

INDIANA

WISH-TV/BALL STATE UNIVERSITY

2014 HOOSIER SURVEY



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Bowen Center for Public Affairs at Ball State University is pleased to partner again this year with WISH-TV, Channel 8, Indianapolis, in presenting the seventh annual Hoosier Survey. The Hoosier Survey is designed to provide Indiana citizens and policymakers with a measure of public opinion on current issues facing our state in the coming year. The results of this non-partisan survey are delivered to every member of the Indiana General Assembly and top administration officials at the beginning of the calendar year so that lawmakers can gauge public views about issues they are likely to face in the upcoming legislative session.

The survey was conducted for WISH TV/Ball State University by Princeton Survey Research International during the period October 7-15, 2014. Results are based on 600 completed interviews with 360 landline respondents and 240 cell phone respondents (including 120 adults with no landline phone). The margin of error is $\pm 5.1\%$. Complete findings and methodology are available at www.bowencenterforpublicaffairs.org.

Major findings in the 2014 Hoosier Survey include:

- Job creation continues as the number one priority for Hoosiers, with 78% (slightly less than last year's 83%) saying job creation should be at the top of the legislative agenda. This year we also asked about crime and public safety. Reducing crime was named the second highest priority at 69%. Improving local schools ranked third at 67%. Protecting the environment rose slightly to attain fourth place. Immigration reform climbed 7% this year to rank fifth in importance.
- Hoosiers continue to express satisfaction with the quality of public services, with few noticing major differences in service delivery across a host of areas, ranging from road maintenance to public schools. However, Hoosiers report increased satisfaction with parks and recreation, as well as with the delivery of fire and police protection services.
- Hoosiers continue to express high levels of satisfaction with public schools, with three-quarters (75%) saying they are very or somewhat satisfied with public schools, a number somewhat larger than last year's 66% with little regional variation.
- There is widespread support (82%) for expanding fully-funded pre-kindergarten programs for all Hoosier children beyond the five pilot counties approved by the General Assembly last year. There is also support (68%) for increasing education spending by 3% to cover the cost of textbooks for all public school children in the state.
- By a large margin (71%), Hoosiers believe education policy-making should be shared between the Superintendent of Public Instruction and the State Board of Education. This finding holds across political parties.
- While Hoosiers are evenly split over whether public officials in Indiana are generally held accountable for their actions, two-thirds believe the state needs to strengthen ethics laws to ensure elected officials behave ethically.
- A plurality of Hoosiers (39%) say that the state should hold onto its budget surplus for a rainy day. However, 31% believe the state should spend some of the surplus to fund programs that faced cuts in recent years, including education, job creation and retraining, fire and police protection, and highways and roads. A third option, using the surplus to help fund a cut in the business personal property tax, is favored by 22%.
- While the average Hoosier does not see racial disparity in the treatment of individuals by police, there is a wide gulf between the views of whites (72% of whom believe the races are treated equally) and blacks (67% of whom believe blacks are treated less fairly than whites).

- Support for same-sex marriage in Indiana is holding steady at 47%. There is wide variation by age and political party, with younger Hoosiers and Democrats as the most supportive. A majority (56%) also believe that Indiana should recognize same-sex marriages performed in other states. Given the confusion over state and federal court rulings, Hoosiers believe (71%) that the Supreme Court should have ruled once and for all on the constitutionality of same-sex marriages rather than refusing to hear challenges by the states.
- Hoosiers are split over the potential impact of President Obama's environmental policies for reducing emissions from coal-fired power plants with 42% saying they haven't yet heard enough to form an opinion about the policies.
- Hoosiers support Sunday sales of liquor (52%) and permitting the sale of cold beer in supermarkets and convenience stores (57%).
- Hoosiers have significantly more trust in state government than they do in the government in Washington. Forty-five percent trust the state government to do what is right all or most of the time, while only 21% feel the same way about the national government. Higher levels of trust translate into favorable ratings for state officials, including Governor Pence with an approval rating of 62% and the General Assembly with an approval rating of 57%. Superintendent of Public Instruction Glenda Ritz has an approval rating of just under fifty percent; however, over a quarter of Hoosiers (28%) still do not know enough about her to have formed an opinion.
- Fifty-five percent of Hoosiers do not believe the National Football League has done enough to reduce acts of domestic violence by its players, with a slight plurality (47%) believing players convicted of such acts should be banned from the game for life.

In addition to providing results for the state as a whole, some findings also are broken down by the three major regions of the state: Northern, Central, and Southern. The maps below illustrate the counties in each region.



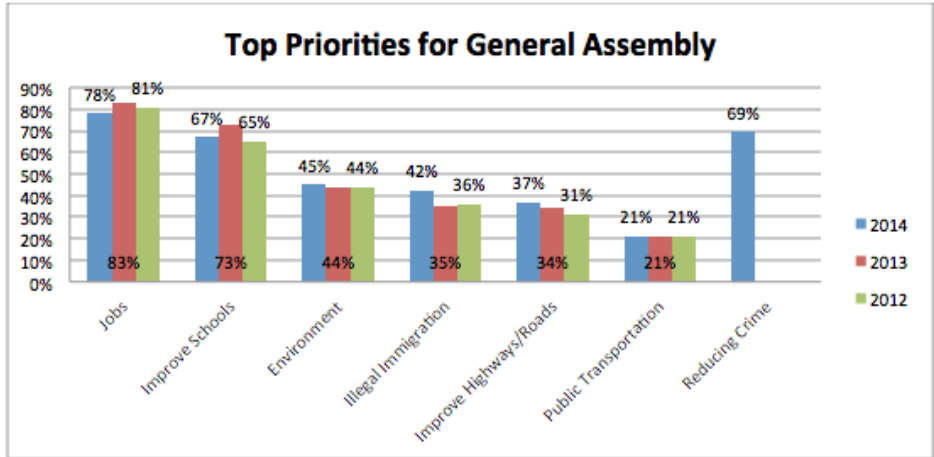
For further information about the Bowen Center and the Hoosier Survey, contact:

Dr. Raymond Scheele, Co-director, 765-285-5895. rscheele@bsu.edu.

Dr. Joseph Losco, Co-director, 765-285-8785. jlosco@bsu.edu.

