

# IPSOS REID / DOMINION INSTITUTE

## NATIONAL CITIZENSHIP EXAM

### 10 YEAR BENCHMARK STUDY

*Ten year benchmark study looking at the general population's ability in 2007, as compared to 1997, to pass a simple twenty-one question quiz similar to exam immigrants take to become Canadian citizens and comparing these results to the responses of a nationally representative sample of first generation Canadians.*

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# Ipsos Reid / Dominion Institute National Citizenship Exam TEN YEAR BENCHMARK STUDY

*Six in ten (60%) Canadians Fail Mock Citizenship Exam Similar to  
One Immigrants take to Become Canadian Citizens*

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*33 % More Canadians Fail Test Today than Ten Years Ago*

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*70 % of First Generation Immigrants Pass Simple Quiz*

**Toronto, ON** – More than half (60%) of Canadians today would not be granted citizenship on the basis of having failed the citizenship exam, a necessary step for immigrants to be granted citizenship. A new poll conducted by Ipsos Reid on behalf of the Dominion Institute finds that 60% of Canadians do not have the basic knowledge required to pass a test similar to the one newcomers are required to take in order to become Canadian citizens. To pass the test respondents had to correctly answer twelve of twenty-one questions as is required of persons who take the actual citizenship exam (see **Page 3** for description of exam methodology and **Appendix A** for a full list of the exam questions, correct answers and correct response rate).

Ipsos Reid and the Dominion Institute administered an identical exam to Canadians in 1997, and as a whole the population fares worse today than a decade ago. With less than half (45%) of Canadians failing the test ten years go versus 60% failing today, the results of this benchmark study suggests Canadians' knowledge about key facts related to Canadian history, politics, culture and geography appears to be on the decline.

However, when the same quiz was administered to a random sample of Canadian immigrants only 30% of first generation Canadians failed the test, meaning that the



outstanding majority (70%) were able to score a pass grade by answering 12 out of 21 questions correctly. These results suggest that by virtue of having taken the citizenship exam at one point in their lives and generally assuming responsibility for learning about their adopted country, immigrants to Canada have accumulated more knowledge about the workings of Canadian government, key moments in Canada's past, and the geography of Canada than the general Canadian public.

Rudyard Griffiths, Co-Founder of the Dominion Institute comments on the survey: "The findings of this ten year benchmark study suggest that we are fast becoming a nation of amnesiacs who lack basic knowledge about the country's past, its democratic institutions and practices, and the physical geography of Canada. It has long been understood that one of the key indicators of the health of a highly diverse democratic society such as Canada is the level of civic knowledge its citizens share in common. Our study suggests not only do many Canadians lack the basic knowledge required to participate in society as informed citizens but this segment of our society is growing rapidly, including among younger age groups." Mr. Griffiths continues: "Having just marked the 10th anniversary of the Dominion Institute it is frankly disheartening to see the lack of progress made by our group and the countless other organizations working to improve civic literacy of Canadians over the last ten years."

For a summary of the policy recommendation the Dominion Institute is making in light of these survey results please see the final page of this release (e.g. **Page 10**).

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For full tabular results, please visit the Ipsos Reid website at [www.ipsos.ca](http://www.ipsos.ca).



## ***Study Methodology...***

*These are the findings of an Ipsos Reid poll conducted exclusively for the Dominion Institute from June 5 to June 7, 2007. For the survey, a representative randomly selected sample of 1005 adults across Canada was interviewed by telephone. With a sample of this size, the results are considered accurate to within  $\pm 3.1$  percentage points, 19 times out of 20, of what they would have been had the entire adult population been polled.*

*The poll fielded exclusively to immigrants was also conducted from June 5 to June 7, 2007. For the survey, a representative randomly selected sample of 1005 adults who were not born in Canada was interviewed via the Ipsos online I-Say Panel. With a sample of this size, the results are considered accurate to within  $\pm 3.1$  percentage points, 19 times out of 20, of what they would have been had the entire adult population of immigrants to Canada been polled.*

*The identical poll carried out in 1997 was fielded to a representative cross-section of 1,356 adult Canadians by telephone. With a sample of this size, the results are considered accurate to within  $\pm 2.7$  percentage points, 19 times out of 20, of what they would have been had the entire adult population been polled.*

