

The AlaskaPoll



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ALASKAN PUBLIC OPINION AND PERCEPTIONS REGARDING PRIORITIES FOR THE 2009 LEGISLATIVE SESSION

March 2009

Prepared for

Alaska State House of Representatives

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Methodology



Overview

During the period February 25 through March 9, 2009, four hundred seven (n=407) Alaskans over the age of 18, located in 64 communities, were personally contacted via telephone by professional interviewing employees of the Dittman Research & Communications Corporation (DRC). The views and opinions of the Alaska residents were recorded on a strictly confidential basis.

Similar research was conducted among n=408 Alaskans in February 2008. Comparisons are provided in this report where applicable.

Research Design

A random sample design was featured which provided that all households listed in the most current telephone directory for each community had essentially an equal chance of being interviewed.

Sample Selection

Individual respondents were randomly selected from current telephone subscribers listed in the most current directory for each community.

Margin of Error/Confidence Level

Margin of Error is a calculation based on the size of the sample and the size of the population being measured. A sample size of n=407 randomly selected within a population of 650,000 is associated with a margin of error of $\pm 4.9\%$.

Confidence Level is a statistical calculation which describes the degree of confidence that can be assigned to a specific margin of error. The margin of error of $\pm 4.9\%$ is established at the 95% confidence level.

Processing the Data

DRC employees completed coding, editing, data entry and verification, while data processing was completed through the in-house DRC computer system featuring the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) program. The SPSS program is one of the most sophisticated research-oriented data processing and analytical systems available, and is designed specifically for the processing and analysis of survey research data.

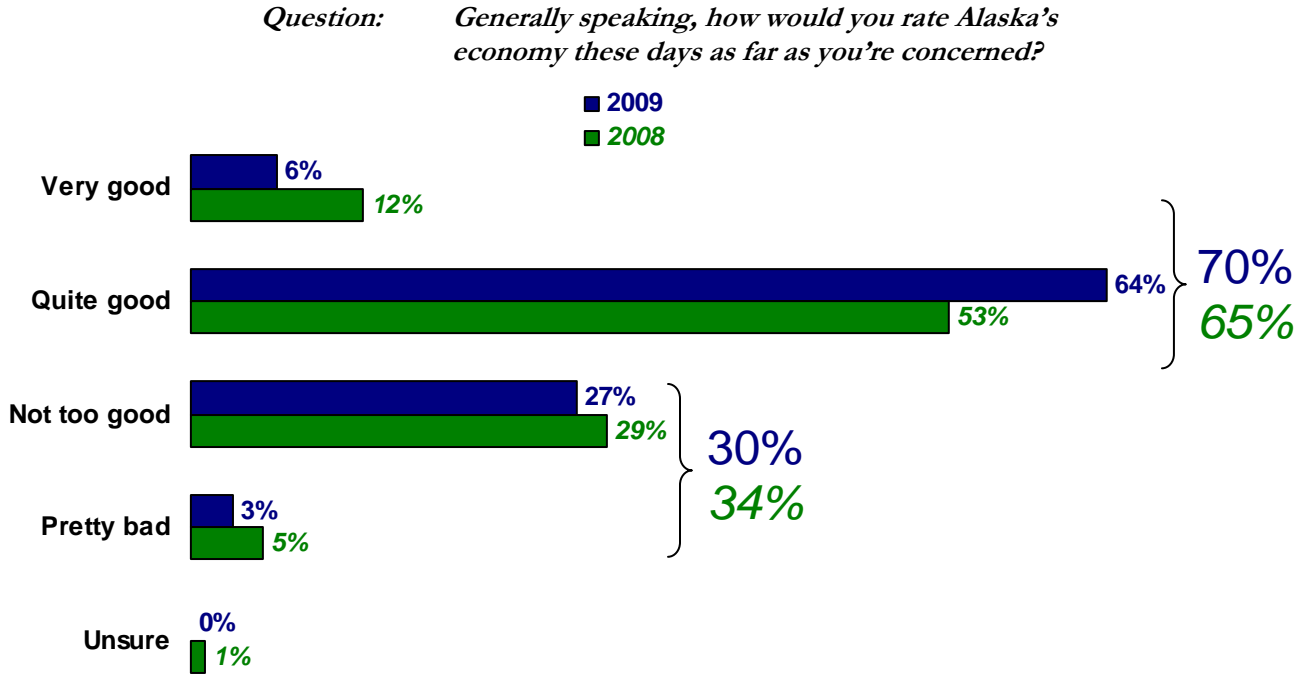
Measurement History

Citizen opinion measurements by DRC, utilizing the previously described methodology, analytical procedures and data processing systems, have proven to accurately forecast the winner of every Primary and General election for Governor of Alaska for over 30 years.

II Findings



On a statewide basis, Alaska's current economy is still rated as good. In fact, 70% say "quite" or "very" good at the present time, compared to 65% last year.



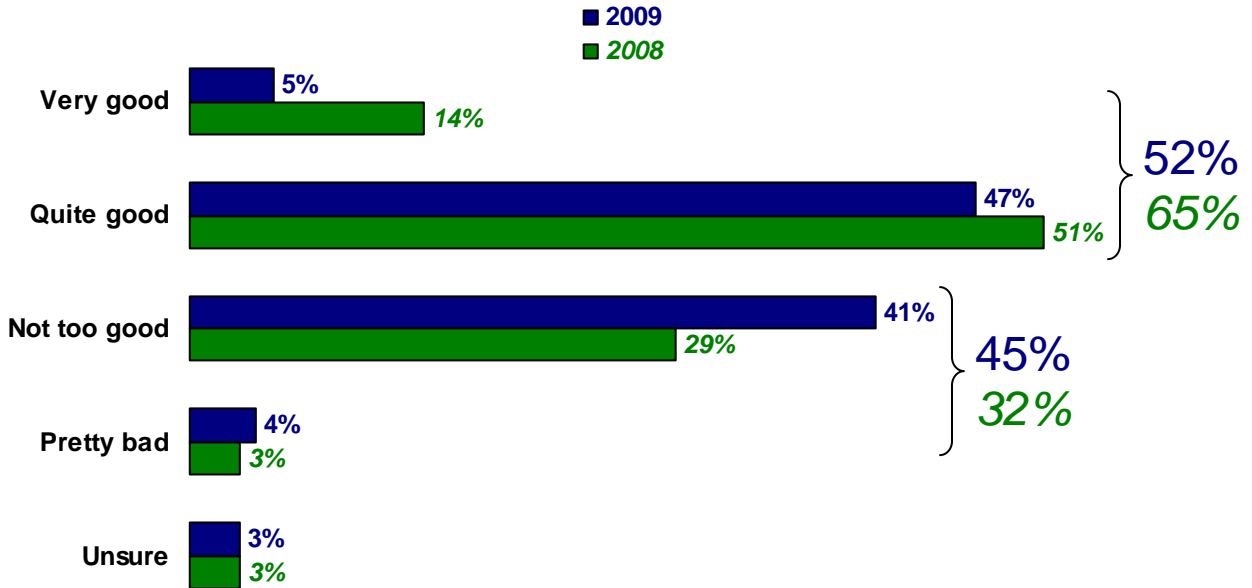
Regionally, Rural areas and Southeast communities are the most likely to report negative perceptions regarding the current economy.

<i>"...rate Alaska's economy...?"</i>		
<u>Region:</u>	<u>Very good/ Quite good</u>	<u>Not too good/ Pretty bad</u>
Rural	55%	44%
Central	80%	18%
Southcentral	72%	27%
Anchorage	73%	27%
Southeast	54%	44%
<u>Registration:</u>		
Democrat	63%	37%
Republican	73%	24%
Non-Partisan	67%	32%



However, many Alaskans see trouble ahead -- while approximately half (52%) say the future looks "good", 45% see the future looking "not too good" or "pretty bad", which is a substantial increase from 32% last year.

