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THE ENVIRONICS INSTITUTE

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Our vision

Survey research -- properly conducted and published -- helps all of us better understand our world as it is today, how it's changing, and where it may be heading.

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December 2014

Welcome to the latest news from the Environics Institute for Survey Research.

In the News

Canadians speak on climate change



As international leaders meet in Lima Peru in search of an inclusive global agreement on climate change, where does the Canadian public stand on the issue. Do they believe the science is now conclusive, and are they looking for their country to join with others to announce new initiatives to reduce greenhouse as emissions?

These questions and others are answered in a Focus Canada survey just released by the Institute, in partnership with the [David Suzuki Foundation](#). This survey updates trends on key indicator questions that have been asked on Environics surveys every year since 2007.

The survey reveals that Canadians are increasingly convinced that climate change is happening and are looking for leadership from their governments on climate change. Few are well informed about what policies might be the appropriate response, but British Columbians are growing more comfortable with their carbon tax (in place since 2008), and there is modest majority support for the same type of climate change policy in other provinces, most notably in Ontario and Atlantic Canada.

[READ THE FULL REPORT](#)

[See op-ed published in the Globe and Mail](#)

Americas Barometer 2014 survey released



On November 27, the Institute released a major study of democracy, governance and civic engagement in Canada, in partnership with the Ottawa-based [Institute on Governance](#). [The Americas Barometer](#) is a 26 country public opinion survey across the Americas, conducted every two years by a consortium of academic and think-tank partners spanning the western hemisphere

This year's survey covers a wide range of issues, including:

- Participation in the democratic process and civil society
- Confidence in the country's democracy, political system and key institutions
- Tolerance of public dissent
- Experiences with crime and neighbourhood safety
- Government protection of citizen privacy and surveillance for national security

This year's study reveals that Canadians continue to have confidence in the democratic system overall, although this does not extend to all of the country's institutions. Opinions have remained notably stable over the past two years, and Canadians are still among the most positive of citizens across the western hemisphere about their system of government.

[READ THE REPORT](#)

Institute set to release new study on governance and the public service

The Environics has also partnered with the Institute on Governance to conduct a landmark public opinion study on governance and the public sector in Canada.

Most of the public discussion about government has focused on policies and spending decisions, with little if any attention given to the process of governance and how our governments should operate. What do Canadians know and think about how their country, province and municipality are governed, and about the people who carry out these responsibilities?



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EXPERTISE DE POINTE

The survey reveals that Canadians continue to see their governments as essential institutions, and there is broad agreement on some expectations about how they should operate. But citizens are divided on how well these expectations are being met today, whether at the municipal, provincial or federal level. Most agree that improvements are needed, but there is no collective vision of what this might entail.

[Check our website for the upcoming release.](#)

Current Projects

Black Experience Project in the GTA: Phase 2 Research launches with a party



The Institute's major research initiative with the Greater Toronto Area Black community has made considerable progress over the past six months. The primary focus has been on extensive outreach across the GTA to build awareness of the project and invite individuals who self-identify as Black to participate and share their story. The survey will launch in January, with public release of the findings scheduled for mid-fall 2015.

On November 26, the project hosted a public "meet and greet" event at the Daniels Spectrum in the Regent Park neighbourhood of Toronto. The event acknowledged the contributions of stakeholders and volunteers, and marked the upcoming launch of the survey. The event also featured the official launch of the project's new ["call to action" video](#), as well as the announcement of a new arts initiative, in collaboration with the

[Michaëlle Jean Foundation](#), the [Art Gallery of Ontario](#) (AGO) and the [Nia Centre for the Arts](#).

The [4th Wall Scratch & Mix Project: Empowering Black Youth through the Arts Challenge](#) will invite youth aged 14-30 to submit artwork on a theme of "Empowering the Black Community." This project is an interdisciplinary grassroots arts and research project, using the arts to make the invisible experiences of Black youth visible by raising awareness about and developing solutions to the challenges and opportunities faced in the Greater Toronto Area.

For more information about the Black Experience Project, see www.environics.ca/bep-gta

Toronto social capital project launches with six lead partners



The Institute is pleased to announce the launch of a new groundbreaking study of social capital to map the level of social trust and community engagement among Toronto residents, and provide a foundation for strengthening the social capital of the city. This project is a partnership of six city-building organizations: the [City of Toronto](#), the Environics Institute, the [Maytree Foundation](#), the [Metcalf Foundation](#), the [Toronto Foundation](#), and the [YMCA of](#)

[Greater Toronto](#).

"Social capital" is the term used to describe the vibrancy of social networks and the extent to which there is trust and reciprocity within a community and among individuals. It is the essential "lubricant" that makes it possible for societies to function, and for people to get along peacefully even when they have little in common. To what extent do Torontonians feel connected to, and actively engage with, their neighbours and community organizations? How well do they trust their neighbours? These questions matter because social trust and engagement are critical to a good quality of life, a healthy population, safe streets, and economic prosperity.

Based on the principle of "you can only manage what you measure", this project will provide the public, private, not-for-profit, and philanthropic sectors with the empirical basis for data-driven policies, programs initiatives, and investments that will sustain and strengthen the community's social capital, social cohesion and subjective well-being, and the benefits that flow from them.

Phase 1 of the project kicks off in January 2015, which will encompass issue scoping, research design, and community outreach. For more information, contact [Keith Neuman](#)

In The Works

Canada's millennial generation - social values and citizenship study

The Environics Institute is pleased to announce that the [Counselling Foundation of Canada](#) will be one of the lead partners in a landmark study of the social values and citizenship orientation of Canada's millennial generation. This new research will examine Canadian millennials through the lense of distinct social values tribes, with a particular focus on civic engagement and career aspirations for their future lives.

