



**TO:** Interested Parties

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**RE:** Nebraska Voters’ Outlook, January 2021

**Date:** January 29, 2021

**Perceptions of State Performance**

When survey respondents were asked to share their overall impression of the state’s direction, 43% asserted it was on “the wrong track,” while 46% believed Nebraska was moving “in the right direction.” Approval of state performance fell sharply from a 64% approval in March 2020, while disapproval strongly increased from 29%. Similar trends in disapproval were also found among Nebraska’s state Legislature (53% approve), and Nebraska’s Governor Ricketts (51% approve).

At the beginning of 2021 Nebraska voters provide the state with failing grades on several issues. *Noted in Figure 1 below*, these include job training (53% negative), ensuring workers are paid reasonable wages (56% negative), access to paid sick and family leave (55% negative), access to affordable childcare (59% negative) and ensuring access to affordable college tuition (62% negative).

*Figure 1: “Please tell me if you think state government in Nebraska is doing an excellent, good, just fair, or poor job on the following:”*

	<b>Positive (Excellent/Good)</b>	<b>Negative (Fair/Poor)</b>	<b>Positive Margin</b>
<b>Providing job training and access to career, technical and vocational education that is affordable</b>	<b>40%</b>	<b>53%</b>	<b>-13</b>
<b>Ensuring workers are paid reasonable wages so they can afford basic needs</b>	<b>38%</b>	<b>56%</b>	<b>-18</b>
<b>Supporting workers with benefits like paid sick and family leave</b>	<b>38%</b>	<b>55%</b>	<b>-17</b>
<b>Making childcare more available and affordable</b>	<b>28%</b>	<b>59%</b>	<b>-31</b>
<b>Providing necessary funding to make sure college tuition is affordable</b>	<b>30%</b>	<b>62%</b>	<b>-32</b>

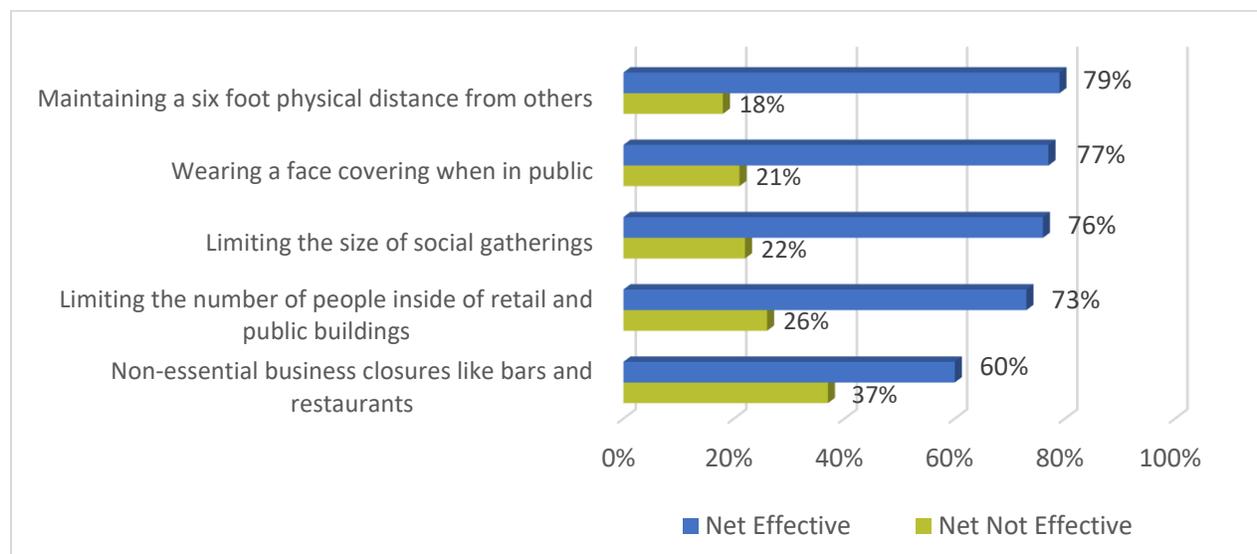
This marks a dramatic negative shift in public opinion from similar March 2020 polling, conducted just a few weeks into the onset of COVID-19 directed health measures. For comparison, see the results of March 2020 questions, page 4, 18-24.<sup>1</sup> **“The reasons for Nebraska voters’ disapproval become increasingly clear when comparing the broad support for these policies and the perception of failure among Nebraska state government leaders’ to provide them,”** explained Hadley Richters - Holland Children’s Institute CEO. **“It’s understandable that during a public health and economic crisis that Nebraskans would feel even more strongly about the ability of these policies to help people.”**

