



Confederation
of Tomorrow

Attachment and identity in the Canadian federation

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2024 SERIES



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The Environics Institute for Survey Research was established by Michael Adams in 2006 with a mandate to conduct in-depth public opinion and social research on the issues shaping Canada's future. It is through such research that Canadians can better understand themselves and their changing society.

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Confederation of Tomorrow

The Confederation of Tomorrow surveys give voice to Canadians about the major issues shaping the future of the federation and their political communities. They are conducted annually by an association of the country's leading public policy and socio-economic research organizations.

The 2024 study consists of a survey of 6,036 adults, conducted between January 13 and April 13, 2024 (82% of the responses were collected between January 17 and February 1); 94% of the responses were collected online. The remaining responses were collected by telephone from respondents living in the North or on First Nations reserves.

View more from the Confederation of Tomorrow series

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Introduction

The Canadian federation is not just an assemblage of different geographic units; it brings together different peoples, nations, communities and cultures. Its premise is that citizens can live together as Canadians under the federal umbrella while retaining and expressing their own particular identities and loyalties.

The annual Confederation of Tomorrow surveys explore the relationships between these different types of identity. It asks about attachment to and identification with Canada and one's province or territory; it also asks Indigenous Peoples about their attachment to their Indigenous nation or community. It considers whether Canadians feel their identities are respected by others or whether they feel pressure to downplay them.

In general, the survey confirms that identities in Canada are not zero-sum: national and regional or cultural identities tend to overlap, meaning that most people express multiple identities rather than selecting only one over others. It also finds that community identities remain stronger among Quebec francophones and Indigenous Peoples, without necessarily excluding an attachment to Canada. Despite persistent frustrations with the way the federation works, in most regions (the main exception being Ontario) the proportion that identifies first or only with their province has declined to some extent over the past several years.

Most Canadians agree that expressing their cultural identity is important to their overall well-being and happiness, and most also agree that their cultural identity is respected in Canada today. But one in four also say they feel pressure to hide or downplay their cultural identity. Indigenous Peoples stand out as feeling even more constrained in the expression of their identity: one in two agree that they feel pressure to hide or downplay their cultural identity. Recent immigrants are also more likely than average to say they feel this kind of pressure. In the case of both Indigenous Peoples and immigrants, the proportions that feel pressure to hide their identity is highest among those in the youngest age group.



Key Findings

- Most Canadians feel attached to both Canada and to their province or territory. Most Indigenous Peoples in Canada also feel attached to both their Indigenous nation or community and to Canada. In general, these different attachments overlap.
- In Quebec, and Newfoundland and Labrador, as well as in each of the three territories, residents are more likely to feel very attached to their province or territory than to feel very attached to Canada.
- Older Canadians are more likely than their younger counterparts to say they feel very attached to Canada. And in every region, the same pattern holds regarding strong feelings of attachment to one's province or territory. The difference between the extent to which the oldest and youngest age groups feel very attached to their province is largest in Quebec and the Prairies.
- Across the country as a whole, a majority defines themselves as a mix of Canadian and someone from their province.
- In only two provinces – Quebec, and Newfoundland and Labrador – does the proportion identifying mostly with their province exceed the proportion identifying mostly with Canada.
- The proportion defining themselves as someone from their province first or only has declined to some extent since 2019 in most provinces, with the exception of Ontario. The drop is more dramatic in Newfoundland and Labrador. In that province, the proportion defining themselves as a Canadian first or only has doubled over the same period.
- Most Indigenous Peoples express a mix of Indigenous and Canadian identities, rather than defining themselves as either only Indigenous or only Canadian.

- One in two First Nations people living on-reserve identify as an Indigenous person first or only.
- Most Canadians feel it is important to express their cultural identity, and most say they have enough opportunities to do so. Yet, some also feel pressure to hide or downplay their identity.
- Francophones in Quebec, as well as Indigenous Peoples, stand out as being more likely than average to agree that expressing their cultural identity is important to their well-being, but less likely than average to agree that their cultural identity is respected in Canada.
- Recent immigrants and Indigenous Peoples stand out as being much more likely to agree that they feel pressure to hide or downplay their cultural identity.
- In general, younger Canadians are more likely than their older counterparts to agree that they feel pressure to hide or downplay their cultural identity. But this age difference is much more pronounced among immigrants and Indigenous Peoples.



Attachment to political communities

Most Canadians feel attached to both Canada and to their province or territory. Most Indigenous Peoples in Canada also feel attached to their Indigenous nation or community. In general, these different attachments overlap. Different attachments in the federation tend to be complementary rather than in competition with one another:

- 85 percent of Canadians say they feel attached to Canada, including 51 percent who are very attached and 34 percent who are somewhat attached.
- 84 percent say they feel attached to their province or territory, including 46 percent who are very attached and 39 percent who are somewhat attached.
- 79 percent of those who identify as Indigenous say they feel attached to their Indigenous nation or community, including 46 percent who are very attached and 33 percent who are somewhat attached.
- 80 percent of Canadians say they feel attached to their city, town or region, including 39 percent who are very attached and 41 percent who are somewhat attached.

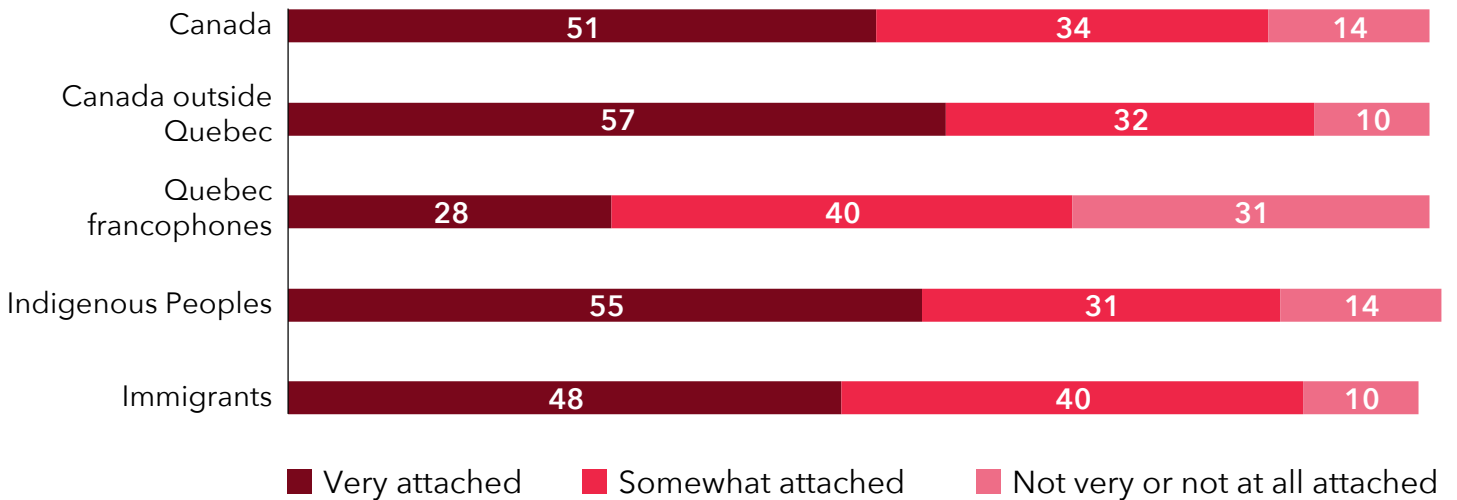
Attachment to Canada

The overall level of attachment to Canada (including both those who feel very or somewhat attached) is very high (around 90%) in each region of the country, with the exception of Quebec, where it is somewhat lower (71%). The level of strong attachment ranges from 55 percent to 60 percent in every province or territory, with two exceptions: Newfoundland and Labrador (50%) and Quebec (32%).

