

THE GRANITE STATE POLL

THE UNIVERSITY OF NEW HAMPSHIRE

JOBS/ECONOMY MOST IMPORTANT ISSUE IN NH

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DURHAM, NH – Jobs and the economy have overtaken education funding as the most important problem facing the state of New Hampshire. Governor Craig Benson’s approval ratings have slipped somewhat but remain positive heading into the election season.

These findings are based on the latest **Granite State Poll**, conducted by the University of New Hampshire Survey Center. The Granite State Poll is sponsored by the University of New Hampshire. Five hundred eleven (511) randomly selected adults were interviewed by telephone between February 4 and February 12, 2004. The margin of sampling error for the survey is +/-4.3 percent. (For more detailed results, visit the Survey Center web site at www.unh.edu/survey-center and click on Press Releases.)

Most Important Problem Facing New Hampshire

For the first time in years, New Hampshire adults are more concerned about jobs and the economy than how to fund primary and secondary education. Although the New Hampshire economy has been improving, and unemployment has been falling, concern over the economy is now the most important problem in the minds of Granite Staters. In the most recent Granite State Poll, the most important problems identified by New Hampshire adults are jobs and the economy (22%), education funding (20%), taxes (14%), health care issues (10%), quality of education (7%), and problems with the state budget (5%).

The importance of funding education has been declining over the last several years. People have become more accustomed to the state-wide property tax that resulted from the Claremont decision which made the state responsible for funding adequate education for New Hampshire students. Also for the first time, healthcare has shown up on the radar as one of the most important problems facing New Hampshire adults. “While education funding is still seen as a very important issue in this state, the uncertain economy and job loss have increased as concerns,” said Dr. Andrew Smith, Director of the UNH Survey Center. “The economy and health care were consistent themes of Democrats competing in the recent primary election in New Hampshire and this may have heightened these concerns among state residents.”

Gubernatorial Approval

In the most recent Granite State Poll, Governor Craig Benson's approval rating has dropped somewhat to 52 percent from 58 percent in the October Granite State Poll. Until now, Mr. Benson's approval rating has steadily increased since he took office in early 2003. In the most recent Granite State Poll, 52 percent of New Hampshire adults say they approve of the job he has done as governor, 29 percent disapprove, and 19 percent are neutral. "Though Mr. Benson's approval has declined since the fall, he is still in relatively good shape for reelection in November as the percentage of adults who disapprove of his performance is relatively low," stated Dr. Smith.

Benson's personal favorability ratings have also slid slightly since October. Currently, 55 percent say they have a favorable opinion of Benson, 28 percent have an unfavorable opinion, 10 percent are neutral, and 7 percent don't know enough about him to say. In the October 2003 Granite State Poll, 58 percent of New Hampshire adults said they had a favorable opinion of Benson, 23 percent had an unfavorable opinion, 10 percent were neutral, and 7 percent did not know enough about him to say.

Right Direction or Wrong Track?

Despite an eight-percentage point slide since October, New Hampshire residents remain optimistic about New Hampshire's future. Sixty-one percent think things in New Hampshire are generally going in the right direction, 28 percent think things are seriously off on the wrong track, and 11 percent say they don't know.

Subgroup Analysis

Benson's highest approval and favorability ratings come from Republicans and conservatives. Democrats, liberals, union households, residents of Western New Hampshire, and people with post-graduate degrees give Benson his lowest approval and favorability ratings.

When looking at all demographic breakdowns concerning the most important problem, New Hampshire adults who have lived in New Hampshire 5 years or less are most worried about jobs and the economy, while union households are most concerned about funding education in the state.

Granite State Poll Methodology

These findings are based on the most recent Granite State Poll conducted by the University of New Hampshire Survey Center from February 4 to February 12, 2003. A random sample of 511 New Hampshire adults was interviewed by telephone. In 95 of 100 cases, the statewide estimates will be accurate to plus or minus 4.3 percent. Results reported for other subgroups have potential for somewhat larger variation than those for the entire population.

The data have been weighted to adjust for numbers of adults and telephone lines within households, respondent sex, and region of the state. In addition to potential sampling error, all surveys have other potential sources of non-sampling error including question order effects, question wording effects, and non-response.

