

# Hopefulness is declining across Canada: having children or strong ties to a local community associated with a more hopeful outlook

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The proportion of Canadians reporting a hopeful outlook on the future is substantially lower compared with 5 to 6 years ago. In 2016, 75% of people in Canada reported feeling hopeful about the future, compared with 64% of the population in 2021/2022.

Some population groups have below-average levels of hopefulness, including persons with a disability and the LGBTQ2+ population. However, those who live in a larger household with children, or persons who have a strong sense of belonging to their local community have above-average levels of hopefulness.

The pandemic has disrupted the lives of many Canadians, with most individuals and families having to cope with rapidly changing circumstances, challenging situations, and uncertainty about the future. While many COVID-19 mandates and restrictions have recently been lifted, the virus continues to spread in our communities. At the same time, the cost of living is increasing, meaning food, housing, and gasoline are all becoming less affordable, and that could make Canadians feel uncertain about the future.

Using new Canadian Social Survey (CSS) data, this study examines the future outlook of the Canadian population. Three waves of the CSS were combined to allow for better disaggregation of data.

This future outlook indicator allows Statistics Canada to stay up to date on how hopeful Canadians feel about their future. This is important because a hopeful outlook is positively associated with key well-being indicators, such as life satisfaction, sense of meaning and purpose, and mental and general health, found in Canada's [Quality of Life Framework](#).

Future outlook, an indicator in the Quality of Life Framework, is measured with the following question in the Canadian Social Survey: "Thinking about your life in general, how often would you say you have a hopeful view of the future?" Responses of always or often are used in this release to indicate having "a hopeful outlook on the future."

This release provides a snapshot of how hopeful different segments of the Canadian population—that is, those aged 15 and older living in Canada's 10 provinces—have generally felt about their future between August 6, 2021 and March 13, 2022.

## Hopeful feelings about the future decline in all provinces

In every province, Canadians are feeling less hopeful about the future compared with how they felt in 2016, although the extent of the decline varied by province. British Columbia experienced the largest decline in the proportion of people reporting a hopeful outlook on the future between 2016 and 2021/2022 (from 76% to 62%).



**Table 1**  
**Hopeful view of the future by province, 2016 to 2021/2022**

	Percentage "always" or "often" hopeful about the future		
	2016 (General Social Survey)	2021/2022 (Canadian Social Survey)	Percentage point difference
<b>Canada</b>	<b>75.4</b>	<b>64.1</b>	<b>-11.3</b>
Newfoundland and Labrador	72.6	62.4	-10.2
Prince Edward Island	78.0	65.8	-12.2
Nova Scotia	74.2	62.0	-12.2
New Brunswick	74.1	63.6	-10.5
Quebec	79.0	70.3	-8.7
Ontario	73.4	62.1	-11.3
Manitoba	74.7	64.6	-10.1
Saskatchewan	78.3	65.3	-13.0
Alberta	74.8	62.5	-12.2
British Columbia	76.0	61.5	-14.5

Source(s): Canadian Social Survey (5354)—waves 2, 3 and 4 and 2016 General Social Survey (5221).

Quebec's population was the most hopeful about the future in 2021/2022 (70%), followed by Prince Edward Island (66%) and Saskatchewan (65%). These provinces also reported the highest levels of hopefulness in 2016.

Generally, people living in rural areas are more hopeful about the future than those living in urban areas (66% versus 64%). A notable exception was in Alberta, where 51% of the rural population was hopeful about the future compared with 64% of urban dwellers in 2021/2022. Additional research will be helpful to better understand these findings.

The overall results are consistent with trends observed with other key indicators of quality of life. According to the latest waves of the CSS, Quebec's population was also more likely to report having a high level of satisfaction with life and a strong sense of meaning and purpose.

### Young Canadians experience larger declines in hopefulness

In 2016, young Canadians were more hopeful than the older population. Nearly 8 in 10 Canadians aged 15 to 34 were always or often hopeful about the future in 2016, compared with 7 in 10 persons aged 65 and older. However, in 2021/2022, the younger group was as hopeful about the future as older Canadians—about 63% of 15 to 34 year-olds had a positive view of the future, down significantly from 2016 (-15%).

This finding coincides with a steady decline in mental health among youth. A decade ago, young Canadians reported better mental health than their older counterparts. However, the situation has since been reversed. Recently, a lower proportion of [young Canadians reported having excellent or very good mental health](#) compared with older Canadians.

### LGBTQ2+ people report less hopeful views of the future

Women (65%) held a slightly more hopeful view of the future than men (63%) in 2021/2022. However, transgender and non-binary individuals were considerably less hopeful about their futures (38%) compared with cisgender people.

Nearly one-half of LGBTQ2+ individuals—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 positive outlook on the future (49%). In comparison, nearly two-thirds of non-LGBTQ2+ individuals were hopeful about the future (65%).

There was variation within the LGBTQ2+ population based on sexual orientation. About 52% of those who were lesbian or gay, 49% of those who were bisexual, and 44% of those with another sexual orientation had a positive outlook on the future.

The LGBTQ2+ population's less hopeful view of the future could be partly related to their [higher likelihood to report having fair or poor mental health, to be violently victimized, or to seriously contemplate suicide during their lifetimes](#) compared with the non-LGBTQ2+ population.

### **About one-half of persons with a disability have a hopeful view of the future in 2021/2022**

Persons with a disability, difficulty or long-term condition were considerably less likely to have a hopeful outlook on their future compared with the rest of the population (53% versus 72%).

