

A Report Card on How Canadians Communicate,
Participate and Lead in Politics

SAMARA'S

DEMOCRACY 360

TALK.ACT.LEAD

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Samara's Democracy 360, a report card on the state of Canada's democracy, focuses on the complex relationship between citizens and political leadership. With the understanding that democracy is about more than just casting a ballot every four years, any conversation about how decisions are taken on the future of our country needs to consider a more robust definition of "everyday democracy."

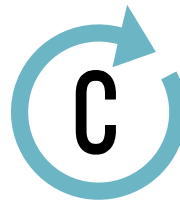
Samara's Democracy 360 expands the measurement of democracy and kick-starts a conversation using measurable indicators focused on three areas essential to a healthy democracy: communication, participation and political leadership. That is: talking, acting and leading.

The Democracy 360 brings together a number of data sources, such as Samara's public opinion research and website content analyses, as well as publicly available data from other sources, including the House of Commons and Elections Canada. It is designed to be a thorough, yet manageable, look at the health of citizens' relationship with politics, and it will be repeated in 2017 in time for Canada's 150th birthday.

In an effort to set a benchmark that prompts reflection and discussion, Samara has awarded an overall letter grade, as well as a letter grade for each of the three areas, as outlined in this report.

The Result: What does C mean? Quite simply our democracy is not doing as well as a country as rich as Canada deserves. Canadians are not participating in politics as much as they could, they don't believe it affects them, and they don't see their leaders as influential or efficacious. To turn this situation around, Canada requires more than just higher voter turnout. Canada requires a culture shift towards "everyday democracy," in which citizens feel politics is a way to make change in the country and their voices are heard.

Current Grade:



WHAT'S INSIDE SAMARA'S DEMOCRACY 360?

CANADIANS DON'T TRUST MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT OR POLITICAL PARTIES AND BELIEVE THEY LARGELY FAIL TO PERFORM THEIR CORE JOBS:

- Only 40% of Canadians report that they trust MPs to do what is right and only 42% of Canadians place some trust in political parties.
- Canadians give MPs and political parties failing grades on nearly all of their responsibilities, ranging from reaching out to citizens to their work in Parliament. Overall, Canadians feel MPs do a better job representing the views of their party than they do representing their constituents.

POLITICS IS SEEN AS IRRELEVANT AND, AS A RESULT, CANADIANS ARE WITHDRAWING FROM THE DEMOCRATIC SYSTEM:

- Only 31% of Canadians believe politics affects them every day.
- Only 37% give any time or resources to formal political activities between elections.
- A surprising number (39%) say they haven't had a single political conversation—online or offline—in a year-long period.
- With a federal voter turnout of 61%, Canada ranks in the bottom fifth among democracies, according to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD).

TO MAKE POLITICS RELEVANT, CANADIANS WILL NEED TO SEE THE VALUE IN POLITICS AND DEMOCRACY. THIS WILL REQUIRE THE FOLLOWING CHANGES:

- MPs who serve as reliable, vibrant, two-way links between citizens and government.
- Citizens who become more politically active at and beyond the ballot box.

- Political leadership that acts in ways that encourages Canadians' involvement and demonstrates how politics is a worthwhile way to invest time in order to make a difference.

DESPITE AN OVERALL UNHEALTHY PICTURE, THE DEMOCRACY 360 ALSO REVEALS SEVERAL POSITIVE SIGNS ON WHICH TO BUILD:

- MPs make considerable efforts—through social media, householder mailings and their websites—to reach out to Canadians. With small changes, they can communicate much more effectively.
- Over half of Canadians petition, donate to charity and volunteer, revealing a desire to connect to causes rooted in and affected by politics.

AN ELECTION IN 2015 PRESENTS A REAL OPPORTUNITY TO BUILD MOMENTUM TOWARDS A MORE ENGAGING POLITICAL CULTURE:

- Individual volunteers, candidates and parties, as well as community groups, can all take simple steps to change how citizens get involved and demand a more responsive democracy.
- Under #TalkActLead, anyone can contribute ideas and solutions to improve how politics works. To spur engagement, Samara Canada will be releasing tip sheets and resources as the election approaches.

INTRODUCTION

“Just because you do not take an interest in politics, doesn’t mean politics won’t take an interest in you.”

—Pericles

“Democracy is not intended to be efficient, linear, logical, cheap [...] The key to its secret is the involvement of the citizen.”

—John Ralston Saul from
Doubter’s Companion: A Dictionary of Aggressive Commonsense

Samara’s Democracy 360 is a made-in-Canada report card on the state of Canada’s democracy, which focuses on the relationship between citizens and political leadership.

“Made-in-Canada” is critical because, as Samara’s co-founders observe in *Tragedy in the Commons*, “Canada is among the world’s most successful democracies. Look at any international ranking of democracy, and we appear, almost without fail, near the top [...] Yet these rankings are increasingly difficult to square with the growing sense among Canadians that the country’s politics are not working quite as they should.” Where international rankings engender complacency, what’s really needed is a constructive dialogue on what has to change so Canada remains a great place to call home.

Samara’s Democracy 360 kick-starts this conversation, using measurable indicators focused on three areas that are essential to a healthy democracy: communication, participation and political leadership. That is: talking, acting and leading.

While not exhaustive, Samara's Democracy 360 paints a rich picture of the way that Canadians engage with—and think about—politics. With the term “leadership” Samara takes a broader view than prime ministers or party leaders alone: all MPs are political leaders, as are the political parties to which most MPs belong, and which are constituted by a national network of locally led riding associations.

Samara's Democracy 360 brings together a number of data sources, such as original public opinion research and website content analyses, as well as publicly available data from other sources, including from the House of Commons and Elections Canada. Such an approach looks beyond the oft-discussed voter turnout to better illuminate the state of Canada's “everyday democracy.” This is not a comprehensive look at all players—for example, this report card does not directly include the work of senators, public servants, political staff, journalists or the judiciary—and future efforts could delve more systematically into political leadership, not only at the federal level, but provincially and municipally, too. But for the inaugural edition, Samara's Democracy 360 is designed to be a thorough, yet manageable, look at the health of citizens' relationship with politics, and one that can be repeated and built upon in future years.

In an effort to set a benchmark that prompts reflection and discussion, Samara has awarded a letter grade for each of the three areas based on the indicators' results.

The circle, echoed by the title's “360,” draws on several themes: to circle back and take stock, to provide a 360-degree scan, and to draw attention to whether Canadians find themselves in a vicious or virtuous circle when it comes to the relationship between citizens and their political leadership.



Samara's Democracy 360 is presented in two parts. The Democracy 360 Report Card, shared here, interprets the results, highlights a slice of data and proposes what Canadians can do to improve our democracy. The Democracy 360 Numbers, a companion to this report card, describes all 23 indicators of a healthy representative democracy, offering a rich resource of data for media and any interested citizens.

Since Canadian democracy has never been measured this robustly, this initial report card serves as the baseline, and when the Democracy 360 returns in 2017—just in time for Canada's 150th birthday—Canadians will be able to see, in a quantifiable way, if democracy has improved or declined.

WHY IS IT NEEDED?

