

II. THE FTA — ATTENTIVENESS, UNDERSTANDING AND SUPPORT

A. Attentiveness to and Understanding of the FTA

Although the free trade deal has been at "centre stage" of the political theatre for a number of months now, the number of Canadians indicating they are closely following the discussions on the Agreement has declined since October 1987 (46% in May 1988 vs 56% in October 1987). As shown in Table 1, the current level of attentiveness to the free trade discussions is only slightly higher than that recorded in the summer of 1987.

Table 1

ATTENTIVENESS AND UNDERSTANDING OF THE FTA

	JUNE 1987 %	AUGUST 1987 %	OCTOBER 1987 %	MAY 1988 %
<u>FOLLOW DISCUSSIONS ON FREE TRADE</u>				
Closely	41	42	56	46
Not closely	59	59	43	53
<u>UNDERSTAND THE ISSUE AS WELL AS YOU'D LIKE TO</u>				
Yes	24	25	N/A	28
No	76	75	N/A	72

Also found in Table 1 is Canadians' reported level of understanding of the free trade issue. Despite the federal government's efforts to inform the public of the Agreement's contents and anticipated effects, the data show that there has not been any change over the past year in the number of Canadians who feel they understand the issue to their satisfaction. In fact, fewer than three-in-ten (28%) acknowledge that they understand the trade deal as well as they would like and views do not differ significantly across the various regions of the country.