

Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation



A REPORT FROM
THE CONFEDERATION
OF TOMORROW
2021 SURVEY OF CANADIANS

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The **Confederation of Tomorrow** surveys are annual studies conducted by an association of the country's leading public policy organizations: the **Environics Institute for Survey Research**, the **Canada West Foundation**, the **Centre D'Analyse Politique – Constitution et Fédéralisme**, the **Institute for Research on Public Policy**, the **Brian Mulroney Institute of Government** and the **Johnson Shoyama Graduate School of Public Policy**. The surveys give voice to Canadians about the major issues shaping the future of the federation and their political communities. The 2021 study consists of a survey of 5,814 adults, conducted online in the provinces between January 25 and February 17; and online and by telephone in the territories between January 25 and March 1. Previous surveys were conducted in January 2019 and January 2020. Survey results are weighted by region, gender, age, language, education, immigrant background and Indigenous identity, to ensure they are representative of the country as a whole. When results are reported for the territories (individually or combined), these are weighted separately to ensure they are representative of that region.

This report highlights results for Indigenous Peoples, as well as for non-Indigenous Canadians. The survey sample includes 775 individuals who self-identified as Indigenous, including 332 who identified as First Nations, 323 who identified as Métis, 91 who identified as Inuit, 16 who provided another identity (typically a specific First Nation), and 13 who did not specify.

Executive summary

In the early months of 2020, prior to the arrival of the COVID-19 pandemic in Canada, news headlines in the country were focused on the protests taking place over issues relating to Indigenous Peoples' rights and control over national resource development. These issues were soon overshadowed by the public health emergency triggered by the pandemic, but not necessarily forgotten. In the ensuing period, non-Indigenous Canadians have grown somewhat more supportive of Indigenous rights; and somewhat more concerned about the slow pace of progress being made toward reconciliation. And a growing proportion is also recognizing that individual Canadians have a role to play in efforts to bring about reconciliation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people.

This report presents the views of both Indigenous Peoples and non-Indigenous people. The results are taken from a survey conducted prior to the discovery in May 2021 of the graves of 215 First Nations children at the site of a former residential school in Kamloops, British Columbia.

Attachment to nations and communities

Seven in ten Indigenous Peoples feel either very or somewhat attached to their Indigenous nation or community. Attachment to one's Indigenous nation or community is stronger among younger Indigenous Peoples, especially in the case of those who identify as Métis.

Majorities of Indigenous Peoples also feel very attached to Canada, and almost nine in ten say they feel either very or somewhat attached. Younger Indigenous Peoples are more likely than their non-Indigenous counterparts to have a strong feeling of attachment to Canada. For most Indigenous Peoples, attachment to Canada and to their Indigenous nation or community overlaps: almost two in three feel attached to both.

Leadership and representation

Two in three Indigenous Peoples have a lot or some confidence in the leaders of Indigenous organizations.

Confidence in leaders of Indigenous organizations is highest among those who identify as Inuit, but is also relatively high among those who identify as First Nations or Métis. Indigenous Peoples are much more likely to have confidence in the leaders of Indigenous organizations than in other governments or political leaders.

Indigenous Peoples are much more likely than non-Indigenous Canadians to express confidence in leaders of Indigenous organizations; however, they are less likely than non-Indigenous Canadians to express confidence in other governments and political leaders. Compared to non-Indigenous Canadians, Indigenous Peoples are also somewhat more likely to say they have confidence in leaders of environmental groups.

When it comes to the question of which government best represents one's interests, the views of both Indigenous Peoples and non-Indigenous Canadians tend to be quite divided. In the case of Indigenous Peoples, a small plurality says their provincial or territorial government best represents their interests, but almost as many say it is their Indigenous government. Fewer say it is the federal government. Among those who identify as First Nations, a modest plurality say their Indigenous government best represents their interests.

Current relations between Indigenous Peoples and non-Indigenous Canadians

Canadians are divided in their view of the current state of relations between Indigenous Peoples and non-Indigenous people, though they are somewhat more likely to describe relations as negative than positive. Almost one in two describe current relations between Indigenous Peoples and non-Indigenous people in Canada today as either somewhat or very negative. The assessment of the state of relations soured somewhat in the first half of 2020, in the wake of the dispute over the land rights of the Wet'suwet'en nation that sparked protests and blockades across the country, but has now partly rebounded.

Currently, Indigenous Peoples are more likely than non-Indigenous people to view relations as positive. This represents a shift from the previous year, when opinions between the two groups were more similar.

Disputes between Indigenous Peoples and non-Indigenous governments in Canada frequently centre on the issue of control over land (or sea) and its resources. However, a majority of the Canadian public remains supportive of the principle that resource development on Indigenous lands require Indigenous Peoples' consent. Seven in ten Canadians currently agree that the development of natural resources on Indigenous land should not proceed unless the Indigenous community that lives there agrees.

Progress toward reconciliation

By a two-to-one margin, Canadians are more likely to believe that governments in Canada have not gone far enough in trying to advance reconciliation with Indigenous Peoples than they are to say that governments have gone too far. The view that governments in Canada have not gone far enough to advance reconciliation is most prevalent in the North and least prevalent in the West.

The proportion saying that governments have not gone far enough has increased over the past year, both nationally and in each region of the country. The change has been most pronounced in Atlantic Canada, especially in Nova Scotia.

Seven in ten Canadians also say that individual Canadians have a role to play in efforts to bring about reconciliation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people – a proportion that is higher than in either of the previous two years.

At the same time, three in five Canadians say they are familiar with the history of Indian residential schools in Canada. Familiarity is highest among Canadians age 18 to 24. Among non-Indigenous people, those who are very familiar with this history are more likely than those who are less familiar to say that individual Canadians have a role to play in advancing reconciliation.

Finally, Canadians are somewhat more likely to express optimism than pessimism about the prospects for making meaningful progress toward reconciliation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people. Just over one in two say they are very or somewhat optimistic that we will make meaningful progress toward reconciliation over the next decade. Indigenous Peoples and non-Indigenous people express similar degrees of optimism.

