

# Rethinking Citizen Engagement

**NARRATIVE REPORT**

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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Results from this edition of Rethinking Citizen Engagement reveal a continued and, arguably, strengthened case for increased citizen engagement.

The federal government's 'scorecard' on engagement and consultation is up in a very significant manner, as is trust in the federal government. There is, however, a strong case for further strengthening federal performance in the area of consultations. Although marks are up, performance is still well short of importance; and there are still large portions of the citizenry who are unhappy with government performance in this area (particularly poor marks are assigned to providing Canadians with an opportunity to input into government decision-making). Survey results also reveal that there are still strong reservoirs of negative outlook on government in terms of governments not caring about the views of average citizens, and this cynicism is more prevalent among older and more economically vulnerable Canadians.

The study provides useful guidance on clarifying the boundaries across representative polling and more open consultation. In a nutshell, both are mandatory for different reasons; people want both scientific representativeness and an approach where anyone can show up. The public (outside of Quebec) reject the idea that consultations should be limited to just those with a vested interest in the issue at hand.

Findings further suggest that there are several cornerstones to better engagement. At the top of the list is the need to disseminate information, knowledge, and understanding before engaging. The public are very skeptical about the average citizen's ability to contribute meaningfully because of low policy fluency. Community organizations are also seen as effective in gathering the views of Canadians, although the apparent popularity of community organizations may simply reflect the very high regards the public hold for these groups, and may not reflect their perceived utility. Town hall meetings, referenda, and public opinion polls find themselves in the middle of the spectrum of perceived usefulness. Social media is not highly trusted (and this is consistent with other research); however, this technology is more popular among young people. At the bottom of the list are 1-800 telephone numbers, but these are more strongly endorsed by lower income and less educated respondents. These results suggest there is no single formula that works; a variety of methods will be necessary to consult with Canadians.

Results further reveal that ensuring that information gathered is used to shape government decision-making, providing feedback based on consultation results, and having people on-hand with subject matter expertise to answer questions are seen as very effective tools for increasing participation in consultations.

The importance of consulting with specific segments of the population is rising quite significantly across all groups. Canadians place equal importance on consulting with both older and younger Canada, and there has been a sharp jump in the importance of consulting with Aboriginal people.

Results suggest that there are some critical challenges in moving forward. One of these challenges is that those who are drawn from the more socioeconomically vulnerable portions of Canadian society (i.e., lower income, less educated) are least likely to be reached by government engagement. These 'vulnerable' segments of the population are more likely to feel alienated and are less likely to vote. Public opinion polls may be the best way of reaching them.

The vast majority of citizen experience with engagement is through polls and surveys; both traditional telephone surveys and online surveys. The latter, however, are much less likely to reach the vulnerable groups noted above.

Digital technology and the Internet continue to be a growing source of connecting to Canadians but there is pretty strong skepticism about social media as a trustworthy source and a surprising resilience of mainstream media (both in traditional and newer digital settings). There are large generational and socioeconomic divides on this. In particular, older, more economically vulnerable Canadians are less comfortable with the privacy protections offered by digital technologies.

The study reflects other EKOS findings which suggest routine citizen engagement is the best option for improving democratic health and trust. Democratic renewal may not be just or even mostly about electoral reform, there may be more payoffs in what the government does between elections.

# 1. BACKGROUND AND METHODOLOGY

One of the primary long-term challenges facing governments is to engage an increasingly cynical public in the policy-making process in a manner that is both meaningful and effective. Rethinking Citizen Engagement has provided decision-makers with insight and strategic guidance in the development of citizen consultation and engagement efforts since its inception in 2002. This edition of the study tracks key issues from previous years, and examines emerging areas such as the use of new technologies and social media in engaging Canadians.

The study involved telephone interviews conducted with 1,009 randomly selected Canadians 16 years of age and older from February 20 to 26, 2017. The results are valid within a margin of error of +/- 3.1 percentage points, 19 times out of 20. The margin of error increases for population sub-group results.

The data was weighted based on Statistics Canada data according to age, gender, and region to ensure that the sample is representative of the general public in Canada aged 16 years and over.



## 2. GENERAL ATTITUDES TOWARD GOVERNMENT

### 2.1 TRUST IN GOVERNMENT

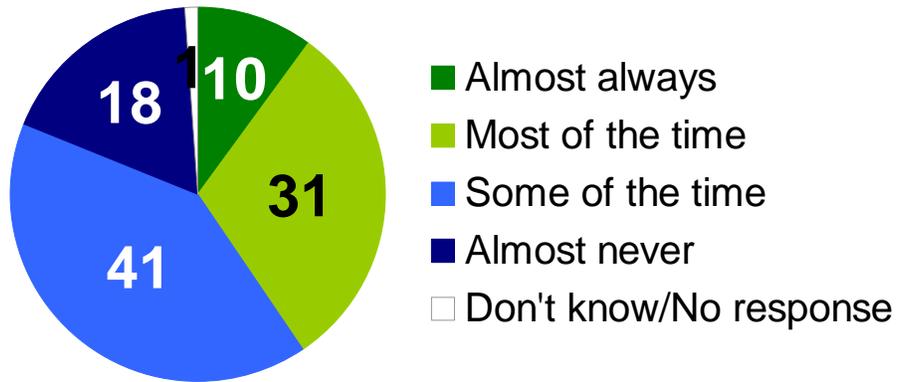
Trust in the federal government, while down over the past year, is quite high by historical standards. Two-fifths of Canadians (41 per cent) indicate they trust the government almost always or most of the time while the same proportion – 41 per cent – trust the Government of Canada *some* of the time. One in five (18 per cent) say they almost never trust the government to do what is right.

- Regionally, residents of Quebec are more likely to express trust in the federal government (51 per cent say they trust the Government of Canada most or all of the time, compared to 41 per cent nationally).
- Men are more apt to say they almost *never* trust the government (21 per cent, compared to 14 per cent of women).

Tracking reveals that trust in the federal government is down from last year (albeit insignificantly); however, the Government of Canada enjoys some of the highest marks on trust in government in more than two decades.

## Trust in Federal Government

Q. How much do you trust the federal government to do what is right?

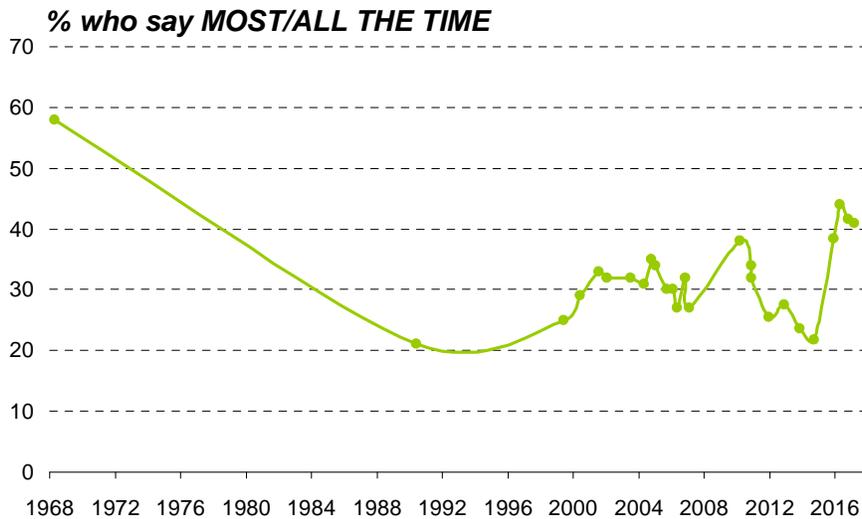


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BASE: Canadians; February 20-26, 2017, n=1,009

## Tracking Trust in Federal Government

Q. How much do you trust the federal government to do what is right?



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## 2.2 POLITICAL CYNICISM

Canadians were also asked about whether they believe that the government cares about the concerns of everyday Canadians. Canadians express a mix of cynicism and optimism, with a plurality of Canadians (46 per cent) leaning toward the view that governments care little about what ordinary citizens think. One-third (36 per cent), however, reject this assessment and one in five (18 per cent) neither agree nor disagree.

