



Foresights for Human Rights

2024 Preliminary Report



Canadian Museum for Human Rights

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Message from the CEO

What are human rights? This is the question that visitors first encounter when they enter the galleries at the Canadian Museum for Human Rights.

Since 2014, more than a million visitors have been invited to consider that question. During visits to the Museum in Winnipeg, online at humanrights.ca, through education and public programs in person and online, and by visiting travelling exhibitions across this land, we are called to reflect on what human rights mean to us—as individuals and as members of a community.

Our mandate is to explore human rights in Canada and beyond, enhance the public's understanding of human rights, promote respect for others, and encourage reflection and dialogue. We do this by hosting transformative experiences, by sharing stories that inspire action, and by modeling and promoting human rights practices. We must meet Canadians where they are on human rights and choose content that will best advance our vision of a world where everyone values human rights and takes responsibility for promoting respect and dignity for all. To promote a better understanding of human rights in Canada, it is vital that we understand what people in Canada know, what they value and what they think about human rights.



The foresights outlined in this report will play an important role in determining what stories and storytelling approaches we pursue in the coming years. They offer a valuable national perspective to explore alongside the experiences of our visitors and the perspectives of our team. We have chosen to share these results more broadly—with partners and colleagues across the human rights, education and museum sectors—so that these insights may offer something to the work of others as well.

“To promote a better understanding of human rights in Canada, it is vital that we understand what people in Canada know, what they value and what they think about human rights.”

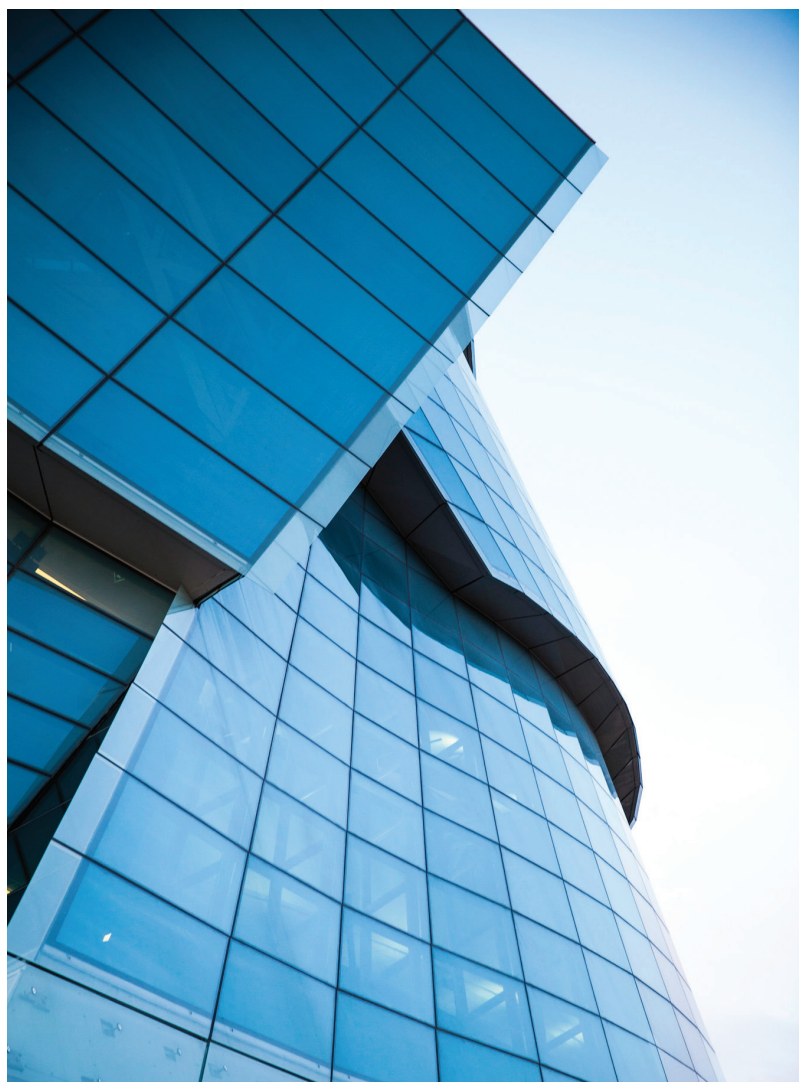
There is much to be optimistic about in the foresights we've gathered this year, and there are many areas for curiosity, concern and further reflection. We look forward to hearing from you and to pursuing further research and understanding together in the coming months.

