



PROFILES ON MANITOBA

REACTIONS OF THE MANITOBA POPULATION
TO
HEALTH AND SAFETY LEGISLATION

FEBRUARY 9, 1984

VOLUME 1, NUMBER 3

INSTITUTE FOR SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC RESEARCH
Faculty of Arts
The University of Manitoba

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Executive Summary ii
Reaction to Seat Belt Legislation 1
Reaction to the Control of Impaired Driving 4
Regulation of Smoking in Public Places 8
Analysis 10
Appendix A
 Methodology
Appendix B
 Sample Quality

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Institute for Social and Economic Research would like to express its appreciation to Steve Stastook and Ron Davis at the Manitoba Telephone System office for their help in drawing the random telephone numbers for the sample. In addition, thanks to the telephone interviewers-- Sonda Bruni, Lesley Fuga, Elaine Kelln, Maureen Rice, Shirley Ring, Shirley Stewart, Meryth Suderman, and Sam Trachtenberg; and to data entry operator Margie Fry, and programmer Dennis Hudyma.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- A majority of Manitobans support the new legislation requiring the use of seat belts. This support is strongest among women and residents of Winnipeg.
- The percentage of individuals who report that they use their seat belts has increased from 24 percent to 62 percent, as a result of the new law.
- There is strong support for the ALERT program over the Christmas season (91.1 percent) and strong support to extend ALERT to a year-round program (80.8 percent). Support for this program is greatest among women.
- Manitobans tend to be in favour of the federal government's proposal to increase the penalties for impaired driving, but approximately one-quarter of the population think the proposed penalties should be even more severe.
- Over two-thirds of the public are in favour of legislation that restricts smoking in public areas, but do not think that the police should be active in enforcing the no-smoking regulation.

This survey was designed to assess the reactions of Manitobans to the efforts of government to regulate behaviour that is deemed to be unhealthy or unsafe. The three areas examined in the survey were the new legislation requiring the use of seat belts, the Winnipeg by-law on smoking, and the ALERT program conducted by the police to deter impaired driving.

1.0 REACTION TO SEAT BELT LEGISLATION

The initial question was an effort to measure the degree of public support for the mandatory use of seat belts. As the table below shows, while a majority of all respondents were in favour of the new law, support is strongest among women and Winnipeg residents.

"ARE YOU FOR OR AGAINST THE REQUIRED USE OF SEAT BELTS?"			
	MEN	WOMEN (percent)	TOTAL
FOR	52.1	64.5	58.7
AGAINST	42.9	29.5	35.8
DON'T KNOW	5.0	5.9	5.5
	WINNIPEG (percent)		NON-WINNIPEG
FOR	63.3		54.4
AGAINST	31.8		40.1
DON'T KNOW	4.9		5.5

In addition to support of the new law, of equal importance is the extent to which the law is effective in encouraging people to wear their seat belts. Individuals were asked if they used their seat belts regularly prior to January 1, 1984, and if they regularly use their seat belts now that the new legislation has passed.

As Figure 1 illustrates, the law has significantly increased the percentage of the population who regularly use their seat belts. It is interesting to note that most individuals are complying with the law, even though the government stated that enforcement of the law would not begin until April 1, 1984.

