

**Chiesman Center for Democracy and
South Dakota News Watch
Statewide Survey**

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Prepared by

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Methodology

In April 2021, the Chiesman Center for Democracy and South Dakota News Watch collaborated to develop a survey designed to assess the perspectives of residents of South Dakota on issues related to democracy and economic outcomes. We contracted with Pulse Research to conduct a telephone survey that would include residents from across the state. The final survey included nineteen questions including demographic questions and was administered by Pulse Research from April 21-27, 2021. The final sample included 500 respondents and was roughly representative of the broader population in terms of gender, age, and political affiliation. However, the sample's median income was higher than the general population (\$75,000). This should be kept in mind when interpreting results. The calculated margin of error for the survey was approximately \pm 4%. Throughout the report we provide the overall distribution of responses as well as some meaningful breakouts based on demographic variables. When testing for statistical significance, we employed both bivariate and multivariate logit models. In all cases, variables that were statistically significant in the bivariate model, were still significant when controlling for other explanatory variables.

Sample Demographics

The final sample included 500 respondents. Tables 1 through 5 below provide a full breakdown of each demographic category. The sample was largely representative of the wider population with a few exceptions. While Native Americans makes up 9% of the South Dakota statewide population, they only make up 4.2% of the sample (Table 1). The median household income of the survey respondents was \$75,000 (Table 5), which is higher than \$58,275¹ median household income of the broader population. This should be kept in mind when interpreting results.

Table 1. Respondent Ethnicity	
White	83.4%
Black	1.0%
Hispanic	1.2%
Native American	4.2%
Mixed	3.2%
Other	1.8%
No Response	5.2%

Source: Nordyke, Shane et al. "Chiesman Center for Democracy and South Dakota News Watch Statewide Survey." May 2021. (N=500 respondents, data collected in April 2021).

¹ <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/SD/BZA210219>

Table 2. Respondent Age	
18-24	12.2%
25-34	17.4%
35-44	15.5%
45-54	19.6%
55-64	16.5%
65 or older	18.7%
Source: Nordyke, Shane et al. "Chiesman Center for Democracy and South Dakota News Watch Statewide Survey." May 2021. (N=500 respondents, data collected in April 2021).	

Table 3. Respondent Gender	
Male	49.4%
Female	50.6%
Source: Nordyke, Shane et al. "Chiesman Center for Democracy and South Dakota News Watch Statewide Survey." May 2021. (N=500 respondents, data collected in April 2021).	

Table 4. Respondent Party Affiliation	
Republican	45.3%
Independent	27.6%
Democrat	21.3%
Don't know or No Response	5.8%
Source: Nordyke, Shane et al. "Chiesman Center for Democracy and South Dakota News Watch Statewide Survey." May 2021. (N=500 respondents, data collected in April 2021).	

Table 5. Respondent Income	
Income Category	Percent
Less than \$10,000	3.2%
\$10,000 to \$19,999	3.8%
\$20,000 to \$29,999	5.0%
\$30,000 to \$39,999	5.7%
\$40,000 to \$49,999	8.4%
\$50,000 to \$59,999	7.6%
\$60,000 to \$69,999	6.7%
\$70,000 to \$79,999	9.6%
\$80,000 to \$99,999	9.9%
\$100,000 to \$119,999	7.4%
\$120,000 to \$149,999	5.6%
\$150,000 to \$199,999	5.4%
\$200,000 to \$249,999	2.2%
\$250,000 to \$349,999	0.5%
\$350,000 to \$499,999	0.3%
\$500,000 or more	1.5%
Prefer not to say	17.2%
Source: Nordyke, Shane et al. "Chiesman Center for Democracy and South Dakota News Watch Statewide Survey." May 2021. (N=500 respondents, data collected in April 2021).	

Survey Results

Health of Democracy

In the first section of the survey, we asked respondents several questions related to their perceptions about the health of American democracy. These questions were adapted from the 2018 American Institutional Confidence Poll created and administered out of Georgetown University by Jonathan M. Ladd, Joshua A. Tucker, and Sean Kates.² By using some of the same questions, we are able to compare the responses of South Dakota residents in 2021 to the national sample from 2018.

First, we asked respondents “How satisfied are you with how democracy is working in the United States.” These results are displayed in Table 6. Only .6% of respondents indicated that they did not know the answer to this question; the percentages displayed below exclude these respondents. On a scale of 1-5 with 1 meaning Very Dissatisfied and 5 meaning Very Satisfied, the mean response for South Dakota residents was 2.24, just over half a point lower than the national survey mean of 2.9.

Table 6. Satisfaction with Democracy		
	South Dakota Respondents	National Survey
Very Dissatisfied	38.1%	15%
Somewhat Dissatisfied	27.8%	21%
Neither Satisfied nor Dissatisfied	9.5%	25%
Somewhat Satisfied	20.6%	30%
Very Satisfied	4.0%	10%

Source: Nordyke, Shane et al. “Chiesman Center for Democracy and South Dakota News Watch Statewide Survey.” May 2021. (N=500 respondents, data collected in April 2021). National survey data from Ladd, Jonathan M., Joshua A. Tucker, and Sean Kates. 2018. “2018 American Institutional Confidence Poll.” Distributed by the Baker Center for Leadership & Governance, Georgetown University, Washington, DC. bakercenter.georgetown.edu

As was the case with the national sample, South Dakota respondents’ satisfaction with the current state of our democracy is significantly related to partisan affiliation. As is demonstrated in Table 7 Republican respondents were more likely to indicate dissatisfaction with democracy.

² Information about this survey and the full results can be found at <http://aicpoll.com/>.

