

2014 Texas Lyceum Poll

Executive Summary of Texans' Attitudes on Immigration, Abortion, and Health Care

*Even in a red state, ambivalent attitudes show context matters.
Partisan, age, race, and ethnicity divides are apparent throughout.*

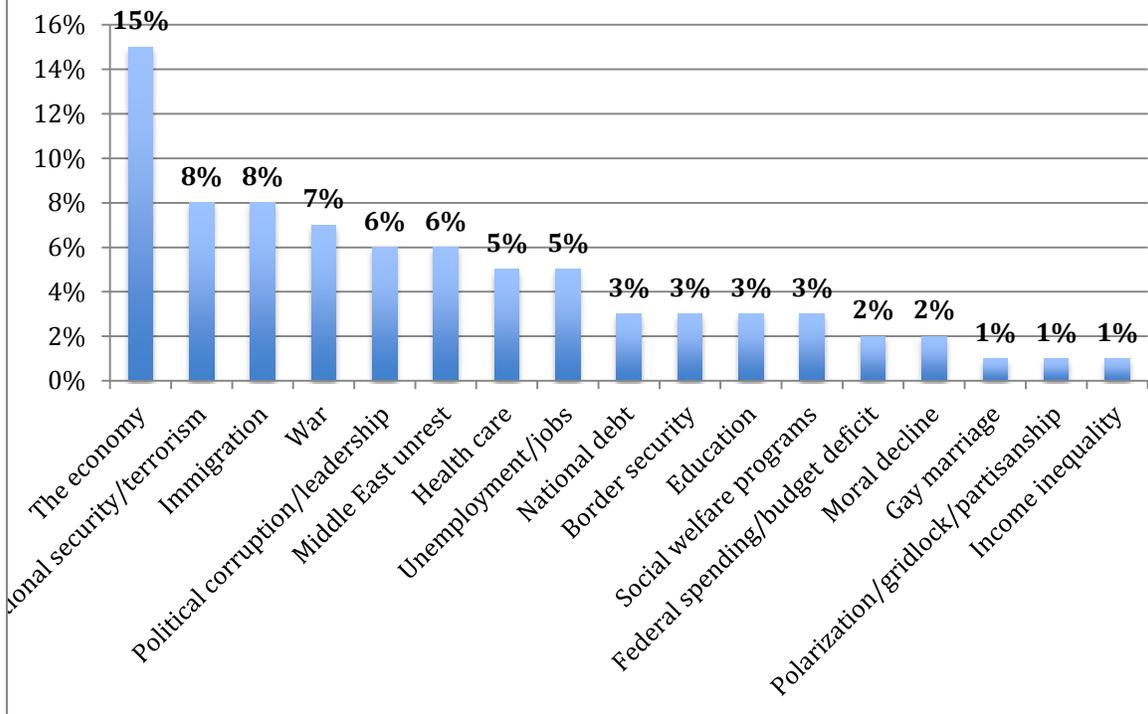
A September 11-25, 2014 survey of 1,000 adult Texans reveals that Texans are divided evenly when it comes to addressing the immigration crisis at the border, but vary considerably based on their party affiliation, are accepting of a woman obtaining an abortion under a number of circumstances and still feel negatively about the Affordable Care Act.

Summary of Findings

Most Important Problem

Among Texas adults, the number one problem facing the country continues to be the economy, cited by 15 percent of Texans. When combined with unemployment/jobs, 20 percent of Texans believe that the economy writ large is still the biggest problem facing the country, but is down considerably from 2013, when 35 percent of respondents cited the economy or jobs/unemployment as the country's most pressing problem. International and safety concerns appear to have displaced the economy's importance in the most recent survey, as large groups of Texans cited national security/terrorism (8 percent), immigration (8 percent), or war in general (7 percent) as the most important problem facing the country.

