



United Nations Association in Canada  
Association canadienne pour les nations unies

**Report on**  
**a Survey of Canadians**  
**during the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary year of**  
**the United Nations**  
**(in 2005)**

by the

United Nations Association in Canada

Ottawa, Ontario

*Results of an opinion poll  
to evaluate Canadian awareness of,  
attitudes towards and perceptions of  
the United Nations*





# Summary Report of UNA-Canada's 2005 UN/60 Citizens Panel Survey

April 2006

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## Appendix I – The UN/60 Citizens Panel Survey

The United Nations Association in Canada (UNA-Canada) is a registered charity, founded in 1946, with a mandate to educate and engage Canadians in support for, and understanding of the United Nations and its issues which have a global impact. A Canadian NGO, UNA-Canada has a wide variety of programmes and activities through which to build Canadian capacity to identify and address emerging international issues on a national basis and to provide a foresight and policy research capacity underpinning this innovative programming. Working with the private and public sectors, academia, community leaders, like-minded NGOs as well as multilateral organizations, UNA-Canada provides a place for Canadians to offer their made-in-Canada solutions to challenges confronting the global commons and to develop skills in living together in peace and prosperity.

**United Nations Association in Canada**  
300-309 Cooper Street, Ottawa, ON K2P 0G5 ✦ [www.unac.org](http://www.unac.org) ✦ [info@unac.org](mailto:info@unac.org)

## BACKGROUND AND INTRODUCTION

For 60 years, the blue and white flag of the United Nations has flown high, especially in the most desperate parts of the world. According to the Human Security Report (Oxford University Press, 2005), it has brought about the end of more civil wars through negotiation in the past 15 years than in the previous 200 years. It has brought hope and care to billions of the world's citizens, and has empowered men and women of all nationalities, religions and races to stand shoulder to shoulder to help those in need. The UN has let us look beyond what is, to what could be.

In the fall of this special anniversary year, the United Nations Association in Canada undertook a nation-wide public opinion poll to evaluate Canadian awareness of, attitudes towards and perceptions of the United Nations. A survey, entitled "Citizens Panel Survey" was mailed out to approximately 175,000 English-speaking Canadians who had not been past supporters of UNA-Canada but who had given to another charity(ies) within the past two years.

*As such, the results are specific to the sector of society targeted by the mailing – those considered "Caring Canadians". According to 2004 statistics from Stats Canada, the average age of tax filers who claimed charitable giving is 52 and the average total income is \$43,700. A more targeted research poll conducted by Mal Warwick & Associates Inc. in 2003 looked specifically at Canadians who made charitable gifts in response to a charity solicitation by mail. Their findings showed that this sector of Canadian society is well educated (over 70% went to college or university), predominately female (60%), and retired (70%) with no dependent children (over 80%).*

The purpose of the survey was a) to evaluate the knowledge and opinions of Canadians on the UN and on Canada's involvement in the UN, and b) to invite survey recipients to support our citizen's movement in support of the UN.

While the survey resulted in valuable and valid information on the attitudes of "Caring Canadians", it should be noted that this was not a scientific survey. Furthermore, no additional profiles were made of the survey respondents (gender, age, income or education level).

# of surveys mailed:	175,183	
# of completed surveys returned:	16,713	(9.5% response rate) **
# of surveys tallied:	2,268	(13.6% of returned surveys)

\*\* It bears noting that a 9.5% response rate is a very strong survey completion rate indicative of a) perception of importance of the issues and b) perception of the authority/credibility of the surveying agency.

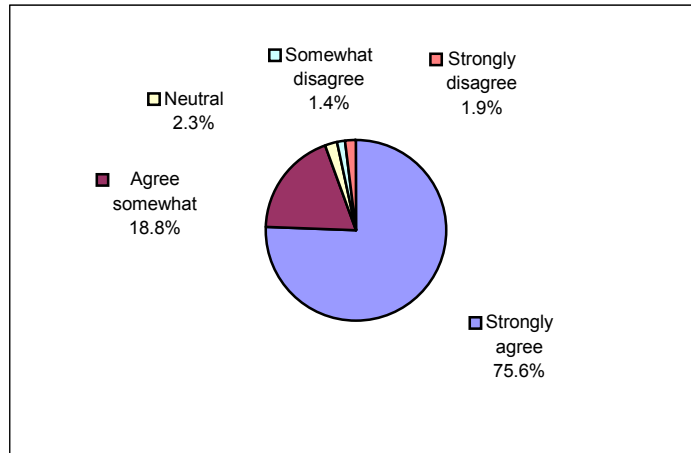
## SURVEY RESULTS

### Section I - Multiple Choice on “Level of Agreement”

Respondents were asked to indicate their level of agreement (from strongly agree to strongly disagree) with the following five statements:

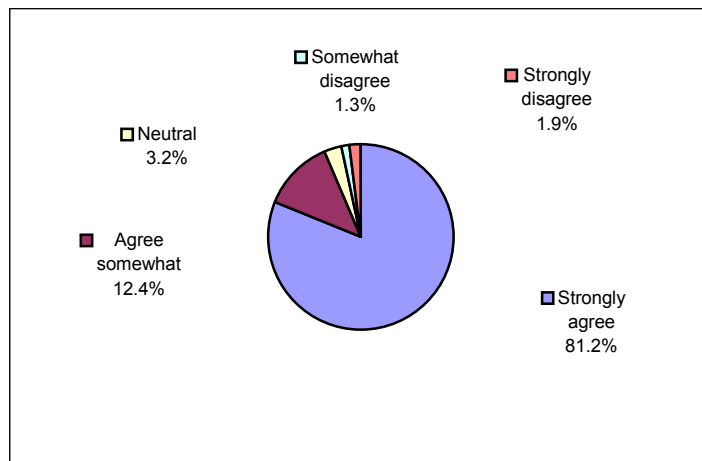
1. Canada should continue to participate in UN peacekeeping missions around the world.

*(2253 or 99.3% of respondents answered this question. Of the responses received, the percentage of respondents who indicated a specific level of agreement is indicated on the chart to the right...)*



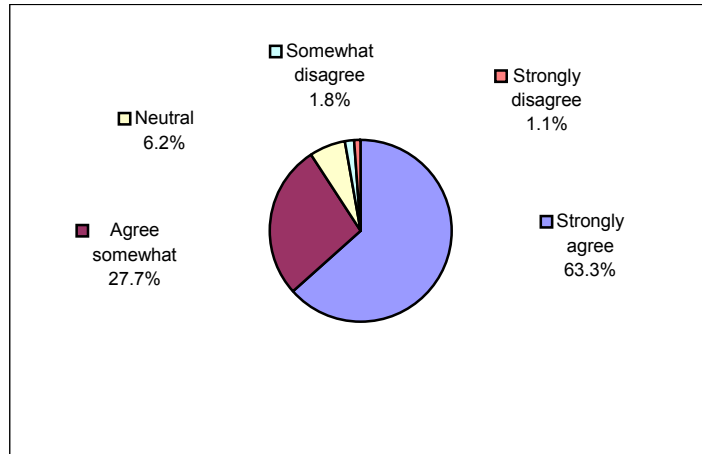
2. Canada and other countries need to commit themselves to the processes begun at the 1992 Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro to address complex environmental problems like global warming, deforestation and the destruction of the ozone layer.

*(2263 or 99.8% of respondents answered this question.)*



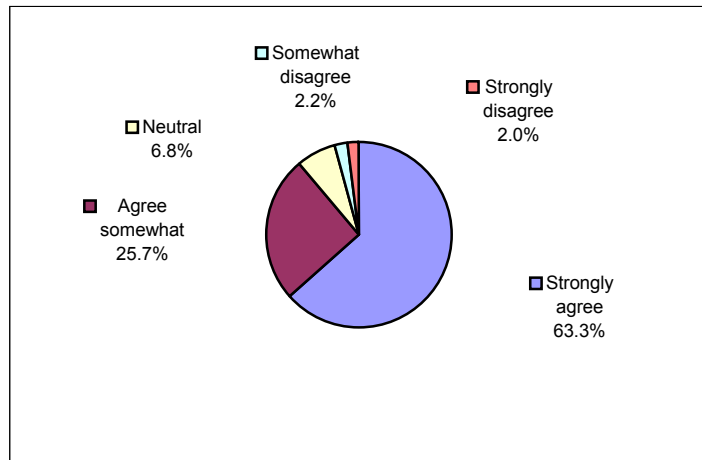
3. Canada should act upon the recommendations of the 1993 Vienna Conference on Human Rights and the 1995 Beijing Conference on Women by considering the human rights record of countries when making foreign aid policy decisions that affect them.

