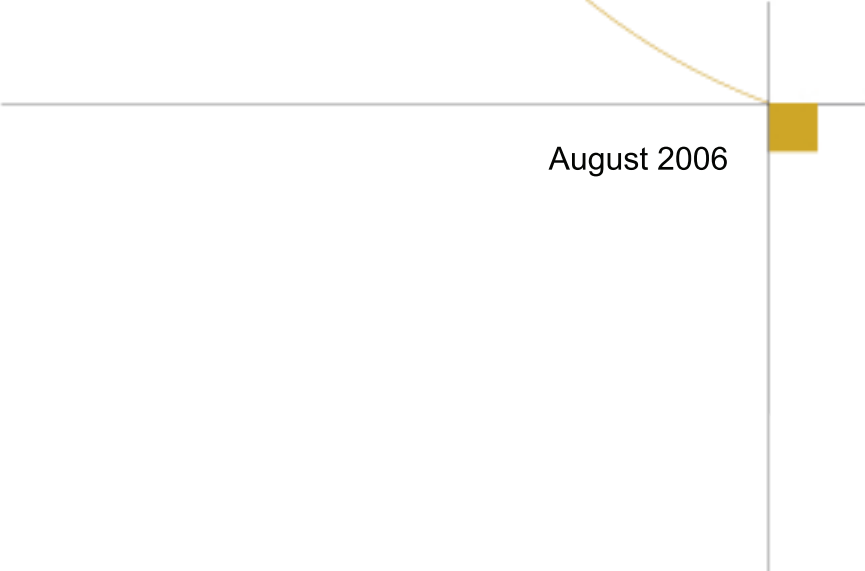




2006 AARP Nebraska Stop Over Spending Survey



August 2006



2006 AARP Nebraska Stop Over Spending Survey

Prepared by Susan L. Silberman, Ph.D.,
AARP Knowledge Management
August 2006

In the November 2006 election, Nebraskans are considering amending the state constitution. The Stop Over Spending (SOS) proposal would impose a state spending limit based on previous appropriation, the inflation rate, and population change in Nebraska. Federal money and services financed by user fees would be exempted from the SOS proposal.

AARP Nebraska commissioned a survey to better understand the opinions of Nebraska registered likely voters age 18 and over. Survey highlights are below. The responses to all survey questions are in the attached annotated questionnaire.

- More than three in four Nebraska registered likely voters (77%) say that Nebraska is spending too little or just the right amount of money on state services such as keeping people safe, providing health and long-term care, repairing roads and highways, maintaining parks, and providing education.
- More than two in three Nebraska registered likely voters (68%) think that property taxes in Nebraska are too high.
- Half of Nebraska registered likely voters (50%) say maintaining and improving state services is a higher priority than limiting taxes.
- Two in three Nebraska registered likely voters (66%) have not seen, read, or heard anything about Nebraska's Stop Over Spending or SOS proposal in the last year.
- More than three in four Nebraska registered likely voters (78%), when asked at the end of the survey, say they are concerned about out of state groups and corporations funding the SOS amendment to Nebraska's constitution.

- Initially, two out of five Nebraska registered likely voters (44%) said they would vote for the Stop Over Spending proposal. However, when asked at the end of the survey, less than three in ten respondents (28%) still indicate support for the measure.

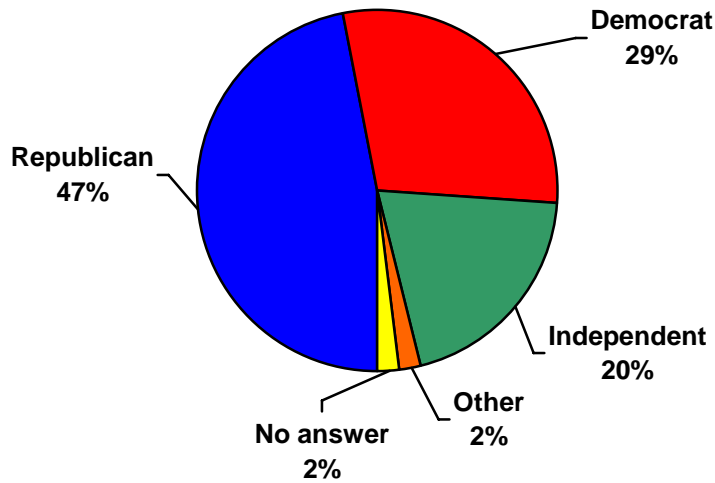
Methodology: In August 2006, AARP commissioned Woelfel Research, Inc., a national survey research firm, to conduct a random digit dial (RDD) telephone survey of 600 Nebraska registered, likely voters age 18 and over. Additionally, there was a boost of AARP Nebraska members so the member sample would be 200. The additional AARP members came from a listed sample of Nebraska residents 50 and over. Interviews were conducted between August 16th and August 19th, 2006. The response rate is 5 percent.¹ The survey has a sampling error of plus or minus 3.9 percentage points.² The AARP Nebraska member sample was weighted to reflect the actual distribution of age for the population of AARP Nebraska members. Percentages may not add to 100% due to rounding or multiple responses. The responses to all survey questions are in the attached annotated questionnaires.

