

CANADIAN PRESS / LÉGER MARKETING

How Canadians Feel About Unions

Report



1.0 Study Highlights

- The great majority of the Canadian labor force prefers not to be unionised.

Question : *Are you unionised ?*

n=957 Canadians who are part of the labour force	YES	NO	Don't know
Canada	28%	71%	1%

Question : *Would you like to be unionised?*

n=680 Canadians who are not unionised	YES	NO	Don't know /refusal
Canada	9%	86%	5%

- Canadians have mixed opinions on the influence of unions.

Question : *Do you think the UNIONS exert TOO MUCH, ENOUGH, NOT ENOUGH or NO INFLUENCE AT ALL in our society?*

n=1503	Too much	Enough	Not enough	None at all	Don't know/Refusal
Canada	37%	34%	13%	3%	13%

- Unions contribute positively to social development?

Question : *Do you believe that the unions contribute positively to social development?*

n=1503	YES	NO	Don't know/Refusal
Canada	54%	36%	11%

- Unions are more inclined to favour their members' interests.

Question : *Do you think the unions represent the interests of their MEMBERS or those of WORKERS IN GENERAL?*

n=1503	Their members	Workers in general	None	Don't know/Refusal
Canada	48%	30%	12%	10%

➤ Canadians believe civil servants should have the right to strike, but doctors shouldn't.

Question : *Do you think the following groups should have the right to strike?*

n=1503	YES	NO	Don't know/Refusal
... civil servants	58%	36%	7%
... teachers	50%	46%	3%
... nurses	46%	51%	3%
... the police	31%	65%	3%
... doctors	30%	66%	3%

2. Results

2.1 The great majority of the Canadian labor force prefers not to be unionised

28% of the Canadians labor force say they are unionised. Among these, the highest proportion (37%) live in the Atlantic Provinces.

86% of non-unionised workers say they prefer not to be unionised. 18–24 year olds (16%) are more likely to want to be unionised compared to other age groups. Although 12% of manual workers prefer being unionised, the majority of them (79%) did not demonstrate any interest.

Question : *Are you unionised ?*

n=957 Canadians who are part of the labour force	YES	NO	Don't know
Service/sales/office	28%	71%	0%
Manual workers	32%	67%	0%
Professionals	25%	73%	1%
Canada	28%	71%	1%

Question : *Would you like to be unionised ?*

n=680 Canadians who are not unionised	YES	NO	Don't know /refusal
Service/sales/office	8%	87%	5%
Manual workers	12%	79%	9%
Professionals	8%	88%	4%
Canada	9%	86%	5%

2.2 Opinions on the influence of unions are mixed

Canadians have mixed opinions on the influence unions have in our society. In fact, although 37% of Canadians feel that unions exert too much influence, 34% believe they have just the right influence. Those over the age of 45 (42%), anglophones (39%), British Columbia residents (46%), and non-unionised Canadians (42%) were more likely to feel that unions had too much influence. In comparison, 18-24 year olds (47%), francophones (42%), Quebec residents (43%) and unionised workers (45%) felt that the unions exerted enough influence.

However, when questioned about other groups, such as corporate executives, bankers and politicians, a greater number of Canadians (39%) feel that politicians exert too much influence. Furthermore, 37% of the general population feel corporate executives and bankers exert enough influence in society.

It should be pointed out that 22% of Canadians think politicians don't exert enough of an influence.

Question : *Do you think....exert TOO MUCH, ENOUGH, NOT ENOUGH or NO INFLUENCE AT ALL in our society?*

n=1503	Too much	Enough	Not enough	None at all	Don't know/ Refusal
Politicians	39%	26%	22%	5%	8%
Unions	37%	34%	13%	3%	13%
Bankers	32%	37%	12%	6%	13%
Corporate Executives	30%	37%	14%	4%	15%

