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Institute**  
For Survey Research



*Confederation  
of Tomorrow*

# Confidence in Leaders



2023 SERIES



# Confederation of Tomorrow

The Confederation of Tomorrow surveys are annual studies conducted by an association of the country's leading public policy and socio-economic research organizations. The surveys give voice to Canadians about the major issues shaping the future of the federation and their political communities.

The 2023 study consists of a survey of 5,300 adults, conducted online in the provinces between January 26 and February 9; and by telephone in the territories between January 24 and February 26.

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The Environics Institute for Survey Research was established by Michael Adams in 2006 with a mandate to conduct in-depth public opinion and social research on the issues shaping Canada's future. It is through such research that Canadians can better understand themselves and their changing society.

For more information  
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## Are Canadians losing confidence in political leaders, in experts or in the media?

Answers to this question vary according to the type of leader in question, and the period of time under consideration. Most Canadians continue to express confidence in scientists and medical experts. Roughly one in two Canadians also express confidence in leaders of environmental groups, leaders of Indigenous organizations and journalists. Notably, Canadians are more likely to have confidence in Indigenous leaders than they are in political leaders in general.

Canadians are less likely to have confidence in business leaders, governments and political leaders. And in these cases, confidence has declined in recent years. Confidence in political leaders and in governments, however, remains higher today than it was 30 years ago. Only in the case of business leaders is confidence lower today than at any previous time over the past four decades.

In 2021, almost a year into the COVID-19 pandemic, the **Confederation of Tomorrow Survey of Canadians** addressed the issue of public confidence in scientists, government medical advice and political leaders. At that time, the survey found that large majorities of Canadians had confidence in scientists, and trusted the medical and health advice given by the Government of Canada – although far fewer had confidence in governments in general. Two years later, the survey revisits this issue, with a focus on longer-term trends in the evolution of how Canadians see leaders from different sectors, including not only scientists and politicians, but also business leaders, leaders of environmental groups, and leaders of Indigenous organizations.

## Confidence in scientists and trust in government health advice

Three years into the COVID-19 pandemic, a strong majority of Canadians continue to express confidence in scientists, and say they trust the medical and health advice given by the Government of Canada. However, confidence in both scientists and government medical advice has declined somewhat from the very high levels seen in early 2021, as vaccinations against COVID-19 first became available in Canada.

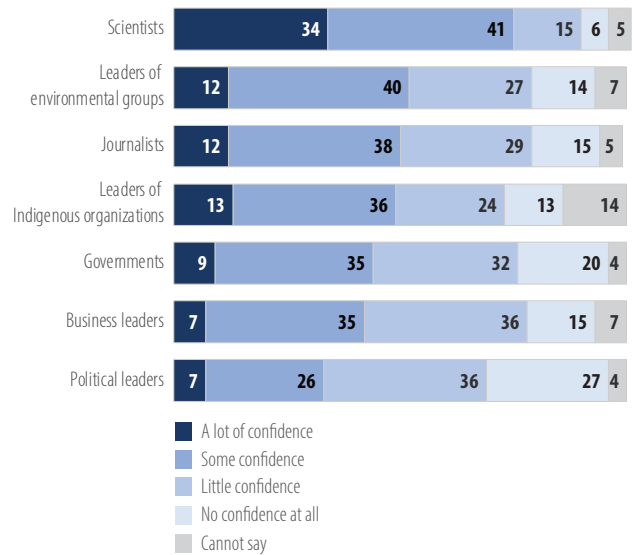
Three in four Canadians (75%) currently say they have either a lot (34%) or some (41%) confidence in scientists. Only 21 percent say they have little (15%) or no (6%) confidence. The proportion that has a lot of some confidence in scientists has declined by nine percentage points since early 2021 (down from 84% to 75%).

At the same time, seven in ten Canadians (71%) trust the medical and health advice provided by the Government of Canada (including 29% who trust this advice a lot, and 42% who express some trust). This compares to 26 percent who have not much trust (17%) in this advice, or who do not trust this advice at all (9%). Trust in the medical and health advice from the government has also declined by nine percentage points since 2021, when it stood at 80 percent.

Confidence in both scientists and the Government of Canada's medical advice is higher among certain groups of the population, such as those with a college diploma or university degree, compared to those with no post-secondary education; or among those who place themselves on the left of the political spectrum compared to those on the right. But compared to 2021, the level of confidence in 2023 generally is slightly lower among most population groups. It is likely that confidence levels in early 2021 were boosted by the fact that, at the time of the survey that year, the first vaccines against COVID-19 were becoming available.

