



Canadian
Survey

Americas **Barometer**

2025 SERIES

Support for democracy among younger Canadians



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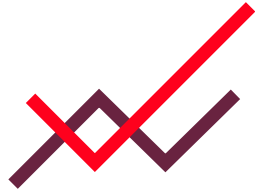
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The Environics Institute for Survey Research was established by Michael Adams in 2006 with a mandate to conduct in-depth public opinion and social research on the issues shaping Canada's future. It is through such research that Canadians can better understand themselves and their changing society.

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AmericasBarometer

These results are from the Canadian portion of the 2025–26 AmericasBarometer, a regular comparative survey of democratic values and behaviours that covers countries in North, Central and South America, as well as a significant number of countries in the Caribbean (the 2025–26 study will cover 20 countries).

The project is led by the LAPOP Lab at Vanderbilt University's Center for Global Democracy (CGD) and was conducted by the Environics Institute for Survey Research, in partnership with CGD's LAPOP Lab at Vanderbilt University and with the support of the Max Bell Foundation.

The survey was conducted online with a sample of 3,550 Canadians (aged 18 and over) between July 30 and August 7, 2025. The results are weighted by region, age, gender, education and language so as to be fully representative of the Canadian population.

This report also includes results from the companion survey conducted in the United States. This survey was conducted online with a 1,600 Americans, 18 years of age and older, between October 3 and 16, 2025. The results are weighted by region, age, gender, education and ethnicity so as to be fully representative of the American population.

[See our website for more reports from this survey](#)



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Contents

Introduction	<u>1</u>
Satisfaction and Trust	<u>3</u>
Is Democracy the Best Form of Government?	<u>5</u>
Democratic Norms	<u>10</u>
Respect for Civil Liberties	<u>14</u>
Political Disaffection	<u>15</u>
Conclusion	<u>20</u>



Introduction

Discussions of the health of democracy tend to pay particular attention to the views of younger citizens. If democracy is to endure, then the commitment to the values and behaviours that underpin it must be renewed as each new generation grows into adulthood. Or, put differently, if support for democracy is weaker among younger people, then there is a risk that it will erode over time, as older people – that is, those who are more supportive – age and pass on.

There is no shortage of concern that, in fact, support for democracy among younger generations is weakening. Some believe that schools have failed to teach students the essentials of democratic citizenship. Others contend that, as the Second World War recedes from living memory, younger generations – who have less direct experience with fascism or totalitarianism – end up with less appreciation of the consequences of so-called “democratic backsliding.” A more popular argument recently suggests that the failure of governments to address key issues affecting the lives of younger people – such as unemployment, the cost of housing or climate change – has fostered political disengagement and disillusionment, and even an openness to anti-democratic leaders promising change. Additionally, the advent of social media is widely seen as facilitating the spread of disinformation and fuelling a more aggressive style of political discourse – developments that make it harder to reach the types of compromises that allow democratic societies to function. According to one study from the UK, these and other related developments are “driving a generational slide away from social and democratic norms toward atomization and authoritarianism.”

This report addresses the question of whether, and how, support for democracy in Canada varies among age groups – and, in particular, whether this support is weaker (and increasingly so) among younger adults. It does so by reviewing results to survey questions grouped under five themes: satisfaction and trust; democracy compared to other forms of government; democratic norms; respect for civil liberties; and political disaffection.

The analysis of these results leads to three main conclusions:

- First, younger **Canadians don't stand out as being particularly dissatisfied with democracy**, less trusting of political actors or institutions, or less supportive of the political system. Nor are they less interested in politics than are middle-aged Canadians. But, in these cases, older Canadians (age 60 and older) are distinctive: they hold more positive views on these questions than either their younger or middle-aged counterparts.
- A second, more concerning, finding is that **younger Canadian adults are less emphatic in agreeing that democracy is the best form of government**. While few of those in the youngest age group go as far turning toward authoritarianism, a larger proportion says it doesn't really matter. Similarly, Canadians in this younger age group are less one-sided in their rejection of forms of politics that contravene traditional democratic norms (such as media censorship). Despite this, younger Canadians are at least as likely than those in older age groups – and sometimes more likely – to oppose security measures that would infringe on civil liberties.
- A third set of findings offers no clear pattern. On the one hand, younger Canadians are **more likely to believe that most politicians are corrupt**. On the other hand, they are no more likely to **feel that their concerns are ignored by politicians** – and, in fact, have become less likely to feel ignored than they were 15 years ago.

One additional theme that emerges from this review is the lack of any recent, significant widening in the gaps in opinions between older and younger Canadians. Where gaps do exist, they are evident throughout the period covered by this series of surveys (from 2010 to 2025); they have not emerged in response to recent developments, be it the pandemic, the post-pandemic cost of living crisis, or the proliferation of smart phones and social media platforms.

Satisfaction and Trust

The question of whether younger Canadians are less supportive of democracy as a form of government is not an easy one to answer, as the results across different measures are not consistent.