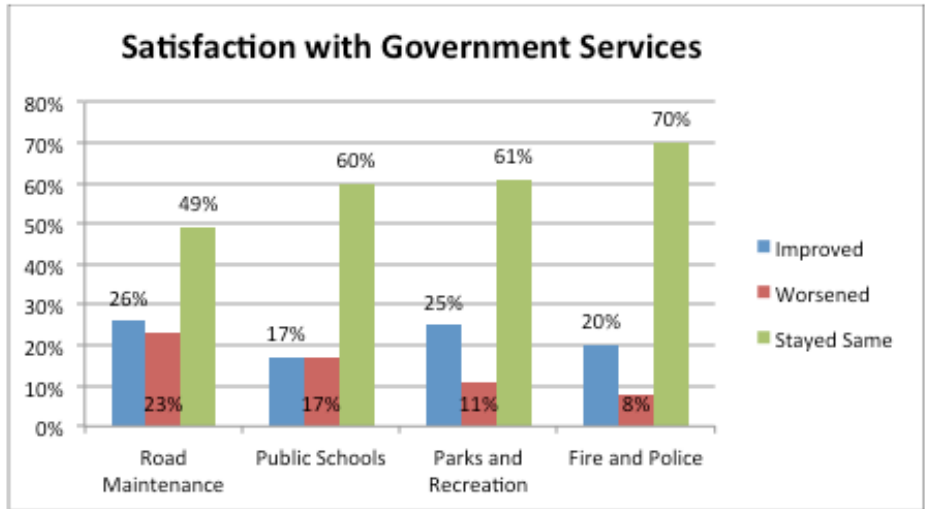
TOP PRIORITIES FOR THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY

Job creation continues as the number one priority for Hoosiers, with 78% placing job creation at the top of the legislative agenda for their legislators—even though 64% say they are very or somewhat satisfied with the current record of state government in attracting new jobs to the state. Last year’s survey showed even stronger support (83%) for job creation as the highest priority for lawmakers. This year we also asked about crime and public safety. Reducing crime was the second highest priority at 69%. Improving local schools ranked third, with 67% saying this should be a top priority. Protecting the environment rose slightly to advance to fourth place. Immigration reform climbed 7% this year to rank fifth in importance, followed by improving highways and roads, and increased funding for public transportation.



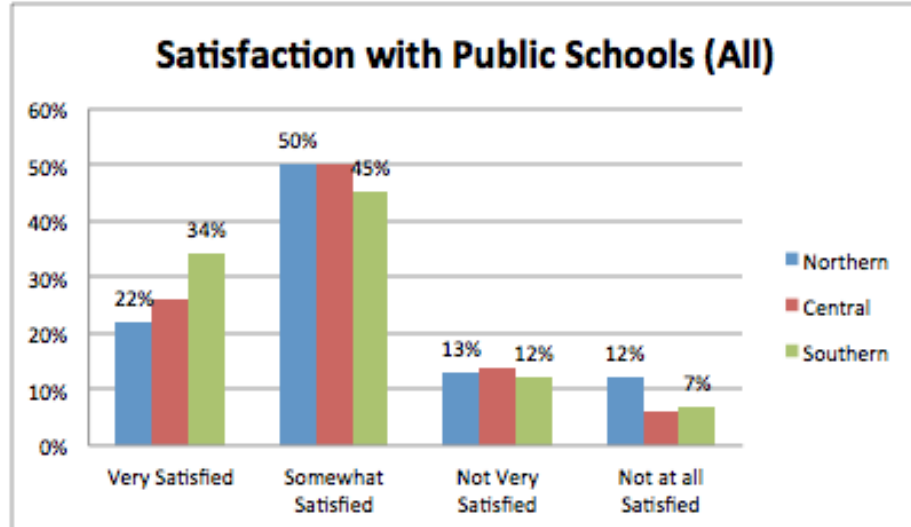
SATISFACTION WITH PUBLIC SERVICES

Hoosiers continue to express satisfaction with the quality of public services, with few noticing major differences in service delivery across a host of areas, ranging from road maintenance to public schools. However, Hoosiers report increased satisfaction with parks and recreation, as well as with the delivery of fire and police protection services.

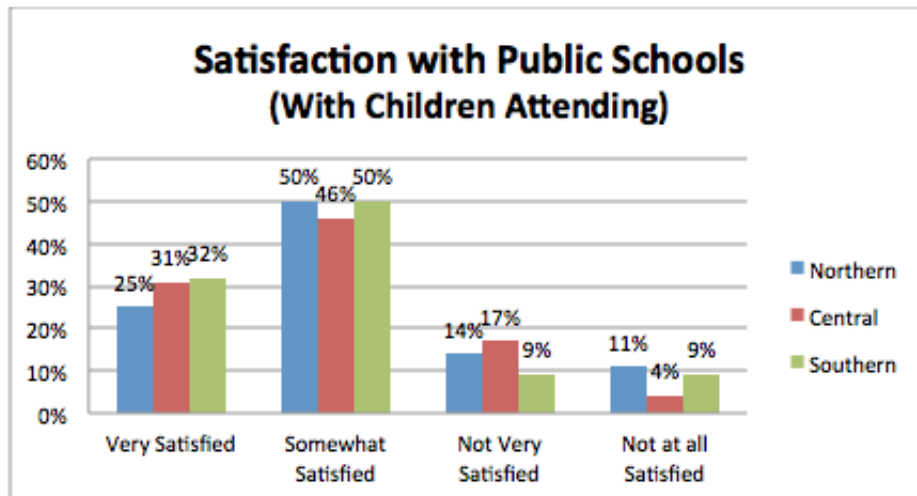


EDUCATION

Hoosiers continue to express high levels of satisfaction with public schools, with three-quarters (75%) saying they are very or somewhat satisfied with public schools; a number somewhat larger than last year's 66% with little regional variation. Similarly, there is little variation by party identification, with over 70% of Republican and Democratic identifiers being very or somewhat satisfied.

