



# *Kansas Speaks 2013*

*An annual scientific survey of what Kansas citizens think  
about important issues in their lives*

*Prepared for the Citizens of Kansas by*



Fort Hays State University

# INTRODUCTION

## **Dr. Gary Brinker, Director**

The Docking Institute of Public Affairs is a social research center sponsored by and housed on the campus of Fort Hays State University. The Institute's primary mission is to assist Kansas government and non-profit organizations in accomplishing their goals by providing high-quality research services at competitive costs. In pursuit of Fort Hays State University's public affairs mission, the Docking Institute conducts an annual statewide public opinion survey of adult Kansas residents. This highly scientific study is conducted using state-of-the-art methods and computer-assisted telephone survey software, producing highly representative data on how Kansans feel about their state, their leaders and the policies our elected officials promote in their legislative agendas.

This year, Kansas Speaks adopted a new sampling methodology that includes cell phone numbers along with landline phone numbers. This method has given younger Kansans more opportunities to participate, making our data much more representative of the true age cohorts as determined by the U.S. Census, along with more valid estimates of what Kansans as a whole think about the important issues facing our state. We invite readers to peruse the major findings presented in this insert. More detailed findings can be found under the Kansas Speaks tab of our website: [www.fhsu.edu/docking](http://www.fhsu.edu/docking). We hope that our efforts will be used constructively by voters and legislators to promote statewide policies that reflect the majority of Kansan's values and aspirations for the future of our state.

# MOST INTERESTING FINDINGS

## **Dr. Chapman Rackaway, Senior Research Fellow**

Kansas remains a great place to live, and Kansans are optimistic about the future. But they are also feeling a significant amount of uncertainty. Overall, according to the Docking Institute of Public Affairs' annual Kansas Speaks survey, Kansans are feeling caught between different forces and unsure about what the future will hold.

First of all, Kansans believe our state is a great place to live. But that does not mean they look at events in the state with rose-colored glasses. Almost 90% of respondents rate Kansas as a good, very good or excellent place to live, but only 53.4% of respondents rate the Kansas economy that highly. Most people rate the economy as fair or good, but clearly the enthusiasm among Kansans for the state does not extend to the state of the economy. In fact, 61% of respondents are concerned the Kansas economy will threaten their family's welfare in the near future. There is an apparent concern for the economy, but one of the biggest uncertainties is what the people want to do about it.

Sweeping into office in 2010, Gov. Sam Brownback promised to improve the Kansas economy through a low-tax, pro-business policy agenda showcased by a gradual reduction of corporate and individual income taxes. After two years of Brownback's regime, respondents are divided on the effects of the plan. Survey participants are evenly divided on Brownback's economic plan, with just under 40% satisfied with his handling of the economy and almost the same number dissatisfied with his performance. Respondents to Kansas Speaks are also evenly divided on Democratic plans for the state's economy, but more neutral. The results suggest that people might not be enthusiastic



about Brownback's economic agenda, but aren't even sure what the Democratic plan is. The actual percentage of supporters and opponents for Democrats is close to the numbers for Brownback (30% supporting and 36% opposing), so no clear mandate on a direction for the economy emerges from the results of Kansas Speaks.

Most notable are the results on state spending. Many respondents (44.5%) think government spending should be decreased, but other data suggest that Kansans don't know where the cuts should come from. More Kansans think funding for education, both K-12 and higher education, and social services should be increased, while at the same time they think Kansas government overall spending should decrease. In no specific areas did a mandate emerge for reduction in government spending. So while people who participated in Kansas Speaks generally think that government spending should decrease, they have no preference for specific and substantive cuts in the state budget. In fact, they would like to see spending increases on the two policy areas that make up three-quarters of the state budget; education and social services. Support for spending increases is so strong that three in five participants support school districts being allowed to sue the state legislature to increase their funding. Respondents are also decisive on how they would pay for extra spending, strongly favoring tax increases for large corporations and wealthier Kansans, with majorities supporting higher taxes for both groups.