## Confidence in leaders

2023

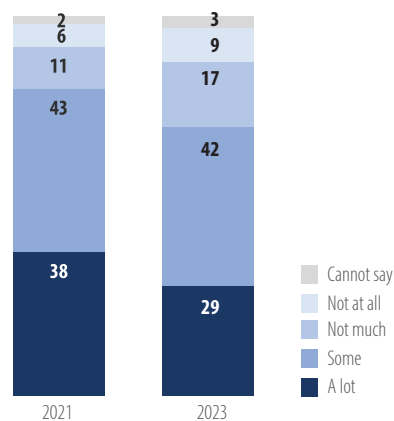


Q.CONF1

In general, in Canada today, would you say you have a lot of confidence, some confidence, little confidence or no confidence at all in each of the following?

## Confidence in government medical advice

2021 - 2023



Q.CONF2

In general, how much do you trust medical and health advice that the Government of Canada gives?

## Confidence in environmental and Indigenous leaders

Roughly one in two Canadians express a lot or some confidence in leaders of environmental groups (52%) and leaders of Indigenous organizations (49%). Levels of confidence in both these types of leaders is more or less unchanged from 2021.

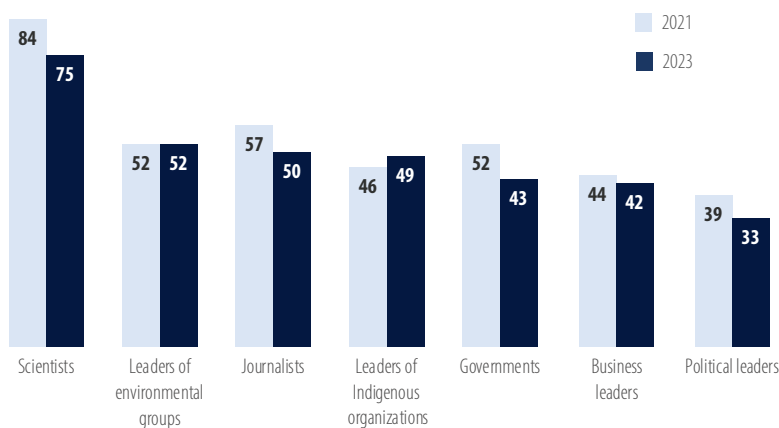
In both cases, levels of confidence vary considerably by region, as well as by political leaning.

- Confidence in environmental leaders is highest in the North (55%), especially in the Northwest Territories (61%). Among the provinces, confidence is highest in Quebec (57%) and Ontario (54%), and lowest in Alberta (45%) and Saskatchewan (40%).
- Confidence in environmental leaders is also much higher among those who place themselves on the left of the political spectrum (73%), compared to those on the right (45%); and is also higher among supporters of the federal Liberal Party (68%), Green Party (67%), NDP (66%) or Bloc Québécois (64%), compared to supporters of the Conservative Party (37%) or People’s Party of Canada (30%).

- Similarly, confidence in Indigenous leaders is highest in the North (66%), especially in the Northwest Territories (76%). Among the provinces, confidence is highest in Nova Scotia (53%), Quebec (51%) and Ontario (51%); and lowest in Newfoundland and Labrador (41%), Prince Edward Island (41%) and Saskatchewan (40%).
- Confidence in Indigenous leaders is also much higher among those who place themselves on the left of the political spectrum (65%), compared to those on the right (45%); and is also higher among supporters of the federal NDP (63%), Green Party (63%), Liberal Party (58%) or Bloc Québécois (50%), compared to supporters of the Conservative Party (38%) or People’s Party of Canada (37%).

Confidence in leaders of environmental groups is slightly higher than average among Canadians age 18 to 34, and dips below average among those age 45 to 54. Confidence in leaders of Indigenous organizations is also higher than average among those age 18 to 34, especially among those age 18 to 24, where it reaches 60 percent.

