

AmericasBarometer

*The public speaks on democracy
and governance in the Americas*

Canada 2017 

FINAL REPORT

June 2017



The AmericasBarometer (www.AmericasBarometer.org) is a multi-country public opinion survey on democratic values and behaviours in the Americas, conducted every two to three years by a consortium of academic and think tank partners in the hemisphere.

The research is coordinated by Vanderbilt University's Latin American Public Opinion Project (LAPOP), which has been supporting surveys on governance for many years, beginning in Costa Rica in the 1970. This research has grown over time and now encompasses North America, Latin America and the Caribbean (covering 29 countries representing 99% percent of the hemisphere's population). It is the only comprehensive survey project of its kind in the Western Hemisphere.

The AmericasBarometer is a unique research project that contributes to our understanding of the changes in how citizens across the hemisphere view their country on key issues of democracy and governance. This research represents a unique body of public opinion data that is used extensively by academic researchers, governments, and organizations such as the World Bank, the Organization of American States, the Inter-American Development Bank, and the United Nations Development Programme

AmericasBarometer and Canada



The focus of the AmericasBarometer has been on Latin America, in tune with the changing dynamics of governance and democracy in this continent over the past decade. The inclusion of Canada in this international research project is significant given the country's long standing adherence to a democratic system, its tradition of good governance, and because of its proximity as an alternative to the US model.

The inclusion of Canada in this year's AmericasBarometer survey is especially timely because of recent trends both in the western hemisphere and elsewhere in the world, notably the election of Donald Trump as US President, the rise of anti-government sentiments, nationalism and populism in parts of Europe, and major economic and political challenges facing such countries as Venezuela and Brazil. Many are now wondering if Canada may soon be following a similar path, and this research helps to answer the question.

Canada was first included in AmericasBarometer surveys in 2008 and 2010. In 2012, the Environics Institute for Survey Research joined the research consortium as the Canadian partner, and has conducted the Canadian research in 2012, 2014 and now in 2017.

2017 AmericasBarometer survey

The 2017 AmericasBarometer survey was conducted in 29 countries, with a total sample of approximately 40,000 individuals (fieldwork in some countries was completed in 2016). The questionnaire includes a core set of questions and was administered in each country by the domestic research partner. In all countries except Canada and the USA, the survey was administered in-person in people's homes.

The Canadian survey focused on the following themes:

- Attitudes about democracy
- Confidence in the political system and institutions of government
- Confidence in the justice system and the protection of human rights
- Tolerance for political dissent
- Confidence in the national economy and household financial circumstances

The Canadian survey was conducted online in English and French, with a representative sample of 1,511 Canadians (aged 18 and over) between March 24 and April 4, 2017. The sample was weighted by region, age and gender to match the country's population.

The AmericasBarometer results from the other 28 countries are not yet available, and will be published in a separate report in Fall 2017.

2017 AmericasBarometer – Canada survey

Methodological Note

The methodology used for this survey is the same used for the Canadian AmericasBarometer surveys in 2010, 2012 and 2014, while the 2006 and 2008 Canadian surveys were conducted by telephone. This shift from telephone to online survey methods limits the precision of comparability of results.

The research literature has demonstrated that the way in which respondents complete surveys (referred to as “survey mode”) can influence how they answer questions. Interview-based surveys (e.g., telephone, in-person) have a tendency to elicit more socially-desirable responses, in comparison to surveys involving self-administration (paper and pencil questionnaires, online surveys) since the latter does not involve direct contact with another individual. This means that comparisons between 2006 – 2008 and 2010 – 2017 results from the Canadian AmericasBarometer surveys should be treated with caution, since some of the differences may be due to survey mode rather than changes in opinions.

Acknowledgements

The project was made possible with generous support from the Latin American Public Opinion Project (LAPOP) at Vanderbilt University. A special thanks goes to Nat Stone (Professor, Marketing and Business Intelligence Research Program at Algonquin College) for his ongoing support and encouragement.



Executive Summary

Overall trends

Canadians' level of confidence in their country's democracy, political system and central institutions has changed very little over the past three years, and continues a stable trend dating back to 2010. On most measures, public opinion has either not changed or improved modestly since 2014.

As before, Canadians are generally positive about their system of government and democracy, with a more mixed assessment of the central institutions of government. The public continues express the most trust in the Canadian Armed Forces, RCMP and Supreme Court, and much less so when it comes to the political system (e.g., Parliament, political parties) and the mass media.

The change in government in Ottawa since 2014 (and its change in “tone”) appears to have had a positive effect in terms of improving public confidence in the Prime Minister and in how elections are run. Opinions between Canadians on the left and those on the right of the political spectrum are now less polarized than three years ago.

There is no clear evidence of growth in anti-government or populist sentiment among Canadians over the past three years. However, the public's commitment to democracy as the only form of government has weakened a bit over this period.

Overall trends (continued)

Canadians' faith in the country's democracy is further reflected in a sustained belief in the importance of free speech and tolerance of political dissent. Public confidence in the protection of human rights, including the right to a fair trial, has held steady for most of the past decade.

The stable or improving results may in part reflect improved confidence in both the national economy and ones' own household financial circumstances, in both cases now somewhat stronger than in 2014.

Income inequality remains an issue on the radar for most Canadians, but it is not manifested in a growing divide in confidence about economic conditions or the country's democracy and central institutions. Canadians at the lower end of the socio-economic ladder mirror the national average in terms of showing stable or improving opinions about the topics covered on this survey. There is no evidence of a growing segment of the population feeling economically or politically alienated.

Group trends

Within these stable national trends, there have been some notable shifts within specific parts of the population since 2014:

Age/generation. Younger Canadians (aged 18 to 29) have become more positive in their views about democracy and the country's institutions. In most cases this either erases or reverses a generation gap from previous years (when older Canadians were the most confident). At the same time, this young cohort is the least committed to democracy as the best or only form of government.

Political orientation. The most dramatic shift is a significant boost in confidence among Canadians (13% of the population) who identify as being on the political left, with this change likely in response to the new government in Ottawa. Opinions among those on the political right (22%) tend not to be quite as positive, but in most cases have held steady or improved modestly over this time. Both of these groups are now more confident than the majority (65%) who place themselves in the middle of the political spectrum.

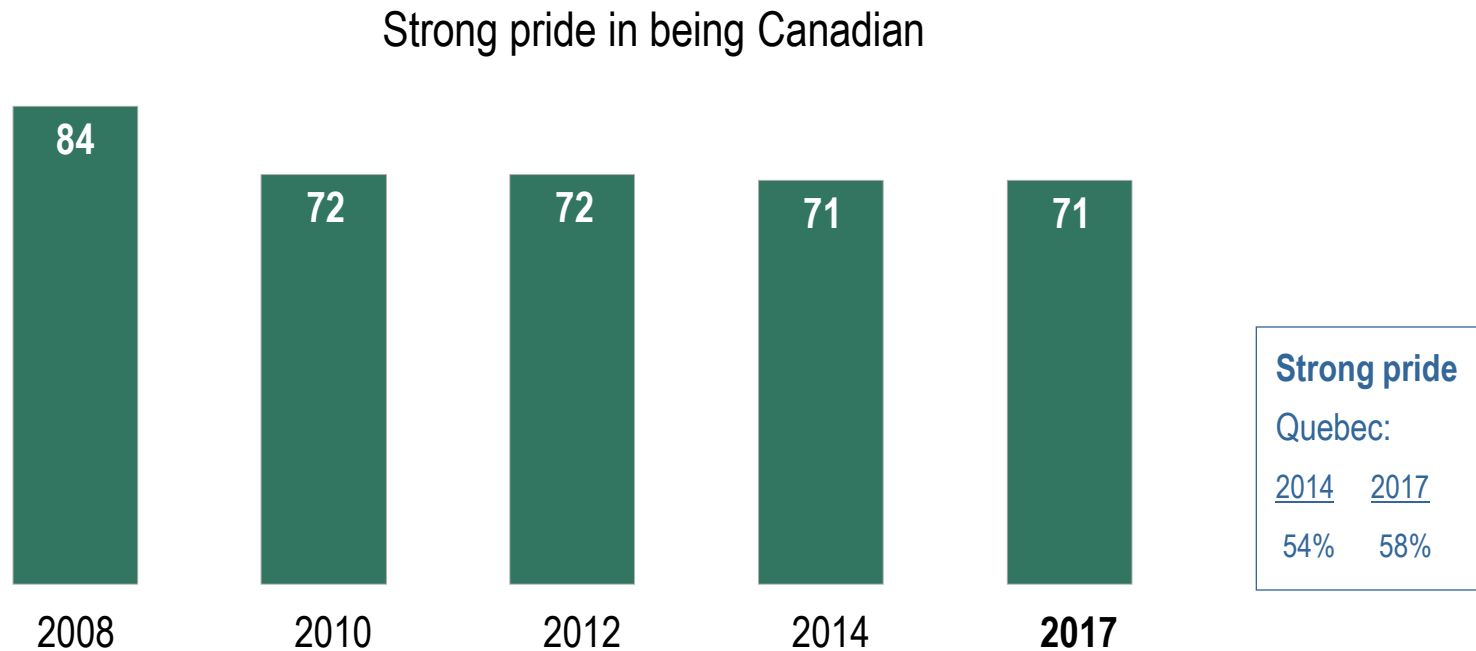
Region. The most notable changes are in western Canada, with improving opinions on some (but not all) measures in Alberta and British Columbia, and the opposite trend in Manitoba and Saskatchewan (where confidence in the national economy has declined sharply since 2014). Quebecers continue to have less confidence than other Canadians in the country's democratic system.



Confidence in Canada's political system and institutions

Most Canadians continue to express strong pride in their country; pride remains lower in Quebec but shows marginal growth since 2014

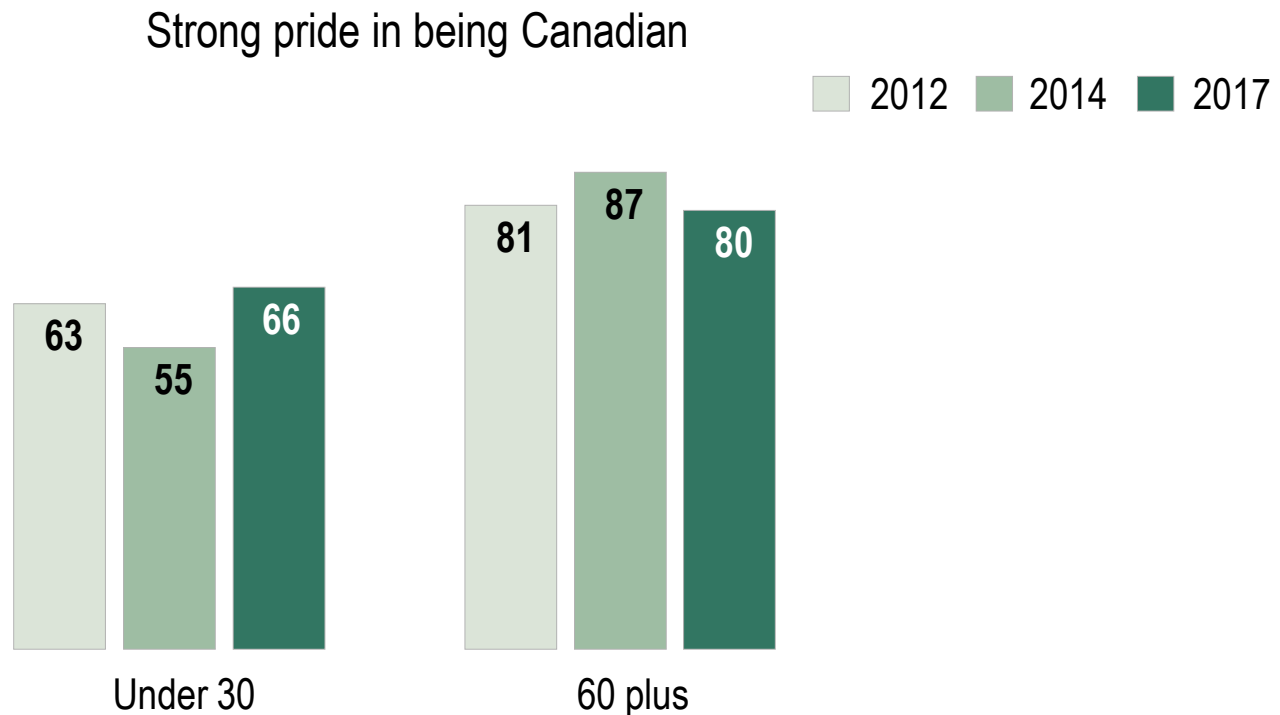
2008 - 2017



Q.30o. To what extent are you proud of being a Canadian? (on a 7 point scale (1=not at all, 7=a lot). Results show percentage giving “6” or “7.”

Since 2014, pride in being Canadian has strengthened among younger Canadians while declining among those 60 plus, closing the generation gap

2012 - 2017 By age cohort

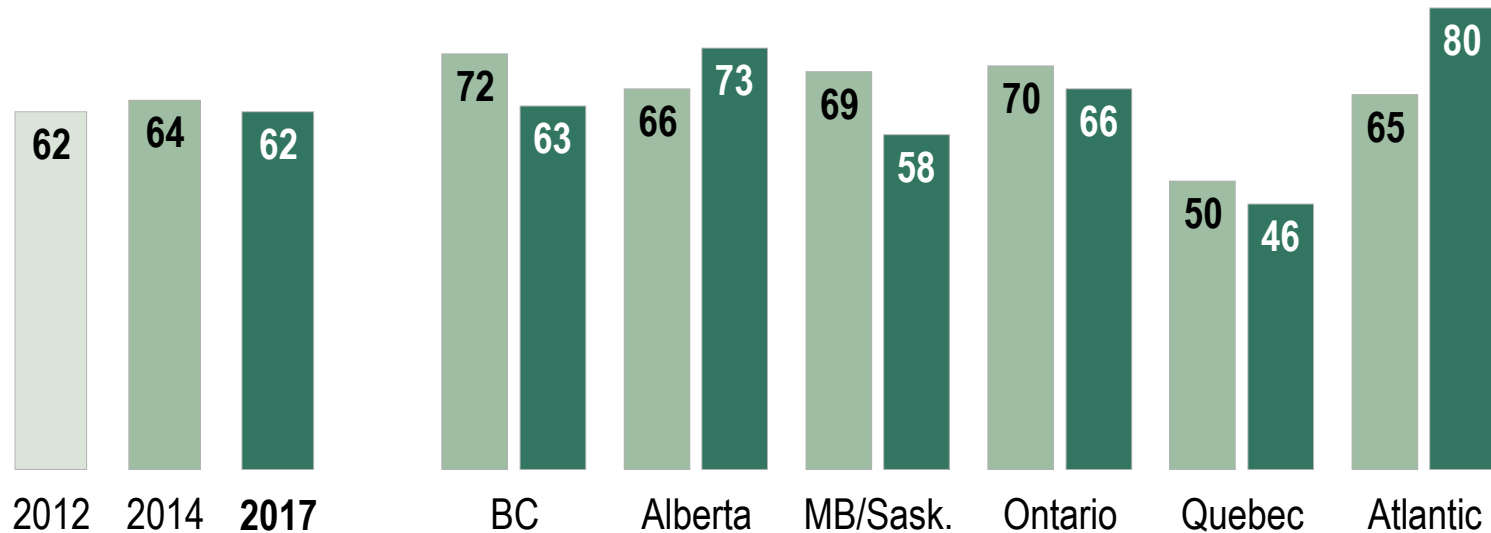


Q.30o. To what extent are you proud of being a Canadian? (on a 7 point scale (1=not at all, 7=a lot). Results show percentage giving “6” or “7.”

