

## Truths of reconciliation: Canadians are deeply divided on how best to address Indigenous issues

*Most see the attention and money currently going toward these issues as ineffective*

**June 6, 2018** – The Trudeau government has made a commitment since the 2015 election to [reset the relationship](#) with First Nations.

But the challenges of this relationship – and how Canadians perceive it – are detailed in a new study from the Angus Reid Institute that finds residents more likely to say Trudeau is paying “too much” attention to Indigenous issues, rather than “too little”.

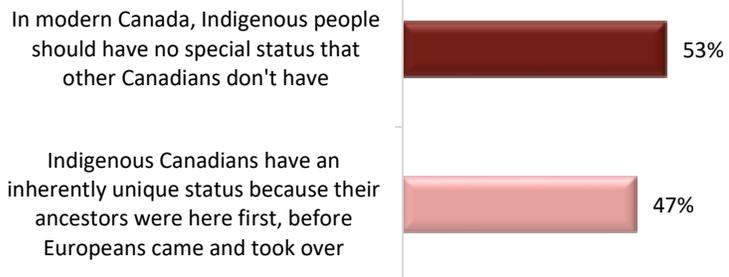
Further complicating this issue for policy-makers, Canadians – Indigenous and non-Indigenous alike – are deeply divided about some fundamental questions regarding the first human inhabitants of this land. From Indigenous self-government, to the legacy of residential schools, to the unique status of Indigenous Canadians, people in the country voice significant disagreement about the path forward.

These divisions manifest themselves across the general population. While most Canadians agree that the attention and money currently being devoted to Indigenous issues in Canada is not particularly effective, they vary wildly in their perspectives about how to change this status quo. Despite this tension, six-in-ten Canadians (61%) say they have optimism about the future of the relationship between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Canadians.

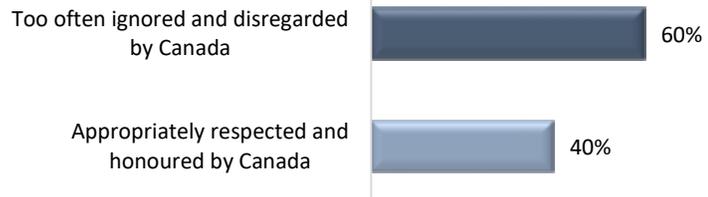
### More Key Findings:

- Amid a vote by parliament to extend an invitation to the Pope to apologize for the

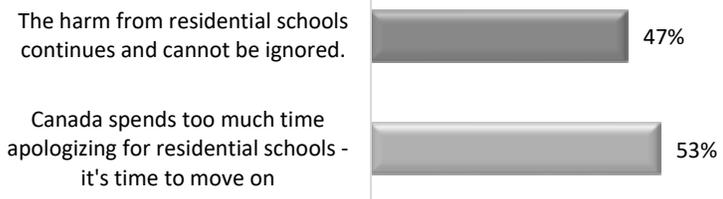
### In your opinion, would you say..



### Treaties with Indigenous people have been...



### Fundamentally, do you think...



### **METHODOLOGY:**

The Angus Reid Institute conducted an online survey from March 20 – 27, 2018, among a representative randomized sample of 2,443 Canadian adults who are members of the [Angus Reid Forum](#). The sample plan included large oversamples in regions with high Indigenous populations, which were then weighted back to provide a national snapshot. For comparison purposes only, a probability sample of this size with this sample plan would carry a margin of error of +/- 2.5 percentage points, 19 times out of 20. Discrepancies in or between totals are due to rounding. The survey was self-commissioned and paid for by ARI. Detailed tables are found at the end of this release.

### CONTACT:

Angus Reid, Chairman: 604-505-2229 [angus@angusreid.org](mailto:angus@angusreid.org)

Catholic Church's role in residential schools, 53 per cent of Canadians say Canada is too focused on apologies for this legacy, while 47 per cent say it is important and cannot be ignored

- Social issues, such as violence and alcohol abuse are at the top of the list of concerns facing First Nations communities. Seven-in-ten Indigenous (68%) and three-quarters of non-Indigenous Canadians (75%) say this
- Despite a number of concerns over poor quality of life for many living on reserves in Canada, three-quarters of Canadians say that reserves can succeed, given the proper level of investment
- But on spending, 28 per cent of Canadians say the government has not put enough money into Indigenous issues, while one-in-three (33%) lean the other way, saying the government has allocated too many resources in this area
- Half of Canadians (47%) say that Indigenous people have an inherently unique status in Canada because their ancestors were here first, while half disagree (53%), saying there should be no special status for Indigenous people in modern Canada

## INDEX:

### Part 1 - Deep divisions on Indigenous issues

- Canadians disagree on existential questions
- Four mindsets regarding Indigenous issues in Canada

### Part 2 - Some consensus in views of reserves, inefficient spending

- Canadians have negative view of reserves
- Critical view does not mean pessimism for the future
- Seven-in-ten say Canada has a moral, legal obligation to help
- Attention, spending, effectiveness

### Part 3 - Interactions between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people

- Proximity to life on reserve
- Engagement with First Nations communities
- Three categories based on interaction
- How does quality of life compare across communities?
- Optimism for the future

### Part 4 - Notes on Methodology

- The contact index
- The four mindsets

## Part 1 – Deep divisions on Indigenous issues

The relationship between the established governments of Canada and Indigenous peoples has been an oft-strained one. People in this country themselves have professed awareness of the worst aspects of this history, and the legacy that [many argue](#) still lingers present day. Perhaps the best indication of this is previous research from the Angus Reid Institute conducted in 2015, which found seven-in-ten Canadians consider the residential school system as an [act of cultural genocide](#).

[Related – Truth and Reconciliation: Canadians see value in process, skeptical about government action](#)

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## CONTACT:

Angus Reid, Chairman: [angus@angusreid.org](mailto:angus@angusreid.org)

But what does that relationship look like in 2018 in the day-to-day lives of non-Indigenous and Indigenous in Canada? Among other things, this study looks at the ways in which Canadians across the country engage with the Indigenous community in their province, and the extent to which they have knowledge of issues surrounding this group. Each of these relationships is unique, but in aggregate, they paint a picture of Canadian society at this point in time.

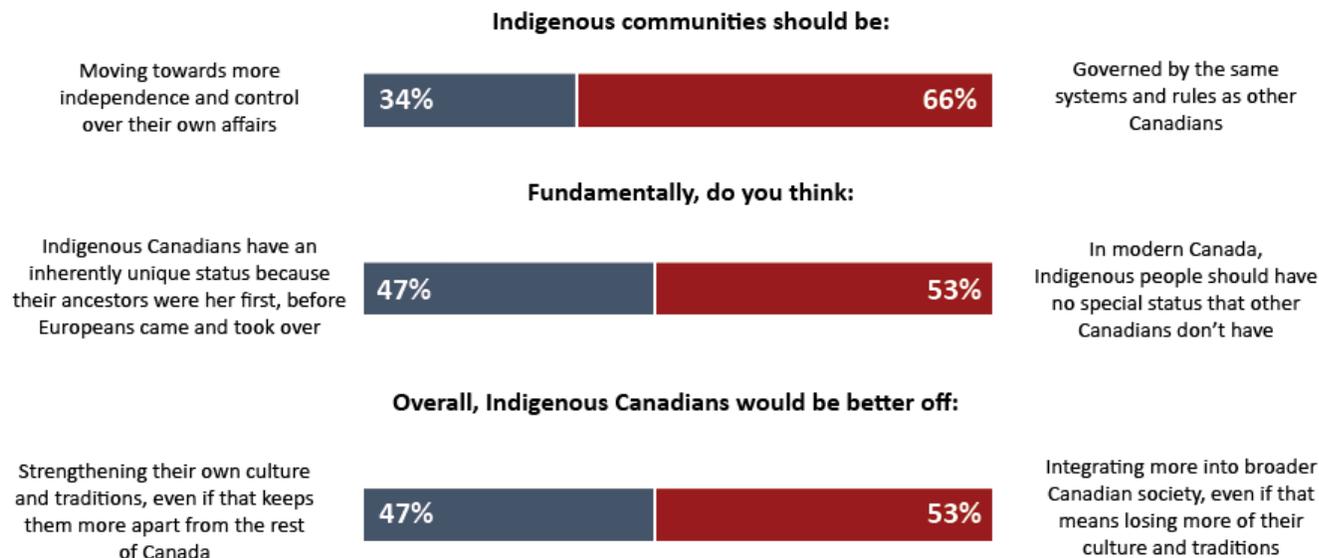
### Canadians disagree on existential questions

At the most basic level, what does it mean to be Indigenous in Canada? This is a question that can ultimately only be answered by Indigenous Canadians themselves, and one that countless Indigenous leaders, artists, and activists have grappled with – and will continue to grapple with – over the years.

That said, the government of Canada has also made numerous attempts at answering this question over the years, and it is in this context that non-Indigenous Canadians have typically engaged with Indigenous issues.

Asked to weigh in on some existential questions about Canada’s Indigenous population, the general public is quite divided. This survey presented respondents with several “face-offs,” asking them to choose which of two opposing statements is closest to their own view – even if they didn’t agree with it exactly.

