

# SOCIAL COHESION

In the Pandemic Age

A Focus on Canada

October 2020

For more information about this survey, please visit:  
<https://www.ipsos.com/en-ca/news-polls/Social-Cohesion-is-under-assault-globally>

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# What This Is



*The OECD characterizes a society cohesive if “it works towards the well-being of all its members, fights exclusion and marginalization, creates a sense of belonging, promotes trust, and offers its members the opportunity of upward social mobility.”*

*And related, “social capital is the networks together with shared norms, values and understandings that facilitate co-operation within or among groups.”*

So, at its very core, social cohesion is a necessary condition for democratic countries to function.

There is no question that the pandemic created a more “cohesive” society in many countries in its early days. People will always pull together when there is a common enemy (COVID-19), especially the double challenge of a health enemy and an economic enemy. But our COVID-19 tracking surveys have suggested that social cohesion has started to fray as the pandemic has evolved.

Indeed, one has to look no further than recent protests in the US, Canada, Latin America, France, the UK and Russia as a demonstration that social cohesion might be increasingly challenged moving forward.

# What This Is



Many pundits and others are talking about the importance of social cohesion and social capital in the pandemic recovery and beyond.

They note that the “group-think” and “what have you done for me and mine” perspective created by lower social cohesion can ultimately tear a society apart. People make demands of governments and businesses to act more to address how they think they are “wronged” and what their specific wants/needs are, than about what is good for the whole.

Therefore, social cohesion has widespread potential impact on marketing, messaging and positioning among the private sector,

and public and social policy in the public sector moving forward.

But, absent from this discussion is any hard data about the current situation. To address this, we did a literature review on the topic. We then developed our own lens and series of questions that we believe best reflect social cohesion. We asked these questions on the October wave of our monthly 28 country Global Advisor vehicle (see appendix for sample size, etc.).

**NB: Note that we are talking about social cohesion mostly in a “national” context, not within a specific region about that region or a specific demographic group about that group.**

# The Metrics



After testing a larger battery of metrics, we arrived at three buckets\* with three probes in each:

## **Ipsos Social Cohesion Index (ISCI) is a combination of:**

Strong agree, some agree, some disagree, strong disagree

### **Social Relations (People Trust, Shared Priorities, Diversity)**

I trust other (country citizens) to do what is in the best interests of the country

Having a diverse population, with different ethnicities, cultures, etc. is a very good thing for the country

I have the same outlook on life, opinions on important issues, etc. than other (country citizens)

### **Connectedness (Identity, System Trust, Fairness)**

I define myself as a (country) first before anything else

I trust government/our political system to do what is right

I am treated fairly as a (country citizens)

### **Focus Common Good (Help Others, Respect Laws, Corruption)**

I have a responsibility to help other (country citizens)

I respect our laws and ways of doing things

Our society/system is corrupt

\* Dragotov et al, 2016

# Key Observations



For healthy social cohesion to exist, people must be more than just “sort of” committed. The challenges that constantly emerge in any society always put pressure on the degree of social cohesion that people feel. Therefore, “high” or “strong” social cohesion (we have labelled this “solid”) is a pre-requisite for a truly healthy society in order for that society to withstand the constant challenges that it inevitably faces. A marriage is much more likely to be healthy if the partners are in love, than if they are sort of in love, sort of not.

With that in mind, the Ipsos Social Cohesion Index (ISCI) suggests that Social Cohesion is under assault globally. Almost twice as many global citizens are “weak” than “solid” in their sense of social cohesion.

The situation in Canada is better. But, it too lacks strong social cohesion. More Canadians have “weak” (30%) than “solid” (26%) social cohesion.

While social cohesion struggles across all demographics in Canada, some groups are more challenged than others. For example:

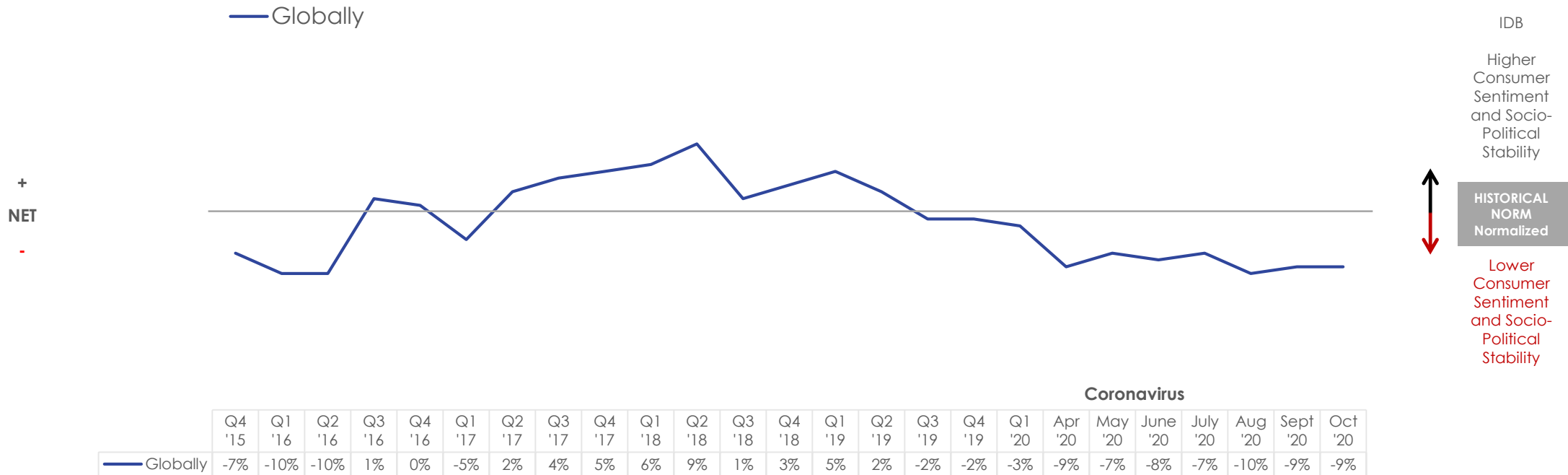
- Social cohesion is particularly challenging among Gen X and especially Millennials, compared with Gen Z and Boomers.
- It is much more solid among higher income than middle and especially lower income.
- Social cohesion is a challenge across all regions, although is most challenging in Ontario and especially the Prairies.

Given the turmoil created by the pandemic, it is concerning that we have such a low level of social cohesion globally going into a period where significant challenges will emerge with any recovery. All is not lost of course. The largest proportion of citizens in most countries have a “moderate” (soft) sense of social cohesion. But, this simply means that they could go either positive or negative depending on how their situation and the country’s situation evolves.

