

CANADIAN
MILLENNIAL
VIEWS ON ASIA

**2017
NATIONAL
OPINION
POLL**



ASIA PACIFIC
FOUNDATION
OF CANADA

FONDATION
ASIE PACIFIQUE
DU CANADA





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METHODOLOGY



SURVEY

The Asia Pacific Foundation of Canada (APF Canada) commissioned EKOS Research Associates to conduct a survey of 1,527 Canadian adults (18+). The survey oversampled respondents in the age group 18–24 to ensure adequate responses from this group for a detailed analysis.

The survey was conducted from September 18 to October 1, 2017. The margin of error—which measures sampling variability—is +/- 2.51% for the entire sample. The median completion time for the survey was 10 minutes. The results have been statistically weighted by EKOS according to the current census data on age, gender, and region to ensure that the sample is representative of the entire adult population of Canada. Discrepancies in or between totals are due to rounding.

SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEWS


The survey was supplemented by semi-structured interviews of 22 millennials (ages 18–34 as of 2017) conducted by APF Canada between August 17 and September 27, 2017. Participants were recruited on a voluntary basis. Selected verbatim statements from interviews are presented in this report to provide in-depth insights into how millennials' perceptions are shaped by various factors.



DEFINING MILLENNIALS

Millennials are frequently defined as a group who grow up with digital technology and have different values and a different way of life from older generations. This generation is often treated as a single group. This study focuses on adult millennials—those born between 1983 and 1999 (now aged 18–34). However, further analysis shows that significant intergenerational differences exist within the millennial generation in terms of their views on Asia. Thus, the study distinguishes between two subgroups: younger millennials (18–24) and older millennials (25–34). All other age groups (35+) are collapsed into a reference group.

We are mindful that setting hard chronological boundaries between the generations entails an element of false precision and that many attitudinal differences we observe among these groups could be due to age differences or cohort differences. Nevertheless, we believe the data indicates that there are sufficient differences between groups to merit distinguishing between younger millennials, older millennials, and Canadians aged 35 and above (Canadians 35+).





EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



MILLENNIALS (THOSE AGED 18 TO 34) are the first generation of Canadians to come of age during a time when the “rise of Asia” has moved from being a future possibility to a present reality. As Canada considers its engagement with this important region of the world, it is the millennials who will play a key role in shaping its form and scope. Understanding their attitudes and the factors driving their perceptions is central to projecting the likely trajectory of Canada-Asia relations.

This survey provides initial insights into this issue by probing whether the millennial generations’ views on Asia are changing along with shifts in global power and whether their views are departing in any way from the views of older generations. It further examines whether there is a desire among members of the millennial generation to become more informed about this vital region.

The National Opinion Poll finds:

- Canadian millennials are not a homogeneous group in terms of their views on Asia. Rather, distinct views are held by younger millennials (18–24) and older millennials (25–34).
- Millennials are more positive about Asia in general and more engaged with Asia than Canadians 35+.
- Generations differ in how well informed they are and what information sources they use to learn about Asia.

The poll distinguishes between three age groups: the younger millennials (18–24), the older millennials (25–34), and Canadians 35+. These are also described as “the learning generation,” “the engaged generation,” and “the skeptical generation” based on their views on Asia.

THE LEARNING GENERATION: Millennials aged 18–24 are a group of young people whose opinions about Asia are still forming. They are globally minded on foreign relations issues. They have the least-informed perspectives about Asia and are the least knowledgeable about it. But they are the most Asian-language competent, are more engaged with Asia, and show strong interest in learning more about Asia, particularly Asian languages (they are less interested in politics). Their knowledge about Asia mostly come from social media. Yet their perceptions of Asia are less likely to be influenced by the mass media compared with older generations.

THE ENGAGED GENERATION: Millennials aged 25–34 share some similarities with the younger millennials but also show their own characteristics. They are globally minded on foreign relations issues as well. They have established their own opinions about Asia, are the most familiar with Asia, and are more engaged with Asia. They show the strongest interest in learning about Asia, particularly in language, business, and politics. Websites (e.g., online newspapers, magazines, and blogs) are their main sources of information about Asia. They are well informed about Asia, with perceptions that are less influenced by the mass media.

THE SKEPTICAL GENERATION: Canadians 35+ have the least favourable views of Asia and are more value centric on foreign relations issues. They are mostly disengaged from Asia, with perceptions largely influenced by mass media in a negative way. Traditional media is their dominant source of information about Asia. They are fairly knowledgeable about Asia and show moderate interest in learning about it.



ABOUT THE ASIA PACIFIC FOUNDATION OF CANADA



THE ASIA PACIFIC FOUNDATION OF CANADA is dedicated to strengthening ties between Canada and Asia with a focus on expanding economic relations through trade, investment, and innovation; promoting Canada's expertise in offering solutions to Asia's climate change, energy, food security, and natural resource management challenges; building Asia skills and competencies among Canadians, including young Canadians; and improving Canadians' general understanding of Asia and its growing global influence.

The Foundation is well known for its annual national opinion polls of Canadian attitudes regarding relations with Asia, including Asian foreign investment in Canada and Canada's trade with Asia. The Foundation places an emphasis on China, India, Japan, and South Korea, while also developing expertise in emerging markets in the region, particularly economies within ASEAN.

Visit APF Canada at www.asiapacific.ca.



ABOUT THE NATIONAL OPINION POLL



SINCE 2004, THE ASIA PACIFIC FOUNDATION OF CANADA has been conducting regular nation-wide surveys to assess Canadians' attitudes toward countries in the Asia Pacific, and their perceptions of Canada-Asia relations. Unique in its construction and its objectives, the Foundation's National Opinion Poll has been instrumental in drawing a portrait of Canadians' perspectives on Asia and the region's increasing relevance to Canada's prosperity. With a representative sample of 1,527 Canadians, the second thematic National Opinion Poll of 2017 serves as a valuable source of information on Canadian millennial attitudes toward Asia as opposed to those of Canadians 35+.



SURVEY RESULTS



THE FOLLOWING SURVEY assesses generational differences on Canadian perceptions of Asia, with a special attention to millennials. Overall, we find that the learning generation (18–24), the engaged generation (25–34), and the skeptical generation (35+) differ in how they view Asia, how they see Canada-Asia foreign policy, how well informed they are, and where they get information about Asia.

SECTION 1

OVERALL FEELINGS ON ASIA

Canadians have a China-centric mental image of Asia.

Nearly 7 in 10 Canadians think of China when hearing the word “Asia,” with Japan (10%) and India (5%) standing at a distant second and third place. This China-centric mental image of Asia is shared by millennials and older generations.

China dominates Canadians’ mental image of Asia



Base: All respondents: (n = 1,527); Millennials 18-24: (n = 459); Millennials 25-34: (n = 197); 35+: (n = 871)

Q1: When you hear the word "Asia", what is the first country or territory you think of?

Top countries people think of when hearing the word “Asia”

Millennials 18–24	Millennials 25–34	35+	Total
China 61%	China 74%	China 72%	China 69%
Japan 11%	Japan 8%	Japan 9%	Japan 10%
India 8%	India 3%	India 5%	India 5%
Philippines 2%	Russia 2%	Thailand 2%	Thailand 2%
Thailand 2%	Hong Kong 1%	Vietnam 1%	Vietnam 1%

Base: All respondents: (n = 1,527); Millennials 18-24: (n = 459); Millennials 25-34: (n = 197); 35+: (n = 871)

Q1: When you hear the word "Asia," what is the first country or territory you think of?

MILLENNIALS' VOICES • Interview participants often cite the scale of population or territory of China as well as its global influence on the world economy as reasons why they think of China. Chinese culture is also perceived by some as representative of Asian culture. Moreover, the Chinese diaspora and media coverage are also mentioned as reminders of China.

“I think what made me think of China ... was how influential it is as a country both in a political and economic manner. As well as the fact that it is such a large country and such a large population with something like 20% of the world’s population being Chinese. Furthermore, living in Vancouver, specifically in Richmond, there is a large Chinese influence, and so it is naturally one of the first countries that pops into my head.”

FEMALE, AGE 25–29, SELF-IDENTIFIED ASIAN

“[What made you think of China?] Political clout and power, economic might and size, size of Chinese diaspora in Canada, and this country’s influence in Canada. Presence in the media.”

MALE, AGE 25–29, SELF-IDENTIFIED NON-ASIAN

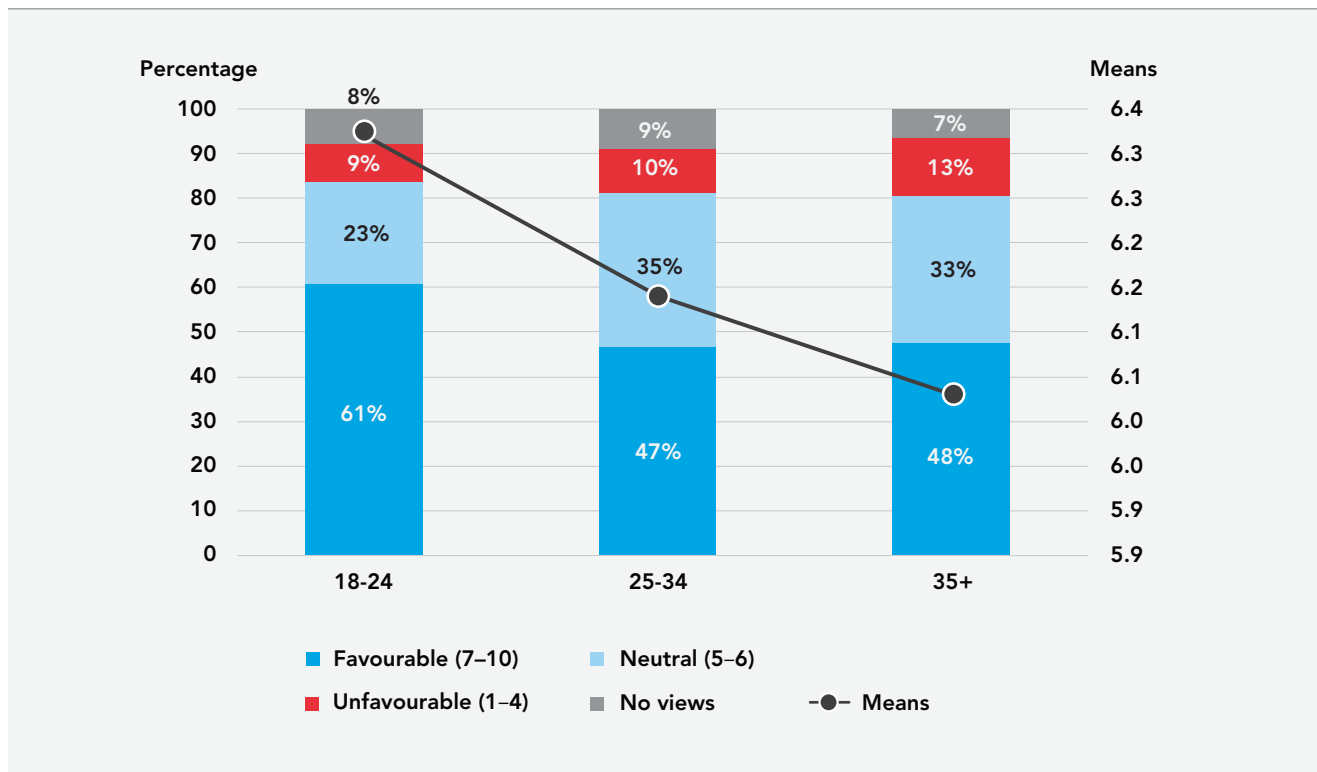
“India is another populous country, but ... I tend to think about India more as European-like or American-like just because of its languages and culture in general. China is pretty representative of the culture and people that we are thinking about here. South Korea and Japan definitely have influences, but they are much smaller. Don’t even think about them.”

FEMALE, AGE 18–24, SELF-IDENTIFIED ASIAN

The learning generation (18–24) has more positive feelings toward Asia than other generations.

Overall, Canadians have mixed feelings about Asia. Forty-nine percent express favourable feelings to Asia in general whereas another 44% express neutral or unfavourable feelings. Within the population, the learning generation (18–24) feels most positive toward Asia: 61% express favourable feelings toward Asia, as opposed to 47% for the engaged generation (25–34) and 48% for the skeptical generation (35+). The skeptical generation also has the most unfavourable ratings (13%) of Asia.

Millennials feel more favourable about Asia



Base: All respondents: (n = 1,527); Millennials 18-24: (n = 459); Millennials 25-34: (n = 197); 35+: (n = 871)

Q2: Please rate your feelings toward Asia in general, with 10 meaning you have a “very warm, favourable” feeling and 1 meaning you have a “very cold, unfavourable” feeling.

MILLENNIALS' VOICES • Interview participants attribute their positive feelings about Asia to various factors. Some recognize the economic opportunities embraced by Asia:

“Generally [I have] positive attitudes towards Asia and the potential partnerships for Canada with countries of the region. Economic opportunities for Canadians in Asia are vast and cooperation with growing economies of the region especially China, India, but also with established Canadian partners like Japan and South Korea are good for Canadians. Asia is and will continue to be a significant and growing influencer in Canada. And generally speaking, immigration from Asia has contributed to Canada in a positive way.”

FEMALE, AGE 25–34, SELF-IDENTIFIED ASIAN

Some see the dynamics and diversity of economy, culture, history, and politics in Asia:

“I feel interested in Asia. I love the diversity in cultures throughout Asia and find it an intriguing place to discuss and travel to.” — FEMALE, AGE 25–34, SELF-IDENTIFIED ASIAN

“Asia as a whole is so incredibly big and diverse that I don’t have any one feeling towards all of it. East Asia and India are economically fascinating. From Japan’s embrace of western-style democracy and capitalism to Bhutan’s wholesale rejection of capitalism with almost everything in between when looking at China, India, Vietnam, Cambodia, etc. I see Asia as a place of great cultural wealth, often sordid histories, and brimming with potential, with many cases of great success.” — MALE, AGE 18–24, SELF-IDENTIFIED NON-ASIAN

Some appreciate specific characteristics that they attribute to Asian populations:

“... Their ability to adapt: I think that’s one of the key elements that I really respect about almost every Asian nation that I’ve come in contact with. Because western societies are so individual, whereas the people that I’ve met from Asia and what I’ve learnt from them is their ability to adapt to difference and change, much more progressive than perhaps people stereotype.” — FEMALE, AGE 18–24, SELF-IDENTIFIED NON-ASIAN

Negative feelings toward Asia arise from perceptions of over-paced development and regional insecurity.

“I’ve spent a cumulative six months in South/Southeast Asia and loved it. It is a great place to travel as it is cheap, the culture is interesting, and the people are friendly. However, I also saw a lot of poverty that is a hard reality to face.”