In Quebec, attachment to Canada is somewhat weaker among francophones, with 28 percent feeling very attached and 68 percent feeling very or somewhat attached.

FIGURE 1

Attachment to Canada 2024



Q4A_2024. How attached do you feel to each of the following: to Canada?

Among Indigenous Peoples, 85 percent say they feel either very (55%) or somewhat (31%) attached to Canada. There is little difference between the proportions of First Nations (86%) and Métis (84%) who say they feel attached to Canada.

First-generation (88%) and-second generation (87%) immigrants are slightly more likely than those born in Canada to Canadian-born parents (83%) to say they feel attached to Canada. However, this difference stems from the fact that francophone Quebecers disproportionately fall into the latter group (third-generation-plus in Canada). Outside Quebec, there is no difference in the overall level of attachment among the three groups (first- and second-generation immigrants and third-generation-plus Canadians), though those who are third-generation-plus are more likely to feel very attached to Canada.

In two provinces, residents are more likely to feel very attached to their province than to Canada: Quebec, and Newfoundland and Labrador. In each of the three territories, residents are also more likely to feel very attached to their territory than to Canada.

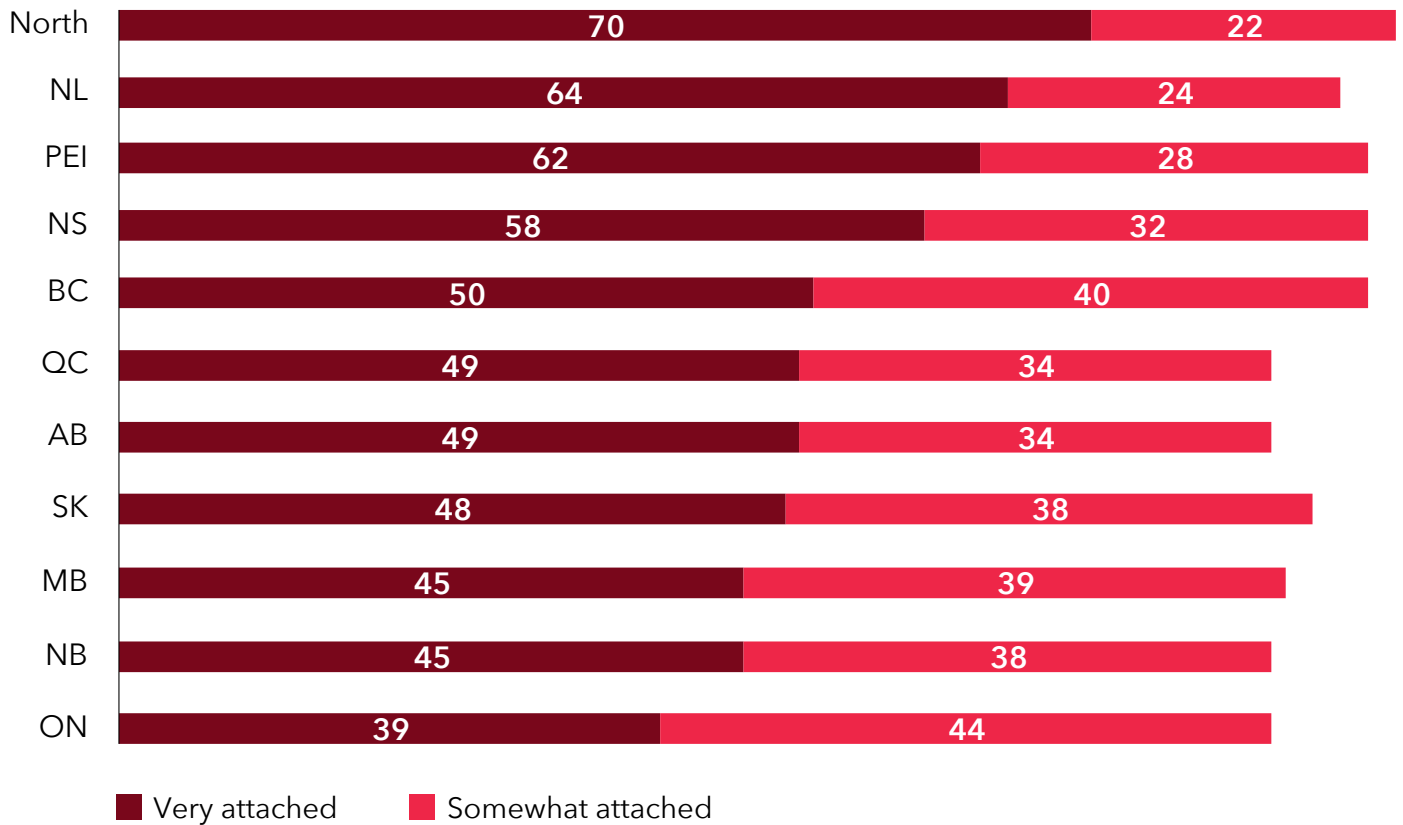
Older Canadians (60%) - those age 55 and older - are more likely to say they feel very attached to Canada than are Canadians younger than 55 (45%).

Attachment to province or territory

Overall attachment to one's province or territory varies very little, ranging from 92 percent in the North and 90 percent in Nova Scotia, PEI and B.C., to 83 percent in New Brunswick, Quebec and Ontario. The level of strong attachment only varies a little more: it is highest in the North (70%), Newfoundland and Labrador (64%) and PEI (62%), and lowest in Manitoba (45%), New Brunswick (45%) and Ontario (39%).