A majority continue to believe Canadians share common values, but opinions have shifted differentially across regions; Quebecers remain least convinced

2012 - 2017 By region

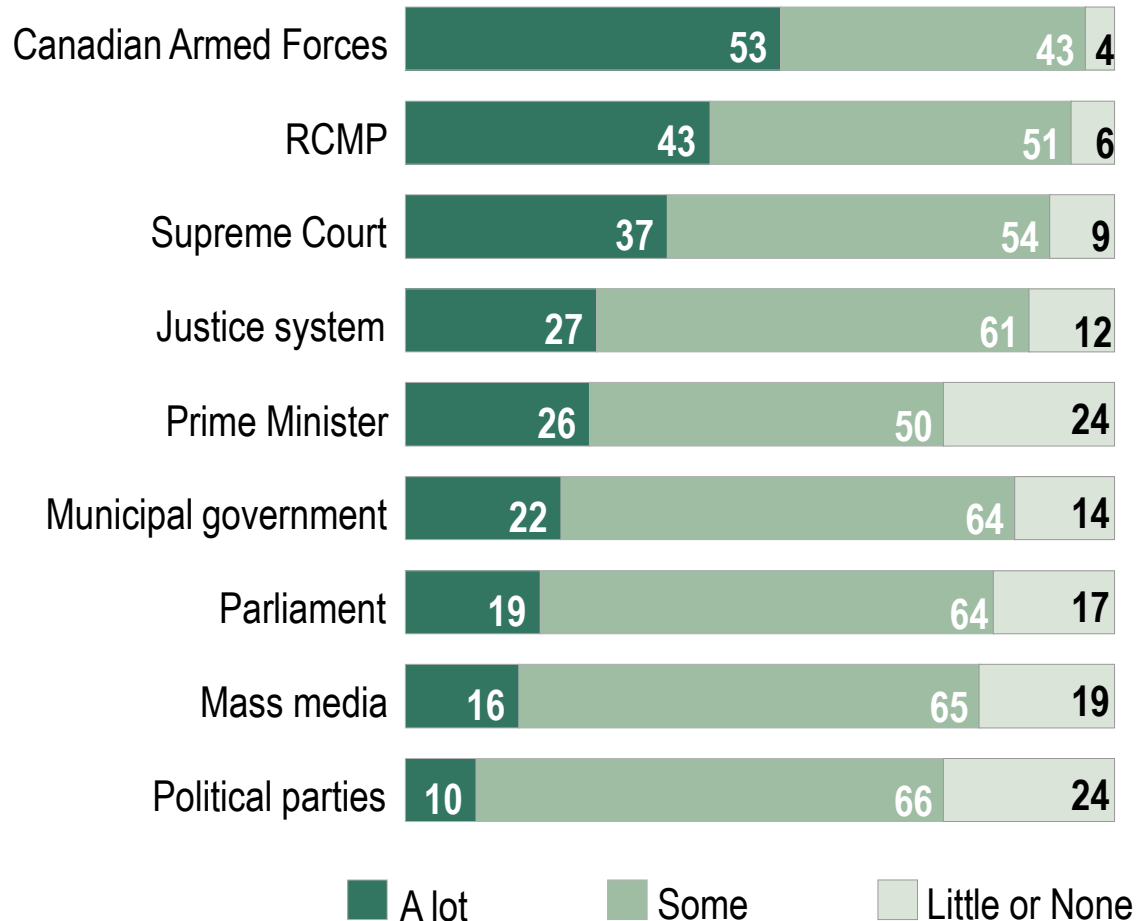
*Agree: Despite differences, Canadians have many things that unite us**



Q. 34e. * 6 or 7 on a 7-point scale (1=not at all, 7=a lot)

There continues to be wide variation in the level of public trust across a range of the country's central institutions of government and politics

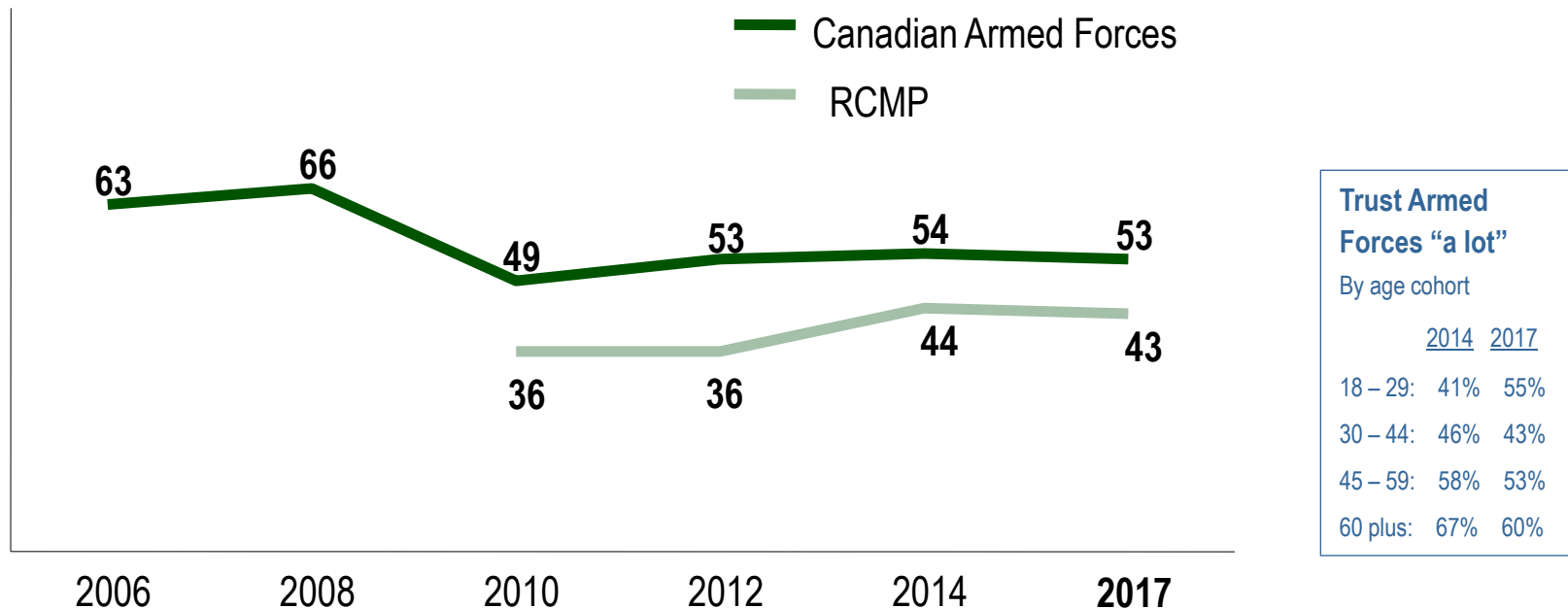
2017



*Q. 30 g – n, p, q. To what extent do you trust . . . ? (on a 7 point scale (1=not at all, 7=a lot). Results show percentage giving “6” or “7.”

Canadians continue to place the strongest trust in the Canadian Armed Forces and the RCMP, with little change over the past seven years

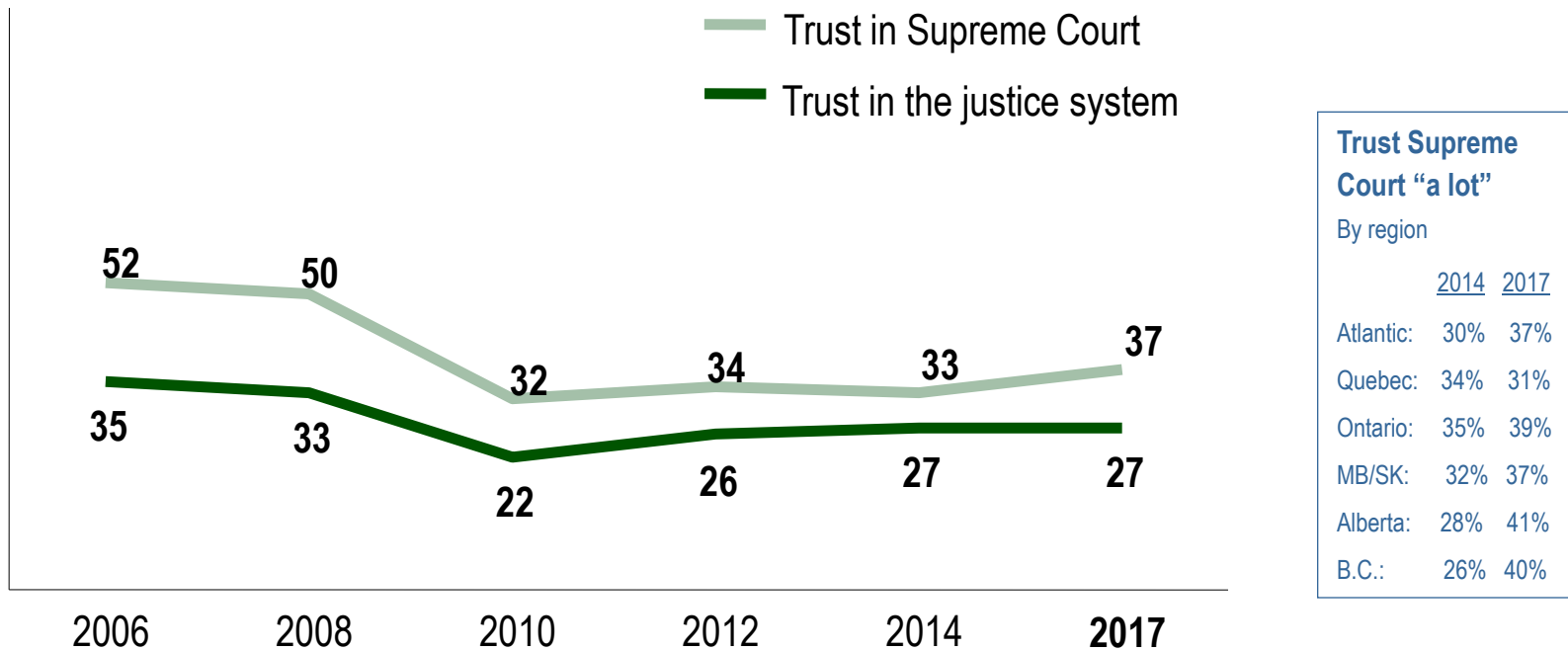
2006 - 2017



Q.30h.j. To what extent do you trust . . . ? (on a 7 point scale (1=not at all, 7=a lot). Results show percentage giving "6" or "7."

Public trust in the justice system and Supreme Court also are also holding steady, with opinions of the Supreme Court improving since 2014

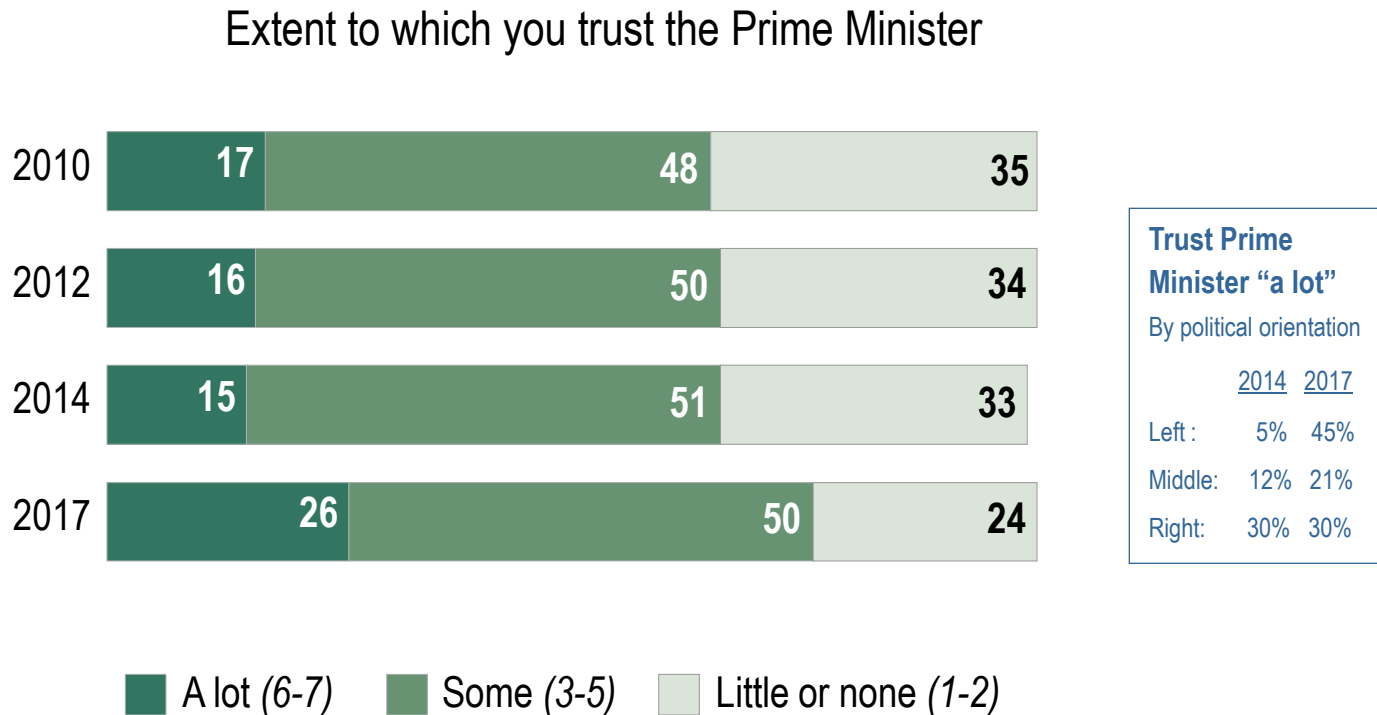
2006 - 2017



Q.g.m. To what extent do you trust . . . ? (on a 7 point scale (1=not at all, 7=a lot). Results show percentage giving "6" or "7."

Canadians' level of trust in the Prime Minister has improved noticeably since 2014, reflecting the change in leader and government . . .

2010 - 2017

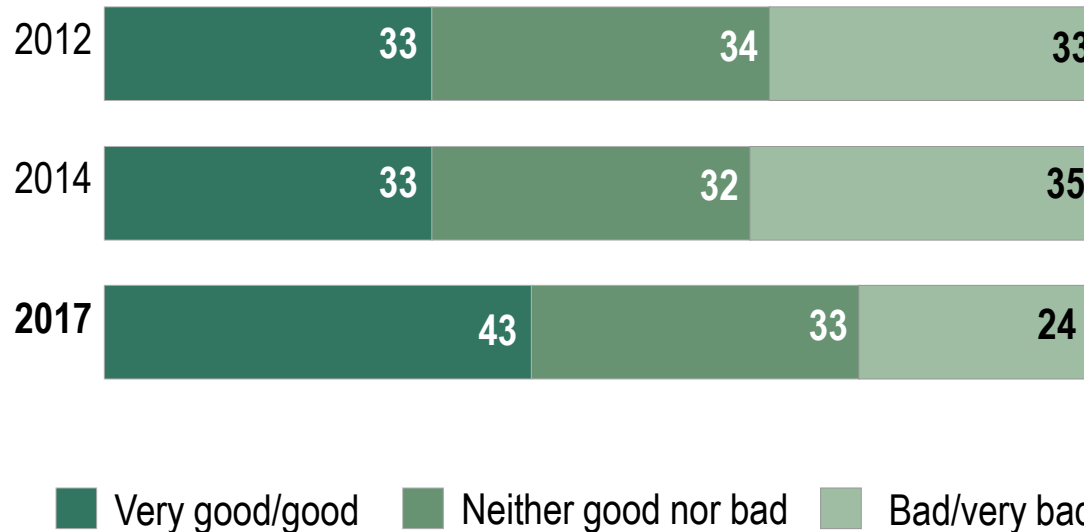


Q.30I. To what extent do you trust the Prime Minister? (on a 7 point scale (1=not at all, 7=a lot)).

