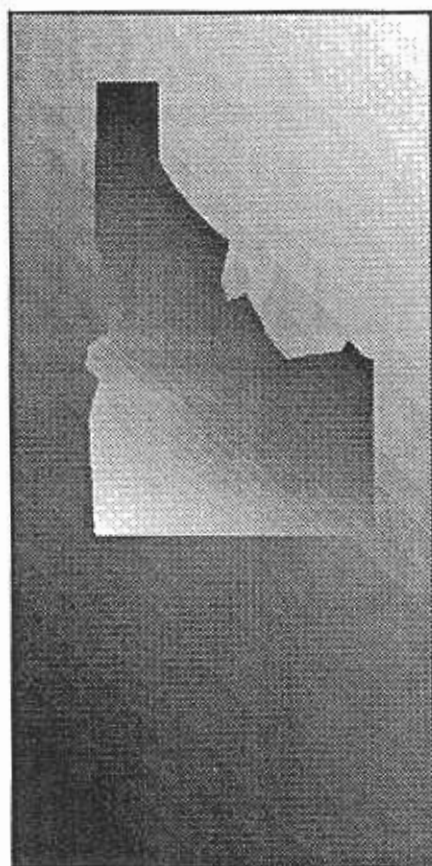

IDAHO

POLICY

SURVEY



The Survey Research Center
School of Social Sciences and Public Affairs
Boise State University

#1

January 1990

IDAHO

POLICY

SURVEY

#1

January 1990

Gregory A. Raymond

Survey Research Center
School of Social Sciences and Public Affairs
Boise State University

Thomas E. Mayes, Acting Director
Sandra Shook, Research Assistant

This survey was funded in part by a grant from
the Boise State University Foundation

Copyright © 1990 by Boise State University

PREFACE

The Idaho State Board of Education has designated public affairs as a primary emphasis area for Boise State University. One of the ways that Boise State is meeting this responsibility is by operating a Survey Research Center. The Center's mission is to conduct timely, high-quality research that will assist Idaho's citizens and policymakers in their efforts to solve state and local problems.

This report presents the results from the first annual omnibus survey of the opinions held by Idahoans on public affairs issues. The research was conducted under the direction of Dr. Gregory A. Raymond, with the assistance of Thomas E. Mayes and Sandra Shook. Faculty from the School of Social Sciences and Public Affairs who helped construct the survey questionnaire included Professors Michael Blain (Sociology), Dennis J. Donoghue (Political Science), John C. Freemuth (Political Science), Daniel D. Huff (Social Work), David Johnson (Social Work), Suzanne McCorkle (Communication), Gary F. Moncrief (Political Science), Robert C. Sims (History), and James B. Weatherby (Graduate Program in Public Affairs). Additional contributions to the project were made by Gary Lyman (Boise Future Foundation) and various members of the Boise State University staff, including Karen Kelsch, Patricia Trofast, Chuck Scheer, Chris Latter, Dana Robinson, Diane Clayton, and Bruce Carter.

The Survey Research Center gratefully acknowledges the dedication and enthusiasm of the following individuals who spent many long hours in the Public Opinion Laboratory conducting telephone interviews: Alex Abad, Stephanie Burgess, Larry Clark, Kathy Eckert, Mary Eubanks, San Juanita Flores, Kathleen Graham, Dianna Gray, Jennifer Hughes, Jennifer Jenkins, Tod Jenkins, Byron Keely, Karma Metzler, Renee Morse, Terri Vorseth, Rod J. Walker, and Harold Wilson. Their hard work is much appreciated.

INTRODUCTION

As Idaho begins its centennial year, it is appropriate to take stock of the state's past and begin thinking about what kind of place we would like Idaho to be in the next century. One of the primary purposes of the *Idaho Policy Survey* is to examine public opinion on issues that are currently the subject of debate or that civic leaders have identified as potentially important items on the state's agenda.

Polling has become commonplace in contemporary American life. When designed and administered properly, polls are an effective way to gauge public beliefs, attitudes, and opinions on a range of prominent issues. Although the *Idaho Policy Survey* provides an overview of citizen concerns and preferences, it does not make policy recommendations. We recognize that surveys are only one way of gathering information about public opinion, and that public opinion is just one consideration that goes into policymaking.

This inaugural volume of the *Idaho Policy Survey* contains six sections. The first section examines citizens' opinions on the quality of life in Idaho and what problems are seen as the most important now facing the state.

The next section looks at the preferences of Idahoans toward the current state budget surplus, and explores the degree of their support for state spending increases in twelve broad service areas.

The third section focuses on attitudes toward the national, state, and local levels of government. It also assesses the degree of support that exists for such proposals as local option taxes, election consolidation, limiting the number of consecutive terms that an elected official can serve, and using a reapportionment commission to determine the boundaries of legislative districts after the 1990 census.

The fourth section portrays the views of Idahoans toward their public schools (kindergarten through high school) and public colleges and universities.

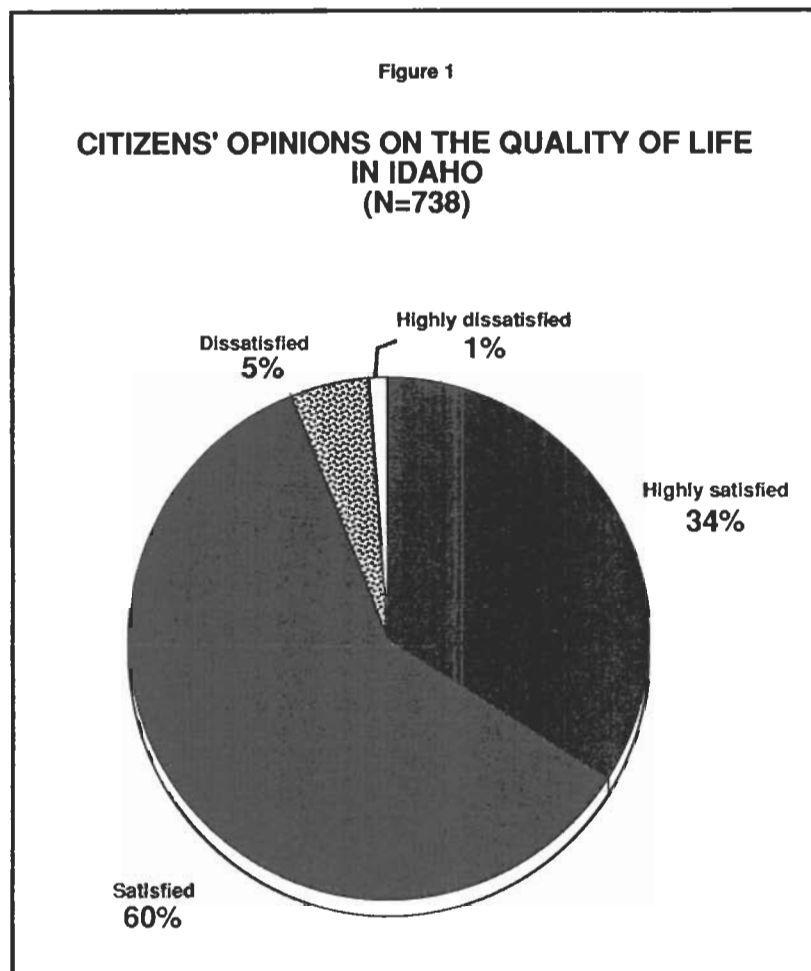
The fifth section moves on to consider such social issues as daycare, child support, responsibility for helping Idaho's poor, and citizens' opinions on the recent *Webster* decision by the U.S. Supreme Court.

Finally, the last section examines the environmental concerns of Idahoans. It analyzes the degree of support for additions to the U.S. park system, as well as for the SIS project at the Idaho National Engineering Laboratory in eastern Idaho.

The report concludes with a methodological appendix that summarizes the procedures used to draw the sample and conduct the interviews.

THE QUALITY OF LIFE IN IDAHO

The *Idaho Policy Survey* began by asking the respondents how they felt about the overall quality of life in Idaho. As Figure 1 and Table 1 show, the vast majority of the individuals in our sample gave a positive response to this question, with respondents from counties in Region VI expressing the greatest satisfaction and those from counties in Region V voicing the most dissatisfaction (see Map 1). In general, the higher the level of education possessed by the respondent, the greater the degree of satisfaction. Whereas 48 percent of the college graduates in the sample were highly satisfied with the quality of life in Idaho, only 28 percent of those who had a high school education or less held the same point of view.



