



**Belonging
Forum**



The Belonging Signal 2025

Key Findings

OCTOBER 9, 2025

Introduction

This topline summary presents the key findings from the polling conducted by the Belonging Forum. It provides an initial picture of how belonging is experienced across Canada, based on what Canadians themselves say about the topic.

The research is designed to:

- Highlight the importance of belonging in Canada
- Offer a snapshot or “scorecard” of where things stand today
- Explore what matters most to people through the lens of the four Ps of belonging: People, Power, Place, and Purpose

This report follows that structure, walking through each of the four Ps in turn, and concludes with a short section on how belonging could be improved, and who is seen as best placed to help make that happen.

The focus here is on the quantitative data, helping to surface strong headlines and key findings. However, there is also a rich layer of qualitative insights and demographic detail behind the data, which can be drawn on further to inform future phases of the Belonging Barometer in Canada.

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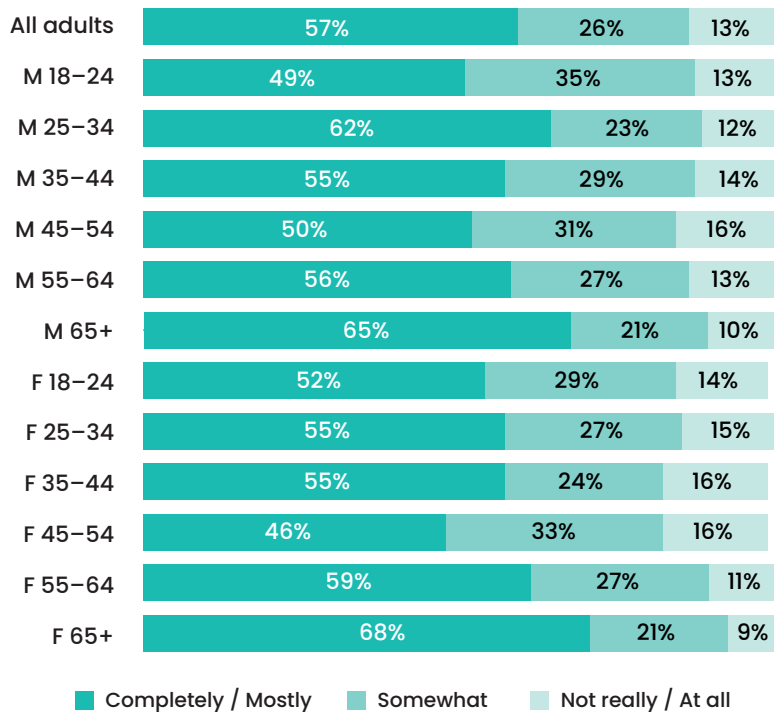
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Measuring Belonging in Canada

Patterns in Canadians' Sense of Belonging

Almost three in five (57%) Canadians feel like they “completely” or “mostly” belong: 23% feel like they completely belong and, most commonly, 35% feel like they mostly belong. A further quarter (26%) give a more neutral “somewhat belong”, while approximately one in eight (13%) say they don’t really feel like they belong, or don’t feel like they belong at all.

Sense of Belonging by gender and age



Some of the strongest senses of belonging are among those aged 65 and over: 68% of women and 65% of men in this age bracket say they feel like they completely or mostly belong.

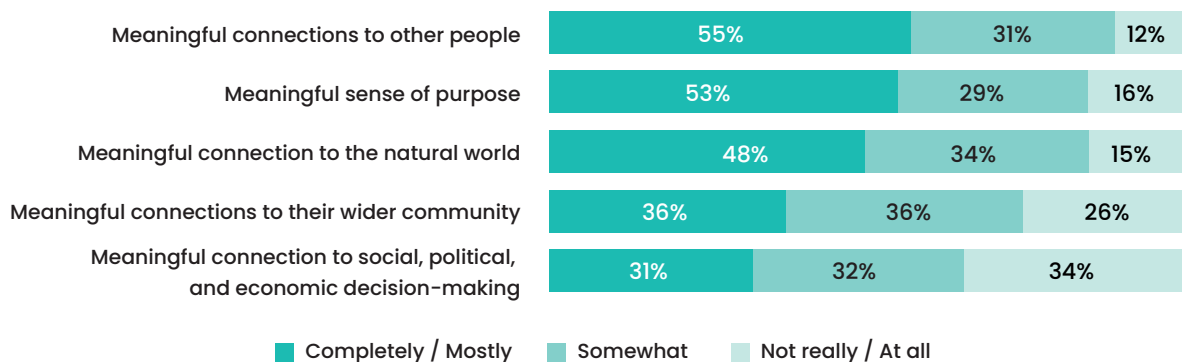
However, there are two key dips in sense of belonging. The first is among the very youngest (18–24s), where only 52% of women that age feel like they completely or mostly belong and fewer than half (49%) of men that age feel the same. The second dip appears among those aged 45–54: here, only 46% of women and 50% of men that age feel like they completely or mostly belong.

