



Albertans' Opinion Structure on Six Policy Issues

Alberta Public Opinion Study – Fall 2012

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Methodology


-  **Population** The province of Alberta has a total population of 3,873,700 residents (Statistics Canada, July 1, 2012) approximately 77% of which are 18 years of age or older for an adult population of approximately 2,982,750.
-  **Sample** Data were collected by Lethbridge College and Athabasca University students enrolled in STS270 – Social Science Research Methods and PSC150 – Local Government in the fall of 2012. Students interviewed 1,067 adult Alberta residents by telephone from September 29 to 30, 2012 under the supervision of Canadian Studies faculty members Faron Ellis PhD and Marda Schindeler MA. Telephone numbers were selected from a sample drawn from InfoGroup directories. 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 and age).
-  **Confidence** The weighted sample yields a margin of error of ± 3.0 percentage points, 19 times out of 20. The margin of error increases when analyzing sub-samples of the data (Calgary ± 5.4 percentage points, Edmonton and immediate area ± 5.5 percentage points, North ± 6.9 percentage points, South ± 6.7 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 and applications originally developed by the Open Source Learning Lab (OSLL). We thank James Manis PhD and OSLL for their efforts in working with us to establish the IB Commons Call Centre.
-  **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 resulted from the ongoing research interests of Lethbridge College faculty and students.


Traditional or Progressive?


Alberta Opinion Structure on Six Policy Issues

 **Introduction:** This report analyzes Albertans' opinions concerning six public policy issues, each of which can be conceptualized along a traditional vs. progressive dimension. As is to be expected in a liberal pluralist political culture, a considerable amount of diversity exists within the overall Alberta public opinion structure and divisions are often based on known causes such as religion and political partisanship, generational and gender differences, or economic and educational differences.

Contrary to some common stereotypes, Albertans are more progressive than traditional in their thinking on this cluster of issues. A majority of Albertans take a progressive position on four of the six items with Calgarians and other southern Albertans leading the way.

 **The six items:** Opinion was measured on the issues of same-sex marriage, abortion choice, capital punishment, medical marijuana, recreational marijuana, and legalized doctor assisted suicide. By a margin of more than four to one, Albertans strongly support abortion choice remaining a private matter (81.4%). Albertans support same-sex marriages having legal status with traditional marriages (74.3%) by almost a three to one margin. They demonstrate similar support for marijuana being legal for medical purposes (76.1%) and for legalized doctor-assisted suicide (75.9%). A majority of Albertans support reinstating capital punishment for first degree murder (60.3%) and a slim majority are opposed to decriminalizing marijuana for recreational purposes (55.1%), although even on these issues significant pluralities of Albertans adopt a progressive stance.

 **Index of Opinion on Social Issues:** An index of opinion structure was created by summing the responses to the six questions, thereby allowing for easier regional and demographic comparisons. The index scores range from a possible "0.0" for the most traditional, to "6.0" for the most progressive. The mean score for the province as a whole is 3.7, slightly to the progressive side of neutral. Technical and methodological questions about the index construction can be obtained by directly contacting the authors of the report. A summary of the results are presented below.

 **Detailed tabular data:** A brief summary of the results are presented along with condensed tabular data. Individuals interested in the full results can contact the authors directly.

Six Policy Issues 2009-2012 (% support)

Calgary	Same-sex Marriage	Abortion Choice	Capital Punishment	Medical Marijuana	Recreational Marijuana	Doctor Assisted Suicide
2012	78.3	87.0	52.8	77.8	43.7	77.8
2011	72.4	84.8	49.6	77.2	41.1	72.8
2010	70.9	81.1	53.5	76.7	46.0	68.2
2009	73.7	79.1	50.9	77.0	39.7	66.0
Edmonton	Same-sex Marriage	Abortion Choice	Capital Punishment	Medical Marijuana	Recreational Marijuana	Doctor Assisted Suicide
2012	73.3	80.9	60.3	75.5	42.5	72.4
2011	75.5	85.0	51.6	75.9	37.7	72.9
2010	72.3	81.2	55.0	79.4	45.8	73.4
2009	65.5	81.0	58.6	75.5	38.3	65.3
North	Same-sex Marriage	Abortion Choice	Capital Punishment	Medical Marijuana	Recreational Marijuana	Doctor Assisted Suicide
2012	67.9	72.7	64.7	71.4	46.8	71.7
2011	68.6	81.6	60.3	76.6	40.1	74.6
2010	67.8	80.7	64.7	72.8	34.5	61.6
2009	58.6	72.5	62.9	66.1	28.7	57.7
South	Same-sex Marriage	Abortion Choice	Capital Punishment	Medical Marijuana	Recreational Marijuana	Doctor Assisted Suicide
2012	75.6	81.1	68.5	78.7	48.2	81.8
2011	69.6	82.7	58.9	76.1	39.6	70.2
2010	68.3	79.1	62.7	69.9	29.6	65.8
2009	58.3	73.3	72.3	73.2	35.2	67.4
All Alberta	Same-sex Marriage	Abortion Choice	Capital Punishment	Medical Marijuana	Recreational Marijuana	Doctor Assisted Suicide
2012	74.3	81.4	60.3	76.1	44.9	75.9
2011	72.1	83.8	53.9	76.5	39.5	72.7
2010	70.4	80.8	57.4	75.8	41.4	68.3
2009	65.7	77.6	59.0	73.8	36.5	64.3

