

## The Views of Economics and Policy Academics in Illinois: 2016-2017 School Year

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**Abstract:** In August 2016, over 100 economics and policy academics from accredited universities and colleges in Illinois voluntarily participated in the 2<sup>nd</sup> annual *Poll of Illinois Economics Professors, Instructors, and Experts* (PIE<sup>2</sup>). The survey contained 24 questions about general public policy issues, Illinois-specific policy issues, and the field of economics. Relative to the actual number of economics and policy academics at accredited universities and colleges in Illinois, the 110-person sample size produces a margin of error of  $\pm 8.4\%$ . The responses show that economics and policy academics in Illinois are generally strong supporters of infrastructure investment, public education, immigration, international free trade, and tax changes to help balance the state budget. A majority of economics and policy academics in Illinois say that expanding early childhood education and investing in highways, bridges, and public transit systems would improve the Illinois economy. Finally, a significant majority of Illinois' economics and policy academics do not think that elected officials generally have a strong understanding of economic principles.

**Question topics:** 1) university or college type; 2) qualifications; 3) area of study; 4) voter affiliation; 5) religious identification; 6) minimum wage laws; 7) labor unions; 8) public education; 9) transportation infrastructure; 10) free trade; 11) role of government; 12) Illinois income gap; 13) Illinois budget problems; 14) Illinois infrastructure investment; 15) Safe Roads Amendment; 16) hypothetical pension amendment; 17) action on climate change; 18) progressive income tax in Illinois; 19) immigration in Illinois; 20) Illinois minimum wage; 21) improving employment in Illinois; 22) social issues; 23) elected officials; 24) problems conducting quality research.

### Introduction

In August 2016, the Illinois Economic Policy Institute (ILEPI) surveyed over 100 economics academics and policy professors from accredited university programs in Illinois. The anonymous, 24-item survey contained questions on general public policy issues, Illinois-specific issues, and the field of economics. Most questions were designed to elicit an overall judgement of support or opposition to a particular issue or public policy. To understand how Illinois' economics and policy academics generally think on a variety of economic issues, questions ranged from topics such as support for minimum wage laws or for transportation infrastructure to views on the essential functions of government. Participants were also asked to volunteer which policy changes they thought would improve Illinois' employment outcomes and grow the economy.

The results may raise more questions than answers. ILEPI has made every effort to objectively analyze the available data— which has been made publicly available<sup>1</sup>— and to put the results in context with other relevant surveys. However, the concluding section provides more narrative in summarizing areas of general consensus among economics and policy academics. Ultimately, the purpose of this survey is to help Illinois' residents and elected officials understand the views of expert economists and public policy professors in their state.

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<sup>1</sup> A publicly available spreadsheet with full respondent results is available online at: <http://goo.gl/iUUDWq>.

**Description of Survey and Limitations**

The Illinois Economic Policy Institute (ILEPI) compiled a list of 578 publicly-available email addresses of economics and public policy academics employed at universities and colleges throughout the State of Illinois. The academic contacts included professors, lecturers, and instructors in economics departments and major public policy programs across Illinois ([CollegeDegree.com](http://CollegeDegree.com)).<sup>2</sup> Faculty and staff at community colleges and junior colleges were not included. Among the included are the economics department at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign and the Harris School of Public Policy at the University of Chicago, institutions from which the author has earned degrees.

The 2<sup>nd</sup> annual *Poll of Illinois Economics Professors, Instructors, and Experts* (PIE<sup>2</sup>) was emailed to the 578-person contact list on August 18, 2016. Responses were collected through August 31, 2016. Note that the PIE<sup>2</sup> was not a random survey – all of the state’s top economics and policy academics were contacted as long as their email was publicly available.

In total, 110 professors, instructors, and experts participated in the survey, for a response rate of 19.0%. While the small sample size limits the ability to draw definitive conclusions, the results do provide suggestive evidence of broad agreement on certain issues. The estimated margin of error associated with this sample size is ±8.4%, so it can be stated with relative confidence that a majority of the state’s economics academics and policy academics hold a particular position if the results show a consensus of 60% or greater.

**The Sample of Economics and Policy Experts**

Respondents were split between professors at public universities and colleges and at private institutions. A total of 46 academics (41.8%) report that they are employed in a public university or college in Illinois and 57 academics (51.8%) say they work at a private educational institution in Illinois. Seven respondents (6.4%) state that they are not employed as a faculty member at a university or college in Illinois. Three of these individuals reply that they are retired professors. The four remaining individuals may be employed at a university in another state, be employed at another institution (e.g., the Federal Reserve Bank of Chicago), or be currently unemployed.

*1) Are you employed as a faculty member at a university or college in Illinois?*

Yes, at a public university or college	46	47.9%
Yes, at a private university or college	57	48.9%
No/Other	7	3.2%

\*Six of the “No/Other” responses indicated that they had earned a Ph.D. in Economics. One has a J.D. degree. Their responses are all included in the remainder of the analysis.

The sample of academics mostly contains individuals with a Ph.D. in Economics (73.6%). About one-in-six respondents earned a Ph.D. in Political Science, Public Policy, Public Administration, or a related field (16.4%) and three individuals attained a Ph.D. in Business or Business Administration (2.7%).

The survey received responses from a variety of economists and public policy academics by research interest. The five most common research interests include public economics or finance

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<sup>2</sup> For the complete list of economic and policy academic email addresses (to be used for *research purposes only* and not for spam), please contact author Frank Manzo IV at [fmanzo@illinoisepi.org](mailto:fmanzo@illinoisepi.org).

