

# PUBLIC PERSPECTIVES

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## Attitudes Toward Ageing Not a Rosy Picture

February 2019 | Issue 91

An Ipsos Study Conducted  
in Partnership with...



# WHY CHANGING PUBLIC OPINION MATTERS

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**Rapid and continuous transformation, due to technological and social phenomena has become the norm.**

How can organizations thrive in the social and economic transformation (SET) era, where change is the new normal?

Three key pillars are critical in the SET era:

1. Understanding **the context in which you are operating today;**
2. understanding **the public's future hopes and expectations** and,
3. having **the trust of your stakeholders.**

Ipsos is constantly monitoring the Canadian environment and examining...

- [CanadianContext](#) (quarterly consumer confidence, quality of life, Ipsos Disruption Barometer, etc.)
- **CanadaNext** (annual receptivity to and expectations for future technology, social change, etc.)
- [CanadianReputation](#) (annual trust and reputation in sectors and companies)

This report is related to **CanadianContext**, and draws on an extensive international study that Ipsos conducted in partnership with the Centre for Ageing Better (UK).

# KEY FINDINGS OF THIS REPORT: NO ROSY PICTURE OF WHAT AGEING IS PERCEIVED TO BE ALL ABOUT

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## **Canadians do not subscribe to any romantic perceptions of what old age means.**

- A majority worry about old age, and relatively few are looking forward to it, largely because they don't think they will be fit and healthy when they get there.
- Interestingly, Canadians are significantly less favourable in their assessments of ageing than the global average and even their American counterparts.

## **Canadians' descriptions of old age are mixed. While the largest percentage describe people in old age as wise, almost as many describe them as frail and lonely.**

- This has interesting implications for marketing and advertising. For example, while much retirement advertising from financial institutions is framed in a positive light (e.g., old folks sitting on a dock watching the sunset), this does not mesh with how many Canadians perceive older age.

## **Only a minority of Canadians believe that the young should take care of ageing relatives.**

- This places Canada well down the list of countries believing this.

## **In some political circles there is sometimes a cry of “it's time for younger folks to rise up and counter the influence of older folk.”**

- But, this resonates more in most other countries than in Canada. Only one-in-five Canadians think that old people have too much political clout.

## **Our work in IpsosCanadaNext has shown that Canadians are not as convinced about the benefits of new technology than are citizens in many other countries.**

- This seems to hold true as well in the impact of technology on improving old age. Granted, half of Canadians do believe that new technology will help. However, this places Canada well down the list of countries in this belief.

## FERTILITY RATES CONTINUE TO TREND DOWN, % OF SENIORS SHOOTING UP

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### FERTILITY



#### WORLD

1960 = 4.9  
Today = 2.5  
2050 = 2.3

#### CANADA

1960 = 3.9  
Today = 1.6  
2050 = 1.7

### % OF SENIORS



#### WORLD

1960 = 5%  
Today = 9.3%  
2050 = 16%

#### CANADA

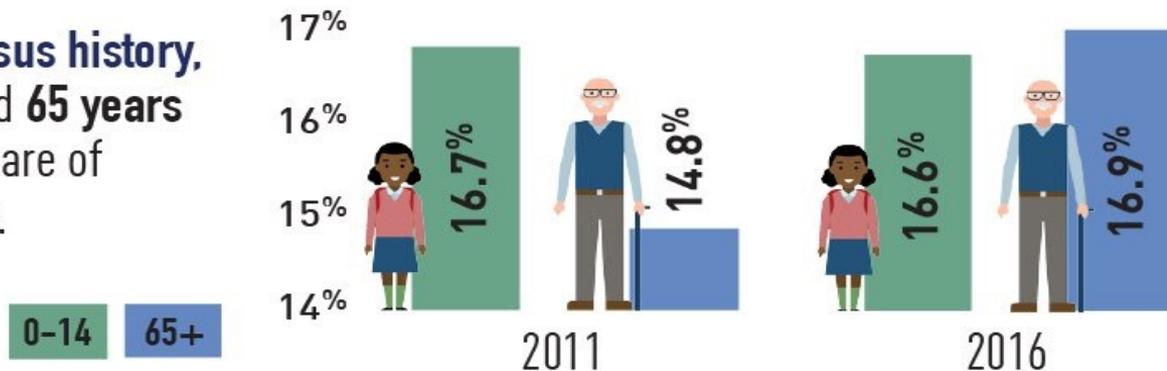
1960 = 7.7%  
Today = 16.9%  
2050 = 26.4%

# SHARE OF SENIORS IN CANADA OUTSTRIPS SHARE OF CHILDREN



## Population Trends by Age and Sex

For the first time in census history, the share of seniors aged **65 years and over** exceeds the share of children **under 15 years**.



