

# Quarterly Profile

## OF NEW MEXICO CITIZENS

A UNM INSTITUTE FOR PUBLIC POLICY SURVEY RESEARCH CENTER REPORT

FALL 1992—VOL 4/NO 4

### FOCUS: THE PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION

This edition of the *Quarterly Profile of New Mexico Citizens* focuses on New Mexicans' presidential candidate preferences and the changes that have taken place since H. Ross Perot withdrew from and re-entered the presidential race. From where did the support for Perot come? We explore the profiles of respondents who did not know for whom they would vote "If the presidential election were held today . . ." and those of self-identified Democrats and Republicans in an attempt to answer this question. In addition, the analysis of time serial data continues on the *approval ratings* for the Governor and State Legislature, the Waste Isolation Pilot Plant (WIPP), and the *biggest problem* facing New Mexico today.

### Presidential Support in New Mexico

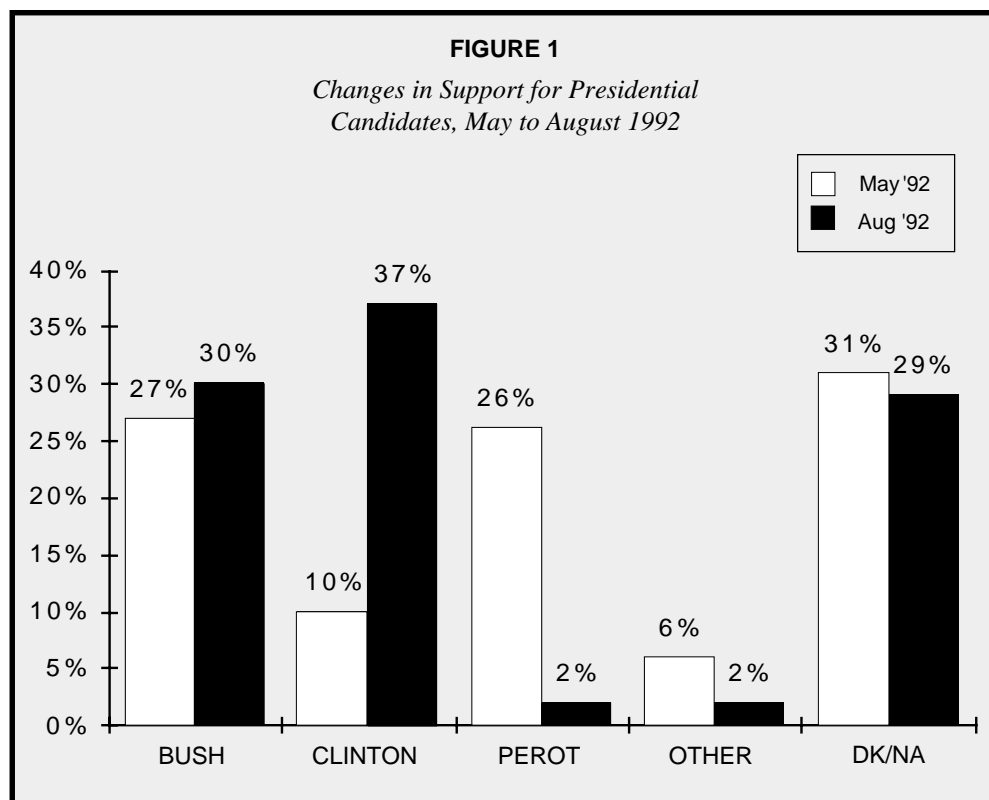
#### Basic Description of Support

For the first time since Kennedy's 1962 visit, presidential candidates have taken an active interest in New Mexico's five electoral votes: both President Bush and Governor Clinton included Albuquerque as a stop on their campaign travels. Governor Clinton may have been interested to know that he garnered only 10% of the vote in our May 1992 survey, but among our August respondents his support nearly quadrupled (37%)! Bush had a slight increase in support (3%), but the biggest change was in the support for Perot (-24%). Clinton seems to have gained the most from Perot's withdrawal. The August data still show a large percentage of respondents as uncommitted to either candidate,

enough to potentially upset any predictions about the placement of New Mexico's electoral votes. See Figure 1.

