

# **Canadians' Knowledge about the Charter of Rights: Marking 75 years since the adoption of the UN's Universal Declaration of Human Rights**

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# Introduction

To mark the 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the UN Declaration Universal Declaration of Human Rights (adopted on December 10<sup>th</sup>, 1948) , the Association for Canadian Studies asked Leger Marketing to conduct a survey of Canadians that looked at knowledge of the Canadian Charter of Rights, at those rights that Canadians feel are currently most in need of protection. We also asked a question on whether Canadians felt we're all born with an equal chance to succeed in the country, a variation on Article 1 of the UN Declaration which states that: "All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights...".

## Part 1

How familiar are Canadians with our Charter of Rights and Freedoms? According to a Leger survey for the Association for Canadian Studies, some one in three Canadians say they have read the Charter. And yet, Canadians are divided when asked whether "Canada is founded upon principles that recognize the supremacy of God and the rule of law" despite that being the opening line in the Charter. Also while most Canadians recognize that the government of Canada can limit rights and freedoms, a substantial percentage either disagree or don't know that to be the case. We also asked which right (s) Canadians felt were most in need of protection and it was freedom of expression and the right to privacy that emerged as the top answers.

## Methodology

The Leger survey was conducted during the week of September 25<sup>th</sup>, 2023 for the Association for Canadian Studies and the Metropolis Institute via web panel with 1502 Canadians. A margin of error cannot be associated with a non-probability sample in a panel survey for comparison purposes. A probability sample of 1502 respondents would have a margin of error of  $\pm 2.5\%$ , 19 times out of 20

# Some one in three Canadians say that they have read the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms

I have read the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms.	Total	Male	Female	18-34	35-54	55+
Weighted Total	1502	732	761	401	483	618
Unweighted Total	1502	750	746	365	490	647
Yes	33%	40%	28%	43%	36%	25%
No	62%	57%	66%	51%	60%	70%
I don't know / I prefer not to answer	5%	3%	6%	6%	4%	5%
NET	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

Canadians are divided when asked whether Canada is founded upon principles that recognize the supremacy of God and the rule of law

Canada is founded upon principles that recognize the supremacy of God and the rule of law.	Total	Male	Female	18-34	35-54	55+	French	English	Other
Yes	38%	41%	36%	33%	36%	44%	25%	41%	45%
No	37%	40%	33%	41%	38%	33%	49%	35%	29%
I don't know / I prefer not to answer	25%	19%	31%	26%	26%	23%	26%	24%	26%
NET	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

# A majority of Canadians correctly acknowledge that the government of Canada can limit rights and freedoms; yet some 45% disagree or don't know

The government of Canada can limit rights and freedoms	Total	Male	Female	18-34	35-54	55+	French	English	Other
Yes	55%	58%	52%	54%	57%	54%	50%	56%	59%
No	30%	30%	30%	28%	30%	31%	36%	28%	27%
I don't know / I prefer not to answer	15%	12%	18%	18%	13%	15%	14%	16%	13%
NET	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

**Amongst those saying they have read the Charter of Rights, some 47% say that Canada is founded upon principles that recognize the supremacy of God and the rule of law**

Canada is founded upon principles that recognize the supremacy of God and the rule of law.	I have read the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms	
	Yes	No
Yes	47.7%	34.4%
No	33.5%	39.2%
I don't know / I prefer not to answer	18.8%	26.4%
Total	100.0%	100.0%

# Amongst those saying they have read the Charter of Rights, some two in three correctly affirm that Canada can limit rights and freedoms while others disagree or don't know

The government of Canada can limit rights and freedoms. - Please answer yes or no to the following.	I have read the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. - Please answer yes or no to the following.	
	Yes	No
Yes	64.6%	51.4%
No	24.2%	33.4%
I don't know / I prefer not to answer	11.2%	15.2%
Total	100.0%	100.0%



# Freedom of expression finishes first when Canadians are asked to rank which right (s) is most in need of protection

Of the following, please rank in order which you think are most in need of protection in Canada	Total	Male	Female	18-34	35-54	55+
Freedom of expression/speech	17%	21%	14%	13%	19%	19%
The right to privacy	14%	14%	14%	13%	17%	12%
Gender equality	13%	10%	16%	14%	11%	12%
The right to vote	12%	14%	10%	7%	8%	19%
Protection from racial discrimination	12%	8%	15%	16%	12%	9%
Indigenous rights	8%	7%	9%	9%	8%	7%
Sexual orientation (2SLGBTQIA+)	6%	6%	5%	8%	6%	4%
Freedom of religion/conscience	5%	6%	4%	7%	5%	4%
I don't know / I prefer not to answer	5%	5%	5%	6%	4%	5%
Freedom of peaceful assembly	5%	5%	5%	5%	5%	4%
Minority language rights	3%	4%	3%	3%	3%	3%
Other, please specify	1%	1%	1%	0%	1%	1%

## Right to privacy and freedom of speech emerge as the two areas Canadians feel are most in need of protection when asked to name up to three

Of the following, please rank in order the top three that you think are most in need of protection in Canada (Three mentions cumulated):	Total	Male	Female	18-34	35-54	55+
The right to privacy	46%	46%	45%	43%	51%	43%
Freedom of expression/speech	42%	46%	37%	33%	43%	46%
Protection from racial discrimination	38%	33%	42%	40%	37%	37%
Gender equality	37%	32%	42%	38%	36%	37%
The right to vote	30%	31%	28%	19%	27%	39%
Indigenous rights	24%	22%	25%	27%	24%	21%
Freedom of peaceful assembly	20%	22%	19%	19%	21%	20%
Freedom of religion/conscience	19%	22%	17%	23%	19%	17%
Sexual orientation (2SLGBTQIA+)	19%	19%	19%	27%	17%	16%
Minority language rights	9%	9%	9%	9%	11%	8%
I don't know / I prefer not to answer	5%	5%	5%	6%	4%	5%
Other, please specify	3%	4%	2%	3%	3%	2%

# Many Canadians fail to distinguish the goals of our Charter from that of the US

Everyone in Canada has the right to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. - Please answer yes or no to the following	Total	Male	Female	18-34	35-54	55+
Yes	88%	85%	90%	85%	85%	91%
No	9%	11%	7%	12%	10%	7%
I don't know / I prefer not to answer	3%	4%	3%	4%	5%	2%
NET	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%