

# Quarterly Profile

## OF NEW MEXICO CITIZENS

A UNM INSTITUTE FOR PUBLIC POLICY SURVEY RESEARCH CENTER REPORT

SUMMER 1994—VOL 6/NO 3

### FOCUS 1: NEWCOMERS AND IMMIGRATION

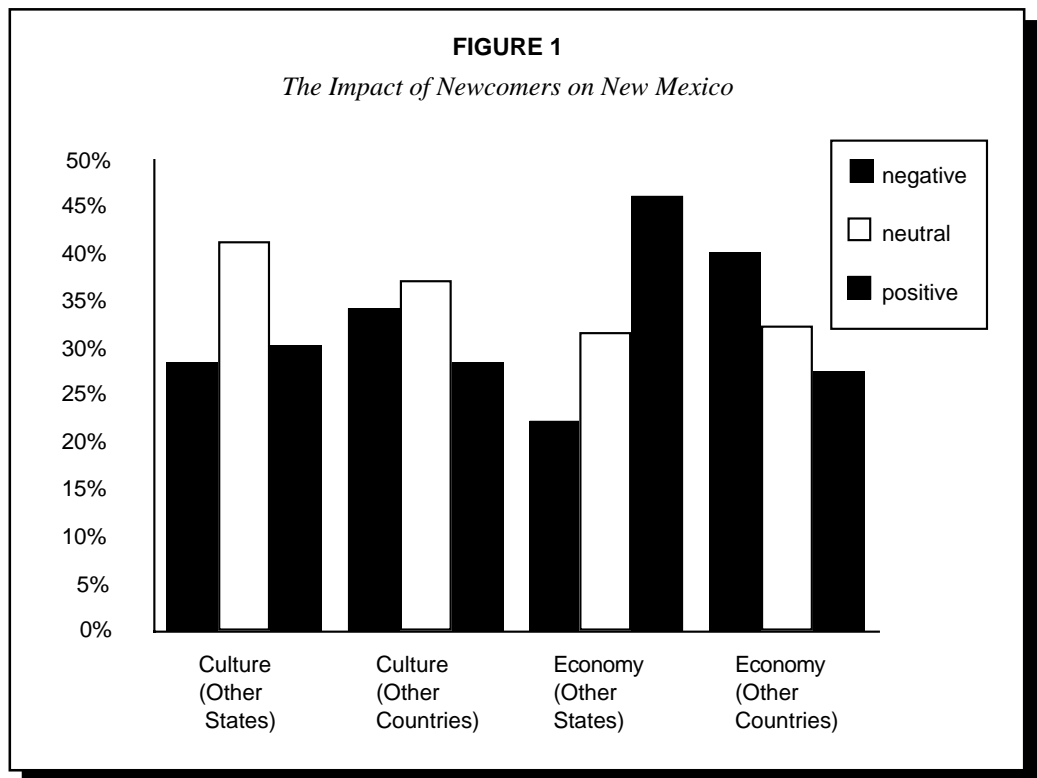
#### Newcomers to New Mexico

Given the high rate of population movement into New Mexico, there has been considerable concern about the effects of newcomers on the culture, traditions, and economy of the state. In our statewide sample of 526 New Mexico households in May and June of 1994, we asked questions concerning our respondents' views on the impact of newcomers to New Mexico, legislation regarding *illegal* immigrants into the United States, and granting equal access to *legal* immigrants for several government benefits.

To see how New Mexicans feel about the effects of the population movement into New Mexico, we asked four questions about perceptions of the impacts of newcomers: the effects of newcomers from *other states* on New Mexico's economy, the effects of newcomers from *other states* on New Mexico's culture and traditions, the effects of newcomers from *other countries* on New Mexico's economy, and the effects of newcomers from *other countries* on New Mexico's culture and traditions. Respondents were asked to place the effects of these different forces on a five-point scale, ranging from *very negative* to *very positive*.

