

A Year of Service? Canadians – including young adults – embrace the idea of civilian service for those under 30

Young adults support giving a year of their life to national service; but it depends on the kind of work

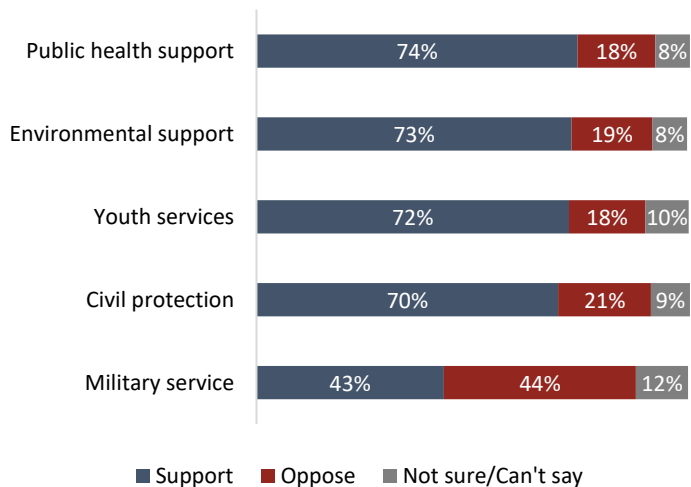
August 11, 2025 – Prime Minister Mark Carney spoke last week in Trenton, Ontario to announce what he called a “[generational](#)” increase in pay for members of the Canadian Armed Forces. And while this may bolster an already growing interest in joining the ranks of Canada’s military, which has reached [a 10-year high](#) this year, new data from the non-profit Angus Reid Institute find many Canadians evidently willing to serve their country in a number of different forms – even if it’s mandatory.

These data find Canadians overwhelmingly supportive of the idea of mandatory civilian service – that is, one year of time donated for those younger than 30 years of age – across a number of fields. This type of model has been utilized in Germany, France, Norway, and other countries in recent years to engage citizens. Whether it’s civil protection, public health support, environmental support or youth services (for definitions, [click here](#)), at least seven-in-10 say they would support one year of compulsory time donated.

Perhaps most key here are the views of young people between the age of 18 and 29. Comparing support minus opposition across these four broad areas yields a +36 or higher among 18- to 29-year-old men in all four and a +30 or higher among 18- to 29-year-old women across each option. Young women are close to equally likely as young men to support each prospective field of service, aside from civil protection, which would include items like disaster response, emergency management, and firefighting, where their net score dips 13-points lower than men.

Mandatory military service, however, is much more divisive. Overall, the same number support (43%), as oppose it (44%). Using that same net score approach (support minus opposition) on one year of mandatory military service, men 30 and older all offer net support, while young men are more opposed (-

Putting this another way, would you support or oppose Canada having one year of mandatory service for people younger than 30 in any of these areas? (All respondents, n=1,619)



METHODOLOGY:

The Angus Reid Institute conducted an online survey from June 20-23, 2025, among a randomized sample of 1,619 Canadian adults who are members of Angus Reid Forum. The sample was weighted to be representative of adults nationwide according to region, gender, age, household income, and education, based on the Canadian census. For comparison purposes only, a probability sample of this size would carry a margin of error of +/- 2.0 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.

For more information on our polling methods, [click here](#).

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8). All female age groups are widely in opposition to this idea, aside from those 60 years of age and older, who are divided evenly (+2) on each side.

Ask which form they would support more if they had to choose one, three-in-five (59%) say they prefer civilian service, while one-in-five (19%) say military service. One-in-eight (13%) say neither.

About ARI

*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 foundation 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.*

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Part One: Would Canadians support mandatory youth service?

Military service divisive overall, particularly across generations

One suggestion that has cropped up in recent years as a way to boost the Canadian shortfall in Armed Forces personnel recruitment is compulsory service. Some argue that mandating a portion of military service similar to that in countries like the Nordic nations or Greece would provide young adults with better physical health, and a sense of purpose that some lack, while also establishing a domestic emergency response capacity and a more secure nation. Opponents argue that this infringes on Canadians' freedoms, pointing to previous crises during conscription periods in Canada.

