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## 2015 Louisiana Gubernatorial Runoff Survey

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## 2015 LOUISIANA GUBERNATORIAL RUNOFF SURVEY



November 2015

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The University of New Orleans Survey Research Center (SRC) conducted a statewide telephone poll of 600 likely voters in Louisiana. Telephone numbers were selected at random from a sample frame of likely voters. A likely voter is defined as an individual who has voted at least three times in the last five statewide elections. Interviews were conducted November 2-8, 2015. The combined landline and cell phone sample matches the gender, age, and race parameters from the voter file obtained from the Louisiana Secretary of State. The margin of error is +/- 4.0 percent at a 95% level of confidence.

**Summary:**

- Two-thirds of likely voters say Louisiana is headed in the wrong direction.
- Nearly one-half of respondents report that the state's economy has worsened over the past year.
- Governor Bobby Jindal has a 70% disapproval rating.
- John Bel Edwards enjoys a 22 point lead over David Vitter among likely voters.
- One-fourth of Republicans say they are going to vote for the Democratic candidate, John Bel Edwards.
- Nearly one-third of conservatives say they are going to vote for Edwards.
- Nearly one-half of voters who cast a ballot for Scott Angelle or Jay Dardenne plan on voting for Edwards.
- Three-fourths of voters who strongly disapprove of Bobby Jindal support Edwards in the runoff.
- Billy Nungesser has a 10-point lead over Kip Holden in the Lieutenant Governor's race.

**State of the State****Right Direction or Wrong Direction in Louisiana**

	Total	Whites	Blacks	Females	Males	Democrats	Independents	Republicans
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Right Direction	20	22	14	19	22	19	18	23
Wrong Direction	67	65	73	69	65	68	71	64
DK	13	13	13	12	13	13	11	13
(N)	600	398	168	332	268	199	126	226

Respondents were pessimistic about the direction of the state with two-thirds of them reporting that the state was moving in the wrong direction. This sentiment was expressed across the board, with African-Americans, women and Independents being the most negative in their evaluation. **Even Republicans reported that the state was moving in the wrong direction by a nearly 3 to 1 margin.**

The current evaluation of the direction of the state is far more negative than it was in October 2014. A statewide telephone survey conducted by the UNO Survey Research Center for the Senate election found that 52% of respondents felt the state was moving in the wrong direction. It appears that unhappiness about the direction of the state has deepened over the past year.

### Evaluation of Louisiana Economy

	Total	Whites	Blacks	Females	Males	Democrats	Independents	Republicans
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Gotten Better	14	13	13	9	18	13	10	16
Stayed the Same	36	35	39	35	37	35	35	37
Gotten Worse	47	47	46	51	42	50	48	42
DK	4	5	2	5	3	2	6	4
(N)	600	398	168	332	268	199	126	227

