



CRITICAL INSIGHTS

RESEARCH FOR PRECISE PRAGMATIC DIRECTION

Critical Insights on Maine[™] Tracking Survey

~ Spring 2009 ~

Residents' Views on Politics, the Economy
& Issues Facing the State of Maine

Focus Groups • Surveys • Public Opinion Polling

120 Exchange Street, Portland, Maine 04101

Telephone: 207-772-4011 • Fax: 207-772-7027

www.criticalinsights.com



Background & Survey Method

- Each Spring and Fall, Critical Insights conducts the *Critical Insights on Maine™* Tracking Survey, a comprehensive, statewide public opinion survey of registered voters which covers a variety of topics of interest to business, government and the general public.
 - In addition to general interest items (the results of which are released to the media as a public service), the survey also includes a number of proprietary items included on behalf of sponsoring entities, with results of those items released only to the sponsors.
- For the current wave of the study, Critical Insights completed a total of 601 random telephone interviews across the state between May 14, 2009 and May 20, 2009.
 - With a sample of 601 interviews, results presented here have an associated margin of error of ± 3.4 percentage points at the 90% confidence level, or ± 4.0 percentage points at the 95% confidence level.
 - All interviews were conducted with self-reported registered voters; final data was statistically weighted according to relevant demographics to reflect the voter base in Maine.
 - On average, the entire survey instrument – including general interest items and all subscriber questions – was 17 minutes in administrative length.
 - Initial refusal rates for the study were approximately 2% overall, indicating that the sample was not tainted by non-response error.
- This document presents results of general interest questions which Critical Insights makes public to the media.
 - Where appropriate, comparisons of current results are made with findings from past iterations of the *Critical Insights on Maine™* Tracking Survey.



*Issues Facing Maine &
Perceptions of the Economy*



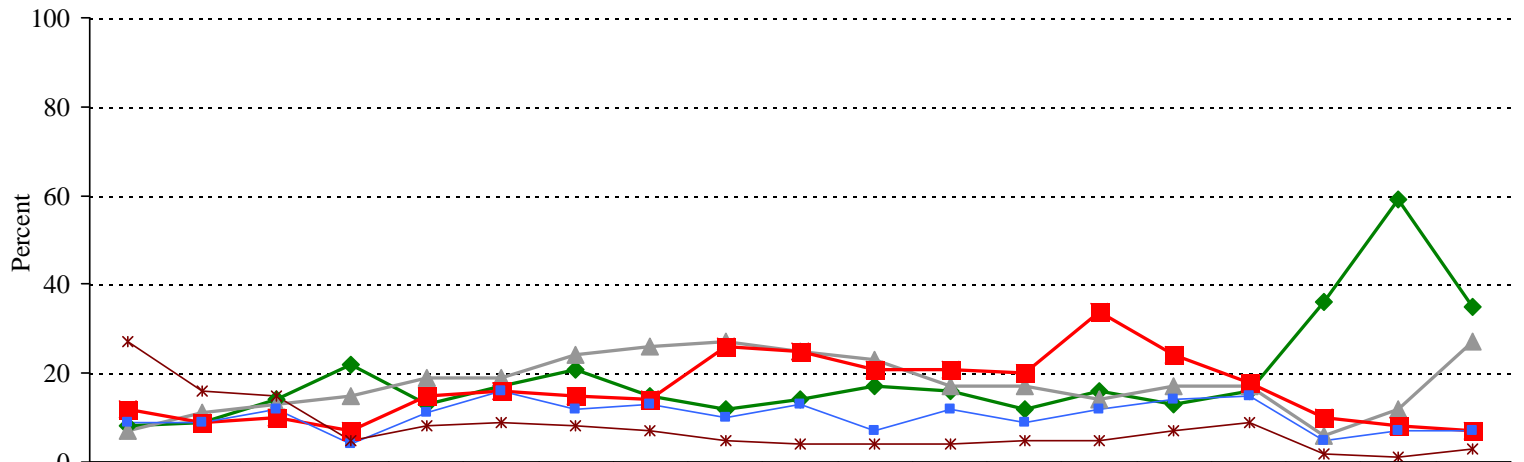
Issues Facing the State of Maine

- Though the **economy** continues to be an issue of paramount concern for many Maine residents, it has declined in top-of-mind issue salience since the Fall 2008 iteration of the *Critical Insights on MaineTM* Tracking Survey.
 - The October 2008 survey measured the highest level of concern to date regarding the economy, with a majority of residents (6-in-10) saying the **economy** was the issue of greatest concern to them.
 - Though still a worry to many Mainers, top-of-mind mentions of the **economy** have declined significantly compared to six months ago, with just over one-third of residents now citing the economy as their chief concern.
- However, worries about general economic woes have been supplanted by specific concerns regarding **unemployment**; indeed top-of-mind mentions of unemployment have nearly doubled since the last *Critical Insights on MaineTM* Tracking Survey, with more than one-quarter of residents now citing this as their chief concern.
 - When those who cited the **economy** were combined with those residents who mentioned **unemployment**, economic-themed issues continue to dominate residents' top-of-mind concerns, with more than 6-in-10 Mainers citing one of these two economic issues as the primary issue facing the state today.
- Not surprising, with the overall broader economic situation taking precedence, other issues have declined in comparative importance:
 - Top-of-mind citations of issues such as **high taxes**, **healthcare** and **education** remained consistent from the fall iteration of the survey, with fewer than 1-in-10 residents citing taxes and healthcare, and only 3% mentioning education.



Residents' Perceptions of Key Issues Facing Maine

In your opinion, what is the most important issue facing Maine today?



	Spring '00	Fall '00	Spring '01	Fall '01	Spring '02	Fall '02	Spring '03	Fall '03	Spring '04	Fall '04	Spring '05	Fall '05	Spring '06	Fall '06	Spring '07	Fall '07	Spring '08	Fall '08	Spring '09
◆ Economy	8	9	14	22	13	17	21	15	12	14	17	16	12	16	13	16	36	59	35
▲ Unemployment	7	11	13	15	19	19	24	26	27	25	23	17	17	14	17	17	6	12	27
■ Taxes	12	9	10	7	15	16	15	14	26	25	21	21	20	34	24	18	10	8	7
■ Health care	9	9	12	4	11	16	12	13	10	13	7	12	9	12	14	15	5	7	7
* Education	27	16	15	5	8	9	8	7	5	4	4	4	5	5	7	9	2	1	3



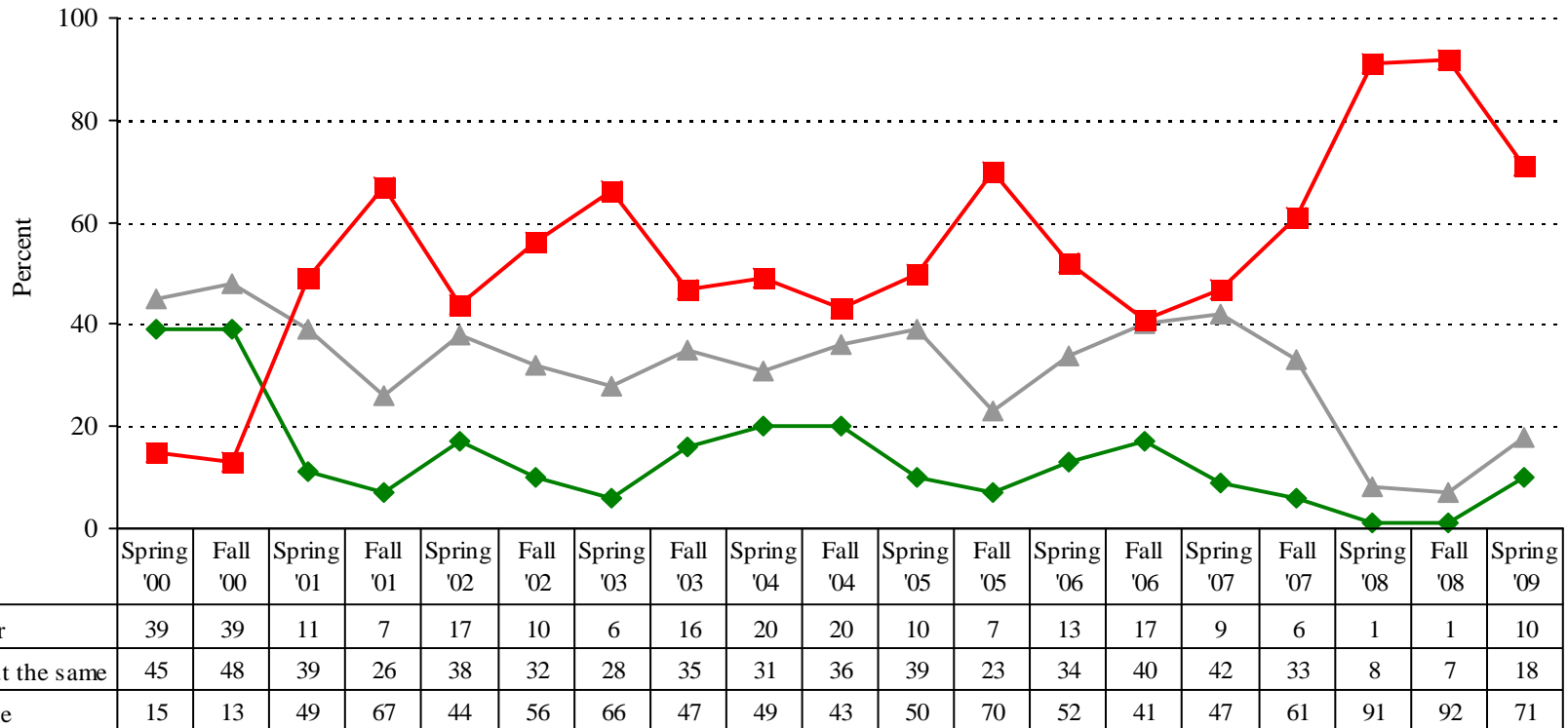
Maine Residents' Views on the Economy

- Notably, the economic climate is viewed more favorably than it was a year ago.
 - When the *Critical Insights on Maine™* Tracking Survey was administered in the Spring and Fall of 2008, more than 9-in-10 residents described the economy as worse than it was in the previous 12 months; in the present survey only 7-in-10 residents in the present survey described the present economy as being worse than it was a year ago.
 - Similarly, only a scant few residents in the last two polls saw the economy as being better than it was a year prior; in the current iteration of the *Critical Insights on Maine™* Tracking Survey, 1-in-10 Mainers see the economy as being better than it was a year ago.
 - Views broke clearly across political party lines, with registered Republicans being significantly more likely than either Democrats or Independents to view the economy as worse than it was 12 months ago.
- Interestingly, it appears possible that Mainers perhaps feel the economy has bottomed-out and has no where to go but up; indeed, residents' outlook on the economy is more positive than it has been in the last seven years.
 - Currently, close to half of residents said they think the economy will improve in the next 12 months. This is three times the proportion of residents who responded similarly a year ago in the Spring 2008 measurement.
 - In the current survey, the proportion of residents (24%) who believe the economy will worsen over the next 12 months also declined significantly from highs seen a year ago when more than half of residents said they believed the economy would erode in the next year.



