

2015

Louisiana Survey 2015

LSU Reilly Center for Media & Public Affairs

THE LOUISIANA SURVEY 2015

LSU

Public Policy Research Lab



Full Report

Sponsored by:
The Reilly Center for Media and Public Affairs
Manship School of Mass Communication
Louisiana State University



**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION
ON THIS REPORT:**

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About the Louisiana Survey

The 2015 Louisiana Survey is the fourteenth in an annual series conducted by Louisiana State University's Public Policy Research Lab (PPRL). For the 2015 edition of the Louisiana Survey, we contacted 980 adult residents of the state between January 12 and February 13. The Louisiana Survey is sponsored by the Reilly Center for Media and Public Affairs in Louisiana State University'sanship School of Mass Communication. The survey has been conducted each year since 2003 and twice in 2006, establishing rich longitudinal measures of public opinion in Louisiana. The mission of the Louisiana Survey is to establish benchmarks as well as to assess 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 2015 Louisiana Survey, this core is supplemented by measures of public attitudes about current issues such as tax incentives for attracting businesses, the Common Core State Standards, cost control measures for the Taylor Opportunity Program for Students (TOPS), Medicaid expansion under the federal Affordable Care Act, race relations and law enforcement, same-sex marriage, and legalization or decriminalization of marijuana.

As part of an effort to assure that the Louisiana Survey fulfills its public service mission, the research team solicited input from an Advisory Committee. This committee 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 the committee members 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.

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About the 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 mass communication and its many faceted relationships with social, economic, and political issues. Evident in everything the Center does is its commitment to strengthen and advance 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. It takes seriously its role, within the Flagship University, to respond quickly in times of crisis to help state governance, 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.

Dr. Amy Reynolds, Director, Reilly Center for Media and Public Affairs

About the Public Policy Research Lab

Louisiana State University's Public Policy Research Lab (PPRL) is a research center dedicated to high quality, state-of-the-art data collection and analytics, with a special emphasis on survey research. PPRL is a joint effort of the Manship School of Mass Communication's Reilly Center for Media and Public Affairs and the College of Humanities and Social Sciences.

PPRL provides a variety of services including survey research, 'big data' analytics, social media tracking, and focus group interviews. The Lab is primarily known for its telephone survey work. PPRL has 52 computer-assisted telephone interview call stations and a corps of highly-trained, well-supervised professional callers. It is one of the largest phone survey data collection facilities in the Southeastern Conference.

The Lab is dedicated to meeting the unique goals and objectives for each project by working closely with those seeking data, research expertise, or analysis. PPRL's clients have included: the federal Center for Disease Control and Prevention, the Louisiana Department of Health and Hospitals, the Louisiana Department of Labor, Louisiana Public Broadcasting, the Mississippi-Alabama Sea Grant Consortium, and the Baton Rouge Area Foundation.

More information on previous surveys may be found at: www.survey.lsu.edu

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Executive Summary

The Louisiana Survey tracks trends in state residents' perceptions about the state of the state. Additionally, the 2015 edition taps the public's views of pressing contemporary issues such as strategies for addressing budget shortfalls, tax incentives for economic development, the Common Core State Standards, cost controls for the Taylor Opportunity Program for Students, Medicaid expansion under the Affordable Care Act, race relations and law enforcement, same-sex marriage, and legalization/decriminalization of marijuana. To execute the survey, Louisiana State University's Public Policy Research Lab conducted a live-caller, dual frame survey (landline and cellphone samples) of 980 adult residents of the state. The total sample has a margin of error of +/- 3.1 percentage points.

Principal findings from the 2015 Survey include:

State of the State

- Perceptions that the state is heading in the right direction have slowly risen over the past two years. Results from the latest edition of the Louisiana Survey show that residents are now evenly divided between those who believe it is heading in the right direction (44%) and those heading in the wrong direction (45%).
- The trend for the public's confidence in state government has changed direction after a five year decline. Today, 39% say they are "very" or "somewhat" confident.
- Education (25%) and the economy (23%) continue to top the public's list of the most important problem facing Louisiana.
- Perceptions of business conditions in Louisiana have not soured despite a recent downturn in the state's economy. Overall, 26% think state business conditions are improving compared to a year ago, the largest share in seven years.
- Residents give relatively low marks to the quality of health care, the state's public schools, and transportation infrastructure. In contrast, they give the highest grades to the state's public colleges and universities. Nearly two-thirds (64%) give higher education an A or B grade.

State Finance

- A large majority of the public (83%) wants the state budget shortfall resolved through a combination of spending cuts *and* additional revenue, however they oppose reductions in key areas such as higher education and health care.
- When asked about specific reductions, however, the public wants more spending – not less – in areas such as elementary and secondary education, higher education, transportation, and health care.
- There is also little support for raising most specific taxes. The tax increases with the most support are tobacco taxes (50%), taxes on the gaming industry (49%), and alcohol taxes (42%).
- The public is poorly informed about most fiscal facts. Contrary to actual revenue and expenditure trends over the past seven years, a majority (54%) believes that state taxes have gone up over this

period. On the spending side, nearly a third (30%) say state government spending has “gone up a lot”.

- Nearly two in five (39%) say the state spends the most money on welfare programs, and a third (33%) say the state spends the most on prisons. Yet, each of these make up relatively small shares of actual state spending.

Tax Incentives

- Louisiana residents generally support using tax incentives to attract businesses to the state, but there is a stronger preference for programs that just reduce the amount of taxes businesses owe, such as deductions and exemptions, than for programs that issue payments to these companies, such as refundable tax credits. Nearly three fourths of residents (72%) support *reducing state taxes* on businesses to get them to come to Louisiana. A smaller majority (55%) supports *using state government funds to pay* businesses to get them to come to Louisiana.
- Both Democrats and Republicans support reducing state taxes on businesses as an economic development tool, but the parties divide on whether or not to pay public funds to businesses.
- The public remains supportive of tax incentive programs for businesses even when told specific arguments raised by critics.
- Republicans remain supportive of these programs even when the programs are criticized on the basis of costs or effectiveness. Democrats are more sensitive to the frame of the debate. A majority of Democrats (60%) support these incentives when told about direct costs to the state budget, but their support drops to 48% if they are told that incentives may go to companies that fail to create jobs.

Elementary and Secondary Education

- Louisiana residents dislike the phrase “Common Core” far more than they dislike the concept of common standards. When the Common Core label is dropped, support for common standards across states leaps from 39% to 67%.
- The Common Core label has become politically polarizing. A majority of Democrats (57%) support Common Core, and a majority of Republicans (62%) oppose. However, when the phrase “Common Core” is not used, large majorities from both parties support common standards.
- The share of the public claiming to be “very familiar” or “somewhat familiar” with Common Core is 62%, which is 13 percentage points higher than a year ago.
- A great deal of confusion continues to surround the standards. When asked to say whether or not a statement about Common core is true or false, anywhere from 28% to 47% often cannot even say.
- Nearly a third (31%) say it is true that Common Core was developed by the federal Department of Education under the leadership of President Barack Obama. Close to half (46%) say it is true that Common Core sets higher expectations for student performance than the standards Louisiana used previously, but a third (33%) say it is true that Common Core set lower expectations.
- However, these true or false answers often appear to be little more than guesswork and vary widely depending on how exactly the question is worded. For example, when asked one way, people are

more likely to say that state participation in Common Core is voluntary, but when phrased differently people are more likely to say that the federal government requires participation

- Fewer than one-in-five residents (18%) give public schools in the state a grade of A or B. This is the smallest share since the Louisiana Survey began asking this question. Nearly twice as many (35%) give A or B grades to the public schools in their own local communities.
- The share of A and B grades is 17 percentage points higher for local public schools than public schools around the state.
- Majorities support charter schools (75%) and the use of test scores when evaluating teachers (62%), but the public is less enamored with another key Jindal Administration education reform: vouchers, which a majority opposes.
- About three-fourths of the public support government funded universal pre-kindergarten. Support remains high even when funding is tied to sales tax increases (62%) or property tax increases (52%).

Higher Education

- Nearly two-thirds of residents (63%) say the state government – rather than college students and their families – should play the major role in funding higher education.
- To curb the costs of TOPS, 63% support excluding students in high-income families from receiving the award, but the public is evenly split on limiting the program just to low-income families (49% favor versus 48% oppose). The public also supports raising academic qualifications for receiving TOPS (59%) but opposes reducing the amount of the award (72%).
- College graduates judge the quality of public colleges and universities in Louisiana compared to institutions in the rest of the country more harshly than those who do not have college degrees. However, college educated residents are more likely to recognize that the cost of enrollment at the state's public colleges and universities is generally lower than most states.

Health Care

- The public supports accepting federal dollars to expand Medicaid coverage in Louisiana (60%).
- The public overestimates the share of the state population that lacks health insurance. Most reports peg the state's uninsured rate between the mid-teens and the mid-twenties, but Louisiana residents on average guess that 46% of the state population lacks health insurance.

Race Relations

- The share of the public saying race relations are getting worse rose from 21% in 2014 to 30% in 2015.
- Half of all African Americans have very little confidence that police officers in their community treat blacks and whites equally. In contrast, 41% of whites have a great deal of confidence in the local police to treat races equally.

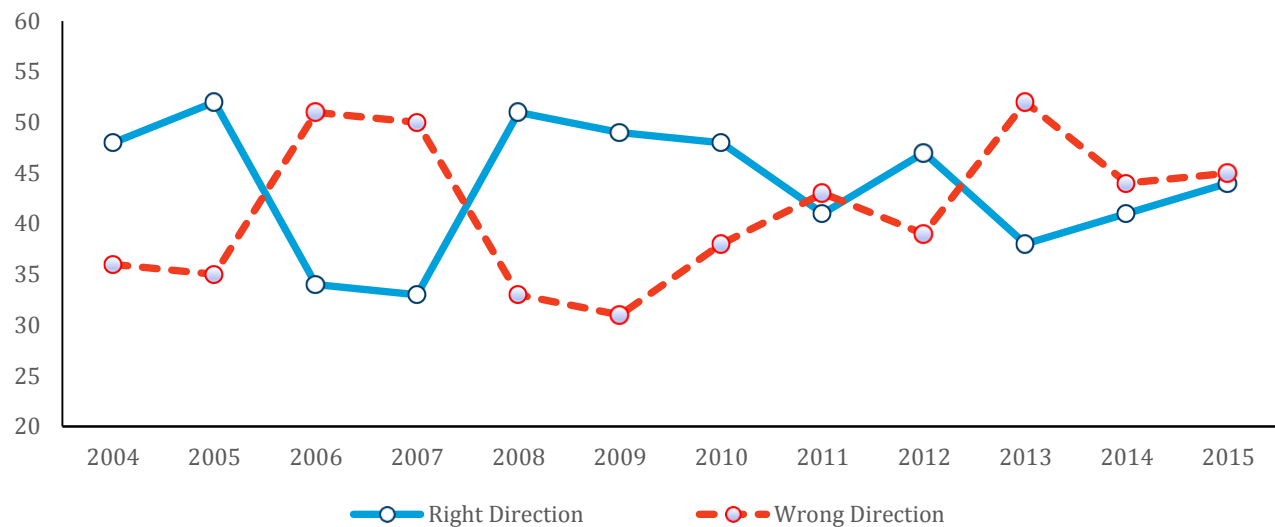
Social Issues

- Support in Louisiana for legally recognizing same-sex marriages continues to lag significantly behind national opinion. However, the lead opponents (51%) holds over supporters (42%) has shrunk by nearly half over the past two years.
- Adult Louisiana residents between the ages of 18 and 29 are the only age group for whom a majority (59%) favors allowing same-sex couples to legally marry in the state. Residents age 65 or older are the most opposed (62%).
- Support for legalizing marijuana for personal use (45%) continues to lag opposition (52%), but the gap has narrowed by half since 2013.
- The opposite pattern holds for legalizing marijuana for medical use – supporters (60%) outnumber opponents (39%), but this lead has shrunk considerably from a year ago.
- Only 18 to 29 year old residents have a majority supporting legalization of marijuana for personal use (68%), but residents 65 years or older are the only age group to oppose legalization for medical use (55%).
- Even if marijuana remains illegal, two thirds of the public (67%) say that people convicted of possessing small amounts should not serve jail time. This share jumps to 79% when respondents are told the costs of incarcerating these individuals.

Section 1: State of the State

Figure 1.1: Narrowing Gap in Direction of State

% who say state heading in right/wrong direction



Louisiana Survey, 2004-2015
Public Policy Research Lab

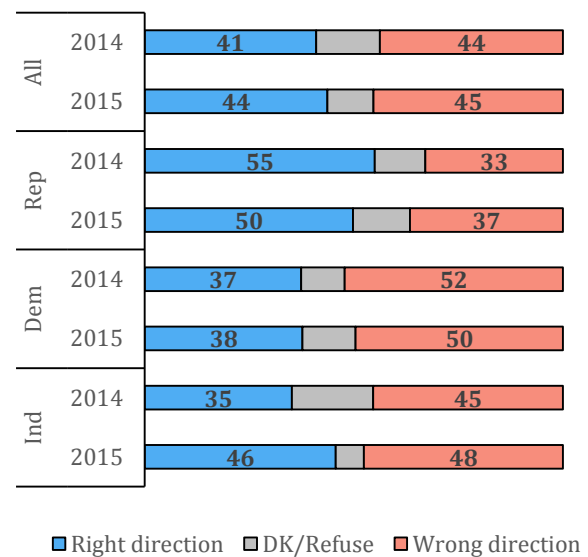
Public is Evenly Divided on Direction of the State

Today there is a statistical tie between those who say the state is heading in the right direction (44%) and those who say it is heading in the wrong direction (45%). This continues the modest two year growth in optimism (Figure 1.1). The gap that existed two years ago, when those who thought the state was heading in the wrong direction outnumbered those who thought it was heading in the right direction by 14 percentage points, has disappeared.

These opinions partly reflect partisanship (Figure 1.2). Half of all Democrats say the state is heading in the wrong direction, while half of all Republicans say the state is heading in the right direction. Interestingly, there has been no change in opinion among Democrats since 2014, but Republicans have slightly soured on the direction of the state. Most of the shift in opinion, however,

Figure 1.2: Partisan Division on Direction of State

% who say state heading in right/wrong direction by political party



■ Right direction ■ DK/Refuse ■ Wrong direction

Louisiana Survey, 2015
Public Policy Research Lab

comes from independents who saw an 11 point jump in the share saying the state is heading in the right direction.

Opinion about the direction of the state varies widely across the six geographic regions (see page 40 for definitions of the six regions). Residents in the southwestern part of the state have the most positive view – a majority (55%) say the state is heading in the right direction compared to 42% who say the state is heading in the wrong direction. This is the only region where right direction outpolls wrong direction. Northeast Louisiana stands at the opposite end of the state both geographically and attitudinally – only 35% of residents there see the state moving in the right direction, and half say it is going in the wrong direction. Wrong direction also outpolls right direction in the New Orleans area (47% vs. 38%) and northwest Louisiana (47% vs 39%). The two opinions are tied in the Baton Rouge area and in the southeast part of the state.

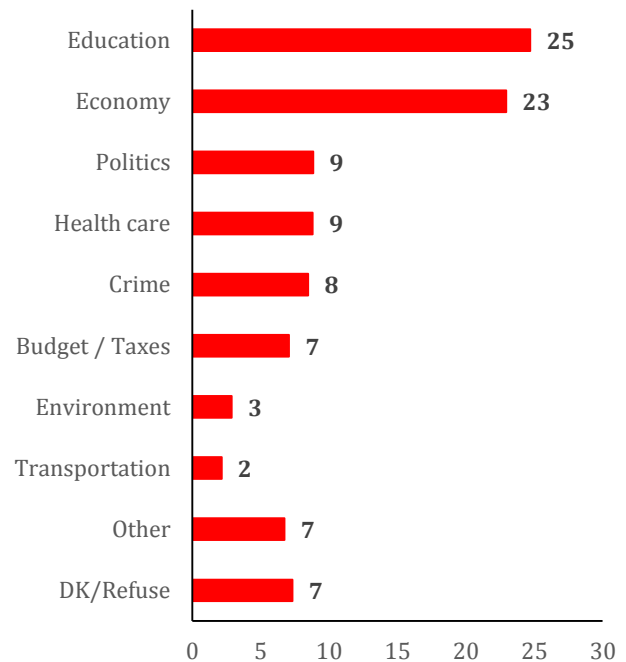
Same Old Problems, but Confidence No Longer Eroding

Louisiana residents continue to place the highest priorities on education and the economy as the state's most important problems. About one quarter of residents name education as the chief concern, and about another quarter name the economy (Figure 1.3).

Like perceptions about the direction of the state, the trend in the public's confidence that Louisiana's government will effectively deal with the most pressing problems has shifted direction. From 2009 through 2014, confidence steadily eroded. In 2015, for the first time in six years, the share of respondents saying they are 'very confident' or 'somewhat confident' in state government did not fall (Figure 1.4).

Figure 1.3: Education and Economy Top List of Concerns

% naming each as the state's most important problem



NOTE: Responses to open-ended question.

Louisiana Survey, 2015

Public Policy Research Lab

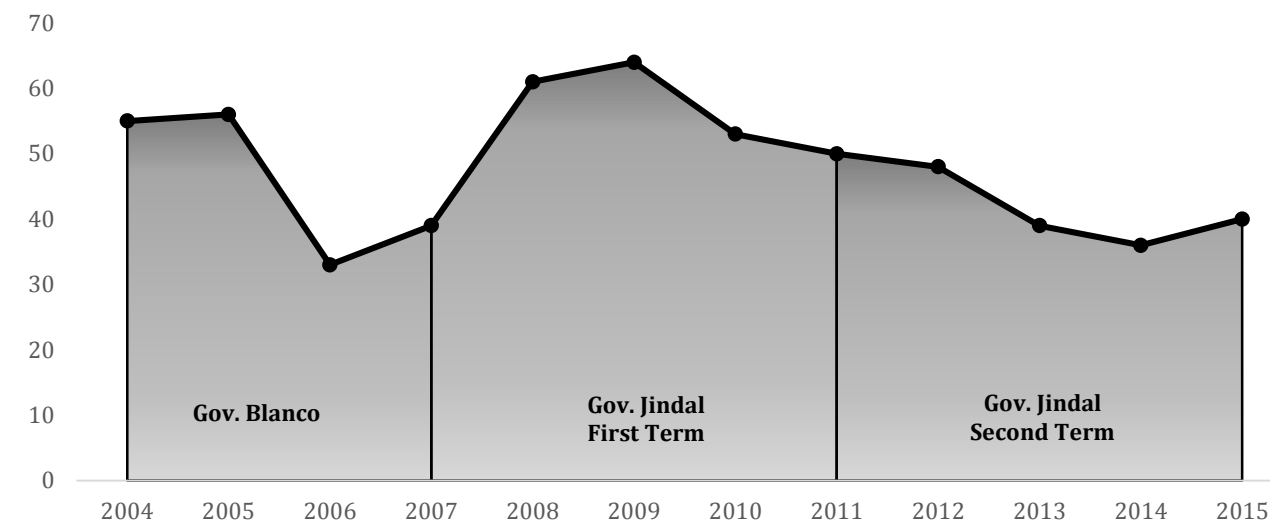
Growing Economic Optimism, Recent Shifts Not Registering with Public

The recent changes in the public's perceptions about the direction of the state and their confidence in government may have to do with evaluations of the Louisiana economy. About a quarter say that state business conditions are better than a year ago and a quarter say worse (Figure 1.5). While these responses do not reflect overwhelming economic optimism, they do reflect a rising sense that the state's economy is improving (Figure 1.6).