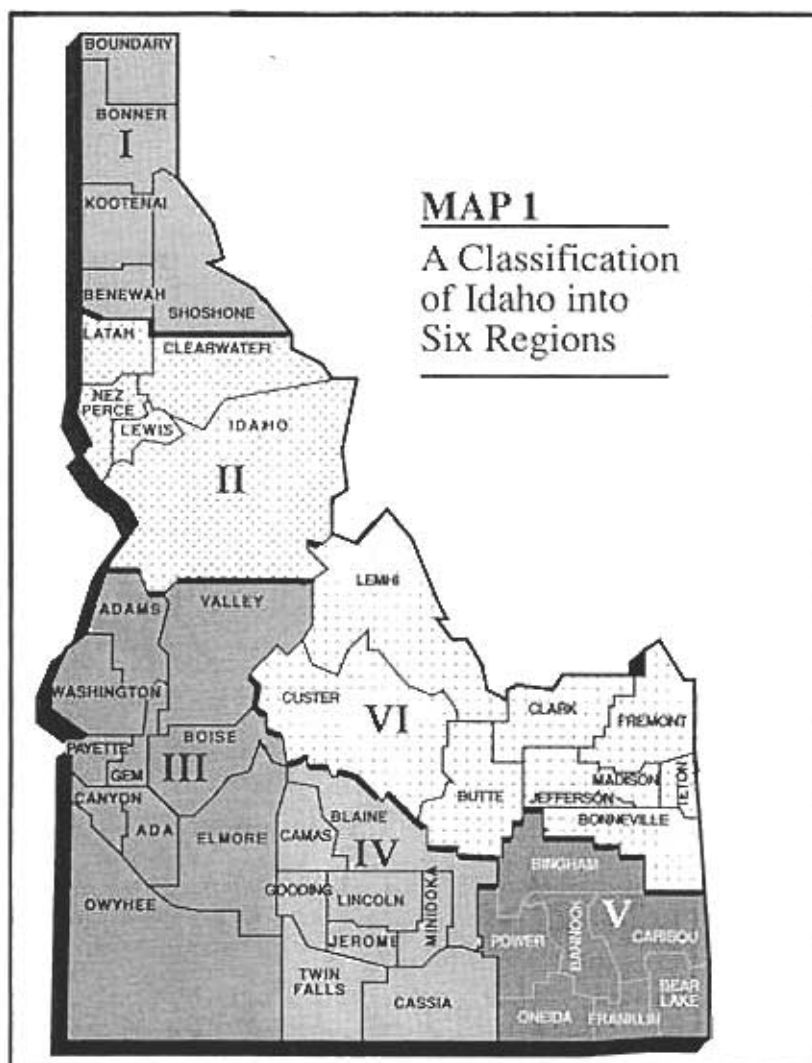


TABLE 1
A COMPARISON OF OPINIONS ON THE QUALITY
OF LIFE IN IDAHO, BY REGION*

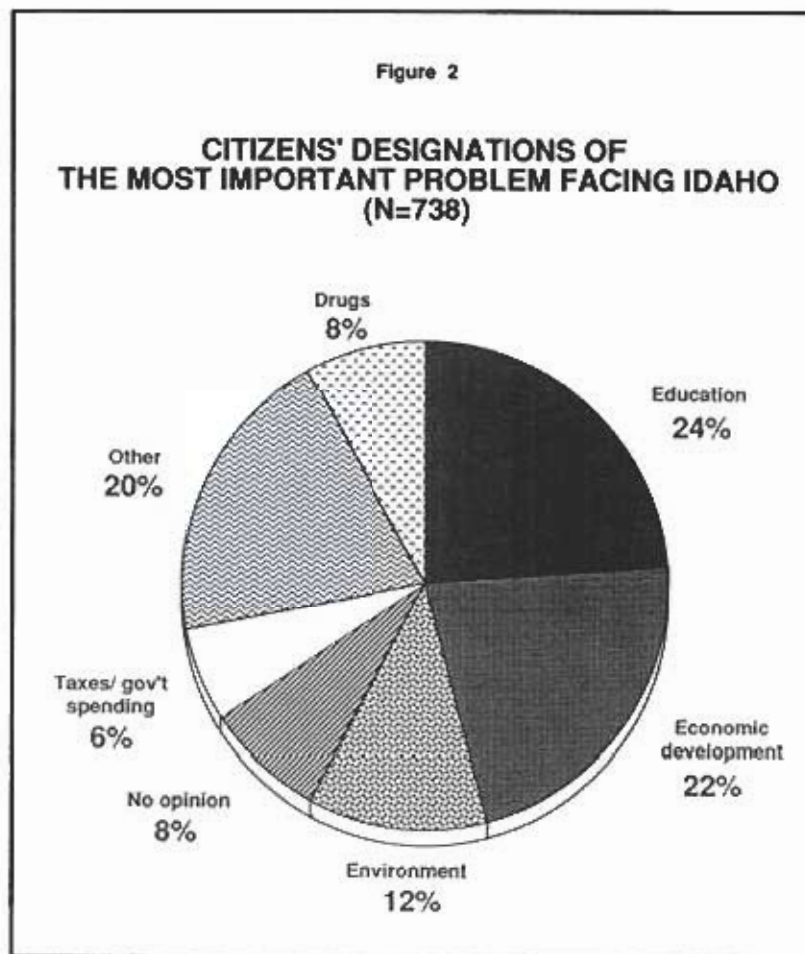
	State Planning Region					
	I	II	III	IV	V	VI
Highly Satisfied	31%	34%	35%	34%	28%	40%
Satisfied	60	61	61	61	60	59
Dissatisfied	8	2	4	3	11	1
Highly Dissatisfied	1	2	0	3	2	0
(Number of Cases)	(90)	(67)	(270)	(104)	(104)	(103)

*Column percentages may not total 100% due to rounding error

Although few Idahoans are dissatisfied with the quality of life in their state, most are aware that various problems face Idaho. To gain insight into citizens' perceptions of these problems, the survey respondents were asked what they considered the most important problem facing the state of Idaho today. The question was open-ended to prevent any influence from suggested choices and was asked early in the interview before other questions in the survey could bias the responses. The problems that were identified, therefore, can be interpreted as being highly salient to Idahoans.

Ninety-two percent of the respondents in our sample identified a major problem that faced Idaho, and the majority focused upon three specific issues — education, economic development, and the environment. As depicted in Figure 2:

- Education is perceived as the state's single most important problem, being cited by 24 percent of the citizens in the survey.
- Twenty-two percent of the respondents point to some aspect of economic development as the major problem confronting the state.
- Environmental issues are the primary concern of 12 percent of the respondents.
- Drugs (8 percent) and taxes (6 percent) are the only other perceived problems that concern at least five percent of the Idahoans who were interviewed.



Some differences exist in the kinds of people who perceive problems in each of these areas. Table 2 provides the percentages within several demographic groups on whether they see education, economic development, or the environment as the major problem facing Idaho.

- Women (30 percent) are more likely than men (18 percent) to cite education as the foremost problem.
- Citizens between the ages of 35 and 60 are the most likely age group to cite economic development as Idaho's primary problem. The state's eldest citizens, aged 61 and above, are the least likely to see education as the major problem confronting Idaho.

- Idahoans with a bachelor's degree or more (32 percent) are more likely than Idahoans with a high school education or less (20 percent) to name education as the state's primary problem, and they are less likely (16 percent versus 25 percent) to single out economic development as the most important problem.
- One-third of the respondents from counties within Region VI and one quarter of those within Region III see education as Idaho's primary problem.
- Approximately one-third of the respondents from Regions I and V, plus one quarter of those from Region IV, cite economic development issues.
- Citizens residing within Regions V and VI tend to describe environmental concerns as the state's most important problem less often than citizens in the rest of the state.

TABLE 2
EDUCATION, ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, AND THE
ENVIRONMENT AS THE MOST IMPORTANT PROBLEMS
FACING IDAHO, BY DEMOGRAPHIC GROUPS

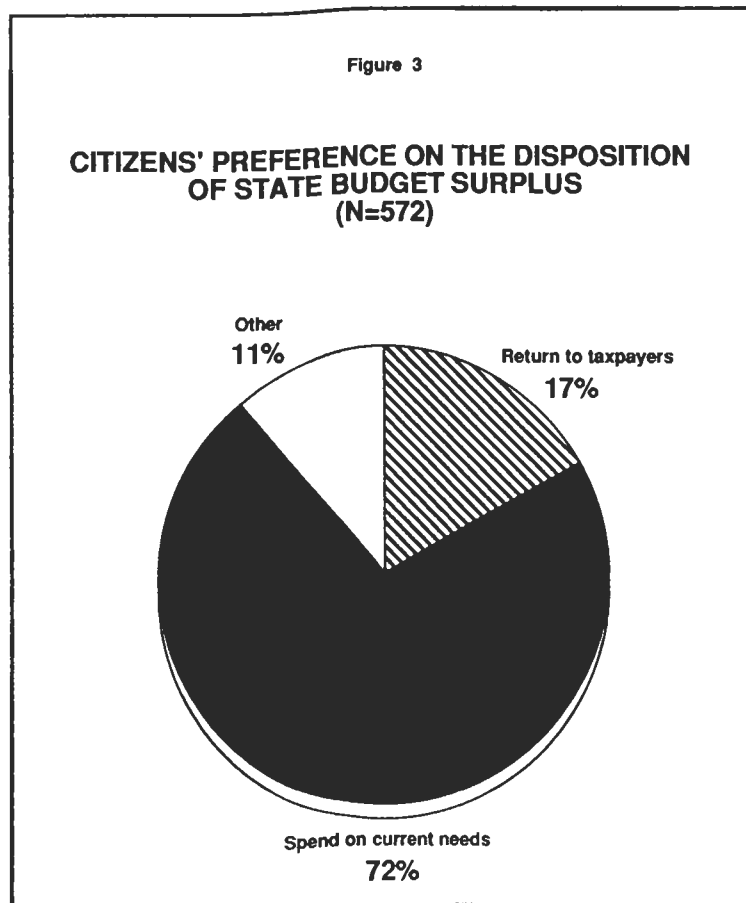
<u>Demographic Group</u>	<u>Most Important Problem</u>			(N)
	Education	Economic Development	Environment	
Total Sample	24%	22%	12%	(738)
Gender				
Male	18	25	14	(349)
Female	30	19	11	(389)
Age*				
18-34	26	18	15	(201)
35-60	27	27	13	(358)
61+	17	17	9	(174)
Education				
HS or less	20	25	9	(318)
Some college/tech.	24	22	14	(241)
BA or more	32	16	16	(179)
Household Income*				
Under \$25,000	20	20	9	(280)
\$25,000 +	28	22	15	(423)
State Planning Region				
I	21	32	11	(90)
II	19	19	19	(67)
III	26	16	14	(270)
IV	19	25	18	(104)
V	22	33	6	(104)
VI	33	15	6	(103)

**Number of cases less than 738 due to refusal of some respondents to report age or income.*

STATE SPENDING PRIORITIES

During the early 1980s, Idaho's economy suffered through a deep recession that made it difficult for state government to meet its financial obligations while simultaneously maintaining a balanced budget. In contrast to those lean years of budget shortfalls and cutback management, the state government now faces the task of deciding what to do with a budget surplus. Over three quarters of the Idahoans polled ($n = 572$) indicated that they had an opinion on what should be done with the state's budget surplus. As documented in Figure 3, 72 percent of those who held an opinion on the surplus said that it should be spent on current needs.

