



Citizenship and  
Immigration Canada

Citoyenneté et  
Immigration Canada

# A literature review of Public Opinion Research on Canadian attitudes towards multiculturalism and immigration, 2006-2009

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Canada

The views and opinions expressed in this document are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect those of Citizenship and Immigration Canada or the Government of Canada.

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## Table of contents

Executive summary.....	iv
1. Research overview.....	1
2. Canadian attitudes towards multiculturalism and immigration.....	3
2.1. Support for ethnic/linguistic/religious diversity.....	3
2.1.1. Value to Canadian identity .....	3
2.1.2. Attitudes towards diversity.....	5
2.1.3. Integration/assimilation.....	8
2.1.4. Discrimination.....	13
2.2. Support for minority rights.....	19
2.2.1. General .....	19
2.2.2. Multiculturalism, reasonable accommodation and bilingualism .....	22
2.3. Support for immigration.....	26
2.3.1. Immigration Levels .....	26
2.3.2. Immigrants' contributions to Canada .....	29
2.3.3. Attitudes about ethnic groups.....	33
2.4. Canada in comparative context.....	35
3. Review and conclusions.....	41
Data sources .....	42

## List of Figures

Figure 1:	Canada's multicultural makeup is one of the best things about this country. ....	3
Figure 2:	Multiculturalism .....	4
Figure 3:	In your view, what is it about Canada that you think most deserves to be celebrated on its 150 <sup>th</sup> birthday? ( <i>answers obtained without prompting</i> ).....	4
Figure 4:	How important are the following to the Canadian identity? (very important to not at all important, 4-point scale) .....	5
Figure 5:	In your view, is the growing variety of ethnic and racial groups in Canada very good, good, bad or very bad for the country? .....	6
Figure 6:	Which of the following two statements comes closest to your own point of view? .....	6
Figure 7:	Canada is changing too quickly because of all the minorities we have here now. ....	7
Figure 8:	It is better for Canada to have a variety of people with different religions. ....	7
Figure 9:	As you may have heard, Canada now has 5 million citizens who are members of visible minorities according to the latest census. In your view, is this a positive or negative development, or are you not sure? .....	8
Figure 10:	Visible minorities now comprise 16 percent of Canada's population. How would you characterize that proportion? Is it...?.....	8
Figure 11:	It is better for Canada if almost everyone shares the same customs and traditions. ....	10
Figure 12:	Some people say that immigrants and minority ethnic groups should blend into Canadian society and not form a separate community. Other people say that immigrants and minority ethnic groups should be free to maintain their religious and cultural practice and traditions. Which one of these two points of view is closest to your own? .....	10
Figure 13:	Once immigrants arrive here, what do you think should be Canada's main aim? Do you think we should be encouraging immigrants to maintain their identity and culture or do you think we should be encouraging immigrants to integrate and become part of the Canadian culture? .....	11
Figure 14:	Overall, what do you, yourself think should be a higher priority for Canada? .....	11
Figure 15:	There are too many immigrants coming into this country who are not adopting Canadian values. (strongly agree to strongly disagree, 4-point scale). ....	12
Figure 16:	Too many recent immigrants just don't want to fit into Canadian society. (strongly agree to strong disagree, 4-point scale).....	12
Figure 17:	Would you say that most immigrants integrate easily into Canadian society? .....	13

Figure 18:	Some people say that new Canadians hold on to their customs and traditions for too long when they come to Canada. Others say that new Canadians integrate into Canadian life at a natural and acceptable pace. Which view is closer to your own? .....	13
Figure 19:	_____ (Canada/my community/my province) is welcoming to members of visible minorities. (strongly agree to strongly disagree, 4-point scale) .....	15
Figure 20:	My city is very welcoming to people of different cultures and backgrounds. [strongly agree to strongly disagree, 4-point scale] .....	16
Figure 21:	Discrimination against visible minorities is a problem in Canada. (strongly agree to strongly disagree, 4-point scale). .....	16
Figure 22:	For each of the following groups, please tell me whether you think they are often, sometimes, rarely or never the subject of discrimination in Canadian society today. ....	17
Figure 23:	Would you say you have a generally favourable or unfavourable opinion of each of the following religions? .....	18
Figure 24:	Would it be acceptable or unacceptable to you if one of your children were to marry a person who was a follower of any of these religions? .....	18
Figure 25:	Minority groups need special rights (strongly agree to strong disagree, 4-point scale).....	20
Figure 26:	Which is more important in democratic society: 1. letting the majority decide, or 2. protecting the needs and rights of minorities. ....	20
Figure 27:	We have gone too far in pushing equal rights in this country (strongly agree to strong disagree, 4-point scale). ....	20
Figure 28:	We should look after Canadians born in this country first and others second. (strongly agree to strong disagree, 4-point scale). ....	21
Figure 29:	Opinion on equal rights.....	21
Figure 30:	As you may know, there have been discussions over the past few years on providing public funding to faith-based schools. Thinking of each of the following religions, would you agree or disagree with providing public funding to schools that teach each of these faiths? .....	22
Figure 31:	Which of these two statements best reflects your personal view? .....	23
Figure 32:	Over the past few months, there have been many discussions across Canada about the concept of "Reasonable Accommodation", which entails modifying specific laws and norms when they could affect minorities. Which of these statements comes closest to your own point of view?.....	24
Figure 33:	Would you say you strongly agree, agree, disagree or strongly disagree with the following practices... ..	24
Figure 34:	We have gone too far in pushing bilingualism in Canada. (strongly agree to strong disagree, 4-point scale) .....	25
Figure 35:	Anglophones in Quebec are better treated than Francophones in the rest of Canada. (strongly agree to strong disagree, 4-point scale).....	25
Figure 36:	Federal government services should be provided in only one language: French in Quebec and English in the rest of Canada. (strongly agree to strong disagree, 4-point scale).....	25
Figure 37:	In your opinion, do you feel there are too many, too few, or about the right number of immigrants coming to Canada?.....	27
Figure 38:	Overall, there is too much immigration to Canada. (strongly agree to strongly disagree, 4-point scale) .....	27
Figure 39:	From what you can tell, do you think Canada accepts too many, too few or about the right number of immigrants per year? .....	28
Figure 40:	In total, approximately how many new immigrants do you think Canada allows into the country each year? [ <i>Respondent answer</i> ].....	28
Figure 41:	Immigrants make an important contribution to this country (strongly agree to strong disagree, 4-point scale) .....	30
Figure 42:	Immigration from other countries is good for [city] (strongly agree to strongly disagree, 4-point scale) .....	30
Figure 43:	In general, what effect does immigration to this country have on your community? (very positive to very negative, 5-point scale).....	31
Figure 44:	Opinions about immigrants and Canadian society.....	31
Figure 45:	Overall, immigration has a positive impact on the economy of Canada. (strongly agree to strongly disagree, 4-point scale) .....	32
Figure 46:	Immigrants take away jobs from other Canadians. (strongly agree to strongly disagree, 4-point scale) .....	32
Figure 47:	Opinions about immigrants and the economy.....	33
Figure 48:	Non-whites should not be allowed to immigrate to Canada. (strongly agree to strongly disagree, 4-point scale) .....	34
Figure 49:	Opinions about immigrants' visible minority status and country of origin .....	34

Figure 50:	I'd like to ask you how much you trust people from various groups. Could you tell me for each whether you trust people from this group completely, somewhat, not very much or not at all? People of another nationality.....	37
Figure 51:	I'd like to ask you how much you trust people from various groups. Could you tell me for each whether you trust people from this group completely, somewhat, not very much or not at all? People of another religion .....	38
Figure 52:	In your opinion, how many (Canadians, British, French, Spanish, Germans) do you think are hostile toward Muslims? Would you say most, many, just some or very few? % answering "most".....	39
Figure 53:	Some countries have decided to ban the wearing of headscarves by Muslim women in public places, including schools. Do you think this is a good idea or a bad idea? % answering "a good idea" .....	39
Figure 54:	In the last two years, have you personally had a bad experience due to your race, ethnicity, or religion, or hasn't this happened to you? (Muslims only) % answering "yes".....	39
Figure 55:	In your opinion, how important should the following be as requirements for somebody seeking citizenship of your country? Adopting the customs of my country .....	40

## Executive summary

The goal of this report is to review all publicly-available data relating to issues of multiculturalism and immigration from 2006 to 2009. The report draws together data from many different polling firms, across a wide range of issues. Where possible, data from recent years are presented alongside historical trends and, while the focus is on Canada, several cross-national results are also reviewed.

The resulting data provide a relatively thorough picture of where Canadians stand on issues of multiculturalism and immigration. Some general themes emerge from this review. First, Canadian support for multiculturalism and immigration is relatively high, and has changed very little over the past several years. Second, while there is a good degree of support for diversity, there is also consistent and relatively strong support for a certain degree of assimilation. Canadians support levels of immigration that are relatively high by international standards; they are tolerant of different cultures, languages, and religions; and they are supportive of a wide range of minority rights. However, Canadians also show strong support for individual equality; a majority agree that “laws and norms should not be modified to accommodate minorities” (Angus Reid Strategies, 2008), and disagree that “minority groups need special rights” (Canadian Election Studies, 2000-2008); and a considerable minority believes that immigrants should “blend into Canadian society” rather than be “free to maintain religious/cultural practices” (Environics, 2006).

These findings are discussed in detail in this report, alongside results from roughly 80 different polling questions on issues of multiculturalism and immigration. We argue that the picture that emerges is of a Canadian public with strong, but conditional, support for multiculturalism and immigration.

## 1. Research overview

The following report is a review of publicly-available data on public attitudes relating to multiculturalism and immigration, from 2006 to 2009. We believe that a review of attitudes can play a critical role in policy and program development in these domains. That said, relatively little data on the state of Canadian public opinion on issues of multiculturalism and immigration exists since 2006, and the current state of Canadian opinion on these critical issues has been scarcely explored. There has been some intermittent and partial exploration of these attitudes in various individual commercial and in some academic work, but no systematic review of the public literature on the state of opinion on these issues. The primary purpose of this project is to identify and analyze existing public opinion data on the Canadian public's attitudes towards multiculturalism and immigration, and review literature that analyzes such data.

The data reviewed in this report are, almost by definition, incomplete, as we have not commissioned any new public opinion polls. Rather, we rely entirely on existing, publicly-available data, and through this reveal some areas which could benefit from more data. Nonetheless, there are a good number of domains in which there are relatively complete data, and as a result, we have a good understanding of the state of public opinion in several areas. In other domains, we rely on existing data to highlight a few findings, and point towards the need for further research.

This review began by identifying what we saw as the major themes applying to public opinion research on issues of immigration and multiculturalism. The purpose of this report is to explore attitudes about multiculturalism, not attitudes that capture the success (or failure) of multiculturalism policy. While there has been a good deal of recent academic work on the latter — exploring, for instance, political participation and sense of belonging of immigrants, this is not the focus of this review<sup>1</sup>. Rather, this review focuses on Canadians' attitudes about the following themes based on a review of the existing data and the related literature, which capture three broad areas in which there exists a sufficient recent body of opinion data related to issues of multiculturalism and immigration:

- Support for ethnic/linguistic/religious diversity
- Support for minority rights
- Support for immigration

While the three themes are related, and overlap, most of the data from the surveys here reviewed, covering 2006 to 2009, fit relatively easily into one of these categories. We examine each theme below, with a focus on Canadian data, and then look briefly at the available comparative international data on similar issues.

Following from these themes, the opinion data included in this report are the result of a search based on the following criteria:

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<sup>1</sup> Reitz, Jeffrey C., Raymond Breton, Karen Kisiel Dion and Kenneth L. Dion. 2009. *Multiculturalism and Social Cohesion: Potentials and Challenges of Diversity*. New York: Springer; Soroka, Stuart .N., Richard Johnston, and Keith Banting, 2007. "Ethnicity, Trust, and the Welfare State". In *Social Capital, Diversity, and the Welfare State*, edited by F.M. Kay and R. Johnston, Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, pp. 279–303; Soroka, Stuart N., Richard Johnston, and Keith Banting, 2007. "Ties That Bind? Social Cohesion and Diversity in Canada". In *Belonging? Diversity, Recognition and Shared Citizenship in Canada*, edited by K. Banting, T.J. Courchene, and F.L. Seidle. *The Art of the State*, Vol. 3. Montreal: Institute for Research on Public Policy, pp. 561–600.

- focus on data collected from 2006 to 2009, with an interest in comparability over a longer time period;
- focus on Canadian polls, with an interest in international studies with a Canadian component; and
- a search of polling results, focused on the following keywords (among others): multiculturalism/multicultural, diversity/diverse, ethnicity/ethnic, linguistic, minority/minorities, minority rights, immigrant, and immigration.

We have drawn on a combination of the following resources for this review:

- publicly-available individual-level commercial data files at the Canadian Opinion Research Archive;
- additional individual-level data files from Environics;
- results from aggregate-level reports from other commercial firms; and
- results from the Canadian Election Studies and from other available academic polls.

As a result, the data presented in this review are drawn from dozens of different polls, across many agencies, both commercial and academic. We have not presented every available result, but rather focus on the most reliable questions (based on consideration of sampling, question wording, etc.) or those that are representative of others which we have chosen to leave out. We present detailed results on roughly 80 separate polling questions in the pages that follow, many for which there exist data over an extended period.

What do these data tell us about the state of public opinion on issues of multiculturalism and immigration? It will come as no surprise to those involved in the field that Canadians show broad support for multiculturalism -- for diversity -- and for immigration. There is no evidence of the kind of retrenchment seen in European countries over the past decade. Indeed, we suggest that one of the main findings in this report is that Canadian attitudes towards multiculturalism are very stable, perhaps a remarkable finding, given high levels of immigration and diversity.

As a result, we characterize opinion in this domain as one of strong, but conditional, support for multiculturalism and immigration. Canadians' attitudes about diversity, immigration and minority rights are largely, though not entirely, positive; and those attitudes are accompanied by a sense that a degree of difference should be combined with a degree of integration. Multiculturalism is viewed as an integral and largely positive aspect of the Canadian state; but Canadians — including visible minorities and recent immigrants — see some value in shared values and traditions as well. These are the two findings that we see as most prominent in public opinion data on these matters from 2006 to 2009. Much of the data collected for this report is presented in fifty-five figures, throughout sections of the report. Each of those figures is discussed, by subject and by theme, in the sections that follow.

Unless otherwise indicated, polling data are for a nationally-representative sample of Canadian residents; sample sizes and data sources are listed in the corresponding figure; all data sources are listed again in the final section of this report. Since we are dealing almost entirely with aggregate-level data, we have for the most part presented results for Canadians as a whole, rather than by age, gender, and other demographic characteristics. In several cases, results are presented by age, or region, where the data are available, and where differences are noteworthy. That said, there is more that can be done in the future with regards to examining results by demographics, in relating opinions across domains to each other, and in conducting opinion research on issues that have not been dealt with in the recent past.



## 2. Canadian attitudes towards multiculturalism and immigration

### 2.1. Support for ethnic/linguistic/religious diversity

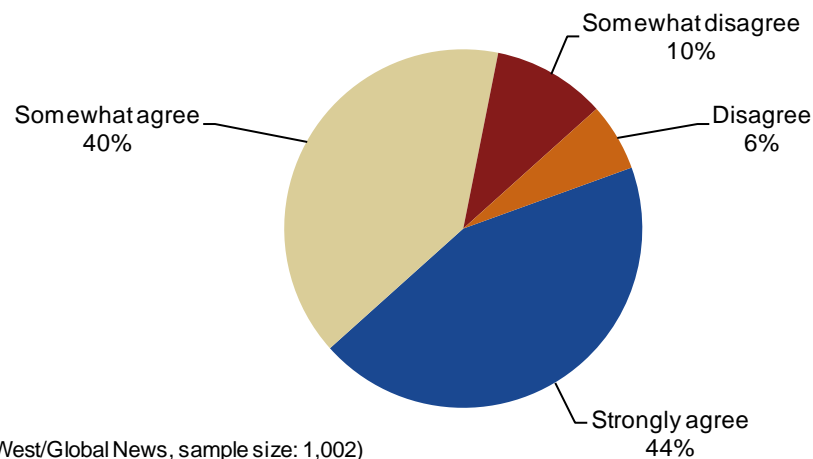
#### 2.1.1. Value to Canadian identity

We begin by examining some public opinion data on the perceived importance of multiculturalism to Canadian identity. Evident in each of figures 1 through 3, there is majority support for multiculturalism as a central component of Canadian identity. A survey by Ipsos-Reid finds that 84% of Canadians agree (including both “somewhat agree” and “strongly agree”) with the statement that “Canada’s multicultural makeup is one of the best things about this country” (Figure 1); a Strategic Counsel survey shows that 61% of Canadians believe multiculturalism “strengthens national identity” (Figure 2). Moreover, recently released data (2010) from Environics reveals that Canadians believe multiculturalism is the one characteristic about Canada that most deserves to be celebrated on its upcoming 150th anniversary (Figure 3) -- when asked, 27% of Canadians identified multiculturalism without any kind of prompting, well ahead of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms (12%) as the most deserving reason for celebration.

According to Figure 4, there has been a 13 percentage-point increase in perceived importance of multiculturalism to the Canadian identity over the past decade. While this increase is evident in both Quebec and the rest of Canada (though data by region are not shown here), the increase has been somewhat greater in Quebec, where 40% of those polled regard multiculturalism as very important. In the rest of Canada, a narrow majority (52%) regard it as very important. Where bilingualism is concerned, a clear majority of Quebecers regard bilingualism as very important; in the rest of Canada, results hover between 30% and 40%.

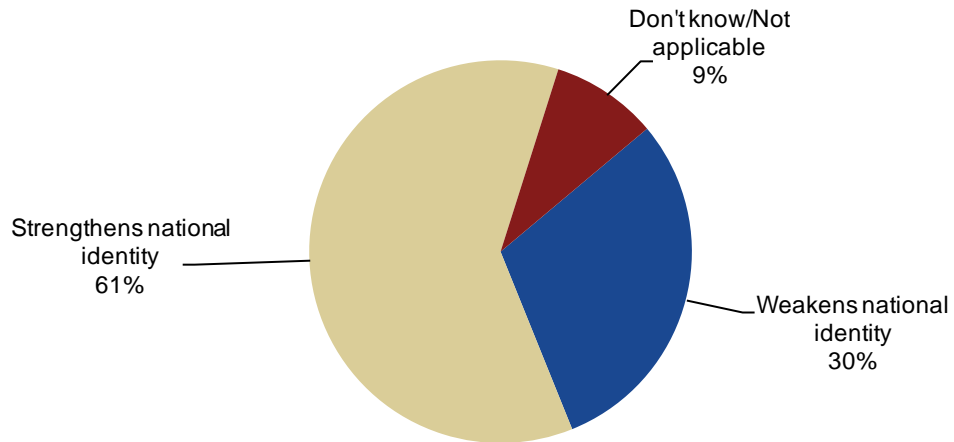
The Environics data shown in Figure 4 suggest that neither multiculturalism nor bilingualism are seen as the most important feature of Canadian identity; generally, universal health care and the Charter of Rights and Freedoms regularly top the list. Nevertheless, looking at several different questions indicates a majority of Canadians support the idea that multiculturalism is central to Canadian identity.

