

The 2008 New Hampshire State of the State Poll

Analysis of Results

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

During the week of April 28-May 2, 2008, students in the Policy Research Shop conducted a telephone survey of New Hampshire registered voters. Calls were made between the hours of 6:30pm and 9:30pm on Monday through Thursday evenings. Additional calls were made during daytime hours on Tuesday through Friday when requests were made to call during the day. Over the course of the week, a total of three attempts were made to contact each of the registered voters drawn in the sample. A total of 401 survey interviews were completed during the week, yielding an error rate of +/- 5.0 percent at a 95 percent confidence interval. Survey respondents were asked a wide range of questions relating to the current political and economic state of affairs in New Hampshire. The sample drawn is quite representative of the voting population in New Hampshire; just over half of the respondents were male (51.7 percent) while just under half were women (48.3 percent). Respondents were divided evenly between the two congressional districts (47.9 percent from the 1st Congressional District and 52.1 percent from the 2nd Congressional District). The mean and median ages of the respondents were 56.7 and 56, respectively. Regarding the partisan identification of the respondents, 27.6 percent are registered as Democrats, 29.8 percent are registered Republicans, and 42.6 percent are undeclared/independents.

State of the New Hampshire Economy

Regarding the general state of the economy in New Hampshire, just over half of the respondents (51.1 percent) state that the economy is WEAK; roughly 40 percent of the respondents believe that the economy is STABLE (41.2 percent). Only 3.5 percent of the respondents think that the economy in New Hampshire is STRONG. Just under five percent of the respondents are unsure about the economy (4.2 percent).

Regarding their personal economic situations, the largest plurality of respondents (46.0 percent) believe that compared to one year ago their own economic situation remains the SAME. However, 42.8 percent of the respondents feel that their own economic situation is WORSE than it was one year ago. Just over ten percent of the respondents feel that they are BETTER OFF today than they were one year ago (11.3 percent).

Nearly fifteen percent of the respondents state that they personally or a member of their family has been negatively affected by the current mortgage crisis (14.9 percent). Close to one-in-five respondents considers his or her own personal credit card debt situation to be among the top personal financial concerns at the present time (18.8 percent). Regarding saving for retirement, approximately 70 percent of respondents are currently investing in retirement savings plans (70.4 percent). For those who currently invest, roughly half of the respondents invest in both employer-based retirement savings plans and personal retirement plans (47.6 percent). The remaining investors are split roughly evenly between employer-based plans (27.9 percent) and personal retirement plans (24.5 percent).

Regarding future economic prospects, the largest plurality of respondents believe that their own financial situation will be ABOUT THE SAME one year from now (42.2 percent). Just over one-quarter of the respondents believe that their financial situation will be BETTER one year from

now (27.0 percent); just under one-quarter of the respondents believe that they will be in a WORSE financial situation in one year (22.4 percent). Less than ten percent are unsure (8.4 percent) regarding their future financial situation.

More than three-quarters of the respondents (76.1 percent) expect to receive a federal tax rebate check resulting from the economic stimulus package passed by Congress and signed by President Bush. For those anticipating a federal rebate check, the respondents plan on utilizing the money in the following ways:

- Pay bills-----24.5 percent
- Save it-----19.3 percent
- Normal daily purchases-----17.6 percent
- Purchase large consumer item---9.3 percent
- Pay off credit card debt-----8.6 percent
- Spend on vacation-----7.9 percent
- Something else-----12.8 percent

At least for the state of the economy in New Hampshire, perhaps 25 percent of the money sent to New Hampshire residents will actually serve to stimulate the economy. The proposed uses of the federal rebate checks by respondents will do little to stimulate economic growth in the state.

Public Policy Issues in New Hampshire

Respondents were given a list of policy issues and asked to select the most important issue for New Hampshire policymakers to focus on in Concord. Respondents had the opportunity to offer their own most important issue (6.9 percent); none of these responses garnered more than two percent. Below is the list of policy issues and respondent choices:

1. building and maintaining a strong economy-----28.5 percent
2. relieving the property tax burdens of citizens----26.9 percent
3. improving education across the state-----17.3 percent
4. providing for the health care needs of citizens---12.8 percent
5. maintaining a clean and livable environment-----4.5 percent
6. maintaining roads and bridges-----3.2 percent
7. other-----6.9 percent

Respondents were then asked to identify from a list of issues the greatest threat to New Hampshire's future. Below is the list of issues presented to respondents and their choices:

1. public education system-----19.0 percent
2. lack of high paying jobs-----15.8 percent
3. availability of affordable housing-----15.6 percent
4. cost of health care-----15.3 percent
5. increased government spending-----12.7 percent
6. population growth-----11.6 percent
7. other-----10.0 percent

In their assessment of the level of government most important to ensure New Hampshire's future, respondents overwhelmingly identified the state government in Concord as most responsible (61.6 percent), followed by local government (20.0 percent) and the federal government in Washington, DC (18.4 percent).

Education Policy

Moving to education policy, respondents rate the job the public schools are doing in New Hampshire as follows: excellent (7.5 percent), good (43.2 percent), fair (30.1 percent), and poor (13.1 percent); less than ten percent did not know enough about the public school system in New Hampshire to offer a response (6.1 percent). When comparing the current public education system to when the respondent was in school, roughly one-third of the respondents feel that the current system is BETTER (34.2 percent); another one-third believe the current system is WORSE (32.9 percent) and ten percent believe that it is the SAME as when they were in school (10.5 percent). Roughly one-quarter had no basis for comparison or were unsure (22.4 percent). When asked about the current state of public school financing in New Hampshire, most respondents express dissatisfaction with the progress being made by state officials to address the delivery of an "adequate" education to all public school children in New Hampshire (30.4 percent are somewhat dissatisfied and 27.8 percent are very dissatisfied; conversely 3.9 percent are very satisfied and 19.4 percent are somewhat satisfied. The remaining respondents are neutral on the issue (7.3 percent) or are unsure (11.3 percent).

Budgetary Policy

Regarding the seriousness of the budget problems facing New Hampshire, three-quarters of the respondents find the current budget situation to be either very serious (27.1 percent) or somewhat serious (50.3 percent). Less than ten percent of the respondents believe the problem is not very serious (8.9 percent) or not serious at all (0.8 percent); thirteen percent are unsure. Looking at budget issues at the local level, respondents were offered the following scenario: "Currently many towns in New Hampshire are facing budget problems. In order to provide the same level of services they might have to raise taxes. If you had to choose between raising taxes or cutting services, which would you choose?" Just over 30 percent of respondents opt for raising taxes (30.4 percent) while more than 40 percent support cutting services (44.0 percent). Another 19 percent say it would depend on the particular service or program (19.1 percent) and six percent are unsure (6.5 percent). Respondents were then asked about a specific budgetary problem at the state level—funding for roads and bridges. "Over the next decade, according to the New Hampshire Department of Transportation, the state of New Hampshire faces a \$1.7 billion deficit for the repair and maintenance of the state's roads and bridges. I am going to read you a list of proposed options to solve this budget deficit over the next decade. Please let me know if you approve or disapprove of each of the options:"

1. raising the gas tax five cents per gallon (27.6 percent approve)
2. a five percent increase in motor vehicle tax (54.8 percent approve)
3. a two percent increase in interest and dividends tax (36.9 percent approve)
4. increase in minimum cap on I and D tax (38.5 percent approve)
5. a one-percent sales tax (40.0 percent approve)
6. a 25-cent increase in the cigarette tax (81.0 percent approve)

Health Care Policy

An overwhelming percentage of respondents currently have health insurance (94.4 percent). In general, respondents are relatively satisfied with the current state of healthcare in the state with 11.9 percent of respondents being very satisfied and 32.0 percent being somewhat satisfied; an additional 14.3 percent are neutral with 18.8 percent somewhat dissatisfied and 13.2 percent very dissatisfied. Less than ten percent of the respondents are unsure (9.8 percent). Asked whether they would support or oppose the adoption of a system of required healthcare insurance for all citizens similar to the plan adopted in Massachusetts, roughly one-third of the respondents support such a plan (31.5 percent); roughly one-third oppose the plan (33.6 percent) and one-third of the respondents are unsure (34.9 percent).

Internet Usage and Broadband Access

With the February 2008 purchase of Verizon by Fairpoint Communications in New Hampshire, we asked questions regarding Internet usage and access to Broadband Internet service. Just under 80 percent of the respondents reported daily usage of the Internet (79.1 percent), with 20.9 percent reporting no usage and 26.4 percent reporting less than an hour of Internet usage per day. Just over one third of the respondents reporting spending one-to-two hours daily online (35.4 percent) and 17.2 percent of respondents spent more than two hours a day online. Regarding Broadband Internet access, 71.6 percent of the respondents reported having access to Broadband Internet service.

New Hampshire Politics

Respondents were asked about their opinions of statewide elected officials in New Hampshire—Governor John Lynch, Senator Judd Gregg, and Senator John Sununu. Their ratings are as follows:

- Governor John Lynch: 56.4 percent favorable
27.4 percent neutral
8.9 percent unfavorable
7.0 percent unsure
- Senator Judd Gregg: 38.1 percent favorable
27.3 percent neutral
26.8 percent unfavorable
7.8 percent unsure
- Senator John Sununu: 32.4 percent favorable
26.2 percent neutral
33.4 percent unfavorable
8.1 percent unsure

The job approval rating for Governor Lynch is consistent with his high favorable ratings. More than 65 percent of respondents approve of the way Governor Lynch is handling his job as governor (65.2 percent); whereas only 13.2 percent disapprove of job performance. More than one-fifth of the respondents are unsure about his job performance, however (21.6 percent). The institutional job approval rating of the state legislature is less impressive as 36.6 percent of respondents approve of the way the members of the New Hampshire legislature are handling their jobs; almost one-third of the respondents disapprove of the job performance of the legislature (32.2 percent) while 31.2 percent are unsure.

Regarding the upcoming elections in the fall, respondents were presented with a series of choices for president and for the U.S. Senate. The Republican nominee, John McCain, fared well against Senators Clinton and Obama as well as against former Vice President Al Gore. In the Senate race, the Democratic challenger, Jean Shaheen, has a ten-point lead over incumbent Senator John Sununu. Undecided voters in all of the match-ups are consistently in the 18 percent range.

Race for the Presidency

John McCain 45.2 percent	John McCain 41.8 percent	John McCain 46.5 percent
Hillary Clinton 36.4 percent	Barack Obama 39.3 percent	Al Gore 35.2 percent
Undecided 18.4 percent	Undecided 18.9 percent	Undecided 18.3 percent

Race for U.S. Senate

Senator John Sununu	35.9 percent
Former Governor Jean Shaheen	46.0 percent
Undecided	18.1 percent

Finally, we asked two questions regarding the “Pledge” and the First in the Nation Primary. Regarding the first issue, we asked, “How important is it to you personally that candidates for elective office in New Hampshire sign the “Pledge” not to create an income tax or to create a sales tax?” Just over half of the respondents feel that the Pledge remains important (40.4 percent very important, 16.1 percent somewhat important). More than one-third of the respondents, however, find the “Pledge” to be not very important (11.8 percent) or not important at all (26.0 percent); 5.7 percent are unsure.

