



Canadian public opinion on Aboriginal Peoples, 2016

August 10, 2016

Background



Canadians' attitudes hardening on aboriginal issues: new poll

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The Globe and Mail

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The polling on how Canadians feel about aboriginals reveals a nation that, at best, is ambiguous and, at worst, is shockingly unsupportive of native issues. Canadians are more eager than they have ever been to give a full bear-hug of acceptance to a disparaging image of aboriginals and, I might add, a very positive one of themselves.

- Michael Harris in *iPolitics* (March 24, 2013)

Why this research is needed

- Public opinion matters – and what we “think it is” and “what we tell each other it is” sometimes matters even more
- Prevailing thinking is that mainstream opinions of Aboriginal peoples and issues is predominantly negative
- This view is based mostly on anecdote, stereotypes and politics – there is very little empirical evidence
- Now is a critical time to have a current, balanced and thoughtful understanding of public knowledge and attitudes

The Environics Institute for Survey Research

- Founded in 2006 to promote relevant public opinion and social research on important issues of public policy and social change
- Public opinion research makes an important contribution to democracy and the public interest
- Governments used to do this type of research, but the role has now been largely vacated
- Non-profit, and not formally linked to the commercial Environics companies





Urban Aboriginal Peoples Study

2010

THE
ENVIRONICS
INSTITUTE

Research objectives

- What Non-Aboriginal Canadians know about Aboriginal peoples, and the challenges they face
- Perceptions and attitudes – generally and on specific issues (residential schools, economic disparities, band governance)
- How opinions have changed over the past decade (updating previous surveys)
- How perspectives vary across the population (region, demographics, social values)

Study Partners



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THE CIRCLE | LE CERCLE

ON PHILANTHROPY AND ABORIGINAL PEOPLES IN CANADA
SUR LA PHILANTHROPIE ET LES PEUPLES AUTOCHTONES AU CANADA



CANADIANS FOR A
NEW PARTNERSHIP

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Survey themes

- Impressions and perceptions of Aboriginal peoples
- Knowledge and connections with Aboriginal peoples
- Treatment by mainstream society
- Relations between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Canadians
- Indian residential schools and the TRC
- Reconciliation
- Aboriginal governance
- World-view perspectives on Aboriginal peoples

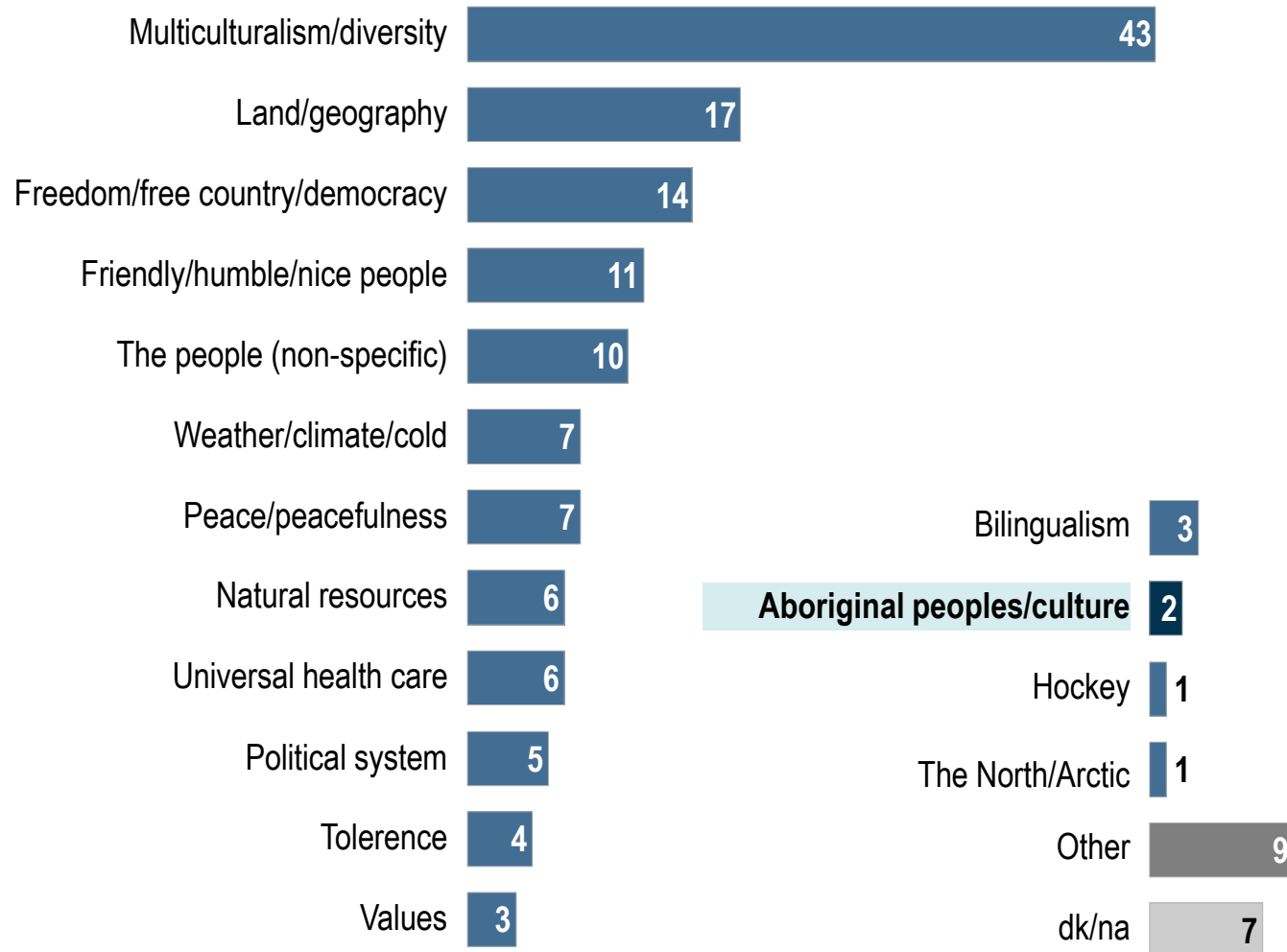
Survey methods

- Telephone survey with representative sample of 2,001 non-Aboriginal Canadians (aged 18 plus)
- Sample stratified across 10 provinces and 3 territories
- Fieldwork conducted January 15 – February 8, 2016
- 40 percent of the interviews conducted via respondents' cell-phones
- Margin of sampling error is +/-2.2% (19 in 20 samples)

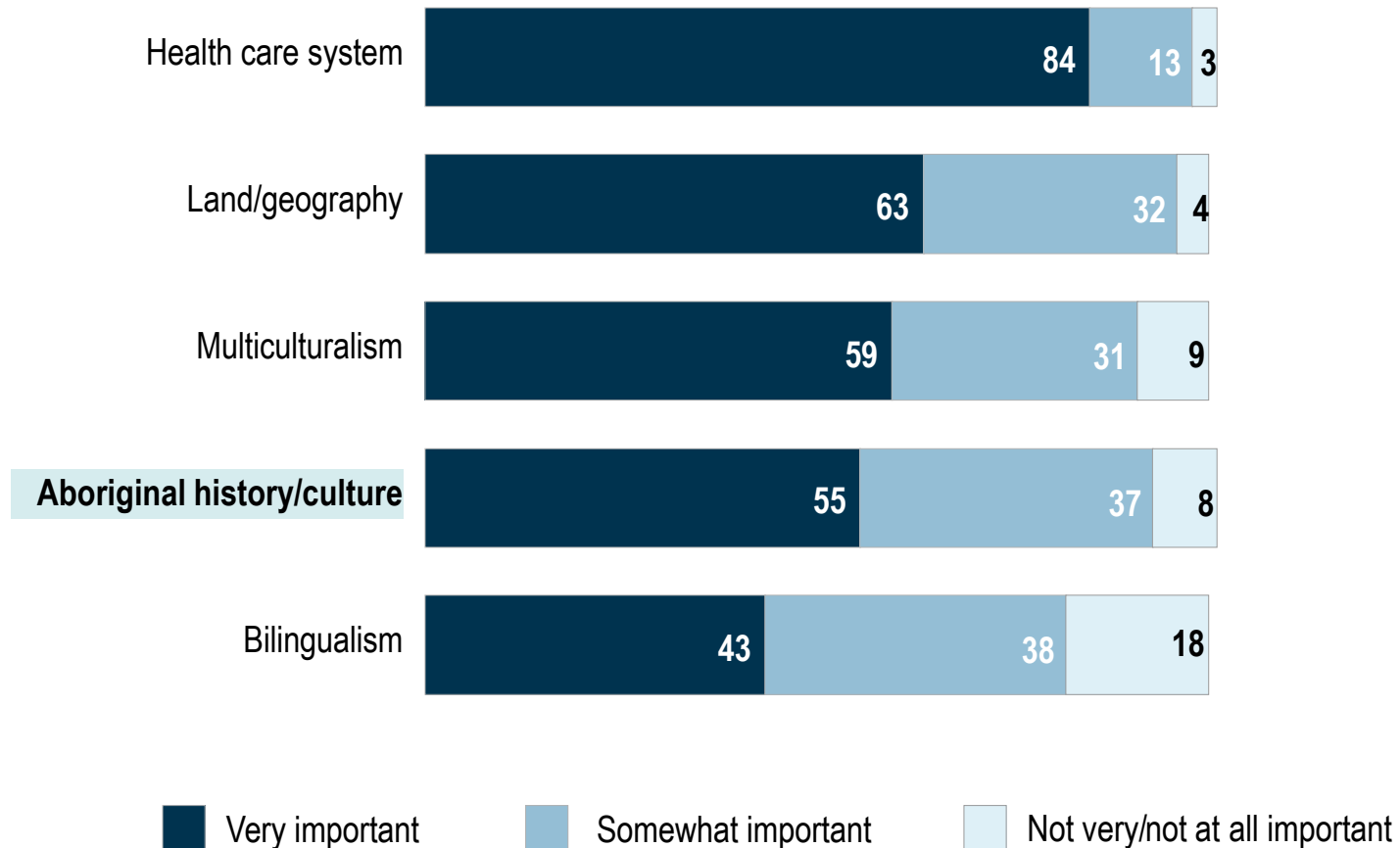
Survey findings

What makes Canada unique?

