

# Building a **stronger evidence/policy feedback loop** through regular and frequent social data time series

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# The pace of change is accelerating



- **Era of “poly crisis”:** climate risks materializing, geo-political instability, low productivity, high inflation; lingering effects of the pandemic on society such as polarization, less confidence in institutions, increased crime, growing mental health issues
- **Society is at a post-pandemic turning point:** thirst for timely and granular data, but also information overload; there is a strong need to make meaning, distill critical insights about what is changing, **social statistics need to put emerging issues into historical and relative context**
- **Demonstrating societal progress is key to confidence in government;** departments are calling for better impact assessment tools





**Social statistics should help us to see the big picture; put things into historical and relative perspective**



# Pandemic sparked innovation



- **“Building back better”**: Canada’s Quality of Life framework developed during early pandemic unity and optimism (though policy commitment made prior to pandemic)
- **Canadian Social Survey (CSS)**: pandemic provided a strong impetus for timely data; quarterly omnibus survey introduced
- **Window of opportunity to understand rapid social change**; CSS leveraged to develop a quarterly time series for some Quality of Life indicators






# Canada's Quality of Life framework



- **Multi-dimensional well-being:** Five thematic outcome domains supported by 84 indicators
- **Inclusion:** Cross-cutting lens and concurrent investments in disaggregated data to understand distributional differences in well-being
- **Sustainability:** Cross-cutting lens to bring a long-term perspective, prevention focus
- Budget 2021 funding to:
  - Fill quality of life data gaps
  - Develop a hub to bring together quality of life statistics



# Quality of Life Framework for Canada

 <b>Prosperity</b>	 <b>Health</b>	 <b>Society</b>	 <b>Environment</b>	 <b>Good Governance</b>
<p><b>Income and growth</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>★ Household income</li> <li>GDP per capita</li> <li>Productivity</li> <li>Access to high-speed Internet</li> <li>Household wealth</li> <li>Investment in in-house research and development</li> <li>Public net financial liabilities-to-GDP ratio</li> <li>Firm growth</li> </ul> <p><b>Employment and job quality</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>★ Employment</li> <li>Labour underutilization</li> <li>Wages</li> <li>Precarious or gig work</li> <li>Job satisfaction</li> </ul> <p><b>Skills and opportunity</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>★ Youth not in employment, education or training (NEET)</li> <li>Access to early learning and child care</li> <li>Child, student and adult skills</li> <li>Postsecondary attainment</li> <li>Future outlook</li> </ul> <p><b>Economic security and deprivation</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>★ Housing needs</li> <li>★ Poverty</li> <li>Protection from income shocks</li> <li>Financial well-being</li> <li>Homelessness</li> <li>Food security</li> </ul>	<p><b>Healthy people</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>★ Health-adjusted life expectancy</li> <li>★ Self-rated mental health</li> <li>Self-rated health</li> <li>Physical activity</li> <li>Functional health status</li> <li>Children vulnerable in early development</li> <li>Fruit and vegetable consumption/healthy eating environments</li> </ul> <p><b>Healthy care systems</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Timely access to primary care provider</li> <li>Unmet health care needs</li> <li>Unmet needs for mental health care</li> <li>Long-term care (access and quality)</li> <li>Access to supplementary health insurance</li> <li>Unmet needs for home care</li> <li>Cost-related non-adherence to prescription medication</li> </ul>	<p><b>Culture and identity</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Sense of pride/belonging to Canada</li> <li>Positive perceptions of diversity</li> <li>Indigenous languages</li> <li>Knowledge of official languages</li> <li>Participation in cultural or religious practices, recreation or sport</li> </ul> <p><b>Social cohesion and connections</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>★ Sense of belonging to local community</li> <li>★ Someone to count on</li> <li>Trust in others</li> <li>Volunteering</li> <li>Satisfaction with personal relationships (family and friends)</li> <li>Loneliness</li> <li>Accessible environments</li> </ul> <p><b>Time use</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>★ Time use</li> <li>Satisfaction with time use</li> </ul>	<p><b>Environment and people</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>★ Air quality</li> <li>★ Drinking water</li> <li>★ Climate change adaptation</li> <li>Natural disasters and emergencies</li> <li>Satisfaction with local environment</li> <li>Walkable communities</li> <li>Access to public transit</li> </ul> <p><b>Ecological integrity and environmental stewardship</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>★ Greenhouse gas emissions</li> <li>★ Conserved areas</li> <li>Canadian species index</li> <li>Water quality in Canadian rivers</li> <li>Natural capital</li> <li>Waste management</li> <li>Marine and coastal ecosystems</li> </ul>	<p><b>Safety and security</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>★ Personal safety</li> <li>Crime Severity Index</li> <li>Perceptions of neighbourhood safety after dark</li> <li>Childhood maltreatment</li> <li>Household emergency preparedness</li> </ul> <p><b>Democracy and institutions</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>★ Confidence in institutions</li> <li>Voter turnout</li> <li>Representation in senior leadership positions</li> <li>Canada's place in the world</li> <li>Misinformation/trust in media</li> <li>Indigenous self-determination</li> </ul> <p><b>Justice and human rights</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>★ Discrimination and unfair treatment</li> <li>Cyberbullying</li> <li>Access to fair and equal justice (civil and criminal)</li> <li>Resolution of serious legal problems</li> <li>Incarceration rate</li> </ul>

★ **Life satisfaction**

★ **Sense of meaning and purpose**

★ **Headline indicators:** intended to provide a high-level assessment of overall quality of life in Canada.



The Fairness and Inclusion lens is intended to inform policy and program development, leading to greater equity and equality, by assessing the distribution of outcomes for different populations in Canada.

The Sustainability and Resilience lens promotes long-term thinking by considering the trajectory of indicators in order to identify risks, build resilience and ensure that policy choices are contributing to a higher quality of life not only now but in the years ahead.

# Loneliness in Canada

Canada's Quality of Life Framework  
Society Domain

In Canada, 13% of people aged 15 and older reported always or often feeling lonely

## Loneliness is prevalent across Canada

If you feel lonely, you're not alone.