. . . and this is accompanied with a more positive assessment of Justin Trudeau's performance as Prime Minister

2012 - 2017

Rating the job performance of Justin Trudeau



Very good/good performance of PM

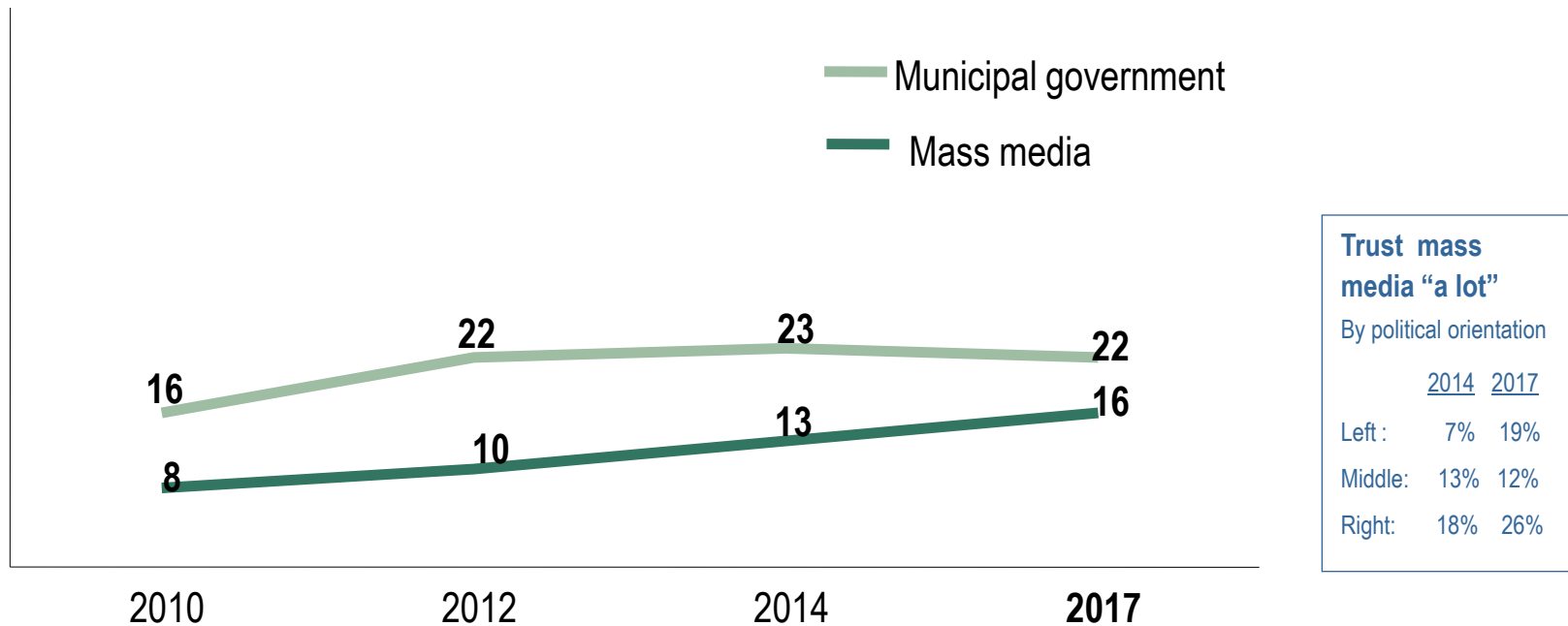
By region

	2014	2017
Atlantic:	24%	50%
Quebec:	23%	47%
Ontario:	36%	40%
MB/SK:	41%	32%
Alberta:	45%	43%
B.C.:	31%	48%

Q.33. Speaking in general of the current government, how would you rate the job performance of Prime Minister Justin Trudeau?

Public trust in municipal government and the mass media is low, but the latter has been gradually improving over time

2006 - 2017

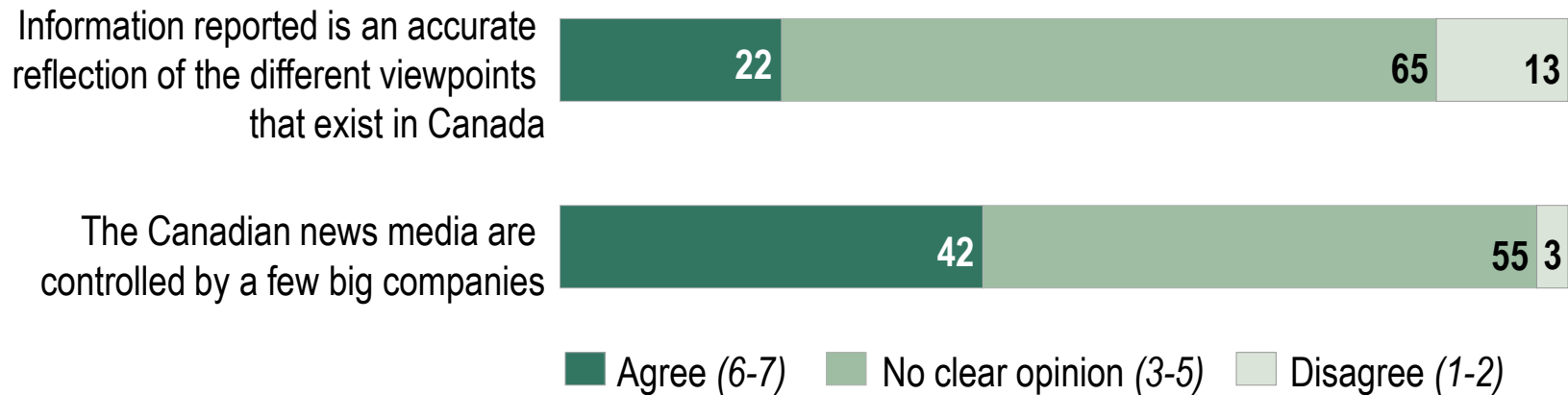


Q.30n,p. To what extent do you trust . . . ? (on a 7 point scale (1=not at all, 7=a lot). Results show percentage giving "6" or "7."

Canadians are unsure about how well media reflect the spectrum of viewpoints, and more likely than not see it as controlled by a few big companies

2017

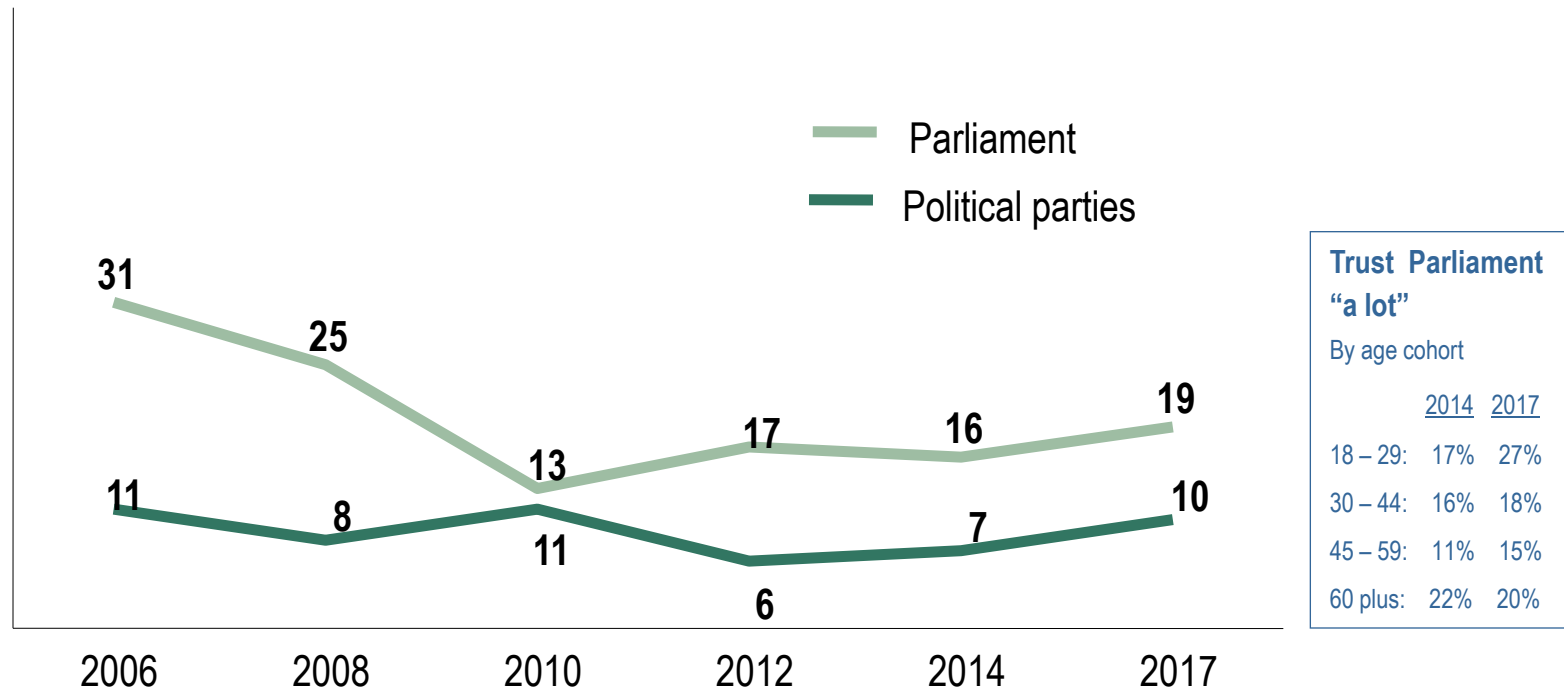
Opinions about the media in Canada today



Q.35a-b. To what extent do you agree or disagree that . . . ?

Public trust in Parliament and political parties is low, but marginally stronger since 2012

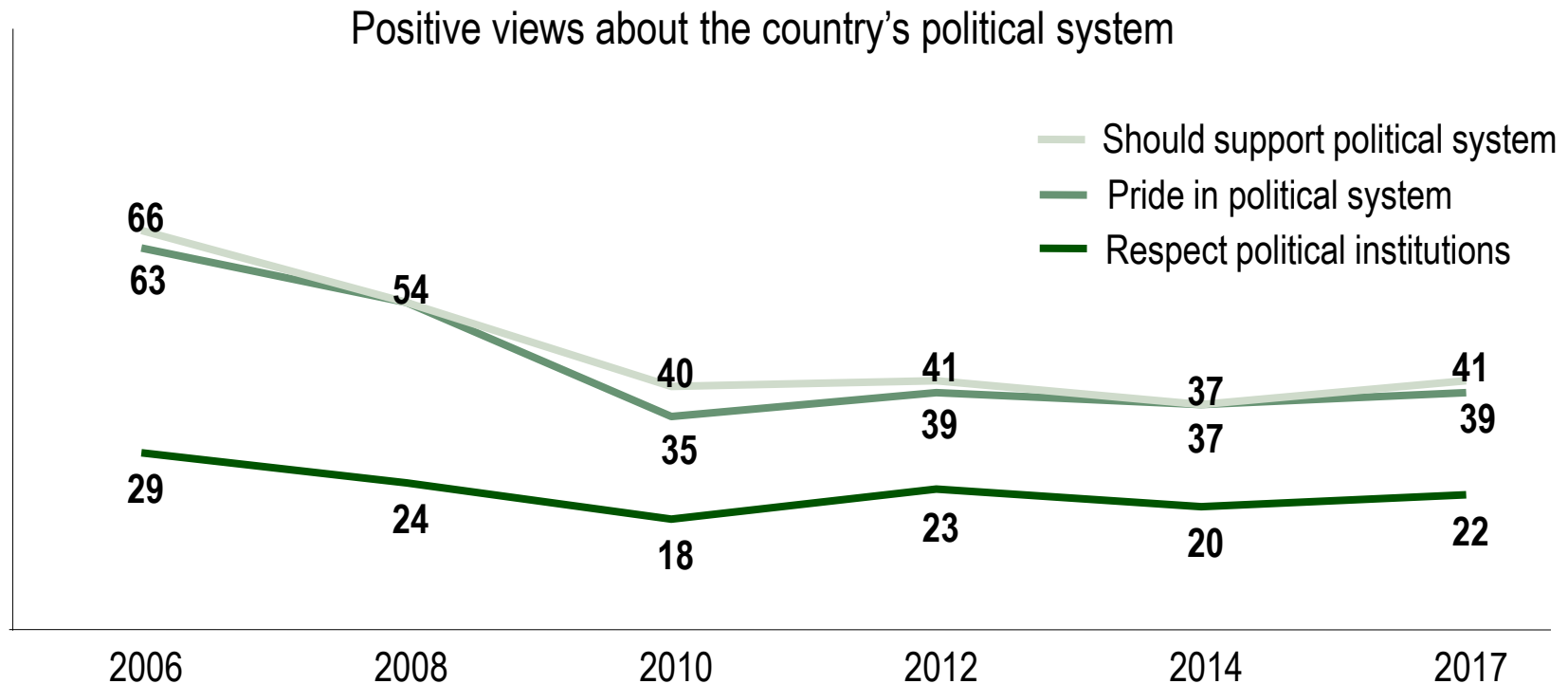
2006 - 2017



Q.30i,k. To what extent do you trust . . . ? (on a 7 point scale (1=not at all, 7=a lot). Results show percentage giving "6" or "7."

Fewer than half of Canadians have pride and respect for the country's political system, but opinions have held remarkably steady over the past seven years

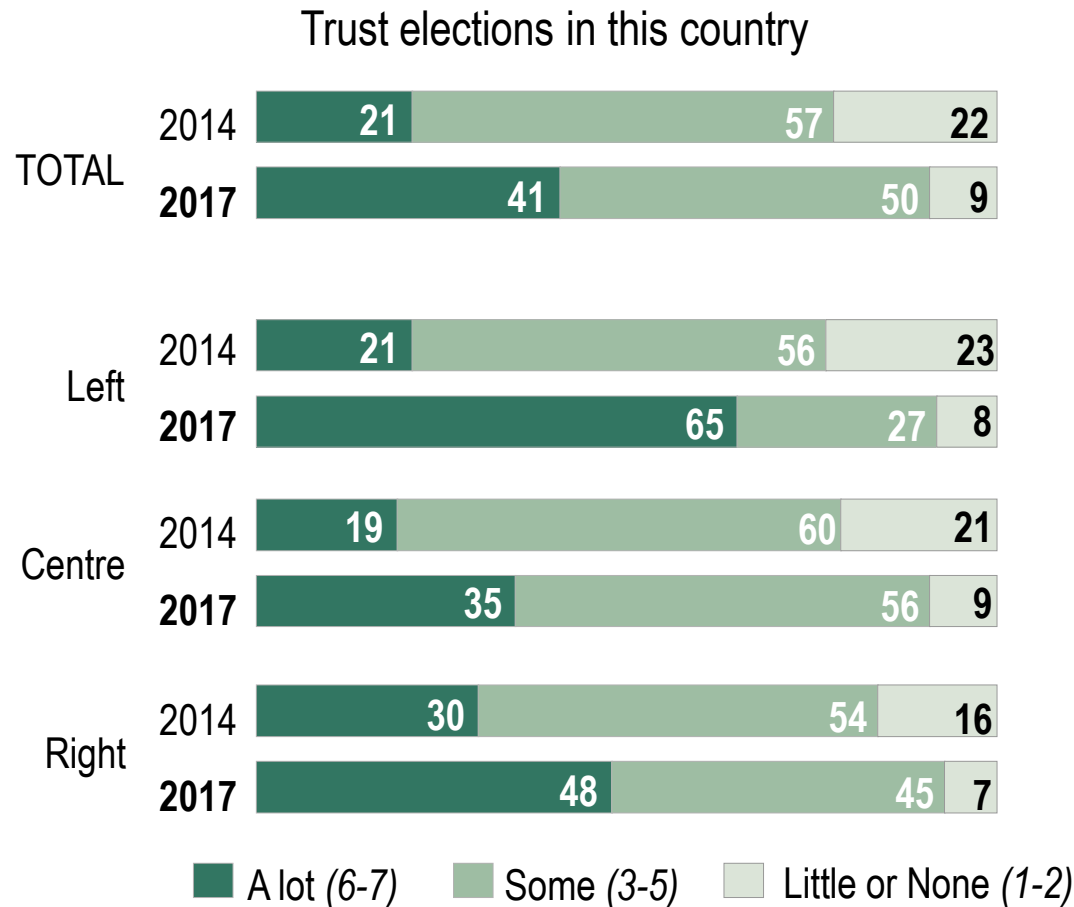
2006 - 2017



Q.30b,e,f. To what extent do you . . . ? (on a 7 point scale (1=not at all, 7=a lot). Results show percentage giving "6" or "7."