# SOCIAL COHESION GLOBALLY

# Context | Citizen/Consumer Sentiment – The Ipsos Disruption Barometer (IDB)

The broader citizen/consumer environment is a breeding ground for challenges to social cohesion. Global citizens/consumers were turning negative on the Ipsos Disruption Barometer (IDB) leading into the coronavirus outbreak, but they became and remain much more negative since. This suggests continued lower consumer sentiment and higher potential for socio-political disruption. This is obviously relevant for social cohesion as it puts pressure on solidarity as people look for solutions.

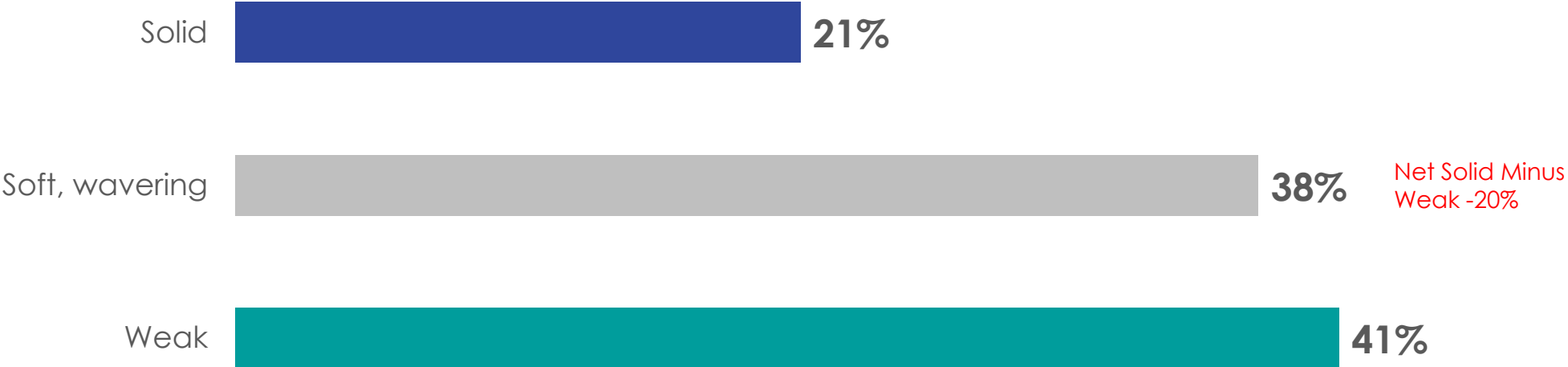




# Social Cohesion Snapshot

Social Cohesion worldwide is under assault. Almost twice as many citizens are “weak” than “solid” in their sense of social cohesion.

## SOCIAL COHESION INDEX

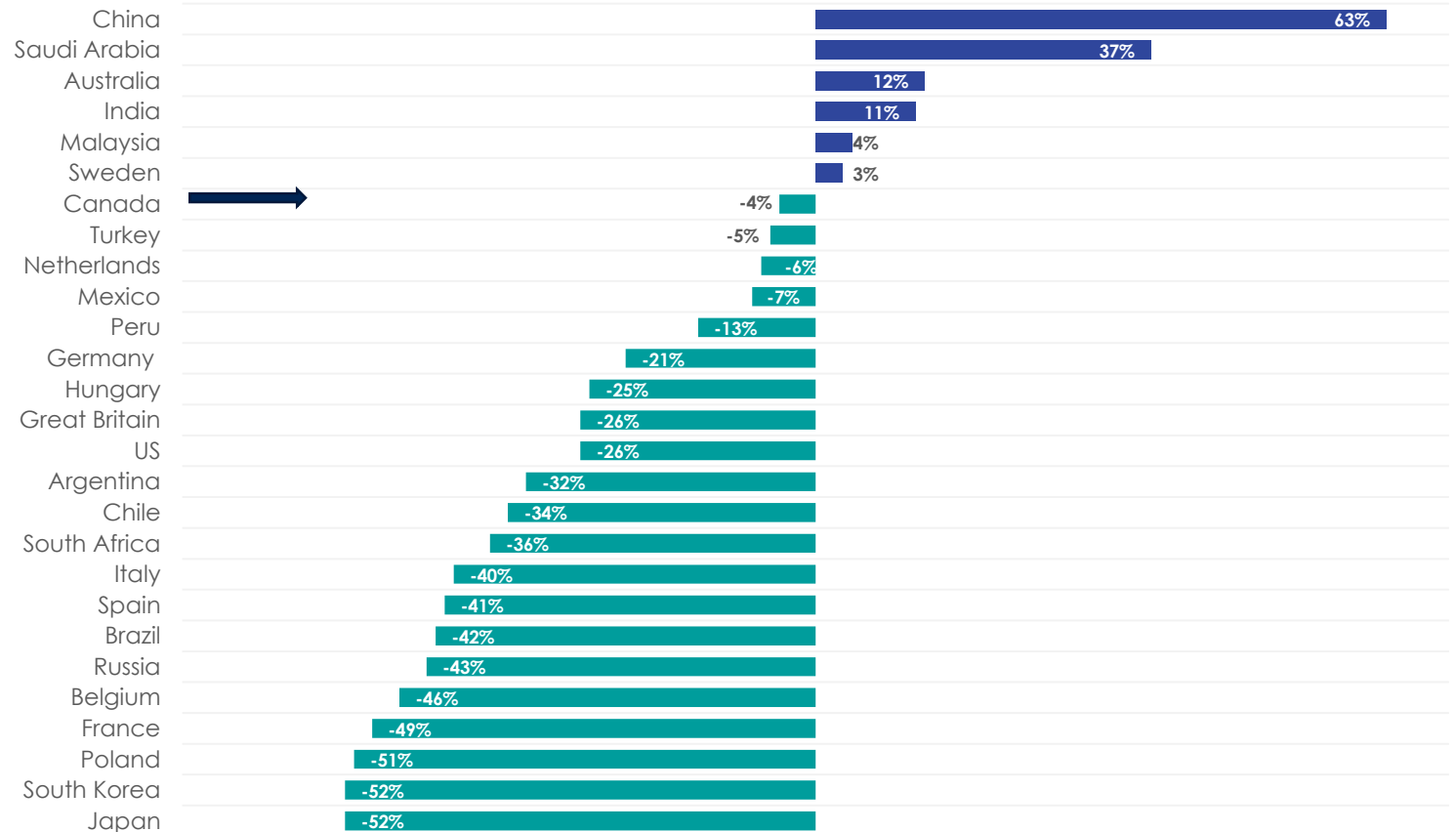


“Solid” = “Solid” on all 3 of the sub-indices or “Solid” on 2 and not worse than “soft, wavering” on 1.

