

Trust in neighbors, my People, 'other' people and people in general: East Coast more trusting than the West Coast

Jack Jedwab

President and CEO, Metropolis Institute and the Association for Canadian Studies

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Introduction

In the United States persons under 30 are generally regarded as less trusting of other people and institutions.

A survey conducted by Leger for the Association for Canadian Studies confirms that younger Canadians are generally less trusting than older persons.

But the study also confirms that education, higher income and geographic proximity are drivers of higher overall trust. Atlantic Canadians are most trusting while British Columbians least so when it comes to trust of people in general.

Harvard political scientist Robert Putnam has argued that trust, or "social capital," is essential for a healthy and functioning democracy. Low public trust implies weaker social connections and civic engagement. When people trust each other and their institutions, they are more likely to listen, collaborate, and care. Putnam also distinguishes between trust within one's own ethnic group and trust outside the group as respectively contributing to bonding and bridging forms or expressions of social capital and suggests that bridging is more important in strengthening the democratic fabric.

Overall ethnic minorities are most trusting of persons that share their same ethnic background but are not less trusting than others of people in general. Hence contrary to Putnam's long held theory not all trust operates vertically as a sort of zero sum equation, rather it is often more horizontal with 'trusting persons' being generally more trusting across a spectrum of peoples.

The survey was conducted by Leger for the Association for Canadian Studies with 1527 respondents in Canada over the period October 29-31, 2025. A margin of error cannot be associated with a non-probability sample in a panel survey for comparison purposes. A probability sample of 1631 respondents would have a margin of error of $\pm 2.5\%$, 19 times out of 20.

Trust of people in general rises with age as least trusting are persons under 35 years of age

When it comes to -- People in general -- do you very much trust, somewhat trust, somewhat distrust, very much distrust or don't know/prefer not to answer?	Total	Male	Female	Age 18-24	Age 25-34	Age 35-44	Age 45-54	Age 55-64	Age 65+
NET TRUST	57%	60%	55%	47%	45%	53%	56%	61%	72%
Very much trust	4%	5%	4%	2%	6%	2%	3%	4%	6%
Somewhat trust	53%	55%	51%	44%	39%	51%	54%	56%	66%
NET DISTRUST	35%	33%	37%	39%	47%	35%	38%	35%	23%
Somewhat distrust	29%	28%	30%	31%	32%	31%	30%	31%	21%
Very much distrust	6%	6%	7%	7%	15%	4%	7%	4%	2%
I don't know/I prefer not to answer	8%	7%	8%	15%	8%	12%	6%	5%	5%

When it comes to trusting your neighbors age is an important factor with younger cohorts somewhat less trusting

When it comes to – my neighbors -- do you very much trust, somewhat trust, somewhat distrust, very much distrust or don't know/prefer not to answer?	Total	Male	Female	Age 18-24	Age 25-34	Age 35-44	Age 45-54	Age 55-64	Age 65+
NET TRUST	70%	71%	70%	60%	63%	66%	75%	76%	76%
Very much trust	22%	20%	23%	9%	16%	16%	17%	27%	34%
Somewhat trust	49%	51%	47%	51%	47%	50%	58%	49%	42%
NET DISTRUST	18%	19%	16%	25%	23%	20%	18%	12%	13%
Somewhat distrust	13%	14%	12%	19%	14%	16%	14%	6%	11%
Very much distrust	5%	6%	5%	6%	9%	4%	5%	6%	2%
I don't know/I prefer not to answer	12%	10%	14%	15%	14%	14%	7%	12%	11%

The oldest cohort is somewhat more trusting than others of persons with shared ethnic background

When it comes to -- Persons who share the same ethnic or cultural background - - do you very much trust, somewhat trust, somewhat distrust, very much distrust or don't know/prefer not to answer?	Total	Male	Female	Age 18-24	Age 25-34	Age 35-44	Age 45-54	Age 55-64	Age 65+
NET TRUST	67%	65%	68%	64%	65%	59%	69%	67%	73%
Very much trust	9%	9%	9%	8%	12%	9%	7%	7%	10%
Somewhat trust	58%	56%	60%	56%	52%	51%	61%	60%	63%
NET DISTRUST	15%	17%	13%	22%	15%	14%	19%	13%	11%
Somewhat distrust	13%	14%	11%	19%	11%	12%	17%	11%	10%
Very much distrust	2%	3%	1%	3%	5%	2%	1%	2%	1%
I don't know/I prefer not to answer	19%	18%	19%	14%	20%	26%	13%	20%	16%

In the case of persons with different ethnic backgrounds the older cohort is somewhat less trusting than the youngest

When it comes to -- Persons with different ethnic or cultural backgrounds -- do you very much trust, somewhat trust, somewhat distrust, very much distrust or don't know/prefer not to answer?	Total	Male	Female	Age 18-24	Age 25-34	Age 35-44	Age 45-54	Age 55-64	Age 65+
NET TRUST	58%	57%	59%	61%	56%	56%	63%	55%	57%
Very much trust	8%	8%	9%	9%	13%	5%	7%	8%	8%
Somewhat trust	49%	48%	50%	53%	43%	51%	56%	47%	49%
NET DISTRUST	25%	29%	21%	23%	25%	23%	24%	29%	25%
Somewhat distrust	19%	21%	17%	17%	18%	18%	17%	23%	20%
Very much distrust	6%	8%	4%	5%	7%	5%	7%	6%	5%
I don't know/I prefer not to answer	17%	15%	20%	16%	19%	21%	13%	16%	18%