Gubernatorial Approval

“GENERALLY SPEAKING, do you approve or disapprove of the way Governor Benson is handling his job as governor?”

	<u>Feb. 2003</u>	<u>April 2003</u>	<u>June 2003</u>	<u>Oct. 2003</u>	<u>Feb. 2004</u>
Approve	43%	48%	53%	58%	52%
Neutral / Don't Know	44	30	22	16	19
Disapprove	13	22	25	26	29
(N)	(618)	(496)	(505)	(485)	(495)

Favorability Rating - Governor Craig Benson

"Next, I'd like to get your overall opinion of some people in the news. As I read each name, please say if you have a favorable or unfavorable opinion of this person - or if you have never heard of him or her. Governor Craig Benson."

	<u>Feb. 2003</u>	<u>April 2003</u>	<u>June 2003</u>	<u>Oct. 2003</u>	<u>Feb. 2004</u>
Favorable	58%	53%	54%	58%	55%
Neutral	15	9	12	9	10
Unfavorable	14	21	24	23	28
Don't Know	18	17	9	10	7
(N)	(652)	(507)	(512)	(496)	(508)

Most Important Problem Facing New Hampshire

"Let's turn to the State of New Hampshire ... There are many problems facing the STATE OF NEW HAMPSHIRE today. In general, what do you think is the most IMPORTANT problem facing the STATE OF NEW HAMPSHIRE today?"

	<u>Oct. '01</u>	<u>Feb. '02</u>	<u>Apr. '02</u>	<u>June '02</u>	<u>Feb. '03</u>	<u>Apr. '03</u>	<u>June '03</u>	<u>Oct. '03</u>	<u>Feb. '04</u>
Jobs, the economy	15%	12%	11%	16%	16%	16%	16%	19%	22%
Education funding	42	27	31	31	29	28	27	21	20
Taxes	11	17	24	15	16	14	13	13	14
Health care	1	0	2	2	2	4	3	5	10
Quality of education	4	21	7	12	12	8	6	10	7
State budget	-	3	1	5	2	6	9	6	5
Other / DK	27	20	24	19	23	24	26	26	23
(N)	(519)	(312)	(684)	(424)	(644)	(497)	(513)	(490)	(502)

NH - Right Direction or Wrong Track

“Do you think things in New Hampshire are generally going in the right direction or are they seriously off on the wrong track?”

	<u>June 2003</u>	<u>Oct. 2003</u>	<u>Feb. 2004</u>
Right Direction	62%	67%	61%
Wrong Track	29	26	28
Don't Know	9	7	11
(N)	(510)	(485)	(500)

Gubernatorial Approval

STATEWIDE	<u>Approve</u> 52%	<u>Neutral</u> 19%	<u>Disapprove</u> 29%	<u>(N)</u> 495
Registered Democrat	30	15	55	112
Undeclared	49	18	33	178
Registered Republican	73	16	11	114
Not registered	56	32	12	89
Democrat	37	17	46	216
Independent	53	28	19	86
Republican	71	16	14	183
Liberal	29	16	55	112
Moderate	50	21	29	203
Conservative	73	14	13	136
Union household	34	7	59	58
Non-union	54	21	25	433
5 Years or less in NH	52	30	18	71
6 to 10 years	51	20	29	40
11 to 20 years	51	19	30	96
More than 20 years	53	16	31	282
18 to 34	52	25	23	109
33 to 49	61	12	26	166
50 to 64	42	20	38	129
65 and over	49	22	29	75
Male	59	17	24	241
Female	45	22	33	254
High school or less	61	20	19	123
Some college	57	16	27	127
College graduate	51	19	30	147
Post-graduate	36	23	40	95
Less than \$30K	44	25	30	57
\$30K to \$60K	53	15	32	148
\$60K to \$75K	52	12	36	57
\$75K to \$100K	45	22	33	53
More than \$100K	62	16	22	79
Married	53	18	29	341
Divorced/separated	58	13	28	78
Never married	39	29	31	69
Protestant	55	18	27	195
Catholic	54	20	26	152
Other	44	21	35	136
Attend 1 or more/week	57	18	25	103
1-2 times a month	48	15	37	67
Less often	51	23	26	166
Never	52	17	31	143
Northern NH	48	20	32	67
Western NH	41	10	49	46
Central/Lakes	41	17	42	76
Hillsborough County	52	27	21	152
Seacoast	62	16	22	155
1st Cong. District	59	19	22	197
2nd Cong. District	47	19	33	298
1st E.C. District	47	18	35	97
2nd E.C. District	49	18	33	101
3rd E.C. District	59	15	26	97
4th E.C. District	60	24	15	100
5th E.C. District	42	23	35	93