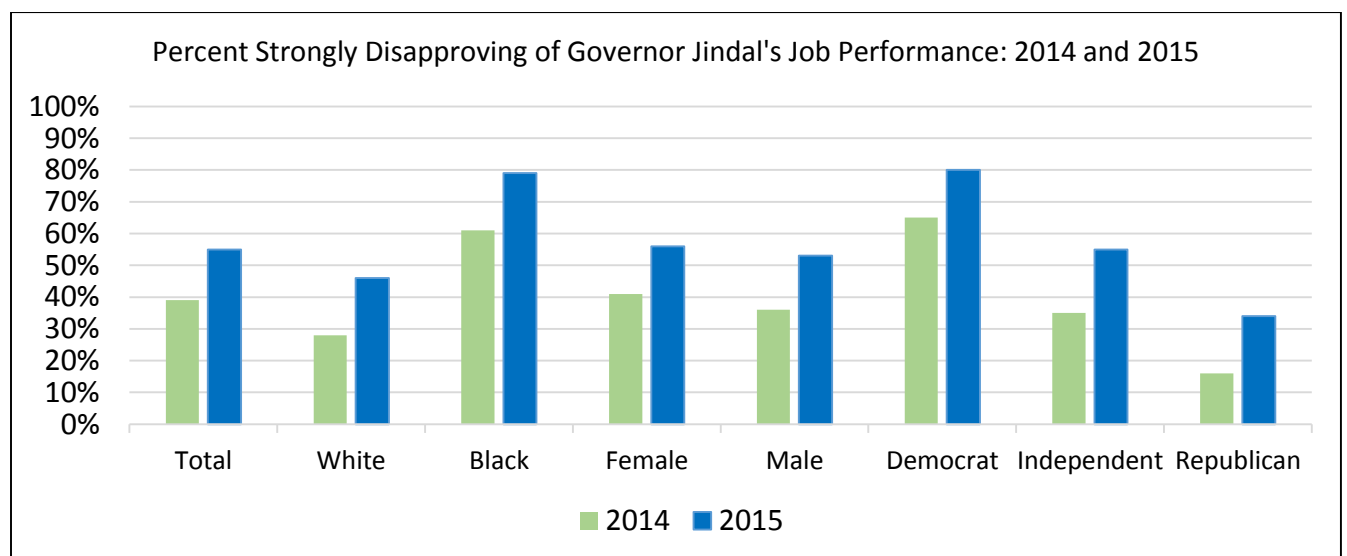
Respondents also tended to be critical of Louisiana's economy. A near majority of respondents reported that the economy has worsened over the past year. Women rated the state of the economy most poorly with less than 10% saying it had improved, while men were twice as likely as women to say that it had improved. Nonetheless, respondents across all the categories were more likely to evaluate the state's economic climate as having worsened over the past year.

Evaluations of the state's economy today are much worse than a year ago. The October 2014 study indicated that 25% of all respondents felt the economy had worsened over the past year. **Negative evaluations of the state's economy has almost doubled according to our most recent poll.**

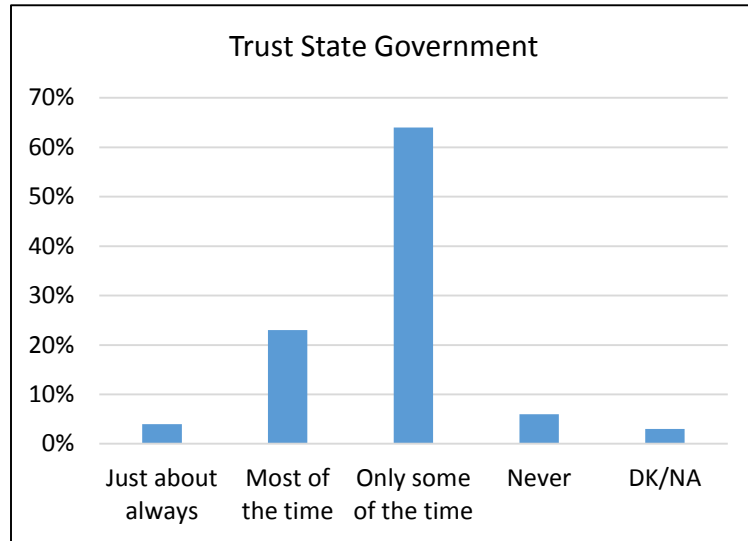
### Governor Jindal Approval Rating

	Total	Whites	Blacks	Females	Males	Democrats	Independents	Republicans
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Strongly Approve	10	12	5	9	12	4	11	13
Approve	10	15	1	9	11	3	8	19
Disapprove	15	17	11	15	18	9	15	21
Strongly Disapprove	55	46	79	56	53	80	55	34
DK	9	11	4	11	7	5	11	13
(N)	600	398	168	332	269	197	126	226

**Governor Bobby Jindal’s disapproval rating has entered the stratosphere as he received a 70% negative job rating from the likely voters we surveyed.** In fact, Jindal’s approval rating has nose-dived by one-half from 40% in the October 2014 survey to 20% today. Not only did a vast majority of respondents disapprove of Jindal, over one-half of them reported they strongly disapproved his handling of his job. In the 2014 study 60% of Republicans gave the governor a positive evaluation, and one-third of them strongly approved of him. Today, however, barely one-third of Republicans give the governor positive marks for his job performance and, only 13% strongly approve of him.