Attachment to nations and communities

Most Indigenous Peoples feel a sense of attachment to their Indigenous nation or community, as well as to Canada. Attachment to one's Indigenous nation or community is stronger among Indigenous Peoples who are younger, especially in the case of those who identify as Métis.

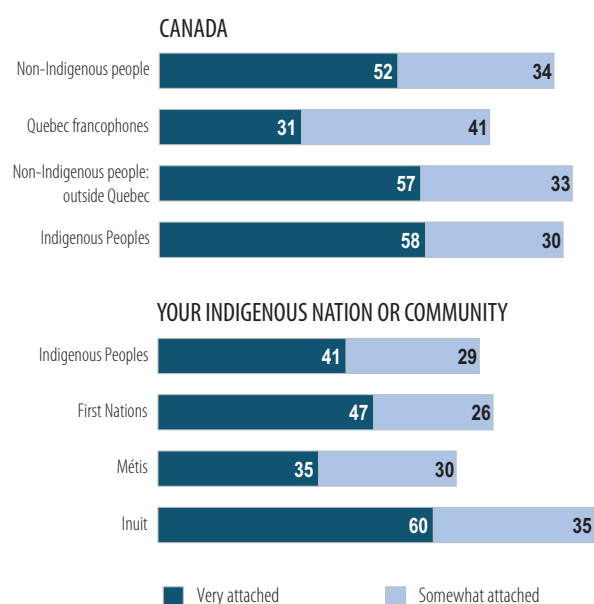
Indigenous Peoples and non-Indigenous Canadians generally feel a sense of attachment to Canada, to their province or territory, and to their city, town or region. But most Indigenous Peoples also have a similar feeling of attachment to their Indigenous nation or community.

Majorities of both Indigenous Peoples (58%) and non-Indigenous Canadians (52%) say they feel very attached to Canada, and almost nine in ten in each case (87% and 86%, respectively) say they feel either very or somewhat attached. Indigenous Peoples are about as likely as non-Indigenous Canadians living outside Quebec (57%) to say they feel very attached to Canada, but are much more likely than francophone Quebecers (31%) to feel this way. Strong attachment to Canada is slightly higher among those who identify as Inuit (63%) and First Nations (60%) than among Métis (52%).¹

A majority of Indigenous Peoples (70%) also say they feel either very (41%) or somewhat (29%) attached to their Indigenous nation or community. In this case, there is more variation among different Indigenous identity groups: strong attachment is highest among Inuit (60%), somewhat lower among First Nations peoples (47%), and lowest among Métis (35%).² In each case, majorities feel either very or somewhat attached.

Attachment to Canada and to your Indigenous nation or community

Very or somewhat attached



Q3
How attached do you feel to each of the following?

¹ The sample size for those who identify as Inuit (n=91) is small and results should be treated with caution. Note that this sample size is too small to allow for breakdowns of results for those who identify as Inuit by age or gender.

² Strong attachment to one's Indigenous nation or community appears much higher among First Nations peoples living on-reserve (70%) than among First Nations peoples living off-reserve (44%), but the sample size for those on reserve (n=79) is too small to report this finding with confidence.

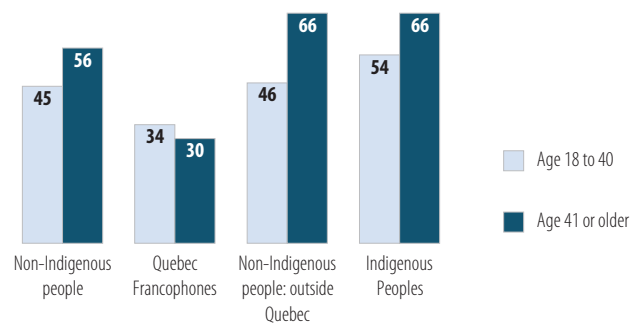
For most Indigenous Peoples, attachment to Canada and to their Indigenous nation or community overlaps: almost two in three (64%) feel attached (either very or somewhat) to both. Almost one in four (23%) feel attached to Canada, but not their Indigenous nation or community; and far fewer feel either attached to their Indigenous nation or community, but not to Canada (6%); or not attached to either (5%). By way of comparison, a similar proportion of francophone Quebecers feel attached to both Canada and to Quebec (69%); but almost one in four (23%) feel attached to Quebec, but not to Canada.

In the case of both Indigenous Peoples and non-Indigenous Canadians, the likelihood of feeling very attached to Canada increases with age. Younger Indigenous Peoples are *more likely* than younger non-Indigenous Canadians to have a strong feeling of attachment to Canada. In the case of those age 40 and under, 54 percent of Indigenous Peoples, compared to 45 percent of non-Indigenous Canadians, feel very attached to Canada. Among Indigenous Peoples age 40 and under, those who identify as First Nations feel more strongly attached to Canada than those who identify as Métis.

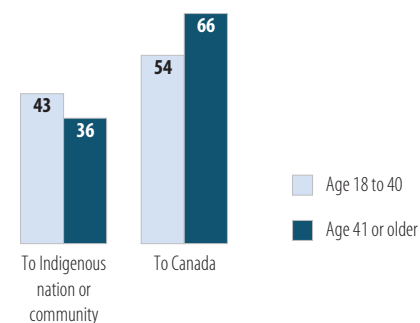
Attachment to Canada and to your Indigenous nation or community

By age group

VERY ATTACHED TO CANADA



INDIGENOUS PEOPLES VERY ATTACHED TO:



Q3

How attached do you feel to each of the following?

