



This is our full report.
An abridge report is available.

Canadians' *Prosocial Behaviours* Survey

*The drivers of generosity, civic
participation, and civility.*

An initiative of
GIV3 and **SECTOR3** INSIGHTS

April 2026

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Why This Study Matters Now

➤ Prosocial behaviour is part of the functioning of a healthy society

- **A well-functioning democracy depends not only on laws, institutions, and public services, but also on the everyday willingness of citizens to contribute to the common good.**
 - Generosity, volunteering, helping others, voting, and civic participation all play a role in making communities more resilient, cooperative, and humane. Where these behaviours are strong, communities often absorb social strain more effectively. Where they weaken, more pressure falls onto governments, formal services, and already-stretched charitable institutions.

➤ Prosocial behaviours as weakening, as well as their key drivers.

- Multiple indicators suggest long-term softening in financial giving, volunteering, and other forms of contribution.
- Several key drivers have been weakening: Connectedness, religiosity, aging Boomers, and financial capacity.

➤ This matters for charities and governments

- **These shifts matter not only to charities, but also to governments concerned with health, social cohesion, civic resilience, public trust, and the cost of downstream social problems.**

This study was designed to better understand the foundations and drivers of prosocial behaviour in Canada.

- It builds on prior work exploring the many of forms and correlates of generosity in Canada (www.Sector3Insights.com)



Executive Summary: Canadians' Prosocial Behaviours Survey

Exploring the social elements driving greater generosity, civic participation, and civility. – April 2026

This summarizes the key points from a unique, national survey of Canadian adults exploring their civic/prosocial behaviours and the drivers behind them. **It was designed to find the true drivers to help support smart, relevant policy considerations.**

Background/Introduction: Prosocial behaviours (giving, volunteering, civic participation, voting, etc.) are public goods that are an important part of a healthy civil society. They help communities function, strengthen resilience, and reduce pressure on formal systems of care and government. *Yet many of the social conditions that appear to support these behaviours are weakening in Canada.*

Key Insights/Implications:

1. Prosocial behaviour depends heavily on **connectedness/community embeddedness** (more so than on empathy and goodwill)
 - Canadians who are more socially embedded (in associations, religious attendance, clubs, etc.) are more prosocial.
2. Prosocial behaviour is shaped by **social norms**; Especially obligation to be generous, upbringing, and visible examples.
3. Religiosity matters, but largely because it reinforces belonging, participation, social expectation, and social norms (less due to divinity/spirituality). - Religion is important because it is good at supporting the drivers of connectedness + social norms.
4. Financial capacity matters, but less than the above drivers.
5. Older adults are more prosocial in both behaviour and values

A significant concern for the future: The continuing weakening of connectedness, religiosity, and the passing of the Boomer cohort implies a further weakening in prosocial behaviour in Canada unless remedial action is taken.

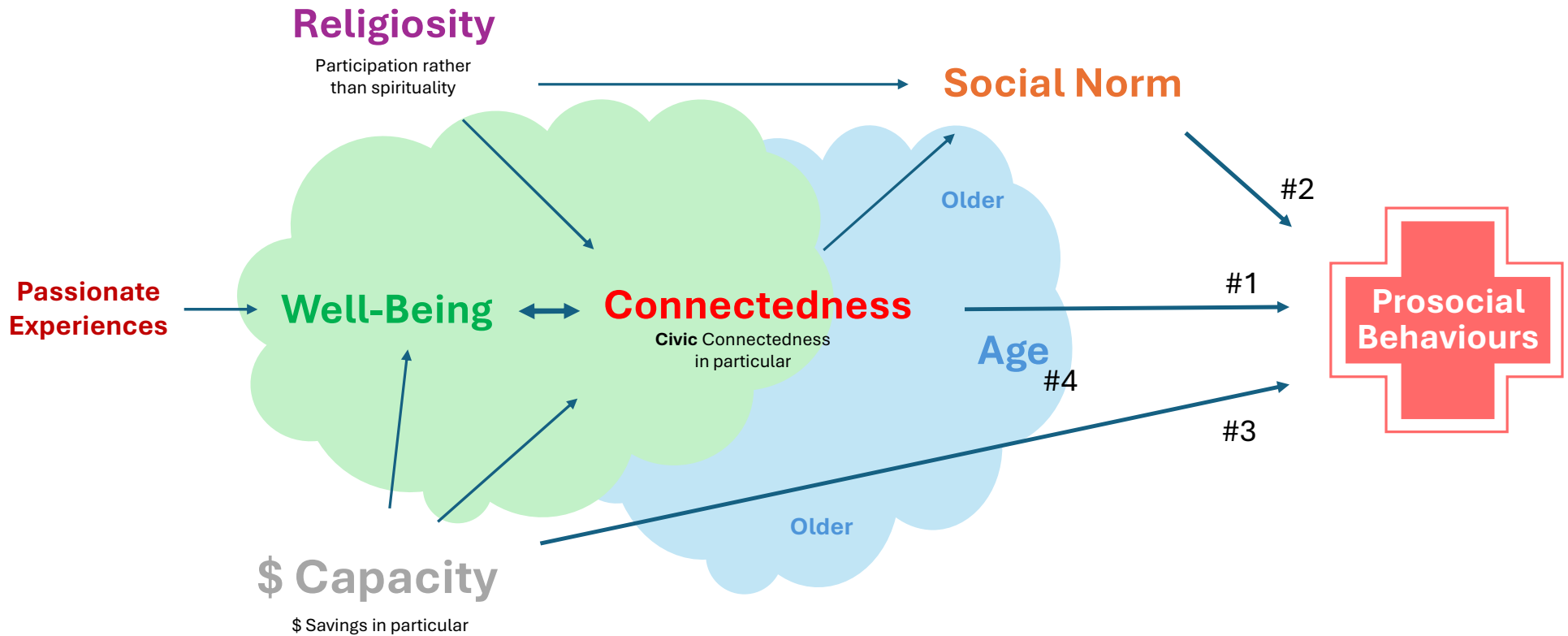
The central implication: Prosocial behaviour is not simply a matter of personal virtue or private preference. **It is socially produced.** Canadians are more prosocial when people are connected, embedded, encouraged, and shaped by social norms that make helping others feel ordinary and expected. → For the charitable sector and governments alike, the need is to **strengthen the social architecture that helps produce stronger prosocial behaviour via new innovative policy development.**

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GIV3 and **SECTOR3** INSIGHTS

A Visual Representation of the Drivers of Prosocial Behaviour in Canada

This summarizes the key insights from a unique, national survey of Canadian adults exploring their civic/prosocial behaviours. Our modeling teases out and accounts for the interactions between these many characteristics



ASIDE: Social media + digital entertainment consumption have no meaningful impact on prosocial behaviour after accounting for age and income



GIV3 and SECTOR3 INSIGHTS

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Implications From The Insights

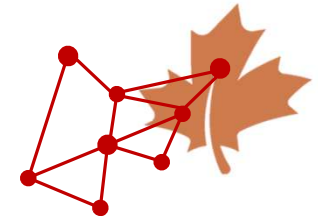
If Canada wants stronger generosity and civic contribution, it cannot rely on the appeals of individual charities. It must rebuild the social architecture that helps produce them. – The current drivers are weakening.

- Prosocial behaviours depend on strong(er) social norms, repeated participation, visible examples, belonging, and the socialization/normalization of helping behaviour over time.
- Canada needs new policy leadership to reverse the weakening of social norms and to develop policies which boost community connectedness. **Policy implication include:**
 - ✓ **Develop innovate (tax) incentives to encourage the full spectrum of prosocial behaviours** that matter to our civility (i.e. incentives for volunteering, for care-giving, for donating items/things, for donating body parts, and so on).
 - ✓ **Rebuild the social conditions** that support generosity. **Build connectedness + embeddedness in our communities.**
 - Strengthen local associations, volunteer pathways, neighbourhood groups, and recurring community participation.
 - Create recurring community gatherings, volunteer circles, neighbourhood groups, civic clubs, giving circles, school/workplace-based service rituals, monthly local events tied to helping others, and so on.
 - The point is to create **routine, repeated participation**. Treat connectedness as part of a society's **social infrastructure**.
 - ✓ **Strengthen social norms, not just awareness of need**
 - Religious generosity is often visible: Public asks, shared campaigns, visible participation, collective rituals of contribution. On the other hand, outside religion, giving is often hidden and privatized. This weakens norm formation. Possible interventions: public community fundraising goals, visible local giving/volunteering campaigns, community challenge models, social proof messaging, “people in this neighbourhood/ workplace helped X families” style reporting.
 - The data suggest obligation is a powerful value. The strongest differentiators include: “Helping is a personal responsibility”/ “Supporting charities is an obligation”/ “I was raised to help others”
 - Being raised to help others is a major pathway. Develop better interventions through schools, families, youth service programs, faith groups, sports and clubs, structured volunteering for teens and young adults.
 - ✓ **And better measure prosocial behaviours and drivers more systemically. We need to be measuring what matters.**

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GIV3 and **SECTOR3** INSIGHTS

Sharing and use of this research



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- If you have questions for Sector3Insights, about this study, or about access to the summary tables and/or raw data, please contact John.Hallward@giv3.ca or visit www.Sector3Insights.com

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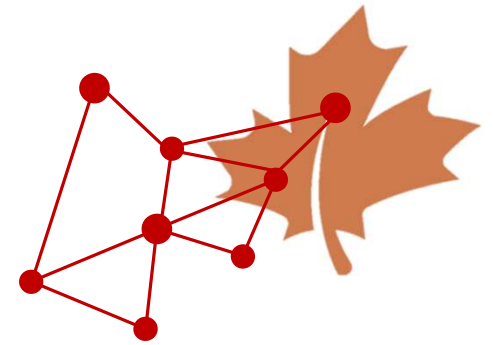
GIV3 is a movement to encourage more Canadians to be more generous.

- GIV3 is a registered Canadian charity, created in 2009.
- It started with a focus on grassroots initiatives such as bringing **GivingTuesday** to Canada and developing **The Great Canadians Giving Challenge**. Both programs have triggered (and continue to encourage) tens of millions of additional donation dollars and other acts of giving, annually, in Canada.
- **However, more recently, GIV3 has increased its work on advocacy and policy improvements for the charitable sector.** We believe that systemic changes in regulations and government programs are overdue. New policies can quickly and effectively lead to significant benefits in the charitable sector, on the order of magnitude of billions of dollars for millions of Canadians in need.
- Learn more at www.GIV3.ca

SECTOR3 INSIGHTS is a social enterprise research firm providing insights for non-profit success.

- S3I leverages state-of-the-art research tools used in the corporate world to help guide non-profits in their decisions, strategies and actions. **All profit is used to support charitable causes and initiatives.**
- Visit the S3I website to find many **free** research reports, insights, and implications to enhance fundraising and generosity.
- Learn more at www.Sector3Insights.com





Introduction

Prosocial Behaviours are Waning in Canada

➤ Financial giving is weakening

- The incidence of Canadians claiming a charity tax credit in their T1 Annual Tax Filing, over time, has been declining steadily, from 30% of tax filers in 1990 to 17% in 2024.
 - The dollar value of donations, in constant inflation-adjusted dollars, per capita, has also been weakening.
 - “Boomers” comprise over a third of all donations (and increasing). As Boomers pass, giving will likely fall further.

➤ Giving items/things is directionally down

- Survey data (including Stats Can “Survey of Giving, Volunteering and Participating”) indicates a general decline in the incidence of Canadians giving items to those in need (e.g. food, personal care products, clothing, household items).

➤ Volunteering has been declining

- Formal volunteering for nonprofits and charities also fell from 41% (2018) to 32% (2023).

➤ Blood donations have not bounced back since COVID

- The patchy Canadian data on blood donations has declined to about 1.5% of eligible Canadians, a significant decline from pre-Covid (at about 4%).

➤ Voting turnout is lower than a generation ago

- Federal election turnout rates have declined from about 80% in 1960 to about 70% in the last election, with lows below at about 60% fifteen years ago).

Social Connectedness Matters

- Social connectedness (“social capital” to some) is **the glue which holds our communities together and empowers them**. - It is our networks, connections, shared social norms, trust, generosity, and reciprocity which facilitates our productivity and civility.
 - ✓ **When social connectedness is strong**, communities often “co-produce” public outcomes with each level of government: Informal caregiving, mutual aid, civic participation, and other prosocial behaviours **that reduce downstream demand on public systems**. This is widely accepted globally.
 - ✗ **When it weakens**, social problems can become more expensive, and civility becomes harder to govern. The evidence proves that with higher loneliness, there is **greater pressure on health and social services**. With weaker ‘connectedness’, **generosity towards others declines** (putting more pressure on governments to fund the provision of social/charitable services). Weaker social connectedness means fewer civic buffers that support peaceful civility and community resiliency.

Connectedness appears to be weakening...



- In Canada, several “everyday connection” indicators appear to be weakening in ways that plausibly **matter for Ottawa’s priorities: economic productivity, public safety, health-system problems, philanthropy, and civic participation.**
- Consider recent Canadian indicators often used to proxy connectedness and prosocial capacity.
 - Statistics Canada time-use data show the share of Canadians who saw friends on an average day fell from **47.9% (1986) to 19.3% (2022)**;
 - And among those who did, time together declined from **5.0 hours to 3.8 hours.**
 - Formal volunteering for nonprofits and charities also fell from **41% (2018) to 32% (2023).**
 - Restaurants Canada Org reports: “Three in four Canadians (75%) are eating out less often”
 - Health trends may also be relevant: Statistics Canada’s *Mental Health and Access to Care Survey* reports notable increases over the last decade in measured conditions, including:
 - **Generalized anxiety disorder** (past 12 months) from **2.6% (2012) to 5.2% (2022)** and
 - **Major depressive episode** (past 12 months) from **4.7% (2012) to 7.6% (2022).**
- These trends do not prove causation, but they are consistent with a thinning of key components of connectedness, and with downstream impacts in communities and on social services, health, and declining generosity.

How prosocial are Canadians?



- **Prosocial behaviour is the focus of this study. It refers to acts that contribute to the strength of our communities, including giving, volunteering, helping others, voting, civic participation, and so on.**
 - This study intentionally adopts a broad definition rather than reducing prosociality to charitable donations alone. That broader approach reflects the reality that many Canadians contribute to society in ways that are meaningful but not always well measured.
- ***The results suggest a mixed picture.***
 - *Most Canadians report at least some prosocial behaviour, but relatively few are active across many different forms of contribution.*
 - *In other words, **prosociality in Canada appears broad but often shallow**: Many people do something, but a much smaller share do many things, or do them with strong regularity and intensity.*
 - *This implies both that Canada retains a base of generosity and civic contribution, and that **there is substantial room for strengthening it.***

How prosocial are Canadians?



Canadians are generous in more ways than indicated by \$ donations in the well-measured T1 filings with charity tax credits.

