

2016

Louisiana Survey 2016

LSU Reilly Center for Media & Public Affairs

THE LOUISIANA SURVEY 2016



Manship School of
Mass Communication
Reilly Center For
Media & Public Affairs



FULL REPORT



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FOR FURTHER INFORMATION ON THIS REPORT:

Dr. Michael Henderson
225-578-5149
mbhende1@lsu.edu



Reilly Center for Media and Public Affairs

The Reilly Center for Media & Public Affairs, an integral part of Louisiana State University's Manship School of Mass Communication, uses the intellectual muscle of the school's faculty to help solve practical problems and advance good government initiatives. The Reilly Center's mission is to generate thoughtful programs, dialogue, and research about social, economic, and political affairs, as well as the developing role of the media in American society. The Center is committed to advancing the Manship School's national leadership in media and politics.

The Center's agenda is diverse and fluid – from the annual John Breaux Symposium, which brings in national experts to discuss a topic that has received little or no attention, to conducting the annual *Louisiana Survey*, a vital resource for policymakers, which tracks advancements and regressions of citizen attitudes about state services. The Center's role, within the state's flagship university, is to respond quickly to the needs of state governance in addressing challenges facing Louisiana, particularly in times of crisis such as during Hurricanes Katrina and Rita and the 2010 Deepwater Horizon oil spill. Its action-oriented and partnership-driven philosophy underscores the Reilly Center's dedication to tackling ideas and issues that explore the relationship of media and the public in democratic society.

About the Louisiana Survey

The *2016 Louisiana Survey* is the fifteenth in an annual series sponsored by the Reilly Center for Media and Public Affairs at Louisiana State University's Manship School of Mass Communication.

The mission of the *Louisiana Survey* is to establish benchmarks as well as to capture change in residents' assessments of state government services. The survey is further dedicated to tracking public opinion on the contemporary policy issues that face the state. Each iteration of the *Louisiana Survey* contains core items designed to serve as barometers of public sentiment, including assessments of whether the state is heading in the right direction or wrong direction, perceptions about the most important problems facing the state, as well as evaluations of public revenue sources and spending priorities.

In the *2016 Louisiana Survey*, this core is supplemented by measures of partisan polarization; public opinion of testing, the Common Core State Standards, and school reforms implemented during the Jindal Administration; support for changing the Taylor Opportunity Program for Students (TOPS); beliefs about the causes and solutions for poverty; public opinion on raising the minimum wage in Louisiana; perceptions of race relations in Louisiana; attitudes toward public memorials to the Confederacy; and opinions on a variety of social issues such as same sex marriage, religious freedom laws, abortion, and gun rights.

As part of an effort to ensure that the *Louisiana Survey* fulfills its public service mission, the research team drew upon expertise in public policy and polling from Louisiana State University faculty in the Public Administration Institute, the Department of Political Science, and the Manship School of Mass Communication. These faculty members provided invaluable insight into the design of the questionnaire and in identifying the contemporary policy questions that could most benefit from an understanding of the public's views. While we are indebted to them for their time and contributions, they bear no responsibility for any mistakes in the questionnaire, analysis, or interpretation presented in this report.

We especially thank the Reilly Family Foundation for their generous support and vision in helping to create the Louisiana Survey.

Principal Authors

Michael Henderson
Research Director, Public Policy Research Lab
Assistant Professor of Research, Manship School of Mass Communication

Belinda Davis
Associate Director, Public Policy Research Lab
Associate Professor, Department of Political Science

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Overview

As Louisiana's lawmakers conduct the 2016 Regular Session, the public is in a historically grim mood. The *2016 Louisiana Survey*, a project of the Reilly Center for Media and Public Affairs at LSU'sanship School of Mass Communication, shows that Louisiana residents are disgruntled with the direction of the state, increasingly dismayed with economic conditions, and have little confidence in government to solve the state's most important problems. Specifically, the survey reveals:

State of the State

- Nearly two-thirds of Louisiana residents (63 percent) think the state is heading in the wrong direction, the most on record since the *Louisiana Survey* began tracking opinion in 2003.
- Evaluations of the state's economy as a whole have declined significantly since 2015, but residents' evaluations of their own financial situation have remained stable. About half (51 percent) now think the state's economy lags behind the nation's economy, compared to 36 percent who said so in 2015. The share saying state business conditions are worse than a year ago rose from 24 percent in 2015 to 40 percent in 2016, while the share saying their own financial situation is worse hardly budged from 23 percent to 26 percent.
- The share of respondents who name the state's budget as the most important problem jumped from 7 percent in 2015 to 26 percent this year. As a result, the budget now tops the public's list of the most important problem facing the state for the first time on record.
- Public confidence that state government will effectively deal with the most pressing problems remains low. Only 34 percent say they are 'very confident' or 'somewhat confident' that state government can address these problems.
- Residents give the highest grades to the Louisiana's public colleges and universities, with 59 percent assigning a grade of A or B. In contrast, residents give relatively low marks to the quality of roads, bridges, and highways (13 percent A and B grades); state economic development efforts to attract, recruit, and create jobs (25 percent); and Louisiana's public schools overall (26 percent).

State Finance

- About half of the public (51 percent) wants more spending for elementary and secondary education and *are willing to pay higher taxes for it*, while only four percent favor cutting spending for education. Similar patterns hold for higher education, transportation infrastructure and, to a lesser extent, health care and coastal protection. In only one area (spending for public assistance programs such as welfare), do more residents favor spending cuts than favor paying more in taxes.
- At the same time, when asked about taxes separately from spending preferences, a majority of residents believe state income and sales taxes are "just about right" at current levels (57 percent in each case). Similarly, 56 percent feel they pay "about the right amount" in state taxes.

- The shares of state residents who think the income tax and the sales tax are “too high and need to be reduced” have dropped significantly in recent years landing at their lowest points on record since the survey began tracking these opinions in 2003.
- Few residents are familiar with the details of the budget. Most are unable to answer questions about how the state spends funds across policy areas, and significant numbers overestimate expenditures on welfare and prisons relative to other policy areas.

Higher Education

- A majority of Louisiana residents (57 percent) think the state government should be primarily responsible for funding public colleges and universities.
- Nearly two-thirds of state residents (62 percent) think institutions of higher education should have primary responsibility for deciding tuition.
- About half of residents (49 percent) oppose recent proposal would require authorization from the Louisiana Legislature to fund future increases in the cost of TOPS awards. A slightly smaller share (43 percent) supports it.

Elementary & Secondary Education

- About two-thirds of Louisiana residents (68 percent) favor increasing the number of charter schools, and just 29 percent oppose. In contrast, the public is far more divided on the issue of providing vouchers to help pay for students in struggling public schools to attend private schools. About half of Louisiana residents favor vouchers (48 percent), and half oppose (46 percent).
- Opposition to Common Core is on the rise. Support for the standards slipped slightly from 39 percent to 34 percent over the past year, and opposition grew from 51 percent to 59 percent. However, the concept of shared academic standards remains popular when stripped of the label “Common Core.” Without the offending phrase, 57 percent of Louisiana residents support the standards and just 37 percent oppose them.
- Close to half of Louisiana residents say there is too much emphasis on testing in their local public schools (46 percent), which is significantly less than recent polls have shown for the nation as a whole (64 percent).
- A majority of residents (55 percent) favor having the Louisiana Department of Education assign letter grades to public school districts based in part on student test scores. However, there is little evidence that people actually use these grades. Just one in ten (11 percent) could correctly identify the grade issued to their district.
- The public’s chief concerns about public schools have little direct connection to these recent reforms. Nearly one in four Louisiana residents believe limited funding and teacher pay is the biggest problem the schools face (22 percent). Another 14 percent believe student safety and discipline are the biggest problem.

- Although Louisiana residents give low ratings to the state's public schools overall, they are much more positive about the public schools in their local communities. Just 26 percent of respondents assign a grade of A or B to *Louisiana's public schools overall*, but about half (49 percent) assign a grade of A or B to *the public schools in your local community*. Parents of public school students have especially positive views of their local schools: 60 percent grade their local public schools with an A or B.

Poverty & Economic Inequality

- Most Louisiana residents (58 percent) think the economic system in the United States unfairly favors the wealthy. Only 38 percent think the economic system is generally fair to most Americans.
- The public is much more divided over government policies to redistribute from the wealthy to the poor. A majority of Democrats (67 percent) say that raising taxes on wealthy people and corporations to expand programs for the poor would do more to reduce poverty than lowering taxes on wealthy people and corporations to encourage investment and economic growth. The majority of Republicans (61 percent) believe lowering taxes on wealthy people and corporations will do more to reduce poverty than raising taxes and using the revenue to fund programs for the poor.
- More Louisiana residents say being rich has to do with *having advantages in life that others do not have* than say being rich has to do with working harder than most people. However, they are also more likely to say that being poor results from *a lack of effort* than to say being poor results from circumstances beyond a person's control.
- Overall, 76 percent of Louisiana residents favor raising the minimum wage to \$8.50 an hour. Support is even higher among Democrats and Independents (88 percent and 83 percent respectively), but most Republicans (59 percent) also want to raise the minimum wage.

Government Transparency

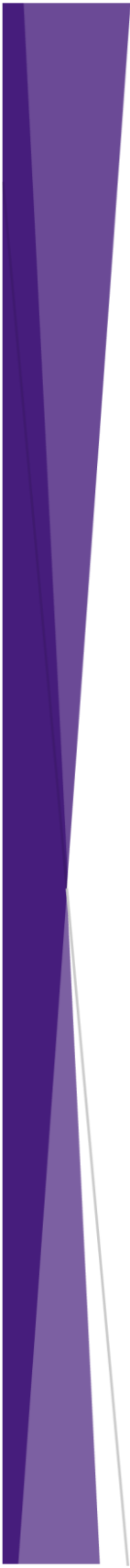
- When asked how much of the time they think they can trust the state government of Louisiana to do what is right, very few respondents to the survey said "just about always" (2 percent) or "most of the time" (16 percent). Most (60 percent) said "some of the time" and about one-in-five said "never."
- Overall, there is broad support for the idea of transparency and access. Nearly all Louisiana residents (95 percent) *agree* with the statement that "Every citizen should have complete access to information about their state government." A majority (56 percent) *disagree* with the statement that "Sometimes state officials are justified in keeping government information from the public."
- Yet, the public expresses more support for transparency in principle than in practice – or, at least, depending on the specific kind of government records at issue. While 82 percent agree that records about state incentives provided to businesses for economic development should be open to the public, just half believe the public should have access to the governor's calendar and schedule.

Social Issues

- Opponents of same sex marriage continue to edge out supporters in the state (53 percent to 41 percent), a division unchanged from a year ago before the U.S. Supreme Court ruling.
- About half of residents (52 percent) believe a business providing wedding services, such as catering or flowers, should be allowed to refuse services to same sex couples for religious reasons, and 41 percent believe they should be required to provide those services as they would to all customers.
- Louisiana residents are generally more opposed to abortion than are Americans as a whole. In Louisiana a majority (55 percent) think abortions should be *illegal* in all or most cases, while just 40 percent think it should be *legal* in all or most cases – nearly the mirror opposite of what national surveys show. While a large majority support some restrictions on access to abortion (82 percent), a relatively small share (26 percent) think it should be illegal in all cases.
- Roughly two-thirds of Louisiana residents (68 percent) oppose allowing refugees from the conflict in Syria to settle in Louisiana. Only 24 percent favor having Syrian refugees settle in Louisiana.
- Just over one-third of Louisiana residents (36 percent) favor a statewide ban on assault weapons, most (61 percent) oppose such a ban. However, Louisiana residents are more supportive of gun control when asked a broader question about stricter statewide restrictions on access to firearms. A majority (55 percent) favor more restrictions.
- Nearly three-fourths of Louisiana residents (73 percent) oppose removing monuments to people who fought on the side of the Confederacy during the Civil War from public spaces. About half of Louisiana residents (49 percent) favor the state issuing license plates that contain the image of the confederate battle flag when requested by individual drivers, and 44 percent oppose the practice.

Party Conflict and Compromise

- Louisiana residents as a whole have a mixed view of political compromise, with 49 percent preferring elected leaders to work with the other side and 45 percent preferring their leaders to stand up for their positions. The parties are split – a majority of Democrats (55 percent) would accept some policies they do not like in order to get things done in state government, while a majority of Republicans (52 percent) would prefer their leaders to stick to their positions even if little gets done.
- Ideological differences underlie, in part, views on compromise. Republicans tilt further to the right than Democrats tilt to the left: 42 percent of Democrats are liberal and 69 percent of Republicans are conservative. Forty-nine percent of Democrats are moderate or conservative, but just 27 percent of Republicans are moderate or liberal.
- The *perceived* ideological gap may be larger than the *actual* gap. Democrats see the Republican Party in Louisiana as more conservative than Republicans see themselves. Likewise, Republicans see the Democratic Party in Louisiana as more liberal than



Democrats see themselves. Yet, for most issues, the majority of Democrats and the majority of Republicans do not take opposing positions.

- Beyond ideology, the parties are divided by mutual dislike. Nearly nine in ten Republicans (87 percent) have unfavorable opinions of the Democratic Party in Louisiana, including 40 percent with a very unfavorable opinion. In contrast, two-thirds of Democrats (67 percent) have an unfavorable opinion of the Republican Party in the state, including 31 percent with a very unfavorable opinion.
- Republicans like the Republican Party in Louisiana (81 percent favorable) more than they like their party nationally (74 percent favorable). But Democrats like the Democratic Party nationally (79 percent favorable) more than they like their state party (66 percent favorable).

The *2016 Louisiana Survey* was administered over the telephone from February 1st to February 26th to both landline and cell phone respondents. The project includes a representative sample of 1,001 adult Louisiana residents. The total sample has a margin of error of +/- 3.1 percentage points.

The *2016 Louisiana Survey* are available at www.pprllsu.com.

1. State of the State

As Louisiana's lawmakers conduct the 2016 Regular Session, the public is in a historically grim mood. The *2016 Louisiana Survey*, a project of the Reilly Center for Media and Public Affairs at LSU's Manship School of Mass Communication, shows that Louisiana residents are disgruntled with the direction of the state, increasingly dismayed with economic conditions, and have little confidence in government to solve the state's most important problems.

Most Say State Heading in Wrong Direction

More Louisiana residents think the state is heading in the wrong direction than at any point since the *Louisiana Survey* began tracking opinion in 2003 (Figure 1.1). Nearly two thirds of Louisiana residents (63 percent) think the state is heading in the wrong direction. Only 27 percent think Louisiana is heading in the right direction.

A year ago, respondents to the *2015 Louisiana Survey* split evenly over the direction of the state:

44 percent saying it was heading in the right direction and 45 percent saying it was heading in the wrong direction. The public mood then soured over the remaining months of 2015 – a trend captured in polls from the summer and fall.

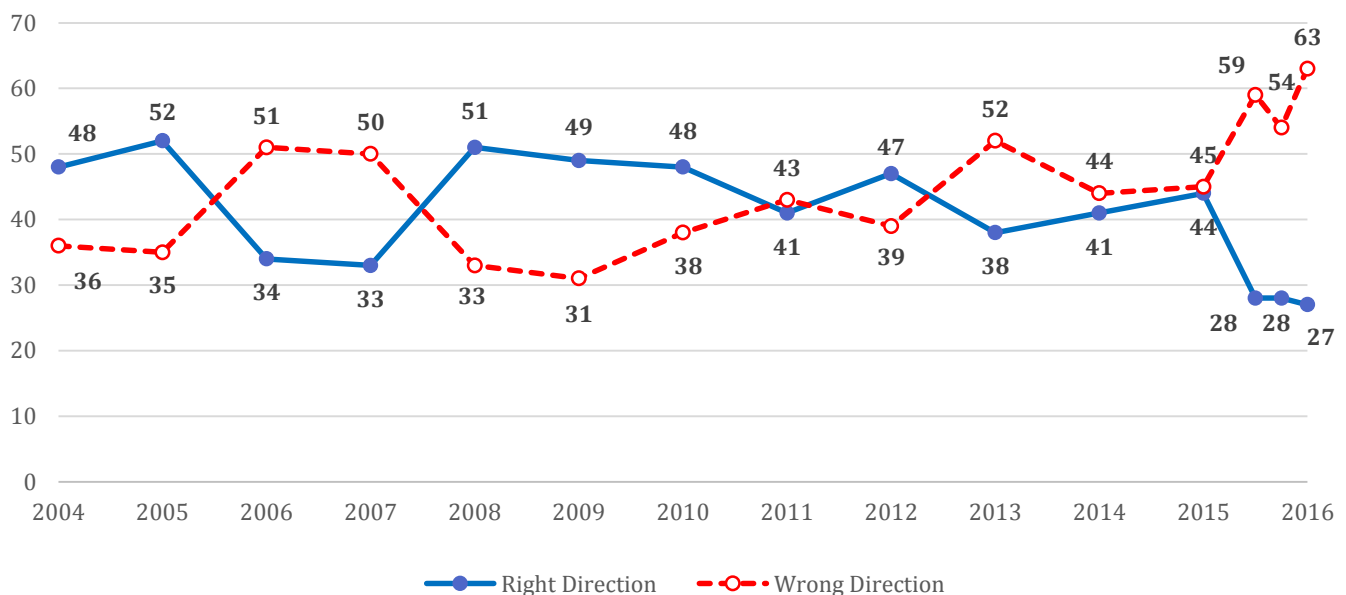
Although the public mood darkened well before he took office, the shift nevertheless leaves Gov. John Bel Edwards facing an unprecedented challenge. In recent years, the public has tended to be most optimistic when new governors take office. For example, about half of Louisiana residents felt the state was heading in the right direction early in Gov. Blanco's administration, but this share fell to about a third by the end of her term in office. The share rose again to half at the start of the Jindal Administration, but fell to little more than a quarter by his final months in office. The new administration, however, has not had the benefit of a comparable bounce in mood.

Republicans Soured Most on Direction of State

Attitudes about the direction of the state are, in part, a reflection of political allegiances. A year ago, when a Republican governor held office, Republicans were more optimistic about the

Figure 1.1: Largest Share on Record Think State Heading in Wrong Direction

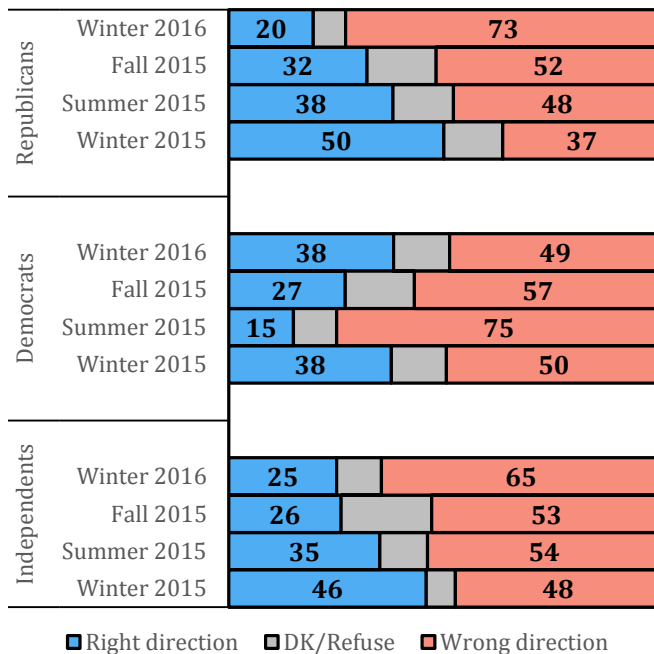
Percent who say state heading in right/wrong direction



SOURCE: 2004 - 2016 Louisiana Survey, Summer 2015 Election Survey, and Fall 2015 Election Survey

Figure 1.2: Republicans Soured Most on Direction of State

Percent who say state heading in right/wrong direction



SOURCE: 2015 & 2016 Louisiana Survey, Summer 2015 Election Survey, and Fall 2015 Election Survey

direction of the state than Democrats. Today, with a Democrat as governor, the pattern is reversed (Figure 1.2).

Republican mood began turning even while Gov. Jindal still held office. From early 2015 through the fall, the share of Republicans who felt the state was heading in the wrong direction rose by 15 percentage points, from 37 to 52 percent. Yet, this share jumped an additional 21 percentage points between the fall of 2015 and the 2016 Louisiana Survey, a period that coincides with the election and inauguration of Gov. Edwards.

Likewise, Democrats' shift in mood over the second half of 2015 is nearly the mirror image of Republicans'. Despite their softening mood, Democrats are no more positive today than they were a year ago.