Also, there is significantly less pessimism about the state's economy than the nation's economy. Louisianans are also slightly more optimistic about the trend in business conditions in the state than they are about trends in their own financial situation.

Figure 1.4: Confidence No Longer Sliding

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



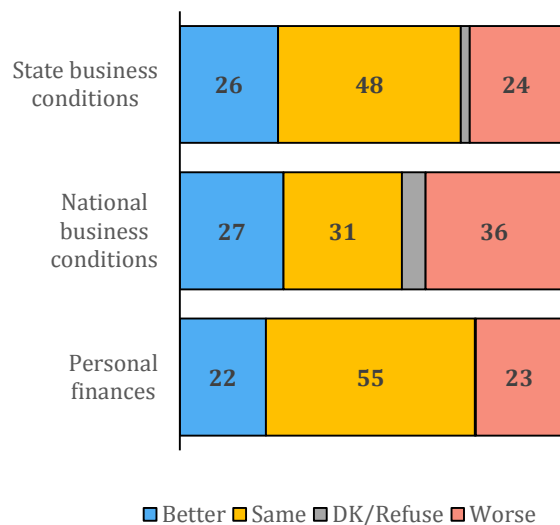
Louisiana Survey, 2004-2015
Public Policy Research Lab

The fact that evaluations of the state economy in 2015 look so similar to 2014 suggests that recent economic events have not colored the public's views. Since last year's survey, the unemployment rate in Louisiana has steadily risen even as the national rate declined (Figure

1.7). By the end of 2014, Louisiana's unemployment rate was worse than the nation's for the first time in more than a decade. Of course, the unemployment rate is just one facet of economic health, but it does provide a useful proxy for overall economic health because it moves with short term shifts in economic conditions.

Figure 1.5: Less Pessimism about State than National Economy

% saying _____ better, worse, or the same as a year



Louisiana Survey, 2015
Public Policy Research Lab

Figure 1.6: Highest Level of Optimism Since Recession

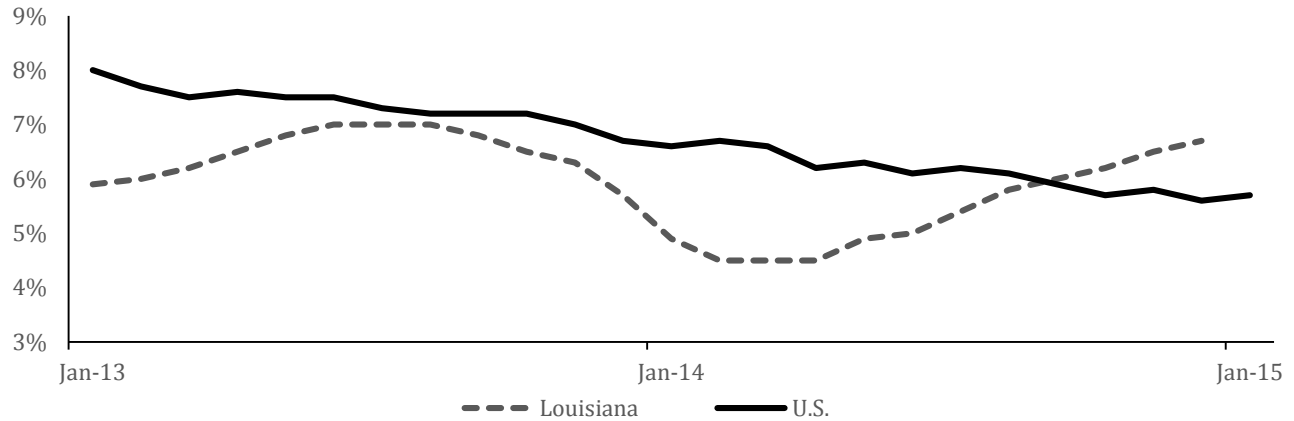
% state business conditions better than a year ago



Louisiana Survey, 2007-2015
Public Policy Research Lab

Figure 1.7: Louisiana Unemployment Surpasses Nation

% unemployed



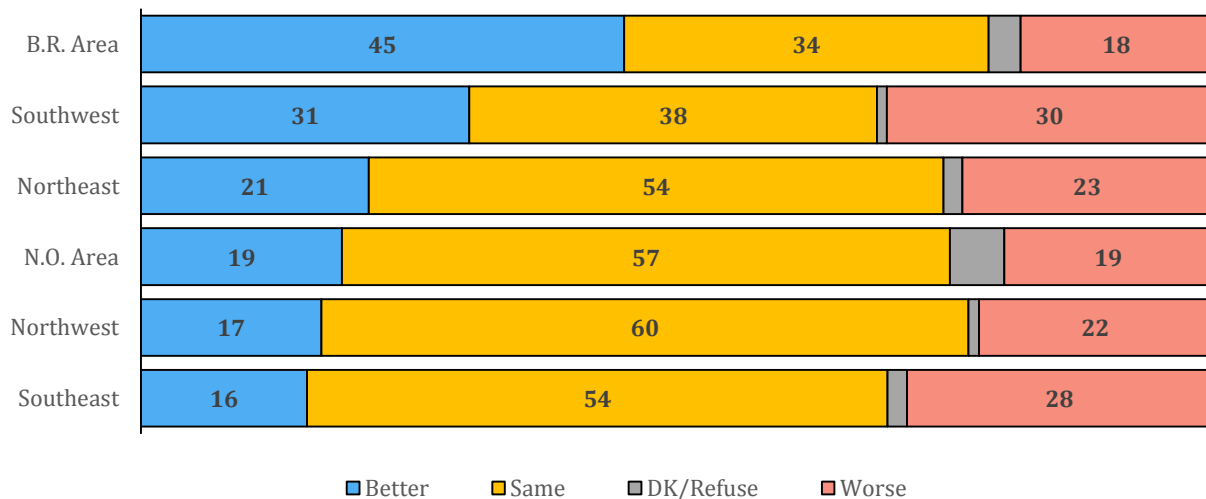
Bureau of Labor Statistics

Perceptions of economic trends partly reflect the conditions residents face in different parts of the state. For example, residents of the Baton Rouge area tend to take the most optimistic view of state business conditions (see Figure 1.8). Residents of southwest Louisiana – with a regional economy especially sensitive to the rise and fall of oil prices – have far more mixed assessments.

The political parties see the economy differently – especially the national economy. Among Democrats, 42% say that national business conditions are better than a year ago, 36% say they remain the same, and only 18% say they are worse. Among Republicans, 53% say they are worse, 29% say they are the same, and 12% say they are better.

Figure 1.8: Most Improvement Seen In Baton Rouge

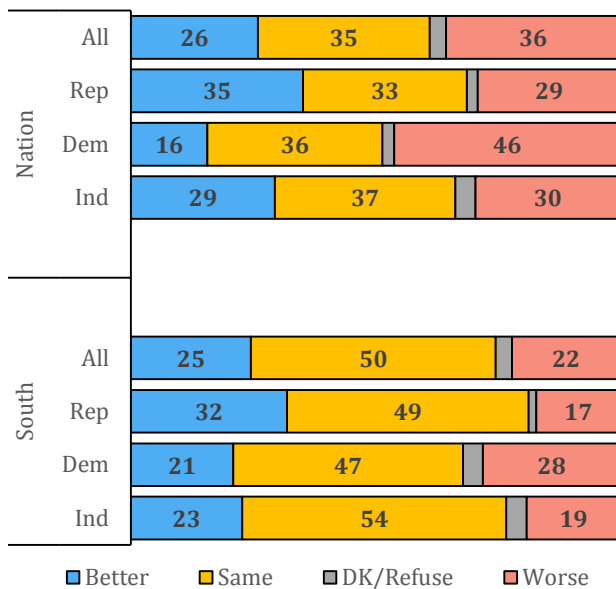
% saying state business conditions better, worse, or the same as a year ago



Louisiana Survey, 2015
Public Policy Research Lab

Figure 1.9: Parties See Economy Differently

% saying the state economy is better/same/worse than _____



Louisiana Survey, 2015
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Overall, only about one in four Louisiana residents say the state's economy is better than the national economy. More residents think the state is doing worse than the nation economically

(36%) than think it is doing worse than the rest of the south (22%).

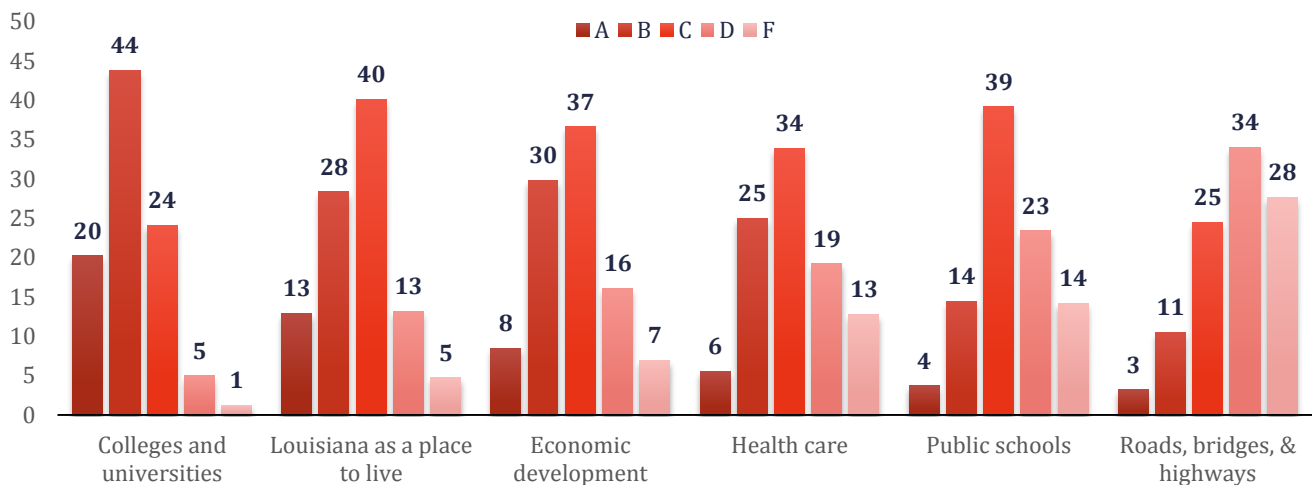
Partisan slants are evident here as well (see Figure 1.9). The share of Republicans who see the state's economy as better than the rest of the south is 11 points higher than the share of Democrats. For comparisons to the national economy, the difference balloons to 19 points.

Higher Education Tops Grades Given to State

For more than ten years the Louisiana Survey has periodically asked respondents to grade various government services in the state as well as an overall assessment of Louisiana as a place to live. As in previous years, respondents again give the highest marks to the state's colleges and universities among the six items on the 2015 Louisiana Survey (Figure 1.10). Approximately two-thirds of respondents give the state's colleges and universities an A or B grade. For no other item does the frequency of A and B grades rise above 50%. By far, the lowest grades are given to the state's public schools and transportation infrastructure.

Figure 1.10: Higher Education Gets Highest Grades, Transportation Lowest

% assigning each grade to each feature of the state



Louisiana Survey, 2007-2015
Public Policy Research Lab

Section 2: State Finance

Most Want Budget Shortfall Addressed with Blend of Spending Cuts and Tax Increases

A large majority of the public (83%) think that both spending cuts *and* tax increases should be used to address budget shortfalls (Figure 2.1). Thirteen percent want to concentrate only on spending cuts to deal with budget shortfalls, and just 2% want to focus only on tax increases. In all, 85% want tax increases to be part of the solution, and 96% want spending reductions to be part of the solution.

Among Republicans, 22% want *only* spending cuts, significantly more than the 13% of independents and 6% of Democrats who say the same. Yet even among Republicans, a clear majority prefer a combination of spending cuts and tax increases (75%).

Most of those who prefer a combined approach, however, also want the focus to be *mostly on*

spending cuts when asked a follow up question about which of the two approaches to emphasize. Overall, when combining responses to both questions, 72% want the state government to deal with budget shortfalls by focusing *only* or *mostly* on spending cuts. Just one in five Louisiana residents want to focus *only* or even *mostly* on tax increases.

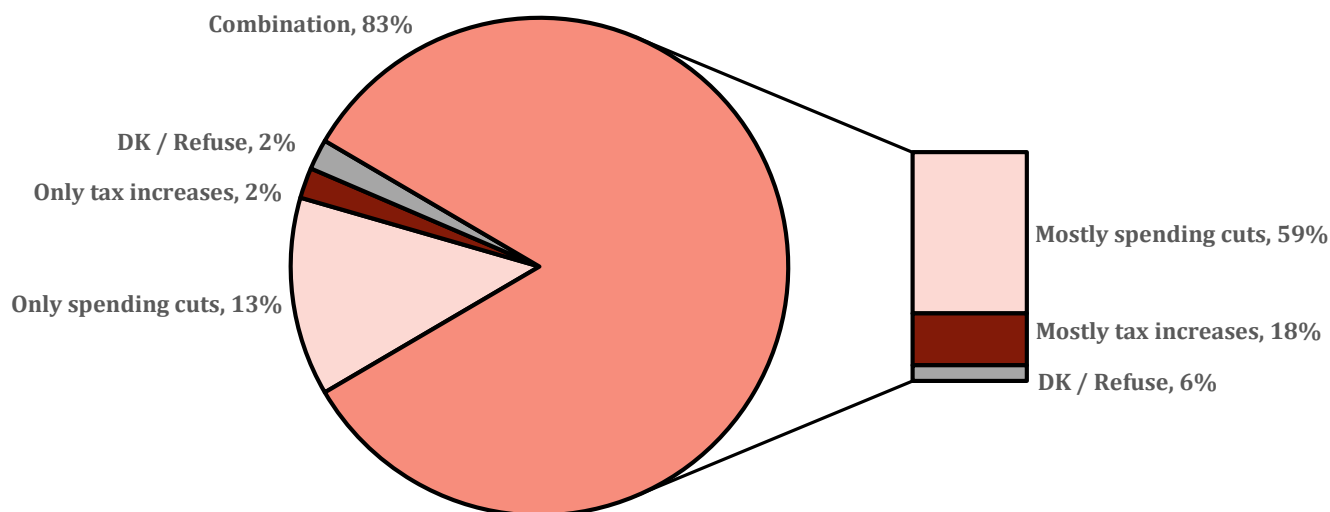
Public Has Little Stomach for Specific Spending Cuts

Even though the public says they are willing to consider tax increases in combination with spending cuts, there is little evidence for widespread support of specific cuts.

In fact, rather than calling for specific cuts, the public generally supports spending *increases* in a variety of programs (Figure 2.2). Large majorities want to increase – rather than cut – spending for K-12 education, higher education, transportation infrastructure, and health care.

Figure 2.1: Large Majority Wants Budget Addressed with Blend of Cuts and Taxes, Prefers Cuts

To deal with budget shortfalls, legislature and governor should focus on...

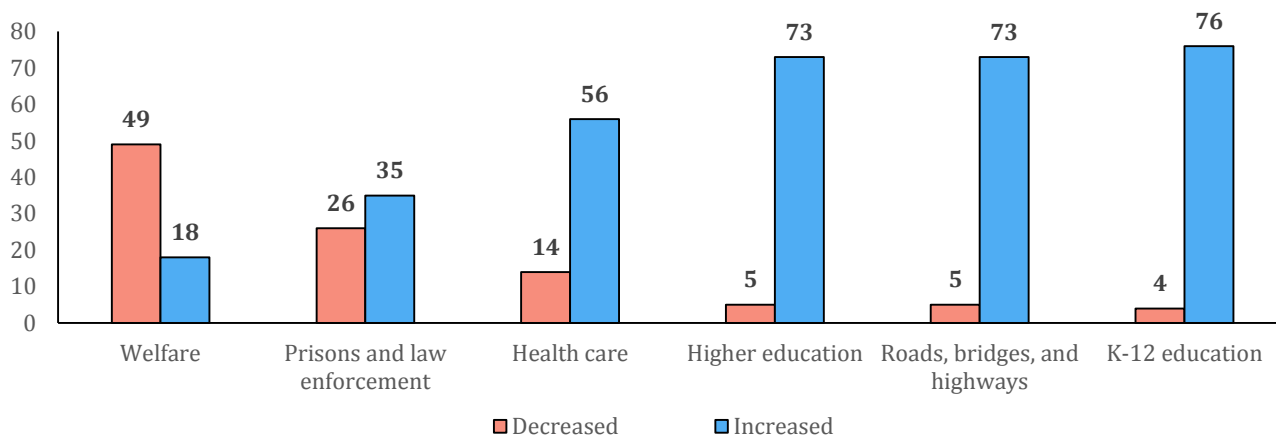


NOTE: Respondents first chose between 'only spending cuts,' 'only tax increases,' and 'a combination of both'. Respondents who chose 'a combination of both' were then asked to choose between 'mostly on spending cuts' and 'mostly on tax increases' in a followup question.

Louisiana Survey, 2015
Public Policy Research Lab

Figure 2.2: Most Want More Spending on Many Specific Programs

% Saying state spending for _____ should be increased, decreased, or kept the same



Louisiana Survey, 2015
Public Policy Research Lab

Only for public assistance programs, such as welfare, does a substantial share of the public support spending cuts (49%).

Little Support for Raising Specific Taxes

When asked if specific state taxes are too high and need to be reduced, too low and need to be raised, or just about right, Louisiana residents tend to stick with the status quo. The specific taxes include: Income taxes, sales taxes, local property taxes, taxes on alcohol, taxes on tobacco, corporate taxes, mineral taxes, and taxes levied on the gaming industry. Majorities say that the state income tax and sales tax are just about right as they currently stand (Figure 2.3). This is also the most frequent response for several other taxes – mineral taxes, corporate taxes, and local property taxes.

About half of Louisiana residents would like to see tobacco taxes and taxes on gaming raised – the only two taxes where this is the most popular response. A substantial portion of the public also favors raising taxes on alcohol (42%), although this is a statistical tie with those saying alcohol taxes are just about right.

