

# PUBLIC PERSPECTIVES

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**Perils of Perception Canada**  
Does Knowledge of the Facts Matter?

June 2016



# PERILS OF PERCEPTION CANADA



As governments across the country are increasingly engaging Canadians in policy and program discussions, Ipsos undertook this research to better understand how well Canadians know some of the key facts about their province.

In some cases, Canadians have a solid understanding of their province such as how much of our provincial budgets we spend on healthcare or how many of us smoke cigarettes.

In other cases, Canadians remain ignorant on some facts, such as how many Canadians smoke marijuana, work in the resource sector, how many of us volunteer, drink heavily, travel abroad or vote.

As a rule, it seems that Canadians tend to over-estimate issues that have been in the news a lot recently (e.g. marijuana usage, resource sector employment, foreign-born and older population) begging the question are governments tackling these issues to address public concerns or is public awareness of these issues merely a reflection of government actions and news coverage.

# PERILS OF PERCEPTION CANADA

## What might the perils of perception mean for policy makers?

- Canadians grossly over-estimate the proportion of people in their province who work in the resource sector. This could mean that, during the recent slowdown in the oil sector, Canadians might over-estimate the degree to which it's impacting the broader economy, or the number of job losses that are actually occurring. This could impact broader economic confidence, investments, and support for EI revisions.
- Canadians significantly over-estimate the number of Canadians who smoke marijuana. Given that many believe that its use is widespread, does this mean that they're more supportive of changes to marijuana control based on this belief? If they knew it was a relatively small proportion of the population that used marijuana, would most still support its decriminalization?
- Canadians think that the number of marijuana smokers in Canada is double that of cigarette smokers, when in fact the opposite is true. What kind of impact does this perception have on laws and by-laws towards smokers and marijuana control?
- Canadians over-estimate the number of us who are classified as heavy drinkers. Begging the question, are provincial liquor laws more restrictive than they would be if Canadians knew the true numbers?
- Given all of the discussion around the aging population, Canadians believe that 41% of the population is aged 55+, when in fact it's only 28%. Does over-estimating the number of boomers in Canada mean that Canadians are overly deferential to or supportive of policies that are targeted towards older demographics, perhaps at the expense of younger generations?
- Canadians over-estimate the proportion of residents of Canada who are immigrants. Has this been triggered by the attention paid to the Syrian refugee crisis and Canada's commitment to settle 25,000 refugees? While we are a nation of immigrants, we're not to the extent we think we are. Does this make Canadians more liberal or conservative with our attitudes towards immigrants or immigration policies as a result?

# PERILS OF PERCEPTION CANADA

## Index of Ignorance

The index of ignorance tallies the total amount of error for each province across the 12 core questions of the survey. This allows us to understand which Canadians have a better understanding of their province and the people who live there (most knowledgeable), and which provinces have a weaker understanding of their province and the people who live there (most ignorant).

The results of the survey show that residents of Quebec have the honoured position of being the most knowledgeable, averaging 10 points of error across the 12 questions. They performed particularly well on their understanding of education in Quebec, smokers and heavy drinking.

Following Quebec, from most knowledgeable to most ignorant are residents of PEI (average of 13 points of error), Ontario (14), Manitoba (14), British Columbia (15), Alberta (15), Newfoundland and Labrador (15), Nova Scotia (15) and New Brunswick (16).

Residents of Saskatchewan have the dubious distinction of being the most ignorant of their own province, overall, averaging 18 points of error. They performed particularly poorly on their understanding of the size of the resource sector, volunteerism, and marijuana usage.

