

The Lebanon New Hampshire
School District
Bond Issue Survey

June 2008

Conducted by



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Executive Summary

The Lebanon School District commissioned the Center for Survey Research and Analysis (CSRA) at the University of Connecticut to conduct a survey of likely voters to assess their opinions about a bond issue for funding new school buildings in the district. The study, conducted in May and June 2008, finished with a total of 402 interviews. This section summarizes the key findings of the survey.

Key Findings

Just less than half (44%) of likely voters reported voting against the bond proposal in the 2008 referendum, which is consistent with the actual vote. Older voters (ages 50+) were more likely to vote against the bond proposal, whereas younger voters (ages 18 to 49) voted for the proposal nearly two-to-one. In addition, voters reporting annual household income below \$50,000 a year voted overwhelmingly against the bond proposal.

By far the most important issues for voters opposing the proposal were financial concerns. When asked the most important reason for voting against the proposal, half either indicated the cost or the increase in taxes (29% and 21%, respectively) while another 22% mentioned that the plan did not include elementary schools.

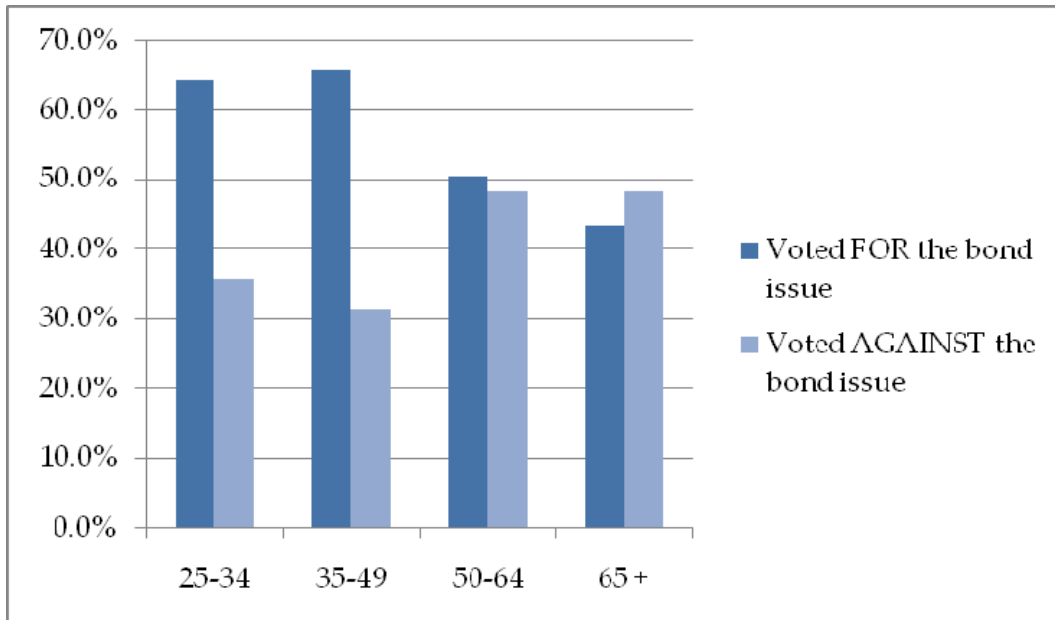
When asked about potential relocation plans for the school district, residents were less enthusiastic about the current location of the elementary school near the high school (46% favor, 41% oppose) than they were about relocating the junior high school to that site (62% favor, 23% oppose).

Support for and against future construction plans is relatively consistent with at least half supporting each of the proposed plans; 57% support building a new consolidated elementary school at the current junior high school site, 52% support a plan to build a new junior high school on the current site, and 52% support building a new junior high school and consolidated elementary school.

