



THE DOMINION INSTITUTE
DOMINION INSTITUTE/NATIONAL ANGUS REID GROUP POLL
THE DOMINION INSTITUTE NATIONAL citizenship
exam survey OF 1997

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45% of Canadians Fail Mock Citizenship Exam Similar to One Immigrants Take to Become Canadian Citizen

[Click here to read a paper on the survey results by award-winning journalist Richard Gwyn.](#)

This National Angus Reid Poll was conducted by telephone between October 28 and November 3rd, 1997 among a representative cross-section of 1,356 Canadian adults.

These data were statistically weighted to ensure the sample's regional and age/sex composition reflects that of the actual Canadian population according to the 1991 and 1996 Census data.

With a national sample of 1,356, one can say with 95 percent certainty that results are within ± 2.7 percentage points of what they would have been had the entire adult Canadian population been polled. The margin of error will be larger within regions and for other sub-groupings of the survey population.

RESULTS OF THE SURVEY

45% of Canadians would not be granted citizenship on the basis of having failed the Citizenship Exam, a necessary step for immigrants to be granted citizenship. Since successful applicants need to correctly answer 12 out of 20 questions, only 55% would pass the exam.

The actual exam from Citizenship and Immigration Canada is composed of 20 questions, a mix of multiple choice and "fill in the blank" questions, divided into five segments: Canadian history and culture, the electoral system, government structure, Confederation and rights and responsibilities of citizens. Our "National Citizenship Exam" and the following press release follow the same pattern.

In order to learn more about the extensive process involved in the design of questionnaire – which included a panel of renowned advisors, recent immigrants and the 200 question Citizenship and Immigration Canada sourcebook -- please refer to the "methodology" section on page 6 of the press release.

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The highlights of the poll findings include:

- Overall, 45% failed the "Citizenship Exam" administered over the telephone, while 55% got at least the passing grade of 12 out of 20. (Table 1)
- Comparatively, residents of Ontario received the higher average (12 out of 20 – 64% passed), as opposed to Quebec residents who showed the lowest averages among the Canadian regions (10.6 out of 20 – 45% passed). (Table 1)
- Participants in the middle age bracket of 35 to 54 did better than their younger or older counterparts, as 61% of them passed the exam, compared to 52% among the group aged 18 to 34 and 52% among the group 55 years of age or more. (Table 1)
- Respondents with higher levels of education did better on the test -- 78% of those with a university degree passed the test while only 36% succeeded in the group without a high school degree. On average, men (65%) were more likely to pass the exam compared to women (46%). (Table 2)
- Respondents who were born in Canada did slightly better (57% passed) than those born in another country (50% passed). (Table 2)
- In questions separate from the actual exam, 74% of respondents agree with the statement that, "not enough history and civics are being taught

schools". As well, 89% of respondents agreed that "their province should collaborate with other provinces in developing national standards for history and civics education.

- When asked to indicate just how prominent should the celebration of historical figures and events be in the government's planning for millennium activities, 50% believed they should be "prominent" or "very prominent" (as indicated by a response of at least 7 on a scale of 1 to 10) while 16% felt they should not be prominent or "not prominent at all" (indicated by a response of 1 to 4 on the same scale).

Historical, Geographic and Cultural Questions

In total, eight questions in the Exam dealt with history, geography and culture in Canada. While participants could fairly easily answer questions dealing with Canada's largest trading partner or the main trade of the Hudson Bay Company, they had a harder time identifying the province with the most bilingual residents and remembering the first two lines of the national anthem ([Table 3](#))

- **The National Anthem** – 95% of Canadians could name the title of Canada's national anthem. Percentages were high across Canada and demographic categories. Only 63%, however, could correctly remember the first two lines of the anthem, with results as low as 46% correct answers in Atlantic Canada and the Prairies and as high as Quebec with 82% correct answers.
- **The Fur Trade** – 87% of Canadians knew that the main trade controlled by the Hudson Bay Company was fur/beaver, while 4% said wool and blankets, 3% said gold and precious metals, 2% for agricultural products and 1% buffalo.
- **Province with the Most Bilingual Residents** – 54% said that Quebec was the province where you could find the most bilingual people, while another 26% believed it was Ontario and 11% thought it was New Brunswick. Quebec residents were more likely to see themselves as multilingual, as 67% of them answered the question correctly.
- **The Three Oceans Bordering Canada** – 65% of respondents correctly named the three oceans bordering Canada. The Arctic Ocean was least known -- only 65% identified it correctly -- while knowledge of the Atlantic and Pacific were at 94% each.