Millennials make up almost a quarter of the Canadian population.

The cohort of Canadians born between 1980 and 1995 (now aged 19 to 34)

is among the largest in the country's history, and is literally the country's future: who they are today and what they become will shape Canada for the next half-century and beyond. Leaders must find ways to engage these young adults as citizens, consumers, employees, voters, and donors.



The Counselling
Foundation of Canada

Understanding what this generation thinks, cares about, will buy and how it participates in civil society is of critical importance to many organizations. Like generations before them, Millennials cannot be lumped into a single entity linked only by birthdate; this leads to oversimplification and misleading stereotypes.

This challenge provides the impetus for a new Environics Institute initiative to map the distinct social values "tribes" of today's Canadian Millennials. This work builds upon the social values work pioneered by the Environics Research Group, and showcased in Michael Adams' groundbreaking book *Sex in the Snow*, which in 1997 charted the social values tribes of Elders, Boomers and Gen-Xers.

Upcoming workshop for journalists on public opinion polling and the media

Institute Executive Director Keith Neuman will be teaming up with CBC Ombudsman Esther Enkin to offer a one day workshop for journalists on public opinion polling and the media. The workshop will take place in Spring 2015, and will be hosted by [The Ryerson School of Journalism](#).



Public opinion research has always been tightly linked to journalism and the media, and polling is now a ubiquitous part of media content (especially in politics and during elections). But the relationship between polling and media is complex and often problematic: Journalists often have little understanding of how research is done, how to evaluate its veracity and how best to report on it. Media organizations face intense pressures to run with polling stories regardless of how accurate or responsible, and polling firms may take shortcuts in the interest of producing results that boost their profile and business.

This will be the first workshop ever offered to journalists in Canada that covers the nexus between public opinion research and the media. It will cover the history of polling and its relationship with the media, the fundamentals of research methods and statistics (e.g., how surveys are designed and collected, what questions to ask when evaluating a poll), selected case studies of how polling has been used effectively and ineffectively, and current practices both in Canada and internationally.



National public opinion survey on Canada's Aboriginal Peoples

The Environics Institute is planning to launch a new survey in early 2015 to take a proper reading of Canadian public opinion on the key issues facing Aboriginal Peoples and their relation to the rest of the country. Given the current political climate, there is an urgent need for a current, balanced and thoughtful understanding of the non-Aboriginal population in Canada in terms of:

- What they know and do not know about the Aboriginal community, and the issues it faces;
- Perceptions and attitudes about Aboriginal peoples generally, and about specific issues (e.g., responsibility of government, Idle No More, solutions for problems);
- How opinions toward Aboriginal peoples have changed (or not) over the past decade (based on trend analysis using previous Institute research); and

- How perspectives vary across the population, based on region, demographics and social values

Such research is urgently needed to clarify through credible empirical evidence where the general public stands on Aboriginal issues, to inform the media, decision-makers, opinion leaders and others in both the Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal communities. Such information can help avoid a mis-reading of public sentiment that can lead to growing divisiveness and conflict that may take years to repair.

The Environics Institute is partnering on this project with [Tides Canada](#), [the Institute on Governance](#) and [The Circle on Philanthropy and Aboriginal Peoples in Canada](#). The partners are now seeking sponsors to support this important research. For more information, contact [Keith Neuman](#).

Update on Survey of Muslims in Canada

In 2006, the Environics Institute's inaugural project was the first-ever national survey to examine the relationship between Canadian Muslims and Canadian society-at-large. The Institute is now gearing up to conduct a second national survey to update the 2006 findings and expand the scope of the research.



On this project the Institute is partnering with the [Tessellate Institute](#), [the Olive Tree Foundation](#), and [the Inspirit Foundation](#).

The project is being made possible by the generous support from several organizations and individuals, but additional financial resources are still needed to launch the project in 2015. Contributions are tax deductible (contact [Keith Neuman](#) for details).

Outreach and Education

Crime and populism - an evidence-based analysis

In the September 2014 issue of Policy Options, Institute founder and President Michael Adams published [an in-depth piece](#) examining the Harper government's tough on crime agenda, and why it has become one of its showcase policies.

Since taking office in 2006, the federal government has introduced no fewer than 81 crime bills, though only 30 have been passed into law. According to University of Toronto criminologist Anthony Doob, the effect of these new laws has largely been to lengthen sentences (as with mandatory minimums) or to eliminate chances to have sentences shortened (as with the elimination of "accelerated parole review," a mechanism that could temper punishments for first-time, nonviolent offenders). Michael explores the rationale behind this position from the standpoint of politics and public opinion.

POLICY
OPTIONS



Asking the right questions about survey research

In the latest in a long-running "Five Good Ideas" lunch and learn series hosted by [the Maytree Foundation](#), Environics Institute Executive Director Keith Neuman presented to a group of 100 plus from the non-profit, government and corporate sectors on November 19, 2014 about survey research and asking the right questions.

Surveys, polls and market research are ubiquitous in today's world, a predictable response to the ever growing pressures to better understand audiences, customers and stakeholders.

Everyone is doing it, but doing it effectively is often a challenge, especially for non-profits which typically lack the internal expertise and financial resources of governments and corporations.

Today, collecting survey data has never been easier thanks to inexpensive online tools now on the market. But these tools do not help address the more important questions about determining what information to collect, how to effectively reach target populations and how to make sense of the data collected.

[Watch the full video presentation.](#)



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In addition to providing updates on Institute activities, our tweets keep followers up to date with the latest public opinion and social research from across Canada and around the world - most of which is never covered by traditional media. Follow us [@Environics_Inst](#)

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