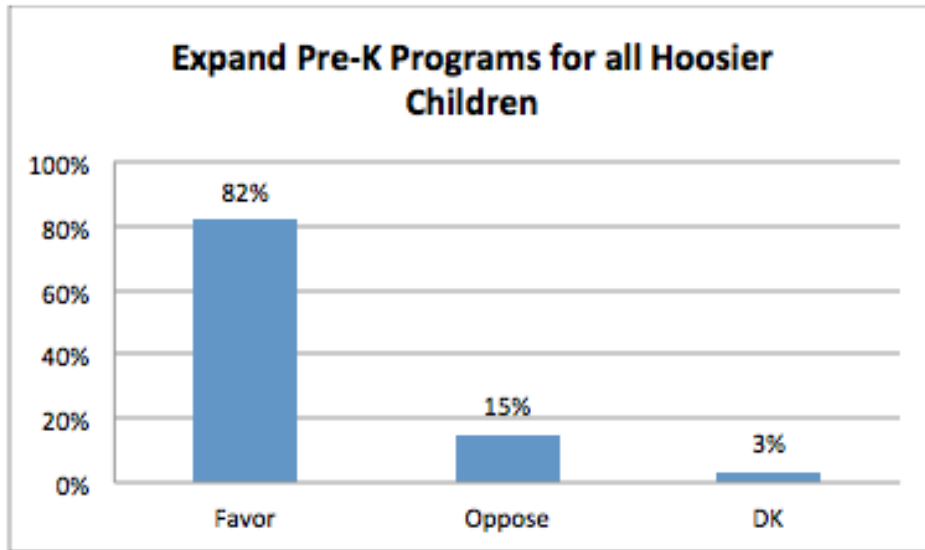


Satisfaction levels for those who have children in public schools are also high (73%) across all regions of the state.

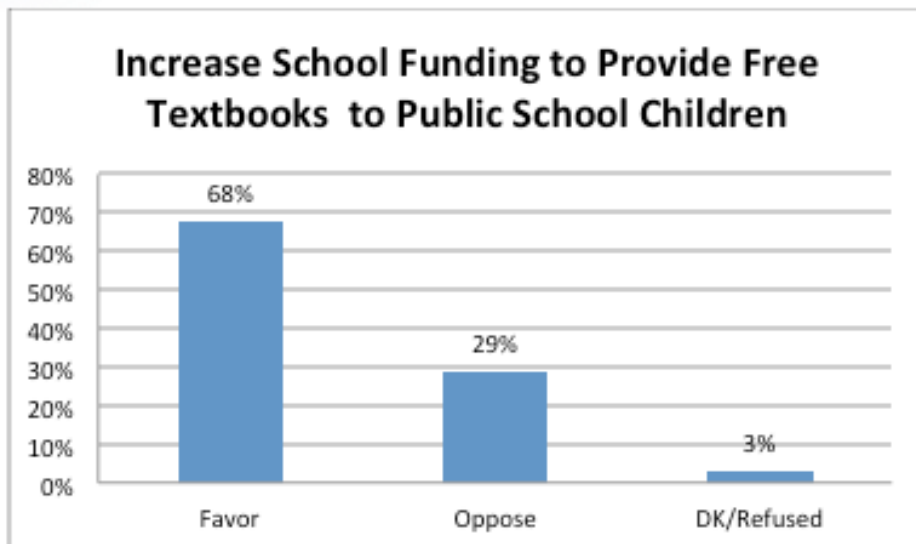


EDUCATION POLICY

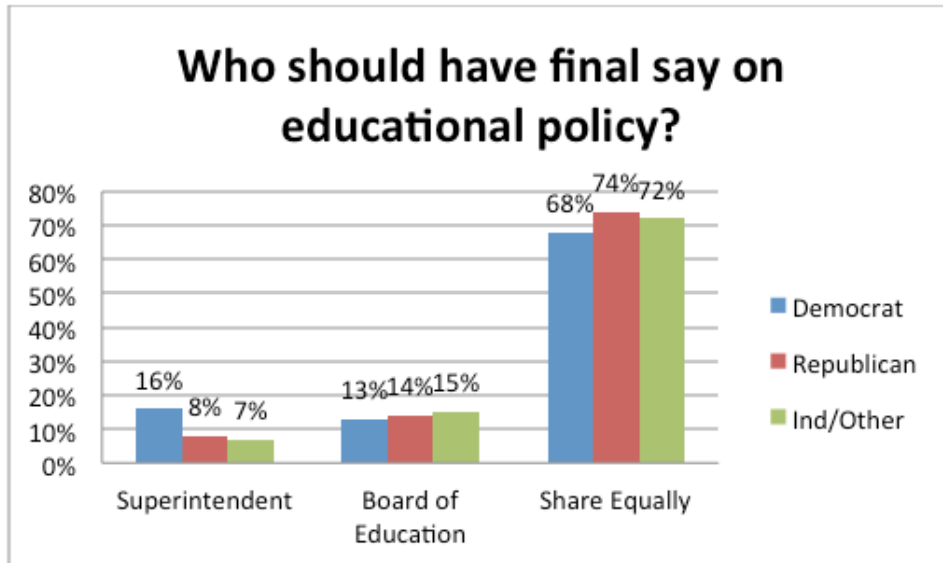
House Enrolled Act (HEA) 1004, passed last year by the Indiana General Assembly, established a pilot program to provide grants to eligible children for qualified pre-kindergarten education services in five counties: Allen, Jackson, Lake, Marion, and Vanderburgh. The program requires a combination of about \$10 million from Childcare and Development grant funds together with private funding to provide pre-kindergarten education for low-income students in the designated counties. Governor Pence recently decided to forego applying for as much as an \$80 million federal grant to fund universal pre-K programs in the state. By a wide margin, Hoosiers would like to see an expansion of this program for all children in all counties. Support is strong across all political parties, with 70% of Republican identifiers and 90% of Democratic identifiers favoring expansion.



Hoosiers are also enthusiastic about providing free textbooks to students in public schools. Indiana is one of eight states that charges families of public school children for the cost of textbooks. More than two-thirds of survey respondents said that they would support a three percent increase in school funding to cover the costs of textbooks for every child in the public schools. Again, support crosses party lines with 57% of Republicans and 75% of Democrats favoring such a plan.

