



**Ken Blake**, Ph.D., Director of the MTSU Poll, (615) 210-6187  
**Robert Wyatt**, Ph.D., Director of Communication Research, (615) 477-8389

E-mail: [kblake@mtsu.edu](mailto:kblake@mtsu.edu)  
[rwyatt@mtsu.edu](mailto:rwyatt@mtsu.edu)

## Satisfaction with Tennessee conditions takes largest plunge in four years

MURFREESBORO, Tenn. – With the credit crisis and other evidence of an economic downturn, satisfaction with conditions in Tennessee has dropped for the second time in a row and by the largest margin in four years, an analysis of the latest MTSU Poll State Barometer shows.

Worries about the economy - especially among the state's poorer and poorly educated residents - appear to be driving the decline, the analysis indicates. Economic concerns for such people also may have boosted feelings that the economy is the most important issue in the presidential election and the most important problem facing the state.

“Life is good for those standing on the top rung of the state’s economy,” said Dr. Robert Wyatt, director of communication research at MTSU. “On the lower rungs, though, the climate is turning rapidly grim for many, with issues like health care, financial hard times and crime posing more significant problems. Unlike most ladders, this one is shakiest and scariest at the bottom rather than the top.”

The MTSU Poll State Barometer now stands at 57 out of 100, down from 62 just last fall and 63 last spring. The analysis finds that Tennessee’s well-educated and wealthy residents average significantly higher on the barometer than do those with lower education levels or who take home smaller paychecks.

Computed from measures of three interrelated attitudes – approval of the governor, perceived outlook for the state’s economy, and evaluation of the direction the state seems to be going – the barometer provides a general picture of Tennesseans’ satisfaction with conditions in the state.

The analysis also finds that:

- The economy tops a list of issues that Tennesseans consider most important in the upcoming presidential election. A plurality of 34% say the economy will be the most important issue to them when they decide how to vote for president.
- Dissatisfaction with conditions in Tennessee seems to benefit Hillary Clinton more than Barack Obama, her rival for the Democratic presidential nomination.
- Wealthier, better educated Tennesseans see education as the state’s top problem, but poorer, less educated Tennesseans see the economy, healthcare and crime as more problematic.
- Tennesseans at all economic levels, though, tend to support establishing a state minimum wage that exceeds the federal minimum wage.

## MTSU ECONOMIC POLL RESULTS, CONT'D

The analysis is based on data from the latest MTSU Poll, conducted by telephone Feb. 11 - 23 by students in the College of Mass Communication at Middle Tennessee State University. Students interviewed 577 people age 18 or older chosen at random from the state population. The poll has an estimated error margin of plus or minus 4 percentage points at the 95 percent level of confidence.

Theoretically, this means that a sample of this size should produce a statistical portrait of the population within four percentage points 95 out of 100 times.

MTSU Poll results have shown a high degree of consistency with actual election outcomes since 2002, the first election year in which the poll was fielded using a statewide sample. During that time, the poll has measured state opinion in one general presidential election, two gubernatorial races and one U.S. Senate contest. In each instance, the state-level election results have fallen within the poll results' error margin.

For nearly 10 years, the Survey Group at MTSU has been providing independent, non-partisan, and unbiased public opinion data regarding major social, political, and ethical issues affecting Tennessee. The poll began in 1998 as a measure of public opinion in the 39 counties comprising Middle Tennessee and began measuring public opinion statewide in 2001. Learn more at [www.mtsusurveygroup.org](http://www.mtsusurveygroup.org)

###

### NOTES:

[Click here](#) to view **complete** economic poll report and results.

Document files may be obtained by contacting [margie@hallstrategies.com](mailto:margie@hallstrategies.com) or 615-587-2224.