\* Differences in the proportion of people reporting loneliness from region to region are not statistically significant.

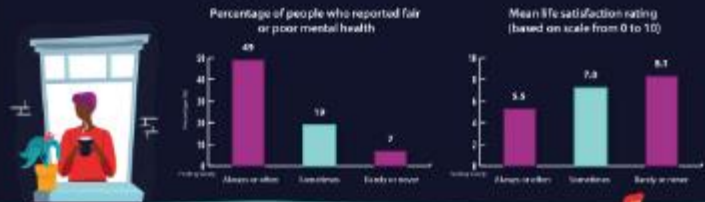
## Loneliness has no age restriction



## Women report higher levels of loneliness than men



## Those who are lonely report worse mental health and lower life satisfaction



## People who are married or in a common-law relationship are less lonely



1. Loneliness, life satisfaction and self-rated mental health are indicators in the National Quality of Life Framework for Canada.  
2. The life table displays reflect the responses of the population aged 15 and older in Canada, 18 provinces.

Source: Canadian Social Survey, Wave 2, August to September 2021.

# Confidence in institutions and the media, 2023

Text | Related Information | PDF (213 KB)

Released: 2024-02-13

[Public confidence in institutions](#) can encourage political participation, strengthen bonds between citizens and help people and communities become more resilient in the face of challenges. New data from the most recent cycle of the [Canadian Social Survey - Quality of Life, Renter Experiences and Trust](#), conducted from October to December 2023, sheds light on the link between confidence in institutions, trust in media and well-being.

Results show that having a high level of confidence in the police, the justice system, schools, Canadian media and the Federal Parliament is linked to overall trust in news stories and information from the media. In 2023, 58% of Canadians with a high level of confidence in four or more institutions trusted news and information from the media. This trust drops to 15% among those who reported low confidence in institutions.

[Confidence in institutions](#) and [trust in media](#) are both indicators in [Canada's Quality of Life Framework](#). This Framework enables the federal government to identify future policy priorities, and to build on previous actions to strengthen evidence-based decision-making and budgeting, and improve the well-being of Canadians.

## Close to two-thirds of Canadians report high confidence in the police

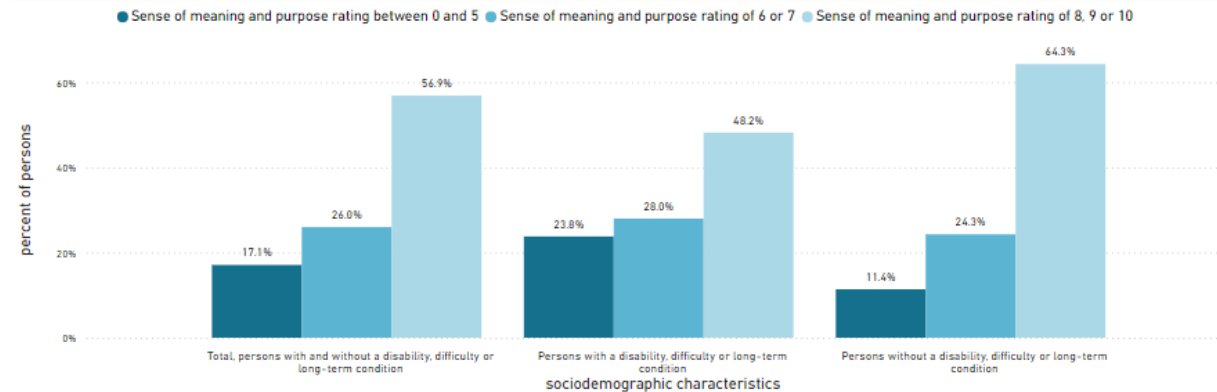
In 2023, close to two-thirds (65%) of Canadians reported high confidence in the police, a higher proportion than any other institution measured by the survey. The next highest ranked institution was the justice system and courts, where nearly half (49%) of Canadians reported high confidence. This was followed by the school system (45%), the Canadian media (37%) and the Federal Parliament (28%). Of these institutions, [confidence levels have been consistently highest for the police](#).

### Sociodemographic characteristics

Persons with a disability, difficulty or long-term condition

Note: Some sociodemographic groups will not be displayed as the estimates are too unreliable to be published.

### Distribution of responses by sense of meaning and purpose, by persons with a disability, difficulty or long-term condition, all persons, Q1 2024



Reset the interactive dashboard

# Almost half of Canadians report a strong sense of belonging to their local community

Text | Related Information | PDF (155 KB)

Released: 2022-08-19

In 2021 and 2022, almost half of people in Canada (47%) reported having a strong sense of belonging to their community. This percentage was lower among young people aged 15 to 34 (ranging from 37% to 44%) and the LGBTQ2+ population (36%), among other groups.

Building relationships and social networks is critical to fostering a sense of belonging to a larger community, ensuring that we feel connected to each other, and that we have support when we need it. This makes a strong sense of belonging to a local community an important indicator of social integration. It is also associated with positive quality of life indicators such as being [more hopeful about the future](#) as well as [better physical and mental health](#).

To explore the factors associated with a strong sense of belonging to a local community, a key indicator of [Canada's Quality of Life Framework](#), four waves of the Canadian Social Survey collected from August 6, 2021 to June 5, 2022 were combined to reflect the experiences of Canadians during the COVID-19 pandemic.

## People experiencing social and economic challenges are less likely to have a strong sense of belonging to their local community

The pandemic has disrupted the lives of most Canadians, with many facing ongoing or worsening social and economic situations, such as experiences of discrimination and job insecurity. The data show that some of these challenges and barriers to social inclusion may be associated with a weaker sense of belonging to the local community. For example, Canadians who experienced discrimination or unfair treatment in the past five years were less likely to have a strong sense of belonging to their local community (38%), compared with those who did not report these experiences (51%).