Among our respondents, 29% felt newcomers from *other states* would negatively affect the state's culture and traditions, while 30% expected a positive effect. Over 41% were neutral on the issue. Our respondents' views about the effects of newcomers from *other countries* on the state's culture and traditions was slightly more negative with 34%, 37%, and 29% expressing negative, neutral, and positive views, respectively.

New Mexicans' views on the impact of domestic versus foreign newcomers on the state's economy were quite different.



Respondents expressed fairly positive views regarding newcomers from within the United States on the state economy. There was still a large proportion expressing neutral attitudes (32%). The largest response category was positive effects (46%), with only 22% expecting negative effects on the state economy. However, New Mexicans were much less optimistic in assessing the impact of newcomers from other countries on the economy of the state; 40% of respondents felt negatively about the economic consequences of such newcomers, while only 27% felt positively. Over 32% expressed neutral views. There was no significant difference between the attitudes of respondents who were *born* in New Mexico and those who were born elsewhere and moved to New Mexico.

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## Illegal Immigration

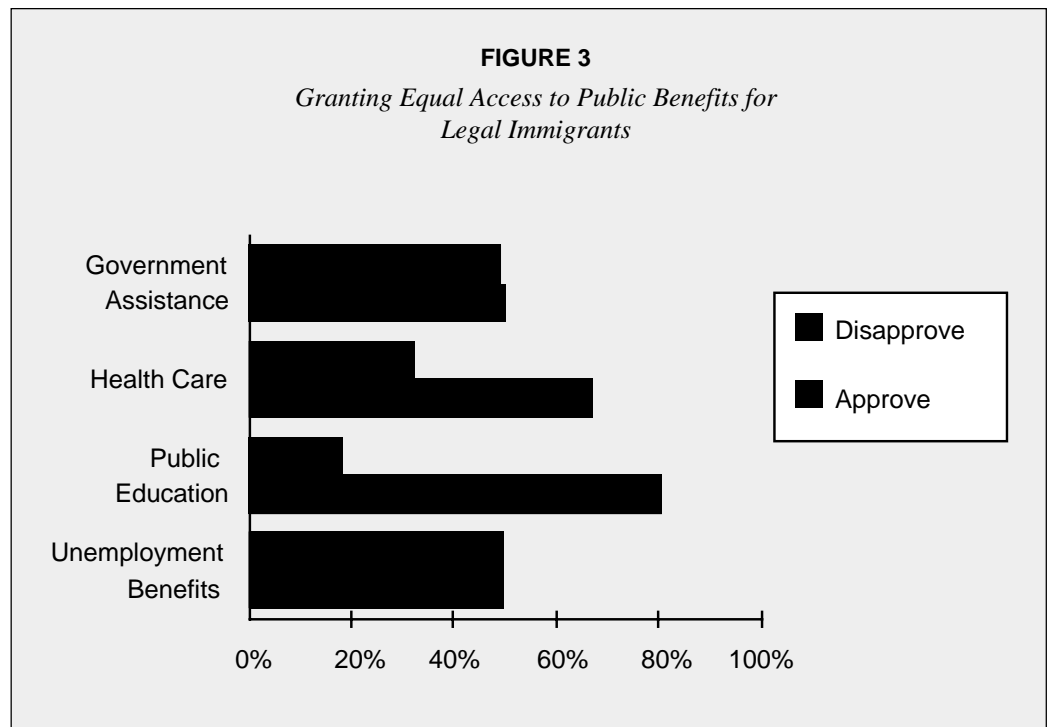
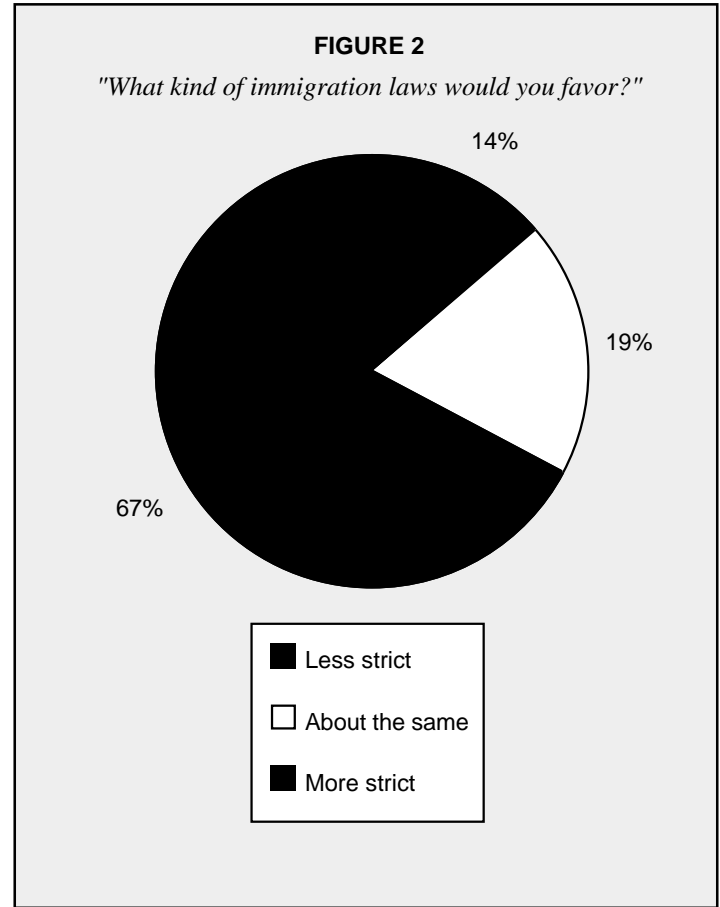
Respondents were asked the following question: “There has been much discussion recently about the perceived effects of *illegal* immigrants on the economy, culture, and society of the United States. Some people feel that *illegal* immigration is harmful to our society and should be greatly restricted. Others argue that illegal immigrants are beneficial to our society, and that restrictions on such immigrants should be less strict. Overall, how do *you* feel about current U.S. laws regarding *illegal* immigrants? On a five-point scale where *one* is *much less strict*, *three* is *about the same*, and *five* is *much more strict*, what kind of immigration laws would you favor?”

