

“We’re number 1?’ Most European countries rank Canada first on quality of life according to 2004 survey of Americans and Europeans

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Through the late 1990’s until 2001 the annual quality of life indicators of the United Nations ranked Canada first in the world. In recent years however Canada lost top spot though it remained in the top ten internationally. When surveyed in 2003 by the firm Environics Canadians insisted that their quality of life was best. In fact that view is shared by most European countries according to a poll conducted in the summer of 2004 by the firm Hi Europe, a division of Harris Interactive. According to the five largest European countries on different aspects of life and government in their own countries as well as in the U.S., Canada, Japan, China and Russia it is Canada that tops the list on quality of life and environment. The United States is perceived as number one for its economy; France has the most respected health care system, and there is no clear leader on the constitution and systems of government, or the present governments—though respondents across countries were consistent in their very positive feelings toward their own country’s constitutions and system of governments. Still even in this regard Canada scores high marks. For those in this country that feel that we mishandle our constitutional affairs, Canada actually yield relatively high scores in France and other European countries for our constitution and system of government. In a second survey conducted by Harris Interactive the United States ranks Canada in conjunction with several European countries on a variety of indicators and we receive relatively high marks. In fact the United States views our health care system more positively than they do their own. In the end Canada seems to be best perceived in an environment where Europe rarely gives the United States high marks and America tends with the exception of Great Britain to not perceive most European countries in a favorable way.

These results of nationwide surveys of adults were based on 2,339 interviews in Britain, 2,018 in France, 2,078 in Germany, 2,120 in Italy, and 1,382 in Spain. The surveys, which were conducted online between June 3 and 8, 2004, were designed to be representative of all adults in each country.

Sommes-nous numéro 1? La plupart des pays européens placent le Canada au premier rang quant à la qualité de vie, selon un sondage fait en 2004 auprès des Américains et des Européens

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Des années 90 jusqu'en 2001, les indicateurs annuels de la qualité de vie des Nations Unies ont placé le Canada premier au monde. Toutefois, ces dernières années, le Canada a perdu sa première place, bien qu'il soit resté parmi les 10 meilleurs au monde. Lors d'un sondage fait en 2003 par la firme Environics, les Canadiens ont insisté sur le fait que leur qualité de la vie était la meilleure. En fait, cette opinion est partagée par la plupart des pays européens, selon une étude effectuée en 2004 par la firme Hi Europe, une branche de Harris interactive. Selon les cinq plus grands pays européens, on a évalué les différents aspects de la vie et le gouvernement dans leurs propres pays, de même qu'aux États-Unis, au Canada, au Japon, en Chine et en Russie, et c'est le Canada qui arrive en tête de liste quant à la qualité de vie et de l'environnement. Les États-Unis sont perçus numéro un pour son économie et la France est enviée pour son système de santé. Ce n'est cependant pas aussi clair lorsque l'on s'attarde sur les leaders de constitution et les systèmes gouvernementaux ou les gouvernements présents : les répondants des différents pays s'accordent tout de même pour dire qu'ils ont une opinion positive de leurs systèmes gouvernementaux et de la constitution de leur pays. Encore à cet égard, le Canada se place parmi les premiers. Pour les Canadiens qui estiment que nous traitons mal nos affaires constitutionnelles, le Canada a pourtant obtenu d'excellents résultats en France et dans d'autres pays européens en ce qui a trait à notre constitution et notre système gouvernemental. Lors d'un deuxième sondage effectué par la firme Harris Interactive, les États-Unis classaient le Canada au même niveau que plusieurs autres pays européens sur une multitude de facteurs, nous classant relativement haut. En fait, les États-Unis voient notre système de santé plus positivement que le leur. En résumé, le Canada est le pays le mieux perçu dans un contexte où l'Europe donne rarement aux États-Unis une cote élevée et l'Amérique ne voit pas les pays européens d'une manière favorable, exception faite de la Grande-Bretagne.

European Results

Canada receives some of the highest ratings by the European countries. Britain (45%), France (52%), Germany (42%) and Italy (33%) feel very positive about Canada's quality of life. Spaniards (34%) also feel very positive towards the Canadian quality of life, but more of them felt that way towards their own country (53%). On the environment, Canada again tops the list with France (52%), Italy (43%), Spain (42%) and Britain (37%) feeling very positive about Canada's environment. Canada's environment also fares well among Germans (31%), though more Germans (42%) feel very positive towards their own country's environment. France is in first place overall for its health care system, but that is mainly because fully 65% of French adults feel good about their system; not because other countries feel very positively about it. This was the highest positive response percentage given in any country on any criterion.