Residents More Negative about State Economy than about Own Finances

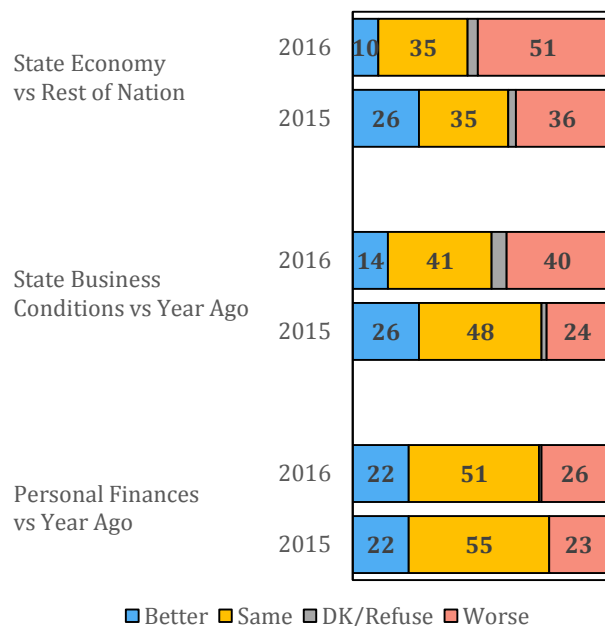
In addition to political leanings, mood about the direction of the state also reflects actual conditions in the state, particularly economic conditions. Already reserved in their view of the state's economy a year ago, residents are even more dismayed today.

A majority of Louisiana residents (51 percent) now says the state's economy lags behind the nation's economy; only ten percent think it compares favorably. Last year, a smaller plurality (36 percent) felt the state's economy was doing worse than the economy of the nation as a whole, and 26 percent felt it was outperforming the country (Figure 1.3).

Each year, the *Louisiana Survey* asks respondents if they think the state's business conditions and their own personal finances have improved or worsened over the previous year. In the 2015 survey, the share who felt that state business conditions had improved (26 percent) was

Figure 1.3: Pessimism about State Economy

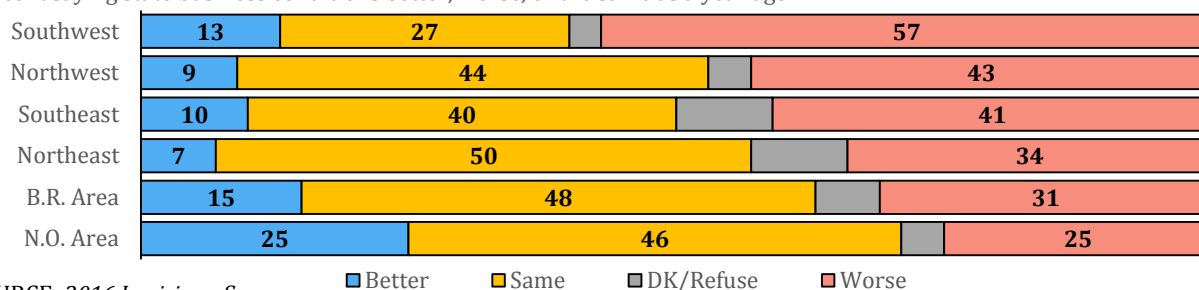
Percent saying ___ better, worse, or the same



SOURCE: 2016 Louisiana Survey

Figure 1.4: Residents in Southwest See Worst Economic Declines

Percent saying state business conditions better, worse, or the same as a year ago



SOURCE: 2016 Louisiana Survey

roughly equivalent to the share that said conditions had worsened (24 percent). This year, 40 percent say that state business conditions are worse, and just 14 percent think they are better.

However, residents' perceptions of their own financial health have not followed the same path. Half (51 percent) say their own financial situation is the same as a year ago, while just 22 percent and 26 percent say their finances have improved or worsened respectively. Hardly an overwhelming vote of confidence, these perceptions of personal economic health are nevertheless more positive than perceptions of the state's economic health.

There is significant variation in economic perceptions across regions of the state. Residents of southwest Louisiana are, by far, the most likely to say business conditions are worse (Figure 1.4).

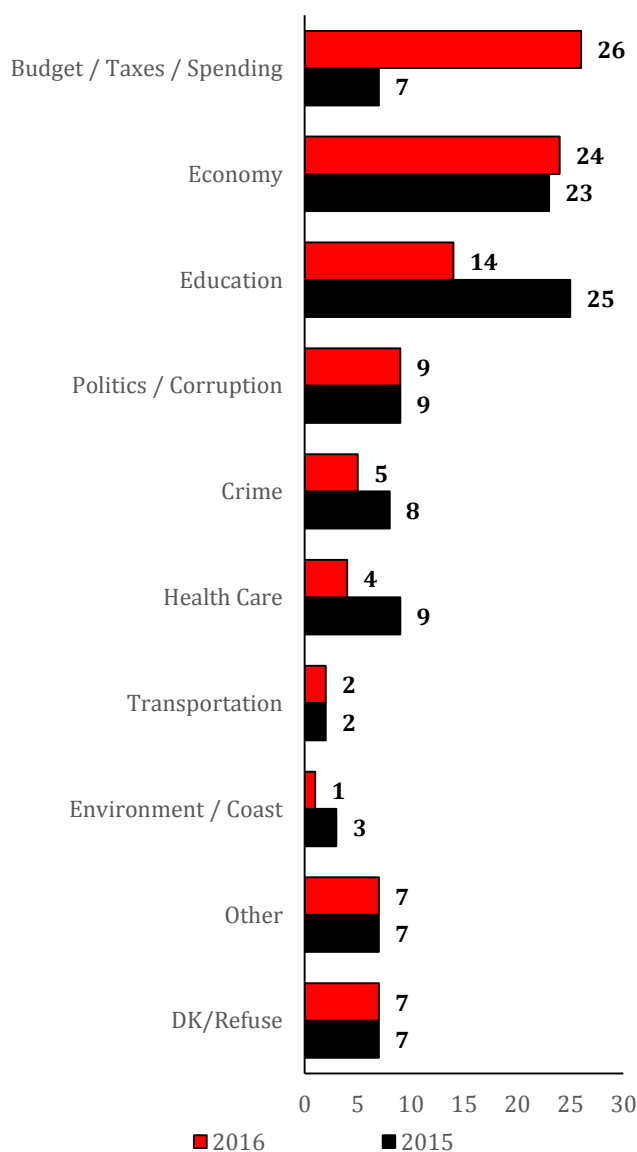
Budget Tops List of Most Important Problems

More than one in four residents say that the budget (including comments about state revenue or expenditures) is the most important problem the state faces today (Figure 1.5). The result is striking because the economy and education tended to dominate the public's list of concerns in past years.

A year ago, just seven percent named the budget as the most important problem, lagging well behind education (25 percent) and the economy (23 percent). Concern about the economy has remained high, named as the most

Figure 1.5: Budget Soars to Top Priority

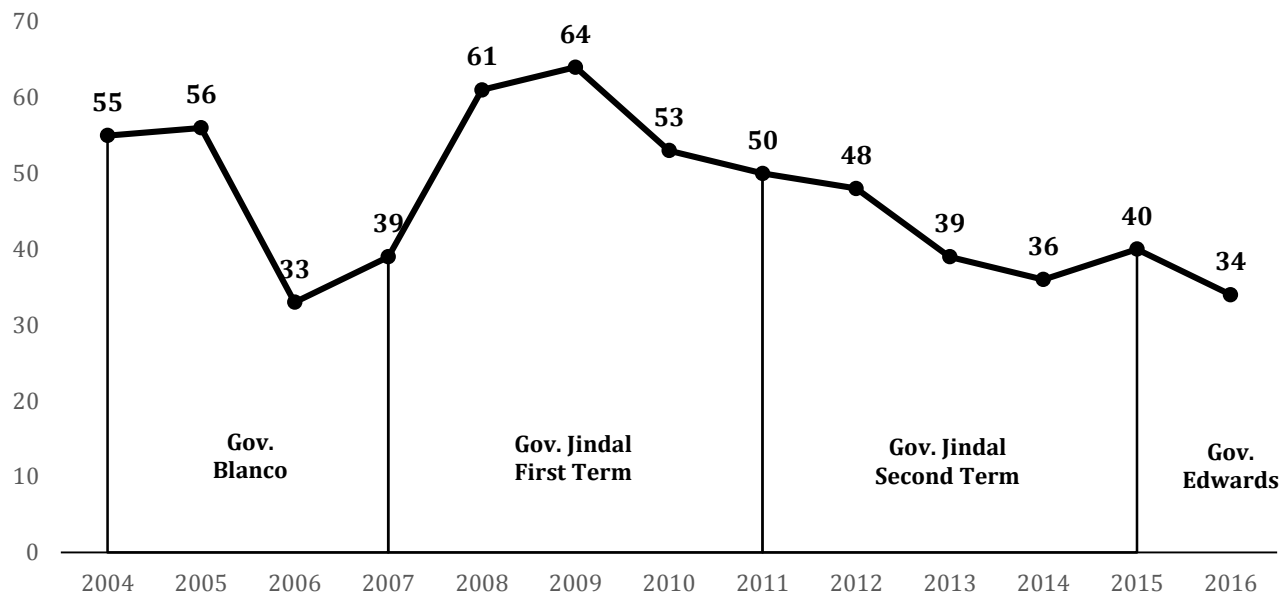
Percent naming each as the state's most important problem



SOURCE: 2015 & 2016 Louisiana Survey

Figure 1.6: Confidence That State Can Solve Important Problems Remains Low

Percent saying "very" or "somewhat" confident in state government to effectively address state's most important problem



SOURCE: 2003 - 2016 Louisiana Survey

important problem by 25 percent of respondents. The share naming education has dropped to 14 percent.

Confidence in Government to Solve Important Problems Remains Low

Like the public's mood about the direction of the state, the public's confidence that Louisiana's government will effectively deal with the most pressing problems remains low. Confidence in state government has steadily eroded since 2009. While the decline appeared to taper off somewhat last year, it has slipped again this year (Figure 1.6). Today, only about one in three respondents (34 percent) say they are 'very confident' or 'somewhat confident' in state government's ability to deal with the most pressing problems.

Also like mood about the state generally, there is a substantial partisan gap in confidence. Just over half of Democrats (51 percent) are either 'very confident' or 'somewhat confident' in state government. On the other side of the aisle, 73 percent of Republicans are either 'not very confident' or 'not at all confident.' This is a near

mirror image of last year when 50 percent of Republicans were 'very confident' or 'somewhat confident,' and 66 percent of Democrats were 'not very confident' or 'not at all confident.'

Higher Education Earns Top Grades, Economic Development Efforts Slide

For more than a decade the *Louisiana Survey* has asked respondents to grade quality of life in the state as well as the quality of specific public services. With the exception of economic development efforts, the 2016 grades remain similar to the 2015 grades. As in previous years, respondents again give the highest marks to the state's colleges and universities among the seven items they were asked to grade on the 2016 *Louisiana Survey* (Figure 1.7). A majority of respondents (59 percent) give the state's public colleges and universities an A or B grade. It is the only item to receive a majority of A or B grades.

Once again, the lowest grades are given to transportation infrastructure, for which about two thirds (65 percent) assign a D or F grade.

Evaluations of the state economic development efforts to attract, recruit, and create jobs have declined since last year. The share of A and B grades fell from 38 percent to 25 percent, while the share of D and F grades rose from 23 percent to 36 percent. As a result, evaluations of state economic development efforts are now worse than evaluations of the quality of health care and public schools in the state.

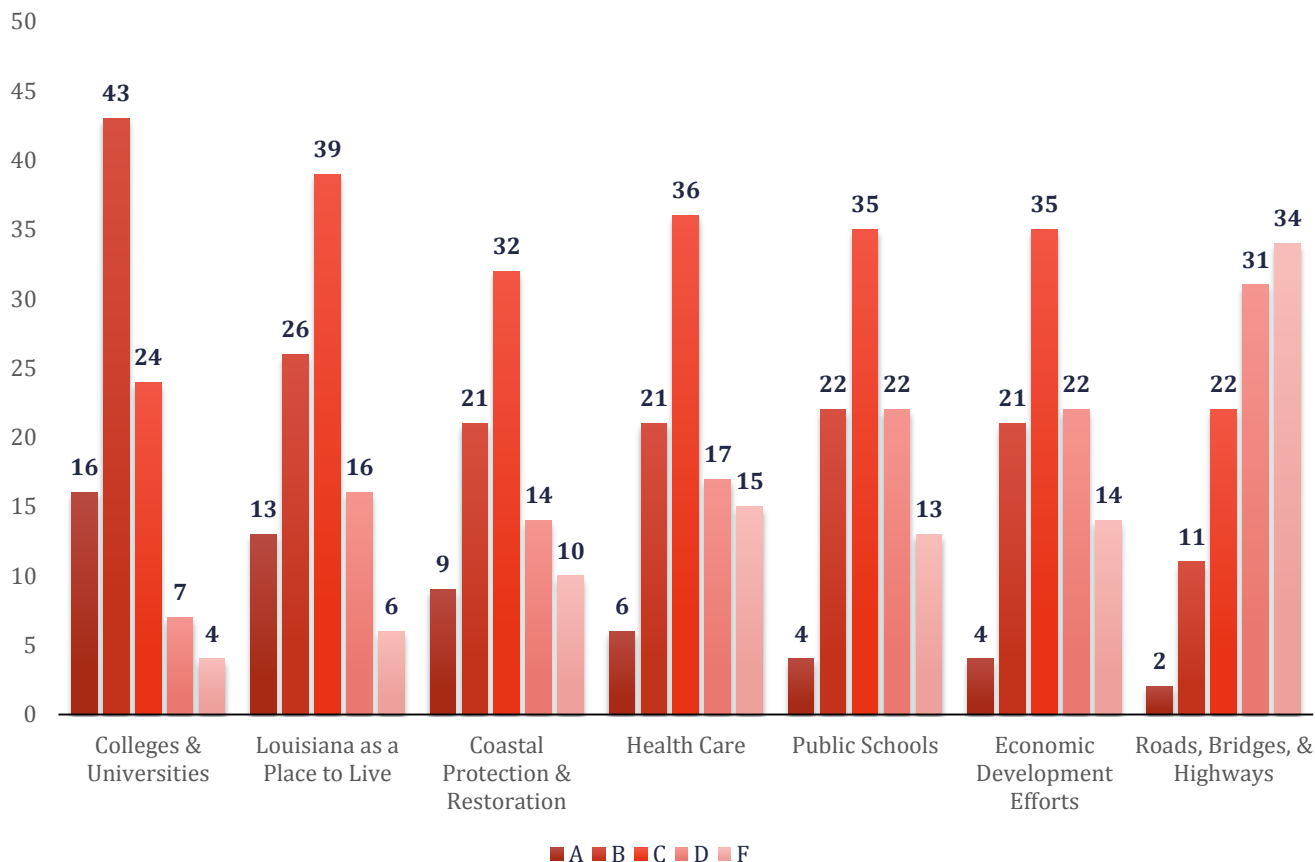
It is also worth reiterating that overall evaluations of Louisiana as a place to live have not changed since 2015. Despite a souring public mood, growing pessimism about the economy, and declining confidence in state government during the past year, the public does not find the overall quality of life in Louisiana any worse today. Just as in 2015, about two fifths of

residents continue to give Louisiana a grade of A or B as a place to live.

Evaluations of state economic development efforts to attract, recruit, and create jobs have declined since last year.

Figure 1.7: Higher Education Gets Highest Grades, Transportation Lowest

Percent assigning each grade to each feature of the state



NOTE: Darker columns represent higher grades on A to F scale. Items sorted left to right by combined percent A & B grades.

SOURCE: 2016 Louisiana Survey

2. State Finance

For next year's \$800 million budget hole, Louisiana lawmakers must consider whether to raise additional revenue or make further cuts, but what do Louisiana voters want? The *2016 Louisiana Survey*, a project of the Reilly Center for Media and Public Affairs at LSU's Manship School of Mass Communication, shows there is more support for higher taxes to fund key services than for spending cuts.

Public Would Rather Pay Higher Taxes than Cut Spending for Education

A large share of the public (51 percent) wants the state to spend more on elementary and secondary education and are *willing to pay more taxes* for it. Similar shares of the public support

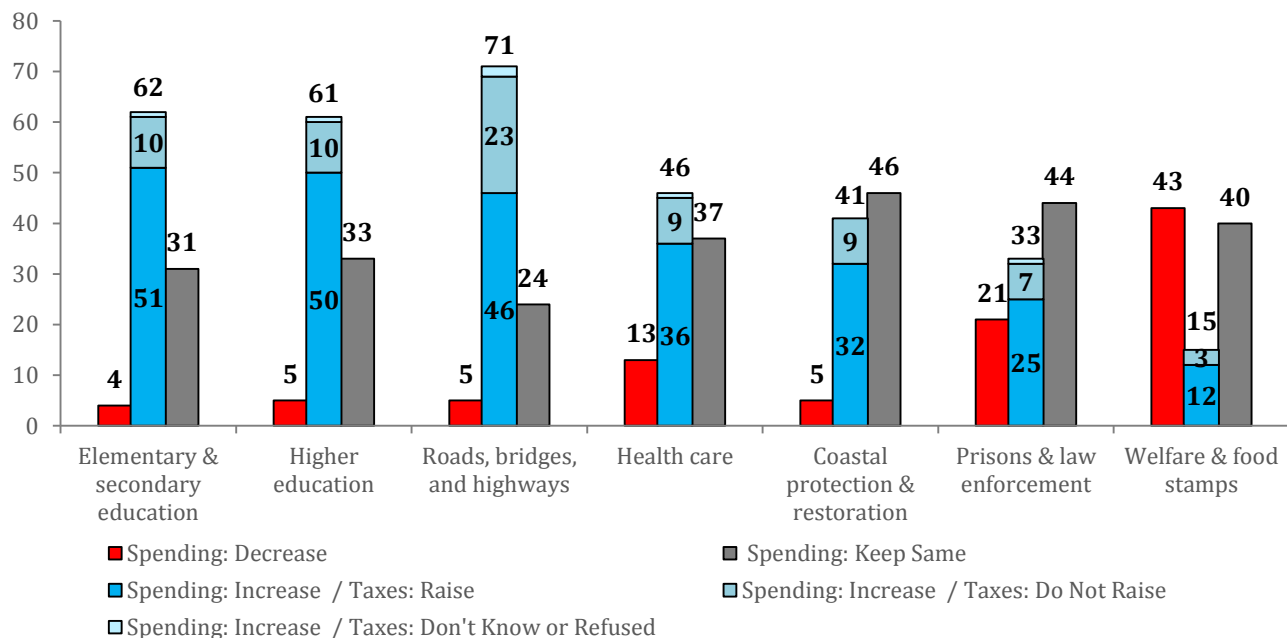
tax increases to fund higher education (50 percent) and transportation infrastructure (46 percent).

Respondents answered a series of questions gauging their spending preferences across six policy areas. Those individuals who favored more spending in a particular area were then faced with an explicit tradeoff: Would they be willing to pay more in taxes in order to increase spending in this area? Combined responses from the initial and follow up questions appear in Figure 2.1.

The share of Louisiana residents who are willing to pay higher taxes for elementary and secondary education is more than 13 times bigger than the share favoring spending cuts in this area. Ten times as many would rather raise taxes for higher education than cut spending for it. Nine times as many favor higher taxes to pay for roads, bridges, and highways than support cuts to transportation

Figure 2.1: More Support for Raising Taxes to Fund Programs than for Spending Cuts to Programs

Percent saying state spending for ____ should be increased, decreased, or kept the same and whether willing to pay more in taxes to fund increases.

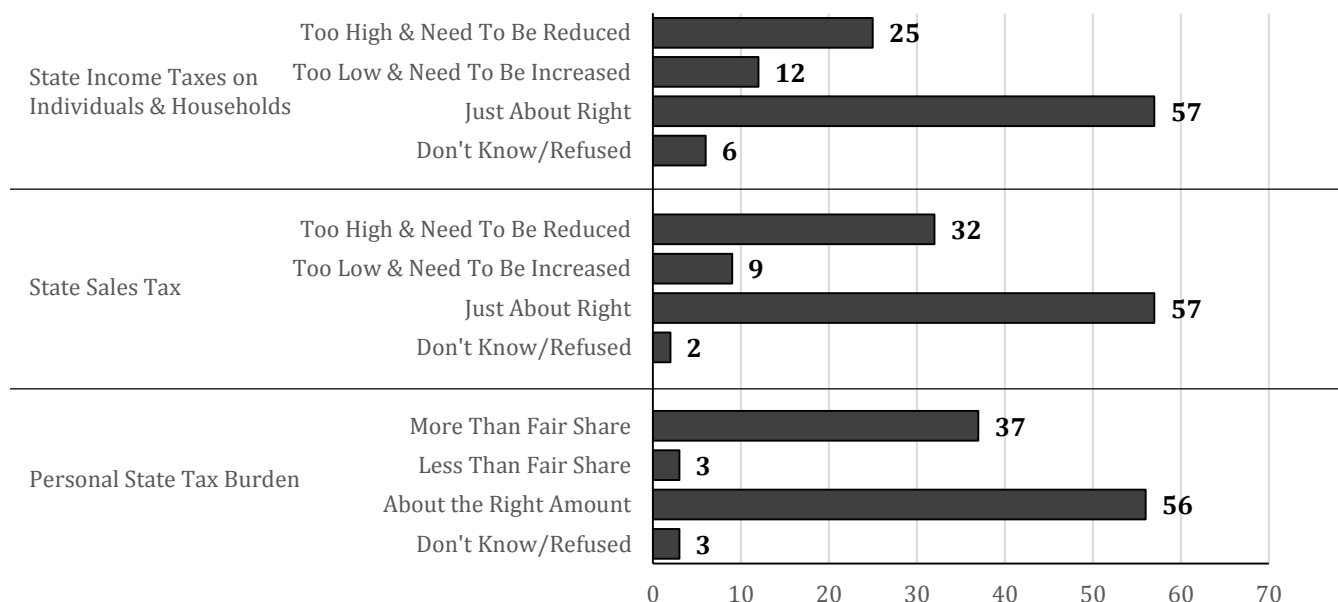


NOTE: Numbers above bars are responses to an initial question about spending preferences. Numbers within the blue bars are the percent of the total sample who answered they would/would not be willing to pay higher taxes to fund spending increases when asked a follow up question about how to fund increased spending.