# A Global Snapshot Comparing Social Cohesion by Country

- Only 6 of 27 countries are net positive in Social Cohesion – China, Saudi Arabia, Australia, India, Malaysia and Sweden.
- A variety of countries are decidedly negative in their net Social Cohesion, lowest in Japan, South Korea, Poland, France and Belgium.
- It is interesting that while much attention has been paid to the social rancor currently in the US, it ranks in the middle of countries on Social Cohesion, although it is decidedly negative as well.

## SOCIAL COHESION OCT 2020 (NET “SOLID” MINUS “WEAK”)



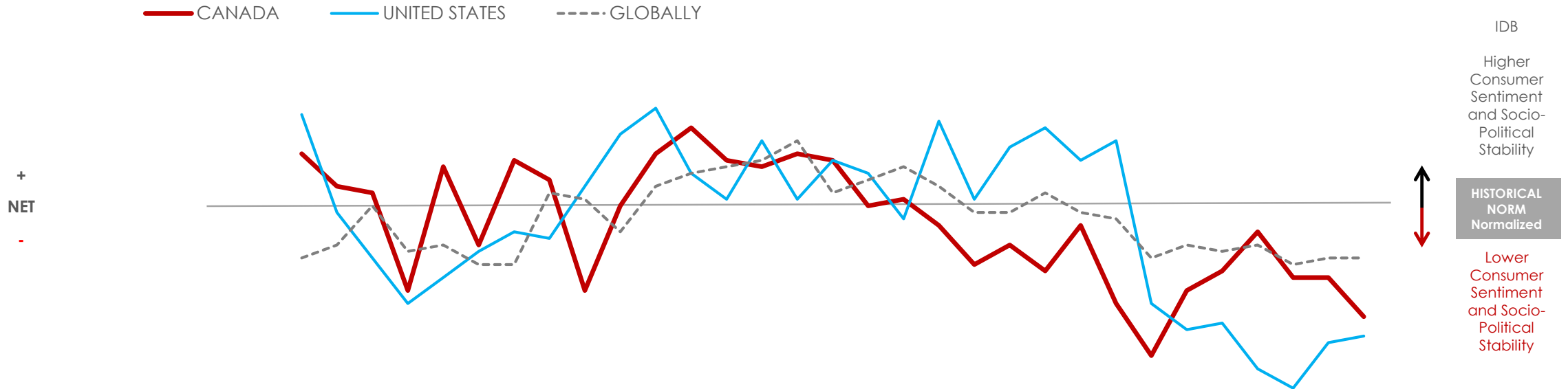
# SOCIAL COHESION FOCUS ON CANADA



1  
1  
1

# Context | Citizen/Consumer Sentiment – The Ipsos Disruption Barometer (IDB)

Even more so than globally, the broader citizen/consumer environment in Canada is a breeding ground for challenges to social cohesion. After showing signs of a “V” recovery up until July, citizen/consumer sentiment in Canada stalled, fell back in August and has continued to fall into October. This is obviously relevant for social cohesion as it puts pressure on solidarity as people look for solutions.

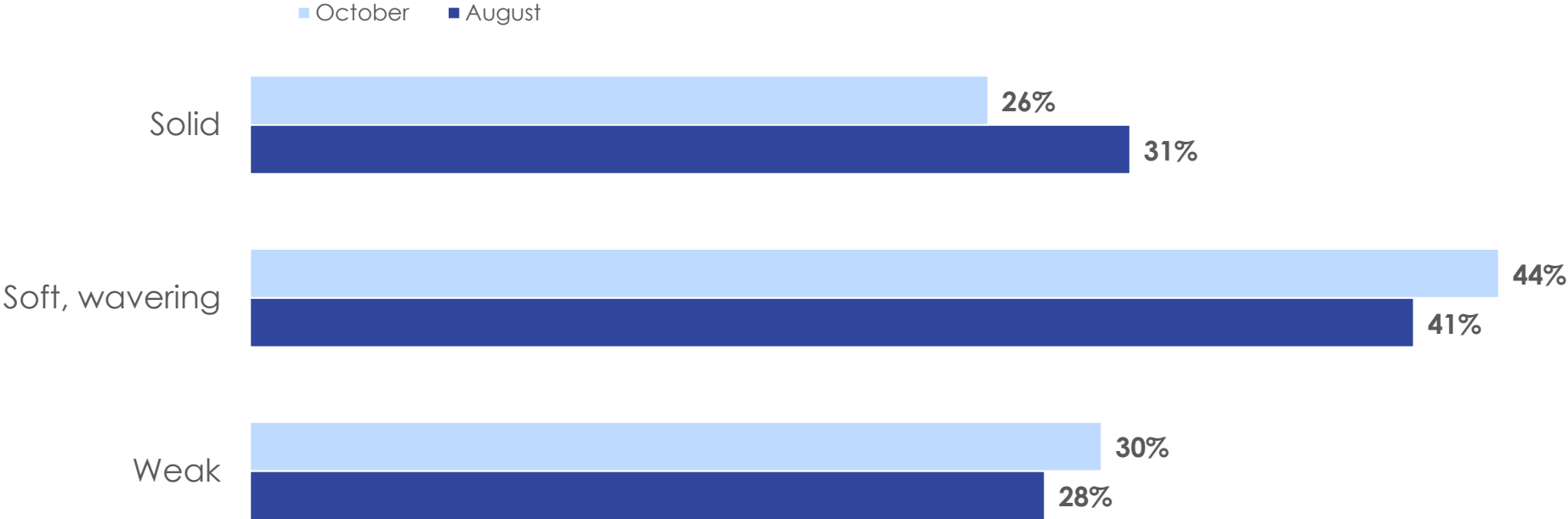


	Federal Election Oct 2015													Federal Election Oct 2019													Coronavirus												
	Q4 '14	Q1 '15	Q2 '15	Q3 '15	Q4 '15	Q1 '16	Q2 '16	Q3 '16	Q4 '16	Q1 '17	Q2 '17	Q3 '17	Q4 '17	Q1 '18	Q2 '18	Q3 '18	Q4 '18	Q1 '19	Q2 '19	Q3 '19	Q4 '19	Jan '20	Feb '20	Mar '20	Apr '20	May '20	Jun '20	Jul '20	Aug '20	Sept '20	Oct '20								
<b>CANADA</b>	7%	2%	1%	-14%	5%	-7%	6%	3%	-14%	-1%	7%	11%	6%	5%	7%	6%	-1%	0%	-4%	-10%	-7%	-11%	-4%	-16%	-24%	-14%	-11%	-5%	-12%	-12%	-18%								
<b>UNITED STATES</b>	13%	-2%	-9%	-16%	-12%	-8%	-5%	-6%	2%	10%	14%	4%	0%	9%	0%	6%	4%	-3%	12%	0%	8%	11%	6%	9%	-16%	-20%	-19%	-26%	-29%	-22%	-21%								
<b>GLOBALLY</b>	-9%	-7%	-1%	-8%	-7%	-10%	-10%	1%	0%	-5%	2%	4%	5%	6%	9%	1%	3%	5%	2%	-2%	-2%	1%	-2%	-3%	-9%	-7%	-8%	-7%	-10%	-9%	-9%								

# Social Cohesion Canada

Social Cohesion in Canada is challenged. Slightly more Canadians are “weak” than “solid” in their sense of social cohesion. Furthermore, social cohesion appears to be eroding as the pandemic drones on.