Public trust in elections has strengthened significantly since 2014; most dramatically among those on the left but also across the political spectrum

2014 – 2017 By political orientation



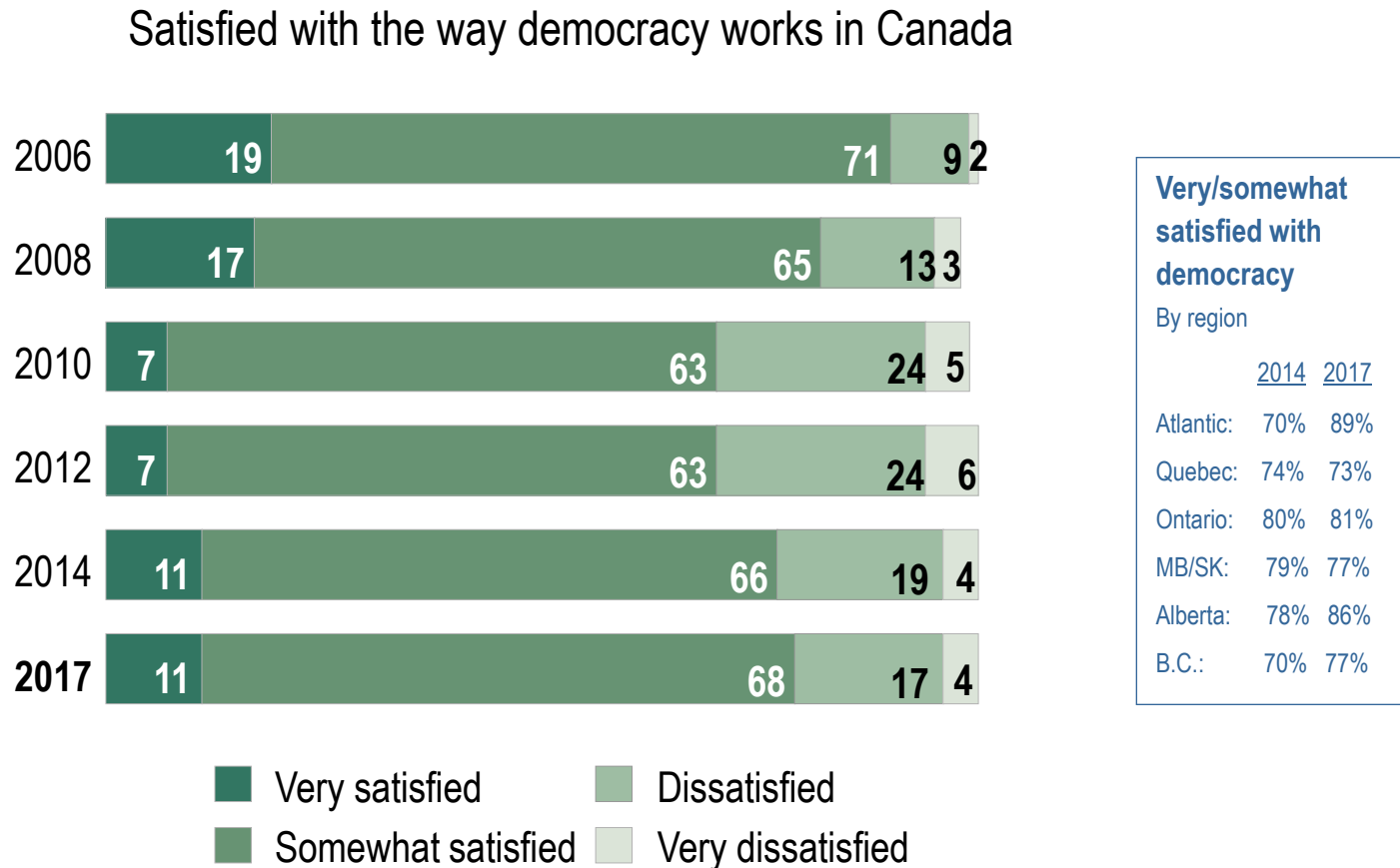
Q.30q. To what extent do you trust elections in this country? (on a 7 point scale (1=not at all, 7=a lot). Results show percentage giving "6" or "7."



Attitudes toward democracy

Most Canadians continue to be somewhat, if not very, satisfied with their country's democracy. Dissatisfaction is at its lowest level since 2008.

2006 - 2017

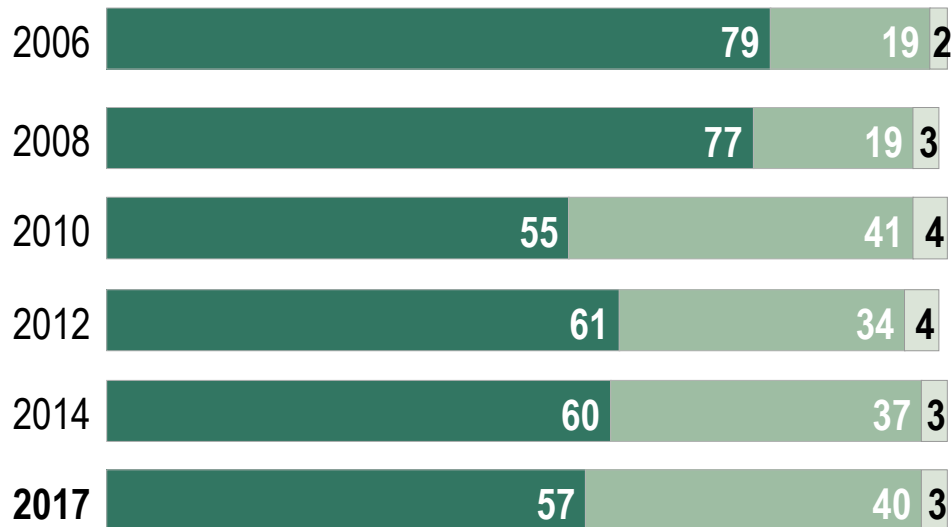


Q.36. In general, would you say that you are very satisfied, satisfied, dissatisfied or very dissatisfied with the way democracy works in Canada?

A modest majority continue to believe democracy is the best form of government . . .

2006 - 2017

Agree – Disagree: *Democracy may have its problems but it is better than any other form of government*



Agree that democracy is best

By age cohort

2014 2017

18 – 29: 44% 46%

30 – 44: 46% 48%

45 – 59: 63% 59%

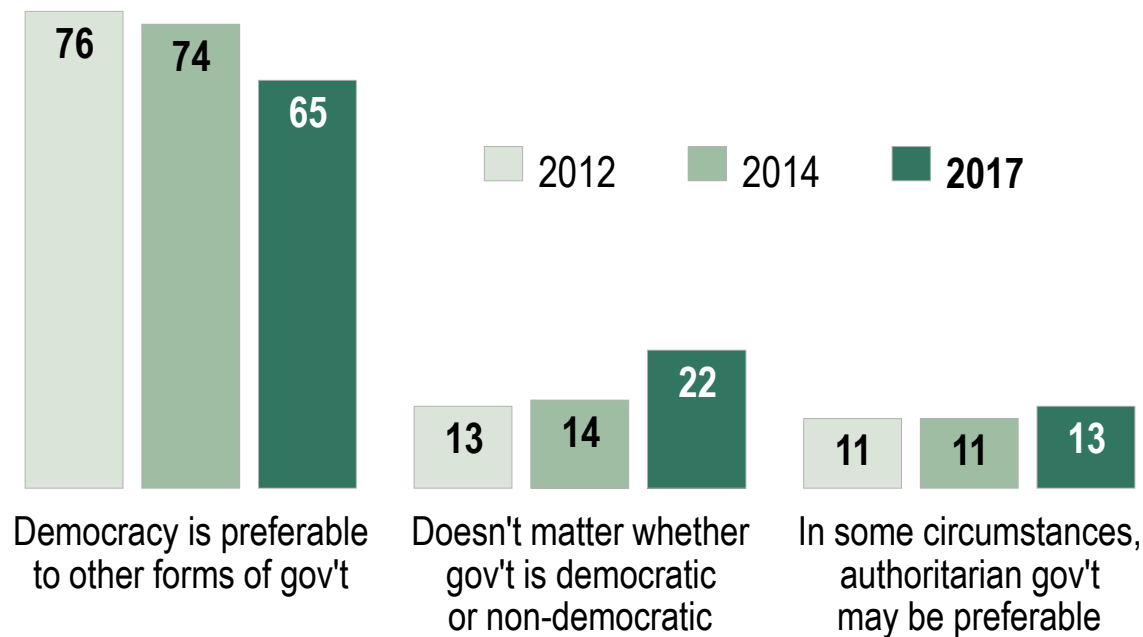
60 plus: 84% 70%

■ Agree (6-7) ■ No clear opinion (3-5) ■ Disagree (1-2)

Q.34d. *Democracy may have problems but it is better than any other form of government* (7 point-scale :1=strongly agree, 7 = strongly disagree)

. . . yet public commitment to democracy over other forms of government has weakened a bit since 2014

2012 - 2017



Democracy is preferable

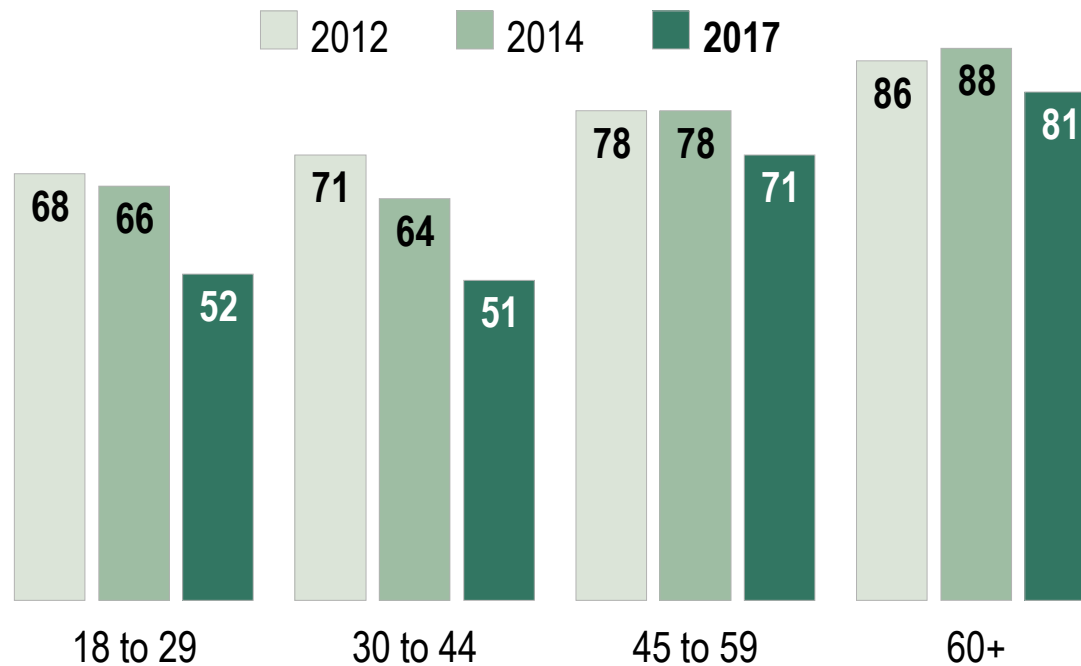
By region

	2014	2017
Atlantic:	72%	68%
Quebec:	76%	59%
Ontario:	72%	68%
MB/SK:	71%	67%
Alberta:	80%	68%
B.C.:	75%	63%

Q.37. Which of the following statements do you agree with the most?

Commitment to democracy has dropped across generations, but most noticeably among Canadians under 45 years of age

2012 - 2017 By age cohort

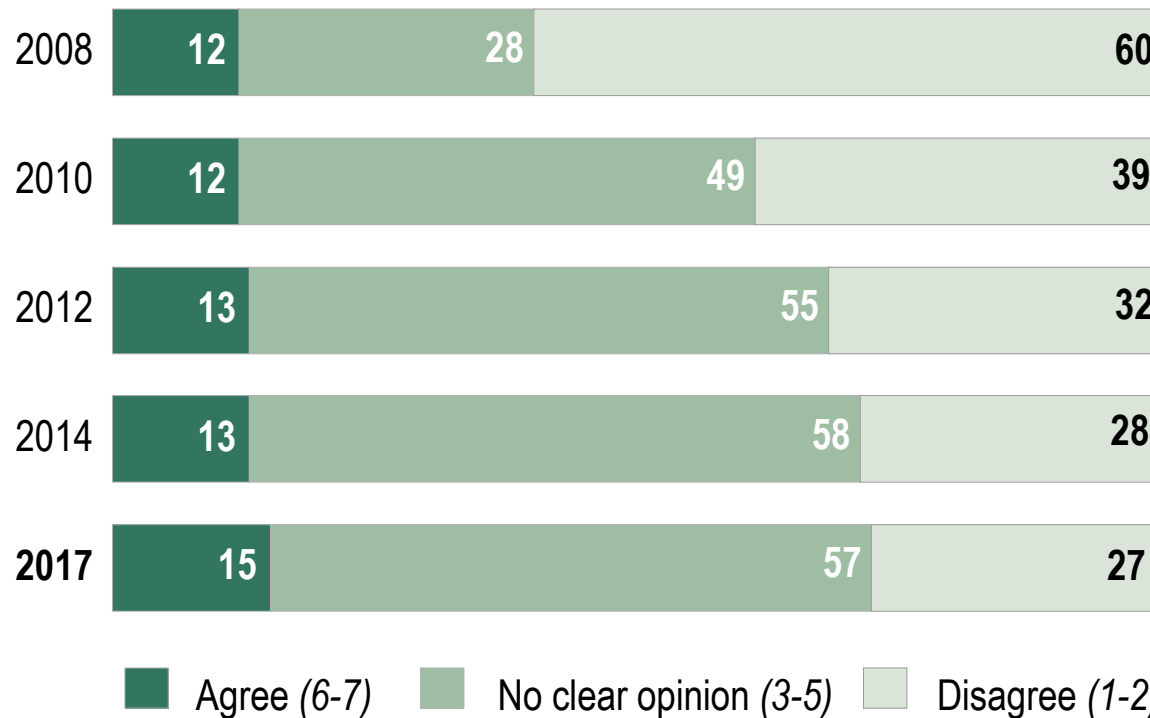


Q.37. Which of the following statements do you agree with the most?

Few Canadians embrace the populist idea of governing directly rather than through elected politicians, but is gaining ground on the political right

2008 – 2017

Agree – Disagree: *The people should govern directly rather than through elected representatives*



Agree on governing directly

By political orientation

2014 2017

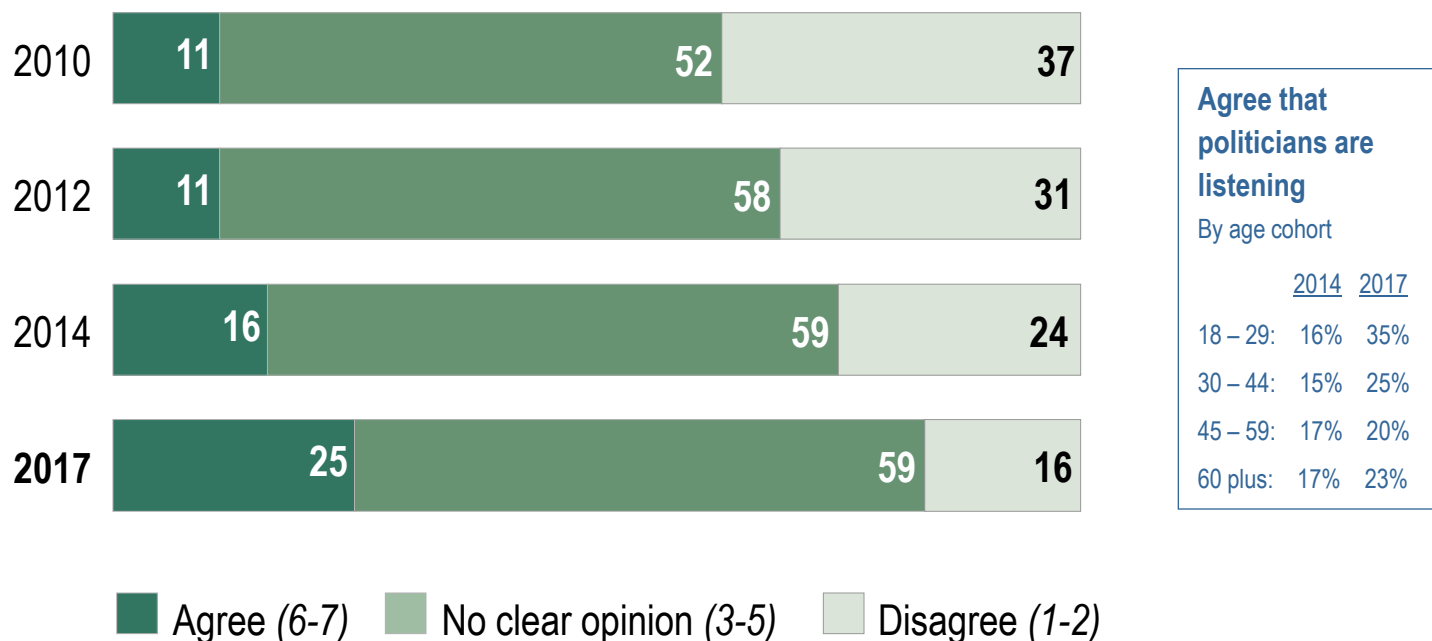
Left :	15%	13%
Middle:	10%	11%
Right:	19%	30%

