

FACT SHEET : 2013 General Social Survey on Social Identity

POLITICAL ENGAGEMENT

What is the General Social Survey?

- The General Social Survey (GSS) is Statistics Canada's primary social survey. It seeks to gather data on social trends in order to monitor changes in the living conditions and well-being of Canadians over time, and to provide information on specific social policy issues.
- The GSS is a reliable, trusted and credible data source for performance measurement and policy research. The 2013 GSS on Social Identity used a sample of 27,695 Canadians.
- The target population includes all persons 15 years and older living in the provinces of Canada, excluding full-time residents of institutions.

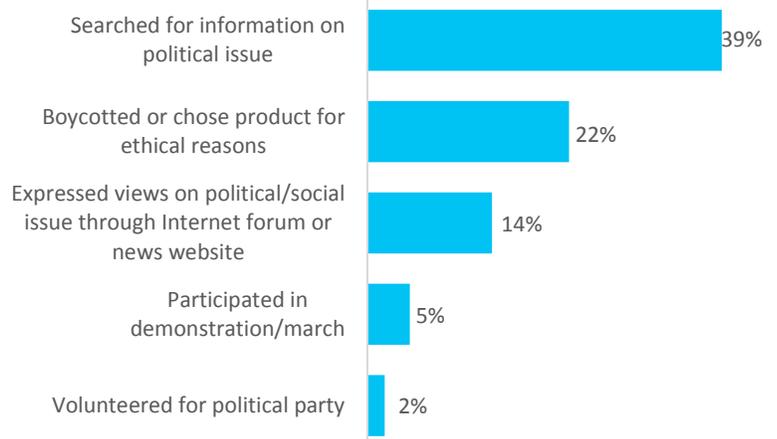
Why does political engagement matter?

- Political participation is often associated with traditional styles of political engagement such as voting in elections and volunteering for a party or candidate. More broadly, political participation can include less institutionalized forms of political expression and how these can influence norms, social structures and media systems. Political consumerism for example – purchasing or boycotting products for ethical or political reasons – increasingly prompts change in corporate practices. Political engagement matters to PCH because research is showing that higher political engagement leads to increased civic engagement, which fosters social cohesion and vibrant communities.¹

How do Canadians engage politically?

- The 2013 GSS on Social Identity asked respondents whether they had participated (yes or no) in political activities in the 12 months preceding the survey. Respondents were asked if they had searched for information on a political issue, if they had boycotted or chosen a product for ethical reasons, if they had expressed their views on a political or social issue through an Internet forum or news website, if they had participated in a demonstration or march, and if they had volunteered for a political party. Respondents were also asked to identify on a four-point scale how they would describe their interest in politics (very interested, somewhat interested, not very interested and not interested at all).

Political Activity [last 12 months]



Age matters

- Respondents aged 15 to 29 were most likely to report having searched for information on a political issue, with respectively 50%, 54% and 51% of respondents aged 15 to 19 years, 20 to 24 years, and 25 to 29 years having engaged in this activity. Respondents aged 65 years and over were the least likely to have searched for information on a political issue (25%).
- Respondents aged 20 to 24 years were the most likely to have participated in a demonstration or march (10%). This figure is lowest among those aged 65 years and over (2%).
- Respondents aged 60 to 64 years as well as those aged 65 years and over were the most likely to have volunteered for a political party (3%). This figure is lowest among those aged 20 to 24 years, 35 to 39 years, and 45 to 49 years (1%).

¹ For example, see: Copeland (2014) "Conceptualizing Political Consumerism: How Citizenship Norms Differentiate Boycotting from Buycotting." *Political Studies*. Martin (2012) "Political Participation among the Young in Australia: Testing Dalton's Good Citizen Thesis." *Australian Journal of Political Science*. Tossutti (2007) "Voluntary Associations and the Political Engagement of Young Canadians." *Journal of Canadian Studies*.

