

CONTACT WITH AND IMPRESSIONS OF MINORITY GROUPS

Contact with ethnic groups

Canadians are increasingly likely to have frequent contact with members of numerous minority groups, particularly in cities. Aboriginal Peoples are the only group Canadians are more likely to encounter outside the city.

Today, Canadians have more contact with a more diverse set of fellow citizens than at any other time in the country's history. Although Canada's territory is vast, most Canadians live in fairly densely populated and multicultural towns and cities. Immigrants and ethnocultural minorities are even more heavily concentrated in Canada's big cities. It is worth examining which groups Canadians are encountering in their daily lives, and how contact between groups changes over time.

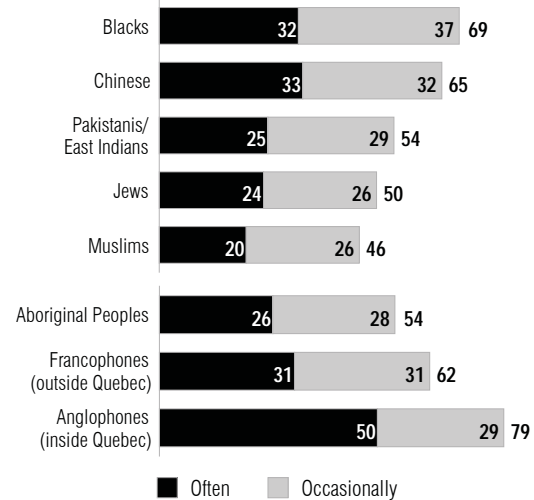
The minority groups Canadians are most likely to report encountering either "occasionally" or "often" are black Canadians (69%) and Chinese-Canadians (65%), followed by South Asian-Canadians (54%) and Aboriginal Peoples (54%). Jewish-Canadians (50%) and Muslim-Canadians (46%), who compose smaller proportions of the total population, tend to be less frequently encountered.

In Canada outside Quebec, 62 percent of Canadians say they encounter francophones sometimes or often. Meanwhile, 79 percent of Quebecers have at least occasional contact with anglophones.

While the proportion of Canadians reporting contact with all the minority groups listed has been on the rise since 1988, the likelihood of encountering members of these groups "often" has changed little between 2004 and 2006. However, in 2006, Canadians are slightly more likely than they were in 2004 to report frequent or occasional contact with Muslim-Canadians (46%, up 6 points).

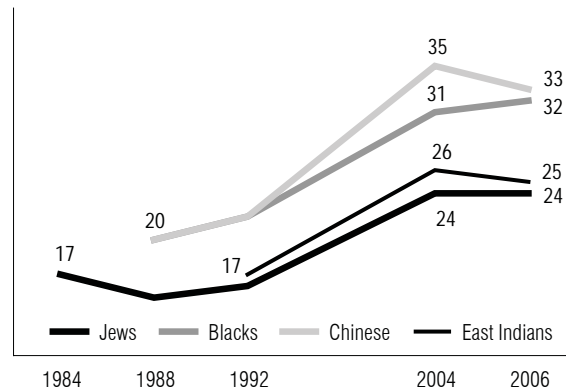
Contact with ethnic groups

Population-at-large December 2006



Contact with ethnic groups

Population-at-large Often 1984 - 2006



Q.FC30

Do you personally have contact with members of the following groups often, occasionally, rarely or never ...?

As most immigrants settle in the country's urban areas, it is not surprising that Canadians are more likely to encounter most minority groups in big cities rather than in smaller towns and rural areas. Canadians living in cities of one million or more are much more likely to say they often encounter Jews, blacks, South Asians, Chinese and Muslims. The notable exception to this rule is Aboriginal Peoples: Canadians living in communities of less than 5,000 people are more than twice as likely as those living in cities of one million or more to say they often have contact with Aboriginal Peoples.

Divergent patterns are apparent in the frequency of contact between anglophones and francophones within and outside Quebec. Quebecers who live in the province's largest city, Montreal, are markedly more likely than others to encounter anglophones often in their daily lives. In the rest of Canada, meanwhile, contact with francophones is most frequent in mid-sized towns and cities with populations of 5,000 to one million – especially in those with populations of 100,000 to one million. This finding relates to the fact that contact with francophones outside Quebec is most frequent in the Atlantic provinces, which do not have any cities with populations in excess of one million.

Special focus: contact with Muslims

Just under half of Canadians have regular personal contact with Muslims. City-dwellers, especially Torontonians and Vancouverites, are the most likely to encounter Muslims frequently.

Although Muslims are Canada's fastest-growing minority group, they remain a small proportion of the total population: 842,000 out of 33,000,000 – about two and a half percent. Given these numbers, it is not surprising that about half of all Canadians report that they rarely (23%) or never (30%) have personal

contact with Muslims. One in five Canadians (20%) encounter Muslims often, while a quarter (26%) report occasional contact.

The Canadian Muslim population is heavily concentrated in urban areas; seven in ten Canadian Muslims live in Toronto, Montreal, or Vancouver. As a result, it is residents of Canada's largest cities who are most likely to say they encounter Muslims often or occasionally. Four in ten (38%) Toronto area residents indicate they often have contact with individuals from this faith, followed by residents of Vancouver (32%) and Montreal (29%). By comparison, this degree of contact is reported by one in ten or fewer residents in communities under 100,000 in population.