**Confidence in leaders**  
2021 - 2023 A lot or some confidence



Q.CONF1

*In general, in Canada today, would you say you have a lot of confidence, some confidence, little confidence or no confidence at all in each of the following?*

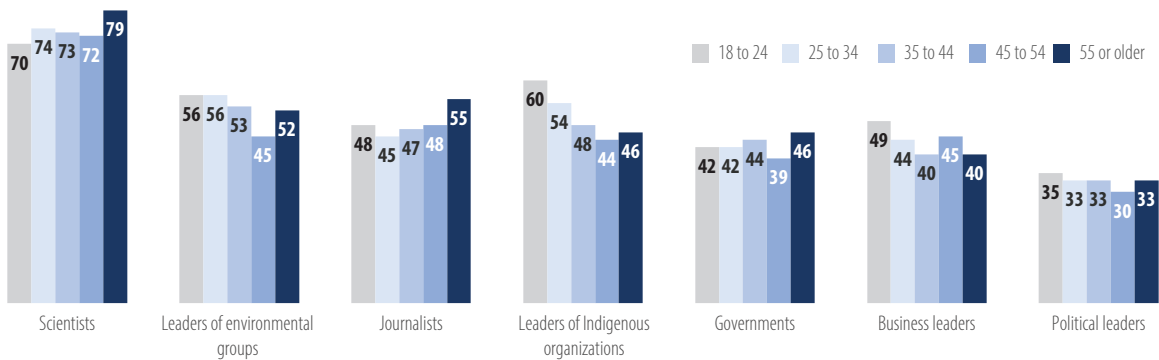
Confidence in leaders of Indigenous organizations is significantly higher among Indigenous Peoples (67%) than non-Indigenous people (48%). However, non-Indigenous Canadians are still more likely to have confidence in Indigenous leaders than they are in political leaders or business leaders in general.

Finally, confidence in leaders of Indigenous organizations and views on reconciliation between Indigenous Peoples

and non-Indigenous people in Canada are strongly related. Those who say that governments have not gone far enough to advance reconciliation are much more likely (67%) to express confidence in Indigenous leaders than those who say governments have gone too far (30%). Similarly, those who say that individual Canadians have a role to play in advancing reconciliation are much more likely (59%) to express confidence in Indigenous leaders than those who say they do not have a role (23%).

## Confidence in leaders

2023 A lot or some confidence, by age group



Q.CONF1

In general, in Canada today, would you say you have a lot of confidence, some confidence, little confidence or no confidence at all in each of the following?

## Confidence in journalists

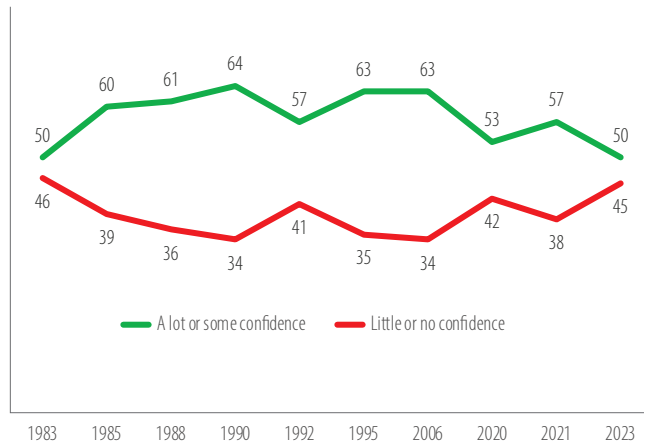
One in two Canadians also express a lot or some confidence in journalists (50%). Confidence in journalists has declined by seven percentage points since 2021 (from 57%), and by 13 points since 1995 (from 63%). However, the level of confidence in journalists expressed by Canadians today is similar to that found in 2020 (53%), and identical to that found when this question was first asked by Environics 40 years ago, in 1983 (50%).

As is the case with both environmental and Indigenous leaders, confidence in journalists is much higher among those who place themselves on the left of the political spectrum (68%), compared to those on the right (46%); and is also higher among supporters of the Bloc Québécois (70%), federal Liberal Party (65%), NDP (60%) or Green Party (49%), compared to supporters of the Conservative Party (38%) or People's Party of Canada (31%).

Among party supporters, the decline in confidence in journalists since 1995 is only significant in the case of the Conservative Party. Compared to 1995, confidence in journalists has fallen by 26 percentage points among Conservative Party supporters, but remained unchanged among Liberal Party supporters, and risen slightly by four points among NDP supporters.