**Figure 1: Canada’s multicultural makeup is one of the best things about this country.**



(2007, Ipsos-Reid for CanWest/Global News, sample size: 1,002)

**Figure 2: Multiculturalism**



(2008, Strategic Counsel for Globe & Mail/CTV, sample size: 1,000 Canadians)

**Figure 3: In your view, what is it about Canada that you think most deserves to be celebrated on its 150<sup>th</sup> birthday? (answers obtained without prompting)**

%	
27	Multiculturalism
12	Charter of Rights and Freedoms
7	Natural beauty/natural resources
6	Canada's Aboriginal history/heritage/culture
5	Peaceful country/absence of crime/social problems
5	Nice/friendly people
5	Freedom (general)
4	Independence from US/other countries
4	Arts and culture/Literature/music/artists
4	Health care system
4	Democracy/Democratic institutions
4	Canada's history/heritage
4	National Unity
3	Economic prosperity/standard of living
3	Tolerance of others/human rights
3	Role/contribution to peacekeeping/world peace
3	Great Canadians
27	Other
14	None/Nothing
18	DK/NA

(February 2010, Environics 150! Canada Poll, sample size: 1,001)

**Figure 4: How important are the following to the Canadian identity? (very important to not at all important, 4-point scale)**

	% saying "Very important"			
	1997	2000	2003	2007
Health care system	89	80	78	83
Charter of Rights and Freedoms	72	76	71	72
Canadian flag	70	73	68	69
National parks	71	73	62	63
National anthem	67	65	60	62
Historic sites	65	67	53	58
RCMP	60	60	57	52
Multiculturalism	37	54	47	50
Canadian literature and music	49	58	46	46
Bilingualism	37	45	38	40
CBC	39	37	37	39
Hockey	30	35	40	37
National capital Ottawa	–	43	36	33
The Queen	14	16	16	16

(1997-2007, Environics Focus Canada, sample size [2007]: 2,030)

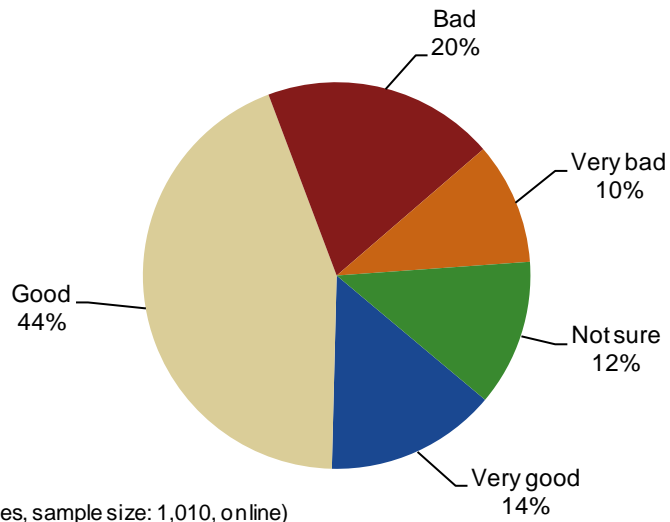
### 2.1.2. Attitudes towards diversity

In this section we turn from attitudes about “multiculturalism” to attitudes about “diversity.” Figure 5 is the first of several to examine Canadians’ attitudes in this domain. Again, we see majority support for a diverse, multi-ethnic Canada. Six in ten (58%) Canadians believe that “the growing variety of ethnic and racial groups in Canada” is either very good or good (Figure 5); a similar proportion (64%) believe that “having a multicultural blend of different cultures provides a richer, more tolerant society” (Figure 6). Majority support for diversity is also evident in response to a negatively-worded statement about tolerance: six in ten (59%) Canadians disagree that “Canada is changing too quickly because of all the minorities we have here now” (Figure 7). And it is evident when questions are directed at religious diversity as well: three-quarters (75%) of Canadians agree that “it is better for Canada to have a variety of people with different religions” (Figure 8). Figure 9 and Figure 10 show results from questions that mention explicitly the number or proportion of visible minorities in Canada. Both figures show very few Canadians (less than one in ten) regarding the number as either a negative development or too large.

Across these various surveys and questions, support for diversity is consistently higher among younger Canadians, although this tends to be a question of degree rather than of a completely different viewpoint. For example (using data in Figure 5 broken down by age group), majorities in all age groups say that “the growing variety of ethnic and racial groups in Canada” is either very good or good; but this view is more common among Canadians aged 18 to 34 (65%) than among older Canadians (55%).

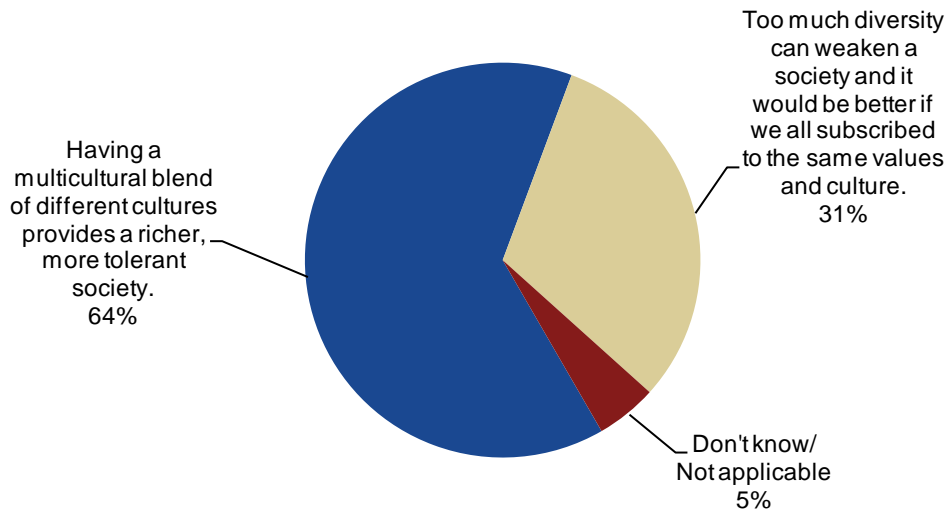
Overall, a majority of Canadians have a positive view of various forms of diversity. That said, there are hints of a concerned minority, with 31% of Canadians believing that “too much diversity can weaken a society and it would be better if we all subscribed to the same values and culture” (Figure 6), and 39% of Canadians agreeing that “Canada is changing too quickly because of all the minorities we have here now” (Figure 7). While preceding figures have emphasized the relatively high levels of support for diversity in Canada, then, these data suggest a certain degree of caution. In short, Canadians are supportive of diversity with some reservations. This theme will be apparent in the section that follows as well, on the issue of integration and assimilation.

**Figure 5:** In your view, is the growing variety of ethnic and racial groups in Canada very good, good, bad or very bad for the country?



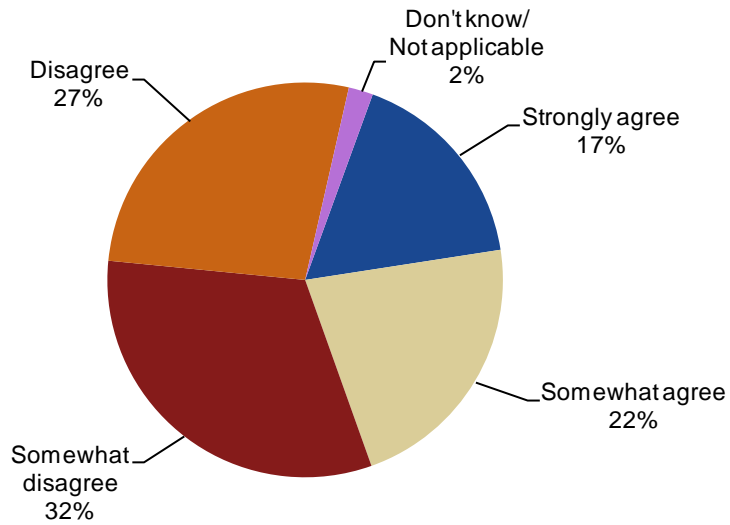
(2008, Angus-Reid Strategies, sample size: 1,010, online)

**Figure 6:** Which of the following two statements comes closest to your own point of view?



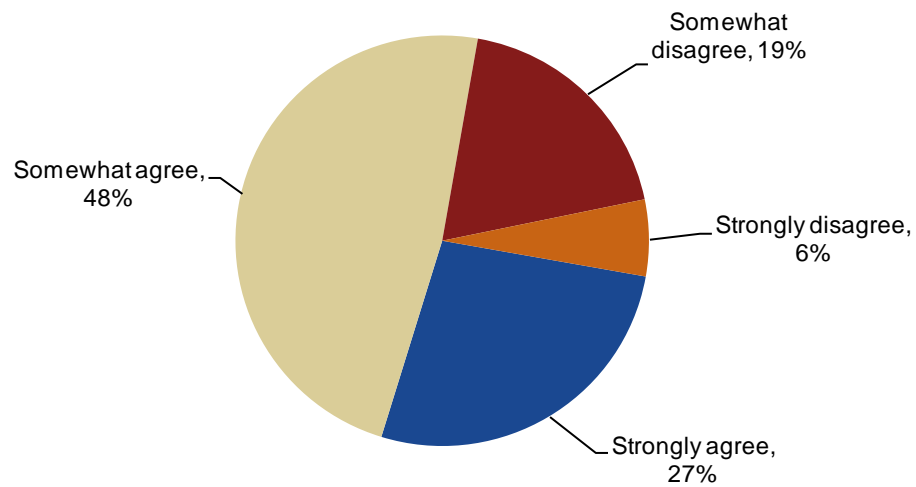
(2009, EKOS for the CBC, sample size: 1,587, online)

**Figure 7: Canada is changing too quickly because of all the minorities we have here now.**



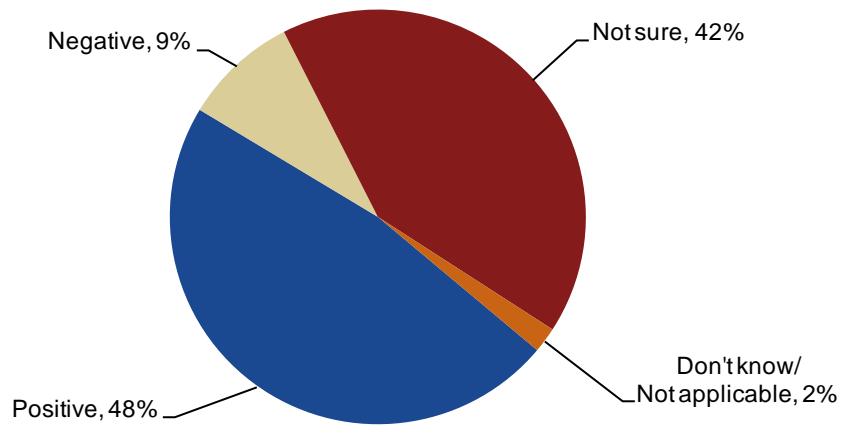
(2007, Ipsos-Reid for CanWest/Global News, sample size: 1,002)

**Figure 8: It is better for Canada to have a variety of people with different religions.**



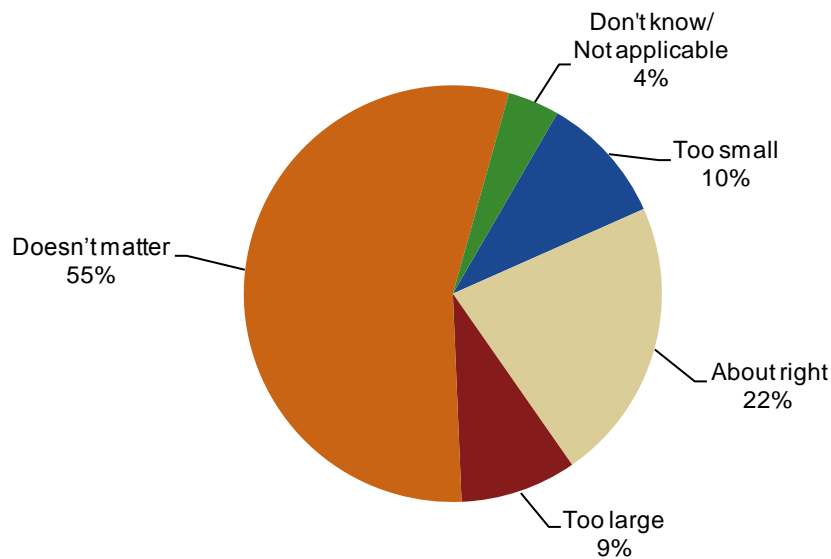
(2007, Ipsos-Reid for CanWest/Global News, sample size: 7,787, online)

**Figure 9:** As you may have heard, Canada now has 5 million citizens who are members of visible minorities according to the latest census. In your view, is this a positive or negative development, or are you not sure?



(2008, Strategic Counsel for Globe & Mail/CTV, sample size: 1,000)

**Figure 10:** Visible minorities now comprise 16 percent of Canada's population. How would you characterize that proportion? Is it...?



(2008, Strategic Counsel for Globe & Mail/CTV, sample size: 1,000)

### 2.1.3. Integration/assimilation

The preceding section suggested that some Canadians have reservations about diversity. Data suggest that these reservations are related mainly to concerns about integration or assimilation. The Canadian public is broadly supportive of diversity, but not without some degree of assimilation. Put differently, given the opportunity to consider integration or assimilation, the Canadian public falls somewhere in the middle — encouraging integration, to be sure, though not to the point of full assimilation.

First, there is a body of polling results suggesting support for diversity. Data in Figure 11 suggest that a majority of Canadians is tolerant of difference, with more than six in ten (64%) who disagree that “it is better for Canada if almost everyone shares the same customs and traditions.” An Environics survey finds, similarly, a general tendency among Canadians to believe that immigrants and minority ethnic groups should be able to maintain their religious and cultural practices (49%) (Figure 12).

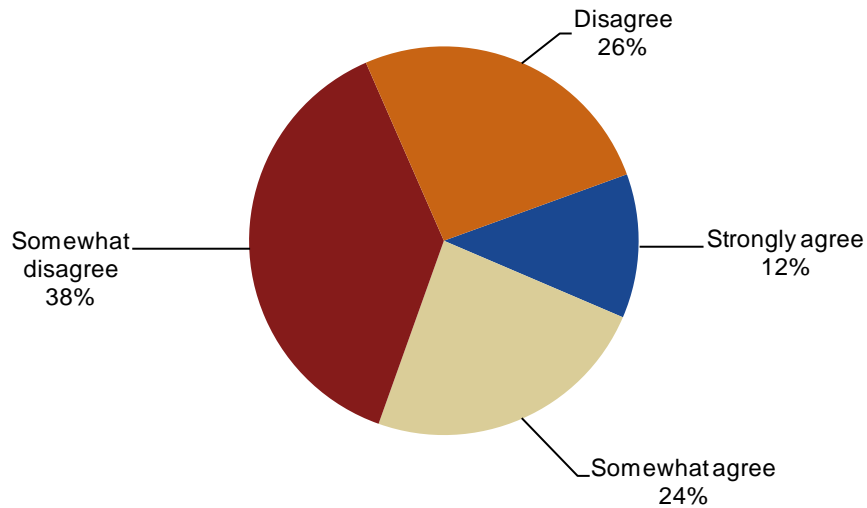
Second, there is a gap between the views of the general population and, for instance, those of Canadian Muslims (see Figure 12) with respect to the extent to which immigrants and minority ethnic groups should blend into Canadian society. In all likelihood, the average Canadian favours a greater degree of integration than do ethnic minorities. Indeed, when faced with the option of either integration, or maintaining identities and cultures, the average Canadian selects the former. A 2006 survey by the Strategic Counsel found that 70% of Canadians believe “we should be encouraging immigrants to integrate and become part of Canadian culture”, strongly outweighing the 19% who believe the goal should be “encouraging immigrants to maintain their identity and culture”; these opinions had not changed since 2005 (Figure 13). Similarly, in 2007 a modest majority of individuals polled by Ipsos-Reid considered it a higher priority to encourage minority groups to be more like Canadians (57%) rather than to encourage Canadians to accept minority groups and their customs (38%) (see Figure 14).

Younger Canadians (under 35 years of age) are generally more in favour of minority groups maintaining their customs and traditions, though there is a substantial minority who favours integration. For example, 50% of Canadians under 35 were found in a 2007 Ipsos-Reid poll to favour the acceptance of minority groups and their customs, compared to 24% of those aged 55 or older (using data in Figure 14 broken down by age group, not shown). Nonetheless, more than four in ten (44%) younger Canadians prioritize integration, compared to 71% of older Canadians.

What do Canadians think immigrants themselves want or do when they come to Canada? Many Canadians express concern that immigrants are not interested in integrating into Canadian society. For example, a 2008 Environics survey found that 60% of Canadians agree that “there are too many immigrants coming into this country who are not adopting Canadian values” (Figure 15). The same year, the Canadian Election Study survey found that a slim majority (54%) agrees that “too many recent immigrants just don’t want to fit into Canadian society” (Figure 16). Both surveys revealed consistent levels of concern since 2000—though there is a spike in concern in 2006, evident in Figure 15, that may have been in response to media reports of the debate in Western European countries about the integration of their newcomer populations and the arrests of 18 young men in the Greater Toronto Area suspected of plotting terrorist attacks on Canadian targets.

