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Statewide Survey of LA Registered Voters: Current Budget Situation

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Statewide Survey of LA Registered Voters

The University of New Orleans' Survey Research Center (SRC) sponsored an automated interactive voice response (IVR) telephone survey of active registered voters in Louisiana on Sunday March 13, 2016. The sample for the survey was randomly selected from all active registered voters in the state. The sample of 631 respondents yields a 3.9% margin of error at a 95% level of confidence. The sample matches the gender, age, and race parameters from the voter file obtained from the Louisiana Secretary of State.

UNO Graduate Research Assistant Tony Licciardi, with the supervision of UNO Survey Research Center Director Dr. Edward Chervenak, constructed a survey to analyze the public's perception of Louisiana's current budget situation and to learn who residents believe is responsible for the state's budgetary difficulties. The poll also gauged the favorability ratings of the governor and the state legislature. A question was also included on the partisan choice of registered voters in the upcoming US Senate election. In addition, the survey asked respondents to self-identify their race, gender, age, and total household income. For the income question, respondents were asked if their total household income was over or under \$45,000.

This IVR survey is a departure from the SRC's traditional live telephone polling. The Center and its researchers desire to explore new and developing technology for data collection methods as they become available. IVR surveys reduce interviewer bias to zero by eliminating the live human interviewer. Every survey respondent hears the same question read the same way. Independent analysis from publications such as The Wall Street Journal, National Council on Public Polls, and The Pew Research Center all show automated, recorded voice surveys used to record candidate preferences have an accuracy level comparable to live interviewer surveys. One issue to be concerned with IVR is that while the survey assumes the person in the voter file will answer the phone to take the survey, a different person might answer. This is why it is important to ask qualifying demographic questions about the respondents' age, gender, race, party ID, and income.

Public Perceptions of Louisiana's Budget Situation

Is There a Crisis with the State Budget?

	Total	Whites	Blacks	Males	Females	Democrat	Republican	Independent Other Party
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Yes	79	83	75	75	86	82	78	79
No	11	10	11	13	7	8	10	15
DK	10	7	14	13	7	9	12	6
(N)	618	375	184	267	323	226	234	138

	Total	18 to 29	30 to 49	50 to 64	65 and Over	Over \$45,000	Under \$45,000
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Yes	79	74	82	83	76	87	72
No	11	10	13	10	9	7	14
DK	10	16	5	6	15	5	14
(N)	618	115	202	173	128	323	201

Respondents were first asked whether they believed there was a budget crisis in Louisiana. By an overwhelming 8 to 1 margin, people believed that the state is experiencing a financial crisis. While this sentiment was expressed by every demographic group, whites were more likely than African-Americans and women were more likely than men to report the belief that there was a budget crisis. There was little partisan disagreement on the opinion that Louisiana was facing a fiscal emergency.

The oldest and youngest age categories were three times more likely than the middle age categories to claim they did not know if there was a budget crisis or not. When it came to the two income groups, wealthier respondents were more likely to reply there was a crisis while the respondents in the lower income category were twice as likely as their wealthier counterparts to answer there was no crisis and three times more likely to state they did not know if there was a crisis or not.

Who is to Blame for the State's Budget Crisis?

	Total	Whites	Blacks	Males	Females	Democrat	Republican	Independent Other Party
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Jindal	55	41	81	54	54	85	38	32
Legislature	28	36	12	32	27	11	41	39
Edwards	4	5	2	6	2	0	6	8
Something Else/Other	13	18	5	8	16	4	15	22
(N)	562	339	163	232	303	207	211	117

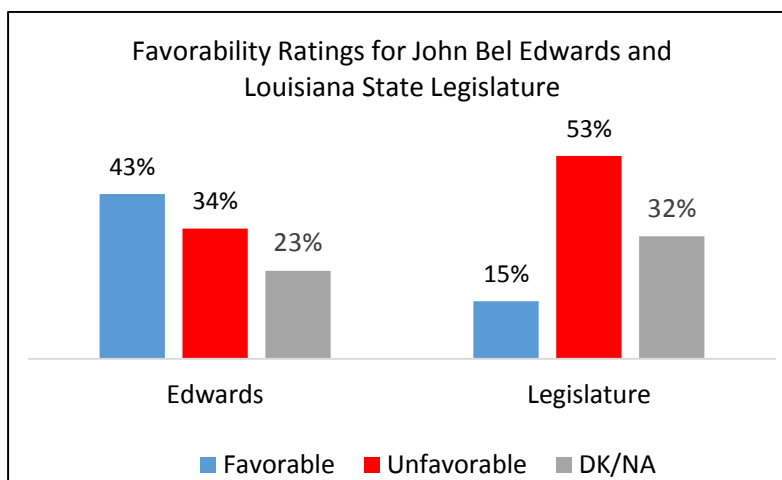
	Total	18 to 29	30 to 49	50 to 64	65 and Over	Over \$45,000	Under \$45,000
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Jindal	55	68	48	54	55	56	58
Legislature	28	13	29	35	32	34	23
Edwards	4	8	2	3	2	1	4
Something Else/Other	13	12	21	8	10	9	15
(N)	562	103	176	155	116	298	173