In 2015, Canadians will elect—from among 35 million people—338 of their fellow citizens to form the Parliament that will likely lead Canada into its 150th birthday in 2017 and beyond. If Canada's 21st century takes any cues from the 20th century, domestic crises, international conflict, economic recessions and seemingly intractable problems can be expected; these are problems that Canadians will have to solve together. There will also be opportunities to adapt, evolve and change: Where do we invest in innovation to drive progress? How do we build a healthier and happier country? What do we want Canada to look like at its 200th birthday?

It's through Canada's democratic system that we will grapple with these questions together. And politics, the day-to-day exercise of democracy, offers many ways to drive change, whether through leaders' framing of issues, new laws, policy designs, taxes or spending.

Yet in practice, there's a growing sense expressed not only by ordinary Canadians, but also by many former and current elected representatives, that Canada's democracy has not evolved with the changing times. The political process now repels more citizens than it attracts—particularly young Canadians. That both citizens and political leaders are concerned suggests a need to better understand what is happening to the relationship between the two. This relationship is at the heart of parliamentary democracy and is more complicated than a trip to the ballot box every four years. Under the banner of Samara's Democracy 360, Samara seeks to fill this need and begin a conversation on how to improve how our democracy functions and is experienced.

Samara Canada

Samara Canada is a charity dedicated to reconnecting Canadians to politics. Established in 2009 by Michael MacMillan and Alison Loat, Samara Canada has become Canada's most trusted, non-partisan champion of increased civic engagement and a more positive public life.

Samara Canada's research and educational programming shine new light on Canada's democratic system and encourages greater political participation across the country, to build better politics, and a better Canada, for everyone.

LEADERSHIP LETDOWN

Despite Canada's enviable international ranking among nations, Canadians express a surprising amount of dissatisfaction with democracy—especially with their political leaders. Samara's Democracy 360 reveals several sources of this dissatisfaction, in particular Canadians' low trust in MPs and generally poor reviews of their job performance.

TRUST

Large endeavours undertaken together—like democratic governance—require trust: a belief that, despite uncertainty, leaders will follow through on their commitment. Obviously, blind trust isn't desirable, but when there's more mistrust than trust, it is hard for political leaders to lead, to tackle tough questions and to commit to long-term plans. In the Democracy 360, only 40% of Canadians report that they trust their MPs to do what is right. Political parties fare no better: only 42% of Canadians report trusting them.

PERFORMANCE

Low levels of trust are compounded by the perceived performance of political leaders. When asked to rate MPs' performance across six areas of responsibility, Canadians gave MPs failing grades in all but one area: representing their parties' views (57%). This percentage is notably higher than the grades they received for representing constituents (45%) or holding government to account (42%). Though Canadians, in a way, hire an MP through elections, these elections will mean little to citizens if there is a prevailing sense that, regardless of party and regardless of sitting in government or opposition, MPs are there for their parties and not for their constituents.

Parties fare a little better in their key roles, such as policy development and engagement with Canadians. Although Canadians give parties passing grades for their roles in elections, such as recruiting candidates (50%) and encouraging people to vote (55%), they reserve their lowest marks for parties' performance in reaching out to Canadians to hear their views (42%). Perhaps, then, it's no surprise so few people are involved with parties today.

THE CITIZEN BYSTANDER

With low levels of citizens' trust and dismal job performance, political leaders may be letting Canadians down, but Canadians aren't holding up their side of the relationship either. Canadians believe in the values of democracy, but they are spectators rather than participants. Too many have tuned out altogether, whether it's at the polls, getting involved or simply talking politics.

VOTING

With federal turnout at 61% in the 2011 federal election, Canada ranks in the bottom fifth for voter participation among OECD countries. This reflects a steep decline from the 75% turnout that characterized most of Canada's post-war period until the 1980s. Particularly troublesome is that this declining turnout is driven almost entirely by young Canadians (aged 18 to 24), who vote at almost half the rate (39%) as Canadians aged 65 to 74 (75%), and who are increasingly less likely to ever start voting.

GETTING INVOLVED

Outside of an election, Canadians are less likely to participate in politics. By their own admission, a clear majority (63%) of Canadians did not put any time into any of the following six activities in the last year:

- With a political party: Joining a party, donating to a candidate or party, or volunteering for a candidate or campaign
- On politics' frontlines: Attending a political meeting or speech, planning a political event or giving a political speech in public

POLITICAL TALK

Even for a very accessible form of participation—talking about politics both online or in person—a large number of Canadians (39%) report never having had a single political conversation in a year-long period.

Without strong signals that politics matters and that political participation is something to be proud of, politics feels distant, if not irrelevant, to many people. When Samara asked Canadians “how often they are affected by decisions made by elected officials,” only 31% responded “every day.” Worse: 17% indicated they “don’t know.”

THE REPORT CARD

Canada functions well, for the most part. Daily, millions of Canadians are served by public institutions, such as public schools and universities, and publicly funded services such as medical care and law enforcement. But when problems arise—and they will—Canadians need a democratic system that works, where citizens believe politics is an effective route to make change, rather than something to be ignored or circumvented.

Canada's democracy is now like a slow leak when it rains. It's easy to ignore a pesky leak, but if left until the damage becomes severe or a storm rages, the problem will become more difficult and expensive to correct. So, too, is the case with democracy, which Samara's inaugural report card echoes. The overall grade of C speaks to a turning point that Canada's democracy faces: without some intervention, "everyday democracy" will be weakened further.

In the spirit of a constructive report card, the Democracy 360 delves deeper into each section to consider how and where to improve. Fortunately, there are many encouraging signs and examples of commitment from leaders and citizens alike. Built upon, these could lead to a different path, towards a politics that Canadians believe matters.

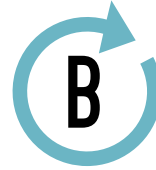
A note on the letter grades

As this is the first time Canadian democracy has been measured in this way, bringing together data on citizens' perceptions as well as objectively measurable data, there are no historical or cross-country comparisons that can be accurately made. In order to establish a scale that underpins the grades given, researchers at Samara, with input from individuals active in the area of democratic engagement, considered the question "*What would a 'great' democracy look like in ten years time?*" Based on this input, we compared these definitions of "great" with where Canada is now, and determined the grades below. More details are available at www.samaracanada.com.

COMMUNICATION

The Aspiration: Canadians need Members of Parliament who serve as reliable, vibrant, two-way links between citizens and government, and citizens themselves need to begin to engage by talking about politics.

Current Grade:



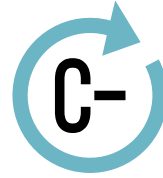
MPs do reach out to Canadians through the channels available to them. Most MPs are on social media, and the vast majority of them maintain websites that share their offices' contact information. Only a few fail to send printed householders to all the homes in their ridings. In short, MPs have the tools to speak to Canadians and they use them, but whether they do so successfully is more difficult to ascertain; Canadians' low trust levels suggest there is room for improvement. For example, when social media is used more often to broadcast a message, rather than gather input or exchange views, it misses a chance to engage.