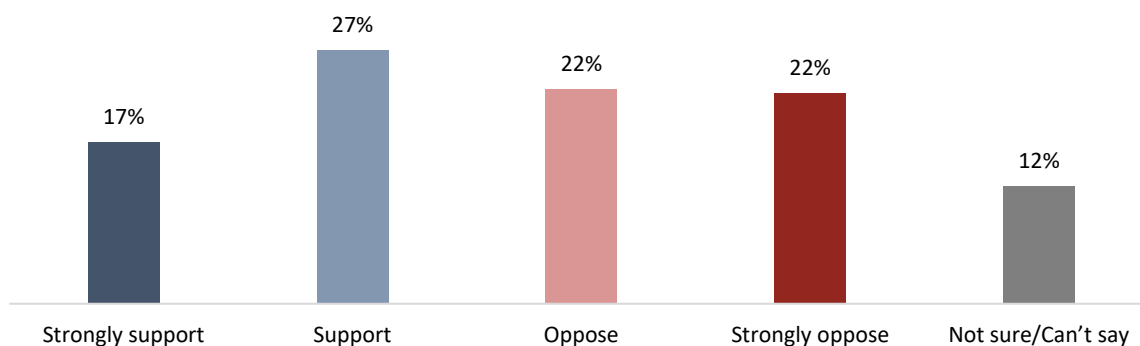
Canadians were asked if they would support or oppose Canada having one year of mandatory Armed Forces training for citizens before the age of 30. The issue is divisive, with 43 per cent in support and 44 per cent in opposition:

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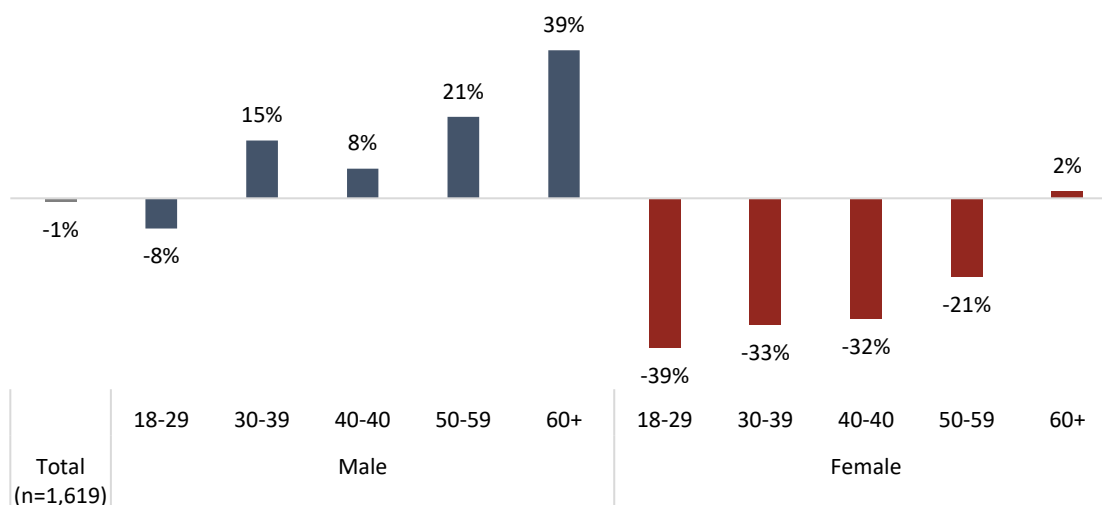
**Would you support or oppose Canada having one year of mandatory service
for people younger than 30 in any of these areas?**

'Military service'
(All respondents, n=1,619)



For men, this is much more of a positive prospect than for women. Responses also follow relatively linearly along generational lines, rising as age rises. Subtracting opposition from support yields a net support score, which is positive for men other than those 18- to 29-years-old and negative among women, other than those over the age of 59:

Support minus oppose - Mandatory military service



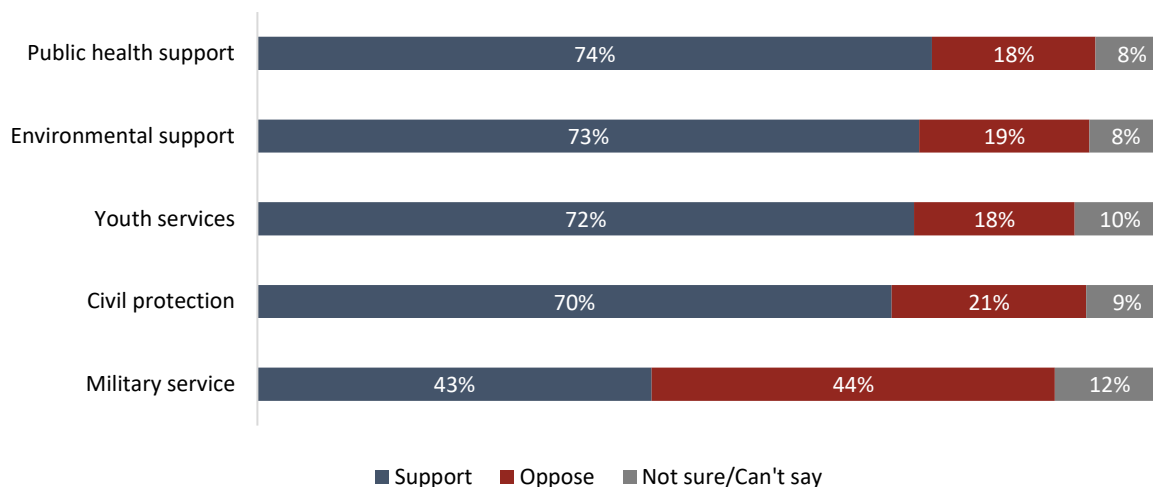
Civilian service vastly preferred to military