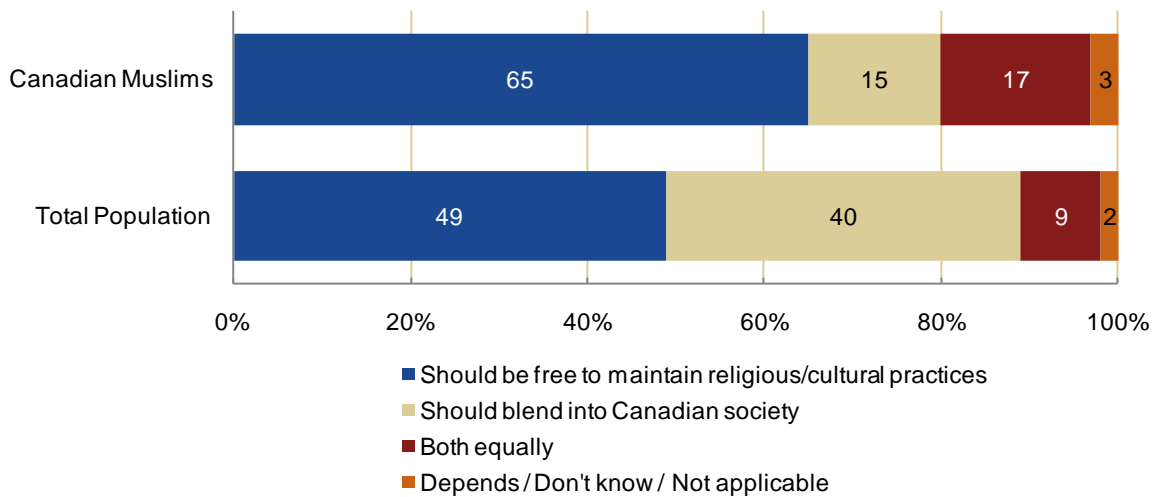
Figure 17 and Figure 18 provide further evidence, from a different survey, of concerns about a lack of assimilation amongst a considerable number of Canadians. More than four in ten (46%) respondents of a 2006 Leger Poll feel that immigrants integrate into Canadian society either “not very easily” or “not at all easily”; a similar proportion (45%) believe that new Canadians hold on too long to their customs and traditions.

**Figure 11: It is better for Canada if almost everyone shares the same customs and traditions.**



(2006, Ipsos-Reid for CanWest/Global News, sample size: 7,787, on line)

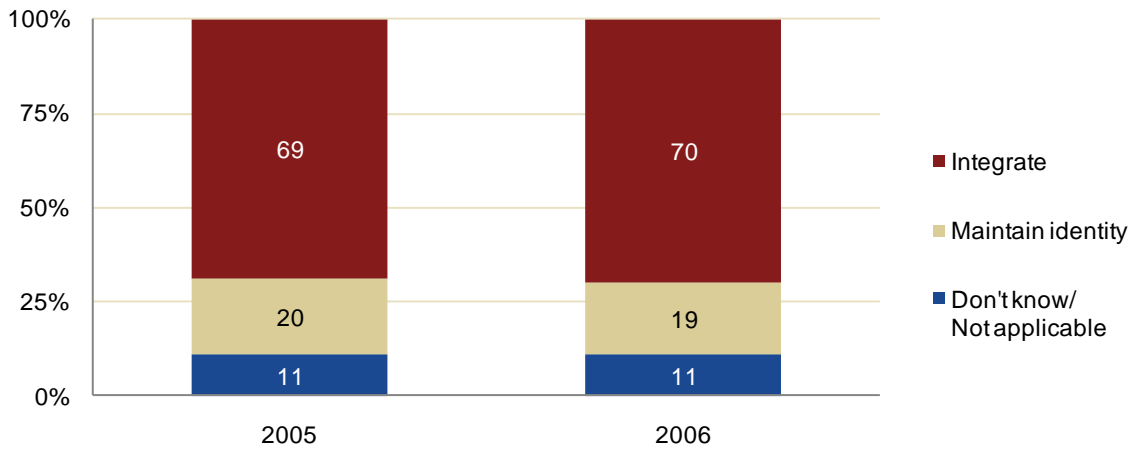
**Figure 12: Some people say that immigrants and minority ethnic groups should blend into Canadian society and not form a separate community. Other people say that immigrants and minority ethnic groups should be free to maintain their religious and cultural practice and traditions. Which one of these two points of view is closest to your own?**



(2006, Environics Focus Canada 2006-4, Muslim sample size: 500; Can sample size: 2,045)

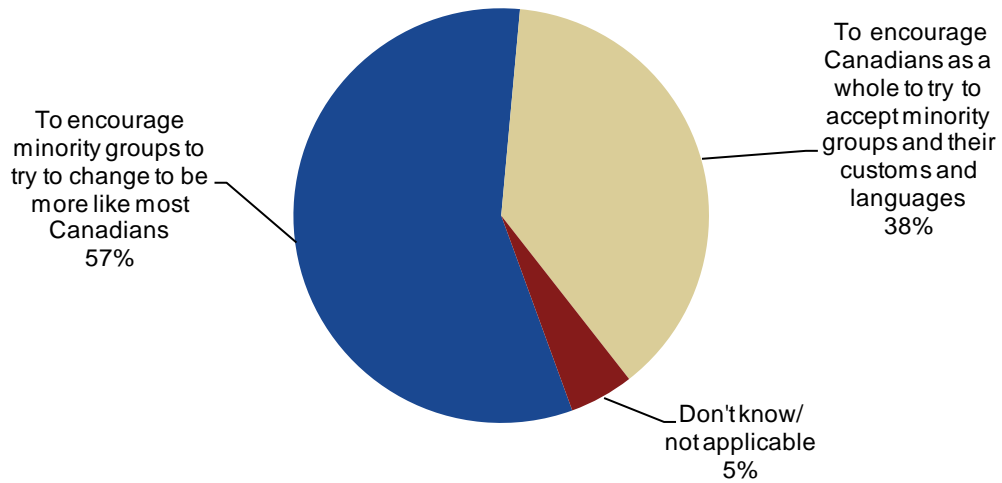


**Figure 13: Once immigrants arrive here, what do you think should be Canada's main aim? Do you think we should be encouraging immigrants to maintain their identity and culture or do you think we should be encouraging immigrants to integrate and become part of the Canadian culture?**



(2005 & 2006, Strategic Counsel for Globe & Mail/CTV, sample size: 1,000 per wave)

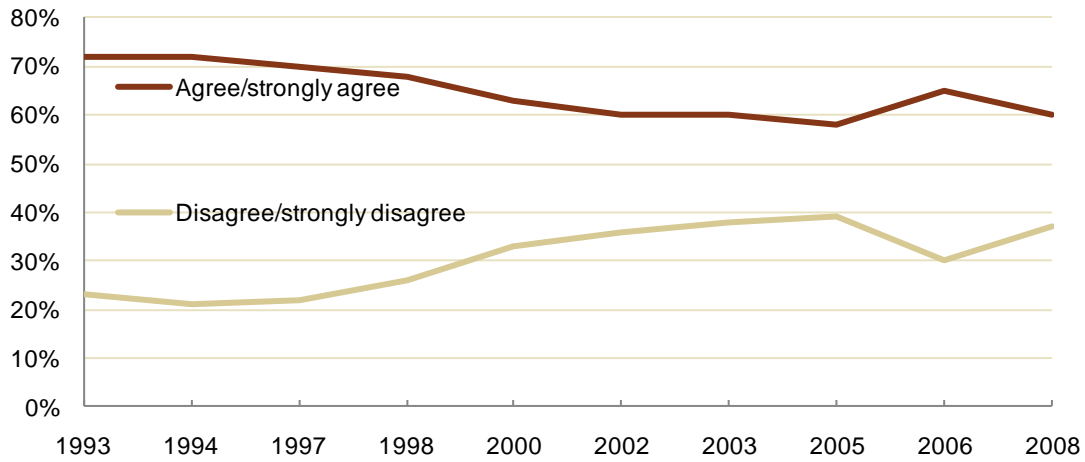
**Figure 14: Overall, what do you, yourself think should be a higher priority for Canada?**



(2007, Ipsos-Reid for CanWest/Global News, sample size: 1,002)

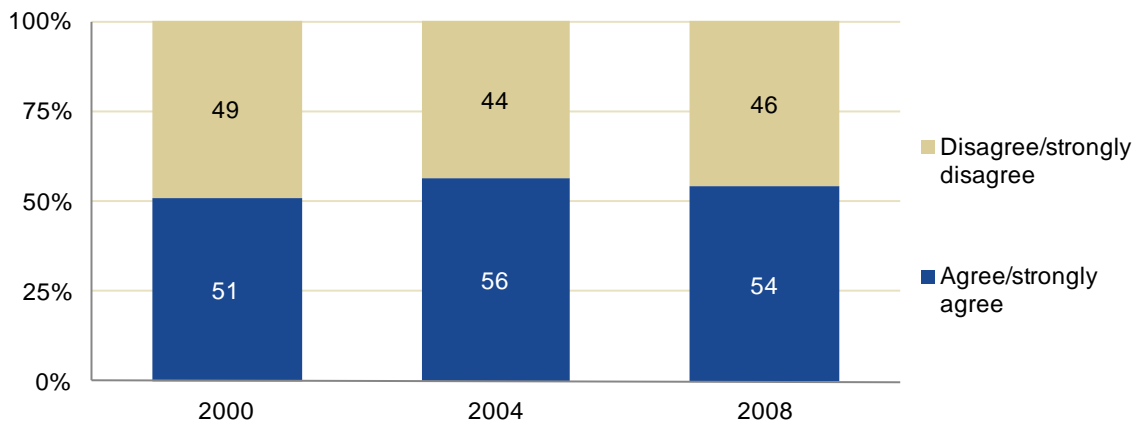
**Figure 15: There are too many immigrants coming into this country who are not adopting Canadian values. (strongly agree to strongly disagree, 4-point scale).**

*Note: time points shown on the horizontal axis indicate when polls were conducted: durations of intervals between time points vary.*



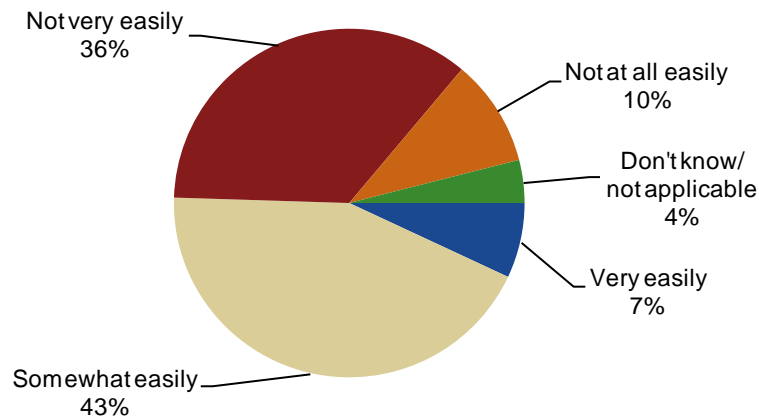
(1993-2008, Environics Focus Canada 2008-1, sample size 2008: 2,028)

**Figure 16: Too many recent immigrants just don't want to fit into Canadian society. (strongly agree to strong disagree, 4-point scale).**



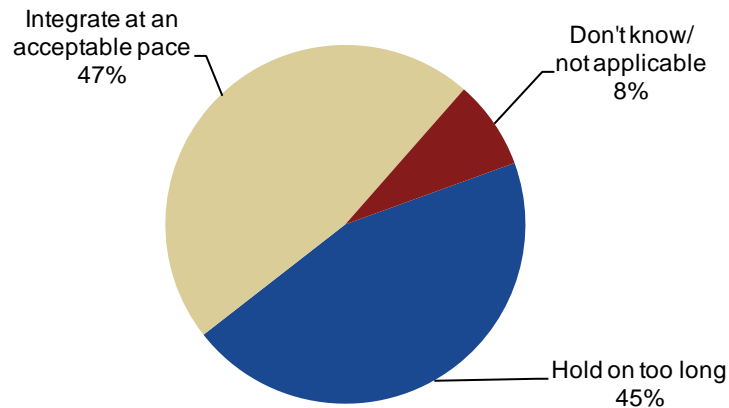
(Canadian Election Studies, sample size (Mailback survey): approximately 1,500 per election)

**Figure 17: Would you say that most immigrants integrate easily into Canadian society?**



(2007, Leger Marketing for Sun Media, sample size: 3,092, online)

**Figure 18: Some people say that new Canadians hold on to their customs and traditions for too long when they come to Canada. Others say that new Canadians integrate into Canadian life at a natural and acceptable pace. Which view is closer to your own?**



(2008, Strategic Counsel for Globe & Mail/CTV, sample size: 1,000)

#### 2.1.4. Discrimination

Public policymaking on multiculturalism and immigration should focus not only on public support for immigration and diversity, but also on how public perceptions of discrimination evolve. We accordingly review here results for questions dealing with discrimination, broadly construed. For instance, a 2008 Strategic Counsel survey found that an overwhelming majority of Canadians (88%) agree that “Canada is welcoming to members of visible minorities” (Figure 19). Belief in the tolerance of their province (89%) is equally high, and only slightly lower for their community (81%). There are some differences between Quebec and the rest of Canada, shown in the bottom panel of Figure 19. In short, Quebecers are less likely to believe their province is welcoming to a diversity of people—34% agree strongly versus 48% of individuals living in the rest of Canada. Note, however, that if we combine the “strongly” and “somewhat” agree categories, the difference in the combined percentage is very small. A 2007 survey by the Canada

West Foundation found that between 86% and 92% of residents of urban centres in the western provinces and Toronto strongly agree or somewhat agree that their city is welcoming to different cultures and backgrounds (Figure 20).

While Canadians believe that their province, city or community is generally welcoming, many clearly believe that discrimination is also an issue. This is first evidenced by the findings in Figure 19, showing a sizeable minority of Canadians “somewhat” rather than “strongly” agree. Second, subsequent figures confirm that the Canadian public recognizes discrimination exists in Canada: in a 2007 Ipsos-Reid poll, a slim majority (53%) of Canadians agreed that “discrimination against visible minorities is a problem in Canada”, compared to 45% of Canadians who disagreed with this statement (Figure 21).

Comparing results over time (not shown), suggests that perceptions of discrimination are becoming less common. Ipsos-Reid reported that the extent of agreement that discrimination against minorities in Canada is a problem stood at seven in ten (70%) in 1993, six in ten (60%) in 1998, and falling to just over half (53%) in 2007 (Figure 21). More recent trends point towards a potential increase in perceived discrimination, though at least over the past several years (see discussion of Figure 22).

A more recent survey by Environics asked Canadians about the extent of perceived discrimination towards various minority groups. Most Canadians perceive at least occasional discrimination against these groups, although they differentiate among groups with regards to how pervasive or systemic they believe the extent of discrimination (Figure 22). For instance, the results of this survey indicate that Muslims and Aboriginal Peoples are considered the most likely to face discrimination. One in three Canadians believes each of these two groups “often” experiences discrimination. Jews, Chinese, francophones (outside Quebec) and anglophones (in Quebec) are least likely to be perceived as targets of discrimination, with about one in ten Canadians who say discrimination is a regular occurrence for these groups. Perceptions of discrimination towards Pakistanis/East Indians and Blacks are only marginally lower than for Muslims and Aboriginal Peoples.

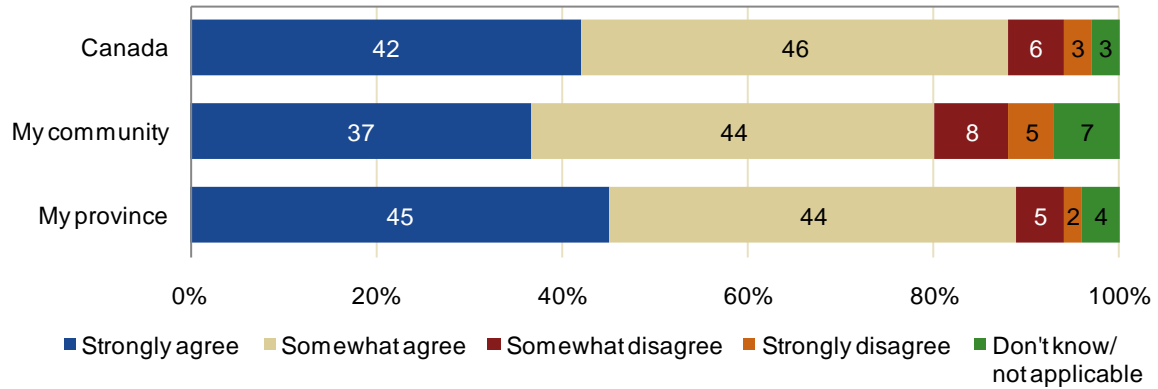
Environics data reveal small increases between 2006 and 2010 in the level of perceived tolerance towards Blacks, Muslims, Aboriginal Peoples, Pakistanis/East Indians. While the sense that pervasive discrimination against Chinese, francophones and anglophones has remained low and stable, the sense that discrimination exists at some level (i.e. sometimes, but not often) has broadened.

While a breakdown by age groups is not shown here, younger Canadians (under 30 years of age) are found to be more likely than others to perceive discrimination towards most of these groups. As noted earlier, tolerance of diversity has also increased more evidently among this youngest group compared with older Canadians.

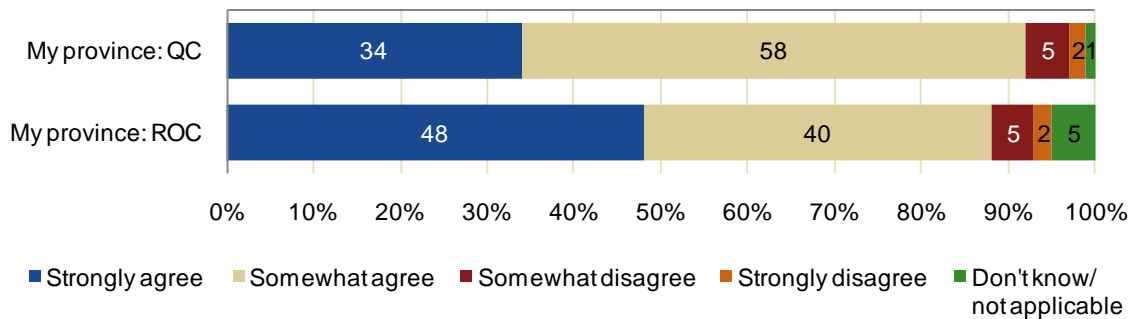
The issue of discrimination towards religious groups is examined in Figure 23 and Figure 24. The questions are not about perceived discrimination—rather, they are intended to capture discrimination directly. The first question asks about favourable versus unfavourable opinion towards six different religions including Christianity, Islam, Hinduism, Sikhism, Buddhism and Judaism (Figure 23). The proportion saying they were “very” or “moderately” favourable towards these religions varies considerably across groups, from 7 in 10 towards Christianity, 5 in 10 towards Judaism and Buddhism, and 4 in 10 towards Hinduism, to 3 in 10 towards Sikhism, and Islam. The second question, in Figure 24, asks about whether it would be acceptable if a family member married a follower of the same religions. Results suggest roughly the same differences

from one religion to the other as in Figure 23. Indeed, the same general differences across religious groups is also apparent in survey data on support for faith-based schools (see Figure 30 in the next section); and it is partly reflected in preceding data on perceived discrimination towards different groups (some of which are defined by religion, see Figure 22. Taken together, these results point towards the particular difficulties of Muslims, and perhaps Sikhs as well, in Canada.