A large majority of New Mexicans favor making the present laws regarding *illegal* immigration into the country more strict. Of those who answered the question on illegal immigration, 67% favor making the current legislation on the issue more strict, 19% approve of keeping the laws about the same, and only 14% would make such laws less strict than they currently are. Interestingly, even among those respondents who said they know someone who has immigrated into the United States (approximately 66%), there was strong support for making laws regarding illegal immigrants more strict.

## Legal Immigration and Public Benefits

New Mexicans were polled regarding their views on granting the same access to *legal* immigrants living in the United States as to U.S. natives for several public benefits. Respondents were asked whether they approve of *legal* immigrants having equal access to Unemployment Benefits, Public Education, Health Care, and Government Assistance Programs such as Food Stamps.

For Unemployment Benefits and Government Assistance Programs, about one-half of the respondents approved. Willingness to grant equal access for Health Care is much stronger, with 68% of respondents approving. Equal access to Public Education received strongest support, with 81% of respondents approving granting equal access to legal immigrants. Once again, whether or not the respondent knows someone who has immigrated to the United States from another country had no effect on the approval ratios.



## FOCUS 2: ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

### Use of Public Funds

There has been a lot of discussion about economic development and how to encourage it. In order to provide information about what New Mexicans think about the role of economic development in the state, we asked about several relevant issues. Table 1 shows the percentages of survey respondents that agreed with different strategies for promoting economic development with the use of public state funding.

