

The Simon Review

Ethical Reforms, the Budget Crisis, and Perceptions of Quality of Life in Illinois:

Results and Analysis of The Paul Simon Public Policy Institute 2009 Statewide Poll

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Introduction

The Paul Simon Public Policy Institute at Southern Illinois University Carbondale conducted its second annual statewide public opinion survey in the fall of 2009. As in the inaugural survey in 2008, the Institute asked Illinoisans about their quality of life and about ways to deal with the state's crippling budget deficits—whether cutting government spending or enhancing revenues. We also asked their opinions on a number of political and electoral reform ideas that had been well publicized over the summer of 2009 by the Illinois Reform Commission, appointed by Gov. Pat Quinn. Quinn's takeover from the impeached Gov. Rod Blagojevich seemed to promise a new era of cleaner, more transparent government.

The Illinois voters we surveyed reacted positively to a number of the proposed reforms: Large majorities favored a proposal to bar campaign contributions from companies seeking to do business with the state, to allow recall elections for statewide office-holders, to limit how much money legislative leaders could distribute to other candidates, to limit the length of time legislators could serve in leadership roles, and other proposals. Though voters statewide would probably respond warmly to the proposed reforms if actually introduced to them, most of them would require constitutional amendments, which is a difficult and arduous process in Illinois.

It is the fiscal system in the state, however, that represents the more immediately pressing problem. The \$3 billion deficit that alarmed voters in the 2008 survey is more like \$12 billion as we publish the final results of the 2009 survey. As in the 2008 survey, most Illinois voters in 2009 believed the fiscal imbalance comes about as a result of waste and overspending rather than not taking in enough revenue. In the present survey, we asked what ought to be done to bring the deficit under control. A large majority, 56.5%, thought the budget problems could be solved simply by cutting waste and inefficiency—and that majority held across demographic and geographic subgroups. Far fewer (9.5%) thought the budget problem could be fixed only through increased revenues, or through a combination of budget cuts and tax increases (27.3%).

It is understandable why the “average” voter in Illinois could think the government could operate without enhanced revenues: Mistrust of state government fuels the supposition that the government is shot through with waste and fraud. Former Gov. Rod Blagojevich adamantly opposed tax increases, while the Republican candidates running in the February 2010 primary challenged each other to take a “no tax increase” pledge. Facts like our lower-than-average state income tax rate or our already rock-bottom per-capita state personnel spending don't seem to be as newsworthy.

The Paul Simon Public Policy Institute created and directed this telephone survey of 800 registered voters across the state of Illinois. Interviews were conducted by the Survey Research Center at the University of North Texas between September 9, 2009 and October 8, 2009. Respondents were chosen at random, and each interview lasted approximately 19 minutes. Results for the entire sample have a statistical margin for error of ± 3.4 percentage points at the 95 percent confidence level. This means that if we were to conduct the survey 100 times, in 95 of those instances the results would vary by no more than plus or minus 3.4 points from the results obtained here. The margin for error will be larger for demographic, geographic, and response subgroups.

Section One: Issue Analysis

A. DIRECTION OF NATION, STATE, AND AREA

In the fall of 2009 we found registered voters in the Illinois pessimistic about things in their state. And to have read the news and watched the unpleasant primary-election campaign commercials, we can hardly blame them. The state's budget is \$12 billion in deficit, charges and countercharges of mismanagement come from our leadership in Springfield, and the government appears unable to respond to fiscal challenges in any way other than cutting services and employment.

Half (50.4 percent) of the voters in our survey told us things in the United States were moving in the wrong direction, while a whopping two-thirds (67.8 percent) said things in the State of Illinois were moving in the wrong direction. Almost half (48.3 percent) said they got a not-so-good or a poor value in services for the taxes they paid the state.

As grim as these numbers look, we can see that they even were worse a year ago—beginning to demonstrate, perhaps, the value of an annual series of surveys. In the fall of 2008, only 6 percent of Illinoisans thought things in the United States were going in the right direction, compared to 42.3% in the present survey. Just 12 percent thought things in the State of Illinois were going in the right direction in 2008; in 2009 the number went up to a still-unsatisfactory 22%.

Certainly the improvement in the nation's "right direction" response reflects the departure of President George W. Bush, who was widely unpopular at the end of his presidency, particularly in heavily Democratic Illinois. It may also reflect the ascendancy of a favorite son, Chicago's Barack Obama, to succeed Bush in the White House. Particularly among African American voters, an "Obama effect" may add to their rosy outlook on the direction of the nation: seven in ten black respondents in our survey thought America was headed in the right direction, as opposed to fewer than four in ten whites.

Similarly, the improvement in the perception of the direction of the State of Illinois from 2008 to 2009 probably reflects the removal of an even more unpopular politician, former Governor Rod Blagojevich, and his replacement with the somewhat more popular Governor Pat Quinn. Even though circumstances in the state are dire, removal of Blagojevich, presumed by some to be part of the problem, may mark for many voters a step in the "right direction."

Respondents were a lot more optimistic about the direction of things closer to home, with just over half saying things in their city or area of the state were headed in the right direction. And when asked specifically about the quality of life in their area—regardless of its direction—almost half said it was excellent or good, and another third said it was at least average. As we will see later in the report, though, satisfaction with particular aspects of the quality of life vary greatly by geography and demography.

Better-off, better-educated, and suburban respondents were significantly more likely to be satisfied with the way things are going.

B. POLITICAL AND ELECTORAL REFORMS

Most Illinois voters we surveyed strongly supported most of the political and electoral reforms we tested. The only one that failed to gain majority support—the public financing of state elections—still received plurality support. Given that Illinoisans recognize the debilitated condition of their government, and that crooked politics continue to make the state a national laughingstock, it is not surprising that they would support efforts to rein in the power of state officials, and to make it easier for outsiders to compete.

Some political reforms made it through last year’s legislative session, including relatively high campaign finance limits, ceilings on the distribution of campaign funds by party leadership, and measures to report campaign contributions in a more timely fashion. Political reformers in Illinois endorsed these measures, but half-heartedly, and as only one step in the right direction.

Our research indicates that the public supports stronger measures—including leadership term limits, state campaign contribution limits that match federal limits, and more. In presenting the preliminary results of the survey to the press and the public last fall, Paul Simon Institute Director David Yepsen said, “Reform groups should take these results as meaning they need to give serious consideration to using the initiative process to act if lawmakers fail to do so.”

The ideas we tested were inspired by the report of Gov. Pat Quinn’s Illinois Reform Commission and, while the commission’s report seemed to receive tepid support in Springfield, they were warmly received in our survey: 64.1 percent favored a proposal to prohibit companies that seek to do business with the state from making campaign contributions; 72.4 percent favored a proposal to allow recall elections for holders of statewide offices (up 8.9 percentage points from the 2008 Simon Institute survey); 65.4 percent favored limits on the amount of money party leaders could distribute to other candidates; 71.6 percent favored limits on in-kind contributions, as opposed to cash contributions; 70.3 percent favored limits on contributions to Illinois campaigns that match the limits on federal campaigns; and fully three-fourths (77.9 percent) favored limits on the time legislators could serve in leadership positions.

Even a proposal for public funding of elections—which would prohibit private contributions altogether—received plurality support in our survey, with 49.4 percent either favoring or strongly favoring it, with 38.5 percent opposing. It is difficult to imagine how such a proposal would find its way through the legislature!

For many students of Illinois government, the most important reform would be to change the way the Illinois legislature redraws legislative district maps after each census. We broadly and neutrally described the current process to our respondents—

telling them that partisan stalemates over redistricting were solved by pulling a name out of a hat—and asked them whether they approved or disapproved. Only about one in six approved and more than seven in ten disapproved. We then described a proposal in which the Illinois Supreme Court would appoint a “neutral person” to the redistricting panel to resolve partisan ties, and almost three-fourths approved.

This indicates to us a strong likelihood that at least some of these proposals could command a majority of Illinois voters if they could find their way onto the November ballot. The desire for political reform is strong in the state, and appears to be so across demographic, geographic, and partisan categories.

The political reform ideas we presented appeared to draw even stronger support from the groups more often associated with “good-government” and Progressive reforms: those with higher-than-average incomes, suburbanites, and those who have completed a college degree. Those in the Chicago city limits, with its urban-machine governmental structure and history, while still favoring the reforms, were less likely to do so.

We asked respondents whether they thought the best way to reform Illinois politics was through legislative action or through a public vote. The results were not even close, with two-thirds favoring the referendum, about an eighth favoring legislative action, and the balance saying they hadn’t heard enough about the subject to have an opinion.

C. VALUE OF SERVICES FOR TAXES PAID AND SHARE OF STATE SPENDING

We opened by asking respondents how they felt about the direction of the nation, state, and their area; another way to get at their satisfaction with the government is to ask whether they feel they get a good value for taxes paid to the federal government, to the state government, and to their local governments. People don’t like paying taxes, and for some, “tax” is a dirty word. Therefore it is understandable that the percentages of people saying they get an excellent or good value for taxes paid is relatively low, particularly at the federal and state level.

About one in five respondents said they get an excellent or good **value for the federal taxes paid**—up about 8 percentage points from the previous survey. This makes sense, since the percentage of people who say the country is headed in the right direction is up from the 2008 survey. As we might expect, Democrats were more likely than Republicans to say they got an excellent or good value for the taxes paid to the federal and state governments.

Satisfaction with the **value of taxes paid to the state of Illinois** is lower than with the value of taxes paid to the federal government. As in the “right direction/wrong direction” question, this is the opposite of our standing expectation. It shows broad and deep sentiment that things are not going well in our state.

Satisfaction with the **value received for the tax dollar paid to local governments** is significantly higher than for the taxes paid to the feds and the state. Just as satisfaction

with the direction of the local area is higher among upper-income voters and suburbanites, so is satisfaction with the value of taxes paid to the localities. For example, respondents living in the Chicago suburbs were twice as likely as those in the City to say they got an excellent or good value for the local taxes they pay (42.8% vs. 21.2%).

As in the 2008 survey, we asked respondents whether the **share of state spending in their area** was high, about right, or low. In 2008, they were more likely to say their area did not get its fair share than to say their area did get its fair share. In the 2009 survey, the percentages were roughly equal—37.9 percent said their area got about the right amount and 39.3 percent said their area got less than its fair share. Only 8.8 percent said their area got more than its fair share. Residents in “downstate” Illinois (meaning everything not in the Chicago area) were most likely to say their area did not get its fair share of state spending.

D. QUALITY OF LIFE INDICATORS

One purpose of the Simon Institute annual survey is to track satisfaction with the quality of life in the State of Illinois—in areas such as the environment, infrastructure, education, etc. We refer in the questionnaire not to quality of “state services” in these areas—though the state indeed spends heavily here—but to quality of environment, quality of education, etc. We separate these issues as much as possible from currently sour feelings toward the state government.

Perceived quality in 2009 was up over 2008 levels in every area except for performance of the local economy. Majorities perceived excellent or good quality in the environment (56 percent), in public safety (70.7 percent), and in parks and recreational opportunities (70.3 percent). Fewer than four in ten (38.6 percent) said the quality of infrastructure in their area was excellent or good, while just under half (48.1 percent) said the quality of K-12 public education in their area was excellent or good.

In each area tested, perceived quality of these indicators is higher in the Chicago suburbs than in the City or downstate; higher among the better-off and better-educated; and higher among white respondents than among black respondents.

E. ADDRESSING THE STATE BUDGET DEFICIT

Large majorities of Illinois voters still believe the state could pay for everything it needs to do—if only officials could cut waste and inefficiency. Apparently it is much easier for voters to believe a story in which Illinois’ legendarily corrupt and wasteful state government is entirely to blame for massive deficits than it is to look at the size of the deficit—somewhere around a third of the budget itself—and conclude that there is a structural problem requiring difficult decisions. It is our belief that those decisions will have to include wrenching restructuring of state programs and worker pension benefits, combined with increases in revenue, such as an increase in the state income tax.

The 2008 Simon Institute Survey asked voters what they thought of a budget deficit problem that was much smaller than the one we asked voters about in 2009. In the first survey we asked respondents whether the deficit came about because the state does not take in enough money to pay for needed programs and services, or because the state takes in enough money but wastes it on unnecessary programs and services. More than three-quarters (77.9 percent) thought the state took in enough money to pay for everything.

In the present survey we structured the question differently by asking respondents to choose a statement that came closest to their views about what the state should do about its deficits: Fewer than one in ten (9.5 percent) agreed that “we can only fix the problem by taking in more revenue, such as a tax increase.” A little over a quarter (27.3%) chose the statement “the problem can only be solved by a combination of budget cuts and revenue increases.” A majority (56.5 percent) remain convinced that the budget problem can be fixed by “cutting waste and inefficiency in government.”

While the results of the two surveys are not strictly comparable, it remains true that most voters think the government is so badly run that these massive deficits can be solved with a little old-fashioned belt-tightening.

Majorities in almost every category (except Democrats, at 49.4 percent) thought the budget woes could be fixed by cutting waste and inefficiency. Other than partisan differences, most continue to have an exaggerated belief in the power of cutting wasteful spending, regardless of demography or geography.

Increasing education levels appear to correlate negatively with a belief that budget cuts alone can solve the problem: Almost two-thirds (64.6 percent) of those with no college and six in ten (61.8 percent) of those with some college believe the budget deficit can be cured by simply cutting waste and inefficiency, compared with just over half (51.8 percent) of those with a bachelor’s degree or more.

However, when faced with policy choices that could help move the budget toward balance, voters continue—as they did in 2008—to oppose both budget cuts in specific areas *and* specific types of revenue increases. “People say they want to cut state services,” Institute Director David Yepsen said when the initial poll results were released, “but they can’t seem to point to things that should be trimmed.”

