is evident across the country, but has widened most noticeably in Atlantic Canada and Alberta, and is most widespread in Saskatchewan, among Canadians with higher levels of education and income, and those with a religious affiliation (with the notable exception of Catholics, who along with Quebecers are least apt to make such donations). Average dollar amounts given to aid organizations over the past 12 months are highest in Ontario and the Prairies, and among Canadians aged 60 plus, Conservative supporters and Evangelical Christians.

### Financial assistance given overseas in past two years 2008 - 2011



Note: 2008 data from Environics Institute's Canada's World survey

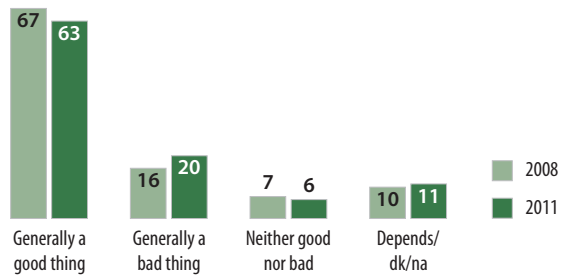
One in four (26%) Canadians say they *provided financial support to family members or others they know living in another country* (often referred to as "remittances"), which is up from 18 percent who reported this in 2008. In this category, the average dollar figure contributed over the past 12 months is \$2,166, which is down noticeably from that reported in 2008 (\$5,938). Projected to the population provides an estimate of \$12.4 billion, which is down from the \$20 billion provided in 2008, but well above the \$4 billion in official development assistance currently given by the Canadian government on an annual basis.

The growing proportion of Canadians helping individuals overseas is again most notable in Atlantic Canada and Alberta (which now leads all regions at 37%). Such contributions are most widely reported by non-European immigrants and allophones, and increase along with education and income. Quebecers are least apt to provide such assistance.

**CANADIANS LIVING ABROAD.** What does the public think about the fact that an estimated three million Canadians currently live abroad? Six in ten (63%) believe this is generally a good thing for Canada, although this proportion is down marginally since 2008 (down 4 points). One in five (20%, up 4) say it is generally a bad thing, while a similar number (17%, unchanged) do not have a clear opinion either way.

This decline in positive views about expatriates has taken place primarily in eastern Canada and B.C., and is now most likely to be an issue for Quebecers and Manitobans, as well as non-European immigrants (although held by no more than three in ten in any of these groups).

Opinion of 3 million Canadians living abroad  
2008 - 2011



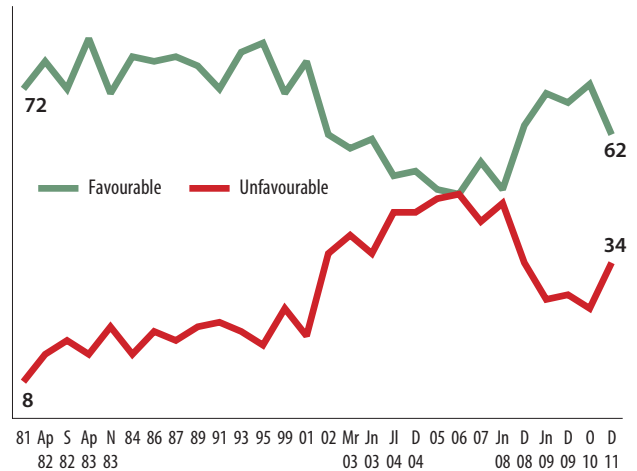
Note: 2008 data from Environics Institute's Canada's World survey

## Canada – U.S. relations

**OVERALL OPINION OF THE U.S.** Canadians' overall impression of their neighbour to the south has declined sharply over the past year, reversing what has been mostly a positive trend following Barack Obama's ascendency to the White House. Six in ten (62%) have a favourable view of the United States, down 11 points since 2010, and now at its lowest point since June 2008 (when Bush was still President).

This decline has taken place across the country, but most significantly in Quebec, Saskatchewan and B.C., as well as among non-European immigrants. Positive views are most widely held by Atlantic Canadians and Ontarians, Canadians aged 45 years and older, and Conservative supporters, and least evident among British Columbians, Canadians aged 18 to 29, allophones and Green Party supporters.

