

# Reasons for not voting in the federal election, October 21, 2019

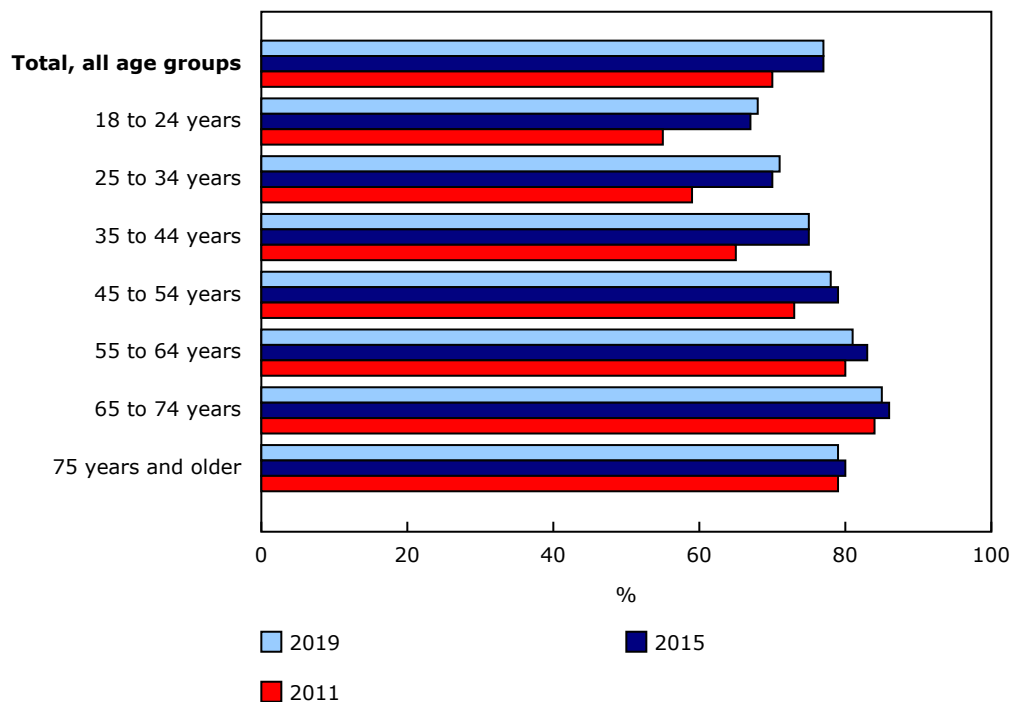
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## Voter turnout among youth holds steady for the October 21, 2019, federal election

Just over three-quarters (77%) of Canadians reported voting in the 2019 federal election, unchanged from the 2015 election.

In particular, following notable increases of more than 10 percentage points between the 2011 and 2015 elections, voter turnout among younger people aged 18 to 24, and 25 to 34, remained at similar levels in 2019.

**Chart 1**  
Voter turnout by age group, 2011, 2015 and 2019 federal elections



Source(s): Labour Force Survey (3701).

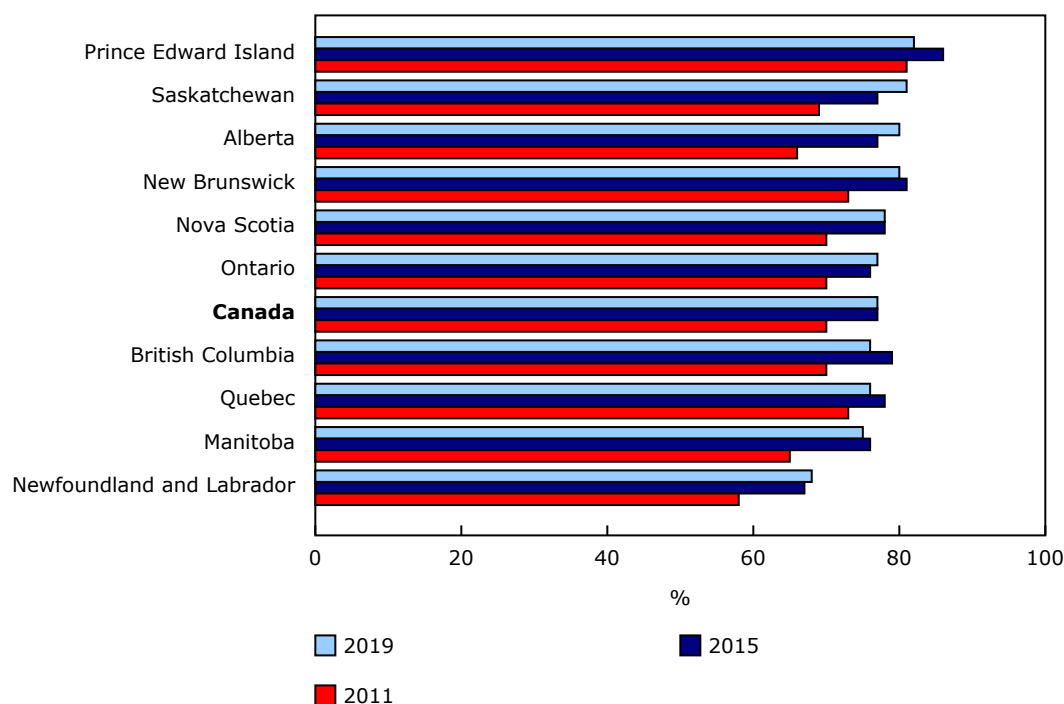
## Voter turnout increases in Saskatchewan, Alberta and Ontario

