# CANADIANS AND CIVIC ISSUES

An Analysis of C-DEM's 2021 Canadian Election Study Data

GLOCAL Foundation of Canada 2024
Canadians and Civic Issues
An Analysis of C-DEM's 2021 Canadian Election Study Data


By GLOCAL Data Team

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# ABOUT US

GLOCAL is a non-partisan, not-for-profit organization that is committed to domestic engagement and global awareness. We focus on grassroots initiatives that encourage civic engagement and full participation in Canada's democratic institutions.

On July 1, 2021, we officially launched YouCount.ca: an innovative digital platform for civic engagement and democratic participation. YouCount.ca is an online database of political representatives at the federal, provincial, and municipal levels of government. Fighting against information overload and disinformation, our platform allows users to navigate the information of political representatives and Canada's democratic institutions with ease and in 109 languages.

As of March 2024, our team consists of over 1,195 staff, volunteers and advisors who have diverse academic and professional backgrounds, and who represent a wide variety of ethnic groups and languages. Our members span the country, from British Columbia to Newfoundland, and we are looking to grow our numbers in all parts of Canada.

C•DEM Consortium on Electoral Democracy
Consortium de la démocratie électorale

We are an official partner of The Consortium on Electoral Democracy/Consortium de la démocratie électorale (C-Dem). C-Dem is reimagining election research in Canada by developing a pioneering consortium model for researchers, electoral management boards, policymakers, and civil society organizations to build upon mutual interests and pool resources and knowledge to investigate the health of democracy across the country and over time. C-Dem is a dynamic research network across Canada that addresses urgent questions about political engagement, underrepresentation, levels of government, the evolution of public opinion between and across elections, and data collection practices with an evidence-based, cooperative approach to studying electoral democracy, during federal elections as well as sub nationally and between elections. To learn more, visit c-dem.ca

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## Introduction

In 2024, Canadian civic engagement is characterized by a diverse array of activities, ranging from digital initiatives to traditional volunteerism, each aiming to address the evolving challenges of democracy and community involvement. Statistics Canada's 2022 report reveals that Canadian youth participate in civic activities at varying rates. While youth vote at notably lower rates than other age groups, many young Canadians engage in non-electoral political activities and formal volunteer work, indicating a broad spectrum of civic engagement beyond the ballot box (Arriagada, Khanam, & Sano, 2022a).

With this report, we aim to explore Canadians' knowledge of, views on, and experiences with the various levels of government. We also hope to explore how social status and differing behaviours correlate with certain views and experiences. Analysis was also conducted on voting, the factors that influence likelihood of voting, and Canadians' perception of voting as a duty or choice. Correlations were found between social determinants (e.g., age, gender, education), as well as behaviours (i.e., volunteering, consuming news media) in relation to political knowledge, attitudes, and experiences among the population.

This report draws upon data from the 2021 Canadian Election Study (CES) conducted by the Consortium on Electoral Democracy (C-DEM). This survey documents the attitudes of Canadians during and after the 2021 election. During the campaign period survey, which lasted from August 17 to September 19, 2021, a total of 20,968 Canadian citizens and permanent residents aged 18 or older completed the survey. A post-election survey (PES) was also conducted from September 23 to October 4, 2021, with a total of 15,069 participants.

## Executive Summary

Canadians face a wide array of challenges when it comes to engaging with political issues. This report demonstrates specific knowledge gaps and concerns in regard to social background as well as some behavioural factors.

**The main findings of this analysis are summarized as follows:**

- Survey takers came from all provinces and the majority of participants (97%) are Canadian citizens. 54% of survey takers identified as women and 45% as men. Most survey takers are in their 30s and have completed post-secondary education.

- More than 50% of survey takers indicated that they have a moderate to strong interest in politics.

- The majority of the survey takers found politics and government too complex for their understanding. In particular, young adults self-reported struggling more with political understanding compared to adults and seniors. Male respondents self-reported higher political comprehension compared to female respondents. Self-reported political comprehension also increases with one's level of education.

- 71% of the survey takers indicated that they are very satisfied or fairly satisfied with the democracy of Canada.

- Approximately 60% of survey takers were able to correctly identify the federal Minister of Finance (Chrystia Freeland) and the Governor General of Canada (Mary Simon).

- Less than half of the survey takers indicated that they are confident in the federal government. Respondents from British Columbia, Québec, and Nova Scotia demonstrated a higher level of confidence in their provincial governments compared to other provinces.

- Concerning voting attitudes, the majority of permanent residents of Canada reported that they would vote in their first federal election. In general, most of the Canadians in the study viewed voting as a duty (rather than a choice).

- Various factors influence voting among Canadian citizens. Seniors, those with higher levels of education, those satisfied with Canadian democracy, and those residing in Ontario and Québec are more likely to vote compared to other groups.

*\* The results presented in this report only reflect the views of Canadians who took part in the online survey. The nature of the survey does not ensure random sampling of the population. Therefore, to generalize the conclusions made in this report to the whole population, further efforts would need to be made by employing weights. Furthermore, in certain provinces and territories, such as Nunavut, the Northwest Territories, Yukon, and Prince Edward Island, the smaller sample size of respondents may have influenced the outcomes of the analyses.*

## Glossary

**Political representatives**
These are people elected to represent you at different levels of government: federal (national), provincial (subnational), and municipal (local). Each represents a small geographic area out of a larger whole, like the country, province, or city/town/county.

**Federal government**
The federal government is the national level of government, dealing with issues that affect the whole country. Its representatives are elected from across the country and meet in the federal Parliament in Ottawa.

**Provincial government**
The provincial government is not subordinate to the federal government, but deals with different issues, like health care, education, and language. Its representatives are elected from across the province, and the provincial legislature will be in the province's capital.

**Territorial government**
A territorial government deals with similar issues as a provincial government, but its power is borrowed from the federal government. It is still made up of elected representatives from across the territory, but the government may operate a little differently from provincial governments.

**Permanent resident(s)**
According to the Government of Canada (2019), "A permanent resident is someone who has been given permanent resident status by immigrating to Canada, but is not a Canadian citizen. Permanent residents are citizens of other countries." Permanent residents have access to most social services available to citizens, but cannot vote or run for political office.

**Federal Minister of Finance**
The federal Minister of Finance is in charge of the Department of Finance, which controls all money the federal government takes in through taxation and spends in the federal budget. Planning the taxation and spending in this budget is also called fiscal policy.

**Governor General**
The Governor General (GG) is the ceremonial head of state, but generally does not actively take part in governing the country. The GG represents the Crown and symbolically wields its constitutional power and sovereignty, but generally does so only at the advice of the Prime Minister, the head of government.

**Premier**
The Premier is the head of government in a province and plays a role much like the Prime Minister, but at the provincial level.

**Panel study**
A panel study is a type of research in which data is collected from the same individuals, known as a panel, at multiple points in time. This approach allows researchers to track changes over time, identify trends, and analyze the effects of specific variables on the panel members.

**Rolling cross-section**
In a rolling cross-sectional study, data is collected from different segments of the population over several periods, rather than surveying the same individuals repeatedly. This approach allows researchers to examine changes in public opinion or behaviour over time, while also capturing the variability among different segments of the population at any given point.

**Recontact wave**
A recontact wave refers to a method used in studies where participants who were previously surveyed are contacted again for follow-up data collection. This approach allows researchers to gather additional information or measure changes over time among the same individuals.

**Stratification**
Stratification (of a sample) is a sampling technique used to ensure that subgroups within a population are adequately represented in the sample. This process involves dividing the population into distinct strata based on specific characteristics such as age, income, education, or geographic location. Then, a sample is drawn from each stratum, usually in proportion to its size in the overall population. Stratification enhances the accuracy of the sample by ensuring that important subgroups are not underrepresented, allowing for more reliable analysis of the population as a whole.

**Weighting**
Weighting is a statistical adjustment technique used to compensate for biases or imbalances in a sample that may not perfectly represent the target population. When certain groups within the population are overrepresented or underrepresented in the sample, weighting assigns different importance to responses from these groups to more accurately reflect the overall population.

## 1.  Survey Demographic

The online sample for the 2021 Canadian Election Study was composed of a two-wave panel with a modified rolling-cross section during the campaign period and a post-election recontact wave (PES).

The total number of survey takers (respondents) from the Campaign Period Survey (CPS) was 20,968, procured online through the Leger Opinion panel, stratified by region and balanced on gender and age within each region. Respondents needed to be aged 18 or over and Canadian citizens or permanent residents in order to participate. All respondents from the CPS were re-contacted after the election for a follow-up survey. 15,069 respondents completed the PES (return rate of 72%).

### 1.1 Participation rate by province or territory

Participation rates are calculated by dividing the number of participants by population of their province or territory, using the population estimate for the third quarter of 2021 – approximately when the survey took place (Statistics Canada, 2023).

The participation rates ranged from 0.010% to 0.074%, coming from Nunavut and Québec respectively.

**Figure 1. Participation rate by province or territory**
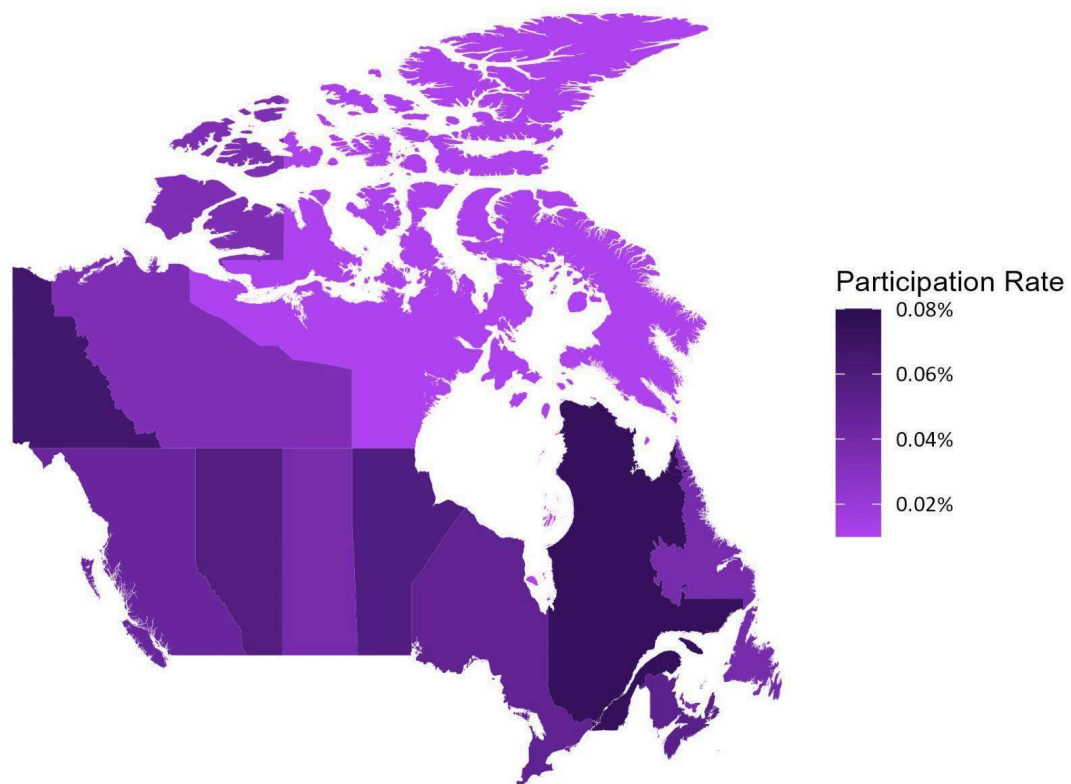
The total number of respondents by province or territory is shown in Table 1. Nunavut ($n$ = 4), Northwest Territories ($n$ = 15), Yukon ($n$ = 28), and Prince Edward Island ($n$ = 59) had fewer than 100 respondents. Newfoundland and Labrador ($n$ = 199), New Brunswick ($n$ = 410), Saskatchewan ($n$ = 446), and Nova Scotia ($n$ = 530) each had fewer than 1,000 respondents. The majority of respondents came from Québec ($n$ = 6317) or Ontario ($n$ = 7309).

**Table 1. Number of respondents by province or territory**

| Province or territory | Number of respondents (CPS) |
|---|---|
| Alberta | 2527 |
| British Columbia | 2329 |
| Manitoba | 795 |
| New Brunswick | 410 |
| Newfoundland & Labrador | 199 |
| Northwest Territories | 15 |
| Nova Scotia | 530 |
| Nunavut | 4 |
| Ontario | 7309 |
| Prince Edward Island | 59 |
| Québec | 6317 |
| Saskatchewan | 446 |
| Yukon | 28 |
| Total | 20968 |

## 1.2 Year of birth

The average year of birth of the participants is 1970, with a standard deviation of 17.2 years, coloured in deep purple.

