

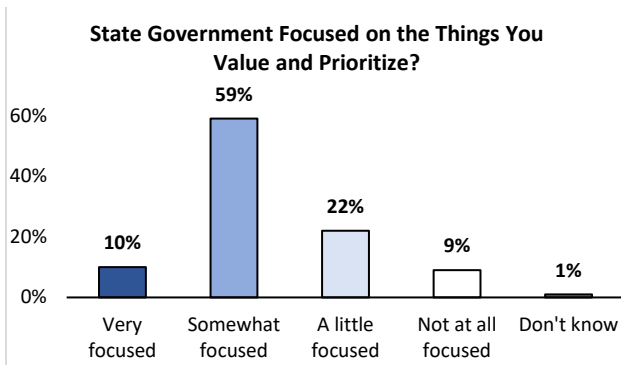


DATE: September 10, 2018
 TO: Holland Children’s Institute
 FROM: Ben Lazarus and Yu-Ming Liou
 TargetSmart
 RE: Nebraska Statewide Issues Survey: Perceptions on Influence in State Government

Surface Level Satisfaction Conceals Cynicism and Discontent with State Government

Results from a recent Holland Children’s Institute poll of 600 registered Nebraska voters¹ show that on the surface, voters are broadly satisfied with the direction of the state (55 percent right direction to 31 percent wrong track) and the performance of their state government (the Unicameral receives the approval of 61 percent of voters and Governor Ricketts receives the approval of 54 percent as well)

Figure 1: State Government Focus



percent) or not at all focused (9 percent) on their priorities as very focused (10 percent).

Likewise, voters express profound cynicism about what influence decisions made by state government. When asked to volunteer what they believe most influences these decisions, the most common response was “money” (see Figure 2), cited by nearly three-in-ten respondents (28 percent). Overall, 70 percent of voters offered a cynical answer (e.g., money, lobbyists or special interests, personal agendas or interest, and partisanship).

However, closer examination suggests this may be more a product of low expectations than real satisfaction. We see substantial voter cynicism about how and for whom state government works. As shown in Figure 1, nearly six-in-ten voters (59 percent) believe state government is only somewhat focused on their priorities, compared to only 10 percent who answered very focused. In fact, more than three times as many voters think state government is only a little focused (22