– **Isha Khan**
Chief Executive Officer

Our National Research Program

The Canadian Museum for Human Rights intends to capture and measure, on a periodic basis, national perspectives and priorities related to human rights, including:

- What human rights mean to different people in Canada;
- What people identify as the most pressing human rights issues today—both domestically and worldwide;
- How people choose to learn more about human rights;
- Which sources of information people deem trustworthy; and
- How people are taking action as upstanders—people who recognize injustice and act to create change in their communities.



Methodology

The Museum commissioned a National Survey on Human Rights Knowledge and Values through Probe Research Inc. in 2023 and 2024. This preliminary report discusses some of the high-level findings from the comparative analysis between the 2023 and 2024 surveys.

Surveys were conducted in the fall of 2023 and again in fall 2024 by Probe Research and completed online (or by phone when requested). The total number of respondents constituted a representative national sample of 2,500 people in Canada. The survey was designed by Probe Research, in close consultation with staff from the Museum, and was available in both English and French.

The survey sample came from Prodege, a national sample provider. Minor statistical weighting for age and gender was applied to ensure the survey represented the true demographic and regional composition of the country, in accordance with the 2021 Census of Population. Additionally, quotas ensuring a reliable sample of equity groups were similarly applied. Probe Research used SPSS statistical software to conduct all data analysis.

As the online panel is not a random sample, no margin of error can be ascribed. However, a probability sample of 2,500 respondents normally carries a margin of error of +/-2.0 percentage points, 19 times out of 20. Where appropriate, the results from the 2023 survey were included and compared to the 2024 survey results to help track changes in views over time. Interpretive analysis in this report was carried out by Museum staff.

The data gathered from these surveys, along with other sources of research and information, will be used to improve insights and approaches to the work of the Museum as part of our commitment to enhance the public's understanding and respect for human rights on a continuous basis, now and into the future.



Findings

Optimism and pessimism



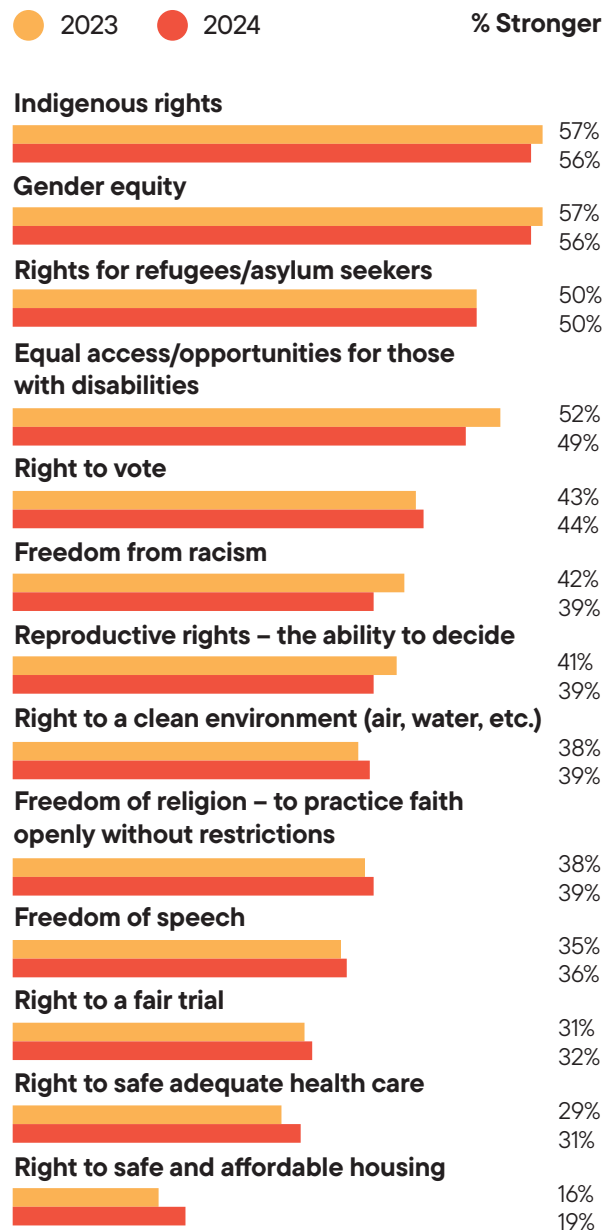
Respondents are generally optimistic about the direction of human rights protection in Canada, but much less optimistic about human rights globally.

