

# THE GRANITE STATE POLL

## BENSON APPROVAL CONTINUES TO RISE

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DURHAM, NH -- Governor Craig Benson's approval rating continues to rise during his first year in office. Funding education along with jobs and economic conditions are seen to be the most important problem facing the state.

These findings are based on the latest **Granite State Poll**, conducted by the University of New Hampshire Survey Center. The Granite State Poll is sponsored by the University of New Hampshire. Five hundred six (506) randomly selected adults were interviewed by telephone between September 30 and October 7, 2003. The margin of sampling error for the survey is +/-4.4 percent. (For more detailed results, visit the Survey Center web site at [www.unh.edu/survey-center](http://www.unh.edu/survey-center) and click on Press Releases.)

### Gubernatorial Approval

After his first legislative session, and with a contentious budget debate behind him, Governor Craig Benson's approval rating has risen among residents of the Granite State. In the most recent Granite State Poll, 58 percent of New Hampshire adults say they approve of the job he has done as governor, 26 percent disapprove, and 16 percent are neutral. The percentage of New Hampshire adults who approve of the job Benson is doing as Governor has steadily increased from 43 percent in the Winter 2003 Granite State Poll. "Despite the bruising budget debate, Governor Benson is seen to be doing the right things for the state by most residents," says Andrew Smith, Director of the UNH Survey Center.

Benson's personal favorability ratings have remained fairly stable. Currently, 58 percent say they have a favorable opinion of Benson, 23 percent have an unfavorable opinion, 9 percent are neutral, and 10 percent don't know enough about him to say. In the Summer 2003 Granite State Poll, 54 percent of New Hampshire adults said they had a favorable opinion of Benson, 24 percent had an unfavorable opinion, 12 percent were neutral, and 9 percent did not know enough about him to say.

### Most Important Problem Facing New Hampshire

How to fund primary and secondary education has been seen as the most important problem facing the State of New Hampshire for the past several years. But recent economic uncertainties have started to weigh more heavily on the minds of Granite Staters. In the most recent Granite State poll, 21 percent of New Hampshire adults cite education funding as the most important problem facing the state, 19 percent cite jobs and the economy, 13 percent think it is taxes, 10 percent cite problems with the quality of education, and 6 percent cite problems with the state budget.

### Right Direction or Wrong Track?

New Hampshire residents are becoming increasingly optimistic about New Hampshire's future in spite of somewhat heightened concerns over the economy. Sixty-seven percent think things in New Hampshire are generally

going in the right direction, 26 percent think things are seriously off on the wrong track, and 7 percent say they don't know. The percentage of adults who think things in New Hampshire are generally headed in the right direction has increased from 62 percent in the Summer 2003 Granite State Poll.

### Subgroup Analysis

Benson's highest approval and favorability ratings come from Republicans, conservatives and people earning between \$75,000 and \$100,00 per year. Democrats, liberals, union households, and people with post-graduate degrees give Benson his lowest approval and favorability ratings.

New Hampshire adults from all demographic and geographic groups are remarkably similar in their perceptions of problems facing the state. However, jobs and the state of the economy is most often cited by people with lower levels of education and those with low incomes. People who have lived in New Hampshire between 6 and 10 years are significantly more likely to say cite the quality of education as the most important problem facing the state.

### Granite State Poll Methodology

These findings are based on the most recent Granite State Poll conducted by the University of New Hampshire Survey Center from September 30 to October 7, 2003. A random sample of 506 New Hampshire adults was interviewed by telephone. In 95 of 100 cases, the statewide estimates will be accurate to plus or minus 4.3 percent. Results reported for other subgroups have potential for somewhat larger variation than those for the entire population.

The data have been weighted to adjust for numbers of adults and telephone lines within households, respondent sex, and region of the state. In addition to potential sampling error, all surveys have other potential sources of non-sampling error including question order effects, question wording effects, and non-response.