Canadians trust their neighbors over persons who share their ethnic background and over people in general

Atlantic Canadians are most trusting

When it comes to the following, do you very much trust or somewhat trust (Net Trust)...?	Total	Atlantic provinces	QC	ON	MB/SK	AB	BC
People in General	57%	71%	57%	55%	57%	66%	51%
Persons who share the same ethnic or cultural background	67%	68%	68%	64%	66%	72%	68%
Persons with different ethnic or cultural backgrounds	58%	57%	54%	58%	52%	63%	61%
My next door neighbour	70%	79%	68%	71%	65%	71%	70%

Persons under 35 are least trusting of people in general than of persons who share their cultural background but trust in neighbors prevails after 35

When it comes to the following, do you very much trust or somewhat trust (Net Trust)...?	Total	Male	Female	Age 18-24	Age 25-34	Age 35-44	Age 45-54	Age 55-64	Age 65+
People in General	57%	60%	55%	47%	45%	53%	56%	61%	72%
Persons who share the same ethnic or cultural background	67%	65%	68%	64%	65%	59%	69%	67%	73%
Persons with different ethnic or cultural backgrounds	58%	57%	59%	61%	56%	56%	63%	55%	57%
My next door neighbour	70%	71%	70%	60%	63%	66%	75%	76%	76%

Members of ethnic minorities (persons who speak a language other than French or English) are by far more trusting of people that share their ethnic background than those who don't as well as of people in general

When it comes to the following, do you very much trust or somewhat trust (Net Trust)...	Total	French	English	A language other than French or English
People in General	57%	55%	58%	55%
Persons who share the same ethnic or cultural background	67%	65%	65%	79%
Persons with different ethnic or cultural backgrounds	58%	51%	60%	57%
My next door neighbour	70%	67%	72%	69%

Black Canadians are least trusting of people in general, while Chinese and Middle Eastern are generally more trusting of persons that share the same background

When it comes to the following, do you very much trust or somewhat trust (Net Trust)...?	Total	White	Indigenous	Black	South Asian	Chinese	Middle Eastern / North African
People in General	57%	59%	57%	40%	57%	60%	60%
Persons who share the same ethnic or cultural background	67%	67%	66%	61%	74%	76%	67%
Persons with different ethnic or cultural backgrounds	58%	57%	66%	52%	71%	61%	52%
My next door neighbour	70%	71%	91%	51%	69%	72%	70%

Persons with higher income are somewhat more trusting across people and neighbors

When it comes to the following, do you very much trust or somewhat trust (Net Trust)...?

	<40k	40-59k	60-79k	80-99k	100k+
People in General	53%	53%	56%	64%	62%
Persons who share the same ethnic or cultural background	60%	66%	60%	76%	72%
Persons with different ethnic or cultural backgrounds	51%	57%	59%	61%	62%
My next door neighbour	63%	70%	71%	75%	74%

Trust of people in general and in neighbors is higher in rural areas than in urban

When it comes to the following, do you very much trust or somewhat trust (Net Trust)...

	Urban	Suburban	Rural
People in General	56%	55%	68%
Persons who share the same ethnic or cultural background	68%	64%	69%
Persons with different ethnic or cultural backgrounds	59%	58%	57%
My next door neighbour	67%	72%	74%

Trust of people rises with higher educational attainment

When it comes to the following, do you very much trust or somewhat trust (Net Trust)...?

	HS or less	Coll.	Uni.
People in General	52%	56%	65%
Persons who share the same ethnic or cultural background	60%	66%	75%
Persons with different ethnic or cultural backgrounds	52%	57%	65%
My next door neighbour	66%	72%	74%

Slight variation in trust of people in general between those who very much trust persons with the same ethnic background versus those who trust persons with different ethnic backgrounds

People in general - When it comes to the following do you very much trust, somewhat trust, somewhat distrust, very much distrust or don't know/prefer not to answer?	Very much trust Persons who share the same ethnic or cultural background	Very much trust Persons with different ethnic or cultural background
Very much trust	24.6%	27.1%
Somewhat trust	50.7%	51.2%
Somewhat distrust	21.7%	15.5%
Very much distrust	2.2%	3.9%
I don't know/I prefer not to answer	0.7%	2.3%
Total	100.0%	100.0%

Persons who very much trust those who share the same ethnic background are also most likely to very much trust persons with different ethnic backgrounds

Persons with different ethnic or cultural backgrounds - When it comes to the following do you very much trust, somewhat trust, somewhat distrust, very much distrust or don't know/prefer not to answer?	Persons who share the same ethnic or cultural background - When it comes to the following do you very much trust, somewhat trust, somewhat distrust, very much distrust or don't know/prefer not to answer?			
	Very much trust	Somewhat trust	Somewhat distrust	Very much distrust
Very much trust	50.7%	4.5%	2.6%	5.7%
Somewhat trust	30.9%	66.0%	34.2%	11.4%
Somewhat distrust	10.3%	17.7%	44.6%	25.7%
Very much distrust	5.9%	3.9%	10.9%	51.4%
I don't know/I prefer not to answer	2.2%	7.9%	7.8%	5.7%
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%