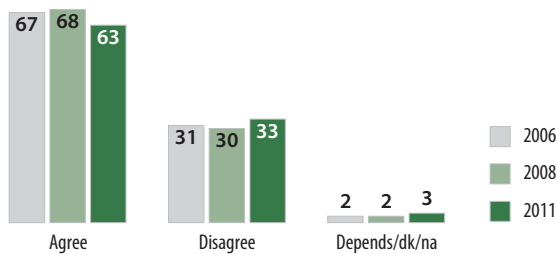
Overall opinion of the United States  
1981 - 2011



**TERRORISM AND BORDER SECURITY.** The Canadian government recently signed a new border plan with the U.S. to strengthen security and expedite the flow of travellers and goods. The public remains supportive of joint Canada-U.S. border policies, although marginally less so than in 2008. Close to two-thirds (63%) agree that both countries should adopt a common policy regarding immigration and border control (down 5 points from 2008), compared with one-third (33%) who disagree (up 3).

This drop in support is most evident in central Canada and the Prairies (while increasing in BC). Support is strongest in Atlantic Canada, among Canadians with lower levels of education and Conservative supporters, while weakest among allophones, followers of non-Christian religions and NDP supporters.

Canada and U.S. should adopt common policy on immigration and border control  
2006 - 2011

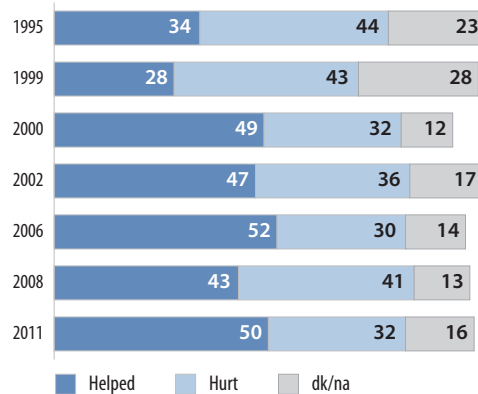


**IMPACT OF NAFTA.** While Canadians may be growing a bit more wary of the U.S., they have also become more positive about the impact of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) signed with the U.S. and Mexico more than a decade ago. Half (50%) now say that NAFTA has helped the Canadian economy (up 7 points since 2008), compared with 32 percent who believe it has hurt the domestic economy (down 9) and another 18 percent who can't see a clear difference either way (up 2). Current opinions of NAFTA have rebounded modestly to levels recorded in 2006, and are now comparable to levels of support recorded between 2000 and 2006.

This improving trend is evident across most of the country, but most noticeably in Quebec and B.C. Positive views about NAFTA continue to be most widespread among more affluent Canadians and those living in urban areas, while the most negative perception is expressed by NDP and Green Party supporters.

U.S. public opinion about free trade with other countries (generically) is a bit less positive, with 48 percent considering it a good thing for the U.S., compared with 41 percent who say it is a bad thing (from a February 2011 Pew Research Center survey).

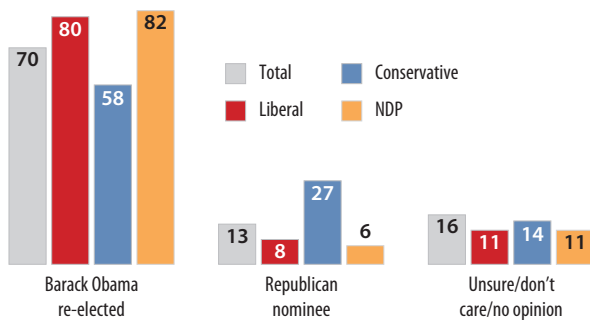
Impact of NAFTA on Canadian economy  
1995 - 2008



**2012 U.S. PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION.** U.S. President Barack Obama was widely popular in Canada when first elected, but how is he viewed today? Despite his many challenges and disappointments (and declining positive impressions of the U.S. overall), President Obama retains strong support among Canadians, with seven in ten (70%) preferring to see him re-elected in November over whomever the Republicans choose as their nominee (the preference of just 13%).

Obama is the runaway choice among all identifiable groups of Canadians, but especially among Quebecers, university graduates, and supporters of the federal Liberals, NDP and Bloc. Preference for the eventual Republican nominee is most evident among Albertans (23%), allophones (25%) and Conservative supporters (27%, versus 58% who would like to see Obama re-elected).