¹ The response rate is 5 percent and the cooperation rate is 75 percent. The response rate is Response Rate 3 and the cooperation rate is Cooperation Rate 3 (AAPOR, 2004).

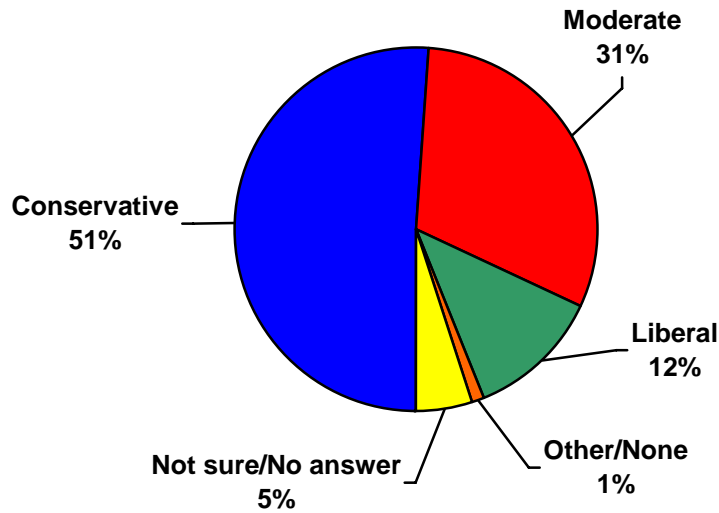
² This means that in 95 out of 100 samples of this size, the results obtained in the sample would fall in a range of 3.9 percentage points of what would have been obtained if every Nebraska registered likely voter age 18 and over had been surveyed.

Demographic Profile of Nebraska Registered Likely Voters

Political Party Affiliation (n=631)



Political Ideology (n=631)



Annotated Questionnaire

AARP Nebraska Stop Over Spending Survey
18+ Registered, Likely Voters
N = 631, Response Rate = 5%, Error +/- 3.9%

INTRODUCTION

Hello, this is ____ calling from Woelfel Research, Inc., a national opinion research firm. We are not telemarketers and are not trying to sell you anything. We would like to find out your opinions on an important issue facing Nebraska. Your views are important and we would greatly appreciate your participation. All your responses will be kept entirely confidential. This survey should take about 10 minutes of your time.

SCREENER

S1. Before we begin, I need to know if you are registered to vote in Nebraska?

- 1) Yes → [SKIP TO S3]
- 2) No
- 3) DON'T KNOW / NOT SURE
- 4) REFUSED → [TERMINATE]

S2. Is there someone else at home who is registered to vote in Nebraska?

- 1) Yes, Person Coming to Phone → [SKIP TO INTRO]
- 2) Yes, BUT Person not available right now → [SCHEDULE CALLBACK]
- 3) Yes, BUT Person never available → [TERMINATE]
- 4) No one in household is registered to vote in Nebraska → [TERMINATE]
- 5) DON'T KNOW / NOT SURE → [TERMINATE]
- 6) REFUSED → [TERMINATE]

S3. Thinking about the upcoming state elections for Nebraska Governor and Legislators in 2006, how likely do you think you are to vote in these 2006 elections? Would you say you are very likely, somewhat likely, not very likely, or not at all likely to vote in these state elections in 2006?

