

HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE MANSFIELD UNIVERSITY STATE SURVEY

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PROPERTY TAXES NEED TO BE REDUCED

Politicians have been attempting to provide state residents with property tax relief for several years now. After all the unsuccessful attempts, one thing is clear: Pennsylvanians want a reduction in property taxes. Some 3 out of 4 agree that property taxes need to be reduced.

In order to compensate the state budget from such a cut, people are most in favor of increasing the statewide sales tax from 6.0 to 6.5 (54%) or expanding the sales tax to excluded items (54%). A majority of residents oppose increasing the state income tax (65%).

PENNSYLVANIANS SAY “RAISE THE MINIMUM WAGE”

A clear majority of people in the state agree with the plan to raise the minimum wage (86%). Support for raising the minimum wage drops somewhat if the raise would result in employers eliminating jobs. Still, nearly 2 out of 3 of those who support raising the minimum wage continue to support such a policy despite the threat of jobs being lost.

Those who support raising the minimum wage say it should be any where from below \$6 to over \$8 per hour. The most common response fell between “\$7.01-7.50”. This choice contains the amount that is currently being discussed as a minimum for the state to reach two years from now—\$7.15 per hour.



SPECIAL POINTS OF INTEREST:

- *Democrats lead in Gubernatorial and US Senate elections*
- *School should start after labor day*
- *Many are not saving for retirement*
- *47,000 pathological gamblers in PA*

ECONOMIC HUMAN RIGHTS

The survey found that only 1 out of 3 adults are clearly aware of the concept of economic human rights. About 1 out of 10 are somewhat familiar with the idea. Most people, however, are not familiar with the idea.

The United Nations declared that everyone should

be entitled to ‘economic human rights’. Surprisingly, few people have heard of this push for human rights.

Although folks are not familiar with the concept, they are in agreement with the principle. Some 8 out of 10 respondents say that

they believe people have the right to adequate food, shelter, and health insurance. Only 1 in 10 disagree with this right as stated.

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ARE PENNSYLVANIANS READY FINANCIALLY FOR RETIREMENT?



Retirement—are you saving for your future?

The baby boomers are getting closer to retirement. Are they ready for it? The situation for many is changing. Younger people are faced with an increase in the age at which they can become eligible for full Social Security benefits. In addition, the cost of healthcare has been increasing while at the same time personal savings have been going down. For example, in 2005 the United States recorded the first negative personal savings since 1933.

Adding to the picture is the fact that older adults are staying healthy and living longer. As a state, Pennsylvania has the second largest percentage of older adults—15.6% of the

population (US Census 2000).

The questions about retirement focused on how prepared people are for retirement. The findings indicate that a significant number of adults have not begun to prepare financially for retirement. Overall, 26 percent of adults have not begun to plan for retirement. This lack of preparation is partly related to age: younger respondents are less likely to be planning. Only half of the respondents between 18-34 years of age indicate that they have begun to plan for retirement. Alarming, the results indicate that 1 out of 5 adults between the ages of 35-50 has not started retirement planning. These results suggest

that several million adults in Pennsylvania are not fully preparing themselves for retirement. With Social Security supposedly in a state of crisis, what will they rely on for financial security in their golden years?

Only about half of the adults in the survey began saving for retirement between the ages of 20-30. A quarter of the respondents started saving between ages 31-40 and over 10 percent started after age 41. It seems as if saving for retirement is something that people expect should be done when they get older. Or as one respondent said, she hopes that she hits the lottery.

PROBLEM AND PATHOLOGICAL GAMBLERS IN PENNSYLVANNIA

The past year prevalence rate of problem gambling was measured by a set of questions designed by the National Opinion Research Center. The nine questions resembled those used by Gamblers Anonymous and tap into whether gambling affects the respondents' personal and social lives. Positive responses to the questions suggest problem gambling behavior.

