



AGA KHAN FOUNDATION
CANADA

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Canadians as Global Citizens

Research study on Canadian engagement in
international development

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Executive Summary

Background

In late 2013 Aga Khan Foundation Canada (AKFC) commissioned a research study to explore key insights and opportunities for engaging Canadians on international development issues. The research methodology included: a review of media coverage, in-depth interviews and online panels; an online quantitative survey of 1205 respondents; digital analysis and a social media audit.

The research was undertaken with the financial support of the Government of Canada through the Department of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development.

Summary of Key Findings

The following is a brief summary of the main research findings. Detailed findings are presented below.

Media primarily focused on disasters

When tragic events occur around the world, the media respond immediately. They tell the stories, make the headlines, and the fundraising challenge begins. But the urgency and profile wanes as quickly as it arrived. Yet, there are many more stories that are not being told. Canadians want to hear stories of communities that have been positively impacted by international development programs. Three quarters of Canadians want to hear these stories and learn about international development yet less than 1 in 10 say they are extremely or very knowledgeable about development issues.

Canadians believe international development is important

International development is important to 75% of Canadians and 32% cite it as extremely or very important. They believe international development will reduce global poverty, improve skills and education, and provide tools and resources for sustainable and peaceful societies.

Canadians also believe that education, clean water and health care are the essential building blocks to empowering communities. It is important to note, that these topics along with gender equality also garnered the most conversations online when looking at how international development is discussed within social media communities.

Canadians also have an underlying sentiment that it is our duty as human beings to care about these issues — that what affects others around the world directly affects us.

Furthermore, to be part of a global society means we have to do our part. Indeed, ***84% of Canadians believe it is important for Canadian citizens to support international development***, and 46% cite it as extremely or very important.

Equally, ***84% of Canadians also believe it is important for the Canadian Government to support international development***, and similarly 46% cite it as extremely or very important.

Canadians are most interested in learning about health and education

When Canadians were asked what key topics that they want to learn more about, not surprisingly it is the same topics that they believe are the most important that is, education and health. Specifically, they are most interested in stories of health and education that can have a positive impact on local communities. These issues can be used as entry-points into broader international development topics.

Canadians want to learn more about international development online, watching news or television programs, and viewing documentary films. Young Canadians aged 16 to 24 also mention social networks such as Facebook, Twitter and YouTube as important sources for learning about international development.

How do you get Canadians who are not interested — interested?

Canadians who are not interested in learning about international development say that they don't have enough time and they are too busy or focused on their own problems. However, they do reveal that they could become more interested if they could see positive results, knew that funds were managed well and went directly to projects that were making a difference.

Women have the highest interest in international development

Canadians who are most interested in international development are between the ages of 16 to 34 and skew higher to women. Most of these people are in relationships, either married or living common law, and do not have children. Slightly more than half are university educated, are currently working and tend to live in urban cities.

It is important to start early

Another key finding among Canadians who are currently involved in international development efforts was about how they got involved. Most began in their youth — in high school and university, or through travel, family and friends. These “Interested Canadians” have a huge appetite for international development and they want to learn more and become more actively involved. They are particularly interested in attending public events or presentations and are interested in going beyond donating towards a long term engagement.

Becoming more social will help drive engagement

More and more international development organizations are using a multi-channel strategy combining traditional and digital media. In addition, they are providing opportunities for their followers and audiences to connect and engage with each other about specific interests that they may share. International development organizations that are more social, that is, use social media as part key part of their marketing communications efforts have stronger positive sentiment towards their cause and organization.

Furthermore, organizations that are perceived as the most successful receive strong public recognition and approval from their followers. These followers become champions for the organization and tell the organization’s stories in a more authentic and compelling way.

Implications

The research shows that Canadians are interested in international development, but what is the best way to engage them, to get them involved, and make it a priority for them? Here are five key recommendations.

1. **Reframe International Development:** Reframe international development from aid, charity and hand-outs to fairness, responsibility and partnership. Communicate real stories of community impact and sustainability.
2. **Leverage Canadians' view of global responsibility and humanity:** Canadians believe it is a true Canadian value to be a global citizen. Ensure engagement activities are emotionally rooted in notions of shared responsibility and global citizenship.
3. **Use an integrated multi-channel approach:** Use traditional and digital and social media channels to engage Canadians and amplify content. Use rich visuals, short videos, films and photos to encourage sharing and engagement.
4. **Focus engagement efforts to specific audiences:** Focus efforts towards media as influencers and young Canadians as early adopters, as well as women who can act as amplifiers and champions.
5. **Move beyond donations:** Focus on awareness, education and interest in ideas to engage long term and develop positive enduring relationships.

Research Objectives and Methodology

Objectives

The research objectives of this study were to:

- ◆ Explore key issues, concerns and opportunities for engaging Canadians on international development issues
- ◆ Provide context, insights and ideas for engagement opportunities
- ◆ Determine awareness, understanding and engagement amongst Canadians
- ◆ Carry out digital analysis of online conversations, determine what topics people care most about and identify topics and key channels for strongest engagement

Methodology

The research methodology for this study was as follows:

- ◆ Review of Canadian media coverage of international development, foreign aid, and other key word searches (May to October 2013)
- ◆ Literature review of quantitative and qualitative research and position papers on international development
- ◆ Analysis of key international development communications efforts, media campaigns and best practices
- ◆ Digital analysis on key channels, topics and themes and conversations
- ◆ General Population online study (N=1205) - National English (N=955) and French (N=250)

The research was conducted from November 2013 to February 2014 by Colbourne Consulting, Insight & Innovation CMI and ArCompany.

Key Findings

Media Analysis Findings

Key Media Analysis Findings

- ◆ The majority of media coverage is driven by disasters or controversy
- ◆ There is a lot of media outreach by charitable organizations but not a lot of coverage in traditional media
- ◆ “Local Hero” stories get coverage. These stories are more about individuals than the cause or issue
- ◆ Celebrities and political leaders garner coverage
- ◆ Alternative approaches to aid are emerging (such as migrant remittances, micro-financing, entrepreneurship and voluntourism)

*Canadian General Population
Research Findings*

International development is generally seen very positively by Canadians, but some negative perceptions exist too

International development brings to mind largely positive imagery

Improving global poverty

- ◆ Hope and a way up

Education

- ◆ Education and skills development

Aid

- ◆ Tools and resources for sustainability

Peace

- ◆ No war or terrorism

But also has some negative imagery, particularly in Quebec

Money and corruption

- ◆ Misuse of funds
- ◆ Money not getting to those who really need it
- ◆ Donations not having an impact

Misery, severe poverty

- ◆ Starving children
- ◆ Squalor and hopelessness

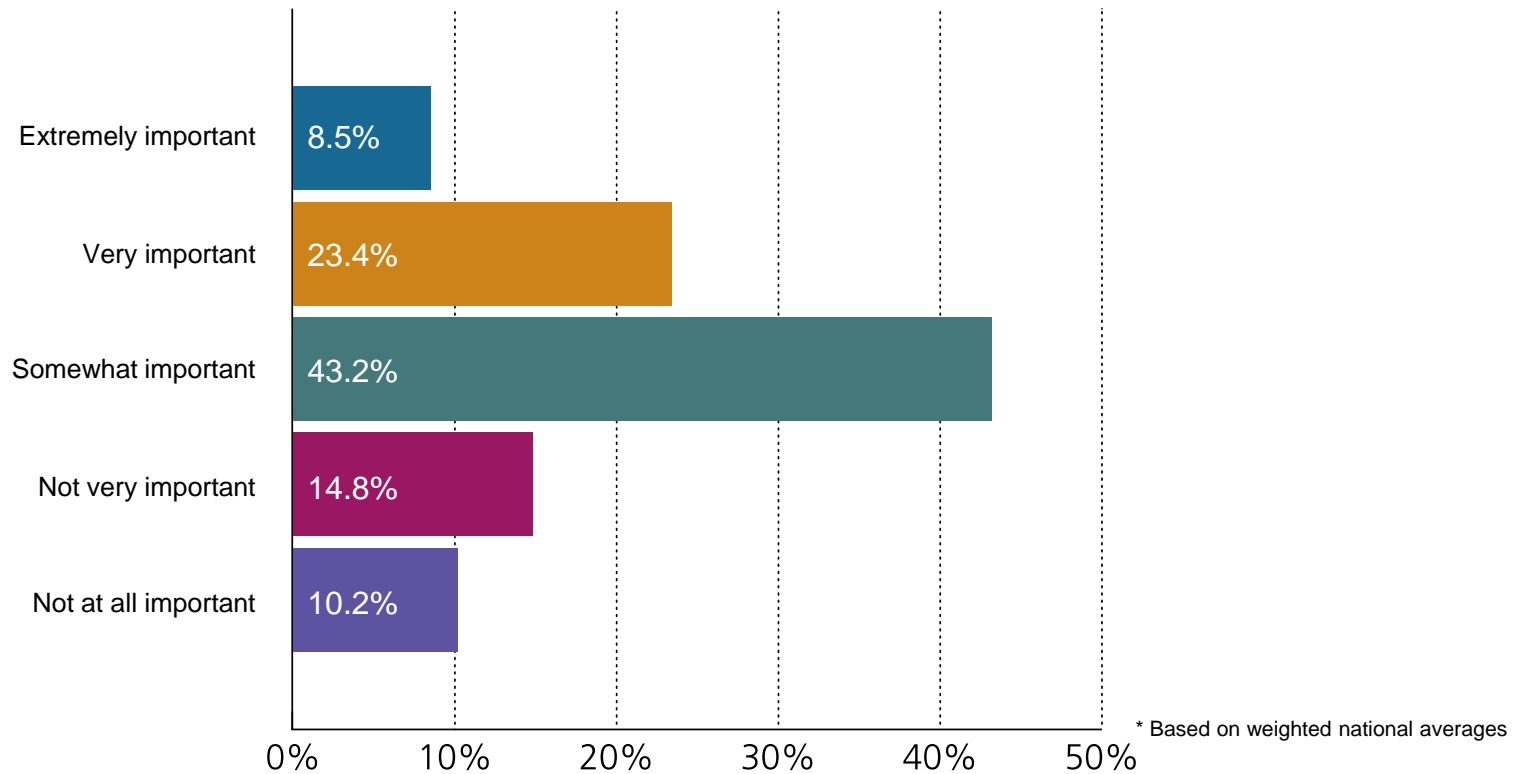
Advertising

- ◆ For funds/donations

International development is important to **75% of Canadians** and 32% cite it as extremely or very important*