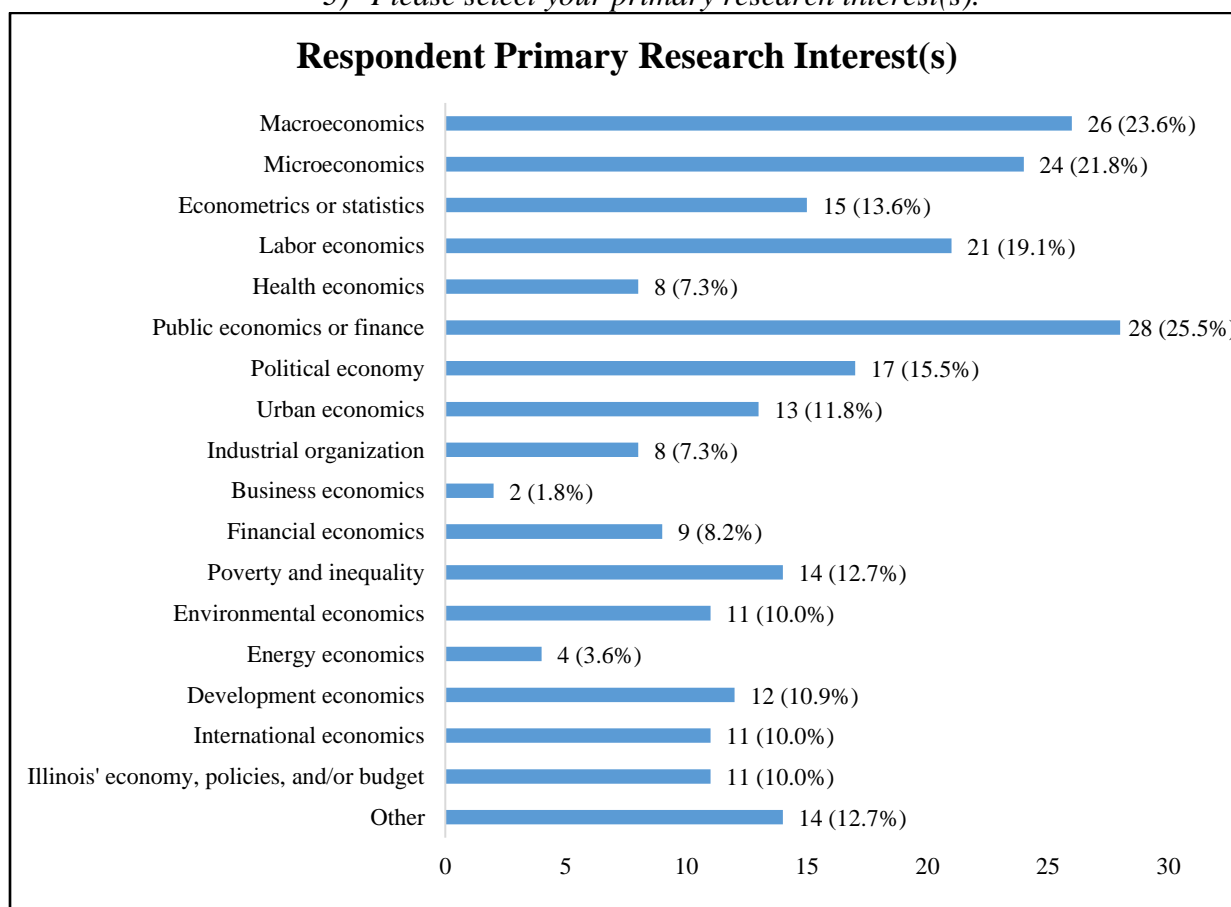
(25.5%), macroeconomics (23.6%), microeconomics (21.8%), labor economics (19.1%), and econometrics or statistics (13.6%). Contacts were informed that they did not need to be an expert on Illinois to participate in the survey. However, 11 individuals (10.0%) consider “Illinois’ economy, policies, and/or budget” to be one of their primary areas of study.

2) *In what field did you earn your advanced degree?*

I have a Ph.D. in Economics	81	73.6%
I have a Ph.D. in Business, Business Administration, or a related field	3	2.7%
I have a Ph.D. in Political Science, Public Policy, Public Administration, or a related field	18	16.4%
Other	8	7.3%

\*“Other” includes: MBA, MA/MS in Economics, Ph.D. in Economic Geography, J.D., “US History,” “MA,” and MPH.

3) *Please select your primary research interest(s).*



\*Respondents were limited to selection of three (3) areas of study.

Most of the economics and policy academics in Illinois generally vote for Democratic candidates (60.4%). The ratio of Democratic-voting academics to Republican- or Libertarian-voting academics in the sample is 2.8:1. Consequently, there are about three Democratic voters for every one Republican or Libertarian voter among Illinois’ economics and public policy faculty. This ratio roughly aligns with national academic voting behavior. Klein and Stern (2006), for instance, report that the Democratic to Republican/Libertarian ratio is 2.2:1 among U.S. economists and

5.1:1 among U.S. political scientists. Note that, in the PIE<sup>2</sup> Illinois sample, the Democratic to Republican/Libertarian ratio is 2.8:1 in both public universities and private universities. (Figure 1).

4) *To which political party have the candidates you have voted for in the past eight years mostly belonged?*

Democratic	64	60.4%
Republican	18	17.0%
Libertarian	5	4.7%
Green	1	0.9%
I do not vote	8	7.5%
Other	10	9.4%

\*“Other” write-in responses: “Depended on candidate,” “Independent,” “Did not vote,” “No party affiliation,” “Not a US citizen,” and “Split voter.”

*Figure 1: Democratic to Republican/Libertarian ratio by employment sector*

<b>Employment</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>D:R/L ratio</b>
Public university	43	2.8:1
Private university	56	2.8:1
Total	106	2.8:1

\*D:R/L Ratio excludes those who selected “Other” and the Green Party.

Illinois’ top economics and policy professors are less religious than the rest of the state. The religious traditions with the most followers amongst economics and policy academics in Illinois are Protestant Christianity (23.9%) and Roman Catholicism (14.7%). However, the next three religious identifications are all in the unaffiliated category– including atheism (13.8%), agnosticism (10.1%), and “nothing in particular” (11.9%). In the aggregate, 40.4% of economics and policy professors in Illinois report that their present religion is a Christian denomination, 35.8% are unaffiliated, and 9.2% follow the Jewish faith. By contrast, the overall Illinois population is an estimated 68% Christian, 22% unaffiliated, and 2% Jewish (PRRI, 2015).

5) *What is your present religion, if any?*

Christian – Protestant	26	23.9%
Christian – Roman Catholic	16	14.7%
Christian – Mormon	2	1.8%
Christian – Other	3	2.8%
Jewish	10	9.2%
Muslim	3	2.8%
Buddhist	1	0.9%
Hindu	2	1.8%
Unaffiliated – Atheist	15	13.8%
Unaffiliated – Agnostic	11	10.1%
Unaffiliated – Nothing in Particular	13	11.9%
I would rather not say	5	4.6%
Other	2	1.8%

\*“Other” write-in responses: “Center for Spiritual Living” and “Universalist.”