## Confidence in journalists

1983 – 2023

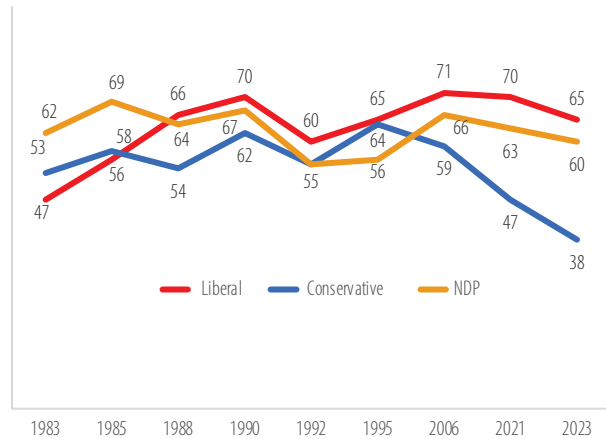


Q.CONF1E

In general, in Canada today, would you say you have a lot of confidence, some confidence, little confidence or no confidence at all in each of the following? Journalists (from 1988 to 2006: “newspaper journalists”)

## Confidence in journalists

1983 – 2023 By federal party support



Q.CONF1E

In general, in Canada today, would you say you have a lot of confidence, some confidence, little confidence or no confidence at all in each of the following? Journalists (from 1988 to 2006: “newspaper journalists”)

Source for 1983-2009: Environics Focus Canada (in-person or telephone); 2020: A Better Canada (Environics Institute) – online survey.

## Confidence in governments and business leaders

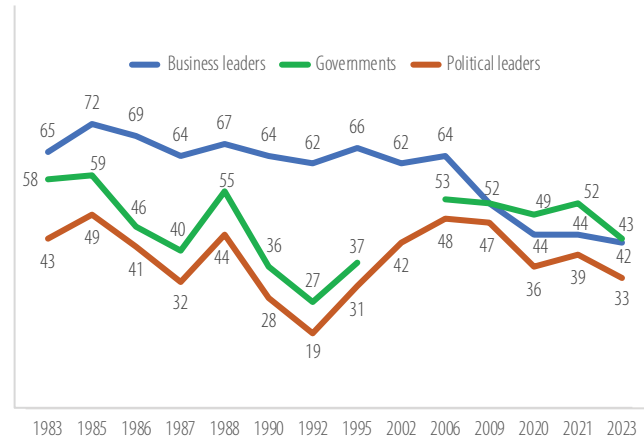
Fewer than one in two Canadians say they have a lot or some confidence in governments (43%), business leaders (42%) or political leaders (33%). In each case, a greater proportion say they have little or no confidence.

While it is true that confidence in governments and political leaders has declined recently, this does not mean that confidence levels have not been falling steadily over the longer-term. Compared to 2006, for instance, confidence in governments has declined by 10 percentage points (from 53% to 43%), and confidence in political leaders has declined by an even greater amount (by 15 points, from 48% to 33%). But, in each case, confidence levels are higher than they were about 30 years ago – in 1992 – and similar to what they were in 1987. Thus, confidence in governments and political leaders is lower today than it was 17 years ago, but much higher today than it was 31 years ago, and the same today as it was 36 years ago.

In the case of confidence in business leaders, the trend is more clear. The proportion of Canadians with a lot or some confidence in business leaders remained relatively steady at around 65 percent over about two decades, from 1983 to 2006. However, since 2006 it has declined by 22 percentage points, to reach 42 percent in 2023. Since 2006, the decline in confidence in business leaders is greater than the decline in confidence in either governments or political leaders.

## Confidence in business leaders, political leaders and governments

1983 – 2023 A lot of confidence



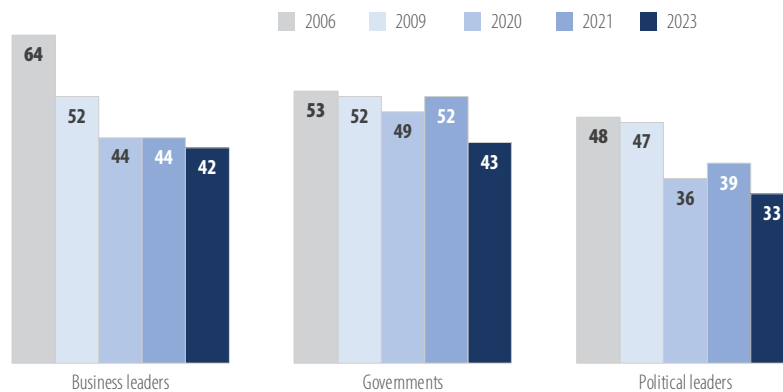
Q.CONF1A-C

In general, in Canada today, would you say you have a lot of confidence, some confidence, little confidence or no confidence at all in each of the following?