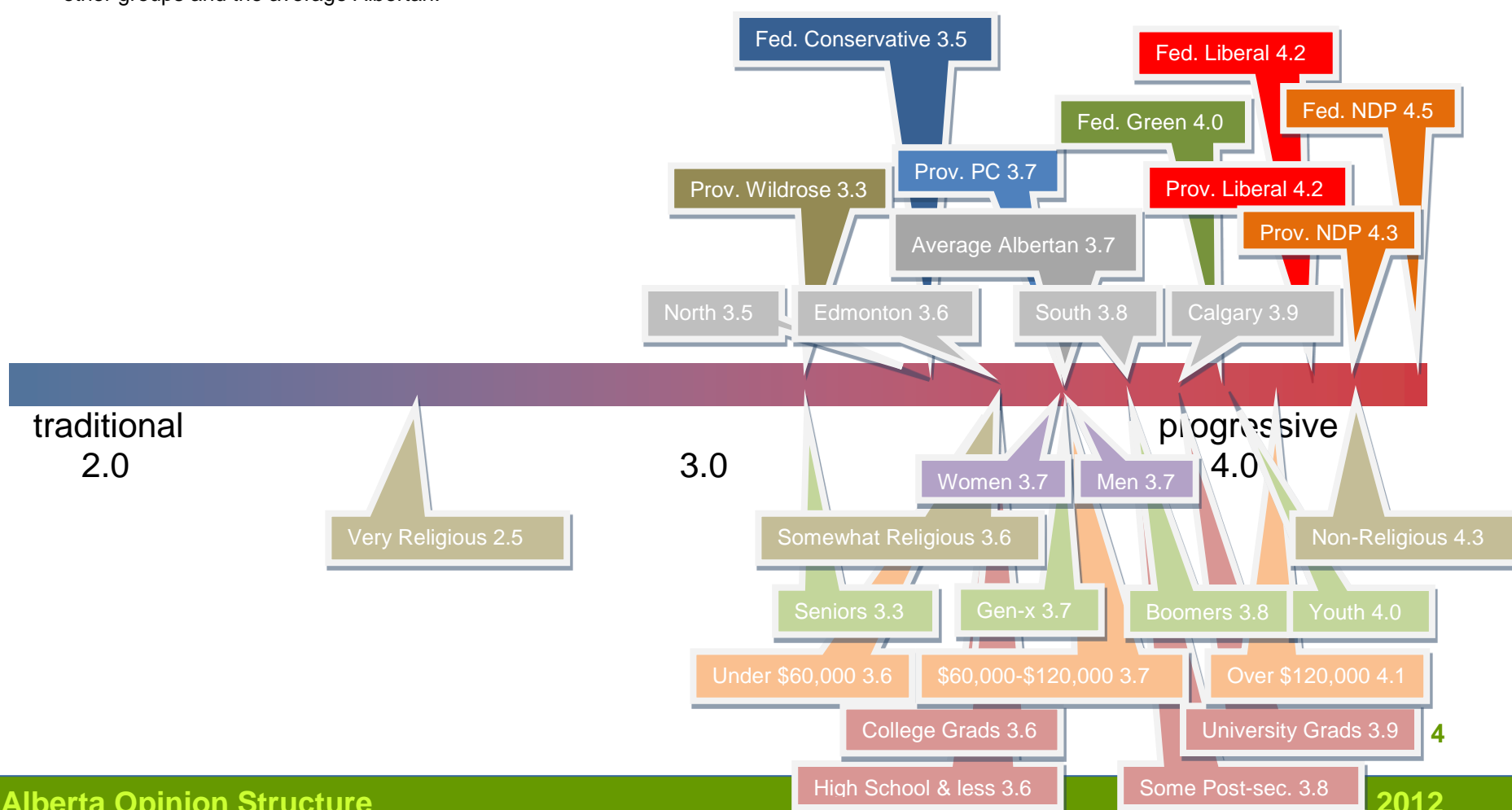
Issues Index (2012) (means)