A mostly reassuring picture emerges when the focus is either *satisfaction* with democracy in Canada, or *trust* in political institutions. In both cases, opinions are somewhat more positive among *older* Canadians: those age 60 and older are somewhat more likely than average to say they are satisfied with the way democracy works in this country, and to say they have a lot of trust in the country's political institutions. But younger Canadians don't stand out as being less satisfied or trusting than those in the middle-age groups. Specifically:

- There are essentially no differences in the proportions of Canadians age 18 to 29, 30 to 44 and 45 to 59 who say they are satisfied with the way democracy works in this country.
- Canadians age 18 to 29 are actually a little more likely than those age 30 to 44 and 45 to 59 to express trust in the country's political institutions (based on an average of levels of trust in 8 different institutions).
- Younger Canadians, therefore, cannot be said to be particularly dissatisfied with Canadian democracy or to have especially low levels of trust in political institutions.

More from this series

More detailed results on questions relating to satisfaction with democracy and trust in political institutions in Canada are available in two additional reports:



Trust in Political Institutions in Canada

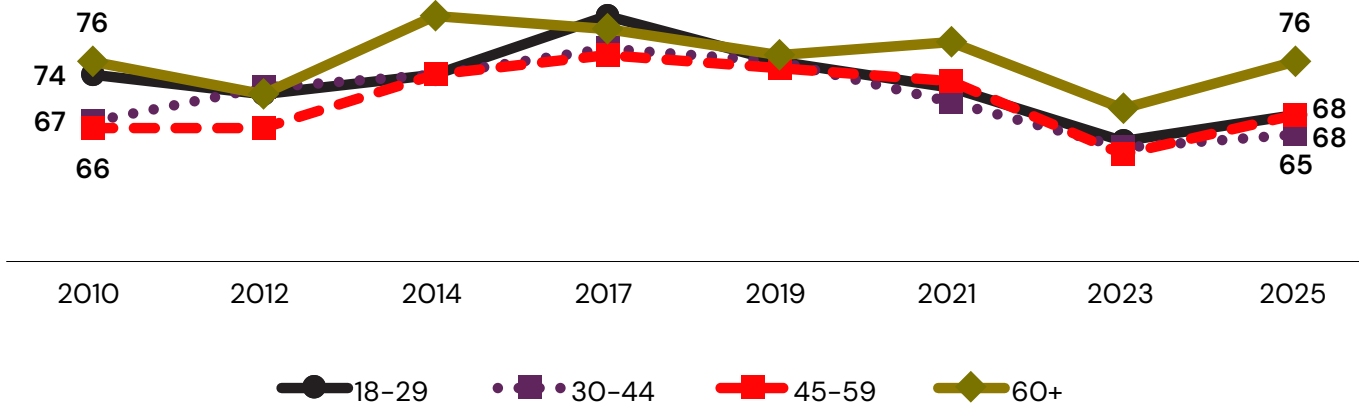


Democracy and the fairness of elections in Canada

Figure 1

Satisfaction with the way democracy works in Canada

2010 – 2025, by age group – Very satisfied or satisfied

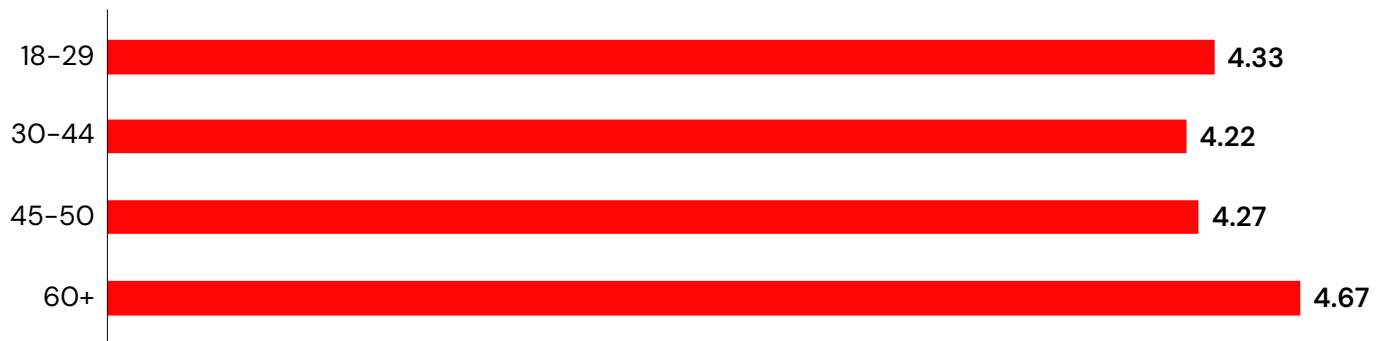


In general, would you say that you are very satisfied, satisfied, dissatisfied or very dissatisfied with the way democracy works in Canada?

Figure 2

Trust in institutions – average scores (8 institutions combined)

2025, by age group – Figures represent an average of mean scores on a scale of 1 (lowest trust) to 7 (highest trust) across 8 institutions*



**The eight institutions are: Parliament, the RCMP, the Prime Minister of Canada, the Supreme Court, your municipal government, the mass media, elections and political parties.*

Is Democracy the Best Form of Government?

A different pattern emerges, however, on questions about whether democracy is the best form of government:

- Younger Canadians are much less likely than older Canadians to strongly agree that “democracy may have problems, but it is better than any other form of government.” The figures are 41 percent for those age 18 to 29, compared to 72 percent for those age 60 and older.
- When presented with three statements about democratic government, younger Canadians (65%) are less likely than their older counterparts (84%) to favour the one most supportive of democracy, namely that “democracy is preferable to any other form of government.”

