

Albertan Provincial Politics Carbon Tax and Coal-fired Electricity Generation

Alberta Public Opinion Study – October 2016

**Faron Ellis, PhD
Research Chair**

faron.ellis@lethbridgecollege.ca
www.lethbridgecollege.ca/go/csrl

Lethbridge College
3000 College Drive South
Lethbridge AB T1K 1L6



Methodology

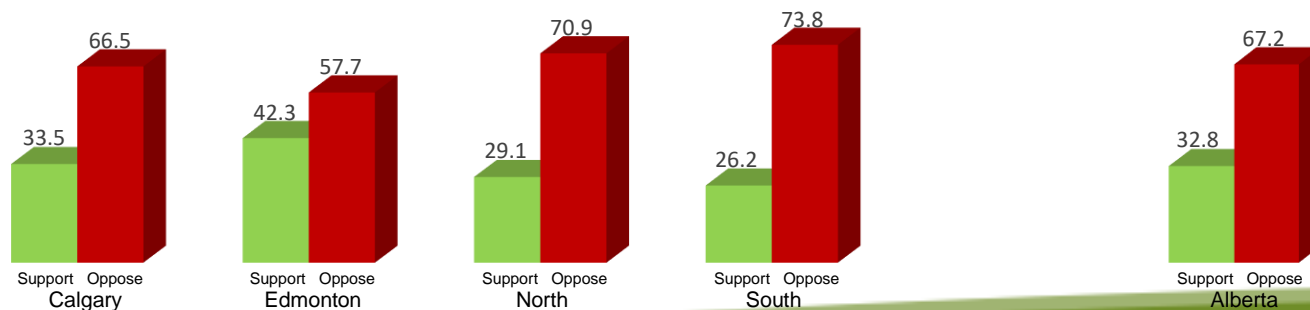
- **Population** The province of Alberta has a total population of 4,233,933 residents (Statistics Canada, July 1, 2016) approximately 78% of which are 18 years of age or older for an adult population of 3,302,467.
- **Sample** Data were collected by Lethbridge College students in the fall of 2016. Students interviewed 1,513 adult Alberta residents by telephone from October 1 to 8, 2016 under the supervision of principal investigator Faron Ellis, Research Chair, Citizen Society Research Lab. Landline telephone numbers were selected from a sample drawn from InfoGroup directories and supplemented with a selection of mobile numbers from CSRL lists. We sincerely thank all participants who took time out of their day to respond to our inquiries. Further results from this study and results from past studies can be accessed by visiting the CSRL web pages at: www.lethbridgecollege.ca/go/csrl
- **Representativeness** Analysis of the demographic data indicates that, within acceptable limits, the sample accurately represents the demographic distribution of the adult population within the province of Alberta. The sample has been statistically weighted where necessary to even better reflect the demographic distribution of the population (gender, region of province and age).
- **Confidence** The weighted sample yields a margin of error ± 2.5 percentage points, 19 times out of 20. The margin of error increases when analyzing sub-samples of the data (Calgary ± 5.0 percentage points, Edmonton and immediate area ± 5.0 percentage points, North ± 5.2 percentage points, South ± 4.9 percentage points 19 times out of 20).
- **IB Commons Call Centre** Students conducted interviews using the facilities of the Lethbridge College IB Commons Call Centre. We thank members of Lethbridge College's IT team for their support in helping maintain the IB Commons Call Center.
- **Sponsorship** These data are part of a larger study of the opinions and attitudes of Alberta residents conducted by the Citizen Society Research Lab at Lethbridge College. This particular set of questions was derived from student and faculty interest in the topics.