A strong majority (75.2%) of Republicans indicated they were either dissatisfied or very dissatisfied with democracy, compared to 45.3% of Democrats.

Table 7. Satisfaction with Democracy by Party			
	Republican	Independent	Democrat
Very Dissatisfied	50.9%	30.3%	16.4%
Dissatisfied	24.3%	33.8%	28.9%
Neither	7.1%	13.4%	7.7%
Satisfied	15.0%	19.0%	35.6%
Very Satisfied	1.8%	2.8%	11.5%
Don't know	0.9%	0.7%	0.0%

Source: Nordyke, Shane et al. "Chiesman Center for Democracy and South Dakota News Watch Statewide Survey." May 2021. (N=500 respondents, data collected in April 2021).

We also found a statistically significant difference between rural and urban residents in South Dakota with rural respondents indicating slightly less satisfaction than urban respondents.

Table 8. Satisfaction with Democracy by Rural/Urban		
	Rural	Urban
Very Dissatisfied	45.8%	29.1%
Dissatisfied	23.7%	32.9%
Neither	9.6%	9.4%
Satisfied	17.3%	23.1%
Very Satisfied	3.2%	4.7%
Don't know	0.4%	0.9%

Source: Nordyke, Shane et al. "Chiesman Center for Democracy and South Dakota News Watch Statewide Survey." May 2021. (N=500 respondents, data collected in April 2021).

While there was not a statistically significant linear relationship between age and satisfaction, there are some interesting differences by age groups displayed below in Table 9.

Table 9. Satisfaction with Democracy by Age						
	18-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	64 or older
Very Dissatisfied	24.6%	30.9%	32.5%	44.4%	51.2%	37.5%
Dissatisfied	39.1%	33.3%	25.0%	24.4%	25.6%	21.6%
Neither	15.9%	9.9%	15.0%	8.9%	3.5%	5.7%
Satisfied	17.4%	22.2%	25.0%	17.8%	16.3%	25.0%
Very Satisfied	1.5%	3.7%	1.3%	4.4%	2.3%	9.1%
Don't know	1.5%	0.0%	1.3%	0.0%	1.2%	1.1%

Source: Nordyke, Shane et al. "Chiesman Center for Democracy and South Dakota News Watch Statewide Survey." May 2021. (N=500 respondents, data collected in April 2021).

Next, we asked respondents how often they think that members of the opposing party still have the best interests of the country in mind. Only 5.8% of respondents indicated that they did not know the answer to this question; the percentages displayed below exclude these respondents. South Dakota respondents were a bit more likely to say that member of the opposing party never had the best interest of the country in mind than the national sample from 2018.

Table 10. Opposing Party has Best Interests of the Country in Mind.		
	South Dakota Respondents	National Survey
All of the time	2.5%	5%
Most of the time	8.5%	16%
Some of the time	43.1%	44%
None of the Time	45.9%	36%
Source: Nordyke, Shane et al. "Chiesman Center for Democracy and South Dakota News Watch Statewide Survey." May 2021. (N=500 respondents, data collected in April 2021). National survey data from Ladd, Jonathan M., Joshua A. Tucker, and Sean Kates. 2018. "2018 American Institutional Confidence Poll." Distributed by the Baker Center for Leadership & Governance, Georgetown University, Washington, DC. bakercenter.georgetown.edu		

Unlike the previous question, there were no statistically significant differences between members of different parties, rural urban residents, or male and female residents. Neither age nor income produced statistically significant differences.

Continuing on this theme, we then asked respondents if they believed that members of the opposing party are a threat to the United States and its people. Only 5.7% of respondents indicated that they did not know the answer to this question; the percentages displayed below exclude these respondents. South Dakota respondents were slightly more likely than the national sample to see the members of the opposing party as a threat. On a scale of 1-4 with 1 meaning "Very Serious Threat" and 4 meaning "No Threat," South Dakota respondents had a mean response of 2.24 compared to the national mean of 2.35. It is important to remember that in this case, a higher value indicates less perceived threat.

Table 11. Opposing Party are a Threat to the United States and Its People		
	South Dakota Respondents	National Survey
Very Serious Threat	31.4%	29.6%
Somewhat Serious Threat	27.3%	27.5%
Minor Threat	18.0%	24.17%
No Threat	17.7%	19.7%
Source: Nordyke, Shane et al. "Chiesman Center for Democracy and South Dakota News Watch Statewide Survey." May 2021. (N=500 respondents, data collected in April 2021). National survey data from Ladd, Jonathan M., Joshua A. Tucker, and Sean Kates. 2018. "2018 American Institutional Confidence Poll." Distributed by the Baker Center for Leadership & Governance, Georgetown University, Washington, DC. bakercenter.georgetown.edu		

For this question, there were statistically significant differences between parties on their perceptions of threat posed by the opposing party. Republicans were more likely than Independents and Democrats to indicate that they thought the opposing party was a very serious threat to the United States and its people (40.7% of Republicans versus 19.2% of Democrats). Independent respondents were more likely than either Republicans or Democrats to say that opposing parties posed "No Threat."

Table 12. Opposing Party are a Threat to the United States and Its People by Party			
	Republican	Independent	Democrat
Very Serious Threat	40.7%	25.4%	19.2%
Somewhat Serious Threat	27.9%	26.8%	29.8%
Minor Threat	14.6%	16.9%	25.0%
No Threat	12.8%	26.1%	21.2%
Don't know	4.0%	4.9%	4.8%
Source: Nordyke, Shane et al. "Chiesman Center for Democracy and South Dakota News Watch Statewide Survey." May 2021. (N=500 respondents, data collected in April 2021).			