Regarding the place of New Hampshire as the first primary state in the nation, two-thirds of the respondents believe that remaining the first primary state is very important (42.5 percent) or somewhat important (25.1 percent). Roughly one-quarter of the respondents do not find the issue to be important (12.8 percent—not very important and 14.8 percent—not at all important); five percent are unsure (4.9 percent).

In addition to the questions presented above, respondents were asked a series of questions regarding their civic activism and media consumption as well as a variety of demographic questions. Later reports will analyze these data as well as provide greater depth of analysis of the data presented in this report.

1. ECONOMY

1.1 Introduction

The Rockefeller Center’s State of the State Poll surveyed respondents on an assortment of economic issues to gauge perceptions on the conditions of the state economy as well as concerns with personal credit card debt, retirement savings, and the mortgage crisis. Responses to these questions were correlated with demographic factors, such as age, income, education, and party affiliation in an effort to discern relationships that may be of concern to state and local policy makers.

The economic outlook of New Hampshire respondents varies greatly depending on the sum of an array of factors. Some of the most telling indicators of economic confidence include religious service attendance, political ideology, and household size in addition to more expected variables like income, education, and employment status. Conversely, factors such as ownership of residence, union membership, and possession of health insurance had almost no correlation with economic wellbeing.

In order to assess individuals outlook on the economy we created the variable “wellbeing,” a composite of a persons evaluation of his or her personal economic situation, his or her view of the state economy, and his or her expectation of future personal finances. The above components are aggregated to create a wellbeing score from three to eleven with a mean of 7.6. Because the most optimistic answers (considering the economy “strong”, for instance) were coded one, three represents the highest possible wellbeing while eleven represents the lowest possible wellbeing. Wellbeing is surprisingly uncorrelated across a number of demographic breakdowns, although a few questions are significant predictors of high wellbeing.

Table 1.1 identifies the number of respondents in each of our “wellbeing segments,” identifying the top, middle, and bottom third of respondents based on their economic circumstances. Segment 1, the most optimistic, ranged from a wellbeing score of three (the most optimistic possible) to six (an average response of “stable” or “about the same” to posed questions) suggesting that New Hampshire residents are not especially positive about the current economic outlook. Segment 2 ranged from seven to eight and Segment 3 ranged from nine to eleven.

Table 1.1 Wellbeing Segments in N.H.

Wellbeing Score	Number of Respondents	Percentage	Wellbeing Segment
3	2	0.51 percent	Segment 1
4	18	4.59 percent	Segment 1
5	36	9.18 percent	Segment 1
6	84	21.43 percent	Segment 1
7	43	10.97 percent	Segment 2
8	81	20.66 percent	Segment 2
9	53	13.52 percent	Segment 3
10	29	7.40 percent	Segment 3
11	46	11.73 percent	Segment 3

Source: Rockefeller Center State of the State Poll 2008

The survey data supported the following conclusions:

- A majority of respondents identified a combination of economic issues as most important for New Hampshire policy makers to focus on in Concord.
- Household income, education, and regularity of church service attendance each had a fairly strong correlation with general perception of economic wellbeing.
- Union membership, possession of health insurance, home ownership, party identification, size of household, and religious affiliation all had virtually no impact on respondents' general perception of economic wellbeing.

1.2 Threats and Priorities

1.2.1 Constituents' Priorities for State Policy Makers

When asked to identify the most important issue for New Hampshire policy makers to focus on in Concord, a majority (55.4 percent) selected one of the two choices pertaining to the economy. Strengthening the economy was the most frequent top priority (28.5 percent) while relieving the property tax burden was second (26.9 percent). As such, respondents identified economic issues, whether statewide or personal, as their most pressing concern.

Disaggregating the responses by income led to some interesting observations. Of those with below-median incomes, 30.6 percent of respondents ranked strengthening the economy as their first priority, compared to 28.1 percent of those with incomes at or above the median. A difference of proportions test determined that this disparity was not statistically significant ($p > 0.6$), demonstrating that concern about the economy was high across all income levels. Of those with below-median incomes 26.5 percent cited relieving the property tax burden as their first priority compared to 26.6 percent of those with incomes at or above the median, clearly a statistically insignificant difference ($p > 0.95$).

1.2.2 Perceived Threats to New Hampshire's Future

Respondents were also asked to identify what they perceived to be the greatest threat to New Hampshire's future. The quality of the education system was the most frequent response (19.9 percent); however, the next three most frequently perceived threats were all concerned with economic issues. Together, the lack of high-paying jobs (15.8 percent), the availability of affordable housing (15.6 percent), and the cost of health care (15.3) accounted for 46.7 percent of respondents' economic concerns for New Hampshire's future.

1.2.3 Concern with Availability of High-Paying Jobs across Education Levels

As mentioned above, the lack of high paying jobs was cited as the second greatest threat to New Hampshire's future. We disaggregated the responses by education level to determine which demographics were most severely affected by a lack of jobs.

The responses throughout all education levels remained fairly consistent, ranging from 9.8 percent among respondents with some graduate training to 14.8 percent among those with only a high school diploma. Of bachelor's degree recipients without any graduate training, a full 21.4 percent cited a lack of high-paying jobs as their greatest concern, compared to a mean of 13.9 percent across the other categories. The difference in proportions was statistically significant at the ninety percent level ($p > 0.07$).

Further investigation found that a disparity between union and non-union households was skewing the results. Among respondents with a bachelor's degree, 53.9 percent of respondents with a labor union member in the household found a lack of high-paying jobs to be the greatest threat to the state, compared to 16.7 percent for those without a union member in the household. Despite the small sample size, the difference was highly significant ($p = 0.0025$).

One might predict that the trend of union households finding an inadequate supply of jobs to be a greater threat than non-union households would remain consistent across education levels; however, this was not the case. When college graduates were excluded from the sample, 14.3 percent of respondents from union households perceived jobs to be the greatest threat compared to 13.4 percent of respondents from non-union households, a statistically insignificant difference ($p > 0.85$). In addition, when union members were excluded from the sample, no difference was found between holders of bachelor's degrees and other educational categories ($p > 0.5$).

While it is of course possible that the combination of a bachelor's degree and a labor union member in the household makes it particularly difficult to find a well-paying job, it is difficult to conclude this based on such a minuscule subgroup of the sample. Considerably more data would be needed to establish a credible correlation.

1.3 Perception of Economy

Without dividing the sample into subgroups, 51.1 percent of all respondents considered the New Hampshire economy to be weak, while 41.2 percent said that it was stable, and only 3.5 percent said that the economy was strong. This section analyzes factors that may contribute to respondents' perceptions of the economy, including household income, financial past.

1.3.1 Effect of Income and Employment on Perceptions of the Economy

Each respondent's income was reported not as a dollar amount but as part of a range, as delineated in Table 1.2. Any analysis of income data is by necessity less precise than it would be if we used exact figures, but comparing the mean and median nevertheless yielded an approximate measure of the disparity in income among various subgroups. The fact that fifteen percent of respondents did not report household income may skew the results; these individuals were excluded from the statistical tests below, but their absence may still have an effect on the accuracy of these results. For the whole sample, the median income was category six (\$60,000 to 75,000) and the mean was between categories five and six, or in the range \$50,000 to 60,000.

Table 1: Income Ranges

Category	Annual Income (\$)	Frequency (%)
1	Under 20,000	6.4
2	20,000 to 30,000	6.7
3	30,000 to 40,000	5.9
4	40,000 to 50,000	8.4
5	50,000 to 60,000	7.5
6	60,000 to 75,000	14.5
7	75,000 to 100,000	15.0
8	100,000 to 150,000	12.0
9	150,000 to 200,000	5.6
10	Over 200,00	3.1
11	No answer/Refusal	15.0

Among those who said that the economy was “strong” or “stable,” the median income was in category six (\$60,000 to 75,000) and the average category was 6.15 (\$60,000 to 75,000), indicating a slightly higher income than the sample as a whole. The median income for those who said that the economy was “weak” was also in category six (\$60,000 to 75,000), but the mean category was 5.29 (\$50,000 to 60,000). This indicates a lower income amongst “weak” economy respondents than the “strong” or “stable” economy group. Based on these results, we hypothesize that those with lower incomes are significantly more likely to perceive the economy as weak, while those with higher incomes are more likely to describe the economy as stable or strong.

To evaluate the strength of this hypothesis, we conducted a difference of proportions test comparing the proportion of respondents with below-median incomes who described the New Hampshire economy as weak to the proportion of respondents with incomes at or above the median who said the economy was weak. The test revealed that the income discrepancy between the two groups was statistically significant at the ninety percent level but not, however, at the ninety-five percent level ($p > 0.06$).

We found similar results using our wellbeing scale. Among respondents making less than \$20,000, less than a tenth were in the top third wellbeing category, and nearly half (47.8 percent) were in the bottom third. Respondents making between \$60,000 and \$75,000 were more likely to be in the top third (40.4 percent) than the bottom third (28.8 percent) of economic wellbeing. Of respondents earning over \$200,000 dollars a year, 72.7 percent were in the top third wellbeing segment. This income bracket was not at all represented in the bottom third wellbeing category.

Predictably, those with full time employment and a high income were far more likely to fall into the top segment than those without. Among survey participants with full time employment, 41.1 percent fell into the top third of economic satisfaction, while only 10.5 percent of unemployed were similarly optimistic about the economy. Among respondents with only part-time employment, more than half (56.3 percent) fell in the lowest category level of satisfaction with the economy. Retirees were fairly evenly distributed.

1.3.2 Past Perceptions and Future Expectations

Asked to describe their current financial situation in relation to their situation last year, 11.3 percent of respondents said they were better off, 42.8 percent said they were worse off, and 46.0 percent said that their situation had remained about the same.

Of respondents who said their finances had improved, 68.2 percent said they expected their financial situation to improve in the next year, 20.5 percent expected it to remain the same, and 6.8 percent expected it to worsen. Of those who said their finances had worsened, 38.9 percent expected their situation to worsen in the next year, 29.9 percent expected it to remain the same, and 22.4 percent expected it to improve. Respondents who said their finances had remained steady, 60.7 percent expected their situation to remain the same, 21.4 percent expected it to improve, and 10.7 percent expected their finances to decline. Based on these results, we concluded that people believed—no matter what their perception of the economy had been the year before—that the next year would be a continuation of the previous year.

Wellbeing was more closely correlated with an individual's view of the New Hampshire economy than with his or her own financial situation (0.708 to 0.633). However, an individual's expectation for the future was more correlated with his or her personal situation than their view of the New Hampshire economy (0.353 to 0.222). Thus, while respondents considered their economic wellbeing in light of expectations for the New Hampshire economy, respondents' future expectations were based upon personal finances.

