



AB FACT SHEET

Interest in Public Policy

May 2004

The final question asked of Looking West 2004 respondents concerned policy interest. Respondents were asked, "How would you rate your personal interest in public policy issues? High level of interest; moderate level of interest; low level of interest."

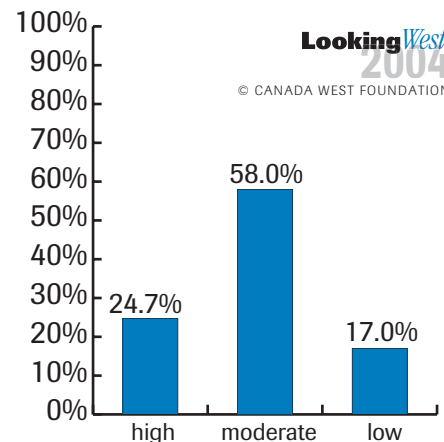
One-quarter of Alberta respondents report a high level of interest and less than two in ten (17.0%) report a low level of interest. The majority reports a moderate level of interest. Variations by urban size are modest.

There were numerous demographic differences; indeed the only demographic variable that did not impact level of interest in public policy is whether one was or was not born in Canada. The largest gaps are seen in age, income and educational status. Respondents with graduate degrees report the highest level of interest in public policy of all demographic cohorts, and are the only cohort in which the majority reports a high (rather than a moderate) level of interest. The percentage of respondents reporting a high level of interest in public policy generally rises with educational attainment, from a low of 16.8% for those with a high school diploma to a high of 53.6% of those with graduate degrees – a difference of almost 37 percentage points. Conversely, the percentage of respondents reporting a low level of interest in public policy declines with educational attainment, from a high of 24.7% of those with less than a high school diploma to a low of 5.2% for those with graduate degrees.

Significant differences are also seen with age category, with interest in public policy increasing with age. Almost one-third (31.8%) of respondents under the age of thirty report a low level of interest in public policy, while less than one in ten (6.6%) respondents aged 70 and over reports low interest – a gap of 25 percentage points.

The differences by income category are also notable; here, linear patterns are seen, with the number of respondents reporting low interest declining as income rises and the number reporting high interest rising as income rises. Respondents in the highest income category (\$150,000 and over) report a particularly high level of interest in public policy at 41.9%.

Figure 1:
Level of Public Policy Interest -
AB Respondents



How would you rate your personal interest in public policy issues?
High level of interest; moderate level of interest; low level of interest.

Lastly, a gender gap is seen, with men more likely than women to report a high level of interest in public policy, and women more likely than men to report a low level of interest in public policy. This gap is modest compared to the age, education and income gaps.

Overall, the data demonstrate that older, wealthier and more highly educated individuals report higher levels of interest in public policy, while younger, less wealthy and less educated individuals report lower levels of interest in public policy. The five cohorts in which a greater percentage reports low interest than reports high interest include: income under \$30,000; age under 30 years; less than high school diploma; high school diploma; and women.

Figure 2: Level of Public Policy Interest, AB Respondents

	Low	Moderate	High
Male	12.6%	57.3%	29.9%
Female	21.2%	58.7%	19.9%
<i>Difference between low and high</i>	<i>8.6</i>		<i>10.0</i>
Income under \$30,000	29.2%	54.2%	16.5%
Income \$30,000 – 69,999	14.1%	63.9%	21.2%
Income \$70,000 – 149,999	14.3%	54.5%	31.2%
Income \$150,000 and over	9.3%	48.8%	41.9%
<i>Difference between low and high</i>	<i>19.9</i>		<i>25.4</i>
Age under 30 years	31.8%	55.8%	12.0%
Age 30-49 years	16.4%	59.9%	23.4%
Age 50-69 years	10.6%	54.8%	34.6%
Age 70 years and over	6.6%	67.1%	26.3%
<i>Difference between low and high</i>	<i>25.2</i>		<i>22.6</i>
Less than high school education	24.7%	57.3%	18.0%
High school diploma	20.4%	62.4%	16.8%
Some university/college/technical school	19.4%	57.6%	22.3%
Completed college/trade/technical diploma/degree	19.1%	61.9%	19.1%
University bachelor's degree	10.8%	55.4%	33.9%
Graduate degree	5.2%	41.2%	53.6%
<i>Difference between low and high</i>	<i>19.5</i>		<i>36.8</i>
Born in Canada	17.0%	58.2%	24.7%
Born outside Canada	16.8%	57.0%	25.2%
<i>Difference between low and high</i>	<i>0.2</i>		<i>0.5</i>



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