- 1) Very Likely → [SKIP TO Q1]
- 2) Somewhat Likely → [SKIP TO Q1]
- 3) Not very Likely → [TERMINATE]
- 4) Not At All Likely → [TERMINATE]
- 5) DON'T KNOW / NOT SURE → [TERMINATE]
- 4) REFUSED → [TERMINATE]

QUESTIONNAIRE

Q1. To begin, do you think that Nebraska is spending too much money, too little money, or just the right amount of money on state services such as keeping people safe, providing health and long-term care, repairing roads and highways, maintaining parks, and providing education?

	<u>%</u>
Too much money	13
Too little money	35
Just the right amount of money	41
NOT SURE/DON'T KNOW (VOLUNTEERED)	10
REFUSED (VOLUNTEERED)	1

Q2. Thinking about the local taxes that you pay, do you think that property taxes in Nebraska are too high, are about right, or are too low to support public services? [INTERVIEWERS: IF NECESSARY PROBE WITH: “And would you say that local taxes are much too (low/high) or somewhat too (low/high)?”]

	<u>%</u>
Much too high	42
Somewhat too high	26
About right	23
Somewhat too low	2
Much too low	1
NOT SURE/DON'T KNOW (VOLUNTEERED)	5
REFUSED (VOLUNTEERED)	<.5

Q3. Thinking about the state taxes that you pay, not including federal or local taxes, do you think that the state income and sales taxes in Nebraska are too high, are about right, or are too low to support state services? [INTERVIEWERS: IF NECESSARY PROBE WITH: “And would you say that Nebraska state taxes are much too (low/high) or somewhat too (low/high)?”]

	<u>%</u>
Much too high	15
Somewhat too high	20
About right	54
Somewhat too low	5
Much too low	1
NOT SURE/DON'T KNOW (VOLUNTEERED)	4
REFUSED (VOLUNTEERED)	<.5

Q4. How much do you trust your state government to use your tax money effectively and deliver public services--a great deal, a fair amount, just a little, or not at all?

	<u>%</u>
Trust a great deal	7
Trust a fair amount	53
Trust just a little	28
Do not trust at all	10
NOT SURE/DON'T KNOW (VOLUNTEERED)	2
REFUSED (VOLUNTEERED)	<.5

Q5. In Nebraska which is a higher priority for you --[RANDOMIZE ORDER: “maintaining and improving state services” or “limiting taxes”]?

	<u>%</u>
Maintaining and improving state services is higher priority	50
Limiting taxes is higher priority	39
Both are priorities (VOLUNTEERED)	8
NOT SURE/DON'T KNOW (VOLUNTEERED)	3
REFUSED (VOLUNTEERED)	-

Q6. Thinking about state government today in Nebraska, which one or two of the following goals are most important to you? [READ LIST] [ACCEPT UP TO TWO RESPONSES] [IF RESPONDENT SAYS ALL ARE IMPORTANT ASK: “Well, if you had to choose just one or two, which would you say are MOST important?”] [RANDOMIZE ORDER OF A-E]

	<u>%</u>
Improving accountability	34
Reducing taxes	17
Setting spending priorities	24
Cutting spending	15
Investing in services	7
None/Other (VOLUNTEERED)	2
NOT SURE/DON'T KNOW (VOLUNTEERED)	2
REFUSED (VOLUNTEERED)	<.5

Q7. Have you seen, read, or heard anything about Nebraska’s Stop Over Spending or SOS proposal in the last year?

	<u>%</u>
Yes	31
No	66
NOT SURE/DON’T KNOW (VOLUNTEERED)	3
REFUSED (VOLUNTEERED)	-

Next I’m going to read you a proposal, known as Stop Over Spending, or SOS that will be on the November ballot in Nebraska. Most of the remaining survey questions are going to reference this proposal and so we want to be sure you are familiar with the basics of this initiative. If after I read it you would like to hear it again just to be sure you understand everything, just let me know and I will be happy to read it again.

The SOS proposal would amend the Nebraska state constitution. It would impose a state spending limit based on previous appropriations, the inflation rate, and population change in Nebraska. Some state spending would be exempt from the spending limit, for example federal funds or services financed entirely by user fees. The limit could be lifted if two-thirds of the Legislature vote to place the limit exception on the ballot and a majority of voters agree to lifting the limit. Any taxpaying resident could sue the state if they felt that the spending limit was not being observed.