These questions uncover a populace deeply divided, as seen in the following graphs:



**In your opinion, would you say:**

The harm from residential schools continues and cannot be ignored



Canada spends too much time apologizing for residential schools - it's time to move on

**Treaties with Indigenous people have been:**

Too often ignored and disregarded by Canada



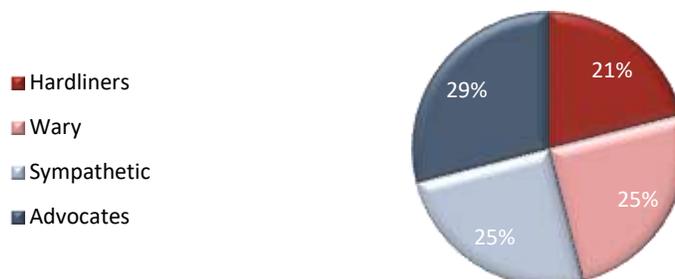
Appropriately respected and honoured by Canada

**Four mindsets regarding Indigenous issues in Canada**

Based on their responses to these and other questions in this survey, Canadians can be grouped into four distinct subsets, which exist along a continuum. For greater detail on how these four groups were derived, see “notes on methodology” at the end of this release.

The relative proportion of the Canadian population represented by each group is shown in the following graph:

**Four mindsets on Indigenous issues in Canada:**



At one end of this spectrum are the **Hardliners** (21% of the total population). This group is defined by its antipathy toward any special status or accommodation for Indigenous people in this country. To members of this group, Indigenous Canadians are no different from any other subset of the population and governments should give no additional consideration to them that isn't afforded to other citizens.

The Hardliners are, on average, older, wealthier, and more male than the general population. They are also disproportionately located in Manitoba, Saskatchewan, and Alberta, where they make up at least one-third of the population.

At the other end of the spectrum are the **Advocates** (29% of the total population). This group takes a strong stand in favour of Indigenous self-determination and Canada's responsibility to acknowledge and make amends for its history of colonial oppression. To members of this group, Indigenous Canadians hold an inherently unique status in this country because their ancestors were here first, and that status and history should help inform contemporary policy.

The Advocates are the only one of the four groups that includes more women than men. Members of this group are more likely to have university degrees and tend to be younger than the general population. They're also disproportionately located in Ontario and Quebec, and not on the Prairies.

In between these two poles are a pair of mindsets that each represent roughly one-quarter of the total population: The **Wary** (25%) and the **Sympathetic** (25%). As their names might imply, the Wary tend to be more closely aligned with the Hardliners – though they take less of a hard-line and are less consistent in doing so – while the Sympathetic align more closely with the Advocates on most questions in this survey.

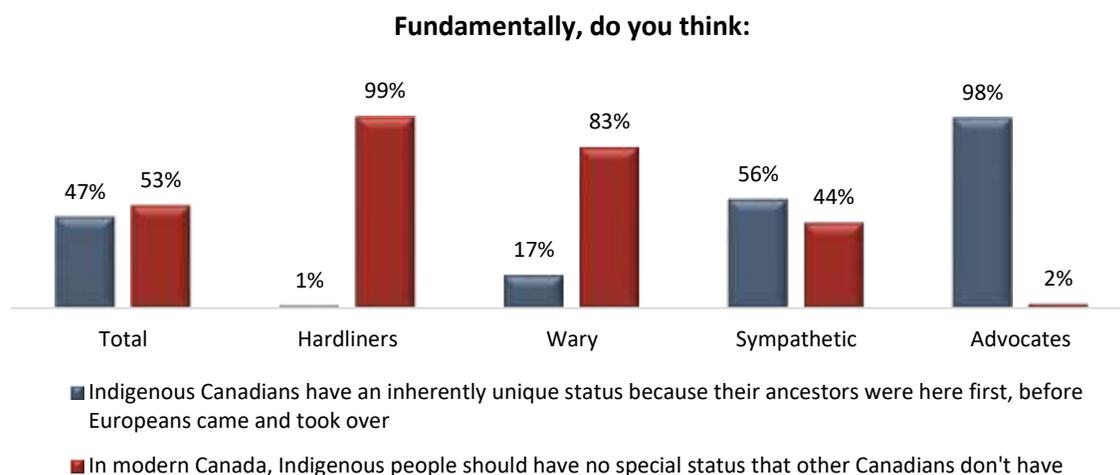
Like the Hardliners, the Wary are, on average, older and more male than the general population. Unlike the Hardliners, however, they're not so geographically concentrated. The Wary represent roughly one-in-four respondents in each region of the country.

The Sympathetic, meanwhile, tend to be younger than the general population, like the Advocates. Unlike the Advocates, the Sympathetic are balanced along gender lines and tend to have average levels of education. They are the group most likely to be living in households that earn less than \$50,000 per year.

Notably, self-identified Indigenous Canadians – who make up 6 per cent of respondents to this survey, roughly equivalent to [their proportion of the total population](#) – can be found in each of these four groups, though there are more of them among the Sympathetic and Advocates than among the Wary and the Hardliners. In all, 10 per cent of Indigenous Canadians surveyed are Hardliners, 13 per cent are Wary, 35 per cent are Sympathetic, and 41 per cent are Advocates.

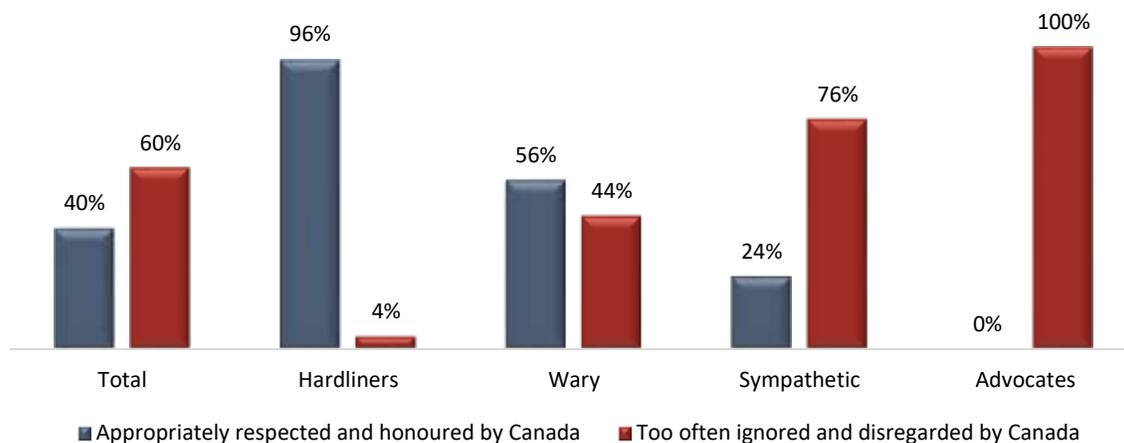
That said, while the views of self-described Indigenous people are reported here to provide valuable context, it should be noted that this sample is not necessarily representative of the Indigenous population of Canada as a whole.

The attitudes underlying these four mindsets can be seen in their responses to the face-off questions. Asked about the fundamental nature of Indigenous status in Canada, the groups on either end of the spectrum nearly universally take the position that would be expected of them. The Wary, meanwhile, are fairly uniform in believing that “in modern Canada, Indigenous people should have no special status that other Canadians don't have,” while the Sympathetic are divided:



A similar pattern manifests itself on the question of whether treaties between Canada and its Indigenous peoples have been respected or ignored. On this question, the Sympathetic are largely in agreement, while the Wary are divided:

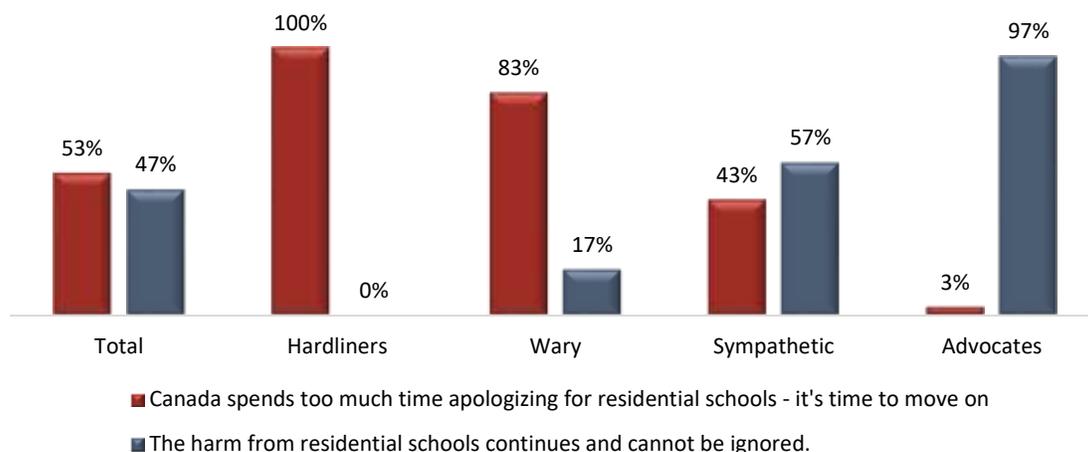
**Treaties with Indigenous people have been:**



And on residential schools, the same basic patterns can be seen. This is notable, as parliament recently voted 269 to 10 to invite the Pope to visit Canada to apologize on behalf of the Catholic Church for its role in the residential school system. The church ran 72 per cent of these schools, which the federal government formally apologized to former students for in 2008.