As seen in the table, each of these particular methods of promoting economic development was favored by a majority of our respondents. New Mexicans were asked if public funds should be used to *recruit new firms* to New Mexico. An overwhelming 86% of respondents agreed with encouraging economic development by recruiting new firms from other states. However, more people agreed with the idea of recruiting new firms from outside the state

TABLE 1

*Promoting Economic Development*

Recruit new businesses to New Mexico using public funds	86%
Encourage the start-up of new businesses in New Mexico	77%
Expand firms already existing in New Mexico using public funds	68%
Encourage businesses to expand or relocate to access the Mexican economy	63%
Invest in new businesses that might not have received financing without using public funds	55%

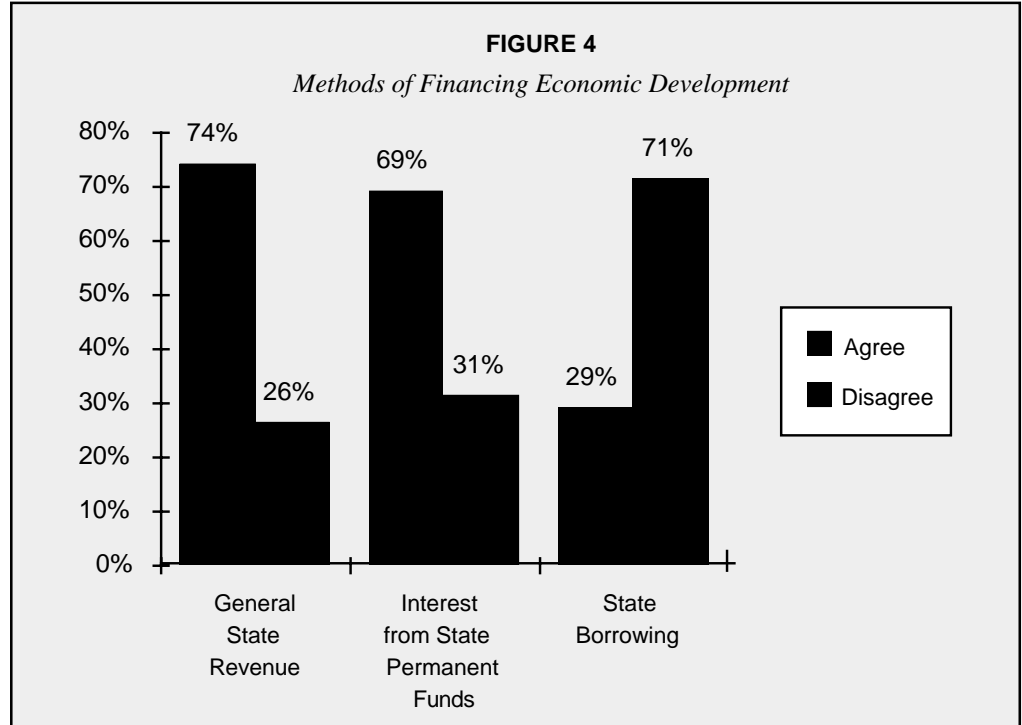
than with stimulating businesses already existing in New Mexico (68%), or with encouraging businesses to relocate to access the Mexican economy (63%). Over two-thirds of our respondents (77%) agreed with encouraging the formation of new business in New Mexico. Only a slight majority (55%) agreed with using public money to invest in new businesses that might not have otherwise received financing.

### Revenue and Incentives for Economic Development

We were interested in finding out how New Mexicans felt about different ways of financing economic development. Respondents were asked if they would agree or disagree with specific sources of funding for economic development. Of our respondents, 73% agreed with using general state revenue to finance economic development. Interest from the state permanent fund was a desired source of financing economic development by 69%, while a surprising 71% disagreed with the use of state borrowing.

There are several ways to encourage economic growth using state generated revenues. Incentives such as giving tax reductions to specific businesses to get them to relocate to an area are widely used.

Another strategy might be to reduce the electric utility rates specifically for new or expanding businesses. We asked our respondents if they agreed or disagreed with different strategies for encouraging economic development. When New Mexicans were asked about tax reductions given to specific businesses to get them to relocate to New Mexico, 55% agreed with this form of incentive. We then asked



our respondents whether they agreed with using public funds to pay for some of the costs of setting up new business facilities like water and electric hook-ups, to which 57% agreed. Finally we asked if they agreed with reducing the electric utility rates for new or expanding firms, and the majority of respondents, 58%, did *not* agree with this strategy for encouraging economic development.

