Critical Insights on Maine™ Tracking Survey

~ Fall 2014 ~

Residents’ Views on Politics, the Economy, & Issues Facing the State of Maine

October 2014
Introduction
Background & Methodology

• Each Spring and Fall, Critical Insights conducts the Critical Insights on Maine™ Tracking Survey, a comprehensive, statewide public opinion survey of registered voters which covers a variety of topics of interest to business, government, and the general public.

• Critical Insights on Maine™ has been documenting the attitudes, perceptions, and preferences of Maine’s residents for over 18 years, making it the longest running, consistently administered Tracking Survey in the Northeast.
  – In addition to general interest items (the results of which are released to the media as a public service) the survey also includes a number of proprietary items included in the poll on behalf of sponsoring entities, with results of those items released only to those sponsors.

• For the current wave of the study, Critical Insights completed a total of 606 telephone interviews (including cell phones) with randomly selected likely voters across the state between September 24th and September 30th, 2014.
  – With a sample of 606 interviews, results presented here have an associated sampling error of +/- 4 percentage points at the 95% confidence level.
  – All interviews were conducted with self-reported registered and likely voters; final data were statistically weighted according to relevant demographics to reflect the voter base in Maine.
  – The reported sample size on some items may be less than 606 due to respondent refusal on selected items.
  – On average, the entire survey instrument – including both general interest items and all proprietary subscriber items – was 20 minutes in administrative length.

• This document presents findings from general interest items included in the current round of measurement, with comparisons made — as appropriate — to results from past iterations of the Critical Insights on Maine™ Tracking Survey.
Research Highlights
The Economy
Economic concerns persist as the most pressing issues among Mainers, with the economy in general and unemployment worries, respectively, topping the list of perceived issues facing Maine.

Consistent with findings over the last year, roughly half of Maine voters are concerned with one of these economic-focused issues.

In your opinion, what is the most important issue facing Maine today? *

* Top trended responses shown.
Job loss has nearly doubled since last Spring to emerge as the leading near-term financial concern for Mainers, the highest it has been since the Fall 2011 measurement. Remaining responses are highly fragmented, suggesting that a fairly diverse set of financial worries are also weighing on the minds of Mainers.

*As you think about the next 6 months what economic or financial situations concern you the MOST?*

*Top tracked responses shown. Multiple responses accepted.*
In a significant uptick from Spring 2014, one-third of Maine voters now feel the economy will improve over the coming year.

In results nearly identical to six months ago, fully half of voters believe things will remain roughly the same into 2015; given the number of residents currently citing economic concerns, the notion of steadiness in the state of the economy is a troubling finding.

*Now think about the future of the economy. In the next 12 months, do you think the economy will be . . .*
National Politics
With figures that have continued to trend a bit below national averages, President Obama has remained below majority favorability among Maine voters over the last three iterations of Critical Insights on Maine™.

Perspectives on the President continue to be sharply divided along party lines.

Do you have a favorable or unfavorable opinion of President Barack Obama?

Support for the President continues to be strongest among residents of Southern Maine (50%) and the 1st District (49%), more well-educated Mainers (59%), and self-reported Democrats (74%).

Disapproval tends to be highest among men (52%), residents of Northern Maine (55%), those in the 2nd District (52%), and self-reported Republicans (81%).

**** Source: Daily Kos poll, May 18-21, 2009
*** Source: Daily Kos poll, Oct. 19-22, 2009
** Source: Daily Kos poll, May 3-6, 2010
* Source: Daily Kos poll, April 28-May 1, 2011
^ Source: ABC-GfK poll, Oct. 13-17, 2011
^^ Source: Gallup Poll, April 11-14, 2013
^^^^ Source: Gallup Poll, Sept. 15-16, 2013
### Source: Gallup Poll, Feb. 6-9, 2014
Unlike last Spring when a large bloc of respondents expressed mixed views about the direction of the nation, Mainers are currently more certain about their opinions. In results consistent with Fall 2013, only one-quarter of Mainers claim to have a positive sense of where the country is headed, while a majority see things headed in the wrong direction.

*All in all, do you think things in the nation are generally headed in the right direction, or do you feel that things are off on the wrong track?*

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Optimism about the country’s direction is most acute among more highly-educated (31%) and wealthier (38%) Mainers, as well as self-reported Democrats (45%).