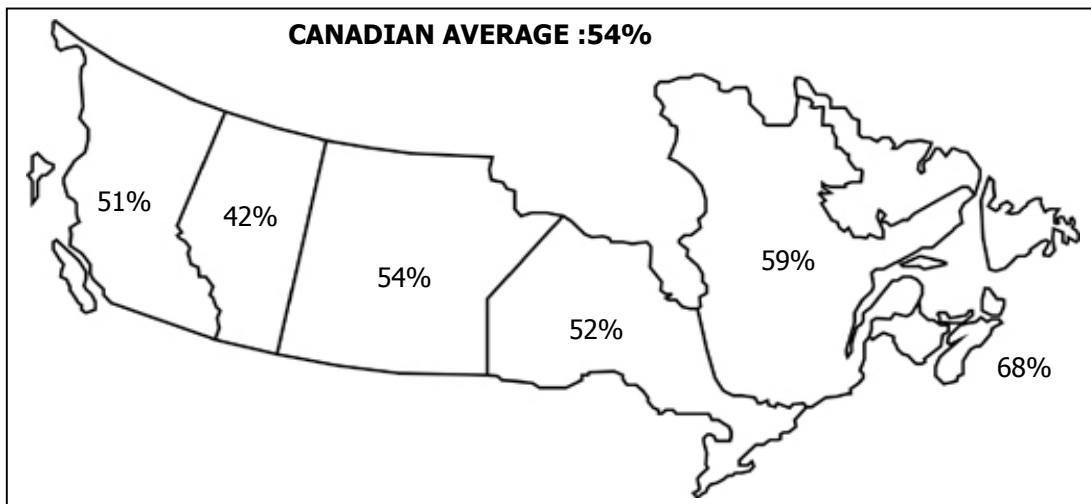
2.3 A positive contribution towards social development

Over half of Canadians (54%) feel that unions make a positive contribution to social development. 18-24 year olds (66%) and Atlantic Province residents (68%) are among those who look on more favourably towards the unions' contributions. This opinion is shared by 71% of unionised workers but is somewhat mixed among non-unionised workers with 46% of the latter stating the union's contribution is positive and 44% claiming it isn't.

Question : *Do you believe that unions contribute positively to social development?*

n=1503	YES	NO	Don't know/ Refusal
Service/sales/office	50%	40%	10%
Manual worker	56%	36%	8%
Professional	55%	37%	8%
Homemaker	57%	29%	13%
Student	72%	22%	7%
Retired	51%	36%	12%
Unemployed	49%	32%	20%
Canada	54%	36%	11%

Percentage of Canadians who feel the unions contribute positively to social development



2.4 Unions place their members' interests above those of other workers

According to 48% of the Canadian population, unions represent their members' interests more than they do those of other workers. This view became more prevalent as the respondents' ages increased. This opinion was also shared by francophones (56%), professionals (57%), university graduates (56%), and Quebeckers (56%).

However, 30% of Canadians, particularly those in the Atlantic Provinces (41%) felt that the unions were concerned with the interests of workers in general. Surprisingly, more unionised workers (37%) than non-unionised workers (25%) shared this view.

Question : *Do you believe the unions represent the interests of their MEMBERS or those of WORKERS in general?*

n=1503	Their members	Workers in general	None	Don't know/Refusal
Atlantic Provinces	34%	41%	7%	18%
Quebec	56%	33%	6%	4%
Ontario	46%	28%	13%	12%
Prairies	53%	25%	11%	11%
Alberta	43%	27%	18%	12%
British Columbia	51%	25%	16%	9%
Canada	48%	30%	12%	10%

2.5 Canadians would allow civil servants to strike but not doctors

A large number of Canadians (58%) agree that civil servants should have the right to vote, but the majority (66%) firmly oppose a doctor's right to strike. The majority (65%) were also opposed to the police's right to strike. Canadians had more mixed opinions towards the right of teachers to strike (50% for and 46% against) and those of nurses (46% for and 51% against).

Question : *Do you think the following groups should have the right to strike... ?*

n=1503	YES	NO	Don't know/ Refusal
... civil servants	58%	36%	7%
... teachers	50%	46%	3%
... nurses	46%	51%	3%
... the police	31%	65%	3%
... doctors	30%	66%	3%

3.0 Methodology

This study was conducted by Leger Marketing through telephone interviews among a representative sample of 1503 English- or French-speaking Canadians, 18 years of age or older.

The interviews were conducted from our Montreal and Winnipeg call centres between July 4 and July 8 2002. Up to ten call-backs were made in the case of non-response.

Using data from Statistics Canada, the results were weighted according to geographic location, gender and language spoken at home to ensure a sample representative of the entire Canadian adult population. In the end, the maximum margin of error obtained for a sample of 1503 respondents is of ± 2.5 , 19 times out of 20.