

Methodology:

Results are based on an online survey conducted from August 17 to August 19, 2026, among 1,002 adults in Canada. The data has been statistically weighted according to Canadian census figures for age, gender and region in Canada. The margin of error—which measures sample variability—is +/- 3.1 percentage points, nineteen times out of twenty.

All things considered, do you agree or disagree with each of these statements?

Canada's criminal courts do a good job in determining whether or not an accused person is guilty.

Agree – 54% (-2)
Disagree – 30% (=)
Not sure – 16% (+3)

The justice system in Canada treats every person fairly.

Agree – 44% (-1)
Disagree – 43% (=)
Not sure – 13% (+1)

Canada's prison system does a good job in helping prisoners become law-abiding.

Agree – 38% (+1)
Disagree – 43% (-3)
Not sure – 19% (+2)

Canadians Still Divided When Assessing Fairness in Justice System

Public support for alternative penalties in lieu of prison time for offenders is lower than three years ago.

Vancouver, BC [September 3, 2026] – Canadians remain evenly split when pondering the impartiality of the justice system, a new Research Co. poll has found.

In the online survey of a representative national sample, 44% of Canadians think that the justice system in Canada treats every person fairly, while 43% disagree and 13% are undecided.

The results show little fluctuation from a previous Research Co. poll [conducted in April 2023](#).

“There is a discernible gender gap when Canadians review the justice system,” says Mario Canseco, President of Research Co. “While half of men (50%) think it treats every person fairly, only 40% of women concur.”

Just over half of Quebecers (51%) say the justice system in Canada treats every person fairly. The proportions are lower in Ontario (44%), Saskatchewan and Manitoba (42%), British Columbia (41%), Alberta (also 41%) and Atlantic Canada (37%).

Majorities of Canadians whose origins are South Asian (63%) or East Asian (51%) think the justice system in Canada treats every person fairly. Fewer Canadians whose descent is European (41%) or Indigenous (30%) share this view.

More than half of Canadians (54%, -2) think Canada's criminal courts do a good job in determining whether or not an accused person is guilty—a proportion that rises to 58% among men and to 56% among Canadians aged 55 and over.

More than a third of Canadians (38%, +1) believe Canada's prison system does a good job in helping prisoners become law-abiding, including 44% of those aged 18-to-34.

Respondents to this survey were asked about the use of alternative penalties—such as fines, probation or community service—rather than prison for specific offences.

Fewer than one-in-four Canadians (22%, -3) are in favour of relying on alternative penalties after an arson conviction, and just under a third (32%, -6) would consent to their use as punishment for drunk driving offences.



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More Canadians—but short of a majority—support alternative penalties in cases of online harassment or cyberbullying (40%, -5) and credit card fraud (43%, -3).

The survey also asked Canadians about the Youth Criminal Justice Act, which governs the application of criminal and correctional law to people who have committed an offence between the ages of 12 and 18.

More than seven-in-ten Canadians (72%, +3) agree with having the possibility of finding parents in contempt of court if they do not attend hearings or participate in the legal process.

About two thirds of Canadians agree with two other elements of the Youth Criminal Justice Act: allowing non-violent, first-time offenders who are unlikely to re-offend to avoid trial in youth justice court by taking part in programs of extrajudicial sanctions (67%, -2) and disclosing the identity of the youths who have been charged only under special circumstances (65%, -2).

Canadians are divided when assessing the provision establishing that no person can be convicted of an offence while he or she is under the age of 12 years, with 43% (-5) agreeing with it and 44% (+5) disagreeing.

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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.

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