FIGURE 2

Attachment to province / territory
2024, by region

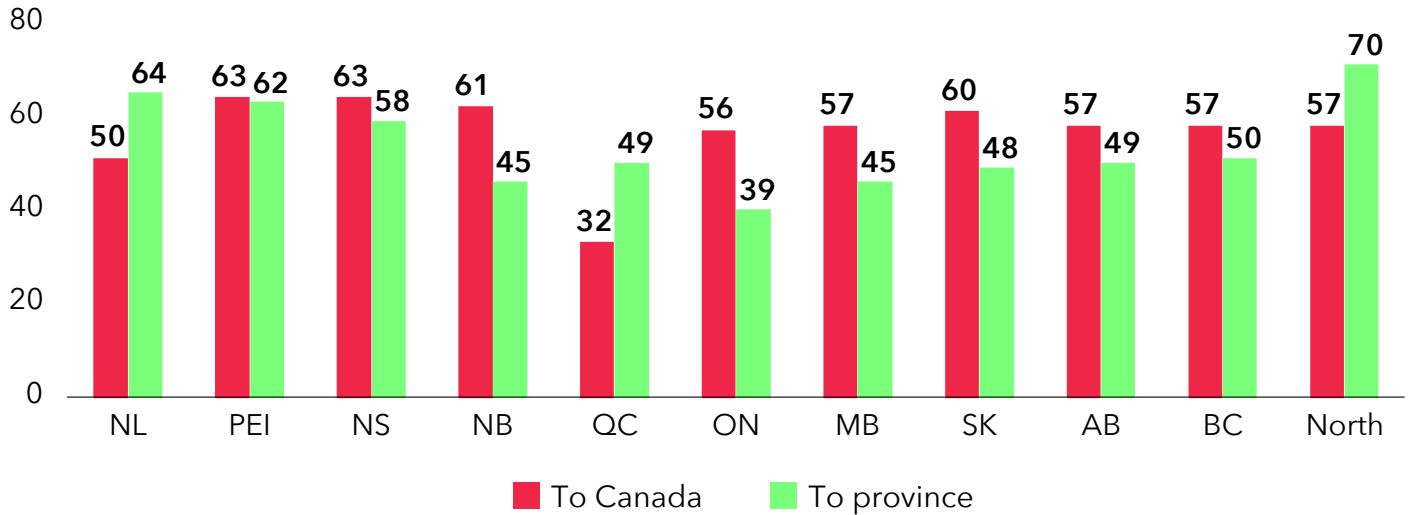


Q4B_2024. How attached do you feel to each of the following: to [name of province / territory]?

In two provinces, residents are more likely to feel very attached to their province than to Canada: Quebec, and Newfoundland and Labrador. In each of the three territories, residents are also more likely to feel very attached to their territory than to Canada.

FIGURE 3

Attachment to Canada and to province / territory (very attached)
2024, by province

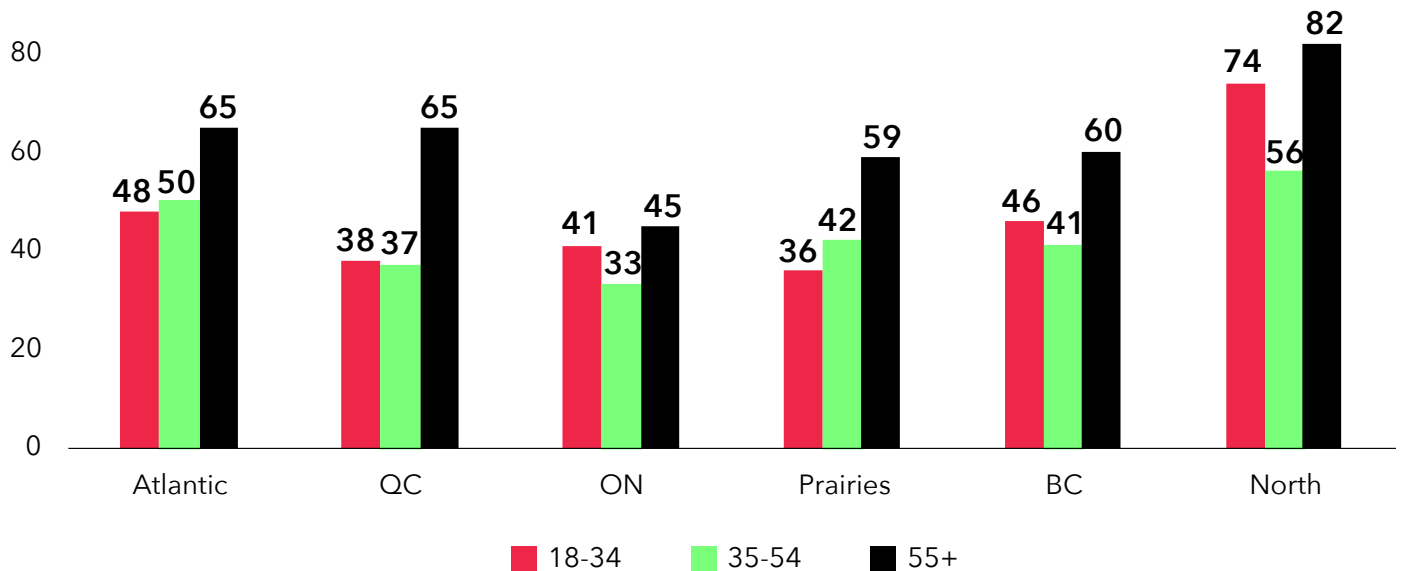


Q4_2024. How attached do you feel to each of the following:

In every region, older residents (age 55 and older) are more likely to feel very attached to their province or territory than their younger counterparts (age 18 to 34). The difference between the oldest and youngest age groups is largest in Quebec (a difference of 27 percentage points) and the Prairies (23 points) and smallest in the North (8 points) and Ontario (4 points).

FIGURE 4

Very attached to province / territory
2024, by region and age group



Q4_2024. How attached do you feel to each of the following: to [name of province / territory]

Attachment to Indigenous nation or community

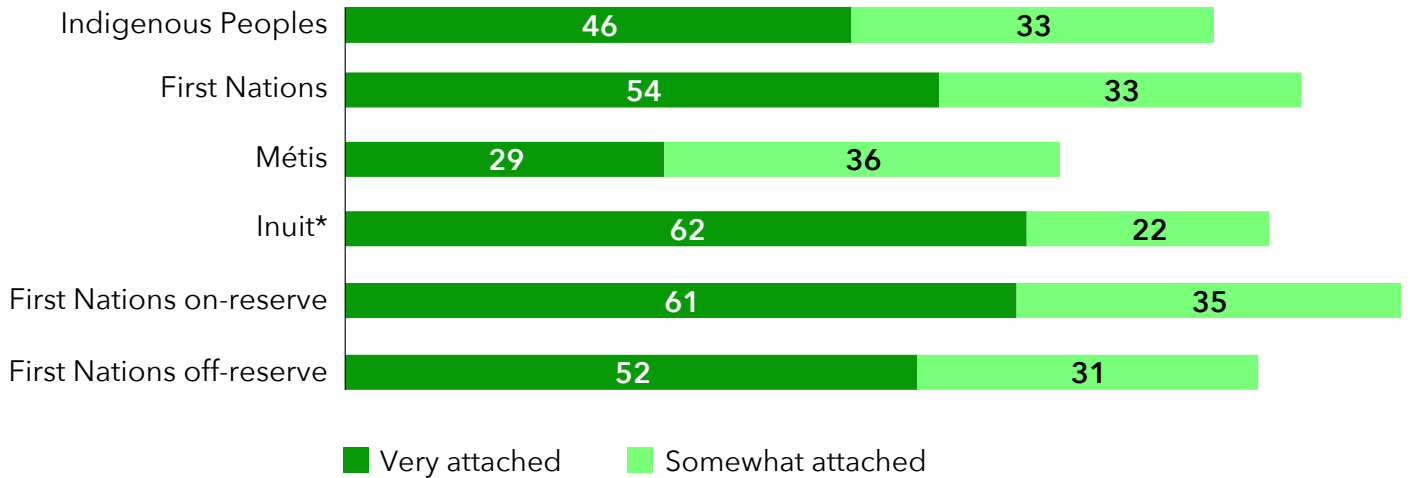
Among those who identify as Indigenous, eight in ten (79%) say they feel attached to their Indigenous nation or community. This includes 46 percent who say they feel very attached and 33 percent who feel somewhat attached.

