



# **Albertans' Views on China:**

**Results from the  
2011 Alberta Survey**

**China Institute,  
University of Alberta**

## **Objectives of the Survey**

As China, now in its fourth decade of economic expansion, grows in importance to Canada and in particular to the resource-rich province of Alberta, it is important to understand how Albertans view China and the significance of China to our province and its economy.

Following on the Asia Pacific Foundation of Canada's 2010 national opinion poll in which Albertans were found to be more favourable toward Asian economies than the national average, the China Institute included a series of questions on the University of Alberta's 2011 Alberta Survey to further probe Albertans' opinions and concerns about the Asia Pacific generally and China specifically.

## **2011 Alberta Survey**

The 2011 Alberta Survey was administered by the University of Alberta's Population Research Lab (PRL), a member of the Association of Academic Survey Research Organizations (AASRO). This survey of households across the province of Alberta was conducted between May 31 and July 4, 2011 via telephone questionnaire.

A sample size of 1201 respondents was evenly distributed between Metro Edmonton, Metro Calgary, and Other Alberta – with 400 respondents in Metro Edmonton and Other Alberta, and 401 in Metro Calgary. Weights were calculated using population estimates for 2010 in order to bring the data in line with a proportional distribution of the current Alberta population. There is an estimated sampling error of +/- 2.8% with a 95% confidence level.

The China Institute included 10 statements concerning Asia Pacific and China-related issues with which respondents were asked to agree or disagree on a 5-point scale. These statements were posed on 'Survey A' of two surveys run for the 2011 Alberta Survey.

## Analysis Summary

Albertans hold a generally positive view of the significance of China and Asia to Alberta's economy. In all, 10 statements were posed. When asked to agree or disagree, a majority of respondents (>50%) held affirmative attitudes regarding China in every case. Among the issues which garnered high agreement rates: 79% of respondents agreed that China is an important export market for Alberta goods and services; 64% agreed that China's increasing economic strength benefits Alberta; and 62% agreed that Alberta should build stronger ties with China.

While a majority of Albertans agreed that China is important to the province, they were more cautious about statements that detailed possible approaches to building stronger economic ties with China. While 75% agreed that Alberta should diversify its economy by boosting trade with Asia, only 57% agreed that Alberta should decrease its economic reliance on the U.S. market as a means of diversifying its economy. On this latter issue, however, this does not mean 43% of respondents disagreed with decreasing economic reliance on the U.S. Only 27% disagreed, while 16% were undecided, neither agreeing nor disagreeing.

It is important to note that even though Albertans were more cautious in agreeing with particular approaches to strengthening economic ties with China, agreement rates in all questions more than doubled disagreement rates. For instance, even when asked whether Alberta should welcome Chinese investment in energy and other resource sectors of the province, a sensitive issue, 52% of Albertans agreed, whereas only 25% disagreed.

Various demographic and socioeconomic factors, such as area of residence, political affiliations, income, age, and education among others, influence how respondents viewed individual issues. For example, the area of residence in the province and provincial political affiliation were significant factors in how respondents viewed the issue of Chinese investment in Alberta's energy and resource sectors. The relationships between survey questions and demographic and socioeconomic variables are detailed below.

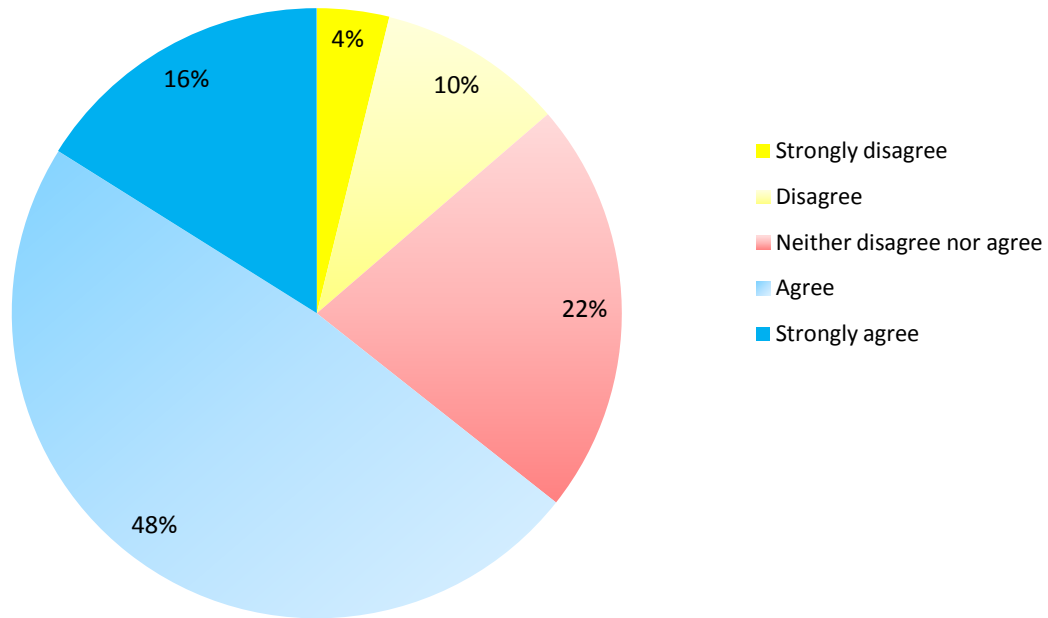


Gordon Houlden  
Director, China Institute  
Professor of Political Science

**Statements with which respondents were asked to  
agree or disagree on a 5-point scale**

Extent of agreement with statements	Agree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree
China's increasing economic strength benefits Alberta	64%	14%	22%
Alberta should build stronger ties with China	62%	16%	22%
China is important as an export market for Alberta goods and services	79%	9%	12%
Alberta should decrease its economic reliance on the U.S. market	57%	27%	16%
Alberta should diversify its economy by trading more with Asia	75%	10%	16%
Alberta should support the building of better infrastructure to transport energy to the west coast for export to Asia	59%	21%	21%
Alberta should welcome Chinese investment in the province	56%	21%	23%
Alberta should welcome Chinese investment in energy and other resource sectors of the province	52%	25%	23%
China will play an increasingly significant role in the future opportunities of Albertans	63%	17%	21%
Increased tourism from China is good for Alberta	86%	6%	8%

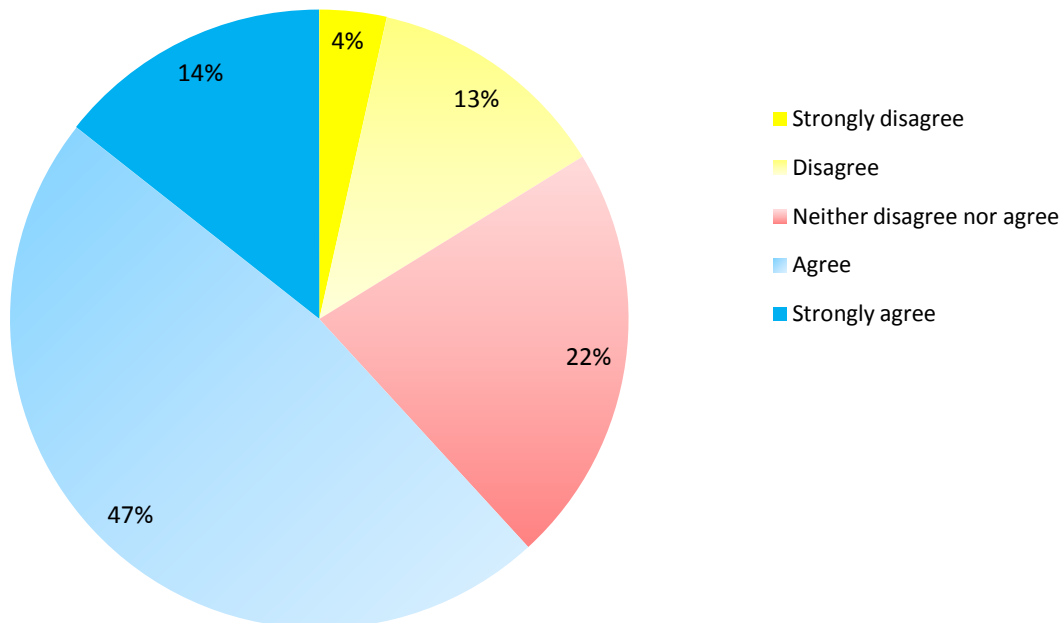
## China's increasing economic strength benefits Alberta