The Previous Junior High Bond Proposal

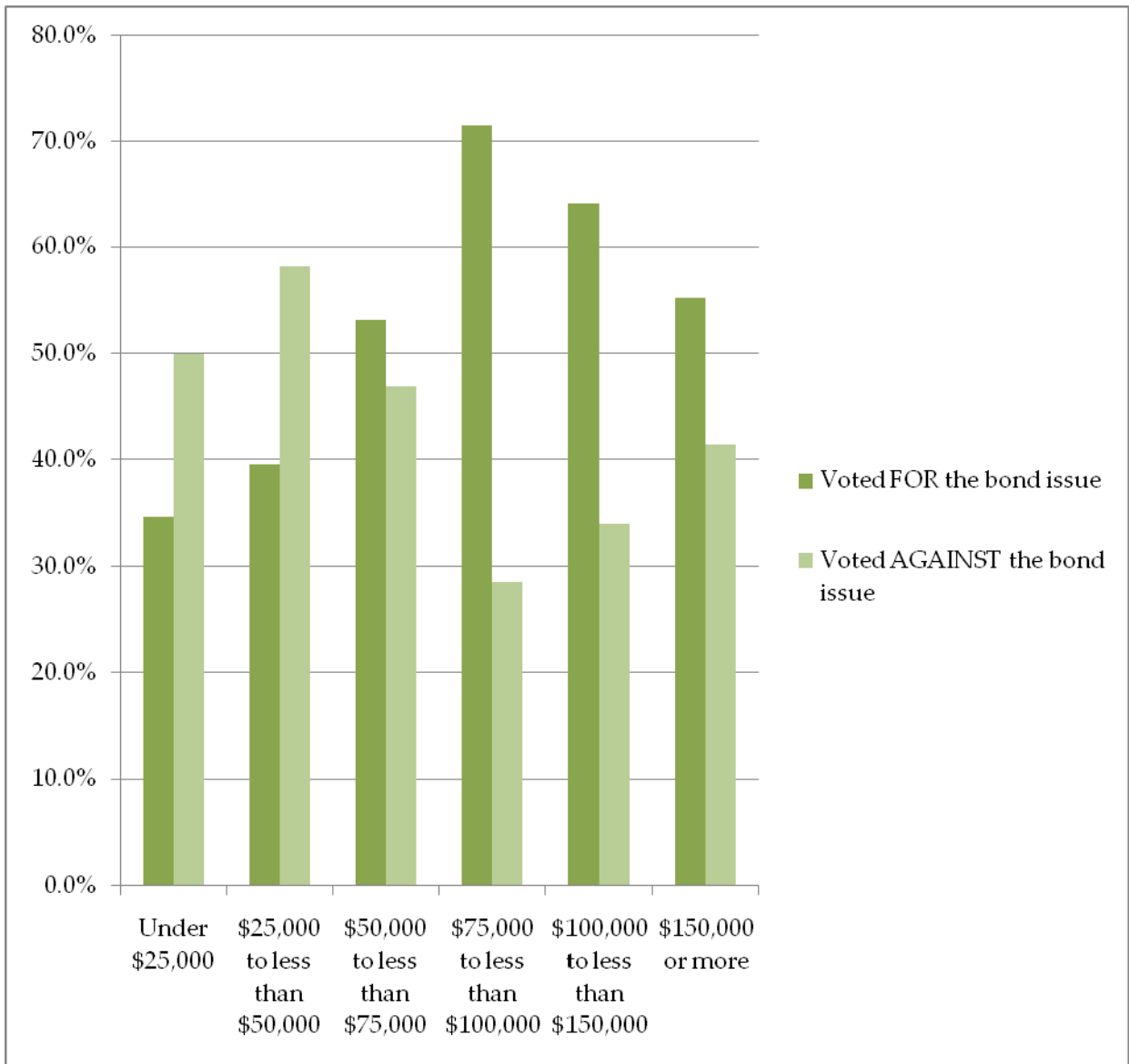
About half (52%) the residents who report voting in the last election indicate that they voted for the proposal. Younger voters were much more likely to vote for the proposal, as were voters of moderate to high incomes. Older voters, however, were much less likely to support the measure, as were voters with lower incomes.

Voters between the ages of 25 to 49 overwhelmingly supported the previous school bond proposal. About two-thirds of voters in the 25-34 and 35-49 age groups reported voting for the measure. (64% and 66%, respectively). The proposal had much less support among voters ages 50 and above. Only half of likely voters ages 50 to 64 voted for the measure, and only 43% of those ages 65 and up reported voting in favor of the proposal. Older voters may be less likely to have children in the schools, and therefore be less likely to feel that new school facilities are necessary. In addition, retired seniors often lived on smaller, fixed incomes, and may be resistant to increasing tax burdens.



Liberals and Democrats were more likely than conservatives and Republicans to vote for the proposal. Fifty-nine percent of Democrats and 60% of self-described liberals voted for the measure, contrasted with 42% of Republicans and 41% of conservatives. Moderates and independents fell in the middle, with 54% and 53% support, respectively.