In general, perceptions that taxes are too high are more frequent among lower income households.

Figure 2.3: No Tax Has Majority Support for Increases

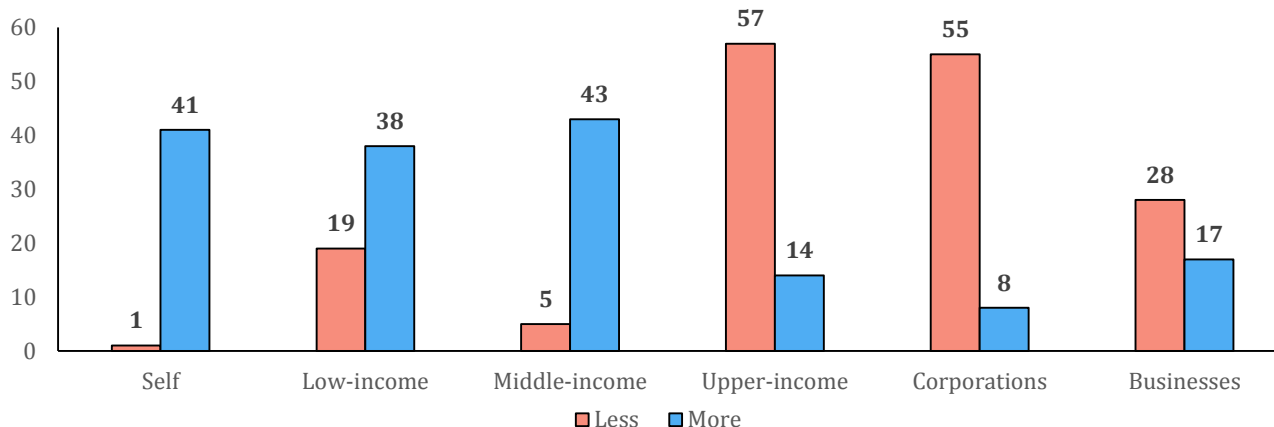
% Saying _____ are too high and need to be reduced, too low and need to be increased, or about right.



Louisiana Survey, 2015
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Figure 2.4: Most Say Wealthy People and Corporations Do Not Pay Fair Share

% Saying _____ pay less/more than their fair share in state taxes



Louisiana Survey, 2015
Public Policy Research Lab

For example, 49% of individuals with household annual earnings below \$20,000 (approximately the bottom quartile) say that sales taxes are too high, but only about half as many of individuals with household income of \$100,000 or more agree (24%). Likewise, half of those with the lowest household income say local property taxes are too high and need to be reduced, while just 32% of those in the highest earning households have a similar grievance. A similar pattern holds for mineral taxes, gaming taxes, and taxes on alcohol and tobacco. The exception is the income tax, for which individuals with lower household incomes are the most likely to say taxes are too low and need to be raised (29% versus just 11% among those with household earnings of \$100,000 or more).

Most Feel They Pay Their Fair Share While Others Shirk

Louisiana residents generally see themselves as paying their fair share in taxes. More than half (56%) say they pay about the right amount in taxes, but another 41% feel they are paying more than their fair share (Figure 2.4). Very few feel they are paying less than their fair share in taxes.

Overall, judgments about whether middle-income earners are paying more or less than their fair share look remarkably similar to judgments

about one's own tax burden. This is not true for the perceived fairness of taxes paid by upper-income and low-income earners. A majority of the public (57%) believes upper-income earners pay less than their fair share in taxes, while only 14% think they pay more than their fair share.

Opinion is more divided on whether or not low-income earners pay the right amount. Roughly equal shares of the public say low-income earners pay about the right amount (39%) as say they pay too much (38%). About one in five Louisiana residents say the poor are paying less than their fair share.

Beliefs about whether companies pay more or less than their fair share in taxes have a lot to do with how the question is phrased. To explore this dynamic, the 2015 Louisiana Survey asked two different versions of a question – one each to a randomly selected half of respondents. When asked about “corporations,” a majority (55%) says they pay less than their fair share. However, when the term “businesses” is used this share plummets to just 28%. When asked the latter version, about half of respondents say businesses are paying about the right amount. This suggests that even support for increases to corporate taxes may wane when those proposals are framed as affecting businesses.

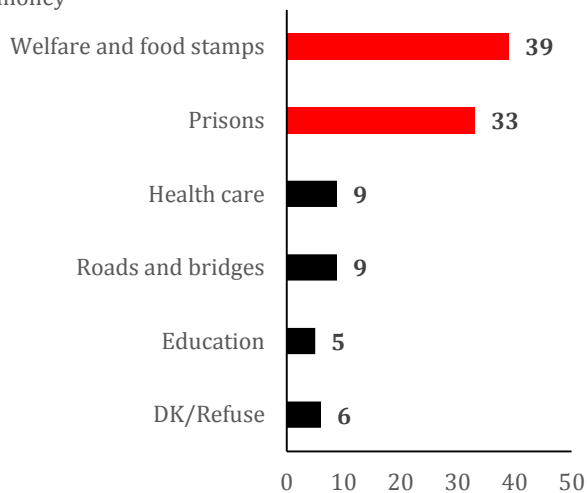
Public Knows Little about State Budget

How is it, then, that the public believes the budget can be balanced without reducing spending for specific programs? There are two potential answers. The first has to do with misperceptions about spending. Large swaths of the public are misinformed about where the state spends its money. From a list of five policy areas – education, health care, prisons, roads and bridges, and welfare and food stamps – respondents selected the one where they believe the state spends the most money.

About two in five Louisiana residents believe the state spends more on welfare and food stamps than on any of these other areas (Figure 2.5). Another third believe prisons get the largest share. In actuality these areas make up relatively small shares of total expenditures – three percent goes to corrections and less than one percent

Figure 2.5: Overestimating Spending on Public Assistance and Prisons

% naming each as the area where state spends most money



Louisiana Survey, 2015
Public Policy Research Lab

¹ These percentages are based on total expenditures (including federal funded expenditures by Louisiana) as reported by the National Association of State Budget Officers in *State Expenditure Report 2012-2014*. However, even if federal revenue is excluded, health

goes to public assistance programs such as welfare and food stamps.¹ In contrast, the state spends the largest shares on health care and education. About 19% of Louisiana's total expenditures goes to elementary and secondary education while an additional 10% goes to higher education.² A quarter of the state's total budget goes to Medicaid, which is only one piece of state health care spending. Yet, only 9% of Louisiana residents chose health care, and just 5% chose education as the areas where the state spends the most money.

Everyone does not make the same mistakes. Democrats (46%) are especially prone to overestimating the amount the state spends on prisons, while Republicans (60%) are more likely to overestimate spending on welfare and food stamps.

A majority of residents incorrectly believe that state taxes have risen over the past seven years, including one in five who think taxes have "gone up a lot."

The public is also poorly informed about recent trends in state finance. Although the state has repeatedly faced budgetary challenges in recent years, the basic facts of the state's fiscal situation have not registered broadly among the public. A majority of Louisiana residents (54%) believe that state taxes have risen over the past seven years, including one in five (20%) who think taxes have "gone up a lot." In actuality rates for state taxes have remained constant or been reduced since January 2008. Even if the term "state taxes" is defined instead as the amount of revenue the state draws from taxes, licenses, and

care and education remain the top two expenditure categories among these five by far.

² National Association of State Budget Officers. *State Expenditure Report 2012-2014*.

other fees (rather than as the rate of taxation), these revenues declined by nearly \$3 billion from 2008 to 2010 and have shown only slight increases since then.³

Similarly, a majority of the public believe state spending has increased since 2008 (56%), including 30% who say spending has increased a lot. Again, these widespread perceptions do not mirror the facts. Even with the most generous definition of spending – to include capital investments and spending with federal revenue – total expenditures for Louisiana show little change from 2008 amounts.⁴ When focusing just on state general fund spending, current expenditures remain nearly \$2 billion below 2008.

The public is a bit closer to the facts when it comes to higher education funding, but still misses the mark significantly. Since 2008, the state has cut support for higher education by

approximately \$700 million. Still, only about a third of residents (32%) know of these cuts. A slightly larger share (39%) believe higher education funding has actually *increased* over this period.

Public believes 44 cents of every dollar wasted

The second reason the public may believe the budget can be balanced without sacrificing valued programs or raising specific taxes has to do with perceptions of waste. The survey asks respondents to specify the number of cents they think is wasted out of every dollar spent by state government. On average, the public believes 44 cents of every state dollar is wasted. Therefore, the public may believe that overall spending can be reduced by cutting this perceived waste rather than cutting services.

³ Louisiana Division of Administration. *State Budget Document FY 2014-2015*.

⁴ National Association of State Budget Officers. *State Expenditure Reports*. 2008-2014.

Section 3: Tax Incentives

Public Likes Reducing Taxes on Businesses More than Issuing Payments

Like many states, Louisiana offers tax breaks to businesses in order to attract them to locate in the state. These incentives take two general forms. In some cases, the state offers tax exemptions or deductions which reduce the amount of taxes a company may have to pay. In other cases, the state offers refundable tax credits, meaning that if a company's credits exceed its tax bill the state pays public funds directly to the company. Recently, these programs have come under scrutiny as the state faces budget shortfalls.

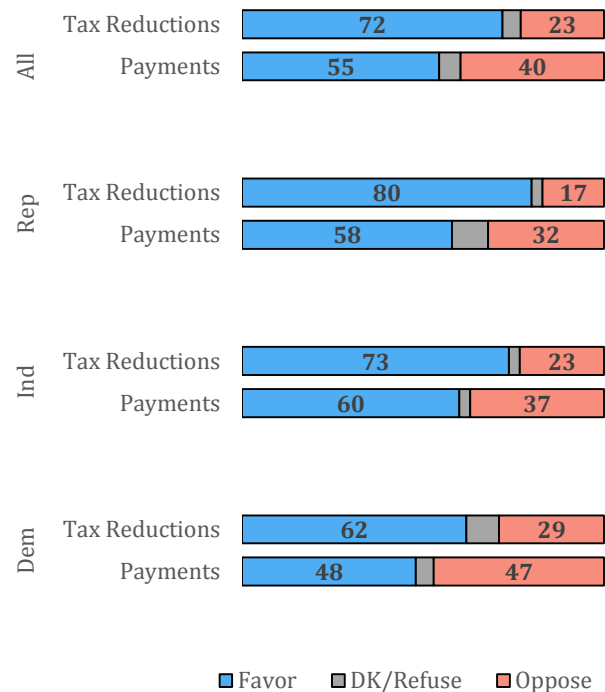
To examine how the structure of tax incentives might shape public support, the 2015 Louisiana Survey includes an experiment to compare responses to two questions. For the *tax reductions* question, respondents say whether they favor or oppose "reducing state taxes on businesses and manufacturers to get them to come to Louisiana." For the *payments* question, respondents say whether they favor or oppose "using state government funds to pay businesses and manufacturers to get them to come to Louisiana." The descriptions of the programs are designed to be more accessible to the layman than formal policy jargon would allow. Each respondent is randomly assigned to get only the *tax reductions* question or only the *payments* question.

For the *tax reductions* question, 72% favor this kind of incentive to attract businesses to the state (Figure 3.1). Furthermore, these programs have the support from large majorities in both Republicans (80%) and Democrats (62%).

For the *payments* question, support drops by 17 percentage points and opposition nearly doubles over the *tax reductions* version. Still, a majority (55%) favors these incentives as well. The effect of policy design on opinion is larger among

Figure 3.1: Tax Incentives Popular, More Support for Reducing Taxes than for Payments

% favor or oppose



Louisiana Survey, 2015

Public Policy Research Lab

Republicans than among Democrats. Support for payments is 22 percentage points lower than support for tax reductions among Republicans. The difference is 14 percentage points among Democrats. This drop leaves Democrats evenly split on payments (48% favor and 47% oppose).

Criticisms Move Democrats, Not Republicans

Supporters of these incentives claim they create jobs by bringing businesses to Louisiana. Critics contend that these programs reduce state revenue by more than one billion dollars a year. Critics also challenge the effectiveness of these programs, arguing that companies may claim the benefits even when they do not create jobs.

The 2015 Louisiana Survey uses a second experiment to examine how sensitive the public is to these arguments. The survey includes two questions that feature different arguments about the incentives. Both questions include an argument in favor of the incentives and an argument in opposition. The argument in support of the incentives is the same in both questions: “Supporters say these programs create jobs and grow the economy.”

The argument against the incentives is different across the two questions. The *costs* version of the question includes the statement: “Critics say these programs now cost the state more than one billion dollars a year that could otherwise be used for things like education and health care.” The *effectiveness* version includes the statement: “Critics say the state loses money on these programs when businesses that take the incentives fail to create jobs.” Each respondent is randomly assigned to only one of these two questions.⁵

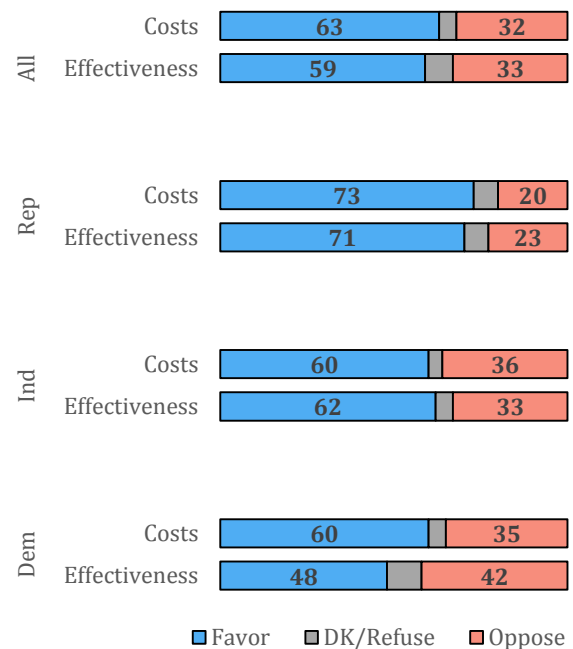
For both versions, support for the incentives is close to 60%, and about one third of respondents oppose. These small differences across the two versions mask more significant differences across the political parties. There is no evidence that Republicans are moved more by one set of arguments over the other; the patterns of opinion for Republicans are statistically indistinguishable across the two versions (see Figure 3.2).

Democrats are much more sensitive to the elements of the debate. Support for these programs drops by twelve percentage points

among Democrats when moving from the *costs* version to the *effectiveness* version. The former version wins a clear majority of support among Democrats (60%), while the latter version divides opinion such that neither side has a majority.

Figure 3.2: Democrats More Sensitive to Criticisms of Tax Incentives

% favor or oppose



NOTE: The *costs* version includes the statement: “Critics say these programs now cost the state more than one billion dollars a year.” The *effectiveness* version includes “Critics say the state loses money on these programs when businesses that take the incentives fail to create jobs.”

Louisiana Survey, 2015

Public Policy Research Lab

⁵ Additionally, the order in which the support and opposition arguments appear is also randomized within each version of the question.

Section 4: Elementary and Secondary Education

Public Supports Common Standards When Not Called 'Common Core'

As states have begun implementing Common Core, the standards have been caught up in a growing political debate. This debate appears to have tainted the Common Core brand, but perhaps not the concept of shared standards. People dislike the phrase "Common Core" far more than they dislike the concept of common standards.

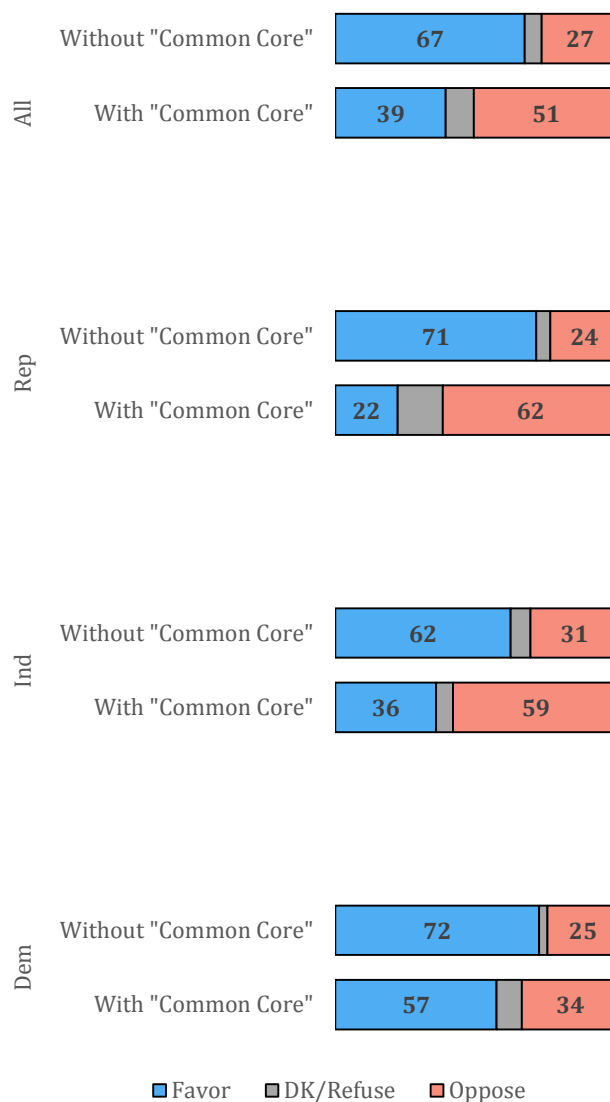
Most states quietly adopted the Common Core State Standards – a set of benchmarks detailing what students should master in math and English language arts at each grade level – without controversy by 2011. In recent years, however, criticism of the standards has been on the rise – particularly from conservative leaders and groups, but also from grassroots parent organizations and teacher unions (although the national bodies of the major unions continue to endorse the idea of common standards, they have taken issue with implementation of Common Core).

To examine whether or not the heated rhetoric now attached to Common Core influences opinion, the 2015 Louisiana Survey uses an experiment featuring two versions of a question tapping support for the educational standards. Each respondent hears only one of these two questions. The differences in wording between these two versions are underlined below.

One version of the question refers to the program by name: "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?"

Figure 4.1: Public Supports Principles of Common Core More When Not Labelled as "Common Core"

% favor or oppose



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

Louisiana Survey, 2015

Public Policy Research Lab

The alternate version drops the program's 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 performance. Do you favor or oppose the use of these standards in Louisiana?"

When the Common Core label is dropped from the question, support for the concept leaps from 39% to 67% (Figure 4.1). With the label, a majority of the public (51%) opposes Common core, but without the label a majority (67%) supports it.

The shift is especially pronounced among Republicans, for whom support rises from 22% to 71% without the offending phrase.

As a result, Common Core evokes significant partisan polarization. There is no difference in support of Democrats and Republicans when the program is not labeled as Common Core. However, when the phrase is present, a majority of Democrats (57%) support while a majority of Republicans (62%) oppose it. In other words, a broad consensus remains with respect to common standards, despite the fact that public debate over the Common Core polarizes the public.

