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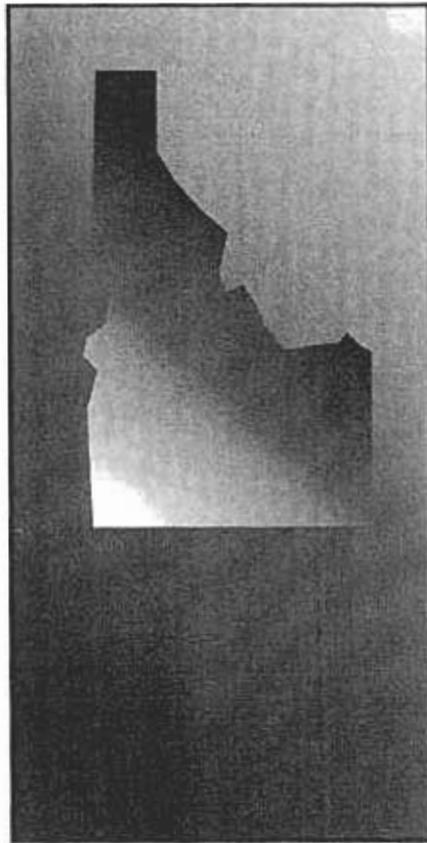
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POLICY

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SURVEY

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

#3

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February 1992

IDAHO  
POLICY  
SURVEY

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**Gregory A. Raymond**

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## INTRODUCTION

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.

The *Idaho Policy Survey* is a continuing program in the College of Social Sciences and Public Affairs at Boise State University. Its primary purpose is to examine public opinion on issues that are currently the subject of debate or that civic leaders have identified as potentially important 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 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 report presents the results from the third annual omnibus survey of the opinions held by Idahoans on public affairs issues. It builds upon its predecessors by asking many of the same questions that were posed to respondents during the past two years. Our intent is to build a longitudinal data-base so that trends in public opinion can be traced over time. In addition to the questions that we repeat from year to year, each volume of the *Idaho Policy Survey* contains findings that are derived from asking questions that bear upon topics that may be of special interest only during a particular year. Thus the reader is given information that allows over-time comparisons of enduring issues, as well as focused case studies of hot topics.

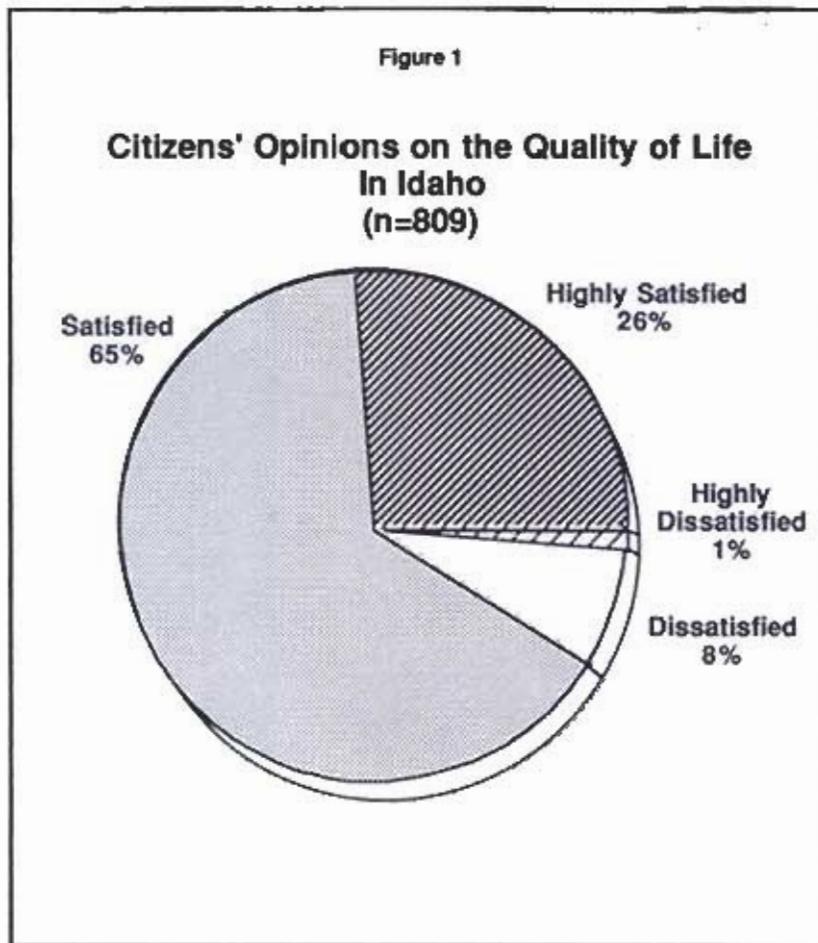
Volume 3 of the *Idaho Policy Survey* contains five sections. As in the two previous survey reports, the first section examines citizens' opinions on the quality of life in Idaho, and what problems facing the state are seen as the most important. The next section focuses on attitudes toward the federal, state, and local levels of government, as well as on recently suggested governmental reforms. The third section examines the perceived fairness of different types of taxes and the degree of support for state spending increases in thirteen broad service areas. The fourth section moves on to consider a variety of social, health, and education issues. Finally, the last section explores how residents of the Gem State feel about potential environmental problems in Idaho. The report concludes with a methodological appendix that summarizes the procedure used to draw the sample and conduct the interviews.

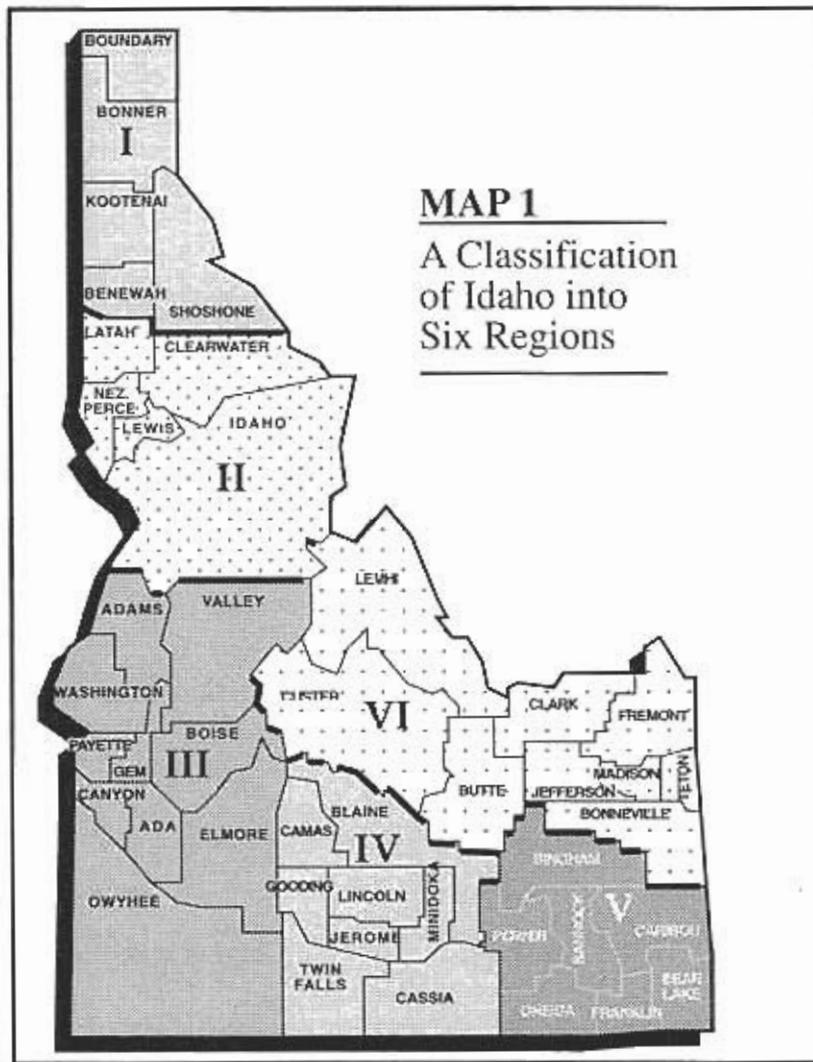
The research for this report was conducted under the direction of Dr. Gregory A. Raymond, with the assistance of Thomas E. Mayes. Faculty from the College of Social Sciences and Public Affairs who helped construct the survey questionnaire included Professors John C. Freemuth (Political Science), David Johnson (Social Work), Gary F. Moncrief (Political Science), W. David Patton (Graduate Program in Public Affairs), Robert C. Sims (History), James B. Weatherby (Graduate Program in Public Affairs), and Stephanie Witt (Political Science). Additional contributions to the project were made by Larry Clark (Survey Research Center Interviewing Supervisor), Patricia L. Trofast, and various members of the Boise State University staff.

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: Britta Anderson, Angela Black, Sheri Carver, Steve Carver, Larry Clark, Rhett Cook, Sheri Cook, Jason Doran, Colleen Fellows, Mitch Ison, Bilal Itani, Tim Kettle, Renae Knapp, Richard Manweller, Mark McClure, Myra Miller, Tanwir Rahman, Darlene Rourke, Reza Sadeghi, Donna Selle, Jonah Shue, Shannon Smith, Rod Walker, and Joel Wallace. Their hard work is much appreciated.

## THE QUALITY OF LIFE IN IDAHO

The third annual *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 the question, with respondents from counties in the South (Regions III, IV, and V) voicing the greatest satisfaction and those from counties in the North (Regions I and II) expressing greatest dissatisfaction (see Map 1).





