

86th State of the State Survey (SOSS) Brief Report

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OVERVIEW

This report summarizes key findings from the 86th State of the State Survey (SOSS), a Michigan general adult population survey. SOSS has been conducted since 1994 by the Office for Survey Research, and the Institute for Public Policy and Social Research (IPPSR) at Michigan State University. Initially conducted as a Random Digit Dialing (RDD) telephone survey (1994 - 2020), SOSS now utilizes a YouGov web panel survey (2020 - current). Due to the differences in methodology between the previous telephone and current web panel modes, comparisons between the different methods will not be reported.

The current survey was completed as a YouGov panel survey with data collection spanning December 9 to December 19, 2022. Invitations were sent to 6,036 adult Michigan residents from which 1,242 interviews were completed. The response rate for this round of SOSS was 21.4%¹. After calibrating the data to assign weights, the final dataset consisted of 1,000 cases. Data was weighted for analysis using the "weight" variable unless otherwise stated.

¹ Response rate was calculated using AAPOR RR3.

RESULTS

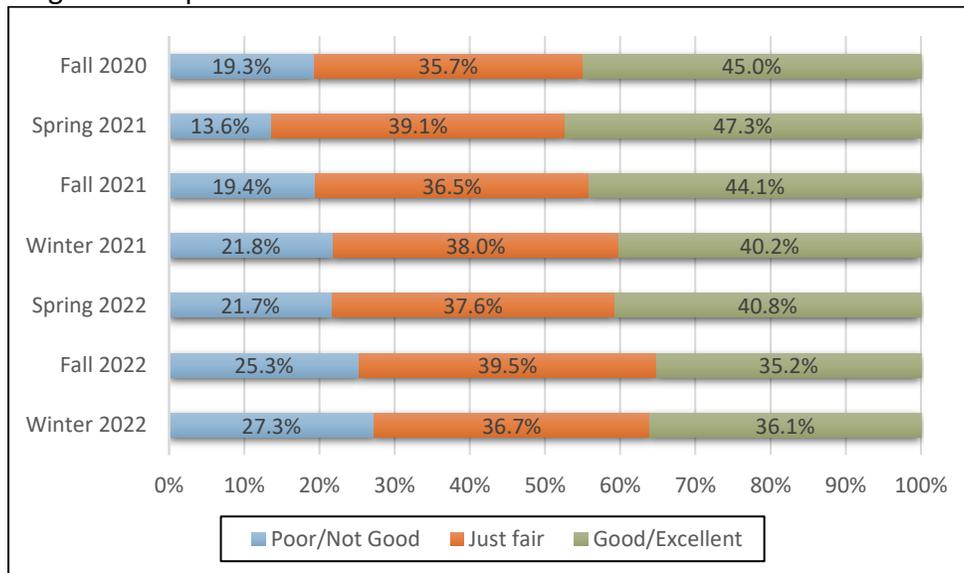
Section A. Economic Optimism

This series of questions is related to multiple areas of economic optimism and has been included in SOSS surveys since the first SOSS in the Fall 1994 (Wave 1). Respondents were asked three questions about their financial situation for three time periods:

- "How would you rate your household's **overall financial** situation these days?" (Current)
- "Would you say that you (and your family living with you) are **better off** or **worse off** financially than you were a year ago?" (Current to past)
- "Now looking ahead, do you think that a year from now, you and your family living with you will be better off financially or worse off financially?" (Current to future).

The responses to current household financial situation are reported in Figure 1. This figure also compares the current round (Winter 2022) to rounds over the last three years.

Figure 1. Reported Assessment of Current Household Financial Situation



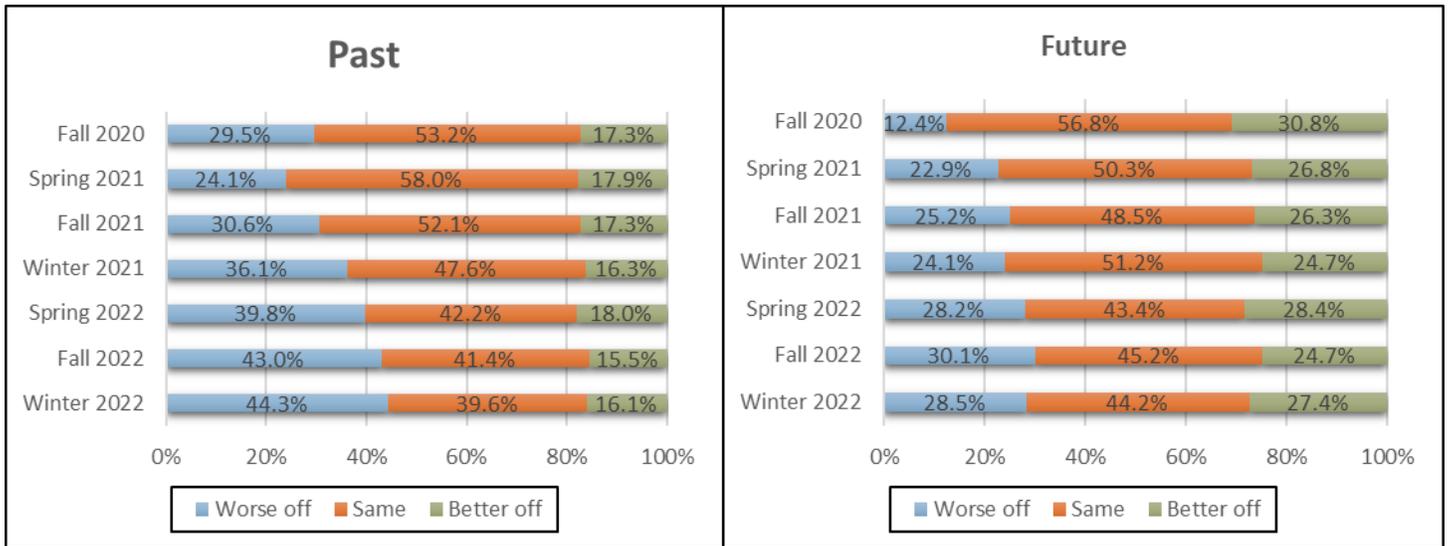
SOSS Sample size = 999-1499

Figure 1 shows a general decrease in SOSS respondents' views of their personal household finances.