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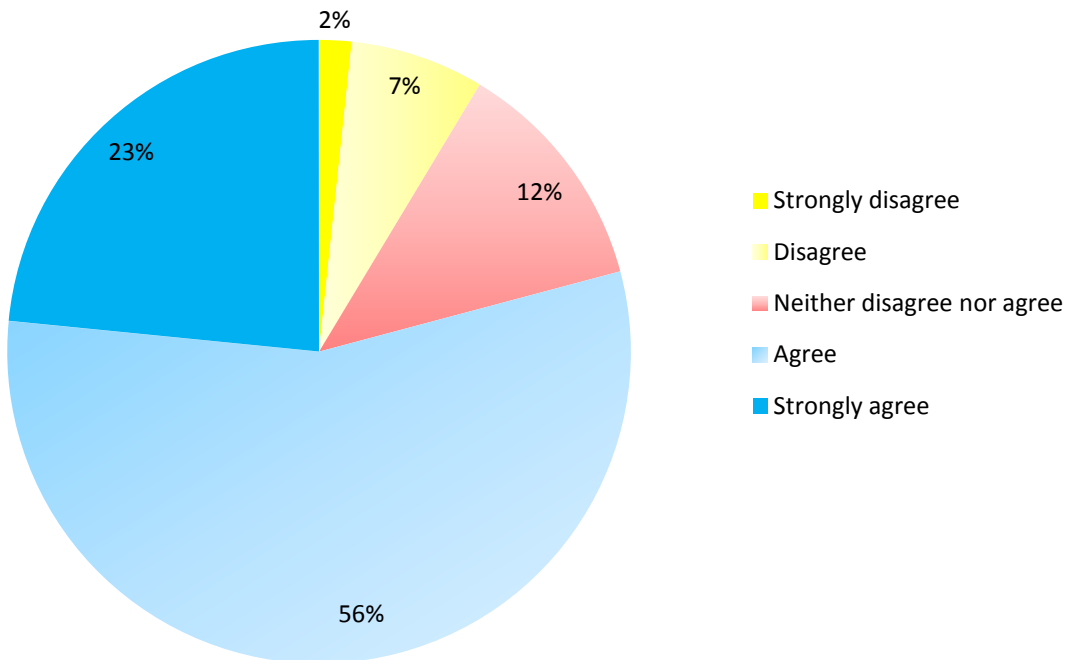
## Alberta should build stronger ties with China



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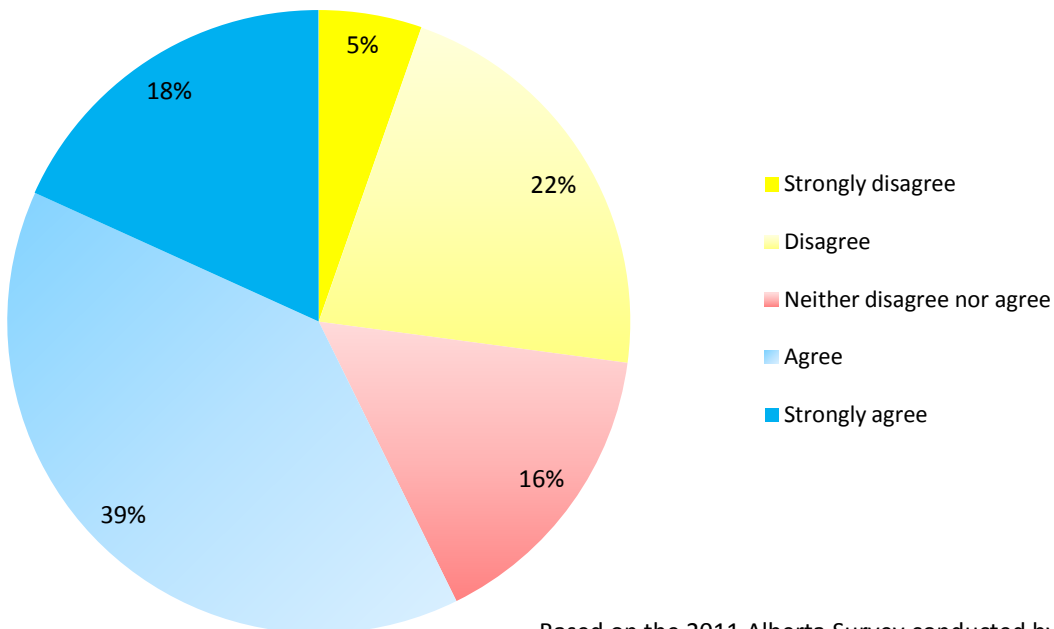
## China is important as an export market for Alberta goods and services



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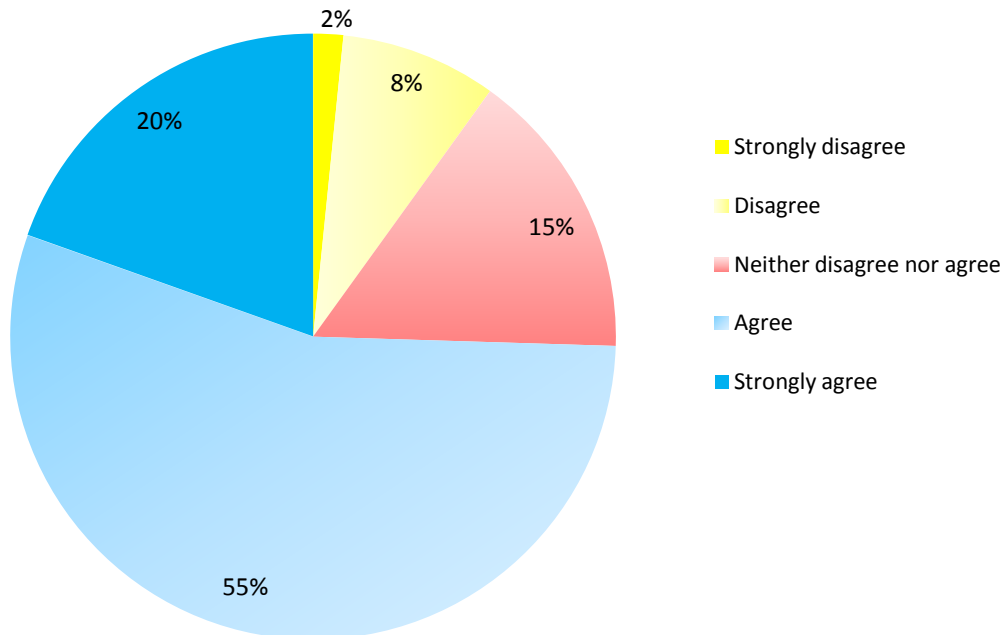
## Alberta should decrease its economic reliance on the U.S. market