There are, however, other models of compulsory civilian service that have less of a focus on the military. For these alternatives, Canadians are much more supportive. For each of four additional options, including mandatory training in public health support, environmental support, youth services, or civil protection ([see definitions here](#)), Canadians are more than three-times as likely to support than oppose each:

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**Putting this another way, would you support or oppose Canada having one year of mandatory service for people younger than 30 in any of these areas?
(All respondents, n=1,619)**



Young people supportive of serving their country in a non-military form

What is perhaps most notable here are the views of those who, in this hypothetical, would be doing the work. In all cases other than military service, 18- to 29-year-old Canadians are widely supportive of a compulsory obligation for people in their age range:

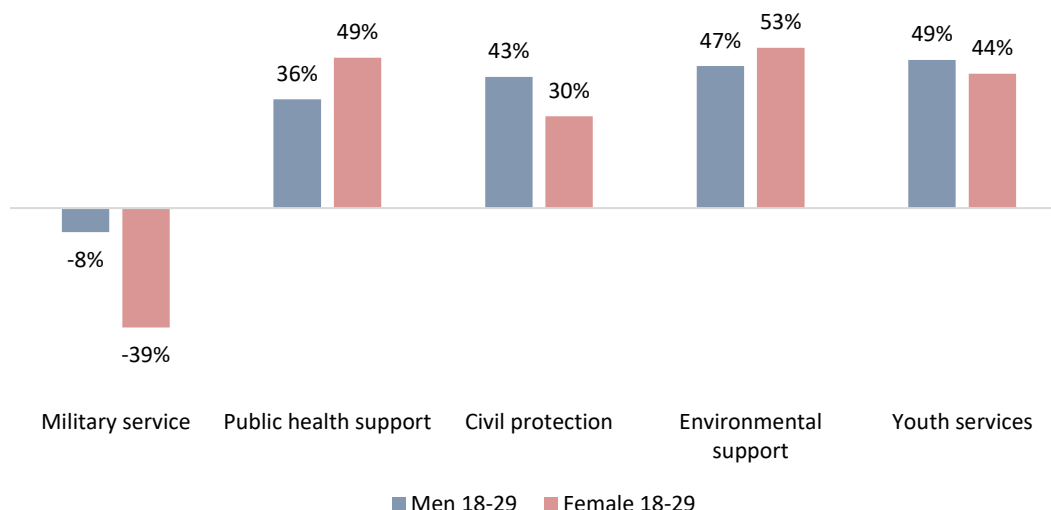
Support minus oppose each type of mandatory service						
	Total (n=1,619)	Age				
		18-29 (n=212)	30-39 (n=366)	40-49 (n=289)	50-59 (n=222)	60+ (n=530)
Public health support	56%	43%	54%	52%	47%	69%
Youth services	55%	46%	55%	57%	42%	62%
Environmental support	54%	50%	58%	49%	37%	63%
Civil protection	48%	37%	43%	43%	36%	64%
Military service	-1%	-24%	-9%	-12%	-2%	20%

Looking again at those who would be affected most, there are higher support levels for public health work among 18- to 29-year-old women compared to men of their age cohort. Men show higher levels of support for civil protection and military service.

