

SUMMARY - DECIMA RESEARCH LTD. POLL -
MAY 1988

Overall Support/Opposition

In general attitudes towards the Free Trade Agreement remain stable, with 51% supporting the deal and 43% opposing. There has been no significant shift from the level found in December.

Despite the profile which this issue has achieved over the last few years, a remarkably large segment of the population reports feeling that they do not know enough about the agreement, and feel the government should be providing more information.

Economic Considerations

Most Canadians believe that free trade will bring economic benefits, at a national, provincial and household level, findings which are consistent again with past surveys.

Most people seem uncertain about specifically how these benefits will materialize. However, two-thirds of those interviewed anticipated lower consumer prices.

Majorities continue to disagree that U.S. branch plants will close, that incomes will be higher or that regional disparities will end.

In short, while there remains some uncertainty about the specific economic impacts of free trade, overall people tend to think the effect will be positive.

To the extent that they will make predictions about the effect of free trade on specific industries, people generally assume that the oil and gas, wood and paper products, and fish and fish products industries will benefit, while agriculture, wine, autos, and films, books and magazines will be adversely affected. It should be strongly noted that the degree of consensus on any of these is very slight: Most people acknowledge their unfamiliarity with the contents of the Agreement and appear to have absorbed little information about sector-specific effects.

A consistent majority of Canadians have said that they will be basing their view of free trade on economic criteria, rather than those relating to Canada's degree of independence from the United States. Among this group, two of three say they anticipate economic gains rather than losses for Canada.