

The 2002 Report on the
ILLINOIS
Policy Survey



Center for Governmental Studies
Northern Illinois University

**THE 2002 REPORT ON THE
ILLINOIS POLICY SURVEY**

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INTRODUCTION

Now in its eighteenth year, the *Illinois Policy Survey* is a continuing program of the Center for Governmental Studies at Northern Illinois University. It is designed to provide residents and state leaders with systematic and representative information on public attitudes, values and expectations with respect to the performance of elected officials and policy issues facing Illinois.

The *Illinois Policy Survey* is usually conducted in the Fall of every year. With the understanding that people were preoccupied in the Fall of 2001 with the events of September 11th, the Center delayed the field period of the most recent survey. In one section of the survey, respondents told us about their reactions following the terrorist attacks, and considered policy questions raised during a time when our security is threatened.

The sampling frame for this survey is all telephone residences in Illinois. A disproportionate sampling strategy is used to achieve an approximately equal number of respondents in each of six geographical areas of Illinois. One thousand two hundred nine men and women 18 years of age or older were interviewed by telephone in December 2001 through February 2002. Since surveys question only a small proportion of the population, estimates based on survey data have a confidence interval based on the sample size. The 95% confidence interval for a sample of 1209 individuals is plus or minus 2.9. This means there is a 95 percent likelihood the population percentage will fall within 2.9 percentage points of the sample percentage. The confidence interval for subgroups will be wider, and will vary with the size of the subgroup. Surveys of this kind may be subject to sources of error besides sampling error. For example, survey results may be influenced by events taking place while the survey is in the field, by question wording or question order. In addition, people who were willing to participate may not reflect the views of individuals who were not at home or declined to be interviewed.

The *Illinois Policy Survey* has been conducted annually since 1984. Core questions asked every year are supplemented by questions of topical interest. The survey is open for researchers, media, public agencies, and public interest groups to sponsor questions on the survey. Further information regarding this study is available by writing the Center for Governmental Studies, Northern Illinois University, DeKalb, IL 60115, or by phoning 815 753-1918. This report can also be found on the World Wide Web. Visit us at <http://www.cgsniu.org>.

MOST IMPORTANT PROBLEM

Concern about Jobs and the Economy

Unemployment matches education at the top of the list of concerns for Illinois residents this year. Although education has headed the list for the past several years, this year an equal number of respondents, one in five, spoke of their concern about jobs in Illinois. **Figure 1** shows the percentage of respondents citing education, crime, taxes and state spending, and unemployment as the most important problem since 1990. These four topics are generally the top four responses to the first, open-ended question on the survey. Issues mentioned by at least five percent of the respondents in the most recent survey are shown in **Table 1**. Two additions this year to the perennial issues are the economy and the government. The economy was cited by some without specific reference to unemployment. One in ten respondents mentioned government, politics or corruption as the number one problem facing the state. This response has been stable at 10 percent over the past three survey years.

The extent to which economic concerns have come to the forefront in the past year can be seen in **Figure 2**. Throughout the survey's history, concerns about taxes and state spending have been collapsed into one category for presentation, as they are in the first figure and table. Generally people in this group mentioned high taxes as the most important problem; those mentioning the state budget refer to the level of expenditures. As seen in **Figure 2**, respondents were more likely to mention the state budget, and less likely to complain about high taxes than in previous years. Also, concerns elicited by the budget deficit in the most recent survey appear to have more dimensions than previous complaints about state spending. Although many attributed the budget deficit to overspending, at least some of the respondents spoke of the economic downturn or decreased revenues as factors contributing to the current budget problems. The deficit has implications not only for taxes, but for a variety of public efforts. People whose primary concern was education, health care, poverty or the condition of roads would sometimes follow up with a statement indicating they were worried about funding for the program area. Collectively, about one in twenty respondents expressed concern about inadequate funding for their predominant issue of concern; this is about the same percentage who cited high taxes as the number one problem.

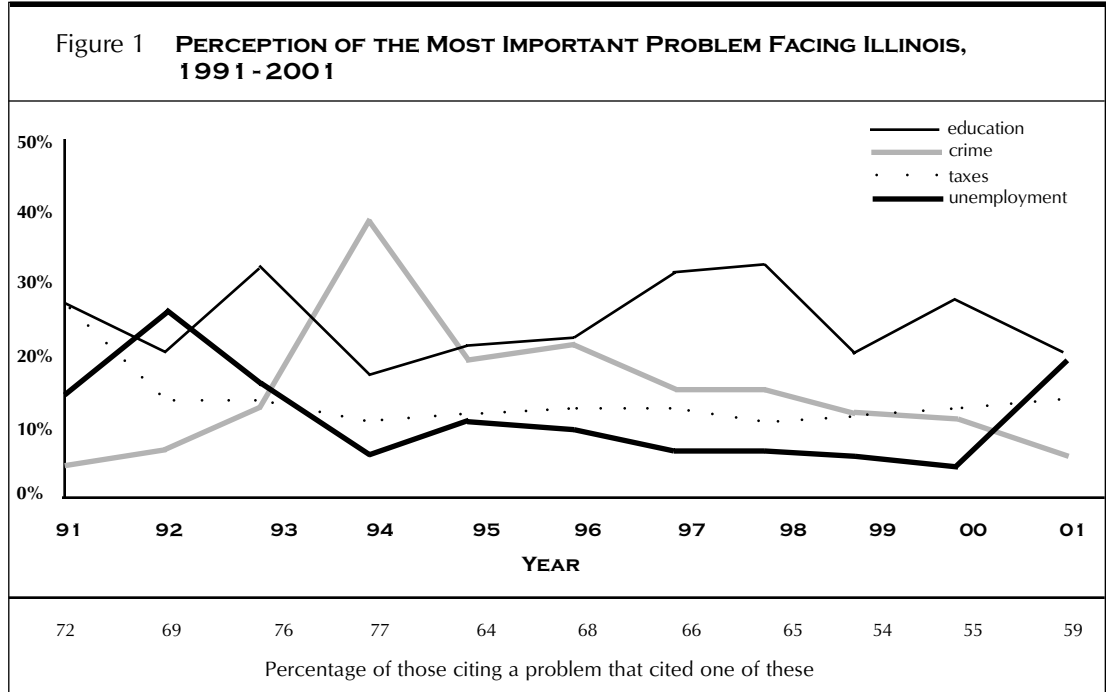
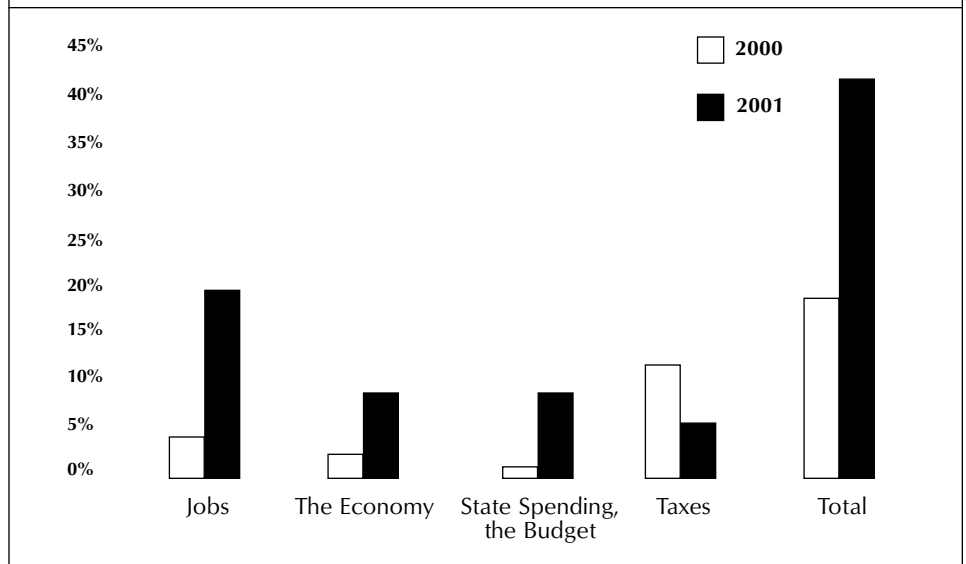