Age also had statistically significant relationship with perceptions of threat. Specifically, older age groups more likely to indicate that the opposing party was more of a threat, as can be seen in Table 13.

	18-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65 or older	N/A
Very Serious Threat	14.5%	21.0%	22.5%	40.0%	45.4%	38.6%	33.3%
Somewhat Serious Threat	24.6%	28.4%	33.8%	24.4%	30.2%	23.9%	0.0%
Minor Threat	30.4%	23.5%	23.8%	11.1%	9.30	14.8%	0.0%
No Threat	24.6%	21.0%	18.8%	17.8%	10.5%	17.1%	50.0%
Don't know	5.8%	6.2%	1.3%	6.7%	4.7%	5.7%	16.7%

Source: Nordyke, Shane et al. "Chiesman Center for Democracy and South Dakota News Watch Statewide Survey." May 2021. (N=500 respondents, data collected in April 2021).

There were no significant differences by rural versus urban distinctions, respondent ethnicity, or income. While the differences were not statistically significant, there were some slight variations based on gender as is displayed in table 14.

	Male	Female
Very Serious Threat	33.3%	29.1%
Somewhat Serious Threat	25.2%	29.1%
Minor Threat	20.3%	15.8%
No Threat	15.9%	20.9%
Don't know	5.3%	5.1%

Source: Nordyke, Shane et al. "Chiesman Center for Democracy and South Dakota News Watch Statewide Survey." May 2021. (N=500 respondents, data collected in April 2021).

Next, we asked respondents to report their level of confidence in a variety of institutions on a scale from 1-4 with 1 meaning “No confidence” and 4 meaning “A great deal of confidence”.

Rather than comparing percentage breakdowns for each of these groups, we will report mean confidence values and the percent of the respondents that indicated they had no confidence in the institution. It is important to remember that the closer the value is to 4, the more confidence respondents have in those institutions. As can be seen in Table 15, in most cases, South Dakota respondents had less confidence in institutions than the national sample from 2018. However, the respondents from South Dakota did have greater confidence in the military, local government, and local police.

Table 15. Confidence in Institutions			
	South Dakota Respondents		National Sample
	% reporting no confidence	Mean	Mean
The Executive Branch	42.2%	2.1	2.3
Congress	41.0%	1.9	2.1
The Courts	20.2%	2.5	2.7
The Military	3.7%	3.4	3.2
State Government	20.9%	2.6	2.6
Local Government	10.5%	2.9	2.8
Local Police	5.8%	3.3	3.0
Colleges and Universities	18.5%	2.7	2.9
Political Parties	39.6%	1.9	2.1
The Press	54.4%	1.8	2.5

Source: Nordyke, Shane et al. “Chiesman Center for Democracy and South Dakota News Watch Statewide Survey.” May 2021. (N=500 respondents, data collected in April 2021). National survey data from Ladd, Jonathan M., Joshua A. Tucker, and Sean Kates. 2018. “2018 American Institutional Confidence Poll.” Distributed by the Baker Center for Leadership & Governance, Georgetown University, Washington, DC. bakercenter.georgetown.edu

Table 16 provides a comparison by party of the South Dakota respondents for each institution. We also tested for statistically significant relationships for all explanatory variables for each institution.

- **Executive Branch** - Female respondents reported statistically significantly higher confidence in the executive branch. Age had a statistically significant negative relationship with confidence, indicating that as the respondent age increased, their confidence level decreased. There were also statistically significant differences by party affiliation as indicated in Table 16.
- **Congress** - Female respondents reported statistically significantly higher confidence in Congress, as did urban respondents. In addition age and income had significant negative relationships with confidence indicating that older and higher income respondents had less confidence in Congress. There were also statistically significant differences by party affiliation as indicated in Table 16.
- **Courts** - The only statistically significant differences were between Democrats and Republicans as indicated in Table 16.
- **Military** - There were statistically significant differences between Democrats and Republicans. While Republicans expressed greater confidence in the military, these changes were primarily in the higher levels of confidence. As can be seen in table 16 confidence in the military was high among respondents of all parties and a smaller percentage of Democrats reported having no confidence in the military than Republicans. Age also had a positive significant relationship with confidence however, this was largely driven by less confidence among those in the 18-24 age bracket than all other groups.
- **State Government** - Age and income had statistically significant positive relationships with confidence in the state government, even after controlling for party differences. As can be seen in Table 16, the differences between parties were statistically significant and sizable. This is not surprising giving the strong Republican majority in South Dakota's state government.
- **Local Government** - Income had a positive statistically significant relationship with confidence in local government, meaning that respondents in higher income brackets had greater levels of confidence in local governments. While Independents had statistically significantly less confidence in local government than Republicans, there was not a meaningful difference between Democrats and Republicans.