- The current trend continues to show an increasing percent of respondents reporting their household situation as "Poor/Not Good".
- The percentage of those who reported that their household financial situation was "Good/Excellent" increased slightly from the last round with those reporting "Just Fair" decreasing over the last period.

Respondents' evaluations of their current situation compared to their past financial situation and anticipated future financial situation are reported in Figure 2 for the same time periods.

Figure 2. Reported Assessment of Current Financial Situation Compared to Past/Future



In terms of present conditions compared to 12 months ago (Figure Labeled "Past"):

- Just as in Fall 2022, about 85 percent of the respondent reported that they were “worse off” or the “Same” as they were a year ago.
- The trend continues that more respondents are reporting being worse off than they were a year ago.

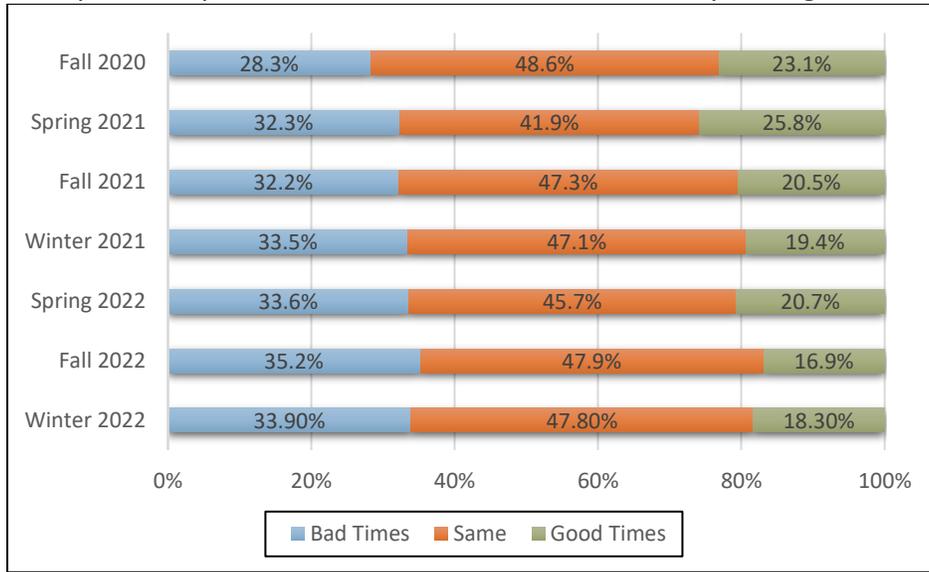
In terms of present conditions compared to those conditions expected 12 months into the future (Table Figure Labeled "Future"):

- Over 70 percent of the respondent believed that they will be worse off or the same financially in the following year as they are now.
- There appears to be a slight increase in optimism for the current round compared to the last round with more respondents stating that they felt that their financial future would improve next year (27 percent versus 25 percent) and less stating that they would be worse off (29 percent versus 30 percent).

SOSS respondents were also asked, "Now, turning to business conditions in your community, do you think that during the next 12 months, your community will have good times financially or bad times financially?"

The responses to this item for the past seven waves of SOSS are summarized in Figure 3 which shows that respondents though respondents are still pessimistic about their expectations about their communities' financial situation, there was a slight increase in optimism in Winter 2022 compared to Fall 2022.

Figure 3. Reported Expected Financial Situation in Community During Next 12 Months



SOSS Sample sizes: 996-1499

In particular:

- 82 percent of respondents expected that the financial situation in their community would be worse off or the same in the coming year as now.
- 18 percent of Winter 2022 respondents reported expecting better times in 12 months compared to 17 percent in Fall 2022.

SOSS respondents were then asked about their expectations for specific economic indicators involving the country as a whole during the next 12 months. The questions asked were:

- "Twelve months from now, do you expect the unemployment situation in this country to be better than, worse than, or about the same as it was in the last 12 months?"
- "During the next 12 months, do you think the rate of inflation in this country will go up, will go down, or will stay about the same as it was in the past 12 months?"

Figure 4. Reported Expected Change in Economic Indicators, Over Next 12 Months

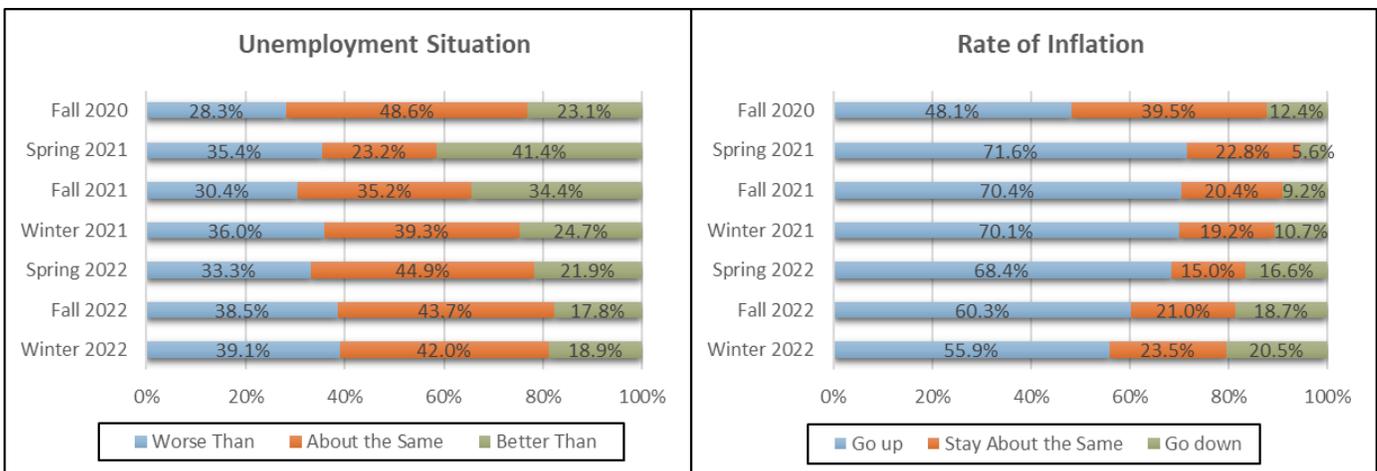


Figure 4 reports the results for these two variables over the past several waves of SOSS.

Specifically, the figure for unemployment shows:

- The percent of respondents who believe that the unemployment situation will worsen over the next 12 months continues to increase.
- There is a slight increase in the percent of respondents that believe that it will be better compared to the last round of SOSS.