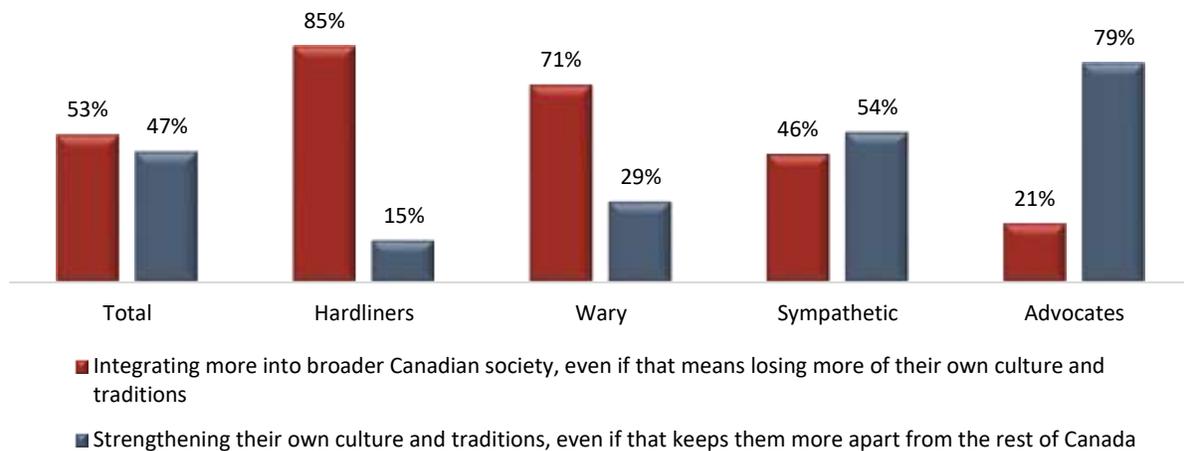
As seen in the graph that follows, Hardliners would like to move on from this painful history, while advocates say the legacy continues to cause harm and cannot be ignored:

**In your opinion, would you say:**



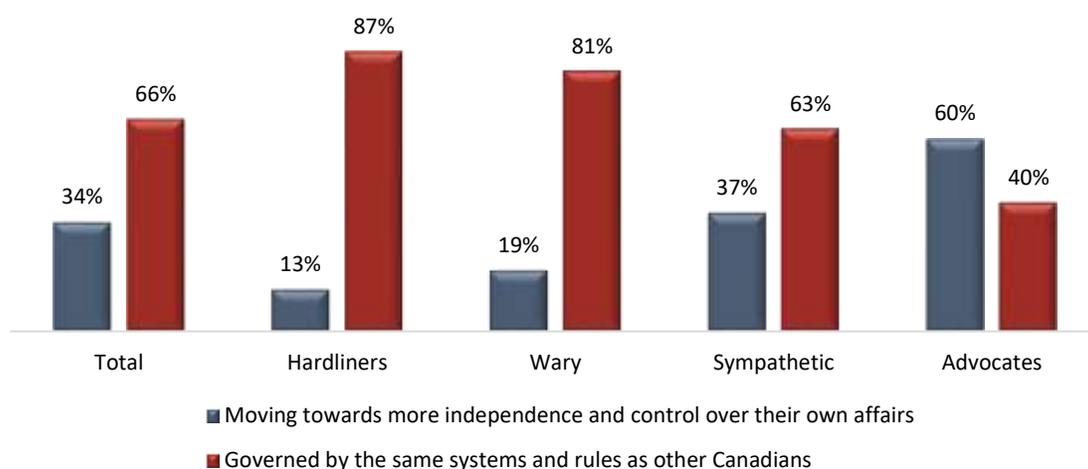
The four groups are less uniform in their responses to the other two face-off questions that have a more prescriptive framework, asking about what Indigenous Canadians and their communities ought to do in the future, rather than an individual's perception of the current reality. The first of these questions is shown in the following graph.

**Overall, Indigenous Canadians would be better off:**



On a related face-off about Indigenous independence and self-governance, the Hardliners and the Wary are joined by nearly two-in-three of the Sympathetic in their belief that Indigenous communities should be “governed by the same systems and rules as other Canadians.” The Advocates are the only group that is more likely to say Indigenous communities should be “moving towards more independence and control over their own affairs,” as seen in the graph that follows.

**Would you say Indigenous communities should be:**



It's worth noting that on each of these five face-off questions, Indigenous Canadians themselves are divided, but tend to have a distinct perspective from those who are not Indigenous. These differences are summarized in the table that follows:

<b>Responses to face-off questions from Indigenous and non-Indigenous Canadians:</b>			
(unweighted sample sizes)	Total (2443)	Indigenous?	
		Yes* (167)	No (2276)
<b>Fundamentally, do you think:</b>			
Indigenous Canadians have an inherently unique status because their ancestors were here first, before Europeans came and took over	47%	58%	46%
In modern Canada, Indigenous people should have no special status that other Canadians don't have	53%	42%	54%
<b>Treaties with Indigenous people have been:</b>			
Appropriately respected and honoured by Canada	40%	34%	41%
Too often ignored and disregarded by Canada	60%	66%	59%
<b>In your opinion, would you say:</b>			
Canada spends too much time apologizing for residential schools - it's time to move on	53%	46%	54%
The harm from residential schools continues and cannot be ignored.	47%	54%	46%
<b>Overall, Indigenous Canadians would be better off:</b>			
Integrating more into broader Canadian society, even if that means losing more of their own culture and traditions	53%	41%	54%
Strengthening their own culture and traditions, even if that keeps them more apart from the rest of Canada	47%	59%	46%
<b>Would you say Indigenous communities should be:</b>			
Moving towards more independence and control over their own affairs	34%	42%	34%
Governed by the same systems and rules as other Canadians	66%	58%	66%

*\*Note that Indigenous respondents to this survey may not be representative of all Indigenous Canadians*

## Part 2 – Some consensus in views of reserves, inefficient spending

### Canadians have negative view of reserves

When Canadians – Indigenous or not – consider life on First Nations land reserves, the picture they paint is more bleak than bright.

Much of this is likely rooted in the reality of poor outcomes for those living on reserve in comparison to those living away from them. According to [research done by Statistics Canada](#), Indigenous Canadians [living on-reserve face](#) a higher probability of early death, reduced access to health care, and higher rates of poverty and domestic violence.

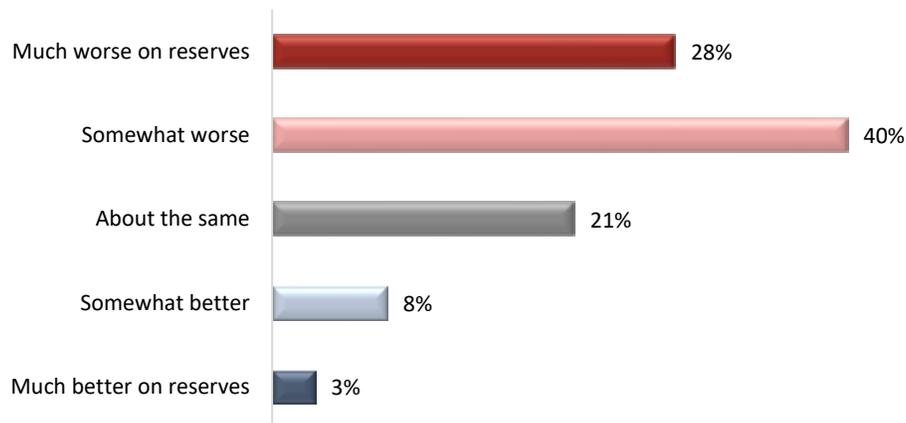
Asked which descriptions of First Nations reserves they feel are most accurate, Canadians list three issues – social problems, poor economies, and lack of social services – at the highest level.

This is true for Canadians across all levels of involvement with Indigenous issues, from those who profess low knowledge and little-to-no contact with Indigenous people, to those who feel well-informed about such issues and have close friends and family who are Indigenous – or are Indigenous themselves. The “contact index,” and its categories of “low,” “medium,” and “high” contact with Indigenous people is described in greater detail in part three of this report.

Here is a list of descriptions that might be made of First Nations reserves here in [Province]. Please choose the three that you feel most accurately describe them.						
(unweighted sample sizes)	Total (2443)	Indigenous?		Relationship with Indigenous/ Knowledge of Indigenous issues		
		Yes (167)	No (2276)	Low (631)	Medium (708)	High (1096)
Social problems (i.e.: substance abuse, violence)	62%	55%	63%	56%	69%	63%
Poor economy/Not enough jobs or opportunity	43%	39%	43%	44%	45%	41%
Social services lacking/poor quality (i.e.: housing, education, healthcare)	43%	40%	43%	41%	48%	40%
Tight knit community/Know everybody	27%	21%	27%	26%	20%	35%
Corrupt leadership/chiefs	25%	23%	25%	15%	29%	33%
Closer to Indigenous traditions and culture	24%	23%	24%	27%	21%	21%
Remote/isolated/so far from services	20%	23%	20%	25%	17%	18%
More traditional way of life (trapping, fishing)	16%	25%	15%	21%	14%	12%
Wilderness/fresh air	15%	24%	14%	18%	13%	13%
Simple lifestyle/no city hassles	15%	15%	15%	16%	13%	15%
Nothing to do/Boring	11%	12%	11%	12%	10%	10%

