

Confidence in institutions and the media, 2023

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[Public confidence in institutions](#) can encourage political participation, strengthen bonds between citizens and help people and communities become more resilient in the face of challenges. New data from the most recent cycle of the [Canadian Social Survey – Quality of Life, Renter Experiences and Trust](#), conducted from October to December 2023, sheds light on the link between confidence in institutions, trust in media and well-being.

Results show that having a high level of confidence in the police, the justice system, schools, Canadian media and the Federal Parliament is linked to overall trust in news stories and information from the media. In 2023, 58% of Canadians with a high level of confidence in four or more institutions trusted news and information from the media. This trust drops to 15% among those who reported low confidence in institutions.

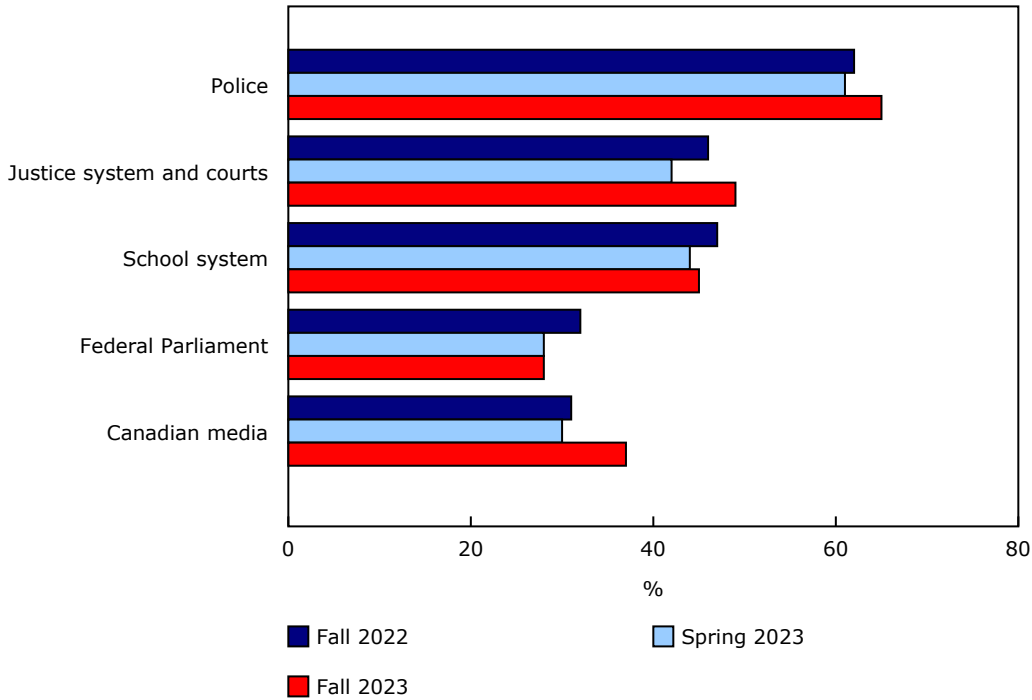
[Confidence in institutions](#) and [trust in media](#) are both indicators in [Canada's Quality of Life Framework](#). This Framework enables the federal government to identify future policy priorities, and to build on previous actions to strengthen evidence-based decision-making and budgeting, and improve the well-being of Canadians.

Close to two-thirds of Canadians report high confidence in the police

In 2023, close to two-thirds (65%) of Canadians reported high confidence in the police, a higher proportion than any other institution measured by the survey. The next highest ranked institution was the justice system and courts, where nearly half (49%) of Canadians reported high confidence. This was followed by the school system (45%), the Canadian media (37%) and the Federal Parliament (28%). Of these institutions, [confidence levels have been consistently highest for the police](#).



Chart 1
Percentage of population who reported a high confidence in institutions, by institution, 2022 to 2023



Source(s): Canadian Social Survey (5354), 2023.

