



## POLITICAL EXCHANGE: Nova Scotians among the most engaged, most dissatisfied with politics

MARK COFFIN, KING'S COUNTY NEWS

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If a chain is only as strong as its weakest link, there are several weak spots in the chain connecting Canadians and our public institutions

So says [Samara](#), the national charity that recently released the results of a massive study exploring the relationship between Canadians and politicians.

Most of us know that voter turnout is at an all time low. But voting rates are just one of the two-dozen indicators reviewed in this study.

Barely half of Canadians admitted to having a conversation about politics “out loud” in the last year. While two-thirds of Canadians reported being contacted by politicians, less than a third actively reached out to contact their representatives. The vast majority of MPs are active on social media, but only one in four Canadians follow them.

Many are inclined to blame apathetic citizens for our struggling democracy. Yet, most Canadians - 83 per cent - are engaged community members who care enough to volunteer, work on community problems, or donate to charity.

When it comes to political engagement, only 37 per cent of Canadians were a part of a single political activity in the last year. This includes participating in a political campaign, political party or simply attending a political meeting or speech.

Canadians were asked to assess the performance of members of parliament and political parties in a number of areas. MPs received poor grades in most categories: helping constituents, 46 per cent; holding government to account, 42 per cent, and,

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explaining their decisions to voters, 43 per cent. Six of ten Canadians believe political parties are only interested in collecting their votes, not their views.

The only category where MPs received a passing grade was in representing the views of their parties- 57 per cent. Parties were only deemed to be successful at recruiting candidates, 50 per cent, and encouraging people to vote – 55 per cent.

When asked, 35 per cent of Canadians expressed some level of dissatisfaction with democracy.

I'm biased, but the most intriguing findings come from the Nova Scotia sample of the research. As Bluenosers, we are simultaneously the most politically engaged Canadians, and – second only to Quebec – the most likely to be dissatisfied with how democracy is working, at 40 per cent. The closer we get to it, the less satisfied we are with politics.

As the authors conclude, those of us who are engaged, particularly elected leaders, must make a place for the Canadians who don't currently see one for themselves in our politics.

The full [national report](#) from Samara with [Provincial breakdowns](#).

*Mark Coffin is the President and Founder of the Springtide Collective, and organization dedicated to reconnecting Nova Scotians and our democratic institutions, and imagining ways of doing politics differently. He can be reached [@MarkCoffin](#) on Twitter or [Mark@SpringtideCollective.ca](#)*

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