Source: Statistics Canada, 2016 Census of Population



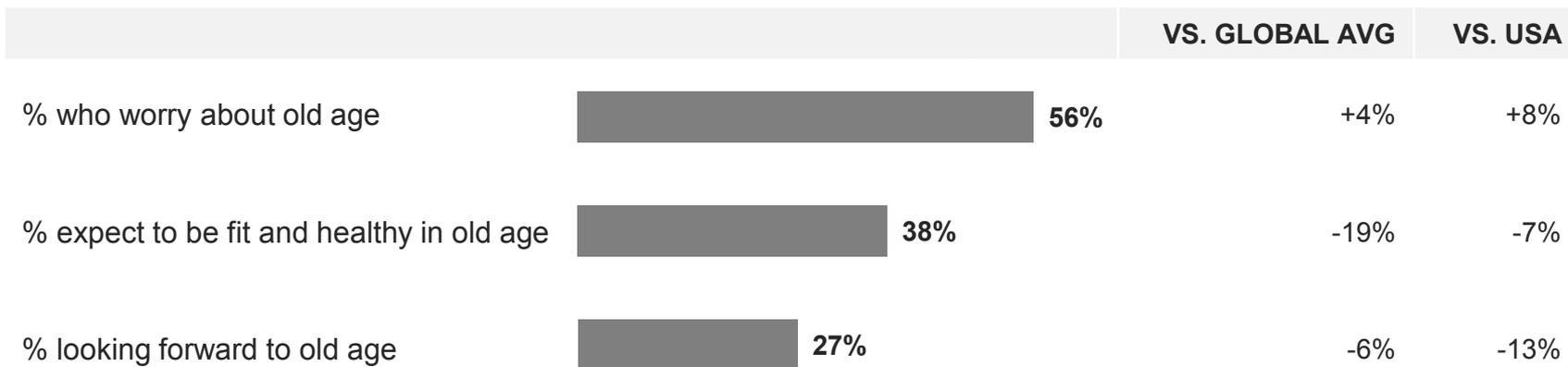
Statistics  
Canada

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Canada

Canada

## A MAJORITY OF CANADIANS WORRY ABOUT OLD AGE

A majority worry about old age, and relatively few are looking forward to it, largely because they don't think they will be fit and healthy when they get there. Interestingly, Canadians are significantly less favourable in their assessments of ageing than the global average and even their American counterparts.

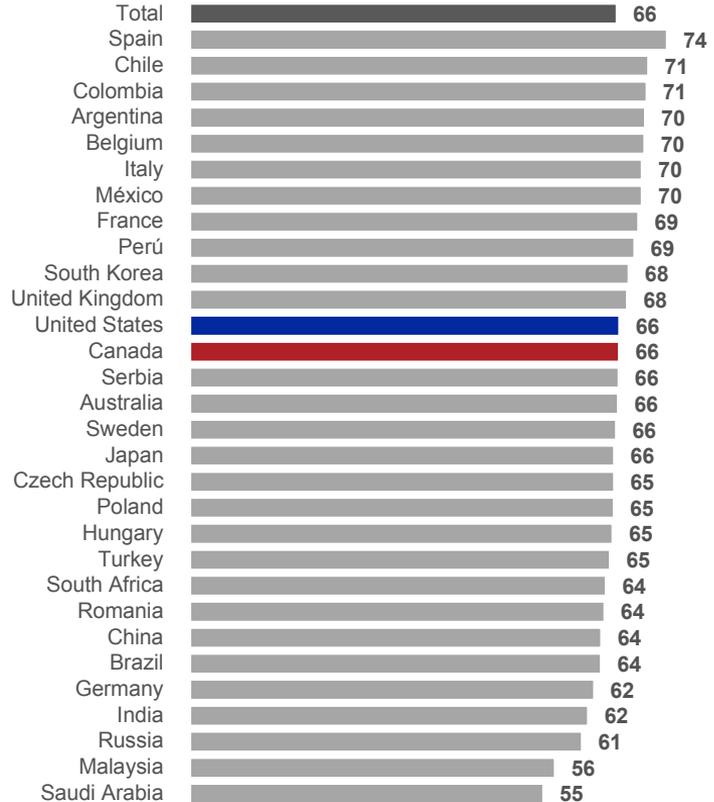


|                     | BC  | Alta | Prairies | Ont | Que | Atl | Men | Women | Millennial | Gen X | Boomer |
|---------------------|-----|------|----------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-------|------------|-------|--------|
| Worry about old age | 64% | 65%  | 56%      | 54% | 49% | 54% | 50% | 61%   | 62%        | 57%   | 48%    |

# ON AVERAGE, OLD MEANS 66 YEARS TO CANADIANS

Congratulations to readers of this report who have reached the age of 66 years. You are now considered to be “old” by Canadians.