Budget Cuts

As in the 2008 survey, most voters oppose cuts in state programs and services in every area tested, from public safety and public education to infrastructure and parks-and-recreation. However, we see what appears to be movement toward accepting cuts in some areas. For example respondents in 2009 were more likely to favor cuts in spending on state universities than they were in 2008 (31.9 percent versus 20.9 percent). We see a similar increase in acceptance for budget cuts in state spending on natural resources between the 2009 results (32.0% favor) and 2008 (21.2 percent). We

saw a 15.4 percentage-point increase in the proportion favoring cuts in state workers' pension benefits (39.5 percent in 2009, 24.1 percent in 2008).

Revenue Increases

If most Illinoisans still believe the budget can be balanced with cuts alone, why would they be in favor of any revenue increases? They aren't. From income tax hikes to sales tax revisions to gambling to the sale or lease of state assets, the voters we surveyed expressed opposition in every instance. On the other hand, as in the list of possible spending cuts, we do see what looks like movement in the direction of accepting some revenue enhancements.

Respondent acceptance of expanding the sales tax to cover services was up significantly in 2009 (44.1 percent) over 2008 (28.4 percent), with acceptance increasing as respondent education rose. The proportion approving of an increase in the sales tax rate was up slightly, though perhaps not significantly, to 21.4 percent in 2009 from 17 percent in 2008.

Support for expansion of legalized gambling was flat (46.5 percent favor in 2008, 44.5 percent favor in 2009), and support for selling or leasing state assets such as the lottery or the toll road system was down significantly from 2008 (37.8 percent) to 2009 (25.9 percent).

A change in wording of the income tax question, unfortunately, leaves us unable to compare responses from '08 to '09. In 2008, we asked if respondents favored or opposed adding a bracket to the state income tax system so higher-income Illinoisans would pay a higher rate. This looks much like the approach backed by Illinois Comptroller Dan Hynes a year later as he campaigned for the Democratic nomination for governor. Two-thirds (65.7 percent) favored that proposal.

In 2009, Governor Quinn put forth a specific proposal to raise the flat state income tax rate from 3 percent to 4.5 percent, so we asked for voter reaction to that. A mirror-image 65.5 percent *opposed* this facet of the Quinn proposal. Quinn's proposed system of off-setting tax credits to lessen the burden of the tax on lower-income Illinoisans seemed to us too complex to test in this brief telephone survey.

F. POSITIONS ON SOCIAL ISSUES

As we headed into the 2010 primary and general elections, Institute researchers were interested in Illinoisans' positions on divisive social issues that find their way into major campaigns: the so-called "wedge" issues of legal abortion and gay marriage.

As the federal health care debate pushed forward on the national stage, before it subsided in January, we also were interested to see the extent to which Illinoisans believed the federal government had a responsibility to guarantee that all citizens have health insurance.

Illinoisans, as a whole, take a moderate stance on these issues: Half think abortion should be legal but that there should be some restrictions; two-thirds think there should be at least some legal recognition of same-sex unions; and about six in ten agree at least somewhat that the federal government has a responsibility to ensure that all citizens have health insurance.

Position on Abortion

We offered respondents a choice of three positions someone might take on the legality of elective abortion: that it should be legal under any circumstances, legal only under certain circumstances, or illegal under all circumstances. As we might expect, most respondents (51.0 percent) chose the middle position and fewer chose the extreme positions, that it be legal under any circumstances (28.3 percent) or illegal under all circumstances (17.8 percent).

Also in line with that past research has shown, opposition to abortion in all circumstances was higher, but still well below a majority, among Republicans (32 percent) and evangelical Christians (34.5 percent).

Position on Same-Sex Marriage

Similarly, we asked respondents to choose among three positions on same-sex marriage laws in Illinois: that same-sex couples should be allowed to legally marry, that they should be allowed to form civil unions with fewer legal rights than actual marriage, or that there should be no legal recognition of same-sex unions.

This time, however, the voters we spoke with sorted themselves more or less evenly among the three alternatives, favoring full marriage rights to gay and lesbian couples (29.3%), favoring civil unions (35.3%), or favoring no legal recognition (31.3%).

As with their positions on abortion, Illinoisans' partisan identification was correlated with their positions on same-sex marriage. Six in ten (58.3 percent) Republicans opposed any official recognition of same-sex unions, while a plurality (44.1 percent) of Democrats favor full legal recognition of gay and lesbian marriage.

Religious affiliation, too, influenced respondents' positions on gay marriage: Seven in ten evangelical Christians opposed any legal recognition for same-sex unions, while among other religious classifications, support for each of the three options was not significantly different from the group average.

Respondents' education appears to have some effect on their likelihood of supporting gay marriage: Those with at least a bachelor's degree are more 17 percentage points more likely to support marriage for same-sex couples than are those with no college education.

Position on Government's Obligation to Ensure Health Insurance

We asked respondents whether they strongly agreed, agreed, disagreed, or strongly disagreed with a statement that read: "The federal government has a responsibility to make sure that all citizens have health insurance." Six in ten (60.9 percent) either agreed or strongly agreed.

As before, party identification helps predict how respondents will answer: only three in ten Republicans (29.3 percent) agreed that the federal government has a responsibility to make sure everyone has health insurance, while Democrats (63.7 percent) and Independents (57.7 percent) were much more likely to do so.

In the Chicago area, partisanship is correlated with geography, so we should not be surprised to find that agreement was higher in the City (79.3 percent strongly more mostly agree) than in the Chicago suburbs (59.6 percent) or downstate (52.9 percent).

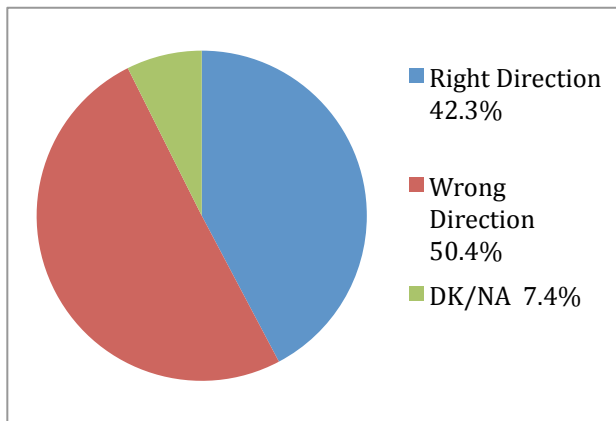
Section Two: Item Analysis

A. STATE OF THE COUNTRY AND QUALITY OF LIFE

As in the inaugural Simon Institute survey, we begin the questionnaire with the common introductory questions about the general “direction” of the nation, the State of Illinois, and the respondent’s own area of the state. A follow-up question asks about overall quality of life in the respondent’s area.

1. Direction of the Country

While a slim majority (50.4%) of respondents thought things in the United States were “off track and headed in the wrong direction,” the 42.3% of the sample who thought things were moving in the right direction represented an increase of 36 percentage points over last year’s dismal 6.3% “right direction” response.



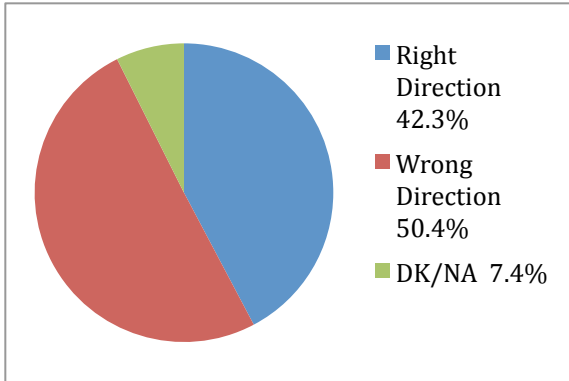
is a likely “Obama effect” among black voters, 70.9% of whom thought the country was moving in the right direction, as opposed to just 38.5% of whites.

Other groups significantly more likely than average to say the country is going in the right direction were those in the City of Chicago (60.9%) and Democrats (70.1%). Women were somewhat more likely than men to say they thought the country was moving in the right direction (45.5% vs. 37.7%).

- Unlike last year’s survey, there was significant variation among groups on the direction of the country. As other surveys have shown, for example, there

2. Direction of the State

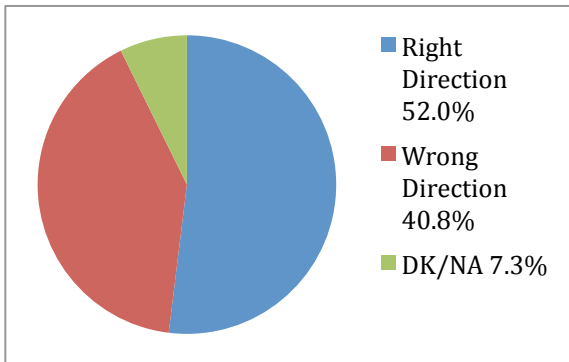
Normally respondents are more optimistic about the direction of the state than they are about the direction of the country. Given the recent persistent problems in Illinois—such as the removal of Gov. Blagojevich and the ballooning state budget deficit—perhaps it is not surprising that our respondents were a lot less likely to say Illinois was moving in the right direction. Given the dismal 21.8% who were optimistic about the direction of the state, it is a 9 percentage-point improvement over 2008’s 12.4% “right direction” response.



- More likely than average to say things in Illinois were moving in the right direction were Democrats (31.3%) and black respondents (34.2%). Women were more likely than men to say the state was moving in the right direction (24.6% vs. 17.3%).

3. Direction of “Your area of the State”

Responses return to the expected pattern when we get to the direction of respondents’ own “city or area of the state.” More than half (52.0%) said things closer to home were moving in the right direction.



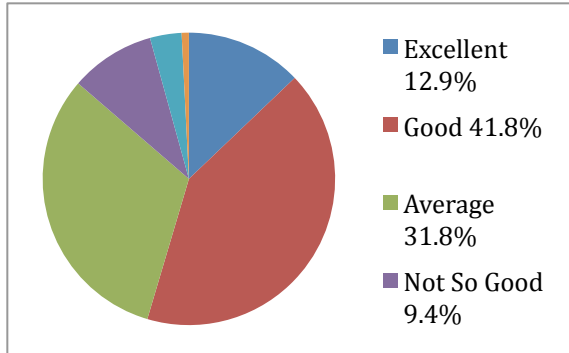
say things in their area were moving in the right direction (64.0% vs. 31.0%), with respondents in “downstate” Illinois somewhere in-between (51.4% “right direction”).

- Residents of the Chicago suburbs were twice as likely as those in the City to

- Other groups more likely than average to say things were moving in the right direction in their area were Republicans (59.7%) and those with household incomes above \$100,000 (57.2%). These demographic characteristics likely correlate with suburban Chicago residence.

4. Quality of Life

We asked respondents about the quality of life in their area of the state, regardless of its general direction. Optimism is somewhat higher in this area than it was in the 2008 survey. About one in eight (12.9%) thought quality of life in their area was excellent, four in ten (41.8%) said it was good, a little less than a third (31.8%) thought it was average. The 54.7% combined “excellent/good” response is roughly equivalent to the 52% who said things in their area were moving in the right direction, and seven points higher than last year’s 47.2% combined “excellent/good” response.



- Respondents of the Chicago suburbs were more likely to say the quality of life in their area was excellent or good (64.3% combined) than were those in the City (52.2%) or downstate (44.5%).
- Not surprisingly, perceived quality of life improves with respondent

household income, from 40.7% combined excellent/good among those with incomes below \$50,000 to 53.3% among those with incomes between \$50,000 and \$100,000, to 79.3% among those with household incomes above \$100,000.

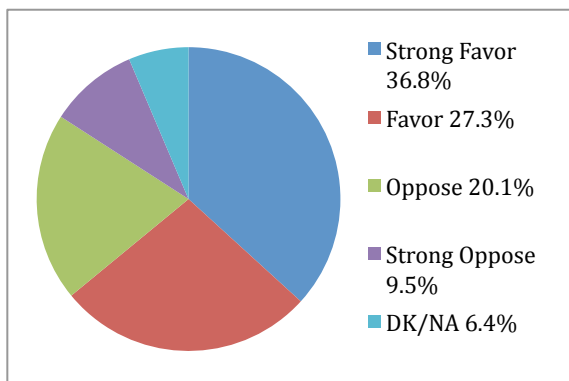
- Perceptions of local quality of life increase sharply with education levels, from 37.7% excellent/good among those with a high school diploma or less, to 47.9% among those with some college, and to 66.1% among those with a bachelor's degree or more.
- White respondents were significantly more likely than blacks to say the quality of life in their area was excellent or good (57.7% vs. 31.6%).

B. POLITICAL AND ELECTORAL REFORMS

A major focus of the 2009 survey was political reform, inspired by the Illinois Reform Commission's recommendations. We tested political reform ideas championed by the commission, including campaign finance issues, recall elections, and redistricting reform. Every reform idea in the questionnaire received large majority approval, except for public financing of elections, which still commanded plurality support.

1. Campaign Contribution Prohibition for Companies that Seek State Business

Almost two-thirds (64.1%) either favored or strongly favored a proposal to prohibit legislative-race campaign contributions from companies that seek to do business with the State of Illinois.



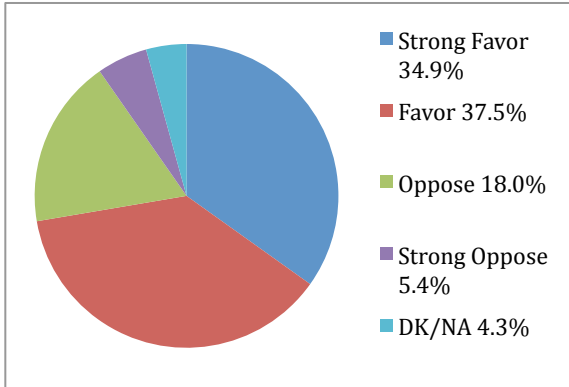
- Support for the campaign-contribution prohibition rises with respondent education and income. Among those with household incomes below \$50,000, 57.4% gave a combined

strong favor/favor. It rose to 65.4% among those with incomes between \$50,000 and \$100,000, and to 77.3% among those with incomes above \$100,000.