Feelings of attachment to one's Indigenous nation or community are stronger among those who identify as Inuit (62% feel very attached) and First Nations (54%).¹ Among those who identify as First Nations, the figure is slightly higher for those living on-reserve (61%), compared to those living off-reserve (52%). This compares to 29 percent of Métis who say they feel very attached to their Indigenous nation or community.

¹ As the number of Inuit respondents is very small (n=57), this result should be treated with caution.

FIGURE 5

Attachment to Indigenous nation or community 2024, by Indigenous identity



Q4D_2024. How attached do you feel to each of the following: to your Indigenous nation or community?

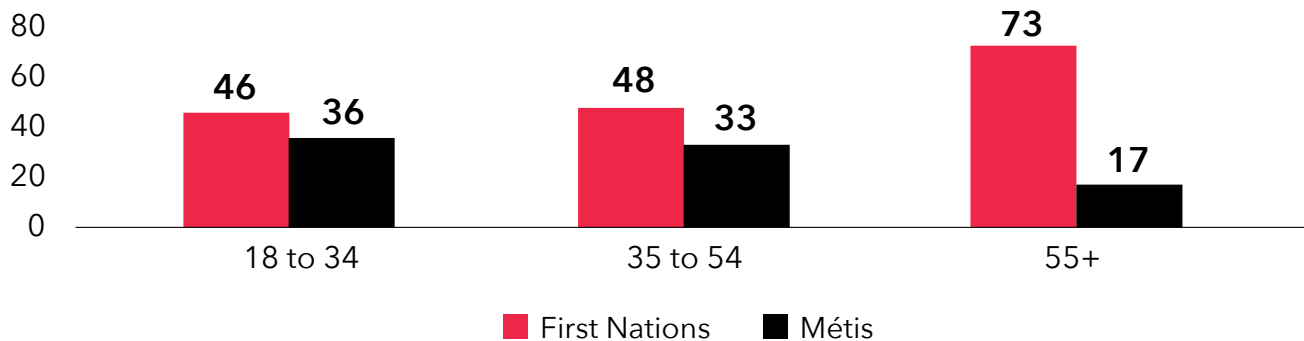
*The sample of Inuit respondents is small; use this result with caution.

Among Indigenous Peoples overall, those in the oldest age group (age 55 and older) are more likely to feel very attached to their Indigenous nation or community than those in the youngest age group (age 18 to 34). But the pattern is quite different for those who are First Nations, compared to those who are Métis. In the case of First Nations people, feelings of attachment to one’s Indigenous nation or community are stronger among older people than their younger counterparts. Among those who are Métis, the reverse is true.²

2 As the subsample sizes for age group among those who identify as Métis are smaller, this finding should be treated with caution.

FIGURE 6

Very attached to Indigenous nation or community 2024, by Indigenous identity and age group



Q4D_2024. How attached do you feel to each of the following: to your Indigenous nation or community?

Attachment to city or town

Eight in ten Canadians (80%) also say they feel attached to their city, town or region, with opinions being divided equally between those who feel very attached (39%) and those who feel somewhat attached (41%). There is very little variation across regions of the country, or between those living in urban and rural areas.

Overlapping attachments

One of the more important aspects of these feelings of attachment is the extent to which they overlap. Most Canadians feel attached to both Canada and to their province or territory, rather than to one and not the other.

When answers to these two questions (about attachment to Canada and to one's province or territory) are combined, the largest group (33%) say they feel very attached to both. Somewhat fewer (23%) say they feel very attached to one and somewhat attached to the other, and 20 percent say they feel somewhat attached to both. Adding these together, more than three in four (77%) feel either very or somewhat



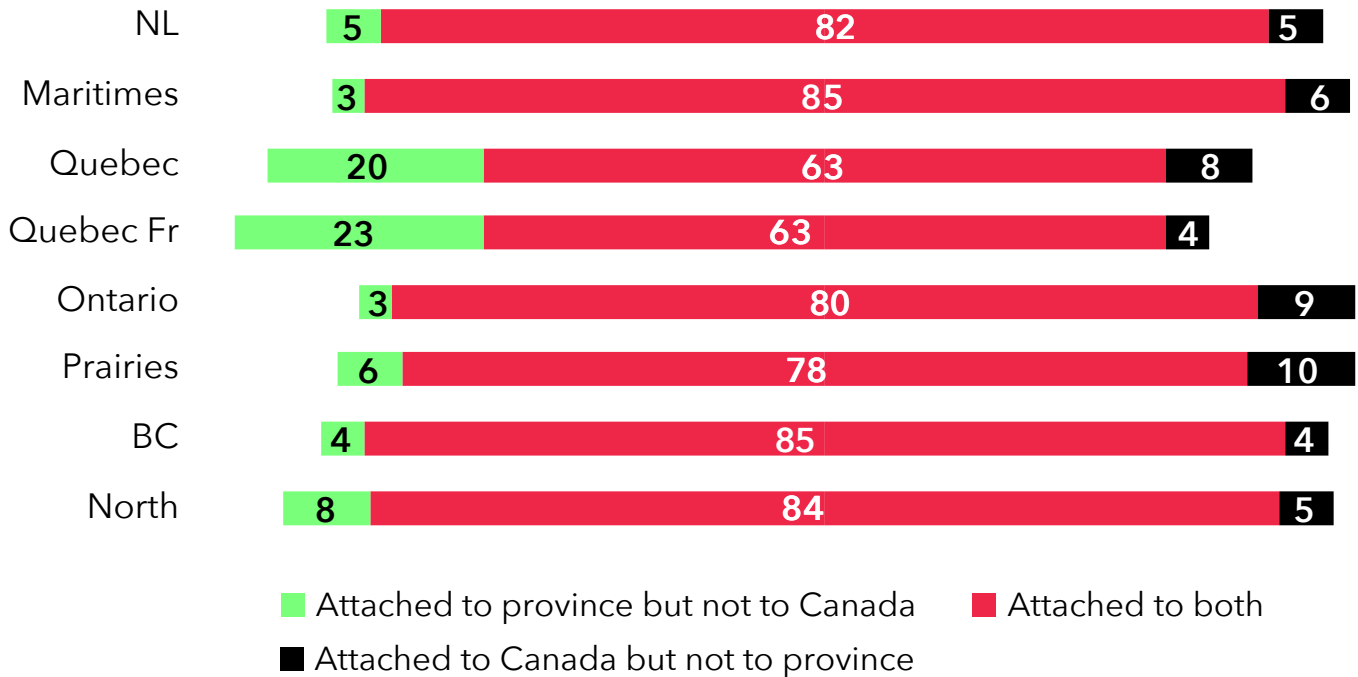
attached to both Canada and to their province or territory. This compares to only eight percent feel attached to Canada and not to their province or territory, and a similar proportion that feel attached to their province or territory but not to Canada. Only six percent feel attached to neither.

