
TOLERANCE UNDER PRESSURE?

By Frank Graves

[Ottawa – March 12, 2015] Canada has been singularly successful in solving the postmodern riddle of the clash of civilizations. While Europe and America have torn themselves apart over issues of immigration and race, Canada has been remarkably spared this particular affliction. All of this may be drawing to a close.

Under the forces of growing economic and cultural insecurities linked to security and terror, we are seeing a sharp erosion of our openness to diversity and immigration. Moreover, these issues are now prominent in the rhetoric of the political parties jostling for position in what will be a fiercely contested and extremely tight forty second federal election. Attitudes to immigration are in flux and we are trending to a less open society. These issues, along with concerns about religious dress have rarely been ballot booth issues in Canada. They are, however, the key sorters underlying major shifts in the voter landscape.

Public debates often generate more heat than light when stripped of evidence and reason and we offer this evidence in the service of a more informed debate. We note that while the public are in flux on this there is no simple consensus available to resolve the deep fractures we are seeing on public opinion. These fault lines are connected to contradictory values which are starkly divided than across different party supporters.

The long-term trajectory on attitudes to immigration and visible minority immigration

Canada has experienced a large influx of immigrants over the past twenty years. Over this period the incidence of immigration from members of visibility groups has burgeoned and Canada has morphed from a largely white society with ancestry drawn from Britain and France to an extremely heterogeneous society. As one can see the initial deep reservations about immigration dropped consistently over that period as we became more diverse. Multiculturalism was embraced by the public and the dire warnings of ethnic enclaves and diminution of national identity failed to occur. In our research, we found that national attachment has remained very high in Canada and that ethnic identifications actually dropped considerably. So not only did the "Selling Illusions" predictions of increased ethnic ghettoization not occur, but the reverse became true.¹

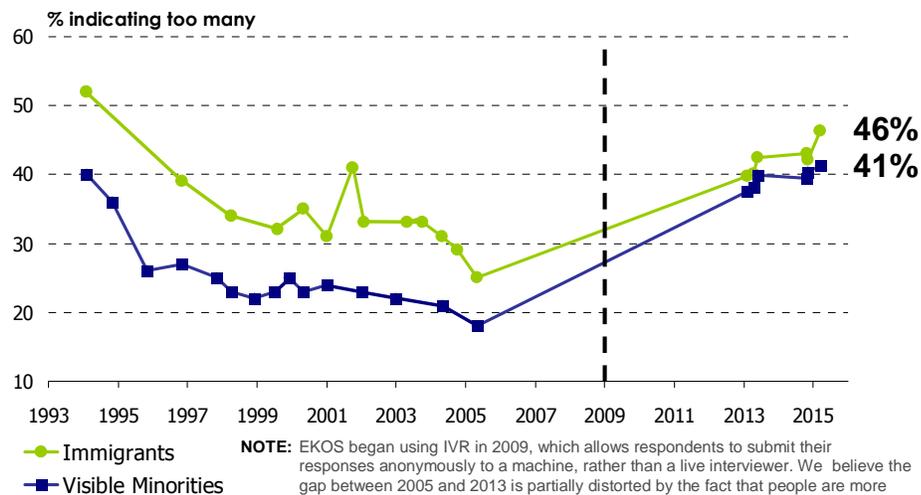
¹ Frank Graves, Jeff Smith, and Michael Valpy: "*Canada: The State of the Federation 2012: Regions, Resources, and Resiliency*", Working Paper, Institute of Intergovernmental Relations, School of Policy Studies, Queen's University, 2012. Available online at: <http://goo.gl/sbjLLW>

Also notable was the divergent paths of public opinion in Canada and the United States following the September 11th attacks. In both countries, there was a sharp rise in opposition to immigration but in Canada, it dissipated in the following years and reached an all-time low in 2005 (with only 25 per cent saying there were too many immigrants and less than one in five saying that of those coming too many were visible minority members. By stark contrast, the opposition levels were nearly three times higher in the United States, despite incoming levels of much less than half. Canadians were pro-trade, pro-immigration, and pro-diversity. This seemed to provide not only a societal advantage, but quite possibly an economic advantage in an increasingly globalised economy.

Attitudes to immigration/visible minorities

Q. In your opinion do you feel that there are too few, too many or about the right number of immigrants coming to Canada?

Q. Forgetting about the overall number of immigrants coming to Canada, **OF THOSE WHO COME** would you say there are too few, too many or the right amount who are **MEMBERS OF VISIBLE MINORITIES**?