**Figure 19:** \_\_\_\_\_ (Canada/my community/my province) is welcoming to members of visible minorities. (strongly agree to strongly disagree, 4-point scale)

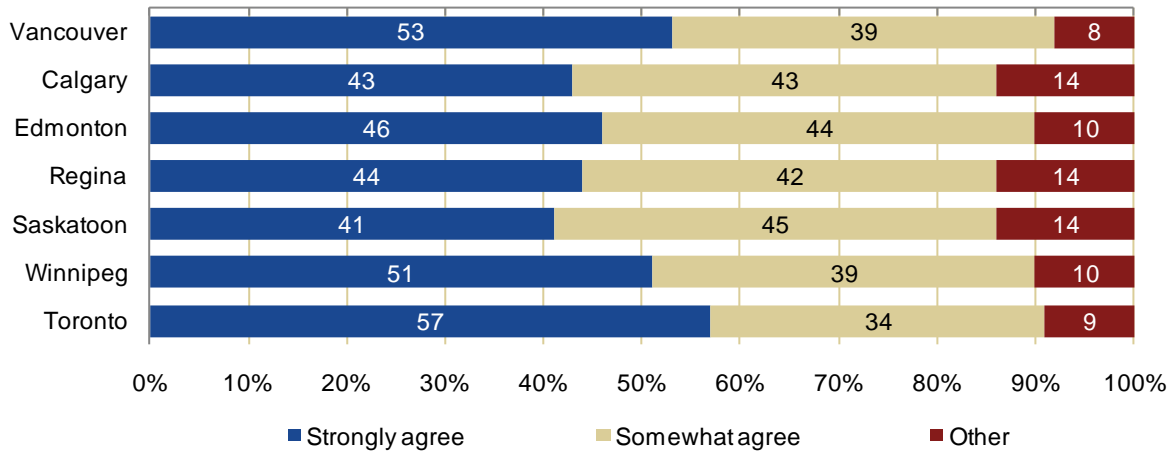


(2008, Strategic Counsel for Globe & Mail/CTV, sample size: 1,000)



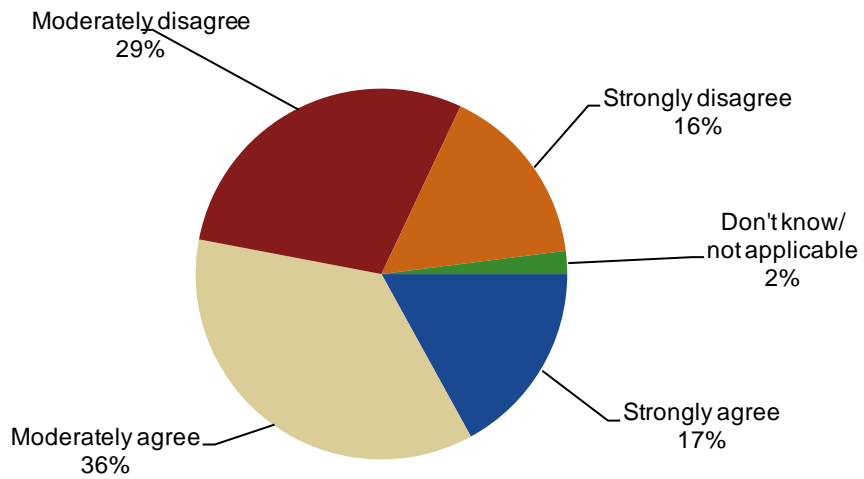
(2008, Strategic Counsel for Globe & Mail/CTV, sample size: 1,000)

**Figure 20: My city is very welcoming to people of different cultures and backgrounds. [strongly agree to strongly disagree, 4-point scale]**



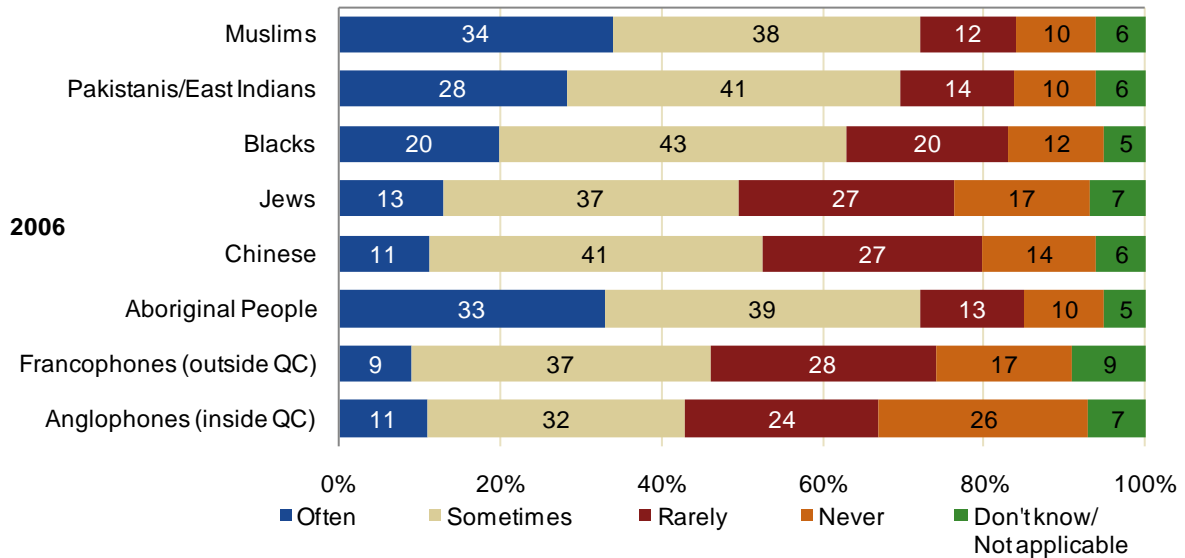
(2007, Canada West Foundation, sample size: 500 urban residents in each of Vanc, Calg, Edm, Reg, Sask, Winn, Tor.)

**Figure 21: Discrimination against visible minorities is a problem in Canada. (strongly agree to strongly disagree, 4-point scale).**

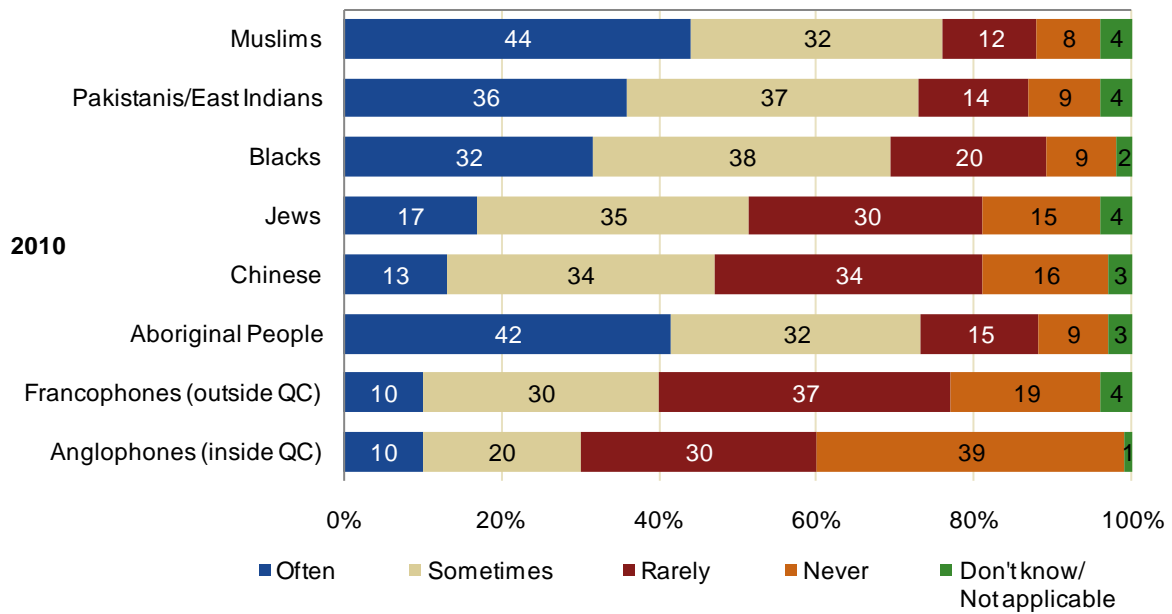


(2007, Ipsos-Reid for CanWest/Global News, sample size: 1,002)

**Figure 22: For each of the following groups, please tell me whether you think they are often, sometimes, rarely or never the subject of discrimination in Canadian society today.**



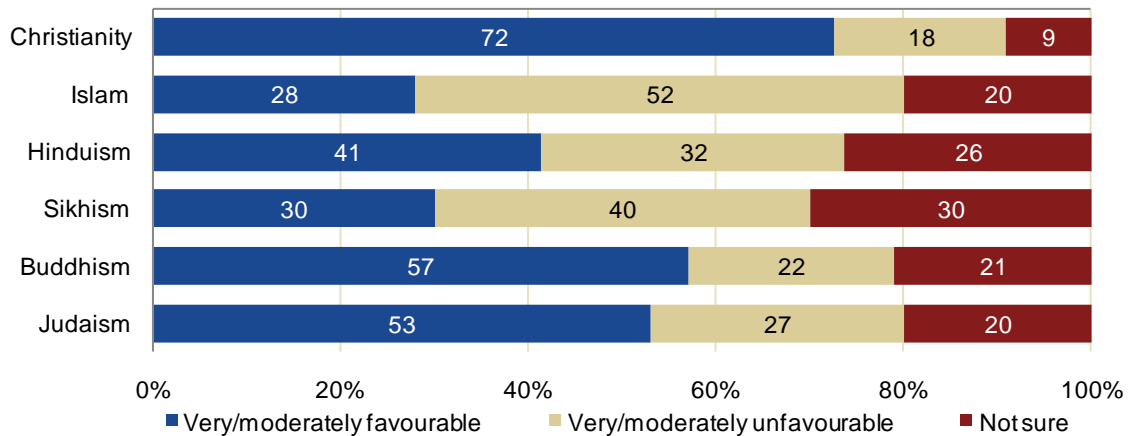
(2006, Environics Focus Canada 2006-4, Can sample size: 2,045; 2010 CBC Omnibus by Environics, Feb-Mar, sample size: 2,002)



(2006, Environics Focus Canada 2006-4, Can sample size: 2,045; 2010 CBC Omnibus by Environics, Feb-Mar, sample size: 2,002)

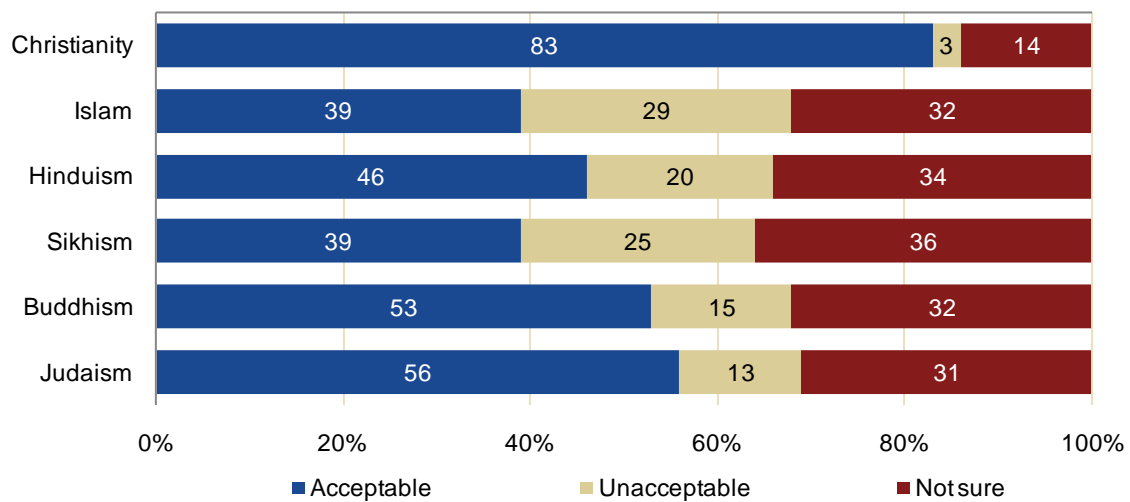
**Figure 23: Would you say you have a generally favourable or unfavourable opinion of each of the following religions?**

*Results may not add to 100 because of rounding*



(2009. Angus-Reid Strategies, sample size: 1,007, online)

**Figure 24: Would it be acceptable or unacceptable to you if one of your children were to marry a person who was a follower of any of these religions?**



(2009. Angus-Reid Strategies, sample size: 1,007, online)



## 2.2. Support for minority rights

### 2.2.1. General

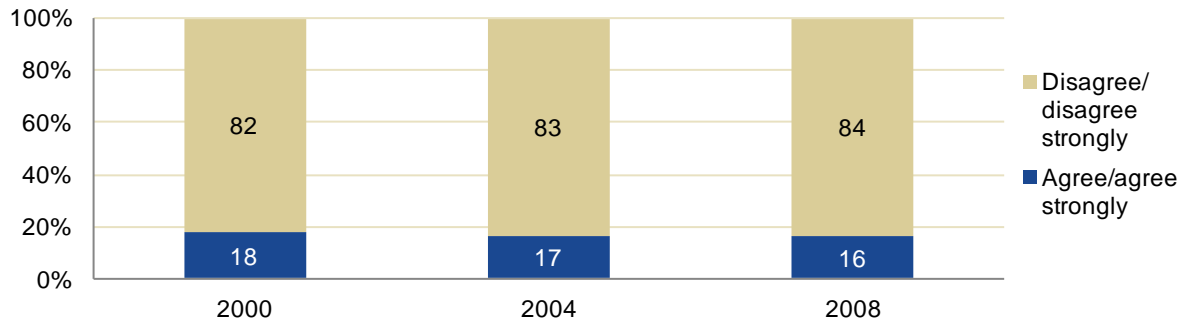
The strong support seen for diversity and multiculturalism generally is not similarly reflected in the results of questions focusing specifically on “minority rights.” While one might expect that positive views of Canada’s multicultural makeup would lead to an emphasis on protecting the rights of minorities, in fact, most Canadians reject special rights for minority groups, preferring equal treatment for all.

Opinion on minority rights has been best captured in the Canadian Election Studies (CES). As shown in Figure 25, more than eight in ten (84%) Canadians in 2008 disagreed with the statement “Minority groups need special rights”. The same survey also reveals that more than seven in ten (72%) Canadians believe that “letting the majority decide” is more important in a democratic society than is “protecting the needs and rights of minorities” (Figure 26). Looking at the 2000 and 2004 CES surveys reveals that responses to both questions have been stable over time; so too have responses to the statements “We have gone too far in pushing equal rights in this country” (Figure 27). In each of the 2000, 2004 and 2008 election surveys, more than six in ten Canadians agreed with that statement—testament to the durable support for equality (rather than minority rights) over the past decade. Canadians’ preference for equality of individual rights over minority rights does not imply disregard for the rights and needs of newcomers. Rather, preference for the equal rights of all, including newcomers, is the prevailing position. In fact, Canadians who disagree with the statement “we should look after Canadians born in this country first and others second” are twice as many as those who agree (67% compared to 33%, Figure 28).

These trends are echoed in the responses from other survey questions on minority rights, three of which are included in Figure 29. A Strategic Counsel poll (2008) finds that more than six in ten (61%) of Canadians agree that “we make too many accommodations to visible minorities in Canada.” – a view that is less common but nonetheless still the majority position among younger Canadians (53% of those aged 18 to 34). At the same time, a 2007 Ipsos-Reid survey finds that a majority (62%) of Canadians agree with the statement that “recent immigrants should have equal say about Canada’s future”, and a similar proportion (67%) disagree that “it makes me angry when recent immigrants demand the same rights as Canadians.”

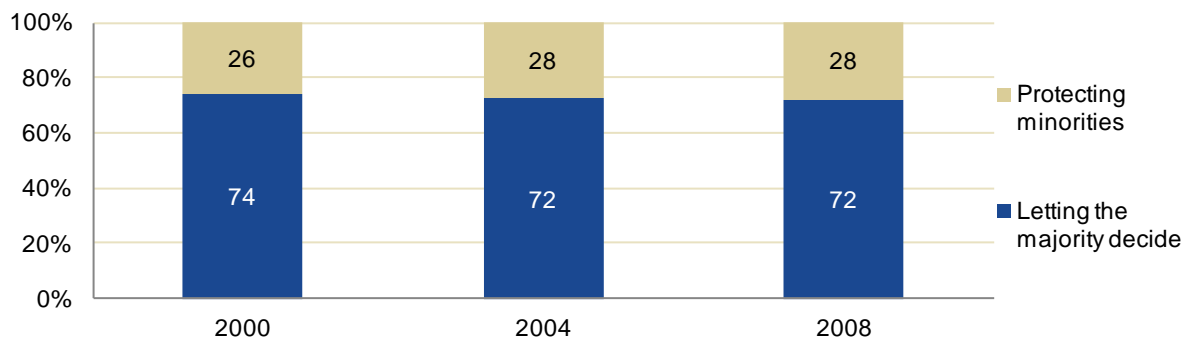
The trepidation apparent in Canadian attitudes about minority rights generally is also apparent in attitudes towards faith-based schools. Agreement with providing public funding to schools that teach Judaism, Buddhism, Hinduism, Islam or Sikhism ranges between 15 to 21 percent, with strong majorities in all cases disagreeing with such financial support (Figure 30). There is a notable difference with support for Christian schools, which is 41%, still less than the proportion of Canadians disagreeing with it (51%), but only by a small margin; and clearly support for Christian schools is markedly higher than support for any other denominational school. Results in this domain may be telling—they suggest some discrepancy between support for minority rights, generally defined, and support for specific instances of accommodation and minority rights.