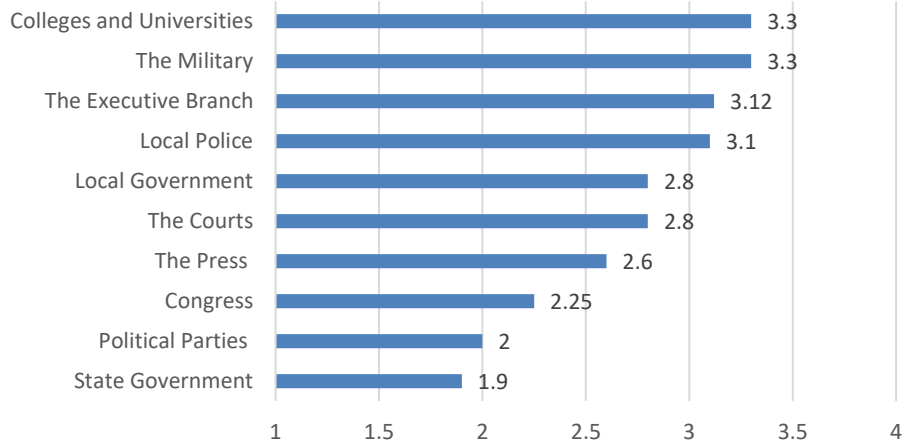
- **The Police** - Female respondents reported statistically significantly higher confidence in the police. While only statistically significant at the 90% confidence level due to the small number of black respondents in our sample, black respondents reported lower confidence in local police, holding all else constant. Higher income respondents also had statistically significant higher levels of confidence in the police. As can be seen in Table 16, the differences by party were sizable and statistically significant.
- **Colleges and Universities** - Black respondents reported statistically significantly lower confidence in colleges and universities, holding all else constant. There were also statistically significant differences by party as can be seen in Table 16.
- **Political Parties** - Female respondents reported statistically significantly higher confidence in Political Parties than males. It is perhaps not surprising that respondents identifying themselves as Independents had significantly less confidence than both Democrats and Republicans in political parties, however there was no significant difference between the two parties.
- **The Press** - As can be seen in Table 16, Democrats and Independents reported greater confidence in the press than Republicans; these differences were statistically significant. Urban residents also had significantly greater confidence than rural residents.

Table 16. Confidence in Institutions						
	Democrats		Independents		Republicans	
	% reporting no confidence	Mean	% reporting no confidence	Mean	% reporting no confidence	Mean
The Executive Branch	8.8%	3.12	34.5%	2.08	60.8%	1.60
Congress	21.6%	2.25	42.9%	1.79	49.6%	1.70
The Courts	9.8%	2.8	19.7%	2.4	22.2%	2.4
The Military	1.9%	3.3	2.8%	3.3	2.2%	3.6
State Government	37.6%	1.9	27.5%	2.3	7.1%	3.1
Local Government	14.1%	2.8	14.9%	2.6	4.0%	3.1
Local Police	8.0%	3.1	7.1%	3.1	3.5%	3.5
Colleges and Universities	4.0%	3.3	14.6%	2.7	26.4%	2.3
Political Parties	22.6%	2.0	55.9%	1.5	36.8%	1.9
The Press	10.9%	2.6	54.7%	1.7	74.0%	1.4

Source: Nordyke, Shane et al. "Chiesman Center for Democracy and South Dakota News Watch Statewide Survey." May 2021. (N=500 respondents, data collected in April 2021).

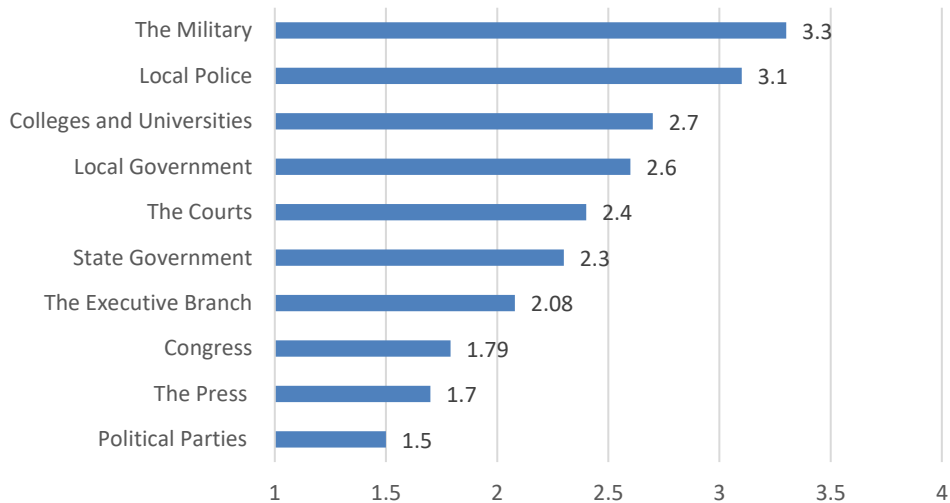
We also ranked the institutions by levels of confidence for each of the party identifications. These are displayed in Figure 1, Figure 2, and Figure 3 below. The military and local police rated in the top four for all respondents. Colleges and Universities also ranked in the top four for Democrats and Independents. Local Governments ranked in the top four for Independents and Republicans.

Figure 1. Confidence in Institutions - SD Democrats
(n=101)



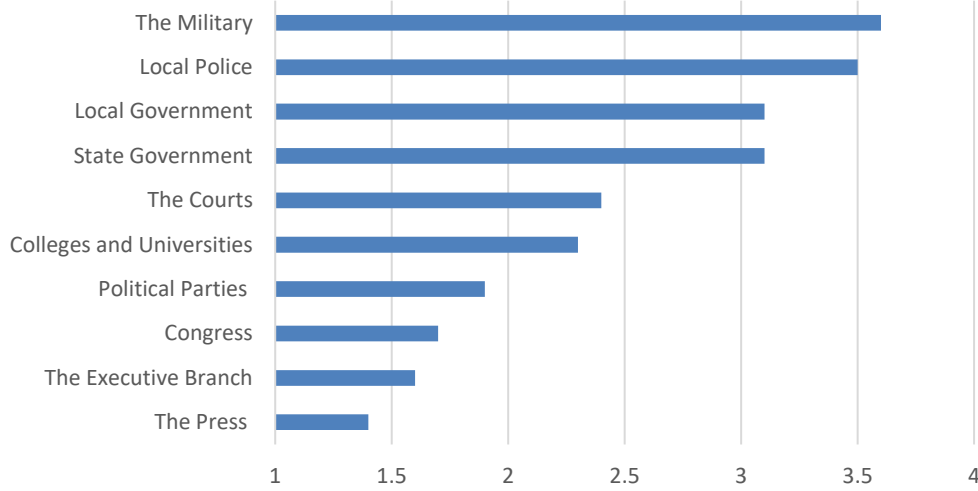
Source: Nordyke, Shane et al. "Chiesman Center for Democracy and South Dakota News Watch Statewide Survey." May 2021. (N=500 respondents, data collected in April 2021).

