
**DOMINION INSTITUTE/HISTORY TELEVISION
NATIONAL ANGUS REID GROUP POLL**

1998 REMEMBRANCE DAY SURVEY

— Veterans' Experiences Lost on Youth: 74% of 18 to 34 year-olds Flunk Survey —

— Almost 1 in 4 Canadians Think D-Day Marked the Bombing of Pearl Harbour —



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This National Angus Reid Group Poll was conducted by telephone between October 25th and November 1st, 1998 among a representative cross-section of 1,500 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 1996 Census data.

With a national sample of 1,500, one can say with 95 percent certainty that the results are within ± 2.5 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.

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10 November 1998

Six in ten (59%) Canadians surveyed failed the 1998 Remembrance Day survey. The poll consisted of 15 questions on Canada's wartime experience spanning WWI to the origins of Canada's role in establishing the U.N. peacekeeping forces. Older Canadians with higher levels of education outperformed other groups. Regionally, residents of Quebec (17%) and Atlantic Canada (39%) fared poorly, while the proportion of respondents who passed the test in all other regions varied minimally (49 to 51%). Overall, Canadians demonstrated poor knowledge of important events and figures such as Vimy Ridge, Dieppe and Billy Bishop. An important exception was the 79% of Canadians who identified the poppy as the symbol of Remembrance Day.

These are some of the findings of a national survey commissioned by **The Dominion Institute** and **History Television** and conducted by the **Angus Reid Group**. The telephone survey interviewed a randomly selected and proportionately representative cross-section of 1,500 Canadian adults. The survey has a $\pm 2.5\%$ margin of error, 19 times out of 20.

The Dominion Institute and History Television commissioned the survey to raise awareness of veterans' contributions to Canada and to expand our knowledge of the country's past. The 15-question "quiz" was designed by Dominion Institute staff in consultation with experts from the Canadian War Museum – lead by Dr. Roger Sarty.

The Dominion Institute's executive director, **Rudyard Griffiths** offered the following comment: "The poor score of youth indicates that we have all but broken our promise to remember the service and sacrifice of our veterans." **Norm Bolen**, History Television's Vice President of Programming remarked, "As Canadians we need to do more to tell the powerful stories of our veterans. This is at the core of History Television's mission."

To raise awareness of Canada's wartime experience, The Dominion Institute and History Television have partnered with **The Canadian War Museum** to create an on-line version of the poll. Visitors to the survey website <www.HistoryTelevision.ca> can take the quiz; compare their personal responses to the national results; read the detailed answers compiled by War Museum staff; and participate in an on-line discussion.

The Dominion Institute was founded in 1997 by a group of young Canadians who wanted to help their generation rediscover links between their history and common identity. History Television is a Canadian specialty channel that features engaging and entertaining documentaries, movies and original historical programming.

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ANALYSIS OF THE SURVEY RESULTS

Overall Results

In total, 41 percent of respondents passed the quiz (conducted between October 25th and November 1st, 1998) —*i.e.* 41 percent of those surveyed answered 8 out of the 15 questions correctly. Overall, 59 percent of respondents failed. Breakdowns include:

- One in four (26%) correctly answered fewer than 2 questions, while one in three (33%) answered between 3 and 7 questions correctly.
- Of those who passed the test, 12 percent answered 8 or 9 questions correctly, 16 percent correctly answered between 10 and 12 questions, while the remaining 13 percent answered between 13 and 15 questions correctly.

The “Generation Gap”

The most successful groups in the population were those with a university education (65% passed the quiz), those with household incomes over \$60,000 (58% passed) and men (51% passed). (See Table 1 and Table 2). Less successful were those with a high school degree or less (78% failed the quiz), those with incomes lower than \$30,000 (72% failed) and women (68% failed). (See Table 1 and 2).

The most pronounced variation between different demographic groups were between those 55 years of age or older (52% passed) and those ages of 18 to 34 (74% failed). Some examples of the profound “generation gap” documented in this survey are as follows:

- 52% of those aged 55 and older correctly identified Lester B. Pearson as the Canadian who won the Nobel Peace Prize for his efforts to peacefully resolve the Suez Crisis and then went on to become Prime Minister, compared to only 12% of those aged 18 to 34.
- Only 17 percent of respondents aged 18 to 34 correctly identified conscription as the topic of a 1942 national plebiscite, compared to twice as many Canadians aged 55 and older (37%).
- And, again, those aged 55 and older (52%) were twice as likely to correctly name the Korean War as the Cold War’s first major armed conflict as those aged 18 to 34 (26%).