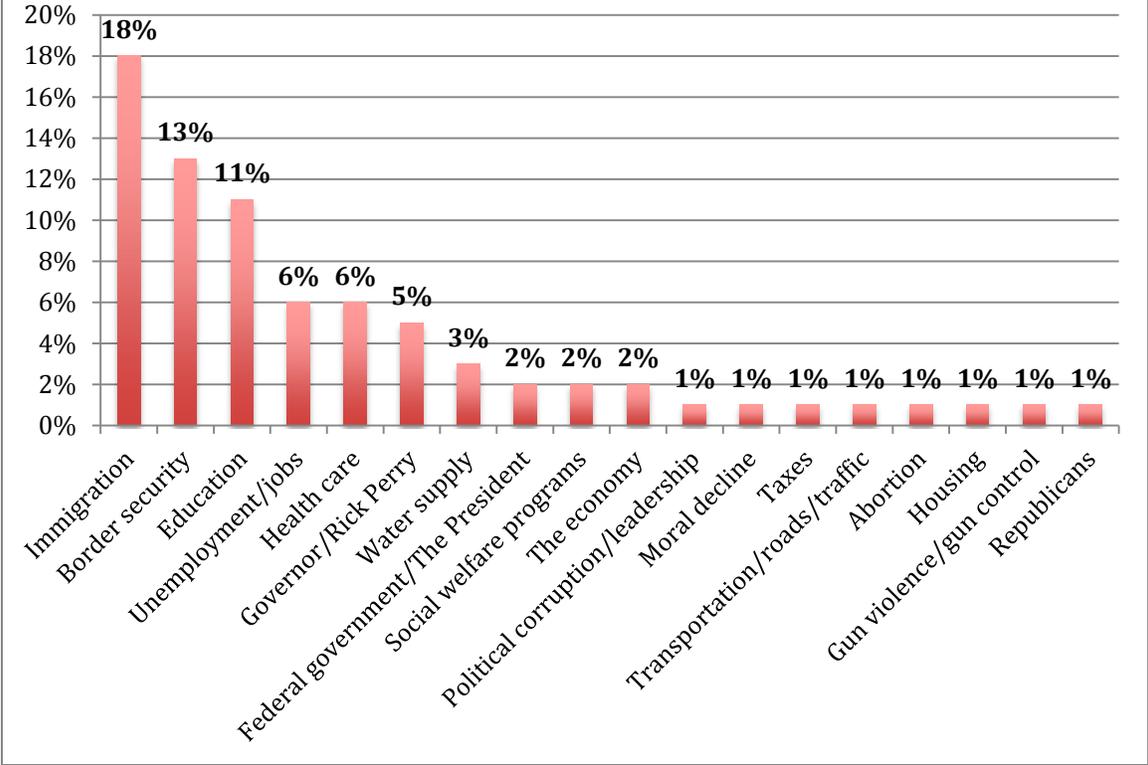
Most Important Problem Facing the Country



Both Democrats and Republicans still perceive the economy to be the most important problem facing the country, with 14 percent and 17 percent choosing it respectively, but differ in their secondary and tertiary selections. The second most chosen issue among Democrats was immigration (10 percent) followed by war (9 percent). For Republicans, the second most selected issue was national security/terrorism (12 percent) followed by political corruption/leadership (10 percent).