**Figure 2. Year of birth of participants**
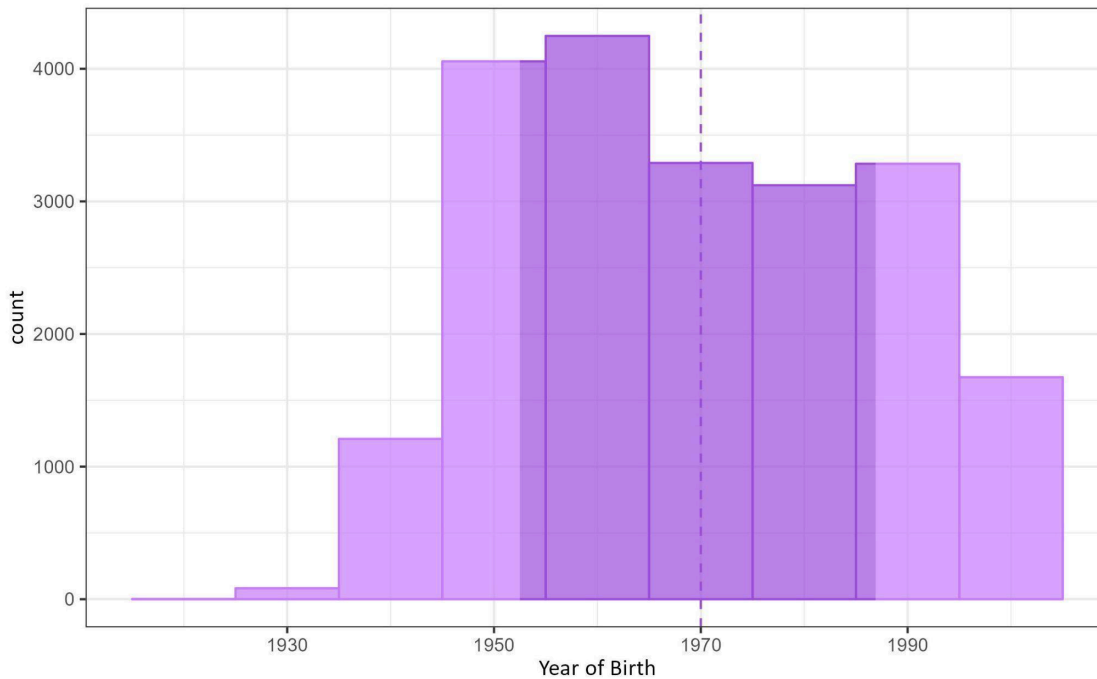


## 1.3 Gender

Out of the 20,968 participants, a total of 11,370 (54%) identified as women, 9,474 (45%) as men, 90 (0.4%) as non-binary and 34 (0.2%) as another gender.

## 1.4 Education

Figure 3 displays participants' levels of education from high to low. The most common level of education attained by the survey participants was a bachelor's degree, with a total count of 6,069 (29%).

**Figure 3. Education level of participants**
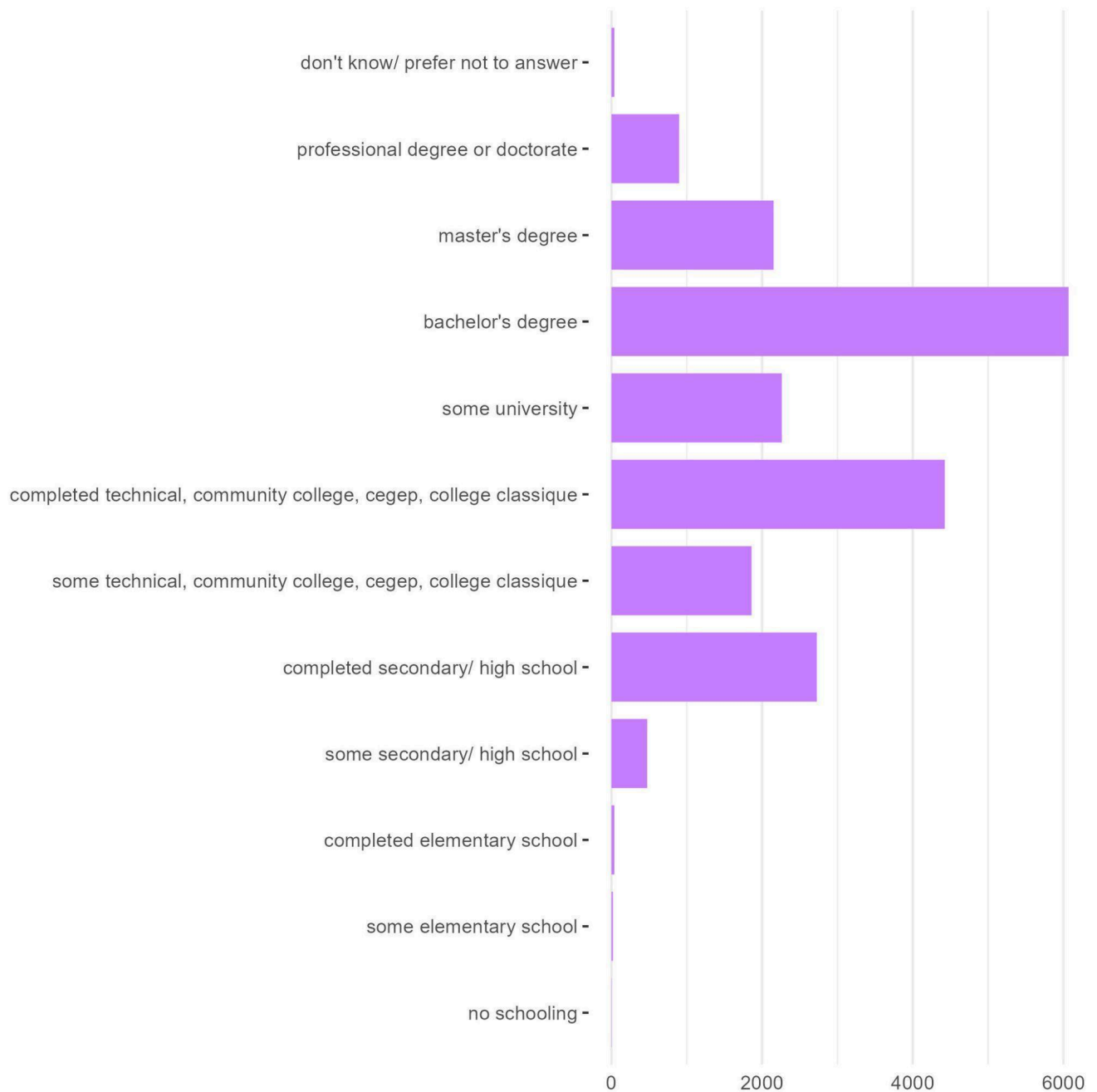


## 1.5 Citizenship

The overwhelming majority of the participants were Canadian citizens, numbering 20,355 out of 20,968 (97%) participants.

## 1.6 Partisanship (PES)

Out of the 15,069 participants who completed the PES, the most popular political parties were, in descending order, Liberal, Conservative, and the NDP. Most participants did not select a party.

**Figure 4. Partisanship of participants**
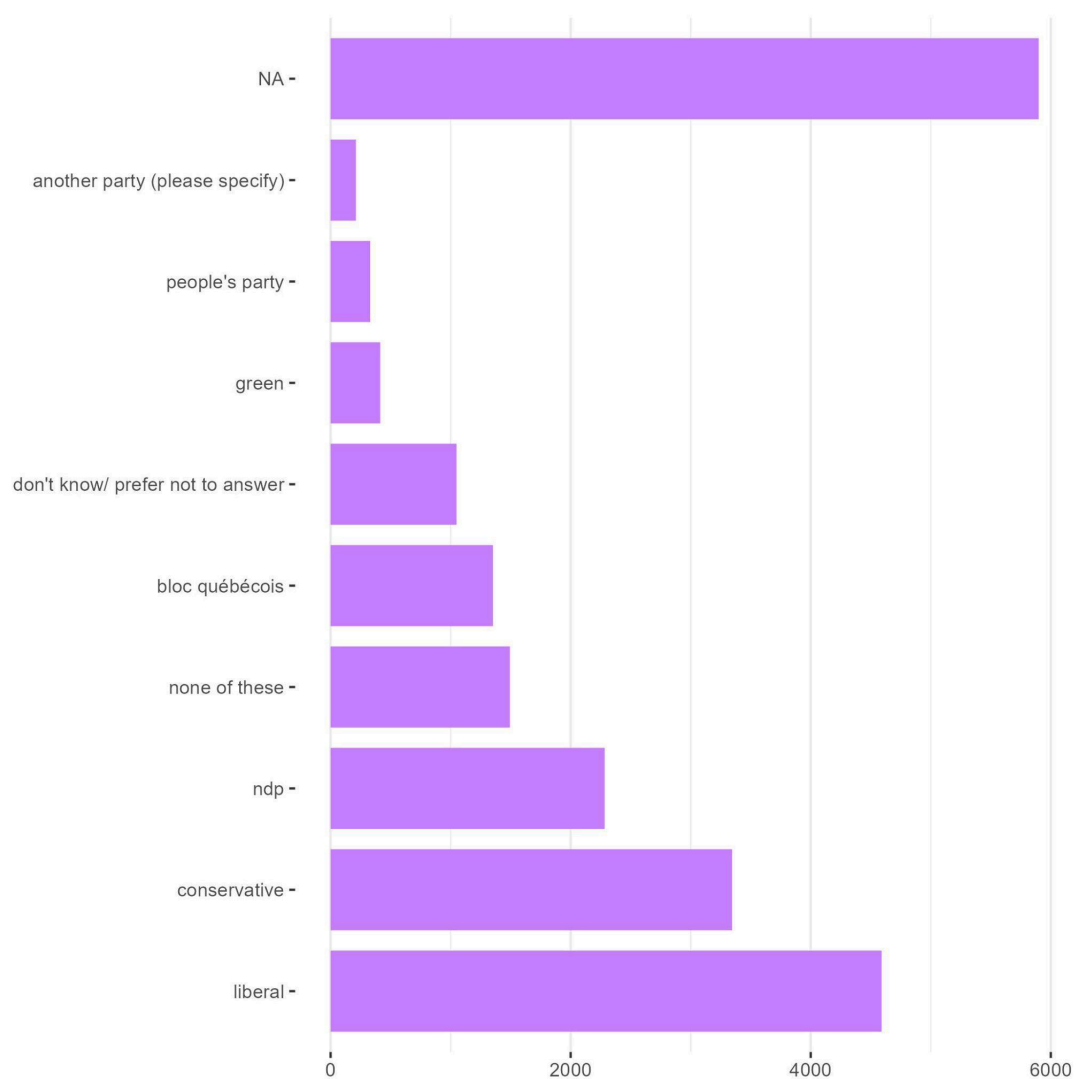
## 2. Political Interest

On a scale of 0–10, the participants were asked about their general interest in politics, where 0 represented "no interest at all" and 10 represented "a great deal of interest." As shown in Figure 6, the majority of participants (56%) reported a moderate to strong general interest in political matters (7, 8, 9 or 10 on the scale). 26.7% of participants reported medium interest (4, 5 or 6 on the scale) and 17.3% reported low interest (0, 1, 2 or 3 on the scale).

**Figure 5. Political interest**
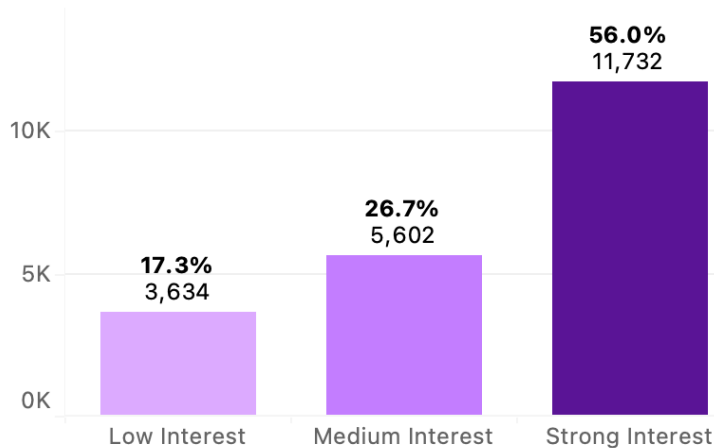


### 2.1 Second-generation immigrants' political interest

Figure 6 shows the political interest of second-generation immigrants and others. Second-generation immigrants have parents who were born outside of Canada. For both second-generation immigrants and others, the greatest number of respondents reported a strong interest in politics. For second-generation immigrants, about 3.4 times more respondents reported high interest than low interest in politics, and for others, about 3.2 times more respondents reported high interest rather than low interest in politics.