**AT WHAT AGE DO YOU THINK PEOPLE CAN BE CONSIDERED OLD? (AVG YRS)**

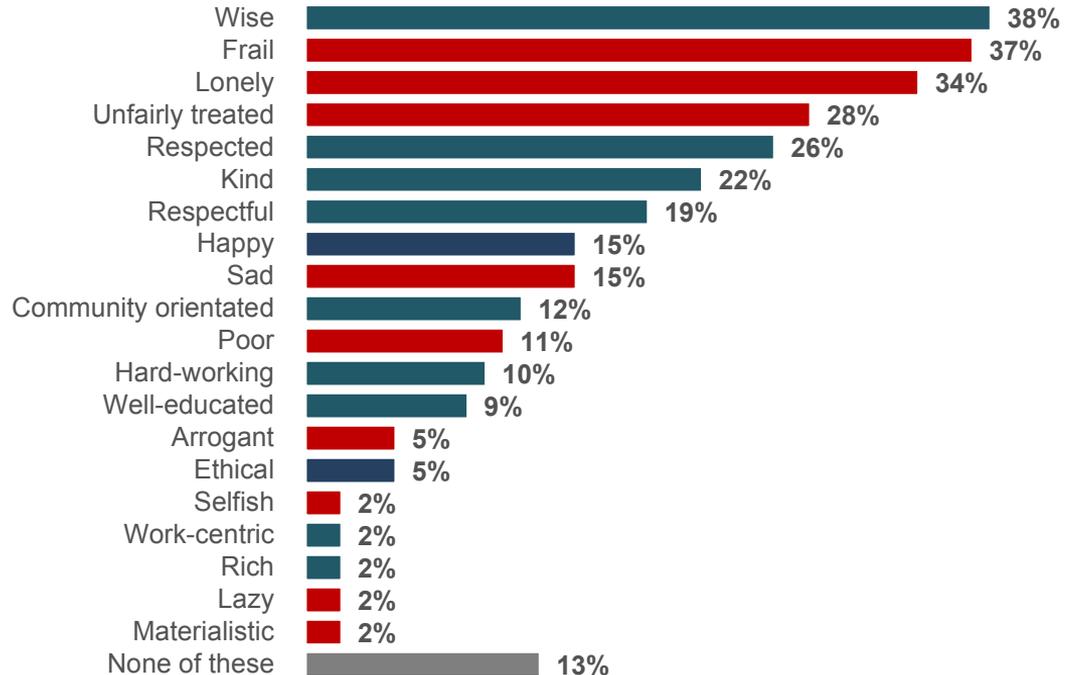


# TWO OUT OF THE TOP THREE WORDS USED TO DESCRIBE OLD AGE ARE NEGATIVE

Canadians' descriptions of old age are mixed. While the largest percentage describe people in old age as wise, almost as many describe them as frail and lonely.

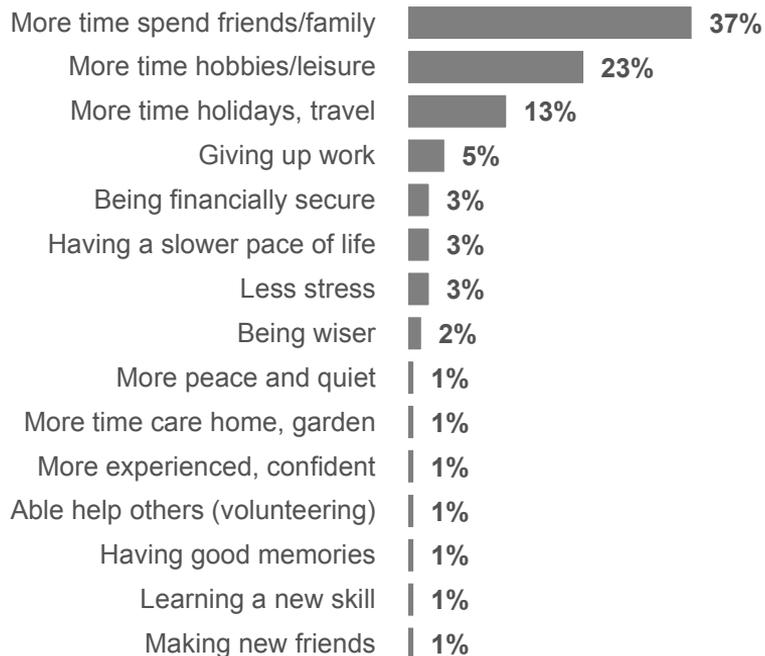
This has interesting implications for marketing and advertising. For example, while much retirement advertising from financial institutions is framed in a positive light (e.g., old folks sitting on a dock watching the sunset), this does not mesh with how many Canadians perceive older age.