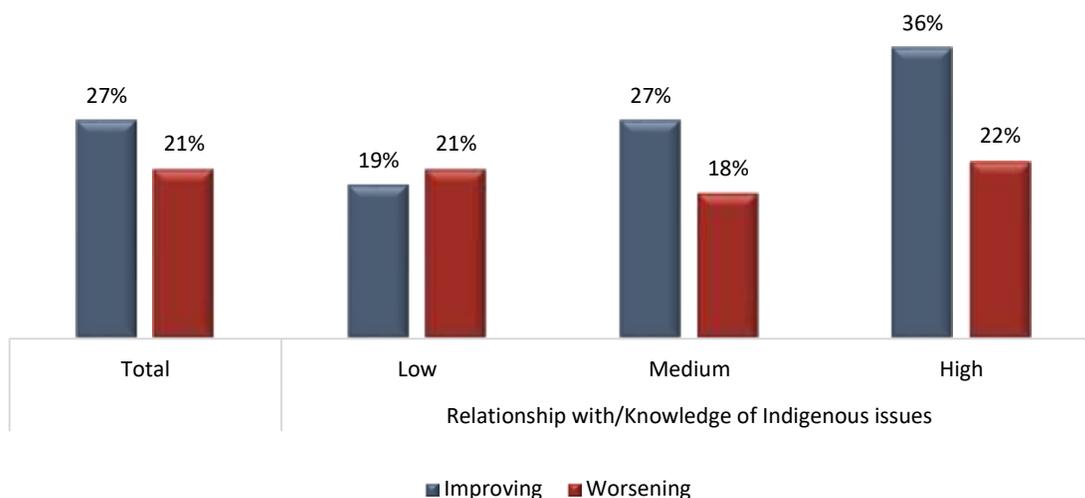
It should be no surprise then, given these findings, that Canadians are much more likely to say the overall quality of life is better for people in their province who live off-reserve. Two-thirds (68%) say the situation is worse on reserves in their region compared to just one-in-ten (11%) who say the opposite (for regional and other demographic breakdowns please [see comprehensive tables](#)):

**How do you think the overall quality of life on reserves compares to that of other people here in this province?**



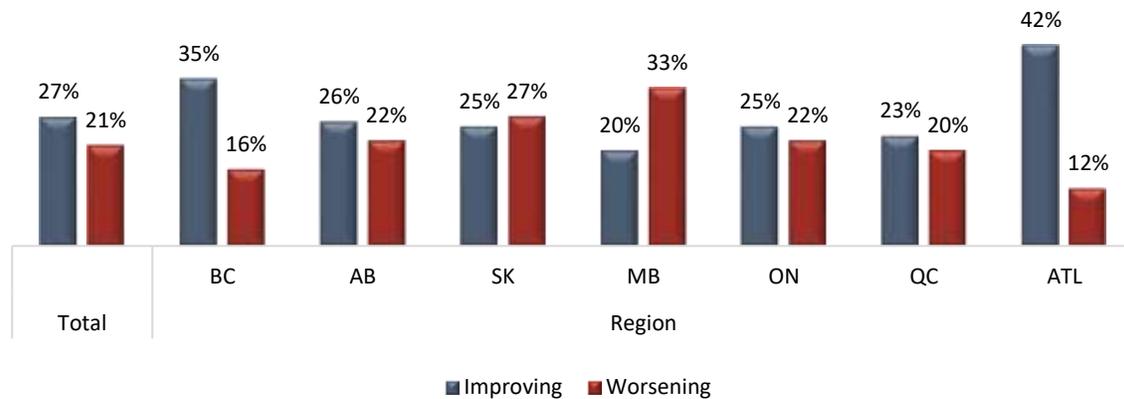
While Canadians are generally pessimistic about conditions on reserves, there is a slight sense among some that things are improving. While four-in-ten say that their perceptions is that conditions have not changed significantly since the turn of the century, Canadians are a little more likely to say that they have improved (27%) rather than worsened (21%).

**Do you think the overall quality of life on First Nation reserves in your province has been improving or getting worse over the past 15 or 20 years (since about the year 2000)?**



This optimism is blunted by opinion in the prairies. In Manitoba, one-in-three (33%) say that quality of life has diminished on reserves in their province, while just over one-quarter (27%) say this in Saskatchewan:

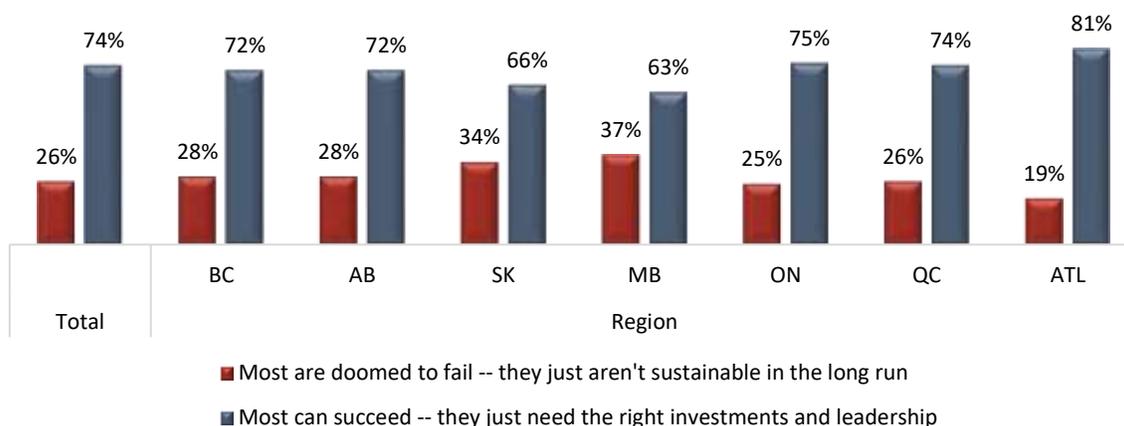
**And, do you think the overall quality of life on First Nation reserves in your province has been improving or worsening over the past 15 or 20 years (since about the year 2000)?**



**Critical view does not mean pessimism for the future**

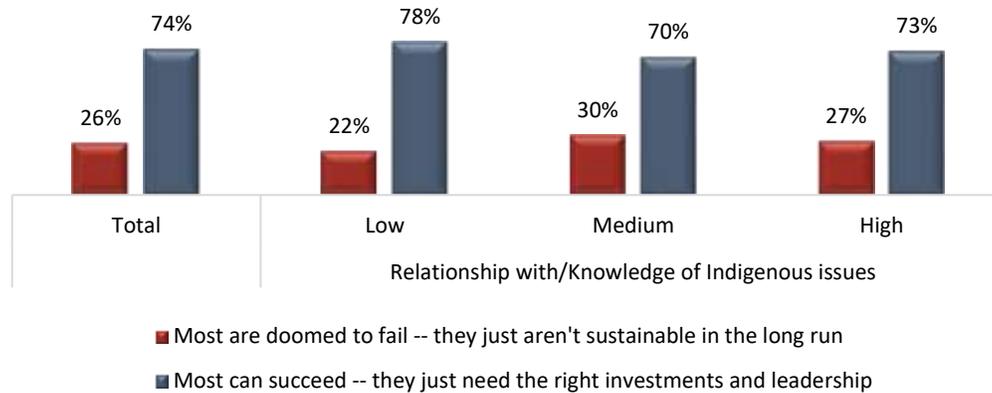
Negative opinion does not necessarily translate into hopelessness, however. Canadians across the country are overwhelmingly more likely to say that reserves need the “right investments and leadership” to thrive.

**Which of the following statements comes closest to your own view about the reserves in your province?**



This opinion is held equally by Canadians from all levels of knowledge and contact with Indigenous communities. At least seven-in-ten from each group express confidence in the potential future of reserves within their province -- with appropriate investment and leadership:

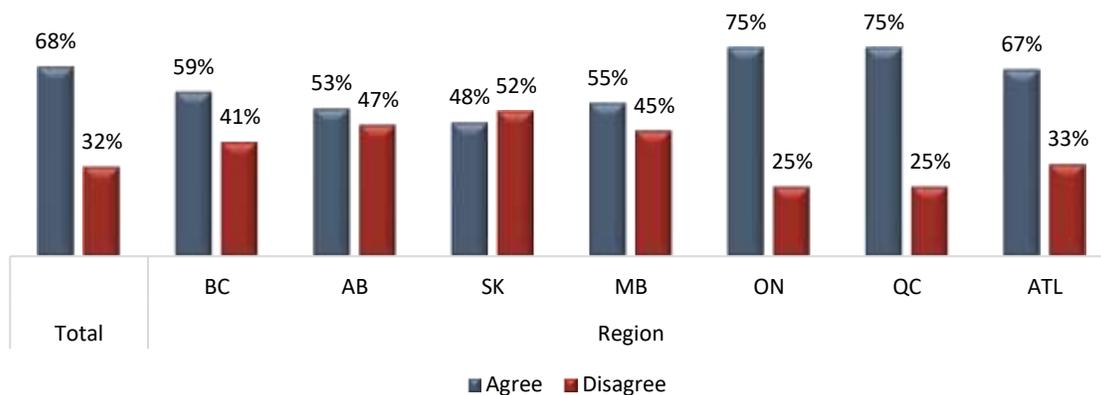
**Which of the following statements comes closest to your own view about the reserves in your province?**



**Seven-in-ten say Canada has a moral, legal obligation to help**

Overall, seven-in-ten Canadians (68%) say that – considering the history of Canada’s treatment of Indigenous groups – the country has a moral and legal obligation to maintain and improve the quality of life on reserves. Notably, however, those provinces where residents are most likely to say conditions are worsening – Alberta, Saskatchewan and Manitoba – are least likely to say they feel an obligation to help:

**"Canada's history means this country has a moral and legal obligation to maintain and improve the quality of life on reserves"**



There are myriad problems to address in many remote communities. Countless First Nations communities are without drinkable water, lack serviceable housing, and lag far behind in educational outcomes.

With so many Canadians saying their country has an obligation to improve these conditions, where do citizens think is the best place to start?