Source for 1983-2009: Environics Focus Canada (in-person or telephone); 2020: A Better Canada (Environics Institute) – online survey.

## Confidence in business leaders, political leaders and governments

2006 – 2023



Q.CONF1A-C

In general, in Canada today, would you say you have a lot of confidence, some confidence, little confidence or no confidence at all in each of the following?

Source for 1983-2009: Environics Focus Canada (in-person or telephone); 2020: A Better Canada (Environics Institute) – online survey.



There are important regional differences in confidence in governments and political leaders. In both cases, among the provinces, the proportion with a lot or some confidence is currently highest in Quebec, while the proportion with little or no confidence at all is highest in Saskatchewan.

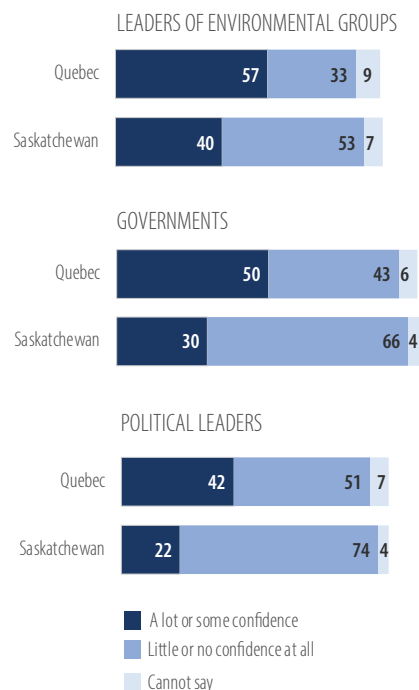
In the case of age groups, however, what stands out is a relatively absence of difference – at least in the case of governments and political leaders.

- The proportion expressing confidence in governments or political leaders among Canadians age 18 to 24 is similar to that among those age 55 and over (though it is slightly lower for those age 45 to 54).
- In the case of business leaders, younger Canadians are actually slightly more likely to express confidence than their older counterparts (the proportion saying they have a lot or some confidence in business leaders is 49% among those age 18 to 24, compared to 40% among those age 55 and older).

Younger Canadians, therefore, do not stand out as having lower than average levels of confidence in leaders. To recap, the Confederation of Tomorrow Survey finds that younger Canadians do not have lower confidence than average in government or political leaders, and have higher confidence than average in business leaders, leaders of environmental groups and leaders of Indigenous organizations. Moreover, younger Canadians are not more likely than their older counterparts to be losing confidence over time in governments or different types of leaders. In the case of confidence in governments, for instance, the trend for the younger age group follows that for Canadians as a whole: confidence levels are lower today than in the mid-2000s, but much higher than in the early 1990s, and comparable to the late 1980s.

## Confidence in governments and political leaders

2023 Quebec and Saskatchewan



Q.CONF1B, C & F

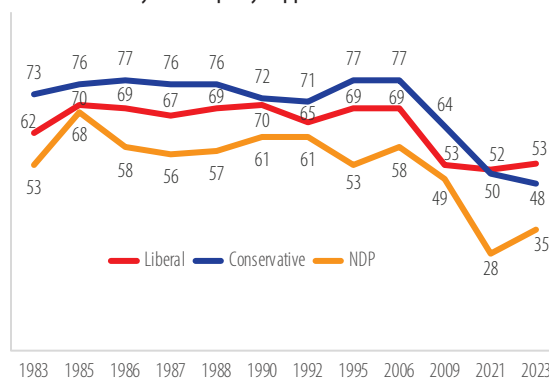
*In general, in Canada today, would you say you have a lot of confidence, some confidence, little confidence or no confidence at all in each of the following?*

There are, however, significant differences in levels of confidence in governments, business leaders and political leaders by political leaning. Not surprisingly, those who place themselves on the right of the political spectrum have more confidence in business leaders (54%) than in governments (41%), whereas those on the left have more confidence in governments (56%) than in business leaders (38%).

Differences among supporters of the different federal parties, however, are more complex.

