

Treatment by mainstream society

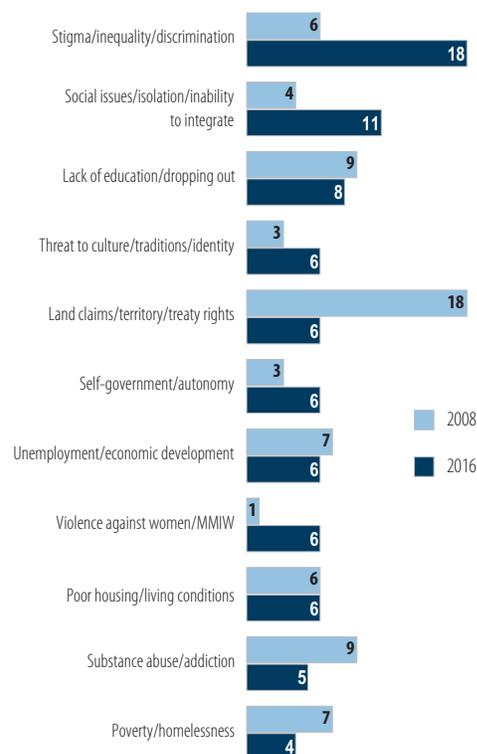
Biggest challenge facing Aboriginal peoples

Lack of acceptance by mainstream Canadian society, contested relations with other governments, and social/economic problems such as educational outcomes, alcohol/drug abuse and poverty, are seen as the most important challenges facing Aboriginal peoples in Canada today.

BIGGEST CHALLENGE. While some non-Aboriginal Canadians hold many positive views of Aboriginal peoples, they are also cognizant of the difficulties Aboriginal peoples confront in this country. When asked, unprompted, what they consider to be the most important challenge Aboriginal peoples face today in Canada, nine in ten are able to provide at least one response, although no single one stands out. Three broad themes emerge:

- **Sense of place and acceptance in Canada.** Topping the list of challenges are issues related to struggles Aboriginal peoples face in being accepted into the Canadian social fabric. At the top of the list is the stigma attached, resulting in inequality and discrimination (18%), followed by isolation and related social issues (11%), and threats to Aboriginal culture and traditions or to their self-identity (6%). Of note, mention of isolation and failure to integrate is more broadly mentioned than in 2008.
- **Governance and relations with governments.** Canadians also mention issues Aboriginal peoples face tied to governance and their relations with governments in Canada, including land claims and treaty rights (6%) and self-government (6%), followed by treatment by governments (3%) and issues of reconciliation (3%). The importance given to challenges associated with land claims/treaty rights has dropped significantly since 2008 (when 18% identified it as the most important issue); this decline is most noticeable in Ontario and among high income earners.
- **Social and economic challenges.** Some non-Aboriginal Canadians also identify the primary struggle for Aboriginal peoples to be in relation to various social and economic challenges, including education/dropping out of school (8%), alcohol/drug abuse (5%), poverty/homelessness

Most important challenge facing Aboriginal peoples today
Top mentions



Q.12

In your opinion, what is the most important challenge facing Aboriginal Peoples in Canada today?

(4%), missing and murdered Aboriginal women (3%), unemployment (3%), economic development/self-sufficiency (3%), housing/poor living conditions (3%) and crime/violence (3%).

The emphasis given to these types of challenges varies across the country. For example, Alberta and B.C. residents are more likely than others to mention Aboriginal peoples' isolation and inability to integrate as key challenges, notably when compared to those living in Saskatchewan. Albertans are also most likely to single out stigma and discrimination.

By comparison, Northerners stand out for seeing economic development and poor living conditions as key struggles for Aboriginal peoples, compared to residents in the provinces. It is worth noting that, across Canada, perceptions of the main challenges facing Aboriginal peoples are not related to the level of attention being paid to Aboriginal stories or the frequency of direct contact (except in the case of the stigma attached to being Aboriginal).

Gap in standard of living

A majority of non-Aboriginal Canadians acknowledge there is a significant disparity in the standard of living between Aboriginal peoples and other Canadians, with this view especially widespread in the Territories. The public is marginally more likely to believe this gap is growing than shrinking.

