

2013 Texas Lyceum Poll

Executive Summary of Economic Evaluations, Job Approval, and Trial Ballots *We're anxious about the (national) economy, we like our leaders, and we weren't aware there is another election just around the corner*

A September 6-20, 2013 survey of adult Texans reveals that while Lone Star State residents are fairly positive about the state's economy, they think the worst is yet to come for the national economy and are only somewhat optimistic with respect to the economic future for their children.

Job approval and favorability numbers for political figures and groups suggest that Texans are not as down on their leaders as people elsewhere in the country. Texas adults are slightly approving of President Obama and significantly approving of Governor Perry. Even the Texas Legislature scores an approval rating close to 60 percent.

Looking ahead to the 2014 elections, the crystal ball is hazy—lots of people have no opinion on any of the races. Still, the current ballot tests indicate the pro-Republican results of recent elections in Texas may well continue in 2014: Greg Abbott leads Wendy Davis by a 29 percent to 21 percent margin, and a generic Republican candidate leads a generic Democrat in both the U.S. House and the Texas House ballots (29 percent to 23 percent, and 23 percent to 19 percent, respectively). The good news for the GOP is that these numbers translate into an edge of between 8 and 16 points, assuming undecided voters break proportionately. The (potentially) good news for the Democrats is that roughly half of the potential electorate hasn't thought enough about the election yet to have an opinion.

Summary of Findings

General and Economic Evaluations

We asked a series of questions about the respondents' general and economic evaluations of Texas and the country. Consistent with recent years, Texans rate the state's economy as better off than that of the nation's economy. But a strong majority believes that the worst is yet to come for the national economy. People split on what to expect for the future - optimism for our children's generation appears to be tempered by a strong sense that our national economic problems may be intractable rather than just stubborn.

Thirty percent of adult Texans believe that the country is headed in the right direction, compared with 59 percent who believe we are off on the wrong track. This is a marked departure from last year, when 42 percent of registered voters believed the country was on the right track while 51 percent were on the wrong track. Looking specifically to the economy, 32 percent of Texans expressed the opinion that the national economy is better off compared with a year ago, while 29 percent said that it was worse off. Thirty-seven percent said that it was about the same.

With a similar sentiment of pessimism, when asked whether the worst was over or the worst was yet to come with respect to the economy, only 30 percent of Texans said that the worst was over while 58 percent believe that the worst is still yet to come.

Similar to previous Texas Lyceum Polls, Texans remain optimistic about the state their state's economy compared to the nations'. When asked whether Texas' economy is better off, worse off, or about the same as the rest of the country, 62 percent of respondents expressed the opinion that Texas' economy is the better off, compared with only 7 percent who thought Texas was worse off, and the remaining 26 percent who said that it was about the same. But similar to the country as a whole, a disparity exists depending on education level. While fully 76 percent of those with a college degree believe that Texas' economy is better off, only 42 percent of those without a high school diploma agree with an equal share believing that Texas' economy is worse off.

Looking to the respondent's personal situation, when asked to assess their family's own financial situation compared with one year ago, 50 percent said that their situation had remained unchanged with about even numbers, 26 percent and 23 percent respectively, expressing that they were better or worse off.

When asked to look to the future, a plurality of Texans, 41 percent, believe that their children will be better off economically. Thirty-five percent think that their children will be worse off and 17 percent believe that they will be about the same.

Job Approval

Turning to the approval numbers, 50 percent of registered voters think that President Obama is doing a good job as president compared with 47 percent who think that he's doing a poor job. But large partisan and racial gaps do exist. While 82 percent of Democrats, 88 percent of blacks, and 71 percent of Hispanics approve of the job that President Obama is doing, 76 percent of Republicans and 63 percent of whites disapprove.

As for Governor Perry, 56 percent of registered voters approve of the job he is doing as governor compared with 34 percent who disapprove. As is the case with President Obama, but in reverse, Republicans overwhelmingly approve of the job that the governor has done while a majority of Democrats disapprove.

Coming off of the recent legislative session, the Texas Legislature received high marks from Texans with 59 percent approving of their performance compared with only 27 percent disapproving. In addition to strong approval from Republicans, a majority of independents (53 percent) and even 50 percent of Democrats expressed their approval of the Legislature this session.

Trial Ballots

Looking ahead to the 2014 elections, 35 percent of registered voters said that they would vote in the March Republican Primary elections, compared with 29 percent who said they would vote in the Democratic Primary, and 16 percent who admitted to not usually voting in primary elections.

