

# **THE HOOSIER POLL 2008**

## **The Bowen Center for Public Affairs Ball State University**

### **Executive Summary**

In the first public policy survey conducted by the Bowen Center for Public Affairs at Ball State University, called the Hoosier Poll 2008, Indiana residents identified their top priorities for state government action in the upcoming year. Overwhelming support for bringing more jobs to the state and making government more efficient placed these two priorities at the top of the list. Fully eighty-three percent of Hoosiers want to see more attention paid to bringing jobs to the state while sixty-seven percent want public officials to make government run more efficiently. Providing Hoosiers with more affordable healthcare and improving local schools are also high on the list of Hoosiers' concerns as the General Assembly opens its 2009 legislative session.

The Hoosier Poll asked a random sample of Hoosiers to rank the policy priorities they wanted lawmakers to address in the upcoming session. The telephone survey was conducted by Princeton Survey Research Associates for the Bowen Center on November 12-16, just following the fall elections. Six hundred adults age 18 and over were interviewed, yielding a margin of error of plus or minus 4.6 percentage points.

The survey found that Hoosiers are willing to pay more to fund some of their priorities. Seventy-one percent said they were very or somewhat likely to support increased taxes to make healthcare available to more people; 69 percent would pay more to improve Indiana's public schools; and 68 percent would support increased taxes to make higher education more affordable for Indiana families. Hoosiers would also support tax increases to enhance environmental protection.

Respondents were almost evenly divided over last year's property tax legislation with just 51 percent expressing satisfaction while 44 percent expressed dissatisfaction with the reforms. Hoosiers also are almost evenly divided over how well local governments are coping with the impact of property tax reform with 54 percent saying local governments are responding very well (11%) or somewhat well (43%), and 37 percent saying local governments are not responding too well (24%) or not well at all (13%).

While Hoosiers are reluctant to give local officials greater taxing authority to solve community problems, they are more receptive to allowing state officials to raise revenues to tackle pressing issues. By margins ranging from 61 to 71 percent, Hoosiers are willing to support higher state taxes to address a range of educational, healthcare, and environmental issues. In contrast, 53 percent oppose increased local taxes to correct pressing problems in their local communities.

Indiana residents have a surprisingly high regard for the Indiana General Assembly with fifty-nine percent approving the job the legislative body has done in recent years. This result contrasts with national results showing a very low (19%) approval rating for the national Congress according to the Gallup Poll (November 17, 2008).

The following is a more detailed analysis of these results with responses broken down by three regions of the state: Northern, Central, and Southern. A complete breakdown of these regions by zip codes and telephone area codes, and other methodological details of the survey are available on the website of the Bowen Center for Public Affairs at <http://www.bsu.edu/politicalscience/bowencenter/>.

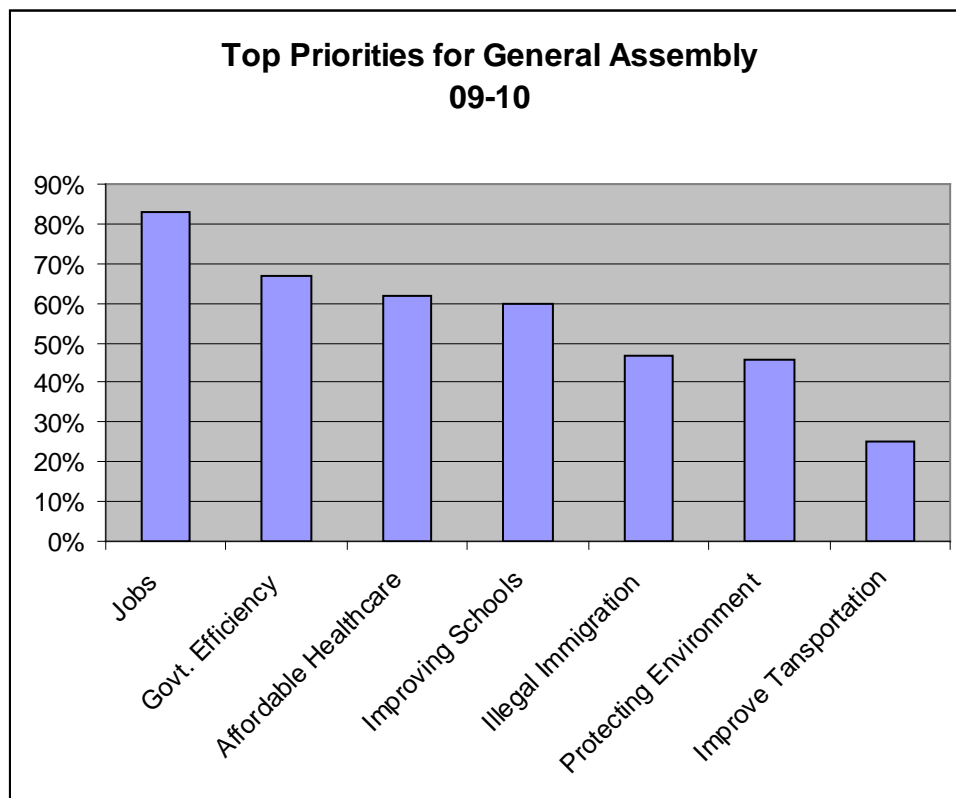
For Additional Information:

Dr. Raymond H. Scheele, Co-Director, The Bowen Center for Public Affairs  
765-2851547  
[rscheele@bsu.edu](mailto:rscheele@bsu.edu)

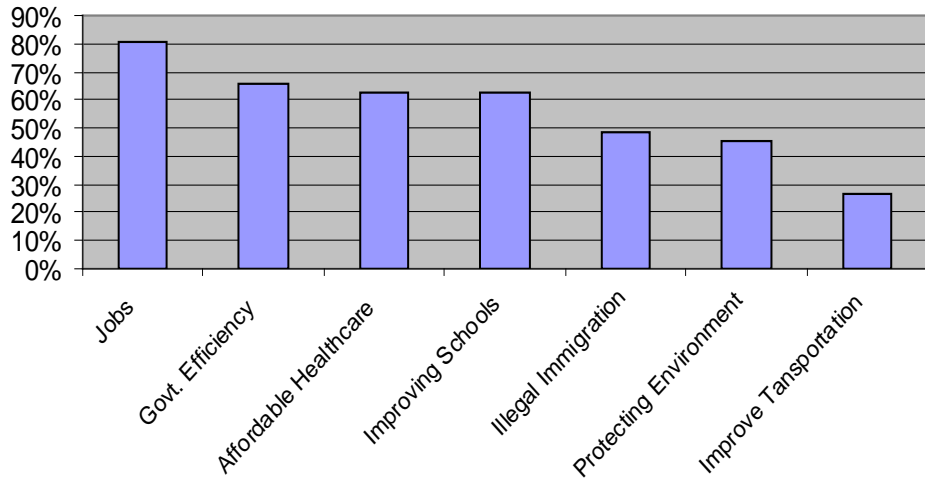
Dr. Joe Losco, Chair, Department of Political Science, Ball State University  
765-285-8780  
[jlosco@bsu.edu](mailto:jlosco@bsu.edu)

## The Hoosier Poll 2008: Top Priorities for Hoosiers

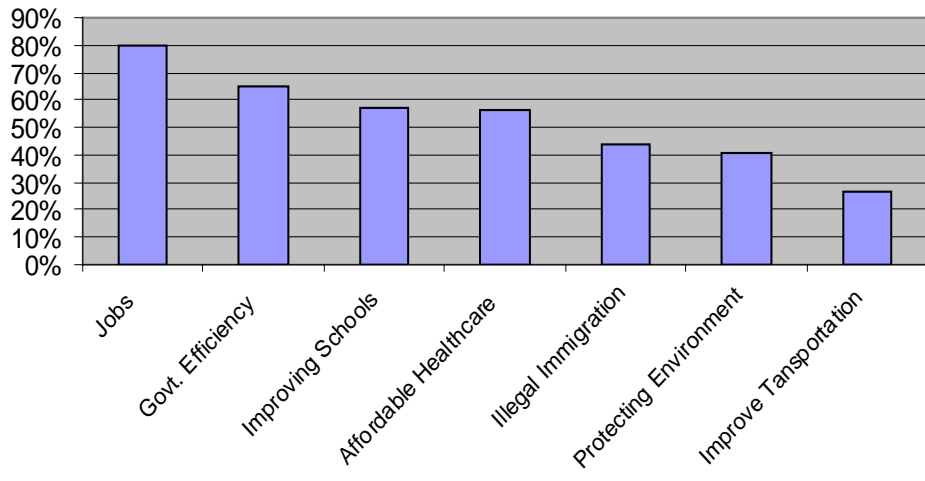
Creating more jobs is the top priority for eighty-three percent of Hoosiers according to our survey. Other top priorities include improving government efficiency, providing affordable health care, and improving the quality of our schools. These results proved uniform across all regions of the state with the exception that Central Indiana placed improving schools slightly ahead of affordable healthcare in third place in contrast to the priority listings for Northern and Southern portions of the state. The following charts show the priorities statewide, as well as by region.