# PERILS OF PERCEPTION CANADA

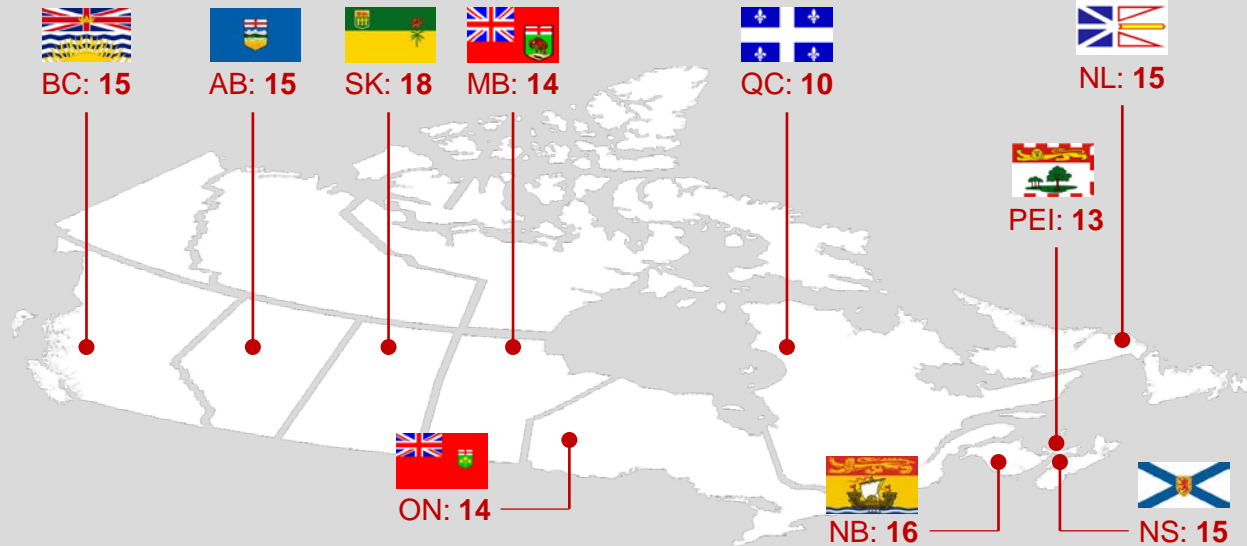
(most knowledgeable at top;  
most ignorant at bottom)

Rank	Province
1	Quebec
2	Prince Edward Island
3	Ontario
4	Manitoba
5	Newfoundland
6	British Columbia
7	Nova Scotia
8	Alberta
9	New Brunswick
10	Saskatchewan

HOW WELL YOU KNOW CANADA

2016

INDEX OF IGNORANCE



# PERILS OF PERCEPTION CANADA

**Q.** What percentage of the workforce in your province is employed in the resource sector (oil and gas, mining, forestry, fishing, quarrying), as of March, 2016?



% point difference	too low   too high	Avg. guess	Actual
Ontario	+19	19	1
Quebec	+20	20	1
Manitoba	+21	22	1
British Columbia	+27	29	2
Nova Scotia	+29	31	3
Prince Edward Island	+29	32	3
New Brunswick	+29	32	3
Saskatchewan	+32	37	4
Alberta	+32	38	7
Newfoundland	+36	42	6









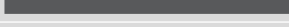
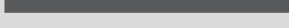
Source: <http://www.statcan.gc.ca/tables-tableaux/sum-som/l01/cst01/labr67b-eng.htm>

Note: Actual numbers cited in report are from March 2016. Statistics Canada has since updated these numbers with more recent data

# PERILS OF PERCEPTION CANADA

**Q.** What percentage of people aged 15 and over in your province have used marijuana in the past year, as of 2013?



% point difference	too low   too high	Avg. guess	Actual
Quebec	 +19	30	11
Manitoba	 +23	33	10
Prince Edward Island	 +23	34	11
British Columbia	 +25	38	13
Alberta	 +27	36	9
Nova Scotia	 +27	40	13
Ontario	 +28	39	10
Newfoundland	 +28	38	10
New Brunswick	 +30	40	10
Saskatchewan	 +30	38	8

# PERILS OF PERCEPTION CANADA

**Q.** What percentage of the population in your province are baby boomers (aged 55 and older), as of 2011?



% point difference	too low   too high	Avg. guess	Actual
Quebec	██████ +10	40	30
British Columbia	██████ +12	41	30
Manitoba	██████ +13	39	27
New Brunswick	██████ +13	45	32
Alberta	██████ +14	37	23
Ontario	██████ +15	42	27
Nova Scotia	██████ +15	46	32
Newfoundland	██████ +15	47	32
Saskatchewan	██████ +15	42	27
Prince Edward Island	██████ +15	46	31

Source: <http://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2011/as-sa/fogs-spg/select-Geo-Choix.cfm?Lang=Eng&GK=PR>

