

WHAT CANADA'S ROLE IN THE WORLD COULD BE

How Canada can make a difference in the world

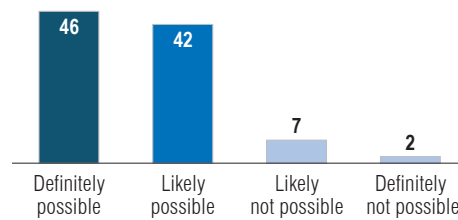
Most Canadians are confident that Canada could increase its influence in the world, particularly in addressing hunger and famine in the developing world, discouraging human rights abuses, and showing leadership on global warming and other environmental issues.

Potential for increased world influence

What potential do Canadians see for their country expanding its role and influence in world affairs? Among Canadians who see their country as having moderate to no influence on the world stage, most believe it is possible for this to change. Close to half (46%) of Canadians who believe Canada's current influence is modest to nil believe it is "definitely possible for the country to hold more sway internationally, and an additional 42 percent say this scenario is at least "somewhat possible. Just one in ten from this group see increased Canadian influence as likely not (7%) or definitely not (2%) possible.

There are no significant group differences on this question, although strong confidence in an expanded role is marginally lower among Canadians 60 plus and residents of Atlantic Canada.

Can Canada strengthen its influence on world affairs?



Q.31

*You said earlier that Canada has {Q.24 response: some/little/no influence} in world affairs today. Do you think it is definitely, likely, likely not or definitely not possible for Canada to strengthen its influence on world affairs if it chose to do so?
Subsample: All except those who said Canada has a lot of influence in world affairs today*

Areas of potential contribution

Beyond the general idea of how much more of an impact Canada could have on world affairs, many Canadians believe their country can make a difference on a number of specific areas. On each of eight major global issues presented, a majority say they believe Canada can make some “some if not “a big difference. The public is most likely to say Canada can make a difference in addressing hunger and famine in the developing world (84%), human rights abuses (83%), global warming and other environmental problems (82%) and the spread of infectious diseases such as HIV-AIDS (79%). The environment and human rights are the issues on which the greatest proportion of Canadians think their country could make a big difference (44% say their country could have a big impact on the environment agenda and 40% say the same about human rights).

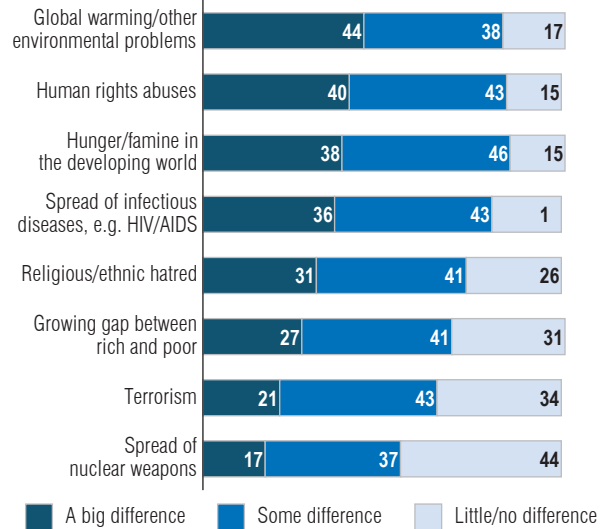
Other issues on which Canadians believe their country could make a difference include easing ethnic and religious hatred (72%), the growing gap between rich and poor (68%), terrorism (64%) and impeding the spread of nuclear weapons (54%). Nuclear weapons are the issue on which Canadians are most doubtful their country can have an impact, with 13 percent of Canadians saying they think Canada can have no effect at all in this area. On each of the other issues named, no more than eight percent of Canadians think Canada is not in a position to make at least some difference.

Young Canadians aged 15 to 24 and foreign-born Canadians differ from the Canadian average in similar ways on this question, with both groups being more likely than other Canadians to believe that Canada can make a big difference on particular issues.

Age cohort. Canadians aged 15 to 24 are significantly more likely than average to believe Canada could make a big difference in fighting hunger in the developing world (51%), tackling global warming and promoting environmental protection (53%) and discouraging human rights abuses (51%).

Place of birth. Foreign-born Canadians are more likely than the average Canadian to believe that Canada could make a big difference in diminishing ethnic and religious hatred in the world (42%).

Where Canada can make a difference in world issues



Q.33

Do you believe that Canada as a country can make a big difference, some difference, little difference or no difference in each of the following world issues ...?