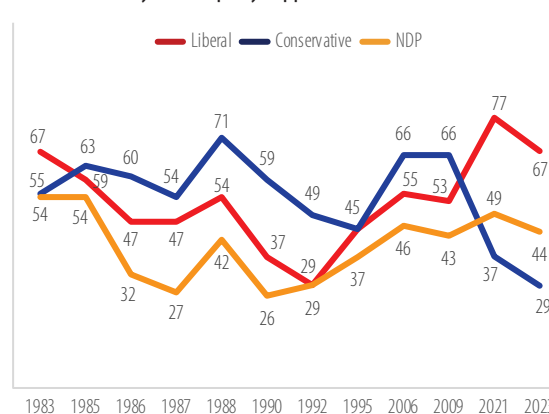
- As expected, confidence in business leaders is lowest among supporters for the federal NDP – as has been the case consistently since this question was first asked by Environics in 1983.<sup>1</sup>
- Confidence in business leaders has traditionally been highest among supporters of the Conservative Party, but more recently, this is not the case. Confidence in business leaders is now slightly higher among Liberal Party supporters (53%) than Conservative Party supporters (48%).
- Since 2006, confidence in business leaders has declined by 16 percentage points among Liberal Party supporters, by 23 points among NDP supporters, and by 29 points among Conservative Party supporters.
- Trends regarding confidence in governments are related to changes in the party in power in Ottawa. Levels of confidence were higher among supporters of the Conservatives than those of the Liberals in the periods that coincided with Conservative governments in Ottawa; more recently, however, levels of confidence have been higher among Liberal supporters than Conservative supporters.

### Confidence in business leaders 1983 – 2023 By federal party support



**Q.CONFIA**  
In general, in Canada today, would you say you have a lot of confidence, some confidence, little confidence or no confidence at all in each of the following?  
Source for 1983-2009: Environics Focus Canada (in-person or telephone); 2020: A Better Canada (Environics Institute) – online survey.

### Confidence in governments 1983 – 2023 By federal party support

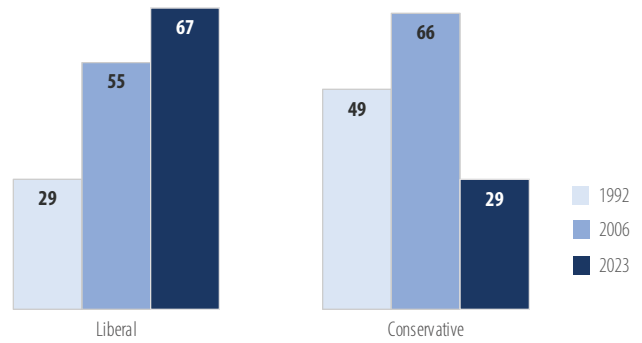


**Q.CONFIB**  
In general, in Canada today, would you say you have a lot of confidence, some confidence, little confidence or no confidence at all in each of the following?  
Source for 1983-2009: Environics Focus Canada (in-person or telephone).

<sup>1</sup> Confidence in business leaders is currently lower among supporters of the PPC (30%) than supporters of the NDP (35%); however, the analysis in this section focuses on the main political parties.

- It is striking that confidence in government fell by 37 percentage points among Conservative Party supporters between 2006 – the year Stephen Harper became prime minister – and today. But this is counterbalanced by an equally large increase of 38 points among Liberal Party supporters between 1992 – when discontent with the government led by Brian Mulroney was at its peak – and today.

### Confidence in governments 1992, 2006, 2023 By federal party support



Q.CONF1B

*In general, in Canada today, would you say you have a lot of confidence, some confidence, little confidence or no confidence at all in each of the following?*

*Source for 1992 and 2006: Environics Focus Canada (in-person or telephone).*

## An overview of key trends

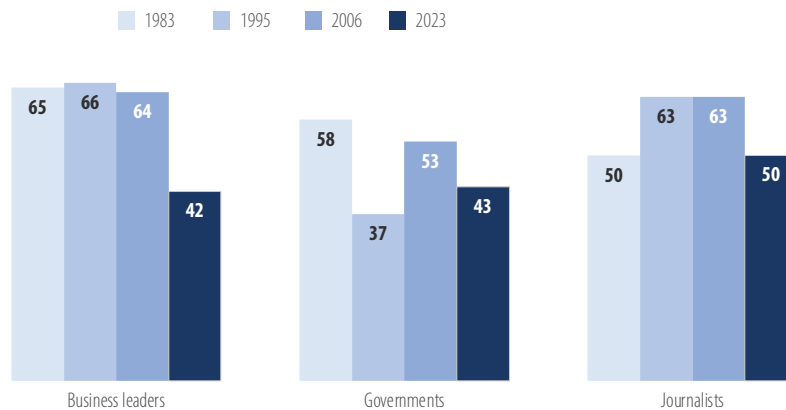
In order to highlight some patterns relating to how confidence in leaders has changed in Canada over the past four decades, this concluding section narrows the focus to three items – confidence in business leaders, governments and journalists – at four different points of time (1983, 1995, 2006 and 2023).