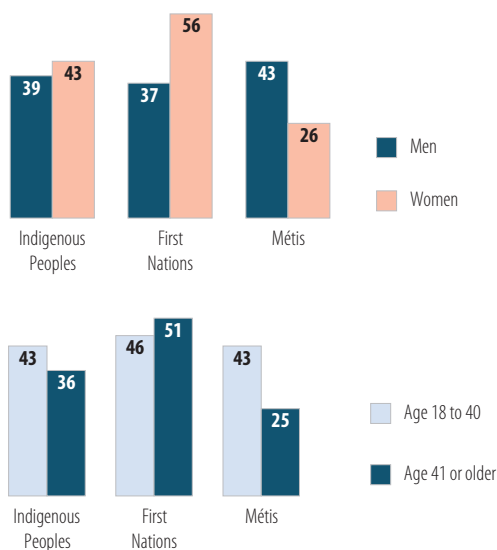
While the likelihood of feeling very attached to Canada increases with age, the reverse is true for strong feelings of attachment to one's Indigenous nation or community. Among Indigenous Peoples, those age 40 and under are slightly *more likely* (43%) to feel very attached to their Indigenous nation or community, compared to those age 41 and older (36%). This overall difference is the result of a much more significant variation between age groups among those who identify as Métis. While younger Métis are much more likely than their older counterparts to feel very attached to their Indigenous nation or community, the difference among age groups for those who identify as First Nations is not significant.

There is also a striking difference by gender between First Nations and Métis peoples. Overall, Indigenous men and women are more or less equally likely to say they feel very attached to their Indigenous nation or community. In the case of those who identify as First Nations, women are much more likely than men to express strong attachment; in the case of those who identify as Métis, the reverse is true. As a result, First Nations women (56%) are twice as likely as Métis women (26%) to say they feel very attached to their Indigenous nation or community. (Note that there are no significant differences between men and women, among either First Nations or Métis peoples, in the likelihood of feeling very attached to Canada.)

The survey finds that Indigenous Peoples and non-Indigenous Canadians are more or less equally likely to feel attached to their province or territory, with those who identify as Inuit being the most likely to say they feel very attached. In terms of attachment to one's city, town or region, the likelihood of feeling attached is slightly higher among non-Indigenous Canadians, compared to Indigenous Peoples. The difference is due mainly to the fact that those who identify as Métis are much less likely than others to say they feel very attached to their city, town or region.

Attachment to your Indigenous nation or community

Very attached, Indigenous Peoples only, by gender and age group



Q3

How attached do you feel to each of the following?

Leadership and representation

Indigenous Peoples are much more likely to say they have confidence in the leaders of Indigenous organizations than in other political leaders. Confidence in leaders of Indigenous organizations is highest among those who identify as Inuit, but is also relatively high among those who identify as First Nations or Métis. A modest plurality of those who identify as First Nations say that their Indigenous government best represents their interests.

Confidence in leaders

Currently, about one in two Canadians (52%) say they have a lot or some confidence in governments, and 39 percent express the same degree on confidence in political leaders. The level of confidence in leaders of Indigenous organizations falls in between these two (46%).

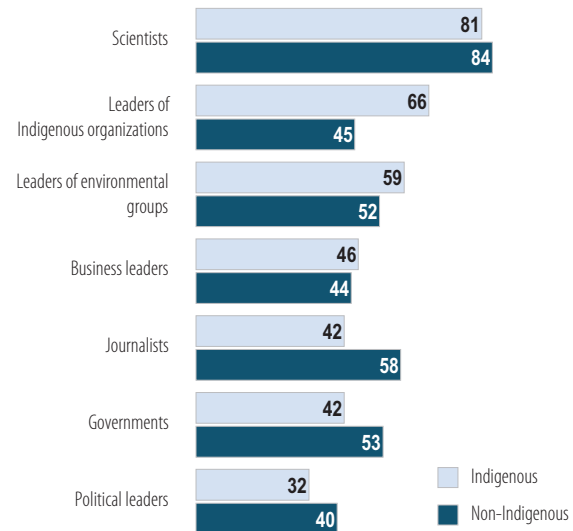
The patterns in the case of Indigenous Peoples and non-Indigenous Canadians are quite different. Indigenous Peoples are much more likely to say they have a lot or some confidence in the leaders of Indigenous organizations (66%) than in governments (42%) or political leaders (32%). Non-Indigenous Canadians are more likely to express this degree of confidence in governments (53%) than in the leaders of Indigenous organizations (45%). As is the case with Indigenous Peoples, non-Indigenous Canadians are least likely to express confidence in political leaders (40%).

Accordingly, there are important differences in the perspectives of Indigenous Peoples and non-Indigenous Canadians. Indigenous Peoples are 21 points *more likely* than non-Indigenous Canadians to express confidence in leaders of Indigenous organizations, but 11 points *less likely* to express confidence in governments, and eight points *less likely* to express confidence in political leaders.

Among Indigenous Peoples, confidence in leaders of Indigenous organizations is highest among those who identify as Inuit (87%), but is also relatively high among those who identify as First Nations (68%) or Métis (64%).

Confidence in leaders and institutions

A lot or some confidence



Q_CONF_1

In general, in Canada today, would you say you have a lot of confidence, some confidence, little confidence or no confidence at all in each of the following?

Among non-Indigenous Canadians, confidence in leaders of Indigenous organizations does not vary much across regions, with one noticeable exception: confidence in these leaders is noticeably lower in Alberta (35%). It is important to note that confidence in leaders of all types, and not just leaders of Indigenous organizations, is consistently lower in Alberta.³

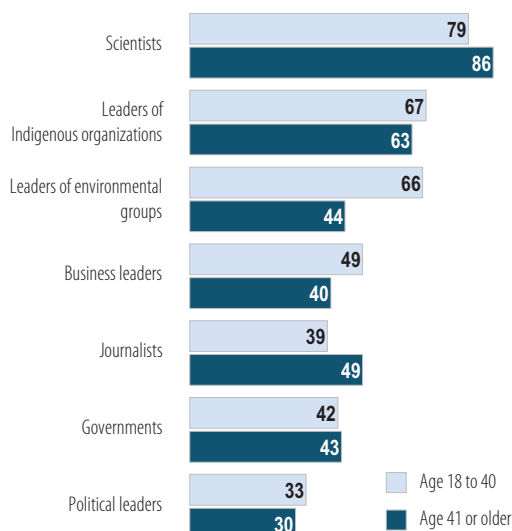
Compared to non-Indigenous Canadians, Indigenous Peoples are also somewhat *more likely* to say they have a lot or some confidence in leaders of environmental groups, and significantly *less likely* to say they have the same degree of confidence in journalists.