Question: Looking ahead what do you see -- how does Alaska's economy in the future look to you?



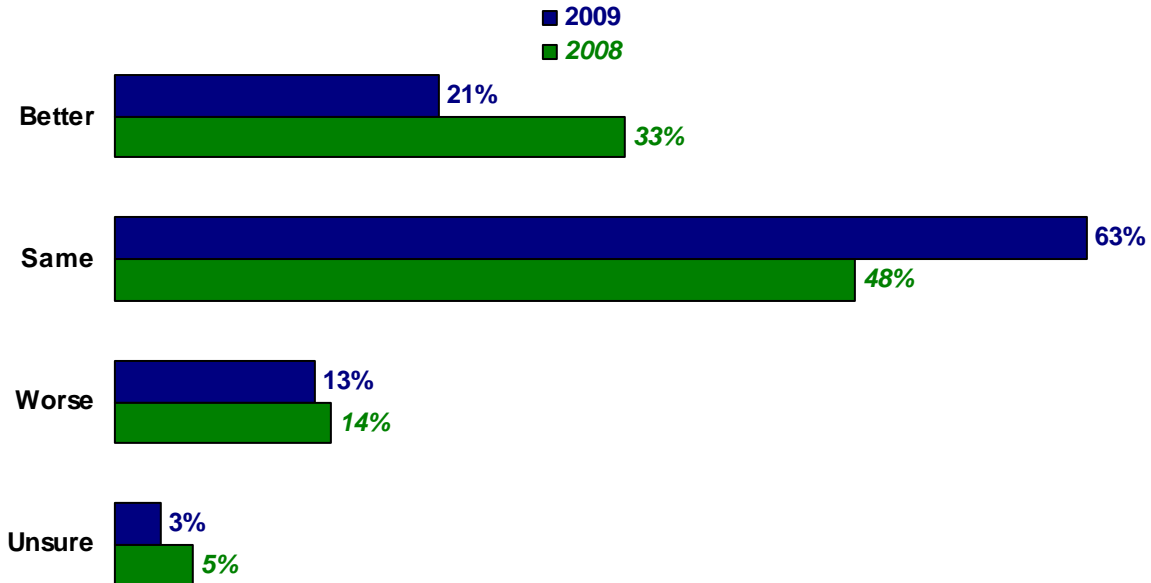
There appears to be very little regional difference regarding Alaska's potential economic future -- respondents throughout the state report highly consistent expectations (48-53% "good", 44-47% "bad").

<i>"...how does Alaska's economy in the future look...?"</i>		
<u>Region:</u>	<u>Very good/ Quite good</u>	<u>Not too good/ Pretty bad</u>
Rural	48%	47%
Central	53%	44%
Southcentral	53%	45%
Anchorage	53%	45%
Southeast	51%	46%
<u>Registration:</u>		
Democrat	50%	49%
Republican	47%	50%
Non-Partisan	55%	43%



Approximately one out of five Alaskans (21%) say state legislature leadership is “working better” these days than it has in the past, which comes on top of last year’s 33% improvement.

Question: What’s your overall opinion of the leadership of the Alaska state legislature these days – does it seem to be working much better than it has in the past, about the same, or worse?



Altogether, the largest number of respondents in all geographic regions reported they believed the legislative leadership was working “about the same” or “better” than before.

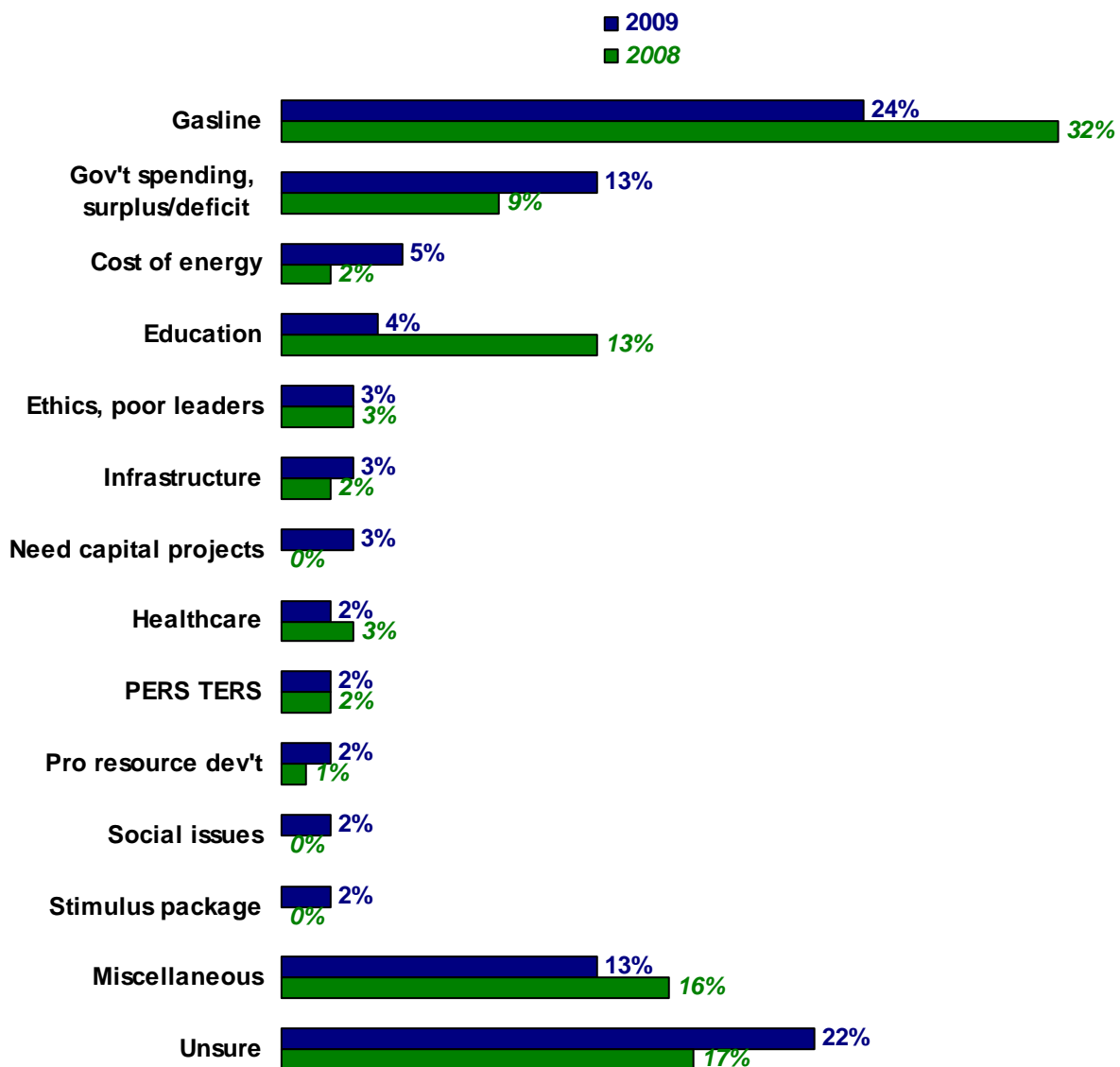
<i>“...opinion of leadership of Alaska state legislature...?”</i>				
Region:	Better	()	Same	Worse
Rural	22%	(89%)	67%	5%
Central	20%	(94%)	74%	6%
Southcentral	15%	(77%)	62%	20%
Anchorage	21%	(81%)	60%	13%
Southeast	29%	(85%)	56%	15%
Registration:				
Democrat	17%	(87%)	70%	8%
Republican	17%	(85%)	68%	13%
Non-Partisan	21%	(81%)	60%	16%



As far as priorities for the legislative session are concerned, “a natural gas pipeline” still leads the list, but has dropped from 32% last year to 24% now. “Government spending” is now one of the top concerns (13%), compared to 9% last year who were concerned about the “surplus”. “Cost of energy” is also an increasing priority, while “education” has declined.