## FOCUS 2: ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

### Is Our Work Force Prepared?

In order to recruit new firms to New Mexico the state must have a work force that is capable of meeting the needs of the firms. Are New Mexico's institutions preparing the work force for the skilled jobs that might come from companies that are recruited to New Mexico? We asked our respondents if they agreed or disagreed with the following statement: "New Mexico's educational programs prepare the state's work force for the highly skilled jobs that would come from these new firms." Only 39% agreed, compared to 54% who did not feel that the state's educational programs adequately prepare the work force. (See Figure 5.)

### Costs of Economic Development

We were interested in finding out how New Mexicans felt about *potential costs* associated with economic development. We asked our respondents if they agreed or disagreed with the following statement: "Increased traffic on roads and highways is a small price to pay for economic development," to which 61% agreed.

We wanted to discover whether a negative effect on the environment would change the way people felt toward encouraging economic development. We asked New Mexicans the following question: "Suppose that proposed economic development would result in a *negative* effect on the environment in and around your community. Would you encourage economic development in your community knowing that there would be a negative effect on the environment?" We asked our respondents to put themselves on a seven-point scale where one was *strongly encourage* and seven was *strongly discourage*. The seven-point scale has been collapsed into three categories: responses one, two, and three were to discourage, four was neutral, and responses four, five, and six were to encourage.

Most New Mexicans surveyed would discourage economic development if they believed that there would be a negative impact on the environment in their community. Of those who answered, 69% said that they would discourage economic development, about 14% were neutral, and only 17% said they would still encourage economic development under those circumstances. These responses indicate that New Mexicans are in favor of selective recruitment: a majority are primarily interested in bringing in businesses that won't harm the environment around them as shown in Figure 6 and Figure 7.

FIGURE 5

"New Mexico's educational programs prepare ..."

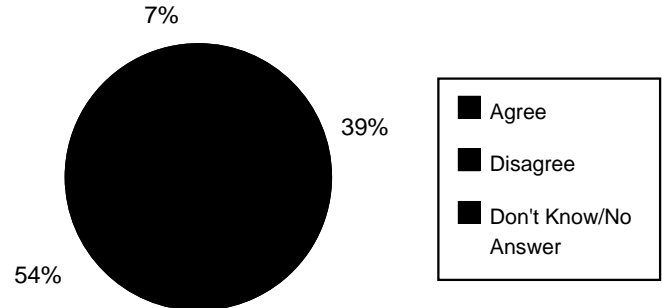


FIGURE 6

"One idea would be to use public funds to recruit new businesses to New Mexico. Do you agree or disagree with this idea?"

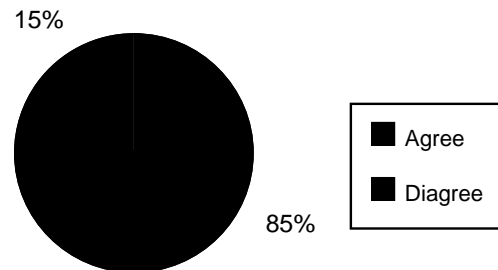
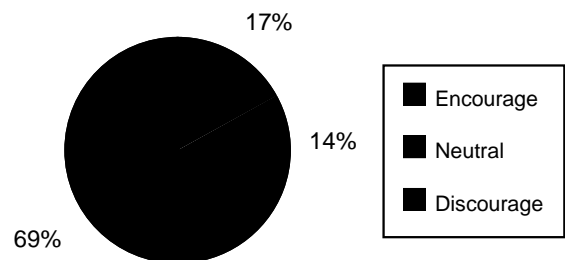


FIGURE 7

"Would you encourage economic development in your community knowing that there would be a negative effect on the environment?"



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Subscriptions: \$30.00/year

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### 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.

