

Canada's Role in the World

Canada's leadership in world affairs

MOST IMPORTANT GLOBAL ISSUE. One year ago, Canadians were most likely to identify economic issues (e.g., recession, unemployment) as the most pressing issue facing the world. In 2012, this remains the number one mention, but no longer by the same margin as before (21%, down 11 points). This is balanced by increasing focus on war and conflict (18%, up 9) and environmental issues (15%, up 3), both increasing for the first time in several years.

A declining number identify starvation/world hunger or poverty (10%, down 7 points), with a smaller proportion specifically naming the unequal distribution of wealth (3%, unchanged). As in 2011, no other issue is identified by more than three percent of Canadians, including religious issues, social/moral decline, over-consumption of resources, food prices and terrorism. One in ten do not name any issue in response to this question.

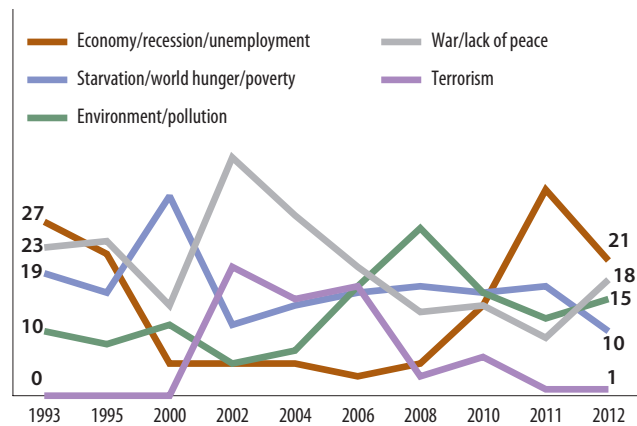
Declining focus on global economic issues is evident across the country, but most noticeably in Ontario and B.C., among men, and Canadians with higher levels of income and education. Concern about global environmental challenges has risen primarily among Quebecers, British Columbians and Green Party supporters (now at 37%, compared with 7% of Conservative supporters, who are among those most apt to focus on the world economy).

CANADA'S LEADERSHIP IN WORLD AFFAIRS. Most Canadians feel positive about their country's role in the world today, but this view has declined moderately over the past two years. Eight in ten now say they are very (30%) or somewhat (52%) satisfied with Canada's place in the world (down 5 points since 2010), compared with 17 percent who are now somewhat or very dissatisfied (up 5). This decline notwithstanding, the current level of satisfaction remains higher than that recorded in 2003.

This decline in satisfaction with the country's leadership has taken place across most of the country, excepting the three Prairie provinces, among small town and rural Canadians, and Conservative Party supporters. Strong satisfaction with

Most important global issue

Top mentions 1993 – 2012

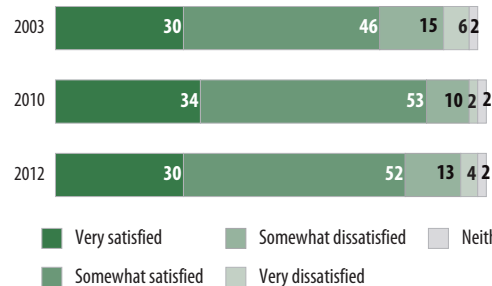


Q.48

What do you think is the most important issue or problem facing the world today?

Satisfaction with Canada's place in the world

2003 – 2012



Q.49

Are you very satisfied, somewhat satisfied, somewhat dissatisfied or very dissatisfied with Canada's place in the world?

the country's leadership is most widespread in Alberta, among immigrants from outside the USA/Europe, more affluent Canadians and those with less education, while dissatisfaction is most evident among Quebecers and university graduates. Positive assessments are given by supporters of all federal political parties (and those who support none of them), but is strongest among Conservative supporters, and weakest among those who back the Green Party and Bloc Québécois.

What is the most positive contribution that Canada, as a country, makes to the world today? When asked (unprompted), the most common response continues to be peacekeeping (20%), up marginally from 2011 after declining significantly since 2004 (at 36%).

Other contributions include foreign aid (9%, down 4 points), multiculturalism/accepting immigrants (5%, down 3), our economic system (5%, down 1), natural resources (5%, up 1), being a voice of moderation/neutrality (5%, up 3), support for human rights and democracy (5%, up 1) and generally as an example to the world (5%, down 4). As in 2011, roughly one in four (27%) do not name any way in which they believe Canada makes a positive contribution to the world.

Opinions about Canada's contribution to the world are notably similar across the country. Quebecers continue to place comparatively greater emphasis on foreign aid (although marginally less so than in 2011).