Unprompted mentions

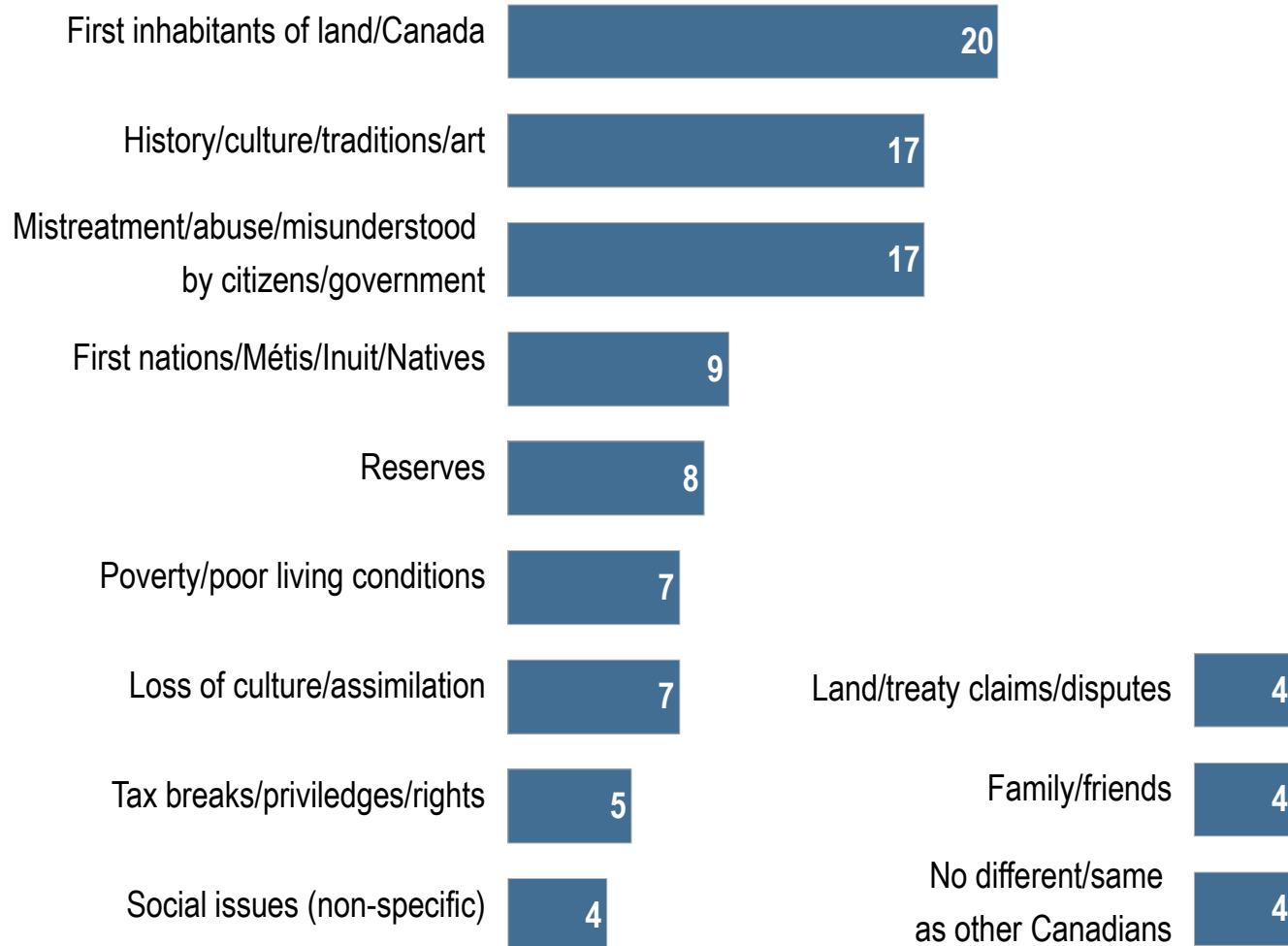


Importance in defining Canada



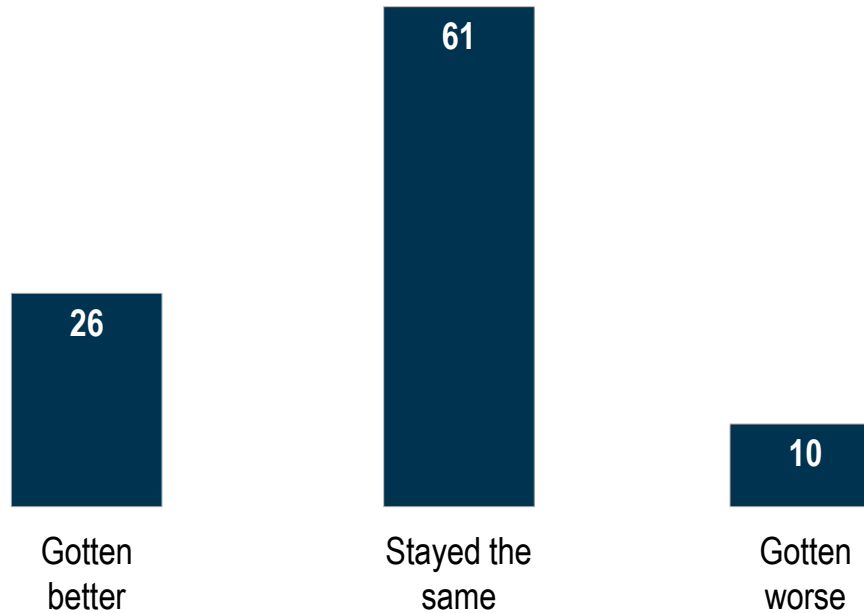
Top-of-mind impressions of Aboriginal peoples

Unprompted mentions

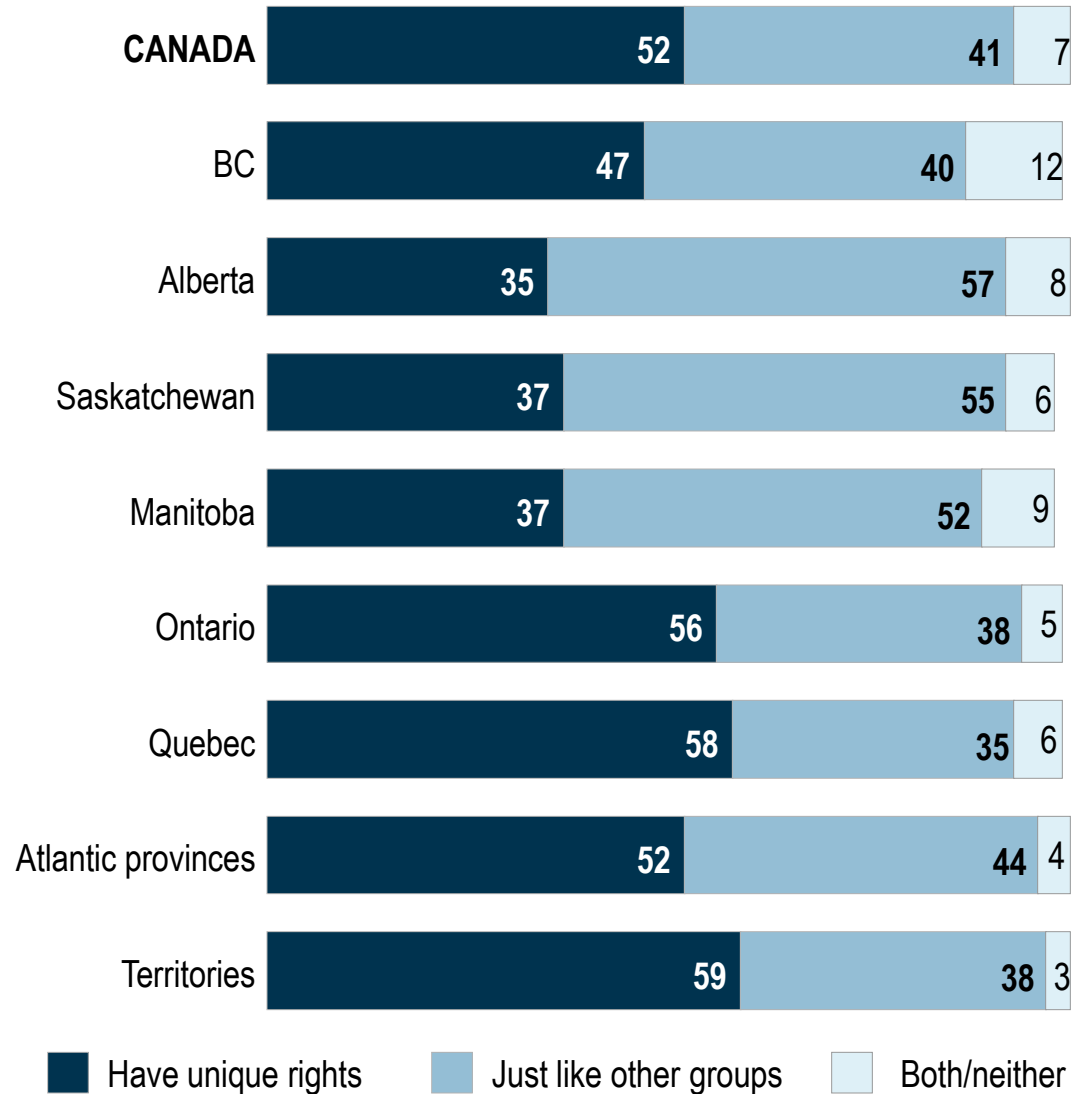


Has your impression of Aboriginal peoples changed?

In the past five years



Do Aboriginal peoples have unique rights or are they just like other ethnic/cultural groups?



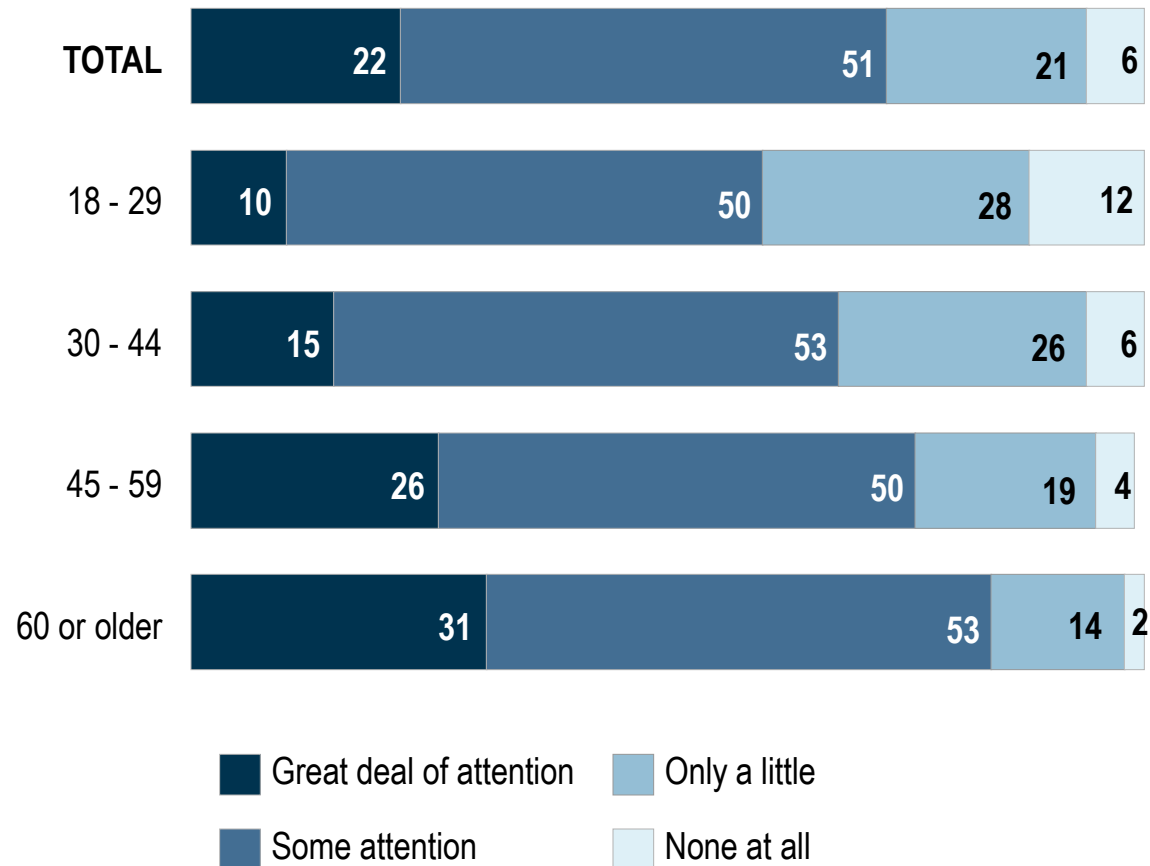
Sources of learning about Aboriginal peoples