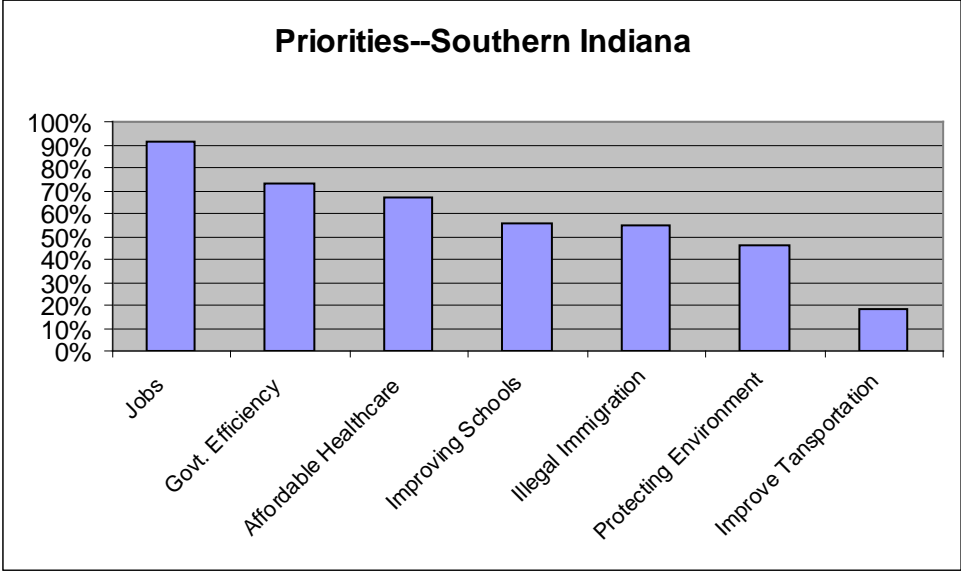


### Priorities-- Northern Indiana



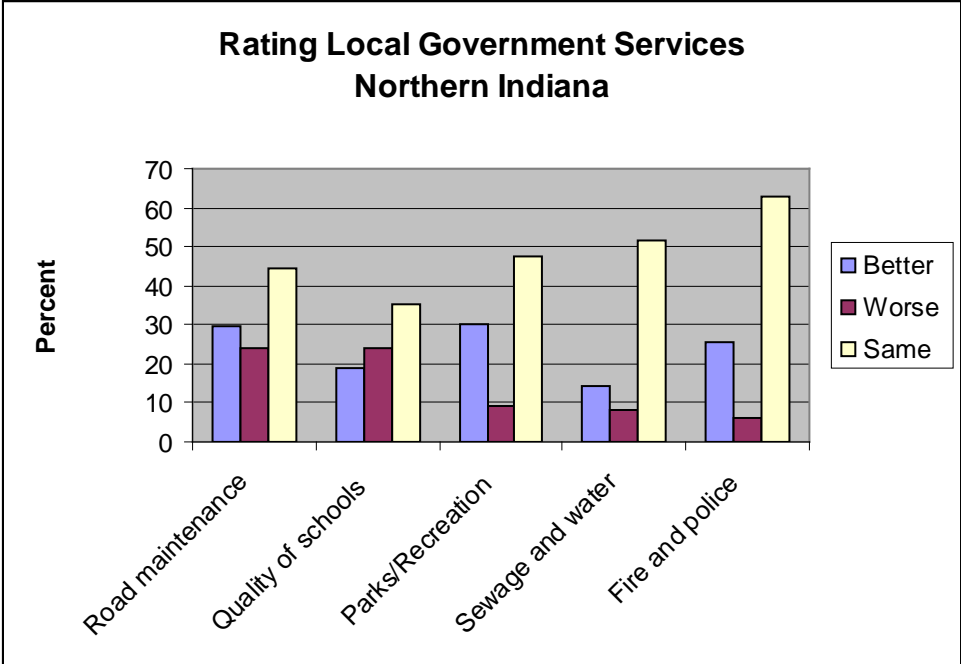