**Figure 6. Political interest by second-generation immigrant and others**
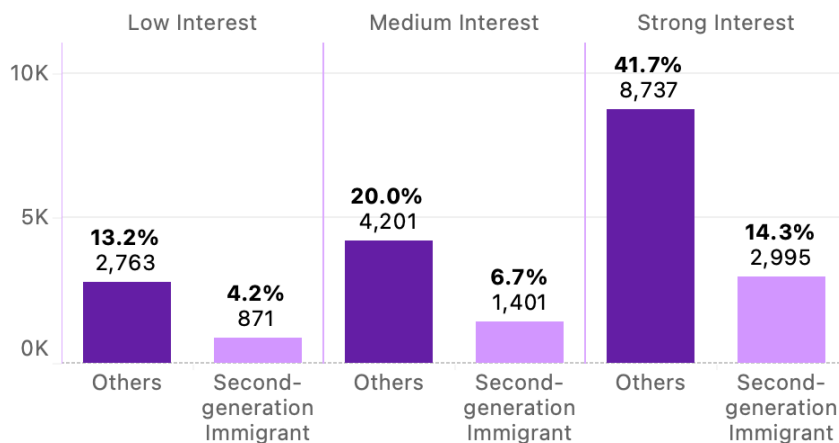
## 2.2 Volunteer participation and political interest

This table shows the relationship between volunteer participation and their political interest. 12.5% of all respondents have volunteered more than five times, and they comprise 8.5% of the group reporting a strong interest in politics. On the other hand, 62.8% of all respondents have never volunteered, and they comprise 32.5% of the group reporting a strong interest in politics.

**Table 2. Political interest and volunteer participation**

| Volunteer | Low Interest | Medium Interest | Strong Interest | Grand Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| More than five times | 286<br>1.4% | 555<br>2.6% | 1,784<br>8.5% | 2,625<br>12.5% |
| A few times | 326<br>1.6% | 659<br>3.1% | 1,778<br>8.5% | 2,763<br>13.2% |
| Just once | 225<br>1.1% | 469<br>2.2% | 1,064<br>5.1% | 1,758<br>8.4% |
| Never | 2,626<br>12.5% | 3,717<br>17.7% | 6,822<br>32.5% | 13,165<br>62.8% |
| Don't know/ Prefer not to answer | 171<br>0.8% | 202<br>1.0% | 284<br>1.4% | 657<br>3.1% |
| Grand Total | 3,634<br>17.3% | 5,602<br>26.7% | 11,732<br>56.0% | 20,968<br>100.0% |

## 3. Understanding Political and Governmental Information

To gauge the level of confusion Canadians have towards political and government information, the survey asked whether they sometimes find politics and government too complicated to understand. Those who found government information and politics difficult to understand responded with "Agree," and those who did not responded with "Disagree."

A plurality of the participants, 41%, indicated they "Somewhat agree" with this statement. The second most common response was "Somewhat disagree," representing 28% of respondents. The smallest groups were those who expressed strong agreement (13%) and strong disagreement (16%). Approximately 44% of respondents reported not finding it difficult to comprehend political and government information (i.e. disagreed with the statement), while 54% indicated they found it difficult to comprehend (i.e. agreed with the statement).

**Figure 7. Political comprehension**
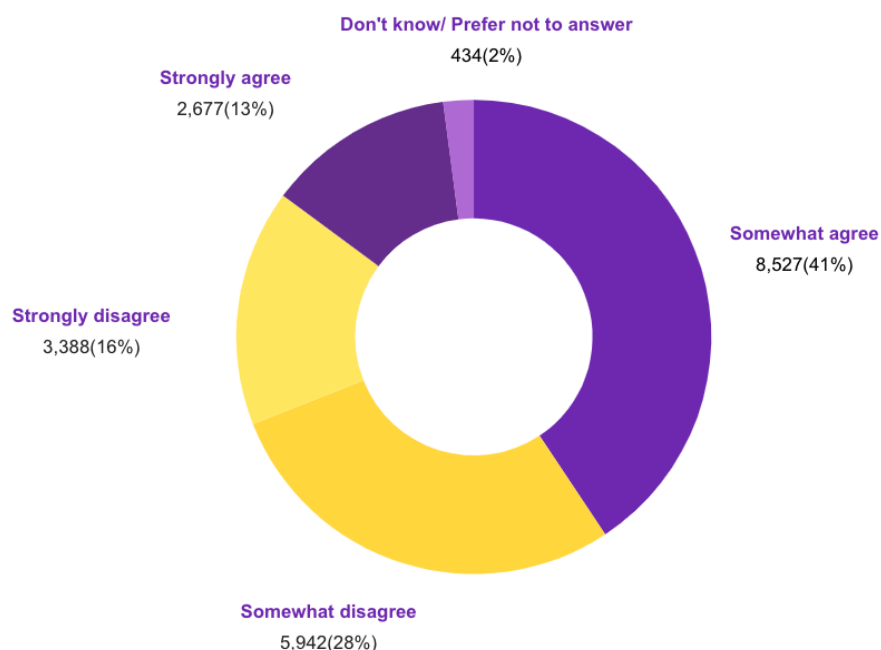


## 3.1 Age and political comprehension

We analyzed the relationship between respondents' ages and their comprehension of politics. According to the age classifications used by Statistics Canada (2023), "Youth" are defined as individuals aged 15–24, "Adults" as those aged 25–64, and "Seniors" as those aged 65 and over. Adults comprised the largest proportion of respondents (13,150 individuals, or 62.71%), followed by seniors (33.96%), and youth (3.33%). 11,204 respondents (53.43%) agreed with the statement on political comprehension, indicating

confusion. Conversely, 9,330 respondents (44.50%) disagreed with the statement regarding their understanding of politics, indicating comprehension.

**Table 3. Age and political comprehension**

| | Finding politics and government hard to understand sometimes | | | |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| | Disagree | Agree | Others | Grand Total |
| Youth (15-24 years) | 195<br>0.93% | 479<br>2.28% | 24<br>0.11% | 698<br>3.33% |
| Adult (25-64 years) | 5,584<br>26.63% | 7,220<br>34.43% | 346<br>1.65% | 13,150<br>62.71% |
| Seniors (65years and over) | 3,551<br>16.94% | 3,505<br>16.72% | 64<br>0.31% | 7,120<br>33.96% |
| Grand Total | 9,330<br>44.50% | 11,204<br>53.43% | 434<br>2.07% | 20,968<br>100.00% |

## 3.2 Gender and political comprehension

We examined how complicated Canadians find the government and politics in relation to their genders. In the classification of the survey results, men were categorized under the "Man" group, women under the "Woman" group, and people who were non-binary or another gender were grouped under "Others."

More women (11,370, or 54.23% of all respondents) responded to the survey than men (9,474, or 45.18% of all respondents). 124 respondents were neither men nor women (0.59%). 11,204 respondents (53.43%) found it hard to comprehend political matters, about 9% more than the 9,330 respondents (44.50%) who did not find it hard to comprehend politics.

Women were more likely to express confusion about politics, with 61.89% of women in the sample (7,037 individuals, or 33.56% of all respondents) affirming that they find politics sometimes confusing. In contrast, 55.25% of men in the sample reported that they do not find politics confusing (24.96% of all respondents), compared to the 43.23% of men who report finding politics sometimes confusing (19.53% of all respondents). As the number of people who were non-binary, another gender, or who did not disclose a gender is low, strong conclusions cannot be drawn from the data.

**Table 4. Gender and political comprehension**

| | Finding politics and government hard to understand sometimes | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Disagree | Agree | Others | Grand Total |
| Man | 5,234<br>24.96% | 4,096<br>19.53% | 144<br>0.69% | 9,474<br>45.18% |
| Woman | 4,047<br>19.30% | 7,037<br>33.56% | 286<br>1.36% | 11,370<br>54.23% |
| Others * | 49<br>0.23% | 71<br>0.34% | 4<br>0.02% | 124<br>0.59% |
| Grand Total | 9,330<br>44.50% | 11,204<br>53.43% | 434<br>2.07% | 20,968<br>100.00% |

*\*It is difficult to make assumptions concerning the group that did not share their gender, as Others including "I don't know" or "I prefer not to answer" were an option for almost all questions in the survey. There can be many reasons for why someone wouldn't respond to any question with either of these answers.*

## 3.3 Education and political comprehension

Here, we will look at how complicated Canadians find the government and politics in relation to their educational background. More than 84% of all respondents have an education level of college or higher.

There is a clear correlation between higher education and finding government and politics less complicated. Among individuals with higher education attainment, including those with a master's degree, bachelor's degree or college diploma, 39.65% reported that they did not find politics too difficult to understand. Those who enrolled in or completed a bachelor's degree program formed the largest group among those who do not find it difficult to understand politics (3,976, or 18.96% of all respondents). At the same time, this group also formed the largest group among those who report finding it difficult to understand politics (4,225, or 20.15% of all respondents).

**Table 5. Education and political comprehension**

Finding politics and government hard to understand sometimes

|  | Disagree | Agree | Others | Grand Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Master's degree & Professional degree or doctorate | 1,839<br>8.77% | 1,185<br>5.65% | 27<br>0.13% | 3,051<br>14.55% |
| Enrolled or completed Bachelor's Degree | 3,976<br>18.96% | 4,225<br>20.15% | 129<br>0.62% | 8,330<br>39.73% |
| Enrolled or completed College * | 2,499<br>11.92% | 3,646<br>17.39% | 139<br>0.66% | 6,284<br>29.97% |
| Graduated High School | 864<br>4.12% | 1,762<br>8.40% | 100<br>0.48% | 2,726<br>13.00% |
| Not completed High School | 143<br>0.68% | 362<br>1.73% | 33<br>0.16% | 538<br>2.57% |
| Don't know/ Prefer not to answer | 9<br>0.04% | 24<br>0.11% | 6<br>0.03% | 39<br>0.19% |
| Grand Total | 9,330<br>44.50% | 11,204<br>53.43% | 434<br>2.07% | 20,968<br>100.00% |

*\* Technical, community college, CEGEP, College Classique*

## 3.4 Consumption of news media and political comprehension

In this section, we will examine how news media consumption affects political comprehension. Higher news media consumption (such as reading newspapers, browsing news articles online, watching broadcasts on TV, or listening to radio programs) is correlated with a higher understanding of the government and politics.

People who do not consume news media daily report struggling more to understand politics and government, with only 192 respondents (0.9%) reporting that they do not find politics confusing and 597 respondents (2.8%) finding politics sometimes confusing (Figure 8). In contrast, among individuals who spend 31–60 minutes consuming news media every day, 2,797 (13.3%) do not find politics confusing. People who spend more than an hour consuming news media daily report higher political comprehension; among those who consume 1–2 hours of news media per day, 12.5% of respondents indicate that they do not find it hard to understand politics, and among those who consume more than 2 hours per day, 5.7% indicate that they do not find it hard to understand politics.

Overall, spending more time with news media is associated with more comprehension. People who spent more than half an hour consuming news media every day reported a better understanding of politics and government than those who did not. However, 53.4% of

all respondents reported experiencing difficulties with consuming news media.

**Figure 8. News media consumption and political comprehension**

| Daily News Consumption Duration | Finding politics and government hard to understand sometimes | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Disagree | | Agree | | Others | | Grand Total | |
| None | 192 | 0.9% | 597 | 2.8% | 107 | 0.5% | 896 | 4.3% |
| 1-10 minutes | 768 | 3.7% | 2,249 | 10.7% | 93 | 0.4% | 3,110 | 14.8% |
| 11-30 minutes | 1,751 | 8.4% | 2,909 | 13.9% | 105 | 0.5% | 4,765 | 22.7% |
| 31-60 minutes | 2,797 | 13.3% | 2,974 | 14.2% | 72 | 0.3% | 5,843 | 27.9% |
| 1-2 hours | 2,629 | 12.5% | 1,804 | 8.6% | 40 | 0.2% | 4,473 | 21.3% |
| More than 2 hours | 1,193 | 5.7% | 671 | 3.2% | 17 | 0.1% | 1,881 | 9.0% |
| Grand Total | 9,330 | 44.5% | 11,204 | 53.4% | 434 | 2.1% | 20,968 | 100.0% |

## 4. Satisfaction with Canadian Democracy

The majority of respondents, constituting 57%, reported being "Fairly satisfied" with the way democracy works in Canada. 20% reported feeling "Not very satisfied." 14% conveyed being "Very satisfied" while only 6% indicated being "Not at all satisfied."

