

Quarterly Profile

OF NEW MEXICO CITIZENS

A UNM INSTITUTE FOR PUBLIC POLICY SURVEY RESEARCH CENTER REPORT

WINTER 1993/1994—VOL 6/NO 1

FOCUS: THE STATE BUDGET

Budgeting in 1994

In our statewide sample of 533 New Mexico households in November 1993, we asked our respondents to consider the legislature's past general fund budget allocations, and to think about how they might change those allocations if they had control of \$1,000 of their own tax money. After telling them how the 1993 legislature had apportioned 'their' \$1,000, we began the exercise by simply asking what, if anything, the respondents might wish to do to alter the allocation. The legislature's breakdown is displayed in Table 1.

Of 520 respondents who had an opinion as to whether or not they would wish to change the distribution within the general fund budget, more than 68% said that they would allocate the funds differently. That 68% (355 respondents) was then asked whether they would wish to change particular categories, or the overall amount. A small minority—17% (60) of respondents—opted to change the total amount. Intuitively one would expect these respondents to opt for reduced spending, and this was in fact the case. Only 14 of the 60 respondents wishing to change overall spending preferred to see increased state spending.

Among the 295 respondents (55.3% of respondents) who wished to alter particular categories of state spending we found that the highest number chose either elementary and secondary education or law enforcement. The third choice for altered spending was the energy and environment category followed by 4) higher education, 5) public health and welfare, 6) governmental administration and other uses, and 7) business development spending. Respondents were given the chance to spontaneously select up to three different spending categories, and in each case they were asked to decide whether they would prefer to increase or decrease spending for each of those categories. Unlike earlier surveys which dealt with the state budget, we did not ask respondents to balance the re-allocation within the constraints of the \$1,000.

Overall, 48% of our survey respondents wished to increase some or all aspects of state spending while 19% wished to decrease some or all aspects of state spending.

Instead we asked only if they wished to increase or decrease the amount the legislature had allocated.

With the result that a plurality of respondents wished to increase some or all aspects of state spending, this survey stands in stark contrast to the results of last year's survey. It should be pointed out that the manner in which respondents were asked to make their choices this year was significantly different from the approach which has been used in previous "budget games." Instead of compelling respondents to shift priorities within the constraints of

TABLE 1

1993 Legislative Allocations Among General Fund Categories

Primary & Secondary Education	\$468
Higher & Other Education	\$166
Health & Welfare	\$193
Law Enforcement	\$88
Energy & Environment	\$19
Business Development & Regulation	\$13
Governmental Administration/Other	\$53
TOTAL	\$1,000

a fixed \$1,000 so that whatever increase a respondent might wish to make in one category would have to be offset by a decrease in the allocation to some other category, we asked respondents first, "Would you like to change the way your money is allocated to any of (the budget categories)?" Respondents were then asked, "Are there particular areas that you wish to change—or—would you prefer to change your overall contribution to state revenues?"

Respondents who opted to change overall spending rather than particular categories were then asked a series of questions meant to elicit, in \$20 increments, an approximate dollar amount of personal tax payment they would wish to pay additionally, or alternatively have reduced from their tax burden. The categories ranged from "more or less than \$20" to "would it be greater than \$100." When the 60 respondents who wished to make an overall change in state spending are subdivided into groups desiring either increases or decreases the numbers become too small to say anything valid from a statistical point of view, however, it's interesting to note that the average desired individual increase in overall state spending amounted to better than \$45. Conversely, of the 45 respondents who wished to reduce overall state spending, nearly 30% selected a reduction of more than 10% (more than \$100) as their preference. Respondents who wished to change particular elements of the state's spending program were given the opportunity to change up to three categories. Rather than prompting the respondent, or in some way compelling them to address the spending in all seven categories, we allowed the respondents to determine which categories were most important to them. Thus each respondent who indicated a preference for changing particular categories was sequentially asked, 1) What is the first area you wish

(continued on page 2)

INSIDE

Focus: <i>The State Budget (continued)</i>	2
Trends:	
<i>Most Pressing Policy Concerns</i>	4
<i>Citizen Approval Ratings</i>	6

