

# Leger

IN COLLABORATION WITH



POSTMEDIA-LEGER POLL

## Report

# False Claims of Indigenous Ancestry – Canada-Wide Survey of Canadians' Understanding & Impressions

December 2022

DATE 2022-12-05 PROJECT NUMBER 82823-003

The logo for Leger, featuring the word "Leger" in a bold, sans-serif font. The letter "e" is red, while the other letters are black.

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*We know Canadians*





# METHODOLOGY


# Methodology

 Web survey using computer-assisted Web interviewing (CAWI) technology.

 From November 25-27, 2022

 1522 Canadian residents, 18 years of age or older, randomly recruited from LEO's online panel.

 Using data from the 2021 Census, results were weighted according to region, age and gender within Canada, as well as by education and presence of children in the household in order to ensure a representative sample of the population.

 For comparison purposes, a probability sample of 1522 respondents would have a margin of error of  $\pm 2.5\%$ , 19 times out of 20.

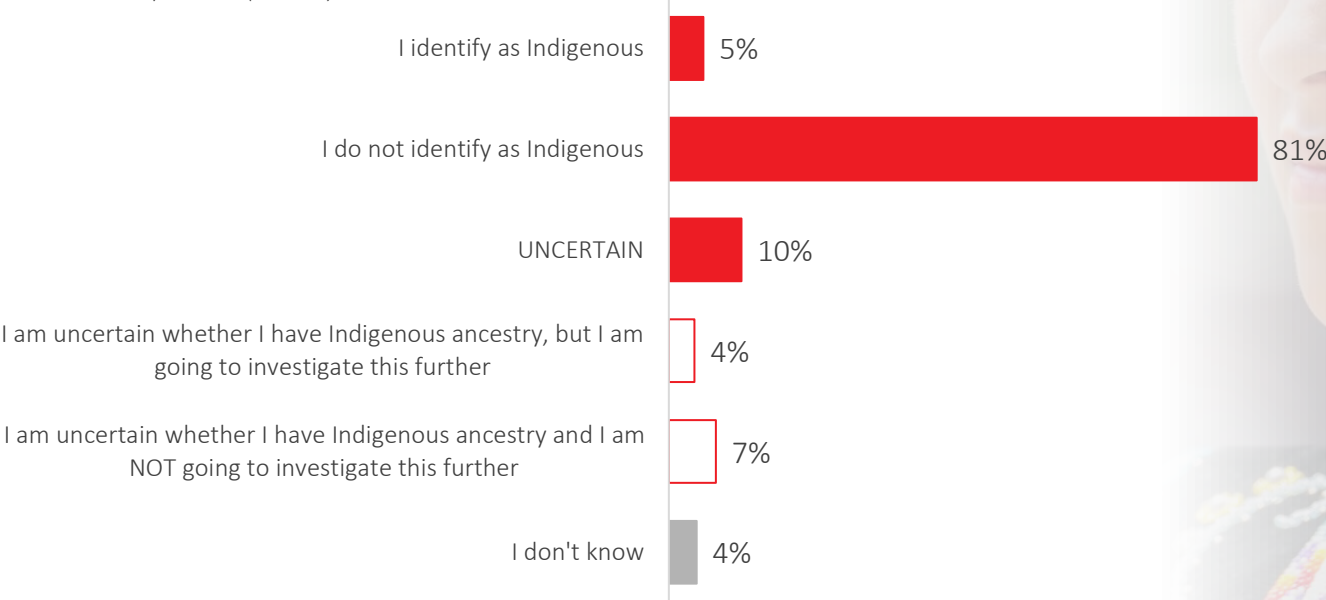
The research results presented here are in full compliance with the CRIC Public Opinion Research Standards and Disclosure Requirements. For additional information regarding this poll please contact Andrew Enns with Leger at [aenns@leger360.com](mailto:aenns@leger360.com)



DETAILED RESULTS

1-in-10 Canadians are uncertain whether they have Indigenous ancestry. Of that uncertain population, 40 per cent say they plan to investigate their identities. This finding suggests the issue of determining one's Indigenous ancestry may be a larger question for Canadians than one would initial think.