- Similarly, among those with a high school diploma or less, 44.5% favored the proposal; among those with some college, that figure rose to 59.5%. Almost three-fourths (74.3%) of those with a bachelor's degree favored the proposal.
- White respondents (67.7%) were 30 points more likely to favor the prohibition than were black respondents (36.8%).

2. Constitutional Amendment to Allow Recall of Statewide Officeholders

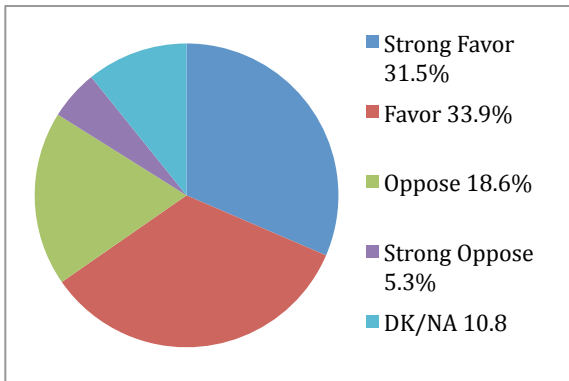
In the only reform question repeated from the 2008 survey, almost three-fourths (72.4%) of survey respondents either favored or strongly favored a proposal to allow for recall elections for holders of statewide offices. This is up 8.9 percentage points from the previous year’s 63.5%.



- Support for recall is strong across demographic and geographic categories. Republicans are somewhat more likely to favor it than are Democrats (79.5% strong favor/favor vs. 68.3%)

3. Limits on Party Leaders’ Campaign Money Redistribution

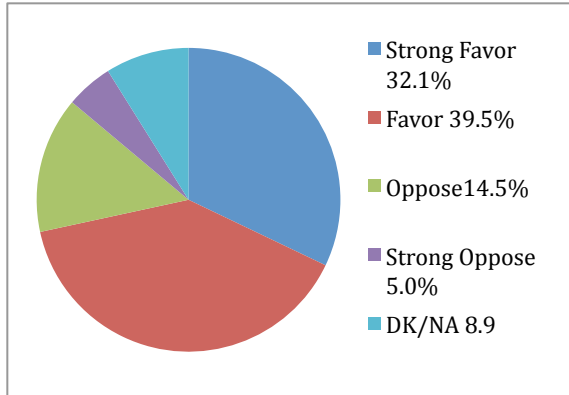
Almost two-thirds (65.4%) either favored or strongly favored a proposal to limit the amount of campaign money that party leaders can redistribute to other candidates.



- Support increases with respondent income and education. While 56.7% of those with household incomes below \$50,000 either favor or strongly favor the proposal, among those with incomes above \$100,000, 77.4% are in favor. Similarly, among those with no college, 58.8% either strongly favor or favor limits on party leaders’ redistribution of campaign money, compared with 71.8% of those with a bachelor’s degree or more.

4. Limits on In-Kind Contributions

More than seven in ten (71.6%) either favored or strongly favored a proposal to place limits on in-kind contributions in state legislative campaigns. Interviewers gave examples of “in-kind” services, such as office space, printing, or purchasing of campaign ads.

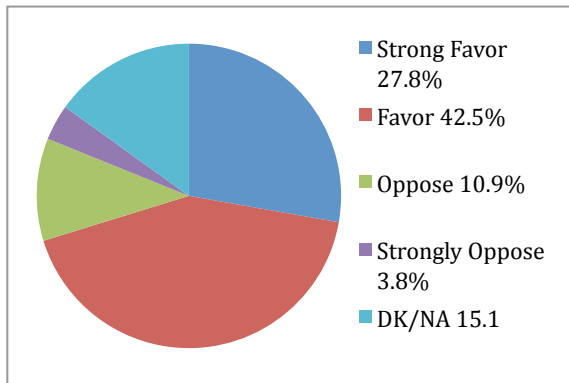


- White respondents were more likely than blacks to favor limits on in-kind contributions (74.4% favor/strong favor vs. 54.4%).

- The likelihood of favoring this proposal increases with respondent education and income. Among those with no college, 55.9% either favor or strongly favor limits on in-kind contributions, as opposed to 69.6% among those with some college and 71.8% among those with a bachelor's degree or more. Among those with household incomes below \$50,000, 65.9% favor the limits. Among those with incomes between \$50,000 and \$100,000, that increases to 72.1%. Among those in households with incomes above \$100,000, 82.4% either favor or strongly favor such limits.

5. Make Illinois Contribution Limits Match Federal Contribution Limits

Seven in ten (70.3%) strongly favored or favored a proposal to have contribution limits for Illinois state offices that match the limits for federal offices.



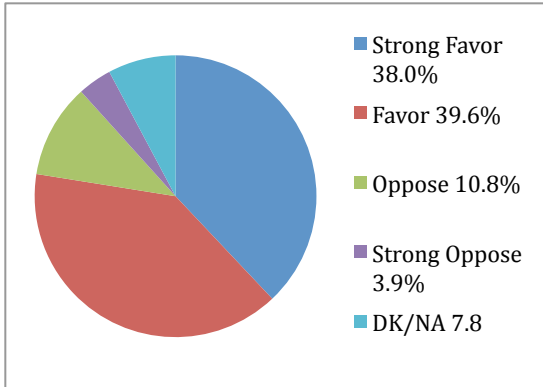
- Support for making Illinois' limits match federal limits was higher among white respondents than among blacks (combined 73.0% vs. 54.4%).
- Levels of support are similar among partisan and geographic groups.

However, income and education levels are again correlated with support for the reform proposal. Among those with no college education, 63.6% either strongly favored or favored the reform; among those with some college, support was 65.8%, and rose to 75.9% among those with a college degree or more.

- Among respondents with household incomes below \$50,000, 62.9% favored making state limits match federal ones. Support rose to 68.1% among those earning between \$50,000 and \$100,000, and to 81.7% among those with incomes above \$100,000.

6. Legislative Leadership Term Limits

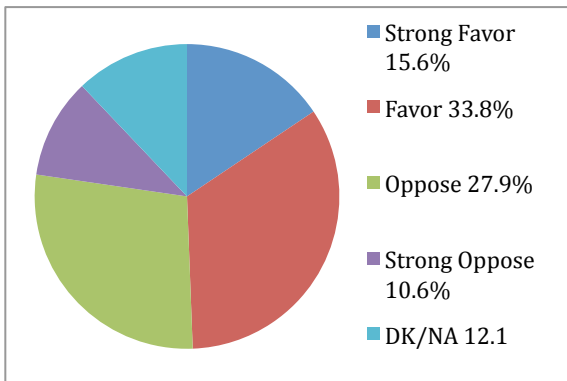
More than three-quarters (77.6%) strongly favored or favored a proposal to limit the amount of time legislators could serve in leadership positions such as Speaker of the House or President of the Senate.



- Republicans are more likely to favor legislative term limits than are Democrats, though support is still high (86.2% vs. 65.8%). Black respondents, who are overwhelmingly Democratic, are somewhat less likely than whites to favor legislative term limits (64.6% vs. 80.0%).

7. Public Funding for Qualified Candidates

Garnering the least support among reform ideas tested was eliminating all contributions for state legislative campaigns and replacing them with a system of public funding. A plurality (49.4%) either strongly favored or favored this proposal.

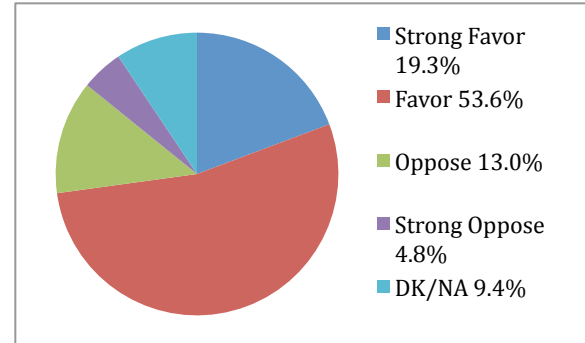
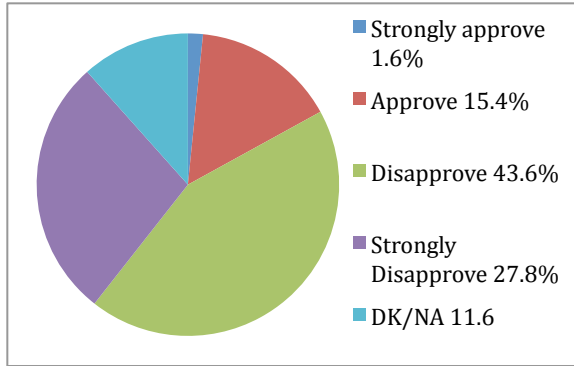


- While the support levels varied little across most categories, whites (51.5% strong favor/favor) were somewhat more likely than blacks (41.7%) to favor public funding.

8. Legislative Redistricting

Interviewers described how current law settles partisan disputes on legislative redistricting plans by pulling a name out of a hat. They were then asked whether they approved or disapproved of this method. Only 16% approved and almost three-fourths (71.4%) strongly or mostly disapproved.

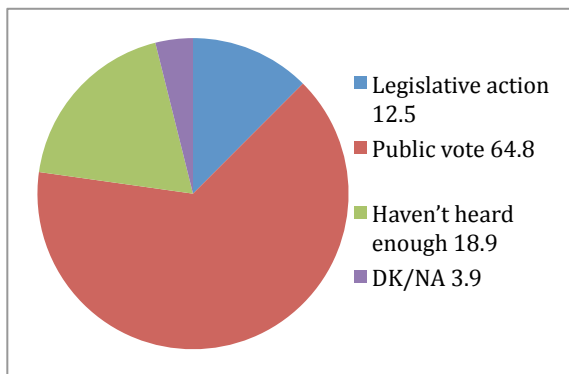
Interviewers then introduced a reform proposal that would have “the Illinois Supreme Court add a neutral person to the redistricting panel in case of a partisan tie.” Almost three-fourths (72.9%) strongly favored or favored the proposed reform.



- Support for the proposed reform of redistricting panels remains strong, with little variation across demographic and geographic groups.

9. Reform Through Legislative Process or by Referendum

Interviewers asked whether respondents thought the best way to reform Illinois politics is through a public vote or through legislative action. They were also offered the option of saying they hadn't heard enough about the issue to have an opinion. Almost two-thirds (64.8%) said a public vote was the better path to reform.



- Levels of support for the referendum over public action was mostly consistent across demographic and geographic categories. Republicans (71.3%) were somewhat more likely than Democrats (57.6%) to say a public vote was the better way to achieve reform in Illinois.

C. APPROVAL OF PUBLIC OFFICIALS

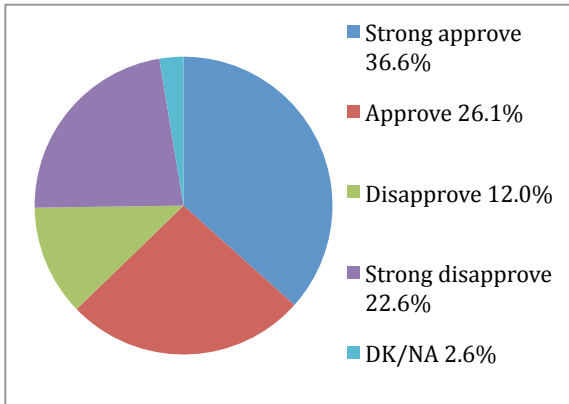
We read respondents a list of public officials and asked respondents whether and to what extent they approved of the job each official was doing. Interviewers also offered respondents an option to say they didn't know enough about that individual to venture an opinion. This offers a "cleaner" result, in that respondents with low information are not offering a "coin flip" approval/disapproval opinion. The "don't know" response also gives us a good idea of an official's statewide name recognition—for example, note that 75% were unable to offer an opinion on the job performance of Illinois Senate Minority Leader Christine Radogno.

As the report is being written in early 2010, events and campaign communications will have changed fall 2009 approval ratings, say, of Governor Pat Quinn and Comptroller Dan Hynes who competed vigorously against each other for the Democratic Party gubernatorial nomination. Other officials, such as the aforementioned Senator Radogno, are little known outside their districts. Officeholders such as US Senators Dick Durbin and Roland Burris and Illinois Attorney General Lisa Madigan will not have a direct hand in the ethics and budget issues at the heart of the Simon Institute poll. Therefore we will spend little time looking at group differences in their job approval ratings.

We will look briefly at partisan and geographical differences in the approval ratings of Illinois Gov. Pat Quinn, Speaker of the Illinois House of Representatives Mike Madigan, and Illinois Senate President John Cullerton.

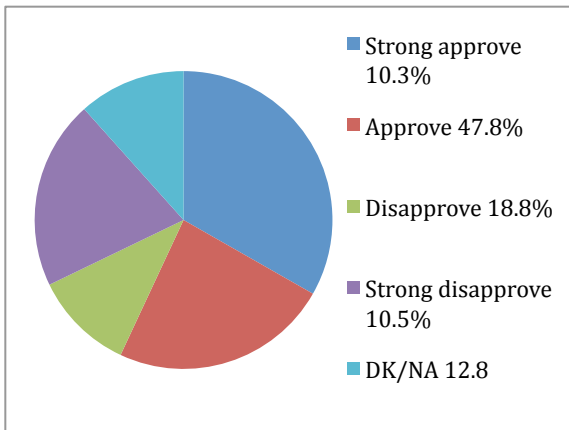
1. Approval of President Barack Obama

Last autumn, President Obama’s combined approval rating in Illinois was 62.7%, roughly ten points higher than his rating in the country as a whole.