### Priorities--Central Indiana

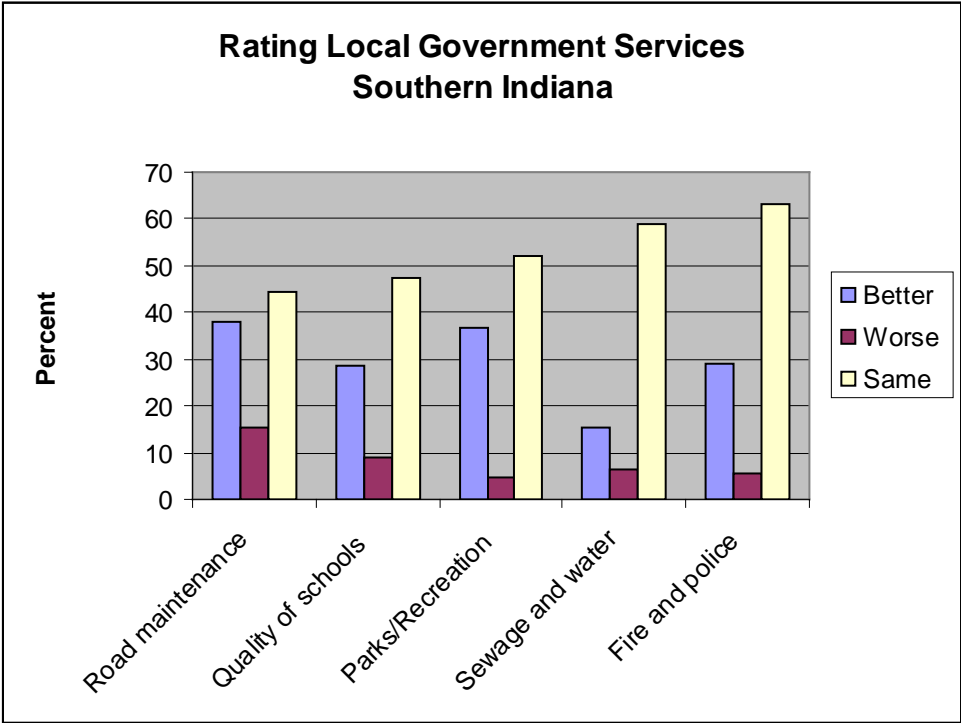
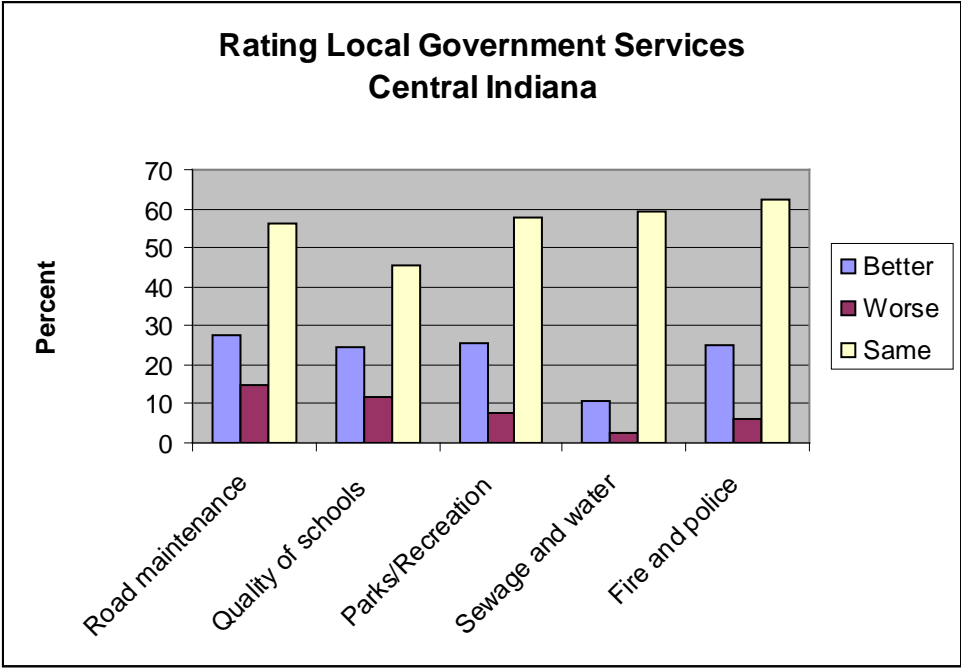




