

MORALITY

## Household Income Levels Define What is Morally Acceptable for Canadians

*Those in the higher-income bracket tend to be more accepting of things like wearing animal fur and gambling than those in the lower-income bracket.*

[TORONTO – Nov. 27, 2009] – A new Angus Reid Public Opinion poll conducted for *Maclean's* has found that the moral compass of Canadians is sometimes linked to their income level.

In the online survey of a representative national sample of 1,003 Canadian adults, most respondents in the higher-income bracket (54%) find pornography morally acceptable, while fewer in the middle-income (41%) and lower-income income brackets (37%) agree.

The same is true when Canadians assess whether the death penalty is morally acceptable. Sixty-three per cent of respondents in the higher-income bracket have no moral qualms about capital punishment, but this proportion is lower amongst middle-income respondents (52%), and drops even further amongst lower-income Canadians (46%).

For the purpose of this analysis, Canadians were divided into three categories according to their yearly household income: \$50,000 or less (lower-income), between \$50,000 and \$99,000 (middle-income), and \$100,000 or more (higher-income).

Respondents in the higher- income bracket are more likely than other Canadians to believe that certain issues are morally acceptable. For instance, while almost eight-in-ten (78%) people in this group regard embryonic stem-cell research as morally

### KEY FINDINGS

#### Morally acceptable:

- **Wearing fur: high-income (65%), middle-income (58%), low-income (47%)**
- **The death penalty: high-income (63%), middle-income (52%), low-income (46%)**
- **Gambling: high-income (76%), middle-income (68%), low-income (49%)**
- **Pornography: high-income (54%), middle-income (41%), low-income (37%)**

Full topline results are at the end of this release.

*From October 7 to October 8, 2009, Angus Reid Public Opinion conducted an online survey among 1,003 randomly selected Canadian adults who are Angus Reid Forum panelists. The margin of error—which measures sampling variability—is +/- 3.1%. The results have been statistically weighted according to the most current education, age, gender and region Census data to ensure samples representative of the entire adult population of Canada. Discrepancies in or between totals are due to rounding.*

**CONTACT:**

Andrew Grenville, Chief Research Officer, 416-640-3993, [andrew.grenville@angus-reid.com](mailto:andrew.grenville@angus-reid.com)

acceptable, this is true for 73 per cent of those in the middle-income bracket, and 62 per cent of those in the lower-income group.

Lifestyle choices such as wearing animal fur (65%) or gambling (76%) are morally acceptable for higher-income Canadians; but fewer respondents in the middle-income bracket also accept them (58% and 68%, respectively). Less than half of those in the lower-income bracket, however, feel the same way about wearing animal fur (47%) or gambling (49%).

### **Middle Income Canadians**

In some cases, it is middle-income Canadians who appear readier than others to see issues as morally acceptable.

About three quarters of respondents in the middle-income bracket (74%) regard sexual relations between two people of the same sex as acceptable, compared to 67 per cent of higher-income Canadians, and 58 per cent of those in the lower-income bracket.

In cases when a married man or woman has an affair, a fifth of middle-income Canadians (21%) condone it, but less than 15 per cent of those in other brackets concur.

Middle-income Canadians (70%) are also slightly more inclined than those in the higher-income bracket (66%) to find doctor-assisted suicide morally acceptable. Fewer lower-income respondents (60%) agree.

### **Agreement Regardless of Income**

Although the trend remains—higher-income Canadians being more inclined view certain issues as morally acceptable—Canadians of all income levels reject certain sensitive issues.

For instance, only between 21 and 27 per cent of respondents in each income bracket condone the use of illegal drugs; between 27 and 31 per cent say suicide is morally acceptable; between 12 and 13 per cent accept the cloning of humans; between 11 and 15 per cent can accept polygamy, and only one or two per cent tolerate paedophilia.

On the other hand, there are certain issues seen as morally acceptable by a solid majority of Canadians in every income level. This is the case with contraception (more than 90%), divorce (more than 80%), having a baby outside of marriage (between 76% and 83%), and abortion (more than 60%).

### **Analysis**

Overall, the survey has found a trend showing that Canadians with higher household incomes are more prone to see a wide array of situations, lifestyle choices and social issues as morally acceptable than middle- and lower-income Canadians.

