

CANADIAN PRESS / LEGER MARKETING

Canadians and Immorality

Report



1.0 Highlights of the Study

- Close to three-quarters of the population believes that Canadians have a strong sense of morals.

Question: *Generally speaking, do you think that Canadians have a moral sense that is VERY STRONG, SOMEWHAT STRONG, SOMEWHAT WEAK or VERY WEAK?*

n=1519	Very strong	Somewhat strong	Somewhat weak	Very weak	Don't know/Refusal
Canada	13.5%	59.0%	20.1%	4.9%	2.5%

- Shoplifting, epitomizes immoral behaviour.

Question: *Please tell me if you find each of the following activities IMMORAL or NOT... ?* (The percentages indicate those who find the activity immoral)

n=1519	TOTAL
... shoplifting	89.3%
... having an extramarital affair	80.8%
... taking hard drugs (cocaine, heroine)	79.2%
... tax evasion	77.0%
... prostitution	68.4%
... alcohol abuse	66.1%
... suicide	61.8%
... working under the table	52.8%
... taking soft drugs (marijuana)	47.5%
... abortion	41.8%
... gambling	41.4%
... swearing	40.2%
... homosexuality	32.1%
... doctor-assisted suicide of a person who is ill	31.3%
... engaging in pre-marital sex	27.3%
... being atheist (not believing in God)	26.2%
... divorce	22.3%

2.0 Results

2.1 Close to Three-Quarters of the Population Believes that Canadians have a Strong Sense of Morals

72.5% of the population in Canada feels that Canadians have a strong sense of morals while 25.0% think otherwise. For 13.5% of people, the moral sense of Canadians is very strong while for 59.0% of them find it strong. 20.1% find the moral sense of Canadians to be somewhat weak and 4.9% find it very weak.

We do not note significant differences between the various segments of the population. A difference can only be seen among those whose mother tongue is neither French nor English. In fact, only 59.2% of them believe that Canadians have a high moral sense.

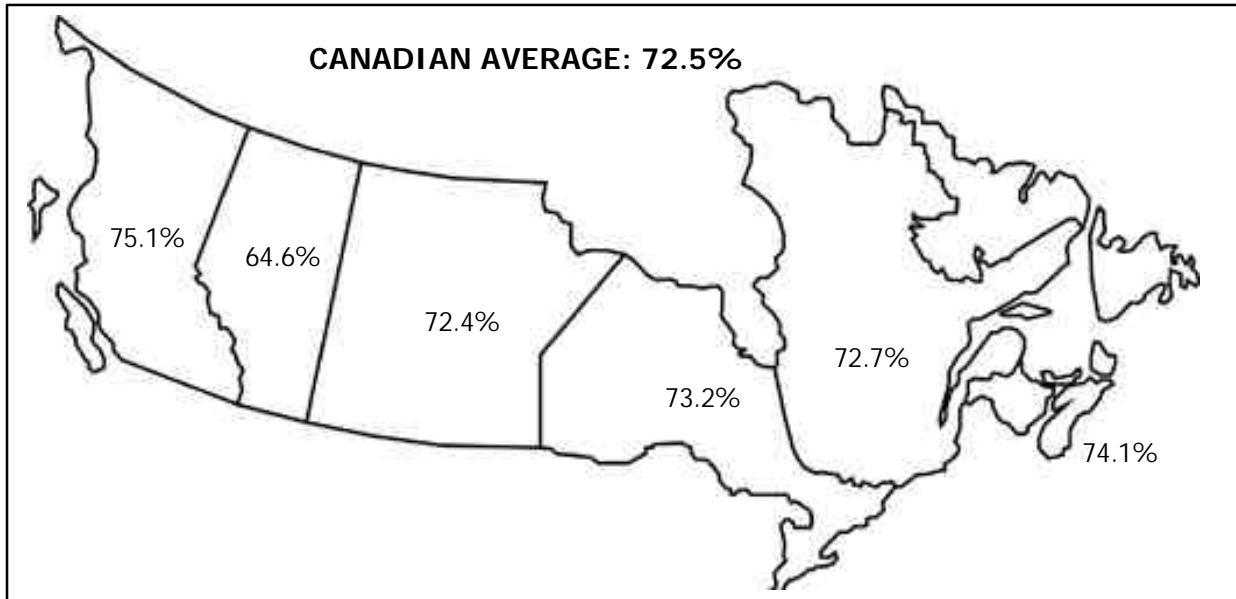
This view held by members of cultural communities could be explained by a deeper attachment to conservative religious values. Hence, we note obvious differences when it comes to atheism, abortion, homosexuality, pre-marital sexual relations and suicide.