## HOW TO BEST DESCRIBE PEOPLE IN OLD AGE

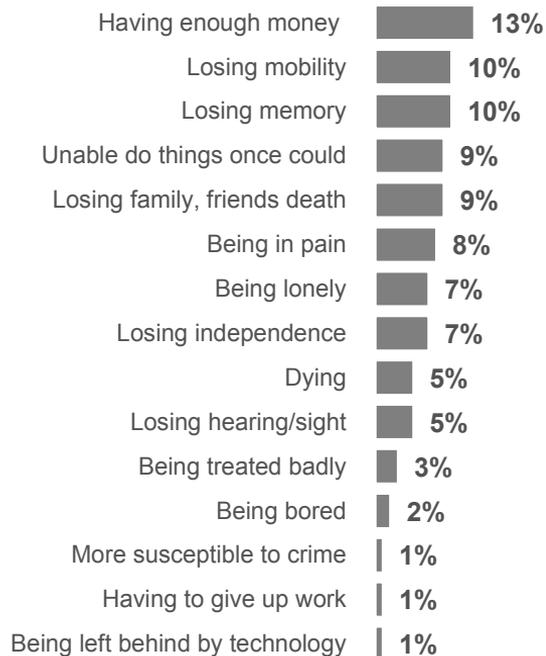


# MORE FAMILY TIME A BENEFIT OF AGEING; MONEY AND HEALTH A DOWNSIDE

## GOOD THINGS ABOUT GETTING OLD



## WORRY ABOUT RE GETTING OLD



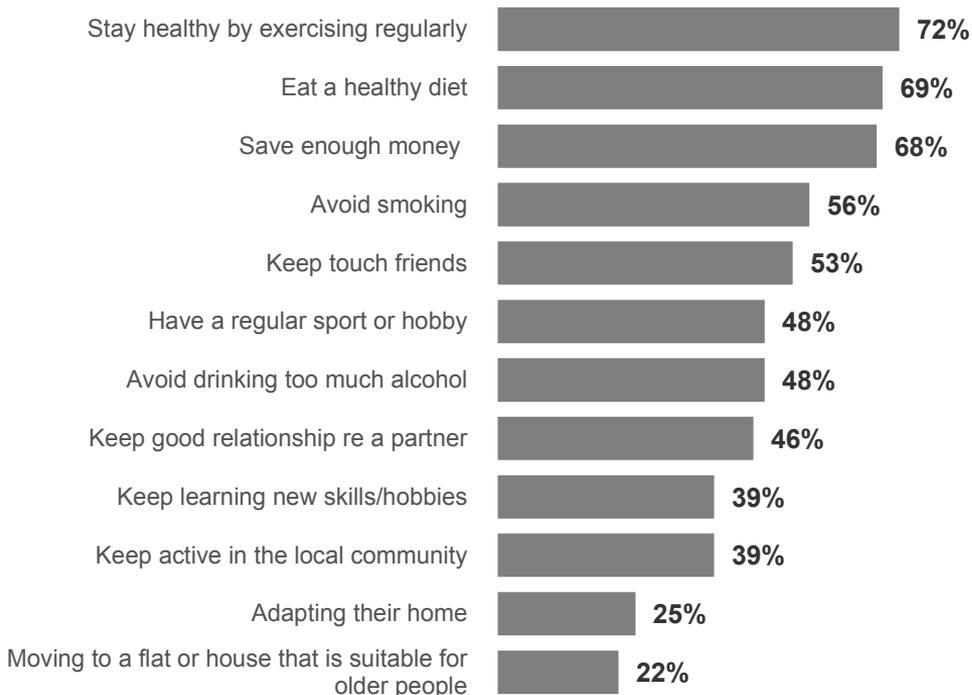
# PREPARING FOR OLD AGE

While only a minority of Canadians are looking forward to old age and believe they will be fit and healthy when they get there, a significant majority believe that people can prepare for old age, mainly, and not surprisingly, by living healthy and saving money.