Over half of Canadians report having some form of contact with an MP, political party or candidate in the last year. This is more evidence that outreach is happening, though perhaps it is not consistent or executed in a way that resonates with everyone. But with many Canadians receiving a phone call, email, mailing or a door knock, there are ample opportunities for Canadians to spend a few more minutes considering politics or, better still, engaging with others in a political conversation.

PARTICIPATION

The Aspiration: Citizens need to be more politically active—at the ballot box and beyond. They should feel invited and compelled to put some of their time and energy into politics to effect change.

Current Grade:



Over half of Canadians say they petition, donate to charities and volunteer annually. This is proof that many citizens do care about their communities and country, and are willing to give their time or resources accordingly.

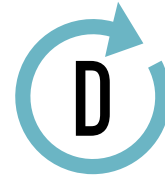
But this activity is often at a distance from politics. For example, only a third of Canadians report that they've reached out to an elected official in the last year, whether to share a message, an idea or concern. What would it take for citizens to value the political arena as a domain for change, as they do with their charitable donations and volunteer hours?

One way to make this happen is to better connect community work to being political—and to reclaim a term that is often seen as pejorative rather than complimentary. This means that Canadians who embody the belief that politics matters to communities should be better recognized and celebrated for their contributions, in the same way volunteers or entrepreneurs are celebrated. Samara has launched an annual “Everyday Political Citizen Project” which asks Canadians to nominate ordinary people engaging in big and small ways that enhance the country’s political culture. These energies with the help of many—schools, community groups, foundations and political leaders—can lead a cultural shift that reclaims being political.

LEADERSHIP

The Aspiration: Members of Parliament and political parties should act in ways that encourage Canadians involvement and build a culture in which politics is seen as worthwhile and efficacious.

Current Grade:



A slight majority of Canadians (54%) believe that MPs *can* shape the direction of the country—a hopeful sign. From the 80 exit interviews that Samara conducted with former MPs, most of the people who become MPs describe entering politics to make a difference in their communities and country. However, MPs also report being stymied by their own parties, which prevents them from doing the job they initially sought.

This too is reflected in Canadians' views of political parties; a majority (62%) feel candidates and parties only want their vote, not their involvement. Yet parties remain essential to the functioning of Canada's parliamentary system. It's clear that in order to restore the trust of those who elect them, party leaders and MPs should work towards more balanced relationships—relationships that enable MPs to better fulfill their jobs as representatives.

Another aspect of leadership is the degree to which it reflects the people from which it's chosen. Though diversity in Parliament has improved significantly over time, the speed of change hasn't matched the country's demographic changes. Women, visible minorities, Indigenous peoples, immigrants and young people are all underrepresented in Parliament. While perfect demographic representation is unlikely, a better match would send a powerful

message to citizens that they are reflected in the political process and that Parliament is equipped to understand the specific needs and concerns of Canada's diverse population. To remedy this, political parties, as the entities that recruit and select candidates, have a major role to play.

The Largest Provincial Differences

Canadians experience most of their political life in the same way across all provinces, and hold similar views when it comes to how politics works. However, there are a few survey questions where interesting differences can be seen.

When it comes to the number of Canadians who report having been contacted by email, phone, mail or in person by political leaders, there's a 22 percentage point difference: Residents of Newfoundland report the lowest levels (50%) and residents of Manitoba report the highest (72%).

On social media, Canadians from PEI are the most likely to follow a politician (45%) while those from Saskatchewan are the least likely (15%).

Ontario and Alberta have the highest number who are "very satisfied" with the way democracy is working (16% and 15% respectively) and Quebec has the highest number "not satisfied at all" (15%).

Canadians in Ontario are the most satisfied with the way Members of Parliament are doing their jobs (53%), while those in Quebec are the least satisfied (37%).

CONCLUSION

With an overall score of C, Samara's Democracy 360 reveals a rather lacklustre state of Canada's politics. Samara's aim in creating this resource is not to signal that perfection is attainable in democracy, but that improvement is required. This presents an important challenge to Canadians: Moving away from a vicious circle that increasingly separates political leadership from citizens' ideas and talents, and

corrodes citizens' trust in, and valuation of, political leadership. However, a federal election in 2015 presents a critical opportunity not just to cast a ballot, but also to provoke citizens, candidates, parties and civil society groups to play a role.

If history is a guide, we can expect in the coming federal election the usual mix of horserace-driven media coverage, focused primarily on party leaders, push-polls and negative advertising. But there will also be numerous occasions to get involved on campaigns, to ask candidates tough questions and, above all, to make a stronger democracy a powerful theme in the election campaign. Every small effort—by citizens and leaders—towards a positive, engaged democratic Canada can spark another effort, and bring Canada to a virtuous circle and a stronger democracy.

Samara hopes that when the Democracy 360 returns in two years, in time for Canada's 150th birthday, Canadians will be communicating, participating and leading the way to a Canada that is more representative, dynamic and responsive—in short, a more democratic country.



In the meantime, 2015 remains an important year to work together. The findings of the Democracy 360 offer a focal point for citizens, community groups and candidates to elevate communication, participation and leadership—to #TalkActLead. Samara will be releasing a number of resources throughout 2015 to help make #TalkActLead straightforward and something everyone can do, and Samara will be listening for great ideas under the #TalkActLead banner.

SAMARA'S

DEMOCRACY 360

TALK.ACT.LEAD

THE NUMBERS

Samara's Democracy 360 uses quantifiable indicators to focus on three areas that are essential to a healthy democracy: communication, participation and political leadership.

The indicators measured in this report track Canadian democracy across a wide range of areas, from diversity in the House of Commons to the many ways Canadians can participate in politics to how Members of Parliament and parties function. While not exhaustive, together the indicators paint a rich picture of the way that Canadians talk, act and lead in politics, adding multiple dimensions to voter turnout, the metric most commonly used to measure democracy.

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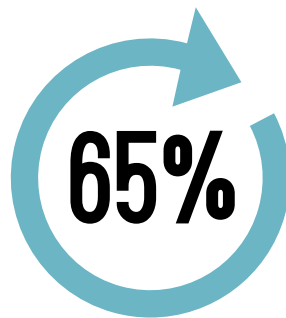
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Think we missed something? Let us know at info@samaracanada.com.

SATISFACTION WITH DEMOCRACY



The percentage of Canadians reporting that they are “very” or “fairly” satisfied with democracy.

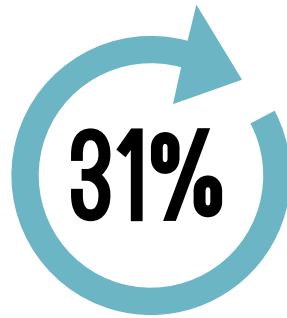
WHY THIS INDICATOR MATTERS

One key test of how well a representative system is working is whether citizens are happy with it. Voter turnout is not the best indication of satisfaction as research indicates that people vote for a variety of reasons unrelated to happiness, including a sense of duty.

WHAT THE NUMBER MEANS

Over a third of Canadians are “not very satisfied” or “not satisfied at all” with how democracy works.

POLITICS MATTERS EVERY DAY



The percentage of Canadians reporting that decisions made by elected officials affect them “every day.”

WHY THIS INDICATOR MATTERS

Political decisions ensure that the country functions as it should, providing basic necessities such as public safety and clean water. If Canadians don’t believe that politics affects them every day, they may not pay attention to it or participate in the functioning of democracy.