**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	28%	25%	30%	23%	22%	19%
Satisfied	57	62	63	67	69	70
Dissatisfied	9	9	7	10	8	10
Highly Dissatisfied	4	3	0	0	1	0
(Number of Cases)	(100)	(71)	(295)	(113)	(114)	(116)

\*Column percentages many not total 100% due to omission of "Don't Know" responses

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 to be 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, with four specific issues receiving particular attention — the environment, economic development, education, and taxes/government spending. As depicted in Figure 2:

- Environmental issues are perceived as the state's single most important problem by over one-fifth of the citizens in the survey.
- 17 percent of the respondents point to some aspect of economic development as the major problem confronting the state.
- Education and taxes/government spending were each identified by 13 percent of the respondents as primary concerns.

Figure 2

**Citizens' Designations of  
the Most Important Problem Facing Idaho  
(n=809)**

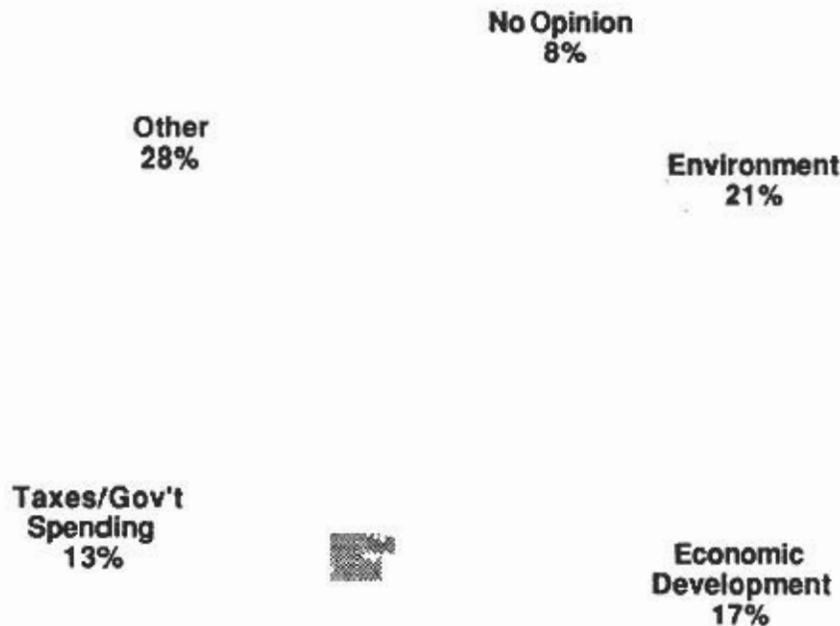


Figure 3 portrays the expectations of Idahoans for the next decade.

- 47 percent of those individuals in the sample who responded to the question of whether they expected their personal life in the 1990s to get easier or harder answered that they felt it would get harder.

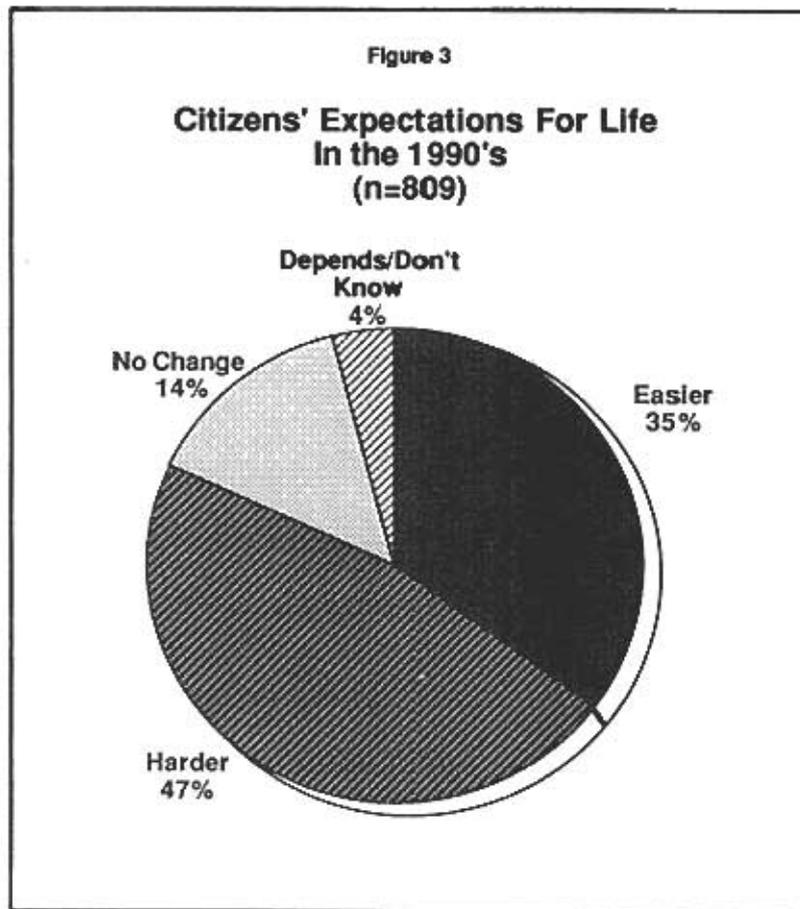


Table 2 provides a comparison of the expectations for the future held by different demographic groups. As a general rule, the lower the level of education, the less the income, and the longer the residency in Idaho, the greater the propensity to believe that life will become more difficult in the future. Residents of Region VI are the least likely of respondents from any state planning region to hold the view that their personal lives would become easier during the current decade.

**TABLE 2**  
**A COMPARISON OF POSITIVE AND NEGATIVE EXPECTATIONS**  
**FOR LIFE IN THE 1990s, BY DEMOGRAPHIC GROUP\***

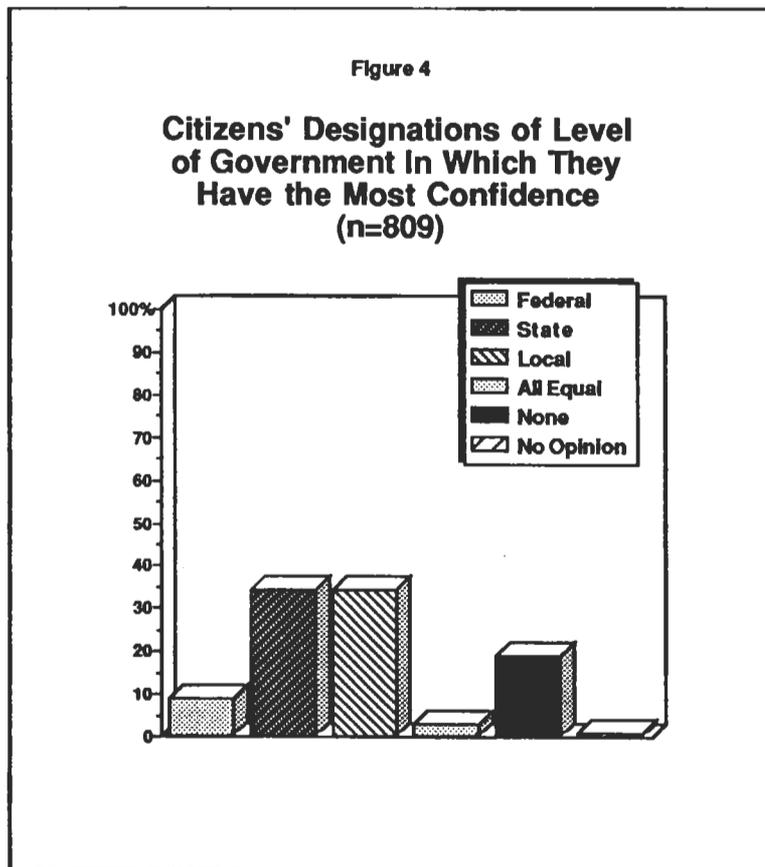
<u>Demographic Group</u>	Citizens' Expectations			(n)
	Easier	Harder	No Change	
<b>Total Sample</b>	35%	47%	14%	(809)
<b>Gender</b>				
Male	35	46	14	(391)
Female	35	48	13	(417)
<b>Age</b>				
18-34	42	51	4	(238)
35-60	37	45	13	(416)
61+	18	48	30	(153)
<b>Education</b>				
HS or less	27	52	14	(300)
Some college/tech.	39	47	11	(272)
BA or more	40	40	17	(233)
<b>Household Income</b>				
Under \$25,000	31	50	14	(275)
\$25,000 +	38	44	14	(496)
<b>Length of Residence</b>				
Under 20 years	43	43	10	(270)
20 years +	31	49	15	(539)
<b>State Planning Region</b>				
I	37	42	19	(100)
II	32	48	13	( 71)
III	38	46	13	(295)
IV	34	46	14	(113)
V	40	47	8	(114)
VI	24	53	16	(116)

\*Row percentages may not total 100% due to omission of "Don't Know" responses. Number of cases in certain groups is less than 809 due to refusal of some respondents to report demographic information.