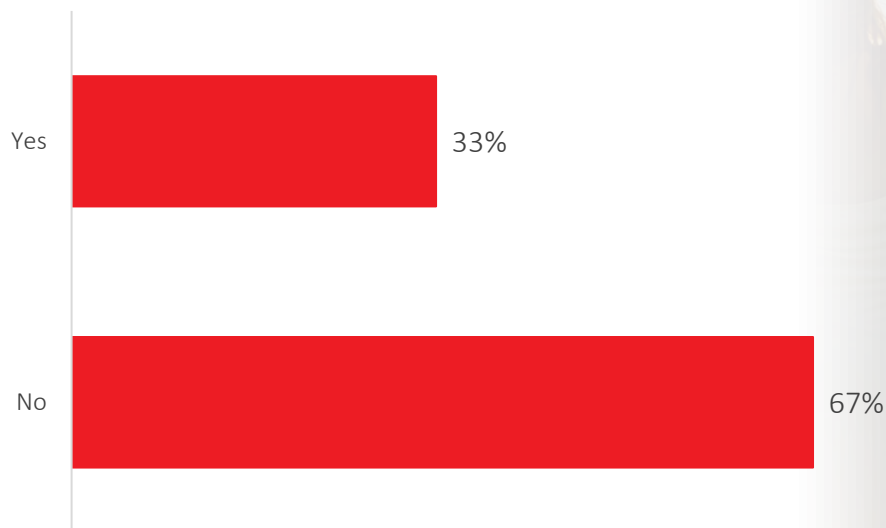
Q7. Which of the following statements best describes your situation?  
Base: All respondents (n=1522)



One-third of Canadians have read, heard, or seen anything regarding the issue of people falsely claiming to be of Indigenous ancestry; highest among those in Western Canada (40%) and those who identify as Indigenous (55%).

Q1. Have you read, heard or seen anything regarding the issue of people falsely claiming to be of Indigenous ancestry, that is claiming to be either, First Nation, Inuit or Metis when they were not of that heritage?

Base: All respondents (n=1522)



# Demographic breakdown of those who have read, heard, seen anything about issue of false claims of Indigenous heritage:

Q1. Have you read, heard or seen anything regarding the issue of people falsely claiming to be of Indigenous ancestry, that is claiming to be either, First Nation, Inuit or Metis when they were not of that heritage?

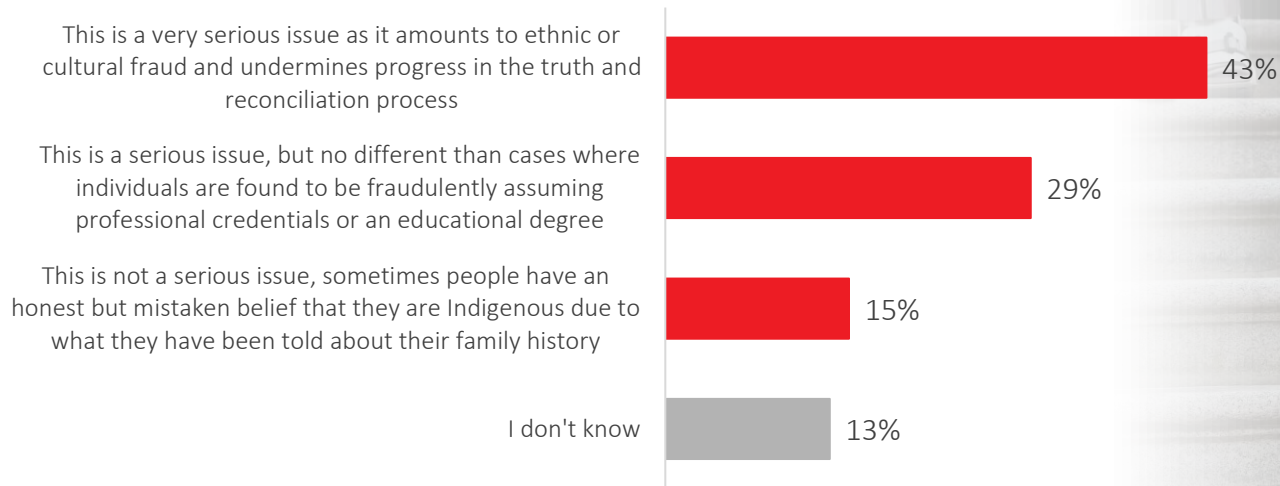
Base: All respondents (n=1522)

