

## Venerating our Veterans: Four-in-five say Canada should do more to honour those who served in Armed Forces

*One-quarter will attend a formal Remembrance Day service on November 11, half will not*

**November 8, 2019** – As Remembrance Day approaches, many Canadians will be taking time to reflect on the service and sacrifices of the men and women of this country's Armed Forces.

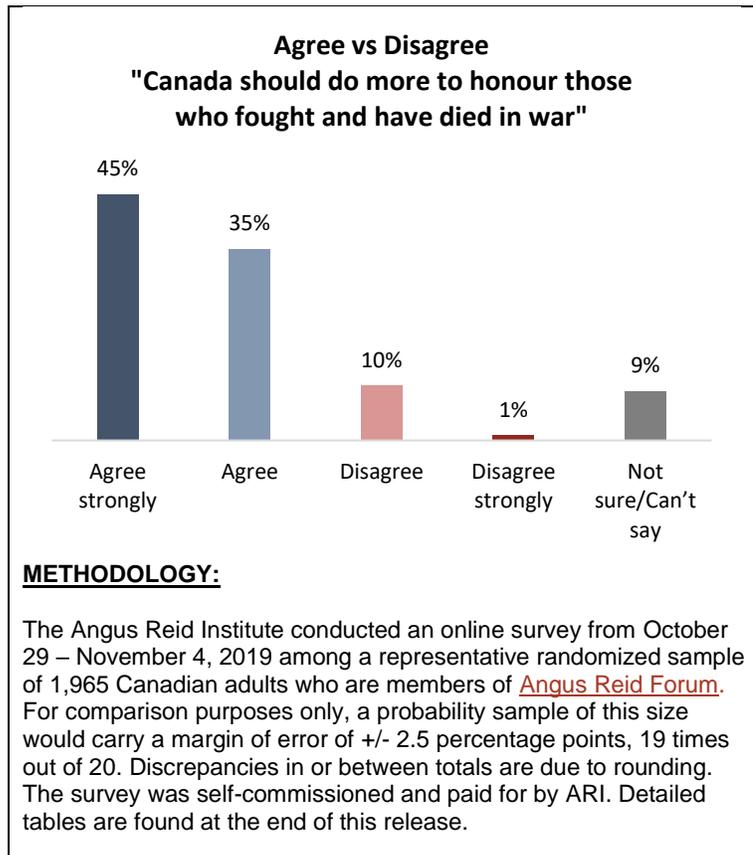
A new study from the non-profit Angus Reid Institute finds one-in-four Canadians say they'll attend a formal service on November 11, while the same number say they might.

And while Canadians come together to remember those who have served, the vast majority (80%) also say that Canada should do more to honour those who serve and have served in the past.

Overall, just seven per cent of Canadians say they have an immediate family member in the Armed Forces but more than six-in-ten (62%) say they have had at least one or two conversations with someone who serves, or has served recently, about their experiences. This may help to inform the sentiment that Forces should be considered more often.

That said, personal connection the desire to honour Canada's Forces does not necessarily mean support for increased defence spending. Indeed, there are deep divisions over the issue. Nearly six-in-ten (57%) say Canada should spend less than the NATO target, two per cent of GDP. A significant minority, 43 per cent, say we should spend at or above that target.

The study also finds the passage of time since the World War's also means oral history of veterans' experiences, passed down through the generations, is increasingly lost. Three-in-ten Canadians say they recall having a conversation with a veteran of the First World War. (Canada's last surviving veteran of that conflict died in 2010.) Stories from the Second World War, however, are more present in the lives of people today: seven-in-ten say they have had conversations with veterans of that war about what they experienced.



### CONTACT:

Shachi Kurl, Executive Director: 604.908.1693 [shachi.kurl@angusreid.org](mailto:shachi.kurl@angusreid.org) @shachikurl  
Dave Korzinski, Research Director: 250.899.0821 [dave.korzinski@angusreid.org](mailto:dave.korzinski@angusreid.org)

---

**More Key Findings:**

- Four-in-five Canadians (79%) say that they feel proud when they think about this nation's Armed Forces, but more than two-in-five (44%) say that they do not think about this part of Canadian society very often
- Asked if they can foresee an international conflict that would compel them to volunteer for military service, 29 per cent of Canadians, and 49 per cent of men between the ages of 18 and 34, say that they can. Half say they cannot envision this.
- Approximately three-in-ten Canadians are able to accurately identify the number of Canadians that served and died in each of the World Wars

**About ARI**

*The **Angus Reid Institute (ARI)** was founded in October 2014 by pollster and sociologist, Dr. Angus Reid. ARI is a national, not-for-profit, non-partisan public opinion research foundation established to advance education by commissioning, conducting and disseminating to the public accessible and impartial statistical data, research and policy analysis on economics, political science, philanthropy, public administration, domestic and international affairs and other socio-economic issues of importance to Canada and its world.*