## POLITICAL CONFIDENCE AND GOVERNMENT REFORM

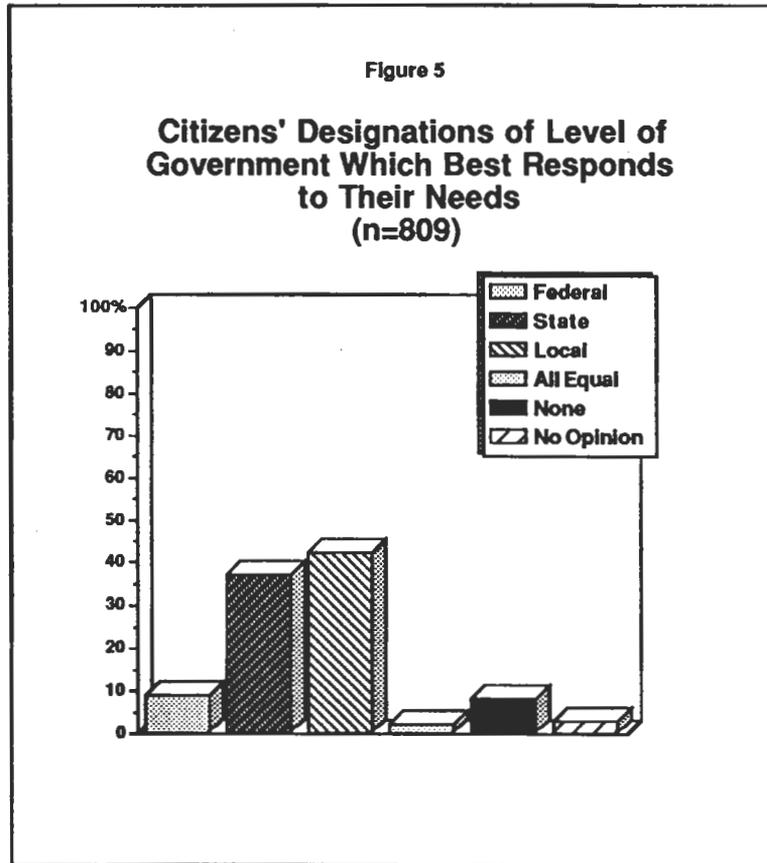
Idahoans interact with federal, state, and local government. They frequently hold different opinions about each of these three levels within the American political system. The degree of confidence that they have in any given level is often thought of as a barometer of their optimism or pessimism about the capacity of that level of government to solve current problems. Figure 4 shows that:

- 34 percent of the individuals in the sample claimed that they had the most confidence in local government, another 34 percent said the same for state government, and only 8 percent held that view of the federal government.
- 19 percent of the respondents said that they have no confidence in any level of government.



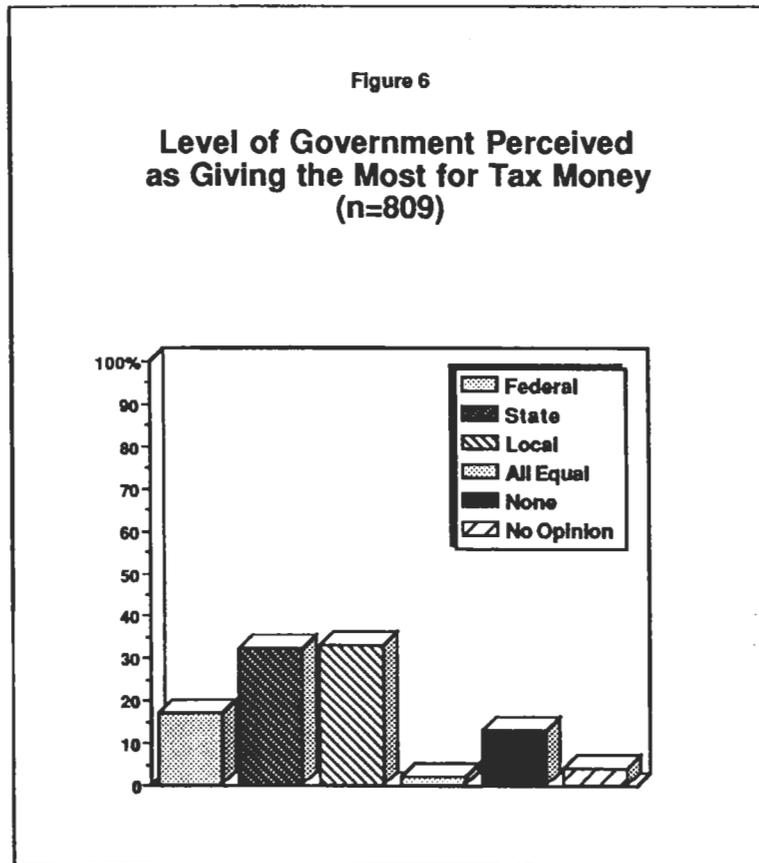
When asked to name the level of government that best responds to their needs, Figure 5 reveals that:

- 42 percent of those polled believe that local government responds best, 37 percent selected state government, and 11 percent picked the federal 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:

- 33 percent of the individuals in the sample believed that they received the most for their tax money from local government, 32 percent selected state government, and 17 percent picked the federal government.



Overall, 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-three 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, 50 percent of the college graduates versus 32 percent of the respondents with a high school diploma or less thought that local government best responded to their needs.

Closely related to these findings (which are consistent with the results from our two previous annual surveys) are feelings that politics is too complex for ordinary citizens to understand and that public officials are not attentive to citizen concerns. As indicated in Table 3:

- 73 percent of those interviewed agreed with the statement that “politics and government are so complicated that it is hard to understand what’s really going on.”
- 52 percent of those polled agreed with the statement that “public officials don’t really care what voters think.”

**TABLE 3**  
**A COMPARISON OF CITIZENS' OPINIONS ABOUT**  
**POLITICS, BY DEMOGRAPHIC GROUP\***

<u>Demographic Group</u>	<u>Percentage of Respondents Who Agree</u>	
	Politics is too complicated to understand	Public officials don't care what voters think
<b>Total Sample</b>	73%	52%
<b>Gender</b>		
Male	67	53 (391)
Female	79	52 (417)
<b>Age</b>		
18-34	70	50 (238)
35-60	71	53 (416)
61+	82	54 (153)
<b>Education</b>		
HS or less	82	60 (300)
Some college/tech.	77	53 (272)
BA or more	55	41 (233)
<b>Household Income</b>		
Under \$25,000	79	56 (275)
\$25,000 +	70	50 (496)
<b>Length of Residence</b>		
Under 20 years	66	50 (270)
20 years +	76	53 (539)
<b>State Planning Region</b>		
I	73	46 (100)
II	80	44 ( 71)
III	71	59 (295)
IV	74	51 (113)
V	68	51 (114)
VI	75	49 (116)

*\*Number of cases in certain groups is less than 809 due to refusal of some respondents to report demographic information.*

In the light of these feelings, it is not surprising that considerable support exists for various proposals to reform certain perceived deficiencies in the political system. The establishment of term limitations is one of the most frequently debated reforms. Figure 7 indicates:

- 76 percent of the respondents supported the establishment of term limitations for members of Congress, and 74 percent supported term limitations on elected state officials.

Reapportionment lies at the heart of many discussions of political reform. At present, there are 42 state senators and 84 state representatives, but the legislature must be cut by at least 21 seats and new legislative districts must be drawn. Figure 8 provides the results that were obtained when respondents were asked about how Idaho's state legislature should be reapportioned:

- 50 percent of those who responded to the survey supported using an independent reapportionment commission to draw Idaho's new legislative districts. On the other hand, 22 percent thought that the state legislature should determine the boundaries of the new districts, and only 12 percent believed that the courts should be involved in redistricting.

A final question asked of the survey respondents was whether they believed that the increased attention being given to the private lives of public officials and candidates was a bad thing for politics and government in the United States.

- 55 percent of those polled disapproved of such attention, while 41 percent voiced their approval.

Figure 7

### Citizens' Support for Term Limitations (n=809)

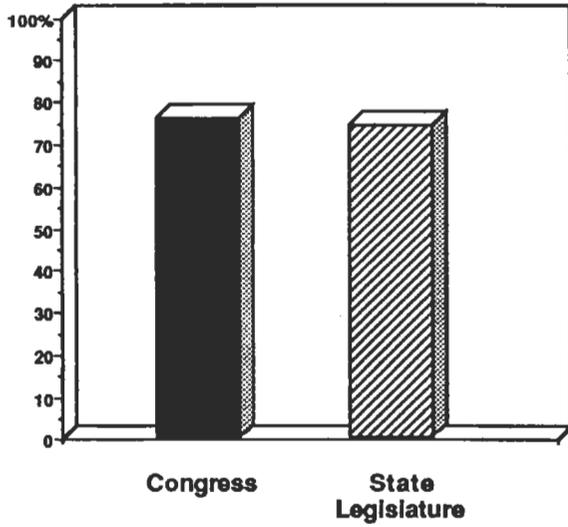
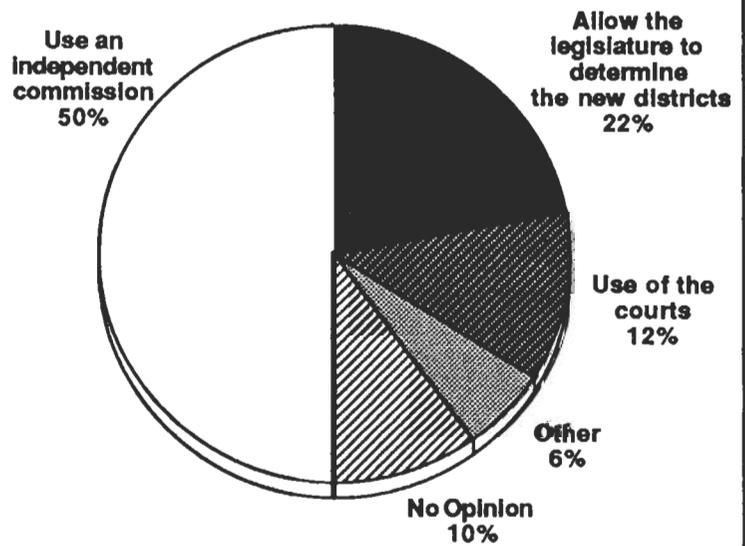