Question: The regular 90-day session of the Alaska State Legislature has approximately 45 days remaining – what’s the one most important thing you’d like to see it accomplish before it goes out of session?

(asked as open-ended question)



See Verbatim Comments for a complete list of all responses, pages 24-42.



On a regional basis, the high “*cost of energy*” is the leading priority in Rural areas. Emphasis on a “*natural gas pipeline*” continues to be the highest priority along the Railbelt (Central / Southcentral / Anchorage), while “*government spending*” is the highest priority in Southeast.

<i>“...most important thing...?”</i>			
<u>Region:</u>	<u>Gasline</u>	<u>Government spending</u>	<u>High cost of energy</u>
Rural	14%	2%	18%
Central	36%	7%	--
Southcentral	21%	13%	4%
Anchorage	28%	17%	2%
Southeast	13%	20%	6%
<u>Registration:</u>			
Democrat	19%	6%	9%
Republican	31%	13%	6%
Non-Partisan	23%	16%	4%

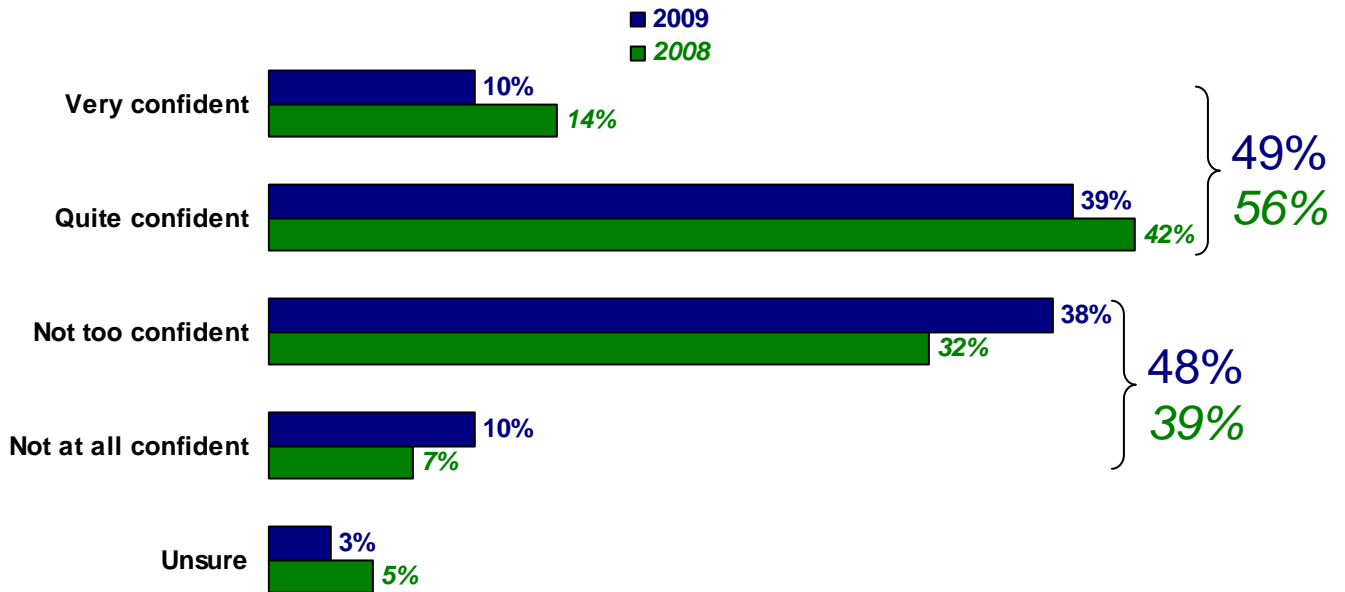
See Verbatim Comments for a complete list of all responses, pages 24-42.

* Note: The Central region primarily consists of Fairbanks and North Pole, but also includes respondents in proportion to their population in communities such as Delta Junction, Healy, Nenana and Tok.



At the present time, Alaskans are nearly equally divided regarding the likely success of AGIA (49% “confident”; 48% “not confident”), indicating a little less optimism than last year (56% “confident”).

Question: How confident are you that Governor Palin’s AGIA plan will be successful in getting a natural gas pipeline for Alaska?



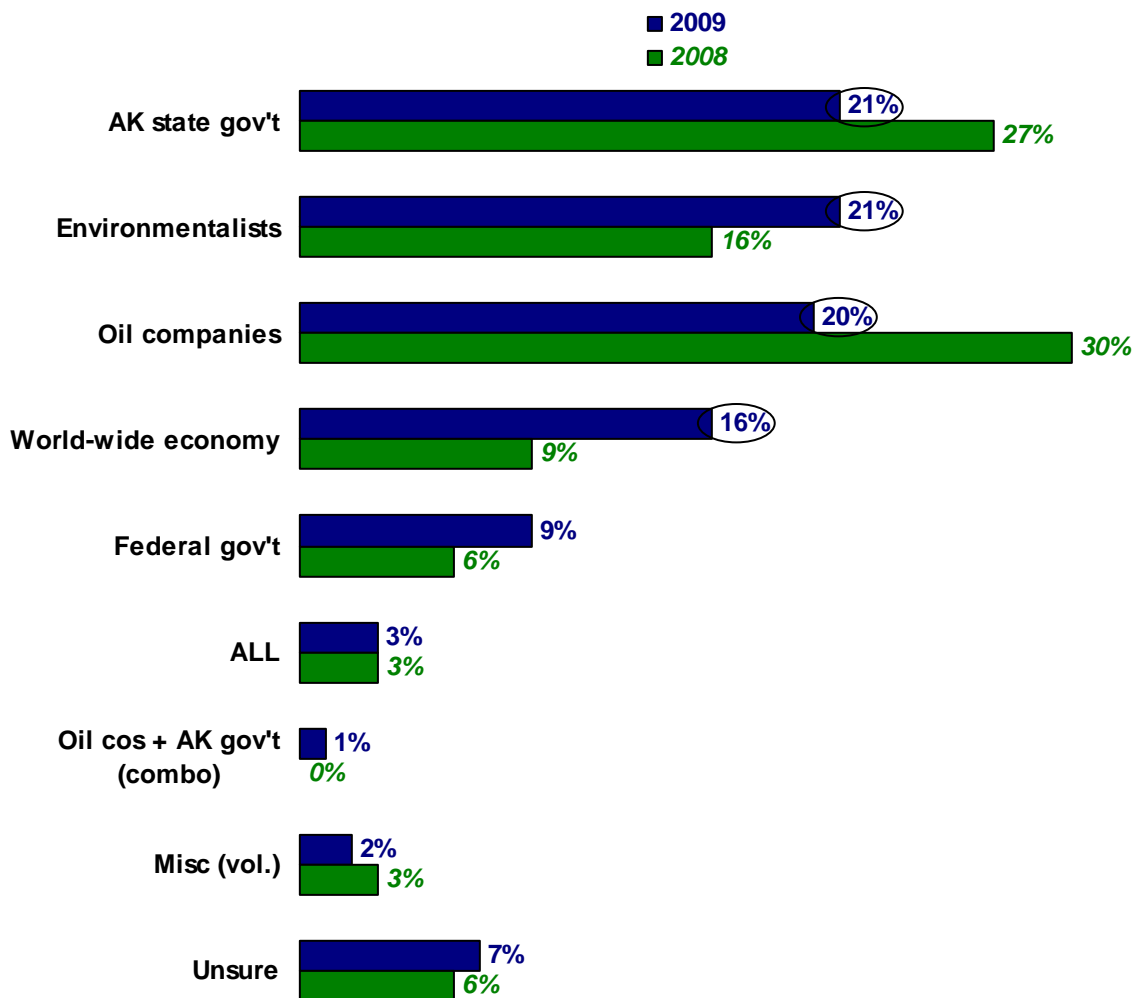
A majority (52-56%) of Alaskans in Rural, Central and Southcentral remain confident, while a similar majority (53%) in Anchorage and Southeast report less confidence in the AGIA plan.

