

III. GENERAL ATTITUDES TOWARD THE ECONOMY

In general, participants in the focus groups believed that Canada compared well economically to other industrialized countries in the world. While there were significant concerns expressed about Canada's small population, high wages, taxes and inability to 'keep up,' with other industrialized nations (notably, the United States, Japan and Germany), participants were generally of the view that Canada was ranked among the top ten countries in the world in terms of its economic performance. ("comfortable economy;" "Canada is even with other industrialized countries;" "Doing pretty well;" "Still in top ten") Not surprisingly, moderate supporters of the FTA were somewhat more inclined to report that Canada compared well to other industrialized nations economically, although moderate opponents were also reasonably positive in their assessments.

A majority also reported that in terms of the standard of living in the country, Canada compared favourably with other industrialized nations having a high, if not a better, standard of living. ("Fairly high, compares favourably with the U.S.;" "In top three...compare with U.S. and Germany;" "High, but maybe by borrowing").

There was a general sense among all participants that Canada has fallen behind other industrialized nations in the world in the past few years. While there was general agreement that Canada's social programs were better than most other countries, concern was expressed by the size of the deficit and the perceived negative effects of taxes on Canada's ability to maintain its position as one of the top industrialized nations in the world.

Several participants in the groups of moderate FTA opponents in each of the three cities cited the Canada - U.S. Free Trade Agreement and the resultant loss of jobs as reasons for Canada's declining economy over the past few years.