### 4.1 Provincial and territorial democracy satisfaction among campaign-period survey respondents

**Figure 9. Campaign-period satisfaction in Canadian democracy by region**
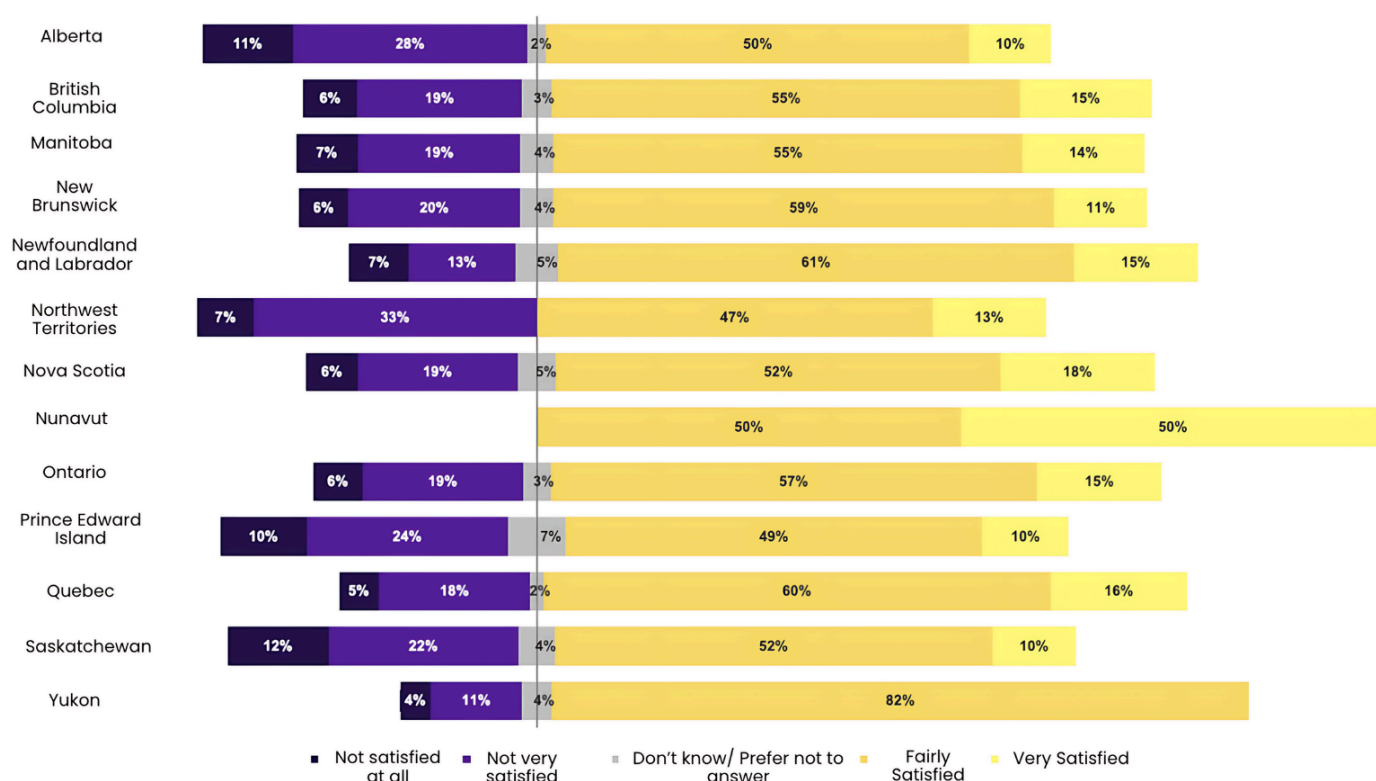


The diverging bar chart (Figure 9) illustrates campaign-period survey (CPS) respondents' varying levels of satisfaction with democracy in Canada across different regions. Across the surveyed regions, there are notable differences in satisfaction levels.

In most provinces and territories, the majority of CPS respondents report being fairly satisfied with Canadian democracy. This trend is evident in provinces and territories like Québec, Ontario, Newfoundland and Labrador, New Brunswick, Manitoba, British Columbia, and Yukon, where the percentages of people who are fairly satisfied range from 50% to 82%. Alberta, Saskatchewan, Prince Edward Island, and the Northwest Territories have the highest levels of dissatisfaction with Canadian democracy.

While most respondents from Nunavut reported being fairly satisfied (50%) or very satisfied (50%) with Canadian democracy, these numbers are likely skewed due to the relatively low number of respondents from Nunavut (*n* = 4) and may not reflect the true levels of satisfaction in Nunavut.

## 4.2 Provincial and territorial democracy satisfaction among post-election survey respondents

**Figure 10. Post-election satisfaction in Canadian democracy by region**
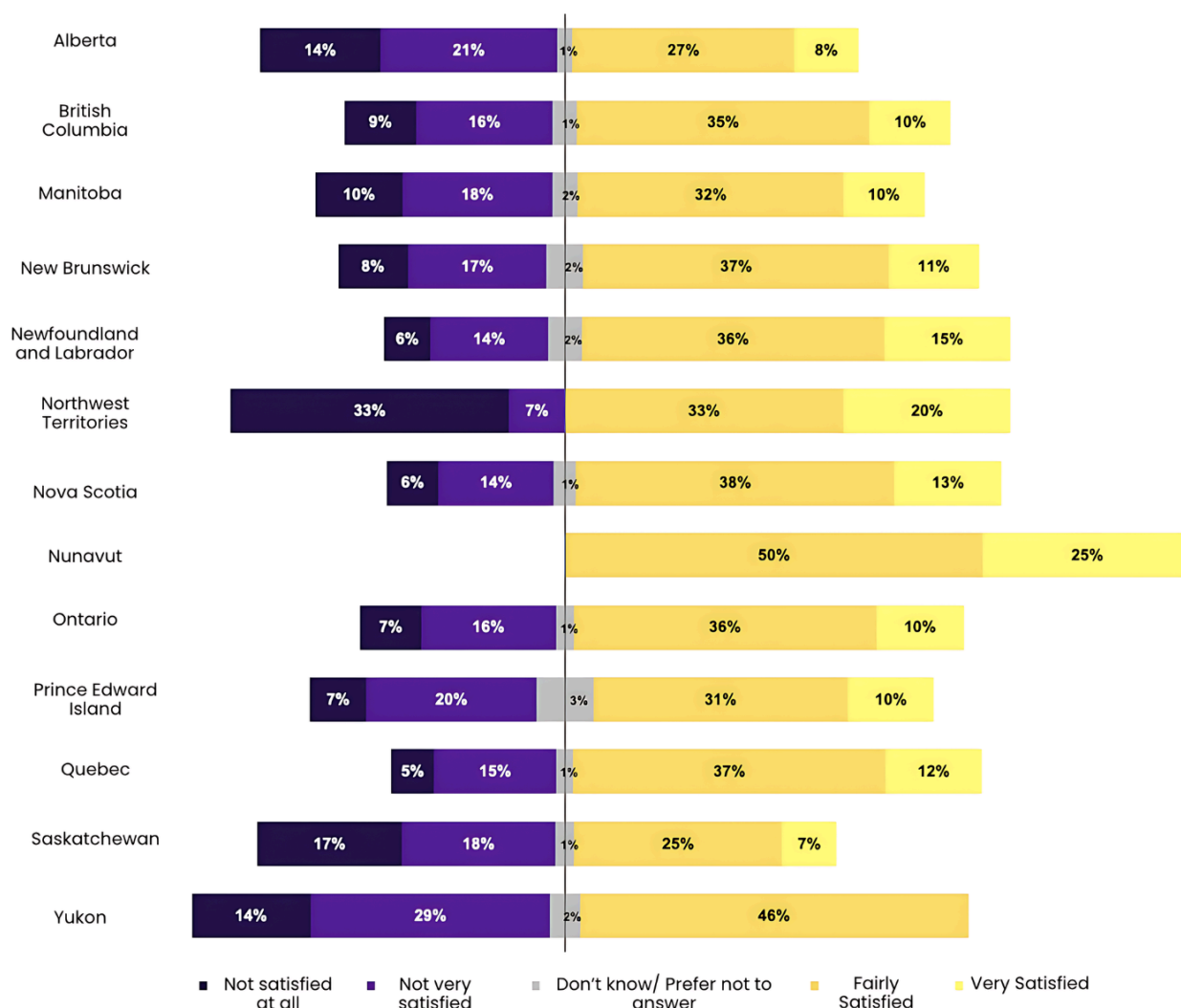


This diverging bar graph (Figure 10) showcases the post-election survey (PES) respondents' satisfaction levels with Canadian democracy in their own provinces or territories.

We see similar trends to the CPS results, with most respondents indicating that they are fairly satisfied with Canadian democracy. Alberta, Saskatchewan, Prince Edward Island, and the Northwest Territories continue to express higher levels of dissatisfaction compared to the rest of the provinces and territories. Notably, Yukon had a shift in opinion from a majority of satisfied respondents to a more even split of satisfied and unsatisfied respondents.

However, relatively few respondents from Prince Edward Island, the Northwest Territories, and Yukon took the survey, and these levels may not reflect the true opinions of each region.

## 5. Identification of Political Leaders: Overall and Regional Analysis

### 5.1 Identification of federal Minister of Finance (Chrystia Freeland)

The respondents were asked to identify the federal Minister of Finance from a list of options. Overall, approximately 57% of the respondents correctly identified Chrystia Freeland as the Finance Minister. The remaining 43% included incorrect choices, those who were unsure, and those who chose not to answer.

**Figure 11. Correct identification of federal Minister of Finance**
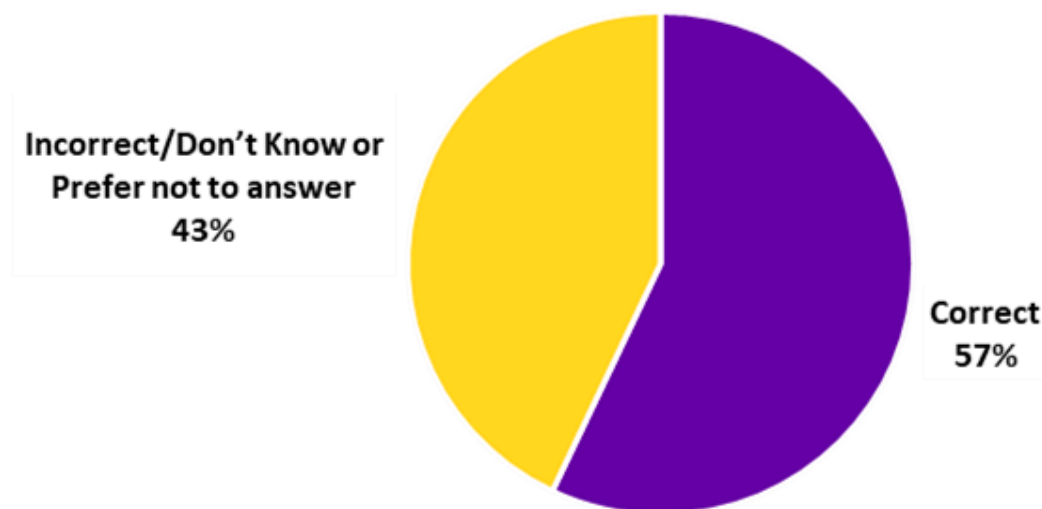


Regional variances in awareness were thoroughly examined, revealing intriguing patterns. The Northwest Territories (80%) and Yukon (68%) emerged with the highest proportion of respondents correctly identifying the Finance Minister. Conversely, Nunavut recorded the lowest percentage of correct identifications at 25%, with Newfoundland and Labrador, Nova Scotia, and New Brunswick trailing behind at 42%, 47%, and 49%, respectively. The remaining provinces fell within the 50–60% range, suggesting a moderate level of awareness. However, it is essential to consider that in certain provinces and territories, such as Nunavut, the Northwest Territories, Yukon, and Prince Edward Island, the smaller sample size of respondents likely skewed the percentages.

**Figure 12. Correct identification of federal Minister of Finance by region (in %)**
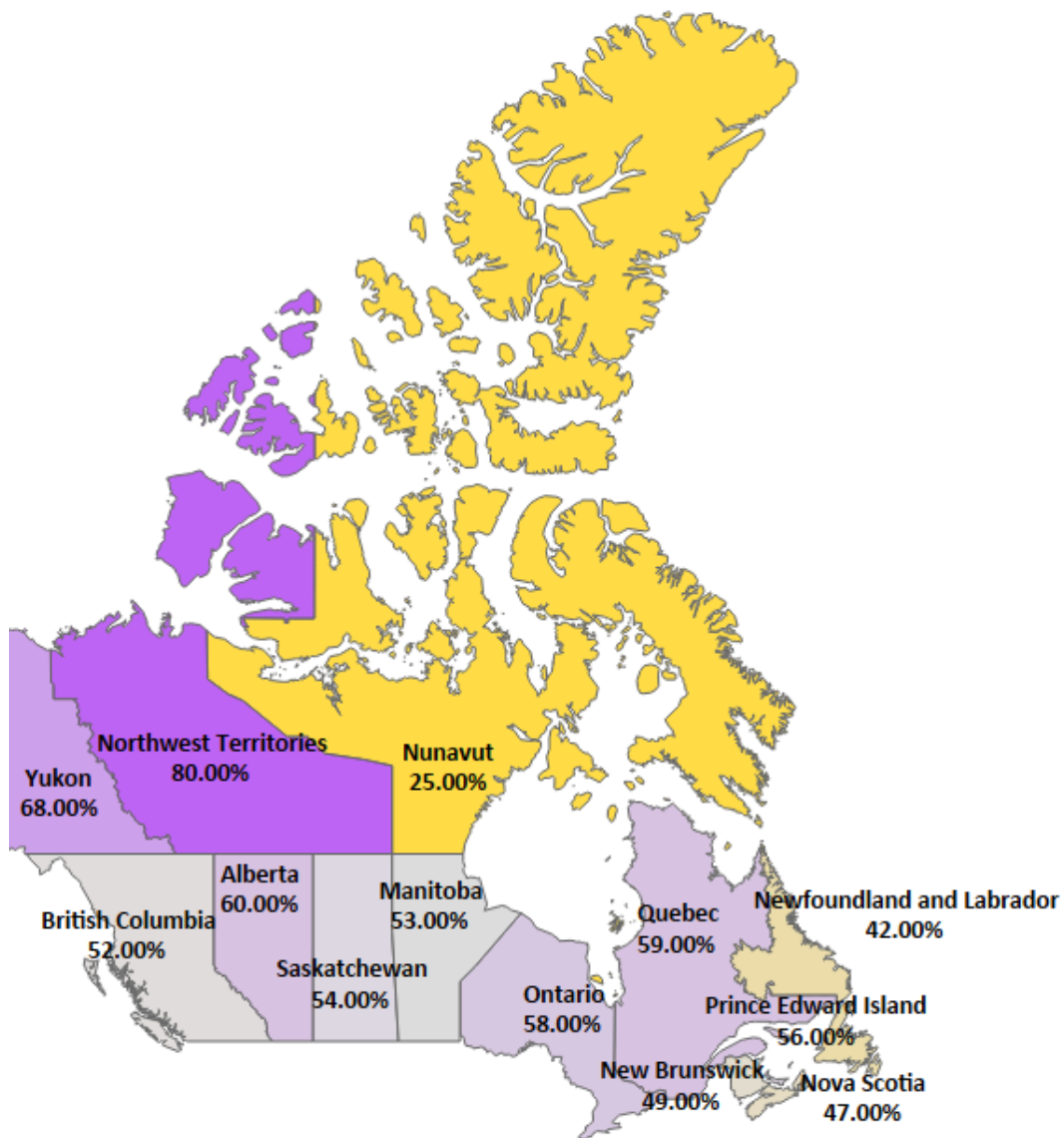


## 5.2 Identification of Governor General of Canada (Mary Simon)

The respondents were given a list of options to identify the Governor General of Canada. Out of all of the valid responses received, around 64% of the total respondents were able to correctly identify Mary Simon as the Governor General of Canada. The remaining 36% encompassed incorrect responses, "don't know" responses, and those who preferred not to answer.