Kansans are unsure of the future, skeptical of all political leaders' ideas for improving the state's economic health, and want the government to decrease spending, while at the same time they want increased funds going to schools and social services. The one thing that is clear from the responses to this year's Kansas Speaks is that uncertainty reigns.

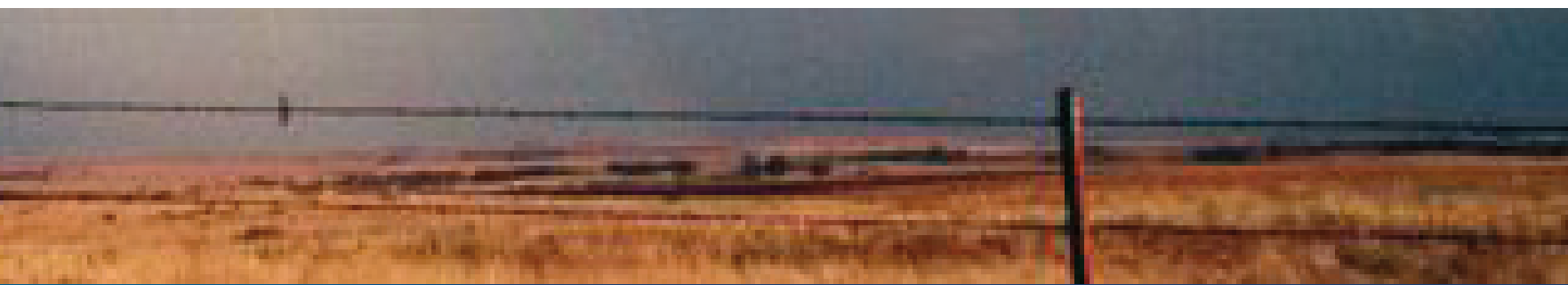
## SURVEY METHODOLOGY

### Dr. Jian Sun, Principal Investigator

To assess attitudes and opinions of Kansans, the Docking Institute has surveyed a random sample of residents age 18 and older in Kansas every year since 2009. In previous years, thousands of Kansas residents were contacted, and each year answers from more than 900 people were collected.

In 2013, the Docking Institute purchased from Scientific Telephone Samples a random sample consisting of Kansas landline telephone numbers and cellphone numbers. From May 23 to Sept. 18, a total of 1,459 Kansas residents were contacted and 944 of them completed the survey, resulting in a 64.7% response rate. The margin of error was 3.2% at the 95% confidence level. A margin of error of 3.2% means that there is a 95% probability that findings among the sample vary no more than  $\pm 3.2\%$  from the value that would be found if all adult Kansas residents were surveyed, assuming no response bias. In 2013, the survey had higher response rates among Kansas residents who are white, non-Hispanic and those over 55. Therefore, the overall population estimates are biased toward the opinions of white, non-Hispanic and older Kansans.

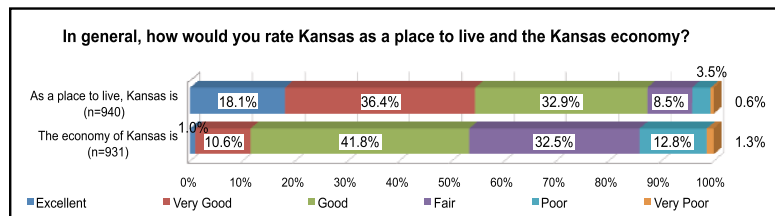
The questionnaire was developed with the assistance of Dr. Chapman Rackaway, Docking Institute Senior Research Fellow and Professor of Political Science at Fort Hays State University. The survey questions measure what the researchers deemed the most substantive indicators of satisfaction with state government and policies.