Residents' Perceptions of the Current State of the Economy

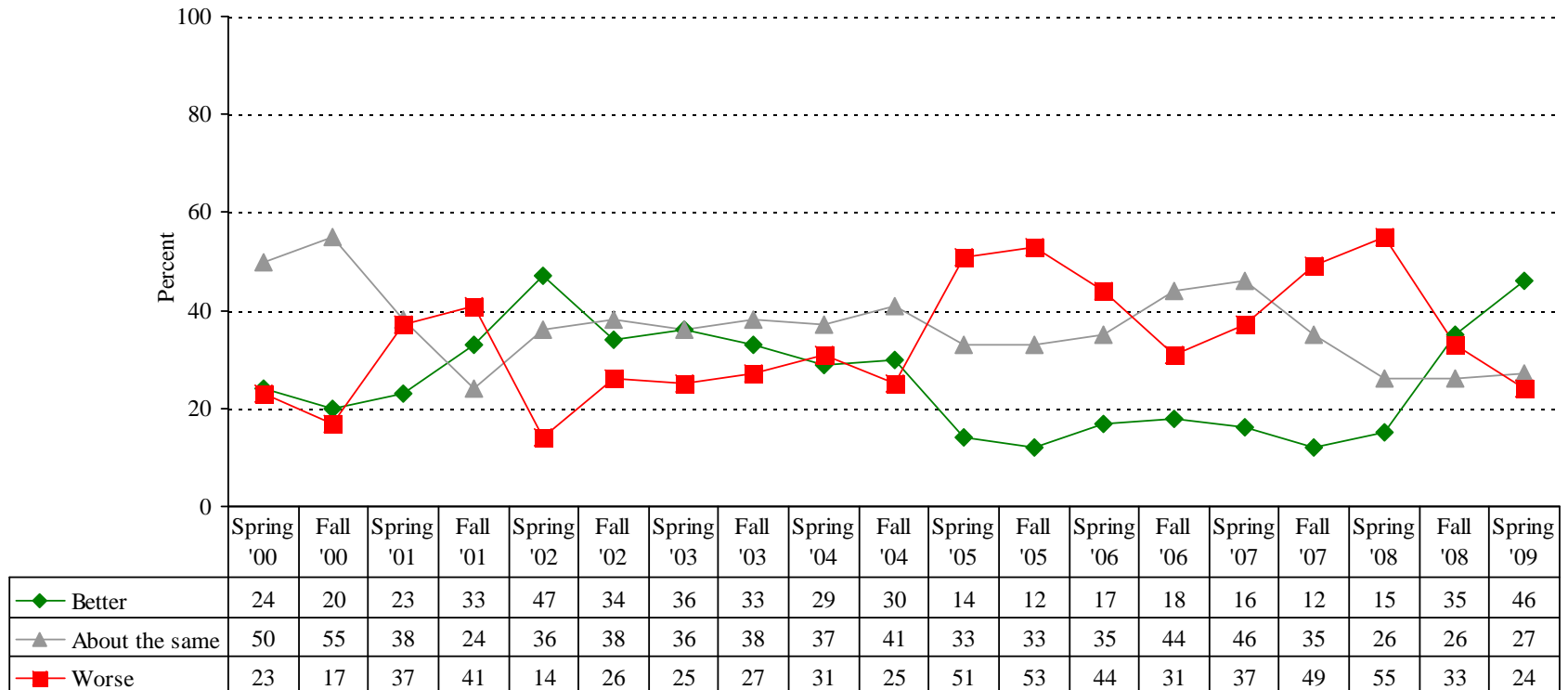
Compared with 12 months ago, how would you describe the overall status of the economy? Would you say it is...





Residents' Perceptions on the Future State of the Economy

Now think about the future of the economy. In the next 12 months, do you think the economy will be . . .





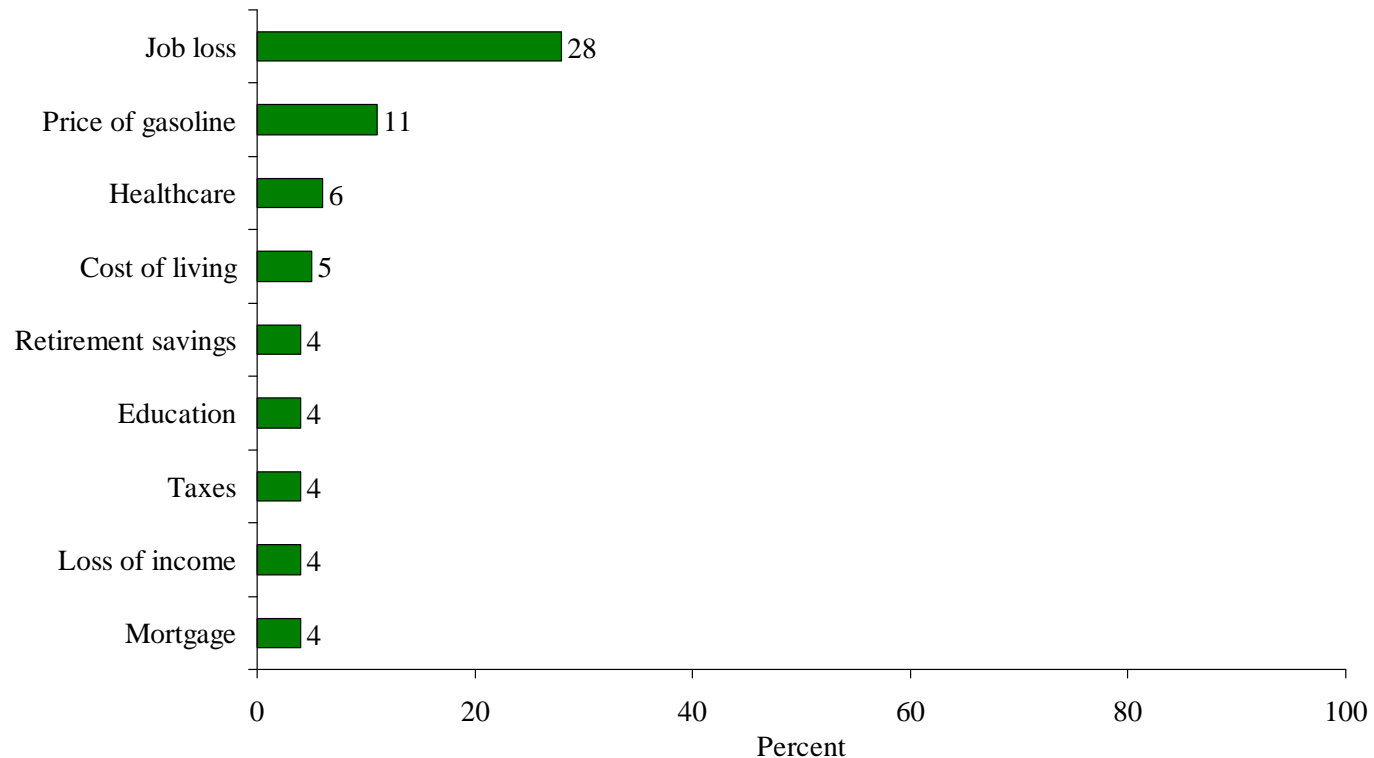
Views on Economic Problem of Greatest Concern and the Current Recession

- When asked what personal economic or financial situation is of most concern over the next six months, more than one-quarter of Maine residents polled (28%) cited job loss.
 - Not surprisingly, this finding is consistent with the proportion of residents who cite ‘unemployment’ as the most important issue facing Maine today.
 - Notably, higher SES residents (socio-economic status, i.e. those with a college degree and residents making more than \$50K per year) were significantly more likely to view a job loss as the economic or financial issue of greatest personal concern to them.
- When asked to rate their level of concern about a potential job loss in their household, one-third of residents said they were concerned that in the next 12 months someone in their immediate household would lose their job.
 - This finding is trending consistently with results from the Fall 2008 survey, when about 3-in-10 residents said they were concerned about job loss striking their household.
 - Though they rated it their chief economic concern, higher wage earners were significantly more likely to be less concerned about a personal or familial job loss, while lower wage earners were significantly more likely to rate themselves as “very concerned”.
 - This appears partly due to these lower income residents also frequently citing daily living expenditures – such as the price of gasoline, utilities and healthcare – as their chief economic concern; clearly, a job loss would exacerbate these worries.



Economic Problem of Greatest Concern

As you think about the next 6 months what economic or financial situation concerns you the MOST?

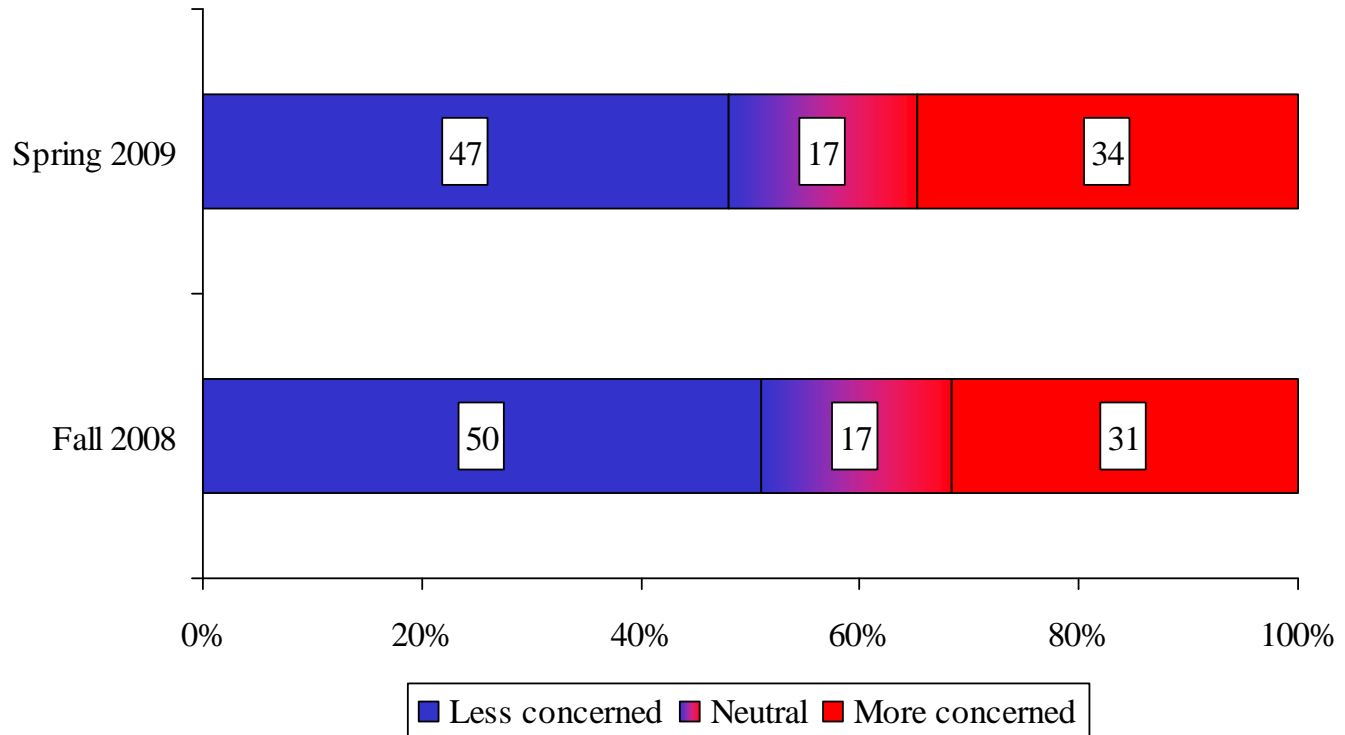


* Source:



Employment Concerns Among Maine Residents

How concerned are you that in the next 12 months you or someone else in your household might be out of work and looking for a job?





