

Study: An examination of gender differences in social and democratic values

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Multiculturalism, linguistic duality and human rights are often identified as shared values in Canada, and, together, represent the foundation for social inclusion and cohesion in a growing and diverse society. However, do Canadians personally adhere to these and other social and democratic values?

A new study released today, titled "[An examination of gender differences in social and democratic values in Canada](#)," tackles this question by looking at personal agreement with the values of human rights, respect for the law, gender equality, linguistic duality, ethnic and cultural diversity and respect for Indigenous cultures.

In 2020, a majority of Canadians (86%) strongly valued human rights. Similar levels of agreement were seen for gender equality (81%) and respect for the law (80%).

Other values also had high levels of agreement. For instance, just over two-thirds of Canadians greatly agreed with the values of respecting Indigenous cultures (68%) and ethnocultural diversity (67%), and a slight majority (55%) of people greatly supported linguistic duality.

Women are more likely than men to agree with most social and democratic values

Women were more likely than men to agree with most social and democratic values, with the exception of linguistic duality, which had no gender difference.

The greatest differences between women and men were seen for gender equality, ethnic and cultural diversity and respect for Indigenous cultures. For example, 71% of women greatly valued ethnocultural diversity, compared with 62% of men.

Across all age groups, women were more likely than men to agree with most values. However, the difference was even more pronounced among younger people.

For instance, when it came to respect for Indigenous cultures, 82% of young women aged 15 to 34 years greatly agreed with this value, compared with 67% of young men.

Agreement with social and democratic values tend to be lower among seniors

The proportion of Canadians who personally agreed with social and democratic values decreased as age increased, with the exceptions of respect for the law and linguistic duality, for which agreement was highest among Canadians aged 65 years and older.

In 2020, 82% of women aged 15 to 34 years greatly agreed with ethnocultural diversity, while this proportion was lower among women aged 65 years and older (60%). In contrast, respect for the law climbed from 69% for young women to 91% for older women. The same age patterns were observed for men.

Canadians with higher educational attainment and those living in urban areas were also among the most likely to agree to a great extent with these values. For example, 9 in 10 women (90%) with a bachelor's degree or higher greatly agreed with gender equality, compared with 8 in 10 women (80%) with a high school diploma or below.

Immigrants more likely to agree with multiculturalism

Immigrants were more likely to agree with the values of ethnocultural diversity, respect for Indigenous cultures and respect for the law compared with their Canadian-born counterparts.



Much of this difference could be attributed to recent immigrants, that is, those who arrived in Canada in 2011 or later, who were more likely than other immigrants to personally embrace these values. For example, 83% of recent immigrants greatly agreed with the value of ethnocultural diversity, compared with 74% of longer-term immigrants.

Gender differences among the overall immigrant population were less pronounced than among the Canadian-born population.

Respect for Indigenous cultures is highly valued by First Nations people, Inuit and Métis

Respect for Indigenous cultures, which encompasses the unique histories, languages, cultural practices and spiritual beliefs of diverse Indigenous groups, was highly valued by both Indigenous men and women, more so than the non-Indigenous population.

Among Indigenous women, 9 in 10 (90%) greatly agreed with the value of respect for Indigenous cultures, compared with just over 7 in 10 non-Indigenous women (73%). The difference was less pronounced for men, but still present. In 2020, 78% of Indigenous men greatly agreed with the value of respecting Indigenous cultures, compared with 63% of non-Indigenous men.

Note to readers

This study used data from the 2020 General Social Survey – Social Identity. The study provides descriptive statistics of gender gaps among the population aged 15 years and older who personally agreed with social and democratic values in the Canadian provinces.

To measure the degree of personal agreement with social and democratic values, the survey asked respondents, "To what extent do you personally agree with the following values?" The values listed were human rights, respect for the law, gender equality, English and French as Canada's official languages, ethnic and cultural diversity and respect for Indigenous (First Nations, Métis or Inuit) culture. The response categories were "to a great extent," "to a moderate extent," "to a small extent" or "not at all." This study examined the respondents who agreed with the values to a great extent.

Definitions, data sources and methods: survey number [5024](#).

The article entitled "[An examination of gender differences in social and democratic values in Canada](#)" is now available in *Insights on Canadian Society* ([75-006-X](#)).

The infographic "[Agreement with social and democratic values in Canada](#)" is now available in the series *Statistics Canada – Infographics* ([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) or Media Relations (statcan.mediahotline-ligneinfomedias.statcan@statcan.gc.ca).