

**CANADIAN PRESS / LEGER MARKETING**

## **Canadians and Immorality**

**Report**



## 1.0 Highlights of the Study

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- Close to three-quarters of the population believes that Canadians have a strong sense of morals.

Question: *Generally speaking, do you think that Canadians have a moral sense that is VERY STRONG, SOMEWHAT STRONG, SOMEWHAT WEAK or VERY WEAK?*

n=1519	Very strong	Somewhat strong	Somewhat weak	Very weak	Don't know/Refusal
Canada	13.5%	59.0%	20.1%	4.9%	2.5%

- Shoplifting, epitomizes immoral behaviour.

Question: *Please tell me if you find each of the following activities IMMORAL or NOT... ?* (The percentages indicate those who find the activity immoral)

n=1519	TOTAL
... shoplifting	89.3%
... having an extramarital affair	80.8%
... taking hard drugs (cocaine, heroine)	79.2%
... tax evasion	77.0%
... prostitution	68.4%
... alcohol abuse	66.1%
... suicide	61.8%
... working under the table	52.8%
... taking soft drugs (marijuana)	47.5%
... abortion	41.8%
... gambling	41.4%
... swearing	40.2%
... homosexuality	32.1%
... doctor-assisted suicide of a person who is ill	31.3%
... engaging in pre-marital sex	27.3%
... being atheist (not believing in God)	26.2%
... divorce	22.3%

## 2.0 Results

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### 2.1 Close to Three-Quarters of the Population Believes that Canadians have a Strong Sense of Morals

72.5% of the population in Canada feels that Canadians have a strong sense of morals while 25.0% think otherwise. For 13.5% of people, the moral sense of Canadians is very strong while for 59.0% of them find it strong. 20.1% find the moral sense of Canadians to be somewhat weak and 4.9% find it very weak.

We do not note significant differences between the various segments of the population. A difference can only be seen among those whose mother tongue is neither French nor English. In fact, only 59.2% of them believe that Canadians have a high moral sense.

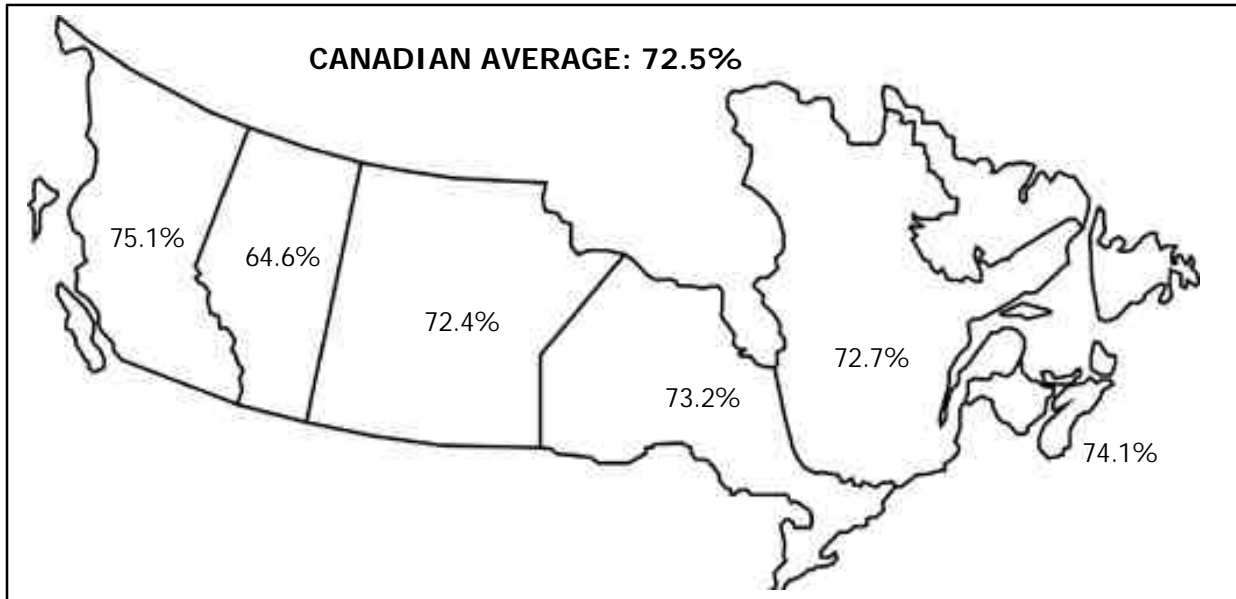
This view held by members of cultural communities could be explained by a deeper attachment to conservative religious values. Hence, we note obvious differences when it comes to atheism, abortion, homosexuality, pre-marital sexual relations and suicide.