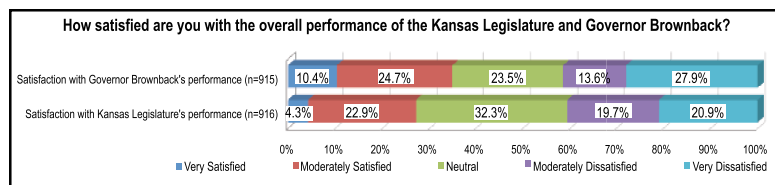


# SURVEY RESULTS

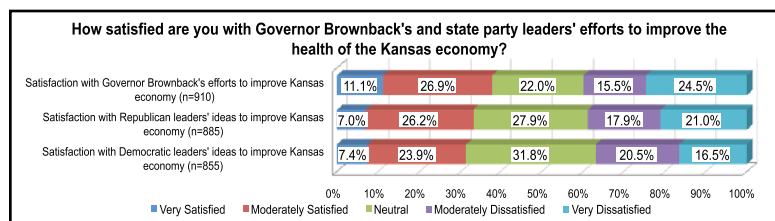
**Dr. Jian Sun, Principal Investigator,**  
**Dr. Gary Brinker, Director**



The vast majority (87.4%) of respondents felt Kansas is at least a good place to live, with only 4.1% expressing negative feelings. The rating was higher among older, higher-educated, higher-income and Republican respondents and those who reported voting in 2012. Respondents were not as optimistic about the state of the Kansas economy, with 46.6% saying the economy is, at best, in fair condition. Higher-income respondents tended to rate the state's economy more highly.

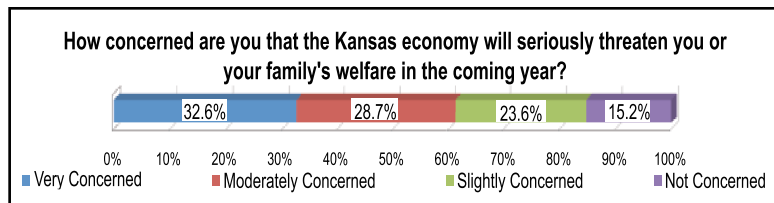


Respondents expressed mixed satisfaction with the overall performance of Gov. Sam Brownback and the Kansas Legislature, with a higher percentage indicating dissatisfaction with both. The governor was rated lower by Democratic and higher-educated respondents and those who voted in 2012. The ratings of the Kansas Legislature tended to be lower among the older and Democratic respondents and those who voted in 2012.

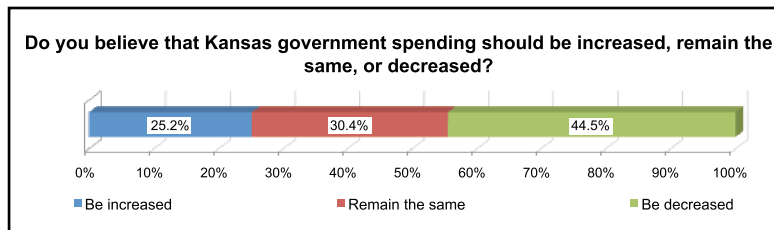


Respondents were also highly divided in their satisfaction with the governor's and both parties' efforts to improve

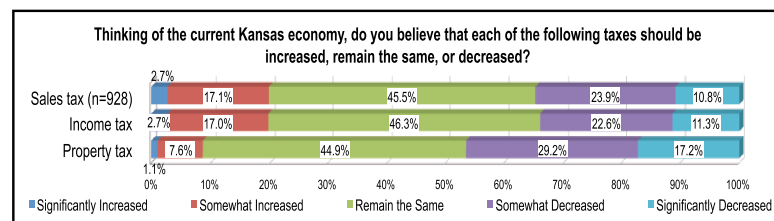
the Kansas economy. Satisfaction with the governor was higher among the less-educated and Republican respondents. Respondents who did not vote in 2012 tended to rate the governor more highly or neutral as compared with those who voted. Dissatisfaction with Republican leaders' efforts was higher among the older and Democratic respondents and those who voted in 2012. Democratic Party leaders' efforts were rated lower by Republicans and those who voted in 2012.



About one-third of respondents said they were "very concerned" that economic conditions will threaten them or their family's welfare. Well over half are at least "moderately concerned." Concern tended to be higher among the older, less educated, female, and lower-income respondents.