FEMALE, 18–24, SELF-IDENTIFIED NON-ASIAN

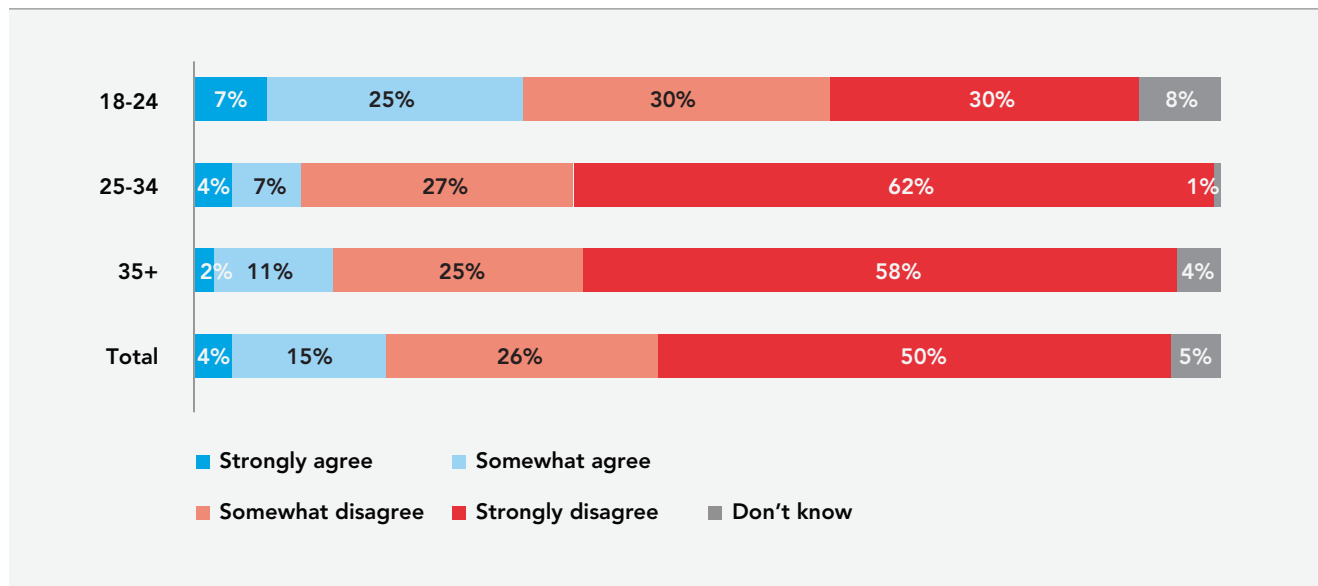
“I think Asia is currently conflicted. This is primarily because of the rate of modernization, which by western standards has been very fast. In addition, territorial disputes crop up now and again. I think it is an area that has suffered greatly in the past hundred years or so....”

MALE, 25–34, SELF-IDENTIFIED NON-ASIAN

While Canadians as a whole recognize that Asia is not monolithic, the learning generation (18–24) is more likely than their elders to perceive Asia as a single entity.

Canadians as a whole have a strong sense that Asian countries are dissimilar culturally, economically, and politically. Seventy-six percent of Canadians disagree with the statement that “All Asian countries are similar culturally,” 80% disagree that “All Asian countries are similar economically,” and 83% disagree that “All Asian countries are similar politically.” However, when separated out, the learning generation (18–24) is more likely to perceive Asia as a single entity with similar culture (32%), economy (28%), and politics (21%).

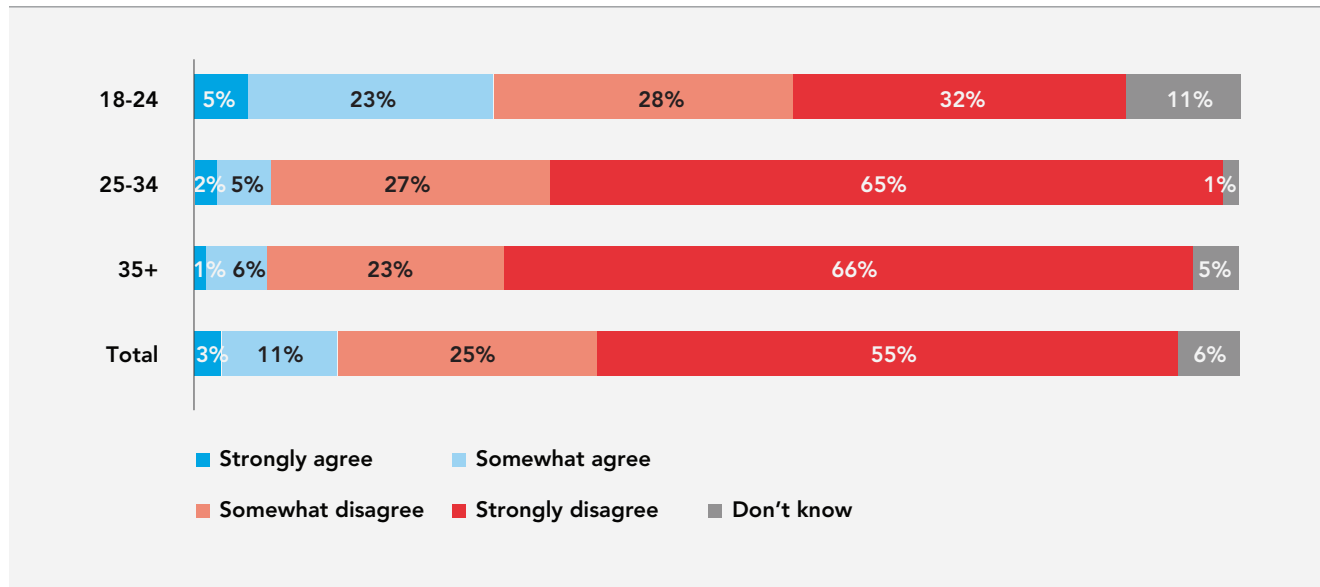
The learning generation (18–24) is more likely to see Asia as similar culturally



Base: All respondents: (n = 1,527); Millennials 18-24: (n = 459); Millennials 25-34: (n = 197); 35+: (n = 871)

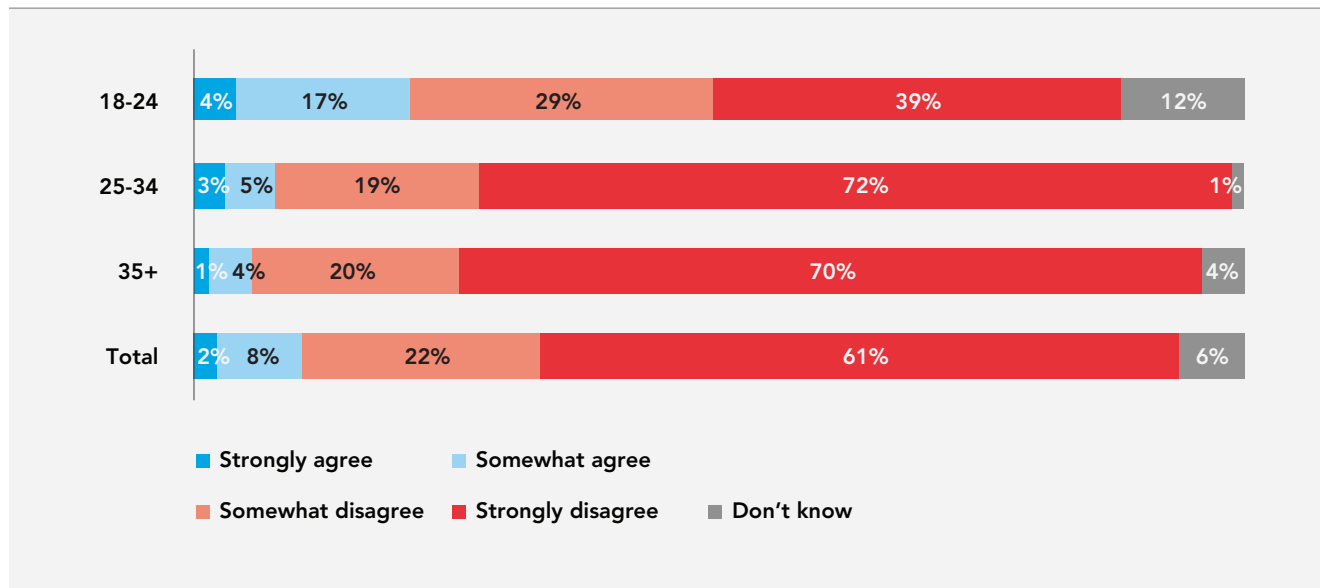
Q3A: Do you agree or disagree: All Asian countries are similar culturally?

The learning generation (18–24) is more likely to see Asia as similar economically



Base: All respondents: (n = 1,527); Millennials 18-24: (n = 459); Millennials 25-34: (n = 197); 35+: (n = 871)
 Q3B: Do you agree or disagree: All Asian countries are similar economically?

The learning generation (18–24) is more likely to see Asia as similar politically



Base: All respondents: (n = 1,527); Millennials 18-24: (n = 459); Millennials 25-34: (n = 197); 35+: (n = 871)
 Q3C: Do you agree or disagree: All Asian countries are similar politically?

MILLENNIALS' VOICES • The engaged generation (25–34) tends to see the great diversity within Asia.

“Though I think that Asia is so diverse, it does stand out to me when people lump so many countries under one name. For example, having worked in South Korea and India but also having travelled a little bit throughout Southeast Asia, I truly think of each country individually. Yet, many people who haven’t travelled there or don’t know much about the geography or [number] of countries in Asia (many westerners in my experience—and I’ve been guilty of this before too) tend to just lump them all together because it’s easier. I don’t feel like it’s always fair to categorize all of these extremely different countries under one name.” — FEMALE, AGE 25–34, SELF-IDENTIFIED ASIAN

SECTION 2

FEELINGS ON THE GOVERNMENT, PEOPLE, AND INTERNATIONAL ORDER OF ASIAN COUNTRIES

WHILE ALL THREE GENERATIONS view the government, people, and international order of different countries through a similar lens, the views of millennials, especially the learning generation's (18–24) views, stand out in several ways.

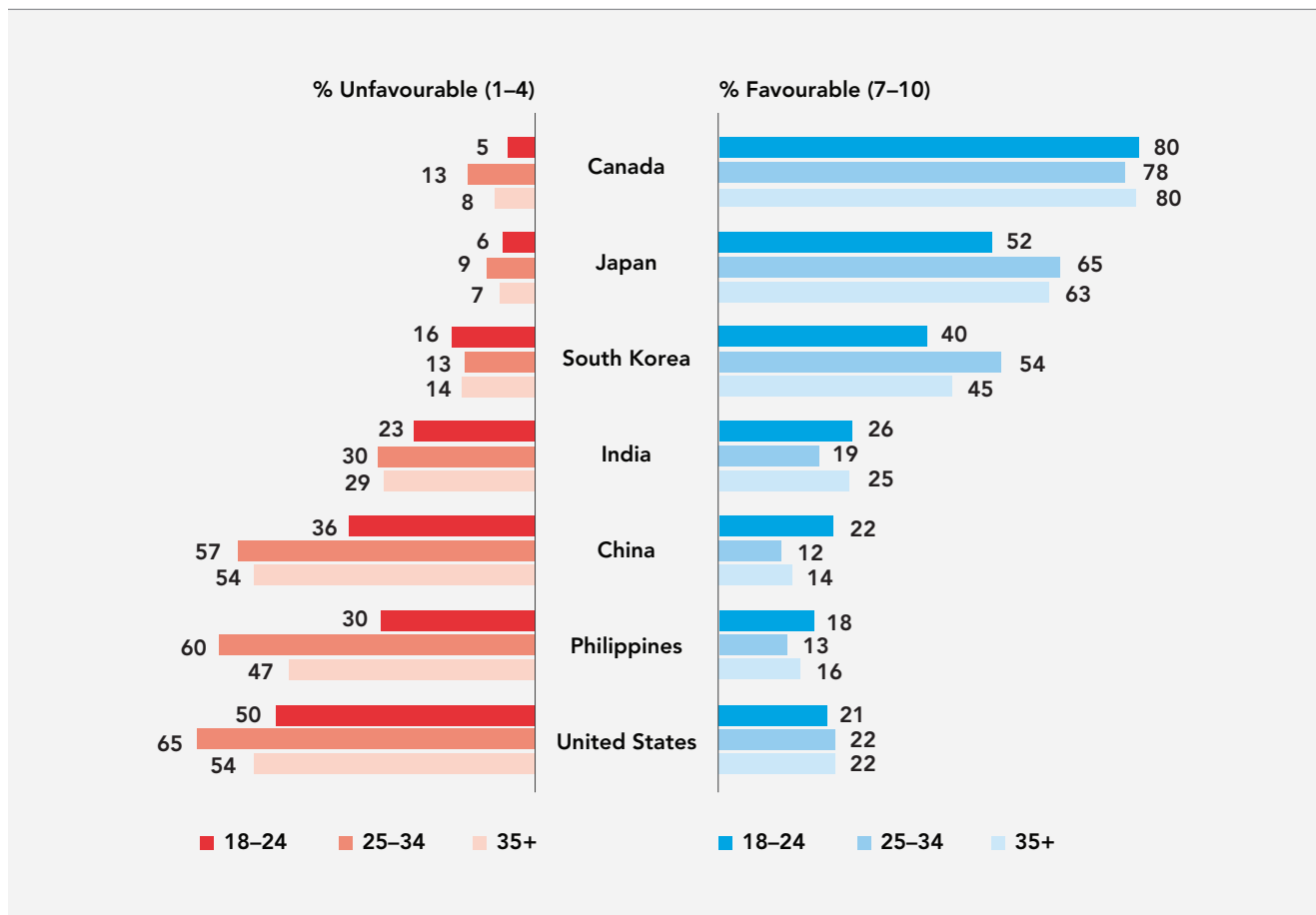
1. The learning generation (18–24) is more positive about the governments of China, the Philippines, India, and the U.S. than their elders are.
2. Compared with the skeptical generation (35+), the learning generation (18–24) holds less favourable views of people in Asian countries, while the engaged generation (25–34) has more favourable views.
3. The learning generation (18–24) has more diverse views of Asian populations than other generations.
4. The learning generation (18–24) tends to be less informed about Asia when compared to older generations.

Canadians across all generations favour the governments of Japan and South Korea over the governments of India, China, the Philippines, and the U.S.; the learning generation (18–24) tends to be the least critical.

All three generations have higher ratings for the governments of Canada, Japan, and South Korea than the governments of India, China, the Philippines, and the U.S. Survey respondents associate words like “well functioning” with the Japanese government and “democratic” with the Korean government. In contrast, respondents tend to associate “authoritarian” with the governments of China and the Philippines, “corrupt” with the governments of India and the Philippines, “repressive” with the governments of China and the Philippines, and “dysfunctional” with the U.S. and Indian governments.

Some variation across generations is present, with the learning generation (18–24) rating the governments of India, China, and the Philippines more favourably and the engaged generation (25–34) viewing them less favourably, compared with the skeptical generation (35+). The learning generation is also more likely to use positive descriptors for the governments of these countries. For instance, they are more likely than other groups to label Chinese government with terms such as “democratic,” “respecting of rights,” and “accountable.”

Feelings on government of countries, by age groups

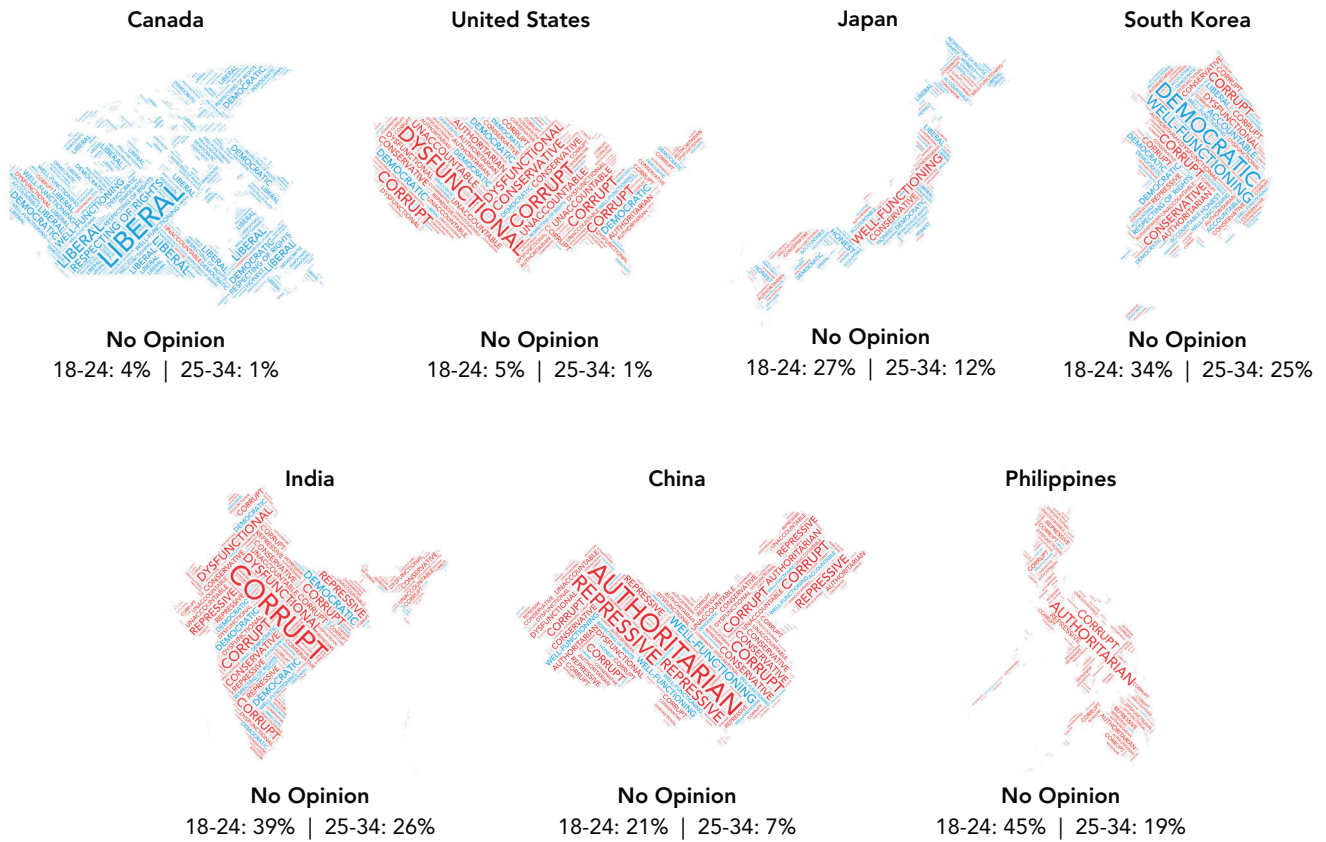


Base: All respondents: (n = 1,527); Millennials 18-24: (n = 459); Millennials 25-34: (n = 197); 35+: (n = 871)

Q5A: Please rate your feelings towards the government of the following countries, with 10 meaning a "very warm, favourable" feeling and 1 meaning a "very cold, unfavourable" feeling.