## FOUR TIMES A YEAR...

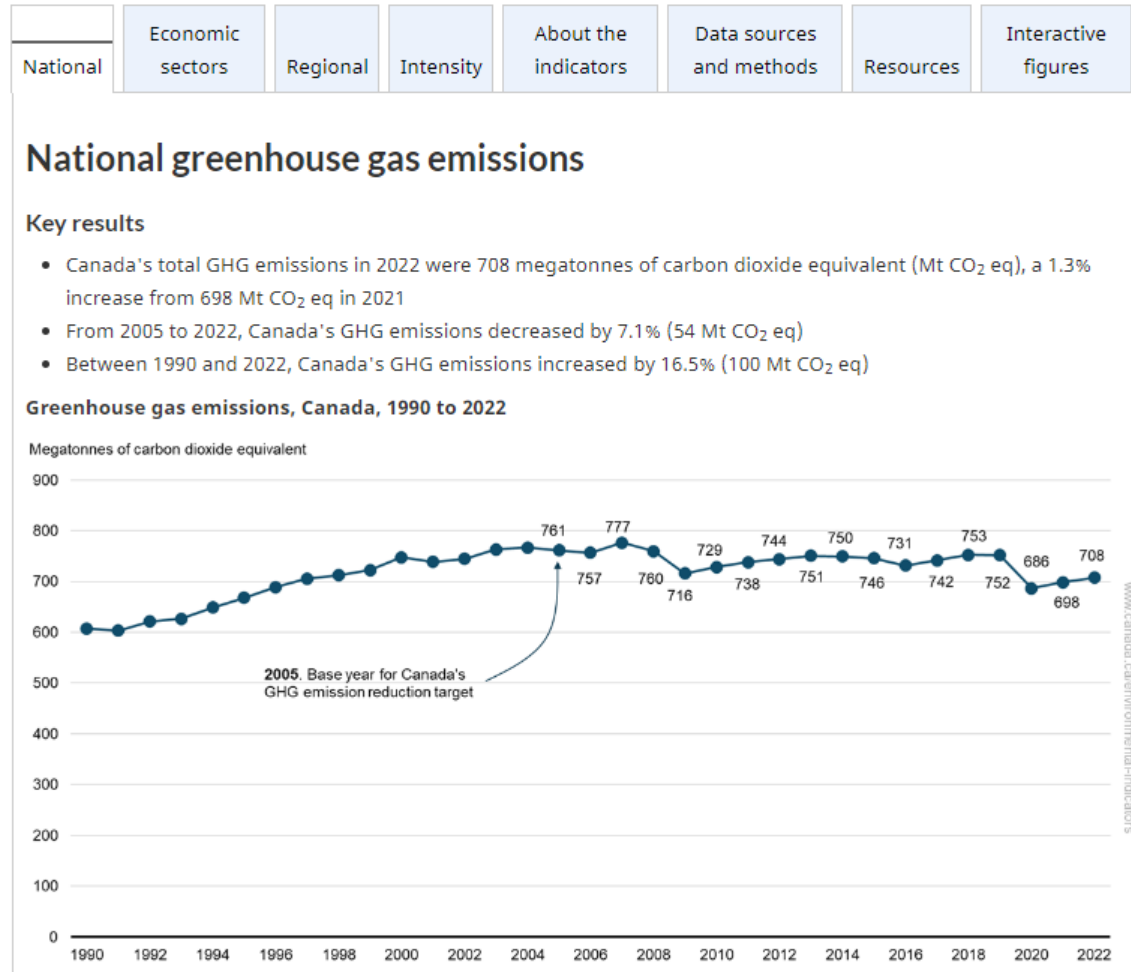
... a group of civil servants go into the “lock up” procedure in a secure room... When all analysis has been done, the document is approved by a group of top management officials. The report is transmitted to the adviser of the President of the United States... This procedure is followed every quarter... The following morning the report is made public... The media report the results almost instantly, politicians comment,...investment decisions are considered....”

*-- Hoekstra, Rutger; Replacing GDP by 2030: Towards a Common Language for the Well-being and Sustainability Community*

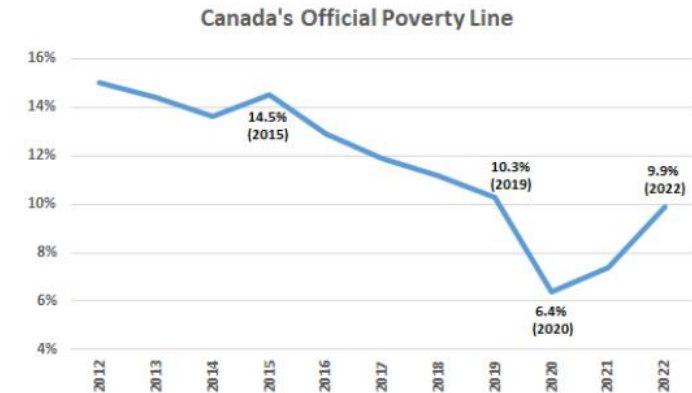




# Some key indicators have a built-in lag time



## Canada's Official Poverty Line



► Description - Canada's Official Poverty Line

In 2022, 9.9% of Canadians lived in poverty, up from 7.4% in 2021. [More information](#)



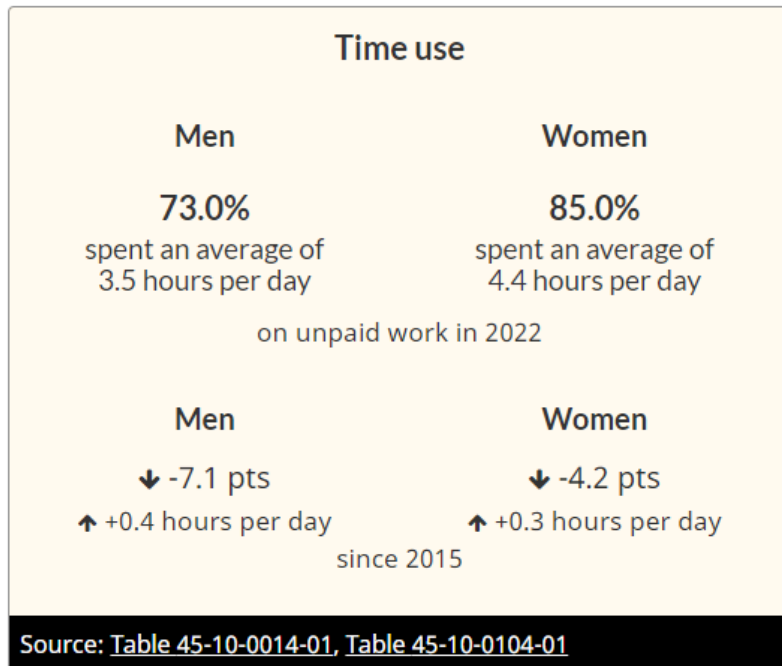
# Social statistics weren't really built for monitoring real-time progress

