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REMEMBRANCE DAY SURVEY

This year the annual Dominion Institute / Ipsos-Reid Remembrance Day survey looks what can be done to improve the teaching of history in schools. These results form the basis of a series of practical policy recommendations that the Dominion Institute is making to improve history instruction in Canada.

COMMISSIONED BY:



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ANNUAL NOV. 11 SURVEY

While only four provinces require students to take a course dedicated to Canadian history to graduate, nine in ten (89%) 18 to 24 year olds think history should be a mandatory subject in every province

Half of young adults (54%) think history courses should focus on the history of "Canada, the nation" as opposed to only one in ten (11%) who think that the history of their region should be paramount

Seven in ten (70%) young adults support the Dominion Institute's recommendation that to graduate from high school students should be required to take the citizenship exam given to newcomers to Canada

Only one in ten (8%) young adults rank history as the academic subject that has most prepared them to succeed in their everyday life

Friday, November 9. On the heels of its ten year benchmark study on what young adults know about Canadian history, the Dominion Institute's annual Remembrance Day survey explores 18 to 24 years olds' attitudes about the teaching of history. Overall, young adults 'strongly' (64%) or 'somewhat' (25%) support the idea that every high school student should be required to take a course dedicated to the teaching of Canadian history in order to graduate. This includes the vast majority of young adults who reside in the six provinces - BC., AB., SK., NB., PE., NF. - where students are currently allowed to graduate from high school without taking a course dedicated to Canadian history (see companion report for a summary of high school history instruction in Canada). While young adults are much more



likely to rank English (47%) and Math (27%) as subjects that provide the skills necessary to succeed in everyday life, they support (31% strongly, 39% somewhat) the Dominion Institute proposal that high school students be required to pass the exam given to newcomers to Canada in order to graduate from high school. Young adults also believe (54%) that history courses should focus on the “history of Canada, the nation” – a view not reflected in many provincial curricula that give equal or greater weighting to regional and local histories.

In light of the survey results and previous polls showing declining knowledge among young Canadians about key events and people in our country’s political history, Rudyard Griffiths, Co-Founder of the Dominion Institute, is making the following policy recommendations:

“First, to ensure that young Canadians share the same basic knowledge of Canadian history regardless from what part of the country they hail from or whether their families have been in Canada for three or three hundred years the Council of the Federation should spearhead the development of a national framework for the teaching of history. This framework would ensure that an agreed upon body of “core knowledge” about Canada’s past, our democratic institutions and value, would be featured in every provincial curriculum. From the outset, the creation of such a framework should be made dependent on Quebec’s participation.”

“Second, the Council of the Federation should move immediately to require every high school student in Canada to pass the exam newcomers must take to become citizens. Such an exam would be a powerful statement that Canada’s provincial governments expect longer-settled Canadians to assume some of the same responsibilities of citizenship that are required of newcomers, namely possessing basic knowledge about Canada. The federal government should also make passing the citizenship exam a pre-requisite for every student, foreign and native born, who apply for a federal scholarships or receives student loan assistance.”

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For full tabular results, please visit the Ipsos Reid website at www.ipsos.ca.

Methodology...

These are the findings of an Ipsos Reid poll conducted on behalf of the Dominion Institute from Sep 6 to Oct 25, 2007. For the survey, a representative randomly selected sample of 1004 adults was interviewed via telephone. With a sample of this size, the results are considered accurate to within ± 3.1 percentage points, 19 times out of 20, of what they would have been had the entire adult population been polled. The margin of error will be larger within regions and for other sub-groupings of the survey population. These data were weighted to ensure that the sample's regional and age/sex composition reflects that of the actual Canadian population according to Census data.

Should Students Be Required to Take a History Course to Graduate?

There appears to be overwhelming support among Canadians aged 18 to 24 across the country for the notion that students should be required to take a history course in order to graduate from high school. In fact, nationally, nine in ten (89%) either 'strongly' (64%) or 'somewhat agree' (25%) that students should have to take a history course in order to graduate, while just on in ten (10%) either 'strongly' (4%) or 'somewhat' (6%) disagree that this should be the case.

- Even in the provinces where students are not mandated to take a history course, support is overwhelming. For example, 85% of young adults in British Columbia, 84% of young adults in Alberta, and 94% of young adults in Atlantic Canada believe that high school students should be required to take a history course in order to graduate.
- Residents of Saskatchewan and Manitoba (91%), Ontario (91%) and Quebec (89%) are also overwhelmingly in support of this practice.
- Women (91%) are slightly more likely than men (87%) to agree that this should be the case.

- Canadians who were born in Canada are only slightly more likely (90%) than immigrants (86%) to believe that students should be required to take a history course in high school in order to graduate.

What History Should We Teach? Local? Regional? National? Global?

And in terms of what history should be the focus of teaching in the classroom, a majority of Canadians are of the opinion that the history of Canada, the entire nation, would be the focus of their ideal history course. Furthermore, one third (31%) would stress Canada's role in world events in this ideal history course, while just one in nine (11%) would focus primarily on the history of their local province or region. Just 3% of Canadians believe that the focus of such a history course should be on their local community.

- Ontarians are the most likely (60%) to believe that the focus of the curriculum in an ideal history course should be on Canada as a nation.
- Quebecers are the most likely (31%) to believe that the focus of the curriculum in an ideal history course should be on their local region or province. However, more (43%) still believe that the focus should be nationally.
- Men (33%) are more likely than women (28%) to want to stress Canada's role on the global stage.

Making Taking the Citizenship exam a Pre-requisite of Graduation...

The idea of making Canadians take the citizenship exam before being able to graduate from high school is an idea that has been tossed around, and one that many see as fair as a result of requiring immigrants to take the test to become citizens. Seven in ten (70%) 'strongly' (31%) or 'somewhat agree' (39%) that this would be a good practice, while just three in ten (30%) 'somewhat' (18%) or 'strongly disagree' (12%) that Canadians should be required to take the citizenship as a requirement to graduate from high school.



- Atlantic Canadians are the most likely to agree (75%), while Ontarians (67%) and Quebecers (67%) are the least likely.
- Quite interestingly, though, is that individuals born in Canada are slightly more likely (70%) than those who have immigrated to Canada (68%) to believe that this practice should be put into place.

English and Math Beat History in Terms of Life Relevance...

When it comes time to assess the relevance of various subjects to the success of their own lives, English (of French for some) appears to have beaten out (47%) math (28%), science (16%) and history (8%) in terms of the skills that are necessary for them to succeed in life.

- Albertans are the most likely (11%) to cite history as being the most important subject in terms of life relevance. Quebecers (6%) and Atlantic Canadians (6%), however, are the least likely.
- Atlantic Canadians (34%) and Albertans (32%) are the most likely to say that math is the subject which most provided them with the skills necessary to succeed in life today.
- Men (34%) are much more likely than women (21%) to say that math is the subject which provided them with the skills that have allowed them to succeed in life today. Women, on the other hand, are more likely to mention English/French (58%) than are men (36%).

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