Finally, let us mention that our American neighbours essentially share the same opinion as Canadians. In fact, a Gallup poll conducted in May 2001 revealed that 75.0% of Americans feel that their nation has a strong moral fibre.

Question: *Generally speaking, do you think that Canadians have a moral sense that is VERY STRONG, SOMEWHAT STRONG, SOMEWHAT WEAK or VERY WEAK?*

n=1519	Very strong	Somewhat strong	Somewhat weak	Very weak	Don't know/Refusal
Atlantic provinces	17.4%	56.7%	19.2%	4.5%	2.2%
Quebec	8.4%	64.3%	22.2%	3.7%	1.4%
Ontario	15.9%	57.3%	19.3%	4.6%	2.9%
Prairies	12.3%	60.1%	17.2%	5.3%	5.0%
Alberta	8.5%	56.1%	23.8%	8.0%	3.7%
British Columbia	17.9%	57.2%	17.5%	6.0%	1.3%
Canada	13.5%	59.0%	20.1%	4.9%	7.3%

**Percentage of the population that believes Canadians have a strong sense of morals**



## 2.2 Shoplifting Epitomizes Immoral Behaviour

**Shoplifting** constitutes the behaviour deemed immoral by the greatest number of Canadians. This opinion is shared by all segments of society with slight variations in Ontario (86.2%) and British Columbia (84.5%).

**Extramarital relationships** rank second in the immorality scale with 80.8% of Canadians condemning this type of behaviour. These relationships are mostly criticized by 86.8% of those 18-24 years old, 83.0% of Anglophones, 86.2% of those whose mother tongue is neither French nor English, 88.0% of Albertans, 84.6% of those in the higher income brackets and by 89.9% of homemakers. This rate drops to 76.3% among professionals, to 71.4% among Francophones and to 72.7% among Quebeckers.

**Taking hard drugs such as cocaine and heroine** is next with 79.2%. This behaviour is much less tolerated in Quebec (85.1%) than in British Columbia (69.8%). 86.8% of Canadians who do not have a college education find that taking hard drugs is immoral while only 68.2% of those with a university education share this view.

With 77.0%, **tax evasion** ranks fourth. This view is shared relatively equally among Canadians of all regions of the country.

In terms of **prostitution** (68.4%), it is more tolerated by men (61.4% who find it immoral), than by women (74.9%), more by those who earn more than \$40,000 a year (63.9%), than by those who are in the lower income brackets (73.9%), more by those 45-54 years old (60,1%) than by those 65years old and over (75,1%) and more by university-educated Canadians (63.5%) than by those who have only completed the lowest levels of schooling (84.3%).

Two-thirds of Canadians (66.1%) find **alcohol abuse** immoral. The abuse of alcohol is more criticized in Quebec (73.7%) than in the Prairies (59.5%). It is also more condemned by those 65 years old and over (80.6%) than by those 35-44 years old (59.2%), more by Francophones (73.9%) than by Anglophones (62.6%), more by manual workers (73.6%) than by professionals (55.5%), more by those not in the labour force (71.9%) than those in it (62.8%) and more by those with lower levels of education (85.8%) than by university-educated Canadians (55.7%).

**Suicide** is immoral according to 61.8% of the population. 72.5% of those whose mother tongue is neither French nor English find suicide more immoral than 60.3% of Anglophones and Francophones together, 74.2% of manual workers versus 46.9% of professionals and 78.3% of those with lower levels of education and 45.3% of university-educated Canadians.

