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Majority (60%) See Racism as a Serious Problem in Canada Today, Up 13 points Since Last Year

Nearly a Third of Canadians (28%) Say They Have Personally Experienced Racism in the Past Year (+5%)

Toronto, ON, July 24, 2020 — More Canadians see racism as a serious problem in Canada today than just one year ago. The latest Ipsos poll for Global News finds that sixty percent of Canadians think racism is a serious problem, whether it's "fairly serious" (36%), "one of the most serious" (20%), or "the most serious problem facing Canada today" (3%). By contrast, fewer than half (47%) rated racism as a serious problem just one year ago.

Racism has been a major issue in the news this summer, with marches and demonstrations around the world in support of the Black Lives Matter movement following the deaths of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor and others at the hands of police in the United States. Here in Canada, the death of Regis Korchinski-Paquet following a police interaction in Toronto has also made headlines.

Overall, nearly two in three Canadians (63%) express some level of support for those demonstrating, agreeing (30% strongly/32% somewhat) they support the Black Lives Matter movement. Agreement is strongest among those aged 18-34 (72%), women (70%), and university graduates (75%).

Some Canadians are more likely than others to see racism as a serious problem. While a majority of all ages agree, those aged 18-34, are the most likely (70%) to see racism as a serious problem for Canada, ahead of those aged 35-54 (60%) and aged 55+ (52%). Women (66%) are more likely than men (52%) to consider racism a serious problem, while regionally, this view is most widely held in the Prairies (68%), ahead of Ontario (61%), Alberta (61%), Atlantic Canada (60%), Quebec (57%), and British Columbia (56%).

A Canadian Issue, in Canadian Institutions

Some Canadians (40%) hold the view that racism is an American issue, though just over half (52%) disagree (20% strongly/32% somewhat) and a further 8% don't know. More Canadians are saying they themselves have been on the receiving end of racist behaviour, with nearly three in ten (28%) reporting that they have personally been a victim of racism, up 5 points since last year. Younger Canadians are much more likely to say they've been targeted: 40% of those aged 18-34 say they've been a victim of racism, compared to 30% of those 35-54 and 18% of those 55+.

The presence of systemic racism in Canada is accepted by a majority: six in ten (60%) agree (21% strongly/39% somewhat) that there is systemic racism in Canada. Similarly, nearly six in ten (57%) disagree (27% strongly/30% somewhat) that "saying there is systemic racism in Canada is an exaggeration," leaving one in three (32%) who do agree and a further one in ten (8%) who don't know.



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What's more, half (50%) believe there is systemic racism in the RCMP – rising to two in three (65%) in Saskatchewan and Manitoba. The other half is split between those who disagree (26%) and those who aren't sure (24%).

Canadians are divided as to whether other Canadian institutions are also helping to propagate systemic racism, though more lean towards saying that they do. Nearly half (48%) agree (12% strongly/36% somewhat) that institutions like government, the police, the courts, the education system, and journalists tolerate racism. This leaves 37% who disagree and 14% who don't know.

When it comes to the role of government, Canadians also tend toward thinking that more could be done. Just over half (51%) agree (16% strongly/35% somewhat) Canada hasn't gone far enough in making sure all Canadians, regardless of ethnic, racial or religious background, have equal rights. While half (54%) think the Trudeau Government has done a good job of improving relations among all Canadians, regardless of their ethnic, racial or religious background, one in three (32%) disagree (13% strongly/19% somewhat), rising to 47% in Alberta and 46% in the Prairies.

There is less certainty on the role of businesses in tackling racism. Asked whether businesses in Canada are doing enough to address it, Canadians are split, with no majority opinion prevailing. However, those with an opinion are more likely to disagree (45%) than agree (38%), while nearly two in ten (17%) aren't sure.

“Not Racist, But...”

The poll examined a number of attitudes about racism and discrimination and found that perceptions are broadly in line with where they were a year ago. Most Canadians take a firm stance against racism and discrimination – but some do not. For instance, nearly one in ten (7%) disagree (2% strongly/5% somewhat) that 'racism is a terrible thing', and a further one in ten (10%) disagree (3% strongly/6% somewhat) that they 'would welcome people, without reservation, from other races if they moved in next door to me.' Nearly two in ten (17%) cannot 'confidently say that they are not racist', while half (54%) agree that 'everyone is at least a little bit racist.'

Opinions vary by age: Canadians 35-54 (93%) and 55+ (91%) are more likely than 18-34 year-olds (83%) to agree that racism is terrible, while those aged 18-34 are more likely than those 55 and over to feel that prejudice against other races is normal (24% vs. 15%) or to say they would never marry or date someone of a different race (20% vs. 12%).

Other attitudes polled on include:

- 'While I sometimes think racist thoughts, I wouldn't talk about them in public': 49% agree, unchanged from 2019;
- 'I believe that people of different races are fundamentally different from each other': 43% agree, unchanged;
- 'It's perfectly normal to be prejudiced against people of other races': 19% agree (-3 pts).



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Some 28% of Canadian agree (9% strongly/19% somewhat) that ‘white Canadians are under threat from immigration’, though this opinion has shrunk 9 points over the past year. More than half (56%) disagree, and 16% don’t know. When it comes to their personal relationships, a small number (15%, unchanged) continue to say they would ‘never marry or have a relationship with someone of a different race.’

These attitudes sometimes vary from one part of the country to another. Those living in BC (61%) and Ontario (59%) are more likely to agree that ‘everyone is at least a little bit racist’, while residents of Quebec (48%) and Alberta (44%) are less inclined to agree. Meanwhile, the view that ‘people of different races are fundamentally different from other’ is more prevalent in Quebec (50%), Atlantic Canada (49%) and Ontario (46%) than in BC (34%), the Prairies (32%) and Alberta (30%).

Acceptable Discrimination?

When asked for specifics on the acceptability of discriminating against certain groups, many Canadians feel the dynamic has shifted. Thinking about the past five years, fewer Canadians now say that discriminating against immigrants, Muslims or Arabs is more acceptable than it was, while in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, more now feel that discrimination against Asians is more accepted today.

Acceptability of Discrimination Against Groups					
	More Acceptable	No Change	Less Acceptable	Don't Know	2019 More Acceptable
Muslims/Arabs	17%	34%	38%	11%	26%
Aboriginals/First Nations	13%	39%	38%	10%	13%
Blacks	14%	35%	41%	10%	12%
East Indians	14%	39%	33%	14%	15%
Asians	17%	39%	34%	10%	13%
Jews	13%	43%	32%	12%	15%
Hispanics	12%	42%	33%	13%	10%
Immigrants	18%	36%	37%	10%	23%
Refugees	16%	37%	36%	11%	21%



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About the Study

These are some of the findings of an Ipsos poll conducted between July 8 and July 10, 2020, on behalf of Global News. For this survey, a sample of 1,000 Canadians aged 18+ was interviewed online via the Ipsos I-Say panel. Quota sampling and weighting were employed to balance demographics to ensure that the sample's composition reflects that of the adult population according to census parameters. The precision of Ipsos online polls is measured using a credibility interval. In this case, the poll is accurate to within ± 3.5 percentage points, 19 times out of 20, had all Canadian adults been polled. The credibility interval will be wider among subsets of the population. All sample surveys and polls may be subject to other sources of error, including, but not limited to coverage error, and measurement error.

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