SOURCE: 2016 Louisiana Survey

Figure 2.2: When Asked Only About Taxes, Public Satisfied with Status Quo

Percent saying ____ when asked tax questions.



SOURCE: 2016 Louisiana Survey

spending. The share favoring higher taxes to pay for health care outnumber those backing health care cuts by two and half times.

The value of asking about preferences for *specific* government expenditures and following up with a question about taxes to fund those expenditures is that it forces respondents to think in terms of the same sort of tradeoffs that lawmakers face. When faced with a budget deficit, would they favor less spending or more revenue? Without framing these issues in terms of this fundamental tradeoff, survey respondents will typically say they want both more spending and lower taxes (see, for example, the [2015 Louisiana Survey](#)).

Fewer People Think Taxes Too High

Residents' willingness to pay higher taxes is strongly tied to what they believe those taxes will fund. When asked solely about state taxes and their personal tax burdens in isolation from the expenditure programs they support, most are satisfied with current taxation levels (Figure 2.2). A majority of Louisiana residents say that the state sales and income taxes are "just about right"

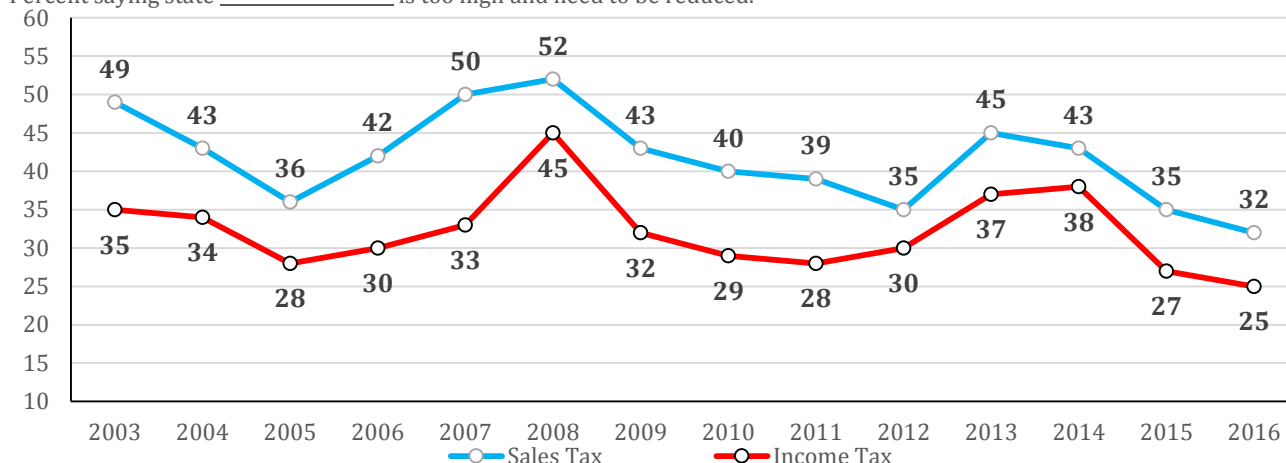
(57 percent in each case). A similar share (56 percent) feel they currently pay the right amount in taxes.

It is important to remember, however, that these questions ask respondents about overall tax levels without drawing out the tradeoff between preferences for spending and preferences for revenue.

The share of Louisiana residents who think the sales tax is "too high and should be reduced" has fallen steadily from 45 percent in 2013 to 32 percent this year (Figure 2.3). Opinions of the state's income tax follow the same trend, falling by nearly half from a peak of 45 percent in 2008 to 25 percent today. The shares are at their lowest point since the *Louisiana Survey* began tracking them in 2003.

Figure 2.3: Share of Public Saying Taxes Too High Has Declined in Recent Years

Percent saying state _____ is too high and need to be reduced.



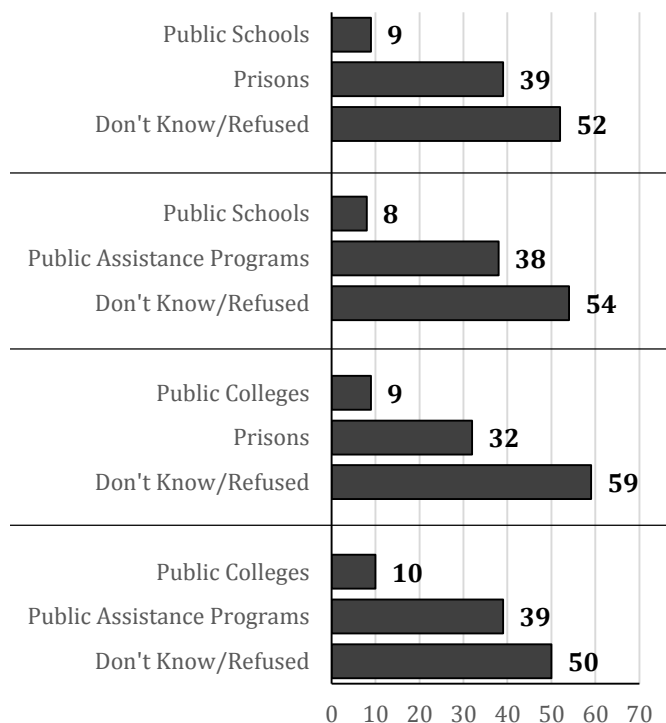
SOURCE: 2003-2016 Louisiana Surveys

There is a Knowledge Deficit When It Comes to Budget Issues

Large swaths of the public are uninformed – even *misinformed* – about where the state government spends its money. Each respondent to the 2016 Louisiana Survey was presented with one of four possible pairs of expenditure areas in the state budget and asked to select the area where they thought the most money is spent. Anywhere from 50 to 59 percent could not answer the question. Among those who ventured a guess, larger shares consistently chose prisons and welfare over public schools and public colleges and universities (Figure 2.4). In actuality, corrections and public assistance programs, like welfare, make up relatively small shares of total state expenditures – three percent and under one percent respectively – less than the share spent for education, health care, transportation, and other areas.¹ The belief that state government spends more on corrections and welfare than it actually does may underlie the relatively high support for spending cuts to these programs seen in Figure 2.1.

Figure 2.4: Public Overestimates Spending on Public Assistance and Prisons

Percent saying state spends more to fund ____ when asked to choose between two expenditure areas.



SOURCE: 2016 Louisiana Survey

¹ Expenditure data are from the *State Expenditure Report 2013-2015* of the National Association of State Budget Officers.

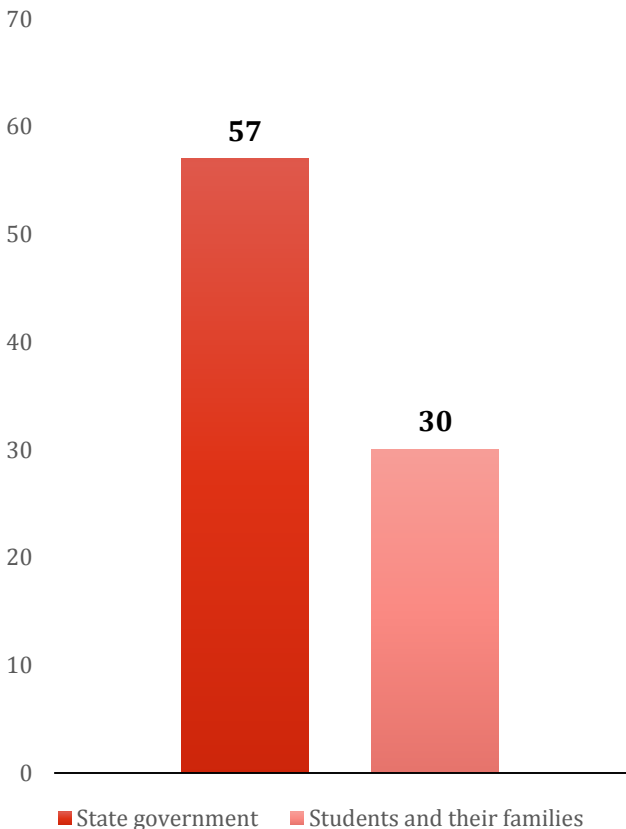
3. Higher Education

Most Want State To Bear Primary Responsibility for Funding Higher Education

A majority of Louisiana residents (57 percent) think the state government should be primarily responsible for funding public colleges and universities. In contrast, only 30 percent think the students enrolled at these institutions and their families should bear the primary responsibility for funding higher education in Louisiana (Figure 3.1).

Figure 3.1: Most Want State Government to Bear Greater Share of Higher Education Funding

Percent saying ___ should be primarily responsible for funding Louisiana's public colleges and universities



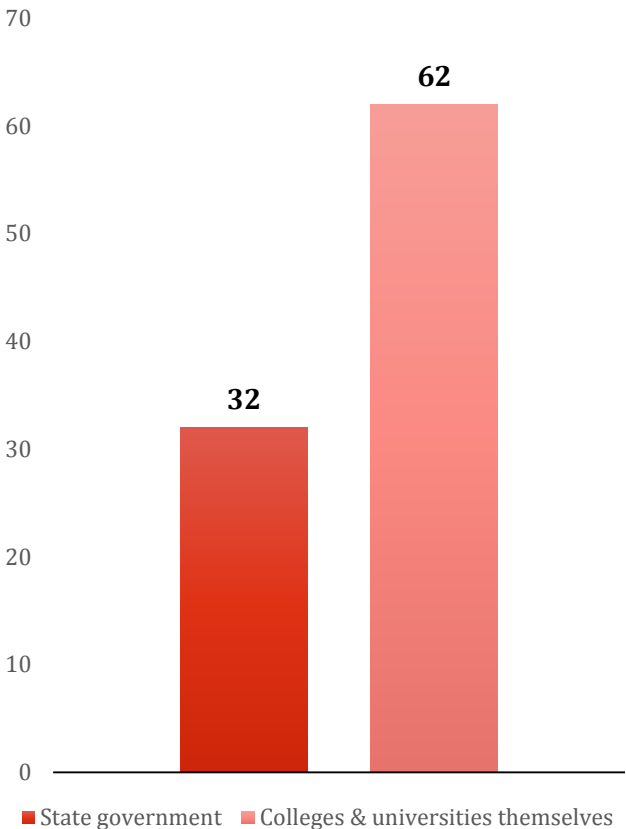
SOURCE: 2016 Louisiana Survey

Public Thinks State Should give Tuition Control to Colleges and Universities

Under current law, Louisiana's public colleges and universities must get legislative approval for increases in tuition under most circumstances. Nearly two-thirds of state residents (62 percent), however, think institutions of higher education should have primary responsibility for deciding tuition (Figure 3.2).

Figure 3.2: Most Want Higher Education Institutions to Control Own Tuition

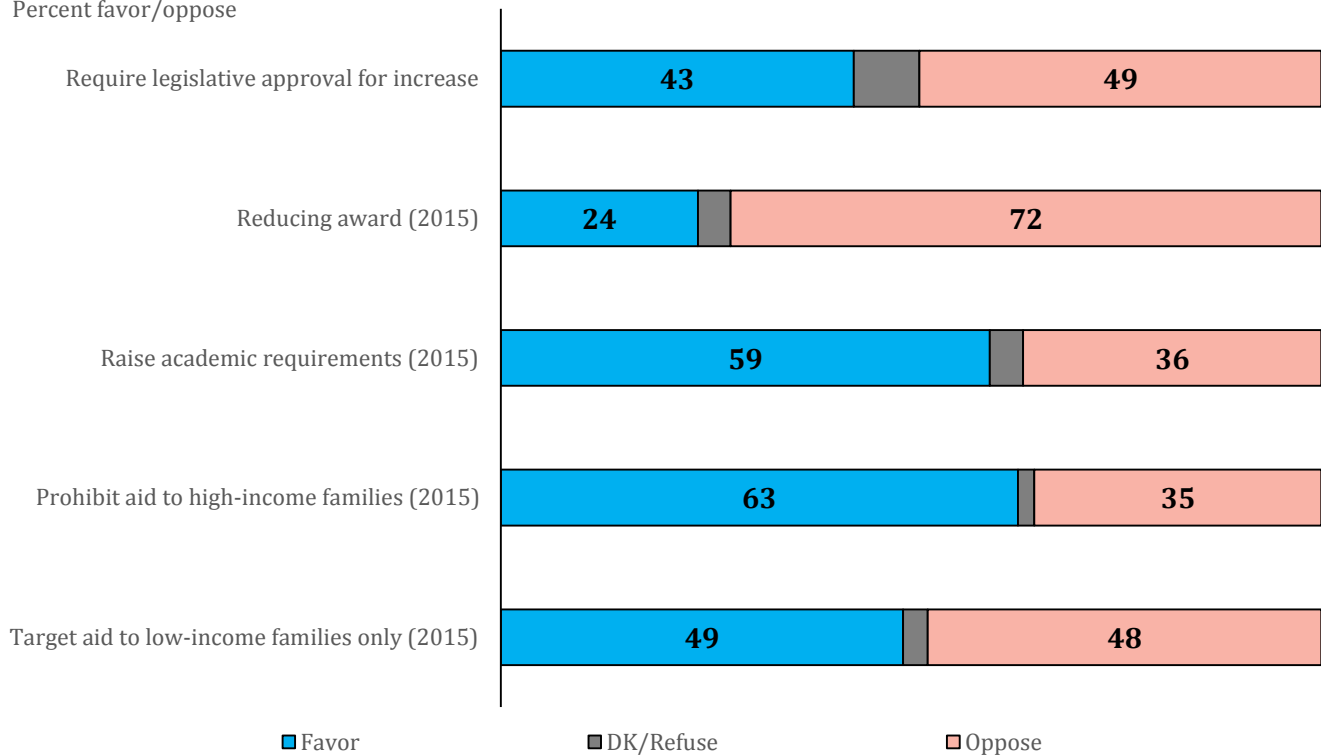
Percent saying ___ should be primarily responsible for deciding how much tuition should cost at Louisiana's public colleges and universities



SOURCE: 2016 Louisiana Survey

Figure 3.3: Mixed Opinion on Recent Proposal to Require Legislative Approval for Funding Future TOPS Cost Increases

Percent favor/oppose



NOTE: In 2015 survey one half of respondents was asked about TOPS for low-income families, while the other half was asked about TOPS for high-income families.

SOURCE: 2015 & 2016 Louisiana Surveys

Mixed Opinions on Proposal to Require Legislative Approval to Fund Future Cost Increases for TOPS Program

As in previous years, the public is somewhat skeptical of proposed changes to the Taylor Opportunity Program for Students (TOPS), the state's main tuition assistance program for higher education. A recent proposal would require authorization from the Louisiana Legislature to fund future increases in the cost of TOPS awards. About half of residents (49 percent) oppose this proposal (Figure 3.3). A slightly smaller share (43 percent) supports it.

For comparison, Figure 3.3 also displays opinion on four other proposed changes to TOPS included on last year's Louisiana Survey. The most recent

proposal is less popular than reforms that would tie eligibility to family income or raise academic standards. However, it is more popular than reducing the amount of the award.

4. Elementary & Secondary Education

Louisiana has seen a flurry of reforms to public schools in recent years: Expansion of choice through charter schools and vouchers; changes in academic standards, including adoption (then review) of the Common Core State Standards; and renewed emphasis on standardized tests in evaluations of schools and teachers. Supporters of these policies argue they promote strong academic growth in a state that has long lagged in national student achievement ratings. Opponents, however, contend the policies threaten the quality of public schools.

Several bills filed in the current legislative session take aim at these and similar policies. As lawmakers prepare to revisit many of these reforms in a new administration, how does the public assess this changing landscape for public education in Louisiana?

The 2016 *Louisiana Survey*, a project of the Reilly Center for Media & Public Affairs at LSU's Manship School of Mass Communication, shows that the public has a mixed view of these school reforms. Louisiana residents support charter schools and assigning letter grades to school

districts based on student test scores, but they are more skeptical of vouchers and the Common Core.

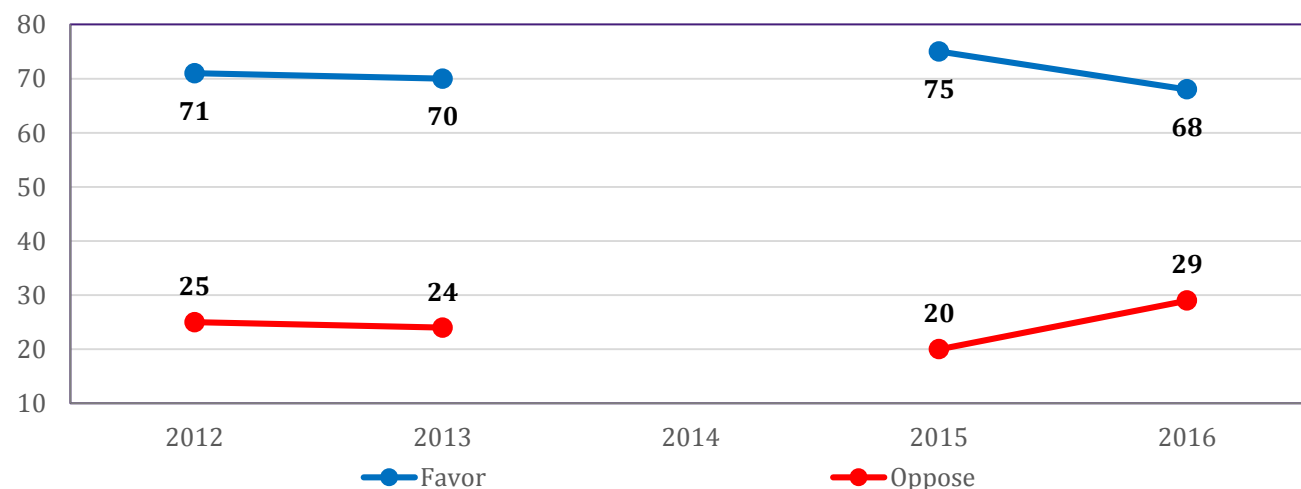
Support for Charter Schools Remains Strong, More Skepticism about Vouchers

Over the past several years, state lawmakers and education officials have expanded school choice in Louisiana. In the spring of 2005, there were little more than a handful of charter schools operating in the state. Today, charter schools number well over 100. While most of these operate in New Orleans, these schools have expanded to other areas of the state as well. For the 2015-2016 school year, 20 of Louisiana's parishes had at least one charter school. Additionally, during the Jindal Administration, lawmakers launched a statewide voucher program that provides parents of children enrolled in a public school assigned a C, D, or F grade by the Louisiana Department of Education public dollars in the form of a scholarship to pay the cost of attending private school.

About two-thirds of Louisiana residents (68 percent) favor increasing the number of charter schools, despite a modest slip from 75 percent a

Figure 4.1: Despite Slight Dip, Support for Charters Remains Strong

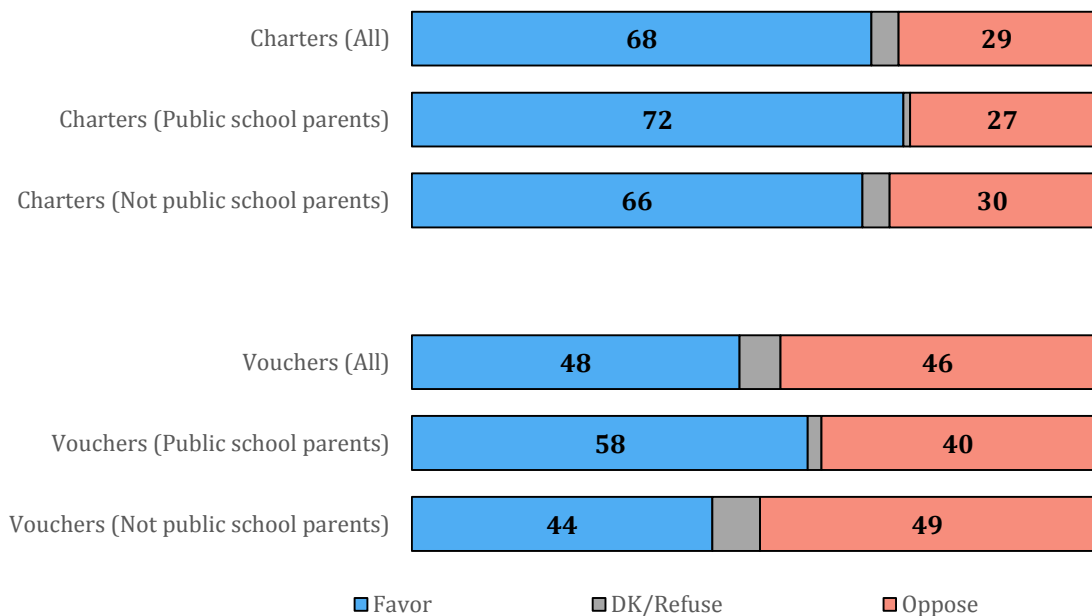
Percent who favor/oppose opening more charter schools



SOURCE: 2012 - 2013, 2015 - 2016 Louisiana Surveys

Figure 4.2: Majority Support for Charters but not Vouchers

Percent favor or oppose



SOURCE: 2016 Louisiana Survey

year ago (Figure 4.1). Opposition to charter schools rose from 20% in 2015 to 29% this year.