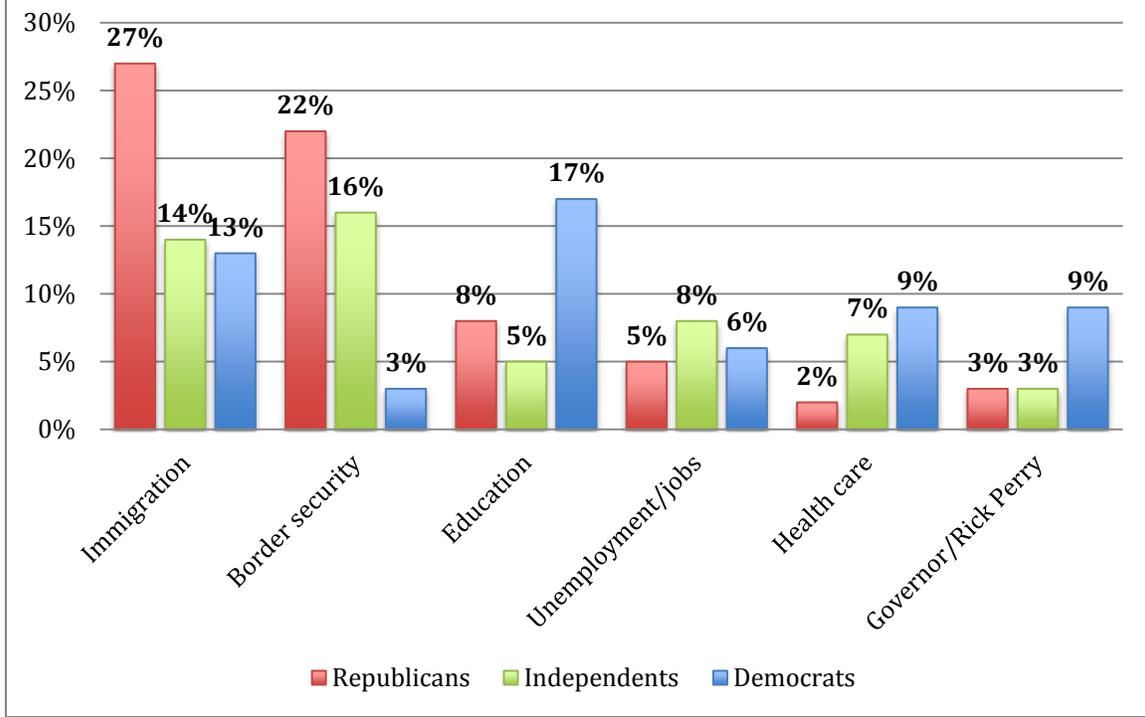
At the state level, immigration and border security topped the list of most important problems, displacing 2013's most important problem: education. In this year's poll, 18 percent of Texas adults said that immigration was the most important problem facing the state followed by border security, cited by 13 percent of the public. Education came in third, cited by 11 percent of respondents (as compared with 13 percent in 2013).

Most Important Problem Facing Texas



Whereas the partisan differences regarding the most important problem facing the country was minimal, when it comes to the most important problem facing the state, it is clear that Texas partisans of both sides are clearly in disagreement. While 49 percent of Republicans cited either immigration (27 percent) or border security (22 percent) as the most important problem facing the state, only 16 percent of Democrats agreed. The most important issue for Democrats is education, chosen by 17 percent of Democratic respondents.

Most Important Problem Facing Texas by Party Identification



Central American Refugee Crisis

Republican concerns about immigration and border security have been a persistent feature of polling in Texas for a number of years, but the recent influx of children from Central America has magnified the issue’s salience.

We asked adult Texans what should be done with the unaccompanied children from Central America who have been illegally crossing the border into the U.S.: 42 percent thought that we should allow them to stay while awaiting an immigration hearing, 48 percent thought that they should be returned to their home country as soon as possible, and 10 percent were unable to express an opinion.

Given that immigration is a key issue in the campaigns, it’s notable that among likely voters, those wanting the children deported as soon as possible increases from 48 percent to 56 percent, and those indicating a belief that the children should remain in the U.S. while awaiting an immigration hearing decreases from 42 percent to 37 percent.

What do you think should happen to the unaccompanied children from Central America who have been illegally crossing the border into the US?