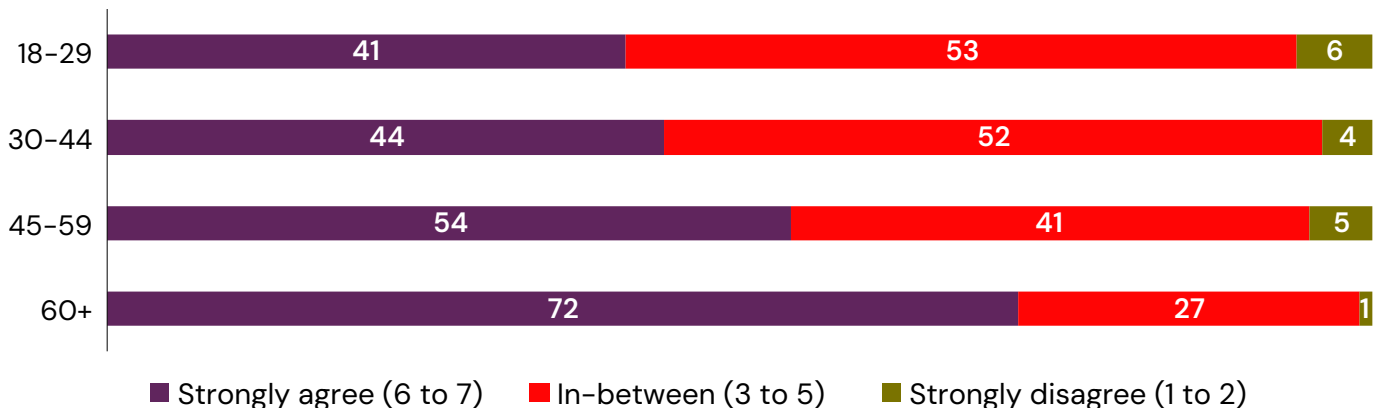
However, the results suggest that, while people in the youngest age group are less emphatic in their support for democracy, they do not go as far as opposing democracy outright.

In the first case, while younger Canadians are less likely to *strongly agree* that democracy is better than any other form of government, they are not very likely to *strongly disagree*: only six percent of those age 18 to 29 take a strongly negative position. Naturally, this means that younger people are more likely to take an in-between position: 53 percent of those age 18 to 29 find themselves at or on either side of the midpoint between strong agreement and strong disagreement, compared to 27 percent of those age 60 and older.

Figure 3

Is democracy better than any other form of government?

2025, by age group – Using a scale where 1 means “strongly disagree” and 7 means “strongly agree.”



Now we will use a scale where 1 means “strongly disagree” and 7 means “strongly agree.” A number in between 1 and 7 represents an intermediate score. You will now see some statements. For each one, use the 1-7 scale to tell us to what extent you disagree or agree with the statement. How much do you agree or disagree with that: Democracy may have problems, but it is better than any other form of government.

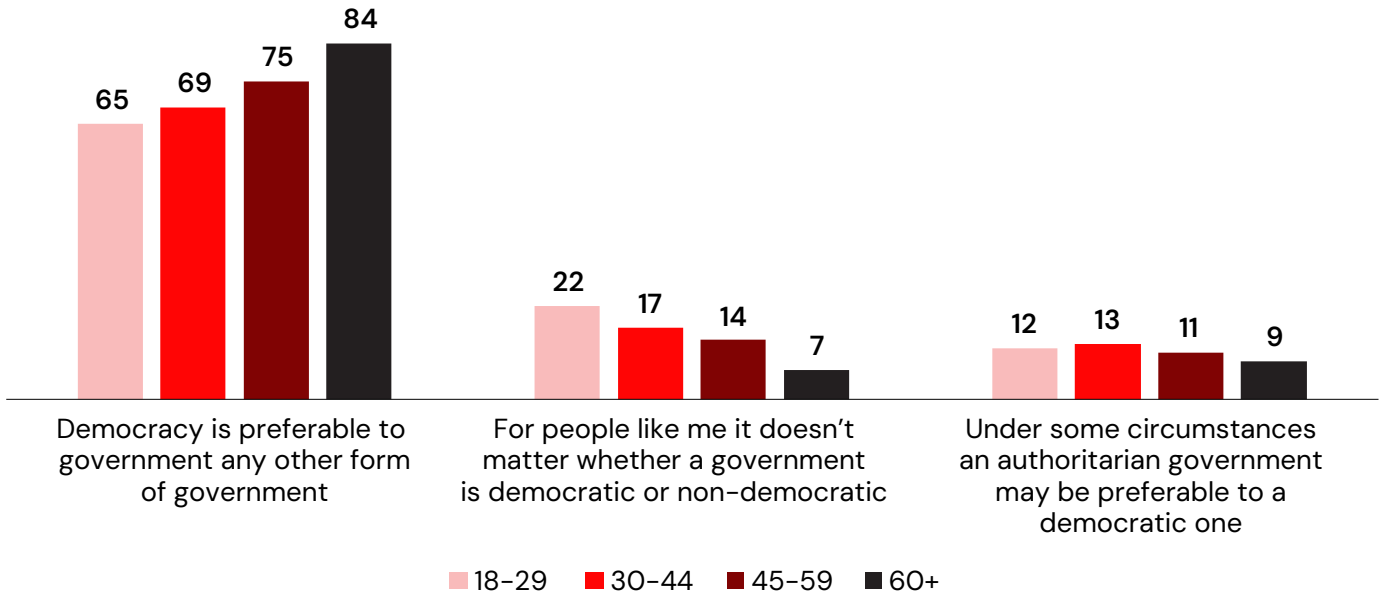
In the second case, while younger Canadians are less likely to prefer the statement most supportive of democracy, they are not much more supportive of authoritarianism: while 12 percent of those 18 to 29 prefer the idea that “under some circumstances an authoritarian government may be preferable to a democratic one,” this is not much more than the nine percent of those age 60 and older who do so. In other words, about one in ten Canadians favour authoritarian government (at least, under some circumstances), but this does not vary significantly across age groups.