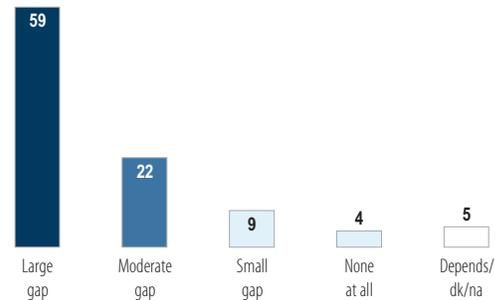
Countless news stories have been told over the past decade of the difficult social and economic situation confronting many Aboriginal communities (especially reserves in remote locations). This comes to mind for many non-Aboriginal Canadians in how they see Aboriginal peoples. Six in ten (59%) believe there is a large gap in the standard of living between Aboriginal peoples and other Canadians generally, with another 22 percent describing this as a moderate gap. By comparison, few maintain the gap is small (9%) or non-existent (4%), with another five percent unable to say for sure.

Public awareness of the substantial gap in living standards between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Canadians is evident across the country, but especially so in the Territories (77% say it is a large gap), as well as among older Canadians, those with higher levels of education and income, and those who pay the closest attention to Aboriginal stories. This view is least apt to be shared in Saskatchewan (43%), and among those who pay little or no attention to Aboriginal peoples in the news (45%).

Tellingly, there is little optimism among the non-Aboriginal population in Canada that progress is being made in narrowing this gap in living standards. Among those who believe a gap exists, a majority (54%) do not believe it has been changing, while one in five (22%) says the gap is actually getting bigger, compared with 17 percent who think it is getting smaller.

The perception of a growing gap in standard of living is most evident among Canadians who believe the gap is large (26%) versus those who think it is moderate (17%) or small (14%). Residents in the Territories are especially likely to hold this view (48%) and it is shared but to a lesser extent among men, Canadians aged 30 to 59, those with higher levels of education and income, and those who follow Aboriginal stories closely.

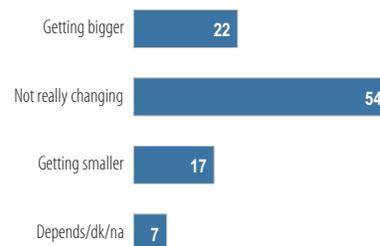
Aboriginal – Non-Aboriginal gap in standard of living



Q.13

From what you know or have heard, would you say there is a large gap, a moderate gap, a small gap, or no gap at all in the standard of living between Aboriginal Peoples and other Canadians generally?

Has the standard of living gap been changing?



Q.14

And from what you know or have heard, do you think this gap in standard of living between Aboriginal Peoples and other Canadians is getting bigger, getting smaller or not really changing?

Biggest obstacle to achieving economic and social equality

Non-Aboriginal Canadians are divided on whether the primary obstacle to economic and social equality for Aboriginal peoples lies with government policies, public attitudes or Aboriginal peoples themselves. Some insist all three share equal responsibility for progress in this area.

While most non-Aboriginal Canadians acknowledge there is a sizeable gap in the standard of living between Aboriginal peoples and other Canadians, there is no consensus on the most significant barrier to reducing it. When asked which of three obstacles is the biggest to achieving economic and social equality for Aboriginal peoples, opinions are split.

One-quarter (26%) say it is the policies of Canadian governments, while the same proportion (26%) maintains it is Aboriginal peoples themselves, and a smaller proportion (18%) put the primary responsibility on the attitudes of the Canadian public. Notably, one in six (17%) volunteers that all three are equally large obstacles to such progress, while another 10 percent mention other combinations of the options (e.g., public attitudes and governments equally).

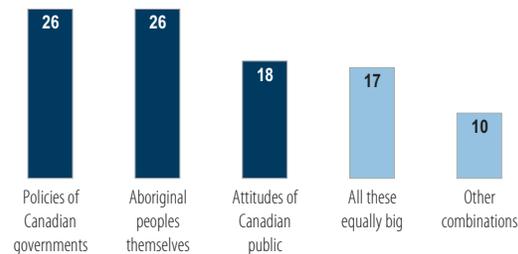
[Note: Combined options were not offered to respondents as part of the survey.]