The Angus Reid Institute offered a number of proposals to Canadians and asked them whether they consider each to be a good or a bad idea:

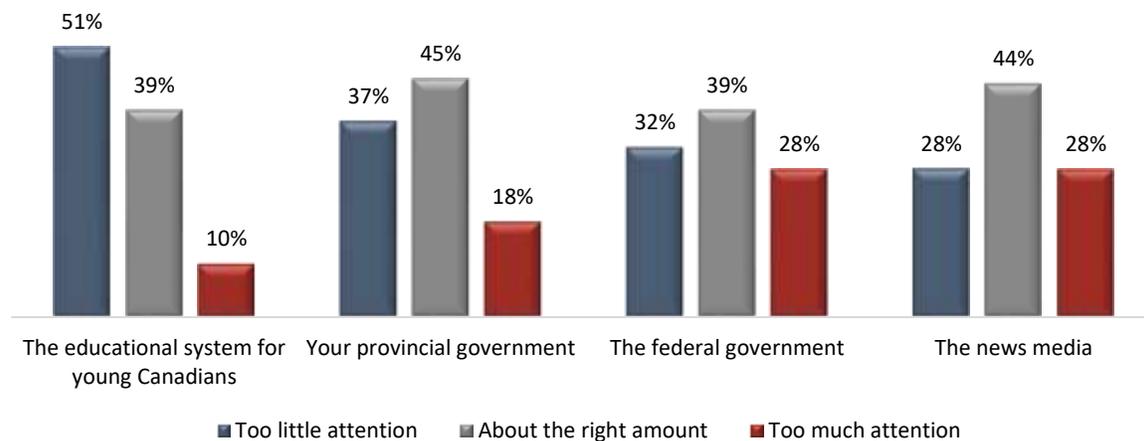
Keeping the focus on your own province, please indicate whether you think each of the following is a good or a bad idea.									
(unweighted sample sizes)		Total (2443)	Region						
			BC (412)	AB (367)	SK (267)	MB (275)	ON (505)	QC (386)	ATL (231)
More emphasis on support and training for local reserve governments	Good idea	78%	76%	72%	79%	73%	83%	74%	74%
	Bad idea	10%	12%	12%	11%	13%	7%	13%	9%
More Indigenous independence and self-government on reserves	Good idea	49%	48%	41%	45%	49%	50%	52%	53%
	Bad idea	29%	31%	36%	40%	36%	28%	26%	23%
Programs to promote and support businesses located on reserves	Good idea	80%	77%	74%	83%	80%	86%	75%	75%
	Bad idea	10%	11%	12%	9%	12%	6%	13%	12%
Spend more money and effort to provide better social services on reserves	Good idea	68%	60%	55%	53%	59%	74%	71%	62%
	Bad idea	21%	28%	31%	34%	28%	16%	17%	25%
Spend more money and effort on improving the education available to reserve residents	Good idea	75%	70%	64%	65%	70%	82%	76%	72%
	Bad idea	15%	19%	23%	25%	20%	10%	14%	15%
Have programs to help people who want to move off reserves by offering financial and other support for them to relocate and get settled elsewhere	Good idea	62%	58%	55%	50%	50%	66%	67%	58%
	Bad idea	20%	22%	23%	31%	35%	17%	20%	22%
Close down reserves with the most serious and damaging social problems, and help the relocated people adjust to living somewhere else	Good idea	36%	29%	38%	43%	35%	37%	36%	32%
	Bad idea	46%	48%	43%	43%	51%	44%	49%	46%

**Attention, spending, effectiveness**

Overall, Canadians tend to view Indigenous issues as receiving either too little or the right amount of attention from the country’s institutions, including the news media, provincial and federal governments, and the school system.

As seen in the following graph, fully half of all Canadians (51%) say Indigenous topics receive too little attention from the education system, while pluralities see the other three institutions canvassed as devoting “about the right amount” of attention:

**Do you think Indigenous Canadians and the issues facing their communities are getting the right amount of attention from ...**

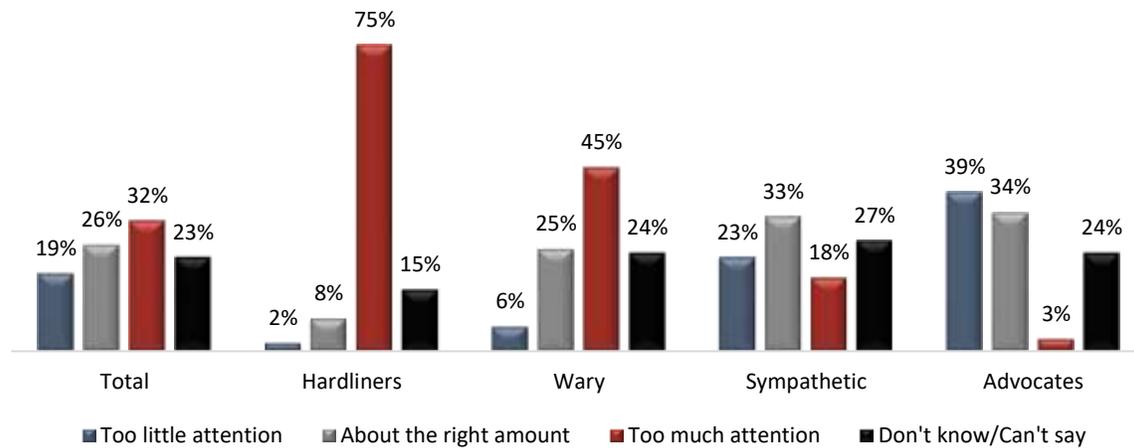


Of course, these topline findings don’t tell the whole story. The four segments of the population have very different views on how much attention these issues receive from the institutions in question, with Advocates overwhelmingly feeling each one pays too little attention, and Hardliners more inclined to say each one – but especially governments and media – pay too much attention:

<b>Do you think Indigenous Canadians and the issues facing their communities are getting the right amount of attention from ...</b>					
<b>(weighted sample sizes)</b>	<b>Total (2420)</b>	<b>Mindset</b>			
		<b>Hardliners (409)</b>	<b>Wary (361)</b>	<b>Sympathetic (265)</b>	<b>Advocates (272)</b>
<b>The educational system for young Canadians</b>					
<b>Too little attention</b>	<b>51%</b>	<b>19%</b>	<b>36%</b>	<b>58%</b>	<b>79%</b>
<b>About the right amount</b>	<b>39%</b>	<b>53%</b>	<b>54%</b>	<b>38%</b>	<b>18%</b>
<b>Too much attention</b>	<b>10%</b>	<b>27%</b>	<b>10%</b>	<b>4%</b>	<b>2%</b>
<b>Your provincial government</b>					
<b>Too little attention</b>	<b>37%</b>	<b>5%</b>	<b>14%</b>	<b>45%</b>	<b>72%</b>
<b>About the right amount</b>	<b>45%</b>	<b>44%</b>	<b>66%</b>	<b>48%</b>	<b>24%</b>
<b>Too much attention</b>	<b>18%</b>	<b>51%</b>	<b>20%</b>	<b>7%</b>	<b>3%</b>
<b>The federal government</b>					
<b>Too little attention</b>	<b>32%</b>	<b>4%</b>	<b>10%</b>	<b>37%</b>	<b>67%</b>
<b>About the right amount</b>	<b>39%</b>	<b>25%</b>	<b>54%</b>	<b>50%</b>	<b>29%</b>
<b>Too much attention</b>	<b>28%</b>	<b>71%</b>	<b>36%</b>	<b>13%</b>	<b>4%</b>
<b>The news media</b>					
<b>Too little attention</b>	<b>28%</b>	<b>3%</b>	<b>12%</b>	<b>31%</b>	<b>57%</b>
<b>About the right amount</b>	<b>44%</b>	<b>31%</b>	<b>54%</b>	<b>53%</b>	<b>36%</b>
<b>Too much attention</b>	<b>28%</b>	<b>66%</b>	<b>34%</b>	<b>15%</b>	<b>7%</b>

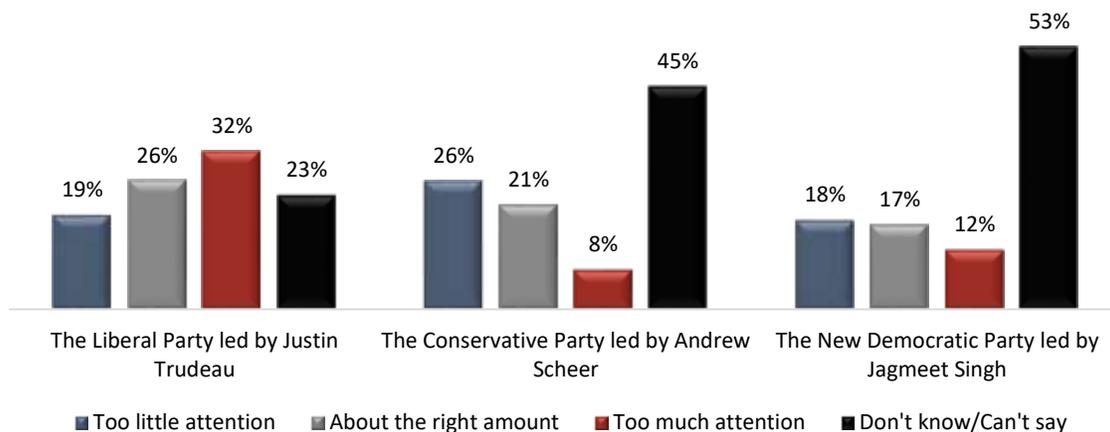
In a similar vein, when asked about Justin Trudeau, Hardliners overwhelmingly say the Prime Minister is paying too much attention to Indigenous issues. The Advocates and the Sympathetic lean more toward the notion that Trudeau and the Liberals are paying too little attention to this file, as seen in the following graph:

**And, would you say the Liberal Party led by Justin Trudeau is paying too much, too little, or about the right amount of attention to Indigenous issues?**



Asked about the other two major federal parties and their leaders, Canadians are considerably more likely to say they don't know how to assess the amount of attention each one pays to topics of importance to Indigenous Canadians:

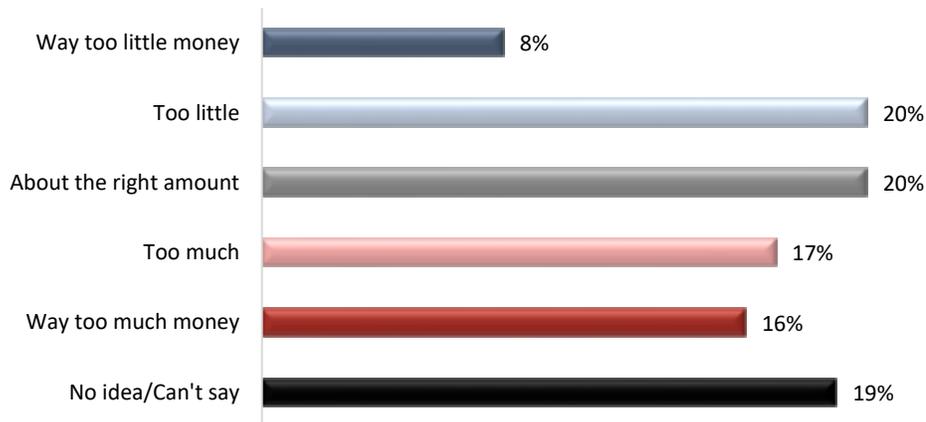
**And, would you say each of the following is paying too little, too much, or about the right amount of attention to Indigenous issues?**



Related to the question of attention and the public discourse is the question of spending and the public purse. This survey asked Canadians about their perceptions of the amount of money being spent on issues affecting the Indigenous population.

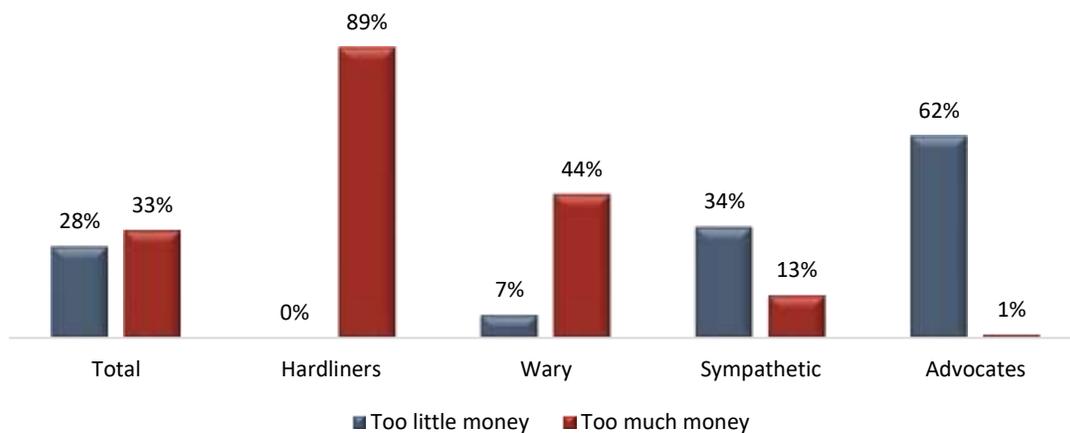
Overall, a slightly larger number of Canadians say too much money is being spent than say too little is. Notably, twice as many say "way too much money" is being spent than say "way too little money," as seen in the following graph:

**What about the amount of money being spent on Indigenous Canadians and these types of issues?**



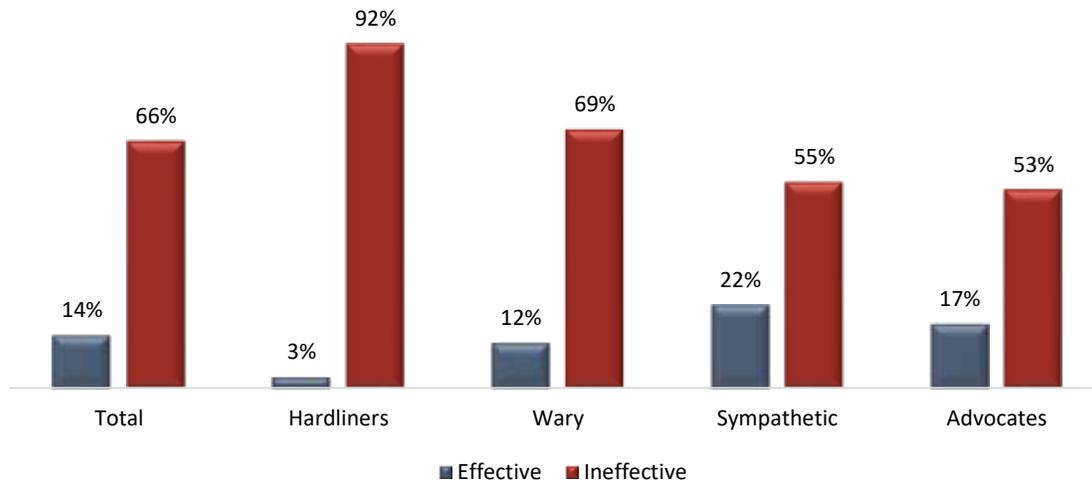
As might be expected, the one-in-five Canadians who find themselves among the Hardliners overwhelmingly say too much money is dedicated to Indigenous issues, while the three-in-ten who are Advocates overwhelmingly say too little money is. The middle groups are more divided, with the Wary more aligned with the Hardliners and the Sympathetic more aligned with the Advocates:

**What about the amount of money being spent on Indigenous Canadians and these types of issues?**



Though they have wildly different views on Canada's Indigenous peoples and the amount of attention and funding they receive, all four groups agree that these efforts have mostly been ineffective. More than nine-in-ten Hardliners say the attention and money that is going toward Indigenous issues is ineffective in terms of yielding results, and they are joined in this view by seven-in-ten of the Wary and full majorities of the Sympathetic and the Advocates, as well:

**And, do you think whatever money and/or attention is going towards Indigenous issues is generally effective or ineffective in terms of results?**

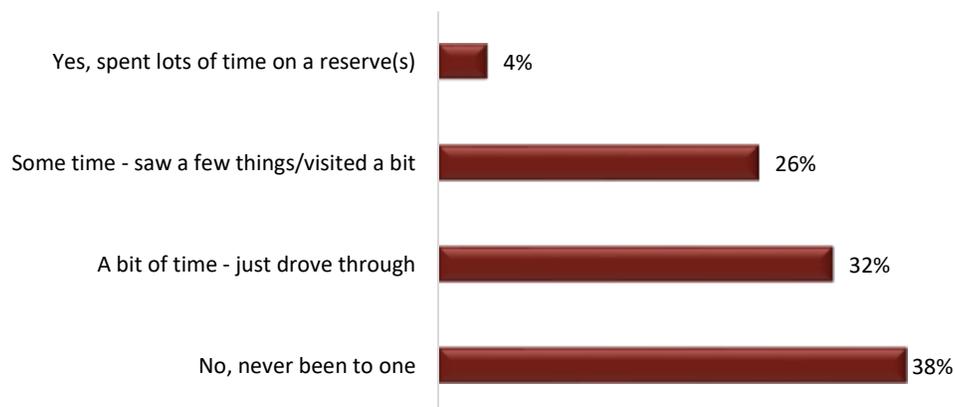


**Part 3 – Interactions between Indigenous and Non-Indigenous people**

**Proximity to life on reserve**

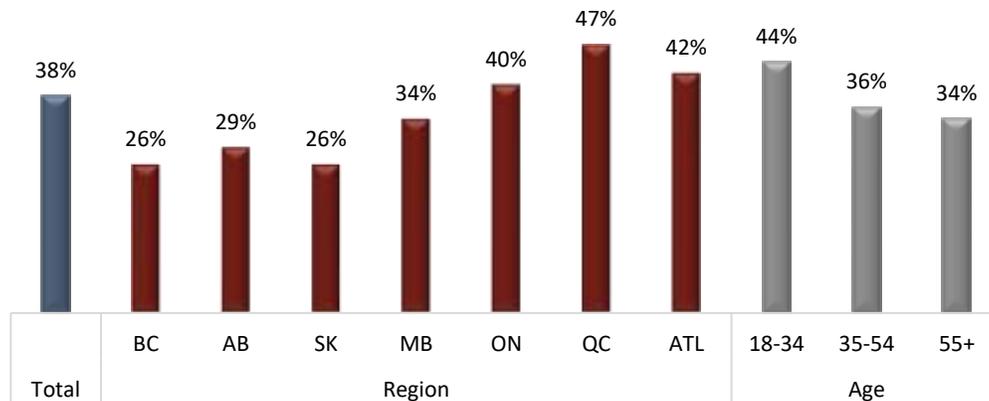
For most Canadians, First Nations reserves are not something with which they have much, if any, experience. Approximately four-in-ten non-Indigenous respondents (38%) have never been to a reserve, while smaller groups say they have driven through one (32%) or briefly visited (26%). This leaves just four per cent that they have spent any meaningful time on a First Nations reserve. Thus, any knowledge they have of these issues is based largely on other sources of information.