Unprompted mentions

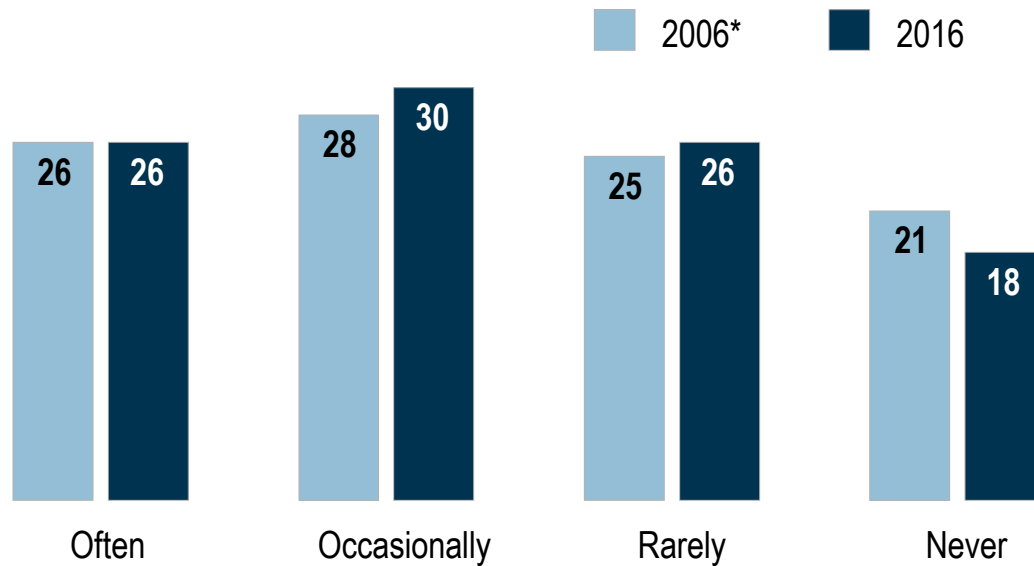


How much attention paid to news and stories about Aboriginal peoples

By age cohort



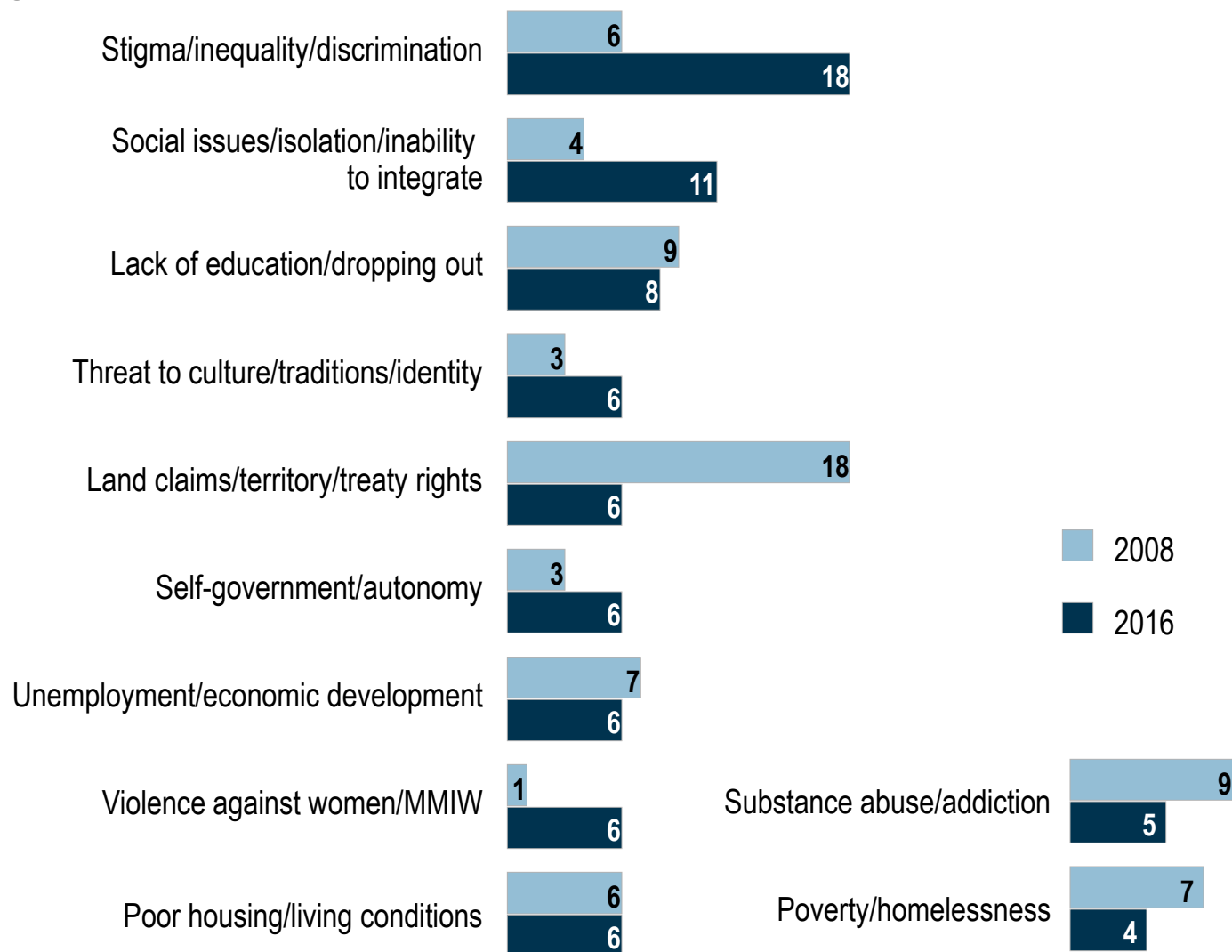
Frequency of personal contact with Aboriginal peoples



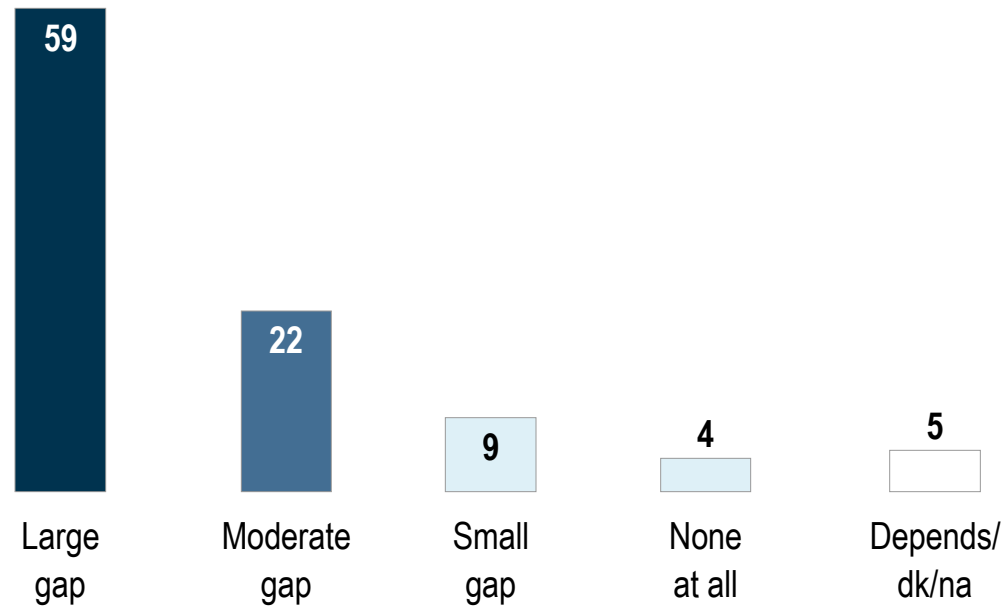
* Environics Research Focus Canada (December 2006)

Most important challenge facing Aboriginal peoples today

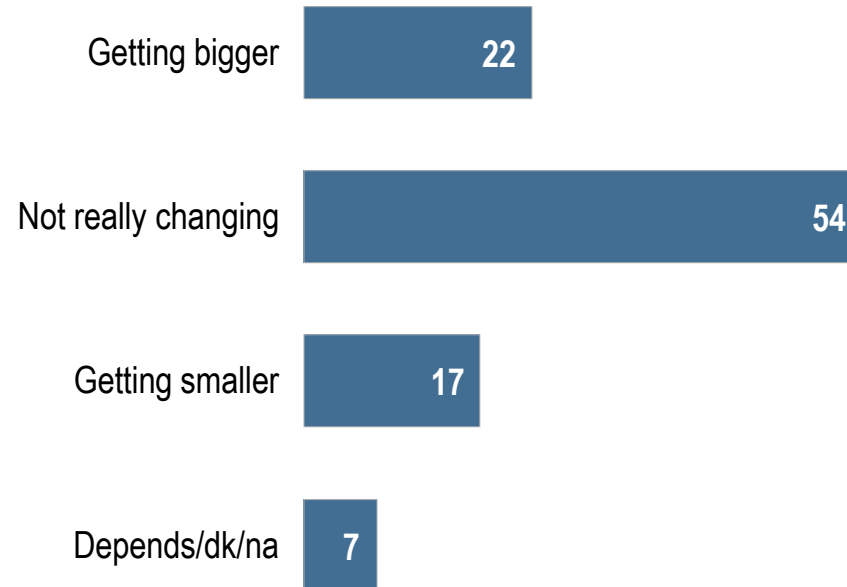
Top mentions



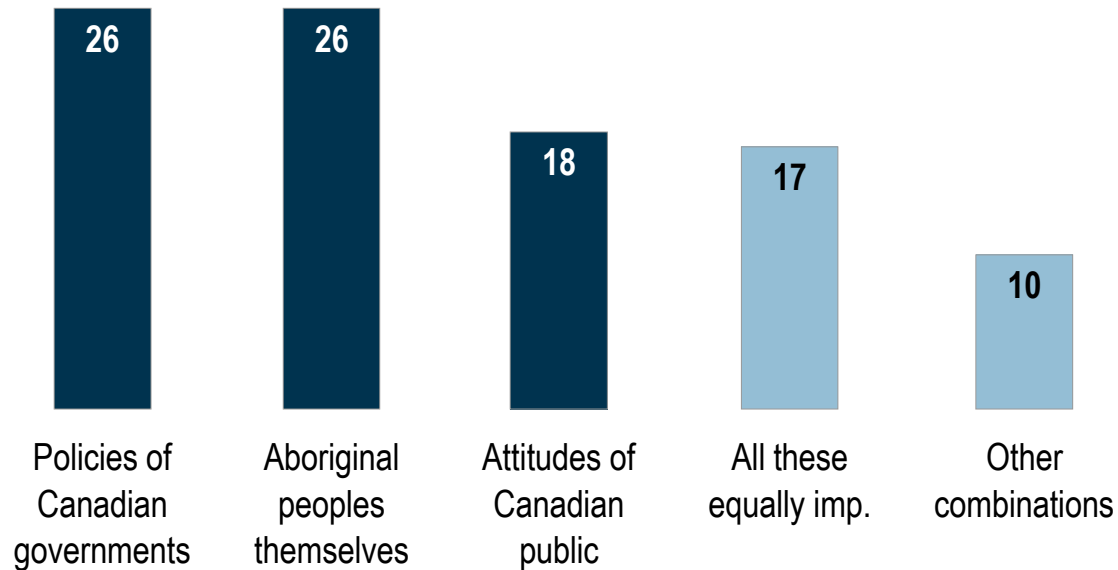
Aboriginal – Non-Aboriginal gap in standard of living



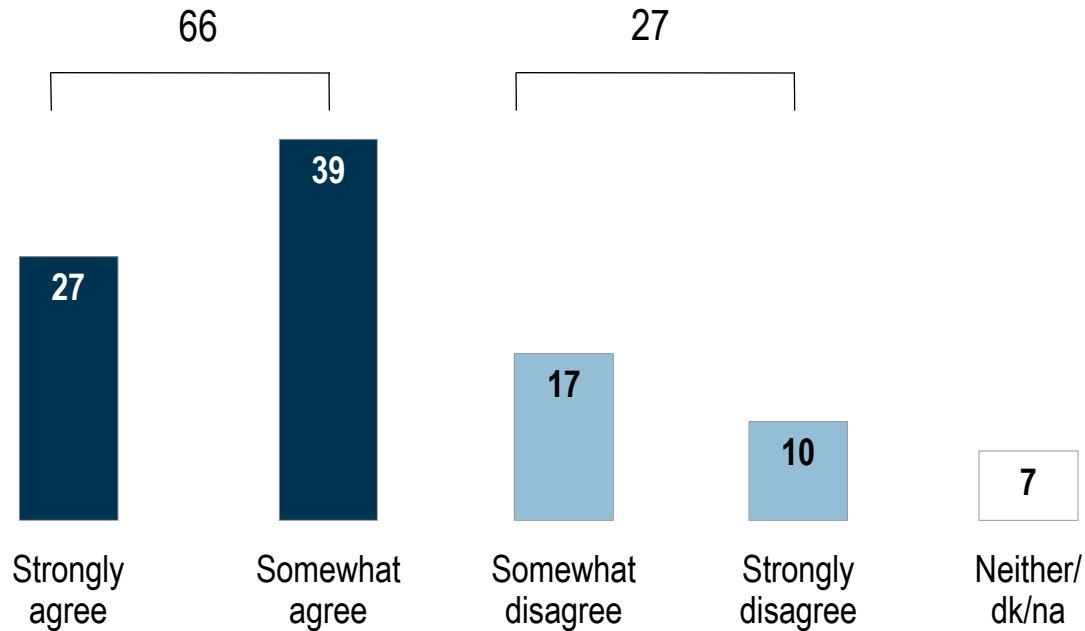
Has the standard of living gap been changing?



