

PROFILES ON MANITOBA

ATTITUDES OF THE MANITOBA POPULATION
TOWARD
NUCLEAR DISARMAMENT

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- Most Manitobans regularly think about nuclear war.
- The population as a whole is split almost evenly on the issue of unilateral disarmament (reduction in Western nuclear forces without regard to what the Soviet Union does), but women and young people typically are more supportive of this than men and older respondents.
- 56 percent of Manitobans oppose Cruise missile testing in Canada, 32 percent are in favour. Women and young people (under 30) are much more strongly against Cruise testing than are men and older respondents.
- 35 percent of all respondents favour an increase in military spending by Canada, 12 percent favour a reduction, and 45 percent support no change. Support for an increase in military spending by Canada is much weaker by the young. Strongest support for an increase comes from respondents between the ages of 45 and 65.
- In general, people between the age of 45 and 65 are the most "hardline" on issues relating to defence and disarmament, while the younger generation and women tend to be more strongly supportive of unilateral action and other policies to reduce the change of nuclear war.

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THE MAIN RESULTS

The first question was designed to measure how frequently the typical Manitoban thinks about nuclear war. Figure 1 presents a picture of the response to this question, while the first table shows there is a tendency for women to be more generally concerned about nuclear war than men.

HOW OFTEN DO YOU THINK ABOUT NUCLEAR WAR?

"HOW OFTEN DO YOU THINK ABOUT NUCLEAR WAR?"

(By Gender)

	MEN	WOMEN	TOTAL
NOT AT ALL	10.1	7.7	8.8
A LITTLE	59.0	46.9	52.8
A LOT	31.0	45.4	38.4

There is also an important relationship between age of respondent and the pattern of response to this question.

"HOW OFTEN DO YOU THINK ABOUT NUCLEAR WAR?"

(By Age)

	18-29	30-44	45-65	65+
NOT AT ALL	8.4	8.7	7.0	12.4
A LITTLE	59.1	59.3	46.4	35.7
A LOT	32.5	32.0	46.6	51.9

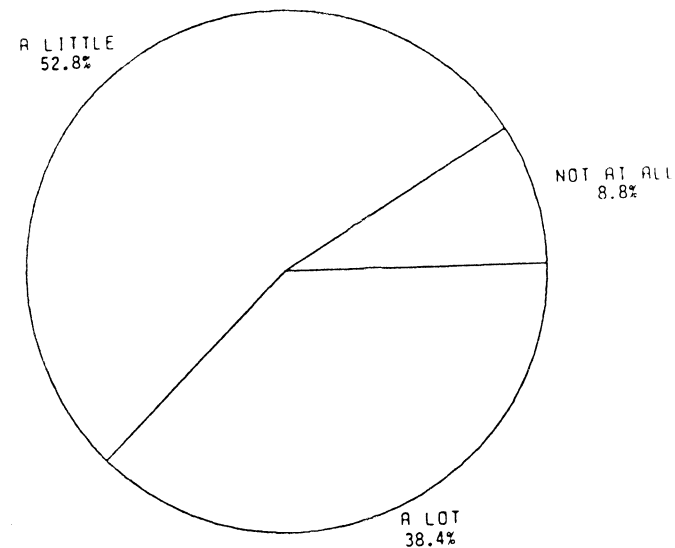


FIGURE 1

Apparently, as one gets older, there is more concern and thought about the possibility of nuclear war. In the light of responses provided above, and in the light of what is commonly perceived as the "anti-nuke" movement and its support from young people, these results appear somewhat surprising.

Another general background issue concerned the likelihood of nuclear war by the year 2000.

"IT IS LIKELY THAT THE WORLD WILL BE INVOLVED IN A NUCLEAR WAR BY THE YEAR 2000."

(By Gender)

	MEN	WOMEN	TOTAL
AGREE	38.4	45.0	41.8
DISAGREE	53.2	40.6	46.8
DON'T KNOW	8.3	14.4	11.4

(By Age)

	18-29	30-44	45-65	65+
AGREE	47.7	37.8	40.5	39.1
DISAGREE	45.5	49.4	48.4	44.6
DON'T KNOW	6.9	12.8	11.0	16.3

Although the relationship between gender and the pattern of response to the question is statistically significant, the influence of age on the response is weak. Generally, women are more pessimistic than men on the likelihood of war.