In contrast, the public is far more divided on the issue of providing vouchers to help pay for students in struggling public schools to attend private schools instead. About half of Louisiana residents favor vouchers (48 percent), and half oppose (46 percent).

Parents of children attending public schools are generally more attracted to both forms of school choice than residents who do not have children in public schools (Figure 4.2). Support for charters reaches 72 percent among parents of public school students. A majority of parents of public school students favor vouchers as well (58 percent), while other residents remain split (44 percent for, 49 percent against).

Opposition to Common Core Grows

After adopting the Common Core State Standards in 2010 without political fireworks, state officials have since questioned the use of the standards in the state. Last year, following more than year of heated political debate and tumultuous litigation, the Louisiana Legislature created a committee to review the standards and make recommendations to the state about which should be retained, which revised, and which eliminated.

To track opinion on the Common Core, the 2016 Louisiana Survey uses a version of a question from last year's survey: "As you may know, in the last few years states have been deciding whether or not to use the Common Core, which are standards for reading and math that are the same across the states. In the states that have these standards, they will be used to hold public schools accountable for their performance. Do you support or oppose the use of the Common Core in Louisiana?"

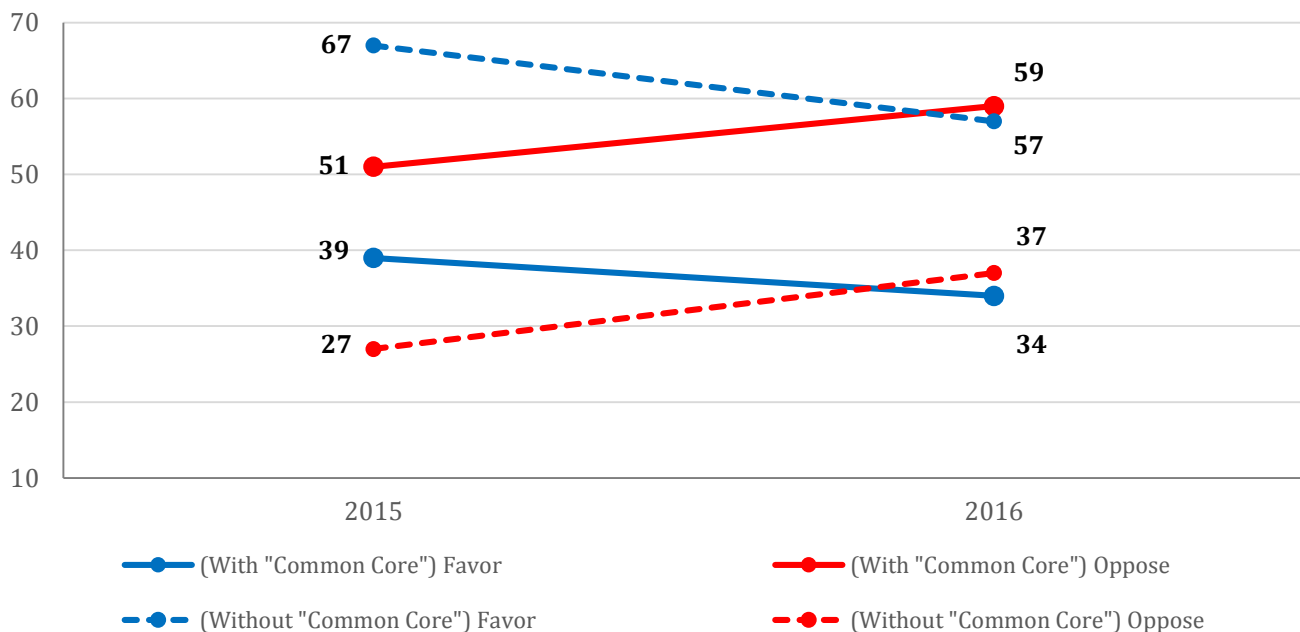
Opposition to the standards is on the rise. A year ago, 51 percent of respondents said they opposed Common Core when asked this question. Today, the share is 59 percent (Figure 4.3).

However, opposition to the standards still largely reflects the politicized rhetoric that surrounds the standards. We repeated an experiment from last year's survey to examine whether or not this rhetoric – as well as the beliefs, oftentimes erroneous, that many now have about the Common Core – shapes opinion of the standards.

The experiment involves two versions of a question about the standards. Each respondent hears only one of these two questions. The first is the version described above. The second version uses the same wording but removes all reference to the standards by name: "As you may know, in the last few years states have been deciding whether or not to use standards for reading and math that are the same across the states. In the states that have these standards, they will be used to hold public schools accountable for their

Figure 4.3: Declining Support for Common Core and Concept of Shared Standards

Percent who favor/oppose



NOTE: One half of respondents asked question with phrase "Common Core," while the other half was asked the question without that phrase.

SOURCE: 2012 - 2013, 2015 - 2016 Louisiana Surveys

performance. Do you favor or oppose the use of these standards in Louisiana?”

The experiment once again shows that the Common Core brand – and all the connotations it brings to mind – is tainted, but the concept of states using shared standards for reading and mathematics to hold schools accountable for student performance remains popular.

When the Common Core label is dropped from the question, support for the concept is at 57 percent (rather than just 34 percent when the name is used). Only 37 percent oppose the standards without the name “Common Core” (rather than 59 when the name is used).

Even so, a simple rebranding of the Common Core under a different name will not satisfy many residents. The effect of removing the “Common Core” name from the question is smaller this year than it was last year. For example, even without using the name “Common Core” opposition to shared standards is ten percentage points higher than a year ago. The shrinking difference between the two versions indicates that people are growing more skeptical of the concept of shared standards or, just as likely, more adept at recognizing the Common Core even when the name is not used.

Few Think Academic Standards for Students are Too High

There is no consensus about a need to adjust the rigor of the state’s standards for student achievement. Opinion is largely split between those who say the state’s current standards are about right (46 percent) and those who say standards are too low (37 percent). Only ten percent of state residents feel current standards are too high.

Less Pushback against Testing

In recent years, several states have seen a pushback against standardized testing. In some areas of the country this has taken the form of opt-out movements, in which parents refuse to have their children participate in standardized tests. [National polling from late 2015](#) shows that 64 percent of Americans think there is too much emphasis on testing in their local public schools.

Using an identical question as in the national survey, the *2016 Louisiana Survey* shows that 46 percent of Louisiana residents feel the same way about testing in their local public schools. This is significantly less than what national polling shows, but it remains the most common response here as well. About one-third (34 percent) feel there is about the right amount of emphasis on testing, and 12 percent say there is not enough emphasis.

Parents with children in public schools are much more likely to say there is too much emphasis on testing. Indeed, a majority of these parents (57 percent) think there is too much emphasis on testing. Among the rest of the public, only 42 percent think there is too much emphasis on testing.

Public Likes Idea of Grading Districts, but Unfamiliar with Results

Even as many Louisiana residents – especially parents of public school students – are questioning the emphasis on testing in public schools, most want the state to use these tests scores to assign letter grades to public school districts. Since the late 1990s, the Louisiana Department of Education has released summary information about how public school districts are performing based on the state’s accountability program. During the Jindal Administration, the state switched to issuing letter grades (A, B, C, D, or F) to schools and school districts. School letter grades are based almost entirely on test scores for elementary (100%) and middle schools (95%), but they comprise 50% of a high school’s letter grade. The state then assigns a letter grade to the school district based on a weighted average of school scores. Supporters claim this approach is more intuitive and useful for parents and the public when evaluating their schools and districts and the leaders who govern them.

The idea is popular among Louisiana residents: 55 percent favor these letter grades. Parents with children in public schools are just as supportive as people who do not have children in public schools (55 percent in both groups). However, they are more likely to oppose issuing these grades than people without children in public schools (45 percent among the former and 36 percent among the later).

Despite support for the letter grades, there is little evidence that the public generally – or even public school parents specifically – are familiar with the actual grades the state issues to their districts.

We asked respondents: “As you may know, each year the Louisiana Department of Education grades each local public school district in the state. To the best of your knowledge, what grade

did the state Department of Education give your local school district?”²

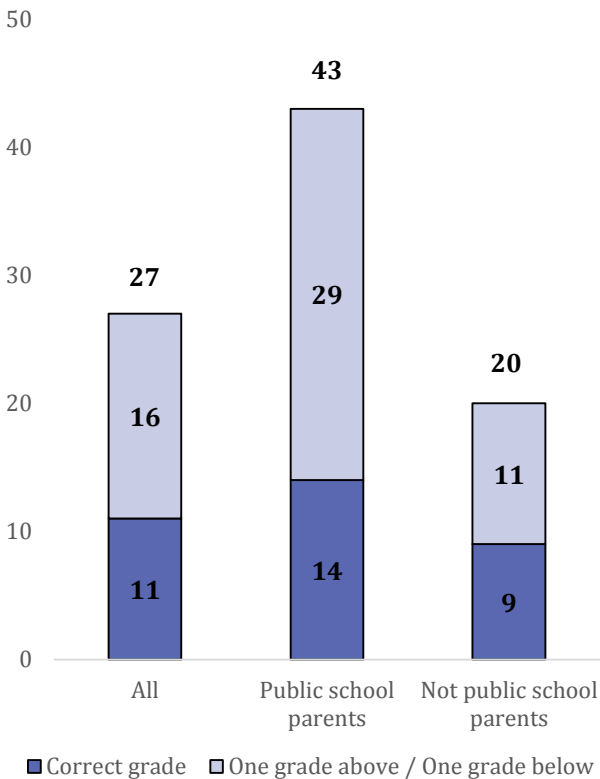
Because we can identify the parish in which respondents live (and, in the cases of parishes that include more than one school district, the cities in which they live as well), we are able to match respondents to public school districts and compare their responses to the actual grades issued to those districts by the Louisiana Department of Education.

Few Louisiana residents have any inkling about the grade their own school district received from the state (Figure 4.4). Just one in ten (11 percent) correctly identify the grade issued by the state to their district, and only 27 percent come within one grade of the correct response (identifying either the correct grade, the grade above, or the grade below).

Parents of public school students are more likely to know the letter grade (or, at least, to come close to the correct letter grade) than people without children in the public schools. About one in seven (14 percent) public school parents correctly identify their district’s grade, but 43 percent are within one grade of the correct response. In contrast, only nine percent of respondents without children in public schools identify the correct grade assigned to their school district, and just one in five (20 percent) come within one grade of the actual one assigned.

Figure 4.4: Few Know Their District's Grade

Percent who correctly name grade issued to local public school district or who come within grade of the correct response



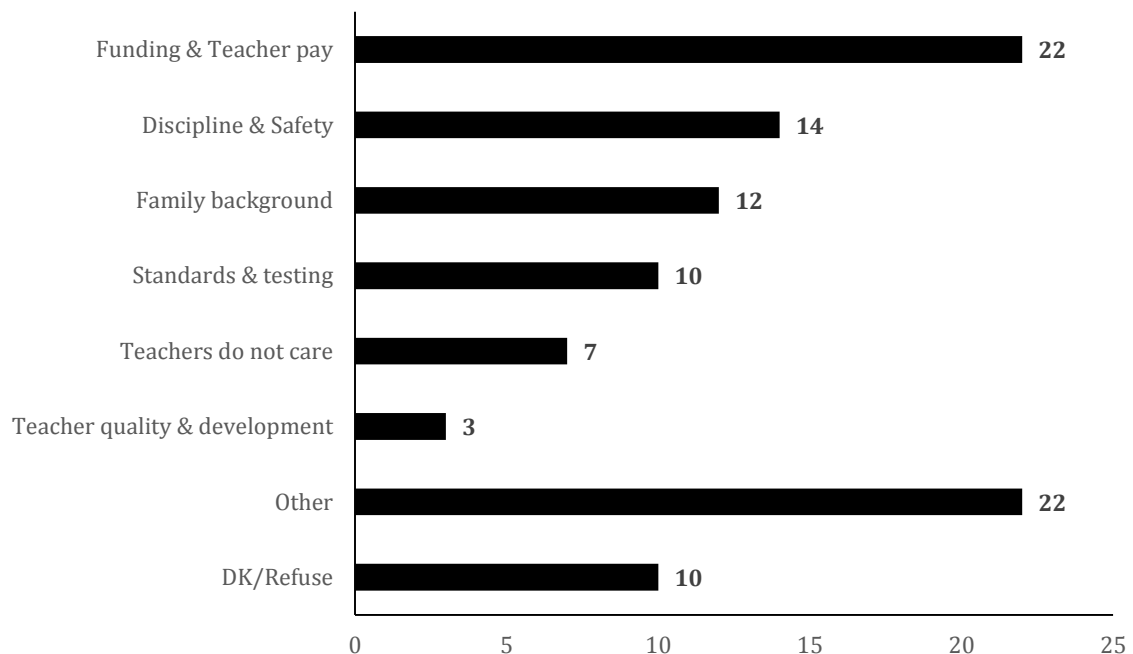
SOURCE: 2016 Louisiana Survey.

² Residents of Orleans Parish were asked two questions – one asking about the grade assigned to the local public school district and one asking about the

grade assigned to the Recovery School District-New Orleans. Results reported here are nearly identical regardless of the question used.

Figure 4.5: Funding and Discipline/Safety Top List of Concerns

Percent naming each as the biggest problem public schools in Louisiana must deal with



Note: Question is open-ended. Verbatim responses coded into categories.

SOURCE: 2016 Louisiana Survey

Funding Considered Biggest Problem, Safety & Discipline Next

Why does the public have such mixed reactions to recent school reforms? One possibility is that they do not recognize a direct connection between those policies and the problems for public schools that are of the greatest concern to them.

We asked respondents an open-ended question about the challenges facing public education in Louisiana: “In your own words, what do you think is the biggest problem that public schools in Louisiana must deal with?” Responses were coded into seven categories (Figure 4.5).

Nearly one in four (22 percent) name funding issues as the biggest problem for public schools. Another 14 percent name safety and discipline issues. Family background – including home life and socio-economic conditions – was mentioned third most frequently.

Low Evaluations for Public Schools across State, but Higher Evaluations for Public Schools in Local Community

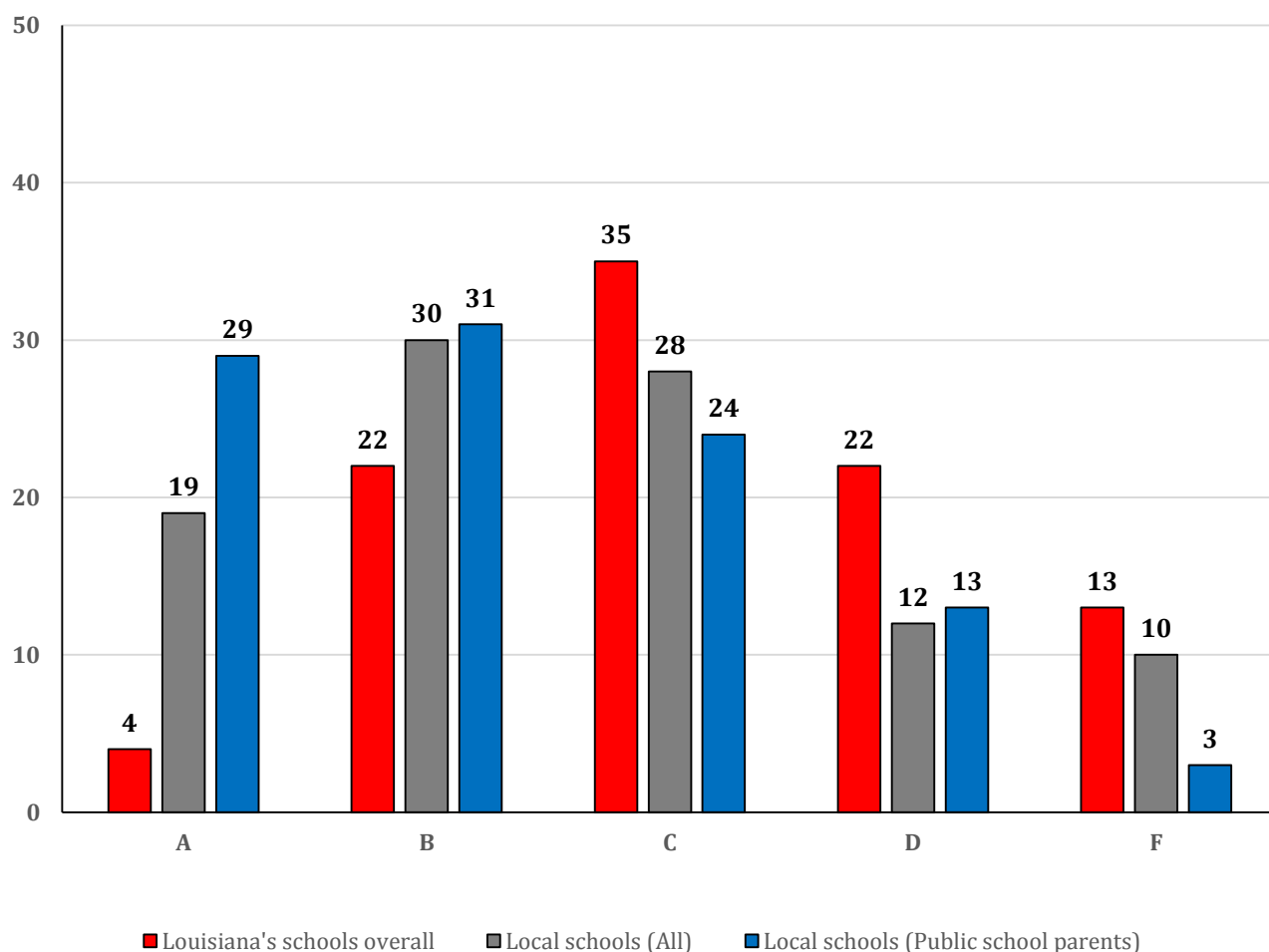
Another possible reason why Louisiana residents have mixed views of these school reforms is that when it comes to their own local public schools they see little need for change. Louisiana residents may take a dim view of public schools as a whole in the state, but they are much more satisfied when considering the public schools in their local community.

Just 26 percent of respondents assign a grade of A or B to *Louisiana's public schools overall*, but when asked to grade *the public schools in your local community* about half (49 percent) assign a grade of A or B (Figure 4.6).

Parents of public school students have especially positive views of their local schools: 60 percent grade their local public schools with an A or B. Only 16 percent assign them a grade of D or F.

Figure 4.6: Critical of Public Schools Statewide, but Higher Grades for Local Schools

Percent giving each letter grade to "Louisiana's public schools overall" and to "the public schools in your local community"



SOURCE: 2016 Louisiana Survey

5. Poverty & Economic Inequality

Louisiana has long struggled with more poverty and economic inequality than most other states. According to recent estimates, 15 percent of Americans live in poverty but 23 percent of Louisiana's population live in poverty – the highest rate in the nation.³ Louisiana also ranks third among all states in income inequality.⁴ As state leaders continue to struggle with the economic and social consequences of poverty and inequality, what do Louisiana voters think about the causes and solutions for these challenges?

The *2016 Louisiana Survey*, a project of the Reilly Center for Media and Public Affairs at LSU'sanship School of Mass Communication, shows that a majority of state residents share the view that the economic system unfairly favors the wealthy. Yet, the survey also shows the public is deeply divided over government assistance for the poor. In contrast, there is broad support for raising the minimum wage in the state.

Most Say Economic System Unfairly Favors the Wealthy

Most Louisiana residents (58 percent) think the economic system in the United States unfairly favors the wealthy (Table 5.1). Only 38 percent think the economic system is generally fair to most Americans.

Partisan and income differences loom large. Among both Democrats and Independents, 70 percent think the wealthy have an unfair advantage. Fewer than 30 percent in each of these groups feel the system treats all fairly. In contrast, the majority of Republicans (57 percent) believe the country's economic system is generally fair.

Table 5.2 shows that residents with lower household incomes tend to believe the economic system unfairly advantages the wealthy (72 percent of those with household earnings less than \$25,000 a year and 67 percent of those with household earnings between \$25,000 and \$49,999, which combine to make up roughly half of Louisiana households).

Interestingly, individuals in the top half of the state's household income distribution do not consistently take the opposite view. Instead, these individuals are split roughly evenly between those who think the system unfairly favors the wealthy and those who think the system is generally fair.

³ Kaiser Family Foundation estimates of poverty rates based on the U.S. Census Bureau's March 2015 Current Population Survey (<http://kff.org/state-category/demographics-and-the-economy/people-in-poverty/>).