Figure 2. Confidence in Institutions - SD Independents
(n=139)



Source: Nordyke, Shane et al. "Chiesman Center for Democracy and South Dakota News Watch Statewide Survey." May 2021. (N=500 respondents, data collected in April 2021).

Figure 3. Confidence in Institutions - SD Republicans
(n=223)



Source: Nordyke, Shane et al. "Chiesman Center for Democracy and South Dakota News Watch Statewide Survey." May 2021. (N=500 respondents, data collected in April 2021).

Next, we asked respondents two questions about citizens initiatives. These questions are not taken from the larger national survey but are specific to current discussions about citizen ballot initiatives in South Dakota. First, we asked respondents to report their level of agreement with the statement "Citizen ballot initiatives are an important part of the democratic process." These results are reported in Table 17. There were statistically significant differences between parties (Table 18), but not other subgroups.

Table 17. Citizen Ballot Initiatives are an Important Part of the Democratic Process

Strongly Disagree	6.6%
Disagree	6.2%
Neither Disagree nor Agree	9.3%
Agree	34.9%
Strongly Agree	39.9%

Source: Nordyke, Shane et al. "Chiesman Center for Democracy and South Dakota News Watch Statewide Survey." May 2021. (N=500 respondents, data collected in April 2021).

Table 18. Citizen Ballot Initiatives are an Important Part of the Democratic Process by Party			
	Republican	Independent	Democrat
Strongly disagree	9.3%	3.5%	5.8%
Disagree	8.4%	4.9%	1.9%
Neither	7.5%	20.4%	4.8%
Agree	39.8%	29.6%	32.7%
Strongly agree	29.7%	48.6%	51.9%
Don't know	5.3%	1.4%	2.9%

Source: Nordyke, Shane et al. "Chiesman Center for Democracy and South Dakota News Watch Statewide Survey." May 2021. (N=500 respondents, data collected in April 2021).

Next, we asked respondents to report their level of agreement with the statement "The South Dakota legislature should make it more difficult for citizen initiatives to get onto the ballot." These results are reported in Table 19.

Table 19. SD Legislature Should Make It More Difficult for Citizen Initiatives to get onto the Ballot	
Strongly Disagree	35.0%
Disagree	26.8%
Neither Disagree nor Agree	14.4%
Agree	17.6%
Strongly Agree	6.2%

Source: Nordyke, Shane et al. "Chiesman Center for Democracy and South Dakota News Watch Statewide Survey." May 2021. (N=500 respondents, data collected in April 2021).

There were again statistically significant differences between the parties in terms of agreement. These breakdowns are provided in Table 20. Over half of Democrats strongly disagreed with the statement compared to only 19.5% of Republicans. However, total levels of disagreement for Republicans were also over 50%. Age was also positively correlated with levels of agreement; the older the respondent the more likely they were to agree that the legislature should make it more difficult. Again though, even within the oldest age bracket, a majority of respondents disagreed with the statement.

Table 20. SD Legislature Should Make It More Difficult for Citizen Initiatives to get onto the Ballot by Party			
	Republican	Independent	Democrat
Strongly disagree	19.5%	45.1%	55.8%
Disagree	31.0%	24.7%	20.2%
Neither	17.3%	11.3%	11.5%
Agree	23.9%	13.4%	10.6%
Strongly agree	8.4%	5.6%	1.9%

Source: Nordyke, Shane et al. "Chiesman Center for Democracy and South Dakota News Watch Statewide Survey." May 2021. (N=500 respondents, data collected in April 2021).

Table 21. SD Legislature Should Make It More Difficult for Citizen Initiatives to get onto the Ballot by Age						
	18-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65 or older
Strongly disagree	44.9%	40.7%	37.5%	31.1%	27.9%	30.7%
Disagree	27.5%	21.0%	22.5%	33.3%	31.4%	26.1%
Neither	13.0%	72.8%	20.0%	15.6%	5.8%	19.3%
Agree	7.3%	21.0%	16.3%	13.3%	25.6%	19.3%
Strongly agree	7.3%	6.2%	3.8%	6.7%	9.3%	4.6%

Source: Nordyke, Shane et al. "Chiesman Center for Democracy and South Dakota News Watch Statewide Survey." May 2021. (N=500 respondents, data collected in April 2021).

To wrap up our health of democracy section, we asked respondents to indicate their level of agreement with two general statements about democracy. First, we asked respondents to

report their level of agreement with the statement “Democracy is always preferable.” These results are reported in Table 22.

Table 22. Democracy is Always Preferable	
	South Dakota
Strongly Disagree	3.0%
Disagree	6.6%
Neither Disagree nor Agree	10.2%
Agree	37.4%
Strongly Agree	42.8%
Source: Nordyke, Shane et al. “Chiesman Center for Democracy and South Dakota News Watch Statewide Survey.” May 2021. (N=500 respondents, data collected in April 2021).	

Age was the only statistically significant explanatory variable and was positively correlated with agreement. This means the older respondents were more likely to agree that democracy is always preferable.