2. Approval of Illinois Governor Pat Quinn

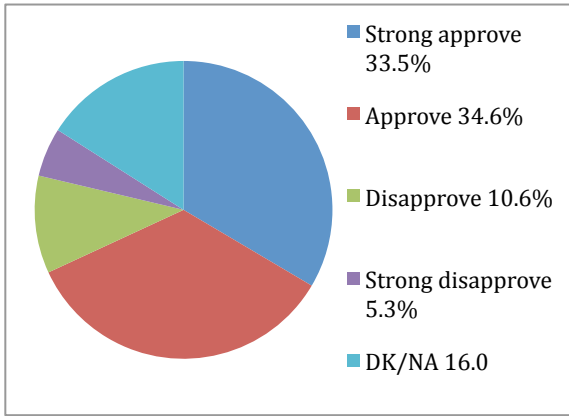
A majority of Illinoisans surveyed, at 58.1% strongly approve/approve, appeared to think Governor Quinn was doing a good job. One suspects he gets some approval simply for not being the enormously unpopular previous governor, Rod Blagojevich. In a similar question on last year’s survey, for example, 9.4% said then-Gov. Blagojevich was doing an excellent or good job on the state budget, with a quarter (25.0%) saying his performance was not good, and a full six in ten (61.4%) saying his performance was poor.



- Governor Quinn’s rating was relatively even across the state—slightly higher in Democratic Chicago (63.1%), and still above 50% in more conservative downstate (53.5%).
- Quinn’s approval, as expected, was higher among Democrats (71.6%), though a plurality of Republicans approved (48.0%). More than half (55.6%) of Independents approved or strongly approved of Quinn’s performance.

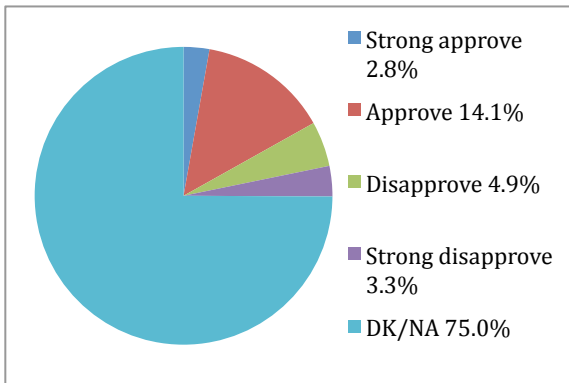
3. Approval of Illinois Attorney General Lisa Madigan

More than two-thirds (68.1%) approve or strongly approved of the job done by Illinois Attorney General Lisa Madigan.



4. Job Approval of Illinois Senate Minority Leader Christine Radogno

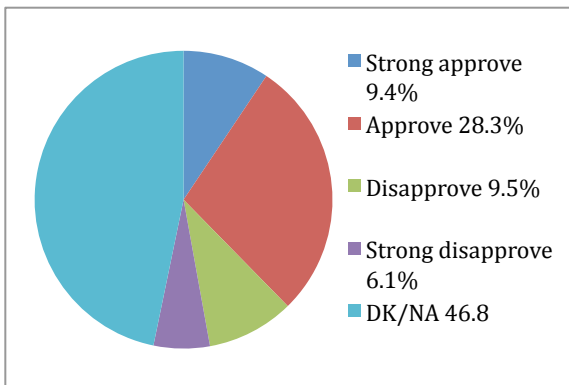
While Leader Radogno’s combined approval rating (16.9%) was roughly two times higher than her disapproval (8.2%), the dominant response (75.0%) was “don’t know.”



- Her name recognition was not much higher in the Chicago suburbs, where Radogno’s Senate district is: The “don’t know” response there was 72.0%.

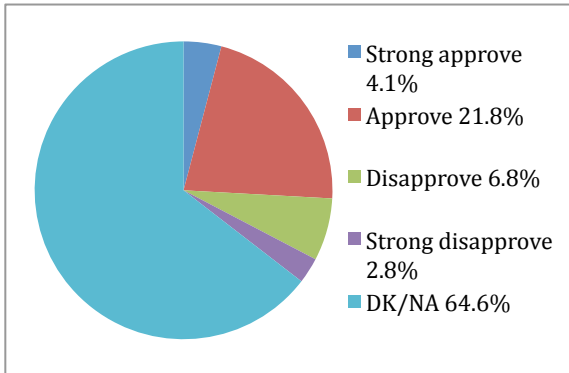
5. Job Approval of Illinois State Treasurer Alexi Giannoulias

Giannoulias’s job approval ratings far outpace disapproval ratings, though his name recognition in the fall of 2009 was relatively low for a statewide officeholder: 46.8% “don’t know.”



6. Job Approval of Illinois House Minority Leader Tom Cross

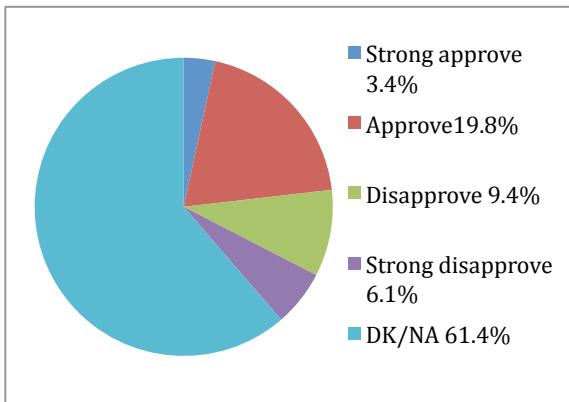
Almost two-thirds were unable to offer an opinion on the job performance of House Minority Leader Tom Cross. Among those with an opinion, approval far outpaced disapproval.



- As with Senate Minority Leader Radogno, House Minority Leader Cross is as unknown in the Chicago suburbs, in which his district lies, as he is statewide (62.2% vs. 64.6%)

7. Job Approval of Illinois Senate President John Cullerton

As with Leaders Radogno and Cross, a sizable majority (61.4%) said they did not know enough about new Senate President John Cullerton. Among those with an opinion, favorable ratings (23.2%) were higher than unfavorables (15.5%).

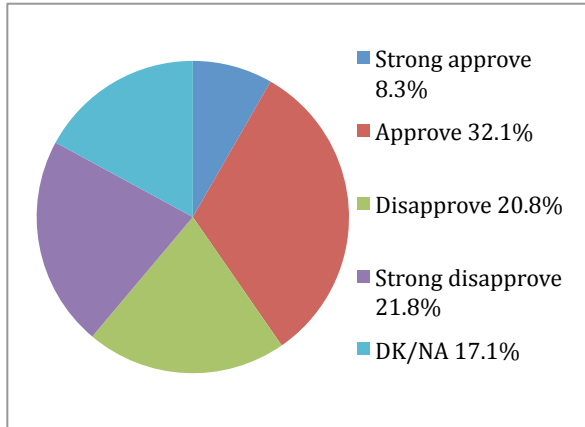


unable to venture an opinion on his performance, vs. 56.2% in the Chicago suburbs and 76.4% downstate.

- There is enough familiarity of Cullerton for there to be interesting partisan differences on his performance, with Democrats more likely to approve than to disapprove (combined 31.6% approve vs. 11.9% disapprove. Likelihood of approval vs. disapproval was about even for Republicans (13.8% vs. 14.7%) and Independents (21.2% vs. 20.0%).
- Unlike the numbers for the Republican leaders, there is regional variation in Cullerton's approval/recognition. In the City of Chicago, only 48.4% were

8. Job Approval of Illinois House Speaker Mike Madigan

Job approval of Illinois House Speaker Mike Madigan is about evenly divided between those who approve (40.4%) and those who disapprove (42.6%). The “don’t know” percentage (17.1%) appears quite low for a statehouse party leader, perhaps because Madigan has been Speaker for most of the last 25 years and is widely acknowledged as a powerful force in state politics.



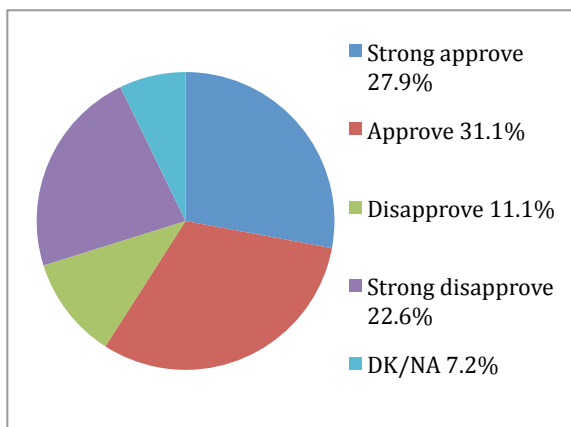
- Madigan’s combined favorable ratings are somewhat higher than unfavorable ratings in the City of Chicago (46.3% vs. 39.1%) and Downstate (39.9% vs.

35.3%). In suburban Chicago 37.5% approve or strongly approve of Madigan’s performance, while 50.3% either disapprove or strongly disapprove.

- Among Democrats, 48.6% approve or strongly approve of Madigan’s job performance, while 34.9% disapprove or strongly disapprove. Combined disapproval is understandably higher among Republicans (45.0% disapprove/strongly disapprove), and higher still among Independents (54.0%).

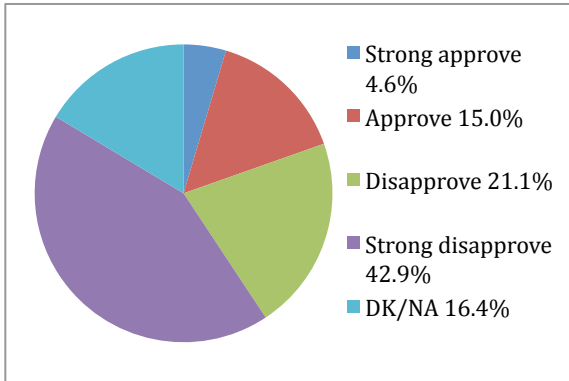
9. Job Approval of US Senator Dick Durbin

Almost six in ten (59.0%) respondents said they either approved or strongly approved of the job being done by US Senator Dick Durbin. A little over a third (33.7%) disapproved or strongly disapproved.



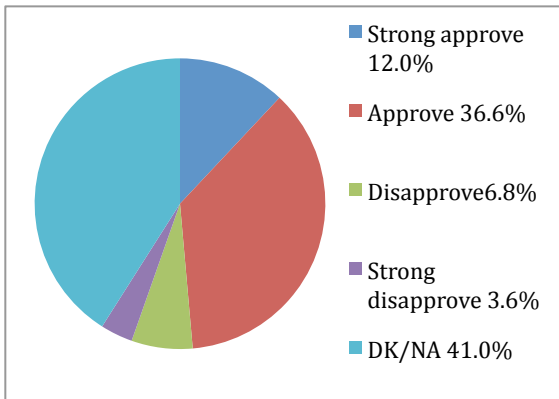
10. Job Approval of US Senator Roland Burris

Likely because of the controversy surrounding his appointment to the US Senate by former Governor Rod Blagojevich, Senator Burris gets negative ratings from almost two-thirds (64.0%) of those polled. Just one in five (19.6%) approve or strongly approve of his job performance.



11. Job Approval of Illinois Comptroller Dan Hynes

Before Comptroller Hynes's Democratic gubernatorial campaign had begun in earnest, 48.6% of respondents approved of the job he was doing; slightly fewer, 41.0%, were unable to offer an opinion. Just over one in ten (10.4%) either disapproved or strongly disapproved of his performance.

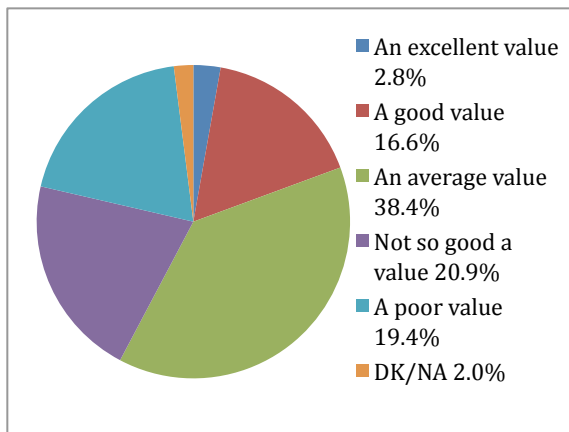


D. VALUE OF SERVICES FOR TAXES PAID

Another measure of satisfaction with government is the extent to which voters perceive good value of services they receive in exchange for the taxes they pay to various levels of government. As in the “direction” questions, the standing expectation is that respondents will perceive better value of services per tax dollar as levels of government get closer to home—that is, they should be less satisfied with the value of services they get from the federal government, somewhat more satisfied with the value of state service for the tax dollar, and most satisfied with the value of services they get for their local tax dollar.

1. Value of Services for Federal Taxes Paid

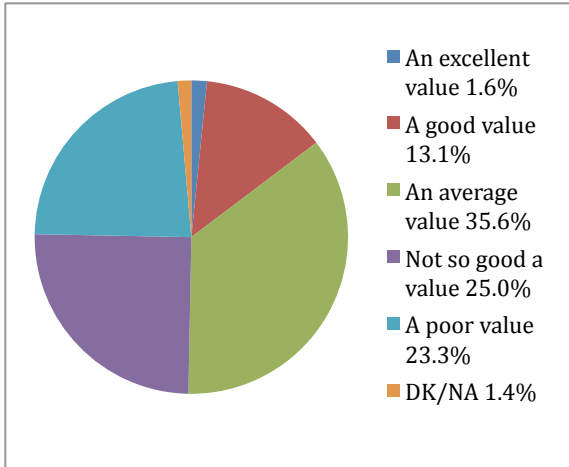
Almost one in five respondents (19.4%) said they got an excellent or good value for the taxes they pay to the federal government. A plurality (38.4%) said they felt they got an “average” value. Though the positive reports seem relatively low, the combined excellent/good response is up more than 8 percentage points, consistent with the improvement in perceived direction of the United States.



- Democrats were a lot more likely than to say they get an excellent or good value for their federal tax dollar (28.8% vs. 11.6%).
- Respondents with college degrees were more likely than those with some college to say they get an excellent or good value for their federal taxes (23.3% vs. 13.8%). Those with no college fall somewhere in between (18.2% excellent/good).

