

Summary

Alabama School Starting Date Survey

conducted by

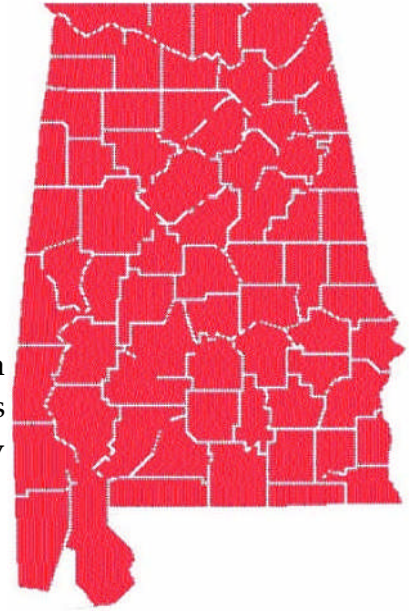
Southern Opinion Research August 2005

Introduction

This report presents the results of a telephone survey of a random sample of 400 Alabama registered voters. The survey was commissioned by SaveAlabamaSummers.org and conducted by Southern Opinion Research. The interviews for the survey were completed on August 15 and 16. The results of the survey were statistically weighted to reflect the gender composition of Alabama registered voters.

All probability samples contain some sampling error - the extent to which the views of respondents differ from the views held by the entire population from which the sample was selected. For this survey, one can be 95 percent confident that the results from the sample are not more than approximately 5.5 percent different from that of the entire population of Alabama registered voters. Sampling error is larger when sub-groups of respondents are examined. Sampling error does not reflect the influence of other factors, such as question wording, question order, or interviewer effect, which can also influence the result of the survey.

In the statistical tables presented here, percentages may not always sum to exactly 100 percent because of rounding.



School starting date issue

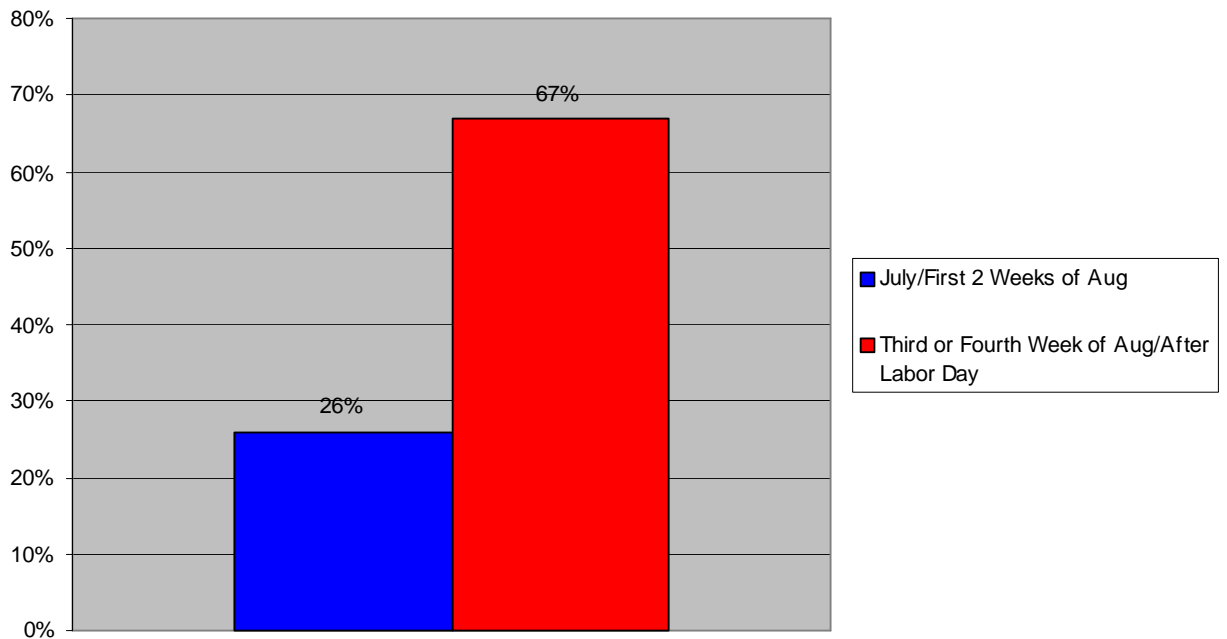
About 43 percent of Alabama registered voters say that September is when the state's public schools should end their summer break and begin the next school year (Figure 1). About 21 percent say that the school year should begin in the first two weeks of August, while about 16 percent prefer the third week in August. About 5 percent favor beginning the school year in July.