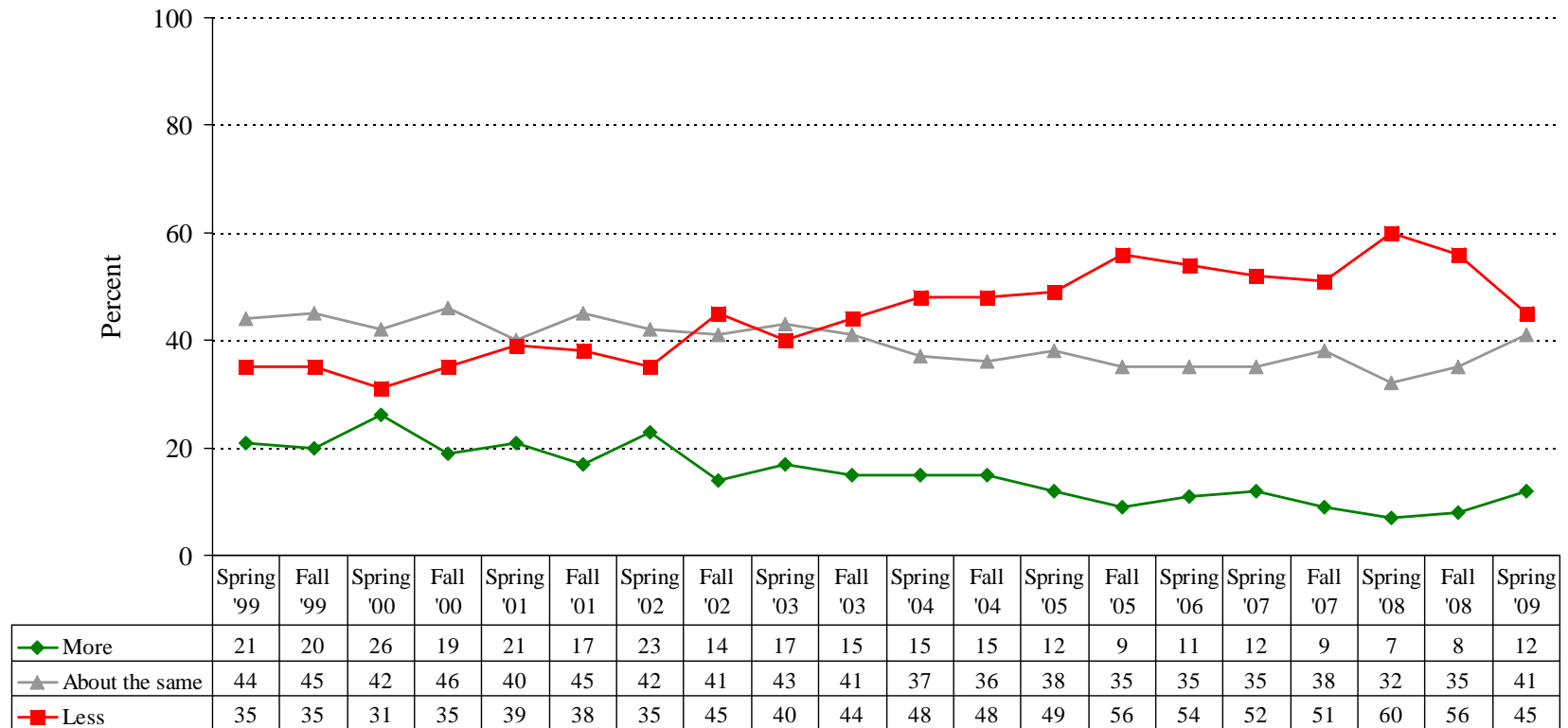
Maine Residents' Personal Household Financial Situation

- The continuing challenges of the economy are also evident in Maine residents' ability to save, a key indicator of personal and household financial health.
 - Indeed, as has been the case since 2000, a sizable gap continues to exist between the proportion of those who say they are saving more and those who are saving less; presently, 45% of Maine households polled are saving less than they were a year ago and just 12% are saving more
 - However, favorable trends are observed in this area relative to a year ago; presently, more than half of residents (53%) say they will be able to put more or about the same amount of money into savings, compared to 39% in the Spring 2008 iteration of the *Critical Insights on Maine™* Tracking Survey. A sizable decline in the proportion of Mainers who are saving less is also observed relative to a year ago; currently 45% are saying they're saving less, a 15 percentage-point drop from the level seen in the Spring of 2008 (60%).
 - Not surprisingly, however, this favorable trend is not extending into lower wage earning brackets, as residents earning less than \$50,000 per year continue to be significantly more likely to say they are putting less into personal savings.
- When compared to national trends, Maine residents are a bit more pessimistic than are residents across the rest of the U.S. when it comes to hypothesizing about the length of the current recession.
 - Indeed, fully six-in-ten Maine residents (compared to just over 4-in-10 residents nationally) think the recession will last a minimum of 2 years.
 - Pessimism about the length of the recession in Maine is most robust among lower SES residents, as well as those living in Northern or Central/Western Maine.



Household Economic Situation: Personal Savings

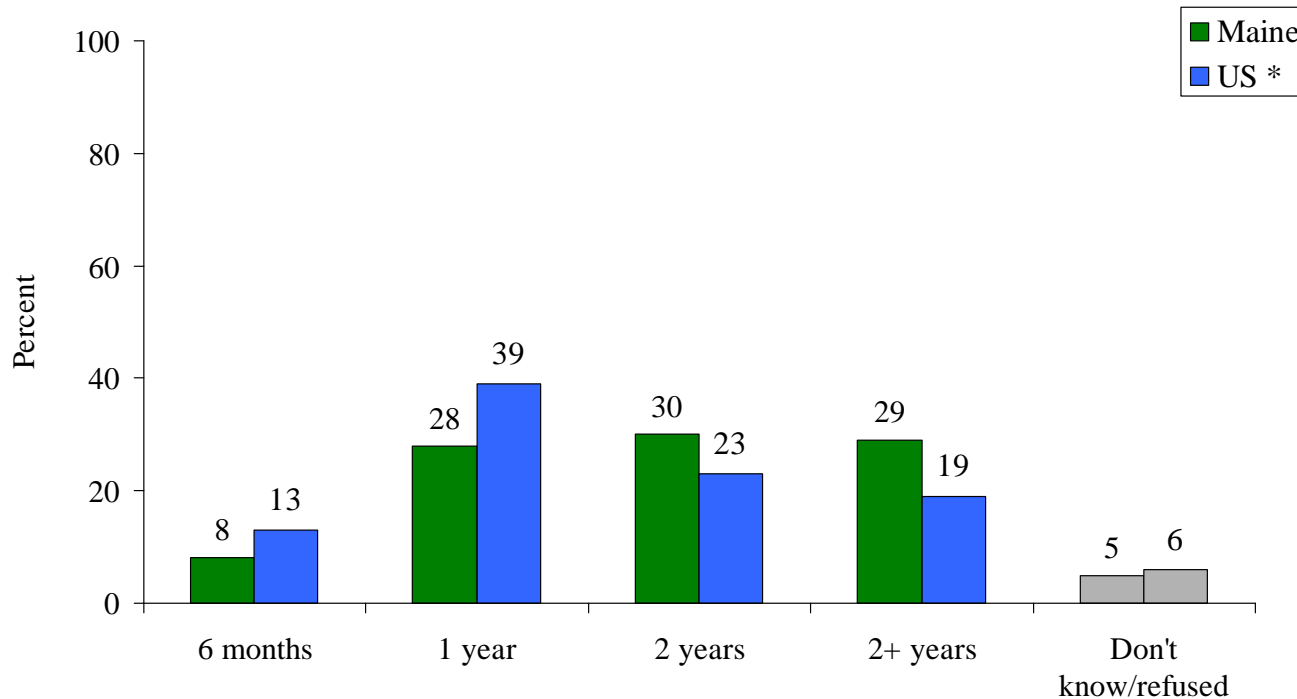
Compared to last year, would you say your household is putting more into personal savings, about the same amount, or saving less?





Opinions on Length of Current Recession: *Maine vs. U.S.*

How long do you think the current recession will last: six months, a year, 2 years, or more than 2 years?



* Source: CBS News Poll, May 6 – 12, 2009



*Observations on
National and State Politics*



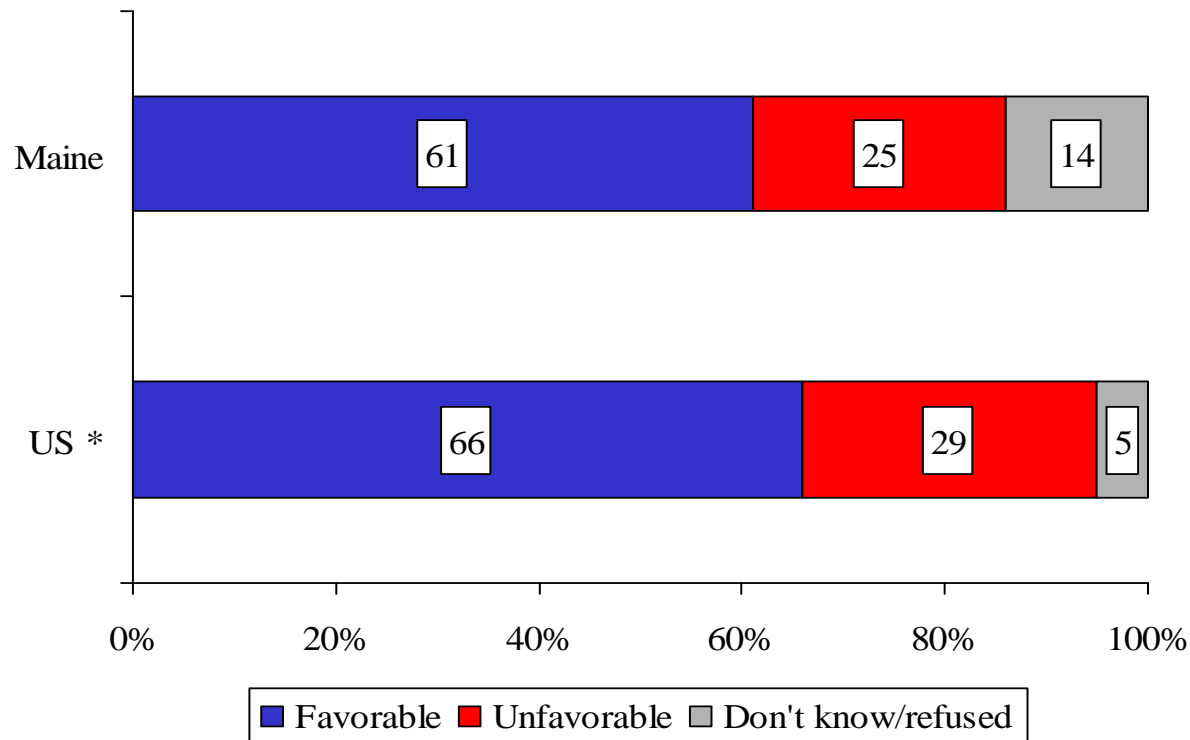
Maine Presidential and Congressional Approval Ratings