SEAT BELT USE BEFORE AND AFTER JANUARY 1, 1984
FIGURE 1

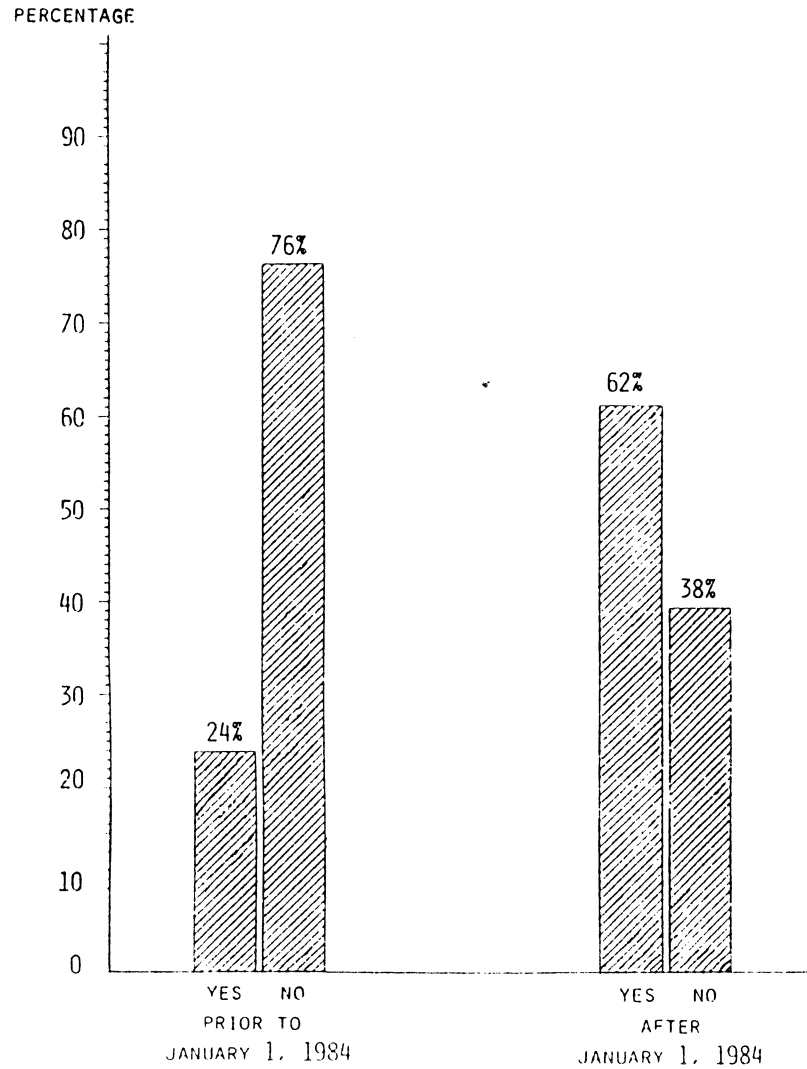


FIGURE 2

"BEFORE JANUARY 1, 1984, DID YOU REGULARLY USE YOUR SEAT BELT WHILE TRAVELLING IN A MOTOR VEHICLE?"

"DO YOU REGULARLY USE YOUR SEAT BELT NOW THAT THE NEW LEGISLATION HAS BEEN PASSED?"

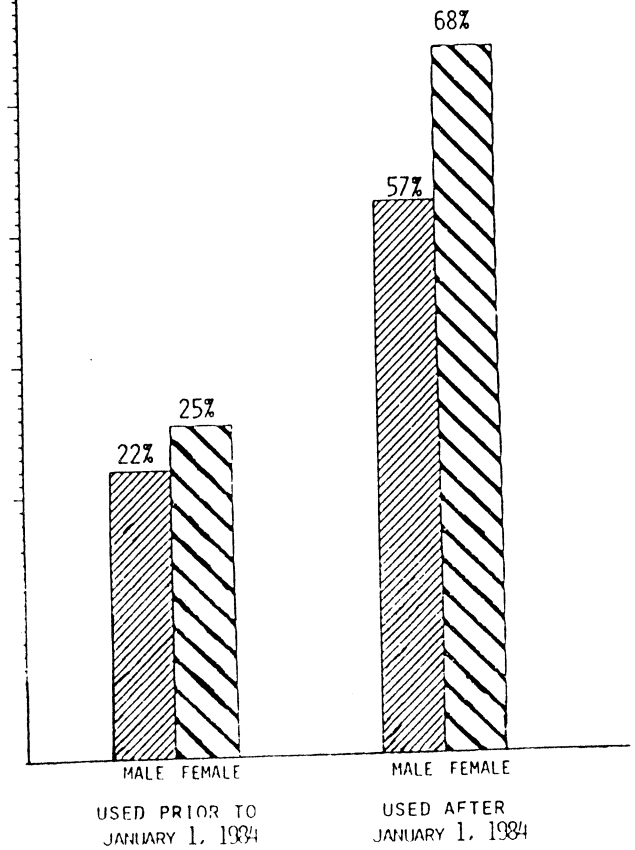


Figure 2 shows the difference in compliance with law between men and women. While the proportion of men and women who regularly used their seat belts before January 1 was virtually the same, women are now more likely to wear their seat belts than men. This finding is consistent with other research that has found that women tend to be more law abiding than men.

Those individuals who stated that they currently do not use their seat belts were asked the following question:

"COULD YOU TELL ME THE MAIN REASON WHY YOU DON'T USE YOUR SEAT BELT?"	
	(percent)
FORGET TO USE THEM	24.0
TOO MUCH TROUBLE	20.2
UNCOMFORTABLE	24.6
POTENTIALLY DANGEROUS	10.3
CAR IS UNEQUIPPED	4.7
OTHER	14.1
DON'T KNOW	2.0

It would appear that the most common reason for not wearing seat belts could be categorized as seat belts being a nuisance. Responses in the "Other" category included statements that wearing seat belts was an individual decision and not the government's, and that individuals would start wearing their seat belts when the police started enforcing the law.

