



## 1 Should political participation be a choice or obligation?

### ■ Make It Matter

To what extent do you agree or disagree with each of these statements?

1. Strongly agree
2. Agree
3. Neutral or not sure
4. Disagree
5. Strongly disagree

All individuals who live in Canada are represented equally by its democratic system.

The media should promote more patriotism to increase political participation.

There is no such thing as a Canadian national identity.

The government cares about what the youth of Canada have to say.

Voting is a responsibility and a right. All citizens should be required to vote by law.

Elections in Canada and Alberta are conducted fairly, impartially and securely.

Provincial representatives in the federal government represent regional interests rather than Canadian interests.

If you belong to a political party, you have to believe its ideology completely.

Canadian culture and heritage should be protected by government policies against external global influences.

The government does not represent the identity and interests of all Canadians because of the system of representation by population.

Voter apathy is detrimental to the well-being of Canadians.

democratic participation  
 apathy youth voting  
 identity

## Should political participation be a choice or obligation?

Is the perception that young people are apathetic about politics a stereotype? Voting rates among young Canadians have declined, with many young people choosing not to vote in federal and provincial elections. Some interpret this as a sign of apathy.

Yet, many think youth apathy is a myth. *Message Not Delivered*, a study conducted in 2015 by Samara Canada, debunks this myth.



### Pause and Reflect

How do these findings compare to your opinions on political participation?

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- When it comes to rates of participation in political and civic life beyond voting, younger Canadian's participation rate is 11 percentage points higher, on average, than their older counterparts across 18 forms of participation.
- 57 percent of youth aged 18 to 29 discuss politics and political issues face to face over the phone, compared to 51 percent of Canadians aged 30 to 55 and 49 percent aged 56 and over.
- 50 percent of youth aged 18 to 29 worked with others in their communities, compared to 36 percent of Canadians aged 30 to 55 and 39 percent aged 56 and over.

- 22 percent of youth aged 18 to 29 volunteer for a candidate or campaign, compared to 15 percent of Canadians aged 30 to 55 and 17 percent aged 56 and over.
- 34 percent of youth aged 18 to 29 have protested or demonstrated, compared to 21 percent of Canadians aged 30 to 55 and 15 percent aged 56 and over.

Samara Canada. *Youth are not apathetic*. [www.samaracanada.com/research/active-citizenship/youth-are-not-apathectic-infographic](http://www.samaracanada.com/research/active-citizenship/youth-are-not-apathectic-infographic)

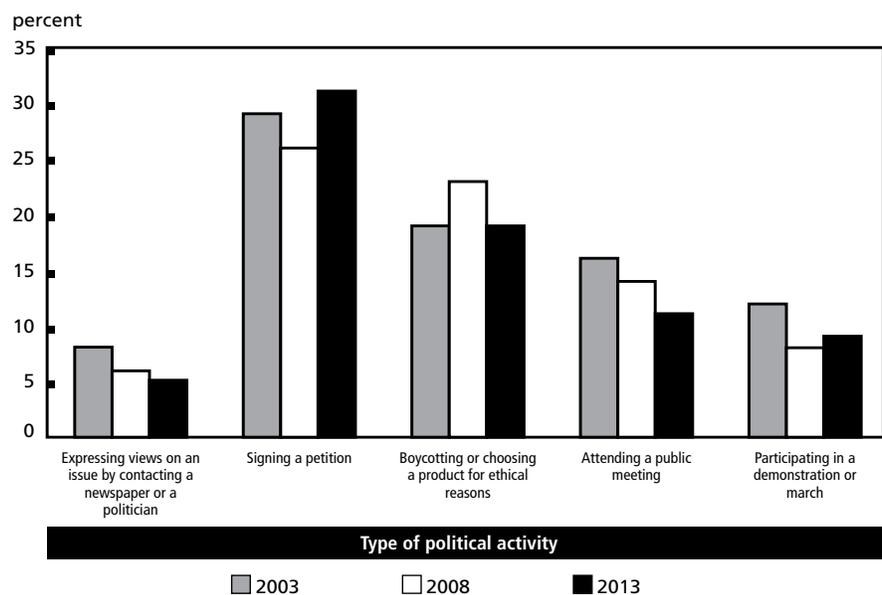
### Find Out More



Find out more about political choices and actions, including the choice to vote. Explore **Choice or Obligation** on the **Building Future Voters** senior high webpage at [www.buildingfuturevoters.ca](http://www.buildingfuturevoters.ca).

List the reasons that resonate most with you.

Participation of Youth Aged 15 to 24 in Non-Electoral Political Activities 2003, 2008 and 2013



Source: Statistics Canada, General Social Survey, 2003, 2008, and 2013.