**Local Services**

Overall, Hoosiers believe the quality of local government services has not changed much in recent years, although among the services perceived to have improved most were road maintenance (32% reporting improvement) and public parks and recreation (30% reporting improvement). There was little variation among major regions of the state.

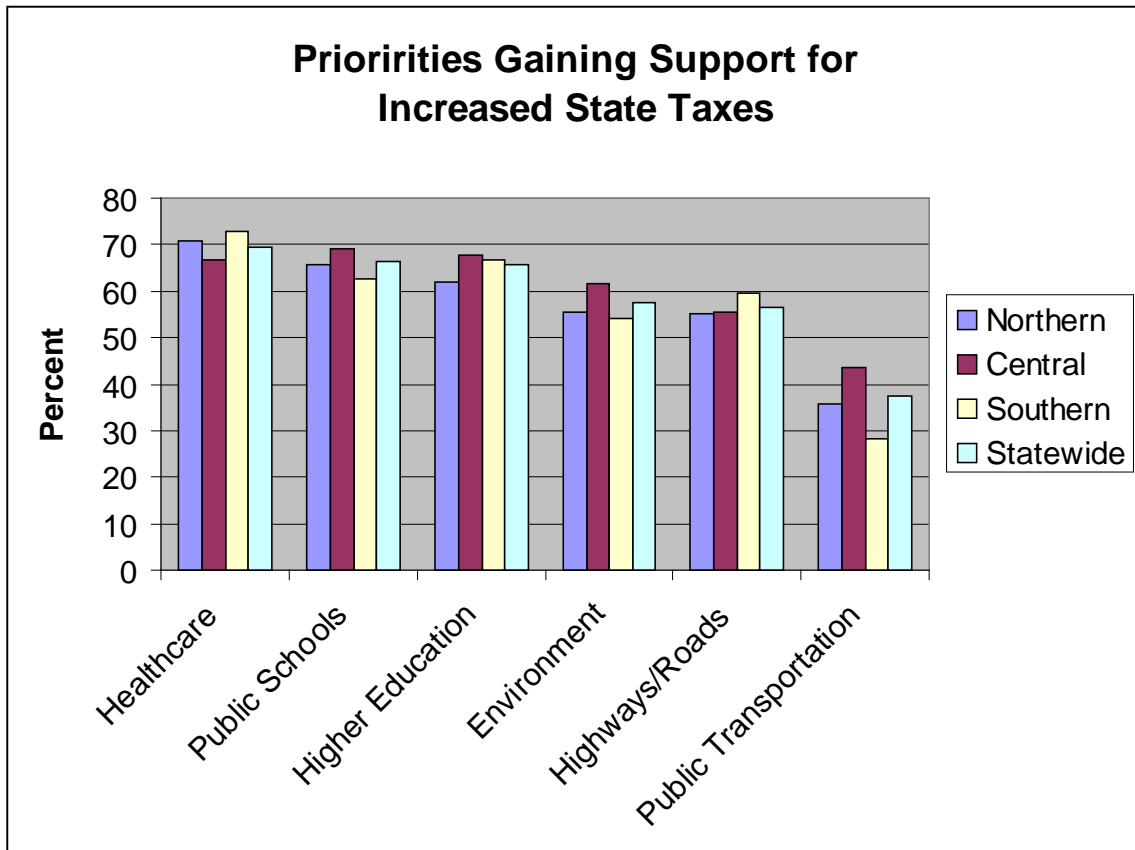




**Tax Support for Priorities**

Hoosiers appear willing to pay more for some state services. Paramount among these is healthcare. Nearly seven in ten Hoosiers reported that they would be very likely