What does vary more significantly is the proportion that favours the idea that it doesn’t really matter: 22 percent of younger Canadians believe that “for people like me it doesn’t matter whether a government is democratic or non-democratic.” This compares to only seven percent of their older counterparts.

Figure 4

Three statements about democracy

2025, by age group



Which of the following statements do you agree with the most?

It is also important to note that these differences in opinion across age groups are not new; rather, they are evident, more or less to the same extent, in each of the eight surveys in this series conducted since 2010. It is not the case, in other words, that the gap in opinions among age groups has recently widened because support for democracy among younger Canadians has softened. There is, in fact, no consistent downward trend in opinion among younger Canadians over the past 10 to 15 years; and the gaps in opinion between young and old are no wider today at the beginning of the 2010s.



Spotlight: Economic outlook

There is concern that young people’s growing pessimism about economic opportunity could undermine their support for democracy as a form of government. But, while younger Canadians have grown more pessimistic about the economy and their own financial situation in the years following the pandemic, it is important to note that this trend applies to all age groups and not to younger people exclusively.

Since 2019, the proportion of those between the ages 18 and 29 who describe the country’s economic situation as bad or very bad more than doubled, from 16 to 35 percent. But there has been a similar change among those age 30 to 44 (increasing from 15% to 38%) and age 45 to 59 (increasing from 20% to 41%). Canadians in the oldest age group (age 60 and older) are a bit more positive, with only 33 percent describing the economic situation as bad or very bad – though this is up from 17 percent in 2019.

The pattern is similar when it comes to people’s description of their household’s income. The proportion describing their incomes as “not enough” – either because they feel stretched or are having a hard time – hit a low point during the pandemic (in 2021), but increased as that emergency receded. But the increase since 2021 among those age 18 to 29 (from 23% to 33%) was matched by a slightly larger increase among those age 30 to 44 (from 28% to 41%). The proportion also increased among those age 45 to 59 (from 33% to 40%), but less so among those age 60 and older (from 21% to 24%).

On one additional measure, younger Canadians stand out more. In 2025, Canadians age 18 to 29 (27%) are more likely than those in older age groups to report running out of food in the past three months because of a lack of money or other resources. However, the proportion of those age 30 to 44 who have experienced this form of food insecurity is equally as high (25%). It is lower among those age 45 to 59 (17%) and those age 60 and older (7%). Since 2021, the proportion reporting running out of food has edged up for all age groups, but has shifted the most for those age 30 to 44 (up 6 percentage points, from 19% to 25%).



Younger Canadians are more likely than those in older age groups to report running out of food in the past three months because of a lack of money or other resources.

27%

 Age 18 – 29

7%

 Age 60+

Democratic Norms

This less emphatic support for democracy as a form of government among younger Canadian adults is accompanied by more openness to forms of politics that stretch or contravene traditional democratic norms, such as the idea that no one – even the leader of an elected government – should be above the law.

For instance, an average of 23 percent of Canadians agree that it is justifiable for politicians to act outside the law in order to deliver on their promises. This proportion, however, is higher than average among those in the two younger age groups (38% among those age 18 to 29 and 32% among those age 30 to 44), but lower than average among those in the two older age groups (19% for those age 45 to 59 and 11% among those age 60 and older).

Similarly, while only a minority within each age group agrees with a number of additional statements outlining ways in which governments or leaders might ignore checks and balances on their power, the proportion agreeing is highest among those in the youngest age group, and declines as age increases. Specifically, younger adults in Canada are more likely than their older counterparts to agree that:

- Governments should be able to censor media outlets that are too critical of them.
- Prime ministers should be able to ignore judges' decisions if they consider them unfair.
- If Parliament makes the work of a prime minister difficult, Parliament should be ignored by the prime minister.

Figure 5

Disagreement that democratic leaders should ignore checks on their power

2025, by age group – Figures represent an average of mean scores on a scale of 1 (strongest agreement) to 5 (strongest disagreement) across 3 statements*