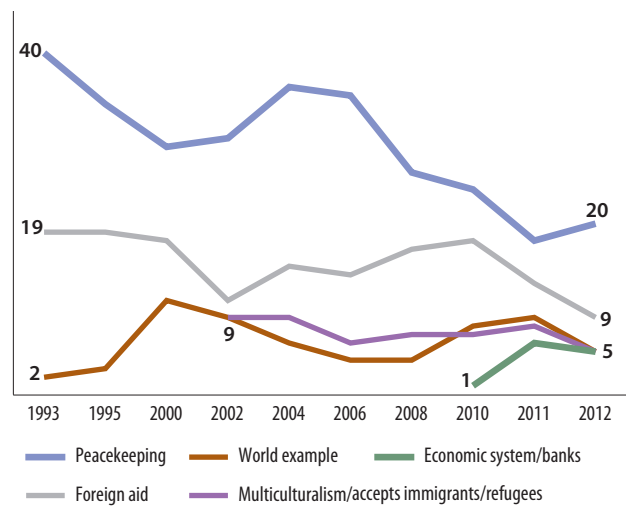
Canada – U.S. relations

OVERALL OPINION OF THE USA. Canadians' overall impression of their neighbour to the south has rebounded over the past year (due likely to Obama's recent re-election victory), although not back to the high point recorded in 2010. Close to seven in ten now have a very (11%) or somewhat (57%) favourable view of the United States, up six points since 2011. [Note: this survey was completed prior to the Newtown school shooting, which could have subsequently affected Canadian opinions of the U.S.]

This upward trend has taken place across the country, but most significantly in Quebec, Saskatchewan and Alberta, among Canadians under 45 years of age and immigrants from outside the USA/Europe. A majority from every group has a favourable view, but this is now lowest among British Columbians (58%), immigrants from the USA/Europe (56%) and Green Party supporters (55%).

Canada's most positive contribution to the world

Top mentions 1993 – 2012

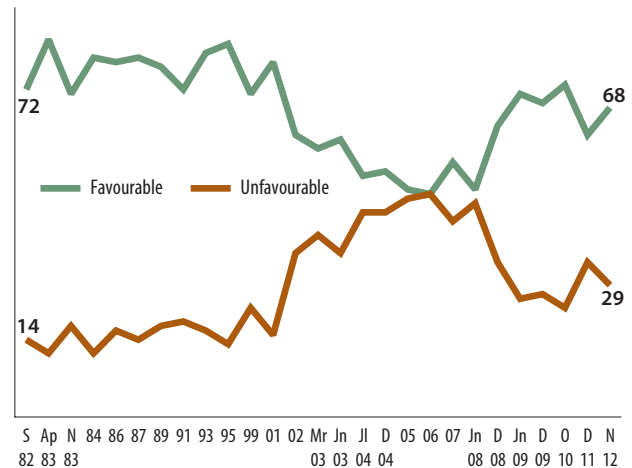


Q.50

In your opinion, what is the most positive contribution that Canada, as a country, makes to the world?

Overall opinion of the United States

1982 – 2012



Q.51

In general, what is your opinion of the United States? Is it very favourable, somewhat favourable, somewhat unfavourable or very unfavourable?

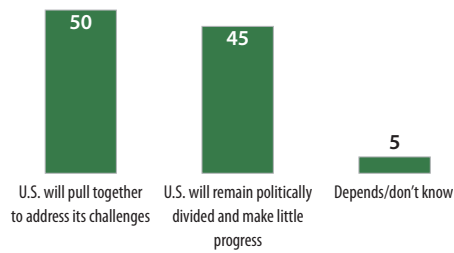
While most Canadians would appear to be happy to see Barack Obama re-elected for another four years, they are currently divided on how successful he will be in his second term. Half (50%) of Canadians think it will lead to the U.S. finally pulling together to more seriously address its economic and social challenges, while almost as many (45%) expect the U.S. to remain politically divided and make little progress to meet these challenges.

This division of opinion runs across the country, but Quebecers (61%) are the most optimistic about the USA getting its act together, while Manitobans (38%) are least likely to share this view.

USA VERSUS CHINA. The last decade has witnessed China ascending as a global superpower and economic engine to the world, while the influence of the USA appears to be waning. Despite these evident trends, Canadians continue to believe it is the USA (56%) rather than China (41%) that will be the more important country for Canada over the next 10 years, with this gap widening slightly since 2010.

The emphasis on the USA over China has strengthened across most of the population over the past two years, but most noticeably in Quebec and B.C., among Canadians aged 45 and older, immigrants and federal Liberal Party supporters. A shift toward seeing China as the more important country for Canada has taken place in Manitoba, and among NDP and Green Party supporters, but in no group do more than half share this perspective.

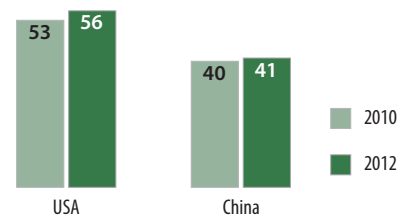
Most likely scenario for Obama's second presidential term 2012



Q.52

Now that Barack Obama has been re-elected as U.S. President for another four years, which of the following two scenarios do you think is most likely to happen...?

Which country will be more important to Canada 10 years from now? 2010 – 2012



Q.53

Which country do you think will be more important to Canada over the next 10 years...?