Looking at change over time, Toronto residents are the group whose contact with Muslims has increased most drastically; in 2004, 55 percent of Torontonians reported at least occasional contact with Muslims – 15 points lower than the proportion reporting such contact today. Proportions reporting at least occasional contact with Muslims have also risen in Canada's other two largest cities, but less markedly: 10 points in Montreal and eight points in Vancouver.

Frequency of contact with Muslims

Population-at-large December 2006

	OFTEN	OCCASIONALLY	RARELY	NEVER
Community size				
1 M+	34	30	18	17
100K – 1M	22	29	22	25
5K – 100K	9	24	29	37
>5K	5	19	25	49
Toronto	38	32	17	13
Montreal	29	25	22	23
Vancouver	32	33	15	19f

Q.FC30f

Do you personally have contact with members of the following groups often, occasionally, rarely or never ...?

Since current FOCUS CANADA data show that Canadian Muslims are more highly educated than the general population (45% of Muslims have university degrees, as compared to a national average of 33%), Canadians with higher levels of education are more likely to encounter Muslims in the workplace and perhaps in related social settings as well. While about three in ten Canadians with a high school diploma or less report at least occasional contact with Muslims, the proportion among university-educated Canadians is nearly twice as high: about six in ten.

The proportion of highly educated Canadians reporting at least occasional contact with Muslims has changed little since 2004, while those with lower levels of education are notably more likely today than in 2004 to report regular contact. The proportion of those with less than a high school education who reported at least occasional contact with Muslims in 2004 was 20 percent; that figure has risen eight points.

Quebecers and residents of the Atlantic provinces are the least likely to report regular contact with Muslims. About two-thirds of residents in each of these regions say they rarely or never encounter Muslims. Ontarians are the most likely to report occasional or frequent contact with Muslims, not surprising since – according to census data – about six in ten Canadian Muslims reside in that province.

Although Atlantic Canadians are the least likely to report regular contact with Muslims, reported contact has risen dramatically in this region since 2004; that year, just 22 percent of Atlantic Canadians reported at least occasional contact with Muslims, a figure which has since risen 11 points. In Alberta, the number reporting at least occasional contact is up by 13 points.

In addition to education and region of residence, age appears to make a difference in the likelihood of Canadians having regular contact with Muslims. Among Canadians aged 18 to 29, nearly six in ten report at least occasional encounters with Muslims, compared with just one in three Canadians aged 60 or over.

General impressions of religious groups

Canadians' impressions of Christians and Jews are more favourable than their impressions of Islam. But for all three groups, Canadians are more likely to hold positive impressions than negative ones.¹

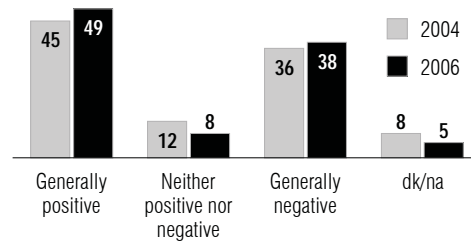
Since the September 2001 terrorist attacks on the United States, the links between the Islamic faith and violence carried out in the name of Islam have been much debated. Most moderates downplay the relationship between Islam per se and the violence perpetrated by extremist groups such as al-Qaeda. Still, the extent to which terrorism carried out under the banner of Islam has damaged the Western public's perception of the religion bears examination.

Canadians on average are more positive than negative about the religion of Islam. Half of all Canadians (49%, up 4 points from 2004) report generally positive impressions of the Islamic faith, while about four in ten (38%) are generally negative. Eight percent (down 4) are neutral and five percent offer no opinion. These findings suggest that events during the intervening years (e.g., the London subway bombings in July, 2005 and the arrests of 18 men in the Greater Toronto Area on suspicion of terrorist activity) have not negatively affected Canadians' general opinion about Islam.

Positive impressions of Christians and Jews are considerably higher. Over eight in ten Canadians (84%) report a favourable impression of Christians, and a roughly similar proportion (81%) positive impression of Jews.

Impression of religion of Islam

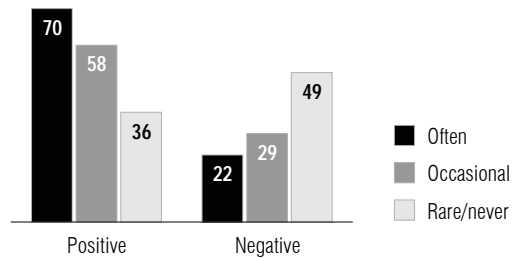
Population-at-large 2004 - 2006



Impression of religion of Islam

Population-at-large

By frequency of contact with Muslims December 2006



Q.FC32

Is your impression of the religion of Islam generally positive or negative?

Canadians' views of Islam improve the more frequent their personal contact with Muslims. Of those who encounter Muslims often, a large majority (70%) report positive impressions of Islam, compared with just one in five (22%) who are negative about the faith. Among those who encounter Muslims rarely or never in their own lives, just over a third (36%) express positive impressions of Islam, while half (49%) are negative about it.

¹ These comparisons are drawn from two separate items:

(Q.31.1) Would you say you have a very favourable, somewhat favourable, somewhat unfavourable, or very unfavourable opinion of [Christians, Jews]?

(Q.32) Is your impression of the religion of Islam generally positive or negative?

