



The
THINKING
MINNESOTA
POLL



UNDER THE MICROSCOPE

A closer look at the beliefs and views
of a few 'typical' Minnesotans.

BY BILL WALSH

Thinking Minnesota magazine conducted our very first poll back in August 2018, asking national polling firm Meeting Street Insights to survey 500 Minnesotans with 25 questions about education, crime, and the economy. Since that time, 20 additional polls have been conducted asking hundreds of questions to 10,500 different Minnesotans around the state and across demographics. While brainstorming for our next project, the editors at *Thinking Minnesota* came up with a novel idea: What if instead of conducting another poll, we looked back at all the data acquired in the previous 21 polls and developed a snapshot of Minnesota?

The first step was to combine the data from these 21 polls

into one massive file ready for analysis. Next, we used the data to create indices for the 10,500 Minnesotans who took our surveys over the years: who they are, their political affiliation, their perception of the economy, how much they trust the media, where they get their information, and how they feel about taxes, education, energy, crime, and social issues. Five distinct profiles of Minnesotans arose from the data, and we are pleased to present them here.

There are two important caveats to consider. First, purists in polling methodology will be quick to point out the inherent scientific flaws of combining surveys over a five-year period. We agree and advise readers to consume the data with this in mind.



TACONITE TIM



Taconite Tim represents the people living on the Iron Range in Northeast Minnesota. Tim’s grandfather and father worked in the mines, but those opportunities no longer exist so he became an EMT and teaches at the high school. Tim likes to hunt, fish, and snowmobile, and he calls tourists from the Twin Cities “612ers” or “citiots.”

IRON RANGERS WHO THEY ARE

- Older (55 percent are ages 55+)
- Do not have a college degree (70 percent)
- Much more Republican (48 percent) than Democrat (33 percent) and Range Democrats are older, which explains the recent shift in voting patterns
- More conservative (50 percent) compared to all Minnesota voters (35 percent) with only 17 percent liberal

HOW THEY FEEL

- Pessimistic about the state’s direction and the governor leading it: 54 percent say the state is on the wrong track and only 46 percent approve of Gov. Tim Walz’s job performance
- Worried about the future: 55 percent say their personal financial situation is fair or poor
- Distrustful of the media compared to Minnesota as a whole: 86 percent say Minnesota media contributes to polarization

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WHAT THEY BELIEVE

- More fiscally conservative as nearly a majority (45 percent) say 31 percent or more of state spending is wasteful, and eight in 10 (82 percent) oppose a gas tax
- More likely to give Minnesota’s public schools a lower grade
- A majority (55 percent) believe accountability should come before increased education funding
- Trust parents over teachers and principals when it comes to curriculum (the opposite is true among voters statewide)
- Socially conservative: 80 percent oppose the new abortion law and 93 percent oppose sex change operations for minors
- Opposed to Walz’s 2040 renewable energy plan
- Tough on crime: they favor strengthening mandatory minimums (81 percent)

While each individual survey had a margin of error of +/-4.38 percent, that can’t be said for the combined data file. Second, not all Minnesotans fit neatly into the five profiles showcased in this exercise. Winnowing down the profiles to just five was one of the toughest challenges of the entire project.

So, which one are you? Taconite Tim, MAGA Marv, Apathetic Andy, Subaru Suzy, or the Trade School Thompsens? ★

About the pollster

Rob Autry, founder of Meeting Street Insights, is one of the nation’s leading pollsters and research strategists.



SUBARU SUZY

Suzy represents liberals living in Minneapolis and St. Paul. She has short, prematurely gray hair and drives a Subaru station wagon with a Planned Parenthood bumper sticker. She still wears a mask and shops at Whole Foods with recycled shopping bags.

URBAN LIBERALS WHO THEY ARE

- Younger (64 percent are under the age of 55)
- College educated (55 percent are college grads compared to 45 percent for the state)
- Strongly Democrat: 42 percent identify as a “Strong Democrat” — nearly 20 points higher than the state
- Not surprisingly, ideologically liberal (50 percent), with one in three saying they are politically “very liberal” (32 percent)

HOW THEY FEEL

- Optimistic about Minnesota: 68 percent believe the state is headed in the right direction and 71 percent approve of Walz
- Worried about their finances but don’t blame taxes: 56 percent say Minnesota’s tax rates are about right
- Trust the media and get their news online

WHAT THEY BELIEVE

- Strong supporters of K-12 schools and support more funding and trust teachers
- Woke: 70 percent support an ethnic studies requirement, 67 percent oppose a gender identity ban, 81 percent support driver’s licenses for illegals, and 67 percent support restoring voting rights for felons
- More liberal on social issues, particularly abortion: 84 percent support Minnesota’s new abortion law
- Wholeheartedly support Walz’s renewable energy plan (80 percent)
- Most feel safe in Minneapolis (70 percent compared with 47 percent statewide) and want to loosen the reins on crime policy

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APATHETIC ANDY

Andy represents self-described independent men across Minnesota. He believes both parties are generally worthless at solving problems and making his life better. Andy needs a compelling local issue or strong candidate in order to vote. Andy disagrees with his wife on many important issues.

