

THE RESULTS ARE IN! COMMENTARY ON THE 'WORLD TRIBUNE' READERS SURVEY BY GREG MARTIN, ASSISTANT PUBLISHER

After several weeks of collecting and processing, the results of the *World Tribune* Readers Survey are finally available. And the results are very clear! Our readers love the *World Tribune*, are very happy with the recent improvements and find it very encouraging. We are appreciative to all of our readers for your support, especially those who participated in this survey.

The survey form appeared in the March 26 issue of the *World Tribune*. It had two parts—Part 1 asked for opinions about the newspaper itself, and Part 2 asked for demographic information from each respondent. We received more than 600 replies over a three-month period.

Limitations of This Survey

We are aware of some of the limitations of this type of survey, and of this particular survey, and we appreciate the many constructive suggestions that we've received in this regard.

Surveys where participants are not randomly selected but self-selected (as this one was—every reader had the opportunity, but only some chose to reply) are known to be among the least reliable of surveying techniques. This is due to a number of factors, including the tendency for those with the strongest, most extreme opinions to respond more frequently than those who are generally satisfied. There also exists the possibility of the outcome being skewed by a vocal minority sending multiple replies (stuffing the ballot box, so to speak).

Random samplings eliminate these problems and are often held to be much more accurate indicators of the entire group's opinions; we will use this method in future surveys. This being the case, the accuracy of this survey will be addressed in the next section.

We know that the design of questions and responses needs improvement. Several questions were so unclear (based on write-in opinions) that the responses were suspect. Also, in questions 1 through 3, the range of possible replies (1 to 5) should have been broader (1 to 9 is ideal, we are told). This would allow for a wider range of responses. Subtle variations in response are more difficult to discern with the limited response options we offered.

Accuracy of the Survey Responses

Given this, do the results of the survey accurately represent the opinions of our readership?

To address this question, the survey responses to Part 2 (demographic) were compared to similar questions found in the survey recently published by Phillip Hammond and David Machacek in *Soka Gakkai in America*. In fact, the demographic questions were included in this survey for the purpose of making this comparison.

The Hammond survey was a randomly selected, statistically significant sampling of our membership, accurate to within several percentage points. And although there are some differences between the two surveys—the Hammond sample size was smaller than ours

(400 versus 600), and the Hammond survey was of *subscribers*, while the *World Tribune* survey was of *readers*—it was felt that if the demographics of the two surveys were similar enough, the assumption could be made that both surveys accurately represent the opinions of the same population.

Although the two sets of demographic questions were not identical, when the two surveys were compared in terms of age, gender, race/ethnicity, marital status and educational status, there was *remarkable agreement*. (For those interested in the details of the demographic breakdown of the SGI-USA membership, please refer to *Soka Gakkai in America*, chapter 2). Knowing, then, that the survey results are quite likely an accurate reflection of our readers' opinions—in spite of our choosing a less accurate surveying method—let us now move on to some of the results.

Highlights of the Survey Results

Of *World Tribune* readers:

- 47 percent report that they regularly use the Internet.
- 11 percent use the Internet as a primary news source.
- 8 percent have been practicing for less than five years.
- 7 percent are below the age of 30.
- 68 percent are women and 32 percent, men.

Commenting on the newspaper itself, our readers report that:

- They feel that *more space* should be allocated to experiences and study, *less space* for “Fine Print.” Everything else is about right.
- They are *most encouraged* by SGI President Ikeda's guidance, experiences and study articles.
- They most often read President Ikeda's guidance, experiences and study articles first; opinion pieces next; and then the rest of the paper.
- They are most divided in opinion about the temple issue articles.

So, these are some summary points of the survey. For more details please refer to “The Numbers: *World Tribune* Survey Results” on the next page. We will continue to analyze the results and the many written opinions received as we strive to improve the newspaper.

Remember, we always welcome your input and opinions.

Thank you again!

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