Figure 8

### Citizens' Preferences on Approaches to Legislative Reapportionment (n=809)

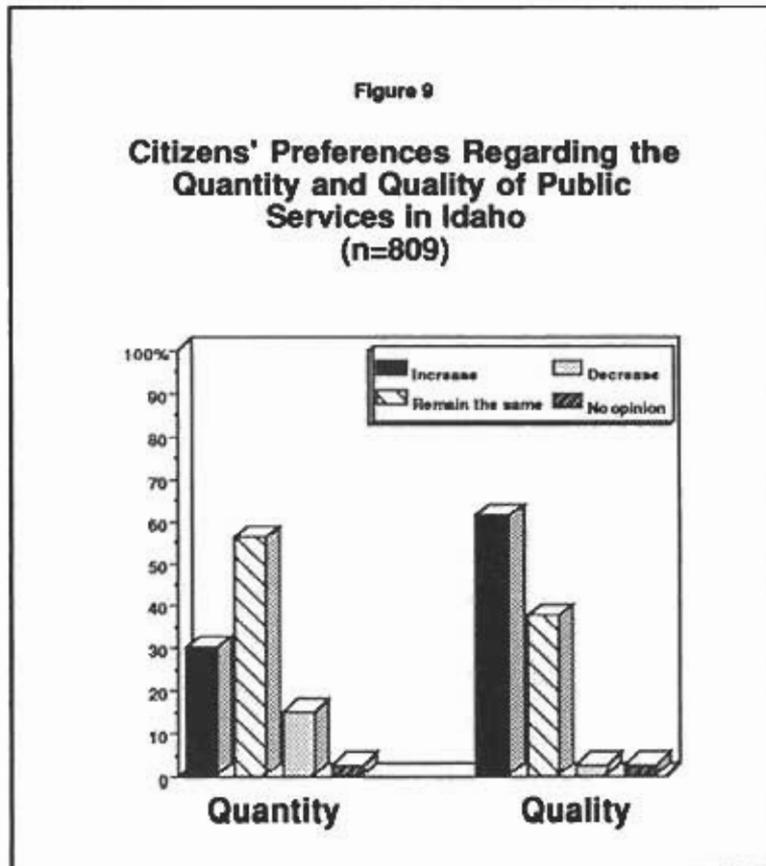


## STATE SPENDING PRIORITIES

Recent nation-wide surveys have revealed deep public concern regarding America's economic health and frustration over what is perceived as the inability of government officials to take the necessary steps to move the country out of the current recession. While Idaho has not yet experienced the economic hardship afflicting some regions of the country, many Idahoans worry about the state's economic future. As reported earlier, almost one-third of those polled believed that either economic development or taxes/government spending were the most important problems facing Idaho.

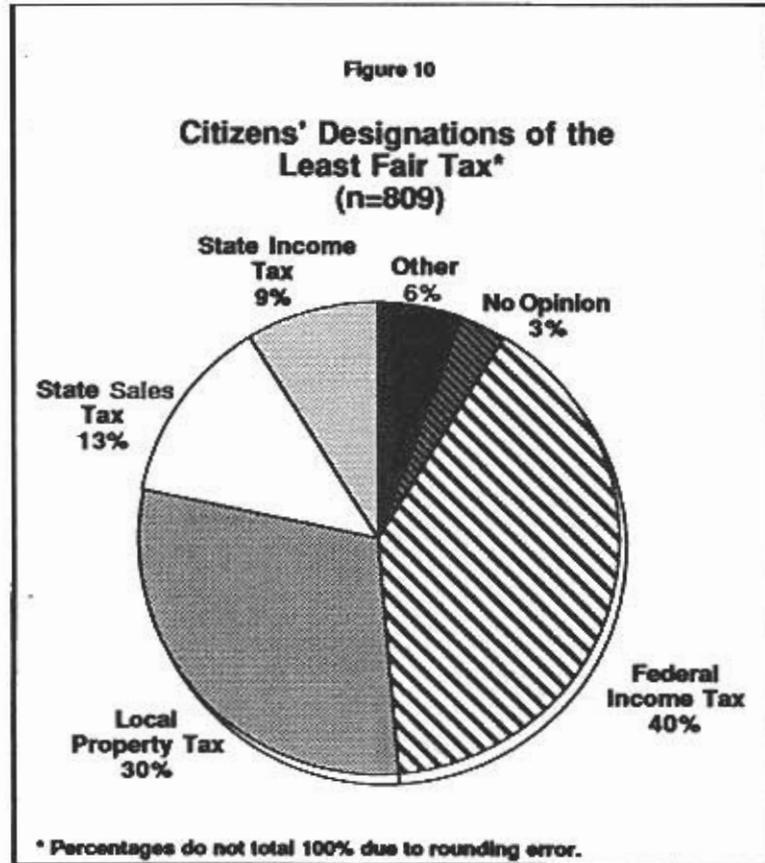
One of the issues facing any state government in uncertain economic times is how to balance the quantity and quality of services provided to the public. Figure 9 shows that:

- Whereas 30 percent of those surveyed called for an increase in the quantity of public services in Idaho, 61 percent wanted an increase in the quality of existing service.
- 56 percent of the respondents preferred to maintain the current quantity of public services, while only 36 percent were satisfied with the quality of current public services.
- 12 percent of the respondents in the survey believed that state government should decrease the quality of services, and only 2 percent desired a cut in the quality of public services.



Increases in either the quantity or quality of public services are linked to revenue. Figure 10 reveals that Idahoans differentiate among different types of taxes based on their perceived fairness.

- 40 percent of the respondents in our sample claimed that the federal income tax was the least fair tax that they paid, 30 percent designated local property tax, 13 percent asserted that it was the state sales tax, and 9 percent singled out the state income tax.

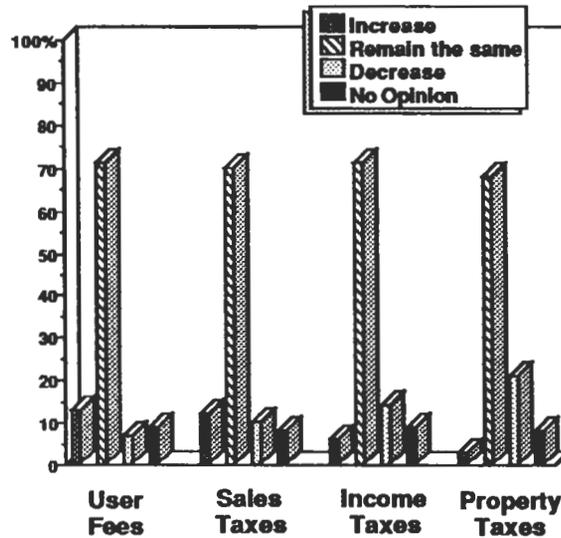


Government in Idaho receives approximately 29 percent of its funding from user fees, 26 percent from income taxes, 24 percent from property taxes, and 21 percent from sales taxes. Everyone in our sample was asked whether he or she was generally satisfied with the amounts received from each source or whether the combination should be changed with some sources increasing and others decreasing. As shown in Figure 11:

- 71 percent of the respondents wanted the amount obtained from user fees to remain the same. Similar results were found for income taxes (71 percent), sales taxes (70 percent), and property taxes (68 percent).
- 13 percent of the respondents supported an increase in the proportion of funds that came from user fees, 12 percent backed an increase in sales taxes, 6 percent said that funding from income taxes should rise, and 3 percent advocated a heavier reliance upon property taxes.
- 21 percent of the respondents sought a decrease in the funding derived from property taxes, 14 percent held the same view about income taxes, 10 percent advocated a decrease in sales taxes, and 7 percent wanted the amount obtained from user fees to be decreased.

Figure 11

**Changes Desired in Current State  
Revenue Breakdown  
(n=809)**



Given that three out of ten survey respondents stated that local property taxes were the least fair tax, and given that just over one-fifth of the respondents called for a decrease in the proportion of government funding that comes from such taxes, each individual who we interviewed was asked about his or her opinion regarding the proposal to limit property taxes to one percent of the market value of the property. Figure 12 provides the results for the entire sample and Table 4 focuses on the demographic characteristics of those 350 respondents who had knowledge of, and held an opinion on, the one percent initiative.

- 23 percent of the survey respondents favored the proposal to limit property taxes to one percent of the market value, 20 percent opposed it, 25 percent stated that they had not heard of the proposal, and 32 percent of the respondents said that either they did not know what to think about the proposal or they had not yet formed an opinion on the proposal.
- The primary sources of support for the one percent initiative are among men (62 percent), respondents possessing a high school degree or less (67 percent), respondents with annual household incomes below \$25,000 (61 percent), and residents in Region I (62 percent).
- The primary sources of opposition are among women (58 percent), respondents with a college degree (59 percent), and residents in Region IV (60 percent).