**General Public Policy Issues**

Respondents were asked six questions about general public policy issues. The first four queries were uniformly formatted, following the approach in Klein and Stern (2006). Responses were weighted from 1 to 5, designed to elicit an overall judgement of support or opposition for the entire sample. The 1 through 5 weights did not appear in the survey (Figure 2). The following table illustrates the format:

*Figure 2: Which of the following levels of support BEST describes your view of: [X]*

<b>Intensity of Support/Opposition</b>	<b>Value (Not Presented to Respondent)</b>
Support strongly	1
Support mildly	2
I have mixed feelings	3
Oppose mildly	4
Oppose strongly	5
I have no opinion	

For each question, results are combined into an index (or mean value). An index value that is closer to 1.0 indicates a high level of support among economics and policy academics, while an index value that approaches 5.0 suggests a high degree of opposition among respondents. An index value of 3.0 would indicate split opinions. Figure 3 presents findings for the four general public policy questions.

Illinois’ top economics and policy experts broadly support government action in transportation infrastructure and k-12 public education (Figure 3). With 105 academics in support (95.5%) of the government investing in roads, bridges, and public transportation infrastructure and only one opposed (0.9%), infrastructure investment garners the strongest consensus among economics and policy academics, as further highlighted by an index of 1.2. About four-fifths (79.8%) also support the government producing elementary and secondary schooling, with an index of 1.6.

*Figure 3: Views of Illinois’ Economics and Policy Academics on General Public Policy Issues*

Question Number and General Policy Issue Addressed	Support strongly (1)	Support mildly (2)	Have mixed feelings (3)	Oppose mildly (4)	Oppose strongly (5)	Mean value
6) Minimum wage laws	39 (35.5%)	25 (22.7%)	17 (15.5%)	15 (13.6%)	13 (11.8%)	2.4
7) Labor unions	25 (22.7%)	35 (31.8%)	29 (26.4%)	14 (12.7%)	6 (5.5%)	2.4
8) The government producing elementary and secondary schooling (i.e., k-12 public education)	77 (70.6%)	10 (9.2%)	12 (11.0%)	3 (2.8%)	6 (5.5%)	1.6
9) The government investing in roads, bridges, and public transportation infrastructure	97 (88.2%)	8 (7.3%)	4 (3.6%)	1 (0.9%)	0 (0.0%)	1.2

Conversely, the academics’ support for minimum wage laws and labor unions is mixed. Economics and policy experts in Illinois generally support minimum wage laws. In total, 64 academics (58.2%) say that they support minimum wage laws while only 28 respondents (25.5%) oppose them, amounting to an index of 2.4. This finding parallels previous national surveys of economists (Klein & Stern, 2006; Fuchs et al., 1998) and echoes the 2014 petition by over 600 Ph.D. economists urging the President and U.S. Congress to raise the federal minimum wage (EPI, 2014). There is also an edge in support of labor unions. Three times as many economics and policy academics in Illinois support unions (54.5%) than oppose them (18.2%). The index value for labor unions is 2.4.

Illinois’ economics and policy academics also broadly support international free trade. Fully 77.1% of those surveyed report that they think international free trade agreements are a net positive because they lower prices for consumers and allow American companies to export goods and services abroad, creating more jobs than are lost. By contrast, 10.1% of respondent economics and policy professors believe that international free trade agreements do more harm than good because they move American manufacturing jobs abroad and lower wages, resulting in more jobs lost than created. In Illinois, for every one economics or policy professor expressing concern about international trade, there are seven or eight other economic experts who have a favorable view on international trade.

*10) Which of these statements comes CLOSEST to your view on international free trade agreements?*

Statement	N	Sample %
International free trade agreements are a net positive because they lower prices for consumers and allow American companies to export goods and services abroad, creating more jobs than are lost	84	77.1%
International free trade agreements do more harm than good because they move American manufacturing jobs abroad and lower wages, resulting in more jobs lost than created	11	10.1%
I don’t know or prefer not to respond	14	12.8%

The final general public policy question asked pertained to the essential functions of government. In *The Wealth of Nations*, Adam Smith outlines four basic reasons for government’s existence. According to Smith, government is instituted to protect the rights of the individual, to instill fairness in society through a legal code to mediate disputes and enforce contracts, to provide public goods “which it can never be for the interest of any individual, or small number of individuals, to erect and maintain,” and to correct market activities that generate “externalities”<sup>3</sup> (Smith, 1776).

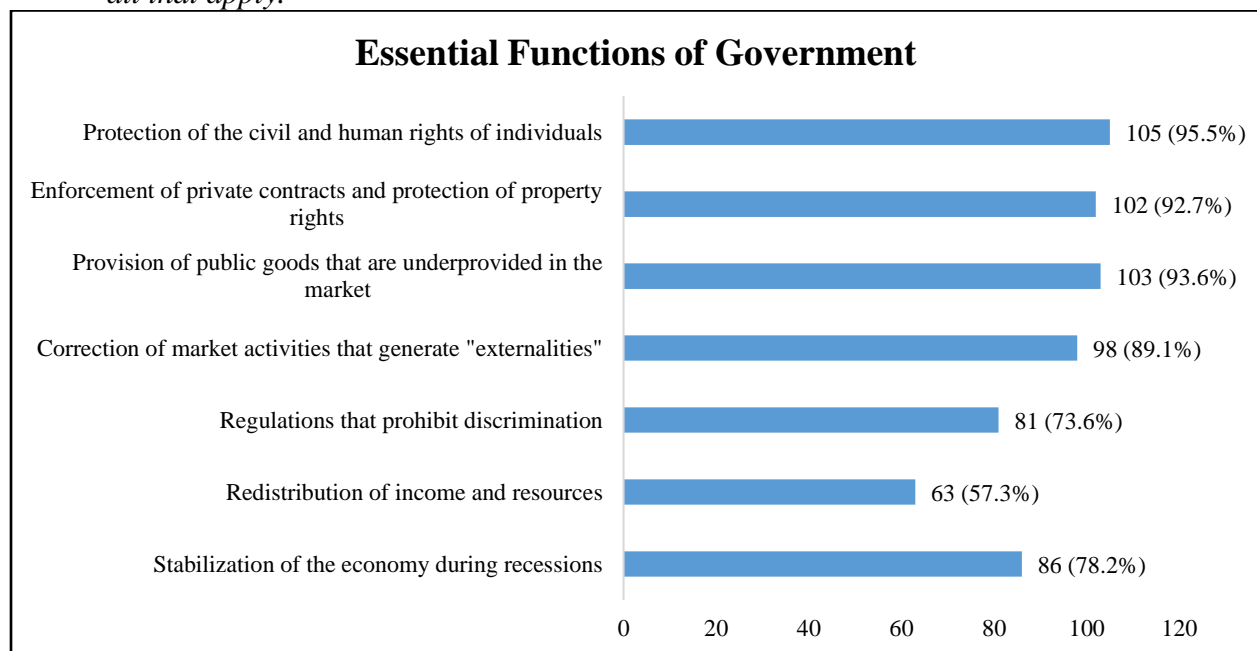
Illinois economists and policy academics concur with Adam Smith. Nearly every respondent believes that an essential function of government is the protection of the civil and human rights of individuals (95.5%). The enforcement of private contracts and protection of property rights (92.7%), the provision of public goods that are underprovided in the market