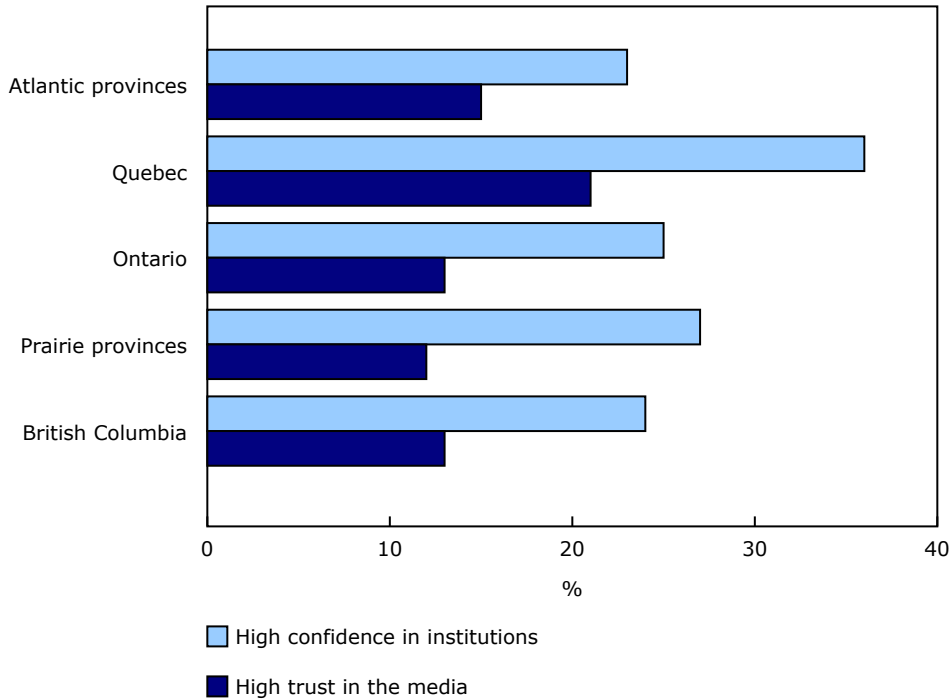
Residents of Quebec are more likely to have higher confidence and trust

In general, levels of confidence in institutions were highest among those living in Quebec, where 36% had high confidence in institutions and 21% had high trust in news or information from the media. For confidence in institutions, the next highest provincial rates were the Prairie provinces (27%), Ontario (25%), British Columbia (24%) and the Atlantic provinces (23%). For trust in media, the next highest provincial rates were the Atlantic provinces (15%), Ontario and British Columbia (13% each) and the Prairie provinces (12%).

People living in urban areas were more likely to report high confidence in institutions (28%) than their rural counterparts (24%), but they did not differ in their likelihood of reporting high trust in news and information from the media (15% for each group).

Chart 2

Percentage of the population who reported a high level of trust in the media and high level of confidence in institutions, by province or region, 2023

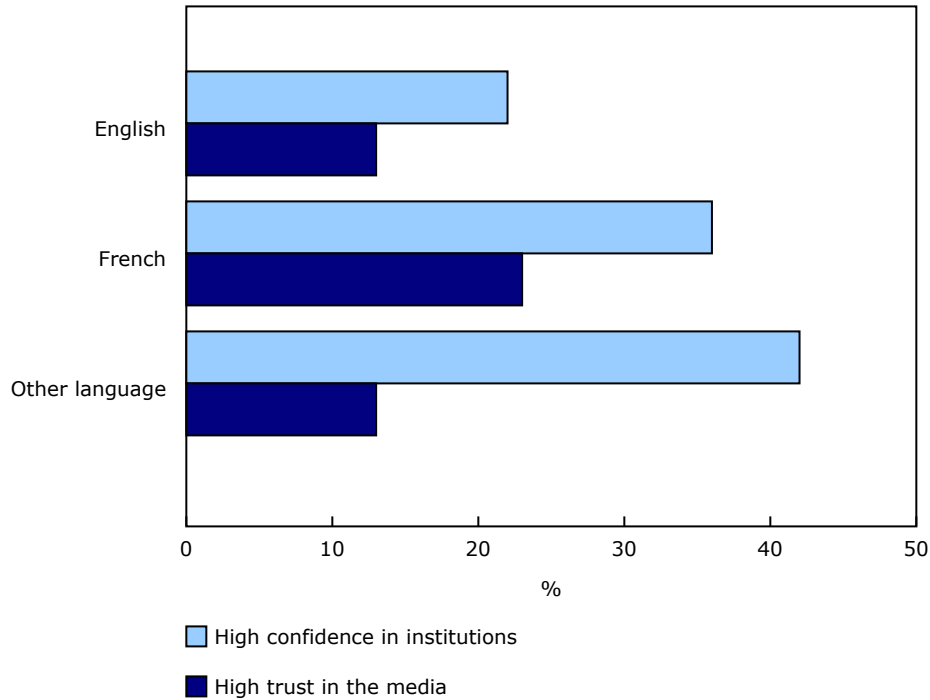


Source(s): Canadian Social Survey (5354), 2023.