Predictably, support for the bond measure was lowest among those in the lowest income brackets: 38% of those reporting income below \$50,000 voted for the proposal, and 53% of those making between \$50,000 and \$75,000 voted for the measure. Support was highest (71%) among those making between \$75,000 and \$100,000. Sixty-one percent of those making more than \$100,000 voted for the proposal. Decreased support among low-income voters could reflect increasing anxiety over tax increases rather than opposition to the plan.



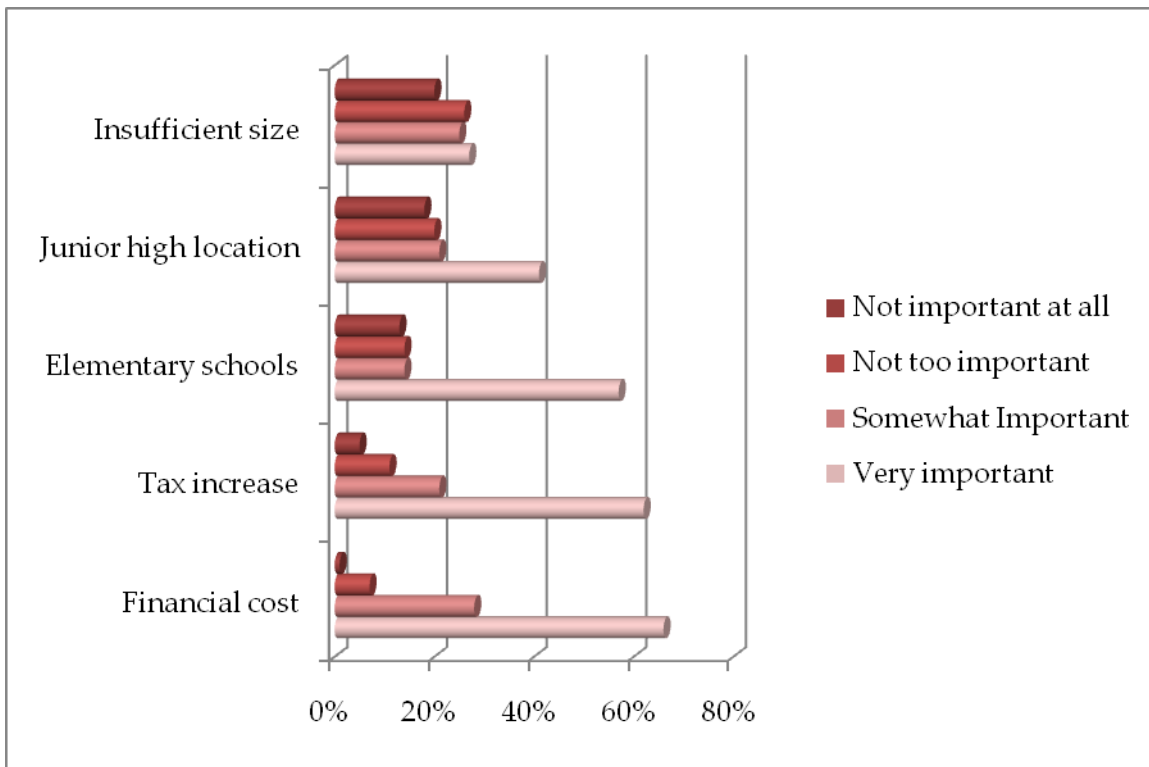
Objections to the Previous Proposal

Most opponents of the bond proposal objected to the cost of the project and the resulting tax increase. Respondents also strongly agreed that the plan should have included consolidation of the elementary schools.

The financial issues associated with the project are the most important, according to voters. When asked which component was the most important reason for opposing it, half stated that their reasons were monetary: three in ten (29%) cited the cost as the primary reason for voting against the measure, and another 21% mentioned the tax increase. When asked the importance of the cost of the project in their decision to vote against the measure, two-thirds (66%) rated the cost as “very important,” and 62% felt the same about the tax increase.

Other issues, separate from the finances of the project, include the lack of consideration of elementary schools. Nearly six in ten (57%) rated this issue as “very important,” while 22% rated this as the most important reason to vote against the bond. Only 41% rated the location of the new junior high school as very important, compared to only 27% rating the insufficient size of the proposed location as very important.

