

Remembrance Day & Reconciliation: Most Canadians agree with raising flags at federal buildings post Nov. 11

Flags have been at half-mast since May to mourn children found in unmarked graves at residential schools

November 8, 2021 – As Canadians wrestle with the complexities of continuing to honour those who are buried in unmarked graves at former residential schools while also marking the sacrifices of those who served this country's armed forces, most appear to be at peace with last Friday's decision to raise Canadian flags to full-mast on government buildings – in time to be ceremonially lowered for Remembrance Day.

New data from a survey by the non-profit Angus Reid Institute – commissioned days before the Trudeau government announced its plan – found a majority (58%) saying flags that have been flown at half-mast at locations such as the Peace Tower on Parliament Hill since late May should be raised in time to commemorate Canada's war veterans on Thursday.

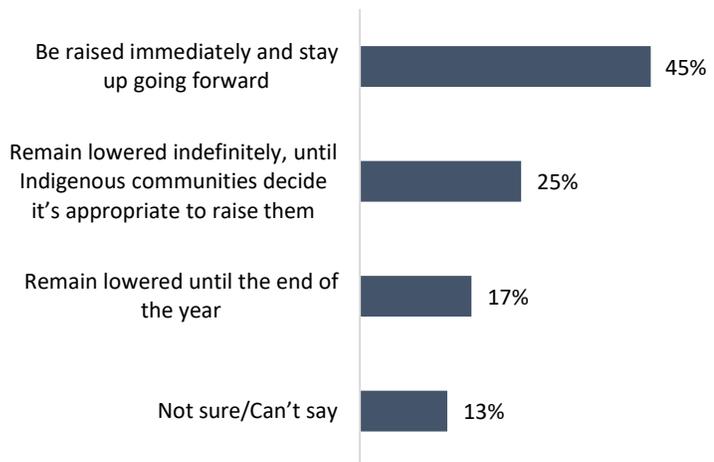
As to what should be done after Nov. 11, nearly half of Canadians (45%) say the flags should fly at full-mast going forward, while another quarter (25%) are happy to raise them only when Indigenous groups felt it was appropriate. This condition has evidently been satisfied, as the federal government announced late last week it had [sought guidance](#) from Indigenous leaders in making the decision, and Assembly of First Nations National Chief RoseAnne Archibald stated that the organization was in agreement that the flags should be raised.

Not all agree that the period of mourning over unmarked graves should end this week. Nearly one-in-five (17%) say flags at federal government buildings should have stayed lowered until the end of the year.

More Key Findings:

- Two-thirds (65%) say it was the right thing to do to lower the flags to half-mast in the first place. One-in-five (21%) disagree.

Regardless of how you feel about raising the flag for Remembrance Day, going forward, should the flags: (All respondents, n=1,442)



METHODOLOGY:

The Angus Reid Institute conducted an online survey from November 3-5, 2021 among a representative randomized sample of 1,442 Canadian adults who are members of [Angus Reid Forum](#). For comparison purposes only, a probability sample of this size 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.

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- Canadians are divided about the value of the decision to lower flags to half-mast. Nearly half (46%) say it was a nice gesture but needs to be followed by real action while similar number say it is mostly a political maneuver (43%)

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

- **Two-thirds say lowering flags in May was the right decision**
- **Three-in-five wanted flags raised in time for Remembrance Day**
- **What to do after the 11th?**
- **A gesture, or real reconciliation?**