Confidence and trust levels also varied by language spoken most often at home. Francophones were more likely than Anglophones to report a high level of confidence in institutions (36% for Francophones compared with 22% for Anglophones) and a high level of trust in the media (23% compared with 13%). Those who speak a language other than English or French most often at home had the highest likelihood of reporting high confidence in institutions (42%), while they did not differ from Anglophones in their level of trust in media (13%).

Chart 3

Percentage of the population who reported a high level of trust in the media and high level of confidence in institutions, by language spoken most often at home, 2023



Source(s): Canadian Social Survey (5354), 2023.

Confidence in institutions is linked with trust in news and information from the media

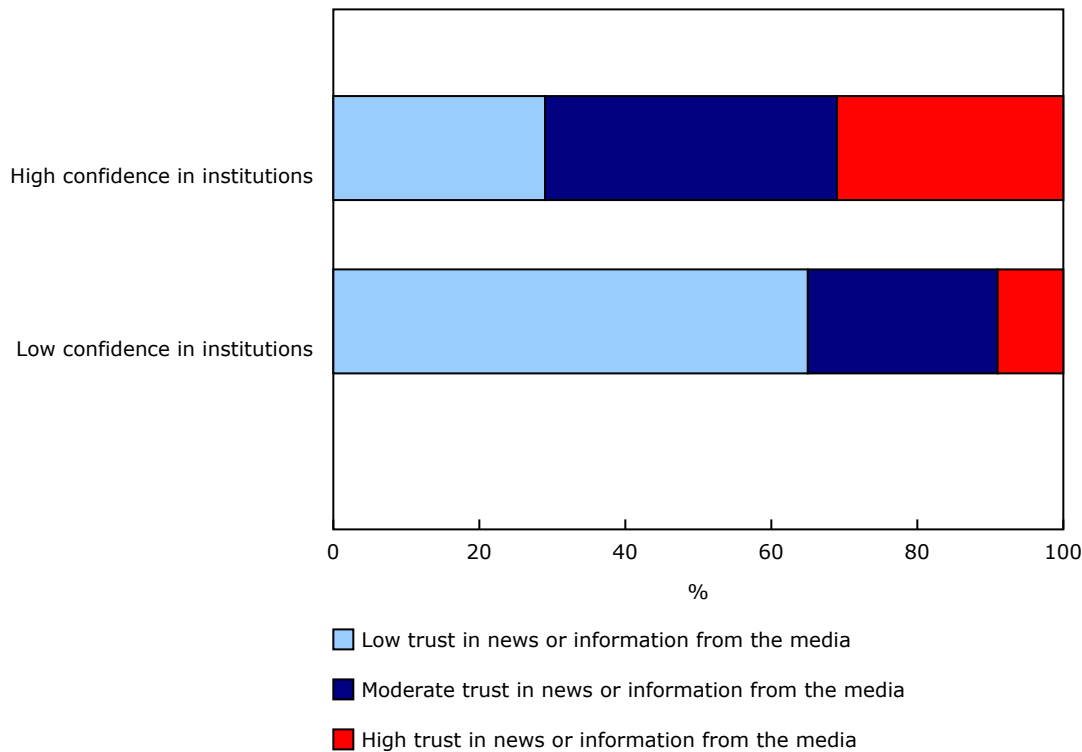
Confidence in institutions and trust in media are interrelated, though somewhat different. Confidence tends to refer to the performance of an institution, whereas trust in the media is more related to expectations and perceptions of truthful and unbiased reporting.

Overall, 58% of those who reported high confidence in four or more institutions also reported a high level of trust in news or information from the media. In comparison, 15% of those who reported low confidence in institutions reported high trust in news or information from the media.

Age plays an important role in public confidence and trust, with levels generally increasing with age. One-quarter (25%) of 15-to-24-year-olds reported a high level of confidence in institutions, rising to 33% among Canadians 65 years and older. Meanwhile, having high levels of trust in the media was twice as common among Canadians aged 65 years and older than among their counterparts aged 15 to 24 (22% versus 11%).

When it comes to the media, connectivity, [exposure to online misinformation](#), and preferred media sources may affect levels of trust. In general, young Canadians are more likely to get most of their news or information from online sources, resulting in a possible higher exposure to misinformation. Social media was the most common outlet for young people aged 15 to 24, with 62% getting their news or information this way, while Canadians aged 65 years and older were more likely to rely on traditional sources such as television (64%).