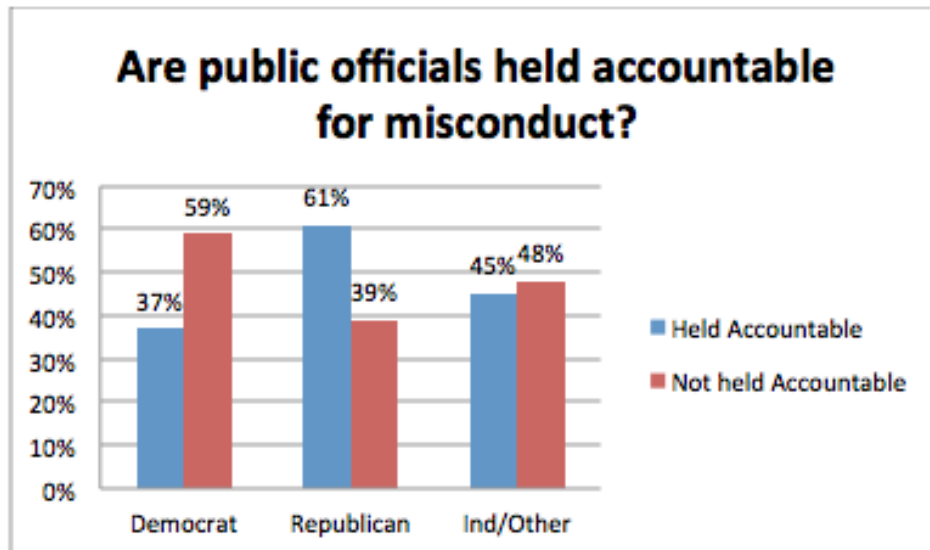


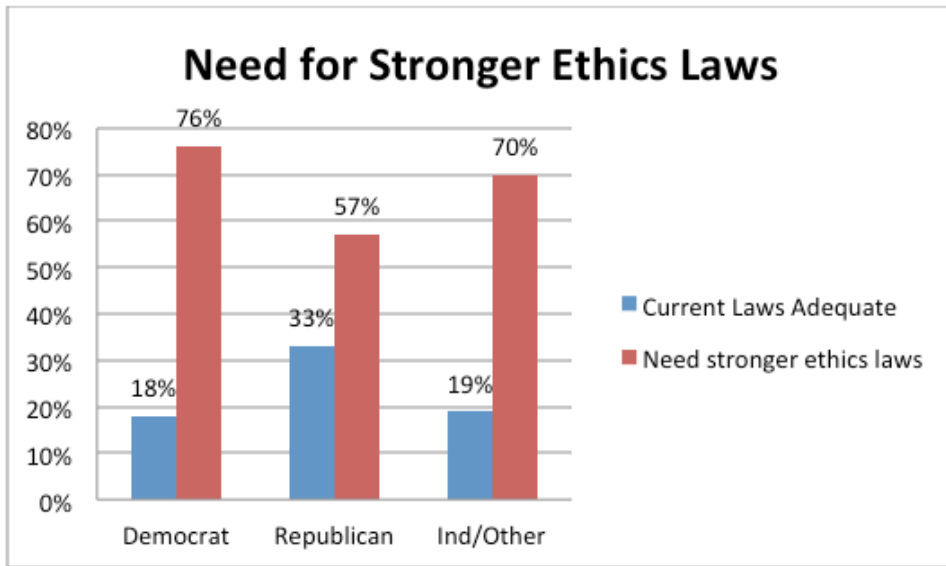
The past two years have witnessed battles between the Superintendent of Public Instruction and the State Board of Education over control of education policy in Indiana. Some say that the Superintendent should have final authority in educational administration since her position is elected. Others claim the gubernatorial-appointed State Board of Education should determine education policy to ensure compliance with state policies and procedures. When asked which of these two offices should have final say on education policy in the state, Hoosiers overwhelmingly prefer that power be shared by both bodies. This finding holds across both political parties and in all regions of the state.



ETHICS REFORM

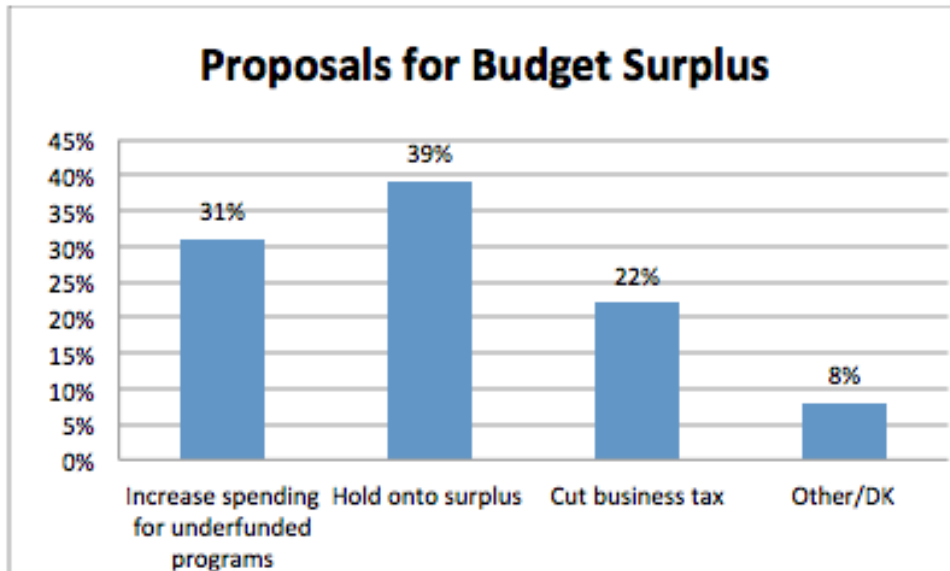
A series of high profile cases involving possible ethics violations by state officials last year prompted House Speaker Brian Bosma to say that he would sponsor an ethics reform bill in the 2014 session. When asked about the ethical climate in Indiana for public officials, Hoosiers are evenly split on whether public officials are held accountable for misconduct. Nevertheless, 66% believe that Indiana needs to strengthen its ethics laws. As might be expected, there is significant variation by party ID with Democrats expressing less confidence in the accountability of officeholders. There is a nineteen point gap between Democrats (76%) and Republicans (57%) with regard to the need for stronger ethics laws, with the latter more confident that current laws provide enough protection. Seventy-two percent of those identifying with neither major political party see the need for stronger ethics legislation.