Among the 6-in-10 Mainers who are bullish on the country’s direction, feelings about heading in the wrong direction are strongest among less highly-educated (70%) Mainers and Republican voters (83%).
Among the majority who feel the country is on the wrong track, results are fragmented. Reasons cited focus on what is seen as government dysfunction, a poor economy, and opposition to the President’s policies, including foreign policy.

All in all, do you think things in the nation are generally headed in the right direction, or do you feel that things are off on the wrong track?

Why do you say that? *

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reason</th>
<th>(n=360)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dysfunction in Congress/Leadership/Government</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bad economy/No jobs</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Obama’s leadership/ideas are the problem</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall/In general things are going downhill</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foreign policy/We help other countries, not our own</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Top responses shown. Multiple responses accepted.
Among the 26% of Maine voters who feel the country is headed in the *right direction*, reasons cited are centered on a belief that the economy is improving and that the President is providing good leadership.

*All in all, do you think things in the nation are generally headed in the right direction, or do you feel that things are off on the wrong track?*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Why do you say that? *</th>
<th>(n=160)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Right Direction</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economy improving/Unemployment down</td>
<td>29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall/In general things are improving</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>President Obama making good decisions/providing good leadership</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Believe in our country/Democracy/Optimism</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Top responses shown. Multiple responses accepted.*
Maine Politics
Doubling from six months ago to results consistent with the Fall 2013 iteration of *Critical Insights on Maine™*, more than one-third of Mainers currently have a positive sense of where Maine is headed, but 42% do not (+8 percentage points since Spring 2014).

*All in all, do you think things in Maine are generally headed in the right direction, or do you feel that things are off on the wrong track?*

![Bar chart showing changes in opinion from Spring 2009 to Fall 2014.](chart.png)

Views on the direction Maine is headed tend to split according to party lines, with 56% of Democrats claiming the state is off on the wrong track (vs. just 25% of Republicans who feel similarly) and 57% of Republicans believing Maine is headed in the right direction (vs. only 23% of Democrats).
However, among the 42% of voters who feel Maine is off on the *wrong track*, Gov. LePage and his policies play a contrasting role, with 4-in-10 blaming the governor for this sense that Maine is on a downward trajectory as a state.

*All in all, do you think things in Maine are generally headed in the right direction, or do you feel that things are off on the wrong track?*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Why do you say that? *</th>
<th>(n=255)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bad Governor/Disapprove of Governor</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No jobs/Job outlook bleak</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bad economy</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partisan politics/Little cooperation</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maine not business friendly</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Top responses shown. Multiple responses accepted.
For the 37% of Maine voters who feel the state is headed in the *right direction*, one-third attribute this belief to Gov. LePage and his policies.

*All in all, do you think things in Maine are generally headed in the right direction, or do you feel that things are off on the wrong track?*

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Right Direction</th>
<th>(n=223)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Good Governor/Governor doing good job</td>
<td>34%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General optimism</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gradual improvement in economy</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Welfare reform</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Top responses shown. Multiple responses accepted.*
Governor LePage’s job performance is currently at a 45% approval rating (+6 percentage points since Spring 2014), the highest it has been over the past two years.

_Do you approve or disapprove of the way Governor LePage is handling his job as governor of Maine?_

Support for Gov. LePage continues to be strongest among men (52%), residents of Northern Maine (56%), those in the 2nd District (51%), and Republican voters (82%).

Disapproval tends to be most acute among Southern Mainers (57%), the 1st District (55%), and self-reported Democrats (76%).
In a slight change since one year ago, 58% of Mainers polled approve of the job Angus King is doing as U.S. Senator (-5 percentage points). One-fifth are still unsure.

*Do you approve or disapprove of the way Senator Angus King is handling his job as US Senator?*

Support for Senator King is strongest among those in the 45-64 age band (64%), the most highly educated (65%) and wealthiest (67%) Mainers, residents of Southern Maine (62%), those in the 1st District (62%), and self-reported Democrats (76%).
Approval for the way Susan Collins is handling her job as U.S. Senator is currently at 64% (-5 percentage points since Fall 2013), while 27% disapprove of her performance.

Do you approve or disapprove of the way Senator Susan Collins is handling her job as U.S. Senator?