### Gubernatorial Approval

"GENERALLY SPEAKING, do you approve or disapprove of the way Governor Benson is handling his job as governor?"

	<u>Feb. 2003</u>	<u>April 2003</u>	<u>June 2003</u>	<u>Oct. 2003</u>
<b>Approve</b>	43%	48%	53%	58%
<b>Neutral / Don't Know</b>	44	30	22	16
<b>Disapprove</b>	13	22	25	26
<b>(N)</b>	(618)	(496)	(505)	(485)

### Favorability Rating - Governor Craig Benson

"Next, I'd like to get your overall opinion of some people in the news. As I read each name, please say if you have a favorable or unfavorable opinion of this person - or if you have never heard of him or her. Governor Craig Benson."

	<u>Feb. 2003</u>	<u>April 2003</u>	<u>June 2003</u>	<u>Oct. 2003</u>
<b>Favorable</b>	58%	53%	54%	58%
<b>Neutral</b>	15	9	12	9
<b>Unfavorable</b>	14	21	24	23
<b>Don't Know</b>	18	17	9	10
<b>(N)</b>	(652)	(507)	(512)	(496)

### Most Important Problem Facing New Hampshire

"Let's turn to the State of New Hampshire ... There are many problems facing the STATE OF NEW HAMPSHIRE today. In general, what do you think is the most IMPORTANT problem facing the STATE OF NEW HAMPSHIRE today?"

	<u>Oct. '01</u>	<u>Feb. '02</u>	<u>Apr. '02</u>	<u>June '02</u>	<u>Feb. '03</u>	<u>Apr. '03</u>	<u>June '03</u>	<u>Oct. '03</u>
Education Funding	42%	27%	31%	31%	29%	28%	27%	21%
Jobs, the economy	15	12	11	16	16	16	16	19
Taxes	11	17	24	15	16	14	13	13
Quality of Education	4	21	7	12	12	8	6	10
State budget	-	3	1	5	2	6	9	6
Health care	1	0	2	2	2	4	3	5
Other / Don't Know	27	20	24	19	23	24	26	26
(N)	(519)	(312)	(684)	(424)	(644)	(497)	(513)	(490)

### NH - Right Direction or Wrong Track

"Do you think things in New Hampshire are generally going in the right direction or are they seriously off on the wrong track?"

	<u>June 2003</u>	<u>Oct. 2003</u>
<b>Right Direction</b>	62%	67%
<b>Wrong Track</b>	29	26
<b>Don't Know</b>	9	7
<b>(N)</b>	(510)	(485)

## Gubernatorial Approval

<b>STATEWIDE</b>	<b><u>Approve</u></b> <b>58%</b>	<b><u>Neutral</u></b> <b>16%</b>	<b><u>Disapprove</u></b> <b>26%</b>	<b><u>(N)</u></b> <b>485</b>
Registered Democrat	34	11	55	85
Undeclared	55	17	28	147
Registered Republican	78	9	13	142
Not registered	56	26	18	109
Democrat	36	17	47	166
Independent	52	27	21	72
Republican	77	10	13	233
Liberal	42	20	37	96
Moderate	58	14	27	213
Conservative	71	11	18	149
Union household	44	4	52	66
Non-union	61	17	22	412
5 Years or less in NH	58	34	8	62
6 to 10 years	63	21	16	53
11 to 20 years	65	9	26	105
More than 20 years	55	12	32	259
18 to 34	65	17	18	104
33 to 49	57	21	23	164
50 to 64	52	13	35	135
65 and over	65	6	29	73
Male	65	10	25	232
Female	52	21	27	253
High school or less	59	15	26	119
Some college	66	14	20	141
College graduate	60	15	25	133
Post-graduate	43	20	37	87
Less than \$30K	56	20	25	66
\$30K to \$60K	53	14	33	105
\$60K to \$75K	51	14	35	70
\$75K to \$100K	71	4	25	65
More than \$100K	53	24	22	69
Married	57	14	28	322
Divorced/separated	60	18	22	88
Never married	66	18	16	69
Protestant	58	14	27	180
Catholic	62	11	27	173
Other	53	25	22	115
Northern NH	56	23	21	66
Western NH	60	7	33	45
Central/Lakes	53	10	37	77
Hillsborough County	59	17	25	147
Seacoast	61	17	22	150
1st Cong. District	59	18	23	232
2nd Cong. District	58	13	29	253
1st E.C. District	58	18	24	105
2nd E.C. District	51	9	41	94
3rd E.C. District	62	17	21	101
4th E.C. District	61	21	18	104
5th E.C. District	60	12	28	81