### Nebraska’s Pandemic Response

Nebraska voters are divided as to whether the worst is yet to come (44%) or the worst is over (44%) when considering the COVID-19 pandemic in Nebraska. Many Nebraskans are struggling financially amidst the public health, economic crisis, 36% reporting that they or someone in their household has been “laid off,” “had hours reduced,” or “taken a pay-cut” due to COVID-19. Another 23% report that they will have trouble paying bills over the next few months, with 8% unsure as whether they would struggle.

There are broad levels of support for strategies to help slow the spread of the coronavirus (see Figure 2 below) - with over-six-in-ten Nebraskans indicating that physical distancing (79% net effective), wearing face coverings in public (77% net effective), limiting both gatherings (76% net effective) and the number of people in establishments (73% net effective), and closing non-essential businesses (60% net effective) are effective in slowing the spread of the coronavirus,

Figure 2: “Now I’m going to read you a series of strategies people have suggested to help slow the spread of the coronavirus in your community. After each, please tell me how effective you think that strategy is in slowing the spread of the coronavirus in your community—is it very effective, somewhat effective, not too effective, or not effective at all?”

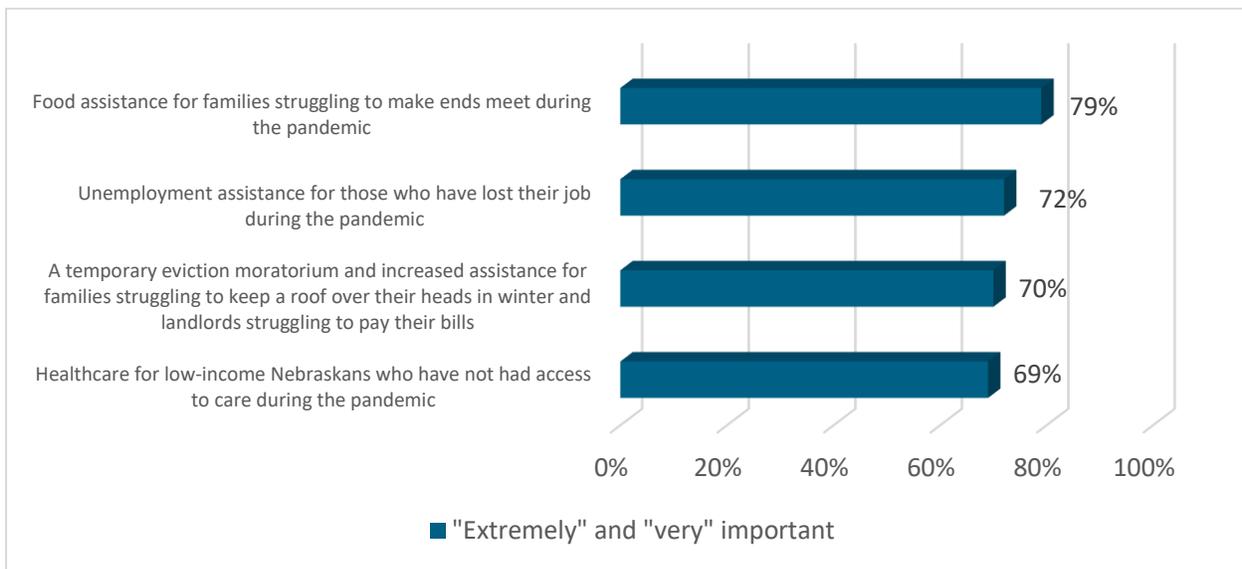


<sup>1</sup> <https://hollandinstitute.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/Institute-Q1-2020-Toplines.pdf>.

Notably, nearly two-thirds of Nebraskans support the implementation of a “mandate requiring Nebraskans to wear a mask when in public spaces” (65% v. 31%). The intensity of feeling strong with a majority (58%) indicating they would “strongly” favor the implementation of such a policy.

Respondents broadly supported programs designed to help Nebraskans through the economic crisis caused by the (see Figure 3). Nearly seven-in-10 or more voters believe it is “extremely” or “very” important that the Nebraska Legislature ensures access to food assistance (79%), unemployment assistance (72%), an eviction moratorium (70%), and health care for low-income Nebraskans (69%) in their response to the ongoing crisis.