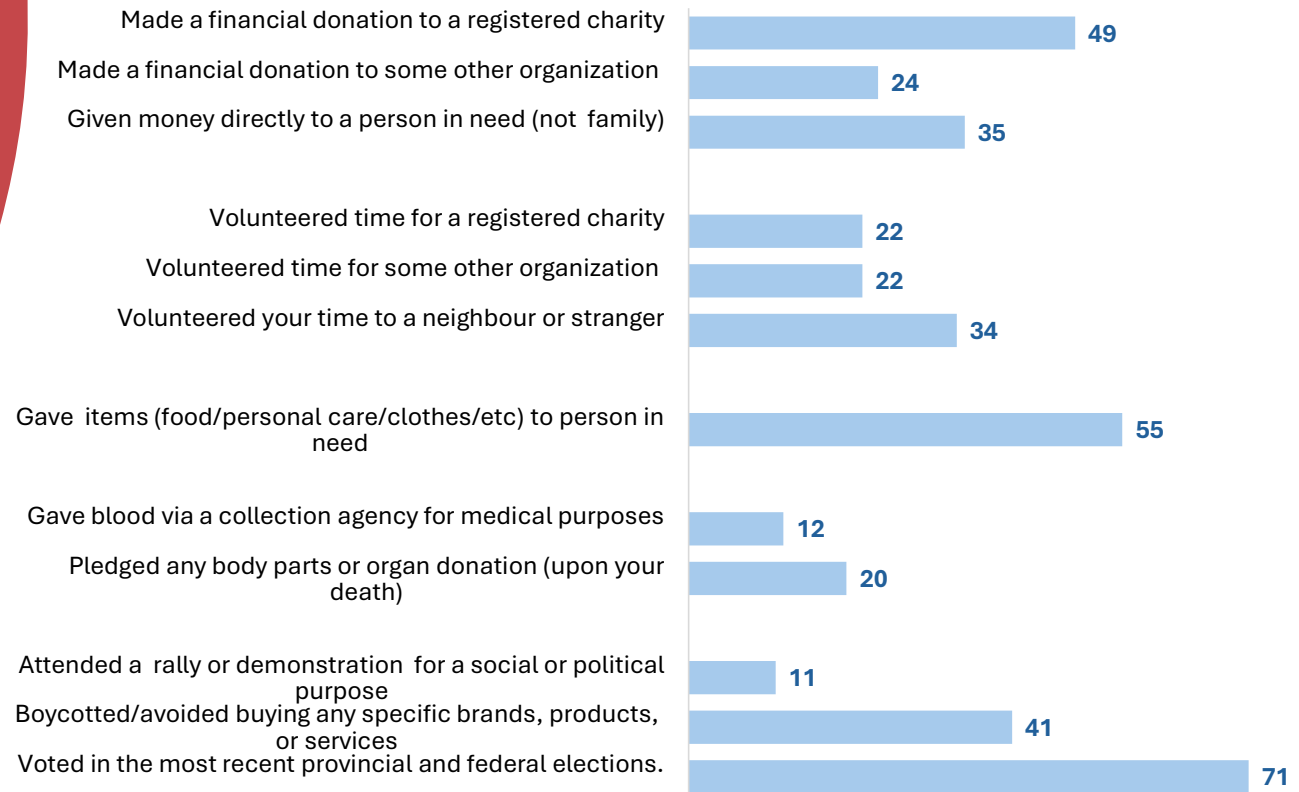
Beyond making financial donations, they are giving items (food, personal care, clothes, household items) to people in need. And they are volunteering.

They are also doing other prosocial behaviours: Boycotting, voting, and pledging organs, and so on.

However, a relatively low incidence of Canadians are active across many forms of contribution. - see next page.

Prosocial Behaviour Done in Past 12 Months

All Adults (%)



Q. "In the past 12 months, have you, yourself,...." (full question found in the Appendix)

Of the 12 measured behaviours, there is room for improvement



In absolute, Canadians do not appear to be so prosocially oriented....

- Fewer than 20% of Canadians have done more than half of the 12 measured behaviours...
- One-third have done fewer than 3 of the 12 behaviours.

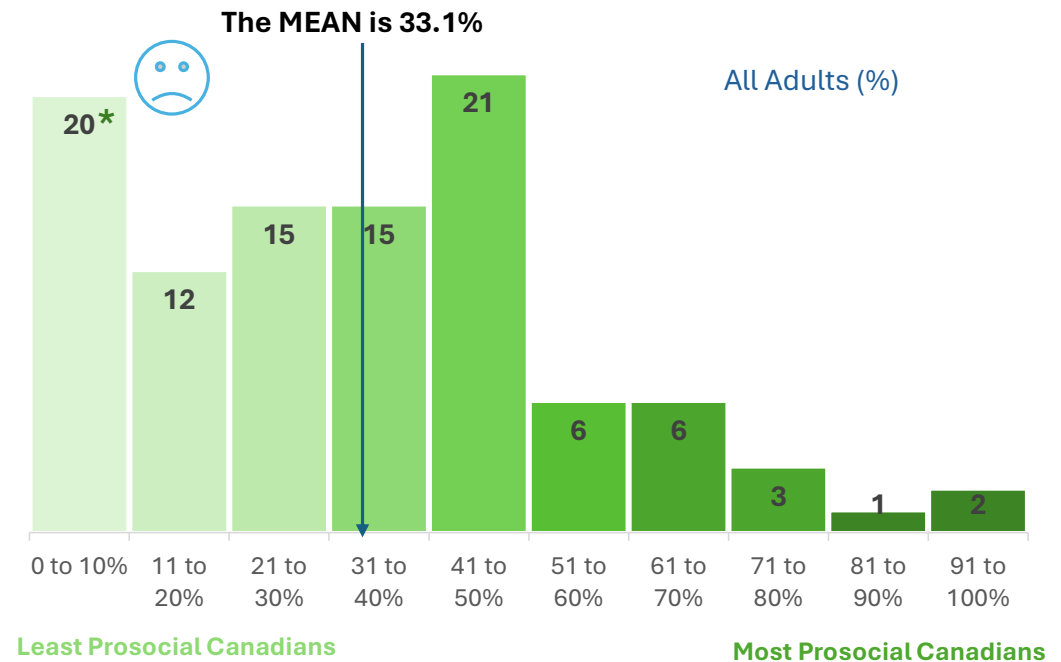
There is much room for improvement.

Owing to the importance of these prosocial contributions:

- ✓ It is likely important to understand what drives these behaviours.
- ✓ Who are the more prosocially oriented? And why?

Canadian's Prosocial Behaviour Index Scores

This indicates the percentage of the 12 measured behaviours Canadians have done in the past 12 months. The closer to 100% the more people did all 12 of the measured behaviours



* How to read: 20% of Canadians did fewer than 10% of the 12 measured prosocial behaviours

Some have stronger prosocial behaviours than others...



We find stronger prosocial behaviours among...

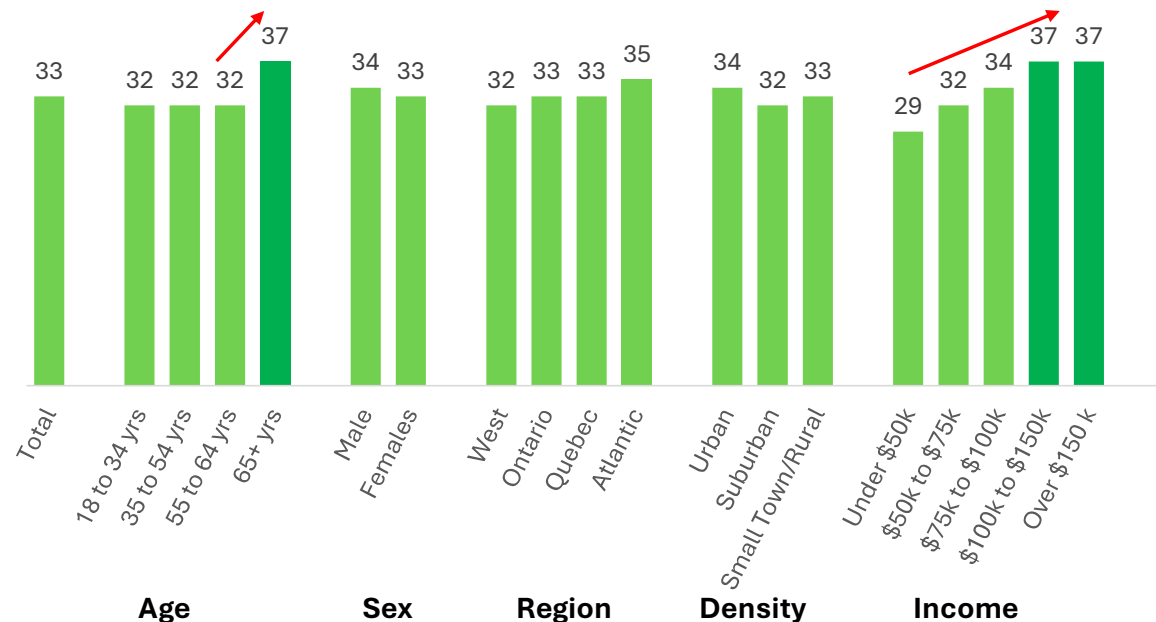
- Baby Boomers, and
- Higher Income Households

There are no statistically significant differences by gender, urban vs rural, and just a slight regional skew (Atlantic Canada).

However, there are some significant differences by people's values, connectedness, well-being, and religiosity...

Canadian's Prosocial Behaviour Index Scores

Mean Score for Each Sub-Segment



Four different prosocial profiles emerge

This works from the strongest prosocial Canadians to the weakest



Prosocial Heroes (23%)

Average behaviours: 7.5 of 12

strongest all-round helping segment

Younger, happy + connected, religious

What they do most

gave items to people in need: **85%**

voted: **82%**

donated to a registered charity: **80%**

helped a neighbour with time: **77%**

gave money directly to a person: **77%**

donated to another organization: **66%**

Personal profile

average age: **45**

happiness: **77.4**

connectedness index: **76.5**

well-being index: **71.4**

very/quite religious: **42%**

financially comfortable: **41%**

quite stretched/struggling: **23%**

gave **\$200+** in past year: **61%**

The Decents (32%)

Average behaviours: 4.1 of 12

Older, Reasonably connected and reasonably well engaged, but more selective rather than deeply active

What they do most

gave items to people in need: **92%**

voted: **88%**

donated to a registered charity: **55%**

boycotted based on values: **47%**

helped a neighbour with time: **29%**

gave money directly to a person **27%**

What they do less

volunteered for a charity: **11%**

Personal profile

average age: **52**

happiness: **70.8**

connectedness index: **72.2**

well-being index: **68.3**

very/quite religious: **19%**

financially comfortable: **37%**

quite stretched/struggling: **29%**

gave **\$200+** in past year: **33%**

Hands Off Voters (25%)

Average behaviours: 2.6 of 12

Older, civically aware, strongly anchored in voting, but much weaker on hands-on helping and giving goods

What they do most

voted: **96%**

boycotted based on values: **41%**

donated to a registered charity: **40%**

What they do much less

helped a neighbour with time: **19%**

gave money directly to a person: **15%**

organ donor pledge: **14%**

Gave items : **0%**

Personal profile

average age: **52**

happiness: **69.1**

connectedness index: **68.5**

well-being index: **67.0**

very/quite religious: **18%**

financially comfortable: **36%**

quite stretched/struggling: **29%**

gave **\$200+** in past year: **17%**

Detached (20%)

Average behaviours: 1.4 of 12

Youngest group. Least connected, lowest financial comfort. Least generous. Clearly the most behaviourally disengaged

What they do at all

gave goods/items: **31%**

gave money directly to a person **23%**

donated to a registered charity: **16%**

boycotted: **14%**

helped a neighbour with time: **12%**

What stands out most

voted: **0%**

Personal profile

average age: **40**

happiness: **69.3**

connectedness index: **67.0**

well-being index: **64.9**

very/quite religious: **21%**

financially comfortable: **21%**

quite stretched/struggling: **37%**

gave **\$200+** in past year: **12%**

Our prosocial values + attitudes...



- Behaviour alone does not explain itself.
 - People with similar resources and similar exposure to need may behave differently **because they hold different values, assumptions, and social norms about helping.**
 - For that reason, this study also examines a set of attitudes related to generosity, obligation, trust, financial strain, social responsibility, and upbringing. These attitudes are especially important because they help explain not only whether people can contribute, but whether they feel they should.
- *One of the clearest themes in these findings is that empathy is not the only issue. Many Canadians express sympathy for others and recognize real social need, but the **strength of the norm around personal obligation** appears an important discriminator. In particular, the line between seeing helping as ‘good’ and seeing it as ‘my responsibility’ remains a critical fault line.*
 - *This distinction matters greatly for understanding why prosocial behaviour is stronger among some groups than others. And it represents a key point of focus for strengthening generosity in the future.*

Generally, Canadians appreciate the need for charitable behaviour. They trust the charity sector.



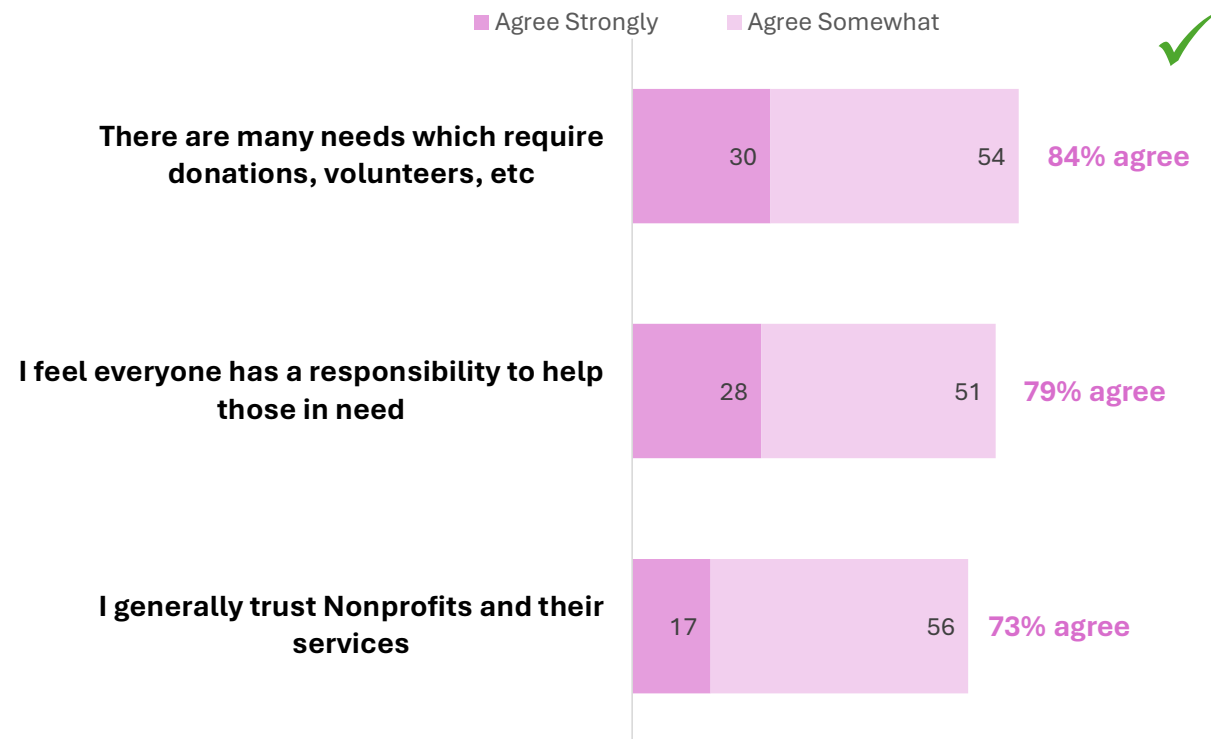
Canadians appear to have good values towards generosity and helping others.

Trust is relatively strong for/towards charities.

