

EMBARGOED UNTIL JULY 8TH, 2013

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New report reveals Canadians' low political participation between elections, particularly among youth.

Toronto, July 8th 2013—There are some signs of vibrancy in Canadians' political involvement between elections, but most participation is not connected to the formal political or party system. That's according to a new report from **Samara**, which sets a new baseline for understanding how Canadians participate in politics beyond voting.

The survey asked Canadians how much they participate in 20 activities considered vital in measuring political engagement between elections. These activities include: online discussion, offline discussion, activism, civic engagement and formal political engagement.

The survey's findings showed that Canadians rarely discuss politics, online or off. Only 40% of Canadians reported discussing a social or political issue in person or by phone once in the previous year, and only 17% shared political content on social media.

In only three of the 20 activities measured did more than half of Canadians participate: joining a group (58%), volunteering (55%) and signing a petition (51%). The activities least often performed were those that involved party politics: volunteering in an election (10%), donating to a party or candidate (10%) and joining a political party (10%).

Young people (18–34) participate in most activities at the same or at a higher rate than older adults (35 and over), with the exception of activities that involve interacting with a party, candidate or elected official, where youth participation rates are lower by 11 to 34%, depending on the activity.

"Samara's work reveals that young people often struggle to see what involvement in politics looks like, and mention that they have no role models or people in politics to whom they can relate," said Alison Loat, Samara's executive director. "While it's encouraging that youth are engaged in so many facets of Canadian life, should their low participation in formal politics persist, it will be an unfortunate sign for the renewal of parties and Canadian politics."

The report, entitled "Lightweights? Political Participation Beyond the Ballot Box," also highlights small steps Canadians can take to help build their democracy, which take little time or money. "There are lots of easy ways to get a little political beyond the ballot box, and I encourage Canadians to take advantage of them," said Loat.

The findings are based on the results of the Samara Citizens' Survey, designed by Samara's staff with guidance from a team of academics from universities across Canada.

The link to the complete report will be visible as of 12:01 am on July 8th at:

<http://www.samaracanada.com/what-we-do/current-research/lightweights>

About Samara's Democracy Reports

"Lightweights?" is part of the [Samara Democracy Reports](#) series, which is designed to shine a light on Canada's democratic system and increase Canadians' understanding of politics. Previous reports examined the attitudes of people who do not vote, explored how politics is discussed on Twitter, analyzed how the media cover politics, offered citizens' performance reviews for MPs and analyzed how well discussion in the House of Commons mirrored Canadians concerns.

About Samara

Samara is a charitable organization dedicated to improving political participation in Canada. Through research and educational programs, Samara reconnects citizens to politics.

Samara's areas of research include:

- Members of Parliament
- Political parties
- Citizens' attitudes towards politics
- Citizen participation and voting behaviour
- Political journalism and writing

Our research and information on our programs can be found at www.samaracanada.com. **We are always available to comment on our areas of research.** You can also follow Samara on [Twitter](#) or join the [Facebook](#) group.

Methodology

The data shared in "Lightweights? Political Participation Beyond the Ballot Box" is drawn from Samara's Citizen Survey, an online survey conducted in English and in French with 2,287 Canadian respondents over 18 years of age living in ten provinces. Responses were weighted to ensure they reflect a national representative sample of Canadians. Survey data was collected between March 19 and April 2, 2012. Additional details on the methodology are available on page 9 of the report.