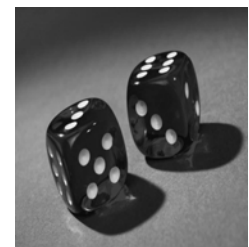
About 5 percent of adults answered yes to at least one of the nine questions. Breaking these results down further

reveals the extent of problem and pathological gamblers in the state. Some 3.6 percent of the respondents said yes once or twice, .7 percent answered yes three or four times and .5 percent said yes five or more times.

Overall, Pennsylvanians—even before the slot machines enter the state—display more problem and pathological gambling behavior than people in general across the United States. The numbers suggest that Pennsylvania has a resident population of

roughly 47,000 pathological gamblers, 65,000 problem gamblers and 337,000 at-risk gamblers.

The results can be used as a baseline to compare the social impact of future slot machines on the behavior of state residents. Will the rate of problem gamblers increase as slot machines are put in close proximity to major population centers or will these current problem gamblers simply shift their play from lottery, bingo, and other forms of betting to slots?



Will slot machines increase the number of problem and pathological gamblers?

COMPENSATION FOR WRONGFULLY CONVICTED INMATES

Since 2002, 8 state inmates have been exonerated due to newly available DNA testing. These inmates, some of which have spent over 20 years behind bars and on death row, receive nothing upon release. The nation as a whole has not established a policy about what to do in such cases.

One approach that is being discussed among state lawmakers is to compensate these wrongfully convicted inmates. Pennsylvanians were

asked if they support such a policy.

About 3 out of 4 adults support compensating wrongfully convicted inmates. The results show strong support for providing some kind of aid or compensation. The next question to explore is how much compensation should be provided?



SHOULD PUBLIC SCHOOL START AFTER LABOR DAY?

Traditionally, public schools open after the Labor Day weekend in Pennsylvania. However, some school districts are beginning school before Labor Day. This practice will lead to an earlier finish date in the following spring. However, an early start date will make planning late summer vacations more difficult for families.

When asked about their opinion towards a law to start school after Labor Day weekend, the most frequent response is "Favor". However, the group responding in favor only amounts to about half of the survey sample (47%). About a quarter of the respondents (23%) say either the start date "Doesn't Matter" or that they "Oppose" (26%) starting after

Labor Day. A few say that they don't know when school should start (4%).

Having school-aged children or not does not make a difference in whether people prefer school starting before or after Labor Day. However, women are more likely than men to favor starting school after Labor Day (52 vs. 40%).



DEMOCRATS HAVE THE LEAD IN TWO UPCOMING STATE ELECTIONS

Republican Lynn Swann is not far behind Governor Rendell in the run for governor's office. If the election were held today, 42 percent of the respondents would vote for Rendell and 34 percent for Swann. Some 19 percent have not decided. Finally, 5 percent refuse to reveal their choice.

Governor Rendell continues to record a relatively low job approval rating (42%) and a large (38%) disapproval rating. Overall, Rendell's job approval rating has been lower than that of his two predecessors, Schweiker and Ridege.

The U.S. Senate race is not as close as the governor's race.

Respondents favor State Treasurer Casey instead of incumbent Rich Santorum (45 vs. 31% respectively). About 1 in 5 are not sure about who they would choose and 3 percent refuse to reveal their choice.

THE GOVERNOR IS
BEING CHALLENGED
BY SWANN
WHILE CASEY
OUTDISTANCES
SANTORUM



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Press Release

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MANSFIELD UNIVERSITY STATE
SURVEY

2006

RESEARCH USING THE SOCIOLOGICAL
IMAGINATION

SURVEY INFORMATION

The Mansfield University State Survey (formerly The Public Mind) was conducted from February 13, 2006 through March 7, 2006. The sample was provided by Survey Sampling, Inc. It consisted of telephone numbers randomly selected from all listed numbers in Pennsylvania. The survey results are based on 1,102 completed telephone calls of adult Pennsylvanians (18 or older). Each interview took approximately 10 minutes to complete. The results have a margin of error of +/- 3.0%.