**Have you spent any time on a First Nations land reserve(s)?  
(Among non-Indigenous Canadians, n=2306)**



Experiences vary across the country and by age. Central and Eastern Canadians – those in Ontario, Quebec and Atlantic Canada – are less likely to have had any direct experience with First Nations reserves, as are younger generations:

**Percentage of Canadians who say they have never been to a First Nations reserve**

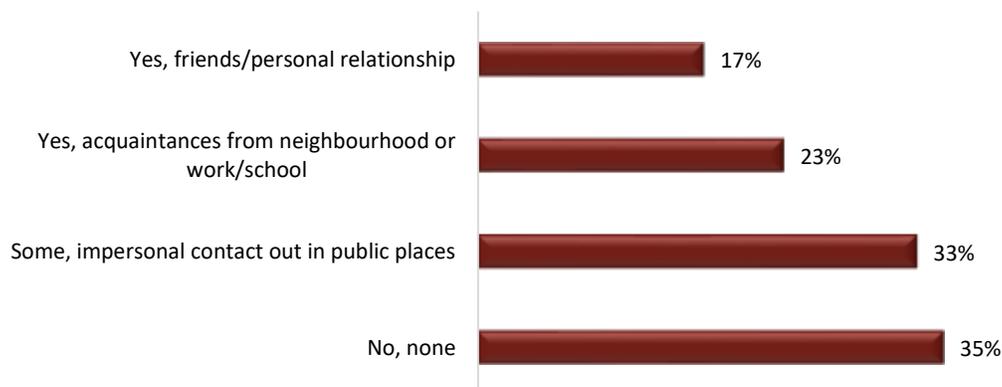


**Engagement with First Nations communities**

Roughly the same proportion of non-Indigenous Canadians who have never been to a reserve have never had any significant contact with an Indigenous Canadian person. One-in-three Canadians (35%) report this, indicating that there is a significant gap in face-to-face interaction for a large subset of the Canadian population.

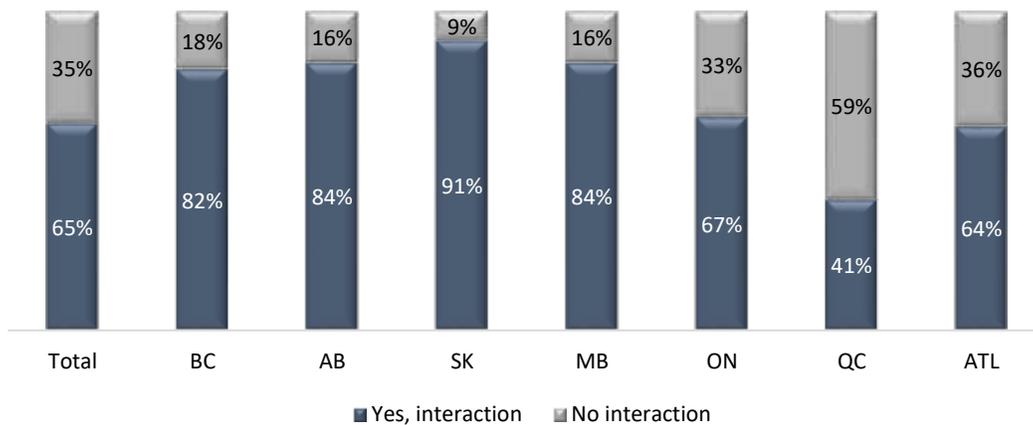
Slightly fewer than one-in-five non-Indigenous respondents say that they have friends or close personal relationships with Indigenous Canadians, while a greater number have acquaintances in their community:

**Do you have any contact or interactions with Indigenous Canadians in your own life?**



The percentage of Canadians who are engaged with the Indigenous community in various capacities is, thus, approximately two-thirds (65%). There are, however, significant regional variations. In Saskatchewan, for example, nine-in-ten residents (91%) say they have interactions with these communities, whereas in Quebec, that number drops to four-in-ten (41%).

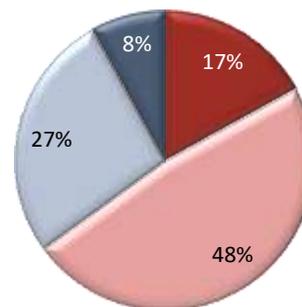
**Do you have any contact or interactions with Indigenous Canadians in your own life?**



Friendship and familiarity, however, does not mean that non-Indigenous Canadians are well-informed about the issues that Indigenous Canadians are dealing with. In fact, fewer than one-in-ten (8%) say they feel they have a “good understanding of Indigenous issues”.

**How well informed would you say you are about Indigenous issues?**

- Don't know much at all about these issues
- Know a bit/the basics
- Know a fair amount
- Have a good understanding of Indigenous issues



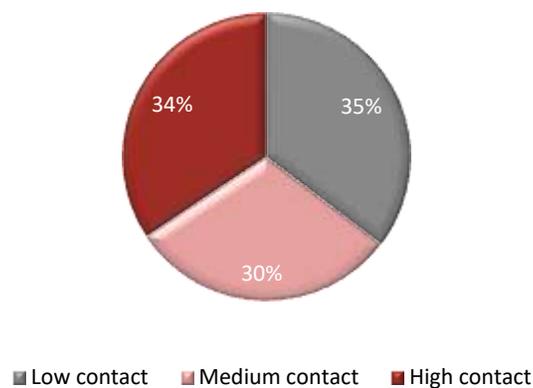
**Three categories based on interaction**

Combining these three questions – about experience visiting reserves, personal interactions with Indigenous people, and knowledge of Indigenous issues – ARI researchers developed a “contact index” that sorts Canadians into three broad groups: Those who have minimal contact with or knowledge of

Indigenous Canadians or none at all (called “low contact” in the graph that follows), those who have a moderate amount (“medium contact”) and those who have a high degree of contact and understanding (“high contact”).

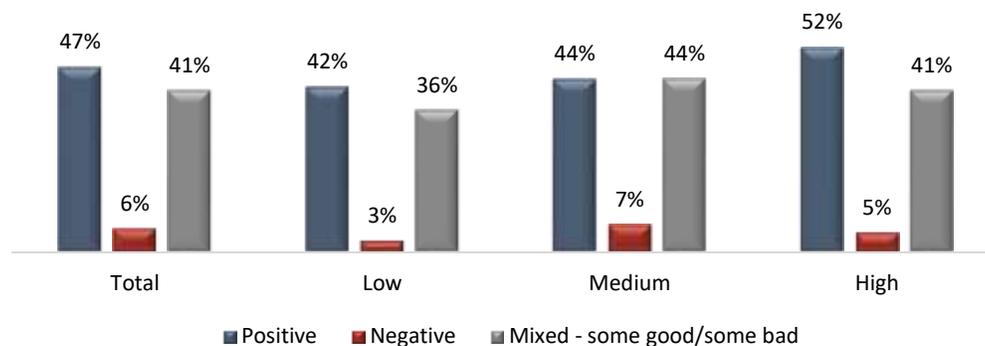
Each group represents approximately one-third of the population, and self-described Indigenous people are included in the medium and high contact groups (see notes on methodology for greater detail on how Indigenous people were incorporated into the contact index).

**Canadians by self-described contact with and knowledge about Indigenous people and issues:**



As previously noted, the level at which non-Indigenous Canadians across the country engage with Indigenous communities varies from person to person. That said, when considering non-Indigenous Canadians, the group most likely to say they have positive interactions are those who interact the most. Further, very few Canadians (6%) say they have negative feelings about their contact with Indigenous people:

**Generally speaking, how do you feel about the contact you have with Indigenous Canadians - is this positive or negative for you? (Among non-Indigenous Canadians, n=2306)**



Looking at the responses from Indigenous Canadians, this enthusiasm is reciprocal, and slightly more positive. The same small number (6%) say they have negative experiences with non-Indigenous Canadians, but a strong majority (58%) say the contact they have is positive:

**Generally speaking, how would you describe your own contact and interaction with non-Indigenous Canadians - is this positive or negative for you?  
Among Indigenous Canadians, n = 167**



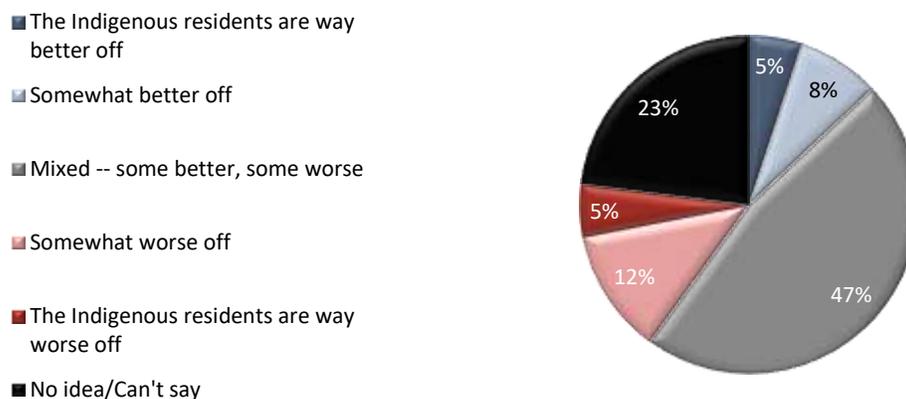
**How does quality of life compare across communities?**

While a significant portion of First Nations people live on a reserve, [more than six-in-ten do not](#).

These off-reserve communities face challenges as well. The [2012 Statistics Canada Aboriginal Peoples Survey](#) found that 49 per cent of Indigenous Canadians living off-reserve reported that they were in excellent or very good health, compared to 62 per cent among the total Canadians population. Further, this group was more likely to have mental health problems, and to have at least one chronic health issue.

