

Social values vary across Canada

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Canada: true north, strong and free. But how strong are our beliefs? How free are our citizens? It depends where you live. According to a national survey led by researchers at Concordia University, the importance of providing assistance to those in need, and the importance of Aboriginal self-governance varies across the country.

A team of researchers from Concordia University recently partnered with the Trudeau Foundation and the Environics Institute for Survey Research to conduct a national poll* on responsible citizenship. The survey focused on two themes:

1. What is society's responsibility to address the social and economic welfare of those in need?
2. What is society's responsibility to address the aspirations of the country's Aboriginal peoples?

Providing assistance to those in need

- A clear majority (65 per cent) of Canadians want to ensure that the country's social and economic assistance programs are available to everyone. But the public is quick to express clear priorities on which groups should get greater governmental assistance.
- Seven out of ten Canadians think families with children living in poverty should be the top priority—rather than young adults having difficulty finding their first job, or people who have been

unable to find work for more than a year.

- Impressions are mixed about the concept of a guaranteed annual income as a way to reduce poverty. Opinions are divided with a slightly larger proportion who favour such a policy (46 per cent) than who oppose it (42 per cent).
- Support for a guaranteed annual income is the majority view in Quebec and among Canadians with lower levels of education and income, while most strongly opposed by Albertans and high-income Canadians.

Aboriginal self-governance

- Almost six in 10 (58 per cent) Canadians believe that the country's Aboriginal peoples should have some form of self-government—an opinion that has gradually strengthened over the past two decades. This is the majority view across the country, except in Saskatchewan and Alberta, where support has declined sharply since 1997.
- Canadians are most likely to say that Aboriginal peoples should have the powers comparable to a municipality (i.e., still subject to provincial and federal laws), rather than the powers of a province or a nation.
- By a two-to-one margin (58 per cent versus 29 per cent), Canadians say the current federal government has a moral responsibility to honour existing First Nations treaties, regardless of what this might cost. This is a majority view across the country, except in the Prairies, where opinion is divided.

More information: Tenth Annual Trudeau Foundation Conference
www.fondationtrudeau.ca/en/2013conference

Provided by Concordia University

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