

THE LOUISIANA SURVEY 2018

LSU

Manship School of
Mass Communication
Reilly Center For
Media & Public Affairs



Louisiana residents ambivalent about role of government

Want more active state government, despite belief that it is
almost always wasteful and ineffective

The third in a series of six reports from the 2018 Louisiana Survey



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**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION
ON THIS REPORT:**

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Reilly Center for Media & Public Affairs

The Reilly Center for Media & Public Affairs, an integral part of Louisiana State University's Manship School of Mass Communication, uses the intellectual muscle of the school's faculty to help solve practical problems and advance good government initiatives. The Reilly Center's mission is to generate thoughtful programs, dialogue, and research about social, economic, and political affairs, as well as the developing role of the media in American society. The Center is committed to advancing the Manship School's national leadership in media and politics.

The Center's agenda is diverse and fluid – from the annual John Breaux Symposium, which brings in national experts to discuss a topic that has received little or no attention, to conducting the annual *Louisiana Survey*, a vital resource for policymakers, which tracks advancements and regressions of citizen attitudes about state services. The Center's role, within the state's flagship university, is to respond quickly to the needs of state governance in addressing challenges facing Louisiana, particularly in times of crisis such as during Hurricanes Katrina and Rita and the 2010 Deepwater Horizon oil spill. Its action-oriented and partnership-driven philosophy underscores the Reilly Center's dedication to tackling ideas and issues that explore the relationship of media and the public in democratic society.

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About the Louisiana Survey

The *2018 Louisiana Survey* is the seventeenth in an annual series sponsored by the Reilly Center for Media & Public Affairs at Louisiana State University's Manship School of Mass Communication.

The mission of the *Louisiana Survey* is to establish benchmarks as well as to capture change in residents' assessments of state government services. The survey is further dedicated to tracking public opinion on the contemporary policy issues that face the state. Each iteration of the *Louisiana Survey* contains core items designed to serve as barometers of public sentiment, including assessments of whether the state is heading in the right direction or wrong direction, perceptions about the most important problems facing the state, as well as evaluations of public revenue sources and spending priorities.

In the *2018 Louisiana Survey*, this core is supplemented by measures of perceptions of political polarization in the state and support for compromise; trust in government and media; opinion on proposals to address the state's "fiscal cliff;" beliefs about the role of government in business and the economy; approval of major recent policy developments such as criminal justice reform and Medicaid expansion; and beliefs about gender discrimination and sexual harassment.

As part of an effort to ensure that the *Louisiana Survey* fulfills its public service mission, the research team solicited input about topics for the survey from members of the government and policy community across the political spectrum. Additionally, the research team drew upon expertise in public policy and polling from Louisiana State University faculty. These advisors provided invaluable insight into the design of the questionnaire and in identifying the contemporary policy questions that could most benefit from an understanding of the public's views. While we are indebted to them for their time and contributions, they bear no responsibility for any mistakes in the questionnaire, analysis, or interpretation presented in this report.

We especially thank the Reilly Family Foundation for their generous support and vision in helping to create the Louisiana Survey.

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Overview

Overall, Louisianans have a mixed view of the role of state government in the lives of its residents and businesses. The *2018 Louisiana Survey*, a project of the Reilly Center for Media & Public Affairs, reveals that:

- Close to two-thirds (62 percent) of Louisiana residents believe state government is almost always wasteful and inefficient. Just 34 percent say state government often does a better job than people give it credit for. Only 20 percent say state government does an “excellent job” or “good job” in running its programs – matched by the share who say Louisiana government does a “poor job” (21 percent). Most (57 percent) say it does “only a fair job.”
- Despite believing that state government is often wasteful and does only a fair job of running its programs, most Louisiana residents would like to see it active in more areas. When asked which statement comes closer to their views, “Government in Louisiana is doing too many things better left to businesses and individuals,” or “Government in Louisiana should do more to solve problems,” a majority (57 percent) chose the latter.
- Opinion splits more evenly on state government regulation of business – 51 percent say that state government regulation of business usually does more harm than good, but 45 percent say these regulations are necessary to protect the public interest.
- Opinion also splits evenly between the view that state government cannot afford to do much more to help people in need in Louisiana (47 percent) and the view that state government should do more to help these people even if it means spending more money (50 percent).

The *2018 Louisiana Survey* was administered over the telephone from January 26 to March 3, 2018, to both landline and cell phone respondents. The project includes a representative sample of 852 adult Louisiana residents. The total sample has a margin of error of +/- 3.4 percentage points.

