

Canadians say it's easier for men to get elected, but see both sexes as equally good leaders

More people think Hillary Clinton's gender has helped her career than hurt it

July 25, 2016 – As Hillary Clinton makes history this week by becoming the first woman to receive a major party's nomination for U.S. president, a new public opinion poll from the Angus Reid Institute – following similar research in the U.S., U.K., and Germany – finds Canadians have mixed feelings about women as political leaders.

While the vast majority of Canadians (84%) say men and women make equally good leaders, just as many say that Canadian society as a whole still believes men are better suited to top political jobs.

Moreover, Canadians are almost 20 times more likely to say it's easier for men to get elected than to say it's easier for women.

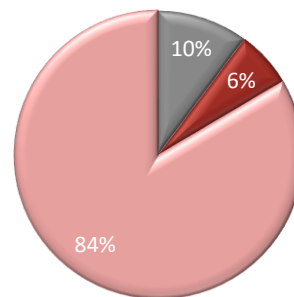
As might be expected, there are significant gender and age divides on whether men or women are more likely to possess the traits typically associated with leadership. But, perhaps surprisingly, it is *younger* men who are vastly more likely than their fathers and uncles to say men are better than women at “being honest and ethical,” and “working to improve the quality of life for Canadians.”

Key Findings:

- Just 10 per cent of Canadians say they themselves believe men make better political leaders than women, but more than eight-in-ten (85%) say they think either “some” or “most” of Canadian society *does* believe this
- Roughly three-fifths of Canadians (59%) say it's easier for men to get elected to high political offices, compared to just 3 per cent who say it's easier for women (38% say there's no difference)

Which of the following statements comes closest to your opinion about men/women as political leaders?

- Men generally make better political leaders than women
- Women generally make better political leaders than men
- In general, women and men make equally good political leaders



METHODOLOGY:

The Angus Reid Institute conducted an online survey from June 8 – 13, 2016, among a representative randomized sample of 1,515 Canadian adults who are members of the [Angus Reid Forum](#). For comparison purposes only, a probability sample of this size would carry a margin of error of +/- 2.5 percentage points, 19 times out of 20. Discrepancies in or between totals are due to rounding. The survey was self-commissioned and paid for by ARI. Detailed tables are found at the end of this release.

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- As is often the case in a survey on gender, there are significant differences of opinion between men and women, with respondents of each gender tending to be more favourable to their own

As good as men? Most say yes, assume others say no

In her 2008 speech conceding the Democratic nomination for president to Barack Obama, Hillary Clinton thanked the more than 18 million people who voted for her for helping to put “18 million cracks in the glass ceiling.”

Today, with Clinton having smashed through one such barrier and aiming for an even bigger one, the United States may soon enter the ranks of countries that have been led by women – a club Canada joined some 23 years ago when Kim Campbell became Prime Minister.

Indeed, there’s no denying Canada is ahead of its southern neighbour when it comes to women in political leadership. The contemporary incarnation of Campbell’s party is currently led – on an interim basis – by a woman, and female premiers have become an increasingly common sight in the last decade.

When asked whether men or women make better political leaders, Canadians respond in the manner one might expect given this history.

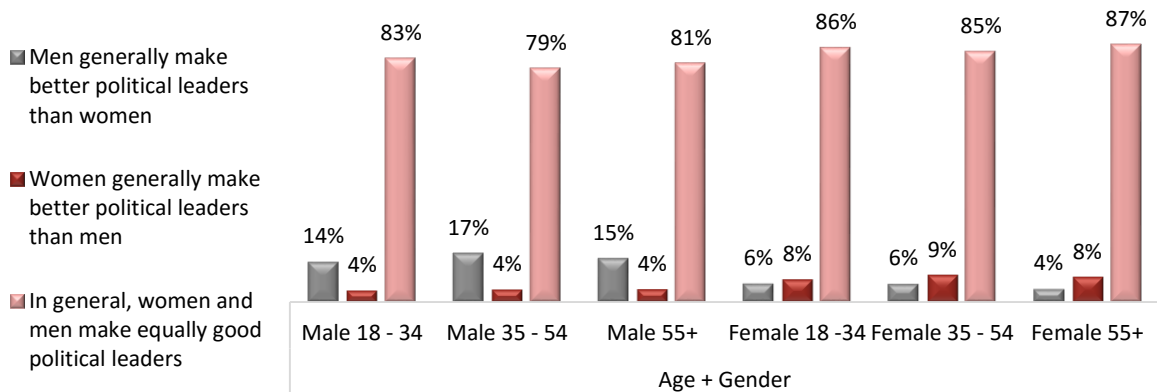
More than eight-in-ten respondents (84%) say “in general, women and men make equally good political leaders.” This total is higher than the number [recorded by Pew Research](#) in the U.S. in 2014, when 75 per cent of respondents chose this answer when asked the same question.