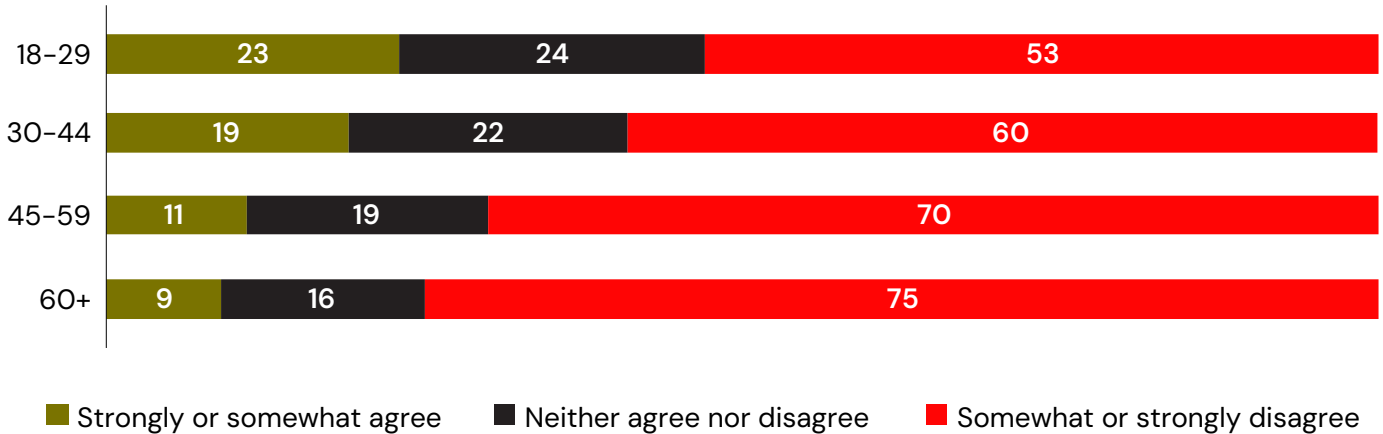
**The statements are: Governments should be able to censor media outlets that are too critical of them; Prime ministers should be able to ignore judges' decisions if they consider them unfair; If Parliament makes the work of a prime minister difficult, Parliament should be ignored by the prime minister.*

To take the first statement, 23 percent of 18- to 29-year-olds agree, either strongly or somewhat, that governments should be able to censor media outlets that are too critical of them, compared to only nine percent of those age 60 and older. Similarly, 23 percent of 18- to 29-year-olds agree that prime ministers should be able to ignore judges' decisions if they consider them unfair, compared to only eight percent of those age 60 and older.

Figure 6

Should government be able to censor media outlets that are too critical?

2025, by age group



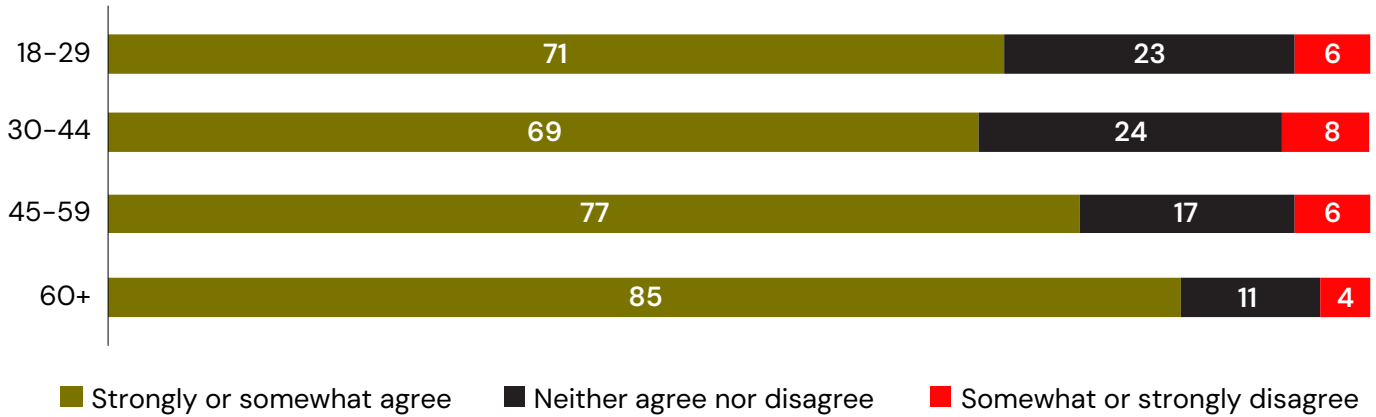
Governments should be able to censor media outlets that are too critical of them. To what extent do you agree or disagree with this statement?

Perhaps the most important of democratic norms, however, is the one related to election results: that everyone accepts the outcome, regardless of who wins or loses. In this case as well, opinions among younger Canadians are somewhat less one-sided: while a majority of those age 18 to 29 agree (71%) that “election results should be respected regardless of which candidate or party wins,” this level of agreement is lower than it is among those age 60 and older (85%). In this case, two by now familiar patterns appear. First, there is no real difference in opinion between those in the two youngest age groups (18 to 29 and 30 to 44) – suggesting that a focus on “youth” is somewhat misplaced. Second, while younger Canadians are less likely than their older counterpart to agree, they are not significantly more likely to disagree. Rather, they are twice as likely as those age 60 and older to be noncommittal – that is, to neither agree nor disagree that election results should be respected.

Figure 7

Should election results be respected regardless of who wins?

2025, by age group




Election results should be respected regardless of which candidate or party wins. To what extent do you agree or disagree with this statement?




Canadians who agree that “election results should be respected regardless of which candidate or party wins”:

71%

 18-29 yrs.

85%

 60+ yrs.