To determine presidential candidate preferences, respondents were asked, "If the presidential election were held today, who would you vote for?" This was asked as an open-ended question without mentioning possible candidates. Anyone other than Bush, Clinton or Perot was coded as "other." Therefore, the changes in Perot's support were not a function of question wording, but of respondents' perceptions of Perot as a viable candidate at that time. Table 1 is a profile of the May 1992 and August 1992 supporters for each major candidate.

(continued on page 2)



### INSIDE

#### The Presidential Election:

<i>Presidential Support in New Mexico (continued) ....</i>	2
<i>The Role of the Undecided Voter .....</i>	3
<i>The Role of Parties .....</i>	4

#### Trends:

<i>Most Pressing Policy Concerns .....</i>	5
<i>WIPP .....</i>	5
<i>Citizen Approval Ratings .....</i>	6

## FOCUS: THE PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION

## Presidential Support in New Mexico

(continued from page 1)

This more detailed view shows that in May our Democrat respondents were more likely to vote for Perot, or say they did not know for whom they would vote, than they were to support their party's candidate. Clinton was the clear beneficiary (among both Democrats and Republicans) of Perot's withdrawal; he gained 16 points within the opposition party and 37 points

among the Democrat respondents. Bush gained 9 percentage points in Republican support from May to August and lost 3 points among the Democrats. This trend is reflected throughout this *Quarterly*: both major candidates have picked up a share of the Perot supporters, but the majority of them have moved to the Clinton camp.

(continued on page 3)

**TABLE 1**

*Profile of Presidential Supporters, May and August 1992<sup>1</sup>*

	May '92				August '92			
	Bush	Clinton	Perot	DK	Bush	Clinton	Perot	DK
<b>Party Identification</b>								
Democrat	14%	19%	23%	38%	11%	56%	1%	29%
Republican	54%	2%	26%	17%	63%	18%	2%	18%
<b>Race/Ethnicity<sup>2</sup></b>								
Anglo	30%	10%	29%	26%	35%	35%	2%	25%
Spanish American	18%	13%	15%	47%	19%	40%	1%	38%
Mexican American	32%	10%	23%	32%	18%	42%	0%	40%
<b>Income</b>								
<\$30,000	26%	9%	24%	37%	21%	40%	2%	34%
>\$30,000	30%	11%	29%	22%	37%	34%	2%	24%
<b>Biggest Problem Facing New Mexico Today</b>								
Jobs & Economy	25%	10%	26%	34%	27%	42%	1%	28%
Crime	36%	10%	23%	29%	34%	28%	1%	34%
Public Education	27%	11%	32%	21%	34%	35%	2%	25%
<b>Sex</b>								
Female	25%	10%	20%	40%	29%	36%	1%	31%
Male	30%	10%	35%	19%	31%	37%	2%	26%
<b>Registered to Vote<sup>3</sup></b>								
Yes	•	•	•	•	32%	39%	2%	24%
No	•	•	•	•	23%	28%	2%	47%

<sup>1</sup>Totals for any breakout of the presidential preference question will not equal one hundred percent due to the unreported "other" category.

<sup>2</sup>A note on Race and Ethnicity. All the tables herein differentiate between self-identified Spanish-American and Mexican-American respondents based on a forced response question format. In this *Quarterly* we also asked an open-ended, verbatim response question to determine the respondents' race or ethnic origin **without** fitting them into previously constructed categories. Among those respondents who stated an identifier indicating Spanish extraction, "Hispanic" was the identifier of choice (76%), followed by "Spanish" (13%), and "Spanish-American" (7%). There was only one self-identified "Chicano" and no self-identified "Latinos" in our sample. We are currently verifying the suitability of these different racial/ethnic identifiers for the study of the unique ethnic population of New Mexico. The numbers of Native Americans, Blacks and Asians in our sample are too small to generalize from and therefore are not reported.