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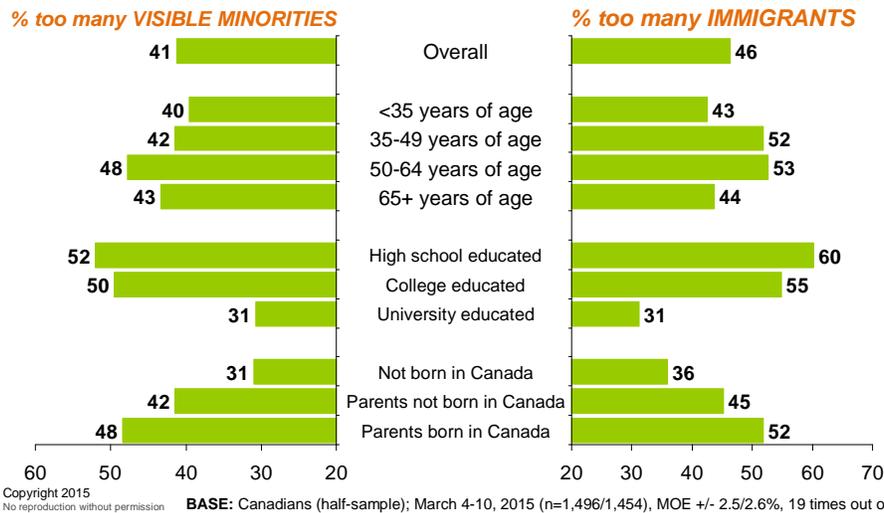
BASE: Canadians (half-sample); March 4-10, 2015 (n=1,496/1,454), MOE +/- 2.5/2.6%, 19 times out of 20

It is therefore with some chagrin that we look at the current poll numbers.

Attitudes to immigration by demographics

Q. In your opinion do you feel that there are too few, too many or about the right number of immigrants coming to Canada?

Q. Forgetting about the overall number of immigrants coming to Canada, **OF THOSE WHO COME** would you say there are too few, too many or the right amount who are **MEMBERS OF VISIBLE MINORITIES?**



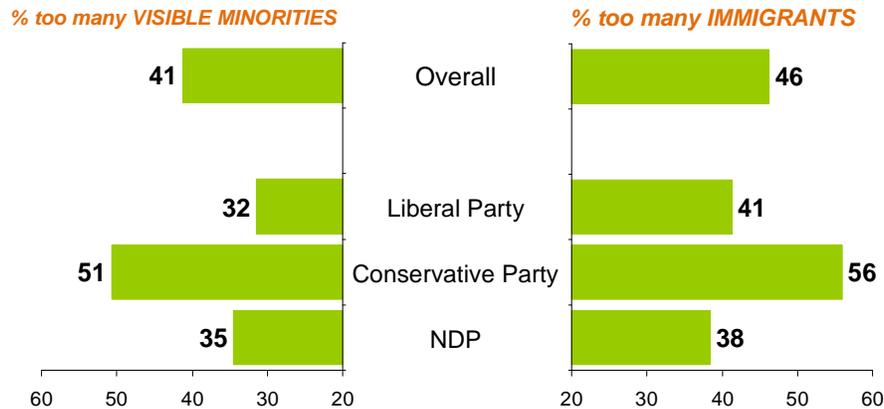
Recently, the overall incidence of opposition to immigration has nearly doubled and is threatening to crack the 53 per cent level we saw in 1993 and which caused it to be the lead front page story in the Globe and Mail (Michael Valpy wrote this explosive piece up). This story triggered a major national debate and we would submit that the Canadian public and governments responded in an enlightened manner which produced the positive sentiments we outlined earlier. Not only is opposition to immigration in general plumbing heights not seen in twenty years but the racial discrimination test, (forgetting about the numbers coming, are too many not white?) has just crossed the 40-point threshold for the first time ever.

And let's be clear about this. While opposition to immigration can be driven by factors other than racial discrimination, saying that of those who are coming, too many just aren't white is a racist sentiment. It may not be a particular insidious form of racism but it is racism and the overall numbers are not particularly flattering for those who believe in an open and tolerant society.

The demographic fault lines are interesting, but the far more interesting and important divides occur across partisan constituencies. Considering the three main parties, we can see a vivid difference in how the visible minority question sorts supporters of the three main parties. Neither Liberal nor NDP parties should be overly smug that fully one-third of their supporters think too many of those coming to Canada are visible minorities. But the Conservative Party, which owes much of its success to wooing new Canadians, is another story. Jason Kenney may (admirably) want your votes, but half of the constituents his party represents would prefer fewer new non-white immigrants.