This is the third in a series of six releases on results from the *2018 Louisiana Survey*.

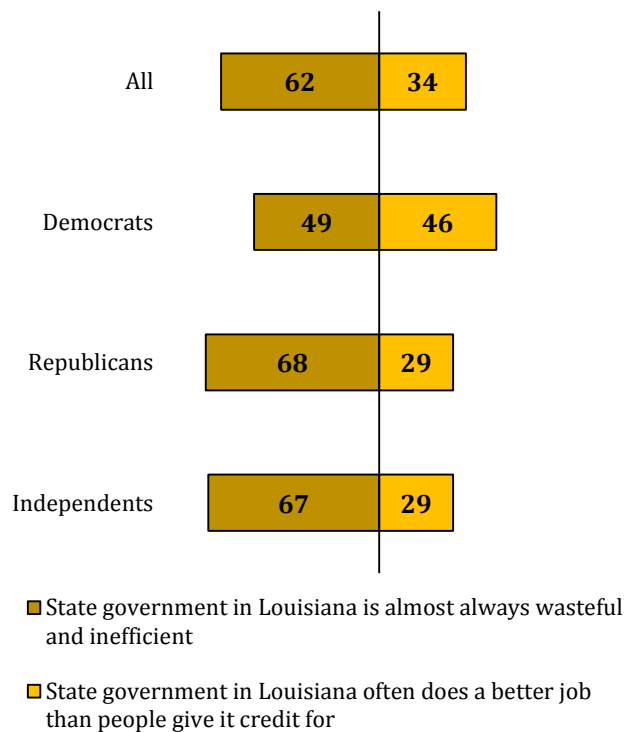
Most think state government is wasteful and does only a fair job running its programs...

Close to two-thirds (62 percent) of Louisiana residents believe state government in Louisiana is almost always wasteful and inefficient. Just 34 percent say state government often does a better job than people give it credit for. Most Republicans and independents share this view (Figure 1). Even among Democrats, opinion splits nearly evenly.

Similar views are reflected in responses about the effectiveness of state government in running its programs. Only 20 percent say state government does an “excellent job” or “good job” in running its programs – matched by the share who says Louisiana government does a “poor job” (21 percent). Most (57 percent) say it does “only a fair job.”

Figure 1: Most view state government as wasteful and inefficient

Percent who say _____



SOURCE: 2018 Louisiana Survey

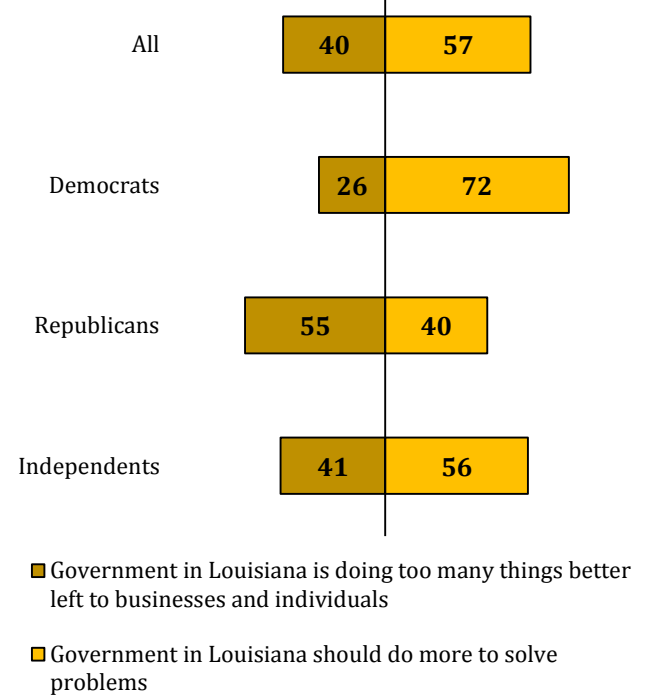
...but most also want state government to be active in solving more problems

Despite believing that state government is often wasteful and does only a fair job of running its programs, most Louisiana residents would like to see it active in more areas. When asked which statement comes closer to their views, “Government in Louisiana is doing too many things better left to businesses and individuals,” or “Government in Louisiana should do more to solve problems,” a majority (57 percent) chose the latter.

Most Democrats (72 percent) and independents (56 percent) want a more active state government. Most Republicans (55 percent), however, think state government is already doing too many things that should be left to businesses and individuals.