*During the development of the original mock citizenship exam in 1997 Ipsos Reid and the Dominion Institute undertook extensive research and consultation to ensure that it was reflective of the actual exam taken by newcomers. To start, a copy of the "A Look at Canada" applicant study guide was reviewed to ascertain the general content covered by the exam. Following this, consultations were held with officials and area specialists who provided further insight into the format of the exam. An expert panel of historians and experts then gathered to review a list of potential questions to ensure accuracy and representation. Finally, Ipsos Reid organized a focus group of Canadians who had recently undertaken the citizenship exam to comment on its authenticity and they internally reviewed the exam to ensure that the questions complied with the rules and requirements of a sound telephone survey.*

## *The Results Across Canada...*

Canadians did not perform well on our mock citizenship test, with six in ten (60%) failing to pass the quiz (e.g. they were not able to answer a minimum of 12 of 21 questions correctly as per what is required of newcomers who take the exam to become Canadian citizens). However, some Canadians did do better than others:

- There is large disparity among the various provinces and regions in Canada. Just under one third (27%) of Quebecers were able to pass the test, only around one in four (41%) Ontarians and Albertans (38%) also passed the test. On the flip side, almost six in ten (58%) residents in Saskatchewan and Manitoba were able to pass the twenty-one question test, while around half of residents of British Columbia (50%) and Atlantic Canada (48%) passed.
- It appears that formal education has an impact on one's ability to pass the test, with almost two thirds (63%) of Canadians who hold a university degree passing the test. In comparison, slightly over one third (37%) of those with only some post secondary education, 22% Canadians who only hold a high school diploma, and 10% Canadians without any formal education were able to pass the test.
- It also appears that Canadians in urban centres were more likely to have passed the test, with about one in four (41%) in urban settings passing the test, and two thirds (65%) of those in rural settings failing the test.
- Middle aged Canadians, aged 35 to 54, were the most likely to pass the test, with 44% managing to do so. The youngest (18-34) and oldest (55+) Canadians who took the exam were equally likely to pass, with just under four in ten (38%) passing.
- Men were more likely to pass the test than women, with 46% of men achieving a passing grade, while just 35% of women managed to do the same.

## *What Canadians Know In 2007...*

Canadians performed better on some questions than they did on others. Here is a sampling of what Canadians did know:

- 96% of Canadians could recall the name of Canada's national anthem. Almost all (99%) in British Columbia were able to do so.
- 91% of Canadians could correctly identify the United States as Canada's largest trading partner. Those in Ontario and in Atlantic Canada were most likely to do so (93%).
- 82% of Canadians could recall the name of Canada's Prime Minister, Stephen Harper, with residents of British Columbia being most likely to do so (85%).
- 70% of Canadians could name the three oceans that border on Canada (e.g. the Atlantic, the Arctic and the Pacific). Residents of Saskatchewan/Manitoba were most likely to answer this question correctly (82%) followed by Albertans (79%).

## *And What Canadians Don't Know In 2007...*

Canadians performed abysmally on some questions, with very few being able to correctly answer many of the questions. Here is a sampling of questions where Canadians seem to have missed the boat completely:

- Just 4% of Canadians could name three requirements that a person must meet in order to vote in a federal election.
- Only 3% could correctly name three responsibilities that Canadian citizens hold, according to Citizenship and Immigration Canada.
- 5% could recall four different rights or freedoms protected by the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

- Fewer than two in ten (16%) could name the four provinces that joined together in Confederation in 1867.
- Just one third (32%) of Canadians could correctly identify the number of Canadian provinces and territories. Only 15% of Quebecers were able to do so.
- Only 8% could name Queen Elizabeth II as Canada's Head of State.

### *Canadians Perform Worse than 10 Years Ago...*

When the same citizenship quiz was issued to Canadians 10 years ago, 55% were able to pass compared to just 40% who now pass the test today. It appears that a declining level of knowledge among Canadians regarding Canada's culture, heritage, geography and political landscape have fuelled these results. Below are some comparative highlights:

- Residents of Ontario have declined sharply in their performance, with 64% passing the test in 1997, but only 41% passing in 2007, representing a drop of 23 points. The scores of residents of Quebec have declined almost as much, 18 points, with only 27% passing the exam in 2007, compared to 45% who passed in 1997. Fewer Albertans also passed this time around, with 54% passing in 1997, but only 38% achieving a passing grade in 2007, the percentage passing fell of 16 points.
- Saskatchewan and Manitoba actually saw an improvement in its score, 2 points, this contributed to it being the single highest scoring region in 2007, 56% of residents in Saskatchewan and Manitoba passed in 1997, 58% have now passed the test.
- Some regions' passing rates did not fall as sharply. Residents of Atlantic Canada had the smallest drop in scores at 2 points, with 50% passing in 1997, and 48% receiving a passing grade in 2007. The number of British Columbians passing fell 6 points (56% in 1997 to 50% in 2007).