Canadian views are more similar to those found in the United Kingdom – itself a country with a history of female political leaders – in a Kantar Media poll [conducted last fall](#). Asked a slightly different question, 84 per cent of respondents there said women are “just as capable” of being leaders as men.

A survey in Germany, a nation that has been governed by Chancellor Angela Merkel for more than a decade now, asked citizens to respond to the statement that men make better political leaders than women. More than three-quarters (78.1%) said they disagree with this statement.

In this ARI survey, the vast majority of respondents across ages, genders, and regions say men and women make equally good political leaders. Men of all ages *are* more likely to say their gender is more fit for leadership, but this is the view of, at most, one-in-six, as seen in the following graph:

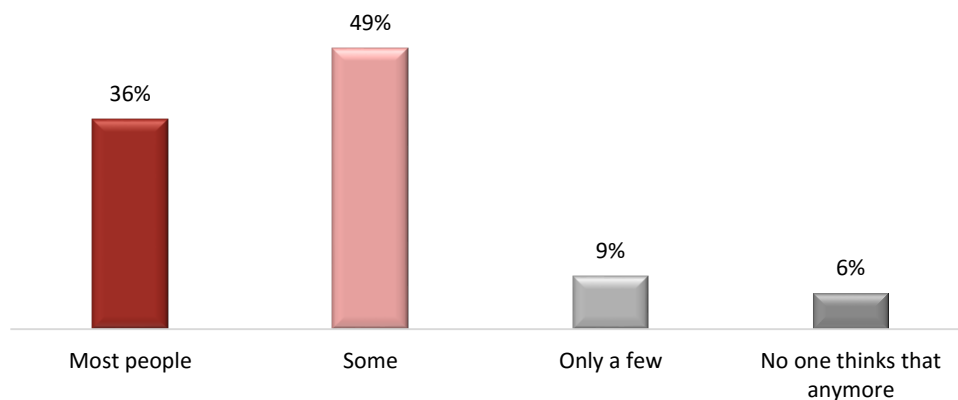
Which of the following statements comes closest to your opinion about men/women as political leaders?



Before Canadians congratulate themselves on their progressive attitudes toward women in politics, however, they should note that a similarly large majority of respondents (85%) say “some” or “most people” in Canada do, in fact, believe that men make better leaders than women.

Only six per cent of respondents believe “no one thinks this anymore,” as seen in the following graph:

Now, thinking about society as a whole, how many people would you say believe men make better political leaders than women?



Regardless of whether Canadians believe men or women to be equally capable leaders or not, the fact is that there are still relatively few women in positions of political power in this country.

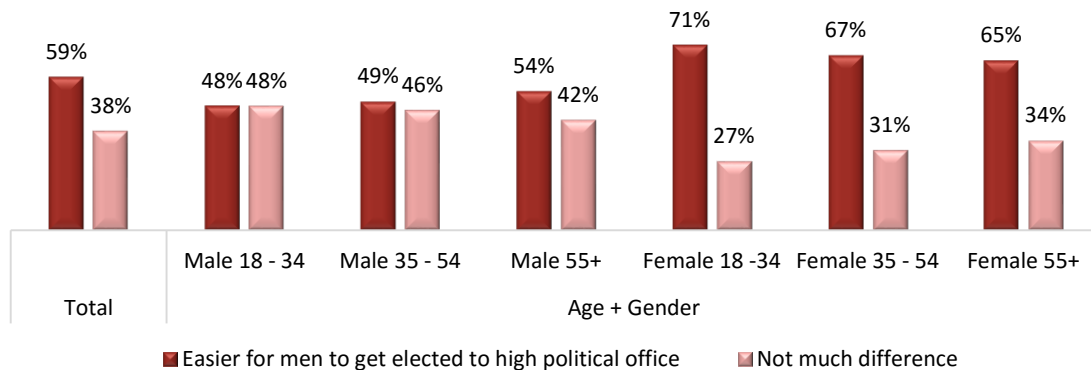
Recent research from Simon Fraser University shows that women make up just one-quarter of members of Parliament (26%), members of provincial legislatures (25.7%), and members of municipal councils (23%).