Favorability Rating - Craig Benson

STATEWIDE	<u>Favorable</u> 55%	<u>Neutral</u> 10%	<u>Unfavorable</u> 28%	<u>Don't Know</u> 7%	<u>(N)</u> 508
Registered Democrat	36	9	53	3	115
Undeclared	52	11	30	6	185
Registered Republican	78	6	11	5	114
Not registered	56	11	14	19	92
Democrat	39	12	44	5	224
Independent	61	10	16	13	90
Republican	73	7	13	6	182
Liberal	30	10	52	7	115
Moderate	55	12	27	6	211
Conservative	77	7	13	3	137
Union household	35	11	52	2	60
Non-union	58	10	24	8	443
5 Years or less in NH	54	16	21	8	77
6 to 10 years	50	10	29	11	42
11 to 20 years	48	11	27	14	98
More than 20 years	58	8	30	4	285
18 to 34	52	10	26	12	114
33 to 49	63	7	23	7	172
50 to 64	47	13	36	4	131
65 and over	57	8	27	8	75
Male	62	10	23	5	244
Female	49	10	32	9	263
High school or less	65	6	17	11	127
Some college	53	10	29	9	128
College graduate	58	7	28	6	150
Post-graduate	42	18	37	3	99
Less than \$30K	49	12	32	7	58
\$30K to \$60K	54	10	28	8	152
\$60K to \$75K	52	11	36	1	59
\$75K to \$100K	49	12	36	3	54
More than \$100K	60	10	23	7	83
Married	57	10	27	6	347
Divorced/separated	58	6	27	10	81
Never married	41	12	34	12	72
Protestant	61	10	26	4	198
Catholic	58	9	26	7	155
Other	45	11	32	11	140
Attend 1 or more/week	61	9	24	5	106
1-2 times a month	51	10	36	3	69
Less often	56	11	24	8	172
Never	51	10	30	9	145
Northern NH	49	14	31	6	68
Western NH	38	7	42	13	48
Central/Lakes	45	12	39	4	80
Hillsborough County	61	9	21	9	152
Seacoast	63	8	23	6	159
1st Cong. District	62	9	22	7	202
2nd Cong. District	50	11	32	7	306
1st E.C. District	48	13	34	4	99
2nd E.C. District	58	8	29	6	104
3rd E.C. District	57	8	27	8	101
4th E.C. District	64	14	18	4	102
5th E.C. District	49	4	32	15	95

Are Things in NH on Right/Wrong Track

STATEWIDE	<u>Right</u> <u>Direction</u> 61%	<u>Wrong</u> <u>Track</u> 28%	<u>Don't</u> <u>Know</u> 11%	<u>(N)</u> <u>500</u>
Registered Democrat	42	45	12	110
Undeclared	58	33	9	182
Registered Republican	81	9	10	116
Not registered	65	19	17	91
Democrat	45	40	14	219
Independent	59	31	10	86
Republican	81	11	8	183
Liberal	38	45	16	113
Moderate	59	28	13	205
Conservative	83	15	2	138
Union household	43	43	14	60
Non-union	63	26	11	436
5 Years or less in NH	57	20	23	76
6 to 10 years	71	24	6	42
11 to 20 years	62	27	11	97
More than 20 years	60	31	9	281
18 to 34	65	22	12	114
33 to 49	64	27	9	168
50 to 64	51	38	12	128
65 and over	66	21	13	75
Male	68	23	9	244
Female	55	32	13	257
High school or less	66	26	8	126
Some college	59	27	14	125
College graduate	66	24	11	148
Post-graduate	50	37	13	99
Less than \$30K	50	34	17	57
\$30K to \$60K	63	32	5	149
\$60K to \$75K	60	31	9	58
\$75K to \$100K	57	30	13	54
More than \$100K	71	16	14	82
Married	62	27	11	339
Divorced/separated	61	32	6	81
Never married	56	27	17	72
Protestant	67	24	9	196
Catholic	60	31	9	155
Other	54	29	17	136
Attend 1 or more/week	65	26	10	104
1-2 times a month	51	32	17	68
Less often	62	29	9	169
Never	65	27	8	143
Northern NH	65	22	14	67
Western NH	40	50	10	46
Central/Lakes	54	35	10	79
Hillsborough County	70	20	10	152
Seacoast	61	27	12	156
1st Cong. District	60	27	12	199
2nd Cong. District	61	28	11	301
1st E.C. District	60	30	11	97
2nd E.C. District	62	31	7	102
3rd E.C. District	59	25	16	99
4th E.C. District	69	23	9	102
5th E.C. District	55	30	14	93