Attitudes to immigration by party support

- Q. In your opinion do you feel that there are too few, too many or about the right number of immigrants coming to Canada?
- Q. Forgetting about the overall number of immigrants coming to Canada, **OF THOSE WHO COME** would you say there are too few, too many or the right amount who are **MEMBERS OF VISIBLE MINORITIES**?



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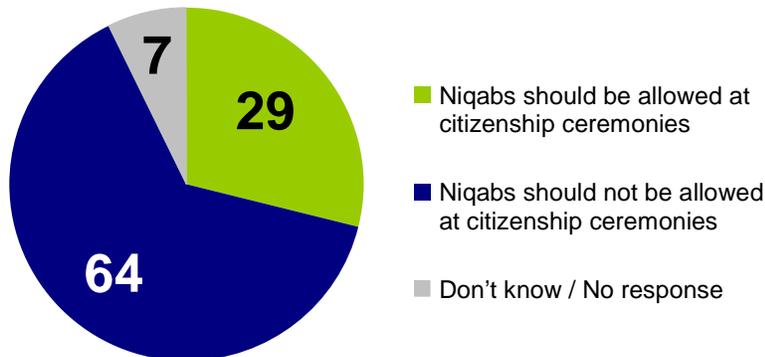
And how about those niqabs?

One of the things I recall vividly about the immigration debate in Toronto in the early nineties was how inflamed and emotional it was. In addition to surveys, we did focus groups and these were withering to behold. Mixing visible minorities and white participants was a practice to be avoided at that time. The white European population were displaying aggravated cultural insecurities. *"We can't say the Lord's Prayer in school anymore. We are banishing Christmas from our public lexicon. I am afraid to get on the subway with all those scary looking immigrants wearing weird hats. And don't get me going on turbans on Mounties!"* It was a toxic stew of fear and hostility at that time. Yet this recollection sounds utterly at odds with the relative harmonious diversity of a much more racially and ethnically heterogeneous Toronto we saw emerge in the early part of this new century.

Given the intensity of those debates and how they faded with time, we might want to consider the future prospects for current views on the niqab. As one can readily see, Mr. Harper's position enjoys broad public support. We also point out that there is very high correlation across those who subscribe to the offensive position and those who think there are too many visible minorities coming to Canada. Not all of the supporters of this ban at think there are too many visible minorities coming but virtually all of those who think that support the ban.

Attitudes to the niqab

Q. There has been a lot of debate lately over whether women should be allowed to wear a face-covering veil called a niqab at citizenship ceremonies. Some say the niqab is offensive and should not be allowed. Others say that welcoming diversity is what makes Canada a better society and niqabs should be allowed. Which of these statements comes closest to your own point of view?



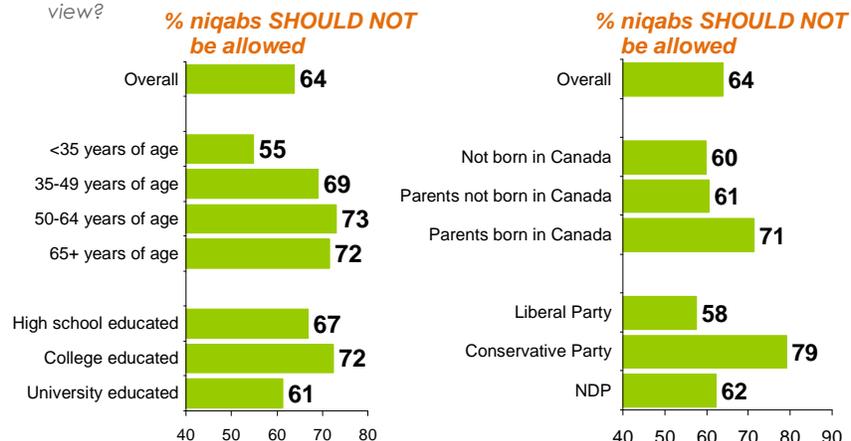
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BASE: Canadians; March 4-10, 2015 (n=2,950), MOE +/- 1.8%, 19 times out of 20

It is also notable that the Conservative resurgence has been established in precisely the demographics where these less tolerant attitudes to visible minorities and the niqab are strongest. It is also notable that the Bloc Québécois resurgence is the epicentre of the most allergic attitudes to visible minority immigration (59 per cent) and a near consensus support of 88 per cent for the ban on niqab at citizenship ceremonies.

