

## HOOSIER SURVEY 2009

The Bowen Center for Public Affairs at Ball State University conducts the annual Hoosier Survey to provide Indiana policymakers with a measure of public opinion on current issues facing our state and nation. The nonpartisan survey does not ask respondents about particular candidates or campaigns. The results are delivered to every member of the Indiana General Assembly at the beginning of the calendar year so that lawmakers can gauge public views about issues they are likely to face in the coming session.

Major findings in the 2009 Hoosier Survey include:

- strong public support for changing the Indiana Constitution to make permanent caps on property taxes,
- plurality support for allocating state funds to schools in communities where schools face the greatest obstacles to student achievement rather than schools in communities experiencing greatest growth,
- plurality support for a government run health care plan to compete with private insurers.

The survey was conducted for the Bowen Center for Public Affairs by Princeton Survey Research Associates International (PSRAI) from November 9 to December 6, 2009. PSRAI surveyed 600 Hoosier adults, chosen randomly, yielding a margin of sampling error of  $\pm 4.5\%$ .

This is the second consecutive year the Bowen Center has conducted the Hoosier Survey. Like the first Hoosier Survey, the 2009 poll asked Hoosiers about the priorities they wanted legislators to address. This year, the poll added questions about a constitutional change to cap property taxes and state spending on public schools, two issues likely to warrant significant attention by the legislative branch.

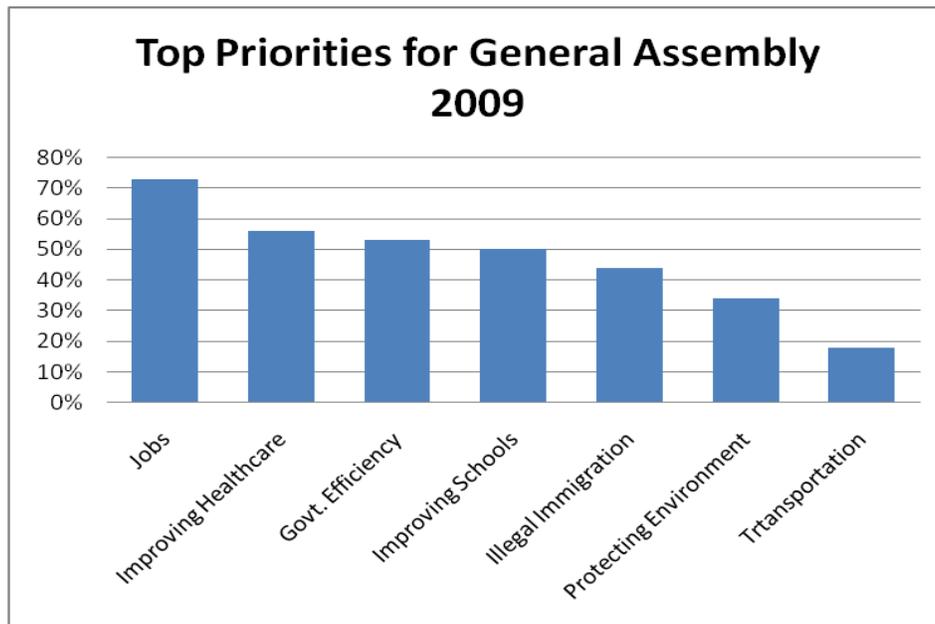
In addition to providing results for the state as a whole, findings are also broken down by the three major regions of the state: Northern, Central, Southern. The maps below illustrate the counties in each region.