Region. Quebecers tend to be in line with the national average on this question.

Canada as a role model to the world

Almost all Canadians believe their country can make a difference in the world by setting an example at home, especially in its environmental practices, but also in such areas as support for human rights and in the area of multiculturalism and immigration.

One way for a country to exert its influence on world affairs is in demonstrating to the rest of the world what it can do at home. A strong majority of Canadians (86%) believe their country can accomplish such a feat, and have a positive impact on the world by acting as a role model to other countries. Just 12 percent say they think Canada can have little influence over other countries by setting an example in the way it conducts its affairs at home.

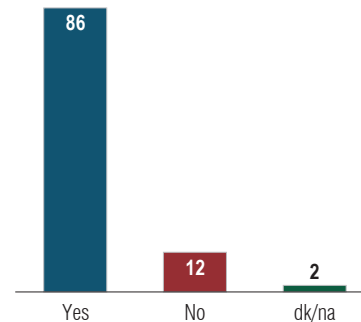
Asked to name particular policies or practices on which Canada might set an example to other countries, the environment emerges as Canadians' top choice, with 17 percent saying that Canada could be an effective role model in this area. Other areas in which Canadians think their country could set an example include support for human rights (12%), multiculturalism and inviting immigration policies (11%), peacekeeping (7%), and foreign aid (4%). Smaller proportions of Canadians say that having a strong health care system (4%), and reducing the gap between rich and poor (4%) would make Canada a strong example to other countries.

Age cohort. Young people aged 15 to 24 are slightly more likely (91%) than others to believe that setting an example at home is an effective way for Canada to influence other countries. But they are no more likely to identify specific areas in which this can be done (and in fact somewhat more likely to plead ignorance on this question).

Place of birth. Foreign-born Canadians stand out in naming Canada's immigration and multiculturalism policies (16%) as something that could set an effective example to the world.

Region. Quebecers are above average in their belief that support for human rights (20%) and peacekeeping (13%) could be areas in which Canada might be an example. Environmental leadership is most apt to be emphasized by residents of the North (27%) and Atlantic Canada (23%).

Can Canada have positive impact by serving as a role model for other countries?



Q.34

Do you think Canada can have a positive impact on world affairs by serving as a role model to other countries? By this, I mean setting an example at home for how important issues can be addressed, that might show other countries what can be done?

How can Canada best serve as a role model to other countries?

Top mentions



Q.35

On what issue, or in what way, do you think Canada could be most effective in serving as a role model to other countries?

Subsample: Those who think Canada can be an effective role model

Confidence in Canadian actors

Canadians are most confident in the ability of their country's NGOs to make a positive difference on the world stage, followed by the capabilities of individual Canadians. Opinion is more divided on the role that Canadian governments and businesses can play in contributing to world issues.

Canadians believe their country can play a major role in world affairs, but who in Canada would they most trust to carry this out? Most have at least some confidence in a range of actors, from government to NGOs, to Canadian businesses and individual Canadians, but the degree of confidence varies noticeably. Canadians are most likely to have a great deal of confidence in the foreign activities of non-governmental organizations, such as the Red Cross and Save the Children (47%). One-third (32%) have this level of trust in the actions of individual Canadians, while fewer place this confidence in Canadian businesses (20%) and the Canadian government (20%). In these latter cases, about one in four (24%) say they have little or no trust in the capabilities of government or businesses to make a positive difference in the world.

Age cohort. Youth aged 15 to 24 register above-average confidence in both NGOs and the Canadian government. Six in ten (59%) young Canadians say they have a great deal of confidence in NGOs to make a positive difference in the world, and 28 percent have a great deal of confidence in the federal government to do the same.

Place of birth. Foreign-born Canadians are about average on this question.

Region. Like youth, Quebecers stand out in registering the strongest level of confidence in NGOs (57%).

Confidence in capabilities of Canadian actors working abroad



Q.36

There are different actors in Canadian society that are currently involved in the world abroad. Please tell me if you have a great deal of confidence, some confidence, or little confidence in the capabilities of ... to make a positive difference in the world.

The role of Canadians living abroad

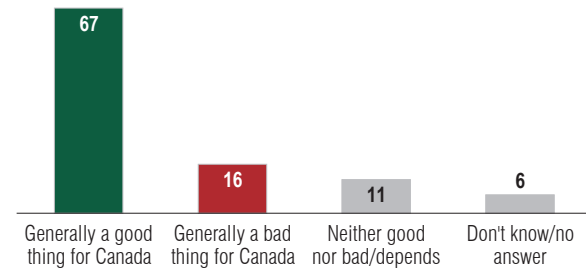
Most Canadians consider the large community of Canadians currently living abroad to be a positive, rather than negative, thing for the country. This expatriate community is viewed as good ambassadors and a means of enriching both its members and their country back home.