Attitudes to niqab by demographics

Q. There has been a lot of debate lately over whether women should be allowed to wear a face-covering veil called a niqab at citizenship ceremonies. Some say the niqab is offensive and should not be allowed. Others say that welcoming diversity is what makes Canada a better society and niqabs should be allowed. Which of these statements comes closest to your own point of view?



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It is unclear how this debate will evolve and what if any consequences it will have for the 42nd Generation Election of Canada. There is no question that it is currently sorting the electorate more than issues they say are of greater concern; notably a moribund economy. It is, however, the first really explicit political debate about values that we have seen in Canada for some time. The Conservative movement has been very successful in using values to secure emotional engagement from its supporters. Progressive parties have been less adroit and active on this front. It will be interesting to see how this value debate emerges because that reticence has been shattered on this issue. It will also be interesting to see if the values debate extends to other critical areas of value difference across the parties (many of which the progressive side enjoys a much clearer and growing advantage such as the value of equality of opportunity).

And in closing, as a long time student of the issue of tolerance and diversity, it will be important and fascinating to watch which path Canada ultimately chooses on these value choices.

Detailed tables:

Attitudes to Immigration						
<i>Q. [HALF-SAMPLE] In your opinion do you feel that there are too few, too many or about the right number of immigrants coming to Canada?</i>						
	Too few	About right	Too many	DK/NR	Sample Size	Margin of Error (+/-)
NATIONALLY	12.8%	34.5%	46.3%	6.4%	1496	2.5
REGION						
British Columbia	11.4%	34.9%	44.5%	9.3%	142	8.2
Alberta	10.0%	32.2%	49.4%	8.4%	185	7.2
Saskatchewan	6.8%	32.0%	54.2%	7.0%	60	12.7
Manitoba	10.6%	29.2%	56.9%	3.3%	76	11.2
Ontario	13.9%	32.5%	47.5%	6.1%	623	3.9
Quebec	14.3%	40.5%	40.5%	4.7%	274	5.9
Atlantic Canada	9.4%	29.8%	53.5%	7.4%	130	8.6
GENDER						
Male	12.4%	36.6%	48.6%	2.5%	666	3.8
Female	14.1%	35.2%	47.0%	3.7%	768	3.5
AGE						
<35	17.7%	34.4%	42.6%	5.3%	154	7.9
35-49	10.9%	35.2%	51.8%	2.1%	316	5.5
50-64	12.4%	33.3%	52.6%	1.7%	487	4.4
65+	11.0%	42.5%	43.7%	2.7%	476	4.5
EDUCATION						
High school or less	12.4%	23.8%	60.2%	3.7%	376	5.1
College or CEGEP	7.1%	36.1%	54.9%	1.9%	482	4.5
University or higher	19.8%	45.7%	31.2%	3.4%	562	4.1
COUNTRY OF BIRTH						
Not born in Canada	20.0%	32.7%	36.0%	11.2%	235	6.4
Parents not born in Canada	15.9%	38.2%	45.3%	0.7%	343	5.3
Both parents born in Canada	10.6%	35.5%	51.9%	2.0%	855	3.4
CURRENT VOTE INTENTION						
Liberal Party	16.7%	39.4%	41.3%	2.6%	413	4.8
Conservative Party	6.1%	37.1%	55.9%	0.9%	410	4.8
NDP	19.5%	40.1%	38.4%	2.1%	241	6.3
Green Party	12.3%	31.6%	54.4%	1.7%	84	10.7
Bloc Québécois	1.4%	42.3%	53.1%	3.2%	43	14.9

Attitudes to Visible Minorities

Q. [HALF-SAMPLE] Forgetting about the overall number of immigrants coming to Canada, of those who come would you say there are too few, too many or the right amount who are members of visible minorities?