A key issue in Canada now is of testing Cruise missiles.

"ARE YOU FOR OR AGAINST TESTING OF THE CRUISE MISSILE IN CANADA?"

(By Gender)

	MEN	WOMEN	TOTAL
FOR	45.6	19.1	32.1
AGAINST	45.3	67.1	56.4
DON'T KNOW	9.1	13.8	11.5

(By Age)

	18-29	30-44	45-65	65+
FOR	22.8	32.5	42.2	36.3
AGAINST	69.6	56.3	47.5	44.2
DON'T KNOW	7.6	11.2	10.3	19.5

These results reflect two important phenomena that run throughout the survey. First, in general, the strongest support for maintaining a vigorous defence posture lies in the 45 to 65 age group. Second, there is a tendency to respond with "Don't Know" as the respondent is older.

Another important issue concerns the level of defence spending in Canada. The pattern of response also reflects the variation with gender and age noted above.

"PER PERSON, CANADA SPENDS ABOUT HALF OF WHAT THE U.S. OR EUROPEAN COUNTRIES SPEND ON DEFENCE. DO YOU THINK THAT CANADA SHOULD INCREASE ITS SPENDING TO MATCH THAT SPENT BY OTHER COUNTRIES, DECREASE ITS SPENDING, OR LEAVE IT AT ITS PRESENT LEVEL?"

(By Gender)

	MEN	WOMEN	TOTAL
INCREASE	39.6	31.2	35.3
DECREASE	14.3	9.7	11.9
SAME	41.0	49.0	45.1
DON'T KNOW	5.1	10.1	7.7

(By Age)

	18-29	30-44	45-65	65+
INCREASE	27.1	34.9	46.6	36.0
DECREASE	16.1	13.3	8.9	5.4
SAME	51.8	46.3	37.4	41.7
DON'T KNOW	5.1	5.4	7.1	17.0

Once again, the strongest support for increased military spending comes from the age group of 45 to 65. Also, the increased tendency to respond with "Don't Know" is apparent as age increases.

The current debate over "survivability" during nuclear war is reflected in several interesting ways in this survey. Two questions were used to analyze this issue. The first probes general feelings about the chances of surviving a nuclear war, while a second questions whether the respondent supports increased commitment to civil defence. Again, gender (but not age) is important to understanding the pattern of response.

"IT IS IMPOSSIBLE FOR CIVILIZATION TO SURVIVE A NUCLEAR WAR."

(By Gender)

	MEN	WOMEN	TOTAL
AGREE	63.4	72.1	67.8
DISAGREE	30.5	21.2	25.7
DON'T KNOW	6.2	6.7	6.4

With respect to expenditures on civil defence, both gender and age are important to an understanding of the pattern of response.

"MORE ATTENTION SHOULD BE GIVEN TO CIVIL DEFENCE PROGRAMS - LIKE THE BUILDING OF FALLOUT SHELTERS - SO WE COULD SURVIVE A NUCLEAR WAR."

(By Gender)

	MEN	WOMEN	TOTAL
AGREE	35.8	52.7	44.4
DISAGREE	60.0	42.6	51.1
DON'T KNOW	4.3	4.7	4.5

(By Age)

	18-29	30-44	45-65	65+
AGREE	54.0	42.9	36.8	36.2
DISAGREE	42.6	53.3	57.5	56.8
DON'T KNOW	3.3	3.8	5.7	7.0

The difference between men and women, and the quite pronounced increase for support of civil defence as age declines, are statistically very significant and important results.

An important component of the survey was concerned with how Manitobans feel about "strategic" issues. These are expressed in popular discussion by statements such as "better dead than red" (and vice versa), by the perception that security of the western world is enhanced by maintaining a strong nuclear force, and whether Canada should have a nuclear capability. Again, age and gender are important influences on the patterns of response to the various questions.

"THE ONLY EFFECTIVE WAY TO PREVENT THE MAJOR POWERS FROM USING NUCLEAR WEAPONS IS FOR BOTH SIDES TO HAVE NUCLEAR WEAPONS OF THEIR OWN."

(By Gender)

	MEN	WOMEN	TOTAL
AGREE	42.6	44.1	43.4
DISAGREE	49.3	47.8	48.6
DON'T KNOW	8.1	8.0	8.1

(By Age)

	18-29	30-44	45-65	65+
AGREE	31.0	48.6	51.3	50.2
DISAGREE	63.5	45.6	38.3	37.7
DON'T KNOW	5.5	5.7	10.4	12.1

In this case, gender was not significant, but as the age increases, so does support for a balance in nuclear capabilities on both sides.