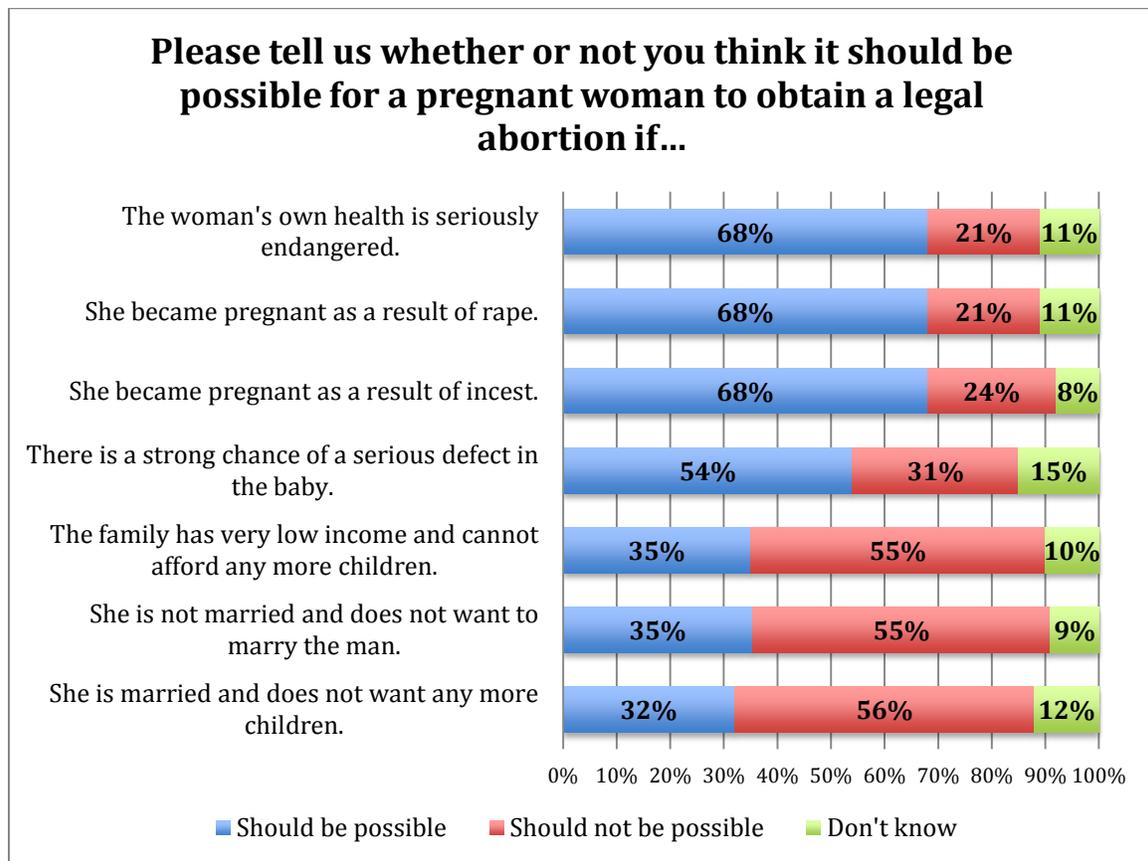
Not surprisingly, there were stark partisan divides when it came to opinions about what to do with these unaccompanied minors. Among Democrats, the majority (64 percent) want the children to be allowed to stay (30 percent said they should be returned immediately), while among Republicans, 73 percent think that the children should be returned to their country as soon as possible (18 percent felt that they should be allowed to stay).

Race was also a dividing factor when it came to perceptions of how we should deal with these children. Among white respondents, 62 percent think that the children should be returned to their home country, 34 points higher than those who think they should be allowed to stay (28 percent). Blacks were almost evenly divided on the issue, with 48 percent who would allow them to stay and 41 percent who would send them back to their home country. Hispanics were the racial group most supportive of the position that would allow them to stay in the country while awaiting an immigration hearing at 58 percent – 33 percent would send them home as soon as possible.

Abortion Exceptions

Abortion is another issue that has emerged as a major point of contention in the 2014 gubernatorial election with the revelation of two abortions by Democratic candidate Wendy Davis in the 1990s. One, an ectopic pregnancy, is commonly classified as a life threatening condition. In the other, her fetus was found to have a severe abnormality known as Dandy-Walker syndrome. To assess attitudes toward abortion, we asked adult Texans about a number of potential ‘exceptions,’ defined here as circumstances under which a woman should be able to obtain an abortion.