More Claim Familiarity, but Confusion Remains

One reason why people respond differently to the 'Common Core' label than to the concept of common standards may have to do with what people think that label means. In the mind of the public the label may now reflect the rhetoric of the political debate which with have become familiar.

The 2015 Louisiana Survey uses two approaches to examine how informed people are about Common Core. The first is a simple question asking respondents how familiar they are with Common Core.

The share of the public claiming to be familiar with Common Core is higher than a year ago. In 2014 nearly half of the public (49%) described themselves as "very familiar" or "somewhat familiar," and about the same share (48%) said they were either "not very familiar" or "not familiar at all". This year, 62% of Louisiana residents say they are "very familiar" or "somewhat familiar" with Common Core. The share who say they are "not very familiar" or "not familiar at all" is 37%.

The trend suggests that people are becoming more informed about the standards, but an examination of their perceptions about Common Core reveals continued confusion.

The second approach to examine what people know about Common Core uses a series of true/false questions. The 2015 Louisiana Survey asks respondents whether statements purportedly describing Common Core are true or false. These statements cover four topics:

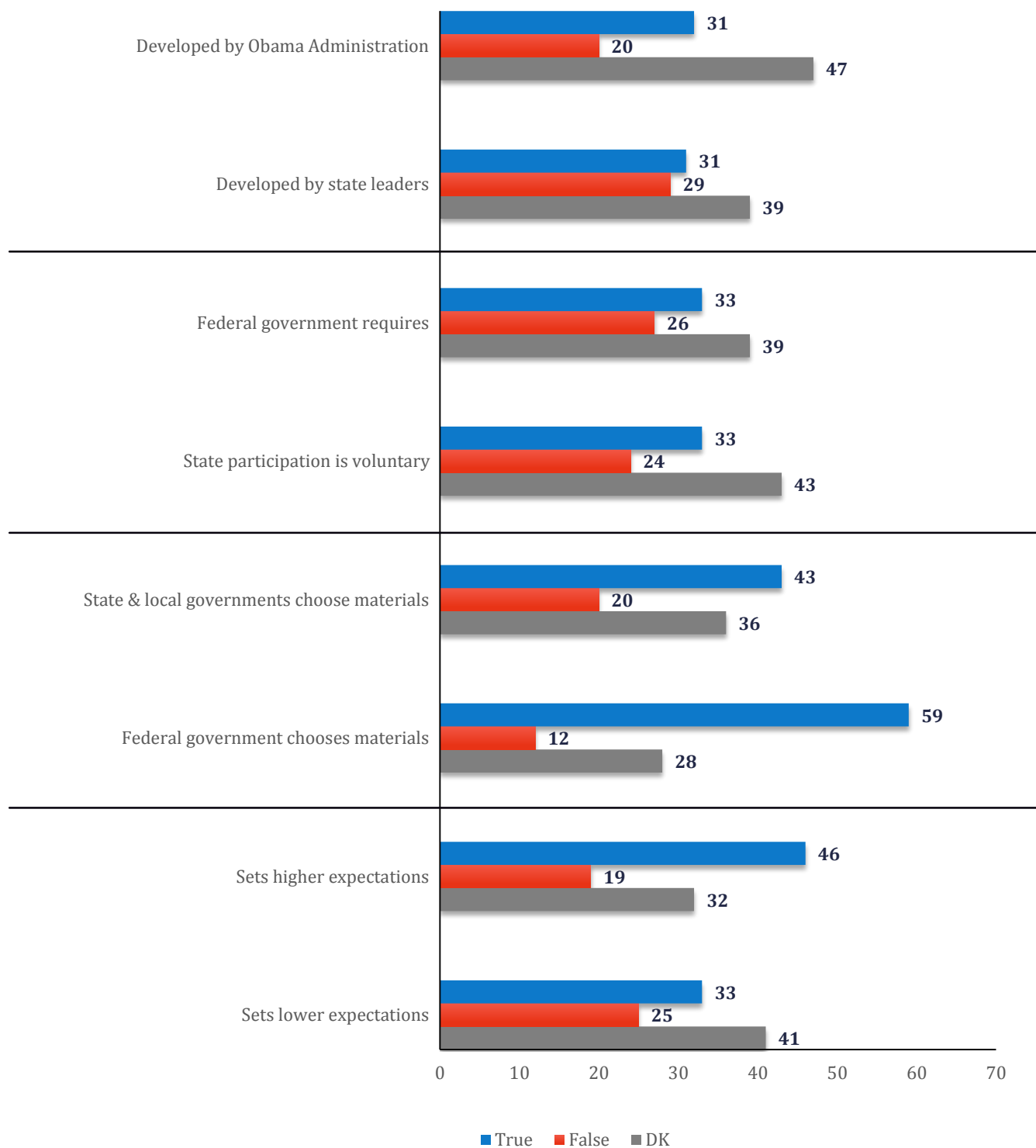
1. Source of the standards
2. Voluntary or mandated
3. Curricula and instructional authority
4. Academic rigor

Each of these topics has become a point of debate. For example, the movement to create the standards began when members of the Chief State School Officers (CCSS), a professional association for state superintendents of education, began discussing the idea for common standards in 2007. These conversations led to the creation of the Common Core State Standards Initiative in collaboration with the Council of Chief State School Officers in early 2009. The initiative drew upon input from teachers and education experts to develop the standards, which were released in 2010.

States then began deciding whether or not to adopt the standards. Forty two states and the District of Columbia are implementing Common Core. Another state has adopted just the English language arts standards but not the math standards. Three more states adopted the standards but have since voluntarily withdrawn.

Figure 4.2: Public Confused about What is True and False about Common Core

% saying statements are true or false



Louisiana Survey, 2015
Public Policy Research Lab

Four states have never chosen to adopt the standards.

However, critics of Common Core offer different interpretations of who is behind the standards and the role of the federal government in their adoption. Critics point to Pres. Barack Obama's and U.S. Department of Education Secretary Arne Duncan's support of Common Core as evidence of a federal role in the program. They contend that even in the absence of a congressional mandate, the U.S. Department of Education pressures states to adopt the standards through the federal Race to the Top program and by streamlining the path to waivers from No Child Left Behind requirements for states that adopt Common Core.

There is also significant debate about who gets to control what happens in classrooms – in terms of decisions about curricula, instructional materials, and textbooks – under Common Core. Defenders of Common Core note that the standards simply detail the grade level benchmarks for what students should learn in math and English language arts. Details about how students reach these benchmarks – decisions over curricula, instructional materials, and textbooks – remain in the hands of states and local school districts as before.

Opponents say otherwise. Some say sharing standards across states will itself open a door for future federal involvement in education decisions. Others say states and local districts will have fewer alternatives to choose from if companies that produce instructional materials and textbooks align their offerings to Common Core.

The issue of whether Common Core raises or lower expectations for what students should learn may be the most debatable. The answer has a lot to do with a person's opinions about what exactly children should know. Critics of Common Core say that the common standards will bring all states down to the lowest common denominator.

Supporters of the standards claim the standards are higher than what most states had in place before adoption. They point to initial drops of test scores in states that have already begun using Common Core as evidence that the standards – or at least the tests – are more demanding than those used before.

What does the Louisiana public think? To measure perceptions about Common Core on each of these four topics, a pair of statements is crafted to reflect two contradictory views. Each respondent then hears only one of the two statements in each pair.

The 2015 Louisiana Survey uses this approach because decades of survey research have shown that people have a tendency simply to agree with statements presented to them when they are unsure about the topic.⁶ Looking at the percent who answer 'true' to just one statement would leave us unable to separate those who genuinely believe the statement from those who are simply guessing.

Comparing the share of respondents answering 'true' for one version of a question to the share answering 'false' for the contradictory version (and vice versa) sheds light on how firmly people hold their perceptions. When differences in how a question or statement is phrased produce significant inconsistencies – as they do here – that suggests many responses may be based on guesswork or a vague understanding of the facts.

For example, some respondents are asked whether the following statement is true or false: "The Common Core was developed by the federal Department of Education under the leadership of President Obama." Almost half of respondents (47%) say they do not know whether the statement is true or false (figure 4.2). Nearly another third (31%) say it is *true*, while one fifth say (20%) say it is *false*.

⁶ For more information on this phenomenon, known as 'acquiescence bias,' see Robert S. Erikson & Kent L.

Tedin. (2014). *American Public Opinion*. 9th edition. Person Education Inc.

Compare this to responses when people are asked whether it is true or false that “The Common Core was developed by governors and state school superintendents with input from teachers.” A large share (39%) is still unable to say one way or the other when the question is phrased this way. About one third (31%) say it is *true* that governors and state school superintendents developed Common Core. Notice that the 31% who think this statement is *true* is not matched by a comparable share who say the contradictory statement about the Obama Administration’s role is *false* (20%). In other words, when asked one way people are more likely to say state leaders developed the standards, but when asked another way they are more likely to say the federal government developed the standards.

A similar pattern holds for the question about whether the standards are voluntary or federally mandated. A third of respondents (33%) believe it is *true* that “the federal government requires all states to use the Common Core,” but only 24% say that it is *false* that “the Common Core is a voluntary program in which states choose for themselves whether to participate.” These two perceptions are not only inconsistent with the facts (as evidence by several state opting to not join Common Core), but also inconsistent with each other. Again, when asked one way, people are more likely to say that state participation is voluntary, but when phrased from the other perspective, people are more likely to say that the federal government requires participation.

On the issue of who controls curricula, some respondents are asked whether the following statement is true or false: “Under the Common Core, the state of Louisiana and its local school districts decide which textbooks and educational materials to use in their schools.” One fifth say this statement is *false*, and 43% say it is *true*. Again, more than a third say they do not know.

We ask another set of respondents to say whether or not the opposite statement is true or false: “Under the Common Core, the federal government decides which textbooks and

educational materials to use in schools.” If 43% believe it is true that states and local districts retain this authority, then it is reasonable to expect that at least as many will say the statement about federal authority is false. However, that is not the case. Just 12% say the second statement is *false*. Indeed, 59% say that it is *true* that the federal government makes these decisions – despite the fact that only 20% think the claim that state and local governments make the decisions is *false*.

On the issue of the standards’ rigor, 46% say it is *true* that “the Common Core sets higher expectations for student performance than the standards Louisiana used before the Common Core was introduced.” Yet, when the statement is presented from the other side, only 25% say it is *false* that “the Common Core sets lower expectations for student performance than the standards Louisiana used before the Common Core was introduced.”

Evaluations of Schools Have Dropped In Recent Years

Since the Louisiana Survey began asking more than a decade ago state residents have never had a rosy view of the state’s public schools. In recent years, the grades the public gives the schools have tumbled to their lowest levels.

Today, fewer residents assign an A or B grade to the state’s public schools (18%) than at any point in the history of the Louisiana Survey – well below the peak of 33% seen in 2011 (Figure 4.3).

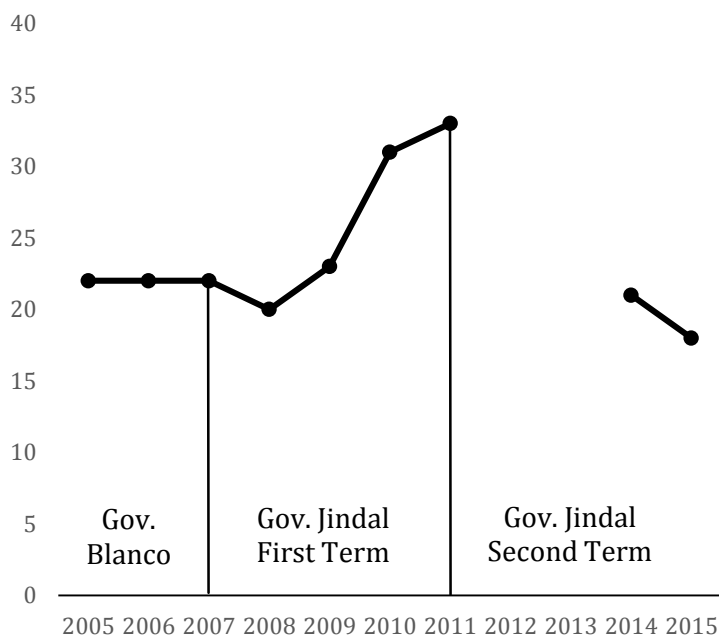
Residents from all different demographic and socio-economic backgrounds take a dim view of the state’s public schools, but more highly educated individuals and individuals living in higher income households find the schools especially repugnant. More than one-in four residents without a high school diploma (27%) give the schools an A or B. The share among residents who completed college is less than half that (12%). Similarly, close to one third (29%) of individuals with household incomes below

\$20,000 assign an A or B to the state's public schools, but only 6% of individuals with household earnings of \$100,000 or more have the same positive view.

The public gives higher grades to their own local public schools than they do to public schools across the state. Even so, the share of the public who believe their own local schools merit an A or B has declined from a peak of 45% in 2007 to a new low of 35% in 2015.

Although, the bump in grades for local schools relative to the state's schools as a whole cuts across all demographic groups, the size of the gap varies significantly across regions (Figure 4.4). The reasons for these differences vary across regions. The gap is particularly small in the southwest because residents tend to give higher grades to the state's schools generally. Compare this to the New Orleans area, where the small gap is due to low evaluations of their own schools.

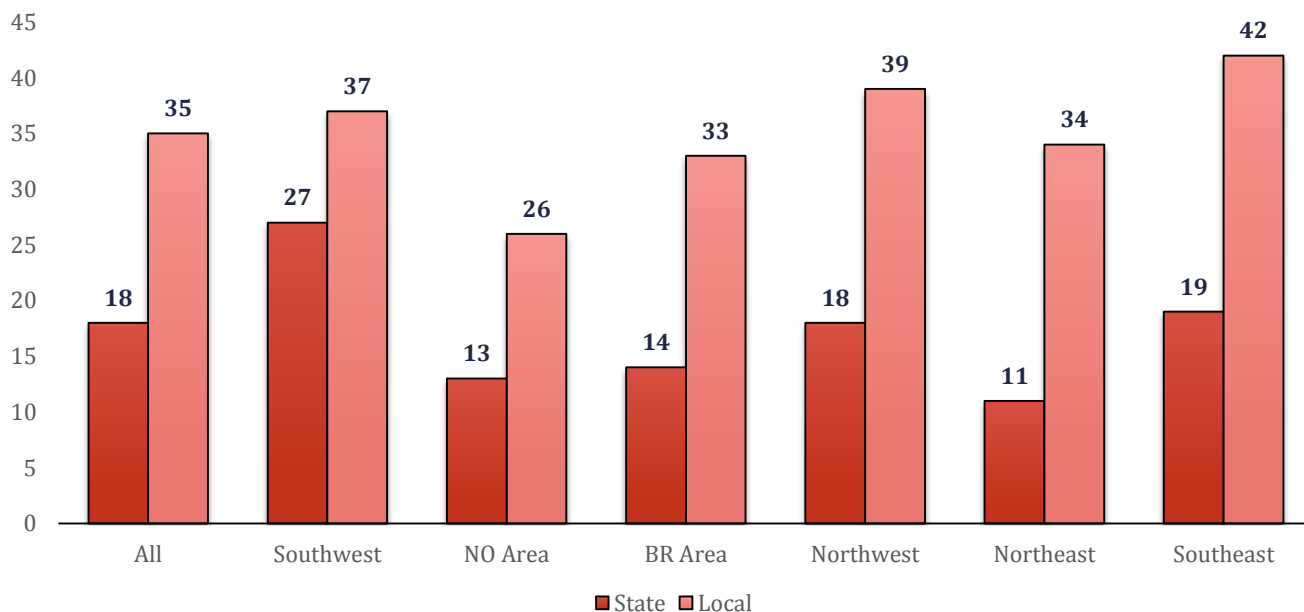
Figure 4.3: Public Less Satisfied with Public Schools
% assigning grade of A or B to Louisiana public schools



NOTE: Question not asked 2012-2013
Louisiana Survey, 2005-2015
Public Policy Research Lab

Figure 4.4: Local Public Schools Earn Higher Grades than Public Schools Statewide

% assigning grade of A or B to Louisiana/local public schools



Louisiana Survey, 2015
Public Policy Research Lab

Public Supports Much of the Jindal Administration's School Reforms but Opposes Vouchers

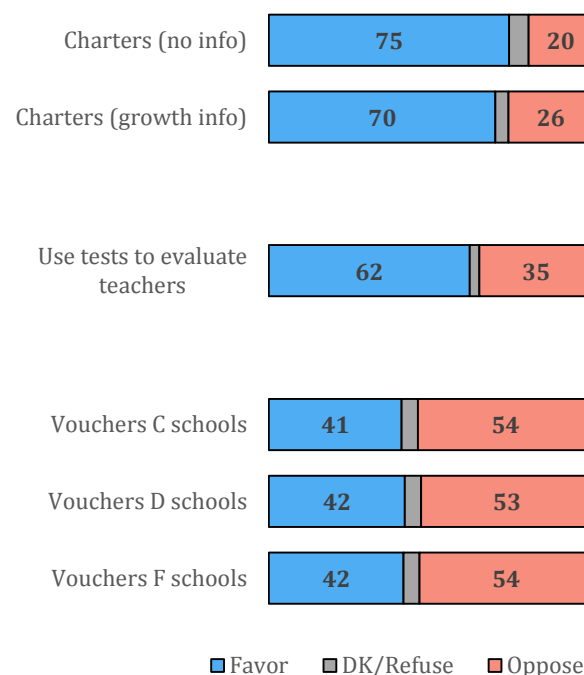
Despite souring evaluations of the public schools, the public generally likes core elements of Gov. Bobby Jindal's policy agenda for the schools. Since Gov. Jindal took office in January 2008, the state has increased the number of charter schools, increased the emphasis on students' standardized test scores in evaluations of teachers, and launched a statewide voucher program. The public strongly backs the first two, but remains more skeptical of vouchers.

Critics of the state's approach to charter schools frequently cite the large number of such schools that currently operate in the state. They contend that, even if charter schools are acceptable in principle, Louisiana over-utilizes them. However, information about the current number of charter schools in the state makes only a small dent in the public's support for these schools. The 2015 Louisiana Survey includes an experiment in which one randomly selected half of respondents are asked their opinion of charter schools while a second randomly selected half is first told, "In recent years, the number of charter schools in Louisiana has grown, and more than 130 currently operate in the state." This extra information decreases support by five percentage points, nevertheless support for charter schools remains at 70% (Figure 4.5).

A majority of the public (62%) also favors including student standardized test scores in the evaluation of teachers. Majority support holds across most demographic and partisan groups. One key exception is the college educated. Individuals with college degrees are evenly divided on the subject with 48% favoring and 50% opposing. It should be noted that this question only references basing teacher evaluations in part on test scores; it does not necessarily measure how much the public supports the various ways these scores might be used in teacher evaluations such as using them for tenure determination or salary increases.