<sup>3</sup> “Externalities” are outcomes that are under-provided or over-provided by the private market because individual actors do not have enough of an incentive to factor social costs or benefits into their own personal decisions. The primary example of a “negative externality” is pollution.

(93.6%), and the correction of market activities that generate “externalities” (89.1%) are all considered essential functions of government by nine-in-ten economics and policy professors.

ILEPI also inquired about the roles of the public sector in prohibiting discrimination, redistributing income and resources, and stabilizing the economy during recessions. A majority of respondents (73.6%) believe that implementing regulations that prohibit discrimination is an essential function of government. Most economics and policy academics (57.3%) also consider the redistribution of income and resources to be an essential function of government, although the support falls within the margin of error. Finally, a significant portion of respondent experts (78.2%) say that stabilization of the economy during recessions is an essential function of government.

*11) Which of the following do you consider an essential function of government? Please select all that apply.*



**Illinois-Specific Public Policy Issues**

Respondents were subsequently asked 11 queries about Illinois-specific public policy issues. The first five questions followed the uniform, 1 through 5 format. Results from three of these questions are reported in Figure 4.

Thinking specifically about Illinois, a majority of economics and policy academics think that the Illinois state government should adopt policies that work to substantially reduce the income gap between the rich and the poor (60.0%), while about one-fifth (20.9%) oppose such measures. Economists and policy academics express even greater support for making necessary cuts in spending as well as raising new revenues through tax increases to resolve the state’s budget problems (71.8%). Additionally, a sizeable majority (79.1%) support the statement that the state should increase transportation infrastructure investment to improve the quality of roads and bridges, grow the economy, and put Illinois residents to work. As index values, Illinois’ economic and policy academics have the greatest level of support for increasing transportation infrastructure

investment (1.7), followed by an approach to balancing the budget that includes both spending cuts and revenue increases (1.8). Respondents were more mixed on— but generally in favor of— adopting policies to reduce inequality (2.4).

Two questions adhering to the uniform format were asked regarding proposed amendments to the Illinois Constitution. The first is an actual amendment that will be presented to voters in the November 2016 elections: the Safe Roads Amendment. The Safe Roads Amendment would constitutionally protect— or “lockbox”— all revenue contributed by drivers through motor fuel taxes, tollways, licenses, and vehicle registration fees and require that the money is used solely for transportation purposes. Since 2002, over \$6 billion has been diverted from transportation funds to pay for other items in Illinois, meaning that gas taxes that drivers paid at the pump did not go to improve roads, bridges, and public transit systems (Manzo, 2016a).

Figure 4: Views of Illinois’ Economics and Policy Academics on Illinois-Specific Public Policy Issues

Question Number and General Policy Issue Addressed	Support strongly (1)	Support mildly (2)	Have mixed feelings (3)	Oppose mildly (4)	Oppose strongly (5)	Mean value
12) The Illinois state government should adopt policies that work to substantially reduce the income gap between the rich and the poor	34 (30.9%)	32 (29.1%)	19 (17.3%)	9 (8.2%)	14 (12.7%)	2.4
13) Resolving Illinois’ state budget problems should include making any necessary cuts in spending AND raising new revenues through tax increases	60 (54.5%)	19 (17.3%)	21 (19.1%)	7 (6.4%)	1 (0.9%)	1.8
14) The State of Illinois should increase transportation infrastructure investment to improve the quality of roads and bridges, grow the economy, and put Illinois residents to work	52 (47.3%)	35 (31.8%)	15 (13.6%)	4 (3.6%)	1 (0.9%)	1.7

Surveyed economists and policy experts generally support the “lockbox” amendment. In total, 54.1% of respondents support the ballot measure versus 22.9% who oppose it. The index yields a value of 2.5, suggesting that economics and policy academics in Illinois have slightly more positive than negative views of the Safe Roads Amendment.

*15) In November, the Safe Roads Amendment will be voted on by the Illinois public. This amendment would require all money from motor fuel taxes, vehicle registration fees, and other transportation-related taxes to be spent solely on transportation purposes (e.g., roads, bridges, public transit systems).*

Support strongly (1)	Support mildly (2)	Have mixed feelings (3)	Oppose mildly (4)	Oppose strongly (5)	Mean value
25 (22.9%)	34 (31.2%)	20 (18.3%)	10 (9.2%)	15 (13.8%)	2.5