Figure 1

"One issue facing Alabama public schools is when the summer break should end and the next school year begin. Would you like to see school start in July, in the first two weeks of August, in the third week of August, in the fourth week of August, or after Labor Day in September?"

JULY	5%
FIRST TWO WEEKS OF AUGUST	21
THIRD WEEK OF AUGUST	16
FOURTH WEEK OF AUGUST	8
LABOR DAY/SEPTEMBER	43
OTHER	3
DK/NA	4

Preferred School Start Date



Longer summers preferred

By 62 to 33 percent margin, respondents say that they prefer a calendar which includes a longer summer vacation with traditional holiday breaks versus a plan involving a shorter summer vacation and more breaks during the school year (Figure 2).

Figure 2

"Which of these two options do you prefer the most: (1) a longer summer vacation with traditional holiday breaks during the school year, or (2) a shorter summer vacation with more breaks during the school year?"

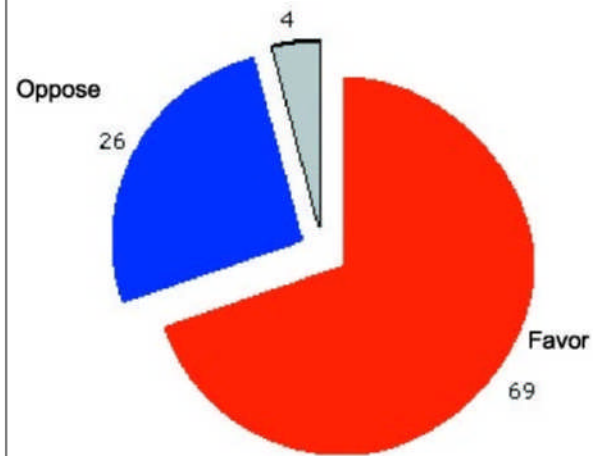
LONGER SUMMER/FEWER BREAKS	62%
SHORTER SUMMER/MORE BREAKS	33
DK/NA	4

Attitudes toward uniform starting dates proposal

About 69 percent of Alabama registered voters say that they favor a proposal "to have each public school district in Alabama begin its school year no earlier than the week of August 21st. Beyond this condition, each district would continue to set its own school calendar." About 26 percent are opposed to this plan (Figure 3).

Figure 3

Favor/oppose proposal to begin school no earlier than Aug. 21

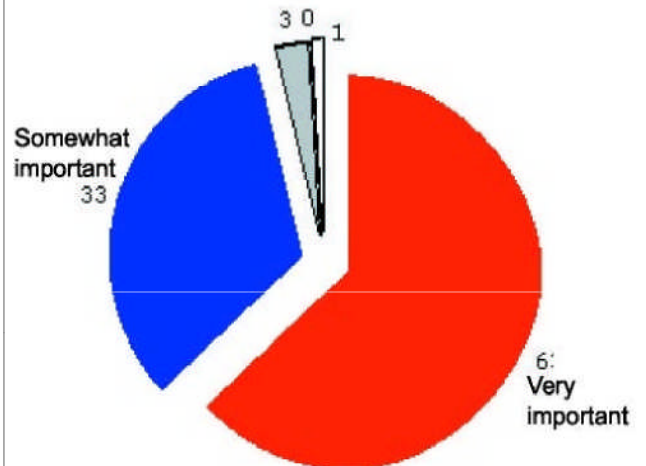


Participating in non-school educational programs

Alabama registered voters believe that it is important for "students to have the opportunity to participate in non-school educational programs sponsored by churches, civic organizations, recreation departments, camps, or other groups." Figure 6 shows that about 63 percent of respondents say that it is "very important" for students to have the opportunity to participate in these activities, while an additional 33 percent say it is "important"