⁴ Reported by Reuters in *The Unequal States of America: A Reuters Series* (<http://www.reuters.com/subjects/income-inequality>).

Table 5.1: Parties Split on Fairness of Economic System				
	All	Rep	Dem	Ind
Fairness of the Economic System				
The economic system in this country is generally fair to most Americans	38	57	26	28
The economic system in this country unfairly favors the wealthy	58	39	70	70
Opinions about the Rich & Poor				
<i>Which has more to do with why a person is rich?</i>				
Because he or she worked harder than most people	41	59	24	40
Because he or she had more advantages in life than most other people	50	34	66	49
<i>Which has more to do with why a person is poor?</i>				
Lack of effort on his or her own part	49	70	35	35
Circumstances beyond his or her control	43	22	59	54

Table 5.2: Low Income Households Most Likely to Say Economy is Unfair					
	All	Less than \$25,000	\$25,000-\$49,999	\$50,000-\$99,999	\$100,000 or more
Fairness of the Economic System					
The economic system in this country is generally fair to most Americans	38	23	31	48	46
The economic system in this country unfairly favors the wealthy	58	72	67	48	52
Opinions about the Rich & Poor					
<i>Which has more to do with why a person is rich?</i>					
Because he or she worked harder than most people	41	28	36	50	52
Because he or she had more advantages in life than most other people	50	62	57	42	38
<i>Which has more to do with why a person is poor?</i>					
Lack of effort on his or her own part	49	28	57	62	50
Circumstances beyond his or her control	43	61	38	32	39

Public Skepticism about Effectiveness of Government Assistance for Poor

The public is much more divided in its beliefs about the effectiveness of redistributive policies to reduce poverty (Figure 5.1). A majority of Democrats (67 percent) say that raising taxes on wealthy people and corporations to expand programs for the poor would do more to reduce poverty than lowering taxes on wealthy people and corporations to encourage investment and economic growth. Only 18 percent of Democrats believe the latter option would do more to reduce poverty.

Republicans favor the latter by a three to one margin. The majority of Republicans (61 percent) believes lowering taxes on wealthy people and corporations will do more to reduce poverty than raising taxes and using the revenue to fund programs for the poor. Only 23 percent of Republicans believe raising taxes to fund programs for the poor would do more to reduce poverty than lowering taxes.

Overall, roughly half of state residents have more faith in the effectiveness of government programs funded through tax increases on wealthy people and corporations, while 38 percent have more faith in lowering taxes to promote economic growth as a solution to the state's high poverty rate. Preferences shift from the former to the latter among those with higher household incomes.

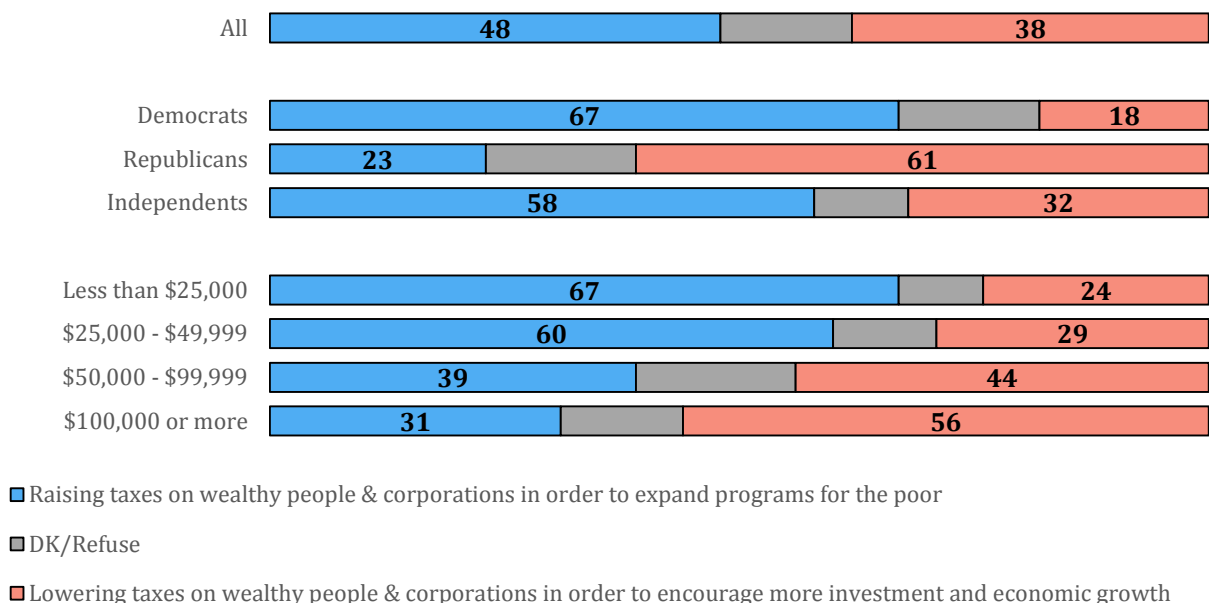
Double Standard in Perceptions about Causes of Wealth and Poverty

Overall, more Louisiana residents say being rich has to do with *having advantages in life that others do not have* than say being rich has to do with working harder than most people. However, they are also more likely to say that being poor has to do with *a lack of effort* than to say being poor has to do with circumstances beyond a person's control.

In other words, Louisiana residents are more likely to attribute wealth to fortunate circumstances than to individual effort, but also

Figure 5.1: Opinion Split on Effectiveness of Redistribution Policies

Percent saying ___ would do more to reduce poverty



SOURCE: 2016 Louisiana Survey

more likely to blame poverty on individual effort than on unfortunate circumstances.

There is more consistency about the causes of wealth and poverty within political parties. Generally, Democrats, Independents, and individuals with lower household incomes are more likely to attribute wealth or poverty to circumstances than individual effort. In contrast, Republicans and individuals from households with higher income attribute wealth and poverty to individual effort and hard work.

One possible reason, then, for the different beliefs about the effectiveness of government programs to reduce poverty noted above is that the political parties have different views about what leads to wealth and poverty.

Widespread Support for Raising Minimum Wage

Currently, the minimum wage in Louisiana is the amount set by the federal government: \$7.25 an hour. Although more than half of all states have

set their minimum wage higher than the federal level, only two southern states have done so – Arkansas and Florida.

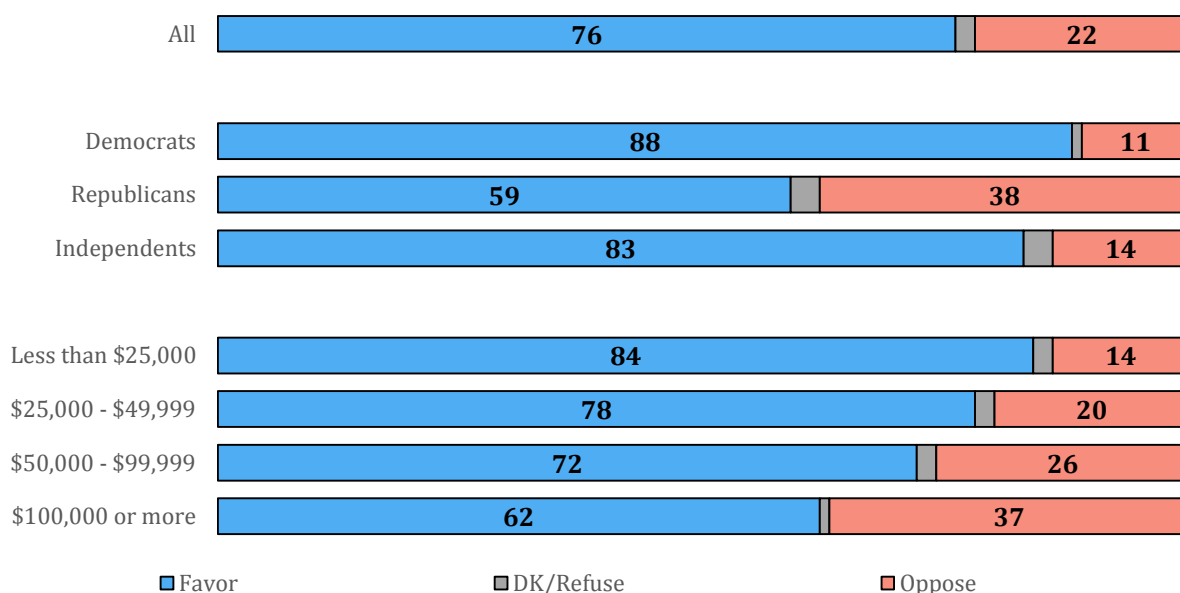
Overall, 76 percent of Louisiana residents favor raising the state's minimum wage to \$8.50 an hour (Figure 5.2).

Large majorities among all parties and income groups also support the proposal. Support is highest among Democrats and Independents (88 percent and 83 percent respectively), but most Republicans (59 percent) also want to raise the minimum wage.

Across levels of household income, support for raising the minimum wage is highest among those with household incomes less than \$25,000 a year (roughly the bottom 30 percent of households in Louisiana according to U.S. Census data). Support for raising the minimum wage is lower at higher levels of household income, but 62 percent favor the increase even among the roughly top fifth of households (earning \$100,000 a year or more).

Figure 5.2: Broad Support for Raising Minimum Wage to \$8.50

Percent favor/oppose



SOURCE: 2016 Louisiana Survey

6. Government Transparency

Louisiana has come under increased scrutiny over the issue of government transparency and public access to state records. The Center for Public Integrity, a watchdog group that tracks transparency and ethics policies across the United States, recently assigned a grade of F to Louisiana for its record on public access to government information.

Do the residents of Louisiana share this concern about the need for access to government records? The *2016 Louisiana Survey*, a project of the Reilly Center for Media and Public Affairs at LSU'sanship School of Mass Communication, shows there is broad support for the principles of transparency and public access to government records. However, when it comes to putting these principles in practice, support is sensitive to the specific kinds of records at issue.

Few Trust Government to Do What is Right

When asked how much of the time they think they can trust the state government of Louisiana to do what is right, very few respondents to the survey said “just about always” (2 percent) or

“most of the time” (16 percent). Most (60 percent) said “some of the time” and about one-in-five said “never”.

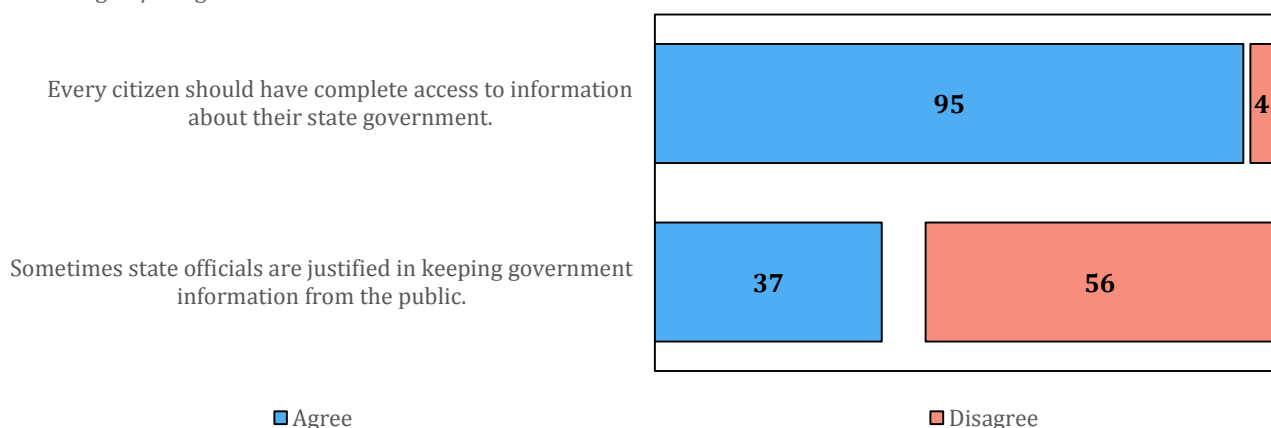
The tepid faith in state government is broadly shared across political identities. Among Democrats, 22 percent trust state government to do what is right “just about always” or “most of the time”, and 15 percent believe they can never trust state government to do what is right. For Republicans, somewhat fewer trust state government to do what is right “just about always” or “most of the time” (14 percent), but the share who never trust the government to do what is right (19 percent) is statistically indistinguishable from Democrats. Independents are the least trusting: 29 percent say they can never trust state government to do what is right.

Broad Support for Principles of Transparency

Nearly all Louisiana residents (95 percent) *agree* with the statement that “Every citizen should have complete access to information about their state government” (Figure 6.1). The principle of complete access is shared by similarly large majorities across all demographic and political groups identified in the survey.

Figure 6.1: Broad Support for Government Transparency in Principle

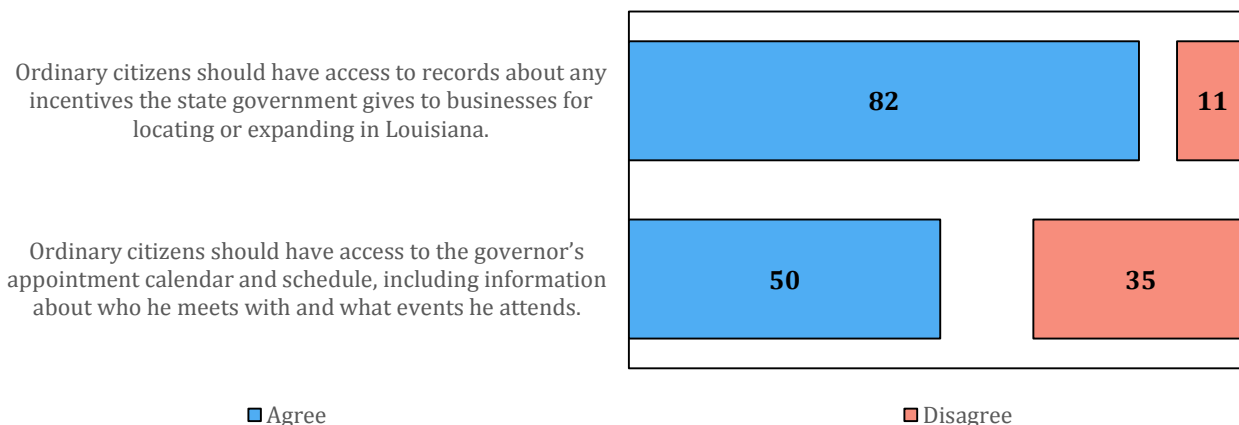
Percent agree/disagree



SOURCE: 2016 Louisiana Survey

Figure 6.2: Support for Specific Policies Depends on Type of Records

Percent agree/disagree



SOURCE: 2016 Louisiana Survey

Support for transparency dips somewhat when the question is framed in terms of whether state officials are justified in keeping some information secret, but a majority still opt for more access. Overall, 56 percent *disagree* with the statement that “Sometimes state officials are justified in keeping government information from the public.” Only 37 percent *agree* that the government is sometimes justified in withholding information. Again, however, differences across demographic or political groups are quite small.

Support for Transparency Depends on the Specific Application

Despite broad majority support for transparency in principle, when it comes to putting these principles into practice support for specific proposals is sensitive to the kinds of records at issue. To examine this sensitivity, we conducted an experiment within the survey. We asked some

respondents whether they agree or disagree with the statement that “Ordinary citizens should have access to records about any incentives the state government gives to businesses for locating or expanding in Louisiana,” while asking others whether they agree or disagree with the statement that “Ordinary citizens should have access to the governor’s appointment calendar and schedule, including information about who he meets with and what events he attends.” We randomly assigned participants to one of these two questions.

While 82 percent of respondents to the question about records of economic incentives agreed the public should have access, only half of respondents to the question about the governor’s calendar and schedule agreed the public should have access (Figure 6.2). It appears, then, that the public support for the principle of government transparency may break down when specific policies are crafted depending on the specific kind of records at issue.

Only 18 percent of Louisiana residents trust state government to do what is right “just about always” or “most of the time.”

7. Social Issues

Law Has Changed, but Public Opinion Has Not

Despite the U.S. Supreme Court ruling in 2015 legalizing same sex marriage throughout the country, Louisiana residents are no more supportive of legal recognition for same sex marriage than they were a year ago. Opponents continue to edge out supporters in the state: 53 percent to 41 percent.

Republicans, evangelical Christians, and older residents are the most opposed to legalized same sex marriage (Figure 7.1). Republicans oppose legal recognition of same sex marriage nearly two to one (61 percent oppose and 32 percent favor). Democrats and independents split more evenly (50 percent oppose and 44 percent favor among Democrats; 45 percent oppose and 49 percent favor among independents).

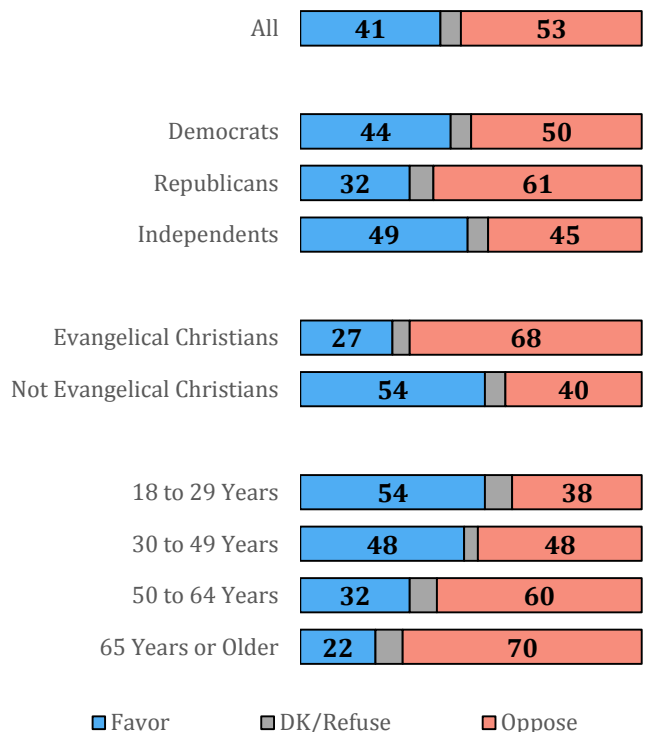
Two thirds of evangelical Christians (68 percent) oppose legal same sex marriage. Among residents who do not consider themselves evangelical Christians, a majority (54 percent) favor allowing same sex couple to marry legally.

Aside from partisanship and religion, attitudes toward same sex marriage also differ dramatically across age groups. The youngest cohort of adult residents, from 18 to 29 years of age, favors legal recognition of same sex marriage (54 percent). Opinions split evenly among residents 30 to 49 years old (48 percent favor and 48 percent oppose). A large majority of residents age 50 or older oppose legal recognition of same sex marriage.

Opinion toward same sex marriage also varies across regions of the state. In the New Orleans area, 58 percent favor allowing same sex couples to marry legally – the only region of the state where a majority of residents favor legal recognition of these marriages. Support is lowest in north and southwest Louisiana, where only

Figure 7.1: Religious and Generational Divisions Over Same Sex Marriage

Percent favor/ oppose



SOURCE: 2016 Louisiana Survey

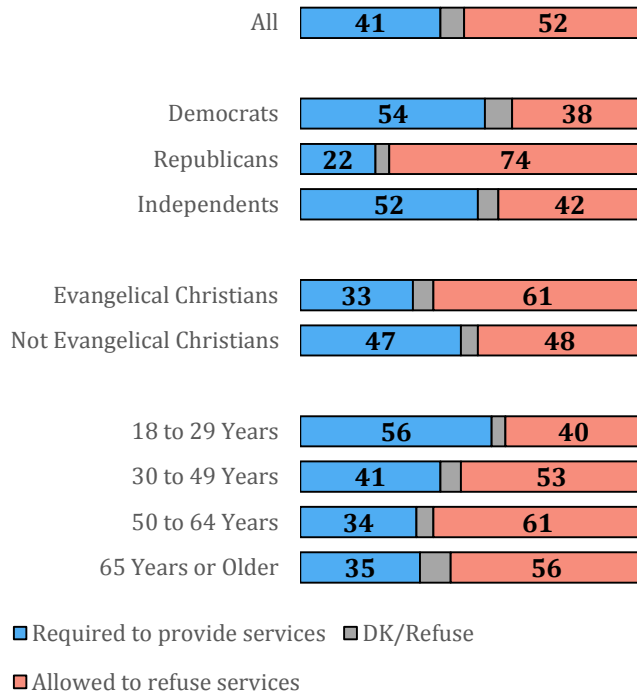
about one in three residents favor allowing same sex couples to marry legally.

Most Think Businesses Should Not Be Required to Provide Services for Same Sex Weddings if They Object for Religious Reasons

A number of states have debated and adopted laws that would allow businesses or other organizations to refuse services to individuals whose behaviors do not comport with the religious beliefs of the organization or business operator. Supporters, who often refer to these policies as “religious freedom laws,” argue that these laws protect the liberty of the organizations and business operators to practice their religion by allowing them to conduct their activities in keeping with their faith. Opponents contend

Figure 7.2: Parties Divide Over "Religious Freedom" Law

Percent saying businesses that provide wedding services should be ___ to same sex couples



SOURCE: 2016 Louisiana Survey

these laws permit discrimination on the basis of religion, particularly against LGBT individuals.