Although most Idahoans probably do not know the exact funding levels for specific state programs, they generally have opinions on the spending priorities for broad categories of state services. To ascertain citizen spending preferences, survey respondents were first reminded that government spending comes principally from tax revenues, and then asked whether the amount now being spent by the state government should be increased, maintained at the present level, or decreased in each of 12 broad service areas. These areas included economic development, senior citizen programs, aid to low income families, health care services, prisons, law enforcement, roads and bridges, fish and game, parks and recreation, environmental protection, higher education, and public education (kindergarten through high school).



Few Idahoans called for a decrease in state spending within any of these 12 service areas. There were, however, clear differences of opinion over which areas needed funding increases. As summarized by Figure 4, at least half of those polled favor increases in public education (73 percent), higher education (50 percent), roads and bridges (58 percent), law enforcement (50 percent), and senior citizen programs (51 percent). Between one-third and one-half of the respondents support increases in environmental protection (38 percent), prisons (37 percent), health care (47 percent), aid to low income families (37 percent), and economic development programs (42 percent).

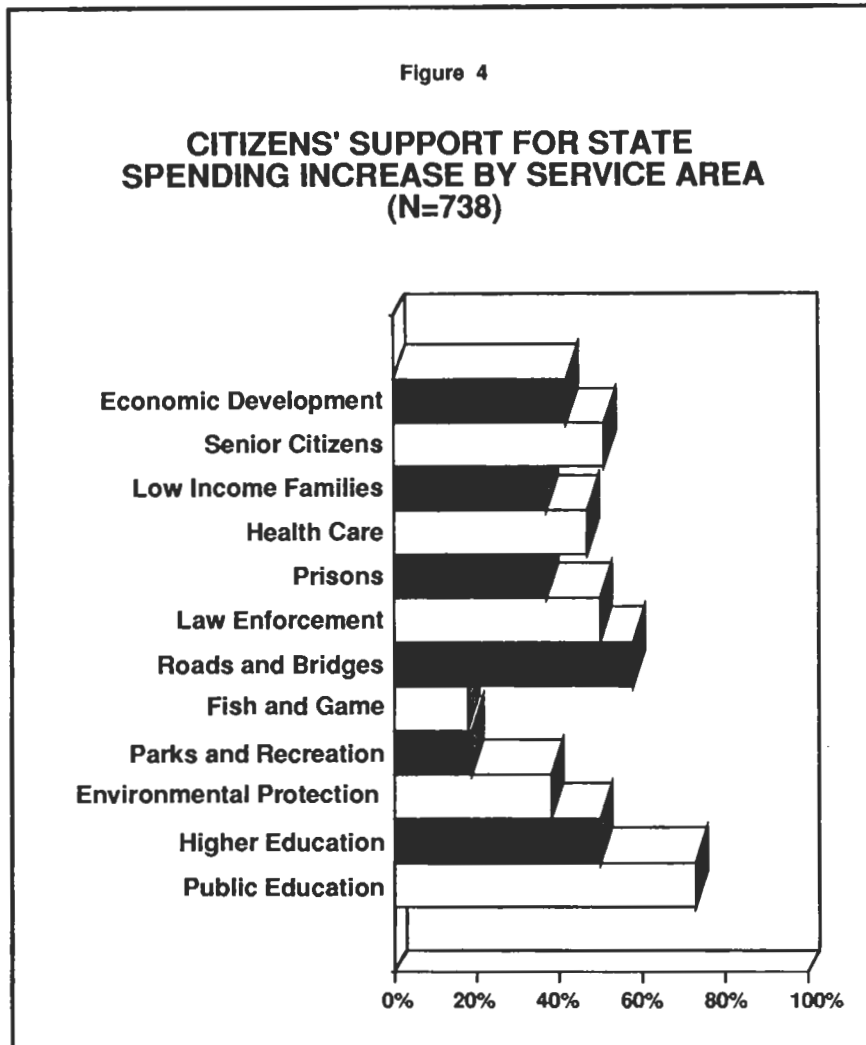


Table 3 gives the demographic differences in the degree of support for those programs which received backing for funding increases by at least half of the total sample of respondents.

- A majority of respondents in each demographic group supported an increase in state spending for public education.
- The strongest source of support (60 percent) for an increase in higher education spending is among respondents who are 18-34 years of age.
- A majority of respondents in each demographic group except Regions V (45 percent) and VI (48 percent) supported an increase in state spending on roads and bridges.
- The strongest source of support (60 percent) for an increase in spending on law enforcement is among respondents who are 61 years of age or older.
- The strongest sources of support for increased spending on senior citizen programs are among women (56 percent), members of the 18-34 age group (57 percent), citizens with a high school education or less (59 percent), respondents with a household income under \$25,000 (57 percent), and residents of Regions II (57 percent) and V (59 percent).

TABLE 3
SUPPORT FOR STATE SPENDING INCREASE IN
SELECTED SERVICE AREAS, BY DEMOGRAPHIC GROUP

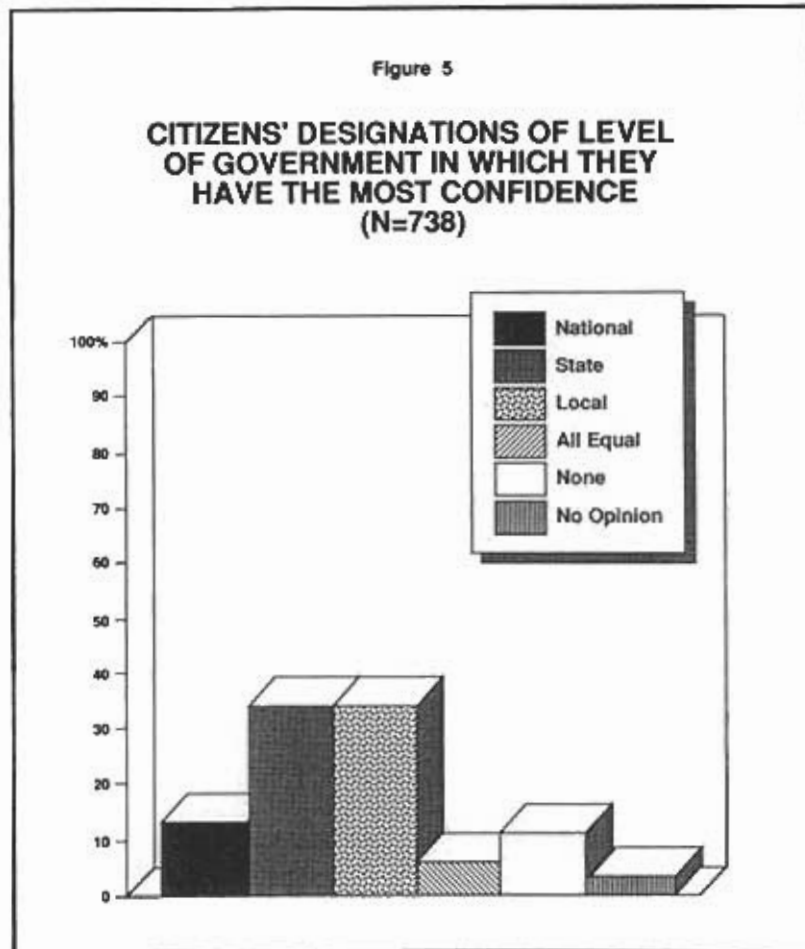
<u>Demographic Group</u>	<u>Service Area</u>					(N)
	Public Education	Higher Education	Roads & Bridges	Law Enforcement	Senior Citizens	
Total Sample	73%	50%	58%	50%	51%	(738)
Gender						
Male	69	48	61	47	45	(349)
Female	78	51	57	53	56	(389)
Age*						
18-34	86	60	57	46	57	(201)
35-60	75	48	59	48	52	(358)
61+	54	43	60	60	41	(174)
Education						
HS or less	70	46	57	54	59	(318)
Some college/tech.	74	52	62	53	50	(241)
BA or more	78	53	56	40	37	(179)
Household Income*						
Under \$25,000	72	49	61	54	57	(280)
\$25,000+	76	51	57	49	49	(423)
State Planning Region						
I	69	39	66	56	51	(90)
II	76	55	67	42	57	(67)
III	71	47	63	53	47	(270)
IV	74	54	60	47	49	(104)
V	75	56	45	47	59	(104)
VI	80	52	48	50	49	(103)

*Number of cases less than 738 due to refusal of some respondents to report age or income.