Figure 4.5: Support for Charters and Teacher Evaluations, but not Vouchers

% favor or oppose



NOTE: Half of respondents were told "In recent years, the number of charter schools in Louisiana has grown, and more than 130 currently operate in the state." The other half was not provided this information.

Louisiana Survey, 2015

Public Policy Research Lab

Previous examinations of public opinion toward vouchers in Louisiana have tended to show a divided public on the issue. The 2015 Louisiana Survey includes a series of questions aimed more specifically at the structure of Louisiana's voucher program. In Louisiana, students are eligible for a scholarship to fund tuition at private school if they attend a public school that receives a grade of C or below in the state's accountability system. A majority of the public opposes vouchers for students in C grade schools, D grade schools, and F grade schools (see Figure 4.5). In other words, the public is no more or less favorable toward vouchers whether the program

is restricted to students in F grade schools or more expansive to include students in schools with grades as high as C.

Opinion on vouchers is racially divided. African Americans are especially supportive of state subsidies for private school tuition. For each voucher question, a majority of African Americans favor (56% or more) while a majority of whites oppose (61% or more).

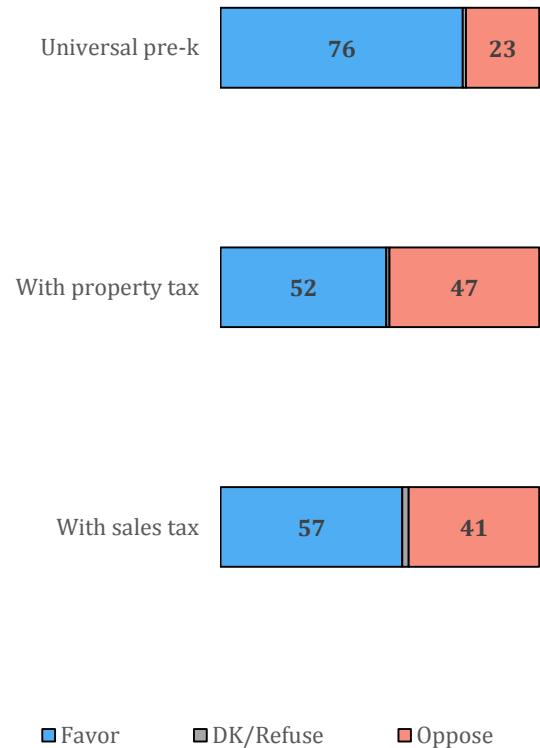
The Public Supports Universal Pre-Kindergarten and the Taxes to Pay for It

Three-fourths of Louisiana residents favor state funding for universal pre-K. There are significant differences across political parties, races, and socio-economic statuses, but in every group a majority supports universal pre-K.

When asked whether they support taxes to pay for universal pre-K, support drops substantially but the proposal remains popular (see Figure 4.6). There is a larger drop in support when property taxes are invoked (-24) than when sales taxes are invoked (-19). Nevertheless, under each condition a majority continues to support paying for pre-K (57% support raising sales taxes to pay for the program and 52% support raising property taxes).

Figure 4.6: Majority Supports Universal Pre-K Even with Higher Taxes

% favor or oppose



Louisiana Survey, 2015
Public Policy Research Lab

Section 5: Higher Education

Footing the Bill for Higher Education

The public also believes that the state government should be primarily responsible for funding Louisiana's public colleges and universities rather than the students who attend them and their families. Nearly two-thirds (63%) say the state government should play the major role in supporting higher education.

There are significant partisan differences. A large majority of Democrats (79%) believes the state should be primarily responsible for funding, but Republicans are divided – 45% think the state is primarily responsible and 46% think students and their families are primarily responsible.

The survey also includes a variation of this question presented to a randomly selected subset of respondents. This alternate question specifies recent trends in state funding for higher education. Information about cuts to state colleges and universities over the past several years produces no statistically meaningful difference in opinion about who should primarily bear the costs of higher education in Louisiana.

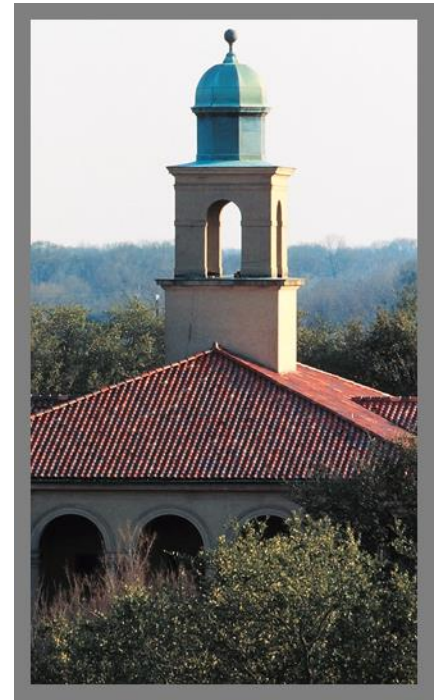
Public Favors Academic and Income Requirements for TOPS Eligibility

As in previous years, the public opposes reductions to the award qualified students receive from the Taylor Opportunity Program for Students (TOPS), the state's main tuition assistance program for higher education. Yet, they are open to other approaches to limiting the costs of the program to the state. Through the TOPS program, the state pays tuition and certain fees at Louisiana colleges and universities for resident citizens who take a specified set of classes in high school, earn a high school grade point average of 2.5, and score at or above the state average on the ACT or SAT. The cost of the program has ballooned since its inception in the

late 1990s. As costs have grown, policy-makers search for ways to curb costs.

Nearly three-fourths (72%) of the public opposes cutting the total amount of money qualified students receive; just 24% support this approach (Figure 5.1).

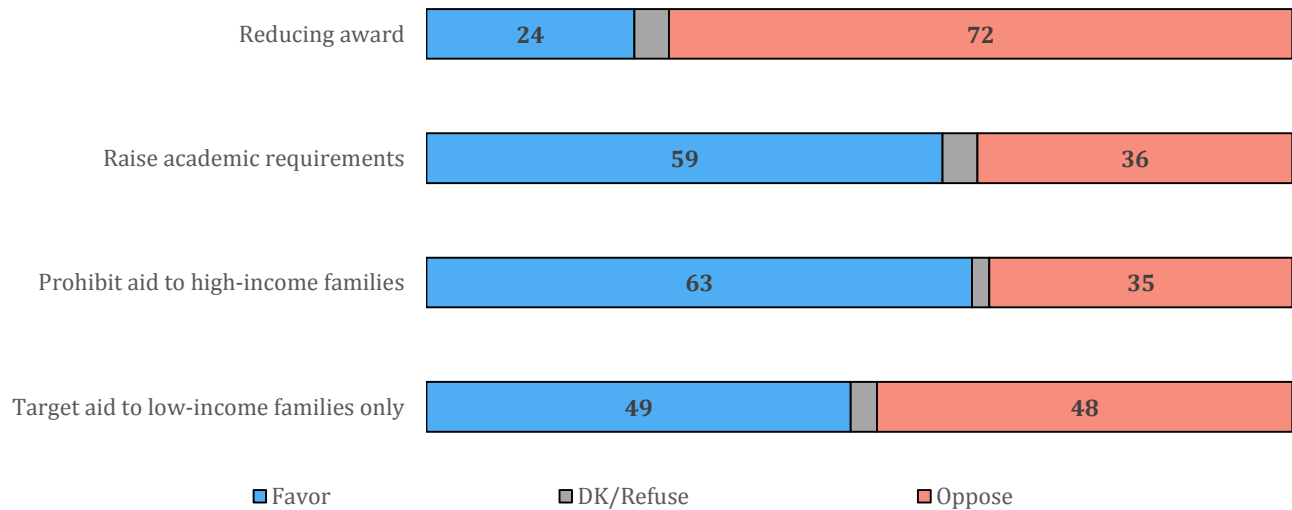
There are few significant partisan and demographic differences in opinions about cuts to the award, but those who have higher levels of education or live in higher-income households are the most opposed. Nearly a third of individuals with household income below \$20,000 favor reducing the award (32%), but among the highest earning households this share



Nearly two-thirds say that state government (rather than students and their families) should play the major role in supporting higher education.

Figure 5.1: Opinions on TOPS Proposals

% favor or oppose



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

Louisiana Survey, 2015

Public Policy Research Lab

is cut in half (16%). In a similar fashion, one-fourth of those without a high school diploma favor reducing the award, while only 18% of college graduates do. Nevertheless, majorities among each of these groups oppose a reduction.

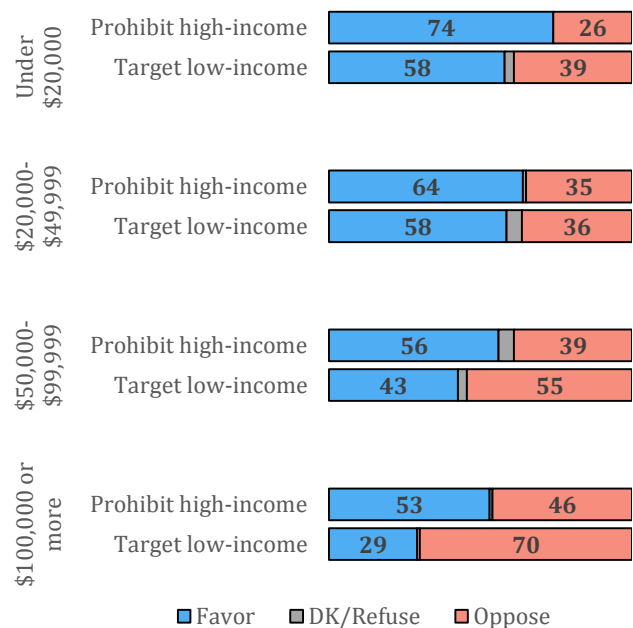
More are open to increasing academic requirements and introducing caps on household income for eligibility. Three in five (59%) support increasing the academic criteria for eligibility. This proposal has support from both Republicans (63%) and Democrats (53%).

The 2015 survey includes an experiment to identify support for a proposal that would link the TOPS award to the ability of students' families to pay for college. Each respondent was asked either about a proposal that would no longer provide TOPS awards to students from high income families that can afford to pay for college or about a proposal that would target TOPS awards just to students from low-income families that cannot afford to pay for college.

A majority (63%) favors restricting TOPS so that students from wealthy families are no longer

Figure 5.2: TOPS Opinion by Income

% favor or oppose



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

Louisiana Survey, 2015

Public Policy Research Lab

eligible. However, the public is less supportive of restrictions that would leave only low-income families eligible – 49% favor and 48% oppose.

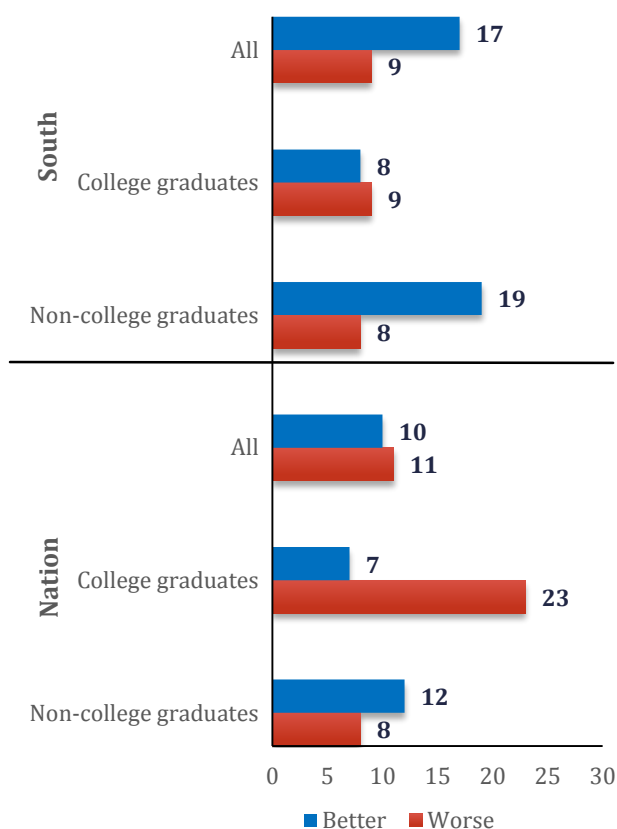
The drop in support for income caps between these two versions of the question is largest for those in the highest income households – from 53% to 29% (Figure 5.2). The drop is also sizable at the bottom of the income ladder – from 74% support to 58% support. Among individuals with household income of \$50,000 or more, the wording difference flips from majority support for including an income cap that would keep high-income families out of TOPS to majority opposition to an income cap that would allow only low-income families to participate.

Public has Positive View of Colleges but Does Not Recognize the Lower Cost

As noted in Section 1 of this report, the public gives high marks to the state's colleges and universities. To get a more concrete understanding of how the public evaluates the quality and value of its higher education institutions, the 2015 Louisiana Survey asks respondents to compare the quality and cost of attendance of the state's colleges and universities to other institutions across the country and the south.

Figure 5.3: Perceptions of Higher Education Quality Compared to Other States

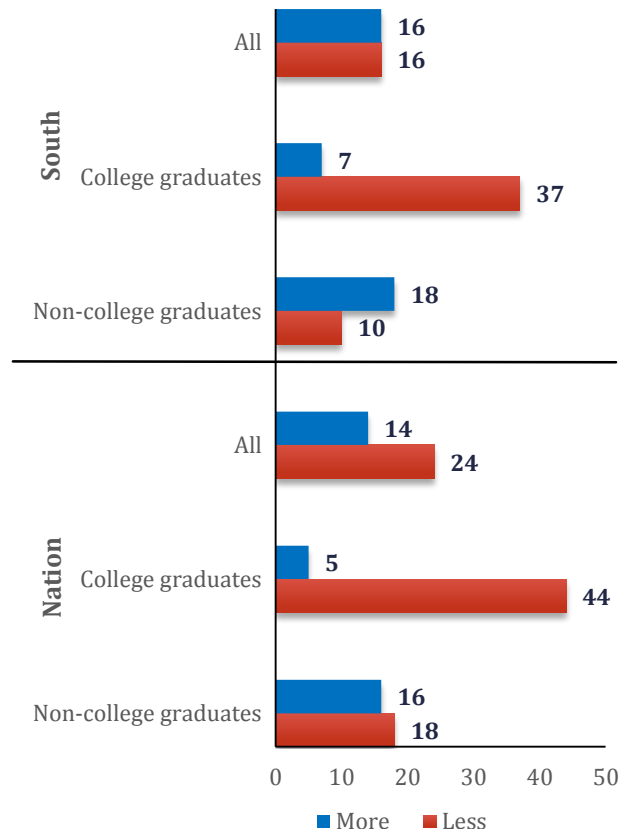
% saying quality of Louisiana's public colleges and universities is better or worse than the rest of the...



Louisiana Survey, 2015
Public Policy Research Lab

Figure 5.4: Perceptions of Higher Education Cost Compared to Other States

% saying cost of enrollment at Louisiana's public colleges and universities is more or less than the rest of the...



Louisiana Survey, 2015
Public Policy Research Lab

Overall, the public believes Louisiana colleges and universities are about as good as their peers nationally and regionally (Figure 5.3). Few think the state's colleges and universities are better – though they fare better in comparisons to the south than to the nation.

The public is only vaguely aware of how the cost of enrollment in Louisiana compares to other places. According to data in The College Board's Annual Survey of Colleges, the cost of attendance at public two-year and four-year colleges in Louisiana are below the national average.⁷ Louisiana ranks 27th in cost of attendance at its two-year colleges and 37th in cost of attendance at its four-year colleges and universities. In comparison to southern states, Louisiana is slightly above average in cost of attendance at two-year institutions but still below average for four-year institutions.

Most Louisiana residents (56%) believe cost of enrollment at the state's colleges and universities is about the same as other southern schools (Figure 5.4). Only 16% say state colleges and universities cost more compared to the rest of the south, and another 16% say less. The public is somewhat more likely to say these costs are lower in Louisiana compared to the rest of the nation (24%), but this is a relatively small share. The most popular response (46%) is that Louisiana colleges and universities cost about the same at institutions across the country.

⁷ The College Board. *Trends in College Pricing*, 2014.

Section 6: Health Care

Expanding Medicaid: Popular Support but Partisan Polarization

The federal Affordable Care Act encourages states to expand their Medicaid programs to increase the income threshold of eligibility for the program. In the first few years, the federal government will cover 100% of additional costs of the expanded programs, but a portion of these costs would eventually shift back to the states who choose to participate. So far, Louisiana has rejected these funds. However, most Louisiana residents (60%) want the state to accept federal money to expand Medicaid in Louisiana in order to provide health coverage to more people who do not have it (see Figure 6.1).

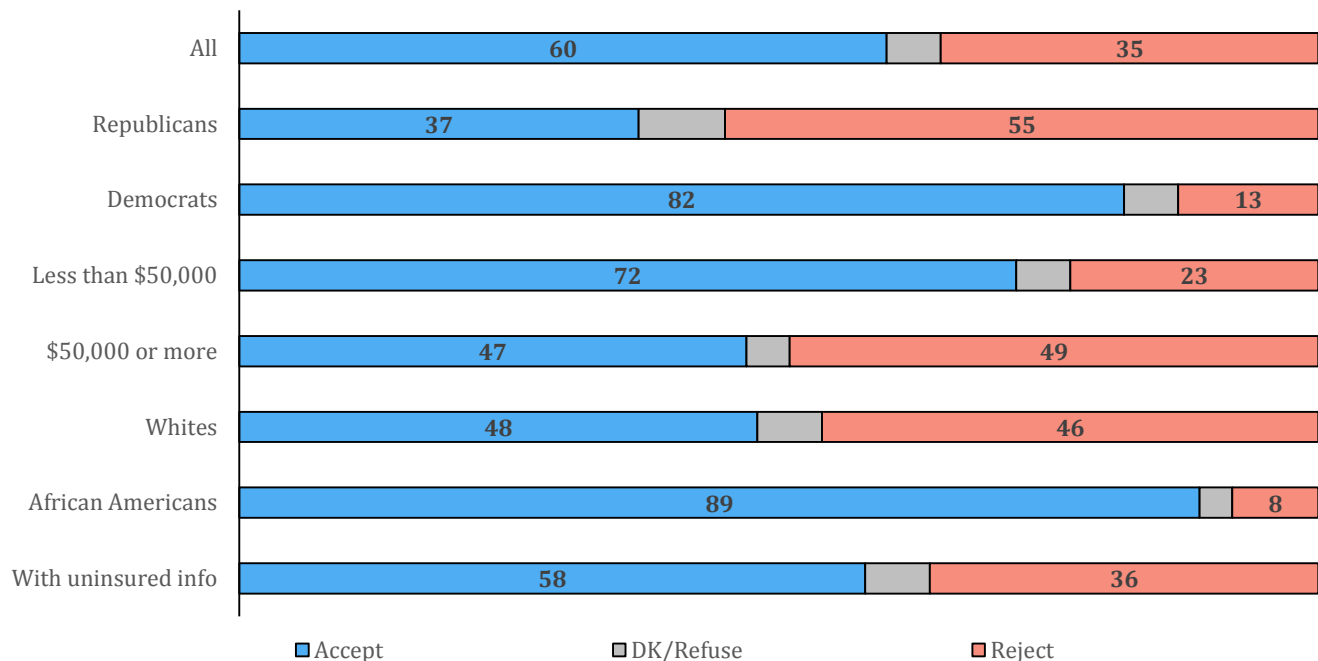
The 2015 Louisiana Survey uses a pro/con format for the Medicaid question, presenting arguments from both supporters and critics of

expansion. Specifically, the question reads: “Do you think the Louisiana state government should accept money from the federal government in Washington D.C. to expand the Medicaid program in this state in order to provide health insurance to more people who do not have it, even if doing so may require additional state spending in the future or do you think the state government should reject the money to keep state health care spending from increasing in the future?”