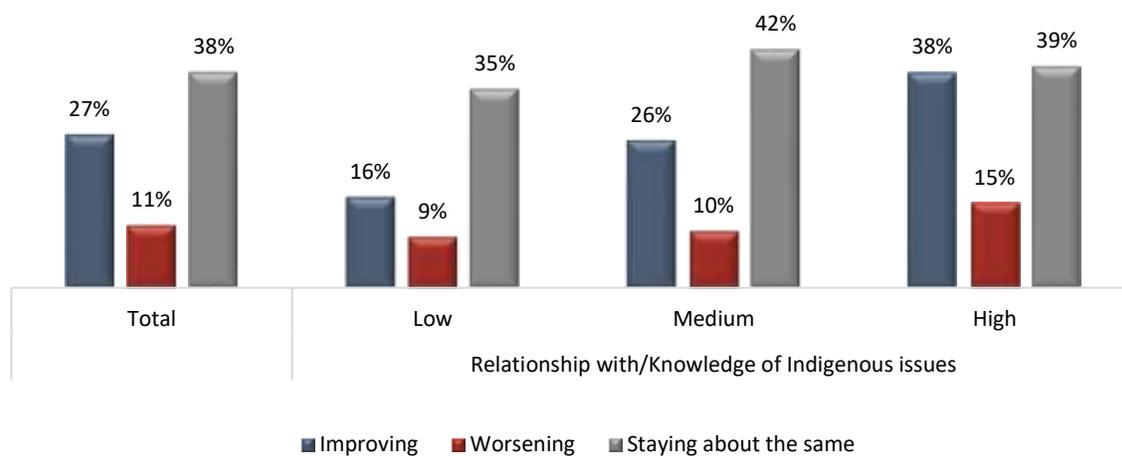
For its part, the general Canadian public does not necessarily perceive this reality:

**Generally, how is the life of Indigenous Canadians living in and around your own community compared to other non-Indigenous residents there?**



The largest number of Canadians say that they haven't noticed a significant change in the perceived conditions for Indigenous people in their community, but those who have are more likely to say that this situation is improving. Among those with the most contact and knowledge of Indigenous issues, four-in-ten (38%) say that they feel a change for the better has been happening over the last decade or so:

**And, over the past 10 or 15 years or so, would you say the situation of Indigenous Canadians in your own community is improving or getting worse?**



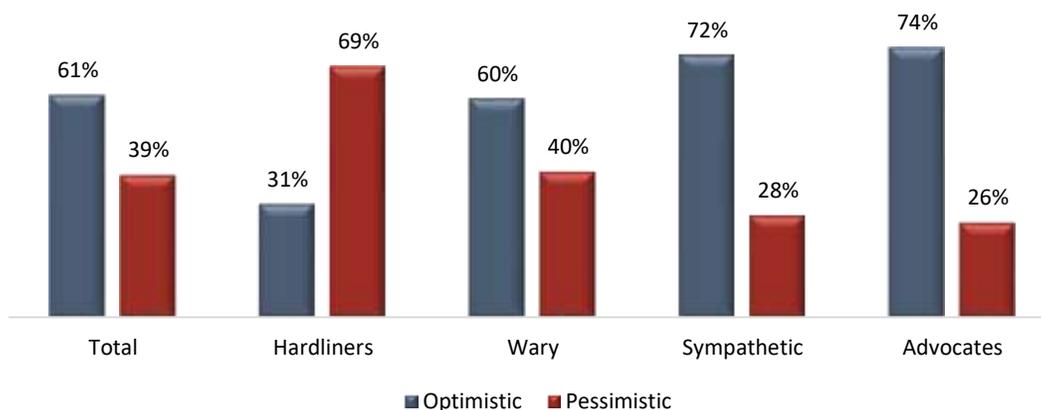
**Optimism for the future**

While Canadians of all stripes feel the status quo is not working when it comes to the handling of Indigenous issues in this country, it's worth noting that most people are at least cautiously optimistic about the future of relations between Canada's Indigenous and non-Indigenous populations.

Only one-in-20 Canadians (5%) say they are "very optimistic" about the overall outlook for the relationship between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Canadians going forward, but a similarly small number (6%) are "very pessimistic." Most of those in the middle – indeed, a full majority (57%) of all Canadians – say they are "optimistic" about the future of this relationship.

Those who are optimistic include majorities of the Wary, Sympathetic, and Advocates groups, as well as three-in-ten Hardliners, as seen in the following graph:

**Overall, looking towards the future, are you generally optimistic or pessimistic about the overall outlook for the relationship between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Canadians?**



**Part 4 – Notes on Methodology**

**The contact index**

In addition to gaining insights into Canadians’ contact with Indigenous places (reserves), people (relationships) and issues (self-assessed feeling of being ‘informed’), a key objective of this research was to understand the relationship between familiarity and Canadians’ perceptions and attitudes on the range of public policy issues assessed in the study.

To facilitate this analysis, ARI researchers created a straightforward index out of the responses to the three contact-related questions (each of which used a four-point scale). The questions were:

- Have you ever spent any time on a First Nations land reserve? Scores were assigned from zero for “never been to one” to three points for “spent lots of time on reserve(s)”
- Do you have any contact or interactions with Indigenous Canadians in your own life? Scores were assigned from zero for “no, none” to three points for “yes, friends/personal relationships”
- How well informed would you say you are about Indigenous issues and the topics we’ve been considering today? Scores were assigned from zero for “don’t know much at all” to three points for “have a good understanding of Indigenous issues”

Across the three measures combined, therefore, a respondent could score as low as zero if they had no contact on any, and as high as nine points if they reported the highest contact on each. The survey sample was then split into three roughly equal sized groups:

The low contact group scored from zero to two on the index, and therefore were at the “none” level for at least one (and often more) of the three measures, and reported high exposure on none of them. The medium contact group scored three or four, and the high contact group includes the one-in-three respondents scoring five or higher on the index, meaning they had at least some exposure (and many had more) on at least two of the three measures.

Note that survey respondents self-identifying as Indigenous Canadians were asked two of these three questions (Been on a reserve? and How well informed?) and were scored in the same way as other Canadians on those measures. Self-identified Indigenous Canadians were excluded from the third question about the amount of contact they have with Indigenous people because they had already identified as such. For the purposes of these groupings, Indigenous Canadians were assumed to have regular interactions with Indigenous people in their lives and were assigned three points for this remaining question.

Most Indigenous respondents (87%) find themselves in the “high contact” group, while the rest (13%) are in the medium contact group.

#### **The four mindsets:**

In addition to creating an index based on the three contact questions, Angus Reid Institute researchers performed some further analysis on attitudinal questions in order to highlight the main mindsets on these issues.

This data reduction exercise focused on five core survey questions:

- Does Canada have an obligation to maintain and improve quality of life on reserves?
- Have treaties with Indigenous peoples been honoured or ignored by Canada?
- Fundamentally, should Indigenous Canadians have a special status since they were here first?
- Has Canada spent too much time apologizing for residential schools or is the harm too great to ignore?
- Do Canadian governments spend too little or too much money on Indigenous issues?

For each question, scores were assigned to the response options, sloping up from negative values assigned to the more “hardline” positions to positive values for the more “sympathetic” ones. Any neutral options were assigned a zero. These scores were then added up into one composite index score for each respondent. These scores ranged from -17 to +17 with a good distribution of respondents across the entire scale.

The survey population was then grouped into four segments along this attitudinal spectrum:

- The Hardliners – are the one-in-five respondents scoring between -17 and -11;
- Wary – one-in-four scoring -10 to -1;
- Sympathetic – one in four scoring +1 to +9;
- Advocates – three-in-ten scoring +10 to +17

This simple yet powerful analytical technique helps highlight the different public opinion “camps” and how views on the core questions correlate with perspectives on other parts of the picture (conditions on reserves, for example) and with lived experiences (such as contact and engagement with Indigenous Canadians).

*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.*

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

*For detailed results by the four mindsets and the contact index, [click here](#).*

Here is a list of descriptions that might be made of First Nations reserves here in [Province]. Please choose the three that you feel most accurately describe them.			
(unweighted sample sizes)	Total (2443)	Indigenous?	
		Yes (167)	No (2276)
Social problems (i.e.: substance abuse, violence)	62%	55%	63%
Poor economy/Not enough jobs or opportunity	43%	39%	43%
Social services lacking/poor quality (i.e.: housing, education, healthcare)	43%	40%	43%
Tight knit community/Know everybody	27%	21%	27%
Corrupt leadership/chiefs	25%	23%	25%
Closer to Indigenous traditions and culture	24%	23%	24%
Remote/isolated/so far from services	20%	23%	20%
More traditional way of life (trapping, fishing)	16%	25%	15%
Wilderness/fresh air	15%	24%	14%
Simple lifestyle/no city hassles	15%	15%	15%
Nothing to do/Boring	11%	12%	11%

The following questions will present you with a series of paired statements. For each pair, we'll ask you to select the statement that more closely reflects your own beliefs, values and attitudes (even if you don't completely agree).

(unweighted sample sizes)	Total (2443)	Indigenous?	
		Yes (167)	No (2276)
<b>Fundamentally, do you think:</b>			
Indigenous Canadians have an inherently unique status because their ancestors were here first, before Europeans came and took over	47%	58%	46%
In modern Canada, Indigenous people should have no special status that other Canadians don't have	53%	42%	54%
<b>Treaties with Indigenous people have been:</b>			
Appropriately respected and honoured by Canada	40%	34%	41%
Too often ignored and disregarded by Canada	60%	66%	59%
<b>In your opinion, would you say:</b>			
Canada spends too much time apologizing for residential schools - it's time to move on	53%	46%	54%
The harm from residential schools continues and cannot be ignored.	47%	54%	46%
<b>Overall, Indigenous Canadians would be better off:</b>			
Integrating more into broader Canadian society, even if that means losing more of their own culture and traditions	53%	41%	54%
Strengthening their own culture and traditions, even if that keeps them more apart from the rest of Canada	47%	59%	46%
<b>Would you say Indigenous communities should be:</b>			
Moving towards more independence and control over their own affairs	34%	42%	34%
Governed by the same systems and rules as other Canadians	66%	58%	66%