- While still strong, President Obama's favorability rating is slightly lower among Maine residents than it is for the rest of the country, with two-thirds of U.S. residents (vs. 6-in-10 Maine residents) saying their opinion of the President is favorable.
 - Not surprisingly, registered Democrats are even more likely to have a positive opinion of the President, with close to 9-in-10 Democrats saying their opinion is favorable. Additionally, residents who said that the most important issue facing Maine was Healthcare were significantly more likely to have a favorable opinion of Barack Obama; indeed, non-in-10 said their opinion of President Obama was favorable.
 - Differences were also observed across gender lines with close to three-quarters of women (vs. just half of men) noting that their opinion of the President as favorable.
- Conversely, approval ratings for each party in Congress were somewhat higher in the state of Maine than in the nation as a whole.
 - While only 4-in-10 U.S. residents say they have a favorable opinion of congressional Democrats, 45% of Maine residents cited their opinion as favorable.
 - As for Republicans in Congress, while only 12% of U.S. residents said their opinion was favorable, more than a quarter of Maine residents said they had a favorable opinion of the Republicans in Congress.
 - Not surprisingly, the opinions expressed varied widely across party lines: Maine Democrats were more than four times as likely to have a favorable opinion of congressional Democrats than were Republicans. Meanwhile, Republicans here in Maine were twice as likely to have a favorable opinion of congressional Republicans than were Democrats.



Presidential Favorability Ratings: *Maine vs. U.S.*

Do you have a favorable or unfavorable opinion of Barack Obama?

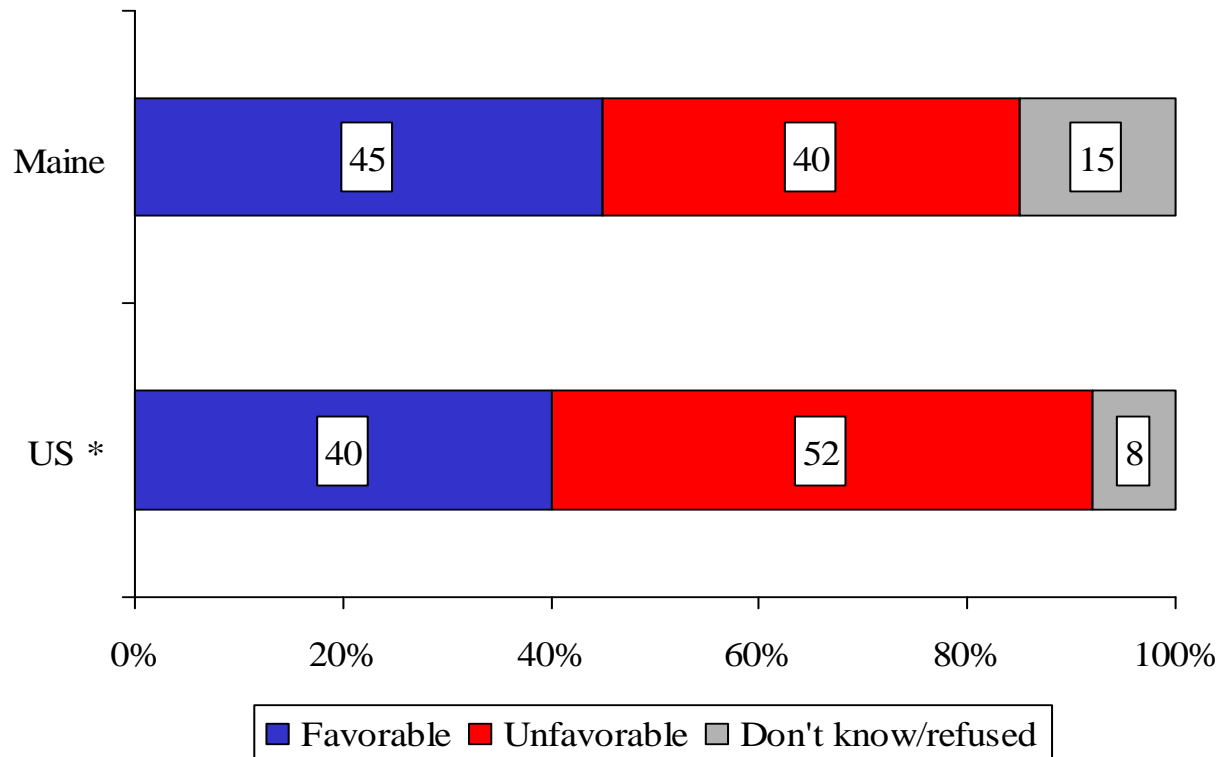


* Source: Daily Kos poll, May 18 – 21, 2009



Favorability Ratings for Congressional Democrats: *Maine vs. U.S.*

Do you have a favorable or unfavorable opinion of congressional Democrats?

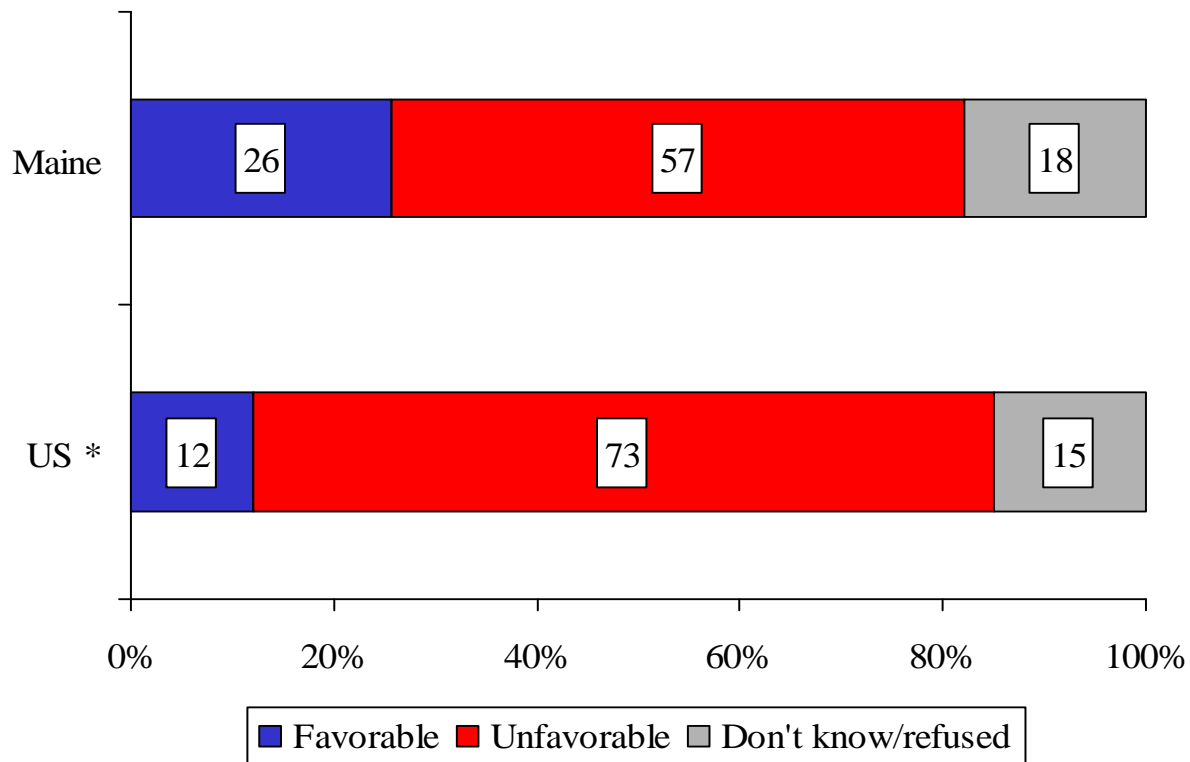


* Source: Daily Kos poll, May 18 – 21, 2009



Favorability Ratings for Congressional Republicans: *Maine vs. U.S.*

Do you have a favorable or unfavorable opinion of congressional Republicans?



* Source: Daily Kos poll, May 18 – 21, 2009



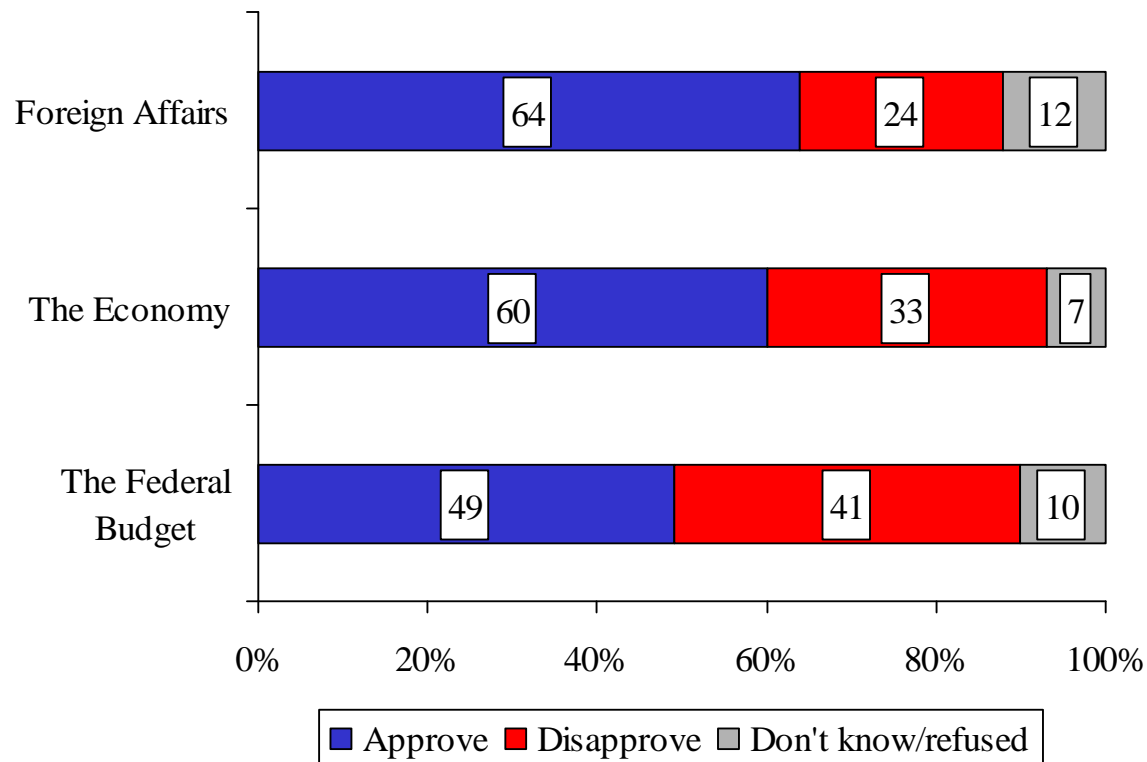
Maine Approval Ratings for President's Job Performance

- In general, Maine residents approve of the way President Obama is handling his job, with close to two-thirds approving of his handling of foreign affairs, 6-in-10 approving of his handling of the economy, and half endorsing his handling of the federal budget.
 - Notably, women were significantly more likely than were men to approve of the President's handling of each of these issues.
 - Again, sharp differences were seen along political party lines, with registered Republicans being more likely to disapprove of the President's job performance, particularly when it comes to the handling of the federal budget.
- Maine residents' approval ratings of the President's job performance were consistent with those of the residents nationally.