Q8. Given what you know about the proposal, if the election were held today, would you vote for or against the Stop Over Spending or SOS proposal? [INTERVIEWERS: IF RESPONDENT SAYS THEY DON’T KNOW ENOUGH ABOUT PROPOSAL, SAY: “We understand you may not know very much about the proposal, but we would still like your gut reaction based on what you have heard.”] [INTERVIEWERS: IF NECESSARY, PROBE WITH: “And will you definitely or probably vote (in favor/against)?”]

	<u>%</u>
Definitely vote in favor	14
Probably vote in favor	30
Neither vote for nor vote against	7
Probably vote against	19
Definitely vote against	24
NOT SURE/DON’T KNOW (VOLUNTEERED)	5
REFUSED (VOLUNTEERED)	1

Q9. I'm going to read you some of the things that supporters of SOS say about the proposal and some of the things opponents say. We realize you may already have an opinion about this proposal. However we'd like you to please consider how convincing each argument is, even if it would not cause you to change your opinion about the SOS proposal. After I reach each argument, I'd like you to please tell me whether you find it an extremely convincing argument, very convincing, somewhat convincing, not very convincing, or whether this particular argument is not at all convincing.

[RANDOMLY SELECT FOUR OF THE FOLLOWING ARGUMENT PAIRS, BUT FORCE ONE TO BE Q9F, AND THEN RANDOMLY SELECT ONE ARGUMENT FROM EACH OF THE SELECTED SUPPORT/OPPOSE PAIRS TO PRESENT TO RESPONDENTS]

Q9A. Control spending vs. cuts:

- Supporters of SOS say that it would control runaway state government spending and force the state government to operate more efficiently. (n =191)

	<u>%</u>
Extremely convincing	6
Very convincing	21
Somewhat convincing	45
Not very convincing	18
Not at all convincing	8
NOT SURE/DON'T KNOW (VOLUNTEERED)	2
REFUSED (VOLUNTEERED)	1

- Opponents of SOS say the state already has a balanced budget requirement, voters already can control state government actions at the ballot box, and that SOS would decrease the quality of life in Nebraska forcing major cuts in health, education, transportation, and public safety. (n =172)

	<u>%</u>
Extremely convincing	6
Very convincing	19
Somewhat convincing	37
Not very convincing	22
Not at all convincing	12
NOT SURE/DON'T KNOW (VOLUNTEERED)	3
REFUSED (VOLUNTEERED)	1

Q9B. Limit Spending vs. harm economy:

- Supporters of SOS say that it would help the Nebraska economy by limiting state government spending and making Nebraska a more affordable place to live. (n =**204**)

	<u>%</u>
Extremely convincing	9
Very convincing	19
Somewhat convincing	34
Not very convincing	22
Not at all convincing	14
NOT SURE/DON'T KNOW (VOLUNTEERED)	2
REFUSED (VOLUNTEERED)	1

- Opponents of SOS point out that in Colorado, the only state that has passed this type of amendment, childhood immunizations fell sharply, roads deteriorated, college tuition exploded, and property tax relief for seniors was suspended. Also, families had to pay for items that schools typically provided such as textbooks and basic school supplies, while children attended classes wearing coats because heat was dramatically lowered. (n =**182**)

	<u>%</u>
Extremely convincing	11
Very convincing	24
Somewhat convincing	28
Not very convincing	18
Not at all convincing	13
NOT SURE/DON'T KNOW (VOLUNTEERED)	5
REFUSED (VOLUNTEERED)	1

Q9C. Voter approval vs. accountability:

- Supporters of SOS say that it would take power away from state politicians and put it back in the hands of the people by requiring that any spending increase above the prescribed limit be approved by voters. (n =**191**)

	<u>%</u>
Extremely convincing	8
Very convincing	23
Somewhat convincing	40
Not very convincing	15
Not at all convincing	13
NOT SURE/DON'T KNOW (VOLUNTEERED)	2
REFUSED (VOLUNTEERED)	-

- Opponents of SOS say that it allows lawmakers to shirk their responsibility for managing the state budget, and, by making voters decide on spending limit exemptions ties up the budget process and creates gridlock, in addition to expecting taxpayers to become budget experts. (n =201)