Figure 12

**Citizens' Responses to the  
One Percent Initiative  
(n=809)**

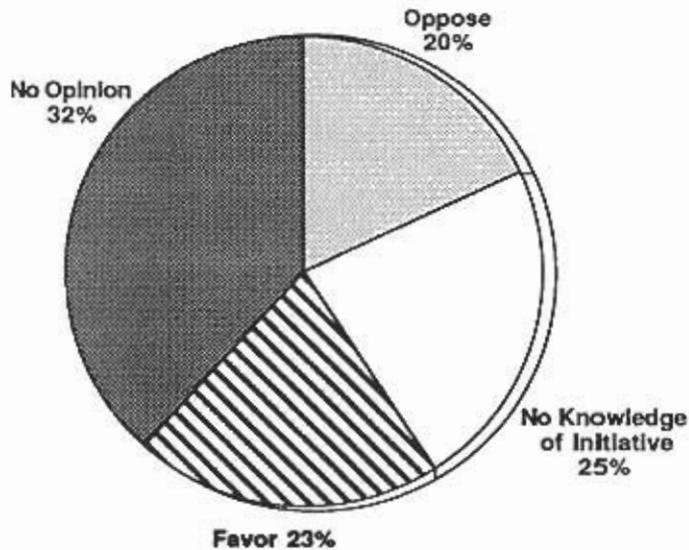


TABLE 4

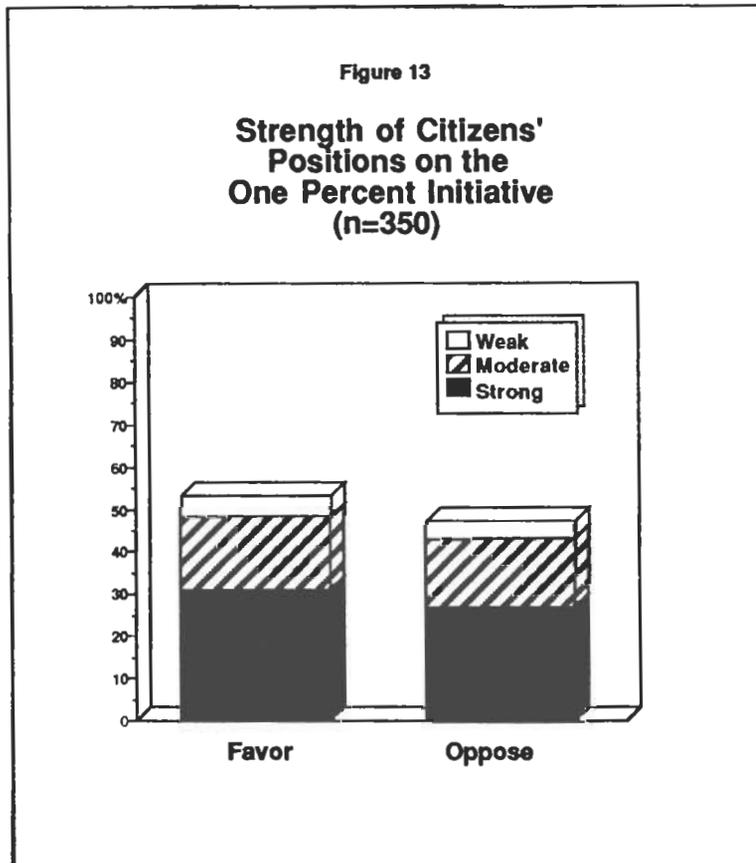
**DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS OF CITIZENS HAVING KNOWLEDGE OF, AND  
EXPRESSING AN OPINION ON, THE ONE PERCENT INITIATIVE\***

Demographic Group	Favor	Oppose	(n)
<b>Gender</b>			
Male	62%	38%	(198)
Female	42	58	(152)
<b>Age</b>			
18-34	50	50	(76)
35-60	54	46	(201)
61+	54	46	(71)
<b>Education</b>			
HS or less	67	33	(113)
Some college/tech.	52	48	(112)
BA or more	41	59	(123)
<b>Household Income</b>			
Under \$25,000	61	39	(92)
\$25,000 +	50	50	(245)
<b>Length of Residence</b>			
Under 20 years	56	44	(102)
20 years +	52	48	(248)
<b>State Planning Region</b>			
I	62	38	(42)
II	56	44	(25)
III	56	44	(151)
IV	45	55	(40)
V	54	46	(50)
VI	41	60	(42)

\*Row percentages may not total 100% due to rounding error. Number of cases in certain groups is less than 350 due to refusal of some respondents to report demographic information.

Figure 13 compares the intensity of the opinions held by both sides of the one percent issue.

- 31 percent of those knowledgeable about the issue and holding an opinion strongly favor a one percent limitation, 17 percent moderately favor it, and 5 percent express weak support.
- 27 percent of those knowledgeable about the issue and holding an opinion strongly oppose such a limitation, 16 percent moderately oppose it, and 4 percent express weak opposition.

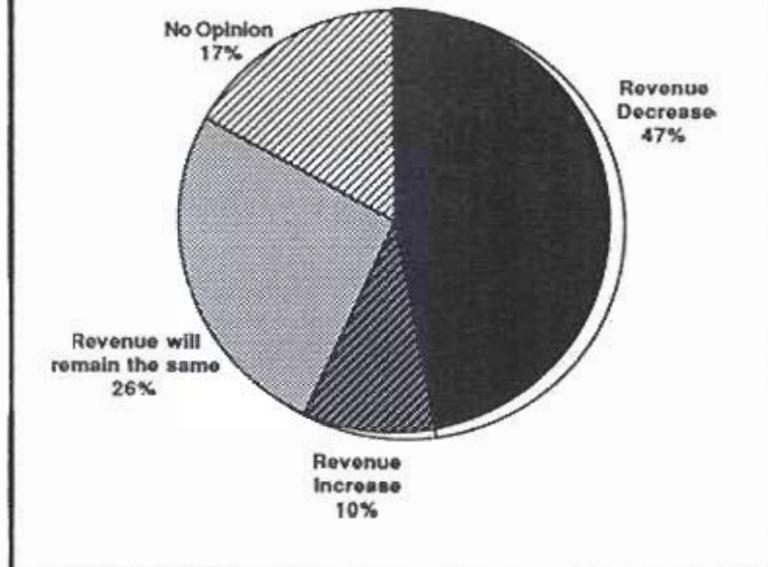


Regardless of whether Idahoans have reached an opinion for or against the one percent initiative, those who are knowledgeable about it (n=611) may possess expectations about the possible effect of a one percent limit on state revenue. Figure 14 reveals that:

- 47 percent of those respondents who have heard of the one percent initiative expect state revenue to decrease if it were enacted, 26 percent believe that revenue will remain about the same, and 10 percent believe that state revenue will increase.
- Of those who expect revenue to decrease (n=285), 39 percent claim that such a decrease would be large, 42 percent suggest it would be modest, 11 percent assume that any decrease in revenue would be small, and 8 percent are uncertain about the magnitude of any decline in state revenue.

Figure 14

**Citizens' Expectations of Effect  
on State Revenue of a One Percent Limit  
(n=611)**



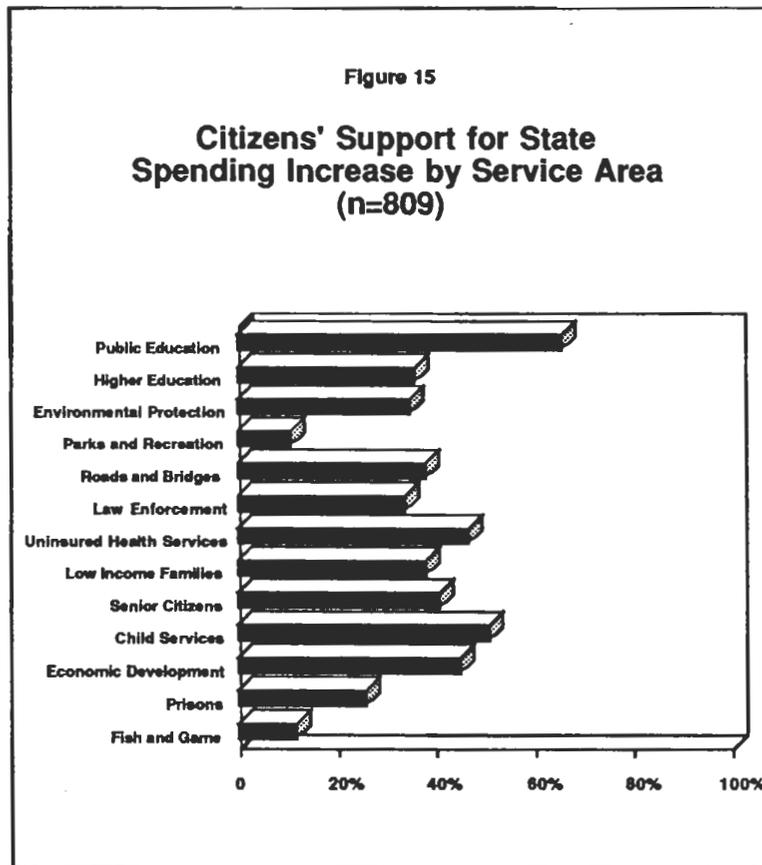
Those individuals who expected revenue to decrease as a consequence of the one percent initiative were asked how the state should deal with any loss of funds. Twelve percent of these respondents favored increasing other taxes, 41 percent called for reductions in government spending, and 36 percent advocated a combination of tax increases and spending cuts. When those who both expected revenue to decrease and supported higher taxes ( $n=136$ ) were asked what specific revenue sources should be increased, 52 percent said they would support raising user fees, 50 percent claimed they would support higher sales taxes, and 23 percent indicated they would back a hike in income taxes. If more money had to be raised from sales taxes, 36 percent of the entire sample said they would support eliminating exemptions now allowed some products and organizations, 26 percent would be willing to agree to raise the tax rate from five percent to a higher amount, and 23 percent would favor extending sales taxes to include services, particularly such non-medical professional services as those provided by attorneys and accountants. Alternatively, if money had to be raised from state income taxes, 31 percent of the entire sample preferred raising income taxes on businesses, 8 percent would raise income taxes on individuals, and 48 percent would do both. More specifically, 64 percent of the survey respondents would raise the tax rate on persons with higher incomes. Whereas 46 percent of the respondents would raise state individual income taxes on investments, only 9 percent would target wages. When asked whether Idaho's cities or counties should be allowed to add an extra amount to the state sales or income taxes in their area to generate more money for local community needs, 56 percent of the respondents opposed local option sales taxes and 60 percent opposed local option income taxes.

Although most Idahoans probably do not know the exact funding for specific state programs, they generally have opinions on 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 13 broad service areas. These areas included public education (kindergarten through high school), higher education, environmental protection, parks and recreation, roads and bridges, law enforcement, uninsured health services, aid to low income families, senior citizen programs, child protective services, economic development, prisons, and fish and game.