When asked about state government spending, 44.5% of respondents favored decreasing expenditures, 30.4% favored keeping state spending unchanged, and about one-fourth favored increased spending. Higher-educated and Democratic respondents were more likely to favor increased state spending.

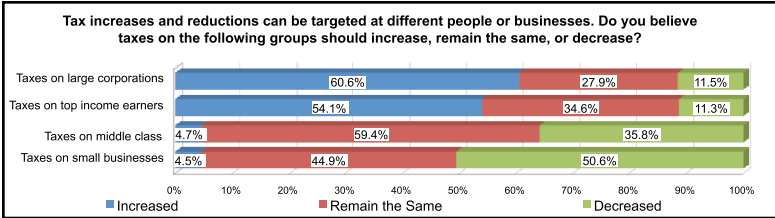


Respondents were most likely to favor keeping sales tax and income tax as is, while more favored reductions

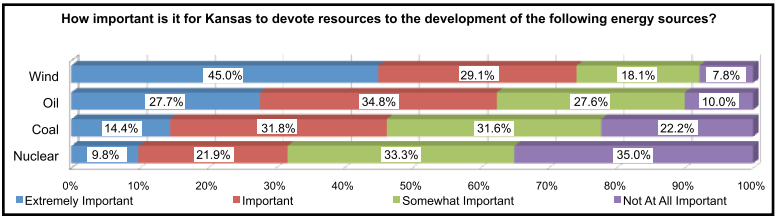




in taxes than favored increases. Respondents differed slightly in their preferences for property tax policy, being more likely to favor a decrease, and less likely to favor an increase, compared to sales and income taxes. Respondents with higher education were more likely to support increases in sales, income, and property taxes. Increasing income tax was more popular among Democratic respondents. Lower sales tax was favored more by lower-income respondents.

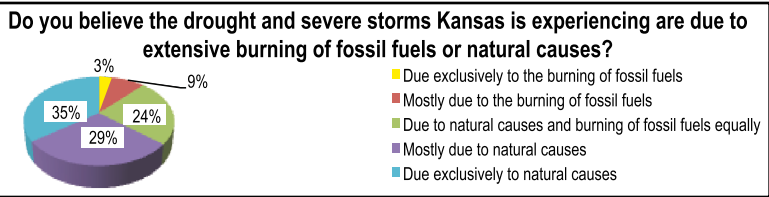


When asked about taxing specific groups, more than half of respondents favored increasing taxes on large corporations and the top income earners. Almost all respondents wanted to decrease or keep the current tax rates on small businesses and the middle class. The higher-educated, Democratic, and female respondents were more likely to favor increased taxes on top income earners. Lowering taxes on the middle class was more popular among higher-educated and lower-income respondents. The female, younger, and Democratic respondents tended to favor increased taxes on large corporations. The higher-educated and Democratic respondents were more likely to favor increased taxes on small businesses.

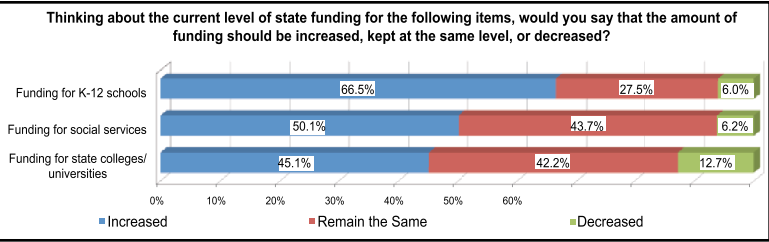


When asked about their support for devoting resources for the development of four energy sources, almost half of respondents felt it “very important” to devote resources to developing wind energy, 27.7% felt this way toward oil resources, and 14.4% toward coal. More than one-third favored no support at all toward nuclear energy. Higher-income, upper-educated, and Democratic respondents were less likely to support coal and oil. Wind

energy received stronger support among the female and Democratic respondents and those who did not vote in 2012. Males and Republicans were more likely to support nuclear energy.