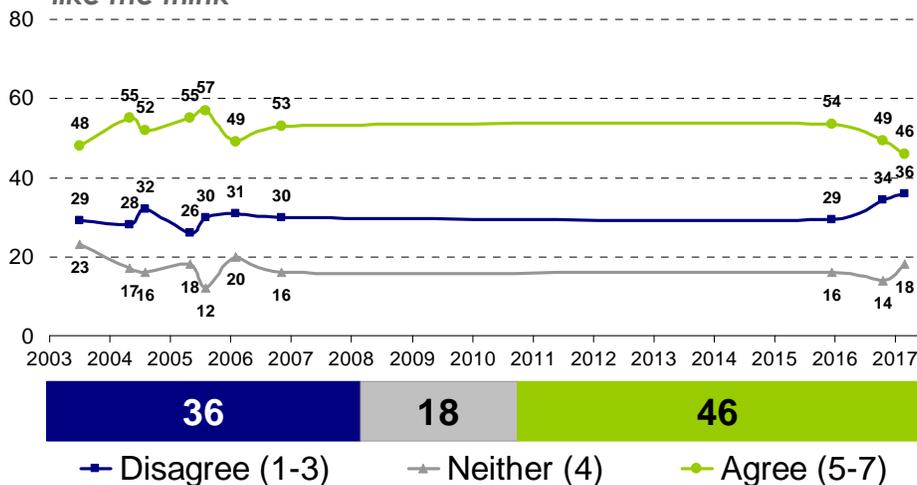
- Those in the lowest household income cohort (under \$40,000 per year) are considerably more likely to feel that the government does not care about what they think (58 per cent, compared to 46 per cent nationally).

Tracking reveals that cynicism has declined somewhat over the past decade. The proportion of Canadians who doubt the government's ability to consider the preferences of average Canadians has declined from 53 per cent in 2007 to 46 per cent today.

### Political Cynicism

Q. Please rate the degree to which you agree or disagree with the following statement:

***I don't think the government cares much about what people like me think***



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## 2.3 SATISFACTION WITH FEDERAL GOVERNMENT

Results reveal modest approval for the way the country's affairs are being run. When asked to rate the overall performance of the Government of Canada, just under half of Canadians (45 per cent) offer a positive assessment. Three in ten (31 per cent), however, would consider the government's performance to be poor. One in four (24 per cent) provided a neutral score.

- Regionally, residents of Atlantic Canada and British Columbia are more satisfied with the performance of the federal government (55 per cent and 53 per cent, respectively, compared to 45 per cent nationally). Albertans, in contrast, are considerably more likely to give the federal government a failing grade (50 per cent, compared to 31 per cent nationally).
- Youth (i.e., those under the age of 35) are more satisfied with the performance of the Government of Canada (52 per cent).
- University graduates are more likely to rate the federal government's performance as good (53 per cent).

These results represent a marked improvement in attitudes toward the federal government over 2007, when just 30 per cent of Canadians rated the government's performance as good.

### Satisfaction with Federal Government

Q. How would you rate the overall performance of the Government of Canada?

#### February 2017



BASE: Canadians; February 20-26, 2017, n=1,009

#### July 2007



BASE: Canadians; June 12-July 7, 2007, n=1,551

■ Poor (1-3) ■ Neither good nor poor (4) ■ Good (5-7)

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# 3. VIEWS ON CITIZEN ENGAGEMENT

The survey then narrowed its focus to views on consultations and citizen engagement.

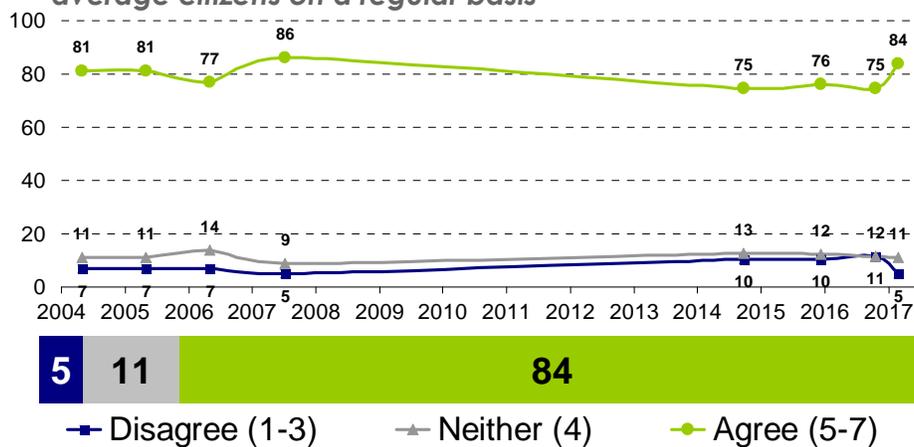
## 3.1 NEED FOR PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

Findings suggest that Canadians strongly feel it is important to consult with citizens. Fully 84 per cent of Canadians say that they would feel better about government decision-making if they knew that governments sought informed input from average citizens on a regular basis, and only five per cent disagree with this idea. Tracking reveals a nine-point increase in the proportion of Canadians who agree with this idea over last year; however, these results are largely on par with historical patterns.

### Need for Public Engagement

Q. Please rate the degree to which you agree or disagree with the following statement:

*I would personally feel better about government decision-making if I knew that governments sought informed input from average citizens on a regular basis*



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BASE: Canadians; most recent data point February 20-26, 2017, n=1,009

## 3.2 BROAD VIEWS ON CITIZEN ENGAGEMENT

Despite strong agreement with the need to engage the public, Canadians express mixed views on the benefits of engaging citizens. Fully three-quarters of Canadians (75 per cent) feel that citizens lack the information necessary to make meaningful contributions to public policy debates, and half (50 per cent) believe that it is virtually impossible for the average citizen to make a difference. At the same time, however, three-quarters (74 per cent) feel that they would be able to change things for the better if they were to collaborate with people like themselves, and six in ten (62 per cent) say that most national problems could be solved if decisions were brought to people at the grassroots. These results are largely unchanged from 2007.

- University graduates are more apt to disagree that society's problems could be solved through bringing decisions to people at the grassroots (26 per cent, compared to 19 per cent nationally).
- Those of lower socioeconomic status are more likely to express cynicism about the political power of everyday Canadians. Those with an annual household income of less than \$40,000 are more likely to agree that it is virtually impossible for average citizens to effect real change (61 per cent, compared to 50 per cent on average), a sentiment shared by 56 per cent of high school and college educated (compared to 41 per cent of university graduates).