## Major Findings

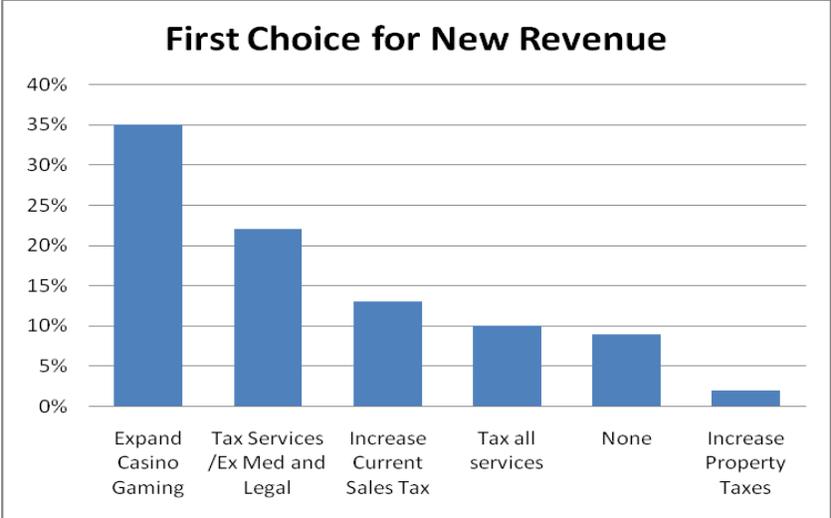
### Policy Priorities for the State

As in 2008, job creation remains the top priority for Hoosiers with 73% saying the state needs to do more to bring jobs to the state even though a majority of Hoosiers (53%) are either very satisfied or somewhat satisfied with the record the state has built in creating jobs. Other top priorities include affordable healthcare (56%), making government run more efficiently (53%), and improving local schools (50%). The ranking of issues parallels last year's results with the exception that improving healthcare leapfrogged one space to beat out government efficiency for second place. There are no regional differences in the rank order of these priorities.



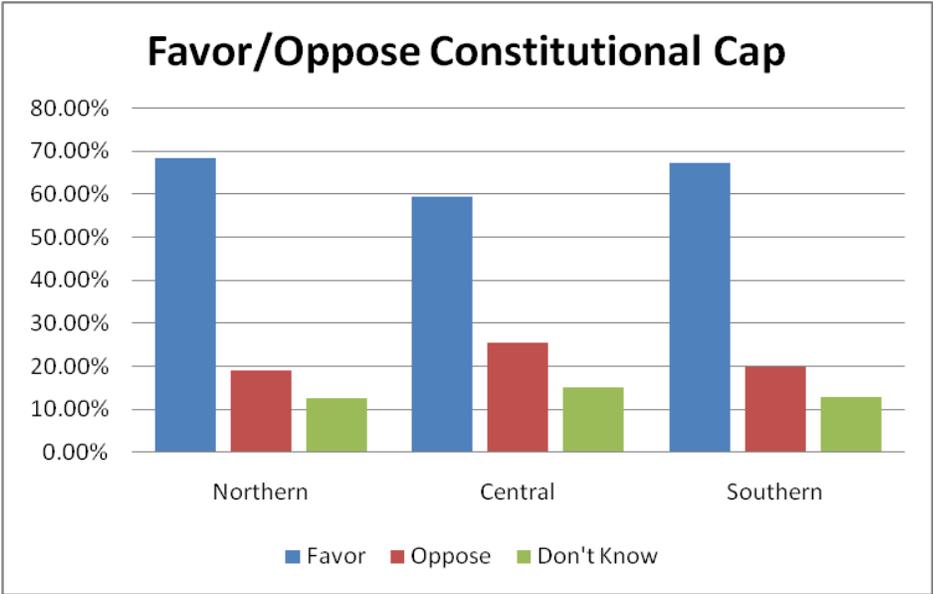
### Preferences for Obtaining New Revenue

Hoosiers also spoke out regarding their preferences for revenue generation should the state require additional funds to support its ongoing operations. Favored choices for new revenue include: 1) Expand casino gaming (35%), 2) Extend sales tax to services with exemptions for medical and legal services (22%), 3) Increase current sales tax (13%), 4) Extend sales tax to all services (10%), 5) Increase property taxes (2%). The only regional difference in this rank ordering is in Southern Indiana counties where slightly more residents prefer taxing all services rather than taxing services with exemptions for medical and legal services.