- **The Great Lakes** – When asked to name 4 of the 5 Great Lakes, 61% respondents answered correctly, with the highest results found in Ontario (74% correct answers) and the lowest in Quebec (45%).
- **Smallest Province in Land Size** – 74% answered correctly that Prince Edward Island is the smallest Canadian province in land size.
- **Canada's Largest Trading Partner** – 92% of respondents named the United-States as Canada's largest trading partner. Recognition was high throughout all demographic categories.

Confederation

In total, 2 questions in the Exam dealt with Confederation. While fewer than half (48%) of respondents were aware that "Confederation" is the name of the event that joined the first four provinces joined together, they had an even harder time correctly naming all four of these provinces.

- **Confederation** – 48% said "Confederation" when asked the name of the event when the first four provinces joined together. In Quebec, 25% answered correctly.
- **Who joined?** – When asked to name the four provinces that joined together, 22% of respondents answered correctly. While Ontario (72%) and Quebec (67%) were common responses, Nova Scotia (37%) and New Brunswick (39%) were less obvious answers. PEI (15% of mentions), Newfoundland (8% of mentions), Manitoba (20% of mentions), Saskatchewan (11% of mentions), Alberta (10% of mentions) and BC (10% of mentions) were also listed by participants.

The Electoral System

In total, 4 questions on the Exam discussed Canada's electoral and party system. While participants found it easy enough to remember the name of the Prime Minister, the name of the party in power in their province, and the political parties that comprise the House of Commons, only 1 in 10 (9%) could name the three requirements necessary for exercising the right to vote in a Federal election. ([Table 3](#))

- **Name of Current Prime Minister** – 93% of respondents said "Jean

Chrétien" when asked to name the Prime Minister of Canada, while 4% said "Don't know" and another 3% gave another name. In Ontario, 2% said "Mike Harris", while 1% of Quebec respondents said "Lucien Bouchard".

- **Parties in the House of Commons** – 72% of respondents successfully named 4 of the 5 parties presently represented in the House of Commons with Quebec posting the lowest results (59% correct answers). In Quebec only 38% mentioned the NDP, while 49% named the Reform Party. In the Rest of Canada, only 32% of respondents mentioned the Bloc Québécois.
- **Party in Power in Your Province** – 76% of respondents correctly identified the party presently forming government in their province. Results were comparatively lower in Quebec with 65% answering the Parti Québécois, while 14% said the Bloc Québécois.
- **Requirements to Exercise Right to Vote** – Only 9% of respondents correctly named 3 requirements one needs to fulfill in order to vote in a Federal Election. While 82% correctly mentioned "citizenship" as one requirement, 71% indicated that 18 years of age or more was one other requirement. Being registered or enumerated, however, was only mentioned by 15% of respondents.

Government Structure

The National Citizenship Exam also included 4 questions related to Canadian government structures. While most Canadians (68%) correctly identified the current number of provinces and territories in Canada and 62% could name three levels of government in Canada, results were not as high when it came time to identify Canada's head of state (8% correct answers) or remember the term "Bill" as the name of a piece of legislation before it becomes actual law (55% correct answers). ([Table 3](#))

- **Number of Provinces and Territories** – 68% of respondents counted provinces and two territories. Results were lowest in British Columbia with 63% correct answers, and highest in Atlantic Canada (77% correct).
- **Canada's Head of State** – Only 8% of respondents knew that The Queen was Canada's Head of State, while 11% thought that the Governor General acted as Head of State and 57% believed the Prime Minister held that responsibility. In Quebec, 69% believed the Prime Minister was the Head of State.
- **The Three Levels of Government** – 62% of respondents correctly named federal, provincial and municipal as the three levels of government in Canada. Results were higher in Ontario (69% correct responses), and

lower in Atlantic Canada (49%).