The people who responded that they believed there was a budget crisis were then asked who they thought was to blame for the predicament. Overall, the majority of respondents laid blame at the feet of former governor Bobby Jindal while a tiny percentage attributed the state's financial troubles to the current governor, John Bel Edwards. Over one-quarter of respondents communicated that the legislature bore responsibility for the budget crisis.

There was some divergence across demographic categories in assigning fault for the budget crunch. African-Americans overwhelmingly placed the onus on Jindal, while whites were more ambivalent. A plurality of whites (41%) replied that Jindal was responsible for the budget crisis, however, over one third of them thought that the state legislature was to blame. Men and women were equally likely to hold Jindal culpable, but women were twice as likely as men to declare that something else was responsible for the budget mess. Partisanship influenced the assignment of responsibility as Democrats blamed Jindal over the legislature by a nearly 8 to 1 margin. Republicans, however, were basically split in who they believed was responsible for the budget crisis. Independents and members of Other Parties were more likely to consider the legislature to be at fault for the financial state of affairs. In addition, nearly one-quarter of these respondents answered that something else was accountable for the dismal budget situation.

Young people were far more likely to assign blame for the budget crisis to Bobby Jindal than to the state legislature. Those respondents age 30 to 49 were the only age group where less than a majority said Jindal was to blame for the current budget mess. One in five of them specified that responsibility lay beyond either the former governor or the state legislature. Both income groups were similar in assigning blame to Jindal. However, one-third of the higher income respondents thought the legislature was at fault for the budget situation compared to one-quarter of the lower income respondents.

Favorability Ratings



Respondents were asked to rate the favorability of Governor John Bel Edwards and the Louisiana state legislature. The chart illustrates that Edwards was viewed more favorably than unfavorably, enjoying a net 9 point positive rating. Approximately one-fourth respondents had no opinion one way or another when invited to rate the governor.

It was a much different story for the state legislature. The state legislature finds itself experiencing a serious favorability deficit, matched by the state's budget deficit. Only 15% of respondents viewed the state legislature favorably while 53% rated them as unfavorable for a net 38 point negative rating. About one-third of respondents did not express an opinion when asked to rate the legislature.

John Bel Edwards Favorability Rating

	Total	Whites	Blacks	Males	Females	Democrat	Republican	Independent Other Party
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Favorable	43	31	72	44	46	77	24	27
Unfavorable	34	44	16	39	31	10	54	43
DK	23	25	12	17	24	13	22	30
(N)	631	374	184	267	324	226	233	139

	Total	18 to 29	30 to 49	50 to 64	65 and Over	Over \$45,000	Under \$45,000
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Favorable	43	58	35	41	47	48	44
Unfavorable	34	27	43	35	27	35	32
DK	23	15	22	24	26	17	23
(N)	631	116	201	172	129	322	201

A breakdown of Edward's favorability ratings show him enjoying strong support from African-Americans and Democrats. Conversely, whites and Republicans were more likely to rate the governor unfavorably. Independents and Other Party members were also more negative than positive when evaluating the governor.

Young people were the most supportive age group for Edwards. This may be tied to his promise to fund TOPS and higher education and stem the rise in tuition. The respondents age 30 to 49 were more negative than positive in rating the governor's favorability. They were the only age group to do so. The analysis indicated that a plurality of respondents age 50 and older held a more favorable attitude toward the governor. There were no significant differences across the two income categories when it came to Edwards' favorability ratings.