Figure 4

Importance of participating in non-school education programs



School Administrators Response to Public Opinion

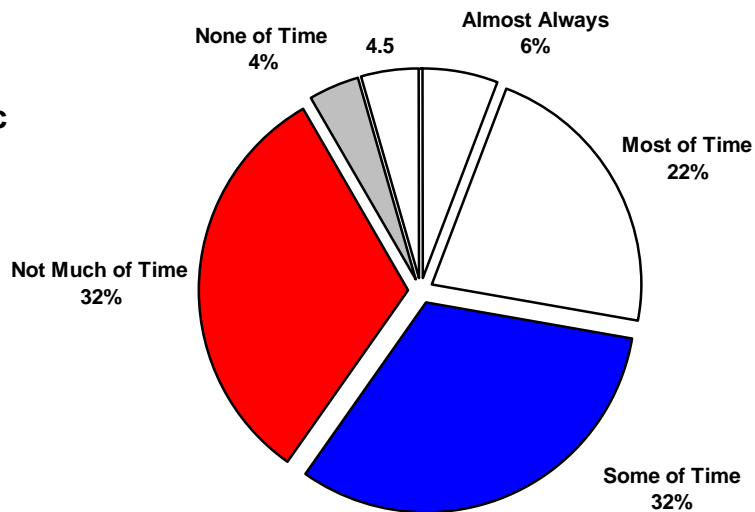
Respondents generally believe that local public school administrators are unresponsive to public opinion. About 6 percent say that local administrators “almost always” “pays attention” to what “people like” them think. An additional 22 percent say that local school administrators are respondents “most of the time.” In contrast, about 36 percent say that administrators pay attention either “not much of the time” (32 percent) or “none of the time” (4 percent).

Figure 7

“In your opinion, how often do your local public school administrators pay attention to what people like you think-- just about always, most of the time, some of the time or not much of the time?”

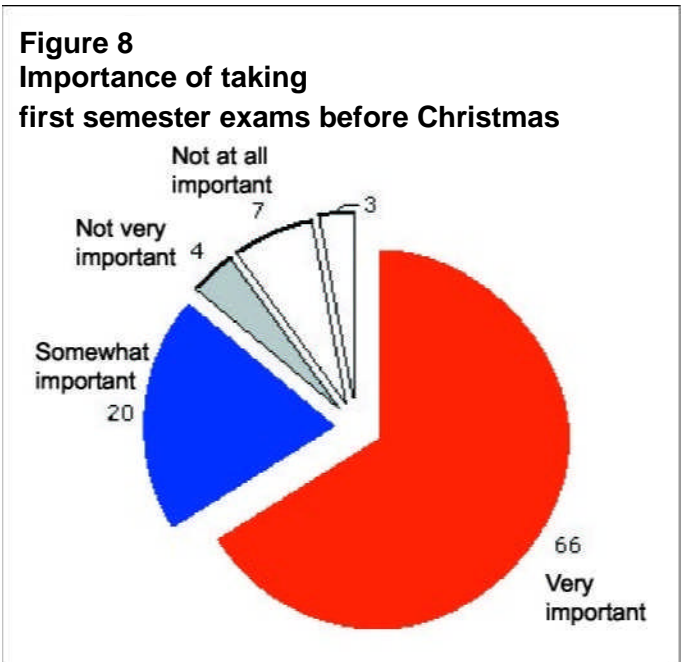
ALMOST ALWAYS	6%
MOST OF THE TIME	22
SOME OF THE TIME	32
NOT MUCH OF THE TIME	32
NONE OF THE TIME (volunteered)	4
DK/NA	5

Do Local School Administrators Respond to Public Opinion?



First semester exams

Figure 8 shows that about two-thirds (66 percent) of respondents say that it is “very important” for students to take “their first semester exams before rather than after the Christmas break.” An additional 20 percent say that it is “important” for first semester exams to be completed before the Christmas break.



This summary was prepared by *Southern Opinion Research*, an independent survey research company located in Tuscaloosa, Alabama and on the web at www.southernopinion.com.

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