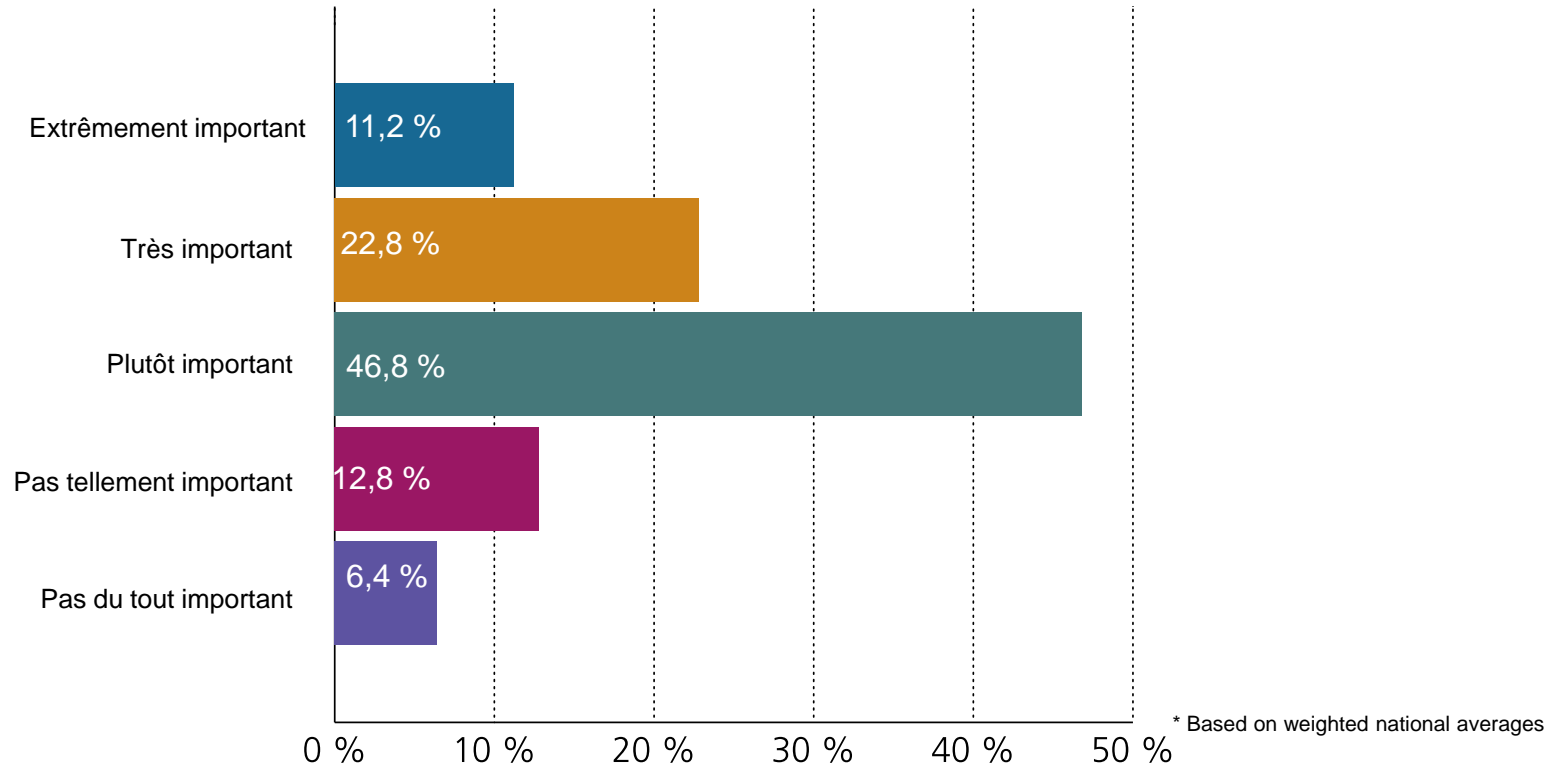
English Canada

How important is international development to you?



French Quebec

Dans quelle mesure le développement international est-il important pour vous?



Canadians believe **education**, **clean water** and **health care** are the most important elements of international development — they are key pillars for life

Canadians believe focusing on education and training is the ideal approach as it provides for self sufficiency

Canadians also see education, clean water and health care as the building blocks to empowering communities

Canadians feel that improvements in these areas are the best way to reduce global poverty

In Quebec, themes of agriculture, farming and food production are also important

Canadians believe we should care about these issues because they affect us all as human beings

Able Affects Canada
Canadians Care Compassion
Compassionate Country Economy
Fortunate Future Global Citizens Global
Community Happen Human Humanitarian Idea
Live Money Moral Nation Peace
Planet Poverty Share Think Water World
Citizens

Aider Cause Concerne D'aider
Faire Gens Humaine Ici
Important Monde Pays
Planète Qualité Ressources Richesse Sais
Sociale Sommes Survie Valeurs

Canadians care about international development because ...

Why should Canadians care about these issues?

“*Canadians are generally more concerned about human rights than others. What affects others around the world can directly affect how we, as a country are viewed...*”

“*We're a global community—we are inter-connected—impacts on other nations affect us and vice versa*”

“*It is our duty as human beings.*”

“*Nous sommes citoyen du monde*”

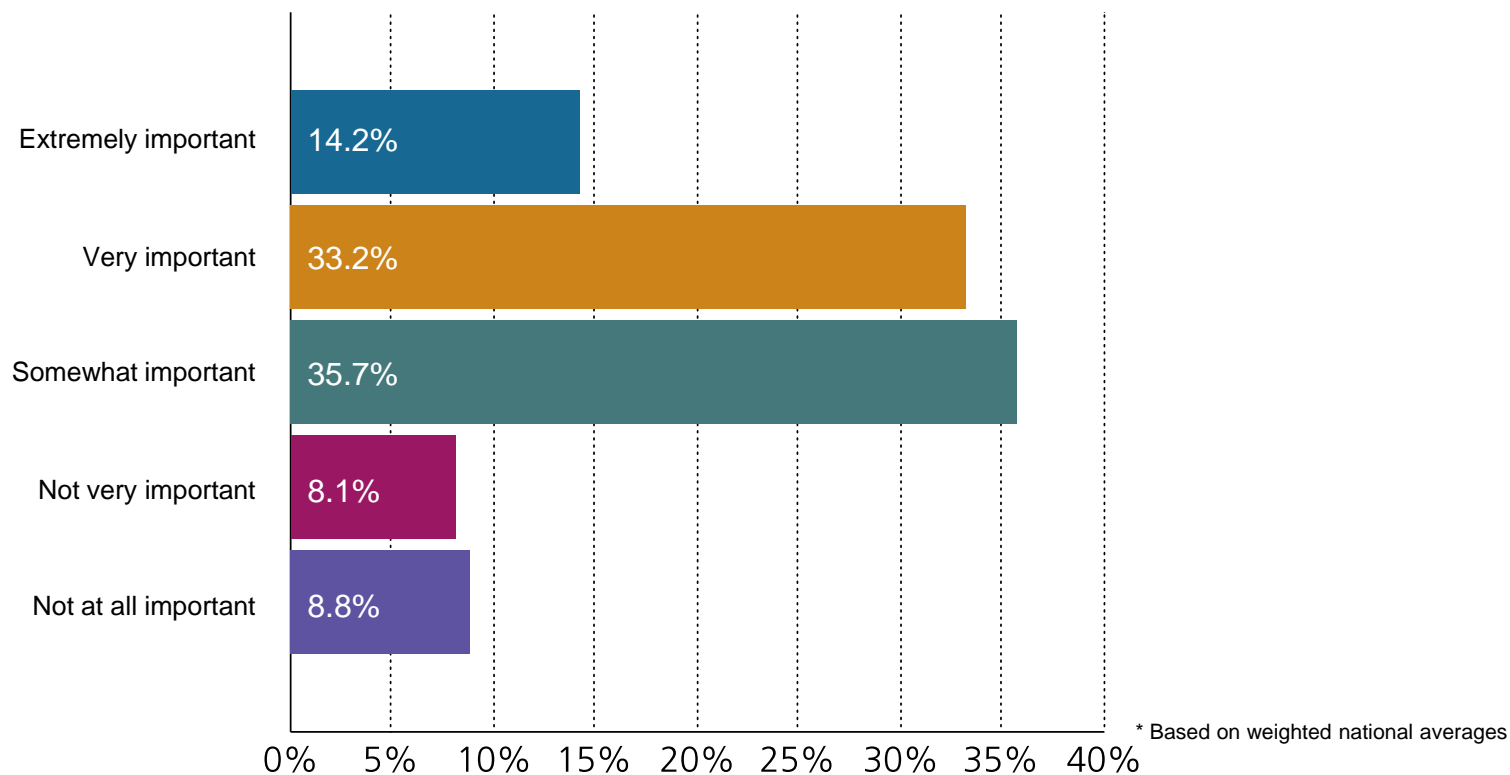
“*We are all human*”

“*We are all responsible for our world family...we need to shop, trade, and think responsibly for our actions affect the very least of our brothers around the world*”

84% of Canadians believe it is important for the Canadian **government** to support international development — 46% cite extremely or very important*