INDEPENDENT MEN WHO THEY ARE

- Middle-aged (43 percent are ages 35-54 – 8 points higher than the state)
- Some college: most Independent Men do not have a college diploma (52 percent), statistically matching the state
- Politically moderate
- Different than Independent Women: Independent Women tend to be older and more educated (52 percent have college degrees)

HOW THEY FEEL

- Apathetic at best, slightly pessimistic at worst, they tend to be mixed on both the direction of the state (48 percent right direction versus 44 percent on the wrong track) and Walz’s job performance (46 percent approve versus 39 percent disapprove)
- Different than Independent Women who approve of Walz by large margins (62 percent approve and 19 percent disapprove)
- Generally content with their personal financial situation but concerned about taxes: 62 percent say Minnesota tax rates are too high
- More cynical compared to the overall electorate and Independent Women
- Follow the news and current events closely and listen to the radio

WHAT THEY BELIEVE

- Harder on K-12 education than Independent Women, trust parents over teachers, want accountability
- Slightly more conservative on social issues, particularly when it comes to abortion and sex change operations (50 percent oppose the new abortion law)
- Oppose Walz’s alternative energy plan (51 percent) and new California-based emissions standards while Independent Women hold more support
- Concerned about crime in Minnesota (77 percent) and favor strengthening mandatory minimums and a three-strikes law



TRADE SCHOOL THOMPSONS

The Thompsons represent people in the outer-ring suburbs without a college education. Mr. Thompson drives a newer Ford F-150 while Mrs. Thompson rocks a minivan. He works in HVAC, making over \$100k; she works as a medical technician at the local clinic. They did not go to college but their kids probably will.

NON-COLLEGE SUBURBANITES

WHO THEY ARE

- Older (53 percent are ages 55+)
- Nearly half have some college education (46 percent)
- Politically split: closely matching the rest of the state, but more conservative than their neighbors with a college degree
- Lived in Minnesota longer than their higher-educated, suburban neighbors

HOW THEY FEEL

- Fairly content: 50 percent say the state is headed in the right direction with 52 percent approving of the job Walz is doing as governor
- Pessimistic about economic issues: 46 percent describe their personal financial situation as only fair or poor
- Less trusting of the media than their college-educated neighbors

WHAT THEY BELIEVE

- Fiscally in line with the state as a whole, though notably more opposed to the gas tax
- Less supportive of the K-12 education system than their college-educated neighbors (78 percent support school choice)
- Generally more right of center on social issues: 52 percent oppose the new abortion law and 63 percent oppose sex change operations for minors
- Concerned about crime and safety (85 percent) with 78 percent supporting a three-strikes law



MAGA MARV

Marv represents conservatives living in rural Minnesota. Marv is fiscally and socially conservative and not afraid to tell you about it during the meat raffle at the VFW. Has a “Let’s Go Brandon” bumper sticker on his GMC pickup and attends church regularly.

RURAL CONSERVATIVES

WHO THEY ARE

- Older: only 28 percent are ages 18-44 and 50 percent are ages 55+
- Male (55 percent compared to 48 percent for the state)
- Working class: only 29 percent have a college degree compared to 45 percent of voters statewide
- Republican: 76 percent are Republican with 45 percent identifying as “Strongly Republican”
- Deeply rooted in Minnesota: 81 percent say they have lived in Minnesota all their lives

HOW THEY FEEL

- Negative and incredibly pessimistic, they believe Minnesota has lost its way under Walz’s leadership (72 percent wrong track with 71 percent disapproving of Walz)
- Satisfied with their personal finances (66 percent excellent or good), but negative about the rest of the economy
- Skeptical of the media (83 percent say Minnesota reporters misrepresent the facts)

WHAT THEY BELIEVE

- Full-fledged fiscal conservatives who strongly believe tax rates are too high (80 percent)
- Skeptical of the K-12 education system: they trust parents over teachers and believe accountability should be a prerequisite to increased funding
- Socially conservative (80 percent oppose the new abortion law and 93 percent oppose sex change operations for minors)
- Opposed to Walz’s 2040 renewable energy plan
- Tough on crime: 81 percent favor strengthening mandatory minimums



KEY TAKEAWAYS:

- Urban Liberals and Rural Conservatives think and behave exactly as expected
- The polling confirms the recent trend of Iron Rangers becoming increasingly conservative
- Suburban voters are not a monolithic bloc: their attitudes vary based on the amount of college education attained
- Independents (especially independent men) are waiting to be inspired by a candidate, party, or movement that can show the system can work for them