



Albertans' Opinions About the Legal Status of Prostitution







Alberta Public Opinion Study – Fall 2011

December 2011








Dr. Faron Ellis
Citizen Society Research Lab
Lethbridge College
3000 College Drive South
Lethbridge AB T1K 1L6
faron.ellis@lethbridgecollege.ca
www.lethbridgecollege.ca/go/csrl



Methodology

-  **Population** The province of Alberta has a total population of 3,779,353 residents (Statistics Canada, July 1, 2011) approximately 77% of which are 18 years of age or older for an adult population of approximately 2,910,102.
-  **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 2011. Students interviewed 1,237 adult Alberta residents by telephone from October 1st to 2nd 2011 under the supervision of Canadian Studies faculty members Faron Ellis PhD and Marda Schindeler MA. Telephone numbers were selected from a sample drawn from InfoCanada 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 ± 2.8 percentage points, 19 times out of 20. The margin of error increases when analyzing sub-samples of the data (Calgary ± 4.9 percentage points, Edmonton and immediate area ± 4.8 percentage points, North ± 6.6 percentage points, South ± 6.5 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 developed by the Open Source Learning Lab (OSLL). We thank James Manis PhD and OSLL for their efforts in working with us to establish and maintain 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 arose out of the research interests of College students and faculty.

Albertans' Opinions About the Legal Status of Prostitution

-  Although it is currently legal to sell sex for money in Canada, some activities such as communicating for the purpose of prostitution or running a brothel are illegal. The subtleties associated with the legal status of prostitution have led to a considerable amount of confusion amongst the Canadian public with over two-thirds (69%) believing the act of selling sex for money is currently illegal in Canada (Angus Reid Public Opinion, 2009). As such, we introduced this item by explaining the current legal status of prostitution in Canada before asking respondents their opinion on whether or not they would like to see a change in the legal status of prostitution.
-  Nearly half of all Albertans (48.5%) would prefer to see all aspects of prostitution made illegal in Canada. Support was strongest in areas outside of the two major cities (54.3% in the north outside of the Edmonton area and 54.5% in the south outside of Calgary.) Support for making all aspects of prostitution illegal drops slightly in the major cities (45.6% in Calgary and 43.9% in the Edmonton area). Support for making all aspects of prostitution legal was also highest in the major cities at just over 30% in both Calgary and Edmonton.
-  As previous studies have shown, a significant gender divide exists on this issue with a clear majority of Alberta women (60.4%) believing that all aspects of prostitution should be illegal, while only slightly more than one in five Alberta women think all aspects should be legal (21.7%). Men, on the other hand, are much more evenly divided on the issue with 37.2% thinking all aspects of prostitution should be illegal, only slightly more than the 36.0% who think all aspects of prostitution should be legal. A further quarter of men (26.8%) believe that the status quo is fine.
-  Highly religious Albertans are also more likely to believe that all aspects of prostitution should be illegal (60.6%) than do their less religious compatriots.
-  Interestingly, the youth (55.2%) are more likely than are other generations to believe that all aspects of prostitution should be illegal.
-  Federal Conservative (51.4%) and Liberal (52.1%) supporters are more likely than are NDP (40.1%) or Green (44.2%) partisans to believe that all aspects of prostitution should be illegal.
-  Provincial PC supporters (52.8%) are more likely than are NDP (45.9%), Wildrose (43.2%) and Liberal (38.9%) supporters to believe that all aspects of prostitution should be illegal. Interestingly, Wildrose supporters (33.1%) are among the most likely to believe that all aspects of prostitution should be legal.

Albertans' Opinions About the Legal Status of Prostitution (2011) (%)

Region*	Calgary	Edmonton	North	South	All Albertans
All Illegal	45.6	43.9	54.3	54.5	48.5
Status Quo	23.9	25.7	20.2	17.4	22.5
All Legal	30.6	30.4	25.5	28.2	29.0

Gender*	Male	Female
All Illegal	37.2	60.4
Status Quo	26.8	17.9
All Legal	36.0	21.7

Religious Attendance*	2-3 times/month-more	Several times/year	Rarely-never
All Illegal	60.6	48.5	42.8
Status Quo	20.5	27.9	20.3
All Legal	18.9	23.6	36.9

Household Income	Under \$50,000	\$50,000 to \$100,000	Over \$100,000
All Illegal	54.1	47.6	42.4
Status Quo	13.2	24.1	26.5
All Legal	32.6	28.2	31.1

Education*	High School or less	Some Post-Secondary	College-Tech-Trade	University Grad
All Illegal	52.7	54.9	49.3	41.7
Status Quo	17.4	22.5	20.3	27.4
All Legal	30.0	22.5	30.4	30.9

Age*	18-29	30-44	45-64	65 and older
All Illegal	55.2	48.1	44.7	48.5
Status Quo	24.4	20.2	24.3	20.1
All Legal	20.4	31.7	31.0	31.4

Federal Vote	CPC	Liberal	NDP	Green	Undecided
All Illegal	51.4	52.1	40.1	44.2	46.1
Status Quo	22.3	23.9	27.2	11.5	22.4
All Legal	26.3	23.9	32.7	44.2	31.6

Provincial Vote*	PC	NDP	Wildrose	Liberal	Undecided
All Illegal	52.8	45.9	43.2	38.9	48.2
Status Quo	21.3	23.0	23.6	30.1	24.1
All Legal	25.9	33.1	33.1	31.0	27.7

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

Demographics

Area of Province (%)		Gender (%)		Income (%)		Education (%)		Age (%)	
Calgary	30.3	Male	50.5	Under \$50,000	27.1	H-School/less	19.8	18-29	20.2
Edmonton	32.0	Female	49.5	\$50-\$100,000	37.5	Some P-Sec.	17.9	30-44	24.8
North	18.0			Over \$100,000	35.3	Col-Tech-Grad	27.6	45-64	35.6
South	19.7					University Grad	34.7	65 or older	19.4
									Mean age = 47 years old

Religious Participation (%)		Provincial Vote (%)		Federal Vote (%)	
2-3/month-more	27.0	PC	42.0	Conservative	54.2
Several/year	22.7	NDP	14.4	Liberal	11.9
Rarely-never	50.3	Wildrose	14.2	NDP	19.7
		Liberal	11.8	Green	5.6
		Alberta Party	2.7	Undecided	8.5
		Other Party	3.0		
		Undecided	11.9		

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

Question

In Canada, it is currently legal to sell sex for money, but some activities such as communicating for the purpose of prostitution or running a brothel are illegal. Please tell me which of the following best represents your opinion on the legal status of prostitution in Canada?

- All aspects of prostitution should be illegal in Canada allowing no one to buy or sell sex for money
- The current situation is satisfactory (prostitution itself is legal but communicating and running brothels are illegal)
- All aspects of prostitution should be legal allowing consenting adults to engage in the buying or selling of sex for money

Reference:

Angus Reid Public Opinion: A Visioncritical Practice. 2009. *Prostitution: Gender shapes views on debate over prostitution in Canada.*