Finally, let us mention that our American neighbours essentially share the same opinion as Canadians. In fact, a Gallup poll conducted in May 2001 revealed that 75.0% of Americans feel that their nation has a strong moral fibre.

Question: *Generally speaking, do you think that Canadians have a moral sense that is VERY STRONG, SOMEWHAT STRONG, SOMEWHAT WEAK or VERY WEAK?*

n=1519	Very strong	Somewhat strong	Somewhat weak	Very weak	Don't know/Refusal
Atlantic provinces	17.4%	56.7%	19.2%	4.5%	2.2%
Quebec	8.4%	64.3%	22.2%	3.7%	1.4%
Ontario	15.9%	57.3%	19.3%	4.6%	2.9%
Prairies	12.3%	60.1%	17.2%	5.3%	5.0%
Alberta	8.5%	56.1%	23.8%	8.0%	3.7%
British Columbia	17.9%	57.2%	17.5%	6.0%	1.3%
Canada	13.5%	59.0%	20.1%	4.9%	7.3%

Percentage of the population that believes Canadians have a strong sense of morals



2.2 Shoplifting Epitomizes Immoral Behaviour

Shoplifting constitutes the behaviour deemed immoral by the greatest number of Canadians. This opinion is shared by all segments of society with slight variations in Ontario (86.2%) and British Columbia (84.5%).

Extramarital relationships rank second in the immorality scale with 80.8% of Canadians condemning this type of behaviour. These relationships are mostly criticized by 86.8% of those 18-24 years old, 83.0% of Anglophones, 86.2% of those whose mother tongue is neither French nor English, 88.0% of Albertans, 84.6% of those in the higher income brackets and by 89.9% of homemakers. This rate drops to 76.3% among professionals, to 71.4% among Francophones and to 72.7% among Quebeckers.

Taking hard drugs such as cocaine and heroine is next with 79.2%. This behaviour is much less tolerated in Quebec (85.1%) than in British Columbia (69.8%). 86.8% of Canadians who do not have a college education find that taking hard drugs is immoral while only 68.2% of those with a university education share this view.

With 77.0%, **tax evasion** ranks fourth. This view is shared relatively equally among Canadians of all regions of the country.

In terms of **prostitution** (68.4%), it is more tolerated by men (61.4% who find it immoral), than by women (74.9%), more by those who earn more than \$40,000 a year (63.9%), than by those who are in the lower income brackets (73.9%), more by those 45-54 years old (60,1%) than by those 65years old and over (75,1%) and more by university-educated Canadians (63.5%) than by those who have only completed the lowest levels of schooling (84.3%).

Two-thirds of Canadians (66.1%) find **alcohol abuse** immoral. The abuse of alcohol is more criticized in Quebec (73.7%) than in the Prairies (59.5%). It is also more condemned by those 65 years old and over (80.6%) than by those 35-44 years old (59.2%), more by Francophones (73.9%) than by Anglophones (62.6%), more by manual workers (73.6%) than by professionals (55.5%), more by those not in the labour force (71.9%) than those in it (62.8%) and more by those with lower levels of education (85.8%) than by university-educated Canadians (55.7%).