Those who identify as Métis are significantly less likely than their First Nations or Inuit counterparts to have confidence in governments, political leaders, leaders of environmental groups and journalists; but they are slightly more likely to have confidence in business leaders.

Among Indigenous Peoples, there are small differences in some cases by age, with those age 40 and under being somewhat more likely to have confidence in business leaders, and somewhat less likely to have confidence in journalists, than those age 41 and older. There is a much more striking difference in the case of leaders of environmental groups: Indigenous Peoples age 40 and under (66%) are 22 points more likely to have a lot or some confidence in these leaders than are their counterparts age 41 and older (44%). Younger non-Indigenous Canadians are also more likely than their older counterparts to have confidence in environmental leaders: the figures are 57% for those age 40 and under and 49% for those age 41 and older.

Confidence in leaders and institutions

A lot or some confidence, Indigenous Peoples only, by age group



Q_CONF_1

In general, in Canada today, would you say you have a lot of confidence, some confidence, little confidence or no confidence at all in each of the following?

³ Regional differences in confidence in other types of leader and institution are explored in: Environics Institute for Survey Research, *Addressing Climate Change in the Canadian Federation* (June 2021), forthcoming (see <https://www.environicsinstitute.org/projects>).

Which government best represents your interests?

Canadians in all regions and from all backgrounds are represented by several different types of government, including the federal government, their provincial or territorial government, and their municipal or regional government. In many cases, Indigenous Peoples are also represented by an Indigenous (First Nations) government, a land claims corporation, or a national or regional association.

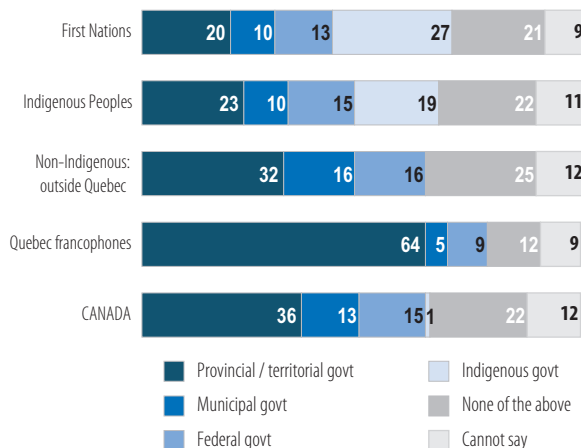
Views about which of these governments best represents one's interests are divided. Canadians as a whole are more likely to say their provincial or territorial government best represents their interests (36%), than they are to say it is the federal government (15%) or their municipal government (13%). About one in three either say no government best represents them (22%) or do not express an opinion either way (12%). The proportion saying their provincial or territorial government best represents their interests is much higher in Quebec (54%) and in the three territories (48%).

In the case of Indigenous Peoples as a whole, 23 percent say their provincial or territorial government best represents their interests, but almost as many (19%) say it is their Indigenous government. Fewer say it is the federal government (15%) or their municipal government (10%), and about one in three either say no government best represents them (22%) or do not express an opinion either way (11%). Among those who identify as First Nations, however, a modest plurality (27%) say their Indigenous government best represents their interests.

The proportion saying their Indigenous government best represents their interests is much higher among First Nations women (33%) compared to men (18%); and much higher among First Nations peoples age 40 and under (31%), compared to those age 41 and older (15%).

As mentioned, the proportion saying their provincial or territorial government best represents their interests is higher than average in the three territories. In the case of Nunavut, however, the territorial government is also in many ways an Inuit government, as Inuit comprise 85 percent of the territory's population. More than one in two (54%) of those living in Nunavut (and the same proportion of Inuit

Which government best represents your interests?



Q15

Which government do you believe best represents your interests?

in the territory) say they feel best represented either by the territorial government or by their Indigenous government – which may in practice be mean the same thing. Only two percent of Nunavut residents say they feel best represented by the federal government – the lowest proportion of any province or territory.

Current relations between Indigenous Peoples and non-Indigenous Canadians

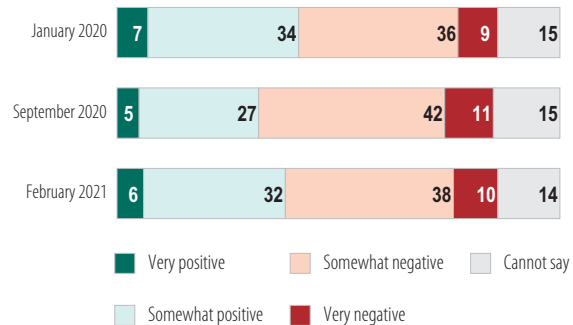
Almost one in two Canadians describe current relations between Indigenous Peoples and non-Indigenous people as negative, while somewhat fewer describe relations as positive. Indigenous Peoples are more likely than non-Indigenous people to view relations as positive. Majorities of both Indigenous and non-Indigenous people are supportive of the principle that the development of natural resources on Indigenous land should not proceed unless the Indigenous community that lives there agrees.

Relations between Indigenous Peoples and non-Indigenous people

Canadians are divided in their view of the current state of relations between Indigenous Peoples and non-Indigenous people, though they are somewhat more likely to describe relations as negative than positive. Almost one in two (48%) describe the current relations between Indigenous Peoples and non-Indigenous people in Canada today as either somewhat (38%) or very (10%) negative. Somewhat fewer (37%) describe relations and somewhat (32%) or very (6%) positive. Notably, few Canadians express strong views either way, with no more than one in ten describing relations between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people as either very positive or very negative.

The proportion offering a positive assessment of relations between Indigenous Peoples and non-Indigenous people is slightly lower compared to that seen in early 2020 (41%), but is a bit higher than that recorded in September of that year (32%).⁴ This assessment of the state of relations soured somewhat in the first half of 2020, in the wake of the dispute over the land rights of the Wet’suwet’en nation that sparked protests and blockades across the country, but has now partly rebounded.

Current state of relations between Indigenous Peoples and non-Indigenous people in Canada
2020 - 2021



Q34

Would you describe the current relations between Indigenous Peoples and non-Indigenous people in Canada today as very positive, somewhat positive, somewhat negative or very negative?

