



*behavior research center's*

# *Rocky Mountain Poll*

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## RURAL FOLK WORRY ABOUT FUTURE OF ECONOMY AND THEIR ENVIRONMENT; CITY FOLK FOCUS ON TRANSPORTATION

Phoenix, Arizona – February 8, 2001. What Arizonans think needs to be done today to keep Arizona the place where they want to live varies considerably depending upon whether they live in one of the big urban counties or in one of the state's 13 "rural" counties. While the top issues for urban dwellers in both Tucson and Phoenix is traffic congestion and the need to improve freeways and roads, these matters draw the attention of less than a fifth of rural residents. For them, the top concerns relate to fears the economy and job market are weakening and to beliefs that city and town sprawl, loss of environment and increasing pollution are ruining their communities.

Tucsonans are by far the most troubled of all Arizonans with the perceived inadequacy of their transportation system – nearly half identify it as the top "future" issue in their community. Issues pertaining to growth management and urban sprawl are close behind.

The findings outlined in this report are based on a survey of 702 residents of Arizona conducted in October by the Behavior Research Center of Arizona as part of the Center's independent and non-partisan Rocky Mountain Poll series. For more information you may visit [www.brcpolls.com](http://www.brcpolls.com).

In both the Tucson and Phoenix areas, concerns about the economy and the job market register at less than 20 percent compared to 32 percent in rural Arizona. Note, however, that the readings in Maricopa county were taken in November and

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may have changed since then, as consumer confidence has shown signs of collapse both nationally and in Arizona.

Improving the state's public education system has slipped to fourth place in both rural Arizona and in Tucson, although late last year it had registered at 24 percent in Maricopa county and a year earlier had been the top issue in the state. Passage of the initiative to raise sales taxes for education in November 2000 may have helped relieve some public concern about the future of education in the state while voters wait to see what the new revenues will do.

Across the state, the proportion who focus their attention on a need to invest more energy in reduction of crime and violence registers only at about ten percent in the Tucson and Phoenix areas and declines to only five percent among rural residents. Less than a decade ago, it was the number one issue in the state.

Public distress about state taxes, wasteful government spending, and social welfare programs are also low areas of concern as of the time of this survey.

With major news stories focusing on the unstable health of the economy and the possibility of a recession, it may be reasonable to expect that public concerns about the economy will rise in the coming months unless the Fed's recent interest rate reductions help put some steam back into the economy.

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**EDITOR'S NOTE:** This Rocky Mountain Poll - Arizona (2001-I-08), is based on 702 interviews with adult heads of household throughout Arizona between January 10 and 15, 2001. Where necessary, figures for age, sex, race and political party were weighted to bring them into line with their actual proportion in the population. In a sample of this size, one can say with a 95 percent certainty that the results have a statistical precision of plus or minus 3.77 percent of what they would have been had the entire adult population been surveyed. The Rocky Mountain Poll is conducted by the Behavior Research Center of Arizona and is an independent and non-partisan research program sponsored by the Center.

This statement conforms to the principles of disclosure of the National Council on Public Polls.

**BELOW:** Statistical tables.

**STATISTICAL DATA**

Behavior Research Center  
Rocky Mountain Poll - Arizona  
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*"Looking to the future of your community, what would you say needs to be done today to make sure your community is the kind of place you will want to live in ten years from now?"*

Need	<u>Tucson</u>	<u>Rural</u>	<u>Maricopa</u>
	<u>Jan</u> 2001	<u>Jan</u> 2001	<u>Nov</u> 2000
<b>Improve area transportation system</b>	<b>45%</b>	17%	<b>36%</b>
<b>Reduce pollution, sprawl, loss of environment</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>31</b>
Strengthen economy, reduce unemployment	17	<b>32</b>	14
Improve quality of education	15	11	24
Reduce crime & violence	10	5	11
Improve law enforcement & courts	6	4	9
Reduce government waste & taxes	5	3	4
Care for poor, needy, elderly	2	6	8
Support cultural/arts development	3	5	6
Encourage family values	0	1	2

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