	<u>%</u>
Extremely convincing	6
Very convincing	13
Somewhat convincing	41
Not very convincing	27
Not at all convincing	12
NOT SURE/DON'T KNOW (VOLUNTEERED)	1
REFUSED (VOLUNTEERED)	1

Q9D. Lower business taxes vs. force businesses out of state:

- Supporters of SOS say that it would be good for businesses because it would lower the taxes businesses have to pay to operate in the state. (n =182)

	<u>%</u>
Extremely convincing	6
Very convincing	18
Somewhat convincing	35
Not very convincing	23
Not at all convincing	13
NOT SURE/DON'T KNOW (VOLUNTEERED)	4
REFUSED (VOLUNTEERED)	<.5

- Opponents of SOS say that it would cause businesses to leave or deter them from relocating to Nebraska because the deteriorating education and road systems would drive make it difficult to do business in the state. (n =174)

	<u>%</u>
Extremely convincing	5
Very convincing	17
Somewhat convincing	33
Not very convincing	28
Not at all convincing	14
NOT SURE/DON'T KNOW (VOLUNTEERED)	3
REFUSED (VOLUNTEERED)	1

Q9E. Sue state vs. cost of suits:

- Supporters of the SOS proposal say that it would allow any taxpaying resident of Nebraska to sue state government if they believe the SOS proposal limits are not being met. (n =233)

	<u>%</u>
Extremely convincing	3
Very convincing	6
Somewhat convincing	29
Not very convincing	27
Not at all convincing	32
NOT SURE/DON'T KNOW (VOLUNTEERED)	2
REFUSED (VOLUNTEERED)	1

- Opponents of the SOS proposal say allowing any taxpaying resident of Nebraska to sue the State government would cost taxpayers more money and would cause further strains on the state budget to pay court costs and attorney fees. (n =163)

	<u>%</u>
Extremely convincing	15
Very convincing	34
Somewhat convincing	28
Not very convincing	11
Not at all convincing	8
NOT SURE/DON'T KNOW (VOLUNTEERED)	2
REFUSED (VOLUNTEERED)	1

Q9F.State budget cuts vs. property tax increases:

- Supporters of the SOS proposal say that it would tie state spending increases to population growth and inflation, a reasonable way to keep spending under control. (n =333)

	<u>%</u>
Extremely convincing	3
Very convincing	19
Somewhat convincing	44
Not very convincing	18
Not at all convincing	12
NOT SURE/DON'T KNOW (VOLUNTEERED)	4
REFUSED (VOLUNTEERED)	1

- Opponents of the SOS proposal say it would force the state to shift responsibility for many public services to the local level and that would increase property taxes. (n =298)

	<u>%</u>
Extremely convincing	3
Very convincing	18
Somewhat convincing	40
Not very convincing	22
Not at all convincing	12
NOT SURE/DON'T KNOW (VOLUNTEERED)	5
REFUSED (VOLUNTEERED)	<.5

Q10. Having heard arguments about the SOS proposal, now how strongly do you support or oppose the SOS proposal in Nebraska? Do you ... [READ LIST]

	<u>%</u>
Strongly support	9
Somewhat support	30
Neither support nor oppose	19
Somewhat oppose	19
Strongly oppose	20
NOT SURE/DON'T KNOW (VOLUNTEERED)	3
REFUSED (VOLUNTEERED)	1

Q11. Now, I am going to ask you about state and local services Nebraska provides. How important is/are _____ (READ ITEM FROM LIST BELOW) to you? Is it extremely important, very important, somewhat important, not very important or not at all important? [RANDOMLY SELECT 4 OF THE SEVEN CHOICES TO ASK RESPONDENTS]

[RANDOMIZE LIST ORDER]

	Extremely Important ▼ %	Very Important ▼ %	Somewhat Important ▼ %	Not Very Important ▼ %	Not At All Important ▼ %	Not Sure ▼ %	No Answer ▼ %
a. Police protection and pub Safety (n=372).....	44	45	9	1	0	0	0
b. State Law enforcement efforts to fight meth and other illegal drugs (n=339).....	46	41	11	1	0	0	0
c. K-12 public school education (n=362)	43	42	11	3	1	1	0
d. Health care for low income families and their children (n=358) ...	29	39	28	2	1	1	<.5
e. Higher education (Universities, Colleges, & Technical Colleges (n=361).....	24	49	23	2	1	1	0
f. Road maintenance & public transportation. (n=392).....	17	43	35	3	2	1	<.5
g. Senior state services including home delivered meals, homestead exemption, & senior transportation (n=340).....	28	36	31	4	1	0	0