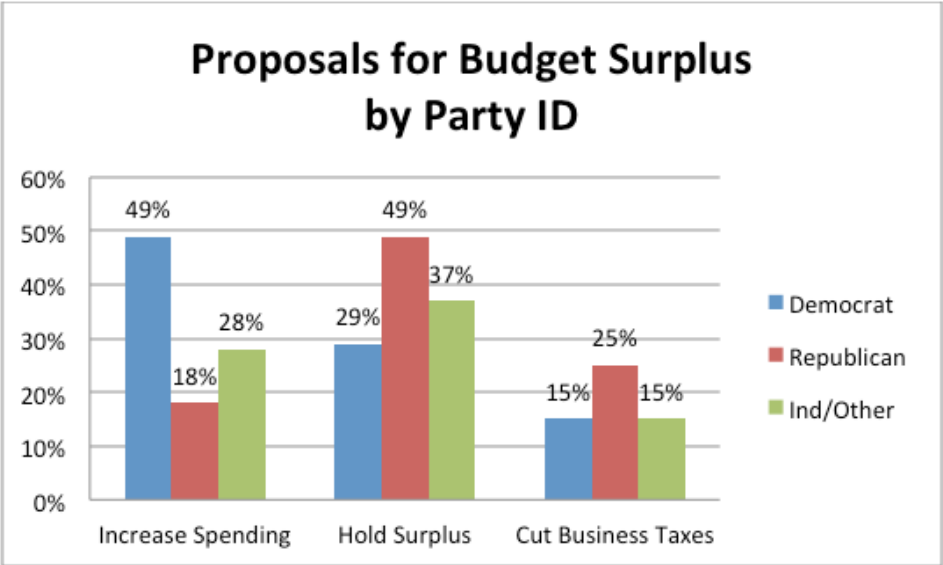


BUDGET SURPLUS

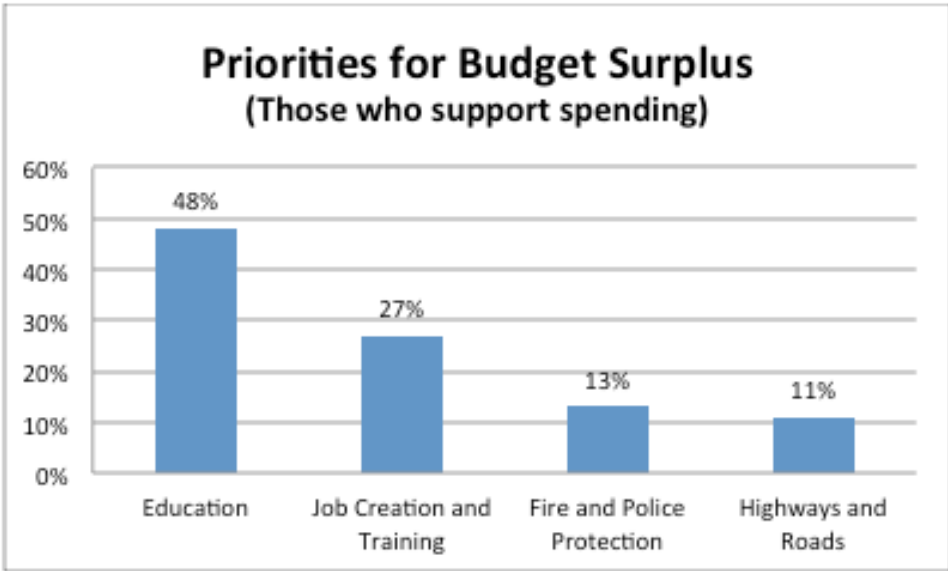
Indiana currently holds a reserve of approximately \$2 billion and is running an annual budget surplus of about \$100 million, some of which is funded by claw backs from funds allocated to state agencies. Some argue that the state is ignoring the needs of cities and towns, as well as educational institutions, and should begin spending down some of the surplus. The Governor argues that tax receipts are uncertain and the state needs to retain its strong financial position in case of another economic slowdown and to attract business investors. A plurality of Hoosiers (39%) agree with the Governor’s position. However, 31% believe the state should spend some of the surplus to fund programs that faced cuts in recent years. A third option, also raised by the Governor, is to use the surplus to help fund a cut in the business personal property tax. Using the funds for this latter purpose draws the support of 22% of Hoosiers.



Once again, opinions vary by party identification. Whereas 49% of Republicans want to hold onto the surplus for a rainy day, the same percentage of Democrats would prefer to spend more money on underfunded programs. Cutting business taxes further is supported by a quarter of Republicans but only 15% of Democrats and Independents.



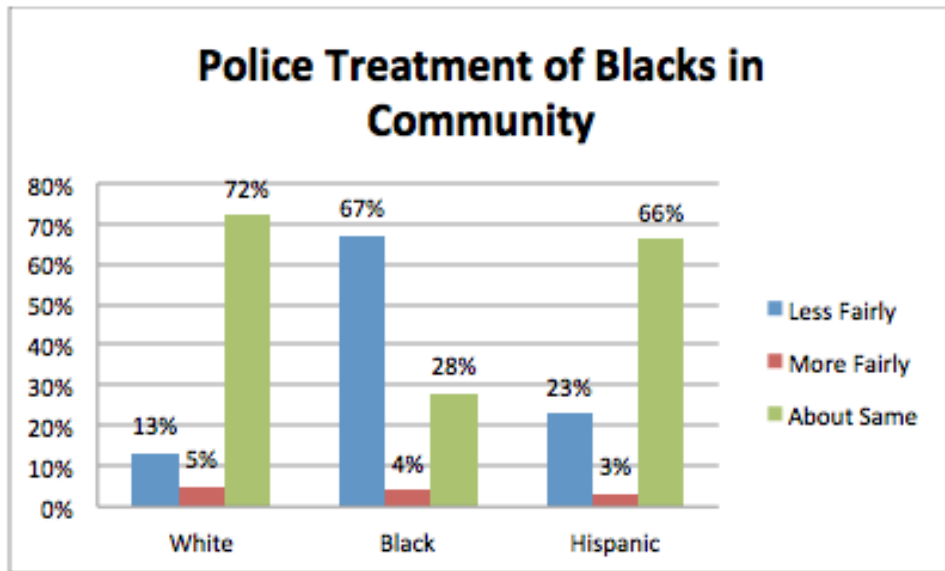
Those who support spending the surplus rank their priorities as follows: Education, Job Creation and Training, Fire and Police Protection, and Highways and Roads.