As for gender differences, women with a disability, difficulty or long-term condition had a slightly more positive view of the future than men with a disability, difficulty or long-term condition (55% versus 51%).

### **Economic and social challenges linked to a less hopeful outlook**

Households that experienced financial difficulty meeting basic household needs during the pandemic, such as transportation, housing, food and clothing, had a less hopeful view of the future than those who did not experience financial hardship (47% versus 69%) in 2021/2022.

Similarly, compared with those who were employed (66%), people who were looking for paid work in the week prior to completing the survey were less likely to be hopeful about the future (51%).

Challenging social situations—such as experiences of discrimination—were also associated with lower levels of hopefulness. More specifically, 55% of individuals who experienced discrimination or unfair treatment in the past five years were hopeful about the future, while 68% of those who did not have those experiences held a hopeful outlook.

Population groups that had below-average levels of hopefulness included Japanese (55%; data should be used with caution), Chinese (58%), Southeast Asian (60%) and Korean (61%) ethnocultural groups. Notably, [these groups have reported experiencing increased levels of discrimination during the pandemic](#).

Despite experiencing discrimination or unfair treatment at higher rates, some population groups reported above-average hopefulness about their futures, including the Black Canadian population (73%), recent immigrants (74%) and non-permanent residents (72%). This is consistent with previous findings that found the [Black Canadian population reports higher than average resilience](#). This suggests that hopefulness may protect against some of the negative impacts of discrimination and can keep people motivated, engaged and resilient in the face of adversity.

**Table 2**  
**Hopeful view of the future by select characteristics, 2021/2022**

	Percentage "always" or "often" hopeful about the future
<b>Total population</b>	<b>64.1</b>
<b>Gender</b>	
Men	63.3
Women	65.4
Transgender or non-binary	37.9
<b>Sexual orientation</b>	
Non-LGBTQ2+ population	65.1
LGBTQ2+ population	48.9
Lesbian or gay	52.2
Bisexual	48.7
Other sexual orientation	43.9
<b>Disability status</b>	
Persons with a disability, difficulty or long-term condition	53.0
Persons without a disability, difficulty or long-term condition	72.4
<b>Visible minority groups</b>	
Visible minorities	67.1
South Asian	70.1
Chinese	57.8
Black	72.5
Filipino	75.2
Arab	70.3
Latin American	70.7
Southeast Asian	59.9
West Asian	73.6
Korean	60.7
Japanese	55.4 <sup>E</sup>
Visible minority, n.i.e.	66.5 <sup>E</sup>
Multiple visible minorities	63.1
Not a visible minority	63.1
<b>Immigrant status</b>	
Non-immigrant	63.1
Immigrant	66.5
Established immigrant	63.5
Recent immigrant	73.8
Non-permanent resident	71.6

<sup>E</sup> use with caution

**Note(s):** The abbreviation "n.i.e." means "not included elsewhere."

**Source(s):** Canadian Social Survey (5354)—waves 2, 3 and 4.

## Living in larger households with children and having a strong sense of belonging to a local community associated with hopefulness

Canadians who lived in multiple-person households with children were more hopeful about the future (70%) than those living in multiple-person households without children (64%) or those living alone (56%). In particular, Canadians on maternity, paternity or parental leave reported some of the highest levels of hopefulness (83%).

Nearly 8 in 10 people (78%) who had a strong sense of belonging to their local community always or often had a hopeful view of the future. Conversely, just over one-third of people who always or often felt lonely (35%) had a positive view of the future.

As the Canadian economy continues to rebound and social life adjusts to a new normal, Canada will track the quality of life for all Canadians using the Quality of Life Framework. The hopeful outlook indicator can be understood as a measure of wellbeing that is interconnected with other indicators, such as mental health, loneliness and sense of belonging to local communities. Future research could be done to better understand these interconnections as well as the potential implications for policymakers.

### Note to readers

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

- CSS – Well-being, Activities and Perception of Time (collected between August 6 and September 18, 2021);
- CSS – Well-being, Unpaid work, and Family Time (collected between October 26 and December 7, 2021);
- CSS – Well-being and Family Relationships (collected between January 28 and March 13, 2022), released today.

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

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 during this time of crisis.

Comparisons are made with the 2016 General Social Survey—Canadians at work and home—to better capture the evolving views of Canadians about the future.

Persons with a disability, difficulty or long-term condition includes those who identified themselves as a person with a disability and/or reported at least one long-term difficulty or condition. The pooling of CSS data supports disaggregation of quality of life indicators by disability type. However, the disaggregation of the future outlook indicator by disability type fell outside the scope of this study.

**Cisgender person** refers to persons whose reported gender corresponds to their reported sex at birth. It includes cisgender men and women.

**Transgender person** includes persons whose reported gender does not correspond to their reported sex at birth. It includes transgender men and women. Non-binary persons are excluded.

**Non-binary person** refers to persons whose reported gender is not exclusively male or female.

### Definitions, data sources and methods: survey numbers [5221](#) and [5354](#).

The infographic "[Hopefulness in Canada](#)" is available as part of the *Statistics Canada – Infographics* series ([11-627-M](#)).

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](mailto:infostats@statcan.gc.ca)) or Media Relations ([statcan.mediahotline-ligneinfomedias.statcan@statcan.gc.ca](mailto:statcan.mediahotline-ligneinfomedias.statcan@statcan.gc.ca)).