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Most Tennesseans oppose carrying handguns in parks, eateries and bars. Fifty-four percent oppose allowing permit holders to carry handguns in parks; 60 percent, in restaurants; and 80 percent, in bars. *(Contact Jason Reineke)*

Two in five plan to get swine flu vaccine; only half think government can avoid epidemic. Only 38 percent of Tennesseans plan to get inoculated against swine flu, and about half (48 percent) say they are either “somewhat confident” (33 percent) or “very confident” (15 percent) that the government can prevent a nationwide epidemic. *(Contact Ken Blake)*

“Bottle bill” draws strong support among state residents. Eighty-three percent favor a 5-cent deposit on containers that would be refunded upon return. Seventy-nine percent said the system would make them more likely to recycle. *(Contact Jason Reineke)*

Economy also No. 1 state problem, but below national level. Just 31 percent named the economy the No. 1 problem confronting the state, 15 percent fewer than those identifying the economy as nation’s top problem. *(Contact Bob Wyatt)*

State-mood barometer rises a bit, still higher than national. Tennessee’s barometer stands at 47, up from 43 last spring. The state barometer remains considerably higher than the national score of 28 in this survey as well as our spring poll. *(Contact Bob Wyatt)*

Mixed message to illegal immigrants: Leave. No, stay. No, stay just a little while. Tennesseans appear ambivalent about how best to deal with illegal immigrants currently working in the United States. *(Contact Ken Blake)*

Which party should wield power in the state? Tennesseans shrug. Tennesseans appear decidedly undecided about which party should control the state Legislature and occupy the governor’s mansion after the next election cycle. *(Contact Ken Blake)*

Bredesen, legislative approval both edge up. Gov. Bredesen’s approval edged marginally higher to 56 percent, up from 52 percent last spring – but down from an all-time high of 72 percent in spring 2004. Legislative approval is back to 38 percent. *(Contact Bob Wyatt)*

Details of State Findings Fall 2009

Most Tennesseans oppose carrying handguns in parks, eateries and bars *(Contact Jason Reineke, 615-494-7746)*

Handgun-carry permit holders should not be allowed to carry their weapons in public parks, restaurants, and bars, majorities of Tennesseans say.

Fifty-four percent of state residents oppose allowing permit holders to carry handguns in parks; 60 percent, in restaurants; and 80 percent, in bars.

As one might expect, Tennesseans who have handguns – and especially who have permits to carry them – express the most support for measures allowing handguns to be carried in these places. But there are limits even to their support.

Among those who have a handgun in their household, 53 percent favor allowing handguns to be carried in parks; 49 percent, in restaurants; and 23 percent in bars. Among those who have a handgun carry permit holder in the household, 63 percent favor allowing handguns to be carried in parks; 56 percent, in restaurants; and 25 percent, in bars.

About half the respondents, 47 percent, reported having a handgun in their household, and 23 percent said they or a household member had a Tennessee handgun carry permit.

Two in five plan to get swine flu vaccine; only half think government can avoid epidemic *(Contact Ken Blake, 615-210-6187)*

Only about two in five Tennesseans (38 percent) say they plan to get inoculated against swine flu, and only about half (48 percent) say they are either “somewhat confident” (33 percent) or “very confident” (15 percent) that the government can prevent a nationwide epidemic of the disease.

A majority (52 percent) say they do not plan to get inoculated against swine flu, and 8 percent aren’t sure. Meanwhile, 21 percent of Tennesseans say they are “not very confident” that the government can prevent an epidemic, and 27 percent say they are “not at all confident” that the government can prevent an epidemic. The rest don’t know or decline to answer.

Confidence in the government’s ability to head off an epidemic correlates positively with intent to get vaccinated – but not as strongly, perhaps, as one might think. Among those who are very confident that the government can prevent an epidemic, half plan to get vaccinated. Among the “somewhat” or “not very” confident, the percentage planning to get vaccinated slips to 40 percent, and finally to 30 percent among the “not at all confident.”

Attention to media including television news, newspapers and the Internet appears to be the biggest outside factor in both boosting intent to get inoculated and confidence in the vaccination effort’s effectiveness. Half of daily newspaper readers plan to get inoculated compared to around a third of people who read newspapers less often. And among these less frequent newspaper readers, older people are more likely than younger ones to say they plan on getting vaccinated.

Meanwhile, among those who watch television news three days a week or more, 53 percent express confidence in the government's efforts to ward off an epidemic compared to only 35 percent of those who watch less often. Frequent newspaper reading reverses this pattern somewhat among those who don't watch television news often. And among more frequent viewers of television, men have more confidence than women.

Furthermore, among these male viewers of TV news, frequent Internet use is associated with even higher confidence, and among female TV news viewers, those who watch every day report more confidence than those who watch relatively less.

"Bottle bill" draws strong support among state residents

(Contact Jason Reineke, 615-494-7746)

Eighty-three percent of Tennesseans would favor charging a 5-cent deposit on glass, plastic and aluminum beverage containers that would be refunded upon the container's return to a redemption center. Only 14 percent were opposed, and 3 percent were unsure. Seventy-nine percent said such a system would make them more likely to recycle.

The measure enjoys particular support among Tennesseans age 49 and younger, 89 percent of whom favor it. But the measure drew solid majorities of support among older Tennesseans, too.

Economy No. 1 state problem, but below national level

(Contact Bob Wyatt, 615-477-8389)

Just 31 percent named the economy the No. 1 problem confronting the state, 15 percent fewer than those identifying the economy as the nation's top problem. This finding suggests that economic problems are conceived of more as a national than a local issue.