To measure sentiment in Louisiana regarding this type of law, we asked respondents whether a business providing wedding services, such as catering or flowers, should be allowed to refuse services to same sex couples for religious reasons, or should the business be required to provide those services as it would to all customers.

Opinion in Louisiana toward these sorts of laws parallels opinion about same sex marriage (Figure 7.2). About half of residents (52 percent) believe these businesses should be allowed to

refuse services, and 41 percent believe they should be required to provide services.

As with same sex marriage, the major cleavages in opinion fall along partisan, religious, and age lines. Most Democrats (54 percent) believe businesses should be required to provide services to same sex couples, while most Republicans (74 percent) believe businesses should be allowed to refuse services for religious reasons.

Three in five individuals (61 percent) who identify themselves as evangelical Christian believe businesses should be allowed to refuse services for religious reasons. Opinion splits almost evenly among individuals who do not think of themselves as evangelical Christians (48 percent versus 47 percent).

A majority of residents between the ages of 18 and 29 believe businesses should be required to provide services, but majorities among all older age groups believe businesses should be allowed to refuse services.

More Opposition to Abortion in Louisiana than in the US as a Whole

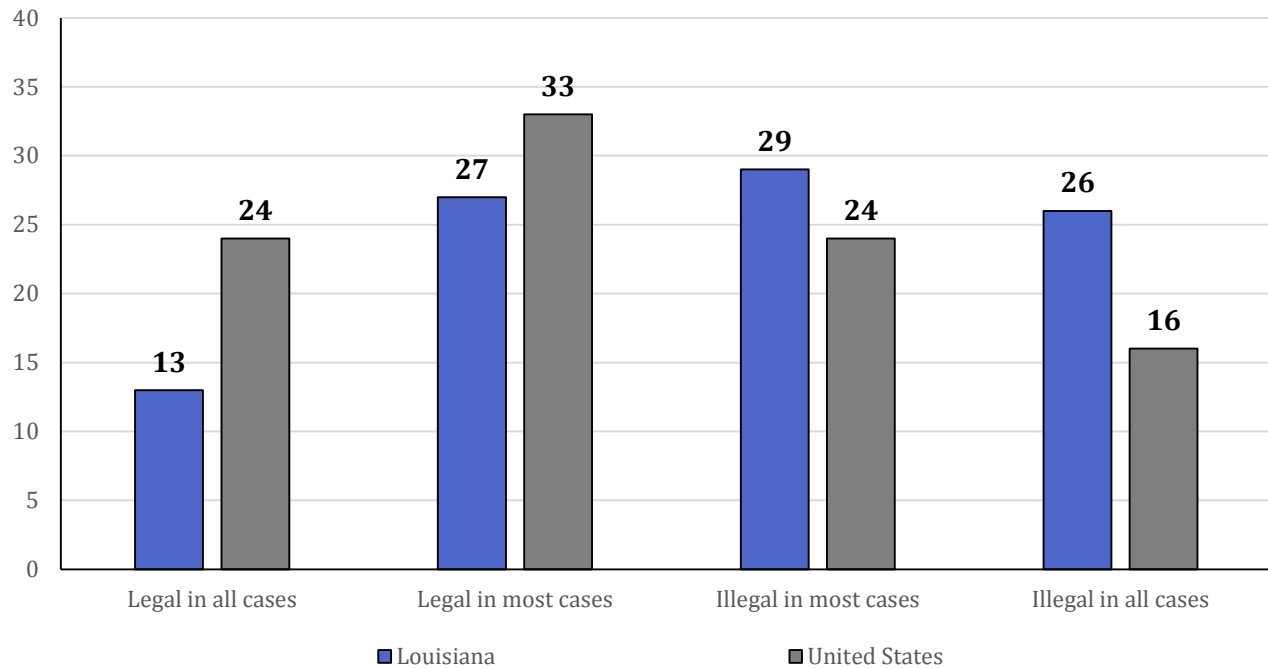
Louisiana residents are generally more opposed to abortion than are Americans as a whole. We asked respondents whether abortion should be legal in all cases, legal in most cases, illegal in most cases, or illegal in all cases. This question is identical to the one posed by the Pew Research Center for the People and the Press to a national sample.⁵

The response patterns from these two samples are nearly mirror opposites (Figure 7.3). A majority of Americans (56 percent) think abortion should be legal in all or most cases, and 41 percent think it should be illegal in all or most cases. In Louisiana a majority (55 percent) think abortions should be illegal in all or most cases, and just 40

⁵ <http://www.people-press.org/files/2016/03/03-31-2016-Political-topline-for-release.pdf>

Figure 7.3: More Opposition to Legal Abortion in Louisiana than in United States as a Whole

Percent saying abortion should be ____



SOURCE: 2016 Louisiana Survey

percent think it should be legal in all or most cases. Opinion on abortion follows the familiar lines of partisanship and religion. A majority of Democrats (53 percent) think abortion should be legal in all or most cases, and 39 percent think it should be illegal in all or most cases. A majority of Republicans (69 percent) think abortion should be illegal in all or most cases, and slightly more than one quarter (27 percent) think it should be legal in all or most cases.

Nearly two-thirds of evangelical Christians think it should be illegal in all or most cases. Similarly, a majority of individuals who attend religious services weekly or twice a month think abortion should be illegal in all or most cases, but a majority of individuals who rarely or never attend religious services think it should be legal in all or most cases. While a substantial majority support some restrictions on access to abortion (82 percent),

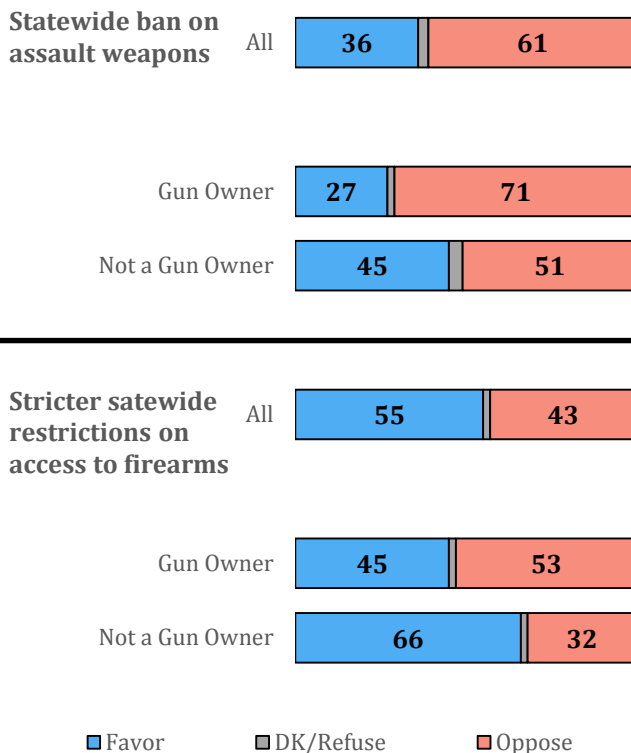
only a relatively small share (26 percent) think it should be illegal in all cases.. Even among Republicans and evangelical Christians, only about 30 percent think it should be illegal in every case.

Most Do Not Want Refugees from Syria Settling in Louisiana

Roughly two-thirds of Louisiana residents (68 percent) oppose allowing refugees from the conflict in Syria to settle in Louisiana. Only 24 percent favor having Syrian refugees settle in Louisiana. Large majorities of Republicans (84 percent) and independents (66 percent) oppose settlement of Syrian refugees in Louisiana, while Democrats are more divided with 50 percent opposing and 39 percent favoring.

Figure 7.4: Majority Rejects Assault Weapon Ban but Open to Other Firearm Restrictions

Percent favor/oppose



SOURCE: 2016 Louisiana Survey

Louisiana Residents Oppose Ban on Assault Weapons but Open to Other Firearm Restrictions

Just over one-third of Louisiana residents (36 percent) favor a statewide ban on assault weapons; most (61 percent) oppose such a ban (Figure 7.4). Gun owners are especially opposed to an assault weapons ban in the state (71 percent), while residents who do not own a gun split more evenly between support (45 percent) and opposition (51 percent).⁶

⁶ Breaking out non-gun-owners into those who live with someone who owns a gun and those who do not reveals negligible difference between these two groups.

⁷ The opposite may be true among black respondents to the survey who live in the New Orleans area

However, Louisiana residents are more supportive of gun control when asked a broader question about stricter statewide restrictions on access to firearms. A majority (55 percent) favor more restrictions. Residents who do not currently own a gun are especially favorable toward greater restrictions (66 percent). Gun owners, though more likely to oppose tighter restrictions on access to firearms, are split more closely on this question: 45 percent favor and 53 percent oppose.

No Broad Call for Removal of Confederate Monuments and Images

Nearly three-fourths of Louisiana residents (73 percent) oppose removing monuments to people who fought on the side of the Confederacy during the Civil War from public spaces (Figure 7.5). Only 20 percent favor their removal.

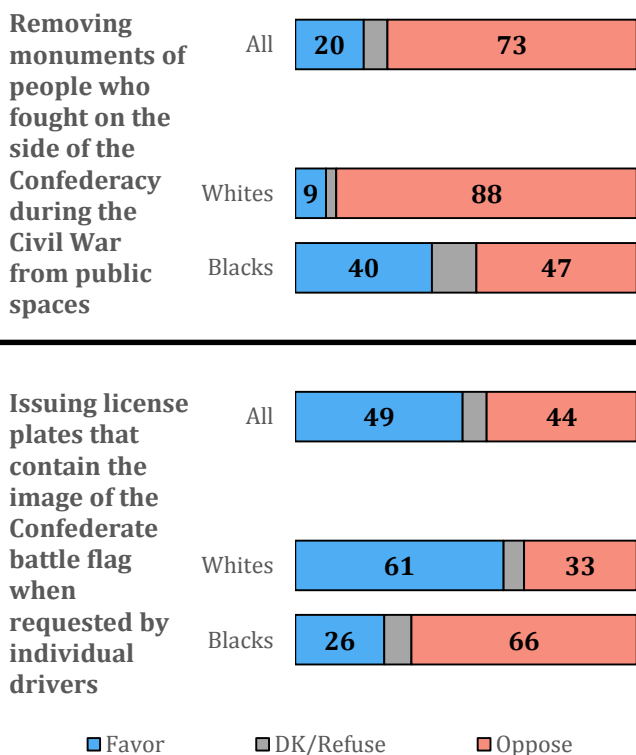
The largest cleavage in opinion on this issue occurs along racial lines. Whites overwhelmingly oppose removal of Confederate monuments: 88 percent oppose it and just 9 percent favor it. Black residents of Louisiana are much more likely than whites to support removal of these monuments. Even so, more black residents oppose removal (47 percent) than favor it (40 percent).⁷

The public is more divided on the question of whether the state should issue license plates that include an emblem of the Confederate battle flag when requested by individual drivers. Since 1999, the state of Louisiana has issued a Sons of Confederate Veterans specialty license plate that includes an image of the battle flag to drivers who request it and pay an additional fee. As of 2015, there were about 160 vehicles with a valid Sons of Confederate Veterans specialty plate out of

(Jefferson, Orleans, Plaquemines, and St. Bernard Parishes): 51 percent favor removal and 45 percent oppose. However, the sample of black residents in this area is too small to estimate opinion precisely.

Figure 7.5: Large Racial Divisions Over Public Use of Confederate Symbols

Percent favor/oppose



SOURCE: 2016 Louisiana Survey

approximately 4.5 million vehicles registered in Louisiana.⁸ The U.S. Supreme Court ruled last year that state rejection of license plates featuring the Confederate battle flag does not constitute a violation of freedom of speech.⁹ Around the same time as that ruling, the

Louisiana State Conference of the NAACP requested that then-governor Bobby Jindal take steps to end the issuing of the Sons of Confederate Veterans specialty plates.¹⁰

About half of Louisiana residents (49 percent) favor the state issuing license plates that contain the image of the confederate battle flag when

requested by individual drivers, and 44 percent oppose the practice.

There are stark divisions across races and political parties. A majority of whites (61 percent) favor the state issuing these plates, while a majority of blacks oppose the policy (66 percent).

Most Republicans (68 percent) favor the state issuing plates with the Confederate battle flag when requested by individual drivers, but most Democrats (64 percent) oppose these plates. Independent are split: 48 percent favor and 46 percent oppose.

Few See Improvement in Race Relations

One-third of Louisiana residents (33 percent) think race relations in the state are getting worse. Nearly half (49 percent) say that race relations are about the same as they have been, and only 16 percent believe they are getting better. The patterns of opinion are similar across demographic and political groups.

Even the difference between how black and white Louisiana residents see the trend in race relations is relatively small. Black residents are somewhat more likely than white residents to say relations are getting worse, but the difference is only seven percentage points (37 percent of black residents and 30 percent of white residents). Whites, in turn, are more likely than blacks to say race relations are about the same (53 percent of whites versus 46 percent of blacks). Only 16 percent of white residents and 17 percent of black residents say race relations in the state are improving.

⁸http://www.nola.com/politics/index.ssf/2015/06/confederate_flag_license_plate.html

⁹ *Walker v Texas Division, Sons of Confederate Veterans* (2015)

¹⁰<http://media.nola.com/politics/images/NAACP%20letter%20re%20flag.jpeg>

8. Party Conflict & Compromise

In recent years, the nation's politics have become increasingly polarized, with shrinking common ground between Democrats and Republicans. This polarization is reflected in the gridlock now common to the halls of government. Does polarization pose a threat to our state politics as well? Are voters looking for compromise between a Democratic governor and a majority Republican legislature?

The *2016 Louisiana Survey*, a project of the Reilly Center for Media & Public Affairs at LSU'sanship School of Mass Communication, shows that Democrats and Republicans are split over whether their leaders should compromise with the opposing party or stand firm on their positions. The survey also shows that the ideological chasm between the parties may be more a matter of perception than actual differences in position.

Republicans Want to Stand Firm, Democrats Willing to Compromise

Representative democracy often requires political leaders with different views to compromise, relaxing on some positions in order

to accomplish other goals. However, these compromises are sometimes criticized for giving up too much ground to political opponents or yielding on principles that some voters consider too important to sacrifice.

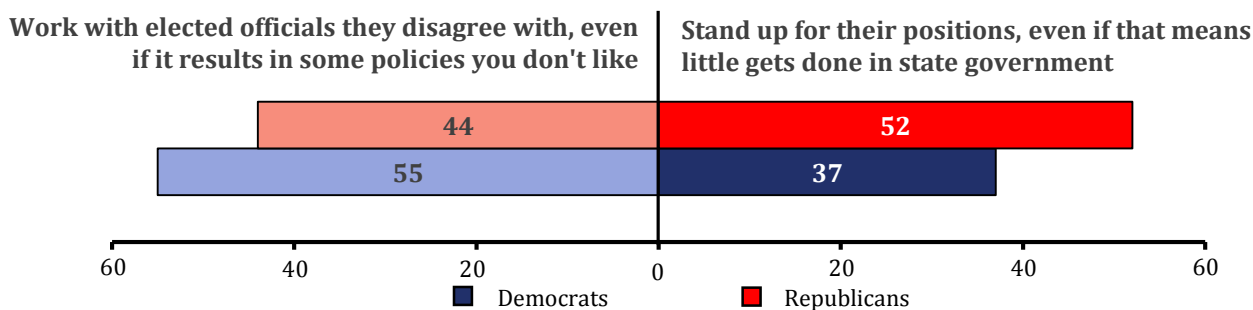
Louisiana residents as a whole take a mixed view of political compromise. We asked respondents whether elected leaders in state government who share their positions on the most important issues facing Louisiana should work with elected officials they disagree with, even if it results in some policies they do not like, or should these leaders stand up for their positions, even if it means little gets done in state government. About half prefer compromise (49 percent), and nearly the same amount want leaders to stick to their positions (45 percent).

The overall result, however, masks important divisions across the political parties (Figure 8.1). A majority of Democrats (55 percent) would accept some policies they do not like in order to get things done in state government, while a majority of Republicans (52 percent) would prefer their leaders to stick to their positions even if little gets done.¹¹

Ideology plays a role in how partisans answer this question. Partisans closer to the ideological extremes are less supportive of compromise, especially among Republicans. Very liberal and liberal Democrats still prefer compromise but by

Figure 8.1: Democrats More Willing to Work with Other Side

Percent saying elected officials in state government who share their positions on important issues should _____

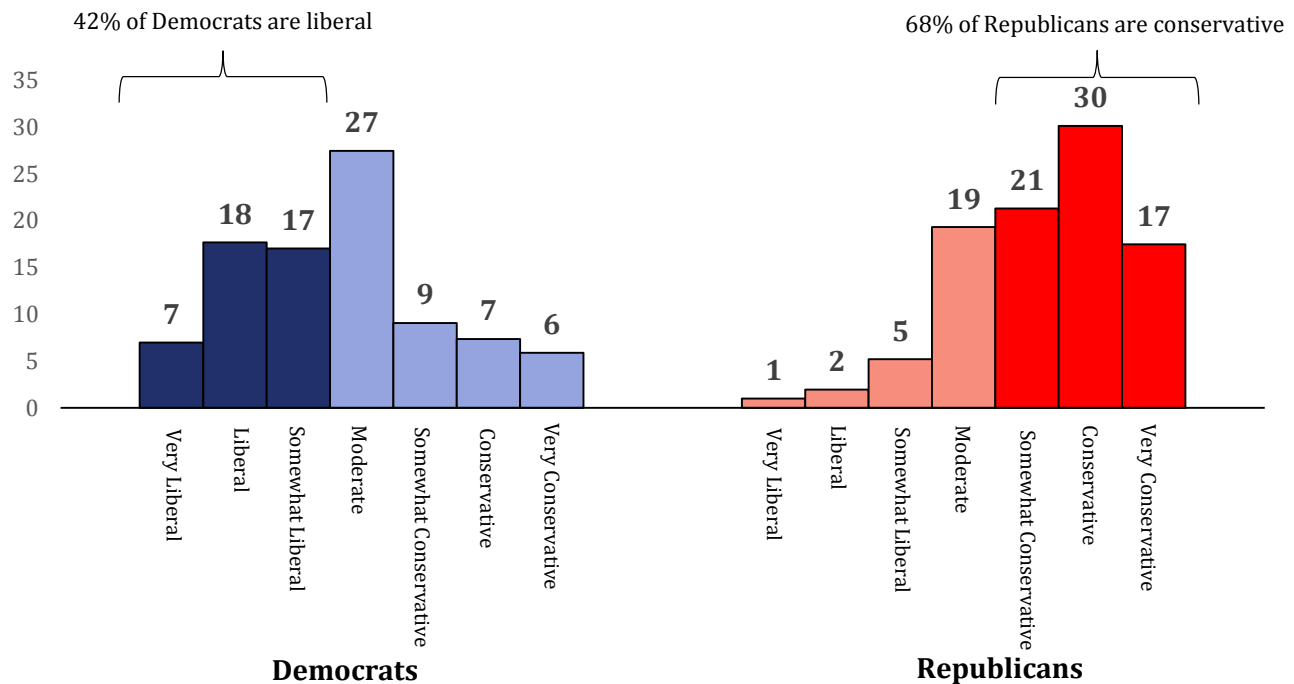


SOURCE: 2016 Louisiana Survey

¹¹ Throughout this report Democrats and Republicans include individuals who 'lean' toward those parties.

Figure 8.2: There are More Conservative Republicans than Liberal Democrats

Percent in each party who identify as _____



Note: Percent saying 'don't know' or refusing to answer not shown.

SOURCE: 2016 Louisiana Survey

a slimmer margin (51 percent for compromise). Very conservative and conservative Republicans prefer for their leaders to stand up for their positions by a 29 point margin (62 percent say stand up vs 33 percent who say compromise).

Republicans Further to Right than Democrats are to Left

Political parties in Louisiana are more ideologically sorted than they once were. As was the case throughout the South historically, the Democratic Party in Louisiana was once home to a significant number of conservatives and moderates. For decades, the rightward tilt of Democrats in the state – relative to Democrats nationally – meant there was significant overlap between the two parties in Louisiana.

The survey asked respondents to identify their political ideology using a seven point scale: 'very

liberal' (1), 'liberal' (2), 'somewhat liberal' (3), 'moderate' (4), 'somewhat conservative' (5), 'conservative' (6), or 'very conservative' (7).

Today, 42 percent of Democrats in Louisiana identify as liberal (either 'somewhat liberal', 'liberal', or 'very liberal'). Only about half as many (22 percent) identify as conservative (Figure 8.2).

