

INNOVATIVE RESEARCH GROUP / DOMINION INSTITUTE AMERICAN MYTHS SURVEY

The Dominion Institute and Innovative Research Group release the findings of a major study that assesses Canadian and American impressions of themselves and of each other. Participants were asked to respond to questions dealing with issues ranging from societal values to assimilation of respective immigrant populations and healthcare to national security. The results were used as the basis for a five-part series in the National Post - "American Myths".

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Innovative Research Group / Dominion Institute

AMERICAN MYTHS SURVEY

Two-in-five (38%) Canadians feel that US President, George W. Bush, is a greater danger to the world than Osama bin Laden. While 68% of Canadians hold a favourable impression of Americans as individuals.

A strong majority of both Canadians (70%) and Americans (76%) believe that new immigrants should adapt to their respective countries culture and way of life.

Three-quarters (73%) of Canadians feel that Canada's Charter of Rights and Freedoms allows for more individual freedom than American's receive under their Constitution's Bill of Rights.

Only 58% of Canadians agree with the statement that 'if there was a political issue I really cared about, I could make a difference by participating in the political process'. This is in comparison to 73% of American respondents.

Friday, February 22, 2005. At a tumultuous time in American history, and a time when Canadians and Americans alike are questioning their own place in the world as global citizens, The Dominion Institute and Innovative Research Group have undertaken a study to analyze how Canadians and Americans alike feel about the state of their own nation in



comparison to their neighbour, on issues including health care, justice, defence, and American and Canadian values.

In November of 2005, this poll was used as a foundation for a five-part series in the National Post entitled 'American Myths'.

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For full tabular results, please visit the Ipsos Reid website at www.ipsos.ca.

Methodology...

These are the findings of an Innovative Research Group poll commissioned by the Dominion Institute from Oct 20 to Oct 25, 2005. For the survey, a representative, randomly selected sample of 1016 adult Canadians and 1000 randomly selected adult Americans, were interviewed via telephone. With a sample of this size, the results are considered accurate to within ± 3.1 percentage points, 19 times out of 20, of what they would have been had the entire adult population been polled. The margin of error will be larger within regions and for other sub-groupings of the survey population. This data were weighted to ensure that the sample's regional and age/sex composition reflects that of the actual Canadian population according to Census data.

American and Canadian opinions of each other on health care and on individual freedom.

For years, Canadians have been told by critics of Canada's healthcare system that service and care is superior in the United States, while many Americans look north in envy of our universal health care system. But where would you want to be treated if you had a serious medical problem? A summary of the significant results from the poll are as follows:

- 76% of Americans stated that they would receive better treatment in the US, in comparison to 71% of Canadians who feel they would receive better care in Canada
- Albertans held the greatest amount of faith in the Canadian health care system, with only 17% suggesting that better care could be sought South of the border. This in comparison to Canadians from Saskatchewan and Manitoba, 29% of whom feel that they could find better treatment in the United States.
- Interestingly those with the greatest amount of faith in their respective system were American seniors and Americans with household incomes of \$50,000 – \$75,000 (at 87% and 84%, respectively).

Innovative Research Group also analyzed American and Canadian sentiment towards the individual freedoms enshrined by the American Bill of Rights and the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

- Three-quarters (73%) of Canadians feel that Canada's Charter of Rights and Freedoms allows for more individual freedom than Americans receive under their Constitution's Bill of Rights.
- Young Canadians, aged 18 - 24 (86%), who have lived under the Charter for their entire lives, are the most likely to believe that Canadians receive more individual freedoms under the Charter than Americans do under their Bill of Rights.
- Regionally, Atlantic Canada (82%) and Québec (80%) are more likely than those in other regions, specifically Ontario (68%) and Alberta (66%) to say that the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms provides more protection for individual rights than does the American Bill of Rights.

Americans Feel More Empowered by their Political System than Do Canadians

There has been a marked decline in political participation on both sides of the border, which has been an equally major concern for both Canada and the United States. Theories are abound as to why this decline has occurred; perhaps citizens do not feel like they have a voice in the decision process, or that their participation would not make a difference, or perhaps that regardless of who is in power, their lives would not be very different.