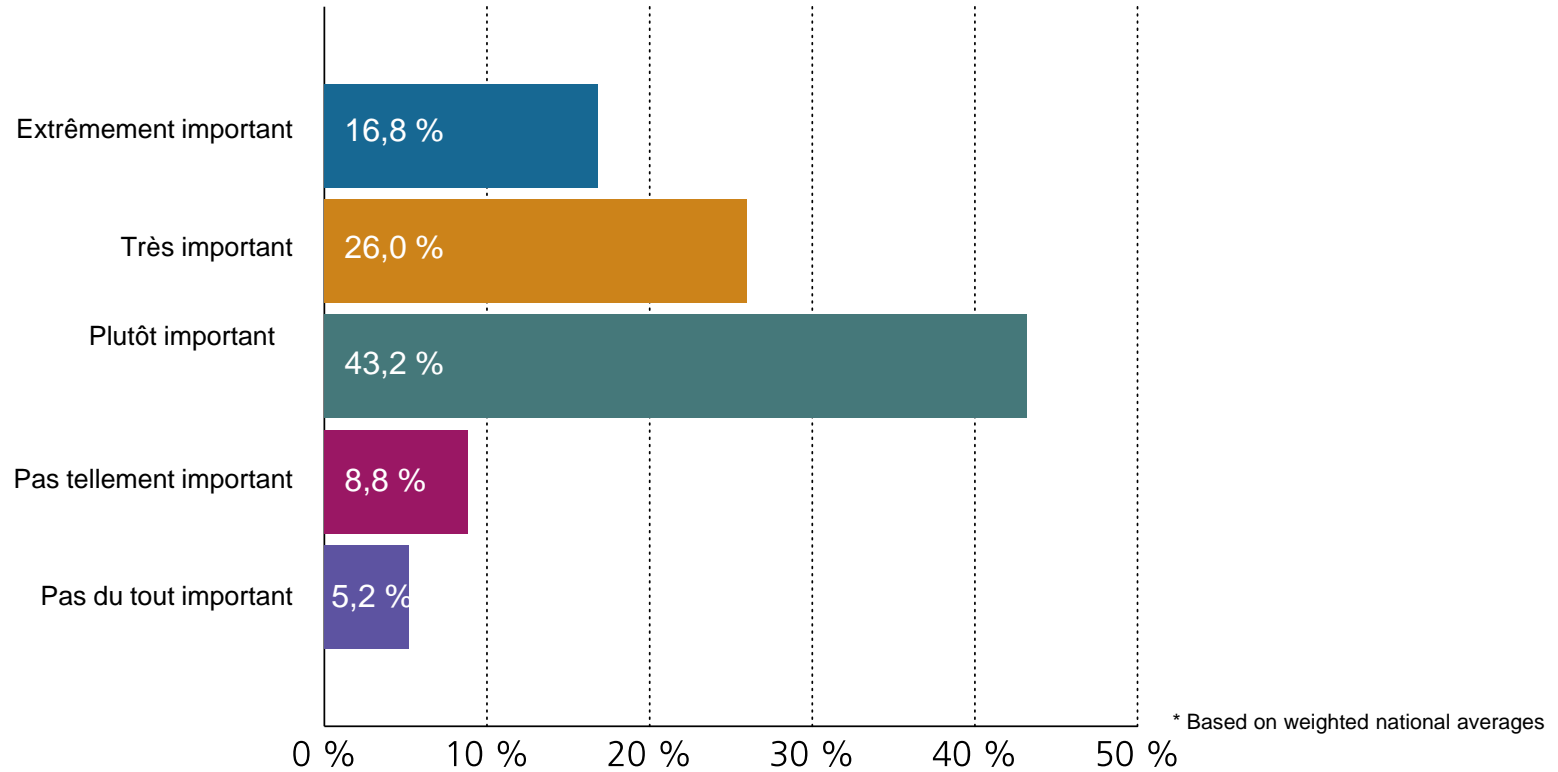
English Canada

How important is it for the Canadian government to support international development?



French Quebec

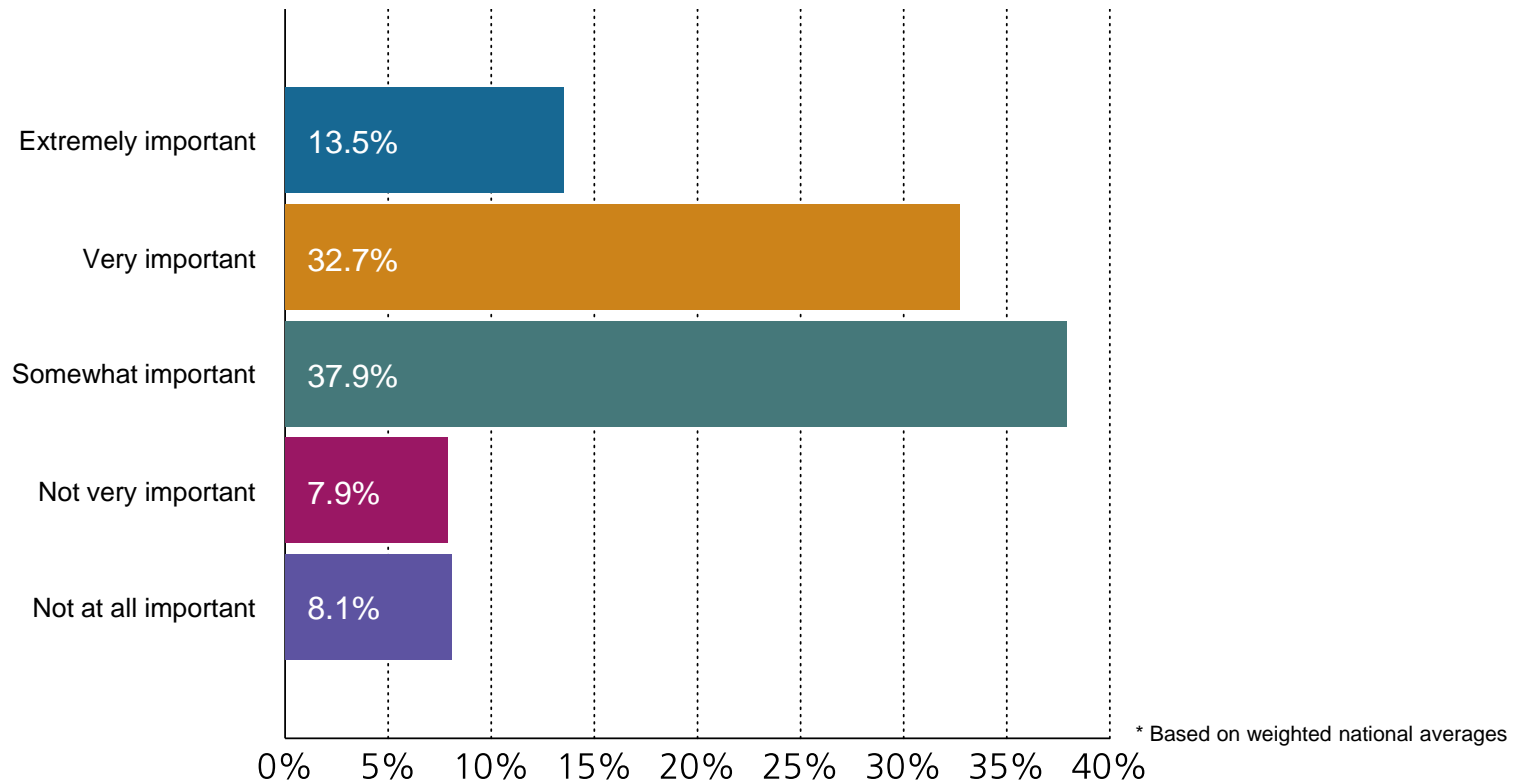
Dans quelle mesure est-ce important que le gouvernement canadien appuie le développement international?



Equally, Canadians believe it is important for Canadian **citizens** to support international development (84%) — 46% cite extremely or very important*

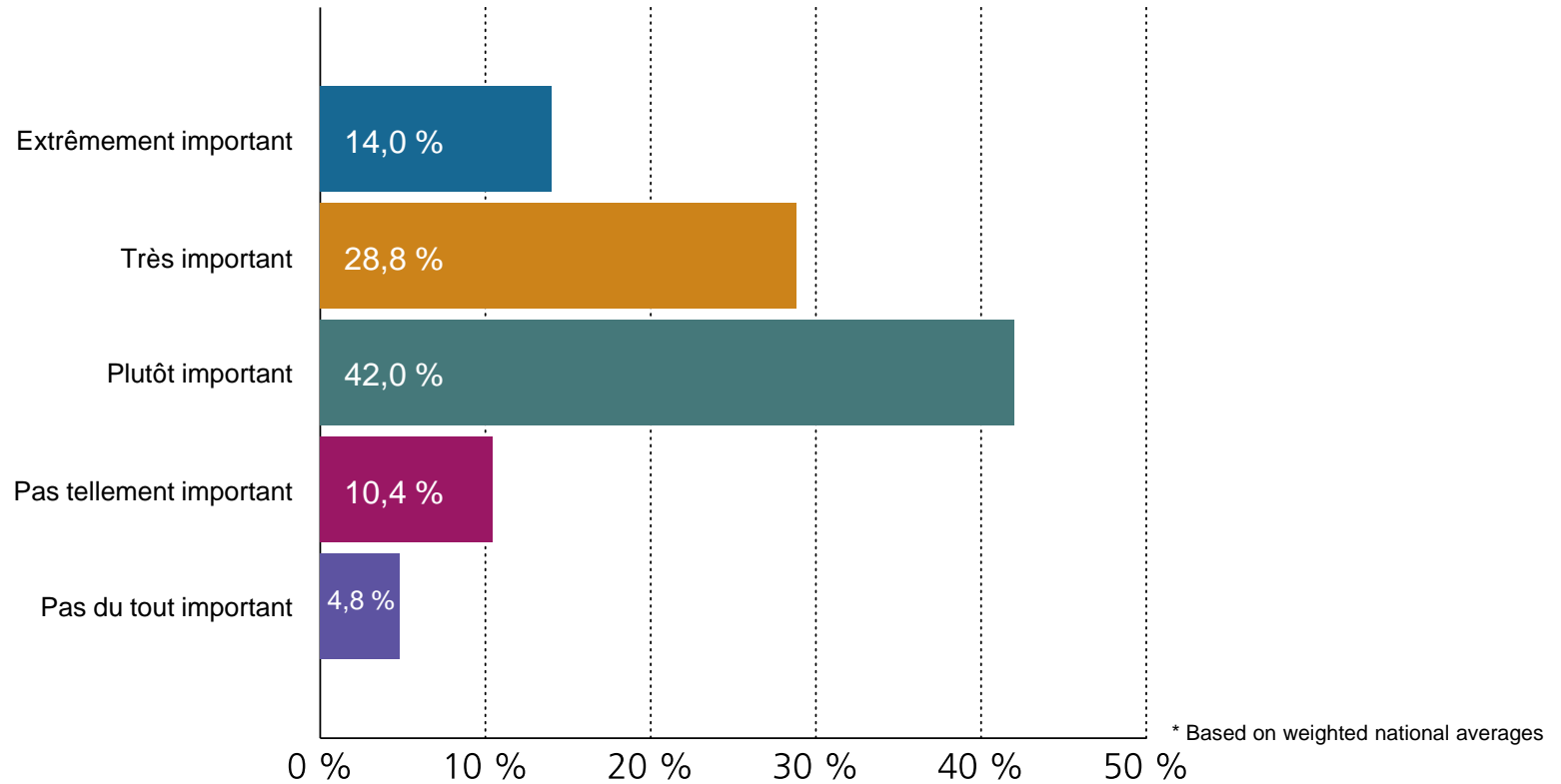
English Canada

How important is it for Canadian citizens to support international development?



French Quebec

Dans quelle mesure est-ce important que les citoyens canadiens appuient le développement international?



