The Arkansas Poll
Summary Report
November, 1999

Presented to
The City, County & Local Affairs Committee
House of Representatives, Arkansas General Assembly

Supported by
The Center for the Study of Representation,
The Department of Political Science,
and
The Graduate School

University of Arkansas

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Arkansas Poll Website: http://plsc.uark.edu/arkpoll/
Public Officials Evaluations

Do you approve or disapprove of the way Mike Huckabee is handling his job as governor?

- Approve: 66%
- Disapprove: 13%
- Don't Know / Refused: 21%

Do you approve or disapprove of the way Blanche Lincoln is handling her job as a U.S. Senator?

- Approve: 46%
- Disapprove: 17%
- Don't Know / Refused: 37%

Do you approve or disapprove of the way Tim Hutchinson is handling his job as a U.S. Senator?

- Approve: 48%
- Disapprove: 22%
- Don't Know / Refused: 30%

Do you approve or disapprove of the way Bill Clinton is handling his job as president?

- Approve: 55%
- Disapprove: 41%
- Don't Know / Refused: 4%

Do you approve or disapprove of the way Hillary Clinton is handling her job as First Lady?

- Approve: 59%
- Disapprove: 33%
- Don't Know / Refused: 8%
Schools and Community Services

The K through 12th grade public schools in your community
- Don't Know / Refused: 17%
- Unsatisfied / Very Unsatisfied: 22%
- Satisfied / Very Satisfied: 62%

Health care and hospital services in your community
- Don't Know / Refused: 3%
- Unsatisfied / Very Unsatisfied: 29%
- Satisfied / Very Satisfied: 68%

Police Protection in your community
- Don't Know / Refused: 1%
- Unsatisfied / Very Unsatisfied: 17%
- Satisfied / Very Satisfied: 82%

The public libraries in your community
- Don't Know / Refused: 14%
- Unsatisfied / Very Unsatisfied: 10%
- Satisfied / Very Satisfied: 76%
State Services

The present condition of the roads and highways in our state

- Unsatisfied / Very Unsatisfied: 68%
- Satisfied / Very Satisfied: 31%
- Don't Know / Refused: 1%

The quality of parks and recreational facilities in our state

- Unsatisfied / Very Unsatisfied: 14%
- Satisfied / Very Satisfied: 81%
- Don't Know / Refused: 5%

Colleges and universities in our state

- Don't Know / Refused: 10%
- Unsatisfied / Very Unsatisfied: 7%
- Satisfied / Very Satisfied: 84%

The public welfare system in our state

- Don't Know / Refused: 24%
- Unsatisfied / Very Unsatisfied: 39%
- Satisfied / Very Satisfied: 36%
State and National Issues

Do you approve or disapprove of taking the state sales tax off of food purchased at the grocery store? Or haven't you thought much about this matter?

- Approve: 71%
- Disapprove: 18%
- Don't Know / Haven't Thought: 10%
- Don't Know / Refused: 6%

Do you favor legalizing gambling in the state of Arkansas?

- Strongly Favor: 25%
- Somewhat Favor: 13%
- Somewhat Oppose: 11%
- Strongly Oppose: 42%
- Haven't Thought Much: 5%
- Don't Know / Refused: 3%
In your opinion, what do you think is the most important problem or issue facing people in Arkansas today?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Issue</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Educational Issues</td>
<td>106</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economic Issues</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Morality and Family Breakdown</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unemployment and Lack of Jobs</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drugs</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low Wages</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taxes</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crime</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health Issues &amp; Medical Insurance</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corrupt or Inefficient Government</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roads</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poverty</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Racism</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Environmental Issues</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School Violence</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Immigration</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Welfare</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gun Control</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Response</td>
<td>228</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>885</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Is there another problem or issue facing people in Arkansas today you would like to mention?

- Educational Issues: 50
- Crime: 32
- Drugs: 31
- Health Issues & Medical Insurance: 31
- Other: 27
- Economic Issues: 26
- Roads: 25
- Taxes: 25
- Low Wages: 20
- Morality and Family Breakdown: 18

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**Taxes**

Property taxes are too high. Do you:

- Strongly Agree: 40
- Agree: 33
- Disagree: 18
- Strongly Disagree: 3
- Don’t Know / Refused: 5

Property taxes should be:

- Increased: 2
- Kept the Same: 22
- Reduced: 42
- Abolished: 30
- Don’t Know / Refused: 4

Property taxes in Arkansas should be REDUCED/ABOLISHED _______ the lost revenue is replaced (includes only respondents who stated property taxes ought to be reduced or abolished).