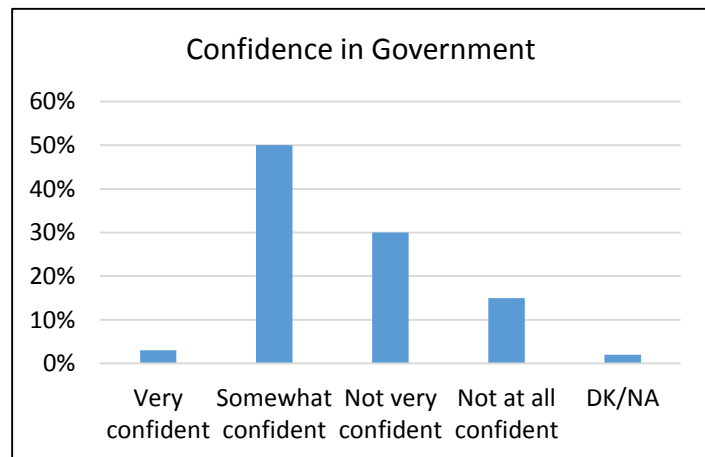
**Perceptions of Jindal’s performance in office has grown more negative across all categories of likely voters, including Republicans.** Republicans are twice as likely to strongly disapprove of Jindal today as they were just one year ago.



We asked respondents about their perceptions of the state government in Baton Rouge. Specifically, we inquired as to whether respondents trusted state government, whether they had confidence in state government, whether state government was run by big interests, and whether the state government wasted taxpayer money.

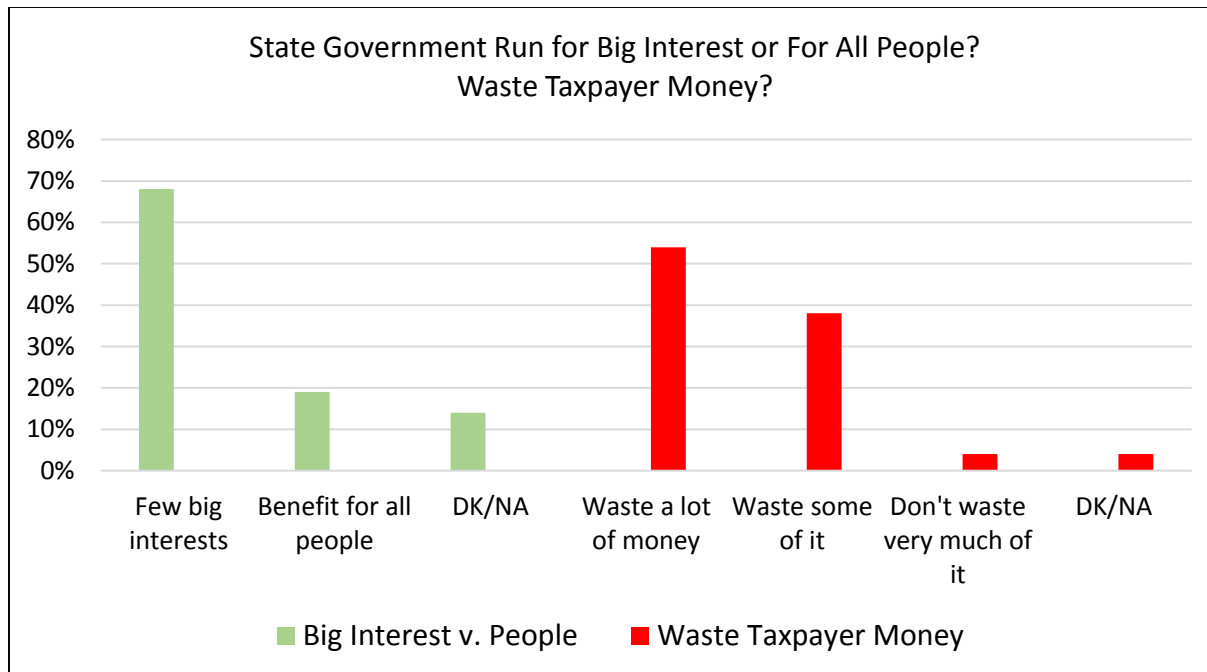
Respondents communicated a relative lack of trust in Baton Rouge with most people saying the state government could be trusted only some of the time. Only one-quarter reported that trusted state government most of the time or just about always.