<i>“...confidence in AGIA being successful...?”</i>		
<u>Region:</u>	<u>Very / Quite</u>	<u>Not too / Not at all</u>
Rural	52%	47%
Central	56%	41%
Southcentral	56%	40%
Anchorage	45%	53%
Southeast	40%	53%
<u>Registration:</u>		
Democrat	34%	63%
Republican	58%	41%
Non-Partisan	50%	46%



“Oil companies” are no longer seen as the major hindrance to a natural gas pipeline (20% currently, 30% last year). “Alaska state government” has also declined compared to last year (21%, down from 27%), while “environmentalists” (21%) and “world-wide economy” (16%) are now more likely to be seen as reasons for the delay in building a natural gas pipeline. Altogether, Alaskans do not point to a single culprit for the lack of a natural gas pipeline -- four major factors share almost equal degrees of blame.

Question: What do you feel has been the main reason a pipeline hasn't been started or built yet -- is it mostly the fault of the Alaska state government, the oil companies, the Federal government, environmentalist, world-wide economy, or something else?

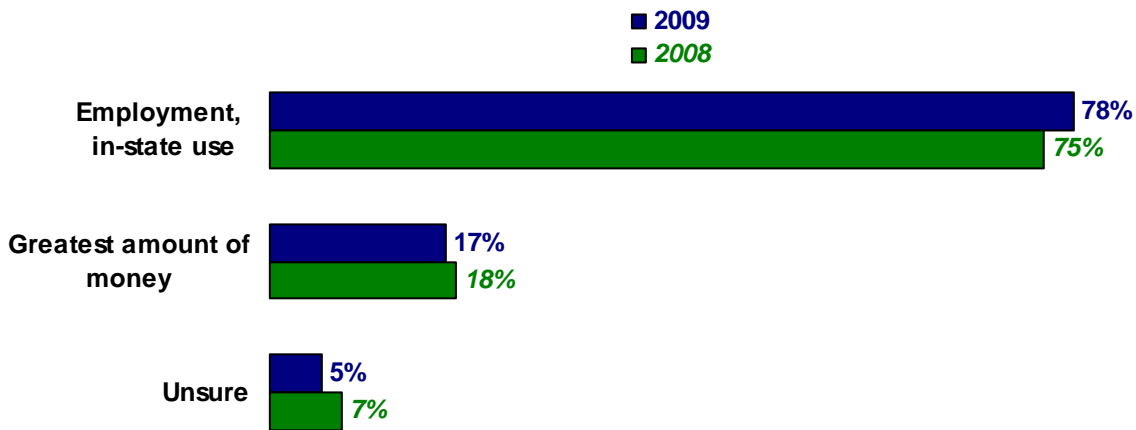


Alaskans in Rural areas and Southeast are most likely to believe “*environmentalists*” are hindering natural gas pipeline development (31-33%), while Central and Southcentral Alaskans are most likely to blame “*oil companies*” (27-34%). Anchorage residents (27%) are most likely to place the blame on “*state government*” (27%).

<i>“...main reason a pipeline hasn’t been started or built yet...?”</i>			
<u>Region:</u>	<u>Alaska state government</u>	<u>Environ-mentalists</u>	<u>Oil companies</u>
Rural	24%	33%	10%
Central	17%	12%	34%
Southcentral	15%	20%	27%
Anchorage	27%	19%	17%
Southeast	11%	31%	11%
<u>Registration:</u>			
Democrat	18%	12%	26%
Republican	18%	32%	21%
Non-Partisan	24%	20%	15%

Alaskans' interpretation of the constitutional requirement to use state natural resources for the "maximum benefit of state residents" remains highly focused on "employment and in-state use" (78%).

Question: Alaska's constitution states that Alaska's natural resources are to be used for the "maximum benefit" of state residents. In your opinion, does "maximum benefit" primarily mean provide the greatest amount of money to the state, or does it mean providing employment and in-state use of the resources?



And there appears to be broad agreement throughout the state -- from 62% in Southeast to 90% in the Central region.

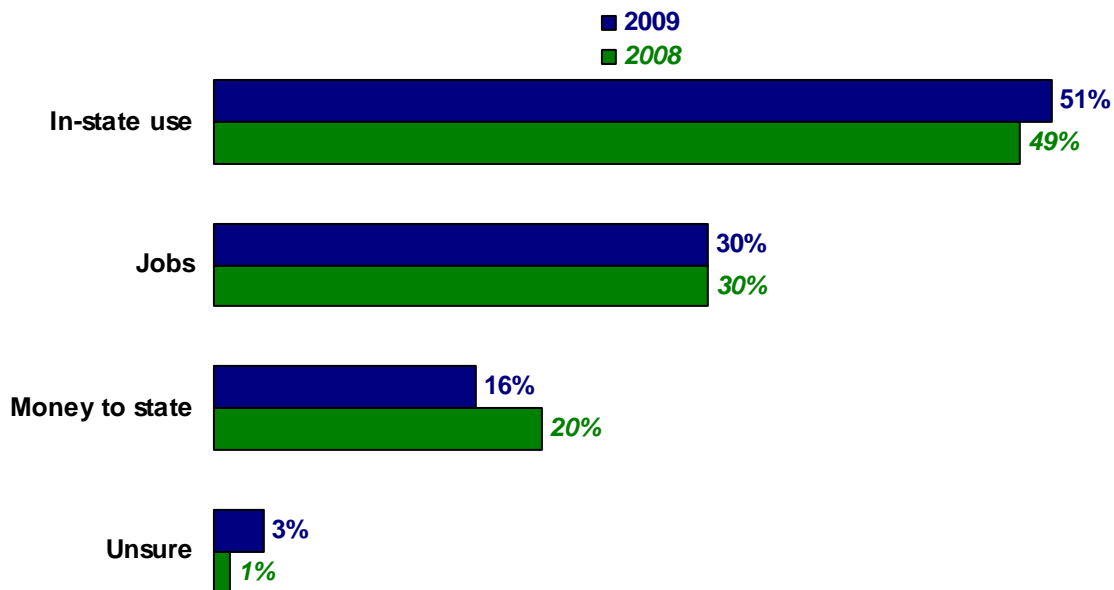
<i>"...what does 'maximum benefit' mean...?"</i>		
<u>Region:</u>	<u>Greatest amount of money</u>	<u>Employment, in-state use</u>
Rural	20%	76%
Central	6%	90%
Southcentral	22%	76%
Anchorage	14%	81%
Southeast	31%	62%
<u>Registration:</u>		
Democrat	20%	75%
Republican	20%	77%
Non-Partisan	16%	78%



Points-of-view regarding the benefits and relative importance of a natural gas pipeline are mostly unchanged from last year -- “*in-state use*” (51%) and “*jobs*” (30%) are still seen as the most important benefits.