1.3.3 Political Ideology

Ideology played a large role in predicting economic wellbeing. Self-proclaimed liberals were staunchly in the middle of the economic wellbeing measurement, with only 17.4 percent in Segment 3 and only 26.9 percent in Segment 1. Thus, the majority of liberals were in Segment two (55.7 percent). Moderates and conservatives were nearly identical in terms of economic wellbeing. Both leaned slightly optimistic with 40.4 percent and 40.5 percent in Segment one, respectively. Additionally, roughly a third of moderates and conservatives were in the bottom category (30.7 percent and 29.8 percent, respectively). Thus, self-identified liberals in the survey viewed the economy somewhat neutrally while both moderates and conservatives were more often in either the top or bottom segments.

1.3.4 Religious Attendance

Religious practice is generally correlated with economic outlook. Those who rarely or never attended services were nearly evenly distributed across the wellbeing segments (32 percent in Segment one and 38 percent in Segment three suggesting only a slight trend toward the negative.) However, among those who attended services once or more per week, nearly half (48 percent) are in Segment one. Similarly, those who attended services a few times a year also tended to be optimistic, with 40.7 percent in the top segment. However, attending services sporadically, once or twice a month, was associated with economic pessimism as nearly half of these survey participants (46.2 percent) fell into Segment three and only a fifth had a high enough wellbeing score to rank in the top third.

1.3.5 Anticipation of Federal Rebate

Whether or not New Hampshire residents expected a rebate had essentially no impact on their wellbeing rating: the seventy-six percent of respondents who expected a rebate were evenly distributed across all three segments. However, huge variations in wellbeing were present when respondents were broken down by how they intended to use the rebate. Of those planning to pay bills, over half (50.7 percent) were from Segment three (those with the least optimistic economic outlook). Conversely, among those who planned to spend the rebate on vacation or pleasure, nearly half (47.8 percent) were from Segment one (the most optimistic category).

1.3.6 Household Size and Marital Status

New Hampshire residents that were married or lived with one other person were more likely to be in the highest level of wellbeing. Among respondents that lived alone, only 16.7 percent were in the highest level and half were in the lowest level of wellbeing. Those that lived with one other person were much better off with 39.1 percent in the highest third category of wellbeing. This figure remained stable as household size increased. Similarly, among those that were married 39.8 percent were in the highest third category of economic wellbeing.

1.4 Impact of Credit Card Debt

Respondents were asked whether they considered credit card debt a pressing financial concern. 18.7 percent of respondents regarded credit card debt as a significant concern, while 81.3 percent did not. We analyzed the data first to determine whether there was a difference in income between those burdened by credit card debt and those who were not, and second to determine whether credit card debt influenced respondents' planned use of the rebate check they received as part of the federal economic stimulus package.

1.4.1 Relationship between Income and Credit Card Debt

Those who cited credit card debt as a pressing financial concern reported a median income in category six (\$60,000 to 75,000) with a mean of 5.6 (\$50,000 to 60,000), compared to a median of six and mean of 5.61 for those not concerned with credit card debt, a statistically insignificant difference ($p > 0.98$). We concluded that the impact of credit card debt extended across all income levels and did not disproportionately affect low-income people.

1.4.2 Effect of Credit Card Debt on Planned Use of the Federal Stimulus Package

Of respondents with credit card debt, 85.1 percent expected to receive a rebate check. Of those, 22.9 percent planned to use the check to repay credit card debt, the second most frequent response after "pay bills" (35.7 percent). The third most frequent was "no/unsure" with 15.7 percent. The five remaining alternatives each garnered less than 10 percent of responses, with only 2.9 percent planning to spend the check on a large consumer item.

Of respondents without credit card debt, 21.8 percent answered “no/unsure” to their planned use for their rebate check. 17.7 percent planned to save the check, sixteen percent planned to spend it on normal daily purchases, and 15.7 percent planned to use it to pay bills. 8.2 percent planned to spend it on a large consumer item, and only 3.1 percent planned to use the check to pay off credit cards.

The original intent of the rebate check was to stimulate consumption; of the alternatives given, “normal daily purchases,” “spend on large consumer item,” and “upcoming vacation/pleasure” could be categorized as such. Among respondents with credit card debt, only 12.9 percent planned to spend their rebate check in this way, compared to thirty percent of those without credit card debt. Aggregating these categories, 27.5 percent planned to use their check to finance consumption, and only 13.6 percent planned to spend it on consumption beyond normal daily purchases.

This analysis demonstrates that respondents with credit card debt were significantly less likely to shop ($p < 0.003$) and more likely to use their check to pay off debt or bills, though neither group was very likely to prioritize consumption, the targeted area meant to be boosted by the stimulus package.

1.5 The Mortgage Crisis

14.9 percent of respondents reported that they or a family member had been negatively affected by the current mortgage crisis.

1.5.1 Impact of the Mortgage Crisis by Income

Those who reported that they or a family member had been negatively affected by the mortgage crisis had a median income in category six (\$60,000 to 75,000) with a median of 5.61 (\$50,000 to 60,000), compared to a median of six and a mean of 5.63 for those who had not been affected, clearly a statistically insignificant difference ($p > 0.05$). As with credit card debt, the scope of the mortgage crisis was not limited to low-income people but affected all income levels.

1.5.2 Impact of the Mortgage Crisis by Age

The mean age of those affected by the mortgage crisis was 54.7, compared to 57.0 for those not affected by the crisis, a statistically insignificant difference ($p > 0.25$).

1.6 Retirement Savings

70.4 percent of respondents said they had invested in a retirement savings plan, while 29.6 percent said they had not. These responses were disaggregated and analyzed to see if income and age differed between the two groups.

1.6.1 Retirement Savings by Age and Income

Those who invested in a retirement savings plan had a median income in category seven (\$75,000 to 100,000) with a mean of 6.26 (\$60,000 to 75,000), compared to a median of three (\$30,000 to 40,000) and a mean of 3.99 for those who did not, a striking disparity ($p < 0.001$).

Comparing the age distribution of the two groups, however, revealed that those not investing in a plan were over a decade older on average than those currently investing (64.2 compared to 53.8 years), also a statistically significant difference ($p < 0.001$).

1.6.2 Retirement Savings Excluding Current Retirees

We hypothesized that the disparity in age between the two groups might reflect a problem with the question design, if already-retired people were forced to answer “no” because they were not *currently* investing at the time of the survey, skewing the results.

Figures 1.1 and 1.2 are stem and leaf plots showing the age distribution between respondents currently investing and not investing in retirement accounts. The stem plot for those currently investing predictably approximates a normal distribution; the stem plot for those not investing skews noticeably to the right, with numbers increasing with age from the early fifties to the mid-eighties before abruptly dropping off. Presumably, as age increases, so does the number of retirees who would not be contributing to a retirement fund because they are currently using it.

Figure 1.1 Age Distribution (Currently Investing)

```

0. | 7
1* |
1. |
2* | 1
2. | 568999
3* | 11444
3. | 555667778889
4* | 0000000111222222233333344444
4. | 5555566666777777777888889999999999
5* | 000000011111111122222222333333333444444444
5. | 555555555555666666666677777777788888888899999
6* | 0000000000011111111112222333444
6. | 5555666666666677778
7* | 00001223
7. | 5555556888
8* | 001234
8. | 5

```


Figure 1.2 Age Distribution (Not Investing)

2* | 3
2. | 7889
3* | 4
3. | 7
4* | 33
4. | 5555557799
5* | 0001244
5. | 5588899
6* | 012222344
6. | 666778888889
7* | 1111122333444
7. | 555666777788
8* | 0000111122222234
8. | 5
9* | 0

Figure 1.3 is a plot reflecting the distribution of those not currently saving for retirement, but *excluding* respondents who described their occupational status as “retired,” as the question does not apply to them. It is significantly closer to a normal distribution than the plot that included the retirees; however, the distribution still skews to the right, with older people more likely to invest than younger.

Figure 3: Age Distribution (Not Investing), Excluding Current Retirees

2* | 3
2. | 7889
3* | 4
3. | 7
4* | 33
4. | 5555557799
5* | 0001244
5. | 558899
6* | 012222
6. | 678
7* | 24
7. | 6

We determined that the group not investing in a retirement plan had a lower income in the aggregate than the group that did invest, but we also determined that the group not currently investing had a large proportion of retirees. Given that retirees generally have lower incomes than working people, did their data points unduly skew the mean of the non-investing group downward?

When current retirees were excluded, those investing in a retirement savings plan had a median income of in category seven (\$75,000 to 100,000) with a mean of 6.46 (\$60,000 to 75,000), compared to a median of 5 (\$50,000 to 60,000) and mean of 4.58 (\$40,000 to \$50,000) for those

not investing. We thus observe that low-income people are significantly less likely to invest in a retirement savings plan ($p < 0.001$).

Looking at the responses to the original question, one might easily conclude that nearly thirty percent of survey participants were without retirement savings. When retirees—to whom the question, due to its phrasing, was irrelevant—were excluded from the sample, the rate of respondents not currently investing in a retirement savings plan dropped to 18.5 percent. Still alarming, though, is that the group not saving for retirement (as evident in Figure 1.3) included a significant proportion of people in their mid-forties through mid-sixties who will retire within the next decade or two. The state government of New Hampshire may consider investigating if any government intervention in this area would be appropriate, and if so, which policies might assist its low-income residents in saving for retirement.

1.6.3 Life in New Hampshire

New Hampshire residents that had lived in the state for a significant amount of time, and those that were planning on remaining in the state for the rest of their lives were evenly split across our wellbeing segments. Among those that had lived in the state for more than twenty years, 34.4 percent were in the highest level of wellbeing, while 31.9 percent were in the lowest level. Among those planning on remaining in the state for the rest of their lives, 38.1 percent were in the highest level of wellbeing while 30.1 percent were in the lowest level. Thus, survey participants were evenly distributed among levels of economic security. The majority of respondents planned on living in the state for the remainder of their lives, independent of their economic position.

2. EDUCATION

2.1 Introduction

In the 2008 State of the State Poll, respondents rated the public education system as the biggest threat to New Hampshire's future. Numerous questions in the poll aimed to gauge respondents' views on the significance of public education, the performance of public schools in educating students, the quality of public education over time, and the job performance of New Hampshire officials to finance an "adequate education" for all New Hampshire children.