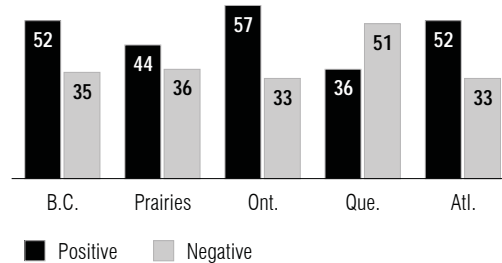
There are marked regional variations in Canadian opinion on both Jews and Islam, with Quebecers the most negative about both. Throughout most of Canada, approximately a third of all respondents report negative impressions of Islam; in Quebec the proportion is fully half (51%). Similarly, the proportion of Quebecers reporting positive impressions of Jews is 66 percent, 15 points below the national average.

Ontarians are the most likely to report positive impressions of both Islam and Jews. Just under six in ten (57%) say their impression of Islam is generally good, eight points above average. And 89 percent of Ontarians report positive impressions of Jews, again eight points above the national average. Since personal contact tends to breed positive impressions minority groups, positive feelings toward Islam and Jews in Ontario may be partly attributed to the concentration of Muslims and Jews in that province (six in ten Canadian Muslims live in Ontario, as do over half of Canadian Jews).

Quebec, notably, has the second highest concentration of Muslims in Canada but the second-lowest frequency of contact with Muslims (after the Atlantic provinces) and the most negative impression of Islam. In Quebec as elsewhere in Canada, a sizeable majority of those who have personal contact with Muslims hold positive impressions of Islam. But personal contact with Muslims among Quebecers is surprisingly low given the concentration of Muslims in the province.

Impressions of these three religious groups varies in some cases according to the ethnicity and religion of respondents. Those who belong to no religion are the most likely to express an unfavourable view of Christians, and are also most likely to express neither favourable nor unfavourable views of all three groups. Protestants are the most likely to express favourable

Impression of religion of Islam
Population-at-large By region December 2006



Q.FC32

Is your impression of the religion of Islam generally positive or negative?

opinions of both Jews and Christians, and are about average in their impressions of Islam. Canadians who adhere to a religion but are neither Catholic nor Protestant are above average in favourable opinions of all three groups. Catholics are roughly average in their opinions of Christians, but are slightly less positive than average about Jews, and are also more negative than average in their impressions of Islam.

Those who describe their ethnicity as French or Quebecer are markedly less likely than average to express favourable views of Jews and Islam, but are about average in their impressions of Christians. Canadians of British origin are roughly average in their opinions of Christians, more favourable than average in their opinions of Islam, and especially positive in their impressions of Jews. Canadians with non-European origins are more positive than average in their impressions of Islam, and roughly average in their impressions of Christians and Jews.

Canadians with higher levels of educational attainment tend to report more positive impressions of all religious groups. This finding is consistent with the general tendency for highly educated people to accept differences of various kinds – of religion, ethnicity, sexual orientation and so on. In the case of Muslims

and Jews, it may also point to more frequent contact between the minority groups in question and highly educated Canadians. Both Muslims (FC data) and Jews (census data) have higher than average levels of educational attainment, so these groups may be more likely to have regular personal contact with highly educated Canadians in their professional lives.

Attitudes about immigration

A majority of Canadians express approval of the country's high levels of immigration. By and large, Canadians feel that immigrants have a positive effect on the Canadian economy; only a small minority feel that immigrants take jobs away from other Canadians. Despite generally positive attitudes about immigration in this country, Canadians express some anxiety about the integration of newcomers, and abuses of the immigration and refugee system. There has been a small but noteworthy shift in opinion since 2005, reflecting increased concern among Canadians about some aspects of immigration in Canada.

Immigration levels

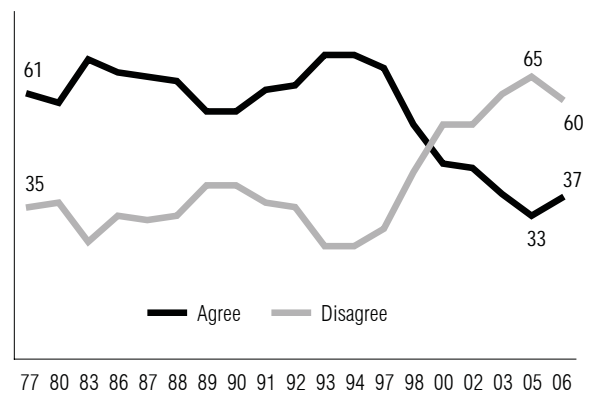
Most Canadians are positive about the country's immigration rate, although support has dipped slightly since 2005.

Accepting a quarter-million newcomers annually, Canada has the highest immigration rate in the world. Most Canadians express satisfaction with these high rates of immigration. Six in ten (60%) *disagree* that "Overall, there is too much immigration to Canada," while 37 percent agree.

Support for current levels of immigration has been on the rise since the late 1990s; the proportion of Canadians who believe that immigration rates are too high hit a low of 33 percent in 2005. This trend has reversed over the past year, however, with a small rebound in the proportion of the population seeing current immigration rates as excessive.

Immigration levels too high

Population-at-large 1977 - 2006



Q.FC19a

Do you strongly agree, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree or strongly disagree with each of the following statements ... Overall, there is too much immigration to Canada?

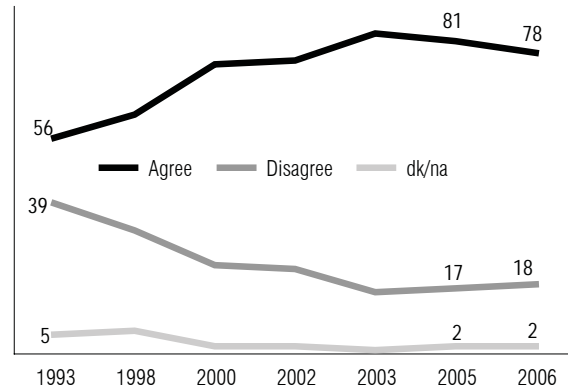
Economic impact of immigration

A large majority of Canadians continue to believe that immigration has a positive effect on the economy, but this view has softened over the past year.