In both 2023 and 2024, respondents felt that rights in Canada are stronger in several areas than they were a decade ago, with the greatest proportion perceiving improvements in relation to Indigenous rights and gender equity. In both years, 50% of respondents felt that the rights of refugees and asylum seekers have strengthened over the past decade.

In 2024, while two thirds of respondents were optimistic about human rights in Canada, only one third were optimistic about human rights globally.

Human rights trajectory

Based on what you know, is the protection of the following rights in Canada generally stronger or weaker now than a decade ago?



However, in both years, the right to safe and adequate health care, along with the right to safe and affordable housing, were seen to have weakened over the past decade. This was most pronounced in relation to housing, which nearly 60% of respondents felt had weakened. About 37% of respondents in both years felt access to safe and adequate health care had weakened.

In 2024, while two thirds of respondents were optimistic about human rights in Canada, only one third were optimistic about human rights globally. In both 2023 and 2024, for instance, concerns related to war and violence, followed closely by concerns related to sexism and women’s rights, topped the listed human rights concerns. Interestingly, what is considered one of the greatest challenges globally—sexism and women’s rights—is perceived by the second-most number of respondents to have improved in Canada.

Moreover, 40% of respondents agree with the statement that “human rights violations mostly happen in other countries.” Among racialized respondents and newcomer respondents, 50% of each group agree with this statement. This suggests that life experience impacts how human rights violations are understood.

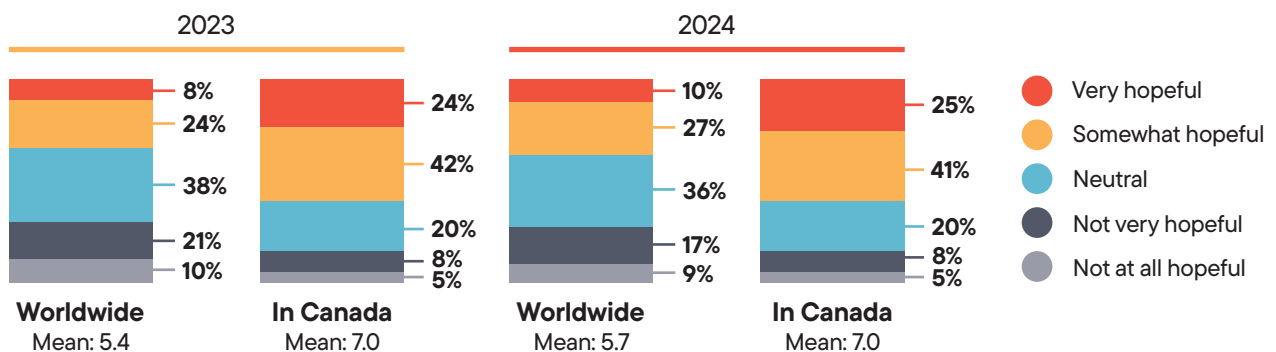
Views on Canada’s human rights record

Do you agree or disagree with the following statements?



Optimism about the future of human rights

On a scale of 1-10, how hopeful are you about the future of human rights?



Findings

Communities and individuals

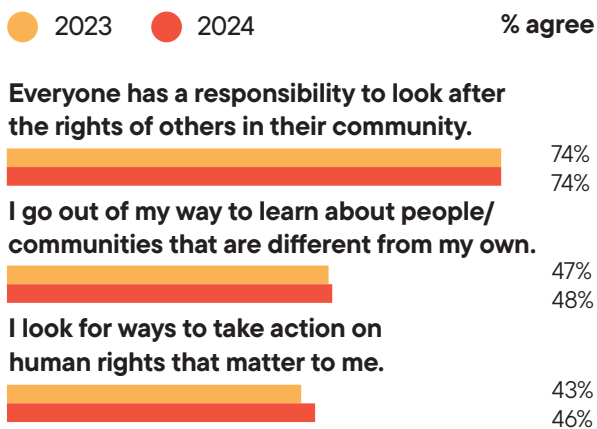
Censorship, inequality, racism and antisemitism were top concerns in Canada. Housing and economic issues also arose.

While access to affordable housing was cited as a top human rights issue in Canada by only 11% of respondents in 2024 (up from 8% just a year ago), nearly 60% identified the right to housing as something that had weakened over the last decade.