POLITICAL CONFIDENCE AND GOVERNMENTAL REFORM

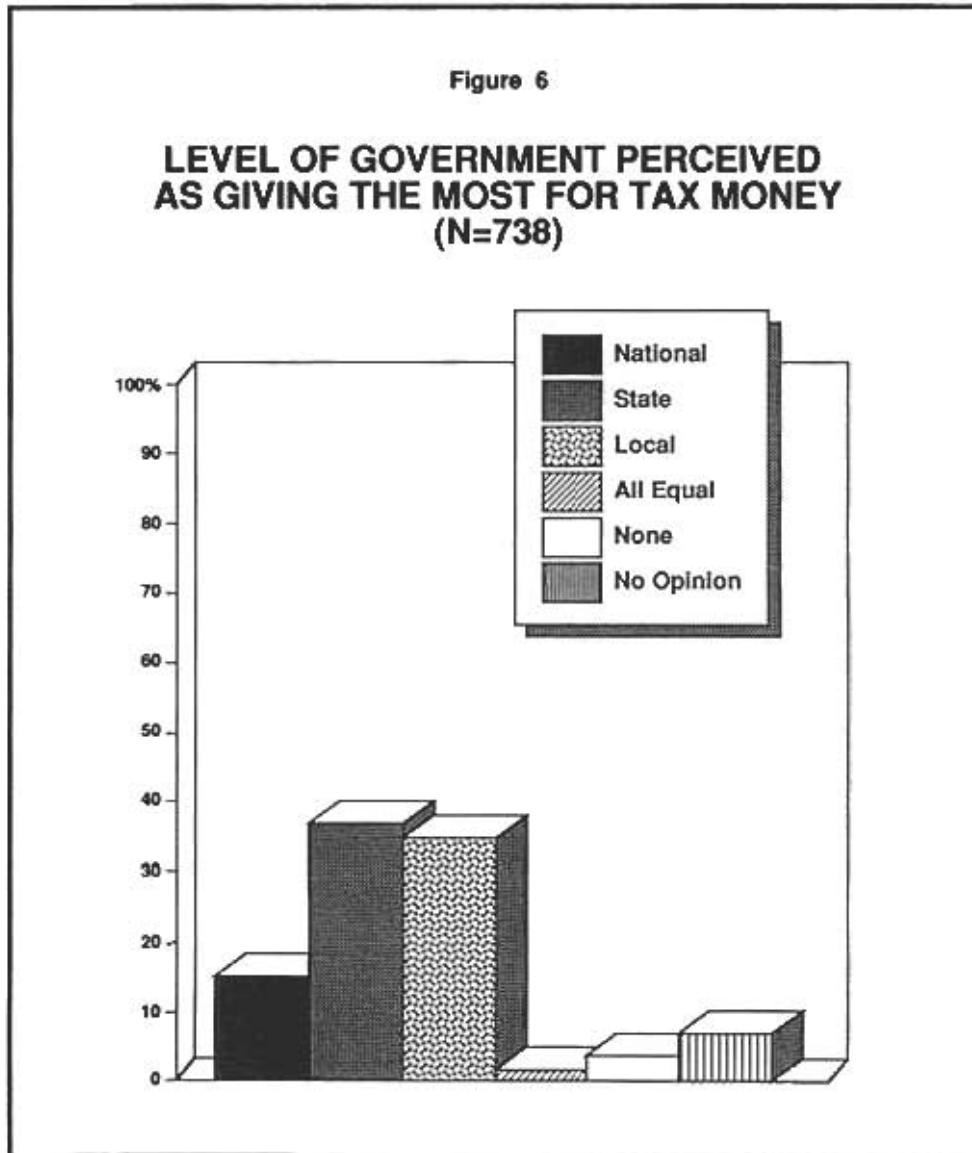
Within our federal system, Idahoans interact with national, state, and local government. They frequently hold different opinions about each of these three levels. The degree of confidence that they have in any given level is often thought of as a barometer of their optimism or pessimism about the capacity of that level of government to solve current problems. Figure 5 shows that:

- 34 percent of the individuals in the sample claimed that they had the most trust and confidence in state government, another 34 percent said the same for local government, and only 13 percent held that view of the national government.
- 11 percent of the respondents volunteered that they have no confidence in any level of government.



One of the factors that erodes trust in government is the perception that government wastes tax dollars. According to the results displayed in Figure 6:

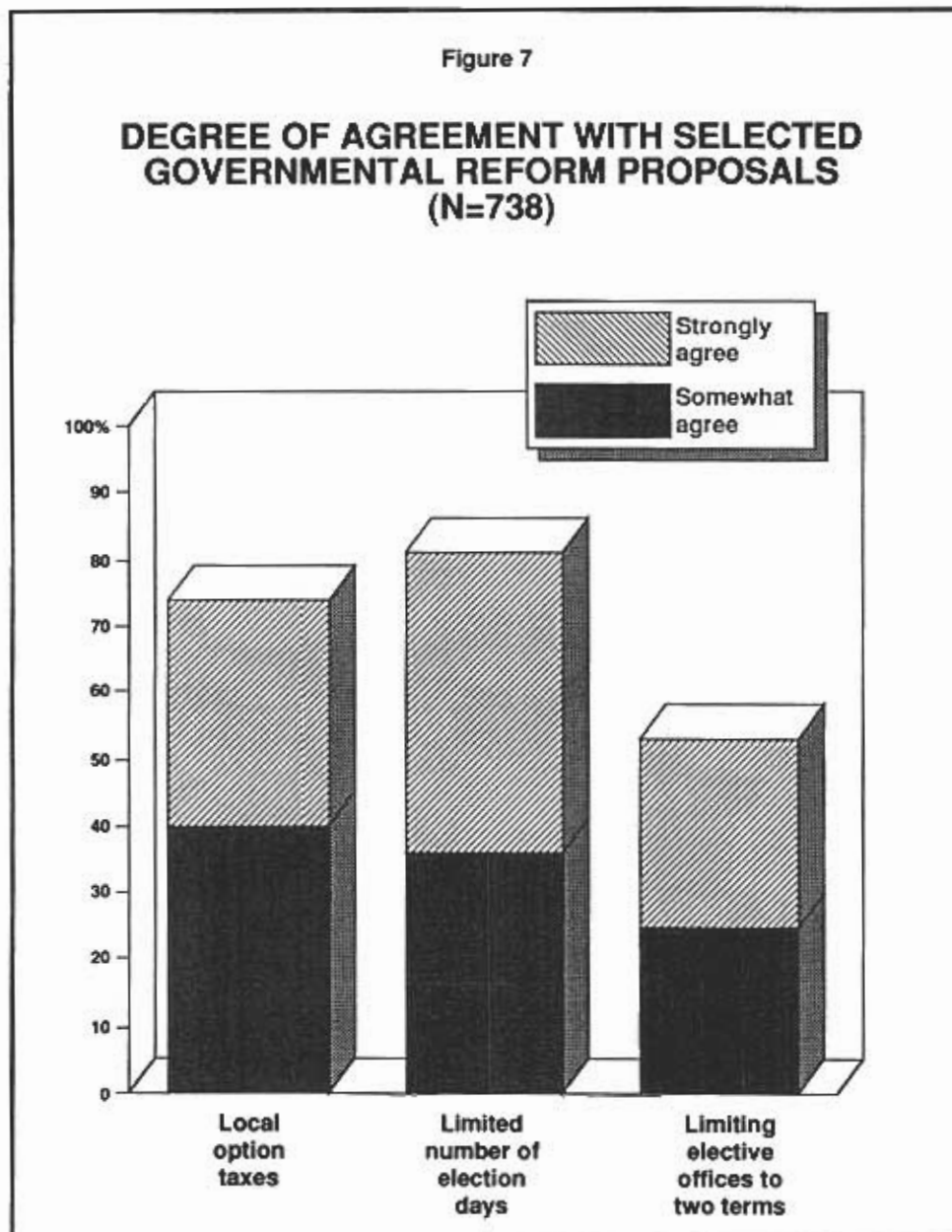
- 37 percent of the individuals in the sample believed that they received the most for their tax money from state government, 35 percent selected local government, and 15 percent picked the national level of government.



As a general rule, the higher the level of education, the greater the confidence in local government and the stronger the belief that a citizen will get the most for his or her tax dollar from local government. Forty-four percent of the respondents with a college degree, compared to 28 percent of those possessing a high school education or less, proclaim the most confidence in local government. Similarly, 43 percent of the college graduates versus 31 percent of the respondents with a high school diploma or less thought that local government gave the most return for the tax dollar.

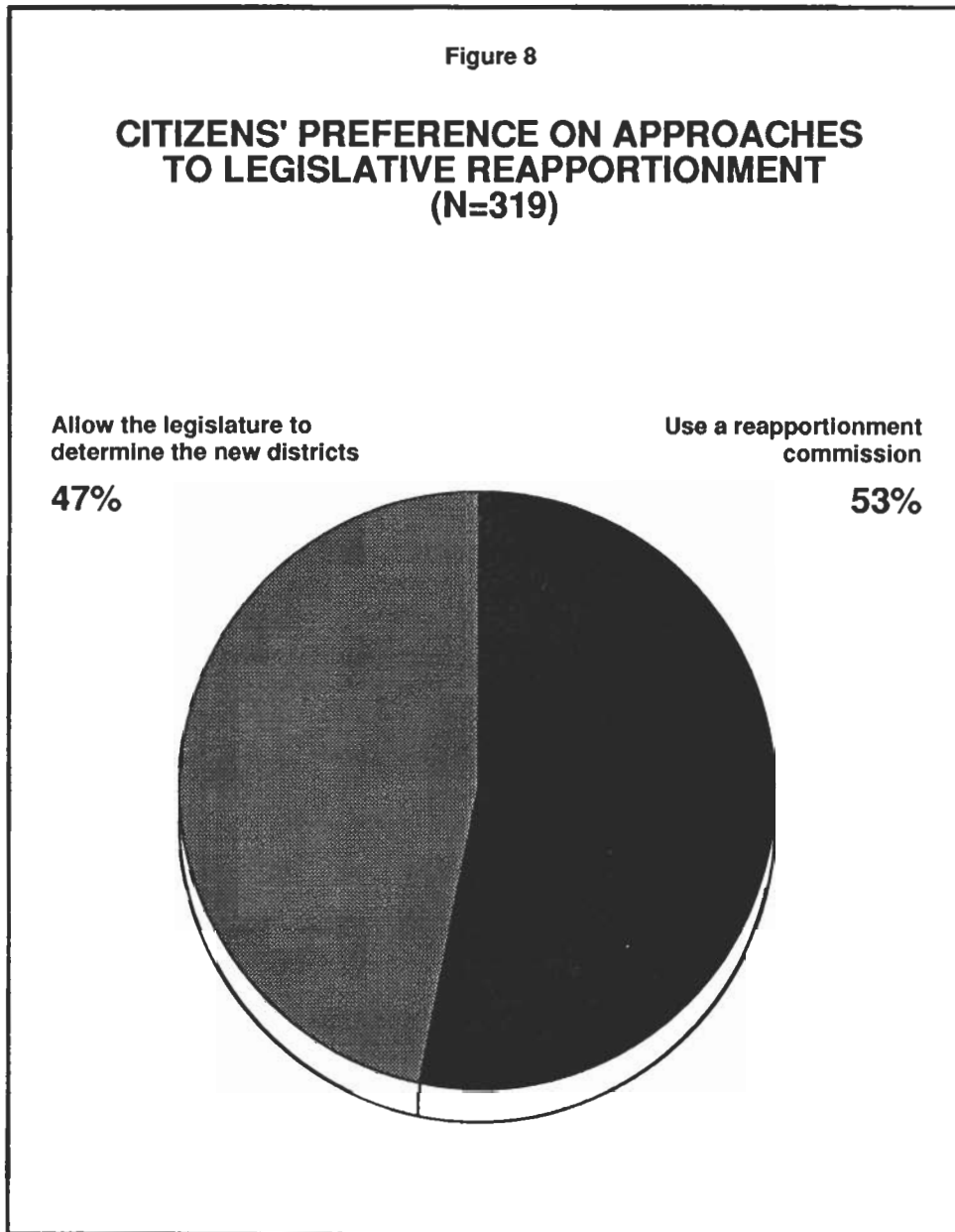
Various proposals have been made to reform certain perceived deficiencies in Idaho's state and local governments. Three of these proposed reforms pertain to local option taxation, election consolidation, and limiting the number of consecutive terms that elected officials in Idaho may serve. As Figure 7 indicates:

- 74 percent of those interviewed would allow communities to establish local option taxes, subject to voter approval.
- 81 percent of the respondents support holding elections in Idaho on a limited number of days.
- 63 percent of the those polled believe that all elective offices in Idaho should be limited to two terms.



Other proposals that currently are being discussed focus on reapportionment. Once the 1990 census is completed, Idaho's state legislature must be reapportioned. At present, there are 42 state senators and 84 state representatives, but the total number of seats will be reduced in the next reapportionment. Fifty-seven percent of the individuals who were interviewed for this study said that they did not know very much about reapportionment and therefore did not have an opinion on how the new state legislative districts should be determined. As shown in Figure 8, those who were familiar with the concept of reapportionment were divided over the question of how it should be done.

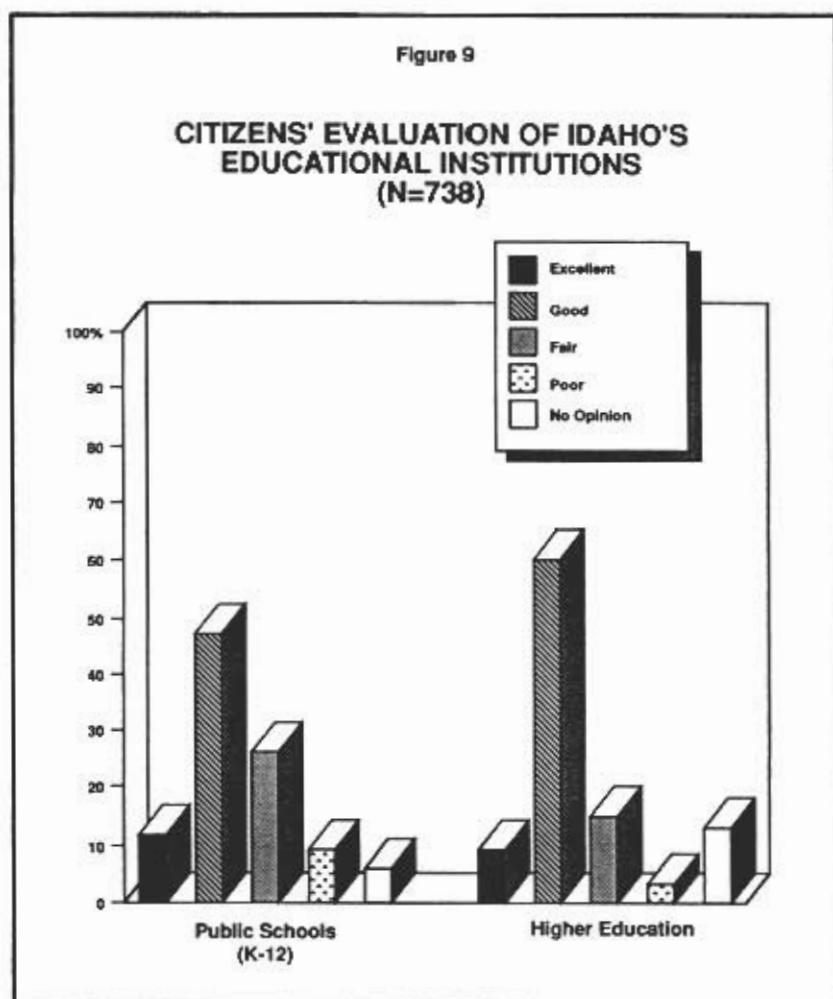
- A majority (53 percent) of the individuals who held an opinion supported using a reapportionment commission to draw the new legislative districts. On the other hand, 47 percent of those with an opinion on how reapportionment should be done thought that the state legislature should determine the boundaries of the new districts.



AN EVALUATION OF PUBLIC EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS

In 1983 a presidential report titled *A Nation at Risk* warned of a "rising tide of mediocrity" within the American school system. Worried about the educational preparation of the next generation of Americans who will face stiff competition in the international marketplace, concerned citizens have recommended numerous plans for enhancing the quality of education in the United States.

To discover how Idahoans evaluate public education within their state, each survey respondent was asked to rate the quality of Idaho's public schools (kindergarten through high school) and public colleges and universities. As Figure 9 demonstrates, they generally gave these educational institutions passing grades.



- 12 percent of the those who were polled said that Idaho's public schools were excellent, 47 percent believed that they were good, 26 percent believed that they were fair, and 9 percent called them poor.
- 9 percent of the survey respondents thought that Idaho's public colleges and universities were excellent, 60 percent judged them to be good, 15 percent felt that they were fair, and 3 percent labeled them poor.

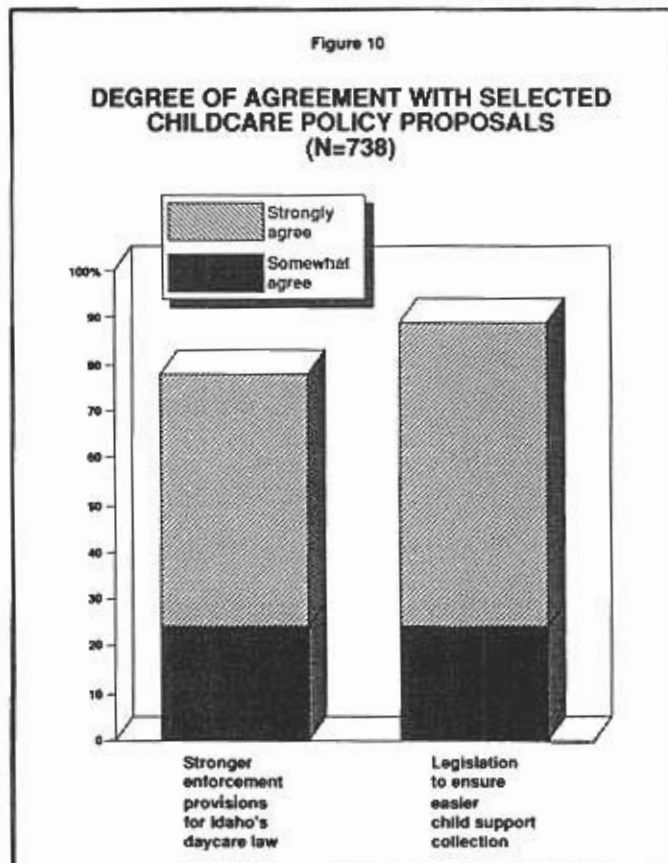
In short, a majority of Idahoans give the state's public schools and system of higher education a favorable evaluation. A total of 59 percent of the respondents rated public schools as good or excellent, and 69 percent rated higher education in Idaho as good or excellent.

CURRENT SOCIAL ISSUES

As Idaho enters its centennial year, a variety of pressing social issues pose the question of what kind of society Idahoans want in the future. Although many residents of the Gem State continue to think of themselves as rugged individualists, both government and the private sector have felt it necessary to institute programs that address a wide assortment of human needs. Disagreements exist, however, over the range of needs that should be covered, as well as over how these programs should be funded.

Figure 10 compares the amount of support for two childcare policy proposals, both of which are favored by over three-fourths of the survey respondents.

- 78 percent of those who responded to the survey favored stronger enforcement provisions for Idaho's daycare law. Specifically, 24 percent agreed and another 54 percent strongly agreed with the proposition that stronger enforcement provisions were warranted.
- 89 percent of the respondents supported the enactment of legislation to ensure collection of child support payments. Of that total, 24 percent agreed and 65 percent strongly agreed with the need for such legislation.



Another social issue confronting Idaho and the nation is how to help citizens who fall below the poverty line. As Figures 11 and 12 indicate:

- 46 percent of those interviewed thought that the government was primarily responsible for helping the poor. Among those who took this position ($n = 338$), 41 percent believed that the national government was the most responsible, 32 percent felt that the bulk of the responsibility belonged to the state government, and 18 percent saw helping the poor as a local government responsibility.
- 30 percent of the survey respondents expressed the view that the family was responsible for supporting those members who could not adequately provide for themselves.
- 7 percent of the respondents saw charitable organizations as bearing the main responsibility for helping the poor.
- 6 percent believed it was the primary responsibility of churches.
- 10 percent believed it was the primary responsibility of other organizations.
- 2 percent believed it was the primary responsibility of no one.