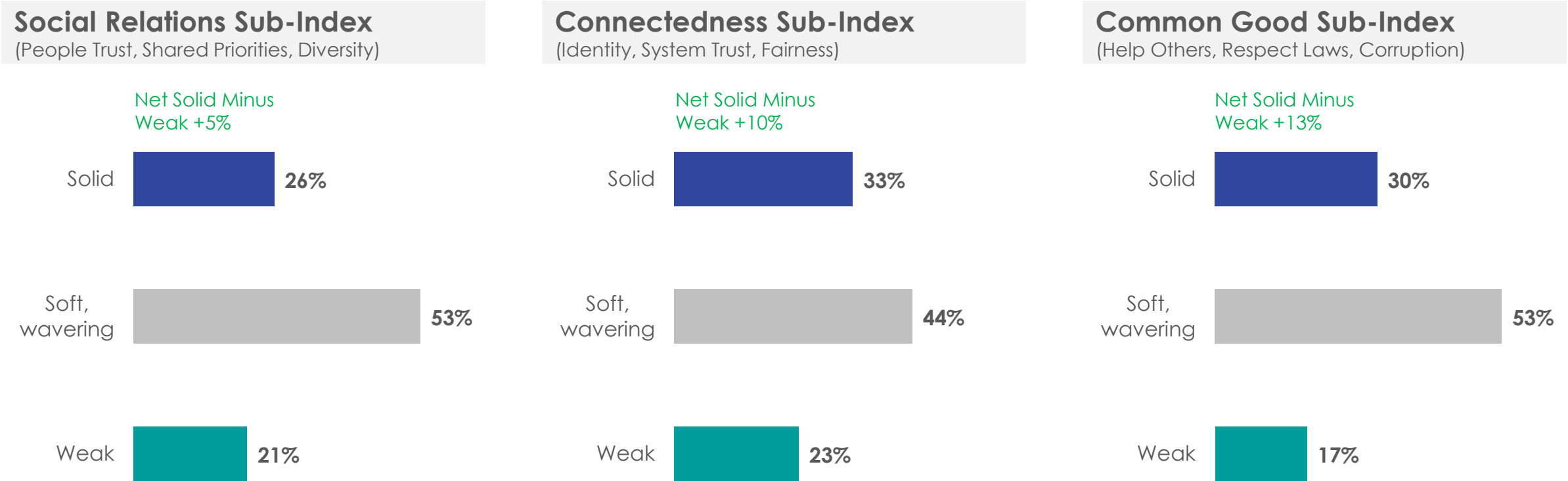
## SOCIAL COHESION INDEX



“Solid” = “Solid” on all 3 of the sub-indices or “Solid” on 2 and not worse than “soft, wavering” on 1.

# Social Cohesion Sub-Indices Canada

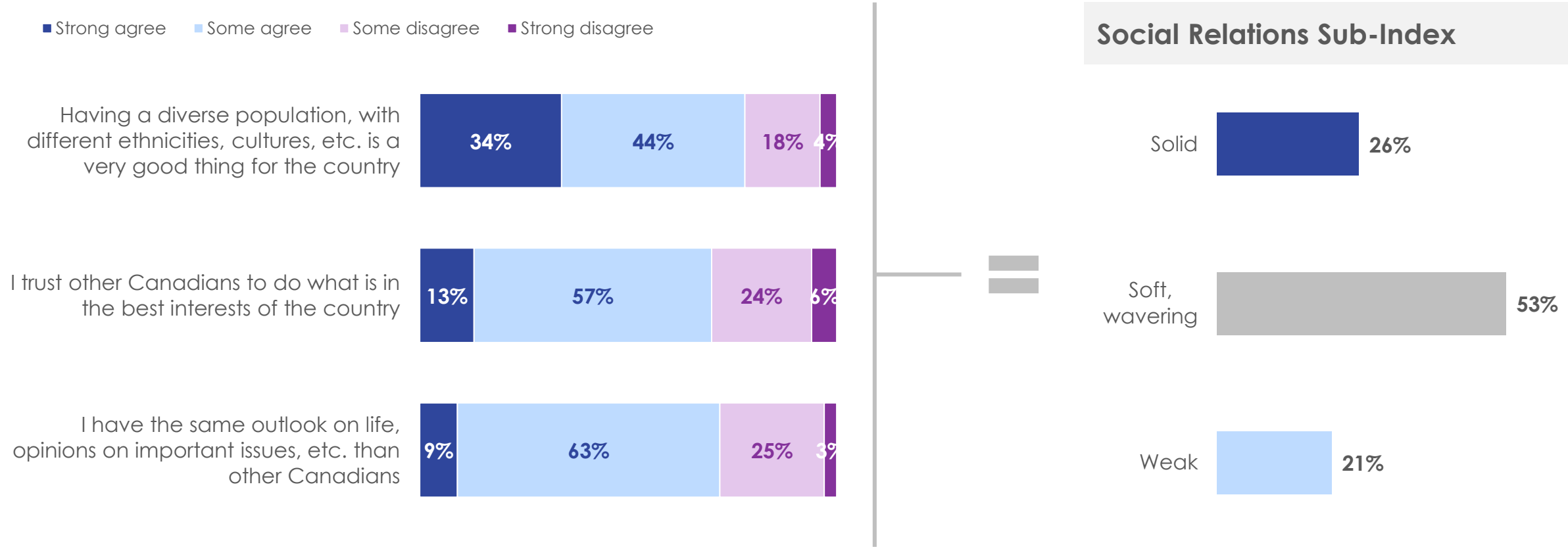
Canada does best on Common Good (Help Others, Respect Laws, Corruption), especially compared with Social Relations (People Trust, Shared Priorities, Diversity).



How can the 3 sub-indices that comprise the overall index all be more positive than the overall? It is all in the math. For example, for someone to be "Solid" overall they need to be "Solid" on all 3 of the sub-indices or "Solid" on 2 and not worse than "soft, wavering" on 1. There is a sizeable proportion of people who have starkly different ratings on each sub-index (i.e., they move from negative to positive and visa versa). Therefore the overall is not simply an "average."