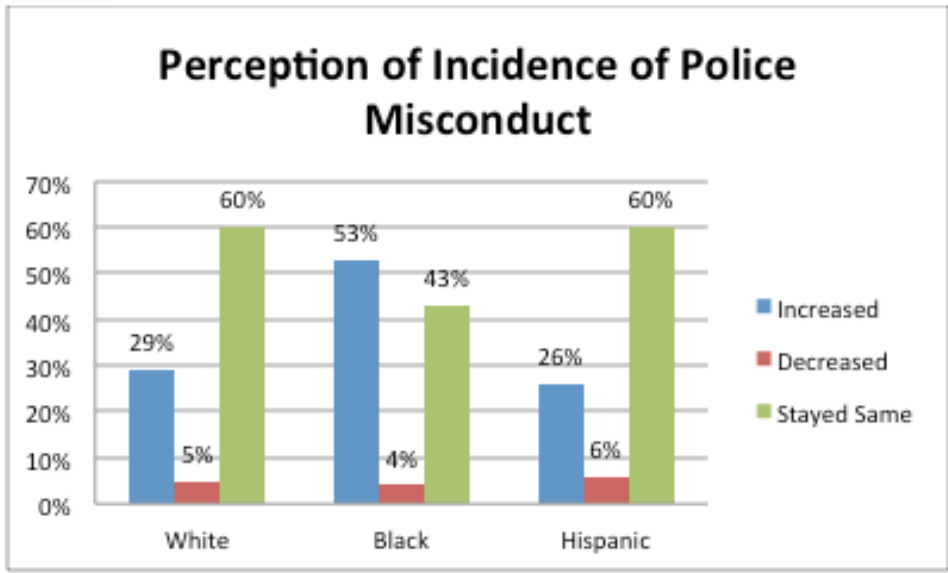
CRIME AND TREATMENT BY POLICE

As we noted above, 69% of Hoosiers see improving public safety and reducing crime as a top priority for the state. Attention to crime may have been heightened as a result of recent news reports of crimes in the Indianapolis and Gary areas. In any case, the perception of 59% of Hoosiers is that violent crime has increased in recent years. Thirty-three percent believe it has stayed about the same, but only 7% believe it has decreased.¹

Increased attention to crime and law enforcement may also be attributable to media coverage of the disturbances in Ferguson, MO, following the shooting of 18-year-old Michael Brown by police. The alleged shooting of a black youth by a white policeman triggered days of protest and rioting, leading to a national discussion about potentially disparate treatment of white and black suspects by police. Overall, Hoosiers believe police treat whites and blacks about the same (67%), while only 20% believe blacks are treated less fairly. However, these figures mask a wide racial divide. Whereas, 72% of whites believe blacks and whites are treated about the same, 67% of black Hoosiers believe blacks are treated less fairly. A majority of Hispanics (66%) view police treatment as even-handed but, as compared with whites, more Hispanics say blacks are treated less fairly by police. The same racial divide appears when Hoosiers are asked if cases of police misconduct, such as the use of excessive force and covering up police mistakes, have increased in recent years.

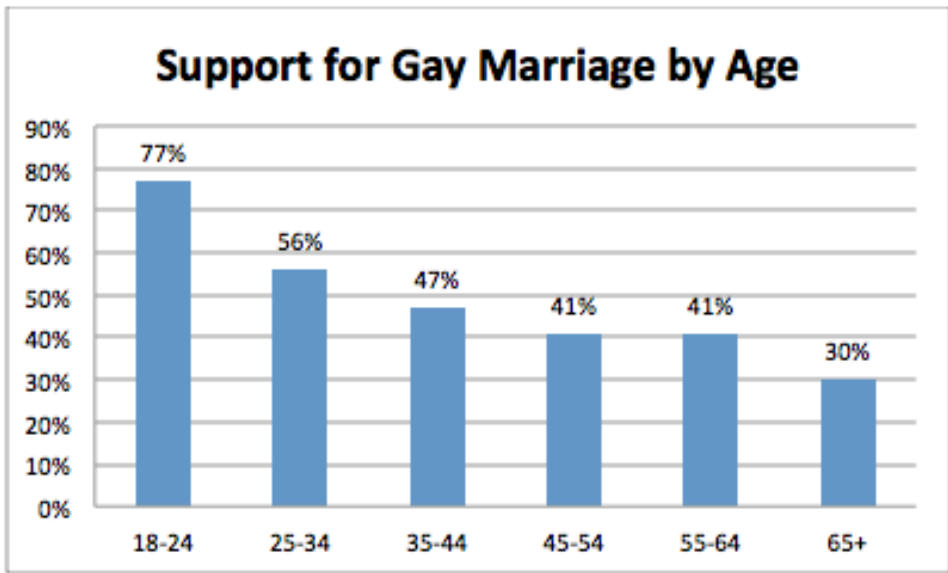


¹ It should be noted that while the FBI reports a slight uptick in violent crime in Indiana in 2011-2012 (the most recent years for which FBI uniform statistics are available), the level of violent crime in Indiana today is significantly lower than it was in the 1990s. (<http://www.bjs.gov/ucrdata/Search/Crime/State/RunCrimeStatebyState.cfm>).

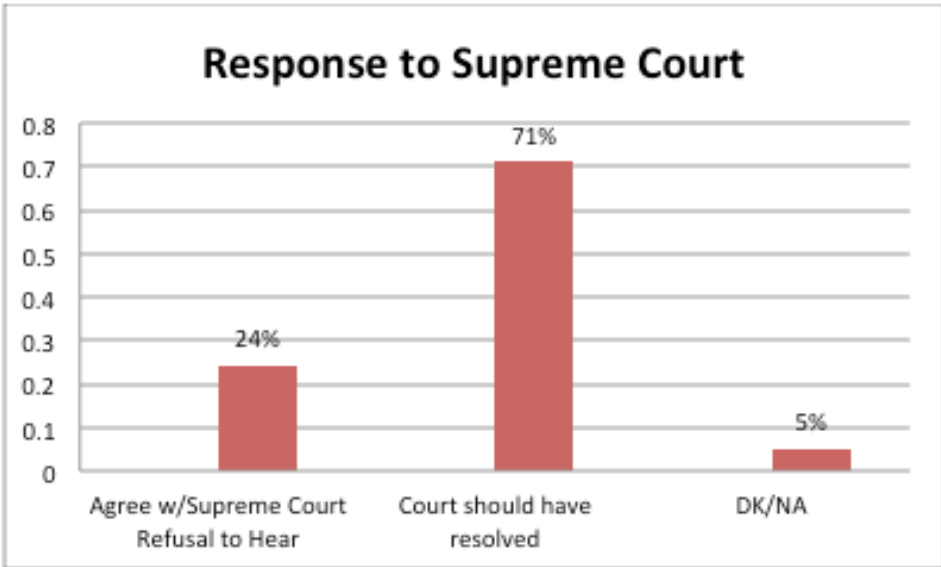
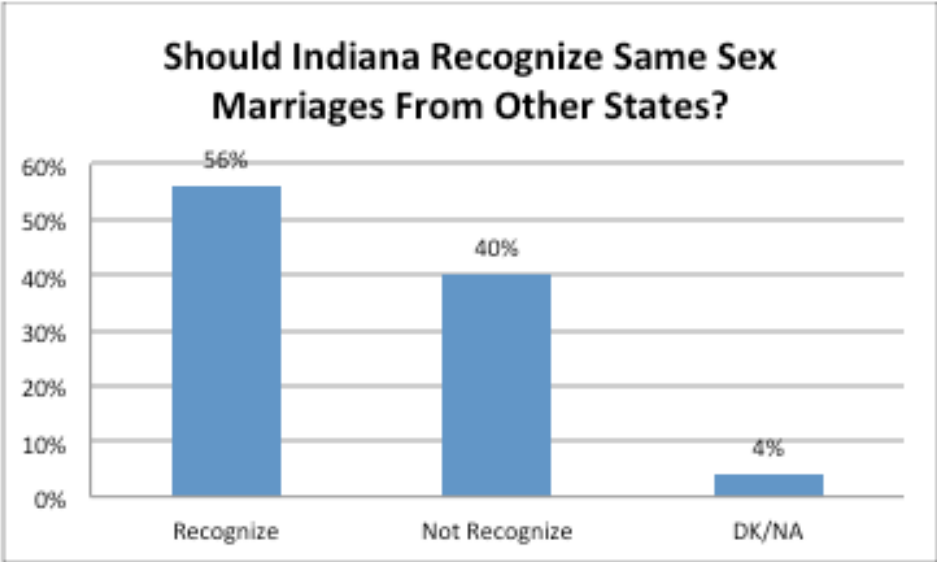