## % BELIEVE POSSIBLE TO PREPARE FOR OLD AGE

|            | vs. Global Avg | vs. USA |
|------------|----------------|---------|
| <b>75%</b> | +11%           | 0%      |

## WHAT SHOULD WE DO TO PREPARE FOR OLD AGE

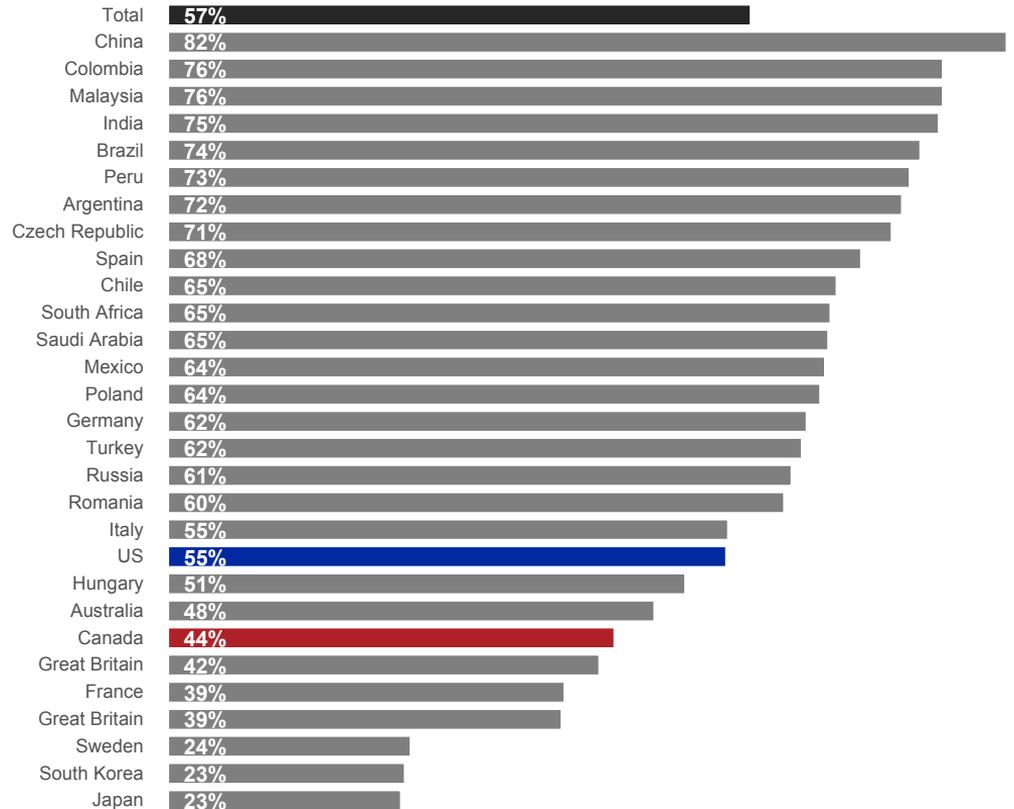


# CANADIANS ARE AMONG THE LEAST LIKELY TO THINK THAT THE YOUNG SHOULD CARE FOR AGEING RELATIVES

Other Ipsos research has shown that a sense of personal empathy among Canadians is waning (with increasing expectations that government will step in instead).

This sentiment seems to be present as well in perceptions of whether or not the young should help take care of ageing relatives. Only a minority of Canadians believe that they should, placing Canada well down the list of countries of the 29 countries surveyed.

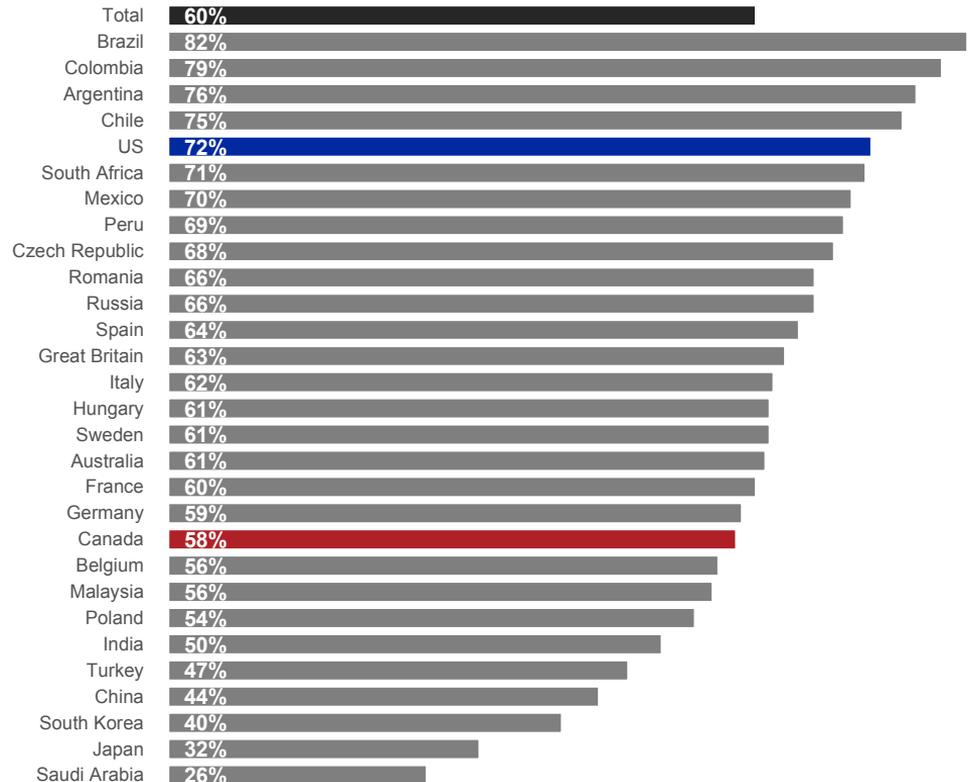
**“It is the job of the young to care for ageing relatives for a lot of people”**