Preferences for next U.S. president  
By party affiliation 2011



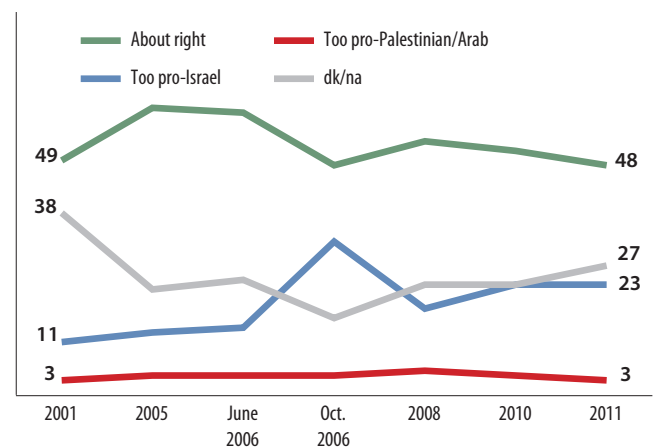
## The Middle East

**CANADA'S MIDDLE EAST POLICY.** Canada's policy approach to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict has shifted noticeably over the past several years, as the Harper government has publicly adopted pro-Israeli positions at the UN and in the media. This change has not affected the public's general assessment of the government policy, and opinions have held notably consistent over the past five years.

Half (48%) of Canadians continue to believe current policy strikes the right balance, down marginally from 2010 and largely unchanged over the past decade. By comparison, one in four (23%, unchanged) say the government is too pro-Israel, while only three percent believe the government is too pro-Palestinian. An increasing proportion (27%, up 4 points) is unable to offer a clear opinion on this issue, now at its highest level since 2001.

Underneath the stable national numbers, belief in current government policy as too pro-Israeli increased in the Prairie provinces, as well as among older Canadians, those with higher socio-economic status and NDP supporters. This view is most widely expressed by Quebecers (especially in Montreal), university graduates and Bloc supporters. Few in any group believe the Harper government is too pro-Palestinian, although this sentiment is articulated mainly by non-mainline Christians and non-Christians (e.g., Muslims, Hindus, Sikhs).

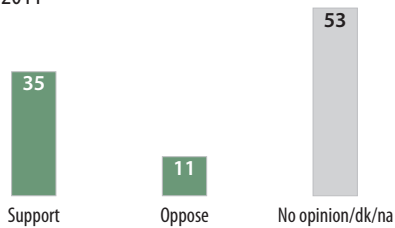
Canada's Middle East policy  
2001 - 2011



**PALESTINIANS' BID FOR STATEHOOD.** The Palestinian Authority recently launched a bid to be officially recognized as a state by the United Nations. Canadian public opinion is not well-defined on this issue, with more than half (53%) indicating they have no opinion. Of the remainder, however, support (35%) for the Palestinian bid outweighs opposition (11%) by a three-to-one margin.

Support is most widely expressed in Quebec and Ontario (especially in Montreal and Toronto), among men, university graduates, non-European immigrants, and those who support the NDP or Green Party. Opposition falls below one in five in all identifiable groups, but is most evident among Canadians aged 60 plus and Conservative supporters.

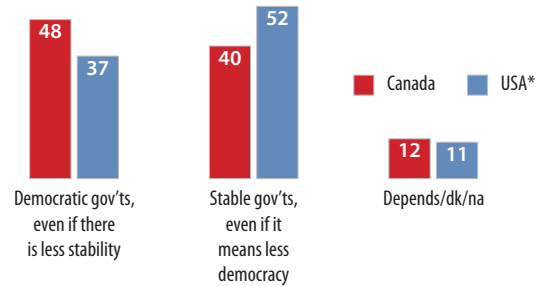
Support for Palestinian bid for UN recognition of statehood 2011



**DEMOCRACY VERSUS STABILITY IN THE MIDDLE EAST.** Political turmoil and renewal have swept over much of the Middle East over the past year, and the political situation in countries such as Egypt and Syria remains volatile. Canadians express a modest preference for democratic governments, even if it means less stability in the region (48%) versus stable governments, even if it means less democracy (40%). Americans, by comparison, are more likely to place a priority on Middle East stability (52%) over democracy (37%) (from a February 2011 Pew survey).

In Canada, preference for democracy over stability is most clearly evident in Quebec, among Canadians with higher socio-economic status, European immigrants, and NDP and Bloc supporters, while the reverse is most apt to be voiced by allophones and Conservative supporters.

Preference for governments in the Middle East 2011



\* Note: U.S. data from Pew Research Center, Feb. 2011