- **A "Bill" In Parliament** – 55% knew that "Bill" is the name commonly given to a piece of legislation before it is passed and becomes law.

Rights and Responsibilities of Citizenship

Finally, 3 questions in the exam dealt with the rights, freedoms and responsibilities of Canadian citizens. Only one in three (32%) Canadians could name the Charter as the constitutional document that protects Canadians' rights and freedoms, and even fewer (20%) participants could list just four of the rights it contains. Only 4% could name three responsibilities that Canadian citizens hold.

- **The Existence of the Charter** – Fewer than one third of respondents (32%) were able to name the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedom (or any part thereof) as the "part of the Constitution which legally protects the basic rights and freedoms of all Canadians". Results were highest in Quebec (40% correct responses, while lowest in Atlantic Canada (23% correct responses).
- **Naming Four Rights** – One in five (20%) of respondents were able to name four basic rights protected by the Charter. The most often mentioned rights or freedoms were freedom of religion (34%), freedom of expression (22%), right to vote (15%), right to life/liberty/security (8%), protection against discrimination (8%), and freedom of mobility (7%).
- **Naming Three Responsibilities** – Only 4% of respondents could name three responsibilities that Canadian citizens hold. "Obey the law" (32%) was the most often mentioned responsibility, followed by electoral participation (26%). Respect for others' rights (7%), helping others (9%), caring for Canada's heritage (6%) and eliminating discrimination and injustice (2%) were seldom mentioned by respondents.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY FOR THE DOMINION INSTITUTE MOCK CITIZENSHIP EXAM

Due to the stipulations found in Section 24 of the *Freedom of Information Act*, an actual or old citizenship exam is not available from Citizenship and Immigration Canada. Section 24 prevents the public release of exam copies

protect the integrity of Citizenship and Immigration's testing process.

In order to ensure that the questionnaire for the mock exam was as close as possible to the actual test, the following steps were undertaken:

- Step 1: The Angus Reid Group obtained a copy of "A Look at Canada" (1997), a booklet distributed by Citizenship and Immigration Canada, which serves as the study guide for applicants taking the citizenship exam. This booklet contains a list of 200 study questions, from which, as the booklet indicates, "the actual exam questions will be taken".
- Step 2: After consulting with various officials and area specialists, it became apparent that the exam was composed of 20 questions in five areas: The electoral system, governmental structures, rights and responsibilities, history/geography/culture and Confederation. This knowledge provided an outline for selecting questions from the booklet provided by Citizenship and Immigration Canada. Sections of the *Citizenship Act* were also reviewed that set out the exam process. In particular, Section 15 of the Act provides a detailed description of the content of the citizenship test.
- Step 3: In order to set representative questions, the Dominion Institute and the Angus Reid Group constituted an expert panel composed of the following:
 - Dr. Jack Granatstein, Historian and Public Commentator
 - Mr. Stephen Green, LL.B.; Partner, Green & Spiegel; Chairman of the Canadian Bar Association – Ontario, Citizenship and Immigration Section; Head Lecturer for Immigration Practices and Procedures, Seneca College
 - Mr. Mendel Green, LL.B., Q.C.; Founding Chairman of Immigration Law Section of the Canadian Bar Association; Adjunct Professor of Law at the University of Western Ontario and the Osgoode Hall Law School of York University
 - Mr. Richard Gwyn, Toronto Star Columnist and Writer
 - Mr. Cecil Rotenberg, Q.C.; Member-at-Large, Canadian Bar Association Immigration Section; Founder of the Immigration Law Reporter, a scholarly journal dealing with immigration matters.
- Step 4: The Angus Reid Group then took the draft questionnaire emanating from the expert panel and presented it to a focus group of immigrants to Canada who had completed the exam in the last two years in order to get their input as to the accuracy of the questionnaire.
- Step 5: At the end of the process, the Angus Reid Group ensured that the questions were compatible to the rules and requirements of a sound

telephone survey.

