

Almost half of Canadians report a strong sense of belonging to their local community

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In 2021 and 2022, almost half of people in Canada (47%) reported having a strong sense of belonging to their community. This percentage was lower among young people aged 15 to 34 (ranging from 37% to 44%) and the LGBTQ2+ population (36%), among other groups.

Building relationships and social networks is critical to fostering a sense of belonging to a larger community, ensuring that we feel connected to each other, and that we have support when we need it. This makes a strong sense of belonging to a local community an important indicator of social integration. It is also associated with positive quality of life indicators such as being [more hopeful about the future](#) as well as [better physical and mental health](#).

To explore the factors associated with a strong sense of belonging to a local community, a key indicator of [Canada's Quality of Life Framework](#), four waves of the Canadian Social Survey collected from August 6, 2021 to June 5, 2022 were combined to reflect the experiences of Canadians during the COVID-19 pandemic.

People experiencing social and economic challenges are less likely to have a strong sense of belonging to their local community

The pandemic has disrupted the lives of most Canadians, with many facing ongoing or worsening social and economic situations, such as experiences of discrimination and job insecurity. The data show that some of these challenges and barriers to social inclusion may be associated with a weaker sense of belonging to the local community. For example, Canadians who experienced discrimination or unfair treatment in the past five years were less likely to have a strong sense of belonging to their local community (38%), compared with those who did not report these experiences (51%).

Similarly, compared with those who were working at a paid job or business (45%) or those whose main activity was volunteering (69%), a smaller share of Canadians who were looking for paid work in the week prior to completing the survey had a strong sense of belonging to their local community (35%).

Along similar lines, 36% of individuals within households that experienced financial difficulty meeting basic household needs during the pandemic had a strong sense of belonging to their local community, compared with 49% of those who did not experience financial hardship.

A strong sense of belonging to a local community is more common in rural regions and in some provinces

A larger proportion of rural residents had a strong sense of belonging to their local community (56%), compared with their urban counterparts (45%). This difference was larger in Newfoundland and Labrador (65% for rural and 48% for urban) compared with Ontario (55% for rural and 44% for urban).

Compared with other provinces, the proportion of people reporting a strong sense of belonging to their local community was lowest in Ontario (45%) and Quebec (46%), and highest in Newfoundland and Labrador (55%) and Saskatchewan (53%). Some of these provincial variations may be due to differences in rural/urban composition of those provinces, as well as age structures, socio-cultural factors and other demographics.

Younger Canadians and LGBTQ2+ people are less likely to have a strong sense of belonging to their local community

The proportion of those who reported a strong sense of belonging to a local community was notably lower among certain population segments. Younger Canadians, aged 15 to 24 (44%) and especially those aged 25 to 34 (37%), were less likely to have a strong sense of belonging to their local community compared with those



aged 35 to 64 (47%), 65 to 74 (53%), and 75 and older (57%). As for gender differences, a smaller proportion of men aged 15 to 24 (43%) had a strong sense of belonging to their local community compared with their female counterparts (46%). However, this trend was reversed among those aged 65 to 74 (54% for men and 51% for women) and 75 and older (58% for men and 56% for women).

Overall, 36% of the LGBTQ2+ population—that is, people who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, Two-Spirit, or who use other terms related to gender or sexual diversity—had a strong sense of belonging to their local community. There was no variation in sense of belonging within the LGBTQ2+ population based on sexual orientation (e.g., lesbian or gay, bisexual, or other). By contrast, 47% of the non-LGBTQ2+ population had a strong sense of belonging to their local community. This difference was notable among young Canadians aged 15 to 24, where 32% of the LGBTQ2+ and 46% of the non-LGBTQ2+ population had a strong sense of belonging to their local community.

Sense of belonging to a local community varies among racialized groups

The proportion of people reporting a strong sense of belonging to a local community differed across racialized groups. For example, South Asian (59%), Filipino (57%), Arab (54%), and Black (51%) Canadians were more likely to have a strong sense of belonging to their local community, compared with those who did not belong to a racialized group and were not Indigenous (46%).