*(2238 or 98.7% of respondents answered this question)*



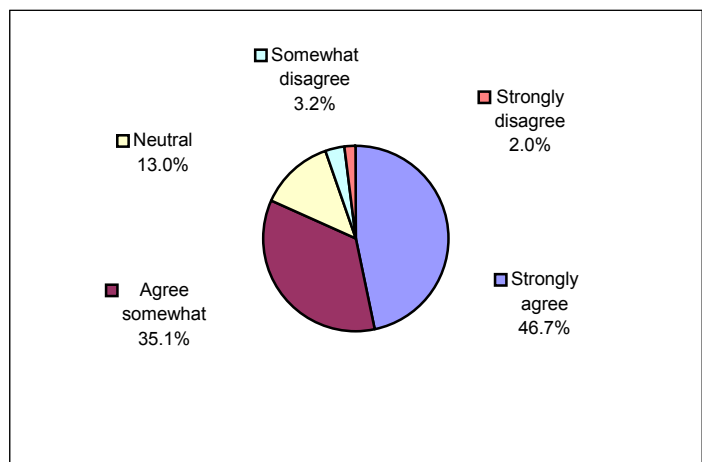
4. Canada needs to support more actively the UN's Millennium Development Goals to halve extreme poverty worldwide by year 2015.

*(2243 or 98.9% of respondents answered this question)*



5. Canada should continue to participate in UN efforts to establish democratic governments as in Namibia, East Timor and Angola.

*(2230 or 98.3% of respondents answered this question)*



## Section II - Ranking

6. Respondents were asked to indicate the three (3) issues that concerned them the most out of a list of 17 issues. The following chart shows the percentage of respondents who picked the respective issue as among the top three issues of concern to them.

Environment .....	34.83%	
Poverty .....	33.47%	
Global health & disease control .....	28.17%	
Global Warming .....	26.15%	
Human rights .....	26.06%	
Terrorism .....	20.50%	
Global security .....	19.89%	
Peacekeeping .....	16.49%	
International childrens' issues .....	15.70%	
HIV/AIDS .....	15.08%	
Population growth .....	13.05%	
Disarmament .....	10.67%	
Women's rights .....	9.30%	
Reform of the Security Council .....	8.29%	
Global monetary & economic issues .....	8.20%	
Refugees .....	5.34%	
Natural disasters .....	5.16%	
Other .....	0.69%	

*(2258 or 99.60%  
respondents answered  
this question)*

### Notes:

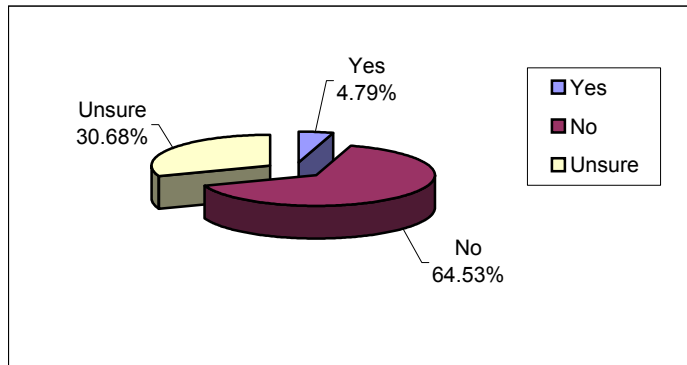
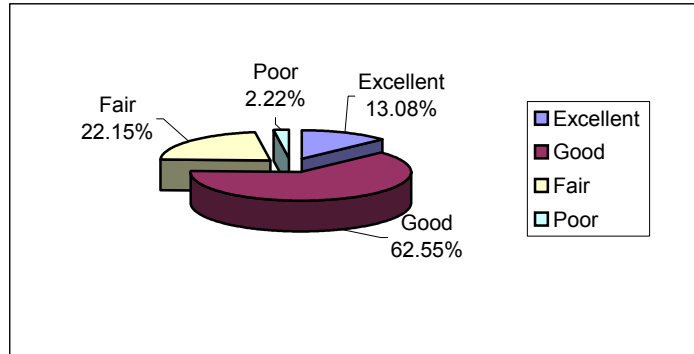
- a) some of respondents (approx. 5-8%) opted to select more than 3 issues. In such cases, all of the issues they indicated were counted.
- b) a few respondents (less than 1%) chose to use the option of Other to add an issue they felt was missing from our list. Issues identified included hunger, racism and international crime.
- c) a few respondents (2-3%) opted to clarify or more tightly define one of our issues with a specific issue that we considered as falling under our broader category. The most common such cases were nuclear disarmament and/or biological weapons under disarmament; freshwater under global environment; and the Middle East under peacekeeping.