<sup>3</sup> Data for May 1992 not available.

**FOCUS: THE PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION**
**Presidential Support in New Mexico**
*(continued from page 2)*

May survey respondents who chose "Jobs and the Economy" as the biggest problem facing New Mexico supported Bush and Perot nearly equally (25% and 26% respectively), though most were not sure of their presidential choice (34%). In August, respondents with similar concerns about jobs and the economy supported Clinton (42%) over Bush (27%). Those for whom "Crime" is the biggest problem clearly supported Bush in May and are split between Bush and Don't Know (34% each) in the August survey.

Within all the demographic characteristics mentioned in Table 1, the pattern of support moving from Perot in May to Clinton in August holds true -- Clinton's support has grown across all ethnic, gender, and economic categories. Currently, Anglos split their votes between the two major candidates; Spanish and Mexican-Americans support Clinton, although nearly 40% of these respondents answered "don't know." Bush's support is highest among Republicans, Anglos and those with incomes above \$30,000.

**TABLE 2**

*Profile of Respondents Who Answered "Don't Know" When Asked for Whom  
They Would Vote for President, May and August 1992*

	May '92	August '92
<b>Party Identification</b>		
Democrat	52%	49%
Republican	18%	22%
<b>Race/Ethnicity</b>		
Anglo	56%	60%
Spanish American	24%	21%
Mexican American	5%	10%
American Indian	3%	4%
<b>Income</b>		
<\$30,000	58%	57%
>\$30,000	34%	40%
<b>Biggest Problem Facing New Mexico Today</b>		
Jobs & Economy	36%	45%
Crime	16%	21%
Public Education	17%	13%
<b>Sex</b>		
Female	73%	65%
Male	27%	35%
<b>Education Level</b>		
HS Graduate	27%	26%
<b>Registered to Vote</b>		
Yes	•	37%

**The Role of the Undecided Voter**

Within nearly every demographic group there are a large number of those who stated that they did not know for whom they would vote for President. This represents about 30% of the respondents in both surveys. Table 2 profiles this potentially powerful uncommitted element.

The uncommitted respondents, nearly a third of the August sample, are predominantly self-identified Democrats, Anglo, female, have a household income of less than \$30,000, and a high

school education; they see "Jobs and the economy" as the biggest problem facing New Mexico. Basically they fit the general profile of the majority of our respondents, **but only 37% of the "Don't Knows" are registered to vote!** (Seventy-five percent of the entire sample is registered.) In reality, the potential for this faction to make a major impact on the upcoming presidential election is reduced; the 30% "Don't Knows" are effectively only 15% of the voting sample. They cannot be a "swing vote" if they do not vote.

## FOCUS: THE PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION

### The Role of Parties

Since Perot was not a viable candidate at the time of our August survey and the relative importance of the “Don’t Know” faction has been determined, the Table 3 profile of self-identified Democrats and Republicans should add yet another dimension to the understanding of the nature of presidential candidate choice in New Mexico. A plurality of our respondents identify as Democrats (identification with a party does not necessarily mean one is registered as such or at all). The

Republican respondents are more likely than their Democratic contemporaries to be Anglo, born out of state, and have household incomes over \$30,000. In some aspects, such as approval ratings for the Governor and percentage of registered voters, our Democrat and Republican respondents are very similar. Other differences provide a hint as to the identity of the real swing vote in New Mexico.