Question: *Which do you think is the most important benefit of a natural gas pipeline from the North Slope...*

- *the jobs it will provide;*
- *the in-state use for heating, electricity and industrial development;*
- *the money it will provide to the state and Permanent Fund?*



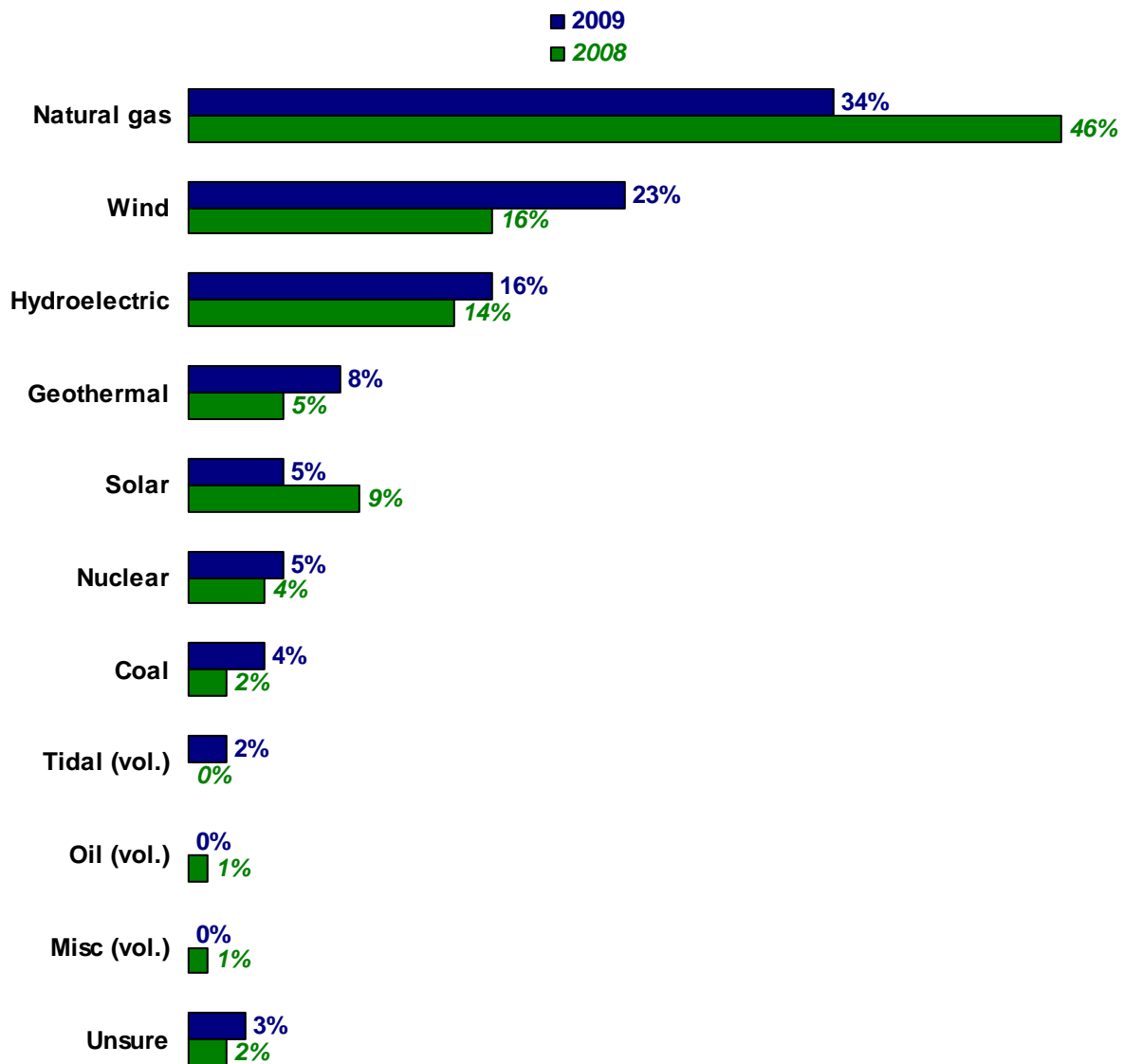
Although “*in-state use*” leads in every geographic area, “*jobs*” are still considered to be relatively important in Rural, Southcentral and Anchorage. Southeast residents place a relatively higher level of importance on the “*amount of money*” it will provide to the state and Permanent Fund.

<i>“...most important benefit of a gas pipeline...?”</i>			
<u>Region:</u>	<u>In-state use</u>	<u>Jobs</u>	<u>Money</u>
Rural	42%	33%	26%
Central	69%	17%	13%
Southcentral	47%	34%	12%
Anchorage	52%	34%	12%
Southeast	44%	25%	32%
<u>Registration:</u>			
Democrat	50%	29%	20%
Republican	46%	33%	16%
Non-Partisan	50%	31%	17%



“Natural gas” still leads as the most desired source of energy in the future (34%), but it’s down from 46% last year. On the other hand, Alaskans report increased support for “wind” as a potential source of energy in the future (23%) compared to 16% last year. “Hydroelectric” and “geothermal” are also increasingly recommended, followed by “nuclear”, “coal” and “tidal”, while “solar” has declined as a favored potential source of energy.

Question: As energy needs in the area where you live continue to grow, which source of energy do you support the most for the future?

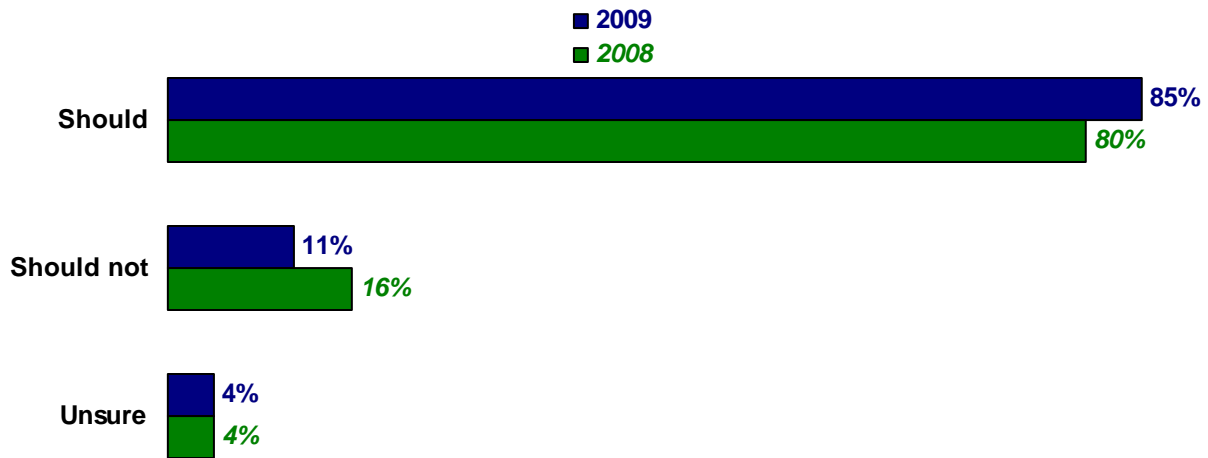


Southeast residents clearly prefer “hydroelectric” (51%), while Central residents clearly prefer “natural gas” (50%). The other regions do not have a single preferred method, with Rural residents favoring a combination of “natural gas”, “wind” and “geothermal”.

<i>“...which source of energy do you support...?”</i>					
<u>Region:</u>	<u>Natural Gas</u>	<u>Wind</u>	<u>Hydroelectric</u>	<u>Geothermal</u>	<u>Solar</u>
Rural	32%	36%	8%	16%	2%
Central	50%	10%	7%	12%	4%
Southcentral	26%	28%	7%	8%	7%
Anchorage	39%	25%	15%	5%	5%
Southeast	10%	12%	51%	1%	9%
<u>Registration:</u>					
Democrat	28%	34%	13%	13%	7%
Republican	42%	13%	12%	6%	3%
Non-Partisan	31%	26%	17%	8%	6%

Support for an in-state natural gas pipeline from the North Slope to tidewater in Southcentral is increasing (85%), from an already high level (80%) last year.