### Section III – Multiple Choice

Respondents were asked to answer three (3) multiple choice questions.

7. How do you rate Canada's participation in the UN?

*(2163 or 95.4% of respondents answered this question)*

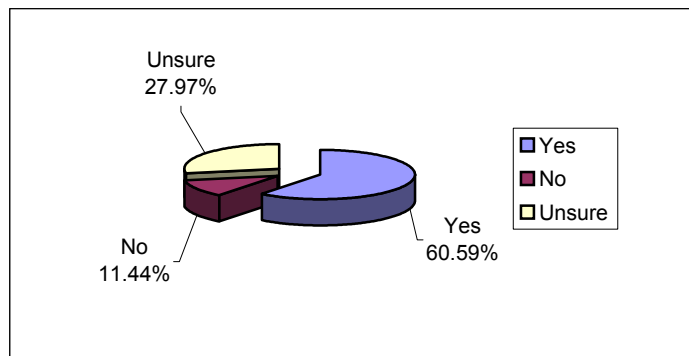


8. Do you think Canadian children are adequately educated about the UN and its role in international security?

*(2233 or 98.5% of respondents answered this question)*

9. Do you believe that the UN offers the best alternatives to resolve global conflict?

*(2228 or 98.2% of respondent answered this question)*



### Section IV – Multiple Choice with Multiple Answers per Question Possible

The final section of the survey asked respondents to select from a multiple choice list as many options as they felt were relevant. Most respondents did select more than one option. There was



also an open-ended “other” category for each question. Approximately 5% of respondents added their own comments. If similar comments were mentioned by multiple respondents, they also were tallied.

10. What do you think is the greatest success(es) of the UN to date? The following chart shows the percentage of respondents who selected the respective option.

(2148 or 94.7% of respondents answered this question)

	% of respondents
Peacekeeping	40.32%
Creation of UN agencies, e.g. UNICEF, WHO, FAO	36.96%
Negotiation and dialogue between nations	28.12%
Humanitarian aid and disaster relief	27.56%
Establishment of international conventions, treaties, standards and rules of conduct	24.53%
Universal Declaration of Human Rights	21.79%
Establishing the International Criminal Court	17.23%
Improving global health, eradicating small pox	16.01%
Protecting the environment	6.15%
Establishing democratic governments	3.96%
<i>Additional comments/successes listed in open-ended “Other” line:</i>	
UN has had no successes	1.16%
They are all successes	0.98%
I don’t know	0.93%
Not “caving in” to U.S. over Iraq, standing firm	0.23%

11. What do you think is the greatest shortcoming(s) of the UN to date? The following chart shows the percentage of respondents who selected the respective option.

(2127 or 93.8% of respondents answered this question)

	% of respondents
Inability to respond to civil war or human rights abuses within a State that wants no international interference	42.92%
Security Council veto gives weighted power to U.S., Russia, China, France & U.K.	38.36%
Too many member States do not pay their dues on time	33.47%
Decision-making between 191 States can be slow	31.55%
UN is too bureaucratic	28.16%
Continued economic disparity between nations	23.55%
Minimal public relations about issues other than crises facing the Security Council	9.21%
<i>Additional comments/successes listed in open-ended “Other” line:</i>	
They are all shortcomings	1.83%
I don’t know	1.32%
Corruption	0.80%
UN could not stop US invasion of Iraq	0.75%
The UN has not failed. Governments and people have failed the UN	0.09%
It continues to exist	0.05%

12. What do you think is the greatest challenge facing the UN today? The following chart shows the percentage of respondents who selected the respective option.