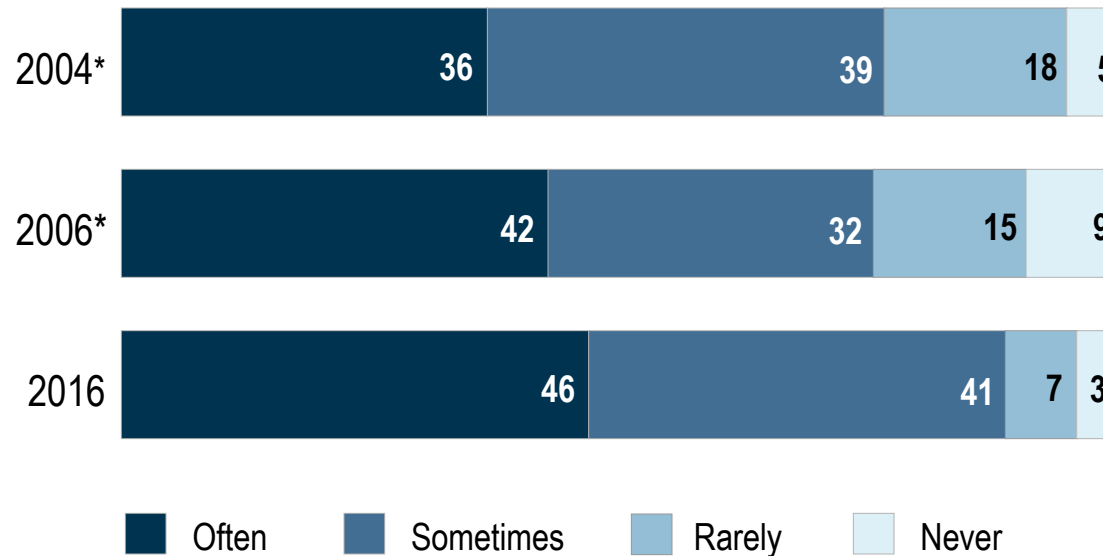
Biggest obstacle to achieving economic and social equality for Aboriginal peoples



“Aboriginal peoples have a sense of entitlement about receiving support from government and taxpayers”

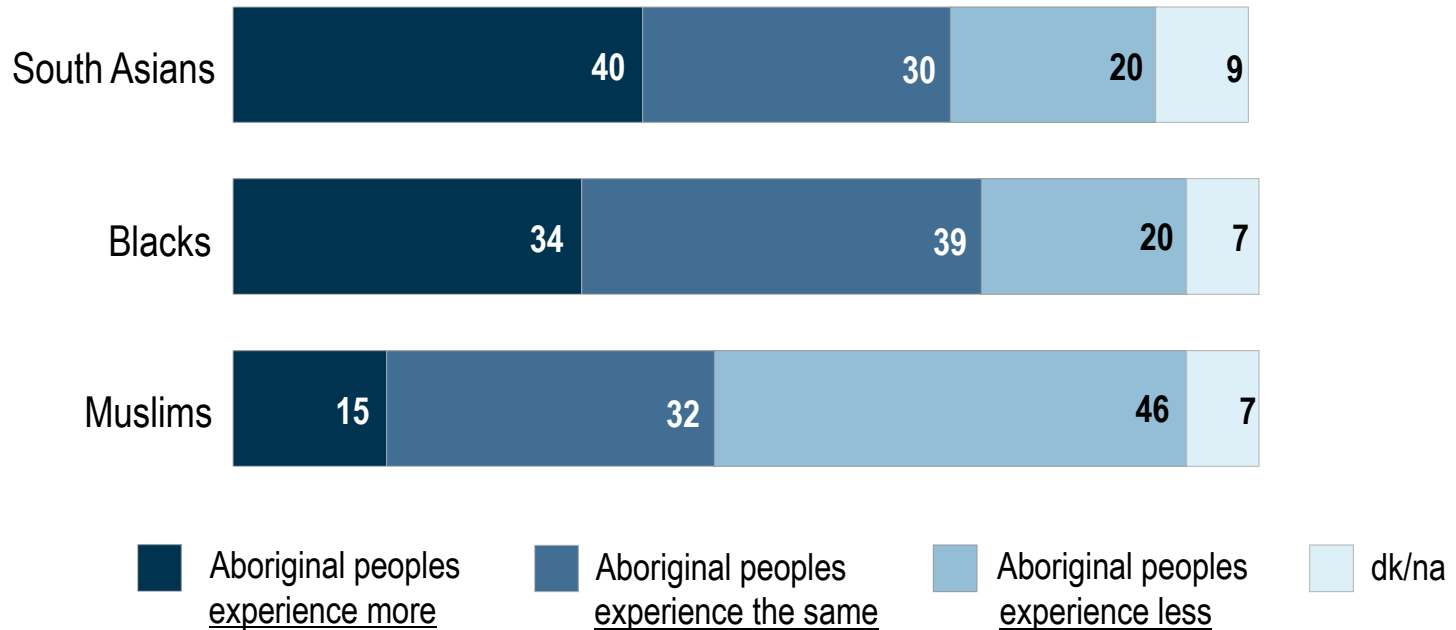


Extent of discrimination against Aboriginal peoples in Canadian society

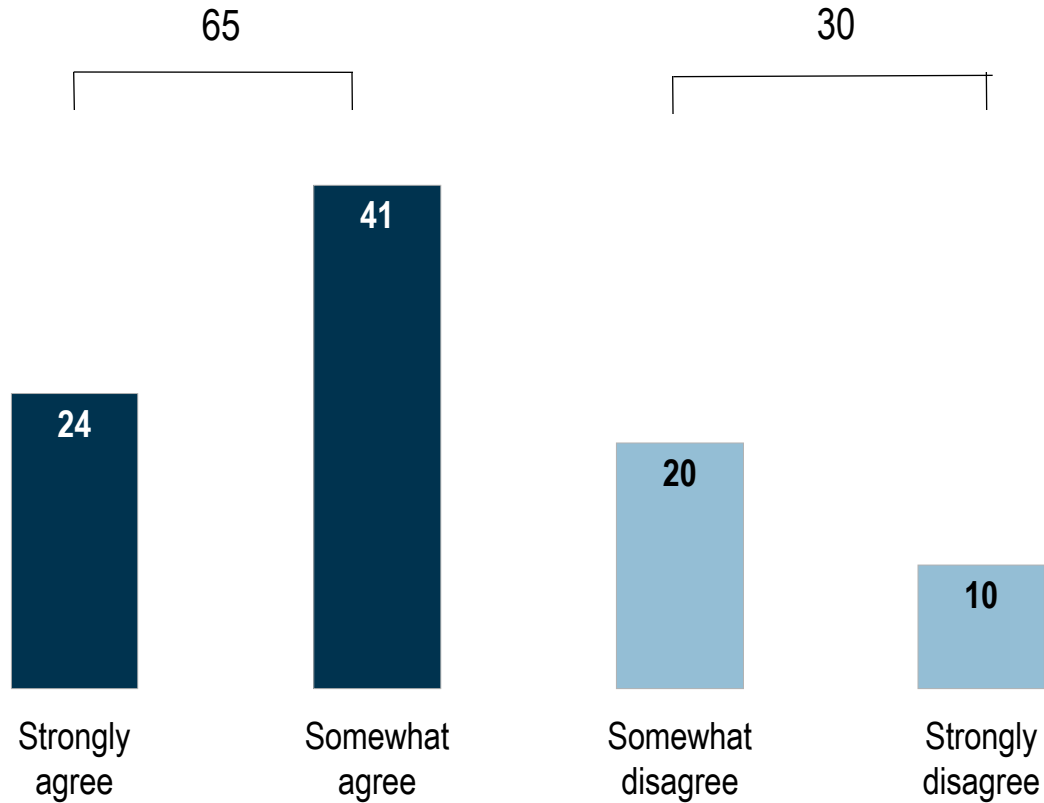


* Environics Research Focus Canada (2004, 2006)

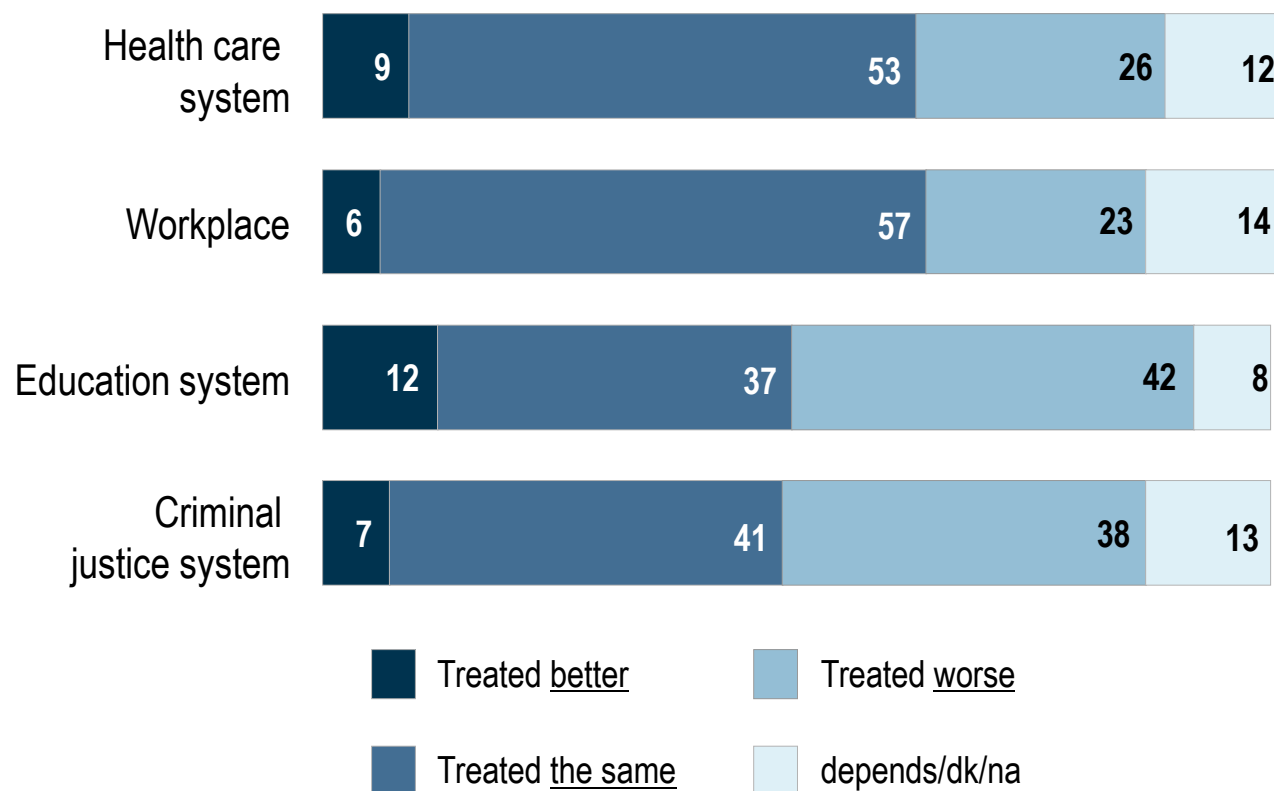
Discrimination experienced by Aboriginal peoples versus other groups



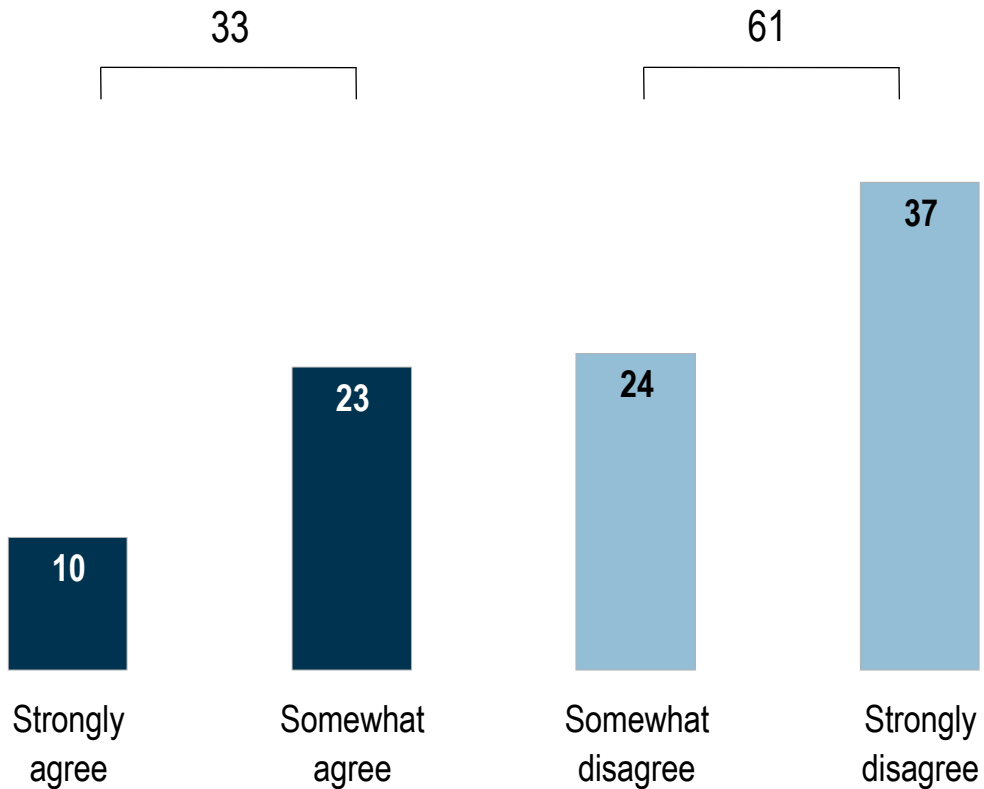
“Most Canadians are prejudiced against Aboriginal peoples, whether or not they are conscious of it”