Figure 4 also reports respondents' outlook on changes in the rate of inflation during the next 12 months.

In particular,

- There was a decrease in the percentage of respondents who felt that inflation would continue to increase within the next 12 months.
- The percentage of respondents who felt that the rate of inflation would stay the same or go down increased from the previous round of SOSS.

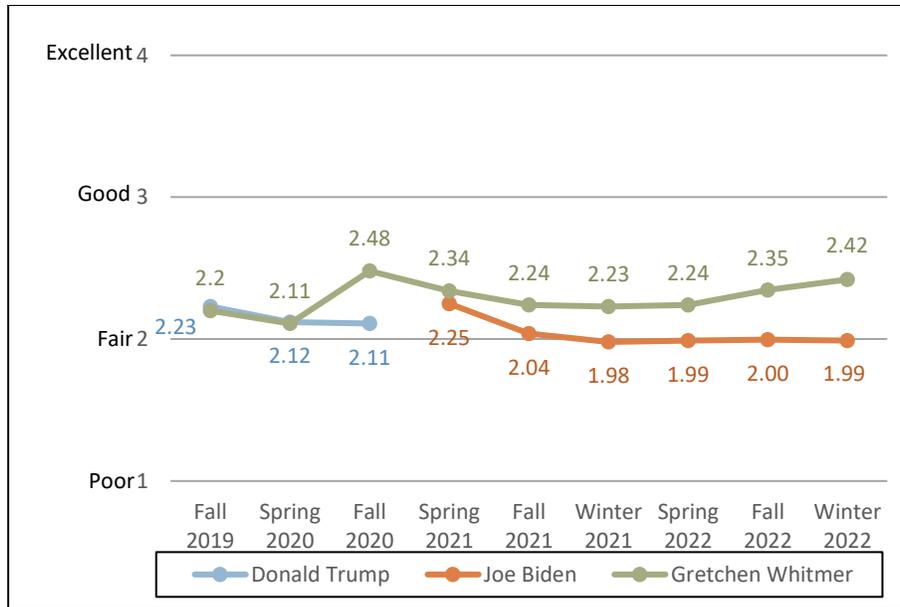
Section B. Assessment of Political Leaders

The questions assessing the current U.S. president and Michigan governor were first asked about President Bill Clinton and Governor John Engler in the Winter 1995 SOSS survey (Wave 2). Since Wave 2, the standing Michigan Governor and the U.S. President have been rated using a four-point performance scale of *poor (1)*, *fair (2)*, *good (3)*, and *excellent (4)*.

Figure 5 shows the mean approval rating at the end of President Donald Trump's term and the beginning of President Joe Biden's term, as well as the majority of Michigan Gov. Gretchen Whitmer's terms².

Figure 5. Mean Approval Ratings of Executives, Tracked Over Time

² Ratings prior to Fall 2019 were collected as part of telephone interviews and are not included due to methodological differences.



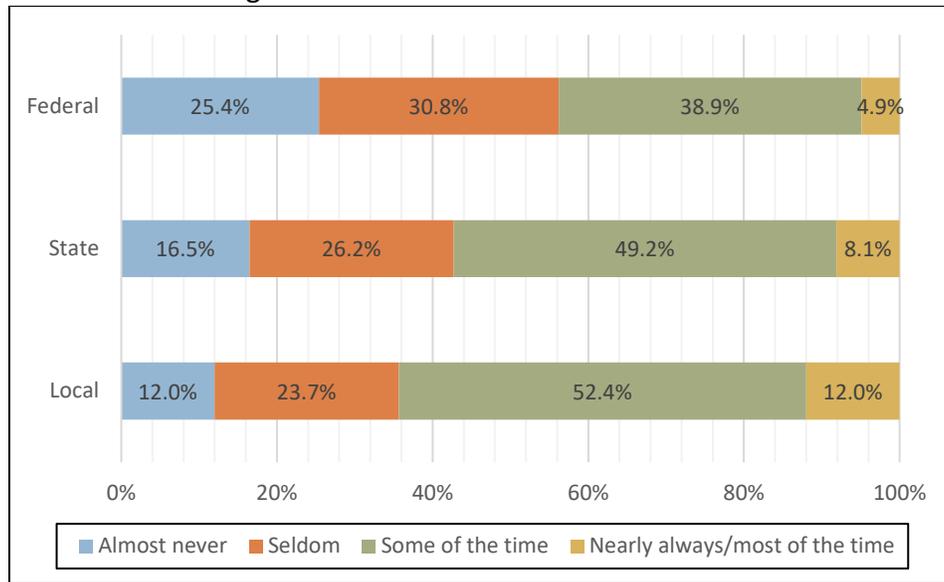
As can be seen in Figure 5:

- President Trump's approval rating decreased over his last year in office but stayed within the *Fair* to *Good* range.
- President Biden's approval rating decreased during his first year in office and fell from the *Fair* to *Good* range to *Fair*, where they have stabilized.
- Governor Whitmer's approval ratings have varied over time, quite possibly due to response to the COVID pandemic during her term, though her ratings have stayed within the *Fair* to *Good* range. They show an increase from the previous round of SOSS and are the second-highest rating she has received while in office.

Section C. Trust in Government

Respondents were asked how much of the time they trust the federal and state governments, as well as the level of trust they have in their local government. The amount of trust varied by level of government (Figure 6).