**Figure 25: Minority groups need special rights (strongly agree to strong disagree, 4-point scale).**



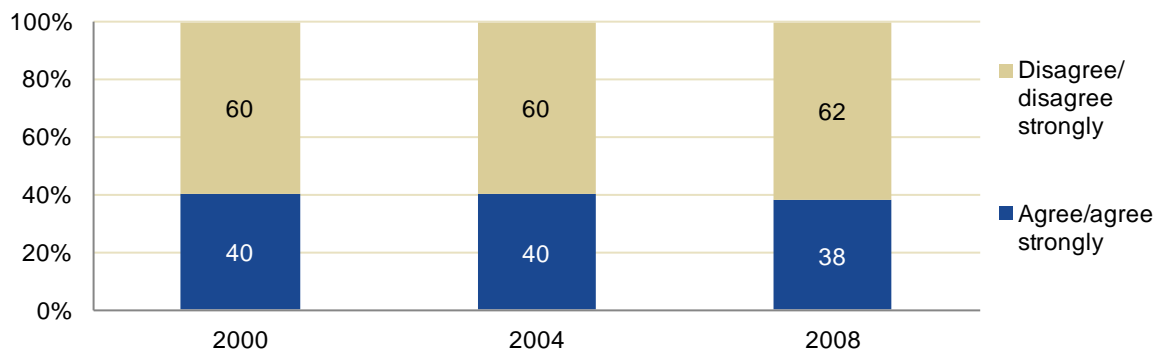
(Canadian Election Studies, sample size (Mailback survey): approximately 1,500 per election)

**Figure 26: Which is more important in democratic society: 1. letting the majority decide, or 2. protecting the needs and rights of minorities?**



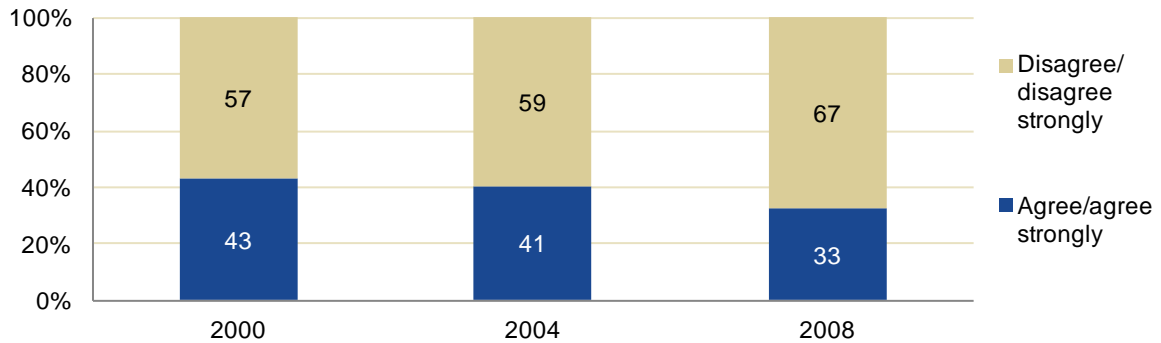
(Canadian Election Studies, sample size (Mailback survey): approximately 1,500 per election)

**Figure 27: We have gone too far in pushing equal rights in this country (strongly agree to strong disagree, 4-point scale).**



(Canadian Election Studies, sample size (Mailback survey): approximately 1,500 per election)

**Figure 28: We should look after Canadians born in this country first and others second. (strongly agree to strong disagree, 4-point scale).**



(Canadian Election Studies, sample size (Mailback survey): approximately 1,500 per election)

**Figure 29: Opinion on equal rights**

**a. We make too many accommodations to visible minorities in Canada. (strongly agree to strongly disagree, 4-point scale)**

Strongly agree	28
Somewhat agree	33
Somewhat disagree	22
Strongly disagree	14
Dk/na	3

(2008, Strategic Counsel for Globe & Mail/CTV, sample size: 1,000)

**b. It makes me angry when recent immigrants demand the same rights as Canadian citizens.**

Strongly agree	15
Moderately agree	16
Moderately disagree	28
Strongly disagree	39
Dk/na	2

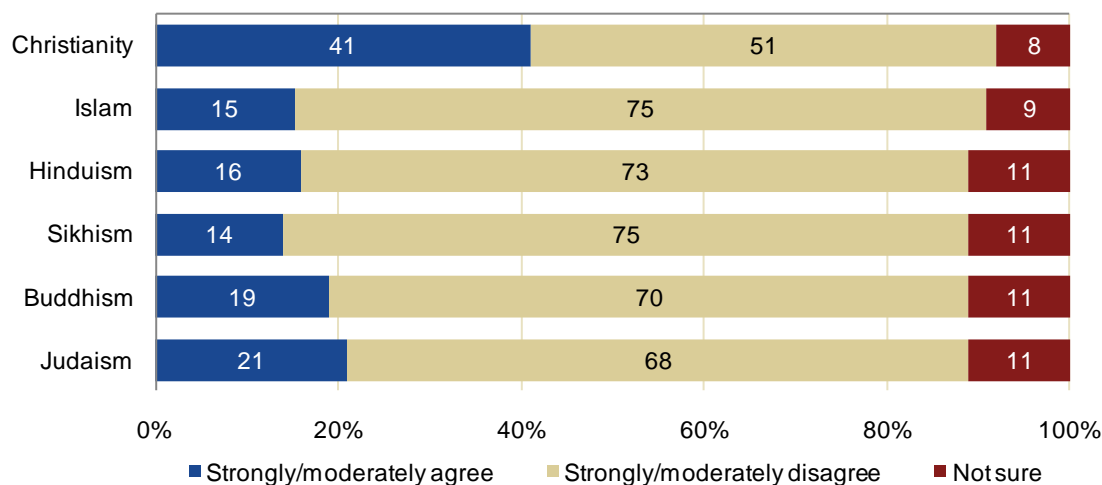
(2007, Ipsos-Reid for CanWest/Global News, sample size: 1,002)

**c. Recent immigrants should have equal say about Canada's future.**

Strongly agree	28
Moderately agree	34
Moderately disagree	20
Strongly disagree	15
Dk/na	2

(2007, Ipsos-Reid for CanWest/Global News, sample size: 1,002)

**Figure 30: As you may know, there have been discussions over the past few years on providing public funding to faith-based schools. Thinking of each of the following religions, would you agree or disagree with providing public funding to schools that teach each of these faiths?**



(2009, Angus-Reid Strategies, sample size: 1,007, on line)

## 2.2.2. Multiculturalism, reasonable accommodation and bilingualism

In spite of the relative prominence of debates on multiculturalism and reasonable accommodation in the years covered by this review, there have been relatively few publicly-available polls that address these policy issues directly. Even in Quebec, following the activities of the Bouchard-Taylor Commission, taking place in 2007-2008, and including a widespread public consultation on reasonable accommodation<sup>2</sup>, there has been relatively little polling available in the public domain addressing directly this issue.

An online survey conducted by SES Research for the Institute for Research on Public Policy (IRPP) found that Canadians are much more likely than not to oppose “accommodating” minorities. More than half (53%) of Canadians polled in 2008 thought that immigrants should fully adapt to culture in Canada, compared to two in ten (18%) who said it is reasonable to accommodate religious and cultural minorities (Figure 31). The proportion favouring adaptation grew even larger among those polled in 2006 (77%).

Online surveys conducted by Angus Reid Strategies in 2008 and 2009 suggest a similar degree of opposition to, or at least a lack of support for, accommodating minorities. In a question that refers to “reasonable accommodation” specifically, a slim majority (54%) of Canadians in 2008 thought that laws and norms should not be modified to accommodate minorities; this proportion grew to six in ten (62%) in 2009 (Figure 32). Quebecers were more likely than other Canadians to oppose reasonable accommodation (62% in 2008 and 74% in 2009), in line with the Bouchard-Taylor Commission’s observation that public opinion surveys at that time revealed Quebec to be “less receptive to accommodation than the rest of Canada”.

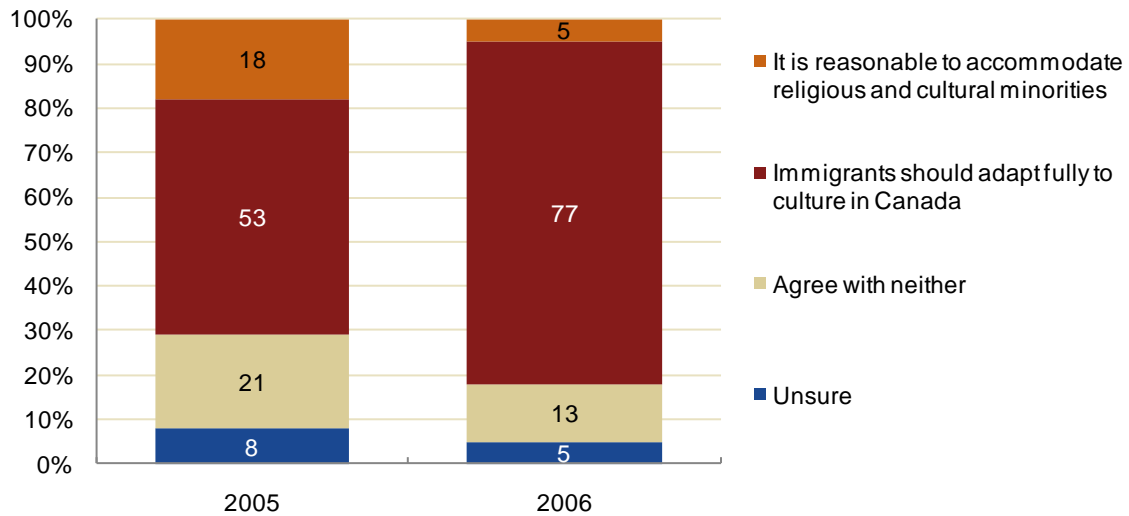
Somewhat more detailed information on attitudes of Quebec residents towards specific instances of accommodation is available in a 2008 CROP poll (Figure 33). This survey (which asked the same questions as a SOM survey conducted earlier in 2007) found that most Quebecers still

<sup>2</sup> See [www.accommodements.qc.ca/index-en.html](http://www.accommodements.qc.ca/index-en.html)

oppose the wearing of a kirpan to school (87%), wearing a hijab at school (58%) or at soccer matches (66%), or offering a different menu in school cafeteria for religious reasons (58%). The only statistically significant decline since 2007 was reduced opposition to the hijab at school (down 7 percentage points); on other questions, supporters of these accommodations were a minority, and responses stable over time.

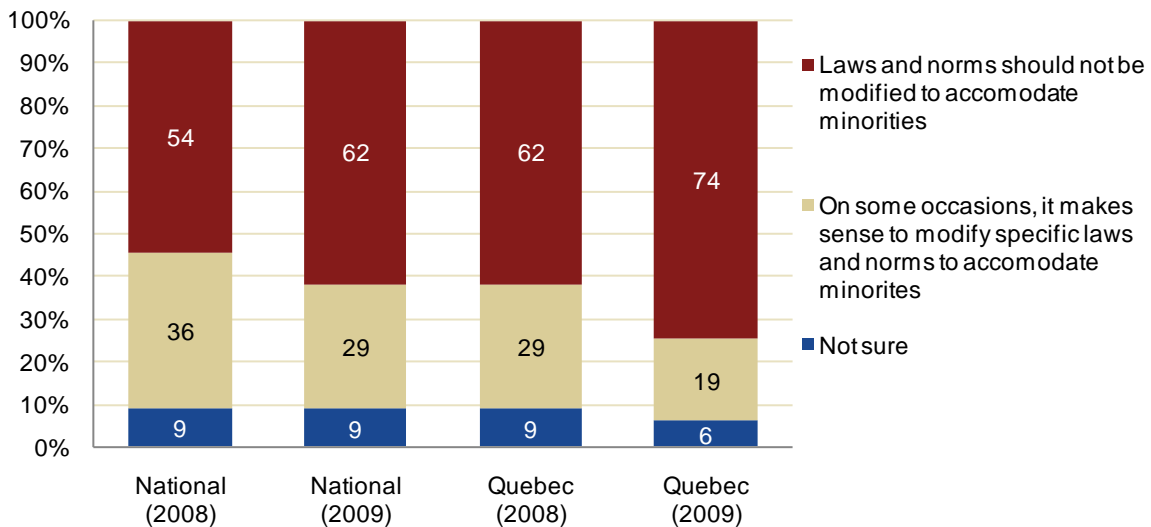
Canadians are more divided about the lengths to which the country has gone to promote bilingualism. According to the 2008 Canadian Elections Study survey, about half (48%) agree Canada has gone too far in pushing bilingualism in Canada, while another half (52%) disagree (Figure 34). Moreover, the view that we have gone too far has declined since 2004 (down 6 points). Most (67%) Canadians do not agree that anglophones in Quebec receive better treatment than francophones in the rest of Canada (Figure 35), nor that federal government services should only be provided in the majority language, i.e., French in Quebec and English in the rest of Canada (73%) —see Figure 36.

**Figure 31: Which of these two statements best reflects your personal view?**



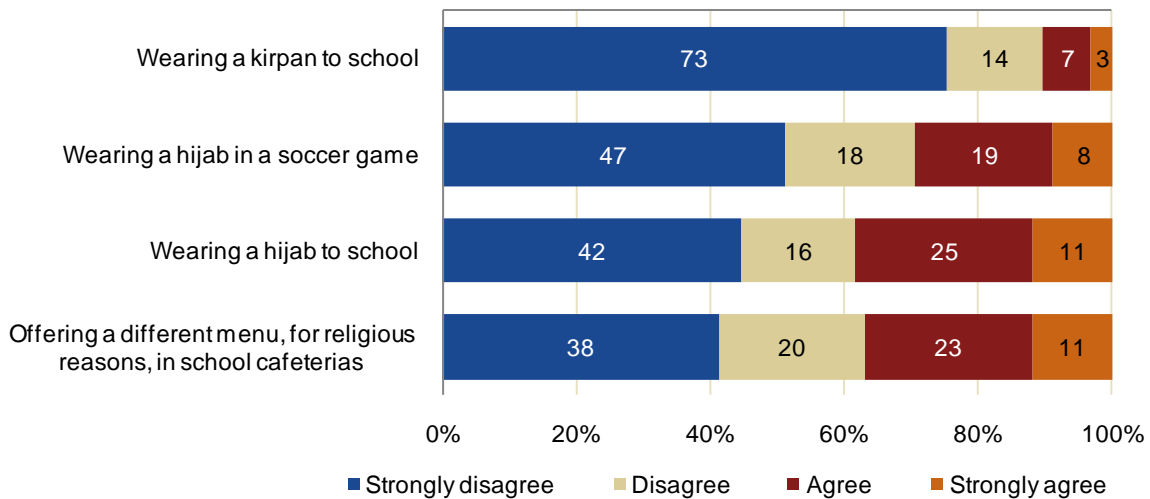
(2007, SES Research for IRPP, sample size: 1,083, online)

**Figure 32:** Over the past few months, there have been many discussions across Canada about the concept of “Reasonable Accommodation”, which entails modifying specific laws and norms when they could affect minorities. Which of these statements comes closest to your own point of view?



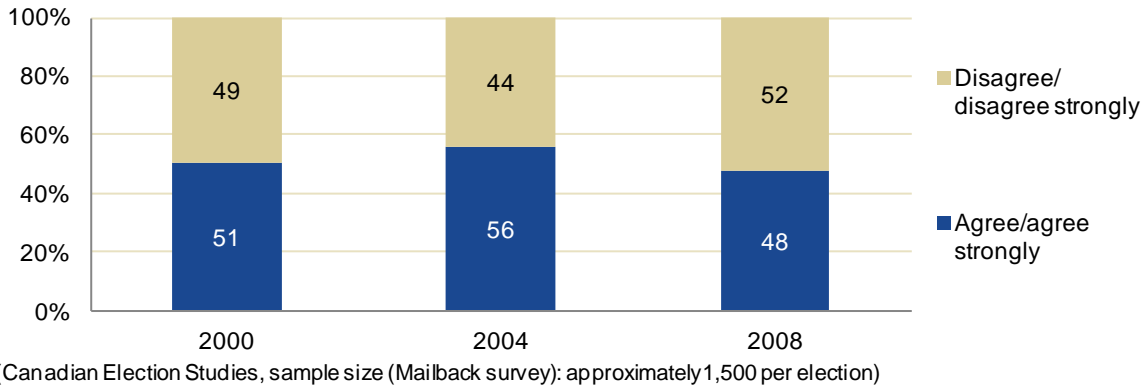
(2008, Angus Reid Strategies, 2008 sample size: 1,006 Canadians and 800\* Quebec residents / 2009 sample size: 1,007 Canadians, online)

**Figure 33:** Would you say you strongly agree, agree, disagree or strongly disagree with the following practices...

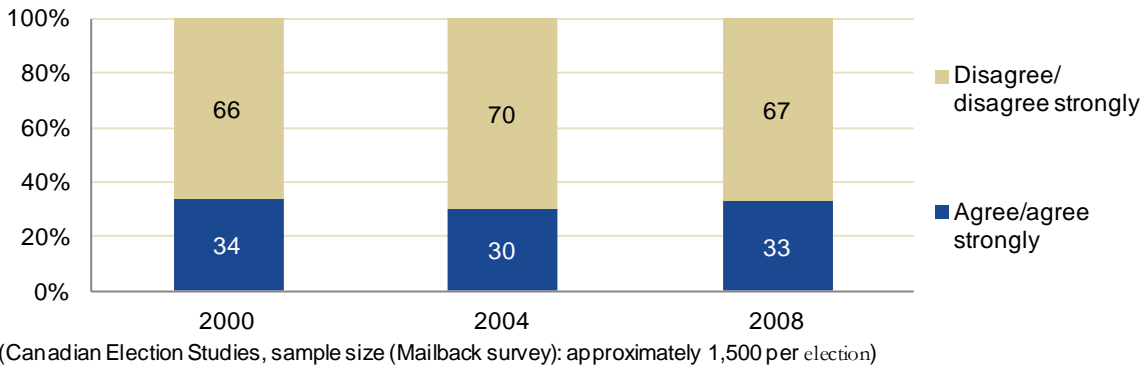


(2009, CROP, Quebec only, sample size: 1,000)

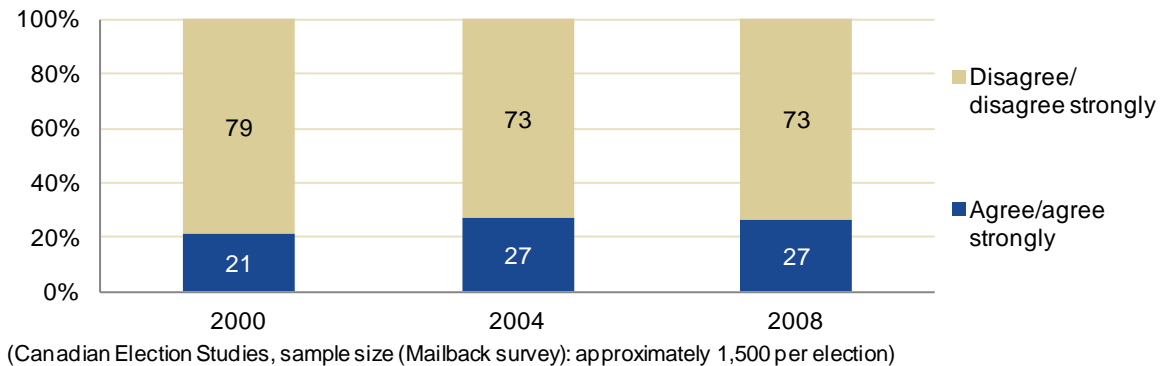
**Figure 34: We have gone too far in pushing bilingualism in Canada. (strongly agree to strong disagree, 4-point scale)**



**Figure 35: Anglophones in Quebec are better treated than Francophones in the rest of Canada. (strongly agree to strong disagree, 4-point scale)**



**Figure 36: Federal government services should be provided in only one language: French in Quebec and English in the rest of Canada. (strongly agree to strong disagree, 4-point scale)**



## 2.3. Support for immigration

### 2.3.1. Immigration Levels

Canadians express broad support for immigration through their general approval of annual immigration levels. Citizenship and Immigration Canada's (CIC) research program includes an Annual Tracking Survey of public opinion on issues related to citizenship, immigration and multiculturalism. This survey allows tracking over time of Canadian's attitudes towards immigration levels<sup>3</sup>.

