

State Services and Program Priorities in 2005: What Alabama Thinks

- A majority of Alabamians are optimistic about the future of the State, and have confidence that Alabama is moving in a positive direction.
- Over eighty percent of respondents assign an urgent or high priority for State officials to promote economic development and the creation of new jobs (81%), assuring access to quality health care (81%), and assuring access to affordable prescription medications (81%). Over 70% assign an urgent or high priority to providing child welfare services to protect Alabama's children (74%), improving K-12 education (72%), and preserving or enhancing senior citizen services (71%).
- 83% consider that assuring the honesty and integrity of State officials is an urgent or high priority, but only 37% consider that a new State Constitution should be an urgent or high priority for State officials.

(Auburn, July 15) The *Ask-Alabama* statewide spring 2005 public opinion survey identified the priorities of the public regarding State services and policy action in Alabama¹. Only 23% of respondents feel that life in Alabama has deteriorated over the past year, and 54% express confidence that Alabama's elected leaders are moving the State forward.

Economic and job development, access to health care, and affordable prescription drugs, are the top priorities identified by Alabamians that need serious attention by the State. Alabamians are also very concerned about the honesty and integrity of State elected officials, but are much less concerned about developing a new State constitution, promoting ethnic or racial respect, or protecting the environment. Citizen rankings of priorities have changed little since last measured in November 2004².

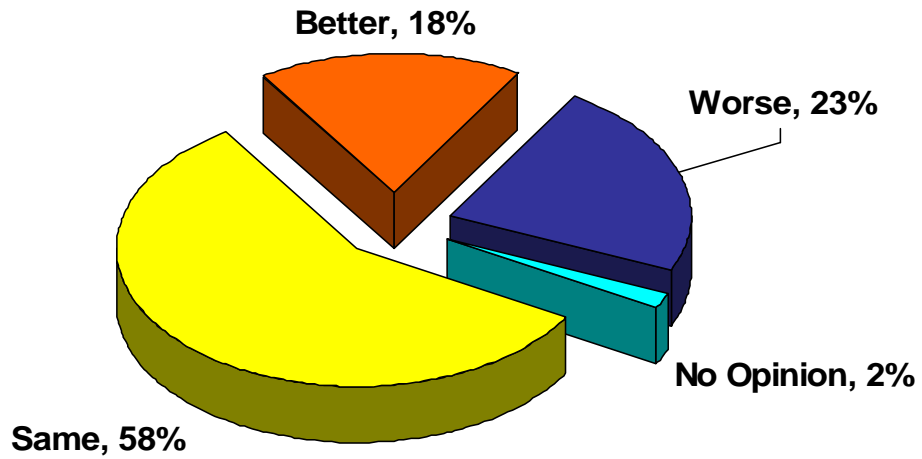
Public is Optimistic about Alabama's Direction in 2005

Only 23% of Alabamians assess that the quality of life in the State has worsened over the past year, and a smaller proportion (18%) believe that life in Alabama has improved during this time. Fifty-four percent express some confidence that the elected leadership in the State is moving Alabama in a positive direction, but a quarter of the sample (25%) are very critical about the direction that the State leaders have taken.

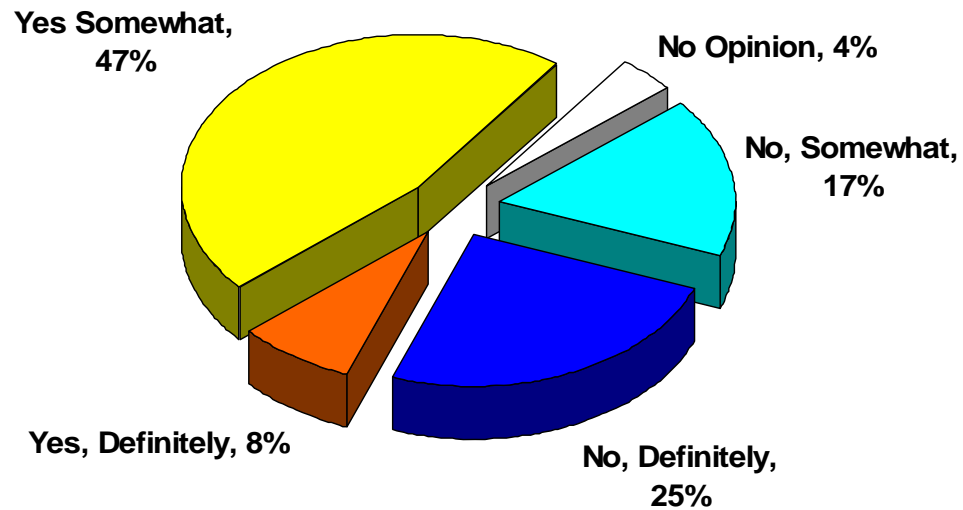
¹ The survey of a random telephone sample of 603 Alabamians was conducted from April 6 - 18, 2005. The average estimated margin of error is +/- 4%.

² See www.askalabama.org *State Service Delivery*, Volume 1, Number 6 (November 2004).

Assessment of Life in Alabama in 2005 Compared to Last Year



Confidence in Alabama's Elected Leaders Moving Alabama in a Positive Direction in 2005



The Public's Top Priorities and Concerns

Over 80% of the respondents identified economic development (81%), access to health care (81%), and affordable prescription medications (81%) as the top priority items needing attention by State leaders. More than 70% of the sample considered that child welfare services (73%), K-12 education (72%), and senior citizen services (71%) are urgent or high priority policy areas. The ranking of issues in 2005 was nearly identical to the ranking in 2004, with only child welfare services and K-12 education exchanging relative positions.

Public Prioritization of Selected State Programs or Services 2005

Rank	State Program or Policy Issue	Urgent	High Priority	Combined ³
1.	Economic Development and Jobs	32%	49%	81%
2.	Access to Health Care	32%	49%	81%
3.	Affordable Prescription Medications	35%	45%	81%
4.	Child Welfare Services	25%	48%	73%
5.	K-12 Education	32%	40%	72%
6.	Senior Citizen Services	28%	43%	71%
7.	State Law Enforcement Services	20%	45%	66%
8.	Public Higher Education	21%	40%	62%
9.	Tax Reform	23%	37%	60%
10.	Roads and Transportation	19%	41%	60%
11.	State Mental Health Services	18%	39%	57%
12.	State Judicial System	17%	36%	54%
13.	State Prisons and Corrections	20%	34%	54%
14.	State Parks and Recreation	7%	18%	25%

All but one of the state programs and services identified in the poll merit serious attention by State decision-makers, and neglect of any of these issues would have serious ramifications on the political environment of the State. Overall, it appears that Alabamians are not complacent about what State government should do and that they expect Alabama's elected leadership to give serious attention to each of these State programs and services.

Alabamians are adamant that serious concern and attention must be given to assuring the honesty and integrity of State officials and the policy process. Forty percent of all respondents believe that this is an *urgent* need, and an additional 43% feel that this should receive *high priority*. Only 6% characterized honesty and integrity among State officials as a *low priority* issue.

Relatively few Alabamians see the drafting of a new Alabama State Constitution as an *urgent* or *high priority* issue. Only 14% characterize a new State constitution as an *urgent*

³ Differences in the sums are due to rounding.

need, and only 22% believe that it merits high attention. Twenty-six percent assign it a *low priority*.

Finally, only 13% of the respondents assign an *urgent priority* to addressing State environmental issues, and 18% characterized ethnic and racial relations as needing *urgent* attention by State officials.

Public Assessment of Concerns for Selected State Policy Issues