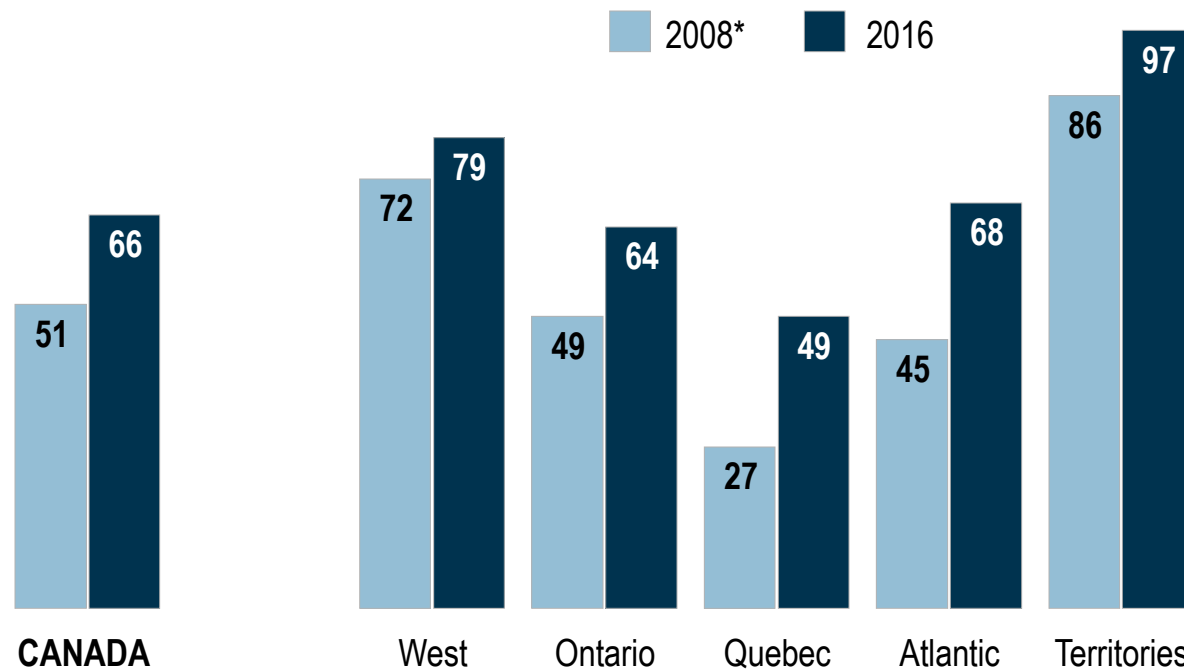
Treatment of Aboriginal peoples by institutions compared to other Canadians



“Mainstream Canadian society benefits from ongoing discrimination against Aboriginal peoples”



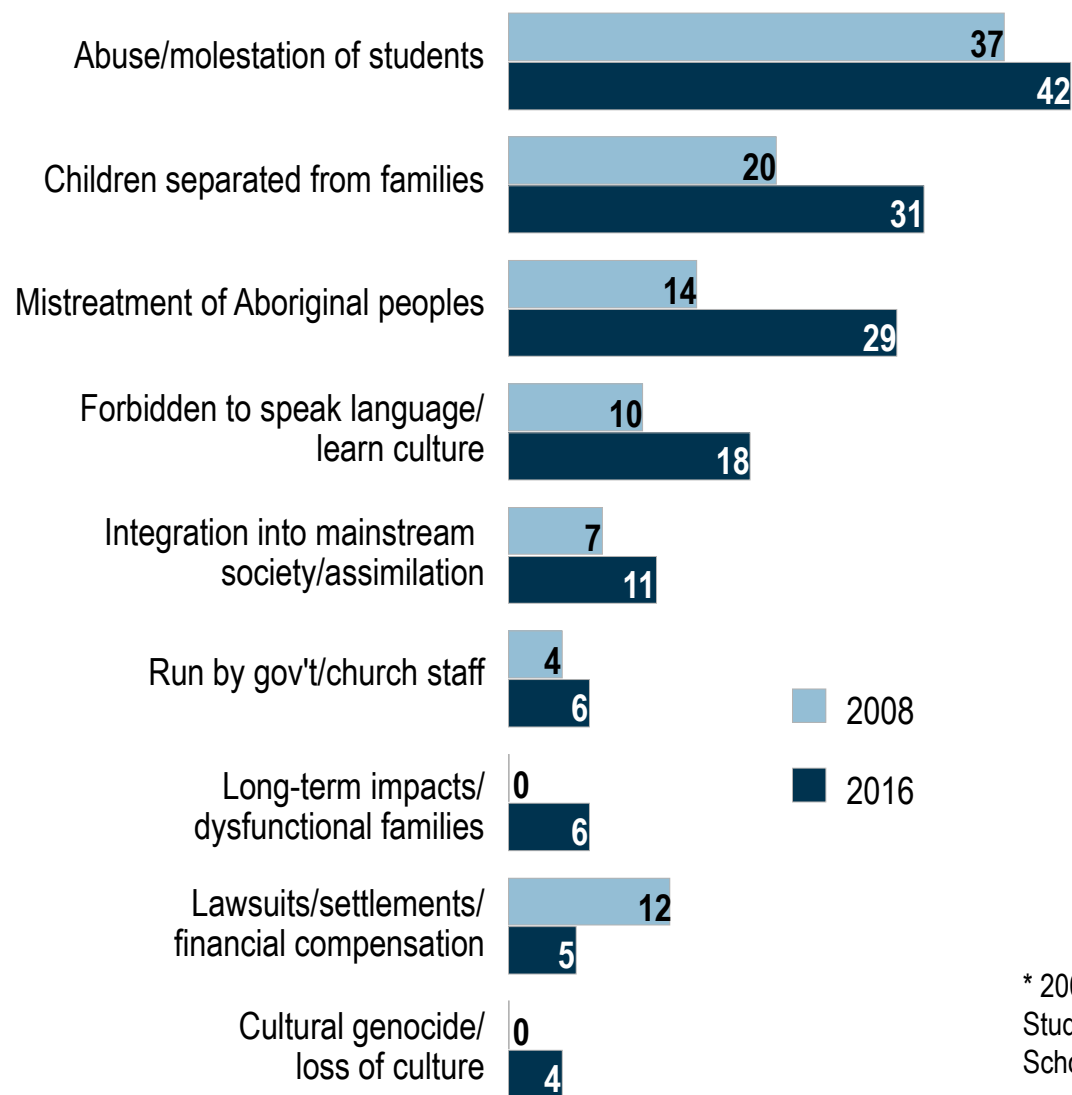
Have read or heard about Indian residential schools



* 2008 National Benchmark Study, Indian Residential Schools Resolution Canada

What have you heard or read about residential schools?

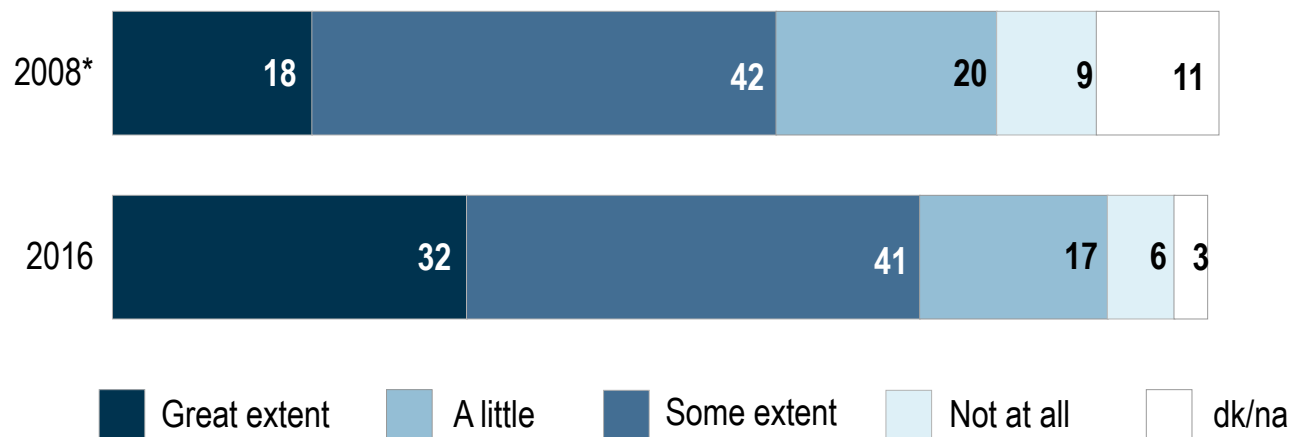
Those who have heard of residential schools – unprompted mentions



* 2008 National Benchmark Study, Indian Residential Schools Resolution Canada

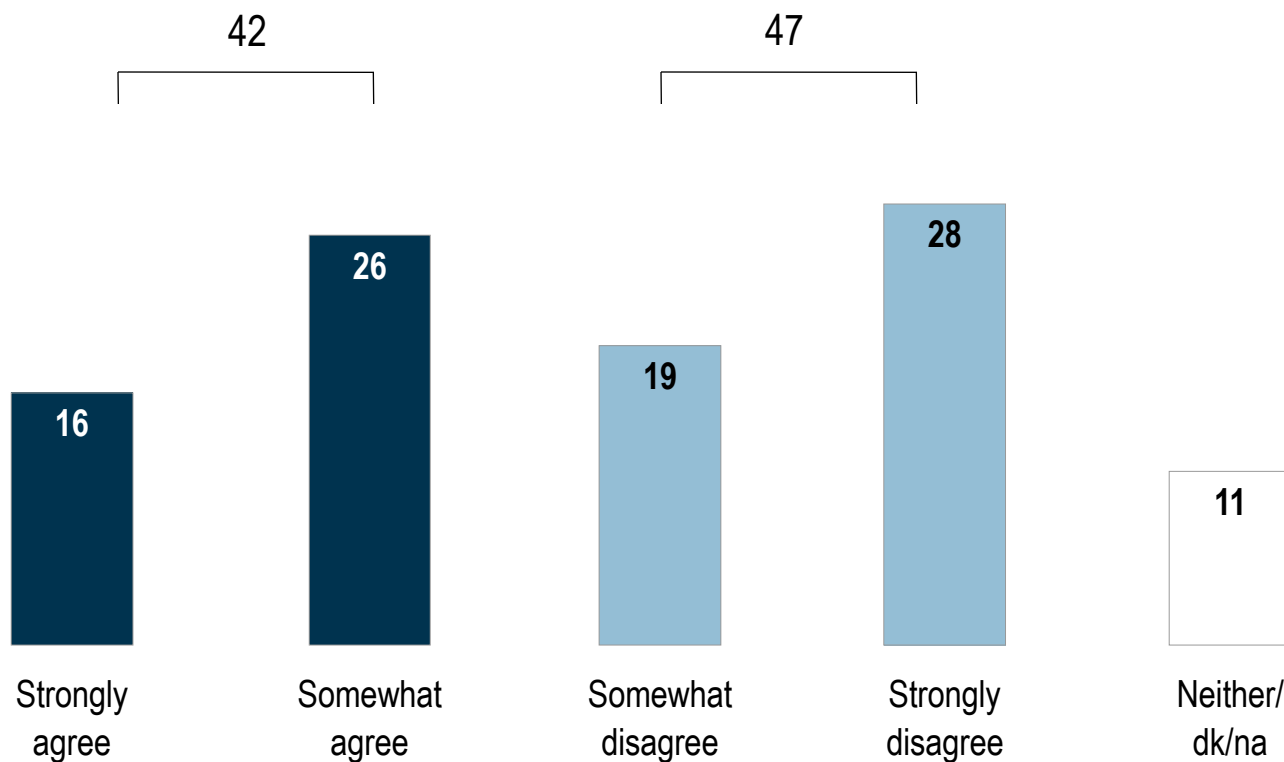
Extent of connection between residential schools experience and current challenges facing Aboriginal communities