The January 2009 CIC Tracking Survey revealed that most Canadians feel the number of immigrants coming to Canada is about right (50%) or too little (14%); these perceptions have changed little over the past five years (Figure 37)<sup>4</sup>. A 2008 Environics survey also found that most Canadians' attitudes are positive about the country's immigration rate, with just over six in ten (63%) who disagree that "overall, there is too much immigration to Canada" (Figure 38). Indeed, support for current levels of immigration has been on the rise since the late 1990s, although it appears to have remained the same since 2005. Similarly, a 2006 Strategic Counsel survey found that a majority of Canadians believe Canada accepts about the right amount (42%) or too few immigrants (10%) per year (Figure 39).

In general, younger Canadians appear to be more supportive of immigration. For example, based on the 2009 CIC Tracking Survey, the proportion of Canadians who say the number of immigrants coming to Canada is about right is higher among those under 35 years old (58%) than those 55 years of age and older (44%). Similarly, according to the 2008 Environics survey (Figure 38, breakdown by age not shown), disagreement with "there is too much immigration to Canada" tends to be higher among younger Canadians.

Another interesting result emerges from the CIC Annual Tracking Survey, which asks the respondents' opinion of immigration levels twice: the second time, seeking to understand if this opinion is changed by, first, asking respondents what they think the actual annual number of immigrants coming to Canada is and, second, providing them with this number (see Figures 39 and 40 for question wording). The results of the 2006 and 2009 CIC Tracking Surveys (Figures 39 and 40) suggest that levels of support for immigration rates drop only very slightly the second time the question is asked. Combining the responses stating that "about right" and "too few" immigrants are coming to Canada adds up to 64 percent before receiving the information on actual levels, and 60 percent after – a relatively small change. In parallel, the proportion saying there are "too many" immigrants grows 10 points to 36 percent, drawing primarily from those who had no opinion prior to being told the actual numbers.

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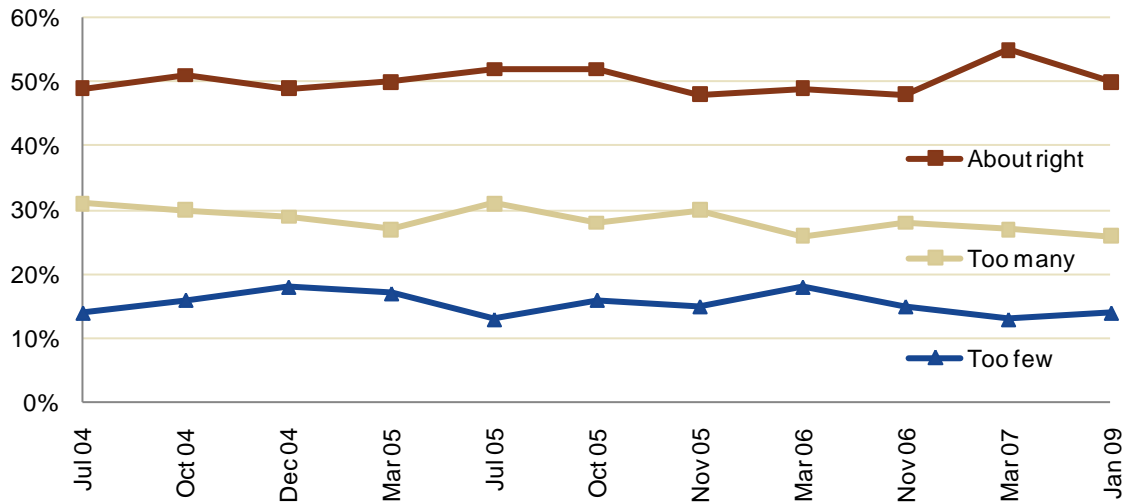
<sup>3</sup> Tracking Survey annual reports are available at [epe.lac-bac.gc.ca/100/200/301/pwgsc-tpsgc/por-ef/citizenship\\_immigration/](http://epe.lac-bac.gc.ca/100/200/301/pwgsc-tpsgc/por-ef/citizenship_immigration/)

<sup>4</sup> 2010 Tracking Survey results became available between the completion and publication of this report: in 2010, 54% of respondents expressed the opinion that "there are the right number of immigrants coming to Canada" (up 4% from previous year), and 13% that there are too few (down 1% from previous year).



**Figure 37: In your opinion, do you feel there are too many, too few, or about the right number of immigrants coming to Canada?**

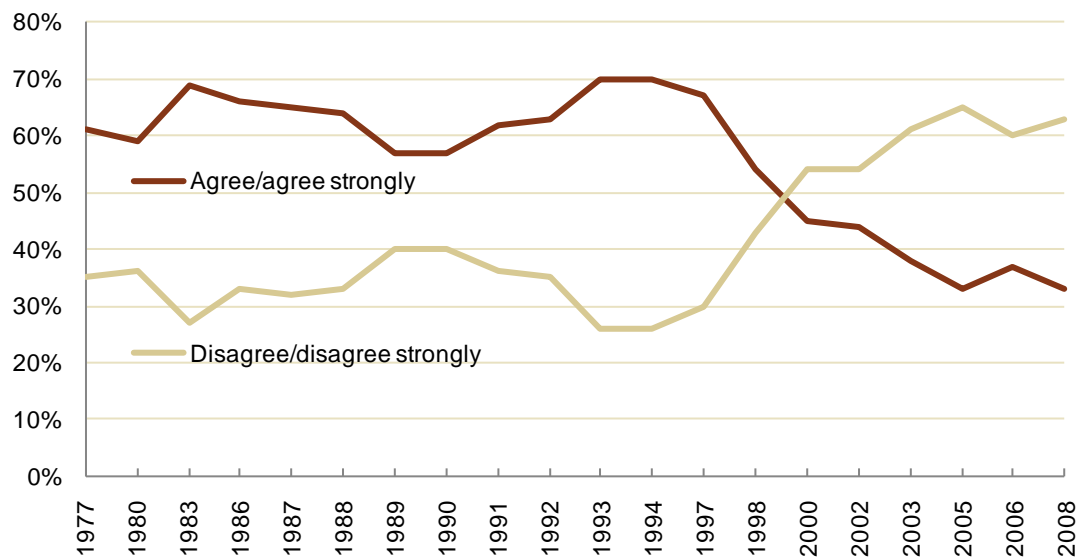
*Note: time points shown on the horizontal axis indicate when polls were conducted: durations of intervals between time points vary.*



(CIC Tracking Surveys, 2008-9 sample size: 1,203)

**Figure 38: Overall, there is too much immigration to Canada. (strongly agree to strongly disagree, 4-point scale)**

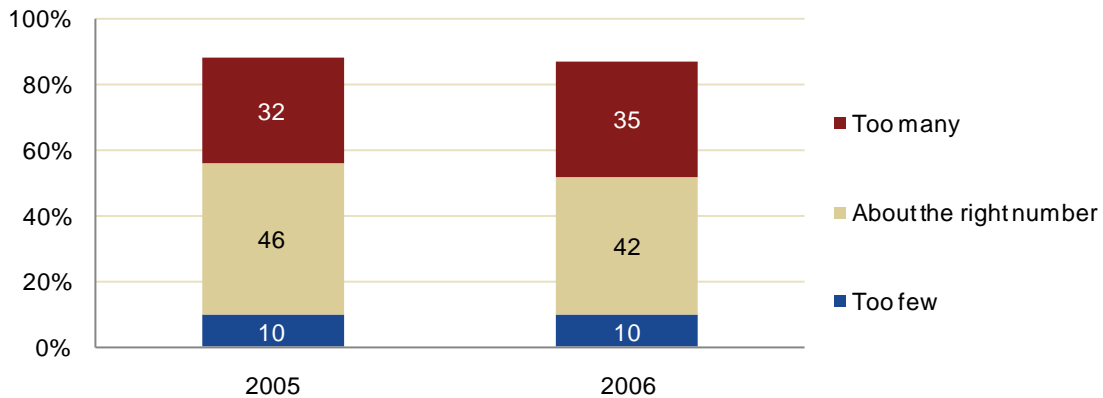
*Note: time points shown on the horizontal axis indicate when polls were conducted: durations of intervals between time points vary.*



(Environics, Focus Canada 2008-1, sample size 2008: 2,028)

**Figure 39: From what you can tell, do you think Canada accepts too many, too few or about the right number of immigrants per year?**

*Results do not add up to 100 because totals include "Don't know" response.*

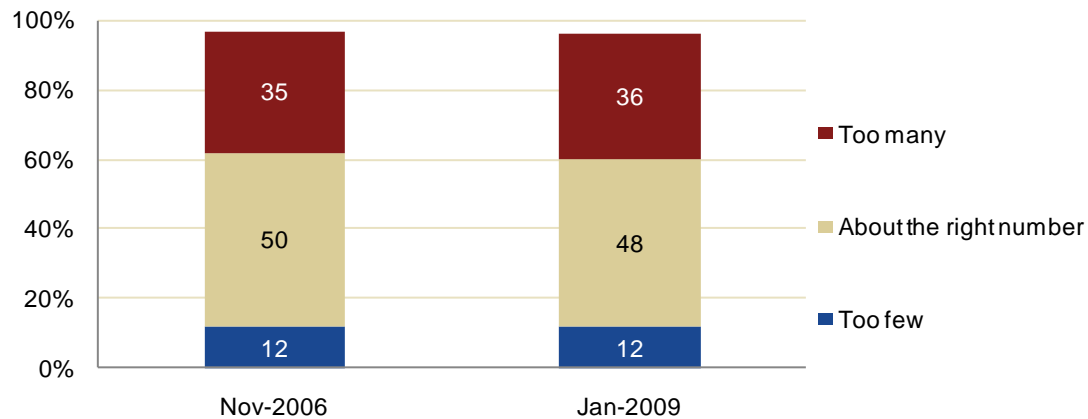


(2005, 2006, Strategic Counsel for Globe & Mail/CTV, sample size: 1,000 each wave)

**Figure 40: In total, approximately how many new immigrants do you think Canada allows into the country each year? [Respondent answer]**

**In fact, in the last few years approximately 240,000 to 250,000<sup>5</sup> new immigrants came to Canada each year. Knowing this, do you feel there are too many, too few, or about the right number of immigrants coming to Canada?**

*Results do not add up to 100 because totals include "Don't know" response.*



(CIC Tracking Survey, 2006 sample size: 1,200)

<sup>5</sup> This range was provided in the 2009 questionnaire. In 2006, the range "between 240,000 and 265,000" was provided.

### 2.3.2. Immigrants' contributions to Canada

Canadians express consistently positive views about the impact that immigrants have on Canada. The 2008 Canadian Election Study found that more than eight in ten (85%) agree that “immigrants make an important contribution to this country,” a perception that has remained largely unchanged since 2000 (Figure 41). Positive perceptions are also widespread when Canadians are asked about the effect of immigration on their city or community. In a 2007 survey for the Canada West Foundation, majorities of eight in ten or more residents of cities from Toronto to the west agree that “immigration from other countries is good for this city” (Figure 42, cities include Toronto, Winnipeg, Saskatoon, Regina, Edmonton, Calgary and Vancouver).

The 2009 CIC tracking survey finds that half (50%) of Canadians say immigration has a very or somewhat positive effect, compared to 15% who say it has a negative effect (one-third chose to say “neither” when given the option, Figure 43). Since 2007, positive views of the impact of immigration on the community have declined (by 9 percentage points), offset by a growing proportion who feel the impact has been neither positive nor negative; negative views have remained consistently low over the past five years.

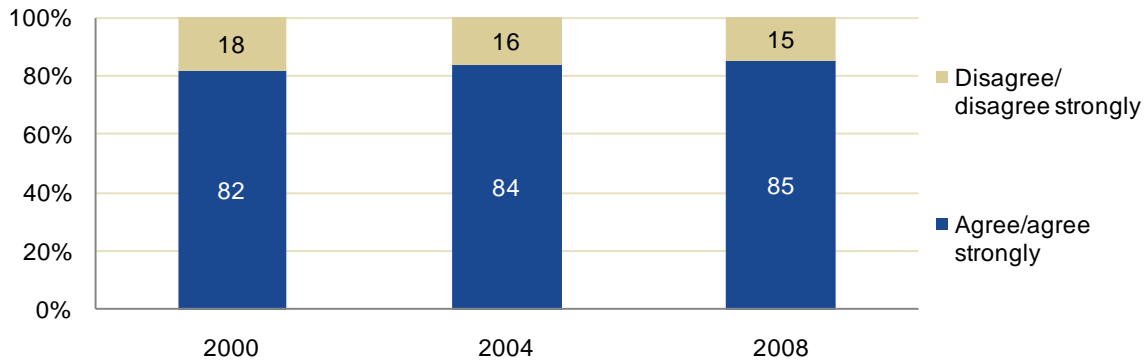
Majority support for the contributions made by newcomers is also evident in the public's rejection of negatively-worded statements about immigrants; Figure 44 includes three such examples. A 2007 Ipsos-Reid survey finds that two-thirds (66%) of Canadians disagree that “the fabric of Canadian society is being threatened by the influx of visible minority immigrants.” The vast majority (89%) also disagree with the somewhat inflammatory statement included in a 2006 Ipsos-Reid online survey that “Canada would be a lot better off if immigrants went back to where they came from”; in fact, two-thirds (67%) strongly disagreed, while only 9% agreed.

Focusing on perceptions of immigration and the economy does not greatly change Canadians' impressions of immigrants' contributions. Canadians feel that immigrants have a positive impact on the Canadian economy: in a 2008 Environics survey, for instance, a large majority (82%) agreed that the economic impact of immigration is positive, while 15% disagreed (Figure 45). These data suggest that the proportion who are optimistic about the effect of immigration on the economy may have grown slightly since 2006 (up 4 percentage points, from 78% to 82%), returning to the record-high level previously reached in 2003 (83%). Moreover, only a minority of Canadians believe immigrants are a threat when it comes to employment. In a 2008 Environics survey, the proportion of those polled who agreed with the idea that immigrants take away jobs from other Canadians (20%) reached an all-time low (Figure 46).

These impressions are reflected in a number of related polling questions, some of which are included in Figure 47. Agreement that new immigrants take too many jobs from Canadians is limited to a small minority of respondents (18%) in a 2007 Ipsos-Reid survey. A question included in a 2006 Ipsos-Reid online survey switched the focus slightly to the types of jobs immigrants fill upon coming to Canada. The results of this survey indicate that Canadians are most likely to say immigrants take jobs Canadians don't want (46%) or create new jobs for themselves (19%); once again, only two in ten (22%) believe they take away jobs from Canadians. Moreover, the 2009 CIC tracking survey found that most (66%) Canadians believe immigration makes a positive impact on Canada's economy; only two in ten (19%) think the impact is negative, while 14% say the impact is neither positive nor negative. This result of the CIC 2009 Tracking Survey, compared to the result of the Environics 2008 survey reported above, may lead to think that there has been a decline in the proportion of Canadians who think the contribution of immigrants to the economy is positive, from 82% to 66%. However, it is important to note

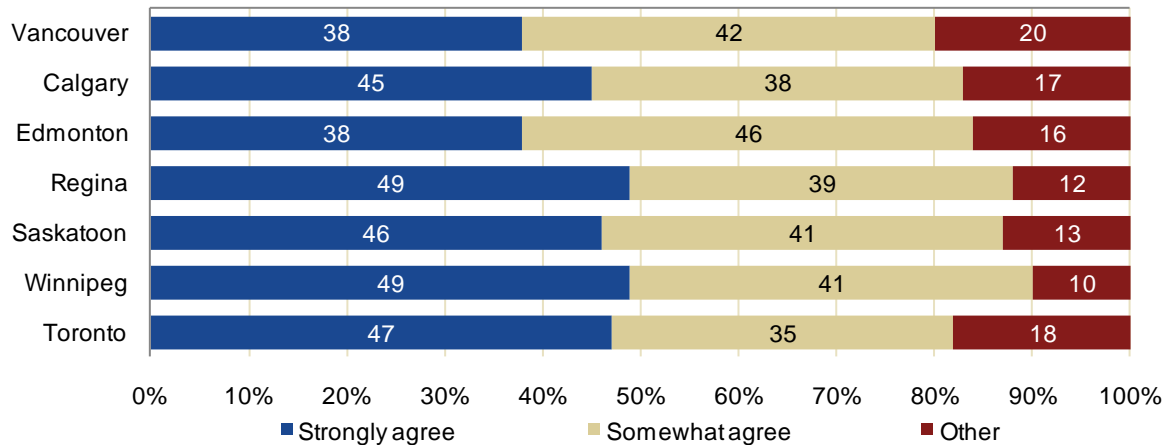
that the Environics and CIC survey questions employ different response scales (compare questions shown in Figure 45 and the third part of Figure 47.) In other words, the results of the two questions are not directly comparable. In general, the results of the 2009 CIC Tracking Survey show that, even under the influence of the 2008 economic recession, the attitudes of Canadians regarding the contribution of immigrants to the economy remained to a great extent positive<sup>6</sup>. Although younger Canadians express greater support for immigration overall, views about the impact of immigration on communities, on the Canadian economy and on jobs are similar across all age groups.

