

Local Priorities in Alabama:

- **Over 70% of Alabamians have confidence that their local elected officials are leading their communities in positive directions, and few Alabamians believe that the quality of life in their local Communities is deteriorating.**
- **The public asserts that *Public Education, Crime, Honesty of Local Officials, and Jobs* are the most critical issues facing Alabama local governments.**
- **Minorities are more likely than non-minorities to assign an *urgent* priority to local issues such as, *Senior Services, Accessibility of Health Care, Business/Commercial Development, Jobs, and Respect for Racial and Ethnic Diversity.***

(Auburn, February 23) The *Ask-Alabama* statewide public opinion survey on the perceptions and attitudes of Alabamians regarding the quality of life and critical issues facing our local communities highlights the satisfaction and optimism which most Alabamians feel about their local community¹. The poll, conducted by Auburn University's Center for Governmental Services also indicates that most Alabamians believe that their local officials are making a positive contribution to their cities and towns.

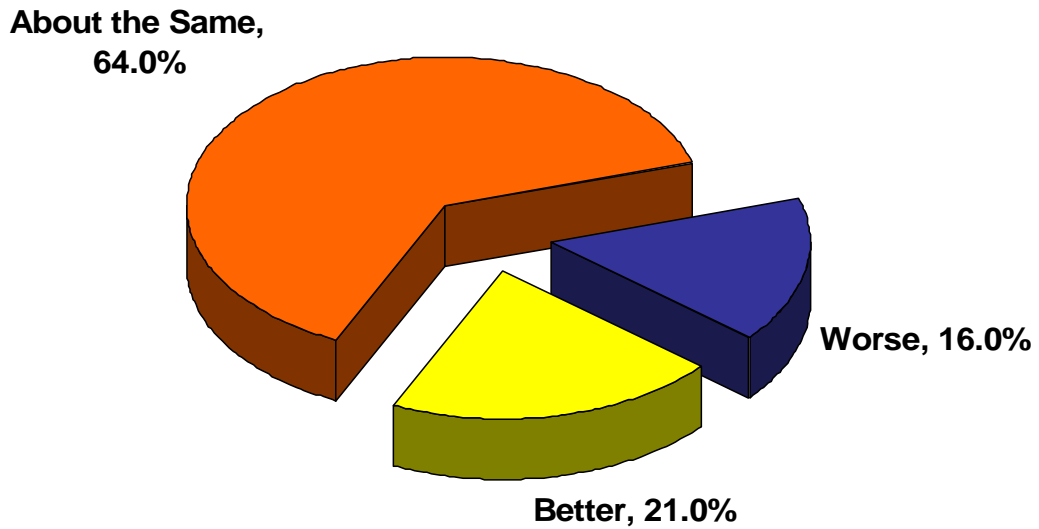
For Alabamians, the most important issues facing their local communities in priority order are: (1) Public Education; (2) Law Enforcement and Crime; (3) Honesty of Local Officials; and (4) Job Availability. Not all Alabamians have the same perspective on prioritization of community issues. The minority population in the State tends to assign a higher priority than non-minorities to such services as: *Senior Services, Accessibility of Health Care, Business and Commercial Development, Availability of Jobs, and Respect for Racial and Ethnic Diversity.*