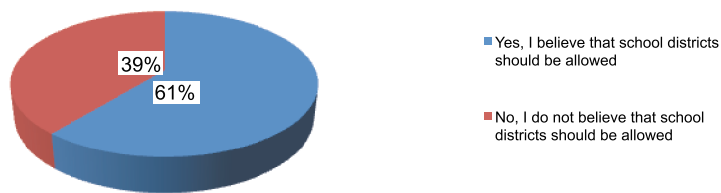


Respondents were asked if they believe the drought and severe storms recently experienced in Kansas were due to extensive burning of fossil fuels or natural causes. Almost two-thirds (64%) of respondents thought the drought and severe storms were due exclusively or mostly to natural causes, while only 12% felt the erratic weather pattern was due exclusively or mostly to the burning of fossil fuels. The less-educated and Republican respondents were more likely to feel the erratic weather pattern was due exclusively or mostly to natural causes.



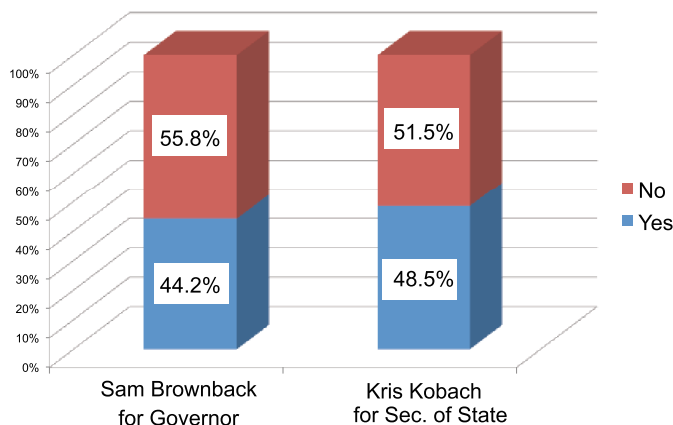
When asked about their support for public education and social services, respondents expressed the most financial support for K-12, with two-thirds favoring an increase in spending for these schools. Half of respondents supported increased funding for social services. Respondents were more divided on whether to increase funding for state colleges and universities or leave the current funding in place. Female, African American, and Democratic respondents were more likely to support increased funding for K-12 schools. The support for increased funding for social services was higher among the female, lower-income, African American, Democratic, and less-educated respondents. Female, higher-educated, and Democratic respondents were more likely to support increased funding for colleges and universities.

Do you believe that Kansas school districts should be allowed to sue the state for failing to meet the constitutional mandate that the state "adequately fund" elementary and secondary public education?



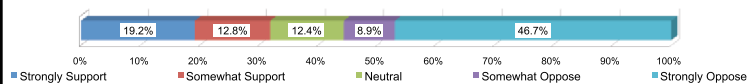
When asked if Kansas school districts should be allowed to sue the state for failing to provide the constitutional mandate for minimum funding, a majority of respondents indicated that they felt this was justified. Four out of 10 respondents, however, disapproved of school districts suing the state.

If the November 2014 election were held today, would you vote for:



Respondents were asked to speculate on whether they would vote to retain two key incumbents in the upcoming 2014 state election. Of those expressing an opinion, only 44% of respondents indicated they intended to vote to retain Gov. Brownback for a second term. Secretary of State Kris Kobach fell just short of majority support among respondents who expressed an opinion.

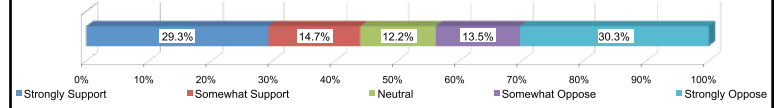
Would you support or oppose allowing concealed weapons to be carried in schools, hospitals and government buildings?



