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OBAMA RATINGS IMPROVE; CONSUMER CONFIDENCE MIXED

President Barack Obama’s positive ratings improved to their highest level since mid-2009, according to the latest survey of Michigan residents from MSU’s State of the State Survey.

The survey took place between January 14, 2013 and March 4, 2013. Interviews were conducted with 1,013 Michigan adults, including both landline and cell-phone users.

In assessing their top elected leaders, 48.4 percent of survey respondents gave Obama an “excellent” or “good” rating, up from last fall’s 42.8 percent approval.

“It appears that President Obama received a boost from his successful campaign for re-election, in which he carried Michigan with 54.3 percent of the vote,” said Charles Ballard, MSU professor of economics and director of the State of the State Survey.

The quarterly survey is sponsored by MSU’s Institute for Public Policy and Social Research in the university’s College of Social Science.

Michigan Gov. Rick Snyder’s approval ratings were basically unchanged. Snyder received a rating of “excellent” or “good” from 34 percent of Michigan’s residents.

Snyder’s favorable ratings are down slightly from 35.5 percent last fall, but that small decrease is less than the survey’s margin of error. Snyder’s approval ratings have stayed in the mid-30s in every survey for the last year.

The results show a small gender gap, with Obama receiving stronger support from women, and Snyder receiving stronger support from men.

Obama’s support was much stronger in Southeast Michigan than in West Michigan, but the opposite was true for Snyder. Snyder received his highest approvals of the quarter, 43.1 percent, from a region including eight west Michigan counties.

Obama and Snyder both have solid support from members of their own party. Obama’s standing among Democrats is stronger than Snyder’s standing among Republicans, however.

Some 85.5 percent of Democrats rated Obama as either “excellent” or “good.” Snyder received favorable ratings from 56.9 percent of Republicans.

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The survey also asked Michigan residents about their financial situation. Respondents who rated their current financial situation as “excellent” or “good” climbed from 47.8 percent last fall to 52.6 percent this winter.

What’s less heartening, Ballard said, are Michigan residents’ beliefs about whether they are “better off” or “worse off” than one year before. Among those surveyed, 34.9 percent answered “better off,” which is a decrease from 41.7 percent last fall.

At the same time, 37.5 percent considered themselves “worse off,” and 27.6 percent answered “about the same.”

The survey also asked Michigan residents whether they’d be better off a year from now. They were less positive on that front this winter compared to last fall, Ballard said. Nevertheless, optimists outnumbered pessimists two-to-one.

In this winter’s survey, 55.2 percent said they expect to be “better off” next year; 28.7 percent said they’re likely to be “worse off,” and 16.1 percent predicted they’d be “about the same.”

“When we compare the latest results with those from the previous survey last fall, the consumer-confidence indicators give a mixed picture,” said Ballard.

He suggested that the mixed survey results may reflect the slowdown of job growth in 2012. Michigan gained 97,000 jobs in 2011, but only 37,400 in 2012.

“Fortunately, the U.S. Labor Department has estimated that the jobs picture in Michigan has improved in the first two months of 2013,” Ballard said.

“If that trend continues for the next few months, I’m hopeful we will see an improvement in consumer sentiment in our next survey. Moreover, in every case, Michigan consumer confidence remains well above the levels of 2009,” he said.