**TABLE 3**

*Profile of Self-Identified Democrats and Republicans, May and August 1992*

	Democrats		Republicans	
	May '92	August '92	May '92	August '92
<b>Approval of Governor</b>	36%	39%	32%	37%
<b>Vote for President</b>				
Bush	14%	10%	54%	63%
Clinton	19%	56%	2%	16%
Perot	23%	0%	26%	0%
Don't Know	38%	29%	17%	19%
<b>Strength of Party Identification</b>				
Completely	15%	26%	14%	26%
Somewhat	53%	49%	64%	58%
Slightly	28%	21%	20%	12%
<b>Ideology</b>				
Liberal	38%	38%	23%	15%
Moderate	28%	28%	23%	15%
Conservative	33%	33%	58%	63%
<b>Income</b>				
<\$30,000	53%	52%	41%	39%
>\$30,000	42%	44%	56%	57%
<b>Race/Ethnicity</b>				
Anglo	54%	62%	80%	79%
Spanish American	27%	21%	6%	11%
Mexican American	3%	10%	5%	4%
<b>Born in New Mexico</b>	49%	45%	29%	35%
<b>Registered to Vote</b>	•	82%	•	81%

Again, the effects of the Perot candidacy can be seen across the May and August surveys. Among both Democrats and Republicans, the changes in strength of party identification are positive, with fewer respondents only “slightly identifying” with their party. Twenty-six percent of self-identified Republicans and Democrats identify completely with their party. Our Republican respondents are more ideologically consistent: a clear majority (63%) define themselves as “Conservative”; only 38% of the Democrats define themselves as “Liberals.” The rest of the Democrat respondents are predominantly conservative (33% compared to 28% moderate). Perhaps this is the most volatile segment of New Mexico voters — those who are cross-pressured by the draw of “family values” on one hand, and the perceived inadequacy of the Bush economic policies on the other. These may be the Reagan Democrats; the potential swing vote in New Mexico.

#### Perot Redux

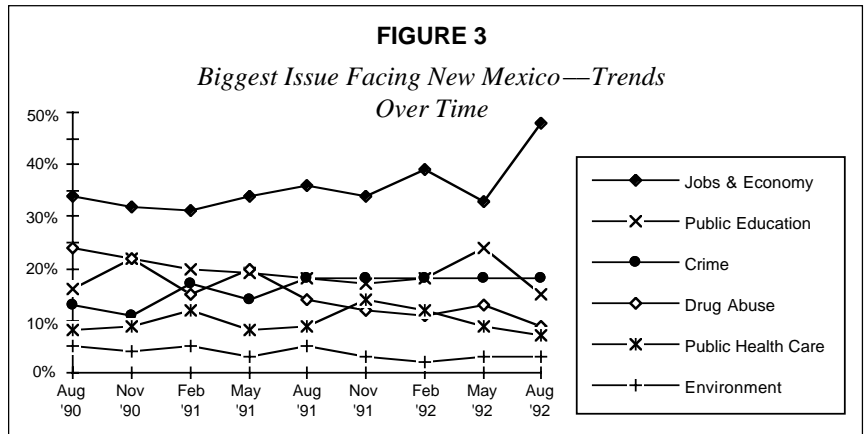
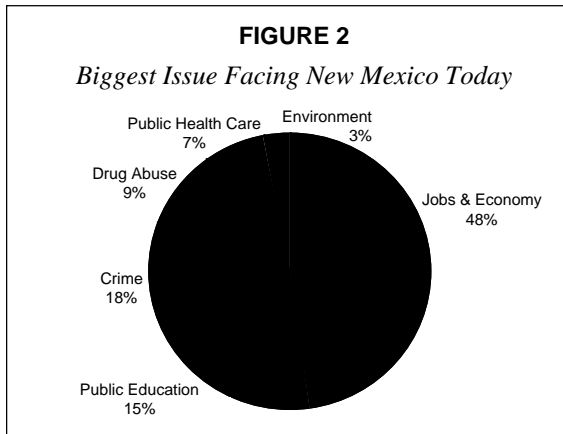
As this *Quarterly* goes to print, H. Ross Perot has rejoined the presidential race. National predictions place him at a distant third with Bush and Clinton losing only marginal support. Will this hold true in New Mexico? If Perot can establish credibility and regain New Mexicans’ trust, it will most probably be at Clinton’s expense: our analysis has shown that Bush’s support is much less sensitive to Perot’s presence. If Perot runs a successful campaign in New Mexico, he may recapture the disaffected Republicans and conservative Democrats who went to the Clinton camp when he withdrew.