Meaningful Connections to Other People Typify the Sense of Belonging in Canada

Canadians give noticeably different answers when you break out the sense of belonging into its component parts: people, place, power, and purpose.

Canadians feel the greatest sense of belonging when it comes to people (meaningful connections to other people) and in terms of purpose (a meaningful sense of direction). In both cases, over half of Canadians say they belong completely or mostly (55% and 53% respectively).

Dimensions of Belonging



However, on place and power the sense of connection is far weaker. On the former, only 36% say they feel like they belong completely or mostly when it comes to meaningful connections to their wider community.

Most concerning is power. A plurality of Canadians say they have little or no sense of belonging when it comes to meaningful connections to social, political, or economic decision-making; only 31% feel like they belong completely or mostly in this space.

- Read more about the success stories of People on Page 6 and Purpose on Page 8.
- Read more about the areas for improvement in Place on Page 9 and Power on Page 11.

People

Important people to talk to

Most Canadians say it's important to regularly connect with the people that are closest to them. Speaking to close friends comes top overall, with 60% saying it matters most to them. This is followed by staying in touch with family members who live elsewhere (55%) and then partners (45%).

Options	All Adults	Male	Female	18-24	25-34	34-44	45-54	55-64	65+
Close friends	60%	57%	62%	60%	59%	59%	57%	58%	63%
Family members live elsewhere	55%	49%	62%	38%	46%	50%	53%	60%	69%
Partner	45%	46%	45%	25%	44%	46%	46%	46%	52%
Family members lived with	32%	30%	34%	44%	36%	39%	38%	28%	20%
Neighbours	24%	24%	23%	13%	17%	18%	22%	26%	35%

Partner become much more important among those in relationships, with four in five (79%) of this group saying it's important to speak to their partner regularly, compared to 45% across Canada as a whole.

There are also gender and age differences worth noting. Women are more likely than men to value staying connected to both close friends (62% vs. 57%) and distant family (62% vs. 49%). Meanwhile, older Canadians (65+) are significantly more likely than younger adults (18-24s) to say it's important to speak to family members who live elsewhere (69% vs. 38%).

Obstacles When Making New Friends

There are three equally important obstacles Canadians face when making new friends. These are:

- **Lack of opportunities to meet new people (39%).** This is more prevalent among those with a bachelor's degree or higher compared to those without (45% vs 36%). Non-Indigenous ethnic minorities are also more likely to cite a lack of opportunities than white Canadians (45% vs 38%).
- **Shyness or lack of confidence (38%).** There is a large age gap on this issue, as 57% of 18–24's selected this option compared to 29% of those 65+. This divide is more pronounced looking at women specifically—nearly two-thirds (63%) of 18–24 say this is an obstacle when making friends, compared to 32% of 65+.
- **Lack of time or too busy (36%).** Among age groups this is highest among those 25–44 (49%). This is likely due to the role work and children plays in these people's lives. Nearly half (47%) of those working report a lack of time compared to 21% not in work, and over half (53%) with children under 18 selected this compared to 35% without children.