*Question: In addition to a potential 30 billion dollar, 2,000 mile natural gas pipeline from the North Slope to the mid-western United States that could take 15-20 years to build, do you feel the governor and state legislature should or should not give serious attention to supporting a smaller 800 mile gas line from the North Slope to tidewater in Southcentral Alaska that could be built more quickly and provide gas for in-state use as well as for export? **



And support is strong throughout Alaska, ranging from 95% in Rural areas, to 82-89% along the Railbelt, to 79% in Southeast.

<i>“...attention to smaller gas line...?”</i>		
<u>Region:</u>	<u>Should</u>	<u>Should not</u>
Rural	95%	4%
Central	89%	3%
Southcentral	85%	14%
Anchorage	82%	12%
Southeast	79%	17%
<u>Registration:</u>		
Democrat	80%	13%
Republican	87%	9%
Non-Partisan	87%	9%

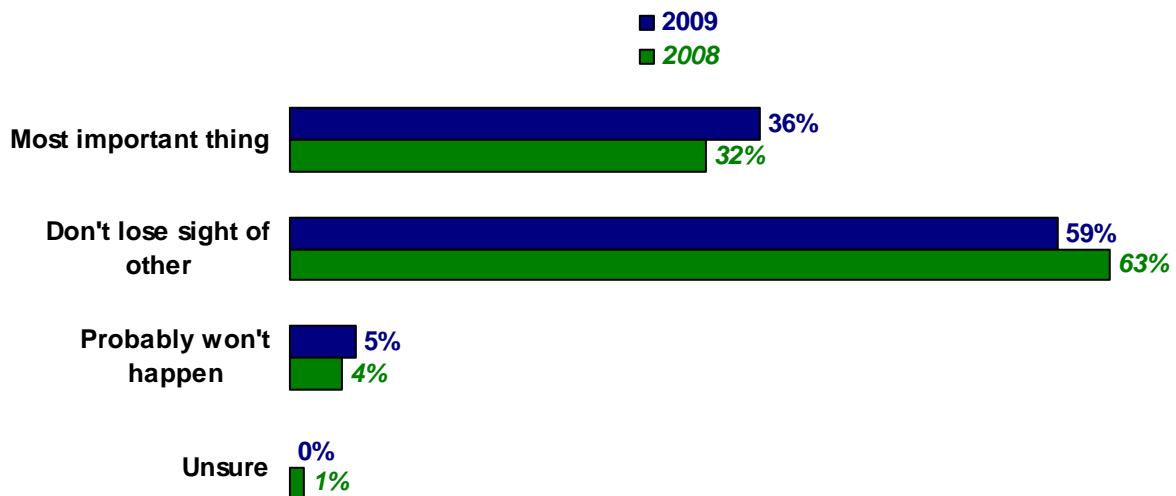
*Note This question has been slightly revised since 2008. Replaced words underlined: “...to the mid-western United States that would take 15-20 years...” and “...a smaller 800 mile ‘bullet line’ from the North Slope to Valdez that could be built more quickly...”



Alaskans are slightly more likely than last year to say the natural gas pipeline is “by far most important” for Alaska’s economy; however, most respondents still feel other economic opportunities should be considered.

Question: I’m going to read three different points of view regarding a natural gas pipeline from the North Slope, please tell me which description comes closest to your own personal point of view...?

*It’s by far the most important thing for Alaska’s economic future; it’s important, but we shouldn’t lose sight of other economic opportunities;
it’s a waste of time and a boondoggle that probably won’t happen*



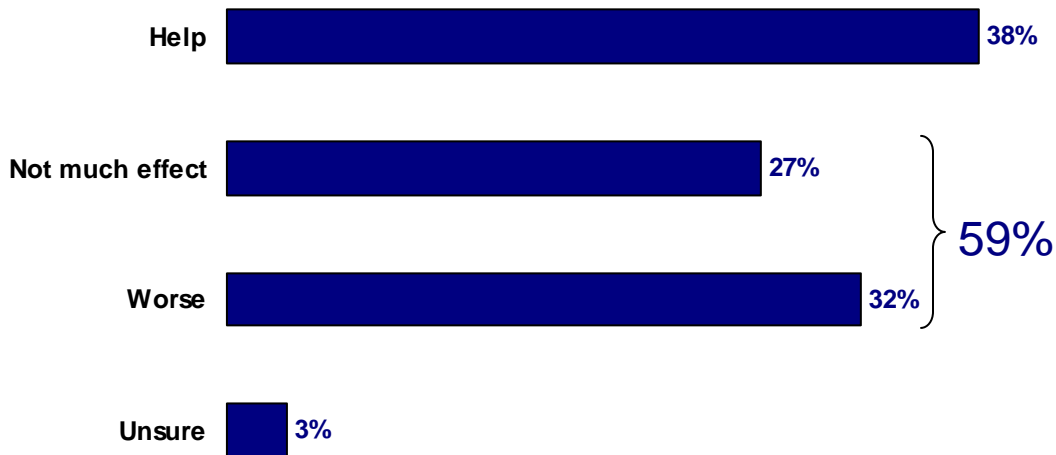
Southcentral residents are most likely to say a natural gas pipeline is “by far most important” -- while all other regions agree it’s important, but we should not close our eyes to other opportunities.

<i>“...which description of gas pipeline...?”</i>			
<u>Region:</u>	<u>Most important</u>	<u>Don't lose sight of other</u>	<u>Waste of time prob won't happen</u>
Rural	32%	60%	8%
Central	31%	68%	1%
Southcentral	49%	42%	8%
Anchorage	34%	61%	3%
Southeast	26%	69%	5%
<u>Registration:</u>			
Democrat	24%	67%	9%
Republican	46%	50%	4%
Non-Partisan	34%	60%	4%



Statewide, nearly two out of five respondents (38%) report they believe the federal stimulus package will help the national economy, while a broad majority (59%) believe it will “not have much effect” or “make things worse”.

Question: In your personal opinion, do you feel the \$787 billion dollar federal government “stimulus package” will help the national economy, not have much effect, or make it worse?



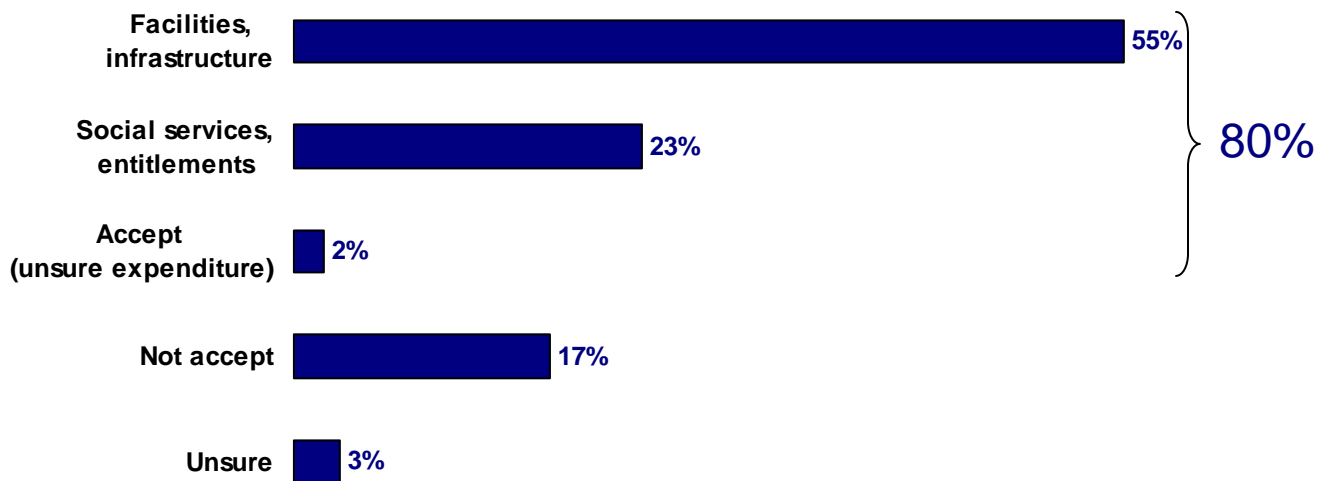
Rural residents are most hopeful (58% “help”), followed by Southeast (46%), while Central, Southcentral and Anchorage residents are the most likely to expect the stimulus package to make things worse (30-37%).