Legislature Favorability Rating

	Total	Whites	Blacks	Males	Females	Democrat	Republican	Independent Other Party
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Favorable	15	13	19	18	11	16	16	9
Unfavorable	53	60	40	58	49	44	54	65
DK	32	28	41	24	40	41	30	26
(N)	631	376	183	266	232	225	234	138

	Total	18 to 29	30 to 49	50 to 64	65 and Over	Over \$45,000	Under \$45,000
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Favorable	15	11	18	14	12	15	9
Unfavorable	53	47	51	61	54	58	49
DK	32	42	31	26	33	27	42
(N)	631	115	202	172	129	323	202

An examination of the legislature's favorability ratings indicated that whites were four times more likely to rate the legislature unfavorably while African-American were twice as likely to do so. Four in ten African-Americans did not rate the legislature either positively or negatively. Men were a bit more favorably disposed toward the legislature than were women. At the same time, however, a higher percentage of men than women rated the legislature unfavorably. This was due to the fact that a large percentage of women did not express an opinion when asked to rate the legislature. An equal percentage of Democrats and Republicans rated the legislature positively while more Republicans than Democrats evaluated the legislature unfavorably. The Independents and Other Party members graded the legislature the most negatively. They were over six times more likely to express an unfavorable rating when asked to assess the legislature.

The youngest and the oldest age groups expressed the lowest favorable ratings for the legislature. The 30 to 49 age group was the most positive towards the legislature, although they were still nearly 3 times more likely to hold an unfavorable than favorable view of the legislature. The wealthier income respondents expressed both more favorable and more unfavorable views of the legislature than did lower income respondents. This was because 42% of lower income registered voters did not express an opinion on this question.

Edwards Favorability Rating by Budget Crisis and Blame for Budget Crisis

	Budget Crisis				Blame for Budget Crisis			
	Yes	No	DK		Jindal	Legislature	Edwards	Something Else/Other
	%	%	%		%	%	%	%
Favorable	47	18	44		70	20	4	16
Unfavorable	31	72	18		13	55	79	29
DK	22	10	38		17	25	17	55
(N)	500	68	63		309	155	24	73

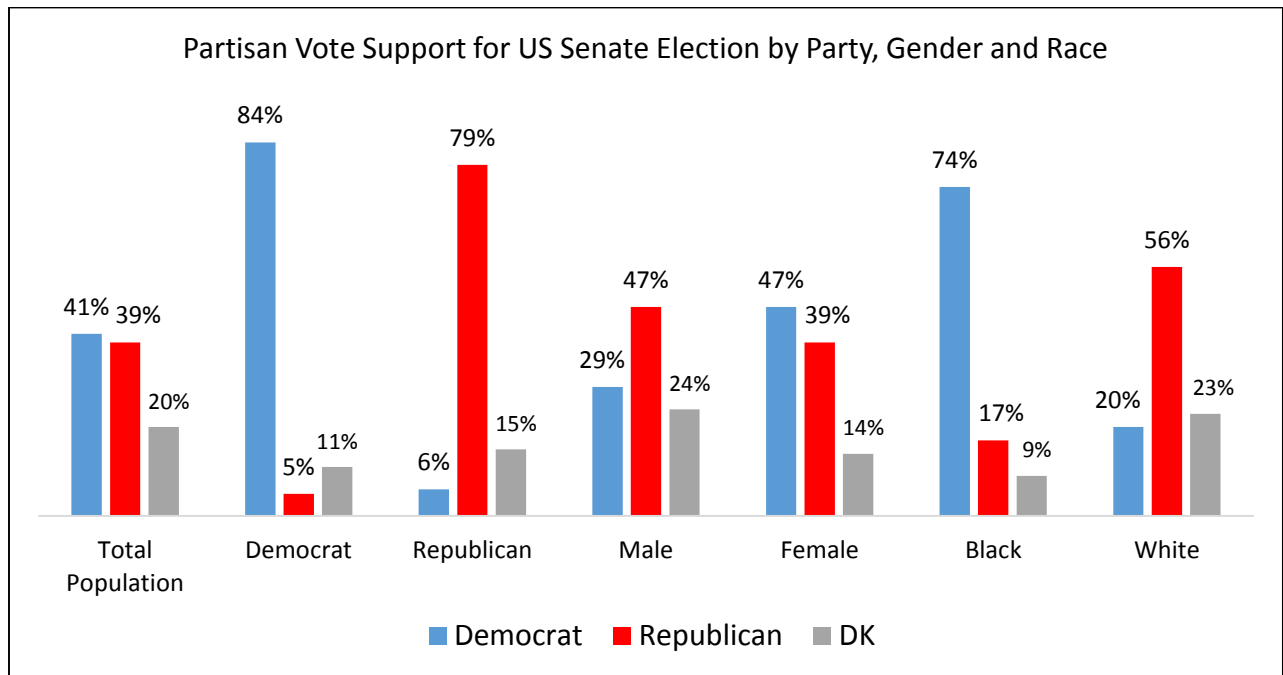
Legislature Favorability Rating by Budget Crisis and Blame for Budget Crisis