The United States tops the list, with the highest marks for its economy, with a clear lead over Japan and a much larger lead over other countries. However, on all the other criteria it is generally less well regarded than most of the European countries and Canada

TABLE 1

**THOSE WHO FEEL VERY POSITIVE ABOUT:
THE QUALITY OF LIFE IN DIFFERENT COUNTRIES**

"For each of the following please indicate which countries you feel very positive about – the quality of life."

Base: All Adults

	Total	Countries Surveyed				
		Great Britain	France	Germany	Italy	Spain
	%	%	%	%	%	%
Canada	42	45	52	42	33	34
France	35	32	48	40	22	30
Spain	29	30	22	27	21	53
Germany	28	24	29	38	21	31
United States	24	38	14	25	21	21
Italy	23	24	18	26	29	17
Great Britain	22	38	12	19	20	21
Japan	12	15	8	13	9	14
China	1	2	1	1	1	1
Russia	1	2	*	1	1	1
None of these	14	18	11	16	15	10

TABLE 2

THOSE WHO FEEL VERY POSITIVE ABOUT:

THE CONSTITUTIONS AND SYSTEMS OF GOVERNMENT IN DIFFERENT COUNTRIES

"For each of the following please indicate which countries you feel very positive about – the constitution and system of government."

Base: All Adults

	Total	Countries Surveyed				
		Great Britain	France	Germany	Italy	Spain
	%	%	%	%	%	%
France	23	14	33	26	17	28
Canada	23	24	26	28	14	22
Germany	22	15	24	31	16	25
Great Britain	21	29	14	19	20	21
United States	19	22	12	15	26	17
Spain	18	10	15	15	15	44
Italy	10	4	5	8	24	9
Japan	7	8	5	9	5	7
Russia	1	2	1	1	1	1
China	1	2	1	1	1	1
None of these	34	44	34	34	29	25

TABLE 3**THOSE WHO FEEL VERY POSITIVE ABOUT:
THE ECONOMY OF DIFFERENT COUNTRIES**

"For each of the following please indicate which countries you feel very positive about – the economy."

Base: All Adults

	Total	Countries Surveyed				
		Great Britain	France	Germany	Italy	Spain
	%	%	%	%	%	%
United States	31	30	28	31	34	32
Japan	26	20	23	34	23	33
Canada	23	20	27	24	18	27
Great Britain	22	34	16	15	20	23
Germany	20	15	26	12	22	32
France	13	11	12	15	11	20
China	13	10	14	23	10	6
Spain	12	9	11	9	12	24
Italy	6	5	5	6	8	7
Russia	2	2	1	4	1	1
None of these	24	33	24	23	22	15

TABLE 4

**THOSE WHO FEEL VERY POSITIVE ABOUT:
THE ENVIRONMENT IN DIFFERENT COUNTRIES**

"For each of the following please indicate which countries you feel very positive about – the environment."

Base: All Adults

	Total	Countries Surveyed				
		Great Britain	France	Germany	Italy	Spain
	%	%	%	%	%	%
Canada	41	37	52	31	43	42
Germany	29	18	37	42	21	24
France	16	18	20	9	16	15
Great Britain	13	24	8	6	15	9
Spain	12	16	7	6	17	17
Italy	10	12	6	4	23	6
Japan	8	10	6	5	7	10
United States	7	12	4	4	11	4
China	3	3	2	2	3	4
Russia	2	1	1	1	3	2
None of these	25	32	18	30	19	28

TABLE 5**THOSE WHO FEEL VERY POSITIVE ABOUT:****THE HEALTH CARE SYSTEM IN DIFFERENT COUNTRIES**

"For each of the following please indicate which countries you feel very positive about – the health care system."

Base: All Adults

	United States	Countries Surveyed				
		Great Britain	France	Germany	Italy	Spain
		%	%	%	%	%
France	12	26	65	12	17	22
Germany	16	22	18	28	18	23
Great Britain	28	32	4	8	14	13
Canada	49	19	13	14	10	13
Spain		12	4	4	6	42
United States	34	17	3	5	14	8
Italy		6	3	3	21	4
Japan	12	8	3	6	4	6
China		2	1	2	1	1
Russia		1	1	1	1	1
None of these		30	20	47	33	23

TABLE 6**THOSE WHO FEEL VERY POSITIVE ABOUT:****THE PRESENT GOVERNMENTS OF DIFFERENT COUNTRIES**

"For each of the following please indicate which countries you feel very positive about – the present government."

