



Women and Gender
Equality Canada

Femmes et Égalité
des genres Canada

Canada

Attitudes Regarding Gender Equality and Gender-Based Violence in Canada

Executive Summary

Prepared for Women and Gender Equality Canada

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Executive summary

Objectives

Women and Gender Equality Canada (WAGE) required public opinion research among a nationally representative sample of people in Canada, aged 16 years and older, in order to understand attitudes on a number of issues related to gender equality and gender-based violence. The research is intended to help develop a foundational knowledge on the attitudes of people living in Canada towards:

- Gender roles and norms, sexual diversity, and gender identity and expression;
- Gender equality and equity; and,
- Gender-based violence.

This research is intended to inform future efforts to shift attitudes within Canada that contribute to gendered inequalities and gender-based violence (GBV). It is also intended to provide a baseline measure of attitudes in order to monitor the impact of attitude change efforts over time.

Methodology

To address the research objectives, a quantitative, random-probability **telephone survey** was conducted with 3,033 people in Canada (aged 16 and over) from May 22 to June 27, 2019. A survey of this size will yield results which can be considered accurate to within +/- 1.8 percentage points, 19 times out of 20.

Simultaneously, an **online survey** was conducted with a sample of 1,040 people in Canada (aged 16 and over) via an online panel, from May 29 to June 10, 2019. This allowed for a comparison between the results obtained by the two survey modes to gauge the social desirability bias associated with questions about this sensitive topic. Because an online survey is not a random probability sample, a margin of sampling error cannot be reported.

The results described below are based on the telephone data only, with the exception of the section that summarizes the impact of survey mode.

More information about the survey methodology is included in Appendix A of the full report.

Cost of research

The cost of this research was \$243,418.39 (HST included).

Key findings

Most people in Canada believe we haven't yet definitely achieved gender equality in Canada; only one in five (21%) say we definitely have. Views are divided about whether Canadian society has made adequate efforts (48%) or not (42%) to advance gender equality. Regardless of their view on efforts to date, the results suggest there is broad support for further action to address gender inequality as most people (81%) believe that investing in girls and women benefits everyone, rather than leaving men and boys behind.

People in Canada generally (but not universally) express progressive views about gender roles and responsibilities. For instance, a majority of people agree that men should take parental leave (83%), and disagree that: men are absolved of child support if they don't see their children enough (63%); families suffer when women work full-time (64%); and, women have sole responsibility for birth control (73%).

- Similarly, most people in Canada believe that women and men are equally good at learning skills related to STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics), the trades and caregiving professions. However, significant proportions of people hold traditional gender biases about learning trades (26% say men/boys are better) and caregiving skills (30% say women/girls are better). The same biases are less notable for STEM-related skills (fewer than one in ten say either gender is better).
- A strong majority of people think there is no difference between men and women in their suitability for leadership positions such as the head of a major corporation (93%), leader of a political party (92%) or a police officer (82%).

What are seen to be the factors contributing to gender inequality? A majority of people in Canada connect the under-representation of women in certain jobs and industries (such as STEM) to hostile work environments (83%) and to discrimination in the recruitment and hiring process (76%). Opinion is more divided about whether a lack of interest on the part of women themselves is a reason (47% say it is a major or minor reason, vs. 50% who say it is not a reason).

- When it comes to the reasons women earn less money than men, people in Canada tend to agree with the statement that it is because society undervalues women's work (69%) and to disagree with the idea that it is because women's jobs tends to be less skilled (60%). However, opinion is more evenly divided about whether the gender wage gap is related to the perception that men tend to have riskier jobs (53% say it is a major or minor reason, vs. 45% who say it is not a reason).
- With respect to leadership, most people in Canada agree that women must do more than men to prove themselves as capable leaders (79% agree) and disagree that men are more effective than women in position of power because they are less emotional (77% disagree). However, a slight gender bias emerges in the relative proportions who agree that either women or men are less likeable when they take on leadership roles (40% and 31% respectively).

Views on issues related to gender identity, gender expression and sexual orientation are positive in many, but not all, cases. For instance, there appears to be more overall acceptance of and comfort with people who are LGB (lesbian, gay, bisexual) than for people who are transgender or whose gender expression differs from societal conventions. Moreover, public opinion is divided on gender identity and gender expression issues which challenge long-held, pre-conceived notions that sex assigned at birth equates to gender and that there are only two genders: men and women. About six in ten believe that a person's gender can be different than the sex that they were assigned at birth, and about one in two believe that a person can be a gender other than a man or a woman.

A strong majority of people believe that violence against women and girls in Canada is common, and that sexual assaults happen more often than people think. Most people agree that friends and neighbours should report domestic violence (97%), that controlling a partner by refusing money constitutes a form of violence (79%), and that a man's non-consensual removal of a condom during sex constitutes sexual assault (80%). The majority disagrees that a woman could leave an abusive relationship if she wanted to (56%). On preventing

sexual assaults perpetrated by men against women, the vast majority believe the onus is on men (84%), compared to one in ten (10%) who believe it is up to women alone.

People who are more open about what constitutes a family and hold more pro-immigration views, also tend to hold more progressive views on gender issues, while demographics such as gender and religion play a relatively smaller role in determining those attitudes. Overall, traditional view on gender issues are consistently (but not exclusively) more evident among men, visible minorities and those born outside Canada, as well as among those with lower socioeconomic status (particularly those with lower levels of education). However, advanced analysis demonstrates that attitudes related to gender issues are more accurately predicted by an individual's social values, that is, how they see the world.

Political neutrality statement and contact information

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