Chart 4
Distribution of the population by level of trust in the media, by confidence in institutions, 2023



Note(s): Those who expressed a high level of confidence in "all institutions" are those who rated their confidence a 4 or 5 for at least four of the five institutions. Those who rated their confidence a 1, 2 or 3 for two or more institutions were considered to have low confidence in "all institutions".
Source(s): Canadian Social Survey (5354), 2023.

Canadians with financial or health concerns are more likely to report low confidence in institutions and low trust in media

Canadians' confidence in institutions and trust in media are both connected to measures of financial well-being and health. In 2023, the share of Canadians feeling the impact of rising prices has grown. In the fall of 2023, just over one-third (37%) found it difficult or very difficult to meet their household financial needs, in terms of transportation, housing, food, clothing and other necessities. These Canadians were more likely than other Canadians who were not struggling financially to have low confidence in institutions (81% versus 61%).

Trust in media was also lowest among those experiencing financial hardship. Over two-thirds (68%) of these Canadians had low levels of trust in the news or information they received from the media, with another 22% having neutral levels of trust and 10% having high levels. Meanwhile, those Canadians who were able to easily meet their financial needs were more evenly split on their trust of the media, with 40% having low trust in media and 37% having neutral levels of trust. High trust in media was recorded for 23% of Canadians easily able to meet their financial needs.

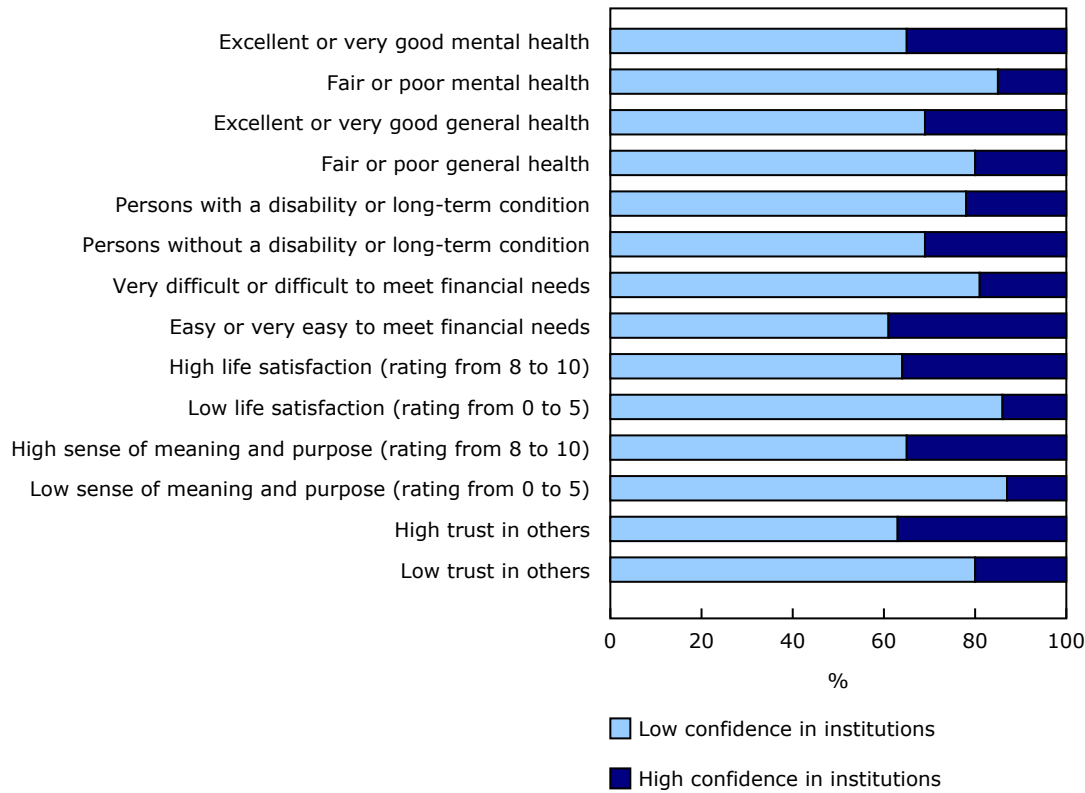
Not only are levels of public confidence in institutions and trust in media tied to financial well-being, but they are also linked to mental and overall health. Mirroring the pattern seen for financial well-being, confidence levels were the lowest among Canadians experiencing fair or poor mental health and/or general health. In 2023, 85% of

Canadians experiencing poor mental health had little confidence in institutions, and 80% of those with poor general health lacked confidence. Having low levels of confidence, while still relatively common, was less often seen among people with excellent or very good mental health (65%) or general health (69%).