The pattern is not symmetric across parties. Democrats have more moderates and conservatives than Republicans have moderates and liberals (19 percent and 8 percent respectively). Instead, Republicans tilt further to the right than Democrats do to the left. The share of Republicans on the conservative side of the ideological spectrum (68 percent) is much greater than the share of Democrats on the liberal side. Additionally, Republicans are more likely to identify themselves at the furthest end of the spectrum: 17 percent consider themselves very

Table 8.1: Few Wedge Issues Pit Most Democrats Against Most Republicans

Issues where majority of Democrats and majority of Republicans DO give different responses	Issues where majority of Democrats and majority of Republicans DO NOT give different responses
<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Welfare spending2. Raising taxes on corporations & wealthy3. School vouchers4. Stricter restrictions on firearms5. Abortion6. Religious freedom law	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. K-12 education spending2. Higher education spending3. Health care spending4. Transportation infrastructure spending5. Law enforcement & prison spending6. Coastal protection & restoration spending7. Raising minimum wage8. Common Core9. Charter schools10. Requiring legislative approval to increase TOPS11. Removing Confederate monuments12. Same sex marriage13. Allowing Syrian refugees to settle in state

Note: See appendix below for cross tabs of responses to these questions by party identification.

conservative as opposed to just seven percent of Democrats who consider themselves very liberal. Still, the political parties' centers of gravity (that is, the median Democrat and the median Republican) are not very far apart on the seven point ideological spectrum used in the survey. The median Democrat identifies as 'moderate' (4) and the median Republican identifies as 'somewhat conservative' (5).

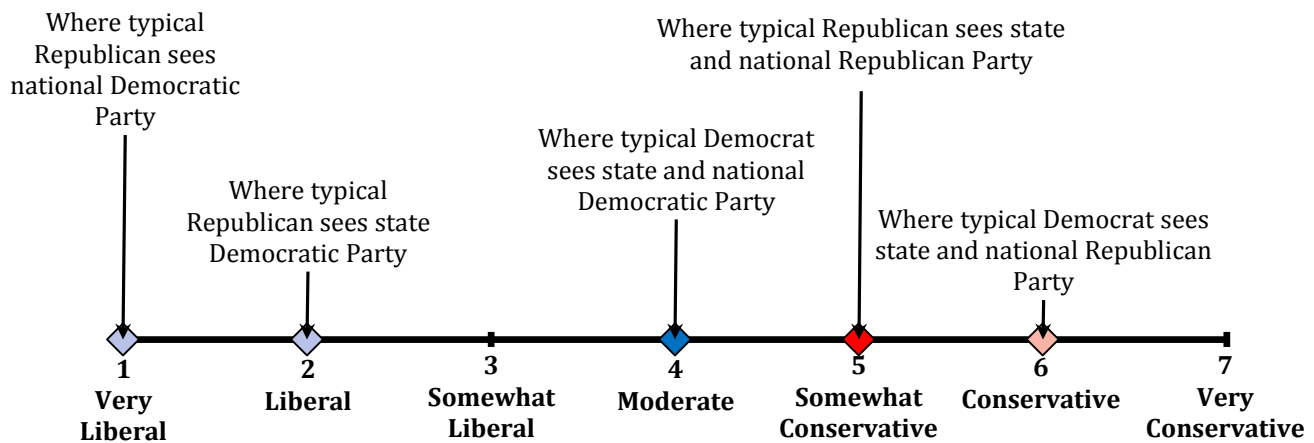
The proximity between the parties is further evidenced when considering specific issues. For example, there is only one instance out of seven questions about state spending in various policy areas – K-12 education, higher education, health care, transportation infrastructure, law enforcement, public assistance programs, and coastal protection – where the majority within each party choose different response options: A majority of Republicans want to decrease spending for public assistance programs like welfare, while a majority of Democrats want to maintain current spending. To be sure, there are some differences on other issues – Democrats tend to be more supportive of higher spending – but these differences rarely pit a majority of Democrats against a majority of Republicans.

The same pattern holds across a number of policy issues included in the 2016 Louisiana Survey. Republicans and Democrats often differ in the amount of support or opposition, but on most issue these differences do not end up with the majority within each party on opposing sides (Table 8.1). Again, this does not mean that the parties are exactly the same in how they think about the issues in the second column of Table 8.1, but any differences that exist are not so large as to put entrenched majorities on opposite sides.

Differences rarely
pit majority of
Democrats against
majority of
Republicans on
specific issues.

Figure 8.3: Partisans See Opposing Party as More Extreme Than Opposing Party Sees Itself

Median placement of self, state parties, and national parties by respondent partisanship



Note: Darker points are where partisans see their own party. Lighter points are where partisans see the opposing party.

SOURCE: 2016 Louisiana Survey

Parties See Opponents as More Extreme

The perception of a wide ideological gap may be a bigger deterrent to compromise than the actual gap. As noted above, despite ideological sorting across parties, the distance between the median Democrat and median Republican is relatively small. The distance between where partisans see their party and where they see the opposing party is much greater.

Democrats and Republicans both believe their party aligns well with their own positions. The median Democrat not only thinks of herself as moderate, but also thinks the Democratic Party in the state and the Democratic Party nationally are moderate. Similarly, the median Republican sees the state and national Republican Party as 'somewhat conservative,' where she also places herself.

Partisans tend to see the opposing side as more extreme than where people on the other side see themselves (Figure 8.3). For example, the typical Democrat thinks the Republican Party in Louisiana (as well as the Republican Party

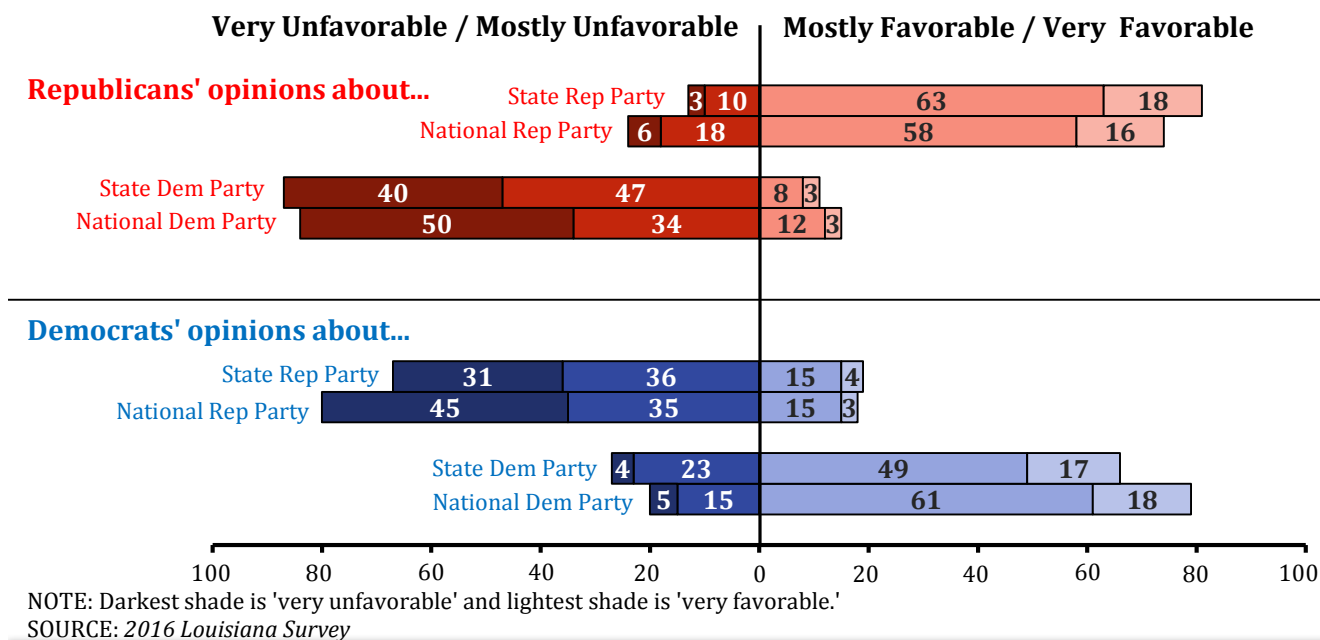
nationally) is 'conservative' rather than 'somewhat conservative.' What might have been a one-step difference is instead seen as a two-step difference.

Republicans see an even wider gap. The typical Republican thinks the Democratic Party in Louisiana is liberal (but not quite as liberal as they see the Democratic Party nationally, which they place all the way on the far left of the spectrum). The one-step difference between where the parties place themselves becomes a three-step difference in the minds of Republicans.

Partisans tend to see the opposing side as more extreme than where people on the other side see themselves.

Figure 8.4: Few Partisans Have a Favorable Opinion of Other Side

Percent with mostly/very unfavorable/favorable opinion of the political parties



Deep Dislike between Parties

Democrats, of course, dislike the Republican Party, and Republicans, likewise, dislike the Democratic Party. What is alarming is the depth of the mutual antipathy between the parties. The survey asked respondents about their overall opinions of the Republican Party in Louisiana, the Republican Party nationally, the Democratic Party in Louisiana, and the Democratic Party nationally. Respondents described their opinions as 'very favorable,' 'mostly favorable,' 'mostly unfavorable,' or 'very unfavorable.'

Democrats and Republicans each dislike the opposing party in the state, but there is some imbalance. Nearly nine in ten Republicans (87 percent) have unfavorable opinions of the Democratic Party in Louisiana, including 40 percent with a very unfavorable opinion. In contrast, two-thirds of Democrats (67 percent) have an unfavorable opinion of the Republican Party in the state, including 31 percent with a very unfavorable opinion. This leaves a 20 point gap between Republicans and Democrats in how much they dislike the opposing party in the state.

Republicans tend to evaluate the Democratic Party in Louisiana in the same way they evaluate the party nationally. The share of Republicans with an unfavorable opinion of the state Democratic Party (87 percent) is statistically indistinguishable from the share with an unfavorable opinion of the national party (84 percent). However, the share with a 'very unfavorable' opinion of the Democratic Party nationally (50 percent) is larger than the share with that opinion of the party in Louisiana.

Democrats see more of a difference between the state and national Republican Party. Two-thirds of Democrats have an unfavorable opinion of the Republican Party in Louisiana, but this rises to 80 percent when evaluating the Republican Party nationally.

Taken together, these results indicate Democrats like the Democratic Party nationally (79 percent favorable) more than they like their state party (66 percent). But Republicans like the Republican Party in Louisiana (81 percent favorable) more than they like their party nationally (74 percent favorable).

Survey Methodology

The data in this report were collected from a randomly selected sample of adult (18 years or older) residents of Louisiana via telephone interviews conducted from February 1 to February 26, 2016. The project includes live-interviewer surveys of 302 respondents contacted via landline telephone and 699 respondents contacted via cell phone, for a total sample of 1,001 respondents. The design of the landline sample ensures representation of both listed and unlisted numbers by use of random digit dialing. The cell phone sample is randomly drawn from known, available phone number banks dedicated to wireless service.

The response rate is 3%. This response rate is the percentage of residential households or personal cell phones for which an interview is completed. The rates are calculated using the American Association for Public Opinion Research's method for Response Rate 3 as published in their Standard Definitions. Response rates have declined steadily for all surveys over the past several decades. Response rates for telephone have been on decline for several decades and frequently fall in the single digits even among the very best survey research organizations.

The combined landline and cell phone sample is weighted using an iterative procedure that matches race and ethnicity, education, household income, gender and age to known profiles for Louisiana found in the Census Bureau's American Community Survey. The sample is also weighted for population density by parish. Weighting cannot eliminate every source of nonresponse bias. However, proper conduction of random sampling combined with accepted weighting techniques has a strong record of yielding unbiased results.

The sample has an overall margin of error of +/- 3.1 percentage points.

In addition to sampling error, as accounted for through the margin of error, readers should recognize that question wording and practical difficulties in conducting surveys can introduce error or bias into the findings of opinion polls.

Louisiana State University's Public Policy Research Lab, a division of the Reilly Center for Media and Public Affairs, designed the survey questionnaire and sampling strategy, computed the survey weights, and conducted all statistical analysis. Telephone interviews were conducted by Reconnaissance Market Research.

Because the data collection occurred both before and during a special legislative session to address fiscal issues in the state, responses to all questions used in this report were tested for any difference that may have been induced as a result of the session. Responses were divided into two periods: Before the governor's February 11th televised speech on the state's budget challenges (February 1st-11th; 477 respondents) and after the speech (February 12th-26th; 524 respondents).

Regional Definitions

Respondents are divided into six regional groups based on parish of residence using the following classifications:

New Orleans Area: Jefferson, Orleans, Plaquemines, St. Bernard

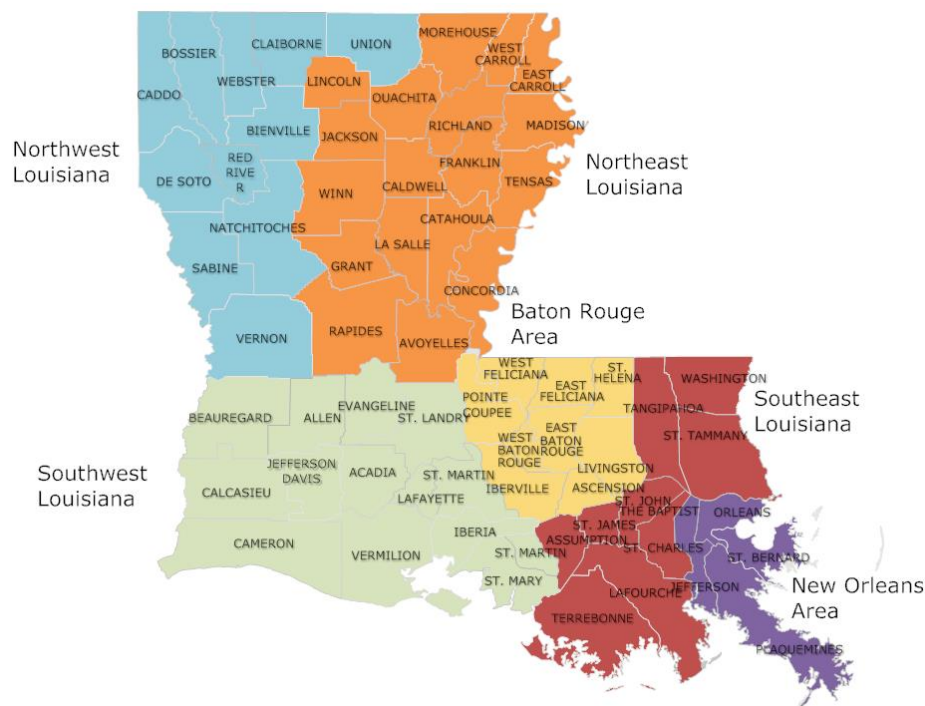
Baton Rouge Area: Ascension, East Baton Rouge, East Feliciana, Iberville, Livingston, Point Coupee, St. Helena, West Baton Rouge, West Feliciana

Northwest Louisiana: Bienville, Bossier, Caddo, Claiborne, De Soto, Natchitoches, Red River, Sabine, Union, Vernon, Webster

Northeast Louisiana: Avoyelles, Caldwell, Catahoula, Concordia, East Carroll, Franklin, Grant, Jackson, La Salle, Lincoln, Madison, Morehouse, Ouachita, Rapides, Richland, Tensas, West Carroll, Winn

Southwest Louisiana: Acadia, Allen, Beauregard, Calcasieu, Cameron, Evangeline, Iberia, Jefferson Davis, Lafayette, St. Landry, St. Martin, St. Mary, Vermilion

Southeast Louisiana (excluding New Orleans Area and Baton Rouge Area): Assumption, Lafourche, St. Charles, St. James, St. John the Baptist, St. Tammany, Tangipahoa, Terrebonne, Washington



Question Wording & Topline Frequencies

NOTE: Frequencies for a given question represent percentages among only those respondents who were asked that particular question (rounded to nearest whole number). Not all respondents were asked each question, and questions asked to a subset of respondents are labelled accordingly. Percentages may not sum to 100 due to rounding.

Q1. To begin with, would you say things are generally going in the right direction, or do you think things are going in the wrong direction here in Louisiana?

Right Direction	27
Wrong Direction	63
Don't know/Refused (Volunteered)	10

Q2. In your opinion, what do you think is the single most important problem facing the state of Louisiana?

[OPEN-ENDED, See Figure 1.5 for coded frequencies]

[Q3 was asked only if respondents answered Q2.]

Q3. How much confidence would you say you have in state government to effectively address this problem? Would you say you are very confident, somewhat confident, not very confident, or not at all confident?

Very Confident	7
Somewhat Confident	27
Not Very Confident	33
Not at all Confident	26
Don't know/Refused (Vol.)	2

Q4. We are also interested in how people are getting along financially these days. Would you say that you are better off financially, worse off, or about the same as you were a year ago?

Better	22
Same	51
Worse	26
Don't know/Refused (Vol.)	1

Q5. What about business conditions in the state of Louisiana -- do you think that at the present time business conditions in Louisiana are better, worse, or about the same as they were a year ago?

Better	14
Same	41
Worse	40
Don't know/Refused (Vol.)	6

Q6. When it comes to the overall state economy, would you say Louisiana is currently faring better than the rest of the country, worse than the rest of country or about the same as the rest of the country?

Better	10
Same	35
Worse	51
Don't know/Refused (Vol.)	4

Q7. As you know, students are often given a grade A through F to evaluate their performance. What grade would you give **Louisiana as a place to live?**

A	13
B	26
C	39
D	16
F	6
Don't know/Refused (Vol.)	1

[Order in which Q8 through Q12 appeared was randomized.]

Q8. What grade would you give to **state economic development efforts to attract, recruit, and create jobs?**

A	4
B	21
C	35
D	22
F	14
Don't know/Refused (Vol.)	4

Q9. What grade would you give to **Louisiana's roads, bridges, and highways?**

A	2
B	11
C	22
D	31
F	34
Don't know/Refused (Vol.)	0

Q10. What grade would you give to **the overall quality of health care in Louisiana?**

A	6
B	21
C	36
D	17
F	15
Don't know/Refused (Vol.)	4

Q11. What grade would you give to **the state's coastal protection and restoration efforts?**

A	9
B	21
C	32
D	14
F	10
Don't know/Refused (Vol.)	14

Q12. What grade would you give to **Louisiana's public colleges and universities?**

A	16
B	43
C	24
D	7
F	4
Don't know/Refused (Vol.)	7

Q13. What grade would you give to **Louisiana's public schools overall?**

A	4
B	22
C	35
D	22
F	13
Don't know/Refused (Vol.)	3

[Respondents randomly selected to answer both Q14 and Q15a/b]

Q14. What grade would you give to the public schools in your local community?

A	19
B	30
C	28
D	12
F	10
Don't know/Refused (Vol.)	2

[Q15a used only if respondent does not live in Orleans Parish]

Q15a. As you may know, each year the Louisiana Department of Education grades each local public school district in the state. To the best of your knowledge, what grade did the state department of education give your local school district? Or, if you don't know, just tell me that.

A	7
B	8
C	11
D	3
F	1
Don't know	69
Refused (Vol.)	0

[Version Q15b used only if respondent lives in Orleans Parish]

Q15b. As you may know, each year the Louisiana Department of Education grades each local public school district in the state. To the best of your knowledge, what grade did the state department of education give to the Orleans Parish School Board's district? Or, if you don't know, just tell me that.

A	0
B	14
C	5
D	7
F	8
Don't know	67
Refused (Vol.)	0

[Q16 asked only if respondent lives in Orleans Parish and assigned to Q14 and Q15b]

Q16. As you may know, each year the Louisiana Department of Education grades each local public school district in the state. To the best of your knowledge, what grade did the state department of education give to the Recovery School District in New Orleans? Or, if you don't know, just tell me that.

A	0
B	10
C	6
D	2
F	0
Don't know	82
Refused (Vol.)	0

Q17-Q23 INTRO. Now I'm going to read you some different areas where Louisiana spends tax dollars. As I read each one, tell me if you would like to see *state spending* in this area increased, decreased, or kept about the same. **[Randomized order in which Q17 to Q23 appear.]**

Q17a. What about spending for primary and secondary education? Should this be increased, decreased, or kept about the same?

Increased	62
Decreased	4
Kept about the same	31
Don't know/Refused (Vol.)	2

[Q17b was asked only if respondents answered "increased" to Q17a.]

Q17b. Would you be willing to pay more in taxes in order to increase spending for primary and secondary education?

Yes	82
No	16
Don't know/Refused (Vol.)	2

Q18a. What about spending for higher education? Should this be increased, decreased, or kept about the same?

Increased	61
Decreased	5
Kept about the same	33
Don't know/Refused (Vol.)	1

[Q18b was asked only if respondents answered "increased" to Q18a.]

Q18b. Would you be willing to pay more in taxes in order to increase spending for higher education?

Yes	82
No	17
Don't know/Refused (Vol.)	1

Q19a. What about spending for health care? Should this be increased, decreased, or kept about the same?

Increased	46
Decreased	13
Kept about the same	37
Don't know/Refused (Vol.)	4

[Q19b was asked only if respondents answered "increased" to Q19a.]

Q19b. Would you be willing to pay more in taxes in order to increase spending for health care?

Yes	78
No	20
Don't know/Refused (Vol.)	2

Q20a. What about spending for roads, bridges, and highways? Should this be increased, decreased, or kept about the same?

Increased	71
Decreased	5
Kept about the same	24
Don't know/Refused (Vol.)	1

[Q20b was asked only if respondents answered "increased" to Q20a.]

Q20b. Would you be willing to pay more in taxes in order to increase spending for roads, bridges, and highways?

