

# Market Research Insight

A Confidential Report  
Prepared For

**MAINE MERI SURVEY**  
January 2004

Prepared By:  
Verne Kennedy, Ph.D.  
Market Research Insight  
January 2004



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## Introduction

This report represents the results of a scientific survey of public opinion among 400 likely voters in Maine conducted between the dates of December 3-4, 2003.

The sample population was scientifically selected to meet rigid criteria of random selection and geographical allocation. Survey results for the sample of 400 likely voters provides a sampling error factor of plus or minus 5% at the .95 level of confidence; however, error factors for various geographical areas and cross-tabulations contained in this report may vary widely depending upon the number of respondents in each cell.

As a full service marketing research firm, all aspects of survey research are completed by MRI staff members using the research company's Florida research facility which includes 63 CATI (Computer Assisted Telephone Interviewing) stations. MRI uses industry standard techniques for all research projects.

Market Research Insight follows established and accepted procedures for sample selection, survey design, and analysis. All survey research, however, is subject to a margin of statistical error.



## Analysis

Dr. Verne Kennedy, Senior Analyst for Market Research Insight, served as Project Director, examined data and prepared the following analysis report. The analytical report is based upon the actual interviews of 400 likely Maine voters conducted from the field research facilities of Market Research Insight. Results contained within this report are based upon responses as reflected in the survey at the time actual interviews were completed.



## Demographics

Demographic characteristics are important in survey research for two principal reasons. First, demographic characteristics enable survey researchers to confirm the accuracy and validity of the sampling process. Second, demographics provide a valuable tool for describing opinion and behavior of specific voter population groups. Several demographic characteristics, including voter county of residence, political party identification, voter age, head of household occupation, level of education, gender and employment status, and Internet access, were used in the survey of 400 likely Maine voters.

Geographically, voters were identified by county of residence.

GEOGRAPHICAL COUNTY OF RESIDENCE	
Androscoggin	8%
Aroostock	6
Cumberland	21
Franklin	2
Hancock	4
Kennebec	9
Knox	3
Lincoln	3
Oxford	4
Penobscot	11
Piscataquis	1
Sagadahoc	3
Somerset	4
Waldo	3
Washington	2
York	14



The first specific demographic question determined voter political party identification. The question asked: “Regardless of how you may be registered to vote in Maine, do you think of yourself more as (ROTATE ORDER) a Democrat, an Independent, or a Republican?”

POLITICAL PARTY IDENTIFICATION	
Republican	25%
Independent	45
Democrat	28
Uncertain/Won't Say	2

Compared to actual voter registration, about 5% of Republicans and Democrats classify themselves as Independents.

The next question asked: “(DECEMBER 2003 SURVEY) If an election for the State Legislature were held today, would you be more likely to vote for (ROTATE ORDER) the Democrats or the Republicans? (CONTINUE WITH...) Do you feel strongly about that?”

POLITICAL PARTY FOR LEGISLATURE	
Strongly Republican	21%
Republican	9
Party Makes No Difference	29
Democrat	11
Strongly Democrat	29
Total Republican	30%
Total Democrat	40

If elections were held at the time this survey was conducted, Democrats would have received higher support than Republicans. However, 29% of voters said that political party does not make a difference to them.



The next question examined voter age. The question asked: “What is your age?”  
Market Research Insight distributes age results into traditional census categories.

VOTER AGE	
18-29 Years	5%
30-44 Years	22
45-59 Years	37
60 Years And Over	37

The next question asked: “What is the occupation of the head of this household? (IF RETIRED OR DISABLED, ASK...) What did he or she do before that?”

HEAD OF HOUSEHOLD OCCUPATION	
Professional/Administration	6%
Sales/Clerical/Technical	51
Laborer	40
Other	2

The next question asked: “What is the highest level of education you have obtained to date?”

LEVEL OF EDUCATION	
Less Than High School	3%
High School Graduate	30
Some College & 2 Year Degree	28
College Graduate (4 Years)	23
Post Graduate (Masters, Ph.D., Lawyer)	17



The next question asked: “And, your gender is male or female? (CONTINUE WITH...) Are you employed outside the home?”

<b>GENDER &amp; EMPLOYMENT STATUS</b>	
Employed Male	33%
Not Employed Male	16
Employed Female	31
Not Employed Female	20

The next question asked: “Do you have access to the Internet at home, work, or both?”