Although respondents were highly divided on whether

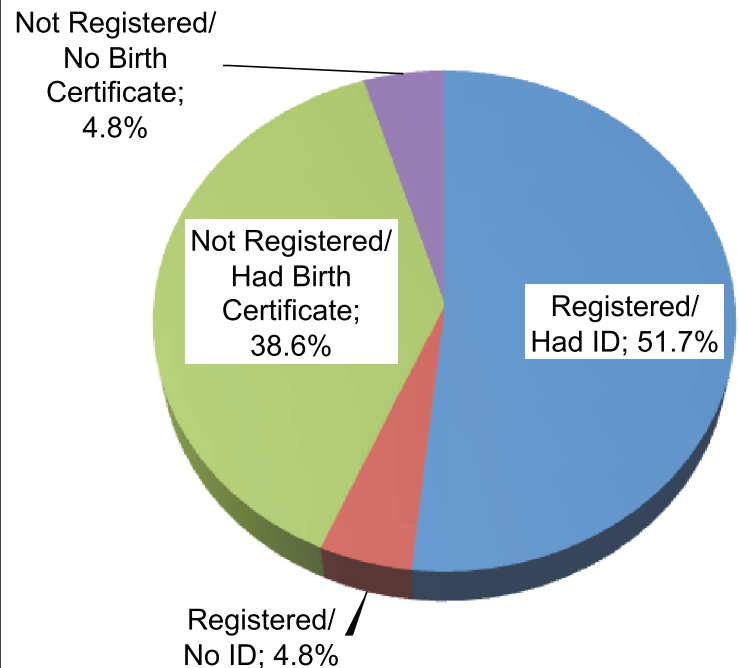
concealed firearms should be allowed in schools, hospitals and government buildings, over half indicated that they preferred weapons not be allowed in these venues. Almost half expressed strong opposition to this policy, while almost one-fifth expressed strong support.

Do you support or oppose the recent legislation that prohibits federal agencies from regulating any firearms that are manufactured, sold, and kept within the state of Kansas?



Kansas now has a law that prohibits federal agencies from enforcing federal gun laws pertaining to any weapons fully manufactured, sold and retained within the state borders. Respondents were also highly divided on this issue, with almost equal percentages favoring and opposing such legislation.

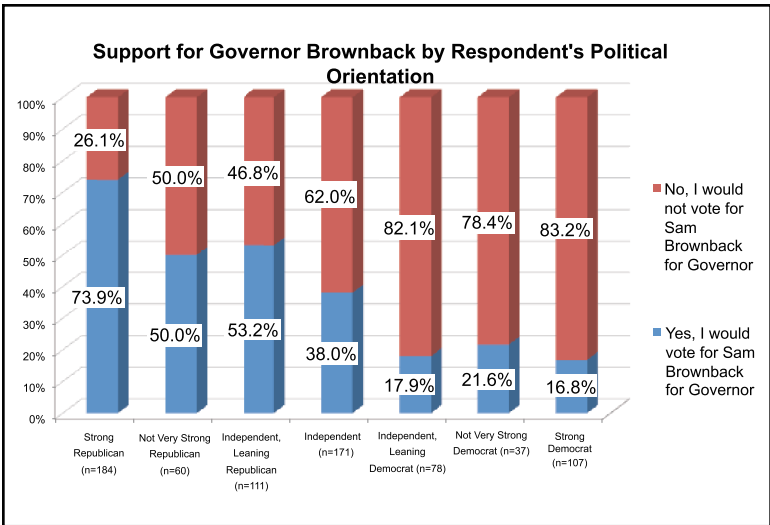
Did Not Vote in 2012 Election



To measure the effects of the new voter and voter registration requirements, respondents who indicated that they did not vote in the 2012 general election were asked whether they were registered to vote. Those who said they were registered to vote were asked if they had