Table 1 THE TOP ISSUES THIS YEAR

Education	20.9%
Jobs, Unemployment	20.3
Taxes, State spending	12.8
Government	10.9
Economy	7.5
Crime, Gangs	5.2
Other	9.9
Don't Know	12.5

Figure 2 ECONOMIC CONCERNS AS THE MOST IMPORTANT PROBLEM IN 2000 AND 2001



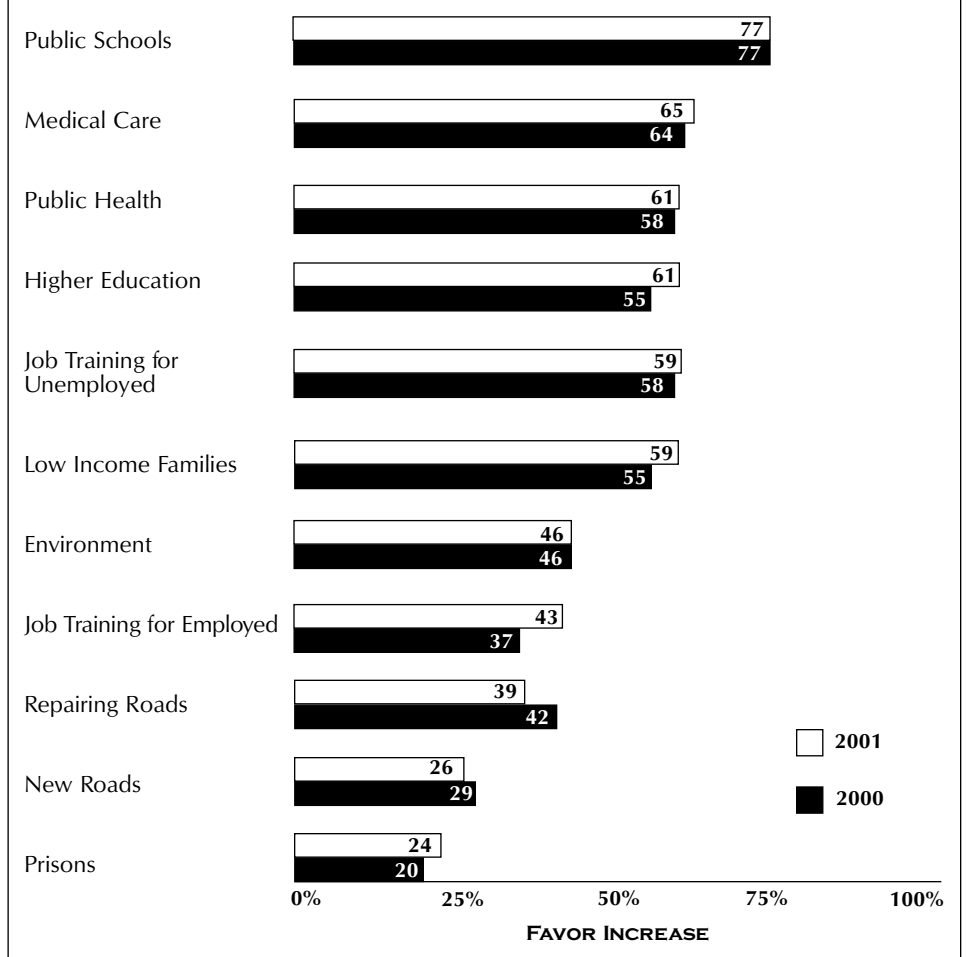
PRIORITIES FOR STATE SPENDING

Support for Public Education Remains High

Each year, the *Illinois Policy Survey* asks residents of Illinois whether state spending for selected programs and activities should be increased, decreased, or remain the same. Public education has consistently been the top priority for increased spending. Generally about three-fourths of respondents say state spending for education through 12th grade should be increased, and this year's report is no exception. As seen in **Figure 3**, other program areas receiving majority support for increased spending are medical care, higher education, public health, job training for the unemployed, and support for lower income families.

Figure 3 SUPPORT FOR INCREASES IN STATE SPENDING: 2001 COMPARED TO 2000

I'd like to ask you some questions about spending by the state government in Springfield. Please bear in mind that eventually all government spending comes out of the taxes that you and other Illinois residents pay. As I mention each program area, tell me whether you think the amount now being spent should be increased, kept at the present level, or decreased.



HOW THINGS ARE GOING IN ILLINOIS

Concern about Financial Conditions

Although the percentage of respondents who are satisfied with the way things are going in Illinois has remained stable over the past year, the percentage who are not satisfied has increased. **Figure 4** shows two lines, the percentage of respondents reporting satisfaction and the percentage reporting dissatisfaction from 1992 through 2001. The declining middle of the chart represent those who stated they were neither satisfied nor dissatisfied. Despite the changes, Illinois residents remain satisfied by a margin of 3 to 1. This compares very favorably with the past and is tied to economic conditions.

Table 2 shows the majority of respondents think the people of Illinois are worse off financially than they were a year ago. Prior to the most recent survey there was a 10 year trend of increasingly positive perceptions about financial conditions in Illinois. Respondents are more positive about their personal financial condition, although nearly one in four reported being worse off financially than they were a year ago. Most of those reporting being worse off this year than last said their financial situation had worsened since September 11th.