WHAT THE NUMBER MEANS

This low number may help explain Canadians’ low levels of participation and voting. It suggests they don’t think political decisions are relevant, and they aren’t connecting public services to political decisions. Indeed a full 7% of Canadians say political decisions never affect them.

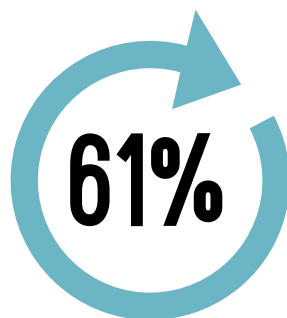
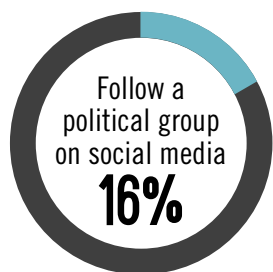
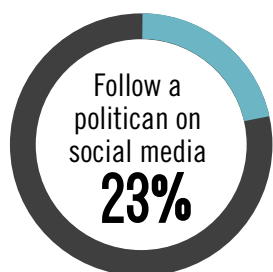
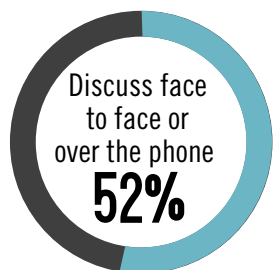
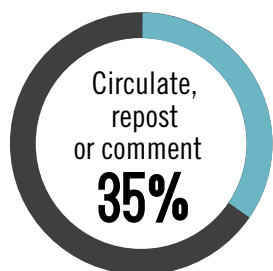
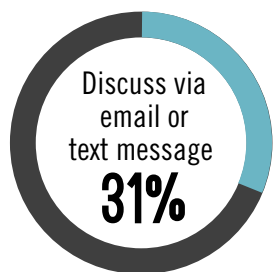
COMMUNICATION

In a representative democracy, good communication is necessary for Canadians to be adequately represented in Parliament. How else can a Member of Parliament know what their constituents think? But in politics, as in other parts of life, communication needs to be a two-way street. In assessing the contribution different kinds of communication make to the state of our democracy, we consider how Canadians reach out to MPs, how MPs explain themselves to Canadians and how much Canadians discuss politics among themselves.

COMMUNICATION KEY FINDINGS

- Despite having more communication channels than in the past, thanks to websites and social media, political chatter doesn't seem to be growing—39% of Canadians did not discuss politics either online or offline in the last year.
- The good news is that MPs and parties are using several different channels to communicate with Canadians, including phone, email and mail. But the message is not getting through, with only 63% of Canadians reporting contact from a politician or party.
- As well, only a quarter of Canadians are following elected officials or candidates on social media.

CANADIANS DISCUSS POLITICS



The percentage of Canadians who reported having a discussion about politics in at least one of five ways.

WHY THIS INDICATOR MATTERS

How many Canadians discuss politics tells us how engaged they are with issues, policies and the democratic system as a whole. Discussion is often the first step towards action.

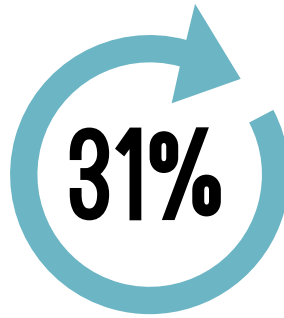
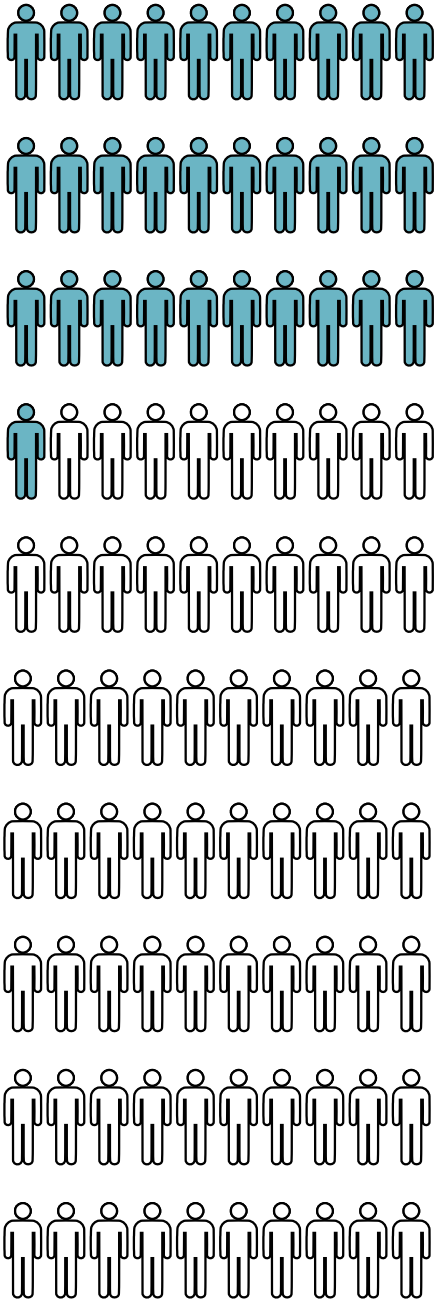
WHAT THE NUMBER MEANS

Political discussion is very low in Canada. Even with the growth of social media, people are still more likely to talk about politics in person, than online.

Source: Survey



CANADIANS CONTACT POLITICAL LEADERSHIP



The percentage of Canadians who report having contacted an elected official in the last year.

WHY THIS INDICATOR MATTERS

All Canadians are served by elected representatives, and ensuring MPs understand their views requires them to ask questions or share concerns directly with their MP.

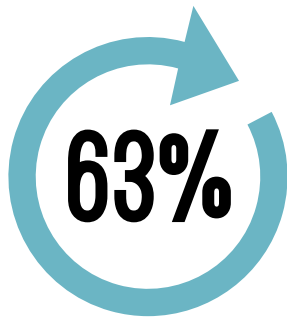
WHAT THE NUMBER MEANS

More than two-thirds of Canadians did not reach out to an elected official in the last year.

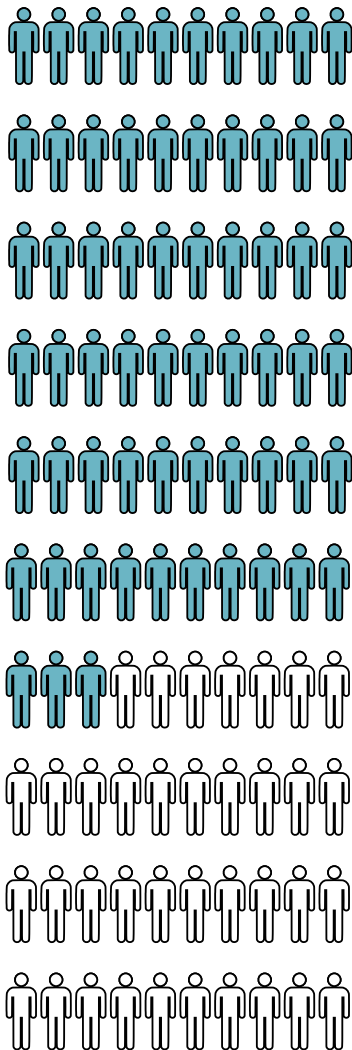
Source: Survey



POLITICAL LEADERS CONTACT CANADIANS



The percentage of Canadians who report having been contacted by a party, candidate or Member of Parliament—via email, phone, mail, in person, or social networking—in the last year.