Note: Percentages of "Neutral (5-6)" and "No views" not shown.

Millennials view the governments of these countries as...



Base: Millennials 18-24: (n = 459); Millennials 25-34: (n = 197)

Q6A: Please select ONE word that best describes your impression of the following countries regarding their government.

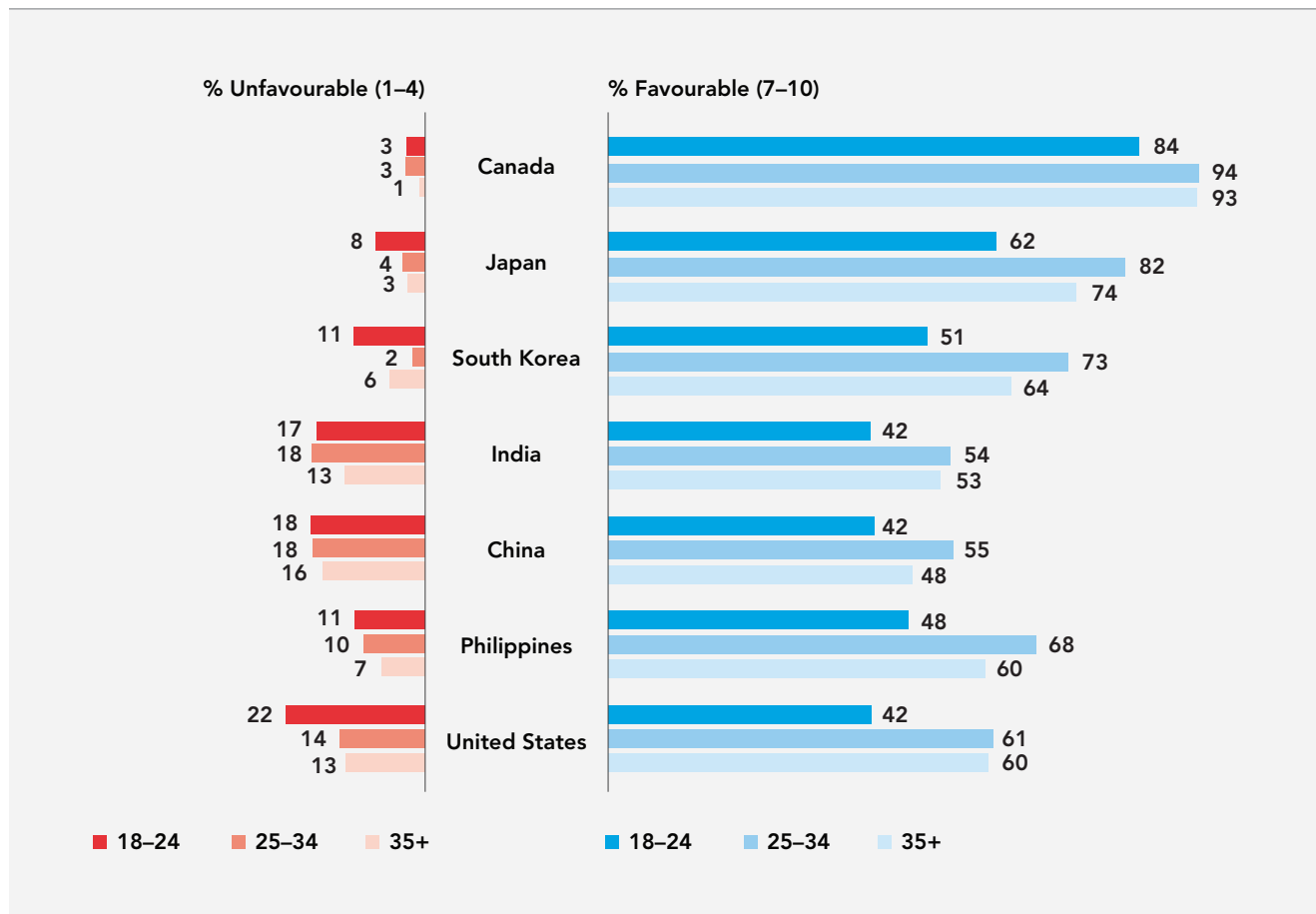
Terms to choose from: democratic, authoritarian, respecting of rights, repressive, corrupt, honest, accountable, unaccountable, dysfunctional, well-functioning, liberal, conservative.

Note: The relative size of a descriptive term indicates its frequency of response from the survey. Repetition of terms is used to fill the map and not associated with actual responses. Responses from 35+ are not shown.

Canadians as a whole tend to stereotype Asian people as being “hardworking” and “traditional.” However, the learning generation in contrast to their elders tends to be less prone to such characterizations.

In general, Canadians have more favourable feelings toward people of countries than toward their governments. Particularly noteworthy are attitudes toward the U.S. (government 22% favourable, people 59% favourable) and toward China (government 15%, people 49%). There is not much intergenerational difference in attitudes toward people, although the engaged generation (25–34) is slightly more favourable than other generations to people from Japan, South Korea, and India.

Feelings on people from countries, by age groups



Base: All respondents: (n = 1,527); Millennials 18-24: (n = 459); Millennials 25-34: (n = 197); 35+: (n = 871)

Q5B: Please rate your feelings toward the people of the following countries, with 10 meaning a “very warm, favourable” feeling and 1 meaning a “very cold, unfavourable” feeling.

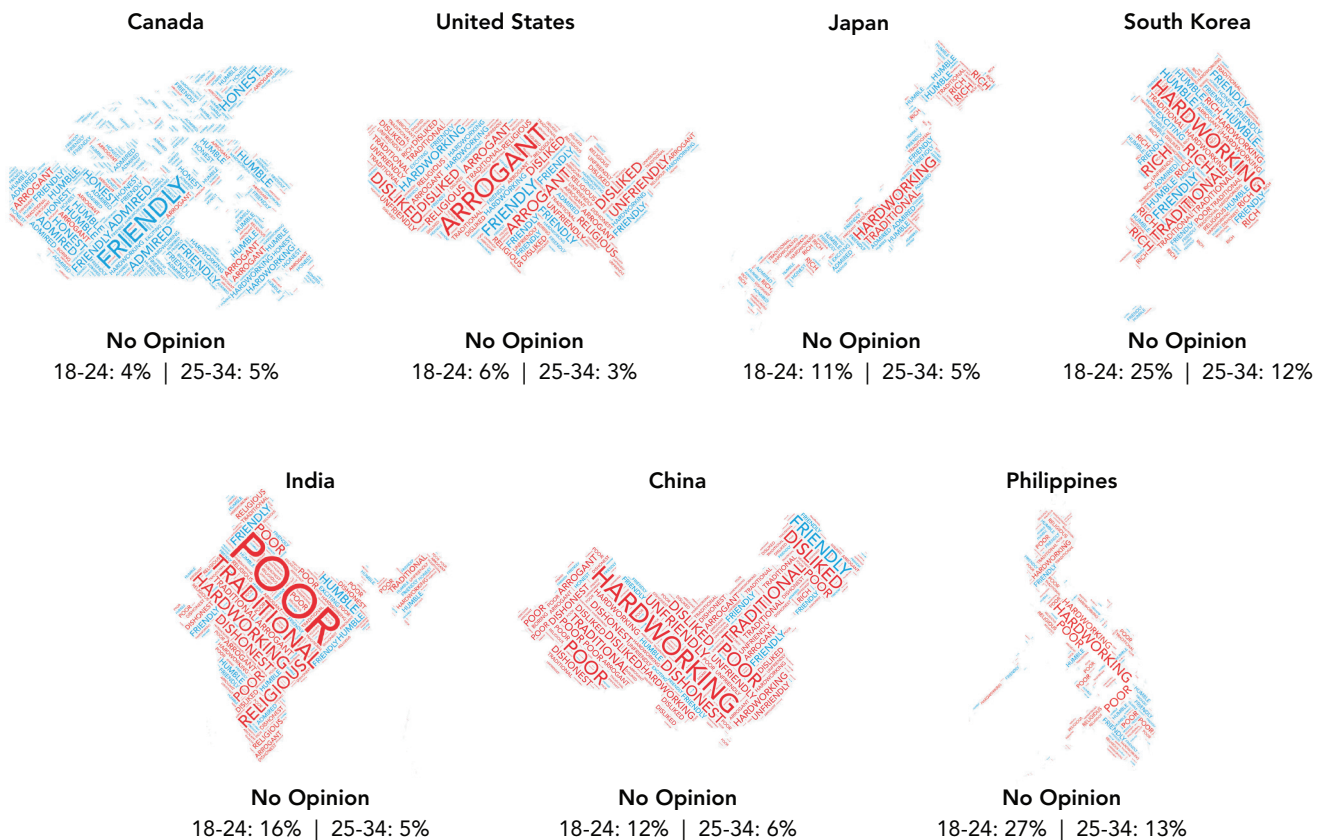
Note: Percentages of “Neutral (5-6)” and “No views” not shown.

Canadians as a whole are prone to stereotyping Asian people, especially the Japanese, Chinese, and South Koreans, as “hardworking” and “traditional.” Filipinos and Indians are also characterized as being “poor.”

However, the learning generation (18–24) tends to have a more wide-ranging view of Asian people: they are more likely than older generations to use descriptors other than “traditional” and “hardworking.”

There is considerable intergenerational convergence among Canadians in their attitudes toward Americans, with the majority of Canadians associating the U.S. people with “arrogant” (45%) and “disliked” (11%).

Millennials view the people of these countries as...



Base: Millennials 18-24: (n = 459); Millennials 25-34: (n = 197)

Q6B: Please select ONE word that best describes your impression of the following countries regarding their people.

Terms to choose from: friendly, unfriendly, humble, arrogant, poor, rich, exciting, boring, honest, dishonest, admired, disliked, hardworking, religious, traditional.

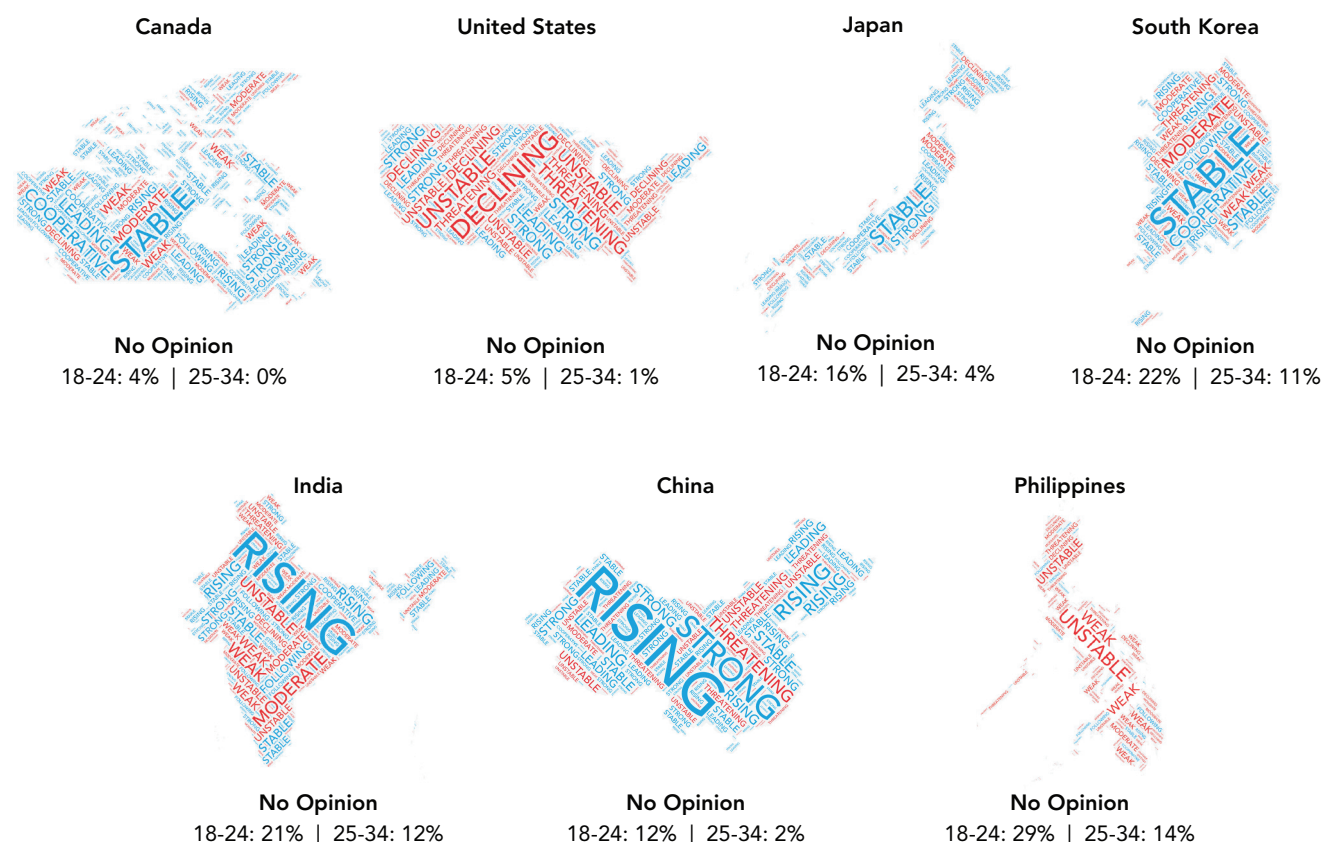
Note: The relative size of a descriptive term indicates its frequency of response from the survey. Repetition of terms is used to fill the map and not associated with actual responses. Responses from 35+ are not shown.

Millennials' perceptions of the international order of Asian countries do not diverge significantly from Canadians 35+.

Most Canadians perceive Canada's position in the world as being "stable" (18%), "cooperative" (17%), and "moderate" (14%). Millennials are also more likely to perceive Canada as being "strong" and "leading."

Top words used by the three generations to describe Asian countries are similar in general. They tend to be more positive for Japan ("stable," "strong"), China ("strong," "rising"), India ("rising"), and South Korea ("moderate," "stable") and less positive for the Philippines ("unstable" and "weak"). Views of the U.S. position in the world are largely negative: "declining" (30%), "unstable" (22%), and "threatening" (20%). This holds for all three generations.

Millennials view the international order of these countries as...