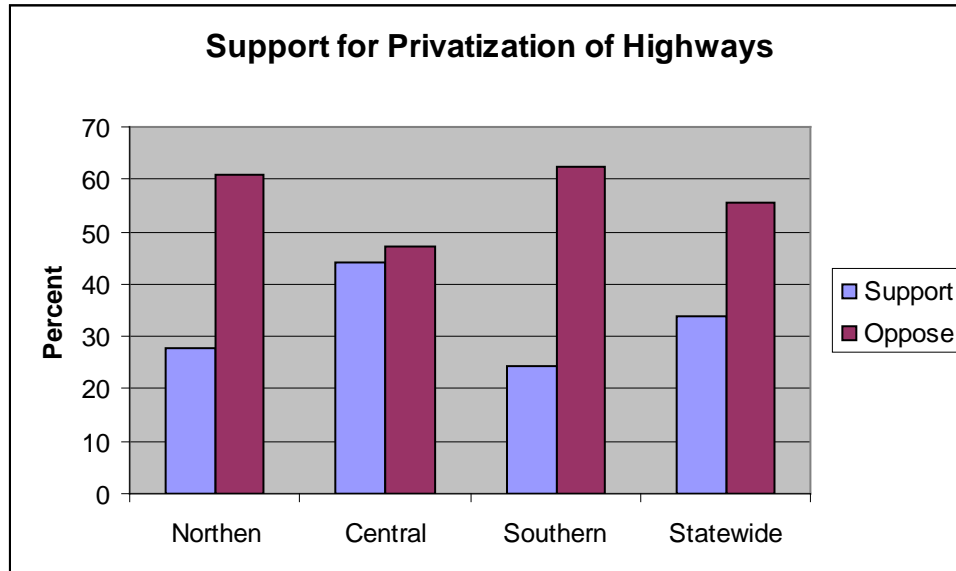
(36.4%) or somewhat likely (33.1%) to support an increase in state taxes to make healthcare more affordable to more people. A majority of respondents also expressed willingness to pay higher taxes to improve public schools, make higher education more affordable, enhance environmental protection, and improve the condition of state highways and roads. Whereas a majority was not willing to support increased taxes for public transportation, Central Indiana respondents were somewhat more supportive of this action (43.6%) than respondents from the other regions. Otherwise there was little variation across the state's regions, although a higher percentage of Northern and Southern respondents supported increased taxes for healthcare while Central Indiana residents were more supportive of tax increases to improve public schools.



	Northern	Central	Southern	Statewide
Healthcare	70.7	66.6	72.9	69.6
Public Schools	65.8	69.1	62.5	66.4
Higher Education	61.9	67.8	66.7	65.6
Environment	55.6	61.6	54.1	57.7
Highways and roads	55.1	55.6	59.7	56.4
Public transportation	35.6	43.6	28.4	37.3