Statistique Canada  
<https://www.statcan.gc.ca/survey/household>

## [Time Use Survey \(TUS\)](#)

Jan 30, 2023 — Statistics Canada conducts the Time Use Survey approximately once every five to seven years, which allows researchers to determine trends ...

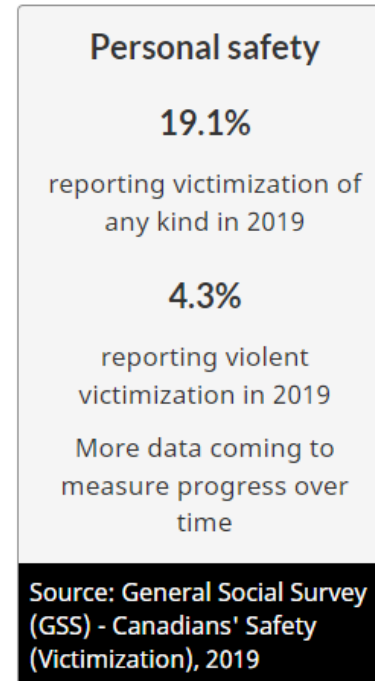
[What practical use is there to...](#) · [Why does Statistics Canada...](#)



Statistique Canada  
<https://www23.statcan.gc.ca/imdb/Function=getSurvey>

## [General Social Survey - Canadians' Safety \(GSS\)](#)

May 11, 2021 — This survey is the only national survey of self-reported victimization and is collected in all provinces and territories. ... Qualitative testing, ...



# Window of opportunity for quarterly time series

## Quality of life indicators

- Life satisfaction
- Sense of meaning and purpose
- Future outlook
- Loneliness
- Someone to count on
- Sense of belonging to local community
- Difficulty meeting financial needs
- Perceived mental health
- Confidence in institutions

**Fairness and  
inclusion lens**



## Socio-demographic characteristics

- Age
- Gender
- Immigration status
- Visible minority group
- Educational attainment
- LGBTQ2+
- Urban / rural

**Quarterly time series**

**Q2 2021**

**Q1 2024**



Statistics  
Canada Statistique  
Canada

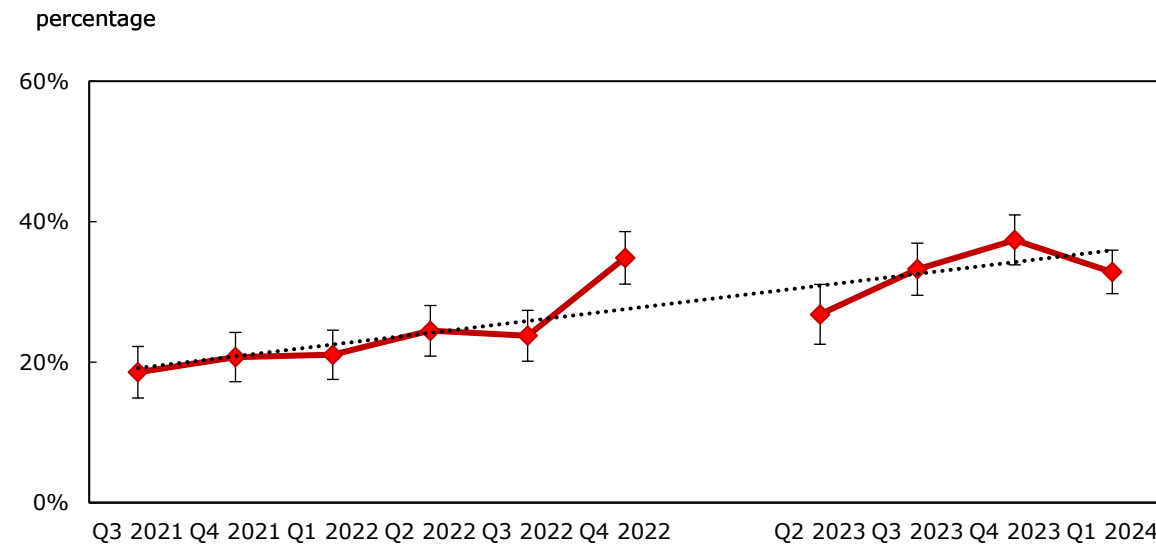
Canada



# More Canadians are finding it difficult to meet their financial needs

More than **one third** (37.4%) of Canadians found it difficult or very difficult to meet their financial needs by the end of 2023.