**Figure 41: Immigrants make an important contribution to this country (strongly agree to strong disagree, 4-point scale).**



(Canadian Election Studies, sample size (Mailback survey): approximately 1,500 per survey)

**Figure 42: Immigration from other countries is good for [city] (strongly agree to strongly disagree, 4-point scale).**

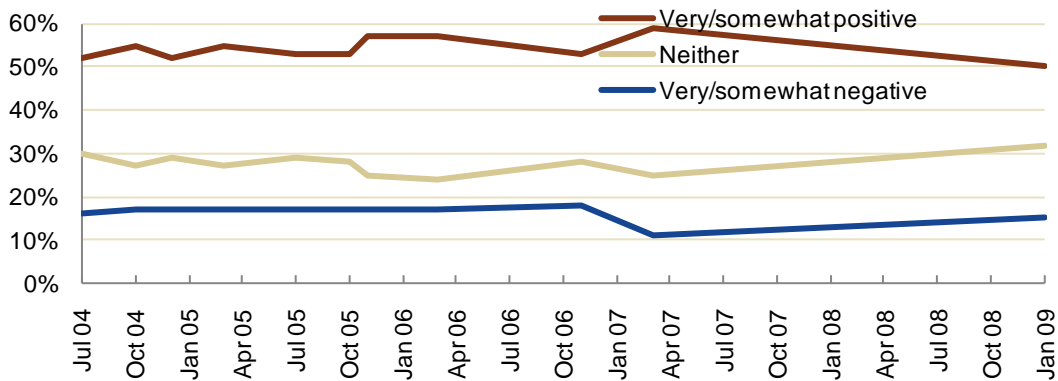


(2007, Canada West Foundation, sample size: 500 urban residents in each of Vanc, Calg, Edm, Reg, Sask, Winn, Tor)

<sup>6</sup> Results of the 2010 CIC Tracking Survey (not available when this report was written) show that the proportion of respondents saying that the contribution of immigrants to the economy was very positive (22%) or positive (46%) added up to 68%: compared to the previous year (66%), essentially the same -- within the margins of sampling error.

**Figure 43: In general, what effect does immigration to this country have on your community? (very positive to very negative, 5-point scale)**

Note: time points shown on the horizontal axis indicate when polls were conducted: durations of intervals between time points vary.



(Focus Canada 2008-1, sample size 2008: 2,028)

**Figure 44: Opinions about immigrants and Canadian society**

**Overall, would you say that immigrants have a good influence or bad influence on the way things are going in Canada? (very good influence to very bad influence, 4-point scale)**

Very good influence	10%
Somewhat good influence	42%
Somewhat bad influence	33%
Very bad influence	7%
Don't know /not applicable	9%

(2007, Ipsos-Reid for CanWest/Global News, sample size: 7,787, online)

**Canada would be a lot better off if immigrants went back to where they came from. (strongly agree to strongly disagree, 4-point scale)**

Strongly agree	4%
Moderately agree	5%
Moderately disagree	22%
Strongly disagree	67%
Don't know /not applicable	2%

(2007, Ipsos-Reid for CanWest/Global News, sample size: 7,787, online)

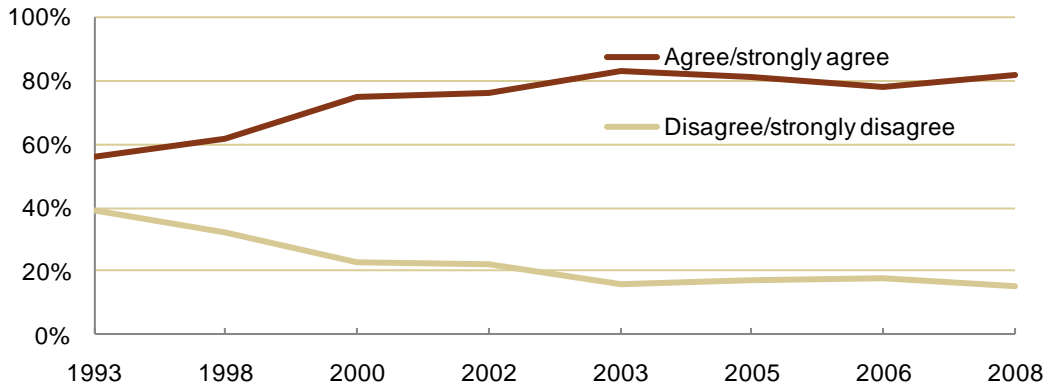
**The fabric of Canadian society is being threatened by the influx of visible minority immigrants. (strongly agree to strongly disagree, 4-point scale)**

Strongly agree	10%
Moderately agree	20%
Moderately disagree	31%
Strongly disagree	35%
Don't know /not applicable	3%

(2007, Ipsos-Reid for CanWest/Global News, sample size: 1,002)

**Figure 45: Overall, immigration has a positive impact on the economy of Canada. (strongly agree to strongly disagree, 4-point scale)**

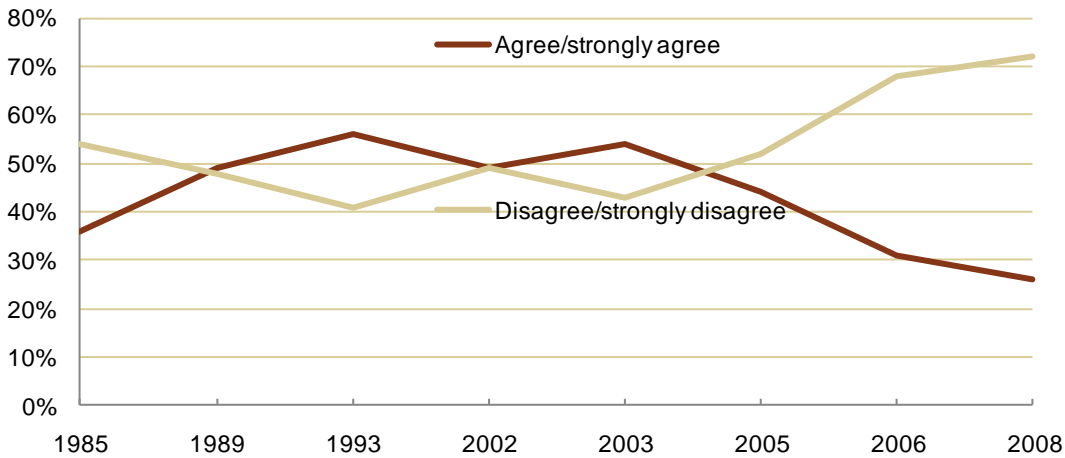
*Note: time points shown on the horizontal axis indicate when polls were conducted: durations of intervals between time points vary.*



(Focus Canada 2008-1, sample size 2008: 2,028)

**Figure 46: Immigrants take away jobs from other Canadians. (strongly agree to strongly disagree, 4-point scale)**

*Note: time points shown on the horizontal axis indicate when polls were conducted: durations of intervals between time points vary.*



(Focus Canada 2008-1, sample size 2008: 2,028)

**Figure 47: Opinions about immigrants and the economy**

Do you think immigrants coming to Canada today mostly...?		Does immigration make a positive or negative impact on Canada's economy? (very positive to very negative, 5-point scale)	
Take away jobs from Canadians	22%	Very positive	20%
Take jobs that Canadians don't want	46%	Somewhat positive	46%
Create new jobs for themselves	19%	Neither	14%
Don't know/not applicable	13%	Somewhat negative	14%
(2006, Ipsos-Reid for CanWest/Global News, sample size: 7,787, online)		Very negative	5%
		Don't know/not applicable	2%
		(2008-9, CIC Tracking Survey, 2008-9 sample size: 1,203)	
New immigrants take too many jobs away from Canadians. (strongly agree to strongly disagree, 4-point scale)			
Strongly agree	8%		
Moderately agree	10%		
Moderately disagree	36%		
Strongly disagree	45%		
Don't know/not applicable	2%		
(2007, Ipsos-Reid for CanWest/Global News, sample size: 1,002)			

### 2.3.3. Attitudes about ethnic groups

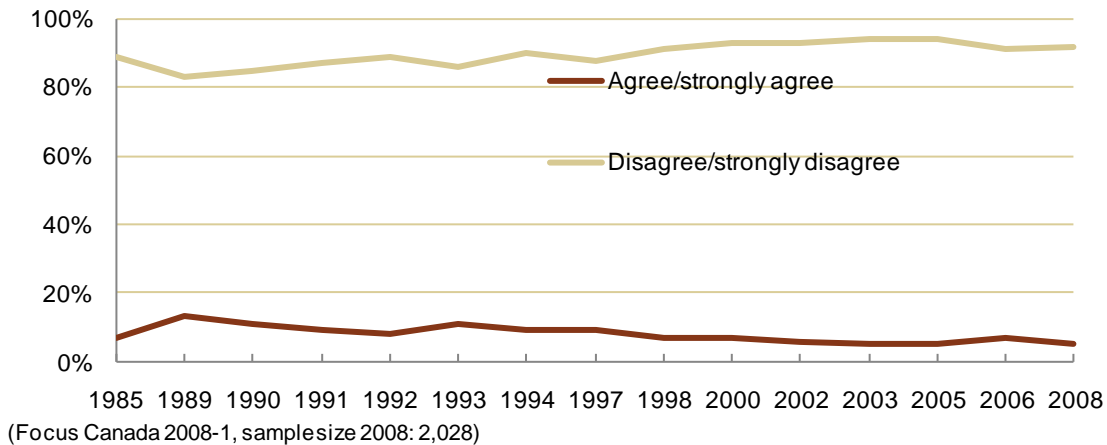
There have been significant shifts over the past few decades in the source countries of Canadian immigration. As figures from the Canadian Census demonstrate, immigration levels started climbing in the 1990s: while the proportion of foreign born in the Canadian population grew from 14.7% to 16.1% between 1951 and 1991, growth accelerated in the 1990s, reaching 19.8% in 2006. This growth corresponded to an average of 229,000 immigrants every year between 1991 and 2006. In addition, the source countries of the immigrant population have greatly changed, resulting in an increasingly diverse population. Most notably, the Asian proportion of immigrants has grown from 14% in 1981 to 41% in 2006, while the proportion born in Europe declined from 67% to 37%. These trends have meant that Canada is one of the most culturally and ethnically diverse nations in the world. In the 2006 Census, over 200 ethnic origins were reported, and the proportion of the population reporting at least one ethnic origin other than Canadian, British or French was 53%. The proportion of the population reporting responses qualifying them as visible minorities was 16.2%, corresponding to approximately 5 million, 70% of whom foreign born.

Diversity does not appear to be a major concern for most Canadians. In 2008, an Environics survey found that an overwhelming majority (92%) of Canadians disagree with the statement “Non-whites should not be allowed to immigrate to Canada” (Figure 48) — a proportion that has remained largely stable since the mid 1980s. This apparent comfort with diversity is also evident in other public opinion surveys that ask similar questions (see Figure 49). A 2007 Ipsos-Reid survey found that most Canadians (73%) disagree that “More white immigrants and fewer visible minorities should be taken into Canada.” Similarly, a Strategic Council survey in 2006 found Canadians are more than twice as likely (68%) to say that “we should make no distinction and accept immigrants from all countries” than to say “we should be making a special effort to attract immigrants from some countries and not others” (25% of survey respondents).

Opinions appear more divided on the relative contribution to Canada of different immigrant groups. A 2006 Strategic Counsel survey found that half (51%) of Canadians believe there is no difference in the contributions of immigrants based on their country of origin, while four in ten (40%) believe some immigrants make bigger contributions than others. While more detailed information to explain these apparently mixed perceptions is not available, it appears that such beliefs have not led to an overall reduced support for visible minority immigrants, nor for immigration more generally.

**Figure 48: Non-whites should not be allowed to immigrate to Canada. (strongly agree to strongly disagree, 4-point scale)**

*Note: time points shown on the horizontal axis indicate when polls were conducted: durations of intervals between time points vary.*



**Figure 49: Opinions about immigrants' visible minority status and country of origin**

**More white immigrants and fewer visible minorities should be taken into Canada. (strongly agree to strongly disagree, 4-point scale)**

Strongly agree	9
Moderately agree	14
Moderately disagree	31
Strongly disagree	42
Don't know /not applicable	4

(2007, Ipsos-Reid for CanWest/Global News, sample size: 1,002)

**Do you think we should be making a special effort to attract immigrants from some countries and not others, or should we make no distinction and accept immigrants from all countries?**

	2005	2006
Make no distinction	71	68
Special effort	23	25
Don't know /not applicable	6	7

(2006 Strategic Counsel for Globe & Mail/CTV, sample size: 1,000 each wave)

**And do you think immigrants that come from some countries make a bigger and better contribution when they arrive here than others or do you think there is no difference in the kind of contribution immigrants make to Canada based on the country where they came from?**

	2005	2006
No difference	50	51
Some make bigger contribution	41	40
Don't know /not applicable	9	9

(2006 Strategic Counsel for Globe & Mail/CTV, sample size: 1,000 each wave)



## 2.4. Canada in comparative context

This section, including Figures 50 through 55, uses results from surveys that allow comparing Canadian attitudes with those of populations in other countries. The themes covered are necessarily limited to those where surveys are available with the same questions repeated across several countries.

The sources used include the World Values Survey, an international survey conducted periodically, spanning the years from 1981 to 2007, in up to 97 countries<sup>7</sup>; and combined results from the Environics 2006 Focus Canada Survey and the 2005 Pew Global Attitudes Survey, both including a few questions with the same wording, and, together, covering Canada, Great Britain, France, Spain and Germany.

The results presented include inter-group trust across nationalities and religions in the countries covered by the World Values Survey, and some issues regarding relations with Muslims in the more limited number of countries covered by the other two surveys combined.

Levels of interpersonal trust are shown in Figures 50 and 51, first for “people of another nationality” and then for “people of another religion.” In each case, Canada ranks amongst the top five most trusting countries.

Questions on hostility towards Muslims provide a glimpse of how Canadians see levels of discrimination, in comparison with other countries (Figure 52). The Canadian population-at-large believes that there is less hostility towards Muslims in Canada than do other respondents with respect to the situation in their countries. For example, 28% of Canadians in a 2006 Focus Canada survey believed that “most” Canadians are hostile towards Muslims, as compared with 40% or more in each of four other countries (comparison to Canada made using results from the 2005 Pew Global Attitudes Survey). That Canadian Muslims also see less hostility than do Muslims in other countries is particularly telling; 17% of Muslims in Canada believe that that “most” Canadians are hostile towards Muslims, as compared with 31% or more in other countries. That being said, almost one in five Muslims in Canada believes that most Canadians are hostile towards Muslims (Environics Focus Canada Survey, 2006).

Support for one specific instance of accommodation related to the public wearing of religious clothing is explored in Figure 53. Canadians are not noticeably more tolerant of Muslim headscarves than are the British or Spanish -- 36 % of Canadians believe that banning headscarves is a “good idea,” compared with 29% in Britain and 43% in Spain. Within Quebec, support for banning headscarves is 53% — stronger support than that seen in Britain and Spain, and equal to Germany, though still 25 percentage points lower than in France. Support for a specific instance of accommodation here reflects what was evident in preceding sections — when asked, Canadians show high levels of support for minority rights generally speaking, but more middling levels of support for specific examples of accommodation. Perceived levels of experienced discrimination, however, may not be noticeably lower in Canada than in other countries, as evident by the results in Figure 54 from a 2006 Focus Canada survey of Canadian Muslims and their personal experiences of discrimination, compared to international results from the 2005 Pew Global Attitudes Survey.