There are significant regional differences in perspectives on this question. Quebecers (36%) are much more likely than those in other provinces to single out Canadian government policies, while residents in Saskatchewan (41%), Manitoba (35%) and Alberta (32%) are more inclined to view Aboriginal peoples themselves as the biggest obstacle to their achieving economic and social equality with other Canadians.

Opinions are also a function of age cohort. Close to one-third of younger Canadians (18-29) emphasize the role of government policies (31%) or public attitudes (30%), while more than one-third (35%) of those 45-59 years of age put the onus on Aboriginal peoples themselves.

Views about the obstacles impeding economic and social equality are linked to Canadians' broader opinions about Aboriginal peoples in a consistent pattern. For example, those most likely to single out policies of Canadian governments as the main impediment also tend to be those who agree that mainstream Canadians benefit from ongoing discrimination against Aboriginal peoples. In contrast,

Biggest obstacle to achieving economic and social equality for Aboriginal peoples



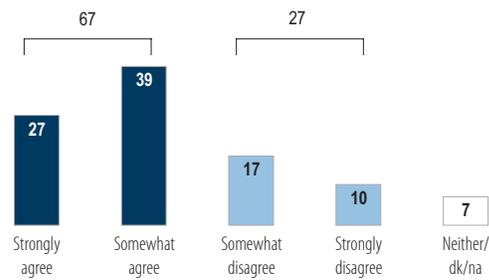
Q.15

Would you say that the biggest obstacle to achieving economic and social equality for Aboriginal peoples is ... ?

Canadians who believe Aboriginal peoples have a sense of entitlement about receiving support from government and taxpayers are also the ones most likely to see Aboriginal peoples themselves as the greatest obstacle to achieving socio-economic equality with other Canadians.

A sense of entitlement. The survey confirms there is a widely-held view among non-Aboriginal Canadians that Aboriginal peoples have a sense of entitlement in terms of receiving special consideration and financial benefits from governments that are not available to other Canadians. Two-thirds strongly (27%) or somewhat (39%) agree with this view, compared with one in four who somewhat (17%) or strongly (10%) disagree. Such agreement is evident across the country, but is particularly strong in Saskatchewan (37% strongly agree) and Alberta (34%), as well as among Canadians 45 years and older (33%), and those who believe that Aboriginal peoples are themselves the biggest obstacle to their own future success (43%).

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



Q.31c
Please tell me whether you strongly agree, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree or strongly disagree with each of the following statements:
Aboriginal Peoples have a sense of entitlement about receiving support from governments and taxpayers?

Relations between Aboriginal peoples and non-Aboriginal Canadians

Non-Aboriginal Canadians are evenly divided on whether current relations between Aboriginal peoples and other Canadians are positive or negative, although opinions are not strongly polarized.

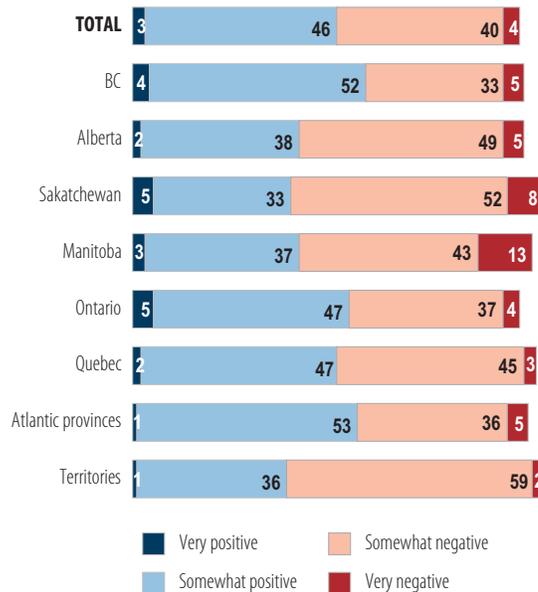
When asked to describe current relations between Aboriginal peoples and non-Aboriginal people, Canadian public opinion is evenly split with few expressing a strong opinion either way. Half describe current relations to be very (3%) or somewhat (46%) positive, compared to almost as many who say it is somewhat (40%) or very (4%) negative.