SAME-SEX MARRIAGE

Over the last several years, the Hoosier survey has tracked a slow but steady increase in support for same-sex marriages. Last year, we found that a slight plurality (48%) supported legalizing gay marriage in the state. That number has remained essentially the same (47%). This may mean that momentum for legalization has plateaued. Consistent with last year's results, support for legalization of same-sex marriages varies by party and most significantly by age.



The most notable change in the status of the legal argument surrounding gay marriage has been the Supreme Court's decision not to hear appeals from lower courts involving states like Indiana. While Hoosiers are closely divided over the legality of same-sex marriages, a majority believes that Indiana should recognize the rights of same-sex couples married in other states (56%). When asked about the Supreme Court's decision not to hear appeals on these matters, Hoosiers overwhelmingly agree that the Supreme Court should have answered the legal challenges once and for all.

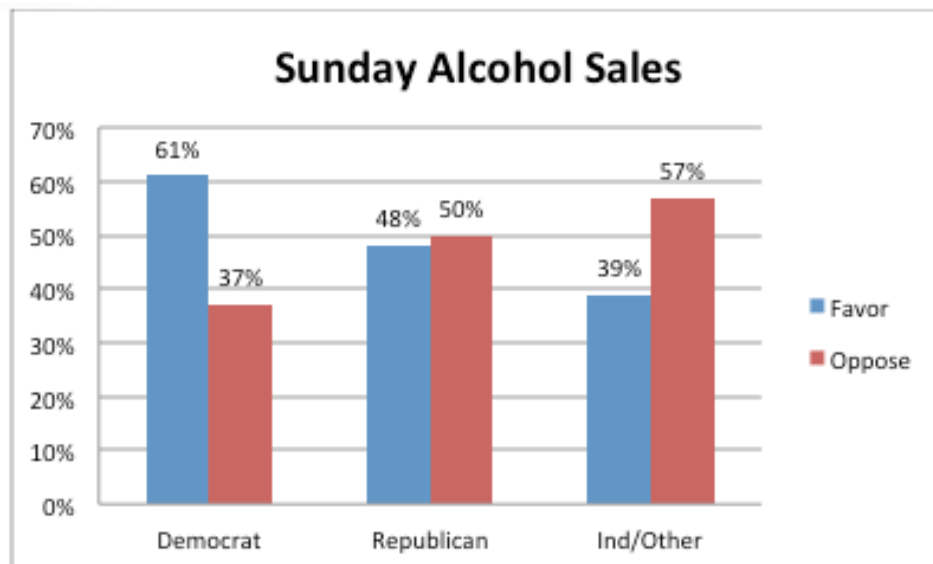
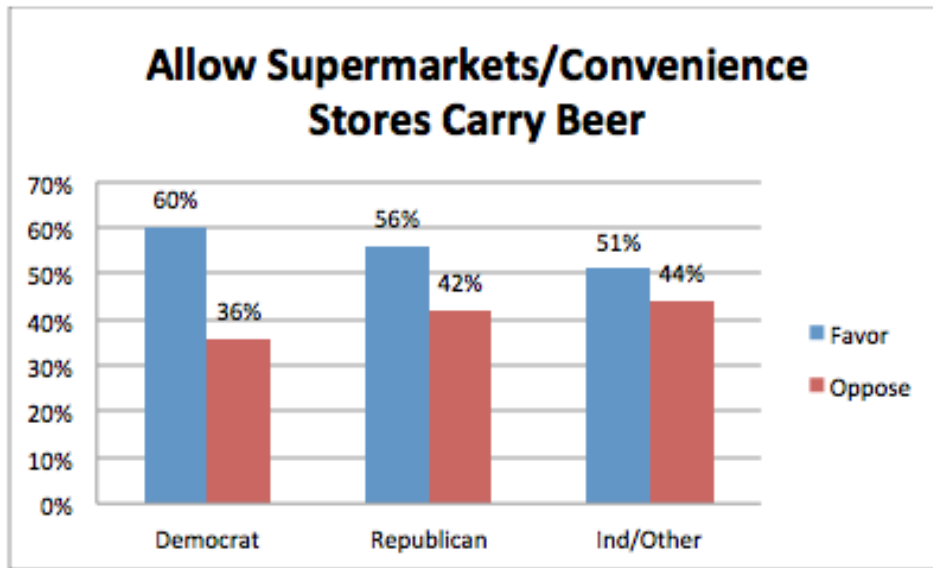


ENERGY

President Obama has proposed regulations for reducing greenhouse emissions from coal-fired power plants like the ones that generate much of the electricity in Indiana. Supporters of these regulations say that this is a good policy that will reduce respiratory illnesses and create incentives to find cleaner energy sources. Opponents, like Governor Pence, say this is a bad policy that will increase the cost of energy for Indiana residents and put good paying coal jobs at risk. In our survey, while more respondents said these regulations were bad for Indiana (33%) rather than a good idea (24%), a plurality of Hoosiers (42%) said they have not yet heard enough about these policies to form an opinion.