As in our two previous annual state-wide surveys, few people called for a decrease in state spending within any of these specific 13 service areas, even though four in ten Idahoans who predicted that state revenues would fall if the one percent initiative passed had expressed support in the abstract for spending cuts to deal with any loss of

money. There were, however, clear differences of opinion over which areas needed funding increases. As summarized by Figure 15:

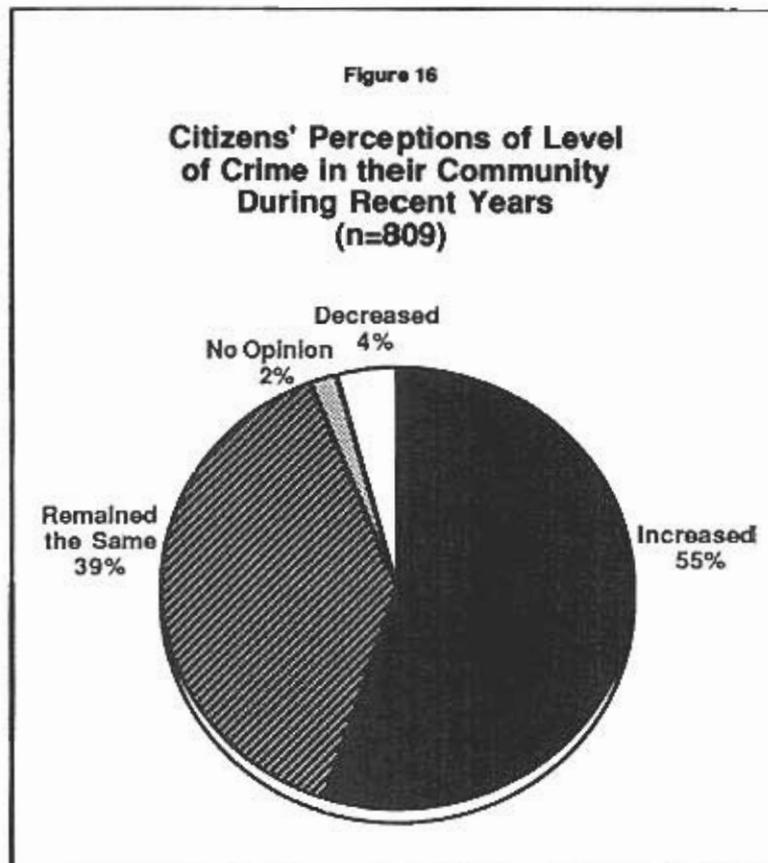
- Over half of those polled favored increases in public education (66 percent) and child protective services (51 percent).
- Between one-third and one-half of the respondents supported funding increases in programs pertaining to uninsured health services (47 percent), economic development (45 percent), senior citizens (41 percent), roads and bridges (38 percent), environmental protection (38 percent), low income families (38 percent), higher education (36 percent), and law enforcement (34 percent).
- Just over a fourth of those individuals who were sampled advocated increases in funding for prisons (26 percent).
- Roughly one in ten respondents supported funding increases for fish and game (12 percent), and parks and recreation (11 percent).



## CURRENT SOCIAL, HEALTH, AND EDUCATIONAL ISSUES

The 1991 *Idaho Policy Survey* revealed a low level of confidence among residents of the Gem State regarding the capacity of the court system to convict and properly sentence criminals. Idahoans advocated harsher punishment in the criminal justice system (including capital punishment) because they tended to believe that violent criminals frequently do not serve their full sentences, and because they assumed that those violent criminals who return to society are unlikely to have been rehabilitated in prison. In view of these past findings, this year we looked at citizen perceptions of the level of crime in their communities. As documented in Figure 16 and Table 5:

- 55 percent of the survey respondents contend that crime has increased in their communities, 39 percent claim that it has remained the same, and only 4 percent maintain that the level of crime had decreased in recent years.
- Residents of Region IV (72 percent) are more likely to say that crime has increased than are residents of other regions in the state.
- Residents of Region II (39 percent) are less likely to say that crime has increased than are residents of other regions.



**TABLE 5**

**A COMPARISON OF OPINIONS ON CRIME, BY REGION\***

		STATE PLANNING REGION				
		II	III	IV	V	VI
Increased	56%	39%	54%	72%	53%	53%
Decreased	3	4	3	2	8	5
Remained the Same	34	54	42	26	38	41
(Number of Cases)	(100)	(71)	(295)	(113)	(114)	(116)

*\*Column percentages many not total 100% due to omission of "Don't Know" responses.*

In a follow up question, each respondent was asked what factors they thought were most responsible for crime in their communities. While numerous factors were cited, drugs (29 percent), unemployment (24 percent), and the breakdown of traditional family values (24 percent) were mentioned most often.

As shown in Figure 17, survey respondents were also asked about their opinions regarding firearms.

- 49 percent of the respondents wanted to maintain current regulations concerning the sale of firearms, 41 percent desired regulations that were more strict, and 8 percent favored making regulations less strict.

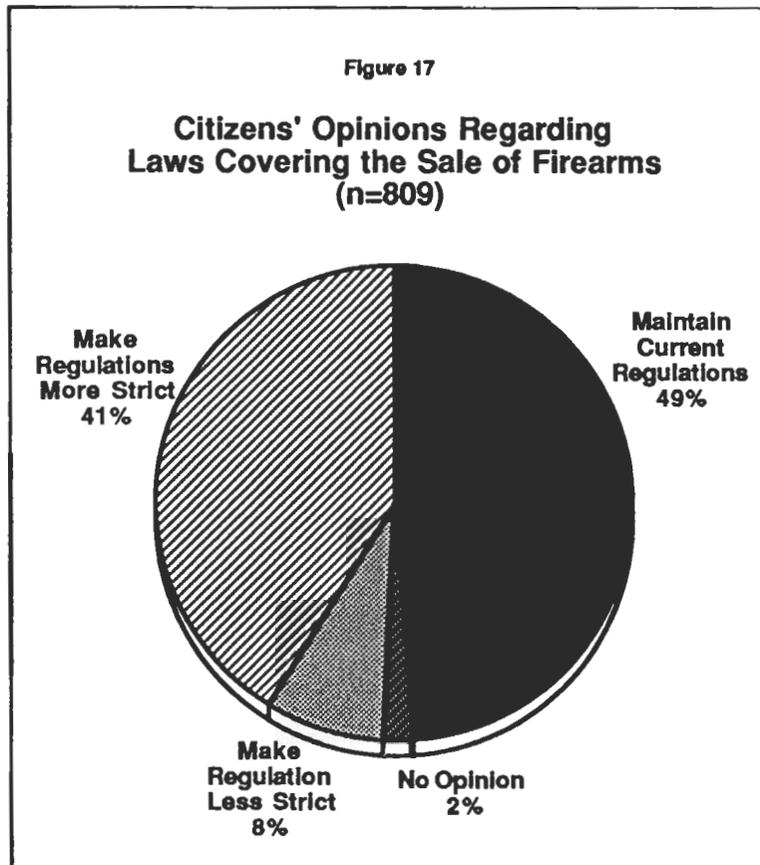


Table 6 reveals some demographic differences in the support for two types of firearms regulations — the registration of handguns and banning semi-automatic assault rifles.

- 65 percent of the respondents say they favor handgun registration, with women (72 percent) being much more in favor than men (57 percent).
- 72 percent of the respondents say they favor a ban on assault rifles, with women (80 percent) once again being more in favor than men (63 percent).

**TABLE 6**  
**SUPPORT FOR SELECTED FIREARMS REGULATIONS,**  
**BY DEMOGRAPHIC GROUP\***

<b>Demographic Group</b>	<b>Percentage of Respondents Favoring:</b>		<b>(n)</b>
	<b>Handgun Registration</b>	<b>Banning Assault Rifles</b>	
<b>Total Sample</b>	65%	72%	(809)
<b>Gender</b>			
Male	57	63	(391)
Female	72	80	(417)
<b>Age</b>			
18-34	78	73	(238)
35-60	57	70	(416)
61+	68	76	(153)
<b>Education</b>			
HS or less	64	71	(300)
Some college/tech.	62	70	(272)
BA or more	68	76	(233)
<b>Household Income</b>			
Under \$25,000	71	73	(275)
\$25,000 +	63	72	(496)
<b>Length of Residence</b>			
Under 20 years	70	62	(270)
20 years +	72	72	(539)
<b>State Planning Region</b>			
I	73	81	(100)
II	45	63	( 71)
III	64	71	(295)
IV	70	75	(113)
V	63	68	(114)
VI	68	74	(116)

\*Number of cases in certain groups is less than 809 due to refusal of some respondents to report demographic information.

Another issue that concerns many Idahoans is health care. Figure 18 displays what our survey respondents perceived as the most urgent health care problem facing the Gem State.

- 31 percent of those interviewed stressed the high cost of health care as the major problem, 20 percent pointed to difficulties created by a lack of health insurance, and 12 percent referred to senior citizen access to health care.