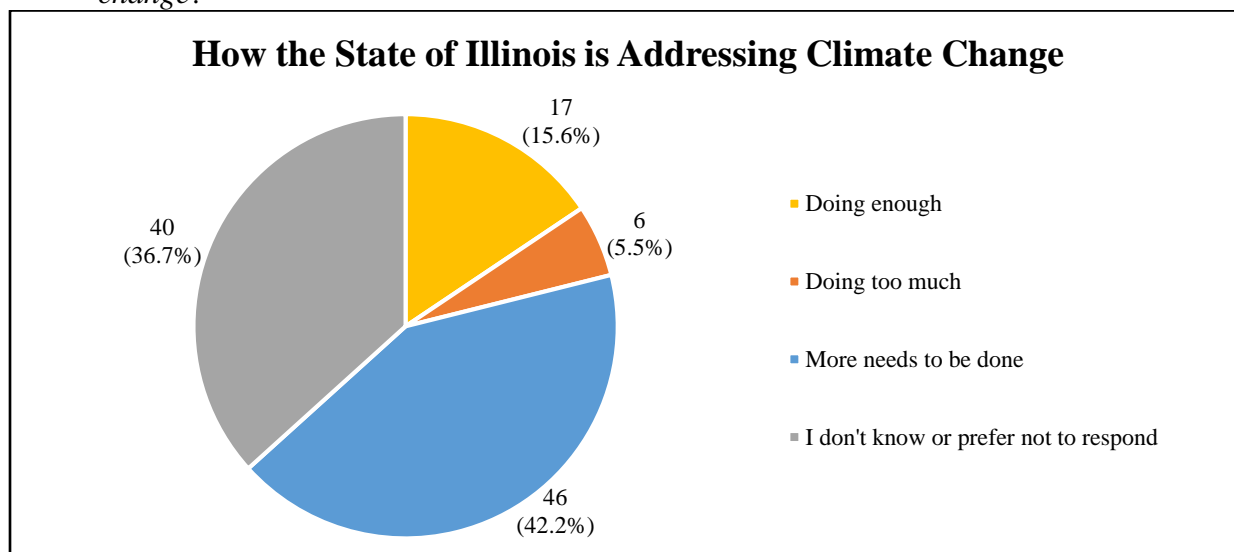
The second policy change posed to economics and policy academics was a hypothetical pension amendment to the Illinois Constitution. Currently, pension benefits are locked in and cannot be reduced for future work of existing employees. One proposal has been to pass a constitutional amendment to limit benefits only to accrued benefits, giving lawmakers the discretion to reduce future (non-accrued) benefits. Half of respondent economics and policy academics supported this hypothetical constitutional amendment (50.0%) while about one-fourth opposed it (26.4%). Others had mixed feelings (17.3%) or had no opinion (6.4%). With an index value of 2.5, economics and policy professors would marginally support a pension amendment to the Illinois Constitution.

In last year’s *Poll of Illinois Economics Professors, Instructors, and Experts* (PIE<sup>2</sup>), ILEPI found that 84.0% of economics and policy experts in Illinois thought that “climate change is a problem that economic policy needs to address” (Manzo, 2015). However, when asked this year whether they think the State of Illinois is doing enough, too much, or too little to address climate change, a significant number of economics and policy academics choose not to respond or said they don’t know (36.7%). A plurality of respondents say that more needs to be done by the state to address climate change (42.2%), while smaller numbers say the state is doing enough (15.6%) or too much (5.5%).

*16) The State of Illinois should approve a constitutional amendment to limit pension benefits only to accrued benefits, giving lawmakers the discretion to reduce future (non-accrued) benefits.*

Support strongly (1)	Support mildly (2)	Have mixed feelings (3)	Oppose mildly (4)	Oppose strongly (5)	Mean value
27 (24.5%)	28 (25.5%)	19 (17.3%)	9 (8.2%)	20 (18.2%)	2.5

*17) Do you think the State of Illinois is doing enough to address climate change, doing too much to address climate change, or do you think more needs to be done to address climate change?*



As previously noted, a majority of survey-takers support a mix of tax increases and spending cuts to help balance the state budget. On the individual income tax, a simple majority of the state’s economics and policy experts (50.5%) support the approval of a constitutional amendment to allow a progressive income tax and raise taxes on the rich. Another 28.4% of respondents support lawmakers reinstating the 5.0% income tax to help balance the budget. In comparison, only 11.9% of economics and policy academics in Illinois say that the State of Illinois should not raise the income tax at all.

Economists and policy experts at Illinois’ universities and colleges express considerable support for immigrants in the state. About nine-in-ten respondents say that immigrants today strengthen Illinois because of their hard work, talents, and contribution to the economy (89.0%). By contrast, just 2.8% of economics and policy academics believe that immigrants are a burden on Illinois. For every one economics or policy professor who thinks immigrants are a burden on the state, there are 32 other economic experts who think that immigrants strengthen the state.

*18) Which of these statements comes CLOSEST to your view on the state budget?*

Statement	N	Sample %
To help balance the budget, the State of Illinois should reinstate the 5.0% income tax for individuals	31	28.4%
To help balance the budget, the State of Illinois should approve a constitutional amendment to allow a progressive income tax and raise taxes on the rich	55	50.5%
The State of Illinois should not raise the income tax at all to help balance the budget	13	11.9%
I don’t know or prefer not to respond	10	9.2%

*19) Which of these statements comes CLOSEST to your view on immigration?*

Statement	N	Sample %
Immigrants today strengthen Illinois because of their hard work, talents, and contribution to the economy	97	89.0%
Immigrants today are a burden on Illinois because they take jobs, housing, and health care from residents	3	2.8%
I don’t know or prefer not to respond	9	8.3%

Respondent academics were also asked about the minimum wage in Illinois. Survey participants were requested to provide the per-hour dollar amount that they believe the minimum wage should currently be in Illinois. Economics and policy academics who believe there should not be a minimum wage at all were asked to enter \$0.

Of the 100 academic economists and policy professors responding to the question, 66 individuals (66.0%) report that they think the minimum wage should be above its current rate of \$8.25 per hour. A subset of respondents in favor of a higher minimum wage (19.0% of those answering the question) say that it should be \$15.00 an hour or greater, while a slightly smaller number of academic economists and policy instructors (13.0%) believe the minimum wage should be less than its current rate of \$8.25 per hour. On average, top economics and policy academics at universities in Illinois report that they think the minimum wage should be \$9.74 per hour in the state. The median response was \$10.00 per hour.