# PERILS OF PERCEPTION CANADA

**Q.** What percentage of your province's total population was not born in Canada, as of 2011?

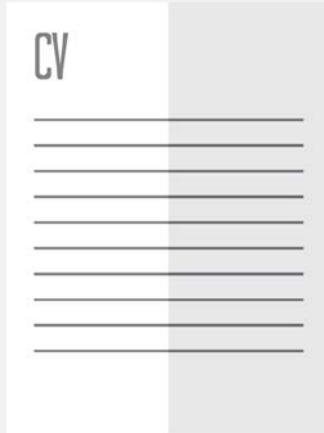


% point difference	too low   too high	Avg. guess	Actual
British Columbia	+6	35	29
Ontario	+7	37	30
Quebec	+10	23	14
Prince Edward Island	+11	17	6
Alberta	+11	31	20
New Brunswick	+12	17	4
Manitoba	+13	29	16
Newfoundland	+13	15	2
Nova Scotia	+15	21	6
Saskatchewan	+21	28	8

Source: <http://www12.statcan.gc.ca/nhs-enm/2011/as-sa/fogs-spg/Pages/ProvinceSelector.cfm?lang=E&level=2>  
 [Note: Population not born in province calculated as immigrants + non-permanent residents]

# PERILS OF PERCEPTION CANADA

**Q.** What is the youth unemployment rate in your province as of March, 2016? Youth are defined as people aged 15-24.



% point difference	too low   too high	Avg. guess	Actual
Quebec	+7	19	12
British Columbia	+9	22	13
New Brunswick	+10	29	19
Prince Edward Island	+10	29	19
Manitoba	+12	24	12
Nova Scotia	+12	29	17
Ontario	+12	27	15
Alberta	+14	25	11
Saskatchewan	+15	26	12
Newfoundland	+15	30	15

Source: <http://www5.statcan.gc.ca/cansim/a26?lang=eng&retrLang=eng&id=2820087&pattern=&csid>

# PERILS OF PERCEPTION CANADA

**Q.** What percentage of people between the ages of 25 and 64 in your province have a university degree, as of 2011?



% point difference	too low   too high	Avg. guess	Actual
Quebec	■ +4	27	23
British Columbia	■ +7	34	27
Alberta	■ +8	34	26
Ontario	■ +8	37	29
Nova Scotia	■ +9	33	23
New Brunswick	■ +11	30	19
Manitoba	■ +11	34	23
Prince Edward Island	■ +13	34	21
Saskatchewan	■ +14	33	20
Newfoundland	■ +17	33	16

Source: <https://www12.statcan.gc.ca/nhs-enm/2011/as-sa/99-012-x/2011001/c-g/c-g03-eng.cfm>

# PERILS OF PERCEPTION CANADA

**Q.** What percentage of people (aged 12 and over) in your province are heavy drinkers, as of 2014?

Heavy drinkers are defined as men having had 5 or more drinks, and women having had 4 or more drinks, on one occasion, at least once a month in the past year.

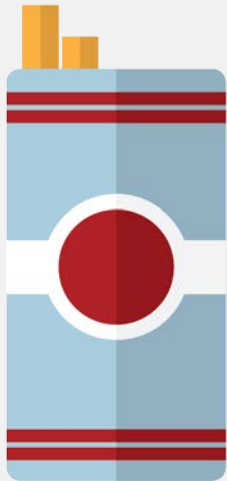


% point difference	too low   too high	Avg. guess	Actual
Quebec	+4	24	20
Manitoba	+10	27	18
Ontario	+11	27	16
British Columbia	+11	27	16
Nova Scotia	+12	32	20
Alberta	+13	31	19
New Brunswick	+13	34	21
Newfoundland	+14	39	25
Prince Edward Island	+16	33	17
Saskatchewan	+20	39	20

Source: <http://www5.statcan.gc.ca/cansim/a05?lang=eng&id=1050501>

# PERILS OF PERCEPTION CANADA

**Q.** What percentage of those aged 12 and older in your province report being current smokers, as of 2014?



% point difference	too low   too high	Avg. guess	Actual
Nova Scotia	■ +3	25	22
Quebec	■ +3	23	20
Prince Edward Island	■ +4	24	20
Alberta	■ +5	24	19
Ontario	■ +7	25	17
British Columbia	■ +8	22	14
Manitoba	■ +8	24	16
New Brunswick	■ +9	30	21
Newfoundland	■ +9	30	22
Saskatchewan	■ +10	31	21

Source: <http://www.statcan.gc.ca/tables-tableaux/sum-som/l01/cst01/health74b-eng.htm>