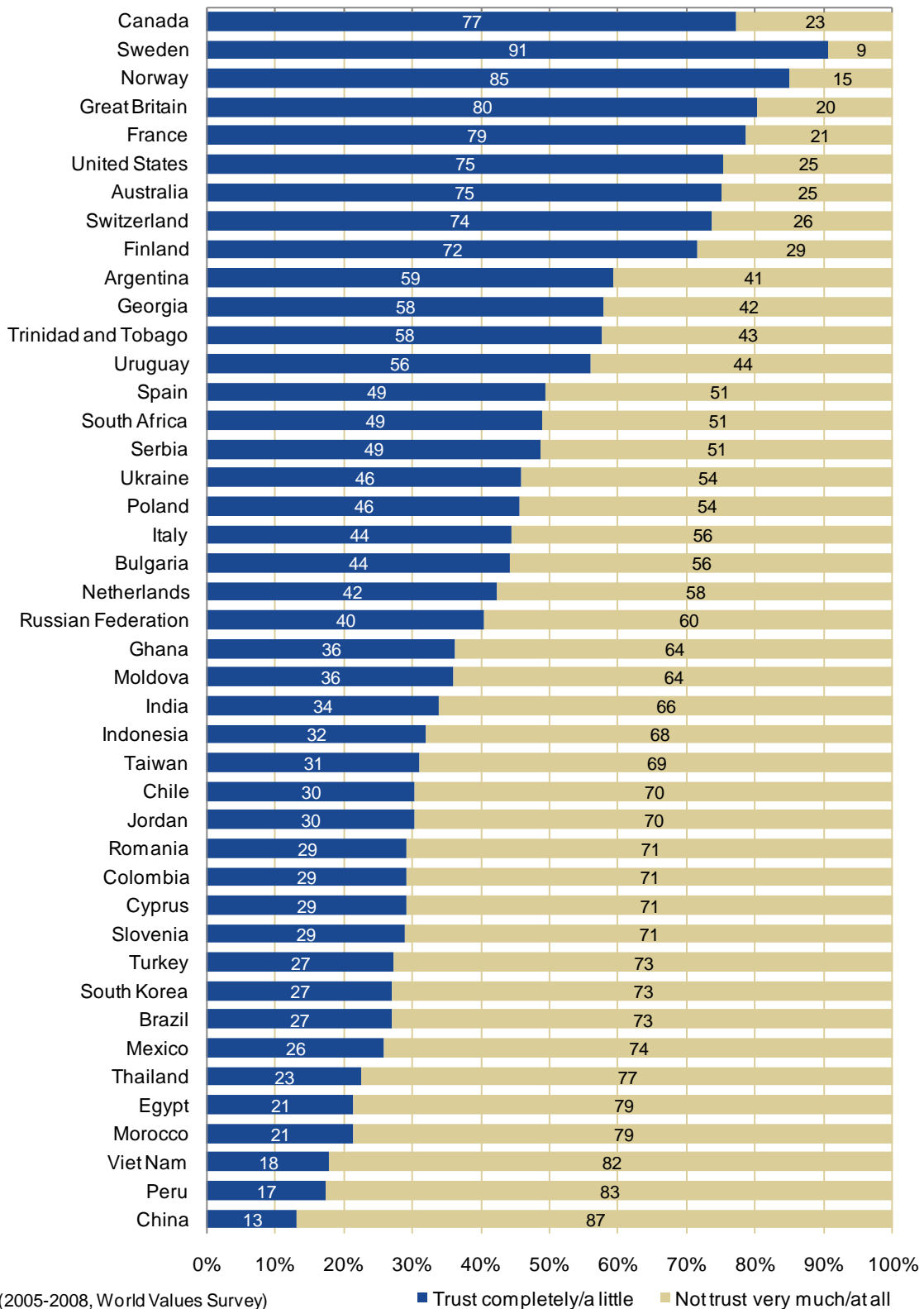
Figure 55 shows how people feel about “adopting the customs of my country” as a condition for citizenship, across a wide range of countries. As seen earlier, Canadians, while supporting

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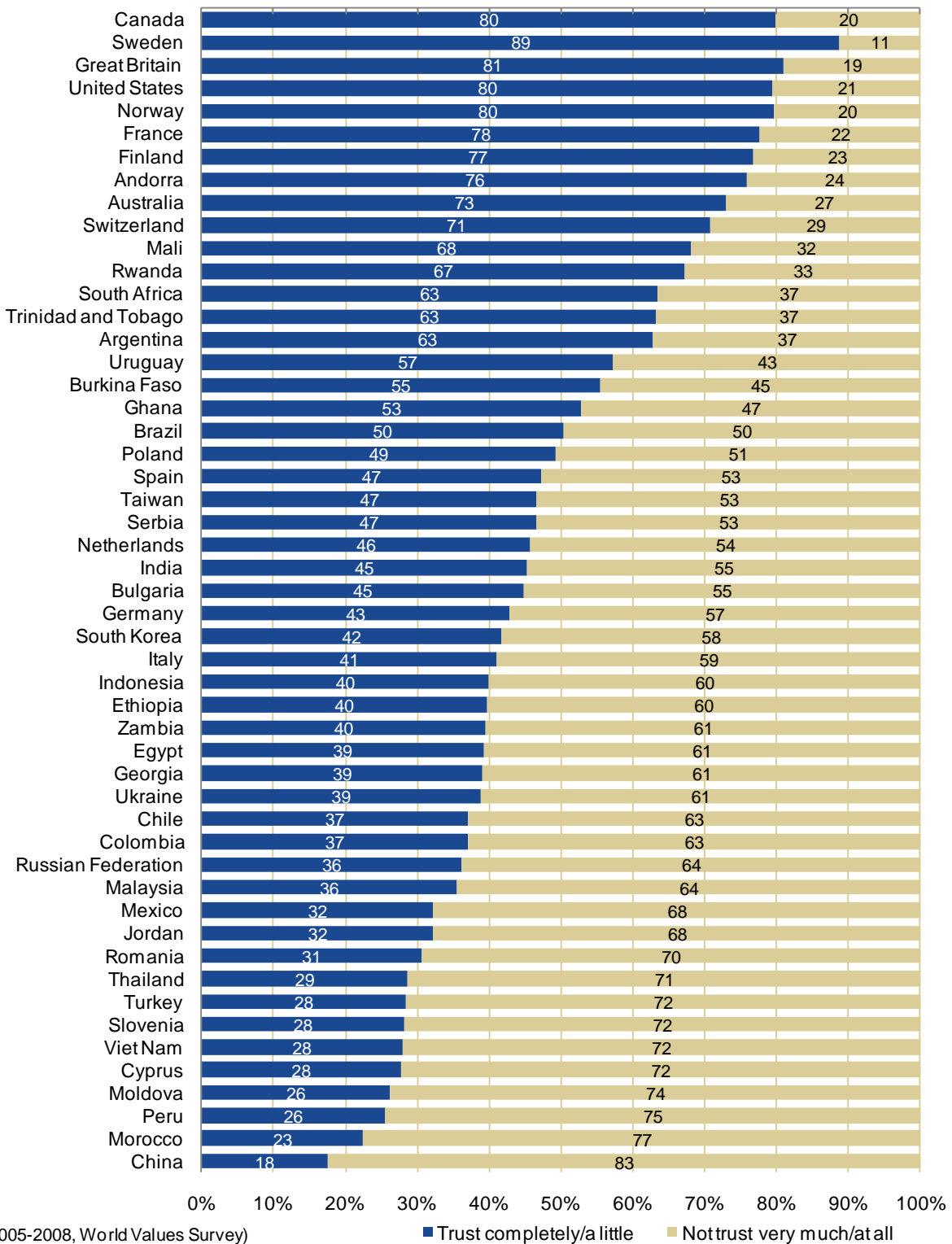
<sup>7</sup> See [www.worldvaluessurvey.org/](http://www.worldvaluessurvey.org/)

diversity and immigration generally, also lean in the direction of assimilation over accommodation; this trend is similarly evident in these country based comparative data. For example, according to the World Values Survey, 58% of Canadians see adopting the customs of their country as “very important”; another 32% see it as “rather important.” This distribution of opinion is no different from the United States, and markedly more assimilation-oriented than most other OECD countries in the sample.

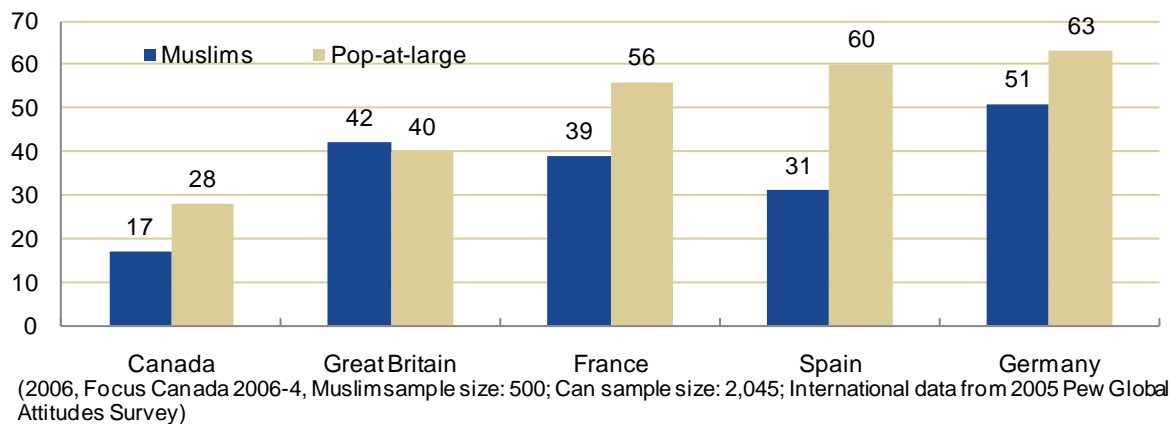
**Figure 50: I'd like to ask you how much you trust people from various groups. Could you tell me for each whether you trust people from this group completely, somewhat, not very much or not at all? People of another nationality:**



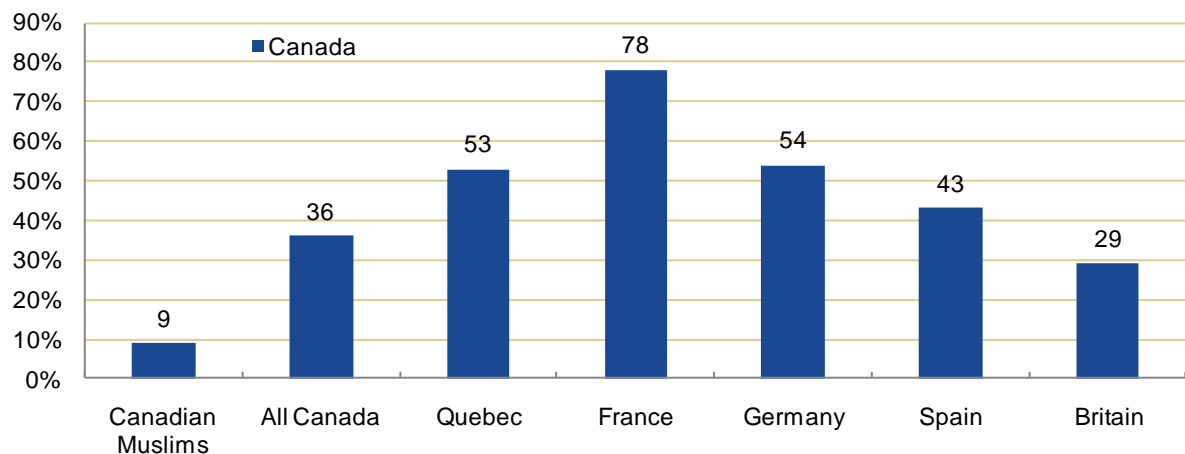
**Figure 51: I'd like to ask you how much you trust people from various groups. Could you tell me for each whether you trust people from this group completely, somewhat, not very much or not at all? People of another religion:**



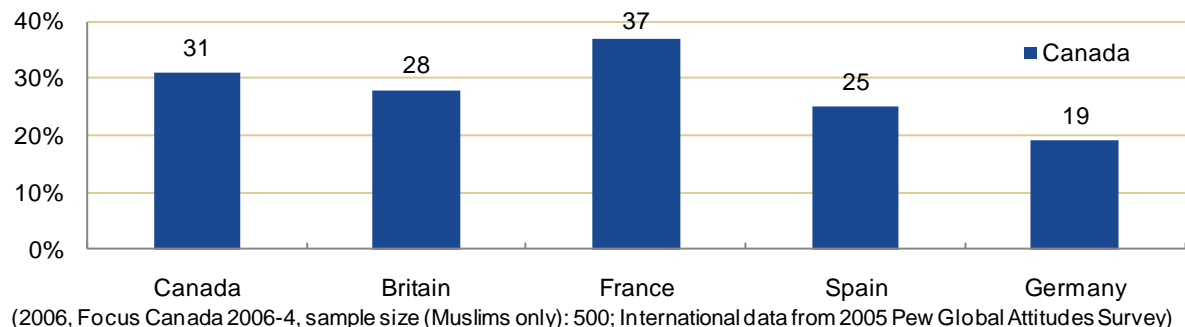
**Figure 52:** In your opinion, how many (Canadians, British, French, Spanish, Germans) do you think are hostile toward Muslims? Would you say most, many, just some or very few? % answering “most”



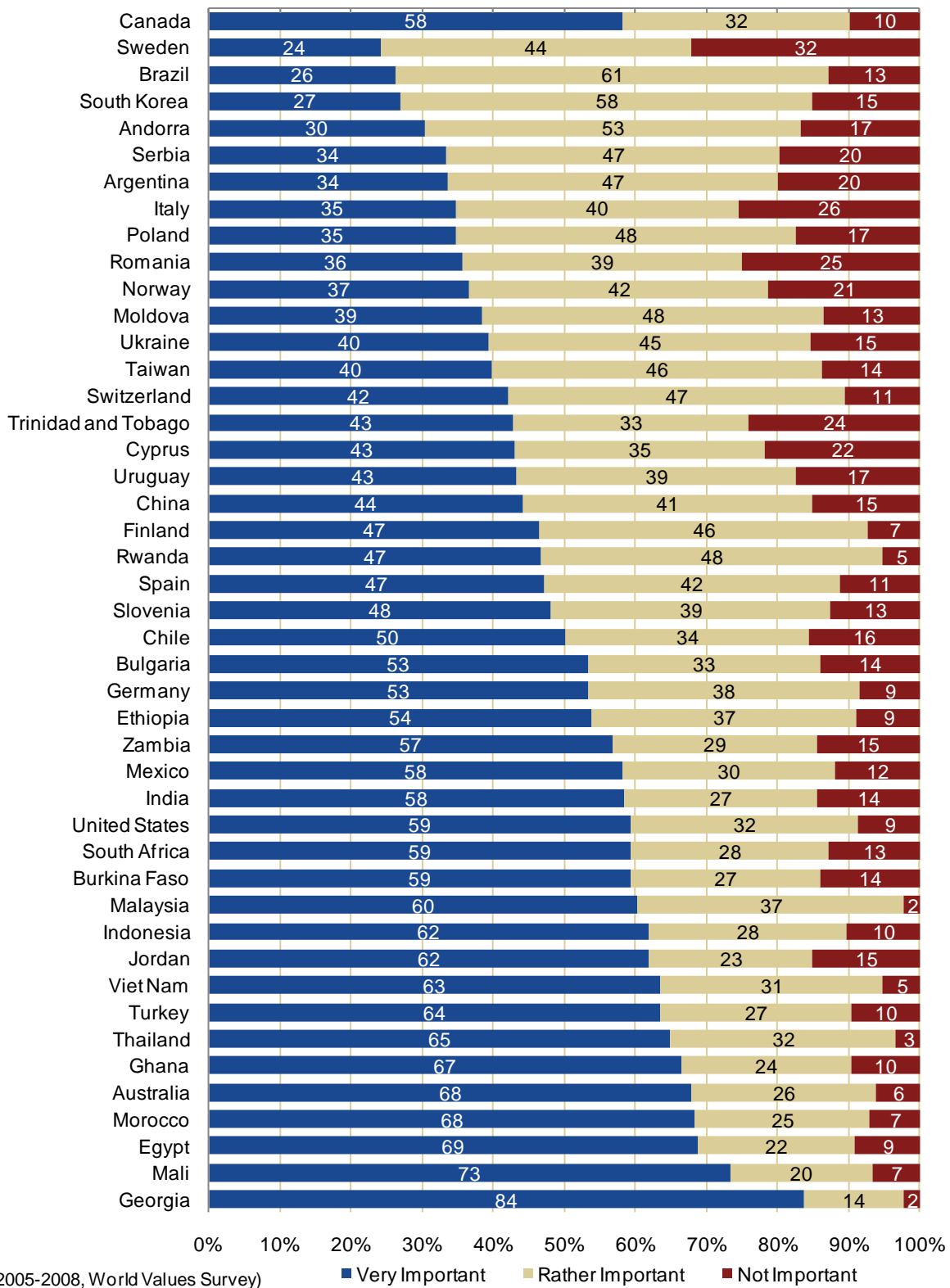
**Figure 53:** Some countries have decided to ban the wearing of headscarves by Muslim women in public places, including schools. Do you think this is a good idea or a bad idea? % answering “a good idea”



**Figure 54:** In the last two years, have you personally had a bad experience due to your race, ethnicity, or religion, or hasn’t this happened to you? (Muslims only) % answering “yes”



**Figure 55: In your opinion, how important should the following be as requirements for somebody seeking citizenship of your country? Adopting the customs of my country.**



### 3. Review and conclusions

What do the existing public opinion data tell us about Canadians' attitudes on issues of immigration and multiculturalism? Overall, there is broad support for multiculturalism and immigration, and that support has not decreased in recent years; indeed, it may even have increased slightly. This broad level of support for immigration and multiculturalism is accompanied by majority support for a certain degree of integration. However, exactly what respondents mean by integration, is difficult to specify given the nature of the questions asked in existing public opinion surveys. Most likely, respondents showing support for integration have quite different views of what that integration entails; the result is that there is a good deal of variance in opinion amongst those within the "integration" category on any one question. Existing polls do not currently provide much leverage on what the appropriate balance is, according to the average Canadian, between diversity and integration.

A lack of specificity is also evident in questions on minority rights and multiculturalism. Again, we have only a vague sense for what respondents are thinking about when they are asked to answer questions about these issues. On these items, as well as on integration, future research might consider ways to better capture attitudes using specific examples of tolerance, or integration, or diversity, and so on. Event-oriented questions may be less useful over extended periods of time, but more valuable in the short-run where understanding opinion is concerned. We should also keep in mind the way in which simple trade-off questions may mask more nuanced preferences. Consider questions presenting either reasonable accommodation or cultural adaptation (as in Figure 31); minority rights or majority rule (as in Figure 26). By forcing choices, these questions capture broad preferences very effectively. But there clearly is a good deal of nuance that further questioning might uncover.

Relatedly, existing data also go only so far in capturing levels of discrimination, or attitudes about specific ethnic groups. We have observed that there is no support for immigration policy based on race; and a belief amongst Canadians that their communities are welcoming to newcomers. At the same time, minority groups clearly face varying degrees of discrimination, as captured either by asking about perceptions of discrimination towards other groups, or by asking about respondents' own feeling towards other ethnic or religious groups. Data suggest that Muslims are perceived as being particularly at risk; though Sikhs, Blacks, and Aboriginal Peoples are seen as suffering similar levels of discrimination.

Clearly, there is more to be done to go beyond the surface of Canadian opinion on these critical issues. The results of this report suggest that Canadians are, and continue to be, broadly supportive of immigration and multiculturalism. There remains much work to be done to fully understand, and then to follow Canadians' evolving attitudes on issues of immigration and multiculturalism.

## Data sources

Data for this report have been drawn from the following sources:

- Angus Reid Strategies, 2008 and 2009.
- Canada Canada West Foundation, 2007
- Canadian Election Studies, 2004, 2006 and 2008
- CIC Tracking Surveys 2008 and 2009
- CROP, 2009
- EKOS (for CBC), 2009
- Environics Focus Canada surveys, 1985-2009
- Environics Muslim Survey, 2006
- Environics 150! Canada poll, 2010
- Pew Global Attitudes Survey, 2005
- Ipsos-Reid (for CanWest/Global News), 2006 and 2007
- Leger Marketing (for Sun Media), 2007
- SES Research (for IRPP), 2007
- Strategic Counsel (for Globe & Mail/CTV), 2005, 2006, and 2008
- World Values Survey, 2005-2008

All Environics and Canadian Election Study polls are freely available through the Canadian Opinion Research Archive at Queen's University ([www.queensu.ca/cora](http://www.queensu.ca/cora)); Ipsos data are available through a paid subscription at [ispos.ca](http://ispos.ca); the Pew Global Attitudes survey is available at [pewglobal.org](http://pewglobal.org); the World Values Survey is available at [worldvaluessurvey.org](http://worldvaluessurvey.org); CIC tracking surveys are available from Citizenship and Immigration Canada. All other data were drawn from press releases from polling firms, or were provided directly to the author by the firms for the purposes of this report.