Public opinion about Aboriginal – non-Aboriginal relations has improved marginally over the past seven years, at least in major urban centres. In 2009, the balance of opinion was

47 percent positive versus 46 percent negative (compared with 49% versus 44% in 2016).

This divided view exists to varying degrees across the country. Atlantic Canadians, Ontarians and B.C. residents tend to perceive current relations as positive, and this perspective is also most apt to be shared by Canadians 60 plus, those with less formal education and lower incomes, and those born outside Canada. Aboriginal – non-Aboriginal relations are more likely to be seen in a negative light among residents of the Territories and Prairie provinces, as well as among Canadians in the top income bracket, and those familiar with both Indian residential schools and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

Current relations between Aboriginal peoples and other Canadians



Q.16

Would you describe the current relations between Aboriginal Peoples and non-Aboriginal people in Canada today as very positive, somewhat positive, somewhat negative or very negative?

Discrimination against Aboriginal peoples

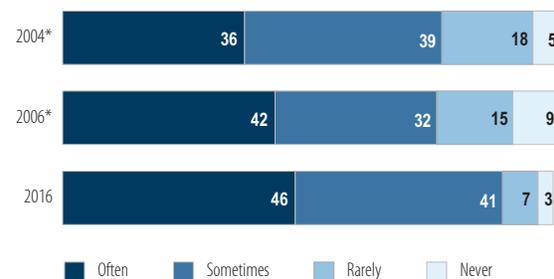
An increasing majority of non-Aboriginal Canadians believe Aboriginal peoples experience discrimination on a regular basis, comparable if not worse than what happens to other minorities. There is general agreement that most people are prejudiced against Aboriginal peoples even if not aware of it.

EXTENT OF DISCRIMINATION. Results from the survey reveal that many non-Aboriginal Canadians acknowledge that discrimination represents an important challenge for Aboriginal peoples, one that is also tied to a sense of isolation, separation from others in Canada, and a certain stigma for being Aboriginal. And there is widespread recognition that discrimination against Aboriginal peoples is commonplace. Close to nine in ten say that Aboriginal peoples are often (46%) or sometimes (41%) the subject of discrimination in Canadian society today, compared with just one in ten who maintain this happens rarely (7%) or never (3%). Only three percent are unable to offer an opinion on this question.

Non-Aboriginal Canadians seem more ready today to perceive anti-Aboriginal sentiment than was the case a decade ago, based on comparative data collected by Environics Research. Since 2004, the proportion of Canadians who say discrimination is happening often or occasionally has increased 13 percentage points, while the number that say rarely or never has declined by the same percentage. A similar trend emerges in urban Canada: Between 2009 and 2016, the proportion of urban residents who believe discrimination against Aboriginal peoples is a frequent occurrence has increased from 39 to 45 percent.

Strong majorities of non-Aboriginal Canadians in all provinces and territories believe Aboriginal peoples experience discrimination at least occasionally. However, a greater number of Quebecers and British Columbians feel the discrimination happens often (51% each) compared to Saskatchewan (39%) and Ontario (40%) residents. Older Canadians (60 plus), university graduates, higher income earners and those who are Canadian-born are also among those most likely to say Aboriginal peoples experience frequent discrimination. Those born outside of Canada are the most likely to say Aboriginal peoples are never the subject of discrimination (11%).

Extent of discrimination against Aboriginal peoples in Canadian society



* Environics Research Focus Canada (2004, 2006)

Q.17

Do you think Aboriginal Peoples are often, sometimes, rarely or never the subject of discrimination in Canadian society today?

Perceptions of ongoing discrimination against Aboriginal peoples have strengthened across the population over the past decade. The likelihood of stating that it rarely or never happens has declined in every identifiable group of Canadians, but this decline is most dramatic in Quebec (dropping from 40% in 2006 to 10%), and among Canadians 60 and older (from 31% to 8%).

Non-Aboriginal Canadians who closely follow stories about Aboriginal peoples are more inclined to believe they confront discrimination frequently, as are those who have more frequent personal contact, and those who are aware of both the Truth and Reconciliation Commission and Indian residential schools.

DISCRIMINATION COMPARED TO OTHER GROUPS.