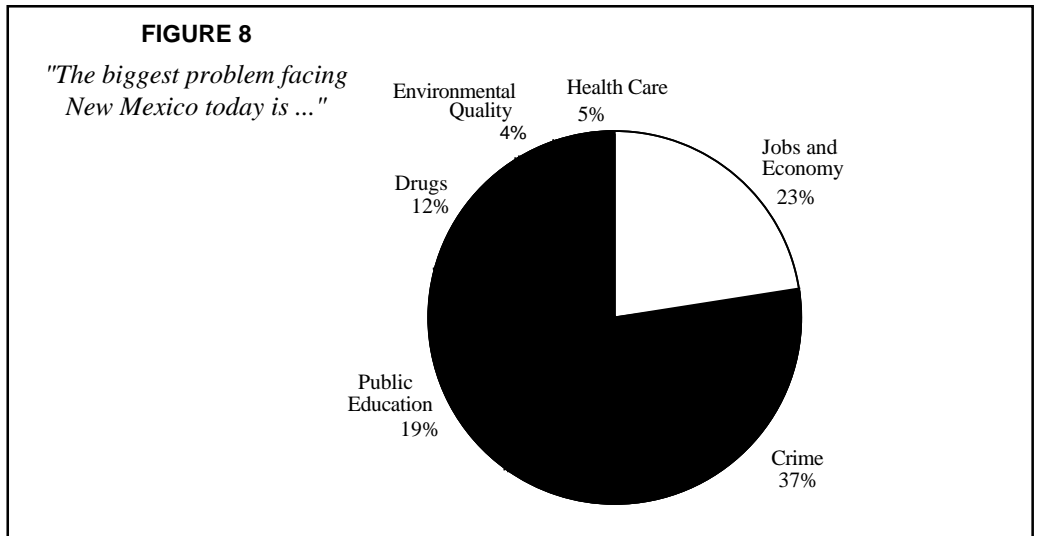
### SURVEY DATA

The UNM Institute for Public Policy conducted its survey of New Mexico citizens through telephone interviews with 526 adult New Mexicans in May and June of 1994. 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

Respondents were asked, "Which of the following is the biggest problem facing New Mexicans today: Public Health Care, Jobs and the Economy, Crime, Public Education, Drug Abuse, or Environmental Quality?" The proportion of participants who consider crime the biggest problem dropped from 42% in February 1994 to 37% in May 1994. Public health care and environmental quality also decreased as concerns. The percentage selecting public education as the most important problem increased from 16% to 19%, and the percentage selecting drug abuse grew from 10% to 12%.



TRENDS

### Political Accessibility and Citizen Influence

We were interested in the extent to which citizens feel that the government is accessible and responsive to their needs. Do New Mexicans feel as if they can affect government policy? The Institute measured the degree to which respondents feel they can affect the political process in two ways. First, how responsive is the government to citizens' needs? Second, how well do citizens feel they understand politics, and how well do they think they would perform in public office? The responses are shown in Tables 2 and 3.

**TABLE 2**  
*Accessibility of Government*

	Agree	Disagree
"People like me don't have any say about what the government does."	48%	52%
"Voting is the only way people like me can have any say about how the government runs things."	58%	42%