Democrats overwhelmingly back expansion, 82% to 13%. Republicans oppose expansion, but not with the same overwhelming majority, 55% to 37%. Nearly nine in ten African Americans support accepting federal money for Medicaid expansion, but whites split evenly – 48% want the state to accept the money and 46% want to reject it. A large majority of lower income households want the state to accept the federal

Figure 6.1: Opinions on Medicaid Expansion

% saying accept or reject federal money to expand coverage of the uninsured in Louisiana



NOTE: All rows contain estimates from half sample receiving version without information about uninsurance rate. Last row contains estimates for the half sample that received this information.

Louisiana Survey, 2015
Public Policy Research Lab

money, but people in households earning \$50,000 or more are split, 47% to 49%.

Although estimates vary across studies, the percent of Louisianans without health insurance is typically pegged between the mid-teens to the mid-twenties. The most recent evidence from the Kaiser Foundation estimates that 17% lack health insurance. Before answering the same question as just described, a randomly selected half of respondents are given information about the actual share of the uninsured: “Based on recent estimates, about 17% of Louisiana residents – that’s 1 in 6 people – do not have health insurance.” Responses to the question for this group are statistically identical to those who do not receive this additional information.

Louisiana Residents Overestimate the Number of Uninsured

One possible explanation for why information about the uninsured rate in Louisiana fails to move opinion is that the public thinks the uninsured problem is worse than it actually is (at least in terms of the number without health insurance). Residents of the state estimate the uninsured share much higher than conventional reports. On average, the public says nearly half of

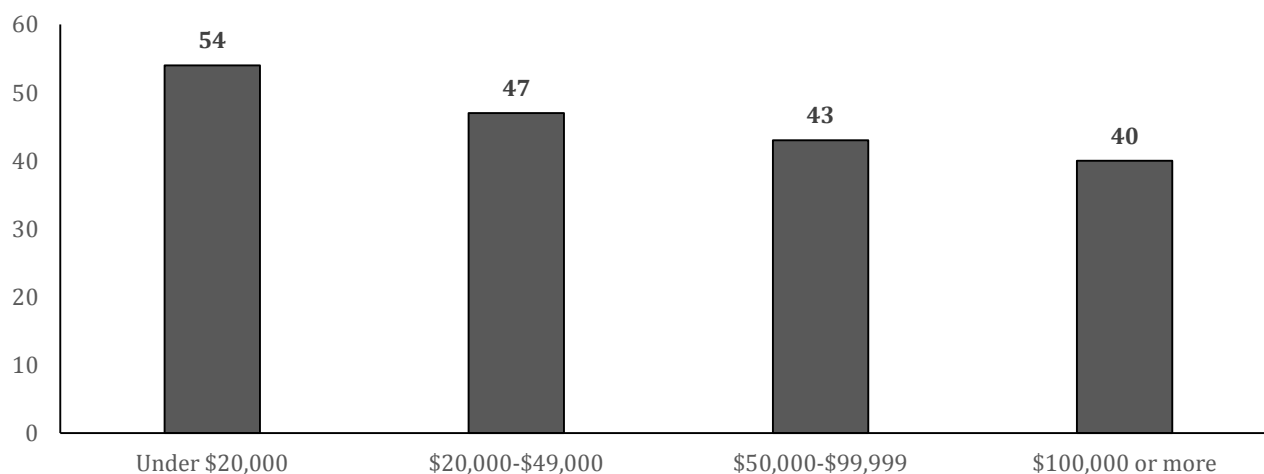
the state’s residents (46%) do not have health insurance. Every demographic and partisan group in the Louisiana Survey overestimates the share of the uninsured by at least twenty percentage points.

On average, the public believes nearly half of the state’s residents (46%) do not have health insurance.

Still, there are noteworthy differences across political parties and income. Republicans estimate the share of the uninsured slightly lower than Democrats (42% versus 50%). Individuals in lower income households are more likely to lack health insurance, and they are also more likely to overestimate the share of the uninsured by a larger amount (see Figure 6.2). Individuals in the lowest income households estimate the share of the state population without health insurance a full 14 points higher than those in the highest earning households.

Figure 6.2: Estimates of the Uninsured Drops with Household Income

Average estimate of the share of the state population that lacks health insurance



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Section 7: Race Relations

Race Relations Seen as More Troubled Than a Year Ago

About half of all Louisiana residents (48%) think race relations in the state are neither getting worse nor getting better. Nearly a third (30%) say they are getting worse, and one in five (20%) say they are getting better. This marks a shift from a year ago when 21% of the public said race relations were getting worse and 26% said relations were getting better.

African Americans and whites see the progress of relations differently. About a quarter of whites (24%), say relations are getting better, slightly below the share of whites who answered the same way in 2014 (28%). Last year, 20% of African Americans said relations were getting better, but today only 12% say relations are improving – just half the share among whites. A similar share among both groups, however, say

relations are getting worse (29% of whites and 33% of African Americans).

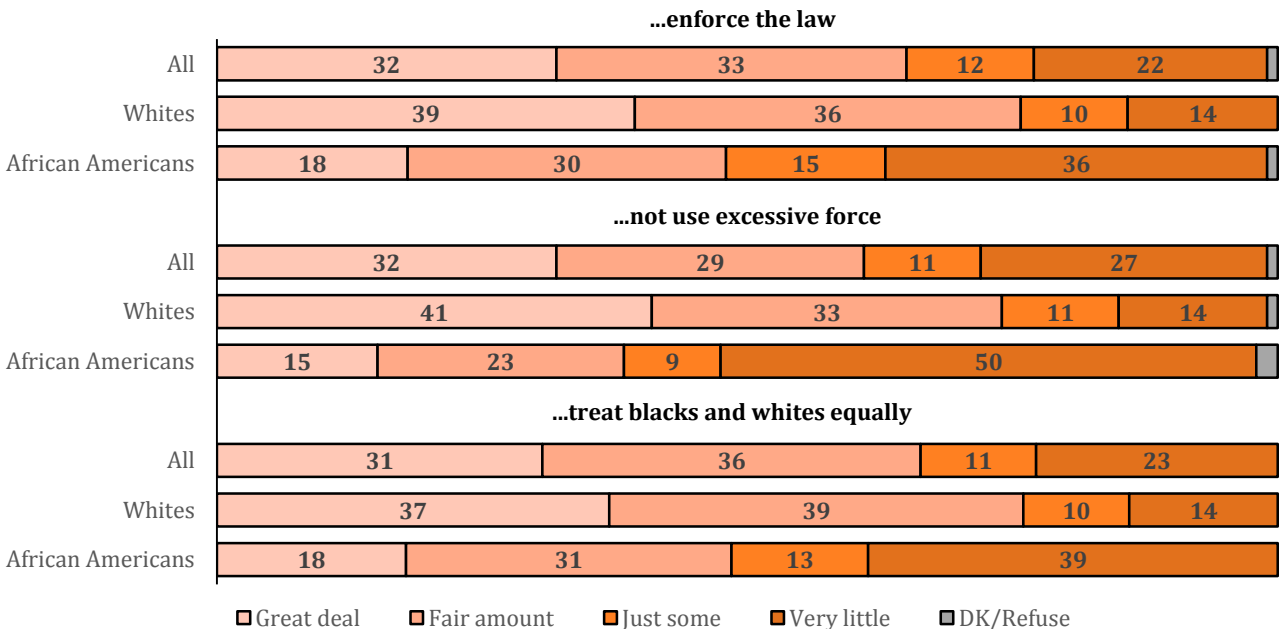
African American Confidence in Local Police Lower than Whites

Divisions between African Americans and whites are even starker when it comes to perceptions of how local police treat people of different races (Figure 7.1). Half of all African Americans have very little confidence in the police officers in their community to treat blacks and whites equally. In contrast, 41% of whites have a great deal of confidence in the local police to treat races equally.

Racial divisions are less dramatic but still sizable for confidence in local police to do a good job in enforcing the law and to not use excessive force.

Figure 7.1: African Americans Express Less Confidence than Whites in Local Police

% saying have ____ of confidence in local police officers to...



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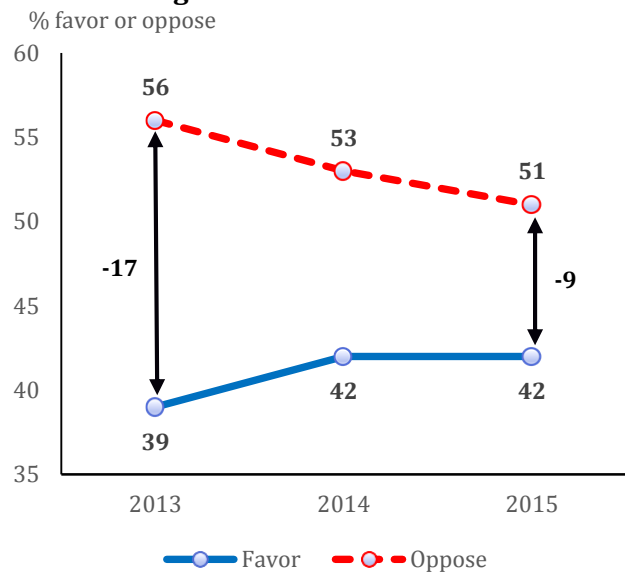
Section 8: Social Issues

Support for Same-Sex Marriage Continues to Lag Behind the Nation

Opponents of legal recognition for same-sex marriages in Louisiana (51%) continue to outnumber supporters (42%). The numbers have not changed significantly from a year ago, but the two year trend shows a shrinking gap between opponents and supporters (figure 8.1). Support in the state for legal recognition of same-sex marriage lags significantly behind national opinion, which typically reaches into the mid-fifties or higher in recent polling by Gallup and the Pew Research Center.

Change may be on the way in Louisiana as younger generations replace older generations. A majority of Louisiana residents between the ages of 18 and 29 supports same-sex marriage (59%). This is the only age group with majority support for legal recognition (figure 8.2). Residents between the ages of 30 and 49 are closely divided on the issue (44% support and 47% oppose). Majorities of individuals between the ages of 50 and 64 (58%) and 65 years or older (62%) oppose same-sex marriage.

Figure 8.1: Small Shifts in Opinion on Same-Sex Marriage since 2013

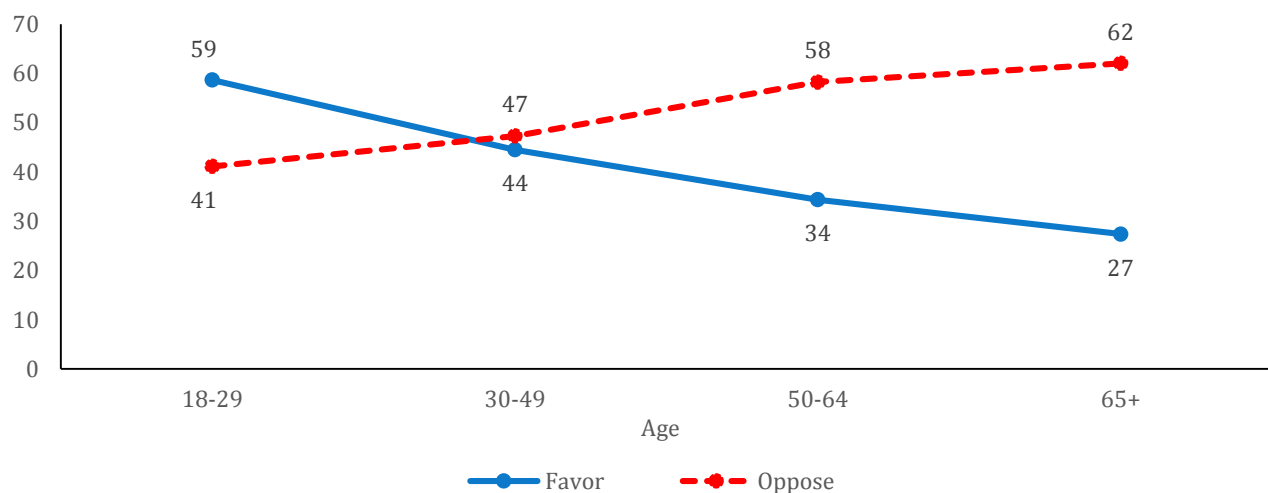


Louisiana Survey, 2013-2015
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There is also a significant difference by religious observance. Nearly two-thirds of those who attend church weekly (64%) oppose same-sex marriage, while an equivalent share of those who

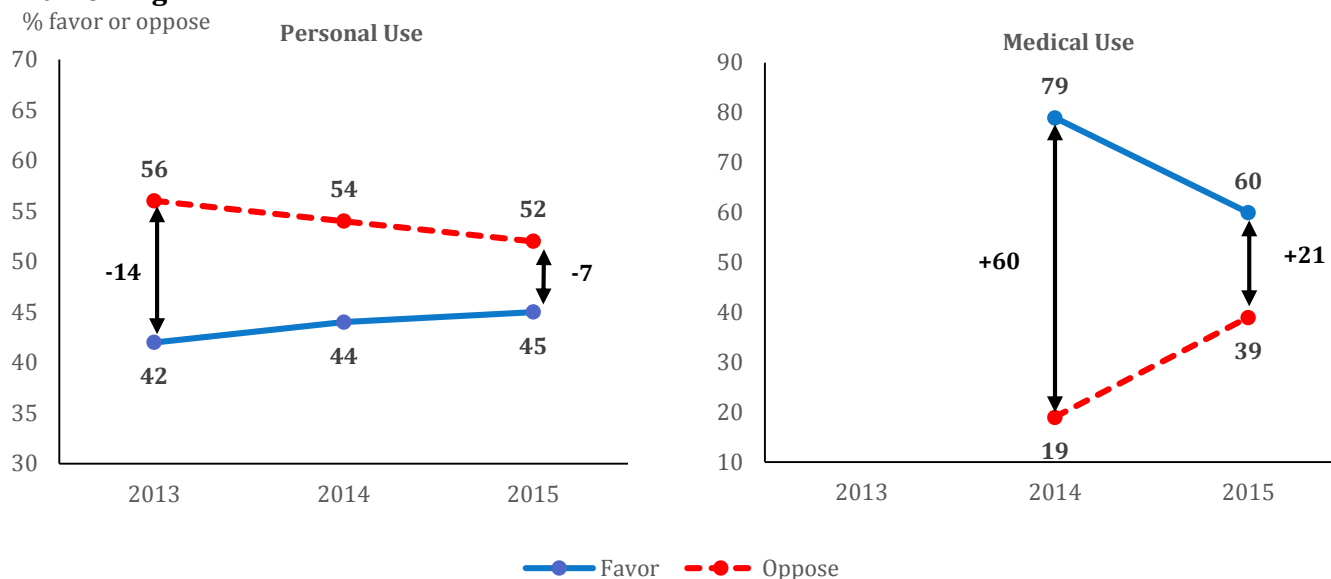
Figure 8.2: Youngest Favor Legal Recognition of Same-Sex Marriage

% favor or oppose



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Public Policy Research Lab

Figure 8.3: Support Lags Opposition for Personal Use and Leads for Medical Use, but Gaps Narrowing



Louisiana Survey, 2013-2015
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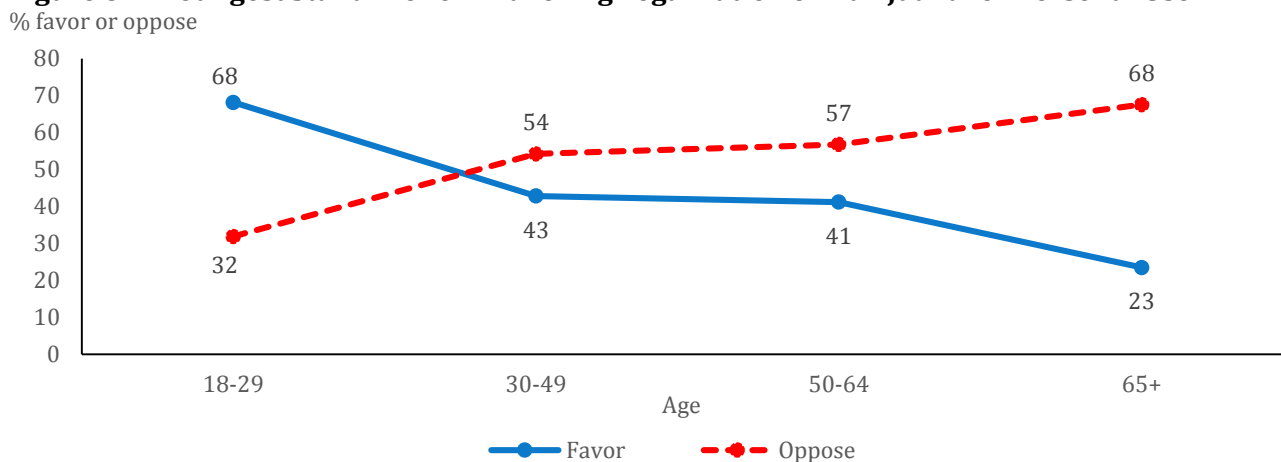
never attend church (64%) favors same-sex marriage.

Public Supports Legalizing Marijuana for Medical, Not Personal, Use

Opponents to legalizing marijuana for *personal* use (52%) continue to lead supporters (45%).