Respondents were nearly evenly divided on the question of confidence in state government to do the right thing. Half expressed confidence and nearly half expressed a lack of confidence.<sup>1</sup>



<sup>1</sup> Trust in government is based on the following question: How much of the time do you think you can trust the state government to do what is right: Just about always, most of the time, or only some of the time?

Confidence in government was based on the following question: How much confidence would you say you have in state government? Would you say you are very confident, somewhat confident, not very confident, or not at all confident?



**Voters perceive Baton Rouge as a captive to big interests rather than looking out for the interests of all the people.** Two-thirds of respondents voice the opinion that state government is pretty much run by a few big interests looking out for themselves. Conversely, less than 20% believe that the state government is run for the benefit for all the people. A majority of respondents also declared that the people in state government wasted a lot of the money we pay in taxes.

In sum, it appears that voters are in an angry mood in the run up to the election. They are overwhelmingly unhappy about the direction of the state, relatively pessimistic about the performance of the state's economy, and strongly disapproving of the current governor. In addition, voters do not place a lot of trust in the state government and are only somewhat confident that Baton Rouge will do the right thing. Finally, they think Baton Rouge is out of touch when it comes to the interests of the people and that government wastes a lot of our taxpayer dollars.



## **Vote for Governor**

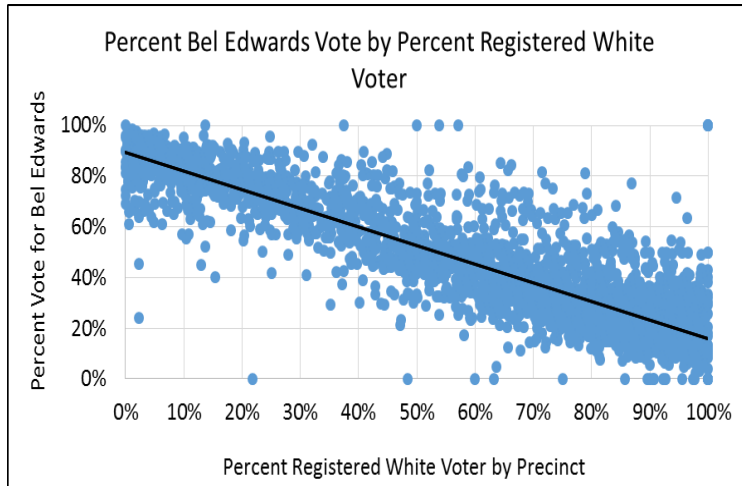
Respondents were asked which candidate they preferred in the upcoming November 21<sup>st</sup> runoff. Those who responded that they were undecided were then queried on which candidate they leaned toward the most. The data reported in the table includes both those who initially expressed a candidate preference and those who leaned toward that candidate.<sup>2</sup>

### **Vote Support for Governor**

	Total	Whites	Blacks	Females	Males	Democrats	Independents	Republicans
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
John Bel Edwards	56	42	90	57	56	92	54	27
David Vitter	34	47	5	31	36	5	38	59
Undecided	10	11	5	12	8	3	9	14
(N)	600	398	167	332	268	199	125	227

**Edwards has a double digit percentage lead over David Vitter as 56% say they will vote for Edwards vs. 34% for Vitter.** As expected, Edwards fares especially well with African-American likely voters, who are typically very supportive of Democratic candidates. One surprising finding is the support for Edwards among white respondents who have tended to support Republican candidates in the recent past. Forty-two percent of them report they are going to vote for the Democrat, John Bel Edwards.