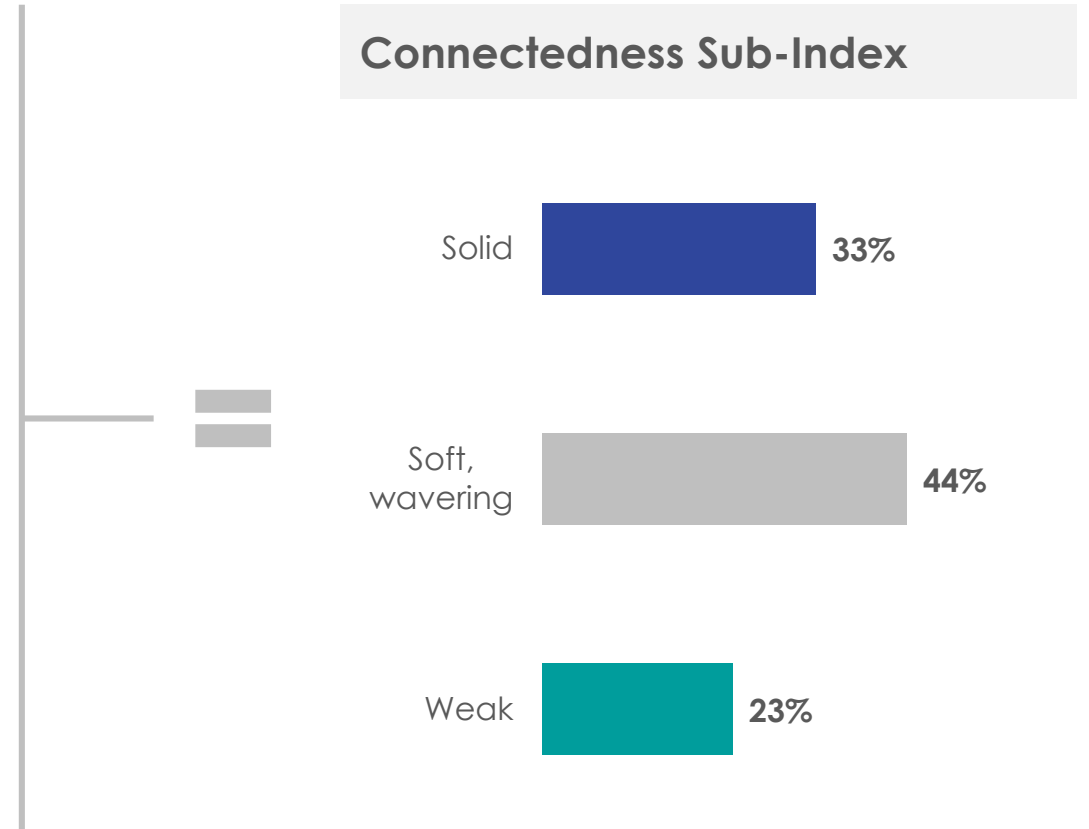
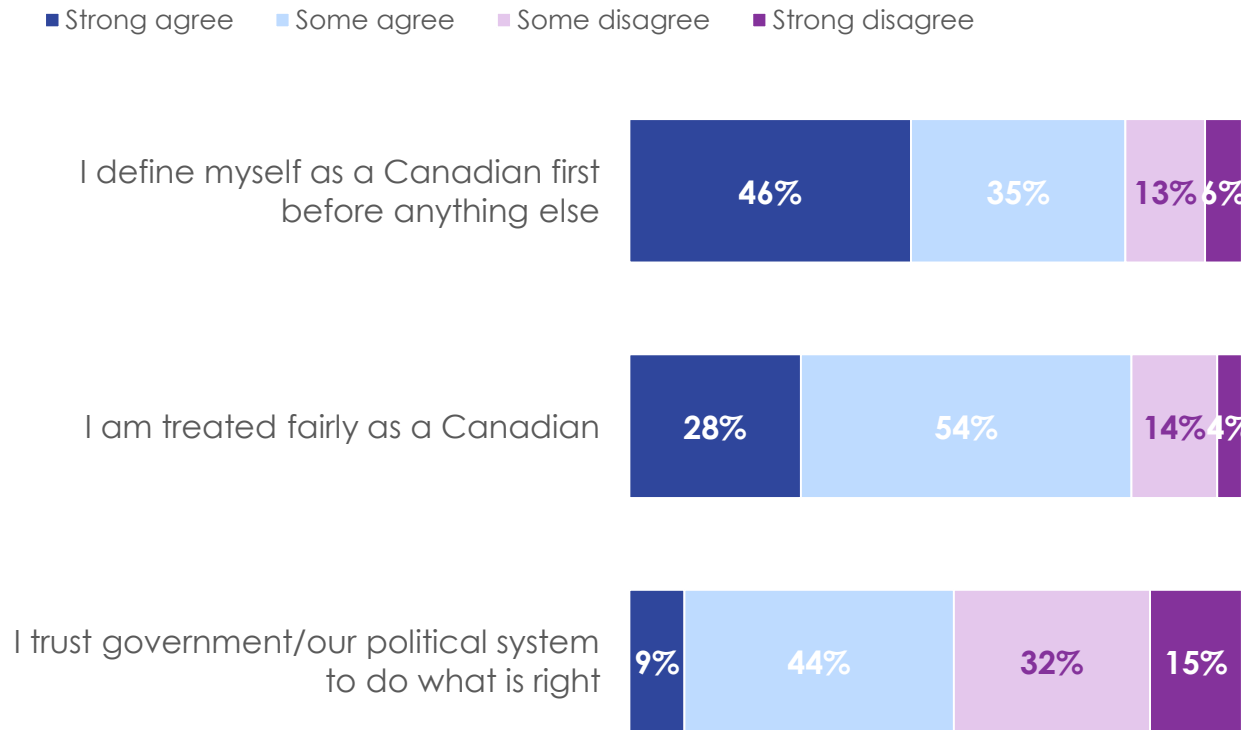
# Social Relations Sub-Index Canada

Diversity is a relative strength in the context of Social Relations (highest “strongly agree”).  
 Shared priorities is a relative weakness.