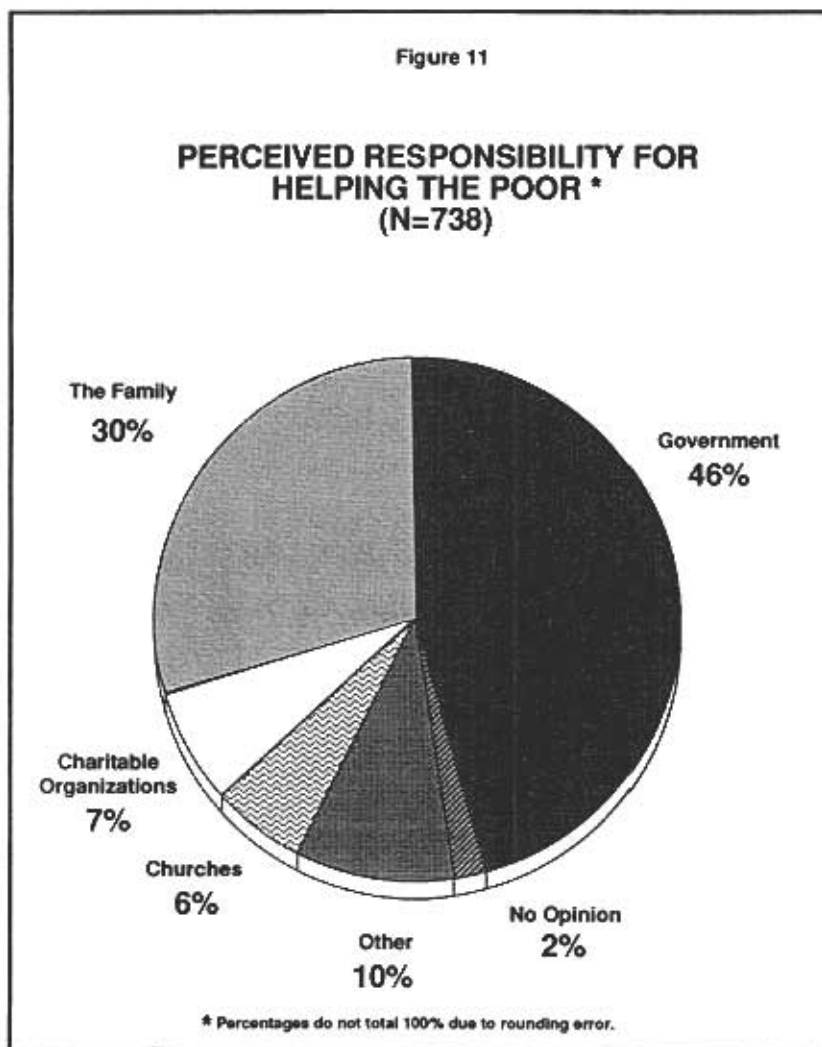
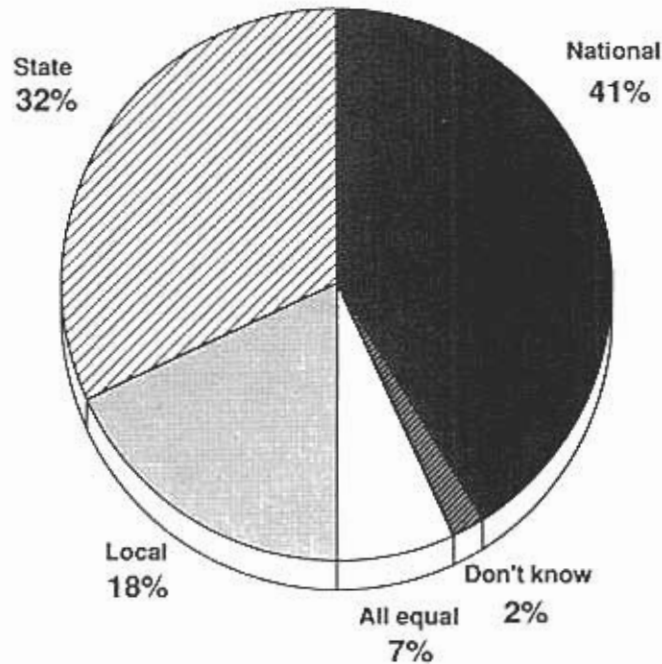


Figure 12

**LEVEL OF GOVERNMENT PERCEIVED AS
MOST RESPONSIBLE FOR HELPING THE POOR
(N=338)**



Abortion may be the most divisive social issue currently facing the state. The recent U.S. Supreme Court decision in *Webster v. Reproductive Health Services* (1989) suggests that each state may have a greater say in regulating the performance of abortions. Survey respondents were asked if they agreed or disagreed with the Supreme Court's decision. They were not asked about their personal views on abortion. As shown in Figure 13:

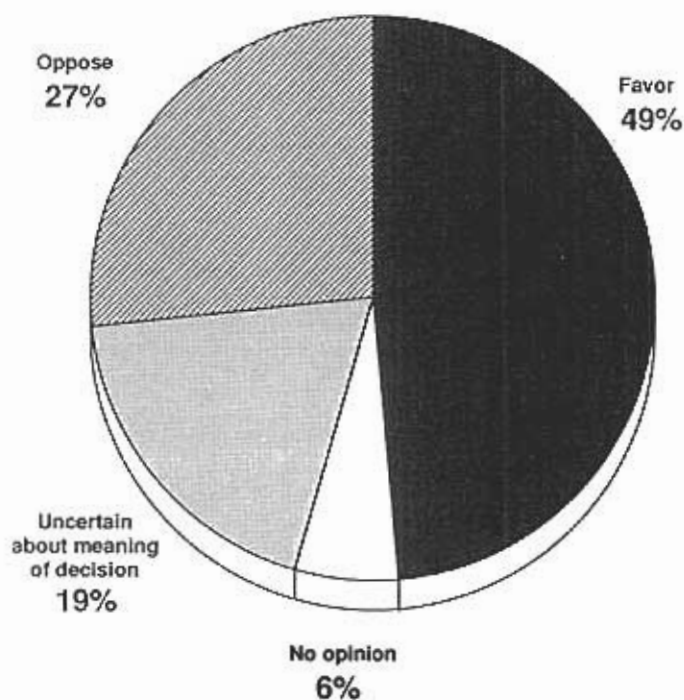
- 49 percent of the respondents said that they agreed with the *Webster* decision, 27 percent disagreed with it, and 6 percent did not express an opinion on the decision.
- Almost one Idahoan in five (19 percent) was uncertain about the meaning and implications of the decision.

Table 4 provides the results for each geographic region of the state.

- The highest levels of agreement with the *Webster* decision are among residents of the counties that comprise Regions V (63 percent in favor) and VI (56 percent in favor).

Figure 13

**CITIZENS' OPINIONS ON THE WEBSTER
DECISION BY THE U. S. SUPREME COURT ***
(N=738)



* Percentages do not total 100% due to rounding error.

TABLE 4
CITIZENS' OPINIONS ON THE WEBSTER
DECISION, BY GEOGRAPHIC REGION*

	State Planning Region					
	I	II	III	IV	V	VI
Favor	41%	52%	45%	41%	63%	56%
Oppose	32	30	30	28	17	20
Uncertain	21	12	20	22	14	20
No Opinion	6	6	6	9	5	3
(Number of Cases)	(90)	(67)	(270)	(104)	(104)	(103)

*Column percentages may not total 100% due to rounding error

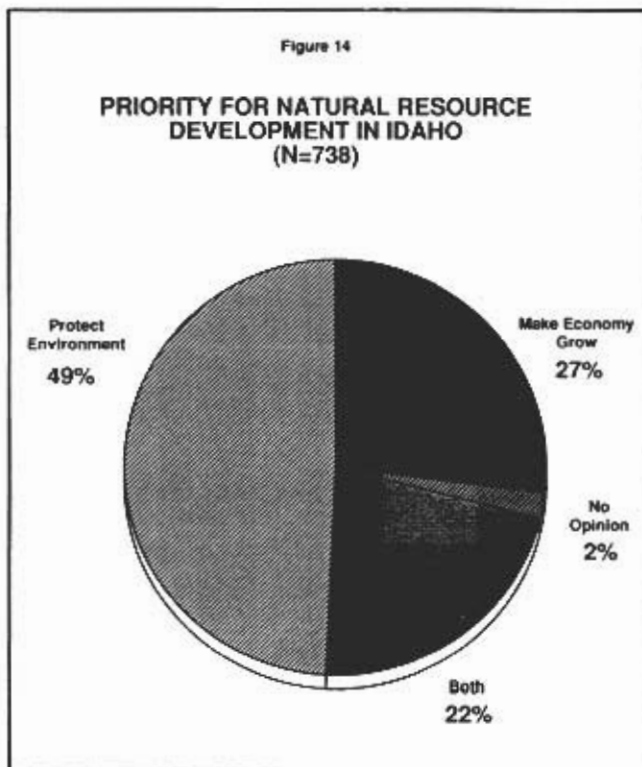
ENVIRONMENTAL PROBLEMS AND PROSPECTS

In the last decade of the twentieth century, aspirations for a bountiful future have been tempered by ominous reports about toxic waste, oil spills, acid rain, global warming, and ozone depletion. According to recent national opinion surveys, environmental concerns occupy a prominent place on the policy agenda of the American public.

Like most matters of public policy, environmental issues are often perceived by the public in terms of trade-offs between environmental protection and economic growth. In a state-wide survey of Idahoans conducted in 1975 under the auspices of the "Idaho's Tomorrow" program, Gem State citizens proclaimed their willingness to back efforts at protecting the environment, especially in the areas of air pollution, water quality, soil erosion, and recycling solid waste. Indeed, when faced with a choice, 65 percent stated that they favored environmental protection over economic growth.