Please Note: Most questions in the exam were fill-the-blank, or open-ended questions, where participants are asked to volunteer an answer without any form of probing. The Angus Reid Group accepted as correct an answer that least contained an important part of the actual answer. For example, if someone answered "The Charter", instead of the "Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms", the respondent's answer was listed as correct.

CANADIAN'S ATTITUDES TOWARDS HISTORY AND CIVICS EDUCATION AND COMMEMORATIVE ACTIVITIES

Before taking the actual exam, participants were asked to agree or disagree with two statements. In total, 74% of participants agreed with the statement which suggests that "Not enough history and civics are being in schools", while 19% disagreed with the statement. Agreement was slightly higher in Quebec (76% agreed), while lowest in Manitoba/Saskatchewan (66% agreed) . (Table 5).

When asked if their "province should collaborate with other provinces in developing national standards for history and civics education", almost nine of ten respondents (89%) agreed, while 10% disagreed with the statement. Agreement with the statement was highest in Atlantic Canada (98%), and lowest in Quebec (80%). (Table 6)

With millennium celebrations on the horizon, 50% of respondents felt that commemorative celebrations of historical event and figures for Canada should be prominent in the government's planning of millennium activities.

SURVEY BACKGROUND & ANALYSIS (PREPARED BY THE DOMINION INSTITUTE)

Background on the 50th Anniversary of the Canadian Citizenship Act

On January 1, 1947, the first Canadian *Citizenship Act* came into force; November 10, 1997 is the last official day of the 50th Anniversary celebration

- Prior to 1947, Canadians were legally classified as British subjects.
- The sponsor of the Act was the Hon. Paul Martin, Sr., a Minister in Mackenzie King's cabinet. Martin sought to establish Canadian citizenship after visiting the graves of fallen soldiers in Dieppe, France.
- Martin and King saw the 1947 Act as an opportunity to foster a national identity that united Canadians across ethnic, religious and regional divisions.
- With the passage of the Act, Canada became the first country in the Commonwealth to gain its own citizenship. Other countries followed Canada's lead and framework.
- Since 1947, over 4.2 million new Canadians have been granted citizenship under the 1947 Act.

The Institute's Analysis

The Institute's Director, Rudyard Griffiths, offers the following comments on survey results:

- Survey results indicate that a large segment of Canadian society lacks much of the civic knowledge required to **understand** and effectively **participate** in the country's public life.
- Citizens who do not **understand** the meaning of terms like "Confederation", "The Charter of Rights and Freedoms" and "Head of State" are cut off from media stories, political debates and community discussions that constitute our nation's public life.
- Without civic knowledge, citizens cannot meaningfully **participate** in pressing national dialogues like unity and constitutional change. They lack the shared political and cultural context to interpret the aspirations of their fellow citizens.
- To provide an illustration of the link between **understanding** and **participation**, consider the "downloading" issue. If 38% of Canadians do not know what the three levels of government are called, how can they play a role in this vital debate?
- The results also indicate that Canadians lack some of the most obvious avenues to express their common identity. Only 56% of Canadians outside of Quebec could recall the first two lines of our national anthem. Interestingly, 82% of Quebecers could.

The Institute's Recommendations

To strengthen Canadians' sense of citizenship and civic knowledge, the Institute is calling for a **National Civics Framework**, and a specific approach to government planning for **millennium celebrations**.

Considering that 38% of Canadians who have *at least a high school education* (that is, high school graduates, those with some post-secondary education and university graduates) failed the exam, a new approach to civics education is urgently needed.

The Council of Ministers of Education should develop a **National Civics Framework**. The framework would set out grade by grade the civic knowledge that students should learn in school from the first grade onwards.

74% of Canadians agree that not enough history and civics are being taught in the schools. A remarkable 89% agree that the provinces and federal government should develop national standards for civics and history education.

Engaging society at large presents more of a challenge. The Institute believes that Canada's past and civic traditions should form an integral part of the government's planning for **millennium celebrations**.