⁴ Data from September 2020 are from a survey of 2,023 Canadians commissioned by the Environics Institute and conducted by the Environics Research Group.

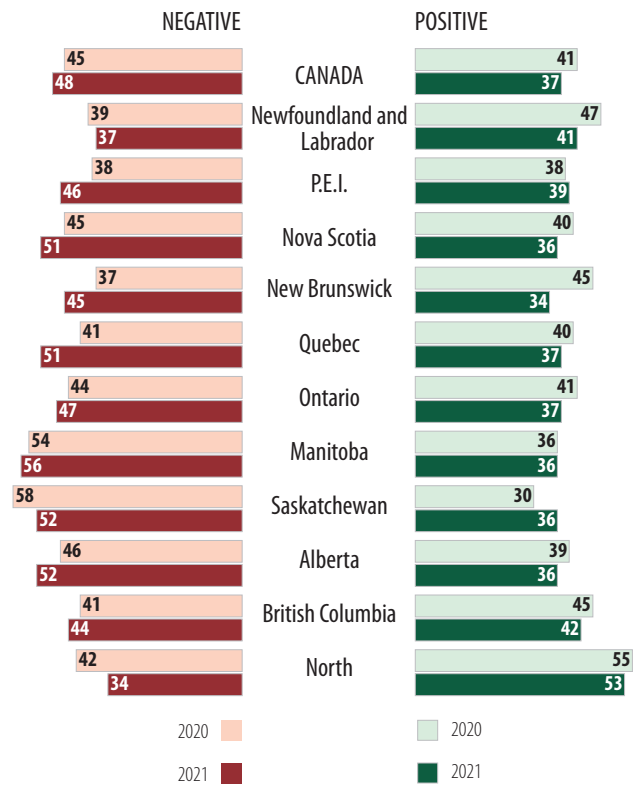
Regionally, relations between Indigenous Peoples and non-Indigenous people are most likely to be seen as positive in the North (53% – 16 points higher than the national average), and most likely to be seen as negative in the Prairies (53% – 5 points higher than the national average). Since January 2020, the largest decline in the proportion seeing relations as positive has occurred in New Brunswick (down 11 points).

Indigenous Peoples (47%) are more likely than non-Indigenous people (37%) to view relations as positive. This represents a shift from a year ago, when opinions between the two groups were more similar. Since January 2020, the proportion seeing relations as positive has increased among Indigenous Peoples (up 7 points), but decreased slightly among non-Indigenous people (down 4 points). Among Indigenous Peoples, the change is somewhat more pronounced among those who identify as Inuit or Métis (up 10 points in each case) than among those who identify as First Nations (up 4 points).

In February 2021, opinions about relations between Indigenous Peoples and non-Indigenous Canadians are somewhat more positive among younger Canadians (50% of 18 to 24-year-olds say relations between the two groups are positive), and also among first generation Canadians (43% of those born in another country say relations are positive, compared to 36% of those born in Canada). The proportion seeing relations as positive is especially high among recent immigrants (those who have lived in Canada for 10 years or less) (54%).

Current state of relations between Indigenous Peoples and non-Indigenous people in Canada

2020 - 2021, by province

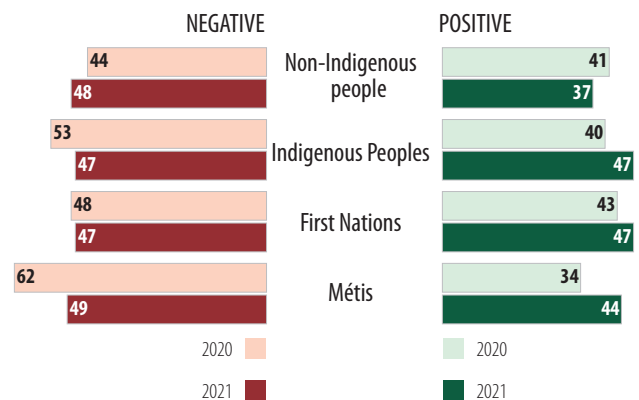


Q34

Would you describe the current relations between Indigenous Peoples and non-Indigenous people in Canada today as very positive, somewhat positive, somewhat negative or very negative?

Current state of relations between Indigenous Peoples and non-Indigenous people in Canada

2020 - 2021, by Indigenous identity



Q34

Would you describe the current relations between Indigenous Peoples and non-Indigenous people in Canada today as very positive, somewhat positive, somewhat negative or very negative?

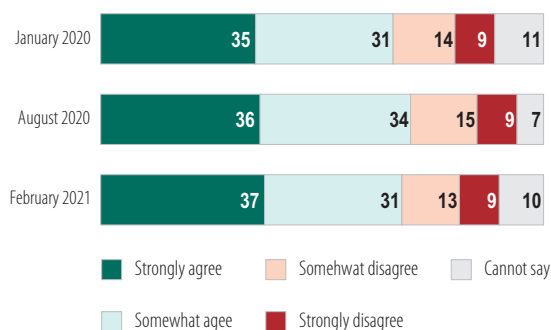
Resource development on Indigenous land

Disputes between Indigenous Peoples and non-Indigenous governments in Canada frequently centre on the issue of control over land (or sea) and its resources. This was the case in conflicts in 2020 with the Wet’suwet’en Nation in B.C., sparked by efforts to build pipelines through Wet’suwet’en territory; and with Mi’kmaq communities in Nova Scotia, sparked by disagreements over the regulation of the lobster fishery.

A majority of the Canadian public is supportive of the principle that the development of natural resources on Indigenous land should not proceed unless the Indigenous community that lives there agrees. This was the case in early 2020, prior to the eruption of the highly publicized conflict with the Wet’suwet’en Nation, when two in three Canadians (66%) agreed. It remained the case in August 2020, by which time agreement had reached 70 percent.⁵ In the current survey, conducted in February 2021, seven in ten Canadians (69%) continue to agree that “no one should be allowed to develop natural resources on Indigenous land unless the Indigenous community that lives there agrees.”