Positive feelings about immigration are underpinned to a great extent by economic interests: eight in ten Canadians (78%) believe that immigration has a positive impact on the Canadian economy. The proportion of Canadians who feel optimistic about the effect of immigration on the economy vastly outweighs the minority (24%) who believe that, “Immigrants take away jobs from other Canadians.” Most Canadians believe that immigrants help stimulate economic growth, rather than simply competing against Canadians in zero-sum contests for employment. Still, the proportion of Canadians believing immigrants have a positive effect on the economy is down three points from 2005, reversing a long-established trend.

Economic impact of immigration is positive

Population-at-large 1993 - 2006

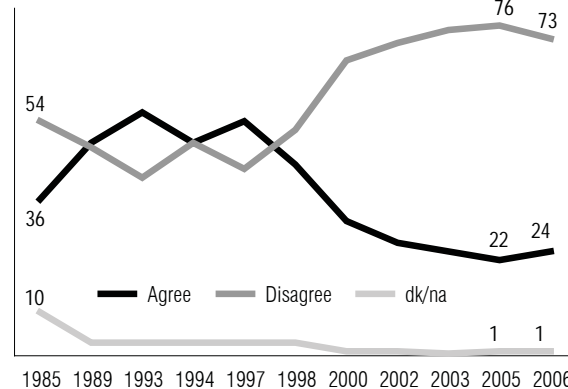


Q.FC19g

Do you strongly agree, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree or strongly disagree with each of the following statements ... Overall, immigration has a positive impact on the economy of Canada?

Immigrants take away Canadian jobs

Population-at-large 1985 - 2006



Q.FC19e

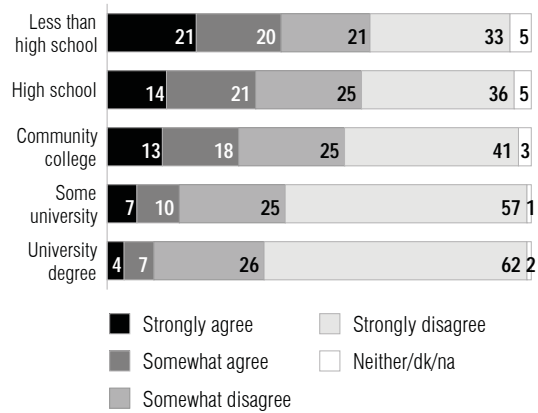
Do you strongly agree, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree or strongly disagree with each of the following statements ... Immigrants take away jobs from other Canadians?

Notably, those with the lowest levels of income and education are the most likely to feel that immigrants take jobs from other Canadians. Although Canadians with lower levels of education might once have disproportionately experienced competition from newcomers to Canada in the job market, since Canada changed its admission criteria in 1993 in order to attract immigrants with higher levels of education, this is no longer the case. (According to Statistics Canada, in 2004, 45% of adult immigrants to Canada held university degrees, as compared to 17% in 1992 before admission criteria changed.) Those in less skilled and less remunerative jobs, particularly in the manufacturing sector, may be feeling the economic effects of outsourcing and mechanization, and expressing their concerns about job insecurity in terms of a competitive threat from newcomers.

Although the sense that immigrants take jobs away from other Canadians is essentially unchanged overall since late 2005, among some subgroups the change has been sharper. This opinion has risen five points (to 37%) among Canadians earning less than \$20,000, seven points (to 41%) among Canadians with less than a high school diploma, and seven points (to 27%) among Canadians aged 18 to 29, who may feel that the competition they face for employment is greater than that experienced by their parents. Outside Quebec, the belief that immigrants take jobs away from other Canadians has risen just one point (to 26%) since 2005, but in Quebec this belief has grown by five points (to 21%).

Immigrants take away Canadian jobs

Population-at-large By education December 2006



Q.FC19e

Do you strongly agree, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree or strongly disagree with each of the following statements ... Immigrants take away jobs from other Canadians?

Immigration from non-white populations

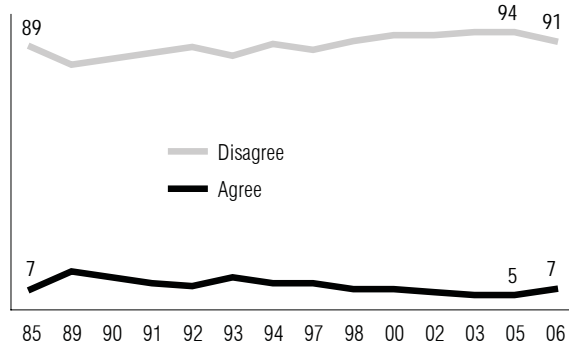
Canadians consistently and overwhelmingly reject the idea of racial screening of prospective immigrants.

Over the past few decades, there has been a massive shift in the source countries of Canadian immigration. Until the 1960s, immigrants to Canada were overwhelmingly European; today, immigrants to Canada are overwhelmingly Asian. There is little evidence that the changing racial composition of the country concerns Canadians: nine in ten Canadians (91%) disagree with the statement, “Non-whites should not be allowed to immigrate to Canada.” This rejection of explicitly racist immigration policy has been a very stable attitude among Canadians since the first FOCUS CANADA measure in 1985, changing no more than a few points over the past two decades.