	Gender			Age			Indigenous			Region							
	Total	Male	Female	18-34	35-54	55+	Yes	No	Uncertain	WEST (NET)	BC	Alberta	MB/SK	EAST (NET)	Ontario	Quebec	Atlantic Canada
n=	1522	778	744	385	551	586	62	1251	149	404	151	128	125	1118	608	410	100
Yes	33%	37%	29%	28%	26%	41%	55%	31%	41%	40%	38%	39%	45%	30%	28%	30%	37%
No	67%	63%	71%	72%	74%	59%	45%	69%	59%	60%	62%	61%	55%	70%	72%	70%	63%



Do Canadians care about the issue of wrongly appropriating Indigenous culture? They do: 72% of Canadians say questions around Indigenous ancestry is a serious issue and that they are bothered by false claims. Four-in-ten agree false claims of ancestry undermine progress toward truth and reconciliation. Three-in-ten say falsely claiming to be of Indigenous heritage is serious, but akin to someone fraudulently claiming to be professionally certified or holding a certain educational degree.

Q2. In the past number of years, there have been several reported instances of people claiming to be of Indigenous ancestry, but upon investigation it was determined they were not. How do you feel about people falsely claiming to be of Indigenous ancestry?  
Base: All respondents (n=1522)



# Demographic breakdown of those who are concerned about false claims of Indigenous ancestry:

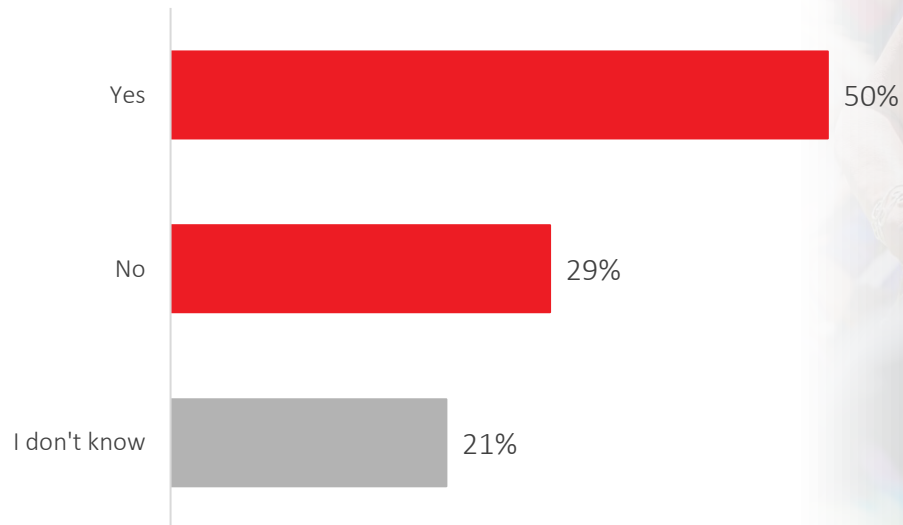
Q2. In the past number of years, there have been several reported instances of people claiming to be of Indigenous ancestry, but upon investigation it was determined they were not. How do you feel about people falsely claiming to be of Indigenous ancestry?