Has gender helped or hurt Hillary?

In general, Canadians believe it is easier for men than for women to get elected to high political offices. Nearly six-in-ten Canadians (59%) say winning election to Parliament or a provincial legislature is easier for men than women, while slightly less than four-in-ten (38%) think the task is equally difficult for each gender.

Men and women have very different views on this question. Among all female respondents, the belief that men have an easier road to elected office rises as high as seven-in-ten, while among men younger than 55, it drops below 50 per cent:

Do you think it is easier, more difficult, or no different for men vs. women to get elected to high political offices, such as member of Parliament (MP) or member of the Legislative Assembly (MLA)?



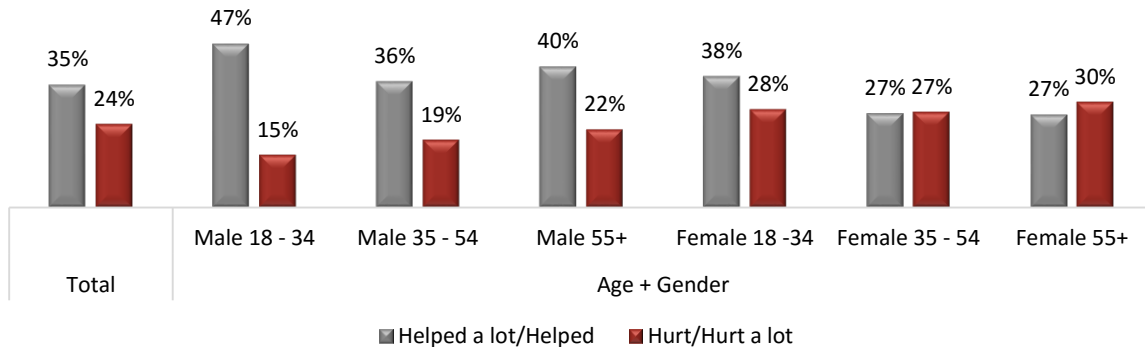
Almost no one thinks it's easier for women to be elected than men. Just three per cent of Canadians say this is the case, and the total who think this is less than five per cent across all age and gender groups.

And yet, when asked whether being female has helped or hurt a specific woman who has been elected to high political office – Hillary Clinton – Canadians don't seem to see gender as a disadvantage.

Indeed, more Canadians say Clinton's gender has helped her political career (35%) than say it has hurt (24%). The largest group of respondents (41%) say the fact that Clinton is a woman has made no difference either way.

This view that being a woman has helped Hillary Clinton's career is common even among women, though men are, again, more likely to believe this is the case. Interestingly, young women are almost as bullish on the benefits of Clinton's gender as older men:

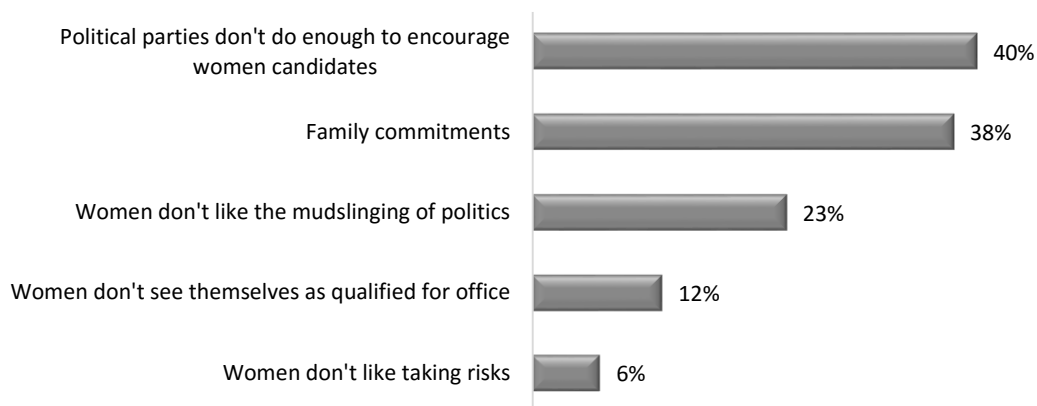
All things considered, as you look at her career and road to the nomination, would you say Hillary Clinton has been politically helped or hurt by the fact she is a woman?



So why aren't there more women in politics?

If you ask Canadians why fewer women are in politics, they put much of the blame squarely on political parties. When canvassed about a number of different theories as to why fewer women run for office, the highest percentage of respondents (40%) say a major reason is that political parties don't do enough to encourage female candidates:

Please indicate whether you think it is a major reason, a minor reason or not a reason why fewer women run for office (Summary of major reason)



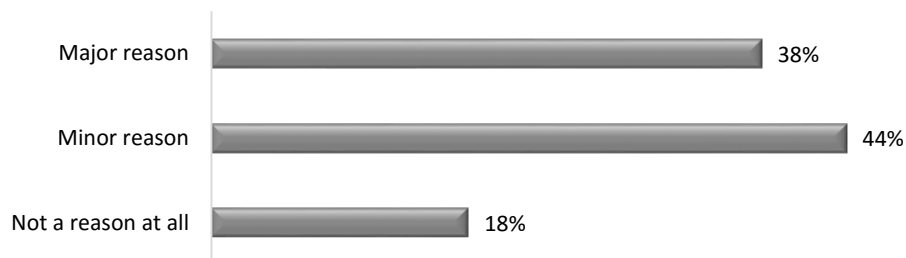
Asked a similar question, but specifically about why more women do not *hold higher offices*, Canadians again voice displeasure with the political parties in this country. Seven-in-ten (69%) say women who are already active in party politics receive less support from party leaders to push them to top positions.

And the reason women aren't running more or holding prestigious positions as often isn't because they're less likely to earn votes from their constituents. A [number of studies in Canada](#) have found that voters do not appear to have a male bias, and in many cases are actually slightly more likely to vote for female candidates.

Family commitments are also often cited as a reason for women abstaining from the demanding world of politics. And there are strong statistical foundations for this reasoning. Women are roughly ten times as likely to cite childcare as a [reason for not working full time](#), and they perform double the amount of childcare work in the home.

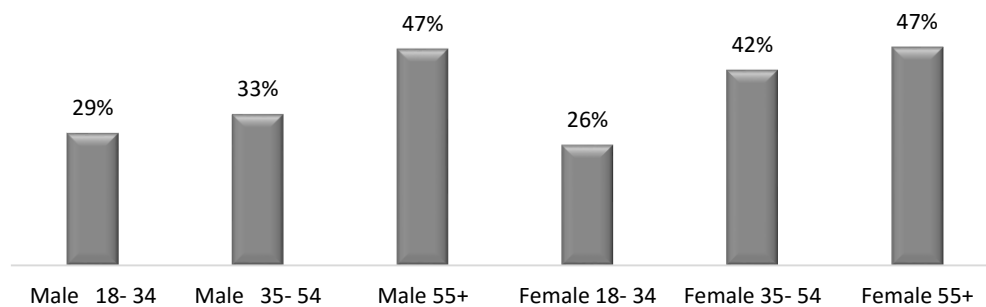
Canadians appear to be attuned to these challenges. Two-in-five (38%) say this is a major reason that fewer women run for office, and another 44 per cent say it plays at least a minor role in that decision:

Please indicate whether you think it is a major reason, a minor reason or not a reason why fewer women run for office (Family commitments)



Men and women are close to equally as likely to see family commitments as a barrier, but there are large age divides on the issue. Younger Canadians, both men and women, see this as less of a major reason compared to their elders:

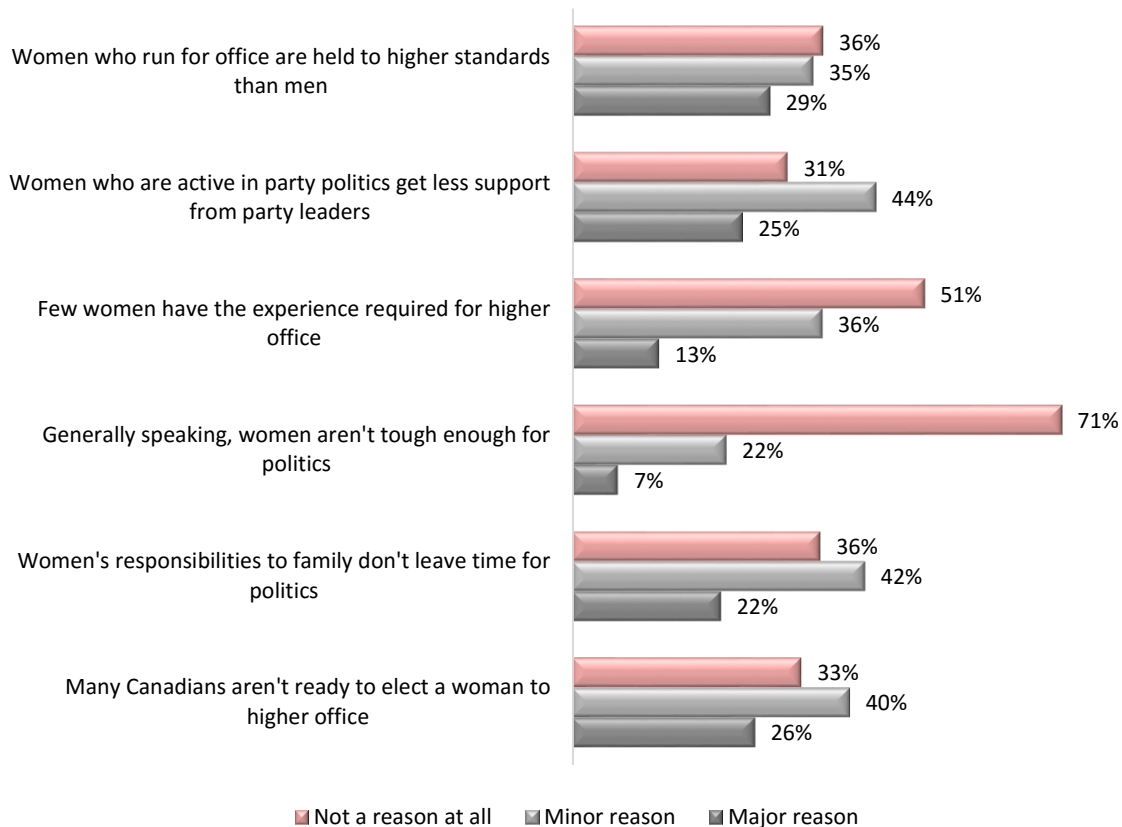
Please indicate whether you think it is a major reason, a minor reason or not a reason why fewer women run for office (Those saying Family Commitments are a 'major reason' shown)



Most Canadians do not however, think that women are unlikely to be willing to take a risk and run for office. Asked if this is a reason for low participation only six per cent say this is a major reason, while two-thirds (66%) say this is not a reason at all.

The main reasons Canadians *perceive* for lower numbers of women in high political offices are that they may be held to a higher standard than men (64%), a hesitancy on behalf of the public to vote for them (67%) and the aforementioned party and family issues. Respondents are less likely to say women lack the experience (51% say not a reason at all) or are not tough enough (71% say not a reason at all):

For each, please indicate whether you think it is a major reason, a minor reason or not a reason why there are fewer women in high political offices