Over nine in ten respondents consider unemployment to be a problem in Illinois. Although they are somewhat more likely to evaluate their own community in positive terms, 87 percent said unemployment was a problem, or an important problem in their own community as seen in **Table 3**.

Figure 4 SATISFACTION WITH THE WAY THINGS ARE GOING IN ILLINOIS: 1992–2001
In general, how satisfied are you with the way things are going in Illinois?

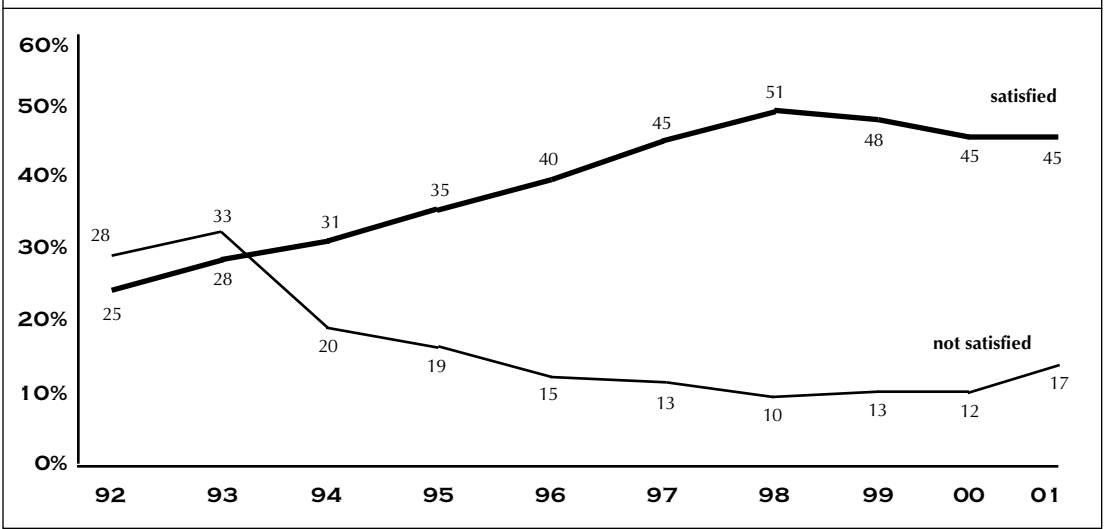


Table 2 CHANGE IN FINANCIAL CONDITIONS IN THE PAST YEAR

Would you say at the present time the people of Illinois are better off financially, just about the same, or worse off than they were last year?
...how about you and your family compared to last year?

	Better	Same	Worse	Don't Know
Financial Conditions of Illinois Residents	3.2	39.5	53.9	3.4
Personal Financial Condition	15.3	61.2	23.4	0.1

Table 3 CONCERN ABOUT UNEMPLOYMENT

Would you say unemployment is not a problem, a problem, or an important problem in your community?
...in Illinois?

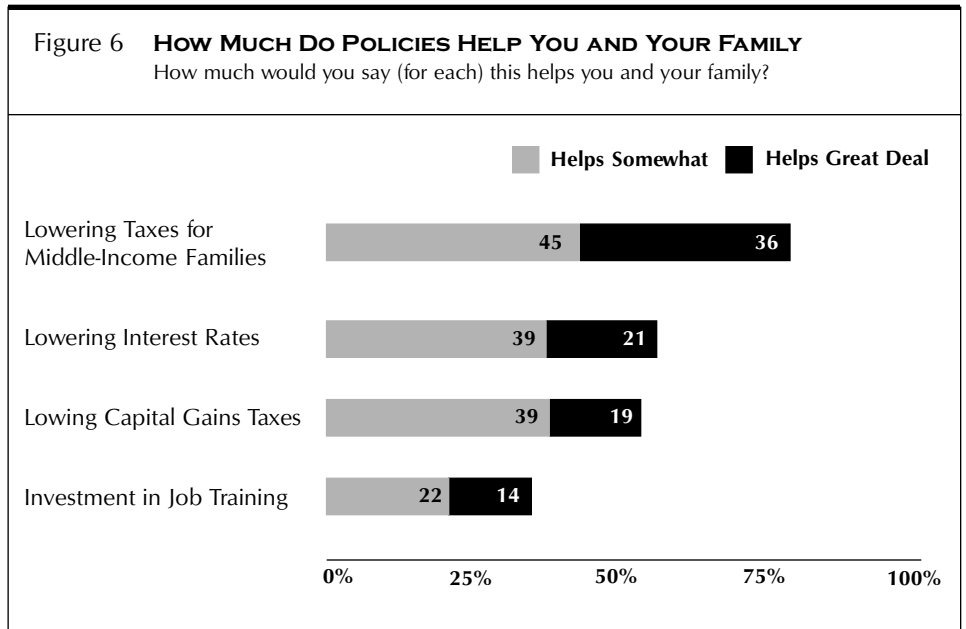
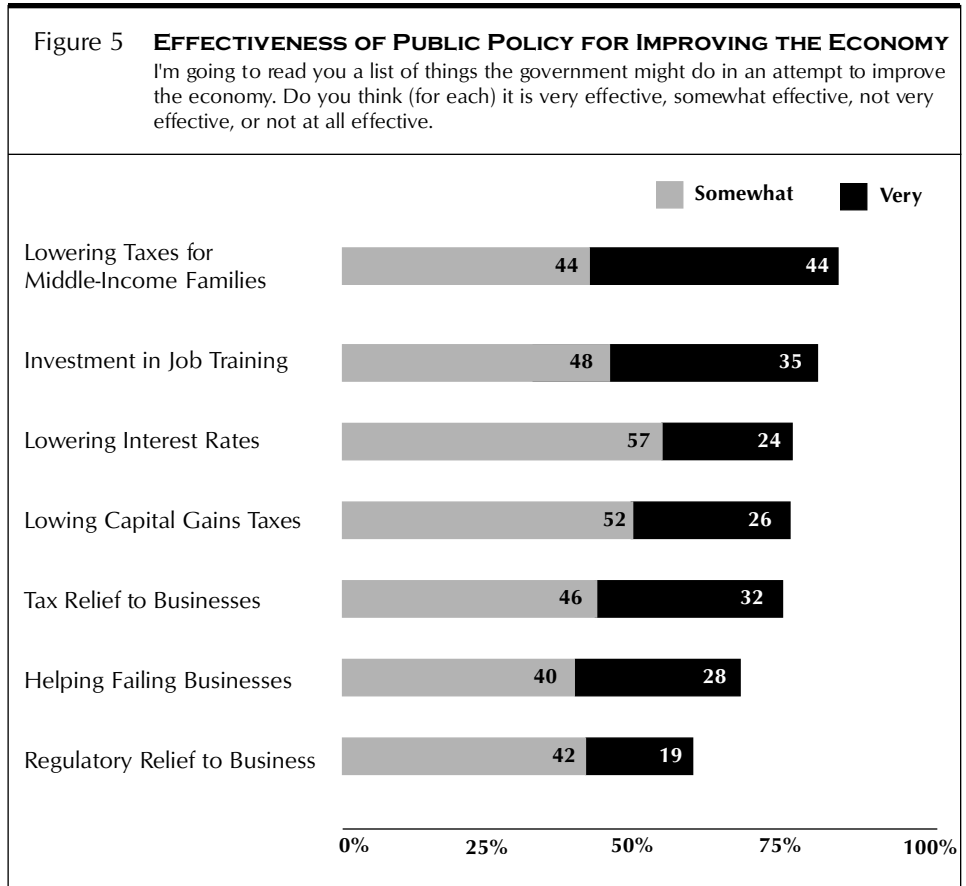
	Not a Problem	A Problem	Important Problem	Don't Know
In Illinois	4	34.5	59.6	1.9
In Community	12.1	33.2	53.9	0.8