TRENDS

### Most Pressing Policy Concerns

When asked, "What would you say is the biggest problem facing New Mexico today?," 48% of the respondents chose "jobs and the economy." (See Figure 2.) This number is 30 points higher than the next most pressing issue, crime (18%). This represents

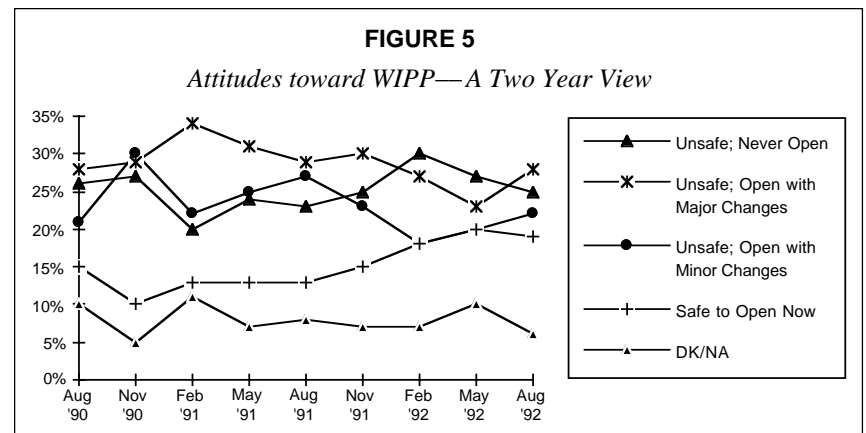
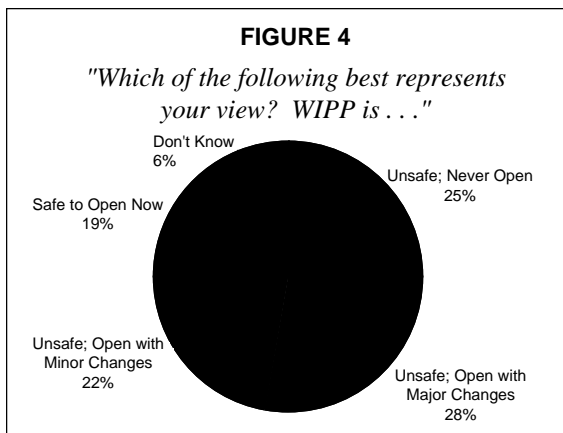
an all-time high for concerns about jobs and the economy for the 16 quarters for which this data has been collected. The relative importance of these and other issues over a two-year time period is shown in Figure 3.



### Waste Isolation Pilot Plant (WIPP)

Figure 4 represents the August 1992 response distribution to the question, "Which of the following best represents your view? WIPP is . . ." The most frequently chosen characterization of WIPP this quarter is "Unsafe; Open with Major Changes." This is true in the Northeast (37%) and Southeast (24%) quadrants of the state and in Bernalillo County (29%). The Northwest quadrant respondents are

equally split between opening WIPP with major changes and stating that WIPP is unsafe and should never be opened (29%). Figure 5 shows the changes in attitudes about WIPP over a two year period (August '90-August '92). There are an increasing number of respondents who view WIPP as openable under some circumstance, 69% this quarter.



### Quarterly Profile

OF NEW MEXICO CITIZENS  
 A UNM INSTITUTE FOR PUBLIC POLICY SURVEY RESEARCH CENTER REPORT  
 Director: Gilbert K. St. Clair  
 Administrator: Carol Brown

Quarterly Profile  
 Project Leader: Amelia A. Rouse  
 Editor: Gilbert K. St. Clair  
 Production/Layout: Carol Brown  
 Survey Manager: Scott Goold  
 Contributing staff: Rob Wright, Mark Peterson, Gilbert K. St. Clair

Subscriptions: \$30.00/year  
 Subscription requests and other inquiries:  
 Carol Brown (505/277-1099)  
 The University of New Mexico  
 Institute for Public Policy  
 Department of Political Science  
 Social Sciences Building, 2nd Floor  
 Albuquerque, New Mexico 87131-1121

### UNM INSTITUTE FOR PUBLIC POLICY

The Institute for Public Policy serves New Mexicans as a non-partisan forum for research, analysis, data collection and training. The Institute's Survey Research Center conducts surveys and research on the policy preferences and political attitudes of New Mexico citizens. The Quarterly Profile is distributed to federal, state, and local New Mexico policy makers, corporate and civic leaders, private organizations, the media and interested citizens.