**Figure 13. Correct identification of Governor General of Canada**
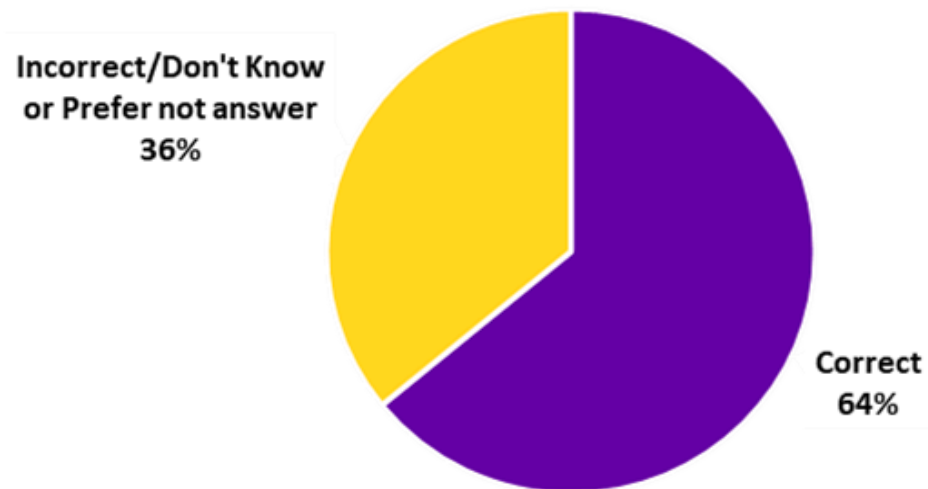


**Figure 14. Correct identification of Governor General of Canada by region (in %)**

Analyzing responses by province reveals notable variations. Nunavut (100%), Yukon (89%), and the Northwest Territories (73%) exhibit the highest identification rates. Mary Simon's Inuit identity may explain the high recognition percentages in these territories, as there is a significant concentration of Inuit populations in these areas. However, the low number of respondents ($n$ = 4–28) from these territories likely affected these results.

Aside from the three territories, Québec boasts the highest percentage (72%). One factor contributing to the high recognition percentages in Québec could be the fact that Mary Simon was born in Québec. The remaining provinces generally fall within the 55–65% range, with Saskatchewan (54%), Newfoundland and Labrador (55%), and Nova Scotia (57%) demonstrating the lowest identification rates.

## 5.3 Identification of provincial and territorial premiers

**Figure 15. Correct identification of provincial and territorial premiers (in %)**
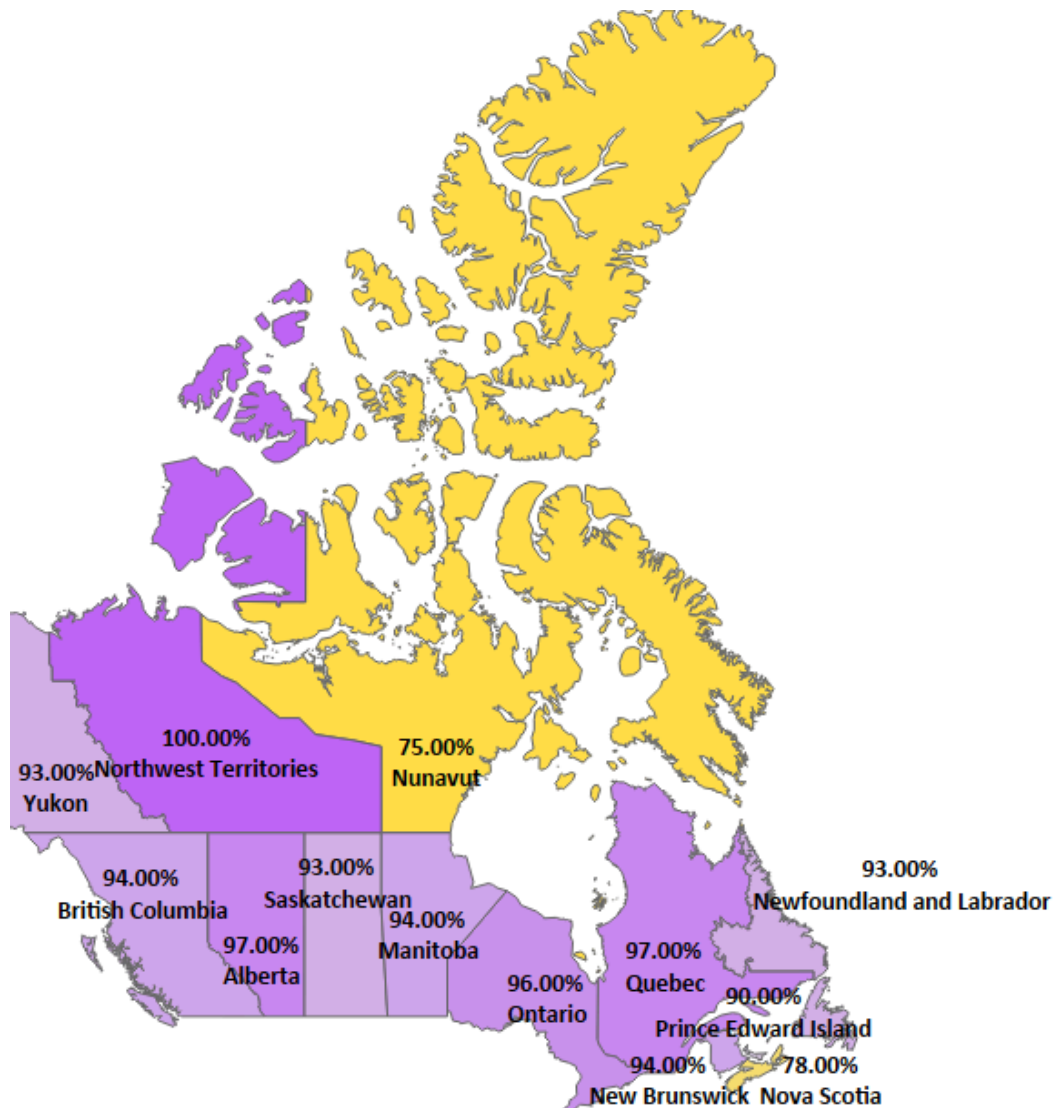
Respondents were asked to identify their respective provincial or territorial Premier from a list of options based on their indicated province or territory. To evaluate the accuracy of these identifications, the responses were matched with the acting premier at the time of the survey.

In Nova Scotia, where the survey ran from August 17, 2021 to September 19, 2021, there was an overlap in acting premiers. Iain Rankin served until August 31, 2021, while Tim Houston assumed office on the same day. As a result, responses indicating Iain Rankin as premier until August 30, 2021 were considered correct, and both Iain Rankin and Tim Houston were deemed correct on August 31. Subsequently, only responses identifying Tim Houston as premier were considered correct.

Similarly, in Manitoba, despite Brian Pallister's term ending on September 1, 2021, any responses identifying him as premier were deemed correct throughout the survey period, as Kelvin Goertzen, who succeeded him in an acting capacity, was not included in the survey options.

With the exception of Nunavut, where 75% of respondents correctly identified their premier, and Nova Scotia, where 78% accuracy was achieved, the remaining provinces and territories saw exceptionally high levels of correctness, exceeding 90%. However, it is important to consider the limitations of these findings, particularly in provinces and territories with a smaller sample size of respondents, such as Nunavut. The lack of a sufficient number of respondents in certain provinces and territories may not provide a definitive indication of the true percentage of correct identifications.

## 6. Confidence in the Federal and Provincial or Territorial Government

### 6.1 Post-election confidence in the federal government

In the post-election survey, respondents were asked to rate their confidence in the federal government. The analysis presented below excludes any missing information, as well as responses indicating "don't know/prefer not to answer," to enhance clarity. As illustrated in the figure below, the overall level of confidence in the federal government appears to be low.

**Figure 16. Overall confidence in federal government**
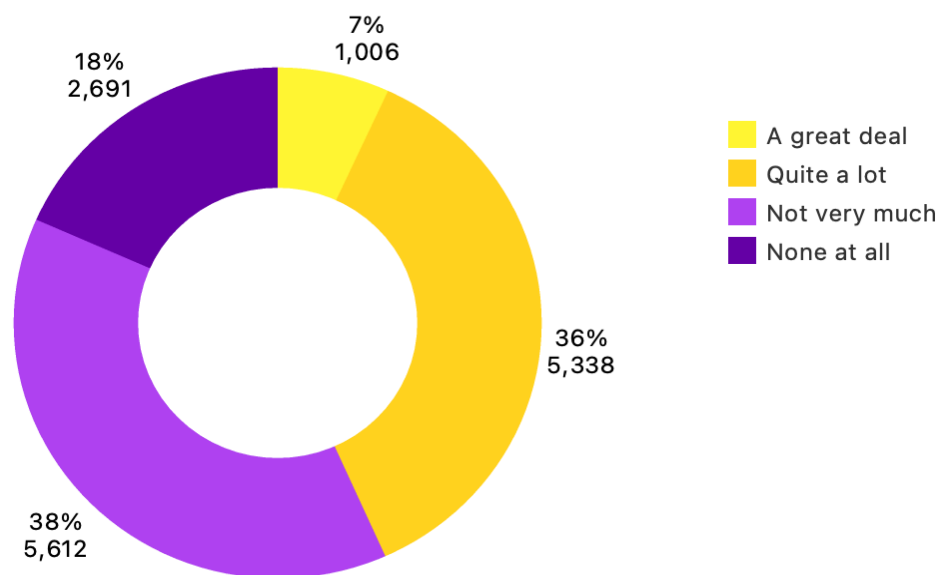


* The chart did not include "NA" and "Don't know/Prefer not to answer".

Overall, the majority of respondents across most provinces and territories express a lack of confidence in the federal government. However, notable exceptions exist, with Nunavut and Québec displaying comparatively higher levels of confidence. Conversely, provinces and territories such as Alberta, the Northwest Territories, Saskatchewan, and Yukon demonstrate the lowest levels of confidence, with only 31% (combining those who responded "Quite a lot" and "A great deal").

The sample size of respondents from certain provinces and territories is relatively low, potentially impacting the outcomes and leading to inaccurate perceptions of confidence levels. Despite this limitation, the overarching pattern indicates a lack of confidence in the federal government among respondents.