This section issues an analysis of responses on the New Hampshire State of the State poll concerning public education in relation to demographic data and views on state priorities, the budget, preferences in the 2008 election, etc. First, we consider the disparity between the public education system as the "greatest threat to the future of New Hampshire" but as the third "most important policy issue for policy-makers to focus on." Second, we explore opinions on the quality of New Hampshire public education. Then, we consider respondents' opinions of the education system's performance compared to their own New Hampshire education. Lastly, we analyze satisfaction with the current system of state financing of public schools in its ability to "adequately" educate all New Hampshire children. We examine what groups were more likely

to have a favorable or unfavorable impression of the school system, as well as the characteristics of those who had no opinion. The data supported the following conclusions:

- Public Education was rated the biggest threat to New Hampshire's future (19 percent)
- Education was rated the third highest priority for Concord policy makers (17.3 percent)
- As a respondent's level of education increased, he was more likely to rate education as most important for New Hampshire, to give public schools a lower performance rating, and to be dissatisfied with the public school finance system
- As a respondent's annual income increased, she was more likely to identify education as the biggest threat to New Hampshire's future, but not significantly more likely to be dissatisfied with public school financing
- Fifty percent of respondents rated the performance of New Hampshire Public Schools as good or excellent, while forty-three percent of respondents judged it to be fair or poor
- Comparing current public education with their own public education, thirty-four percent of respondents thought it was better, eleven percent said it was the same, and thirty-three percent said it was worse
- A majority (58 percent) of respondents were the school finance system's ability to adequately educate New Hampshire students
- The large number of respondents that could not respond to questions about education were less active in local government, were older, and had lived in New Hampshire for a shorter period of time

2.2 The Biggest Threat to New Hampshire's Future and Top Priorities for Concord Policy Makers

In the State of the State survey, respondents were asked to choose the issue that represented the greatest threat to the state's future. Respondents rated the public education system as the biggest threat (19 percent) over the lack of high paying jobs (15.8 percent), the availability of affordable housing (15.6 percent), the cost of health care (15.3 percent), increased government spending (12.7 percent), population growth (11.6 percent), and other (10 percent).

While those polled placed education as the greatest "threat" to New Hampshire's future, only 17.3 percent of respondents considered education "most important for policy makers to focus on in Concord." This was well behind the first preferred priority, building a strong economy (28.5 percent), and the second, relieving property tax burdens (26.9 percent).

2.2.1 Demographics

A number of demographic variables were not statistically significant in predicting perceived threat of the education system or education as an agenda priority. The average age of all survey respondents was 56.5 years old (standard deviation of 12.2). The average age of respondents who believed the greatest threat to the future of New Hampshire was the public education system was fifty-six years old. The average age of respondents that rated improving education as the most significant priority for the New Hampshire legislature was almost the same at 55.8 years

old (standard deviation 15). Of those that rated education as the biggest threat and the highest priority for the legislature, exactly fifty percent were male and fifty percent were female. Overall, approximately twenty-five percent of the sample had children attending a public school in New Hampshire. Of those who saw education as the most important issue, 29.7 percent had children currently attending New Hampshire public schools. Of these, 23.3 percent believed education was the greatest threat to the future of the state (compared to 19 percent overall).

2.2.2 Activism

Of those people who identified the public education system as the greatest threat to New Hampshire's future, thirty percent attended school board meetings regularly, compared to only thirteen percent of those who chose another threat ($p < 0.01$). In contrast, people who said improving education should be the top priority of state legislators were no more likely to attend school board meetings regularly than was the general population.

2.2.3 The Role of Governing Institutions

Respondents who identified education as the greatest threat were no more likely to identify the state as the most important level of government than the general survey population. However, respondents that rated education as the top priority were much more likely to say that the state government was the most important governing institution to ensure New Hampshire's future than the general survey population (77 percent versus 59 percent, $p < 0.01$).

2.2.4 Level of Education

From the cross tab analyses of educational level with most important policy issue ranking, it is evident that the higher the education level of the respondent, the greater concern for improving education over the economy and property taxes. Respondents with high school degrees were significantly more concerned with economic issues than education. Of the 17.3 percent rating education as the most important priority for Concord policy makers, 84.4 percent had at least some college-level or vocational training (compared with 79.5 percent of the overall sample). Table 2.1 summarizes respondents' top three agenda priorities with respect to level of education.

Table 2.1 Respondents' Top Three Preferences on Most Important Issue for Policy Makers to Focus on in Concord by Level of Education

Level of Education	Economy (%)	Property Tax (%)	Education (%)
High School Graduate	30.5	33.9	15.25
College Graduate	35.35	28.28	15.15
Master's Degree	27.66	19.15	25.35
Doctorate Degree	6.67	6.67	33.33

It might be inferred that the economy and property taxes were more important for respondents with lower levels of education because they are most influenced by fluctuations in the economy regarding jobs, housing, and economic opportunities. On the other hand, respondents with higher educational attainment are more secure in their income, and occupation.

2.2.5 Income

For respondents making 30,000 dollars or less annually, the threat of the public education system to New Hampshire's future was equal to that of health care costs (19.57 percent). Likewise, respondents making between 60,000 to 100,000 dollars considered education the greatest threat to New Hampshire's future (26.21 percent) followed distantly by the cost of health care (16.5 percent). Of all the respondents who believed the public education system to be the greatest threat to the state, 39.71 percent were in the 60,000 to 100,000 annual income range.

This data reveals that higher income level relates to perceived threat of the public education system to the state's future. This is probably a reflection of higher income individuals having a higher level of education and thus being more concerned with the public education system

2.2.6 Taxes

People who identified education as the greatest threat favored cutting services to increasing taxes at nearly the same rate as the general population. In contrast, almost half of respondents who viewed education as most important preferred to raise taxes and maintain services (46.9 percent) over maintaining current taxes and reducing services (25 percent). This represents a striking difference between those who view education as most important and the overall sample, which supported cutting services (45 percent) over raising taxes (30.4 percent).

A willingness to accept a tax increase is usually attributed to wealthier citizens, yet the incomes of those who believe education to be the crucial issue facing the state fall almost perfectly in line with the overall sample, with 32.8 percent making below 50,000 dollars per year (compared with 34.9 percent overall) and 51.6 percent making over 50,000 (versus 50.1 percent overall).

2.2.7 Ideology and 2008 Election Preferences

A correlation exists between ideological orientation, electoral preference, and respondents rating education as the top priority. Of the 17.3 percent that rated education as the most important priority, 15.6 percent claimed to be liberal and 20.3 percent conservative (compared to 21.9 percent and 33 percent of the entire survey sample, respectively). An overwhelming 62.5 percent of education first respondents claimed to be "moderate," compared to 43 percent overall.

In terms of party affiliation, there were slightly more "Democrats" (32.8 percent) that rated education as the first priority than in the sample (27.6 percent). When asked about their preferred candidates in the 2008 election, this group overwhelmingly planned to vote Democratic, with 48.4 percent supporting Senator Obama for president (compared to 39.3 overall), and 56.3 percent supporting former Governor Jeanne Shaheen in the New Hampshire senate race (compared to 46 percent overall). Self-identified moderates who placed education at the top of the agenda also strongly preferred Democratic candidates in the 2008 election.

2.2.8 Perception of Public School Performance

Respondents who identified the public school system as the greatest threat to New Hampshire's future were more critical of public schools' job performance. Fully one-fifth of them said that schools were doing a poor job, as opposed to thirteen percent of the general population ($p=0.06$). Those who identified education as the most important priority for legislators were not as negative as those who identified it as a threat, but were more likely to have an opinion on the matter. Not one of the sixty-one people who chose education as the most important priority confessed that they did not know how public schools were doing, as compared to around five percent of the general survey population and the people who identified education as the greatest threat ($p<0.05$).

2.3 Public School Performance

2.3.1 Quality of Schools Today

In another part of the survey, respondents were asked to rate the job public schools were doing in New Hampshire as "excellent" (7.5 percent), "good" (43.2 percent), "fair" (30.1 percent), or "poor" (13.1 percent). Just over six percent of respondents (6.1 percent) did not feel they knew enough to be able to rate the current public school system.

Responses varied across political ideologies. Of respondents who identified education as most important, half of them said schools were doing a good or excellent job, regardless of ideological boundary. Disaggregating further, however, reveals that nearly twelve percent of self-identified liberals said that schools were doing an excellent job, twice the proportion of moderates and conservatives ($p<0.06$).

2.3.2 Quality of Public Schools over Time

Survey participants were also asked to rate the current quality of public education in New Hampshire compared to when they attended school. 34.2 percent ranked current schools as better, 10.5 percent ranked schools the same, and 32.9 percent ranked them worse.

Respondents who rated education as the top agenda priority had similar views to the overall sample of the current public school system and the quality of the current system compared to the quality of schooling they received. Thirty-five percent of these respondents believed the public education system was "worse" than when they were in school, compared to 32.8 percent overall. Twenty-five percent of respondents that identified education as worse than when they were in school perceived the education system as the greatest threat to New Hampshire's future, compared to nineteen percent overall.

People who said that schools in New Hampshire were of the same quality as when they went to school were, on average, younger than the general survey population (50 years old versus 57, $p<0.01$). This is a logical response pattern in that younger respondents were more recently in school and thus were more likely to have had an experience similar to current New Hampshire students.

Considering education, 48.8 percent of respondents who had at least a college degree believed the quality of public education was excellent or good. Of respondents who believe public school education in New Hampshire was fair or poor, sixty-one percent had a college degree or more. Fifty-one percent of respondents who believed public schools were better than before had some college or vocational training or less. Thirty-nine percent of respondents who believed public education was worse than before had some college or vocational training or less.

Thus, the more education a respondent had, the more likely he or she was to think that the public education system was worse than before. This may be because of the higher standards college graduates have for education and for their concern for the future of the state due to the threat of the public education system.

2.4 School Finance and Delivering an Adequate Education

The State of the State Poll asked participants to rate their satisfaction with the progress made to address the delivery of an adequate education to all public school children in New Hampshire. Fifty-eight percent of respondents were either somewhat dissatisfied or very dissatisfied with the delivery of an adequate education. Only 23 percent of respondents were either somewhat satisfied or very satisfied. The remaining 19 percent of respondents were either neutral or unsure.

The debate over delivering a financially “adequate education” to all students has played out on the national stage as well as in the courtrooms of New Hampshire. Public education in New Hampshire is financed primarily through the distribution of property taxes for a given school district, causing per-student spending disparities regions throughout the state. Considering the dismal satisfaction rates amongst respondents, school finance is clearly an important issue for education policy makers to reform.

2.4.1 Perceived Threat of the Education System and Education as Respondents’ Top Priority

Of all respondents who were somewhat dissatisfied with progress in addressing delivery of adequate education, 25 percent believed that the public education system was the biggest threat to New Hampshire. Of those who were very dissatisfied, 28 percent believed the biggest threat was the public education system. Of all respondents who believed the public education system was the greatest threat to the state, 79 percent were either somewhat satisfied or very dissatisfied with the delivery of adequate education. From this data it is evident that respondents believed that public school financing was failing to deliver an adequate education to public schools in New Hampshire, and not enough progress was being made to address this problem.

Of the respondents who believe public education to be the “most important” issue to New Hampshire policymakers, 20 percent were satisfied with the current state while 75.4 percent were dissatisfied. This was a significantly higher rate than for respondents who viewed a strong economy as most important (26.6 percent satisfied and 49.5 percent dissatisfied), and for respondents who rating relieving the burden of property taxes as most important (16.8 percent satisfied and 63.4 percent dissatisfied).