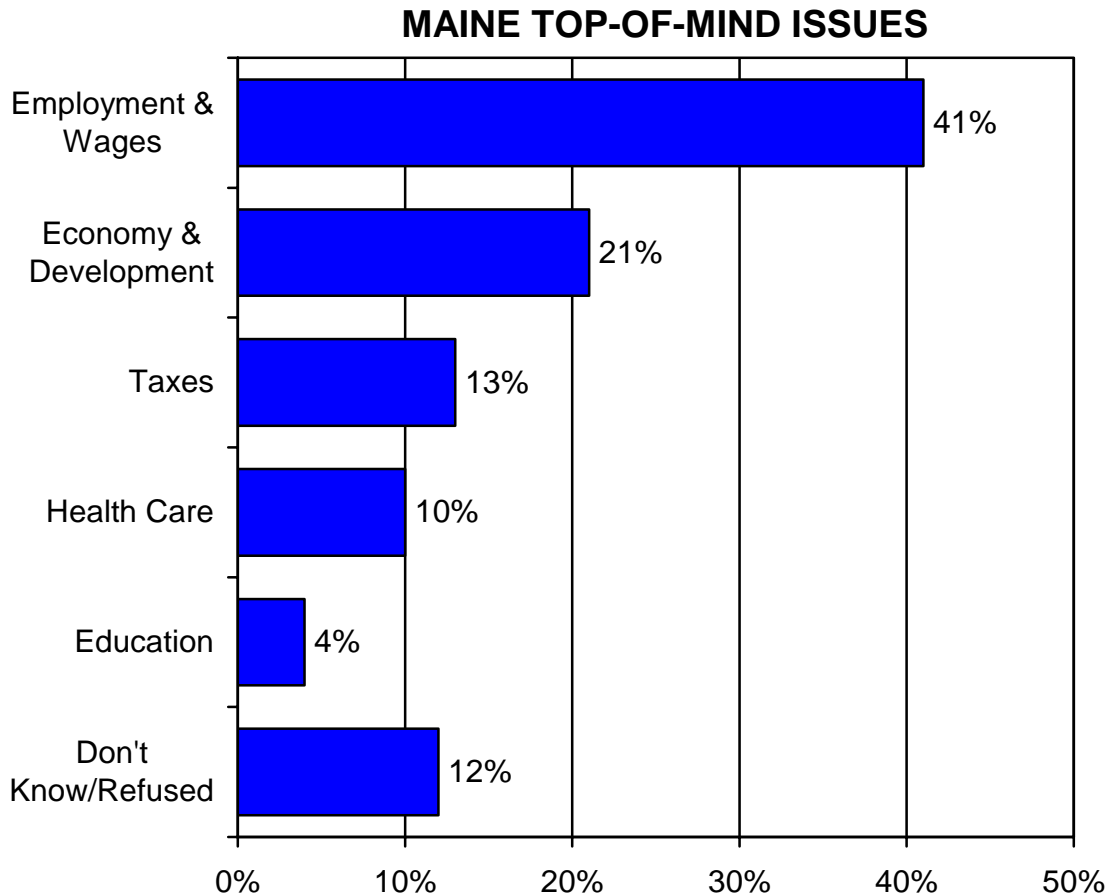
<b>INTERNET ACCESS</b>	
Home	30%
Work	3
Both	42
No Internet Access	25

MRI examined demographic characteristics for 400 surveyed voters and compared that information with known and verifiable data concerning all Maine voters. The research firm is satisfied that the current sampling provides a good distribution of important voter demographic characteristics. Of course, as discussed in the Introduction of this report, all survey research is subject to a margin of sampling error.



## Maine Issues

MRI examined voter opinion concerning key issues. An initial question identified top-of-mind issues or those issues which first come to mind when voters think about problems facing the state. Question 2 asked: “What do you consider the single, major problem facing Maine today?”



Maine voters are far more focused on employment and wages, the economy, and economic development than other issues. Combined, these responses represented 62% of top-of-mind issue replies.



Question 3 asked: “Would you rate Maine’s economy as excellent, good, only fair, or poor?”

<b>MAINE’S ECONOMIC RATING</b>	
Excellent	0%
Good	16
Only Fair	56
Poor	27
Uncertain	1
Total Excellent/Good	16%
Total Poor/Only Fair	83

It is significant that 0% of Maine voters rated the state’s economy as excellent. Only 16% responded good. However, 83% provided an essentially negative rating by saying only fair or poor. When voters in a state see the economy in good shape, well over 50% will rate the economy as excellent or good. In a recent nationwide study conducted by Gallop for CNN and *USA Today* January 2-5, 2004, 43% of respondents said the U.S. economy was excellent or good compared to 16% poor or fair.

Question 4 asked: “Would you say that Maine’s economy is moving in the right direction and getting better or off on the wrong track and getting worse? (CONTINUE WITH...) Do you feel strongly about that?”

*(See table on following page)*



MAINE'S ECONOMY	
Strongly Getting Better	11%
Getting Better	15
Staying The Same/Uncertain	26
Getting Worse	11
Strongly Getting Worse	36
Total Getting Better	26%
Total Getting Worse	47

In that same Gallop survey for the United States, 66% said the economy was getting better and 27% getting worse. In comparison, only 26% of Maine voters say the state's economy is moving in the right direction and getting better compared to 47% responding off on the wrong track and getting worse. Clearly, the economy is the top issue among voters in Maine.

Question 10 asked: "As you probably know, the Maine Legislature was forced to balance the state budget this year with the burden of more than a billion dollar shortfall in revenue. In your opinion, when faced with a budget shortfall is it more important for the Legislature (ROTATE) raise taxes in order to keep programs and services OR cut programs and services to balance the budget? (CONTINUE WITH...) Do you feel strongly about that?"

SOLUTION TO BUDGET	
Strongly Raise Taxes	16%
Raise Taxes	9
Combination of Both	24
Cut Programs & Services	13
Strongly Cut Programs & Services	38
Total Raise Taxes	25%
Total Cut Programs & Services	51



By a ratio of greater than two to one, Maine voters prefer cutting programs and services rather than raising taxes as a solution for meeting the budget shortfall.

Question 11 asked: “Do you favor or oppose lowering taxes on businesses in Maine in an effort to attract new business and industry with the jobs they bring?”

<b>LOWERING TAXES ON MAINE BUSINESSES</b>	
Favor	61%
Oppose	28
Uncertain	11

Over six out of ten voters say they favor lowering taxes on businesses in Maine in an effort to attract new business, industry, and the jobs they bring. Only 28% opposed.

Question 12 asked: “For every one hundred dollars in total sales or income, how much net profit do you think the average Maine business makes?”

<b>NET PROFIT OF AVERAGE MAINE BUSINESS</b>	
Mean	\$30.09
Median	25.00
Mode	10.00

MRI has used this question in numerous statewide surveys when examining propensity of voters to favor business issues. Voters perceiving that businesses make high profit are less likely to support business issues. Voters believing that business profit is low, are more likely to support these issues. Maine voters are very typical compared to other voters in the United States with 30% as a mean profit score and 25% as a median.

