

FACTUM

Remembrance Day 2020: Another Casualty of COVID-19?

Fewer Canadians Will Wear Poppies (-14 pts) Or Attend Remembrance Day Ceremonies (-13 pts) Compared to Last Year

Toronto, Ontario, November 10, 2020 — The year 2020 has been difficult. COVID-19 has confined many Canadians to their homes, profoundly impacting the way in which they celebrate important events or milestones. Canada Day, Thanksgiving, weddings, funerals, and birthdays (to name a few) have all been scaled back, thanks to COVID-19. Remembrance Day will be no different: as the findings of this survey reveal, fewer Canadians will wear poppies (71%; -14 pts) or attend Remembrance Day ceremonies (28%; -13 pts) – virtually or in-person – than in 2019.

Those are some of the findings of the annual Remembrance Day survey commissioned by Historica Canada and conducted by Ipsos Canada. With so many Remembrance Day ceremonies cancelled or scaled back, planned attendance has taken a massive hit, falling thirteen points (-13 pts) from a high of four in ten (41%) last year. Fewer than three in ten (28%) will attend a Remembrance Day ceremony this year - but unlike previous years, this figure also includes virtual attendance. Despite that, estimated attendance is still likely to be well below what was observed last year.

The results indicate that virtual attendance or alternate forms of commemoration are no substitute for the ability to attend events in person. Only one in ten (11%) say they will decorate their porch, windows, or driveway to commemorate Remembrance Day due to COVID-19 restrictions on public gatherings. Those living in the prairies (Manitoba/Saskatchewan) are among the most likely to report that they will be doing this in commemoration of Remembrance Day (26% vs. 10% in the rest of Canada).

Significant anniversaries that occurred earlier in 2020 (but after the pandemic hit), have seen lower recognition than what might otherwise have been expected. One in ten (11%) say they commemorated the 75th anniversary of the liberation of the Netherlands earlier in the year. Only two in ten (19%) commemorated the 75th anniversary of the end of the Second World War.

Fewer than half (44%) have attended a Remembrance Day ceremony in the past by choice. That is 11 per cent lower than in 2019.

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Missing in Education: Many Canadians Lack Knowledge of Historic Wars, Pandemics & Crises

This year's poll also reflects a widespread lack of awareness through traditional education forms of some of the seminal conflicts and events in which Canadians have been involved. One in six (16%) Canadians never learned about the First World War, Second World War, Korean War, Persian Gulf War, Seven Years War, War of 1812, American Revolution, North West Rebellion, Bubonic Plague, Spanish Flu, Oka Crisis, or the October Crisis in school. Two thirds of respondents learned about the First World War (67%) and the Second World War (73%) in school. Fewer than half (44%) learned about the next most studied conflict – the War of 1812. As one measure of the effects of that, only two percent (2%) of respondents correctly rank the Second World War as having caused the most deaths, followed in order by the 1918 influenza (the Spanish Flu), the First World War, the Bubonic Plague, and the Korean War.

That lack of attention to many of Canadian history's key conflicts, events, and crises in the classroom is reflected in a number of ways. Only three-fifths (59%) of respondents think they know more about Canadian than American military history; that figure represents a significant decline (-8 pts) year-over-year. Put another way, four in ten (41%) respondents feel they know more about the history of the United States than Canada.

Almost half (45%) of respondents think they know about the history of Black, Indigenous, and racialized groups in Canadian military service during the First and Second World Wars. But survey evidence suggests otherwise: only fourteen percent (14%) correctly identify the No. 2 Construction Battalion as Canada's first and only All-Black battalion. Slightly more than half (56%) recognize Japanese Canadians as the group forcibly evacuated from the West Coast of Canada during the Second World War. Overall, 11 per cent offer correct responses to both questions.

Canada's Veterans Are an Invaluable Commodity

Veterans can be a great source of knowledge in terms of educating youth about conflict. The vast majority (89%) of respondents agree with that assertion, although by a slightly lower proportion (-5 per cent) than a year ago. They agree that hearing veterans speak about their experiences is the best way for youth to understand conflict. Less than three in ten (28%) of respondents believe that youth under 30 understand the sacrifices of those who have fought and died in wars.

Most Canadians (71%) think Remembrance Day ceremonies will become smaller as time progresses and the last surviving veterans of the Second World War are no longer with us. At the same time, there are indications that Canadians would like to see more done in terms of commemorating more recent conflicts. Almost three quarters (73%) of respondents agree with the idea of building a Canadian memorial, similar to the Vietnam Wall in Washington, that lists the names of all military personnel who have died in combat in modern times (post-Korean War conflicts including Afghanistan).



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About the Study

These are some of the findings of an Ipsos poll conducted between October 27th and 28th, 2020, on behalf of Historica Canada. For this survey, a sample of 1,000 Canadians were interviewed. Weighting was then employed to balance demographics to ensure that the sample's composition reflects that of the Canadian population according to Census data and to provide results intended to approximate the sample universe. The precision of Ipsos online polls is measured using a credibility interval. In this case, the poll is accurate to within ± 3.5 percentage points, 19 times out of 20, had all Canadians been polled. The credibility interval will be wider among subsets of the population. All sample surveys and polls may be subject to other sources of error, including, but not limited to coverage error, and measurement error.

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