A similar pattern is evident when looking at trust in media. Levels of trust in media were lowest among those who rated their mental health (69%) or general health (66%) as fair or poor, compared with those who had rated their mental health (50%) or general health (51%) as excellent or very good.

Canadians with a disability or long-term condition were also more likely to report low confidence in institutions and low trust in media, despite the [rate of disability increasing with age](#) and older people being more likely to have confidence in institutions and trust in media. Almost four in five (78%) Canadians with a disability reported low confidence in institutions, compared with 69% of those who do not have a disability. For trust in media, there was less of a divide: 58% of Canadians with a disability reported low trust in media, compared with 54% of Canadians without a disability.

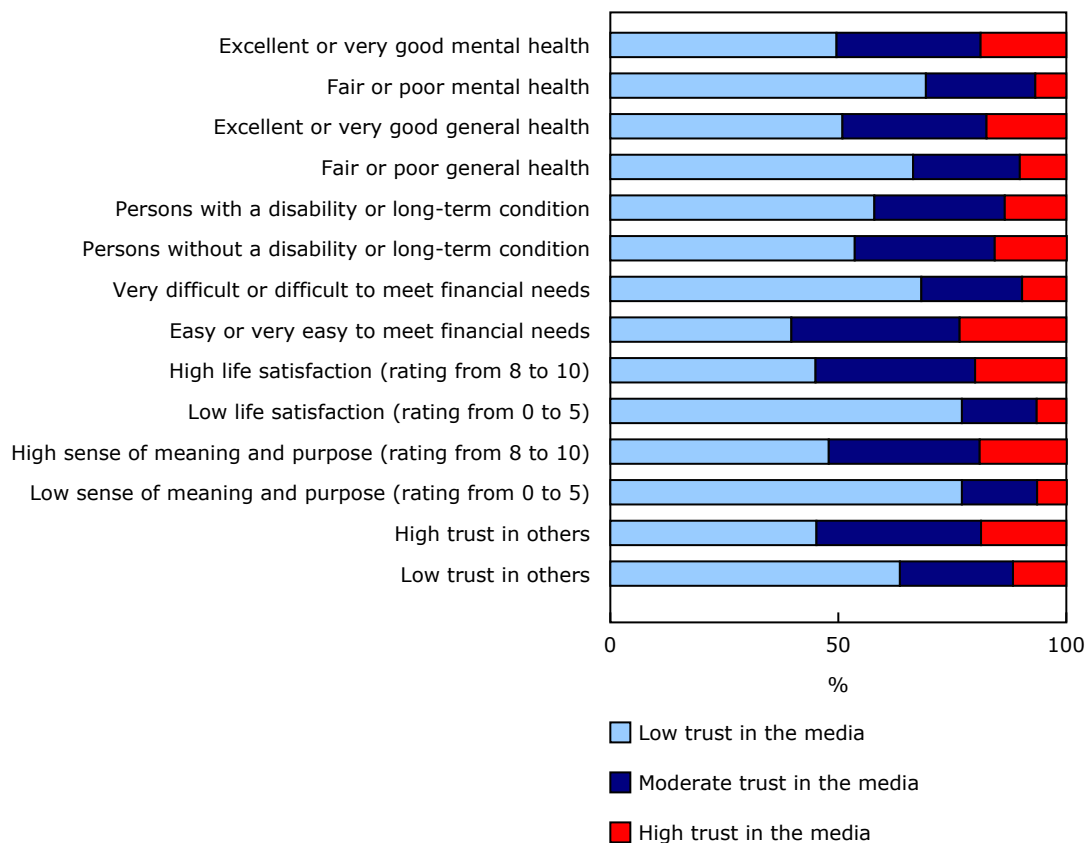
Chart 5
Distribution of the population by level of confidence in institutions by select measures, 2023



Note(s): Those who expressed a high level of confidence in "all institutions" are those who rated their confidence a 4 or 5 for at least four of the five institutions. Those who rated their confidence a 1, 2 or 3 for two or more institutions were considered to have low confidence in "all institutions". Sense of meaning and purpose was measured using the following question: Using a scale of 0 to 10, where 0 means "Not at all" and 10 means "Completely", to what extent do you feel the things you do in your life are worthwhile? Trust in others was measured using the following question: Generally speaking, would you say that most people can be trusted or that you cannot be too careful in dealing with people?