Canadians' knowledge levels of international development are low, but many want to learn more

Fewer than 1 in 10 Canadians say they are extremely or very knowledgeable

- ◆ An additional 4 in 10 Canadians say they are somewhat knowledgeable
- ◆ Canadians feel they are most knowledgeable about education and health care
- ◆ Canadians are least knowledgeable about economic development and civil society

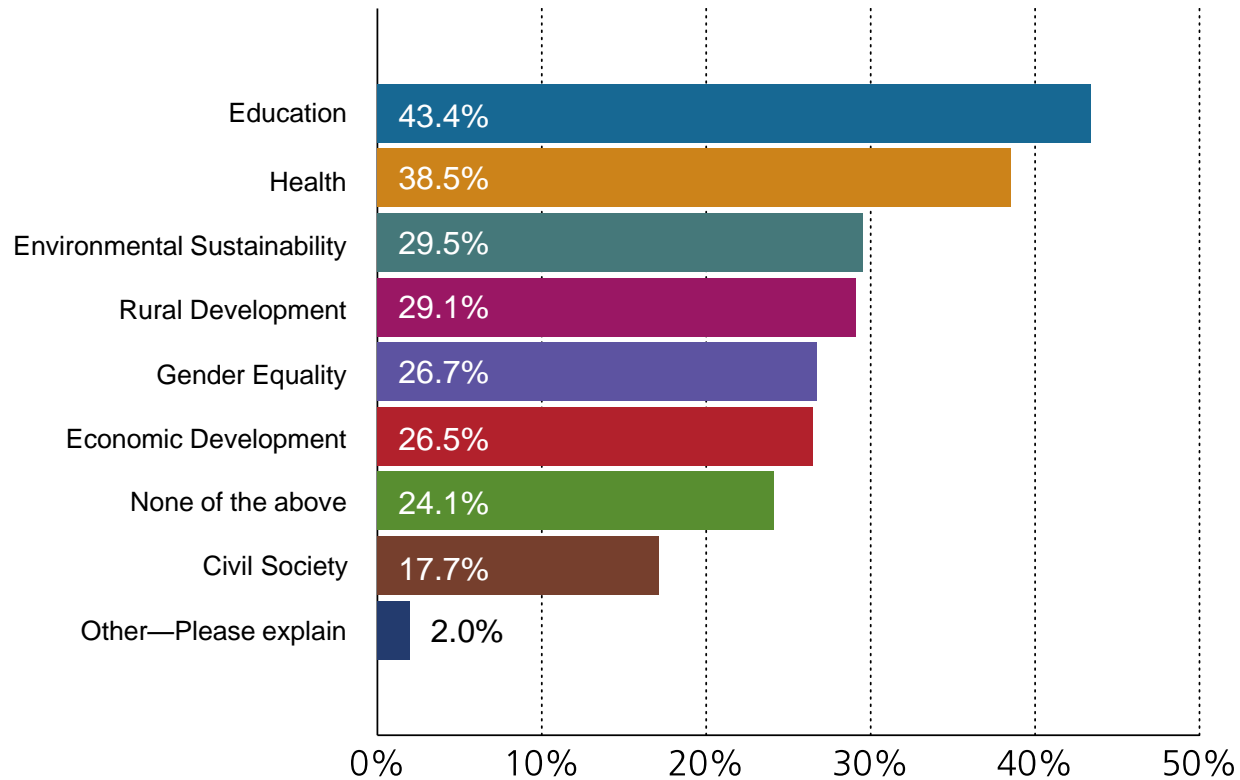
Many would like to learn more, particularly about education and health

- ◆ Three quarters of Canadians have some interest in learning more, with 3 in 10 extremely or very interested
- ◆ Canadians want to learn most about education and health care
- ◆ They are also interested in learning about economic development and gender equality

Education and health are the key topics that Canadians want to learn more about

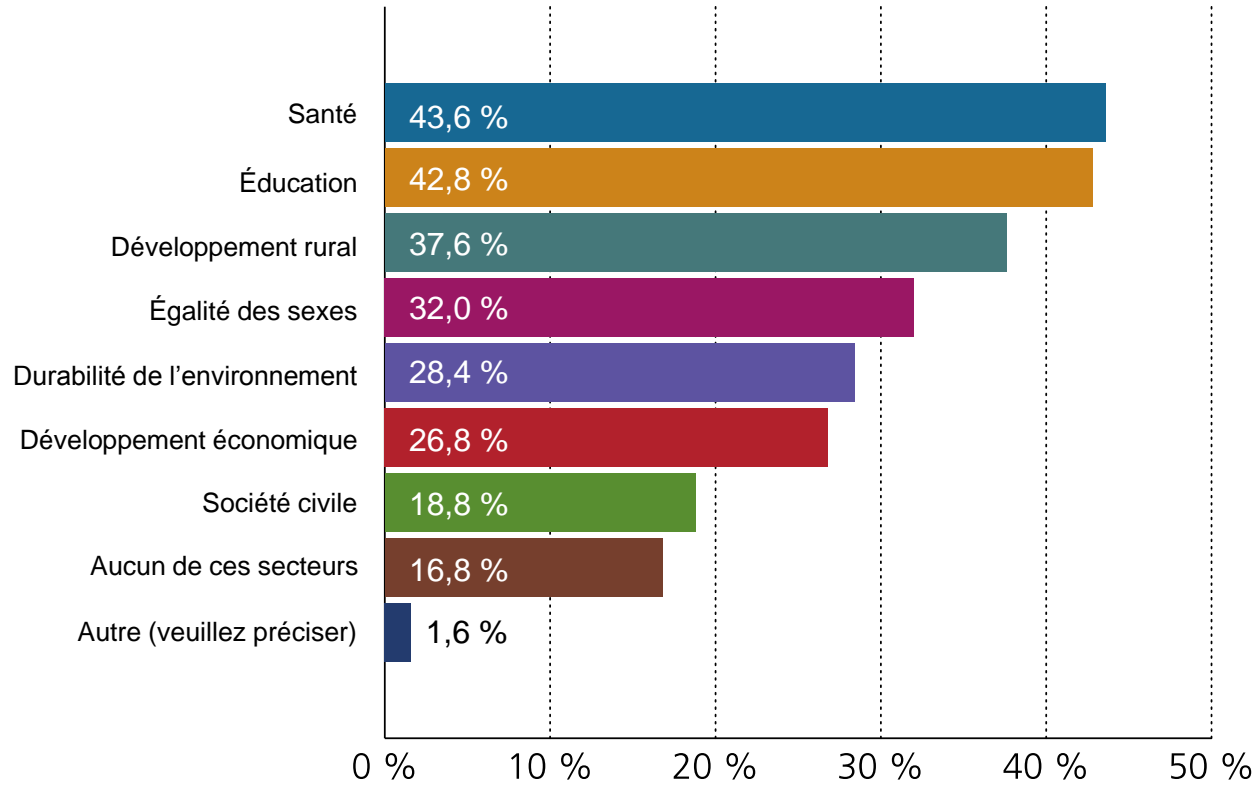
English Canada

Which of the following areas of international development would you like to learn more about?



French Quebec

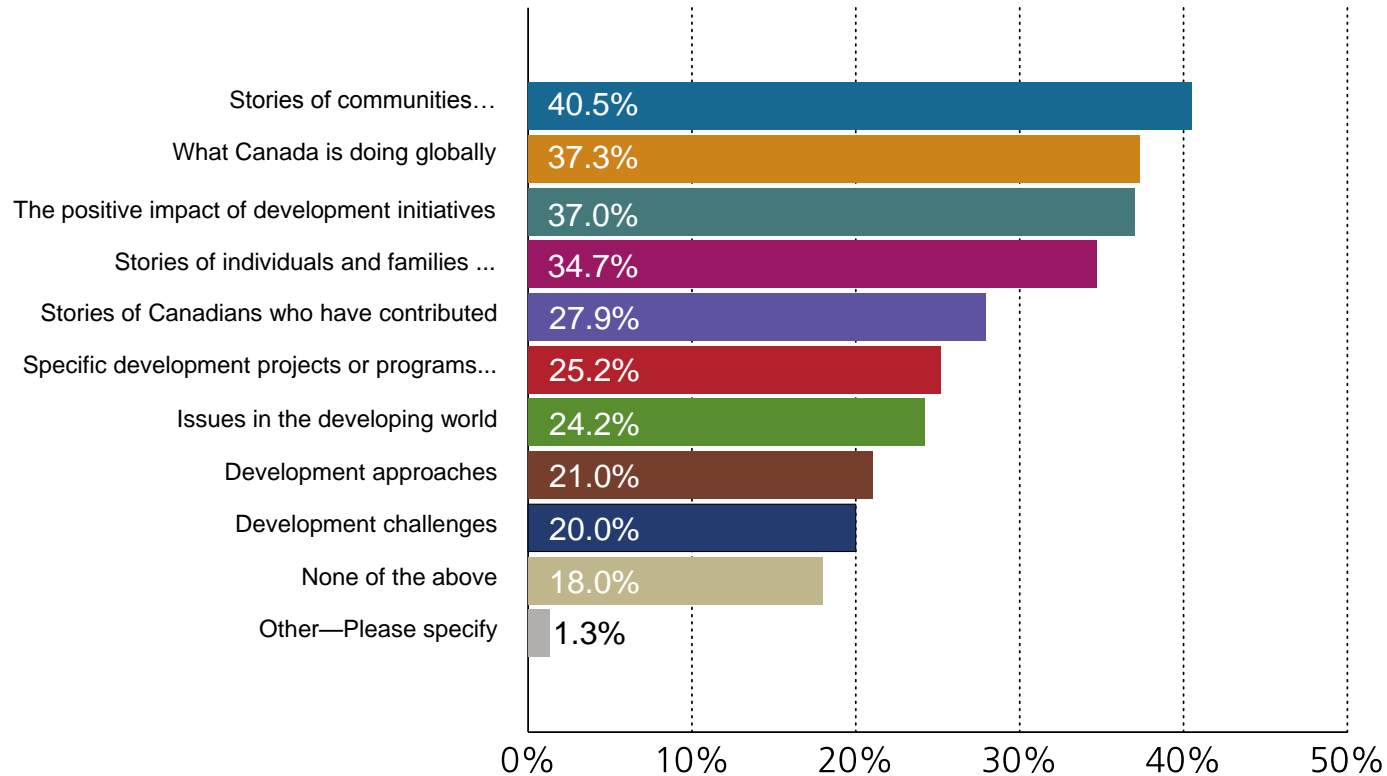
Parmi les secteurs du développement international suivants, sur lesquels aimeriez-vous le plus en apprendre davantage?