FOCUS: THE STATE BUDGET
Budgeting in 1994
(continued from page 1)

to change? 2) Do you wish to increase or decrease the amount of money allocated to (the named category)? 3) Is there a second category ... etc.? For each of the selected categories respondents were then asked to select the amount of personal contribution they wished to increase or decrease across a range from less than \$10 to more than \$50. The range was chosen with the idea that a willingness to increase or reduce spending by more than \$50 would constitute more than a 10% change for the largest single category—public elementary and secondary education—and substantially greater increments for all other budget categories

The conclusions to be drawn from the data include the general discovery that a plurality of New Mexicans would spend more on their favored programs than pundits have heretofore presumed. The other obvious conclusion is that no individual spending category commands the positive attention of a majority of the respondents surveyed. In other words, while a substantial plurality favors more spending, no large number of respondents favors increased (or decreased) spending in any single category.

Thinking in terms of a politician trying to perceive the interests of his/her constituents from this data, the 23% of respondents who favored an increase in public elementary and secondary education as their first, second, or third spending priority are offset by the 29% of respondents who selected law enforcement as their first, second, or third priority for increased spending. Both preferences must be considered in the light of the 48% of respondents who would prefer to see no change, decreased spending, or increases in some other categories.

The fact remains, however, that both public education and law enforcement represent areas of deep public concern. The interconnection between respondents' biggest public policy concerns and their spending priorities is clear. When the responses to our survey question, "What would you say is the single biggest problem facing people in New Mexico today?" were compared with the responses of the 238 respondents who also selected a first category of budget allocation they wished to increase, the following results were obtained. (See Table 2.) Those viewing crime as the biggest problem and desiring an increased level of spending make up the largest cell in the table. The support for public education from those viewing jobs and the economy, or public education as the biggest problem is also noteworthy. Although the "other category" for respondents who saw the environment as the biggest problem is the largest percentage figure in the table, it's important to note that this represents just five respondents.

In an effort to determine explanatory relationships between the personal, economic, or political characteristics of our respon-

TABLE 2
Response Comparisons

Biggest Problem Facing New Mexico	First Spending Priority to Increase:			Total Number of Responses (n=238)
	Law Enforcement (n=79)	Primary & Secondary Education (n=76)	Other (n=83)	
Crime (n=83)	48.2%	31.3%	20.5%	100%
Jobs/Economy (n=65)	24.6%	36.9%	38.5%	100%
Public Education (n=38)	23.7%	31.6%	44.7%	100%
Healthcare (n=27)	29.6%	25.9%	44.5%	100%
Drugs (n=19)	31.6%	31.6%	36.8%	100%
Environment (n=6)	0.0%	16.7%	83.8%	100%

TABLE 3

"Would you like to change the way your money is allocated to any of these (budget categories)?"

	No	Yes
Income (n=497)		
Less than \$20,000 (n=128)	39.8%	60.2%
\$20,000 - \$40,000 (n=209)	31.6%	68.4%
More than \$40,000 (n=160)	25.0%	75.0%
Education (n=518)		
High School or less (n=163)	42.3%	57.7%
Post High School/No BA (n=190)	28.9%	71.1%
BA or more (n=165)	24.2%	75.8%

dents, and their options regarding state spending we examined the differences in opinions by age group, income, ethnicity, political party identification, and position on a scale measuring liberal to conservative political ideology. When we examined those characteristics we found that the proportions of the sample consisting of the very youngest (18-24) and oldest (over 65) age groups of respondents were less interested in changing the budget allocations than the other age groups—nevertheless substantial majorities favored change across all age categories. When we compared household incomes across broad ranges and education levels with choices regarding state spending we found that as income or education increased the proportion of respondents in each subset who expressed a desire to change present spending patterns was larger. Table 3 illustrates these points.

(continued on page 3)

FOCUS: THE STATE BUDGET

Budgeting in 1994

(continued from page 2)

Table 4 illustrates the proportions of Democrats, Republicans, and unaffiliated respondents who said first that they favored changing the way the state allocates funds, and then said they favored increasing one or more categories. A majority of Democrats from our statewide sample favored increased spending in one or more areas of state funding. Republicans on the other hand favor maintenance or reduction of current levels of state funding by a 55.5% majority. Of the 44.5% of Republicans who favored some increase in state spending, nearly three-quarters opted for law enforcement as their first or second priority.

Table 5 illustrates the spending priorities of respondents who self-identified as Democratic, Republican, or politically unaffiliated and favored increased spending in one or more discrete categories.