Q.32b. *People should govern directly rather than through elected representatives (7 point-scale :1=strongly agree, 7 = strongly disagree)*

The public is feeling more confident than before that the country's politicians are listening to what people like them are thinking

2010 - 2017

Agree – Disagree: *Those who govern this country are interested in what people like you think*

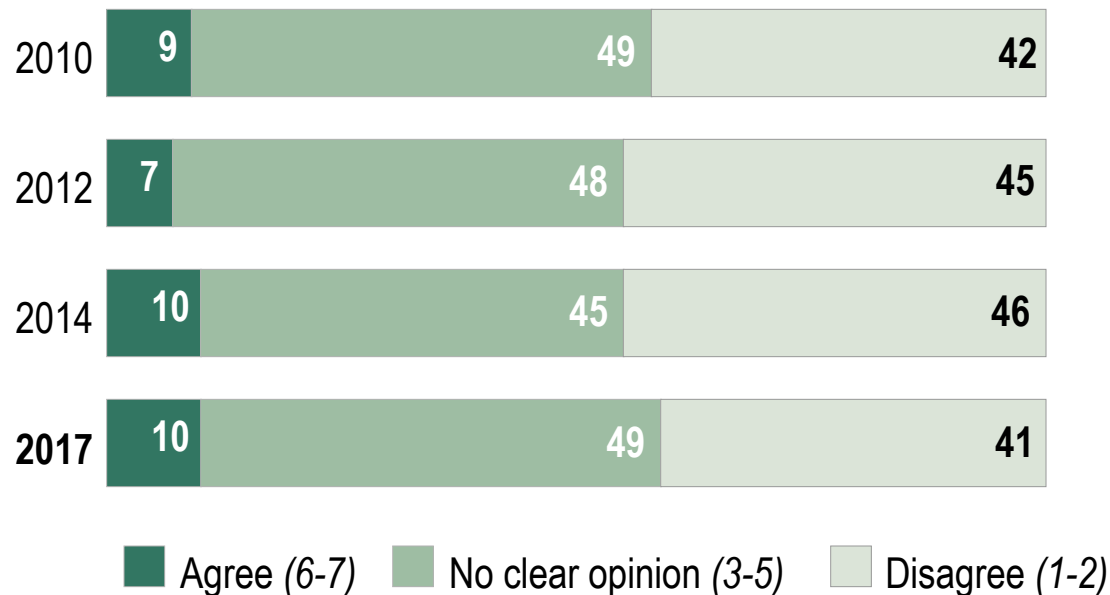


Q.34f. *Those who govern this country are interested in what people like you think (7 point-scale :1=strongly agree, 7 = strongly disagree)*

There remains limited public support for Prime Ministers to silence the voice of opposition parties, but this view has strengthened among Millennials

2010 - 2017

Agree – Disagree: *Prime minister should limit the voice of opposition parties*



Agree on limiting role of opposition

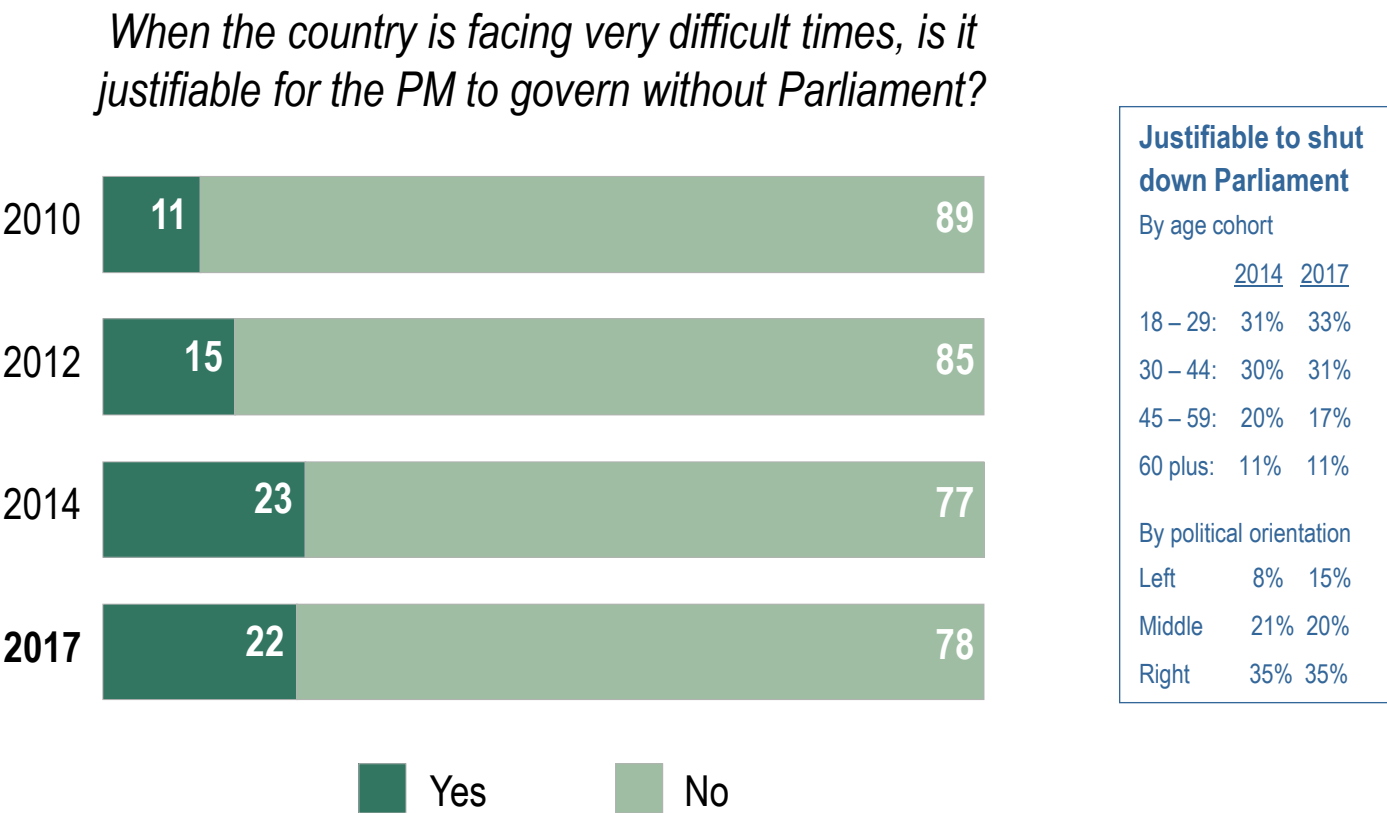
By age cohort

	2014	2017
18 – 29:	11%	19%
30 – 44:	12%	13%
45 – 59:	9%	7%
60 plus:	9%	5%


Q.32a. *It is necessary for the progress of this country that our prime ministers limit the voice and vote of opposition parties.* (7 point-scale :1=strongly agree, 7 = strongly disagree)

A small but stable minority of Canadians believe circumstances could justify the Prime Minister governing without Parliament

2010 - 2017



Q.40. Do you believe that when the country is facing very difficult times it is justifiable for the Prime Minister to close the Parliament and government without Parliament?

A hand is shown from the right side of the frame, holding a white ballot and placing it into the top slot of a white ballot box. The box has a dashed line indicating the slot. In the background, other similar boxes are visible, and a window shows some greenery outside.

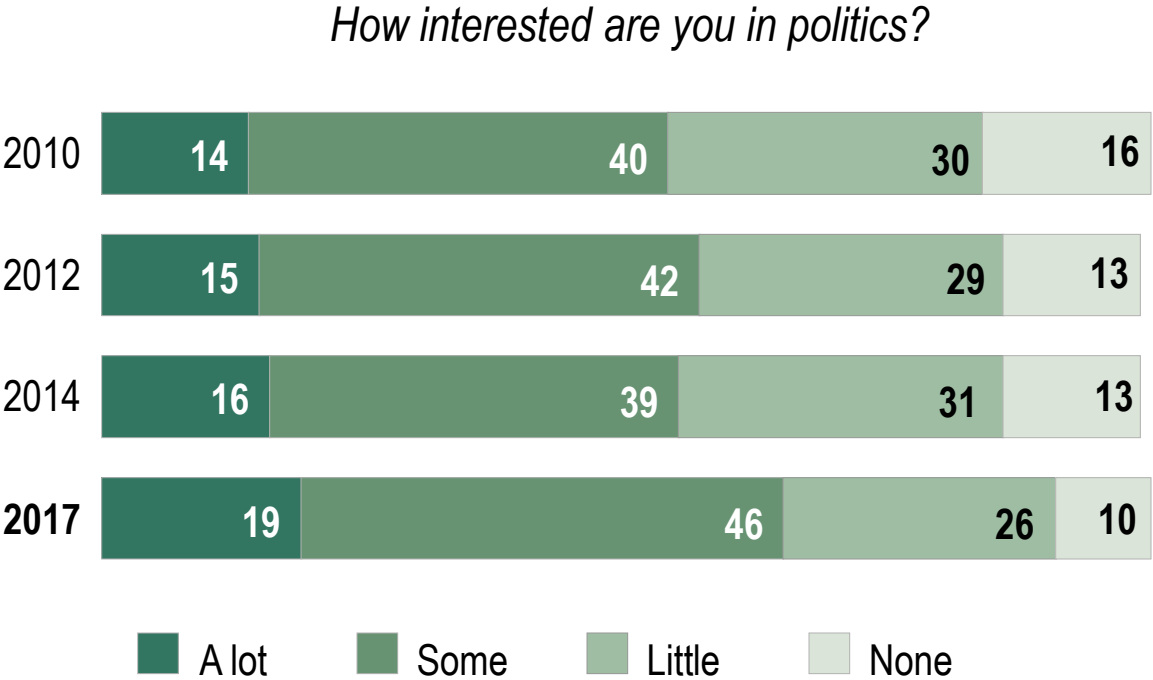
Political engagement



Source: Elections Canada

Canadians are demonstrating increasing interest in politics, with this trend most evident in the prairies

2010 - 2017



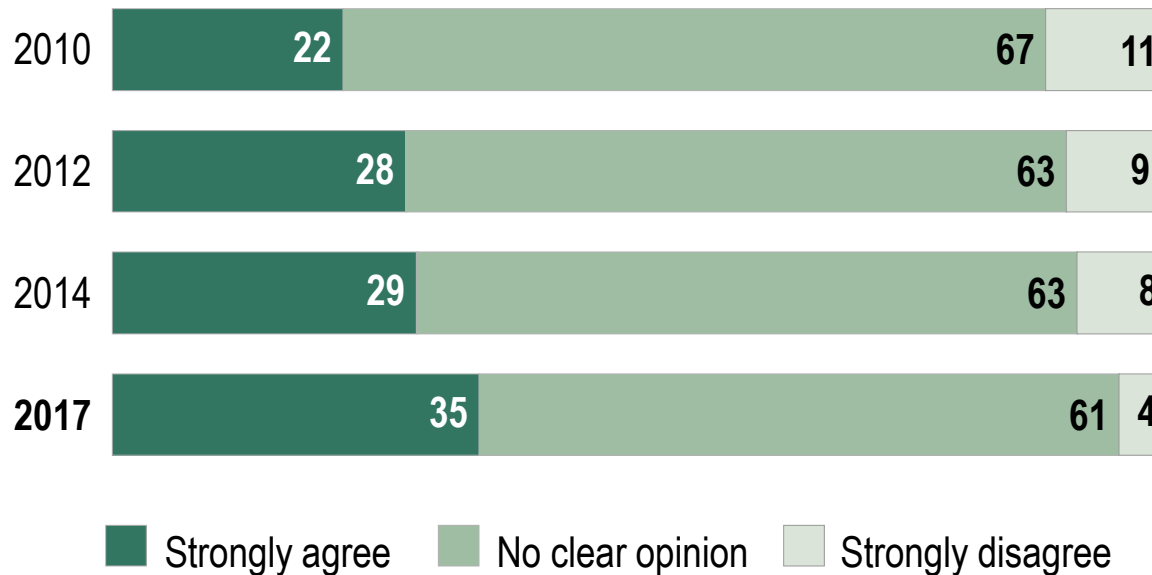
A lot/some interest in politics		
By region		
	2014	2017
Atlantic:	55%	73%
Quebec:	56%	57%
Ontario:	56%	64%
MB/SK:	47%	68%
Alberta:	54%	78%
B.C.:	57%	63%

Q.54. How much interest do you have in politics: a lot, some, little or none?

Increasingly the public feels it has a handle on what is happening politically in the country . . .

2010 – 2017

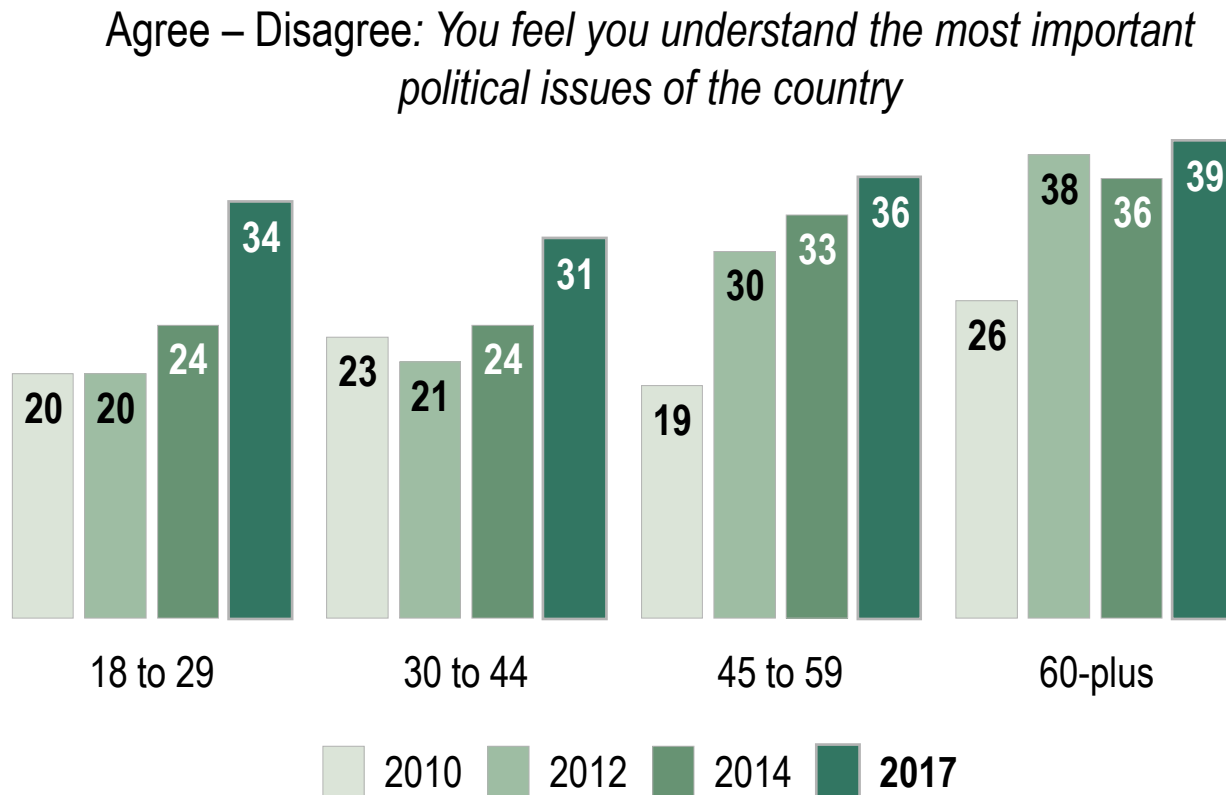
Agree – Disagree: You feel you understand the most important political issues of the country



Q.34g. You feel that you understand the most important political issues of this country (7 point-scale :1=strongly agree, 7 = strongly disagree)

. . . and this upward trend is most evident among younger Canadians, closing the generation gap

2010 - 2017 By age cohort

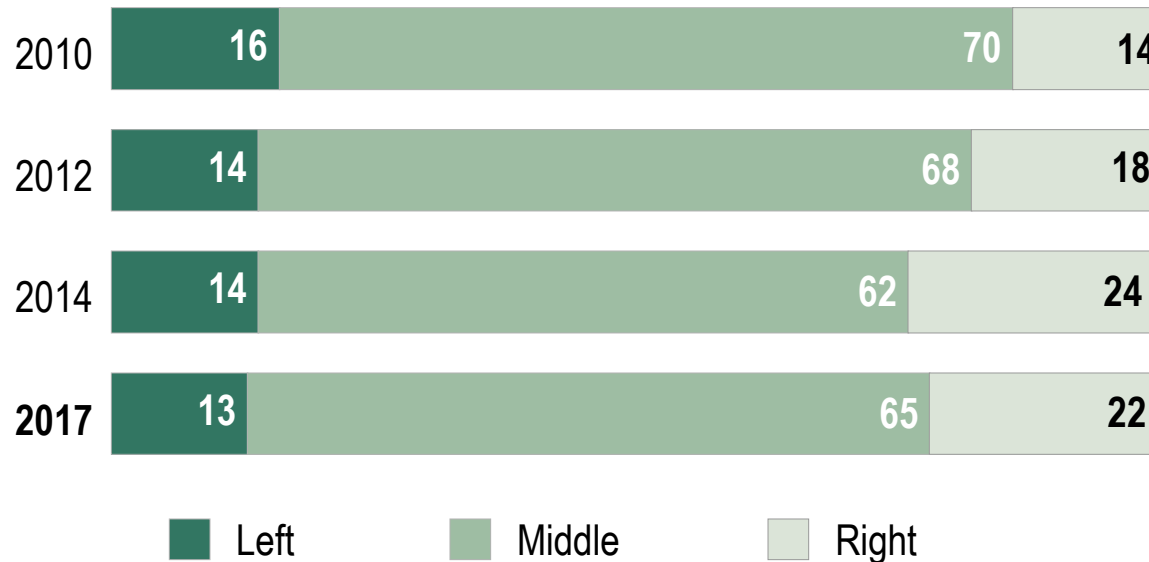


Q.34g. *You feel that you understand the most important political issues of this country (6 or 7 on 7 point-scale)*

Most Canadians place themselves in the middle of the political spectrum, and marginally more so than three years ago

2012 - 2017

Where do you place yourself on the left-right political spectrum?