Suicide is immoral according to 61.8% of the population. 72.5% of those whose mother tongue is neither French nor English find suicide more immoral than 60.3% of Anglophones and Francophones together, 74.2% of manual workers versus 46.9% of professionals and 78.3% of those with lower levels of education and 45.3% of university-educated Canadians.

The immoral character of **working under the table** is recognized by 52.8% of the population. It considered more immoral by 63.9% Quebeckers than by 40.7% of people who live in British Columbia, more so by 56.7% of women than by 48.6% of men, more by 67.4% of retirees than by 45.8% of professionals and by 43.0% of students and more by 59.0% of those not in the labour force than by 49.6% of those in it.

The opinions of Canadians with regard the **consumption of soft drugs (marijuana)** is clearly mixed. Hence, we that 47.5% find this behaviour immoral while 47.2% feel it is not. It can be recalled that a Canadian Press/Leger Marketing published in June 2001 revealed that 46.8% of Canadians were in favour of legalizing marijuana while 47.0% objected to this idea.

41.8% of Canadians define **abortion** as immoral while 47.5% do not believe it to be so. 50.4% of those 65 years old and over are more likely to be opposed to abortion versus 36.6% of those 35-44 years old, 49.3% of residents of the Atlantic provinces versus 32.4% of British Columbians, 53.4% of those in the very low income brackets versus 36.8% of those in the higher brackets, 53.5% of manual workers versus 30.1% of professionals and 50.4% of people who have not gone past high school versus 30.5% of university-educated Canadians. Let us also note that 51.4% of Allophones consider abortion to be immoral.

Gambling is immoral according to 41.4% of the population. This opinion is mostly held by 56.2% of those 65 years old and over, 62.6% of Quebeckers, 52.0% of those in the lower income brackets and 72.5% of those with lower levels of education. However, 35.3% of Canadians 18-24 years old, 25.9% of those living in British Columbia and 33.2% of Ontarians, 35.3% of those in the higher income brackets, 32.1% of students and 33.3% of university-educated Canadians are less likely to feel that gambling is immoral.

According to 40.2% of the public opinion, **swearing** comes in twelfth in the ranking of immoral behaviours. 56.7% of Canadians 65 years old and over share this opinion to a greater extent than 29.1% of those 18-24 years old, 51.7% of Allophones more than 34.3% of Anglophones, 50.6% of residents of the Atlantic provinces and 50.1% Quebeckers more than 32.2% of British Columbians, 53.6% of those in the lower income brackets more than 35.4% of those with very high incomes, 51.3% of retirees more than 27.6% of professionals and 68.9% of those with lower levels of education more than 29.1% of those with higher levels.

If 32.1% of Canadians indicated that **homosexuality** constitutes immoral behaviour, we note that 47.3% of those over 65 years old, 46.5% of Allophones, 42.5% of Albertans, 39.4% of those with a household income lower than \$40,000, 49.5% of manual workers and 40.3% of those who did not go beyond high school are far from being tolerant with regard to homosexuality at a time when the rights to same-sex marriages is being debated.

Doctor-assisted suicide of a person who is ill is considered immoral by 31.3% of Canadians. These numbers match the results revealed in a Canadian Press/Leger Marketing survey on euthanasia conducted in June 2001. In this survey, 32.6% of Canadians mentioned not wanting anyone to assist a loved one in dying if this person was suffering from an incurable illness and 34.0% did not want help in ending their lives if they themselves were suffering from an extremely painful and incurable disease.

A proportion of 27.3% of Canadians find **pre-marital sex** immoral. This opinion is mostly held by 47.9% of those 65 years old and over versus 19.5% of those 35-44 years old, 37.9% of Allophones versus 17.6% of Francophones, 41.3% of Prairie residents versus 16.0% of Quebeckers, 36.9% of those in the lower income brackets versus 18.7% of those in the higher brackets, 42.0% of retirees versus 16.5% of professionals, 35.3% of the population not in the labour force versus 22.4% of those who are in the labour force and 38.7% of those with lower levels of schooling versus 21.0% of university-educated Canadians.