Base: All Adults

	Total	Countries Surveyed				
		Great Britain	France	Germany	Italy	Spain
	%	%	%	%	%	%
Spain	19	9	21	18	22	34
Canada	18	18	23	23	12	15
France	16	9	20	23	13	17
Germany	15	8	22	11	16	18
Great Britain	12	16	8	11	13	12
United States	7	11	3	5	11	5
Italy	6	4	2	2	18	5
Japan	6	7	5	7	5	7
Russia	3	3	3	5	4	2
China	2	3	2	3	2	2
None of these	42	55	40	43	34	36

Methodology

This survey was conducted online by HI Europe between June 3 and June 8 2004, among the following nationwide cross sections of adults aged 16 and over: 2,339 in Great Britain; 2,018 in France; 2,078 in Germany; 2,120 in Italy and 1,382 in Spain. Figures for region, age, sex, education and income were weighted where necessary to bring them into line with their actual proportions in the population. Propensity score weighting was also used to adjust for respondents' propensity to be online.

In theory, with probability samples of these sizes, one could say with 95 percent certainty that:

- The results in Great Britain, France, Germany and Italy have a statistical precision of plus or minus 2 percentage points of what they would be if the entire adult populations in those countries had been polled with complete accuracy.
- The results in Spain have a statistical precision of plus or minus 3 percentage points of what they would be if the entire adult populations in Spain had been polled with complete accuracy.

The View from America

When asked about their perceptions of systems of government, quality of life, present governments, economies, environments and health care systems Americans are far more likely to say they feel very positively about Canada and Great Britain than they do about France, Germany, Italy, Spain, Russia, Japan or China. With the one important exception of their health care system, more Americans give their own country positive ratings than give Canada or Britain positive ratings.

These are the results of a nationwide survey of 2,242 adults by Harris Interactive® conducted online between July 12 and 16, 2004.

TABLE 1

SUMMARY: AMERICANS WHO FEEL VERY POSITIVELY ABOUT SIX FACTORS IN TEN COUNTRIES

"Please indicate which countries you feel very positive about..."

Base: All Adults

Feel Very Positively about:		United States	Canada	France	Germany	Italy	Great Britain
The constitution and system of government	%	77	42	17	20	17	43
The quality of life	%	77	53	31	30	33	45
The present government	%	54	38	13	17	16	41
The economy	%	54	31	12	19	11	30
The environment	%	51	47	17	19	19	26
The health care system	%	34	49	12	16	10	28

Feel Very Positively about:		Spain	Russia	China	Japan	None of These
The constitution and system of government	%	14	4	2	20	12
The quality of life	%	25	3	3	29	8
The present government	%	13	7	4	21	20
The economy	%	10	3	13	26	23
The environment	%	16	4	4	14	20
The health care system	%	9	2	4	12	19

European attitudes to the U.S. are very different and much less favorable

The results of this new survey can be compared to the replies given by Europeans in Britain, France, Germany, Italy and Spain in another survey conducted in June by HI Europe, Harris Interactive's London subsidiary. That survey found that, on average across these five largest European countries, relatively few people felt very positively about the U.S. system of government (19%), the U.S. quality of life (24%), the present U.S. government (7%), and the U.S. health care system (10%). Rather more people (31%) felt very positively about the U.S. economy.

Attitudes to different countries' constitutions and systems of government

More than three quarters (77%) of Americans feel "very positively" about the U.S. Constitution and system of government. Substantial minorities feel very positively about the constitutions and systems of government in Canada (42%) and Great Britain (43%).

Relatively few people feel very positively about the systems of government in Japan (20%), France (17%) and Germany (17%).

In Europe, most people did not feel very positively about the systems of government in any of the ten countries, and the U.S. (19%) was only marginally lower than Canada (23%), France (23%), Germany (22%) and Britain (21%).

TABLE 3

THOSE WHO FEEL VERY POSITIVELY ABOUT THE CONSTITUTION AND SYSTEM OF GOVERNMENT IN TEN COUNTRIES

"Please indicate which countries you feel very positive about the constitution and system of government."

Base: All Adults

	American Perceptions	European* Perceptions
	%	%
United States	77	19
Great Britain	43	21
Canada	42	23
Germany	20	22
Japan	20	7
France	17	23
Italy	17	10
Spain	14	18
Russia	4	1
China	2	1

*Based on HI Europe survey conducted among German, French, British, Italian and Spanish adults in June 2004. (These European data were published by Harris Interactive on June 30, 2004.)

Attitudes to different countries' present governments

Just over half (54%) of U.S. adults feel very positively toward the present U.S. government and well over a third feel very positively about the present British (41%) and Canadian (38%) governments. And 21% feel very positively about the present Japanese government.

Apart from these four exceptions, few Americans feel very positively about the present governments among the countries listed.

Few Europeans feel very positively about *any* of the listed governments whether European, North American or Asian.