## Broad Views on Citizen Engagement

Q. Please rate the degree to which you agree or disagree with the following statements:

Many citizens lack the information necessary to make a meaningful contribution to public policy debate

**2007**  
**% AGREE**



If people who felt like me got together to change things for the better, we could



We would probably solve most of our big national problems if decisions could be brought to people at the grassroots



The way things work these days, it's virtually impossible for the average citizen to make a real difference



■ Disagree (1-3)

■ Neither (4)

■ Agree (5-7)

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### 3.3 USEFULNESS OF VARIOUS CONSULTATION METHODS

Looking at the perceived effectiveness of various methods that could be used by the federal government to gather the views of Canadians, educational sessions were seen as most useful (79 per cent), followed closely by community organizations (74 per cent). Two-thirds (66 per cent) feel that town hall meetings would be useful, while six in ten are similarly supportive of referendums (61 per cent), public opinion polls (59 per cent), and government websites (56 per cent). Social media and 1-800 telephone numbers were seen as comparatively less effective means of reaching Canadians, cited by 46 per cent and 43 per cent of Canadians, respectively.

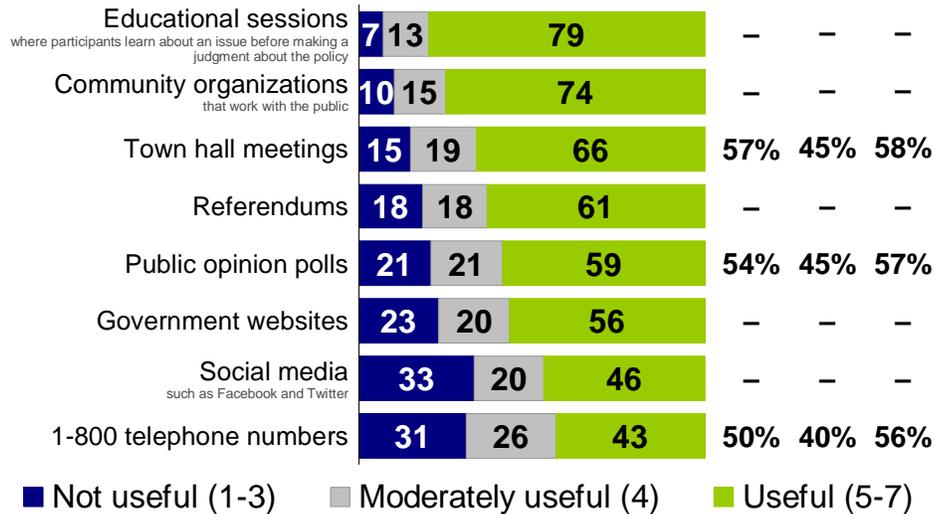
- Residents of Alberta and Saskatchewan are consistently less likely to perceive each of these consultation tools as useful (with the exception of referendums). Residents of Atlantic Canada are more likely to rate community organizations as useful (86 per cent, compared to 74 per cent nationally).
- The perceived value of new technologies declines with age. Among those under the age of 35, 62 per cent rate government websites as useful (compared to 44 per cent of those ages 65 and over), and 54 per cent view social media as a useful consultation instrument (versus 33 per cent of those ages 65 and over). Canadians under the age of 35 are also more positive about the effectiveness of public opinion polls (66 per cent versus 52 per cent of those ages 65 and over).
- Compared to men, women are more likely to believe in the usefulness of educational sessions (82 per cent, compared to 76 per cent of men), community organizations (79 per cent versus 69 per cent), public opinion polls (62 per cent versus 55 per cent), social media (50 per cent versus 41 per cent), and 1-800 telephone numbers (50 per cent versus 36 per cent).
- Those with high school education and those in the lowest income bracket are more likely to see 1-800 telephone numbers as useful (54 per cent and 55 per cent, respectively, compared to 35 per cent of university graduates and 31 per cent of those earning at least \$100,000 per year).

Tracking reveals an increase in the perceived usefulness of town hall meetings (66 per cent say useful, compared to 57 per cent in 2007).

## Usefulness of Various Consultation Methods

Q. There are a number of ways the federal government can gather the views of Canadians. In your opinion, how useful are each of the following methods?

**% USEFUL**  
2007 2005 2002



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## 3.4 EFFECTIVENESS OF VARIOUS FEEDBACK TOOLS

Turning to views on the perceived effectiveness of a number of methods by which citizens can convey their views to the federal government, results reveal that Canadians tend to prefer more traditional methods over the use of new technologies. Voting during elections was seen as the most effective way to express citizens' views among the ideas tested (seen as effective by 76 per cent of Canadians), followed closely by contacting a Member of Parliament (70 per cent). About half of Canadians would advocate calling a government office (51 per cent), creating a website devoted to an issue (46 per cent), or participating in an organized protest (45 per cent). Four in ten feel that writing a letter to a newspaper (43 per cent) and calling a television or radio talk show (39 per cent) would be effective. At the bottom of the list, just one-third (34 per cent) see social media as an effective tool for reaching the federal government, while a clear plurality (47 per cent) see this medium as generally ineffective.

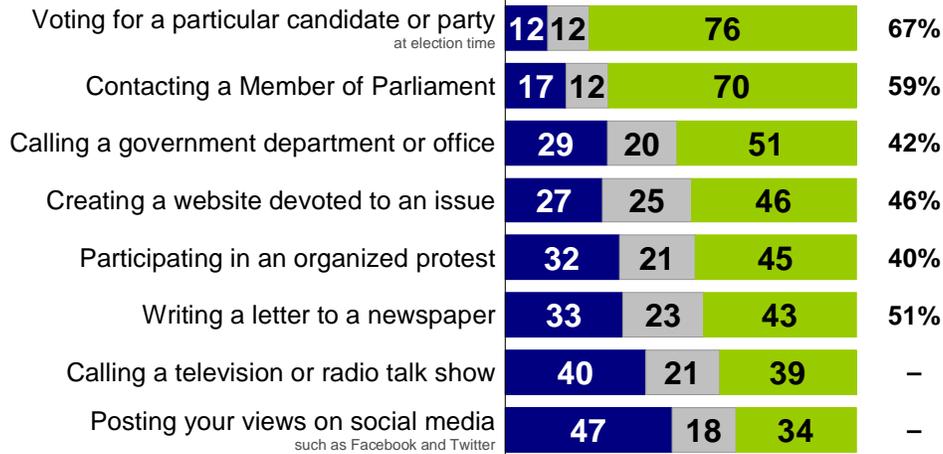
- Regionally, residents of Atlantic Canada and Ontario are more likely to see organized protests as an effective means of expressing their views (55 per cent and 51 per cent, respectively, compared to 45 per cent nationally). Residents of Quebec are more positive about the efficacy of social media (43 per cent versus 34 per cent nationally).
- The perceived usefulness of organized protests seems to decline with age (56 per cent of those under the age of 35 see it as an effective method, compared to 34 per cent of those ages 65 and over). Those ages 35 to 54 are more likely see social media as an effective tool for communicating their views to the government (41 per cent, compared to 34 per cent on average).
- Compared to men, women express a more positive outlook on the usefulness of writing to newspapers (48 per cent, compared to 39 per cent of men), calling in to a talk show (43 per cent versus 35 per cent), and posting views on social media (37 per cent versus 30 per cent).