Canadians with the lowest levels of educational attainment are notably more likely to agree that non-whites should not be allowed to immigrate to Canada: 13 percent of those with less than a high school diploma, as compared to just three percent of those who have completed university, favour racial screening for prospective immigrants.

Exclude racial minorities

Population-at-large 1985 - 2006



Q.FC19c

Do you strongly agree, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree or strongly disagree with each of the following statements ... Non-whites should not be allowed to immigrate to Canada?

Legitimacy of refugee claimants

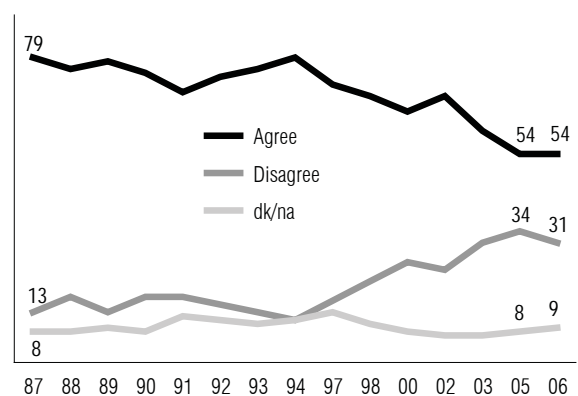
Although in long-term decline, the slight majority who believe that some refugee claimants are not legitimate has held steady over the past year.

A slight majority of Canadians (54%) express suspicion about some refugee claimants, agreeing that “Many people claiming to be refugees are not real refugees.” The proportion of Canadians expressing suspicion about some refugee claims has declined 25 points in all since 1987, but has remained stable since last measured in 2005. Three in ten Canadians (31%) disagree that many refugee claims to Canada are false. One in ten Canadians cannot offer an opinion on this question.

Notably, immigrants themselves (59%) are slightly more likely than the national average to express skepticism about some refugee claims; it may be that some immigrants feel that, in their bid to enter Canada, they were competing with others who had unfairly jumped the queue by falsely claiming refugee status.

Refugee claimants not legitimate

Population-at-large 1987 - 2006



Q.FC19b

Do you strongly agree, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree or strongly disagree with each of the following statements ... Many people claiming to be refugees are not real refugees?

Confidence in immigration selection process

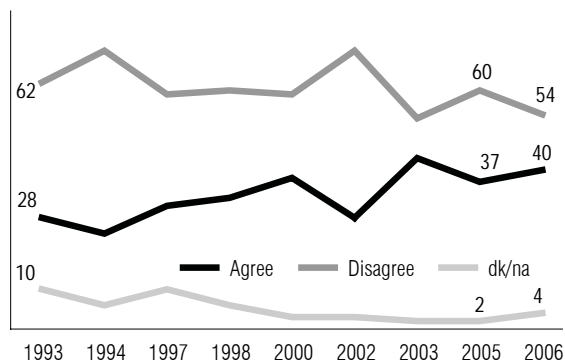
Four in ten Canadians believe Canada does a good job of keeping criminals and suspected criminals out of the country, up slightly from 2005.

Only a minority of Canadians (40%) believe that Canada does a good job of keeping criminals and suspected criminals out of the country. More than half disagree that the system functions well in this regard, with fully a third (33%) strongly disagreeing. Still, the proportion of Canadians who believe that Canada does not do a good job of keeping criminals and suspected criminals out of the country has declined six points from 2005, while the proportion who give positive marks has increased by three points.

Older Canadians are notably more likely to have a negative view of this aspect of the immigration and refugee system: just 32 percent of Canadians aged 60 or over agree that Canada is successful in excluding criminals, as compared to 55 percent of those aged 18 to 29.

Immigration controls effective in keeping out criminals

Population-at-large 1993 - 2006



Q.FC19d

Do you strongly agree, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree or strongly disagree with each of the following statements ... Canada is doing a good job keeping criminals and suspected criminals out of the country?

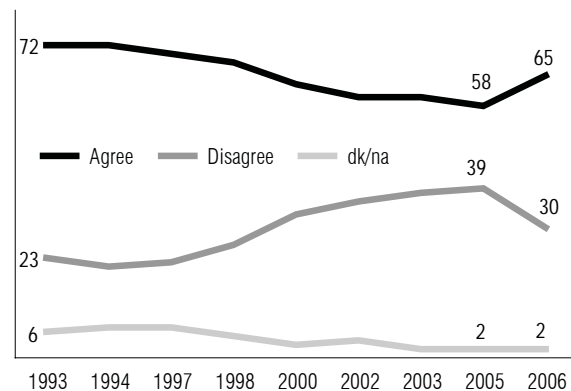
Assimilation into Canadian society

Despite overall acceptance of immigration levels, a majority of Canadians express concern that many immigrants are not adopting Canadian values, and this viewpoint has increased over the past year.

A more general – and more widespread – concern about Canada’s current immigration practices relates to the integration of immigrants into Canadian society. Sixty-five percent of Canadians agree that “There are too many immigrants coming into this country who are not adopting Canadian values,” while 30 percent disagree. Concern about the cultural integration of newcomers to Canada, which has declined gradually since the early 90s, has rebounded recently – up seven points from 2005. Even more notably, the proportion who agree strongly that too many immigrants are not adopting Canadian values has jumped by nine points to 39 percent. This spike may be a response to debate in Western countries

Too many immigrants do not adopt Canadian values

Population-at-large 1993 - 2006



Q.FC19f

Do you strongly agree, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree or strongly disagree with each of the following statements ... There are too many immigrants coming into this country who are not adopting Canadian values?

such as France, Great Britain, Australia and the Netherlands about the integration of their newcomer populations – particularly Muslims. It may also be related to the arrests in 2006 of 18 young men in the Greater Toronto Area suspected of plotting terrorist attacks on Canadian targets, arrests which raised the prospect of “homegrown” terror in Canada.