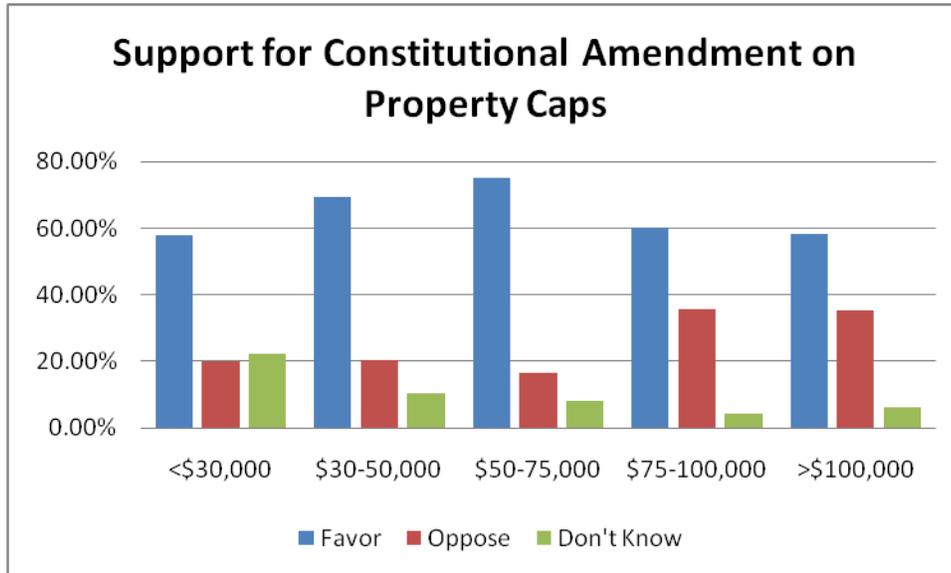


### Support for Constitutional Amendment on Property Caps

There is strong statewide support (64%) for a much discussed constitutional amendment to cap property taxes. Support is strongest in the northern and southern counties of the state. Still, there remains a large number who are uncertain or don't know (14% statewide) ranging from about 13% in Northern and Southern counties to 15.2% in central Indiana counties. Support for the amendment was strong (58.7%) even among those Hoosiers (37%) who reported a decline in property taxes over the past year. There are no significant differences in support for the amendment between those who say their property taxes have declined and those who report they did not.

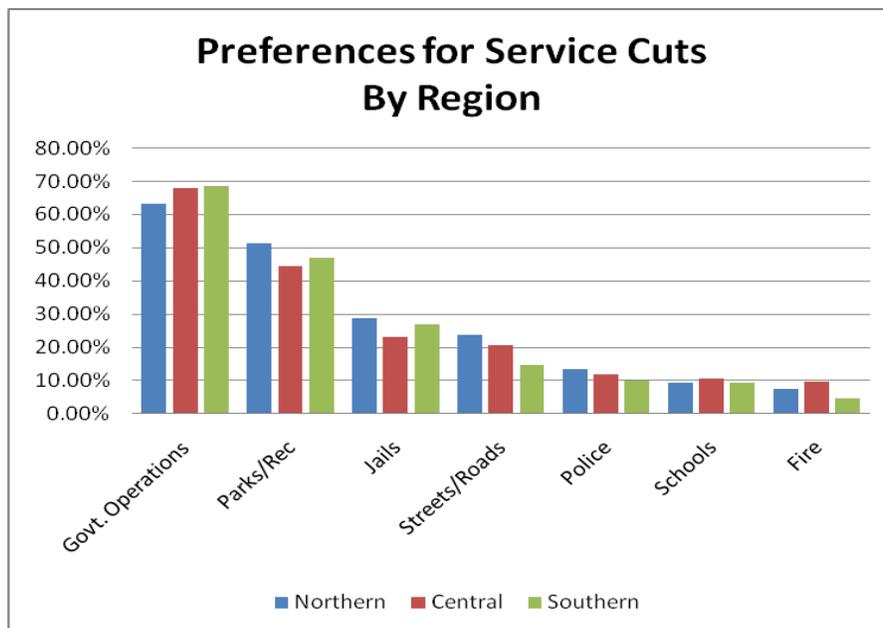


Support for the caps varies by household income with support growing as income increases from under \$30,000 to about \$75,000 and declining thereafter.