The immoral character of **working under the table** is recognized by 52.8% of the population. It considered more immoral by 63.9% Quebeckers than by 40.7% of people who live in British Columbia, more so by 56.7% of women than by 48.6% of men, more by 67.4% of retirees than by 45.8% of professionals and by 43.0% of students and more by 59.0% of those not in the labour force than by 49.6% of those in it.

The opinions of Canadians with regard the **consumption of soft drugs (marijuana)** is clearly mixed. Hence, we that 47.5% find this behaviour immoral while 47.2% feel it is not. It can be recalled that a Canadian Press/Leger Marketing published in June 2001 revealed that 46.8% of Canadians were in favour of legalizing marijuana while 47.0% objected to this idea.

41.8% of Canadians define **abortion** as immoral while 47.5% do not believe it to be so. 50.4% of those 65 years old and over are more likely to be opposed to abortion versus 36.6% of those 35-44 years old, 49.3% of residents of the Atlantic provinces versus 32.4% of British Columbians, 53.4% of those in the very low income brackets versus 36.8% of those in the higher brackets, 53.5% of manual workers versus 30.1% of professionals and 50.4% of people who have not gone past high school versus 30.5% of university-educated Canadians. Let us also note that 51.4% of Allophones consider abortion to be immoral.

**Gambling** is immoral according to 41.4% of the population. This opinion is mostly held by 56.2% of those 65 years old and over, 62.6% of Quebeckers, 52.0% of those in the lower income brackets and 72.5% of those with lower levels of education. However, 35.3% of Canadians 18-24 years old, 25.9% of those living in British Columbia and 33.2% of Ontarians, 35.3% of those in the higher income brackets, 32.1% of students and 33.3% of university-educated Canadians are less likely to feel that gambling is immoral.

According to 40.2% of the public opinion, **swearing** comes in twelfth in the ranking of immoral behaviours. 56.7% of Canadians 65 years old and over share this opinion to a greater extent than 29.1% of those 18-24 years old, 51.7% of Allophones more than 34.3% of Anglophones, 50.6% of residents of the Atlantic provinces and 50.1% Quebeckers more than 32.2% of British Columbians, 53.6% of those in the lower income brackets more than 35.4% of those with very high incomes, 51.3% of retirees more than 27.6% of professionals and 68.9% of those with lower levels of education more than 29.1% of those with higher levels.

If 32.1% of Canadians indicated that **homosexuality** constitutes immoral behaviour, we note that 47.3% of those over 65 years old, 46.5% of Allophones, 42.5% of Albertans, 39.4% of those with a household income lower than \$40,000, 49.5% of manual workers and 40.3% of those who did not go beyond high school are far from being tolerant with regard to homosexuality at a time when the rights to same-sex marriages is being debated.

**Doctor-assisted suicide of a person who is ill** is considered immoral by 31.3% of Canadians. These numbers match the results revealed in a Canadian Press/Leger Marketing survey on euthanasia conducted in June 2001. In this survey, 32.6% of Canadians mentioned not wanting anyone to assist a loved one in dying if this person was suffering from an incurable illness and 34.0% did not want help in ending their lives if they themselves were suffering from an extremely painful and incurable disease.

A proportion of 27.3% of Canadians find **pre-marital sex** immoral. This opinion is mostly held by 47.9% of those 65 years old and over versus 19.5% of those 35-44 years old, 37.9% of Allophones versus 17.6% of Francophones, 41.3% of Prairie residents versus 16.0% of Quebeckers, 36.9% of those in the lower income brackets versus 18.7% of those in the higher brackets, 42.0% of retirees versus 16.5% of professionals, 35.3% of the population not in the labour force versus 22.4% of those who are in the labour force and 38.7% of those with lower levels of schooling versus 21.0% of university-educated Canadians.

The second last item in the ranking of immoral behaviour is **atheism**. It is perceived as immoral by 26.2% of the population and particularly by 41.6% of those whose mother tongue is neither French nor English, 41.8% of residents of the Atlantic provinces and 50.5% of those with low levels of education.