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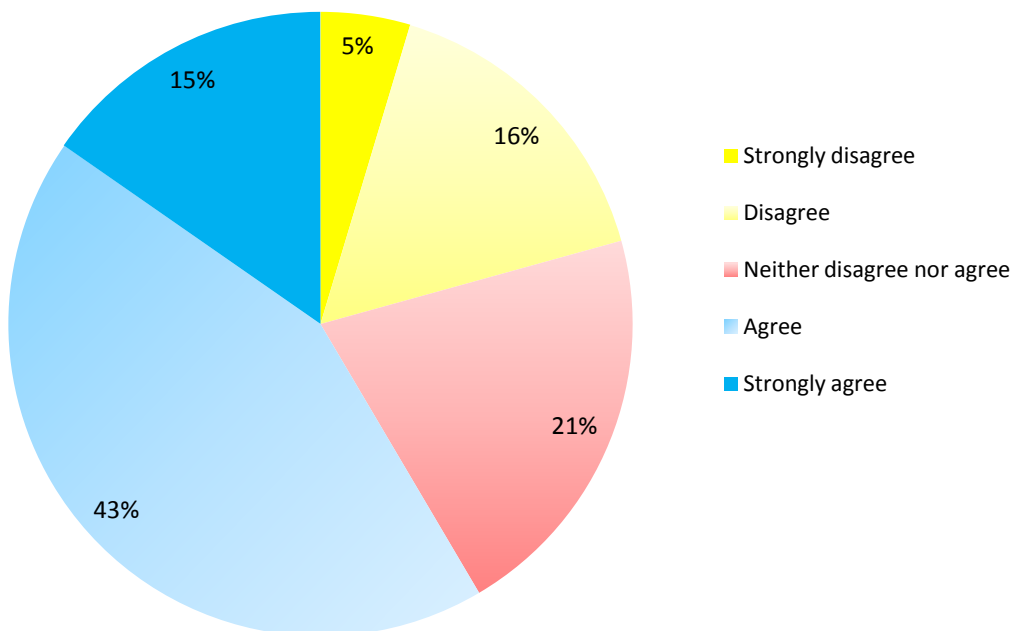
## Alberta should diversify its economy by trading more with Asia



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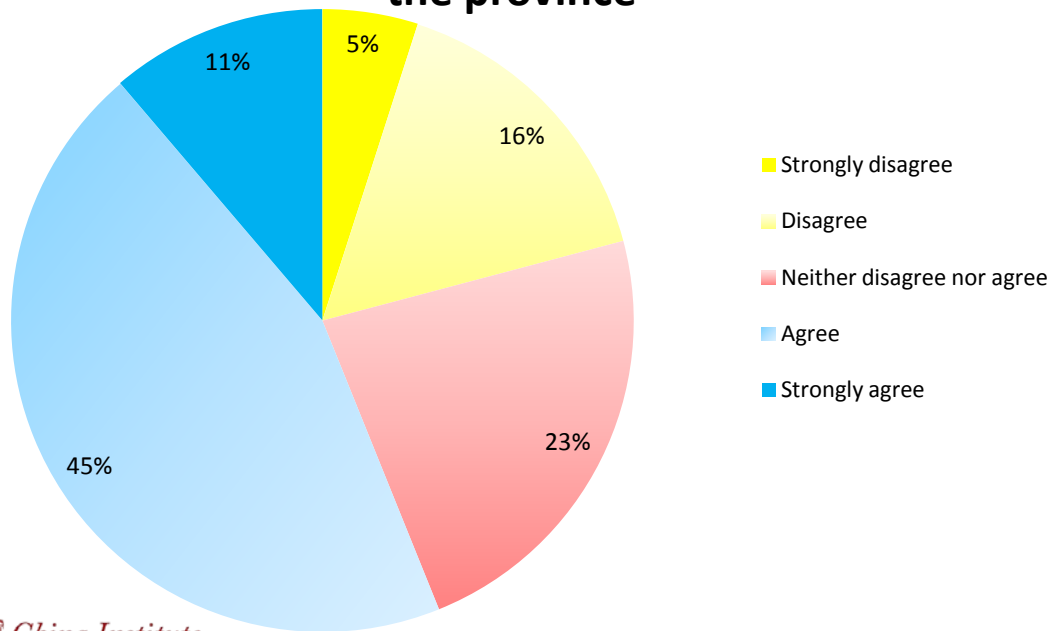
## Alberta should support the building of better infrastructure to transport energy to the west coast for export to Asia



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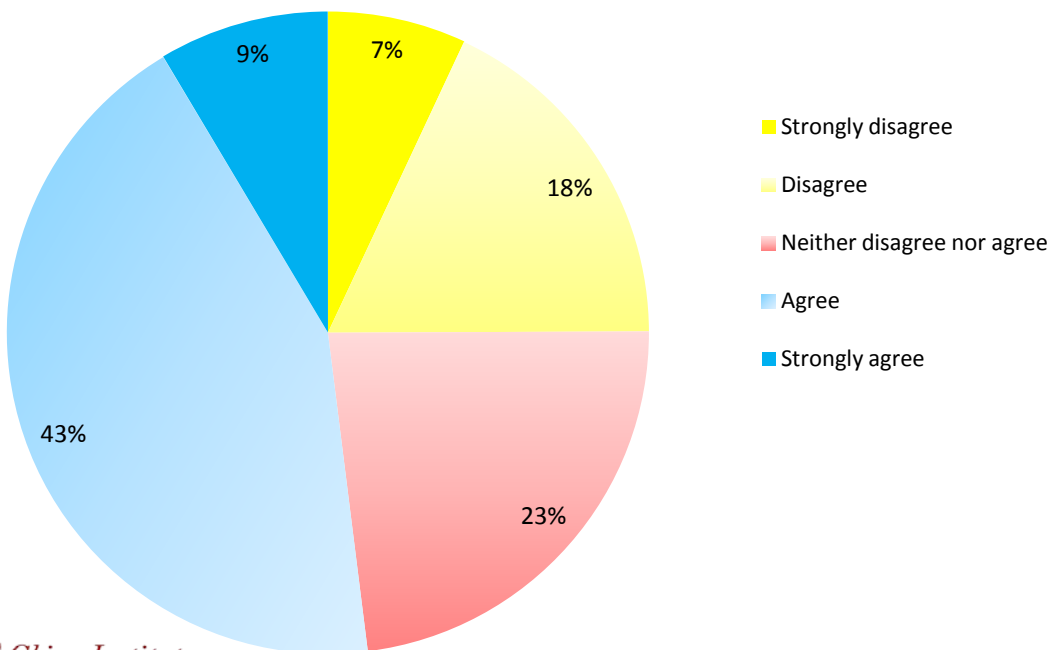
## Alberta should welcome Chinese investment in the province



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## Alberta should welcome Chinese investment in energy and other resource sectors of the province

