



# Annual Minnesota Statewide Survey Fall 2011

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Findings Report

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The SCSU Survey has just completed its annual fall survey of Minnesota residents 18 years of age or older. As is the custom for the SCSU Survey, the bulk of our annual fall survey is devoted to future elections and other recent political issues in Minnesota's news. A SERIES OF QUESTIONS RELATED TO IMMIGRATION AND OTHER MATTERS WILL BE RELEASED IN THE NEAR FUTURE. BREAKDOWNS ARE AVAILABLE BY PARTY, AGE, COMBINED HOUSEHOLD INCOME, EDUCATION. RELIGIOUS DENOMINATION, IMPORTANCE OF RELIGION, TYPE OF PHONE, SEX, REGION OF THE STATE, ETC. This year, we found...

**IS M HEADED IN THE RIGHT DIRECTION OR IS IT ON THE WRONG TRACK?**

More than one-half (55%) of our respondents think the state is on the wrong track. This is only one percentage point lower than last year (2010) when 56% of respondents saw the state on the wrong track. This compares with about one-quarter of the respondents who view the state going in the right direction. This is similar to last year when one out of four respondents also saw the state as moving in the right direction.

**“Do you think things in the state are generally going in the right direction, or do you feel things have gotten off on the wrong track?”**

	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
Wrong Track	42%	36%	36%	39%	44%	37%	39%	44%	56%	55%
Right Direction	38%	48%	50%	46%	41%	46%	42%	43%	26%	26%
Neutral	14%	8%	8%	9%	9%	11%	12%	9%	12%	14%
Don't Know	6%	8%	6%	6%	6%	6%	7%	4%	6%	5%

**WHAT ARE THE MOST IMPORTANT PROBLEMS FACING THE STATE?**

Respondents were also asked to indicate what they feel is the biggest problem facing the state today. The top six problems facing the state, according to our respondents are, from the top, unemployment/job opportunities (22%), budget and budget deficit (20%), the economy (14%), education funding and quality (9%), and politics/politicians and taxes were tied (6%). In 2010 the top five were: the economy, budget and budget deficit, unemployment/job opportunities, education funding and quality, and taxes. In 2009, the top five were: health care, budget, education, unemployment, taxes. In 2008, the top five were education, taxes, financial/mortgage crisis, unemployment, health care. In 2007, education, taxes, health care, roads, crime. In 2006, education, taxes, health care, crime, roads.

We then asked the respondents which party they believe can do a better job of fixing that issue. An examination of the top six problems this year and which political party can do a better job of fixing them, we found the respondents were more likely to see Republicans doing a better job

tackling the budget and taxes but Democrats were seen to better tackle the economy, education and unemployment/jobs<sup>1</sup>. These findings are similar to last year; the only addition is respondents were split in who they saw better dealing with the issue of politics and politicians.

### **JOB PERFORMANCE RATINGS OF PRESIDENT OBAMA AND GOVERNOR DAYTON**

President Obama's performance rating has increased from last year. In 2010, we found that not quite two out of every five (38%) of our respondents rated President Obama's performance as excellent and pretty good. This year, a little more than that (41%) rated President Obama's performance as excellent and pretty good. Approximately three of five (59%) rated his performance as only fair or poor. Respondents answered don't know and refused less than one percent of the time.

Residents were also asked to rate the performance of Governor Dayton. This year, slightly less than half (45%) of the respondents questioned rated Governor Dayton's performance as excellent and pretty good and half (50%) of the respondents rated Governor Dayton's performance as only fair or poor. Around 5% of those surveyed responded they "Don't Know".

### **2012 HYPOTHETICAL PRESIDENTIAL RACES**

In the statewide survey this fall, we paired Michele Bachmann with President Obama in a hypothetical race for the White House. This year President Obama wins Minnesota. President Obama's support was a little over half (53%) of those questioned. Michele Bachmann's support came in around one-fourth (25%) of those polled. We included a "someone else" category which gathered support from about 16% of those surveyed. About 6% of those surveyed responded they "Don't Know" who they would vote for in this hypothetical race.

We then paired Herman Cain and President Obama in another hypothetical race for the White House. President Obama also won Minnesota in this hypothetical race pulling in a little less than half (47%) of the votes. Herman Cain fared better than Bachmann pulling in around one-third (36%) of the votes. A little less than one-tenth (8%) of those surveyed responded they would vote for someone else and about another 9% responded they "Don't Know" who they would vote for in this pairing.

The final hypothetical horse race was between Mitt Romney and President Obama. As with the other hypothetical races, Obama wins Minnesota with around half of (45%) the votes. Mitt Romney comes closest to President Obama's support with around 39% of votes. In this race, about 7% of those surveyed responded with "someone else" and around 9% responded they "Don't Know" who they would vote for.

	<b>Obama vs. Bachmann</b>	<b>Obama vs. Cain</b>	<b>Obama vs. Romney</b>
Obama	53%	47%	45%
Opponent	25%	36%	39%

<sup>1</sup> Pearson Chi-Square Value: 44.425, df: 5, p < 0.001

Someone Else	16%	8%	7%
Don't Know	6%	9%	9%

\*Percentage represents the percentage of "votes" in each hypothetical race (i.e. Obama received 53% of the votes vs. Bachmann)