# Connectedness Sub-Index Canada

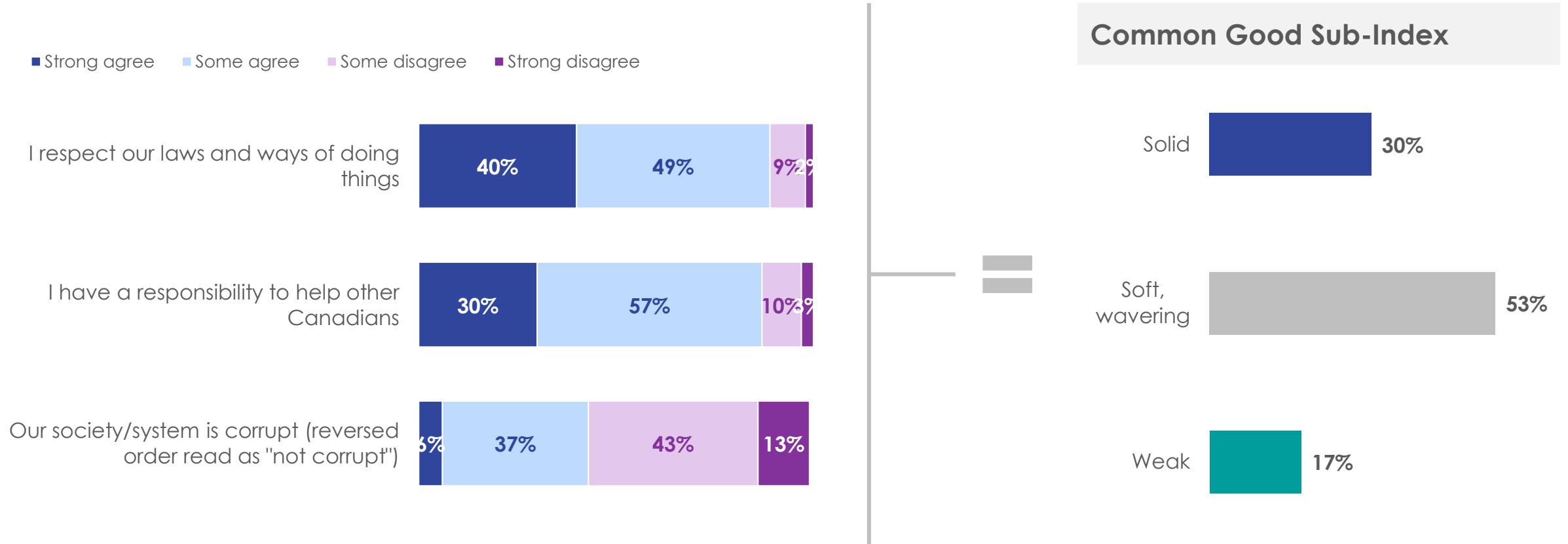
Identifying oneself as Canadian is a relative strength in the context of Connectedness (highest “strongly agree”). Trust in government/politics is a relative weakness.





# Common Good Sub-Index Canada

Respect for laws and ways of doing things is a relative strength in the context of Common Good (highest "strongly agree"). The system being corrupt is a relative weakness.

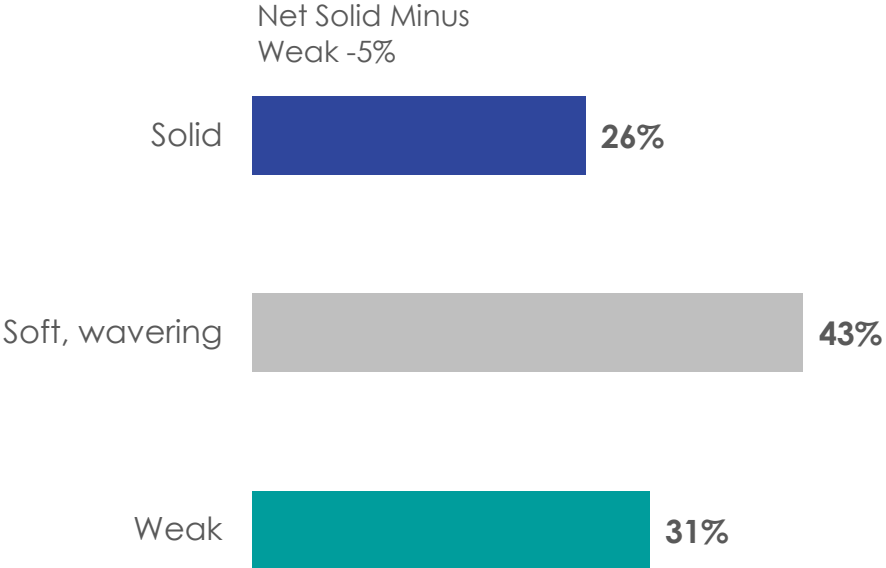


# Social Cohesion by Demographics

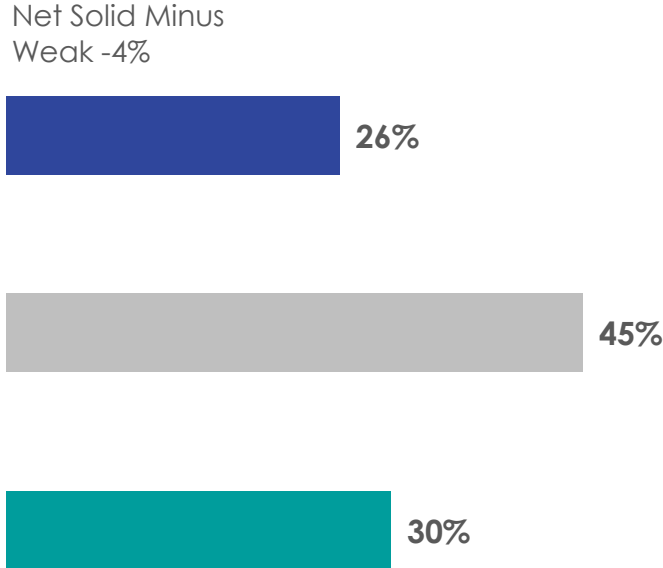
Sex -- Social cohesion is a challenge among both men and women equally.