2.4.2 Level of Education

Of high school graduates, 24.6 percent were satisfied with progress on the school finance system to adequately educate, and 52.5 percent were dissatisfied. Twenty percent of college graduates were satisfied with progress while 59.4 percent were dissatisfied. Master’s degree holders were 20.4 percent satisfied, 63.3 percent dissatisfied and respondents with doctoral degrees were 28.6 percent satisfied and 50 percent dissatisfied with the delivery of education.

Thus, the data shows that the higher a respondents level of education, the greater the dissatisfaction with public school financing and delivery of education to public school children.

2.4.3 Income

Regardless of income bracket, respondents were not satisfied with the state of public school financing and delivery of an adequate education to public school children in New Hampshire. Significantly, there was a ten percent increase in the dissatisfaction level of school finance and delivery of education as the income group of respondents rose from the lowest bracket to the \$30,000-60,000 bracket, and another 11 percent increase in dissatisfaction to the \$60,000-100,000 bracket. Table 2.4 summarizes the level of satisfaction and dissatisfaction across levels of annual income.

Table 2.4 Level of Satisfaction and Dissatisfaction of Public School Financing and the Delivery of an “Adequate Education” by Income Bracket

Annual Income	Satisfaction	Dissatisfaction
Less than \$30,000	27.7%	46.8%
\$30,000-60,000	25.6%	56.4%
\$60,000-100,000	18.9%	67.9%
\$100,000-200,000	23.8%	61.9%
More than \$200,000	26.0%	52.4%

2.4.4 Perceptions on the New Hampshire Budget and Tax Preferences

Respondents who were satisfied and unsatisfied with the progress of the school finance system to deliver an adequate education agreed (73.3 percent and 81.6 percent, respectively) that New Hampshire’s budget problems were “somewhat” or “very” serious. These numbers mirror overall concerns that the budget deficits were somewhat or very serious (77.3 percent).

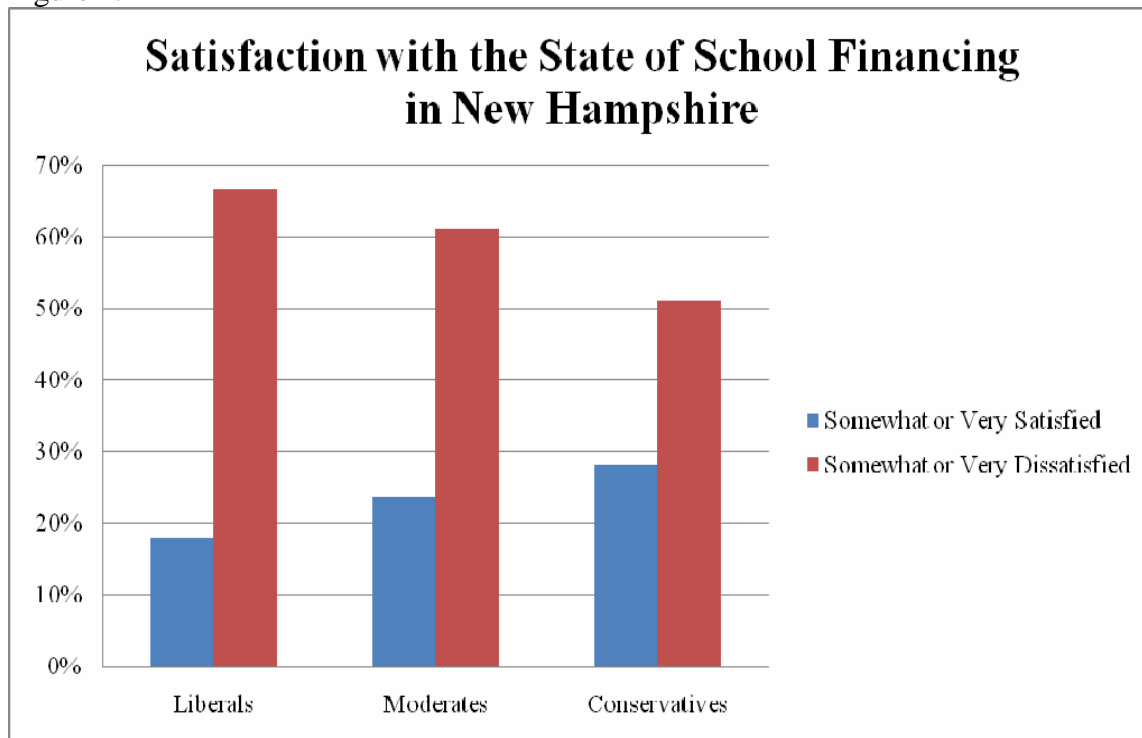
Those who were either somewhat or very dissatisfied with adequacy efforts supported cutting services (43.2 percent) over raising taxes (33.8 percent). These respondents also rated education as the greatest threat to New Hampshire (25.7 percent), ironically above the threat of “increased government spending” (17.8 percent).

2.4.5 Ideology

As discussed above, the majority of New Hampshire residents were dissatisfied with the system of school financing in terms of its ability to deliver an adequate education to every student.

Significant differences in respondents' views on school finance emerged in light of ideology. Likewise, those who were somewhat or very satisfied with the status of school financing were more likely to approve of the job the legislature was doing than those who were somewhat or very dissatisfied (55 percent compared to 31 percent, $p < 0.01$). Figure 2.4 illustrates the differences in ideology.

Figure 2.4



There was a ten percentage point spread between conservatives and liberals who were somewhat or very satisfied with the current state of school finance, with moderates falling right in between, close to the population average ($p = 0.05$). Conversely, there was a sixteen percentage point spread between liberals and conservatives who were somewhat or very dissatisfied with the current state of school finance, with moderates again falling somewhere in between ($p < 0.05$).

Despite this ideological split, many more New Hampshire residents were dissatisfied with school financing than were satisfied. Due to this high level of dissatisfaction, there was a broad consensus in favor of school finance reform. Groups that were less dissatisfied with the current system might be amenable to piecemeal reforms, while those who are more dissatisfied with the system will likely favor more sweeping reforms.

2.5 The "Unsure" Population

Almost one-third of respondents answered "don't know" or "unsure" to one or more of the questions related to the performance, quality, and financing of public schools. We looked for

trends among this subset of the population that could not provide a definite answer to questions addressing education.

Respondents presumably could not assess public schools because they did not have sufficient information to do so. Of those who did not know enough to rate the performance of public schools in New Hampshire, more than 50 percent had never attended a school board meeting, as opposed to less than 40 percent of those who had an opinion on the schools ($p < 0.05$). The "don't know" respondents also tended to be older than the average respondent (age 63 versus 57 overall, $p < 0.05$).

In addition, 35 percent of people who had lived in the state of New Hampshire for less than 20 years were unable to compare New Hampshire schools today to when they went to school. On the other hand, 18 percent of those who had lived in the state for 20 or more years were able to answer the question ($p < 0.01$). Many people who had lived in New Hampshire for less than twenty years likely did not attend public school in the state and thus had no basis for comparison.

2.6 Conclusions

People who saw education as a threat were more likely to be involved in local government but disliked state control and greater taxes, while those who saw education as a top priority for the state legislature were less involved in local government and more likely to tolerate increased state control and higher taxes. Liberals were more likely to rate public schools as excellent than conservatives. Older residents and people who had recently moved to the state were more likely to confess that they did not know enough about the state of the public education system to offer an opinion on questions pertaining to the education system. Finally, the majority of people of all ideologies were dissatisfied with the public school finance system. Thus, there would likely be broad support for reform, though to varying degrees based on ideology.

3. BUDGET

3.1 Introduction

The New Hampshire budget is one of the most significant areas of concern for the state's legislators. This year, the budget is an especially important issue due to slowing economic growth that has caused a serious budget deficit. The state has already taken steps to remedy the situation, issuing hiring freezes, putting a hold on out-of-state travel, and reducing the budgets of the judiciary and legislative branches.¹

The 2008 State of the State Poll included numerous questions pertaining to the state budget. These questions aimed to assess the level of concern over the New Hampshire budget deficit by asking respondents to rate the problem as very serious, somewhat serious, not very serious, not at all serious, or unsure. In addition, the budget questions sought to determine the population's preference for increasing taxes or reducing services to alleviate the budget deficit.

This section analyzes the effects that a variety of variables such as political affiliation, ideology, gender, age, income, etc. have on respondents' opinions about the budget. We examine the

willingness of various groups to use different types of taxes to prevent deficits. The survey data supported the following conclusions:

- We find that in some cases, a higher percentage of people were willing to accept some taxes (such as a cigarette tax) than originally said they preferred to cut services and maintain taxes.
- This report points to various revenue generating options that New Hampshire citizens may be receptive to while indicating that there are many limits on what they will accept

3.2 Perceived Seriousness of New Hampshire Budget Problems

When asked to rate their perception of New Hampshire's budget problems, over seventy-five percent of the respondents said that the current budget situation was very serious (27.1 percent) or somewhat serious (50.3 percent). Less than ten percent of the respondents felt the problem was not very serious (8.9 percent) and 0.8 percent felt it was not serious at all. Thirteen percent were unsure or did not respond.

Approval of legislative performance, charitable activity, and religion were correlated with respondents' perception of the threat of New Hampshire budget problems. Although religious preference was not statistically significant in predicting level of concern over the budget (p value =0.1117), legislative performance and raising money for a charitable organization were highly significant (p=0.006 and p=0.0096 respectively). In addition, respondents making less than 60,000 dollars per year were more likely to view New Hampshire's budget problems as serious or very serious than those making over 60,000 dollars per year (p=0.0489).

Neither partisan affiliation nor ideological stance had a significant affect on people's feelings about the severity of New Hampshire's budget problems; however, respondents most involved and interested in the legislative process were more likely to be concerned about the state's budget problems. Citizens who were civically involved with charitable organizations were more concerned of the state's fiscal situation whereas those who did not comment on their approval of the state legislature were less likely to be interested in or aware of the budget issues.

3.3 Preference for Higher Taxes or Reduced Services

The survey asked if respondents would prefer to see taxes raised or services cut in a town with a budget deficit. Given a choice between higher taxes or reduced services, the majority of respondents elected to "maintain taxes, decrease services" (44 percent). Thirty percent preferred to "increase taxes, maintain services," 19.1 percent of respondents stated that their preference was dependent on the services in question, and 6.5 percent were unsure.

Educational attainment was the most statistically significant variable related to budget preferences (p=0.0058). Performing community service or volunteering with a nonprofit was also statistically significant (p=0.0367).

Excluding respondents who were unsure of their budget preferences (25) or who said it would depend on the services in question (73), ideology had a statistically significant correlation with preferences on policies to balance the budget. Liberals preferred raising taxes at a statistically significant rate ($p=0.003$), while conservatives preferred cutting benefits ($p=0.00001$). Moderates under this model did not have a statistically significant correlation. Despite the significance of ideology, there was not a significant correlation between Democrats, Republicans and Independents.