Finally, **divorce** is immoral according to 22.3% of Canadians. This is mostly the case for men (25.3%), those 65 years of age and over (26.7%), Allophones (31.7%), Albertans (27.1%), manual workers (33.0%) and those with less education (45.9%).

Question: *Please tell me if you find each of the following activities IMMORAL or NOT...?*  
(The percentages indicate those who consider the activity immoral)

n=1519	TOTAL	Atlantic provinces	Quebec	Ontario	Prairies	Alberta	British Columbia
... shoplifting	89.3%	94.0%	91.9%	86.2%	92.4%	95.2%	84.5%
...having an extramarital affair	80.8%	80.7%	72.7%	83.8%	86.3%	<b>88.0%</b>	79.4%
... taking hard drugs (cocaine, heroine)	79.2%	82.9%	<b>85.1%</b>	77.7%	77.9%	80.7%	69.8%
... tax evasion	77.0%	78.7%	75.5%	78.1%	79.0%	79.9%	72.1%
... prostitution	68.4%	69.5%	66.6%	70.2%	73.4%	69.6%	61.9%
... alcohol abuse	66.1%	64.1%	<b>73.7%</b>	64.3%	59.5%	69.6%	59.6%
... suicide	61.8%	67.4%	61.7%	61.3%	65.7%	65.8%	55.2%
... working under the table	52.8%	54.5%	<b>63.9%</b>	48.0%	56.2%	55.8%	40.7%
... taking soft drugs (marijuana)	47.5%	52.5%	45.3%	47.5%	57.4%	50.6%	40.6%
... abortion	41.8%	49.3%	41.6%	43.0%	46.6%	40.9%	32.4%
... gambling	41.4%	46.3%	<b>62.6%</b>	33.2%	39.9%	38.5%	25.9%
... swearing	40.2%	50.6%	<b>50.1%</b>	34.1%	44.0%	39.3%	32.2%
... homosexuality	32.1%	39.6%	26.1%	32.1%	40.9%	<b>42.5%</b>	26.1%
... doctor-assisted suicide	31.3%	35.8%	28.1%	31.7%	33.6%	34.0%	29.7%
... engaging in pre-martial sex	27.3%	<b>38.7%</b>	16.0%	27.8%	<b>41.3%</b>	34.7%	26.8%
... being atheist (not believing in God)	26.2%	<b>41.8%</b>	25.5%	25.2%	29.2%	26.1%	19.5%
... divorce	22.3%	19.4%	25.8%	20.2%	24.5%	<b>27.1%</b>	19.1%

Note: Significant differences that are **greater** appear in bold and significant differences that are *lower* are in italics.

**Profile of those MORE likely to believe that the following activities are immoral**

<b>... Extramarital affairs</b>	
• Anglophones	83.0%
• Mother tongue other than French or English	86.2%
• Income greater than \$60,000	84.6%
• Main occupation is homemaker	89.9%
• Albertans	88.0%
<b>... Taking hard drugs</b>	
• Quebeckers	85.1%
• High school education	86.3%
• Main occupation is homemaker	89.7%
• Not in labour force	83.0%
<b>... Prostitution</b>	
• Women	74.9%
• 65 years old and over	75.1%
• Income less than \$40,000	73.9%
• Elementary education	84.3%
• Main occupation is homemaker	82.0%
<b>... Alcohol abuse</b>	
• Quebeckers	73.7%
• 65 years old and over	80.6%
• Manual workers	73.6%
• Not in labour force	71.9%
• Francophones	73.9%
<b>... Suicide</b>	
• Mother tongue other than French or English	72.5%
• Manual workers	74.2%
• Elementary education	78.3%
<b>... Working under the table</b>	
• Quebeckers	63.9%
• Women	56.7%
• Retirees	67.4%
• Not in labour force	59.0%
<b>... Taking soft drugs</b>	
• 65 years old and over	66.2%
• Mother tongue other than French or English	58.3%
• Retirees	59.3%