**Favorability Rating - Craig Benson**

<b>STATEWIDE</b>	<b><u>Favorable</u></b> <b>58%</b>	<b><u>Neutral</u></b> <b>9%</b>	<b><u>Unfavorable</u></b> <b>23%</b>	<b><u>Don't Know</u></b> <b>10%</b>	<b><u>(N)</u></b> <b>496</b>
Registered Democrat	33	7	51	9	88
Undeclared	58	10	27	5	147
Registered Republican	80	4	11	4	143
Not registered	50	14	14	23	116
Democrat	38	9	43	10	172
Independent	50	14	19	17	75
Republican	77	6	12	5	234
Liberal	45	11	34	10	96
Moderate	58	9	26	8	216
Conservative	71	7	16	6	152
Union household	47	0	49	4	66
Non-union	60	10	20	10	424
5 Years or less in NH	61	18	7	13	63
6 to 10 years	60	9	12	19	57
11 to 20 years	67	4	26	3	106
More than 20 years	55	8	29	8	263
18 to 34	62	9	16	14	105
33 to 49	60	9	22	9	167
50 to 64	54	8	32	7	139
65 and over	61	6	23	9	74
Male	64	5	21	10	241
Female	53	12	26	9	255
High school or less	53	7	21	19	129
Some college	66	8	19	7	142
College graduate	62	10	24	4	135
Post-graduate	49	11	32	9	87
Less than \$30K	50	12	20	18	69
\$30K to \$60K	55	9	27	10	110
\$60K to \$75K	56	2	36	6	70
\$75K to \$100K	69	3	24	4	65
More than \$100K	59	15	19	8	70
Married	60	8	26	7	325
Divorced/separated	57	9	21	13	92
Never married	57	11	15	16	71
Protestant	62	8	24	6	182
Catholic	59	5	24	13	179
Other	54	15	22	9	117
Northern NH	57	17	17	10	66
Western NH	58	1	27	14	46
Central/Lakes	54	6	35	4	79
Hillsborough County	57	10	22	11	152
Seacoast	63	7	20	10	154
1st Cong. District	61	8	21	10	239
2nd Cong. District	56	9	25	10	257
1st E.C. District	60	12	19	9	106
2nd E.C. District	50	6	37	8	95
3rd E.C. District	63	7	22	8	105
4th E.C. District	63	8	17	12	108
5th E.C. District	54	10	25	12	82