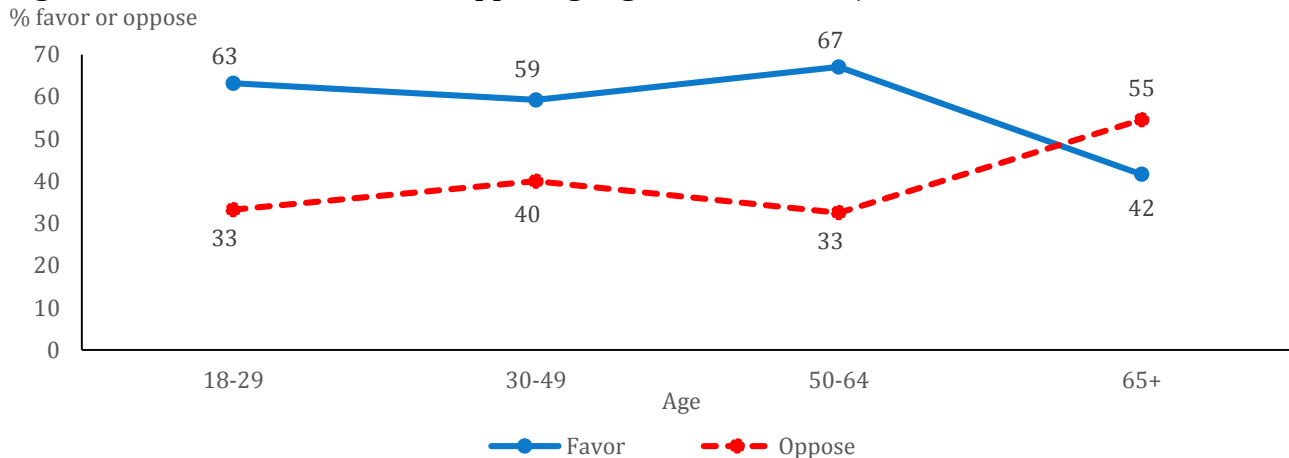
Again, there is evidence suggesting a modest trend unfolding across years (Figure 8.3). The gap between those who oppose and those who support has shrunk by half since 2013. Supporters of legalizing marijuana for *medical use* (60%) have a large lead over opponents (39%), but this lead has shrunk significantly from a year ago.

Figure 8.4: Youngest Stand Alone in Favoring Legalization of Marijuana for Personal Use



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Figure 8.5: Oldest Stand Alone in Opposing Legalization of Marijuana for Medical Use



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Public Policy Research Lab

Younger Louisianans are the most supportive of marijuana legalization (Figures 8.4 & 8.5). The difference is that for personal use 18-29 year olds are the only age group who on balance favors legalization (68% for personal use and 63% for medical use). Individuals 65 years of age or older are the only age group to oppose legalization for both personal (68%) and medical (55%) use. Individuals between these two age groups tend to favor legalization for medical use but oppose legalization for personal use.

Knowledge of Prison Costs Reduce Support for Jailing Marijuana Offenders

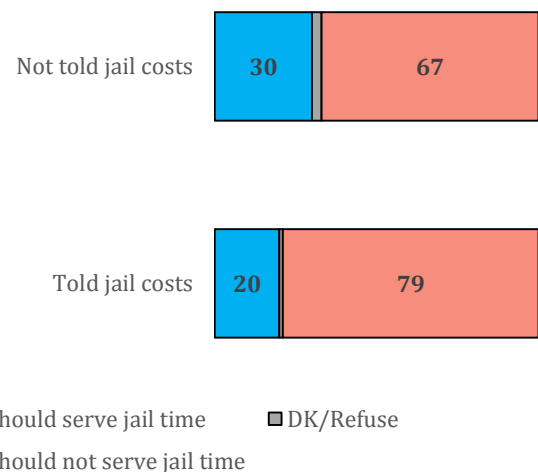
Even if marijuana is not legalized, two thirds of the public (67%) feel that individuals convicted of possessing small amounts of marijuana should not serve jail time.

According to recent estimates using federal crime statistics, state and local governments in Louisiana spend \$7.5 million annually to imprison people convicted of possessing small amounts of marijuana.⁸ To examine whether or not this information shifts public opinion on sentencing, we provided it to a randomly selected

half of respondents before asking them their opinion. The information decreases support for jail time by ten percentage points among the general public (Figure 8.6). The effect is even larger among African Americans, for whom the share supporting jail time drops by half from 26% to 13%. The drop among whites is only half as large, from 30% to 24%.

Figure 8.6: Majority Opposes Jail Sentences for People Convicted of Possessing Small Amounts of Marijuana

% saying should or should not serve jail time



Louisiana Survey, 2015
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⁸ The American Civil Liberties Union. *The War on Marijuana in Black and White*, June 2013.

Survey Methodology

Data in this report are from a randomly selected, statewide representative group of adult residents of Louisiana. Data were collected via telephone interviews conducted from January 12 to February 13, 2015, among a randomly selected state sample of 980 adult residents (18 years or older). The survey includes a traditional landline telephone survey combined with a survey of Louisiana cell phone users. The combined sample of 980 respondents includes 542 respondents interviewed on a landline and 438 respondents interviewed on a cell phone. The cell phone sample includes 292 respondents who have no landline. 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 7% for the landline sample and 6% for the cell phone sample. 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. The response rates for the 2015 Louisiana Survey are within the range of what national survey research organizations such as Gallup and the Pew Research Center have reported.

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 using parameters from 2012 United States Census data. The specific factors used for weighting are: parish of residence, gender, age, household income, education, race, and Hispanic ethnicity.

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 margin of error and tests for statistical significance take this weighting into account.

The overall survey has a margin of error of +/- 3.1 percentage points. However, several of the results in this report are based on subsets from the sample, including analysis of experiments utilizing multiple versions of questions randomly assigned to different sets of respondents as well as comparisons of demographic or partisan subgroups. The margin of error for these comparisons are larger than for the total sample.

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

Please direct any questions concerning survey methodology to:

Dr. Michael Henderson, Research Director, PPRL
mbhende1@lsu.edu
225-578-5149

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
[164 respondents]

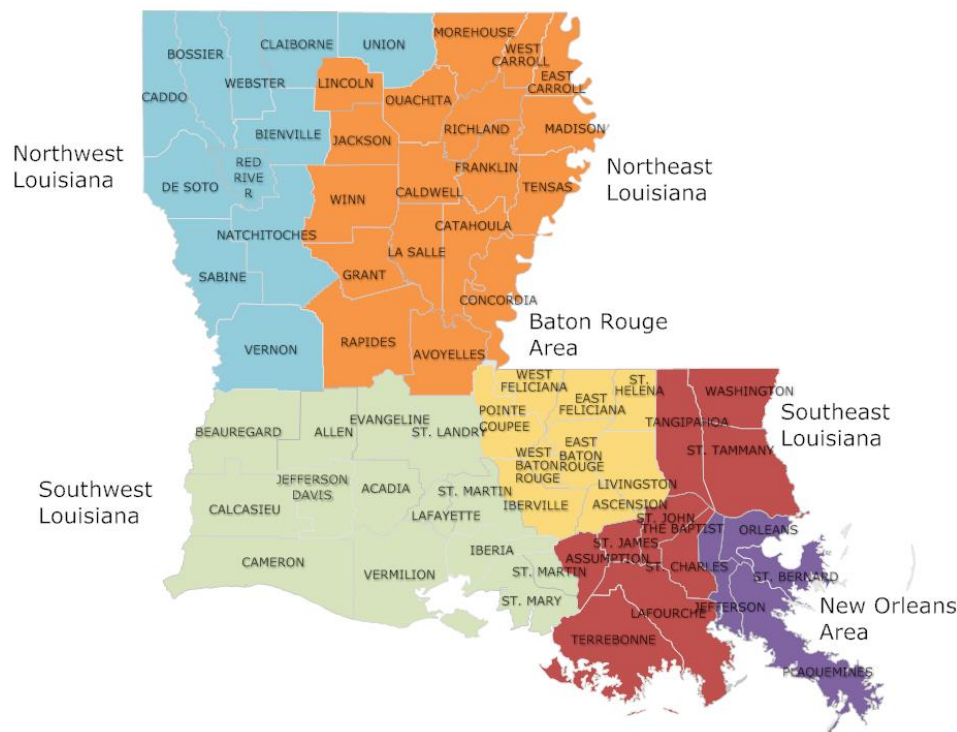
Baton Rouge Area: Ascension, East Baton Rouge, East Feliciana, Iberville, Livingston, Point Coupee, St. Helena, West Baton Rouge, West Feliciana
[191 respondents]

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

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

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

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
[175 respondents]



Survey Toplines

NOTE: Frequencies represent percentages of respondents who received the question. Percentages may not sum to 100 due to rounding. Questions fielded to 980 respondents except where otherwise noted.

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	44
Wrong Direction	45
DK / Refused (Volunteered)	11

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

[OPEN-ENDED]

Education	25
Economy	23
Politics	9
Health care	9
Crime	8
Budget / Taxes	7
Environment	2
Roads / Transportation	2
Other	7
DK / Ref	7

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	5
Somewhat Confident	34
Not Very Confident	30
Not at all Confident	29
DK / 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	55
Worse	23
DK / Refused (Vol)	0

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	26
Same	48
Worse	24
DK / Refused (Vol)	2

Q6. What about business conditions in the nation -- do you think that at the present time business conditions in the country as a whole are better, worse, or about the same as they were a year ago?

Better	27
Same	31
Worse	36
DK / Refused (Vol)	6

Q7. 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	26
Same	35
Worse	36
DK / Refused (Vol)	3

Q8. And how do you think the Louisiana economy compares relative to other southern states? Do you think Louisiana is currently faring better than the rest of the south, worse than the rest of the south or about the same?

Better	25
Same	50
Worse	22
DK / Refused (Vol)	3

Q9. 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	28
C	40
D	13
F	5
DK / Refused (Vol)	1

Q10. What grade would you give to Louisiana public schools overall?

A	4
B	14
C	39
D	23
F	14
DK / Refused (Vol)	5

Q11. What grade would you give to the public schools in your local community?

A	11
B	24
C	31
D	18
F	14
DK / Refused (Vol)	2

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

A	20
B	44
C	24
D	5
F	1
DK / Refused (Vol)	6

Q13. What grade would you give to state economic development efforts to attract, recruit, and create jobs?

A	8
B	30
C	37
D	16
F	7
DK / Refused (Vol)	2

Q14. What grade would you give to Louisiana's roads, bridges, and highways?

A	3
B	11
C	25
D	34
F	28
DK / Refused (Vol)	0

Q15. What grade would you give to the overall quality of healthcare in Louisiana?

A	6
B	25
C	34
D	19
F	13
DK / Refused (Vol)	4

Q16. On a different topic: In the last five years, would you say the amount of crime in Louisiana has increased, decreased, or stayed about the same?

Increased	55
Decreased	13
Stayed about the same	30
DK / Refused (Vol)	2

[FOR Q17-Q20, PROMPT WITH "Just tell me your best guess." IF RESPONDENT INITIALLY SAYS DON'T KNOW/NOT SURE]

Q17. Based on your best guess, on which of these activities does the Louisiana state government currently spend the most money? Is it [RANDOMIZE ORDER AND READ ALL: health care, education, prisons, roads and bridges, or welfare and food stamps]?

Health care	9
Education	5
Prisons	33
Roads and bridges	9
Welfare and food stamps	39
DK / Refused (Vol)	6

Q18. Thinking back over the past seven years, would you say that state taxes have gone up a lot, gone up a little, remained about the same, gone down a little, or gone down a lot?

Gone up a lot	20
Gone up a little	34
Remained about the same	36
Gone down a little	4
Gone down a lot	1
DK / Refused (Vol)	5

[RANDOMLY ASSIGN TO Q19A OR Q19B]

Q19A. Still thinking about the past seven years, would you say that spending by the state government *in general* has gone up a lot, gone up a little, remained about the same, gone down a little, or gone down a lot?
[n = 486]

Gone up a lot	30
Gone up a little	26
Remained about the same	27
Gone down a little	9
Gone down a lot	5
DK / Refused (Vol)	4

Q19B. Still thinking about the past seven years, would you say that spending by the state government *for colleges and universities* has gone up a lot, gone up a little, remained about the same, gone down a little, or gone down a lot?
[n = 494]

Gone up a lot	17
Gone up a little	22
Remained about the same	21
Gone down a little	16
Gone down a lot	16
DK / Refused (Vol)	8

Q20. Using a number from zero to 100, where zero means no one at all and 100 means everyone in the state, what percent of Louisiana residents would you guess do **not** have health insurance?

[ENTER RESPONSE 0-100]

Average response:	46%
DK / Refused (Vol)	3

Q21. How familiar are you with the “Common Core” standards in English and Math for public schools?

Very Familiar	20
Somewhat Familiar	42
Not very familiar	17
Not at all familiar	20
DK / Refused (Vol)	1

RANDOMLY ASSIGN TO Q22A OR Q22B

Q22A. Please tell me if you think the following statements about the Common Core are true or false or whether you don't know enough to say. First, how about this statement: "The federal government requires all states to use the Common Core." Do you think that is definitely true, probably true, probably false, definitely false, or do you not know enough to say?

[n = 476]

Definitely true	11
Probably true	22
Probably false	14
Definitely false	13
Don't know enough to say	39
Refused (Vol)	1

Q22B. Please tell me if you think the following statements about the Common Core are true or false or whether you don't know enough to say. First, how about this statement: "The Common Core is a voluntary program in which states choose for themselves whether to participate." Do you think that is definitely true, probably true, probably false, definitely false, or do you not know enough to say?

[n = 504]

Definitely true	11
Probably true	22
Probably false	13
Definitely false	11
Don't know enough to say	43
Refused (Vol)	0

RANDOMLY ASSIGN TO Q23A OR Q23B

Q23A. How about this statement: "The Common Core sets higher expectations for student performance than the standards Louisiana used before the Common Core was introduced." Do you think that is definitely true, probably true, probably false, definitely false, or do you not know enough to say?

[n = 474]

Definitely true	17
Probably true	29
Probably false	10
Definitely false	9
Don't know enough to say	32
Refused (Vol)	2

Q23B. How about this statement: “The Common Core sets lower expectations for student performance than the standards Louisiana used before the Common Core was introduced.” Do you think that is definitely true, probably true, probably false, definitely false, or do you not know enough to say?
[n = 506]

Definitely true	14
Probably true	19
Probably false	10
Definitely false	15
Don’t know enough to say	41
Refused (Vol)	1

RANDOMLY ASSIGN TO Q24A OR Q24B

Q24A. How about this statement: “Under the Common Core, the state of Louisiana and its local school districts decide which textbooks and educational materials to use in their schools.” Do you think that is definitely true, probably true, probably false, definitely false, or do you not know enough to say?
[n = 463]

Definitely true	17
Probably true	26
Probably false	13
Definitely false	7
Don’t know enough to say	36
Refused (Vol)	1

Q24B. How about this statement: “Under the Common Core, the federal government decides which textbooks and educational materials to use in schools.” Do you think that is definitely true, probably true, probably false, definitely false, or do you not know enough to say?
[n = 517]

Definitely true	28
Probably true	31
Probably false	6
Definitely false	6
Don’t know enough to say	28
Refused (Vol)	1

RANDOMLY ASSIGN TO Q25A OR Q25B

Q25A. How about this statement: “The Common Core was developed by the federal Department of Education under the leadership of President Obama.” Do you think that is definitely true, probably true, probably false, definitely false, or do you not know enough to say?

[n = 498]

Definitely true	15
Probably true	17
Probably false	12
Definitely false	8
Don’t know enough to say	47
Refused (Vol)	2

Q25B. How about this statement: “The Common Core was developed by governors and state school superintendents with input from teachers.” Do you think that is definitely true, probably true, probably false, definitely false, or do you not know enough to say?

[n = 482]

Definitely true	11
Probably true	20
Probably false	17
Definitely false	12
Don’t know enough to say	39
Refused (Vol)	1

Q26. Next we’ll talk about state taxes and spending. Budget shortfalls happen when the government does not have enough money coming in to pay for the cost of the things it does. In your view, when the legislature and the governor discuss steps to address shortfalls in the state budget, should they focus [RANDOMIZE ORDER AND READ ALL: only on spending cuts, only on tax increases] or should they do a combination of both?

Only on spending cuts	13
Only on tax increases	2
Combination of both	83
DK / Refused (Vol)	2

[ASK IF Q26=COMBINATION OF BOTH]

Q27. If both spending cuts and tax increases are being considered should the focus be on [RANDOMIZE ORDER AND READ ALL: mostly on spending cuts or mostly on tax increases]?

[n = 775]

Mostly on spending cuts	71
Mostly on tax increases	22
DK / Refused (Vol)	7

[RANDOMLY ASSIGN TO Q28A OR Q28B]

Q28A. Do you favor or oppose reducing state taxes on businesses and manufacturers to get them to come to Louisiana?

[n = 590]

Favor	72
Oppose	23
DK / Refused (Vol)	5

Q28B. Do you favor or oppose using state government funds to pay businesses and manufacturers to get them to come to Louisiana?

[n = 390]

Favor	55
Oppose	40
DK / Refused (Vol)	6

[RANDOMLY ASSIGN TO Q29A, Q29B, Q29C, or Q29D]

Q29A. The government of Louisiana offers businesses a variety of financial incentives to get them to come to the state. Supporters say these programs create jobs and grow the economy. Critics say these programs now cost the state more than one billion dollars a year that could otherwise be used for things like education and health care. What about you, do you favor or oppose these programs?

[n = 249]

Favor	61
Oppose	34
DK / Refused (Vol)	6

Q29B. The government of Louisiana offers businesses a variety of financial incentives to get them to come to the state. Critics say these programs now cost the state more than one billion dollars a year that could otherwise be used for things like education and health care. Supporters say these programs create jobs and grow the economy. What about you, do you favor or oppose these programs?

[n = 243]

Favor	66
Oppose	30
DK / Refused (Vol)	5

Q29C. The government of Louisiana offers businesses a variety of financial incentives to get them to come to the state. Supporters say these programs create jobs and grow the economy. Critics say the state loses money on these programs when businesses that take the incentives fail to create jobs. What about you, do you favor or oppose these programs?

[n = 228]

Favor	64
Oppose	28
DK / Refused (Vol)	8

Q29D. The government of Louisiana offers businesses a variety of financial incentives to get them to come to the state. Critics say the state loses money on these programs when businesses that take the incentives fail to create jobs. Supporters say these programs create jobs and grow the economy. What about you, do you favor or oppose these programs?

[n = 260]

Favor	55
Oppose	39
DK / Refused (Vol)	7

SPEND 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. [INSERT ITEMS Q30-Q35, RANDOMIZE ORDER]

Q30. What about spending for primary and secondary education? Should this be increased, decreased, or kept about the same?

Increased	76
Decreased	4
Kept about the same	19
DK / Refused (Vol)	1

Q31. What about spending for higher education? Should this be increased, decreased, or kept about the same?

Increased	73
Decreased	5
Kept about the same	20
DK / Refused (Vol)	1

Q32. What about spending for health care? Should this be increased, decreased, or kept about the same?