Most Important Problem Facing NH

STATEWIDE	Educ. Funding 20%	Jobs/ Economy 22%	Taxes 14%	State Budget 5%	Quality of Educ. 7%	Health Care 10%	Other 13%	Don't Know 10%	(N=) 502
Registered Democrat	21	23	14	5	4	14	12	7	113
Undeclared	21	25	18	4	7	7	10	8	183
Registered Republican	23	14	15	5	10	3	24	6	114
Not registered	15	23	5	7	6	20	6	20	90
Democrat	23	27	12	4	6	11	11	6	221
Independent	17	20	16	5	8	13	10	11	89
Republican	19	15	17	6	7	6	17	12	181
Liberal	23	24	11	5	4	16	11	6	113
Moderate	22	26	15	5	5	6	12	9	210
Conservative	16	14	18	5	9	9	19	11	134
Union household	31	17	14	3	8	5	15	6	59
Non-union	19	22	14	5	7	10	13	10	439
5 Years or less in NH	9	38	11	3	6	11	11	13	75
6 to 10 years	29	11	22	3	0	21	6	7	42
11 to 20 years	19	19	11	6	9	6	16	14	96
More than 20 years	23	20	15	5	7	9	14	8	284
18 to 34	18	20	8	3	9	13	12	17	112
33 to 49	24	25	9	4	7	7	14	10	170
50 to 64	21	20	19	8	7	10	12	4	129
65 and over	13	21	24	4	5	9	15	9	76
Male	22	19	17	8	6	5	15	9	242
Female	18	25	12	1	8	15	11	10	260
High school or less	17	20	13	4	6	11	9	20	126
Some college	19	29	12	4	7	9	11	11	127
College graduate	19	16	18	5	9	9	18	5	148
Post-graduate	26	24	13	6	3	9	15	3	98
Less than \$30K	14	31	8	0	9	13	10	16	58
\$30K to \$60K	22	24	14	2	10	8	13	7	150
\$60K to \$75K	14	19	12	5	8	9	23	11	58
\$75K to \$100K	24	22	11	5	6	16	10	5	53
More than \$100K	23	15	23	10	1	7	15	5	80
Married	22	20	16	4	7	10	12	8	344
Divorced/separated	13	25	13	9	7	7	16	11	79
Never married	20	23	11	2	6	9	13	16	71
Protestant	19	18	15	5	10	11	13	11	198
Catholic	17	28	14	8	6	8	9	9	152
Other	24	20	13	2	4	10	18	9	138
Attend 1 or more/week	18	17	23	6	7	6	13	10	104
1-2 times a month	19	34	5	4	3	11	19	5	68
Less often	18	23	15	5	8	13	10	8	168
Never	24	18	12	4	7	8	15	13	146
Northern NH	13	26	8	3	8	12	16	14	67
Western NH	28	14	17	4	10	7	15	5	47
Central/Lakes	16	27	18	3	3	9	13	11	78
Hillsborough County	22	22	13	7	8	10	11	7	152
Seacoast	20	19	15	4	6	11	12	12	158
1st Cong. District	19	21	15	4	6	11	12	12	199
2nd Cong. District	21	22	14	5	7	9	14	8	303
1st E.C. District	13	28	10	2	7	14	15	12	96
2nd E.C. District	19	18	19	6	5	7	17	10	104
3rd E.C. District	20	17	15	4	5	12	13	12	99
4th E.C. District	18	29	12	5	6	10	12	8	102
5th E.C. District	32	13	16	6	11	8	8	6	95