Turcotte, M. (2013). *Political participation and civic engagement of youth*. Statistics Canada. [www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/75-006-x/2015001/article/14232-eng.htm](http://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/75-006-x/2015001/article/14232-eng.htm)

Youth do participate in both political and social contexts. What actions in the articles that follow resonate most with you?

## Youth may not always vote, but still active in politics: study

Carolyn Thompson, Windsor Star

October 14 2015

Just because young people are less likely to fill out a ballot on election day doesn't mean they're not involved in politics, says a study from Statistics Canada. They are more likely to get involved in other ways, according to the surveys that were the basis of the study. In fact, when it comes to some activities, they're more politically motivated than older adults...

Youth usually focus on specific causes, such as the environment or gender equality and work with grassroots organizations. Rather than voting here are ways they take action, according to the study:

**Sign a petition:** A quarter of 15 to 19 year olds, and more than a third of 20 to 24 year olds signed a petition in the year before the study. Fewer than one in seven people over 75 years old did the same.

**Promote a cause:** Youth were twice as likely to have worn a badge or T-shirt, or to have carried a sign for or against a political or social issue in the year before the study.

**Demonstrate or march:** About one in 10 youth went to a protest or march, compared with two per cent of seniors.

**Have a say:** Youth were more than twice as likely to have voiced opinions on the internet or a news site than 45 to 54 year olds.

**Be politically active:** Youth in their early twenties were more involved in political activities than any other age group.

Ronnie Haidar, 25, wakes his parents and siblings up on election day so that the family can vote together. The political science student says they talk politics in the lineup and celebrate as a family.

The more education, the more likely a young person is involved in politics, according to the study.

Haidar, who has been active in student government, said he thinks sometimes youth don't realize how much politics affects the issues they're already passionate about: tuition fees, getting jobs, protecting the environment.

"If you are going to be engaged, if you're involved in these conversations about changing politics, the climate, you have to put your vote in and make it count," he said. "These conversations are just conversations, but your vote is accountability."

Thompson, C. (October 14, 2015). *Youth may not always vote, but still active in politics: study*. Windsor Star. <http://windsorstar.com/news/local-news/youth-may-not-always-vote-but-still-active-in-politics-study>  
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## Positive Post-it Day trends as city rallies behind bullied Alberta girl

CTVNews.ca October 9, 2014

An Alberta high school student who was reprimanded for posting positive messages on lockers in response to being bullied has turned the incident into a city-wide anti-bullying event.

The city of Airdrie has declared today Positive Post-it Day in honour of Caitlin Prater-Haacke, a Grade 11 student at George McDougall High School.

Last month, a fellow student broke into Prater-Haacke's locker and used her iPad to post messages to her Facebook page, saying that she should kill herself. Prater-Haacke was obviously upset, but decided that "something really needed to be done" about bullying at her school.

"The student body was really down about it and bullying affects everybody," she told CTV's Calgary Morning Live on Thursday. "It really does. Whether it be one comment or one post or in person, it's affecting everyone."

Prater-Haacke noticed an idea on Pinterest that showed positive messages written on simple, sticky Post-It notes. The next day, she bought 800 Post-Its and wrote messages on them such as "You are beautiful," "You are awesome," and "Love yourself."

Earlier this week, she stuck them on every locker, and throughout the washrooms.

School officials pulled her out of class and reprimanded her for littering. But students loved it, and word spread throughout the community. Members of a Facebook group called Airdrie Moms took up the cause and created a Facebook page for a proposed Positive Post-it Day.

"We wanted to make this day where we could all do it, we could all show how much we really care for each other," Prater-Haacke said. "And that bullying happens, but we want to try and fix it." The campaign grew, and Airdrie city council passed a motion declaring Thursday, October 9 Positive Post-it Day.

CTVNews.ca (October 9, 2014). *Positive Post-it Day trends as city rallies behind bullied Alberta girl.*  
[www.ctvnews.ca/canada/positive-post-it-day-trends-as-city-rallies-behind-bullied-alberta-girl-1.2047075](http://www.ctvnews.ca/canada/positive-post-it-day-trends-as-city-rallies-behind-bullied-alberta-girl-1.2047075)

Photo courtesy of @YouthCentralYYC





## What do you think?

How important is it to you to get involved? In what ways do you participate politically?



## Find Out More

Find out about other young people who acted on something that mattered to them.

Explore more ideas, examples and information about political action and participation in **Choice or Obligation** on the **Building Future Voters** senior high webpage at [www.buildingfuturevoters.ca](http://www.buildingfuturevoters.ca).

Find out more about the Ladybug Foundation at [www.ladybugfoundation.ca](http://www.ladybugfoundation.ca). Find out more about the WE movement at [www.we.org](http://www.we.org).

What are some examples of situations or conditions that you think are unfair or unjust? What makes them unfair or unjust?

How could you get involved to change these unfair or unjust situations or conditions? Select one or two and make a list of ideas for change.