2. Value of Services for Illinois Taxes Paid

Further reflective of the bad feelings respondents had about their state, they were actually less likely to say they got an excellent or good value for their state tax dollar, contrary to our standing expectation of improved perception as we get “closer to home” in governmental level. Only about one in seven (14.7%) said they got an excellent or good value for their Illinois state tax dollar. This is up very slightly—though probably not significantly—from last year’s 12.2% excellent/good response.



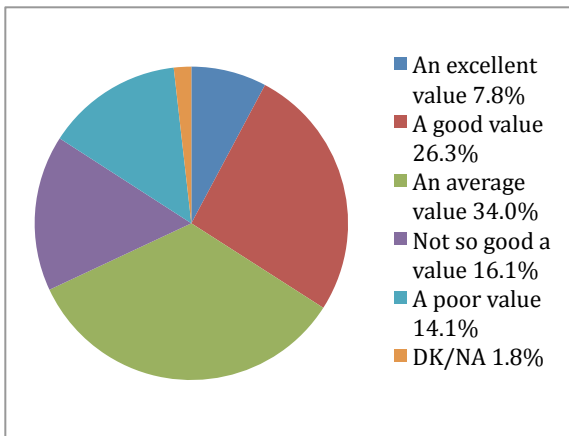
- Not one Republican respondent felt he or she got an excellent value for the

taxes paid to the State of Illinois; about one in eight (12.2%) said “good value.” The combined excellent/good response was roughly equivalent for Independents (11.2%). Democrats were twice as likely (22.0%) to say they got an excellent or good value.

- Respondents with some college were less likely to perceive an excellent or good value for state taxes paid (10.4%), compared with respondents with no college (18.2%) and those with a college degree (23.3%).

3. Value of Services for Local Taxes Paid

Respondents’ perceptions of the value they get in return for local taxes conforms to expectations. About a third (34.1%) said they got an excellent or good value; another third (34.1%) said they got an average value, and just under a third (30.2%) said they got a not-so-good or a poor value. Response patterns here look very much like those in the local-quality-of-life question, in that satisfaction was higher among better-off, better-educated, and suburban respondents.



- Respondents with college degrees were more likely to say they got an excellent or good value for their local taxes (40.8%) than were those with some college (28.9%) or no college (27.1%).

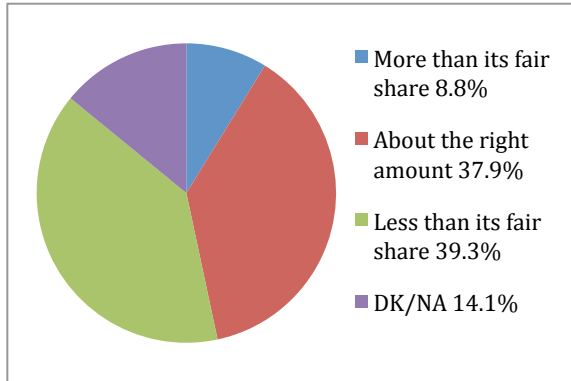
- Numbers look similar for income groups: perceived excellent/good value was highest among those with household incomes above \$100,000 (41.5%) and lower for those with incomes between \$50,000 and \$100,000 (31.2%) or with incomes below \$50,000 (31.6%).
- If this is indeed some sort of proxy for satisfaction with local quality of life, we should not be surprised that those in the Chicago suburbs were more likely to perceive an excellent or good value for the local tax dollar than were those in the City (42.8% vs. 21.2%), with downstate residents somewhere in the middle (27.7%).

4. Respondent’s Area’s Share of State Spending.

We next asked respondents to evaluate the share of state spending their area receives. About four in ten (39.3%) said their area got less than its fair share and a statistically similar number

(37.9%) said their area got about the right amount. Fewer than one in ten (8.8%) said they thought they got more than their fair share.

Last year’s survey showed a significant gap between those who thought their area got the right amount (33.8%) and those who thought their area got less than its fair share (44.7%). Though it’s dangerous to posit a trend, the improved perception of fair distribution of state spending might reflect an improving public mood even in these difficult times.



- This item, too, seems to correlate with local quality-of-life perceptions.

Respondents in the Chicago suburbs are a lot more likely to say their area gets about the right amount of state spending (47.6%) than are those in the City (31.5%) or downstate (30.3%).

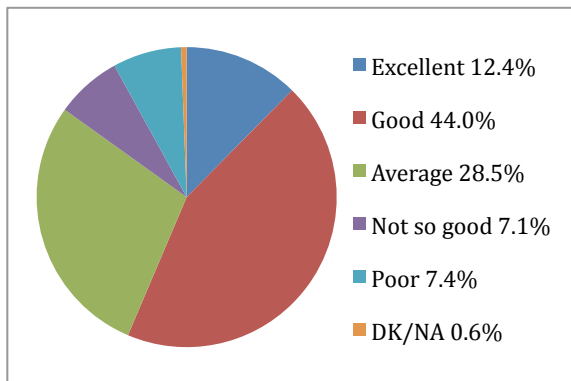
- Most likely to say their area gets more than its fair share are those in the highest income group (13.8%) and residents of the City of Chicago (15.2%).
- Downstate residents are most likely to say their area gets less than its fair share of state spending (57.8%).

E. QUALITY OF LIFE INDICATORS

As in last year’s survey, majorities of respondents say the quality of these items is at least average. This is interesting because Illinoisans think they do not get a good value for the taxes they pay to the state, yet they like the quality of public safety, public parks, and the environment—all areas in which the state spends heavily, and in which many state employees toil.

1. Quality of the Environment

Six in ten respondents (61.5%) thought the quality of the environment in their area was excellent or good, up five points from last year’s survey. About one in ten (10.3%) thought environmental quality was not-so-good or poor.



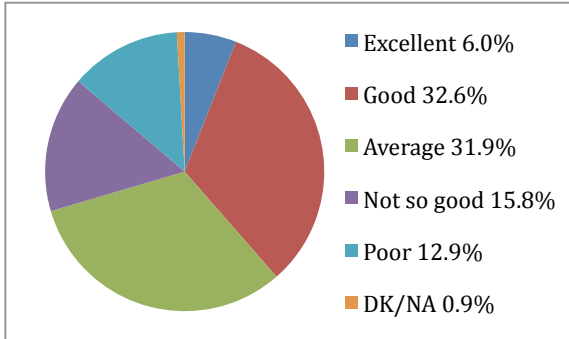
- Almost one in five respondents (19.3%) in the Chicago suburbs said the quality of the environment in their area was excellent, and another 50.3%

said it was good. Those numbers were lower in the City (13.0%/37.0%) and downstate (16.7%/42.0%).

- Perceived environmental quality rose reliably with respondent education and income, to a high of 66.7% excellent/good among those with a college degree and 65.4% excellent/good among those with household incomes above \$100,000.
- White respondents were more likely than black respondents to say the quality of the environment in their area was excellent or good (64.0% vs. 48.1%)

2. Quality of Infrastructure

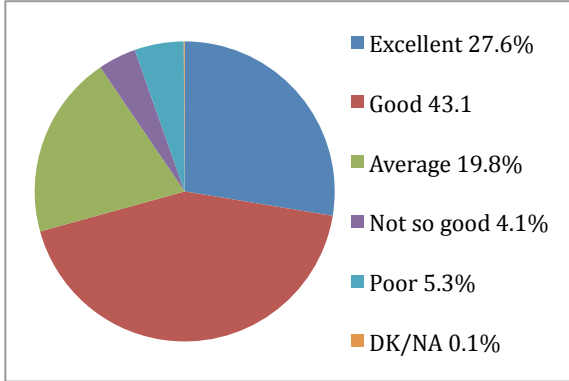
Almost four in ten respondents (38.6%) said the quality of infrastructure, such as roads and bridges, in their area was excellent or good, compared with 30.4% in the 2008 survey. Another 31.9% said the quality of infrastructure in their area was average, similar to last year’s 31.2% “average” rating.



- Perceived quality of infrastructure is, true to pattern, higher in the Chicago suburbs (46.7% excellent/good) than it is in the City (26.6%). Four in ten (40.2%) Downstate respondents said their infrastructure was excellent or good.

3. Quality of Public Safety

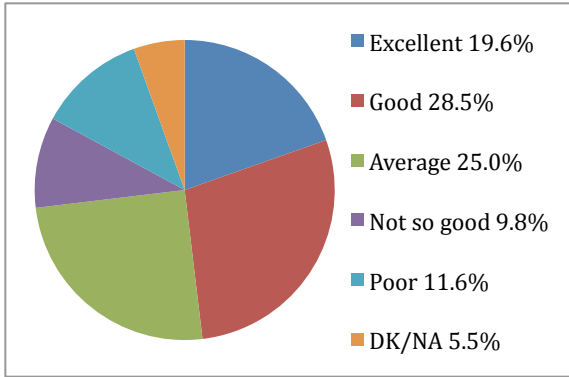
More than a quarter said public safety in their area was excellent (27.6%) and another four in ten (43.1%) said the quality was good—combining for a high level of satisfaction. This year’s “excellent” response was up nine points from last year’s 18.5%, while the “good” response is similar to last year’s 44.6%.



- Geographic differences are sharp, too, with only 49.5% of Chicagoans saying their public safety is excellent or good, compared with 69.2% Downstate and 83.7% in the Chicago suburbs.
- As expected, perceived quality of public safety rises with respondent income, from 60.7% excellent/good among those earning less than \$50,000 per household, to 74.2% among those in the \$50,000-\$100,000 group, and to 79.8% among those in households earning more than \$100,000.
- The difference in perceptions of the quality of public safety between black respondents and whites is striking (48.1% excellent/good vs. 75.1%).

4. Quality of Public Education

Fewer than half overall (48.1%) said the quality of K-12 public education in their area was excellent or good, up slightly from last year’s 44.6%. Startling differences exist among demographic and geographic categories, with suburbanites and whites vastly more satisfied than black respondents, urbanites, and downstaters.



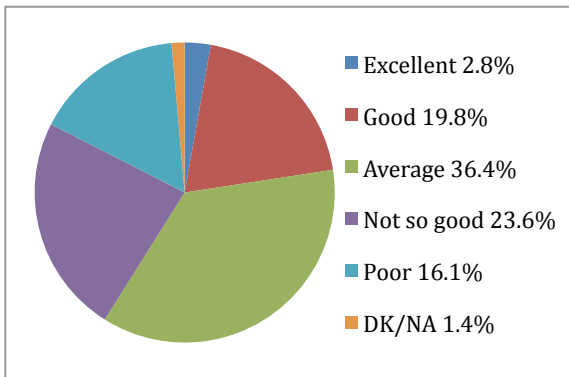
- Among whites, 21.9% said the quality of K-12 education in their area was excellent, and another 30.1% called it good. Only 6.3% of black respondents said the quality of public education was

excellent, with 22.8% saying it was good.

- Perceived differences in the quality of public education between the cities and the suburbs helps drive middle-class flight, and we see it confirmed in Illinois: 33.6% of suburbanites said the quality of public education in their area was excellent, and another 31.5% said it was good. By contrast, in the City of Chicago, 4.9% said their public education was excellent, and only 13.0% called it good. Not good/poor ratings in Chicago were a combined 49.4%. Combined excellent/good ratings Downstate were 47.5%.

5. Performance of the local economy

About one in five (21.6%) said the performance of the economy was excellent or good in their area, down slightly from the 2008 survey’s 26.2%.



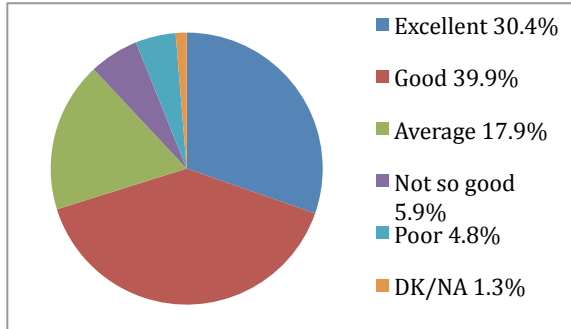
- Not many respondents felt optimistic about the performance of the economy in their areas, but perception of excellent or good economic

performance was somewhat higher in the Chicago suburbs (26.2%) than in the City (18.5%) or Downstate (20.6%).

- Respondents in households with incomes above \$100,000 were more likely to say their local economy’s performance was excellent or good (29.6%) than were those in households with incomes between \$50,000 and \$100,000 (21.3%) or in households with incomes below \$50,000 (17.6%).

6. Quality of Parks and Recreational Opportunities

Almost a third (30.4%) said the quality of parks and recreational opportunities in their area was excellent, up significantly from last year's 21.9%. Another four in ten (39.9%) said the quality was good, the same as the 2008 survey result.



- Respondents in the Chicago suburbs were most likely to say the quality of parks and recreational opportunities in

their area was excellent or good (79.9%), followed by respondents outside of Chicagoland (66.7%) and by those inside the City (57.6%).

- White respondents were almost thirty points more likely than black respondents to say the quality of parks and recreational opportunities in their area was excellent or good (74.0% vs. 46.8%).

F. ADDRESSING THE STATE BUDGET DEFICIT

Illinois' looming, growing, structural budget deficit was the primary focus of the inaugural 2008 Paul Simon Public Policy Institute statewide poll, and with the budget problems just as bad in 2009, we spent a significant portion of our questionnaire on the issue. We asked respondents whether the solution to the deficit was an increase in taxes, cuts from a budget that had enough waste and inefficiency to sustain those cuts, or some combination of the two. As in 2008, we listed a number of areas in which services might be cut, as well as a number of ways the state might enhance revenues.

As we found in the previous poll, large majorities in almost every demographic and geographic category believed the state could cut its way out of the budget mess. This time only about a third said a tax increase in some form would be necessary.

