



PUBLIC OPINION MONITOR

Introducing the *Monitor*

We want to provide our clients with richer explanations for *why* elections are won or lost, public policy changes occur or are resisted, consumers spend more or less, and organizations have trouble or success communicating with their customers or the general public. Consequently, it is inevitable that Public Sector Consultants will undertake polling; it is a logical extension of our research services.

Good survey research also measures the pressures for change. We know that consumer confidence translates directly into future spending patterns, which affects prices and availability of goods. We know that future economic activity is formed by today's consumer attitudes. We also know that the legislative agenda next year is largely being set today in the minds of the electorate, on the campaign trail, as voters tell candidates what is on their minds. We are convinced that good analysis of public opinion will shed considerable light on government action today and tomorrow.

The findings of survey research are of even greater value when rigorously analyzed in broader context. That is particularly true if surveys are taken over time and trends emerge. One poll is a snapshot; eight surveys over two years help explain and predict change.

This issue inaugurates *Public Opinion Monitor*, which over time will become indispensable to you in understanding our economic and political world. We expect to undertake statewide surveys periodically. We will test certain perceptions regularly (approval ratings of the governor and legislature, concerns about the economy, confidence in government, partisan and ideological leanings, and the issues most on people's minds). Each survey also will contain questions that focus on one or two narrower issues and permit a more detailed examination of public perceptions. In our first survey, for example, we explored attitudes toward ethics in government, campaign finance reform, and environmental management issues.

Our purpose is not to predict which candidates will win or lose. Ample polling during campaigns is commissioned by various media in Michigan. While head-to-head pairings are interesting and useful in predicting election outcomes, they do little to help us understand why elections are won or lost, what issues concern people, and how the agendas of the public and business will change. Our intention is to describe and measure the political environment that will lead to change.

As we take the pulse of Michigan and watch shifts in public opinion, we welcome your reactions and suggested fields of inquiry. *Public Opinion Monitor* is designed to round out our research services to our clients. We hope that you find it valuable.

Public Sector Consultants conducted this survey of opinion among Michigan residents between October 10 and October 15, 1990. Eight hundred Michiganians were interviewed by professional interviewers from the Florence Morris Interviewing Agency of Oak Park, Michigan. Participants were chosen from throughout the state using randomly selected telephone numbers. A subsample of the total was validated to ensure that appropriate interviewing techniques were used. Technical assistance was provided by William Sederburg and Harry Moxley.

The sample was "stratified" according to sex (50 percent male and 50 percent female) and by region. This stratification assured PSC of an accurate geographic mix and that a sufficient number of males were interviewed.

A sample of 800 individuals from a population of slightly more than 9 million yields an accuracy rate of plus or minus 3.7 percent. Given the nature of statistics, 95 out of 100 samples will be accurate within the 3.7 percent range. The "sampling error" is slightly greater within subgroups based on the size of each category. PSC is convinced that this poll accurately reflects public opinion at the time of the survey.