- Don’t Know / Refused: 10%
- Only if all: 23%
- Regardless: 37%
- Only if some: 30%

If property taxes are reduced or abolished, it is likely that we will see fewer public services and/or services of lower quality.

- Disagree / Strongly Disagree: 44%
- Agree / Strongly Agree: 47%
- Don’t Know / Refused: 8%
And, overall, considering ALL the taxes you pay to state and local government, do you think the state and local taxes are ________?
The Arkansas Poll and the Property Tax: Quick Facts

- Though nearly 3/4 (73%) of our respondents believe property taxes are too high, there was a strong preference for reduction (42%) over abolition (30%).

- There is a strong relationship between overall satisfaction with government services (“considering the taxes you pay”) and feelings about property taxes. People who support abolishing the property tax are more than twice as likely to be unsatisfied with services when compared to those who are satisfied with services.

- There is a moderate relationship between where people live and their preference on the property tax question. People living in congressional district three have a somewhat stronger aversion to property taxes, but perhaps not by as large a margin as commonly presumed.

- There are some differences between men and women on this issue of property taxes. Women tend to be a bit more likely to pick the policy option of reducing the property tax and less likely than men to support abolishing the property tax.

- Of the 72% of our respondents who said they think that property taxes should be reduced or abolished, more than half are comfortable with this only if all (23%) or some (30%) of the lost revenue is replaced. More than a third, however, would like to see the reduction or abolition of property taxes regardless of whether or not the lost revenue is replaced.

- Our respondents were split over whether reducing or abolishing property taxes would result in fewer services or services of lower quality: 48% agree and 44% disagree. Only those who believed property taxes should remain as they are (22% of our sample) believed strongly (78%) that if property taxes are reduced or abolished, service reduction will follow.
Political Ideology, Partisanship and Participation

Do you usually think of yourself as a Republican, a Democrat, an Independent, or what?

- Republican: 23%
- Independent: 31%
- Democrat: 35%
- Other: 4%
- Don't Know/Refused: 7%

Do you think of yourself as closer to the Republican or Democratic Party? (Independents only)

- Closer to Republican: 33%
- Closer to Democrat: 29%
- Just Independent: 35%
- Don't Know: 4%

Generally, do you think of yourself as Liberal, Moderate, or Conservative?

- Liberal: 14%
- Moderate: 38%
- Conservative: 38%
- Don't Know/Refused: 10%
In talking to people about elections, we often find a lot of people were not able to vote because they were not registered, they were sick, or they just didn't have the time. How about you? Did you vote in the elections (in 1998)?

- **Yes**: 64%
- **No**: 34%
- **Don't Know / Refused**: 1%

Did you give any money, or buy any tickets, to help a party or candidate pay campaign expenses in the past year?

- **No**: 85%
- **Yes**: 14%
- **Don't Know / Refused**:

How many letters have you written to public officials in the past year?

- **None**: 78%
- **1**: 6%
- **2 or 3**: 9%
- **More than 3**: 7%

Did you attend any political meetings, rallies, or dinners, etc., in the past year?

- **None**: 88%
- **1**: 4%
- **2 or 3**: 6%
- **More than 3**: 2%
Life in Arkansas

How would you rate Arkansas as a place to live as compared to other states?

- Slightly / Much Better: 66%
- About the Same: 20%
- Slightly / Much Worse: 10%
- Don't Know: 4%

Would you say you are _______ financially compared to a year ago?

- Better Off: 37%
- About the Same: 16%
- Worse Off: 47%

Do you feel that Arkansas is generally headed in the right direction or wrong direction?

- Right Direction: 73%
- Wrong Direction: 15%
- Don't Know / Refused: 11%
A year from now will you be _______ financially?