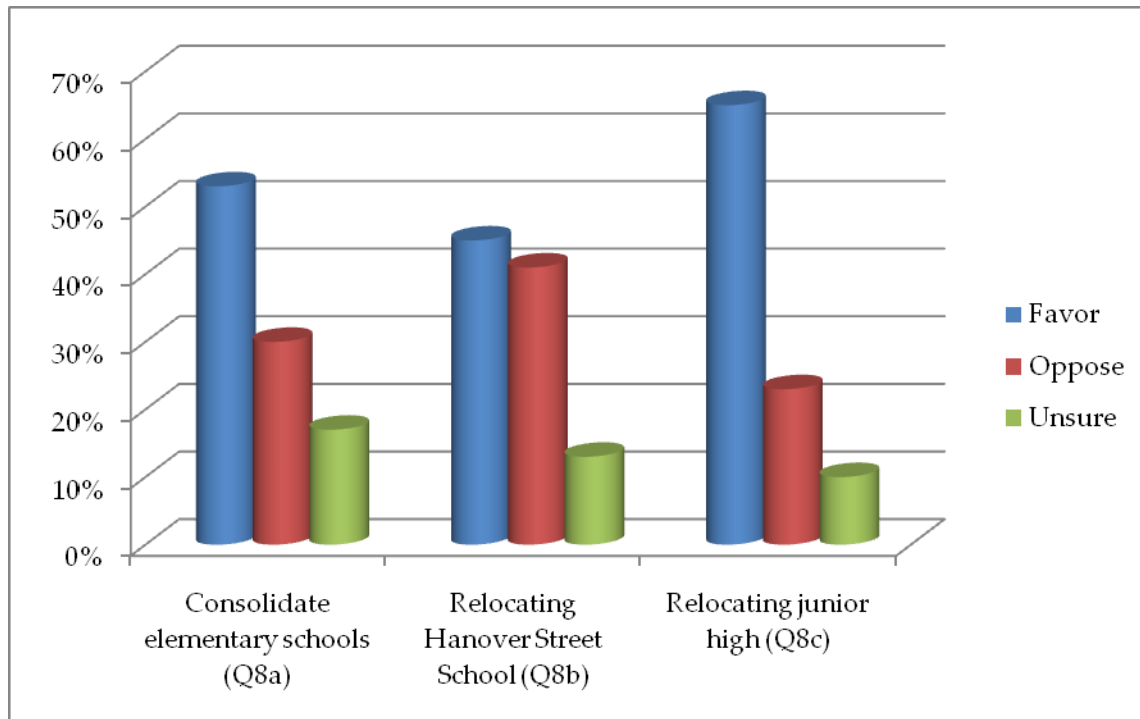
For each of the following reasons please tell me if the following factors were very, somewhat, not too, or not important at all to your decision to vote against the bond proposal.



Future Proposals

Respondents are more likely to support consolidating the elementary school and relocating the junior high near the high schools, but are more ambivalent about the current location of the elementary schools near the high school. Slim majorities indicate that they would be open to future, more comprehensive bond proposals.

When asked about possible future bond proposals and school constructions plans, 53% of voters indicate that they would be likely to support a measure consolidating elementary schools; a further 17% are unsure. Voters are less receptive, however, to the idea of having Hanover Street School next to the high school (45% favor, 41% oppose, 13% unsure), as it currently is. But when asked about relocating the junior high school next to the high school, nearly two-thirds (65%) said they would be likely to favor the proposal.



When asked if they would approve of more specific bond proposals for the next election, voters are once again most receptive to consolidating the elementary schools and moving the junior high school to the current Hanover Street School site, with nearly six in ten (58%) stating that they would be likely to support a proposal, and only 34% unlikely to support it. A plan centered around building a new junior high school and addressing the elementary school at a later date gathered less support (52% likely). About half (52%) of voters are likely to support a two-part plan that calls for building both a new junior high school and consolidated elementary school.

When asked which proposal they were most likely to support, 31% favor the elementary school plan in which a new junior high school and consolidated elementary school would be built, compared to 29% for just the junior high, and 22% for the two-part plan with two new schools.

Methodology

The Lebanon School District commissioned the Center for Survey Research and Analysis (CSRA) at the University of Connecticut to conduct a telephone survey of likely voters in Lebanon, NH to assess their opinions about a past referendum concerning school bond issues. The 26-item questionnaire was jointly developed by the Lebanon School District team and CSRA. Findings are based on a total of 402 completed interviews. The interviews were conducted between May 8 and June 2, 2008 by trained CSRA telephone interviewers.