We did not find a statistically significant correlation between income level and preference for raising taxes or cutting services; however, the percentages indicate that with more data, a correlation might emerge. Less than forty percent of people making over 60,000 dollars per year (39.4 percent) supported raising taxes and 43.3 percent supported cutting services. Fourteen (14.4) percent said it depended on the programs that would be cut. Among respondents making less than 60,000 dollars per year, twenty-four percent supported raising taxes, while forty-six percent supported maintaining taxes and cutting services, and 20.2 percent said it would depend on the programs to be cut.

3.4 Importance of Candidates Signing the “Pledge”

The third budget question on the survey asked respondents to rate how important they believed it was for candidates to sign the “Pledge” promising not to create an income or sales tax. Fifty-six percent of respondents believed the “Pledge” was “very important” (40 percent) or “somewhat important” (16 percent). Thirty-seven percent believed it was either “not very important” (11 percent) or “not important at all” (26 percent). Five percent were unsure of the significance of the “Pledge.”

Most correlated with respondents’ preference for candidates signing the “Pledge” were priorities for the New Hampshire government (0.1215), religious identification (0.1356), preference for Senator McCain or Senator Obama for President (0.1396), educational attainment (0.1968), preference for Senator Sununu or Governor Shaheen for Senate (0.2904), and political ideology (0.3201). Several of these factors predicted whether or not a respondent preferred candidates to sign the “Pledge”. Four factors exceeded a five percent level of significance: religious preference ($p= 0.0036$), whether respondents supported McCain or Obama ($p= 0.0171$), whether they supported Sununu or Shaheen ($p= 0.0013$), and ideology ($p= 0.0005$).

These correlations, though stronger than previous sections, are also more self-explanatory. Those in favor of the Republican candidate for president and in favor of Republican leadership at the state level were far more likely to be in strong support of the “Pledge” for no income or sales taxes. Conversely, those favoring the Democratic candidate and state officials were more inclined to dismiss the “Pledge.”

3.5 Preferred Policy to Correct the New Hampshire Infrastructure Budget Deficit

Respondents were informed, “Over the next decade, according to the New Hampshire Department of Transportation, the state of New Hampshire faces a \$1.7 billion budget deficit for the repair and maintenance of the state’s roads and bridges.” They were then asked if they

approved or disapproved of six different policies proposed to alleviate the deficit: (1) raising the gas tax five cents per gallon, (2) a two percent increase in the Interest and Dividends tax, (3) an increase on the minimum cap on the Interest and Dividends, (4) creating a one percent sales tax, (5) a twenty-five cent increase in the Cigarette Tax, and (6) a five percent increase in the annual motor vehicle tax. A large majority of respondents disapproved of every budget proposal except the increase on the motor vehicle tax and the cigarette tax. The approval and disapproval ratings are found in Table 3.1.

Table 3.1 Percent Approval and Disapproval Ratings of Policy Options to Correct the New Hampshire Infrastructure Budget Deficit

Policy Proposal	Approval (%)	Disapproval (%)
Gas Tax Increase	27.6	72.4
Interest and Dividends Tax Increase	36.9	63.1
Increase Minimum Cap on I&D Tax	38.5	61.5
Sales Tax of 1%	40	60
Motor Vehicle Tax Increase	54.8	45.2
Cigarette Tax Increase	81	19

3.5.1 Five-Cent Gas Tax Increase

The least popular policy proposal was raising the gas tax five cents per gallon with a mere 27.6 percent of respondents approving the measure. A five cent gas increase would earn the state 530 million dollars over ten years, which would not eliminate, but certainly alleviate, the projected deficit. A seventeen cent increase in the tax would be required to fully alleviate the deficit.² Variables most correlated with preferences on the gas tax increase included gender (0.2035), educational attainment (0.2127), perceived legislative performance (0.1968), and religious preference (-0.1209).

The most statistically significant variables predicting approval or disapproval of the gas tax increase were gender and educational attainment. Women were statistically less likely than men to support raising the gas tax ($p=0.0001$). Respondents with a higher level of education were statistically more likely to support an increase ($p=0.0001$). Perception of legislative performance was also highly significant in predicting approval of the tax ($p=0.0004$).

Income was a statistically significant correlation, with 21.77 percent of people making below \$60,000 per year approving of the tax, and 32.61 percent of people making more than \$60,000 per year approving the tax increase ($p=0.0348$). Ideology did predict support for the proposal as liberals were more likely than conservatives to support raising the gas tax ($p=.0348$). Likewise, older respondents were more likely to support raising the tax ($p=0.045$). Lastly, religious preference was statistically significant in predicting disapproval for the measure ($p=0.0469$). Party affiliation was not significantly correlated with approval or disapproval of the policy option.

3.5.2 Two Percent Interest and Dividends (I&D) Tax Increase

The second policy proposal suggests increasing the tax on interest and dividends (I&D) income by two percent (to 7 percent). A one percent increase in the I&D tax rate would generate an additional \$266 million dollars in revenue for the state of New Hampshire from 2008-2018.³ Just over one third of respondents approved of a two percent increase in I&D taxes (36.9 percent).

Variables most correlated with the Interest and Dividends tax were support for Senator McCain or Obama for president (-0.1154), support for Senator Sununu or Governor Shaheen for Senate (-0.1161), level of education (-0.1388), religious preference (-0.1525), and ideology (0.1303).

Ideology and educational attainment were the most statistically significant variables predicting support for the increase in the I&D tax. Liberals were statistically more like to favor the proposal ($p=0.008$) while conservatives were more likely to oppose it ($p=-0.003$). Republicans were statistically less likely to support the increase ($p=0.03$), but a significant correlation was not found for Independents or Democrats. Respondents with a higher level of education were statistically more likely to support the tax increase ($p=.0069$).

There were no statistically significant correlations between the tax increase and age, income level, or gender. A respondent's preferred candidate for president was not predictive of his or her support for the I&D tax increase ($p=0.0512$). Likewise, a respondent's support for Senator Sununu or Governor Shaheen for Senate was not highly predictive of approval of the tax increase ($p=0.0817$). The final correlated variable, religious preference was also not statistically significant in predicting support for the proposal ($p=0.0823$).

3.5.3 Increase the Minimum Cap on Interest and Dividends (I&D) Tax

The third proposal to alleviate the infrastructure budget deficit suggests lowering the threshold at which interest and dividend income can be taxed. If the state of New Hampshire lowered this threshold from \$4,800 to \$2,400 for joint filers, and from \$2,400 dollars to \$1,200 dollars for individual filers, it would generate an additional \$154 million over the next ten years.⁴ Over a third of respondents supported raising the minimum cap on the I&D tax (38.5 percent).

The proposal to increase the tax cap was most closely correlated with religious preference (-0.1087), education (-0.1490), and income (0.1138). Education was highly significant in predicting support for the tax cap ($p=0.0105$). Neither religion ($p=0.0711$) nor income ($p=0.0354$) was a particularly significant predictor. There were no statistically significant correlations between willingness to raise the minimum cap on I&D taxes and income levels, ideology, party affiliation, age or gender.

3.5.4 Creation of a One-Percent Sales Tax

The fourth policy proposal suggests implementing a one percent sales tax on all consumer goods. A one-percent sales tax would generate \$1.79 billion for the state over the next decade, which

would pay off the entire transportation budget deficit and leave the state an additional \$60 million.⁵ Forty percent of respondents supported the creation of a one-percent sales tax.

Variables most correlated with preferences on the one percent sales tax included a respondent's preferred candidate for president (-0.1096) and Senate (-0.2555), preferences for the New Hampshire legislature's priority (-0.1291), ideology (0.1385), and income (0.2210).

Income was the most significant predictor of a respondent's approval of the sales tax ($p=0.0009$). People making between 40,000 and 50,000 dollars a year supported the sales tax increase at a statistically significant level ($p=0.0062$).

Support for a presidential and senatorial candidate, and ideology were the second and third most statistically significant variables predicting support for the sales tax. Support for McCain or Obama for president was highly significant ($p=0.0073$) while support for Sununu or Shaheen was even more significant ($p=0.00001$). Ideology was also statistically significant in predicting sales tax support ($p=0.0075$). Liberals were more likely to support the proposal ($p=0.02$) than conservatives ($p=0.013$). Republicans were significantly correlated towards not supporting the tax ($p=0.002$).

There was not a statistically strong correlation between gender and support of the sales tax. A preference for legislative priorities in the New Hampshire Congress was also not significant ($p=0.0598$).

3.5.5 Increase of the Motor Vehicles Tax by Five Percent

The fifth policy suggestion to alleviate budget deficits is to raise fees paid to the Division of Motor Vehicles by 5 percent. This increase would bring the state \$333 million over ten years.⁶ Over fifty percent (54.8) of respondents supported increasing the motor vehicle tax by five percent.

Variables most correlated with preferences for the motor vehicles tax increase were ideology (0.1023), occupation (-0.1328), and level of education (-0.1672). Level of education was the only statistically significant predictor of the motor vehicle tax increase ($p=0.0010$). Political ideology was the second most significant variable ($p=0.0930$). Conservatives and Republicans were more opposed to the motor vehicles tax ($p=0.017$ and $p=0.07$ respectively). There were no statistically significant correlations between the motor vehicles tax and gender, age, income, or occupation.

3.5.6 Twenty-Five Cent Increase in the Cigarette Tax

The sixth and final proposal addressing infrastructure budget deficits was a twenty-five cent increase in the cigarette tax. This tax would net the state almost 40 million dollars, factoring in only minor losses from a decrease in demand. Even with this increase, New Hampshire's cigarette tax would remain lower than those of other New England states.⁷ This proposal garnered the most approval from respondents (81 percent). Almost ninety percent of Democrats (87.3), 74.6 percent of Republicans, and 81.5 percent of Independents supported the increase.

Liberals supported it at a rate of 89.7 percent, moderates 82.8 percent, and conservatives 75.4 percent.

Variables most correlated with preference on the cigarette tax increase included length of residence in New Hampshire (-0.1033), level of education (-0.1036), political ideology (0.1063), perception of the economy (-0.1088), preference for senatorial candidate (-0.1323).

There was not a statistically significant correlation between support of the cigarette tax and annual income as support was consistent across all income levels. Almost 80 percent (77.7) of people making \$60,000 or more per year and just over 80 percent (81.81) of people making less than \$60,000 supported the tax.

There was a statistically significant correlation between gender and support for the cigarette tax increase ($p=0.019$), with 86 percent of women approving and 76 percent of men. The only other variable showing statistical significance for predicting a respondent's support for the proposal was their preference for Sununu or Shaheen for Senate ($p=0.0124$).

The data demonstrates one clear principal: New Hampshire voters remain hesitant to seriously entertain the idea of creating new taxes or increasing old ones to deal with the State's budget issues. While certain correlations exist in the data, again no single correlation is particularly insightful. The state remains dedicated to low taxes and minimal government intervention.

4. HEALTH CARE

4.1 Introduction

Data from the 2008 State of the State poll shows that the majority of respondents were insured, satisfied with the health care system, and felt that health care costs were fairly stable. Of survey participants, 94.4 percent reported having health care coverage, an accurate representation of the New Hampshire population. According to the New Hampshire for Healthcare website, "America's Health Ranking for New Hampshire is four out of fifty and only 137,000 or less than 10.5 percent of New Hampshire's citizens were uninsured for the year of 2007."⁸ This 10.5 percent is not significantly different from the five percent of participants who did not have healthcare in the survey.