**Percent reporting financial difficulty, Canadians aged 15 or older, selected sociodemographic or geographic groups, 2021 to 2024**



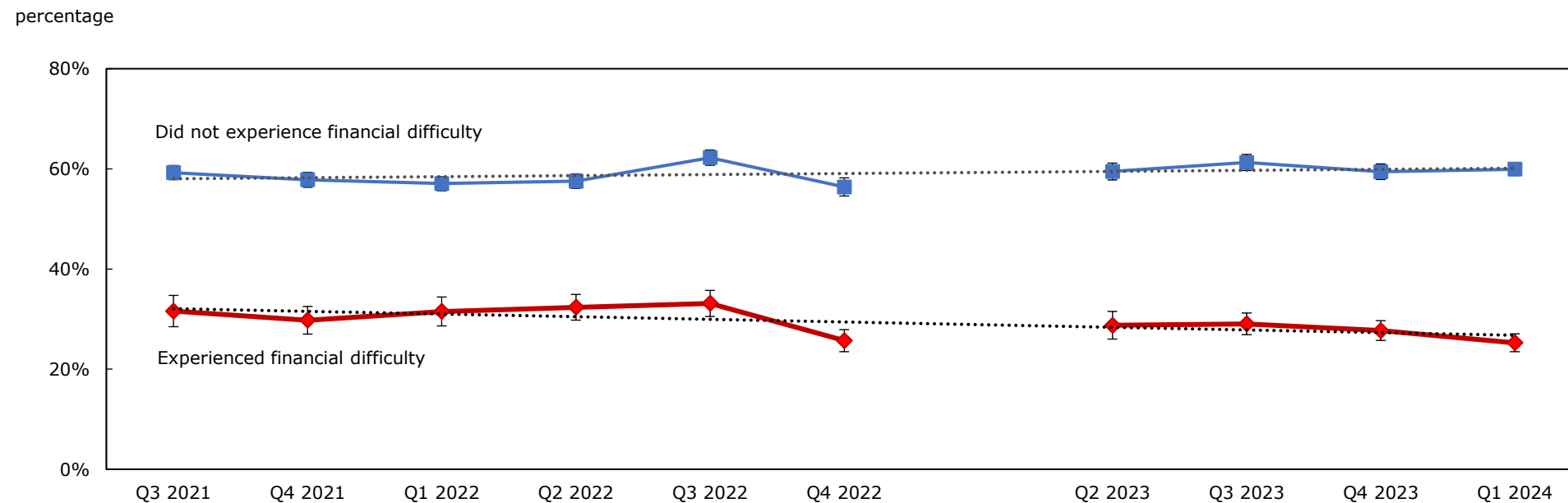
**Source(s):** Statistics Canada, Canadian Social Survey, Waves 1-11.

*(Difficulty meeting financial needs in terms of transportation, housing, food, clothing, and other necessary expenses.)*



# Those who experience financial hardship report lower life satisfaction

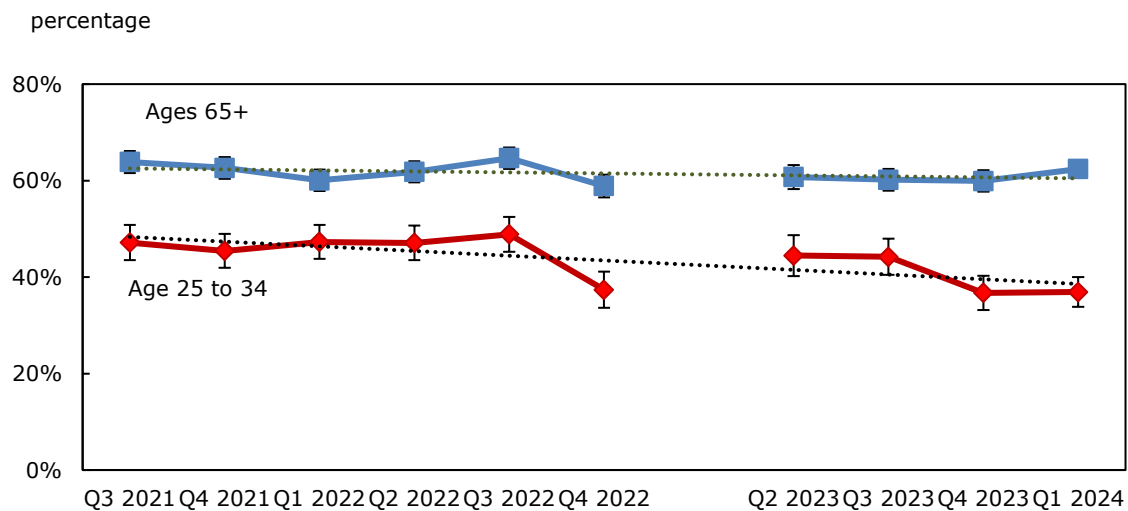
Percent reporting high life satisfaction, Canadians aged 15 or older, by experiences of self-reported financial difficulty, 2021 to 2024



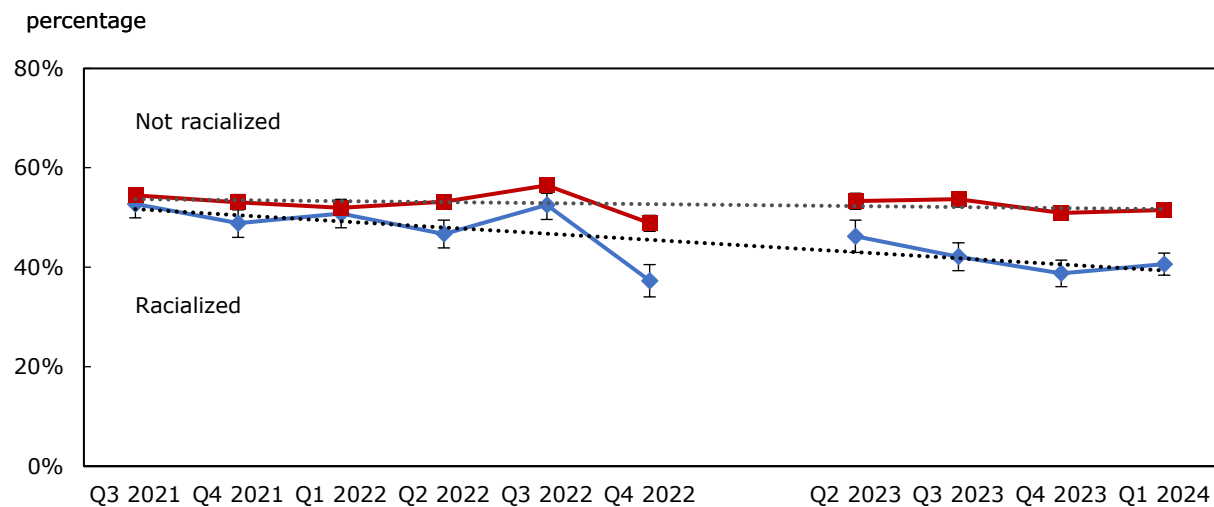
Source: Canadian Social Survey, Q3 2021 - Q1 2024