Maine Approval Ratings for President's Job Performance

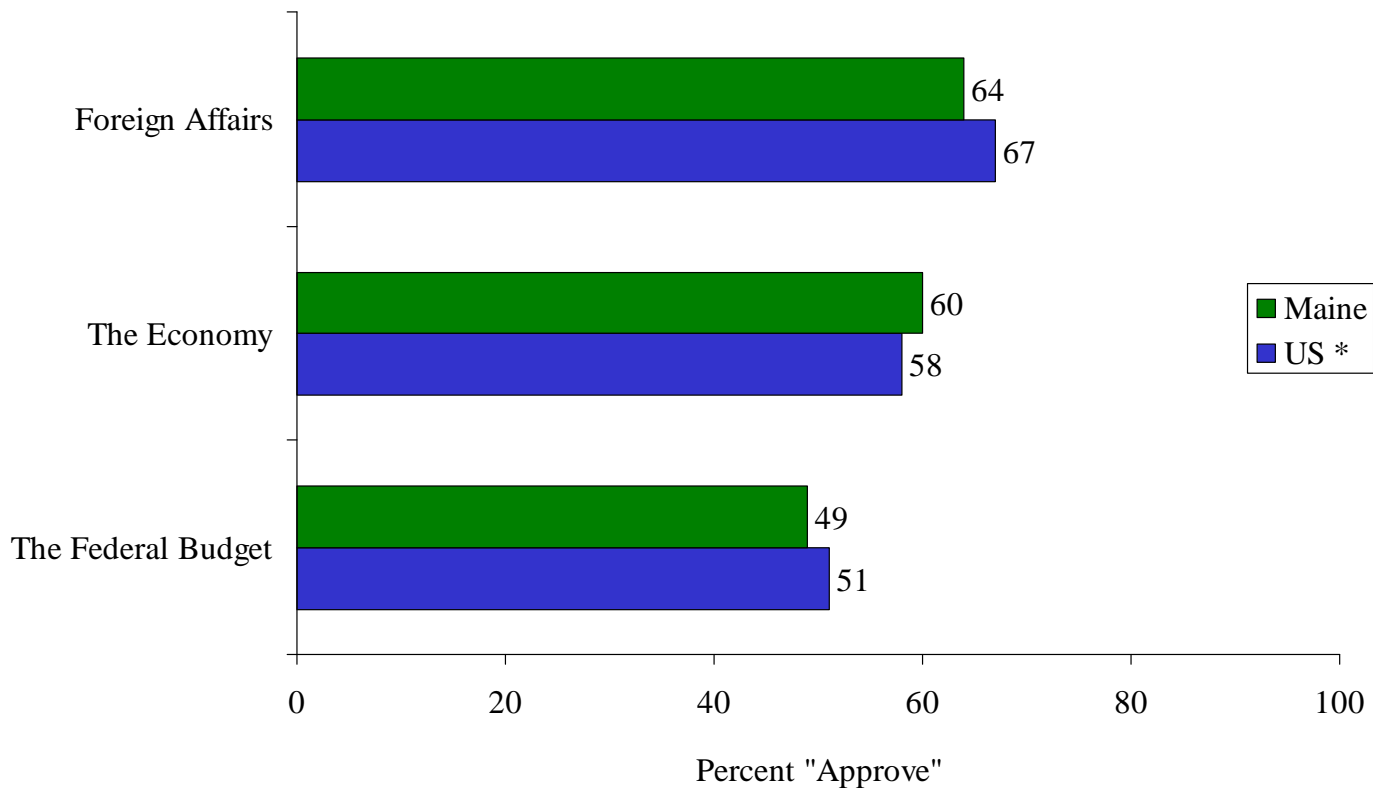
Do you approve or disapprove of the way Barack Obama is handling:





Approval Ratings for President's Job Performance: *Maine vs. U.S.*

Do you approve or disapprove of the way Barack Obama is handling:



* Source: ABC News/Washington Post poll, April 21 – 24, 2009



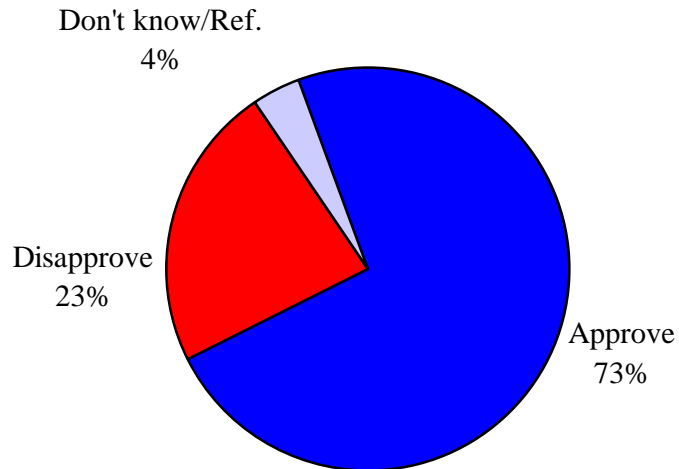
Approval Ratings for Maine Senators and House Representatives

- Overall, close to three-quarters of Maine residents approve of the way Sen. Susan Collins is handling her job.
 - Approval is especially pronounced among women, with fully 8-in-10 saying they approved of Senator Collins' job performance.
- Olympia Snowe also garners high approval ratings, with 7-in-10 residents saying they approve of the way she is handling her job in the U.S. Senate.
 - Again, approval is especially pronounced among women, with 8-in-10 giving Sen. Snowe their approval.
- Newly-elected Congresswoman Chellie Pingree's approval ratings were a bit lower, with fully 3-in-10 residents of the 1st congressional district responding 'don't know' when asked if they approve of her job performance.
 - While many residents of the 1st CD have not yet registered an opinion as she was just elected to Congress in 2008, Rep. Pingree does have the support of her fellow Democrats, with close to two-thirds saying they approve of her performance.
- More than half of residents of his CD (56%) said they approve of the job Congressman Michael Michaud is doing.
 - Again, support among Democrats was even more pronounced, with 8-in-10 saying they approve of his handling of his job.

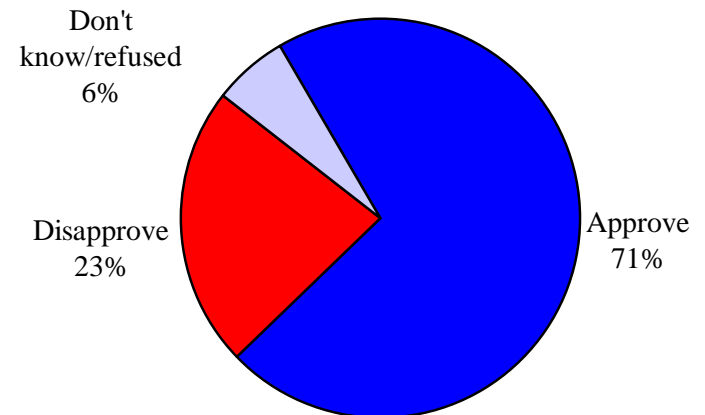


Maine Approval Ratings for State's Senators

In general, do you approve or disapprove of the way Senator Susan Collins is handling her job as U.S. Senator?



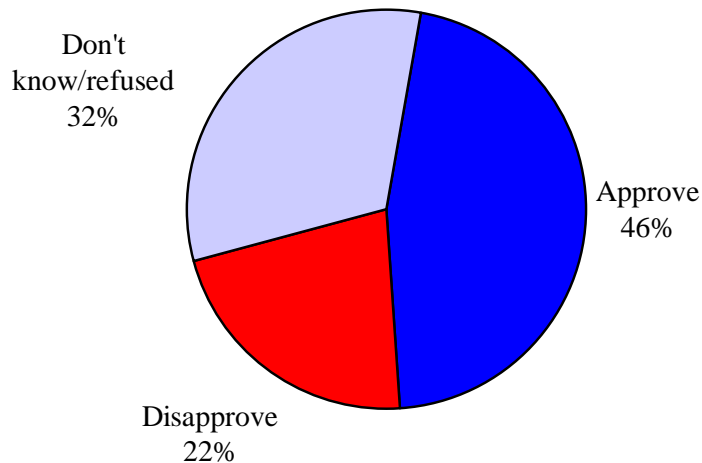
In general, do you approve or disapprove of the way Senator Olympia Snowe is handling her job as U.S. Senator?



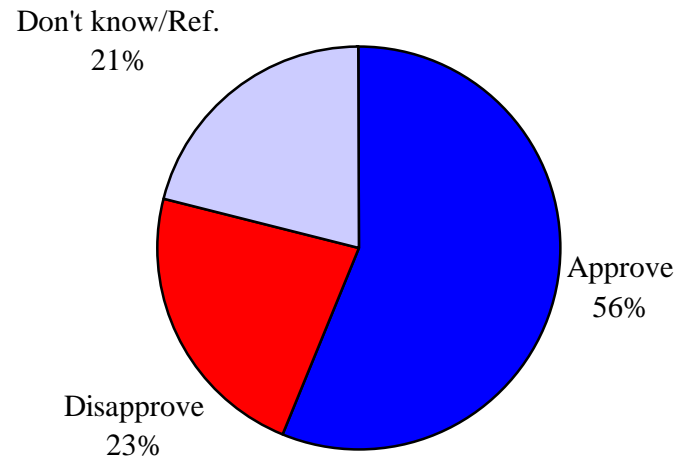


Maine Approval Ratings for State's House Representatives

*In general, do you approve or disapprove of the way Congresswoman Chellie Pingree is handling her job in the House of Representatives? **



In general, do you approve or disapprove of the way Congressman Michael Michaud is handling his job in the House of Representatives? ^



* Based on respondents who live in Maine's First Congressional District.

^ Based on respondents who live in Maine's Second Congressional District.