Purpose

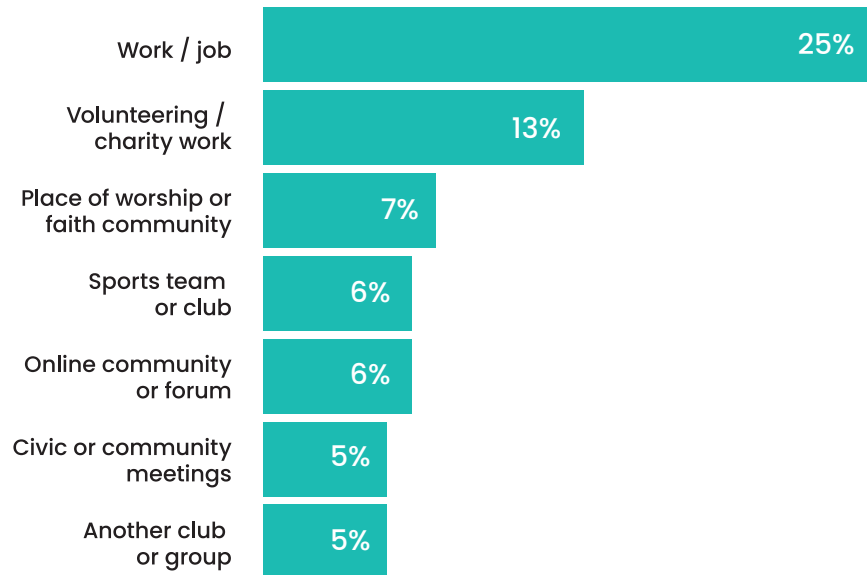
Where a Sense of Purpose is Felt

The workplace is seen as the single most important place to experience mutual benefit or collaborative problem-solving (25%), particularly among those who are currently employed (36%).

Volunteering and charity work is next most popular (13%); however, this is much more prevalent among those aged 65+ compared to 18–24's (22% vs 6%).

Places of worship or faith communities are also valued (7%), more so among those with a religion (14%).

Best place to feel mutual benefit and solve common problems



People most commonly spend time with friends at home, with 50% doing so in their own home and 45% at a friend's home. One's own home is more frequently used for those living in rural areas compared to urban (58% vs 47%).

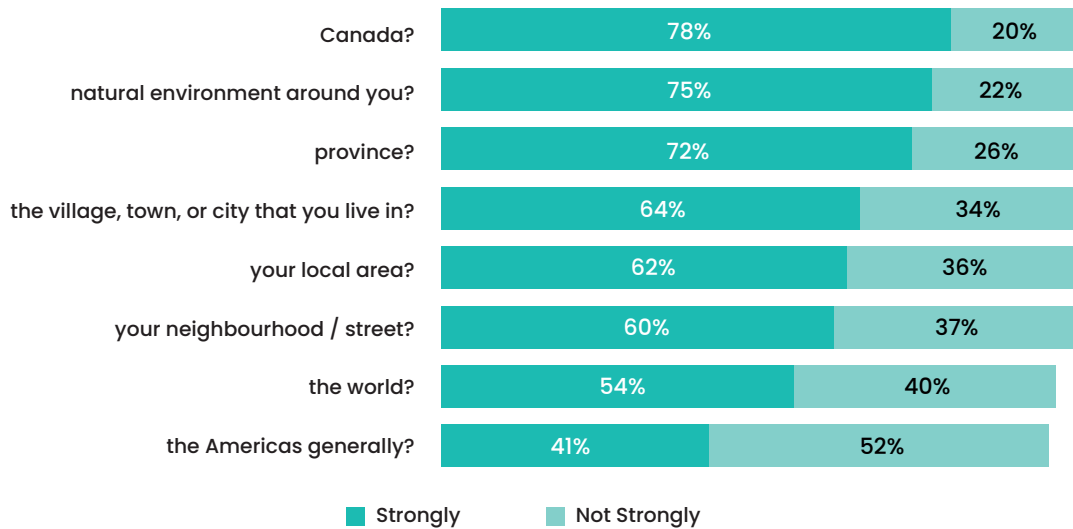
Outside of people's homes, cafés and coffee shops are popular places for people to spend time with their friends (31%), more so for women as opposed to men (37% vs 25%). Conversely, pubs are more popular among men than women for spending time with friends (21% vs 13%). Public parks are also frequented as places to meet friends, particularly so among young people aged 18–34 (25%) and those living in urban areas (22%).

Place

Belonging is Strongest at a National Rather than Local Level

When asked how strongly they feel they belong to various places, Canada itself stands out as the place people feel most connected to (78% strongly). This is followed by the natural environment around them (75%) and their province (72%). While Canadians also report relatively strong feelings of belonging to their village, town or city (64%), local area (62%), and neighbourhood or street (60%), this is still secondary to the national picture and over a third also said they did not feel strongly connected to either their municipality (34%), local area (36%) or neighbourhood / street (37%).

How strongly do you feel you belong to...



At the other end of the scale, fewer people report feeling strongly connected to broader regions such as the world (54%), and particularly the Americas (41%). However, feelings of belonging to the world are also stronger among people living in urban areas (58%) compared to those in rural areas (49%).

Looking at demographic differences, several trends emerge:

- Older Canadians aged 65+ feel a stronger sense of belonging to Canada than younger adults aged 18–24 (85% vs 75%).
- People living in Quebec are less likely to feel they belong to Canada compared to those living in the rest of the country (69% vs 82%)—although it is notable that connection to Canada still seems strong overall.
- Indigenous respondents are slightly more likely to say they feel a strong sense of belonging to Canada (83%) than either white Canadians or those from a non-Indigenous ethnic minority background (both 78%).