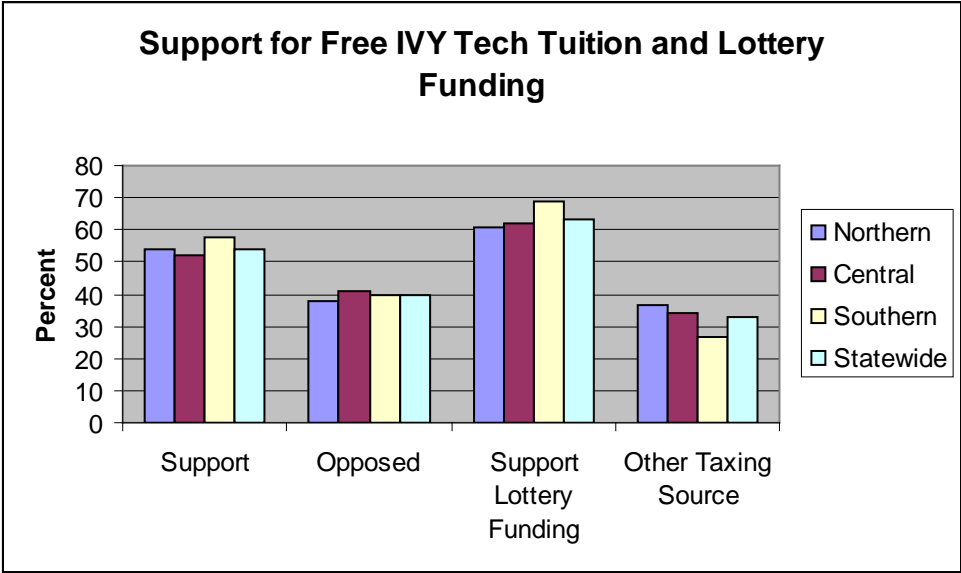
## Individual Issues

As a whole, Hoosiers remain opposed to leasing or selling public highways to private companies, although opposition is greatest in both Northern and Southern Indiana. Northern Indiana, of course, was directly affected by Governor Daniels' lease of the Indiana toll road.



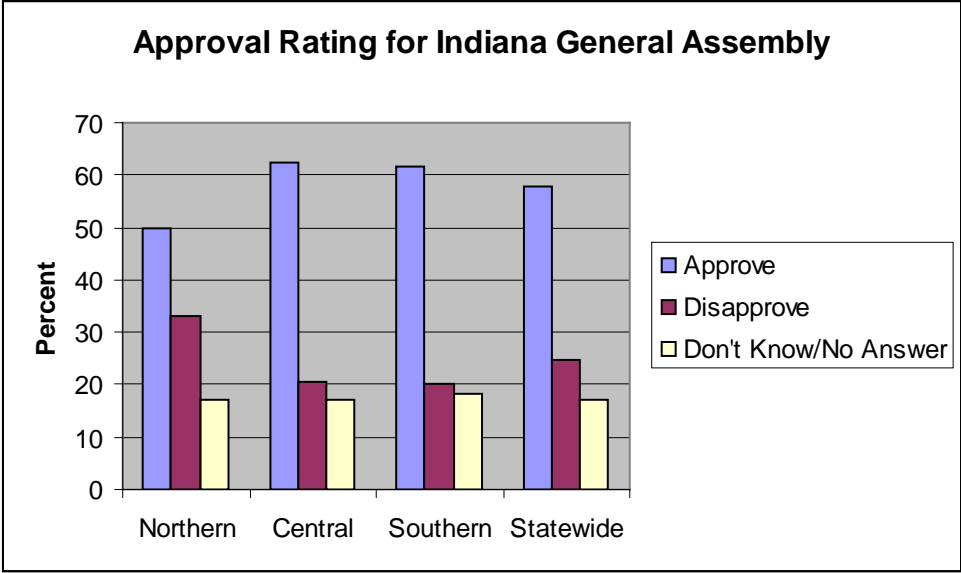
There is greater support for another of Governor Daniels' ideas—providing free tuition for students attending IVY Tech Community College. This proposal was advanced by Daniels in the recent gubernatorial campaign. While his proposal to fund the measure by privatizing the lottery was short-circuited when the U.S. Department of Justice said such a move would not comply with federal law, there does appear to be ample support for both the idea and for using lottery proceeds to fund it.