What first becomes clear is that the trend over time is different in each case. Confidence in business leaders held steady for more than two decades, but has fallen significantly in the most recent period. Confidence in governments has cycled through ups and downs. Confidence in journalist follows more of an arc, first increasing and then, more recently, decreasing. In each case, levels of confidence are lower today than in the mid-2000s. But it is not the case that confidence in different types of leaders has been gradually declining over time. Only in the case of business leaders is confidence lower today than at any previous time over the past four decades.

A second pattern is that Quebec has shifted from being the region where confidence is lowest in each case, to that where confidence is highest. This is not to say that confidence levels in 2023 are exceptionally high in Quebec, nor that there are currently wide differences among regions. But the most recent declines in confidence in business leaders, governments and journalists are steeper outside Quebec than in the province. As a result, the issue of confidence in leaders likely appears less pressing in Quebec.

Third, younger Canadians do not stand out as having less confidence in leaders, or as being more likely to have lost confidence. In general, differences among age groups are modest, and the patterns of change over time for each age group are similar. If there is an exception, it is not among young adults, but among older Canadians (age 60 and older), who are somewhat less likely than those under the age of 60 to have lost confidence in either governments or journalists in the most recent period.

Confidence in business leaders, governments and journalists  
1983 – 2023



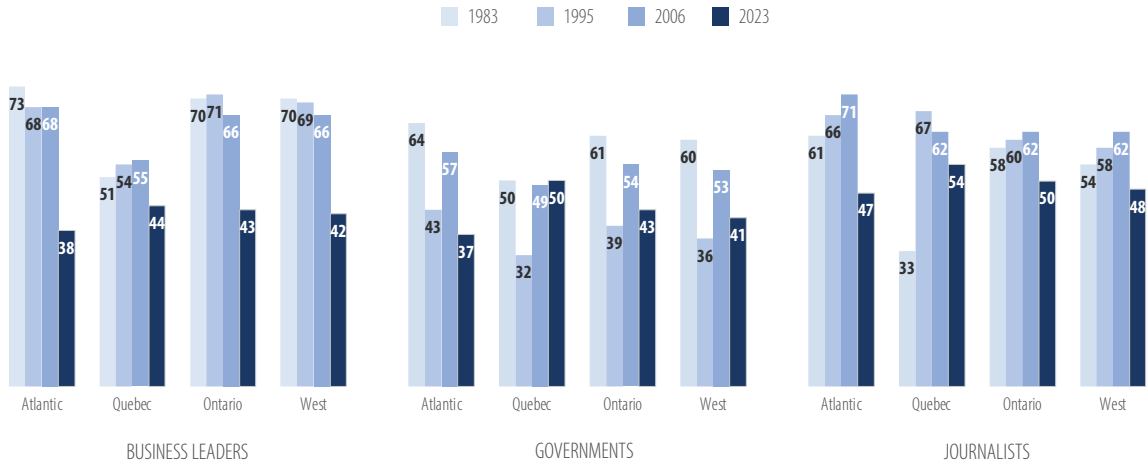
Q.CONF1A, B & E

*In general, in Canada today, would you say you have a lot of confidence, some confidence, little confidence or no confidence at all in each of the following?*