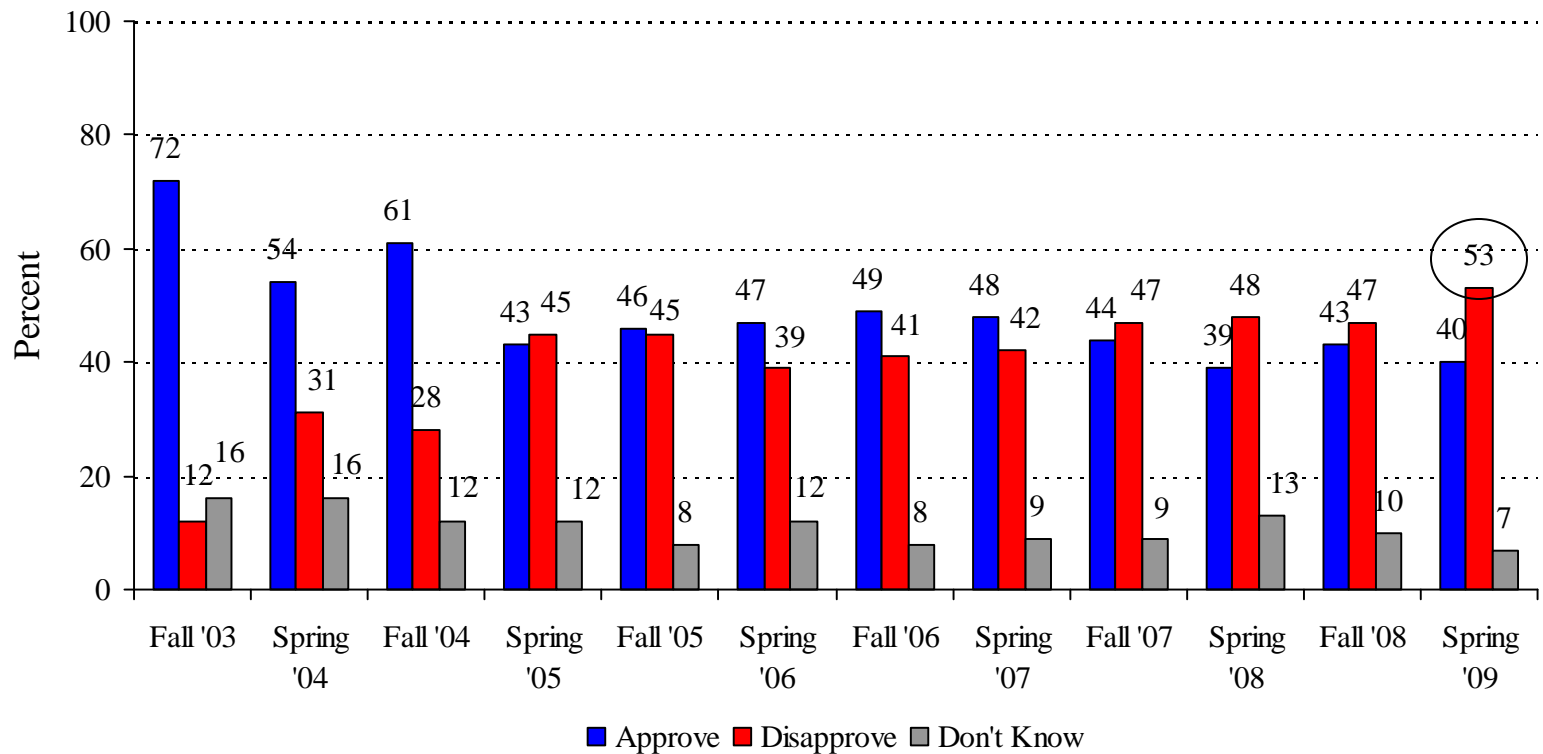
Approval Ratings for Governor John Baldacci

- Governor Baldacci's disapproval ratings continue to climb, and now more than half of Maine residents said they disapprove of the way he is handling his job.
 - Over the last three years, an increasingly negative trend has been observed in the proportion of Mainers expressing disapproval of how the Governor is handling his job.
 - Among demographic subgroups, men, residents of the 2nd CD and those with children at home were significantly more likely to say they disapprove of the way Governor Baldacci is handling his job.
 - Differences continue to be seen across party lines; currently, twice as many Republicans as Democrats said they disapprove of the job Gov. Baldacci is doing, and Independents were more likely to disapprove than approve of his job performance.
 - Also of note, residents who believe healthcare is most important issue facing Maine were significantly more likely to approve of the job Gov. Baldacci is doing, while residents who feel taxation is the most important issue facing Maine were significantly more likely to disapprove of the job the Governor is doing.



Residents' Approval Rating of Governor John Baldacci

In general, do you approve or disapprove of the way Governor Baldacci is handling his job as governor of Maine?





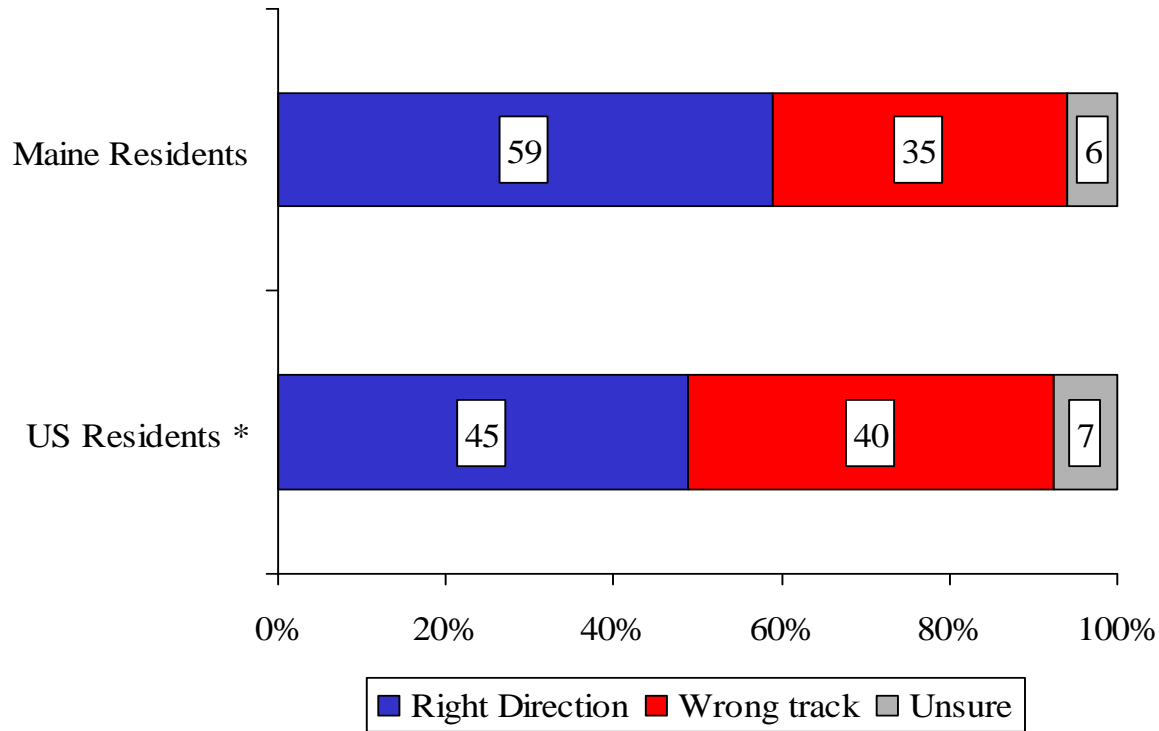
Mainers' Perspectives on the Direction of the State and of the Nation

- Overall, Maine residents appear to be a bit more optimistic than the rest of the country regarding the overall direction the U.S., with 6-in-10 Mainers (vs. 45% of residents nationally) saying the country is headed in the right direction.
 - Again, registered Democrats and Independents were significantly more likely than were Republicans to say the country is on the right track, while nearly two-thirds of Republicans said the country is on the wrong track.
- Notably, however, residents polled were much more pessimistic about the direction Maine is headed.
 - While fully 6-in-10 residents said the country was headed in the right directions, responses reversed when asked about the direction of the state, with 6-in-10 saying the state is on the wrong track.
 - As was seen in assessing the Governor's job performance, men, residents of the 2nd CD and those with children at home were significantly more likely to say they believe Maine is on the wrong track.



Direction of the Nation: *Maine vs. U.S.*

All in all, do you think things in the nation are generally headed in the right direction, or do you feel that things are off on the wrong track?

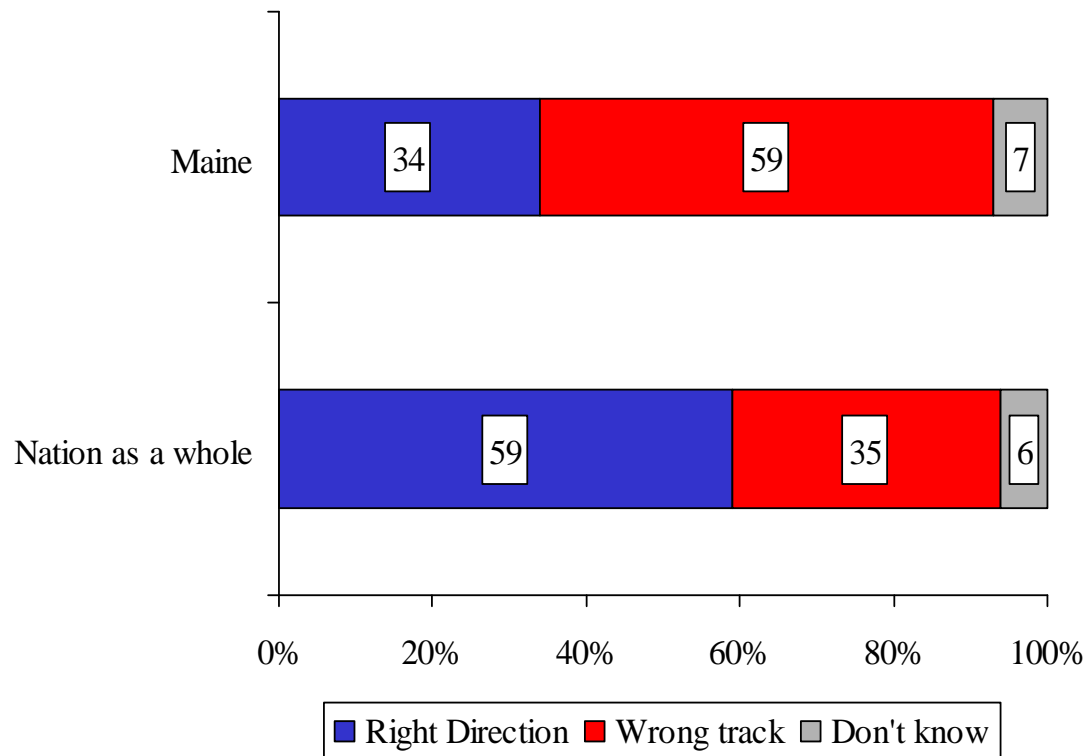


* Source CBS News Poll, May 6 – 12, 2009.



Residents' Perspectives on the Direction of the State of Maine vs. the United States

All in all, do you think things in Maine are generally headed in the right direction, or do you feel that things are off on the wrong track?