**Profile of those LESS likely to believe that the following activities are immoral**

<b>... Extramarital affairs</b>	
• Francophones	71.4%
• Quebeckers	72.7%
• Professionals	76.3%
<b>... Taking hard drugs</b>	
• British Columbians	69.8%
• University education	68.2%
• Professionals	71.3%
• In labour force	76.9%
<b>... Prostitution</b>	
• Men	61.4%
• 45-54 years old	60.1%
• Income more than \$40,000	63.9%
• University education	63.5%
• Professionals	59.6%
<b>... Alcohol abuse</b>	
• Prairie residents	59.5%
• 35-44 years old	59.2%
• Professionals	55.5%
• In labour force	62.8%
• Anglophones	62.6%
<b>... Suicide</b>	
• Anglophones	59.0%
• Professionals	46.9%
• University education	45.3%
<b>... Working under the table</b>	
• British Columbians	40.7%
• Men	48.6%
• Professionals	45.8%
• Students	43.0%
• In labour force	49.6%
<b>... Taking soft drugs</b>	
• 18-24 years old	38.4%
• Anglophones	45.6%
• Professionals	32.1%

**Profile of those who are MORE likely to believe that the following activities are immoral**

... <b>Abortion</b>	
• 65 years old and over	50.4%
• Mother tongue other than French or English	51.4%
• Manual workers	53.5%
• Income less than \$20,000	53.4%
• Elementary or secondary level of education	50.4%
• Residents of Atlantic provinces	49.3%
... <b>Gambling</b>	
• 65 years old and over	56.2%
• Quebeckers	62.6%
• Francophones	60.8%
• Income less than \$20,000	52.0%
• Elementary education	72.5%
... <b>Swearing</b>	
• 65 years old and over	56.7%
• Mother tongue other than French or English	51.7%
• Francophones	50.5%
• Quebeckers	50.1%
• Residents of Atlantic provinces	50.6%
• Elementary education	68.9%
• Income less than \$20,000	53.6%
... <b>Homosexuality</b>	
• 65 years old and over	47.3%
• Mother tongue other than French or English	46.5%
• Elementary education	40.3%
• Manual workers	49.5%
... <b>Pre-marital sex</b>	
• 65 years old and over	47.9%
• Mother tongue other than French or English	37.9%
• Residents of Prairie provinces	41.3%
• Elementary education	38.7%
• Retirees	42.0%

**Profile of those who are LESS likely to believe that the following activities are immoral**

... <b>Abortion</b>	
• 35-44 years old	36.6%
• Anglophones	40.2%
• Professionals	30.1%
• Income more than \$60,000	36.8%
• University education	30.5%
• Residents of British Columbia	32.4%
... <b>Gambling</b>	
• 18-24 years old	35.3%
• Ontarians	33.2%
• Anglophones	32.5%
• Income greater than \$60,000	35.3%
• University education	33.3%
• Students	32.1%
• Residents of British Columbia	25.9%
... <b>Swearing</b>	
• 18-24 years old	29.1%
• Anglophones	34.3%
• Residents of British Columbia	32.2%
• Professionals	27.6%
• University education	29.1%
• Income more than \$60,000	35.4%
... <b>Homosexuality</b>	
• 18-24 years old	21.4%
• Francophones	23.8%
• University education	23.9%
• Professionals	21.0%
... <b>Pre-marital sex</b>	
• 35-44 years old	19.5%
• Francophones	17.6%
• Quebeckers	16.0%
• University education	21.0%
• Professionals	16.5%

### 3.0 Methodology

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This study was conducted by Leger Marketing through telephone interviews among a representative sample of 1519 English- or French-speaking Canadians, 18 years of age or older.

The interviews were conducted from our Montreal and Winnipeg call centres between January 8 and January 13, 2002. Up to ten call-backs were made in the case of non-response.

Using data from Statistics Canada, the results were weighted according to geographic location, gender and language spoken at home to ensure a sample representative of the entire Canadian adult population. In the end, the maximum margin of error obtained for a sample of 1519 respondents is of  $\pm 2.6\%$ , 19 times out of 20.