

II. Levels of Interest and Information Regarding International Affairs

During the summer of 1985, almost all Canadians (83%) claimed to be interested in international events or issues. Since July, claimed interest has dissipated slightly (from 83% to 79%), however, the vast majority continue to say they are either very interested (26%) or somewhat interested (53%) in international affairs.

Despite this slight general decline in the intensity of interest, attitudes continue to differ on the basis of region, age, and socio-economic status. More specifically, residents of British Columbia (32%), those over 55 years of age (34%), and the university educated (48%) are more likely to claim to be very *interested* in world affairs. On the other hand, the level of strong interest among Quebecers (20%), and particularly Francophones (18%), those under 24 years of age (18%), and those with less than a high school diploma (18%) is well below the national average.

The majority of Canadians continue to say that they are either very (12%) or somewhat *informed* (59%) about world affairs and foreign policy issues, although, like interest in world affairs, this has marginally declined over the last six months (from 76% to 71%). As with the expressed level of interest, reported knowledge of international affairs tends to vary by specific groups in much the same way.

A comparison of the data shows that fewer Canadians consider themselves very well informed (12%) than consider themselves very interested (26%) in international affairs. This provides evidence that while many Canadians remain interested in world events and foreign policy issues, some lack confidence in their understanding of these affairs.

III. Global Overview on International Issues

A. Top of Mind Concerns

While there is no consensus regarding what is the most important problem facing the world, there is one issue about which almost half of Canadians express concern. As shown in Table 1, over four in 10 respondents cite some aspect of global security as their top of mind concern. While threat of nuclear war is the most often cited individual concern (21%), related issues include Middle East conflicts, terrorism or violence, "Star Wars" and war in general.