*1 in 5 Quebecers
feel attached to
their province but
not to Canada.*

In each region of the country, large majorities combine these two forms of attachment. However, the proportion feeling attached to both Canada and to their province is lower in Quebec, where it stands at 63 percent (compared to 81 percent in the rest of the country). One in five Quebecers (including 23 percent of francophones in the province) feel attached to their province but not to Canada (compared to only 4% in the rest of the country).

FIGURE 7

Attachment to Canada and to province or territory 2024, by region

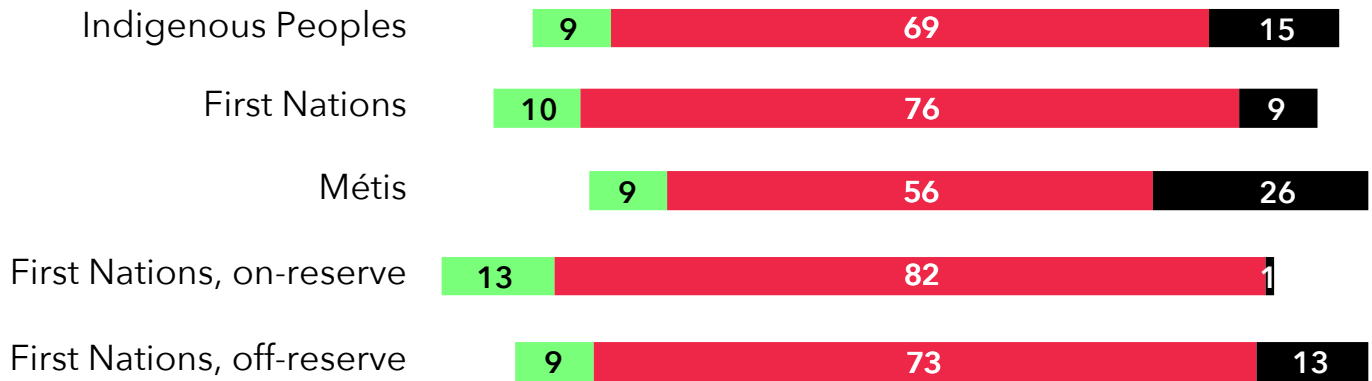


While the group with overlapping attachments is lower in Quebec than the rest of the country, it is still a majority in the province: for most Quebecers (and most francophones in Quebec), feelings of attachment to Quebec and to Canada are compatible and not in competition. Some attachment to Canada is felt even among many Quebecers who describe themselves as sovereigntist. Those in this group are more or less equally divided between those who feel attachment to Quebec but not to Canada (47%), and those who feel attached to both (45%).

Overlapping attachments are also evident among Indigenous Peoples. Seven in ten (69%) are attached to both Canada and to their Indigenous nation or community, compared to 15 percent who are attached to Canada but not to their Indigenous nation or community, and nine percent who are attached to their Indigenous nation or community but not to Canada. This sense of overlapping attachment is most prevalent among First Nations people (76%), particularly those living on-reserve (82%).

FIGURE 8

**Attachment to Canada and to Indigenous nation or community
2024, by Indigenous identity**



- Attached to Indigenous nation / community but not to Canada
- Attached to both
- Attached to Canada but not to Indigenous nation / community

Canadian and provincial identities

Another way of exploring Canadians' ties to the different political communities within the federation is to ask if they identify more with Canada or with their province or territory. The specific survey question is:

People have different ways of defining themselves. Do you consider yourself to be ...?

- A Canadian only
- A Canadian first, but also a someone from your province
- Equally a Canadian and someone from your province
- Someone from your province first, but also a Canadian
- Someone from your province only³

This question is only asked to people who are not Indigenous, as Indigenous Peoples are asked a separate question (discussed in the section that follows).

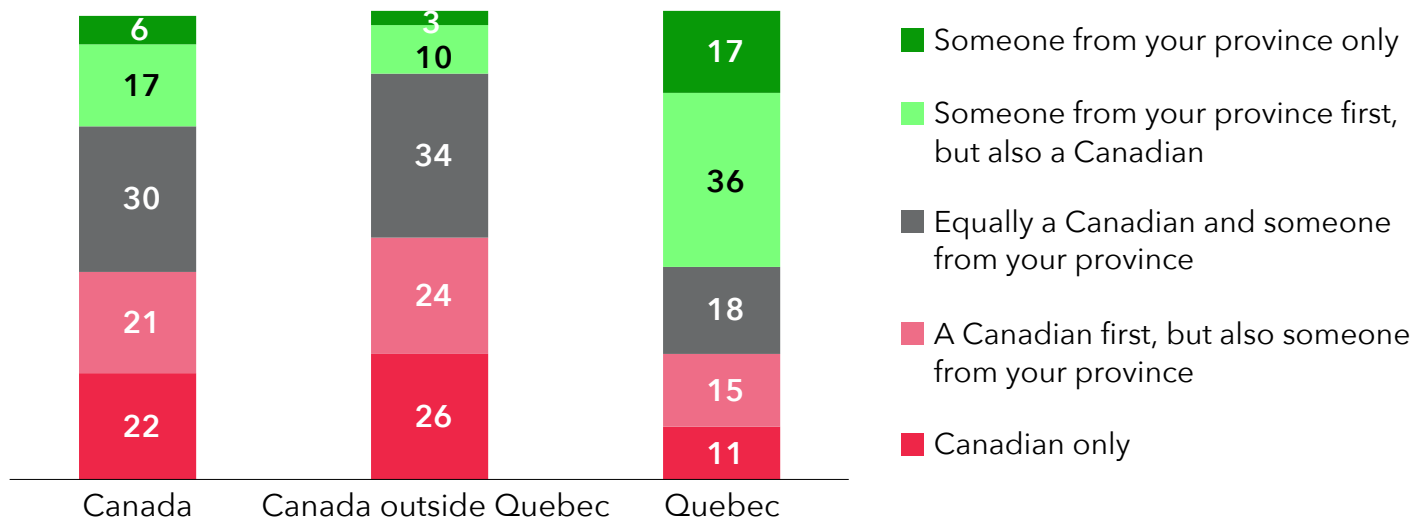
In Canada as a whole, a majority (68%) defines themselves as a mix of Canadian and someone from their province, while 22 percent define themselves as a Canadian only, and six percent as someone from their province only. The proportion with a mix of Canadian and provincial identities is similar in Quebec (69%) and in the rest of the country (68%). However, in Quebec, 11 percent see themselves as a Canadian only, compared to 26 percent outside the province. And while 17 percent of Quebecers see themselves as a Quebecer only, only three percent of Canadians outside Quebec identify only with their province. Among francophone Quebecers, 72 percent select a mix of Canadian and Quebec identities, seven percent define themselves as a Canadian only, and 19 percent define themselves as a Quebecer only.

3 In the survey, the words "someone from your province" are replaced with the appropriate term for residents of each province, for instance, an Albertan, a Quebecer or a Nova Scotian. This question was not asked in the territories.