The non-Aboriginal public in Canada recognizes that Aboriginal peoples experience ongoing discrimination, but how do they believe it compares with the treatment of other marginalized groups in this country? Canadians are more likely than not to believe that Aboriginal peoples experience the same or more frequent discrimination in comparison with South Asians (70%) and Blacks (73%) in this country, but are more divided on whether this applies in the case of Muslims (47% say Aboriginal peoples experience the same or more, versus 46% who say it is Muslims who fare worse in Canada).

In urban Canada, the perception that Aboriginal peoples suffer more discrimination than Blacks has jumped 10 percentage points since 2009, while the opposite trend has occurred in comparison with Muslims (43% of Canadians living in major cities today think Aboriginal peoples face less discrimination than Muslims, a 5 percentage-point increase from 7 years ago).

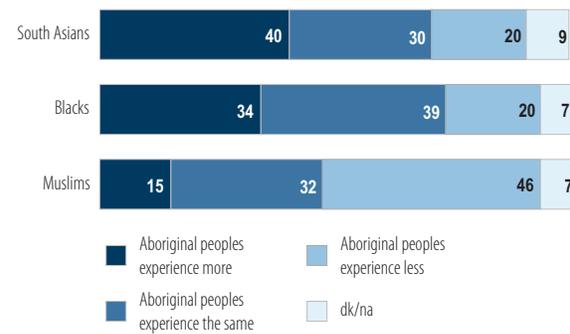
While the pattern of overall perceptions is largely consistent across the country, Manitobans stand out as being significantly more likely to think Aboriginal peoples experience more discrimination than any of the three other minority groups. The opposite is true in Quebec, where residents are more likely to believe Aboriginal peoples are less discriminated against.

Across population groups, university graduates are more likely than others to believe Aboriginal peoples experience more discrimination than Blacks, Muslims and South Asians, while younger Canadians (18-29) are more likely to feel they are less discriminated against than either Blacks or Muslims.

EXTENT OF PREJUDICE. Discrimination against specific groups is rooted in large measure in attitudes and prejudice that are deeply embedded in society. To what extent do non-Aboriginal Canadians believe that such attitudes are well established in mainstream society (and within themselves)? Two-thirds strongly (24%) or somewhat (41%) agree with the statement “Most Canadians are prejudiced against Aboriginal peoples, whether or not they are conscious of it,” compared with three in ten who somewhat (20%) or strongly (10%) disagree.

This sentiment is shared across all regions and population subgroups in Canada, but overall agreement with the

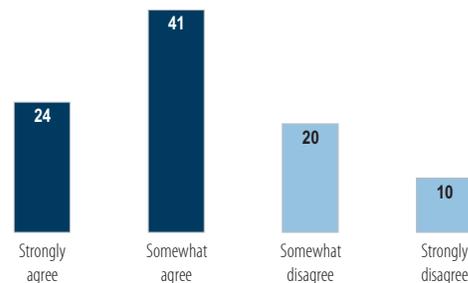
Discrimination experienced by Aboriginal peoples compared to other groups



Q.18

In Canada, do you think Aboriginal Peoples experience more discrimination, less discrimination or about the same amount of discrimination as each of the following groups ... Blacks ... Muslims ... South Asians?

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



Q.31e

Please tell me whether you strongly agree, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree or strongly disagree with each of the following statements: Most Canadians are prejudiced against Aboriginal Peoples, whether or not they are conscious of it?

statement is particularly strong in Quebec (78%), among women (69%), young Canadians (72%) and Canadian-born individuals (67%). Disagreement is the minority view in all groups, but is most apt to be expressed in Ontario (37%) and the Territories (37%), and among Canadians who pay little or no attention to Aboriginal peoples in the news (41%).

Institutional discrimination

Many believe Aboriginal peoples receive worse treatment from institutions than other Canadians, especially in the education and criminal justice systems. At the same time, most also reject the idea that mainstream society currently benefits from ongoing discrimination.