Yes	65
No	33
Don't know/Refused (Vol.)	2

Q21a. What about spending for prisons and law enforcement? Should this be increased, decreased, or kept about the same?

Increased	33
Decreased	21
Kept about the same	44
Don't know/Refused (Vol.)	3

[Q21b was asked only if respondents answered "increased" to Q21a.]

Q21b. Would you be willing to pay more in taxes in order to increase spending for prisons and law enforcement?

Yes	76
No	21
Don't know/Refused (Vol.)	3

Q22a. What about spending for welfare, food stamps, and other public assistance programs? Should this be increased, decreased, or kept about the same?

Increased	15
Decreased	43
Kept about the same	40
Don't know/Refused (Vol.)	2

[Q22b was asked only if respondents answered “increased” to Q22a.]

Q22b. Would you be willing to pay more in taxes in order to increase spending for welfare, food stamps, and other public assistance programs?

Yes	79
No	19
Don’t know/Refused (Vol.)	2

Q23a. What about spending for coastal protection and restoration? Should this be increased, decreased, or kept about the same?

Increased	41
Decreased	5
Kept about the same	46
Don’t know/Refused (Vol.)	8

[Q23b was asked only if respondents answered “increased” to Q23a.]

Q23b. Would you be willing to pay more in taxes in order to increase spending for coastal protection and restoration?

Yes	79
No	21
Don’t know/Refused (Vol.)	1

Q24. Now, thinking about state income taxes on individuals and households, would you say that state income taxes are too high and need to be reduced, too low and need to be increased, or just about right?

Too high and need to be reduced	25
Too low and need to be increased	12
Just about right	57
Don’t know/Refused (Vol.)	6

Q25. What about the state sales tax, would you say that the state sales tax is too high and needs to be reduced, too low and needs to be increased, or just about right?

Too high and need to be reduced	32
Too low and need to be increased	9
Just about right	57
Don’t know/Refused (Vol.)	2

Q26. Thinking about the taxes you pay to the state of Louisiana, do you think you're paying more than your fair share, less than your fair share, or about the right amount?

More than your fair share	37
Less than your fair share	3
About the right amount	56
Don't know/Refused (Vol.)	3

[Respondents were randomized to only one from Q27a, Q27b, Q27c, or Q27d.]

Q27a. To the best of your knowledge, does the state spend more to fund public colleges and universities or to fund prisons? Or, if you don't know, you can just tell me that.

Public colleges and universities	9
Prisons	32
Don't know	59
Refused (Vol.)	0

Q27b. To the best of your knowledge, does the state spend more to fund public colleges and universities or to fund public assistance programs like welfare and food stamps? Or, if you don't know, you can just tell me that.

Public colleges and universities	10
Public assistance programs	39
Don't know	50
Refused (Vol.)	2

Q27c. To the best of your knowledge, does the state spend more to fund public schools or to fund prisons? Or, if you don't know, you can just tell me that.

Public schools	9
Prisons	39
Don't know	52
Refused (Vol.)	0

Q27d. To the best of your knowledge, does the state spend more to fund public schools or to fund public assistance programs like welfare and food stamps? Or, if you don't know, you can just tell me that.

Public schools	8
Public assistance programs	38
Don't know	54
Refused (Vol.)	1

Q28. Now we would like to ask you about some economic issues. First, do you favor or oppose raising the minimum wage in Louisiana to \$8.50 an hour?

Favor	76
Oppose	22
Don't know/Refused (Vol.)	2

Q29. In your view, what would do more to reduce poverty?

Raising taxes on wealthy people and corporations in order to expand programs for the poor	48
Lowering taxes on wealthy people and corporations in order to encourage more investment and economic growth	38
Don't know/Refused (Vol.)	14

Q30. I'm going to read you two statements. As I read them, tell me whether the first statement or the second statement comes closer to your own view – even if neither is exactly right. The first is: “The economic system in this country unfairly favors the wealthy.” The second statement is: “The economic system in this country is generally fair to most Americans”. Which comes closer to your view?

The economic system in this country unfairly favors the wealthy	58
The economic system in this country is generally fair to most Americans	38
Don't know/Refused (Vol.)	4

[Respondents randomly assigned either to Q31a or Q31b]

Q31a. In your opinion, which is generally more often to blame if a person is poor? Lack of effort on his or her own part, or circumstances beyond his or her control?

Lack of effort	49
Circumstances beyond control	43
Don't know/Refused (Vol.)	8

Q31b. In your opinion, which generally has more to do with why a person is rich? Because he or she worked harder than most people, or because he or she had more advantages in life than most other people?

Because he or she worked harder than most people	41
Because he or she had more advantages in life than most other people	50
Don't know/Refused (Vol.)	9

Q32. On another topic, thinking about elected officials in state government who share your positions on the most important issues facing Louisiana. Should they work with elected officials they disagree with, even if it results in some policies you don't like, or should they stand up for their positions, even if that means little gets done in state government?

They should work with elected officials they disagree with, even if it results in some policies you don't like.	49
They should stand up for their positions, even if that means little gets done in state government.	45
Don't know/Refused (Vol.)	7

[For Q33 through Q36, respondents randomly assigned to battery A or battery B. Within each battery order of Q33 and Q34 is randomized, and order of Q5 and Q6 follows pattern for Q33 and Q34.]

Q33a. Would you say your overall opinion of the **Democratic Party** in Louisiana is very favorable, mostly favorable, mostly unfavorable, or very unfavorable?

Very favorable	8
Mostly favorable	30
Mostly unfavorable	32
Very unfavorable	21
Don't know/Refused (Vol.)	8

Q34a. Would you say your overall opinion of the **Republican Party** in Louisiana is very favorable, mostly favorable, mostly unfavorable, or very unfavorable?

Very favorable	10
Mostly favorable	37
Mostly unfavorable	22
Very unfavorable	18
Don't know/Refused (Vol.)	12

Q35a. Would you say that the **Democratic Party** in Louisiana is very liberal, liberal, somewhat liberal, moderate, somewhat conservative, conservative, or very conservative?

Very liberal	12
Liberal	20
Somewhat liberal	14
Moderate	25
Somewhat conservative	9
Conservative	4
Very conservative	6
Don't know/Refused (Vol.)	10

Q36a. Would you say that the **Republican Party** in Louisiana is very liberal, liberal, somewhat liberal, moderate, somewhat conservative, conservative, or very conservative?

Very liberal	4
Liberal	6
Somewhat liberal	6
Moderate	19
Somewhat conservative	17
Conservative	20
Very conservative	17
Don't know/Refused (Vol.)	10

Q33b. Would you say your overall opinion of the **Democratic Party** nationally is very favorable, mostly favorable, mostly unfavorable, or very unfavorable?

Very favorable	8
Mostly favorable	33
Mostly unfavorable	29
Very unfavorable	27
Don't know/Refused (Vol.)	5

Q34b. Would you say your overall opinion of the **Republican Party** nationally is very favorable, mostly favorable, mostly unfavorable, or very unfavorable?

Very favorable	7
Mostly favorable	35
Mostly unfavorable	29
Very unfavorable	24
Don't know/Refused (Vol.)	5

Q35b. Would you say that the **Democratic Party** nationally is very liberal, liberal, somewhat liberal, moderate, somewhat conservative, conservative, or very conservative?

Very liberal	24
Liberal	18
Somewhat liberal	11
Moderate	18
Somewhat conservative	6
Conservative	5
Very conservative	6
Don't know/Refused (Vol.)	12

Q36b. Would you say that the **Republican Party** nationally is very liberal, liberal, somewhat liberal, moderate, somewhat conservative, conservative, or very conservative?

Very liberal	4
Liberal	5
Somewhat liberal	5
Moderate	17
Somewhat conservative	13
Conservative	17
Very conservative	23
Don't know/Refused (Vol.)	15

Q37. Switching to another topic, in your own words, what do you think is the biggest problem that public schools in Louisiana must deal with?

[OPEN-ENDED, See Figure 4.5 for coded frequencies]

Q38. Do you favor or oppose the state department of education rating each public school district with an A, B, C, D, or F letter grade based mostly on how students perform on standardized tests?

Favor	55
Oppose	39
Don't know/Refused (Vol.)	7

Q39. In your opinion, is there too much emphasis on standardized testing in the public schools in your community, not enough emphasis, or about the right amount?

Too much	46
Not enough	12
About the right amount	34
Don't know/Refused (Vol.)	8

Q40. In your opinion, are student achievement standards in the public schools in your community too high, about right, or too low?

Too high	10
About right	46
Too low	37
Don't know/Refused (Vol.)	6

[Respondents randomly assigned to Q41a or q41b]

Q41a. As you may know, in the last few years states have been deciding whether or not to use the Common Core, which are standards for reading and math that are the same across the states. In the states that have these standards, they will be used to hold public schools accountable for their performance. Do you favor or oppose the use of the Common Core in Louisiana?

Favor	34
Oppose	59
Don't know/Refused (Vol.)	7

Q41b. As you may know, in the last few years states have been deciding whether or not to use standards for reading and math that are the same across the states. In the states that have these standards, they will be used to hold public schools accountable for their performance. Do you favor or oppose the use of these standards in Louisiana?

Favor	57
Oppose	37
Don't know/Refused (Vol.)	6

Q42. Do you favor or oppose providing parents with children in failing public schools with tax money in the form of scholarships to help pay for their children to attend private or religious schools?

Favor	48
Oppose	46
Don't know/Refused (Vol.)	6

Q43. A charter school is a public school that functions independently of local school district control. Would you favor or oppose opening more charter schools as long as they maintain certain standards set by the state government?

Favor	68
Oppose	29
Don't know/Refused (Vol.)	4

[Respondents randomly assigned to Q44a or q44b]

Q44a. Now, thinking about higher education, who do you think should be primarily responsible for funding Louisiana's public colleges and universities – the state government or the students who attend these schools and their families?

State government	57
Students and their families	30
Don't know/Refused (Vol.)	14

Q44b. Now, thinking about higher education, who do you think should be primarily responsible for deciding how much tuition should cost at Louisiana's public colleges and universities – the state government or the colleges and universities themselves?

State government	32
College and universities themselves	62
Don't know/Refused (Vol.)	6

Q45. As you may be aware, TOPS is a scholarship program funded by the state of Louisiana that provides financial support for Louisiana high school students to attend Louisiana state colleges and universities. Some state leaders have proposed requiring approval from the state legislature before the amount of the award can be increased, even if tuition goes up. What about you? Would you favor or oppose requiring approval from the state legislature before the amount of the award can be increased, even if tuition goes up?

Favor	43
Oppose	49
Don't know/Refused (Vol.)	8

Q46. On another topic, how much of the time do you think you can trust the state government in Louisiana to do what is right? Just about always, most of the time, only some of the time, or never?

Just about always	2
Most of the time	16
Some of the time	60
Never	21
Don't know/Refused (Vol.)	1

Q47. For each of the following statements, please let me know whether you strongly agree, agree neither agree nor disagree, disagree, or strongly disagree: “Every citizen should have complete access to information about their state government.”

Strongly agree	56
Agree	39
Neither agree nor disagree	1
Disagree	3
Strongly disagree	1
Don’t know/Refused (Vol.)	0

Q48. “Sometimes state officials are justified in keeping government information from the public.”

Strongly agree	10
Agree	27
Neither agree nor disagree	6
Disagree	30
Strongly disagree	26
Don’t know/Refused (Vol.)	1

[Respondents randomly assigned to Q49a or Q49b]

Q49a. “Ordinary citizens should have access to records about any incentives the state government gives to businesses for locating or expanding in Louisiana.”

Strongly agree	35
Agree	47
Neither agree nor disagree	3
Disagree	9
Strongly disagree	3
Don’t know/Refused (Vol.)	3

Q49b. “Ordinary citizens should have access to the governor’s appointment calendar and schedule, including information about who he meets with and what events he attends.”

Strongly agree	20
Agree	31
Neither agree nor disagree	12
Disagree	28
Strongly disagree	7
Don’t know/Refused (Vol.)	4

Q50. Now, thinking about race relations in Louisiana, do you think race relations in Louisiana are getting better, getting worse or staying about the same?

Getting better	16
Getting worse	33
Staying about the same	49
Don't know/Refused (Vol.)	1

Q51. Do you favor or oppose removing monuments of people who fought on the side of the Confederacy during the Civil War from public spaces?

Favor	20
Oppose	73
Don't know/Refused (Vol.)	7

Q52. Do you favor or oppose the state of Louisiana issuing license plates that contain the image of the Confederate battle flag when requested by individual drivers?

Favor	49
Oppose	44
Don't know/Refused (Vol.)	8

Q53. Would you favor or oppose a statewide ban on the sale of assault weapons?

Favor	36
Oppose	61
Don't know/Refused (Vol.)	3

Q54. Would you favor or oppose stricter statewide restrictions on access to firearms?

Favor	55
Oppose	43
Don't know/Refused (Vol.)	2

Q55. Do you think abortion should be legal in all cases, legal in most cases, illegal in most cases, or illegal in all cases?

Legal in all cases	13
Legal in most cases	27
Illegal in most cases	29
Illegal in all cases	26
Don't know/Refused (Vol.)	5

Q56. Do you favor or oppose allowing same-sex couples to marry legally?

Favor	41
Oppose	53
Don't know/Refused (Vol.)	7

Q57. If a business provides wedding services, such as catering or flowers, should it be allowed to refuse those services to same-sex couples for religious reasons, or required to provide those services as it would to all customers?

Be allowed to refuse those services to same sex couples for religious reasons	52
Be required to provide those services to same sex couples as it would to all other customers	41
Don't know/Refused (Vol.)	6

Q58. Do you favor or oppose allowing Syrian refugees to move into Louisiana?

Favor	24
Oppose	68
Don't know/Refused (Vol.)	9

Q59. Generally speaking do you consider yourself a Democrat, Republican, Independent, or what?

Democrat	29
Republican	26
Independent	35
Other	4
Don't know/Refused (Vol.)	6

[Q60a was asked only if respondents answered 'Democrat' or 'Republican' to Q59.]

Q60a. Would you consider yourself a strong or a not so strong **[INSERT ANSWER TO Q59]**?

Strong	59
Not so Strong	40
Don't know/Refused (Vol.)	2

[Q60b was asked only if respondents did not answer 'Democrat' or 'Republican' to Q59.]

Q60b. Would you say, you lean to the Democratic Party or Republican Party, or would you say you don't lean to either party?

Democratic Party	10
Republican Party	27
Independent (Don't lean to either party)	62
Don't know/Refused (Vol.)	1

Q61. When it comes to politics, would you say you are very liberal, liberal, somewhat liberal, moderate, somewhat conservative, conservative, or very conservative?

Very liberal	4
Liberal	9
Somewhat liberal	10
Moderate	25
Somewhat conservative	14
Conservative	19
Very conservative	11
Don't know/Refused (Vol.)	8

Appendix: Cross Tabs by Party Identification

NOTE: Frequencies for a given question represent percentages only among Democrats or Republicans (including leaners) who were asked that particular question. Not all respondents were asked each question. Percentages may not sum to 100 due to rounding. Top line frequencies for responses from overall sample on these issues will be reported in specific issues of the *2016 Louisiana Survey* series that cover the respective topic or in the full report containing all results.

Responses that receive a majority among a political party are highlighted. Questions where majority of Democrats and majority of Republicans answer with different responses are marked with an asterisk (*).

K-12 Spending: What about spending for primary and secondary education? Should this be increased, decreased, or kept about the same?

	<u>Democrats</u>	<u>Republicans</u>
Increased	69	48
Decreased	3	7
Kept about the same	25	44
Don't know/Refused (Vol.)	3	2

Higher Education Spending: What about spending for higher education? Should this be increased, decreased, or kept about the same?

	<u>Democrats</u>	<u>Republicans</u>
Increased	73	48
Decreased	2	8
Kept about the same	24	43
Don't know/Refused (Vol.)	1	1

Health Care Spending: What about spending for health care? Should this be increased, decreased, or kept about the same?

	<u>Democrats</u>	<u>Republicans</u>
Increased	62	27
Decreased	7	21
Kept about the same	27	47
Don't know/Refused (Vol.)	4	4

Transportation Infrastructure Spending: What about spending for roads, bridges, and highways? Should this be increased, decreased, or kept about the same?

	<u>Democrats</u>	<u>Republicans</u>
Increased	70	70
Decreased	5	3
Kept about the same	25	26
Don't know/Refused (Vol.)	1	1

Law Enforcement & Prison Spending: What about spending for prisons and law enforcement? Should this be increased, decreased, or kept about the same?

	<u>Democrats</u>	<u>Republicans</u>
Increased	28	40
Decreased	25	14
Kept about the same	46	43
Don't know/Refused (Vol.)	2	3

***Welfare Spending:** What about spending for welfare, food stamps, and other public assistance programs? Should this be increased, decreased, or kept about the same?

	<u>Democrats</u>	<u>Republicans</u>
Increased	22	6
Decreased	22	67
Kept about the same	54	25
Don't know/Refused (Vol.)	2	3

Coastal Protection & Restoration Spending: What about spending for coastal protection and restoration? Should this be increased, decreased, or kept about the same?

	<u>Democrats</u>	<u>Republicans</u>
Increased	44	39
Decreased	4	8
Kept about the same	46	44
Don't know/Refused (Vol.)	6	9

Raising Minimum Wage: Now we would like to ask you about some economic issues. First, do you favor or oppose raising the minimum wage in Louisiana to \$8.50 an hour?

	<u>Democrats</u>	<u>Republicans</u>
Favor	88	59
Oppose	11	38
Don't know/Refused (Vol.)	1	2

***Raising Taxes on Wealthy & Corporations:** In your view, what would do more to reduce poverty?

	<u>Democrats</u>	<u>Republicans</u>
Raising taxes on wealthy people & corporations in order to expand programs for the poor	67	23
Lowering taxes on wealthy people & corporations in order to encourage more investment & economic growth	18	61
Don't know/Refused (Vol.)	14	17

Common Core: As you may know, in the last few years states have been deciding whether or not to use the Common Core, which are standards for reading and math that are the same across the states. In the states that have these standards, they will be used to hold public schools accountable for their performance. Do you favor or oppose the use of the Common Core in Louisiana?

	<u>Democrats</u>	<u>Republicans</u>
Favor	47	23
Oppose	45	70
Don't know/Refused (Vol.)	9	7

***School Vouchers:** Do you favor or oppose providing parents with children in failing public schools with tax money in the form of scholarships to help pay for their children to attend private or religious schools?

	<u>Democrats</u>	<u>Republicans</u>
Favor	52	39
Oppose	40	55
Don't know/Refused (Vol.)	7	6

Charter Schools: A charter school is a public school that functions independently of local school district control. Would you favor or oppose opening more charter schools as long as they maintain certain standards set by the state government?

	<u>Democrats</u>	<u>Republicans</u>
Favor	67	73
Oppose	30	25
Don't know/Refused (Vol.)	3	3

Requiring Legislative Approval to Increase TOPS: As you may be aware, TOPS is a scholarship program funded by the state of Louisiana that provides financial support for Louisiana high school students to attend Louisiana state colleges and universities. Some state leaders have proposed requiring approval from the state legislature before the amount of the award can be increased, even if tuition goes up. What about you? Would you favor or oppose requiring approval from the state legislature before the amount of the award can be increased, even if tuition goes up?

	<u>Democrats</u>	<u>Republicans</u>
Favor	38	47
Oppose	53	43
Don't know/Refused (Vol.)	8	9

Removal of Confederate Monuments: Do you favor or oppose removing monuments of people who fought on the side of the Confederacy during the Civil War from public spaces?

	<u>Democrats</u>	<u>Republicans</u>
Favor	34	6
Oppose	56	92
Don't know/Refused (Vol.)	11	3

***Stricter Restrictions on Firearms:** Would you favor or oppose stricter statewide restrictions on access to firearms?

	<u>Democrats</u>	<u>Republicans</u>
Favor	71	41
Oppose	28	56
Don't know/Refused (Vol.)	2	3

***Abortion:** Do you think abortion should be legal in all cases, legal in most cases, illegal in most cases, or illegal in all cases?

	<u>Democrats</u>	<u>Republicans</u>
Legal in all/most cases	53	27
Illegal in all/most cases	39	69
Don't know/Refused (Vol.)	8	4

Same Sex Marriage: Do you favor or oppose allowing same-sex couples to marry legally?

	<u>Democrats</u>	<u>Republicans</u>
Favor	44	32
Oppose	50	61
Don't know/Refused (Vol.)	6	8

***‘Religious Freedom Law’:** If a business provides wedding services, such as catering or flowers, should it be allowed to refuse those services to same-sex couples for religious reasons, or required to provide those services as it would to all customers?

	<u>Democrats</u>	<u>Republicans</u>
Be allowed to refuse those services	38	74
Be required to provide those services	54	22
Don't know/Refused (Vol.)	9	5

Allowing Syrian Refugees to Settle in Louisiana: Do you favor or oppose allowing Syrian refugees to move into Louisiana?

	<u>Democrats</u>	<u>Republicans</u>
Favor	39	11
Oppose	50	84
Don't know/Refused (Vol.)	12	5