# PERILS OF PERCEPTION CANADA

**Q.** What percentage of people aged 15 and over in your province do volunteer work to help others, as of 2013?

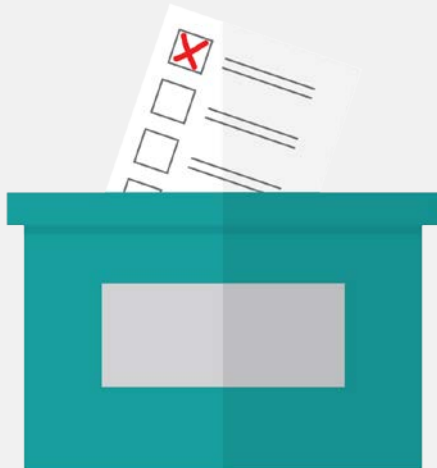








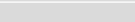
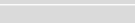


% point difference	too low   too high	Avg. guess	Actual
Ontario	-18	27	44
Quebec	-20	12	32
Newfoundland	-22	25	46
Prince Edward Island	-23	27	50
Manitoba	-28	24	52
British Columbia	-28	21	49
Alberta	-29	22	50
Nova Scotia	-31	20	51
New Brunswick	-32	19	51
Saskatchewan	-33	23	56

Source: <http://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/89-652-x/89-652-x2015001-eng.htm>

# PERILS OF PERCEPTION CANADA

**Q.** What percentage of eligible voters in your province voted in the recent federal election (2015)?



% point difference	too low   too high	Avg. guess	Actual
Newfoundland	-5 	56	61
Prince Edward Island	-7 	71	77
Nova Scotia	-10 	60	71
Quebec	-11 	57	67
Manitoba	-12 	56	68
Alberta	-13 	55	68
Ontario	-15 	53	68
British Columbia	-15 	55	70
Saskatchewan	-17 	54	71
New Brunswick	-18 	56	74

# PERILS OF PERCEPTION CANADA

**Q.** What percentage your province's total population have a Canadian Passport, as of 2012?



% point difference	too low   too high	Avg. guess	Actual
		<hr/>	
Prince Edward Island	+4	53	49
Newfoundland	-1	43	44
Saskatchewan	-5	50	55
Nova Scotia	-5	45	50
New Brunswick	-7	47	54
Manitoba	-8	52	60
Alberta	-10	57	67
Quebec	-11	48	59
Ontario	-18	54	72
British Columbia	-19	53	71

Source: [http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/resources/publications/passport-ar/2012/index.asp#\\_Toc359403297](http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/resources/publications/passport-ar/2012/index.asp#_Toc359403297)

# PERILS OF PERCEPTION CANADA

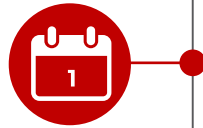
**Q.** What percentage of your province's total provincial budget is spent on healthcare, as of 2014?



% point difference	too low   too high	Avg. guess	Actual
Quebec	+8	38	30
Newfoundland	-2	38	40
Saskatchewan	-3	35	38
Prince Edward Island	-3	34	37
Ontario	-6	35	41
New Brunswick	-6	34	40
British Columbia	-10	33	43
Alberta	-10	32	42
Nova Scotia	-11	35	46
Manitoba	-11	35	46

# PERILS OF PERCEPTION CANADA

## Methodology



These are the findings of an Ipsos poll conducted between May 30 and June 13, 2016 on behalf of Global News. This was a dual mode survey, which used the Ipsos online panel and CATI (computer-assisted telephone interview) technology. The CATI portion was fielded from June 2 to June 8, 2016. The online portion was fielded from May 30 to June 13, 2016.



For this survey, a sample of 2,552 Canadian adults, aged 18 and over, from Ipsos' I-Say panel was interviewed online and by telephone. Weighting was then employed to ensure that the sample's composition reflects that of the adult population of Canada, according to Census data for age, gender and region.



Weighting by age and gender was also applied within each province. This sample included residents of each province: British Columbia (n=301), Alberta (n=300), Saskatchewan (n=200), Manitoba (n=200), Ontario (n=400), Quebec (n=400), New Brunswick (n=200), Nova Scotia (n=200), Prince Edward Island (n=151), and Newfoundland & Labrador (n=200).



The precision of Ipsos polls is measured using a credibility interval. In this case, the national poll results are accurate to within +/- 2.2 percentage points, 19 times out of 20, had all Canadian adults been polled. The credibility interval will be wider among regions. All sample surveys and polls may be subject to other sources of error, including, but not limited to, coverage error and measurement error.

# PERILS OF PERCEPTION CANADA

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