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How Systemic is the perception about systemic racism in Canada?

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Introduction

Systemic racism (also known as institutional racism) is when the societal rules and ways of operating are persistently unfair for certain people because of their race. Non-white persons often face difficulties as a result of systemic racism. There have been while systemic racism is something that happens on a large scale in society. It is racism in the system, in the way things are done. There can be systemic racism in laws, in institutions like schools, hospitals and policing/security.

There have been numerous calls on the part of civil society in Canada for governments and various institutions to acknowledge their systemic racism. Some have indeed done so while others have been reticent wanting to have some benchmark or baseline against which to document its existence in a given institution.

To provide further insight, we also asked whether Canadians had observed evidence of systemic racism in their province. The results vary across provinces, selected identity markers and other demographics.

The findings are based on surveys 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

Most Canadians say that they've viewed evidence of systemic racism but not uniformly: women more likely than men, younger more likely than older and Atlantic, British Columbians and Albertans less likely than others

I have observed evidence of systemic racism in my province	Total	Male	Female	18-34	35-54	55+
Yes	49%	42%	56%	57%	50%	44%
No	37%	45%	30%	27%	36%	44%
I don't know / I prefer not to answer	14%	13%	14%	15%	14%	13%

Majorities in Quebec. Ontario and the Prairies say that they've witnessed evidence of systemic racism but that's not the case in Atlantic Canada, Alberta and BC

I have observed evidence of systemic racism in my province	Total	Atl.	QC	ON	MB/SK	AB	BC
Yes	49%	44%	53%	52%	56%	41%	42%
No	37%	45%	38%	33%	29%	41%	44%
I don't know / I prefer not to answer	14%	11%	10%	15%	15%	18%	14%

Canada's francophones, anglophones and allophones have seen evidence of systemic racism to roughly similar degrees

I have observed evidence of systemic racism in my province. -	French	English	A language other than French or English
Yes	49%	49%	51%
No	39%	37%	29%
I don't know / I prefer not to answer	12%	14%	20%
Total	100%	100.0%	100.0%

Persons identifying as Black in Canada are far more likely to have seen evidence of systemic racism than others

I have observed evidence of systemic racism in my province	White	Non- White	Black
Yes	30%	49%	73%
No	49%	34%	19%
I don't know / I prefer not to answer	21%	17%	8%
	100.0%	100.0%	100%

Immigrants are only slightly more likely than non-immigrants to say that they've seen evidence of systemic racism

I have observed evidence of systemic racism in my province	Born in Canada	Born outside of Canada
Yes	49%	52%
No	38%	30%
I don't know / I prefer not to answer	13%	18%
Total	100.0%	100.0%

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