Figure 14 displays the results that were obtained when Idahoans were once again asked how they would develop and manage Idaho's natural resources if they had to make a choice between emphasizing economic growth or protecting the environment.

- 49 percent of the respondents supported protecting the environment, compared to 65 percent in the 1975 survey.
- 27 percent favored making the economy grow, compared to 21 percent in 1975.
- 22 percent advocated an attempt to do both, compared to 11 percent in 1975.



As revealed in Table 5, a majority of women, individuals who continued their education beyond high school, and respondents with household incomes over \$25,000 selected the option of protecting the environment over the option of making the economy grow. Concern with environmental protection is not, however, shared equally among all groups of Idahoans.

- Only 36 percent of the respondents above the age of 60 would choose protecting the environment instead of making the economy grow, compared to 45 percent aged 35 to 60, and 68 percent under the age of 35.

TABLE 5
PRIORITY FOR NATURAL RESOURCE
DEVELOPMENT IN IDAHO, BY DEMOGRAPHIC GROUP*

Demographic Group	Make Economy Grow	Protect Environment	Both	No Opinion	(N)
Total Sample	27%	49%	22%	2%	(738)
Gender					
Male	30	46	24	1	(349)
Female	25	52	20	3	(389)
Age**					
18-34	19	68	12	1	(201)
35-60	30	45	23	2	(358)
61+	31	36	29	4	(174)
Education					
HS or less	30	46	21	3	(318)
Some college/tech.	27	51	22	1	(241)
BA or more	24	52	22	2	(179)
Household Income**					
Under \$25,000	29	47	21	3	(280)
\$25,000 +	26	52	21	2	(423)
State Planning Region					
I	23	50	23	3	(90)
II	30	46	22	2	(67)
III	22	54	22	2	(270)
IV	29	49	21	1	(104)
V	35	46	18	1	(104)
VI	39	39	24	4	(103)

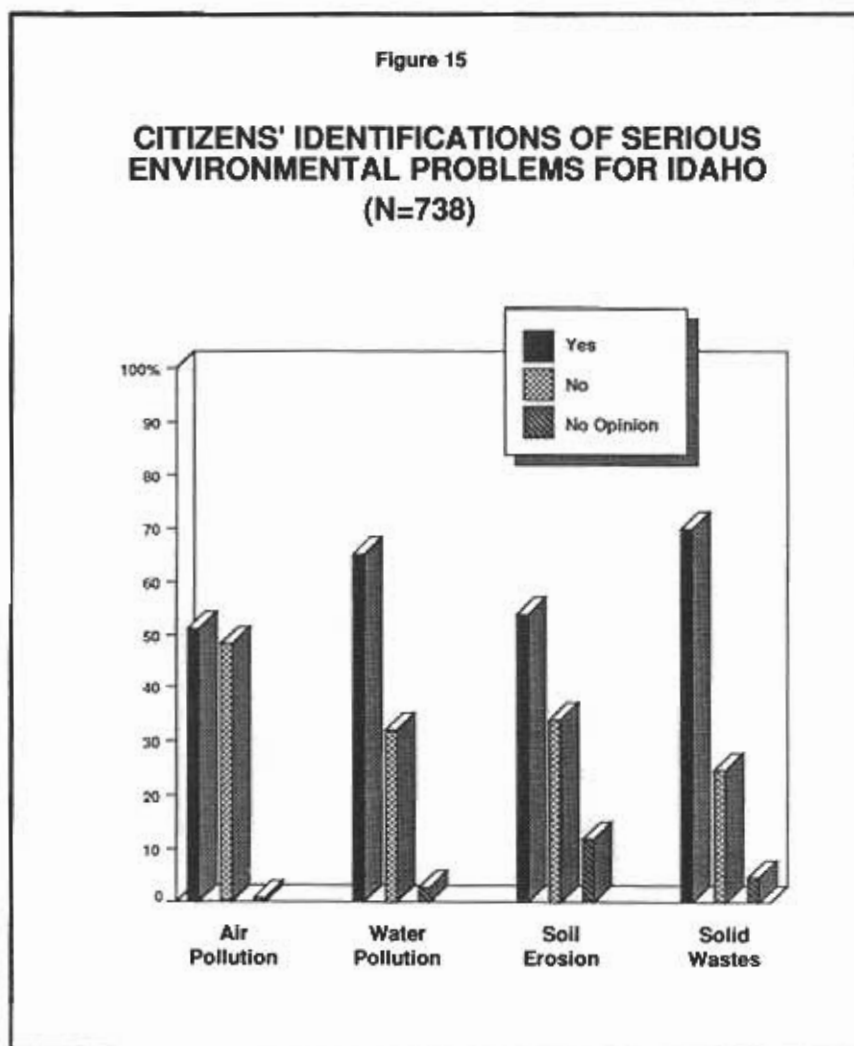
*Row percentages may not total 100% due to rounding error.

**Number of cases less than 738 due to refusal of some respondents to report age or income.

Geographically speaking, support for developing Idaho's natural resources with the most emphasis on economic growth is greatest among residents of Regions V (35 percent) and VI (33 percent), and weakest in Regions I (23 percent) and III (22 percent).

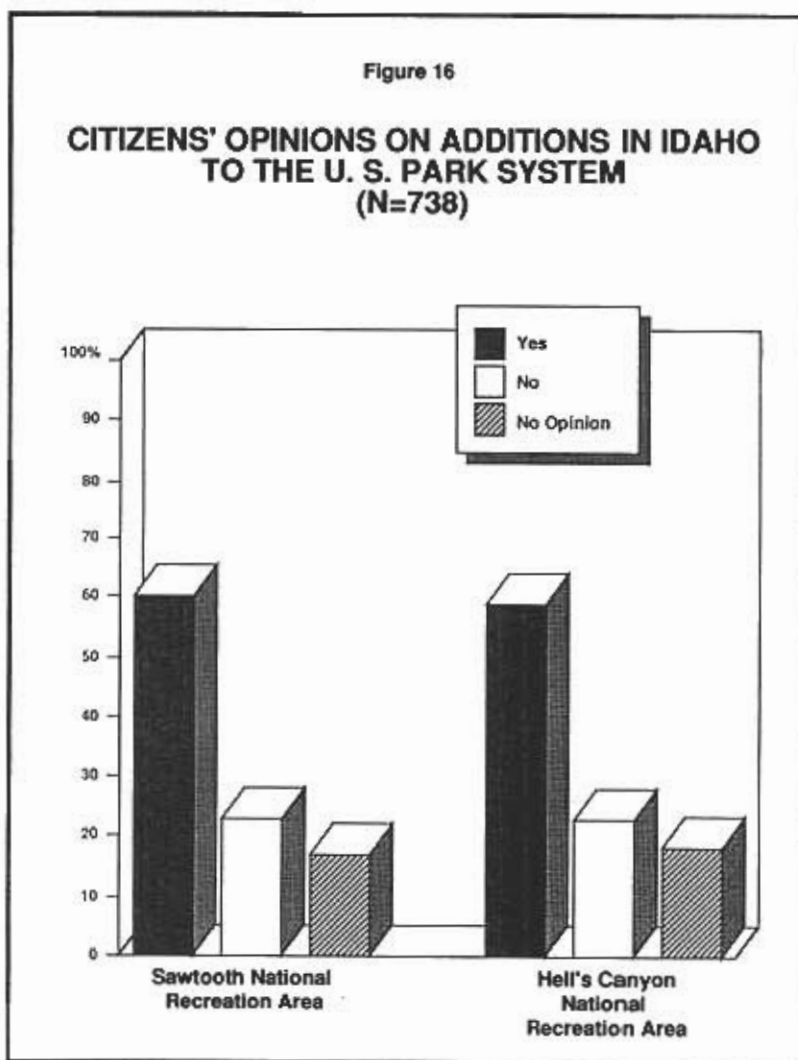
Figure 15 indicates that a majority of Idahoans continue to be concerned about air and water pollution, soil erosion, and the accumulation of solid wastes.

- 70 percent of the respondents sampled agreed that solid wastes presented a serious environmental problem for Idaho.
- 65 percent saw water pollution as a serious problem.
- Air pollution (51 percent) and soil erosion (54 percent) also were cited as serious problems, with the former primarily the concern of citizens in urban areas and the latter a concern of rural residents.



Turning away from some of the perceived environmental problems facing the state to a set of related issues about Idaho's future, Figure 16 displays support for making two additions to the U.S. park system.

- 60 percent of those polled were in favor of the Sawtooth National Recreation Area being included in the U.S. park system.
- 59 percent favored the inclusion of the Hell's Canyon National Recreation Area.