Figure 6: Level of Trust of Governments



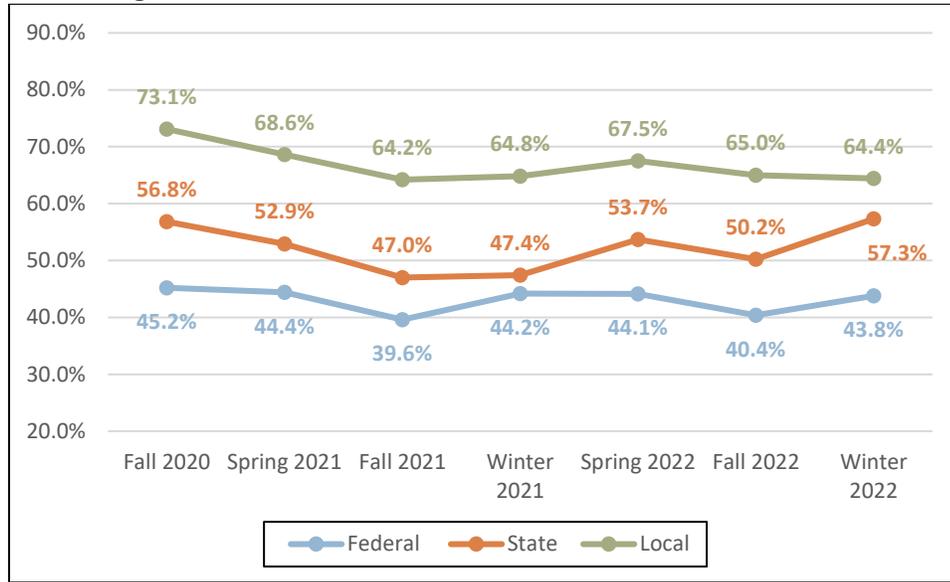
Sample Size = 999/997/998

In particular,

- The Federal government was the least trusted, with only 44 percent stating that they trusted it.
- Fifty-seven percent of the respondents reported that they trust the State government some of the time or nearly always.
- Local governments were the most trusted level of government, with 64 percent of the respondents stating that they trusted it some of the time or nearly always.

Historically, the same patterns of Local government being the most trusted and Federal government being the least trusted can be seen (Figure 7). Figure 7 reports the percentage of respondents who trusted the government entities at least some of the time. The same decreases and increases at one level are also normally mirrored by the other level of government over time. This is not demonstrated during the most recent round of SOSS with the trust in the federal government still declining while trust in both the state and local governments is rising.

Figure 7: Historical View of Level of Trust of Governments



Section D: Important Policy Changes at the Federal and State Levels

Respondents were asked a series of open-ended questions about policy changes within the past two years. Respondents were not provided a list of the various policy changes. The impact of the policy change on the respondent as well as the recency of the policy change could impact what policies come to mind. Though respondents were asked to think about the past two years, those policy changes that have happened more recently may come to mind more readily than those that happened more in the past.

First, respondents were asked about federal policy changes. They were asked:

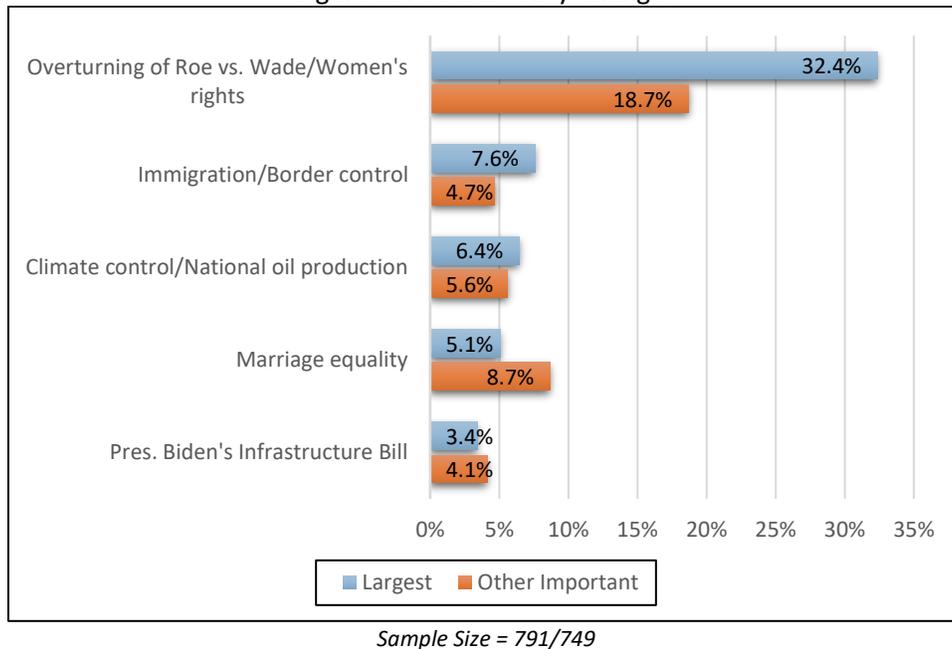
- *What do you see as the largest change in policy that our leaders in Washington have made in the past two years, such as laws passed by Congress or decisions made by the president or federal courts?*
- *What other important policy changes made by Congress, the president, or the federal courts in the past two years have you heard about?*

Figure 8 reports the five most frequently given categories for the largest changes in federal policies. In addition, the figure includes the percent of responses that gave the same category as another important policy change that occurred in the past two years.

Of interest,

- Overturning of *Roe vs. Wade* and its implication for women’s rights was identified as the largest policy change or as an important policy change (but not the largest) by over 50 percent of the respondents.
- Immigration and border control changes were reported the second most often for the largest change and marriage equality was reported the second most often for other important policy change.

Figure 8: Federal Policy Changes



Respondents were then asked similar questions related to Michigan.

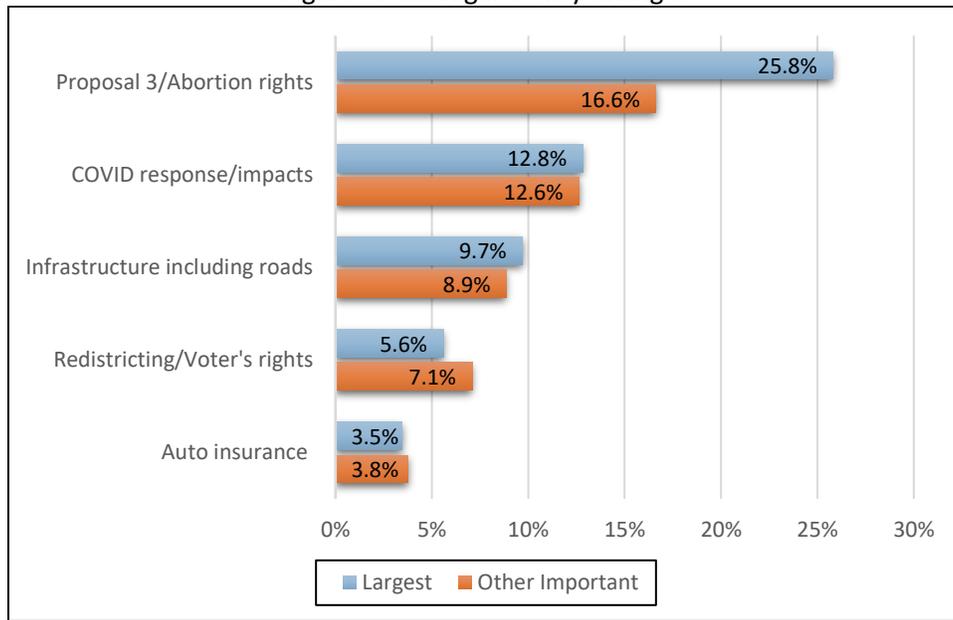
- *What do you see as the largest change in policy that our leaders in Lansing have made in the past two years, such as laws passed by the Michigan legislature or decisions made by the governor or state courts?*
- *What other important policy changes made by the Michigan legislature, the governor, or the state courts in the past two years have you heard about?*

The five most reported responses for the most important policy changes are listed in Figure 9. The figure also includes the percent of respondents who gave that category as another important policy change.