## SOCIAL COHESION INDEX

### Men



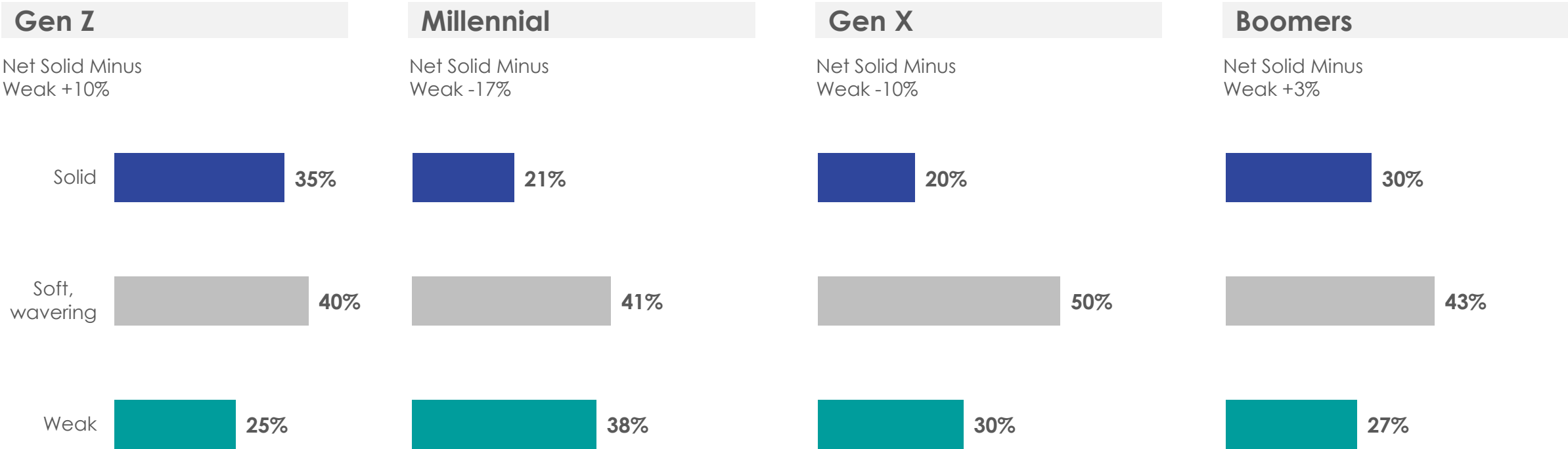
### Women



# Social Cohesion by Demographics

Generation -- Social cohesion is a challenge across all generations. However, it is particularly challenging among Gen X and especially Millennials, compared with Gen Z and Boomers.

## SOCIAL COHESION INDEX



# Social Cohesion by Demographics

Income -- Social cohesion a challenge across all income groups. However, it is much more solid among higher income than middle and especially lower income.

## SOCIAL COHESION INDEX

### Lower \$

Net Solid Minus  
Weak -15%

Solid 23%

Soft, waning 39%

Weak 38%

### Middle \$

Net Solid Minus  
Weak -8%

Solid 24%

Soft, waning 44%

Weak 32%

### Higher \$

Net Solid Minus  
Weak +3%

Solid 31%

Soft, waning 41%

Weak 28%



# Social Cohesion by Demographics

Education -- Social cohesion a challenge across all education groups. However, it is much more solid among higher and middle education than lower education.

## SOCIAL COHESION INDEX

### Lower Ed

Net Solid Minus Weak -18%

Solid 18%

Soft, wavering 47%

Weak 36%

### Middle Ed

Net Solid Minus Weak +3%

Solid 30%

Soft, wavering 43%

Weak 27%

### Higher Ed

Net Solid Minus Weak +7%

Solid 34%

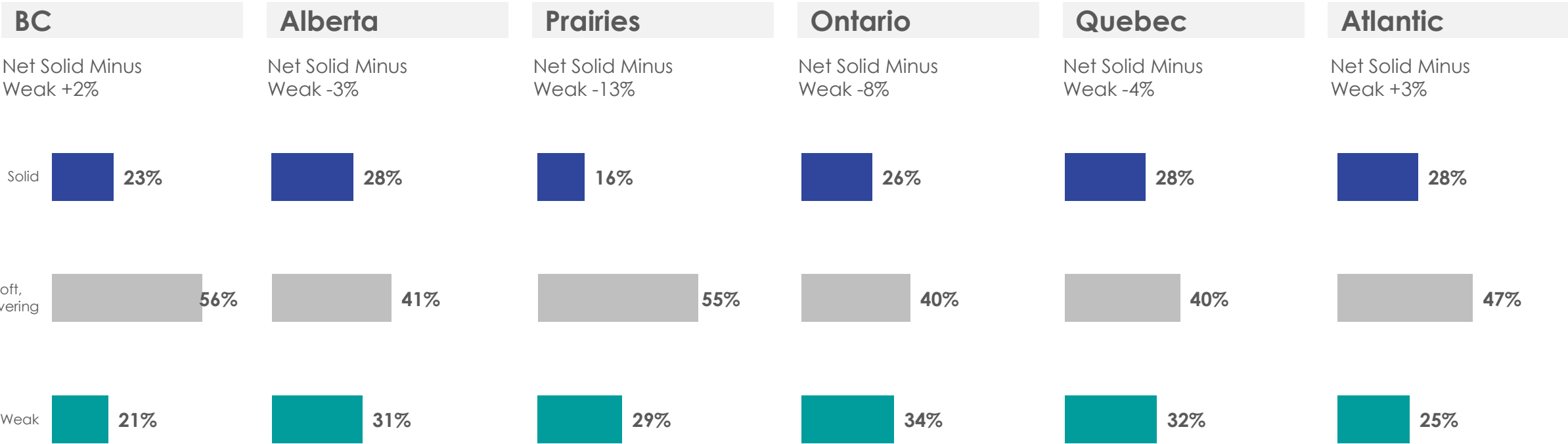
Soft, wavering 39%

Weak 27%

# Social Cohesion by Demographics

Region -- Social cohesion is a challenge across all regions, although is most challenging in Ontario and especially the Prairies.

## SOCIAL COHESION INDEX



# Strengths and Weaknesses



It should come as no surprise that some demographics do better on some Social Cohesion sub-indices than others. For example, the next couple of pages show that...

- The Social Cohesion score in the Prairies is especially dragged down by Social Relations (People Trust, Shared Priorities, Diversity).
- In Ontario, the sub-index score is much higher for Common Good (Help Others, Respect Laws, Corruption) than for Connectedness (Identity, System Trust, Fairness) and Social Relations (People Trust, Shared Priorities, Diversity).

- The Social Cohesion score for Gen Z is especially driven up by Social Relations (People Trust, Shared Priorities, Diversity).
- While among Boomers it is driven up most by Common Good (Help Others, Respect Laws, Corruption).

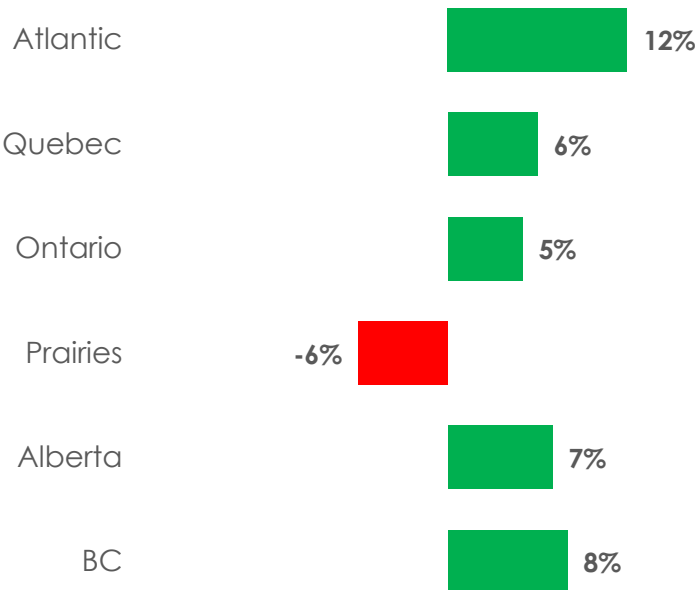
Recognizing these differences is key for private and public sector organizations if they are to target any initiatives to address Social Cohesion challenges.