# CANADIANS AMONG LEAST LIKELY TO THINK THAT OLD PEOPLE AREN'T RESPECTED

A majority of Canadians believe that people do not respect old people as much as they should. However, Canada ranks lower compared to many other countries in this belief.

**“People don’t respect old people as much as they should”**

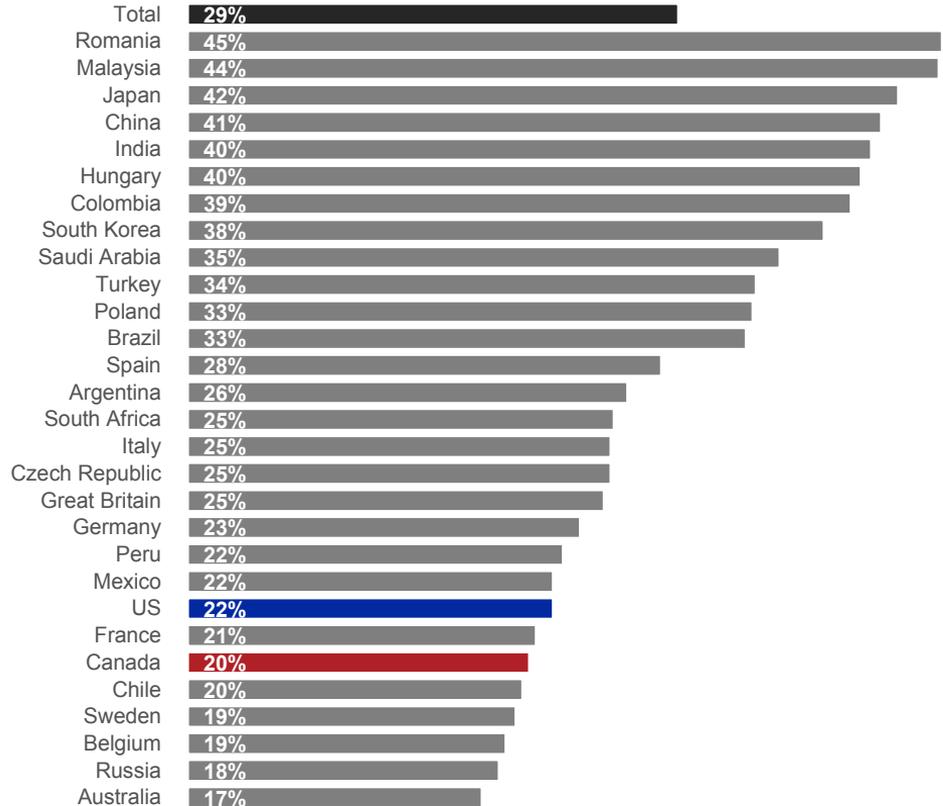


# CANADIANS AMONG THE LEAST LIKELY TO THINK THAT OLD PEOPLE HAVE TOO MUCH POLITICAL CLOUT

In some political circles there is sometimes a cry of “it’s time for younger folks to rise up and counter the influence of older folk.”

But, this resonates more in other countries than in Canada. Only one in five Canadians think that old people have too much political clout.