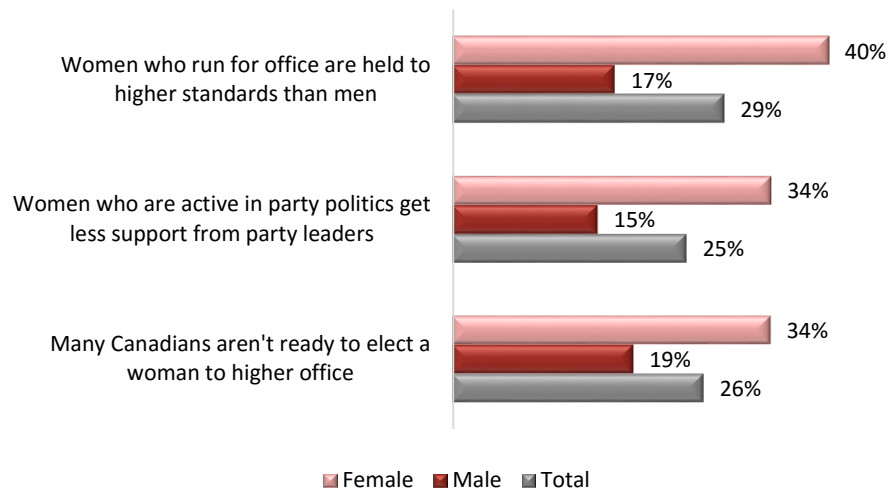


And while common ground is found between men and women on a number of these explanations, there are notable differences of opinion between the genders.

Women are more than twice as likely to say that they are held to a higher standard in politics – 40 per cent say this is a major reason that fewer of them hold higher offices, compared to just 17 per cent of men. This trend holds when assessing the support each gets from their party – one-third (34%) of women

say less support from party leadership is a major reason for a lack of representation, while just 15 per cent of men agree with this:

For each, please indicate whether you think it is a major reason, a minor reason or not a reason why there are fewer women in high political offices

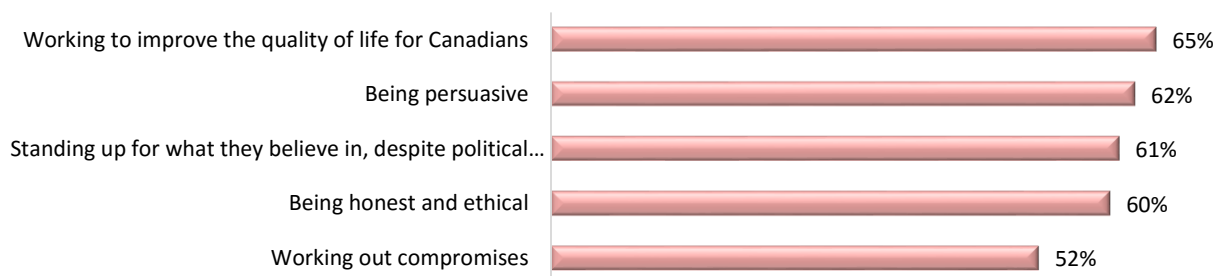


Women more likely to be seen as having leadership qualities

Given that most Canadians say women and men are equally capable leaders, it should come as no surprise that majorities also believe that the genders are equally good at a variety of skills typically associated with political leadership.

As seen in the following graph, at least half of all Canadians say men and women are equally good at “working out compromises,” “being honest and ethical,” “standing up for what they believe in, despite political pressure,” “being persuasive,” and “working to improve the quality of life for Canadians.”