In particular,

- As with the federal policy changes, abortion rights (Proposal 3) was reported the most often as the most important policy change with over 40 percent providing it for one of the two questions.
- The State's response to COVID and the impacts of that response was given the second most often for both the most important policy change and as another important policy change.

Figure 9: Michigan Policy Changes



Sample Size = 608/451

Section E: Heard of Federal and State Policy Changes

After the open-ended questions about policy changes at the federal and state levels, respondents were asked how much they had heard about a set of specific policy changes within the past two years. The policy changes were again at both the federal and state levels.

In terms of the U.S. Supreme Court, respondents were asked how much they had heard about:

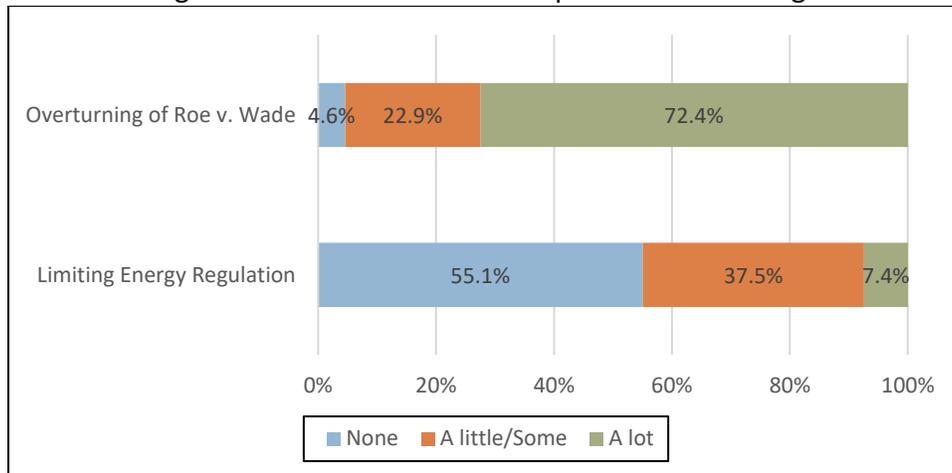
- *Supreme Court abortion ruling overturning Roe v. Wade*
- *Supreme Court ruling limiting energy regulation.*

Figure 8 reports the level of awareness for those two rulings. These two court decisions show drastically different levels of awareness.

In particular,

- 72 percent of respondents had heard a lot about the overturning of Roe v. Wade with only 5 percent saying they had heard nothing.
- Only 7 percent of SOSS respondents stated that they had heard a lot about the ruling related to energy regulation and 55 percent reported hearing nothing about it.

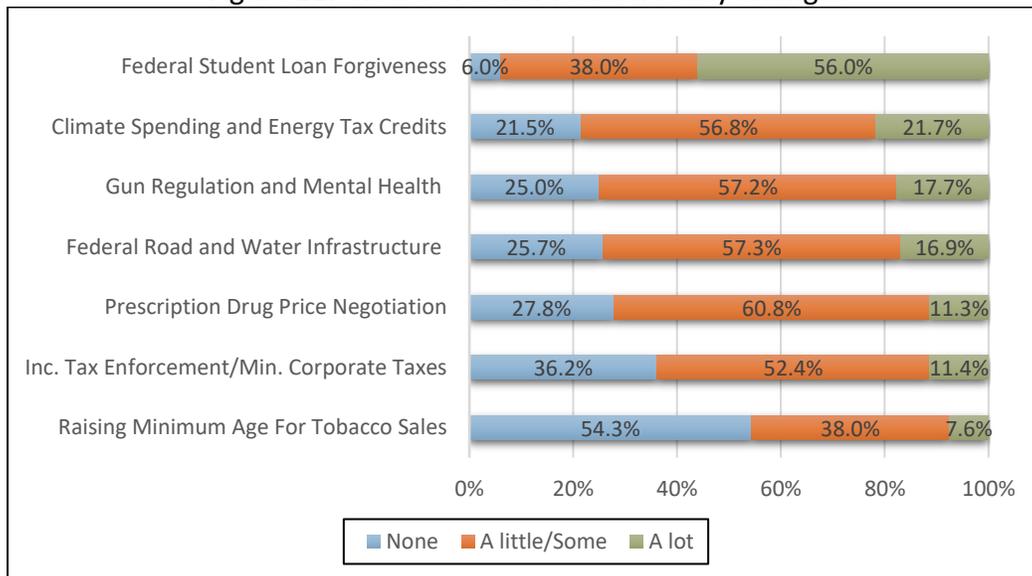
Figure 10: Heard about U.S. Supreme Court Rulings



Sample size = 993/997

In addition to the Supreme Court rulings, respondents were also asked about their awareness of several other federal policy changes that have happened over the past two years (Figure 11). The level of awareness varied greatly across the seven policy changes presented.