Power

Family Crucial to Identity for Canadians

When asked which aspects of their identity matter most to them, Canadians prioritize communal or relational forms of identity.

Two-thirds of Canadians (66%) say that family and relationships are an important part of their identity. This reflects a broader trend across the data: Canadians are more likely to define themselves by their connections to others than by individual traits.

More individual-level aspects of identity also play a meaningful role, particularly gender (36%), age (35%), language (34%). These were the top three individual traits that people identified with most strongly, after family/relationships.

Options	All Adults	M18–24	M25–34	M35–44	M45–54	M55–64	M65+	F18–24	F25–34	F35–44	F45–54	F55–64	F65+
My family	66%	56%	59%	61%	62%	63%	72%	61%	64%	67%	66%	72%	78%
My gender	36%	35%	33%	29%	36%	33%	37%	47%	36%	37%	35%	35%	40%
My age	35%	30%	31%	26%	29%	36%	49%	37%	27%	28%	31%	36%	48%
My language	34%	27%	28%	31%	36%	34%	41%	34%	32%	30%	35%	37%	37%
My ethnic, racial or indigenous background	23%	33%	29%	23%	25%	19%	19%	26%	26%	26%	25%	17%	18%
My religion	23%	32%	28%	19%	18%	21%	20%	37%	25%	22%	24%	18%	21%
My financial situation or class background	19%	20%	27%	21%	18%	21%	19%	17%	18%	18%	17%	18%	17%
My sexual orientation	18%	26%	21%	21%	22%	22%	23%	20%	14%	14%	13%	13%	13%
My political beliefs	18%	19%	20%	17%	16%	23%	22%	15%	14%	17%	14%	14%	20%
My disability or long-term health condition	10%	10%	9%	7%	12%	12%	9%	13%	9%	9%	12%	15%	9%

Older Canadians are more likely to describe their identity as multi-dimensional, citing a wider range of influences compared to younger groups. This was particularly notable among men.

By comparison, men aged 25–34 are significantly more likely than average to highlight less commonly cited aspects of identity:

- Ethnic, racial or Indigenous background (29% vs average of 23%)
- Religion (28% vs average of 23%)
- Financial situation or class background (27% vs average of 19%)

All three are well above the national average, suggesting this group in particular sees identity through a more culturally and socio-economically situated lens.

Federal Government Matters Most

In a federal country like Canada, it's notable that Canadians are most likely to identify the central federal government as the level of government that best represents them politically:

- Federal Government of Canada: 23%
- Provincial/Territorial Government: 14%
- Federal MP: 9%

This means that nearly a quarter of Canadians (23%) see the federal government as their main political representative, more than those who prioritize their provincial or territorial government (14%).

Relatively few selected individual-level representatives, like their federal MP (9%), as their primary link to political power. A similarly low proportion said this about their local municipal government (7%) or local city or town councillor (7%).

Variation by political leaning

There were no strong or overarching demographic divides across age or gender, but political affiliation did reveal important trends:

Liberal voters are more likely to prioritise the federal government: 30% say it's their most important level of political representation, well above the national average of 23%.

Bloc Québécois voters show a very different pattern: 37% prioritise the provincial/territorial government (vs. 14% nationally). Similarly, 11% say their municipal government is most important, more than any other political group

This aligns with the Bloc's platform, which centres on Quebec nationalism and greater provincial autonomy. This is the context in which their voters reflect a broader preference for decision-making power at the provincial or local level.