Health issues scored as the No. 2 state problem at 15 percent, followed by education at 12 percent. Presumably, the aura surrounding TennCare still causes Tennesseans to see health in more local terms, even given the prominence of reform on President Obama's agenda.

State-mood barometer rises a bit, higher than national

(Contact Bob Wyatt, 615-477-8389)

Tennessee's barometer stands at 47, up marginally from 43 last spring. The state barometer remains considerably higher than the national, which scores 28 in this survey as well as our spring poll. Fall 2008's barometer was dramatically higher at 54, but down from 60 in fall 2006.

Education level is the key predictor of one's mood regarding the state, with college graduates and above scoring 54, compared to 42 for those with some college or less.

Our state barometer, derived from a scale used by the Gallup Poll, is a 100-point index based on gubernatorial approval, perceptions of the state of the economy, and satisfaction with the state's direction. A near majority (49 percent) are satisfied with the way things are now going in Tennessee.

Mixed message to illegal immigrants: Leave. No, stay. No, stay just a little while
(Contact Ken Blake, 615-210-6187)

Tennesseans appear ambivalent about how best to deal with illegal immigrants currently working in the United States.

The largest proportion (43 percent) says such illegal immigrants should be required to leave their jobs and leave the country. But the next largest proportion (29 percent) takes the opposite view, saying such individuals should be allowed to stay in their jobs and eventually apply for U.S. citizenship. Finally, another 22 percent say such individuals should be allowed to stay in their jobs, but only as temporary guest workers ineligible for U.S. citizenship. Another 5 percent are undecided, and the rest give no answer.

Most Republicans (54 percent) favor making illegal immigrants leave the country. Democrats and independents are more evenly distributed across the three options, with independents most closely resembling the overall state percentages, and Democrats mostly polarized between the deportation and citizenship options.

Behind the obvious political party divisions, race becomes important, with whites more supportive than non-whites of deportation. Support for deportation is especially strong among lesser educated white males, perhaps due to perceived economic competition with illegal immigrants.

Which party should wield power in the state? Tennesseans shrug
(Contact Ken Blake, 615-210-6187)

Tennesseans appear decidedly undecided about which party should control the state Legislature and occupy the governor's mansion after the next election cycle.

Asked which party should control the Legislature, 31 percent say the Democrats, 33 percent say the Republicans, and 35 percent say they don't know. The rest decline to answer. Similarly, when asked whether Tennessee's next governor should be Democrat or a Republican, about a quarter (25 percent) say Democrat, but another quarter or so (22 percent) say Republican, and most (51 percent) say they have no preference right now. The rest give no answer.

Party preference is, of course, the best predictor of both attitudes. As one might expect, a high proportion (81 percent) of Republicans would prefer a Republican state Legislature, and almost as many Democrats (75 percent) would prefer a Democratic state Legislature. In the middle are independents, 23 percent of whom would favor Democratic control and 16 percent of whom would favor Republican control but most of whom (59 percent) say they just don't know right now. Asking about the party of the next governor produces a similar pattern, but one marked by less decisiveness on the part of both Democrats and Republicans, with about a third of each undecided.

Behind party ideology, race and class lie at the heart of the divisions, with blacks more likely to prefer a Democratic governor and Legislature and whites – especially wealthy ones – more likely to prefer a Republican governor and Legislature.

Bredesen, legislative approval both edge up
(Contact Bob Wyatt, 615-477-8389)

Gov. Phil Bredesen's approval edged somewhat higher to 56 percent, up from 52 percent last spring – but down from an all-time high of 72 percent in spring 2004. This rise in approval may be due to brightening economic prospects in the state.

Age proves the best predictor of Bredesen approval, with 69 percent of those older than 65 approving, compared 54 percent among the 35-64 group and 50 percent for those under 35.

Partisan divide is not and has never been great in Bredesen approval: Here, 55 percent of Republicans, 53 percent of independents, and 62 percent of Democrats approve.

Meanwhile, the proportion of Tennesseans who approve of the state Legislature's job performance is back up to 38 percent, perhaps again reflecting a brighter outlook. Legislative approval stood at 39 percent in fall 2008 but slid to 34 last spring.

Sample and method

The poll was conducted by telephone Sept. 28 - Oct. 10, 2009, by students in the College of Mass Communication at Middle Tennessee State University. Students interviewed 716 people age 18 or older chosen at random from the state population. The poll has an estimated error margin of ± 4 percentage points at the 95 percent level of confidence. Theoretically, this means that a sample of this size should produce a statistical portrait of the population within 4 percentage points 95 out of 100 times. Other factors, such as question wording, also affect the outcome of a survey. Error margins are greater for sample subgroups.

The sample varied somewhat from the U.S. Census Bureau's latest available estimates for age, race and gender proportions within the state. Such variation commonly occurs because certain demographic groups are more difficult to contact. The data were thus weighted to more closely match Census projections for these demographics. Here are the Census data, the sample data, and the weights:

		Unweighted	Weighted
Age	Census	sample	Sample
18-34	29.5 %	13.2 %	29.3 %
35-49	28.3 %	26.4 %	28.4 %
50-64	24.9 %	35.0 %	25.0 %
65+	17.3 %	25.4 %	17.3 %
Race			
White	82.1 %	89.0 %	82.4 %
Black	15.5 %	7.6 %	15.2 %
Other	2.4 %	3.4 %	2.4 %
Gender			
Male	48.0 %	47.3 %	47.6 %
Female	52.0 %	52.7 %	52.4 %

Small variations in reported percentages (1 percent or less) sometimes result from rounding variations in different statistical procedures or the way different programs handle population weights. Weights also can increase the reported sample size in frequency tables. And, in our summary, where reported percentages do not otherwise total 100 percent, small numbers of those who are undecided or refused to answer may be omitted.