This graphical presentation is based on the tabular data that appears on the following page and demonstrates where various groups of Albertans place themselves on the traditional-progressive index.

The graph is organized with supporters of the federal political parties at the top, followed by supporters of the provincial political parties, regions of the province, and the average Alberta score, all above the bar. A selection of various demographic groups are found below the bar.

Clear regional differences appear between the southern half of the province and the northern half. Divisions also exist between the somewhat less progressive Wildrose supporters, and those of the federal Conservative Party of Canada, Alberta PC, as well as the more progressive Liberal, NDP and Green voters. The highly religious are clearly Alberta's most traditional residents, while seniors, lower income earners, and those without post-secondary education also distinguish themselves as somewhat less progressive than other groups and the average Albertan.



Issues Index (2012) (means)

Index of Alberta Opinion Structure (mean scores)

Region	<u>Calgary</u> 3.9	<u>Edmonton</u> 3.6	<u>North</u> 3.5	<u>South</u> 3.8	<u>All Residents</u> 3.7
Provincial Voters	<u>PC</u> 3.7	<u>NDP</u> 4.3	<u>Wildrose</u> 3.3	<u>Liberal</u> 4.2	<u>Undecided</u> 3.6
Federal Voters	<u>CPC</u> 3.5	<u>Liberal</u> 4.2	<u>NDP</u> 4.5	<u>Green</u> 4.0	<u>Undecided</u> 3.4
Gender	<u>Male</u> 3.7	<u>Female</u> 3.7			
Income	<u>Under \$60,000</u> 3.6	<u>\$60-\$120,000</u> 3.7	<u>Over \$120,000</u> 4.1		
Religious Participation	<u>1-3 per month/more</u> 2.5	<u>Several per year</u> 3.6	<u>Rarely/never</u> 4.3		
Age	<u>18-29</u> 4.0	<u>30-44</u> 3.7	<u>45-64</u> 3.8	<u>65 and older</u> 3.3	
Education	<u>High School or Less</u> 3.6	<u>Some Post-secondary</u> 3.8	<u>College-Tech-Trade</u> 3.6	<u>University Grad</u> 3.9	

Range = 0 (most traditional) to 6 (most progressive)

Note: Alberta Party = 3.6


Index Items by Area of Province (2012) (%)

- Substantial majorities in all regions of the province support same-sex marriage having equal legal status with traditional marriages.
- Large majorities in all regions of the province support abortion choice for Canadian women.
- Majorities of Albertans outside of the Calgary support a return to capital punishment for convicted first degree murderers. Opinion in Calgary is much more evenly divided.
- Substantial majorities in all regions of the province support medical marijuana being legal.
- Slim majorities in all regions of the province oppose the decriminalization of recreational marijuana.
- Substantial majorities of all regions of the province support legal doctor assisted suicide.

Same-sex Marriage*	Calgary	Edmonton	North	South	Alberta
Agree	78.3	73.3	67.9	75.6	74.3
Disagree	21.7	26.7	32.1	24.4	25.7
Abortion Choice*	Calgary	Edmonton	North	South	Alberta
Agree	87.0	80.9	72.7	81.1	81.4
Disagree	13.0	19.1	27.3	18.9	18.6
Capital Punishment*	Calgary	Edmonton	North	South	Alberta
Agree	52.8	60.3	64.7	68.5	60.3
Disagree	47.2	39.7	35.3	31.5	39.7
Medical Marijuana	Calgary	Edmonton	North	South	Alberta
Agree	77.8	75.5	71.4	78.7	76.1
Disagree	22.2	24.5	28.6	21.3	23.9
Recreational Marijuana	Calgary	Edmonton	North	South	Alberta
Agree	43.7	42.5	46.8	48.2	44.9
Disagree	56.3	57.5	53.2	51.8	55.1
Doctor Assisted Suicide	Calgary	Edmonton	North	South	Alberta
Agree	77.8	72.4	71.7	81.8	75.9
Disagree	22.2	27.6	28.3	18.2	24.1

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

Same-sex marriage by demographic group (2012) (%)

 Majorities of nearly all demographic groups within Alberta support same-sex marriages having equal legal status with traditional marriages. However, significant opinion differences are measured within each demographic group.