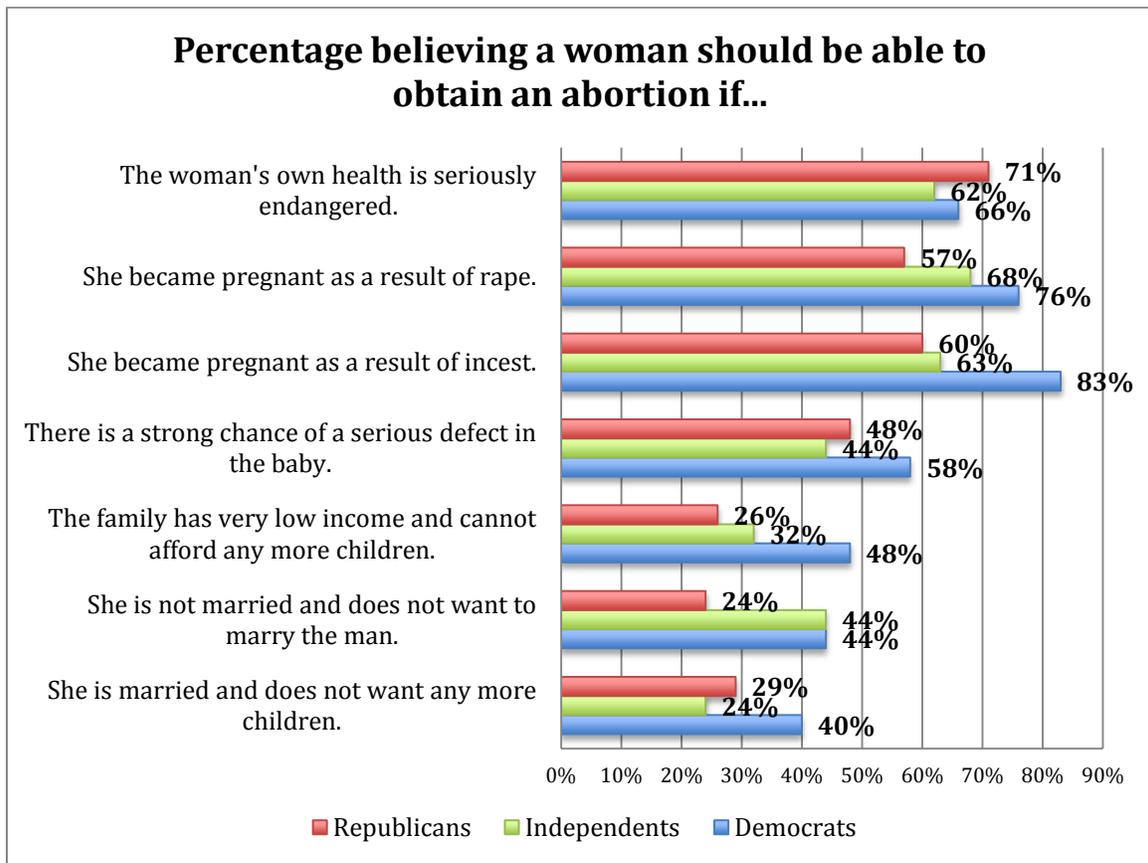
The three most often cited exceptions—when the woman’s life is in danger, when she has become pregnant as a result of rape, and when she has become pregnant as a result of incest—produced widespread support: 68 percent for each among Texas adults. The circumstance registering the next highest level of support was one akin to Davis’, when “there is a strong chance of a serious defect in the baby.” A majority of Texans, 54 percent, think that a woman should be able to obtain an abortion in this circumstance. The remaining three circumstances garnered less support. Thirty-five percent of Texans think that a woman should be able to obtain an abortion when the family has a low income and cannot afford another baby, the same percentage who think that a woman should be able to get an abortion when she is not married and does not want to marry the father. Fewer Texans, 33 percent, expressed the opinion that a woman should be able to obtain an abortion when she is married, but does not want any more children.



As this issue has caused partisan conflict both nationally as well as in Texas, it’s no surprise that attitudes on these exceptions differed significantly by partisanship. While high levels of support exist among both Republicans (71 percent) and Democrats (66 percent)¹ for allowing abortion when a woman’s life is