Respondent economics and policy academics were next presented with a list of ten items or policy changes and asked which ones they thought would improve the employment rate and grow the economy in Illinois. Ultimately, there is only a strong consensus on three of the ten

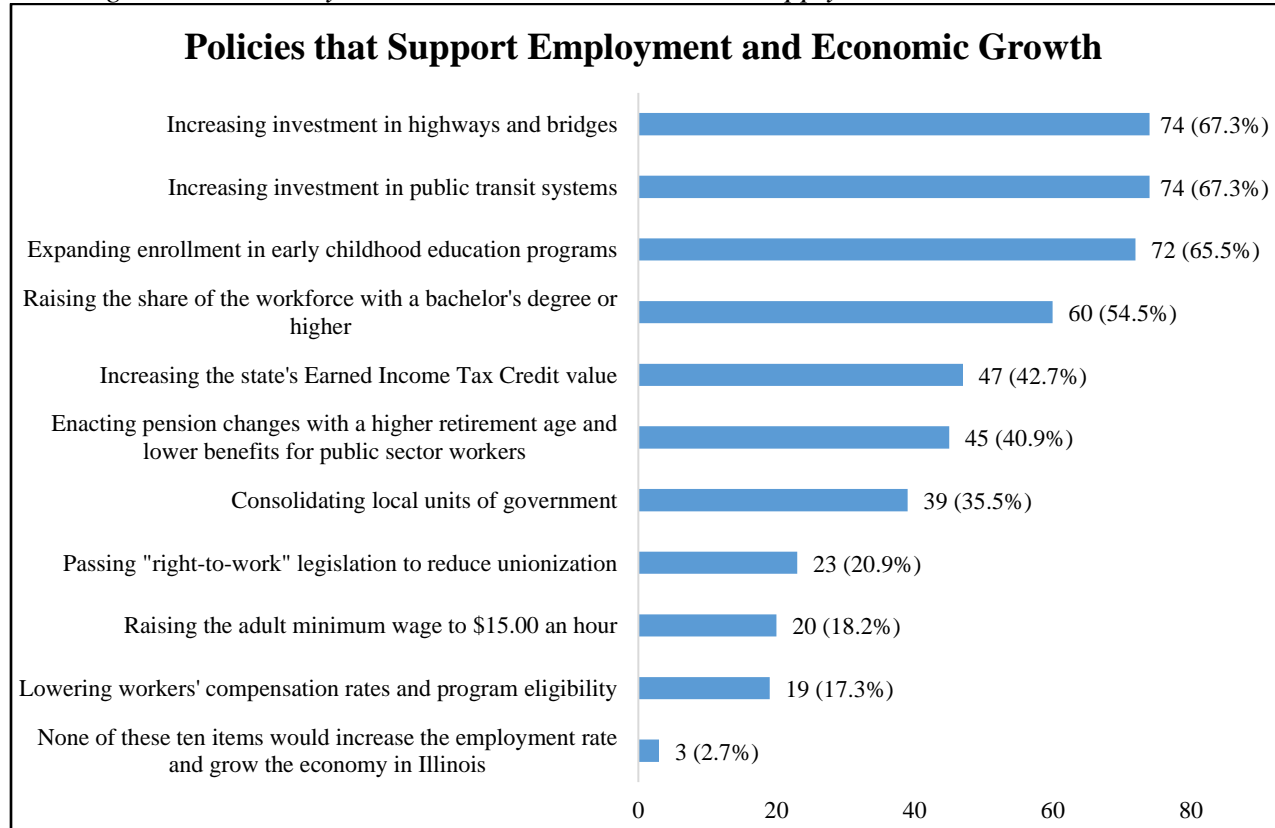
policies. About two-thirds of the respondents say that increasing investment in highways and bridges (67.3%), increasing investment in public transit systems (67.3%), and expanding enrollment in early childhood education programs (65.5%) would improve the state’s employment rate and grow the economy. In addition, over half of Illinois’ top economics and policy experts say that raising the share of the workforce with a bachelor’s degree or higher would improve the state’s economic prospects (54.5%), but the support falls within the margin of error. Each of these policy changes involves investments in either physical capital or human capital.

20) *As you may know, the minimum wage is \$8.25 per hour in Illinois. What do you think the minimum wage should currently be in Illinois?*

Dollar Response	N	Value
Average value	100	\$9.74
Median value	100	\$10.00
Above \$8.25 per hour	66	66.0%
\$15.00 per hour or more	19	19.0%
Less than \$8.25 (including \$0.00)	13	13.0%

\*Not a required question. Values are for the 100 academics who chose to respond. One respondent wrote “\$8.25 but indexed, both up and down for inflation and deflation,” which is counted as \$8.25 and is not included in the “Above \$8.25 per hour” group. Another respondent wrote “\$15.00, especially Chicago.”

21) *Which of the following ten items do you think would IMPROVE the employment rate and grow the economy in Illinois? Please select all that apply.*



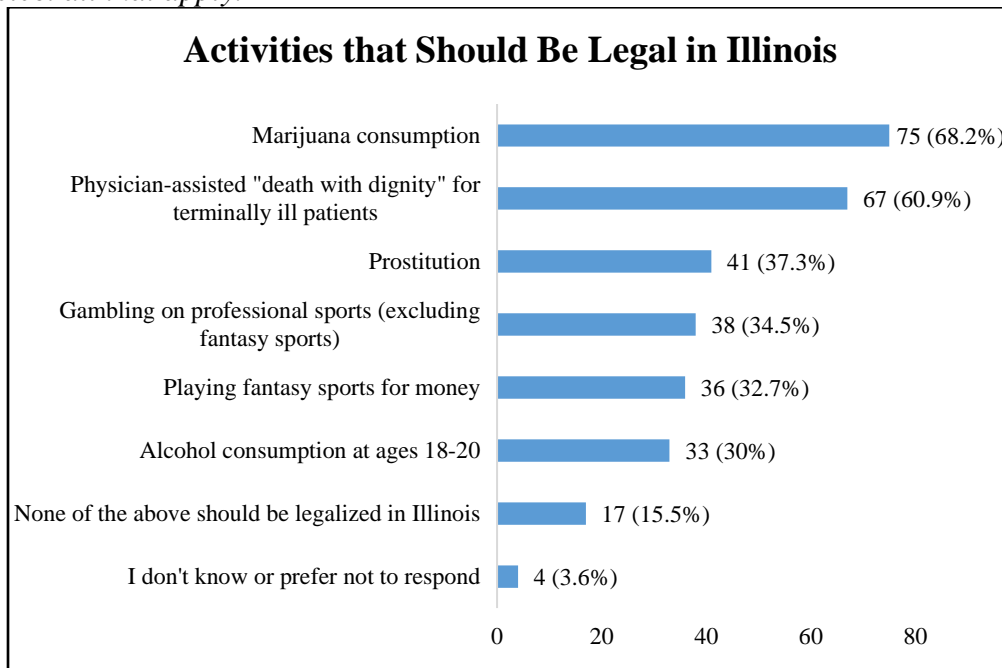
\*Responses are sorted by descending frequency.