Stories of communities that have been positively impacted resonate most with Canadians

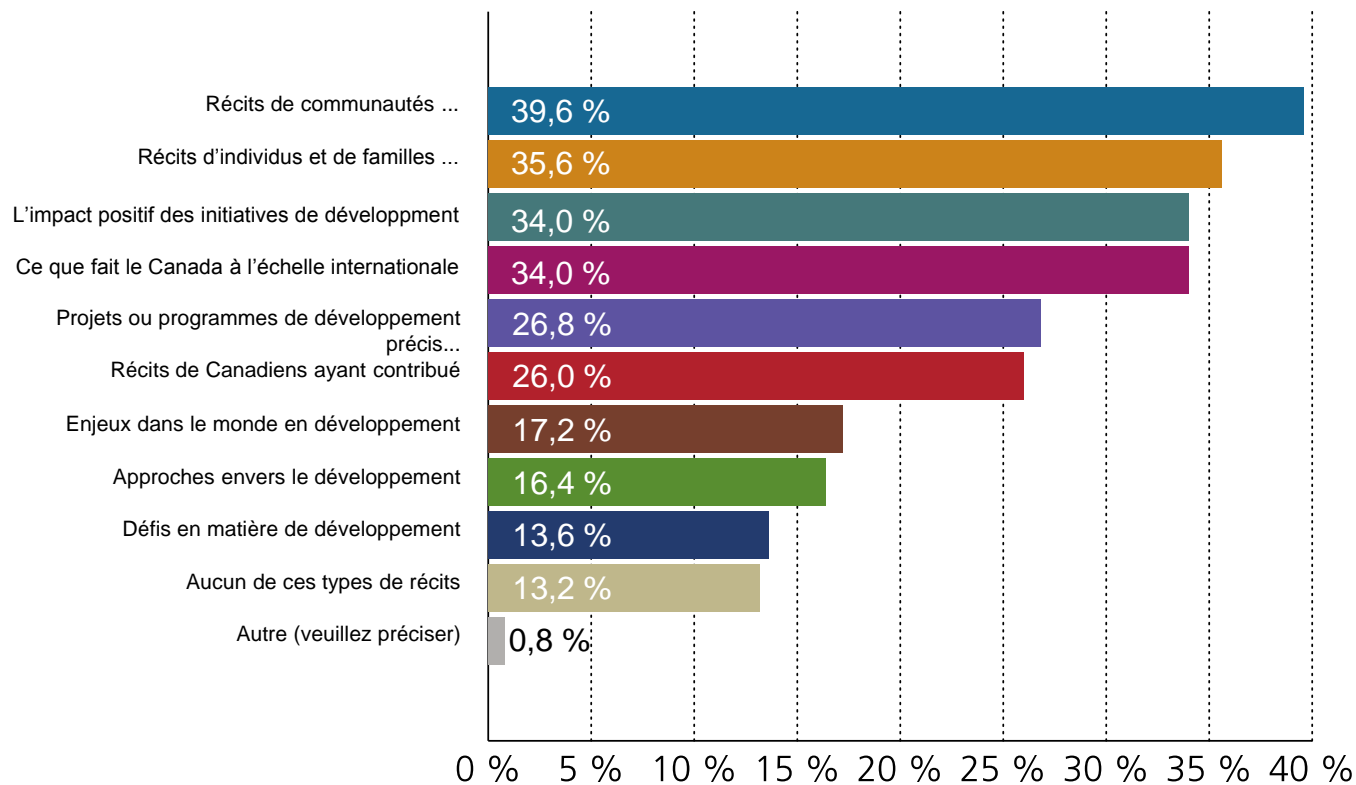
English Canada

What types of stories do you want to know more about?



French Quebec

Quels types de sujets aimeriez-vous découvrir plus amplement?



Canadians are **most** interested in themes and messages that involve local empowerment and global connectivity

Key messages that resonate most with Canadians empower

Messages that are most interesting and engaging for Canadians focus on:

- ◆ A hand up—tools and training for self sufficiency
- ◆ Empowering local communities
- ◆ Education and health care

Key themes that resonate most with Canadians create connections

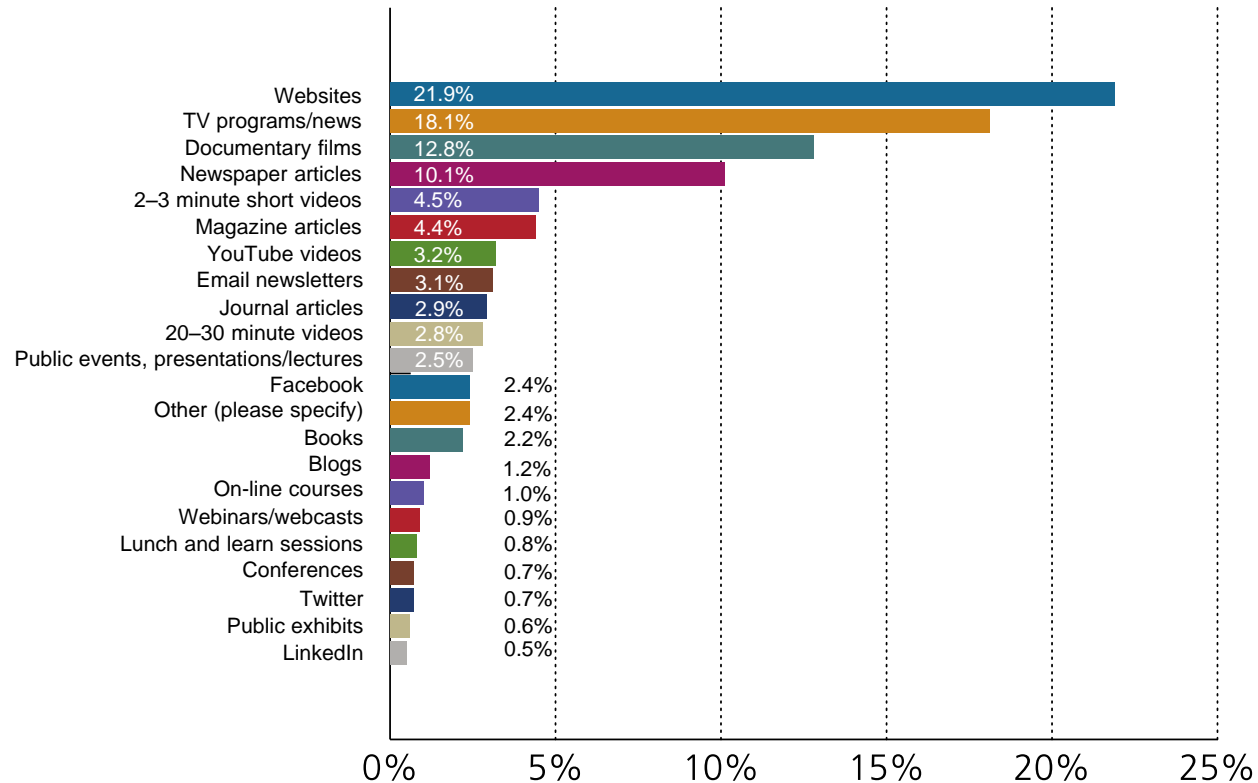
Themes that are most interesting and engaging for Canadians focus on:

- ◆ We are all connected
- ◆ We are global citizens

Canadians are **most** interested in learning more about international development through websites, TV/news, documentary films, and newspaper articles

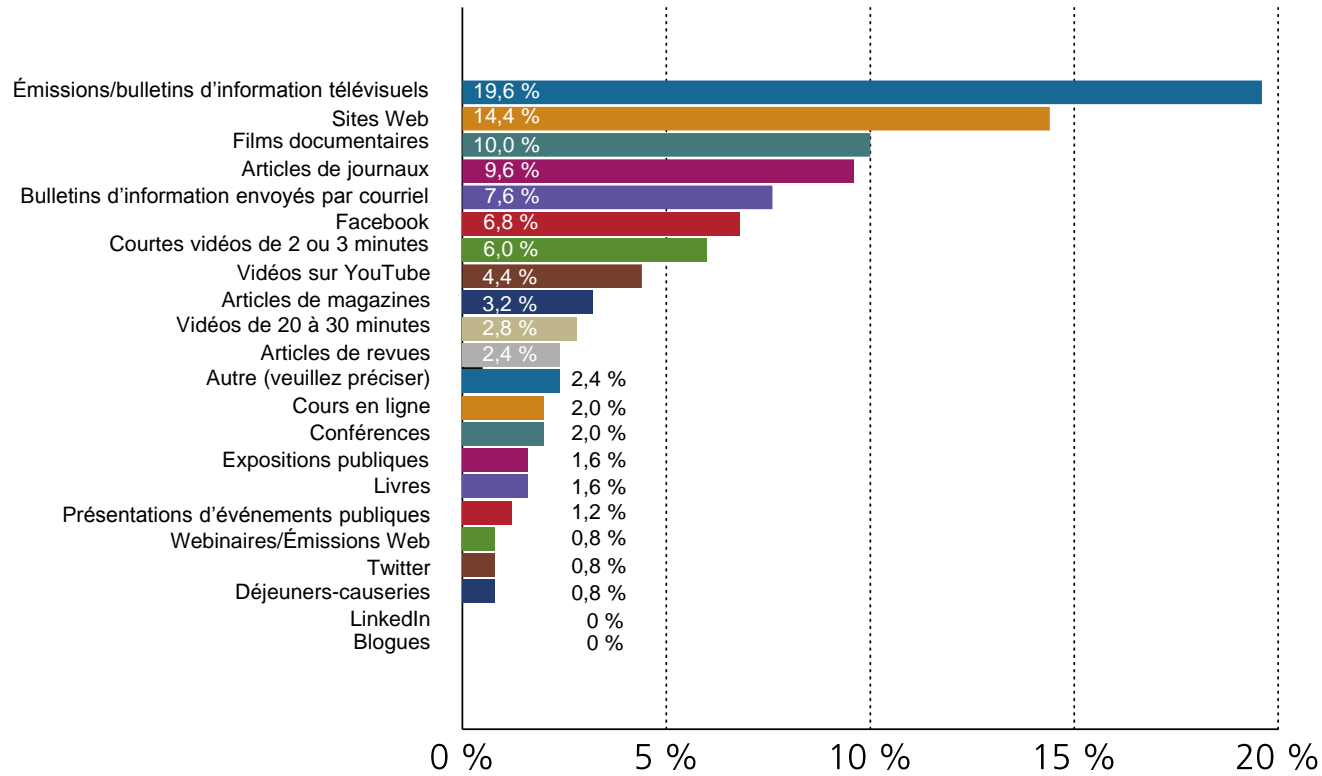
English Canada

Which **one** of the following methods do you prefer **most** for learning more about international development?



