

AFTER 20 YEARS CANADIANS STILL POSITIVE TOWARDS CHARTER OF RIGHTS AND FREEDOMS

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and Freedoms Better Protected Under Charter*

*Seven-in-Ten (72%) Say Charter Most Protects Rights of All
Canadians*

*70% Feel More Comfortable Entrusting Individual Rights and
Freedoms To Judges Than to Politicians (21%)*



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Toronto, ONTARIO – With the 20th anniversary of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms on April 17th, Canadians appear to be satisfied with the Charter, according to an Ipsos-Reid/CTV/Globe and Mail poll released today. In fact, three-quarters (74%) of Canadians believe that their individual rights and freedoms are better protected today than before the Charter of Rights and Freedoms was enacted in 1982.

Canadians most associate the Charter with the protection of the rights of all Canadians (72%), and not just the rights of certain groups, such as criminals or accused criminals (8%) or the enforcement of equality rights of women or minorities (7%).

An equivalent proportion (70%) say that they feel more comfortable entrusting their individual rights and freedoms to judicial interpretation of the Charter than leaving protection of these rights up to politicians in parliament and provincial legislatures (21%).



These are the findings of an Ipsos-Reid/CTV/Globe and Mail poll conducted between March 7th and March 7th, 2002. The poll is based on a randomly selected sample of 1,000 adult Canadians. With a sample of this size, the results are considered accurate to within ± 3.1 percentage points, 19 times out of 20, 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. 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 1996 Census data.

After 20 years of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms as the ultimate arbitrator of Canadians rights and freedoms, Canadians appear to be satisfied with the role and the effect of the Charter. In fact, three-quarters (74%) of Canadians believe that their individual rights and freedoms are better protected today than before the Charter was enacted in 1982.

- Residents of Atlantic Canada (84%) are the most likely to express this view, followed by those in Saskatchewan/Manitoba (77%), Quebec (75%), Ontario (73%), and British Columbia (72%). Albertans (68%) are least likely to express this belief.
- Younger Canada (81%) are more likely to feel this way than older (72%), or middle aged (69%) Canadians.

When asked whose rights the Charter is most associated with protecting, seven-in-ten (72%) say that they associate the Charter most with protecting the rights of all Canadians. Smaller numbers of citizens say that they personally associate the Charter most with the protection of other groups rights such as the rights of criminals or accused criminals (8%), the enforcement of equality rights of women or minorities (7%), the rights of aboriginals (3%), or the rights of gays and lesbians (1%). One in twenty (5%) say they associate the Charter with the protection of the rights of other unidentified groups or individuals.



- Regionally, Atlantic Canadians (86%) are more likely to say they most associated the Charter with the protection of all Canadians' rights. This is followed by residents of British Columbia (75%), Saskatchewan/Manitoba (75%), Quebec (72%), and Ontario (70%). Residents of Alberta (63%) are least likely to believe this to be the case.
- Albertans (18%) and residents of Saskatchewan/Manitoba (11%) are the most likely to most associate the Charter with protecting the rights of criminals or accused criminals. This compares to Ontario (8%), British Columbia (7%), Quebec (6%) and Atlantic Canada (2%).
- Older Canadians (12%) are twice as likely as younger Canadians (6%) to most associate the Charter with the protection of criminals or accused criminals rights. However, younger Canadians (10%) are twice as likely as older Canadians (5%) to most associate the Charter with protecting the equality of woman and minorities.
- There are no significant differences between men and women regarding this subject.

While some politicians have complained about the increased role of the courts in Canadian life since the enactment of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, a majority of Canadians do not appear to share this concern. In fact, seven-in-ten (70%) Canadians say that they feel more comfortable entrusting their individual rights and freedoms to judicial interpretation of the Charter than leaving protection of these rights up to politicians in parliament and provincial legislatures (21%).

- Regionally, this view is strongest among residents of Saskatchewan/Manitoba (77%) and British Columbia (76%), followed by Atlantic Canada (74%), Quebec (73%) and Ontario (67%). Residents of Alberta (62%) are less likely to express comfort with judicial interpretation of the Charter as the main protection of their rights. In fact, three-in-ten

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(28%) Albertans are more comfortable with politicians in parliament and provincial legislators as the main protectors of their individual rights and freedoms.

- Younger (73%) and middle aged (72%) Canadians are more likely to feel more comfortable with judicial interpretation of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms than older Canadians (67%).

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For more information on this news release, please contact:

*John Wright
Senior Vice-President
Public Affairs
Ipsos-Reid
(416) 324-2900*

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