- This is not a key driver or concern which requires priority attention.

Prosocial Values & Attitudes

All Adults (%)



NOTE: These are abbreviated labels. Please see the appendix for the full wording of each attribute.

Appreciation of the social norm for generosity is weaker and much more so among non-religious Canadians

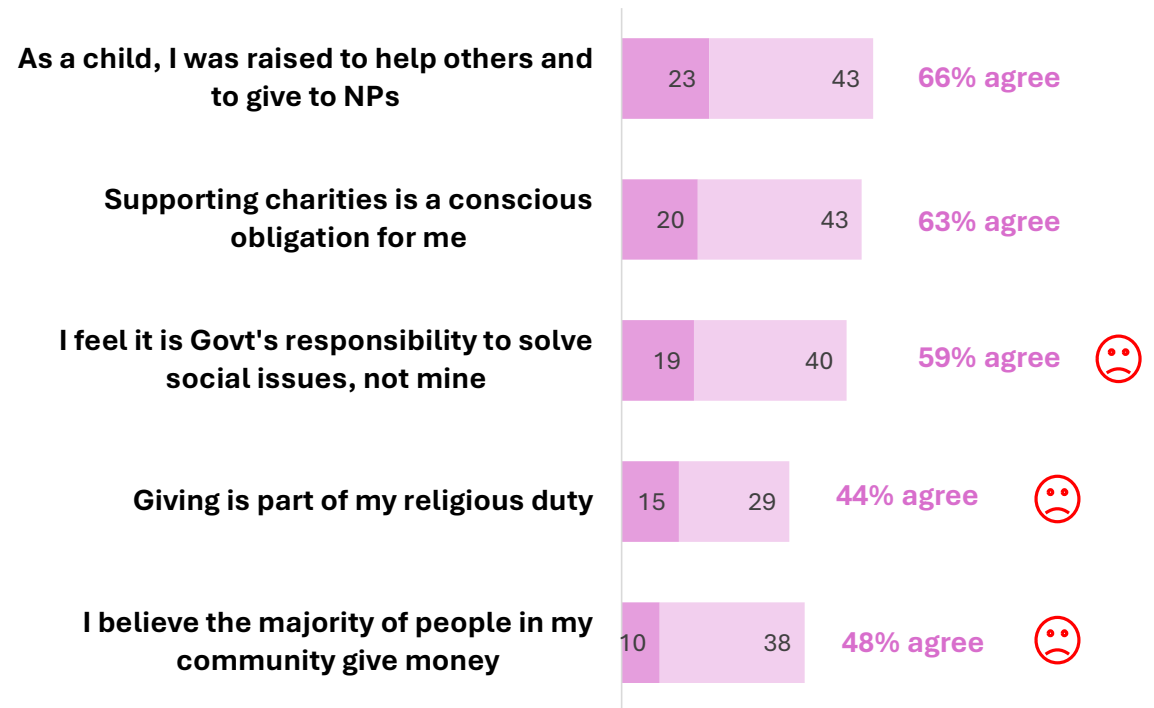


- Although most Canadians claim they were raised to help others, this is not universal.
- More than half of Canadians (52%) disagree that the majority of others are giving.
- 59% of Canadians feel it is NOT their responsibility to help solve social problems (it's the governments role, "not mine")
- The majority of Canadians do not have a religious duty to be giving.
- **In brief, Canadians have generous sentiments, but the strength of the sentiments appear to be questionable...**

Prosocial Values & Attitudes

All Adults (%)

Agree Strongly Agree Somewhat



NOTE: These are abbreviated labels. Please see the appendix for the full wording of each attribute.



Financial capacity matters, but giving levels are also a question of priorities + obligations

About half of Canadians feel that “giving puts too much financial strain” on them.

- For some, this is certainly true
- But this is also a question of values + priorities because religious Canadians are no wealthier than non-religious and yet they are much more generous without any higher claim of “financial strain”.

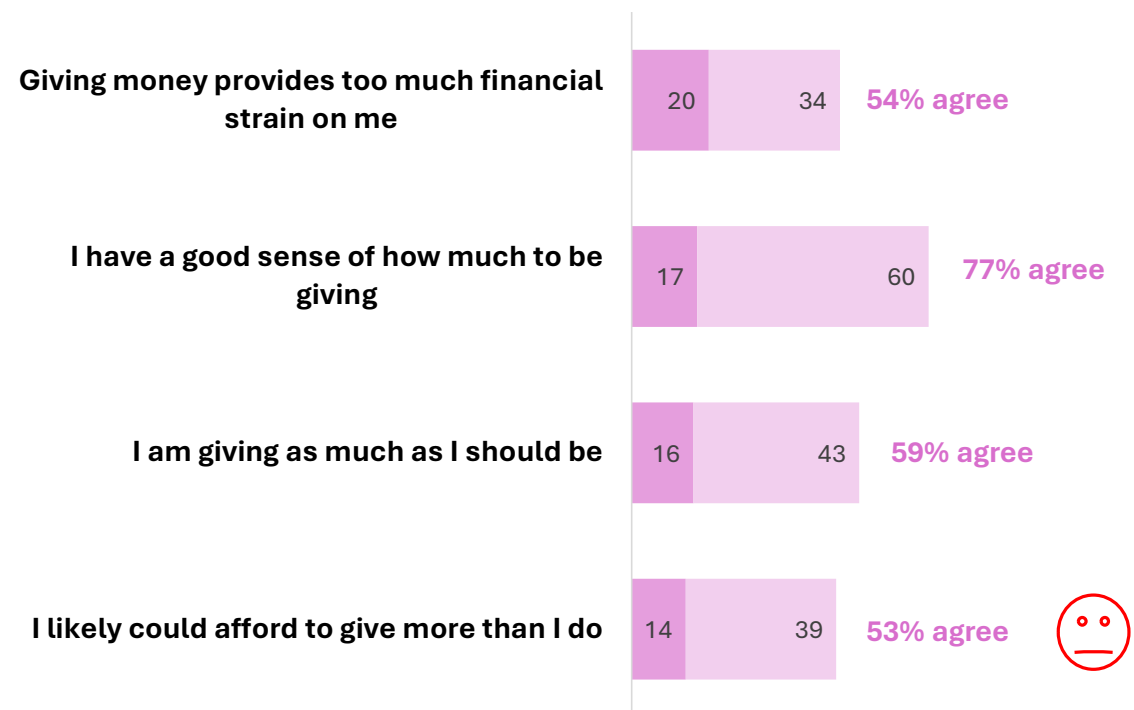
Furthermore, half of Canadians claim they “**could likely afford to give more than they do**”. *So, why aren't they?*

77% believe they have a good sense of how much to be giving, but we know from our earlier research that this is mostly misinformed.

Prosocial Values & Attitudes

All Adults (%)

■ Agree Strongly ■ Agree Somewhat



NOTE: These are abbreviated labels. Please see the appendix for the full wording of each attribute.

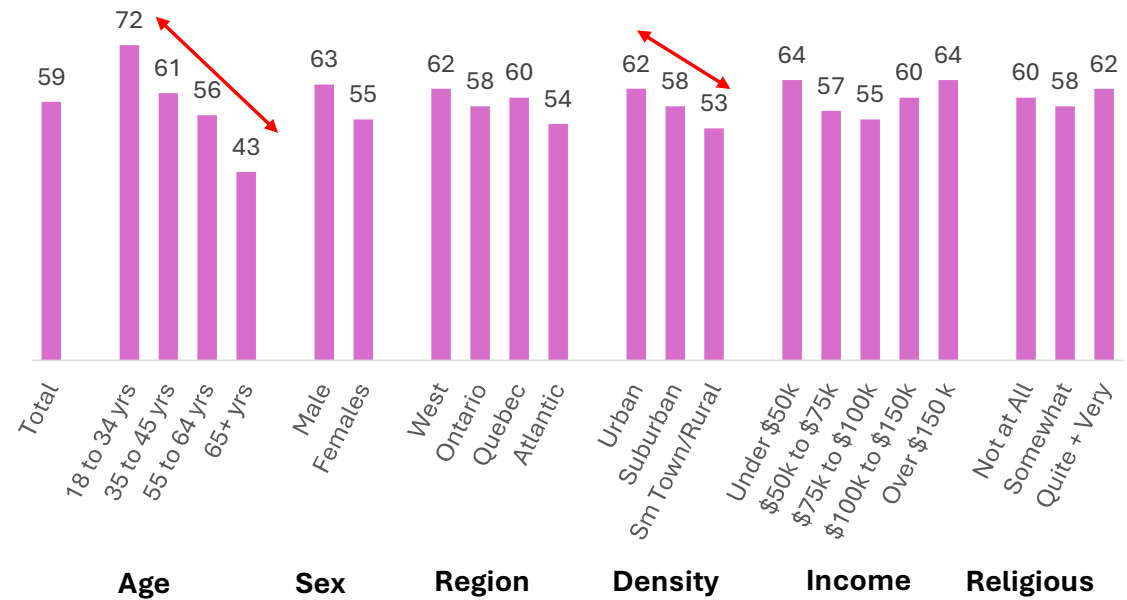
Values: “Not-my-problem” is strongest among younger adults



Younger adults are more likely to feel that it is the government’s responsibility to solve our social problems (and not their role).

→ Younger Canadians appear to have weaker prosocial values.

Agree Strongly/Somewhat:
“I feel it is the government’s responsibility to solve our social problems, and not people like me”



Agree Strongly/Somewhat:

“I feel it is the government’s responsibility to solve our social problems, and not people like me”

People who agree with the statement are:

- **less likely to donate to a registered charity: 44.5% vs 55.8%**
- **less likely to vote: 68.0% vs 76.3%**
- **less likely to boycott/avoid brands for values reasons: 38.2% vs 45.8%**
- **less likely to give goods/items to people in need: 52.5% vs 59.3%**

Once adjusted for age, finances, religiosity, ideology, loneliness, sex, and Québec, the picture sharpens:

- **Registered charity donation** remained meaningfully lower among those who agree
- **Voting** also remained lower

This is not a good sentiment, shared by more than half of Canadians

“Connectedness” is one of the strongest bridges to prosocial behaviour



Connectedness is often treated as a soft or intuitive concept, but it is better understood as a multidimensional social condition. It includes emotional experiences such as belonging and appreciation, social realities such as relationships and support networks, and civic orientations such as trust, openness, participation, and comfort in community life.

In this study, connectedness is treated not as a vague feeling, but as a social infrastructure that can help explain why some people are more resilient, participatory, and prosocial than others.

The concept of “connectedness”

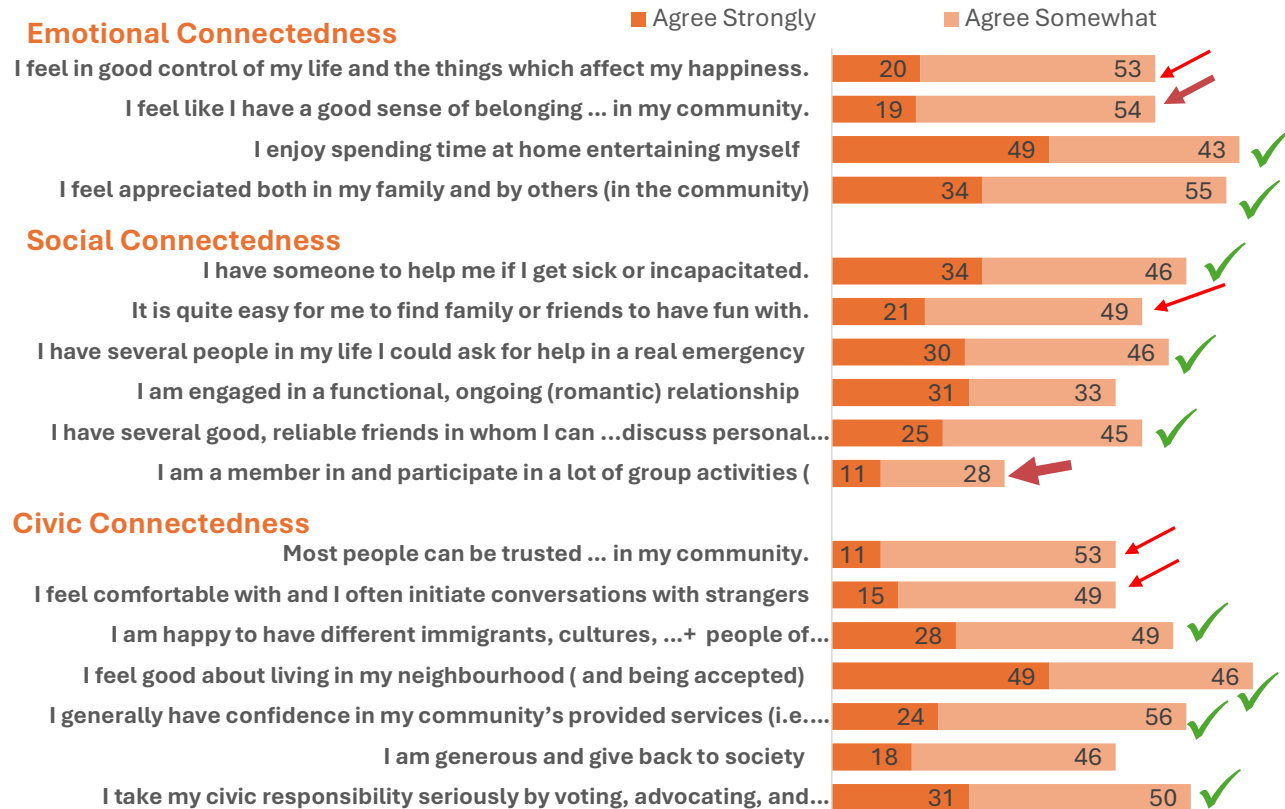


Many characteristics scores well in absolute, but not all of them. There are a few specific sentiments that are noticeably weaker:

- Note the comparatively low score for participation in group activities,
- and the weak sense of belonging in the community.
- There are important concerns...

Connectedness Characteristics

All Adults (%)



NOTE: These are abbreviated labels. Please see the appendix for the full wording of each attribute.

Connectedness is quite balanced by age, gender, religiosity, and income, with just minor skews



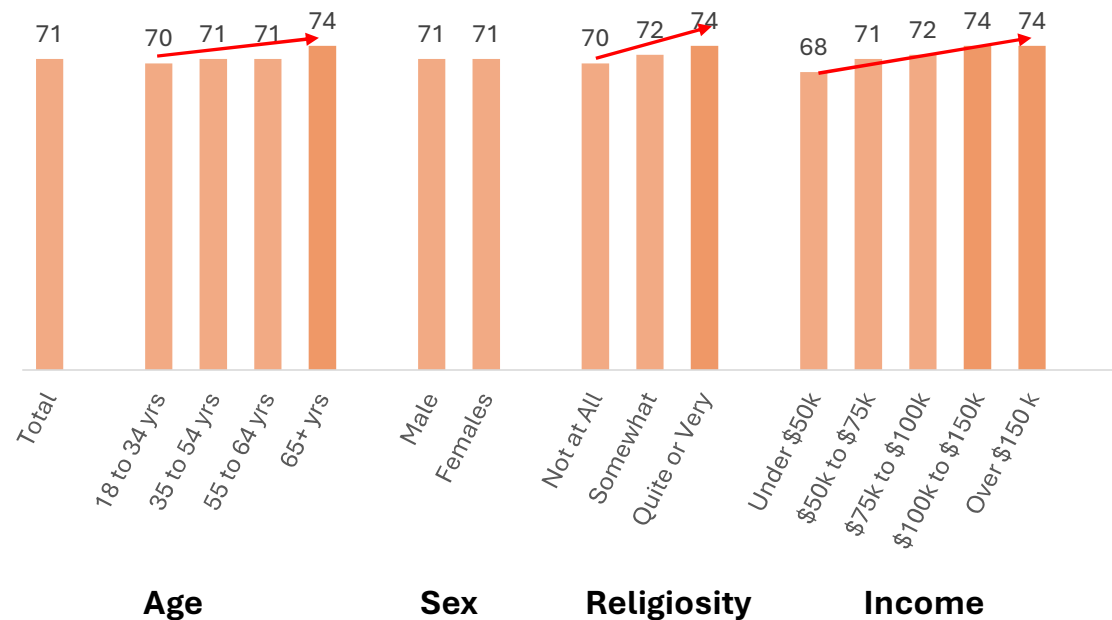
There are some minor skews to greater connectedness among Boomers, religious Canadians and higher income.

