

The Honesty of Canadians



Report



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1. Study Highlights

- For 43% of Canadians, it is easier to be honest with family members than with any other person.

Question: *Among the following groups, with whom is it easier to be honest for you personally. Is it...?*

N=1501	Canada
...Family members	43%
...Close friends	26%
...Casual friends	4%
...Strangers	4%
The same for everybody	22%
Don't know	1%

- More than half of Canadians admit having committed a dishonest act in the past.

Question: *Please tell me WHETHER OR NOT you have ever done the following?*
(Several affirmative answers possible)

N=1501	Canada	
...Paying too little for an article knowing this was the store's mistake and without notifying them	28%	} 56%
...Received too much change at the store without notifying the teller of the situation	23%	
...Cheated on an exam	19%	
...Given false information about yourself to improve your profile	12%	
...Given false information on your income tax return	3%	
...Submitted a false insurance claim (added objects that weren't stolen in your claim)	2%	} 44%
Don't know	27%	
Refuse to answer	17%	

- When Canadians lie, it is mainly out of altruism.

Question: *When you lie to someone, would you say it's to protect yourself or others?*

N=1501	To protect others	To protect myself	Don't know	Refusal
Canada	39%	31%	22%	8%

- One Canadian out of three tends to be less honest with strangers.

Question: *Among the following groups, with whom do you tend to be less honest?*
(Several answers allowed)

N=1501	Canada
Strangers	34%
Casual friends	14%
Government members	12%
Co-workers	10%
Children	10%
Family members	8%
Employer	6%
Police officers	6%
Close friends	5%
Spouse	5%
Insurance agent	5%
Doctor	5%
None	31%
Don't know	3%
Refuse to answer	3%

2. Study Results

2.1 It is easier to be honest with family members than with anyone else

According to 43% of Canadians, it is easier to be honest with family members than with friends, strangers or casual friends. However, 26% find it is easier with friends. A minority feels it is easier to be honest with casual friends (4%) or with strangers (4%). For 22%, it is easy with any one of these groups.

Question: *Among the following groups, with whom is it easier to be honest for you personally. Is it...?*

N=1501	Canada
...Family members	43%
...Close friends	26%
...Casual friends	4%
...Strangers	4%
The same for everybody	22%
Don't know	1%

2.2 More than half of Canadians admit having committed a dishonest act in the past

A majority of Canadians (56%) admit having committed more or less dishonest acts. However, among them, only 3% concede having given false information on their income tax return and 2% on an insurance claim. A proportion of 28% admit they took advantage of a pricing error when purchasing an item, 23% took advantage of a mistake at the store's check out counter, 19% cheated when writing an exam and 12% lied to improve their profile. It should be noted that 27% of Canadians surveyed did not know what to answer to this question and 17% refused to answer.

It should be noted that more men than women admit their dishonest acts: 27% did not pay the price charged on a purchased item versus 20% of women; 22% have cheated on an exam before versus 16% of women; 14% gave false information about themselves to improve their profile versus 10% of women and 3% have submitted a false insurance claim before versus 1% of women.

Question: *Please tell me WHETHER OR NOT you have ever done the following?*
(Several affirmative answers possible)

N=1501	Canada	
...Paying too little for an article knowing this was the store's mistake and without notifying them	28%	} 56%
...Received too much change at the store without notifying the teller of the situation	23%	
...Cheated on an exam	19%	
...Given false information about yourself to improve your profile	12%	
...Given false information on your income tax return	3%	
...Submitted a false insurance claim (added objects that weren't stolen in your claim)	2%	
Don't know	27%	} 44%
Refuse to answer	17%	

2.3 When Canadians lie, it is mainly out of altruism

More Canadians lie to protect others (39%) rather than themselves (31%). A percentage of 30% did not answer this question.

There are significantly more women who say that when they lie, it's for others (43% versus 35% of men) and men are more inclined to say they lie to protect themselves (33% versus 28% of women).