Carbon Tax

- A clear majority of Alberta residents (67.2%) are opposed to the provincial government's plans to introduce a carbon tax in 2017. Most of those are strongly opposed (52.5%) while a further 14.7% are somewhat opposed. A significant plurality of Alberta residents supports the government's carbon tax plans (32.8%), but support is less intense than is opposition given that most of those are only somewhat supportive (19.0%), while only 13.7% strongly support the government's plans. Very few Albertans (3.7%) are undecided about the government's carbon tax plans.
- Several important demographic patterns in support and opposition levels are evident. Initially, partisanship is the best predictor of opinion about the carbon tax. An overwhelming majority of provincial NDP voters (78.6%) agree with the government's carbon tax plans, as does a clear majority of provincial Liberal voters (55.4%). Conversely, overwhelming majorities of Wildrose (88.0%) and Progressive Conservative (81.5%) voters are opposed to the carbon tax plan, as is a clear majority of undecided voters (65.6%).
- Similarly, a substantial majority of federal Conservative voters are opposed (83.3%), while strong majorities of federal Liberal (64.4%) and NDP (64.6%) voters approve of the provincial government's plans. Interestingly, a majority of federal Green Party voters are opposed to the carbon tax plan (57.4%).
- Majorities in all regions of Alberta are opposed to the carbon tax plan. Southern Albertans are most opposed (73.8%), followed closely by northern residents (70.9%) and Calgarians (66.5%). A less substantial but nevertheless clear majority of Edmonton-area residents are also opposed (57.7%).
- Education is the only other demographic characteristic that significantly impacts opinion about the Alberta carbon tax plans. Albertans with the least amount of formal education (73.7%) and those with trade, technical school or college diplomas (74.6%) are most opposed, followed closely by those with some post-secondary (67.5%). A less substantial majority of university graduates are also opposed (56.1%).

Carbon Tax (%)

Strongly support	13.7	Support	32.8
Somewhat support	19.0	Oppose	67.2
Somewhat oppose	14.7		
Strongly oppose	52.5		



Carbon tax by demographic group (2016) (%)

Gender	Male	Female	Alberta
Support	32.0	33.6	32.8
Oppose	68.0	66.4	67.2

Area of Province*	Calgary	Edmonton	North	South
Support	33.5	42.3	29.1	26.2
Oppose	66.5	57.7	70.9	73.8

Household Income	Under \$60,000	\$60,001 to \$120,000	Over \$120,000
Support	32.9	34.0	34.2
Oppose	67.1	66.0	65.8

Religious Attendance	2-3 times/month-more	Several times/year	Rarely-never
Support	35.6	30.9	31.4
Oppose	64.4	69.1	68.6

Education*	High School or less	Some Post-secondary	College-Tech-Trade	University Grad
Support	26.3	32.5	25.4	43.9
Oppose	73.7	67.5	74.6	56.1

Age	18-29	30-44	45-64	65 and older
Support	28.1	33.9	33.1	35.8
Oppose	71.9	66.1	66.9	64.2

Provincial Vote*	NDP	Wildrose	PC	Liberal	Undecided
Support	78.6	12.0	18.5	55.4	34.4
Oppose	21.4	88.0	81.5	44.6	65.6

Federal Vote*	CPC	Liberal	NDP	Green	Undecided
Support	16.7	64.4	64.6	42.6	35.8
Oppose	83.3	35.6	35.4	57.4	64.2

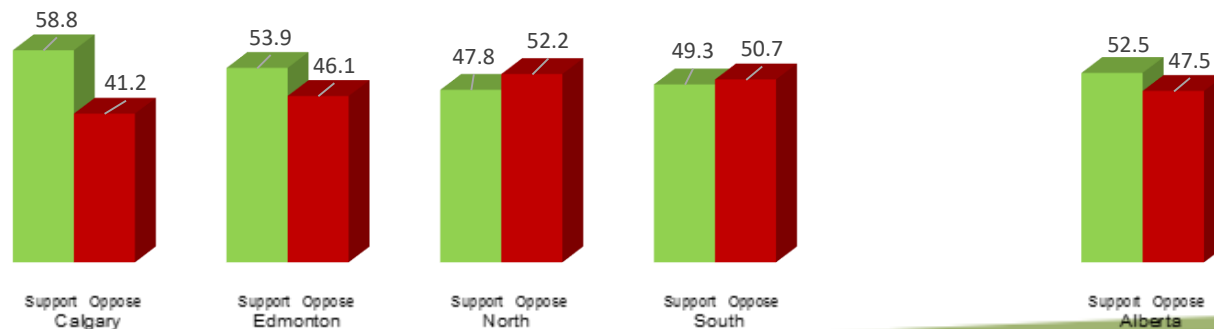
Notes: Due to rounding, proportions may not total exactly 100%; * sig < 0.05

