

FACT SHEET : 2013 General Social Survey on Social Identity

NATIONAL SYMBOLS

What is the General Social Survey?

- ➔ The General Social Survey (GSS) is Statistics Canada's primary social survey. It seeks to gather data on social trends in order to monitor changes in the living conditions and well-being of Canadians over time, and to provide information on specific social policy issues.
- ➔ The GSS is a reliable, trusted and credible data source for performance measurement and policy research. The 2013 GSS on Social Identity used a sample of 27,695 Canadians.
- ➔ The target population includes all persons 15 years and older living in the provinces of Canada, excluding full-time residents of institutions.

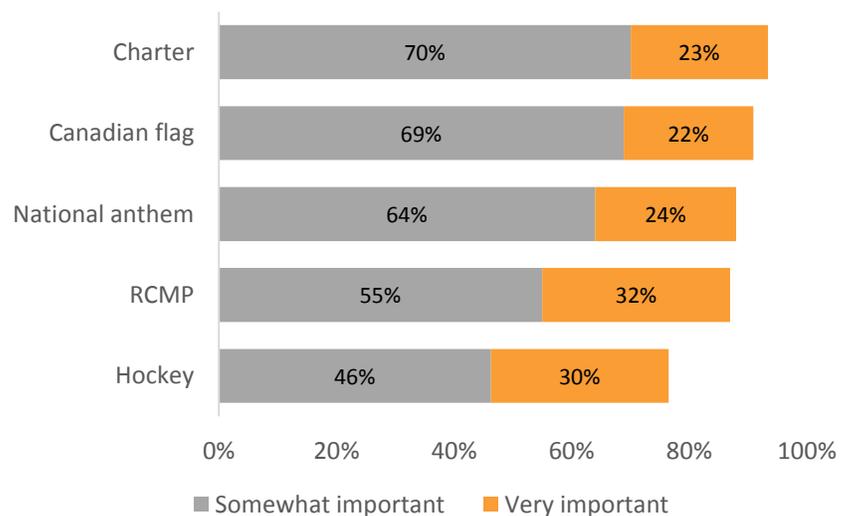
Why do national symbols matter?

- A symbol is a representational token that simultaneously designates itself and figuratively represents something else. National symbols are expressions of nationhood, and may represent national values, goals or history. They appeal to the sense of collective identity shared by the members of a nation. National symbols can serve different functions, including crystalizing national identity, creating bonds between citizens, motivating collective action, honouring the efforts of citizens, legitimizing authority, and sometimes aiding popular political protest.¹ Our personal and collective identification with national symbols unites Canadians, strengthens Canadian identity and enhances the sense of belonging to Canada.

How important are national symbols for Canadian identity?

- The 2013 GSS on Social Identity asked respondents to evaluate, on a four-point scale (very important, somewhat important, not very important, not at all important), the importance of certain key symbols for Canadian identity. Responses to questions pertaining to the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms* (the Charter), the Canadian flag, the national anthem, the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP)², and hockey were analysed.
- Survey results reveal a ranking in the importance, for Canadian identity, attributed to these symbols by Canadians: 93% of Canadians believe that the Charter is important for Canadian identity, followed by the Canadian flag (91%), the national anthem (88%), the RCMP (87%) and hockey (77%).³

Importance of Symbols for Canadian Identity



Aboriginal Identity⁴

- Overall, members of the First Nations share the same outlook as the general Canadian population on the importance of the Charter, the Canadian flag, the national anthem and hockey for Canadian identity.⁵
- Compared to the First Nations and the general population, the Métis rank symbols differently: the Canadian flag first, followed by the Charter, the national anthem and hockey. Further, the Métis attribute more importance to all symbols except the national anthem (where responses between First Nations and the Métis are similar).

¹ Cerulo, K. (1995) *Identity Designs: The Sights and Sounds of a Nation*. New Jersey: Rutgers University Press.

² Because it is less relevant to the work of the Department, data on the importance of the RCMP as a symbol for Canadian identity was only analyzed for the total population, not disaggregated according to the various demographic variables presented for the other symbols.