**“Old people have too much political influence”**

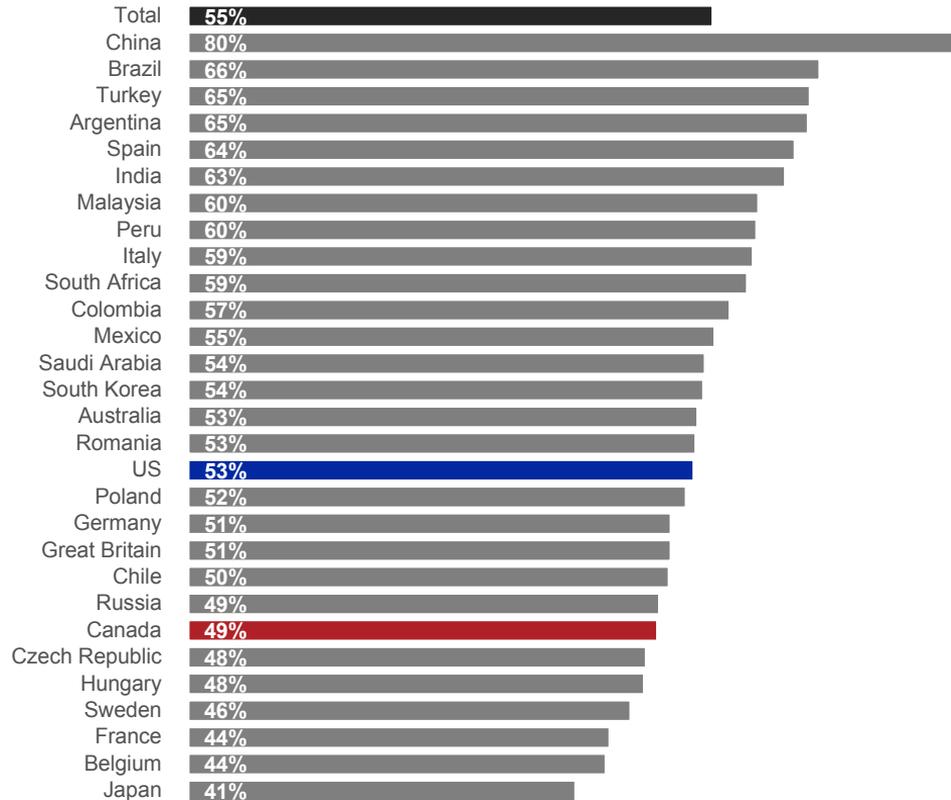


# CANADIANS ARE AMONG THE LEAST CONVINCED THAT TECHNOLOGY WILL IMPROVE OLD AGE

Our work in future forecasting (IpsosCanadaNext) has shown that Canadians are not as convinced about the benefits of new technology than are citizens in many other countries

This seems to hold true as well in the impact of technology on improving old age. Granted, half of Canadians do believe that new technology will help. However, this places Canada well down the list of countries in this belief.

**“Technological developments will improve old age for a lot of people”**



## ATTITUDES ABOUT AGEING BY REGION, SEX AND AGE

Region and demographics do influence attitudes toward ageing to some degree. For example, residents in Ontario and Atlantic, along with men and Millennials, are more likely to see potential benefits from new technology.

|   | BC  | Alta | Prairies | Ont | Que | Atl | Men | Women | Millennial | Gen X | Boomer |
|---|-----|------|----------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-------|------------|-------|--------|
| The young should care for old                 | 50% | 52%  | 45%      | 42% | 36% | 50% | 41% | 47%   | 48%        | 47%   | 37%    |
| Old people don't get the respect they deserve | 64% | 67%  | 61%      | 58% | 49% | 59% | 54% | 62%   | 50%        | 54%   | 70%    |
| Old people have too much political clout      | 30% | 19%  | 16%      | 20% | 18% | 15% | 24% | 16%   | 32%        | 21%   | 8%     |
| Technology will improve old age               | 51% | 43%  | 34%      | 57% | 39% | 66% | 54% | 45%   | 56%        | 49%   | 43%    |