Among economics and policy academics, a majority is not reached for the six remaining items. While economics and policy professors express general support for minimum wage laws and report that the state’s minimum wage should be above its current level of \$8.25 per hour, only 18.2% believe that raising the adult minimum wage to \$15.00 an hour would improve the employment rate and grow the economy. Furthermore, only 20.9% of respondents believe that passing “right-to-work” legislation would improve the employment rate and grow the economy. This means that four out of every five economics and policy academics in Illinois do not think that reducing unionization through a “right-to-work” law would help Illinois’ economic prospects. Similarly, only 17.3% of economics and policy experts in Illinois say that lowering workers’ compensation rates and program eligibility would improve the employment rate and grow the economy.

The remaining items all garner support, but less than a majority. Increasing the state’s Earned Income Tax Credit value (42.7%), enacting pension changes with a higher retirement age and lower benefits for public sector workers (40.9%), and consolidating local units of government (35.5%) are all supported by about two out of every five economics and policy professors in Illinois.

The final Illinois-specific public policy question asked to academics was focused on social issues. Respondents were presented with a list of six activities and asked which ones they thought should be legalized in Illinois, assuming that each activity would be permitted by the federal government.

22) Which of the following activities do you believe should be LEGALIZED in Illinois? Please select all that apply.



\*Respondents were told to assume that each activity would be permitted by the federal government.

On social issues, a majority of Illinois’ economics and policy professors agree that two of the six activities should be legalized in the state. More than three-fifths of respondents believe that

marijuana consumption (68.2%) and physician-assisted “death with dignity” for terminally ill patients (60.9%) should be legalized. Prostitution (37.3%), gambling on professional sports (34.5%), playing fantasy sports for money (32.7%), and allowing alcohol consumption beginning at age 18 (30.0%) all receive support from just over three-in-ten respondents. Only 15.5% of economics and policy academics say that none of the six activities should be legalized in Illinois.

**The Field of Economics**

The last section of the PIE<sup>2</sup> survey concerns the field of economics as a whole. Economics and policy professors were asked about elected officials’ understanding of economic principles and the difficulties they face in conducting research today. Respondents were also allowed to provide any feedback on the PIE<sup>2</sup> survey. Note that every one of the feedback comments is presented, unmodified, in the Appendix.

A considerable majority of economics and policy professors do not think elected officials understand economics. When presented with the sentence “politicians and elected officials generally have a strong understanding of economic principles,” only five respondents (4.6%) support the statement. A total of 88 academic economists and policy professors (80.7%) oppose the statement, while 14 individuals (12.8%) have mixed feelings. The responses translate into an index value of 4.2, reflecting significant opposition to the statement.

*23) Politicians and elected officials generally have a strong understanding of economic principles.*

Support strongly (1)	Support mildly (2)	Have mixed feelings (3)	Oppose mildly (4)	Oppose strongly (5)	Mean value
2 (1.8%)	3 (2.8%)	14 (12.8%)	37 (33.9%)	51 (46.8%)	4.2

*24) Please indicate problems facing economics and policy academics in conducting QUALITY research today. Please select all that apply.*

Statement	N	Percentage
Lack of funding for basic research	59	53.6%
Not enough replication of published results	52	47.3%
Political or agenda-driven pressure biasing results	42	38.2%
Not enough data	29	26.4%
Too much difficulty in performing experiments	22	20.0%
Conflict of interest rules in publications	14	12.7%
Visa problems for international workers and study	7	6.4%
Other	12	10.9%
Total	91	100.0%

\*Responses are sorted by descending frequency. “Other” responses include “Not enough time,” “Lack of support by university management,” “Access to administrative data sources,” “Funding to public universities... the present system continues to disinvest in public schools and universities,” “Left leaning bias and political correctness,” and “The biggest obstacle is one’s own ability and tenacity.” Six of the “Other” responses reported a variant of “None of the above.”

The three biggest problems that economics and policy academics report facing in conducting quality research today are lack of funding (53.6%), the fact that there is not enough replication to confirm or challenge published results (47.3%), and political or agenda-driven pressure biasing results (38.2%). Insufficient data, difficulty in performing experiments, conflict of interest rules in publications, and visa problems are all smaller-scale obstacles to conducting quality research.

## Conclusions

Results from this 2<sup>nd</sup> annual survey of over 100 professors, instructors, and faculty members at accredited academic institutions in Illinois reveal areas of broad agreement among the state's top economics and policy academics. Although the sample size limits the ability to draw definitive conclusions, it can be stated with relative confidence that a majority of the state's top economics and policy academics hold a particular position when the results show strong consensus.

The clearest example of consensus among economics and policy academics is in infrastructure investment. There are at least 105 economics and policy professors (95.5%) in Illinois who support the government investing in roads, bridges, and public transportation infrastructure. Furthermore, at least 87 economics and policy professors (79.1%) think Illinois should increase transportation infrastructure investment. A majority also say that increasing investment in highways and bridges (67.3%) and in public transit systems (67.3%) would improve the state's employment rate and grow the Illinois economy. Finally, at least 59 economics and policy professors support the Safe Roads Amendment to the Illinois Constitution (54.1%) versus 25 who oppose it (22.9%).

A second area of general consensus among Illinois' top economics and policy academics involves public education— especially for children. At least 87 economics and policy academics (79.8%) in Illinois support the government producing elementary and secondary education. A majority also say that expanding enrollment in early childhood education programs (65.5%) and raising the share of the workforce with a bachelor's degree or higher (54.5%) would improve the state's employment rate and grow the Illinois economy.