# Comparing Social Cohesion Sub-Indices by Region

Sub-Indices Region – Quebec is lowest on all three sub-indices. The weakness in the Prairies is driven more by a weakness in Social Relations and Common Good than Connectedness.

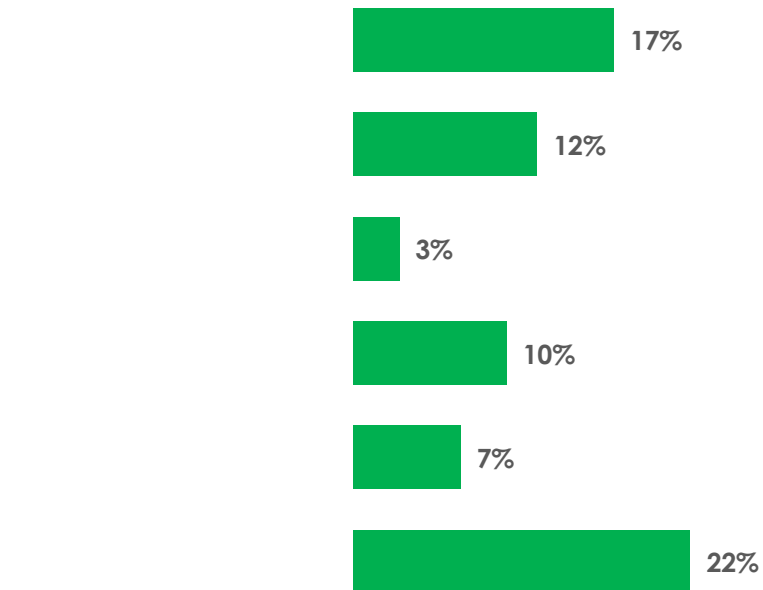
## Social Relations Sub-Index

(People Trust, Shared Priorities, Diversity) (Net "Solid" minus "Weak")



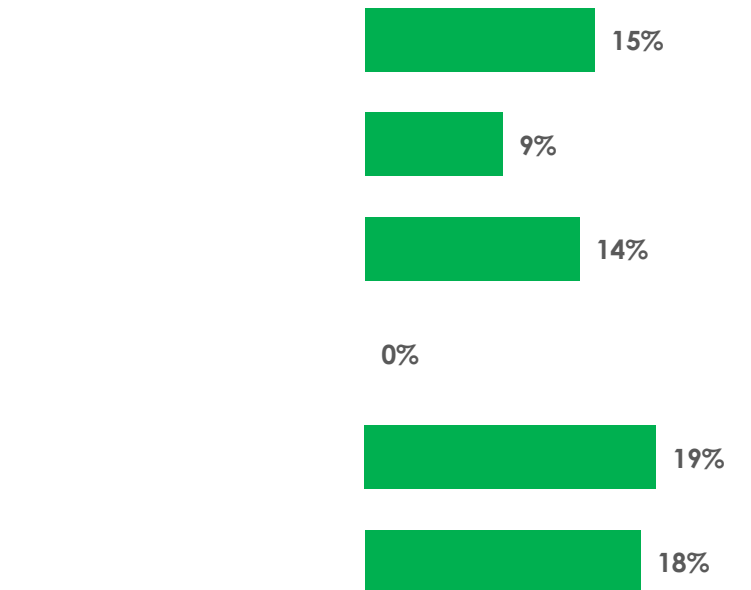
## Connectedness Sub-Index

(Identity, System Trust, Fairness) (Net "Solid" minus "Weak")



## Common Good Sub-Index

(Help Others, Respect Laws, Corruption) (Net "Solid" minus "Weak")





# Comparing Social Cohesion Sub-Indices by Demographics

The relative strength among women, Boomers and Higher Income is driven by Connectedness and Common Good. The relative weakness among Gen Z is disproportionately related to Connectedness, among Gen X Social Relations, and among lower income Connectedness and Common Good.

Net "Solid" minus "Weak"	Social Relations (People Trust, Shared Priorities, Diversity)	Connectedness (Identity, System Trust, Fairness)	Common Good (Help Others, Respect Laws, Corruption)
Men	+2%	+9%	+12%
Women	+8%	+11%	+13%
Gen Z	+24%	+16%	+17%
Millennial	+1%	-2%	-1%
Gen X	+2%	+7%	+9%
Boomer	+4%	+19%	+24%
Lower \$	+1%	-4%	-3%
Middle \$	+4%	+11%	+6%
Higher \$	+11%	+13%	+24%
Lower education	-3%	+1%	-1%
Middle education	+10%	+18%	+20%
Higher education	+15%	+13%	+27%

# Methodology



- The survey was conducted in 27 countries via the Ipsos Online Panel system between September 25 and October 9, 2020.
- Interviews were conducted with 20,011 adults aged 18-74 in Canada, the U.S.A., South Africa, Malaysia and Turkey and 16-74 in all other countries.
- Approximately 1000+ individuals participated on a country by country basis via the Ipsos Online Panel with the exception of Argentina, Belgium, Hungary, India, Mexico, Poland, Russia, Saudi Arabia, South Africa, South Korea, Sweden and Turkey, where each have a sample of approximately 500+.
- In most of the countries surveyed internet penetration is sufficiently high to think of the samples as representative of the wider population within the age ranges covered: Argentina, Australia, Belgium, Canada, France, Germany, Hungary, Italy, Japan, New Zealand, Poland, South Korea, Spain, Sweden, Great Britain and United States.
- Brazil, Chile, China (mainland), India, Malaysia, Mexico, Peru, Russia, Saudi Arabia, South Africa and Turkey have lower levels of internet penetration and so these samples should not be considered to be fully nationally representative, but instead to represent a more affluent, connected population. These are still a vital social group to understand in these countries, representing an important and emerging middle class.
- Weighting has been employed to balance demographics and ensure that the sample's composition reflects that of the adult population according to the most recent country census data.
- The precision of Ipsos online polls are calculated using a credibility interval with a poll of N=1,000 accurate to +/- 3.5 percentage points and N=500 accurate to +/- 4.8 points. For more information on the Ipsos use of credibility intervals, please visit the Ipsos website. The publication of these findings abides by local rules and regulations.

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**You act better when you are sure.**