

**Canadians' Attitudes About Public Debate in
Canada Today - The Good, the Bad and the Boring**
*Three Quarters (73%) Say Friends And Family Do A 'Good Job';
Only One In Three (32%) Think The Same About Politicians
Three in Four (77%) Think Public Debate in Canada is Superficial*

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Canadians Are Concerned About The Quality and Substance of Public Debate in Canada Today

Eight in ten (77%) of Canadians think ‘public debate of political and cultural issues in Canada is superficial and one-sided’

Only one in three Canadians (32%) think our elected politicians do a “good job debating” the important issues that are facing Canada

Eight in ten Canadians (79%) feel that, as a people, we are “too reserved” when it comes to debating important issues

Toronto, ON – Three out of every four Canadians (77%) are concerned about the lack of substance and the one-sidedness of public debate in Canada today. Fully eight in ten (79%) feel that as a people Canadians are “too reserved” when it comes to debating important issues. On a more positive note, a solid majority of Canadians (73%) believe that their friends and family do a ‘good job’ at debating important issues. Also, fully eight in ten Canadians (86%) enjoy being exposed to people and ideas that challenge the way they look at the world.

These are some of the highlights of a national survey commissioned by the Munk Debates; a new biannual public debate series designed to help elevate and enliven public discussion of the major challenges facing Canada and the world. The Munk Debates are an initiative of the Aurea Foundation, a charitable foundation created in 2006 by Peter and Melanie Munk to support individuals and institutions involved in the study and development of public policy.



"These results indicate that Canadians want a more informed and substantive national conversation about the social, political and economic forces effecting their lives," said Rudyard Griffiths, the co-organiser of the Munk Debates. "The goal of the Munk Debates is to provide a non-partisan forum for reasoned and meaningful public debate; a place for informed citizens to come together to discuss the big issues of day," Griffiths added.

The inaugural Munk Debate on global security and the U.S. general election will take place on Monday, May 26, 2008 at 6:30 P.M. at The Royal Ontario Museum in Toronto. Participants in the debate include Samantha Power, a leading human rights scholar and former Barack Obama advisor; Ambassador Richard Holbrooke, the chief architect of the 1995 Dayton Peace Agreement that ended the war in Bosnia; *Washington Post* columnist and foreign policy expert Charles Krauthammer; and renowned British historian and award winning writer Niall Ferguson. Tickets are \$20 and can be purchased online at www.munkdebates.com.

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Survey Analysis

When it comes to the quality of public debate in Canada:

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- Residents of Quebec (84%) are more likely than Canadians living in Atlantic Canada (80%), Alberta (78%), Ontario (76%), British Columbia (72%), and Saskatchewan and Manitoba (67%) to think that it is too superficial and one-sided.
- Older Canadians (80%), over the age of 54, are more likely than those aged 35 to 54 (78%) and those aged 18 to 34 (73%) to say the same.

With regard to whether or not Canadians are too reserved when it comes to public debate:

- Residents of Quebec (84%) are more likely than those living in Alberta (80%), Atlantic Canada (79%), Ontario (78%), British Columbia (76%), and Saskatchewan and Manitoba (74%) to believe Canadians are too reserved.

Canadians over the age of 54 were more likely to enjoy being exposed to people and ideas that challenge the way they look at the world hold this view (87%) than those aged 18 to 34 (84%). This question elicited similar affirmative response for men (87%) and women (86%).

Who is doing a “good job” debating the important issues facing Canada and the world:

- “Friends and family” scored the highest at 73% closely followed by “universities” (72%), “non-governmental organizations” (67%) and “the media” (65%).
- Only a third (32%) think elected politicians do a good job debating important issues.
- Canadians living in Quebec (85%) and Atlantic Canada (80%) are also more likely to say their friends and family do a good job debating the important issues, followed by those living in British Columbia (70%), Ontario (68%), Saskatchewan and Manitoba (67%), and Alberta (67%).

- Canadians living in Quebec (78%) are most likely to think universities do a good job, followed by residents of Atlantic Canada (72%), British Columbia (72%), Alberta (71%), Saskatchewan and Manitoba (70%), and Ontario (70%).
- Residents of Quebec (76%) are most likely to believe NGO's do a good job of debating the issues, as compared to those living in Saskatchewan and Manitoba (69%), Atlantic Canada (68%), British Columbia (67%), Ontario (62%), and Alberta (60%).
- Women (69%) are more likely than men (61%) to say the media is doing a good job of debating the important issues.
- Canadians aged 18 to 34 (37%) are more likely than those aged 35 to 54 (29%) and those over the age of 54 (30%) to believe politicians do a good job.
- Residents of Saskatchewan and Manitoba (47%) are most likely to say the same, followed by Quebec (33%), Ontario (32%), Atlantic Canada (32%), British Columbia (26%), and Alberta (25%).

These are the findings of an Ipsos Reid poll conducted on behalf of Munk Debates from 03/25 to 03/31, 2008. This online survey of 1,043 adult Canadians was conducted via the Ipsos I-Say Online Panel, Ipsos Reid's national online panel. The results are based on a sample where quota sampling and weighting are employed to balance demographics and ensure that the sample's composition reflects that of the actual Canadian population according to Census data. Quota samples with weighting from the Ipsos online panel provide results that are intended to approximate a probability sample. An unweighted probability sample of this size, with a 100% response rate, would have an estimated margin of error of +/- 3 percentage points, 19 times out of 20.