**INDEX:**

**Part One: The Present and Future**

- **How many will attend a Remembrance Day service?**
- **Desire to do more to honour veterans**
- **Relationships with current Armed Services members**
- **Should Canada spend more on national defence?**
- **Canadians proud of military, but many do not think of the enlisted**

**Part Two: Looking Back**

- **Knowledge of service and cost of wars is hazy for most**
- **Conversations with veterans from First World War fading**
- **More acquaintance with veterans from Second World War**

**How many will attend a Remembrance Day service?**

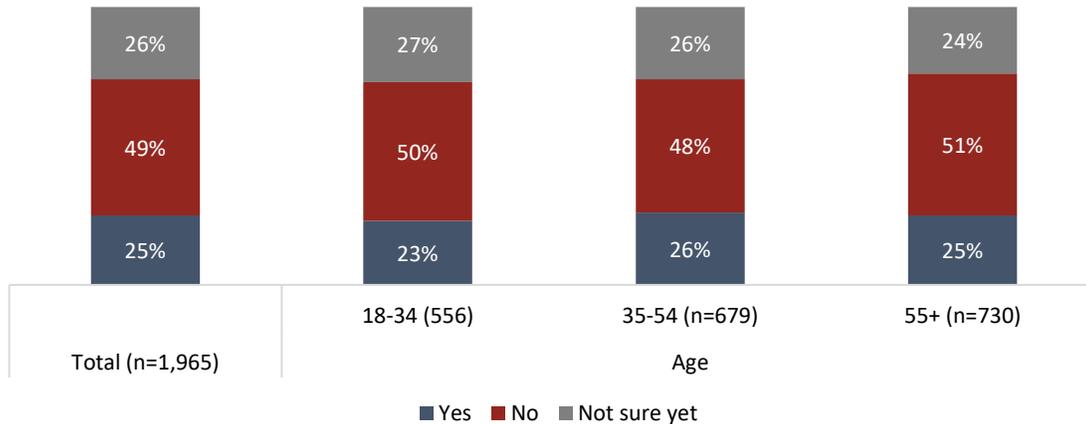
While no Canadian in 2019 can truly understand the experience of Canadian service members during the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, as Canada engaged in two world wars, each year we take a moment to remember their sacrifice. About one-quarter of Canadians across all age groups say that they will attend a formal Remembrance Day service this year to commemorate the 101<sup>st</sup> year since the Armistice was signed to end the First World War:

---

**CONTACT:**

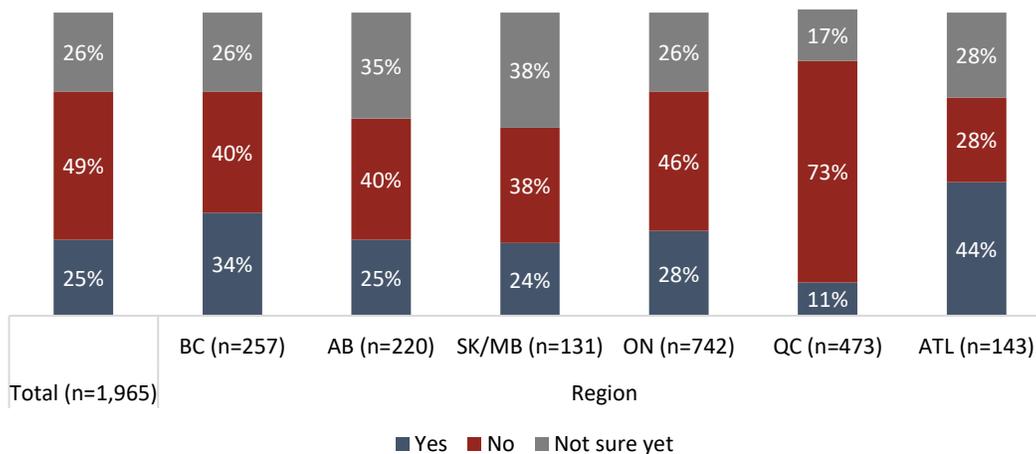
Shachi Kurl, Executive Director: 604.908.1693 [shachi.kurl@angusreid.org](mailto:shachi.kurl@angusreid.org) @shachikurl  
Dave Korzinski, Research Associate: 250.899.0821 [dave.korzinski@angusreid.org](mailto:dave.korzinski@angusreid.org)

**Will you be attending a formal Remembrance Day service this year?**



In Atlantic Canada, which has the highest number of veterans as a portion of the population, residents are most likely to say that they will attend a service on Monday. One-in-three British Columbians say they will as well, while levels of attendance will evidently be lowest in Quebec:

**Will you be attending a formal Remembrance Day service this year?**

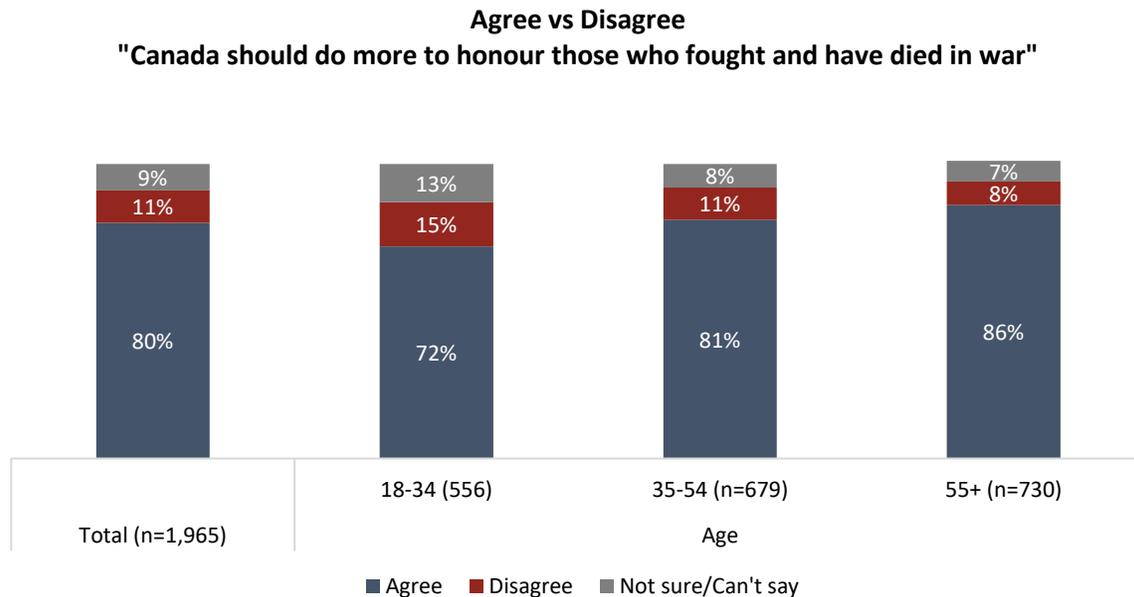


**Desire to do more to honour Veterans**

Interestingly, while just one-quarter of Canadians say they will be attending a service on Remembrance Day, there is a widespread sentiment that Canada should do more to honour veterans.

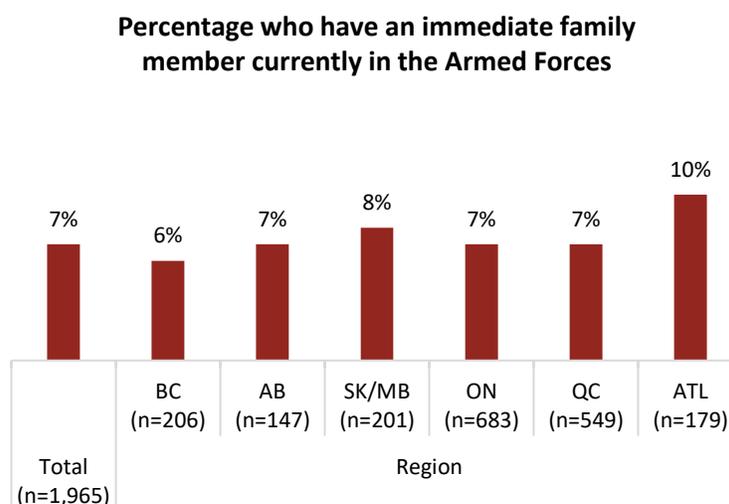
Veterans and current service members are commonly celebrated with Armed Forces nights at [NHL hockey games](#) and [other events](#) across the country, but it appears Canadians would like the country to think more often about those who have served and lost their lives. This could also speak to the sentiment

that Canada needs to take better care of veterans. As many as 40,000 veterans were waiting to hear about their applications for disability assistance earlier this year. Older Canadians are most likely to hold this perspective that more should be done for veterans, as seen in the following graph:



**Relationships with current Armed Forces members**

Most Canadians have little acquaintance with active service members. Asked whether they have an immediate family member, a son, daughter, parent, sister or brother, who are in the Armed Forces, approximately seven per cent of Canadians say this scenario describes them:



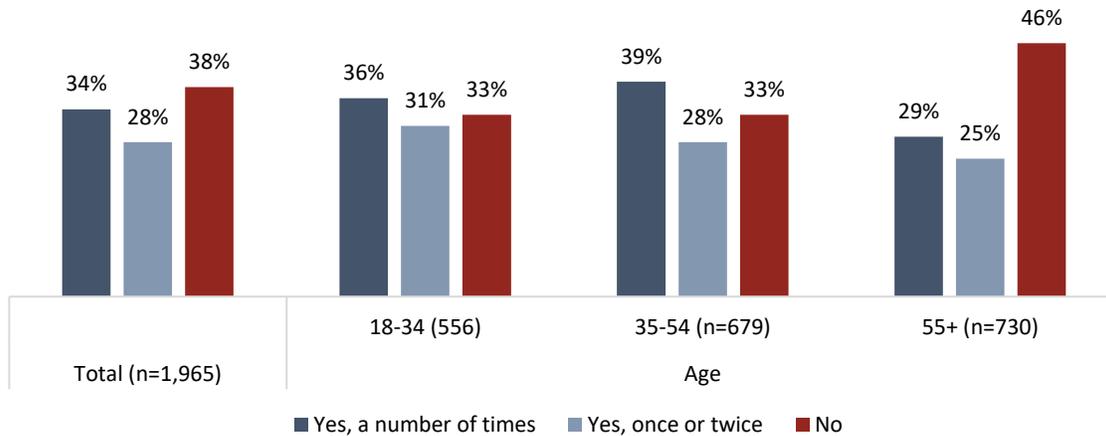
That said, most Canadians have still had a least one or two conversations with a member of the Armed Forces about their experiences while serving. Note, these are members who did not serve in the two

**CONTACT:**

Shachi Kurl, Executive Director: 604.908.1693 [shachi.kurl@angusreid.org](mailto:shachi.kurl@angusreid.org) @shachikurl  
 Dave Korzinski, Research Associate: 250.899.0821 [dave.korzinski@angusreid.org](mailto:dave.korzinski@angusreid.org)

world wars. Older Canadians are less likely to have had these conversations, but there is little variation in experience by age for those younger than 55:

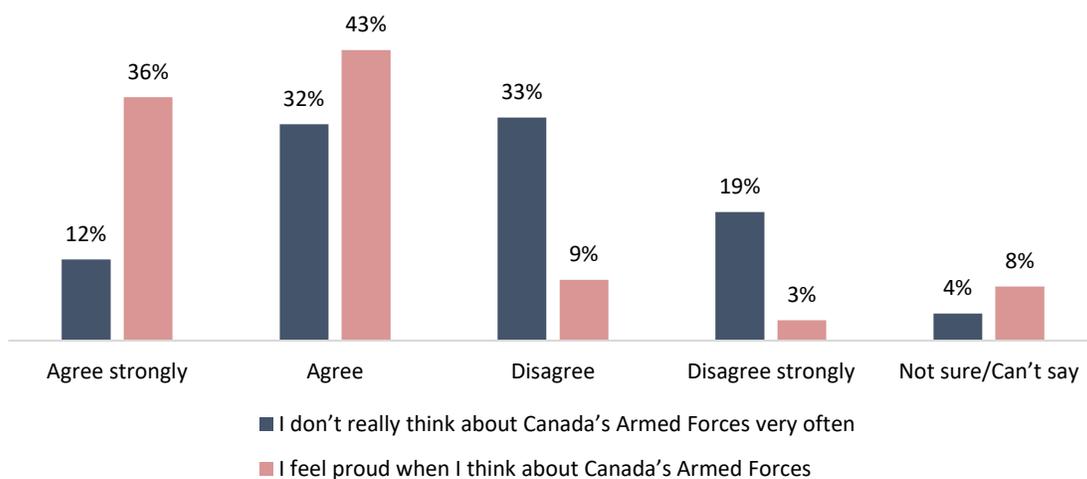
**And what about those who have served more recently, have you ever had a conversation with someone who has served or is currently serving in the Canadian Armed Forces about their experiences?**



**Canadians proud of military, but many do not think of the enlisted**

Canadian opinions of their nation’s service personnel are overwhelmingly positive when they are in fact, thinking about that part of Canada’s society, but for many, this is a rare occurrence. That is, while four-in-five Canadians say they feel pride when they think about Canada’s Armed Forces, 45 per cent of residents also say that they do not think about them very often:

**Agree vs Disagree**

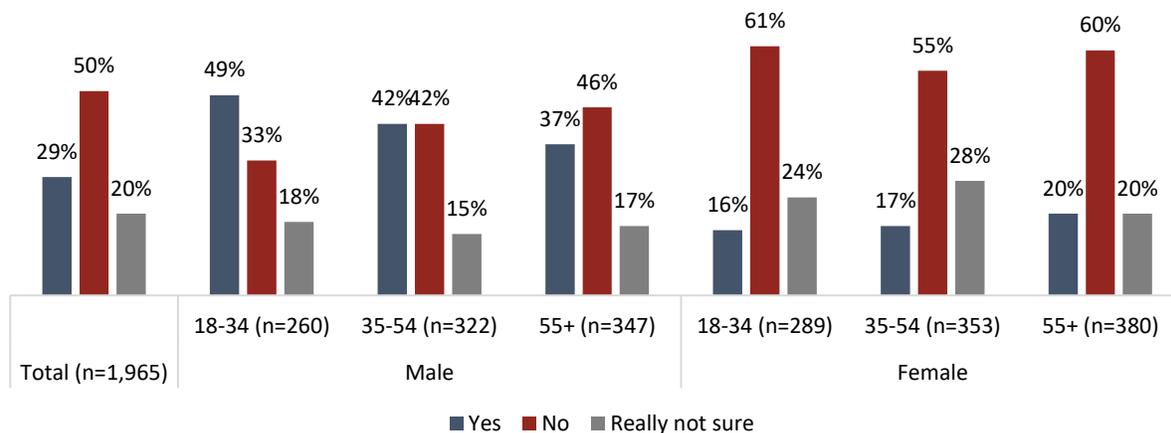


**CONTACT:**

Shachi Kurl, Executive Director: 604.908.1693 [shachi.kurl@angusreid.org](mailto:shachi.kurl@angusreid.org) @shachikurl  
 Dave Korzinski, Research Associate: 250.899.0821 [dave.korzinski@angusreid.org](mailto:dave.korzinski@angusreid.org)

Perhaps one reason that the Armed Forces are held in high esteem is that many Canadians cannot foresee themselves in the same position. Asked if they could foresee an international conflict of some sort that would draw them to volunteer for military service, just 29 per cent, and primarily younger men, say that they can envision it:

**Could you ever foresee an international conflict that would compel you to volunteer for military service, including a possible combat role?**



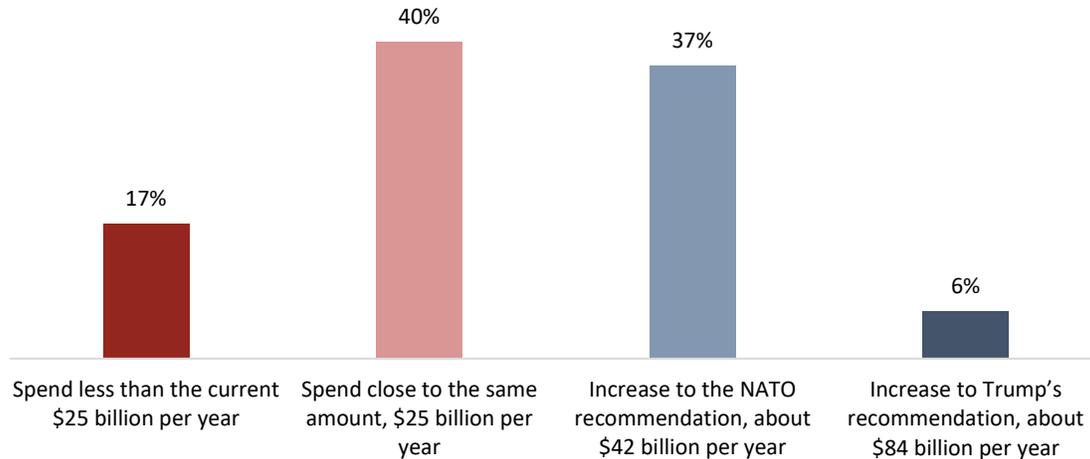
**Should Canada spend more on national defence?**

On the broader question of what sort of investment should be made in the nation's national defense, Canadians are divided. The country currently allocates approximately \$25 billion per year, well below the target of 2 per cent of gross domestic product (GDP) set by the North American Treaty Organization (NATO), which would amount to \$42 billion per year. Asked what they would do going forward, an equal number say that Canada should maintain its current spending (40%) or increase it to the NATO mark (37%). Notably, just under one-in-five would reduce spending further (17%) while a handful would use the target suggested by United States' President Donald Trump, of 4 per cent of GDP:

**CONTACT:**

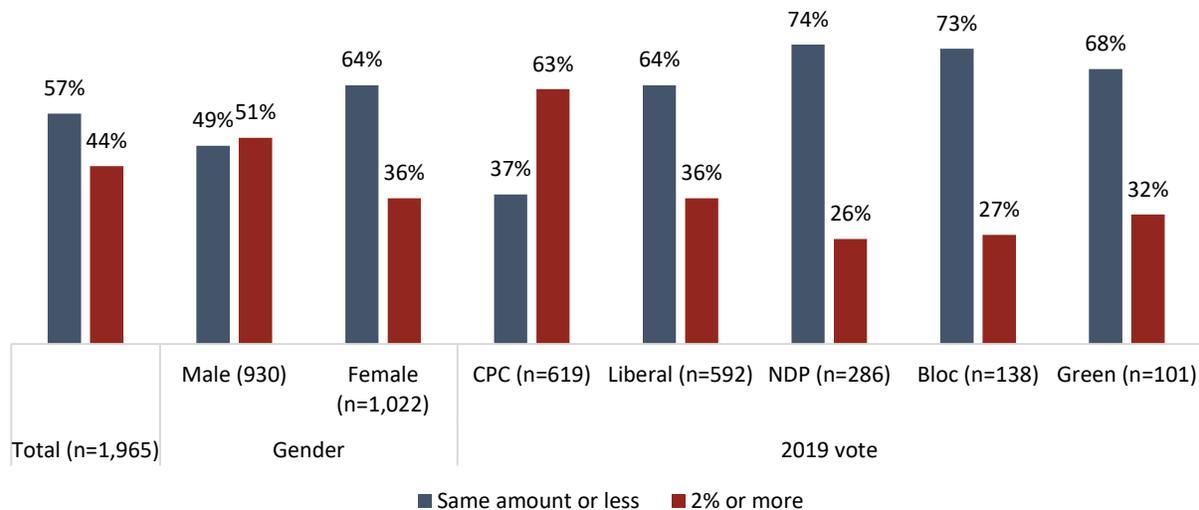
Shachi Kurl, Executive Director: 604.908.1693 [shachi.kurl@angusreid.org](mailto:shachi.kurl@angusreid.org) @shachikurl  
 Dave Korzinski, Research Associate: 250.899.0821 [dave.korzinski@angusreid.org](mailto:dave.korzinski@angusreid.org)

**How do you feel about Canada’s national defence spending?**



Conservative voters are much more likely to say that Canada should increase its spending than supporters of the other federal parties, as are men compared to women:

**How do you feel about Canada’s national defence spending**



**Part Two: Looking Back**

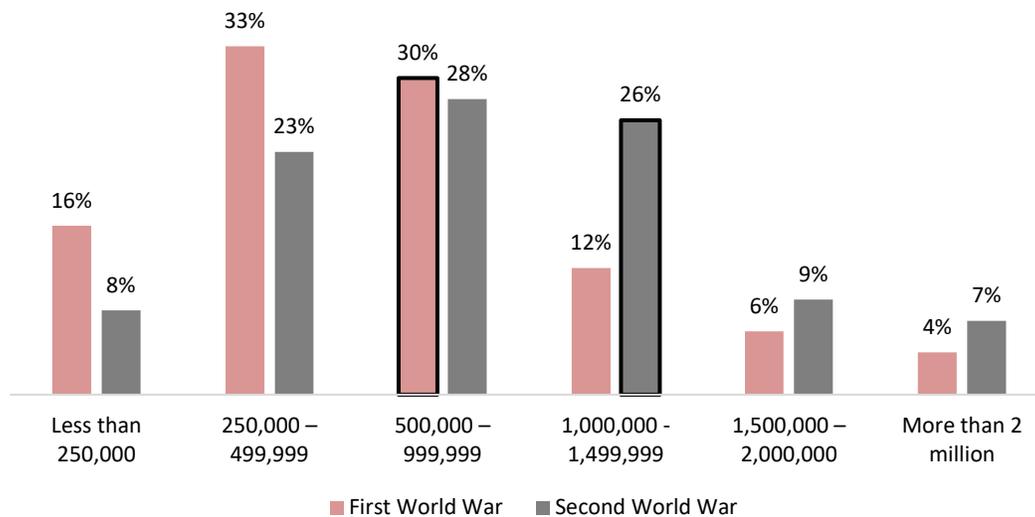
**Knowledge of service and cost of wars is hazy for most**

When Canadians take a day off November 11, it is officially meant to remember those who served. But many do so with a lack of knowledge about how many served and how many were lost. For example,

during the First World War approximately 650,000 Canadians served while around 1.1 million served in the Second – a remarkable number, considering that nation’s population of just 11 million at the time.

