



Proposal A Poll

May 1993

Hello, I'm calling from Public Sector Consultants in Lansing, Michigan. We are conducting a survey of perceptions of Michigan government. The survey is not being conducted for any candidate or political party.

Are you registered to vote in Michigan?

Yes Continue
No Terminate

Before we begin, let me tell you that this interview is completely voluntary. Should we come to any question that you don't want to answer, just let me know and we'll go on to the next question.

1. Which one of the following three things do you believe Michigan needs the most at the present time? (ROTATE)

- a. An ability to compete economically with other states. 18%
- b. An improved system of funding education. 29%
- c. A better tax structure. 35%
- All of the above(volunteered) 16%
- Don't know/can't say 1%
- Refused/other 2%

2. Generally speaking, to what extent do you approve or disapprove of the way John Engler is handling his job as Michigan's governor? Would you say you strongly approve, somewhat approve, somewhat disapprove, or strongly disapprove?

- a. Strongly approve 14%
- b. Somewhat approve 35%
- c. Somewhat disapprove 22%
- d. Strongly disapprove 12%
- Don't know/neutral/undecided 17%
- Refused to answer/other 0

3. Please tell me if you agree or disagree with the following statements about Governor Engler? Would that be strongly (agree/disagree) or just somewhat (agree/disagree)?

a. Governor Engler is someone who is willing to make the tough decisions we need for the best interests of Michigan.

Strongly agree	21%
Somewhat agree	37%
Neutral	5%
Somewhat disagree	17%
Strongly disagree	17%
Don't know/undecided	3%
Refused/other	0

b. Governor Engler is the kind of leader who is willing to bite the bullet and cooperate with Democrats to make things work in Michigan.

Strongly agree	13%
Somewhat agree	29%
Neutral	8%
Somewhat disagree	19%
Strongly disagree	22%
Don't know/undecided	9%
Refused/other	0

c. I trust Governor Engler's opinions about how best to change the property tax system.

Strongly agree	12%
Somewhat agree	26%
Neutral	7%
Somewhat disagree	19%
Strongly disagree	26%
Don't know/undecided	10%
Refused/other	1%

4. The legislature is considering a number of controversial issues. If you learned that your legislator voted for the following issues, please tell me if that vote would tend to make you support the legislator more or less? Would that be much (more/less) or just a little (more/less)?

a. Vote to reduce the property tax and replace the lost revenue with an increase in the sales tax.

Much more likely	27%
Little more likely	32%
No difference (volunteered)	6%
Little less likely	13%
Much less likely	15%

Don't know/can't say/undecided	7%
Refused/other	0

- b. Vote to reduce the property tax without replacing the lost revenue for local schools and cities.

Much more likely	9%
Little more likely	15%
No difference (volunteered)	5%
Little less likely	22%
Much less likely	41%
Don't know/can't say/undecided	7%
Refused/other	1%

The next group of questions is about taxes and the way schools are financed.

5. Do you think the way we finance our schools in Michigan works pretty well as it is now, requires only minor changes, or needs fundamental changes?

a. Works well	7%
b. Minor changes	23%
c. Fundamental changes	63%
Don't know/can't say	5%
Refused/other	2%

6. Do you agree or disagree with the following statements about school finance reform? Would that be strongly (agree/disagree) or somewhat (agree/disagree)?

- a. The way we finance our public schools has reached a crisis.

Strongly agree	55%
Somewhat agree	26%
Neutral	4%
Somewhat disagree	10%
Strongly disagree	3%
Don't know/undecided	2%
Refused/other	0

- b. The quality of the local schools is important to the success of my community.

Strongly agree	84%
Somewhat agree	12%
Neutral	2%
Somewhat disagree	1%
Strongly disagree	1%
Don't know/undecided	0
Refused/other	0

c. School funding can be reduced significantly without hurting education.

Strongly agree	18%
Somewhat agree	16%
Neutral	5%
Somewhat disagree	25%
Strongly disagree	33%
Don't know/undecided	3%
Refused/other	1%

d. Reducing the reliance on local property taxes takes away a lot of my school board's control of local educational policy.