Women (77.2%) are more supportive than are men (71.4%). Upper income residents (83.9%) and younger residents (86.3%) are more supportive than are other income and age groups. Liberal, NDP and Green voters are significantly more supportive than are federal and provincial Conservatives or Wildrose supporters. Seniors (58.5%) and the highly religious (44.8%) are the least supportive, with the highly religious being the only group to indicate that a majority are opposed.

Gender*	Male	Female	All Albertans
Agree	71.4	77.2	74.3
Disagree	28.6	22.8	25.7

Household Income*	Under \$60,000	\$60,000 to \$120,000	Over \$120,000
Agree	71.5	75.1	83.9
Disagree	28.5	24.9	16.1

Religious Attendance*	2-3 times/month-more	Several times/year	Rarely-never
Agree	44.8	75.2	86.2
Disagree	55.2	24.8	13.8

Education*	High School or less	Some Post-secondary	College-Tech-Trade	University Grad
Agree	71.4	73.2	71.0	79.6
Disagree	28.6	26.8	29.0	20.4

Age*	18-29	30-44	45-64	65 and older
Agree	86.3	78.4	72.6	58.5
Disagree	13.7	21.6	27.4	41.5

Provincial Vote*	PC	Wildrose	NDP	Liberal	Undecided
Agree	75.1	65.2	86.2	86.3	73.0
Disagree	24.9	34.8	13.8	13.7	27.0

Federal Vote*	Conservative	Liberal	NDP	Green	Undecided
Agree	69.4	87.6	89.2	80.7	68.8
Disagree	30.6	12.4	10.8	19.3	31.3

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

Abortion choice by demographic group (2012) (%)

Majorities in nearly all demographic groups within Alberta agree that abortion is a matter of private choice. Only the highly religious are more opposed (52.6%) than supportive (47.4%). Only religion and partisanship significantly impact opinion on this item.

Men (79.2%) are nearly as supportive as are women (83.6%), while NDP and Liberal voters are slightly more supportive than are conservative party and Wildrose supporters, but these differences are relatively small and substantial majorities of all partisans from all parties support abortion choice. Religion has the strongest impact on opinion with only 47.4% of the most religious supporting choice. Support climbs to 85.5% among those with moderate amounts of religious participation, and peaks at 93.3% among the non-religious.

Gender	Male	Female	All Albertans
Agree	79.2	83.6	81.4
Disagree	20.8	16.4	18.6

Household Income	Under \$60,000	\$60,000 to \$120,000	Over \$120,000
Agree	80.7	79.9	86.9
Disagree	19.3	20.1	13.1

Religious Attendance*	2-3 times/month-more	Several times/year	Rarely-never
Agree	47.4	85.5	93.3
Disagree	52.6	14.5	6.7

Education	High School or less	Some Post-secondary	College-Tech-Trade	University Grad
Agree	83.4	82.7	76.8	83.3
Disagree	16.6	17.3	23.2	16.7


Age	18-29	30-44	45-64	65 and older
Agree	80.5	83.8	82.3	78.0
Disagree	19.5	16.2	17.7	22.0

Provincial Vote*	PC	Wildrose	NDP	Liberal	Undecided
Agree	81.3	74.9	89.7	88.3	82.4
Disagree	18.7	25.1	10.3	11.7	17.6

Federal Vote*	Conservative	Liberal	NDP	Green	Undecided
Agree	77.3	90.1	91.5	81.0	82.2
Disagree	22.7	9.9	8.5	19.0	17.8

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

Capital punishment by demographic group (2012) (%)

 Majorities in most demographic groups within Alberta agree that capital punishment should be reinstated for people convicted of first degree murder. Significant income, education and partisan differences divide opinion on this issue.