Table 23. Democracy is Always Preferable by Age						
	18-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65 or older
Strongly Disagree	1.5%	1.2%	3.8%	4.4%	2.3%	4.6%
Disagree	8.7%	3.7%	11.3%	8.9%	5.8%	0.0%
Neither Disagree nor Agree	20.3%	12.4%	12.5%	8.9%	1.2%	71.0%
Agree	40.6%	37.0%	35.0%	41.1%	38.4%	33.0%
Strongly Agree	29.0%	45.7%	37.5%	36.7%	52.3%	54.6%
Source: Nordyke, Shane et al. “Chiesman Center for Democracy and South Dakota News Watch Statewide Survey.” May 2021. (N=500 respondents, data collected in April 2021).						

As a corollary, we also asked respondents to indicate their level of agreement with the statement, “Non-democracies can be preferable.” Age was still a significant predictor, though this time in the opposite direction (Table 26). Interestingly, respondents that identified themselves as Independents had a statistically significant greater level of agreement with the statement than Republicans, but the differences between Democrats and Republicans and Democrats and Independents were not statistically significant (Table 25).

Table 24. Non-democracies Can Be preferable	
	South Dakota
Strongly Disagree	36.6%
Disagree	29.2%
Neither Disagree nor Agree	16.4%
Agree	15.2%
Strongly Agree	2.6%
Source: Nordyke, Shane et al. “Chiesman Center for Democracy and South Dakota News Watch Statewide Survey.” May 2021. (N=500 respondents, data collected in April 2021).	

Table 25. Non-democracies Can Be Preferable by Party			
	Republican	Independent	Democrat
Strongly Disagree	41.2%	31.0%	37.5%
Disagree	31.9%	28.2%	26.0%
Neither Agree nor Disagree	12.4%	18.3%	18.3%
Agree	12.8%	19.7%	15.4%
Strongly Agree	1.8%	2.8%	2.9%
Source: Nordyke, Shane et al. “Chiesman Center for Democracy and South Dakota News Watch Statewide Survey.” May 2021. (N=500 respondents, data collected in April 2021).			

Table 26. Non-democracies Can Be Preferable by Age						
	18-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65 or older
Strongly Disagree	21.7%	27.2%	36.3%	42.2%	43.0%	45.5%
Disagree	20.3%	35.3%	32.5%	34.4%	25.6%	25.0%
Neither Agree nor Disagree	27.5%	17.3%	12.5%	13.3%	11.6%	18.2%
Agree	29.0%	17.3%	16.3%	8.9%	14.0%	9.1%
Strongly Agree	1.5%	2.5%	2.5%	1.1%	5.8%	2.3%
Source: Nordyke, Shane et al. "Chiesman Center for Democracy and South Dakota News Watch Statewide Survey." May 2021. (N=500 respondents, data collected in April 2021).						

In the national survey, respondents were asked a slightly different version of these questions. They were asked which of the following statements was the closest to their own opinion about democracy. When phrased this way, only 38.9% of the national sample answered that democracy is preferable to any other kind of government. While not directly comparable, this suggests that South Dakota residents have a greater preference for democracy than the national sample from 2018.

Table 27. 2018 National Survey Responses Opinions about Democracy	
Democracy is preferable to any other kind of government.	38.9%
In some circumstances, a non-democratic government can be preferable.	28.8%
For someone like me, it doesn't matter what kind of government we have.	24.1%
Source: Nordyke, Shane et al. "Chiesman Center for Democracy and South Dakota News Watch Statewide Survey." May 2021. (N=500 respondents, data collected in April 2021).	

Financial Experiences and Perspectives

In this section of the survey, we asked respondents several questions designed to assess their current financial conditions and perspectives. There are no national data comparisons for these questions. First, we asked respondents how their current financial situation compared to their parents at the same stage of life. As can be seen in Table 28, just over half of the respondents reported they were doing better off than their parents at the same stage of life. Not surprisingly, respondents with higher incomes were more likely to report doing better than their parents. However no other variables had statistically significant relationships.

Better off	50.1%
The same	24.5%
Worse off	24.2%
Don't know	1.1%

Source: Nordyke, Shane et al. "Chiesman Center for Democracy and South Dakota News Watch Statewide Survey." May 2021. (N=500 respondents, data collected in April 2021).

	Republican	Independent	Democrat
Better off	50.9%	53.5%	51.0%
The same	26.6%	18.3%	28.9%
Worse off	21.2%	27.5%	19.2%
Don't know	1.3%	0.70%	0.9%

Source: Nordyke, Shane et al. "Chiesman Center for Democracy and South Dakota News Watch Statewide Survey." May 2021. (N=500 respondents, data collected in April 2021).

Table 30A. Current Finances Compared to Parents at the Same Stage of Life by Income								
	< \$10,000	\$10,000-\$19,999	\$20,000-\$29,999	\$30,000-\$39,000	\$40,000-\$49,999	\$50,000-\$59,999	\$60,000-\$69,999	\$70,000-\$79,999
Better off	25%	23.5%	37.0%	33.3%	29.6%	40.5%	54.5%	56.5%
The same	37.5%	11.8%	40.7%	37.0%	40.9%	26.2%	15.2%	17.4%
Worse off	37.5%	64.7%	14.8%	29.6%	29.6%	33.3%	27.3%	26.1%
Don't know	0%	0%	7.4%	0%	0%	0%	3.0%	0%

Source: Nordyke, Shane et al. "Chiesman Center for Democracy and South Dakota News Watch Statewide Survey." May 2021. (N=500 respondents, data collected in April 2021).