Strongly agree	15%
Somewhat agree	29%
Neutral	13%
Somewhat disagree	23%
Strongly disagree	9%
Don't know/undecided	10%
Refused/other	1%

7. When you hear that state government is thinking about reforming school finance, do you believe the primary goal of reform should be to: (ROTATE)

a. Reduce property taxes	12%
b. Shift from the local property tax to a statewide tax	17%
c. Move toward more equal distribution of state money among school districts	41%
d. Provide more money for the schools	19%
Combinations (offered)	6%
Don't know/undecided	3%
Refused/other	2%

8. Do you trust the legislature and the governor to find a good way to finance public education or do you believe their solution will be like the lottery, where the money did not go where many people thought it would?

a. Trust	21%
b. Not trust (like lottery)	68%
Don't know/depends	10%
Refused/other	1%

9. On June 2 there will be a state vote on changing the way we finance the schools. Do you plan to vote on June 2 or is it unlikely that you will find the time to vote?

- a. Vote 86%
- b. Unlikely 6%
- Don't know 9%
- Refused/other 0

IF UNAWARE: Go To Question 14

10. Prior to my mentioning it now, were you aware or unaware of the June 2 vote on a constitutional amendment changing the way we finance our schools?

- a. Aware 62%
- b. Unaware 37%
- Refused/other 1%

IF AWARE: How knowledgeable do you feel you are about this proposed constitutional amendment? Do you feel you are very knowledgeable, somewhat knowledgeable, or not very knowledgeable about the proposal?

- a. Very knowledgeable 9%
- b. Somewhat knowledgeable 39%
- c. Not very knowledgeable 17%
- Don't know/undecided 0
- Refused/other/not aware 35%

IF AWARE: Do you consider the proposal to be basically a property tax cut, a sales tax hike, or a school funding plan?

- a. Property tax cut 4%
- b. Sales tax hike 19%
- c. School funding plan 18%
- Combination of A & C (volunteered) 2%
- Combination of A & B (volunteered) 4%
- Combination of all three (volunteered) 12%
- Don't know/can't say 6%
- Refused/other/unaware 36%

IF AWARE: Based on what you currently know about Proposal A, if the election were being held today, would you vote (ROTATE: favor and oppose) "yes" in favor of the proposal or "no" against the proposal? Are you strongly (in favor/against) or just somewhat (in favor/against)?

- a. Strongly in favor 21%
- b. Somewhat in favor 30%
- c. Neutral/no opinion/undecided 16%
- d. Somewhat against 13%

- e. Strongly against 19%
- Don't plan to vote 1%

IF NOT NEUTRAL OR UNDECIDED: Go to question 13

11. Proposal A, if adopted, will do five things. It will... (OPTION ONE)

- limit annual increases in all property tax assessments to no more than 5% per year;
- reduce school operating taxes to 18 nonvoted mills;
- reduce the maximum millage from 50 to 40 mills but permit districts to levy up to 9 additional mills;
- increase the state sales tax rate to 6 percent and dedicate this additional revenue and lottery proceeds to education;
- and set a minimum per pupil funding guarantee.

or (OPTION TWO)

12. [One half sample] Proposal A will increase the sales tax from 4 cents to 6 cents. The sales tax increase will pay for a reduction of 20% to 25% on the average property tax bill. Future property tax increases would be limited to no more than 5% per year. Current assessments will be "roll back" to last years levels. Schools will be given a grant of \$4,800 per student and be allowed to ask voters to levy up to 9 mills for school improvements. Lottery funds will be earmarked for education. Based on what you currently know about Proposal A, if the election were being held today, would you vote (ROTATE: favor and oppose) "yes" in favor of the proposal or "no" against the proposal? Are you strongly (in favor/against) or just somewhat (in favor/against)?

- a. Strongly in favor 10%
- b. Somewhat in favor 19%
- c. Neutral/no opinion/undecided 10%
- d. Somewhat against 6%
- e. Strongly against 5%
- Don't plan to vote 1%
- Unaware of proposal 0
- Refused/other 50%

13. IF OPPOSE: How could this proposal be changed to gain your support? (PROBE)

14a. IF SUPPORT: Would you continue to support it if it were clear that you could not deduct the sales tax from your federal income taxes as you can the local property tax?