Referendum Issues



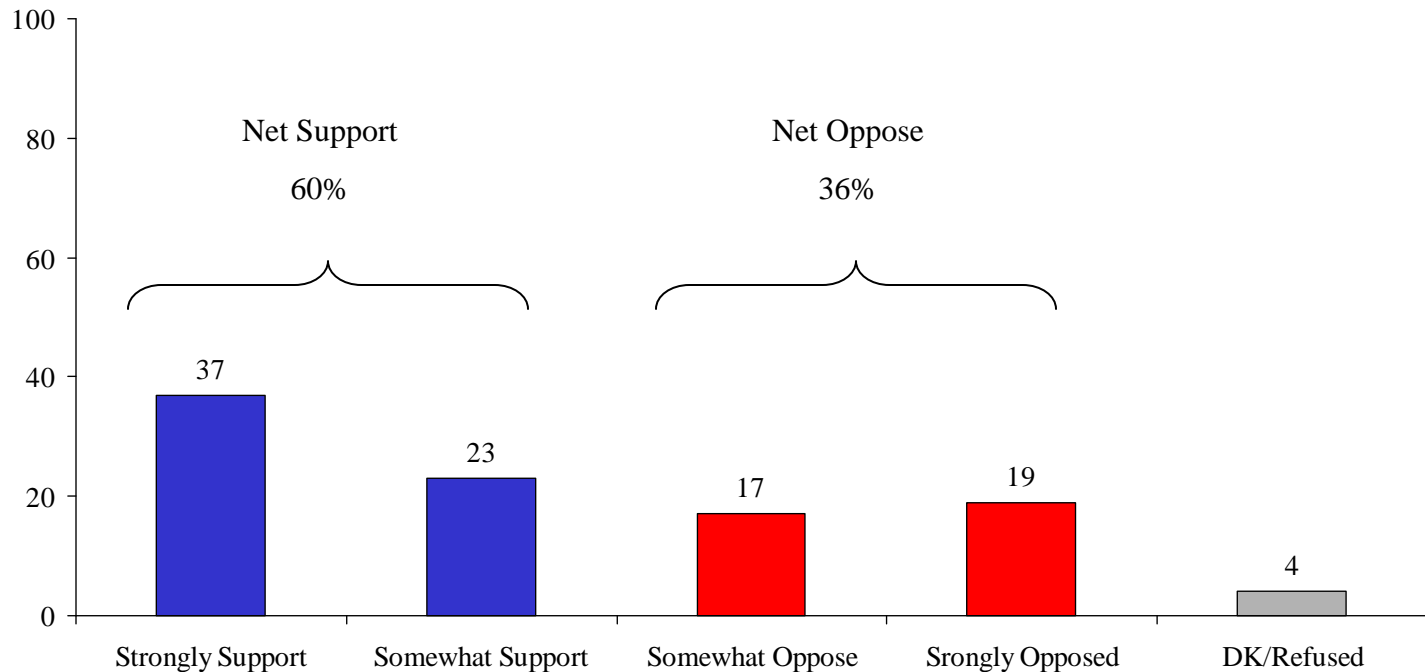
Residents' Perspectives on Proposed Referendum Issues

- Six-in-ten Maine residents said they would support a TABOR initiative which would require voter approval of state taxes and local property tax increases, and limit government spending increases to inflation plus population growth.
 - Though support of the referendum was consistent across most demographics, several differences were noted: though more than half of women polled said they support such an initiative, men were significantly more likely to support it; in addition, self-identified Republicans and Independents were significantly more likely than Democrats to support the initiative.
- Maine residents also support an initiative to cut the auto excise tax for all vehicles and eliminate sales tax for buying energy efficient vehicles, with two-thirds of residents stating they would support such an initiative.
 - Women, residents age 18-34, residents with children currently living in the household, and Democrats were most likely to support cutting the auto excise tax and eliminating sales tax for those who purchase energy efficient vehicles.
- Support for legislation that would allow the development of public charter schools in Maine was also high; currently, 7-in-10 residents say they would support such an initiative.
 - Notably, there was no breakdown across gender or political lines; men and women were equally likely to support this initiative, as were Democrats, Independents and Republicans.
 - Younger residents and residents with children still living in the household were significantly more likely to support legislation allowing for public charter schools.



Residents' Support of TABOR

*A Taxpayer Bill of Rights or TABOR initiative will appear on the November 2009 ballot. This initiative requires voter approval of state taxes and local property tax increases, and limits government spending increases to inflation plus population growth unless voters approve more spending. Do you support or opposed this ballot initiative? **

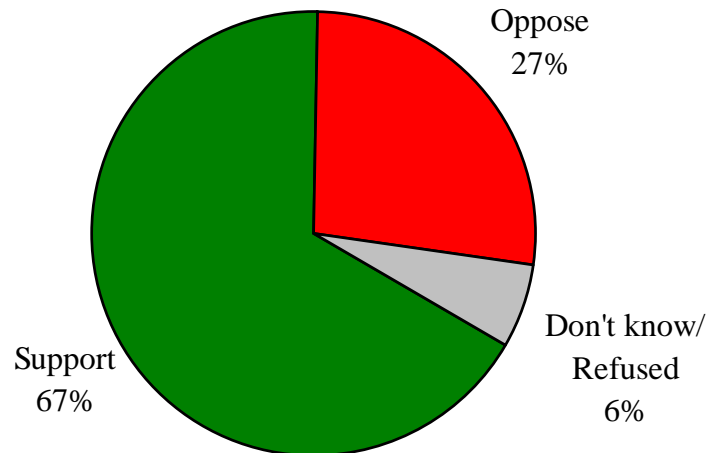


* Approximate wording. Proposed wording of Citizen's Initiative not available at time of survey administration



Residents' Support for Cuts to Maine's Auto Excise Tax

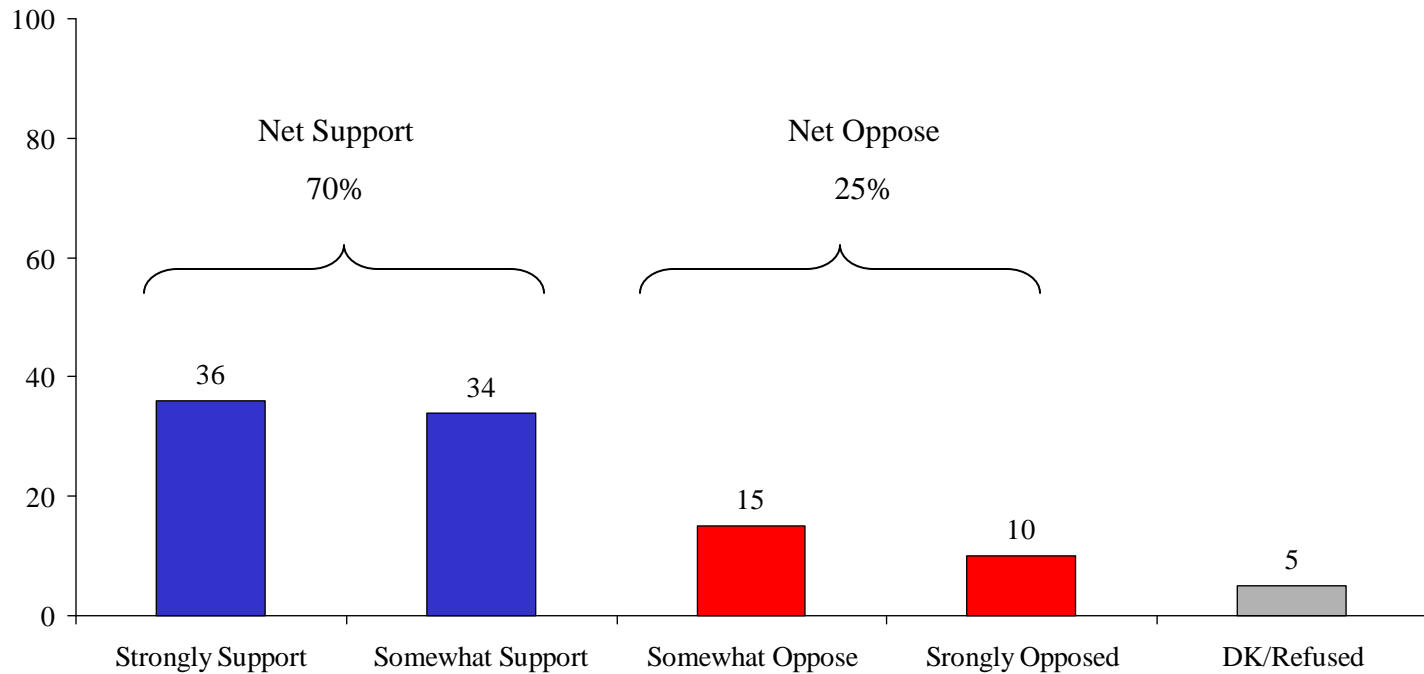
An initiative to cut Maine's auto excise tax in half for the first five years you register your vehicle, and completely eliminate the sales tax and first three years of auto excise tax for purchasing a new hybrid or energy efficient vehicle, including motorcycles, will be on the November 2009 ballot. Do you support or oppose this ballot initiative?





Residents' Support for School Choice in Maine

*Charter schools are public schools that have more control over their own budget, staff and curriculum, and are free from many existing public school regulations. In general how strongly would you support legislation allowing for the development of public charter schools in Maine? **



* Approximate wording. Proposed wording of Citizen's Initiative not available at time of survey administration



General Interest Observations



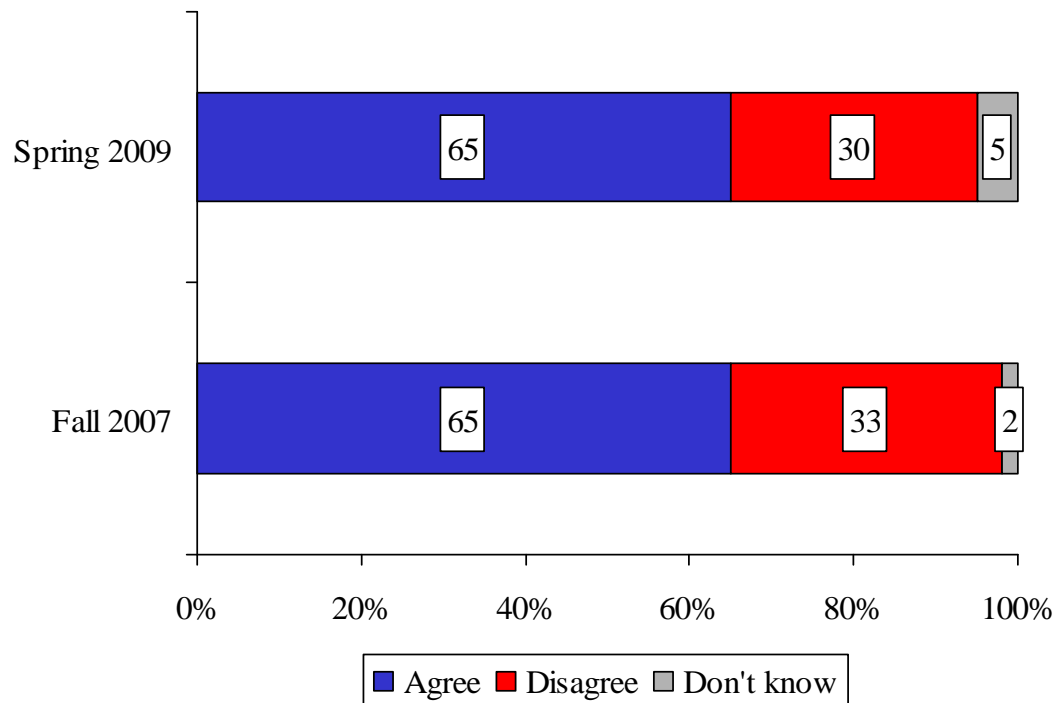
Residents' Perspectives on Quality of Life in Maine and Wind Farms

- Along with *Forbes* recently ranking Portland, Maine as the #1 place to live in the country, a strong majority of Maine residents from all regions of the state agree that living in Maine is '*The Way Life Should Be.*'
 - These results are consistent with those observed in the Fall 2007 iteration of the *Critical Insights on Maine™* Tracking Survey.
 - Currently, two-thirds of Maine residents polled said they agree with the sentiment of the slogan.
 - Residents age 65 and older and registered Democrats were even more likely to agree that living in Maine is indeed '*The Way Life Should Be.*'
- Also, when asked about support for wind farms in the state of Maine, 8-in-10 residents said they support the building of wind farms in Maine's wilderness to provide alternative energy for New England residents.
 - In fact, more than half of all residents (55%) said they 'strongly support' the building of wind farms.
 - Democrats, residents of the 1st CD, and those residents earning \$75K per year or more were significantly more likely to say they support the building of wind farms, and fully nine-in-ten residents under the age of 35 support wind energy.