Agreement is both higher and much stronger among Indigenous Peoples than among non-Indigenous Canadians – but majorities in both cases find themselves on the same side of the issue. Among Indigenous Peoples, 80 percent agree that “no one should be allowed to develop natural resources on Indigenous land unless the Indigenous community that lives there agrees,” including a majority (63%) who strongly agree (strong agreement is especially high among those who identify as First Nations (69%)). Among non-Indigenous people, 68 percent agree, including 36 percent who strongly agree. Twenty-two percent of non-Indigenous people disagree, either somewhat (13%) or strongly (9%).

Development of natural resources on Indigenous land 2020 - 2021



Q22h

How much do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements?
No one should be allowed to develop natural resources on Indigenous land unless the Indigenous community that lives there agrees.

⁵ Data for August 2020 are from: A Better Canada: Values and Priorities after COVID-19, a survey of 3,008 Canadians conducted by the Environics Institute in partnership with Vancity.

In each province and territory, a majority agrees that the development of natural resources on Indigenous land should not proceed unless the Indigenous community that lives there agrees. Among the provinces, agreement ranges from a low of 61 percent in Alberta to a high of 71 percent in Nova Scotia, and 72 percent in PEI and Ontario. Agreement is also quite high in the North (71%), particularly in Nunavut (72%) and the Northwest Territories (75%).

Majorities also are in agreement regardless of both community size and economic circumstances.

- The level of agreement is similar among those living in big cities with populations of one million or more (68%), in mid-sized cities with populations between 100,000 and 999,999 (71%), and in smaller communities with populations under 100,000 (68%). Disagreement is highest in smaller communities in B.C. (30%), but even there, 62 percent remain in agreement.

- There is no noticeable difference in opinion on this question between those who are and are not comfortable with their household income; and those who are and are not concerned about job security for themselves or their family.

Majorities of supporters of each of the main federal political parties also agree that the development of natural resources on Indigenous land should not proceed unless the Indigenous community that lives there agrees. Agreement is higher among supporters of the NDP (85%), the Green Party (85%), the Liberal Party (77%) and the Bloc Québécois (71%) than among supporters of the Conservative Party (55%). While a majority of Conservative Party supporters outside of Western Canada (60%) are in agreement, Conservatives within the West are evenly split on the question (with 46% agreeing, and 47% disagreeing).

Progress toward reconciliation

By a two-to-one margin, Canadians are more likely to believe that governments in Canada have not gone far enough in trying to advance reconciliation with Indigenous Peoples than they are to say that governments have gone too far. The proportion saying that governments have not gone far enough has increased over the past year in each region of the country. Seven in ten Canadians also say that individual Canadians have a role to play in efforts to bring about reconciliation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people – a proportion that is higher than in either of the previous two years. Three in five Canadians say they are familiar with the history of Indian residential schools in Canada; and a slight majority say they are optimistic that we will make meaningful progress toward reconciliation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people over the next decade.

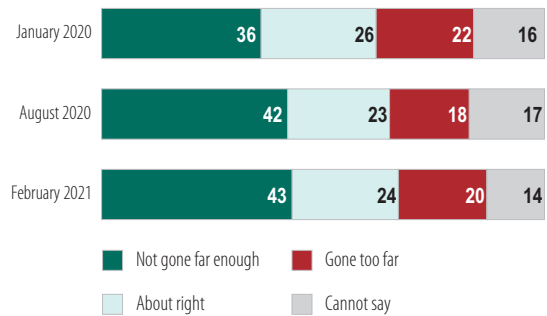
The role of governments

The principle of reconciliation between Indigenous Peoples and Canada was placed of the forefront of the political agenda by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, which presented its final report in 2015. While governments have taken a number of steps to implement the Commission’s 94 Calls to Action, critics argue that progress to date has been too slow.

Canadians themselves are currently more likely than not to believe that governments in Canada have not gone far enough in trying to advance reconciliation with Indigenous Peoples: 43 percent hold this view, compared to 20 percent who say that governments have gone too far. One in four (24%) say that government actions in this area have been about right, and 14 percent do not express an opinion.

Have governments gone too far or have they not gone far enough to advance reconciliation?

2020 - 2021



Q36

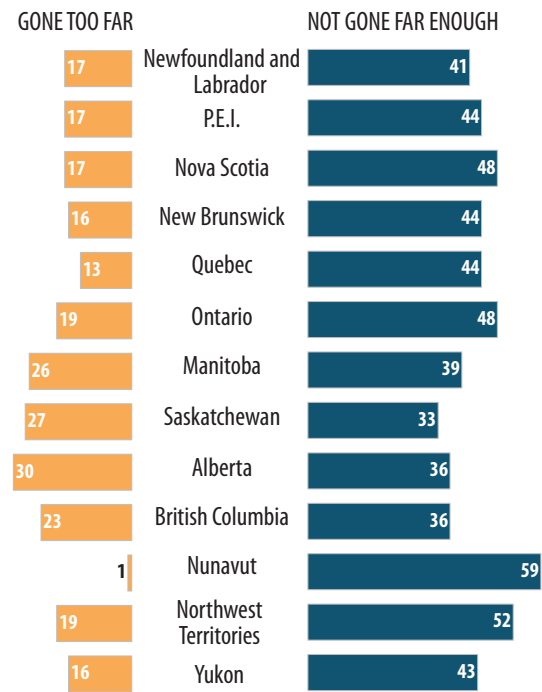
In your opinion, have governments in Canada gone too far or have they not gone far enough in trying to advance reconciliation with Indigenous Peoples?

Indigenous Peoples (60%) are much more likely than non-Indigenous people to say that governments have not gone far enough to advance reconciliation. Those who identify as First Nations (68%) are especially likely to hold this view. Among non-Indigenous people, the proportion saying that governments have not gone far enough (42%) is more than twice the proportion that says that governments have gone too far (20%).

The view that governments in Canada have not gone far enough to advance reconciliation with Indigenous Peoples is most prevalent in the North (51%) and least prevalent in the West (36%). The difference between the proportion holding this view, and the proportion saying governments have gone too far, is 38 percentage points in the North, compared to 10 points in the West, and only six points in both Saskatchewan and Alberta.

