

Reasons for not voting in the federal election, September 20, 2021

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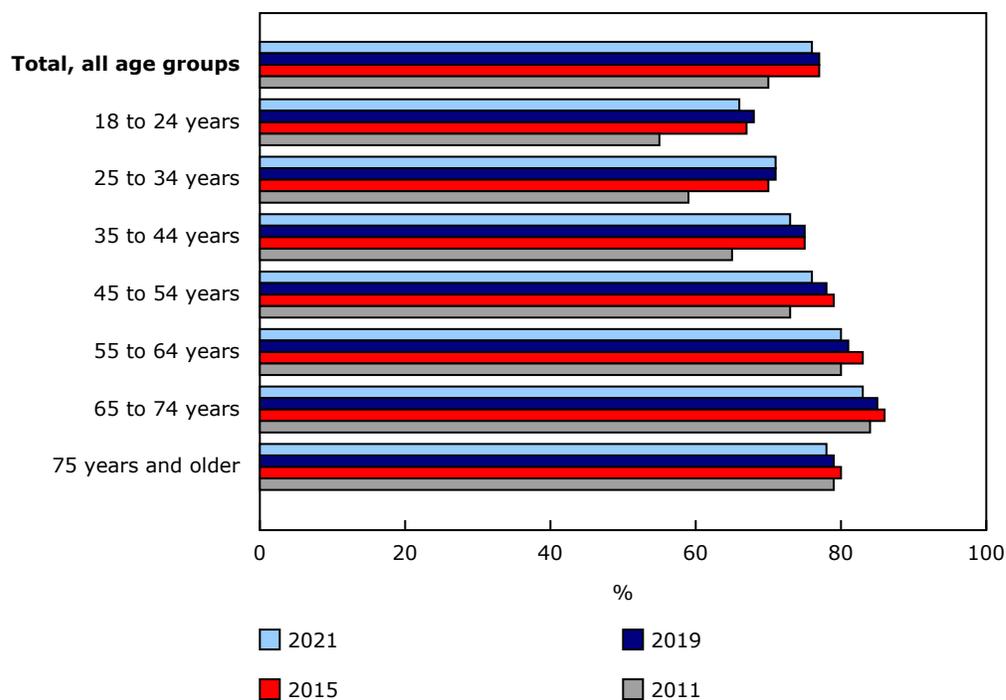
Voter turnout among youth returns to 2015 level

Three-quarters (76%) of eligible Canadians reported voting in the 2021 federal election, down 1 percentage point from the 2019 election.

Among eligible youth aged 18 to 24, 66% cast a ballot in the 2021 federal election, down 2 percentage points compared with 2019. This decline marks a return to the 2015 level, but youth turnout remained well above the rate observed in 2011 (55%).

Declines of 2 percentage points were also observed among 35- to 54-year-olds and people aged 65 to 74. A smaller drop of 1 percentage point was seen among people aged 55 to 64.

Chart 1
Voter turnout rates by age group, 2011, 2015, 2019 and 2021 federal elections



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

Voter turnout rises in Quebec, drops in six other provinces

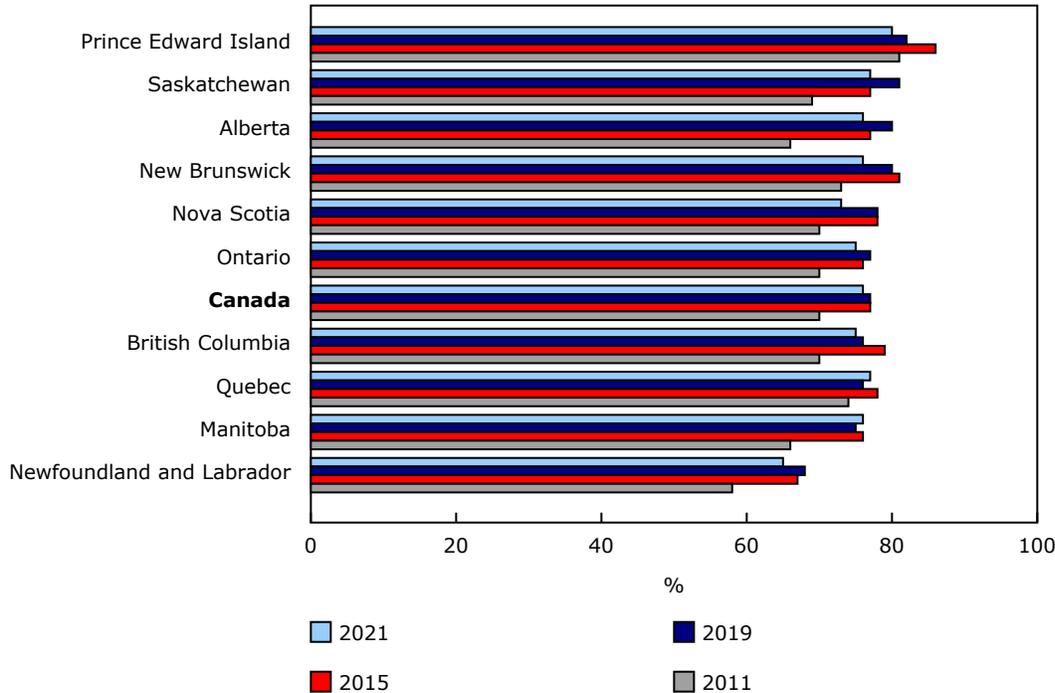
Quebec was the lone province where voter turnout was higher in 2021 than in the 2019 federal election, rising 1 percentage point to 77%.