- Three-quarters (73%) of Americans agree that "if there was a political issue I really cared about, I think I could make a difference by participating in the political process. This compares to just 58% of Canadians who hold a similar position. While one-in-three (36%) Canadians disagree that they would not make a difference.

- In Canada, the most optimistic residents are found in Manitoba and Saskatchewan, 69% of whom feel they could make a difference if they chose to – this is contrary to just 51% of Québécois; the least optimistic in the country.
- Americans with any type of College or University education (77%) felt more empowered than those with a high school (or less) education (63%).

Canadian Impressions of Our Own National Defence and Security

At the end of the Second World War, Canada was viewed as a significant middle-power. However, over the last sixty years, the Canadian Forces were allowed to slip and many claim that we have not been pulling our weight. This coming at a time when, arguably, as a result of international terrorism, Canadian domestic security has never been threatened more. Furthermore, Canadians and Americans alike view Osama bin Laden as a greater threat to world security than American President George W. Bush - however, with respect to Canadians, only slightly.

- Two-fifths of Canadians (40%; 16% strongly) agree with the statement “when it comes to national defence, Canada has been getting a free ride from the United States since the end of the Second World War.”
- Québécois (31%) were the least likely to agree with this statement, while Albertans (51%) were the most likely.
- 60% of “Pro-Bush” Canadians (those who have a favourable opinion of both Americans in general and US President George W. Bush) agree with the view that Canada has been riding on National Defence. While even 30% of “Anti-American” (those with an unfavourable opinion of both Americans in general and US President George W. Bush) agree with the statement.

- 70% of Americans and just 49% of Canadians suggest that Osama bin Laden is a greater threat to world security than American President George W. Bush. While 38% of Canadians, and one-in-five (21%) of Americans thought the opposite.
- Of 'Pro-Bush' Canadians, a vast majority (84%) selected Osama bin Laden as the greater danger – with even 10% of this group selecting Mr. Bush. While 57% of “Anti-American” Canadians suggested that Mr. Bush was the greater danger to world security.
- Interestingly, in Québec and BC, the majority (45% and 44%, respectively) were of the opinion that George W. Bush was a greater threat to the world than Osama bin Laden.
- 26% of Canadians can be termed “Pro-Bush”, 18% are considered to be “Anti-American” and 51% of Canadians fall into the category of “Bush sceptics” – with a favourable impression of Americans individually, but hold an unfavourable opinion of President Bush. Interesting to note that 48% of Canadians hold a very unfavourable opinion of Mr. Bush.

Canadian and American Values and Our Level of Comfort in Each Others Country

With Canadians and Americans watching the same TV programs and movies, listening to the same music, and following the same news issues, are Canadian and American values converging? And with such a similar culture and habits, do we feel comfortable in visiting our respective neighbour?

- Just one-in-five (24%) Canadians and even fewer (17%) Americans feel that Canadian and American values are becoming more similar – while 27% of Canadians and 20% of Americans feel that the values of the two nations are becoming increasingly different.

- Canadians with a university (36%) or a post-graduate degree (39%) are more likely than those without to feel that Canadian and American values are diverging. Conversely, those with a high school education or less (51%) feel that there is no comparative change in American and Canadian values.
- When asked if they “feel at home whenever you visit the United States”, 44% of Canadians (16% strongly) agree, while 44% (19% strongly) disagree.

Canada and the United States; Multicultural Mosaic? Or Melting Pot?

Despite the official rhetoric of Canada being a multicultural mosaic and the United States being a melting pot, a majority of both Canadians (70%) and Americans (76%) believe that new immigrants should adapt to their new country’s way of life – suggesting that, in fact, both countries emulate a melting pot approach to immigration.

- To the contrary, one-fifth of Canadians (20%) and Americans (17%) say that the priority of new immigrants to Canada and the US should be to sustain the culture of their home country.
- Of Canadians aged 18-24, 48% suggest that new Canadians should sustain their home culture, while 46% say they should adopt to Canadian culture. While among Canada’s older population, those aged 55 or older eight-in-ten (83%) feel that immigrants to Canada should adopt the Canadian way of life. A nearly identical pattern is found in the United States.
- 67% of Canadians believe that an immigrant to Canada has a better chance of getting ahead than does an immigrant in the United States. Albertans, at 79%, were the most likely of any Canadians to hold this perspective.