FIGURE 9

Canadian or provincial identity

2024



Q3A. People have different ways of defining themselves. Do you consider yourself to be: A Canadian only; A Canadian first, but also a someone from your province; Equally a Canadian and someone from your province; Someone from your province first, but also a Canadian; Someone from your province only. (Non-Indigenous respondents only; not asked in the territories).

While a majority in every province define themselves as both a Canadian and someone from their province, the identity that predominates varies.

In Ontario and New Brunswick, about one in two define themselves as a Canadian only or first, close to one in three say they are equally a Canadian and someone from their province, and relatively few see themselves as someone from their province first or only.

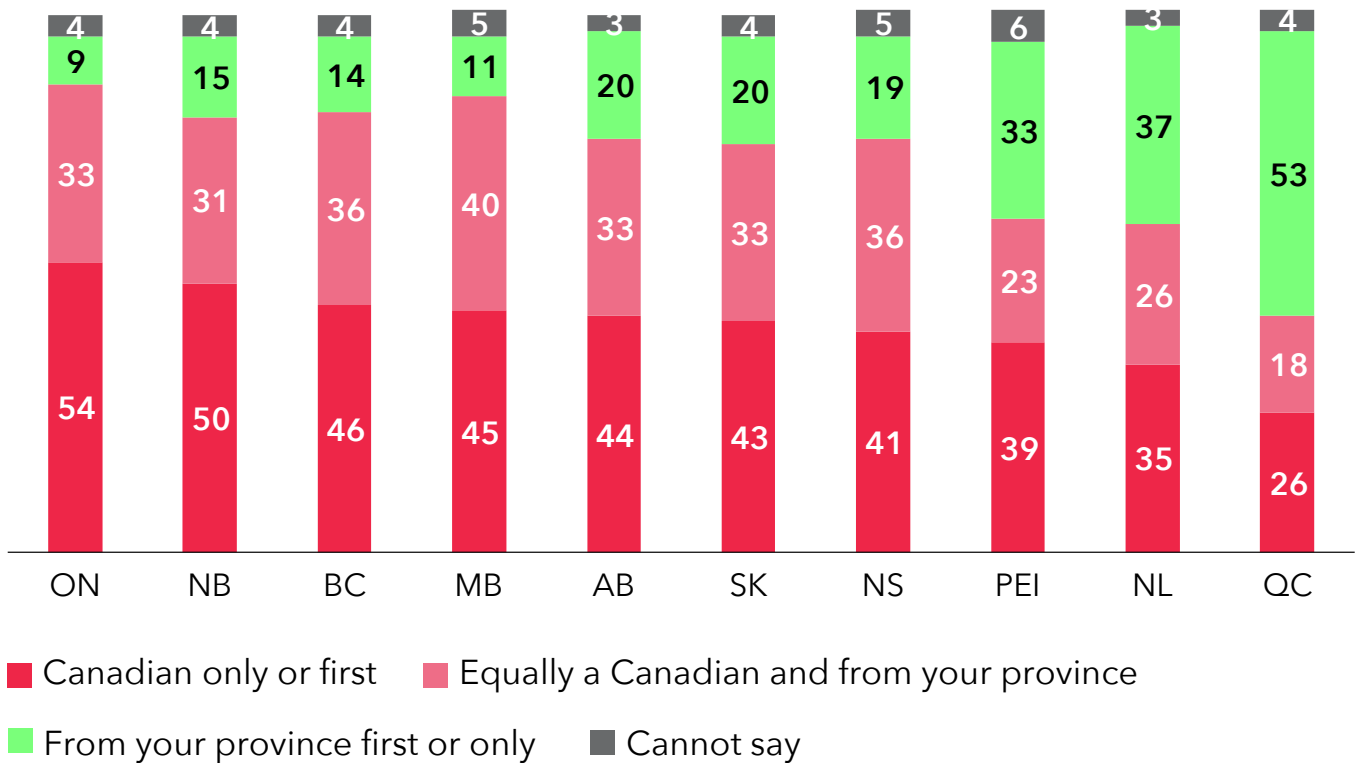
In the four Western provinces, as well as Nova Scotia, the distribution of responses is broadly similar, except that the proportion identifying as a Canadian only or first dips slightly below 50 percent. In Alberta, Saskatchewan and Nova Scotia, the proportion identifying as someone from their province first or only reaches one in five.

In PEI, as many as one in three define themselves as someone from their province first or only.

Finally, in two provinces – Quebec, and Newfoundland and Labrador – the proportion identifying mostly with their province exceeds the proportion identifying mostly with Canada. In Newfoundland and Labrador, 37 percent identify as someone from their province first or only, while in Quebec this proportion reaches 53 percent (and 60 percent among Quebec francophones).

FIGURE 10

Canadian or provincial identity
2024, by province



Q3A. People have different ways of defining themselves. Do you consider yourself to be: A Canadian only; A Canadian first, but also a someone from your province; Equally a Canadian and someone from your province; Someone from your province first, but also a Canadian; Someone from your province only. (Non-Indigenous respondents only; not asked in the territories).



Across Canada, there has been relatively little change in how people define themselves since this series of surveys began in 2019. But there has been some change in certain provinces or regions.

Across Canada, there has been relatively little change in how people define themselves since this series of surveys began in 2019. But there has been some change in certain provinces or regions.⁴

The proportion defining themselves as someone from their province first or only has declined since 2019 by nine percentage points in Quebec (from 62% to 53%), by nine points in the Maritimes (from 27% to 18%), by seven points in the Prairies (from 25% to 18%), and by six points in B.C. (from 20% to 14%).

But there has been a much more dramatic drop in Newfoundland and Labrador (from 56% to 37%). In that province, the proportion defining themselves as a Canadian first or only has doubled over the same period, from 17 percent to 35 percent.⁵

4 The fact that there has been no change specifically in Ontario, which is the largest province, explains why larger changes in some smaller provinces are less apparent when they are part of the weighted national average.

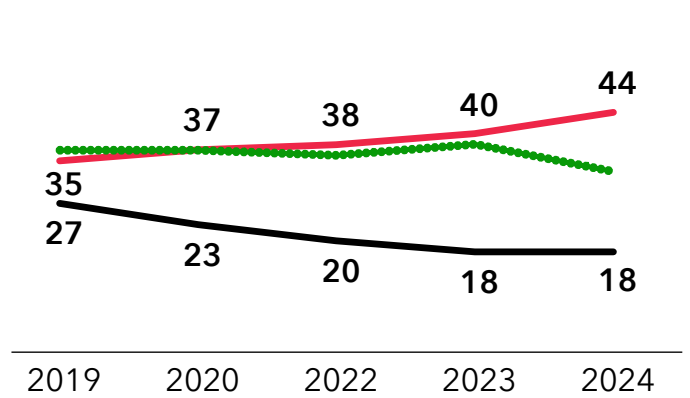
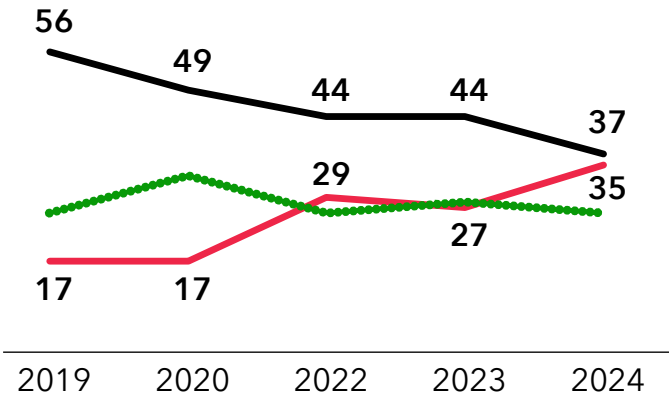
5 This pattern holds for Newfoundland and Labrador with both weighted and unweighted data.

