

LSU Releases 2010 Louisiana Survey

04/05/2010 11:45 AM



[Full Report Available Online](#)

BATON ROUGE – The 2010 Louisiana Survey, released last week, provides key insight into public opinion about the direction of the state and the economy as well as evaluations of government services and public preferences for addressing state budget shortfalls. Sponsored by LSU's Reilly Center for Media & Public Affairs, the Louisiana Survey was established in 2002 to serve as a barometer of statewide public opinion.

The 2010 Louisiana Survey includes 913 randomly selected respondents, including 510 landline telephone respondents and 403 cell phone respondents. The survey was conducted from Feb. 1 to March 21 and has margin of error of plus/minus 3.2 percentage points. A full copy of the report can be obtained at www.survey.lsu.edu.

“As an organization that works on behalf of the public as a government watchdog, the annual LA Survey is a valuable tool for advancing informed policy deliberation,” said Barry Erwin, president of the Council for a Better Louisiana

The value of the survey resides in its ability to track changes over time as well as capture the contemporary political environment.

“This is a year defined by stability in public opinion rather than dramatic shifts,” said Kirby Goidel, Senior Public Policy Fellow in the Reilly Center for Media & Public Affairs and director of the Louisiana Survey. “Even so, we see important movement on a number of core questions.”

The percentage of residents saying state business conditions have gotten worse over the past year declined from 51 percent in 2009 to 44 percent in 2010. The percentage saying national business conditions have gotten worse declined from 79 percent to 61 percent. While these are substantial movements in the positive direction, more respondents say state and national business conditions have gotten worse than say state and national business conditions have gotten better.

Joblessness in Louisiana is lower than the national average; however, when asked if Louisiana's unemployment rate was better, worse or about the same as the national unemployment rate, 21 percent said it was worse, 20 percent said it was about the same and 12 percent did not know or were unsure. Forty-seven percent said it was better

When asked whether there are plenty of jobs or whether jobs are difficult to find, 75 percent of respondents said jobs were difficult to find. When asked to compare job opportunities in Louisiana relative to other states and regions, 48 percent of respondents said job opportunities were better in other states, while 38 percent said job opportunities were better in Louisiana.

This piece of economic knowledge has important implications; respondents who recognize that the unemployment rate is better in Louisiana than in the nation are more likely to see greater job opportunities in their local community and relative to other states and regions.

When it comes to the state budget, the public is reluctant to cut spending or increase taxes.

Louisiana residents are not single-mindedly anti-tax and indeed show great reluctance to cut government spending.

When asked how to address the current budget shortfall, a majority of respondents – 51 percent – prefers some combination of spending cuts and tax increases. A substantial minority – 41 percent – favors only cutting spending, while 3 percent favors only raising taxes. Over the past year, the percent preferring some combination of spending cuts and tax increases – as opposed to spending cuts or tax increases alone – increased by 10-points, suggesting that the public recognizes the prospect of looming budget shortfalls and the need to raise revenue to balance the state budget.

Majorities of 67.4 percent, 62.9 percent and 55.9 percent are opposed to cutting health care, primary and secondary education and state colleges and universities, respectively. Substantial percentages of 48.8 and 45.5 percent also prefer making no cuts to state roads and transportation or vocational and workforce training.

Even in areas respondents express a greater willingness to cut – incentives for economic development and environmental regulation – the preference is for minor as opposed to major spending cuts.

Louisianans are split evenly on the question of whether existing budget cuts have gone too far or not far enough: 40 percent of respondents say budget cuts have gone too far, while 41 percent say budget cuts have not gone far enough, with the remainder saying budget cuts were about right or unsure if cuts have gone too far. Despite this split, substantial majorities say they are very or somewhat concerned about the effect of budget cuts on the two areas of government spending that bear the brunt of any budgetary shortfall – higher education and health care.

Eighty-five percent of respondents said they were very or somewhat concerned that budget cuts would affect the quality of academic programs in state colleges and universities, and 88 percent expressed concern that existing cuts would affect the quality of public health care.

The survey finds majority support for “sin taxes” on tobacco, 68 percent; alcoholic beverages, 71 percent; and gaming, 78 percent, with limited support for taxes on higher earning individuals and households – 53 percent. Those findings parallel the 2009 survey results.

When asked whether they would support an increase in taxes on gas and oil, less than 10 percent of respondents said yes; but if tax revenue is specifically dedicated to improving state roads, highways and other infrastructure, that support increases from under 10 percent to 55 percent.

Since 2009 the percentage of respondents saying they were very or somewhat confident state government will effectively address the most important problem declined from 65 percent to 54 percent. Current confidence numbers are on par with pre-Katrina levels.

About the Survey: The 2010 Louisiana Survey includes a traditional landline telephone survey combined with a survey of Louisiana cell phone users. Respondents are randomly selected, and the data have been carefully weighted to account for the higher probability of selection of dual users, respondents with both a landline telephone and a cell phone. In addition, all the results are weighted to reflect current population estimates as reflected in the 2008 American Community Survey and current estimates of the cell phone only population provided by National

Health Interview Survey. The combined survey includes 913 respondents including 510 respondents selected from landline telephone numbers selected via random digit dialing and 403 respondents selected from available cell phone blocks. Landline telephone interviews were conducted from Feb. 2 to March 1, while the cell phone interviews were conducted from March 1 to March 21. The overall survey has a margin of error of plus/minus 3.2 percentage points, and the landline survey has a margin of error of plus/minus 4.3 percentage points. Response rates for the landline and cell phone survey were 24.3 percent and 9.8 percent respectively.

- 30 -

[Billy Gomila](#)
LSU Media Relations
225-578-3867