**Figure 17. Confidence in federal government by province or territory**



"Please indicate how much confidence you have in the following : The Federal government"

■ None at all  ■ Not very much  ■ Quite a lot  ■ A great deal
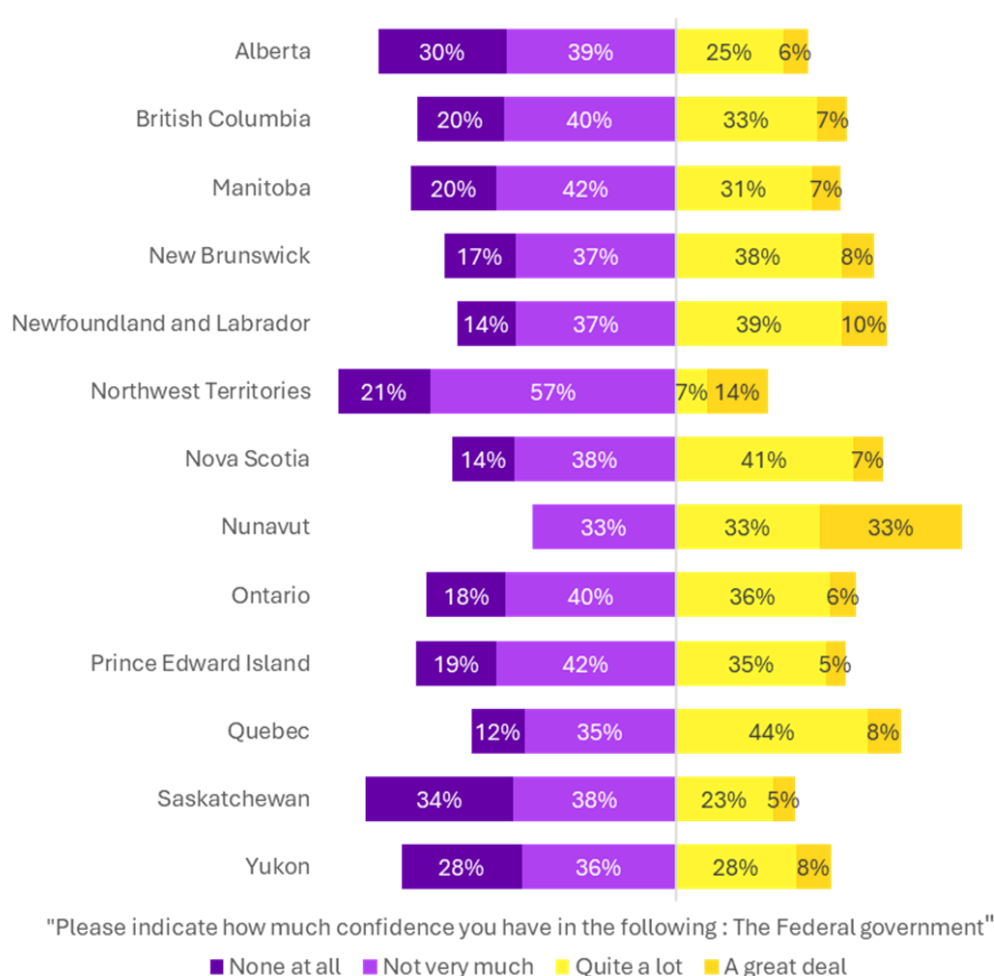
## 6.2 Post-election confidence in the provincial or territorial government

In the post-election survey, respondents were asked to rate their confidence in their respective provincial or territorial governments. The analysis presented below excludes any missing information, as well as responses indicating "don't know" or "prefer not to answer," to enhance clarity.

The number of respondents from certain provinces and territories, such as Nunavut, the Northwest Territories, and Prince Edward Island, is relatively low. Consequently, the data from these provinces may not provide a fully accurate representation of public sentiment.

Excluding these provinces and territories from the analysis, respondents from Alberta, Manitoba, Ontario, Saskatchewan, New Brunswick, and Yukon have collectively expressed a lack of confidence in their respective provincial governments, evident in responses categorized as "None at all" and "Not very much."

With the exception of Saskatchewan and Yukon, respondents generally express satisfaction with the state of democracy within their respective provinces (refer to Section 4.2). On the

other hand, British Columbia, Québec, Nova Scotia, and Newfoundland and Labrador have demonstrated a higher level of confidence in their provincial governments.

**Figure 18. Confidence in provincial or territorial government by province or territory**



"Please indicate how much confidence you have in the following : Your provincial or territorial government"

■ None at all   ■ Not very much   ■ Quite a lot   ■ A great deal
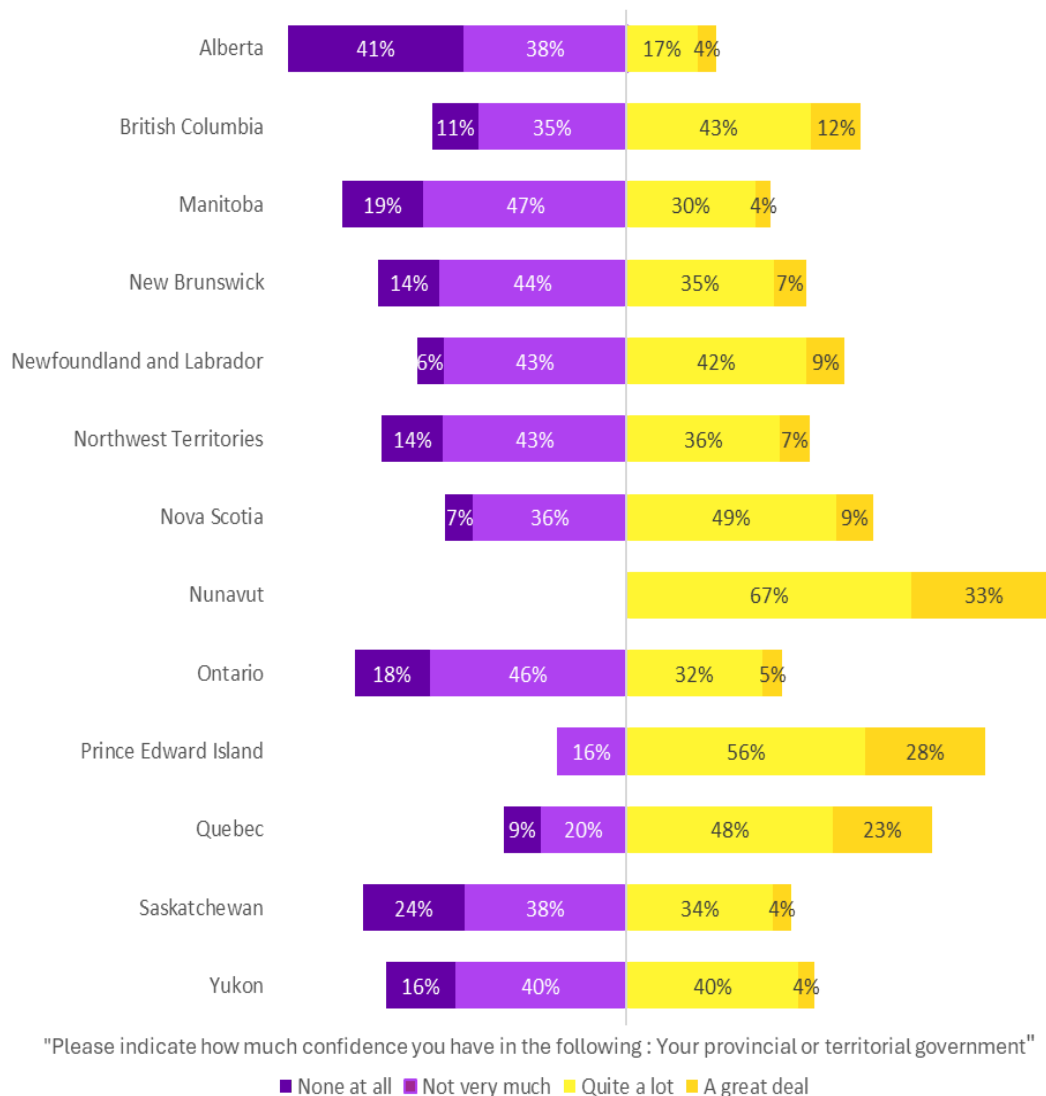
## 6.3 Public preference for governance: federal vs. provincial or territorial authority

In the survey, respondents were asked to indicate their preference between supporting a strong federal government or granting more power to provincial governments. The responses received, excluding those categorized as "Don't know/Prefer not to answer," have been presented below for analysis.

**Figure 19. Preference for a strong federal vs provincial or territorial government**

| Province/Territory | A strong federal government | More power to the provincial governments |
|---|---|---|
| Alberta | 50% | 50% |
| British Columbia | 48% | 52% |
| Manitoba | 56% | 44% |
| New Brunswick | 55% | 45% |
| Newfoundland and Labrador | 52% | 48% |
| Northwest Territories | 44% | 56% |
| Nova Scotia | 50% | 50% |
| Nunavut | 50% | 50% |
| Ontario | 62% | 38% |
| Prince Edward Island | 47% | 53% |
| Quebec | 24% | 76% |
| Saskatchewan | 45% | 55% |
| Yukon | 55% | 45% |

■ A strong federal government   ■ More power to the provincial governments

One of the most notable observations in the survey results pertains to the contrasting preferences between Ontario and Québec. While respondents from Ontario support a stronger federal government, those from Québec express a preference for granting more power to provincial governments. This dichotomy in preferences aligns with previous findings where respondents from Ontario expressed greater satisfaction with the federal government, whereas respondents from Québec reported greater satisfaction with their provincial government (Nilsson, 2021). Among other provinces and territories, there is a more even distribution of preferences. It is also notable that the overall sentiment is in support of more power for the provincial or territorial governments.

## 7. Political Party Preferences (Overall and Regional)

Respondents were asked to select their preferred political party from a provided list of options. To streamline the analysis, missing responses, as well as those indicating "Don't know/Prefer not to answer" and "None of these," have been excluded.

The largest portion of valid respondents, approximately 36%, identified as supporters of the Liberal Party. Following closely behind, around 27% of respondents expressed their affiliation with the Conservative Party. Additionally, approximately 18% indicated their support for the New Democratic Party (NDP). The People's Party and the Green Party garnered approximately 3% each of respondent support. Lastly, around 2% of respondents expressed preference for other political parties.

A clear trend emerges in the preferences of respondents from several provinces and territories. The Conservative Party holds significant sway in Alberta (49%), Manitoba (36%), Saskatchewan (44%), and Yukon (37%). Additionally, it emerges as the second most popular party in other provinces. Conversely, respondents from British Columbia (37%), New Brunswick (44%), Newfoundland and Labrador (53%), Nova Scotia (51%), Ontario (44%), and Québec (32%) have expressed a preference for the Liberal Party. The New Democratic Party (NDP) also garners support across various provinces, including British Columbia (26%), Manitoba (21%), Newfoundland and Labrador (23%), Nova Scotia (21%), and Saskatchewan (23%). In some provinces, it emerges as the second most popular party.

However, it is important to note that responses from certain provinces and territories may have low representation and may not accurately reflect provincial and territorial sentiments. Furthermore, it is difficult to determine the nature of the attitudes among the 1494 respondents that indicated that they did not support any of the listed parties and the 1049 respondents that responded with "Don't know/Prefer not to answer." For example, they may be politically independent, opposed to party politics, unconfident in their political knowledge, or undecided voters.

**Table 6. Political preference by province or territory**

|  | Conservative | Liberal | NDP | People's Party | Green | Bloc Québecois | Another party |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Alberta** | 740 (49%) | 388 (26%) | 279 (18%) | 48 (3%) | 26 (2%) | 0 (0%) | 38 (3%) |
| **British Columbia** | 362 (26%) | 516 (37%) | 367 (26%) | 36 (3%) | 81 (6%) | 0 (0%) | 27 (2%) |
| **Manitoba** | 166 (36%) | 158 (35%) | 95 (21%) | 19 (4%) | 10 (2%) | 0 (0%) | 7 (2%) |
| **New Brunswick** | 47 (20%) | 102 (44%) | 45 (19%) | 9 (4%) | 22 (10%) | 0 (0%) | 6 (3%) |
| **Newfoundland & Labrador** | 22 (19%) | 62 (53%) | 27 (23%) | 1 (1%) | 2 (2%) | 0 (0%) | 2 (2%) |
| **Northwest Territories** | 2 (22%) | 4 (44%) | 3 (33%) | 0 (0%) | 0 (0%) | 0 (0%) | 0 (0%) |
| **Nova Scotia** | 64 (20%) | 162 (51%) | 67 (21%) | 9 (3%) | 6 (2%) | 0 (0%) | 7 (2%) |
| **Nunavut** | 0 (0%) | 2 (100%) | 0 (0%) | 0 (0%) | 0 (0%) | 0 (0%) | 0 (0%) |
| **Ontario** | 1286 (29%) | 1917 (44%) | 851 (19%) | 130 (3%) | 148 (3%) | 0 (0%) | 63 (1%) |
| **Prince Edward Island** | 13 (43%) | 14 (47%) | 1 (3%) | 0 (0%) | 2 (7%) | 0 (0%) | 0 (0%) |
| **Québec** | 529 (14%) | 1199 (32%) | 489 (13%) | 66 (2%) | 111 (3%) | 1353 (36%) | 57 (1%) |
| **Saskatchewan** | 107 (44%) | 63 (26%) | 56 (23%) | 10 (4%) | 2 (1%) | 0 (0%) | 4 (2%) |
| **Yukon** | 7 (37%) | 3 (16%) | 3 (16%) | 2 (11%) | 4 (21%) | 0 (0%) | 0 (0%) |

## 8. Voting Attitudes of Permanent Residents

Out of the 579 permanent residents who provided their voting intentions, the majority, accounting for 66%, expressed certainty in their intention to vote in their first eligible Canadian election. As the next most frequent response, 25% indicated they were "likely to vote." Conversely, only 5% stated they were "unlikely to vote," while a mere 4% asserted they were "certain not to vote."