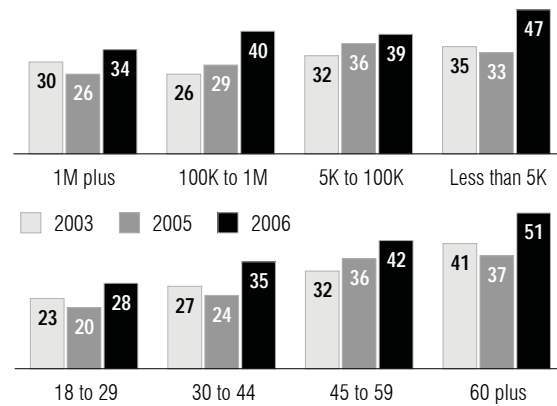
Notably, concern about the dilution of Canadian values is highest among Quebecers, who have waged their own struggle for the preservation of a minority linguistic and cultural heritage in Canada and in North America. Forty-three percent of Quebecers strongly agree that too many immigrants are not adopting the values of their new society.

Quebec is also the area of the country where concern about the integration of immigrants is rising most rapidly; the proportion of Quebecers expressing the view that too many immigrants are not adopting Canadian values has risen 14 points (to 70%) since 2005. In British Columbia the opinion grew 12 points (to 67%). In the other regions, growth has been more modest but still significant – except in Alberta, where it remains essentially unchanged.

Canadians living in smaller communities are also more likely than average to express anxiety about immigrants not adopting Canadian values, and growth in concern is especially strong among those in the smallest communities. Among Canadians in cities of one million or more, the proportion strongly agreeing that too many immigrants fail to adopt Canadian values has increased from about a quarter in 2005 to about a third in 2006. Among those in communities of 5,000 residents or fewer, in the same period strong concern has grown from a third to nearly half.

Too many immigrants do not adopt Canadian values

Population-at-large Strongly agree 2003 - 2006
By community size and age



Q.FC19f

Do you strongly agree, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree or strongly disagree with each of the following statements ... There are too many immigrants coming into this country who are not adopting Canadian values?

Significantly, however, it is in smaller cities that concern about the integration of immigrants has risen most sharply in the past year. Among Canadians living in cities of 100,000 to one million, the sense that too many immigrants are not adopting Canadian values has risen 13 points to 66 percent. Growth in this opinion has been more modest in both the smallest communities (by 8 points, to 70%) and the country’s largest cities (by 6 points to 62%). It may be that, while the smallest communities are little affected by immigration directly and the largest cities are accustomed to encountering newcomers (and have considerable support systems in place), residents of mid-sized cities are feeling the effects of immigration without having the reassurance of past experience and established infrastructure to help newcomers integrate.

Another important finding on this question is that, while the most highly educated Canadians remain less likely than average to express concern about the integration of newcomers, it is among these Canadians that concern is rising most sharply. Among university-educated Canadians, the opinion that too many immigrants are not adopting Canadian values has grown 13 points (to 59%) since 2005. While, in 2005, those with university degrees were 12 points below the national average in their belief that too many immigrants are not adapting Canadian values, change since then has found the most highly educated Canadians catching up: in 2006, those with university degrees are just six points below the national average on this question. Among less educated Canadians, concern has grown more modestly.

Across age groups, older Canadians are not only more intensely concerned about immigrants adopting Canadian values, but are showing a greater increase in concern over time.

Relations between specific groups

Canadians are positive about relations between Christians and Jews in Canada. Opinion is divided on relations between Christians and Muslims, while relations between Jews and Arabs are seen as somewhat negative.

In a diasporic country such as Canada, tensions between ethnic, linguistic and religious groups may originate in domestic debates (such as the struggle for French-language protections in Quebec), or may be imported from other parts of the world as migrants bring their loyalties, concerns – and even prejudices – with them to their adoptive country.

For example, Canadians see tensions between Jews and Arabs – tensions which many trace in part to the ongoing conflict between Israel and the Palestinians – as palpable even among Jews and Arabs living in Canada, far from the contested territories.

Overall, Canadians are very positive in their assessment of relations between Christians and Jews in Canada. There is somewhat greater concern about relations between Christians and Muslims in Canada, while relations between Jews and Arabs in Canada are seen by most as at least somewhat negative.

Quebecers tend to be less optimistic than others about all three sets of ethnic and religious relations. City-dwellers, particularly Torontonians, tend to be the most positive about ethnic relations – and stand out as especially optimistic about relations involving Canadian Muslims and Arabs.

Canadian Muslims more or less match the national average in their assessments of Jewish-Arab and Christian-Jewish relations, but are notably more sanguine about Christian-Muslim relations than the population-at-large.

Relations between Jews and Arabs. Most Canadians see Jewish-Arab relations in Canada as somewhat troubled. Just a third of Canadians see such relations as very (4%) or somewhat (28%) positive, while more than half would describe them as negative (somewhat 32%, very 14%). One in six Canadians (16%) cannot offer any opinion of the state of relations between Jews and Arabs in Canada.

