

The Arkansas Poll, 2003

Summary Report

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Arkansas Poll Website: <http://plsc.uark.edu/arkpoll/>

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*Percentages may not total 100 due to rounding

Most Important Problem

What do you think is the most important problem or issue facing people in Arkansas today? ¹	Percent
• Education	
1999	12
2001	12
2003	24
• Unemployment/Lack of Jobs	
1999	6
2001	21
2003	20
• Health and Medical Insurance	
1999	4
2001	4
2003	8
• The Economy	
1999	7
2001	11
2003	8
• Low Wages	
1999	6
2001	0
2003	7
• Taxes (too much/too high)	
1999	5
2001	2
2003	4
• Drugs	
1999	6
2001	3
2003	3
• Roads	
1999	2
2001	1
2003	2
• Poverty	
1999	2
2001	2
2003	2
• Morality/Family Breakdown	
1999	7
2001	4
2003	1
• No Response	
1999	26
2001	18
2003	7

¹ In odd-numbered years, the Arkansas Poll records the open-ended answers of respondents. In even-numbered years, respondents are asked to choose from the most frequently mentioned issues of the previous year.

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Public Figure Approval Ratings

Do you approve or disapprove of the way Mike Huckabee is handling his job as governor?	Approve	Disapprove	DK/ Refused
1999	66%	13%	21%
2000	69%	14%	17%
2001	70%	17%	13%
2002	50%	35%	15%
2003	47%	38%	16%
Do you approve or disapprove of the way Blanche Lincoln is handling her job as a U.S. Senator?			
1999	46%	17%	37%
2001	51%	13%	36%
2002	50%	16%	35%
2003	55%	10%	35%
Do you approve or disapprove of the way Mark Pryor is handling his job as a U.S. Senator?			
2003	52%	11%	37%
Do you approve or disapprove of the way George Bush is handling his job as president?			
2001	87%	9%	3%
2002	61%	32%	7%
2003	47%	46%	7%

Public Service Evaluations

Now I'm going to mention some features or services in Arkansas. Please rate each one telling me if you are:	Very Satisfied / Satisfied	Dissatisfied/ Very Dissatis'd	DK/ Refused
• The present condition of roads and highways in our state			
1999	31%	68%	1%
2003	43%	57%	1%
• The quality of parks and recreation facilities in our state			
1999	81%	14%	5%
2003	87%	10%	3%
• Colleges and universities in our state			
1999	84%	7%	10%
2003	79%	11%	10%
• The public welfare system in our state			
1999	36%	39%	24%
2003	30%	50%	20%
• The K through 12th grade public schools in our state			
1999	62% ²	22%	17%
2003	50%	41%	9%
• The quality of state and local government services considering the taxes you pay			
1999	43%	51%	6%
2003	52%	44%	4%

² In 1999, this question referred to the public schools "in your community" in congruence with other local-level questions asked that year. The 2003 results consequently may not be comparable to earlier findings.

Public Education Reform

Do you strongly approve, approve, disapprove, or strongly disapprove of the following ideas for improving K-12 education in Arkansas...?	Strongly Approve	Approve	Dis-approve	Strongly Dis-approve	DK/Refused
• Increasing teachers' salaries.					
2002	41%	46%	10%	1%	2%
2003	36%	48%	10%	2%	4%
• Using merit pay to award bonuses to teachers whose students perform well on state exams					
2002	14%	46%	28%	5%	7%
2003	14%	45%	29%	6%	7%
• Expanding access to state-funded pre-school education programs					
2002	19%	57%	16%	2%	6%
2003	18%	61%	11%	3%	7%
• Improving school facilities					
2002	34%	55%	8%	0%	2%
2003	31%	58%	6%	1%	4%
• Expanding the number of courses offered in high schools, especially college-prep courses					
2003 only	32%	56%	8%	0%	4%
• Expanding the use of mandatory testing to measure the performance of Arkansas students					
2003 only	13%	55%	22%	4%	5%
• Requiring that all high schools offer all core courses every year					
2003 only	32%	59%	6%	1%	3%
• Increasing the number of courses needed for high school graduation					
2003 only	10%	40%	37%	3%	10%
Please tell me if you strongly approve, approve, disapprove, or strongly disapprove of the following methods of funding reforms in Arkansas schools....					
• increasing property taxes					
2002	2%	26%	50%	21%	2%
2003	2%	24%	50%	22%	2%
• increasing sales taxes					
2002	3%	35%	48%	12%	2%
2003	4%	37%	42%	15%	2%
• increasing income taxes					
2002	3%	26%	54%	15%	3%
2003	3%	32%	44%	18%	4%
• adopting a state lottery					
2002	22%	36%	25%	14%	4%
2003	27%	35%	22%	13%	3%
• cutting back in other government services					
2003	9%	45%	30%	6%	10%
2003	7%	42%	35%	7%	9%
• consolidating small school districts into larger districts					
2002	9%	40%	35%	11%	6%
2003	12%	29%	35%	17%	7%