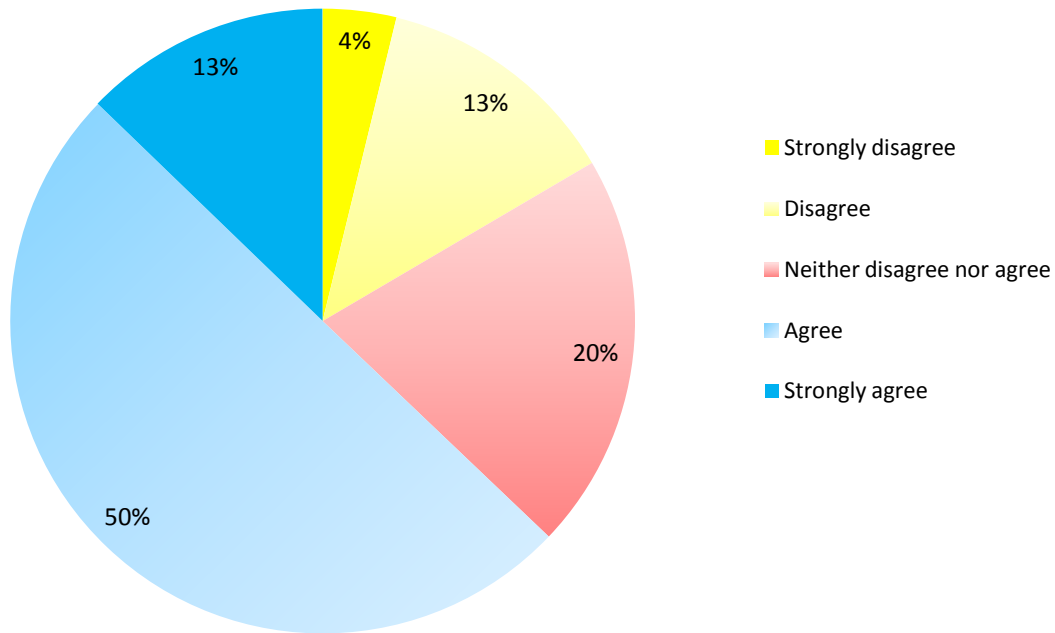


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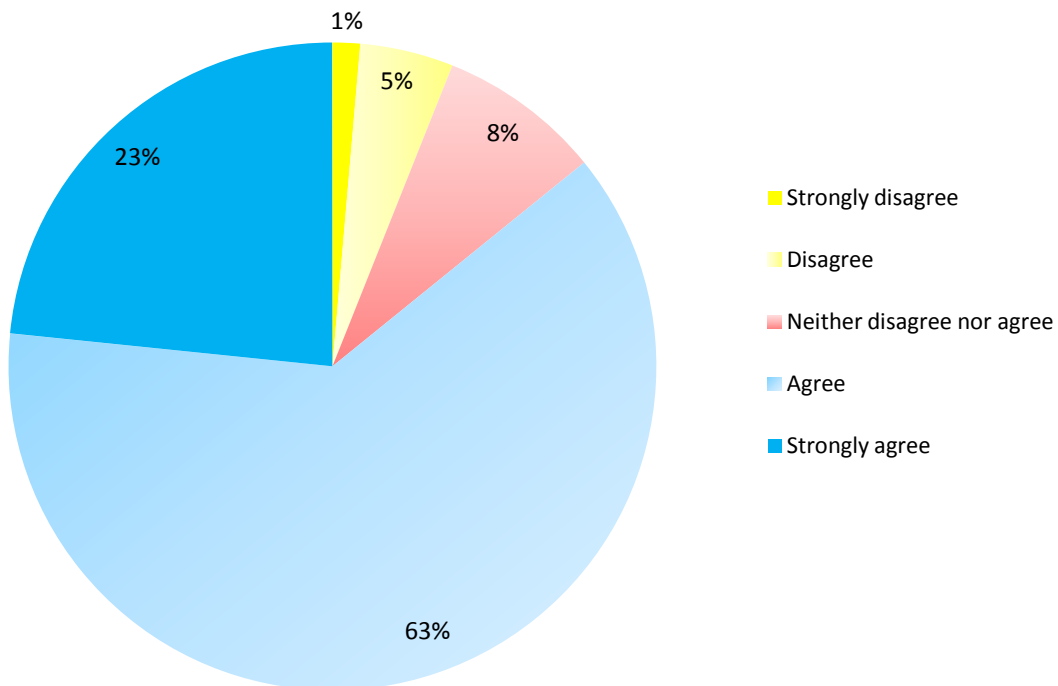
## China will play an increasingly significant role in the future opportunities of Albertans



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Based on the 2011 Alberta Survey conducted by the Population Research Lab at the University of Alberta

## Increased tourism from China is good for Alberta



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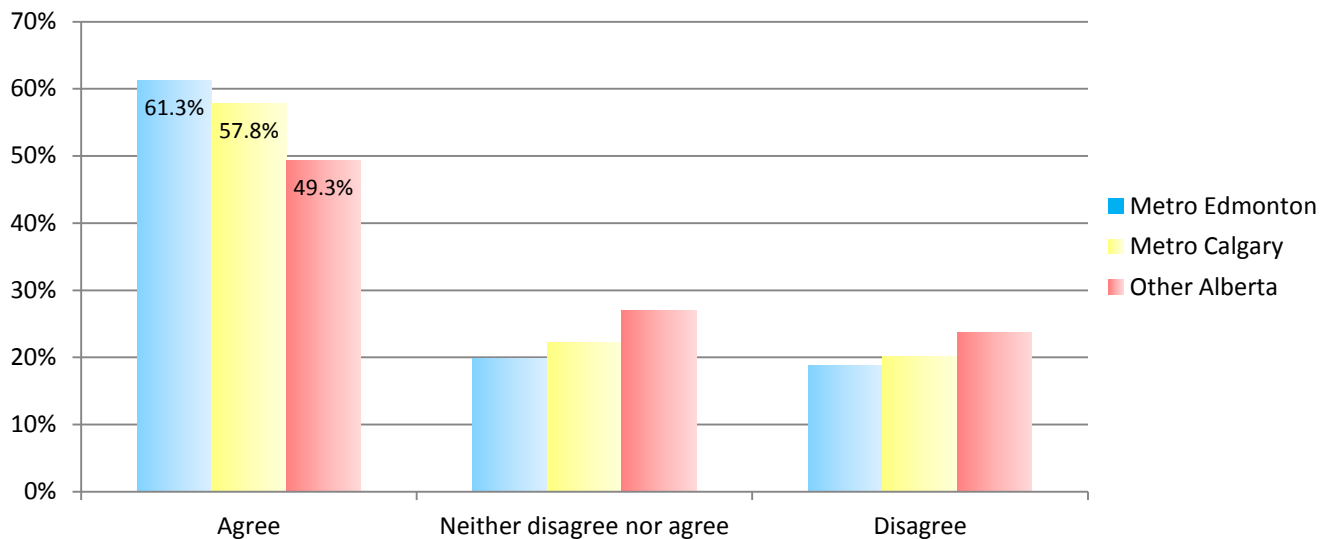
Based on the 2011 Alberta Survey conducted by the Population Research Lab at the University of Alberta

## Highlights by Selected Demographic and Socioeconomic Characteristics

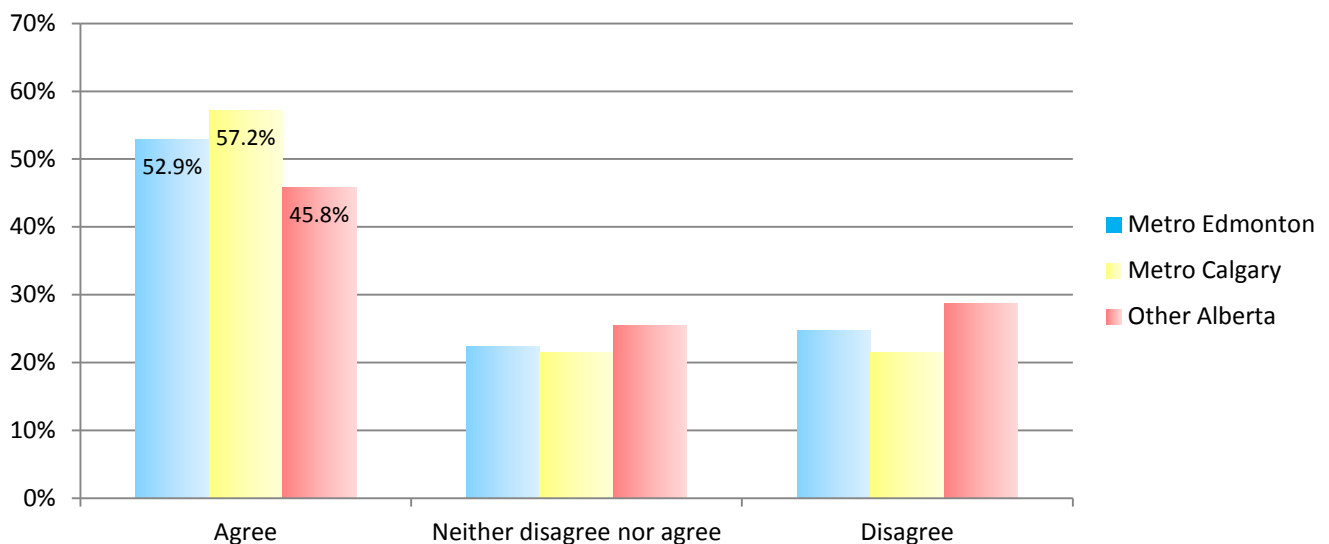
### Area of Residence:

Respondents who live in Edmonton were more likely than those in Calgary or elsewhere in Alberta to agree that the province should welcome Chinese investment generally. On the more detailed issue of whether Alberta should welcome Chinese investment in energy and resource sectors, support in Edmonton dropped leaving Calgarians more likely to agree, while support slightly weakened outside of Calgary and Edmonton.