When asked if they would be willing to pay more taxes to ensure everyone has safe and affordable housing, 37% of respondents in 2024 said they are willing, while 34% disagreed or strongly disagreed with that notion. This represents a 3% increase in 2024 in favour of a willingness to pay more to remedy the housing crisis. Younger respondents in the 18-34 age range were more likely to agree than their older counterparts, as were respondents who identify as 2SLGBTQIA+.

Personal attitudes regarding human rights

Do you agree or disagree with the following statements?



Top human rights issues in Canada

What, for you, is the most important human rights issue in Canada right now?

● 2023 ● 2024

Censorship/freedom of speech/being “cancelled”



Equality and fairness for all



Racism/antisemitism/prejudice



Housing/homelessness



Immigrant rights



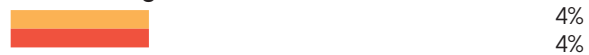
Indigenous rights and MMIWG2S+



Income inequality, poverty and affordability



Women’s rights



2SLGBTQIA+ and gender-based rights



Access to health care and education



Other



Unsure



While rights related to disability and accessibility were not among the top issues named, 70% of respondents indicated broad support for ensuring all businesses were accessible to all people, regardless of the cost. Furthermore, respondents felt that more attention should be paid to the rights of people with disabilities.

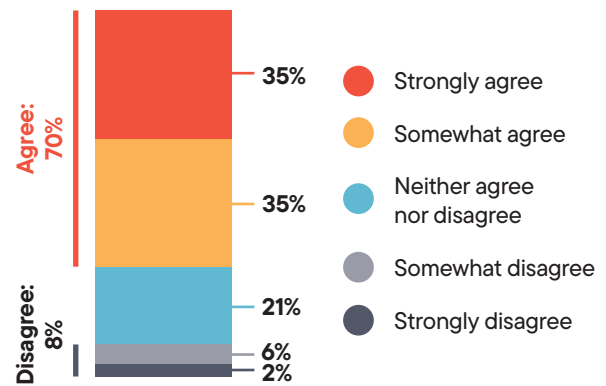
Respondents felt quite differently about newcomers to Canada. In fact, in 2024, 41% said there was too much attention focused on the rights of newcomers. Further, between 2023 and 2024, there was a significant increase in the number of respondents—to a majority of 56% in 2024—who indicate that refugees and asylum seekers receive too many benefits, and a significant decrease in the number—from 52% in 2023 down to 44%—who believe that immigrants make the country better. Among responses received in open-ended inquiries, there was a notable increase between 2023 and 2024 in sentiments that correlate immigration with economic strain in Canada. More research is needed to understand the roots of this trend.

Overall, there appears to be a growing interest in recognizing and remedying human rights issues, and a strong sense among three out of four respondents that there is a collective responsibility for everyone to look

after the rights of others in their community. However, the balance of what people believe requires the most urgent attention is expected to shift over time due to political, social and economic factors. Future research will help us understand these complex dynamics.

Views on rights of people with disabilities (2024)

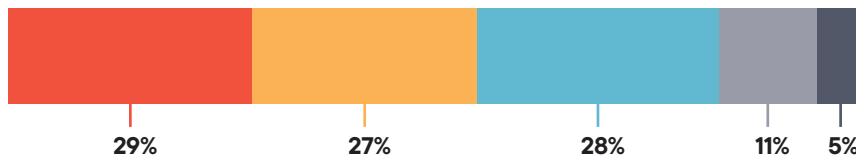
Do you agree or disagree with the following statement: All businesses should be accessible to people with disabilities – no matter the cost.



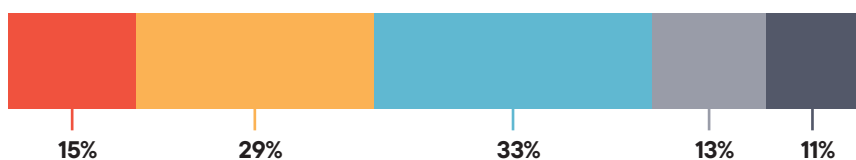
Views on rights of newcomers (2024)

Do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

Refugee applicants/asylum seekers to Canada receive too many benefits that would better be used for Canadians