When asked to rank, on a scale of 1 to 10, the prominence of historical figures and events in the government's planning for millennium activities, 50% of Canadians assigned a priority of 7 or higher.

About The Dominion Institute

- The Institute was founded by a group of young Canadians concerned about our growing sense of civic disillusionment and its effect on informal public debate and the existence of a strong and inclusive national identity.
- The Institute conducts original research into Canadians' knowledge of their country, and builds programs that help Canadians rediscover links between their history and common identity today.
- The Institute commissioned the Mock Citizenship Exam to determine how much Canadians know about the country's past, its political institutions and the rights and responsibilities of citizenship.
- The Institute is currently supported by a generous grant from the Donner Canadian Foundation. One of the Donner's priorities is to foster debate about the rights and responsibilities of citizenship by engaging Canadians in a dialogue about the contributions of generations past.

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Table 1

OVERALL RESULTS OF THE TEST										
	REGION							AGE		
	Canada	BC	Alberta	Man/Sask	Ontario	Quebec	Atlantic	18-34	35-54	55+
(Weighted Bases)	1356	177	122	95	512	340	110	457	521	369
	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)
Average	57	57	58	58	60	53	55	56	59	55
Successful exams	55	56	54	56	64	45	50	52	61	52
Failed exams	45	44	46	44	36	55	50	48	39	48

Table 2

OVERALL RESULTS OF THE TEST									
		GENDER		BORN IN CANADA?		LEVEL OF EDUCATION			
	Canada	Male	Female	Yes	No	< HS	HS	Some P. Sec	Univ.
(Weighted Bases)	1356	665	691	1132	222	218	311	439	386
	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)
Average	57	61	53	58	55	42	54	59	67
Successful exams	55	65	47	57	50	24	46	58	78
Failed	35	53	53	43	50	76	54	43	22

exams									
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Table 3

Question	Right answer	Natl	B.C.	Alberta	Man/ Sask	Ont	Que	Atl
		% Correct Answer						
Name three requirements that a person must meet in order to vote in a Federal election.	Citizenship/18 year of age/Registered voter/Enumerated	9	11	9	3	9	12	8
Name three responsibilities that Canadian citizens hold.	Vote in elections/Obey Canadian law/Respects other's rights/Help others/Care for Canada's heritage/Eliminate discrimination	4	6	6	2	3	4	1
What was the main trade controlled by the Hudson Bay Company	Fur or beaver	87	90	87	92	85	84	90
When the first provinces joined to form Canada, what was that event called?	Confederation	48	55	54	56	56	25	57
Which four provinces joined together in Confederation?	Ontario/Québec/New Brunswick/Nova Scotia	22	28	21	22	26	17	16
What is the part of the Constitution which legally protects the basic rights and freedoms of all Canadians?	Charter of Rights and Freedoms/Charter	32	28	32	26	32	40	23
Name four different rights and/or freedoms protected by the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms?	(As per the Charter)	20	26	20	15	20	19	11

Which province has the most bilingual Canadians?	Québec	54	46	55	56	48	67	49
What song is Canada's national anthem?	O Canada!	95	96	96	98	96	93	95
And can you tell what the first two lines of the anthem are?	O Canada! Our home and native land	63	56	54	50	60	82	46
What three oceans border Canada?	Atlantic, Arctic, Pacific	65	74	73	71	69	51	56
How many provinces and territories are there in Canada?	10 provinces and 2 territories	68	63	71	68	70	64	77
Name four or the five Great Lakes.	Erie/Huron/Ontario/Superior/Michigan	61	58	57	65	74	45	50
Which province in Canada is the smallest in land size?	PEI	74	74	71	70	81	62	86
What country is Canada's largest trading partner?	USA/America	92	92	95	93	94	88	88
Who is Canada's head of state?	Queen Elizabeth II/Queen of England	8	9	8	8	11	6	5
What are the three levels of government called in Canada?	Federal/Provincial/Municipal	62	58	61	59	69	60	49
Name four of the federal political parties presently represented in the House of Commons?	Liberal/Conservative/NDP/Bloc Québécois/Reform	72	72	79	82	78	59	72
What is the name of the Prime Minister of Canada?	Jean Chrétien	93	92	92	97	94	93	91
In the Federal Parliament, what is a law called before it is passed?	Bill	55	50	60	50	65	41	55
Which political party is in power in your province or territory?	(dependent on provinces)	n/a	83	80	85	78	65	85