Base: Millennials 18-24: (n = 459); Millennials 25-34: (n = 197)

Q6C: Please select ONE word that best describes your impression of the following countries regarding their position in the world. Terms to choose from: stable, unstable, strong, weak, moderate, rising, declining, threatening, cooperative, leading, following.

Note: The relative size of a descriptive term indicates its frequency of response from the survey. Repetition of terms is used to fill the map and not associated with actual responses. Responses from 35+ are not shown.

The learning generation (18–24) is the least informed about Asia, whereas the engaged generation (25–34) has formed their own opinions.

There is a sizable proportion of younger millennials (18–24) who have not formed an opinion about Asian countries—a significantly larger proportion of them indicate “no opinion” in response to questions on their attitudes to government, people, and international order. There are fewer undecided responses to these questions among older generations.



SECTION 3

FOREIGN POLICY ISSUES

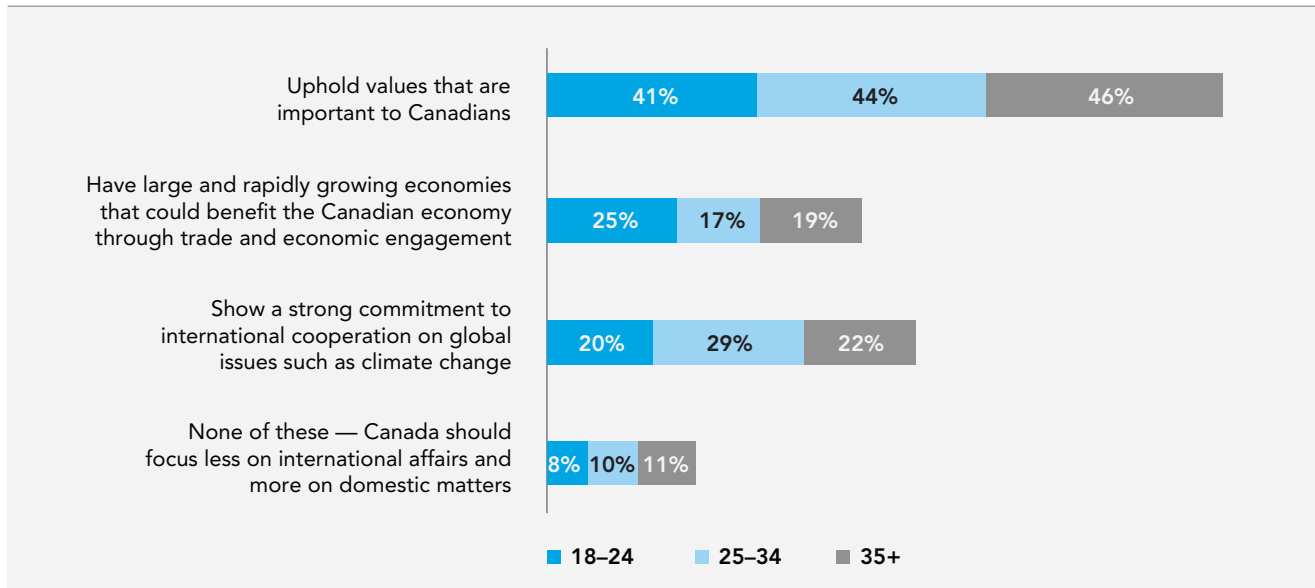


Millennials are less value-centric and more globally minded with respect to Canada's foreign relations than Canadians 35+.

On foreign policy issues, “values important to Canadians” are considered a standard to be used when deciding upon priority relationships with countries. Over 40% of all three generations agree with the statement that “Canada should prioritize relations with countries that uphold values important to Canadians, such as respect for human rights, democracy, the rule of law, and the rights of minorities.” The skeptical generation (35+) is the most value-centric, with 46% supporting the statement.

Compared to the skeptical generation (35+), the learning generation (18–24) is more likely to give priority to trade and economic engagement (25%) while the engaged generation (25–34) is more likely to take into account international cooperation on global issues (29%).

Millennials are more pragmatic in their approach to Canada's foreign relations



Base: All respondents: (n = 1,527); Millennials 18-24: (n = 459); Millennials 25-34: (n = 197); 35+: (n = 871)

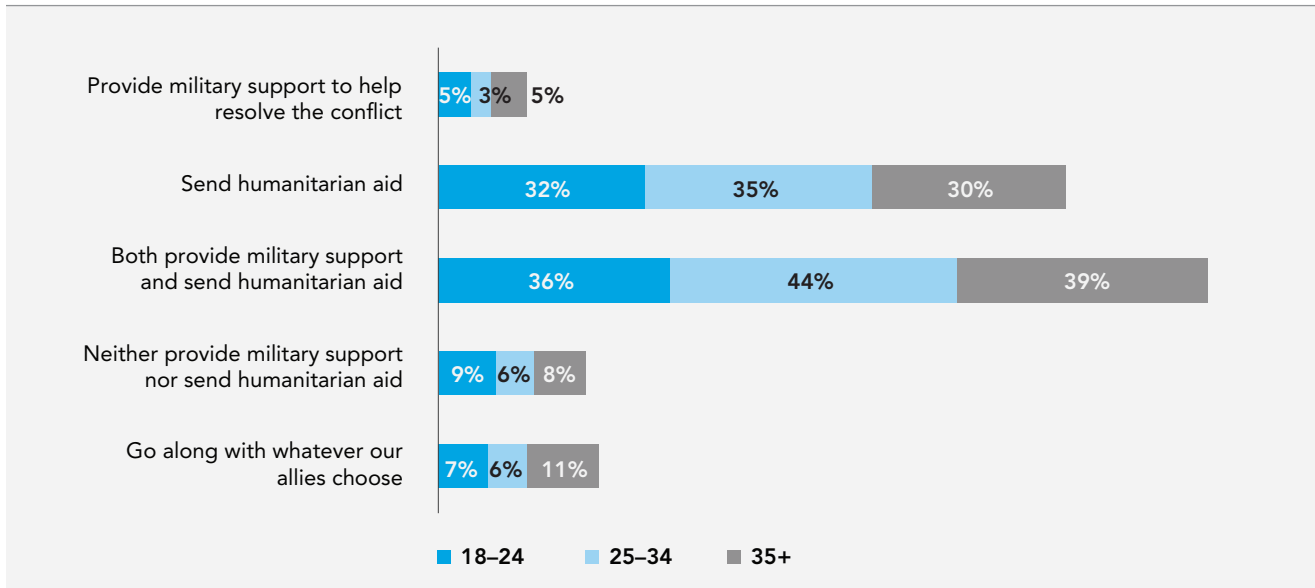
Q8: In your opinion, Canada should prioritize relationships with countries that meet which ONE of the following criteria (please choose the ONE that is most important to you).

Note: Percentages of "I don't know" not shown.

Humanitarian aid is seen by Canadians to be part of Canada's role in global security issues.

The majority of Canadians believe that Canada has a role to play in helping to address conflict on the Korean Peninsula. The largest percentage across all generations feel that military support and humanitarian aid should be offered. A smaller percentage feel that humanitarian aid alone would be sufficient.

Canada's role in security issues in the Korean Peninsula



Base: All respondents: (n = 1,527); Millennials 18-24: (n = 459); Millennials 25-34: (n = 197); 35+: (n = 871)

Q9: If a conflict broke out on the Korean Peninsula, what do you think Canada's response should be?

Note: Percentages of "I don't know" not shown.

SECTION 4

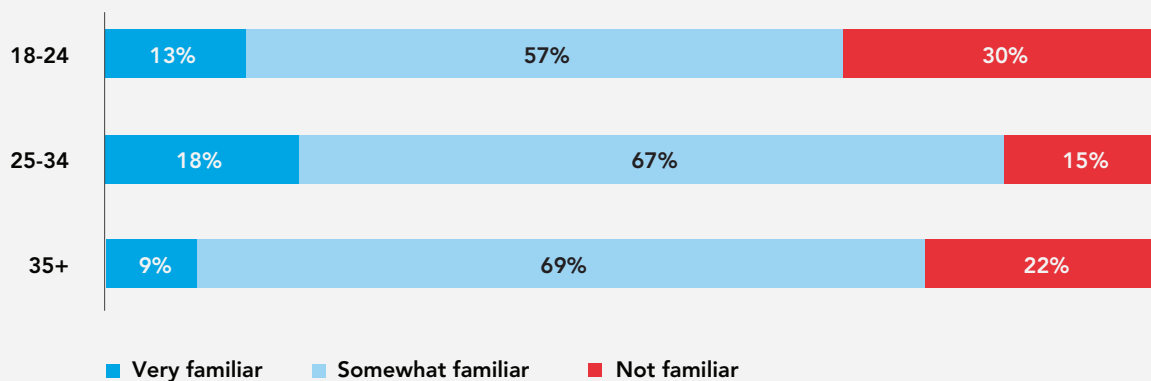
ASIA COMPETENCE

The learning generation (18–24) is the least knowledgeable about Asia but shows strong interest in learning about it; the engaged generation (25–34) is the most knowledgeable about Asia and has the strongest interest in learning more about the region.

Canadians believe that they have moderate levels of familiarity with Asia. Overall, 7 out of 10 Canadians believe they are somewhat or very familiar with Asia.

Across generations, the learning generation (18–24) has the lowest level of self-perceived knowledge about Asia—one-third indicate that they are not familiar with Asia as compared with 15% for the engaged generation (25–34) and 22% for the skeptical generation (35+). The engaged generation (25–34) claims to be most knowledgeable about Asia—18% feel they are very familiar with the region.

Generations differ in self-assessed knowledge about Asia

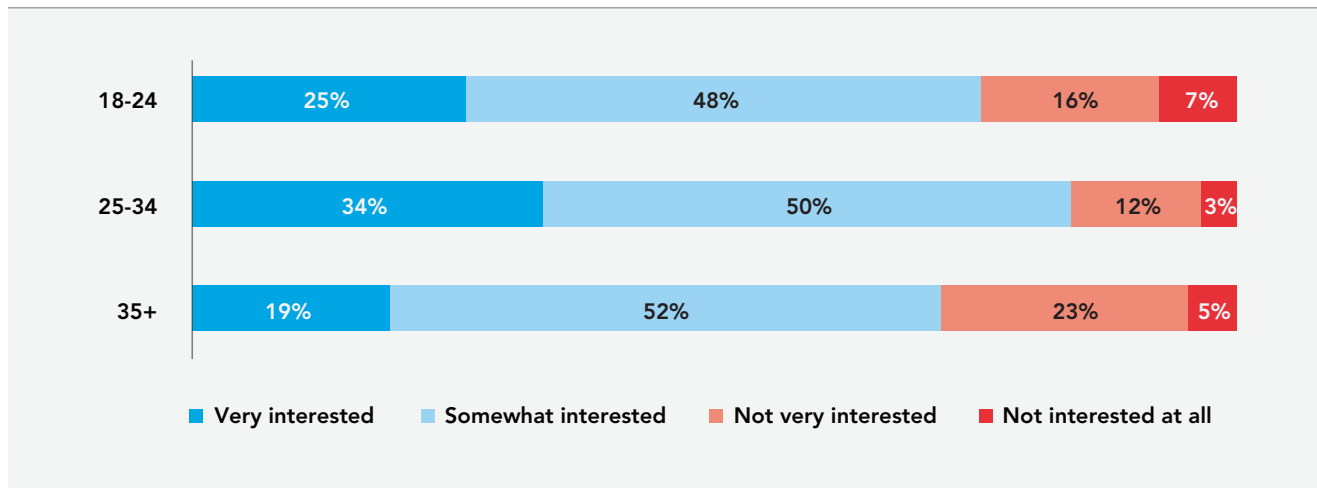


Base: All respondents: (n = 1,527); Millennials 18-24: (n = 459); Millennials 25-34: (n = 197); 35+: (n = 871)

Q4: Which of the following statements best describes your knowledge about Asia (I am very familiar with Asia; I am somewhat familiar with Asia; I am not familiar with Asia)?

There is a solid interest among Canadians in learning more about Asia. Across all generations, over 70% express some interest in Asia. This is particularly true for millennials: 34% of the engaged generation (25–34) and 26% of the learning generation (18–24) say they are very interested and willing to proactively learn about Asia as compared with 19% for the skeptical generation (35+).

Millennials are more interested in learning about Asia



Base: All respondents: (n = 1,527); Millennials 18-24: (n = 459); Millennials 25-34: (n = 197); 35+: (n = 871)

Q15: Would you say you are interested or not interested in learning more about Asia (e.g., its politics, society, people, culture, etc.)?

Note: Percentages of "Prefer not to respond" not shown.

The majority of those interested in Asia are mostly interested in the areas of culture (80%), history (70%), and society (68%). Compared with the skeptical generation (35+), millennials show a stronger interest in language and business. The learning generation (18–24) is less interested in politics (48%) and history (64%). The engaged generation is more interested in politics than the other two generations (74%).

Generations differ in areas of interest about Asia

Area of Interest	Millennials 18–24	Millennials 25–34	35+
Culture	79%	81%	80%
History	64%	78%	71%
Society	68%	68%	69%
Politics	48%	73%	63%
Geography	43%	54%	48%
Language	57%	46%	25%
Business	33%	47%	25%

Significantly more interested than the 35+

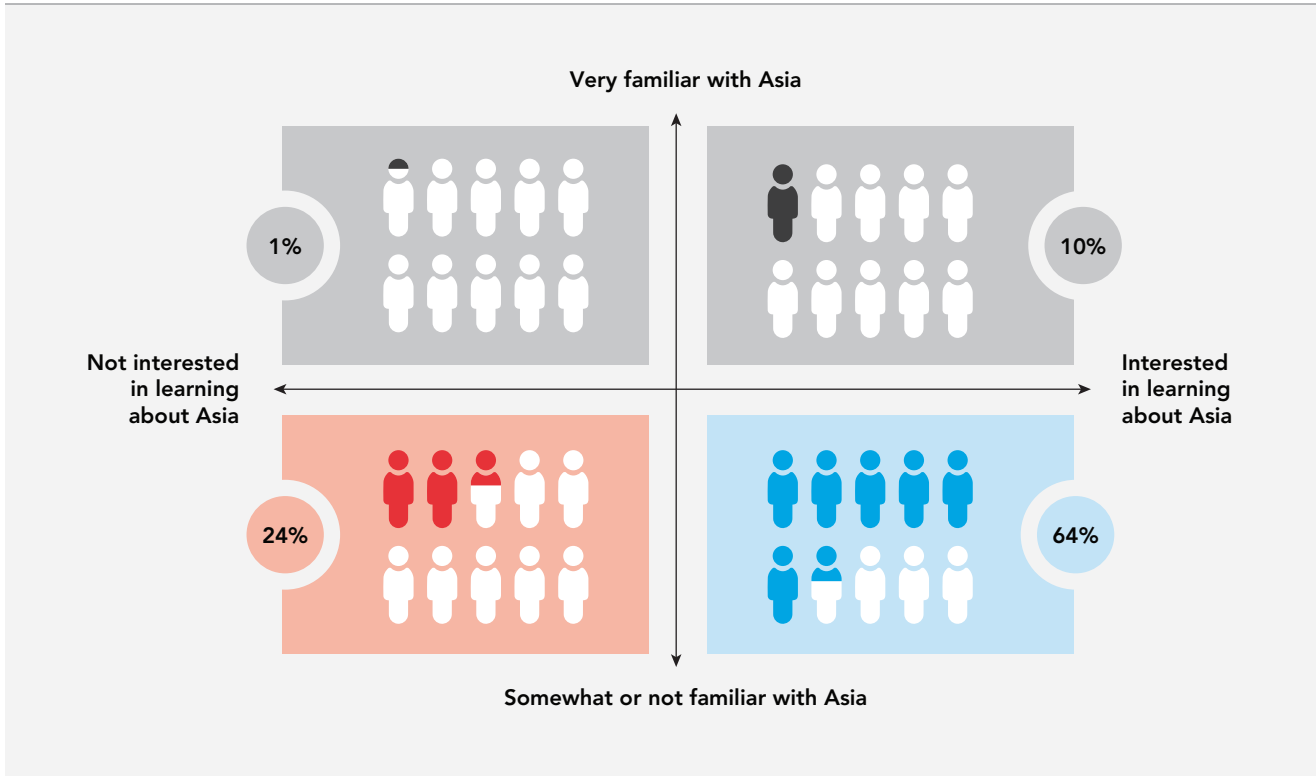
Significantly less interested than the 35+

Base: All respondents: (n = 1,108); Millennials 18-24: (n = 335); Millennials 25-34: (n = 164); 35+: (n = 615)

Q15A: In what area(s) are you interested in learning more about Asia?