Improving Belonging

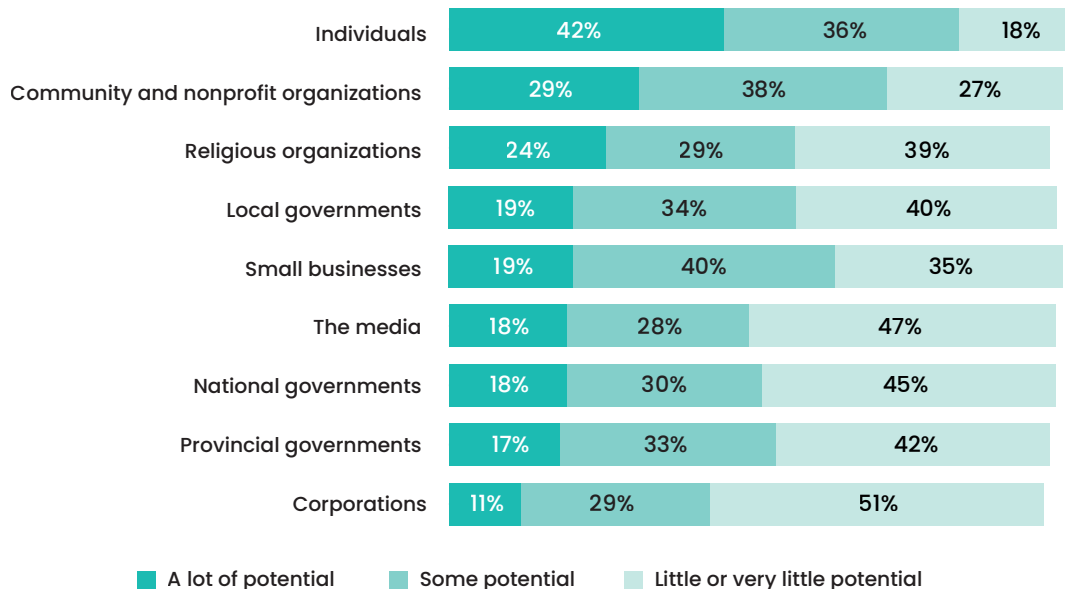
Where is the Greatest Potential to Promote Belonging in Canada?

Canadians continue to see individuals themselves as having the greatest potential to promote a sense of belonging, potentially reflecting a less communal interpretation in how belonging is understood. Canadians believe individuals have...

- A lot of potential: 36%
- Some potential: 38%
- Little/very little potential: 18%

This places individuals well above any institution in terms of perceived influence.

Potential to promote belonging



Other Institutions

After individuals, there is modest confidence in the role of community organizations, nonprofits, and religious institutions:

- Community and nonprofit organizations (a lot of potential 29%, some potential 38%)
- Religious organizations (a lot of potential 19%, some potential 32%)

This adds broader context to Canadians identifying individuals as having the greatest potential. Nonprofit organizations clearly rank above businesses, and a more communal sense of belonging comes through with community and religious organizations also appearing near the top of the list.

Low confidence in government at all levels to promote belonging

There is limited belief in the ability of government, at any level, to promote belonging:

- Local government (A lot of potential 19%, Little/very little 40%)
- Federal/national government (A lot of potential 18%, Little/very little 45%)
- Provincial/territorial government (A lot of potential 17%, Little/very little 45%)

Corporations and media are not trusted to promote belonging

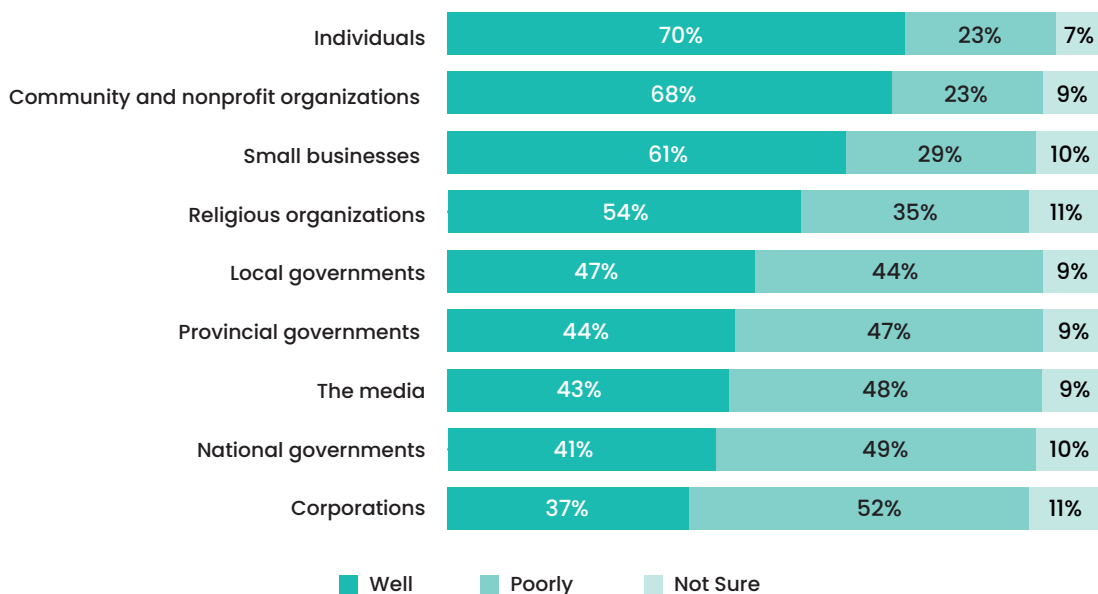
Corporations and the media are among the least trusted institutions when it comes to promoting belonging:

- Corporations (A lot of potential 11%, Little/very little 51%)
- Media (A lot of potential 18%, Little/very little 47%)

Who Does Best at Promoting Belonging?