### NH Headed in Right Direction or On Wrong Track

	<u>Right Direction</u> 67%	<u>Wrong Track</u> 26%	<u>Don't Know</u> 7%	<u>(N)</u> 485
<b>STATEWIDE</b>				
Registered Democrat	49	46	5	88
Undeclared	63	31	6	144
Registered Republican	80	16	4	140
Not registered	71	17	12	111
Democrat	49	41	10	168
Independent	63	29	8	75
Republican	83	14	3	227
Liberal	50	40	10	95
Moderate	68	26	6	213
Conservative	78	19	3	147
Union household	59	38	3	66
Non-union	68	24	7	413
5 Years or less in NH	75	16	8	62
6 to 10 years	74	24	2	54
11 to 20 years	69	24	7	105
More than 20 years	64	30	6	258
18 to 34	72	22	7	104
33 to 49	70	23	7	164
50 to 64	61	36	3	133
65 and over	68	23	9	74
Male	69	26	5	237
Female	65	26	9	248
High school or less	67	27	7	125
Some college	71	22	7	135
College graduate	69	25	6	134
Post-graduate	59	33	8	87
Less than \$30K	56	32	12	67
\$30K to \$60K	62	30	9	108
\$60K to \$75K	64	34	2	67
\$75K to \$100K	72	23	4	65
More than \$100K	71	21	8	70
Married	68	26	5	317
Divorced/separated	61	30	9	90
Never married	73	20	6	70
Protestant	69	26	5	180
Catholic	69	26	5	175
Other	62	27	12	113
Northern NH	71	19	9	65
Western NH	66	33	1	46
Central/Lakes	57	39	5	74
Hillsborough County	73	23	4	149
Seacoast	65	24	11	151
1st Cong. District	68	23	9	234
2nd Cong. District	66	29	5	251
1st E.C. District	68	25	7	104
2nd E.C. District	57	39	5	91
3rd E.C. District	59	29	11	103
4th E.C. District	78	15	8	107
5th E.C. District	73	25	1	80

**Most Important Problem Facing NH**

	<u>Educ. Funding</u> 21%	<u>Jobs/ Economy</u> 19%	<u>Taxes</u> 13%	<u>State Budget</u> 6%	<u>Quality of Educ.</u> 10%	<u>Other</u> 22%	<u>Don't Know</u> 9
<b>STATEWIDE</b>							
Registered Democrat	20	18	18	3	11	25	4
Undeclared	21	21	16	6	11	21	5
Registered Republican	24	15	13	8	11	19	10
Not registered	18	24	5	5	7	23	17
Democrat	22	18	14	3	9	24	10
Independent	14	22	10	4	10	26	14
Republican	23	17	13	9	11	19	7
Liberal	21	20	15	3	10	22	8
Moderate	26	19	11	6	9	20	9
Conservative	15	21	14	8	13	23	6
Union household	25	22	8	5	8	25	8
Non-union	20	19	14	6	11	21	9
5 Years or less in NH	24	10	19	3	9	23	12
6 to 10 years	19	8	17	8	21	23	5
11 to 20 years	20	19	8	6	9	27	11
More than 20 years	21	24	13	6	9	20	7
18 to 34	22	16	8	3	13	23	15
33 to 49	24	18	13	7	10	21	7
50 to 64	19	23	14	10	10	20	4
65 and over	18	20	17	3	7	23	12
Male	19	23	11	7	9	25	7
Female	23	16	15	5	12	19	11
High school or less	12	32	7	2	6	23	18
Some college	20	22	12	6	10	25	5
College graduate	31	10	17	5	13	19	4
Post-graduate	20	10	16	14	11	19	10
Less than \$30K	13	29	9	1	9	27	13
\$30K to \$60K	22	25	10	8	6	23	6
\$60K to \$75K	21	18	14	6	9	24	8
\$75K to \$100K	30	9	15	9	15	18	4
More than \$100K	25	12	18	10	11	19	5
Married	23	16	15	7	13	20	6
Divorced/separated	19	27	9	4	4	26	11
Never married	11	26	7	5	8	24	19
Protestant	21	20	13	6	11	19	10
Catholic	18	20	14	5	9	24	10
Other	26	18	12	8	9	19	8
Northern NH	18	26	15	4	13	20	5
Western NH	18	29	15	3	7	22	6
Central/Lakes	21	22	9	8	7	28	5
Hillsborough County	16	20	14	7	12	19	11
Seacoast	28	11	12	5	10	22	12
1st Cong. District	23	16	11	6	9	22	13
2nd Cong. District	19	22	14	6	11	21	6
1st E.C. District	20	28	11	5	9	22	5
2nd E.C. District	19	22	14	7	12	22	4
3rd E.C. District	25	10	17	5	8	23	11
4th E.C. District	22	13	9	5	12	22	16
5th E.C. District	17	24	14	8	9	20	9