(more)

TABLE 4

THOSE WHO FEEL VERY POSITIVELY ABOUT THE PRESENT GOVERNMENT IN TEN COUNTRIES

"Please indicate which countries you feel very positive about the present government."

Base: All Adults

	American Perceptions	European Perceptions*
	%	%
United States	54	7
Great Britain	41	12
Canada	38	18
Japan	21	6
Germany	17	15
Italy	16	6
France	13	16
Spain	13	19
Russia	7	3
China	4	2

*Based on HI Europe survey conducted among German, French, British, Italian and Spaniard adults in June 2004. (These European data were published by Harris Interactive on June 30, 2004.)

Attitudes to the quality of life in different countries

Three quarters of Americans (77%) feel very positive about the quality of life in the United States. Substantial numbers also feel very positively about the quality of life in Canada (53%), Britain (45%), Italy (33%), France (31%), Germany (30%) and Japan (29%).

Europeans are – as on almost all questions – less positive. They gave their highest marks to the quality of life in Canada (42%), followed by France (35%), Spain (29%), Germany (28%), and the United States (24%).

TABLE 5

THOSE WHO FEEL VERY POSITIVELY ABOUT THE QUALITY OF LIFE IN TEN COUNTRIES

"Please indicate which countries you feel very positive about the quality of life."

Base: All Adults

	American Perceptions	European Perceptions*
	%	%
United States	77	24
Canada	53	42
Great Britain	45	22
Italy	33	23
France	31	35
Germany	30	28
Japan	29	12
Spain	25	29
Russia	3	1
China	3	1

*Based on HI Europe survey conducted among German, French, British, Italian and Spaniard adults in June 2004. (These European data were published by Harris Interactive on June 30, 2004.)

Attitudes to the economy in different countries

A modest majority (54%) of Americans feel very positively toward the economy in the U.S., while just under a third feel very positively about the economy in Canada (31%), and Britain (30%).

Most Europeans do not feel very positively about the economies of any of these countries but they give the U.S. (31%) higher marks than any other country.

TABLE 6

THOSE WHO FEEL VERY POSITIVELY ABOUT THE ECONOMY IN TEN COUNTRIES

"Please indicate which countries you feel very positive about the economy."

Base: All Adults

	American Perceptions	European Perceptions*
	%	%
United States	54	31
Canada	31	23
Great Britain	30	22
Japan	26	26
Germany	19	20
China	13	13
France	12	13
Italy	11	6
Spain	10	12
Russia	3	2

*Based on HI Europe survey conducted among German, French, British, Italian and Spaniard adults in June 2004. (These European data were published by Harris Interactive on June 30, 2004.)

Attitudes to the environment in different countries

Few Americans feel very positively about the environment in any of the countries with the exception of the 51% who feel very positive about the U.S. environment and 47% who are very positive about the Canadian environment.

Here again few Europeans are very positive about all the countries, with the two exceptions that 41% feel very positively about the Canadian environment and 29% about the environment in Germany. Only 7% of Europeans feel very positively about the U.S. environment.

TABLE 7

THOSE WHO FEEL VERY POSITIVELY ABOUT THE ENVIRONMENT IN TEN COUNTRIES

"Please indicate which countries you feel very positive about the environment."

Base: All Adults

	American Perceptions	European* Perceptions
	%	%
United States	51	7
Canada	47	41
Great Britain	26	13
Germany	19	29
Italy	19	10
France	17	16
Spain	16	12
Japan	14	8
China	4	3
Russia	4	2

*Based on HI Europe survey conducted among German, French, British, Italian and Spaniard adults in June 2004. (These European data were published by Harris Interactive on June 30, 2004.)

Attitudes to different countries' health care systems

American attitudes to health care systems are strikingly different. Of the six criteria included in this survey, this is the only one where less than 50% rate the U.S. very positively. Indeed only 34% do so.

It is also the only criterion, where more Americans rate another country higher than their own. Almost half (49%) of Americans feel very positively toward the Canadian health care system. Few other countries are highly rated, perhaps in part because most Americans know little about their health care systems.

In Europe, the highest marks – which are still low – go the French health care system (28% very positive).

TABLE 8

THOSE WHO FEEL VERY POSITIVELY ABOUT THE HEALTH CARE SYSTEM IN TEN COUNTRIES

"Please indicate which countries you feel very positive about the health care system."

Base: All Adults

	American Perceptions	European* Perceptions
	%	%
Canada	49	14
United States	34	10
Great Britain	28	15
Germany	16	22
France	12	28
Japan	12	6
Italy	10	8
Spain	9	12
China	4	1
Russia	2	1

*Based on HI Europe survey conducted among German, French, British, Italian and Spaniard adults in June 2004. (These European data were published by Harris Interactive on June 30, 2004.)