Support for Senator Collins is highest among those in the 45-64 age band (69%), the wealthiest (69%) Mainers, residents of Northern Maine (74%), and Republican voters (75%).
The gubernatorial race has U.S. Rep. Mike Michaud polling in a statistical dead heat with incumbent Paul LePage, with each garnering close to 40% of the projected vote.

*If the election for the Maine Governor’s seat were held tomorrow, would you vote for...*

*Would you say you would **definitely** or **probably** be voting for...*

*Which candidate are you **leaning** toward?*
Demographically, LePage has an advantage over Michaud among men and the 18 to 64 age range; meanwhile, Michaud’s definite support is stronger among women and with the oldest (65+) portion of the electorate.

*If the election for the Maine Governor’s seat were held tomorrow, would you vote for...*

**ACCORDING TO CORE DEMOGRAPHICS: Definites (n=417)**
Among voters who have **definitely** decided on their preferred gubernatorial choice, Michaud and LePage are virtually tied in the 1<sup>st</sup> Congressional District, while LePage holds a dramatic 16 percentage point advantage over Michaud in the 2<sup>nd</sup> CD.

*If the election for the Maine Governor’s seat were held tomorrow, would you vote for…*

**ACCORDING TO CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT: Definites (n=417)**
Among Mainers who *definitely* know which candidate they will vote for, those who are more pessimistic about the broader economy have a much greater tendency to support LePage, who leads both Michaud and Cutler by a wide margin.

*If the election for the Maine Governor’s seat were held tomorrow, would you vote for…*

**According to perceptions of the economy as a whole: Definites (n=417)**

![Bar chart showing voting preferences by economic perception.](chart.png)
Democrat Chellie Pingree garners just over half of the projected vote to lead the 1st Congressional District race, followed by Republican Isaac Misiuk with 19% and Independent Richard Murphy with 10%.

In the 2nd District, Republican Bruce Poliquin has a slight advantage over Democrat Emily Cain (41% vs. 36%, respectively), while Independent Blaine Richardson trails with 6% of the projected vote.

*Now turning to the Congressional Races, if the election were held tomorrow, would you vote for...*
Voter Preferences
Stated Voter Political Affiliation

In what political party are you registered to vote?

- Democrat: 36%
- Republican: 30%
- Unenrolled/Other: 27%
- DK/Ref.: 7%
Stated Voter Plans for November 4th

Do you think you’ll vote in person at your polling place on Election Day, or vote before Election Day by early voting or mail-in/absentee ballot?

- Vote in person: 82%
- Early voting/absentee: 15%
- Don’t know/Refused: 3%
Other Issues
More than 6-in-10 Mainers claim to be at least somewhat satisfied with the quality of education K-12 students are receiving today in Maine, while about one-third are dissatisfied.

Overall, how satisfied are you with the quality of education students receive in kindergarten through grade 12 in Maine today? Would you say...

Overall satisfaction tends to be greatest in Southern Maine (69%) and among the wealthiest Mainers (70%).

Dissatisfaction is most prevalent among women (36%), lower-income Mainers (41%), and Coastal/Downeast Maine residents (39%).
Fully 7-in-10 residents disagree with the idea that all of Maine’s telephone users should pay a fee to subsidize local telephone companies.

*Please tell me whether you agree or disagree with the following statement:*

All of Maine’s telephone users – including those who only use a cell phone – should pay a fee on their monthly phone bill to subsidize local telephone companies that provide affordable, basic landline service to residents of Maine.

![Pie chart showing agreement and disagreement](chart.png)

Even respondents more likely to agree to the fee – those in the 45 to 64 age band and higher-income households – still overwhelming oppose the fee by more than a 2:1 margin.
Sample Profile
Socio-Demographic Profile

Gender
- Male: 47%
- Female: 53%

Age
- 18-24: 14%
- 25-34: 28%
- 35-44: 17%
- 45-54: 24%
- 55-64: 17%
- 65+: 18%

Education
- HS or less: 20%
- Some college: 20%
- College grad: 36%
- Grad school: 20%

Percent
Residential Profile

- 61% with no children
- 15% with one child
- 16% with two children
- 6% with three or more children
- 18% household income < $35K
- 11% household income $35K to < $50K
- 21% household income $50K to < $75K
- 38% household income $75K+