



Levels of Municipal Taxation

Alberta Public Opinion Study – Fall 2010

October 8, 2010

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 3,720,946 residents (July 1, 2010) approximately 77% of which are 18 years of age or older for an adult population of approximately 2,865,000.
-  **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 2010. Students interviewed 1,067 adult Alberta residents by telephone from October 2nd to 3rd 2010 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 ± 3.0 percentage points, 19 times out of 20. The margin of error increases when analyzing sub-samples of the data (Calgary ± 5.1 percentage points, Edmonton and immediate area ± 5.3 percentage points, North ± 7.2 percentage points, South ± 7.6 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.

Alberta Opinion Structure on Municipal Government Taxation

When considering the levels of municipal taxation they pay in relation to the services they receive from their municipal governments, a clear majority of Albertans (55.2%) believe their municipal taxes are too high. Nearly one in every five Albertans (17.9) thinks their taxes are far too high and a further 37.2% believe taxes are somewhat too high.

A significant plurality of Albertans (41.8%) believes that taxes are at about the right levels in relation to the services they receive from their municipal governments.

Only 3.0% of Albertans think their taxes are too low, with 2.1% thinking they are somewhat too low and only 1.0% stating that they are far too low.

Although still much more likely to believe their taxes are too high than too low, Calgarians (50.9%) and Edmontonians (51.6%) are less likely to believe they are being overtaxed than are northern Albertans (61.3%) or southern Albertans (64.9%), the most likely to believe they are paying too much municipal tax.

Household income is a significant predictor of opinion on this issue with lower income Albertans (59.4%) most likely to believe they are being overtaxed, followed by middle income Albertans (56.9%). Although still very likely to believe they are being overtaxed, upper income Albertans (49.4%) are less likely than other Albertans to think their taxes are too high.

Education also significantly impacts opinion with university educated Albertans (45.6%) less likely to believe they are being overtaxed than do other Albertans.

No significant gender or age differences are evident although younger Albertans are the most likely to believe they are being overtaxed (62.7%).

Region*	Calgary	Edmonton	North	South	All Albertans
Too high	50.9	51.6	61.3	64.9	55.2
About right	44.7	45.4	36.9	33.8	41.8
Too low	4.4	3.0	1.8	1.3	3.0
Far too high	16.8	18.1	19.6	18.2	17.9
Somewhat too high	33.9	33.6	41.7	46.8	37.2
About right	44.5	45.4	36.9	33.8	41.8
Somewhat too low	2.4	3.0	0.6	1.3	2.1
Far too low	2.4	0.0	1.2	0.0	1.0

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

Alberta Opinion Structure on Municipal Government Taxation (%)

Region*	Calgary	Edmonton	North	South	All Albertans
Too high	50.9	51.6	61.3	64.9	55.2
About right	44.7	45.4	36.9	33.8	41.8
Too low	4.4	3.0	1.8	1.3	3.0

Gender	Male	Female
Too high	54.7	55.6
About right	42.5	41.0
Too low	2.8	3.4

Household Income*	Under \$50,000	\$50,000 to \$100,000	Over \$100,000
Too high	59.4	56.9	49.4
About right	35.8	40.3	47.9
Too low	4.8	2.8	2.6

Education*	High School or less	Some Post Secondary	College-Tech-Trade	University Grad
Too high	61.4	58.8	61.3	45.6
About right	35.0	38.8	35.9	51.1
Too low	3.6	2.5	2.8	3.3

Age	18-29	30-44	45-64	65 and older
Too high	62.7	52.9	54.3	52.6
About right	30.8	44.6	43.6	44.7
Too low	6.5	2.5	2.0	2.6

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

Alberta Opinion Structure on Municipal Government Taxation (%)

Region*	Calgary	Edmonton	North	South	All Albertans
Far too high	16.8	18.1	19.6	18.2	17.9
Somewhat too high	33.9	33.6	41.7	46.8	37.2
About right	44.5	45.4	36.9	33.8	41.8
Somewhat too low	2.4	3.0	0.6	1.3	2.1
Far too low	2.4	0.0	1.2	0.0	1.0

Gender	Male	Female
Far too high	19.5	16.3
Somewhat too high	35.2	39.4
About right	42.5	41.1
Somewhat too low	1.6	2.6
Far too low	1.2	0.6

Household Income*	Under \$50,000	\$50,000 to \$100,000	Over \$100,000
Far too high	25.1	13.2	15.6
Somewhat too high	34.2	43.9	33.8
About right	35.8	40.4	47.9
Somewhat too low	3.2	2.2	1.5
Far too low	1.6	0.3	1.2

Education*	High School or less	Some Post Secondary	College-Tech-Trade	University Grad
Far too high	25.4	15.0	19.8	13.6
Somewhat too high	36.5	43.8	41.5	31.8
About right	35.0	38.8	35.9	51.3
Somewhat too low	1.5	2.5	2.0	2.2
Far too low	1.5	0.0	0.8	1.1

Age	18-29	30-44	45-64	65 and older
Far too high	25.4	15.0	19.8	13.6
Somewhat too high	36.5	43.8	41.5	31.8
About right	35.0	38.8	35.9	51.3
Somewhat too low	1.5	2.5	2.0	2.2
Far too low	1.5	0.0	0.8	1.1

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

Demographics

Area of Province (%)		Gender (%)		Income (%)		Education (%)		Age (%)	
Calgary	34.8	Male	50.2	Under \$50,000	24.2	H-School/less	21.0	18-29	19.9
Edmonton	32.1	Female	49.8	\$50-\$100,000	37.4	Some P-Sec.	17.4	30-44	24.5
North	17.4			Over \$100,000	38.4	Col-Tech-Grad	25.1	45-64	43.4
South	15.7					University Grad	36.5	65 or older	12.2
									Mean age = 46.4 years old

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

Question

Please tell me which of the following best represents your opinion about the level of municipal property taxes that you pay in relation to the services you receive from your local government. Would you say...?

My taxes are much too high for the services I receive

My taxes are somewhat too high for the services I receive

My taxes are about right for the services I receive

My taxes are somewhat too low for the services I receive

My taxes are much too low for the services I receive

Note: The vast majority of Lethbridge residents in this sample (81.6%) believe their taxes are too high. Nearly one in five (18.4%) think tax levels are about right. None think their taxes are too low. Nearly one-third of Lethbridge residents believe their taxes are far too high (30.6%) while a further 51.0% think they are somewhat too high. Caution must be taken when analyzing these data because the small Lethbridge subsample (only 51 cases) leads to a margin of error of ± 13.7 percentage points, 19 times out of 20.