91% of permanent residents expressed willingness to vote, a positive indication of their intention to actively engage in civic life through exercising their right to vote. However, 9% of permanent residents were less inclined to vote. Although their numbers are small compared to those intending to vote, they still represent individuals disengaged with the electoral process. Understanding the motivations behind their reluctance and barriers to voting could have offered valuable insights for enhancing voter engagement strategies and fostering a more inclusive democratic environment. Additionally, a deeper understanding of permanent residents' attitudes toward other forms of civic participation, such as activism or volunteerism, could yield insights on how potential Canadian citizens can be engaged in the civic process even before they are eligible to vote.

## 9. To Vote – a Duty or a Choice?

Nearly 8 out of 10 participants (77%) reported that they experience voting as a duty to fulfill, indicating that they view voting as a civic obligation. In contrast, the remaining 23% view voting as a matter of personal discretion, highlighting differing perspectives on electoralism and democratic participation.

**Figure 20. Voting as a duty or choice**



View voting as a duty          View voting as a choice

## 10. Factors Affecting Canadian Voting Attitudes

In this section, we explore the various factors that may affect the likelihood of a Canadian citizen deciding to vote in the election. Respondents were asked whether they were likely to vote on election day or if they had already voted in advance.

### 10.1 Age and voting attitudes

**Figure 21. Percentage of Canadians voting in each age category**
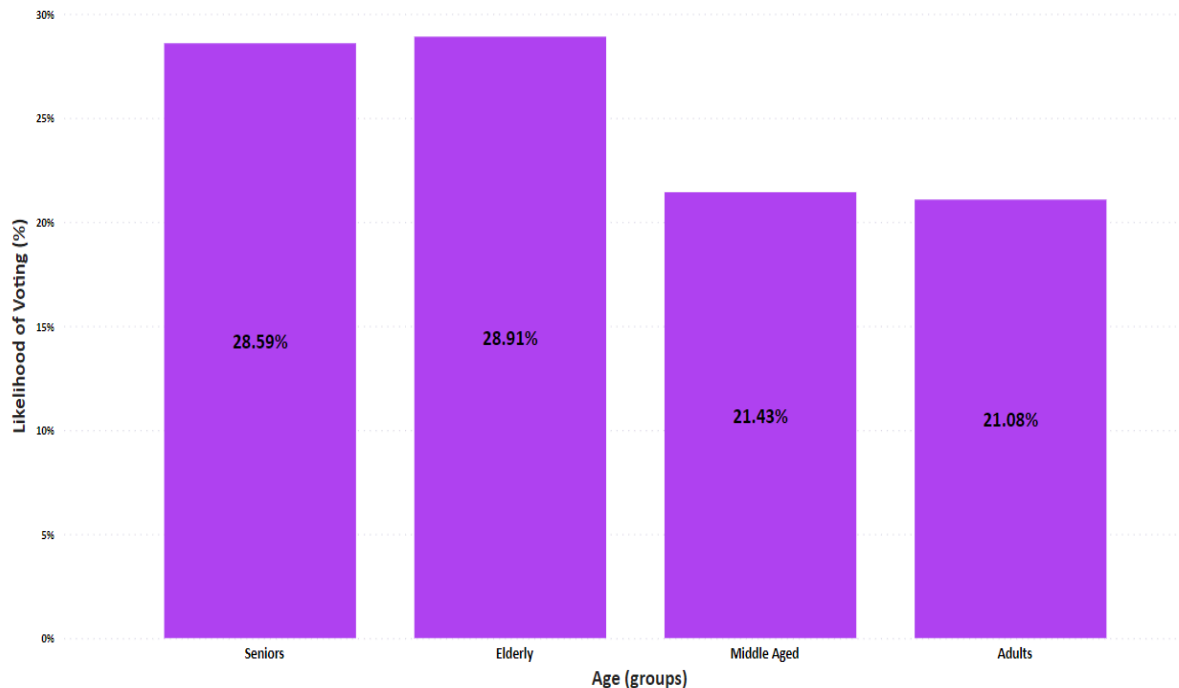


Respondents were grouped into age categories: Adults (18–34), Middle-aged (35–49), Seniors (50–64), and Elderly (65 and above). Their likelihood of voting was analyzed across these age groups. Seniors (28.59%) and the elderly (28.91%) are more likely to vote compared to younger age groups. Younger adults (18–44) exhibit lower voter turnout (around 21%), indicating a need for targeted efforts to increase electoral participation in this demographic. Further research is needed to identify the reasons behind the lower rates of electoral participation among youth, such as barriers to access or political beliefs (Elections Canada, 2023a), as well as assess which strategies would be most effective at engaging young voters.

Furthermore, youth engage in several forms of political and civic activity, such as volunteerism and organizing, at higher rates compared to voting (Arriagada, Khanam, & Sano, 2022b; O'Neill, 2005). This suggests that while voter turnout among youth is relatively low, it is not necessarily because they are more politically disengaged than other age groups. For example, they may face additional barriers to access, such as difficulty accessing election information, compared to older adults and seniors (Elections Canada, 2023b). A more thorough understanding of the motivations behind youth civic participation can both inform future electoral policy and highlight other avenues of civic participation.

## 10.2 Education and voting attitudes

**Figure 22. Percentage of Canadians voting in each education level**
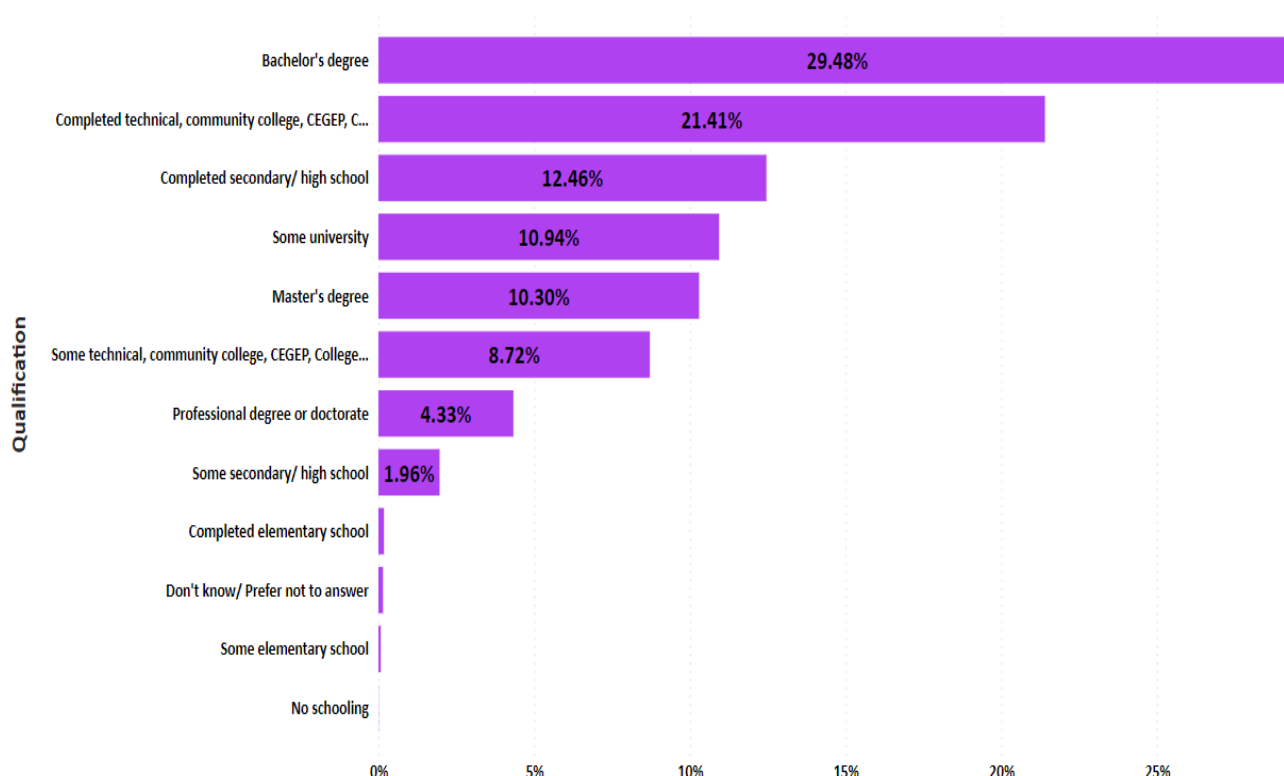


Respondents were categorized based on their highest level of educational attainment, and corresponding likelihood of voting was analyzed. Individuals with higher educational qualifications, such as bachelor's and master's degrees, reported that they were more likely to vote compared to those with lower levels of education.

Policy interventions that focus on improving educational access and attainment may promote broader political participation and voter turnout. Civic education and electoral outreach programs targeting lower-educated populations may help to bridge the gap in political engagement.

Although education is associated with intention to vote, more research is required to confirm whether more education directly or indirectly causes higher turnout and the mechanisms that drive this effect. Further investigation is also needed to determine if more education alone can lead individuals to participate actively in the electoral process, as education is not the sole driver of voting intentions. For example, Canadians who did not vote in the 2021 federal election reported facing many different barriers, including illness or disability (Elections Canada, 2023a). Designing a more accessible electoral system as well as making education more accessible can help to foster inclusive democratic participation.

## 10.3 Satisfaction with democracy and voting attitudes

**Figure 23. Likelihood of voting vs satisfaction with democracy**
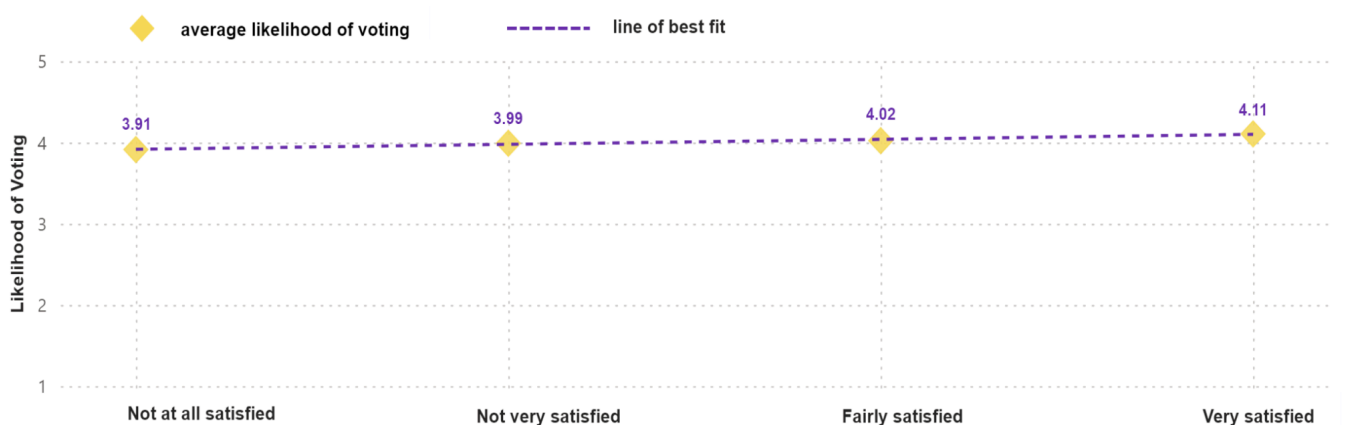


**Note:** The encoded codes represent the likelihood of voting: 5 indicates "I already voted"; 4 means "Certain to vote"; 3 signifies "Likely to vote"; 2 denotes "Unlikely to vote"; and 1 stands for "Certain not to vote."

Respondents' levels of satisfaction with democracy were analyzed in relation to their likelihood of voting. Higher satisfaction with democracy correlates with increased likelihood of voting, indicating a positive relationship between democratic satisfaction and political engagement. Trust in government institutions and perceptions of government performance also influence the likelihood of voting among individuals satisfied with democracy.

Therefore, policy efforts should focus on enhancing democratic accountability, transparency, inclusivity, and responsiveness to foster greater satisfaction with democracy. Public education campaigns highlighting the importance of democratic participation can also bolster voter engagement and turnout.