Those who have heard of residential schools

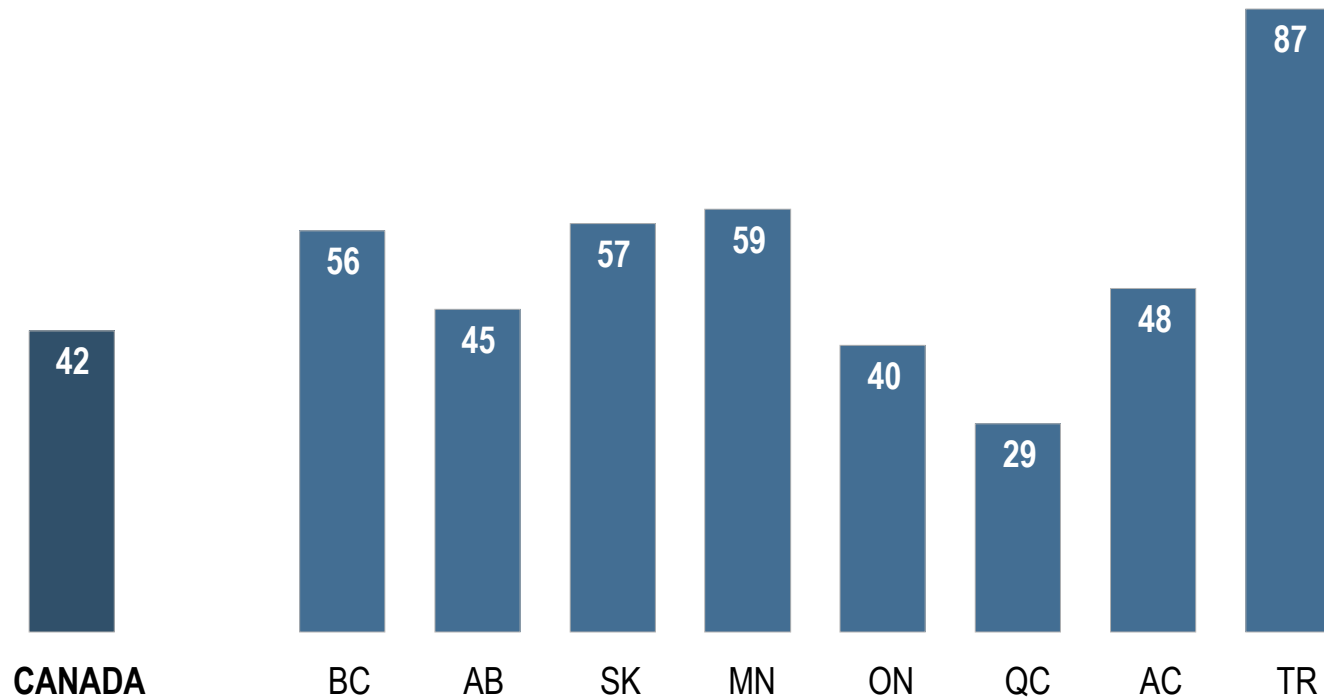


* 2008 National Benchmark Study, Indian Residential Schools Resolution Canada

“Canada's residential schools policy was not an intentional effort to destroy Aboriginal culture and connection to land”

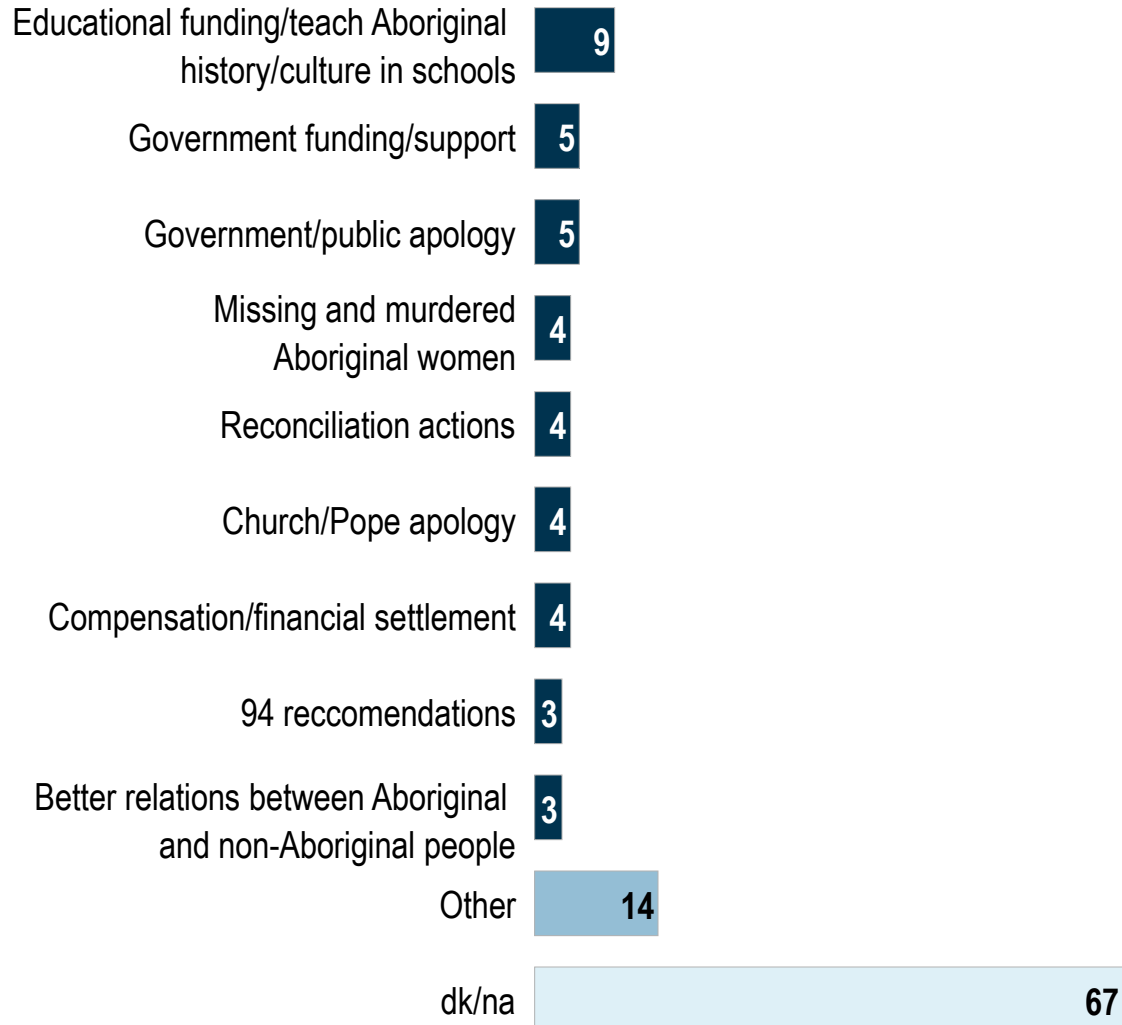


Have read or heard about the Truth and Reconciliation Commission

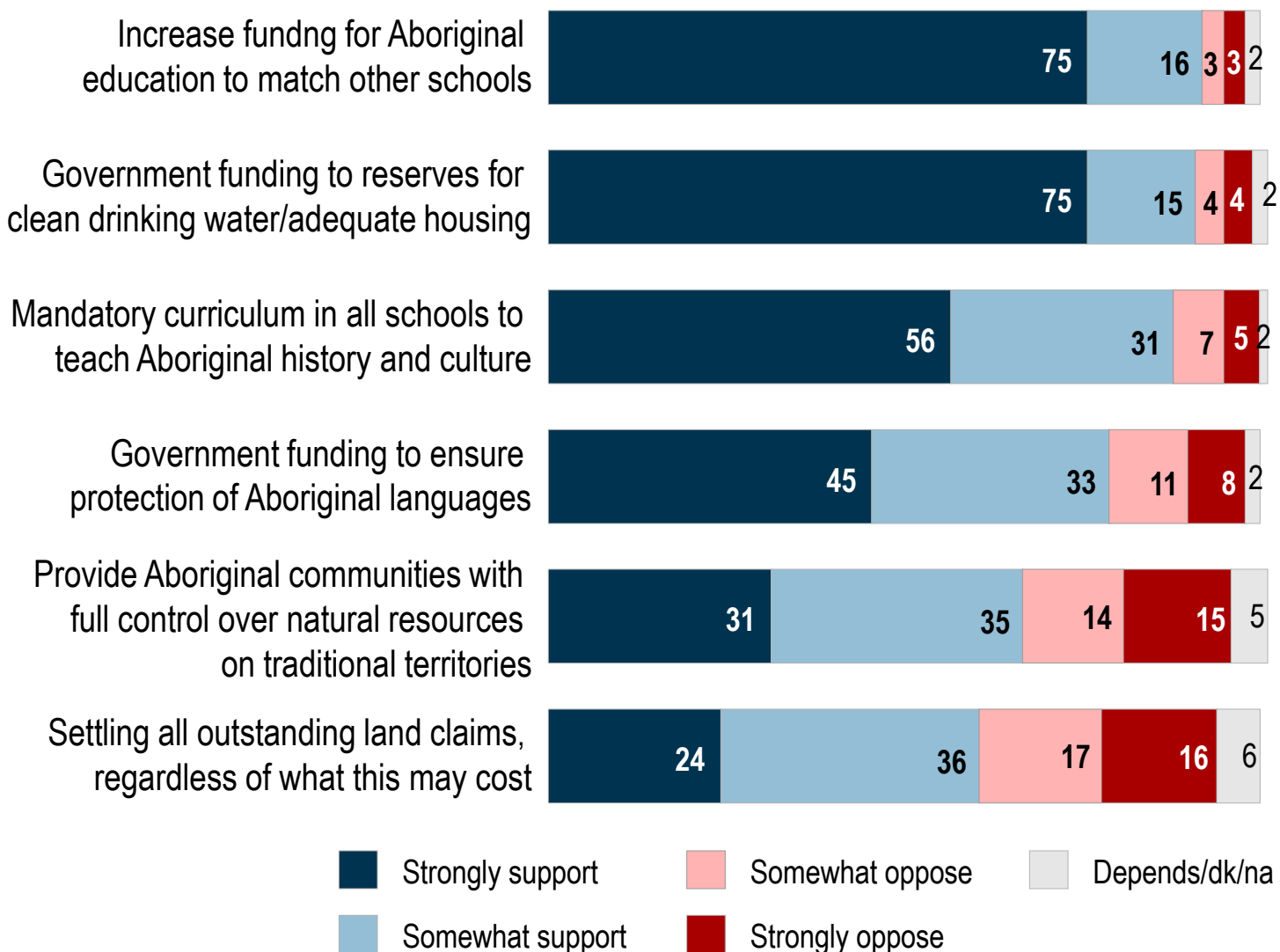


Recall of TRC Calls to Action

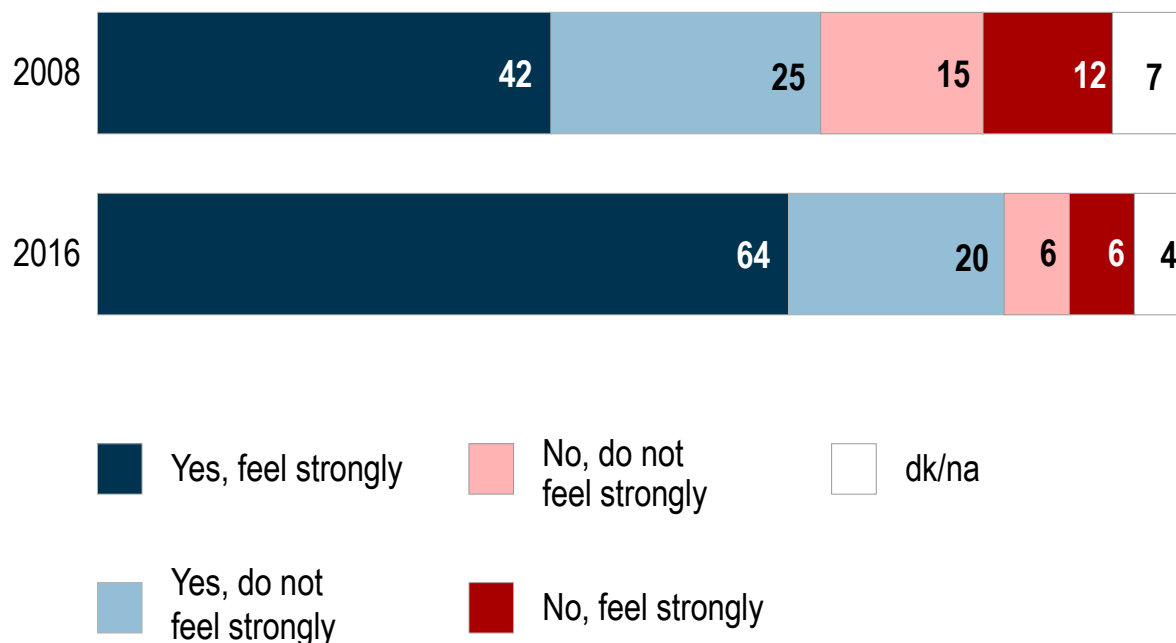
Unprompted - Those who have heard of the TRC



