

## **Wave 7**

## **Overview**

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## **Overview**

### **The Security Landscape**

The security landscape continues to evolve in Canada. There are clear areas of continuity and the overall public commitment to security remains strong. There are, however, some areas that bear careful monitoring - particularly those indicators which have been showing unusual changes or trajectory shifts in Canada.

First of all, we note that there have been some shifts in overall national confidence which are linked to broader approval of the federal government and its role in managing public security and safety. Although rating of federal security performance remains quite strong, there has been a real slide in confidence in national direction over the past few months. This is undoubtedly linked to eroding confidence in the economy, particularly in Ontario. In fact, most Canadians now believe we are in a mild recession.

There are two conflicting hypothesis for how these trends will impact attitudes towards public security. One says that rising economic anxieties will reduce support for security as people wish to see government attention and resources diverted to economic priorities (e.g., job creation and industry support). Another hypothesis is that different insecurities mutually reinforce or magnify each other. So, a more economically anxious public will be more anxious about other areas of security (e.g., crime, terrorism, health and safety). There is past empirical support for both hypothesis and we are in a new era so it will be important to follow this issue.

Pursuant to this discussion, we do note that short term anxieties about security risks appear to be dropping. There has been a steady but modest decline in the sense of danger in both Canada and the broader world. Other risk indicators, particularly those connected to the plausibility of a terrorist attack have also been declining. This would tend to reinforce the first hypothesis discussed above.

There is, however, none of the push back on the civil liberties / human rights front that we might have expected under such circumstances. In Canada, we saw the perturbations on these indicators over the past several months, which often presage a trajectory shift. Instead, we see renewed commitment to the security side of the equation. This is, however, in sharp contrast to a highly significant movement back to the rights and privacy side of the equation evident recently in the United States.

It will be important to monitor these trends in the coming months to determine if they are having an impact on attitudes towards security.

### **Special topics explored in Wave 7**

#### *Health concerns – Areas of Priority, Lyme Disease, and Food Safety*

Canadians express serious concerns over the threat of health crises in Canada (1 in 2 consistently feels that viruses and diseases are occurring more frequently and with greater severity than in the recent past). At the same time, however, 1 in 2 also believes that the Government of Canada is doing a good job of keeping them informed of these threats. As for where they would like the Government to focus their efforts in terms of prevention, Canadians have consistently ranked HIV/AIDS as the number one priority, followed by Hepatitis C and Avian flu.

The survey also examined perceptions of a specific health threat: Lyme disease. Although incidence of this disease is relatively low, 3 in 4 say they have heard of it, and a majority leans towards seeing it as a serious problem in Canada (52 per cent say “somewhat” or “very serious”). Despite the perceived seriousness of Lyme disease, few Canadians are personally concerned about contracting the illness (only about 1 in 10 is “very” or “extremely” concerned vs. 1 in 2 that are “not at all” or “not very” concerned).

Confidence in Canada’s food safety system has declined substantially in recent years (-16 per cent between May 2005 and July 2008), a finding that has primarily been linked to food scares in other countries (e.g., the 2006 bagged spinach e coli outbreak in the U.S.). While confidence in this system has not rebounded, it does appear to have stabilized over the past year (1 in 2 are “confident” and an additional 1 in 3 are “moderately confident”). It should be noted, however, that this survey was

undertaken prior to the recent Canadian outbreak of the bacterial infection, listeria. It will be important to revisit this issue in the near future to determine the impact of this domestic food scare on Canadians' perceptions of food safety.

#### *Oversight & Review – Awareness of review bodies*

As we have seen in the past, awareness of review bodies responsible for monitoring the activities of Canada's law enforcement and security agencies is very modest (only about 1 in 3 recall hearing about them prior to the survey). That said, awareness has continued to grow over time (+9 per cent since we began tracking in March 2005).

Recall of specific organizations continues to be quite limited. Most (7 in 10) are unable to name any organizations with a review function, and those that do are most likely to mention the internal review function of law enforcement bodies in general. Moreover, despite their recent reviews of some high profile cases (e.g., the Security Intelligence Review Committee's review of the case of Mohammed Mansour Jabarah, the Commission for Public Complaints against the RCMP's investigation into the death of Robert Dziekanski and the RCMP's use of tasers) recall of these specific review bodies has declined in this most recent iteration.

#### *Law enforcement – International Deployment of Canadian Police Officers*

Approximately 1 in 2 Canadians says they are aware of the fact that the RCMP deploys police officers on peace missions around the world. Those aware of the participation of Canadian police personnel in these types of activities are able to name many of the countries where the RCMP is currently deployed. The roles assumed in countries such as Afghanistan (Kandahar in particular) and Haiti (specifically Port-au-Prince) are most top-of-mind, however, about 1 in 10 is also aware that the RCMP has missions in Africa (including Sierra Leone, Sudan, and the Ivory Coast) and Bosnia-Herzegovina. About 1 in 10 also incorrectly assumes that the RCMP has ongoing operations in Iraq.