# Young adults reporting lower levels of life satisfaction, racialized people a greater decline

**Percent reporting high life satisfaction, 2021 to 2024 – Selected age groups**



**Percent reporting high life satisfaction, Canadians aged 15 or older, 2021 to 2024 - Racialized group**



Source: Canadian Social Survey, Q3 2021 - Q1 2024

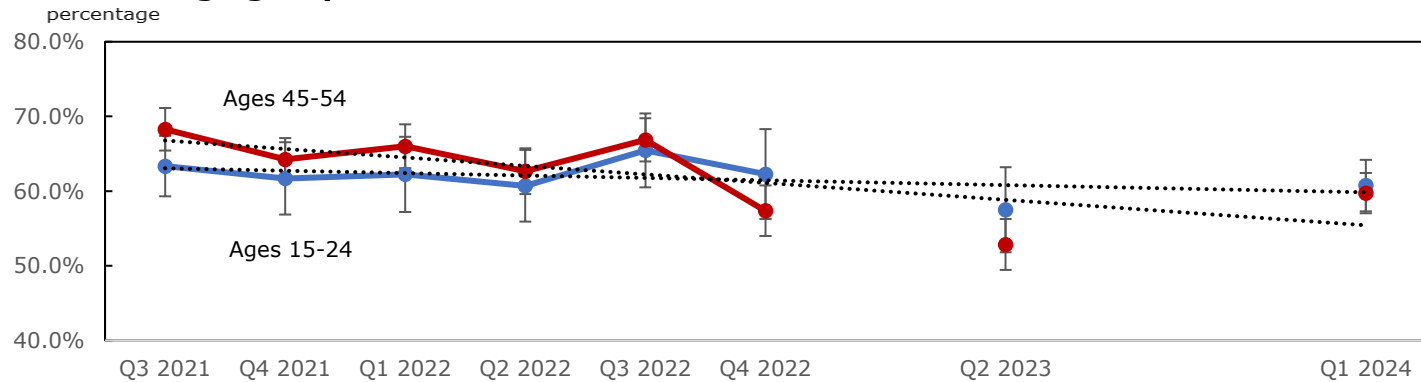
Author: H. Foran  
Source: CSS, multiple waves



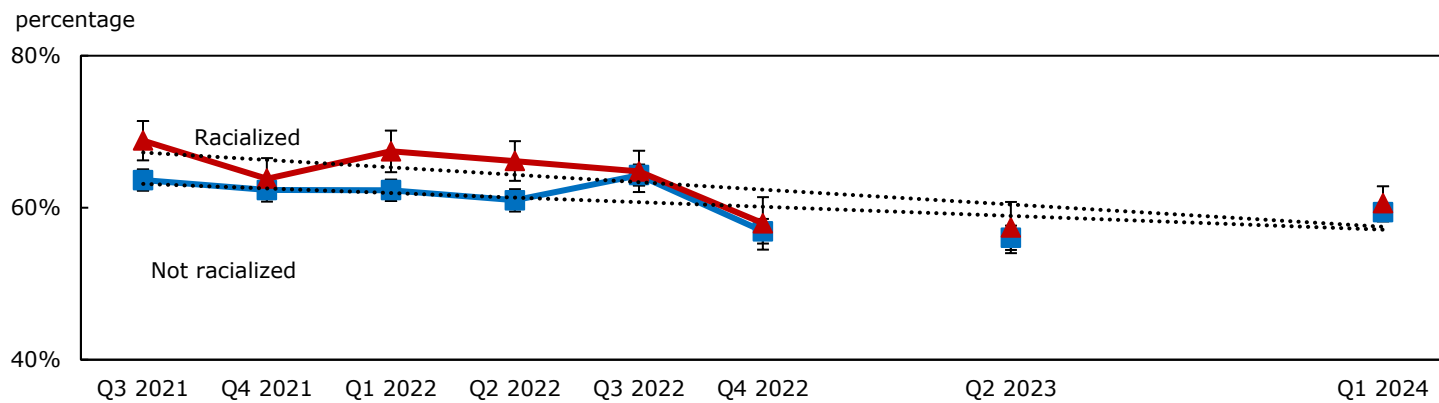
# Early signal re: improving future outlook?

**Percent reporting a hopeful future outlook, Canadians aged 15 to 24, 45 to 54, 2SLGBTQ+, and racialized, 2021 to 2024**