- However, these are not as noteworthy as the impact on our prosocial behaviours in our communities (next slide)

Total Combined Connectedness Score

Mean Score for Each Sub-Segment

These scores indicate how well Canadians rate themselves between disagreement versus agreement. The closer to 100% the more people are in total agreement on the 17 characteristics we measured.



Connectedness is a key bridge to prosocial behaviour



This is where we see the biggest differences in prosocial behaviours.

Those with higher connectedness are more prosocial.

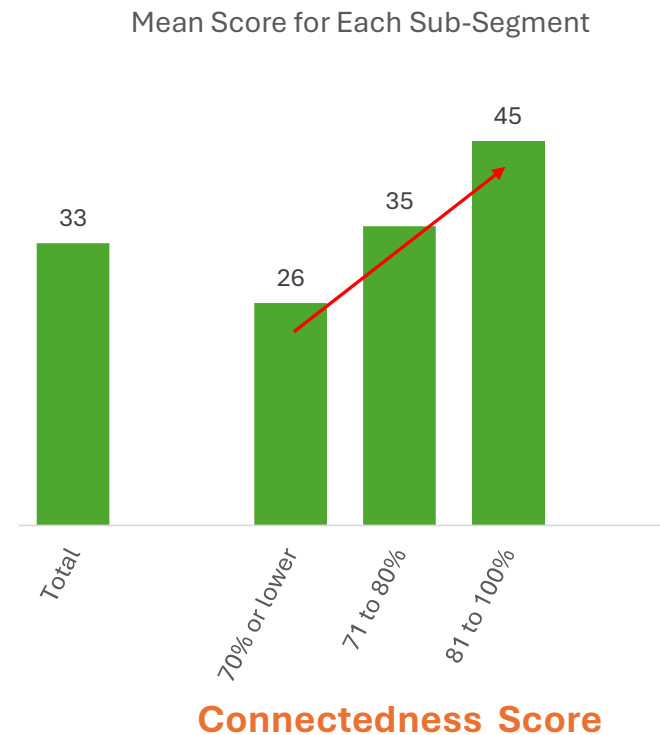
And the inverse is true: Canadians who are not well connected are less prosocial...

This is a concern since **connectedness** is declining in Canada.

This implies weaker prosocial behaviours for the future, with the related consequences, if remedial actions are not taken.

Canadian's Prosocial Behaviour Index Scores

This indicates the percentage of the 12 measured behaviours Canadians have done in the past 12 months. The closer to 100% the more people did all 12 of the measured behaviours

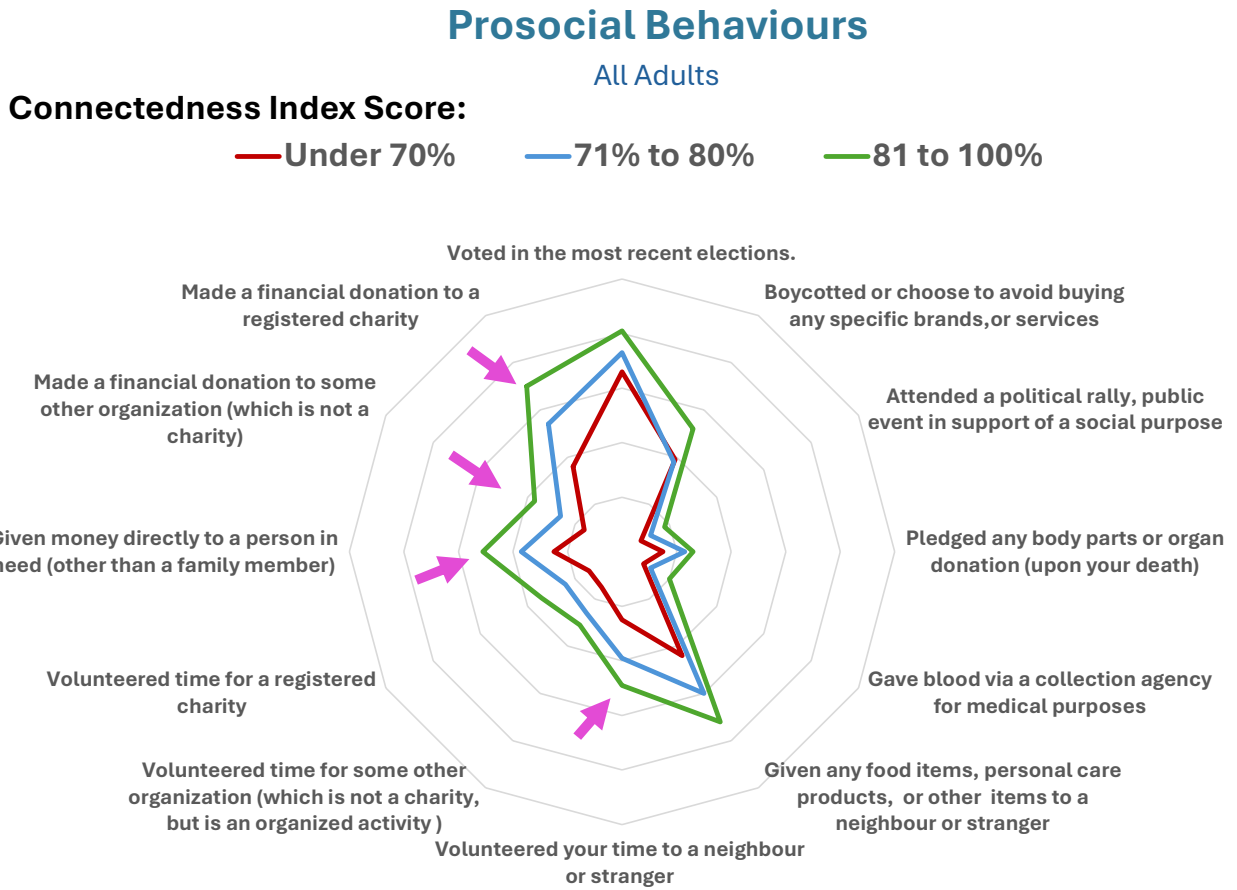




Prosocial behaviours done by level of connectedness

Those with greater connectedness are more likely to be generous in giving money, items/things, and volunteering. - These are characteristics of being engaged in the community/others.

- Less differentiated are voting, boycotting, attending rallies, and pledging body parts (which feel more individualistic)



Q. "In the past 12 months, have you, yourself,...."

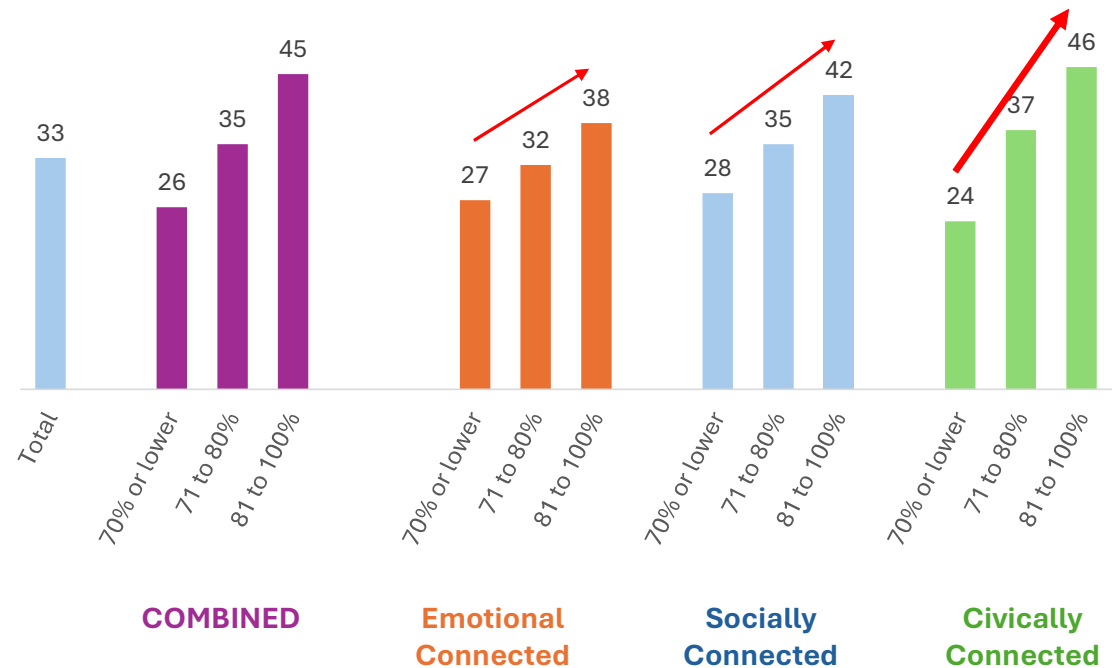
“Civic Connectedness” is the most impactful on behaviour



All three forms of connectedness affect prosocial behaviour, but it is the “Civic Connections” which matter most. This is more about community than about personal feelings.

Prosocial Behaviour Score by Elements of Connectedness

Mean Score for Each Sub-Segment



Modeling the drivers of prosocial behaviour

The approach to modeling: We modeled different characteristics on to the number of prosocial behaviours each person did in the past 12 months. Our goal was to explore which of the characteristics matter most in understanding (driving) prosocial behaviours.

- **The strongest correlates of higher prosocial behaviour are:**
 - More group memberships / association involvement
 - Being active in volunteering/charitable organizations
 - Higher civic connectedness
 - Higher overall connectedness
 - Religious service attendance / faith-community involvement
 - Higher savings / financial capacity
 - Better life expectations / happiness / connectedness since COVID
 - More exercise.
- **Discussion:** Although we find many patterns where being engaged in some prosocial behaviours also drives other prosocial behaviours (i.e. people who volunteer are also more likely to be donors), this appears circular in the modeling (i.e. prosocial behaviours driver prosocial behaviour, even if true!)
 - In turn, we also modeled the many characteristics of prosocial after removing all 'behaviours' on the driver side – see next page...

Modeling the drivers of prosocial behaviour (excluding behaviours as drivers)

Driver (strongest to weakest)	Interpretation
<i>“Supporting charities is a conscious obligation I have for myself”</i>	The strongest clean predictor. This is not behaviour itself; it is an internalized norm.
<i>Religious service attendance</i>	Attendance matters more than general spirituality once everything is in the model.
<i>Age</i>	Older adults have more prosocial behaviours, even after accounting for income, religiosity, health, and connectedness.
<i>Posting/commenting digitally</i>	Active digital expression predicts more prosocial behaviours; passive screen time does not.
<i>“There are many needs/social problems in my community...”</i>	Perceived local need appears to activate behaviour.
<i>“Everyone has a responsibility to give/help”</i>	General civic/prosocial obligation matters.
<i>“Raised to help others”</i>	Upbringing remains important even after religiosity and age are controlled.
<i>Openness to diversity</i>	Social openness is associated with broader prosocial behaviour.
<i>Household savings/income</i>	Capacity matters, but it is not the dominant story.
<i>Traditional/social support network</i>	Having people in one’s life is positive, though less dominant once values and religiosity are included.

The driver analysis for ‘Volume of Dollars Given’

For similar modeling on to **the total \$ value (volume) of financial donations** made in the past 12 months, we see the increased importance of **wealth** and **age**.

- **Supporting charities is a personal obligation**

- **Household income**
- Number of organization/group memberships
- I am giving as much as I should
- **Age**
- Everyone has a responsibility to help
- CIVIC connected score
- Religious service attendance
- Many community needs require support
- SOCIAL connected score
- Religiosity
- Active member: faith community
- Household savings level
- Active member: volunteering/charitable organization

1. **Financial capacity matters more here than in the broader “prosocial behaviour modeling”.** Strong positive drivers include Household income, Savings / current financial situation.
2. **Moral obligation matters a lot.** The single strongest driver in the model is “Supporting charities is a conscious obligation I have for myself”
3. **Social embeddedness still matters.** Higher giving is associated with: More organization/group memberships, Faith-community involvement , Religious attendance , Higher civic connectedness.
4. **Age matters.** Older respondents tend to report higher giving volume.

Summarizing the drivers of prosocial behaviour

1. The big insight is about **embeddedness**. People who are already inside groups, associations, faith communities, neighbourhood structures, and civic life are much more likely to act prosocially.
 - Many prosocial behaviours also encourage other prosocial behaviours (e.g. volunteering correlates with greater giving).
2. A second strong theme is **norms and moral framing**. The clearest predictor is not income by itself, but whether a person sees giving as a **personal obligation** and whether they were **socialized into helping** as a child.
 - And these two elements of **embeddedness** and **moral framing** are strongly developed among religious Canadians which explains why religiosity is often identified as a key driver to giving + volunteering.
3. A third point: **capacity matters, but it is not the whole story**. Accumulated **wealth** as well as **older age** help, but social belonging and prosocial norms appear at least as important, and often more important.
 - To be clear, younger Canadians have weaker prosocial values versus older adults.

The drivers of volunteering

- Volunteering for a **charity** and volunteering for “**other organization type**” are related, but not identical.
 - **Charity volunteering** is driven more by **institutional embeddedness and religiosity**.
 - It is best explained by:
 - organizational membership
 - formal group identity
 - faith-community attendance
 - social exposure
 - prosocial upbringing
 - That means the mechanism is not just “good values.” It is **organized pathways + repeated opportunities + social reinforcement**.
 - **Other organized volunteering** is driven more by **group participation, hobby/ sports/ community structures, and local association life**.
 - It is less about formal charitable institutions and more about:
 - sports and hobby networks
 - neighbourhood/community associations
 - local organized life
 - general group participation
 - practical civic habits
- **Volunteerism is NOT mainly a personal attitude/motivation issue. Greater volunteering is a social-structure issue.** - People volunteer when they are attached to groups, invited into organized settings, and socialized into helping.