Political orientation

By age cohort

	<u>Left</u>	<u>Middle</u>	<u>Right</u>
18 – 29:	14%	53%	33%
30 – 44:	17%	58%	25%
45 – 59:	14%	67%	19%
60 plus:	9%	78%	15%

Q.12. Nowadays when we speak of political leanings, we talk of those on the left and those on the right. In other words, some people sympathize more with the left and others on the right. According to the meaning that the terms “left” and “right” have for you, and thinking about your own political leanings, where would you place yourself on this scale (10 point scale: “1” means “Left”, and “10” means “Right”) [Results shown exclude those who decline to answer]

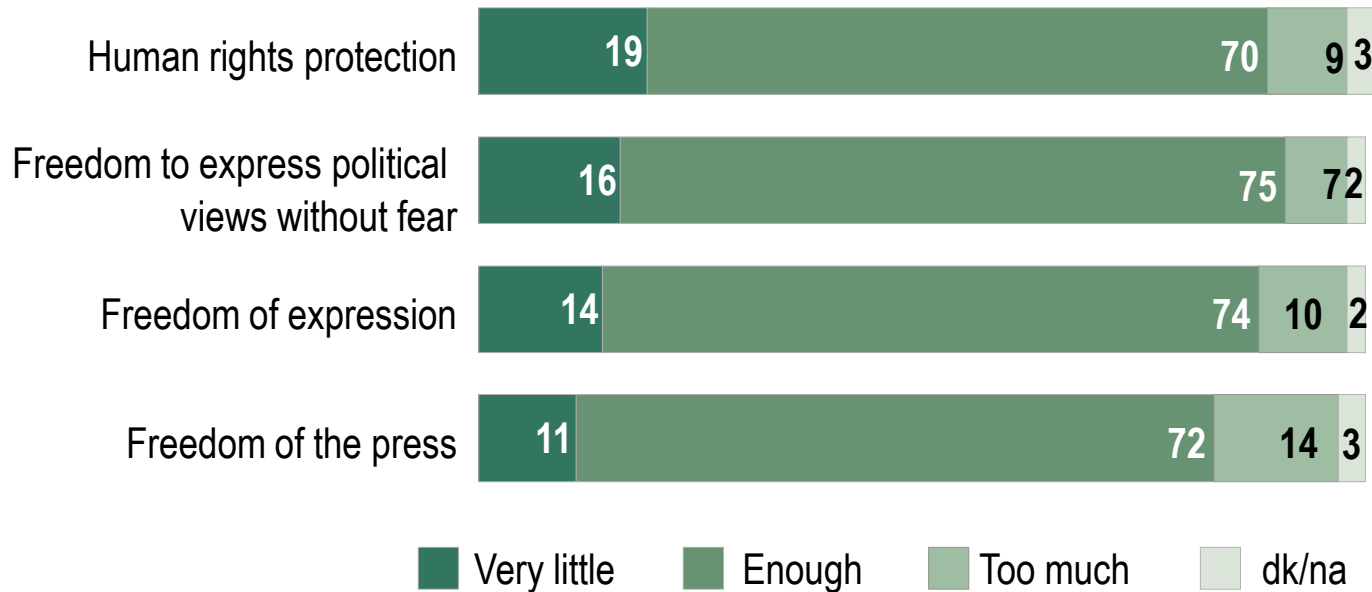


**Tolerance for dissent
and the rule of law**

Three-quarters of Canadians are comfortable with current level of protection of human rights and freedom of expression

2017

Is there enough, too little or too much freedom in Canada today, in terms of?



Freedom to express views without fear

By age cohort

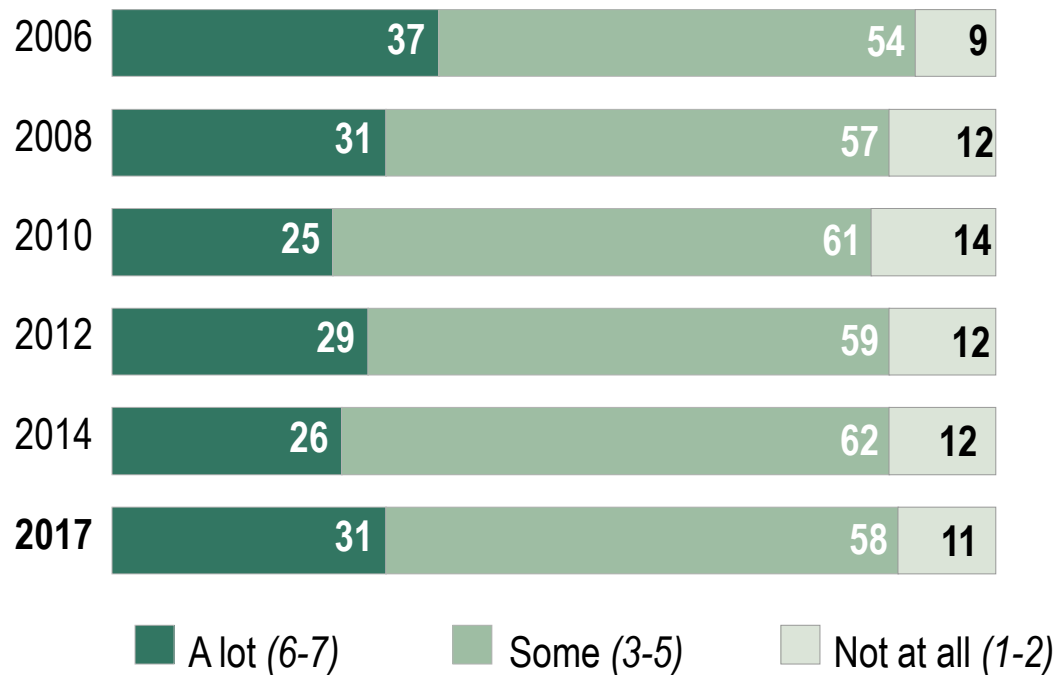
	Too Little	Enough	Too Much
18 – 29:	21%	65%	10%
30 – 44:	21%	70%	7%
45 – 59:	15%	77%	7%
60 plus:	10%	85%	4%

Q.44 – 47. Do you believe we have very little, enough or too much of . ?

The public's belief that citizen rights are well protected has strengthened since 2014, mostly among younger Canadians and those living in the west

2006 - 2017

Citizen's basic rights are well-protected in Canada



Citizen rights are well protected

By age cohort

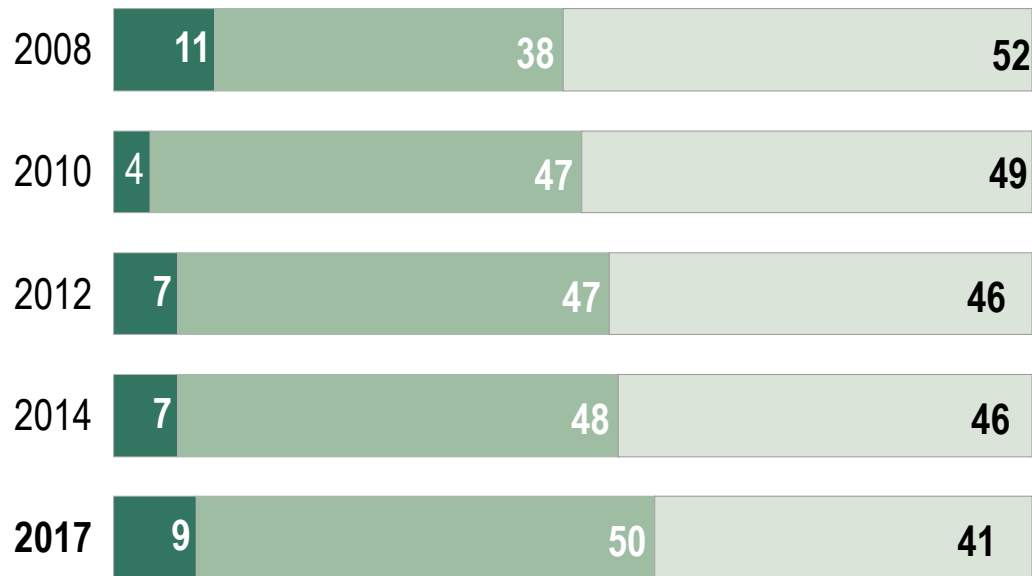
	2014	2017
18 – 29:	27%	42%
30 – 44:	26%	31%
45 – 59:	26%	26%
60 plus:	27%	28%

Q.30c. To what extent do you think that citizens' basic rights are well protected by the political system of Canada? (7 point scale (1=not at all, 7=a lot). Results show percentage giving "6" or "7."

Few continue to believe that speaking out against majority opinion poses a threat, although outright dismissal has waned since 2014

2008 - 2017

Agree – Disagree: *Those who disagree with the majority represent a threat to the country*



Disagree that dissenters pose a threat

By political orientation

	2014	2017
Left :	76%	64%
Middle:	44%	40%
Right:	35%	31%

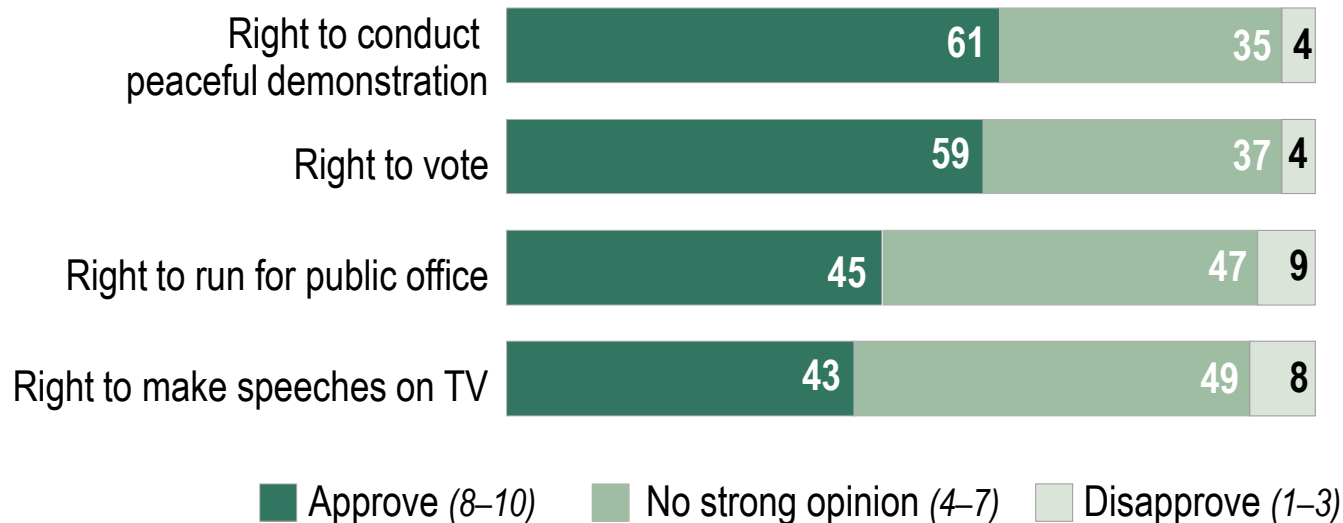
Agree (6-7) No clear opinion (3-5) Disagree (1-2)

Q.32c. Those who disagree with the majority represent a threat to the country (7 point-scale : 1=strongly agree, 7 = strongly disagree)

Canadians continue to support the rights of those who criticize government, but more so in some forms than in others

2017

Approve or disapprove of actions by those who say bad things about our form of government



Approve of right to make TV speeches

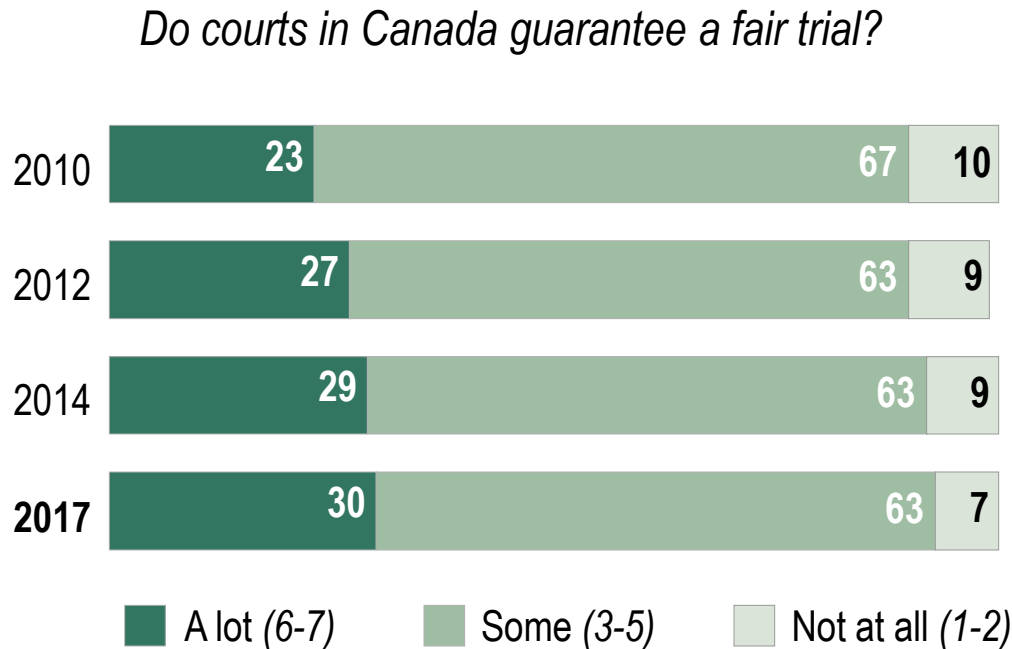
By education level

	2014	2017
< H. S.	37%	31%
HS Diploma	34%	34%
College Degree	40%	43%
Univ. Degree:	45%	54%

Q.43a-d. How strongly do you approve or disapprove of people who live in Canada who say bad things about the Canadian form of government, in terms of their . . . ? (10 point scale: 1 =strongly disapprove, 10 = strongly approve)

Canadians express qualified confidence that the courts guarantee a fair trial, largely unchanged since 2012