Increased	56
Decreased	14
Kept about the same	29
DK / Refused (Vol)	2

Q33. What about spending for roads, bridges, and highways? Should this be increased, decreased, or kept about the same?

Increased	73
Decreased	5
Kept about the same	22
DK / Refused (Vol)	0

Q34. What about spending for prisons and law enforcement? Should this be increased, decreased, or kept about the same?

Increased	35
Decreased	26
Kept about the same	37
DK / Refused (Vol)	3

Q35. What about spending for welfare, food stamps, and other public assistance programs? Should this be increased, decreased, or kept about the same?

Increased	18
Decreased	49
Kept about the same	32
DK / Refused (Vol)	1

Q36. 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	27
Too low and need to be increased	14
Just about right	56
DK / Refused (Vol)	3

Q37. 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	35
Too low and need to be increased	6
Just about right	59
DK / Refused (Vol)	1

Q38. What about local property taxes, would you say local property 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	40
Too low and need to be increased	5
Just about right	47
DK / Refused (Vol)	6

Q39. What about state taxes on beer, wine, and other alcoholic beverages, would you say taxes on beer, wine, and other alcoholic beverages 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	11
Too low and need to be increased	42
Just about right	41
DK / Refused (Vol)	6

Q40. What about state taxes on tobacco products, would you say taxes on tobacco products 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	15
Too low and need to be increased	50
Just about right	30
DK / Refused (Vol)	5

Q41. Thinking about state taxes on corporations, would you say that state taxes on corporations 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	14
Too low and need to be increased	29
Just about right	47
DK / Refused (Vol)	10

Q42. Thinking about state taxes on extraction and production of oil, natural gas, and other mineral resources, would you say that these 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	24
Too low and need to be increased	22
Just about right	46
DK / Refused (Vol)	8

Q43. Thinking about state taxes on casinos, video poker machines, and the lottery, would you say that these 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	11
Too low and need to be increased	49
Just about right	32
DK / Refused (Vol)	8

[RANDOMLY ASSIGN TO Q44A OR Q44B]

Q44A. Of every tax dollar that goes to the federal government in Washington D.C., how many cents of each dollar would you say are wasted?

[n = 473]

[ENTER RESPONSE 0-100]

Average response:	50%
DK / Refused (Vol)	12

Q44B. Of every tax dollar that goes to the state government of Louisiana, how many cents of each dollar would you say are wasted?

[n = 507]

[ENTER RESPONSE 0-100]

Average response:	44%
DK / Refused (Vol)	14

Q45. If you had to choose, would you rather have a smaller government providing fewer services or a larger government providing more services?

Smaller government and fewer services	49
Larger government and more services	45
DK / Refused (Vol)	6

Q46. 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	41
Less than your fair share	1
About the right amount	56
DK / Refused (Vol)	2

Q47. As I read off some different groups, please tell me if you think they are paying more than their fair share of state taxes, less than their fair share, or about the right amount. How about lower-income people, are they paying more than their fair share of state taxes, less than their fair share, or about the right amount?

More than their fair share	38
Less than their fair share	19
About the right amount	39
DK / Refused (Vol)	3

Q48. How about middle-income people, are they paying more than their fair share of state taxes, less than their fair share, or about the right amount?

More than their fair share	43
Less than their fair share	5
About the right amount	50
DK / Refused (Vol)	2

Q49. How about upper-income people, are they paying more than their fair share of state taxes, less than their fair share, or about the right amount?

More than their fair share	14
Less than their fair share	57
About the right amount	27
DK / Refused (Vol)	2

[RANDOMLY ASSIGN TO Q50A OR Q50B]

Q50A. How about corporations, are they paying more than their fair share of state taxes, less than their fair share, or about the right amount?

[n = 511]

More than their fair share	8
Less than their fair share	55
About the right amount	29
DK / Refused (Vol)	9

Q50B. How about businesses, are they paying more than their fair share of state taxes, less than their fair share, or about the right amount?

[n = 469]

More than their fair share	17
Less than their fair share	28
About the right amount	49
DK / Refused (Vol)	6

[RANDOMLY ASSIGN TO Q51A OR Q51B]

Q51A. Do you think the Louisiana state government should accept money from the federal government in Washington D.C. to expand the Medicaid program in this state in order to provide health insurance to more people who do not have it even if doing so may require additional state spending in the future OR do you think state government should reject the money to keep state health care spending from increasing in the future?

[n = 502]

Accept federal money to expand Medicaid	60
Reject money to expand Medicaid	35
DK / Refused (Vol)	6

Q51B. Based on recent estimates, about 17% of Louisiana residents – that's 1 in 6 people – do not have health insurance. Do you think the Louisiana state government should accept money from the federal government in Washington D.C. to expand the Medicaid program in this state in order to provide health insurance to more people who do not have it even if doing so may require additional state spending in the future OR do you think state government should reject the money to keep state health care spending from increasing in the future?

[n = 478]

Accept federal money to expand Medicaid	58
Reject money to expand Medicaid	36
DK / Refused (Vol)	6

Q52. As you may know, the state of Louisiana uses an A, B, C, D, F scale to grade each public school based on how its students perform on standardized tests. An 'A' is the highest grade a school can receive, and an 'F' is the lowest. Do you favor or oppose providing parents with children in public schools that receive an F grade with tax money in the form of scholarships to help pay for their children to attend private or religious schools?

Favor	42
Oppose	54
DK / Refused (Vol)	5

Q53. What about students in public schools that receive a D grade? Do you favor or oppose providing parents with children in public schools that receive a D grade with tax money in the form of scholarships to help pay for their children to attend private or religious schools?

Favor	42
Oppose	53
DK / Refused (Vol)	5

Q54. What about students in public schools that receive a C grade? Do you favor or oppose providing parents with children in public schools that receive a C grade with tax money in the form of scholarships to help pay for their children to attend private or religious schools?

Favor	41
Oppose	54
DK / Refused (Vol)	5

[RANDOMLY ASSIGN TO Q55A OR Q55B]

Q55A. 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?

[n = 468]

Favor	75
Oppose	20
DK / Refused (Vol)	6

Q55B. A charter school is a public school that functions independently of local school district control. In recent years, the number of charter schools in Louisiana has grown, and more than 130 currently operate in the state. Would you favor or oppose opening more charter schools as long as they maintain certain standards set by the state government?

[n = 512]

Favor	70
Oppose	26
DK / Refused (Vol)	4

Q56. Do you favor or oppose basing part of a teacher's evaluations on how well his or her students perform on standardized tests?

Favor	62
Oppose	35
DK / Refused (Vol)	3

[RANDOMLY ASSIGN TO Q57A OR Q57B]

Q57A. 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?

[n = 287]

Favor	39
Oppose	51
DK / Refused (Vol)	10

Q57B. 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?

[n = 489]

Favor	67
Oppose	27
DK / Refused (Vol)	6

[RANDOMLY ASSIGN TO Q58A, Q58B, OR Q58C]

Q58A. Would you favor or oppose a proposal for state government to provide funding so that all 4-year olds can attend a high quality pre-kindergarten program if their parents want them to?

[n = 304]

Favor	76
Oppose	23
DK / Refused (Vol)	1

Q58B. Would you favor or oppose a proposal to raise property taxes in order to provide funding so that all 4-year olds can attend a high quality pre-kindergarten program if their parents want them to?

[n = 345]

Favor	52
Oppose	47
DK / Refused (Vol)	1

Q58C. Would you favor or oppose a proposal to raise sales taxes in order to provide funding so that all 4-year olds can attend a high quality pre-kindergarten program if their parents want them to?

[n = 331]

Favor	57
Oppose	41
DK / Refused (Vol)	2

[RANDOMLY ASSIGN TO Q59A & Q60A OR TO Q59B & Q60B]

Q59A. When it comes to the cost of enrollment, including tuition and fees, would you say public colleges and universities in Louisiana currently cost more than public colleges and universities in the rest of the country, less than public colleges and universities in the rest of the country or about the same?

[n = 496]

More	14
Less	24
Same	46
DK / Refused (Vol)	17

Q59B. When it comes to the cost of enrollment, including tuition and fees, would you say public colleges and universities in Louisiana currently cost more than public colleges and universities in other southern states, less than public colleges and universities in the rest of the south or about the same?

[n = 484]

More	16
Less	16
Same	56
DK / Refused (Vol)	13

[SEE NOTE TO Q59A & Q59B]

Q60A. When it comes to the quality of public colleges and universities in Louisiana, would you say they are better than public colleges and universities in the rest of the country, worse than public colleges and universities in the rest of the country or about the same?

[n = 496]

Better	10
Worse	11
Same	71
DK / Refused (Vol)	7

Q60B. When it comes to the quality of public colleges and universities in Louisiana, would you say they are better than public colleges and universities in other southern states, worse than public colleges and universities in the rest of the south or about the same?

[n = 484]

Better	17
Worse	9
Same	67
DK / Refused (Vol)	8

[RANDOMLY ASSIGN TO Q61A OR Q61B]

Q61A. As you may be aware, state government funding for colleges and universities has decreased over the last several years. To offset these cuts, colleges and universities have raised tuition and fees on students. Who do you think should be primarily responsible for funding Louisiana's colleges and universities – the state government or the students who attend these schools and their families?

[n = 489]

State government	63
Students and their families	31
DK / Refused (Vol)	6

Q61B. As you may be aware, state government funding for colleges and universities has decreased by 700 million dollars over the last several years. To offset these cuts, colleges and universities have raised tuition and fees on students by about 40%. Who do you think should be primarily responsible for funding Louisiana's colleges and universities – the state government or the students who attend these schools and their families?

[n = 491]

State government	60
Students and their families	32
DK / Refused (Vol)	8

Q62. 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 reducing the number or amount of TOPS awards as a way of addressing current budget shortfalls. What about you? Would you favor or oppose the following proposals: Reducing the total amount of money qualified students receive from the TOPS program?

Favor	24
Oppose	72
DK / Refused (Vol)	4

Q63. What about: Increasing the academic requirements to qualify for an award - for example requiring a higher grade point average and/or ACT score? Do you favor or oppose this proposal?

Favor	59
Oppose	36
DK / Refused (Vol)	4

[RANDOMLY ASSIGN TO Q64A OR Q64B]

Q64A. What about: Limiting the program so financial aid does not go to children of high-income families that can afford to pay for college? Do you favor or oppose this proposal?

[n = 450]

Favor	63
Oppose	35
DK / Refused (Vol)	2

Q64B. What about: Limiting the program so financial aid goes only to children of low-income families that cannot afford to pay for college? Do you favor or oppose this proposal?

[n = 530]

Favor	49
Oppose	48
DK / Refused (Vol)	3

Q65. 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	20
Getting worse	30
Staying about the same	48
DK / Refused (Vol)	2

Q66. How much confidence do you have in police officers in your community to do a good job enforcing the law – a great deal, a fair amount, just some, or very little confidence?

Great deal	31
Fair amount	36
Just some	11
Very little	23
DK / Refused (Vol)	0

Q67. How much confidence do you have in police officers in your community to not use excessive force on suspects – a great deal, a fair amount, just some, or very little confidence?

Great deal	32
Fair amount	33
Just some	12
Very little	22
DK / Refused (Vol)	1

Q68. How much confidence do you have in police officers in your community to treat blacks and whites equally – a great deal, a fair amount, just some, or very little confidence?

Great deal	32
Fair amount	29
Just some	11
Very little	27
DK / Refused (Vol)	1

Q69. Now I have some questions for you about laws in Louisiana. Would you favor or oppose a law allowing same-sex couples to be legally married in Louisiana?

Favor	42
Oppose	51
DK / Refused (Vol)	6

[RANDOMLY ASSIGN TO Q70A OR 70B]

Q70A. Would you favor or oppose legalizing the possession of small amounts of marijuana for personal use?

[n = 514]

Favor	45
Oppose	52
DK / Refused (Vol)	3

Q70B. Would you favor or oppose legalizing the possession of small amounts of marijuana for medical use?
[n = 466]

Favor	60
Oppose	39
DK / Refused (Vol)	2

[RANDOMLY ASSIGN TO Q71A OR Q71B]

Q71A. If marijuana use is not legalized, do you think people convicted of possessing small amounts of marijuana should serve jail time or not?

[n = 510]

Should serve jail time	30
Should not serve jail time	67
DK / Refused (Vol)	3

Q71B. According to recent estimates, state and local governments in Louisiana spend about seven and half million dollars each year to imprison people convicted of possessing marijuana. If marijuana use is not legalized, do you think people convicted of possessing small amounts of marijuana should serve jail time or not?

[n = 470]

Should serve jail time	20
Should not serve jail time	79
DK / Refused (Vol)	2

Q72. Would you say you pay a great deal of attention, some attention, not very much attention, or no attention at all to news about state government?

Great deal of attention	32
Some attention	46
Not very much attention	17
No attention at all	4
DK / Refused (Vol)	1

Q73. Do you get most of your news about Louisiana public affairs and politics from television, print newspapers, radio, or the internet? (CHOOSE ONE)

Television	51
Print newspapers	11
Radio	6
Internet	31
DK / Refused (Vol)	2

Q74. In the past week, how many days did you read a newspaper?

[Enter # of days 0-7]

0	43
1	13
2	10
3	9
4	3
5	3
6	2
7	16
DK / Refused (Vol)	1

[ASK ONLY IF DID NOT CHOOSE '0' IN Q74]

Q75. When you read the newspaper, do you mostly read the paper version of the newspaper or do you read the paper online?

[n = 627]

Paper	78
Online	22
DK / Refused (Vol)	0

Q76. In the past week, how many days did you watch a local television news program such as "Eyewitness News" or "Action News"?

[Enter # of days 0-7]

0	16
1	6
2	10
3	8
4	7
5	12
6	2
7	39
DK / Refused (Vol)	0

Q77. In the past week, how many days did you watch a national network news program such as ABC World News Tonight, NBC Nightly News or CBS Evening News?

[Enter # of days 0-7]

0	28
1	10
2	8
3	11
4	7
5	9
6	1
7	24
DK / Refused (Vol)	1

Q78. In the past week, how many days did you watch a news program on one of the dedicated cable news networks such as FoxNews, MSNBC, or CNN?

[Enter # of days 0-7]

0	30
1	11
2	10
3	9
4	6
5	8
6	2
7	23
DK / Refused (Vol)	0

Q79. In the past week, how many days did you listen to a news program on radio?

[Enter # of days 0-7]

0	57
1	7
2	10
3	6
4	3
5	6
6	1
7	11
DK / Refused (Vol)	0

Q80. In the past week, how many days did you go on-line to get news about public affairs and politics?

[Enter # of days 0-7]

0	43
1	8
2	8
3	8
4	5
5	4
6	1
7	22
DK / Refused (Vol)	0

Q81. Generally speaking do you consider yourself a Democrat, Republican, Independent, or what?

Democrat	35
Republican	27
Independent	28
Other	8
DK / Refused (Vol)	2

[ASK ONLY IF ANSWERED "Democrat" OR "Republican" TO Q81]

Q82. Would you consider yourself a strong or a not so strong [INSERT ANSWER TO Q81]?

[n = 651]

Strong	59
Not so Strong	38
DK / Refused (Vol)	2

[ASK ONLY IF DID NOT ANSWER "Democrat" OR "Republican" TO Q81]

Q83. Would you say, you lean to the Democratic Party or Republican Party, or would you say you don't lean to either party?

[n = 329]

Democratic Party	16
Republican Party	21
Independent (Don't lean to either party)	60
DK / Refused (Vol)	4

Q84. We just have a few follow up questions left. Your data is very helpful and will be used only for statistical purposes. In what year were you born?

[Open-ended] [Answers coded into categories]

18-29	24
30-49	32
50-64	27
65 or older	17
DK / Refused (Vol)	0

Q85. Do you own your own home, pay rent, or something else?

Own home	62
Pay Rent	22
Something else	16
DK / Refused (Vol)	1

Q86. And do any children under the age of 18 currently reside in your household?

Yes	39
No	61
DK / Refused (Vol)	0

[ASK ONLY IF ANSWERED "Yes" TO Q86]

Q87. Do any of these children attend a public school in Louisiana?

[n = 291]

Yes	71
No	29
DK / Refused (Vol)	0

Q88. Which of the following categories best describes your level of education? Please stop me when I get to that category.

Less than 9 th grade	6
9 th – 11 th grade	11
High school diploma, no college	34
Some college or vocational Degree	26
Four-year college degree	11
Some graduate school	3
Advanced degree	7
DK / Refused (Vol)	0

Q89. What is your current marital status?

Married	46
Single	34
Divorced	9
Separated	3
Widowed	7
DK / Refused (Vol)	0

Q90. And what is your zip code?

[ENTER RESPONSE]

Q91. Are you of Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish origin?

Yes	4
No	95
DK / Refused (Vol)	0

Q92. Which of the following best describes you? Are you White, African-American, Asian, or something else?

White	62
African-American	32
Asian	7
Other	4
DK / Refused (Vol)	1

Q93. Is your religious preference Christian, Jewish, Muslim, Agnostic, Atheists, or something else?

Christian	81
Jewish	1
Muslim	0
Agnostic	2
Atheist	1
Something Else	15
DK / Refused (Vol)	0

[ASK ONLY IF ANSWERED "Christian" TO Q93]

Q94. Do you generally consider yourself Protestant, Catholic, nondenominational, or something else?
[n = 840]

Protestant	12
Catholic	34
Baptist	23
Nondenominational	20
Something else	11
DK / Refused (Vol)	1

[ASK ONLY IF ANSWERED "Christian" TO Q93]

Q95. Do you generally consider yourself an evangelical or born again?
[n = 840]

Yes	49
No	45
DK / Refused (Vol)	7

Q96. How often do you attend services at a church, synagogue, mosque, or other place of worship?...Never, once a year, a few times a year, once a month, about twice a month, once a week or more often

Never	11
Once a year	6
A few times a year	18
Once a month	10
About twice a month	11
Once a week or more often	44
DK / Refused (Vol)	6

Q97. Are you currently employed full-time, employed part-time, retired, unemployed and looking for work, or not employed and not looking for work?

Employed Full-time	52
Employed Part-time	10
Retired	17
Unemployed and looking for work	9
Not employed and not looking for work	8
On Disability (Vol)	5
DK / Refused (Vol)	0

Q98. We would like to know what your household income was last year before taxes. This information will remain strictly confidential and will only be used for statistical purposes. Please stop me when I get to the category that includes your household income.

Under \$10,000	10
\$10,000 - \$19,999	16
\$20,000 - \$29,999	10
\$30,000 - \$39,999	5
\$40,000- \$49,999	4
\$50,000 - \$74,999	14
\$75,000 - \$99,999	10
\$100,000 - \$199,999	15
\$200,000 or more	3
DK / Refused (Vol)	14

Q99. [RECORD GENDER. DO NOT ASK.]

Male	48
Female	52