#### Alberta should welcome Chinese investment in the province



#### Alberta should welcome Chinese investment in energy and other resource sectors of the province

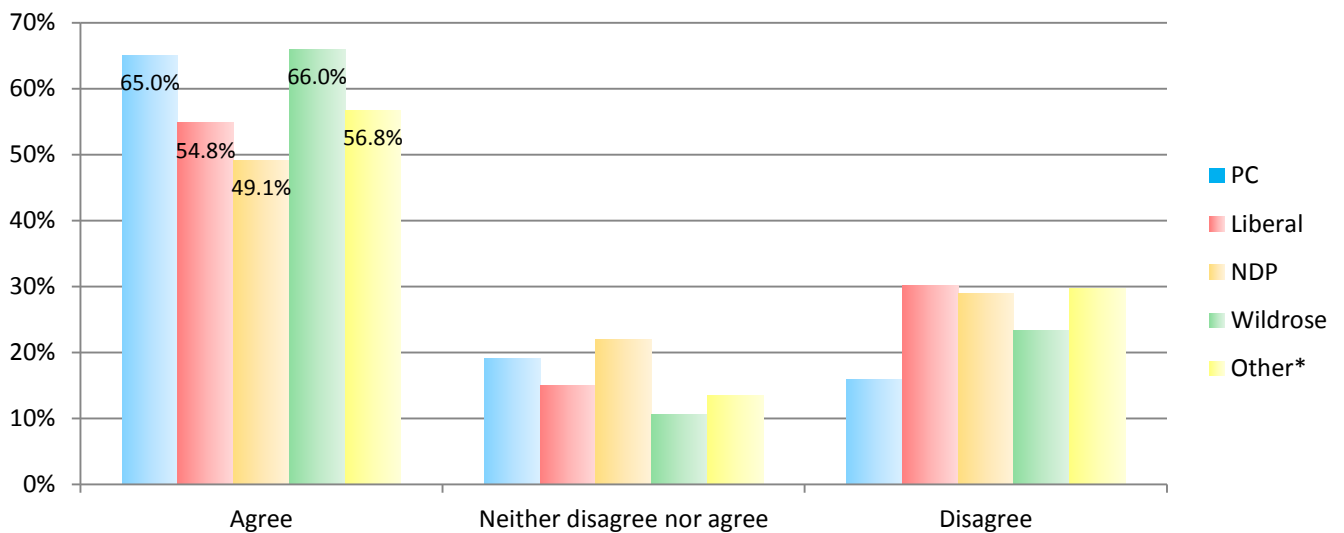


\* Note: Weights were removed in determining the statistical significance of area of the province.

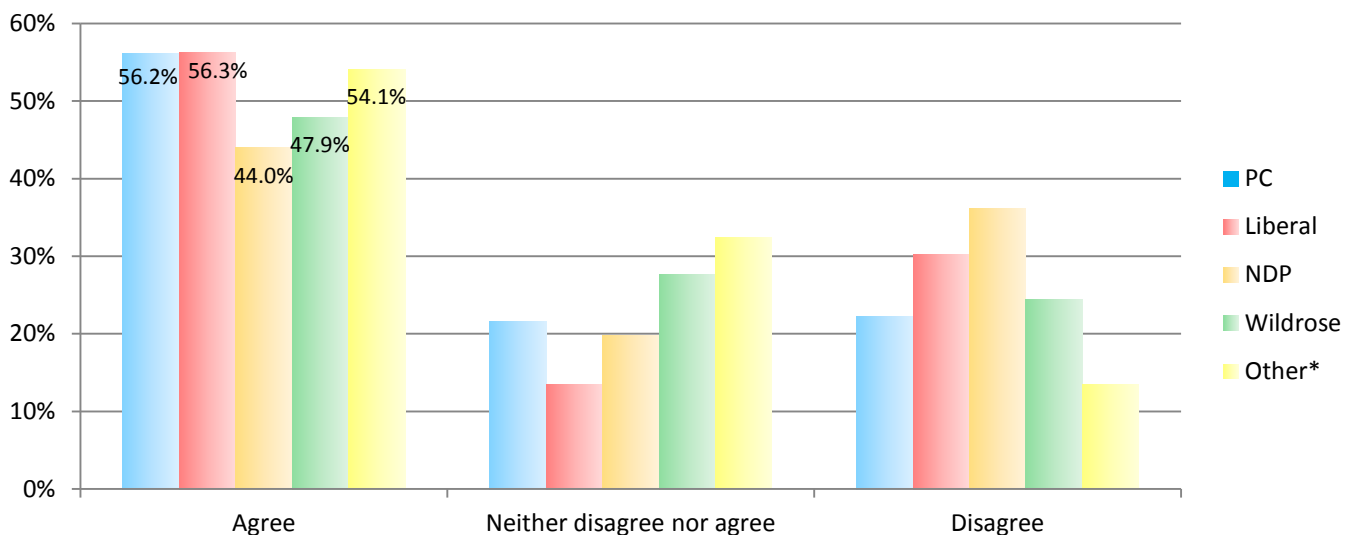
*Provincial Political Parties:*

Albertans who indicated they would vote Wildrose or Progressive Conservative in the next provincial election were most likely to agree that Alberta should support the building of better infrastructure to transport energy to the West Coast for export to Asia, whereas those who would vote Liberal or NDP were more likely to disagree. However, Albertans who indicated they would vote Liberal in the next provincial election were as likely as those who would vote Progressive Conservative to agree that Alberta should welcome Chinese investment in energy and resource sectors. Those who indicated they would vote NDP were most likely to disagree with this statement, and those who would vote Wildrose were slightly more ambivalent.

**Alberta should support the building of better infrastructure to transport energy to the west coast for export to Asia**