**Q12. If SOS cut state funding for(READ ITEM FROM LIST BELOW), would you be more likely to support SOS, more likely to oppose, or would it not make a difference?
[RANDOMLY SELECT 4 OF THE SEVEN CHOICES TO ASK RESPONDENTS]**

[RANDOMIZE LIST ORDER]

	Support ▼ %	Oppose ▼ %	Neither Support or Oppose ▼ %	Not Sure ▼ %	No Answer ▼ %
a. Police protection and pub Safety (n=372).....	9	64	24	2	1
b. State Law enforcement efforts to fight meth and other illegal drugs (n=339).....	14	64	20	2	1
c. K-12 public school education (n=362)	6	68	22	4	1
d. Health care for low income families and their children (n=358)	9	62	26	3	0
e. Higher education (Universities, Colleges, & Technical Colleges (n=361).....	8	49	38	4	0
f. Road maintenance & public transportation. (n=392).....	8	50	41	2	0
g. Senior state services including home delivered meals, homestead exemption, & senior transportation (n=340).....	8	60	29	6	1

Q13. Suppose you learned that some organizations or people OPPOSED the SOS proposal, because they believe it would lead to significant cuts in important state services for Nebraska seniors and their families. Would you be more likely to support the SOS proposal, more likely to oppose, or would it not make a difference in how you vote for the proposal if [RANDOMIZE and choose only three of the 6 listed.

	More Likely to Support ▼ <u>%</u>	Neither Support or Oppose ▼ <u>%</u>	More Likely to Oppose ▼ <u>%</u>	Not Sure ▼ <u>%</u>	No Answer ▼ <u>%</u>
a. The governor opposed SOS? (n=336).....	7	61	28	3	1
b. Business leaders opposed SOS? (n=325) ..	7	62	27	5	<.5
c. Senior organizations opposed SOS? (n=326) ...	9	48	36	6	1
d. Teachers and PTAs opposed SOS? (n=325) ..	9	46	41	4	1
e. Farmers and ranchers opposed SOS? (n=307) ..	8	52	34	6	<.5
f. Firemen and policemen opposed SOS?. (n=335)...	8	53	37	2	1

Q14. How concerned are you about out of state groups and corporations funding the SOS amendment to Nebraska’s constitution? Are you extremely, very, somewhat, not very, or not at all concerned?

Extremely concerned	<u>%</u> 24
Very concerned	23
Somewhat concerned	31
Not very concerned	10
Not at all concerned	9
NOT SURE/DON’T KNOW (VOLUNTEERED)	4
REFUSED (VOLUNTEERED)	<.5

Q15. Now thinking about all the information we have discussed about this proposal that will be on the ballot in November, if the election were held today, would you vote for or against this proposal? (IF "VOTE IN FAVOR" OR "VOTE AGAINST," ASK:) And will you definitely or probably vote (in favor/against)?

	<u>%</u>
Definitely vote in favor → [SKIP TO D1]	9
Probably vote in favor → [SKIP TO D1]	19
Neither vote for nor vote against → [SKIP TO D1]	9
Probably vote against → [SKIP TO D1]	24
Definitely vote against → [SKIP TO D1]	28
NOT SURE/DON'T KNOW (VOLUNTEERED)	11
REFUSED (VOLUNTEERED) → [SKIP TO D1]	<.5

Q16. (ASK ONLY OF RESPONDENTS WHO SAY "NOT SURE/DON'T KNOW" IN Q15.) Well, if you had to decide right now, which way would you say you are leaning—toward voting in favor or toward voting against? (n=71)

	<u>%</u>
Lean toward in favor	26
Lean toward against	28
NOT SURE/DON'T KNOW (VOLUNTEERED)	45
REFUSED (VOLUNTEERED)	1

DEMOGRAPHICS

Now the following questions are for classification purposes only and will be kept entirely confidential.