Support for Aboriginal rights and reconciliation

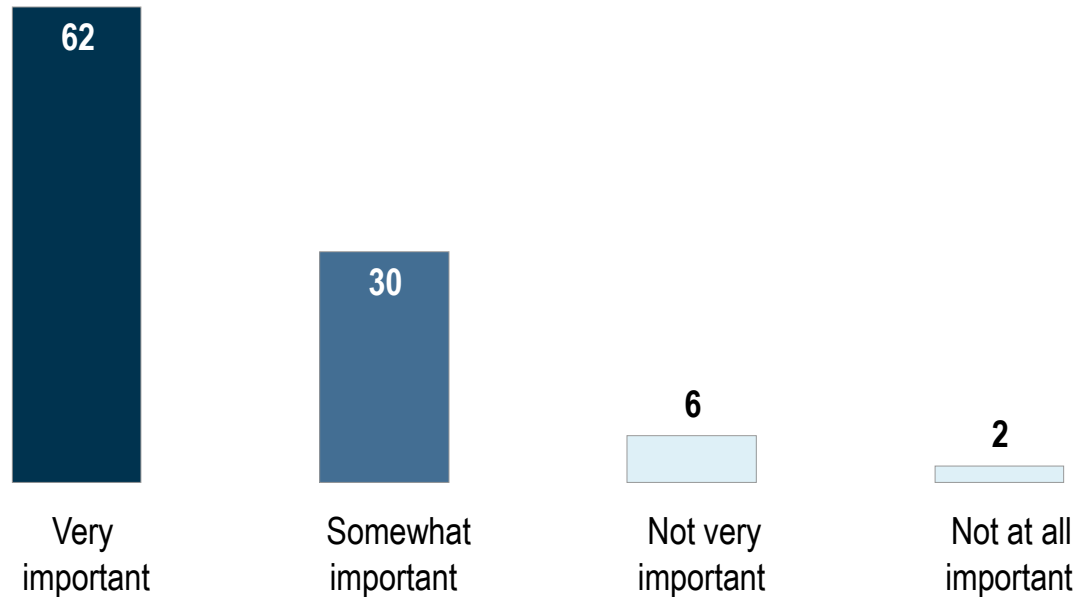


Do individual Canadians have a role in bringing about reconciliation?

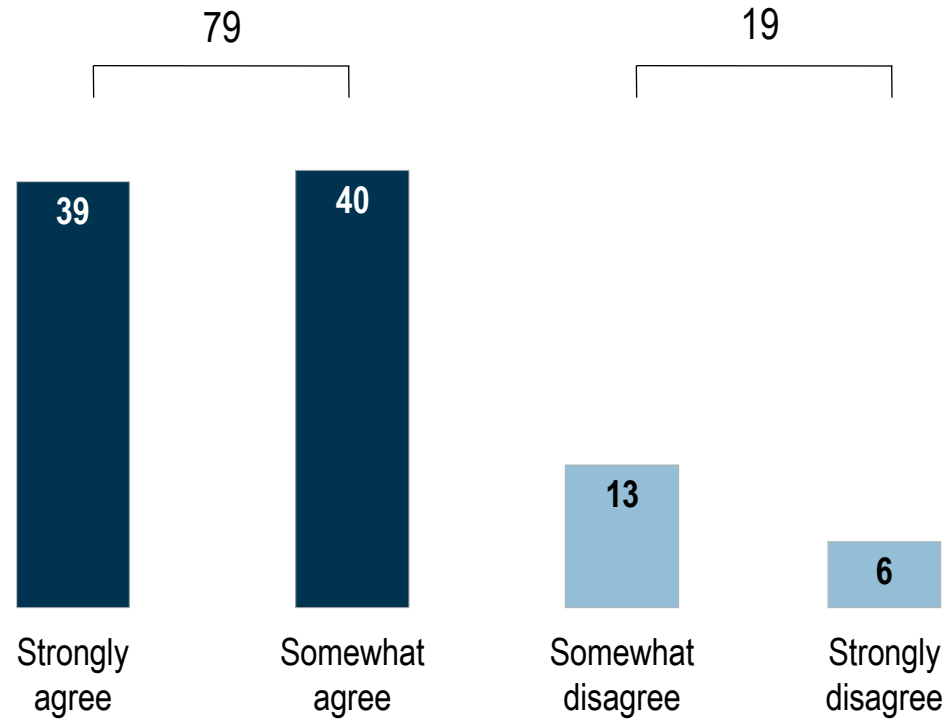


* 2008 National Benchmark Study, Indian Residential Schools Resolution Canada

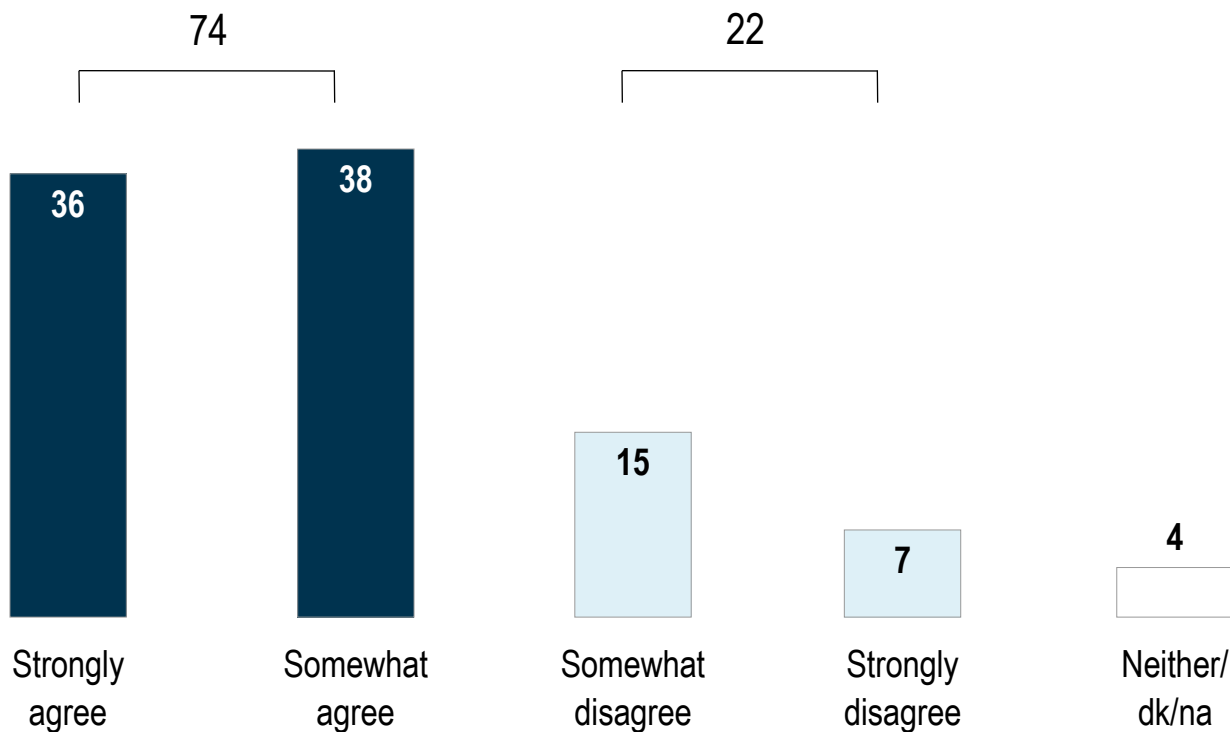
Importance of understanding true history of how Aboriginal peoples have been treated in Canada



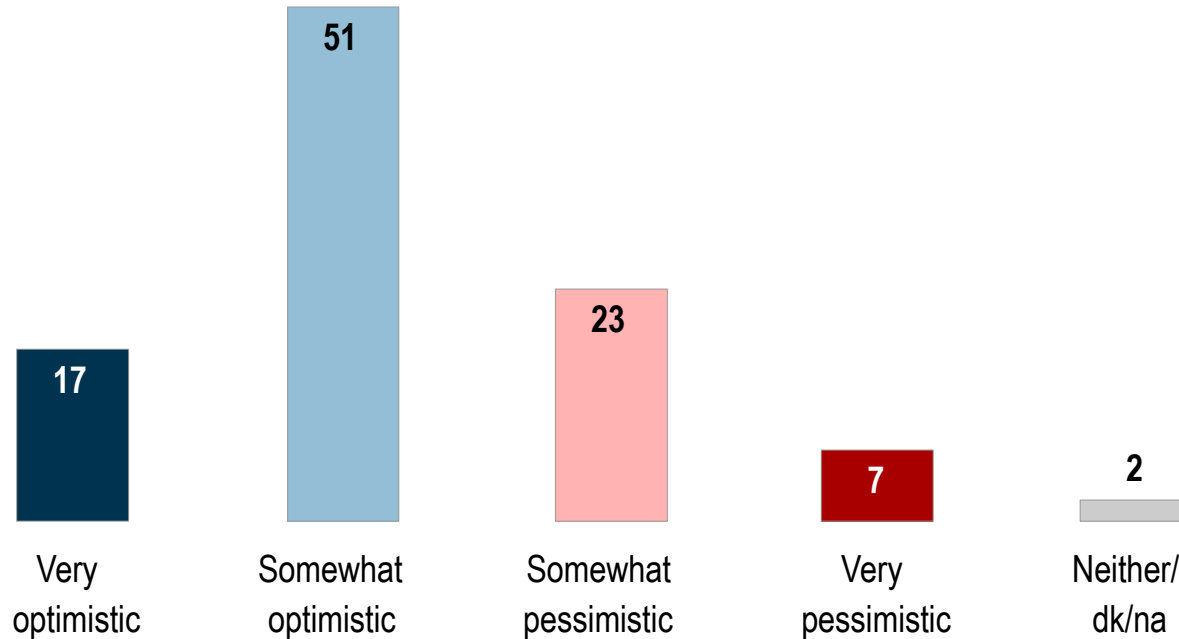
“Would be personally interested in learning more about Aboriginal cultures”



“Reconciliation will be impossible as long as Aboriginal peoples remain socio-economically disadvantaged”