There are few variations across groups in Canadians' assessments of relations between Jews and Arabs in Canada, but on average older people are more negative about Jewish-Arab relations. Only about a quarter of Canadians aged 60 or over (23%) see relations between these groups as either very or somewhat positive, nine points below the national average.

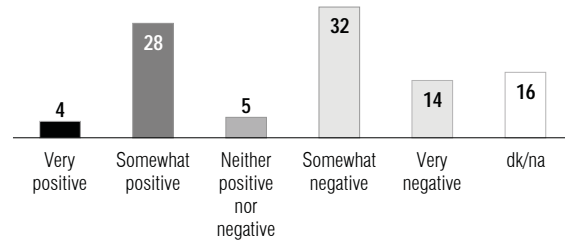
Notably, Canadian Muslims (36%) are more likely than other Canadians (32%) to see Jewish-Arab relations in a positive light. Canadians overall are more likely to see relations between Jews and Arabs as negative, while Muslims are more likely to see them as neither positive nor negative, or not to express an opinion on the state of these two groups' relations.

Relations between Christians and Muslims. Canadians are somewhat more optimistic in their assessment of relations between Christians and Muslims in Canada than in their estimation of Jewish-Arab relations in this country, although public opinion remains split. About half of Canadians see Christian-Muslim relations as either positive (46%) or neutral (3%). Over four in ten see relations as negative (44%).

Canadian Muslims are markedly more positive than others in their assessment of relations between Christians and Muslims in Canada: about three-quarters (73%) of Canadian Muslims see Christian-Muslim relations as largely positive, while less than one in five (16%) see them as generally negative. This particular

Perception of current relations between Jews and Arabs in Canada

Population-at-large December 2006

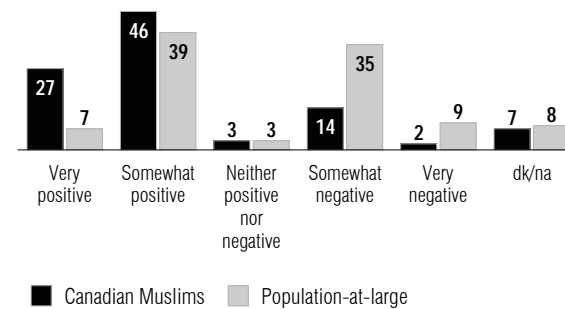


Q.FC31.2c

Would you describe the current relations between Jews and Arabs in Canada today be very positive, somewhat positive, somewhat negative, or very negative?

Perception of current relations between Christians and Muslims in Canada

December 2006



Q.M7.2b/FC31.2b

Would you describe the current relations between Christians and Muslims in Canada today be very positive, somewhat positive, somewhat negative, or very negative?

relationship – between the Christian and Muslim communities in Canada – is the site of the greatest divergence between Muslim opinion and national opinion when it comes to relations between religious or ethnocultural groups.

Canadians who live in cities are more likely to offer a positive assessment of Christian-Muslim relations in Canada. Of those living in cities with populations of one million or more, fully half (52%) see relations between Christians and Muslims as at least somewhat positive, as compared to four in ten (41%) among those living in communities of 5,000 people or fewer. Toronto residents are especially sanguine in their view of Christian-Muslim relations in Canada; 57 percent of Torontonians see relations between members of these two faiths as at least somewhat positive. This more positive outlook on inter-group relations, like more positive impressions of minority groups in general, is likely due to city-dwellers' more frequent personal experience with minority religious and ethnic groups.

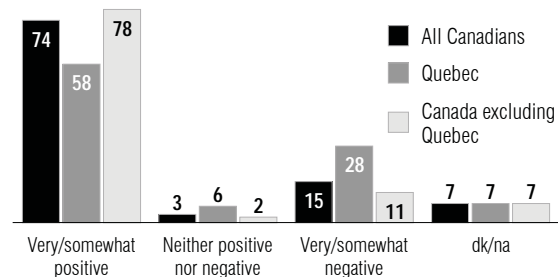
Notably, immigrants to Canada are more likely than native-born residents to see relations between Christians and Muslims living in Canada as positive; immigrants with origins outside Europe are especially likely to view Christian-Muslim relations as positive (58% of non-European immigrants, versus 49% of European immigrants). One possible explanation for this finding is that some new Canadians may have their origins in countries where religious strife is much more severe than it is in Canada, causing whatever tensions that may exist in their adoptive country to appear relatively minor in comparison to the tensions in their nations of origin.

Relations between Christians and Jews. In comparison with the group relations presented previously, most Canadians see relations between Christians and Jews in Canada as positive. Fully three-quarters of Canadians say that Christian-Jewish relations are either very (24%) or somewhat (50%) positive. Just 15 percent see relations as negative. A small proportion see relations between Canadian Christians and Jews as neither positive nor negative (3%), or do not offer an assessment (7%).

Quebecers stand out as especially pessimistic on this question; three in ten Quebecers (28%) describe Christian-Jewish relations in Canada as at least somewhat negative – almost twice the national average.

Perception of current relations between Christians and Jews in Canada

Population-at-large December 2006



Q.FC31.2a

Would you describe the current relations between Christians and Jews in Canada today be very positive, somewhat positive, somewhat negative, or very negative?

Residents of Ontario (84%) are the most likely to see Christian-Jewish relations as generally positive. This optimism about Christian-Jewish relations in Canada may derive at least in part from familiarity with both groups and personal experience with their interactions: census data show that half of all Canadian Jews live in Toronto.