While notable in all areas of the test, the “generation gap” is most apparent in sections of the quiz which deal with seminal events and war on the home front, while being least notable when the area of questioning turns to famous Canadians. For example, 47% of 18 to 34 year-olds correctly identify Japanese Canadians as those who were forcibly evacuated from the West Coast during the Second World War as compared to 71% of those aged 55 and older.

This gap narrows somewhat when the line of questioning turns to famous Canadians – 18 to 34 year-olds were as likely as those aged 55 and older to identify George-Phileas Vanier as the famous war hero after whom the trophy for the Canadian university football league is named (both at 13%). And the gap closes altogether on the question dealing with the poppy as the symbol of Canadian remembrance. 77% of 18 to 34 year-olds answered this question correctly as compared to 75% of those aged 55 and older.

Seminal Events

- Asked to identify which of four options best describes “D-Day”, two thirds of respondents (64%) correctly selected “the invasion of France”. This figure is even higher among university graduates (81%), the most affluent (76%), men (75%) and those aged 55 and older (73% -- compared to 52% of those aged 18 to 34). On the other hand, one in five (20%) incorrectly guessed “the bombing of Pearl Harbour”. Very small proportions of respondents incorrectly chose either “the invasion of Japan” (7%) or “the liberation of Hong Kong” (2%).
- In response to an open-ended question, one in three (36%) correctly identified the battle of Vimy Ridge as “Canada’s most famous single victory in the First World War, consisting of the capture of a key ridge on the Western Front”. This question was correctly answered most often by those aged 55 and older (51%) and university graduates (54%).
- On an open-ended basis, three quarters (73%) of respondents correctly identified Germany as one of the Axis countries against whom Canada and the Allied Nations fought in the Second World War. Three in ten (30%) correctly identified Italy, while about one in four (23%) were able to identify Japan. Respondents were significantly less likely to incorrectly suggest that Canada fought against Russia (13%), France (5%) or Great Britain (2%).
- In order to get “full marks” for this question, respondents had to correctly identify *two* Axis countries. This was accomplished by one half of respondents (50%). Most likely to have correctly identified two Axis countries are university graduates (67%), men (63%), those aged 55 and older (63% -- compared to 37% of those aged 18 to 34) and the most affluent (61%).
- In response to another open-ended question, 43 percent correctly identified The United Nations (or U.N.) as the body similar to the League of Nations that Canadians helped create in the aftermath of World War Two. As many (42%) were unable to provide a guess, while 10 percent incorrectly guessed NATO. Most likely to provide a correct response were university graduates (68%), the most affluent (61%), and men (52%).
- Similarly, 43 percent correctly identified the Korean War as the Cold War’s first major armed conflict in which over 20,000 Canadian service men and women took part. Four in ten (41%) were unable to provide a guess, while four percent incorrectly guessed the Vietnam War. Again, the greatest number of correct responses came from university graduates (63%), the most affluent (61%), and men (56%). Correct responses among those aged 55 and older outnumbered those aged 18 to 34 two to one (52% versus 26%).

Canadian Heroes

- Four outstanding military heroes were named in the survey and respondents were asked to identify which were Canadian. In total, 57 percent knew that Air Marshal “Billy” Bishop was Canadian, while slightly fewer (48%) knew that Sir Arthur Currie hailed from Canada. One in four (24%) incorrectly selected General Douglas MacArthur, and another 15 percent mistook General Ulysses Grant for a Canadian military hero. Significantly, one in five (21%) were unable to identify a single Canadian from the list of four military heroes.
- In response to an open-ended question, one half (50%) of survey respondents were correctly able to identify “In Flanders Fields” as the famous Canadian war poem penned by Captain John McCrae. University graduates (63%) and the most affluent (62%) stand out as the two demographic groups most likely to have given a correct answer.