Phase Out of Coal-fired Electrical Power Generation

- A slim majority of Alberta residents (52.5%) support the provincial government's plans to phase out coal-fired electrical power generation by 2030. Support is evenly divided between those who strongly support (26.0%) and those who are only somewhat supportive (26.5%). A significant plurality of Alberta residents (47.5%) oppose the phase out plan. Most of those are strongly opposed (28.8%), with a remainder somewhat opposed (18.7%). Nearly one in ten Albertans (9.6%) are currently undecided about the coal-fired electrical generation phase out plans.
- Partisanship differences at both the federal and provincial levels account for most of the significant differences in opinions about the phasing out of coal-fired electricity generation. Clear and substantial majorities of provincial NDP (82.8%) and Liberal (71.6%) voters agree with the phase out plan. Wildrose voters are most opposed (68.3%). Provincial Progressive Conservative voters are more nuanced in as much as they are most divided on this issue, but a majority (56.8%) are opposed.
- Similarly, a clear majority of federal Conservative voters are opposed (62.9%), while strong majorities of federal Liberal (80.6%), NDP (70.5%) and federal Green (70.2%) voters support the plan to phase out coal-fired electrical power generation in Alberta.
- Significant opinion differences are also measured between residents of Alberta's two largest cities and those not residing in those metropolitan centers. While slight majorities of Calgary (58.8%) and Edmonton residents (53.9%) are supportive, while slight majorities of southern Albertans outside of Calgary (50.7%) and northern Albertans outside of the Edmonton-area (52.2%) opposed.
- Education is also an important predictor of opinion on this issue with support increasing as education levels increase. A majority of those with the least amount of formal education are opposed (54.9%), while a majority of university graduates is supportive (63.3%).

Phase-out of coal-fired electricity (%)

Strongly support	26.0		
Somewhat support	26.5	Support	52.5
Somewhat oppose	18.7	Oppose	47.5
Strongly oppose	28.8		



Phase-out of coal-fired electric power generation by demographic group (2016) (%)

Gender*	Male	Female	Alberta
Support	49.9	55.3	52.5
Oppose	50.1	44.7	47.5

Area of Province*	Calgary	Edmonton	North	South
Support	58.8	53.9	47.8	49.3
Oppose	41.2	46.1	52.2	50.7

Household Income	Under \$60,000	\$60,001 to \$120,000	Over \$120,000
Support	53.4	53.5	54.2
Oppose	46.6	46.5	45.8

Religious Attendance	2-3 times/month-more	Several times/year	Rarely-never
Support	52.1	51.7	51.6
Oppose	47.9	48.3	48.4

Education*	High School or less	Some Post-secondary	College-Tech-Trade	University Grad
Support	45.1	46.2	49.5	63.3
Oppose	54.9	53.8	50.5	36.7

Age	18-29	30-44	45-64	65 and older
Support	53.8	54.1	52.1	50.3
Oppose	46.2	45.9	47.9	49.7

Provincial Vote*	NDP	Wildrose	PC	Liberal	Undecided
Support	82.8	31.7	43.2	71.6	53.9
Oppose	17.2	68.3	56.8	28.4	46.1

Federal Vote*	CPC	Liberal	NDP	Green	Undecided
Support	37.1	80.6	70.5	70.2	53.5
Oppose	62.9	19.4	29.5	29.8	46.5

Notes: Due to rounding, proportions may not total exactly 100%; * sig < 0.05

Demographics

Area of Province (%)		Gender (%)		Income (%)		Education (%)		Age (%)	
Calgary	25.2	Male	49.9	Under \$60,000	35.1	H-School/less	18.2	18-29	22.1
Edmonton	25.1	Female	50.1	\$60-\$120,000	39.3	Some P-Sec.	20.0	30-44	22.5
North	23.2			Over \$120,000	25.6	Col-Tech-Grad	30.2	45-64	33.1
South	26.5					University Grad	31.6	65 or older	22.3

Mean age = 48 years old

Religious Participation (%)	
2-3/month-more	25.2
Several/year	20.6
Rarely-never	54.2

Note: Due to rounding, proportions may not total exactly 100

Questions

As part of its climate change strategy, the Alberta government is planning to introduce a carbon tax in Alberta beginning next year. Please tell me how much you support or oppose the introduction of a carbon tax in Alberta.

(Optional Read: the carbon tax will require Albertans to pay 4.7-cents more per liter of gas at the pumps in 2017, and 5.5 cents more per liter of diesel, plus an extra \$320 to heat their homes in 2017, rising to \$470 by 2018.)

As part of its climate change strategy, the Alberta government is planning on phasing out coal-fired electric power generation plants in Alberta by 2030. Please tell me how much you support or oppose phasing out coal-fired electricity in Alberta.

(Optional Read: 55% of Alberta's electricity is produced from coal-fired plants. The plan would replace this source of electricity with electricity generated from wind, other renewable sources and natural gas.)

- Strongly support
- Somewhat support
- Somewhat oppose
- Strongly oppose
- Don't know (unprompted)
- Refused (unprompted)