(2200 or 97% of respondents answered this question)

	% of respondents
Global peace and security	42.14%
Protecting the environment	22.86%
Poverty alleviation	22.82%
Staying relevant	20.95%
Health and disease	20.73%
Terrorism	20.59%
Human rights abuses	18.09%
HIV/AIDS	15.41%
Population growth	10.86%
Refugee protection	5.36%
<i>Additional comments/successes listed in open-ended "Other" line:</i>	
All	2.36%
United States	2.09%
Corporations, Transnational Corporations (TNC's)	0.05%

## **ANALYSIS AND TRENDS**

### **The Top UN-Related Issues Prioritized by Canadians:**

#### ***Environment:***

Canadians are clearly concerned about the global environment. The environment was the single strongest issue of concern to Canadians at 34.83% and the specific environmental issue of global warming ranked fourth at 26.15%. As well, protecting the environment was the second highest choice of the greatest challenge facing the UN today.

Few identified the environment as being a strong success or failure of the UN to date – only 6.15% thought that the UN has had significant accomplishments in the area of the environment (several of whom qualified their choice with “Kyoto”). However, 81.2% strongly agree and another 12.4% somewhat agree that countries should commit themselves to the 1992 Earth Summit processes.

Notable changes in Canadian perceptions and opinions:

- Comparison to 5 years ago: No significant changes. It continues to be the top ranked issue of concern, but not an issue that Canadians strongly identify as being part of the role or success of the UN.

#### ***Poverty:***

Poverty was rated among the most important issues of concern by the second largest group (33.47%) of Canadians. It slipped to third place (22.82%), behind peace & security and the environment, when asked what issue is the greatest challenge facing the UN today.

Compared to similar surveys in past years, the issue of poverty was more strongly highlighted as a specific issue to consider this year, possibly due to increased awareness of the UN’s Millennium Development Goals and the Make Poverty History campaign.

Notable changes in Canadian perceptions and opinions:

- Comparison to 5 years ago: Poverty did not seem to be a major concern to Canadians in 2000. Although economic disparity was on the survey, it ranked comparatively low at 7<sup>th</sup> place for concern.
- Comparison to 1 year ago. In 2004, Canadians did not focus on poverty as being of strong concern. This year, Canadians ranked poverty as #2 and presumably this attitude change may be as a result of the Millennium Development Goals and the Make Poverty History Campaign.

### ***Global Health & Disease Control:***

Global health and disease control was also ranked among the most important issues of concern by the third largest group (28.17%) of Canadians. It was rated as the fifth (20.73%) greatest challenge facing the UN today, however, if combined with the specific challenge of HIV/AIDS which came in eighth at 15.41%, health and disease control jumps from fifth to second at 36.14%.

Canadians seem to have a stronger affinity in linking the UN with this issue than the UN with the environment. 16.01% believe the improving global health and eradicating small pox as being one of the greatest successes of the UN to date. And the World Health Organization (WHO) was often circled by those respondents who selected the creation of UN agencies as a success story.

Notable changes in Canadian perceptions and opinions:

- Comparison to 5 years ago: No significant changes. It has remained the 3<sup>rd</sup> ranked issue of concern, although the diseases most often cited by respondents have changed. In 2000, Canadians focused on ebola, malaria and only rarely on HIV/AIDS. This year, the strongest health issue was HIV/AIDS and the second-most often mentioned disease was avian or bird flu.

### ***Global Peace & Security:***

*An important note: this survey was conducted at a time when Canadian troops were deployed in Afghanistan; mailed in advance of more recent public debates on peacekeeping in early 2006.*

Canadians strongly affiliate the UN with peacekeeping. On almost every question related to this issue, global security ranked in the top 4. Clearly, Canadians are concerned about the issues and the majority indicated support for the UN's role in peacekeeping and peace-building.