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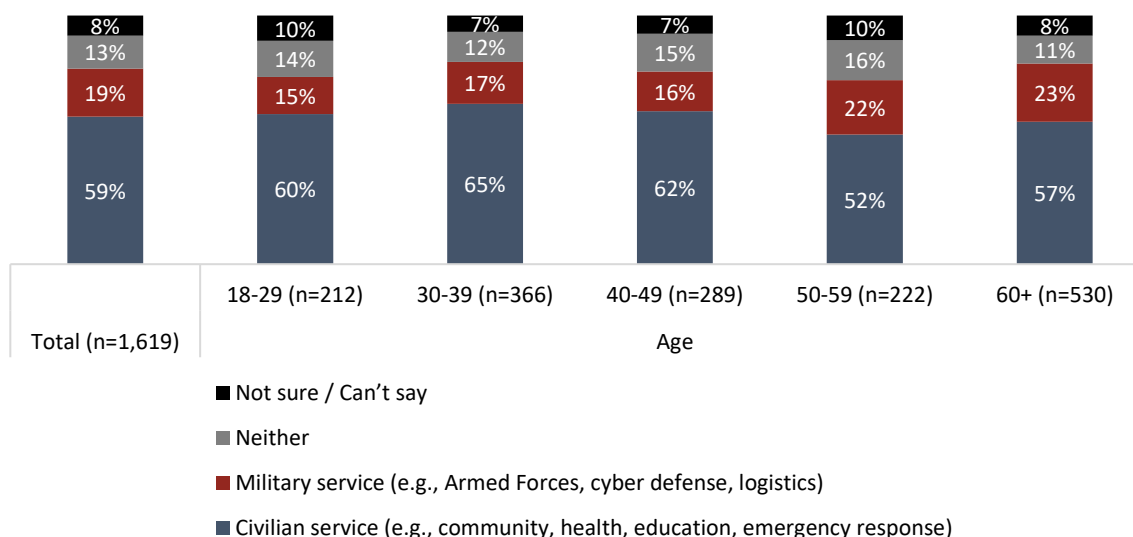
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Support minus oppose each type of mandatory service



Given the option to choose between the two broad areas, it is clear that Canadians would rather some form of civilian service that does not revolve around the Armed Forces. Indeed, they're three times as likely to choose one of the aforementioned forms of civilian work than a military focused service:

If Canada were to introduce one form of mandatory national service for young adults, which would you prefer?



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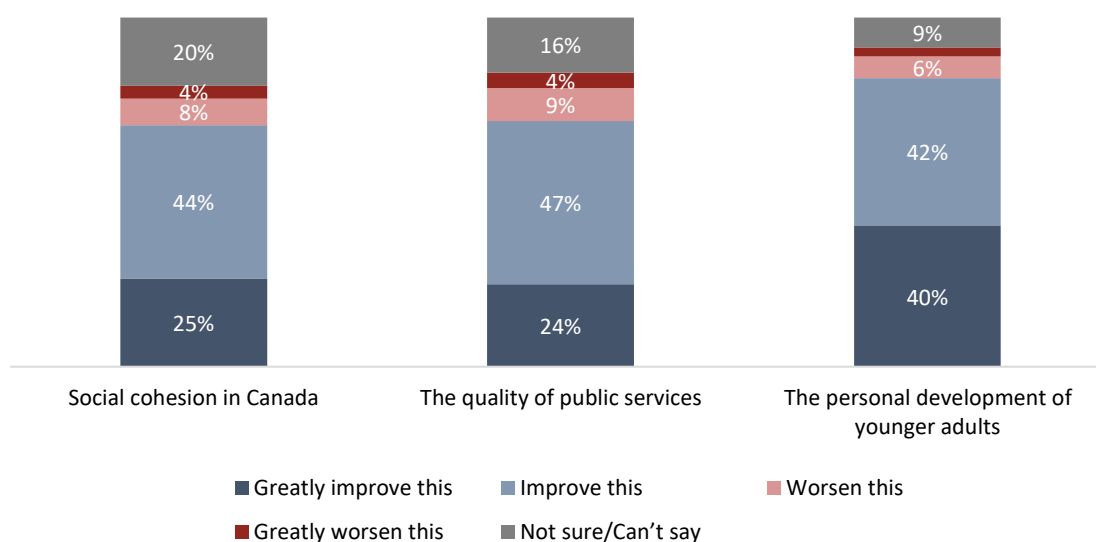
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Part Two: Perceived benefits

Civilian service seen as better than military for core aspects of Canadian society

Asked to imagine any perceived benefits from non-military compulsory service, Canadians foresee significant improvements to some core aspects of their society. The biggest perceived boon would be to the personal development of young people. Here four-in-five (82%) say this aspect of young Canadians' lives would be improved. Fewer, but still a firm majority, are bullish about the impact that this service would have on the quality of public services, with more people qualified to assist in health care, emergency response, and other areas, as well as the social cohesion of Canada more broadly:

Please tell us how much you think mandatory civilian service would affect each of the following:



These positive impacts are viewed as likely across most of the population, with significant net positive scores (improve minus worsen) among all ages ([see detailed tables for age and gender combos](#)):

Percentage who say each aspect would be improved minus those who say it would be worsened with <u>civilian service</u> :						
	Total (n=1,619)	Age				
		18-29 (n=212)	30-39 (n=366)	40-49 (n=289)	50-59 (n=222)	60+ (n=530)
The personal development of younger adults	74%	69%	69%	69%	68%	84%
Social cohesion	58%	56%	54%	52%	47%	69%
The quality of public services	57%	56%	48%	48%	44%	73%

Past Conservative Party supporters are less enthusiastic about what these aspects of service would engender for the population but are nonetheless much more positive than negative.

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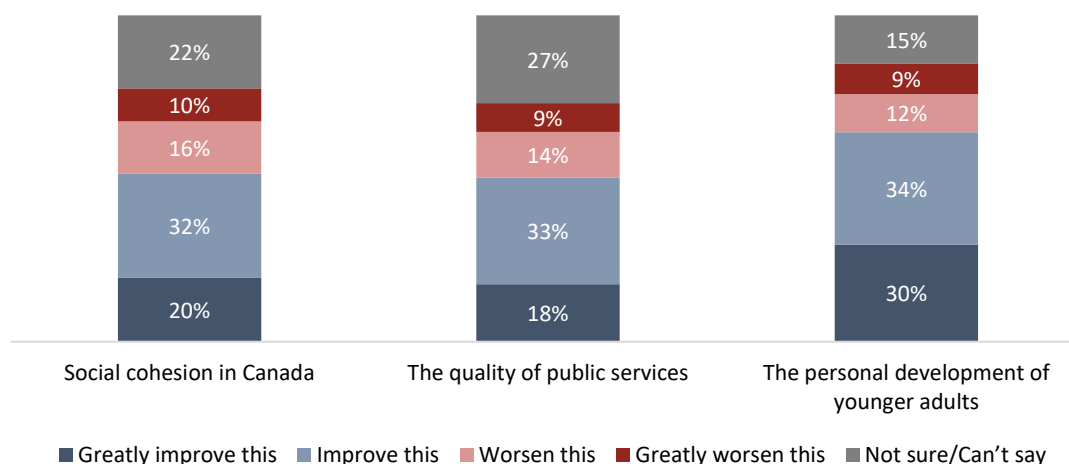
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Percentage who say each aspect would be improved minus those who say it would be worsened with <u>civilian service</u> :					
	Total (n=1,619)	Federal vote 2025			
		CPC (n=599)	Liberal (n=631)	NDP (n=91*)	BQ (n=103)
The personal development of young people	74%	65%	84%	80%	77%
Social Cohesion	58%	45%	72%	68%	65%
The quality of public services	57%	43%	72%	66%	66%

Conservatives more bullish about what military service would confer

The benefits conferred by military service are less obvious to many Canadians. While a majority still say that each of the three aspects of society would be improved, all levels are considerably lower than those recorded for civilian service in the prior section of this report (personal development -18, public services -20, social cohesion -17):

**Please tell us how much you think mandatory military service would affect each of the following:
(All respondents, n=1,619)**



Older Canadians are far more likely to perceive widespread benefits to military training for young people. Those younger than 40 are more dubious, with 18- to 29-year-olds most skeptical:

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Percentage who say each aspect would be improved minus those who say it would be worsened with <u>military service</u> :						
	Total (n=1,619)	Age				
		18-29 (n=212)	30-39 (n=366)	18-29 (n=212)	50-59 (n=222)	60+ (n=530)
The personal development of younger adults	43%	16%	28%	36%	43%	68%
The quality of public services	27%	-1%	16%	21%	21%	53%
Social cohesion	26%	2%	12%	20%	20%	50%

While 2025 CPC voters were less likely than others to say that civilian service would engender positive outcomes, they're more likely to feel that military service would. For New Democrats, the overall impact of compulsory service in the Armed Forces would be negative:

Percentage who say each aspect would be improved minus those who say it would be worsened with <u>military service</u> :					
	Total (n=1,619)	Federal vote 2025			
		CPC (n=599)	Liberal (n=631)	NDP (n=91*)	BQ (n=103)
The personal development of young people	43%	60%	40%	-4%	47%
The quality of public services	27%	35%	29%	-7%	30%
Social Cohesion	26%	38%	24%	-5%	27%

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

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