WHY THIS INDICATOR MATTERS

Canadians rightfully view constituent representation as an important aspect of any MP's job, and doing so effectively requires elected representatives to invite Canadians' participation, report on their own actions, and work to understand their constituents' concerns and ideas. It's also important that Canadians, even if they don't engage with MPs, are aware that efforts have been made to reach them.

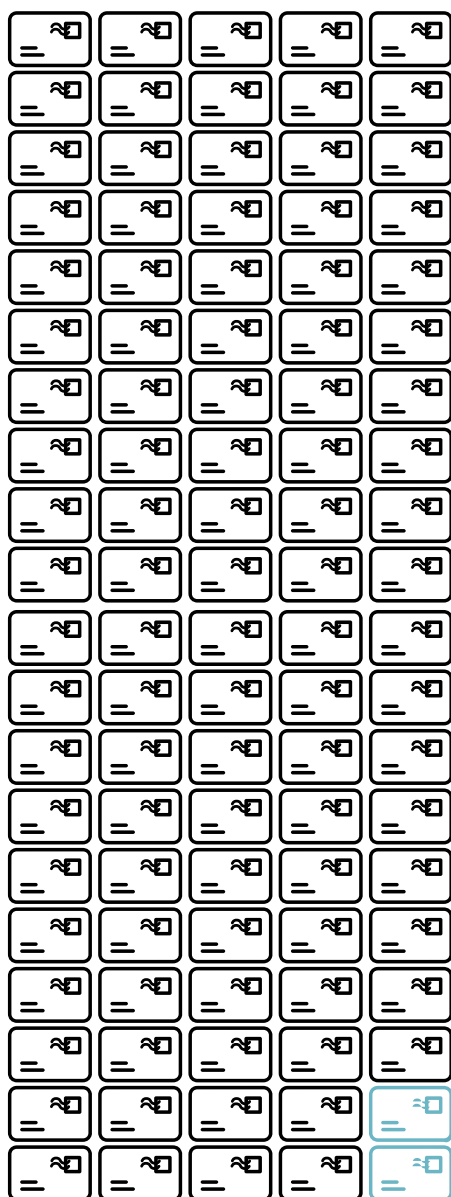
WHAT THE NUMBER MEANS

That two-thirds of Canadians recall being contacted by a political leader indicates that elected officials are trying to connect with Canadians. But when this fact is paired with their poor performance scores it suggests that Canadians are not particularly impressed with the style or message broadcasted. As well, one-third report no contact from a party, candidate or MP in the last year.

Source: Survey



MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT SEND HOUSEHOLDERS



98%

The percentage of Members of Parliament who reported to have spent money on at least one householder pamphlet between April 2013 and March 2014.

WHY THIS INDICATOR MATTERS

MPs' householder paper pamphlets are delivered up to four times a year to all households in a riding and are paid for by the House of Commons. MPs use them to report on their activities in Ottawa and in the local constituency.

WHAT THE NUMBER MEANS

Almost all MPs send householders to communicate with their constituents between elections. But since one-third of Canadians don't recall being contacted, this suggests that Canadians aren't paying attention or don't like what they're reading.

Source: House of Commons



MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT'S WEBSITES



- ☒ A biography
- ☒ Office location
- ☒ Hours of operation
- ☒ Email address
- ☒ Storage of personal information
- ☒ Work in Parliament
- ☒ Work in the riding
- ☒ Community events
- ☒ Services provided
- ☒ Finances
- ☒ Political party information
- ☒ A newsletter
- ☒ Space for discussion or comment
- ☒ Social media presence
- ☒ Petitions
- ☒ How to volunteer



The average grade of 299 Members of Parliament's websites across a checklist of 16 best practices.

WHY THIS INDICATOR MATTERS

An MP's website is a digital office, offering an opportunity for MPs to share information and for constituents to connect with their elected leaders.

WHAT THE NUMBER MEANS

All but three MPs have a website—but most can improve on how effectively their online “office” can inform and engage constituents. Indeed, only 12 MPs' websites received a mark of 13 out of 16 and higher.

Source: Samara original data analysis



RIDING ASSOCIATIONS' WEBSITES

Checklist includes:

- ☒ Email address
- ☒ President's name
- ☒ Executives' names
- ☒ Meeting schedule
- ☒ Riding details
- ☒ Party platform
- ☒ Link to party
- ☒ Donation to party
- ☒ Party leader
- ☒ Past candidates
- ☒ Riding events
- ☒ Social media presence
- ☒ How to volunteer
- ☒ How to become a candidate
- ☒ Newsletter



The average percentage grade of 1307 riding associations' websites across a checklist of 15 best practices. The research looked at associations in

every riding in the country for the Conservative Party of Canada, the Liberal Party of Canada, the New Democratic Party and the Green Party, as well as the Bloc Québécois in the province of Quebec.

WHY THIS INDICATOR MATTERS

Riding associations—the local chapters of political parties—can provide valuable information for people looking to get involved with politics in their communities.

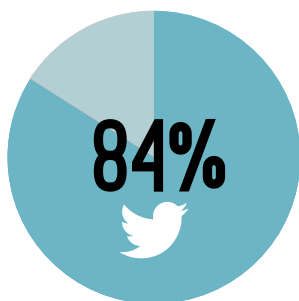
WHAT THE NUMBER MEANS

Almost a quarter of associations don't have a website at all, and those that do are failing to take full advantage of online opportunities. Only four out of 1307 riding association websites scored 12 out of 15 or higher.

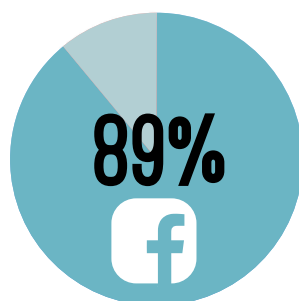
Source: Samara original data analysis



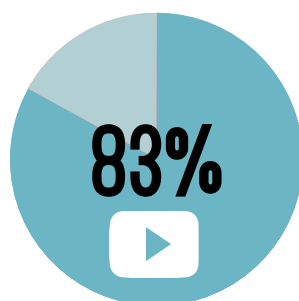
MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT ON SOCIAL MEDIA



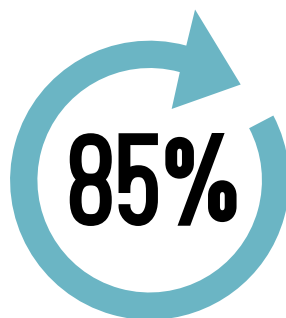
TWITTER



FACEBOOK



YOUTUBE



The average percentage of Members of Parliament using three popular social media accounts.

WHY THIS INDICATOR MATTERS

The adoption and effective use of social media suggests a willingness of MPs to engage with Canadians on interactive platforms.