	Too few	About right	Too many	DK/NR	Sample Size	Margin of Error (+/-)
NATIONALLY	12.6%	37.0%	41.2%	9.2%	1454	2.6
REGION						
British Columbia	16.3%	35.1%	38.5%	10.1%	154	7.9
Alberta	8.6%	33.8%	46.0%	11.5%	174	7.4
Saskatchewan	8.2%	33.4%	46.2%	12.2%	71	11.6
Manitoba	12.2%	37.9%	39.6%	10.3%	76	11.2
Ontario	13.4%	35.3%	41.5%	9.8%	613	4.0
Quebec	11.2%	40.1%	44.8%	3.9%	250	6.2
Atlantic Canada	11.4%	47.2%	27.0%	14.5%	114	9.2
GENDER						
Male	15.2%	36.9%	42.2%	5.7%	655	3.8
Female	11.1%	40.5%	43.7%	4.7%	721	3.7
AGE						
<35	19.8%	33.6%	39.6%	6.9%	124	8.8
35-49	13.3%	41.1%	41.5%	4.1%	297	5.7
50-64	9.2%	37.9%	47.8%	5.2%	480	4.5
65+	9.4%	43.6%	43.4%	3.5%	468	4.5
EDUCATION						
High school or less	10.0%	33.5%	52.1%	4.3%	362	5.2
College or CEGEP	10.0%	36.0%	49.5%	4.5%	456	4.6
University or higher	18.0%	45.7%	30.7%	5.6%	545	4.2
COUNTRY OF BIRTH						
Not born in Canada	23.9%	40.0%	31.0%	5.1%	262	6.1
Parents not born in Canada	12.2%	39.3%	41.5%	7.0%	333	5.4
Both parents born in Canada	9.6%	38.0%	48.4%	3.9%	780	3.5
CURRENT VOTE INTENTION						
Liberal Party	17.4%	47.1%	31.5%	4.0%	348	5.3
Conservative Party	8.3%	39.5%	50.6%	1.6%	416	4.8
NDP	19.2%	43.0%	34.5%	3.4%	204	6.9
Green Party	12.5%	37.7%	44.3%	5.5%	89	10.4
Bloc Québécois	3.1%	37.5%	59.4%	0.0%	41	15.3

Attitudes to Wearing a Niqab to Citizenship Ceremonies

Q. There has been a lot of debate lately over whether women should be allowed to wear a face-covering veil called a niqab at citizenship ceremonies. Some say the niqab is offensive and should not be allowed. Others say that welcoming diversity is what makes Canada a better society and niqabs should be allowed. Which of these statements comes closest to your own point of view?

	Niqabs should be allowed at citizenship ceremonies	Niqabs should not be allowed at citizenship ceremonies	DK/NR	Sample Size	Margin of Error (+/-)
NATIONALLY	28.9%	63.8%	7.3%	2950	1.8
REGION					
British Columbia	37.7%	53.8%	8.5%	296	5.7
Alberta	29.7%	62.0%	8.4%	359	5.2
Saskatchewan	26.6%	65.4%	8.0%	131	8.6
Manitoba	33.0%	53.9%	13.1%	152	8.0
Ontario	29.8%	62.6%	7.6%	1236	2.8
Quebec	17.7%	78.7%	3.6%	524	4.3
Atlantic Canada	36.8%	52.3%	10.9%	244	6.3
GENDER					
Male	27.1%	69.4%	3.4%	1321	2.7
Female	32.7%	63.8%	3.5%	1489	2.5
AGE					
<35	40.7%	54.8%	4.5%	278	5.9
35-49	28.3%	69.0%	2.7%	613	4.0
50-64	23.1%	73.0%	3.8%	967	3.2
65+	27.0%	71.6%	1.4%	944	3.2
EDUCATION					
High school or less	29.6%	66.9%	3.4%	738	3.6
College or CEGEP	25.0%	72.4%	2.6%	938	3.2
University or higher	35.4%	61.2%	3.4%	1107	3.0
COUNTRY OF BIRTH					
Not born in Canada	36.2%	59.8%	4.0%	497	4.4
Parents not born in Canada	35.7%	60.5%	3.8%	676	3.8
Both parents born in Canada	25.9%	71.3%	2.8%	1635	2.4
CURRENT VOTE INTENTION					
Liberal Party	40.6%	57.6%	1.8%	761	3.6
Conservative Party	19.1%	79.2%	1.6%	826	3.4
NDP	36.7%	62.1%	1.2%	445	4.7
Green Party	33.5%	57.4%	9.1%	173	7.5
Bloc Québécois	12.4%	87.6%	0.0%	84	10.7

Methodology:

This study was conducted using High Definition Interactive Voice Response (HD-IVR™) technology, which allows respondents to enter their preferences by punching the keypad on their phone, rather than telling them to an operator. In an effort to reduce the coverage bias of landline only RDD, we created a dual landline/cell phone RDD sampling frame for this research. As a result, we are able to reach those with a landline and cell phone, as well as cell phone only households and landline only households.

The field dates for this survey are March 4-10, 2015. In total, a random sample of 2,950 Canadian adults aged 18 and over responded to the survey. The margin of error associated with the total sample is +/-1.8 percentage points, 19 times out of 20.

Please note that the margin of error increases when the results are sub-divided (i.e., error margins for sub-groups such as region, sex, age, education). All the data have been statistically weighted by **age, gender, region, and educational attainment** to ensure the sample's composition reflects that of the actual population of Canada according to Census data.