Religiosity matters mainly because it builds belonging, norms, and repetition



One of the most distinctive insights in this report

- Religiosity is one of the most consistent correlates of generosity in this study, and in all of our previous research. But the relationship deserves careful interpretation to truly understand why and in which way religiosity matters so we can consider what the decline in religiosity implies about remedial actions.
 - The evidence suggests that religion matters **not because of theological beliefs alone**, but more because it provides a durable environment in which generosity is taught, repeated, modeled, expected, and socially reinforced. **Religiosity appears to operate as a social-moral ecosystem, not merely as a private belief system.**
 - Religious attendance is the clearest direct religious predictor of giving, even after accounting for other influences.
 - Spirituality also matters, but much of its effect seems to operate indirectly through values and norms such as obligation, duty, and prosocial identity. This distinction is important. It suggests that repeated participation in a community of practice may matter more behaviourally than private spirituality alone.
- ***These insights have wider significance beyond religion itself.*** - If religious communities have historically helped cultivate generosity through belonging, repetition, visibility, and moral expectation, then the practical question for a more secular society is what other institutions might replicate these same social functions in each of our communities?
 - The lesson is not that public policy should attempt to make people more religious.
 - ***It is that stronger prosocial behaviour requires stronger secular structures of belonging, participation, and social norm formation.***

Religiosity is quite a discriminator in society

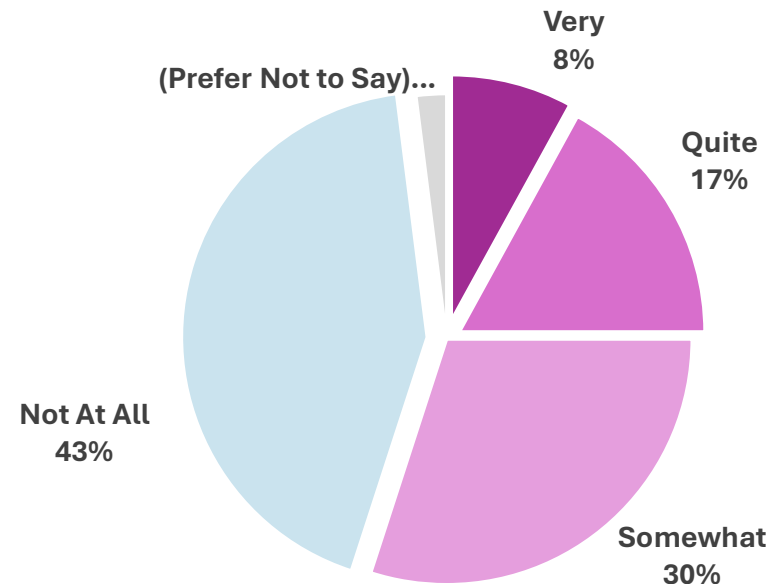


The Canadian adult populations splits into three distinct groups:

- 25% are religious
- 30% are “somewhat religious”
 - Half rarely or never attend religious services (a key characteristic as we will see)
- 43% are **not** at all religious

How Religious Do You Feel You Are?

All Adults



Q. How religious do you feel you are?

Religiosity has its skews, and wealth is not one of them.



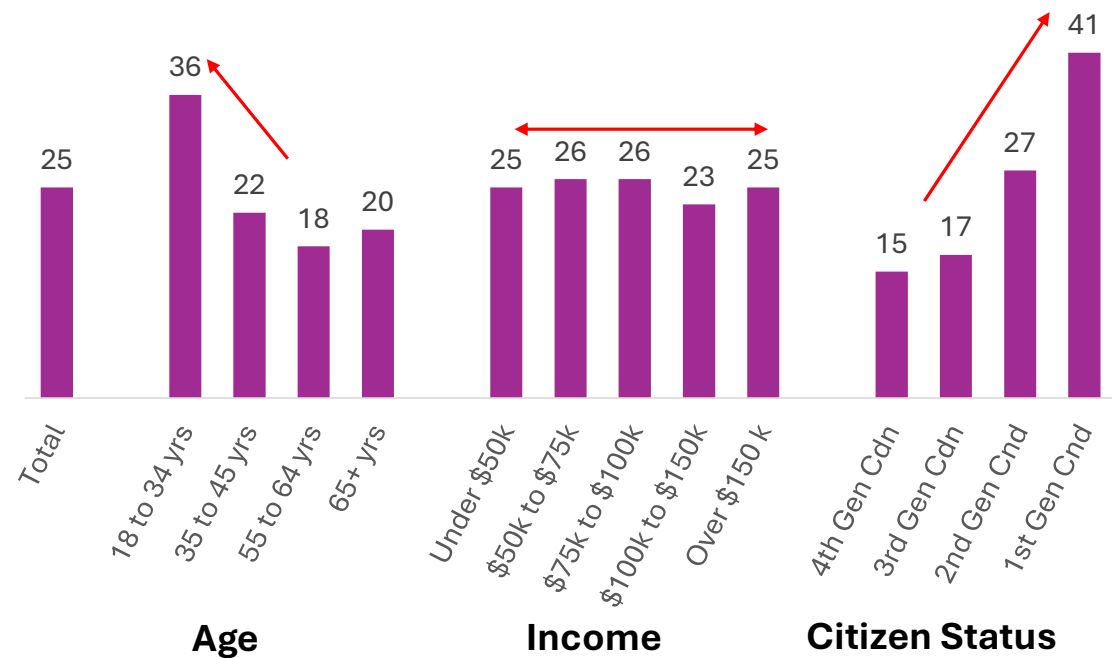
Religiosity skews higher among **younger** adults and among **newer** Canadians.

It is worth noting that religiosity does not differ by wealth or income.

- In turn, the much greater generosity from those who are religious is not due to greater wealth, but instead it is due to the importance of their values and their connectedness.

How Religious Do You Feel You Are?

% Very + Quite



About half of Canadians have some spirituality



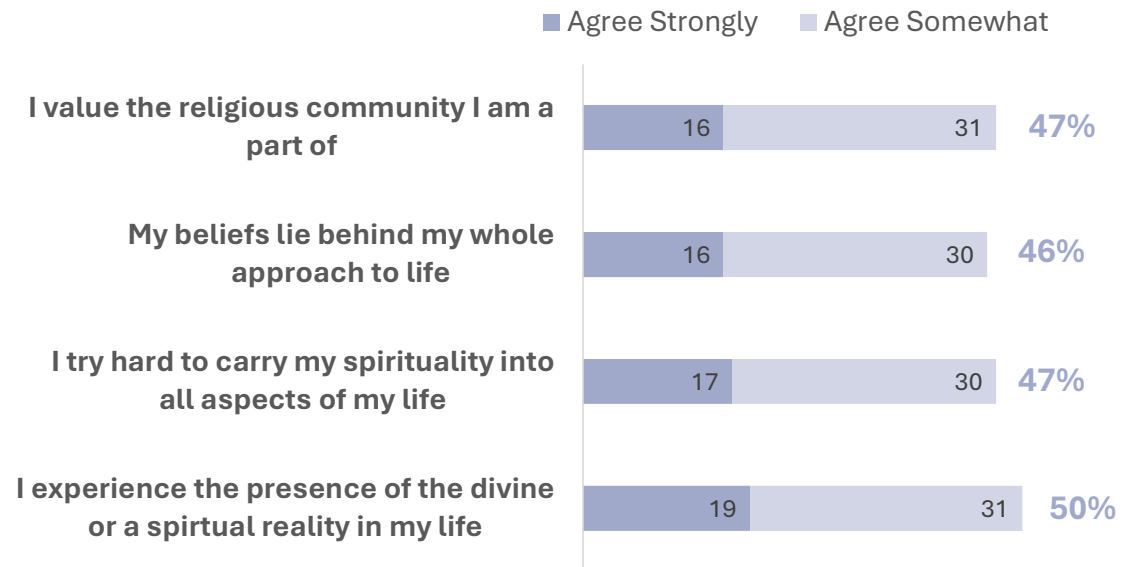
Regardless of religion, overall, about half of Canadians are spiritual.

For our interests about prosocial behaviour, the question is how or in which way does this affect things?

And the answer emerging from the data is that the greater connectedness from religiosity is key....

Religious Beliefs/Experiences

All Adults



Q. Please indicate how much you agree or disagree with each of the following

Separate from spirituality, there is the function of participation



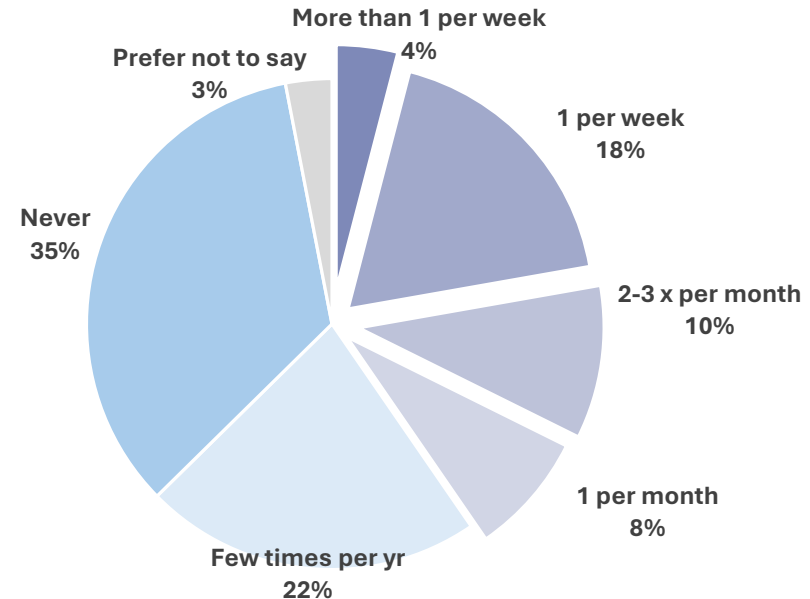
Among the religious Canadians, about half attend a religious service at least once per month.

- Among the 25% who are religious; 60% attend at least monthly
- Among the 30% who are somewhat religious, just ~25% attend at least monthly.

On the total population, this amounts to about ~25% attending a service monthly or more. - This behaviour drivers/correlates with stronger generosity (next page)...

Frequency of Religious Activities

% Among Adults who are Religious (57%)



Q. How often do you attend religious services (excluding weddings and funerals) if ever?

Driver Analysis: The nature of religiosity's relationship with giving behaviour

The approach to modeling: We modeled giving \$ levels in past 12 months, using modeling which controlled for age, income, savings, and debt. Our goal was to explore which of the characteristics of religiosity matter most: attendance vs values vs spirituality. - We observed:

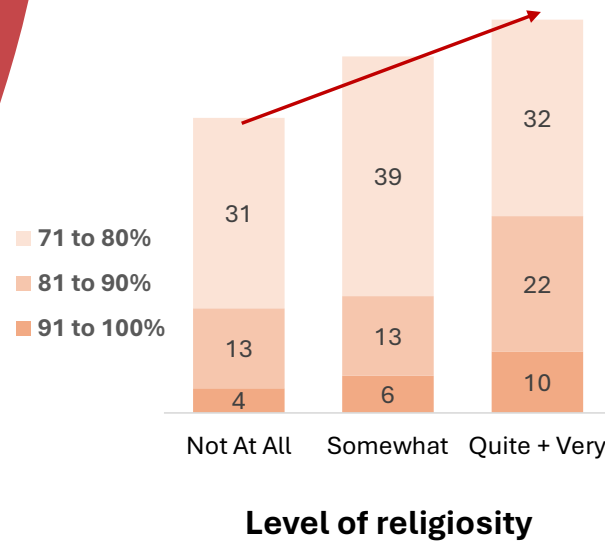
- 1. Attendance** is the strongest direct religious predictor of giving.
 - Attendance seems to work through:
 - social exposure,
 - Participation + connectedness
 - visibility of giving norms, and community expectations,
 - solicitation,
 - 2. Spirituality** items were positively associated with giving. - *BUT*, once **personal/religious values** were added to the model, the **spirituality effect mostly collapsed toward zero**.
 - 3.** This strongly suggests spirituality is working through a pathway to giving, mostly **by shaping norms, values, and identity — especially “obligation to give”**.
- *This implies that greater generosity in society is leveraged by (1) Connectedness, and (2) Development of greater social norms of giving (i.e. ‘obligation to give’ via upbringing, mentoring peers, defined levels, and so on). - It is not so dependent on spirituality or theology.*
- We find greater generosity among religious Canadians because religions are good at hosting connectedness and defining social giving norms (and not because of spiritual beliefs).

Religiosity correlates with connectedness + prosocial behaviour

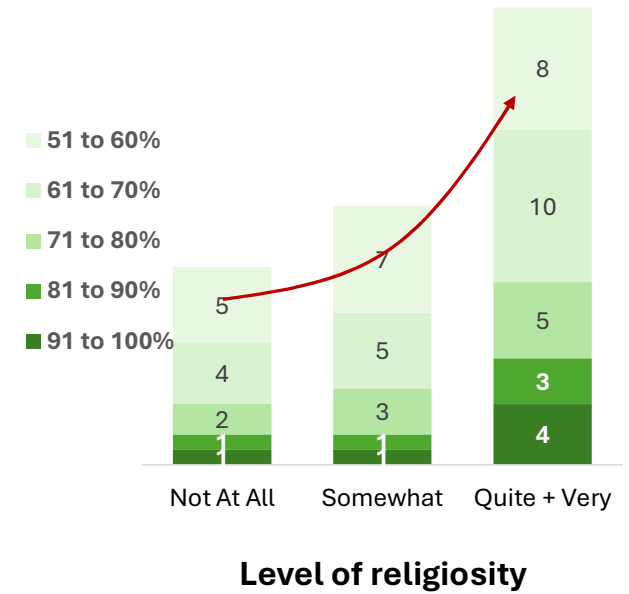


This is where we see the value and benefit of religiosity to our communities. - **Religious Canadians are more connected and with greater generosity.**

Social Connectedness



Prosocial Behavior Index





Prosocial behaviours done X Religiosity

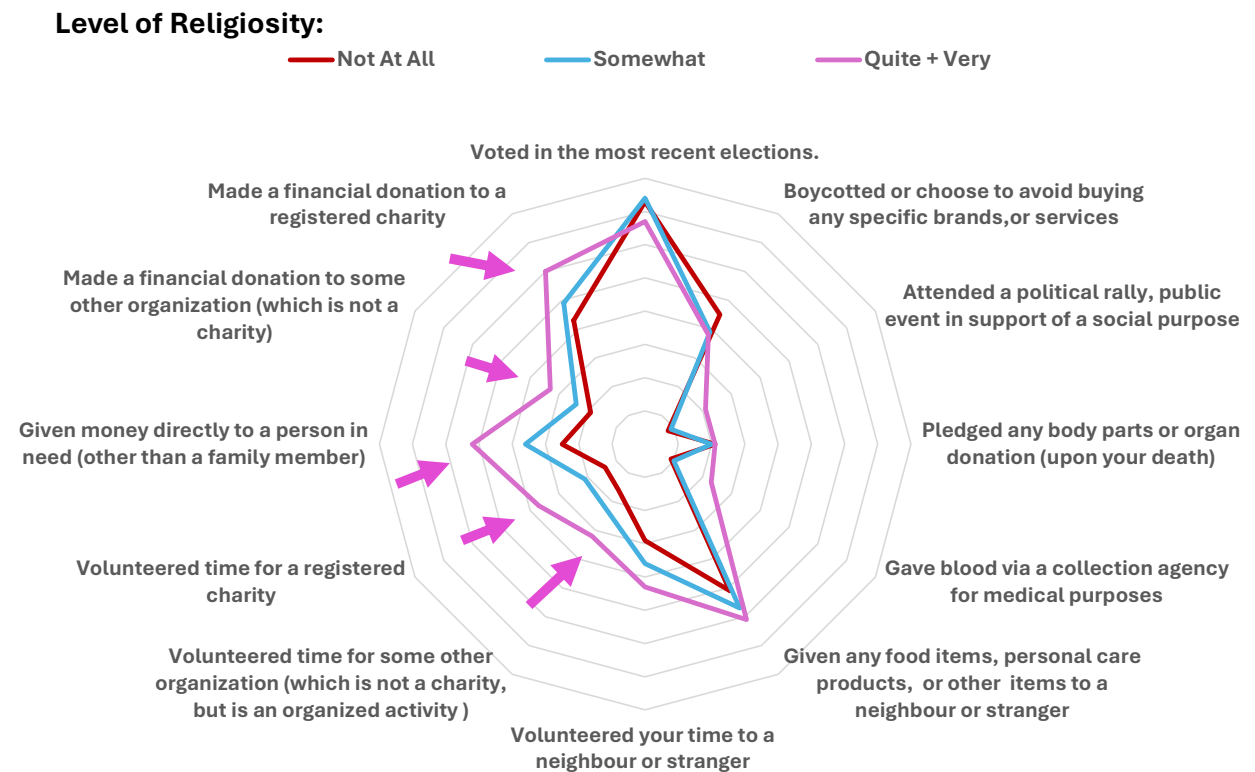
Religiosity is one of the most important drivers of generosity...