- The pass rate for women (47% pass rate in 1997, 35% pass rate in 2007) did not fall as sharply as the pass rate for men has (65% pass rate for men in 1997, 46% pass rate for men in 2007) in the last ten years. Women have fallen 12 points and men 19 points.
- Despite the fact that they still have the best test scores, middle aged Canadians, 35 to 54 years old, have performed considerably worse, with a pass rate that has dropped 17 points in the past ten years. Young Canadians, aged 18 to 34, have dropped 14 points (52% in 1997 to 38% in 2007), and older Canadians, aged 55 and up, have fared the same. Curiously, young Canadians and Canadians aged 55 and up have shown equal likelihood to pass the test both of the times it was issued.

### *Questions that Evidenced the Greatest Declines in Knowledge...*

There were a number of questions where Canadians' knowledge declined considerably over the ten year period 1997 to 2007.

- In 1997 fully 87% of Canadians correctly answered "Fur" or "Beaver" to the question "What was the main trade controlled by the Hudson Bay Company". This compares to only 66% of Canadians who could correctly answer the same question in 2007.
- Fully one in three Canadians in 1997 could identify the Charter of Rights and Freedoms as "The part of the Constitution which legally protects the basic rights and freedoms of all Canadians". In 2007 the correct response rate had declined to 22%.
- The percent of Canadians who can name four rights or freedoms protected by the Charter also declined significantly from 20% in 1997 to 5% in 2007.
- Interestingly almost half as many Canadians in 2007 (38%) as compared to 1997 (72%) were able to name four federal political parties represented in the House of Commons.



## *Immigrants Outperform General Population...*

With seven in ten immigrants passing the exam (70%) compared with four in ten (40%) of Canadians in general, immigrants appear to have a better knowledge of Canada's history, culture, politics and geography than the average Canadian. Perhaps this is a result of the fact that more and more immigrants are becoming the 'average' Canadian, and, since they are required to take the citizenship test in order to be granted citizenship, they would have been required to learn the answers to these types of questions. Here are some questions where immigrants performed significantly better than Canadians on the whole:

- Six in ten (60%) immigrants were able to correctly identify the Charter of Rights and Freedoms as the document which protects the basic rights and freedoms of all Canadians, while only 22% of Canadians on the whole were able to do so.
- One third (35%) of immigrants knew that Queen Elizabeth II is the Head of State for Canada, while just 8% of Canadians at large knew this. Half (51%) of Canadians incorrectly cited the Prime Minister as the Head of State, while 12% thought that the Governor General is the Head of State for Canada.
- A majority of immigrants (56%) knew that Canada has 10 provinces and 3 territories, while less than half (44%) of Canadians on the whole knew this.
- Over one third (35%) of immigrants to Canada knew which four provinces joined together in the act of Confederation, while just 16% of the general Canadian population knew which four provinces joined in Confederation.
- Eight in ten (77%) immigrants knew what the first two lines of the national anthem are, while just six in ten (58%) Canadians across the country could recall the first two lines of the anthem, unaided.

- Eight in ten (77%) immigrants could name four of the five great lakes, while just six in ten (59%) Canadians across Canada were able to do this.
- Most (84%) immigrants knew that, originally, the Hudson Bay Company dealt primarily in the fur trade, while just two thirds (66%) of Canadians on the whole knew this fact.
- Most (86%) immigrants could name the political party currently in power in their province, while just slightly over three quarters (77%) of the general population know who calls the shots at the provincial level.

Immigrants scored higher than the general population on every question except one that asked about which province has the most bilingual Canadians. 52% of Canadians across Canada knew that it is Quebec, while 51% of immigrants were able to correctly identify Quebec as the most bilingual province in Canada.