Tracking reveals a clear rise in the perceived usefulness of voting (76 per cent, compared to 67 per cent in 2007), contacting a Member of Parliament (70 per cent versus 59 per cent), and calling a government department or office (51 per cent versus 42 per cent). In contrast, letters to newspapers are seen as increasingly less effective (43 per cent say effective, compared to 51 per cent in 2007).

## Effectiveness of Various Feedback Tools

Q. There are also a number of ways that citizens can express their views TO the federal government. In your opinion, how effective are each of the following methods?

**2007**  
% EFFECTIVE



■ Not effective (1-3) ■ Somewhat effective (4) ■ Effective (5-7)

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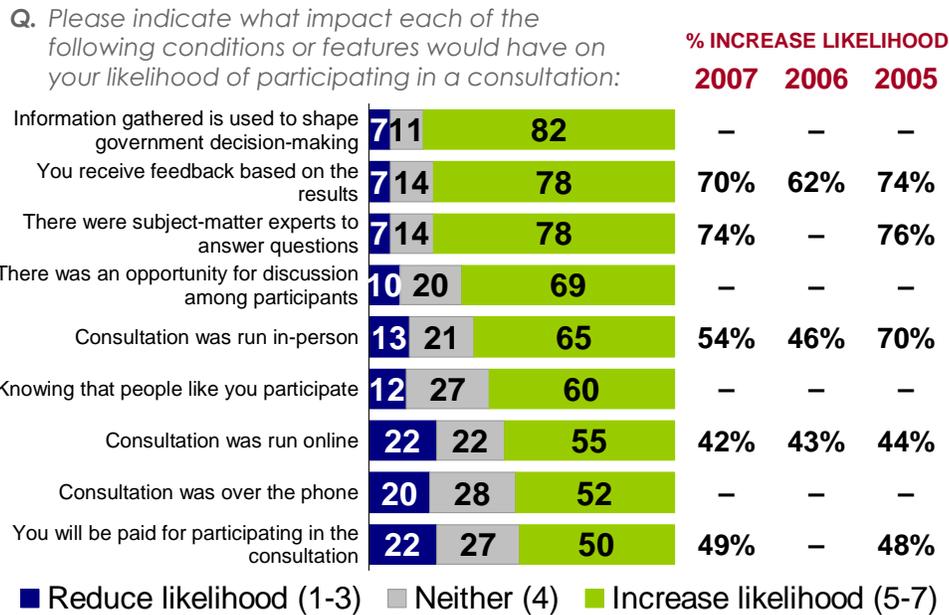
BASE: Canadians; February 20-26, 2017, n=1,009

## 3.5 IMPACT OF VARIOUS FEATURES ON PARTICIPATION

Next, respondents were presented with a range of consultation features and asked how each one would impact their likelihood of participating in a consultation. Ensuring that information gathered is used to shape government decision-making (82 per cent), providing feedback based on consultation results (78 per cent), and having people on-hand with subject matter expertise to answer questions (78 per cent) were seen as the most effective tools for increasing participation. Two-thirds would be more likely to participate if there was an opportunity for discussion among participants (69 per cent) or if consultations were run in-person (65 per cent). Six in ten say that knowing that people like them participate (60 per cent) and the ability to partake in consultations online (55 per cent) would be enticing features. Phone consultations and paid participation would appeal to about half of Canadians (52 per cent and 50 per cent, respectively).

- Regionally, residents of Atlantic Canada and Quebec are more enticed by the prospect of paid participation (64 per cent and 58 per cent, respectively, say they would be more likely to participate, compared to 50 per cent nationally).
- Younger Canadians are more responsive to ensuring that information gathered is used to shape government decision-making, having subject-matter experts on hand, providing feedback based on the results, paid participation, and running the consultations online. In particular, the impacts of paid participation vary drastically by age; 70 per cent of those under the age of 35 would be more likely to participate, compared to just 34 per cent of seniors (i.e., those ages 65 and over). Indeed, results suggest that paid participation would drive away as many seniors as it would attract.
- Ensuring that information gathered is used to shape government decision-making (88 per cent), having subject-matter experts on hand (83 per cent), and running the consultations online (61 per cent) are all comparatively more effective with university graduates. College graduates are relatively more attracted to the prospect of knowing that average Canadians are able to participate (66 per cent, compared to 60 per cent on average) and paid participation (56 per cent versus 50 per cent).
- Results suggest that online consultations would be more effective in recruiting participants with an annual household income of more than \$100,000 (66 per cent, compared to 44 per cent of those earning less than \$40,000).

## Impacts of Various Features on Participation



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## 3.6 IMPORTANCE OF GOVERNMENT OBJECTIVES

Respondents were presented with a list of five potential objectives of government consultations and asked to rate the degree of importance that they place on each one. Three-quarters place a high level of importance on informing Canadians about government policies and programs (77 per cent) and listening to Canadians in order to understand their views and concerns (74 per cent). Two-thirds, meanwhile, see interacting with other Canadians on issues of shared concern (68 per cent), providing Canadians with input into government decision-making (68 per cent), and providing feedback on experiences with government services (64 per cent) as essential objectives.

- Ontario residents place comparatively more importance on providing feedback on government services (71 per cent, compared to 64 per cent nationally).
- Those under the age of 55 place a higher degree of importance on informing Canadians about government policies and programs, listening to Canadians, and providing Canadians with input into government decision-making.
- Those with a university education consistently place more importance on each of the objectives tested.

### Importance of Government Objectives

*Q. Please rate the importance of the following potential objectives of government consultations:*

Informing Canadians about government policies and programs



Listening to Canadians in order to understand their views and concerns



Interacting with other Canadians on issues of shared concern



Providing Canadians with input into government decision-making



Providing feedback on experiences with government services



■ Not important (1-3) ■ Somewhat important (4) ■ Important (5-7)

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## 3.7 GOVERNMENT PERFORMANCE ON THESE OBJECTIVES

Respondents were then asked to rate the Government of Canada's performance in terms of meeting each of these objectives. Results reveal mixed views on how the federal government consults with Canadians. Roughly half of Canadians (47 per cent) approve of how the government has handled informing Canadians about its policies and programs (compared to 28 per cent who provide a negative assessment). About four in ten offer a positive appraisal of how the federal government deals with listening to Canadians in order to understand their concerns (40 per cent, compared to 39 per cent who rate the government's performance as poor), allowing for feedback on government services (37 per cent versus 33 per cent), and allowing for interaction with other Canadians (37 per cent versus 32 per cent). A clear plurality believe that the federal government has done a poor job of providing Canadians with an opportunity to provide input into government decision-making (45 per cent, compared to 32 per cent who provided a positive appraisal).