- But not for all prosocial behaviours.
 - Boycotting. Political rallies, pledging body parts, donating blood, and giving items/things are less differentiated by religiosity.

The concern is that the continuing decay of religiosity in Canada implies a future decline in our prosocial behaviour (especially generosity).

Prosocial Behaviours

All Adults



Q. "In the past 12 months, have you, yourself,...."

What religiosity means strategically to Canada, in general

- If one wants to increase giving across all of Canada, we do not need to increase awareness of charitable need, nor to build trust in charities. Instead, we need to strengthen the **social and moral pathways** that normalize giving.
- Since religious people are not wealthier, but much more generous, this implies that giving is not just a financial act. It is also a **norm**, a **habit**, a **social expectation**, and a **community practice**

1. Build secular versions of the “attendance effect”

Create recurring community gatherings, volunteer circles, neighbourhood groups, civic clubs, giving circles, school/workplace-based service rituals, monthly local events tied to helping others, and so on. The point is to create **routine, repeated participation**, and not just one-off appeals.

2. Build the “obligation to give” norm more explicitly

The data suggest obligation is a powerful value. It is: “people like us help”; “giving back is part of being a good citizen”; “everyone can contribute in some meaningful way”; “supporting community is a normal social responsibility”.

3. Focus on upbringing and socialization

Being raised to help others is a major pathway. Develop better interventions through schools, families, youth service programs, faith groups, sports and clubs, structured volunteering for teens and young adults.

4. Make generosity more visible

Religious generosity is often visible: Public asks, shared campaigns, visible participation, collective rituals of contribution. On the other hand, outside religion, giving is often hidden and privatized. This weakens norm formation.

Possible interventions: public community fundraising goals, visible local giving/volunteering campaigns, community challenge models, social proof messaging, “people in this neighbourhood/ workplace helped X families” style reporting.



Well-being helps, but it is not the main story



- Prosocial behaviour is shaped, at least in part, by people's emotional condition, their sense of security, and whether they feel reasonably in control of their lives.
- A society in which many people are struggling with loneliness, insecurity, or unmet expectations may find it harder to sustain strong patterns of helping, contributing, and civic participation.

*The survey shows that many Canadians are doing reasonably well, but the population is far from uniformly thriving. There is meaningful variation in happiness, loneliness, perceived security, and the sense of being in control. **These differences matter not only in their own right, but because they appear to relate to stronger or weaker forms of connectedness and, indirectly, to different levels of prosocial engagement.***

There is quite a range in happiness among Canadians

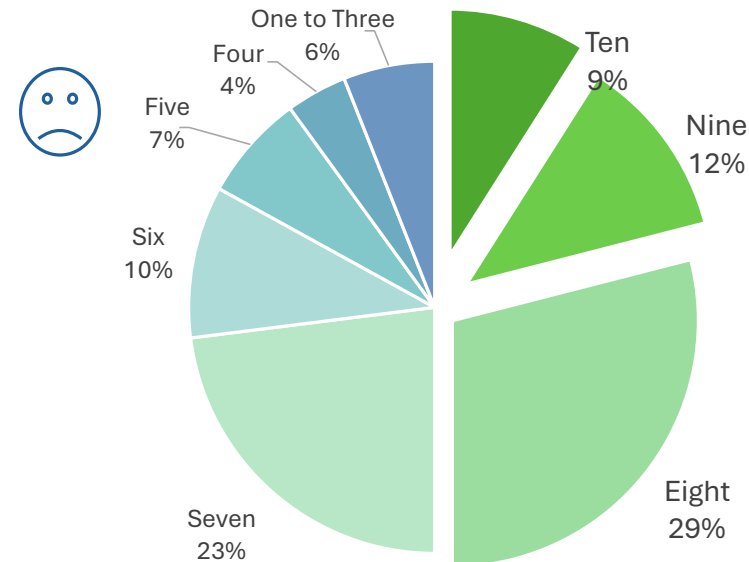


We have a noteworthy range of happiness:

- **50% are quite happy** (8 to 10 rating on a 1-to-10 scale),
- 23% are feeling okay at 7, and
- **27% are feeling less than ideal** (1 to 6).

Happiness Rating (1 to 10)

All Adults (%)



Q. In terms of how you feel about your life, your health, your family life, your social life, and your overall general outlook, how would you score your level of happiness?

Many feel they are lagging their hopes and expectations

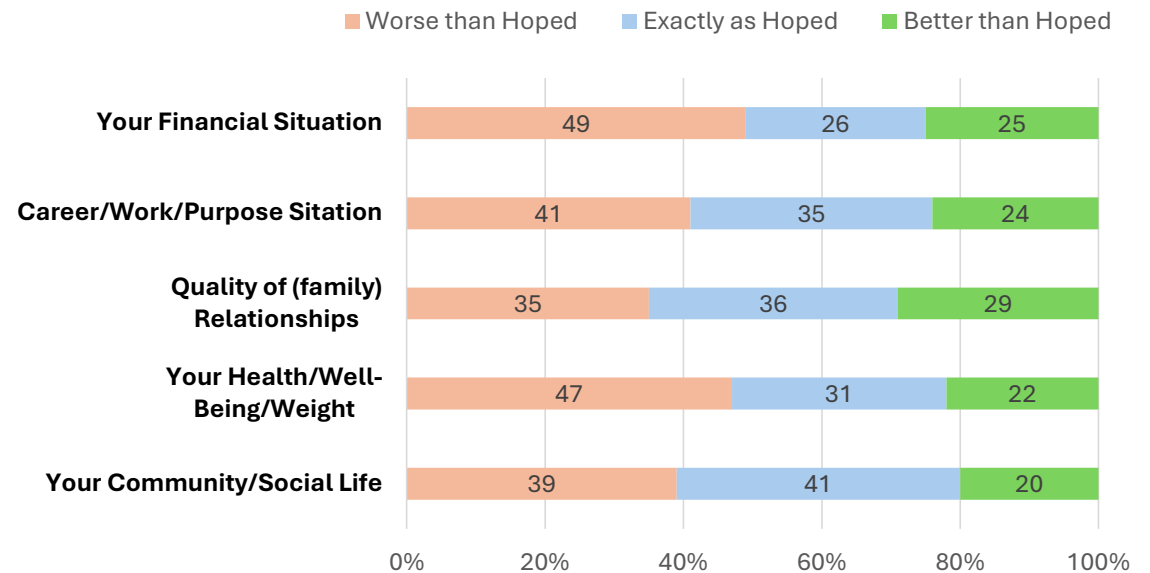


Almost 50% of Canadians feel their life has not turned out as hoped for or expected.

- Wealth and health are the main issues.
- On the other hand, 'quality of relationships' is comparatively good

How Life Compares to Expected/Hoped

All Adults (%)

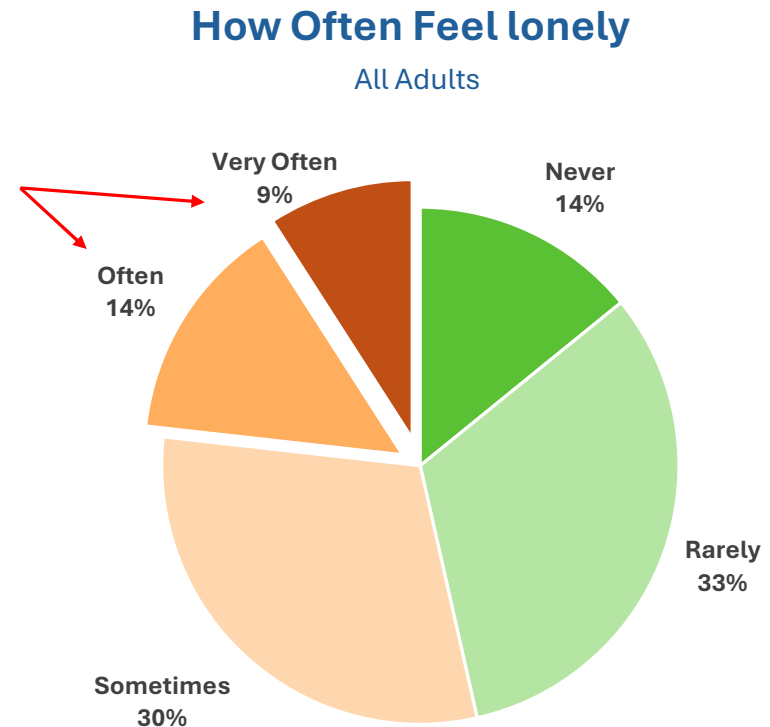


Q. For each characteristic, please rate how your life **today** compares with what you had hoped for or expected by this point.

Loneliness also varies among Canadians.



- Loneliness is not a significant problem, overall,
- But 23% of Canadians are indeed experiencing loneliness **often** or **very often**.



Q. How often do you feel lonely, if at all?

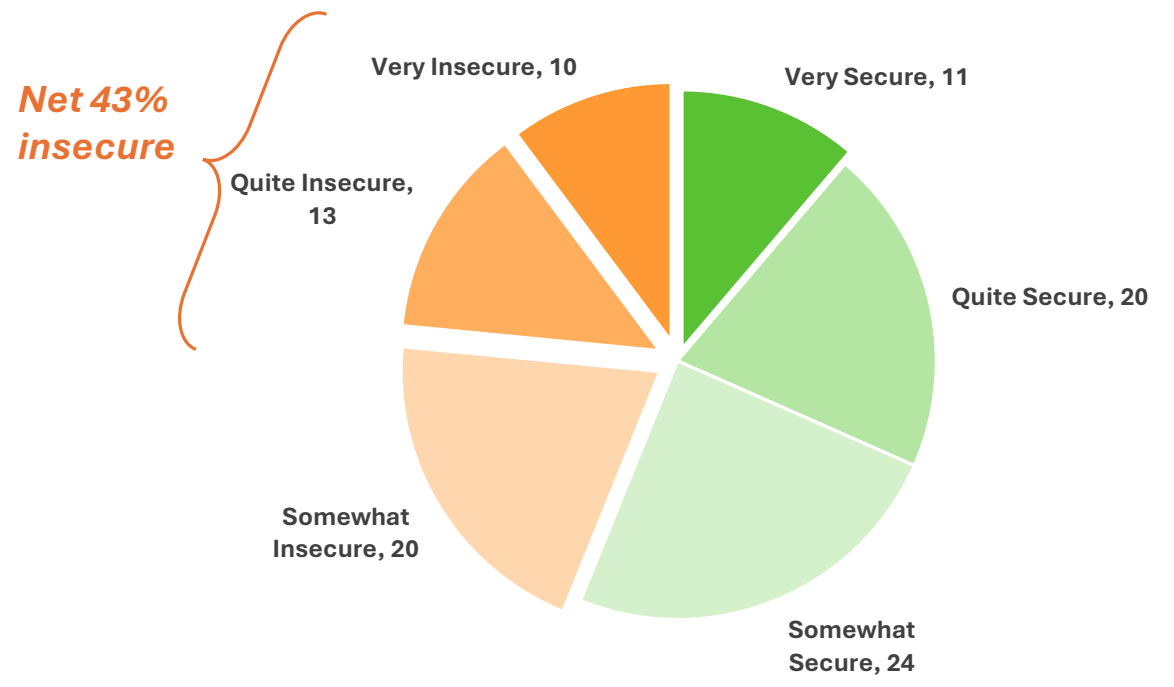
To varying degrees, Canadians are feeling somewhat insecure



One can likely never be secure enough, so this measure has a natural degree of inadequacy, but nonetheless, almost half of Canadians are feeling **insecure**.

Sense of Personal Security and Financial Comfort

All Adults



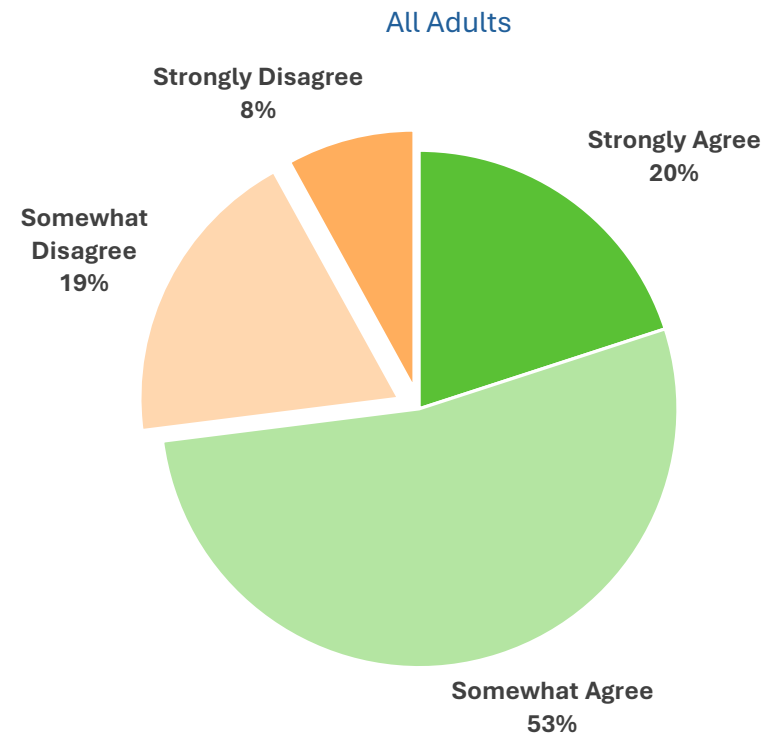
Q. Please indicate which one answer best applies to your current sense of personal security and financial comfort in your day-to-day life. I feel....

The majority feel 'in control' and this is a key sentiment



Despite feelings of insecurity, the majority of Canadians feel they are in control of their lives and what makes them happy... even if they are not totally happy at the moment.

“I Feel in Control of My Life and the Things Which Affect My Happiness”



Q. For each of the following statements, please indicate how much you agree or disagree: I feel in good control of my life and the things which affect my happiness.

Combining the many positive measures: *The Well-Being Index*

Many elements comprise our sense of well-being. In turn, we looked to combine a few different measures to arrive at a composite score which brings together several elements of overall well-being: *Happiness, Loneliness (reversed), Sense of personal + financial security, and Feeling in control of life.*

- If one is doing well on these four measures, they are likely feeling in a good way.