## Selected age groups



## Racialized group

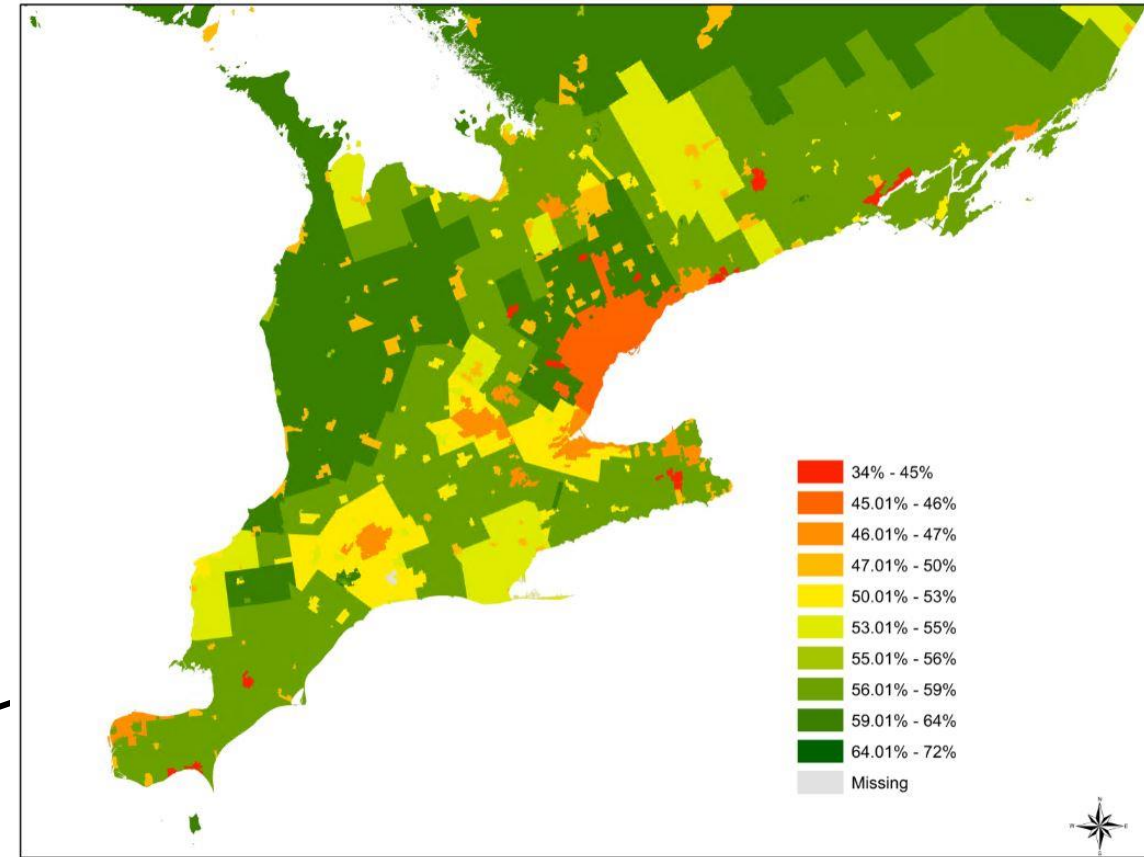
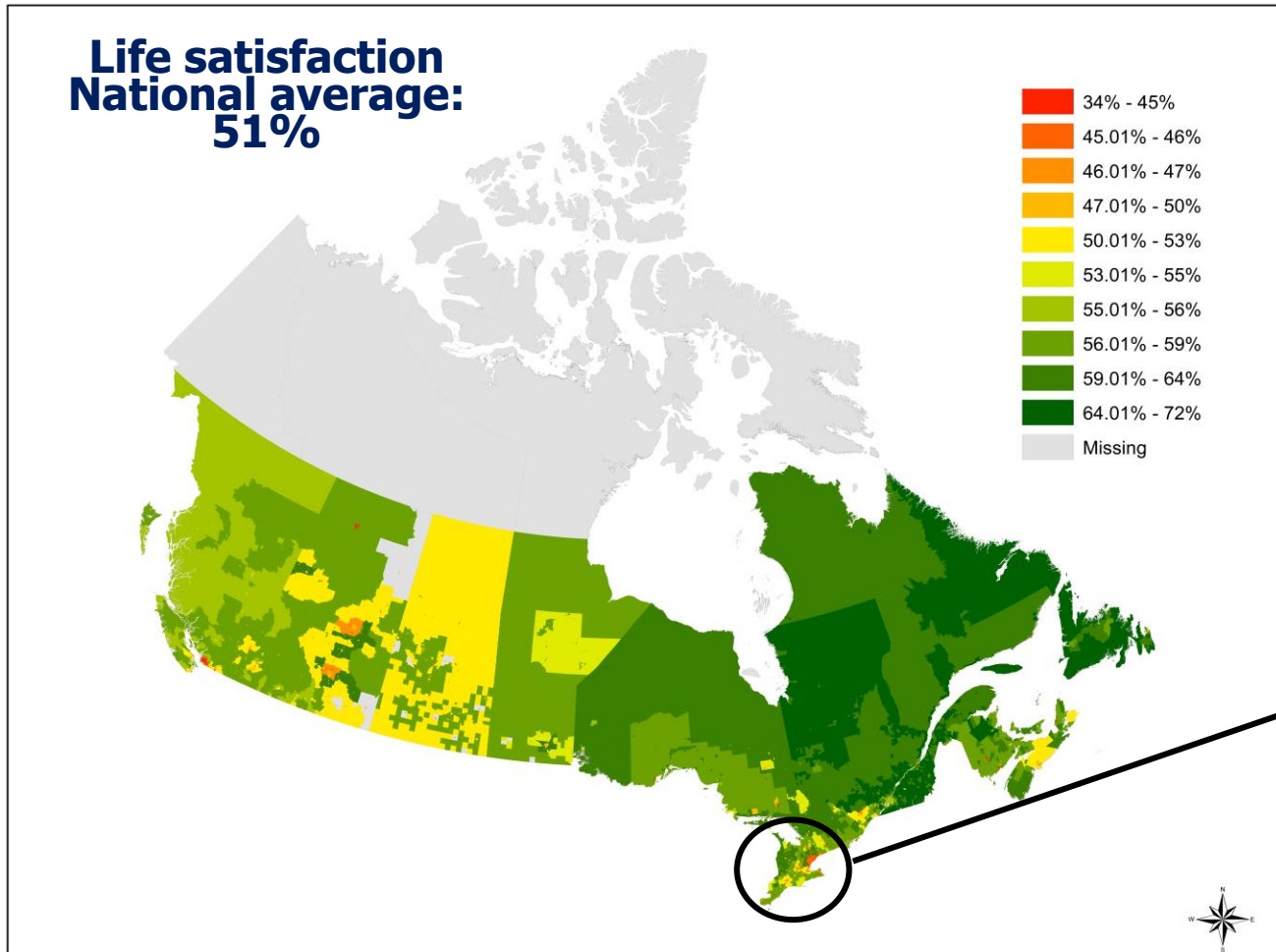