- Regionally, residents of Quebec are more satisfied with the how the Government of Canada has kept Canadians informed about government policies and programs (59 per cent, compared to 47 per cent nationally). Residents of Atlantic Canada consistently rate the federal government more favourably on each of the indicators tested.
- Women give the federal government a more positive appraisal when it comes to allowing for feedback on government services (41 per cent, compared to 33 per cent among men).

## Government Performance on these Objectives

Q. And how would you rate the Government of Canada in terms of its performance in each of these potential objectives of government consultations?

Informing Canadians about government policies and programs



Listening to Canadians in order to understand their views and concerns



Allowing for feedback on government services



Allowing for interaction with other Canadians on issues of shared concern



Providing Canadians w/ an opportunity to input into gov. decision-making



■ Poor (1-3)    ■ Neither good nor poor (4)    ■ Good (5-7)

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## 3.8 SATISFACTION WITH GOVERNMENT CONSULTATIONS

Respondents were also asked to rate the Government of Canada's overall performance in terms of consulting with Canadians. Results reveal that views on government efforts in this area are evenly split: about four in ten (37 per cent) feel the Government of Canada is doing a good job in terms of consulting with Canadians while the same proportion (37 per cent) rate the government's consultation efforts as poor. One in four (24 per cent) would assess the government's performance as neither good nor poor.

- Residents of Atlantic Canada are the most likely to express satisfaction with how the federal government consults with Canadians (53 per cent, compared to 37 per cent nationally). By comparison, Albertans are the most likely to rate the federal government's performance as poor (57 per cent).
- Satisfaction is higher among university graduates (45 per cent).

Tracking reveals a considerable improvement in public attitudes toward the Government of Canada's consultation efforts. Since 2007, the proportion of Canadians rating the government's performance as good has doubled (37 per cent, compared to 18 per cent in 2007).

### Satisfaction with Government Consultations

*Q. Using the same scale, how would you rate the performance of the Government of Canada in terms of consulting with Canadians?*

#### February 2017



BASE: Canadians; February 20-26, 2017, n=1,009

#### July 2007



BASE: Canadians; June 12-July 7, 2007, n=1,551

■ Poor (1-3) ■ Neither good nor poor (4) ■ Good (5-7)

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# 4. CREATING A REPRESENTATIVE DIALOGUE

## 4.1 PREFERRED SCOPE OF CONSULTATIONS

Results reveal broad support for including a diverse and representative assortment of citizens in government consultations. When asked about their views on the scope of the citizenry that should be included in these consultations, fully eight in ten say that consultations should be conducted with a representative sample of the population (83 per cent) and that consultations should be conducted with as many people as possible (83 per cent). In contrast, just two-fifths (38 per cent) feel that participation in consultations should be limited to just those citizens who would be affected by the issue (compared to 44 per cent who disagree with this notion).

- Regionally, residents of Quebec are twice as likely to support the notion that consultations should be limited to only those affected by the issue (73 per cent agree, compared to just 38 per cent nationally).

## Preferred Scope of Consultations

Q. Please rate the degree to which you agree or disagree with the following statements:

Consultations should be conducted with a representative group of people to ensure the views reflect the population



Consultations should be conducted with as many people as possible



Consultations should be conducted with only those affected by the issue



■ Disagree (1-3)    ■ Neither (4)    ■ Agree (5-7)

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## 4.2 GOVERNMENT CONSULTATIONS WITH KEY GROUPS

Results reveal that Canadians feel it is important that the Government of Canada consult with all segments of Canadian society. Roughly eight in ten Canadians feel it is important to consult with Canadian seniors (85 per cent), young Canadians (82 per cent), and Aboriginal people (79 per cent). Seven in ten (70 per cent) feel it is important to consult with new Canadians.

- Regionally, residents of Alberta place less importance on consulting with young Canadians (66 per cent say important, compared to 82 per cent nationally) and new Canadians (51 per cent versus 70 per cent).
- Those under the age of 35 place more of a priority on engaging new Canadians (77 per cent, compared to 70 per cent on average) and, not surprisingly, young Canadians (89 per cent versus 82 per cent).
- Compared to men, women are consistently more likely to value the input of each of the four groups tested.

Tracking reveals an across-the-board increase in the perceived importance of consulting with these groups over 2007, particularly in terms of Aboriginal people (79 per cent, compared to 62 per cent in 2007 – a 17-point increase).

## Government Consultations with Key Groups

Q. How important is it that Government of Canada consults with each of the following groups?

### Seniors



### Young Canadians



### Aboriginal people



### New Canadians



■ Not important (1-3) ■ Somewhat important (4) ■ Important (5-7)

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# 5. EXPERIENCES WITH GOVERNMENT CONSULTATIONS

Rethinking Citizen Engagement also asked Canadians about their experience with government-sponsored consultations. The findings from this series of questions are discussed below.

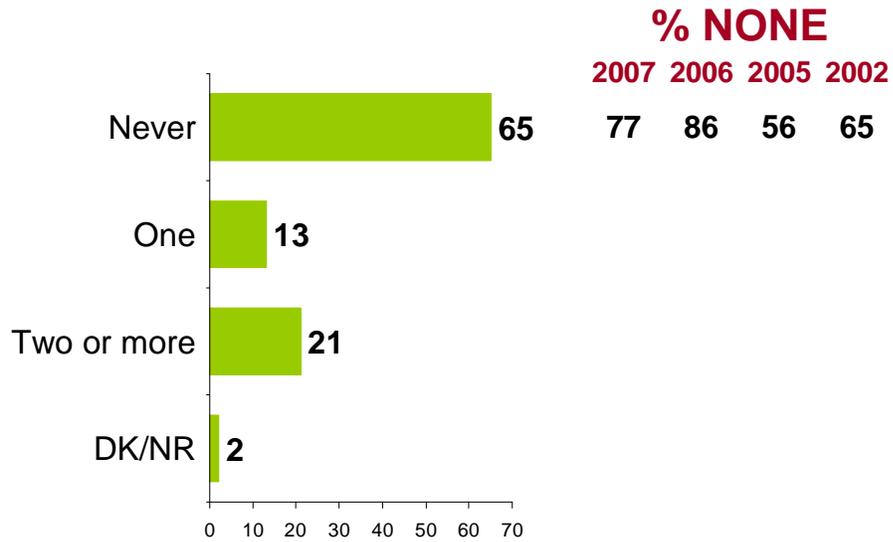
## 5.1 PARTICIPATION IN CONSULTATIONS

Respondents were asked how many times they had taken part in a government-sponsored consultation in the past year. Results reveal that overall participation in government consultations is fairly low: two-thirds of Canadians (65 per cent) say they have not participated in a government-sponsored consultation in the past 12 months. One in three (34 per cent) say they have taken part in a consultation either once (13 per cent), or two or more times (21 per cent).

Tracking suggests an increase in public participation in consultations over the past ten years. One in three (34 per cent) Canadians say they have recently participated in a consultation, compared to 22 per cent in 2007.