"CANADA SHOULD HAVE A STRONG NUCLEAR FORCE."

(By Gender)

	MEN	WOMEN	TOTAL
AGREE	25.7	32.6	29.3
DISAGREE	70.0	52.1	60.8
DON'T KNOW	4.3	15.3	9.9

(By Age)

	18-29	30-44	45-65	65+
AGREE	20.8	28.3	38.9	35.1
DISAGREE	72.0	63.2	52.8	44.6
DON'T KNOW	7.2	8.5	8.3	20.3

Note that in this case, the over-65 group had a relatively high number of "Don't Know" answers.

A key strategic issue at the heart of the current disarmament movement (i.e., those who favour a "freeze"), is unilateral reduction in Western nuclear capabilities.

"IF THE WESTERN POWERS GREATLY REDUCED THEIR NUCLEAR WEAPONS, DO YOU THINK THIS WOULD REDUCE THE CHANGE OF NUCLEAR WAR?"

(By Gender)

	MEN	WOMEN	TOTAL
YES	42.2	47.3	44.8
NO	55.1	43.0	48.9
DON'T KNOW	2.7	9.7	6.3

(By Age)

	18-29	30-44	45-65	65+
YES	55.2	41.5	39.4	37.9
NO	41.5	52.9	55.1	48.3
DON'T KNOW	3.3	5.6	5.5	13.8

The tendency is for women to favour unilateral reduction in nuclear forces, and even more so for young respondents to favour such reductions on the part of the West. Again, the age group of 45-65 emerges as the most "hawkish."

Other questions were asked. For example, the recent high-profile of television coverage such as the program "The Day After" and the series "War" could upset the response pattern. Questions were specifically asked to ascertain whether respondents had viewed these programs (almost 60 percent reported they had), and whether the respondent felt that the programs had influenced their position. Analysis is proceeding to unravel the complex interactions which always underly such responses. In general, however, the effect of the popular media appears to have been to increase overall response to the survey, rather than significantly change the minds of Manitobans.

Also, there is no difference in attitudes based on location in or out of Winnipeg. In other words, there is little distinction between urban and rural respondents.

ANALYSIS

Just what do these results mean? It should be stated that in addressing this issue, we are approaching the limits of the survey research technique. The issue of nuclear war is personally upsetting for most, and in the telephone interaction, a number of respondents indicated discomfort in dealing with some of the issues. Indeed, in the early pre-testing stages, the Institute staff debated whether to call the exercise off, simply because many called at this stage refused to participate. Early refusals in the pre-test were running as high as 40 percent, which would have certainly damaged the validity of the survey. After careful rewording of the questions and the introduction to be used on the telephone, the survey became quite successful, with an average refusal of about 22 percent. This was higher than the previous bilingualism survey (which had a refusal rate of some 16 percent) but still well within the bounds of scientific standards.

It is important to not move beyond the limits of the survey. Nonetheless, there are some features of this research which reveal intriguing aspects of the Manitoba population.

For example, there is a profound difference between men and women with respect to this issue. Women tended to express

- more concern about the prospect of war;
- less support for Cruise testing;
- more pessimism about the likelihood of nuclear war in the near future;
- less support for an expansion in military expenditures for Canada.

While the differences in response by gender were significant, the real story underlying this survey is the generation "gap" in attitudes toward disarmament and nuclear war. In particular, on the "strategic issues" such as whether Canada should increase military spending, invest in fallout shelters, maintain a nuclear force, and a balanced nuclear arsenal on both sides (USSR and United States), younger respondents were consistently less hardline in their views. This is not really all that surprising, since it is the younger generation which has the most to lose from nuclear confrontation. It may seem curious that we would find that the vast majority of respondents (regardless of gender and age) would feel that survival chances of a nuclear war are non-existent, yet there is considerable support for a program of civil defence. Perhaps this reflects "hedging one's bet" or grasping at straws; if there is even the remotest chance of survival, let's take it.