The second last item in the ranking of immoral behaviour is **atheism**. It is perceived as immoral by 26.2% of the population and particularly by 41.6% of those whose mother tongue is neither French nor English, 41.8% of residents of the Atlantic provinces and 50.5% of those with low levels of education.

Finally, **divorce** is immoral according to 22.3% of Canadians. This is mostly the case for men (25.3%), those 65 years of age and over (26.7%), Allophones (31.7%), Albertans (27.1%), manual workers (33.0%) and those with less education (45.9%).

Question: *Please tell me if you find each of the following activities IMMORAL or NOT...?*
(The percentages indicate those who consider the activity immoral)

n=1519	TOTAL	Atlantic provinces	Quebec	Ontario	Prairies	Alberta	British Columbia
... shoplifting	89.3%	94.0%	91.9%	86.2%	92.4%	95.2%	84.5%
...having an extramarital affair	80.8%	80.7%	72.7%	83.8%	86.3%	88.0%	79.4%
... taking hard drugs (cocaine, heroine)	79.2%	82.9%	85.1%	77.7%	77.9%	80.7%	69.8%
... tax evasion	77.0%	78.7%	75.5%	78.1%	79.0%	79.9%	72.1%
... prostitution	68.4%	69.5%	66.6%	70.2%	73.4%	69.6%	61.9%
... alcohol abuse	66.1%	64.1%	73.7%	64.3%	59.5%	69.6%	59.6%
... suicide	61.8%	67.4%	61.7%	61.3%	65.7%	65.8%	55.2%
... working under the table	52.8%	54.5%	63.9%	48.0%	56.2%	55.8%	40.7%
... taking soft drugs (marijuana)	47.5%	52.5%	45.3%	47.5%	57.4%	50.6%	40.6%
... abortion	41.8%	49.3%	41.6%	43.0%	46.6%	40.9%	32.4%
... gambling	41.4%	46.3%	62.6%	33.2%	39.9%	38.5%	25.9%
... swearing	40.2%	50.6%	50.1%	34.1%	44.0%	39.3%	32.2%
... homosexuality	32.1%	39.6%	26.1%	32.1%	40.9%	42.5%	26.1%
... doctor-assisted suicide	31.3%	35.8%	28.1%	31.7%	33.6%	34.0%	29.7%
... engaging in pre-martial sex	27.3%	38.7%	16.0%	27.8%	41.3%	34.7%	26.8%
... being atheist (not believing in God)	26.2%	41.8%	25.5%	25.2%	29.2%	26.1%	19.5%
... divorce	22.3%	19.4%	25.8%	20.2%	24.5%	27.1%	19.1%

Note: Significant differences that are **greater** appear in bold and significant differences that are *lower* are in italics.

Profile of those MORE likely to believe that the following activities are immoral

... Extramarital affairs	
• Anglophones	83.0%
• Mother tongue other than French or English	86.2%
• Income greater than \$60,000	84.6%
• Main occupation is homemaker	89.9%
• Albertans	88.0%
... Taking hard drugs	
• Quebeckers	85.1%
• High school education	86.3%
• Main occupation is homemaker	89.7%
• Not in labour force	83.0%
... Prostitution	
• Women	74.9%
• 65 years old and over	75.1%
• Income less than \$40,000	73.9%
• Elementary education	84.3%
• Main occupation is homemaker	82.0%
... Alcohol abuse	
• Quebeckers	73.7%
• 65 years old and over	80.6%
• Manual workers	73.6%
• Not in labour force	71.9%
• Francophones	73.9%
... Suicide	
• Mother tongue other than French or English	72.5%
• Manual workers	74.2%
• Elementary education	78.3%
... Working under the table	
• Quebeckers	63.9%
• Women	56.7%
• Retirees	67.4%
• Not in labour force	59.0%
... Taking soft drugs	
• 65 years old and over	66.2%
• Mother tongue other than French or English	58.3%
• Retirees	59.3%