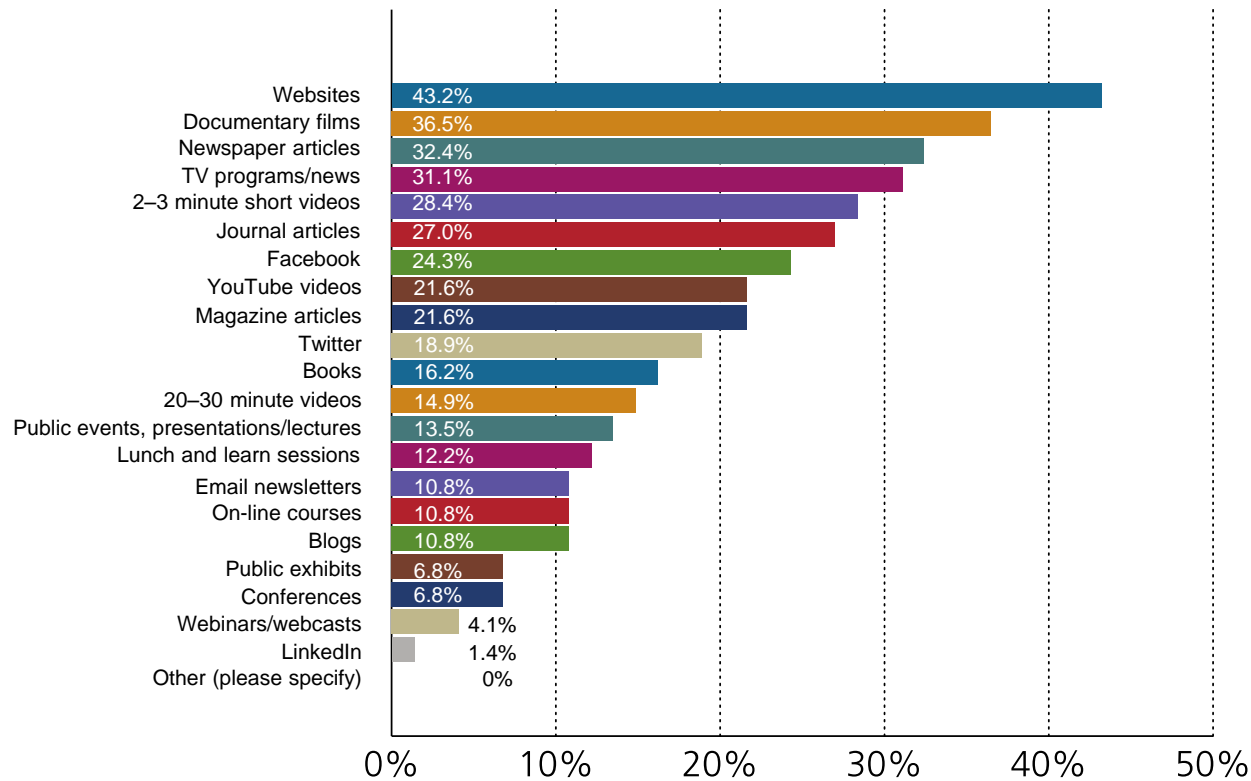
French Quebec

Laquelle des méthodes suivantes aimez-vous **le plus** pour en apprendre davantage sur le développement international?



Amongst young Canadians aged 16-24, engagement channels like Facebook, YouTube and Twitter become more important

Which of the following methods do you prefer for learning more about international development?
(select all that apply)



Young Canadians aged 16-24, N=74 E

One quarter of Canadians are not interested in learning more about international development

They say they are not interested because they:

- ◆ lack the time
- ◆ lack the interest
- ◆ are too busy
- ◆ are more focused on their own problems, or on our own country's problems

But some say they could become more interested if they...

- ◆ could see positive results and the lasting impact of international development efforts
- ◆ knew that funds were managed well and went directly to projects and program that achieve results

Current Canadian citizen involvement in international development is low, but interest does exist

Only 5% of Canadians say they are extremely or very involved

- ◆ An additional 26% of Canadians say they are somewhat involved
- ◆ When asked how Canadians should support international development, Canadians cite volunteering, becoming more educated/informed, and donations most frequently

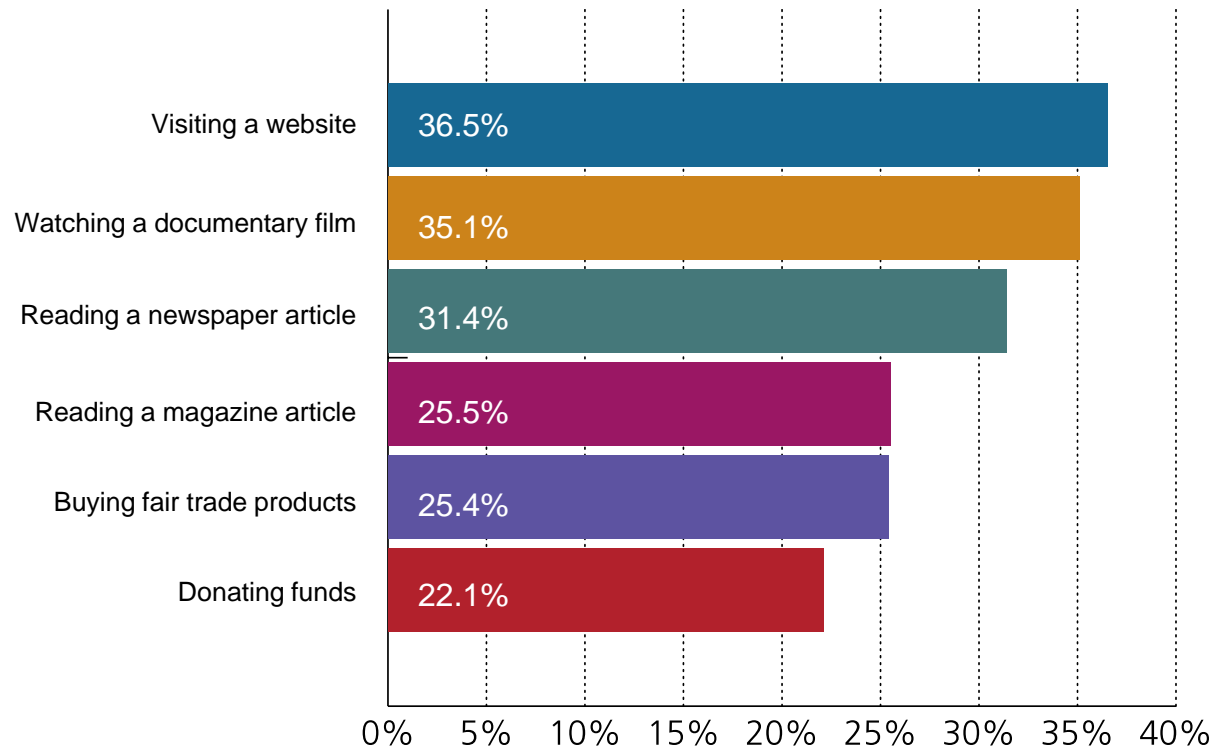
But 14% would like to be more involved in international development

- ◆ An additional 48% say they might like to be more involved (“maybe”)
- ◆ Canadians are most likely to want to get more involved in international development through:
 - ◆ Websites
 - ◆ TV Programs/News
 - ◆ Documentary films

Canadians are interested in participating by visiting a website, watching a documentary film, reading a newspaper article and buying fair trade products

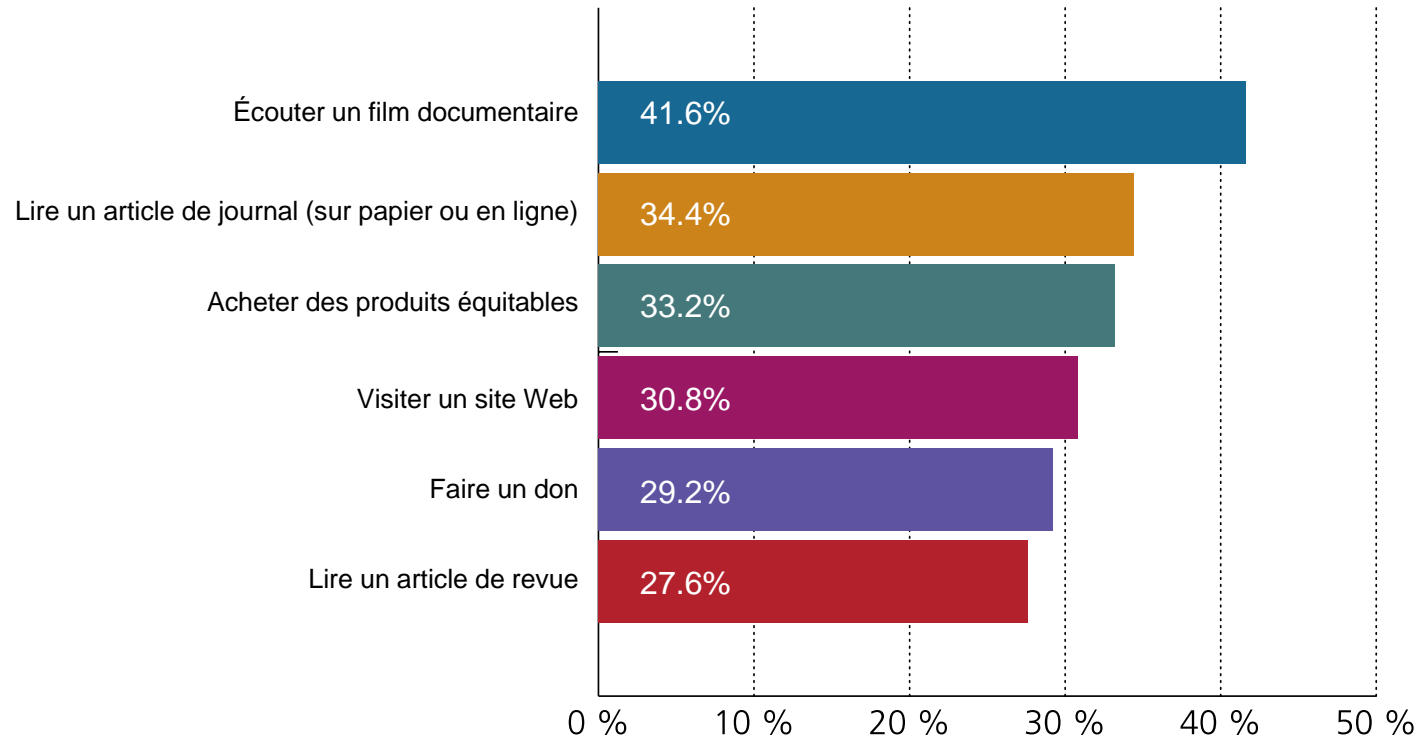
English Canada

Which of the following activities would you be interested in participating in or supporting related to international development? (Please select all that apply.)



French Quebec

Parmi les actions suivantes en faveur du développement international, lesquelles feriez-vous ou appuieriez-vous?