- Three in ten (31%) correctly identified Lester B. Pearson as the Canadian who won the Nobel Peace Prize for his efforts to peacefully resolve the Suez Crisis and then went on to become Prime Minister. Only very small numbers incorrectly guessed Trudeau (6%), Diefenbaker (3%) or Mackenzie King (2%). However, a full majority (52%) were unable to provide a guess. The greatest proportion of correct answers is found among university graduates (51%) and those aged 55 and older (51%, compared to only 12% of those aged 18 to 34).
- Only one in six (16%) respondents correctly identified (on an open-ended basis) Vanier (Georges-Phileas Vanier) as the famous war hero, diplomat and governor general after whom the trophy for the Canadian university football league was named. Seven in ten (69%) were unable to provide a guess, while another 15 percent provided an incorrect guess. The “age gap” closes in response to this question with those aged 18 to 34 being as likely to answer correctly as those aged 55 and older (13% for both groups). There is, however, a gender gap – 23 percent of men correctly identify Vanier, compared to only 9 percent of women.

War on the Home Front

- Six in ten (61%) knew that Japanese Canadians were forcibly evacuated from the West Coast during the Second World War because of their ethnic origin. Most likely to have provided a correct response to this open-ended question are university graduates (81%), the most affluent (77%), those aged 55 and older (71%, compared to 47% of those aged 18 to 34), and men (70%).
- Fewer than one in three (28%) knew that that 1942 national plebiscite that sparked a fierce debate over military service and national unity was a plebiscite about conscription. Twelve percent made other inaccurate guesses, but the majority (60%) were unable to provide any guess at all. The highest proportion of correct responses comes from university graduates (52%), the most affluent (40%), men (38%) and those aged 55 and older (37%, compared to 17% of those aged 18 to 34).
- 43 percent accurately identified Halifax as the site of a massive munitions explosion during WWI, while another 3 percent correctly identified the province of Nova Scotia, bringing the total proportion of correct responses to just less than half (46%). Four in ten (40%) were unable to provide a guess at all, while 14 percent made other incorrect guesses. Correct responses came most frequently from university graduates (60%), the most affluent (54%), men (54%), and those aged 55 and older (53%, compared to 32% of those aged 18 to 34).
- Just over one third (35%) of survey respondents identified World War One as that which prompted the Canadian government to give most women the right to vote in federal elections. Women (31%) are less likely to have correctly answered this question than men (39%) – the plurality of women (47%) incorrectly answered “World War Two”. Overall, university graduates (50%) and the most affluent (47%) stand out as the two demographic groups most likely to provide a correct response.

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FACTS ON CANADIAN REMEMBRANCE

The following statistics were compiled for The Dominion Institute and History Television by research staff at the **Department of Veterans Affairs**. These statistics show the profound impact of war on Canada and also illustrate that the nation's veterans represent a living heritage that is dwindling with each passing year.

War's Impact on Canada

- approximately 1,688,000 Canadians have served in war in this century (the largest numbers served in World War One [650,000] and World War Two [over 1 million])
- 117,000 Canadians have given their lives in armed conflict in this century
- one in every fourteen Canadians who served in war in this century died in service (World War One was the deadliest for Canada with over 68,874 killed)
- to date, 107 Canadians have died in service as peacekeepers

A Dwindling Heritage

- the average age of World War Two veterans is 76
- approximately 415,199 World War Two veterans are alive today; it is estimated that 24,599 WWII veterans will pass on each year
- approximately 1000 World War One veterans are alive today; on average 400 WWI veterans will pass on each year

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RECOMMENDATIONS IN LIGHT OF POLL RESULTS

Considering how little Canadians, and especially youth, know about veterans' experiences, The Dominion Institute believes it is important for governments to act. The Institute thinks that provincial education systems and the federal government have a responsibility to teach students more Canadian history and especially veterans' history.

In conjunction with the release of this survey, Rudyard Griffiths, executive director of The Dominion Institute, has made the following recommendations:

- “Currently four provinces —Alberta, Saskatchewan, Nova Scotia and Newfoundland— allow students to graduate from high school without taking a single Canadian history course. To ensure that all students have the opportunity to learn the remarkable story of Canada, The Council of Ministers of Education should develop national guidelines for history education. These guidelines would include key aspects of veterans' history.”
- “The federal government also has a role to play. The departments of Veterans Affairs and Canadian Heritage could collaborate in the development of a national strategy to get veterans into classrooms to share their experiences with youth.”

For further information on these recommendations please contact the Institute.

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History Television website: www.HistoryTelevision.ca
(on-line interactive survey and full results from 6:00 AM, November 10th)