



## What Is Most Important to Our Identity?

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The Association for Canadian Studies commissioned this poll from Environics Research Group/Focus Canada. The survey of 2,002 Canadians 18 years of age and over looks at issue of identity in Canada. The ACS-Environics survey was carried out by telephone from March 15-23, 2003. Results are accurate to within plus or minus 3,5%, 19 times out of 20.

When Canadians are asked what is most important to their identity, the most obvious cleavage in results arises between francophone and anglophone Canadians. As the 'first' response to the question, francophones cite language as most important to their identity and culture while anglophones refer to ancestry and ethnic origin as somewhat more important than language, which ranks a close second.

### Which is the most important part of your identity and culture? (First Mention)

By language spoken at home

	Total	English	French
Language	33	24	61
Ancestry and ethnic origin	25	29	14
Religion	11	12	8
Political ideology / orientation	11	12	7
Gender	9	11	4
Social class	7	7	5

The difference between French and English respondents is reflected in the regional breakdowns of the most important identity markers. There is a fair degree of consistency in the pattern across the country. Beyond the divide over religion, political ideology and gender are stronger outside of Quebec than within the province.

By region (First Mention)

	Total - Canada	Atlantic Provinces	Quebec	Ontario	Western Canada	Canada excluding Quebec
Language	33	29	60	26	23	25
Ancestry and ethnic origin	25	31	13	26	32	29
Religion	11	13	8	12	13	12
Political ideology / orientation	11	6	8	13	11	12
Gender	9	10	4	11	10	11
Social class	7	7	5	7	7	7

Amongst immigrants one observes that persons of European extraction tend to regard language as the most important part of their identity and culture whereas those of non-European origins tend to choose language, ancestry & ethnic origin and religion to fairly similar degrees. This may be especially relevant given that the fastest growing segment of the population is persons of European descent.

#### By non-British immigration (First Mention)

	Total	Europe	Other
Language	33	38	26
Ancestry and ethnic origin	25	22	24
Religion	11	13	24
Political ideology / orientation	11	8	12
Gender	9	2	5
Social class	7	9	4

On the basis of age, ancestry and ethnic origin is clearly more of a factor for people under the age of 60, whereas religion becomes more relevant to those persons beyond that age.

#### By Age (First Mention)

	Total	18 to 29	30 to 44	45 to 59	60 or more
Language	33	35	31	30	38
Ancestry and ethnic origin	25	23	27	31	19
Religion	11	8	13	9	15
Political ideology / orientation	11	12	11	10	9
Gender	9	8	10	10	8
Social class	7	10	6	6	5

On the basis of party preference the most interesting difference is between those supporters of the Bloc Québécois, for whom language is especially relevant, and those supporters of the Canadian Alliance, where language is the second choice behind ancestry and ethnic origin and religion holds stronger importance than is the case for others.

#### By federal political preference (First Mention)

	Total - Canada	Liberal	P.C.	NDP	Canadian Alliance	Bloc Québécois
Language	33	34	30	25	22	72
Ancestry and ethnic origin	25	26	26	28	29	10
Religion	11	9	13	11	17	6
Political ideology / orientation	11	11	9	16	13	6
Gender	9	10	10	11	8	2
Social class	7	7	9	7	8	3

Respondents listed a second identity marker. On this 'second' marker, there is little difference between English- and French-speaking Canadians, though French-speaking Canadians still place language slightly higher in importance.

By language spoken at home (Second Mention)

	Total	English	French
Language	18	16	20
Ancestry and ethnic origin	25	24	26
Religion	13	12	14
Political ideology / orientation	12	12	14
Gender	11	11	10
Social class	11	11	8

On a regional basis, all regions Ancestry and ethnic origin as the most important 'second' marker.

By region (Second Mention)

	Total - Canada	Atlantic Provinces	Quebec	Ontario	Western Canada	Canada excluding Quebec
Language	18	23	18	17	16	18
Ancestry and ethnic origin	25	27	28	23	23	24
Religion	13	15	13	13	12	13
Political ideology / orientation	12	6	14	12	13	11
Gender	11	10	11	10	12	11
Social class	11	8	8	11	12	11

Non-European immigrants are far more likely than European immigrants to mention language as their second marker. Ancestry and ethnic origin is the most often mentioned for European respondents.

By non-British immigration (Second Mention)

	Total	Europe	Other
Language	18	11	28
Ancestry and ethnic origin	25	23	20
Religion	13	14	13
Political ideology / orientation	12	19	8
Gender	11	8	10
Social class	11	9	10

There is little difference by age on second mention answers.

By Age (Second Mention)

	Total	18 to 29	30 to 44	45 to 59	60 or more
Language	18	13	19	18	18
Ancestry and ethnic origin	25	25	23	24	27
Religion	13	12	13	13	14
Political ideology / orientation	12	12	13	14	11
Gender	11	12	11	10	8
Social class	11	14	10	10	9

Some differences by political preference include a higher percentage for Ancestry and ethnic origin (32%) and Political ideology / orientation (20%) by Bloc Québécois supporters and 18% response for Social Class by NDP supporters.

By federal political preference (Second Mention)

	Total - Canada	Liberal	P.C.	NDP	Canadian Alliance	Bloc Québécois
Language	18	17	19	16	18	15
Ancestry and ethnic origin	25	26	28	22	24	32
Religion	13	14	15	10	14	8
Political ideology / orientation	12	11	9	13	14	20
Gender	11	12	10	10	10	14
Social class	11	11	9	18	7	8

**Which is the most important part of your identity and culture?  
(\*All Mentions)**

By language spoken at home (All Mentions)

	Total	English	French
Language	49	39	<b>79</b>
Ancestry and ethnic origin	47	<b>51</b>	37
Religion	23	23	20
Political ideology / orientation	21	22	20
Gender	19	21	13
Social class	16	17	12

By region (All Mentions)

	Total - Canada	Atlantic Provinces	Quebec	Ontario	Western Canada	Canada excluding Quebec
Language	49	50	<b>75</b>	41	37	41
Ancestry and ethnic origin	47	<b>56</b>	37	47	53	50
Religion	23	27	19	23	23	24
Political ideology / orientation	21	<b>12</b>	20	23	23	22
Gender	19	19	<b>14</b>	20	21	20
Social class	16	15	12	17	18	17

By non-British immigration (All Mentions)

	Total	Europe	Other
Language	49	48	51
Ancestry and ethnic origin	47	42	42
Religion	23	25	<b>36</b>
Political ideology / orientation	21	24	20
Gender	19	10	14
Social class	16	17	13

By Age (All Mentions)

	Total	18 to 29	30 to 44	45 to 59	60 or more
Language	49	47	48	46	54
Ancestry and ethnic origin	47	45	48	53	43
Religion	23	19	24	20	28
Political ideology / orientation	21	23	23	22	19
Gender	19	19	20	19	15
Social class	16	22	15	14	13

By federal political preference (All Mentions)

	Total - Canada	Liberal	P.C.	NDP	Canadian Alliance	Bloc Québécois
Language	49	50	47	40	<b>37</b>	<b>84</b>
Ancestry and ethnic origin	47	50	51	48	49	36
Religion	23	22	26	20	29	21
Political ideology / orientation	21	21	17	29	25	18
Gender	19	21	19	20	16	17
Social class	16	17	17	<b>23</b>	14	13