	Budget Crisis				Blame for Budget Crisis			
	Yes	No	DK		Jindal	Legislature	Edwards	Something Else/Other
	%	%	%		%	%	%	%
Favorable	14	18	19		17	5	21	19
Unfavorable	54	68	32		45	74	21	43
DK	32	15	49		38	21	58	38
(N)	500	68	63		308	156	24	74

We analyzed how attitudes towards the budget situation influenced the favorability evaluations of John Bel Edwards and the state legislature. The question of whether Louisiana was facing a budget crisis appeared to influence evaluations of Edwards and the legislature. For instance, respondents who answered affirmatively to the question of whether there was a budget crisis tended to give the benefit of the doubt to Edwards and were more likely to rate him favorably. Not so with the legislature. A majority of people who believed there was a budget crisis expressed an unfavorable opinion of the institution. The respondents who said there was no crisis were highly critical of Edwards with 72% of them rating him unfavorably. In fact, those people who believed that there was no crisis held both the governor and the legislature in low esteem.

The assignment of blame for the dire budget situation also appears to have affected how Edwards and the legislature were evaluated. The data indicates that former governor Bobby Jindal is lending a helping hand to Edwards' favorability ratings. Those people who hold Jindal responsible for the budget crisis gave the current governor a 70% favorable rating. Not surprisingly, the small percentage of respondents who blamed the governor for the state's fiscal crisis were highly negative in their appraisal of him. As for how the legislature was evaluated, nearly one-half of those people who blamed Jindal for the state's fiscal troubles had an unfavorable view of the legislature. And, of course, three-quarters of those respondents who assigned responsibility to the legislature expressed an unfavorable opinion of lawmakers.

Senate Race



Louisiana will hold a US Senate election in November 2016 with no incumbent in the race. Survey respondents were asked if the election were held today, would they vote for a Democrat, Republican, or didn't they know. Overall 41% of respondents said they will vote for a Republican, 39% reported they will vote for a Democrat, and 20% still had not decided who they would support. The results break down along traditional fault lines in Louisiana elections. Self-identified Democrats would overwhelmingly vote for a Democratic candidate while self-identified Republicans would strongly support their party's candidate. Men leaned decisively toward the Republican Senate candidate while women were more likely to support the Democratic candidate. Three-quarters of African-Americans reported they would vote for the Democratic candidate while a surprisingly high number said they would support the Republican in the Senate election. Whites were nearly three times more likely to say they will vote for the Republican candidate than for the Democratic candidate.

Age

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid 18 to 29	115	18.3	18.6	18.6
30 to 49	202	31.9	32.6	51.3
50 to 64	172	27.3	27.9	79.2
65 and over	129	20.4	20.8	100.0
Total	618	97.9	100.0	
Missing System	13	2.1		
Total	631	100.0		

Gender

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Male	267	42.3	45.2	45.2
Female	323	51.2	54.8	100.0
Total	590	93.5	100.0	
Missing System	41	6.5		
Total	631	100.0		

Race

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Black	184	29.1	31.3	31.3
White	375	59.5	64.0	95.3
Something else	28	4.4	4.7	100.0
Total	587	92.9	100.0	
Missing System	45	7.1		
Total	631	100.0		

SURVEY SCRIPT

INTRO: “This is a confidential LP Community Opinion Survey of Louisiana Voters. It will take less than 90 seconds. Here is the first question-“

Q1-Do you think there is a state budget crisis in Louisiana?

Press 1 for yes press 2 for no press 3 for don’t know

(If no, go to question Q3)

Q2-Who is to blame for the budget crisis, Bobby Jindal, The LA Legislature, John Bel Edwards, Something else?

For Jindal press 1/For the legislature press 2 /For Gov. John Bel Edwards press 3/For something else press 4

Q3-How do you view the state legislature?

Press 1 for favorably Press 2 for Unfavorably Press 3 for don’t know

Q4-How do you view Gov. John Bel Edwards?

Press 1 for favorably Press 2 for Unfavorably Press 3 for don’t know

Q5-If the election for US Senate was today, would you vote for a Democrat or Republican?

Democrat Press 1 Republican Press 2 Don’t Know Press 3

Q6-What is your age?

18-29 Press 1 30-49 press 2 50-64 Press 3 65 or older Press 4

Q7-Do you consider yourself to be a Democrat, Republican or something else?

Democrat Press 1 Republican Press 2 Something Else Press 3

Q8-Are you male or female?

Male Press 1 Female Press 2

Q9-Are you black or white or something else?

Black Press 1 White Press 2 Something Else press 3

Q10-This is the last question. Is your Household Income higher or lower than \$45,000?

Press 1 for higher Press 2 for Lower Press 3 for don’t know