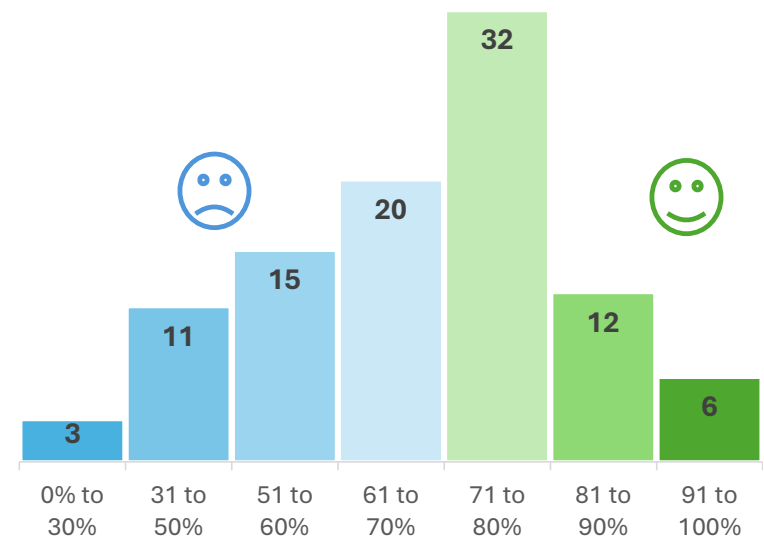
Respondents rate their subjective feelings on these elements, and their results are combined (per person) into a compound scale and indexed on a percentage scale:

- 100% is a perfect score (highest possible rating for all four elements)
- The closer to 0% the worse the person is feeling about their well-being.
- *The full research summary report presents the details of each of these four measures and their individual impact.*

Well-Being Index Distribution

*This score summarizes how Canadians feel across the four measures.
The closer to 100% the more people scored perfectly on the scores.*

MEAN Score: 68%



Boomers are happier and have better well-being



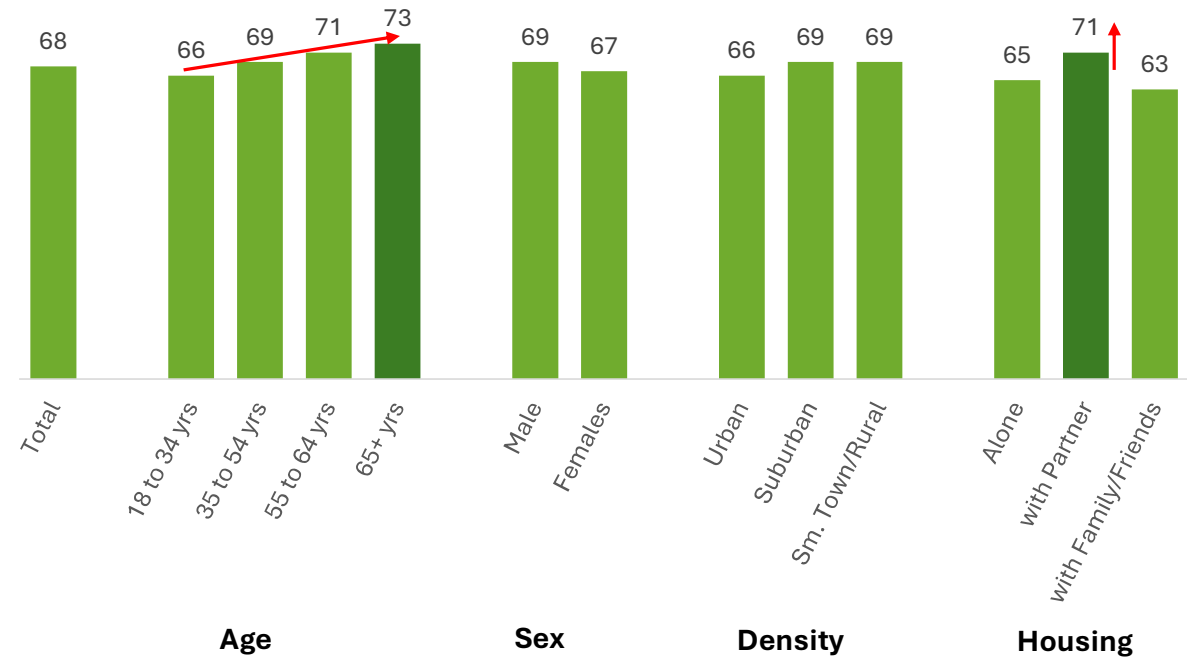
Older Canadians are more likely to have a better well-being than younger adults.

- This is a normal pattern owing to the financial pressures, time demands, and stresses on those in childbearing years, and those starting out in life as adults

Those living with a partner have better well-being, with lower loneliness and greater “connectedness”.

Overall Well-Being Index Score

Mean Index Score (0 to 100%) for Each Sub-Segment



Wealth is also a key element, and in particular, having *savings*



Household income correlates with greater happiness and well-being

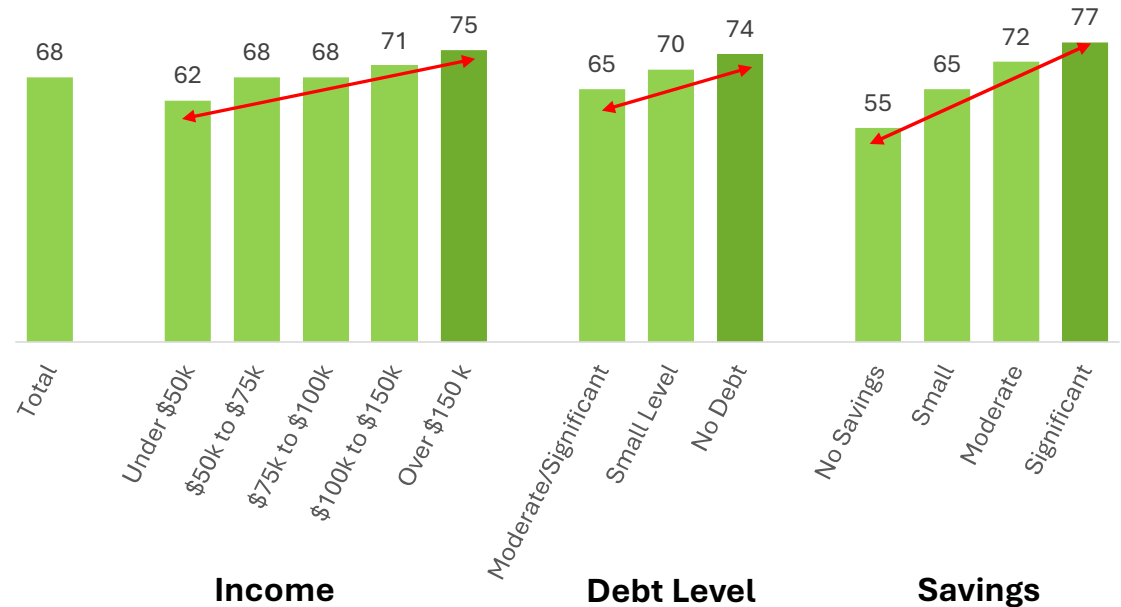
But even more discriminating is the level of *savings* (and avoiding debt)

In particular, our **level of savings** has a significant impact on feelings of security:

- 78% of Canadians with no savings feel personally insecure.

Canadians should be avoiding debt as a pathway to greater happiness.

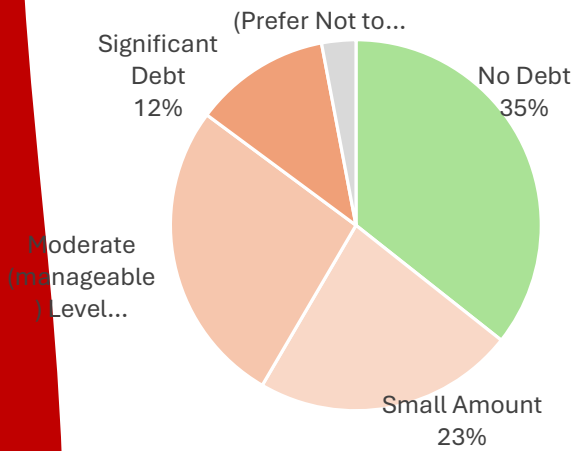
Overall Well-Being Index Score



**About ~30% of Canadians are quite stretched financially.
And there is a lot of debt.**

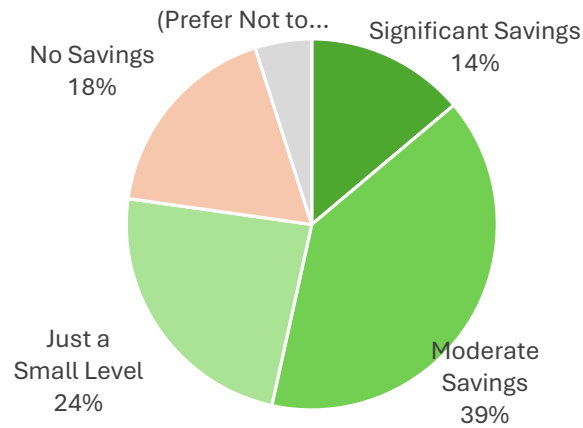


Debt Level



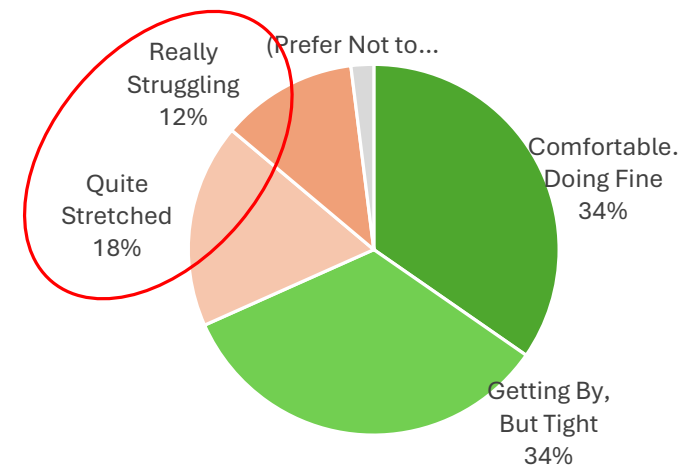
Q. Do you and/or a significant partner have much financial debt (including a mortgage, credit cards, and other forms), or not?

Savings



Q. In a typical week, how often do you do something you are passionate about and really enjoying doing (e.g. a hobby, a preferred pass-time, a "me time", etc.)?

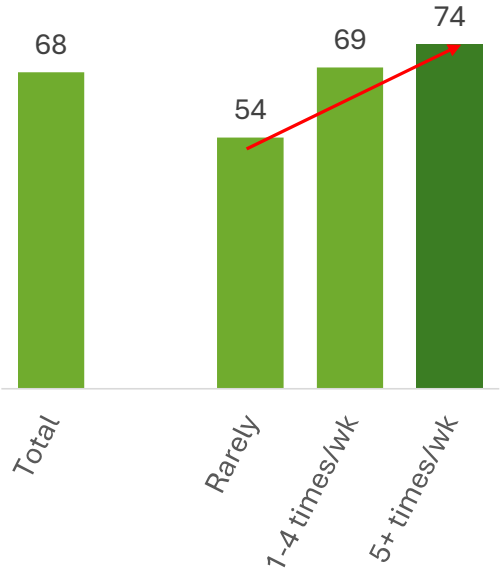
Financial Situation



Q. Which best describes your household's financial situation right now?

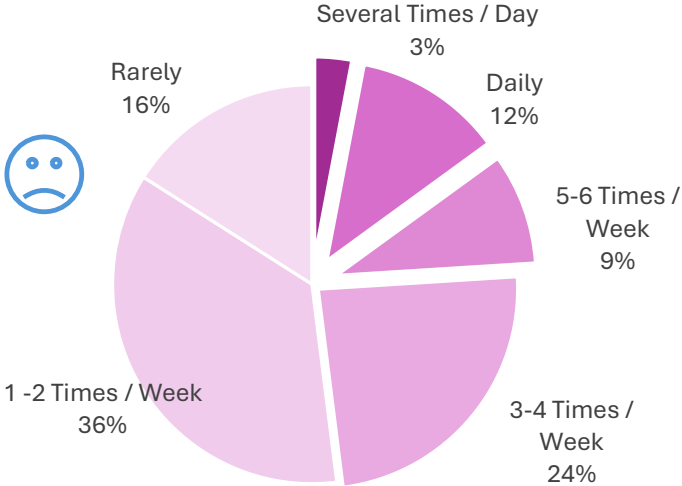
Doing what one is passionate about is a significant contributor to well-being.... But not enough Canadians are doing so

Well-Being Index Score



Do things passion about

Doing What Passionate About



Q. In a typical week, how often do you do something you are passionate about and really enjoying doing (e.g. a hobby, a preferred pass-time, a “me time”, etc.)?

Connectedness is the biggest correlate with well-being



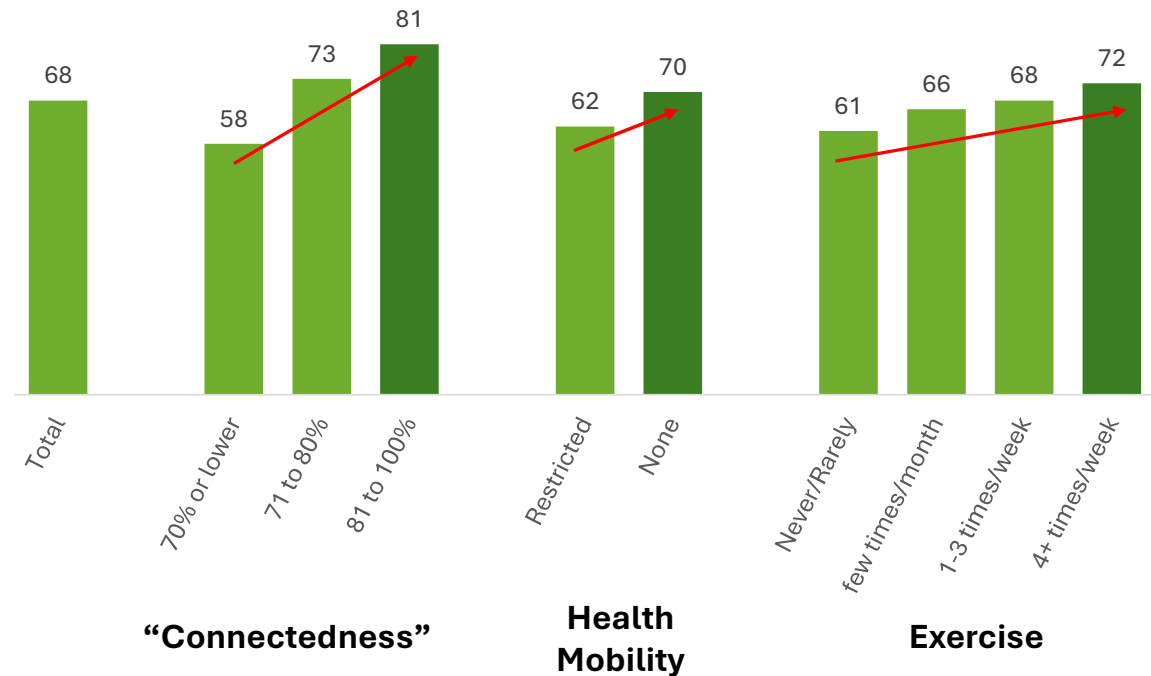
There is a strong correlation between one's **well-being** and **connectedness**.