“... ‘stimulus package’ effect...?”				
<u>Region:</u>	<u>Help</u>	<u>Not much effect</u>		<u>Worse</u>
Rural	58%	18%	(40%)	22%
Central	40%	29%	(59%)	30%
Southcentral	23%	35%	(72%)	37%
Anchorage	38%	26%	(60%)	34%
Southeast	46%	25%	(52%)	27%
<u>Registration:</u>				
Democrat	67%	26%	(33%)	7%
Republican	9%	34%	(89%)	55%
Non-Partisan	43%	23%	(52%)	29%



Most Alaskans (80%) feel Alaska should accept up to 1 billion dollars of stimulus package money and use it for construction of “*facilities and infrastructure*” (55%), while approximately one out of four (23%) say it should be used for “*social services and entitlement programs*”. Approximately one out of six (17%) think Alaska should “*not accept*” the stimulus package money, and 3% are “*unsure*”.

Question: The State of Alaska could choose to accept up to 1 billion dollars of the stimulus package money. Do you feel the state should accept the money and use it primarily for social services and entitlement programs, accept the money and use it primarily for construction of physical facilities and infrastructure — or not accept the stimulus package money?



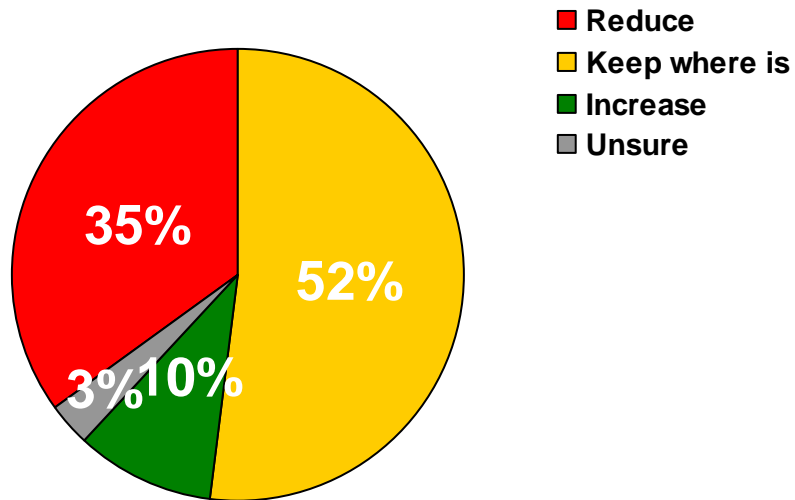
A consistent majority throughout Alaska (54-59%) support accepting the money and using it for “*facilities and infrastructure*”; however, approximately one out of three Rural residents (34%) recommend accepting the money and using it for “*social service programs and entitlements*”.

<i>“...could choose to accept up to \$1 billion stimulus money...?”</i>			
<u>Region:</u>	<u>Facilities / infrastructure</u>	<u>Social Services / entitlements</u>	<u>Not accept</u>
Rural	59%	34%	5%
Central	58%	19%	19%
Southcentral	55%	20%	19%
Anchorage	54%	25%	16%
Southeast	56%	18%	21%
<u>Registration:</u>			
Democrat	50%	40%	4%
Republican	54%	7%	35%
Non-Partisan	59%	27%	11%



Alaskans report very little support for “increasing” the state budget (10%) -- most want to “keep it as-is” (52%) or “reduce it” (35%).

Question: Would you like to see the state legislature reduce the state budget, keep it about where it is, or increase it?



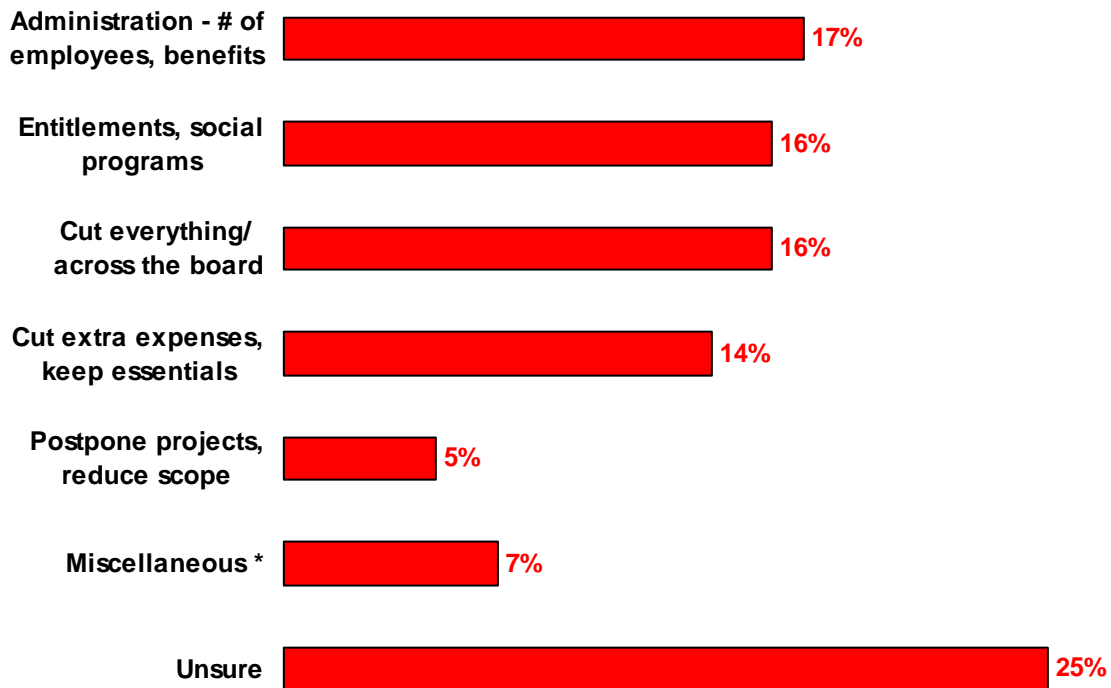
Anchorage-area respondents (47%) are the most likely to want to see a reduced state budget, while a majority of Alaskans in other areas (57-64%) would prefer to see the state budget remain “as-is”.

<i>“...state budget...?”</i>			
<u>Region:</u>	<u>Reduce</u>	<u>Keep where is</u>	<u>Increase</u>
Rural	14%	59%	19%
Central	30%	57%	13%
Southcentral	35%	57%	6%
Anchorage	47%	42%	7%
Southeast	16%	64%	17%
<u>Registration:</u>			
Democrat	19%	57%	20%
Republican	46%	46%	5%
Non-Partisan	29%	57%	12%

Most respondents who would like to see the state budget reduced recommend four closely clustered ways to reduce the budget: “state employees and benefits”, “entitlement programs”, “cut everything, across the board cuts” and “keep essentials, cut extra expenses”, such as travel, marketing, advertising and duplication between Anchorage and Juneau.

Question: Which budget area would you specifically reduce?