Current Issues

First, in general, would you say you favor stricter gun control, less strict gun control, or should no change be made to existing gun control laws?	Stricter	Less Strict	No Change	DK/ Refused
1999	50% ³	31%	15%	4%
2000	39%	15%	42%	4%
2001	36%	17%	44%	4%
2002	36%	15%	45%	4%
2003	38%	17%	42%	4%
Do you favor laws that would make it more difficult for a woman to get an abortion, favor laws that would make it easier to get an abortion or should no change be made to existing abortion laws?	More Difficult	Easier	No Change	DK/ Refused
1999	45%	14%	32%	9%
2000	43%	11%	40%	6%
2001	46%	13%	35%	7%
2002	43%	13%	38%	6%
2003	47%	13%	33%	7%

Political Party and Ideology

Generally speaking, do you usually think of yourself as a Republican, a Democrat, an Independent, or what?	Republican	Democrat	Indep't	Other	DK/ Refused
1999	23%	35%	31%	4%	7%
2000	23%	36%	35%	0%	6%
2001	27%	33%	32%	5%	3%
2002	28%	33%	33%	3%	3%
2003	24%	38%	31%	4%	3%
Independents only: Do you think of yourself as closer to the Republican or Democratic Party?	Closer to Republican	Closer to Democrat	Just Indep't		DK/ Refused
1999	33%	29%	34%		4%
2000	35%	25%	35%		5%
2001	29%	36%	31%		4%
2002	30%	32%	33%		4%
2003	33%	34%	33%		2%
How would you describe your views on most political matters? Generally, do you think of yourself as a liberal, moderate, or conservative?	Liberal	Moderate	Conserv'e		DK/ Refused
1999	14%	38%	38%		10%
2000	16%	36%	39%		9%
2001	17%	39%	38%		6%
2002	15%	39%	41%		5%
2003	17%	36%	39%		7%

³ In 1999, respondents were not offered a "no change" option; this response was recorded only if volunteered. This is the primary reason for the striking difference in gun control opinions for that year.

Living Environment Alternatives for Older Arkansans

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	DK / Refused
I'd like you to tell me if you strongly agree, agree, disagree, or strongly disagree with the following statements about living arrangements for older Arkansans....					
• If you develop health problems as you grow older, there are adequate support services to enable you to live in your own home as long as possible.	17%	52%	19%	5%	7%
• There are affordable choices available to you if you are no longer able to live independently.	9%	46%	27%	8%	11%
• You will have to relocate from your community to find appropriate care if you are no longer able to live independently.	4%	35%	43%	13%	5%
• You will depend upon Medicare to finance long term care if you are no longer able to live independently.	14%	54%	21%	5%	6%
And, if you are unable to live in your own home later in life, how likely are you to....	Very Likely	Likely	Unlikely	Very Unlikely	DK / Refused
• Live with children or other relatives in Arkansas?	15%	28%	31%	24%	3%
• Live with children or other relatives out of state?	12%	19%	37%	30%	3%
• Relocate to a retirement community or facility?	14%	39%	27%	15%	5%
• Relocate to a facility with medical care?	18%	47%	20%	9%	6%