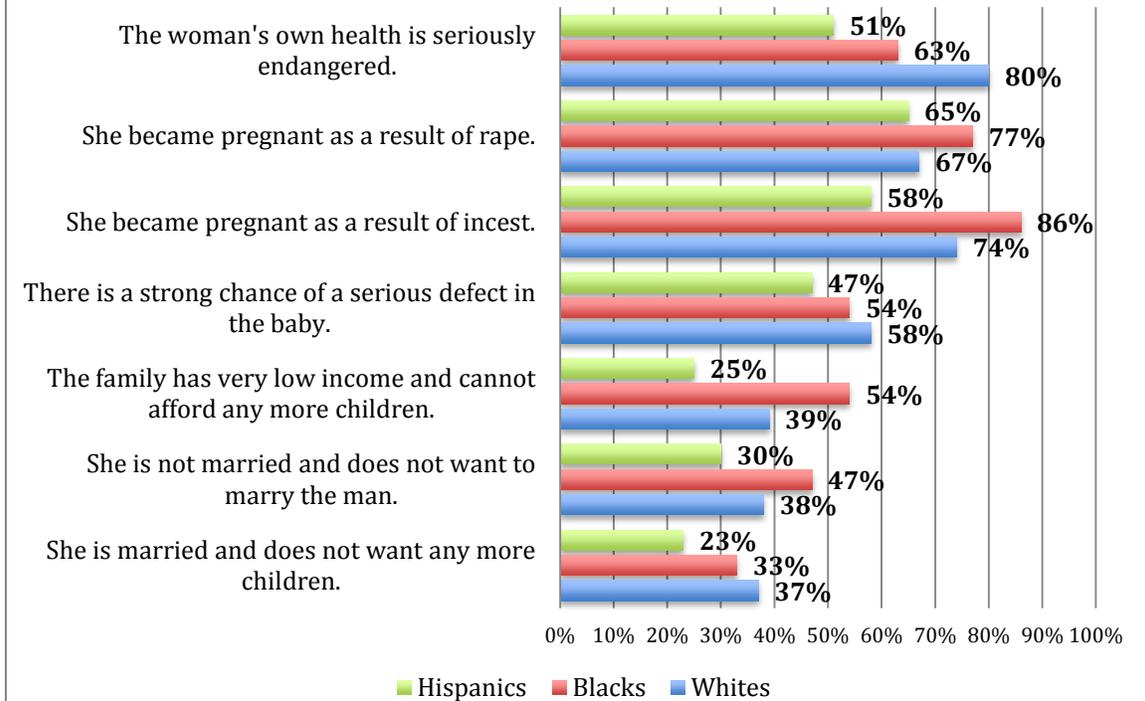
¹ Though this difference may seem surprising, the difference is within the margin of error for this question.

in danger, differences emerge across the other exceptions. When the pregnancy was the result of rape or incest, 76 and 83 percent of Democrats, respectively, think that a woman should be able to obtain an abortion compared with 57 and 60 percent of Republicans. And while a majority of Democrats (58 percent) think that a woman should be able to obtain an abortion when there is a strong chance of a serious defect in the baby, less than a majority of Republicans agree (48 percent). This 10-point gap grows when we look at some of the other circumstances. Forty-eight percent of Democrats think that a woman should be able to obtain an abortion if she cannot afford another baby, 22 points higher than Republicans; 44 percent of Democrats think that a woman who doesn't want to marry the father should be able to obtain an abortion, 20 points more than Republican support. Partisans are slightly closer when it comes to a woman who is married, but doesn't want any more children: 40 percent of Democrats approve compared with 29 percent of Republicans.



Racial attitudes toward abortion, in particular among the growing Hispanic population, are of interest to both parties as each looks to the future of Texas. The survey results do show that Hispanic adults in Texas are less inclined to support exceptions to abortion restrictions across the range of circumstances. In no instance across the seven possible circumstances do Hispanics express more support for a woman being able to get an abortion than does their white or black counterparts.

Percentage believing a woman should be able to obtain an abortion if...