Two-thirds say lowering flags in May was the right decision

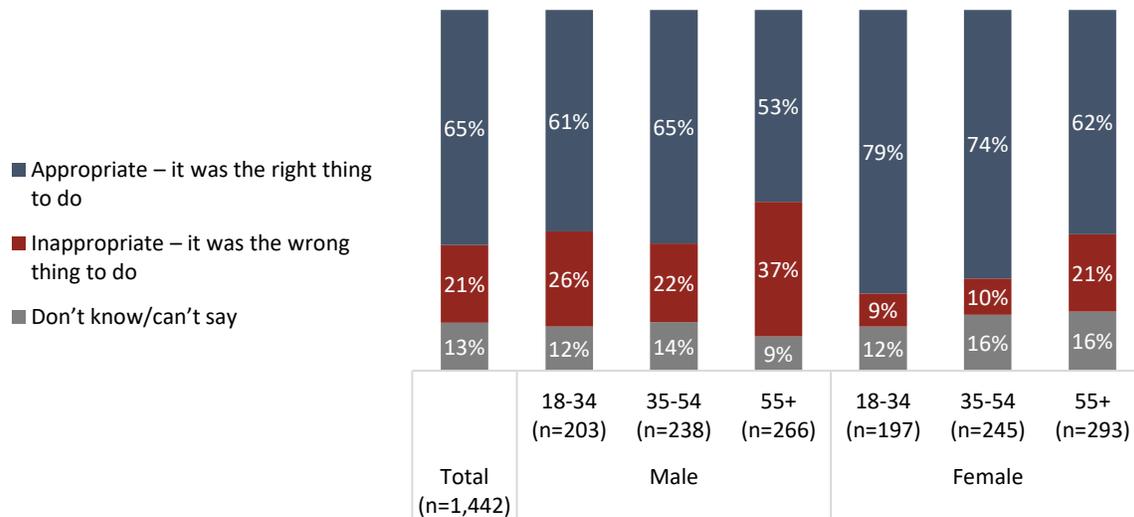
In response to the confirmation in May of 215 unmarked graves at a residential school in Kamloops, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau requested that flags on federal buildings be lowered to half-mast as a show of national mourning. Since then, more confirmations have put the number of unmarked graves at [more than 1,800](#) – and the flags have remained at half-mast.

The act of lowering the flag as a sign of national mourning itself is accepted by most. Indeed, two-thirds say that this was an appropriate decision. This rises to 79 per cent among young women and dips to 53 per cent among men over the age of 54:

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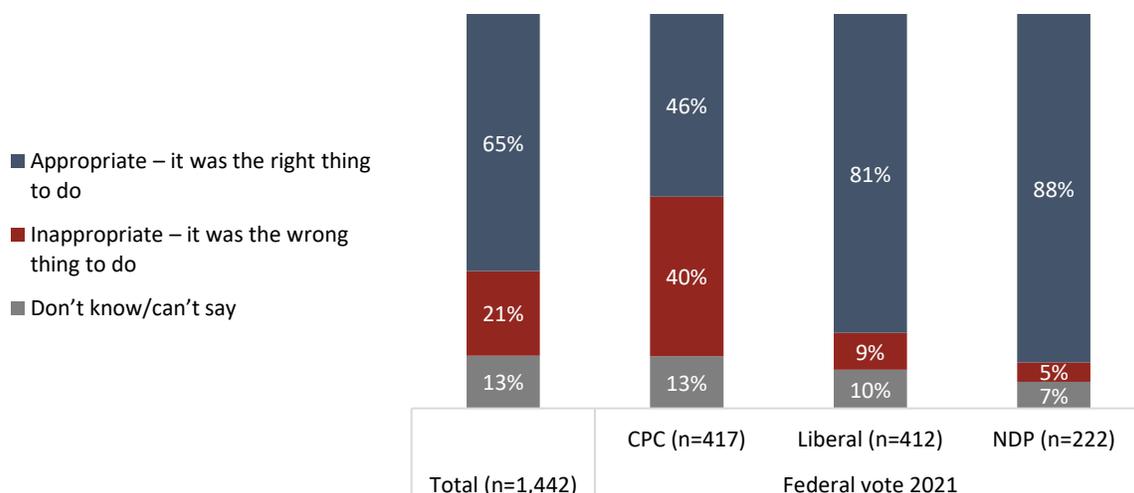
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Overall, what is your own personal view of this decision to lower flags to half-mast?



While Conservative Party leader Erin O'Toole has stated that the decision to lower the flags to half-mast was the right one, his supporters are split between taking his side (46%) and disagreeing (40%). Past CPC voters are four times as likely to say the move was inappropriate compared to Liberal voters, and eight times as likely as those who recently voted for the NDP:

Overall, what is your own personal view of this decision to lower flags to half-mast?