ABOUT THE ECONOMY

People Are Optimistic About Government Efforts to Improve the Economy

After 10 years of growth, the United States economy slowed down in 2001. The news about rising unemployment and falling incomes caused anxiety for many and was brought home for some who were laid off or lost their job. Congress approved The Economic Growth and Tax Relief Act of 2001 in May; most taxpayers received their first tax credit in the form of a check sent in the Summer or Fall. The attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon on September 11th resulted in shock and uncertainty. Economic activity in major sections of the economy was virtually halted for a few weeks; travelers canceled plans and businesses laid off thousands of employees. In November, The National Bureau of Economic Research announced that a recession had begun in March. By the end of the year, the Federal Reserve had cut interest rates 11 times and Congress was debating a new economic stimulus package.

Over one in three respondents to the survey said they were concerned about the possibility they would lose their job, or someone in their family would lose their job in the next few months. The field period for the *Illinois Policy Survey* started in late December of 2001 and extended through the end of February 2002. During this time period there were preliminary reports suggesting modest growth in the final quarter of 2001, and indications that job loss was on the decrease. President Bush and the Congress were continuing to debate various proposals to strengthen the economy. Respondents were optimistic about the effectiveness of public policy aimed at improving the economy. **Figure 5** shows the majority of respondents rated each of seven policies as effective. Lowering taxes for middle-income people is the most likely to be considered effective; it is also the most likely to be considered helpful to respondents and their families as seen in **Figure 6**. Government investment in job training was considered by over eight in ten respondents to be effective although less than four in ten considered it relevant to their own circumstances.



SEPTEMBER 11TH

Life Has Returned to Normal for Most People in Illinois

We experience certain events as profoundly significant and demarcate the time before the event and the time after. In the latter part of 2001, such an event occurred. At 8:45 a.m. Eastern Time on September 11th the first of two airplanes crashed into the World Trade Center. This was the beginning of an apparently coordinated terrorist attack on the United States. Many people turned on the news and saw the collapse of the two World Trade Center towers and the later attack on the Pentagon. Traditionally, the *Illinois Policy Survey* has focused on major policy concerns and issues of interest to the residents of Illinois. The magnitude of the September 11, 2001 events and the widespread effects on people's lives compelled us to ask about individual experiences related to the event. Respondents to this year's *Illinois Policy Survey* talked about how their lives had changed in the weeks following the attacks.

The majority of respondents said their normal routine was disrupted as a result of the attacks of September 11th as seen in **Table 4**. Slightly over 15 percent of respondents reported that they, or a family member, had been laid off or lost a job since September 11th. As seen in **Figure 7**, over one in five respondents canceled or postponed a trip. Over eight out of ten respondents stated they had done something to show their patriotism, which for most meant displaying a flag. Others reported contributing money, donating blood, or both. About one-third of the respondents reported difficulty with stress or emotions. Other changes people reported in their lives in the weeks after September 11th included watching the news more, spending more time with their families, and participating in community memorials and fund-raisers. By the time of the survey, six out of ten people who had cancelled or postponed a trip said they were just as likely as before September 11th to plan a trip. One in two who had changed their spending habits said their previous spending habits had resumed. Most of those saying their routine had been disrupted said things were back to normal (See **Table 5**). A few said their usual routine had not returned to normal, and one in twenty respondents did not believe things would return to normal. This provides an interesting backdrop for attitudes toward policy issues, especially in the context of a weak economy.

Table 4 REACTIONS TO SEPTEMBER 11TH ATTACKS

Would you say your normal routine was disrupted as a result of the attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon on September 11th? (If yes) Would that be somewhat or very disrupted?

Somewhat disrupted	35.0 %
Very disrupted	24.8
Not at all disrupted	40.1
Don't Know	0.1

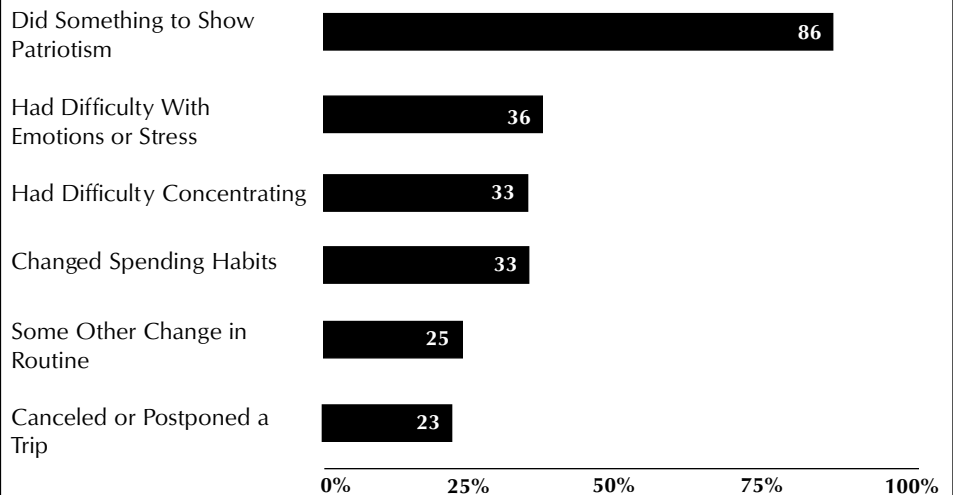
Table 5 RETURNING TO NORMAL

As of today, would you say your normal routine has returned fully to normal, is beginning to be normal, has not returned to normal, or won't return to normal?

Returned to normal	29.6 %
Is beginning to return	20.7
Has not returned to normal	3.9
Won't return to normal	5.0
(Normal Routine not disrupted)	40.1
Don't Know	0.7

Figure 7 REACTIONS TO SEPTEMBER 11TH

I'm going to read you a list of things people have done as a result of the September 11th attacks. Please tell me for each if you have done this.