Have governments gone too far or have they not gone far enough to advance reconciliation?

By province / territory



Q36

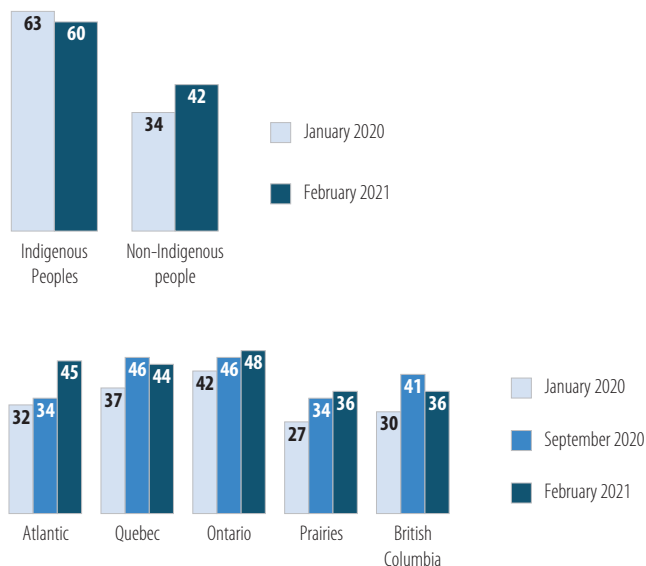
In your opinion, have governments in Canada gone too far or have they not gone far enough in trying to advance reconciliation with Indigenous Peoples?

Surveys conducted in 2020 showed that the proportion saying that governments in Canada have not gone far enough to advance reconciliation with Indigenous Peoples increased somewhat over the course of the year, from 36 percent in January to 42 percent in September.⁶ This may have been a reaction to the conflict over land rights of the Wet’suwet’en Nation in B.C., which came to the fore in February 2020. It may also have been prompted by the anti-racism movement, which was re-energized worldwide later that spring in the wake of the killing of George Floyd by police officers in the U.S.; and which, in Canada, also focused on anti-Indigenous racism and instances of police brutality against Indigenous persons. The February 2021 survey shows that opinions have remained more or less unchanged since September 2020. The proportion now agreeing that governments have not gone far enough to advance reconciliation is now seven points higher than in January 2020 (43%, compared to 36%).

The proportion saying that governments have not gone far enough to advance reconciliation has increased over the past year in each large province or major region of the country. The change has been most pronounced in Atlantic Canada: the proportion of Atlantic Canadians saying that governments have not gone far enough is now 13 points higher compared to early 2020. Within the region, the change is even greater in Nova Scotia (from 31% to 48%, for an increase of 17 points). One of the most recent highly publicized disputes over Indigenous Peoples’ control of and access to natural resources – the dispute over the regulation of the lobster fishery – occurred in Nova Scotia in the late autumn of 2020. As was the case more generally with the conflict centred on the rights of the Wet’suwet’en Nation, it appears that the effect of the lobster fishery dispute has been to prompt non-Indigenous people to become, and not less, supportive of the need to accelerate progress toward reconciliation.

The view that governments have not gone far enough to advance reconciliation is somewhat higher among younger Canadians: 49 percent of those between the ages of 18 and 34 hold this view, compared to 39 percent of those between the ages of 35 and 54, and 42 percent of those age 55 and older. There are also significant differences among supporters

Governments have not gone far enough to advance reconciliation 2020 - 2021



Q36

In your opinion, have governments in Canada gone too far or have they not gone far enough in trying to advance reconciliation with Indigenous Peoples?

of the main federal political parties. The proportion saying that governments have not gone far enough is higher among supporters of the Green Party (70%) and the NDP (64%); somewhat lower among supporters of the Bloc Québécois (49%) and the Liberal Party (46%); and much lower among supporters of the Conservative Party (30%).

⁶ Data from September 2020 are from a survey of 2,023 Canadians commissioned by the Environics Institute and conducted by the Environics Research Group.

The role of individual Canadians

Just as Canadians have been more likely to say that governments should do more to advance reconciliation with Indigenous Peoples, they are also more likely to feel that they themselves have a role to play.

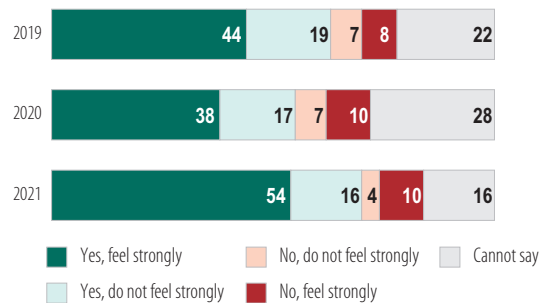
Seven in ten (70%) say that individual Canadians have a role to play in efforts to bring about reconciliation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people, including 54 percent who feel strongly that this is the case, and 16 percent who agree but who do not feel strongly about it. Only 14 percent say that individual Canadians do not have a role to play, including 10 percent who feel strongly that this is the case, and four percent who do not feel strongly about it. An additional 16 percent do not express an opinion.

The proportion saying that individual Canadians have a role to play in efforts to bring about reconciliation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people is higher in 2021 than in either of the two preceding years. In 2019, 63 percent said that individual Canadians have a role to play. This figure dropped to 55 percent in 2020, but has now rebounded to reach 70 percent. In terms of those feeling strongly that individual Canadians have a role to play in advancing reconciliation, the figures are 44% in 2019, 38% in 2020, and 54% in 2021.

The proportion feeling strongly that individual Canadians have a role to play is currently somewhat higher in Ontario (61%) and in the North (61%), and somewhat lower in West (52%). But these proportions are higher today than in either of the preceding two years in each region of the country, except in the North, where it has edged down slightly.

Majorities of both Indigenous Peoples (75%) and non-Indigenous people (70%) believe that individual Canadians have a role to play in efforts to bring about reconciliation. Indigenous Peoples (68%) are somewhat more likely than non-Indigenous people (54%) to feel strongly that this is the case. Among non-Indigenous people, the proportion feeling strongly that individual Canadians have a role to play is 17 points higher in 2021 than it was in 2020, and 10 points higher than in 2019.