2.0 REACTION TO THE CONTROL OF IMPAIRED DRIVING

The greatest consensus found in the survey was in response to questions related to the ALERT program.

"DURING THE CHRISTMAS SEASON THE ALERT PROGRAM GIVES POLICE THE RIGHT TO RANDOMLY STOP ANY CAR AND TEST THE DRIVER'S ALCOHOL LEVEL. ARE YOU FOR OR AGAINST THIS PROGRAM?"			
	MEN	WOMEN	TOTAL
	(percent)		
FOR	84.6	97.1	91.1
AGAINST	13.1	2.9	7.7
DON'T KNOW or NO OPINION	2.3	0.0	1.2

Although women tended to show greater support for the program than men, it is apparent that the public strongly approve of this effort to control impaired driving. The question was also asked if the ALERT program should be extended.

"DO YOU THINK THE ALERT PROGRAM SHOULD BE IN EFFECT YEAR-ROUND?"			
	MEN	WOMEN	TOTAL
	(percent)		
FOR	73.8	86.3	80.8
AGAINST	22.5	11.2	16.2
DON'T KNOW or NO OPINION	3.7	2.5	3.0

Although the support for a year-round program is weaker, approximately 81 percent of the individuals interviewed would be in favour of such a program. Again, it is women who are the strongest supporters of extending the program.

The reasons given for not being in support of a year-round program included costs, the belief that the low incidence of impaired driving outside of the Christmas season would not justify the program, and a concern that the police might use the ALERT program to conduct other searches without reasonable cause. Given that this latter concern is frequently expressed by those who have reservations about the ALERT program, the following question was asked:

"ARE YOU CONCERNED THAT THE POLICE MIGHT CONDUCT OTHER CHECKS OR SEARCHES AS PART OF THE ALERT PROGRAM?"			
	MEN	WOMEN	TOTAL
	(percent)		
YES	37.6	17.2	25.1
NO	59.2	79.3	71.0
DON'T KNOW or NO OPINION	3.2	3.5	3.3

Although a majority of both men and women did not see police searches as a problem, a significantly higher percentage of men than women stated that this was a concern.

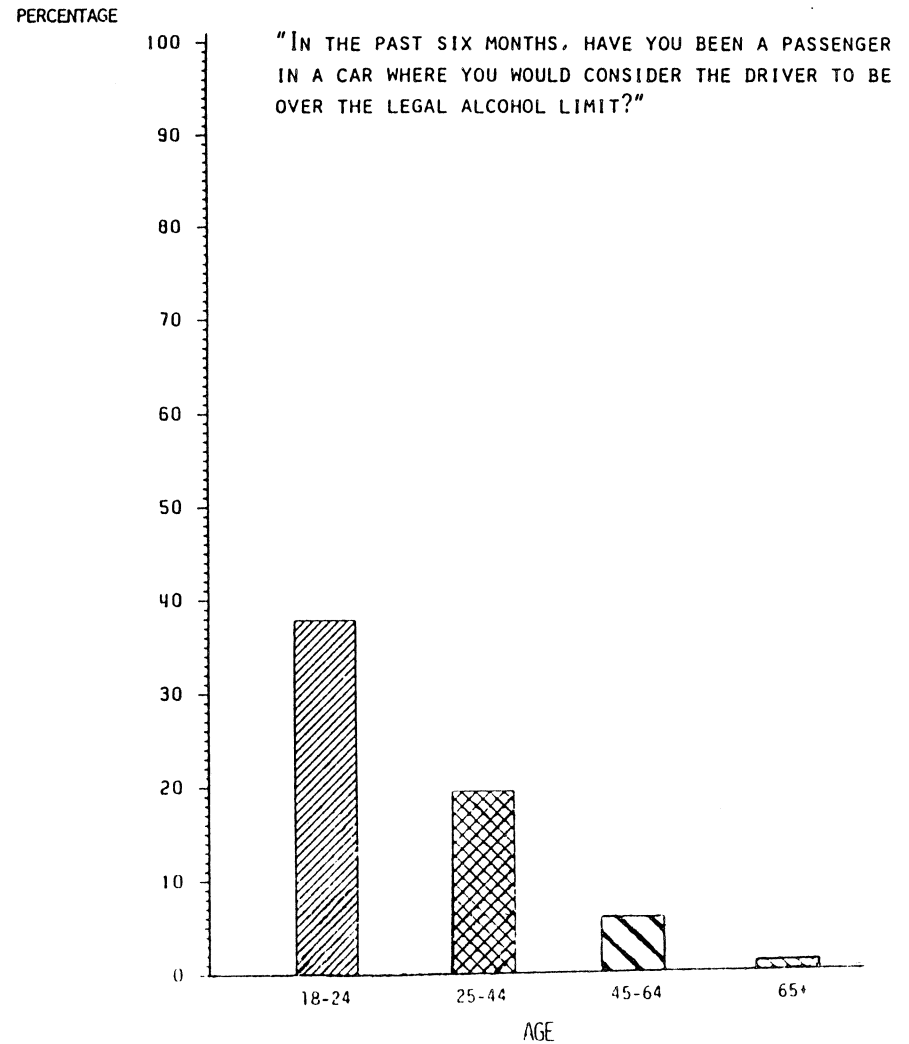
An additional interest in the survey was to obtain an estimate of the amount of impaired driving that occurs in Manitoba. A rough indication of the incidence of this is the responses found to the following question:

	"IN THE PAST SIX MONTHS, HAVE YOU BEEN A PASSENGER IN A CAR WHERE YOU WOULD CONSIDER THE DRIVER TO BE OVER THE LEGAL ALCOHOL LIMIT?"				TOTAL
	18-24	25-44	45-64	65+	
	(percent)				
YES	37.9	19.2	5.8	1.0	15.6
NO	62.1	80.8	94.2	99.0	83.2
DON'T KNOW or NO OPINION	0.0	0.8	0.0	1.0	1.2

Although the percentage of all the respondents who reported that they had been a passenger in a car with an impaired driver is relatively small (15.6 percent), the percentage increases dramatically among those individuals in the age range of 18 to 24. While the survey did not ask how frequently an individual had ridden with someone over the legal limit, the above finding suggests that for young adults, this is a common occurrence. It should be noted, however, that of all people who say they have ridden with an impaired driver, 52 percent of them are between the ages of 25 and 44.

One of the effects of the increased attention being given to the problem of drunk drivers has been a proposal by the Federal Department of Justice to impose more severe sentences for impaired driving. Two questions were asked in the survey on these sentences.

FIGURE 3



"THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT IS PROPOSING THAT INDIVIDUALS WHO ARE CONVICTED OF IMPAIRED DRIVING FOR THE FIRST TIME RECEIVE A MINIMUM SENTENCE OF A \$300 FINE. DO YOU FEEL THIS IS TOO SEVERE, NOT SEVERE ENOUGH, OR ABOUT RIGHT?"

	(percent)
TOO SEVERE	11.1
NOT SEVERE ENOUGH	27.3
ABOUT RIGHT	57.2
DON'T KNOW	2.7
NO OPINION	1.6

"THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT IS ALSO PROPOSING THAT INDIVIDUALS WHO ARE CONVICTED OF IMPAIRED DRIVING A SECOND TIME RECEIVE A MINIMUM SENTENCE OF 14 DAYS IMPRISONMENT. DO YOU FEEL THIS IS TOO SEVERE, NOT SEVERE ENOUGH, OR ABOUT RIGHT?"

	(percent)
TOO SEVERE	17.6
NOT SEVERE ENOUGH	26.3
ABOUT RIGHT	49.2
DON'T KNOW	4.3
NO OPINION	2.6

Based on the above findings, it would appear that the federal government's declared intent to "get tough" on impaired driving has support among the Manitoba population. The findings also indicate that the most likely disagreement with the proposed changes in the severity of sentence is that the penalties should be even more severe.

3.0 REGULATION OF SMOKING IN PUBLIC PLACES

The initial question sought to determine the public's approval of the new by-law on smoking. Since the recently introduced by-law only applies to Winnipeg, a separate question was given to non-Winnipeg residents to measure their support for the control of smoking in designated areas.

NON-WINNIPEG

"A NEW BY-LAW WAS RECENTLY PASSED IN WINNIPEG WHICH PROHIBITS SMOKING IN MANY PUBLIC AREAS. WOULD YOU BE FOR OR AGAINST THIS REGULATION IF IT WAS TO BECOME LAW THROUGHOUT THE PROVINCE?"