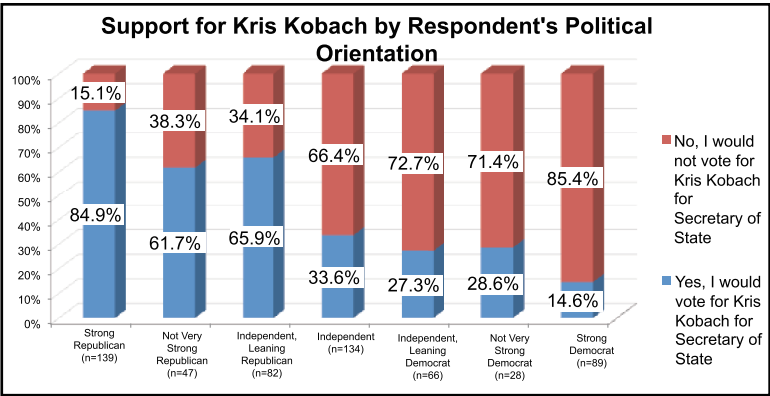
a photo ID. The figure above shows that half of respondents who did not vote were fully eligible. It also shows that over 90% had the necessary proof of citizenship needed to register. The remaining 9.6% of respondents who did not vote said they either did not have access to their birth certificate or did not have a photo ID, making them ineligible to participate in the 2012 election. Among the entire survey sample, 0.7% said they did not have the required proof of citizenship, and an additional 0.7% said they did not have the required photo ID. If the sample is representative of the Kansas adult population, as it was designed to be, the survey data suggest that approximately 14,000 Kansans do not have the required documents to register, and another 14,000 do not have the required photo ID to vote. Although the sample sizes were too small for highly reliable cross tabulation, the data suggest that the photo ID requirement affected Democrats and Republicans equally, but the proof of citizenship requirement disproportionately affected Kansas Democrats.



Support for the re-election of Gov. Brownback was strongly correlated to respondent's expressed political orientation. Generally, the more strongly Republican, the more likely the respondent was to favor Brownback's re-election. However, opposition to the governor's re-election among Democrats was stronger than support among Republicans. Over one-third of Independent Kansans support Gov. Brownback's re-election in 2014.

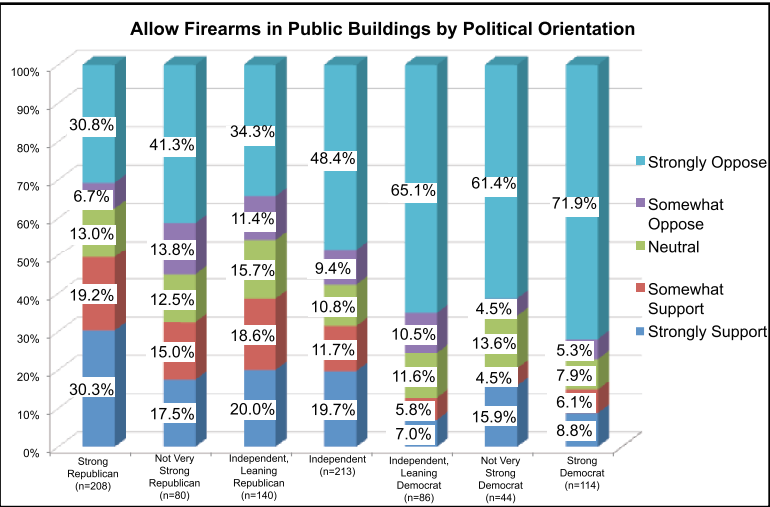
Support for the re-election of Kansas Secretary of State

Kris Kobach mirrored support for Gov. Brownback's re-election. Generally, the more strongly respondents self-reported Democratic affiliation, the less likely they were to support the re-election of Kris Kobach. One-third of Kansans identifying themselves as Independent voters favor re-electing Kobach. As with the governor, opposition to Kobach's re-



election among Democrats was higher than support for his re-election among Republicans.

Support for allowing concealed firearms in schools, hospitals and government buildings was also highly correlated to political orientation. Generally, the more strongly respondents identified with the Republican Party, the more likely they were to support allowing concealed firearms in public buildings. Again, as for the re-election of Gov. Brownback and Secretary of State Kobach, opposition to allowing guns in these venues among Kansas Democrats was stronger than support among Kansas Republicans.





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**You wanted us to have a vision for the future.**

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