Figure 2: Factors Named as Top Influence on State Gov’t

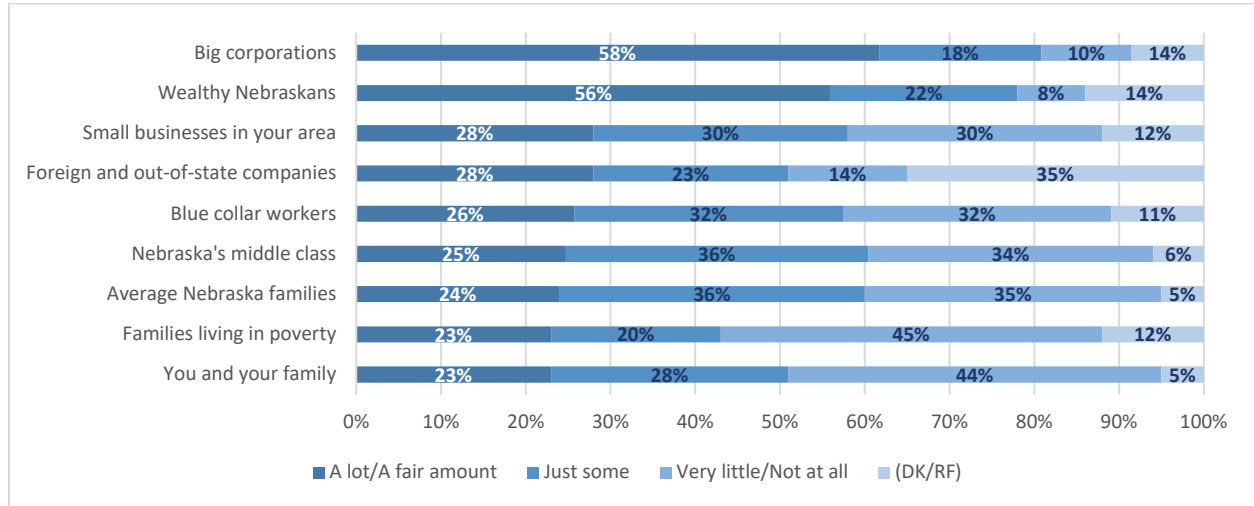


¹ TargetSmart designed and administered this telephone survey conducted by professional interviewers. The survey reached 600 adults, who indicated they were registered to vote in Nebraska. The survey was conducted from July 25-29, 2018. The sample was randomly selected from TargetSmart’s enhanced voter file. The data were weighted by gender, age, party registration, and region by congressional district to ensure an accurate reflection of the population. The overall margin of error is ±4.0%. The margin of error for subgroups is larger and varies. Percentage totals may not add up precisely due to rounding.

Voters Think State Policy and Further Cuts Benefit Big Business and Wealthy, Not Them

Consistent with widespread feelings of cynicism, voters are unlikely to think state economic policies have done much to help them, the middle class, or local small businesses. Instead, as shown in *Figure 3*, they are much more likely to think those policies have helped the wealthy and big corporations.

Figure 1: How Much Has State Economic Policy Helped [Group] in the Past Year?



Similarly, strong pluralities of voters across the state think that further cuts to state services like education and healthcare would harm their family (as shown in *Figure 4*). Moreover, when voters are then asked who they think will benefit most by cuts to further investment in education and healthcare—small businesses and middle-class families or large corporations and wealthy families—most voters answer that these cuts will benefit big business and the wealthy rather than small businesses and the middle class. Tellingly, these perceptions show strong consistency across demographic—and even partisan—lines, as shown in *Figure 5*, below.

Figure 2: Perceived Impact of Cuts on Own Family by Region

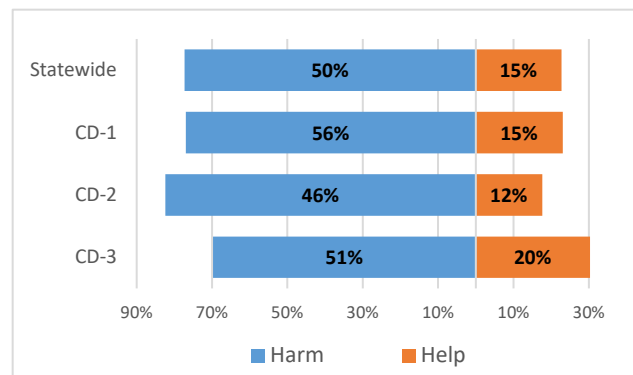
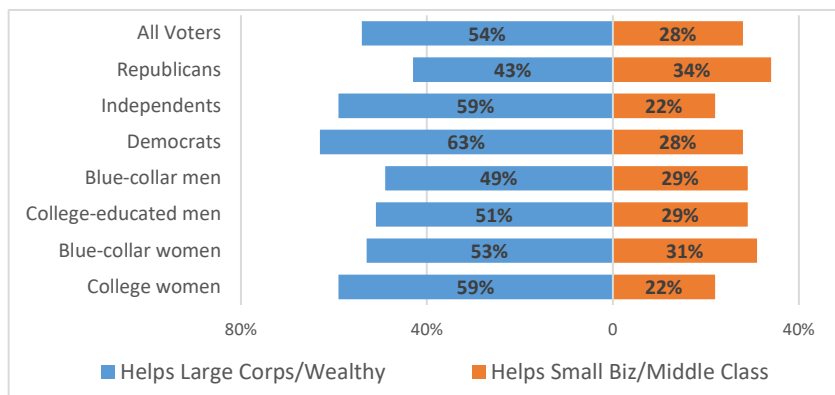


Figure 3: Who Will Benefit Most from Cuts to State Education and Healthcare Services?



Overall, regardless of party, gender, or education, more Nebraskans think cuts to state services will harm their families and instead, benefit big business and the wealthy, and more cuts to key services are only likely to further ingrain voter cynicism when it comes to who and what they think state government is prioritizing.