RECORD GENDER: DO NOT ASK

	<u>%</u>
Male	34
Female	66

D1) Thinking about five media -- television, radio, the Internet, newspapers, and magazines which one do you prefer to use for getting local news?

	<u>%</u>
Local television	50
Local radio	8
Internet	6
Local newspapers	33
Local magazines	<.5
Other [Specify: _____]	<.5
NOT SURE/DON'T KNOW (VOLUNTEERED)	3
REFUSED (VOLUNTEERED)	<.5

D2) How often do you read your local newspaper?

	<u>%</u>
Daily	57
A few times a week	15
Once a week	18
Never	9
NOT SURE/DON'T KNOW (VOLUNTEERED)	1
REFUSED (VOLUNTEERED)	-

D3) What is your current marital status?

	<u>%</u>
Now married	68
Not married, living with partner	1
Separated	1
Divorced	8
Widowed	13
Never married	9
REFUSED (VOLUNTEERED)	1

D4) What is your age as of your last birthday? _____ (in years)

	<u>%</u>
18-49	34
50-59	23
60-74	25
75+	16
REFUSED (VOLUNTEERED)	2

D5) [IF 50 or older in D4] Are you or IF MARRIED...your spouse a member of A-A-R-P formerly known as the American Association of Retired Persons? (n=406)

	<u>%</u>
Yes	49
No	51
NOT SURE/DON'T KNOW (VOLUNTEERED)	1
REFUSED (VOLUNTEERED)	-

D6) What is your zip code? _____

D7) Generally speaking, would you characterize your political views as being...? (READ LIST ENTER ONLY ONE)

	<u>%</u>
Conservative	51
Moderate	31
Liberal	12
Independent	1
None	1
NOT SURE/DON'T KNOW (VOLUNTEERED)	4
REFUSED (VOLUNTEERED)	<.5

D8) Do you consider yourself to be a Democrat, a Republican, an Independent, or something else?

	<u>%</u>
Democrat	29
Republican	47
Independent	20
Other	2
NOT SURE/DON'T KNOW (VOLUNTEERED)	<.5
REFUSED (VOLUNTEERED)	1

D9) What is the highest level of education that you completed?

	<u>%</u>
Less than high school	2
High school graduate or equivalent	28
Some college or technical training beyond high school	22
College graduate (2 year degree)	10
College graduate (4 year degree)	23
Post-graduate or professional degree	14
REFUSED (VOLUNTEERED)	1

D10) Which of the following best describes your current employment status?

	<u>%</u>
Employed or self-employed <u>full-time</u>	45
Employed or self-employed <u>part-time</u>	10
Retired and not working	34
Not in the labor force for other reasons	8
Unemployed and looking for work	1
REFUSED (VOLUNTEERED)	1

D11) Are you or have you ever been a state or local government employee?

	<u>%</u>
Yes	28
No	72
Don't know	1

D12) What is your race?

	<u>%</u>
White or Caucasian	95
Black or African American	1
Asian	1
American Indian or Alaskan Native	1
Other	1
REFUSED (VOLUNTEERED)	2

D13) Are you of Spanish, Hispanic, or Latino origin?

	<u>%</u>
Yes	3
No	97
Don't know	1

D14) How would you describe the place you live now - a city, a suburban area around a city, a small town, or in the country or rural area?

	<u>%</u>
City	40
Suburb	12
Small town	28
Country or rural area	19
REFUSED (VOLUNTEERED)	1

D15) Do you own or rent your primary residence?

	<u>%</u>
Own	81
Rent	16
REFUSED (VOLUNTEERED)	3

D16) We realize income is a private matter and so rather than ask anything specific about your income, I'd like to ask you to please stop me when I get to the category that includes your annual household income before taxes in 2005?

	<u>%</u>
Less than \$10,000	6
\$10,000 but less than \$20,000	10
\$20,000 but less than \$30,000	12
\$30,000 but less than \$40,000	13
\$40,000 but less than \$50,000	10
\$50,000 but less than \$75,000	18
\$75,000 or more	19
NOT SURE/DON'T KNOW (VOLUNTEERED)	2
REFUSED (VOLUNTEERED)	11

Thank you for participating! Your opinion counts.