Compared with 2019, the proportion of eligible Canadians who reported voting in 2021 fell in Nova Scotia (-5 percentage points to 73%), Alberta (-4 percentage points to 76%), Saskatchewan (-4 percentage points to 77%), New Brunswick (-4 percentage points to 76%), Newfoundland and Labrador (-3 percentage points to 65%), and Ontario (-2 percentage points to 75%).

Voter turnout in 2021 was little changed from 2019 in Prince Edward Island, Manitoba and British Columbia.

Chart 2
Voter turnout rates by province, 2011, 2015, 2019 and 2021 federal elections



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

Not being interested in politics remains most common reason for not voting

Among eligible Canadians who did not vote in 2021, the most common reason for not casting a ballot was not being interested in politics (32%). Similar to 2019, this was the most commonly cited reason in the majority of age groups, with two exceptions: illness or disability (39%) was the most reported reason among people aged 75 and older, and being too busy (34%) was most prevalent among those aged 35 to 44.

Overall, citing political issues (including not being interested in politics) as a reason for not voting was more common among men (41%) than among women (37%).

COVID-19 was not a common reason for not voting in 2021

Overall, the COVID-19 pandemic accounted for 2% of all reported reasons for not voting in the 2021 election. Among COVID-19-related reasons cited by non-voters, approximately two-thirds were related to being worried about contracting the virus. The remaining one-third was made up of people who were sick with COVID-19 or

self-isolating, people who disagreed with holding an election during the pandemic, and people who were dissatisfied with the protocols put in place to allow for safe voting. Not voting because of the pandemic was more commonly cited among older age groups.

Leading up to the election, most jurisdictions were in the final or near-final stages of a reopening plan, and capacity limits in non-essential settings were beginning to be replaced by proof-of-vaccination requirements. However, rising COVID-19 case numbers in September led some regions to reintroduce masking requirements in indoor public spaces or pause some aspects of their reopening plans.

Many eligible Canadians report being too busy as reason for not voting

Not voting because of obligations related to everyday life made up 43% of all reasons reported by non-voters. This included being too busy (24%), having an illness or disability (11%), or being out of town (9%).

Electoral process issues more common among new Canadians and youth

Among Canadians who did not vote in the 2021 federal election, electoral process issues accounted for 7% of reasons for not voting, including not being able to prove identity or address, lacking information about the voting process, or having issues travelling to a polling station.

Electoral process issues were most common among naturalized Canadians who were admitted to Canada within the last 10 years (16%). In contrast, Canadian citizens by birth (7%) and naturalized citizens who were admitted in Canada more than 10 years ago (7%) were equally likely to report such issues.

Across age groups, electoral process issues were most prevalent among youth aged 18 to 24 (12%).

Note to readers

Data for this study were derived from five questions added to the October 2021 Labour Force Survey (LFS), commissioned by Elections Canada, to determine the reasons Canadians did not vote in the September 20, 2021, federal election.

These questions were the following:

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 22 categories that were divided into five 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

Reasons related to COVID-19: being sick with COVID-19/quarantining/isolating; fear of contracting COVID-19; dissatisfied with handling of pandemic/election due to pandemic; dissatisfied with voting rules

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 October LFS was a survey of approximately 56,000 households. The LFS excludes people living on reserves and other Indigenous 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 voter turnout rates published by Elections Canada. The estimate for the voter turnout rate in this special LFS study (76%) was approximately 13 percentage points higher than the preliminary figure published by Elections Canada (62.25%) following the September 20, 2021, federal election. In a similar survey conducted following the 2019 federal election, the turnout rate from the survey was 77%, approximately 10 percentage points higher than the preliminary figure of 65.95% published by Elections Canada.