On the other hand, Korean (24%), Chinese (36%), and Southeast Asian (38%) Canadians were less likely to have a strong sense of belonging to their local community. This finding is consistent with previous research, suggesting that [some racialized groups are more likely to have a strong sense of belonging to their local community](#). More in-depth analyses are necessary to further understand this variation.

Immigrants are more likely to have a strong sense of belonging to their local community

Compared with those born in Canada (46%), recent immigrants—i.e., immigrants who arrived in the past five years (50%)—and those who arrived in Canada more than five years ago (48%) were more likely to have a strong sense of belonging to their local community. Despite the unique economic and social challenges they experienced during the pandemic, immigrants may nonetheless settle in regions where they receive support from immigrant settlement organizations or cultural community groups.

This report found that social, economic, and demographic factors were associated with having a strong sense of belonging to a local community. Future research using the Canadian Social Survey will track this and other indicators in the [Quality of Life Framework](#) through the pandemic recovery period and examine how these factors and others relate to each other.

Note to readers

For this release, the following four waves of the Canadian Social Survey (CSS) were pooled:

- *CSS – Well-being, Activities and Perception of Time (collected from August 6 to September 18, 2021);*
- *CSS – Well-being, Unpaid work, and Family Time (collected from October 26 to December 7, 2021);*
- *CSS – Well-being and Family Relationships (collected from January 28 to March 13, 2022);*
- *CSS – Well-being, Shared Values, and Trust (collected from April 22 to June 5, 2022); released today.*

The CSS collects information on a variety of social topics such as health, well-being, impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, changes in the household, work–life balance, time use, intentions to have children, and changes in relationship status.

Sense of belonging to a local community was measured using the following question in the CSS: "How would you describe your sense of belonging to your local community?" Responses of very strong or somewhat strong were used in this report to indicate having "a strong sense of belonging to a local community."

Financial difficulty was measured using the following question in the CSS: "In the past 12 months, how difficult or easy was it for your household to meet its financial needs in terms of transportation, housing, food, clothing and other necessary expenses?" Responses of very difficult or difficult were used in this report to indicate experiencing "financial difficulty."

Urban areas include population centres with a population of at least 1,000 and a population density of 400 persons or more per square kilometre, based on the current census population count. All areas outside population centres are classified as rural areas.

The CSS aims to better understand social issues rapidly by conducting surveys on different topics every three months. Statistics Canada would like to thank all Canadians who took the time to answer the questions.

In this release, the term "Canadians" refers to residents of Canada, regardless of citizenship status.

Table 1
Percentage of Canadians reporting a strong sense of belonging to local community, by selected characteristics

	Strong sense of belonging to local community
	%
Overall	47
Province of residence	
Newfoundland and Labrador	55
Prince Edward Island	52
Nova Scotia	49
New Brunswick	50
Quebec	46
Ontario	45
Manitoba	50
Saskatchewan	53
Alberta	46
British Columbia	48
Place of residence	
Rural	56
Urban	45
LGBTQ2+	
Yes	36
No	47
Experienced discrimination	
No	51
Yes	38
Main activity in week prior to survey	
Working at a paid job or business	45
Vacation from paid work	48
Looking for paid work	35
Going to school, including vacation from school	47
Caring for children	45
Household work	48
Retired	54
Maternity, paternity or parental leave	39
Long-term illness	30
Volunteering	69
Caregiving other than for children	49
Other	41
Racialized group	
Not belonging to a racialized group and not Indigenous	46
South Asian	59
Chinese	36
Black	51
Filipino	57
Arab	54
Latin American	41
Southeast Asian	38
West Asian	50
Korean	24
Japanese	34
Racialized group, n.i.e.	46
Multiple racialized groups	43
Immigration status	
Non-immigrants	46
Established immigrants	48
Recent immigrants	50
Gender	
Male	47
Female	47
Age	
15-24	44
25-34	37
35-64	47
65-74	53
75 or older	57

Note(s):

LGBTQ2+: People who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, Two-Spirit, or who use other terms related to gender or sexual diversity.
The abbreviation "n.i.e." means "not included elsewhere."

Source(s): Canadian Social Survey, pooled waves, 2021-2022 ([5354](#)).

Definitions, data sources and methods: survey number [5354](#).

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).