WHAT THE NUMBER MEANS

The vast majority of MPs are already on a social network.

Source: Full Duplex — Peace, Order and Googleable Government



PARTICIPATION

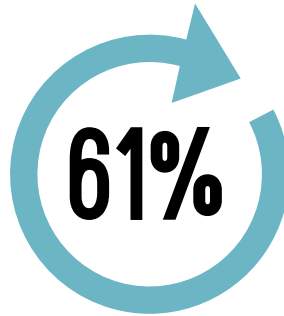
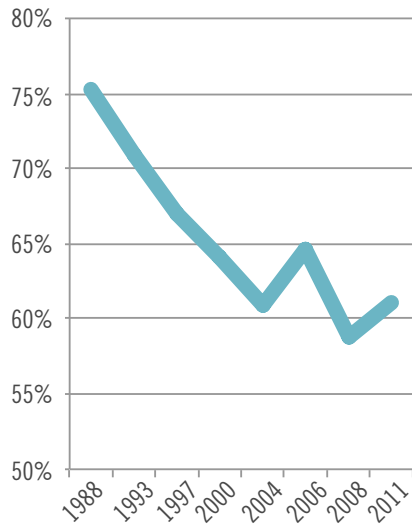
Engagement beyond basic communication is fundamental to democracy; participation is the lifeblood of politics. But voting isn't the only way to participate. By examining different kinds of activities, including volunteering with a charity or political party, donating, or protesting, the Participation section takes a complete picture of how Canadians participate in political life in Canada—not just at election time but every day.

PARTICIPATION KEY FINDINGS

- Participation in individual activities is low, and below federal turnout (61%) in most cases. While Canadians give time and money to making communities better places to live, they are far less likely to apply the same energy to politics: 83% of Canadians perform at least one civic engagement activity while only 37% do at least one formal engagement activity.
- The most popular form of participation is donating to a charity, followed by signing a petition.
- While less than two-thirds of Canadians voted in the most recent federal election, those who did vote are not demographically representative of Canada. Older people vote at much higher rates than young people, making our system less reflective of their views and concerns.

VOTER TURNOUT

VOTING RATES OVER TIME

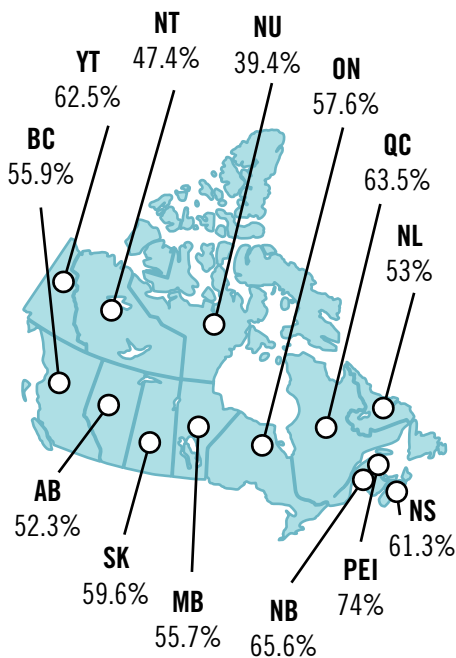


The percentage of eligible Canadians who voted in the 2011 Federal election.

WHY THIS INDICATOR MATTERS

Voting is one of the easiest ways for citizens to express their preferences, and higher turnout will likely bring about more complete and accurate representation.

ACROSS THE COUNTRY



WHAT THE NUMBER MEANS

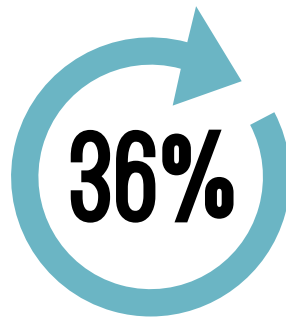
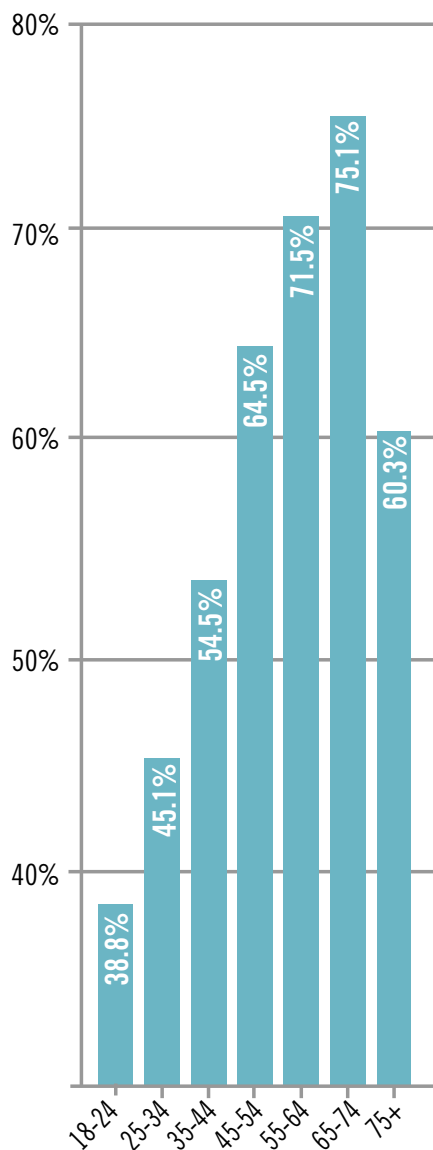
For forty years after World War II turnout hovered around 75%, but it began to decline in 1988 driven largely by a decline in youth participation. Differences can also be seen from province to province; more than 30 percentage points separates turnout in PEI and Nunavut in the last federal election.

Source: Elections Canada



OLD AND YOUNG VOTERS' GAP

VOTERS BY COHORT



The gap between the cohort with the highest turnout in the 2011 federal election (ages 65–74) and the lowest (ages 18–24).

WHY THIS INDICATOR MATTERS

If voter turnout varies significantly by age, politicians are less likely to fully represent the population and its diverse needs.