Regardless of whether or not they are aware that Canadian police officers take part in global humanitarian missions, a strong majority of the public (7 in 10) supports these activities (while only about 1 in 10 does not and a similar proportion is undecided on the matter). Although highly supportive of the international

deployment of Canadian police personnel, the public is divided between seeing these missions as increasing the safety and security of Canada and having no domestic impact whatsoever. Importantly, less than 1 in 10 thinks this work will have a negative impact.

The public's positive assessment of the RCMP is not limited to their role in international policing operations. To the contrary, the RCMP has consistently received the highest confidence ratings of any organization with a public security mandate. Moreover, the incidence of those rating their confidence in the RCMP as being "high" has continued to grow over the past year.

#### *Security & Technology – Policing new technologies and regulating the Internet*

The growing use of cell phones and other communications technology has created new challenges for policing in Canada and around the world. In light of these emerging challenges, Canadians were asked whether or not they are comfortable with police having the authority to intercept electronic communications after obtaining a warrant to do so. Generally speaking, most do not seem to have a problem with this proposition (7 in 10 are "comfortable" and only about 1 in 10 are "uncomfortable). Things become more complicated, however, when Canadians are asked about the possibility of having their own communications intercepted. While a majority (6 in 10) continues to express a high level of comfort, the proportion saying they are *not* comfortable with police having this power increases to 1 in 4.

On a similar note, Canadians were also asked if they agree with police being able to require Internet service providers (ISPs) to disclose personal information about their customers (i.e., their names or addresses). In the case of terrorist investigations, a majority of the Canadian public (6 in 10) says they would support this type of disclosure by ISPs (and only 1 in 4 would not). Support for this type of disclosure is even greater when it comes to child pornography investigations (8 in 10 supports and only about 1 in 10 does not). The higher level of support for disclosure in cases of child pornography is likely rooted in the fact that most consider this a serious crime (9 in 10 "very" or "somewhat serious") – one Canadian police are perceived as being not entirely equipped to handle.

Given their views on child exploitation (and child pornography specifically), it is not unexpected to find a large majority of the public in favour of regulating the Internet for this type of offensive content in much the same way that television and radio is currently regulated. Interestingly, the same proportion of the public (8 in 10) also supports prohibiting the use of Internet by those convicted of committing crimes online.

#### *Laws & Legislation – The Anti-terrorism Act & Security certificates*

Passed shortly after the events of September 11, 2001, the Anti-terrorism Act (ATA) is a primary component of Canada's overall anti-terrorism strategy. Awareness of this impressive piece of legislation, however, is rather modest (1 in 2 "vaguely"/"clearly" recall hearing about it). The level of attention being paid to the first real test of the ATA – the trial of Mohammed Momin Khawaja – is also rather modest. Indeed, despite receiving a great deal of media attention, a plurality of Canadians says they are not following the case at all. For the few paying attention to the Khawaja trial, assessment of this case is fairly. While a slight plurality regard the trial as evidence that the Government of Canada is lacking the tools it needs to deal with alleged cases of terrorism, almost as many feels that it demonstrates that the Government is equipped in this regard.

Even fewer Canadians are familiar with another tool being used in alleged cases of terrorism – the security certificate (1 in 3 vs. 1 in 2 aware of the Anti-Terrorism Act). Despite having only modest awareness of security certificates, Canadians have fairly formed opinions on the use of these measures. When it comes to the rules on detention, 8 in 10 Canadians feels that the Government is justified in using security certificates to detain non-citizens considered a threat to national security. Only about 1 in 10 feels that these individuals should not be arrested, detained, or deported unless they have committed an offence. While these views have fluctuated somewhat over time, a persistent majority has always supported their use under these circumstances. Canadians are slightly more divided when it comes to the rules on access to evidence. In this case, a slight majority is of the view that a non-citizen detained under a security certificate should have access to all evidence against them. Over time, however, this has increasingly been challenged by the view that the current practice of withholding some evidence is justifiable for reasons of national security.

*Transportation security – Security of air travel*

As we approach the seventh anniversary of the terrorist events of September 11, 2001, the Canadian public still perceives there to be a terrorist threat to air travel. Indeed, it is a strong majority (3 in 4) that thinks that international air travel is vulnerable to a terrorist attack (and only 1 in 5 does not). While less pronounced than the perceived threat against international air travel, it is still close to 1 in 2 Canadians that believe that a terrorist threat exists for domestic air travel as well. These threats, however, are not considered “new” (i.e., at least 7 in 10 say the risks to both domestic and international air travel is unchanged from 2007).

Even though a threat is still seen to exist, a majority of the public (about 2 in 3) believes that the government has done “everything reasonable” to ensure the security of travel in Canada post-9/11. It is only a few (about 1 in 5) that thinks the Government could be doing more. Not surprisingly, a majority of the public (2 in 3) also approves of the security procedures currently in place at Canadian airports.