We also noticed that majorities opposed cuts in every category offered in the questionnaire, though we did see some movement in opinion on a few items. Similarly, opposition outpaced support for every revenue enhancement measure we tested.

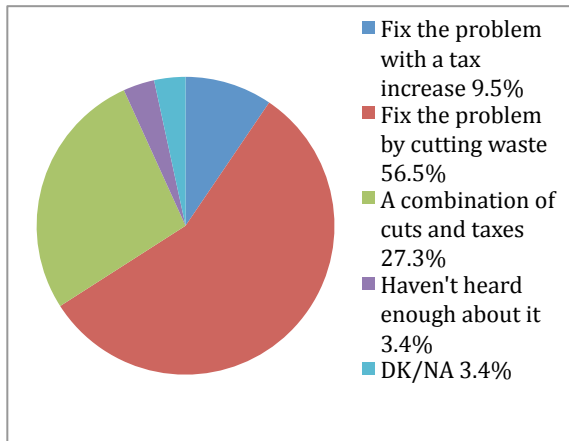
1. Statements about How to Fix the Deficit

Interviewers read an introductory statement about the budget deficit, then asked respondents to pick one of three statements that came "closest to your views." They chose among statements that said large budget cuts had already happened, and that only a tax increase could fix the deficit; that the state takes in plenty of money to pay for public services, and that cutting waste and inefficiency would fix the deficit; or that the budget deficit is so large that only a combination of budget cuts and tax increases could fix the problem. To try to keep unconsidered "doorstep opinions" out of the three choices, we offered respondents the opportunity to say they hadn't thought enough about the issue to have an opinion.

In the 2008 survey, 77.9% said the state takes in enough money to pay for operations, but that waste and unnecessary programs caused the budget deficit. Though we structured the question differently in the 2009 survey than we did in 2008—meaning that the results are not strictly comparable—we still found that a sizable majority (56.5%) believed that the Illinois budget mess could be fixed simply by "cutting waste and inefficiency in government."

Fewer than one in ten believed that after having already reduced public spending significantly, “we can only fix the problem by taking in more revenue, such as a tax increase.” About a quarter (27.3%) chose the middle ground, choosing the statement that the problem “can only be solved by a combination of budget cuts and revenue increases.”

Majorities in almost every category believed that cutting waste could eliminate the budget problem. Increases in income appear to have little effect on this belief, and it is the same across the state and across racial and ethnic categories. More-educated respondents are somewhat more open to the notion of tax increases than are less-educated ones.



- Only 4.0% of Republicans thought only a tax increase could fix the problem, while seven in ten (69.5%) thought the budget mess could be fixed by cutting waste. A quarter (23.7%) thought the solution would be a combination of budget cuts and tax increases. One in seven Democrats (14.0%) thought only a tax increase could fix the problem, while just under half (49.4%) thought the deficit could be fixed by cutting waste and inefficiency. Three in ten Democrats (30.3%) said the state would need a combination of budget cuts and tax increases.
- Geographic differences were small: Respondents in the City of Chicago were slightly more likely (at 12.8%) to

say tax increases could fix the problem than were those in the Chicago suburbs (9.1%) or those downstate (8.3%). The majority opinion in Chicago was that cutting waste alone could fix the budget (52.0%), and that belief was stronger in the suburbs (62.2%) and downstate (55.6%). Fewer than three in ten believed the situation needed cuts and new taxes, whether in Chicago (29.1%), the suburbs (25.4%), or downstate (29.8%)

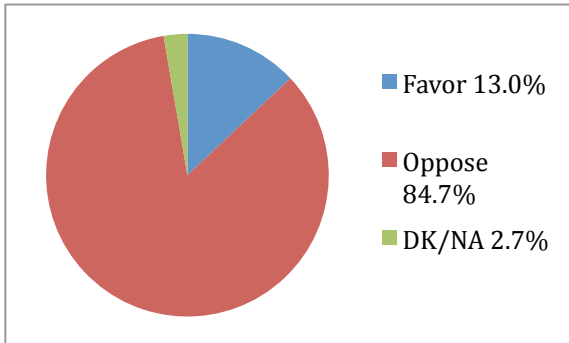
- Just over half (51.8%) of those with a bachelor's degree thought that cutting waste alone could fix the budget situation, compared to larger majorities of those with some college (61.8%) or those with no college (64.6%). Differences were smaller in the percentages of those who thought a tax increase alone could fix the problem, whether the respondents were college-educated (11.5%), had less than a bachelor's degree (7.6%), or no college at all (8.5%). A third of the college-educated group (33.7%) believed the situation called for a combination of budget cuts and revenue increases, compared with fewer than a quarter of those with some college (23.7%) and just one in five of those with no college (19.5%).

2. Proposed Cuts in State Spending.

Respondents were told that there have been a number of proposals to address the budget deficit by making cuts in state spending. Interviewers read a list of areas in which the budget might be cut and asked respondents whether they favored or opposed cuts in each one. Majorities opposed cuts in every item on the list.

2a. Cuts in Spending on Kindergarten through High School Education

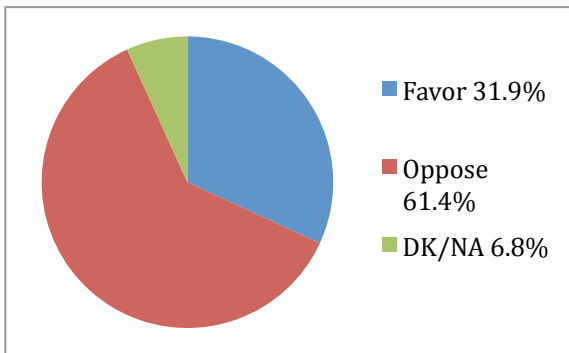
Fewer than one respondent in seven (13.0%) favored cuts in K-12 education, not much different from the 2008 survey's 10.7%.



- Opposition to cuts in K-12 education was high across the board. Republicans were a little more likely to favor cuts (at 16.6%) than were Democrats (at 7.6%) or Independents (13.2%).

2b. Cuts in Spending on Universities

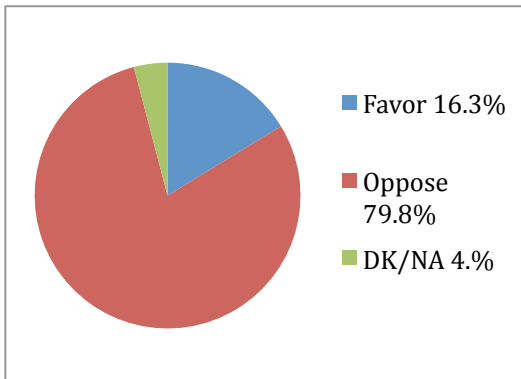
Respondents were more willing to accept cuts in spending on state universities, though only one in three (31.9%) were in favor, up significantly (11.0%) from the 2008 survey results.



- Opposition to cutting spending on universities hovered around one-third across most demographic and geographic groups. Some what more likely to favor cuts were Republicans (42.0%), men (36.9%), and respondents with some college education (37.5%). Opposition was higher than the six-in-ten average among black respondents (77.2%), Chicago residents (72.8%), and Democrats (74.5%).

2c. Cuts in Spending on Public Safety

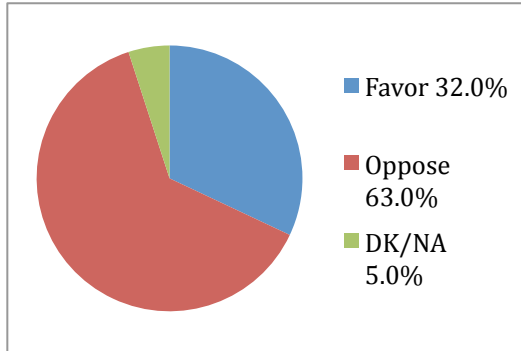
About one respondent in six (16.3%) favored cuts in state spending on public safety, described as things like state police and prison operations, about the same as in the 2008 survey.



- Only among the male-only group did even one in five (20.5%) favor cuts in spending on public safety.

2d. Cuts in Spending on Natural Resources

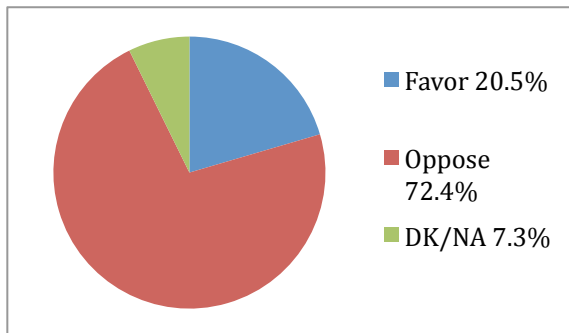
About one in three respondents (32.0%) favored cuts in spending on natural resources, such as state parks or environmental regulation. This represents a 10.8% increase from the result in the 2008 Simon Institute poll.



- Support for spending cuts on natural resources remained at around one-third in most groups, except for Republicans in the sample, among whom nearly half (49.2%) favored such cuts.

2e. Cuts in Spending on Programs for Poor People

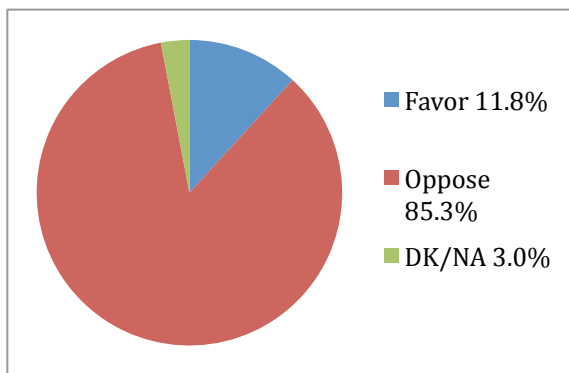
About one respondent in five (20.4%) favored cuts in state spending on programs for poor people, virtually the same as in last year's poll (20.6%), when the wording was "programs for the needy."



- Republicans (37.0%) were more likely to favor cuts in programs for the poor than were Democrats (10.1%) or Independents (20.8%).

2f. Cuts in Spending on Programs for People with Mental or Physical Disabilities

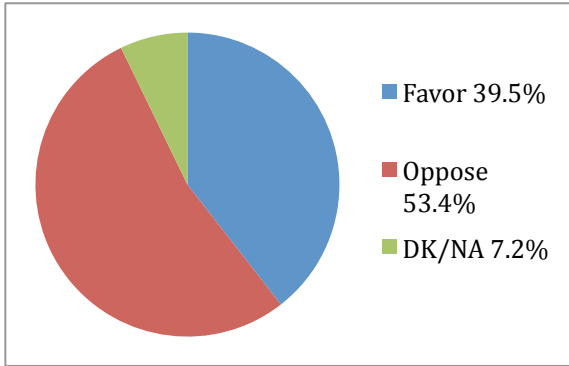
In a question new to the 2009 survey, only about one in eight (11.8%) said they favored cuts in spending on programs for people with mental and physical disabilities.



- There is little meaningful variation among groups in the willingness to tolerate cuts in programs for people with disabilities. Men, though still mostly opposed, were about twice as likely as women to favor such cuts (16.7% to 8.6%).

2g. Cuts in State Spending on Pension Benefits for State Workers’ Retirement

While only about four in ten (39.5) favored spending cuts on state workers’ retirement, that is up 15.4 percentage points from the previous year’s survey (when the wording was simply “state workers’ retirement” without mentioning “pension benefits”).



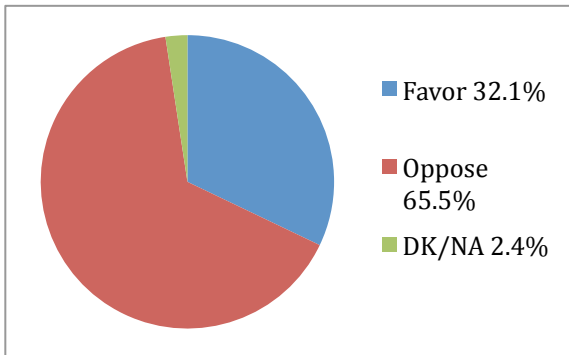
- Among those most likely to favor spending cuts on state workers’ pension benefits were Republicans (51.9%), residents of the Chicago suburbs (47.6%), and men (48.5%).
- White respondents were notably more likely than black respondents to favor cutting state workers’ pension benefits (43.1% to 19.0%).

3. Areas for Raising More State Revenue

Interviewer told respondents there had been proposals to address the state’s budget problems by finding ways to raise more money to pay for programs and services, then asked them whether they favored or opposed each of a list of five proposals.

3a. Raising the State Income Tax Rate from 3 Percent to 4.5 Percent

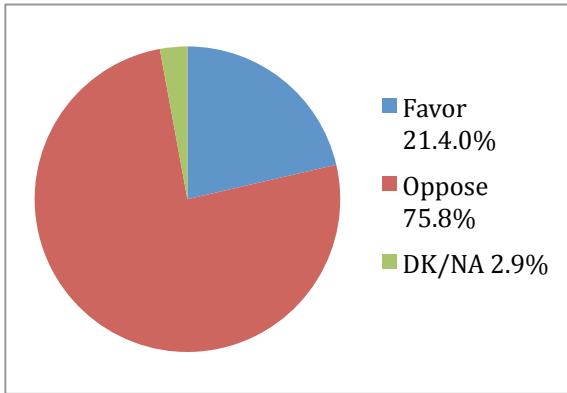
Only about a third (32.1%) favored a proposal to raise the state income tax rate to 4.5 percent. In no group for which we broke out statistics did even half favor the proposal.



- Favorability toward the income tax hike rose with income (from 26.2% among the under-\$50,000 group to 40.3% among the \$100,000-plus group) and with education (from 22.4% among those with no college to 38.5% among those with a bachelor’s degree).
- Among partisan groups, Republicans were least likely to favor the income tax hike (27.1%), followed by Democrats (33.8%) and Independents (36.8%).
- Support for the income tax increase was lowest in the Chicago suburbs (25.3%) and higher in the City (34.8%) and Downstate (38.5%).