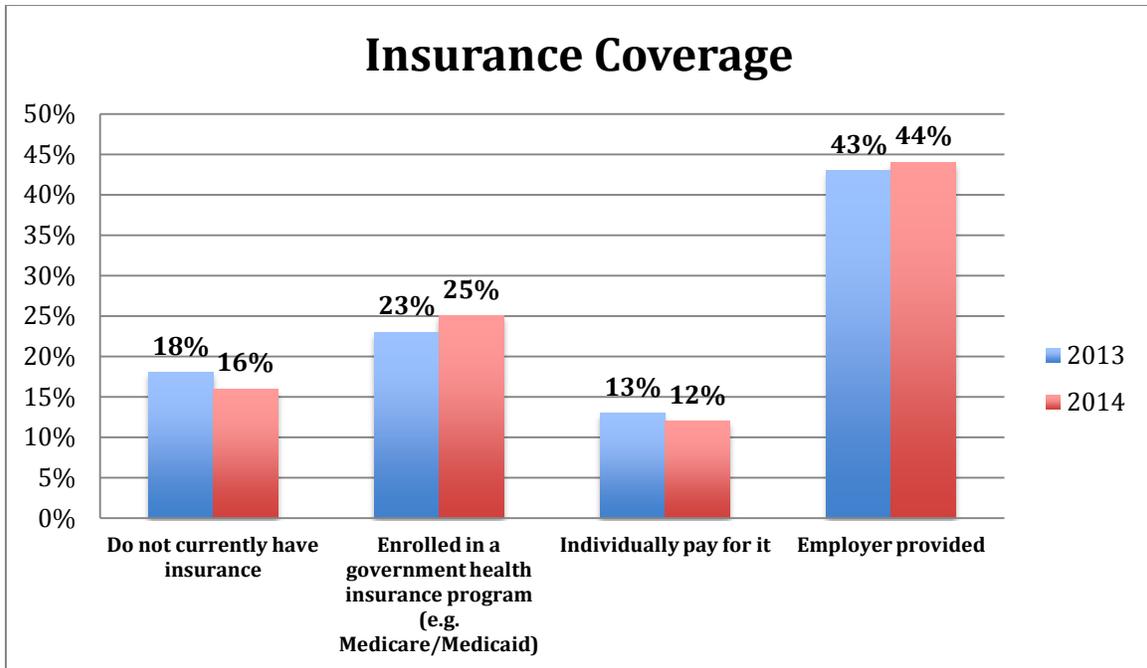


Health and Healthcare

In addition to the battery of items exploring attitudes on abortion, we also asked a number of health-related questions. Most notable for the 2014 election is a question on Texans’ attitude towards the Affordable Care Act (ACA). Overall, 33 percent of Texans hold a favorable opinion of the ACA compared with 48 percent who have an unfavorable opinion. Among likely voters, 35 percent hold a favorable opinion of the ACA compared with 52 percent who hold an unfavorable opinion.

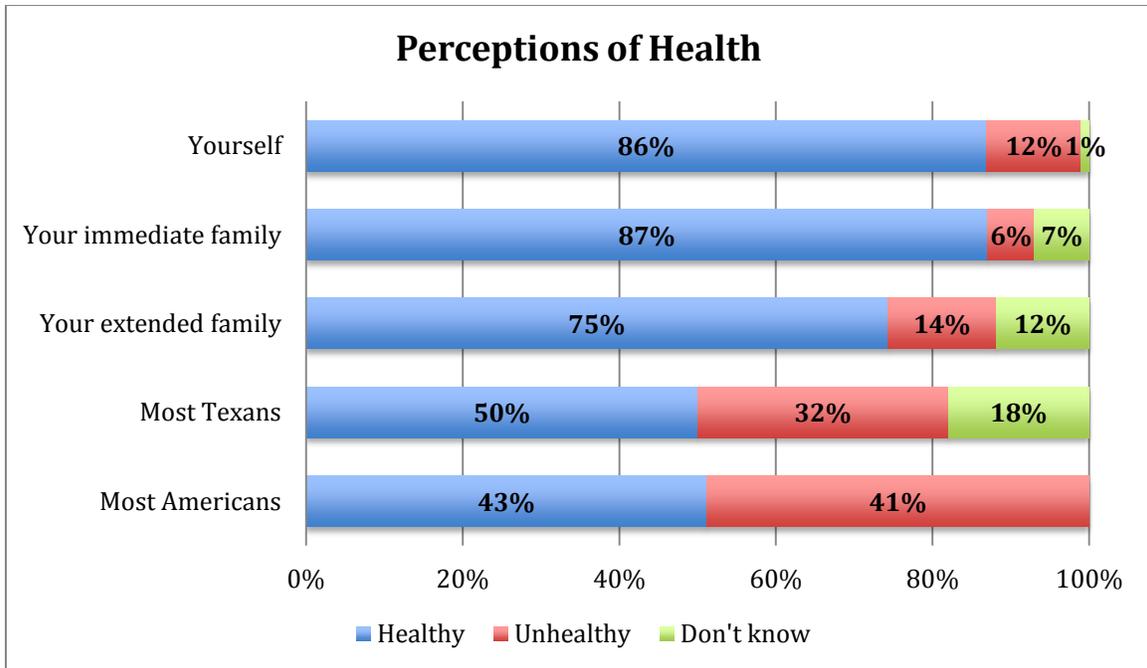
Unsurprisingly, Democrats hold much more positive attitudes toward the ACA than do Republicans. While 58 percent of Democrats hold a positive attitude of the ACA, 80 percent of Republicans hold a negative attitude. In addition, while only 22 percent of whites hold a positive attitude towards the ACA, a significantly greater portion of blacks (61 percent) and Hispanics (39 percent) have favorable opinion. But it’s worth noting that Hispanics are, on balance, slightly negative towards the ACA (39 percent favorable, 40 percent unfavorable).