By intersecting the levels of knowledge and interest, it is possible to identify four groups of Canadians: 64% are not very familiar with Asia but are interested in learning more about it; 24% are neither very familiar with Asia nor interested in learning about it; 10% are knowledgeable about Asia and would like to learn more; and the rest (1%) are very familiar with Asia but not interested in learning more.

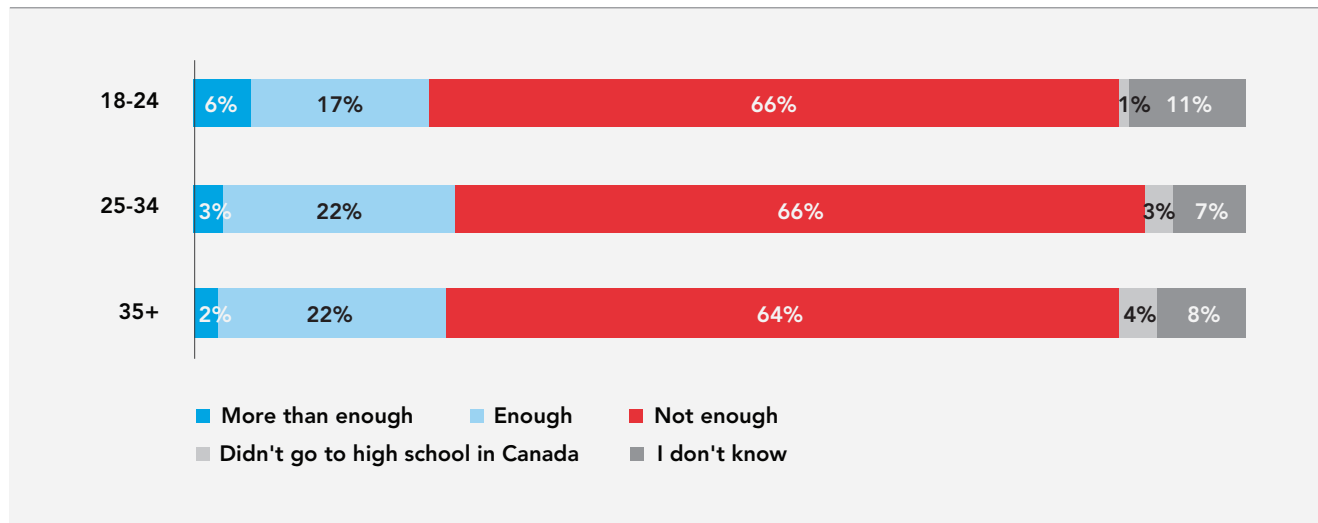
A knowledge gap about Asia exists among Canadians



Base: All respondents: (n = 1,527)
 Q4: Which of the following statements best describes your knowledge about Asia (I am very familiar with Asia; I am somewhat familiar with Asia; I am not familiar with Asia)?
 Q15: Would you say you are interested or not interested in learning more about Asia (e.g., its politics, society, people, culture, etc.)?
 Note: Percentages of "Prefer not to respond" not shown.

The 64% of Canadians who are not very familiar with Asia and yet interested in learning more suggest a significant desire to fill the Asia “knowledge gap” among Canadians. Similarly, over 60% for all generations feel that their high school education did not have enough Asia content.

All groups feel insufficient exposure to Asia in high school education



Base: All respondents: (n = 1,527); Millennials 18-24: (n = 459); Millennials 25-34: (n = 197); 35+: (n = 871)

Q14: In thinking about your high school education, do you think you had enough or not enough exposure to Asia (e.g., history, culture, geography, language, politics, etc.)

MILLENNIALS' VOICES • The lack of Asia content in high school courses is widely felt among interview participants:

“When I had my upper year high school classes, we actually talked about the Korean war and the Cambodian genocide ... But honestly, it was a bit pointless because we didn’t know anything else about the history of the countries we were talking about.... What is the purpose of learning just one major historical event if you don’t know the context in which it happened and you don’t know the culture in which it happened, and you don’t know anything else about it? We spent so much time, like two months, learning about WWII, and I have already learned that six times in my life. And I don’t need to hear it once again.”

FEMALE, AGE 18-24, SELF-IDENTIFIED NON-ASIAN

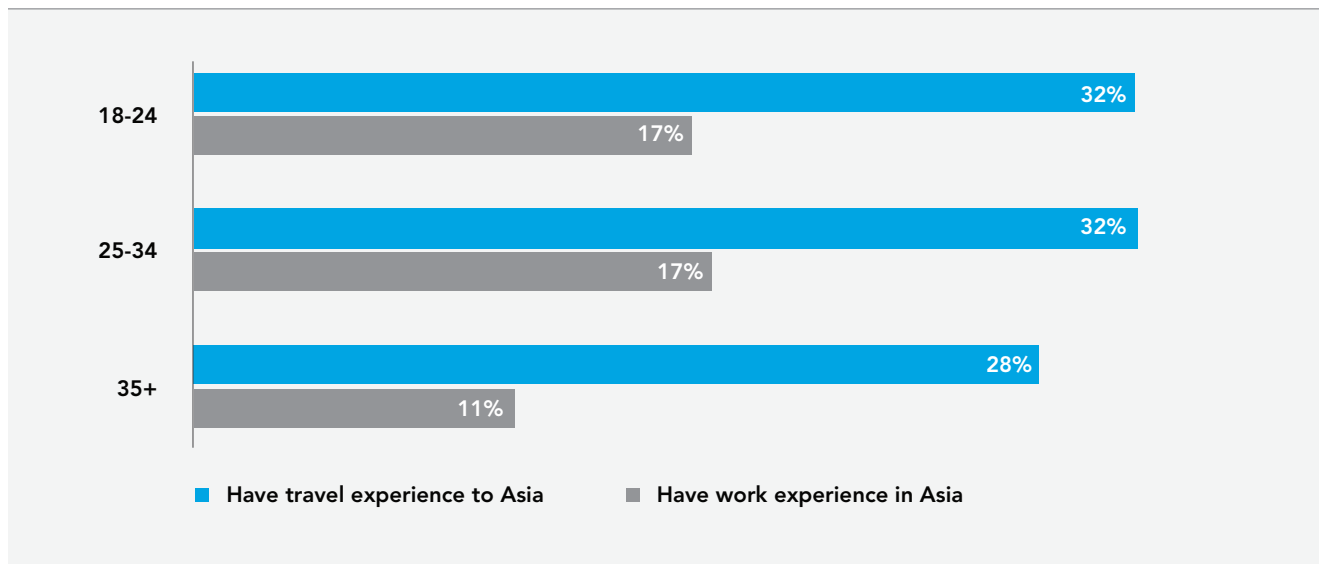
“... Something that I feel is lacking in our education system, at least is the acknowledgement or awareness of the fact that all these Asian countries have a rich history. When you think of mythological creatures, you think of Greek and Roman mythology. But no, there’s Hindu mythology, there’s Chinese mythology, there’s all these mythologies all over the world that

we never really hear often; and the same with the literature, the literature that goes back to countries where hundreds, thousands of years that we don't really have the access to in our public education. There needs to be more of that because I think it took for me to get into university to really understand there were these rich fairy tales, mythologies ... that existed and I didn't really know was around at all...." — MALE, AGE 18-24, SELF-IDENTIFIED ASIAN

Millennials are more involved with Asia through work, travel, language, and socialization, while the skeptical generation (35+) is less engaged.

Seventeen percent of millennials have been involved in work related to Asia over the past three years, as opposed to 11% for the skeptical generation (35+). Similarly, a larger percentage have visited Asia: more than one-third of millennials, as opposed to one-fourth for Canadians 35+, have travelled to Asia in the last decade.

Millennials have more work and travel experience in Asia



Base: All respondents: (n = 1,527); Millennials 18-24: (n = 459); Millennials 25-34: (n = 197); 35+: (n = 871)

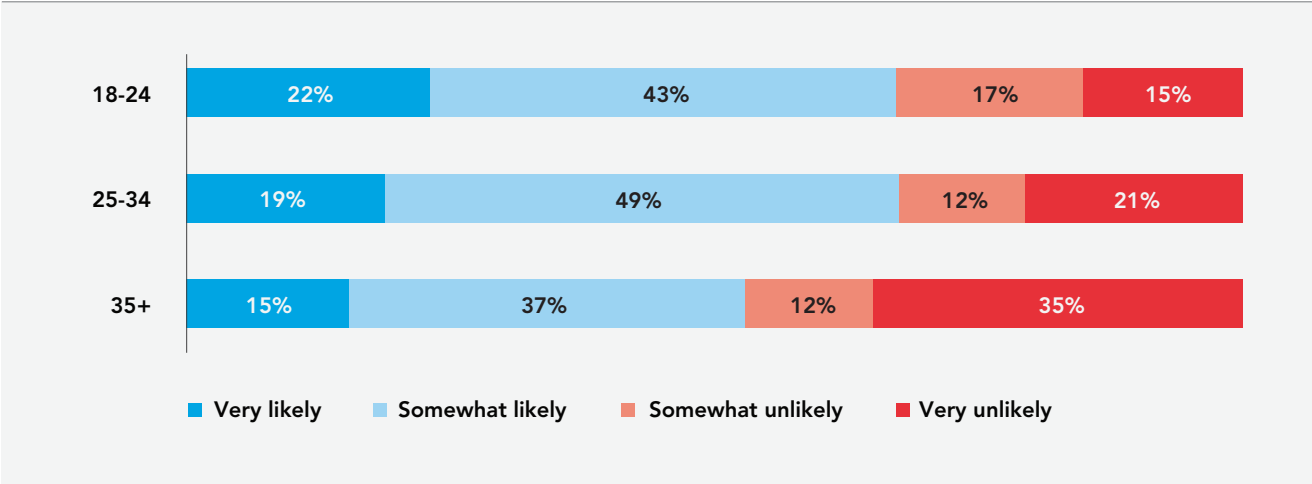
Q16: Over the past three years, were you involved in any work (e.g., professional work, voluntary experiences, research, etc.) related to Asia?

Q17: When was the last time you visited Asia for family, work, study, tourism, or other reasons?

Note: Percentages of having no work or travel experiences in Asia not shown.

Millennials are more willing to relocate to Asia for work than older generations. Sixty-five percent of the learning generation (18–24) and 67% of the engaged generation (25–34) are willing to work in Asia for career advancement, as compared with 53% for the skeptical generation (35+). This underscores millennials’ strong intention to engage Asia through life experience.

Millennials are more willing to relocate to Asia for work

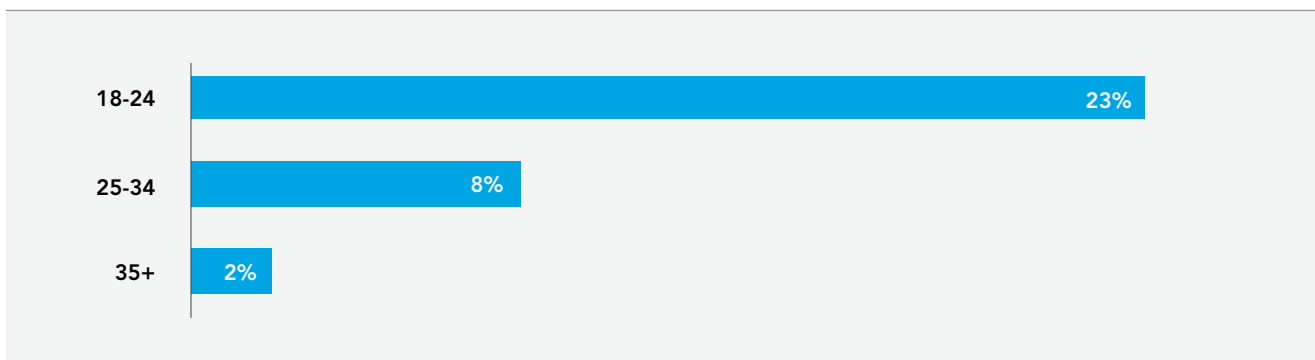


Base: All respondents: (n = 1,527); Millennials 18-24: (n = 459); Millennials 25-34: (n = 197); 35+: (n = 871)
 Q7: Imagine that you were offered a work opportunity in Asia that provides higher pay, strong potential for career advancement, and benefits like family support and housing assistance, as long as you are willing to relocate to Asia for one year. How likely or unlikely are you to accept the offer? (Very likely, I would not hesitate to accept the offer; Somewhat likely, I would seriously consider the offer; Somewhat unlikely, I would only take it if I had no better options; Very unlikely, I have no interest working in Asia).
 Note: Percentages of "Prefer not to respond" not shown.

Deeper engagement with Asia among the learning generation (18–24) is reflected in their higher level of Asian-language competence: 23% can speak an Asian language well enough to conduct a conversation. In contrast, only 8% of the engaged generation (25–34) and 2% of the skeptical generation (35+) can do so.

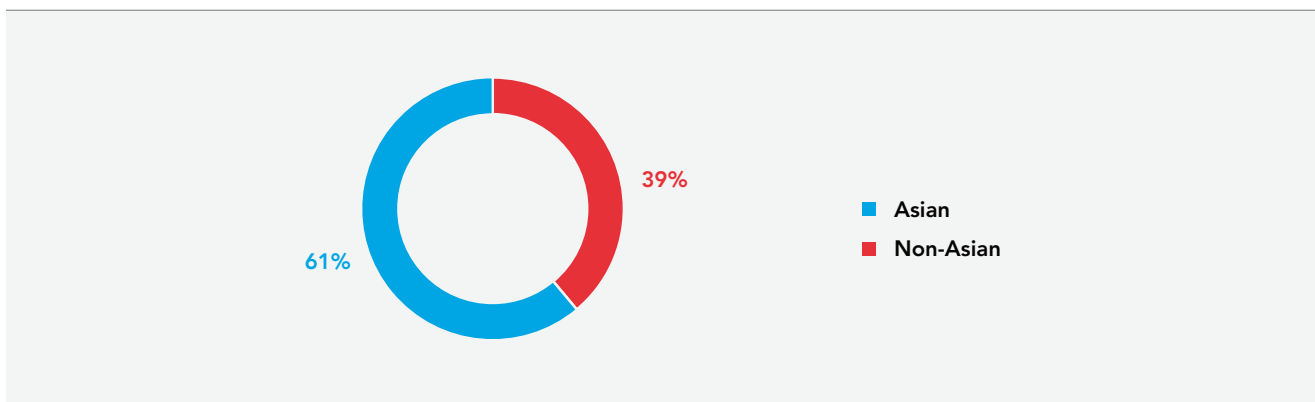
Unsurprisingly, Asian-language competence is strongly associated with ethnic identity. Specifically, among respondents stating that they speak at least one Asian language, 71% are self-identified Asians.

Asian-language speakers



Base: All respondents: (n = 1,527); Millennials 18-24: (n = 459); Millennials 25-34: (n = 197); 35+: (n = 871)
Q12: Can you speak an Asian language well enough to conduct a conversation?
Note: Percentages of non-Asian-language speakers not shown.