Source(s): Canadian Social Survey (5354), 2023.

Chart 6
Distribution of the population by level of trust in news or information from the media by select measures, 2023



Note(s): Sense of meaning and purpose was measured using the following question: Using a scale of 0 to 10, where 0 means "Not at all" and 10 means "Completely", to what extent do you feel the things you do in your life are worthwhile? Trust in others was measured using the following question: Generally speaking, would you say that most people can be trusted or that you cannot be too careful in dealing with people?
Source(s): Canadian Social Survey (5354), 2023.

Reporting low life satisfaction associated with lower levels of confidence in Canadian institutions

Life satisfaction and sense of meaning and purpose are other measures of overall wellbeing linked to public confidence and trust. Canadians who were less satisfied with their life and who had a weak sense of meaning and purpose had less favourable perceptions of institutions. Almost 9 in 10 Canadians with low life satisfaction (86%) or a weak sense of meaning and purpose (87%) had low confidence in institutions. This compares with 64% of those with high life satisfaction and 65% of those with a strong sense of meaning and purpose.

Similarly for trust in media, 77% of Canadians with low life satisfaction or a weak sense of meaning and purpose had low levels of trust, compared with 45% of those with high life satisfaction, and 48% of those with a strong sense of meaning and purpose.

Canadians with high confidence and trust in institutions more likely aware of strategies for flood preparedness

Institutions rely on public trust and confidence to effectively provide crucial information and services, especially during emergencies. The year 2023 was a [record-setting year for weather-related emergencies](#) in Canada. It is essential that Canadians have access to news and information they can trust so they can prepare or respond during crises such as floods. When asked about their awareness of the actions required to protect against or prevent flooding on their property, Canadians who reported high confidence in institutions were significantly more likely to be somewhat or fully aware (63%) compared with those who reported low confidence in institutions (54%). Similarly, 63% of Canadians who reported high trust in the media were somewhat or fully aware of flood prevention actions compared with 54% of those with low trust in the media.

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Note to readers

This release is based on data from the Canadian Social Survey (CSS) – Quality of Life, Renter Experiences and Trust, collected from October 20 to December 3, 2023. The CSS collects information on a variety of social topics, including health, well-being, the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, household changes, work-life balance, time use, intention to have children and changes in marital status. The most recent cycle of the CSS, on which this release is based, collected information on quality of life, trust and rental experiences. Results from the survey will help decision makers develop programs and policies to better serve Canadians. Data are available on request.

The target population for the CSS are those aged 15 years and older living in the 10 provinces of Canada.

Confidence in institutions was measured by the following question: Using a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 means "No confidence at all" and 5 means "A great deal of confidence," how much confidence do you have in the following institutions? This question was used to measure the level of confidence in five different institutions: (1) the police; (2) the justice system and courts; (3) the school system; (4) Federal Parliament; and (5) the Canadian media. In this release, those with a high level of confidence are those who selected a score of 4 or 5. Those who expressed a high level of confidence in all institutions are those who rated their confidence a 4 or 5 for at least four of the five institutions. Those who rated their confidence a 1, 2 or 3 for two or more institutions were considered to have low confidence in all institutions.

Trust in media was measured by the following question: On a scale of 0 to 10, where 0 means "Not at all" and 10 means "Completely," to what extent do you generally trust the news or information you receive from the media? In this release, those with a high trust in the media are those who selected a score of 8, 9 or 10.

For language spoken most often at home, bilingual and trilingual households were excluded from analysis.

Overland flooding occurs when water rises and covers dry land (e.g., river overflowing its banks, a storm surge from a hurricane, runoff from snowmelt). There are actions one can take to protect or prevent this flooding from affecting one's property—including, but not limited to, installing backwater valves, changing property grading to direct water away from the foundation, and installing back-up sump pumps. The cost of these actions can be reduced through government programs that offer subsidies or grants. The CSS asked: How would you rate your level of awareness of the actions you need to take to protect or prevent flooding on your property, the government programs offering grants or subsidies, and the costs associated with this type of work? Those who selected "not applicable" were excluded from this analysis.

The CSS aims to rapidly increase understanding of social issues by conducting surveys every three months on a variety of topics affecting Canadians.

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

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).