Finally the question of how much increase our respondents were willing to support in state spending provides the most difficult to interpret data. Among respondents choosing public elementary and secondary education as their first priority, the median amount was \$30 with 23.4% of respondents indicating a willingness to increase their contributions by over \$50. Those who selected law enforcement as their first priority also had a median value of \$30 with 18.2% indicating a desire to increase their contribution by more than \$50. To put those values in some perspective, an increase of \$30 over current levels used in our \$1,000 formula would mean a 6.4% increase over current levels of spending for primary and secondary education while law enforcement would jump by 34%.

Clearly the public views public education and law enforcement as the two critical elements of the state budget. Given that the legislature must take into account the majority of voters who either favor no increases in state spending, cuts in state spending, or increases in areas other than education and law enforcement, it seems unlikely that major shifts in funding can take place. It must also be re-emphasized that our respondents were not required to keep their preferences within a limit, and they were also not asked to state a preference for raising more revenue. Nevertheless, it is instructive that our survey of New Mexico households clearly points toward support for more rather than less state spending on the issues which concern people most.

TABLE 4
Response Comparisons

	Total Number	Number Favoring Change	Number Favoring Increase
Democrats	235	162 (68.9%)	126 (53.6%)
Republicans	173	121 (69.9%)	77 (44.5%)
No Affiliation	94	64 (68.1%)	48 (51.1%)

TABLE 5
Response Comparisons

Democrats Favoring Increased Spending	
First Categories (n=119)	
Public Education	38.7%
Law Enforcement	26.9%
Energy & Environment	14.3%
Other	21.4%
Second Categories (n=82)	
Law Enforcement	26.8%
Public Education	24.4%
Higher Education	14.6%
Other	34.2%
Republicans Favoring Increased Spending	
First Categories (n=74)	
Law Enforcement	43.2%
Public Education	24.3%
Energy & Environment	10.8%
Other	21.7%
Second Categories (n=58)	
Law Enforcement	39.7%
Energy & Environment	17.2%
Public Education	13.8%
Other	29.3%
No Party Affiliation Favoring Increased Spending	
First Categories (n=45)	
Public Education	31.1%
Law Enforcement	31.1%
Energy & Environment	13.3%
Other	24.5%
Second Categories (n=32)	
Law Enforcement	28.1%
Public Education	18.8%
Energy & Environment	15.6%
Other	37.5%

Quarterly Profile

OF NEW MEXICO CITIZENS

A UNM INSTITUTE FOR PUBLIC POLICY SURVEY RESEARCH CENTER REPORT

Subscriptions: \$30.00/year

Director: Gilbert K. St. Clair

Administrator: Carol Brown

Subscription requests and other inquiries:

Quarterly Profile

Project Leader: Mark Peterson

Editor: Gilbert K. St. Clair

Production/Layout: Carol Brown

Survey Manager: Scott Goold

Contributing staff: Robin Tropper,

Darryl Dieter and Dino Sawyer

Carol Brown (505/277-1099)
The University of New Mexico
Institute for Public Policy
Department of Political Science
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 533 adult New Mexicans in November and December of 1993. 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: MOST PRESSING POLICY CONCERNS

Most Pressing Policy Concerns: Crime on the Mind

A plurality of New Mexicans (35%) currently perceive “crime” as the “single biggest problem” facing the state. This finding is unusual in that for all seventeen previous surveys since November 1988 that have addressed the state’s most pressing issue, “jobs and the economy” has received the highest response percentage. Historically, “public education” has received the second highest. In this most recent survey, only 26% of respondents statewide (n=523) indicated that jobs and the economy is the issue foremost on their minds while 16% chose public education. This new development parallels a nationwide trend, characterized by an escalating fear of crime when FBI crime statistics are dropping. We also noted an interesting difference between Albuquerque area respondents and respondents from the rest of the state. As Figure 1 illustrates, a near majority (47%) of Albuquerque area residents named crime as New Mexico’s biggest problem; jobs/economy and public education were selected as a distant second and third. By contrast, New Mexicans outside Albuquerque selected jobs and the economy as frequently as they did crime, at roughly 30%, with the balance of the sample more or less equally divided over three of the four remaining issues. Respondents from the counties in the two southern quadrants of the state tended to select jobs and the economy with equal or greater frequency than crime, while those in the two northern quadrants (exclusive of Bernalillo county) chose crime most frequently.

