



SK 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."

Almost three in ten (28.3%) Saskatchewan respondents report a high level of interest and less than two in ten (15.9%) report a low level of interest. The majority reports a moderate level of interest. Variations by urban size are modest.

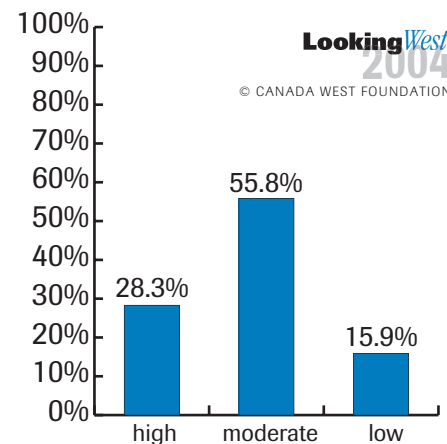
There were numerous demographic differences. The largest gaps are seen in age, income and educational status. The percentage of respondents reporting a high level of interest in public policy generally rises with educational attainment, from a low of 18.3% for those with less than a high school diploma to a high of 39.6% of those with bachelor degrees – a difference of 21 percentage points. Conversely, the percentage of respondents reporting a low level of interest in public policy declines with educational attainment, from a high of 21.7% of those with less than a high school diploma to a low of 4.0% for those with graduate degrees.

Significant differences are also seen with age category, with interest in public policy increasing with age. Over one-third (34.5%) of respondents under the age of thirty report a low level of interest in public policy, while less than one in twenty (4.7%) respondents aged 70 and over reports low interest – a gap of almost 30 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 50.0%.

Differences can also be found between respondents born in Canada and respondents born outside Canada, with the latter being more likely to state a high level of interest in public policy. Lastly, a gender gap is seen, with men

Figure 1:
Level of Public Policy Interest -
SK Respondents



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

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 three cohorts in which a greater percentage reports low interest than reports high interest include: income under \$30,000; age under 30 years; and less than high school diploma.

Figure 2: Level of Public Policy Interest, SK Respondents

	Low	Moderate	High
Male	14.2%	54.9%	30.9%
Female	17.6%	56.8%	25.6%
<i>Difference between low and high</i>	<i>3.4</i>		<i>5.3</i>
Income under \$30,000	23.1%	55.8%	21.2%
Income \$30,000 – 69,999	14.4%	60.0%	25.6%
Income \$70,000 – 149,999	10.2%	49.2%	40.7%
Income \$150,000 and over	0.0%	50.0%	50.0%
<i>Difference between low and high</i>	<i>23.1</i>		<i>28.8</i>
Age under 30 years	34.5%	43.6%	21.8%
Age 30-49 years	16.4%	58.2%	25.4%
Age 50-69 years	10.5%	56.1%	33.3%
Age 70 years and over	4.7%	65.1%	30.2%
<i>Difference between low and high</i>	<i>29.8</i>		<i>11.5</i>
Less than high school education	21.7%	60.0%	18.3%
High school diploma	16.5%	60.4%	23.1%
Some university/college/technical school	17.5%	47.5%	35.0%
Completed college/trade/technical diploma/degree	16.0%	56.0%	28.0%
University bachelor's degree	12.5%	47.9%	39.6%
Graduate degree	4.0%	60.0%	36.0%
<i>Difference between low and high</i>	<i>17.7</i>		<i>21.3</i>
Born in Canada	16.0%	55.9%	28.1%
Born outside Canada	7.7%	53.8%	38.5%
<i>Difference between low and high</i>	<i>8.3</i>		<i>10.4</i>



This summary was authored by CWF Director of Research Loleen Berdahl, and is part of the Canada West Foundation's Building the New West Project. The Kahanoff Foundation, Western Diversification, the Privy Council Office, the Government of Saskatchewan, and Alberta International and Intergovernmental Relations provided funding support for this research study. The opinions expressed in this document are those of the author and not necessarily those of the Canada West Foundation's donors, subscribers or Board.