RESPONDING TO THE THREAT OF TERRORISM

People Favor Heightened Security Measures

The majority of respondents to the survey rated the United States' capacity to respond to terrorism as excellent or good. **Table 6** shows respondents were less certain about our capacity in Illinois. The state's capacity to respond to the threat of terrorism has received attention in recent months. Information about the capabilities of state agencies, including the Illinois Emergency Management Association and the Illinois Department of Public Health has been publicized in the news and on their web pages. Governor Ryan's budget for the upcoming fiscal year has \$ 216.7 Million for the Illinois Emergency Management Association, which includes funds for the Illinois Terrorism Task Force. In a time of state budget constraint, this amount represents an increase of 16 percent, in contrast to the 8 percent increase in the previous year.

Terrorism presents a clear threat to people's safety in any society; the most apparent response to this threat is to increase security measures. Terrorism poses an additional threat to an open society, since the methods for increasing security can constrain individual liberties and overturn long-standing practices grounded in the values of the society. In the days after September 11th, Attorney-General Ashcroft issued a decree extending federal authority for wire-tapping as well as for detaining people without filing charges. Anti-terrorism legislation passed in October gave law enforcement agencies much wider latitude in conducting searches and monitoring electronic communication. In November President Bush signed an emergency order allowing non-citizens suspected of terrorism to be tried in military tribunals. Military trials can be held in secret and there is a less rigorous standard for determining guilt.

Respondents to the *Illinois Policy Survey* were generally supportive of measures to improve security. **Figure 8** shows near-consensus for one measure, tightening airport security. The majority also approved of other proposals, including increasing the power of law enforcement agencies to conduct electronic surveillance. A higher percentage approved of measures that target non-US citizens, including restricting visas and trying suspects in military courts. Civil rights proponents caution against unnecessary expansion of the authorities of law enforcement agencies; it is clear, however, that people will accept certain restrictions on individual rights, at least during a time of heightened security.

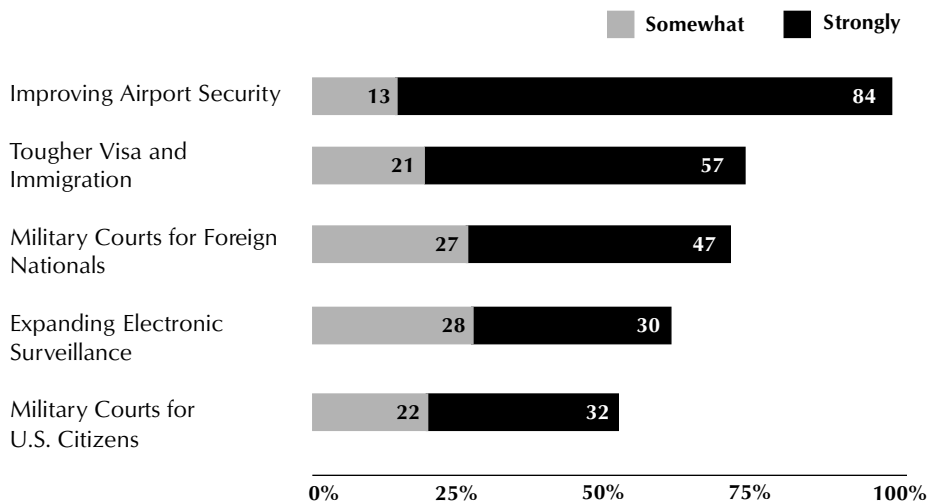
Table 6 OUR CAPACITY TO RESPOND TO THE THREAT OF TERRORISM
How would you rate the United States' current capacity to respond to a threat of a terrorist attack? ...the current capacity in Illinois?

	US	Illinois
Excellent	20.7 %	9.6 %
Good	43.5	39.2
Fair	22.6	26.1
Poor	9.3	12
Very Poor	2.4	3.1
Don't Know	1.4	10

Figure 8 APPROVAL OF PROPOSALS TO INCREASE SAFETY AND SECURITY

Some people believe the government is justified in limited certain rights and liberties when there is a threat such as posed by the September 11th attacks, while others are concerned the government may go too far. I am going to read you a list of actions or proposed actions in response to September 11th. Please tell me for each if you approve or disapprove.

- ...tightening up airport security?
- ...making it easier for law-enforcement officials to carry out electronic surveillance, such as monitoring telephone calls and email?
- ...trying foreign nationals who are suspected of terrorist activities in a military tribunal rather than in the US criminal justice system?
- ...trying US citizens who are suspected of terrorist activities in a military tribunal?
- ...tightening up visa and immigration policies in order to make it harder for foreign nationals to enter the United States



EDUCATION

Public Perception of School Quality

The state educational system has been one of the top four concerns of Illinois residents throughout the history of the *Illinois Policy Survey*. Public education through 12th grade has consistently been the program area receiving the most support for state spending among respondents to the survey. Responses to questions about the quality of public schools asked over the past four years show respondents have consistently given higher ratings to their local community schools than to schools in the state as a whole. **Figure 9** presents the percentage of people giving excellent or good ratings to public schools in Illinois and public schools in their own community. Although the ratings of schools in the state dropped in comparison to last year, the four year trend for both state and local schools is one of improving perceptions of school quality. **Table 7** shows the percentage of people giving public schools in their community high ratings in the last four years according to geographic area. The majority of respondents outside of Chicago gave high ratings to their local schools.

Figure 9 **QUALITY OF PUBLIC SCHOOLS**

In general, how would you rate the overall quality of public schools in Illinois ...in your own community or neighborhood.