Residents' Perspectives on Quality of Life in Maine

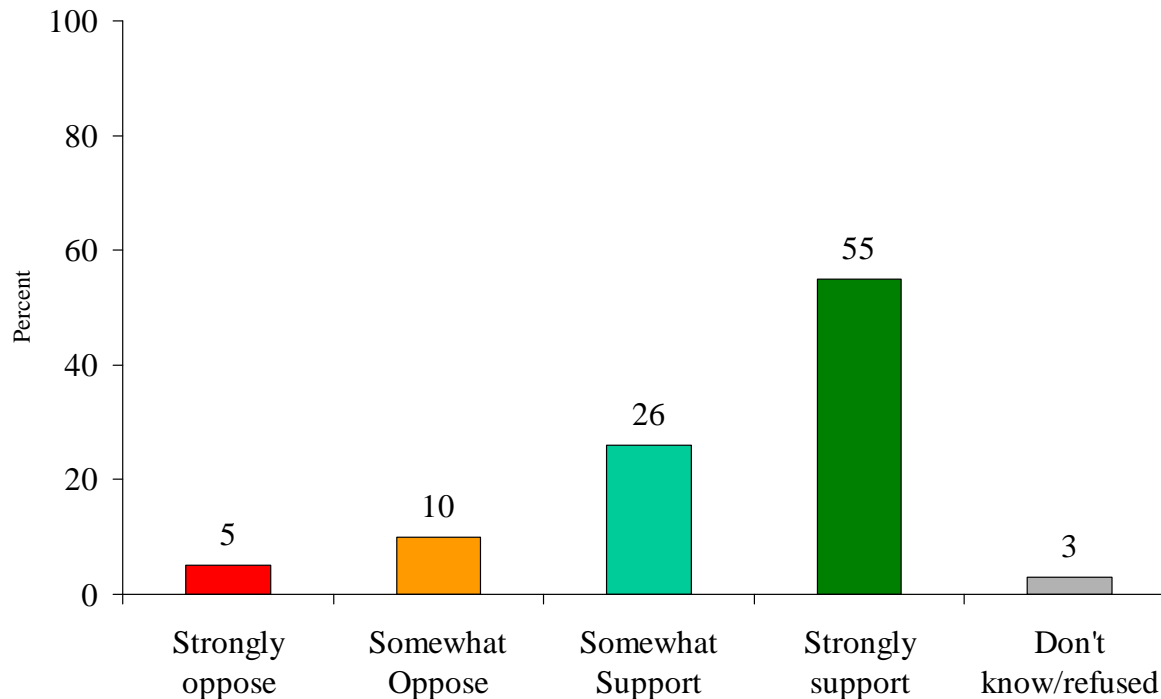
For some time, the phrase 'The Way Life Should Be' has been associated with Maine. Based on your own experiences, do you agree or disagree that living in Maine is indeed the way life should be?





Residents' Perspectives on Wind Farms

On a scale of 1 to 4, with 1 being “strongly opposed” and 4 being “strongly support”, how much do you support the building of wind farms in Maine wilderness regions to produce alternative energy for New England residents?



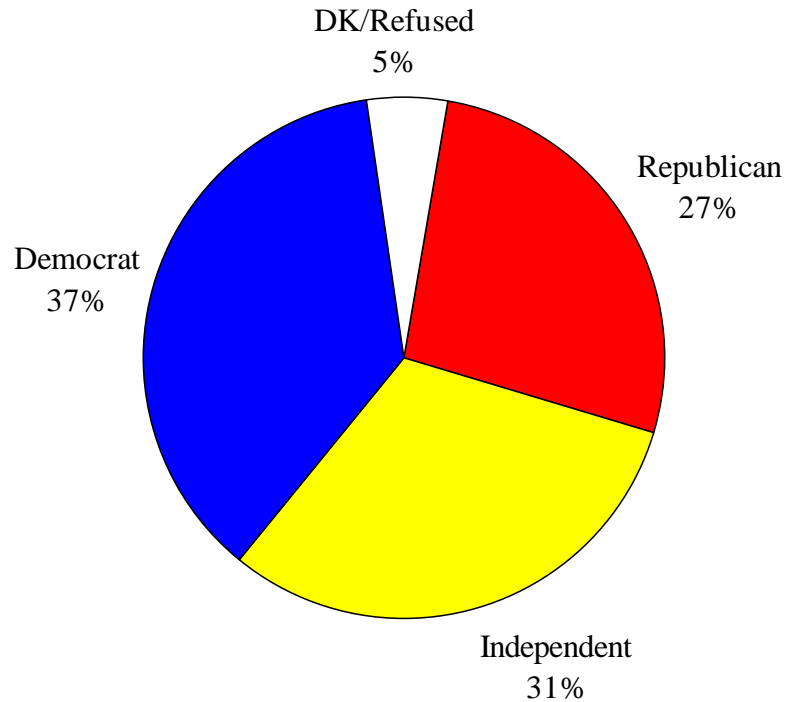


Sample Profile



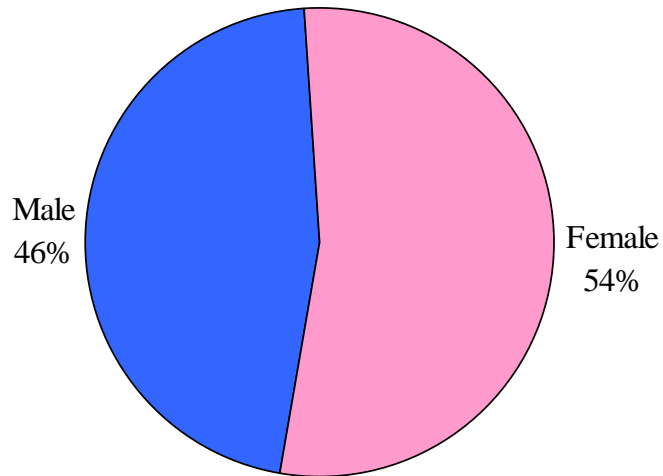
Voter Political Affiliation

In what political party are you registered to vote?





Respondent Gender and Age

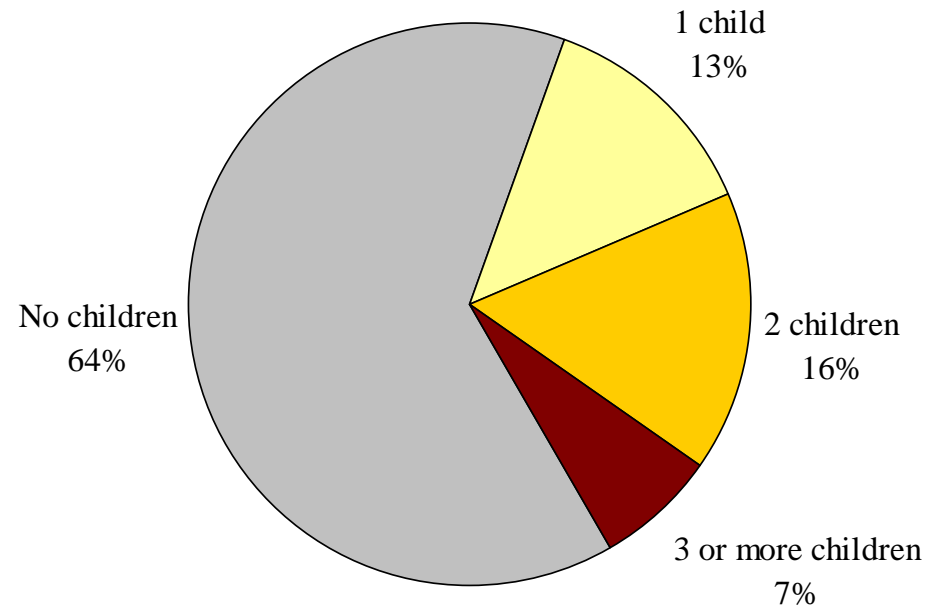


Which of the following categories does your age fall?	Percent
18 to 24	6%
25 to 34	12
35 to 44	25
45 to 54	20
55 to 64	21
65 to 74	9
75 and older	8



Children in the Household

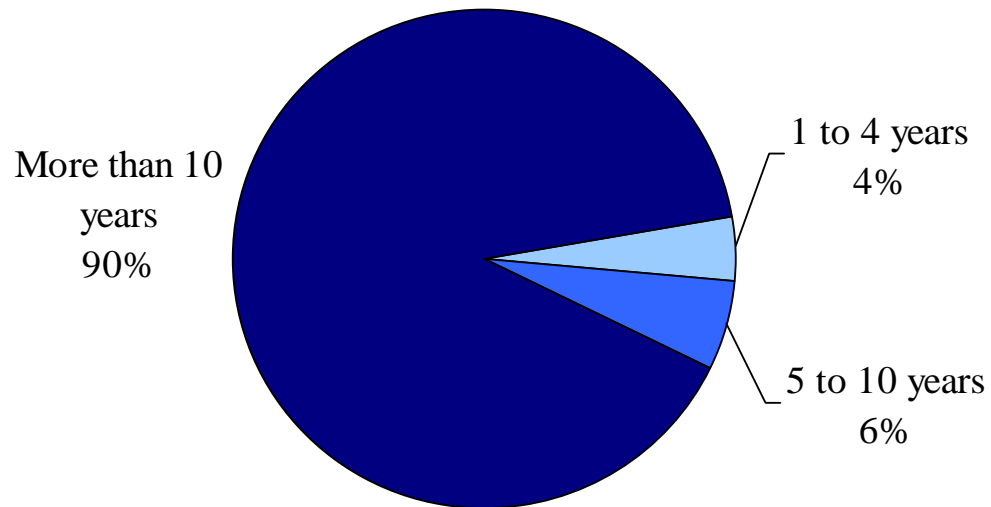
How many children, under the age of 18, live in your household?





Tenure of Residency in Maine

How long have you lived in the State of Maine?





Education

What is the highest level of education you have completed?	Percent
Some high school or less	6%
Graduated high school	25
Technical/Vocational/Community College	5
Some college	22
Graduated college	28
Graduate school	14



Household Income

Which of the following categories best describes your total household income before taxes last year?	Percent
Less than \$15,000	8%
\$15,000 to \$24,999	11
\$25,000 to \$34,999	12
\$35,000 to \$49,999	15
\$50,000 to \$74,999	23
\$75,000 or more	23
Don't know/Refused	7