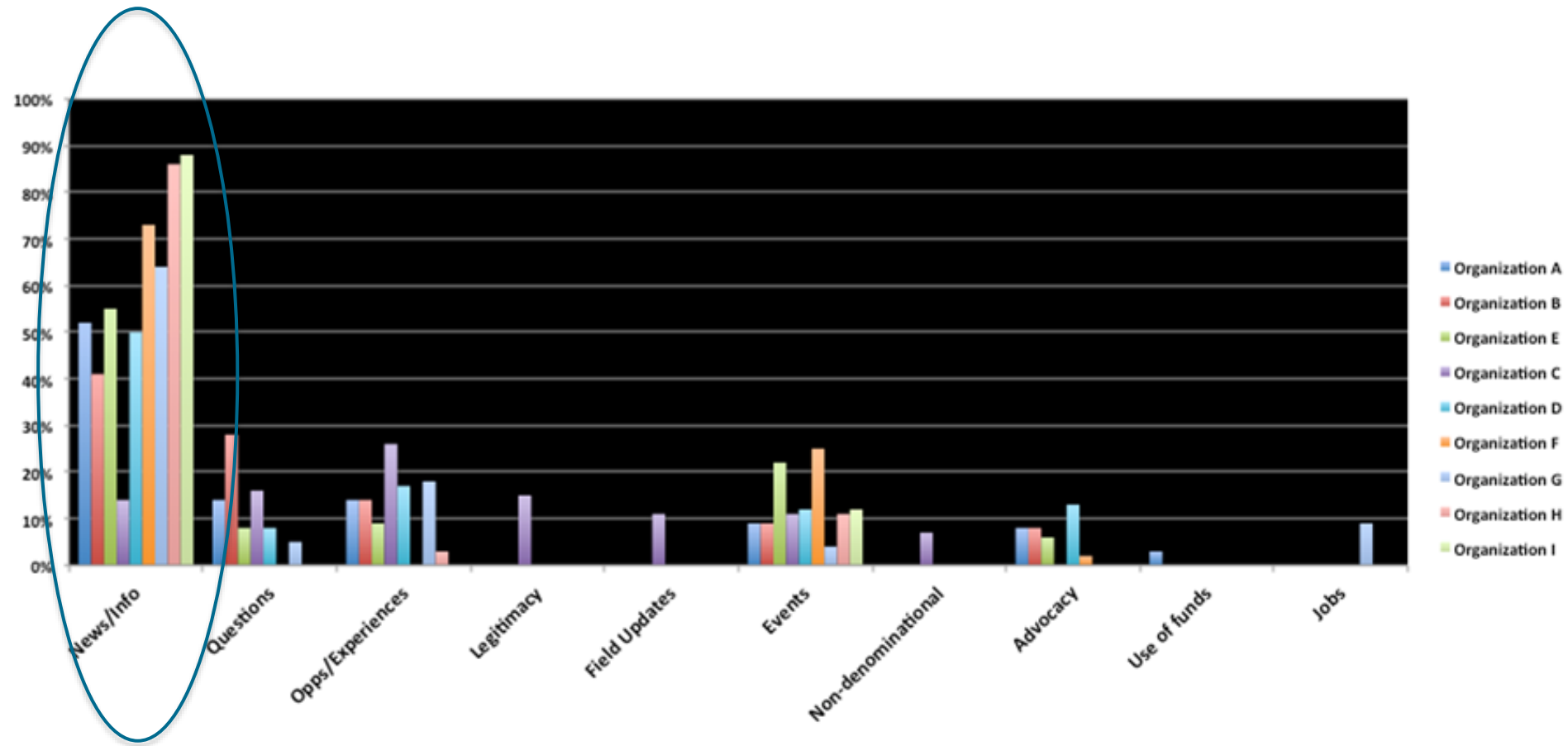


Canadians showing highest interest in international development are between 16 and 34, educated, and skew slightly to women

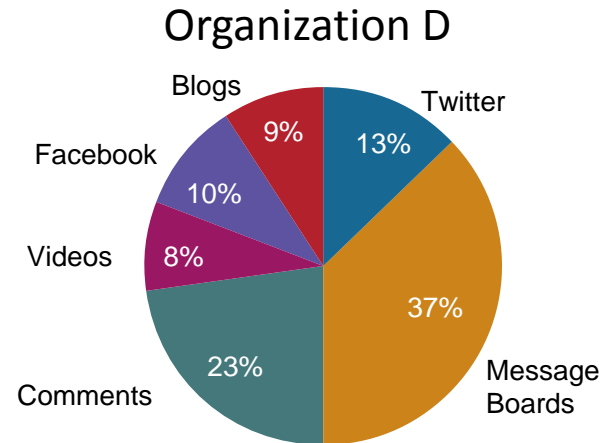
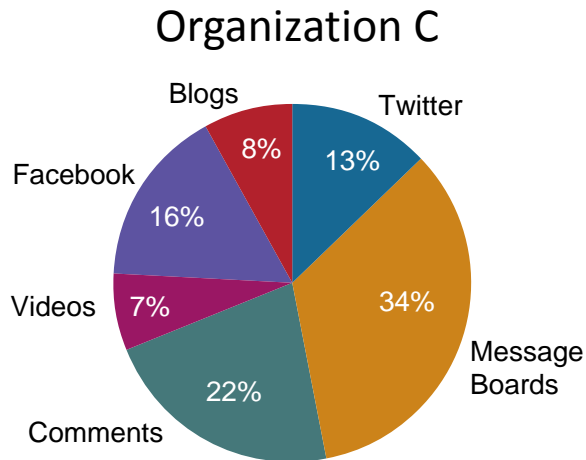
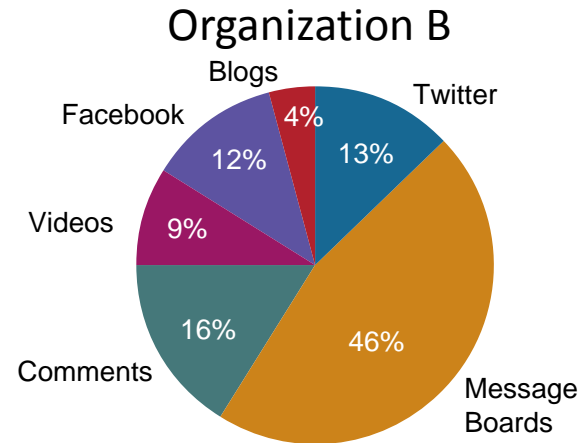
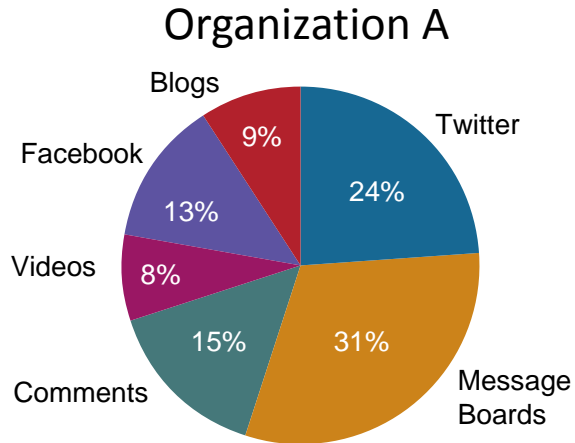
- ◆ **47%** are age 16–34
 - 43% 16–34—English Canada
 - 65% 16–34—French Quebec
- ◆ **55%** are women
 - 56% in English Canada
 - 52% in French Quebec
- ◆ **51%** have a university degree
 - 55% English Canada
 - 38% French Quebec
- ◆ **81%** are working
 - 86% English Canada
 - 63% French Quebec
- ◆ Most live in **Ontario**
 - In urban large cities or suburbs
- ◆ Most are **married/living** common law
- ◆ Most **do not** have children
 - and live in 1–2 person households

Digital Research Findings

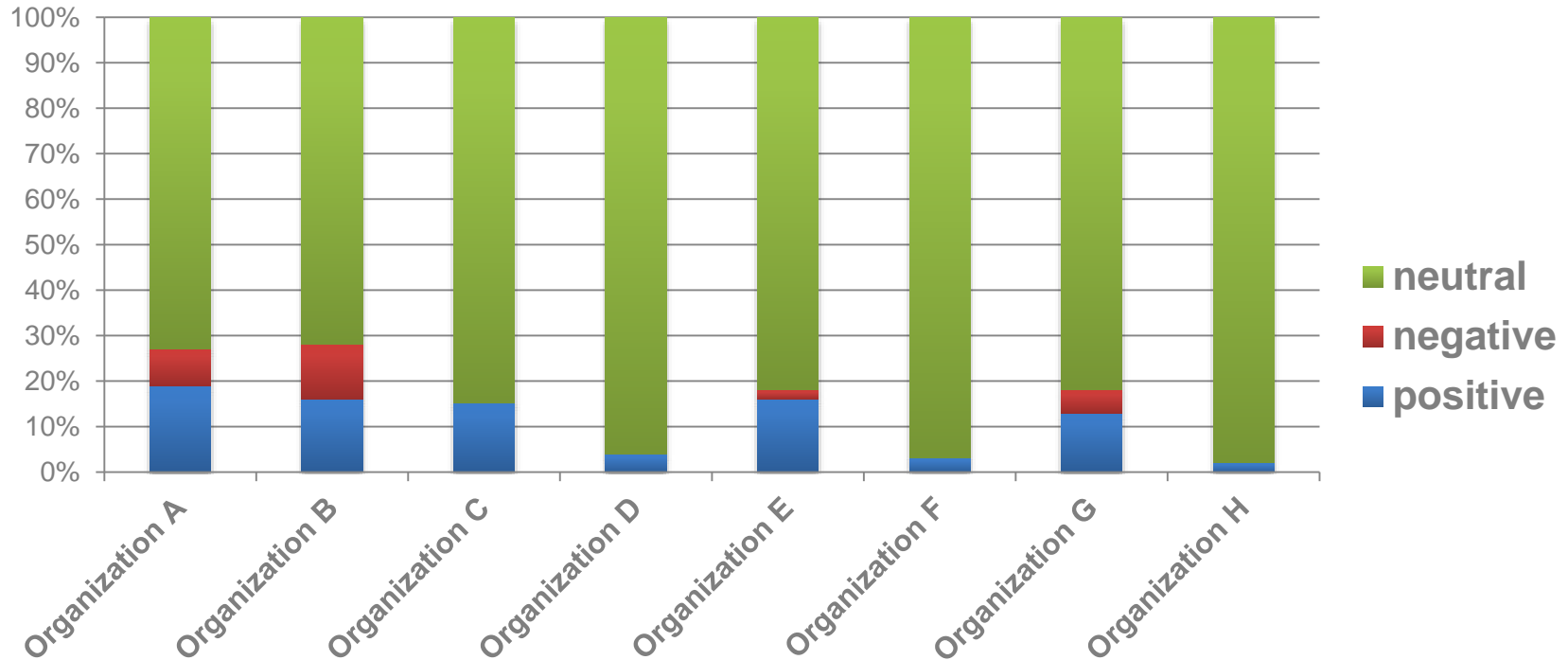
News and information dominate online conversations



Canadians most often use message boards, comments, Twitter and Facebook to engage online



Stronger sentiment exists for organizations that are more active and engaged on social channels