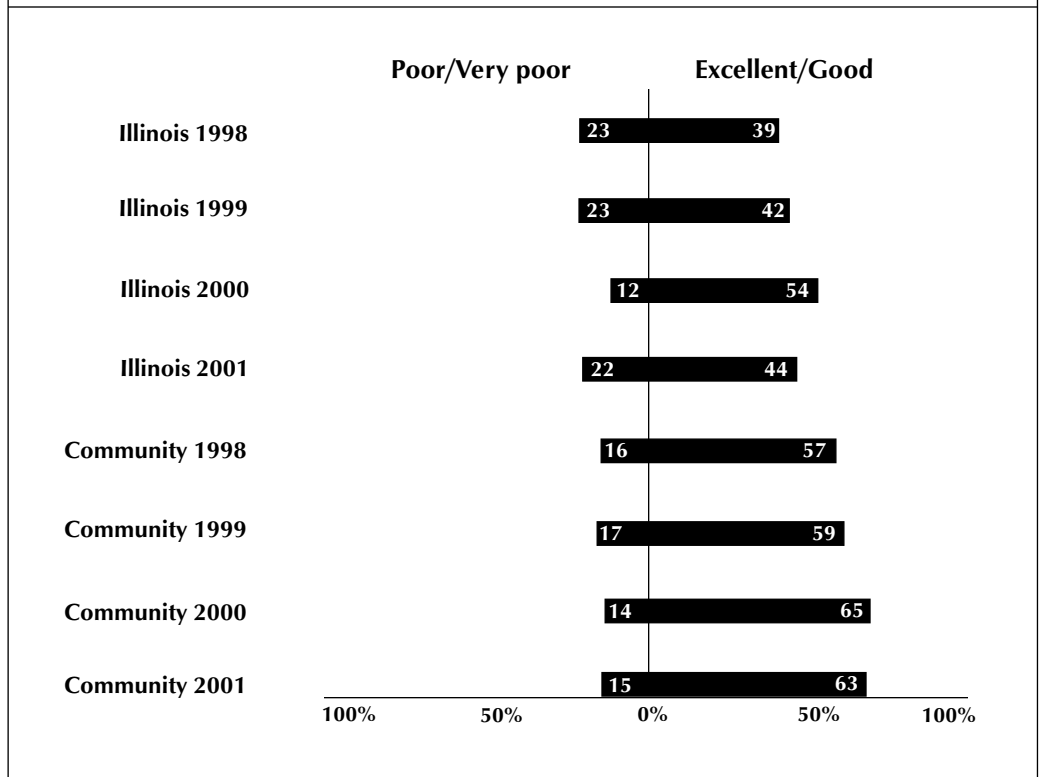


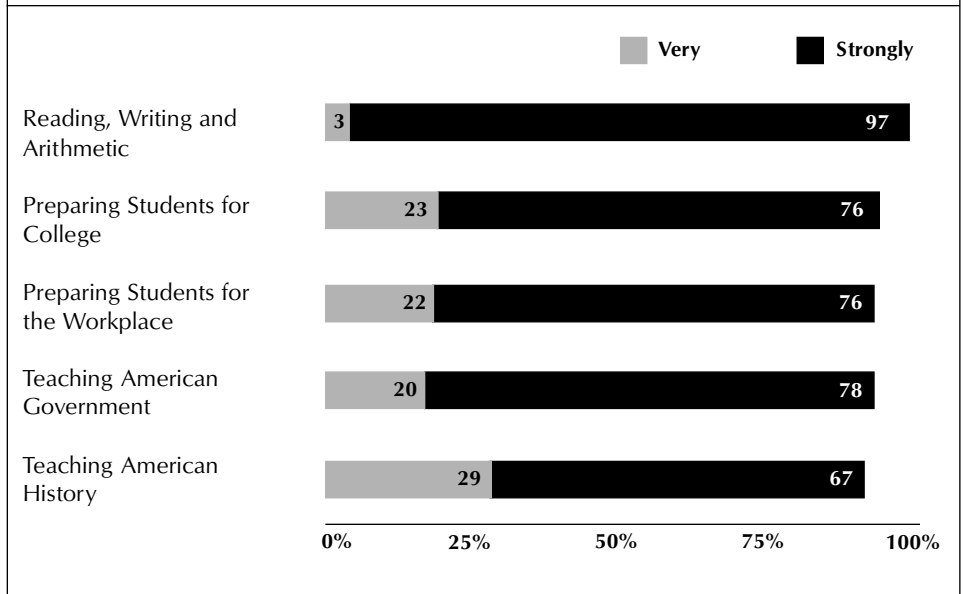
Table 7 **EVALUATION OF LOCAL PUBLIC SCHOOLS, 1998 - 2001**
PERCENT RATING EXCELLENT/GOOD

	1998	1999	2000	2001
Statewide	57%	59%	65%	63%
Region				
Chicago	35	37	36	31
Suburban Cook	70	77	77	71
Collar Counties	67	71	81	75
Northern Illinois	57	50	62	65
Central Illinois	61	59	70	67
Southern Illinois	54	57	67	65

Since the state's educational system is a dominant topic of concern for Illinois residents, questions about education appear every year in the *Illinois Policy Survey*. The tradition of public education in our country includes the goal of preparing students to participate in civic life. This year's report includes public response to questions about the importance of teaching students about American History and American Government. As seen in **Figure 10**, there was a near consensus among respondents on the importance of teaching these subjects. Respondents rated the importance of these subjects nearly as highly as three other goals of education: Teaching students the basics, preparing students for college and preparing students for the workplace.

Figure 10 **THE IMPORTANCE OF TEACHING AMERICAN HISTORY AND GOVERNMENT**

Some people think schools should only concentrate on teaching the "three Rs", that is reading, writing and arithmetic. Others think there are other important goals for public schools. I'm going to read you a list. For each one, please tell me how important you think it is for public schools.



EVALUATION OF PUBLIC OFFICIALS

Washington Officials Receive Record-High Ratings

President Bush was rated as excellent or good by 71 percent of respondents (See **Figure 11**). These are the highest ratings a president has ever received in the *Illinois Policy Survey* (See **Figure 12**). Job approval ratings of elected officials generally track the economy. However, Bush's job approval ratings in the polls jumped in the days following the September 11th attacks and have remained high in subsequent months. The US Congress received excellent or good ratings from 51 percent of respondents. This is the first time Congress has received high ratings by a majority of respondents to the survey as can be seen in **Figure 13**. There has been a great deal of attention directed to the national events of the last several months, including the September 11th attacks and the US response to these attacks. Polls during this time period have shown overwhelming approval for an aggressive government response, including the military action in Afghanistan. The high job approval ratings for Washington officials reflects satisfaction with the decisions they are making. It may also reflect people's identification of Washington with the nation, at a time when people are expressing the importance of allegiance to the nation.

Figure 11 RATINGS OF NATIONAL AND ILLINOIS GOVERNMENT, 2001

How would you rate the job President Bush...the U.S. Congress...the governor...the Illinois legislature is doing?