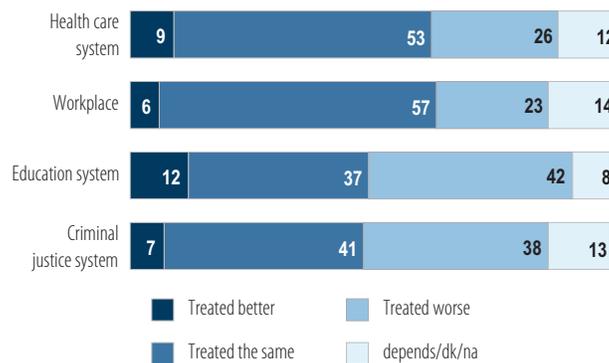
Discrimination against marginalized groups within society happens in different ways, and one form that is often less visible to those unaffected is how individuals from these groups are treated differently by institutions. This tends to be systemic in nature and may involve institutional barriers to employment opportunities and services, singling people out for increased scrutiny, or insensitivity to cultural practices. To what extent do non-Aboriginal Canadians recognize that Aboriginal peoples experience this type of institutional discrimination in the country today?

The survey asked about the treatment of Aboriginal peoples relative to other Canadians with respect to four major institutions: health care, education, criminal justice and the workplace. Across these four, non-Aboriginal Canadians are most likely to believe that Aboriginal peoples receive the same treatment (47%), but one-third (32%) says they receive worse treatment, compared with one in ten (9%) who think they get better treatment than other Canadians.

Public views on the treatment of Aboriginal peoples relative to others vary somewhat depending on the institution. Canadians are most likely to believe that Aboriginal peoples are treated as well as or better than others when it comes to the health care system (62%) and the workplace (63%), in comparison to the education system (49%) and the criminal justice system (48%). In all four cases, however, Canadians are much more likely to say that Aboriginal peoples are treated worse than they are treated better.

The overall pattern of perceived institutional discrimination (across the four institutions combined) holds consistently across the country, but the view that Aboriginal peoples are treated worse than others is shared more widely in Atlantic Canada, Quebec and Ontario than elsewhere. This sentiment is also more likely to be shared among older Canadians (60 plus), university graduates, people who pay a great deal of attention to news and stories about Aboriginal peoples, and those who are aware of both the Truth and Reconciliation Commission and Indian residential schools. Belief that Aboriginal peoples receive better treatment by institutions is most evident in Saskatchewan (17%), and among those who pay little or no attention to Aboriginal stories in the news (13%).

Treatment of Aboriginal peoples by institutions compared to other Canadians



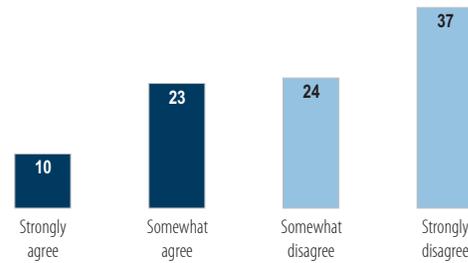
Q.19

How do you think Aboriginal Peoples are treated [SPLIT SAMPLE: by the health care system/by the education system/by the criminal justice system/in the workplace] in Canada? Do you think the treatment Aboriginal Peoples receive is generally better, about the same, or generally worse than that received by other Canadians?

Does the mainstream currently benefit from discrimination against Aboriginal peoples? Despite acknowledgement by many that Aboriginal peoples face systemic discrimination and unconscious prejudices in Canadian society, the non-Aboriginal public is much less sure that the mainstream currently benefits from this state of affairs. Only one-third strongly (10%) or somewhat (23%) agree with the statement “Mainstream Canadian society today benefits from ongoing discrimination against Aboriginal peoples,” compared with six in ten who somewhat (24%) or strongly (37%) disagree.

Those most likely to object to this characterization of mainstream benefitting from discrimination live in Alberta, are university graduates, live in high-income households, were born in Canada, and pay limited attention to news and stories about Aboriginal peoples. Agreement with the statement is most likely to be expressed by residents of Montreal (45%) and the Territories (43%), and by Canadians with the lowest household incomes (48%).

Mainstream Canadian society benefits from ongoing discrimination against Aboriginal peoples



Q.31a
Please tell me whether you strongly agree, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree or strongly disagree with each of the following statements:
Mainstream Canadian society today benefits from ongoing discrimination against Aboriginal Peoples?