

The ‘Perils’ of Perceptions: Canadians May Not Know

Canada As Well As they Think They Do

Estimates of Percentage of Wealth the 1% Hold, Number of Immigrants and Atheists in Canada Radically Out of Step with Reality

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The ‘Perils’ of Perceptions: Canadians May Not Know Canada As Well As they Think They Do

Estimates of Percentage of Wealth the 1% Hold, Number of Immigrants and Atheists in Canada Radically Out of Step with Reality

Toronto, ON – In a recent survey of over 30 countries, Canadians showed a high level of disconnect between perceptions and reality when it comes to Canada and how it is made up. On most questions asked, Canadians don’t appear to have a very firm understanding of the composition of their own country. In fact, Canadians demonstrated worse knowledge of Canada than Americans did of the United States.

Ipsos regularly conducts polls as part of their “[Perils of Perception](#)” survey of beliefs in 33 nations around the world. In the study for 2015, Ipsos found a significant disconnect between the perceptions of the Canadian public and the reality of the numbers on issues ranging from income inequality, immigration, religion, where Canadians live and other issues.

Key Misperceptions of the Canadian Public

- Portion of total household income held by the top 1%: **Off by 30%** (Perception: 55%; Actual: 25%)
- Proportion of Immigrants in Canada: **Off by 18%** (Perception: 39%; Actual: 21%)
- Proportion of atheists or those who do not associate with a religion: **Off by 17%** (Perception: 41%; Actual: 24%)
- Percentage of people living in rural areas: **Off by 16%** (Perception: 34%; Actual: 18%)
- Proportion of adults who are overweight or obese: **Off by 13%** (Perception: 43%; Actual: 56%)
- Portion of people with internet access: **Off by 12%** (Perception: 81%; Actual: 93%)

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- Proportion of people in Canada aged 14 and under: **Off by 10%** (Perception: 26%; Actual 16%)

The full Ipsos “Index of Ignorance” is given in the table below. Mexico and India receive the dubious honor of being the most inaccurate in their perceptions on these issues, while South Koreans are the most accurate. There are some regional patterns in this table – for example Latin American countries tend to be more inaccurate, European and North Americans more accurate – but this hides individual differences, and is not the whole story. New Zealand is the least accurate of the developed countries (in the top five most ignorant), while China is in the top 5 most accurate. Canada was less accurate than 11 other countries, including the United States.

Ranking	Country	
1	Mexico	Least accurate
2	India	
3	Brazil	
4	Peru	
5	New Zealand	
6	Colombia	
7	Belgium	
8	South Africa	
9	Argentina	
10	Italy	
11	Russia	
12	Chile	
13	United Kingdom	
14	Israel	
15	Australia	
16	Japan	
17	Canada	
18	Germany	
19	Netherlands	
20	Spain	
21	Norway	
22	France	

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23	Sweden	
24	United States	
25	China	
26	Poland	
27	Ireland	
28	South Korea	Most accurate

For more information and to take the Perils of Perception Quiz please go to: www.ipsos-mori.com/perilsofperception

Technical note:

- These are the findings of the Ipsos MORI Perils of Perception Survey. 25,556 interviews were conducted between conducted between October 1st – October 16th 2015.
- The survey is conducted in 33 countries around the world via the Ipsos Online Panel system in Argentina, Australia, Belgium, Brazil, Canada, Chile, China, Colombia, France, Germany, Hungary, India, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Japan, Mexico, Montenegro, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Peru, Poland, Russia, Saudi Arabia, Serbia, South Africa, South Korea, Spain, Sweden, Great Britain, Turkey and the United States of America.
- Approximately 1000+ individuals were surveyed in Australia, Brazil, Canada, China, France, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Serbia, Spain, Great Britain Montenegro, the Netherlands, Sweden, Norway and the United States of America. Approximately 500+ individuals were surveyed in the remaining countries.
- Where results do not sum to 100, this may be due to computer rounding, multiple responses or the exclusion of don't knows or not stated responses.
- Data are weighted to match the profile of the population.
- The “actual” data for each question is taken from a variety of verified sources for each question and country – a full list of sources/links to the actual data can be found [here](#)

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