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Dominion Institute / Ipsos-Reid Poll

5th Annual Canada Day History Quiz

Friday, June 29, 2001

Poll gauges Americans' and Canadians' knowledge of equivalent historical facts

Fully six in ten (63%) Americans pass compared to only 39% of Canadians

July 1, 2001 - Dominion Institute / Ipsos-Reid poll

conducted for Canada Day 2001 shows Americans know their history and civics far better than Canadians. In total, 1,003 adult Canadians and 1,000 adult Americans were surveyed on their knowledge of equivalent historical and civic facts. For example, in the Canadian portion of the survey Canadians were asked to name the first Prime Minister of Canada, whereas in the American portion of the survey, Americans were asked to name the first President of the United States. The American survey was conducted between June 2nd and June 3rd, 2001 and the Canadian survey between June 5th and June 7th, 2001 by Ipsos-Reid.

The results show that six in ten (63%) Americans passed the quiz (scoring 5 or more correct responses out of 10) compared to 39% of Canadians. Highlights include: 1 in 4 (26%) Canadians think Canada is a representative republic; 22% believe "Life Liberty and the Pursuit of Happiness" is Canada's constitutional slogan; and fully 90% of Americans could name their first President versus 54% of Canadians who could name Canada's first PM.

The Dominion Institute's founder and Executive Director, Rudyard Griffiths comments, "So much for the dumb American thesis!" Griffiths continues: "Canadians would do well to pay attention to this poll. It provides yet another indication that the strength of a nation's identity rests on its citizens sharing a common body of factual knowledge. In a world of globalization and value change, Canada should take heed of the American example."

Today's release marks the fifth consecutive Canada Day that the Dominion Institute and Ipsos-Reid have released a survey on public knowledge of history and civics.

The Dominion Institute is a Canadian charity dedicated to promoting greater knowledge of the country's history. Ipsos-Reid is Canada's premier public opinion research firm.

For more information on this release please contact:

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Detailed tabular results for this study can be accessed online at [Ipsos-Reid](#)

Analysis of Survey Findings

Methodology



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BREAKING NEWS

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1,003 adult Canadians and 1,000 adult Americans were surveyed yielding results which are accurate to within ± 3.1 percentage points, 19 times out of 20, of what they would have been had the entire adult Canadian and American populations been polled. The margin of error will be larger within regions and for other sub-groupings of the survey population. These data were statistically weighted to ensure the sample's regional and age/sex composition reflects that of the actual Canadian and American populations.

American and Canadian respondents were each given separate ten item questionnaires. Two questions had identical Canadian and American correct answers, for example, "In 1944, [Canadians/Americans] joined in an event called D-Day. What happened on that day?" The remaining eight questions tested respondents' knowledge of equivalent historical facts or events specific to that country. For example, Canadian respondents were asked, "who was the first Canadian in space?" while American respondents were asked, "who was the first American in space?"

Overview

Overall, six in ten (63%) Americans passed the quiz (scoring 5 or more correct responses out of 10), while 39 per cent of Canadians passed and 60 per cent failed (scoring 4 or fewer correct responses out of 10).

The exact questions that were used for the survey and percentage findings for both Canadian and American respondents are presented at the end of this release.

The following are some of the highlights of the poll.

Comparative Analysis

Generally, Americans outperformed Canadians throughout the survey. An analysis reveals that Americans (87%) scored significantly higher than Canadians (41%) on identifying, between three options, the correct constitutional slogan for their country. Some 22% of Canadians believe that "Life, Liberty and the Pursuit of Happiness" is Canada's constitutional slogan. Americans were also far more likely to be able to recite the first line of their national anthem (79%) versus 37% of Canadians who could recite the first line of Oh Canada. Americans also demonstrated greater knowledge of their first President (89%) as compared to the 54% of Canadians who could name Canada's first PM.

Similarly, 61% of Americans were able to give 1776 as the year the Declaration of Independence was issued, while 45% of Canadians correctly answered 1867 as the year of Confederation. Americans (36%) were also more likely to correctly identify the decade in which American women first were given the right to vote in elections than Canadians were able to give the decade in which Canadian women first received this right (13%).