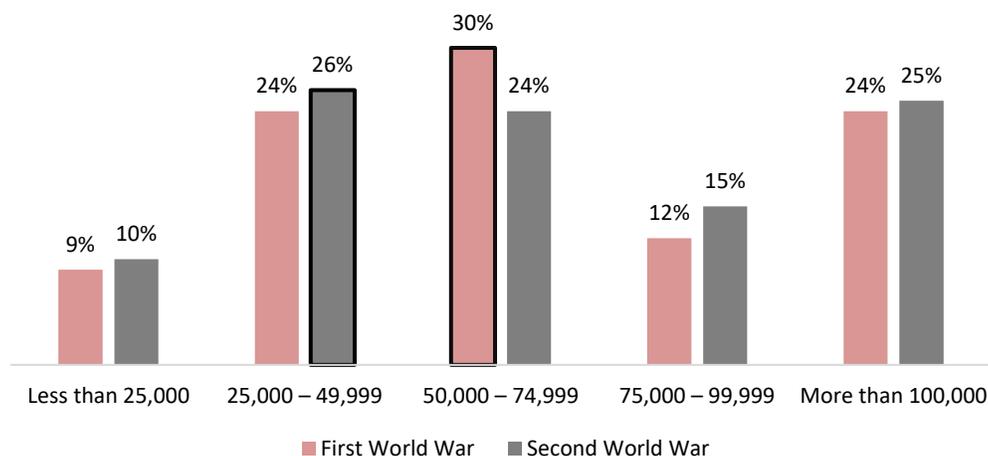
In each case, approximately three-in-ten Canadians are able to accurately place the service numbers. Age and education do not appear to affect knowledge on these questions (see comprehensive tables).

**To the best of your knowledge, how many Canadians served in...**



In terms of loss of life, over 66,000 Canadian soldiers were killed in the First World War, while more than 43,000, were killed in the Second. The same number who correctly place the service numbers for each war, were also able to successfully identify the number lost. One-quarter of Canadians vastly overestimate the number of Canadians who died in each war:

**And how many do you think died while serving in...?**

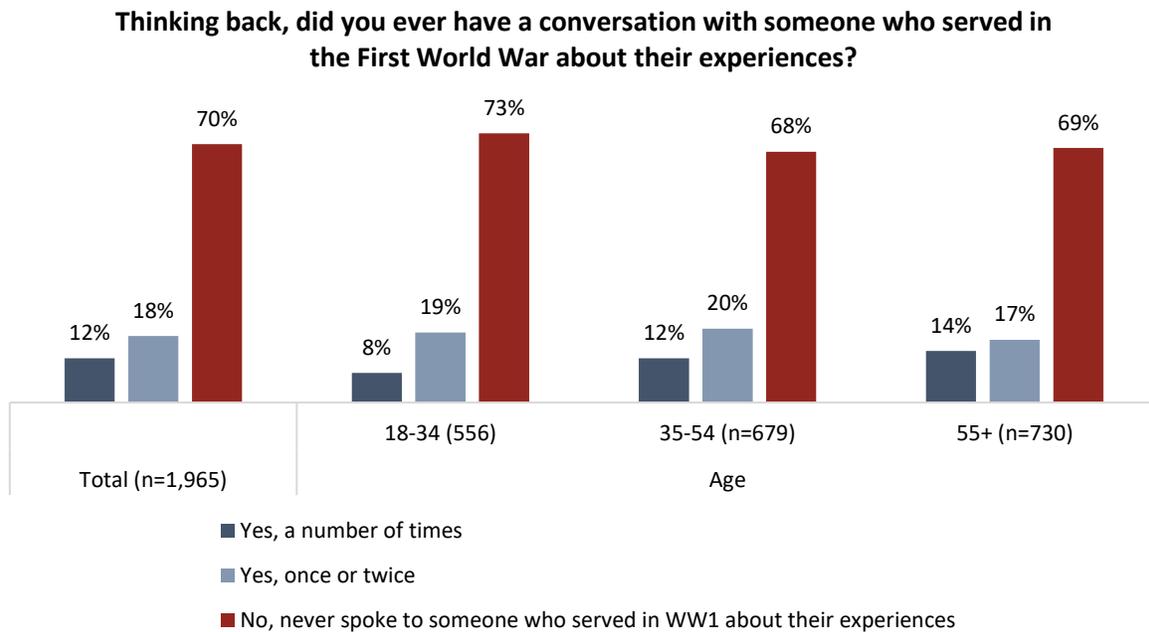


**CONTACT:**

Shachi Kurl, Executive Director: 604.908.1693 [shachi.kurl@angusreid.org](mailto:shachi.kurl@angusreid.org) @shachikurl  
 Dave Korzinski, Research Associate: 250.899.0821 [dave.korzinski@angusreid.org](mailto:dave.korzinski@angusreid.org)

### **Conversations with veterans from First World War fading**

Facts and figures from the war appear hazy for many, and this is also the case when it comes to personal experience with those who fought. Canada's last veteran of the First World War, John Babcock, [passed away in 2010](#), meaning subsequent generations will never have a conversation with someone who served at home or fought abroad. As it stands currently, only about one-in-three Canadians say that they have had a conversation with someone who served in the Great War, a number that will fade with time:



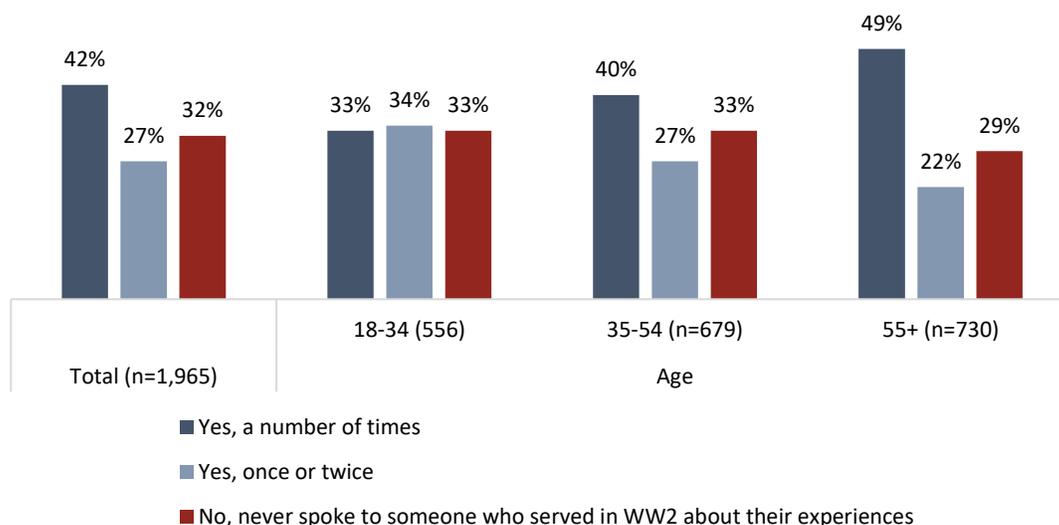
### **More acquaintance with veterans from Second World**

Unlike veterans of the First World War, as of March 2018, more than 41,000 veterans of the Second World War are still alive and able to share their stories. The average age of these men and women is 93. As one might expect, Canadians are much more likely to have a conversation with this group about their experience during their service, in fact, four-in-ten say they have done this a number of times. Canadians 55 years of age and over are more likely to have had numerous conversations, but a significant number of each group say they have had at least one or two:

**CONTACT:**

Shachi Kurl, Executive Director: 604.908.1693 [shachi.kurl@angusreid.org](mailto:shachi.kurl@angusreid.org) @shachikurl  
 Dave Korzinski, Research Associate: 250.899.0821 [dave.korzinski@angusreid.org](mailto:dave.korzinski@angusreid.org)

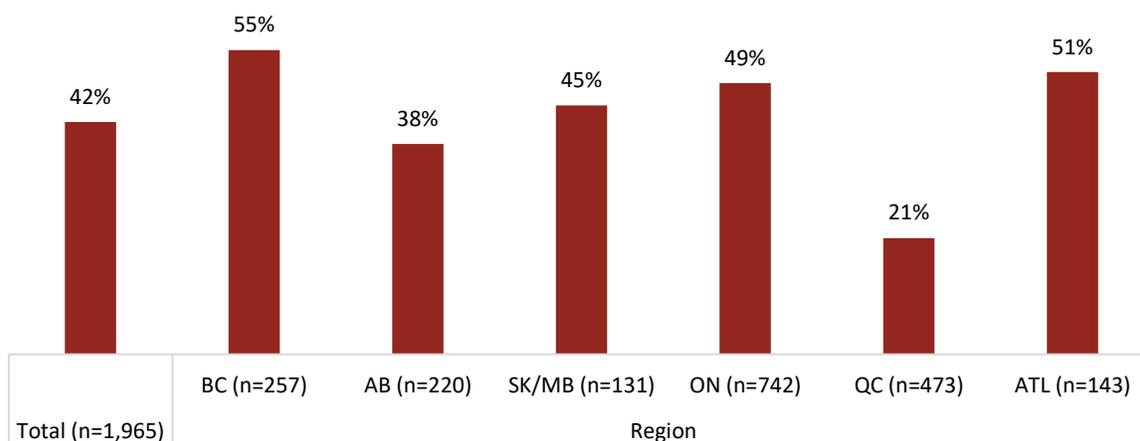
**What about the Second World War, have you ever spoken to someone who served in that war about their experiences?**



There is a notable regional element to Canadian relationships with veterans of this war. British Columbians and Atlantic Canadians are most likely to have had numerous chats with those who served.

Some of this prevalence is likely due to the higher [proportion of veterans](#) in Atlantic Canada. Meanwhile British Columbians represented a significant proportion of those who served in the Second World War and Korean War, [relative to its population](#):

**Have spoken to a WW2 veteran about their experience "a number of times"**



*For detailed results by age, gender, region, education, and other demographics, [click here](#).*