While Canadians see individuals as having the greatest potential to promote belonging, they are also relatively optimistic about how well various groups are performing in this space, even if their perceived potential is lower.

How well do they actually promote belonging



Individuals come out strongest, with 70% of Canadians saying people promote belonging well, and only 23% saying they do so poorly. This mirrors the earlier finding that Canadians place a lot of trust in people, rather than institutions, to build a sense of inclusion. However, community organizations, nonprofits, and religious groups are also seen positively:

- Individuals (70% well, 23% poorly)
- Community and nonprofit organizations (66% well, 23% poorly)
- Religious organizations (54% well, 35% poorly)

Government

When it comes to government, the picture is more mixed. While many are skeptical about government's potential to foster belonging, the numbers suggest people feel local government is trying the best out of the three levels we tested: 47% say their local government promotes belonging well, with 44% thinking they do it poorly.

However, confidence drops at higher levels of government, which is problematic when provincial and national governments are seen as the most important levels of political representation:

- Local government (47% well, 44% poorly)
- Provincial government (44% well, 47% poorly)
- Federal/national government (41% well, 49% poorly)

Business and media

Interestingly, small businesses stand out as another group seen to be doing reasonably well at promoting belonging. While businesses aren't generally seen as having a high potential to promote belonging, 61% of Canadians say that small businesses are doing a good job with the influence they do have. Only 29% say they promote belonging poorly. This suggests that people may be more inclined to see local, community-rooted businesses as part of the social fabric, unlike larger corporations.

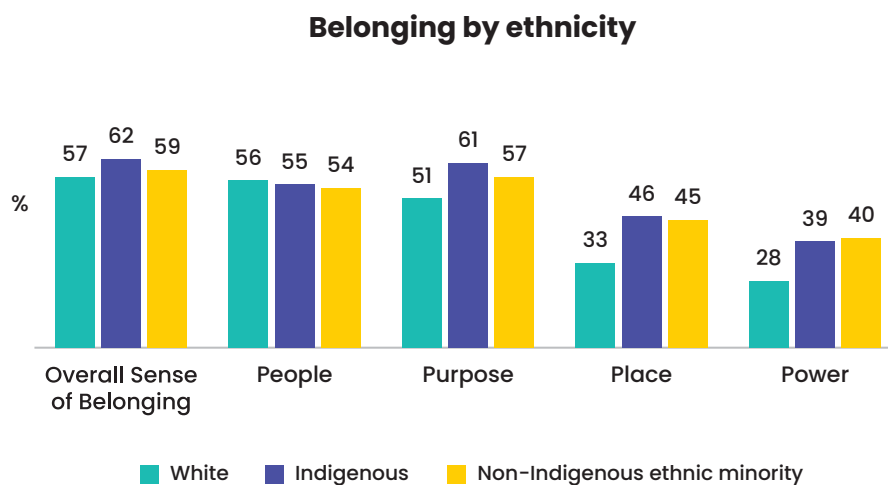
This stands in marked contrast to the media and large corporations:

- Small business (61% well, 29% poorly)
- Media (43% well, 48% poorly)
- Corporations (37% well, 52% poorly)

Key Trends

Indigenous Communities have the Greatest Sense of Belonging

Indigenous Canadians report the strongest overall sense of belonging (62%) of any ethnic group in Canada. This compares to 59% of non-Indigenous ethnic minorities and 57% of white Canadians—both still showing strong levels of belonging overall.



% = Net proportion who said “completely” or “mostly” to each sense of belonging

Some of the most striking differences appear in areas where Canadians tend to report weaker belonging more generally: place and power.