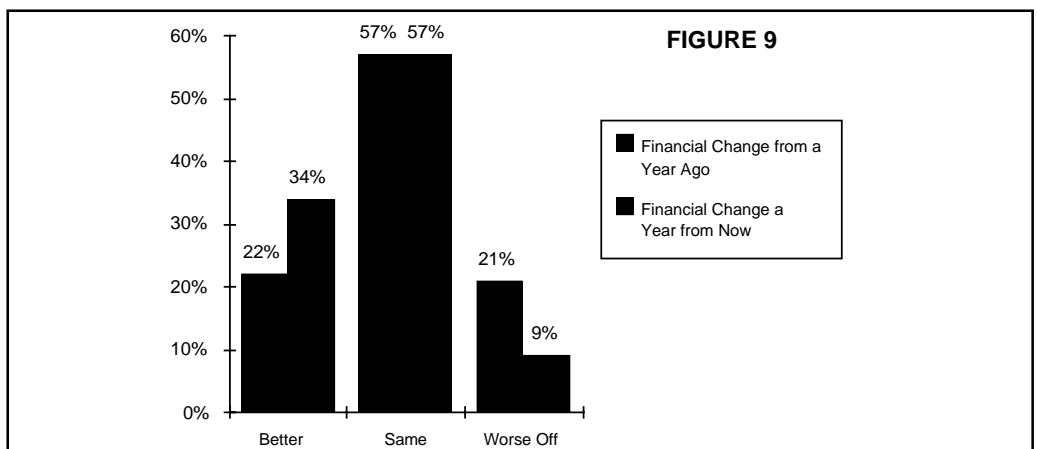
**TABLE 3**  
*Political Understanding/Participation*

	Agree	Disagree
"Sometimes politics and government seem so complicated that a person like me can't understand what's going on."	58%	42%
"I feel I could do as good a job in public office as most other people."	53%	47%

TRENDS

### Financial Change

Respondents were asked whether they were better off, the same, or worse off than they were a year ago. The respondents were then asked if they thought their financial situations would become better, stay the same or become worse a year from now. Figure 9 shows the results of this inquiry.

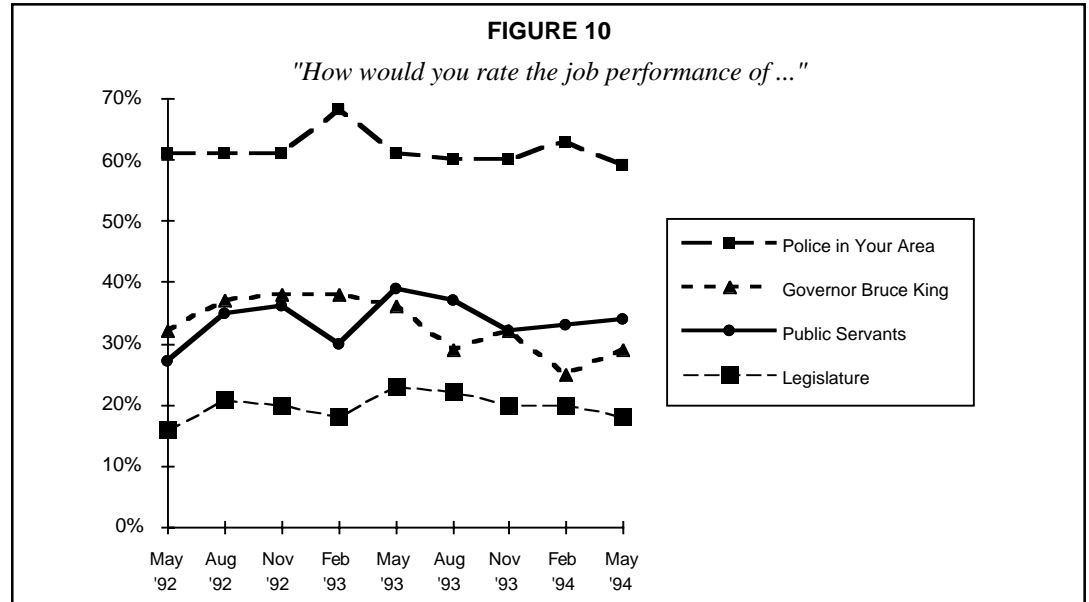


## TRENDS

## Citizen Approval Ratings\*

New Mexicans' approval rating of Governor Bruce King has improved slightly from 27% in February of 1994 to 29% in May of 1994. Figure 10 shows the ratings of the other state actors. There were no drastic changes in the approval ratings of public employees, however the approval ratings of the legislature and the "police in your area" both fell slightly.

\* Approval ratings are calculated as a percentage of those responding "excellent" or "good" by *all* respondents, regardless of whether they provided an answer to the question.



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