### ***Recommendations...***

In light of the survey findings the Dominion Institute is making two principle recommendations (*note that Ipsos Reid does not endorse or in anyway support these recommendations and they reflect solely the views and opinion of the Dominion Institute and its staff*):

- In light of immigrants' significantly higher levels of civic literacy and our belief that this knowledge is in part the product of new Canadians taking the citizenship exam, the Dominion Institute is calling the Premiers to use the Council of Ministers of Education to organise a national citizenship exam for all high school students. Successfully completing this exam would a requirement of high school graduation.
- The Federal government should explore the possibility of creating a new passport program that would provide applicants with the opportunity to volunteer to take the citizenship exam when renewing or applying for their passport for the first time. Upon

passing the same exam immigrants are required to take participants in this program would receive a passport at a reduced fee that visually indicates (e.g. it would be different color) that its holder has successfully completed the citizenship test.

Table 1

OVERALL RESULTS OF THE TEST											
	REGION							Immigrant	AGE		
	National	BC	AB	MB/SK	ON	QC	Atlantic		18-34	35-54	55+
(Weighted Bases)	1005	140	97	67	387	238	76	1000	296	396	310
	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)
Successful exams	40	50	38	58	41	27	48	70	38	44	38
Failed exams	60	50	62	42	59	73	52	30	62	56	62

Table 2

Question	Right answer	National 2007	Change from National 1997	BC	AB	MB/SK	ON	QC	Atl	Immigrant	
		% Correct Answer									
Name three requirements that a person must meet in order to vote in a Federal election.	Citizenship/18 years of age/Registered voter/Enumerated	4	-5	3	3	1	5	5	5	15	
Name three responsibilities that Canadian citizens hold	e.g. Vote in elections/Obey Canadian law/Respect other's rights	3	-1	3	3	3	2	4	5	10	
What was the main trade controlled by the Hudson Bay Company?	Fur/Beaver	66	-21	75	71	92	63	52	80	84	
When the first provinces joined to form Canada, what was that event called?	Confederation	56	+6	68	60	66	58	35	74	62	
Which four provinces joined together in Confederation?	Ontario/Quebec/New Brunswick/Nova Scotia/	16	-6	16	9	30	18	15	13	35	
What is the part of the constitution which legally protects the basic rights and freedoms of all Canadians?	Charter of Rights and Freedoms/Charter	22	-10	15	19	24	15	37	17	60	
Name four different	(As per the charter)	5	-15	9	7	14	3	2	13	23	

rights and/or freedoms protected by the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms...										
Which province has the most bilingual Canadians?	Quebec	52	-2	57	47	51	48	63	40	51
What song is Canada's national anthem?	O Canada!	96	+1	99	96	98	96	91	97	97
And can you tell me what the first two lines of the anthem are?	O Canada! Our home and native land. True patriot love in all thy sons command/ Terre de nos aïeux, ton front est cîent de fleurons glorieux	58	-5	61	59	55	55	63	54	77
What three oceans border Canada?	Atlantic/Arctic/Pacific	70	+5	73	79	82	72	54	76	77
How many provinces and territories are there in Canada?	10 Provinces and 3 Territories	32	-36	42	41	38	35	15	39	56
Name four of the five great lakes...	Erie/Huron/Ontario/Superior/Michigan	59	-2	61	61	69	72	35	54	77
Which province in Canada is the smallest in land size?	Prince Edward Island	72	-2	73	74	93	71	61	90	83
What country is Canada's largest trading partner?	United States of America	91	0	92	92	87	93	87	93	96
Who is Canada's head of State?	Queen Elizabeth II / Queen of England	8	0	13	9	8	9	3	12	35
What are the three levels of Government in Canada?	Federal/Provincial/Municipal	55	-7	60	56	61	63	33	71	67
Name all four of the federal political parties presently represented in the House of Commons...	Conservative/Liberal/New Democratic Party/Bloc	38	-34	35	40	43	29	52	37	55
What is the name of the Prime Minister of Canada?	Stephen Harper	82	-11	86	83	85	80	81	84	93
In the federal parliament, what is a law called before it is passed?	Bill	48	-7	54	58	66	51	26	59	66
Which political party is in power in your province or territory?	(Depends Upon Province)	n/a	n/a	83	80	83	73	79	81	n/a