Immigrants to Canada make the country better



Findings

Personal experience and taking action

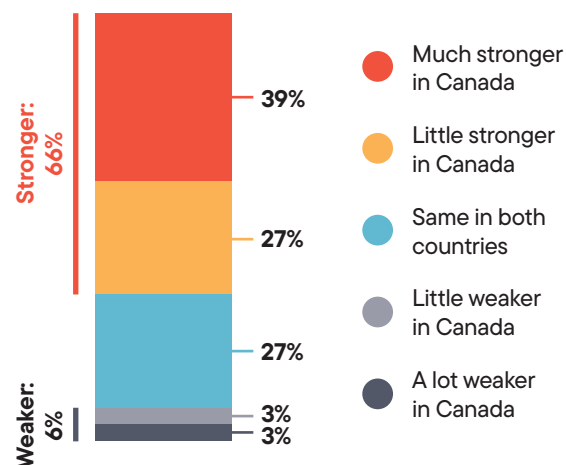
There was an increase in the number of people who reported experiencing human rights violations between 2023 and 2024, as well as a considerable increase in those willing to take action in defence of human rights.

Between 2023 and 2024 there was a significant increase (from 25% to 31%) in the proportion of respondents who self-identified as having experienced at least one human rights violation. The numbers were particularly high among Indigenous (56%) and 2SLGBTQIA+ (52%) respondents in 2024. The increase may indicate an actual rise in incidents or may be related to a greater ability to recognize human rights violations.

Direct experience of a human rights violation increases the likelihood of being an upstander—a person who recognizes injustices and takes action, based on their own skills and means, to call attention to and remedy such injustices.

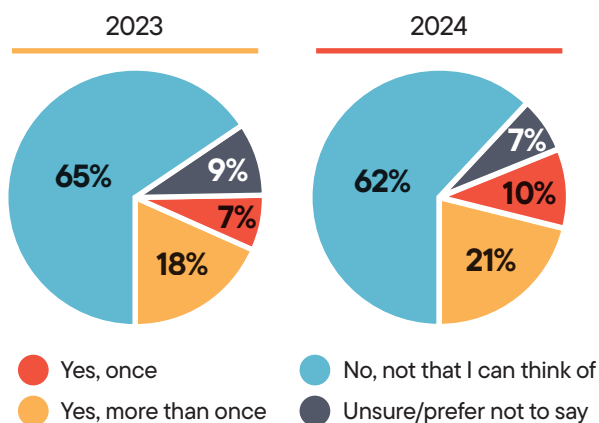
Comparing Canada: Newcomer’s perspectives (2024)

Respondents who indicated they were not born in Canada were asked “Based on what you know, are human rights protections stronger or weaker in Canada than they are in your country of origin?”



Personal encounters with rights violations in Canada

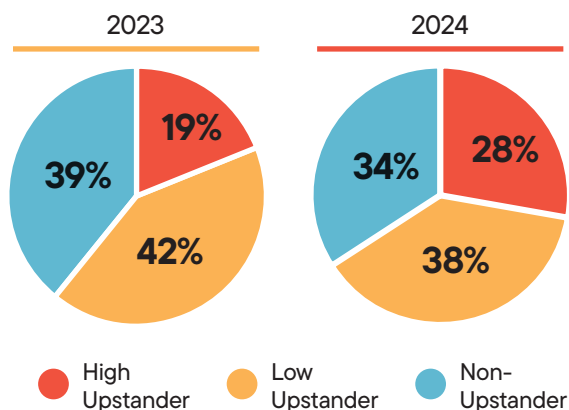
Have you personally ever experienced a human rights violation in Canada – where your rights were harmed or restricted?



Survey respondents were assigned to the categories of high, low and non-upstanders by assigning values to several survey responses, such as the ability to spot injustices, knowing what to do when an injustice happens, and the range of actions the respondent regularly takes.

In 2023, only about one in five respondents scored among the high upstanders, while 42% of respondents were low upstanders and almost 40% scored as non-upstanders. Yet in 2024, nearly one third of respondents scored as high upstanders, just over one third as non-upstanders, and less than 40% as low upstanders, indicating an upward trajectory towards being able to recognize and react to injustice and human rights violations over the past year.

Upstander index



Factors such as age, sexual orientation and race/ethnicity also influenced respondents' levels of human rights knowledge, avenues for action, and actions taken. Those aged 18-34, 2SLGBTQIA+, and/or racialized respondents were more likely to be in the high upstander category, while those aged 55 or above, those with lower incomes and less education, and those who had not experienced any human rights violations were more likely to be in the non-upstander category.