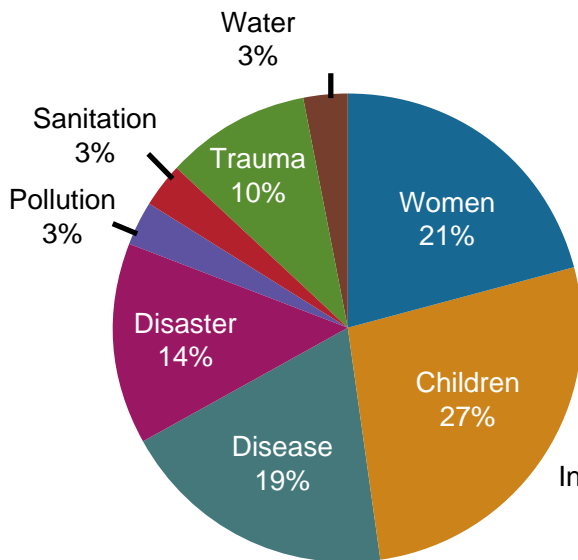
Positives: Primarily mission advocacy/outcomes

Negatives: Money, transparency concerns

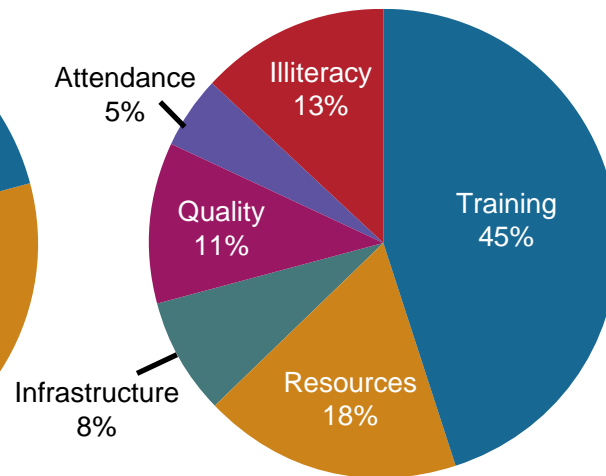
Neutral: Questions/Initiatives/Events/Information

Health, education and gender equality are the topics that garnered the most online conversations

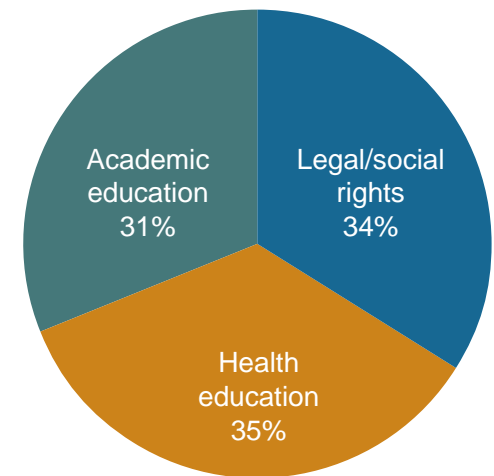
Health—**33%**



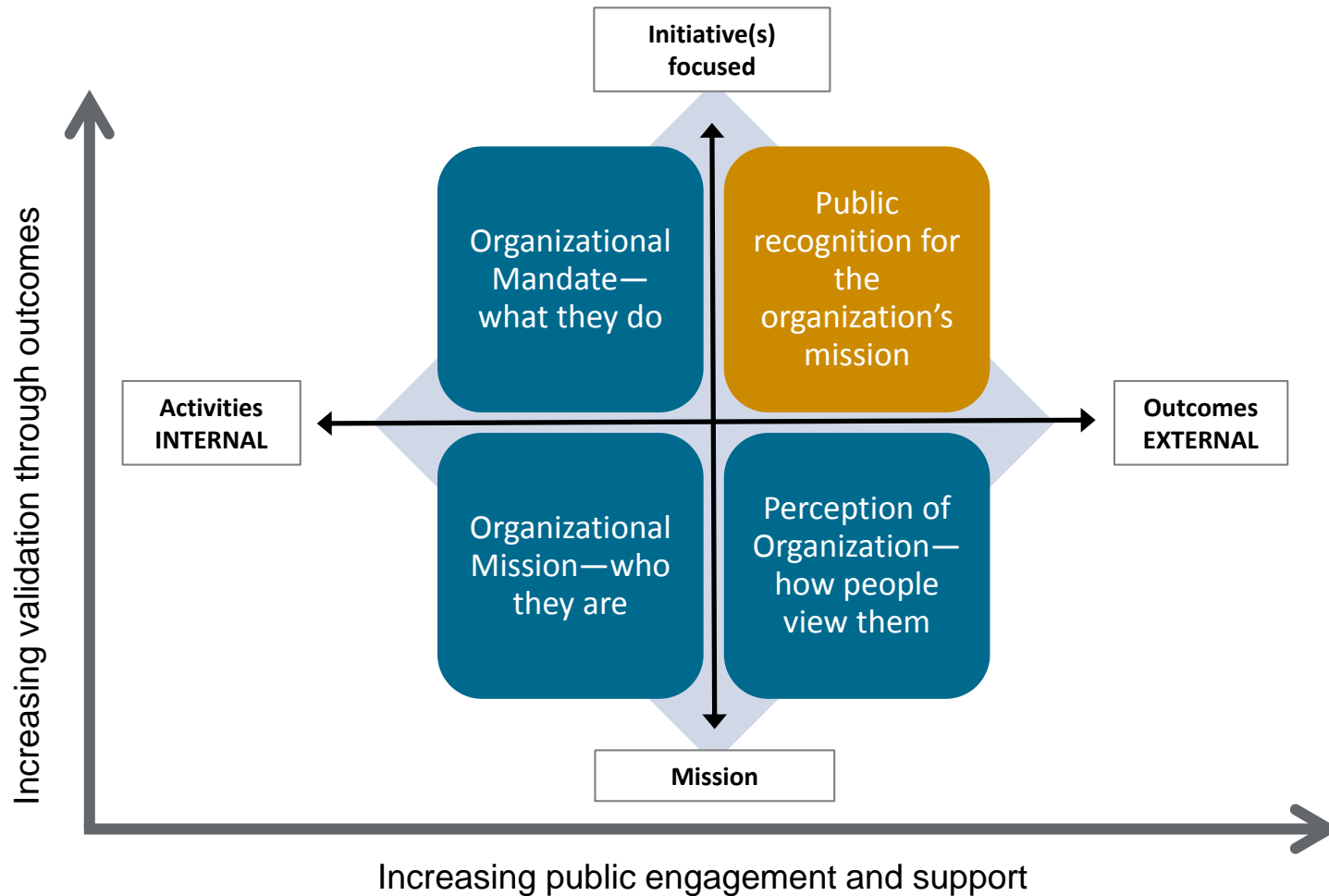
Education—**24%**



Gender Equality—**20%**



International development organizations that are more social receive public recognition and support



Twitter persona who is interested in international development topics:

- ◆ Female
- ◆ 29 years old
- ◆ Earns \$39,000/year
- ◆ Lives in Toronto
- ◆ Student/Senior Manager/
Sales/Marketing
- ◆ Caucasian, Christian
- ◆ News, politics, charity
- ◆ Shops at: Walmart, Ikea, Whole Foods, Target, Starbucks, Lululemon
- ◆ Interests – News, Politics, Charity
- ◆ Follows – Barack Obama, NYTimes, United Nations, Ellen DeGeneres, Bill Gates, Oprah

Facebook persona is similar but more broad:

- ◆ Female is dominant gender
- ◆ US/Canada or North America more broadly were dominant geographic regions
- ◆ Canada is dominant location
- ◆ Fan interaction is predominantly once with the page
- ◆ Pictures are the content type garnering most engagement

LinkedIn Groups also important

Key LinkedIn International development groups include:

- ◆ Mojalink
- ◆ University of Toronto Scarborough Campus International Development Studies Network
- ◆ McGill Institute for the Study of International Development Leadership
- ◆ Society of International Development Ottawa/Gatineau

Key Insights and Recommendations

Key Insights

Real story not being told by media

- ◆ Media not providing a reason for Canadians to want to get involved in international development, except for responding to disasters
- ◆ Need to encourage media to tell the real stories to engage public on the importance of international development

Disasters limited to transactions

- ◆ Disasters focus public attention on fundraising and not enough on longer term development issues
- ◆ Need to move people beyond just donations to deeper, personal engagement
- ◆ Canadians help when asked (e.g. Haiti earthquake, Asian tsunami, typhoon Haiyan, etc.)

Need to reframe international development

- ◆ Low understanding of international development, reframe the discussion from charity and aid to fairness; from development to freedom, responsibility and partnership
- ◆ Need to change the language to focus on the topics that tell the story, focus on global development, access to health and education
- ◆ Canadians are interested in global issues and how they can play a role

Canadians believe they can make a difference

- ◆ Canadians believe that we should care about international development issues because it affects everyone
- ◆ We are more connected now than ever and this is part of being a global citizen

Important to start young

- ◆ It is important to start young, those who are engaged got involved in international development in their youth
- ◆ Social media will play an important role in engaging this audience
- ◆ Younger Canadians interested in both personal experiences and direct contact

Adopt a Multi- Channel Approach

- ◆ Use traditional and digital media channels and content to engage and amplify message
- ◆ Provide opportunities for followers, audience to connect and engage with each other
- ◆ Successful social media engagement includes rich visual engagement via photo, video or link to post. The quality of posts supersedes quantity
- ◆ There is a halo influence from celebrity association creating conversations and profile
- ◆ Most of the more engaged organizations have a “voice” with their own blogs

Recommendations

1

Reframe International Development

- ◆ Fairness, responsibility and partnership — focus on education and health in the broader context of sustainable communities
- ◆ Communicate real stories of community and individual impact that resonate

2

Leverage Canadians' view of global responsibility and humanity

- ◆ Messaging to include global citizenship, responsibility, shared world
- ◆ Emotionally rooted — challenges, hopes and pride of accomplishment

3

Use an integrated multi-channel approach

- ◆ Electronic/online, social, news media, public events/exhibits
- ◆ Rich visuals—films, short videos, photos

4

Target priority audiences

- ◆ Media as influencers and amplifiers to reach Canadians
- ◆ Young Canadians; educated, working, urban skewed to female

5

Focus on awareness, education and interest to engage Canadians

- ◆ Move from donations to long term relationships
- ◆ Get people engaged in the ideas

Aga Khan Foundation Canada

Aga Khan Foundation Canada is an agency of the Aga Khan Development Network (AKDN), a family of private, non-denominational development agencies with mandates ranging from health and education to architecture, culture, microfinance, disaster reduction, rural development, the promotion of private-sector enterprise and the revitalization of historic cities. The Network is dedicated to improving living conditions and opportunities for the poor, without regard to their faith, origin or gender.

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