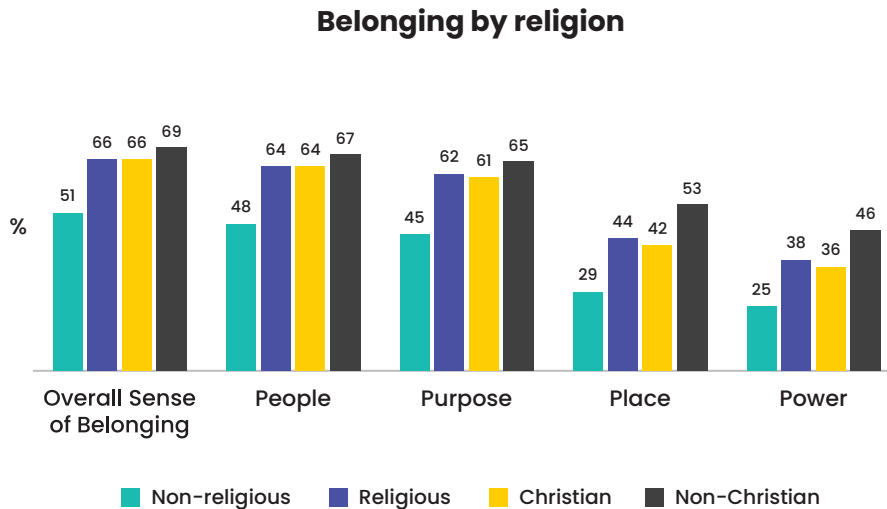
- **Place:** Just 33% of white Canadians feel they have a meaningful connection to their wider community, compared to 46% of Indigenous Canadians.
- **Power:** Only 28% of white Canadians feel they have a meaningful connection to social, political, and economic decision-making, compared to 39% of Indigenous Canadians.

Interestingly, when it comes to people—the strongest area of belonging overall—there is little variation across ethnicities:

- White Canadians (56%), Indigenous Canadians (55%), and non-Indigenous ethnic minorities (54%) all report similar levels of meaningful connection to others.

Religion: How Those with a Faith have a Greater Sense of Belonging Across all of the Four Ps

Religious Canadians tend to feel a stronger sense of belonging than those who are non-religious. Two-thirds (66%) of religious Canadians report a strong sense of belonging, compared to just over half (51%) of non-religious Canadians.



% = Net proportion who said “completely” or “mostly” to each sense of belonging

This pattern holds across all four dimensions of belonging, but the gaps are especially wide on place and power:

- **Power:** Only 25% of non-religious Canadians feel connected to social, political, and economic decision-making, compared to 38% of religious Canadians.
- **Place:** Just 29% of non-religious Canadians feel a meaningful connection to their wider community, compared to 44% of religious Canadians.

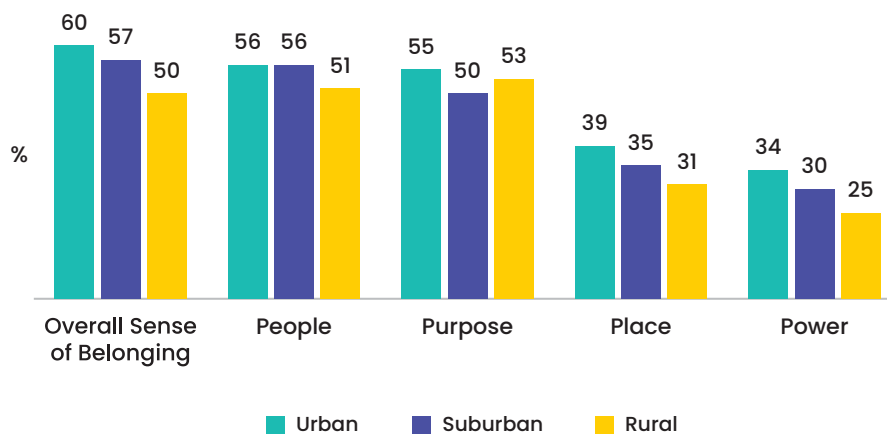
Even within religious communities, there are notable differences. Canadians with a non-Christian religious faith tend to report even higher levels of belonging than Christians. This is especially the case in place and power:

- **Place:** 53% of those with a non-Christian faith report a meaningful connection to their wider community, compared to 42% of Christians.
- **Power:** 46% with a non-Christian faith report a meaningful connection to decision-making, higher than 36% of Christians.

Urban Versus Rural: Canada’s More Socially Connected Cities

Canadians living in urban (60%) and suburban (58%) areas report a stronger overall sense of belonging than those in rural areas (50%).

Belonging by density



% = Net proportion who said “completely” or “mostly” to each sense of belonging

As with other groups, the rural-urban divide is clearest in areas where belonging tends to be weaker across the population: power and place.