Base: All respondents (n=1522)

	Gender		Age			Indigenous			Region								
	Total	Male	Female	18-34	35-54	55+	Yes	No	Uncertain	WEST (NET)	BC	Alberta	MB/SK	EAST (NET)	Ontario	Quebec	Atlantic Canada
n=	1522	778	744	385	551	586	62	1251	149	404	151	128	125	1118	608	410	100
This is a very serious issue as it amounts to ethnic or cultural fraud and undermines progress in the truth and reconciliation process	43%	40%	46%	43%	39%	46%	51%	44%	33%	38%	38%	38%	37%	46%	46%	46%	40%
This is a serious issue, but no different than cases where individuals are found to be fraudulently assuming professional credentials or an educational degree	29%	32%	27%	30%	27%	30%	20%	29%	37%	33%	30%	35%	37%	27%	28%	26%	27%
This is not a serious issue, sometimes people have an honest but mistaken belief that they are Indigenous due to what they have been told about their family history	15%	17%	12%	14%	15%	14%	21%	14%	17%	19%	21%	20%	14%	12%	13%	11%	17%
I don't know	13%	11%	15%	13%	18%	9%	9%	12%	13%	9%	10%	7%	12%	15%	13%	17%	17%

## Half of Canadians believe there should be a law in place making it a federal offense if found to be fraudulently claiming Indigenous heritage.

Q3. Should there be a law in Canada that makes it a federal offense with serious penalties if one is found guilty of falsely claiming to be of Indigenous heritage?  
Base: All respondents (n=1522)



# Demographic breakdown of those who believe there should be a law in Canada making it a federal offense if one is found guilty of falsely claiming to be of Indigenous heritage:

Q3. Should there be a law in Canada that makes it a federal offense with serious penalties if one is found guilty of falsely claiming to be of Indigenous heritage?

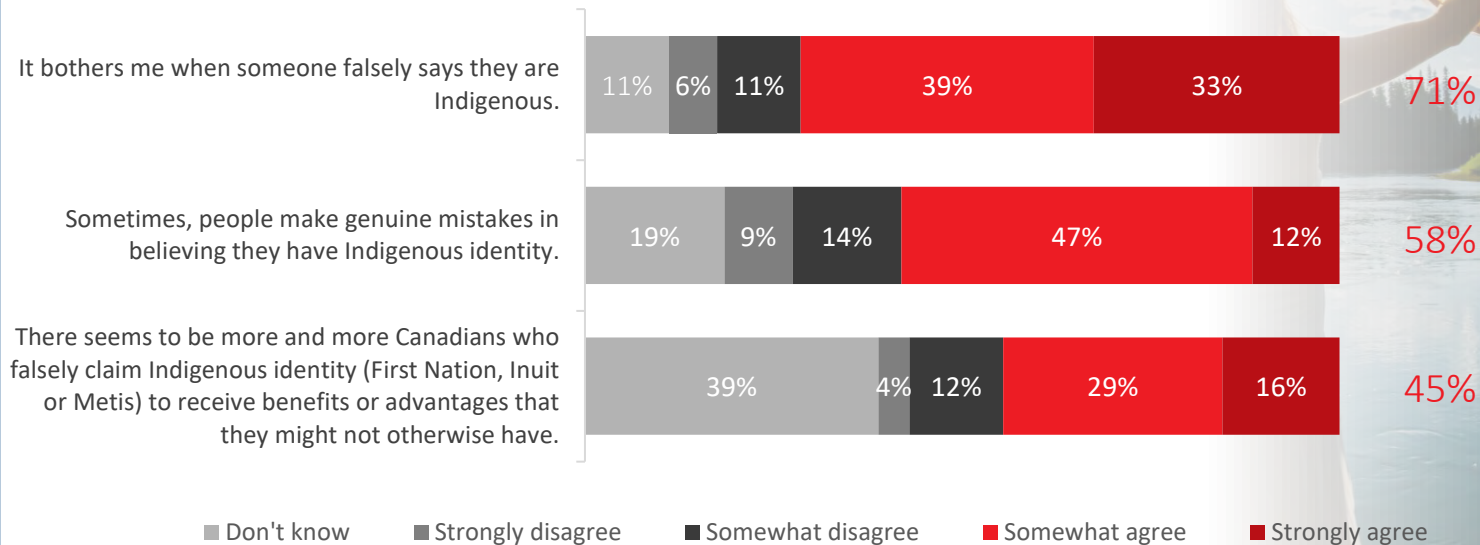
Base: All respondents (n=1522)