2010 - 2017



Think “a lot” that courts guarantee a fair trial

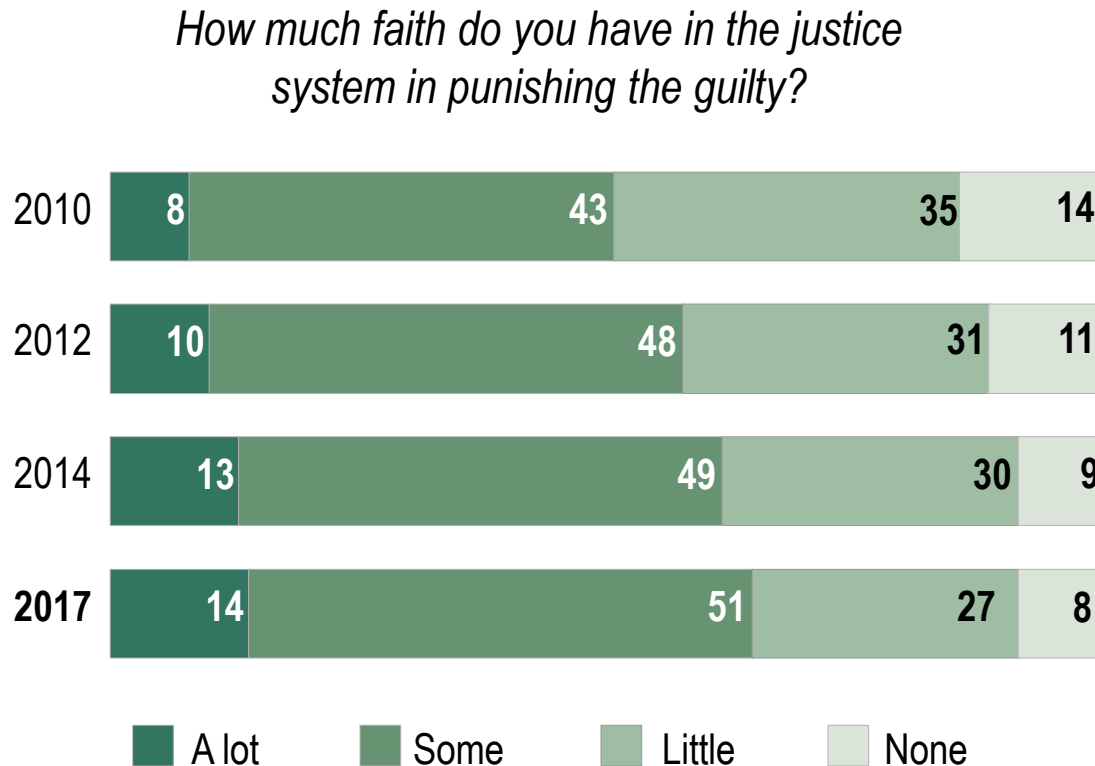
By region

	2014	2017
Atlantic:	30%	25%
Quebec:	22%	21%
Ontario:	34%	31%
MB/SK:	27%	26%
Alberta:	30%	40%
B.C.:	26%	38%

Q.30a. To what extent do you think the courts in Canada guarantee a fair trial(7 point scale (1=not at all, 7=a lot). Results show percentage giving “6” or “7.”

Public faith in the justice system punishing the guilty is lukewarm, but has been gradually increasing over time . . .

2010 - 2017



"A lot/some" faith in punishing the guilty

By region

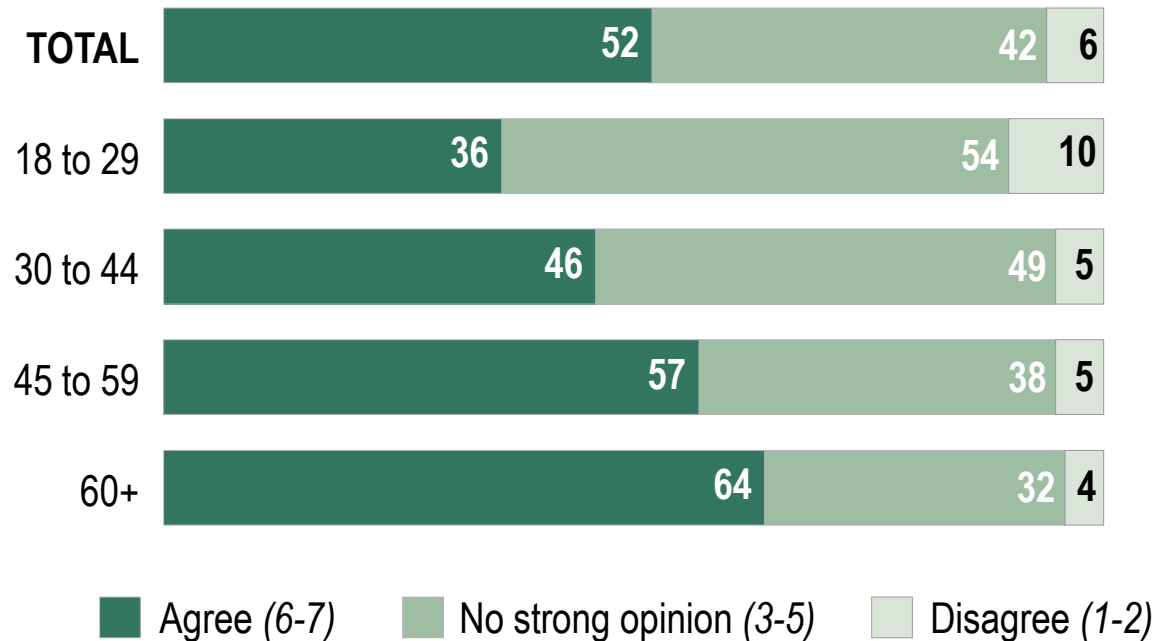
	2014	2017
Atlantic:	60%	69%
Quebec:	58%	56%
Ontario:	66%	73%
MB/SK:	50%	53%
Alberta:	67%	66%
B.C.:	55%	64%

Q.29. If you were a victim of a robbery or assault, how much faith do you have that the judicial system would punish the guilty?

. . . but there is solid public support for strengthening penalties for those convicted of crimes, especially among older Canadians

2017 By age cohort

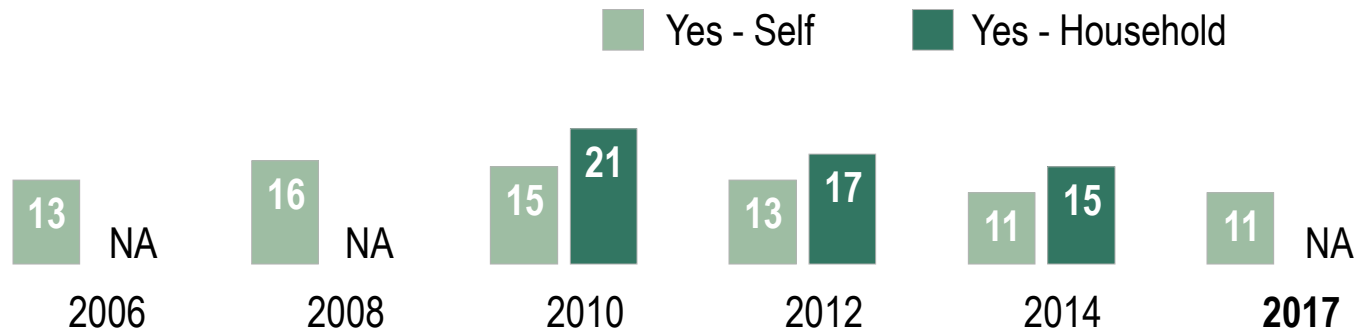
*Agree – Disagree: To reduce crime in a country like ours,
punishment of criminals must be increased*



Q.34h. To reduce crime in a country like ours, punishment of criminals must be increased. (7 point-scale :1=strongly agree, 7 = strongly disagree)

Reported crime victimization remains at low

2006 - 2017

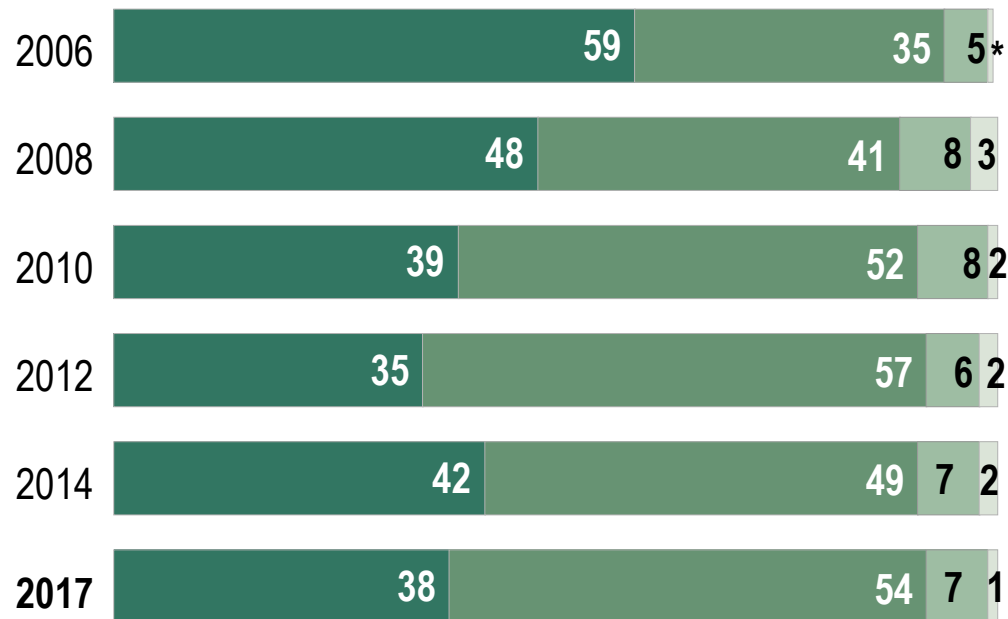


Q.18. Have you been a victim of any type of crime in the past 12 months?

Most Canadians feel somewhat, if not very, safe in their neighbourhood; this is consistent with previous years, but has declined in the west since 2014

2006 - 2017

How safe from crime do you feel in your neighbourhood?



Very safe
 Somewhat unsafe

 Somewhat safe
 Very unsafe

Very safe in neighbourhood

By region

2014 2017

Atlantic: 46% 54%

Quebec: 29% 28%

Ontario: 46% 43%

MB/SK: 45% 25%

Alberta: 49% 46%

B.C.: 48% 38%

Q.25. Speaking of the neighbourhood where you live and thinking about the possibility of being assaulted or robbed, do you feel very safe, somewhat safe, somewhat unsafe or very unsafe?

Canadians' level of trust in their neighbours has held steady over time, with strong trust up everywhere except in Manitoba and Saskatchewan

2010 - 2017

How trustworthy are other people in your community?



- Very trustworthy
- Somewhat trustworthy
- Not very trustworthy/untrustworthy

People in your community are very trustworthy		
By region		
	2014	2017
Atlantic:	20%	35%
Quebec:	9%	14%
Ontario:	18%	22%
MB/SK:	19%	11%
Alberta:	22%	32%
B.C.:	14%	19%

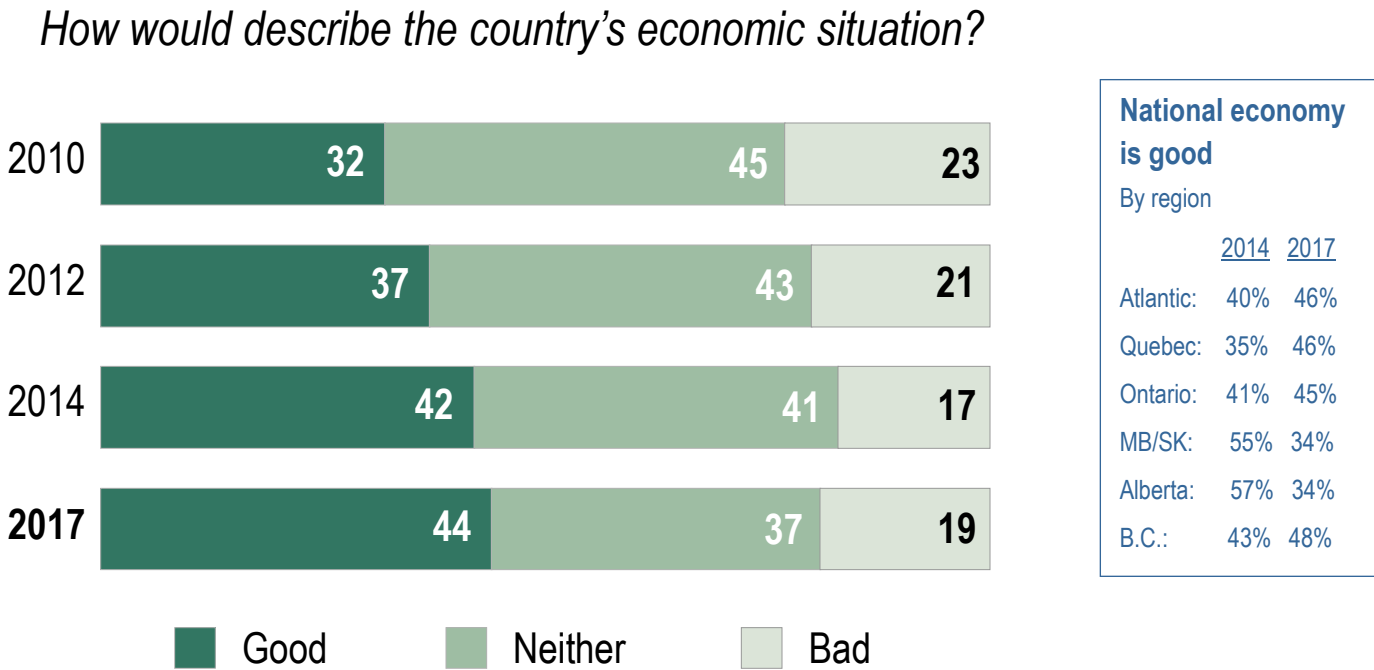
Q.11. Would you say that people in your community are very trustworthy, somewhat trustworthy, not very trustworthy or untrustworthy?

Quality of life and economic security



Canadians' confidence in the national economy has been on a gradual upswing, but since 2014 has declined significantly in the prairies

2010 - 2017

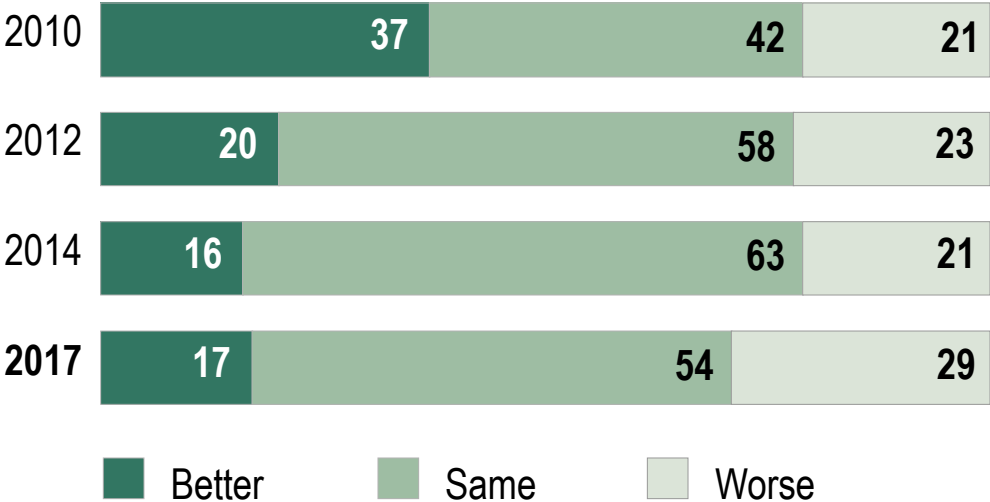


Q.2. How would you describe the country's economic situation: very good, good, neither good nor bad (fair), bad, or very bad?

Despite confidence about the current economy, Canadians are increasingly negative about how it is changing, especially in the prairies

2010 - 2017

How is the economy compared with 12 months ago?



