

FACT SHEET Co-operatives in an Age of Uncertainty

In collaboration with David Coletto and his team at Abacus Data, CMC conducted a national public opinion research to get a profile of the co-op member and a picture of the perception of the average Canadian on co-operatives.

Methodology

Four focus groups validated the survey questions. Five thousand Canadian adults including 1,463 self-identified co-op members responded to this national survey.

Some Key Statistics

- 58% of Canadians do not feel sufficiently in control of their lives.
- 60% agree the economic system is rigged against people like them and agree that the economic system does not favour ordinary people, the typical Canadian.

In parallel,

- Nearly 80% of Canadians consider that the co-operative principles are appealing characteristics for a business.
- Nearly half of Canadians say Canada would be better with more co-ops.
- 95% of Canadians agree the world would be a better place if people collaborated more with each other.
- 30% of Canadians adults are co-op members representing 9 million people.
- 57%, of Canadians have a deep connection to the same values as the co-operative and mutual sector but 66% of this group are not currently members. 37% of Canadians are not co-operative members but should be.
- The growth potential for the cooperative and mutual sector is real. This is the co-op opportunity!

The Upshot of the public opinion research

There is an unease about the future in Canada. Many feel the economic and political system is not working for them. That unease is tied to concerns about inequality, the concentration of economic and political power in a few hands, and the impacts of climate change on their lives. To many, they seek control in their lives and feel isolated from the power structures – whether at their place of work or with the institutions (public or private) they interact with. In short, they feel helpless and isolated.

The alternative is a more democratic and empowered life. One in which more people have a say in how their workplace operates, in how the organizations they rely on and interact with on a daily-basis are run, and in how government decisions are made.

Co-operatives are well placed to offer Canadians of diverse backgrounds and political orientations a solution to this uncertainty by empowering members, employees, and suppliers to benefit from success and influence decisions.

Already one in three Canadians are co-operative members. They are young and older, male and female, Liberal, Conservative, New Democrat, Greens and the Bloc. Co-operative members reflect the diversity of Canada. They live in all parts of Canada, in our largest cities, and most remote communities.

But while many are already engaged in a co-operative, the opportunity for growth is even greater. Millions share the same values of the co-operative model. Millions are interested in learning more and joining a co-op. And half the country thinks Canada would be better off with more co-operatives.

In the age of uncertainty, co-operatives appear to be a solution; a solution to those seeking more control over their lives and a solution to division, polarization, and disagreement. Co-operation and collaboration, local community investment, and a democratic spirit of engagement are what they seek – are co-operatives the solution?

Next Steps

- Co-operatives appeal to people of a wide political spectrum: progressive, classic liberal, populist or classic conservative (please see table below for definitions). We need to adapt our key messages to each of these target audiences to rally Canadians of all parties to the cause of co-operatives.
- The challenge before us is to translate the potential of co-operatives into clear key messages and position the co-op model as a response to the uncertainty Canadians feel.
- Economic conditions and public opinion favor the development of co-operatives if we succeed in making the model better known. Co-operatives are a solution to uncertainty.

We will need to work together as a network to spread the word that co-operatives and mutuals are more relevant than ever! Interco-operation will be the key to developing an effective awareness campaign to build a national co-op community.

	Progressives	Classic Liberals	Populists	Classic Conservatives
% of population	28%	27%	33%	12%
Persona	Progressives are open-minded, forward looking, but worried about the future. They believe climate change is a crisis, that government is a force for good, and that inequality in society is a serious problem. They value collaboration.	Classic Liberals see the good government can do and are generally progressive on social issues. But they are more optimistic about the impact of change and less concerned about income inequality. They are also more open to private-sector solutions.	Populists are by far the most skeptical of elite decisions, worried about the future, and resistant to change. They believe the system is stacked against them, are most opposed to immigration, and have little concern for climate change.	Classic Conservatives believe in the market to drive societal success, rather than government. Suspicious of government and worry about the coercive power of the state.
Beliefs	<p>Strong ties to progressive beliefs:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The rich should pay more in taxes • Climate change is a real problem • Immigrants make our country stronger 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Concerned about 'big issues' (immigration, climate change) but more optimistic about the future than others. • They embrace change and see it as a force for good. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clear concern about the future, most likely due to the 'system' being rigged against them (less trust in government getting it right, and 'the big guys/gals') 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Less concerned about climate change, and current income distribution, but also worried about the future