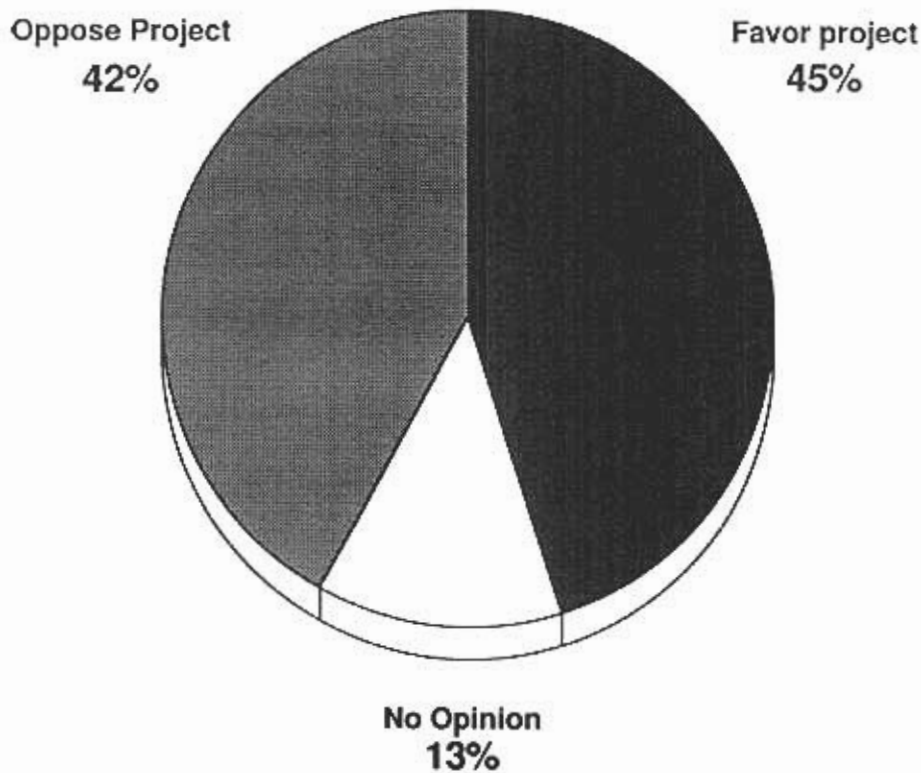


On the other hand, Figure 17 suggests that Gem State residents are divided over whether or not to construct a special isotope separator at the Idaho National Engineering Laboratory that would be employed for recovering plutonium for use in nuclear weapons.

- 45 percent of the respondents favored the project, 42 percent opposed it, and 13 percent did not express an opinion on the issue.

Figure 17

**CITIZENS' POSITIONS ON WHETHER
TO BUILD A SPECIAL ISOTOPE SEPARATOR
AT INEL
(N=738)**



As shown in Table 6, several demographic factors appear to strongly associated with the positions taken on this issue.

- Men (55 percent) are more likely than women (36 percent) to favor the project.
- Among the age groups that were sampled, those younger than 35 are the least likely to support the project (35 percent in favor), those aged 35 to 60 are somewhat more supportive (46 percent in favor), and those older than 60 years of age are the most supportive (54 percent in favor).
- Residents of eastern Idaho counties are highly supportive of the project (69 percent of Region VI in favor, 61 percent of Region V), whereas residents in northern and southwestern counties tend to oppose the project.

TABLE 6
CITIZENS' POSITIONS ON SPECIAL ISOTOPE
SEPARATOR, BY DEMOGRAPHIC CATEGORY*

Demographic Group	Favor Project	Oppose Project	No Opinion	
Total Sample	45%	42%	13%	
Gender				
Male	55	38	7	(349)
Female	36	46	18	(389)
Age**				
18-34	35	55	10	(201)
35-60	46	41	12	(358)
61+	54	31	16	(174)
Education				
HS or less	47	42	11	(318)
Some college/tech.	43	45	12	(241)
BA or more	45	39	16	(179)
Household Income**				
Under \$25,000	43	44	14	(280)
\$25,000 +	46	42	12	(423)
State Planning Region				
I	34	51	14	(90)
II	39	48	13	(67)
III	36	49	14	(270)
IV	42	49	9	(104)
V	61	29	11	(104)
VI	69	20	11	(103)

*Row percentage may not total 100% due to rounding error.

**Number of cases less than 738 due to refusal of some respondents to report age or income.

SUMMARY

Our extraordinarily turbulent times have created a host of challenges for Idaho in the 1990s. Although most Idahoans are satisfied with the quality of life in the Gem State, they are aware that various problems exist, particularly with regard to education, economic development, and the environment.

The overwhelming majority of citizens who have an opinion on what to do with the current state budget surplus submit that it should be spent on current needs. Idahoans are most supportive of state spending increases in public education, higher education, roads and bridges, law enforcement, and senior citizens programs.

Idahoans tend to have more confidence in state and local government than in the federal government, and they believe that they get more for their tax dollar from these two levels of government than they do from Washington. Nevertheless, a majority of Idahoans back such proposals as local option taxes and election consolidation under the assumption that these reforms will correct certain perceived deficiencies in state and local governments.

Idaho citizens also support efforts to add stronger enforcement provisions to the state's daycare law, and they see a need for legislation to ensure the collection of child support payments.

Finally, in the area of environmental protection, Idahoans are concerned about the problems of air and water pollution, soil erosion, and the accumulation of solid wastes.

METHODOLOGICAL APPENDIX

The findings reported above are derived from an analysis of data collected in a survey of 738 respondents who were interviewed by telephone between October 2 and October 10, 1989. Interviews were conducted from 5:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m. on weekdays, from 11:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. on Saturday, and from 1:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m. on Sunday. Confidentiality and anonymity were assured to each respondent.

Sample Selection

The survey questionnaire was administered to individuals 18 years of age or older in a random probability sample of private households in Idaho. In order to draw the sample, the state was divided into the six regions shown in Map 1, and then separate sub-samples were selected from these regions. Each regional sub-sample size was made proportional to the regional population size, as described in the 1989 Bureau of Census estimates. The primary benefits of this procedure are an increase in geographic representativeness and a reduction in sampling error.

A sampling frame of all working telephone exchanges within each region was constructed based on the Waksberg method. All of the central office codes within a region were organized into banks of 100 numbers each, with the banks being defined by suffixes of 0000-0099, 0100-0199, 0200-0299, . . . , 9900-9999. These banks were sampled with equal mathematical probability by means of computer generated random numbers. If a number turned out to be a working household number, an interview was attempted and the bank was retained for additional calls. If it was not a residential phone number, the bank was eliminated from further sampling consideration. By using this version of random-digit dialing, we obtained complete coverage of all residential numbers, including both listed and unlisted exchanges.

Once a given household was identified, we used the "last birthday" technique to randomly select a respondent within the household. This procedure was employed because it lowers refusal rates, is easy for interviewers to use, and yields a far more representative sample than uncontrolled selection.

In sum, our sampling design avoids selection bias by giving each element in the sampling frame a known and nonzero probability of being selected. Of course, no survey is a perfect barometer of public opinion. By using the above procedures, however, we can estimate with a certain degree of confidence how discrepant the sample results are from the true population values. Since we have adopted the most stringent statistical assumptions about the variability of the population under investigation, we are 95 percent confident that our results are accurate within plus or minus four percentage points for findings based on the entire sample. That is to say, the chances are 95 out of 100 that if the entire adult population of Idaho living in private households with access to a telephone had been polled, the results would not deviate from our sample findings by more than four percentage points. Whereas this is the maximum sampling error of the state-wide sample, the sampling error associated with estimates based on subsets of the overall sample can be higher, particularly for numerically small groups within the sample.

Interviewing Procedures

Methods of interviewing can affect the accuracy of survey results. Consequently, the questionnaire was given developmental and polishing pretests, and all interviews were conducted with the Survey Research Center's computer-assisted telephone interviewing system (CATI). The final version of the questionnaire was programed into the computer, read by the interviewer from the computer screen, and responses directly entered from the keyboard into the computer. Because the CATI system allows for extensive branching and nesting of questions, as well as the inclusion of logical checks and the randomization of response categories, the program makes sure that the questions are asked in the correct sequence and the responses are consistent with the questions being asked. Thus the procedures we used improved our quality control over the interview by eliminating possible data entry errors and allowing the interviewer to focus on one question at a time without worrying about whether the next question in the survey was appropriate for the type of individual being interviewed.

To further enhance the accuracy of the survey, the nonresponse problem was dealt with by making callbacks to interview respondents who initially could not be contacted (busy signal, not at home, etc.) or were momentarily unavailable. In addition, the interviewers were carefully trained in ways to reduce the number of refusals. The response rate for the survey was 63 percent.

Caveats and Qualifications

By using the procedures described above, we preserved the anonymity of those individuals who were interviewed. Moreover, following standard professional practice, their names were not asked and if they were volunteered, they were not recorded.

Although the sample reflects the state-wide population about which we want to generalize, it would be well to sound a note of caution about the inferences that may be drawn from the findings. First, the problem of nonattitudes is one of the most pervasive and complex problems in public opinion polling. If the topic of a poll is so remote from the respondents' concerns that they do not hold genuine views on it, then the poll will give a misleading portrait of public opinion. One factor that mitigates the problem of nonattitudes in this survey is the use of screening and filter questions to separate likely attitude holders from nonattitude respondents. Another factor that minimized the possibility of receiving superficial responses to the interview was the use of careful probing by interviewers to be sure that those respondents with a nonexistent opinion were not forced into a choice, and those respondents with a genuine opinion did not opt for a neutral position on a controversial question.

A second caveat that must be borne in mind when interpreting the results is the problem of refusals. Although the response rate for this survey is well within the range of similar telephone surveys conducted by nongovernmental organizations, a bias can be introduced into the data if for some reason the refusals were concentrated among a certain group within the population. Fortunately refusals did not appear to be concentrated within any specific region of the state. Nevertheless, care should still be exercised so as not to attribute greater precision to the results than is justified.

The last warning that should be raised pertains to the nature of telephone surveys. Despite widespread ownership of telephones throughout the target population, low-income households and those households in which the head is nonwhite and under the age of 35 tend to have a lower percentage of phones than other households. This sampling bias may result in an under-representation of some types of potential respondents within certain minority groups. Given the homogeneity of Idaho's population, this is not as severe a problem as it might be in more ethnically diverse states. Nonetheless it is a limitation that is inherent to some degree in any telephone survey.

For Information

about Participating in the 1990/91 *Idaho Policy Survey*

Contact:

The Survey Research Center
School of Social Sciences and Public Affairs
Boise State University
1910 University Drive
Boise, ID 83725
(208) 385-3776

Additional Copies

of this report may be obtained from
The BSU Bookstore, 1910 University Drive,
Boise, ID 83725. Price: \$5.00 per copy.