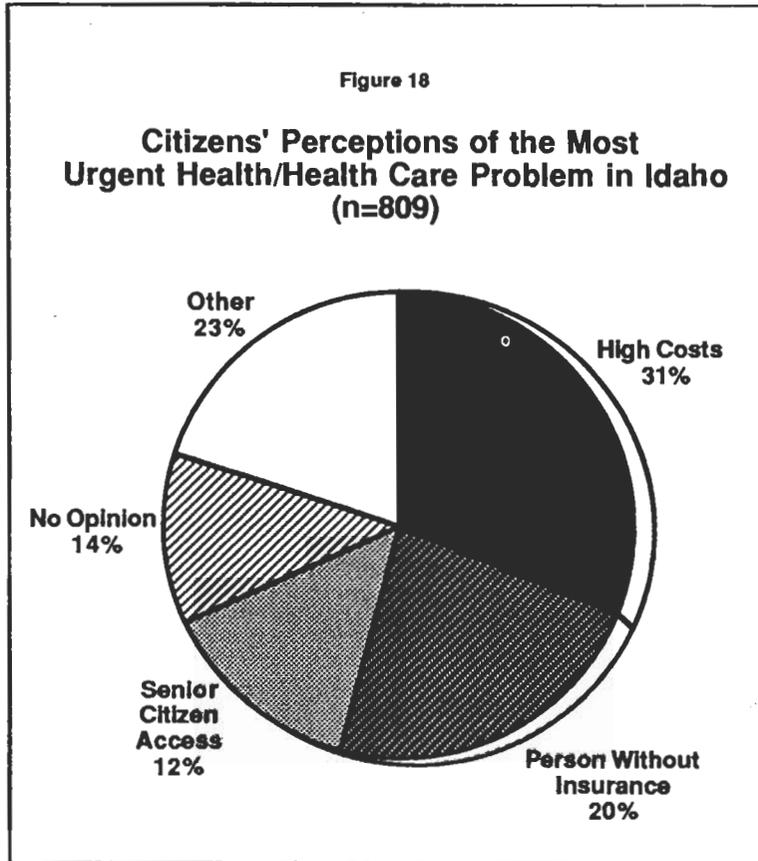
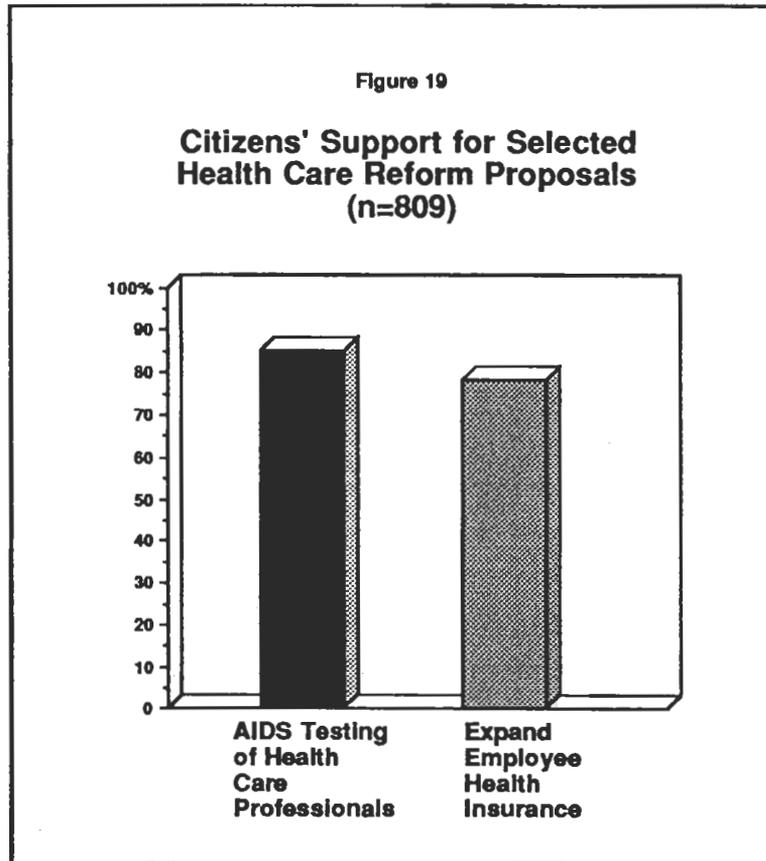


Figure 19 discloses strong support for two changes in the health care system.

- 85 percent of those polled favored regular AIDS testing of health care professionals.
- 78 percent of the respondents felt that more Idaho workers should be covered by employee health insurance.

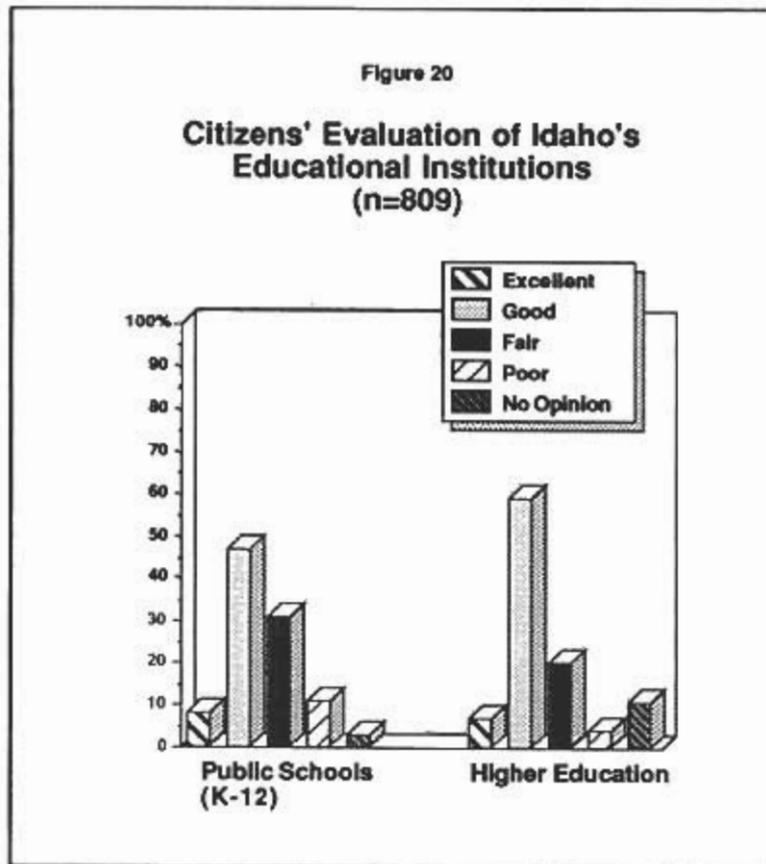


While support for AIDS testing was consistent across demographic groups, the greatest support for expanding employee health insurance was found among women (82 percent) and among those individuals under 35 years of age (89 percent), possessing a high school education or less (92 percent), and having an annual household income below \$25,000 (86 percent). Current estimates place the number of Idahoans who lack health insurance at over 150,000, a statistic that is made more worrisome in the eyes of some since health care costs are rising and many employers are thought to be exploring ways to reduce coverage.

In each of the last three years, education has been cited in our survey as one of the major concern of Idahoans. At present, two proposals for improving education are being discussed: Governor Cecil Andrus' "Strong Start" program for preschool and early elementary education; and a broad set of programs collectively known as "Schools for 2000 and Beyond."

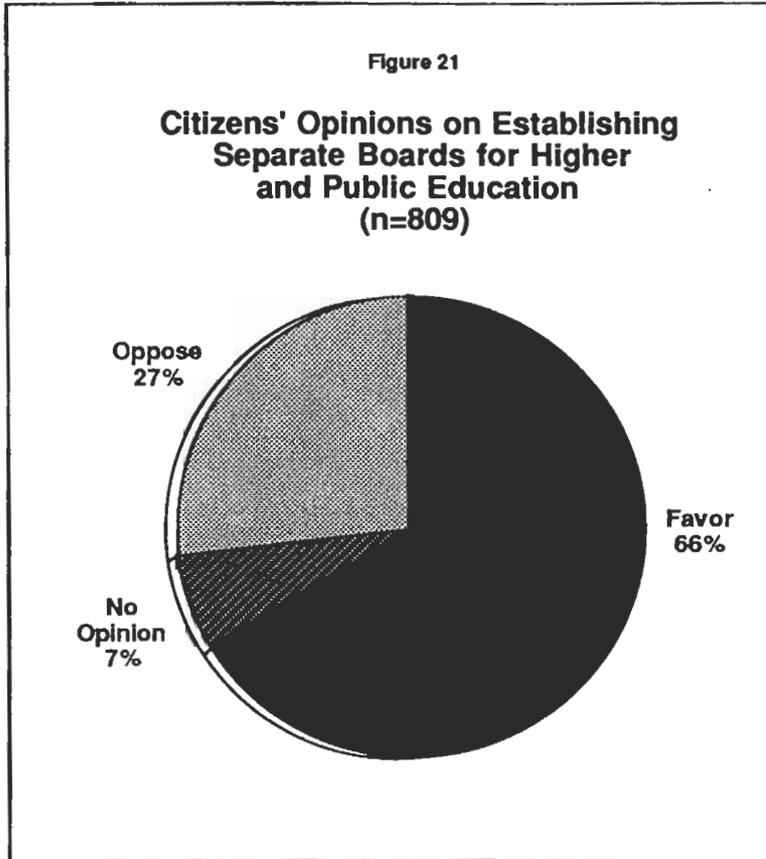
In order to ascertain how Idahoans assess public education within their state, each survey respondent was asked to rate the quality of Idaho's public schools (kindergarten through high school) and public colleges and universities. As Figure 20 indicates, a majority of those individuals who were interviewed gave the state's public schools and institutions of higher education favorable evaluations.

- 8 percent of the survey respondents thought Idaho's public schools were excellent, 47 percent judged them to be good, 31 percent felt that they were fair, and 3 percent labeled them poor.
- 7 percent of the respondents said that Idaho's public colleges and universities were excellent, 59 percent believed that they were good, 20 percent called them fair, and 4 percent judged them to be poor.



Although Idaho's educational system received passing grades, many observers suggest that steps could be taken to improve the system. One potential reform involves dividing the State Board of Education into two entities, one to manage higher education and the other for the public school system. As shown in Figure 21:

- Two-thirds of the individuals in the sample favor establishing separate boards for higher (post-secondary) and public (K-12) education.



## ENVIRONMENTAL PROBLEMS AND PROSPECTS

Once again, respondents to the *Idaho Policy Survey* were 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. Figure 22 describes how Gem State citizens would decide when faced with the trade-offs between economic growth and environmental protection.