Overall, men tend to favour a more hardline position than women. With respect to Cruise testing and defence spending and

other aspects of a "strategic stance," men are consistently and significantly more hardline than women - except for the one question dealing with the role of nuclear weapons in Canada. Women are more supportive than men of having nuclear weapons in Canada. This is a curious anomaly which will be analyzed further. Perhaps there is perceived security resulting from having nuclear weapons. On the other hand, the question may have been misinterpreted, as the high number of "Don't Know" responses seems to suggest.

Another conjecture is perhaps even more troubling. If, indeed, there is a tendency for attitudes toward disarmament to become more hawkish as individuals grow older, then given the fact that the population as a whole is "aging" (i.e., there are a growing number of older people), it could be that over the next decade or so, the reluctance to entertain the possibility of nuclear war will dwindle. Care must be taken on this point, for all we have with this is a "one shot" survey taken at a point in time, and no definitive conclusions can be made in this matter. More than likely, this represents two groups having had markedly different histories. It is possible that as the younger generation ages, overall support for disarmament will grow.

One final conjecture is intriguing. As a rule, men are more hardline than women, and the age category of 45 to 65 more hardline than younger respondents under 45 and older people over 65. Although more complex analysis is needed to validate this, it may be that men in the age group of 45 to 65 are significantly at odds with the rest of the population when it comes to disarmament. This is all the more troubling when it is noted that this group holds disproportionate political and economic power. It may be that the leadership in Canada is not in touch with the electorate on this most critical of issues.

Appendix A

METHODOLOGY

A random selection of 2,000 numbers were drawn directly from the Manitoba Telephone System data base. These were then used to contact households between the hours of 5:30 p.m. and 9:30 p.m. from November 28 to December 1, 1983. Any number which generated a "no answer" was reintroduced into the pool. Refusals were discarded. The sample size for this survey is 884.

Appendix B

SAMPLE QUALITY

A sample size of 884 for a population of 1.2 million provides an error level of less than 4 percent, 19 times out of 20. This level of precision is comparable to the Gallup Poll, and is the standard of scientific precision common in survey research.

To assess representativeness, Gender, Income, Location, and Age are compared to what is known about the population of Manitoba from secondary sources such as the 1981 Census and 1982 tax files.

1. GENDER	INSTITUTE FOR SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC RESEARCH*	STATISTICS CANADA
	Poll #2	
FEMALE	57	51
MALE	43	49

Females tend to be over-represented in the survey just conducted. Therefore, estimates of response are weighted by a simple proportionality factor. This has only a very slight effect on results and is unimportant in viewing the survey as a whole.

2. MEDIAN INCOME	INSTITUTE FOR SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC RESEARCH	REVENUE CANADA (1982)
	Poll #2	
ABOVE \$20,000	49.7	50
BELOW \$20,000	39.0	50
EQUAL TO \$20,000	5.2	-
NO ANSWER	6.0	-

It is useful to remember that the Revenue Canada data pertain to 1982 tax returns, and the figure of \$20,000 is increasingly understating the true (present) median income of the Manitoba population in 1983. Also, the reported figures for 1982 are not exactly \$20,000, but we use a round number for question clarity. Accordingly, the sample can be viewed as very representative of the Manitoba population with respect to income.

3. LOCATION	INSTITUTE FOR SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC RESEARCH	STATISTICS CANADA
	Poll #2	
WINNIPEG	60	55
NON-WINNIPEG	40	45

There is a slight tendency for the sample to be weighted in favour of urban responses. In fact, the difference between the response obtained by this poll and Statistics Canada data exceeds a 95 percent confidence level, implying that some form of weighting be used. Unlike gender, however, the pattern of responses shows no relation to location. When location is crossed with every variable generated in this poll, standard measures of association (Chi-Square) are insignificant. Accordingly, this distortion is unimportant to the pattern of response, and no weighting is needed.

4. AGE	INSTITUTE FOR SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC RESEARCH	STATISTICS CANADA*
	Poll #2	
18 - 24	15	16
25 - 44	41	39
45 - 65	23	28
65+	14	10

* These percentages are derived from the population of Manitoba age 18 and over.

Of all the measures used to assess sample representation, this is the most successful. Clearly, with respect to age, the sample drawn is very representative of the population. This is especially important since age plays such a key role in the pattern of response.

In summary, the sample drawn is very representative of the Manitoba population. The slight over-representation of women (a standard problem in telephone surveys) is resolved by weighting the estimates. The slight over-representation of the Winnipeg population is not a problem statistically in the context of this survey.