Figure 2: Most say they want state government to be active in solving problems

Percent who say _____



SOURCE: 2018 Louisiana Survey

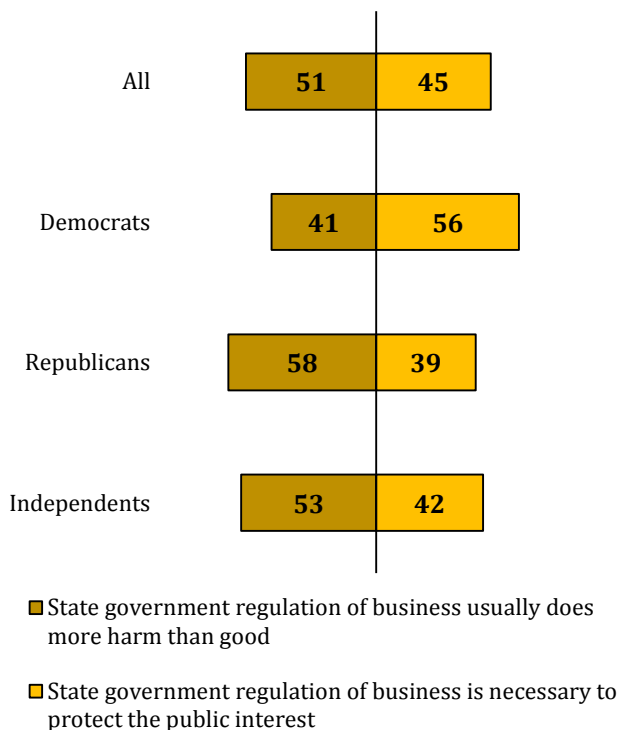
Opinion split more evenly over state role in regulating business

Louisianans' mixed views on the role of government are even more apparent when looking at regulation of business, where opinion is much more closely split about the role of state government. Overall, 51 percent say that state government regulation of business usually does more harm than good, but 45 percent say these regulations are necessary to protect the public interest (Figure 3).

The parties are near mirror images of each other. Most Republicans (58 percent) think regulation does more harm than good. Most Democrats (56 percent) think state government regulation of business is necessary to protect the public interest. Views among independents on this question generally resemble those of Republicans.

Figure 3: Mixed views of state government regulation of business

Percent who say _____



SOURCE: 2018 Louisiana Survey

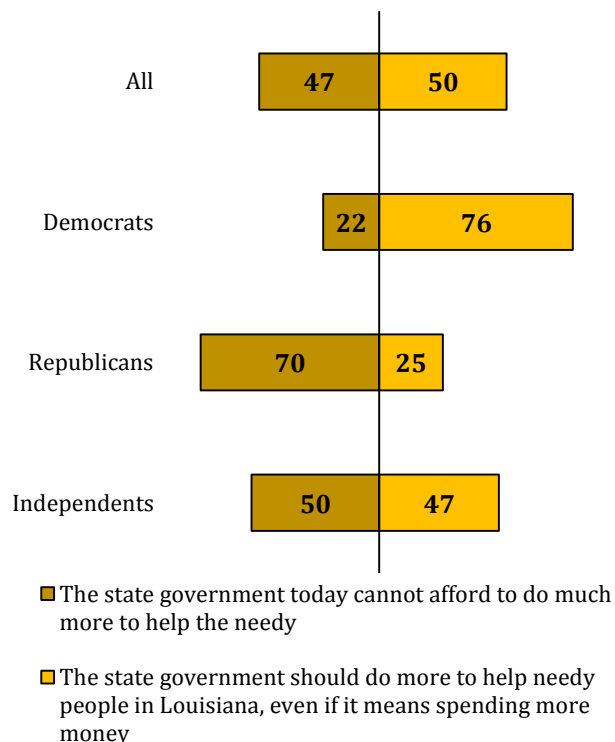
Large gap between parties over role of state government in helping people in need

Opinion also splits nearly evenly between the view that state government cannot afford to do much more to help people in need in Louisiana (47 percent) and the view that state government should do more to help needy people even if it means spending more money (50 percent).

Once again the close divide in overall opinion reflects, in part, a large gap between Democrats and Republicans. A large majority of Republicans (70 percent) believe that state government cannot afford to do more to help people in need. An even larger majority of Democrats (76 percent) take the opposite view, saying that state government needs to do more even if it requires additional spending.