Among self-identified Republican Primary voters, Greg Abbott is the clear favorite with 22 percent of the vote and only token support for his potential rivals: Tom Pauken, Miriam Martinez, and Larry Kilgore. However, by the numbers the race is still wide open, as 69 percent of respondents indicated that they hadn't yet thought enough about the election to have an opinion.

Should State Sen. Wendy Davis run for Governor, she will be the likely Democratic nominee to face Abbott. Looking ahead to that election, we asked respondents whom they would pick should that be the matchup. Among registered voters, 29 percent said they would vote for Greg Abbott, 21 percent said that they would vote for Wendy Davis, and 50 percent hadn't yet thought about it enough to have a preference. Not surprisingly, Democrats and black respondents expressed a preference for Davis while white respondents, independents, men, and Republicans expressed a preference for Abbott. Hispanics showed a slight preference for Davis, and women expressed a very slight preference for Abbott that is within the margin of error.

More generally, 29 percent of registered voters said that they would choose the Republican candidate for Congress come November 2014 while 23 percent said that they would choose the Democrat (43 percent hadn't thought about it enough to have an opinion). For the Texas Legislature, 23 percent said that they would choose the Republican candidate compared with 19 percent who said that they would choose the Democratic candidate (53 percent hadn't thought about it enough to have an opinion).

More broadly still, with the Supreme Court's invalidation of Section 4 of the Voting Rights Act, Attorney General and Gubernatorial candidate Greg Abbott stated

that Texas could now proceed with its voter identification law. We asked Texans whether they believe that voting and election laws in Texas discriminate against minorities. A majority, 64 percent, said that they did not while 31 percent said that they did. And while a majority of Democrats expressed the opinion that these laws discriminate against minorities (52 percent), among minorities themselves, there appeared to be an ambivalent reaction. Fifty-one percent of blacks think these laws discriminate compared with 41 percent who believe they don't. And among Hispanics, 45 percent think that these laws do discriminate, less than the 49 percent who believe that they don't.

Methodology

From September 6-20, 2013, The Texas Lyceum conducted a statewide telephone survey of adult citizens. The survey utilized a stratified probability sample design, with respondents being randomly selected at the level of the household. The survey also employed a randomized cell phone supplement, with approximately 39 percent of completed interviews being conducted among cell phone only or cell phone dominant households. A Spanish-language instrument was developed and bilingual interviewers offered respondents a chance to participate in English or Spanish. On average, respondents completed the interview in 19 minutes. Approximately 6,100 records were drawn to yield 1,000 completed interviews. The final data set is weighted by race/ethnicity, age and gender to achieve representativeness as defined by the Texas specifications from the 2010 Current Population Study. The overall margin of error for the poll is +/- 3.1 percentage points.

The general election ballot questions were asked of the survey's 798 registered voters (margin of error is +/- 3.47 percentage points). The Republican primary ballot questions were asked of the 279 registered voters who said that they intended to vote in next March's GOP primary election (margin of error is 5.87 percentage points).

The Texas Lyceum

The Texas Lyceum has committed to annual probability samples of the state of Texas to bolster its understanding of public opinion on crucial policy issues. The professional rationale for the Texas Lyceum Poll is straightforward: a non-partisan, high quality, scientific survey designed to provide (1) specific data points on issues of interest, and (2) a time series of key demographics, attitudes, and opinions. Towards this end, the trademark of the Texas Lyceum Poll is transparency. Top-line

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and detailed cross-tabular results of each poll will be made available on the Texas Lyceum website at **www.texaslyceum.org**.

The Texas Lyceum, now 33 years strong, is a non-profit, non-partisan statewide leadership organization focused on identifying the next generation of Texas leaders. The Texas Lyceum consists of 96 men and women from throughout the state. Directors begin their service while under the age of 46 and have demonstrated leadership in their community and profession, together with a deep commitment to Texas.

The Texas Lyceum acts as a catalyst to bring together diverse opinions and expertise to focus on national and state issues, and seeks to emphasize constructive private sector, public sector, and individual responses to the issues.

To accomplish these purposes, the Lyceum conducts periodic public forums, publishes the Lyceum *Journal*, commissions The Texas Lyceum Poll, and convenes programs for the Directors to explore and discuss key economic and social issues of the state and nation.