Those who are healthier feel a greater well-being. Is this due to greater social connectedness or simply about personal energy?

- The data shows that those who exercise with others gain the incremental benefit of connectedness (versus those who exercise alone).

Overall Well-Being Index Score

Mean Index Score (0 to 100%) for Each Sub-Segment



Well-being supports prosocial behaviour, but less than the importance of connectedness



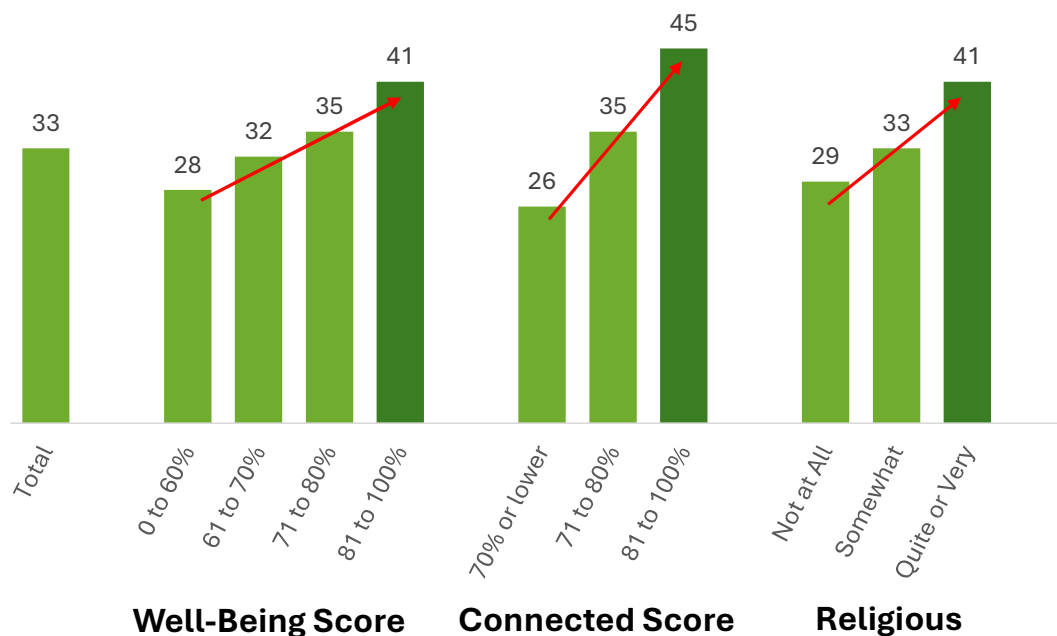
There is a correlation between one's well-being and prosocial behaviour.

However, well-being is not as important as **connectedness**.

Again, we see the importance of religiosity, mostly because the practice of religion includes connectedness and embeddedness

Canadian's Prosocial Behaviour Index Scores

Mean Score for Each Sub-Segment



Other characteristics of interest



In addition to the major drivers already discussed, the study explored a range of other correlates that helped round out the broader profile of social functioning and participation. These include screen time, exercise, health status, news consumption, hobbies, immigration, and other everyday issues

These variables do not appear equally important, but together they help illuminate the social environments in which well-being, connectedness, and prosocial behaviour are more likely to flourish or weaken.



Remarkably, there is little evidence that social media and TV screen time is undermining prosocial behaviour.

One element of life which has increased in the past decade is the use of social media and consumption of digital entertainment.

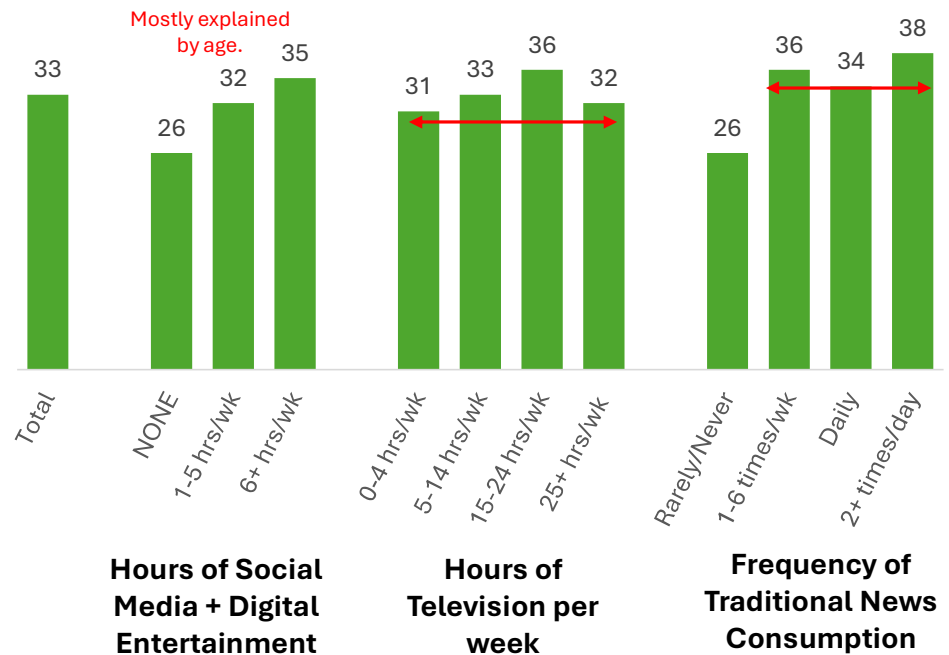
In turn, we wanted to explore if this negatively influenced prosocial behaviours. The answer, is “not really”.

- **Total social-media hours and TV hours consumed** look weak as influences once age, income, and religiosity are controlled.
 - **AGE is a confounder and** needed to be backed-out to understand the impact of media, alone.
- The only media variable showing a distinct signal so far is **passive scrolling frequency** — and even that effect is modest rather than large. And the effect is positive rather than negative!

(The media variables matter a bit more for Well-Being, but still not a lot)

Canadian's Prosocial Behaviour Index Scores

Mean Score for Each Sub-Segment





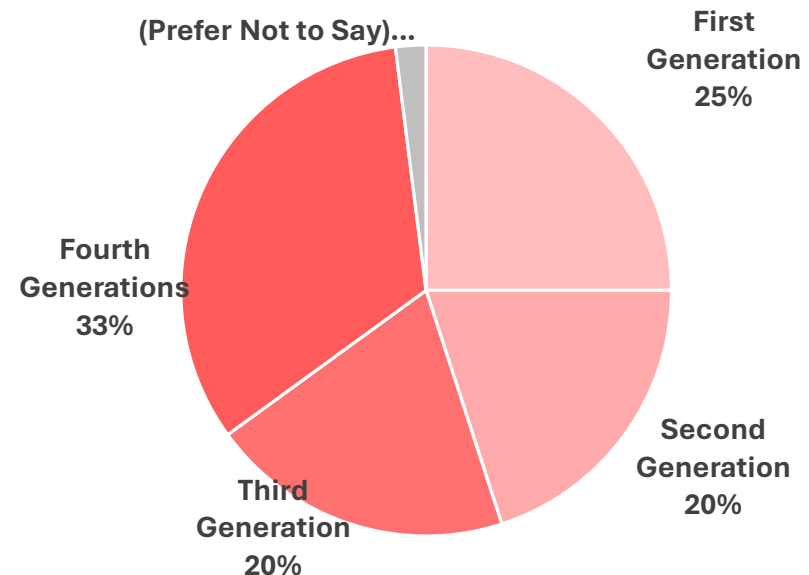
Immigration and Place of Birth

Q. Which best describes you and your parents' places of birth?

- I was born outside Canada, and both of my parents were born outside Canada.
- I was born outside Canada, but one or both parents were born within Canada
- I was born IN Canada with one or both parents were born outside Canada.
- I was born IN Canada, with both parents born within Canada, but no grandparents born in Canada
- I was born IN Canada, so were both of my parents, AND some (1 to 3) of my grandparents were born in Canada
- I was born IN Canada, so were both of my parents, AND so were ALL FOUR of my grandparents were born in Canada.
- Other
- (NOT Sure/Don't know)
- Prefer not to respond

Place of Birth

All Adults



Differences by Generation in Canada

Immigration aligns with social strengths rather than any social erosion.



First-generation Canadians are more likely to be:

- more positive about **humanity**
- somewhat **happier**
- somewhat higher in **well-being**
- not clearly different in **connectedness**
- not clearly different in **charity giving or volunteering** once controls are added
- **less likely to vote**

Second-generation Canadians are more like:

- broadly similar to **deep-rooted Canadians**
- not clearly stronger or weaker on the major outcomes once province and other factors are controlled
- So second-generation Canadians appear to be the **most converged** of the three groups.

Deep-rooted Canadians are:

- less positive about **humanity**
- somewhat lower in happiness and well-being than first-generation Canadians
- similar to the others on connectedness once province is backed out
- more strongly integrated into **voting/electoral behaviour**

After accounting for province and other key background factors, the main immigration difference that remains is not broad social connectedness or broad prosociality. It is worldview.

- **First-generation** Canadians remain distinctly more positive about humanity and somewhat higher in happiness and well-being. They are substantially less likely to report voting, which explains much of the apparent gap in the overall prosocial index.
- **Immigration status seems to shape outlook more than social embeddedness.**
- And by the **second generation**, most of the difference appears to wash out.

Appendix



Study Methodology

- This is a quantitative survey, conducted by **Sector3Insights**, online, using a self-completion questionnaire.
- Respondents were recruited from a national panel established specifically for research purposes. They were invited to participate in our study, at their convenience. They followed the invitation link to our survey.
- The survey averaged ~12 minutes to complete and was accessible via any Internet device.
- The sample represents Canadian adults, 18+ years, English and French, from across all regions of Canada, representative of age, gender and region (as per census data). n=1,509
- Data collection period: March 14 to 21, 2026
- The data has been cleaned of “speeders”, inconsistent respondents, extreme outliers, etc.

About survey results

- Surveys use a sample of the target population. Such a sample may not perfectly reflect the full population. Repeating the same survey, with a different sample, may produce slightly different results. These variations are referred to as **the margin of error**. The reported measures may vary between studies by a few percentage points for any reported measure. The margin of error is a statistical measure of how closely the results from a survey mirror the views of the whole population.
 - The margin of error on our total sample of n=1,500 is +/- 3% points. This means each reported measure should be within +/- 3% points 19 out of 20 times such a study is repeated.
- Furthermore, respondents are not perfect rational machines. Results may not exactly reflect factual reality. It is important to look at comparative differences between results and between sub-groups. If an important decision depends on a precise number, extra caution should be used.



Demographics (Sample Profile)

	Canadian Adults
Female	51%
Male	49%
Age	
18 to 34 yrs.	27%
35 to 54 yrs.	34%
55 to 64 yrs.	18%
65 + yrs.	21%
Region	
B.C.	14%
Prairies	18%
Ontario	38%
Quebec	24%
Atlantic	7%
Household Income	
\$50,000 or lower	27%
\$51,000 to \$100,000	36%
\$100,000 to \$150,000	20%
\$151,000 +	14%

Prosocial Behaviour Question and an Index Score



- We measured 12 different prosocial behaviours (done in the past 12 months):
 - Made a financial donation to a registered charity*
 - Made a financial donation to some other organization (which is not a charity)*
 - Given money directly to a person in need (other than a family member)*
 - Volunteered time for a registered charity*
 - Volunteered time for some other organization (which is not a charity, but is an organized activity e.g. a community activity, an amateur sports team, a group hobby activity, etc.)*
 - Volunteered your time to a neighbour or stranger (other than a family member) with an errand, a car rider, checked their wellbeing, helped with child or pet care, and other time-based activities*
 - Given any food items, personal care products, clothes, or other household items to a neighbour or stranger in need (other than a family member) either directly or via some collection process.*
 - Gave blood via a collection agency for medical purposes*
 - Pledged any body parts or organ donation (upon your death)*
 - Attended a political rally, public demonstration, or community event in support of a social or political purpose*
 - Boycotted or choose to avoid buying any specific brands, products, or services from a company or country which goes against your beliefs or values.*
 - Voted in the most recent provincial and federal elections.*
- For each respondent, we count the number of behaviours done. We then divide their count by 12 (the total number of asked behaviours) to provide a percent index score (per person) from 0% (none of the 12 behaviours) to 100% (did all 12 behaviours).
 - ***The higher the index score, the stronger a person's prosocial behaviour (without judging the quality or importance between each of these 12 behaviors!)***

Prosocial values & attitudes question



How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements:

- Strongly Agree
 - Somewhat Agree
 - Somewhat Disagree
 - Strongly Disagree
-
- i. Giving or helping others gives me joy
 - ii. I feel everyone has a responsibility to give and help those in need.
 - iii. Donating money to charities provides too much of a financial strain on me.
 - iv. I generally trust nonprofits and the services they provide.
 - v. Giving is part of my religious duty.
 - vi. As a child, I was raised to help others and to give to nonprofit organizations.
 - vii. I likely could afford to give more than I do.
 - viii. I feel it is the government's responsibility to solve our social problems, and not people like me.
 - ix. I have a good sense of how much money I should be giving back to others
 - x. I believe the majority of people in my community give money to charity
 - xi. Supporting charities is a conscious obligation I have for myself.
 - xii. I feel most charities already have enough money and do not need my money.
 - xiii. There are many needs and social problems in my community which require donations, volunteers and general community support.
 - xiv. I know of several other people I respect who donate money or volunteer in their own meaningful way.
 - xv. I am giving to charity as much as I should be.

Connectedness Question Statements



We asked Canadians how much they agreed or disagreed with each of the listed attributes (randomized), and have grouped them into the three different forms discussed on the prior page:

Please indicate how much you agree or disagree. (List was randomized)

1. Emotional Connectedness

- I feel in good control of my life and the things which affect my happiness.
- I feel like I have a good sense of belonging and acceptance in my community.
- I enjoy spending time at home entertaining myself (watching TV, streaming, gaming, surfing the Internet, reading, doing hobbies, etc.)
- I feel appreciated both in my family and by others outside of my family (in the community).

2. Social Connectedness:

- I have someone to help me if I get sick or incapacitated.
- It is quite easy for me to find family or friends to have fun with.
- I have several good, reliable friends in whom I can confide and discuss personal problems.
- I am engaged in a functional, ongoing (romantic) relationship with a spouse, partner, or significant other.
- I have several people in my life I could ask for help in a real emergency (e.g., a ride to the hospital, urgent childcare, pet care, etc.)
- I am a member in and participate in a lot of group activities (e.g. clubs, community associations, sports teams, place of worship, and so on)

3. Civic Connectedness:

- Most people can be trusted on the street, in stores, on public transportation, and in my community.
- I feel comfortable with and I often initiate conversations with strangers I encounter in my life.
- I am open and happy to have different immigrants, cultures, ethnic groups and people of different sexual orientation in my community.
- I feel good about living in my neighbourhood (in terms of safety, nice neighbours, looking after each other, and being accepted)
- I generally have confidence in my community's provided services (i.e. the police, fire department, health services, local justice, local governments, etc.).
- I am generous and give back to society with meaningful financial donations (for me), giving personal or household items, and/or volunteering often
- I take my civic responsibility seriously by voting, advocating, and spending my money in conscious ways to help achieve a more civil society

Canadians' Social Connectedness Profile