FIGURE 11

Canadian or provincial identity
2019 - 2024, Atlantic Canada

Newfoundland & Labrador

Maritimes



- Canadian only or first
- Equally a Canadian and from your province
- From your province first or only

Q3A. People have different ways of defining themselves. Do you consider yourself to be: A Canadian only; A Canadian first, but also a someone from your province; Equally a Canadian and someone from your province; Someone from your province first, but also a Canadian; Someone from your province only. (Non-Indigenous respondents only; not asked in the territories).



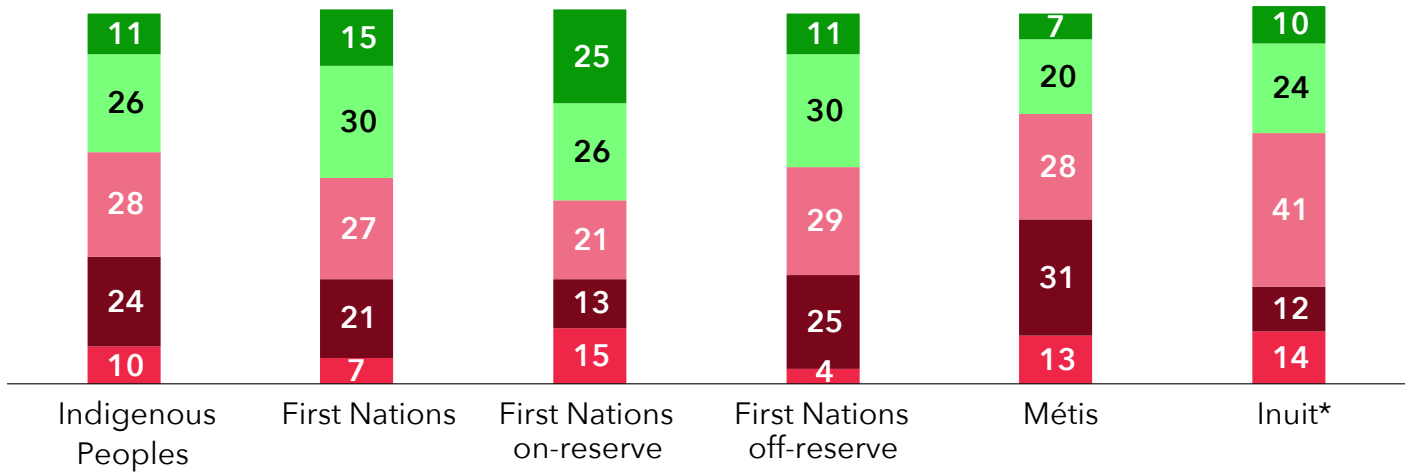
Indigenous and Canadian identities

Most Indigenous Peoples express a mix of Indigenous and Canadian identities, rather than defining themselves as either only Indigenous or only Canadian. Specifically, about eight in ten (78%) consider themselves to be either an Indigenous person first but also a Canadian, equally Indigenous and Canadian, or a Canadian first but also Indigenous. This proportion is the same among those who identify as First Nations (77%), Métis (78%) and Inuit (77%). However, it is lower among First Nations peoples living on-reserve (60%), compared to those living off-reserve (85%).

Most Indigenous Peoples express a mix of Indigenous and Canadian identities, rather than defining themselves as either only Indigenous or only Canadian.

FIGURE 12

Indigenous and Canadian identities 2024, Indigenous Peoples



■ Canadian only
 ■ A Canadian first, but also Indigenous
 ■ Equally Canadian and Indigenous
■ Indigenous first, but also Canadian
 ■ Indigenous only

Q3B. [Indigenous Peoples only] People have different ways of defining themselves. Do you consider yourself to be: a Canadian only; a Canadian first, but also an Indigenous person; equally a Canadian and an Indigenous person; an Indigenous person first, but also a Canadian; or an Indigenous person only.

*The sample of Inuit respondents is small; use this result with caution.

While majorities of each Indigenous identity group consider themselves to be both an Indigenous person and a Canadian, the identity that predominates varies.

Among all Indigenous Peoples, 37 percent identify as an Indigenous person first or only. This proportion is higher among First Nations people (44%) than among Métis people (27%). It is also higher among First Nations peoples living on-reserve (51%), compared to those living off-reserve (41%).



Among all Indigenous Peoples, 34 percent identify as a Canadian person first or only. This proportion is higher Métis people (44%) than among First Nations people (28%).

While majorities of each Indigenous identity group consider themselves to be both an Indigenous person and a Canadian, the identity that predominates varies.

Among all Indigenous Peoples, the proportion identifying themselves as an Indigenous person first or only does not vary much by age. But among Métis people specifically, this proportion is somewhat higher among those in the youngest age group (age 18 to 34).⁶

⁶ As the subsample sizes for age groups among those who identify as Métis are smaller, this finding should be treated with caution.



The expression of identity

Most Canadians feel it is important to express their cultural identity, and most say they have enough opportunities to do so. Yet, some also feel pressure to hide or downplay their identity.

The 2024 Confederation of Tomorrow survey included several questions about cultural identity, defined in broad terms as relating to ancestry, nationality, ethnicity, language, region or any other type of cultural identity that is important to the person responding.

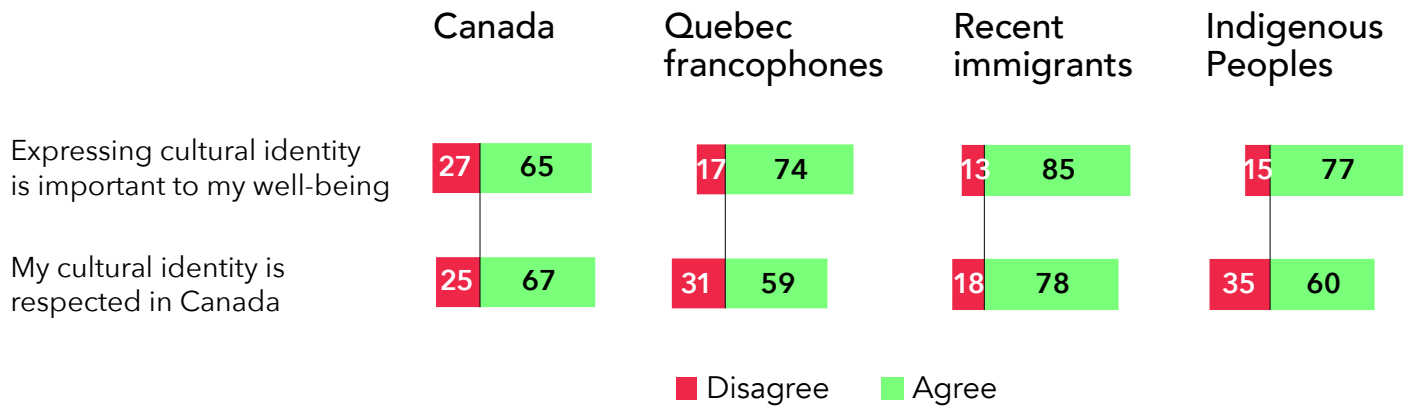
Among all Canadians:

- 65 percent agree that expressing their cultural identity is important to their overall well-being and happiness, compared to 27 percent who disagree.
- 66 percent agree that their cultural identity is respected in Canada today, compared to 25 percent who disagree.
- 72 percent agree that they have enough opportunities to get together with people who share their cultural identity to celebrate the things they have in common, compared to 19 percent who disagree.