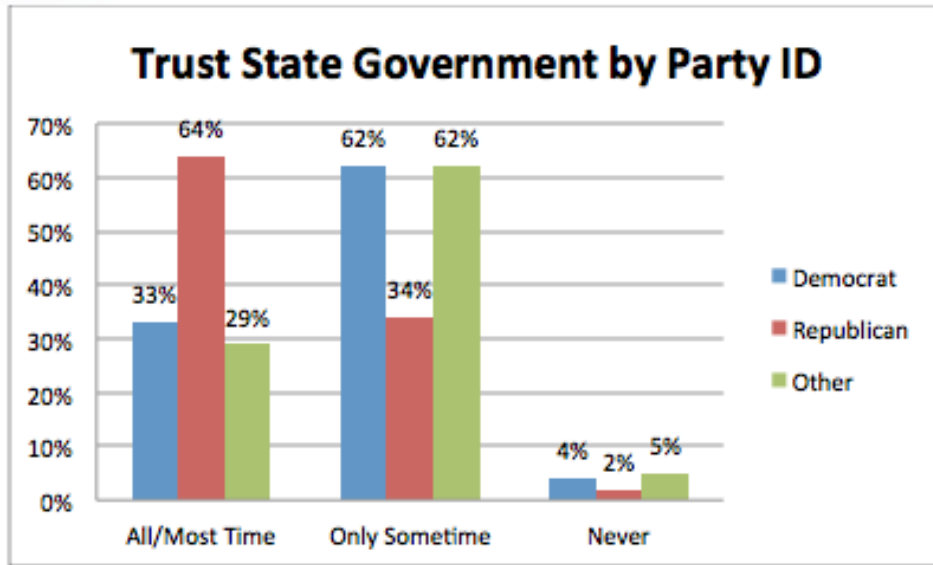
LIQUOR SALES

Liquor sales in Indiana may emerge before the Indiana General Assembly as a topic of discussion this session. Currently, supermarkets and convenience stores are prohibited from selling cold beer, and Indiana is one of two remaining states (Minnesota being the other) that prohibits liquor sales (except in restaurants and eating establishments) on Sundays. By and large, Hoosiers support expanding their options for buying liquor and beer. Overall, 57% of Hoosiers support allowing supermarkets and convenience stores to sell cold beer. Fifty-two percent support Sunday liquor sales. Opinion varies by political party with Democrats more supportive of Sunday sales.



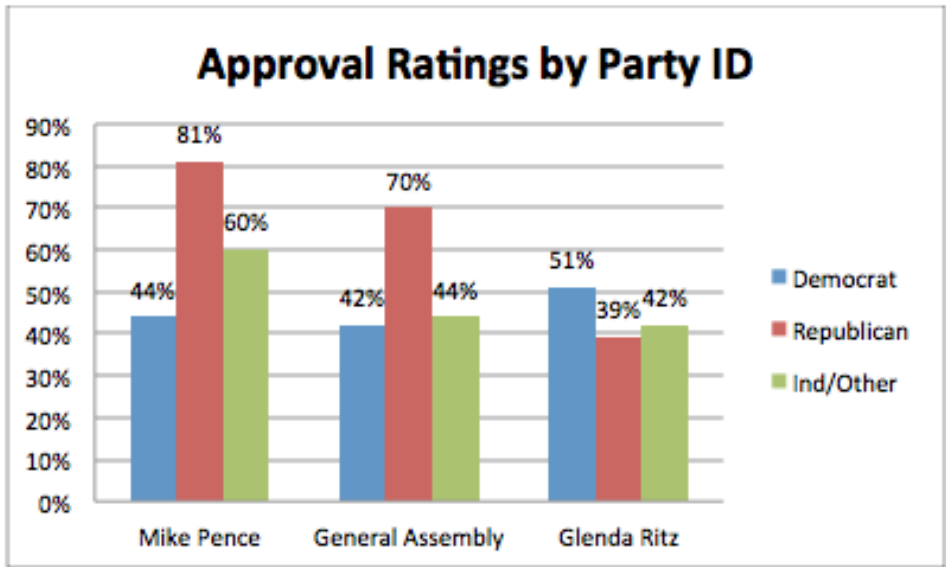
TRUST IN GOVERNMENT

Trust in government appears to be at a historic low across the country. Gallup, for example, finds just 19% of Americans trust the federal government to do the right thing all or most of the time (<http://www.gallup.com/poll/5392/trust-government.aspx>). Hoosiers are right in step with national averages, with just 21% believing they can trust the federal government all or most of the time. When it comes to state government, however, Hoosiers are more trusting, with 46% believing the state government can be trusted to do the right thing all or most of the time. This also reflects a national trend. Generally, residents trust governments closest to them (state and local) more than they trust those that are more remote (Washington). However, trust also depends on the party controlling government. Generally, there is less trust displayed by those who identify with the party out of power. This trend is evident in Indiana, with Democrats and those not affiliated with either party more likely than Republicans to say they trust the state government only some of the time or never.



APPROVAL RATINGS

The generally high level of trust in state government is reflected in the favorable ratings Hoosiers give their elected leaders. Mike Pence enjoys an exceptionally high level of approval for a sitting governor at the midpoint of his first term (62%), and the General Assembly also is held in relatively high esteem (57% approval). Superintendent of Public Instruction Glenda Ritz has an approval rating of under 50%, but a sizable number of Hoosiers (28%) say they still don't know enough about her to have formed an opinion.



DOMESTIC VIOLENCE IN THE NATIONAL FOOTBALL LEAGUE

Revelations of domestic and child abuse by professional football players has garnered significant public attention in recent months, particularly since video surfaced of Baltimore Ravens’ running back Ray Rice punching his wife in a hotel elevator. Public officials have raised questions about the adequacy of the response by National Football League officials in response to these incidents. A majority (55%) believe the NFL is not doing enough to address domestic violence among their players and they are split with regard to whether the NFL should permanently ban those players convicted of domestic abuse (47%) or impose a less severe penalty (43%). More women favor imposing a lifetime ban than do men.