- a. Continue to support 39%
- b. Now oppose 11%
- Don't know 8%
- Refused 42%

- 14b. IF SUPPORT: Would you continue to support the plan if adoption of the plan benefited businesses more than homeowners?
- | | |
|------------------------|-----|
| a. Continue to support | 20% |
| b. Now oppose | 30% |
| Don't know/undecided | 7% |
| Refused | 42% |
- 14c. IF SUPPORT: Would you continue to support the plan if it reduces the ability of your local district to set revenue levels?
- | | |
|------------------------|-----|
| a. Continue to support | 29% |
| b. Now oppose | 14% |
| Don't know/undecided | 14% |
| Refused | 43% |
15. Do you believe that Proposal A will increase the total amount of taxes paid, reduce taxes, or keep them at about the same level?
- | | |
|--------------------|-----|
| a. Increase | 36% |
| b. Decrease | 13% |
| c. Same | 33% |
| Don't know/depends | 16% |
| Refused/other | 2% |
16. Which of the following do you think is the most significant argument in favor of Proposal A? The plan will... (ROTATE)
- | | |
|---|-----|
| a. Lower my taxes. | 16% |
| b. Provide greater equity in expenditures among the schools. | 20% |
| c. Keep the education system strong. | 18% |
| d. Provide better balance between the property tax and other taxes. | 24% |
| Other (volunteered) _____ | 3% |
| No good reason | 8% |
| Don't know/undecided | 9% |
| Refused/other | 1% |
17. Which of the following do you think is the most significant argument against Proposal A? The plan will... (ROTATE)
- | | |
|--|-----|
| a. Limit my ability to set tax and expenditure levels for the local schools. | 11% |
| b. Increase my taxes. | 34% |
| c. Hurt renters while helping homeowners. | 17% |
| d. Increase dependence on state funding. | 17% |
| Other (volunteered) _____ | 4% |
| No good reason | 3% |
| Don't know/undecided | 13% |
| Refused/other | 2% |

18. When John Engler was elected governor, he promised to decrease property taxes and to make education his top priority. As you think about Proposal A, would you say that by supporting it, the governor's position is consistent with his promise or is his support of the plan a violation of that promise?

- a. Consistent 46%
- b. Violation of promise 30%
 - Don't know/depends 20%
 - Refused/other 5%

19. Now, thinking about statewide ballot proposals for a moment... When the state legislature votes to put a proposal on the statewide ballot, which one of the following two statements best describes your thinking about this action:

- a. That this represents a failure of our legislators to find a solution and that they are now passing it on to us 36%

or

- b. That this represents success in that our legislators have compromised and found a solution and are now seeking final voter approval 45%
- Neither/other 7%
- Don't know/undecided 9%
- Refused/other 2%

20. I will read you a list of possible consequences of Proposal A. Please tell me if the consequence will make you more or less likely to support the plan? If (more/less), would that be much (more/less) or a little (more/less) likely?

	Much More	Little More	Neu-tral	Little Less	Much Less	Refused/Other
a. Increase the sales tax by 2 cents	20%	30%	13%	17%	18%	3%
b. Reduce the power of local school boards	13%	27%	14%	30%	14%	3%
c. Reduce overall state taxes by \$213 million	31%	38%	12%	9%	5%	6%
d. Limit future property tax assessments to not more than 5% per year	38%	37%	8%	9%	3%	3%
e. Provide greater tax relief for businesses than homeowners	16%	22%	14%	24%	21%	4%
f. Maintain the overall financial stability of local school districts	40%	38%	9%	4%	4%	4%
g. Reduce the gap in funding levels among school districts	40%	34%	12%	6%	4%	4%

h. Provide for a 20% reduction in property taxes for the average homeowner	54%	27%	8%	5%	4%	3%
i. Roll back recent property tax assessment increases to last years level	44%	30%	12%	7%	3%	3%

21. The following observations have been made about Proposal A. If you became convinced that the observations were true, would you be more or less likely to support Proposal A? Would that be much (more/less) or just a little (more/less)?

a. Proposal A is an historical compromise between Republicans and Democrats.

Much more likely	12%
Little more likely	27%
No difference (volunteered)	42%
Little less likely	10%
Much less likely	4%
Don't know/can't say/undecided	4%
Refused/other	1%

b. There is a widespread support for Proposal A among groups that seldom agree including teachers, business groups, labor unions, and school administrators.