WHAT THE NUMBERS MEAN

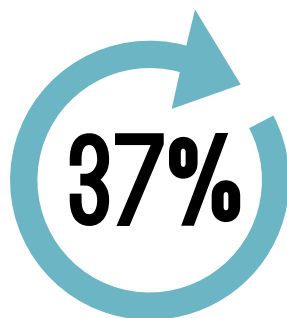
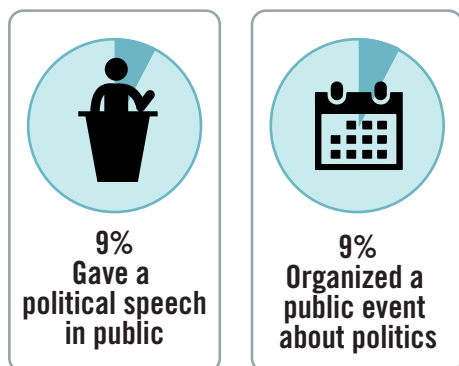
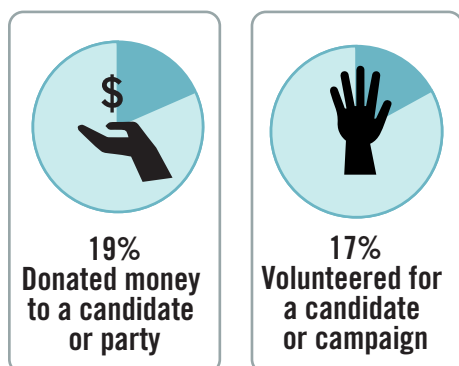
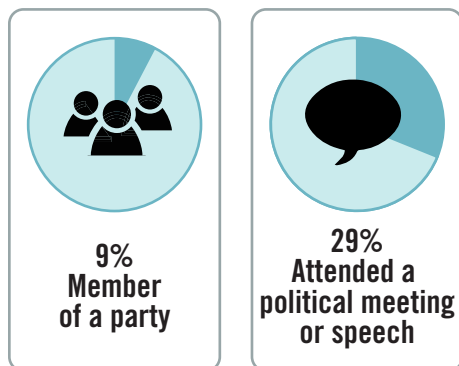
If young voters continue to abstain, politicians will continue to base their electoral platforms and legislative decisions on the interests of the people who do vote, making our democracy less and less representative of the needs of younger people.

Source: Elections Canada



RATES OF FORMAL ENGAGEMENT

Canadians report on their involvement in six activities that are considered to be more conventional forms of political participation, beyond voting or running as a candidate, in the last year.



The percentage of Canadians who participated in at least one formal political activity.

WHY THIS INDICATOR MATTERS

Formal political activities get citizens closer to political decision makers and decision-making.

WHAT THE NUMBERS MEAN

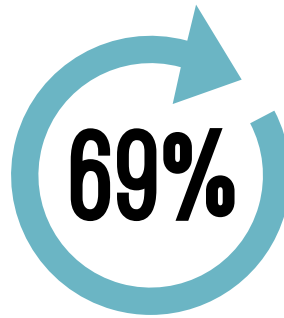
These generally low levels of participation suggest most Canadians do not see a place for themselves in formal politics or that the political system is not doing what it can or should do to facilitate citizens' involvement.

Source: Survey



RATES OF ACTIVISM

Canadians report on whether they participated in three forms of activism in the last year.



The percentage of Canadians who participated in at least one form of activism.



Boycotted or bought products for ethical, environmental or political reasons



WHY THIS INDICATOR MATTERS

These activities are a way for citizens to immediately express their political support or opposition in between elections, without direct contact with their MP.

WHAT THE NUMBERS MEAN

Although it is commonly believed that Canadians are turning away from formal politics and towards activism, even the highest rate of activist participation is still about the same as voter turnout.

Source: Survey



RATES OF CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

Canadians report on four civic engagement activities performed in the last year.



78%
Donated money to
a charitable cause



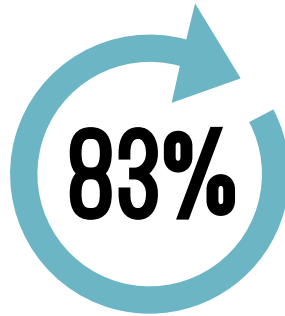
53%
Volunteered for a
charitable cause



38%
Been active in a
group or organization



40%
Worked with others to
solve a community problem



The percentage of
Canadians who participated
in at least one civic
engagement activity.

WHY THIS INDICATOR MATTERS

Democratic life and community vitality are closely linked. Tracking civic engagement reveals ways that Canadians contribute to their communities beyond formal politics.

WHAT THE NUMBER MEANS

Of the three kinds of participation defined in this research, civic engagement is the most common form of engagement.

Source: Survey



LEADERSHIP

Canadians select Members of Parliament to represent them in Ottawa. At the same time, they look to these political leaders to make decisions to move the country forward. How well do political leaders and their parties fulfill the roles Canadians expect of them? As well, do MPs reflect the demographic make-up of the Canadian population, and by extension, help Canadians see themselves reflected in their government?

LEADERSHIP KEY FINDINGS

In Canadians' assessment, MPs and parties are failing, or almost failing, in a number of ways.

- Over half of Canadians are dissatisfied with how MPs are doing their jobs overall. Canadians gave MPs failing grades in most of their functions, including helping people in their ridings, holding government to account and explaining decisions made in Parliament.
- Six out of 10 Canadians think political parties are only after their votes, not their opinions.
- Only half of Canadians believe the work and decisions of MPs influence the direction of our country.
- Parliament fails to adequately reflect the diversity of the Canadian population.

DIVERSITY IN THE HOUSE OF COMMONS



A score out of 100 that reflects the average of how well five different Canadian demographic groups are reflected in the makeup of the House of Commons.

WHY THIS INDICATOR MATTERS

For Canadians to believe politics matters, they need to see themselves represented in the make-up of the House of Commons. It is possible that a parliament made up of MPs of diverse backgrounds will be better suited to understanding the specific needs and concerns of Canada's diverse population. Perhaps if Canadians see themselves in the system, they might be more likely to participate.

WHAT THE NUMBER MEANS

Achieving a score of 100 would represent perfect parity between the Canadian population and their representatives. Perfect parity is not easily attainable, but it's notable that in certain areas, such as the election of foreign-born Canadians, there has been more progress. That said, there's work to be done if we aspire to a House that better reflects the diverse demographic make-up of Canada. Younger cohorts, ages 18–30, are particularly underrepresented.

VISIBLE MINORITY

9% of the House of Commons

19% of the country

50% of the way to parity

WOMEN

25% of the House of Commons

51% of the country

50% of the way to parity

FOREIGN-BORN CANADIANS

14% of the House of Commons

20% of the country

68% of the way to parity

YOUTH (AGES 18 TO 30)

5% of the House of Commons

17% of the country

29% of the way to parity

INDIGENOUS PEOPLE

2% of the House of Commons

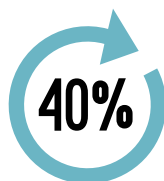
4% of the country

54% of the way to parity

TRUST IN AND SATISFACTION WITH POLITICAL LEADERS

TRUST

“A great deal” or “a fair amount” to do what’s right.



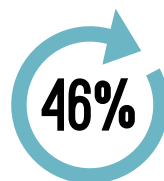
Members of Parliament



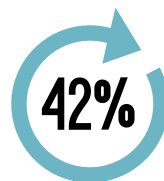
Political Parties

SATISFACTION

“Very” or “fairly” satisfied with how they are doing their jobs.



Members of Parliament



Political Parties

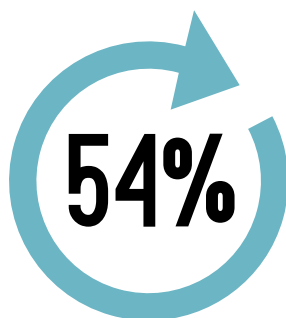
WHY THIS INDICATOR MATTERS

If public levels of trust in MPs and their organizing bodies—parties—remains low, the legitimacy of government is undermined. And decisions taken by government will be difficult to implement and possibly even ignored. One measure of how well parties and MPs are doing their jobs is the satisfaction of the Canadian public.