	Gender			Age			Indigenous			Region							
	Total	Male	Female	18-34	35-54	55+	Yes	No	Uncertain	WEST (NET)	BC	Alberta	MB/SK	EAST (NET)	Ontario	Quebec	Atlantic Canada
n=	1522	778	744	385	551	586	62	1251	149	404	151	128	125	1118	608	410	100
Yes	50%	51%	49%	49%	46%	54%	52%	52%	39%	45%	42%	48%	44%	53%	54%	54%	40%
No	29%	34%	24%	30%	30%	27%	31%	28%	40%	35%	39%	29%	36%	26%	26%	23%	39%
I don't know	21%	15%	26%	20%	24%	19%	17%	20%	20%	21%	19%	23%	20%	21%	20%	23%	21%

Seven-in-ten Canadians are bothered when someone falsely says they are Indigenous, and nearly half agree that false claims of Indigenous heritage are on the rise and speculate that the increase is likely attributed to fraudsters trying to take advantage of benefits (financial or otherwise) that would not be available to them as a non-Indigenous person. However, six-in-ten accept that sometimes, people make genuine mistakes in believing they have Indigenous identity. Agreement with these statements lands equally among all demographics.

Q4. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

Base: All respondents (n=1522)



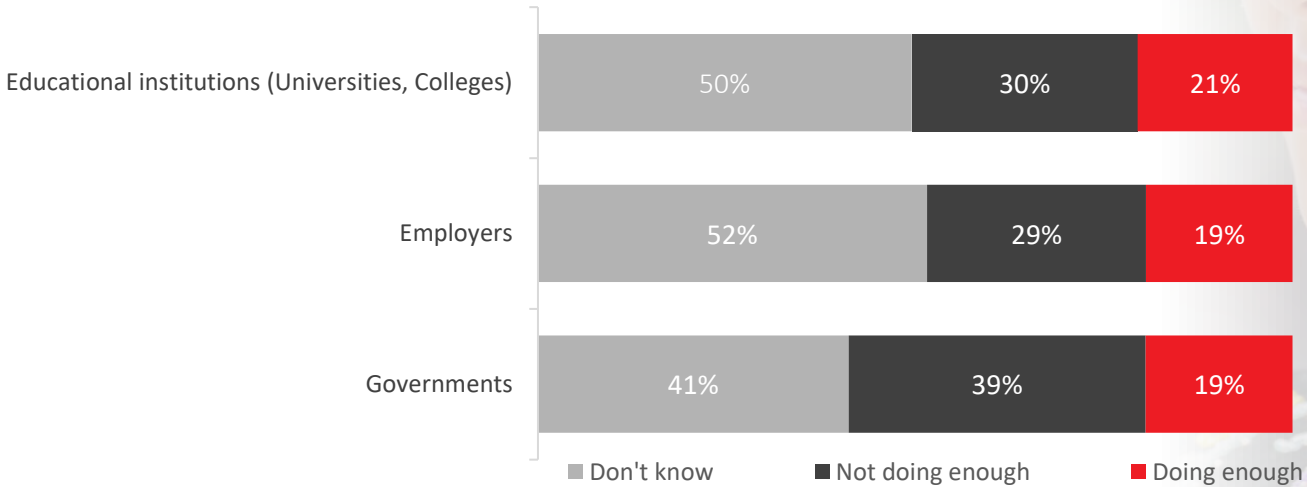
# Demographic breakdown of those who agree (strongly + somewhat) with the following statements:

Q4. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?  
 Base: All respondents (n=1522)

Among those who agree:	Total	Gender		Age			Indigenous			Region							
		Male	Female	18-34	35-54	55+	Yes	No	Uncertain	WEST (NET)	BC	Alberta	MB/SK	EAST (NET)	Ontario	Quebec	Atlantic Canada
n=	1522	778	744	385	551	586	62	1251	149	404	151	128	125	1118	608	410	100
It bothers me when someone falsely says they are Indigenous.	71%	73%	70%	72%	66%	75%	71%	73%	65%	71%	76%	65%	69%	72%	72%	71%	72%
Sometimes, people make genuine mistakes in believing they have Indigenous identity.	58%	60%	56%	64%	57%	55%	67%	57%	72%	61%	67%	57%	54%	57%	54%	58%	71%
There seems to be more and more Canadians who falsely claim Indigenous identity to receive benefits or advantages that they might not otherwise have.	45%	49%	41%	48%	40%	46%	46%	45%	48%	46%	50%	43%	41%	44%	42%	43%	58%

Just two-in-ten Canadians agree that educational institutions (Universities, Colleges), employers, and governments are doing enough to verify self-identified Indigenous identity of students, employees, or others. In fact, four-in-ten feel that governments are not doing enough in this regard.

Q5. In your view, are the following organizations doing enough to verify self-identified Indigenous identity of students, employees, or others?  
Base: All respondents (n=1522)



# Demographic breakdown of those who say institutions are not doing enough to verify self-identified Indigenous identity:

Q5. In your view, are the following organizations doing enough to verify self-identified Indigenous identity of students, employees, or others?  
 Base: All respondents (n=1522)

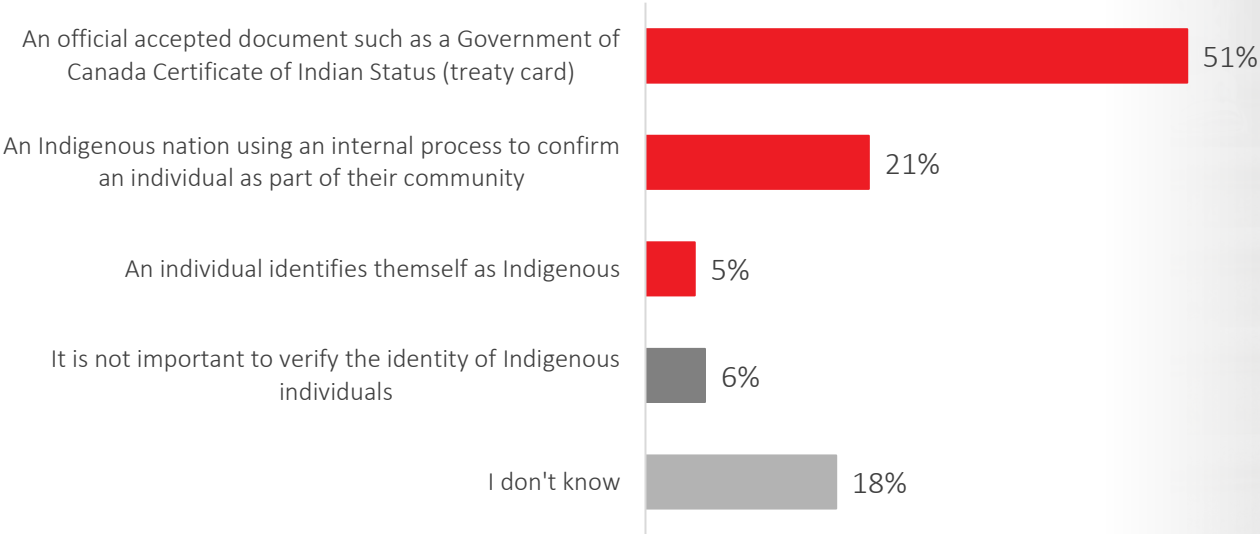
Among those who say institution is NOT doing enough:

	Gender			Age			Indigenous			Region							
	Total	Male	Female	18-34	35-54	55+	Yes	No	Uncertain	WEST (NET)	BC	Alberta	MB/SK	EAST (NET)	Ontario	Quebec	Atlantic Canada
n=	1522	778	744	385	551	586	62	1251	149	404	151	128	125	1118	608	410	100
Governments	39%	42%	37%	45%	30%	43%	46%	39%	47%	41%	45%	38%	36%	39%	37%	42%	37%
Educational institutions (Universities, Colleges)	30%	33%	27%	33%	24%	32%	25%	30%	36%	30%	34%	25%	31%	30%	27%	33%	31%
Employers	29%	30%	28%	35%	25%	29%	40%	28%	33%	29%	32%	25%	31%	29%	29%	30%	26%



Half of Canadians think the best way to confirm an individual's Indigenous identity is through an official document, such as a Government of Canada Certificate of Indian Status, however two-in-ten feel it should be left up to an Indigenous nation to use an internal process to confirm that individual as part of their community. Fewer believe it's enough for someone to just say they are Indigenous or that it isn't important to verify their status.

Q6. In your opinion, what is the best way to confirm an individual's Indigenous identity?  
Base: All respondents (n=1522)



# Demographic breakdown of opinion on best way to confirm Indigenous identity:

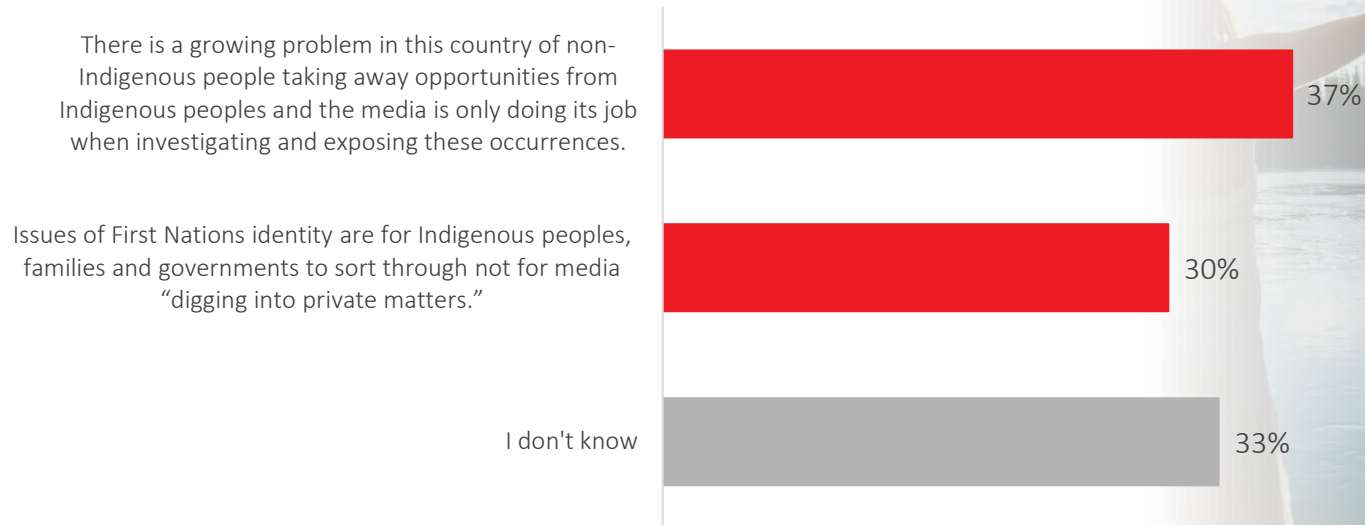
Q6. In your opinion, what is the best way to confirm an individual's Indigenous identity?