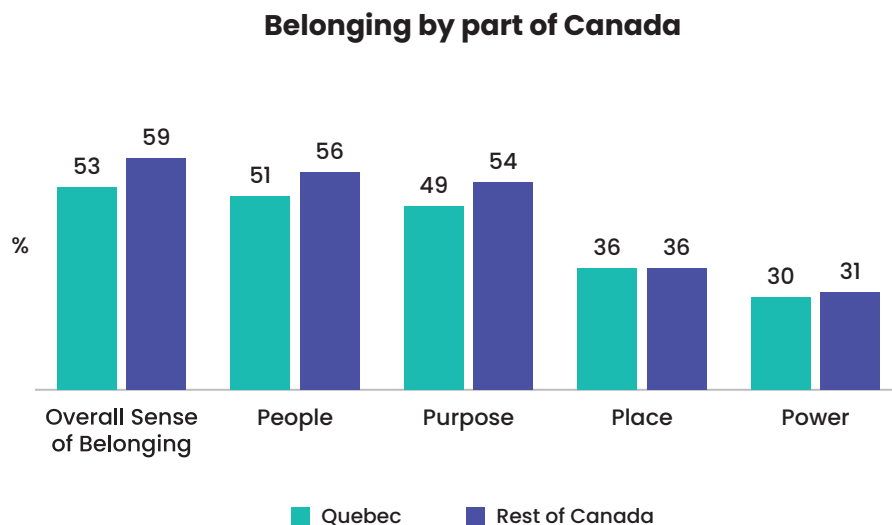
- **Power:** Only 25% of rural Canadians feel they have a meaningful connection to social, political, and economic decision-making, compared to 34% in urban areas.
- **Place:** Rural Canadians also report slightly lower levels of connection to their wider community (31% vs 39% for urban areas), which may seem counterintuitive given perceptions of rural community life.

In contrast, other dimensions of belonging show much smaller gaps:

- **Purpose:** Rural (53%) and urban (55%) Canadians report very similar levels of meaningful purpose in their lives.

Quebec: A Slightly Lower Sense of Belonging

Quebec shows a slightly lower overall sense of belonging compared to the rest of Canada. Just over half (53%) of Quebecers say they feel a strong sense of belonging, compared to nearly three in five (59%) across the rest of the country.



% = Net proportion who said “completely” or “mostly” to each sense of belonging

Unlike many of the other demographic patterns in this section, Quebec’s lower sense of belonging is more evident in the areas where Canadians generally feel strongest overall, namely People and Purpose.

- **People:** Only 51% of Quebecers say they have a meaningful connection to other people, compared to 56% in the rest of Canada.
- **Purpose:** Just 49% of Quebecers feel they have a meaningful sense of direction or purpose, compared to 54% elsewhere.

In contrast, on the dimensions of Place and Power, where Canadians tend to feel less connected overall, the differences between Quebec and the rest of the country are minimal and largely in line with national averages.

Conclusion

Laying the Groundwork for a National Belonging Barometer

A national snapshot of belonging

This summary is designed to provide a snapshot of how belonging is experienced across Canada today. While most Canadians say they feel a sense of belonging (57% saying they “completely” or “mostly” belong) fewer than a quarter (23%) feel this “completely”. In addition to this, there are notable differences in self-declared levels of belonging across Canadian society. For example, belonging is strongest among older Canadians, but significant gaps appear among younger adults (particularly men aged 18–24) and those in midlife.

Where belonging is strongest

Looking across the four dimensions of belonging—People, Purpose, Place, and Power—Canadians feel most connected through their relationships and sense of purpose. Over half say they have meaningful connections to other people (55%) or a clear sense of purpose (53%). These two Ps are where belonging is most deeply rooted, with close friends, family, and the workplace acting as key anchors. A strong emphasis on social identity is also evident, with two-thirds (66%) citing family and relationships as central to how they see themselves.

Where challenges remain

However, the challenges lie in Place and Power: the dimensions where self-declared belonging is weakest. Just 36% of Canadians feel meaningfully connected to their wider community, and only 31% feel they belong when it comes to social, political, or economic decision-making. These figures are even lower among some groups, including rural Canadians, younger adults, and non-religious people. Meanwhile, in Quebec, where overall belonging is slightly lower than in the rest of Canada, feelings of connection to People and Purpose lag behind the national average.

Looking ahead to the Belonging Barometer

This research marks the first step in building a broader Belonging Barometer for Canada. It sets out a clear baseline and points to important next steps, from engaging communities with lower belonging to addressing the identified gaps in Place and Power. Policymakers and community leaders alike can hopefully use these initial findings to build on this foundation, ensuring all Canadians feel more connected, more included, and more at home in the places they live.



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