## Participation in Consultations

Q. In the past year, how many times have you taken part in a government sponsored consultation? (Open)



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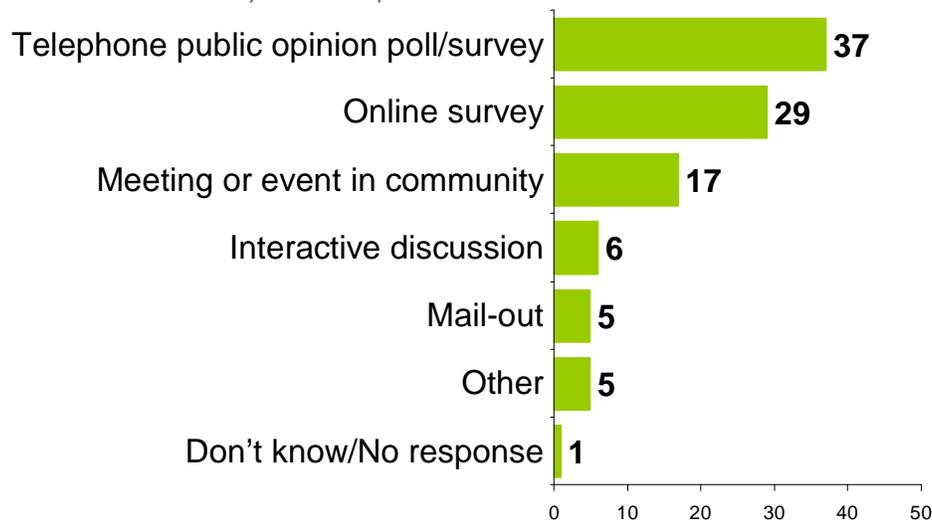
BASE: Canadians; February 20-26, 2017, n=1,009

## 5.2 FORM OF CONSULTATION

Those who say they have participated in a government-sponsored consultation in the past year were asked to identify the format in which it took place. Two-fifths of these respondents (37 per cent) took part in a telephone public opinion survey, while three in ten (29 per cent) participated in an online survey. One in six attended a community meeting or event (17 per cent). A few respondents also reported that the consultation took place in the form of an interactive discussion (six per cent) or a mail-out (five per cent).

### Form of Consultation

Q. [IF PARTICIPATED IN LEAST ONE CONSULTATION] What form did this consultation take? / Thinking only of the most recent consultation you took part in, what form did it take?



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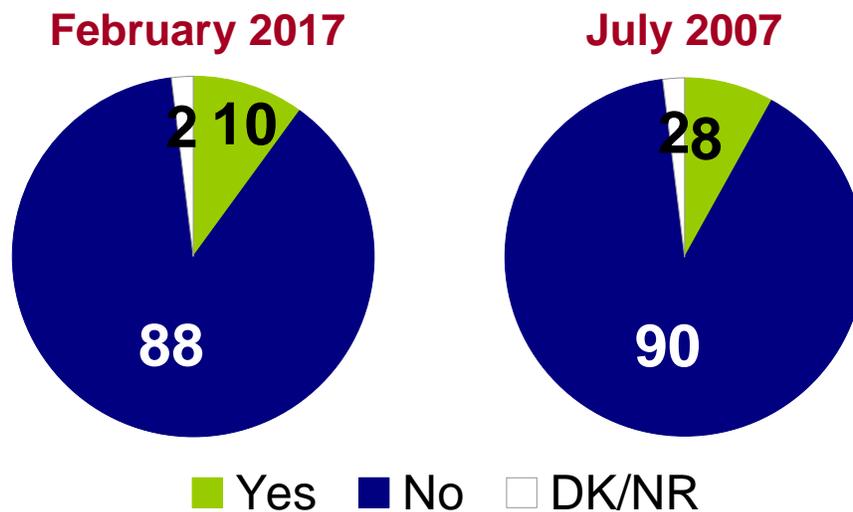
BASE: Those who participated in one or more consultations; February 20-26, 2017, n=332

## 5.3 OPPORTUNITIES TO PARTICIPATE IN CONSULTATIONS

Those who say they have not participated in a government consultation in the past year were asked if they were given an opportunity to take part in one. Consistent with 2007, one in ten of these respondents (10 per cent) say they were given a chance to participate in a government-sponsored consultation, while the vast majority (88 per cent) say they were not provided with such an opportunity.

### Opportunities to Participate in Consultations

Q. [IF NEVER] Were you given the opportunity to take part in a government sponsored consultation in the past year?



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BASE: Never participated in consultation; June 12-July 7, 2007, n=1,230 / February 20-26, 2017, n=677

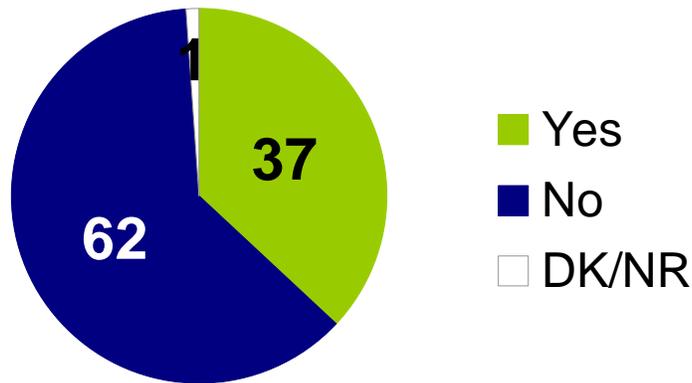
## 5.4 AWARENESS OF CONSULTATION OPPORTUNITIES

Results also reveal relatively low awareness of government consultations. Only about two-fifths of Canadians (37 per cent) are aware of these opportunities, while six in ten (62 per cent) are not.

- University graduates are more likely to feel that there are opportunities for taking part in consultations (48 per cent, compared to 33 per cent of high school educated and 29 per cent of college graduates).

### Awareness of Consultation Opportunities

Q. Are you aware that governments provide opportunities to take part in consultations?



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BASE: Canadians; February 20-26, 2017, n=1,009



# 6. INTEGRATING NEW TECHNOLOGIES

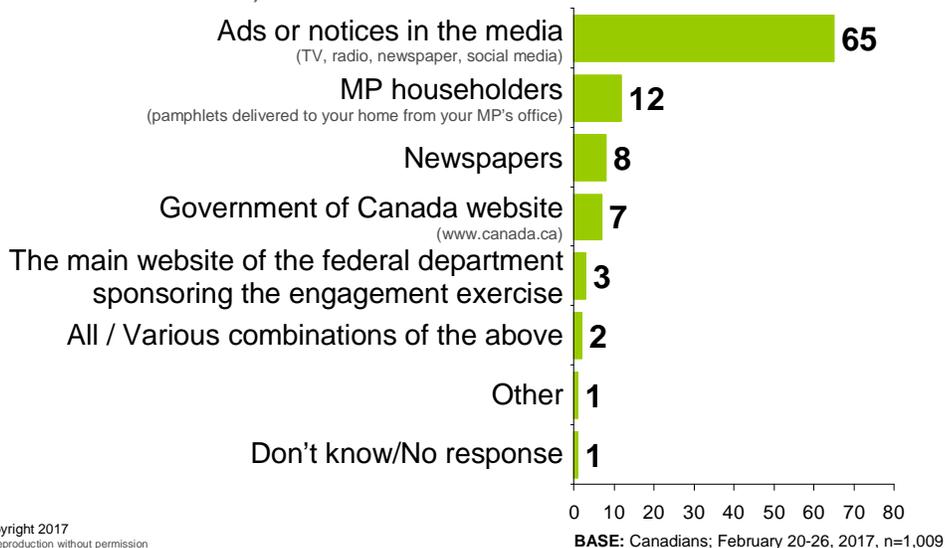
## 6.1 BEST METHOD FOR ENGAGING CANADIANS

Respondents were presented with a list of communication media and asked to identify what they consider to be the best method for engaging Canadians. Results reveal a clear preference for ads or notices in the media, selected by two-thirds of respondents (65 per cent). Just one in ten feel that governments would be better off using MP householders (12 per cent), newspapers (8 per cent), or the Government of Canada website (seven per cent). Very few respondents selected the main website of the federal department sponsoring the engagement exercise (three per cent).