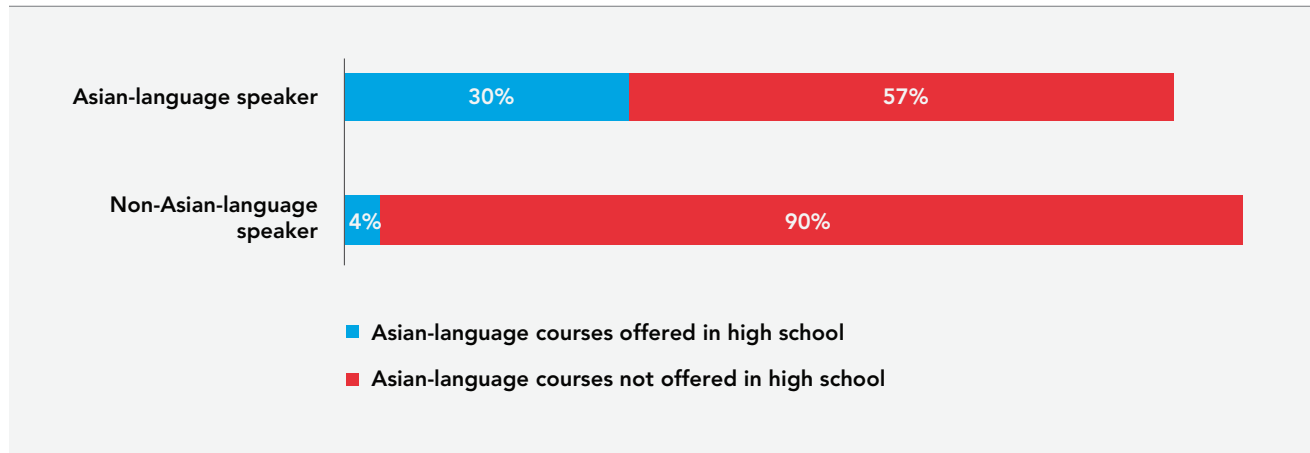
Most Asian-language speakers are self-identified Asian



Base: Asian-language speaker: (n = 75)
Q10: Do you identify yourself as ethnically Asian?
Q12: Can you speak an Asian language well enough to conduct a conversation?

Access to Asian-language courses in school factors into Canadians' Asian-language competence. In general, a significantly higher proportion (30%) of Asian-language speakers attended high schools where Asian-language courses were available, whereas virtually all non-Asian-language speakers (90%) indicated that their high schools did not offer these language courses.

Asian-language speakers tend to attend high schools that offered Asian language courses



Base: Asian-language speakers: (n = 75); Non-Asian-language speakers: (n=1,429)

Q12: Can you speak an Asian language well enough to conduct a conversation?

Q13: Did your high school offer Asian-language courses?

Note: Percentages of "I didn't attend high school in Canada" and "Prefer not to respond" not shown.

MILLENNIALS' VOICES • First-hand life experiences in Asia deepen people's understanding of the region and sometimes change pre-existing perceptions.

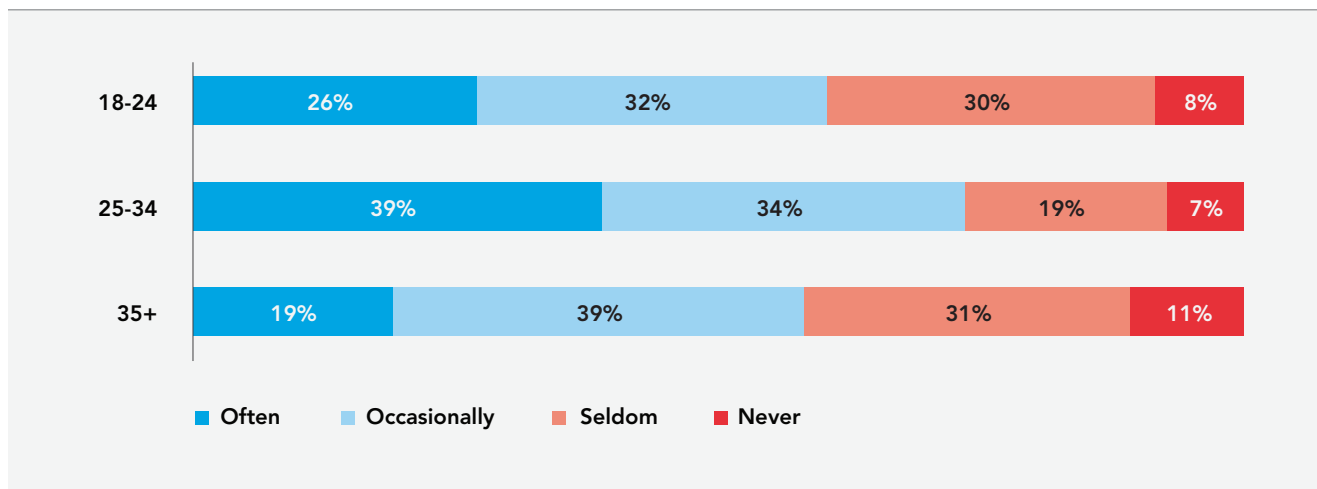
"... Another thing that has changed my perception a lot is I spent 10 days in Indonesia, and then I met someone who had a friend there. So her friend took me around Indonesia. And you think that Indonesia has the largest population of Muslims in the world. So before I went there, I thought they are really conservative—very, very religious. And when I got there, my friends were talking about relationships and dating, and [they were] more open to that than actual Singaporeans were, which I was very surprised about—the kind of freedom.... I think that has really shaped my idea of Asians being more complex than they first appeared." — FEMALE, AGE 18–24, SELF-IDENTIFIED NON-ASIAN

“My grandfather went to China as one of the last trips before he passed away. He got me a copy of the little red book that Chairman Mao wrote. Since then I took an interest in studying about China. I also help coordinate the events with the Confucius Institute at BCIT, so the cultural knowledge has been very useful.... The second-biggest factor [that has shaped my perception] would have been my volunteer work. I worked in 2008 and 2010 with the Chinese Olympic Committee. I also led volunteers in 2014 from Fujian Medical University to give out medical aid to impoverished villages. In 2017, I went with Tsinghua [University] in their SSLP program to teach students about Canada...”

MALE, AGE 25–34, SELF-IDENTIFIED NON-ASIAN

Canadian interactions with people from Asia are common. This is particularly true for millennials. Twenty-six percent of the learning generation (18–24) and 39% of the engaged generation (25–34), as opposed to 19% for the skeptical generation (35+), have frequent interactions with people from Asia.

Millennials have more frequent socialization with people from Asia



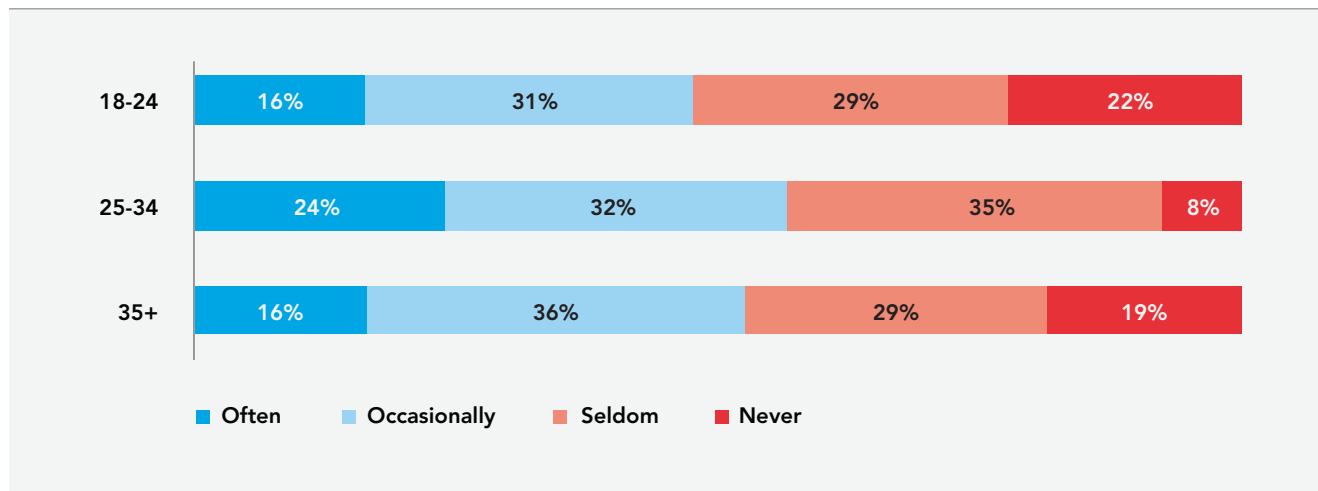
Base: All respondents: (n = 1,527); Millennials 18-24: (n = 459); Millennials 25-34: (n = 197); 35+: (n = 871)

Q19: How often do you socialize with people who are from Asia (i.e., international students, immigrants, people born in Asia)?

Note: Percentages of “Don’t know” not shown.

Conversations about Asia are happening as well. Twenty-seven percent of the engaged generation (25–34) report having frequent conversations about Asia with others in the past three months, as compared to 16% of the other two generations. Asia seems to appear less in the learning generation’s (18–24) conversations with others—22% indicate that they had not had any conversations with others about Asia over the past three months.

The engaged generation (25–34) had most frequent conversations about Asia



Base: All respondents: (n = 1,527); Millennials 18-24: (n = 459); Millennials 25-34: (n = 197); 35+: (n = 871)

Q20: Over the past 3 months, how often did you have a conversation about Asia with your family, friends, school peers, colleagues, or neighbours? (The conversation can range from a few comments to in-depth discussion).

Note: Percentages of “Prefer not to respond” not shown.

MILLENNIALS’ VOICES • Social contacts with people from Asia feed into people’s understanding of Asia.

“Now I work with quite a few Filipinos, so I learned way more about the Philippines than I knew before. But it’s all their own personal experiences; it’s nothing big and sweeping, which I guess might be a good or bad thing because it’s not like overarching stereotypes but also like personal things from their life.”

FEMALE, AGE 18–24, SELF-IDENTIFIED NON-ASIAN

“The second thing [that influences my perceptions of Asia] is interactions with people from Asia. I’ve met so many people from all over Asia and have extended family from some parts of Asia, so hearing the stories and experiences shapes my opinion as well.”

FEMALE, AGE 18–24, SELF-IDENTIFIED NON-ASIAN



SECTION 5

MASS MEDIA

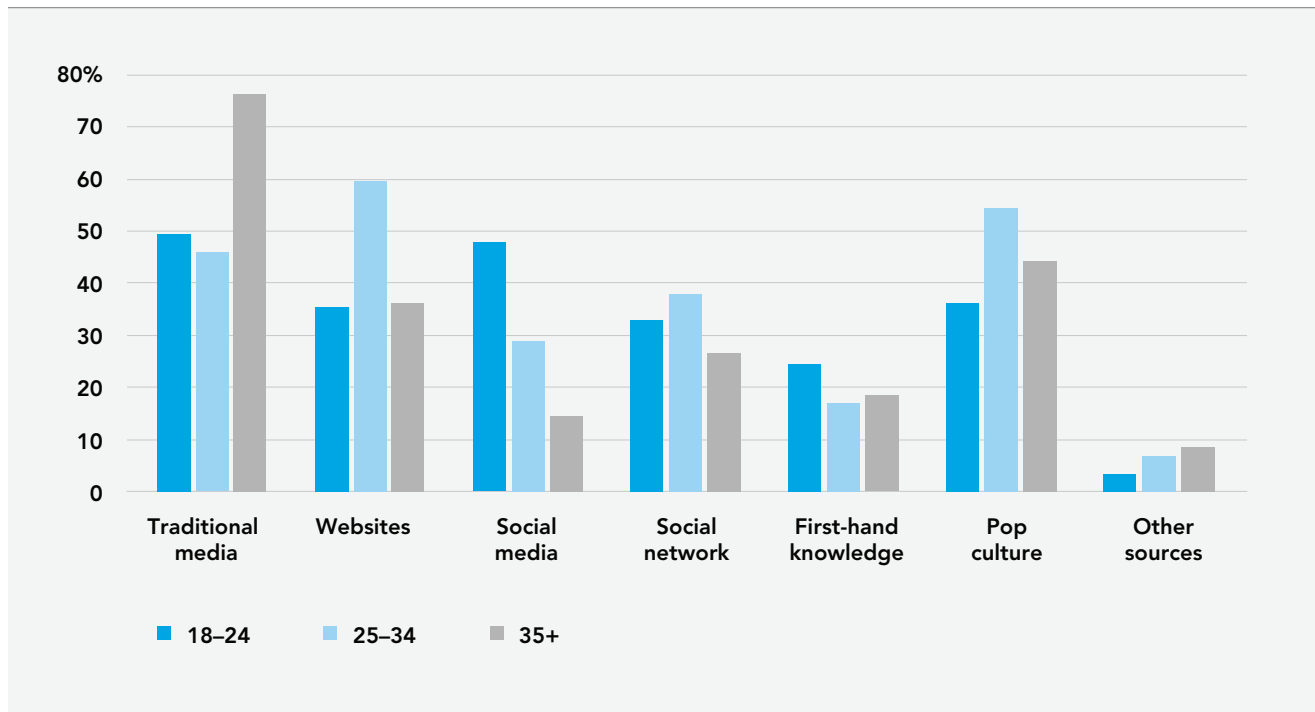


The primary sources of information about Asia for millennials are social media and websites; whereas the skeptical generation (35+) relies more on traditional media outlets.

Millennials are more likely to get information about Asia from a variety of sources. Besides traditional media platforms, the learning generation (18–24) tends to seek information through social media (48%), social networks (i.e., family members and non-family members, 33%) and first-hand experiences such as work, travel, and schooling (24%). The majority of the engaged generation (25–34) refer to websites (e.g., online newspapers, magazines, and blogs) (60%), pop culture (54%), and social networks (38%).

Traditional media dominates the sources of information used by the skeptical generation (35+) to learn about Asia. Seventy-six percent of them indicate that they rely on television, radio, or print newspapers/magazines to get information about Asia, as compared with 50% for the learning generation (18–24) and 46% for the engaged generation (25–34).

Generations differ in sources of information about Asia



Base: All respondents: (n = 1,527); Millennials 18-24: (n = 459); Millennials 25-34: (n = 197); 35+: (n = 871)

Q18: From the list below, please choose up to THREE sources through which you get most of your information about Asia.

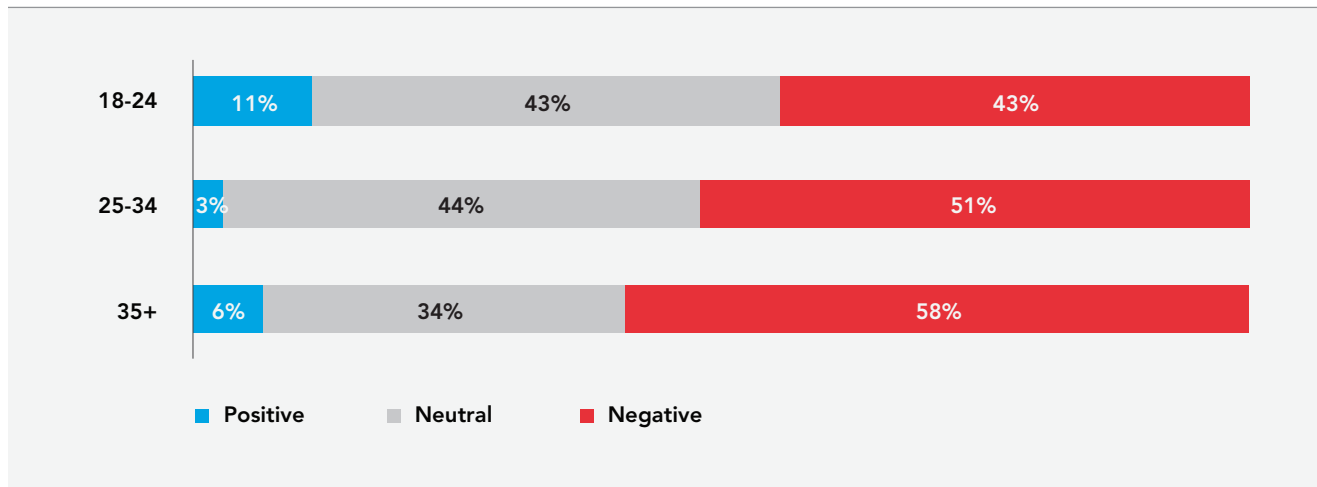
Note: "Traditional media"—television, radio, and print newspapers/magazines; "Websites"—online newspapers/magazines, blogs, and web pages; "Social media"—social media such as news feeds, Facebook, Twitter, podcasts, etc.; "Social network"—family members and non-family members (e.g., friends, co-workers, etc.); "First-hand knowledge"—living in Asia, work, schooling, and travel; "Pop culture"—movies/dramas, documentaries, books, music, and other popular culture; "Other sources"—advertising, international events (e.g., sporting events), and others.