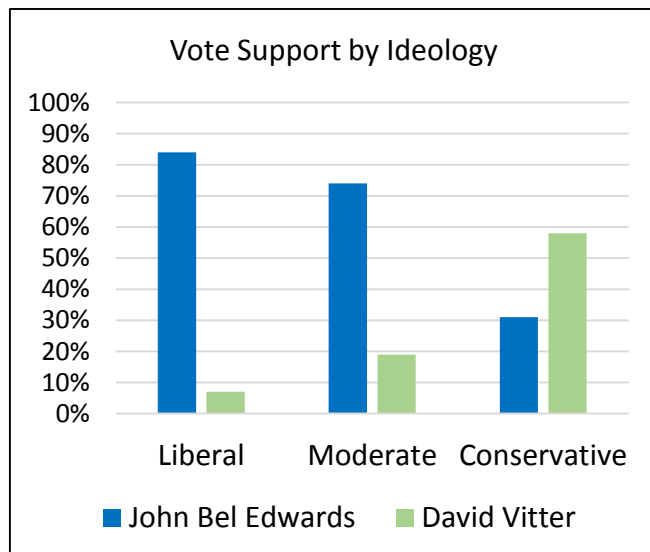
<sup>2</sup> For John Bel Edwards, 317 respondents initially reported they supported him and 22 respondents said they leaned toward him. As for David Vitter, 182 respondents initially reported they would vote for him, while 19 respondents said they leaned toward him. That left a total of 60 undecided likely voters.



An analysis of vote support for Edwards from the primary election indicated he received only 20% of the white vote. The plot chart illustrates the precinct level analysis on the negative relationship between the racial composition of the precinct and vote support for Edwards. As the percent of registered white vote increases in a precinct, the

vote support for Edwards decreases. In essence, it reveals that Edwards received 90% of the vote in the precincts where there were 0% registered white voters (left axis) and garnered 20% of the vote in the precincts that contained 100% registered white voters (right axis). **The conventional wisdom is that Edwards would need at least 30% of whites to vote for him to be victorious. According to our survey, it appears that he has not only met that threshold, but has exceeded it.**

There is no gender gap as women are just as likely as men to say they will vote for Edwards. Democrats are solidly behind their candidate and Independents are more likely to say they will vote for Edwards than for Vitter. The Democratic candidate also appeared to enjoy significant crossover appeal as Republicans are split in their candidate preference. **One-quarter of Republicans reported they were going to vote for Edwards.** Republicans are typically more loyal to their candidates. The fact



that one-quarter of Republican voters say they are going to defect and vote for Edwards is indicative of the fractured state of the Republican Party.

There has been much discussion in the campaign about who is the more conservative candidate. As a result, we asked respondents to report their ideology. We then examined to see how the respondents' ideology matched their vote choice. The chart illustrates that

liberals are extremely loyal to the Democratic candidate while moderates are nearly 4 times more likely to say they will pull the lever for Edwards. Those respondents who identify as conservative, however, are not as united behind the conservative in the race, David Vitter. Nearly 60% of conservatives reported they will vote for Vitter, but 31% said they would be casting a ballot for the Democrat, Edwards.

Respondents were asked if they had voted in the October 24<sup>th</sup> primary. Eighty-six percent answered in the affirmative. These individuals were then asked who they voted for. The responses from our poll matched quite nicely with the vote from the primary for the two qualifiers for the runoff.

Candidate	Survey Results	Primary Election Results
Scott Angelle	12%	19%
Jay Dardenne	13%	15%
John Bel Edwards	39%	40%
David Vitter	22%	23%
Other	1%	3%

### Vote Support in Runoff Election by Vote Support in Primary Election

	Scott Angelle	Jay Dardenne	John Bel Edwards	David Vitter	Other	Refused to Say	DK/NA
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
John Bel Edwards	46	50	97	6	50	49	43
David Vitter	32	32	2	90	33	27	20
Undecided	22	18	1	4	17	24	37
(N)	54	72	204	113	6	33	30

We then analyzed how the votes from the other candidates would be distributed to the two runoff contenders. Those who voted for Edwards and Vitter in the primary plan, for the most part, to stay with their candidate in the runoff. **The results also suggest that the bulk of the vote for the two Republican candidates, Scott Angelle and Jay Dardenne, have moved into the Edwards camp.** Only about one-

third of respondents who voted for either Angelle or Dardenne reported they would stick with the Republican candidate in the runoff. Even those who refused to say who they voted for in the primary lean toward the Democratic candidate by a nearly 2 to 1 margin.