Figure 11: Heard of Other Federal Policy Changes



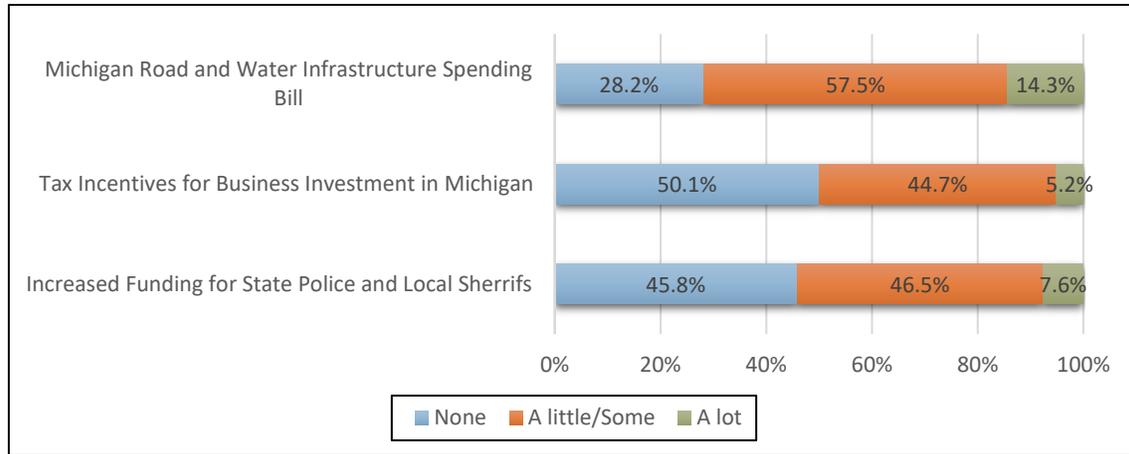
Sample size = 983-990

In particular,

- Federal student loan forgiveness had the highest level of awareness with 56 percent stating they had heard a lot and only 6 percent stating that they had heard nothing.
- Raising of the minimum age of tobacco sales had the lowest level of awareness with only 8 percent having heard a lot and 54 percent reporting that they had heard nothing about it.

Questions were also asked about awareness of three Michigan policy changes that occurred over the past two years (Figure 12). Generally, there was less awareness of the state policy changes than there was for the federal policy changes.

Figure 12: Heard of State Policy Changes



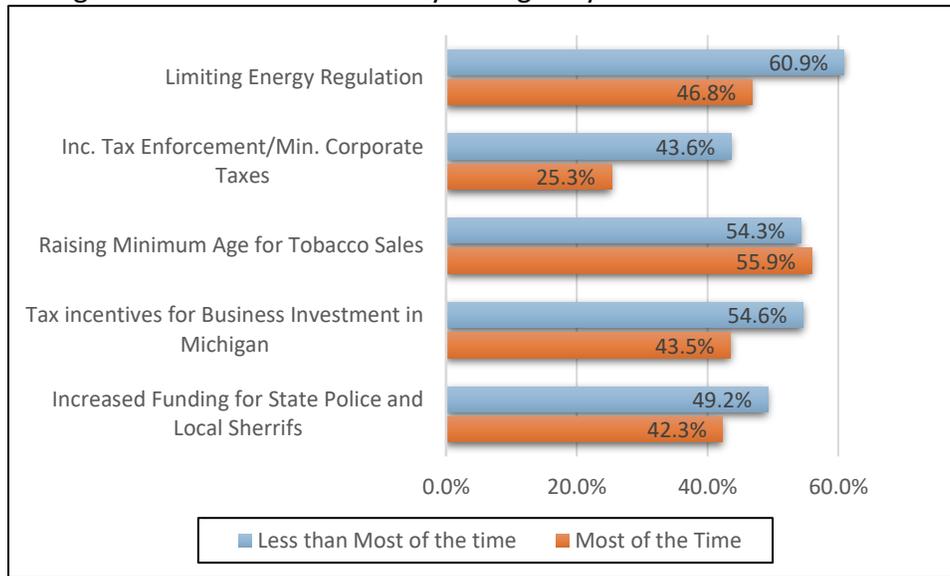
Sample Size = 979/986/981

In particular,

- Only the Michigan Road and Water Infrastructure Spending Bill had over 70 percent of the respondents stating that they were at least heard a little about it. This may be due to the major increase in road construction that occurred this past summer.
- Tax incentives for business investments (50 percent) and increased funding for state and county law enforcement (49 percent) had high levels of not being heard of at all.

To gain a better understanding of whether the lack of awareness of a particular policy change was due to general lack of information or due to lack of actively following politics by the respondent, those who reported paying attention to politics most of the time were compared to those who did not for the policy changes that had at least one-third of the respondents state they had not heard of the policy changes (Figure 13). It would be expected that if it was simply due to the lack of following politics that the percent of those who followed politics most of the time would have a low percent of not hearing about the policy changes. If this is not the case, then the lack of having heard anything about the policy change, may actually be due to the lack of information available to the public through the regular sources of information.

Figure 13: Not Heard of Policy Changes by Level of Political Interest



Sample size = 931/940/943/941/937

Of interest, for those who had not heard of the policy changes,

- More than 40 percent of those who paid attention to politics most of the time reported having no knowledge of the policy changes for all except for the IRS policy changes.
- Those who paid attention to politics most of the time were more likely (56 percent) to have not heard about the raising of the minimum age for tobacco sales than those who paid less attention to politics (54 percent).

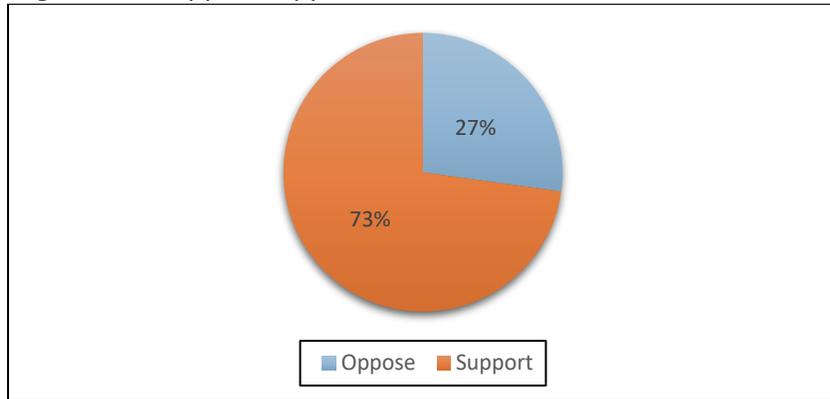
Section F: Support for Federal Bills

In addition to being asked about their awareness of policy changes over the past two years, respondents were asked about how much they supported two of President Biden's bills. In terms of the one trillion-dollar Infrastructure Bill, they were asked:

- *Do you support or oppose the \$1 trillion bill passed by Congress to build roads, bridges, railroads, and other hard infrastructure?*

Almost three-quarters of the respondents stated that they at least somewhat supported the bill (Figure 14).