This survey has a margin of error at the 95% confidence level of +/- 4.7 percentage points with a finite population. This means there is less than a one in twenty chance that the results of a similar survey of this size would differ by more than 4.7 percentage points in either direction from the results that would be obtained if all voters were interviewed. Error for sub-groups could be larger.

Appendix A: Annotated Questionnaire

Hello, my name is \$I and I'm calling from the University of Connecticut. We are conducting a survey about an important issue about the schools in Lebanon and this will only take five minutes of your time. May I please speak with the person in this household who has the MOST RECENT BIRTHDAY who is 18 years of age or older and is at home right now?

1) Just to confirm you are a resident of Lebanon or West Lebanon New Hampshire?

Yes (Lebanon) → CONTINUE	78%
Yes (West Lebanon) → CONTINUE	22%
No → TERM	--
Don't know	--
Refused	--
Count	402

2) Are you currently registered to vote where you live?

Yes → CONTINUE	100%
No → TERM	--
Plan to register (vol.) → TERM	--
Count	402

3) Did you vote in this past March's school and municipal election?

Yes → CONTINUE	75%
No → CONTINUE	25%
Don't know	--
Refused	--
Count	402

4) How likely is it that you will vote in the school and municipal election in March of 2009? Would you say you definitely will vote, probably will vote, probably won't vote or definitely won't vote in the March 2009 school and municipal election?

Definitely will → CONTINUE	68%
Probably will → CONTINUE	32%
Probably won't → TERM	--
Definitely won't → TERM	--
Don't know	--
Refused	--
Count	402

Ask IQ5 to those that said yes to Q3. If no, skip to IQ8.

IQ5) As you know, there was a bond proposal on the ballot of last March's school and municipal election. This bond was for funding the construction of a new junior high school on the site of the current junior high school.

5) Did you vote for or against the new junior high school bond proposal?

Voted FOR the bond proposal → IQ8	52%
Voted AGAINST the bond proposal → IQ6	44%
Don't know	2%
Refused	1%
Count	303

IQ6) We are interested in knowing what specifically caused you to vote against the new junior high school bond proposal. For each of the following reasons please tell me if the following factors were very important, somewhat important, not too important, or not important at all to your decision to vote against the bond proposal. RANDOMIZE 6a-6e

6a) The projected overall financial cost of the project.

Very important	66%
Somewhat important	26%
Not too important	7%
Not important at all	1%
Don't know	--
Refused	1%
Count	133

6b) The projected increase to your tax bill.

Very important	62%
Somewhat important	21%
Not too important	11%
Not important at all	5%
Don't know	1%
Refused	--
Count	133

6c) The proposed plan did not include the elementary schools.

Very important	57%
Somewhat important	14%
Not too important	14%
Not important at all	13%
Don't know	1%
Refused	2%
Count	133

6d) The proposed location of the new junior high school.

Very important	41%
Somewhat important	21%
Not too important	20%
Not important at all	18%
Don't know	1%
Refused	--
Count	133

6e) Insufficient size of proposed location.

Very important	27%
Somewhat important	25%
Not too important	26%
Not important at all	20%
Don't know	2%
Refused	1%
Count	133

6f) Is there any other reason that we have not discussed that was important for you to vote against the new junior high school bond proposal? IF YES, "What?"

Prefers alternative project	29%
Too expensive	20%
Disapproves of construction plans	17%
Project unnecessary	16%
Other	19%
Count	70

7) Of all the reasons we have discussed, what would you say was the most important reason for you to vote against the new junior high school bond proposal? (READ LIST IF NEEDED)

The cost	29%
Did not include elementary schools	22%
Increase in taxes	21%
Location of new junior high	8%
Insufficient size	4%
Other (specify)	14%
Don't know	2%
Refused	1%
Count	133

IQ8) Please tell me if you favor or oppose the following items.

8a) Do you favor or oppose closing and consolidating the School Street and Sacred Heart Public elementary schools? PROBE Strongly/Somewhat favor/oppose?

Strongly favor	32%
Somewhat favor	21%
Somewhat oppose	16%
Strongly oppose	14%
Don't know	17%
Refused	1%
Count	402

8b) Do you favor or oppose having elementary students at Hanover Street School next to the high school? PROBE Strongly/Somewhat favor/oppose? (INTERVIEWER NOTE: The Hanover Street School is currently a grade 3-6 school attached to the High School off of Route 120.)

Strongly favor	16%
Somewhat favor	29%
Somewhat oppose	21%
Strongly oppose	20%
Don't know	13%
Refused	2%
Count	402

8c) Do you favor or oppose having the junior high students next to the high school?
 PROBE Strongly/Somewhat favor/oppose?