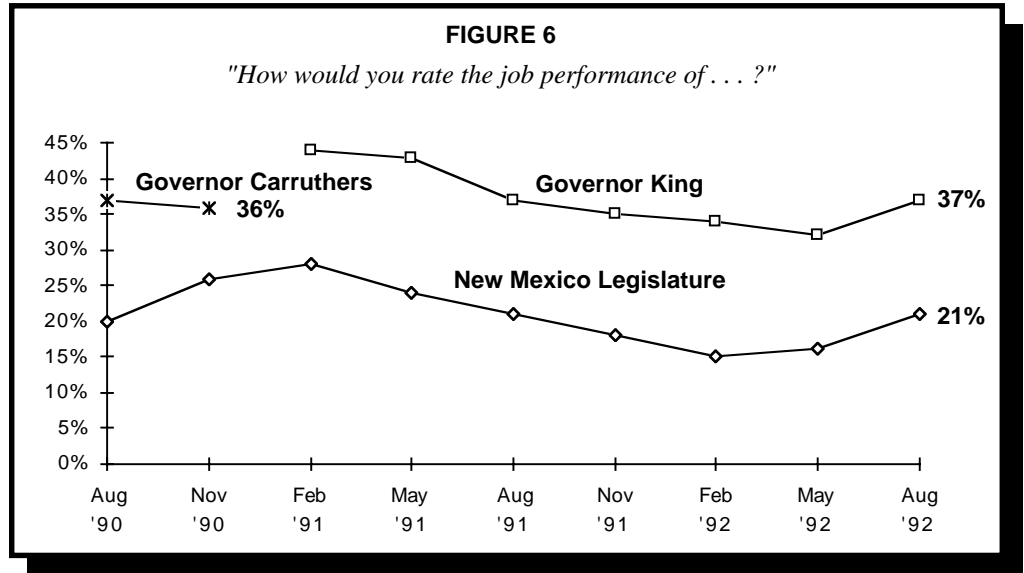
### SURVEY DATA

The UNM Institute for Public Policy conducted its survey of New Mexico citizens through telephone interviews with 560 adult New Mexicans in August of 1992. The telephone numbers were selected randomly by computer. The results of the poll have a five percentage point margin of error at a 95 percent level of confidence, which means that 19 out of 20 times the findings should be within 5 points of the results that would be obtained if all New Mexico households were surveyed. The margin of error is larger for subgroups of the sample because of the smaller number of observations. As with any survey a potential source of error is the possibility that variation in the wording of questions or the order in which questions are asked could produce different results.

## TRENDS

## Citizen Approval Ratings\*

The approval ratings for both Governor King and the New Mexico State Legislature have increased five percentage points in the last three months. With the exception of the May 1992 ratings, the Governor and the Legislature have followed the same general pattern, perhaps a reflection of the public's overall attitudes toward government. Governor King's approval rating for this quarter stands at 37%. In contrast, Governor Carruthers' lowest approval rating (36%) occurred during his last quarter in office following a two year average approval of approximately 45%. See Figure 6.



\*Approval ratings are calculated as a percentage of the total of all respondents, regardless of whether they provided an answer to the question. Those responding "excellent" or "good" are assumed to "approve" of job performance while those responding "fair" or "poor" are assumed to "disapprove."

The University of New Mexico  
Institute for Public Policy  
Department of Political Science  
Albuquerque, New Mexico 87131-1121

(505) 277-1099