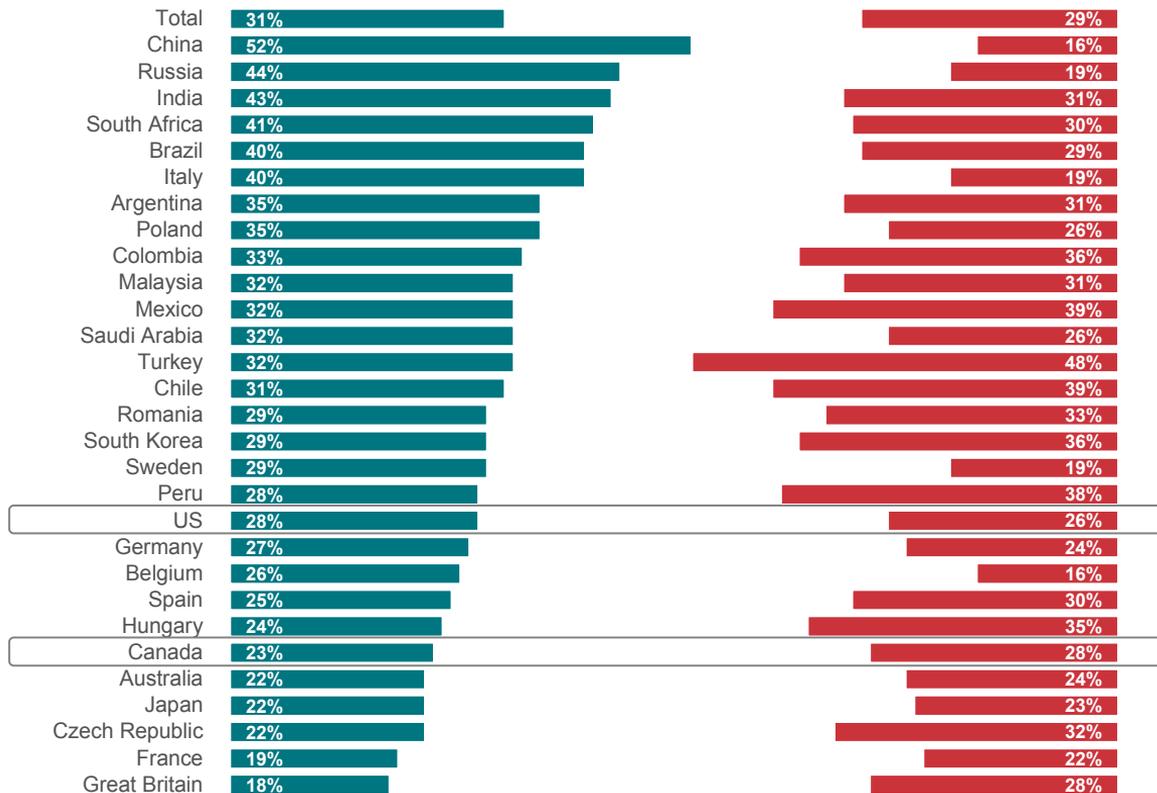
# CANADIANS ARE SPLIT ON THE IMPACT OF MEDIA ON PERCEPTIONS OF OLD AGE

Much is made about the impact of media on perceptions of specific groups.

But with respect to old age, Canadians are split, with most saying that the impact of media on perceptions of old age is mixed, with almost as many saying it is positive as negative.

## KEY:

- TV, film and advertising make old age seem exciting and full of potential
- TV, film and advertising make old age seem depressing, with limited opportunities



# METHODOLOGY

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- These are the findings of an Ipsos Global Advisor survey conducted 24 August- 7 September 2018. In total, 21,000 interviews were conducted among adults aged 18-64 in the US and Canada, and adults aged 16-64 in all other countries.
- The survey was conducted in 29 countries around the world via the Ipsos Online Panel system. Note that some of the questions were not asked in all 29 countries.
- Approximately 1000+ individuals participated on a country by country basis via the Ipsos Online Panel, with the exception of Argentina, Belgium, Chile, Hungary, Mexico, Peru, Poland, Romania, Russia, Saudi Arabia, South Africa, South Korea, Sweden and Turkey, where each have a sample approximately 500+.
- The precision of Ipsos online polls is calculated using a credibility interval with a poll of 1,000 accurate to +/- 3.5 percentage points and of 500 accurate to +/- 5.0 percentage points. For more information on Ipsos' use of credibility intervals, please visit the Ipsos website.
- In countries where internet penetration is approximately 60% or higher the data output generally reflects the overall population. Of the countries surveyed online, the following yield results that are balanced to reflect the general population: Argentina, Australia, Belgium, Canada, France, Germany, Hungary, Italy, Japan, Poland, South Korea, Spain, Sweden, Great Britain and the United States. The remaining countries surveyed produce a national sample that is more urban & educated, and with higher incomes than their fellow citizens. We refer to these respondents as "Upper Deck Consumer Citizens". They are not nationally representative of their country -- Brazil, Chile, China, Colombia, Czech Republic, India, Malaysia, Mexico, Peru, Romania, Russia, Saudi Arabia, South Africa and Turkey. Where results do not sum to 100, this may be due to computer rounding, multiple responses or the exclusion of don't knows or not stated responses.
- Data are weighted to match the profile of the population.

# CONTACTS

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