Strongly favor	33%
Somewhat favor	32%
Somewhat oppose	13%
Strongly oppose	10%
Don't know	10%
Refused	2%
Count	402

IQ9) The Lebanon school district is developing a comprehensive plan to address facility needs. A bond proposal will be brought to next March's school and municipal election ballot. I am going to read you a couple of proposals and for each I would like you tell me if you would be very likely, somewhat likely, not too likely, or not likely at all to vote for the proposal. RANDOMIZE 9a-9c

9a) Build a new junior high school on the current junior high school site and address elementary school needs at a later date. PROBE: Would you be very likely, somewhat likely, not too likely, or not likely at all to vote for this proposal?

Very likely	25%
Somewhat likely	27%
Not too likely	15%
Not likely at all	30%
Don't know	2%
Refused	1%
Count	402

9b) Build a new elementary school that would consolidate the Sacred Heart, School Street, and Hanover Street schools on the site of the current junior high school and renovate the Hanover Street School for use for by the junior high school. PROBE: Would you be very likely, somewhat likely, not too likely, or not likely at all to vote for this proposal? (INTERVIEWER NOTE: The Hanover Street School is currently a grade 3-6 school attached to the High School off of Route 120.)

Very likely	25%
Somewhat likely	33%
Not too likely	17%
Not likely at all	17%
Don't know	6%
Refused	1%
Count	402

9c) A two-part plan involving, first, building a new junior high school on newly purchased land if available. Secondly, construct a new elementary school at the site of the current junior high school that would consolidate the Sacred Heart, School Street, and Hanover Street schools. PROBE: Would you be very likely, somewhat likely, not too likely, or not likely at all to vote for this proposal? (INTERVIEWER NOTE: School administrative offices and overflow programming from the high school would relocate to the Hanover Street School.)

Very likely	20%
Somewhat likely	32%
Not too likely	17%
Not likely at all	22%
Don't know	7%
Refused	1%
Count	402

10) Out of all the plans we discussed, what which one would you be most likely to support in next March's school and municipal election? (READ LIST IF NEEDED)

Build a new junior high school on the current junior high school site.	29%
Build a new elementary school that would consolidate the Sacred Heart, School Street, and Hanover Street schools on the site of the current junior high school and renovate the Hanover Street School for use for by the junior high school.	31%
A two part plan that would involve, first, constructing a new elementary school at the site of the current junior high school that would consolidate the Sacred Heart, School Street, and Hanover Street schools. Secondly, build a new junior high school on newly purchased land.	22%
None (vol.)	10%
Don't know	7%
Refused	1%
Count	402

IQD1) Just a few questions for classification purposes . . .

D1. Age of respondent

18 to 24	0%
25 to 34	7%
35 to 49	24%
50 to 64	43%
65 and up	24%
Don't know	1%
Refused	2%
Count	402

D2. What is the highest grade of school or year of college you have completed and gotten credit for?

Grade school or less	0%
Some high school	2%
High school graduate	17%
Some college	20%
College graduate	33%
Post graduate	27%
Don't know	0%
Refused	0%
Count	402

D3. How would you describe your political views - liberal, moderate or conservative?

Liberal	29%
Moderate	45%
Conservative	22%
Don't know	2%
Refused	2%
Count	402

D4. Are you of Hispanic origin?

Yes	2%
No	92%
Don't know	0%
Refused	6%
Count	402

D5. What racial group would you most identify with? African American, Asian, Native American, white, or some other group?

White	88%
Native American	1%
Asian	0%
Bi/Multi-racial (Vol.)	0%
African American	--
Other (SPECIFY)	0%
Don't know	1%
Refused	8%
Count	402

D6. For classification purposes only, what is the total yearly income of all the members of your family now living at home?

Under \$25,000	8%
\$25,000 to less than \$50,000	15%
\$50,000 to less than \$75,000	21%
\$75,000 to less than \$100,000	13%
\$100,000 to less than \$150,000	15%
\$150,000 or more	8%
Don't know	2%
Refused	15%
Count	402

D7. Generally speaking, do you usually think of yourself as a Republican, a Democrat, an independent, or what?

Republican	20%
Democrat	40%
Independent	36%
Something else (SPECIFY)	1%
Don't know	1%
Refused	2%
Count	402

D8. Gender of respondent

Male	35%
Female	65%
Count	402