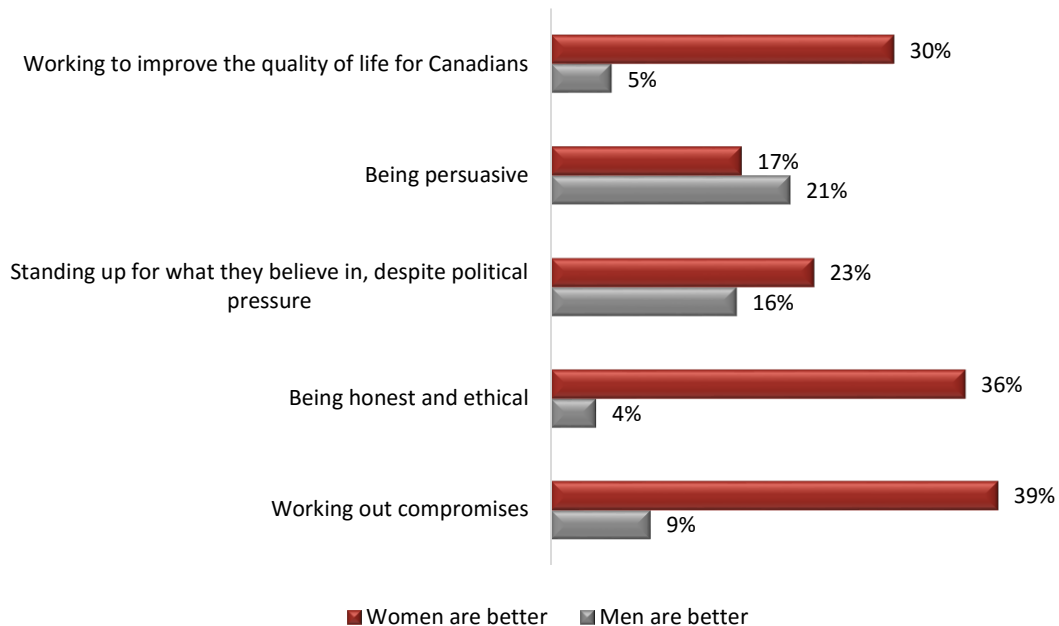
In general, do you think men or women in high political offices are better at each of the following? (those saying men and women are equally good shown)



Among those who think one gender is better than the other, women tend to get the nod. Canadians say women in high political offices are better than men in all of the areas canvassed except for “being persuasive,” where men hold a slight edge (21% versus 17% for women).

On certain skills, such as “being honest and ethical,” “working out compromises,” and “working to improve the quality of life for Canadians,” women hold a huge advantage. Canadians are fully nine times more likely to say women are better than men at being honest, and ethical, for example, as seen in the graph that follows:

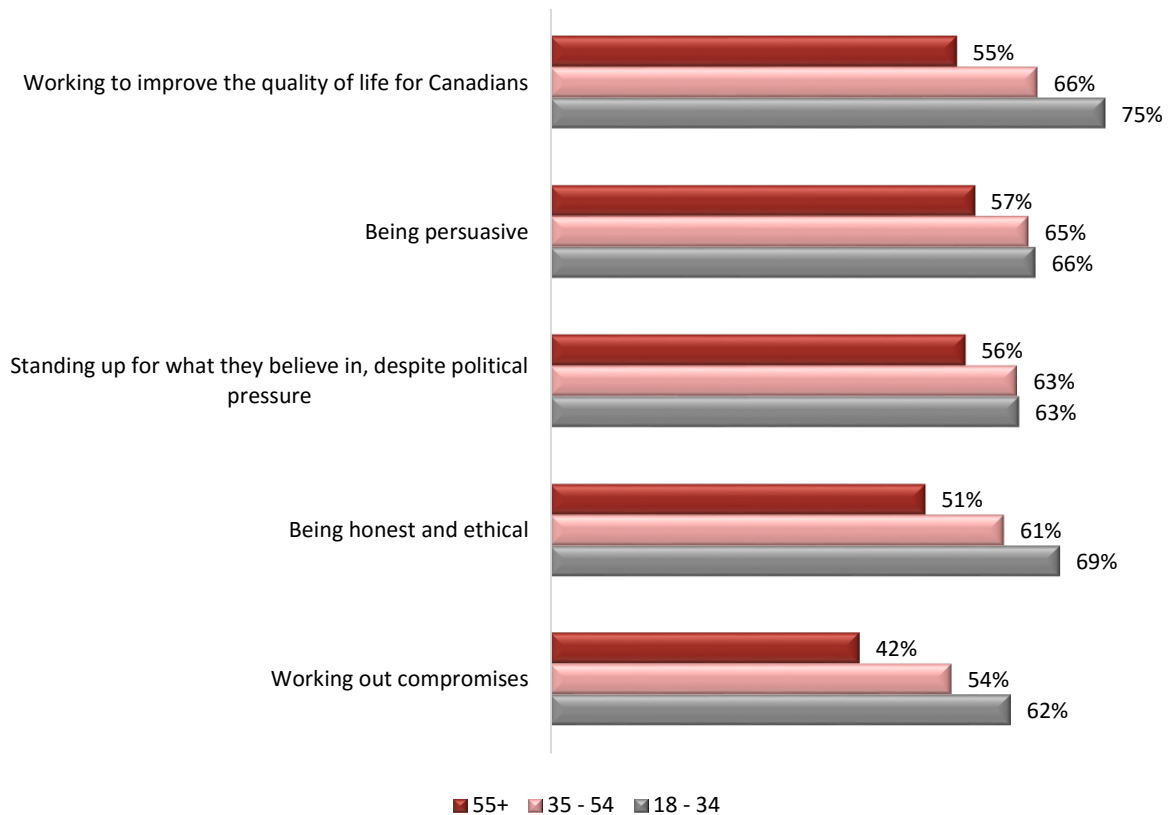
In general, do you think men or women in high political offices are better at each of the following?