Because of the large sample sizes available,¹ additional comparisons were made to help explain both the overall rise in the state’s

¹ Bernalillo county: N=319, includes the regular sample and an oversample for the county.

All other counties: N=361, regular sample

FIGURE 1

“What would you say is the single biggest problem facing people in New Mexico today?”

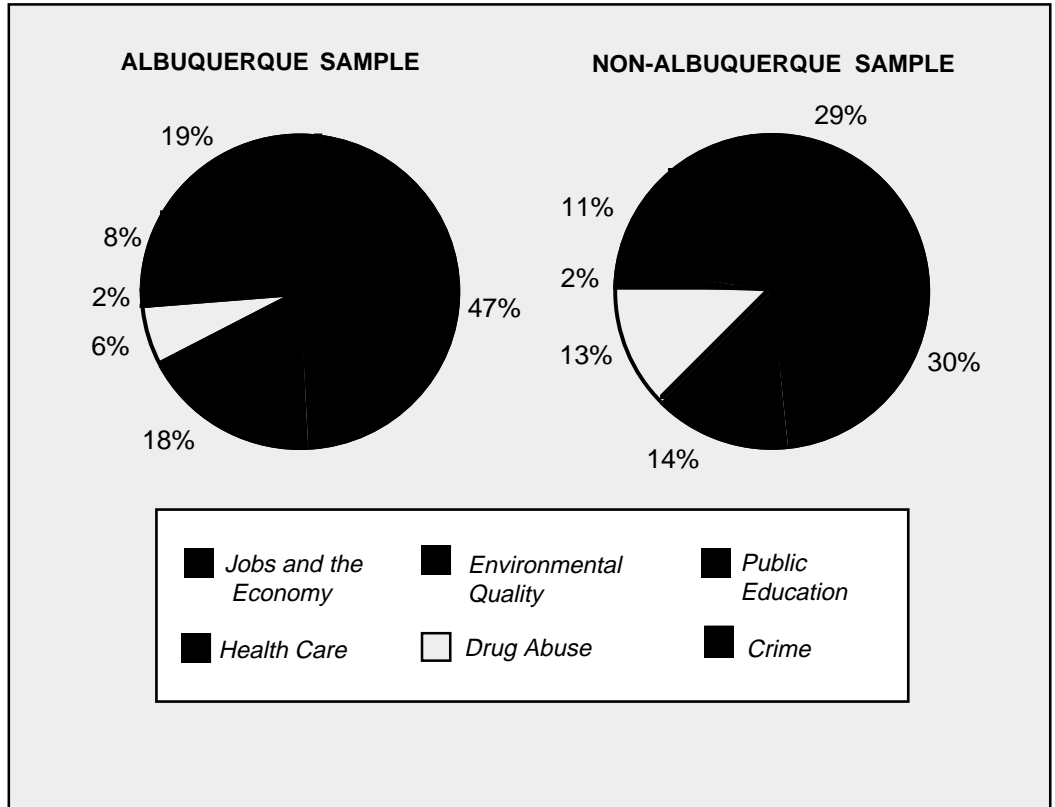


TABLE 6

Identification of Biggest Problem Within Demographic Categories

Key to Table:
 Albuquerque Sample
 Non-Albuquerque Sample

	Sample Size (N)	Crime %	Jobs/Economy %	Public Education %
Education				
High School graduate or less	82 122	51.2 29.5	15.9 29.5	9.8 9.0
Vocational/ Some college	121 138	51.2 33.3	19.0 31.9	11.6 10.9
Bachelor's degree or more	113 100	38.9 28.0	22.1 26.0	31.0 26.0
Age (years)				
18-29	71 75	50.7 26.7	16.9 28.0	19.7 16.0
30-39	89 92	36.0 28.3	16.9 35.9	20.2 10.9
40-54	95 94	49.5 29.8	25.3 30.9	17.9 18.1
>54	60 98	56.7 36.7	15.0 22.4	13.3 13.3
Annual Income				
<\$20,000	72 100	47.2 24.0	15.3 37.0	12.5 9.0
\$20-40,000	117 143	47.0 32.2	23.9 28.0	12.8 10.5
>\$40,000	113 103	45.1 34.0	16.8 26.2	27.4 25.2

TRENDS

Most Pressing Policy Concerns: Crime on the Mind

(continued from page 4)

perception of crime as a problem and the disparity over the degree of this perception between residents of the state's largest city and all other New Mexicans. The strong crime concern expressed by Albuquerque area respondents was evident across the demographic variables of gender, ethnicity, education and income. There were demographic differences in the selection of problems made by respondents from the rest of the state. (See Table 6.)

