

Climate change more feared in Canada than terrorism: poll

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Canadians believe climate change poses a significantly bigger threat to the "vital interests" of this country during the next decade than international terrorism, a new poll suggests.

While nearly half of those surveyed said climate change is a "critical threat," only about one in four people said the same about international terrorism. A similar poll conducted in 2004 showed Canadians believed the two threats were about equal.

The results come from a survey commissioned by the Canadian Defence and Foreign Affairs Institute and conducted by the Innovative Research Group, Inc. between Dec. 22 and Jan. 4.

Canadians were asked about their "threat perceptions" on a number of issues. While fears about climate change remained relatively stable, falling three per cent to 49 per cent in 2010 from 52 per cent in 2004, fears of international terrorism tumbled to 28 per cent in 2010 from 49 per cent in 2004.

Lt.-Gen Michael Jeffery, a senior research fellow for the institute, said the reason for the shift is that the threat of terrorism is not on the front burner for many Canadians.

"We are not aware that the world around us has changed and is continuing to change, and emerging from that very, very different world are increasing threats to Canada, Canadians and our way of life," Jeffery said.

The poll also found an increasing concern about immigration. The percentage of Canadians who believe large numbers of immigrants and refugees pose a critical threat rose slightly, to 27 per cent in 2010 from 21 per cent in 2004. Other categories were on the decline, with globalization falling to 19 per cent from 28 per cent, and potential epidemics plummeting to 16 per cent this year from 60 per cent in 2004.

The online survey sample included 1,229 responses, with a margin of error of 2.8 percentage points, 19 times out of 20.

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