

Methodology:

Results are based on an online study conducted from September 4 to September 6, 2023, among 813 adults in British Columbia. The data has been statistically weighted according to Canadian census figures for age, gender and region in British Columbia. The margin of error—which measures sample variability—is +/- 3.5 percentage points, nineteen times out of twenty.

Do you consider each of the following as threats to the state of democracy in Canada? – “Definitely” and “Probably” listed

“Fake news” featured on social media and online publications – 76%
Polarization (political attitudes becoming more extreme) – 75%
Racism / Discrimination – 70%
Low engagement from citizens on important issues – 68%
Low voter turnout in democratic processes – 67%
The actions of government being perceived as limiting personal freedom – 60%
Hyper partisanship (political parties disagreeing intensely with each other) – 59%
Immigration – 32%

British Columbians See “Fake News” and Polarization as Threats

About two thirds of residents also think the state of democracy in Canada is endangered by low voter turnout in elections.

Vancouver, BC [September 20, 2023] – Three-in-four residents of British Columbia are concerned about the effect of two issues in Canada, a new Research Co. poll conducted in partnership with the “Strengthening Democracy” initiative has found.

In the online survey of a representative provincial sample, 76% of British Columbians think “fake news” featured on social media and online publications is “definitely” or “probably” a threat to the state of democracy in Canada, while 75% feel the same way about polarization, or political attitudes becoming more extreme.

More than two thirds of British Columbians also deem three other issues as threats to democracy in Canada: racism and discrimination (70%), low engagement from citizens on important issues (68%) and low voter turnout in democratic processes (67%).

Majorities of British Columbians are also preoccupied with the actions of government being perceived as limiting personal freedom (60%) and hyper partisanship, or political parties disagreeing intensely with each other (59%). Only 32% of the province’s residents believe immigration endangers the state of democracy in Canada.

More than three-in-five British Columbians (63%) rate the state of democracy in Canada as “very good” or “good”, while 29% consider it “bad” or “very bad.”

“More than a third of British Columbians aged 35-to-54 (35%) are not pleased with the state of democracy in Canada right now,” says Mario Canseco, President of Research Co. “The proportions are lower among their counterparts aged 18-to-34 (27%) and aged 55 and over (26%).”

The survey also gauged support for five ideas related to municipal politics in British Columbia.

Majorities of the province’s residents agree with three proposals: allowing permanent residents who have lived in a municipality for at least six months to vote in municipal elections (62%), compelling media outlets to provide a specific number of minutes (in the case of radio and television) or articles (in the case of print and online journalism) solely devoted to municipal issues (59%) and having elected councillors who represent a specific portion of the municipality (also known as wards), instead of voting for several at-large councillors (56%).



Two other ideas are more contentious, with 50% of British Columbians agreeing with abolishing political parties or “slates” and having every candidate for mayor, council or school board run as independents, and 47% agreeing with making voting mandatory for all citizens in municipal elections.

Majorities of British Columbians think their municipal governments (53%) and the provincial government (also 53%) are very responsive” or “moderately responsive” to their needs and the needs of other residents. The rating is significantly lower (40%) for the federal government.

Over the past year, only 31% of British Columbians have engaged directly with their municipality on a specific issue, such as reporting a problem, seeking a permit or obtaining a business license. More than half of these residents (54%) are satisfied with the way their issue was dealt with by their municipality, while 43% are dissatisfied.

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About Research Co.

Simply put, we are curious about what people think and the decisions they will make. Some call it public opinion, others call it polling or public affairs. We never compromise facts for profit. Our agenda is the truth.

We have a global network of partners in the qualitative, data collection and data visualization specialities.

About Strengthening Democracy

Once standing two sword lengths apart in the BC Legislature, former NDP Premier Mike Harcourt and former Social Credit & BC Liberal Minister Graham Bruce, are now working together to highlight concerns and misperceptions about our democracy and how we might strengthen democracy as elected persons.

As mayors, (Mike – Vancouver and Graham – North Cowichan), both have experienced the front-line issues and pressures of local government.

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