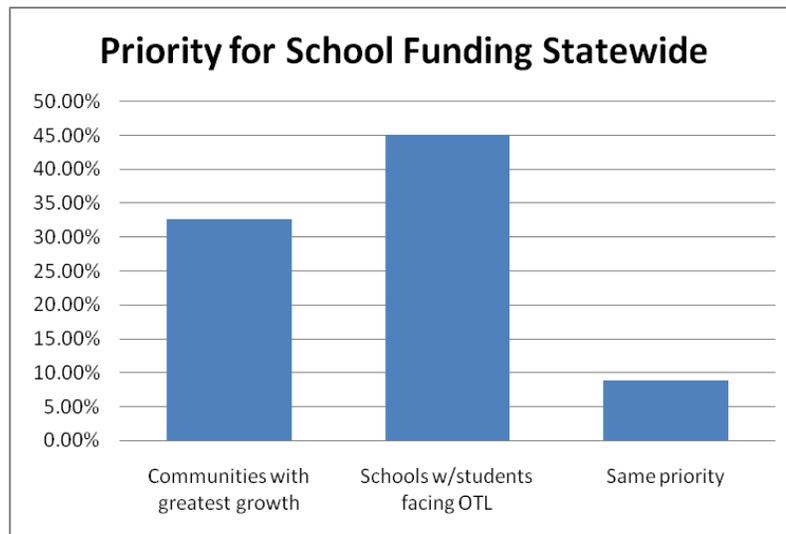
### Local Government Service Cuts

We asked respondents where local governments should cut services if the need arises. As the chart below shows, government operations are favored as the first target for cuts with 66% statewide support. Parks and recreation is second at 47% statewide. Third was jails at 26%, followed by street and road maintenance at 20%. Police departments (12%), schools (10%), and fire services (8%) were least favored for cuts. Regional differences are reflected in the chart below.

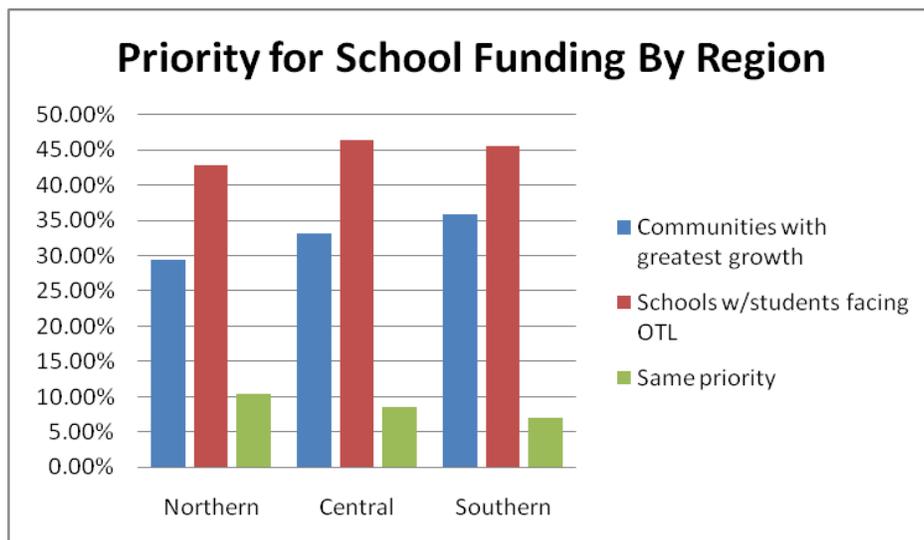


## School Funding Priorities

Since the state assumed the principal role in funding the public schools, there has been substantial discussion regarding the formula the state should adopt in allocating funds. Some have argued that funding should go to communities facing the greatest growth in school attendance while others have suggested that schools facing the greatest obstacles to student achievement should garner more funds. These might be schools in communities with high rates of poverty. Overall, 45% of Hoosiers favor giving more funds to schools in communities facing the greatest obstacles to student achievement, while 33% favor more funding for districts with high growth. Nearly nine percent (8.8%) indicate that both formulas should receive equal treatment in funding.