Also, people between 18 and 34 years of age (42%), Francophones (46%), Quebecers (46%) and students (52%) have more of a tendency to admit they lie primarily for themselves.

Question: *When you lie to someone, would you say it's to protect yourself or others?*
(IF BOTH: ask – in most cases, more often than not)

N = 1501	To protect others	To protect myself	Don't know	Refusal
Men	35%	33%	23%	9%
Women	43%	28%	20%	8%
Atlantic Provinces	42%	29%	20%	8%
Quebec	35%	46%	14%	4%
Ontario	42%	26%	22%	10%
Prairies	38%	25%	25%	12%
Alberta	42%	27%	22%	9%
British Columbia	35%	23%	31%	11%
Canada	39%	31%	22%	8%

2.4 One Canadian out of three admits being less honest with strangers

A third of Canadians (34%) tend to be less honest with strangers than with other groups of people, such as their casual friends (14%), government members (12%), co-workers (10%) or children (10%). Only small minorities are less honest with their employers (6%), police officers (6%), close friends (5%), spouses (5%), insurance agents (5%) or doctors (5%). Also, 31% of Canadians say they are not dishonest with any particular group.

More women say they are less honest with strangers (37% versus 30% of men). On the other hand, men are more likely to be less honest with police officers (9% versus 3% of women), insurance agents (7% versus 4% of women) and members of government (16% versus 8% of women).

Question: *Among the following groups, with whom do you tend to be less honest?*
(Several answers possible)

N=1501	Canada	Men	Women
Strangers	34%	30%	37%
Casual friends	14%	14%	15%
Government members	12%	16%	8%
Co-workers	10%	10%	10%
Children	10%	9%	11%
Family members	8%	7%	9%
Employer	6%	7%	5%
Police officers	6%	9%	3%
Close friends	5%	5%	5%
Spouse	5%	4%	5%
Insurance agent	5%	7%	4%
Doctor	5%	4%	5%
None	31%	31%	31%
Don't know	3%	3%	4%
Refuse to answer	3%	4%	2%

3. Methodology

This study was conducted by Leger Marketing through telephone interviews among a representative sample of 1501 English- or French-speaking Canadians, 18 years of age or older.

The interviews were conducted from our Montreal and Winnipeg call centres from May 18 to May 22, 2005. Up to ten call-backs were made in the case of non-response.

Using data from Statistics Canada, the results were weighted according to region, 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 1501 respondents is of $\pm 2.6\%$, 19 times out of 20.

4. Questionnaire

Q1. Among the following groups, with whom is it easier to be honest for you personally. Is it...

READ * 1 MENTION

Rotation => 4
...family members1
...strangers2
..casual friends.....3
..close friends4
About the same for everybody (DO NOT READ)5
Don't know8
Refusal.....9

Q2. Please tell me WHETHER OR NOT you have ever done the following?

READ AND SELECT EACH OF THE STATEMENTS WITH "YES" AS ANSWER

...Received too much change at the store without notifying the teller of the situation	01	
.....		
...Paying too little for an article knowing this was the store's mistake and without notifying them	02	
...Cheated on an exam.....	03	
...Given false information about yourself to improve your profile.....	04	
...Given false information on your income tax return.....	05	
...Submitted a false insurance claim (added objects that weren't stolen in your claim)	06	
None of the above(not read)	97	X
Don't know	98	X
Refusal	99	X

Q3. When you lie to someone, would you say it's to protect yourself or others?

To protect myself	1
To protect others.....	2
Don't know	8
Refusal	9

Q4. Among the following groups, with whom do you tend to be less honest?

READ AND SELECT EACH OF THE STATEMENTS WITH "YES" AS ANSWER

Rotation => 12	
Strangers.....	01
Family members.....	02
Casual friends	03
Close friends	04
Employer	05
Co-workers	06
Police officers.....	07
Government members	08
Spouse	09
Insurance agent	10
Doctor	11
Children.....	12
None of these choices.....	97 X
Don't know	98 X
Refusal.....	99 X
