

## Concerns Over Tolerance in Canada in a Time of War in the Middle East Is it a Problem?

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The Association for Canadian Studies commissioned this poll from Environics Research Group/Focus Canada. The survey of 1,570 Canadians 18 years of age and over looks at anti-American sentiment. The ACS-Environics survey was carried out by telephone from March 15-19, 2003. Results are accurate to within plus or minus 3,5%, 19 times out of 20.

**The war in Iraq** has brought with it a concern that levels of intolerance in other parts of the world may rise. Assessing the level of prejudice amongst the Canadian population is no simple task. It is fully expected that many respondents will modify their answers to conceal feelings of prejudice largely viewed as unacceptable in Canadian society. Our attention is thus directed at the extent to which intolerance towards groups is viewed as a problem, and the degree to which certain communities are currently regarded as projecting either a positive or negative image.

As observed below, a majority of Canadians are concerned with prejudicial attitudes toward each of the groups identified. The concern over anti-immigrant sentiment is highest in the country followed by anti-Arab and anti-Native sentiments. There are important regional variations in the extent to which such concerns are expressed. Ontario and Quebec express higher levels of concern with anti-Arab sentiment than is the case elsewhere in the country. In Western Canada concerns are highest in regard to anti-immigrant and anti-Native sentiment. Indeed the majority of respondents in the region do not regard either anti-Black or anti-Jewish sentiment as a serious problem. Concerns over anti-Black sentiment are highest in Quebec.

**Do you think the following represent a serious problem in Canadian society?** (Combined very and *somewhat* serious problem)

By region

	Canada	Atlantic Prov	Quebec	Ontario	Western Canada
Anti-Native	67	65	63	65	74
Anti-Immigrant	70	70	67	71	71
Anti-Arab	69	65	70	71	64
Anti-Gay	62	68	65	67	54
Anti-Black	56	55	65	61	40
Anti-Semitic	54	52	59	59	44

On the basis of age the younger segment of the population expresses the highest rate of concern with anti-Arab sentiment followed by anti-native and anti-immigrant feeling. In the older age categories there is a lesser (though still a majority) concern with negative sentiment with the exception of anti-gay sentiment – seen as a problem with relative consistency across all age cohorts.

**Do you think ... sentiment is a very, somewhat, not very, or not at all serious problem in our society? (by age)**

	18-29	30-44	45-59	60+
Anti-Native	72	68	67	58
Anti-Immigrant	71	72	74	63
Anti-Arab	74	71	67	62
Anti-Gay	61	57	64	63
Anti-Black	65	55	52	54
Anti-Semitic	61	55	51	52

**Positive or Negative Image of Certain Groups**

The ACS-Environics Survey asked whether certain communities projected a positive or negative image in society. Each of the four groups identified in the table were seen as projecting a positive image by the majority of Canadians. However in order to draw out the significant variations in opinion on this issue the focus below is first on the degree to which certain groups offer a negative image. As observed below it is the aboriginal population followed by the Arab groups that are viewed as projecting a negative image. In the case of the Aboriginal population the view that it presents a negative image is most strongly felt in Western Canada. In the case of the Arab population it is in Western Canada followed by Ontario that there it is most felt that this group presents a negative image. In the case of the Black population it is in Ontario that they are seen as projecting a negative image more so than anywhere else in the country. In the case of the Jewish population it is in Quebec that nearly one out six believe that they project a negative image which is higher than is the case elsewhere in Canada.

Can you tell me whether you think positively or negatively about the image projected by the following groups in Canadian society? Would that be very or somewhat? (below – combined *somewhat* negative and *very* negative)

By region

	Canada	Atlantic Prov	Quebec	Ontario	Western Canada
Aboriginal	32	36	22	30	42
Arab	29	26	28	30	31
Black	15	10	12	21	8
Jewish	12	8	15	10	10

On the basis of age the younger cohort are more inclined to think that Aboriginals present a negative image, more so than any of the other groups. Amongst those over the age of 45 it is the Arab population that is viewed as most often projecting a negative image. Those over the age of 60 are more inclined than the younger segments of the population to think that the Black population offer a negative image. In the case of the Jewish population it is the youngest segment of the population that is most apt to declare that a negative image is projected.

Can you tell me whether you think positively or negatively about the image projected by the following groups in Canadian society? Would that be very or somewhat? (below – combined *somewhat* negative and *very* negative)

Negatively – by Age

	18-29	30-44	45-59	60+
Aboriginal	31	31	30	22
Arab	27	29	33	28
Black	12	11	16	20
Jewish	15	11	12	12

When asked which communities project a very positive image, the Black and Jewish populations are attributed the highest percentages in this regard. Aboriginal and Arab groups get the highest share of very positive responses from Quebecers, so that the gap between the groups is not as significant in that province as it is elsewhere in the country.

Can you tell me whether you think positively or negatively about the image projected by the following groups in Canadian society? Would that be very or somewhat? (below – *very* positive only)

Very positive – by Region

	Canada	Atlantic Provinces	Quebec	Ontario	Western Canada
Aboriginal	20	19	27	20	14
Arab	16	15	23	13	13
Black	29	35	30	26	30
Jewish	30	32	29	31	29

On the basis of age those between 18 and 44 accord the highest percentage of very positive responses to the Black population while those over 45 give the most very positive responses to the Jewish population. Those between the ages of 30-44 offer the lowest percentage of very positive responses to Arabs and Aboriginals.

Can you tell me whether you think positively or negatively about the image projected by the following groups in Canadian society? Would that be very or somewhat? (below – *very* positive only)

Very Positive – by Age

	18-29	30-44	45-59	60+
Aboriginal	24	16	26	22
Arab	19	14	20	15
Black	34	28	30	25
Jewish	30	27	32	27