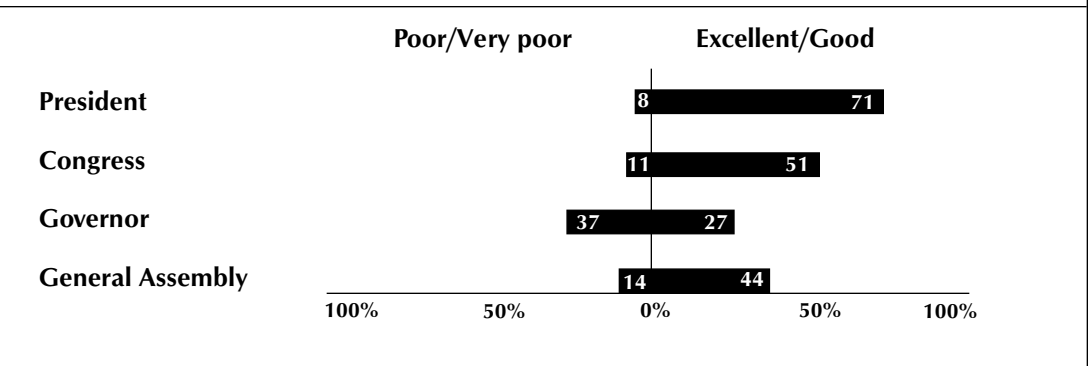


Figure 12 RATINGS OF THE PRESIDENT, 1989 - 2001

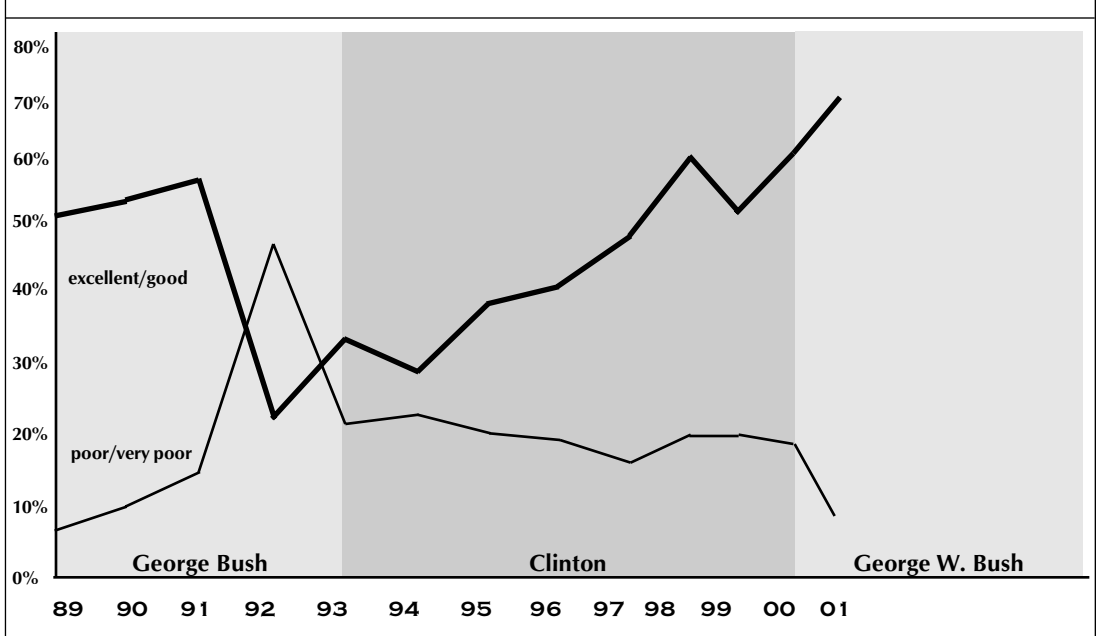
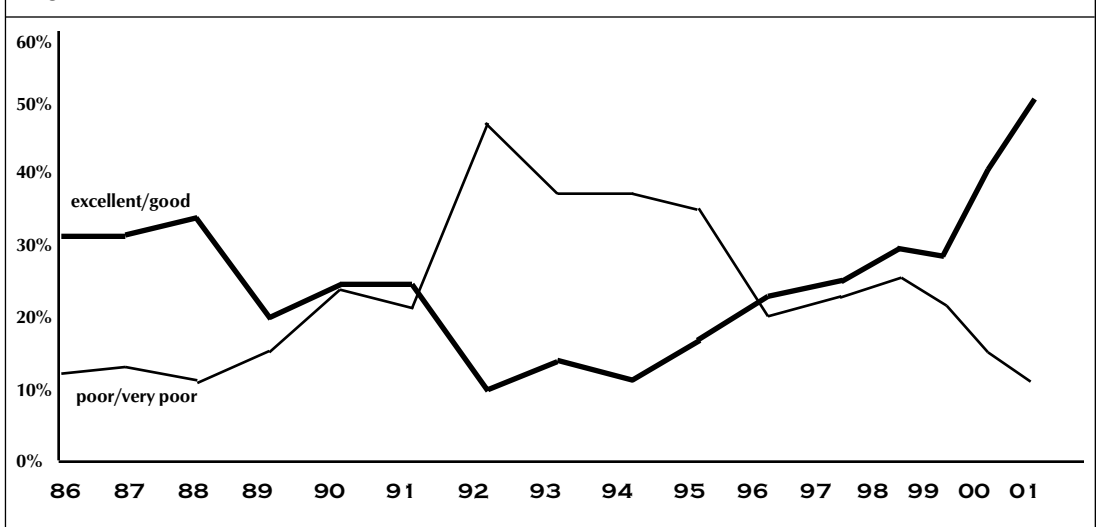
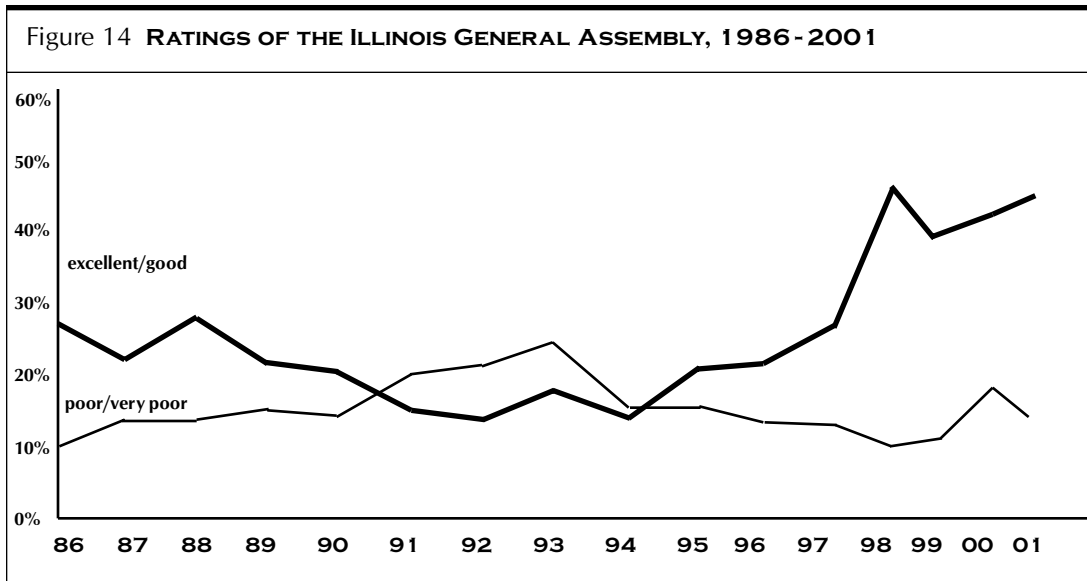