A majority of Illinois' top economics and policy academics support immigration and international free trade. At least 97 economics and policy professors (89.0%) in Illinois say that immigrants strengthen Illinois through their hard work, talents, and contribution to the economy. Similarly, at least 84 economics and policy experts (77.1%) say that international free trade agreements are a net positive to the economy and create more jobs than are lost.

Illinois' top economics and policy academics express marginal support of policies and institutions that address income inequality. Over half of those responding (60.0%) say they think the state government should adopt policies that work to substantially reduce the income gap between the rich and the poor. Economics and policy professors in Illinois tend to support minimum wage laws (58.2%) and think, on average, that Illinois' minimum wage should be \$9.74 per hour. Similarly, respondents express marginal support in favor labor unions (54.5%), with only a small minority (20.9%) saying that "right-to-work" legislation would improve the employment rate and grow the economy in Illinois.

Most economics and policy academics in Illinois think that changes should be made to resolve the state's budget problems. At least 79 economics and policy professors (71.8%) say that

the state should fix the budget with a mix of spending cuts and tax increases. In addition, at least 86 economics and policy professors (78.9%) say that the state should either reinstate the 5.0% income tax for individuals or raise taxes on the rich through a progressive income tax to help balance the state budget. However, a majority of Illinois' top economics and policy academics (80.7%) do not think that politicians and elected officials generally have a strong understanding of economic principles. It is therefore possible that many respondents do not have confidence in Illinois' political leaders to effectively balance the budget and enact strong public policies that improve the state's economy.

**Appendix**

*Final item: Feel free to provide any feedback on this survey!*

**Unmodified Feedback on the Survey**

The Rauner Administration's decimation of the public universities in Illinois will lead to the long term decline of the state and has already reduced jobs and economic activity in the state as a whole and especially in the areas where the universities are located. It is a curious and short sighted stance for a politician who presumably should understand the critical importance an educated workforce plays in today's global economy.

Your wording of questions suggests an agenda. For example, implementing a progressive tax to tax the rich suggests that is good or bad. Not neutral.

Why not ask ethnicity? If Economists answer religion question, ask how often they attend church and what percent of their income they tithe? For those not religious, ask what percent of their income goes to donations to charity? Also, ask do politicians feel that the current political party arguments are negatively impacting the long-term competitive university system in Illinois?

I'm a survey researcher and I think you did a good job on the questionnaire. My only suggestion would be to add a progress bar.

Some issues are treated a bit with a hammer, details matter. Tough to answer, thus. I understand: tricky in a survey.

The inability of politics to address underlying causes of economic issues has been one of the biggest disappointments of my academic career - never seems to be much of a connection to the "solutions" touted in the political process and the root causes of economic problems they are promised to address.

"Instead of ""minimum"" think in terms of living wages. Instead of 'income' gap think in terms of 'wealth' gap. The effects of past (and some current) policies on lending & mortgages have and do contribute to the wealth gap. Advocate for separating health care from employment and get employers out of the picture for health care decisions. Public schooling from pre-K through college is the key. I do not understand Q24."

Make taxes progressive especially on the very high income levels and provide enough social support so that every child can obtain equal opportunity to succeed later in their life.

"Your either/or question on ""free trade"" was erroneous. We know there is no ""free"" trade, but a well designed/negotiate ""fair"" trade agreement provides immeasurable benefits.

Where are the questions on market meddling by corporations? Their price gauging and low cost polluting make the state a far worse place. Then they spend millions to manipulate elections and influence laws voted on by legislators in the last day of any Spring session."

*Full disclosure: How the author would respond to his own survey*

#	Question	Answer	Comment
6	Minimum wage laws	Support mildly	Up to a point (Marginal benefit of higher incomes $\geq$ marginal costs)
7	Labor unions	Support strongly	Freedom of association in private organizations, including unions
8	k-12 public education	Support strongly	Education + infrastructure + science = economic growth
9	Road, bridge, public transit investment	Support strongly	Education + infrastructure + science = economic growth



10	International free trade	Net positive	Current deals should be improved, but are still better than protectionism
11	Essential function of government	Protection of rights, enforcement of contracts, provision of public goods, correction of externalities, regulations that prohibit discrimination, stabilization of economy	Redistribution is not essential... until inequality causes economic inefficiency and fosters plutocracy ( <a href="#">Manzo, 2014</a> )
12	Policies to reduce Illinois' income gap	Support mildly	Inequality has harmed Illinois' economy and budget
13	Budget cuts and raising tax revenues	Support mildly	Civic Federation ( <a href="#">2016</a> ) proposal is a sensible budget solution
14	Infrastructure investment to grow economy	Support strongly	Education + infrastructure + science = economic growth
15	Safe Roads Amendment	Support strongly	\$6.8 billion diverted by politicians since 2002 ( <a href="#">Manzo, 2016a</a> )
16	Pension amendment	Support mildly	Civic Federation ( <a href="#">2016</a> ) endorses this move to help balance budget
17	Illinois steps to address climate change	More needs to be done	The inaction across the nation continues to be embarrassing
18	Raising the income tax to balance budget	Progressive income tax and raise taxes on the rich	Rates of 3%, 5%, and 7% would be better than a flat 5% ( <a href="#">Manzo, 2016b</a> )
19	Immigration in Illinois	Strengthen Illinois because of hard work, talents, and contribution	See Economic Policy Institute factsheet ( <a href="#">Costa et al., 2014</a> )
20	Value of minimum wage in Illinois	\$10.00 statewide, with potentially higher levels in certain areas	See Bruno and Manzo study ( <a href="#">2014</a> ) and Manzo and Staykova ( <a href="#">2016</a> ) study
21	Policies that would improve employment rate	Bachelor's degree, ECE enrollment, road investment, public transit investment	These four policies statistically improve the employment rate in states ( <a href="#">Bruno &amp; Manzo, 2015</a> )
22	Social issues: activities that should be legalized	Marijuana consumption, 18+ alcohol consumption, sports gambling, fantasy sports, prostitution, death with dignity	Black market activity is harmful and costly; all are safer in free (but regulated and taxed) markets
23	Politicians understand economic principles	Oppose strongly	N/A
24	Problems conducting quality economic research	Not enough replication, difficulty in performing experiments, not enough data, political or agenda-driven pressure	In that order

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[Note: a publicly available spreadsheet with full results is available online at: <http://goo.gl/iUUDWq>.]

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