Profile of those LESS likely to believe that the following activities are immoral

... Extramarital affairs	
• Francophones	71.4%
• Quebeckers	72.7%
• Professionals	76.3%
... Taking hard drugs	
• British Columbians	69.8%
• University education	68.2%
• Professionals	71.3%
• In labour force	76.9%
... Prostitution	
• Men	61.4%
• 45-54 years old	60.1%
• Income more than \$40,000	63.9%
• University education	63.5%
• Professionals	59.6%
... Alcohol abuse	
• Prairie residents	59.5%
• 35-44 years old	59.2%
• Professionals	55.5%
• In labour force	62.8%
• Anglophones	62.6%
... Suicide	
• Anglophones	59.0%
• Professionals	46.9%
• University education	45.3%
... Working under the table	
• British Columbians	40.7%
• Men	48.6%
• Professionals	45.8%
• Students	43.0%
• In labour force	49.6%
... Taking soft drugs	
• 18-24 years old	38.4%
• Anglophones	45.6%
• Professionals	32.1%

Profile of those who are MORE likely to believe that the following activities are immoral

... Abortion	
• 65 years old and over	50.4%
• Mother tongue other than French or English	51.4%
• Manual workers	53.5%
• Income less than \$20,000	53.4%
• Elementary or secondary level of education	50.4%
• Residents of Atlantic provinces	49.3%
... Gambling	
• 65 years old and over	56.2%
• Quebeckers	62.6%
• Francophones	60.8%
• Income less than \$20,000	52.0%
• Elementary education	72.5%
... Swearing	
• 65 years old and over	56.7%
• Mother tongue other than French or English	51.7%
• Francophones	50.5%
• Quebeckers	50.1%
• Residents of Atlantic provinces	50.6%
• Elementary education	68.9%
• Income less than \$20,000	53.6%
... Homosexuality	
• 65 years old and over	47.3%
• Mother tongue other than French or English	46.5%
• Elementary education	40.3%
• Manual workers	49.5%
... Pre-marital sex	
• 65 years old and over	47.9%
• Mother tongue other than French or English	37.9%
• Residents of Prairie provinces	41.3%
• Elementary education	38.7%
• Retirees	42.0%

Profile of those who are LESS likely to believe that the following activities are immoral

... Abortion	
• 35-44 years old	36.6%
• Anglophones	40.2%
• Professionals	30.1%
• Income more than \$60,000	36.8%
• University education	30.5%
• Residents of British Columbia	32.4%
... Gambling	
• 18-24 years old	35.3%
• Ontarians	33.2%
• Anglophones	32.5%
• Income greater than \$60,000	35.3%
• University education	33.3%
• Students	32.1%
• Residents of British Columbia	25.9%
... Swearing	
• 18-24 years old	29.1%
• Anglophones	34.3%
• Residents of British Columbia	32.2%
• Professionals	27.6%
• University education	29.1%
• Income more than \$60,000	35.4%
... Homosexuality	
• 18-24 years old	21.4%
• Francophones	23.8%
• University education	23.9%
• Professionals	21.0%
... Pre-marital sex	
• 35-44 years old	19.5%
• Francophones	17.6%
• Quebeckers	16.0%
• University education	21.0%
• Professionals	16.5%

3.0 Methodology

This study was conducted by Leger Marketing through telephone interviews among a representative sample of 1519 English- or French-speaking Canadians, 18 years of age or older.

The interviews were conducted from our Montreal and Winnipeg call centres between January 8 and January 13, 2002. Up to ten call-backs were made in the case of non-response.

Using data from Statistics Canada, the results were weighted according to geographic location, gender and language spoken at home to ensure a sample representative of the entire Canadian adult population. In the end, the maximum margin of error obtained for a sample of 1519 respondents is of $\pm 2.6\%$, 19 times out of 20.