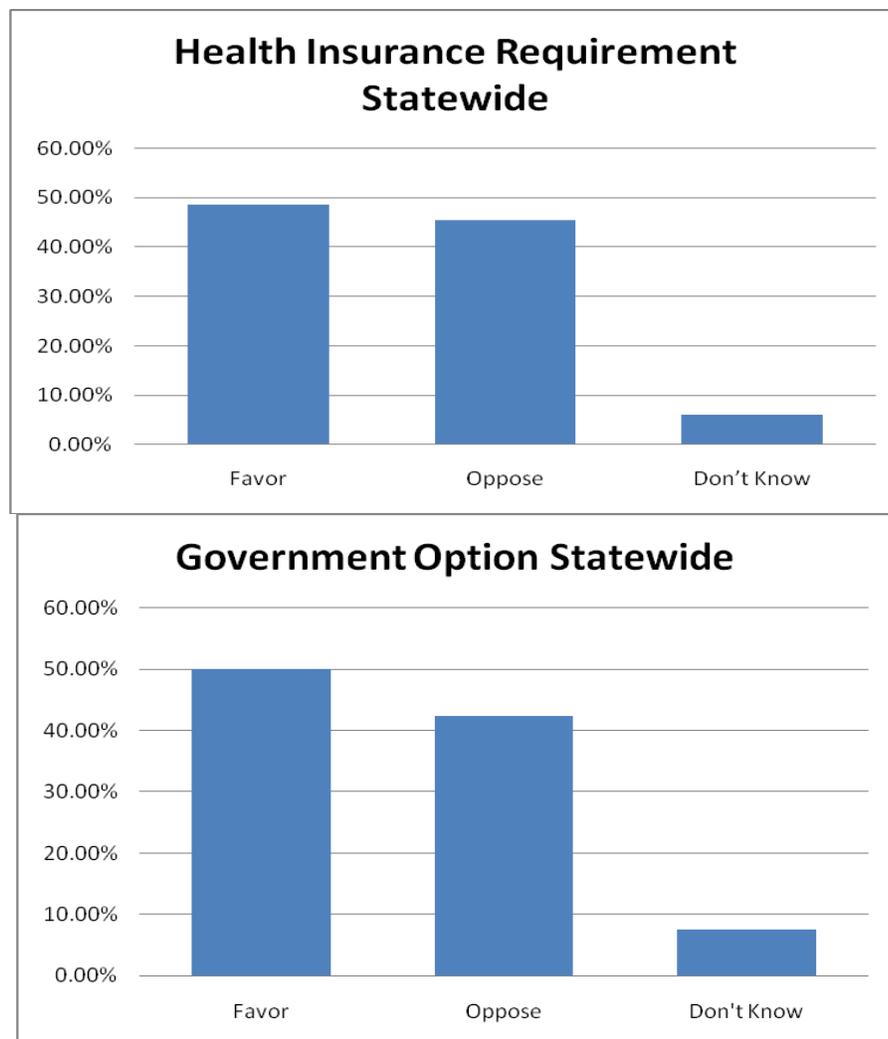


Preference that priority funding be allocated to communities where schools face the greatest obstacles to student achievement is consistent across the state with the greatest support for allocating funding in this manner coming from residents in the central counties of the state, as reported in the following chart.