Much more likely	44%
Little more likely	32%
No difference (volunteered)	30%
Little less likely	8%
Much less likely	5%
Don't know/can't say/undecided	3%
Refused/other	1%

22. Do you believe the plan is fundamentally different from other proposals you have voted on over the years or is pretty much like the other proposals that were defeated?

a. Different	39%
b. Same	40%
c. Depends	8%
Don't know/can't say	13%
Refused/other	2%

23. I will read a list of names of individuals or groups that might provide information to you about Proposal A. Please tell me if you place a great deal of confidence in what they say, some confidence, or not much confidence in what they say about school finance reform? (ROTATE)

	Great Deal	Some	Not Much	DK
a. Governor Engler	17%	42%	39%	3%
b. AFL-CIO	7%	39%	48%	6%
c. UAW	8%	41%	47%	5%
d. Chamber of Commerce	14%	50%	29%	8%
e. Michigan Education Association	22%	45%	28%	5%
f. Your local school superintendent	24%	40%	29%	7%
g. Your local newspaper	14%	51%	30%	5%
h. Detroit Free Press	14%	43%	34%	9%
i. Detroit News	12%	42%	36%	10%

Now I would like to ask you a few questions for statistical purposes only.

24. In the last general election in which you voted, which answer best describes how you voted? (READ CHOICES 1 THROUGH 7)

a. Straight Democratic	17%
b. Mostly Democratic	13%
c. For a few more Democrats than Republicans	9%
d. About equally for both parties	19%
e. For a few more Republicans than Democrats	11%
f. Mostly Republican	12%
g. Straight Republican	10%
Other/don't know/depends	5%
Refused	4%

25. On political issues do you generally consider yourself to be conservative, moderate, or liberal? **IF MODERATE:** If you had to choose, would you describe yourself as more conservative or more liberal on political issues?)
- | | |
|--------------------------|-----|
| a. Conservative | 32% |
| b. Moderate conservative | 16% |
| c. Moderate | 20% |
| d. Moderate liberal | 14% |
| e. Liberal | 13% |
| Don't know/other | 5% |
26. What is your age as of your last birthday?
- | | |
|---------------|-----|
| a. <25 | 7% |
| b. 25-34 | 15% |
| c. 35-44 | 24% |
| d. 45-54 | 18% |
| e. 55-64 | 13% |
| f. 65-74 | 13% |
| g. 75+ | 7% |
| Refused/other | 3% |
27. What county do you live in?
(Enter Code) _____
28. What type of community do you live in? Would you say you live in a large city, a suburban area, a small city or town, or rural area?
- | | |
|-----------------------|-----|
| a. Detroit | 10% |
| b. Other large city | 9% |
| c. Suburban | 38% |
| d. Small town or city | 28% |
| e. Rural/village | 15% |
| Refused/other | 0 |
29. How would you describe your main ethnic or racial background? (CIRCLE RESPONSE)
- | | |
|------------------------------------|-----|
| a. Black/African-American | 10% |
| b. White/Caucasian | 87% |
| c. Asian/Pacific Islander | 1% |
| d. Hispanic | 1% |
| e. Native American/American Indian | 1% |
| Other: (specify) | 0 |
| Refused to answer/other | 2% |

30. What is the last year of school that you completed?

- a. Grade school only 2%
- b. Did not finish high school 8%
- c. High school diploma or GED 32%
- d. Vocational or technical school 6%
- e. Some college 25%
- f. College graduate (BS, BA) 17%
- g. Postgraduate work 4%
- h. Graduate or professional degree (PhD, MD, DO, MA, MBA) 7%
- Don't know/refused to answer 0

31. To get a picture of people's financial situation, we need to know the general range of incomes of all the households we interview. Now, thinking about your household's total annual income from all sources, please tell me the letter that most closely corresponds to total household income:

- a. Less than \$10,000 6%
- b. \$10-19,000 14%
- c. \$20-34,000 20%
- d. \$35-49,000 20%
- e. \$50-59,000 9%
- f. \$60-69,000 3%
- g. More than \$69,000 10%
- Other/refused to answer 17%

32. Have you had or do you presently have children of school age (K-12) or younger? (Circle one)

- Yes (continue to question 38) 54%
- No (go to question 39) 46%

33. Which statement best describes how often you vote in state and local elections?

- a. I vote in all elections 38%
- b. I vote in almost all elections 30%
- c. I vote in most elections 14%
- d. I vote in about half of the elections 9%
- e. I vote in less than half of the elections 7%
- First time voter 1%
- Refused/other 2%

34. INTERVIEWERS: CODE RESPONDENT'S SEX HERE. DO NOT ASK.

- Male 49%
- Female 51%

That's all the questions I have for you. Thank you for the interview.