



# BC 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.”

BC respondents report a relatively high level of interest in public policy, with nearly one-third (31.0%) stating a high level of interest and only 15.1% stating a low level of interest. The majority (53.8%) report moderate interest. There are some variations by community: respondents in the greater Victoria area are more likely (40.5%) than respondents in Vancouver (31.7%) or other areas to state a high level of interest in public policy.

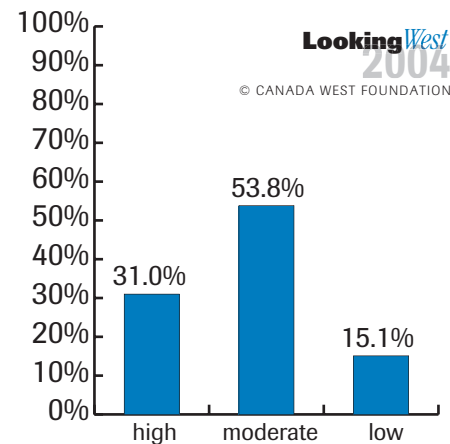
There were numerous demographic differences; indeed the only demographic variable that did not impact level of interest in public policy is whether one was or was not born in Canada. The largest gaps are seen in age and educational status. The data show that interest in public policy increases with age. Almost three in ten (29.5%) respondents under the age of thirty report a low level of interest in public policy, while less than one in twenty (3.9%) of respondents aged 70 and over reports low interest – a gap of over 25 percentage points.

In addition, respondents with graduate degrees report the highest level of interest in public policy of all demographic cohorts. The percentage of respondents reporting a high level of interest in public policy generally rises with educational attainment, from a low of 22.8% for those with a high school diploma to a high of 48.6% of those with graduate degrees – a difference of almost 25 percentage points.

The differences by income category are also notable; near-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.

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.

Figure 1:  
Level of Public Policy Interest -  
BC Respondents



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

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 only cohort in which a greater percentage reports low interest than reports high interest is respondents under 30 years of age.

Figure 2: Level of Public Policy Interest, BC Respondents

	<b>Low</b>	<b>Moderate</b>	<b>High</b>
Male	13.0%	51.8%	34.9%
Female	17.0%	55.5%	27.4%
<i>Difference between low and high</i>	<i>4.0</i>		<i>7.5</i>
Income under \$30,000	17.9%	57.1%	24.5%
Income \$30,000 – 69,999	15.6%	52.4%	31.9%
Income \$70,000 – 149,999	12.6%	52.3%	35.2%
Income \$150,000 and over	12.7%	49.1%	38.2%
<i>Difference between low and high</i>	<i>5.2</i>		<i>13.7</i>
Age under 30 years	29.5%	50.7%	19.8%
Age 30-49 years	18.0%	56.0%	25.9%
Age 50-69 years	9.5%	52.0%	38.5%
Age 70 years and over	3.9%	55.1%	39.9%
<i>Difference between low and high</i>	<i>25.6</i>		<i>20.1</i>
Less than high school education	16.2%	57.7%	24.6%
High school diploma	18.9%	58.4%	22.8%
Some university/college/technical school	16.1%	51.1%	32.7%
Completed college/trade/technical diploma/degree	17.8%	57.5%	24.7%
University bachelor's degree	11.3%	49.3%	39.4%
Graduate degree	6.4%	45.1%	48.6%
<i>Difference between low and high</i>	<i>12.5</i>		<i>25.8</i>
Born in Canada	15.6%	52.5%	31.7%
Born outside Canada	12.9%	60.5%	26.6%
<i>Difference between low and high</i>	<i>2.7</i>		<i>5.1</i>



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