Majorities of Canadians from all backgrounds agree with each of these statements. However, francophones in Quebec, as well as Indigenous Peoples, stand out as being more likely than average to agree that expressing their cultural identity is important to their well-being, but less likely than average to agree that their cultural identity is respected in Canada.

FIGURE 13

Cultural identity: importance and respect 2024



Q86. The following questions are about your own cultural identity. This might relate to your ancestry, nationality, ethnicity, language, region, or any other type of cultural identity that is important to you. Thinking about your own cultural identity, to what extent do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements?

c) I feel my cultural identity is respected in Canada today.

d) Expressing my cultural identity is important to my overall well-being and happiness.

Recent immigrants are also more likely than average to agree that expressing their cultural identity is important to their well-being.⁷ In this case, however, they are also more likely than average to agree that their cultural identity is respected in Canada.

Canadians were also asked whether they feel pressure to hide or downplay their cultural identity (recall that the question refers broadly to many possible types of identity). Overall, one in four (25%) agree that they feel this kind of pressure, and 68 percent disagree.

In this case, there is no significant difference between Quebec francophones and the national average: only 23 percent of Quebec francophones agree that they feel pressure to hide or downplay their cultural identity. But Indigenous Peoples, again, stand out as feeling more constrained in the expression of their identity. One in

7 Recent immigrants are those who have lived in Canada for less than 10 years.

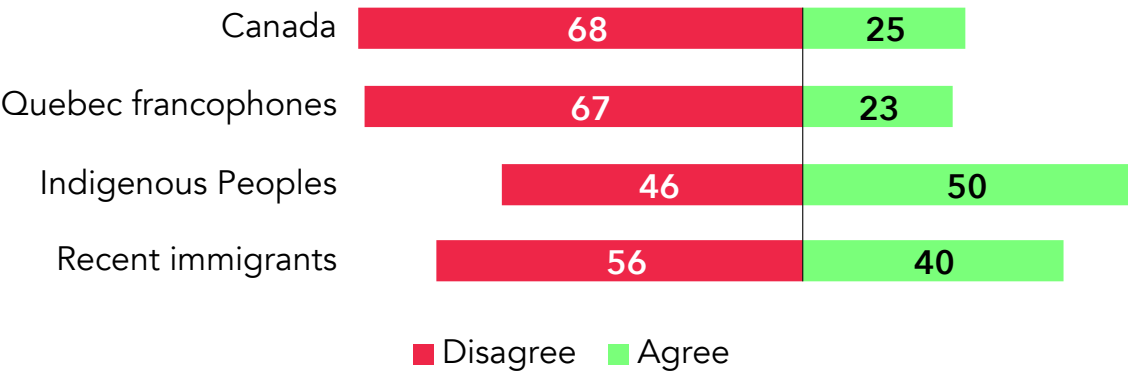
two Indigenous Peoples (50%) agree that they feel pressure to hide or downplay their cultural identity. The proportion agreeing is slightly higher among those who identify as First Nations (53%), in particular among those living on-reserve (58%).

Recent immigrants (40%) are also more likely than average to agree that they feel pressure to hide or downplay their cultural identity.

FIGURE 14

Pressure to downplay cultural identity

2024



Q86. The following questions are about your own cultural identity. This might relate to your ancestry, nationality, ethnicity, language, region, or any other type of cultural identity that is important to you. Thinking about your own cultural identity, to what extent do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements?

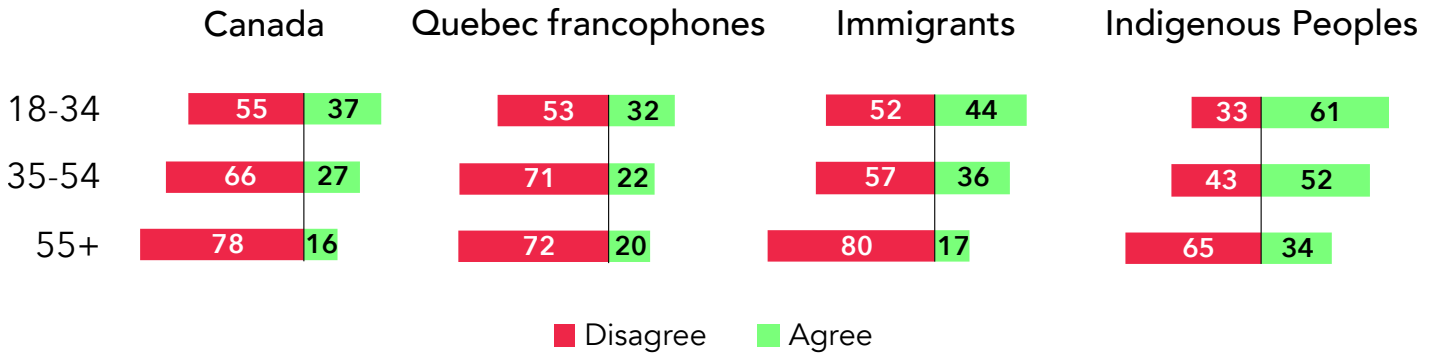
a) I feel pressure to hide or downplay my cultural identity.

In general, younger Canadians are more likely than their older counterparts to agree that they feel pressure to hide or downplay their cultural identity. But this age difference is much more pronounced among immigrants and Indigenous Peoples. Among immigrants age 18 to 34, 44 percent agree that they feel pressure to hide or downplay their cultural identity.⁸ Among Indigenous Peoples, the proportion of those age 18 to 34 agreeing with this statement rises to 61 percent.

8 The figures cited here refer to all immigrants, and not just recent immigrants, because the subsample sizes for age groups among all immigrants are larger and therefore more reliable. However, the pattern for recent immigrants is similar. Among recent immigrants age 18 to 34, 42 percent agree that they feel pressure to hide or downplay their cultural identity.

FIGURE 15

Pressure to downplay cultural identity
2024, by age group



Q86. The following questions are about your own cultural identity. This might relate to your ancestry, nationality, ethnicity, language, region, or any other type of cultural identity that is important to you. Thinking about your own cultural identity, to what extent do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements?

a) I feel pressure to hide or downplay my cultural identity.



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