We then analyzed for how certain variables might affect vote choice. For example, are evaluations of Bobby Jindal’s job performance related to vote choice? To test this we ran a crosstabulation that examined the relationship between the evaluation of the governor’s job performance and who respondents stated they would vote for in the runoff.

### Vote Support by Evaluation of Governor Jindal’s Job Performance

	Strongly Approve	Approve	Disapprove	Strongly Disapprove	DK/NA
	%	%	%	%	%
John Bel Edwards	45	25	39	74	34
David Vitter	50	65	46	19	46
Undecided	5	10	15	8	20
(N)	60	60	95	328	56

Vitter does well with those who approve of the governor’s job performance. However, we have to point out that only 20% of respondents approved/strongly approved of Jindal’s handling of his responsibilities. Those who disapproved of Jindal were more likely to back Edwards than Vitter. For the 55% of respondents who strongly disapproved of Jindal, three-quarters of them stated they were going to vote for Edwards. **In the end, the highly negative perceptions of Bobby Jindal’s job performance are driving vote choice in the direction of the Democratic candidate, John Bel Edwards.**

### Vote Support by Direction of the State/Evaluation of State's Economy

	Total	Right Direction	Wrong Direction	DK/NA	Gotten Better	Stayed About the Same	Gotten Worse	DK/NA
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
John Bel Edwards	56	50	60	47	56	59	56	50
David Vitter	33	44	30	34	38	35	33	17
Undecided	10	6	10	18	6	7	12	33
(N)	600	121	404	76	80	215	280	24

The respondent's vote choice does not appear to be influenced by their evaluation of the direction of the state. Edwards does better regardless how people feel about the direction of the state, although Vitter does better with the people who feel the state is moving in the right direction. Nonetheless, it is not a statistically significant difference.

Attitudes on the economy are not influencing vote choice as Edwards receives the bulk of the vote regardless of how the respondent perceives the state's economic performance over the past year. In addition, trust in state government, confidence in state government, and perceptions on whether the state wastes taxpayer dollars did not have a statistically significant effect on vote choice.

There is a slight difference in support for the candidates based on the respondent's perception of whether state government is run by big interests or is run for the benefit of all people. Sixty percent of those who said Baton Rouge is run by big interests plan on voting for John Bel Edwards vs. 30% who declared they would vote for David Vitter. Among the respondents who told us that state government is run for the benefit of all the people, 50% support Edwards while 40% favor Vitter.

**Lieutenant Governor****Vote Support for Lieutenant Governor**

	Total	Whites	Blacks	Females	Males	Democrats	Independents	Republicans
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Kip Holden	39	22	76	39	38	71	31	16
Billy Nungesser	49	67	13	48	51	19	53	75
Undecided	12	11	12	13	11	10	16	9
(N)	600	398	167	332	268	199	125	227

The Republican candidate Billy Nungesser has a comfortable lead over the Democratic candidate Kip Holden in the contest for the Lieutenant Governor's seat. Support for these candidates falls along racial and partisan lines. For instance, two-thirds of whites favor Billy Nungesser compared to three-quarters of blacks who favor Kip Holden. We found a partisan divide as well as 7 in 10 Democrats stated they were voting for Holden while 7 in 10 Republicans said they backed Nungesser. A majority of Independents reported they would be supporting the Republican Nungesser.

### Sample Information

White	69%
Black	28%
Other	3%
Male	45%
Female	55%
18 to 25	2%
26 to 35	6%
36 to 45	15%
46 to 55	22%
56 to 65	25%
66 and over	30%
Number of Respondents	600
Sampling Error	+/- 4.0%
Dates of Interviewing	November 2-8, 2015