Respect for Civil Liberties

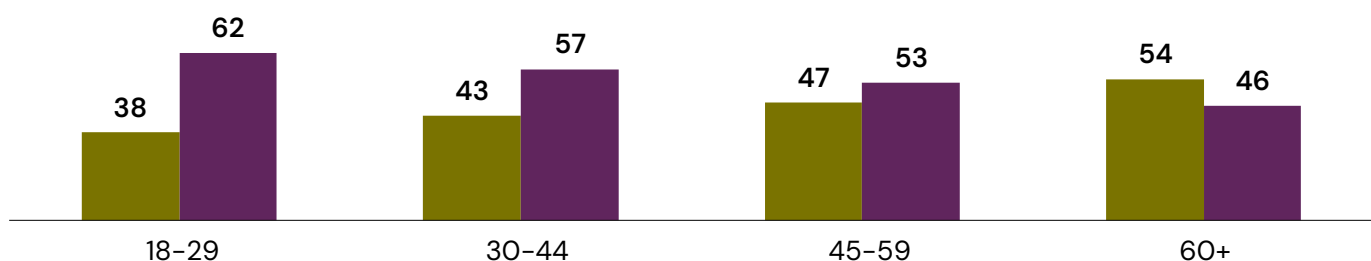
Once again, however, the findings of the survey are not always consistent, making it difficult to reach general conclusions. While younger Canadians seem less concerned about the need for governments to operate within the rules, this does not apply to actions that infringe on civil rights.

For instance, when asked to choose between giving the police more power to detect and arrest criminals (even if that means that the civil rights of some Canadian citizens might not be respected), and making sure the police respect everyone's civil rights (even if that means that some criminals might escape detection or arrest), a majority of those age 18 to 29 (62%) favour respecting civil rights. This figure falls to 46 percent among those age 60 and older.

Figure 8

Police powers and civil rights

2025, by age group – Which of the following is more important?



- Giving the police more power to detect and arrest criminals, even if that means that the civil rights of some Canadian citizens might not be respected
- Making sure the police respect the civil rights of Canadian citizens, even if that means that some criminals might escape detection or arrest

The survey also included a question about whether the federal government should be allowed to suspend civil rights in the event that it declares a national emergency (with the agreement of a majority in Parliament). Canadians are divided on this question, with 49 percent saying it is all right to suspend civil liberties in an emergency, and 51 percent disagreeing. But, in this case, there are no significant differences across age groups. Those age 18 to 29, and those age 60 and older, are both divided more or less 50-50.

Political Disaffection

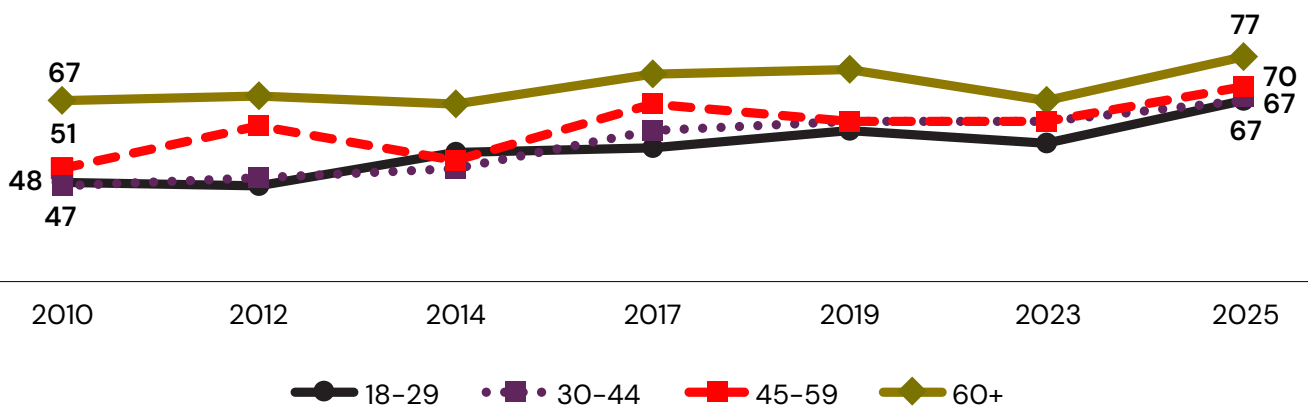
There are additional survey questions that touch on Canadians' opinions of politics and the political system more generally, including the extent of their interest in politics, and their sense that political leaders are interested in them.

Most younger Canadians express some interest in politics: a majority (67%) of 18- to 29-year-olds say they have a lot or some interest, compared to 33 percent with little or no interest. However, interest is higher (77%) among those age 60 and older. The proportion with a *lot* of interest in politics rises from 18 percent among those age 18 to 29, to 32 percent among those age 60 and older. Once again, however, younger Canadians are not necessarily an outlier: there is little difference in the extent of interest expressed by those who are age 18 to 29, 30 to 44 and 45 to 59. It is those who are in the oldest age group (age 60 and older) who stand out as being more interested than the others.

Figure 9

Interest in politics

2010 - 2025, by age group - A lot or some interest



How much interest do you have in politics?