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In fewer cases, those in the middle-income bracket are the ones pushing a trend towards moral acceptability. In any case, Canadians in the lower income bracket—those living in households making \$50,000 or less—are less inclined to accept the moral validity of most of the issues gauged in this exercise.

*For regional, age, gender, education and language breakdowns, please consult the full tables at:*  
[http://www.visioncritical.com/wp-content/uploads/2009/11/macleans\\_morality.pdf](http://www.visioncritical.com/wp-content/uploads/2009/11/macleans_morality.pdf)

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### Morality

Regardless of whether or not you think each of the following issues should be legal, please indicate whether you personally believe they are morally acceptable or morally wrong.

- "Morally acceptable" listed

	Total	<\$50K	\$50-99K	\$100K+
Abortion	66%	61%	69%	67%
Buying and wearing clothing made of animal fur	53%	47%	58%	65%
Cloning animals	27%	22%	30%	33%
Cloning humans	11%	12%	11%	13%
Contraception	93%	92%	93%	97%
Death penalty	53%	46%	52%	63%
Divorce	84%	82%	86%	87%
Doctor-assisted suicide	65%	60%	70%	66%
Gambling	62%	49%	68%	76%
Having a baby outside of marriage	79%	76%	83%	77%
Married men and/or women having an affair	15%	14%	21%	13%
Medical research using stem cells obtained from human embryos	69%	62%	73%	78%
Medical testing on animals	44%	33%	50%	58%
Paedophilia	1%	2%	1%	0%
Polygamy, when one husband has more than one wife at the same time	12%	15%	11%	12%
Pornography	41%	37%	41%	54%
Prostitution	42%	39%	46%	48%
Sexual relations between an unmarried man and woman	87%	81%	90%	93%
Sexual relations between two people of the same sex	66%	58%	74%	67%
Suicide	28%	27%	30%	31%
Using illegal drugs	25%	21%	29%	27%

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*Angus Reid Public Opinion is a practice of Vision Critical—a global research and technology company specializing in custom online panels, private communities, and innovative online methods. Vision Critical is a leader in the use of the Internet and rich media technology to collect high-quality, in-depth insights for a wide array of clients. Dr. Angus Reid and the Angus Reid Public Opinion team are pioneers in online research methodologies, and have been conducting online surveys since 1995*

*Vision Critical is now one of the largest market research enterprises in the world. In addition to its five offices in Canada—located in Vancouver, Calgary, Regina, Toronto, and Montreal—the firm also has offices in San Francisco, Chicago, New York, London, Paris and Sydney. Its team of specialists provides solutions across every type and sector of research, and currently serves over 200 international clients.*

*Angus Reid Public Opinion polls are conducted using the Angus Reid Forum ([www.angusreidforum.com](http://www.angusreidforum.com)), Springboard America ([www.springboardamerica.com](http://www.springboardamerica.com)) and Springboard UK ([www.springboarduk.com](http://www.springboarduk.com)) online panels, which are carefully recruited to ensure representation across all demographic and psychographic segments of these populations. Panel members pass through rigorous screening and a double opt-in process ensuring highly motivated and responsive members. These premier online survey platforms present respondents with highly visual, interactive, and engaging surveys, ensuring that panel members provide thoughtful and reliable responses. Each survey is actively sampled and weighted to model that characteristics of the universe required and employs the latest in quality control techniques to ensure data validity.*

*Angus Reid, the only public opinion firm to exclusively use online methods to follow the views of the electorate during the 2008 federal campaign, offered the most accurate prediction of the results of Canada's 40th election.*

<http://bit.ly/4zxf1S>

*Since 2006, Angus Reid has covered eight provincial elections in Canada—more than any other pollster in the country—and the results have accurately predicted the outcome of each of these democratic processes.*

*More information on the way Angus Reid conducts public opinion research can be found at*

<http://bit.ly/3z0u1l>

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**For more information, please contact  
our spokesperson listed in the footnote.**

**Copies of this poll are available on our website:**

**<http://www.visioncritical.com/category/global-opinions-and-trends>**

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