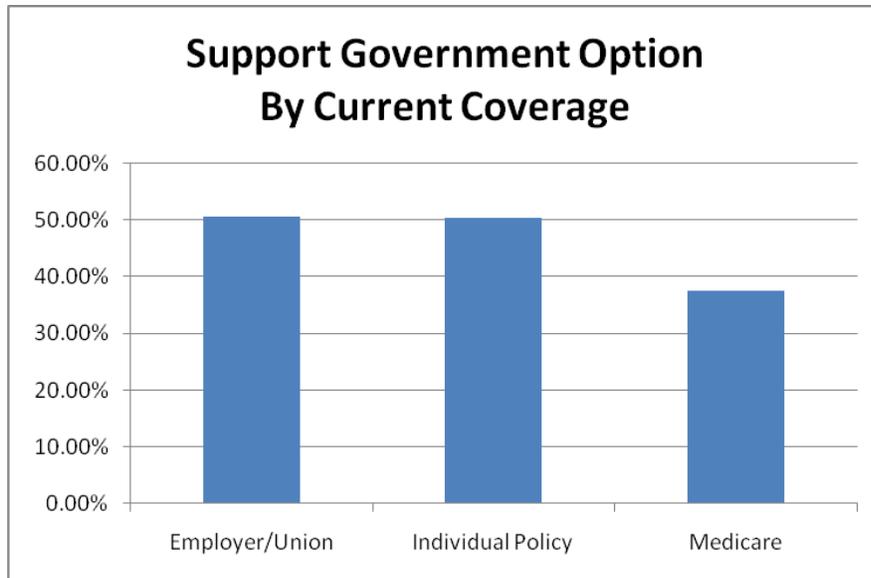


## Healthcare

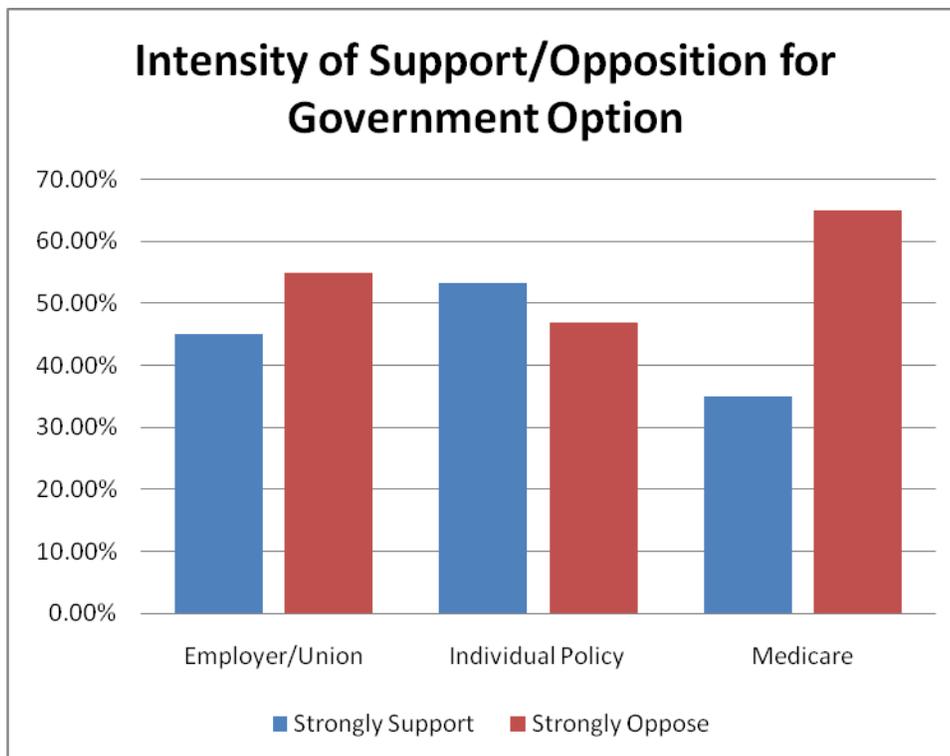
With affordable healthcare being the second highest policy priority for Hoosiers, we asked our sample to weigh in on the current healthcare debate in Washington. First, we asked if respondents would favor or oppose a law that required all Americans to have health insurance, either getting it from work or buying it on their own. A slight plurality 49% to 46% favored such a requirement. Then, we probed respondents to see if they favored or opposed the federal government creating a new health care insurance plan to compete with private health insurance plans. Hoosiers favored a government plan by 50% to 42%, with almost equal intensity among supporters and opponents. These numbers mirror national polls. In November, the Washington Post-ABC News found 53% of Americans voiced support for a government run option with 43% opposed.<sup>1</sup> In Indiana, 29% of those who favored a “public option” expressed strong support while 31% of opponents did so “strongly.”