Figure 14: Support/Oppose President Biden's Infrastructure Bill



Sample Size = 1000

Respondents were also asked about their level of support or opposition towards President Biden's Inflation Reduction Act. Three versions of the questions were randomly assigned to the respondents:

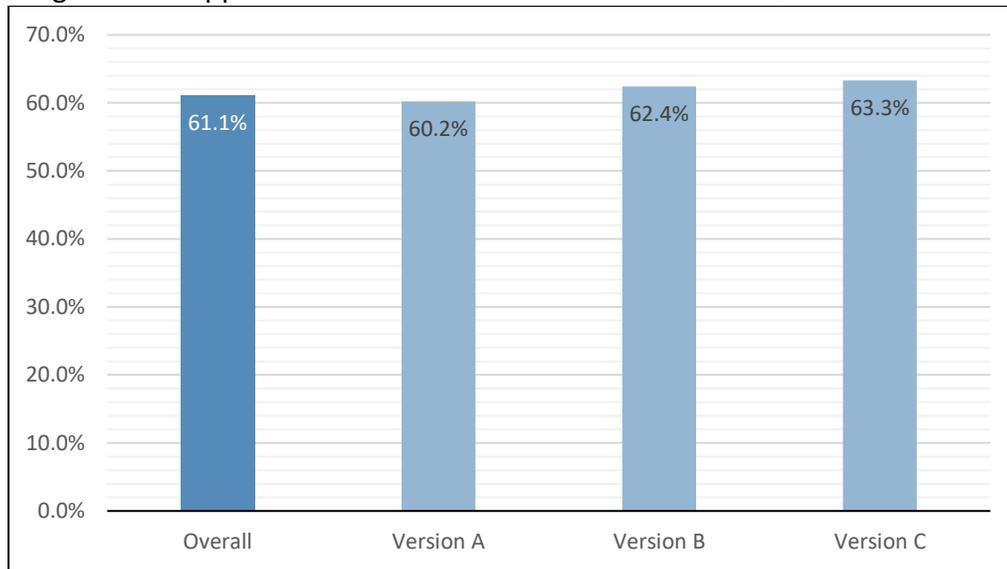
- *Do you support or oppose the \$500 billion reconciliation bill Congress passed to fund clean energy programs and healthcare initiatives? (Version A)*
- *Congress passed a bill to spend \$500 billion over the next ten years to subsidize renewable energy use, address climate change, and expand health insurance coverage. It was funded by increasing taxes on corporations and tax enforcement to reduce the deficit. Based on what you know, do you support or oppose this bill? (Version B)*
- *Do you support or oppose President Biden's \$500 billion Inflation Reduction Act passed by Congress? (Version C)*

The different versions can be defined by the level of information they provide:

- Version A - Basic information
- Version B - Detailed information
- Version C - No information beyond name of the bill. It should also be noted that this is the only version that mentioned it was supported by President Biden.

Figure 15 reports the overall reported support for the bill across the three versions in addition to the level of support for each version.

Figure 15: Support for the Inflation Reduction Bill for all Question Versions



Sample Size = 985/324/323/339

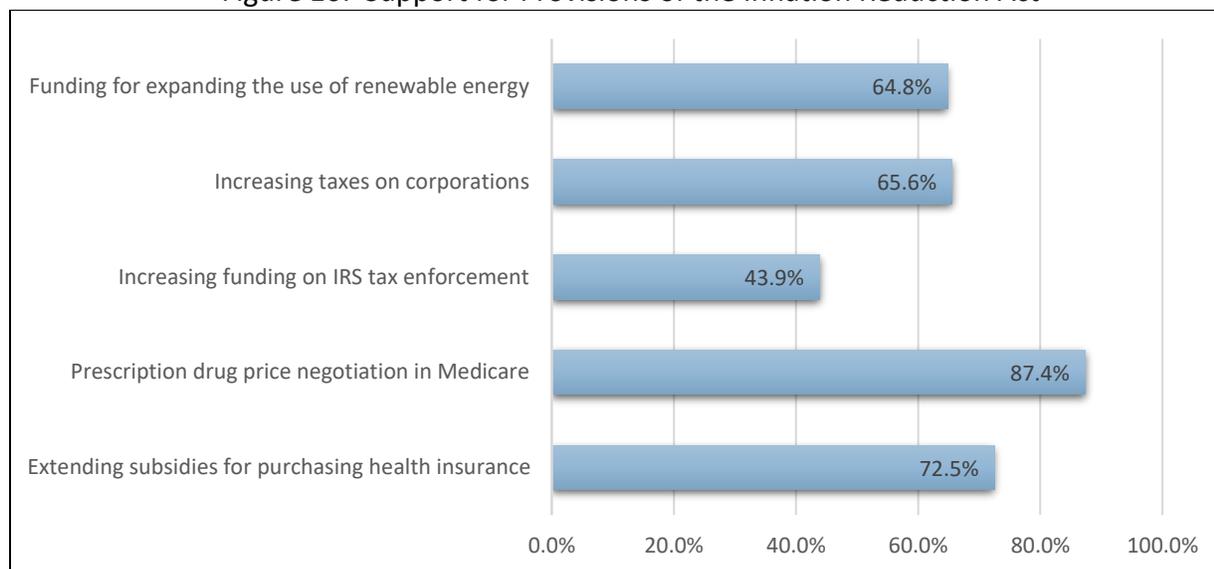
Figure 15 shows:

- The overall reported support for the bill was 61 percent.
- Though there is little difference between the three versions, Version C (Name only) received the highest level of support of the three versions.

Respondents were then asked about their level of support for five provisions of the Inflation Reduction Act (Figure 16).

- *Funding for expanding the use of renewable energy*
- *Increasing taxes on corporations*
- *Increasing funding on Internal Revenue Service tax enforcement*
- *Prescription drug price negotiation in Medicare*
- *Extending subsidies for purchasing health insurance*

Figure 16: Support for Provisions of the Inflation Reduction Act



Sample Size = 997/ 998/999/999/998

Points of interest in Figure 16:

- All but one of the provisions of the Inflation Reduction Bill presented received higher levels of support than given to the bill in general (61 percent).
- The ability to negotiate drug costs for Medicare received the highest support (87 percent).
- Increasing funding to the IRS was the only item to receive less than support than the bill (44 percent vs. 61 percent).