	SMOKERS	NON-SMOKERS	TOTAL
	(percent)		
FOR	51.4	77.3	67.9
AGAINST	45.8	19.0	28.8
DON'T KNOW	1.4	3.3	2.5
NO OPINION	1.4	0.4	0.8

WINNIPEG

"ARE YOU FOR OR AGAINST THE NEW NO-SMOKING BY-LAW WHICH PROHIBITS SMOKING IN MANY PUBLIC AREAS?"

	SMOKERS	NON-SMOKERS	TOTAL
	(percent)		
FOR	45.5	80.7	68.3
AGAINST	49.7	16.1	28.0
DON'T KNOW	4.8	3.2	3.7
NO OPINION	0.0	0.0	0.0

The approval for restricting smoking in public areas both in Winnipeg and in the rest of the Province is almost identical. It is of interest to note that smokers are about evenly divided on the issue in the City and elsewhere. These findings suggest that the public would be receptive to some form of Provincial legislation similar to the by-law in Winnipeg.

Following this question, Winnipeg residents were asked what role the police should play with respect to the new by-law.

WINNIPEG	
"SHOULD THE POLICE ENFORCE THE NO-SMOKING REGULATION AMONG THE PUBLIC?"	
	(percent)
YES	36.4
NO	56.8
DON'T KNOW	4.1
NO OPINION	2.6

The negative response to this question is partly attributable to the perceived difficulties the police would have in attempting to enforce the by-law, and partly to the level of seriousness in which this law violation is viewed.

4.0 ANALYSIS

There are some difficulties in drawing generalizations from a survey that deals with three discrete issues, but several general points can be made. The first is related to the public's perception of the government's right to intervene in individuals' lives. Since the beginning of 1984, the Orwellian theme of Big Brother and state control has been continuously present in the print and electronic media. The present findings suggest that when the area of government regulation is related to health and safety issues, there is minimal opposition from the public. The majority of the population is in favour of the required use of seat belts, would approve the extension of the ALERT program to a year-round program, and is in favour of the restriction of smoking in public areas. The one area where it was thought that there would be concerns expressed was the issue of police conducting other searches during the ALERT program. The findings showed, however, that most individuals did not see this as a problem. The underlying philosophy seems to be that the collective good takes priority over individual freedoms.

Another issue that emerges from the findings is the consistent differences found between men and women in the support given to government regulation. Women were more in favour of the required use of seat belts, showed greater support for the extension of the ALERT program, and were less concerned

that police might conduct other searches during the ALERT program. Finally, women were more likely to comply with the law requiring the use of seat belts than men. There is insufficient information in the survey to allow an explanation of these findings, but the consistent differences found between men and women suggest that this is probably a reflection of the differential manner in which our society socializes males and females, and a reflection of the different values instilled.

APPENDIX A

METHODOLOGY

A random selection of 1,700 numbers were drawn directly from the Manitoba Telephone System data base. These were then used to contact households between the hours of 5:00 p.m. and 9:30 p.m. from January 30 to February 2, 1984. Any number which generated a "no answer" was reintroduced into the pool. Refusals were discarded. The sample size for this survey is 916. Overall refusal rate was 12 percent.

APPENDIX B

SAMPLE QUALITY

A sample size of 916 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 & Economic Research	Statistics Canada
	Poll #3	
Female	58	51
Male	42	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 & Economic Research	Revenue Canada (1982)
	Poll #3	
Above \$20,000	47.7	50
Below \$20,000	39.4	50
Equal to \$20,000	5.5	--
No Answer	7.3	--

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 & Economic Research Poll #3	Statistics Canada
Winnipeg	58	55
Non-Winnipeg	42	45

This sample provides an accurate representation of Winnipeg and non-Winnipeg responses. In fact, the difference between the response obtained by this poll and Statistics Canada data is within a 95 percent confidence level.

4.

Age	Institute for Social & Economic Research Poll #3	Statistics Canada*
18 - 24	14	16
24 - 44	39	39
45 - 64	22	28
65+	18	10

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

There is a slight tendency for the sample to under-represent the 45-64 year old age group and over-represent the 65+ age group. This is most likely the effect of a differential refusal rate between the two age groups, as opposed to an artifact of the sampling procedure. Since age is an important variable in the context of this survey, estimates of responses for the two age groups mentioned are weighted by a simple proportionality factor.

In summary, the sample drawn is very representative of the Manitoba population. The slight over-representation of women (a standard problem in telephone surveys) and people over age 65 is resolved by weighting the estimates.