Figure 4: Parties split over state government's role in helping the needy

Percent who say _____



SOURCE: 2018 Louisiana Survey

Survey Methodology

The analysis in this report is based on telephone interviews conducted among a statewide sample of 852 adults (18 years of age or older) living in Louisiana. The survey was conducted by interviewers at Louisiana State University's Public Policy Research Lab. The sample includes 326 respondents interviewed via landline telephone and 526 respondents interviewed on a cellphone, including 344 who do not have a landline telephone. The design of the landline sample ensures representation of both listed and unlisted numbers by use of random digit dialing. The cell phone sample is randomly drawn from known, available phone number banks dedicated to wireless service. Both samples, landline and cellphone, were provided by Marketing Systems Group.

The combined landline and cell phone sample is weighted using an iterative procedure that matches race, education, household income, gender and age to known profiles for the adult population of Louisiana found in the Census Bureau's American Community Survey 2016 one-year estimates. The sample is also weighted for population density by parish. Weighting cannot eliminate every source of nonresponse bias. However, proper administration of random sampling combined with accepted weighting techniques has a strong record of yielding unbiased results.

The sample has an overall margin of error of +/- 3.4 percentage points.

In addition to sampling error, as accounted for through the margin of error, readers should recognize that question wording and practical difficulties in conducting surveys can introduce error or bias into the findings of opinion polls. As often as possible, the *Louisiana Survey* follows the wording of relevant questions repeatedly used by reputable public opinion research institutions and projects, such as the Pew Research Center, Gallup Inc., and the American National Election Studies.

Interviews for this survey were conducted from January 26 to March 3, 2018. Because data collection overlaps with a special session of the Louisiana Legislature from February 19 to March 3, 2018, responses to questions included in this report were analyzed for any differences between the pre-session interviews and interviews conducted during the session, controlling for mode of interview. For most questions in this report, there is no evidence for differences by date of interview. The single exception is whether people believe the government in Louisiana should do more to solve problems or is already doing too many things better left to businesses and individuals. During the special legislative session, the share saying government should do more to solve problems rose by ten percentage points while the share saying it is already doing too many things fell by nine percentage points.

The *2018 Louisiana Survey* has a response rate of 11 percent. This response rate is the percentage of eligible residential households or personal cell phones in the sample for which an interview is completed. The rate is calculated using the American Association for Public Opinion Research's method for Response Rate 3 as published in their Standard Definitions. Response rates for telephones have been on decline for several decades and frequently fall in the single digits even among the very best survey research organizations. The response rate for this survey is within the typical range for reputable live-interviewer telephone survey firms.

Louisiana State University's Public Policy Research Lab, a division of the Reilly Center for Media & Public Affairs, designed the survey questionnaire and sampling strategy, computed the survey weights, and conducted all statistical analysis.

Question Wording & Toplines

NOTE: Unless otherwise indicated, results are for the total sample. Not all respondents were asked each question, and questions asked to a subset of respondents are labelled accordingly. For these questions, percentages are only for those respondents who were asked the particular question. Percentages may not sum to 100 due to rounding.

Q1.

All in all, how good a job does the state government do running its programs? An excellent job, a good job, only a fair job, or a poor job?

Excellent job	2
Good job	18
Only a fair job	57
Poor job	21
Don't know/Refused [VOLUNTEERED]	2

INTRO FOR Q2-Q5.

I'm going to read you some pairs of statements that will help us understand how you feel about a number of things. As I read each pair, tell me whether the first statement or the second statement comes closer to your own views - even if neither is exactly right.

Q2. [ORDER OF Q2-Q5 RANDOMIZED]

What about... [IF NECESSARY: "Which statement comes closer to your views, even if neither is exactly right?"]

State government in Louisiana is almost always wasteful and inefficient	62
State government in Louisiana often does a better job than people give it credit for	34
Don't know/Refused [VOL.]	4

Q3. [ORDER OF Q2-Q5 RANDOMIZED]

What about... [IF NECESSARY: "Which statement comes closer to your views, even if neither is exactly right?"]

State government regulation of business is necessary to protect the public interest	44
State government regulation of business usually does more harm than good	51
Don't know/Refused [VOL.]	4

Q4. [ORDER OF Q2-Q5 RANDOMIZED]

What about... **[IF NECESSARY: “Which statement comes closer to your views, even if neither is exactly right?”]**

The state government should do more to help needy people in Louisiana, even if it means spending more money	50
The state government today can't afford to do much more to help the needy	47
Don't know/Refused [VOL.]	4

Q5. [ORDER OF Q2-Q5 RANDOMIZED]

What about... **[IF NECESSARY: “Which statement comes closer to your views, even if neither is exactly right?”]**

Government in Louisiana should do more to solve problems	57
Government in Louisiana is doing too many things better left to businesses and individuals	40
Don't know/Refused [VOL.]	3