## THE FEELING THERMOMETER

Every year we ask Minnesota Residents to rate their feelings of political figures on a scale of 100. This year we also added some groups that had been making noise in the news. Ratings on the thermometer between 50 and 100 degrees meant the respondent felt favorable and warm toward the person. Ratings between 0 and 50 meant the respondent did not feel too favorable toward the person. President Barack Obama had a mean rating of 50, but had the highest standard deviation (31) of any of the icons respondents were asked about. This high standard deviation suggests that people either like him strongly or dislike him strongly. Last year Obama's mean was a 49; so, no real change has occurred between this year and last. Minnesota Governor Mark Dayton had a mean rating of 52 with a standard deviation of 24. Michele Bachmann received the lowest score of any person or group with a mean of 33. The group Occupy Wall Street received a mean rating of 44 whilst Wall Street itself received a mean rating of 37. In terms of the upcoming potential US Senate race, we asked our respondents to rate Senator Amy Klobuchar. Almost everyone knows who she is and they rated her with a 60. In comparison, 74 percent of respondents reported that they did not know or could not judge based on what they know of U.S. Senate hopeful Dan Severson. Meanwhile, 85 percent of respondents claimed to not know or to be unable to judge Joe Arwood another U.S. Senate hopeful.

Name	2011 Mean	2010 Mean	2011 Standard Deviation	% of Respondents who didn't know/couldn't judge
Barack Obama	50	49	31	0
Michele Bachmann	33	N/A	26	3
Mark Dayton	52	48	24	4
Amy Klobuchar	60	N/A	25	15
Dan Severson	47	N/A	17	74
Joe Arwood*	47	N/A	12	85
Mitt Romney	48	N/A	21	11
Hermain Cain	47	N/A	23	18
Tea Party	37	N/A	28	14
Wall Street	37	N/A	24	8
Occupy Wall Street	44	N/A	28	25

\* Joe Arwood was added part way through the conduction of the survey N/A: person was not rated in 2010 survey.

## SAME SEX MARRIAGE AMENDMENT

In response to the proposed Minnesota Constitutional amendment concerning same-sex marriage we constructed a question that we believed will be similar to the question on the ballot asking respondents “Should the Minnesota constitution be amended to provide that only a union of one man and one woman shall be valid or recognized as a marriage in Minnesota?” The overall results showed that 44 percent of respondents believed that the Minnesota Constitution should be amended and 47 percent believed that it should not be amended; nine percent of respondents either refused to answer or said that they were not sure.

**Should the Minnesota Constitution be amended to provide that only a union of one man and one woman shall be valid or recognized as a marriage in Minnesota?**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes-Amend	273	43.6	47.9	47.9
	No-Do Not Amend	297	47.4	52.1	100.0
	Total	569	91.0	100.0	
Missing	Refused/Not Sure	57	9.0		
Total		626	100.0		

\*The Missing Percent is made up of those who refused or said they were not sure

When the responses were adjusted by religion’s importance in the respondents’ life the results were as follows: 57 percent of those who said religion was important in their lives said the Minnesota Constitution should be amended whereas only 29 percent of those who said religion was not important believed that the constitution should be amended. The Pearson Chi-Square test shows that there is a significant association between importance of religion and the decision to amend or not amend the constitution<sup>2</sup>.

**MINNESOTA GOVERNMENT SHUTDOWN**

We also asked a question regarding the government shutdown over this past summer. When asked who was to blame for the budget shutdown 57 percent of respondents said the Legislature was to blame, 19 percent put the blame on the Governor, 19 percent volunteered that both were to blame, and six percent reported that they did not know.

**Who do you think is most responsible for the recent Minnesota budget crisis and shutdown a few months ago?**

**The governor or the legislature?**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1. GOVERNOR (MARK DAYTON)	113	18.1	18.6	18.6
	2. (REPUBLICAN) LEGISLATURE	344	54.9	56.5	75.1
	3. BOTH [VOLUNTEERED]	113	18.1	18.6	93.7
	8. DON'T KNOW	38	6.1	6.3	100.0

<sup>2</sup> Pearson Chi-Square Value: 15.602, df: 1, p<0.001

	Total	608	97.2	100.0
Missing	System	18	2.8	
	Total	626	100.0	

Party affiliation was a major factor in respondents' answers to this question<sup>3</sup>. Of the respondents who identified as Democratic or independent but close to Democratic, only 7 percent blamed the governor while 76 percent blamed the legislature and 12 percent blamed both. Of those who identified as Republican or closer to Republican, 31 percent blamed the governor, while 39 percent blamed the Legislature, and 23 percent put the blame on both.

To further investigate this issue we asked respondents what solution to the problem they would prefer, tax increases or budget cuts. In general, about 51 percent of respondents said that spending cuts were the answer, while 18 percent believed that tax increases were the best solution. However, another 28 percent of respondents volunteered that a combination of both were needed.

**Which approach would you rather see used to balance the state budget?**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
<b>Spending Cuts or Tax Increases?</b>					
Valid	1. SPENDING CUTS ONLY	313	50.0	50.5	50.5
	2. TAX INCREASES ONLY	113	18.1	18.3	68.7
	3. A COMBINATION OF SPENDING CUTS AND TAX INCREASES [VOLUNTEERED]	172	27.5	27.8	96.5
	8. DON'T KNOW	22	3.5	3.5	100.0
	Total	620	99.0	100.0	
Missing	System	6	1.0		
	Total	626	100.0		

Once again, party affiliation exhibited a strong association with the respondents' chosen solution.<sup>4</sup> Of the respondents claiming to be Democratic or closer to Democratic, 29 percent chose spending cuts, 33 percent chose tax increases, and 34 percent volunteered both. Of the respondents claiming to be Republican or closer to Republican, 74 percent chose spending cuts, only six percent chose tax increases, and 19 percent volunteered a combination of both.

<sup>3</sup> Pearson Chi-Square Value: 71.519, df: 3, p<0.001

<sup>4</sup> Pearson Chi-Square Value: 98.87, df: 3, p<0.001