3b. Raising the State Sales Tax Rate

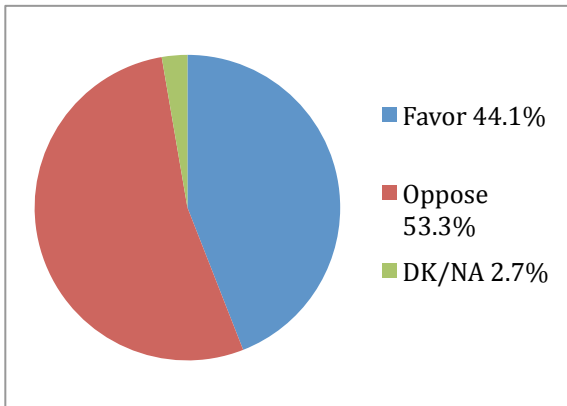
About one in five respondents (21.4%) favored raising the state sales tax rate, up 4 percentage points from the 2008 survey.



- Opposition to raising the state sales tax rate varied closely around the three-fourths mark in most of the groups for which we studied differences. Downstate residents were a little more likely than average to favor the proposal (30.3% favor, 58.9% opposed).

3c. Expanding the State Sales Tax to Cover Services

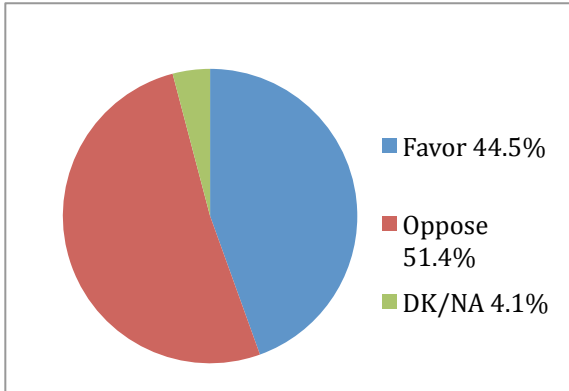
More than four in ten respondents (44.5%) said they would favor expanding the sales tax to cover services, which interviewers described as things “like dry cleaning or haircuts, which are not currently taxed.” This was up 15.7 percentage points from the 2008 survey.



- Respondents with bachelor’s degrees (at 49.5%) were more likely to favor expanding the sales tax than were those with some college (40.8%) or those with no college (36.5%).
- Whites were more likely to favor expanding the sales tax than were blacks (45.4% to 36.7%).
- Democrats (at 50.7%) favored the proposal more often than Republicans (40.3%) or Independents (42.4%).

3d. Expanding Legalized Gambling

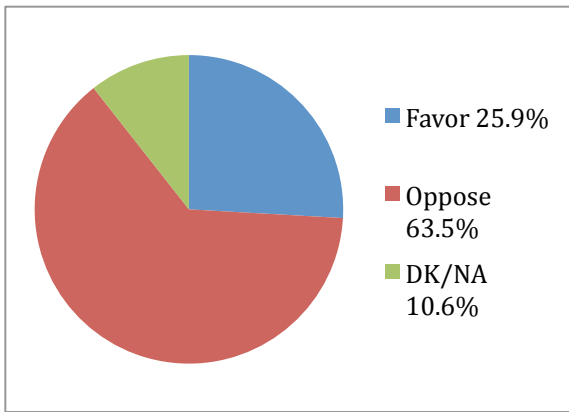
Interviewers asked if respondents would favor or oppose expanding legalized gambling in the state. It was favored by 44.5% (down two percentage points from the previous survey) and opposed by 51.4%.



- As in the 2008 survey, men were more likely to favor gambling expansion than women (51.3% to 40.2%).
- Political Independents were most likely to favor gambling expansion (48.8%), followed by Democrats (47.5%) and Republicans (34.8%).
- Most evangelical Christians (66.9%) opposed gambling expansion, while most other Protestants and Catholics (64.0% and 53.5%, respectively) favored it.

3e. Selling State Assets

Respondents were asked whether they favored or opposed “selling state assets, such as the lottery and the Illinois toll road system, to private investors.” Just over a quarter (25.9%) favored this proposal, down 11.9 percentage points from the previous survey.



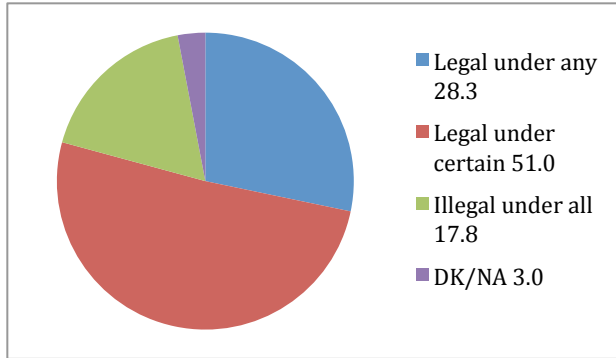
- Likelihood of favoring the sale or lease of state assets rises somewhat with respondent income, from 25.8% among those with household incomes below \$50,000 to 35.8% among those with household incomes above \$100,000.

G. POSITIONS ON SOCIAL ISSUES

We were interested in Illinoisans’ positions on nationally divisive issues such as same-sex marriage, abortion, and the federal government’s role in ensuring that citizens have health insurance. These were all new additions to the Simon Institute Poll.

1. Legality of Abortions

Respondents were asked what they thought about the legality of abortion. Half (51.0% thought abortion should be legal under certain circumstances, a little over a quarter (28.3%) thought it should be legal under any circumstances, and 17.8% of the sample thought it should be illegal under all circumstances.



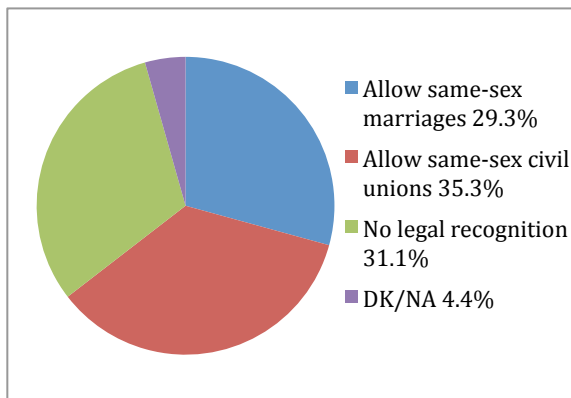
- Republicans were the partisan group most likely to say they thought abortion should be illegal under any circumstances (32.0%), though two-thirds (67.4%) thought abortion should be legal at least under certain circumstances.

Evangelical Christians were more likely than Catholics or non-evangelical Protestants to say abortion should be illegal under any circumstances (34.5% vs. 7.2% and 22.0%, respectively). Among self-identified evangelicals, 63.4% said abortion should be legal in at least some circumstances.

Respondents in downstate Illinois were slightly more likely than average to say abortion should be illegal under all circumstances (21.5%) and less likely than average to say it should be legal under any circumstances (16.1%), however, they were more likely than average to say it should be legal under certain circumstances (60.4%).

2. Same-sex Marriage

We asked respondents what they thought about same-sex marriage laws in Illinois: 29.3% said they thought gay and lesbian couples should be allowed to legally marry, 35.3% said they thought gay and lesbian couples should be allowed to form civil unions with fewer legal rights than marriage, and 31.1% said they thought there should be no legal recognition of relationships between gay and lesbian couples.

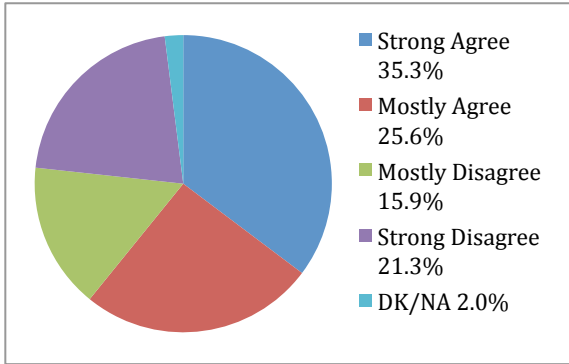


- Support for full, legal gay marriage increases with respondent education, from 20.5% among those with no college and 21.2% among those with some college to 37.9% among those with bachelor's degrees. Opposition to any legal recognition of gay unions is highest (42.3%) among those with no college education.

- Partisan differences are more striking. Among Republicans 58.3% oppose any legal recognition of same-sex unions, while just 10.0% support gay marriage and 28.3% favor civil unions. Among Democrats roughly a quarter (23.7%) oppose any recognition or favor civil unions (28.0%), while a plurality favor same-sex marriage (44.1%).
- Opposition to any legal recognition of same-sex unions is overwhelming among evangelical Christians in our sample, at 71.0%. About one in five evangelicals (22.7%) said they favor civil unions, while only 4.1% said they favor same-sex marriage. Among other Protestants and among Catholics, support for some form of legal recognition looks more like the overall average.

3. Federal Government’s Obligation to Ensure that Citizens Have Health Insurance

Respondents were asked whether and to what extent they agreed that the federal government has a responsibility to make sure that all citizens have health insurance. About six respondents in ten (60.9%) agreed or strongly agreed with the statement.



- Respondents in the City of Chicago were a lot more likely to say the federal government has a responsibility to ensure that citizens have health insurance (58.5% strongly agreed and 20.8% mostly agreed) than were those in the suburbs (59.6% combined strongly/mostly agree) or those in downstate Illinois (52.9% strongly/mostly).
- Differences fall as expected along partisan lines: among Democrats, 63.7% strongly agreed that the federal government should ensure citizen health insurance, while another 23.4% mostly agreed. Among Republicans, only 29.3% strongly or mostly agreed. Among Independents, 57.7% strongly or mostly agreed.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The Paul Simon Public Policy Institute Survey in the fall of 2009 found Illinois voters again in a foul mood—much as the 2008 survey had. However, in one respect, things were looking up. As bad as things looked in some measures—for example, in the perceived direction of the nation and the state, in some quality-of-life questions—indicators in 2009 were more favorable than they were in 2008. The percentage of people who thought Illinois was moving in the “right direction” improved in the present survey from a grim 12.8 percent in 2008 to a still-unfortunate 21.8 percent. But that is still improvement. We might attribute some of this improvement to the removal of the enormously unpopular former governor, Rod Blagojevich.

In other public opinion measures—and in the objective facts on the ground—things in Illinois have become worse. The budget deficit has grown, with no demonstrably effective response to it evident from the Capitol. The economy, while improving in some measures, had not responded with the job creation necessary for voters to feel the recovery at home. Only about one in five Illinoisans in the 2009 survey said the performance of their local economy was excellent or good—virtually unchanged since 2008.

In addition to the poor economy and the low percentage of people who feel the state government is going in the right direction, half of the voters in our survey said they get a not-so-good or a poor value in services for the taxes they pay to the state. Fewer than 15 percent thought they got an excellent or a good value. Certainly this helps to fuel the feeling among voters that the state shouldn't raise taxes in order to fix its budget deficits.

A majority of Illinoisans, according to our poll, believe that the state can trim its way out of its deficit problems, with fewer than one in ten believing that a tax increase is an answer to our problems, and only around a quarter agreeing that a combination of cuts and new revenues will be required to balance the budget.

In the current survey, as in the inaugural 2008 poll, majorities opposed cuts in the programs that, together, make up more than 90 percent of the budget. They did not want cuts in K-12 education, in public university education, public safety, natural resources, state pensions, or services for the disabled or poor. This is not entirely surprising—particularly because they like the quality of services they receive in many of these areas, when we couch the questions in terms of “quality of life” rather than in terms of actions by the state. For many voters, the quality of roads or education or state parks are decoupled from the taxes, fees, and state employees it takes to create and maintain those schools or roads or parks.

Nor, as before, are voters willing to support tax hikes or other revenue-increase proposals—whether income tax increases, sales tax increases, expansion of gambling, or sale or lease of state assets.

As a matter of public policy, something's got to give: state spending either has to be cut by something like one-third, in areas that the majority of voters don't want to see cuts, or revenues will have to be raised in ways that the majority of voters don't want to see revenues raised. Do the results of the last two Simon Institute polls offer any hope to the policy community?

Well, the answer is a definite “maybe.” It is hard to tell in the second of a series whether opinion movement is a trend or an aberration, but in some areas the Illinois electorate may be waking up. Voters in 2009 were more likely than they were in 2008 to support spending cuts in some areas, such as natural resources, state universities, and state pensions. On the other side of the equation, they were somewhat more likely to support expanding the state sales tax to cover

services as well as goods. The 2010 Simon Institute survey will reveal more, we hope, about opinion movement in this area.

What do the voters think about the system that got us into this mess? Illinois is infamous for its rough-and tumble, sometimes corrupt brand of state politics. The downfall of former Governor Blagojevich brought our state to an uncomfortable spot in the national limelight. Does that mean Illinois is ripe for reform?

If it were up to the voters rather than the legislature, it appears that a number of reforms would pass fairly easily. Large majorities of Illinoisans support campaign reform ideas such as limits on campaign cash, in-kind services, and campaign contributions from party leaders; political reforms such as limited terms for legislative leaders and recall elections for statewide officeholders; and changing the ridiculous legislative redistricting scheme that picks a party's map by lot.

Voters are unhappy with the system and open to measures that might make it easier for outsiders to enter the political system, and might loosen the leadership's grip on power. Reformers and politicians alike ought to take note.

**Paul Simon Public Policy Institute
Southern Illinois University Carbondale
Poll Results of Registered Voters in Illinois
Conducted September 9-October 8 2009**

1. First, we'd like to know—generally speaking, do you think things in our country are going in the right direction, or are they off track and heading in the wrong direction?

Right Direction	42.3%
Wrong Direction	50.4%
DK/NA	7.4%

2. And what about the direction of the State of Illinois? Generally speaking, are things in Illinois going in the right direction, or are they off track and heading in the wrong direction?