**Alberta should welcome Chinese investment in energy and other resource sectors of the province**

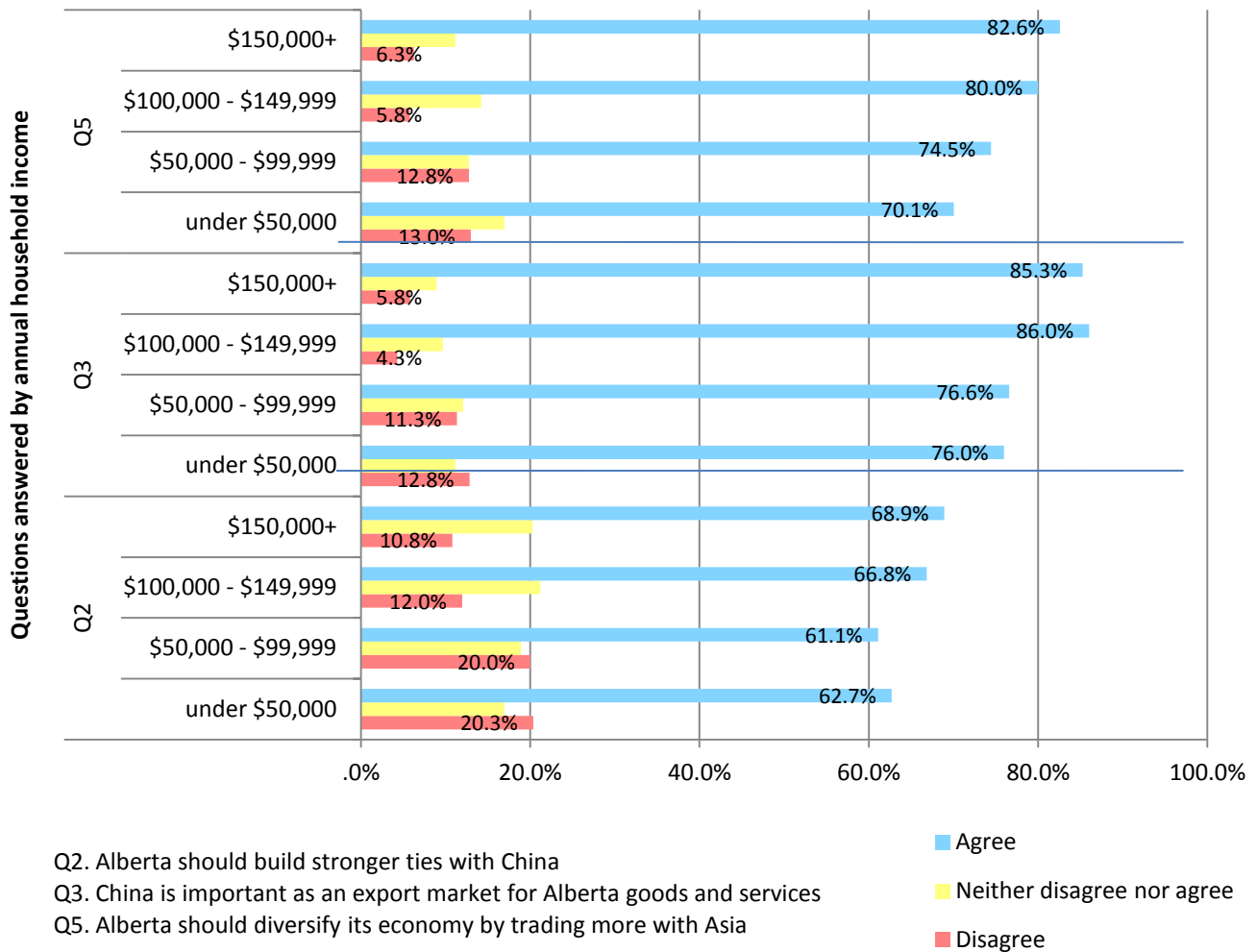


\* 'Other' includes: Alberta Party, Separation Party of Alberta, and Other Specified

*Income:*

Albertans whose annual household income is over \$100,000 are more likely than those whose household income is less than \$100,000 to agree that Alberta should build stronger ties with China, diversify its economy by trading more with Asia, and that China is an important export market for the province. Although agreement rates across all income categories is high, in general the higher the income the higher the level of support for ties to China.

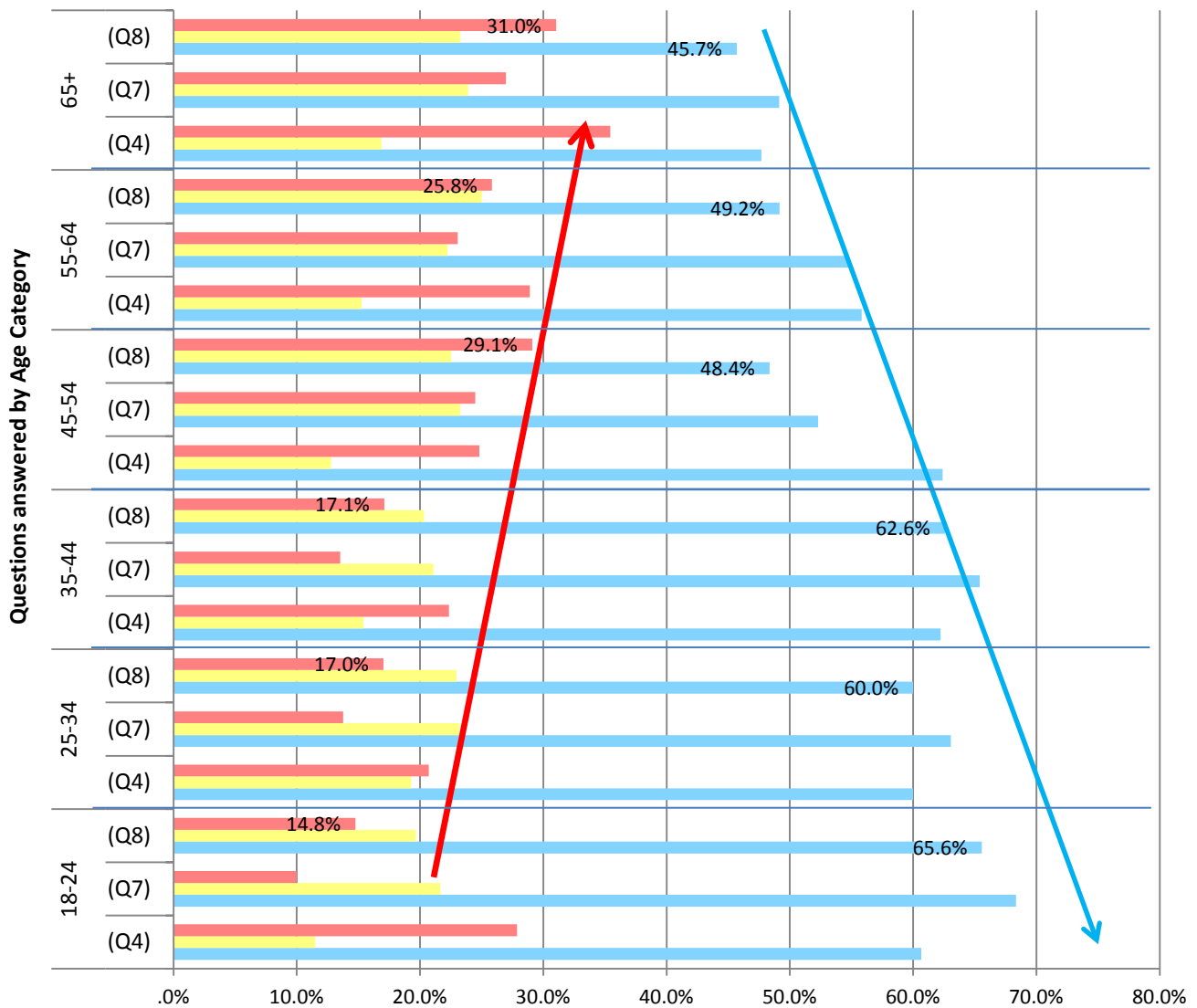
**How Albertans, in relation to income, feel about building stronger ties with China, China as an export market, and diversifying Alberta's economy via trade with Asia**



**Age:**

Of the 5 questions that could be viewed as more sensitive, age was statistically significant to 4 of them. Younger Albertans tend to agree that Alberta should build stronger ties with China and should decrease its economic reliance on the U.S. market. Younger Albertans also tend to view Chinese investment in the province more favourably, both in general and more specifically in energy and resource sectors, while older Albertans were more wary with regard to lessening economic ties with the U.S. and welcoming Chinese investment in the province. The arrows on the chart below indicate the general trend by age for the latter three issues.

**How Albertans, by age category, view the issues of decreasing economic reliance on the U.S. and Chinese investment in Alberta**