When looking at responses to this question by age and gender, two patterns emerge.

First, younger Canadians (those ages 18-34) are considerably more likely than other age groups – especially those ages 55 and older – to say men and women are equally good at each of the skills on the list:

In general, do you think men or women in high political offices are better at each of the following? (those saying the genders are equally good shown)

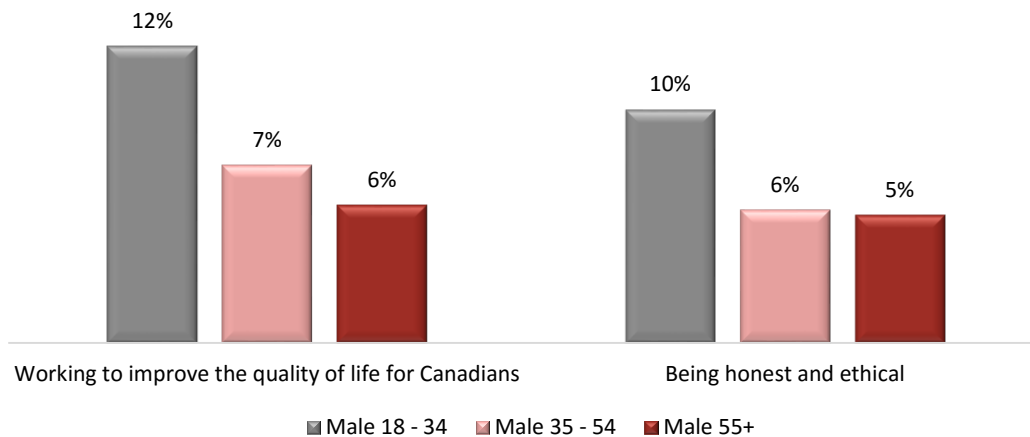


This pattern holds true for both young men and young women ([see comprehensive tables for greater detail](#)).

That said, the second pattern that emerges is that among those young men who don't say the genders are equal, the tendency to say men are better at "being honest and ethical" and "working to improve the quality of life for Canadians" is much stronger than among men 35 and older.

As the following graph illustrates, men in this youngest age group are roughly twice as likely as men older than them to say their gender is better in these leadership qualities:

In general, do you think men or women in high political offices are better at each of the following? (those saying men are better shown)



Taken together, these findings indicate that young men are both the most likely to say men and women are equally gifted with leadership traits, *and* most likely to say men are better than women on these two key measures.

This suggests a divide within Canada's youngest generation of men. While the vast majority of them are inclined to view men and women equally, a small but significant group is still fighting the battle of the sexes – and more convinced than ever that men should win.

Time will tell whether this group's views harden or soften with age.

*The **Angus Reid Institute (ARI)** was founded in October 2014 by pollster and sociologist, Dr. Angus Reid. ARI is a national, not-for-profit, non-partisan public opinion research organization established to advance education by commissioning, conducting and disseminating to the public accessible and impartial statistical data, research and policy analysis on economics, political science, philanthropy, public administration, domestic and international affairs and other socio-economic issues of importance to Canada and its world.*

For detailed results by age, gender, region, education, and other demographics, [click here](#).