Mass media is shaping how the skeptical generation (35+) perceives Asia, but this is less so for millennials.

Mass media is an important shaper of people's perceptions of Asia, especially for those who possess little direct experience or knowledge about Asia. For the skeptical generation (35+), the media effect is largely negative, whereas it is less negative for millennials.

When asked to recall the information they have seen, heard, or read over the past three months in the mass media, the skeptical generation (35+) is most likely to recall negative messages; the engaged generation (25-34) tends to recall more neutral messages; whereas the learning generation (18-24) is more likely to recall positive or neutral messages.

Millennials tend to receive positive or neutral messages from the mass media



Base: All respondents: (n = 1,527); Millennials 18-24: (n = 459); Millennials 25-34: (n = 197); 35+: (n = 871)

Q23: Recall what you have seen, heard, or read over the past three months about Asia-related events, issues, or people in the mass media (e.g., social media, radio, TV, movies, etc.). Would you say most of the messages you received about Asia are positive, negative, or neutral?

Note: Percentages of "Prefer not to respond" not shown.

MILLENNIALS' VOICES • Millennials recognize a biased portrayal of Asia in the mass media and try to form a more balanced view of Asia.

"Very early, I came to understand that the portrayal of Asia in the North American media was often uninformed or inaccurate. Because of this, I have been careful to seek out either more rigorous sources or first-hand accounts and experiences. For cultural matters, I have tended to learn from friends. I have friend with experiences/citizenship in India, China, and Vietnam. Economically, I tend to read the Economist (with a grain of salt) and the occasional study." — MALE, AGE 18–24, SELF-IDENTIFIED NON-ASIAN

"The media I absorb in Canada about Asia tends to be more negative (much of it is fair, mind you), though with certain distinct features. For example, media on Japan, South Korea, Taiwan, is usually more positive. Other countries in Asia receive more mixed treatment. This makes sense given Canada has significant interest and value alignments with these states. Stories of different Asian communities in Vancouver also have a strong influence on how I perceive those particular people. For example, some stories/narratives in the media these days that have negatively influenced my opinions of Asia (or certain people) would be: a) the cases of newly rich Asian immigrants (usually from mainland China) who take advantage of Canadian immigration but avoid paying tax on housing, claim low incomes, but live in multimillion dollar homes; b) foreign companies who break the law in Canada; and c) immigrants communities who take advantage of Canadian immigration...."

MALE, AGE 25–34, SELF-IDENTIFIED NON-ASIAN



CONCLUSION



WHILE IT IS WIDELY ACKNOWLEDGED that millennials are different from earlier generations in the values they hold, their attitudes, and their way of life, to date there has been little analysis of the nature of their perceptions and attitudes toward Asia, a region that will be critical to Canada's future growth and prosperity. This National Opinion Poll, supplemented by qualitative interviews, addresses the gap by shedding some initial light on generational differences. The results reveal distinctive portraits of the three generations: the learning generation (millennials 18–24), the engaged generation (millennials 25–34), and the skeptical generation (35+).

The poll finds that there is a significant convergence in attitudes across all three generations. All of them have a China-centric mental map of Asia and a stereotyped image of Asian people as being “hardworking” and “traditional.” Canadians as a whole feel moderately favourable to Asia and favour culturally similar countries such as Japan and South Korea over other Asian countries like China, India, and the Philippines. The exception is the U.S., which a majority of Canadians view unfavourably. Canadians further tend to prioritize Canadian values in foreign relations.

Despite the similarities, generations differ in their degree of openness to Asia, their engagement with Asia, their knowledge about Asia, and the sources of information on Asia that they rely on. The learning generation (18–24), as the youngest Canadians, is the most open-minded, are more engaged, and yet are the least informed about Asia. They hold the most favourable views of Asia, have more diverse views of Asian populations, and would like economic opportunities to drive their country's foreign relations. They are the least knowledgeable about Asia and have yet to form their opinions about Asia on many issues. However, they are the most engaged with Asia through work, travel, language, socialization, and interest. Their perceptions of Asia are more likely to be shaped by social media, social networks, and first-hand experiences in Asia.

The engaged generation (25–34) has a better-informed view on Asia. They share with Canadians 35+ many unfavourable views about Asia, but they recognize and sometimes appreciate the great diversities within Asia. They are more likely to emphasize that global issues should be the focus of Canada’s foreign relations. Like their younger peers, they are engaged with Asia and interested in learning more about it. They are the most knowledgeable about Asia and draw their information from websites, social networks, and pop culture.

The skeptical generation (35+) is the most disengaged from Asia. They possess largely negative views about Asia. They are the most value-centric about foreign relations. They are fairly knowledgeable about Asia and moderately interested in learning about it. Their primary information source is traditional media.

These findings point to an important challenge for the government as it considers developing its Asia strategy. The data suggests that millennials are more likely to be receptive to a pro-engagement policy than their elders. Younger millennials in particular tend to be more open-minded and interested in the Asia opportunity. At the same time, however, the data does suggest that the government may need to reflect on how it can help build Asia competency among this population, as the survey results suggest that there is currently an important knowledge gap. Equipping our future generation with greater awareness and more comprehensive knowledge about Asia, especially through increasing exposure to Asia in education, offering opportunities of grounded experiences in Asia, and cultivating Asia expertise such as language capabilities will be critical.



APPENDIX

REGIONAL DIFFERENCES



THE SECTION EXPLORES regional differences in attitudes to Asia for the overall Canadian population. For the purpose of analysis and in view of the sample size, provinces/territories were collapsed into five regions:

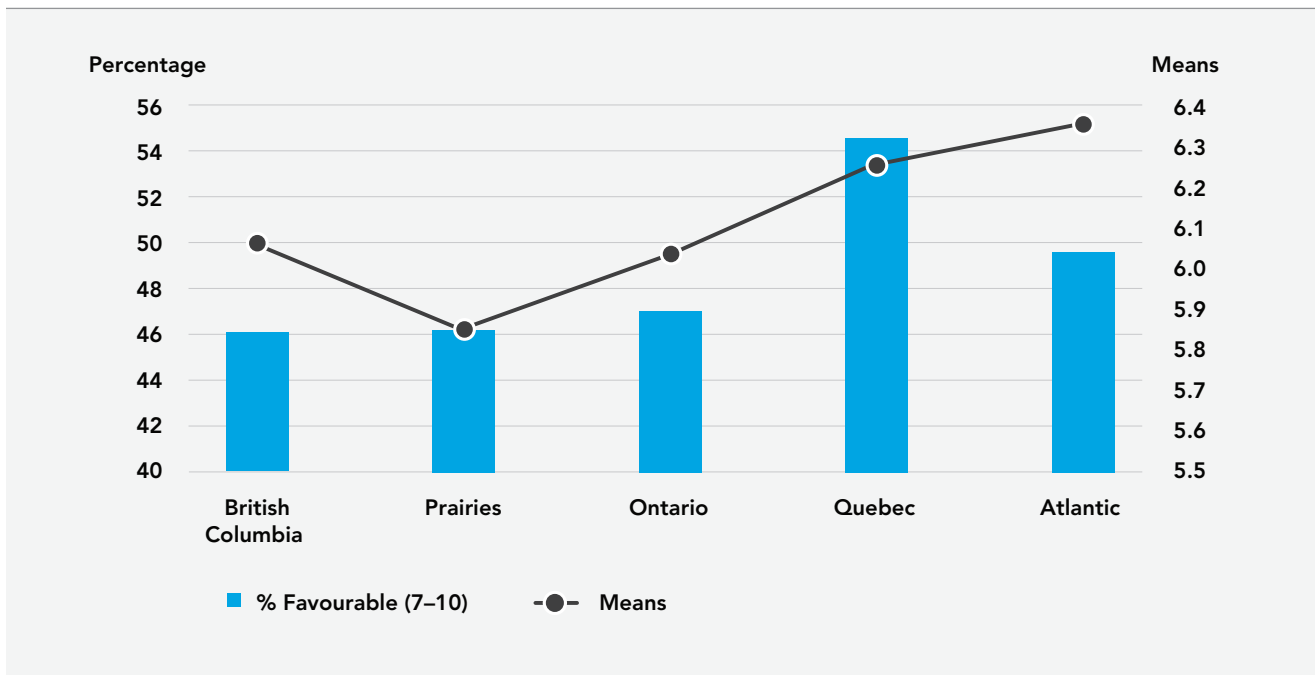
1. British Columbia
2. The Prairies—Alberta, Saskatchewan, and Manitoba
3. Ontario
4. Quebec
5. The Atlantic provinces—New Brunswick, Prince Edward Island, Nova Scotia, and Newfoundland and Labrador.

Yukon, Northwest Territories, and Nunavut only had two respondents; therefore, they are omitted from the analysis.

Quebecers and Atlantic residents are more favourable to Asia.

Among regions, Quebecers and the Atlantic residents have warmer feelings toward Asia in general with higher ratings than residents from other regions. Quebecers also have the highest percentage (55%) of favourable ratings of Asia among all regions.

Quebecers feel the most favourable toward Asia



Base: Prairies: (n = 269); Ontario: (n = 585); British Columbia: (n = 210); Quebec: (n = 355); Atlantic: (n = 105)

Q2: Please rate your feelings toward Asia in general, with 10 meaning you have a "very warm, favourable" feeling and 1 meaning you have a "very cold, unfavourable" feeling.

Note: Percentages of "Unfavourable (1-4)," "Neutral (5-6)" and "No views" not shown.

British Columbians and Ontarians are the most critical of the Chinese government, whereas Quebecers and Atlantic residents are more positive about it.

Regarding government, all regions have the warmest feelings toward the Canadian government, followed by Japan and South Korea. The governments of the U.S., China, and the Philippines are least favoured.

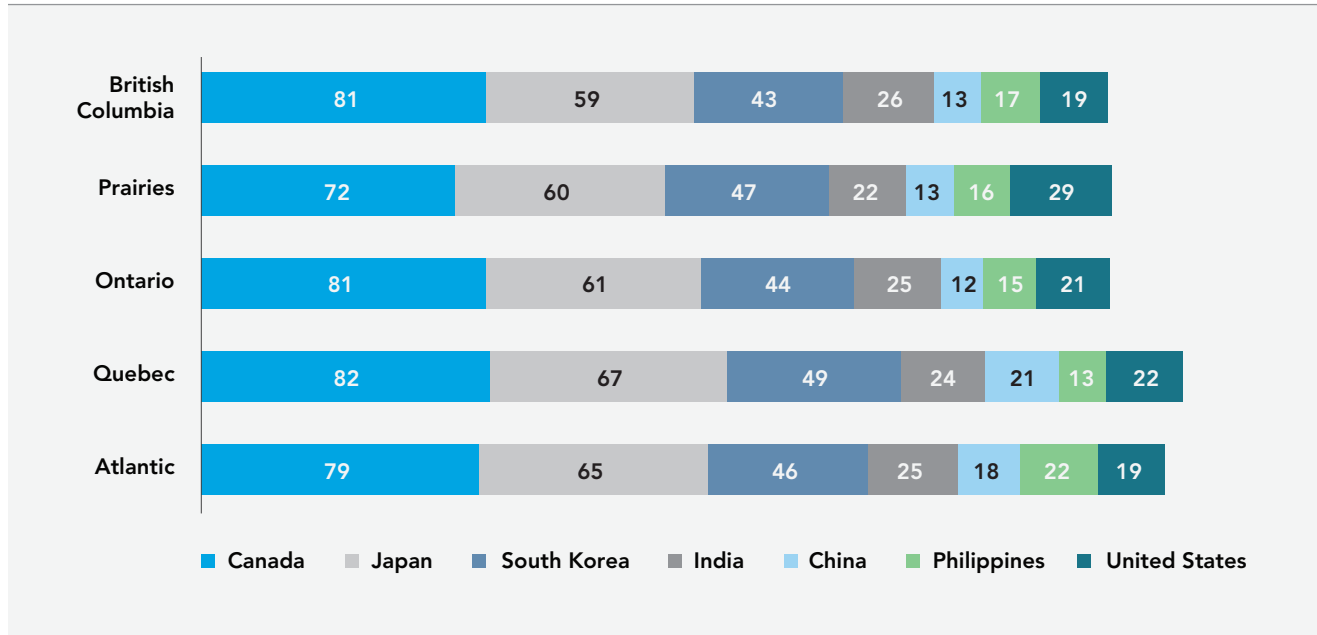
British Columbians, compared with residents in other regions, have the most unfavourable feelings toward the governments of the U.S. (67% unfavourable) and China (60% unfavourable). A significantly higher proportion of them feel the U.S. government is “dysfunctional,” and the Chinese government is “corrupt.”

Residents in the Prairies feel more favourable to the U.S. government (29% favourable, 51% unfavourable) than residents in other regions. Yet they tend to use the same descriptors as other provinces for the U.S. government.

Ontarians join British Columbians in showing unfavourable feelings toward the Chinese government—a significantly higher percentage (57%) of unfavourable ratings. In contrast, Quebecers (21% favourable) and people from the Atlantic provinces (18% favourable) have more favourable feelings for this government. In particular, Quebecers are less likely than other regions to attribute “unaccountable” but more likely “conservative” to the Chinese government.

The Atlantic provinces have less unfavourable feelings than other regions do toward the government of the Philippines. Residents from these provinces are less likely to perceive this government as being “corrupt” and more likely to perceive it as “well-functioning.”

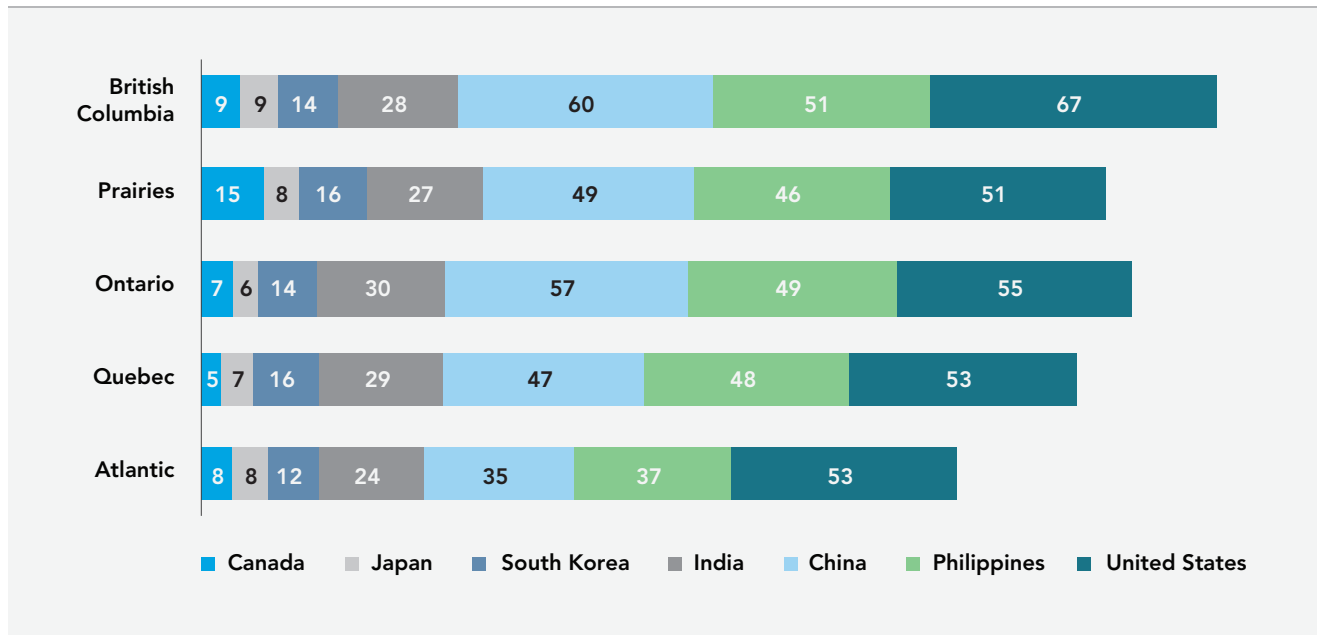
Percent favourable (7–10) feelings toward government of countries, by region



Base: British Columbia: (n = 210); Prairies: (n = 269); Ontario: (n = 585); Quebec: (n = 355); Atlantic: (n = 105)

Q5A: Please rate your feelings toward the governments of the following countries, with 10 meaning a “very warm, favourable” feeling and 1 meaning a “very cold, unfavourable” feeling.