An estimated three million Canadian citizens currently live abroad. When asked whether they believe this is a good or a bad thing for Canada, two-thirds of Canadians (67%) respond that they see it as positive, compared with one in six (16%) who believe having so many Canadian citizens living in other countries is a problem. An equivalent proportion (17%) do not have a clear view either way.

Among those who see large numbers of Canadians living abroad as a good thing for Canada, most say this is because they believe these people are likely to be good ambassadors for the country (39%) and that they will bring home valuable experiences (22%). Other reasons for support of Canadians living in other countries include a belief that it is useful for Canadians to learn about other parts of the world (21%) and that Canadians' international mobility strengthens Canada's role in the world (15%) or spreads Canadian values (8%).

Those who express concern about Canadians living abroad say they believe that Canadian citizens should simply be required to live on Canadian soil (23%), while others give reasons that are variations on the idea of free-riding: 16 percent believe Canadians abroad take advantage of Canadian public services without paying for them, 10 percent worry that they expect the Canadian government to help them when they are in trouble, 10 percent worry that Canadians abroad do not pay taxes and another 10 percent worry about a general disloyalty to the country. [Subsamples on this question are too small to enable useful group comparisons].

Opinion about 3 million Canadians now living abroad



Q.37

There are an estimated three million Canadians currently living abroad in other countries. Do you believe having this number of citizens living in other countries is generally a good thing or a bad thing for Canada?

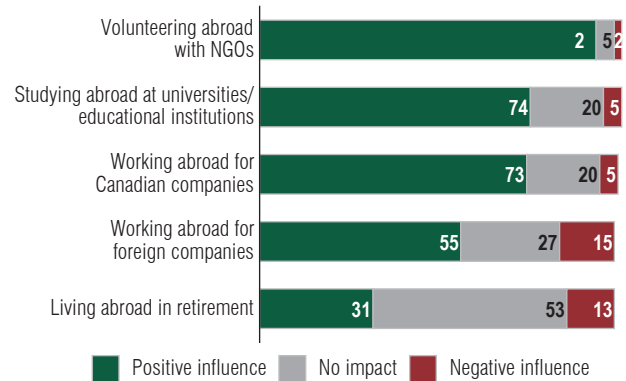
The survey also reveals that the public is largely supportive regardless of what their fellow citizens are doing abroad. Almost everyone (92%) believes that Canadians volunteering abroad with non-governmental organizations have a positive influence on Canada's role in the world. Smaller but strong majorities also feel the same way about Canadians who are living in a foreign country to study (74%) or work for Canadian companies (73%). A smaller majority (55%) are positive about the influence of Canadians working for foreign countries abroad, but only 15 percent believe this has a negative influence (with 27% saying it has no impact either way on Canada's role in the world). Finally, only three in ten (31%) believe that Canadians who move overseas to retire have a positive influence on Canada's role, but most of the remainder are neutral (53%) rather than critical (13%) of these expatriates.

Age cohort. Canadians aged 15 to 24 are somewhat more likely than others to believe that having many Canadians living abroad is a good thing for Canada, and are most positive about Canadians abroad who live abroad to study or retire. Those aged 60 plus are least apt to share these views.

Place of birth. Foreign-born Canadians are moderately less likely than average (61%) to think that Canadians living abroad has a positive effect on Canada, but are more apt to be neutral on this issue (23%) than view it as bad for the country (15%).

Region. Residents of Atlantic Canada (73%) and B.C. (73%)—the coastal regions—are most likely to see the Canadian expatriate community as a good thing for the country, with this view somewhat less evident in Ontario (63%). In no region, however, do more than 17 percent consider it bad for Canada.

Impact on Canada of citizens living abroad



Q.39

Canadians are living abroad for a number of reasons. Please tell me if you think each of the following have a positive influence on Canada's role in the world, a negative influence or really have no impact either way ... Canadians studying abroad at universities and other educational institutions ... Canadians working abroad for Canadian companies ... Canadians working abroad for foreign companies ... Canadians volunteering abroad with non-governmental organizations such as the Red Cross ... Canadians living abroad who are retired.