

Do We Remember? Examining Canadians Knowledge of World War I and II

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Introduction

Remembrance Day was first observed in 1919 throughout the British Commonwealth. It was originally called “Armistice Day” **to commemorate armistice agreement that ended the First World War** on Monday, November 11, 1918, at 11 a.m.—on the eleventh hour of the eleventh day of the eleventh month. During the Second World War **Remembrance commemorations declined as focus switched from remembering the previous war to fighting the current one**, and after 1945 both wars were remembered during services that were held on the Sunday closest to November 11th.

Increasingly, the contemporary commemorations of Remembrance Day seek to mark the Veterans of all military conflicts in which Canadians have been engaged. It is to be fully expected that memory and knowledge about the 2 World Wars will diminish with time notably in the absence of school programs that aim at supporting education about the 20th century conflicts that served as the basis for Remembrance Day. That which follows looks at Canadians knowledge about the two World Wars by asking questions about when they respectively began, inviting respondents to self assess their knowledge, asking whether they participated in Veteran’s week commemorations and about their personal ties to the military.

The web survey was conducted by Leger for the Association for Canadian Studies from November 11 to 13, 2022, with 1,537 Canadians, 18 years of age or older, randomly recruited from LEO’s online panel.

A margin of error cannot be associated with a non-probability sample in a panel survey. For comparison, a probability sample of 1,537 respondents would have a margin of error of $\pm 2.51\%$, 19 times out of 20.

One in four Canadians don't know when World War 1 broke out and one in three don't know the start date for World War 2

In what year did World War I start?	
1909	4%
1914	75%
1919	5%
1924	1%
1929	1%
I don't know	13%

In what year did World War II start?	
1919	1%
1929	3%
1939	67%
1942	13%
1945	4%
I don't know	12%

Most Canadians say they are not knowledgeable about World War I but a slight majority feel that they are knowledgeable about World War II

Knowledgeable about World War I	
TOTAL AGREE	40%
Strongly agree	7%
Somewhat agree	33%
TOTAL DISAGREE	57%
Somewhat disagree	36%
Strongly disagree	21%
I don't know	3%

Knowledgeable about World War II	
TOTAL AGREE	52%
Strongly agree	12%
Somewhat agree	40%
TOTAL DISAGREE	46%
Somewhat disagree	31%
Strongly disagree	15%
I don't know	3%

Those Canadians who estimate higher knowledge about World War II are most likely to select the correct start date

In what year did World War II start?	I am quite knowledgeable about the history of World War II - Do you strongly agree, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree or strongly disagree with each of the following?			
	Strongly agree	Somewhat agree	Somewhat disagree	Strongly disagree
1919	0.5%	0.7%	1.9%	1.3%
1929	0.5%	2.8%	4.7%	4.3%
1939	91.4%	82.2%	55.5%	38.3%
1942	5.4%	8.9%	17.7%	20.0%
1945	1.1%	2.6%	5.7%	5.2%
I don't know	1.1%	2.8%	14.5%	30.9%
	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Some one in four Canadians say that they participated in Veteran's week commemorations

Do you participate in Veterans Week's commemorations this year	
Yes	27%
No	69%
I don't know	4%

Nearly one in two Canadians say they have a family member who served in the military while one in four say they've considered serving in the military

Do you have a family member who served in the military -	
Yes	44%
No	53%
I don't know	3%

Have you ever considered serving in the military - Please answer with yes or no to the following questions:	
Yes	24%
No	74%
I don't know	1%

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