Figure 13 RATINGS OF CONGRESS, 1986 - 2001

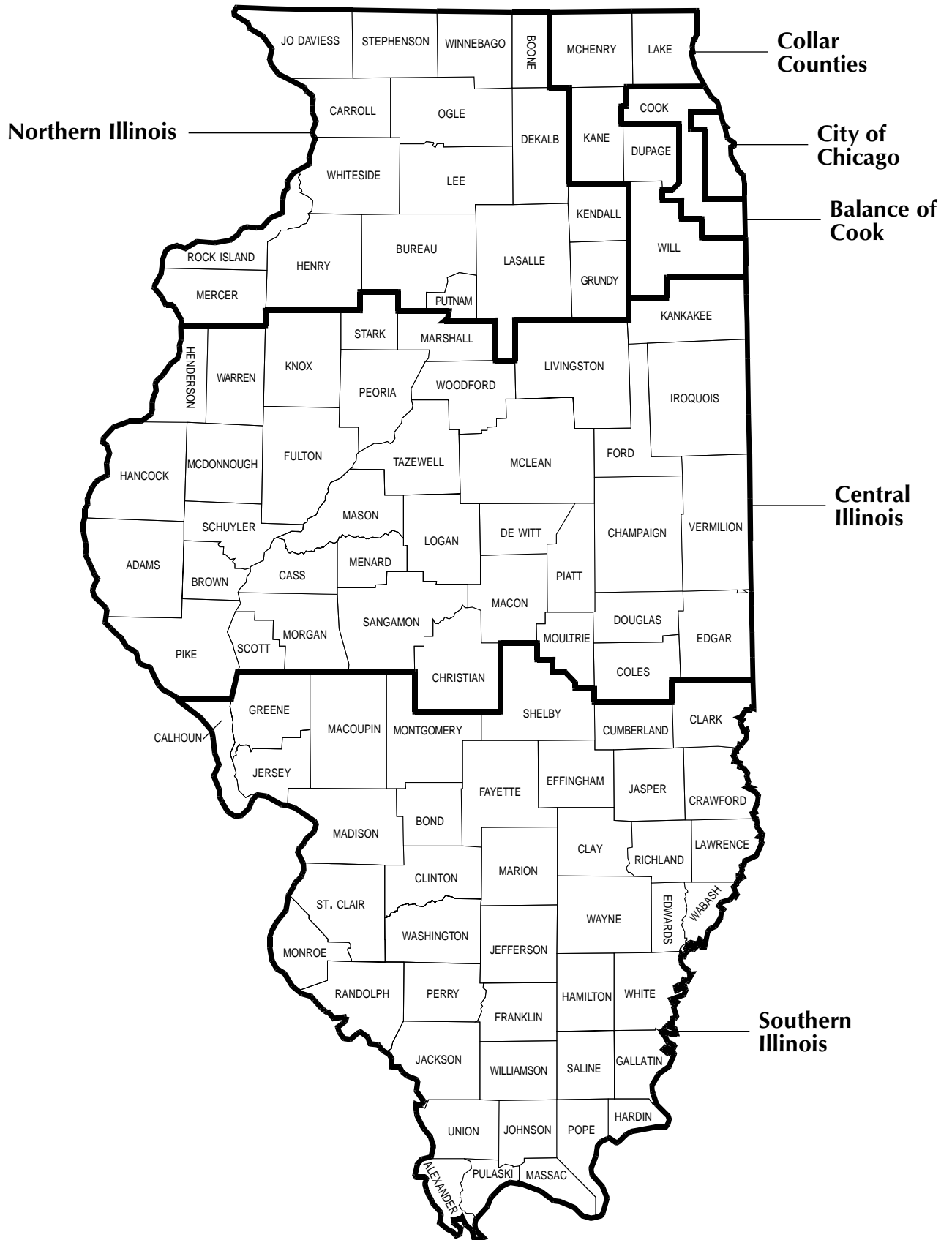


The Illinois General Assembly also received high marks, with 44 percent of respondents giving excellent or good ratings (See **Figure 14**). In the early 1990s respondents gave low marks to the Illinois General Assembly as well as to other political institutions. Since 1994 there has been an upward trend in positive ratings for the legislature.

Overall, the final weeks of 2001 and the early weeks of 2002 showed very positive assessments of elected officials in Washington and stability in assessments of elected officials in Springfield.



REGIONAL MAP OF ILLINOIS



METHODOLOGY

This study is based on a telephone survey of the Illinois adult population, age 18 and older. Interviewers at the Public Opinion Laboratory at Northern Illinois University completed 1209 interviews in December of 2001 through February 2002. Interviews were conducted and responses recorded using a computer-assisted telephone interview system.

The *Illinois Policy Survey* uses a disproportionately stratified sample, divided into six geographical areas: Chicago, the balance of Cook County, five collar counties (DuPage, Kane, Lake, McHenry and Will), the rest of Northern Illinois, Central Illinois and Southern Illinois. Sample sizes in the geographical areas ranged from 199 to 203.

A two-stage sampling strategy was used. For the first stage, telephone numbers were drawn with a known probability of selection within regions. Both listed and unlisted numbers were included in the sample at this stage. The second stage of sampling was carried out when an interviewer reached an eligible household. An eligible household was a non-institutional residence in Illinois which was the home of at least one adult 18 years of age or older. After reaching an adult informant in a household, interviewers gave a brief explanation of the survey and the purpose of the selection process. The household member to be interviewed was randomly selected from among the adults who were at home.

Data were weighted to adjust for disproportionality in the sampling. Unequal probabilities of selection at each stage of sampling were accounted for in the initial weight. A post-stratification adjustment to the initial weight was calculated using a six by two grouping of age group by sex for the strata. Stratum weights for the state were constructed using 2001 current population estimates obtained from Claritas, Inc. The weighted sample was adjusted back to the original sample size for analysis.

The sampling and weighting procedures were designed to provide a representative sample of the English-speaking adult population of Illinois that is accessible by telephone. The conservative 95 percent confidence interval for a sample of 1209 individuals is plus or minus 2.9 percent. This means there is a 95 percent likelihood the population percentage will fall within 3 percentage points of an estimate based on the sample percentage. Confidence intervals for subgroups of the sample will be larger, and will vary with the size of the subgroup.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Telephone interviewing was carried out at the Public Opinion Laboratory under the direction of Robin Bebel, the Director of Field Services. Many thanks to the POL interviewers who spent over 400 hours talking to the people of Illinois and recording their conversations. Trittenhaus Design produced the layout and graphics for this report. Several individuals offered their expertise developing survey topics and questions, including the Center's Policy Survey Steering Committee, Jason Akst, Roger Dahlstrom and Patricia Inman.