Compared with the 2015 federal election, the proportion of Canadians who reported voting in 2019 increased in Saskatchewan (+4 percentage points), Alberta (+3 percentage points), and Ontario (+2 percentage points). These are more modest increases than those observed in most provinces between the 2011 and 2015 elections.

While Prince Edward Island had the highest proportion (82%) of people who reported voting in the 2019 election, voter turnout in the province decreased by 4 percentage points compared with 2015. Declines were also recorded in British Columbia (-3 percentage points) and Quebec (-2 percentage points). There was little change in the remaining provinces.



**Chart 2**  
**Voter turnout by province, 2011, 2015 and 2019 federal elections**



Source(s): Labour Force Survey (3701).

### "Not interested in politics" remains top reason for not voting

Among the 23% of eligible Canadians who did not vote, the top reason for not voting in the federal election was "not interested in politics," cited by 35% of non-voters in 2019. This was the most common reason for all age groups, with the exception of those aged 75 and older, who were most likely to indicate that they did not vote due to an illness or disability (49%).

Non-voters who were Canadian citizens by birth were more likely to report a lack of interest in politics as the reason for not casting a ballot (37%), compared with citizens by naturalization—both those who had been in Canada for 10 years or less (26%) and those who immigrated more than 10 years earlier (also 26%).

### One in five non-voters report being too busy

Collectively, everyday life reasons were cited by nearly half of all non-voters (46%); these include being too busy (22%), having an illness or disability (13%), or being out of town (11%).

Everyday life issues were the most common reasons cited by non-voters in British Columbia, while political issues (including not interested in politics) were most prevalent in Nova Scotia.

## Women more likely to report illness or disability

Female non-voters (48%) were more likely than their male counterparts (44%) to cite one of the everyday life issues as the reason for not voting, most notably having an illness or disability (16% versus 10%). This is partly related to the fact that a higher proportion of women were in the older age groups compared with men. One in ten female non-voters was aged 75 or older.

In contrast, men (37%) were more likely to report not being interested in politics compared with women (32%).

## Some electors not voting for reasons related to the electoral process

Among Canadians who did not vote in the 2019 federal election, 5% identified issues with the electoral process as the reason for not voting, including not being able to prove their identity or address, a lack of information about the voting process, or issues with the voter information card.

Non-voters aged 75 and older (9%) and aged 18 to 24 (8%) were most likely to report electoral process issues as the reason for not voting. However, the proportion of youth citing this reason declined by 3 percentage points compared with the 2015 election.

### Note to readers

Data for this study were derived from five questions added to the November 2019 Labour Force Survey (LFS), commissioned by Elections Canada, to determine the reasons Canadians did not vote in the October 21, 2019, federal election.

These questions were:

1. Are you a Canadian citizen?
2. Did you vote in the recent federal election?
3. Why did you not vote?
4. Did you go to a polling station and try to vote? (if the survey respondent answered "could not prove identity or address" to question 3)
5. In the past 12 months, did you use Elections Canada's online service to check, update or complete your voter registration?

The question 'Why did you not vote?' included 18 categories that were divided into four broad groups for this publication:

**Everyday life or health reasons:** too busy; out of town; illness or disability

**Political reasons:** lack of information about campaign issues and parties' positions; did not like candidates/parties/campaign; felt voting would not make a difference; did not know whom to vote for; not interested in politics.

**Electoral process-related reasons:** could not prove identity or address; not on voters list; transportation problem/polling station too far; lack of information about the voting process; lines were too long; issues with the voter information card.

**All other reasons:** forgot to vote; religious or other beliefs; weather conditions; other reasons.

**Eligible voters** as defined in this study exclude people aged 18 and older who were not Canadian citizens, including "permanent residents" (landed immigrants) who had not yet obtained Canadian citizenship and "non-permanent residents" (people from another country who lived in Canada and had a work or study permit, or who were claiming refugee status, as well as family members also living in Canada with them) at the time of the survey.

The LFS is a monthly survey of approximately 56,000 households. It excludes persons living on reserves and other Aboriginal settlements, full-time members of the Canadian Armed Forces, the institutionalized population, and households in extremely remote areas with very low population density.