First, this section investigates respondents' satisfaction with their health care in New Hampshire. Demographic factors such as age, gender, political ideology and party identification, education and income levels, union membership, total and projected years in New Hampshire, and attendance of religious services were assessed to determine which respondents were most likely to be dissatisfied with health care services. Second, this section investigates respondents' support or opposition to adopting a system of universal health care insurance similar to the plan adopted in Massachusetts. The data supported the following conclusions:

- Respondents rated health care as the fourth biggest threat to New Hampshire's future, and as the fourth top priority for policy-makers to focus on in Concord

- A majority of respondents were satisfied with their health care (32 percent)
- Older respondents were not necessarily more concerned with health care, but they were less likely to be satisfied with the system and more likely to oppose a universal health care plan
- Liberals and Democrats were more likely to support universal health care, conservatives and Republicans were more likely to oppose it, while Independents were evenly split
- The higher the education of a respondent, the more likely he or she was to be dissatisfied with the health care system and to support universal health care

4.2 Health Care as Top Priority and Satisfaction with New Hampshire Health Care

While health care was a national priority, survey participants placed health care fourth in terms of priorities and policy concerns. Respondents rated the cost of health care as the fourth biggest threat to New Hampshire’s future (15.3 percent), behind the public education system (19 percent), the lack of high paying jobs (15.8 percent), and the availability of affordable housing (15.6 percent). In rating the most important priorities for New Hampshire policy makers to address in Concord, respondents rated healthcare fourth (12.8 percent) below building a strong economy (28.5 percent), relieving the property tax burden (26.9 percent), and improving public education (17.3 percent). The plurality of respondents (32 percent) were “somewhat satisfied” with their health care while 19 percent of voters were “somewhat dissatisfied.” The largest plurality of respondents across every demographic category were somewhat satisfied with their health care.

Table 4.1 indicates respondents’ satisfaction level with health care in New Hampshire. The table compares respondents’ level of health care with the following demographics: education level, union membership, the length of time the respondent had lived in New Hampshire, and ideology.

Table 4.1 Satisfaction of Health Care versus Demographic Factors

Satisfaction with health care	Educ-high (n=75)	Educ-coll (n=181)	Educ-doc (n=109)	Union (n=78)	Non-Union (n=297)	Live-nh15 (n=63)	Live-nh20 (n=300)	Lib. (n=78)	Con. (n=120)	Dem. (n=99)	Rep. (n=107)
(1) Very Satisfied	8%	14%	12%	17%	11%	8%	13%	9%	17%	15%	12%
(2) Somewhat Satisfied	32%	33%	31%	33%	33%	33%	33%	33%	30%	35%	36%
(3) Neutral	11%	15%	16%	14%	14%	13%	14%	8%	19%	6%	15%
(4) Somewhat Dissatisfied	19%	16%	21%	20%	18%	20%	18%	24%	14%	19%	16%
(5) Very Dissatisfied	13%	12%	14%	10%	13%	5%	14%	21%	11%	15%	7%
(6) Unsure	17%	10%	6%	6%	11%	21%	8%	5%	9%	10%	14%

The table shows that the only demographic group whose majority was neutral about in their satisfaction was the New Hampshire residents who were not likely to remain in New Hampshire. Twenty-one percent of respondents who had lived less than 15 years in New Hampshire were unsure about their satisfaction of health care, whereas, only eight percent of respondents who had lived in New Hampshire for over 20 years are unsure about their satisfaction level. Six percent of respondents in a union were unsure about their satisfaction with their health care level, while 11 percent of non-union members were unsure about their satisfaction with their health care level.

4.2.1 Age

Looking first at New Hampshire residents' rankings for the top agenda priority, the data yielded surprising results. While one would assume that as a resident's age increased, so would their value of health care, it appears that a resident's age did not affect their opinion on the significance of addressing the health care system. Support for making health care the top priority was level across the data set, with the exception of the age of sixty. Sixty-year olds were an outlier in the data set as it was the age at which nine percent of respondents appeared to care the most about health care.

With a correlation of -0.0486 , an inverse relationship existed between the age of the respondent and their satisfaction with New Hampshire's health care. This indicates that the older the respondent, the more likely he or she was to be less satisfied with the health care system.

4.2.2 Party Identification

Next, we analyzed the data to see if party identification affected respondents' opinion on the importance of health care. Not surprisingly, our results showed that 16 percent of Independents found health care to be important, compared to ten percent of Democrats and two percent of Republicans surveyed. The data showed a correlation between independents and dissatisfaction with the health care system, as 45 percent of the respondents who were somewhat dissatisfied were Independents.

4.2.3 Level of Education

Considering level of education, health care was less important for residents who had either graduated from high school or had only some high school or elementary schooling. An analysis of the data showed that the higher a respondent's level of education, the more likely he or she was to be less satisfied with health care.

4.2.4 Annual Income

While income had little affect on whether or not a respondent rated health care as the most important policy priority, it was somewhat more predictive of his or her satisfaction with the New Hampshire health care system. Respondents who earned \$75,000 to \$100,000 per year were the most satisfied with New Hampshire health care. Twenty percent of this group was "very satisfied," while less than ten percent of respondents with annual incomes below \$75,000

and only thirteen percent of respondents who made more than \$100,000 per year were “very satisfied.”

4.3 Support for Universal Health Care in New Hampshire

Recent legislation in Massachusetts to implement a universal health care system instigated sentiments for a comparable health care plan in New Hampshire. While there are many controversies surrounding the creation of a universal insurance plan for a low budget, small population state like New Hampshire, the driving force of implementing such a policy will be favorable public opinion.

Table 4.2 demonstrates respondent’s support for adopting a universal health care plan in New Hampshire similar to the one proposed in Massachusetts. As is evident from the table, there was a broad array of support, opposition and unfamiliarity/uncertainty across demographic groups. Variables analyzed in the table include ideology, party identification, income, and age. A number of other variables we considered in our analysis did not reveal any significant trends with respect to universal health care, including number in household, union membership, attendance at religious services, and the likelihood of permanently living in New Hampshire.

Table 4.2 Support for Universal Health Care across Ideology, Income, and Age

Universal Health Care	Lib. (n=78)	Con. (n=121)	Dem. (n=99)	Rep. (n=107)	Under \$50,000 (n=68)	\$50,000-75,000 (n=109)	\$75,000-100,000 (n=97)	Over \$100,000 (n=31)	21-47 (n=89)	48-56 (n=95)	57-66 (n=91)	67-90 (n=85)
(1) Support	50%	22%	50%	18%	21%	32%	39%	36%	31%	39%	32%	23%
(2) Oppose	22%	41%	17%	47%	38%	28%	35%	48%	41%	36%	26%	31%
(3) Unfamiliar /Unsure	28%	37%	33%	35%	41%	40%	26%	16%	28%	25%	42%	46%

4.3.1 Age

Age had a significant effect on a respondent’s opposition to universal health care. As a respondent’s age increased, he or she was more likely to oppose universal healthcare. Analysis across the four age brackets (21-47 years old, 48-56, 57-66, 67-90), did not have return enough significance to determine a trend across age groups.

4.3.2 Ideology and Party Identification

The data demonstrates that respondents identifying as a liberal or a Democrat were most likely to support universal health care. On the other hand, respondents that identified as conservative or Republican were most likely to oppose universal health care. Liberals and Democrats both supported universal health care at a rate of fifty percent, while conservatives and Republicans

opposed universal health care at a rate of forty-one percent and forty-seven percent respectively. Independents were almost evenly split on support for a universal health care plan.

4.3.3 Education and Income

Annual income levels were divided into four categories: 1) Below \$50,000, 2) \$50,000 to \$75,000, 3) \$75,000 to \$100,000, and 4) over \$100,000. Support for universal health care increased as the respondent's income level increased, with the exception of the \$75,000 to \$100,000 bracket. Support for universal health care leveled off for respondents with an income over \$100,000. Unfamiliarity and uncertainty toward the universal health care proposal decreased from 41 percent to 16 percent as income increased. Thus, the data shows that the higher a respondent's education and income, the more likely the respondent was to be in favor of universal health care.

4.4 Conclusions

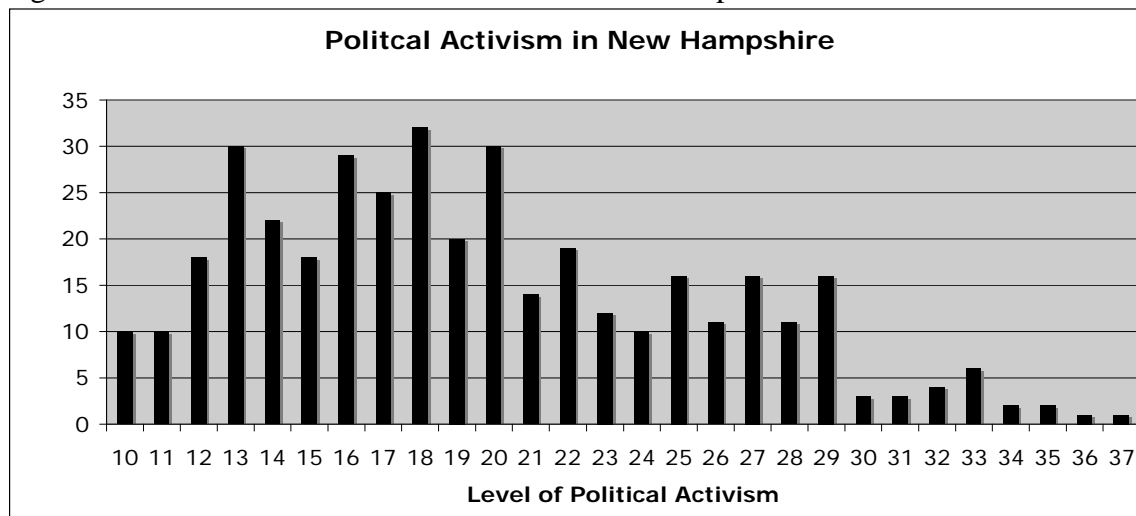
Health care continues to be an important factor for New Hampshire voters. A third of respondents were somewhat satisfied with their health care across all demographics. The idea of universal health care for all New Hampshire citizens was not overwhelmingly supported or opposed. In general, the idea of universal health care was evenly divided between those who supported, opposed and were unsure or unfamiliar with the Massachusetts plan. Over various demographics, the support or opposition for universal health care varied along expected ideological lines. A more comprehensive survey, finding the reasons behind respondents' levels of satisfaction and level of support for universal health care could further improve the New Hampshire health care system.