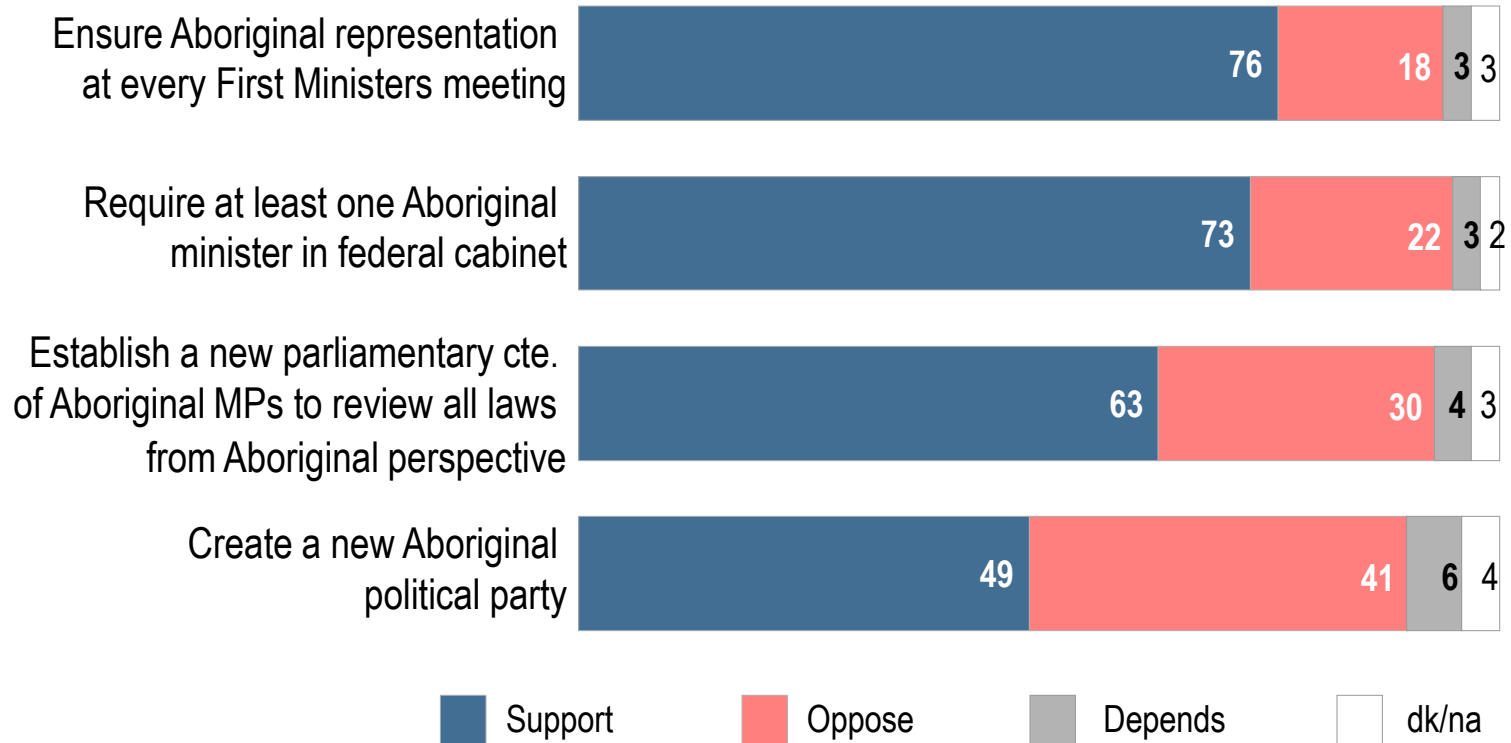
Prospects for meaningful reconciliation happening in your lifetime



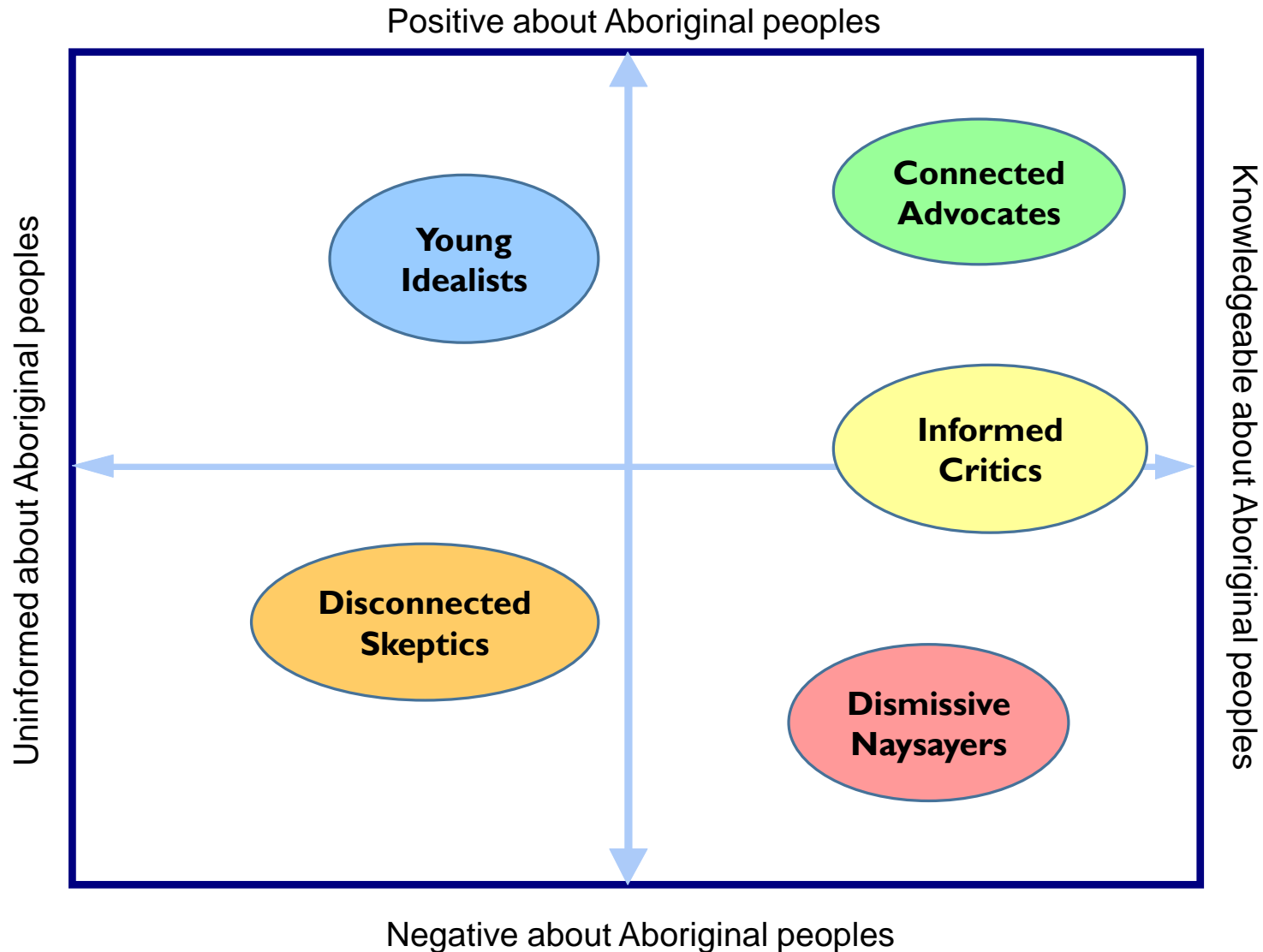
Effectiveness of Aboriginal leaders compared to local government leaders in your province



Support for expanded Aboriginal representation in federal institutions



Mainstream world views about Aboriginal peoples

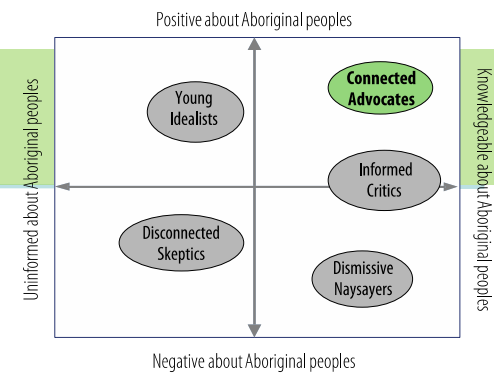


Connected Advocates *(18% of non-Aboriginal Canadians)*

- Most positive and connected group
- Most knowledgeable about history and current challenges
- Strongest proponents of major changes and new direction

Who they are:

- Mostly female
- Older (especially 60 plus)
- Post-graduate degrees but not highest incomes
- All community sizes
- Most apt to be found in Territories, Atlantic Canada and B.C.

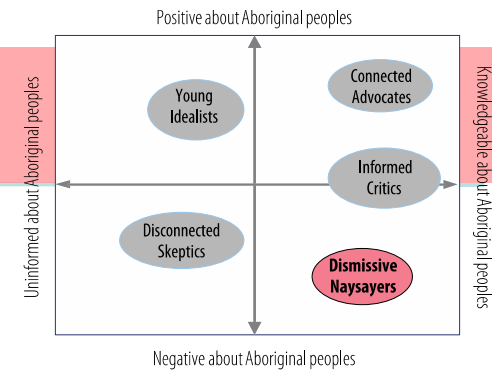


Dismissive Naysayers (14%)

- Most negative of all groups (core racist views)
- Least apt to see economic disparities/most likely to blame the victim
- Weaker support for major policy initiatives (education, living standards)

Who they are:

- Predominantly male
- Higher than average incomes, but not education
- Least urban of all groups
- Concentrated in prairies (least evident in Quebec)

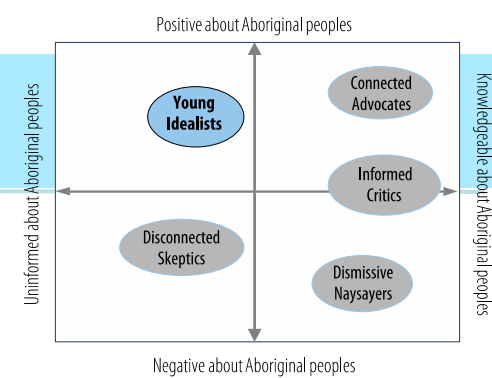


Young Idealists (23%)

- Very positive about Aboriginal peoples (share much in common with Connected Advocates)
- Much less knowledgeable about history and current challenges
- Less engaged or connected to the issues

Who they are:

- Youngest group of all
- Predominantly female and urban (Toronto and Montreal)
- Significant proportion is foreign-born
- Being young are less likely to have post-secondary degree or high incomes

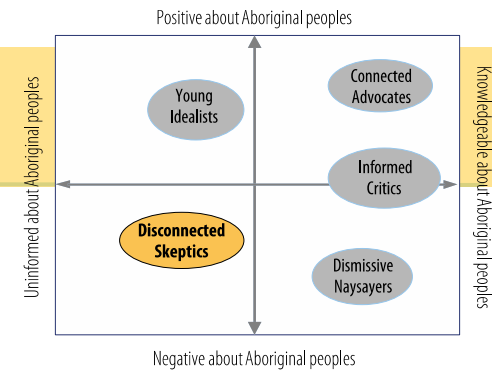


Disconnected Skeptics (21%)

- Mostly tuned out and disengaged
- Generally unsympathetic to challenges of Aboriginal peoples but not as negative as Dismissive Naysayers
- Know the least and care the least of any group

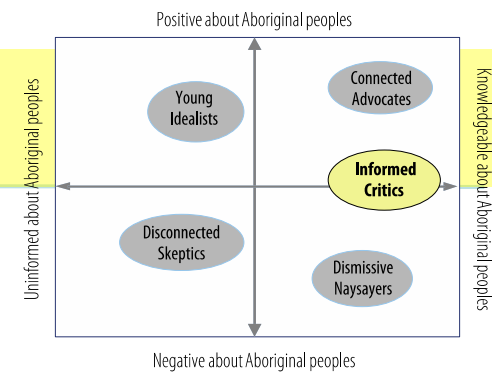
Who they are:

- Male-dominated group
- Predominantly young and foreign-born
- Slightly older than Young Idealists, but less apt to have high school diploma or post-secondary education
- Mostly prevalent in Quebec, and in smaller towns/rural areas



Informed Critics (23%)

- Among the most knowledgeable and connected with respect to Aboriginal peoples/issues
- Acknowledge troubled history but not as sympathetic to challenges and aspirations
- Line up with Connected Advocates on some opinions, with Dismissive Naysayers on others



Who they are:

- Oldest and most affluent of the groups
- Most urban
- Concentrated west of Ontario (esp. in Territories, Manitoba, Saskatchewan)

In conclusion

Conclusions

- Broad perceptions and attitudes of Aboriginal peoples are mixed, and haven't changed that much over the past decade
- But there has been significant growth in public awareness and understanding of the challenges, especially the residential school experience
- There is now widespread and heartfelt support for bold steps and meaningful solutions, especially to address Aboriginal living conditions and education
- Reconciliation is seen as a responsibility for all Canadians, not just governments



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