Quality of Life in Local Communities

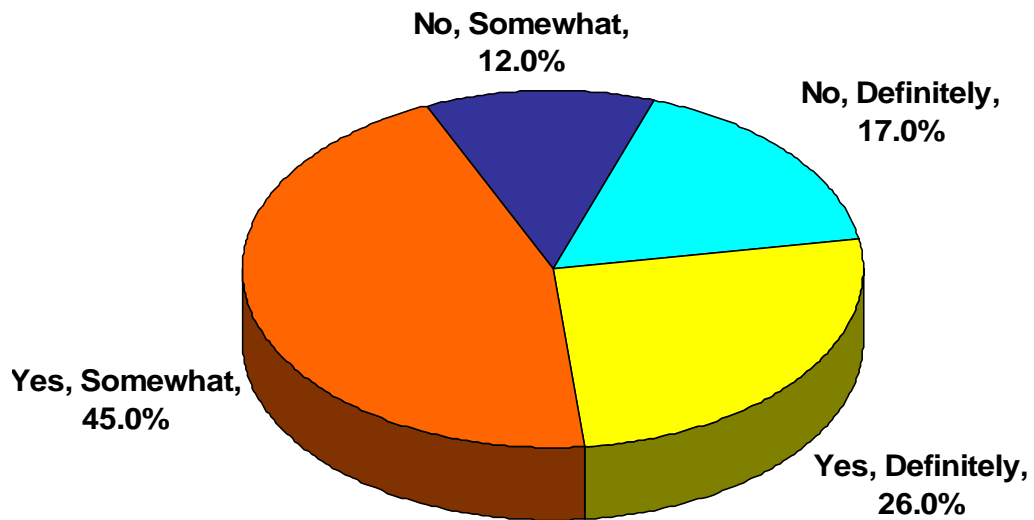
Few Alabamians (16%) believe that the quality of life in their city or town has deteriorated during the past year. Twenty-one percent (21%) assess the quality of life in their community to have improved, and 64% believe that it has remained the same since last year. Seventy-one percent (71%) also express confidence that their elected leadership is leading their city or town in a positive direction, and only 17% believe that their local elected leadership is definitely not moving the community in a positive direction.

¹ The survey of a random telephone sample of 629 Alabamians was conducted from January 24 – February 3 of 2005. The average estimated margin of error is +/- 4%.

Few Alabamians See a Worse Future for Their Local Community (Winter 2005)



Most Alabamians Believe their Local Elected Leadership is Moving the Community in a Positive Direction (Winter 2005)



Urgent Issues Facing Alabama’s Local Communities

The public perceives that certain issues or problems in their local communities should receive urgent or high priority attention. The issue cited by most as an *Urgent* or *High Priority* issue was **Public School Education**, and 80% of respondents assigned an *Urgent* or *High Priority* to education. Seventy-seven percent (77%) cited **Crime and Law Enforcement**, followed by **Honesty of Local Public Officials** (74%), **Job Availability** (73%), and **Availability of Health Care** (67%) as either *Urgent* or *High Priority* issues.

The second tier of issues that Alabamians ranked as *Urgent* or *High Priority* include: **Roads** (62%), **Business and Commercial Growth** (59%), **Fire Protection** (59%), **Ethnic and Racial Respect** (59%), **Senior Services** (59%) and **Water Quality** (58%).

Assessment of the Priority of Selected Local Policy Issues (Winter 2005)

Rank	Local Issue	Urgent	High Priority	Combined ²
1.	Public Education	35%	46%	81%
2.	Crime and Law Enforcement	24%	53%	77%
3.	Honesty of Local Elected Officials	29%	46%	74%
4.	Job Availability	31%	42%	73%
5.	Availability of Health Care	27%	40%	67%
6.	Roads and Bridges	20%	42%	62%
7.	Business and Commercial Growth	17%	42%	59%
8.	Fire Protection	15%	45%	59%
9.	Ethnic and Racial Respect	19%	41%	59%
10.	Services for Senior Citizens	18%	41%	59%
11.	Water Quality	17%	41%	58%
12.	Growth Management and Zoning	14%	38%	52%
13.	Traffic Congestion	20%	30%	50%
14.	Appearance/Beauty of the Town	10%	34%	44%
15.	Parks and Recreation	10%	28%	39%

The general ranking of issues has not changed materially from the July 2004 **Ask Alabama**. Only *Crime and Law Enforcement* and *Water Quality* registered a double digit increase in combined *Urgent* and *High Priority* assessment since the previous poll³.

² Columns may not add exactly due to rounding.

³ See October 2004, *Community Issues in Alabama* www.askalabama.org

Differences in Priorities

The poll highlights differences in prioritization of local community issues between Alabama’s minority and non-minority communities. Minority respondents tended to assign much greater urgency to issues such as: *Senior Services, Accessibility to Health Care, Job Availability, Ethnic and Racial Respect, and Business/Commercial Growth* than did non-minorities.

Fifty-three percent of minority respondents assigned an *Urgent* status to *Availability of Jobs*, compared to 25% of non-minorities. With respect to *Access to Health Care*, minorities were more than twice as likely (50%) than non-minorities (22%) to assign an *Urgent* priority to this issue.

Assessment of Urgency of Selected Issues by Minority Non-Minority Respondents (Winter 2005)