Figure 3: “Next is a list of programs designed to help Nebraskans make it through the economic crisis created by the Coronavirus pandemic. In each case, Governor Ricketts has decided to limit or delay Nebraskans’ ability to access that program. After each, please tell me how important it is that the Nebraska legislature ensure Nebraskans have access to that program—is it extremely important, very important, somewhat important, not too important, or not important at all to ensure continued access to that program.”

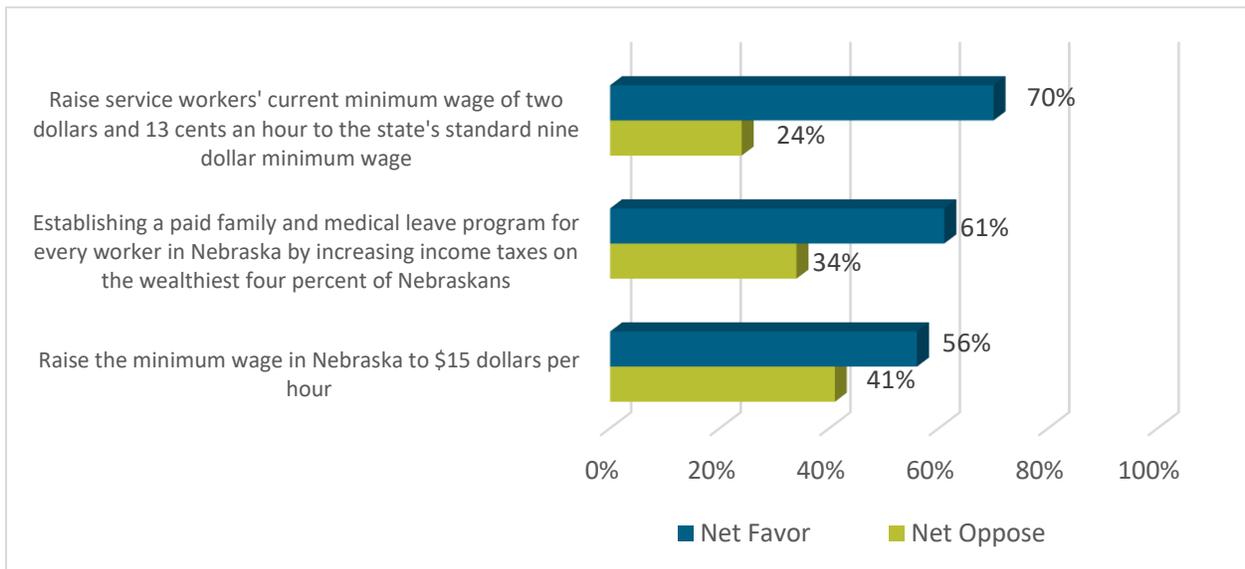


### Perceptions of Economic Policies

Seven-in-10 Nebraskans (70% favor; 24% oppose) are supportive of eliminating the state’s tipped minimum wage with 48% “strongly” backing the policy. Strong majorities also favor establishing a paid family and medical leave policy funded through an income tax on the wealthiest 4% of Nebraskans (61% favor; 34% oppose) and raising the minimum wage in Nebraska to \$15 per hour (56% favor; 41% oppose). Just over four-in-10 Nebraska voters strongly support each policy (paid family and medical leave: 42% favor strongly; \$15 minimum wage: 41% favor strongly).

**“The trend of support for these economic policies among Nebraskans is consistently strong,”** explains Richters. **“Voters have strong opinions on the kinds of economic policy they believe help them and their families.”**

Figure 4: "Next is a list of proposals the legislature may consider during the upcoming 2021 legislative session. After each, please tell me whether you would favor or oppose that proposal."



## Methodology

This analysis is based on a survey commissioned and drafted by Holland Children's Institute in partnership with Patinkin Research Strategies. The survey was conducted January 4<sup>th</sup> through the 7<sup>th</sup>, 2021 among n=616 registered Nebraskan voters. Approximately n=250 interviews were completed via live calls to landlines and cell phones using professional interviewers (n=257 weighted), n=250 interviews were completed using Dynata's online panel (n=252 weighted), and an additional n=116 interviews were completed via a text to web platform (n=107 weighted). Telephone interviews were conducted via both landlines and cell phones. Cell phone interviews represent 54% of live calls. The margin of error for the sample is plus or minus 4.0 percentage points at the 95% level of confidence. The margin of error for subgroups varies and is higher.