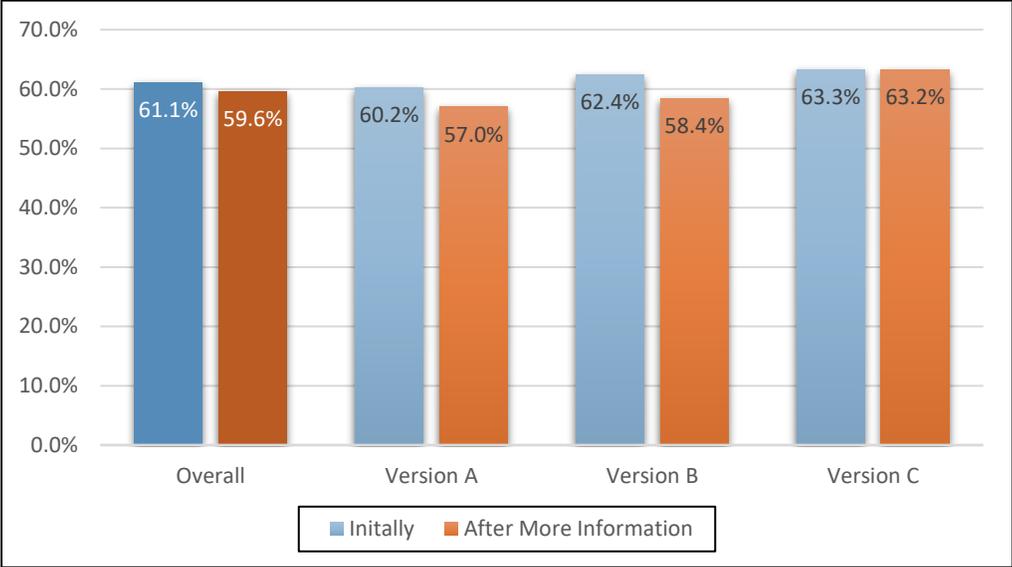
After being asked about the five provisions associated with the Inflation Reduction Bill, they were then asked to reconsider their support for the bill. All respondents were presented the same general wording of the question instead of the previous versions:

- *Now that you know more about the provisions in the Inflation Reduction Act Congress passed, do you support or oppose the plan?*

Figure 17 compares the reported initial support for each version against the support after the five provisions. Of note,

- The overall support of the bill dropped slightly after presenting five of the provisions of the bill.
- Version B (detailed information) showed the largest declining.
- Version C (name only) showed virtually no change.

Figure 17: Impact of Additional Information on Support for the Inflation Reduction Bill



SUMMARY

Section A: Economic Optimism

Respondents continue to have a relatively pessimistic view of their current and future financial situations. The only positive trend was the expectation that inflation may decrease over the next 12 months.

Section B: Assessment of Political Leaders

Governor Whitmer's approval rating climbed from the last round of SOSS in Fall 2022 and is still within the Fair to Good range. President Biden's rating is nearly the same as the previous survey, with a rating of Fair.

Section C: Trust in Government

The Federal government continues to be the least trusted level of government, and Local governments remain the most trusted. Compared to the previous SOSS, the level of trust for both the state and local governments trended upwards and the level of trust for the federal government continued to decline.

Section D: Important Policy Changes at the Federal and State Levels

Respondents were asked about policy changes within the past two years. The impact of the policy change on the respondent as well as the recency of the policy change could impact what policies come to mind for these open-ended questions.

In terms of federal policy changes over the past two years, overturning of Roe vs. Wade and its implication for women's rights were mentioned the most often as either the largest policy change or as an important policy change by over half the respondents. Immigration and border control changes also received a relatively high percent of mentions.

Policy changes associated with abortion rights (Proposal 3) at the state level were also reported the most often as the most important policy change either as the largest change or as another important change. Policy changes associated with the State's response to COVID and the impacts of that response was given the second most often for both questions (largest/another important).

Section E: Heard of Federal and State Policy Changes

Of the federal policy changes within the past two years, the overturning of Roe v. Wade by the U.S. Supreme Court and federal student loan forgiveness were the two most known. The policy changes that were heard of the least were the U.S. Supreme Court ruling on limiting energy regulation and the raising of the minimum age of tobacco sales.

For the State of Michigan policy changes, there was much higher awareness of the Michigan Road and Water Infrastructure Spending Bill than for the tax incentives for business investment and the increased funding for state policy and local sheriffs. This may be due to the high visibility, to the general public, of the impacts of the infrastructure bill compared to the others.

Of interest was that the lack of awareness for some of the policy changes was high for both those that follow politics at a relatively high level compared to those that do not. This was found in the ruling on limiting energy regulation, tax incentives for business investment in Michigan, and the increased funding of state police and local sheriffs. This was most obvious when looking at raising the minimum age for tobacco sales where those that followed politics were slightly more likely to have not heard about the policy change than those that followed it less. This suggests that the lack of awareness for at least some of the policy changes may be due in part to lack of information available to the public.

Section F: Support for Federal Bills

More than half of the respondents supported both the President's Infrastructure Bill and the Inflation Reduction bill with the Infrastructure Bill receiving more support.

In terms of support for the Inflation Reduction Bill, the wording versions of the question asking about support slightly impacted the level of support with the wording that provided the least amount of information (name only) receiving the highest level of initial support compared to those who received some information or detail information about what was included in the bill. After providing additional information about some of the provisions included in the bill, the respondents who received the name only version were still more likely to support the bill with the others decreasing their support after the additional information.

Of the five provisions included in the Inflation Reduction Bill that were presented to the respondents, all but the increasing funding to the IRS provision was supported by well over half of the respondents with the prescription drug price negotiation in Medicare receiving the highest support.

APPENDIX

Table A1: Demographic Description of SOSS Respondents

Demographic Characteristics ^a		
Party	Republican	25.2%
	Independent	36.9%
	Democrat	37.9%
Race/Ethnicity^b	White	83.1%
	Black	13.1%
	Asian/Pacific Islander	1.6%
	Native American/Alaska Native	2.4%
	Other Race	3.4%
	Hispanic	5.0%
Gender^c	Male	48.7%
	Female	51.3%
	Intersex	0.0%
Education	Less than 4-year Degree	73.0%
	4-Year Degree	16.7%
	Graduate Degree	10.3%
n		1,000
^a SOSS percentages are weighted using survey weights provided by YouGov. ^b Racial/ethnic categories are not mutually exclusive, and respondents may have selected more than one. ^c Due to the small percentage of Intersex respondents, they were not included in the analysis related to gender.		