Source: Canadian Social Survey, Q3 2021 - Q1 2024

Author: H. Foran  
Source: CSS, multiple waves



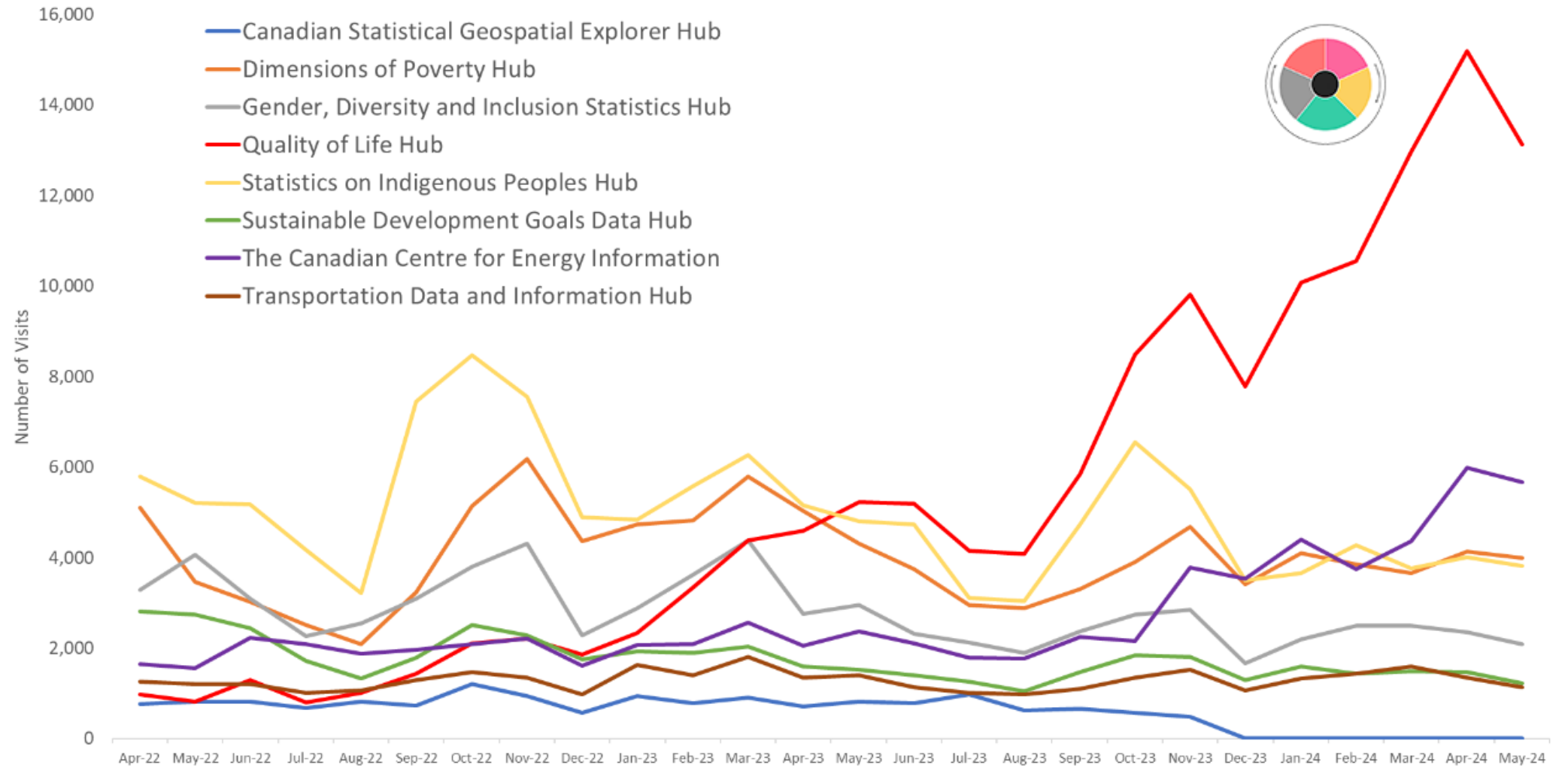
# Eastern Canada and rural communities generally report higher levels of life satisfaction



Source(s): Statistics Canada, Canadian Social Survey, Waves 1-9.



# Demand for Quality of Life Hub



# Concluding thoughts



- **It's fun to design frameworks and pick indicators...** but shifting the outcome focus reduces incentives for progress
- **Consistent reporting of the same indicators** teaches people what to expect and what type of change in the data is meaningful; choreography ensures that **data dissemination is linked to decision-making processes** and can lead to policy action
- **Repeated observations are foundational for impact assessment;** decisions about course correction/scale
- When selecting your indicators, it's equally important to **plan your cadence and fund your long-term time series**



# Friends of the Chair of Social and Demographic Statistics



## Main challenges

- Lack of an overarching **conceptual framework**
- Difficulty of **modeling social phenomena**
- Growing demand for data **disaggregation and timeliness**
- Declining **response rates** and rising survey costs
- Tight **fiscal environments**
- Decentralized **statistical responsibilities**
- Low public acceptability for **administrative data linkages**



# Building blocks for a conceptual framework for social and demographic statistics



## PEOPLE

The fabric, object, and unit of measurement for social and demographic statistics.

- ✓ Population stock population flows
- ✓ Characteristics of individuals (data disaggregation and other intersectional considerations)



## RELATIONSHIPS

Interactions between individuals which collectively build up a society.

- ✓ Family structures
- ✓ Social connections, confidence in institutions



## OUTCOMES

Qualitative or compound measures to be assessed both objectively and subjectively.

- ✓ Objective: education, health, time use (such as unpaid work, work-life balance and leisure), employment, income, wealth and housing, among others
- ✓ Subjective: well-being, including physical and mental health, learning, sense of purpose, meaningful work



## PLACES

Geography as an element for analyzing social and demographic statistics and as a link across themes and domains.

- ✓ Geographic disaggregation
- ✓ Geospatial analysis
- ✓ Small-area estimation



## TIME

Time as an aid in understanding and anticipating changes in population, distribution outcomes and relationships.

- ✓ Time series to monitor progress
- ✓ Life perspectives
- ✓ Age-specific lenses
- ✓ Cohort-based analyses



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