

The Film Subsidy Controversy—

**National Poll Shows Public Polarized with Large,
Female-Led Majority Opposed to Continued Subsidies**



**COMPAS Inc.
Public Opinion and Customer Research
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Overview

The Institute for Canadian Values engaged COMPAS to undertake an objective, fair-minded survey of Canadian public opinion in the wake of mediated debate over federal government subsidies for films considered pornographic.

Opinion is largely one-sided, according to findings from the nation-wide representative survey of more than 500 Canadians.¹ It is one-sided in that 72% oppose any right to subsidies for the films in question while 24% support the subsidies.

The minority supporting the subsidy were asked if opponents should be entitled to withhold a share of their taxes as a matter of conscience if they truly object to such subsidies. About two-fifths of the 24% backing the subsidies believe that opponents should be able to withhold their relevant taxes as a matter of conscience (9%).

Altogether, 81% of Canadian either oppose subsidies for the offending films (72%) or support the subsidies but believe that individual taxpayers should be able to withhold their contributions to the film subsidy program as a matter of personal conscience (9%).

Opinion is polarized in that only a plurality (46%) takes a middle ground, opposing the subsidies while allowing production and distribution of the offending films. Most of the remainder are divided between those who would allow the films to continue receiving subsidies (24%) and those who would legally ban or prohibit these films (26%).

Opinion is gender related in that women are more intensely opposed to the subsidies than men. Among women, 30% would go so far as to prohibit such films compared to 20% among men.

While Canadians are largely one-sided in their feelings about subsidies for pornographic films, they are diverse in their views about film subsidies in general.

¹ By convention, surveys of this size are deemed accurate to within approximately 4.5 percentage points 19 times out of 20. The survey was completed April 11, 2008. N=506.



Large Majority against Subsidies

Opinion is one-sided in that at most a fourth (24%) of the public believes that such films should be entitled to receive government subsidies as much as any other Canadian firm, as shown in table 1. Almost three-quarters (72%) oppose such subsidies. Most of this majority believe that production companies should be free to make such films but ought not to be entitled to subsidies. A minority believe that such films should be banned.

Table 1: Attitudes to Subsidies (in Percent)²

	All	Men	Women
These should be banned and made illegal in Canada	26	20	30
They should be allowed but should receive no government subsidies	46	49	43
<i>Total against subsidies</i>	<i>72</i>	<i>69</i>	<i>73</i>
They should be entitled to receive government subsidies as much as any other Canadian film	24	26	22
UNPROMPTED: Government should not be subsidizing film production in general	*	1	*
UNPROMPTED Don't know	4	4	4

Among Minority Backing Subsidies, Many Would Allow Taxpayers' Conscientious Objection

The 24% minority who favour protecting the right of subsidy for pornographic films were asked if taxpayers who strongly oppose that view

² There's controversy today about government subsidies for films considered X-rated or pornographic. One such film has a 3 word title; the first 2 words are "Young People" while the third word starts with the letter F. Which of the following opinions is closest to your own?
ROTATE POLES.



should be allowed to withhold their share of the subsidy as a matter of conscience. Almost two-fifths (39%) believe that taxpayers should have such a right, as shown in table 2.

*Table 2: Among Supporters of Subsidies,
Attitudes towards Allowing Taxpayers the Right to Withhold Taxes
if Subsidies are a Matter of Conscience³ (in Percent)*

	N=122
Definitely be allowed to withhold their share of the subsidy as a matter of conscience	18
Probably have such a right	21
Probably have no such right	16
Definitely have no such right	40
UNPROMPTED Don't know	6

Women More Intensely Opposed to Offending Films

As shown in table 1, women are more intensely opposed to the offending films than men. The option of banning such films receives 50% more support among females than among males—30% vs. 20%.

Polarization

Opinion is polarized in that only a plurality (46%) takes a middle ground, opposing the subsidies while allowing production and distribution of the offending films. Most of the remainder are divided between those who would

³ ASK IF PREVIOUS RESPONSE WAS THAT THEY SHOULD BE ENTITLED TO RECEIVE GOVERNMENT SUBSIDIES AS MUCH AS ANY OTHER CANADIAN FILM). Some people say that film subsidies put the principle of freedom of speech for the film-maker in conflict with the principle of freedom of conscience for the taxpayer. Suppose that the government continued to subsidize X-rated, pornographic films. In that situation, do you think that individual taxpayers should be allowed to refuse to pay their personal contributions to these subsidies if doing so was against their conscience? Should taxpayers... NO ROTATION.



allow the films to continue receiving subsidies (24%) and those who would legally ban or prohibit these films (26%).

Mixed Views about Film Subsidies in General

Prior to asking respondents about subsidies for the controversial category of films, COMPAS interviewers asked about film subsidies in general. As is evident from table 3, Canadians are divided on the matter with 37% believing that our subsidies are excessive, 20% about right, and 26% insufficient.

*Table 3: The federal government reports that, since 1995, it has subsidized the production of 12,000 films to a total of \$22 billion. On balance, is this amount of subsidy for film-making...
ROTATE POLES*

	N=506
Far too much	13
Too much	24
UNPROMPTED About right	20
Too little	21
Far too little	5
UNPROMPTED Don't know	18

Methodology

A national representative survey was completed April 10, 2008 by computer-assisted telephone interviewing technology among n=506 adult respondents. By convention, surveys of this size are deemed accurate to within approximately 4.5 percentage points 19 times out of 20. The principal investigators were Dr. Conrad Winn and Tamara Gottlieb.