Lower income and less well educated Albertans are more supportive than are upper income and more educated residents, with university grads one of the few groups to be more opposed (56.2%) than supportive (43.8%). Older voters are more supportive than are the youth. Also, federal and provincial conservative party voters and Wildrose supporters are considerably more supportive than are Liberal or NDP partisans, with majorities in each of these latter groups more opposed to reinstating capital punishment than supportive.

Gender	Male	Female	All Albertans
Agree	62.3	58.3	60.3
Disagree	37.7	41.7	39.7

Household Income*	Under \$60,000	\$60,000 to \$120,000	Over \$120,000
Agree	64.4	62.4	53.7
Disagree	35.6	37.6	46.3

Religious Attendance	2-3 times/month-more	Several times/year	Rarely-never
Agree	55.7	61.6	62.9
Disagree	44.3	38.4	37.1

Education*	High School or less	Some Post-secondary	College-Tech-Trade	University Grad
Agree	75.1	61.9	67.2	43.8
Disagree	24.9	38.1	32.8	56.2


Age	18-29	30-44	45-64	65 and older
Agree	55.3	59.1	62.8	62.8
Disagree	44.7	40.9	37.2	37.2

Provincial Vote*	PC	Wildrose	NDP	Liberal	Undecided
Agree	58.1	79.6	41.6	45.2	63.6
Disagree	41.9	20.4	58.4	54.8	36.4

Federal Vote*	Conservative	Liberal	NDP	Green	Undecided
Agree	66.3	41.6	43.4	56.5	67.0
Disagree	33.7	58.4	56.6	43.5	33.0

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

Medical marijuana by demographic group (2012) (%)

 Majorities in all demographic groups within Alberta agree that marijuana should be legal for medical purposes. Religion, education and partisanship significantly divide opinion on this issue.

Seniors (71.0%) are slightly less supportive than are other age groups, particularly the youth (78.8%) and boomers (78.6%). The highly religious (58.1%) are less supportive than are less religious Albertans, while Wildrose (72.5%) and Alberta Conservative (73.7%) are slightly less supportive than are their Liberal (84.5%) and NDP (82.2%) counterparts. Similar patterns of partisan differences are measured between the federal party partisans.

Gender	Male	Female	All Albertans
Agree	76.0	76.3	76.1
Disagree	24.0	23.7	23.9

Household Income*	Under \$60,000	\$60,000 to \$120,000	Over \$120,000
Agree	73.1	76.5	83.3
Disagree	26.9	23.5	16.7

Religious Attendance*	2-3 times/month-more	Several times/year	Rarely-never
Agree	58.1	74.6	85.1
Disagree	41.9	25.4	14.9

Education	High School or less	Some Post-secondary	College-Tech-Trade	University Grad
Agree	73.5	76.4	75.5	78.3
Disagree	26.5	23.6	24.5	21.7

Age	18-29	30-44	45-64	65 and older
Agree	78.8	74.9	78.6	71.0
Disagree	21.2	25.1	21.4	29.0

Provincial Vote*	PC	Wildrose	NDP	Liberal	Undecided
Agree	73.7	72.5	82.2	84.5	80.2
Disagree	26.3	27.5	17.8	15.5	19.8

Federal Vote*	Conservative	Liberal	NDP	Green	Undecided
Agree	71.9	83.7	86.0	82.3	73.4
Disagree	28.1	16.3	14.0	17.7	26.6

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

Recreational marijuana by demographic group (2012) (%)

Majorities in most demographic groups within Alberta are opposed to marijuana being decriminalized for recreational purposes. However, majority support exists among men (50.1%), the least religious (57.6%), the youth (54.5%), provincial NDP supporters (59.5%), and federal NDP (58.6%) and Green (61.9%) partisans.

The highly religious (28.8%) are much less supportive than are the non-religious, while the boomers (48.0%) are nearly as supportive as the youth, and much more supportive than are seniors (33.5%). Federal Conservative (37.7%) and provincial PC (37.3%) supporters are significantly less supportive than are partisans of other parties.