## 10.4 Satisfaction with Justin Trudeau's performance and voting attitudes

**Figure 24. Likelihood of voting vs satisfaction with Justin Trudeau**
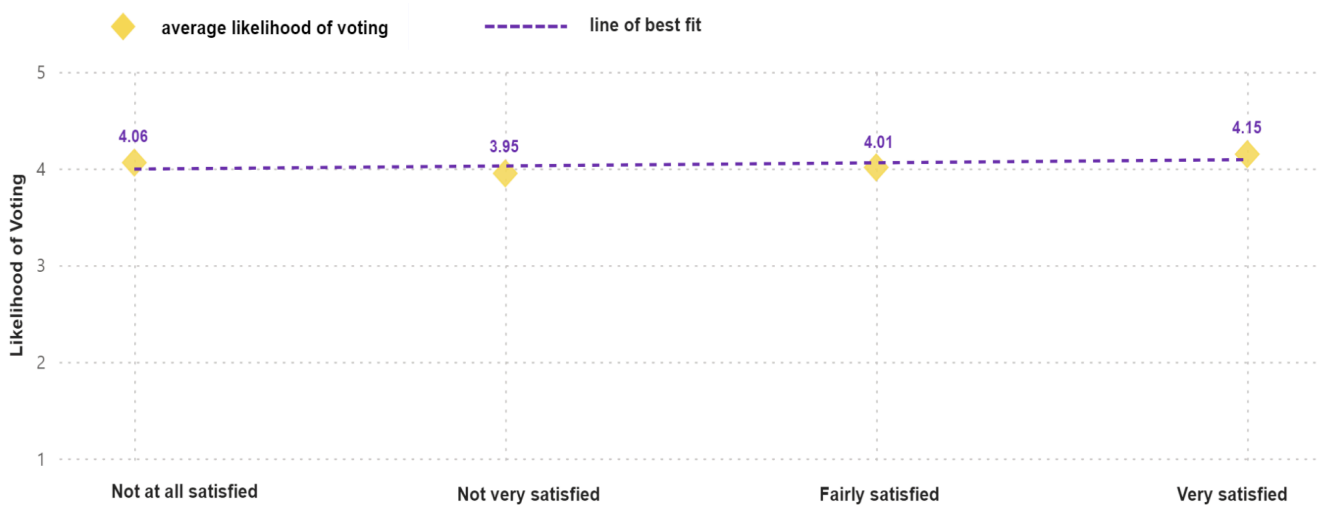


**Note:** The encoded codes represent the likelihood of voting: 5 indicates "I already voted"; 4 means "Certain to vote"; 3 signifies "Likely to vote"; 2 denotes "Unlikely to vote"; and 1 stands for "Certain not to vote."

Respondents' satisfaction with Justin Trudeau's performance as Prime Minister was analyzed in relation to their likelihood of voting. Positive perceptions of Trudeau's performance are associated with a higher likelihood of voting, suggesting that levels of leadership satisfaction influence electoral participation. Media portrayal and political messaging can impact public perceptions of leadership effectiveness and, subsequently, voter behaviour.

The implications are that political parties should strategically communicate achievements and policy successes to enhance public satisfaction and drive voter turnout (Library of Parliament, 2016). Transparent governance and effective communication can strengthen public trust and confidence in political leadership, contributing to increased electoral participation.

## 10.5 Abortion ban opinion and voting attitudes

**Figure 25. Likelihood of voting vs perception on abortion**
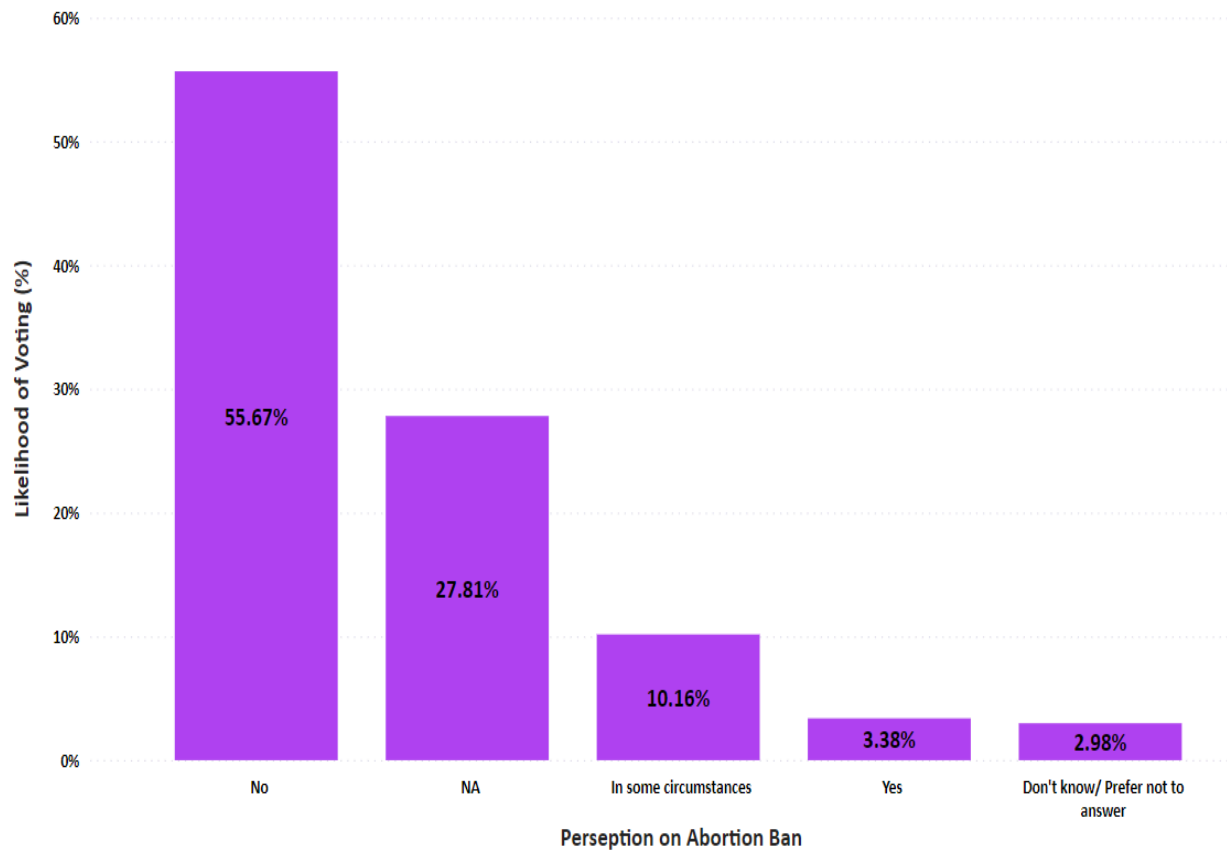


Respondents' opinions on a hypothetical ban on abortions were analyzed in relation to their likelihood of voting. Individuals opposing an abortion ban were more likely to report an intention to vote compared to those supporting an abortion ban or with a nuanced stance on abortion.

Views on social issues like abortion can influence political engagement and electoral behaviour. Policymakers should consider the impact of their social policies on voter engagement and tailor outreach efforts to address diverse perspectives. Public discourse and education on social issues can promote informed civic participation and contribute to a more engaged electorate.

## 10.6 Geographical variation in likelihood of voting

**Figure 26. Percentage of Canadians voting in each province or territory**
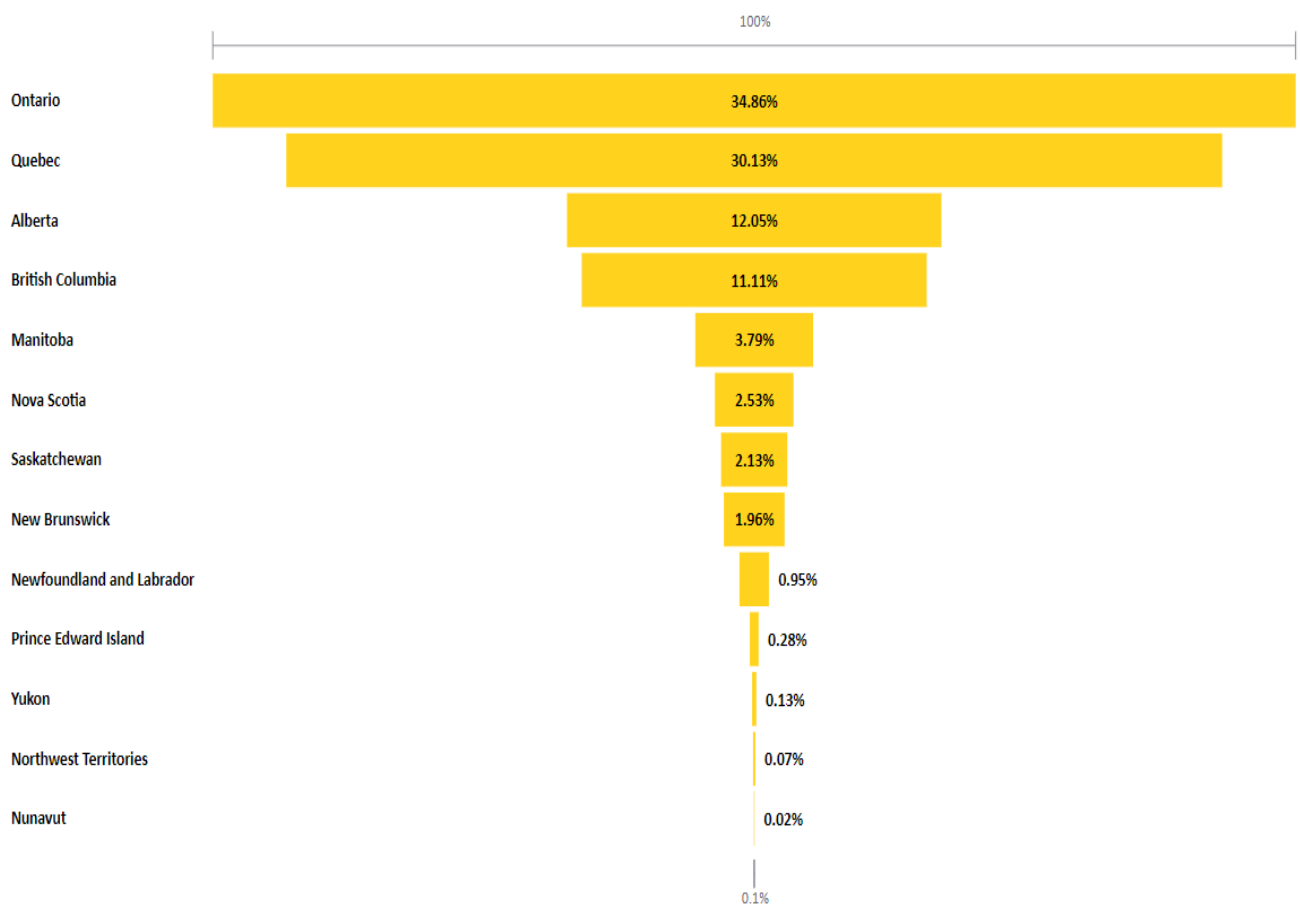


Turnout was analyzed across various provinces and territories to uncover regional differences in electoral participation. Notably, Ontario and Québec emerged with the highest turnout, standing at 34.86% and 30.13% respectively. These figures suggest a robust level of political engagement among residents in these provinces.

In contract, Alberta and British Columbia exhibited markedly lower rates, with only 12.05% and 11.11% of respondents indicating their participation in the electoral process. This disparity underscores potential challenges or factors influencing political engagement in these regions that warrants further investigation.

The analysis also revealed modest rates in other provinces, with Saskatchewan, Nova Scotia, and Manitoba reporting rates ranging from 2.13% to 3.79%. Meanwhile, New Brunswick, Newfoundland and Labrador, Prince Edward Island, Yukon, the Northwest Territories, and Nunavut recorded turnout rates below 2%.

## Methodology

The data team analysts used the dataset *"2021 Canadian Election Study"* from C-DEM and prepared and conducted the analysis using a combination of R, Python, Tableau, and Power BI. The original dataset consisted of many more variables and survey questions not covered within this report. The survey questions addressed here were chosen based on their relevance for the work of GLOCAL. Non-responses were generally not included and unindicative answers ("I don't know"/"Prefer not to answer") were only included if they appeared to be useful for the analysis.

## Acknowledgements

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## Further reading

Parliament of Canada. (n.d.). *Parliamentary Primer*. Retrieved August 12, 2021. https://lop.parl.ca/sites/Learn/default/en_CA/ParliamentaryPrimer
A short summary of how Parliament works and what its parts do, aimed at general audiences, with graphics.

Parliament of Canada. (n.d.). *Explore: Our Country, Our Parliament*. Retrieved August 12, 2021. https://lop.parl.ca/About/Parliament/Education/OurCountryOurParliament/home-e.aspx
A guide for school-age children to understand Parliament and its institutions, and how government works.

Library of Parliament. (n.d.) *Get to Know the House of Commons*. Retrieved August 12, 2021. https://lop.parl.ca/staticfiles/Learn/assets/PDF/ParliamentaryPrimer/GetToKnowThe HOC-en.pdf
A brochure briefly explaining what the House of Commons is and what it does, with graphics appropriate for high school and up, and newcomers to Canada as well.

Parliament of Canada. (n.d.). *Guide to the Canadian House of Commons*. Retrieved August 12, 2021. https://learn.parl.ca/sites/Learn/default/en_CA/GuideToHOC
A more detailed and advanced explanation of how the House of Commons works, suitable for anyone who knows the basics and wants to learn more.

Forsey, E. A. (2020). *How Canadians Govern Themselves, 10th Edition*. Library of Parliament. https://lop.parl.ca/About/Parliament/SenatorEugeneForsey/book/assets/pdf/How_C anadians_Govern_Themselves_10th-ed_EN.pdf
A definitive explainer of how Parliament works by a renowned expert, whom parliamentarians themselves consulted for his expertise. You won't get more detail outside an academic source.

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