Source for 1983-2006: Environics Focus Canada

## Confidence in business leaders, governments and journalists

1983 – 2023 A lot or some confidence, by region



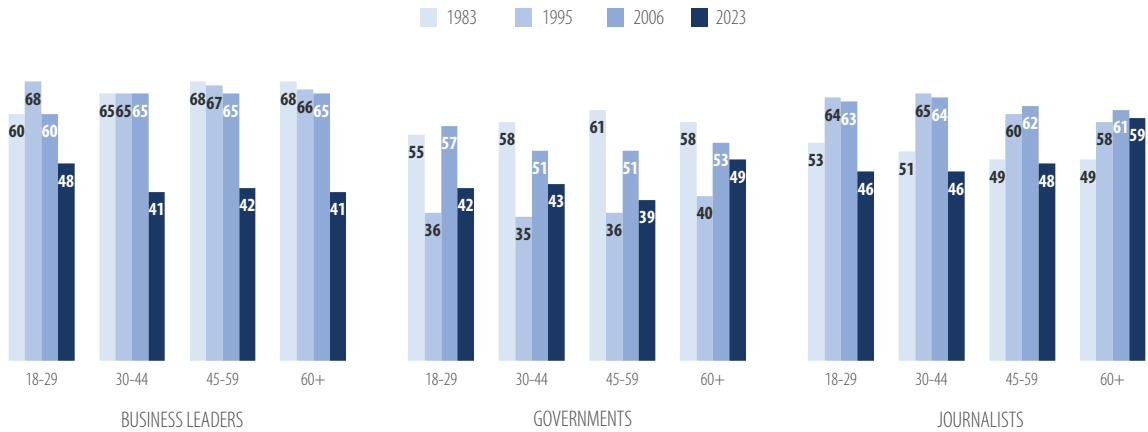
Q.CONF1A, B & E

In general, in Canada today, would you say you have a lot of confidence, some confidence, little confidence or no confidence at all in each of the following?

Source for 1983-2006: Environics Focus Canada

## Confidence in business leaders, governments and journalists

1983 – 2023 A lot or some confidence, by age



Q.CONF1A, B & E

In general, in Canada today, would you say you have a lot of confidence, some confidence, little confidence or no confidence at all in each of the following?

Source for 1983-2006: Environics Focus Canada

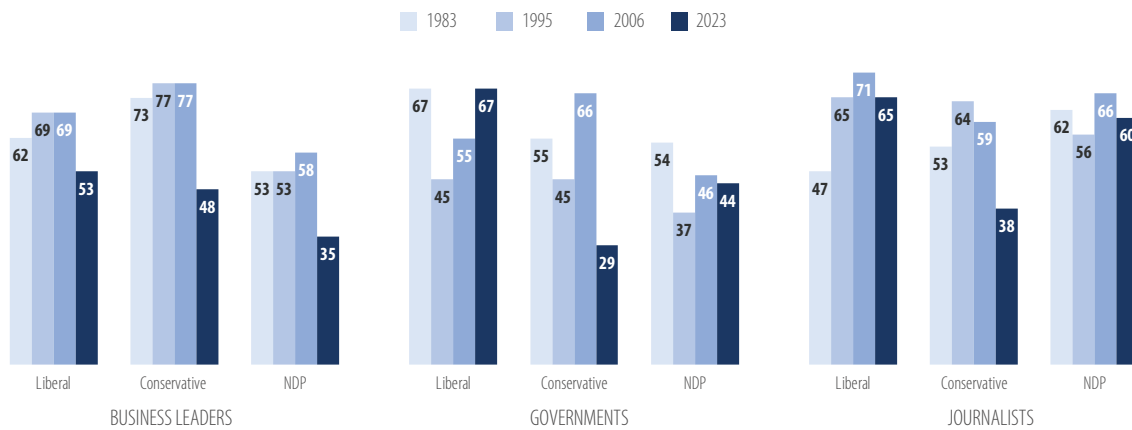
Finally, Conservative Party supporters stand out as being much more likely to have lost confidence in leaders over the past decade than Liberal Party or NDP supporters.

- Among Liberal Party supporters, confidence in business leaders is somewhat lower today than in 1983 (down 9 percentage points), but confidence in governments is unchanged, and confidence in journalists is much higher (up 18 points).
- Among NDP supporters, confidence in business leaders has seen a significant decline (down 18 points), confidence in governments is somewhat lower (down

10 points), and confidence in journalists is more or less unchanged (down 2 points).

- Among Conservative Party supporters, however, there have been significant declines in each case: confidence in business leaders has dropped by 25 points; confidence in governments has dropped by 26 points; and confidence in journalists has dropped by 15 points. As the starting point for this comparison (1983) is, like 2023, a year in which the Liberal Party formed government in Ottawa, these declines in confidence among Conservative Party supporters are not simply a reflection of swings in the political cycle.

### Confidence in business leaders, governments and journalists 1983 – 2023 A lot or some confidence, by federal party support



Q.CONF1A,B & E

In general, in Canada today, would you say you have a lot of confidence, some confidence, little confidence or no confidence at all in each of the following?

Source for 1983-2006: Environics Focus Canada

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