Table 1
Voter turnout rates by age group, province and immigrant status, 2011, 2015, 2019 and 2021
federal elections

	Voter turnout rate				Difference 2019 to 2021
	2011	2015	2019	2021	
	%				
Age group					
18 to 24 years	55	67	68	66	-2
25 to 34 years	59	70	71	71	0
35 to 44 years	65	75	75	73	-2
45 to 54 years	73	79	78	76	-2
55 to 64 years	80	83	81	80	-1
65 to 74 years	84	86	85	83	-2
75 years and older	79	80	79	78	-1
Province					
Canada	70	77	77	76	-1
Newfoundland and Labrador	58	67	68	65	-3
Prince Edward Island	81	86	82	80	-2
Nova Scotia	70	78	78	73	-5
New Brunswick	73	81	80	76	-4
Quebec	74	78	76	77	1
Ontario	70	76	77	75	-2
Manitoba	66	76	75	76	1
Saskatchewan	69	77	81	77	-4
Alberta	66	77	80	76	-4
British Columbia	70	79	76	75	-1
Immigrant status					
Canadian citizen by naturalization – 10 years or less since immigration	56	70	72	66	-6
Canadian citizen by naturalization – More than 10 years since immigration	71	76	75	71	-4
Canadian citizen by birth	70	78	78	77	-1

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

Table 2
Reasons for not voting by age group and sex, 2021 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
	%									
Everyday life or health reasons	43	42	44	42	46	46	42	38	37	52
Too busy	24	24	23	25	31	34	26	18	10	6
Out of town	9	10	8	13	8	5	9	10	10	7
Illness or disability	11	9	13	4	7	7	7	11	18	39
Political reasons	39	41	37	36	37	37	42	45	45	29
Not interested in politics	32	34	30	33	33	31	33	35	34	23
Electoral process-related reasons	7	6	8	12	6	6	6	6	6	8
Reasons related to COVID-19	2	2	2	1^E	2^E	2^E	2^E	3^E	3^E	4^E
All other reasons	8	8	9	9	9	8	8	8	8	7

^E use with caution

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

Table 3
Reasons for not voting by province, 2021 federal election

	Canada	Newfoundland and Labrador	Prince Edward Island	Nova Scotia	New Brunswick	Quebec	Ontario	Manitoba	Saskatchewan	Alberta	British Columbia
	%										
Everyday life or health reasons	43	39	40	38	42	45	44	41	41	44	43
Too busy	24	15	20	17	20	24	24	24	23	24	23
Out of town	9	13	10 ^E	9	9	8	9	7	10	10	9
Illness or disability	11	11	10	11	13	13	11	10	8	9	11
Political reasons	39	46	37	43	39	41	37	44	39	38	40
Not interested in politics	32	41	30	37	32	36	30	35	31	30	31
Electoral process-related reasons	7	5^E	6^E	6	6	8	8	5	7^E	6	5
Reasons related to COVID-19	2	1^E	x	x	5^E	1^E	2	2^E	3^E	2^E	3^E
All other reasons	8	10	14	11	8	5	9	8	10	10	9

x suppressed to meet the confidentiality requirements of the *Statistics Act*

E use with caution

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

Table 4
Reasons for not voting by immigrant status and Indigenous group, 2021 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-Indigenous population	Indigenous population
	%				
Everyday life or health reasons	45	49	42	42	38
Too busy	29	28	22	22	21
Out of town	11 ^E	8	9	9	7
Illness or disability	5 ^E	12	11	11	10
Political reasons	22	35	41	41	42
Not interested in politics	20	28	34	34	35
Electoral process-related reasons	16^E	7	7	7	6^E
Reasons related to COVID-19	x	3	2	2	x
All other reasons	13^E	7	8	8	11

x suppressed to meet the confidentiality requirements of the *Statistics Act*

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

Definitions, data sources and methods: survey number 3701.

For more information, or to enquire about the concepts, methods or data quality of this release, contact us (toll-free 1-800-263-1136; 514-283-8300; infostats@statcan.gc.ca) or Media Relations (statcan.mediahotline-ligneinfomedias.statcan@statcan.gc.ca).