Right Direction	21.8%
Wrong Direction	67.8%
DK/NA	10.6%

3. And how are things going in your city or area of the state? In general, are things in your city or area going in the right direction, or in the wrong direction?

Right Direction	52.0%
Wrong Direction	40.8%
DK/NA	7.3%

4. Regardless of what you think about the direction your part of the state, tell us what you think about the overall quality of life in your area. Taking everything into account, would you say the overall quality of life in your area is . . .

Excellent	12.9
Good	41.8
Average	31.8%
Not so good	9.4%
Poor	3.5%
DK/NA	0.8%

Next, we'd like to know what you think about some public policy questions that are being talked about in Illinois. For each one, please tell us if you strongly favor, favor, oppose, or strongly oppose the proposal. If you don't have an opinion on a question, just tell me that, OK? First, (rotate)

5. a proposal to prohibit companies that seek business with the state of Illinois from making campaign contributions to state legislative campaigns. Would you

Strongly favor	36.8%
Favor	27.3%
Oppose	20.1%
Strongly oppose	9.5%
DK/NA	6.4%

6. a proposal to amend the constitution to allow recall elections for holders of statewide elected offices—such as governor or lieutenant governor. That is, the people could vote at any time to remove an elected official from office rather than waiting until the next election. Would you

Strongly favor	34.9%
Favor	37.5%
Oppose	18.0%
Strongly oppose	5.4%
DK/NA	4.3%

7. a proposal to limit the amount of campaign money that party leaders can redistribute to other candidates. Would you

Strongly favor	31.5%
Favor	33.9%
Oppose	18.6%
Strongly oppose	5.3%
DK/NA	10.8%

8. a proposal to limit “in-kind” contributions to state legislative campaigns? In-kind contributions are goods or services, such as office space, printing, or buying advertising on behalf of a candidate. Currently there are limits on how much cash people can contribute, but not on in-kind contributions. Would you

Strongly favor	32.1%
Favor	39.5%
Oppose	14.5%
Strongly oppose	5.0%
DK/NA	8.9%

9. a proposal to impose campaign contribution limits for Illinois offices that match the contribution limits for federal offices. Would you

Strongly favor	27.8%
Favor	42.5%
Oppose	10.9%
Strongly oppose	3.8%
DK/NA	15.1%

10. a proposal to limit how long legislators could serve in leadership positions—such as Speaker of the House or President of the Senate—before they stepped down to let other legislators lead. Would you

Strongly favor	38.0%
Favor	39.6%
Oppose	10.8%
Strongly oppose	3.9%
DK/NA	7.8%

11. a proposal to eliminate contributions to state legislative campaigns by providing public funding for all candidates who qualify for it. Would you

Strongly favor	15.6%
Favor	33.8%
Oppose	27.9%
Strongly oppose	10.6%
DK/NA	12.1%

Next are a couple of questions about legislative redistricting in Illinois:

12a. Currently, when the political parties can't agree on a redistricting plan, they end the stalemate by pulling a party's name out of a hat. The winning political party gets to draw the new legislative district map. Do you

Strongly approve	1.6%
Approve	15.4%
Disapprove	43.6%
Strongly disapprove	27.8%
DK/NA	11.6%

12b. A new proposal for the redistricting process would have the Illinois Supreme Court add a neutral person to the redistricting panel in case of a partisan tie. Would you

Strongly favor	19.3%
Favor	53.6%
Oppose	13.0%
Strongly oppose	4.8%
DK/NA	9.4%

13. Next I'd like to ask you whether the best way to reform Illinois politics is through a public vote in a referendum—or through action by the legislature. Which is closer to the way you feel? That

Legislative action should reform Illinois politics	12.5%
The public should vote on political reforms in a referendum	64.8%
Haven't heard enough about it to have an opinion	18.9%
DK/NA	3.9%

Now I'd like for you to tell me how well some statewide elected officials are performing their jobs. For each one that I read, I'd like you to tell me if you strongly approve, somewhat approve, somewhat disapprove, or strongly disapprove of the job that official is doing. If you haven't heard enough information to evaluate that person, just tell me that. First is . . . (rotate)

14. President Barack Obama. Do you strongly approve, somewhat approve, somewhat disapprove, or strongly disapprove of the job President Obama is doing?

Strongly approve	36.6%
Approve	26.1%
Disapprove	12.0%
Strongly disapprove	22.6%
DK/NA	2.6%

15. Illinois Governor Pat Quinn?

Strongly approve	10.3%
Approve	47.8%
Disapprove	18.8%
Strongly disapprove	10.5%
DK/NA	12.8%

16. Illinois Attorney General Lisa Madigan?

Strongly approve	33.5%
Approve	34.6%
Disapprove	10.6%
Strongly disapprove	5.3%
DK/NA	16.0%

17. Illinois Senate Minority Leader Christine Radogno?

Strongly approve	2.8%
Approve	14.1%
Disapprove	4.9%
Strongly disapprove	3.3%
DK/NA	75.0%

18. Illinois State Treasurer Alexi Giannoulias?

Strongly approve	9.4%
Approve	28.3%
Disapprove	9.5%
Strongly disapprove	6.1%
DK/NA	46.8%

19. House of Representatives Minority Leader Tom Cross?

Strongly approve	4.1%
Approve	21.8%
Disapprove	6.8%
Strongly disapprove	2.8%
DK/NA	64.6%

20. Illinois Senate President John Cullerton?

Strongly approve	3.4%
Approve	19.8%
Disapprove	9.4%
Strongly disapprove	6.1%
DK/NA	61.4%

21. Speaker of the Illinois House of Representatives Mike Madigan?

Strongly approve	8.3%
Approve	32.1%
Disapprove	20.8%
Strongly disapprove	21.8%
DK/NA	17.1%

22. U.S. Senator Dick Durbin?

Strongly approve	27.9%
Approve	31.1%
Disapprove	11.1%
Strongly disapprove	6.1%
DK/NA	46.8%

23. U.S. Senator Roland Burris?

Strongly approve	4.6%
Approve	15.0%
Disapprove	21.1%
Strongly disapprove	42.9%
DK/NA	16.4%

24. Illinois Comptroller Dan Hynes?

Strongly approve	12.0%
Approve	36.6%
Disapprove	6.8%
Strongly disapprove	3.6%
DK/NA	41.0%

Next, I have a few questions about government taxes and services:

25. First, how good a value would you say you get in terms of services for the taxes you pay to the federal government? Would you say you get

An excellent value	2.8%
A good value	16.6%
A fair value	38.4%
Not so good a value	20.9%
A poor value	19.4%
DK/NA	2.0%

26. And what about the value of services you get for the tax dollars paid to the state of Illinois? Would you say you get

An excellent value	1.6%
A good value	13.1%
A fair value	35.6%
Not so good a value	25.0%
A poor value	23.3%
DK/NA	1.4%

27. How good a value would you say you get in terms of services for the taxes you pay your local governments? Would you say you get

An excellent value	7.8%
A good value	26.3%
A fair value	34.0%
Not so good a value	16.1%
A poor value	14.1%
DK/NA	1.8%

28. And what do you think about government spending in your area of the state? In terms of its share of state spending, do you think your part of the state gets

More than its fair share	8.8%
About the right amount	37.9%
Less than its fair share	39.3%
DK/NA	14.1%

Next we'd like to know what you think of various aspects of the quality of life in your area. For each feature that I read, I'd like for you to tell me if you think it is excellent, good, average, not so good, or poor. First is (rotate items)

29. The quality of the environment, such as clean air and water. In your area, would you say environmental quality is

Excellent	17.0%
Good	44.5%
Average	27.5%
Not so good	6.3%
Poor	4.0%
DK/NA	0.8%

30. The quality of infrastructure, such as roads and bridges. Is the quality of infrastructure in your area

Excellent	6.0%
Good	32.6%
Average	31.9%
Not so good	15.8%
Poor	12.9%
DK/NA	0.9%

31. What about public safety in your area, for example police and fire protection? Would you say public safety in your area is

Excellent	27.6%
Good	43.1%
Average	19.8%
Not so good	4.1%
Poor	5.3%
DK/NA	0.1%

32. What do you think about the quality of public education in your area, in kindergarten through high school? Is public K through 12 education

Excellent
Good
Average
Not so good
Poor
DK/NA

33. How well is the economy performing in your area? Would you say the performance of the economy in your area is

Excellent	2.8%
Good	19.8%
Average	36.4%
Not so good	23.6%
Poor	16.1%
DK/NA	1.4%

34. How good are the parks and recreational opportunities in your area? Would you say parks and recreation in your area are

Excellent	30.4%
Good	39.9%
Average	17.9%
Not so good	5.9%
Poor	4.8%
DK/NA	1.3%

Next I'm going to ask you a few questions about the state of Illinois' budget:

35. The state of Illinois has a budget deficit of over 12 billion dollars. I'm going to read three statements that people have made about how to fix the deficit, and ask you which one comes closest to your views, OK? If you haven't thought much about the issue, just tell me that.

First is . . . (*rotate*)

Illinois' public programs and services have already been reduced significantly. We can only fix the problem by taking in more revenue, such as a tax increase.	9.5%
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Next is . . .

The state takes in plenty of money to pay for public services but wastes it on unnecessary programs. We can fix the problem by cutting waste and inefficiency in government.	56.5%
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Third is . . .

Illinois' budget problem is so large it can only be solved by a combination of budget cuts and revenue increases.	27.3%
Haven't thought much about it	3.4%
DK/NA	3.4%

There have been a number of proposals to address the state's budget problems by making cuts in state programs and services. I'm going to read several areas where people have suggested that the state could make cuts. For each one that I read, I'd like you to tell me whether you favor or oppose budget cuts in that area, OK? (Repeat if necessary) (*rotate choices*)

36. Do you favor or oppose cuts in state spending on kindergarten through high school education?

Favor	13.0%
Oppose	84.4%

DK/NA	2.7%
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37. Do you favor or oppose cuts in state spending on state universities?

Favor	31.9%
Oppose	61.4%
DK/NA	6.8%

38. Do you favor or oppose cuts in state spending on public safety, such as state police and prison operations?

Favor	16.3%
Oppose	79.8%
DK/NA	4.1%

39. Do you favor or oppose cuts in state spending on natural resources, such as state parks or environmental regulation?

Favor	32.0%
Oppose	63.0%
DK/NA	5.0%

40. Do you favor or oppose cuts in state spending on programs for poor people?

Favor	20.4%
Oppose	72.4%
DK/NA	7.3%

41. Do you favor or oppose cuts in state spending on programs for people with mental or physical disabilities?

Favor	11.8%
Oppose	85.3%
DK/NA	3.0%

42. Do you favor or oppose cuts in state spending on pension benefits for state workers' retirement?

Favor	39.5%
Oppose	53.4%
DK/NA	7.2%

There have been a number of proposals to address the state's budget problems by finding ways to raise more money to pay for programs and services. I'm going to read several areas where people have suggested that more money could be raised. For each one that I read, I'd like you to tell me whether you favor or oppose raising revenues in that way, OK? (Repeat if necessary) (rotate choices)

43. Do you favor or oppose raising the state income tax rate from 3 percent to 4.5 percent?

Favor	32.1%
Oppose	65.5%
DK/NA	2.4%

44. Do you favor or oppose raising the state sales tax rate?

Favor	21.4%
Oppose	75.8%
DK/NA	2.9%

45. Do you favor or oppose expanding the sales tax to cover services like dry cleaning or haircuts, which are not currently taxed?

Favor	44.1%
Oppose	53.3%
DK/NA	2.7%

46. Do you favor or oppose a proposal expanding legalized gambling in the state?

Favor	44.5%
Oppose	51.4%
DK/NA	4.1%

47. Do you favor or oppose selling state assets, such as the lottery and the Illinois toll road system, to private investors?

Favor	25.9%
Oppose	63.5%
DK/NA	10.6%

Now I'm going to ask a few questions about elections in Illinois in 2010.

48. Do you plan to vote in the February 2010 party primary elections? .

Yes	91.6%
No	6.1%
DK/NA	2.3%

48a. (Of those naming party preference) Do you plan to vote in the Democratic primary, the Republican Primary, or the primary of some other party, such as the Green or Libertarian Party?

Democratic primary	56.6%
Republican primary	35.3%
Some other party	8.1%

49. (208 Democratic primary voters answered the question) Several candidates have announced that they will seek the Democratic nomination for governor of Illinois. If the election were held today, would you vote for (rotate):

Governor Pat Quinn	52.4%
Comptroller Dan Hynes	25.5%
Someone else	8.1%

50. (89 Republican primary voters answered the question) Several candidates have announced that they will seek the Republican nomination for governor of Illinois. If the election were held today, would you vote for (rotate):

State Sen. Bill Brady	22.5%
State Sen. Kirk Dillard	16.9%
State Sen. Matt Murphy	9.0%
DuPage County Board Chair	
Bob Schillerstrom	7.9%
Radio Commentator Dan Proft	7.9%
Businessman Adam Andrzejewski	4.5%
Someone else	31.3%

Next, we are interested in your opinion on some social issues. First: (rotate)

51. Do you think abortions should be legal under all circumstances, legal only under certain circumstances, or illegal in all circumstances?

Legal under any circumstances	28.3%
Legal under certain circumstances	51.0%
Illegal under all circumstances	17.8%
DK/NA	3.0%

52. Which of the following three statements comes closest to your position on the legal rights of gay and lesbian couples in Illinois?

Gay and lesbian couples should be allowed to legally marry	29.3%
Gay and lesbian couples should be allowed to form civil unions	35.3%
There should be no legal recognition of relationships between gay and lesbian couples	31.1%
DK/NA	4.4%

53. The federal government has a responsibility to make sure that all citizens have health insurance. Do you . . .

Strongly agree	35.3%
Mostly agree	25.6%
Mostly disagree	15.9%
Strongly disagree	21.3%
DK/NA	2.0%