- Better Off: 43%
- About the Same: 46%
- Worse Off: 6%
- Don't Know / Refused: 5%

Some people think of themselves as Southerners -- others do not. How about you - would you say that you are a Southerner or not?

- Yes: 73%
- No: 22%
- Don't Know / Refused: 5%
Demographics

Are you male or female?

- Female: 54%
- Male: 46%

Which of the following best describes your racial or ethnic group:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Race</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>WHITE</td>
<td>722</td>
<td>81.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BLACK OR AFRICAN-AMERICAN</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>11.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HISPANIC</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>1.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ASIAN</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NATIVE AMERICAN</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>1.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MULTI ETHNIC</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>0.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SOMETHING ELSE</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DON'T KNOW</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>REFUSED</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>1.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>885</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Which of the following best describes your current religious preferences:

- Protestant: 73
- Catholic: 8
- Jewish: 1
- Something Else: 15
- Don't Know / Refused: 3
About how often do you attend religious services?

- Never: 12%
- Once a Year: 8%
- Several Times a Year: 15%
- About Once a Month: 6%
- 2-3 Times a Month: 11%
- Every Week: 27%
- More Than Once a Week: 21%
- Don't Know / Refused: 1%

Do you live in a city, a suburb, or a small town?

- Small Town: 34%
- Suburb: 5%
- Rural: 31%
- City: 30%

How many years have you lived in Arkansas, or have you lived here all of your life?

- Less than 1 year: 2%
- 1-10 years: 15%
- 10-20 years: 12%
- 21-30 years: 9%
- 31-40 years: 5%
- 41-50 years: 3%
- 50+ years: 1%
- All of my life: 53%

Where did you spend most of your life before coming to Arkansas? (includes only those 413 respondents born outside of Arkansas)

- Texas: 15%
- California: 10%
- Illinois: 8%
- Oklahoma: 7%
- Missouri: 5%
- Louisiana: 4%
- Other State: 44%
- Another Country: 7%
What is your level of schooling? I have a list here.....please feel free to stop me at any time.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>NO HIGH SCHOOL</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SOME HIGH SCHOOL</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATE OR EQUIVALENT</td>
<td>232</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SOME COLLEGE INCLUDING BUSINESS OR TRADE SCHOOLS</td>
<td>298</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COLLEGE GRADUATE</td>
<td>132</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SOME GRADUATE SCHOOL</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GRADUATE OR PROFESSIONAL DEGREE</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DON'T KNOW</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>REFUSED</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>885</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

What income category best describes your total 1998 household income?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dollars</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Which of the following best describes your present marital status?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Married</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Between September 15th and October 2nd, the Survey Research Center at the University of Arkansas dialed 3,738 randomly selected Arkansas telephone numbers. These attempts yielded 885 completed surveys. The remainder of the surveys were not completed due to the resident’s absence, a refusal to participate, a busy line, a “no longer in service” message, or the resident being under the age of 18 years. Employing guidelines established by the American Association for Public Opinion Research, the poll’s cooperation rate was 70.6%. This figure reflects completed surveys as a percentage of all eligible individuals contacted. The survey’s margin of error is ± 3 percent.

To ensure that the sample drawn for the survey was representative of the state’s residents, a comparison was made between the survey respondents’ demographic characteristics and those of the state as whole. The results are shown in the below table. As is apparent, the respondents in the sample are similar to the state in terms of income and racial background, yet survey respondents are somewhat older and better educated.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Arkansas Poll Respondents</th>
<th>State Data</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Median Age</td>
<td>48 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>40-45 years (Census, 1990; for those over 18 only)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>46.0% male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>48.2% male (Census 1990)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>85.7% high school graduates</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>66.3% high school graduates</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>25.8% college graduates</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>13.3% college graduates</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(Census USA Counties 1996)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Income</td>
<td>$25,001 to $35,000 (median income range)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>$27,117 (Census 1999)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Race / Ethnicity</td>
<td>81.6% White</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>82.7% White</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>11.3% Black</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>15.9% Black</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1.9% Hispanic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>0.5% Asian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>0.7% Asian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>0.5% Native American (Census 1990)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1.7% Native American</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A completed survey consisted of 68 questions. The text of the survey protocol is available on-line at http://plsc.uark.edu/arkpoll.