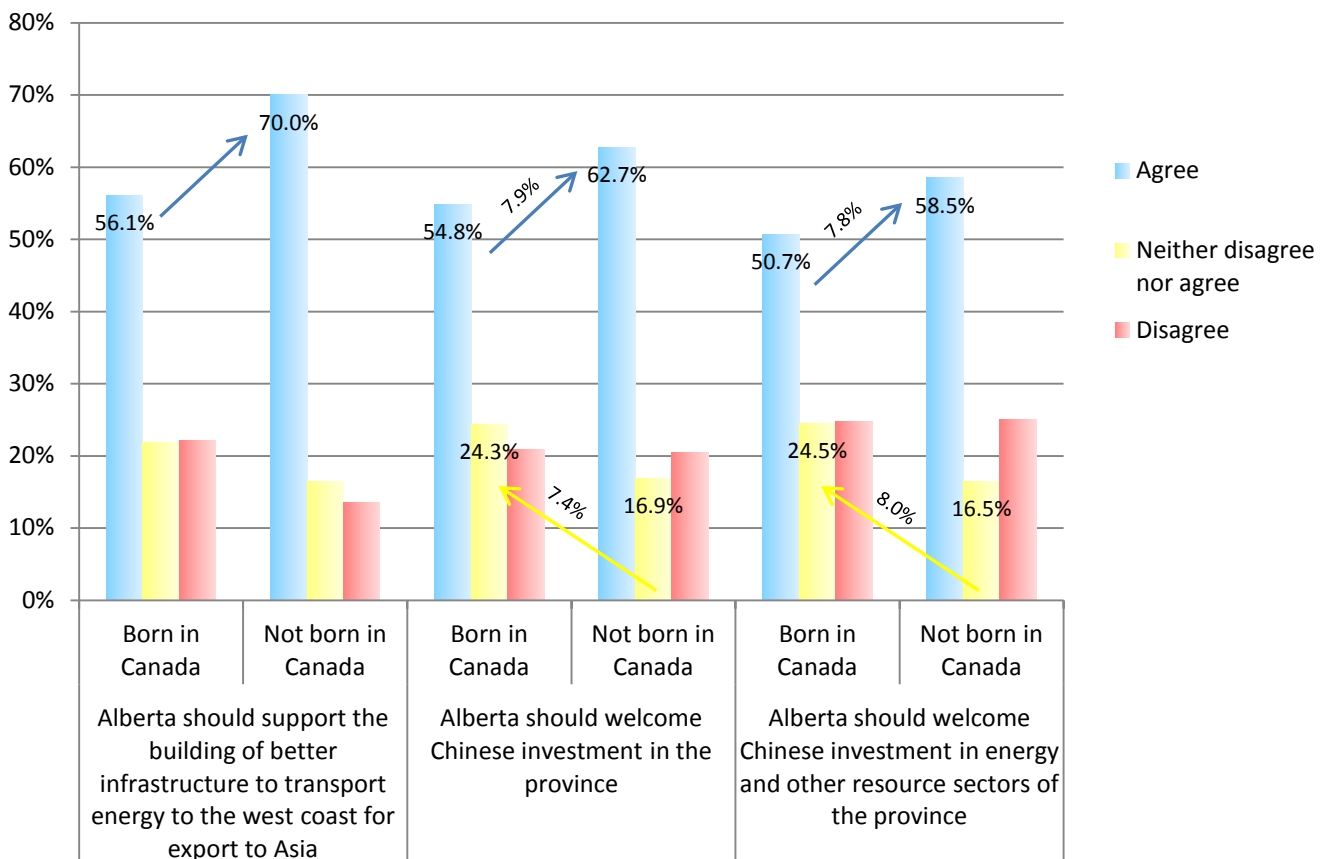
Q4. Alberta should decrease its economic reliance on the U.S. market  
 Q7. Alberta should welcome Chinese investment in the province  
 Q8. Alberta should welcome Chinese investment in energy and other resource sectors of the province

Disagree  
 Neither disagree nor agree  
 Agree

## Place of Birth:

Whether or not a respondent was born in Alberta (as opposed to elsewhere in Canada) did not influence how he or she answered any of the 10 questions. However, whether a respondent was born in Canada or not was significant to 3 issues. Respondents born outside Canada were more likely than those born in Canada to agree that Alberta should build better infrastructure to transport energy to the West Coast for export to Asia, that Alberta should welcome Chinese investment in the province generally, and in the energy and resource sectors more specifically. However, this does not mean that respondents born in Canada were necessarily more likely to disagree with these statements. Respondents born inside and outside Canada both had nearly equal rates of disagreement when asked about Chinese investment in the province (Q7 & Q8). On these issues, those born in Canada were more likely than those born outside Canada to be undecided.

### How Albertans Born Inside and Outside Canada Feel about Transporting Energy to the West Coast and Chinese Investment in Alberta

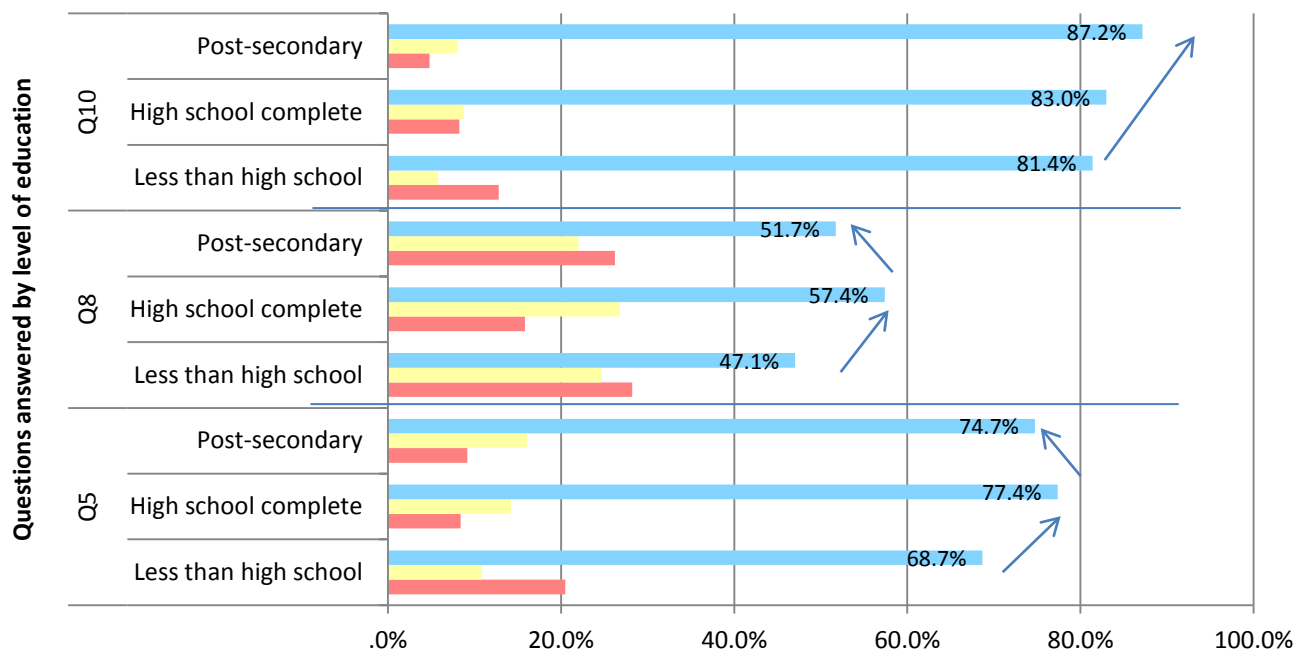


## Education:

A respondent's level of education, on balance, was not particularly significant to the question topics. The distribution of respondents within the three categories of education makes analysis of this characteristic more difficult (i.e. only a small number of respondents are in the 'less than high school' category, making generalizations more problematic). With that note of caution in mind, however, there are some interesting patterns to observe in the data.

The higher one's level of education the more likely he or she was to agree that increased tourism from China is good for Alberta. The relationship between variables, however, becomes more complicated on the issues of how Albertans feel about Chinese investment in the energy and resource sectors and about diversifying Alberta's economy by trading more with Asia. Highest agreement ratings for each topic were among those who had completed high school, with agreement rates somewhat lower among those with post-secondary. Those who had not completed high school were the least likely to agree with these two issues.