For both Albuquerque and the rest of the state, gender had no bearing on levels of concern over most issues with the exception of public education. In both samples notably higher percentages of men selected public education than did women. Respondents outside Albuquerque selected crime or jobs/economy equally, regardless of education. Among self-classified "Hispanic" respondents the proportion selecting crime was 7% greater than "White Non-Hispanics." The proportion of White Non-Hispanics selecting jobs/economy was 10% greater than Hispanics. Consistently for both sub-samples, respondents with the highest level of education and White Non-Hispanic ethnicity showed substantially greater concern over public education than did other respondents. Those respondents with the least amount of education and Hispanic ethnicity demonstrated the greatest concern regarding "drug abuse."

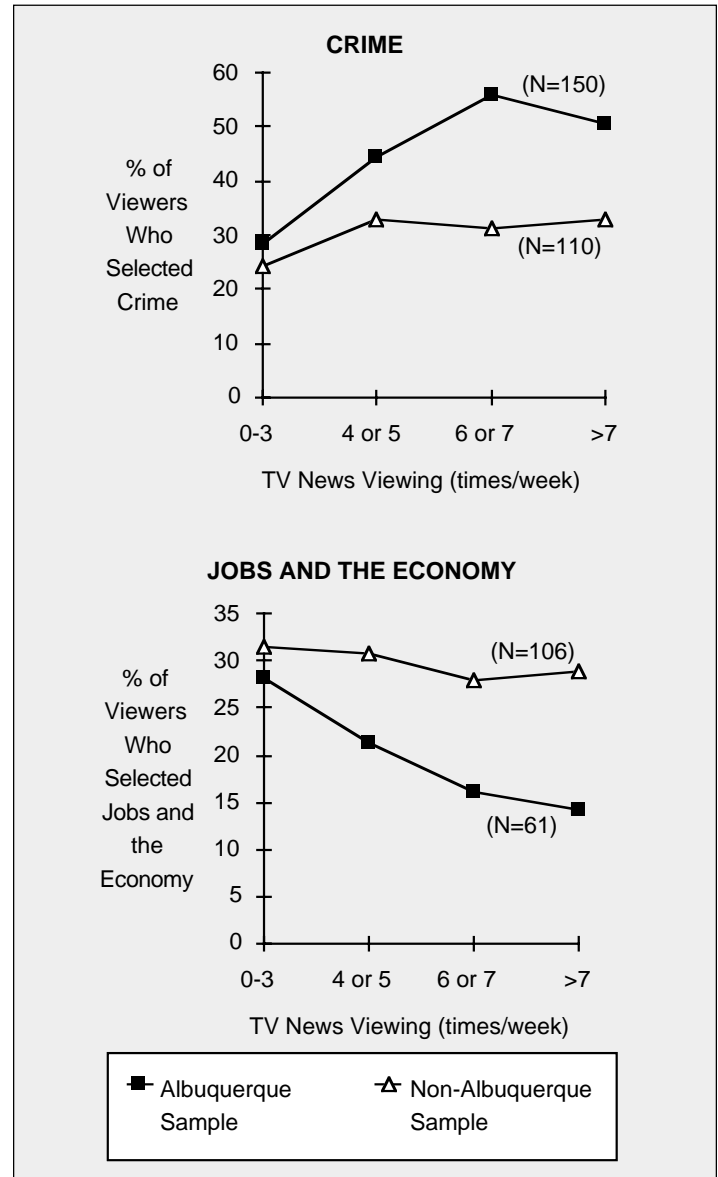
Outside-of-Albuquerque respondents within the 18-29 and the 40-54 age cohorts, selected crime and jobs/economy with equal frequency. The proportion of persons age 55 or older choosing crime was 14% greater than the proportion selecting jobs/economy. The 30-39 cohort accounted for the highest percentage selecting jobs/economy of any age group (35.9%). Even for the Albuquerque sample, in which all age cohorts selected crime the most frequently, the 55 or older group generated the highest selection percentage (57%) and the 30-39 group the lowest percentage (36%).