Texas is known for having the highest percentage of uninsured citizens in the country and is one of 19 states who have refused to expand Medicaid under the ACA. In both 2013 and 2014 we asked what type of health insurance the respondent currently has.



The data indicate that there was little movement between last year and this year with respect to coverage. This is perhaps unsurprising given Texans’ attitudes on the ACA, and their skepticism with respect to Medicaid expansion or any other state level health care reform initiatives.

In light of the apparently static state of affairs with respect to healthcare in Texas, we asked respondents to assess their own health, the health of their immediate family, their extended family, most Texans, and most Americans. While only 12 percent of Texans said that they themselves are somewhat, or extremely unhealthy, they expressed a higher regard for their immediate family than their extended family, 6 percent and 14 percent of respondents deemed each group unhealthy respectively, and a lower regard for most Texans (32 percent said this group was unhealthy) and most Americans (41 percent said that this group was unhealthy).



Because Texans see themselves and their families as healthy but view most Texans and most Americans as marginally healthy (if not unhealthy), we wanted to see what level of support a common public health initiative, and revenue generator, might receive here in Texas. To that end, we asked respondents about a proposal that would impose a tax on full-calorie, non-diet, soda drinks. It appears that such a tax is unlikely in Texas anytime in the near future. While 68 percent of Texas adults expressed opposition to the hypothetical sin tax, among likely voters, that percentage increases to 73 percent in opposition.

Interestingly, opposition was not clearly conditional on full-calorie soda consumption. We asked respondents how often they drink full-calorie soda. Among those who did so 'very often', opposition to a tax was 71 percent, slightly less high than among those who drank full-calorie soda 'somewhat often' (78 percent). But even among those who drink full-calorie soda 'not very often' or 'never,' opposition was still at 68 and 61 percent respectively.

Methodology

From September 11-25, 2014, The Texas Lyceum conducted a statewide telephone survey of adult citizens. The survey utilized a stratified probability sample design, with respondents being randomly selected at the level of the household. The survey also employed a randomized cell phone supplement, with 30 percent of completed interviews being conducted among cell phone only or cell phone dominant households. A Spanish-language instrument was developed and bilingual interviewers offered respondents a chance to participate in English or Spanish. On average, respondents completed the interview in 18 minutes. Approximately 6,700 records were drawn to yield 1,000 completed interviews. The final data set is weighted by race/ethnicity, age and gender to achieve representativeness as defined by the Texas specifications from the 2010 Current Population Study. The overall margin of error for the poll is +/- 3.1 percentage points.

The Texas Lyceum

The Texas Lyceum has committed to annual probability samples of the state of Texas to bolster its understanding of public opinion on crucial policy issues. The professional rationale for the Texas Lyceum Poll is straightforward: a non-partisan, high quality, scientific survey designed to provide (1) specific data points on issues of interest, and (2) a time series of key demographics, attitudes, and opinions. Towards this end, the trademark of the Texas Lyceum Poll is transparency. Top-line and detailed cross-tabular results of each poll will be made available on the Texas Lyceum website at **www.texaslyceum.org**.

The Texas Lyceum, now 34 years strong, is a non-profit, non-partisan statewide leadership organization focused on identifying the next generation of Texas leaders. The Texas Lyceum consists of 96 men and women from throughout the state. Directors begin their service while under the age of 46 and have demonstrated leadership in their community and profession, together with a deep commitment to Texas.

The Texas Lyceum acts as a catalyst to bring together diverse opinions and expertise to focus on national and state issues, and seeks to emphasize constructive private sector, public sector, and individual responses to the issues.

To accomplish these purposes, the Lyceum conducts periodic public forums, publishes the Lyceum *Journal*, commissions The Texas Lyceum Poll, and convenes programs for the Directors to explore and discuss key economic and social issues of the state and nation.