- While global security ranked seventh when asked which issue concerned Canadians most, when the related issues of global security, terrorism, disarmament and peacekeeping are added up this overall issue ranks highest... slightly above environmental issues (combining global environment with global warming).
- Canadians selected global peace & security as being the single greatest challenge facing the UN today – 42.14% selected this issue. An additional 20.59% selected the security-related issue of terrorism.
- Canadians identified peacekeeping as being the number one UN success story.
- 60.59% believed that the UN offers the best alternatives to resolve global conflict.
- The vast majority (94.4%) agreed that Canada should continue to participate in UN peacekeeping missions around the world.

Notable changes in Canadian perceptions and opinions:

- Comparison to 5 years ago: The single biggest change is the focus on terrorism – an issue of negligible concern in 2000. Global peace & security continues to be the issue most related to the UN, and while there are reservations about the UN's success rate, especially with regards to resolving local conflicts, there continues to be strong support for both the UN's role and Canada's role in peacekeeping.

### ***The UN Generally:***

Canadians indicated reservations regarding the effectiveness of the UN.

- The highest ranked shortcoming of the UN to date was its inability to respond to civil war or human rights abuses within a State that wants no international interference.
- The second ranked shortcoming of the UN was that the Security Council veto that gives weighted power to the permanent members.
- 8.29% identified Security Council reform as a top 3 issue of concern
- 20.95% felt that the UN's ability to stay relevant was its greatest challenge today.

However, Canadians also highlighted the important role and success of the UN in specific areas.

- 81.8% agreed that Canada should continue to participate in UN efforts to establish democratic governments.
- Negotiation and dialogue among nations ranked 3<sup>rd</sup>, and humanitarian aid and disaster relief ranked 4<sup>th</sup> as great successes of the UN to date.
- The creation of UN agencies was ranked the second highest greatest success of the UN to date at 36.96%, and the International Criminal Court received another 17.23%.
- The creation of conventions, treaties, standards and rules of conduct was ranked as the fifth greatest success of the UN at 24.53%, and the creation of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights was sixth at 21.79%
- For those who chose to add any personal comments at the end of the survey (+/- 3-4%), the comments made were overwhelmingly in favour of the United Nations, or of Canada's role in the UN, or of specific Canadians who have served in the UN (most commonly Lester Pearson, Stephen Lewis, Louise Arbour and Roméo Dallaire).

## **Notable Statistics on “Canada and the UN”:**

***Rating Canada’s Participation in the UN:*** 75.63% of Canadians rated Canada’s participation in the UN positively – 13.08% felt it was excellent and a further 62.55% rated it as good. Only 2.22% rated it as poor.

- Comparison to 5 years ago: There has been a noticeable slide in how Canadians rate Canada’s participation over the past 5 years. In 2000, 81% gave an overall positive rating of which 18% rated it as excellent and 63% rated it as good.
- Comparison to 1 year ago: There has also been a significant slide in just the past year. In 2004, 81% of Canadians rated Canada’s participation in the UN positively – of which 14.8% felt it was excellent and a further 66.2% rated it as good.

***Education of Canadian Children on the UN:*** 64.53% of Canadians believed that Canadian children were not adequately educated about the UN and its role in international security. Several respondents mentioned that they believed that our children’s knowledge about the UN comes mainly from the news, the web or family discussions on global events rather than from schools.

- Comparison to 5 years ago: While the majority of Canadians still feel that our children are not adequately educated about the UN, the percentage has dropped from 79% in 2000 to 64.53% in 2005.

***Canada and Peacekeeping:*** Despite news coverage over the past year that questioned the role, preparedness of, and risk to members of the Canadian military on peacekeeping missions, 75.6% strongly agreed and another 18.8% somewhat agreed (total 94.4%) that Canada should continue to participate in UN peacekeeping missions. Only 1.9% indicated that they strongly felt that Canada should end its peacekeeping role.

- Comparison to 5 years ago: The high level of approval of Canada’s involvement in peacekeeping has increased since 2000. Five years ago 61.5% strongly and 28.9% somewhat (total 90.4%) agreed with the same statement.

- END -