Educational attainment is a key factor in political engagement

- Respondents whose highest educational attainment was a graduate degree were the most likely to report having searched for information on a political issue (65%), having boycotted or chosen a product for ethical reasons (37%) and having expressed their views on a political or social issue through an Internet forum or news website (20%).
- Inversely, respondents whose highest educational attainment was below a high school diploma were the least likely to report having searched for information on a political issue (23%), having boycotted or chosen a product for ethical reasons (8%) and having expressed their views on a political or social issue through an Internet forum or news website (8%).

Notable results for First Nations² and Metis

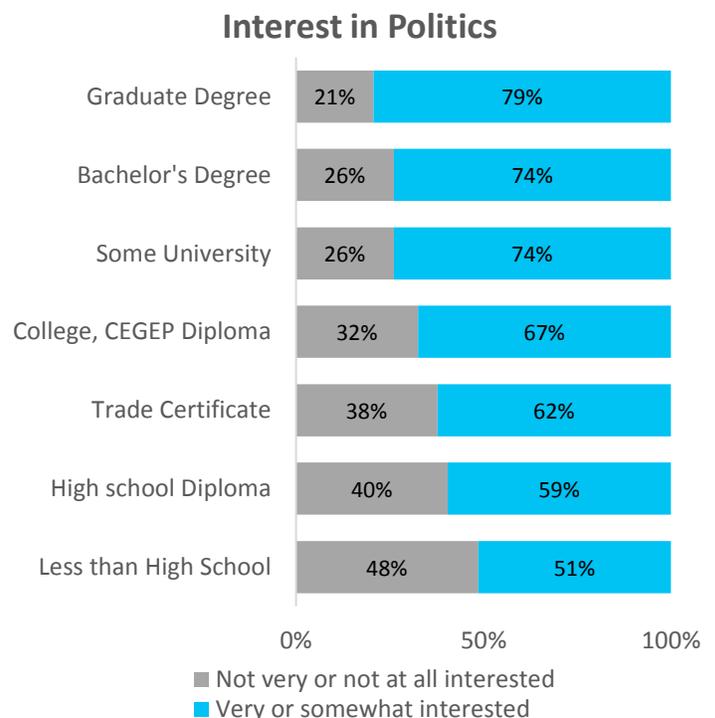
- Metis respondents were more likely to have boycotted or chosen a product for ethical reasons (29%) than First Nations (22%) or non-Aboriginal (22%) respondents.
- First Nations respondents were more likely to have participated in a demonstration or march (8%) than Metis (6%) or non-Aboriginal (5%) respondents.

Notable results according to language

- Francophone Quebecers were less likely to report having expressed their views on a political or social issue through an Internet forum or news website (10%) than Francophones outside Quebec (13%), Anglophone Quebecers (12%), Anglophones outside Quebec (15%), bilingual³ Quebecers (14%), or bilingual Canadians outside Quebec (17%).

65% of Canadians are very or somewhat interested in politics

- Respondents whose highest educational attainment was a graduate degree were the most likely to report being very or somewhat interested in politics (79%). Inversely, respondents whose highest educational attainment was below a high school diploma were the least likely to report being very or somewhat interested in politics (51%).
- First Nations respondents were less likely to report being very or somewhat interested in politics (52%) than Metis (60%) or non-Aboriginal (65%) respondents.
- Francophone Quebecers were more likely to report being very or somewhat interested in politics (70%) than Francophones outside Quebec (66%), Anglophone Quebecers (65%), Anglophones outside Quebec (63%), bilingual Quebecers (67%), or bilingual Canadians outside Quebec (61%).
- 60% of first generation Canadians (immigrants to Canada) reported being very or somewhat interested in politics, along with 67% of second generation Canadians and 65% of respondents of third generation or more.
- Respondents aged 60 to 64 years and 65 years and over were the most likely to report being very or somewhat interested in politics (75% and 74% respectively). Inversely, respondents aged 15 to 19 years and 20 to 24 years were the least likely to report being very or somewhat interested in politics (51% and 52% respectively).



The present analysis represents a partnership between Strategic Policy, Planning and Corporate Affairs Sector, Citizenship, Heritage and Regions Sector, and Sport, Major Events and Commemorations Sector.

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² It should be noted that the survey excluded residents of the Northwest Territories, Nunavut, and Yukon.

³ Defined here as individuals who report both English and French as their first official language spoken.