Role of individual Canadians in reconciliation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people 2019 - 2021



Q38

Do you believe that individual Canadians do, or do not, have a role to play in efforts to bring about reconciliation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people?

Truth before reconciliation

Through its archival research, public hearings and events, and reporting, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission sought to raise awareness among Canadians of the history of the residential school system and its tragic impacts on individuals, families and communities. The Confederation of Tomorrow 2021 survey shows that, while a majority of Canadians say they have some familiarity with the history of Indian residential schools in Canada, a significant minority do not – suggesting there is still work to be done on the “truth” component of the truth and reconciliation process.

Currently, three in five Canadians (60%) say they are very (17%) or somewhat (43%) familiar with the history of Indian residential schools in Canada, while 35 percent say they are not too (21%) or not at all (13%) familiar (an additional 5% do not offer an opinion).

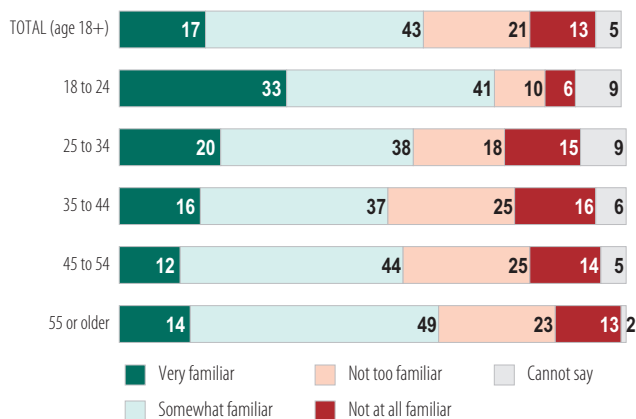
Familiarity is higher among Indigenous Peoples (with 77% saying they are very or somewhat familiar with this history) than among non-Indigenous people (59%). It is also higher among younger Canadians, with 74 percent of 18 to 24-year-olds saying they are very or somewhat familiar with the history of residential schools. Familiarity is also somewhat higher than average among those who have a university degree (67%).

Regionally, familiarity with the history of Indian residential schools in Canada is highest in the North (71%) and in Western Canada (68%) – particularly in Saskatchewan (78%) and Manitoba (72%). The proportion that say they are familiar with this history is close to the national average in Ontario (62%); but lower than average in the Maritimes (55%), Quebec (48%), and Newfoundland and Labrador (45%). In both Quebec, and Newfoundland and Labrador, the population is more or less evenly divided between those who do and do not express familiarity with the history of Indian residential schools in Canada.

There is a relationship between familiarity with the history of Indian residential schools in Canada, and opinions on other questions related to Indigenous Peoples and reconciliation.

Familiarity with the history of Indian residential schools in Canada

By age group



Q40

How familiar do you feel you are with the history of Indian residential schools in Canada?

Among non-Indigenous people, those who are very familiar with this history are more likely than those who are less familiar to say that individual Canadians have a role to play in advancing reconciliation. Similarly, those who are very familiar with this history are more likely than those who are less familiar to agree that the consent of Indigenous Peoples should be required in order to proceed with the development of natural resources on Indigenous land.

The pattern is more complicated in the case of opinions on whether governments have gone far enough in their

attempts to achieve reconciliation. Compared to those who are less familiar, those who are very familiar with this history of Indian residential schools are more likely both to say that governments have not gone far enough, and that they have gone too far. This is possible because among those who are very familiar with this history, the proportion that say governments have acted about right, or who do not express an opinion, is much lower. Familiarity with the history of residential schools is associated with a greater likelihood of taking sides, one way or another, on the question of whether governments have gone far enough.

Outlook on progress

While many Canadians feel that governments have not been doing enough to advance reconciliation, that does not necessarily mean that they do not retain some measure of hope that faster progress can be made in coming years. Canadians are in fact more likely to express optimism than pessimism about the prospects for making meaningful progress toward reconciliation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people.

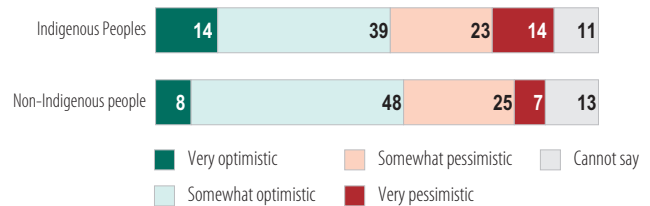
A slight majority of Canadians (55%) say they are very (8%) or somewhat (47%) optimistic that we will make meaningful progress toward reconciliation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people over the next decade. Fewer (32%) – but still a significant minority – are somewhat (25%) or very (7%) pessimistic (an additional 13% do not present an opinion either way).

Indigenous Peoples (53%) and non-Indigenous people (55%) are more or less equally likely to express optimism. Among Indigenous Peoples, those who identify as Métis (59%) are more likely to express optimism, compared to those who identify as First Nations (49%) or Inuit (47%).

Optimism about the prospects for meaningful progress toward reconciliation is lowest in the Prairies (50%) and highest in the North (63%). It does not vary significantly among age groups, but is slightly higher among women (58%) compared to men (52%), and is also higher than average among those with a university education (62%).

Finally, those who feel that governments have not gone far enough to advance reconciliation are actually more, rather than less, optimistic about the prospects for meaningful progress toward reconciliation over the next decade. Two in three (65%) of those who hold this view are optimistic, compared to 41 percent of those who say that governments have gone too far. This suggests that concern about the slow progress toward reconciliation to date is not necessarily an impediment to expressing hope for the future. This relationship, however, is much stronger among non-Indigenous people than among Indigenous Peoples. Among Indigenous Peoples, those who feel that governments have not gone far enough to advance reconciliation are not more likely than average to be optimistic about the prospects for meaningful progress toward reconciliation.

Outlook on reconciliation



Q39

Thinking about Canada over the next decade, are you very optimistic, somewhat optimistic, somewhat pessimistic or very pessimistic that we will make meaningful progress towards reconciliation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people?



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