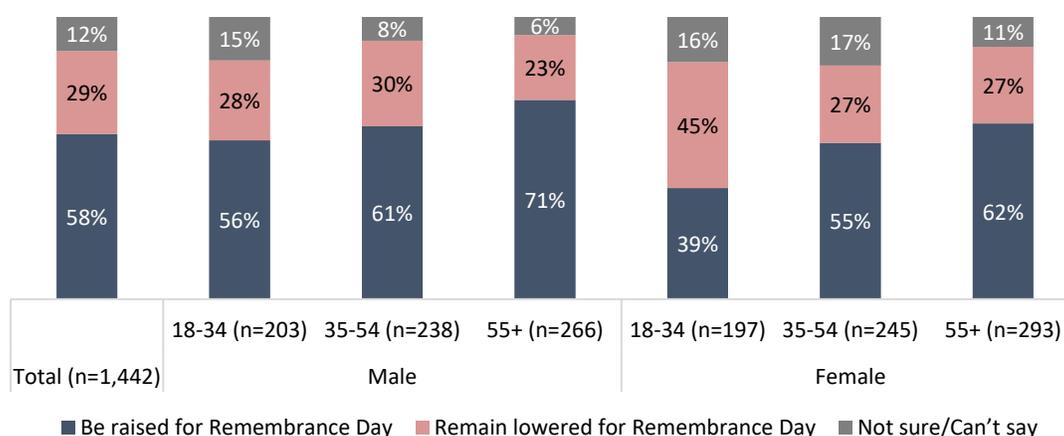


Three-in-five wanted flags raised in time for Remembrance Day

Recently, the government announced that it would raise the flags ahead of Remembrance Day so that they could be lowered again to honour veterans. The decision has been [accepted](#) by many Indigenous leaders as well as the Royal Canadian Legion.

Three-in-five Canadians (58%) say that this is the decision they hoped would be made. Meanwhile, half as many (29%) say that they would keep the flags lowered. These opinions are varied considerably along age and gender lines:

Thinking overall about lowering flags at federal buildings as a gesture of reconciliation to Indigenous communities, what is your point of view? Should the flags:



What to do after the 11th?

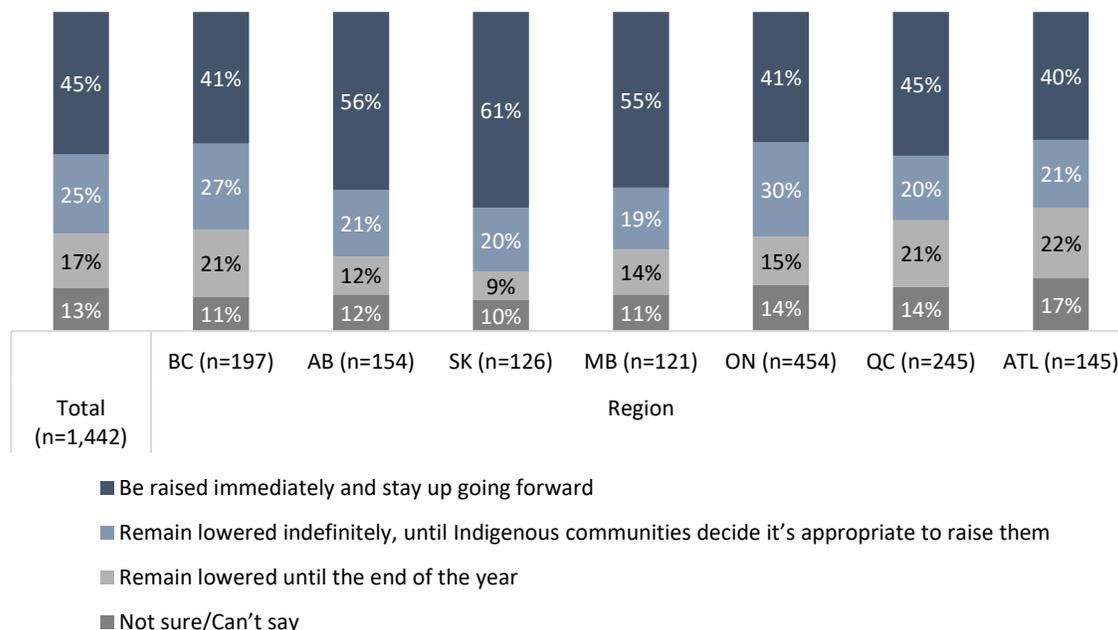
Flags at federal buildings have been flown at half-mast for more than five months – the longest period in Canadian history. After Remembrance Day, they will be raised to full-mast, and lowered on recognized days of mourning, including [Sept. 30 each year](#) to mark the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation.

Nearly half of Canadians say that returning the flags to their full height is the right thing to do after more than five months, while one-quarter (25%) would only have raised them after seeking the approval of Indigenous communities (something the government [has since done](#)). One-in-five (17%) would leave the flags at half-mast until the end of the year. There are considerable age and gender divides on this question as well ([see detailed tables](#)), while regionally, respondents in British Columbia and Ontario were most likely to defer the question of timing to Indigenous communities:

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Regardless of how you feel about raising the flag for Remembrance Day, going forward, should the flags:



A gesture, or real reconciliation?

