

Canadians Value Biotech: 2008 Annual Opinion Polling Results Overview

For the fourth year in a row, biotechnology matters to Canadians. BIOTECanada's annual national opinion survey, undertaken by Nanos Research, found that overall impressions of biotechnology continue to be positive. Canadians value biotechnology and believe their governments should invest in it.

Eighty-eight percent of Canadians understand that biotechnology is important to future prosperity, indicating support for a strong bio-based economy in Canada that is based on a sound business framework, and financing for innovative firms. Strong majorities of Canadians support research in biotechnology and the use of products and processes that involve biotechnology across the board. Canadians see biotechnology as bringing a positive contribution to agriculture, the environment, and notably, believe the greatest benefits will be in the health sciences. Canadians expect to benefit from biotechnology in their lifetimes – and they expect their governments to invest in innovation to bring biotechnology into health care and to financially support the sector, whether through tax incentives or grants.

What we found:

1. Canadians value the contribution of biotechnology to their health care, their food, and their environment.

- **Environment and Agriculture:** 79% of Canadians thought biotechnology would bring benefits to agriculture. Eight of every ten (80%) Canadians thought the environment would benefit from biotechnology
- **Biotechnology and Health Science.** Eighty-six percent of Canadians thought there would be benefits from biotechnology to health sciences. There was no significant change in this very positive measure year over year (90% major/modest benefit in 2007).

2. Canadians believe biotechnology is important to the economy.

- **Biotechnology creates prosperity:** Almost nine of every ten Canadians (88%) believe biotechnology is important to Canada's future economic prosperity.
- **Use of Biotechnology in Research.** Eighty-seven percent of Canadians either strongly or somewhat supported research that involves biotechnology, while only 10% of Canadians strongly or somewhat oppose it. Of note, more than nine of every ten Quebecers (92%) strongly or somewhat supported biotechnology for research.
- **Use of Biotechnology in Products and Processes.** Eighty three percent of Canadians supported products and processes that involved biotechnology while only 13% opposed this activity. Canadians under 30 years of age were comparatively more likely to strongly support the use of biotechnology products and processes (18 to 29 strongly support (39%); national average - 21%).

3. Canadians want their governments to support biotechnology.

- **Financial Incentives in Biotechnology Innovation:** Eight of every ten Canadians (81%) supported the use of government financial incentives to encourage innovation in the biotechnology industry.
- **Options for Federal Government Support:** Canadians preferred grants for research and product development (35%) over incentives (28%) or tax breaks (22%) to support biotechnology companies.
- **Biotechnology and Health:** Eighty percent of Canadians thought the health care system should pay to introduce biotechnological advances into our care.