Table 4

"On what day do Canadians commemorate the sacrifices of those who fought for Canada in past wars?" (UNAIDED – ACCEPT "Remembrance Day/November 11/Armistice)

KNOWLEDGE OF THE SIGNIFICANCE OF REMEMBRANCE DAY										
	REGION							AGE		
	Canada	BC	Alberta	Man/Sask	Ontario	Quebec	Atlantic	18-34	35-54	55+
(Weighted Bases)	1356	177	122	95	512	340	110	457	521	369
	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)
Correct Answer	86	93	90	94	89	71	95	81	90	86
Incorrect Answer	7	4	7	3	6	12	5	10	5	7
Don't know	7	4	3	3	5	17	--	9	6	7

Table 5

"Now, please tell me if you agree or disagree with each of the following statements. Is it important to know the history and civics of the country? - Not enough history and civics are being taught in schools."

HISTORY AND CIVICS EDUCATION IN SCHOOLS										
	REGION							AGE		
	Canada	BC	Alberta	Man/Sask	Ontario	Quebec	Atlantic	18-34	35-54	55+
(Weighted Bases)	1356	177	122	95	512	340	110	457	521	369
	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)
Strongly Agree	40	41	36	32	41	42	36	36	39	36
Moderately Agree	34	32	33	33	33	34	39	35	35	35

Moderately Disagree	15	14	22	23	15	11	15	21	15
Strongly Disagree	4	3	3	5	3	7	5	5	3
Don't know	7	10	6	8	8	6	6	3	8

Table 6

"Now, please tell me if you agree or disagree with each of the following statements. Is it strongly or moderately agree/disagree? - My province should collaborate with other provinces in developing national standards for history and civics education."

INTERPROVINCIAL COLLABORATION ON NATIONAL STANDARDS FOR HISTORY AND CIVICS EDUCATION										
	REGION							AGE		
	Canada	BC	Alberta	Man/Sask	Ontario	Quebec	Atlantic	18-34	35-54	55+
(Weighted Bases)	1356	177	122	95	512	340	110	457	521	378
	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)
Strongly Agree	54	52	46	47	64	47	53	52	55	58
Moderately Agree	34	37	43	43	28	33	44	36	34	31
Moderately Disagree	7	6	9	9	6	9	--	8	6	5
Strongly Disagree	3	5	2	1	1	9	1	3	4	3
Don't know	2	2	1	--	2	2	1	1	1	1

Table 7

"On a scale of 1 to 10, where 1 means "not at all" and 10 means "very", how prominent should the celebration of historical figures and events be in the government's planning millennium activities?"

IMPORTANCE IN MILLENNIUM CELEBRATION OF COMMEMORATING CANADIAN HISTORICAL FIGURES										
	REGION							AGE		
	Canada	BC	Alberta	Man/Sask	Ontario	Quebec	Atlantic	18-34	35-54	55+
(Weighted Bases)	1503	196	135	105	567	377	122	507	578	418
	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)
10 (very)	14	1	14	11	17	7	18	14	12	10
9	5	5	2	2	9	3	3	7	5	5
8	18	19	22	13	21	16	11	19	19	15
7	13	13	16	13	14	11	11	12	13	12
6	11	11	11	17	10	11	13	13	10	10
5	20	21	18	22	17	23	25	15	23	20
4	6	8	6	5	4	8	3	7	5	5
3	3	4	2	8	2	4	5	4	4	5
2	3	1	3	4	1	5	5	3	3	5
1 (not at all)	4	2	4	5	2	8	4	3	4	5
Top box (7-10)	50	52	53	38	61	38	44	53	50	50
Low box (1-4)	16	15	16	22	10	26	15	18	16	15

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