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Association for Canadian Studies

Association d'études canadiennes

Polling Research

**Does Canada belong primarily to
Indigenous Peoples? A question that
divides Canadians**

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Introduction

Indigenous peoples in Canada have hereditary rights which include self-government, title to land, property rights and treaty rights. While the Canadian government and courts recognize these rights, their specific nature and extent may vary and are the object of ongoing debate. There is also an increased acknowledgement that Canadians are on the historic lands of the First Nations. What do such acknowledgements imply as regards the perceived attachment of indigenous peoples to Canada. To mark National Day for Truth and Reconciliation, the Association for Canadian Studies commissioned the firm Leger to ask whether “Canada belongs first and foremost to Indigenous peoples” The answer reflected profound differences on the basis of age (young persons agreed, older disagreed), Immigrant status, students and retirees, ideological preference and views/knowledge of Canadian history.

The findings are based on a survey conducted via web panel by the firm Leger for the Association for Canadian Studies between August 29 and 31, 2025 with 1627 Canadians. While no margin of error can be associated with a non-probability sample of 1627 respondents would have a margin of error of $\pm 2.52\%$, 19 times out of 20

Younger Canadians are far more likely to agree than older ones that Canada belongs first and foremost to indigenous peoples

Canada belongs first and foremost to Indigenous peoples	Total	Between 18 and 24	Between 25 and 34	Between 35 and 44	Between 45 and 54	Between 55 and 64	65+
Yes	38%	58%	52%	44%	35%	30%	24%
No	43%	29%	27%	37%	42%	51%	57%
I don't know / I prefer not to answer	19%	13%	21%	20%	22%	19%	19%

Immigrants agree that Canada belongs first and foremost to indigenous peoples while those born in Canada disagree

	Canada belongs first and foremost to Indigenous peoples	
	Born in Canada	Born outside of Canada
Yes	36%	50%
No	45%	28%
I don't know / I prefer not to answer	19%	22%
Total	100.0%	100.0%

Majorities in Quebec, the Prairies and BC don't agree that Canada belongs first and foremost to Indigenous Peoples

	Total	Atl.	QC	ON	MB/SK	AB	BC
Canada belongs first and foremost to Indigenous peoples							
Yes	38%	40%	31%	46%	34%	32%	33%
No	43%	39%	51%	35%	53%	38%	50%
I don't know / I prefer not to answer	19%	21%	18%	19%	14%	30%	17%

Some three in four Indigenous Peoples agree that Canada belongs first and foremost to Indigenous Peoples but more non-Indigenous disagree than agree

Canada belongs first and foremost to Indigenous peoples.	Not Indigenous	Indigenous
Yes	37%	73%
No	43%	22%
I don't know / I prefer not to answer	20%	5%
Total	100.0%	100.0%

Students agree that Canada belongs first and foremost to Indigenous peoples while retirees hold the opposing view

Canada belongs first and foremost to Indigenous peoples	Canada belongs first and foremost to Indigenous peoples	
	Student	Retired
Yes	60%	23%
No	27%	58%
I don't know / I prefer not to answer	13%	19%
Total	100.0%	100.0%

Ideology is a major driver when it comes to whether Canadians feel Canada belongs first and foremost to Indigenous peoples with those identifying with the left very much of that view and those on the right not in agreement

Canada belongs first and foremost to Indigenous peoples	Where would you place yourself on the ideological spectrum?				
	Left	Left of Centre	Centre	Right of Centre	Right
Yes	69%	45%	35%	20%	27%
No	19%	35%	40%	70%	61%
I don't know / I prefer not to answer	12%	20%	25%	10%	12%
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Amongst those reporting a good knowledge of the history of Canada most disagree that Canada belongs first and foremost to Indigenous Peoples

Canada belongs first and foremost to Indigenous peoples. -	I have a good knowledge of the history of Canada. -	
	Yes	No
Yes	39%	37%
No	45%	37%
I don't know / I prefer not to answer	16%	26%
Total	100.0%	100.0%

Amongst those who think that the teaching of Canada's history is overly negative a majority disagree that Canada belongs first and foremost to Indigenous peoples while those with the contrary view on teaching do believe it belongs first and foremost to Indigenous Peoples

Canada belongs first and foremost to Indigenous peoples	The teaching of Canada's history focuses too much on the negative aspects of the past.			
	Strongly agree	Somewhat agree	Somewhat disagree	Strongly disagree
Yes	28%	33%	38%	56%
No	63%	48%	39%	26%
I don't know / I prefer not to answer	9%	19%	23%	18%
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

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