Life in Arkansas

Overall, do you feel that Arkansas is generally headed in the right direction or the wrong direction?	Right	Wrong		DK/ Refused
1999	73%	15%		12%
2001	78%	14%		8%
2002	69%	22%		9%
2003	63%	26%		11%
On a more individual level, would you say you are better off financially, worse off, or about the same compared to a year ago?	Better	About the Same	Worse	DK/ Refused
1999	37%	47%	16%	1%
2001	41%	39%	19%	1%
2002	33%	39%	27%	1%
2003	27%	45%	28%	1%
And, looking ahead, do you think that a year from now, you will be better off financially, worse off, or about the same as now?	Better	About the Same	Worse	DK/Refused
1999	43%	46%	6%	1%
2001	41%	39%	19%	1%
2002	40%	45%	10%	5%
2003	35%	49%	12%	5%

E-Government and On-Line Tax Filing

Do you have Internet access in your home, workplace, both, or neither?	
• Yes, home only	25%
• Yes, work only	10%
• Yes, both home and work	31%
• Neither home nor work	33%
• Don't Know/Refused	0%

Have you ever visited the State of Arkansas website?		(If "yes") Have you ever transacted business, such as renewing car tags ... through the State of Arkansas website?	
• Yes	35%	• Yes	33%
• No	64%	• No	67%
• Don't Know/Refused	1%	• Don't Know/Refused	0%

Did you file your federal and/or state tax returns electronically last year?		(If "yes") What motivated you to file electronically? Was it...?	
• Yes, both federal and state	37%	• Convenience	35%
• Yes, federal only	3%	• Faster refund	26%
• Yes, state only	0%	• Security	2%
• No	51%	• A tax return preparer did it for you	38%
• Don't Know/Refused	7%		

(Of the "no, I did not file electronically" responders) Why didn't you file electronically? Was it...?		(Of the "no, I did not file electronically" responders) What would make you more likely to file electronically?	
• Distrust of computer security	12%	• Free or lower filing cost	11%
• Desire to postpone paying taxes owed	2%	• More confidence in computer security	22%
• Discomfort with computers	10%	• Better access to a computer	7%
• Habit – I've always filed by mail	37%	• Better personal computer skills	10%
• I leave it to my CPA or tax preparer (volunteered response)	39%	• Nothing would make me more likely (volunteered response)	18%
		• I leave it to my CPA or tax preparer (volunteered response)	32%

Were you due a tax refund last year?	
• Yes, both federal and state	49%
• Yes, federal only	10%
• Yes, state only	3%
• No	34%
• Don't Recall/Refused	3%

Methodology and Sample Information

Between October 5th and October 13th, the Survey Research Center at the University of Arkansas dialed 6,696 randomly selected Arkansas telephone numbers. These attempts yielded 762 completed surveys. The remainder of the surveys were not completed for a variety of reasons, including the resident's absence, a refusal to participate, a busy or disconnected line, or the resident's ineligibility. Employing guidelines established by the American Association for Public Opinion Research, the poll's cooperation rate was 33%. This figure reflects completed surveys as a percentage of all eligible individuals contacted. The survey's margin of error is +/- 3 percent.

To assess the representativeness of the sample drawn for the poll, the Arkansas Poll team opts to publish what many polling organizations do not: a comparison of survey respondents' key demographic characteristics to those of the state as a whole. This information is reported in the table below.

	2003 Arkansas Poll Sample	State of Arkansas
Median Age Category (for 18+ pop.)	45-54 years of age	35-44 years of age
Average # persons per household	2.5	2.5
Marital Status	61% married	58% married
Gender	40% male	49% male
Educational Attainment		
high school graduates	89%	76%
college graduates	30%	17%
Median household income	\$25,001-\$35,000	\$32,182
Race/Ethnicity		
White	82.4%	80.0%
Black or African American	9.4%	15.7%
Multi-Ethnic	2.6%	1.3%
Hispanic	2.0%	3.2%
Native American	0.9%	0.7%
Asian	0.4%	0.8%

Source: All data from the Arkansas Poll or the U.S. Bureau of the Census, Census 2000.