### The influence of education on how Albertans feel about trading more with Asia, welcoming Chinese investment in energy and resources, and Chinese tourism in Alberta



Q5. Alberta should diversify its economy by trading more with Asia

Q8. Alberta should welcome Chinese investment in energy and other resource sectors of the province

Q10. Increased tourism from China is good for Alberta

■ Agree

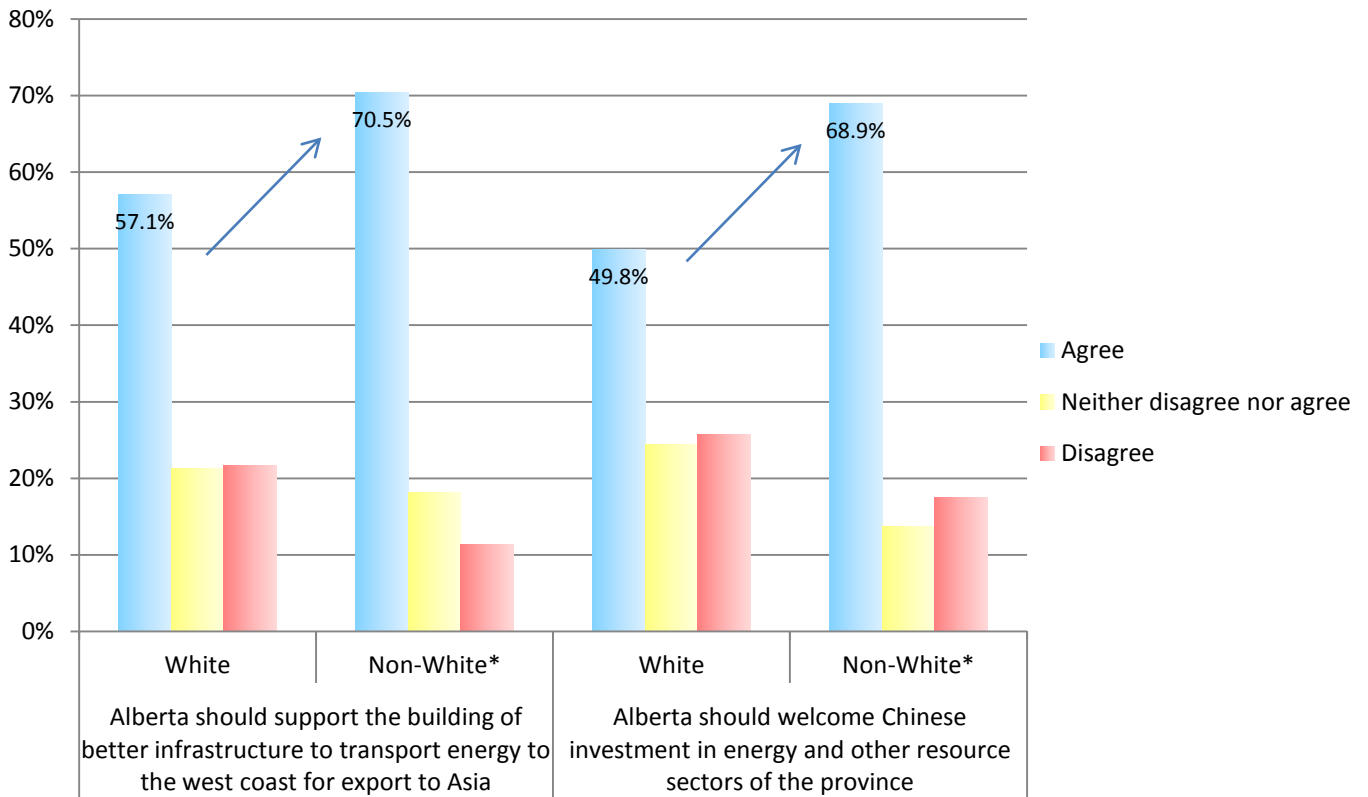
■ Neither disagree nor agree

■ Disagree

*Racial/Ethnic Self- Identification:*

Non-White (visible minority) Albertans were more likely than White (non-visible minority) Albertans to agree that Alberta should welcome Chinese investment in energy and resource sectors and that Alberta should support the building of better infrastructure to transport energy to the west coast for export to Asia.

**How Albertans view the transport of energy to the West Coast and Chinese investment in Alberta's energy and resources sectors based on racial/ethnic self-identification**



\* Note: This category includes respondents who self-identified as other than "white" by choosing one of: Aboriginal, South Asian, Chinese, Black, Filipino, Latin American, Arab, Southeast Asian, West Asian, Korean, or Japanese.



## Questionnaire:

The following questions are about the economic relationship between China and Alberta.

In order to better understand how Albertans view China, its role in Alberta's economy and its degree of significance for the province, please indicate whether you "strongly disagree", "disagree", "neither disagree nor agree", "agree", or "strongly agree" with each of the following statements.

### 1. China's increasing economic strength benefits Alberta.

- 1 Strongly disagree
- 2 Disagree
- 3 Neither disagree nor agree
- 4 Agree
- 5 Strongly agree
  
- 0 No response (volunteered)
- 8 Don't know (volunteered)

### 2. Alberta should build stronger ties with China.

- 1 Strongly disagree
- 2 Disagree
- 3 Neither disagree nor agree
- 4 Agree
- 5 Strongly agree
  
- 0 No response (volunteered)
- 8 Don't know (volunteered)

### 3. China is important as an export market for Alberta goods and services.

- 1 Strongly disagree
- 2 Disagree
- 3 Neither disagree nor agree
- 4 Agree
- 5 Strongly agree
  
- 0 No response (volunteered)
- 8 Don't know (volunteered)

**4. Alberta should decrease its economic reliance on the U.S. market.**

- 1 Strongly disagree
- 2 Disagree
- 3 Neither disagree nor agree
- 4 Agree
- 5 Strongly agree
  
- 0 No response (volunteered)
- 8 Don't know (volunteered)

**5. Alberta should diversify its economy by trading more with Asia.**

- 1 Strongly disagree
- 2 Disagree
- 3 Neither disagree nor agree
- 4 Agree
- 5 Strongly agree
  
- 0 No response (volunteered)
- 8 Don't know (volunteered)

**6. Alberta should support the building of better infrastructure, such as pipelines, roadways, and power supplies, to transport energy to the west coast for export to Asia.**

- 1 Strongly disagree
- 2 Disagree
- 3 Neither disagree nor agree
- 4 Agree
- 5 Strongly agree
  
- 0 No response (volunteered)
- 8 Don't know (volunteered)

**7. Alberta should welcome Chinese investment in the province.**

- 1 Strongly disagree
- 2 Disagree
- 3 Neither disagree nor agree
- 4 Agree
- 5 Strongly agree
  
- 0 No response (volunteered)
- 8 Don't know (volunteered)

**8. Alberta should welcome Chinese investment in energy and other resource sectors of the province.**

- 1 Strongly disagree
- 2 Disagree
- 3 Neither disagree nor agree
- 4 Agree
- 5 Strongly agree
  
- 0 No response (volunteered)
- 8 Don't know (volunteered)

**9. China will play an increasingly significant role in the future opportunities of Albertans.**

- 1 Strongly disagree
- 2 Disagree
- 3 Neither disagree nor agree
- 4 Agree
- 5 Strongly agree
  
- 0 No response (volunteered)
- 8 Don't know (volunteered)

**10. Increased tourism from China is good for Alberta.**

- 1 Strongly disagree
- 2 Disagree
- 3 Neither disagree nor agree
- 4 Agree
- 5 Strongly agree
  
- 0 No response (volunteered)
- 8 Don't know (volunteered)

## About the China Institute

The China Institute at the University of Alberta (CIUA) was established in the fall of 2005 and is dedicated to scholarship on China and to enhancing understanding between Canada and China. The CIUA aims to foster China-related initiatives and scholarship at the University of Alberta, and to enhance and support new teaching and research activities that are focused on China.

CIUA is a board-governed organization, which reports to the Provost and Vice-President (Academic) of the University of Alberta. The director of the CIUA is Professor Gordon Houlden, a specialist of Chinese and Asia Pacific affairs, and former Canadian diplomat with five postings in Greater China.

The current focus of work at the China Institute is on the growing economic linkages between Canada and China with particular emphasis on China's energy profile and its increasing investment in Canada and in Alberta especially.

## Acknowledgements

The China Institute would like to thank the Population Research Lab at the University of Alberta for their advice in formulating questions, their professionalism in conducting the 2011 Alberta Survey, and for the timeliness in which they amalgamated and passed along the data.

The China Institute also wishes to thank Ms. Heather Schmidt, PhD Candidate in Sociology at the University of Alberta, for her crucial role in the completion of this project. Ms. Schmidt's efforts were essential to the design and execution of the China Institute Survey of Albertans' Views on China.