

Should Canada make Youth Service Mandatory?

Discussion Prompt

Canada should make youth service mandatory.

General Background

Consider the following proposal: after completing high school or CEGEP, Canadian youth must dedicate a year of their lives to serving their country. Their labour would be paid, and youth would have several options: some might serve in the military, or do administrative work for community organizations, or spend their service year contributing to agriculture and reforestation initiatives, or do low-level jobs in the public health sector or international development.

A [2025 poll from Angus Reid](#) indicated that approximately 70% of Canadians are in favour of mandating that all Canadians under 30 complete a year of civilian service in the areas of public health, environmental support, youth services, and civil protection, while 43% of Canadians are in favour of mandating a year of military service. Most agree that the labour involved in mandatory service would be paid. Many other countries across the world already have this kind of policy enshrined in law, including Switzerland, France, and South Korea.

Should Canada also mandate this kind of policy? If so, what would it look like? Those in favour of mandated civilian service argue that it would help to strengthen a sense of national identity and build much-needed social cohesion, provide young people with professional development skills, and help address our country's labour shortage. On the other hand, mandated service interferes with people's freedom to choose how they spend their time, and whether and how they earn their money. Additionally, it costs tax payers a lot of money: some estimate that it would cost the government billions of dollars.

For More Information:

- [A Year of Service? Canadians – including young adults – embrace the idea of civilian service for those under 30](#) | Angus Reid
- [Poll: Seven in 10 Canadians support compulsory year of service](#) | Winnipeg Sun