Table 30B. Current Finances Compared to Parents at the Same Stage of Life by Income Continued								
	\$80,000-\$99,999	\$100,000-\$119,999	\$120,000-\$149,999	\$150,000-\$199,999	\$200,000-\$249,999	\$250,000-\$349,000	\$350,000-\$499,999	\$500,000 or more
Better off	55.1%	64.7%	61.5%	73.1%	72.7%	100%	100%	85.7%
The same	26.5%	20.6%	19.2%	15.4%	9.1%	0%	0%	14.3%
Worse off	18.4%	14.7%	19.2%	11.5%	18.2%	0%	0%	0%
Don't know	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%

Source: Nordyke, Shane et al. "Chiesman Center for Democracy and South Dakota News Watch Statewide Survey." May 2021. (N=500 respondents, data collected in April 2021).

Next, we asked respondents if they were doing better, the same, or worse financially than they were five years ago? As can be seen in Table 31, a majority of respondents indicated that they were better off financially than five years ago. Older respondents (Table 32) and higher income respondents (Tables 33A and 33B) were significantly more likely to report being financially better off than five years before.

Table 31. Current Finances Compared to Five Years Ago

Better off	57.8%
The same	24.4%
Worse off	17.8%

Source: Nordyke, Shane et al. "Chiesman Center for Democracy and South Dakota News Watch Statewide Survey." May 2021. (N=500 respondents, data collected in April 2021).

Table 32. Current Finances Compared to Five Years Ago by Age

	18-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65 or older
Better off	78.3%	67.9%	71.3%	52.2%	41.9%	44.3%
The same	5.8%	14.8%	15.0%	24.4%	36.1%	44.3%
Worse off	15.9%	17.3%	13.8%	23.3%	22.1%	11.4%

Source: Nordyke, Shane et al. "Chiesman Center for Democracy and South Dakota News Watch Statewide Survey." May 2021. (N=500 respondents, data collected in April 2021).

Table 33A. Current Finances Compared to Five Years Ago by Income

	< \$10,000	\$10,000-\$19,999	\$20,000-\$29,999	\$30,000-\$39,000	\$40,000-\$49,999	\$50,000-\$59,999	\$60,000-\$69,999	\$70,000-\$79,999
Better off	37.5%	41.2%	48.2%	55.6%	29.6%	59.5%	69.7%	58.7%
The same	18.8%	29.4%	37.0%	22.2%	36.4%	16.7%	18.2%	23.9%
Worse off	43.8%	29.4%	14.8%	22.2%	34.1%	23.8%	12.1%	17.4%
Don't know	37.5%	41.2%	48.2%	55.6%	29.6%	59.5%	69.7%	58.7%

Source: Nordyke, Shane et al. "Chiesman Center for Democracy and South Dakota News Watch Statewide Survey." May 2021. (N=500 respondents, data collected in April 2021).

Table 33B. Current Finances Compared to Five Years Ago by Income Continued								
	\$80,000- \$99,999	\$100,000- \$119,999	\$120,000- \$149,999	\$150,000- \$199,999	\$200,000- \$249,999	\$250,000- \$349,000	\$350,000- \$499,999	\$500,000 or more
Better off	61.2%	67.6%	73.1%	84.6%	72.7%	66.7%	100%	100%
The same	28.6%	26.5%	11.5%	7.7%	18.2%	33.3%	0%	0%
Worse off	10.2%	5.9%	15.4%	7.7%	9.1%	0%	0%	0%
Don't know	61.2%	67.7%	73.1%	84.6%	72.7%	66.7%	100%	100%

Source: Nordyke, Shane et al. "Chiesman Center for Democracy and South Dakota News Watch Statewide Survey." May 2021. (N=500 respondents, data collected in April 2021).

Next, we asked respondents whether they currently have three months of expenses in savings. A sizeable majority of respondents indicated they did have three months' worth of expenses in savings. Again, older respondents (Table 35) and higher income respondents (Table 36) were significantly more likely to respond positively. It is worth keeping in mind that the median income for our sample is higher than the statewide population of South Dakota, so caution is recommended in attempting to generalize from this particular finding.

Table 34. Three Months of Savings	
Yes	64.0%
No	32.6%
Unsure	3.4%

Source: Nordyke, Shane et al. "Chiesman Center for Democracy and South Dakota News Watch Statewide Survey." May 2021. (N=500 respondents, data collected in April 2021).

Table 35. Three Months of Savings by Age

	18-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65 or older
Yes	52.2%	65.4%	58.8%	55.6%	67.4%	83.0%
No	47.8%	34.6%	36.3%	38.9%	30.2%	12.5%
Unsure	0.0%	0.0%	5.0%	5.6%	2.3%	4.6%

Source: Nordyke, Shane et al. "Chiesman Center for Democracy and South Dakota News Watch Statewide Survey." May 2021. (N=500 respondents, data collected in April 2021).

Table 36. Three Months of Savings by Income			
	Yes	No	Unsure
Less than \$10,000	37.5%	62.5%	0.0%
\$10,000-\$19,999	23.5%	76.5%	0.0%
\$20,000-\$29,999	51.9%	48.2%	0.0%
\$30,000-\$39,999	33.3%	66.7%	0.0%
\$40,000-\$49,999	65.9%	34.1%	0.0%
\$50,000-\$59,999	59.5%	40.5%	0.0%
\$60,000-\$69,999	57.6%	39.4%	3.0%
\$70,000-\$79,999	69.6%	28.3%	2.2%
\$80,000-\$99,999	77.6%	22.5%	0.0%
\$100,000-\$119,999	79.4%	20.6%	0.0%
\$120,000-\$149,999	76.9%	19.2%	3.9%
\$150,000-\$199,999	88.5%	11.5%	0.0%
\$200,000-\$249,999	90.9%	0.0%	9.1%
\$250,000-\$349,999	100.0%	0.0%	0.0%
\$350,000-\$499,999	100.0%	0.0%	0.0%
\$500,000 or more	100.0%	0.0%	0.0%

Source: Nordyke, Shane et al. "Chiesman Center for Democracy and South Dakota News Watch Statewide Survey." May 2021. (N=500 respondents, data collected in April 2021).