- 54 percent of the respondents favored protecting the environment, compared to 61 percent in the 1991 survey and 49 percent in the 1990 survey.
- 27 percent supported making the economy grow, compared to 23 percent in the 1991 survey and 27 percent in the 1990 survey.
- 18 percent advocated an attempt to do both, compared to 13 percent in the 1991 survey and 22 percent in the 1990 survey.

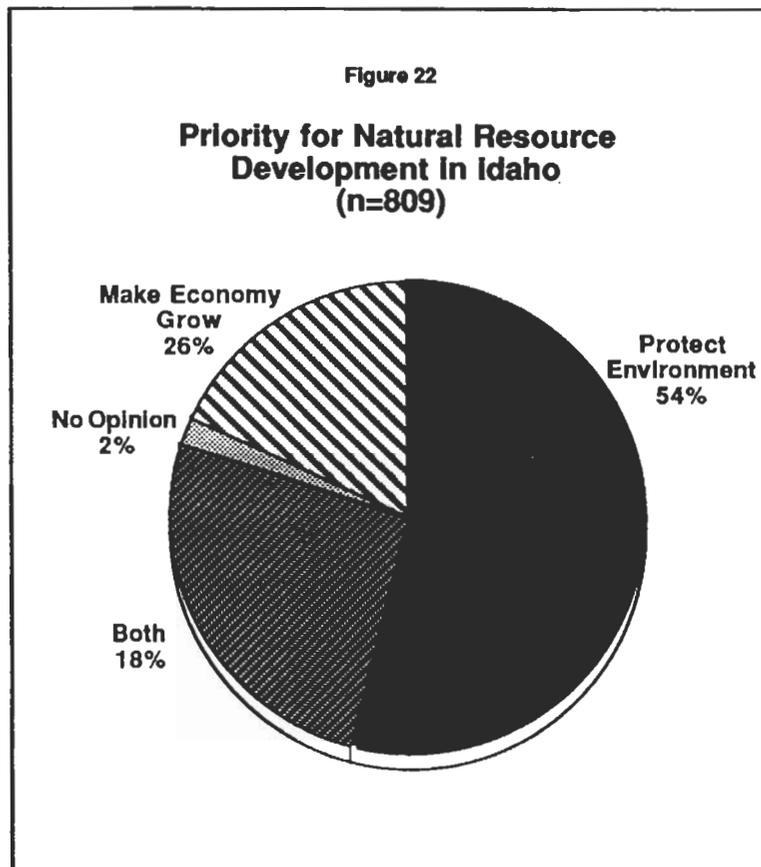


Table 7 shows that the willingness of Idahoans to back efforts at protecting the environment is not shared equally among all age groups.

- 47 percent of the respondents above the age of 60 would choose protecting the environment instead of making the economy grow, compared to 61 percent under the age of 35.

Nor is it shared equally across geographic regions.

- 48 percent of the respondents in Regions V and VI would choose protecting the environment, compared to 63 percent of the respondents in Region IV.

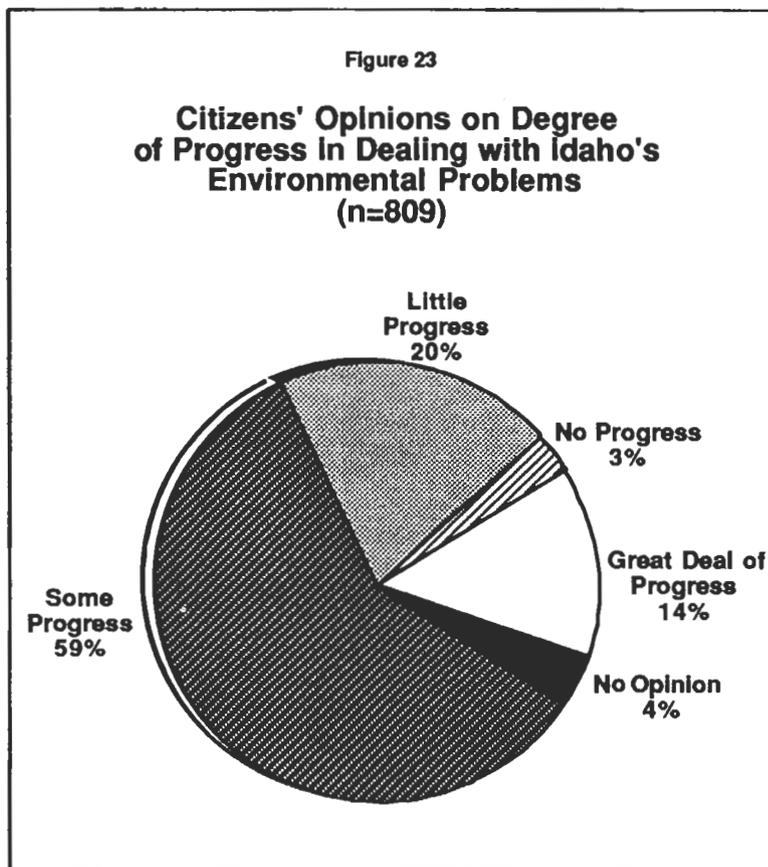
**TABLE 7**  
**PRIORITY FOR NATURAL RESOURCE**  
**DEVELOPMENT IN IDAHO, BY DEMOGRAPHIC GROUP\***

Demographic Group	Make Economy Grow	Protect Environment	Both	(n)
Total Sample	27%	54%	18%	(809)
Gender				
Male	27	53	18	(391)
Female	26	54	19	(417)
Age				
18-34	24	61	14	(238)
35-60	28	52	18	(416)
61+	26	47	26	(153)
Education				
HS or less	31	49	20	(300)
Some college/tech.	24	57	16	(272)
BA or more	23	56	19	(233)
Household Income				
Under \$25,000	26	55	18	(275)
\$25,000 +	27	53	18	(496)
Length of Residence				
Under 20 years	22	59	16	(270)
20 years +	28	51	19	(539)
State Planning Region				
I	17	55	25	(100)
II	30	54	16	( 71)
III	28	54	16	(295)
IV	19	63	18	(113)
V	28	48	24	(114)
VI	32	48	17	(116)

\*Row percentages may not total 100% due to omission of "Don't Know" responses. Number of cases in certain groups is less than 809 due to refusal of some respondents to report demographic information.

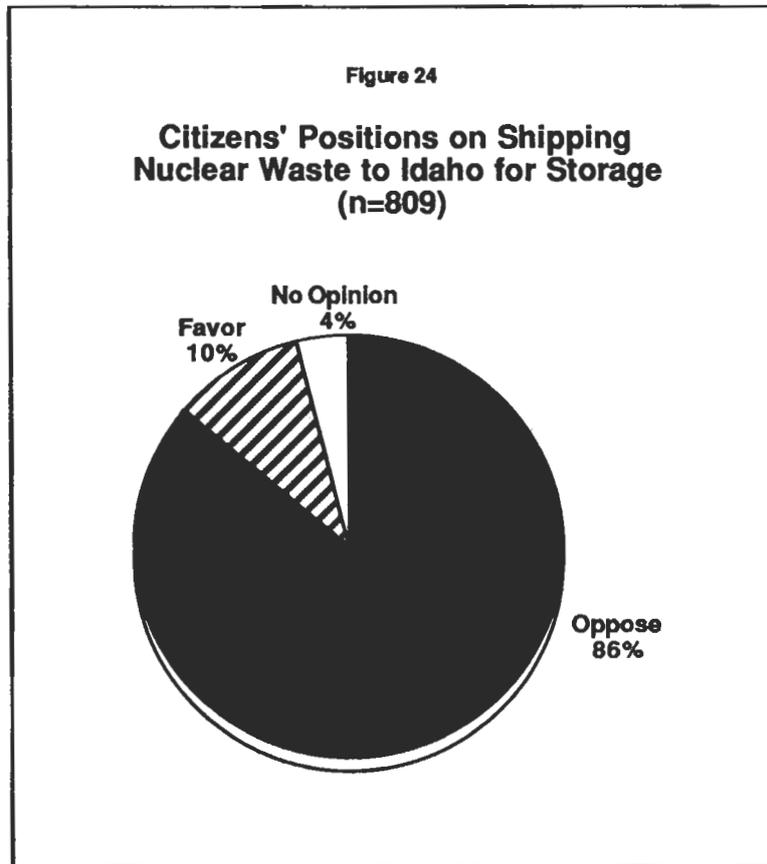
When asked how much progress has been made over the last twenty years in dealing with environmental problems in Idaho, Figure 23 shows:

- 14 percent of the respondents believe that there has been a great deal of progress, 59 percent feel that there has been some progress, 20 percent contend that little progress has been achieved, and 3 percent insist that there has not been any progress in dealing with Idaho's environmental problems.



One of the environmental issues that has received considerable attention is shipping nuclear waste to the Idaho National Engineering Laboratory for storage. As Figure 24 indicates:

- 86 percent of the survey respondents opposed shipping nuclear waste to Idaho for storage, 10 percent supported it, and 4 percent expressed no opinion on the matter.



The final question posed to those who were interviewed pertained to restoring wolves to the wilderness and roadless areas of central Idaho.

- 72 percent of the respondents favored restoring wolves to central Idaho, 22 percent voiced disapproval, and the remainder said that they had no opinion on the issue of wolves in Idaho.

## **METHODOLOGICAL APPENDIX**

The findings reported above are derived from an analysis of data collected in a survey of 809 respondents who were interviewed by telephone during November 4-25, 1991. 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. 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 3.4 percentage points for findings based on the entire sample. This 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 3.4 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 programmed 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 sample

size for some questions may be slightly less than 809 due to the desire of a few respondents not to discuss certain issues.

### **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 respondent's 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. 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***

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