Gender*	Male	Female	All Albertans
Agree	50.1	39.6	44.9
Disagree	49.9	60.4	55.1

Household Income	Under \$60,000	\$60,000 to \$120,000	Over \$120,000
Agree	42.3	47.3	46.5
Disagree	57.7	52.7	53.5

Religious Attendance*	2-3 times/month-more	Several times/year	Rarely-never
Agree	28.8	36.2	57.6
Disagree	71.2	63.8	42.4

Education*	High School or less	Some Post-secondary	College-Tech-Trade	University Grad
Agree	49.5	52.0	43.0	39.4
Disagree	50.5	48.0	57.0	60.6

Age*	18-29	30-44	45-64	65 and older
Agree	54.5	41.5	48.0	33.5
Disagree	45.5	58.5	52.0	66.5

Provincial Vote*	PC	Wildrose	NDP	Liberal	Undecided
Agree	37.3	42.3	59.5	45.8	45.1
Disagree	62.7	57.7	40.5	54.2	54.9

Federal Vote*	Conservative	Liberal	NDP	Green	Undecided
Agree	37.7	48.0	58.6	61.9	39.8
Disagree	62.3	52.0	41.4	38.1	60.2

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

Legalize doctor-assisted suicide by demographic group (2012) (%)

Majorities in almost all demographic groups within Alberta believe that doctor-assisted suicide should be legal for people with terminal illnesses. Religion is clearly the most important predictor of opinion on this issue, while partisanship has limited impact.

Men (77.4%) are slightly more supportive than are women (74.4%) while upper income Albertans (84.7%) are more supportive than lower income residents (77.6%). Most significantly, highly religious Albertans (39.8%) are much less supportive than are the moderately religious (77.3%) and the non-religious (90.0%).

Gender	Male	Female	All Albertans
Agree	77.4	74.4	75.9
Disagree	22.6	25.6	24.1

Household Income*	Under \$60,000	\$60,000 to \$120,000	Over \$120,000
Agree	71.6	74.7	84.7
Disagree	28.4	25.3	15.3

Religious Attendance*	2-3 times/month-more	Several times/year	Rarely-never
Agree	39.8	77.3	90.0
Disagree	60.2	22.7	10.0

Education	High School or less	Some Post-secondary	College-Tech-Trade	University Grad
Agree	74.4	78.4	78.3	74.5
Disagree	25.6	21.6	21.7	25.5

Age	18-29	30-44	45-64	65 and older
Agree	77.1	76.7	76.5	72.8
Disagree	22.9	23.3	23.5	27.2

Provincial Vote	PC	Wildrose	NDP	Liberal	Undecided
Agree	77.0	72.2	78.6	75.8	70.6
Disagree	23.0	27.8	21.4	24.2	29.4

Federal Vote	Conservative	Liberal	NDP	Green	Undecided
Agree	73.3	77.1	81.9	81.4	73.6
Disagree	26.7	22.9	18.1	18.6	26.4

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

Demographics

Area of Province (%)		Gender (%)		Income (%)		Education (%)		Age (%)	
Calgary	32.8	Male	49.8	Under \$60,000	34.3	H-School/less	21.7	18-29	21.3
Edmonton	29.7	Female	50.2	\$60-\$120,000	42.2	Some P-Sec.	20.4	30-44	26.5
North	18.3			Over \$120,000	23.5	Col-Tech-Grad	24.4	45-64	32.2
South	19.3					University Grad	33.5	65 or older	20.0
									Mean age = 48.2 years old

Religious Participation (%)		Provincial Vote (%)		Federal Vote (%)	
2-3/month-more	24.5	PC	42.7	Conservative	56.1
Several/year	25.1	Wildrose	22.8	Liberal	11.3
Rarely-never	50.4	NDP	13.4	NDP	14.5
		Liberal	10.6	Green	7.1
		Undecided	10.5	Undecided	11.0

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

Questions

The federal government should continue to recognize same sex marriages giving them equal legal standing with traditional marriages.

- Strongly Agree – Somewhat Agree – Somewhat Disagree – Strongly Disagree

Abortion is a matter of choice that should be decided between a woman and her doctor.

- Strongly Agree – Somewhat Agree – Somewhat Disagree – Strongly Disagree

Canada should re-introduce capital punishment for people convicted of first-degree murder.

- Strongly Agree – Somewhat Agree – Somewhat Disagree – Strongly Disagree

Marijuana should be legal for medical purposes.

- Strongly Agree – Somewhat Agree – Somewhat Disagree – Strongly Disagree

Marijuana should be decriminalized for recreational purposes.

- Strongly Agree – Somewhat Agree – Somewhat Disagree – Strongly Disagree

People with terminal illnesses should be allowed to legally access doctor assisted suicides.

- Strongly Agree – Somewhat Agree – Somewhat Disagree – Strongly Disagree