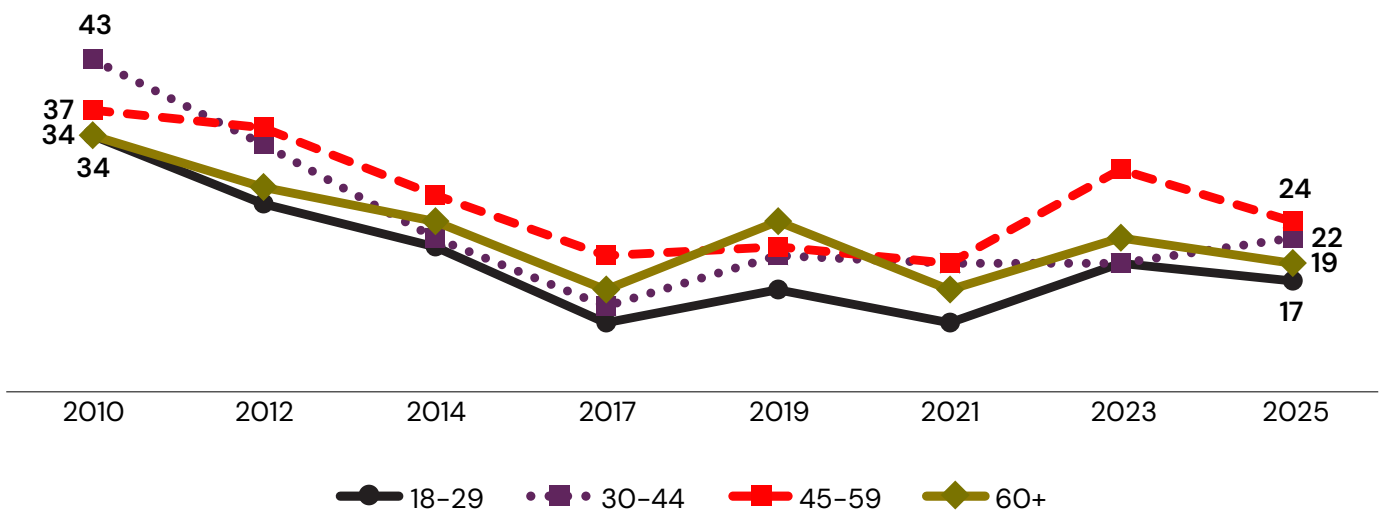
It is also the case that younger Canadians' interest in politics has been growing over time. Compared to 2010, when this series of surveys began, the proportion of those age 18 to 29 who have a lot or some interest in politics has increased by 20 percentage points (from 47% to 67%). There have been similar increases among those age 30 to 44 and 45 to 59, and a smaller 10-point increase among those age 60 and older.

As Canadians have become more interested in politics, they have also become less likely to feel ignored by their governments – a trend that applies across all age groups, including young adults. Currently, one in five Canadians (21%) strongly disagree with the notion that “those who govern this country are interested in what people like you think.” This proportion is slightly higher than average among those age 45 to 59 (24%), and is actually lowest among those age 18 to 29 (17%) (although these differences are too small to be significant).

Figure 10

Those who govern this country are interested in what people like you think

2010 – 2025, by age group – Strongly disagree (1 or 2 on a 7-point scale)



How much do you agree or disagree with that: Those who govern this country are interested in what people like you think. How much do you agree or disagree with this statement? (Using a scale where 1 means “strongly disagree” and 7 means “strongly agree.”)

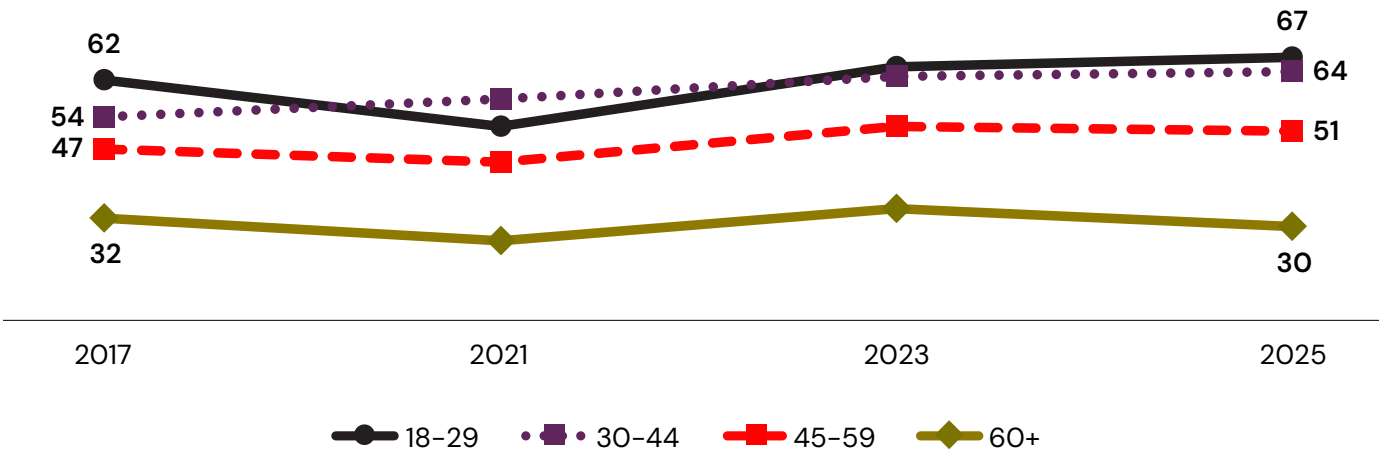
Again, the trend over time is notable. The proportion of young adults (age 18 to 29) that strongly disagrees that governments are interested in what people like them think is currently only half as large as it was when this series of surveys first began in 2010.

Another measure, however, points in the other direction, namely toward greater disaffection with politics among young adults. Canadians age 18 to 29 (67%) are more than twice as likely as those age 60 and older (30%) to say that half or more of politicians in Canada are involved in corruption. Those age 30 to 44 (64%) are just as likely as their younger counterparts to hold this view. Once again, this age difference is not completely new, as younger Canadians have been much more likely than their older counterparts to say that half or more of politicians are corrupt in each of the four surveys in which this question was included since 2017.