In terms of the specific actions taken, in both 2023 and 2024, respondents tended to confide in a family or community member more often than, for instance, approaching a formal reporting body such as a human rights commission or tribunal. Significantly, in both years, roughly one-fifth of respondents who experienced a human rights violation took no action.

Overall, more people are looking for ways to take action on human rights: 46% in 2024 (up from 43% in 2023). The most common action is talking with friends/family. When witnessing racism or discrimination, 39% said they have spoken up in the past year, with younger adults nearly twice as likely as older adults to do so. Almost 30% have made changes in their day-to-day lives, while 26% have donated to a cause in the past year and 16% have attended a protest or rally.

Actions taken to address rights violations

What, if anything, did you do?

● 2023 ● 2024



Findings

Institutional trust and human rights

There appears to be an erosion of trust for most sources of information on human rights issues, even though trust remains very high for some sources.

In both 2023 and 2024, respondents selected teachers and professors as the most trustworthy sources of information on human rights issues, followed by human rights and advocacy organizations, and then museums. Museums were listed as the third most trusted source in 2024, up from sixth place in 2023, but only because other sources lost degrees of trust among respondents, not because museums saw a significant gain. As well, 34% of respondents reported they did not feel free to express their opinions on human rights issues with staff at learning institutions such as museums.



Most trusted information sources (2024)

How trustworthy would you find the following information sources when researching a human rights issue?

● Trust a lot ● Trust a little

Teachers/professors



Human rights or advocacy groups



Museums



International organizations (UN, WHO, UNICEF)



Indigenous Elders



Traditional media (newspapers, TV news, etc.)



The Canadian government



The least trusted sources of information were religious leaders, businesses and social media platforms, respectively, with significantly less than half of respondents considering these three sources of information as trustworthy.



The least trusted sources of information were religious leaders, businesses and social media platforms, respectively, with significantly less than half of respondents considering these three sources of information as trustworthy. In particular, businesses and social media were both trusted by fewer respondents in 2024 than in 2023. Traditional media also experienced a decline in trust.

There is significantly broader trust in social media sources among those in the 18-34 age range, newcomers, and racialized respondents. While social media received the lowest trust score among all options, with only 30% of all respondents viewing social media platforms as trustworthy, 43% of those in the 18-34 age range trusted social media as a source of human rights information, alongside 44% of newcomers residing in Canada for less than 20 years, and 40% of racialized respondents. This trend merits further observation and analysis.

Least trusted information sources (2024)

How trustworthy would you find the following information sources when researching a human rights issue?

● Trust a lot ● Trust a little

Religious/spiritual leaders



Businesses



Social media



Future inquiry

The 2023 and 2024 surveys have provided valuable insights in understanding how people in Canada prioritize human rights, what actions they take—and do not take—in addressing human rights violations, as well as where people feel there are imbalances in emphasis, action and the national discourse.



This preliminary report provides an opportunity for discussion and reflection—with our team, with human rights and community organizations, and with researchers and scholars—in pursuit of contrasting and corroborating research and experiences that can help expand upon the survey results and paint broader picture of human rights knowledge and values in Canada.

Through this research and the insights we will gather as we share the results with others, we aim to strengthen our museum and storytelling practice—using the data to help us choose stories that inspire action, and approaches to storytelling that will allow us to host transformative experiences. Further quantitative and qualitative research may be undertaken or commissioned to build a deeper understanding.

Based on this preliminary report, we are reflecting on several curiosities:

- How and why do people prioritize certain human rights over others?
- How do people in Canada understand housing, affordability and economic issues as human rights issues? What do they perceive to be rights in these contexts?
- How much do Canadians understand the relationships between economics, immigration, housing and quality of life? Do perspectives on these issues incorporate the nuance and complexity of these systems?
- What factors motivate and/or dissuade people from becoming upstanders for human rights?
- If we know who is most likely a high upstander, and we know that people in Canada most trust friends and family, how might we partner with these upstanders to expand our reach within their social networks?
- What presence should the Museum and human rights organizations take up in low-trust environments like social media? What is our role in these spaces?
- What questions are we not asking that we should be?

In this analysis and through the future work we have committed to doing, the Museum will utilize its research capacity while also engaging with in-house and outside expertise, communities and researchers to build our knowledge base, so that we can continuously refine our work and deliver on our mandate for all Canadians.

We're also curious about what you think. You can share your thoughts by emailing research@humanrights.ca.



All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights.

Tous les êtres humains naissent libres et égaux en dignité et en droits.