Outside-of-Albuquerque households with gross annual incomes of less than \$20,000 identified jobs and the economy as New Mexico's biggest problem by a 13% greater margin than they did crime. In contrast, non-city households with higher incomes selected crime to a marginally greater degree. This differs from the Albuquerque sub-sample in which crime was selected with overwhelming frequency over any other issue, regardless of these variables.

What factors, if any, account for such a large percentage of Albuquerque area residents selecting crime as the state's biggest problem? The question, "On average, how many times a week do you watch news on television?" has provided some insight. When we examined the television news viewing behavior of the Albuquerque sub-sample we found that the proportion of individuals selecting crime as the biggest problem generally increased as the frequency of news viewing increased. Once the frequency reached or exceeded 7 times per week, the relationship levels off. The inverse relationship between news viewing and concern expressed for jobs/economy is also observed. Television news viewing does not show this sort of relationship with any of the other issues. Moreover, for the non-Albuquerque sample, these relationships are apparent only to the extent that respondents who most seldom watch the news selected jobs/economy by a 7% margin over crime.

It seems that the content of television news and other news sources may emphasize crime more now than in the recent past. By

FIGURE 2
Relationships Between TV News Viewing and Identification of Biggest Problem

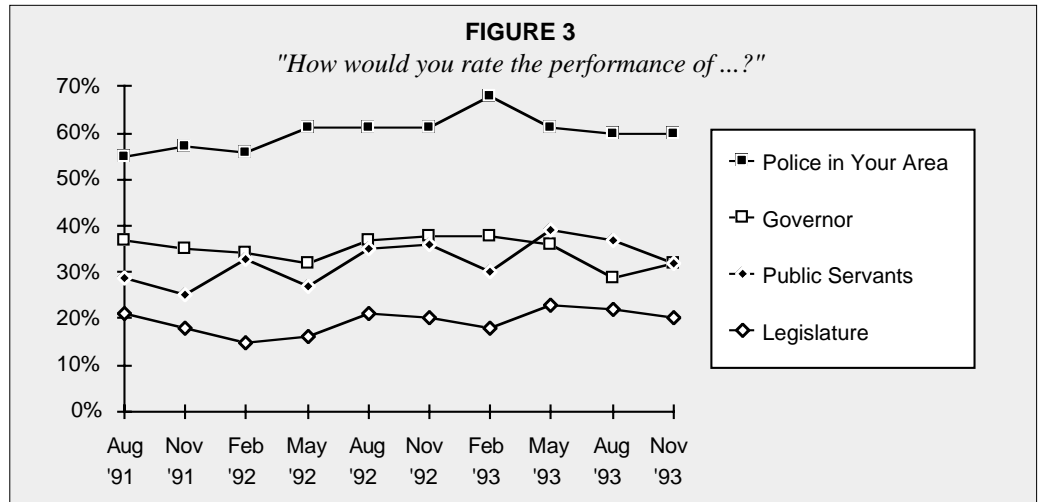


the same token, coverage of the economy and other important issues has probably shared less of the focus recently or has perhaps seemed more optimistic. We can speculate that since residents throughout the state, by and large, view the same news coverage and have similar viewing habits, television news content at least partly accounts for the notable rise statewide in the perception of crime as our biggest problem. Crime is, of course, most visible in an urban center like Albuquerque. In addition, candidates in the city's recent mayoral election centered much discussion on crime over the past few months, via the media and public appearances. And 82% of Albuquerque respondents indicated that "crime prevention and gangs" was the "single most important issue that was discussed" in the recent mayor's race. This factor might additionally explain Albuquerque's strong response toward crime as a problem.

TRENDS

Citizen Approval Ratings

This quarter's survey provides no surprises concerning approval ratings for New Mexico's public officials. The police continue to be most highly regarded. The governor has experienced a slight rebound from the last survey, although it still falls within the statistical margin of error. Standing currently at 32%, it marks a rise of 4 points from the last *Quarterly Profile*. Public servants in general also stand at 32% which marks the second quarter of gradual decline since hitting a peak of 39% last May. Finally, the legislature continues in the 20% approval range.



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

(505) 277-1099