



News Release

Canadians rank highly when it comes to public science knowledge, attitudes, and engagement, finds Expert Panel

Ottawa (August 28, 2014) – A new expert panel report, ***Science Culture: Where Canada Stands***, released today by the Council of Canadian Academies, helps to paint the clearest picture of Canada's science culture and science culture support system in 25 years. The expert panel who conducted the assessment found Canadians excel in public science knowledge, attitudes, and engagement; however they also determined there is room for improvement in some areas, including skills development.

"Overall, our 14-member expert panel found that Canadians perform well across a range of science culture indicators," said Dr. Arthur Carty, Chair of the Expert Panel. "It is important that we continue to strive for a society that looks to science to inform decisions and to broaden our world view."

The Expert Panel based their findings from a review of relevant literature, a new public survey of 2,000 Canadians. The report does not provide policy recommendations but rather provides evidence and insights for policy-makers and others looking to strengthen science culture, and for Canadians to better understand what science culture is, and what it means for our country.

The Panel's key findings are:

Canadians have positive attitudes towards science and technology and low levels of reservations about science compared with citizens of other countries.

- Canadians have some of the lowest levels of reservation towards science, ranking 1st out of 17 countries.
- Canada ranks 9th out of 17 countries in terms of attitudes regarding the promise of science.
- Public apprehension about science has declined in Canada since 1989.
- Since 2004 there has also been an increase in skepticism about the ability of S&T to achieve a range of social, environmental and economic objectives.

Canadians exhibit a high level of engagement with science and technology relative to citizens of other countries.

- 93% of Canadians surveyed by the Panel report being moderately or very interested in scientific discoveries and technological developments. Canada is ranked 1st out of 33 countries on this measure.
- Consistent with other countries, survey respondents who were: younger; male; highly educated; and/or had high incomes levels had a greater interest in science.

Canadians' level of science knowledge is on a par with or above citizens of other countries for which data are available.

- Approximately 42% of Canadians surveyed exhibit a sufficient level of knowledge to grasp basic concepts and understand general media coverage of scientific issues.

- Canada ranks first on a science literacy index among countries with similar available data, though this ranking should be viewed with caution as science literacy has been increasing over time in most countries and data for other countries is less recent.
- Despite Canada's strong performance internationally, more than half of Canadians surveyed still lack the level of science knowledge needed to understand current public debates about issues involving science and technology.

Canada's performance on indicators of science and technology skills development is variable compared with other OECD countries.

- Canada ranks first among OECD countries in overall post-secondary educational attainment, but only 20% of first university degrees are in the sciences and engineering.
- Immigration also plays an important role in supplying S&T skills: 51% of those who hold degrees in science, technology, engineering, or mathematics are immigrants.

The Panel's report also contains a review of the network of organizations, programs, and initiatives that support the development of science culture in Canada, and highlights promising strategies that can be used to strengthen science culture in the future.

-30-

For more information or to download a copy of the Panel's report, visit the Council of Canadian Academies' website, www.scienceadvice.ca.

About the Council of Canadian Academies

The Council of Canadian Academies is an independent, not-for-profit organization that began operation in 2005. The Council supports evidence-based, expert assessments to inform public policy development in Canada. Assessments are conducted by independent, multidisciplinary panels of experts from across Canada and abroad. The Council's blue-ribbon panels serve free of charge and many are Fellows of the Council's Member Academies: the Royal Society of Canada; the Canadian Academy of Engineering; and the Canadian Academy of Health Sciences. The Council's vision is to be a trusted voice for science in the public interest. For more information visit www.scienceadvice.ca

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