We then asked respondents how secure they felt about the amount of money they had saved for retirement. As can be seen in Table 37, roughly a quarter of respondents indicated that they were very secure in the amount of money they had saved for retirement. Another 28.6 of respondents indicated they were not all secure. Income was the only statistically significant explanatory variable with those in higher incomes indicating a greater sense of security (Table 38A & 38B).

Table 37. Security in Money Saved for Retirement	
Not at all secure	28.6%
Somewhat secure	44.8%
Very secure	24.4%
Don't know	2.2%
Source: Nordyke, Shane et al. "Chiesman Center for Democracy and South Dakota News Watch Statewide Survey." May 2021. (N=500 respondents, data collected in April 2021).	

Table 38A. Security in Money Saved for Retirement by Income								
	< \$10,000	\$10,000-\$19,999	\$20,000-\$29,999	\$30,000-\$39,000	\$40,000-\$49,999	\$50,000-\$59,999	\$60,000-\$69,999	\$70,000-\$79,999
Not at all secure	56.3%	70.6%	56.3%	48.2%	29.6%	31.0%	24.2%	28.3%
Somewhat secure	12.5%	11.8%	25.9%	48.2%	47.7%	57.1%	54.6%	45.7%
Very secure	18.8%	17.7%	14.8%	0.0%	22.7%	11.9%	21.2%	23.9%
Don't know	12.5%	0.0%	0.0%	3.7%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	2.2%
Source: Nordyke, Shane et al. "Chiesman Center for Democracy and South Dakota News Watch Statewide Survey." May 2021. (N=500 respondents, data collected in April 2021).								

	\$80,000- \$99,999	\$100,000- \$119,999	\$120,000- \$149,999	\$150,000- \$199,999	\$200,000- \$249,999	\$250,000- \$349,000	\$350,000- \$499,999	\$500,000 or more
Not at all secure	16.3%	17.7%	11.5%	15.4%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Somewhat secure	49.0%	47.1%	50.0%	34.6%	63.6%	0.0%	0.0%	42.9%
Very secure	30.6%	35.3%	38.5%	50.0%	36.4%	100.0%	100.0%	57.1%
Don't know	4.1%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%

Source: Nordyke, Shane et al. "Chiesman Center for Democracy and South Dakota News Watch Statewide Survey." May 2021. (N=500 respondents, data collected in April 2021).

Next, we asked for respondents' perspectives on future conditions in South Dakota, specifically we asked if they expected life will be better, the same, or worse for their children or future generations of South Dakotans. As is demonstrated in Table 40, respondents were more pessimistic here. Just over half of respondents said they thought life would be worse off for their children or future generations of South Dakotans. Republicans were more pessimistic and the difference between Republicans and Democrats was statistically significant (Table 41). There were no other significant differences between subgroups.

Better off	21.1%
The same	19.8%
Worse off	52.4%
Don't know	6.8%

Source: Nordyke, Shane et al. "Chiesman Center for Democracy and South Dakota News Watch Statewide Survey." May 2021. (N=500 respondents, data collected in April 2021).

Table 41. Perspectives on Future Conditions by Party			
	Republican	Independent	Democrat
Better off	18.6%	21.8%	26.0%
The same	16.4%	20.4%	26.9%
Worse off	59.7%	52.1%	41.4%
Don't know	5.3%	5.6%	5.8%

Source: Nordyke, Shane et al. "Chiesman Center for Democracy and South Dakota News Watch Statewide Survey." May 2021. (N=500 respondents, data collected in April 2021).

Finally, we asked respondents to indicate their level of agreement with two statements related to government actions to improve economic conditions. Specifically, they were asked the extent to which they agreed with the two statements, "the South Dakota government has taken steps to help improve my financial stability" and "the federal government has taken steps to help improve my financial stability." As can be seen in Table 42, responses varied widely, but respondents were more likely to agree that South Dakota had taken steps to improve their financial stability than the federal government.

Table 42. Government Has Taken Steps to Improve My Financial Stability		
	South Dakota	Federal Government
Strongly Disagree	12.4%	27.0%
Disagree	24.4%	28.0%
Neither Disagree nor Agree	21.8%	15.2%
Agree	30.6%	23.2%
Strongly Agree	9.4%	6.0%
Don't know	1.4%	0.6%

Source: Nordyke, Shane et al. "Chiesman Center for Democracy and South Dakota News Watch Statewide Survey." May 2021. (N=500 respondents, data collected in April 2021).

Conclusion

This survey of 500 South Dakota respondents, a jointly funded collaboration between the Chiesman Center for Democracy and South Dakota News Watch, provided a number of interesting findings related to the overall health of democracy in South Dakota and the financial experiences and perspectives of South Dakotans. Responses varied widely and there were often strong significant differences based on demographic subgroups, particularly party identification.

The findings of this survey can be cited as: Source: Nordyke, Shane et al. "Chiesman Center for Democracy and South Dakota News Watch Statewide Survey." May 2021. (N=500 respondents, data collected in April 2021).

For more information about the survey methodology or specific results, you can contact the Shane Nordyke, Director of the Chiesman Center for Democracy at the University of South Dakota at Shane.Nordyke@usd.edu.