- Residents of Quebec and British Columbia are more responsive to ads or notices in the media (74 per cent and 73 per cent, respectively, compared to 65 per cent on average).
- Those ages 65 and over are comparatively more likely to select newspapers as the best method for engaging Canadians (18 per cent, compared to eight per cent nationally).

### Best Method for Engaging Canadians

Q. Now let's say that the government wanted to engage Canadians on an important issue, which of the following would be the best way to let them know about it?



## 6.2 IMPORTANCE OF INTERNET IN ENGAGING CITIZENS

Results also reveal broad public support for using the Internet in engaging citizens on policy issues. Seven in ten Canadians (71 per cent) agree that the Internet plays an important role in engaging Canadians on policy issues and problems, while just one in ten (11 per cent) disagree with this idea.

- The perceived usefulness of the Internet declines with age. Fully 82 per cent of those under the age of 35 agree that the Internet plays an important role in engaging Canadians, compared to 55 per cent of those ages 65 and over.
- Those who hold a university degree are more likely to see the Internet as an essential component of citizen engagement (77 per cent, compared to 71 per cent nationally).

Tracking reveals that the proportion of Canadians who see the Internet as an important tool in engaging citizens has jumped from 46 per cent to 71 per cent since 2007.

### Importance of Internet in Engaging Citizens

Q. Please rate the degree to which you agree or disagree with the following statement:

***The Internet plays an important role in engaging citizens on important policy issues and problems***

#### February 2017



BASE: Canadians; February 20-26, 2017, n=1,009

#### July 2007



BASE: Canadians; June 12-July 7, 2007, n=1,551

□ DK/NR   ■ Disagree (1-3)   ■ Neither (4)   ■ Agree (5-7)

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## 6.3 CONTACTING GOVERNMENT TO EXPRESS VIEWS

Canadians were also asked if they had ever contacted the Government of Canada to express their views about a subject. Results reveal that about two-fifths of Canadians (44 per cent) have called or written a government office at some point in their lives, compared to 56 per cent who have not.

- Residents of Ontario are more likely to have called or written to a government office (51 per cent, compared to 44 per cent nationally), while residents of Quebec are the least likely to have done so (25 per cent).
- University and college graduates are more likely to have called or written a government office (53 per cent and 43 per cent, respectively, compared to 28 per cent of high school graduates).

Survey results also reveal that one-quarter of Canadians (26 per cent) say they have visited a government-run website looking for information about how to participate in a government consultation. Tracking reveals that the proportion of Canadians who say they have visited a government website looking for information on how to participate in a government consultation is up since 2007 (when just 16 per cent had visited a government website).

- The likelihood of having visited a government website declines with age (from 35 per cent among those under the age of 35 to 16 per cent among those ages 65 and over).

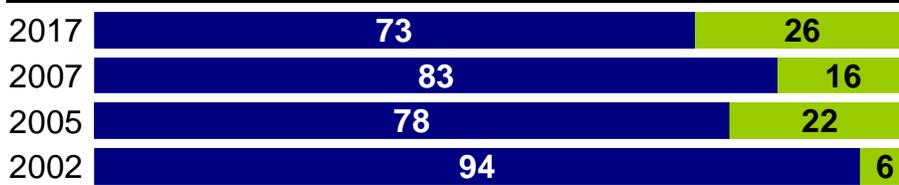
## Contacting Government to Express Views

Q. Have you ever called or written a government office to express your views about a subject? / Have you ever visited a government-run website looking for information about how to participate in a government consultation?

### Called or written



### Visited website



■ No      ■ Yes

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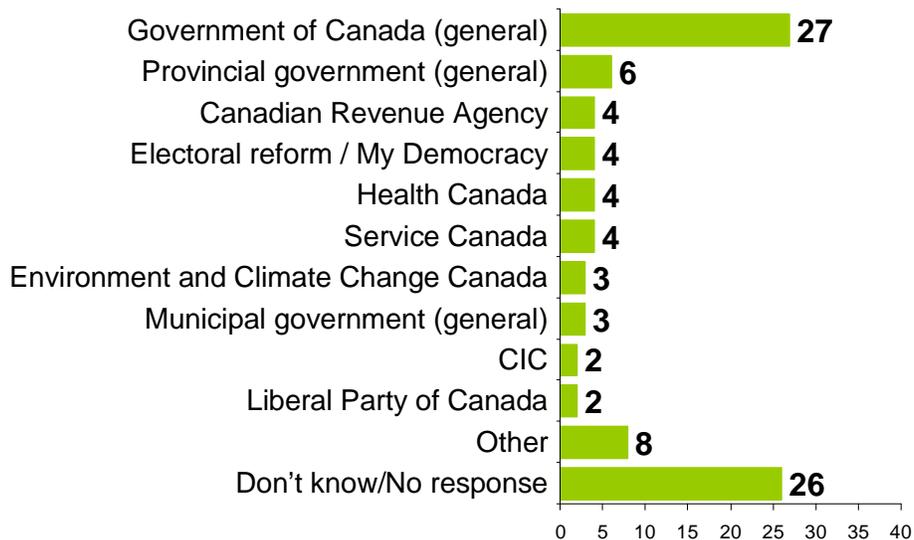
BASE: Canadians; most recent data point February 20-26, 2017, n=1,009

## 6.4 TYPES OF WEBSITES VISITED

Those who have visited a government-run website looking for information about how to participate in a government consultation were asked, unprompted, to list the websites they had visited. By a wide margin, the most commonly cited resource was the Government Canada, with one-quarter of these respondents (27 per cent) saying they visited a federally-run website (with no mention of a specific department).

### Types of Websites Visited

Q. [IF VISITED GOV'T RUN WEBSITES] Which websites have you visited? (Open, up to three responses accepted)



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BASE: Visited a government run website; February 20-26, 2017, n=256

## 6.5 COMFORT WITH PRIVACY BEING PROTECTED

Canadians were also asked to provide their views on the privacy afforded by federal government websites. Results reveal that about half (53 per cent) are comfortable that their privacy would be protected when registering views and opinions on a federal government website. A fairly large proportion (25 per cent), however, are not confident that their privacy would be protected.

- Those ages 55 and over are more likely to say they are not comfortable with the privacy protections offered by federal government websites.
- High school graduates are more likely to say they are not confident that their privacy is being protected (32 per cent, compared to 25 per cent nationally). Similarly, those in the lowest income cohort are more distrustful of the security of government websites (33 per cent, compared to 25 per cent nationally).