Base: All respondents (n=1522)

	Gender		Age			Indigenous			Region								
	Total	Male	Female	18-34	35-54	55+	Yes	No	Uncertain	WEST (NET)	BC	Alberta	MB/SK	EAST (NET)	Ontario	Quebec	Atlantic Canada
n=	1522	778	744	385	551	586	62	1251	149	404	151	128	125	1118	608	410	100
An official accepted document such as a Government of Canada Certificate of Indian Status (treaty card)	51%	49%	52%	40%	50%	59%	22%	22%	15%	49%	48%	53%	45%	52%	46%	61%	50%
An Indigenous nation using an internal process to confirm an individual as part of their community	21%	20%	22%	25%	16%	22%	49%	53%	53%	23%	27%	18%	24%	20%	19%	20%	23%
An individual identifies themselves as Indigenous	5%	6%	4%	8%	5%	2%	8%	4%	11%	5%	4%	7%	7%	4%	5%	3%	3%
It is not important to verify the identity of Indigenous individuals	6%	8%	4%	5%	8%	4%	13%	5%	7%	6%	6%	5%	7%	6%	7%	4%	5%
I don't know	18%	17%	18%	21%	21%	13%	7%	17%	14%	16%	15%	17%	17%	19%	22%	13%	19%

## Canadians are divided and uncertain about the media's role in exposing issues of questionable claims of Indigenous heritage. A slight plurality feel the media has a role to play.

Q7. Recently, a national media organization ran stories calling into question the Indigenous heritage of person of a relatively high profile in Canada. This generated some discussion around the appropriateness of this sort of investigative journalism.  
Base: All respondents (n=1522)



# Demographic breakdown of those have an opinion about the sort of investigative journalism that calls into question the Indigenous heritage of a high profile Canadian:

Q7. Recently, a national media organization ran stories calling into question the Indigenous heritage of person of a relatively high profile in Canada. This generated some discussion around the appropriateness of this sort of investigative journalism.  
Base: All respondents (n=1522)

	Gender		Age			Indigenous			Region								
	Total	Male	Female	18-34	35-54	55+	Yes	No	Uncertain	WEST (NET)	BC	Alberta	MB/SK	EAST (NET)	Ontario	Quebec	Atlantic Canada
n=	1522	778	744	385	551	586	62	1251	149	404	151	128	125	1118	608	410	100
There is a growing problem in this country of non-Indigenous people taking away opportunities from First Nations, Métis	37%	40%	34%	43%	35%	35%	41%	38%	40%	32%	35%	30%	28%	40%	40%	41%	34%
Issues of First Nations identity are for Indigenous peoples, families and governments to sort through based on their law	30%	30%	30%	27%	28%	33%	42%	29%	39%	35%	37%	37%	30%	27%	27%	27%	32%
I don't know	33%	30%	36%	30%	37%	31%	18%	33%	21%	33%	29%	33%	41%	33%	33%	32%	34%

## Detailed Methodology

### Sampling Frame

Participants were randomly selected from LEO's online panel.

Leger owns and manages an Internet panel that includes more than 450,000 Canadians coast to coast. An online panel consists of Web users profiled according to different demographic variables. The majority of Leger's panel members (60%) were randomly recruited over the phone in the past ten years, which makes this panel very similar to the current Canadian population on a number of demographic characteristics. Moreover, 35% of panelists were recruited through affiliate programs and 5% through partner campaigns and programs.

To be eligible, respondents were required to be 18 years of age or older.

# Detailed Methodology

## Weighted and Unweighted Sample

The table below presents the geographic distribution of respondents before weighting and after weighting.

Region	Unweighted	Weighted
British Columbia	151	212
Alberta	128	169
MB/SK	125	98
Ontario	608	589
Quebec	410	351
Atlantic Canada	100	102

GENDER	Unweighted	Weighted
Male	778	742
Female	744	780

AGE	Unweighted	Weighted
Between 18 and 34	385	406
Between 35 and 55	551	490
55 or over	586	626

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