[Asked of n=142 respondents who would like the budget reduced -- 35%]



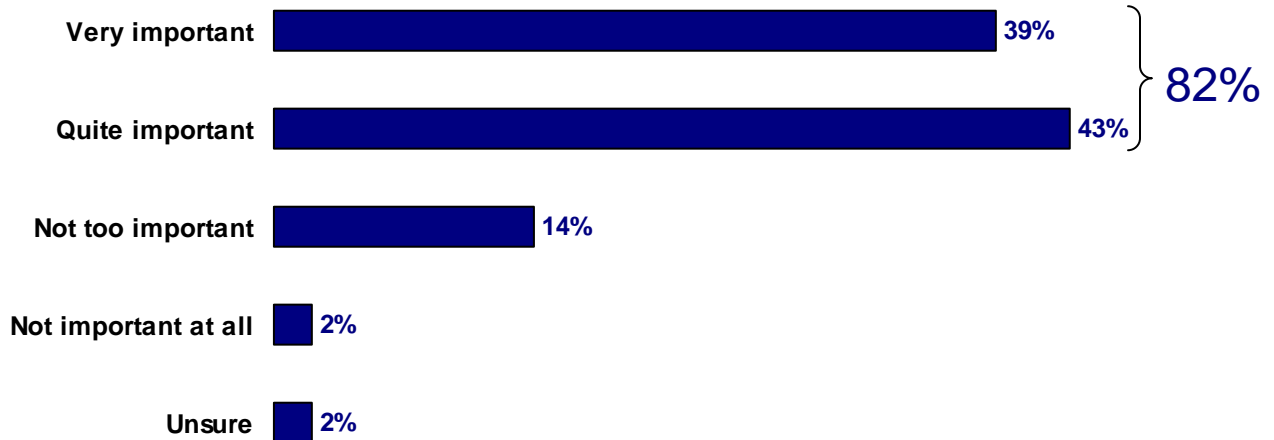
See Verbatim Comments for a complete list of all responses, pages 43-51.

*Note: “Miscellaneous” includes “education”, “Gov. Palin’s expenses”, “move the capitol”, “too many Anchorage offices”, “public transit” and “Fish and Wildlife”.



Over four out of five Alaskans (82%) report they consider cruise ships “quite” or “very” important for Alaska’s economy.

Question: How important would you say cruise ships are for Alaska’s economy?



Southeast residents rate cruise ships most important to Alaska’s economy (91%), followed by Anchorage (85%) and Central (84%).

<i>“...cruise ships for Alaska’s economy...?”</i>		
<u>Region:</u>	<u>Very/Quite important</u>	<u>Not too/Not at all important</u>
Rural	74%	24%
Central	84%	13%
Southcentral	75%	25%
Anchorage	85%	12%
Southeast	91%	8%
<u>Registration:</u>		
Democrat	79%	20%
Republican	80%	19%
Non-Partisan	84%	14%

Over half of all respondents (53%) believe water discharge standards, should be “*about the same*” or “*less strict*” than Alaska’s coastal cities such as Juneau and Ketchikan, while approximately two out of five (42%) favor “*more strict*” standards.

Question: Do you feel the waste water discharge standards required for cruise ships should be more strict, about the same, or less strict than the waste water discharge standards required for Alaska’s coastal cities such as Juneau and Ketchikan?



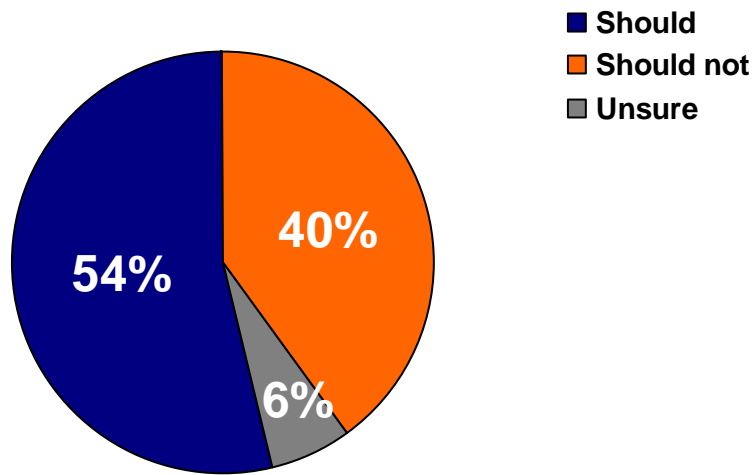
Geographically, Rural residents (58%) are the most likely to report cruise ships should be held to a higher waste water discharge standard, followed by half (50%) of Southeast residents. The largest percentage in the remainder of Alaska (Central / Southcentral / Anchorage) report waste water discharge standards for cruise ships should be “*about the same*” as the standards required for coastal cities such as Juneau and Ketchikan.

<i>“...water discharge standards...?”</i>			
<u>Region:</u>	<u>More strict</u>	<u>About same</u>	<u>Less strict</u>
Rural	58%	31%	5%
Central	28%	63%	1%
Southcentral	37%	57%	2%
Anchorage	41%	49%	5%
Southeast	50%	43%	2%
<u>Registration:</u>			
Democrat	64%	31%	2%
Republican	32%	57%	6%
Non-Partisan	40%	53%	2%



By a margin of 54% to 40%, a majority of Alaskans report they support the death penalty as an option in cases of individuals convicted of first degree murder.

Question: Do you believe Alaska should or should not have the death penalty as a potential sentence for individuals convicted of certain capital offenses, such as first degree murder of police officers and firefighters?

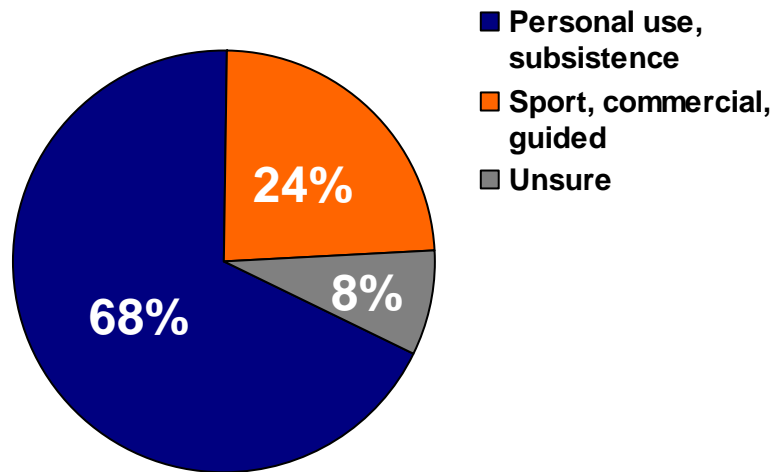


With the exception of Southeast (57% “should not”), Alaskan views are basically consistent throughout most of the state (54-56% “should”) and highest in Southcentral (62%).

<i>“...death penalty as potential sentence...?”</i>		
<u>Region:</u>	<u>Should</u>	<u>Should not</u>
Rural	56%	39%
Central	54%	42%
Southcentral	62%	33%
Anchorage	55%	38%
Southeast	36%	57%
 <u>Registration:</u>		
Democrat	41%	51%
Republican	75%	22%
Non-Partisan	47%	47%

And in conclusion, by a wide margin (68% to 24%), Alaskans believe “*personal use*” and “*subsistence use*” of Alaska’s fisheries resources should have the highest priority when fishery allocation decisions are being made.

Question: If the harvest of Alaska’s fisheries resources is divided into two categories — personal use and subsistence; or sport, commercial and commercial guided fishing — which do you believe should have the highest priority when fishery allocation decisions are being made?



Public support for a “*personal use / subsistence priority*” is highest in Rural areas (85%), while “*sport, commercial and guided fishing*” is relatively more strongly supported in Southcentral (38%). In total, in every area, “*personal use*” and “*subsistence*” is believed, by far, to be the highest priority.

<i>“...highest priority...fishery allocation...?”</i>		
<u>Region:</u>	<u>Personal use, subsistence</u>	<u>Sport, commercial, guided</u>
Rural	85%	12%
Central	79%	12%
Southcentral	56%	38%
Anchorage	67%	24%
Southeast	61%	25%
<u>Registration:</u>		
Democrat	64%	22%
Republican	66%	27%
Non-Partisan	67%	25%