5. ACTIVISM

5.1 Introduction

The 2008 State of the State poll created a scale of political activism based on ten questions gauging respondent's level of involvement in local and state government. Participants were asked if they had communicated via newspaper or radio about an issue, attended a public forum or town hall, performed community service, raised money for or donated to a charitable organization, made a donation to a political candidate or group, volunteered for a campaign, contacted a government official about an issue of concern, signed a petition, or participated in an online discussion about a political issue. Each of the ten political activism questions had four possible answers, "Never," "Once," "A couple times," and "Regularly," numbered 1 through 4 respectively. Higher numbers in the range corresponded with higher levels of political activism. The scale of averages is continuous, running from 10 to 40, and is normally distributed as shown in Figure 5.1 below.

Figure 5.1 The Scale of Political Activism in New Hampshire



We analyzed the correlation between political activism and several identifying characteristics of the survey respondent including variables like age, sex, party affiliation, income level, and level of education. Significant correlations were found between levels of income and education and level of political activism.

We particularly explore levels of political activism through the lenses of gender and self-identified political party affiliation. We examine which gender is more or less politically active and if identification with a political party made a person more or less politically active. We also complete a multivariable analysis to determine which gender in which political party was the most politically active.

This section also includes an analysis of the correlation between political activism and responses to issue questions that measured respondents’ top policy concerns and priorities. We consider participant’s beliefs on the most important issue for New Hampshire policy makers, how important it was to a respondent that candidates for elective office in New Hampshire sign the “Pledge” (promising to not implement a sales or income tax), what respondents considered the greatest threat to New Hampshire’s future, and how serious a respondent considered New Hampshire’s budget problems.

In order to measure the level of political activism against such identifying variables as income, sex, education, party affiliation, and age, we created a new variable that quantified activism. The poll included ten, four-point questions that assessed political activism (ACT1-ACT10). As mentioned above, each of these questions asked respondents how frequently they engage in certain activities, such as voting, that indicate political activism. The possible responses were scored 1 (never) through 4 (regularly). The new variable (ActLevel) was created by adding the responses from ACT1 through ACT10, making the minimum level of activism equivalent to a score of 10, a moderate level equivalent to a score of 25, and the maximum level equivalent to a score of 40.

Once this continuous variable for activism was incorporated into the dataset, we were able to calculate the correlation between several variables using STATA. In order to determine and analyze the relationships between variables and the level of activism, we ran regression analyses. We found it interesting to compare the correlation of each variable with the level of activism using the latter as both an independent and dependent variable. Using this program, we explored the relationships between our five identifying variables and activism focusing especially on gender and party affiliation, as well as the relationships between activism and voter characteristics, such as their perception of major issues facing the New Hampshire legislature. The data supported the following conclusions:

- The higher a respondent's level of education and income, the more likely a respondent was to be more politically active
- Age, gender and party affiliation had a limited effect on political activism
- Stance on policy issues in New Hampshire had a limited effect on political activism

5.2 Basic Demographics: Age, Level of Education, Annual Income

The first of the traits analyzed for affects on political activism was age. The data revealed an insignificant correlation between age and level of activism (-0.0236), suggesting there was no relationship between respondents' age and level of political involvement.

A highly significant relationship was revealed between educational attainment and political activism. A positive correlation of 0.2633 existed between years of education and activism score, implying that more educated individuals are more aware of and are more likely to participate in politics and government. Respondents with a high school diploma or less averaged 17.2 percent, one point lower than the state average for activism while those with a bachelor's degree or higher were above the state activism average (20.1 percent).

The data also showed a strong correlation between income and political activism (0.2268), indicating that higher income individuals were generally more politically active.

5.3 Gender, Party Affiliation, and the Level of Activism

Gender was found to be a poor indicator of level of political activism, with men averaging only a slightly higher level than women on the political activism scale. Party affiliation had a similarly limited effect on level of political involvement. Self-identified Democrats had an average activism level of 19.7 percent, approximately one point higher than the average activism level of all respondents. It was also higher than self-identified Republicans and Independents (18.7 percent and 18.9 percent respectively).

5.3.1 Single Variable Analysis

The first variable we wanted to explore was gender. The survey offered two options for respondents to identify themselves as male or female; 51.7 percent of respondents identified themselves as male, and 48.3 percent of respondents identified themselves as female.

The second variable was the political party that respondents identified with. The four choices available to respondents were Democrat, Republican, Independent, and Other.⁹ Of the respondents, 27.6 percent were Democrats, 29.8 percent were Republicans, and 42.6 percent were Independents.

The last variable we considered was respondents' levels of political activism. There were three levels of political activism, as defined for the purposes of this analysis. A score of one represents low political activism, two represents moderate political activism, and three represents high political activism. For the respondents, 59.2 percent had low political activism, 36.4 percent had moderate levels of political activism, and 4.3 percent had high levels of political activism.

Our analysis indicated that the majority of respondents identified themselves in the lowest category of political activism. This sample is particularly useful because the respondents were almost evenly divided between genders (52 percent men, 48 percent women). Party identification was slightly skewed toward independents, but was fairly even (28 percent of respondents identified as Republican, 30 percent Democrat, 42 percent Independent).

The overwhelming majority of respondents, six out of every ten, were in the lowest level of political activists. Only four percent of respondents identified as having high levels of political activism. The overall trend of low-moderate-high levels of political activism by percentage was sixty percent low, thirty-six percent moderate, four percent high.

5.3.2 Bivariate Analysis

The bivariate analysis of the data first links party identification with level of political activism. When comparing party identification and gender, the data yielded the following results. Of the male respondents, 25.7 percent were Democrats, 30.6 percent Republicans, and 43.7 percent Independents. Of the female respondents, 30.3 percent were Democrats, 27.9 percent Republicans, and 41.8 percent Independents. Aggregated, 27.9 percent of respondents were Democrats, 29.3 percent Republicans, and 42.8 percent Independents.

We compared gender and political activism. Sixty percent of men had low levels of political activism, 35 percent had moderate, and five percent had high levels, nearly identical to that of the overall population of respondents. Women were very similar, with 58 percent of women having low levels of political activism, 38 percent with moderate levels, and four percent of women with high levels of political activism. For the overall population of respondents, 59.3 percent of people had low levels of political activism, 36.2 percent had moderate levels, and 4.5 percent of people had high levels of political activism. These comparisons show that gender has virtually no effect on the political activism level of an individual in New Hampshire.

Next, we compared level of political activism with political party identification. The data used contained 100 Democrats, 117 Republicans, and 128 Independents. Broken down by party, political activism levels by percentage seemed to follow a similar trend. Fifty-one percent of Democrats had low levels of political activism, 43 percent had moderate levels, and six percent of Democrats had high levels of political activism. For Republicans, 57 percent had low levels of

political activism, 39 percent had moderate levels, and four percent had high levels of political activism. Seventy percent of Independents had low levels of political activism, 27 percent had moderate levels, and three percent had high levels of political activism.

Overall, we can assess from this that Democrats tend to be slightly more active than Republicans and Independents, since Democrats had slightly higher percentages of members with moderate and high levels of political activism (43 percent and six percent for Democrats versus 39 percent and four percent for Republicans, and 27 percent and three percent for Independents). Independents seem to be the least politically active, responding with the highest proportion in the lowest score of activism.

5.4 Stance on Issues and Level of Political Activism

After exploring the correlation between voter characteristics and level of political activism, we predicted a relationship between political activism and stance on political issues in New Hampshire. Responses to questions regarding the “Pledge” not to create an income or sales tax, the current budget problems in New Hampshire, the greatest threat to New Hampshire’s future, and the most important issue for New Hampshire policy makers to focus on in Concord were compared to level of political activism. We find that the level of political activism in light of stance on policy preferences varied only slightly from the state average of political activism (18.9 percent).

5.4.1 Importance of the “Pledge”

We used average level of political activism for the group of respondents who rated the significance of the “Pledge” as each “very important,” “somewhat important,” “not very important,” “not at all important,” or “unsure” to determine the correlation between the political activism and perceived significance of the “Pledge.” The rating “not at all important” had the highest average level of political activism of the respondents (21.2 percent) which was higher than the average of all respondents (18.9 percent). As expected, “unsure” had the lowest average level of political activism (16.9 percent).

5.4.2 Seriousness of New Hampshire’s Budget Problems

Once again using the average level of political activism, we gauged the correlation between perceived seriousness of the budget problem in New Hampshire and the level of political involvement. The group that rated the budget problem in New Hampshire as “very serious” had the highest average level of political involvement (19.4 percent). The group that rated the budget problem in New Hampshire as “not at all serious” had the second lowest average of political activism (18.3 percent). The “unsure” group, again had the lowest rate of political activism (17.2 percent average).

5.4.3 Greatest Threat to New Hampshire’s Future

The question “Which of the following is the greatest threat to New Hampshire’s future?” had seven possible responses: the lack of high paying jobs, cost of healthcare, population growth,

public education system, availability of affordable housing, increased government spending, and other. The response with the highest average level of political activism among the respondents was the public education system (20.1 percent). The second highest level of average political activism (19.3 percent) chose increased government spending. The choice with the lowest average level of political activism was lack of high paying jobs. This may be explained by the correlation between level of education and political involvement. We found that respondents with a higher level of education were more likely to be more politically active and conventional wisdom infers that individuals with higher education will more easily find employment.

5.4.4 Most Important Issue for New Hampshire Policy Makers

Seven possible responses were offered for the question “Which of the following do you think is most important for New Hampshire policy makers to focus on in Concord?”: building and maintaining a strong economy, improving education, maintaining a clean and livable environment, providing for healthcare needs of New Hampshire citizens, maintaining roads, highways, and bridges across the state, relieving the property tax burdens on the citizens of New Hampshire, and other. The two responses with the highest average level of political activism were maintaining roads, highways, and bridges (20.7 percent) and maintaining a clean and livable environment (20 percent). The response with the lowest average level of political activism was building and maintaining a strong economy.

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³ Ibid. Page 8.

⁴ Ibid. Page 9.

⁵ Ibid. Page 9.

⁶ Ibid. Page 6.

⁷ Ibid. Page 11.

⁸ Employment Status. 2007. U.S. Census Bureau. 12 Oct. 2008

<[http://factfinder.census.gov/servlet/sttable?_bm=y&-geo_id=04000us33&-](http://factfinder.census.gov/servlet/sttable?_bm=y&-geo_id=04000us33&-qr_name=acs_2007_1yr_g00_s2301&-ds_name=acs_2007_1yr_g00_&-_lang=en&-redolog=false)

[qr_name=acs_2007_1yr_g00_s2301&-ds_name=acs_2007_1yr_g00_&-_lang=en&-redolog=false](http://factfinder.census.gov/servlet/sttable?_bm=y&-geo_id=04000us33&-qr_name=acs_2007_1yr_g00_s2301&-ds_name=acs_2007_1yr_g00_&-_lang=en&-redolog=false)>.

⁹ After generating the new list of overall political activism scores, we recoded the list of variable, aggregating the data into three groups. The overall political activism scores ranging from 1 to 1.9 were recoded as “1” or “low”, the scores ranging from 2 to 2.9 were recoded as “2” or “moderate”, and the scores ranging from 3 to 3.9 were recoded “3” or “high”.