³ Represents the combination of *very important* and *somewhat important* responses.

⁴ It should be noted that the survey excluded residents of the Northwest Territories, Nunavut, and Yukon. Owing to this exclusion, the Inuit are not discussed because the remaining sample of the Inuit population is very small.

⁵ Compared to the general population, the First Nations attribute a bit less importance to the Charter and a bit more to hockey.

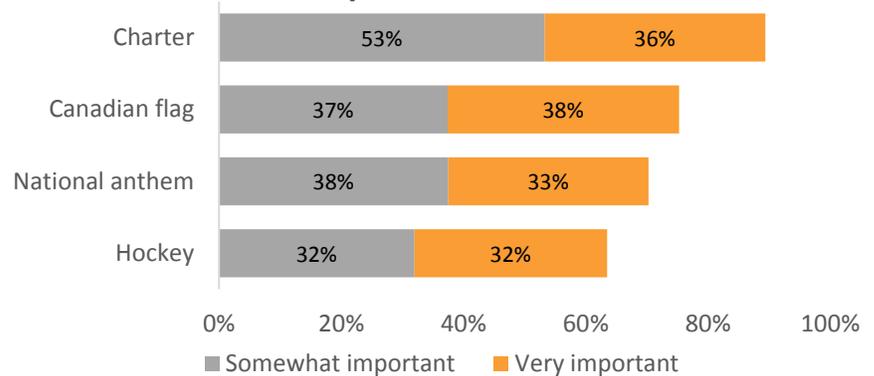
Age

- The ranking of the importance of national symbols is identical across all age groups, with the exception of Canadians over the age of 65, for whom the importance of the flag and the national anthem outrank that of the Charter.
- For young Canadians aged 15 to 24 years, the Charter is seen as an important symbol for Canadian identity by 94%, followed by the flag (88%), the national anthem (84%), and hockey (79%).

First Official Language Spoken

- Francophones within Quebec think that the Charter, the flag, the national anthem and hockey are, in that order, important for Canadian identity. However, their responses are much weaker than those of the general population.⁶
- Francophones outside Quebec rank the importance of key symbols for Canadian identity as follows: the Canadian flag, the national anthem, the Charter and hockey. In many instances, their responses are stronger than those of Anglophones.

Importance of Symbols for Canadian Identity: Francophones in Quebec



Generational Status

- First generation Canadians (immigrants to Canada) are more likely to think that the Charter, the flag, the national anthem and hockey are important for Canadian identity than the general population.
- The percentage of individuals who report that these symbols are important for Canadian identity decreases from the first to the second generation, and again from the second generation to those of third generation and beyond.

Visible and Religious Minorities

- Overall, visible minorities think that these symbols are important for Canadian identity at approximately the same degree as the total population. That being said, some symbols appear particularly salient for certain visible minority groups.
- Relative to the general population, West Asian, Latin American, Filipino and Black Canadians are more likely to consider the Charter as *very important* to Canadian identity.
- South Asian, West Asian, Filipino and Black Canadians are more inclined to report that the Canadian flag is *very important* to Canadian identity.
- South Asian, Filipino and Black Canadians are more likely to report that the national anthem is *very important* to Canadian identity.
- Lastly, South Asian, Black, Japanese and Korean Canadians stand out as more likely to believe that hockey is *very important* to Canadian identity.
- Compared to the general population and to other religious groups, Sikhs, Hindus and Muslims are more likely to report that the Charter is *very important* for Canadian identity.

Regions

- The response patterns of residents of the Atlantic, Ontario, Prairie and Western regions are very similar with respect to the importance attributed to these symbols for Canadian identity.
- Quebec region's results stand out, however. Compared to the residents of the other regions, residents of Quebec are less likely to view the Charter, the flag, the anthem and hockey as important for Canadian identity.

The present analysis represents a partnership between Strategic Policy, Planning and Corporate Affairs Sector, Citizenship, Heritage and Regions Sector, and Sport, Major Events and Commemorations Sector.

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⁶ The only symbol for which the responses of Quebec Francophones come close to those of the general population is the Charter (with a -6 percentage point difference).