Canadian Muslims are fairly close to the national average in their assessment of Christian-Jewish relations, with six in ten (62%) viewing such relations as positive. The gap between Muslims and Canadians at large derives not from a greater propensity for Muslims to see relations between Christians and Jews as negative, but from the greater Muslim tendency to express no opinion on the question (21%, compared to 7% of all Canadians).

Discrimination against ethnic groups

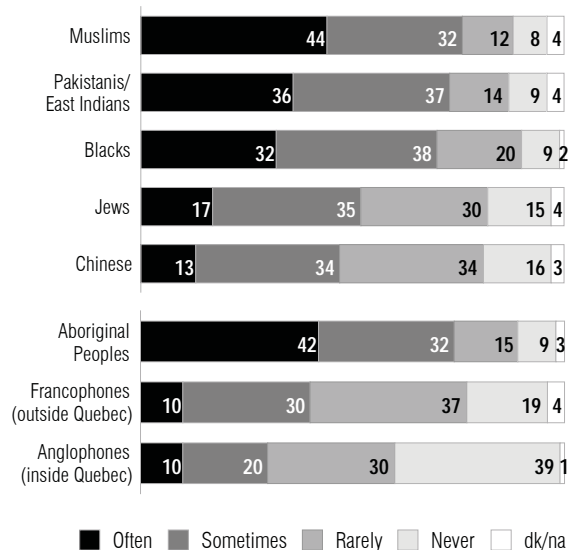
Canadians see Muslims, Aboriginal Peoples, South Asians and blacks as the minority groups who experience discrimination most frequently in Canada.

Although Canada’s national identity is frequently articulated in terms of diversity, multiculturalism and Canada’s history as “a nation of immigrants,” most Canadians perceive that the ideal of equality for all, regardless of ethnocultural background, does not always match the reality of life in Canada. Most Canadians perceive at least occasional discrimination against numerous minority groups.

The group seen as being discriminated against the most frequently are Muslims; over four in ten Canadians (44%) believe Muslims are discriminated

Perceived frequency of discrimination

Population-at-large December 2006



Q.31

For each of the following groups, please tell me whether you think they are often, sometimes, rarely or never the subject of discrimination in Canadian society today ...?

against often, and an additional 32 percent believe that Canadian Muslims experience discrimination at least sometimes. Large majorities also perceive at least occasional discrimination against Aboriginal Peoples (74%), Canadians of Pakistani and Indian origin (73%), and blacks (70%).

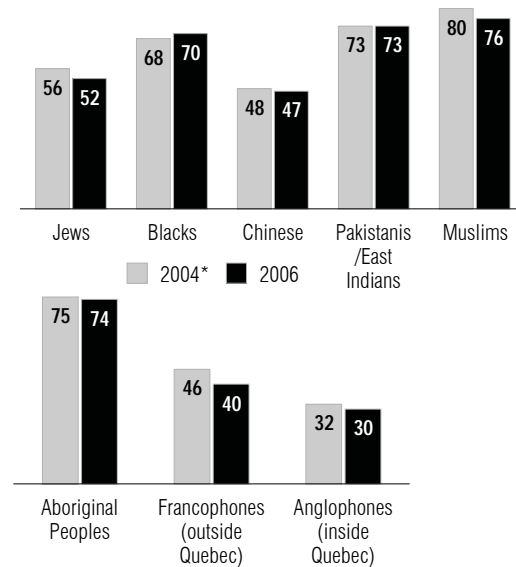
About half of all Canadians believe Jews (52%) and Chinese Canadians (47%) are discriminated against at least sometimes. Four in ten (40%) Canadians outside Quebec believe that francophones experience at least occasional discrimination, while three in ten Quebecers (30%) feel that anglophones are sometimes discriminated against.

Canadians' sense of the frequency of discrimination against most minority groups has declined slightly since 2004. In 2006, Canadians are less likely than in 2004 to perceive frequent or occasional discrimination against Muslims, Jews and francophones living outside Quebec. The perception of discrimination against Chinese Canadians, South Asian Canadians, Aboriginal Peoples, anglophones living inside Quebec and blacks has remained stable.²

Estimates of discrimination against most groups tend to be higher among younger Canadians. For example, while just 67 percent of Canadians aged 60 or over believe that Muslims are at least sometimes discriminated against, the proportion among those aged 18 to 29 is 85 percent. Similarly, while about two-thirds (65%) of Canadians aged 60 or over believe that South Asians experience at least occasional discrimination, eight in ten Canadians under 30 (82%) say the same.

One likely explanation for this finding is that younger Canadians have grown up not only in a Canada where multiculturalism, adopted in 1971, is official

Perceived frequency of discrimination
Population-at-large Often/sometimes 2004 - 2006



* 2004 data from FC omnibus study for the Department of Canadian Heritage

Q.31

For each of the following groups, please tell me whether you think they are often, sometimes, rarely or never the subject of discrimination in Canadian society today ...?

policy, but in a social climate where racism and discrimination have been seen as increasingly unacceptable. As such, younger Canadians are likely to have higher expectations of their fellow citizens in matters of fair treatment for immigrants, people of colour, religious minorities and other groups that may experience discrimination. While older Canadians may see the society around them as exceptionally fair relative to the one they remember from their youth, younger Canadians are more likely to compare their society to the ideals it claims to espouse – not to a more prejudiced past.

2 General population tracking data from a Focus Canada 2004-1 omnibus survey for the Department of Canadian Heritage.