Tracking suggests a slight increase in the proportion of Canadians who trust that their privacy would be protected when using a Government of Canada website (53 per cent, compared to 48 per cent in 2007).

### Comfort with Privacy Being Protected

*Q. How comfortable are you that your privacy would be protected when registering views and opinions on a federal government website?*

#### February 2017



BASE: Canadians; February 20-26, 2017, n=1,009

#### July 2007



BASE: Canadians; June 12-July 7, 2007, n=1,551

- DK/NR
- Not comfortable (1-3)
- Moderately comfortable (4)
- Comfortable (5-7)

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# 7. MEDIA USE

## 7.1 USE OF VARIOUS NEWS MEDIA

Respondents were asked to rate the frequency with which they use various media to follow political and government affairs. Six in ten Canadians watch television (62 per cent) or use the Internet (61 per cent) on a frequent basis. About half get their political updates from radio (50 per cent) and newspapers (49 per cent) on a frequent basis. Social media is a comparatively less popular means for keeping up to date on political events, with two-fifths (42 per cent) using it frequently (compared to 41 per cent who rarely – if ever – use social media).

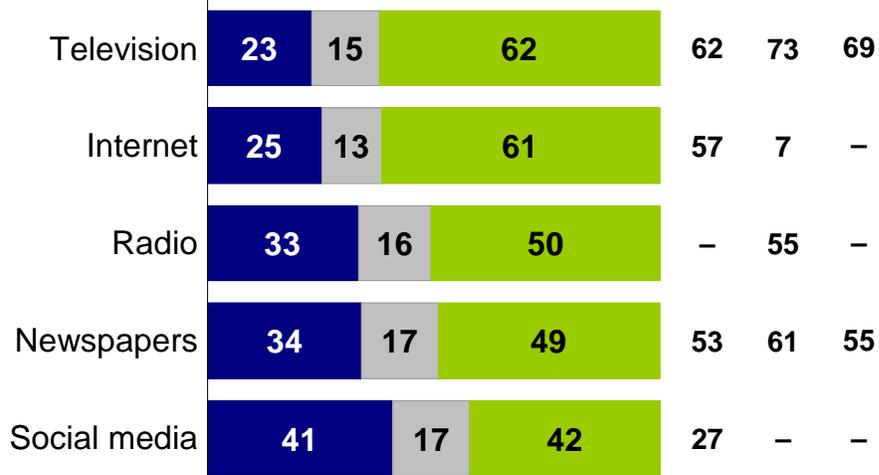
- Regionally, residents of Atlantic Canada are more likely to rely on social media for their news on politics and government affairs (59 per cent say frequently, compared to 42 per cent nationally). Newspapers remain a dominant source of news in Ontario (58 per cent versus 49 per cent nationally).
- The likelihood of using online media declines with age; fully 84 per cent of those under the age of 35 use the Internet on a frequent basis (compared to 33 per cent of those ages 65 and over), while 61 per cent use social media (versus 20 per cent). In contrast, the use of more traditional media rises with age; 79 per cent of those ages 65 and over make frequent use of television (compared to 43 per cent of those under the age of 35), while 59 per cent use newspapers (versus 42 per cent).
- Compared to women, men are more likely to use the Internet on a frequent basis (68 per cent, compared to 55 per cent of men).
- With the exception of television, university graduates are considerably more likely to use each of the news media tested, particularly when compared to high school graduates.
- Those with an annual household income of \$80,000 or more are particularly likely to use the Internet, radio, and social media.

Tracking suggests a downward trend in the use of traditional news media such as television, radio, and newspapers. For instance, 62 per cent of Canadians use television on a frequent basis, a drop of roughly 10 points from the mid-1990s. In contrast, 61 per cent make frequent use of the Internet, a nearly 10-fold increase over 1995. Similarly, 42 per cent say they use social media often, a 15-point increase since 2013.

## Use of Various News Media

Q. How frequently do you follow political and governmental affairs in each of the following?

**% FREQUENTLY**  
**2013 1995 1994**



■ Never/Rarely (1-3)    ■ Sometimes (4)    ■ Frequently (5-7)

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BASE: Canadians; February 20-26, 2017, n=1,009

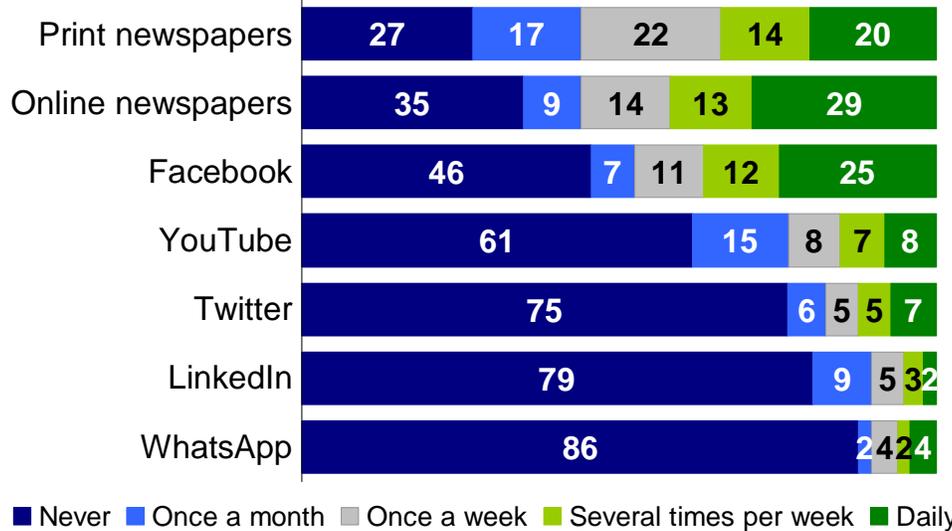
## 7.2 USE OF VARIOUS MEDIA PLATFORMS

Respondents were also presented with a list of seven media platforms and asked how often they use each one to follow politics and government affairs. Print newspapers and online newspapers are the most popular, with 73 per cent and 64 per cent, respectively, using these media at least once a month. Just over half (55 per cent) use Facebook at least once per month. Fewer Canadians (38 per cent) say they use YouTube at least monthly to find information about politics and government affairs, while one in five use Twitter (23 per cent) or LinkedIn (19 per cent). Only one in ten (12 per cent) use WhatsApp to follow political affairs.

- Regionally, residents of Atlantic Canada are more likely to use Facebook on a daily basis (41 per cent, compared to 25 per cent nationally). Print newspapers are more popular in Ontario (28 per cent say daily basis, compared to 20 per cent nationally).
- The likelihood of using online media such as online newspapers, Facebook, YouTube, and Twitter decreases with age. In contrast, the use of print newspapers rises with age.
- Compared to women, men are more likely to use online newspapers on a daily basis (36 per cent, compared to 22 per cent of women).
- University graduates are much more likely to read an online newspaper at least once per day (44 per cent, compared to 22 per cent of college graduates and 11 per cent of high school educated). Similarly, the likelihood reading online newspapers every day rises with household income (from 14 per cent among those earning less than \$40,000 to 40 per cent among those with an annual household income of at least \$100,000).

## Use of Various Media Platforms

Q. How often do you use the following for information about politics and government affairs?



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BASE: Canadians; February 20-26, 2017, n=1,009