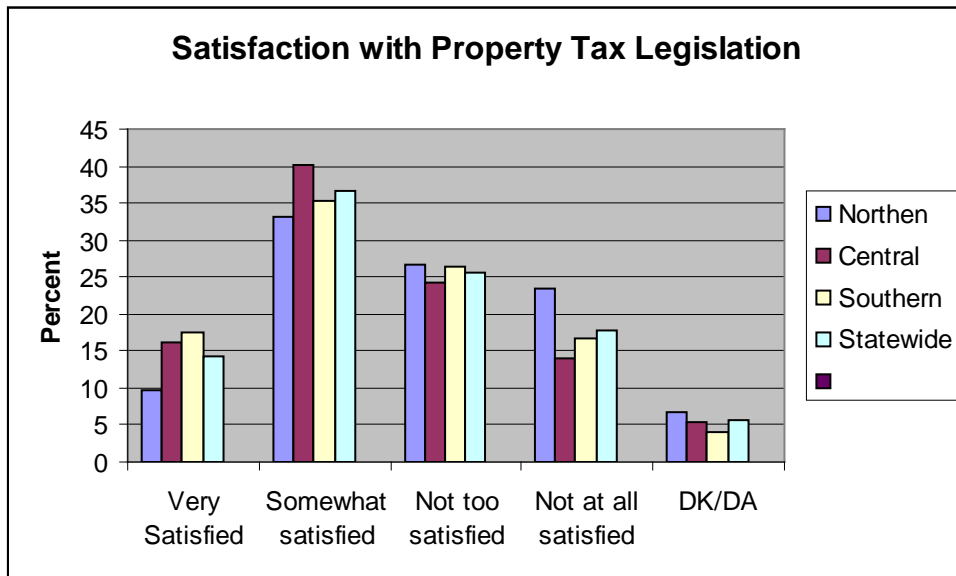
**General Assembly Approval**

The General Assembly received some good news from the survey results. Nearly six in ten Hoosiers said they approved of the job the state legislature has done in recent years. The highest approval rating was awarded by the state’s central counties and by those who say they pay a lot (50.4% approval) or some (64.9% approval) attention to the body’s activities and decisions.



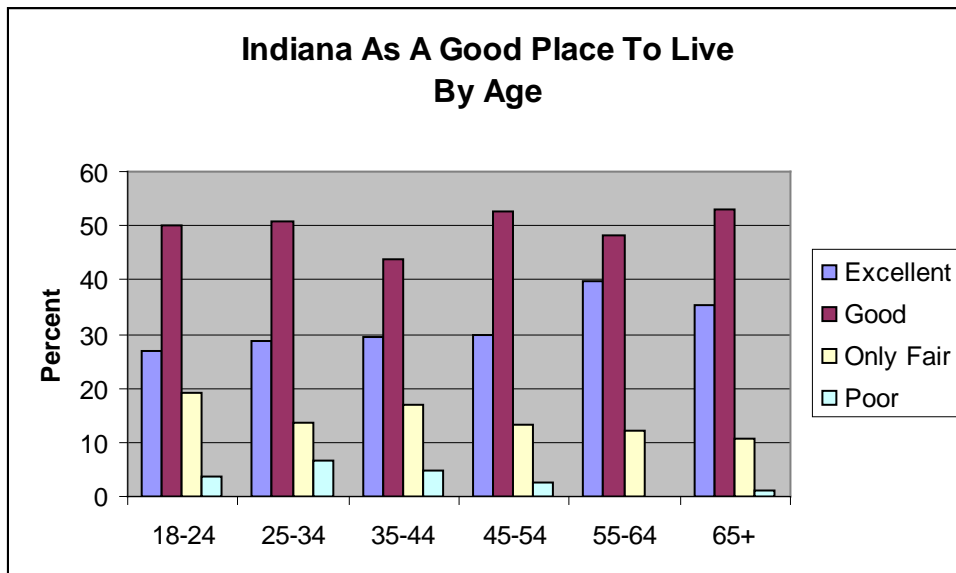
There is less satisfaction with last year’s legislative efforts to cap property taxes. Almost an equal number of Hoosiers express dissatisfaction as those expressing

satisfaction with last year's legislation capping property taxes for homeowners at one percent of assessed value



**Satisfaction with Indiana as a Place to Live**

Overall, Hoosiers rate Indiana as an excellent or good place to live. Given recent concerns about the state's "brain drain," it is instructive to note that young people rate the state as highly as those who are older.



Furthermore, there is a weak yet statistically significant positive correlation between level of education and satisfaction with Indiana as a place to live. Nearly two-fifths of college graduates believe Indiana is an excellent place to live as compared to just under a quarter

of those who did not complete high school and about a third of those with a high school degree alone. Overall, eighty-seven percent of college graduates believe Indiana is either an excellent or good place to live as do eighty-four percent of those who have completed some college. Satisfaction level (either excellent or good) drops to seventy-four percent for those without a high school degree. The relationship between college graduation and satisfaction holds for all age levels. The highest dissatisfaction levels (those who believe Indiana is only a fair or poor place to live) are found among those who have only a high school degree or equivalent or only some technical training. The dissatisfaction level among this group in all probability relates to their current difficulty in finding suitable employment in a state that is transitioning away from the types of industrial jobs for which they are suited.

### Geographic Regions Sampled