<sup>1</sup> Washington Post-ABC News National Poll, available at [http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-srv/hp/ssi/wpc/postpoll\\_111609.html?sid=ST2009111700022](http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-srv/hp/ssi/wpc/postpoll_111609.html?sid=ST2009111700022). Accessed on December 8, 2009.

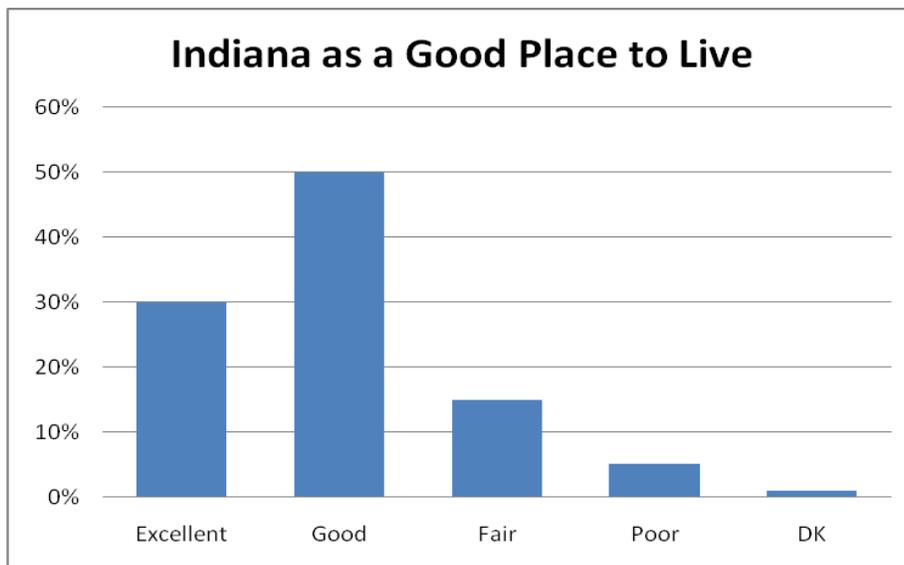


Eighty-five percent of Hoosiers reported they currently have health insurance coverage while 15% reported they are uninsured. Of those who have coverage, 61% reported they were covered by an employer or union; 10 percent purchased their own insurance individually. Twenty-one percent of respondents were Medicare recipients; 3 percent said they were on Medicaid. Five percent said they were covered by some other source or refused to answer. Intensity of opposition to a government option is greatest among Hoosiers on Medicare and those who currently have coverage with their employer or union.



## Satisfaction with Indiana As a Place to Live

We asked residents again this year to rate Indiana as a place to live. Responses were generally favorable and virtually identical to last year's responses.



## Computers and Broadband

We asked Hoosiers "Is there a computer in your Household?" Seventy-six percent reported that they had a computer in their home. We probed further: "Does your household computer have high speed Internet access?" Of those with a home computer, 82% reported having high speed Internet access.

## Approval Ratings

Both the Governor and the General Assembly enjoy approval ratings above 50%. Approval for Governor Daniels stands at 54%; while the General Assembly is viewed favorably by 50% of Hoosiers. This last figure reflects a slight drop from the 59% approval rating enjoyed by lawmakers at the end of 2008.