Economy is worse than before

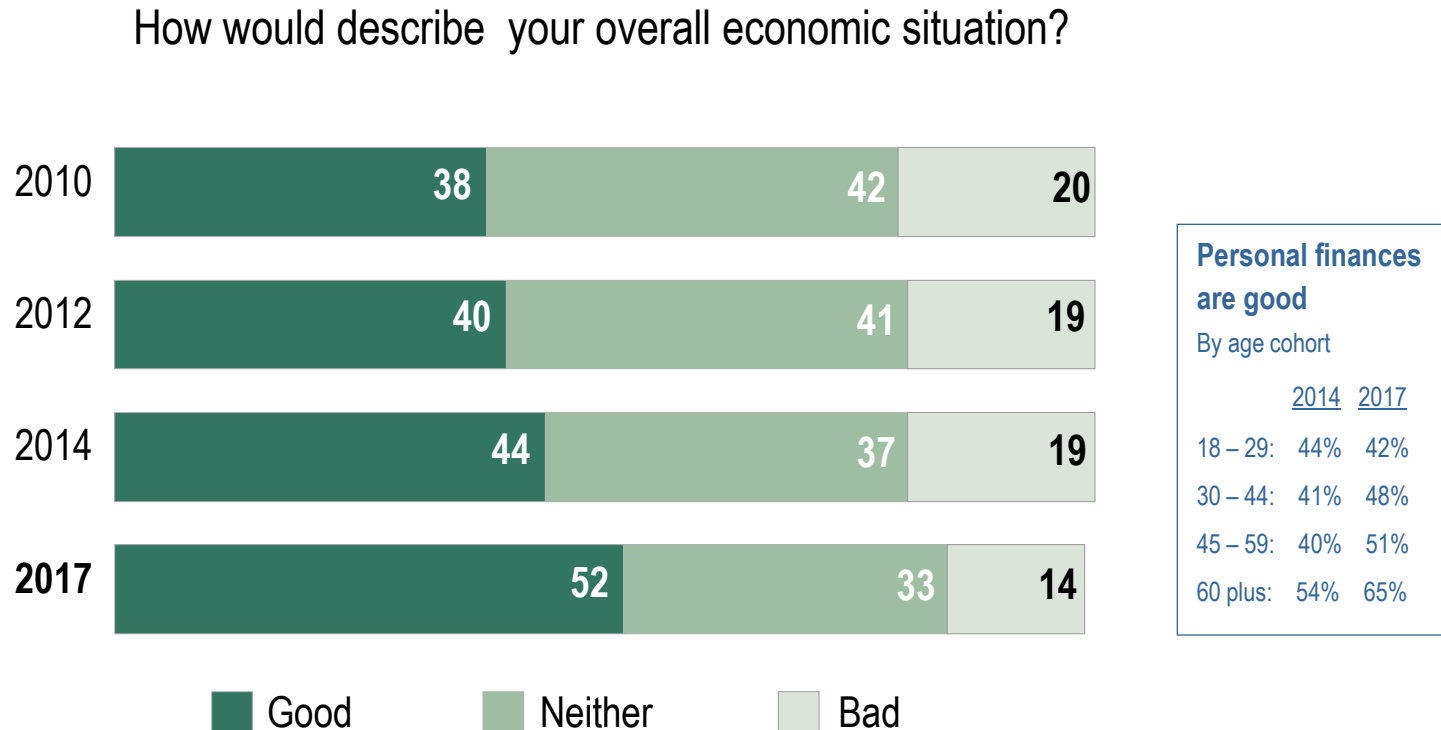
By region

	<u>2014</u>	<u>2017</u>
Atlantic:	23%	28%
Quebec:	26%	24%
Ontario:	19%	30%
MB/SK:	18%	44%
Alberta:	14%	40%
B.C.:	21%	19%

Q.3. Do you think that the country's current economic situation is better than, the same as, or worse than it was 12 months ago?

Canadians are increasingly feeling confident in their own financial circumstances, except among those aged 18 to 29

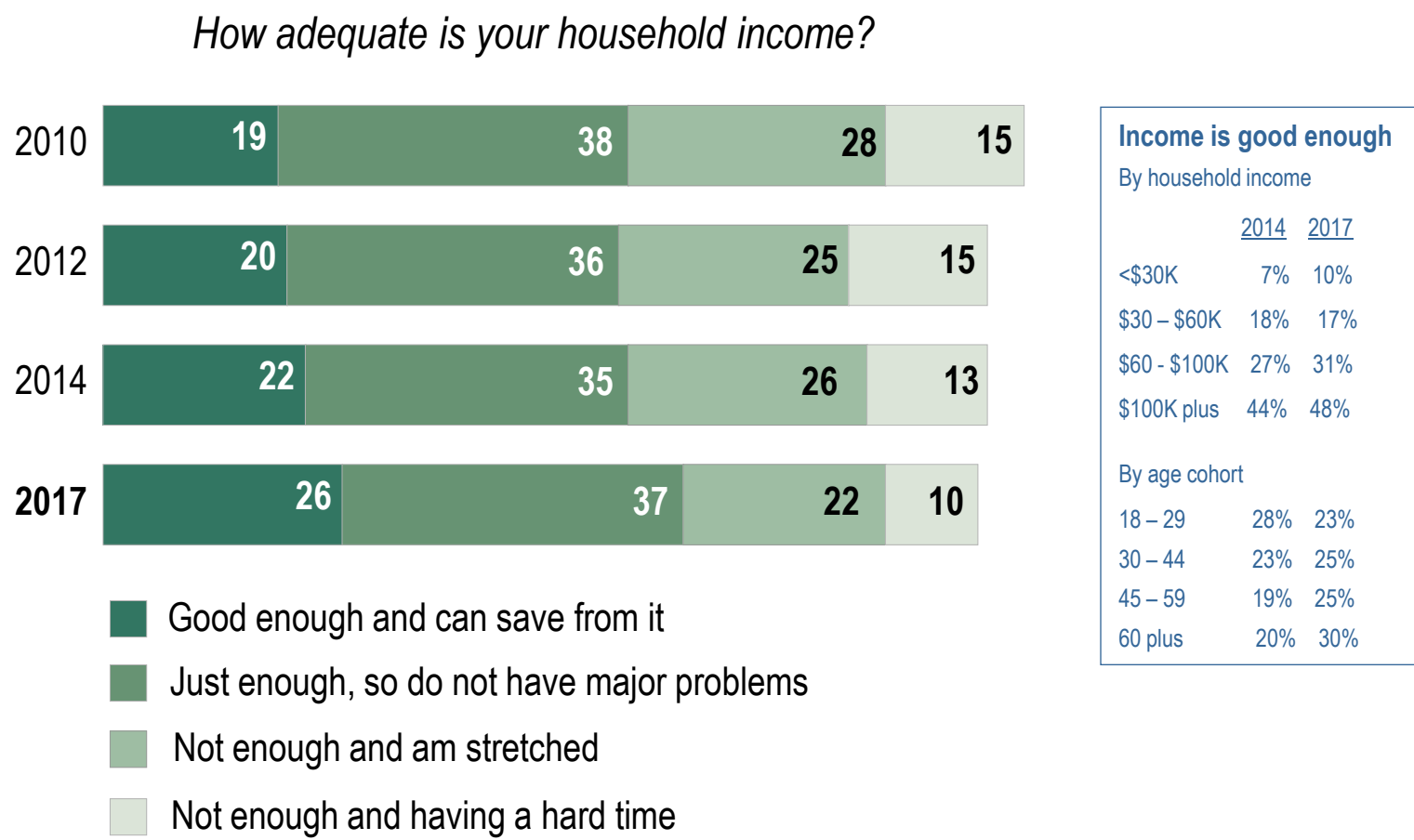
2010 - 2017



Q.4. How would you describe your overall economic situation: Very good, good, neither good nor bad (fair), bad, or very bad?

The adequacy of Canadians' household income continues to improve gradually over time, and across income and age levels

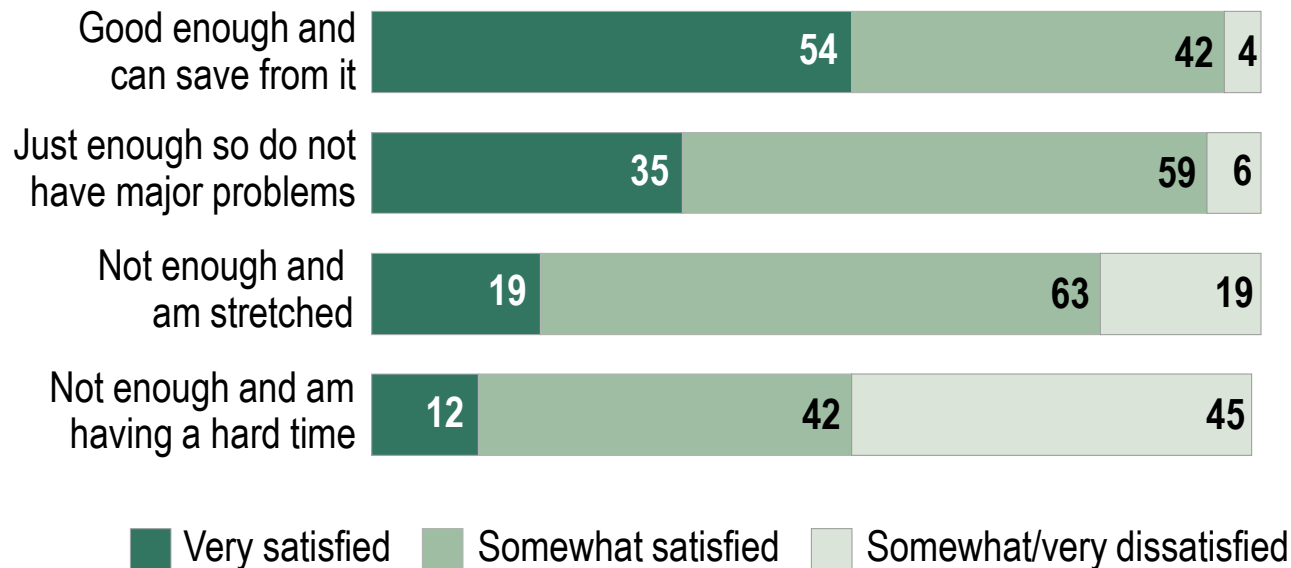
2010 - 2017



Q.64.The salary that you receive and total household income is: ?

Overall life satisfaction among Canadians has been increasing over time, but remains closely linked to adequacy of income . . .

2017



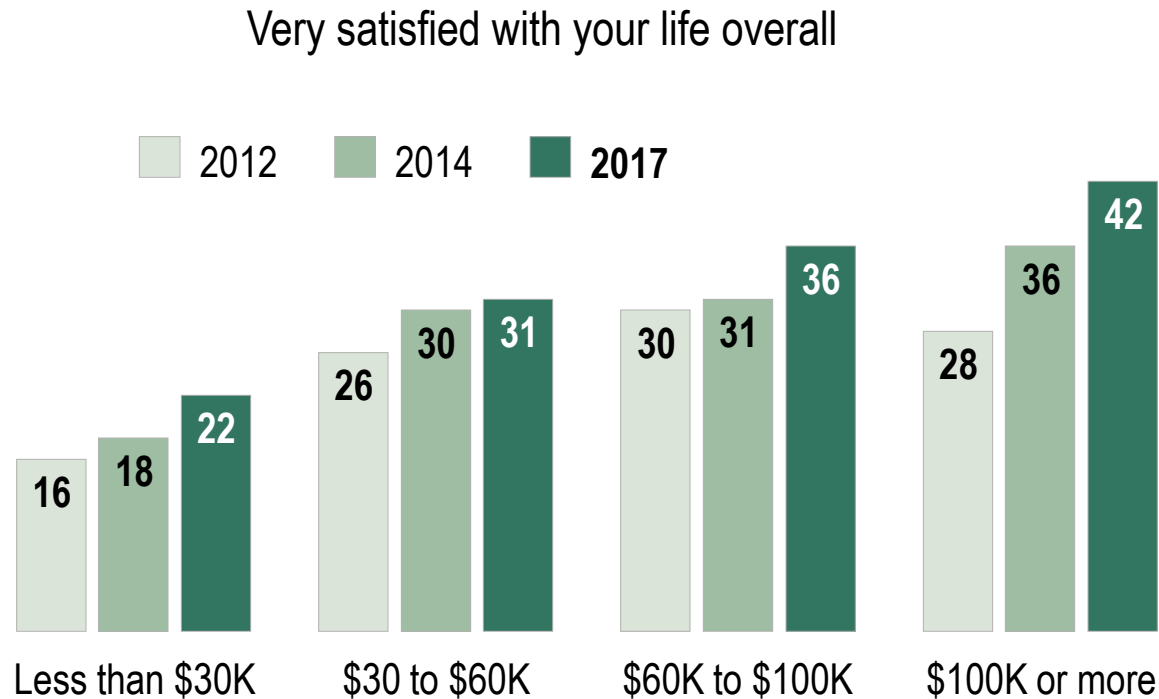
Overall life satisfaction

	<u>2012</u>	<u>2014</u>	<u>2017</u>
Very satisfied	25%	29%	35%
Somewhat satisfied	60%	56%	53%
Somewhat dissatisfied	13%	12%	9%
Very dissatisfied	2%	3%	3%

Q.1. In general, how satisfied are you with your life?

. . . but strong life satisfaction has been improving across income levels

2012 – 2017 By household income

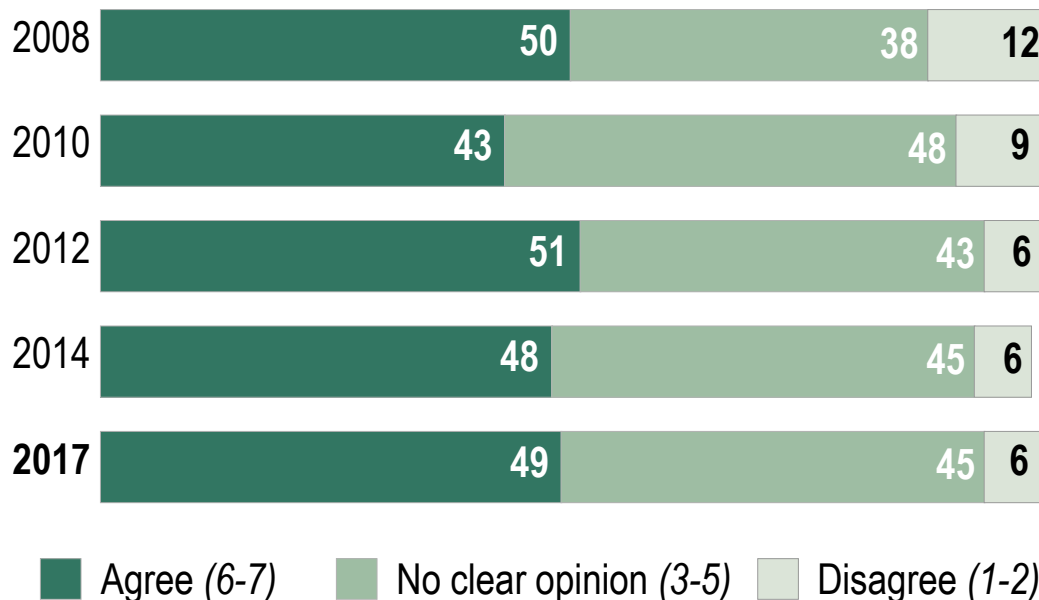


Q.1. In general, how satisfied are you with your life?

Canadians continue to look to government to reduce income inequality between the rich and the poor

2008 - 2017

Agree – Disagree: *Government should implement strong policies to reduce income inequality*



Agree that gov't should act

By region

2014 2017

Atlantic: 59% 58%

Quebec: 56% 55%

Ontario: 42% 49%

MB/SK: 39% 47%

Alberta: 44% 41%

B.C.: 48% 42%

Q.34c. *The Canadian government should implement strong policies to reduce income inequality between the rich and the poor. (7 point-scale :1=strongly agree, 7 = strongly disagree)*

For more information . . .

CANADA

- This report on Canada is available at <http://www.environicsinstitute.org/institute-projects/current-projects/americasbarometer2017>
- Full report on Canada with benchmarking to 28 countries -- Fall 2017

OTHER COUNTRIES IN AMERICAS

- Data and country reports will be available later in 2017 through LAPOP: www.americasbarometer.org

CONTACT: Keith Neuman, Ph.D. keith.neuman@environics.ca

416-969-2457

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The Environics Institute for Survey Research was established by Michael Adams in 2006 to promote relevant and original public opinion and social research on important issues of public policy and social change. It is through such research that organizations and individuals can better understand Canada today, how it has been changing, and where it may be heading.

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