WHAT THE NUMBERS MEAN

Trust in politicians is historically quite low compared to other professions. Satisfaction with political leaders is lower than people’s satisfaction with democracy.

MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT ARE INFLUENTIAL



The percentage of Canadians who “agree” or “strongly agree” that the work and decisions of Members of Parliament influence the direction of the country.



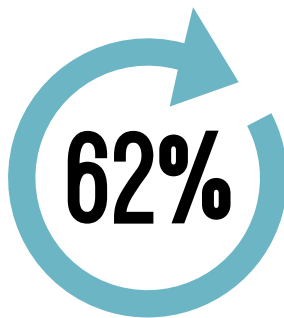
WHY THIS INDICATOR MATTERS

Politics is how we make decisions together. In a representative democracy, we elect MPs to consider those decisions on behalf of citizens to set the direction of the country.

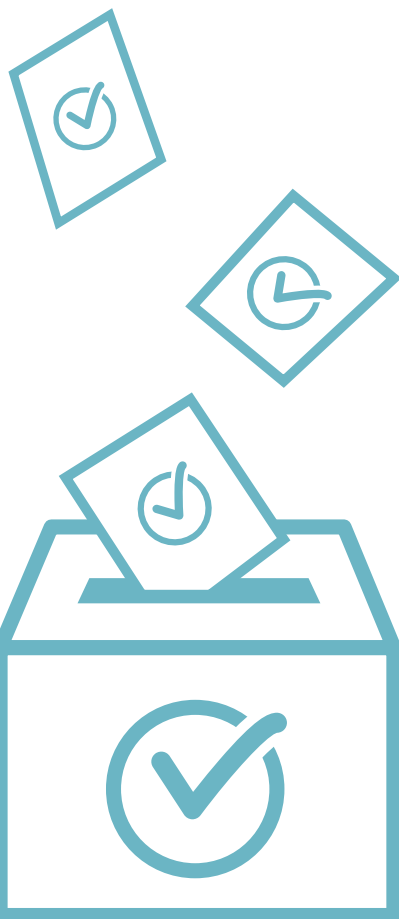
WHAT THE NUMBER MEANS

While half of Canadians feel MPs exercise influence on the direction of the country, the remainder either “disagree” or “strongly disagree” (13%) or have no opinion (33% “neither agree or disagree”).

PARTIES ONLY WANT VOTES



Percentage of Canadians who answered “agree” or “strongly agree” that candidates and parties only want their vote.



WHY THIS INDICATOR MATTERS

This measurement assesses whether people feel political parties genuinely seek to involve Canadians in politics, and promote a fuller and deeper conversation about political issues in this country.

WHAT THE NUMBER MEANS

Over 60% of Canadians feel that political parties and their candidates are not interested in real engagement or dialogue. Only 11% of Canadians “disagree” or “strongly disagree.”

MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT'S JOB PERFORMANCE REVIEWS

REPRESENTATION



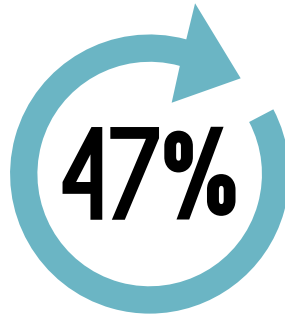
Representing the views of people in their riding
45%



Representing the views of their parties
57%



Helping people in their ridings
46%



Average percentage grade for Members of Parliament on six core jobs that focus on representation, accountability and legislation.

WHY THIS INDICATOR MATTERS

Through elections Canadians hire and fire MPs as their representatives in Ottawa. This indicator gives Canadians a chance to weigh in on MPs' job performance between elections by awarding them grades on each of their jobs.

ACCOUNTABILITY



Holding government to account
42%

LEGISLATION



Debating and voting on issues in the House of Commons
48%



Explaining decisions made in Parliament
43%

WHAT THE NUMBER MEANS

Canadians award MPs failing grades on almost all their key roles, with the worst grade of all going to how well MPs hold government to account. Either MPs are doing a bad job or somehow the explanation of their work is not understood by Canadians. The only passing grade MPs received was in representing the views of their parties.

Source: Survey



POLITICAL PARTIES' JOB PERFORMANCE REVIEWS

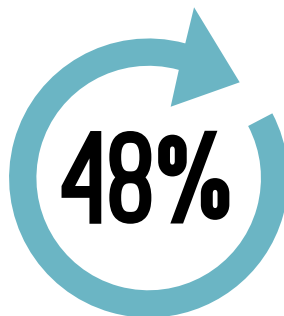
ELECTIONS



Recruiting candidates and competing in elections
50%



Encouraging people to vote
55%



Average percentage grade for political parties on six core jobs that focus on elections, engagement and policy development.

ENGAGEMENT



Hearing ideas from party members
47%



Reaching out to Canadians so their views can be heard
42%

WHY THIS INDICATOR MATTERS

Political parties dominate Canadians' understanding of politics. Partisan debate often frames the news coverage out of Ottawa, and most Canadians consider party and leader preferences when casting a ballot. After the election is over, parties affect and direct how governments form and legislatures function.

POLICY



Coming up with new policy ideas and solutions
44%



Explaining what the party stands for
48%

WHAT THE NUMBER MEANS

Parties are fundamental to the functioning of our system, but Canadians give them failing grades on four of their key roles, and they just barely pass on two others. In particular parties need to do more to reach out to Canadians—their lowest mark.

Source: Survey



BRIEF METHODOLOGY

In the intervening years between conception and publication of Samara's Democracy 360, Samara Canada test-drove a number of the analyses in the Samara Democracy Report series, which have also provoked questions about the health of political and democratic life in Canada. Previous Democracy Reports are available to read at www.samaracanada.com.

Samara Canada was also happy to share the data with a team of academics. The subsequent academic book published by UBC Press in 2014, *Canadian Democracy from the Ground Up: Perceptions and Performance*, provides an in-depth exploration of Canada's democracy—focusing on citizens, political leadership and the media.

A full methodology that includes greater detail about the process used to create the Democracy 360 is available at www.samaracanada.com. Included below are brief descriptions of the data sources used in Samara's Democracy 360.

2014 SAMARA CITIZENS' SURVEY

The Samara Citizens' Survey was conducted in English and French using an online sample of 2406 Canadian residents over 18 years of age living in ten provinces. Data was collected between December 12 and December 31, 2014. The survey has a credibility interval of 1.99 percentage points, 19 times out of 20. Responses were weighted to ensure they reflect a nationally representative sample of Canadians. Questions that asked about Canadians' activities were limited to the last 12 months.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

The 2013 to 2014 Members' Expenditures Reports were used to determine the percentage of MPs that spent money on householders, and therefore likely sent a householder, during the reporting period. Demographic information about MPs was compiled using information available on www.parl.gc.ca.

PUBLICALLY ACCESSIBLE DATA

Samara collected data on MPs' websites (collection from May to July 2014) and Electoral District Association websites (collection from August to September 2013). The MP social media data is drawn from the 2013 annual report "Peace, Order and Googleable Government" produced by Full Duplex.

ELECTIONS CANADA

Rates of 2011 voter turnout are sourced from Elections Canada's reports.

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