Percent unfavourable (1–4) feelings toward government of countries, by region



Base: British Columbia: (n = 210); Prairies: (n = 269); Ontario: (n = 585); Quebec: (n = 355); Atlantic: (n = 105)

Q5A: Please rate your feelings toward the governments of the following countries, with 10 meaning a “very warm, favourable” feeling and 1 meaning a “very cold, unfavourable” feeling.

Different regions have a different take on people from different countries.

Overall, residents from all regions have a more favourable view of the people than of the government of countries. Canadians, joined by Japanese and South Koreans, stand out as the favourites of all regions.

British Columbians feel the least favourable toward Chinese people, with fewer favourable ratings (43%) and more unfavourable ratings (27%) than other regions. They are more likely than people from other parts of Canada to think of Chinese as being “unfriendly” and “arrogant.”

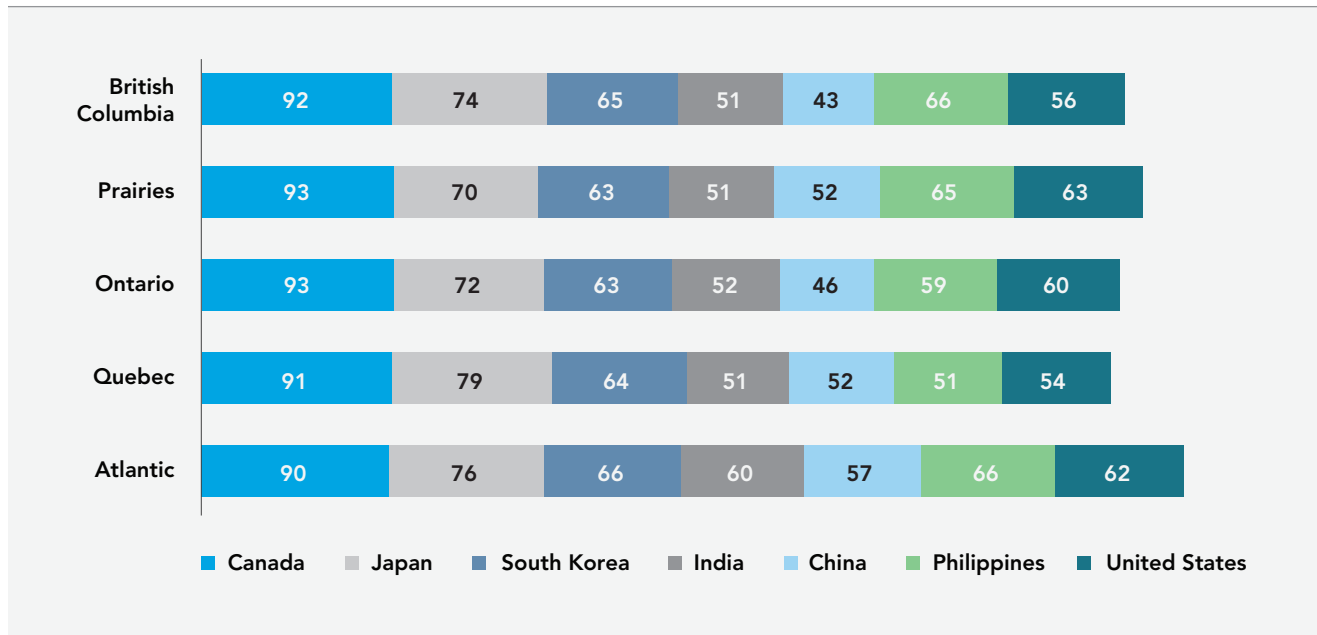
Residents of the Prairies tend to have the least favourable views of the Japanese, as compared with other regions. They are more likely to attribute “dishonest,” as opposed to “honest,” to the Japanese.

Ontarians tend to stand in the middle ground among all regions in terms of their attitudes to people from different countries.

Compared with other Canadians, Quebecers express the most unfavourable feelings toward Filipinos. This may be attributed to their image of Filipinos as being “poor.” Twenty-seven percent of Quebecers associate this descriptor with Filipinos.

The Atlantic residents tend to show the most favourable feelings toward Chinese people—the only region where fewer than 1 in 10 express unfavourable feelings to Chinese.

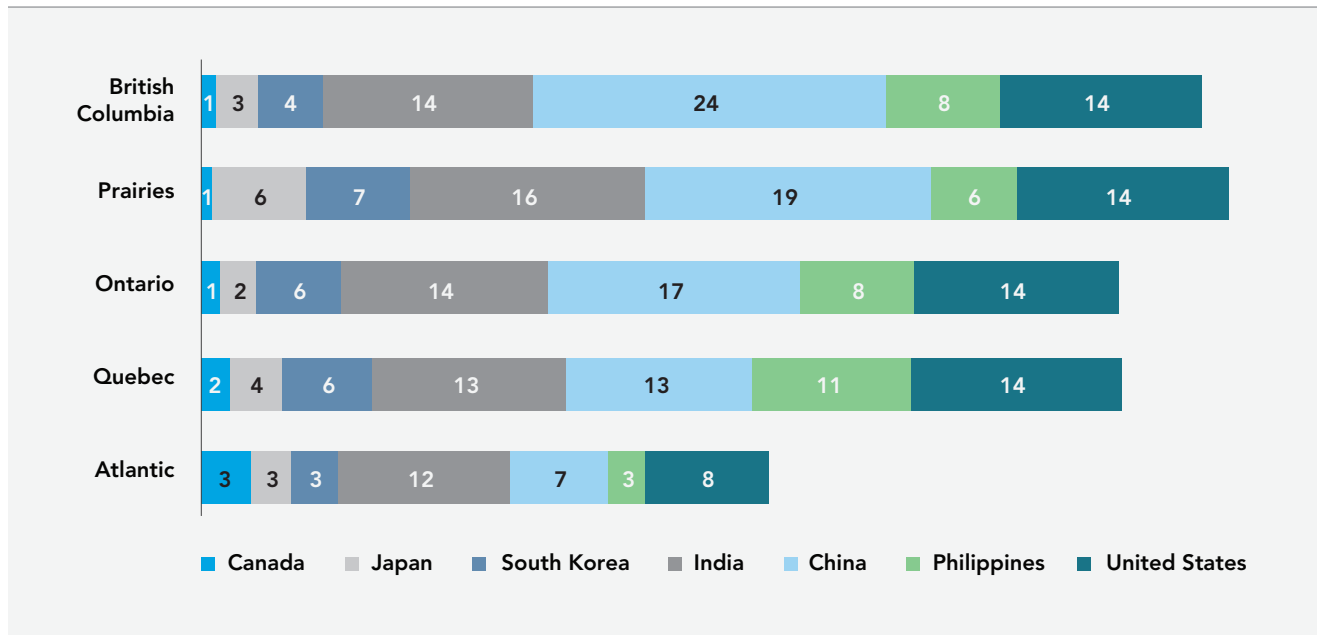
Percent favourable (7–10) feelings to the people of countries, by region



Base: British Columbia: (n = 210); Prairies: (n = 269); Ontario: (n = 585); Quebec: (n = 355); Atlantic: (n = 105)

Q5B: Please rate your feelings toward the people of the following countries, with 10 meaning a “very warm, favourable” feeling and 1 meaning a “very cold, unfavourable” feeling.

Percent unfavourable (1–4) feelings to the people of countries, by region



Base: British Columbia: (n = 210); Prairies: (n = 269); Ontario: (n = 585); Quebec: (n = 355); Atlantic: (n = 105)

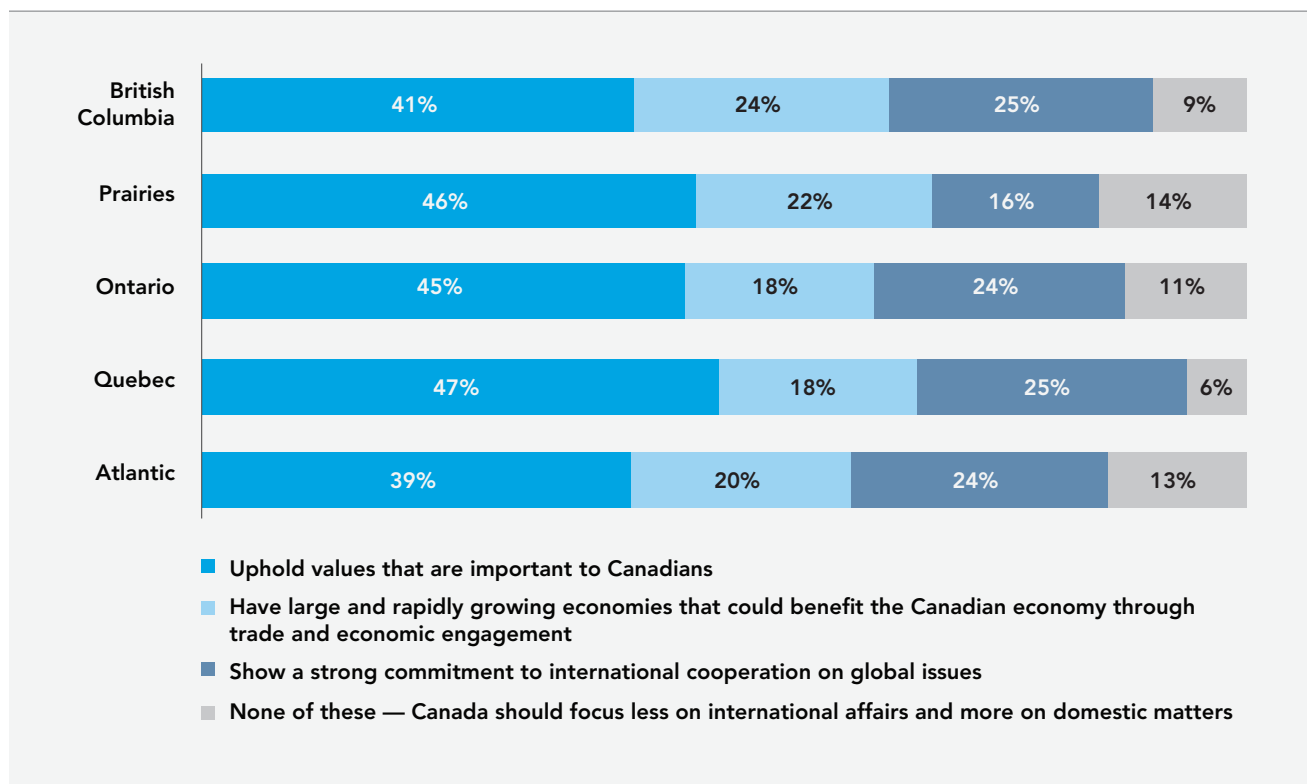
Q5B: Please rate your feelings toward the people of the following countries, with 10 meaning a “very warm, favourable” feeling and 1 meaning a “very cold, unfavourable” feeling.

British Columbians are more likely to believe that economic considerations rather than symmetry on values should drive Canada’s foreign relations.

Regions do not differ significantly on what criteria Canada should prioritize concerning foreign relations. Across all regions, two-fifths or more support that Canada should prioritize relations with countries that uphold values that are important to Canadians (e.g., respect for human rights, democracy, the rule of law, and the rights of minorities).

British Columbians, however, do stand out as being more likely to give priority to economic considerations in foreign relations—a significantly higher percentage of them (24%) think Canada should prioritize countries that “have large and rapidly growing economies that could benefit the Canadian economy through trade and economic engagement.”

Priority criteria for Canada’s foreign relations, by region



Base: British Columbia: (n = 210); Prairies: (n = 269); Ontario: (n = 585); Quebec: (n = 355); Atlantic: (n = 105)

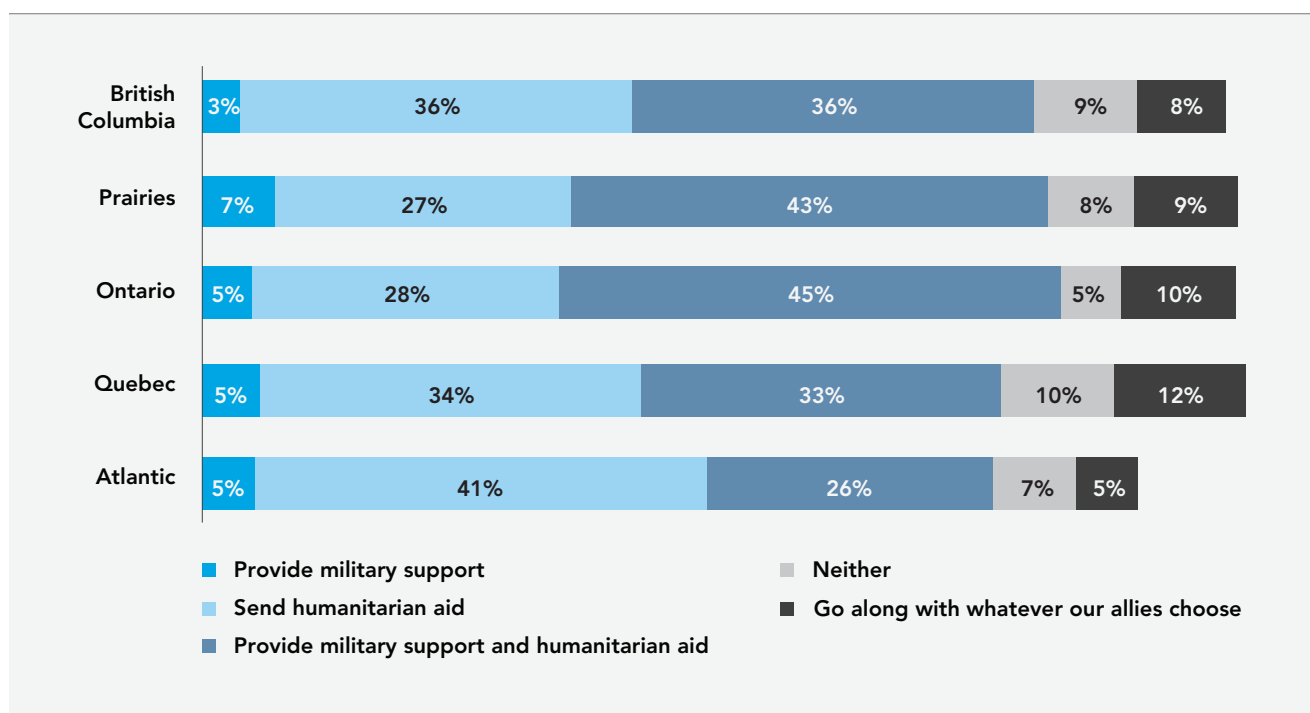
Q8: In your opinion, Canada should prioritize relationships with countries that meet which ONE of the following criteria (please choose the ONE that is most important to you)?

Note: Percentages of “Don’t know” not shown.

Ontario and Atlantic provinces diverge on Canada's role in global security

In discussions around a response to a possible outbreak of conflict in the Korean Peninsula, the majority of Canadians in all regions believe that Canada should provide humanitarian aid. Compared with other regions, Ontarians tend to be more supportive of military support, whereas those from the Atlantic provinces are more supportive of humanitarian aid.

If a conflict broke out on the Korean Peninsula, Canada should...



Base: British Columbia: (n = 210); Prairies: (n = 269); Ontario: (n = 585); Quebec: (n = 355); Atlantic: (n = 105)

Q9: If a conflict broke out on the Korean Peninsula, what do you think Canada's response should be?

Note: Percentages of "Don't know" not shown.



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