Previous studies and post-election surveys have consistently shown that voter turnout rates reported in those studies are higher than official voter turnout rates. The estimate for the voter turnout rate in this special LFS study (77%) was approximately 10 percentage points higher than the official figure published by Elections Canada (65.95%) following the October 21, 2019, federal election. In a similar survey conducted following the 2015 federal election, the turnout rate from the survey was 77.0%, 8.7 percentage points higher than the official figure of 68.3% published by Elections Canada.

**Table 1**  
**Voter turnout rates by age group, province and immigrant status, 2011, 2015 and 2019 federal elections**

	Voter turnout rate			Difference 2015 to 2019
	2011	2015	2019	
	%			
<b>Age group</b>				
18 to 24 years	55	67	68	1
25 to 34 years	59	70	71	1
35 to 44 years	65	75	75	0
45 to 54 years	73	79	78	-1
55 to 64 years	80	83	81	-2
65 to 74 years	84	86	85	-1
75 years and older	79	80	79	-1
<b>Province</b>				
<b>Canada</b>	<b>70</b>	<b>77</b>	<b>77</b>	<b>0</b>
Newfoundland and Labrador	58	67	68	1
Prince Edward Island	81	86	82	-4
Nova Scotia	70	78	78	0
New Brunswick	73	81	80	-1
Quebec	74	78	76	-2
Ontario	70	76	77	1
Manitoba	66	76	75	-1
Saskatchewan	69	77	81	4
Alberta	66	77	80	3
British Columbia	70	79	76	-3
<b>Immigrant status</b>				
Canadian citizen by naturalization – 10 years or less since immigration	56	70	72	2
Canadian citizen by naturalization – More than 10 years since immigration	71	76	75	-1
Canadian citizen by birth	70	78	78	0

Source(s): Labour Force Survey (3701).

**Table 2**  
**Reasons for not voting by age group and sex, 2019 federal election**

	Total	Men	Women	18 to 24 years	25 to 34 years	35 to 44 years	45 to 54 years	55 to 64 years	65 to 74 years	75 years and older
	%									
<b>Everyday life or health reasons</b>	<b>46</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>46</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>59</b>
Too busy	22	22	21	26	30	28	23	16	7	4 <sup>E</sup>
Out of town	11	12	10	15	11	9	13	12	15	6
Illness or disability	13	10	16	6	7	8	9	12	21	49
<b>Political reasons</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>49</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>25</b>
Not interested in politics	35	37	32	35	35	37	37	38	34	21
<b>Electoral process-related reasons</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>All other reasons</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>7</b>

<sup>E</sup> use with caution

Source(s): Labour Force Survey (3701).

**Table 3**  
**Reasons for not voting by province, 2019 federal election**

	Canada	Newfoundland and Labrador	Prince Edward Island	Nova Scotia	New Brunswick	Quebec	Ontario	Manitoba	Saskatchewan	Alberta	British Columbia
	%										
<b>Everyday life or health reasons</b>	<b>46</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>49</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>47</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>46</b>	<b>48</b>
Too busy	22	15	26	16	21	20	23	22	22	23	23
Out of town	11	15	10 <sup>E</sup>	8	10	10	12	9	12	12	12
Illness or disability	13	13	13	12	17	13	14	12	10	11	13
<b>Political reasons</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>49</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>51</b>	<b>41</b>	<b>46</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>41</b>	<b>39</b>
Not interested in politics	35	39	31	40	35	41	32	35	31	31	32
<b>Electoral process-related reasons</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>8<sup>E</sup></b>	<b>6</b>	<b>5<sup>E</sup></b>	<b>5</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>5</b>
All other reasons	7	4	6 <sup>E</sup>	7	7	6	6	7	9	8	8

E use with caution

Source(s): Labour Force Survey (3701).

**Table 4**  
**Reasons for not voting by immigrant status and Aboriginal group, 2019 federal election**

	Canadian citizen by naturalization – 10 years or less since immigration	Canadian citizen by naturalization – More than 10 years since immigration	Canadian citizen by birth	Non-Aboriginal population	Aboriginal population
	%				
<b>Everyday life or health reasons</b>	<b>46</b>	<b>56</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>46</b>	<b>41</b>
Too busy	29	25	20	22	19
Out of town	11 <sup>E</sup>	14	11	11	10
Illness or disability	6 <sup>E</sup>	18	12	13	12
<b>Political reasons</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>48</b>
Not interested in politics	26	26	37	34	39
<b>Electoral process-related reasons</b>	<b>8<sup>E</sup></b>	<b>5</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>7</b>
All other reasons	14 <sup>E</sup>	7	6	7	5

E use with caution

Source(s): Labour Force Survey (3701).

**Definitions, data sources and methods: survey number 3701.**

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