However, Canadians were more than twice as likely as Americans to be able to name the first person their country sent into space (33%). Only 14% of Americans correctly identified Alan Shepard as first American in space. Canadians (38%) were also more than twice as likely as Americans (18%) to be able to name one of the wars Canada was invaded by the United States.

The question that asked respondents to pick from three options the one that best described their country's system of government, produced interesting incorrect responses in the US and Canada. While 72% Americans correctly identified the government of the United States as a representative republic, more than one in ten (13%) respondents volunteered that the government of the United States is best described as a constitutional monarchy. While 56% of Canadians could correctly identify the Canada's form of government as a constitutional monarchy, fully 1 in 4 (26%) believed that Canada is a representative republic.

Highest Correct Responses

The questions that resulted in the highest correct response rates for Canadians were identifying the first Prime Minister of Canada as Sir John A. Macdonald (54%) and choosing constitutional monarchy as the best description of the government of Canada (56%). The top response rates on the American quiz were identifying the first President of the United States as George Washington (90%) and choosing "Life, Liberty and the Pursuit of Happiness" as the slogan associated with the U.S. Constitution (87%).

Least Correct Response

The questions that resulted in the least correct responses among Canadians were identifying the period 1910-1919 in which women were first given the right to vote in elections (13%) and naming the Charter of Rights and Freedoms as the part of the Constitution which protects Canadian's rights and freedoms (29%). The lowest correct response rates on the American quiz were identifying Alan Shepard as the first American in space (14%) and naming a war where the U.S. invaded Canada (18%).

Age

In both countries, older individuals performed better than younger ones. In Canada, on average 44 per cent of those aged 35 and older passed the quiz (scoring at least 5 correct responses out of 10) compared to 26 per cent of those 18 to 34 years. In the U.S., under half (46%) of 18 to 34 year olds passed the quiz compared to seven in ten of those 35 to 54 (69%) or 55+ (73%).

The answers on which older Canadians scored better than younger Canadians include naming the invasion of Normandy/France/Europe as the event which occurred on D-Day (53% of 35+ versus 35% of 18 to 34), Marc Garneau as the first Canadian in space (41% of 35+ versus 17% of 18 to 34). In the U.S., older individuals knew that the government of the United States is best described as a representative republic (75% of 35+ versus 67% of 18 to 34), that the Declaration of Independence was issued in 1776 (66% of 35+ versus 48% of 18 to 34) and that women gained the right to vote in elections in the 1920s (42% of 35+ versus 24% of 18 to 34) as compared with younger age groups.

Region

In Canada, marked regional differences were apparent. Respondents in Ontario (47%), Saskatchewan/Manitoba (44%) and British Columbia (43%) were more likely to pass than those in Atlantic Canada (32%) and Quebec (26%).

Men in both countries performed better than women. In Canada, 45 per cent of men passed the quiz, while 33 per cent of women passed. The questions on which men scored significantly higher than women included describing the events of D-Day as the invasion of Normandy/France/Europe (59% men versus 36% women), and naming the first Canadians in space as Marc Garneau (41% men versus 25% women). However, equal numbers of Canadian men (13%) and women (12%) named 1910 to 1919 as the decade in which women gained the right to vote in elections. And, more women (44%) than men (29%) were able to recite the first line of Canada's national anthem.

In the United States, 67% of men pass the quiz compared to 57% of women. The questions on which men scored significantly higher than women include describing D-Day as the invasion of Normandy/Europe/France (59% men versus 30% women) and naming the year the Declaration of Independence was issued (66% men and 56% women).

Tracking

For Canada only, comparative analyses of the 2001 Canada Day poll with past surveys conducted by Ipsos-Reid indicate that Canadians' knowledge of their country is static. The 1998 Canada Day quiz revealed that 44% (versus 41% in 2001) could correctly identify Canada's constitutional slogan. 1997 Citizenship Survey found that 32% of Canadians could identify the Charter as the part of the constitution that protects their rights and freedoms (versus 29% in 2001). 1997 Canada Day poll of 18-24 year olds found 36% could name the year of Confederation (versus 27% of 18 to 34 year olds in 2001).

Survey Result Summary Chart

Please refer to attached media release for complete summary charts.

For further information regarding this media release, please contact:

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