Figure 11

Politicians in Canada involved in corruption

2017 - 2025, by age group



How many politicians in Canada do you believe are involved in corruption?

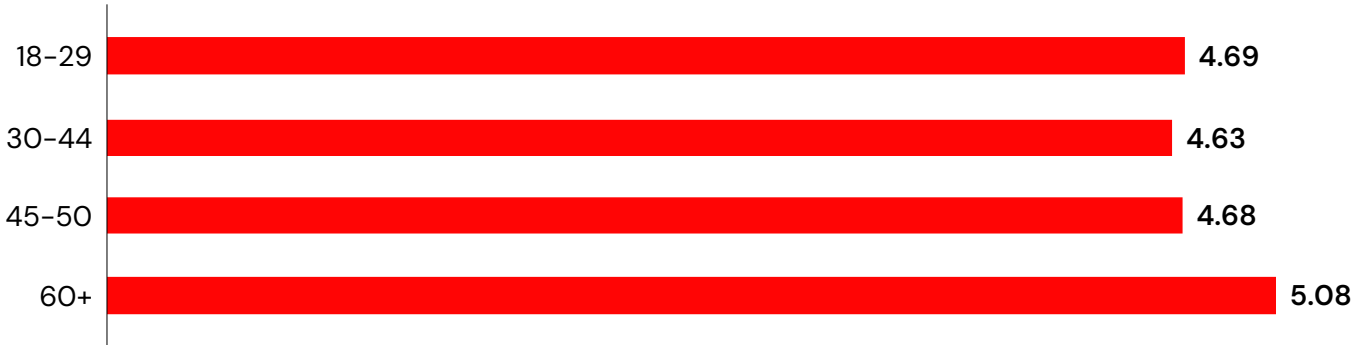
This finding suggests a much lower level of respect for politics and politicians among younger adults in Canada, which stands in contradiction to the more encouraging findings related to satisfaction with the way democracy works, or the sense that governments are interested in what you think.

In this context, it is worth noting one final series of findings about support for the political system. Most young adults in Canada express at least some degree of respect for the country’s political institutions, pride in living under the Canadian political system, and support for the political system of Canada. No more than one in ten strongly disagrees (meaning they *do not* have respect for, feel proud of or support the political system). And notably, the extent of this support among those 18 to 29 is just as high as it is among those age 30 to 44 or 45 to 59. As is the case with satisfaction with democracy in Canada, and with trust in the country’s political institutions, it is not young people who stand out, but rather those age 60 and older, whose opinions are even more positive.

Figure 12

Support for political institutions – average scores (3 questions combined)

2025, by age group – Figures represent an average of mean scores on a scale of 1 (lowest trust) to 7 (highest trust) across 3 questions*



**The three questions are: To what extent do you respect the political institutions of Canada? / feel proud of living under the political system of Canada? / think that one should support the political system of Canada?*



Spotlight: Comparing Canada and the United States

Several of the patterns seen in Canada are evident in the United States as well.

For instance, there is little difference in the proportion of younger and older Americans who are satisfied with the way democracy works in their country, or in the average levels of trust younger and older Americans hold in a range of political institutions such as the President and Congress.

But, as in Canada, there is a considerable difference in the proportions of younger and older Americans who strongly agree that “democracy may have its problems, but it is better than any other form of government.” There is a 35 percentage–point difference in agreement between those age 18 to 29 and those age 60 and older in the United States (33%, compared to 68%); in Canada, the difference is 31 points (41%, compared to 72%).

Similarly, as in Canada, older Americans are more adamantly opposed than their younger counterparts to government ignoring the standard checks and balances within the political system – such as presidents ignoring judges’ decisions, or governments censoring the media.

On questions related to overall support for the political system, however, there is less of a difference in opinion between age groups in the United States than there is in Canada; however, this is because support in the U.S. is more muted among older citizens. For instance, in the U.S., 31 percent of 18- to 29-year-olds express strong support for their country’s political system, compared to 44 percent of those age 60 and older – a difference of 13 points. In Canada, a similar proportion of younger adults (30%) express strong support, but a greater proportion of older adults do (56%), resulting in a difference of 26 points.

Conclusion

For those concerned about the extent to which younger Canadians support democracy, several findings in this report offer reassurance. Younger adults in Canada do not stand out as being particularly dissatisfied with democracy, or less trusting of political institutions; moreover, their levels of satisfaction and trust have not been steadily declining over time. And, over the past 15 years, they have actually become more interested in politics, and less likely to feel that their views are ignored by politicians.

Other results, however, are more worrying. While there are no signs of growing support for authoritarianism as such, younger Canadians remain more likely than their older counterparts to say that it doesn't matter to them whether their government is democratic (although this remains the views of only a minority of youth). Younger adults are also less one-sidedly opposed to governments disregarding the views of legislatures or the courts, or seeking to censor the media.

What is more difficult to answer is the extent to which this represents a new development. Certainly, the gaps in opinion between younger and older Canadians on these questions did not open up in the past few years, as they have been evident since this series of surveys began over 15 years ago. They cannot, therefore, be easily tied to recent experiences such as the pandemic, the cost of living crisis that followed it, or the increasingly widespread use of social media. But whether these gaps have arisen within the past 20 years, or have characterized Canadian democracy for several decades or several generations, is a question that cannot be answered by the survey results examined in this report.



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