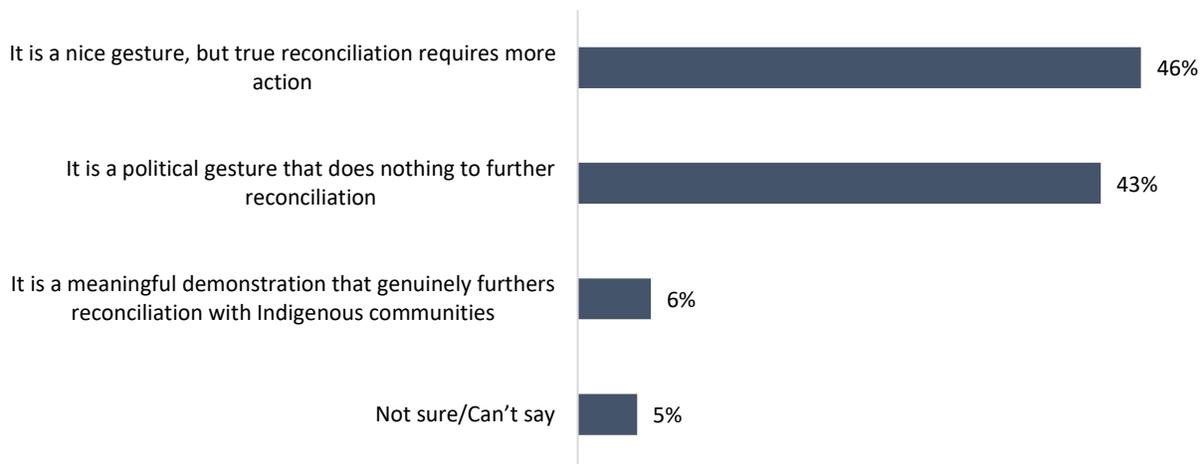
Indigenous leaders [initiated the call](#) for flags to be lowered across Canada after the existence of the remains of 215 children were confirmed at the site of the former Kamloops Indian Residential School in May.

While the majority of Canadians supported lowering the flags, they also say this initial gesture to honour the dead was only that – a gesture – and much more needs to be done to achieve reconciliation. Indeed, nearly half (46%) say true reconciliation requires more action than lowering flags. Nearly as many (43%) believe that lowering the flags was just politics. Very few (6%) believe lowering flags around the country represented genuine reconciliation:

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To what extent do you feel the lowering of flags is a meaningful addition toward reconciliation? (All respondents, n=1,442)



Half of men believe the flag lowering was nothing more than a political act, while two-in-five say it was nice but more action is needed. Women are less likely to say putting the flags at half-mast was purely political and younger women especially believe the gesture had merit, but still believe more needs to be done:

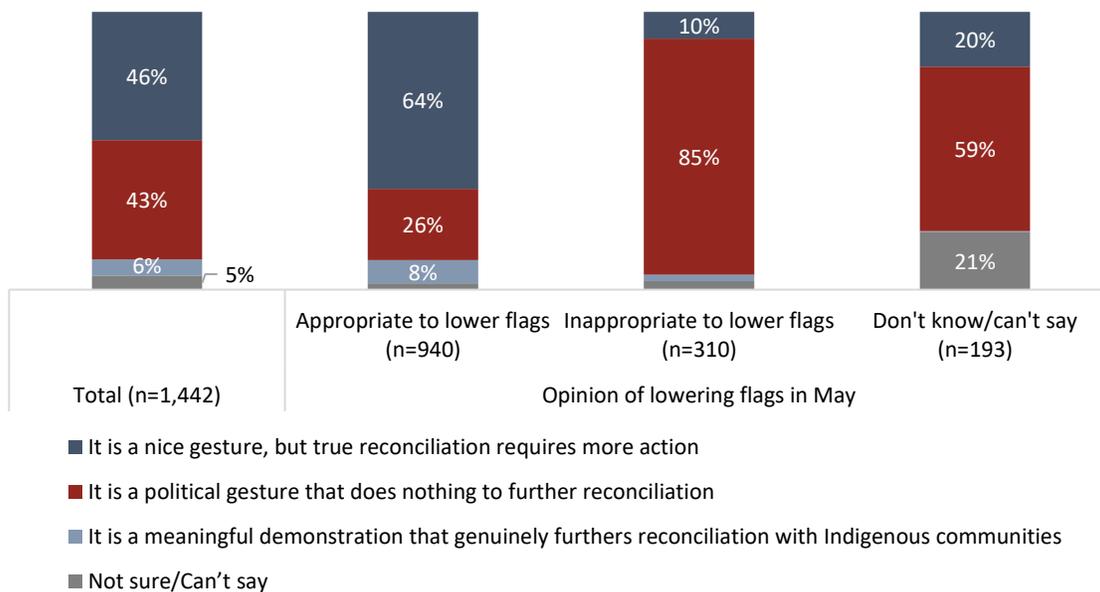
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(Weighted sample sizes)	Total (n=1,442)	Age and Gender					
		Male			Female		
		18-34 (n=203)	35-54 (n=238)	55+ (n=266)	18-34 (n=197)	35-54 (n=245)	55+ (n=293)
It is a nice gesture, but true reconciliation requires more action	46%	40%	40%	40%	62%	50%	47%
It is a political gesture that does nothing to further reconciliation	43%	53%	51%	53%	23%	36%	40%
It is a meaningful demonstration that genuinely furthers reconciliation with Indigenous communities	6%	3%	6%	5%	8%	6%	7%
Not sure/Can't say	5%	3%	3%	2%	7%	8%	7%

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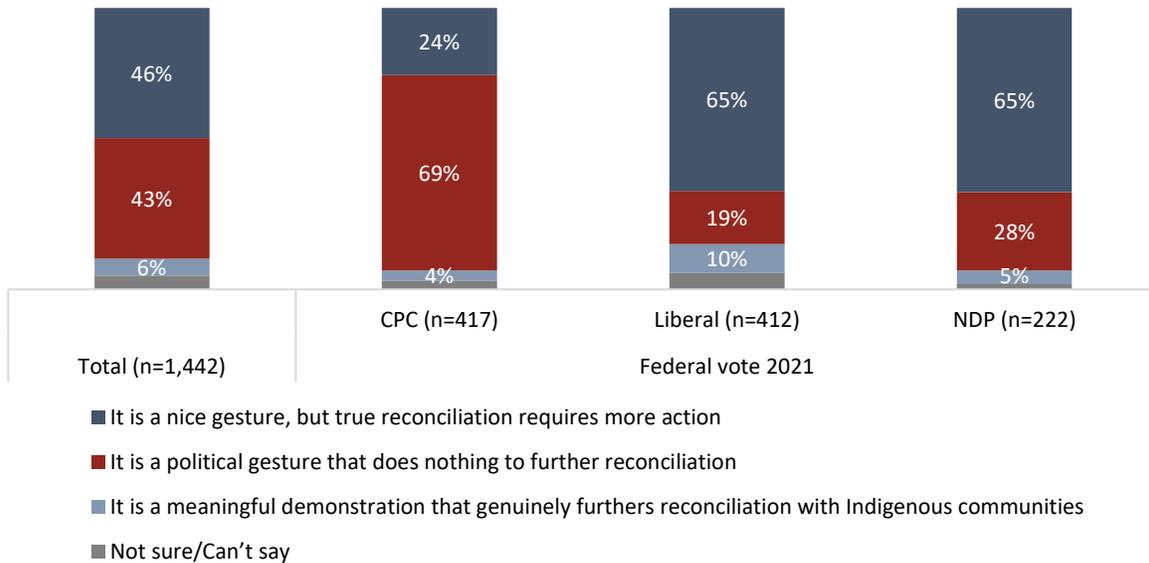
Those who say it was inappropriate to lower flags in the first place are much more cynical; nearly nine-in-ten (85%) among this group also say the move was only political. Among those who say it was an appropriate move to lower the flags initially, two-thirds (64%) believe it was a nice gesture, but much more work needs to be done:

To what extent do you feel the lowering of flags is a meaningful addition toward reconciliation?



Seven-in-ten who voted for the CPC in the September 2021 election (69%) say the move rings hollow for them, as do three-in-ten past NDP voters and – notably – one-fifth of past Liberal voters:

To what extent do you feel the lowering of flags is a meaningful addition toward reconciliation?



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

For detailed results by whether or not the respondent thought lowering flags was appropriate or inappropriate in the first place, [click here](#).

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