

**2014 ARKANSAS ENERGY POLICY SURVEY (PHASE I):  
Assessing Local Policy Elites' Opinions On Arkansas Energy Policy Issues**

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This survey study was conducted by researchers from the Department of Political Science and the Environmental Dynamics Ph.D. program at the University of Arkansas, with the assistance of A. Kate Miller, Hank Jenkins-Smith, and Carol Silva from the University of Oklahoma, Peter Nierengarten from the City of Fayetteville, Spencer Hall and J. Michael Flanigan from the University of Arkansas, Mike Bishop from the Eureka Springs Chamber of Commerce, Perry Webb from the Springdale Chamber of Commerce, and Mike Malone from the Northwest Arkansas Council. This study is not encumbered by any conflicts of interest, as it is conducted independently with no extramural funding.

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**2014 Arkansas Energy Policy Survey (Phase I):  
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A team of faculty and graduate researchers from the Department of Political Science and the Environmental Dynamics Ph.D. program at the University of Arkansas-Fayetteville, are conducting an anonymous Internet survey designed to gauge local policymakers' and business leaders' opinions, attitudes, and preferences toward various important energy policy issues, including energy efficiency, renewable energy, natural resources, and electric power supply infrastructure, in the state of Arkansas. The Institutional Review Board at the University of Arkansas has approved this survey research, and the proper measures are being observed for protecting survey participants' privacy and human rights.

Phase I of this survey, which focused on the opinions of local policy elites mostly in the Northwest Arkansas area, was implemented between March 17<sup>th</sup> and April 8<sup>th</sup> in 2014. The University of Arkansas research team distributed an email invitation that briefly describes the general nature and subject matter of this study (with the survey link embedded) to an estimated 1,400 potential survey participants between March 17<sup>th</sup> and April 1<sup>st</sup>, using publicly available email addresses acquired from municipal governments' websites and relevant professional organizations in the region.

Among these survey recruits were city council representatives and chamber of commerce members in 15 major cities in Northwest Arkansas, including Rogers, Bentonville, Springdale, Fayetteville, Bella Vista, Lowell, Siloam Springs, Farmington, Johnson, West Fork, Greenland, Tontitown, Elkins, Eureka Springs, and Berryville. The survey invitations were also sent to Arkansas legislators and attendees of the 2014 Arkansas Governor's Conference on Tourism.

Out of 1,400 individuals who received the survey invitations, a total of 235 (or 16.8%) respondents, who are 18 years or older, voluntarily participated in the survey, and 160 (68.2%) of those 235 individuals who started the survey completed it by responding to all the survey questions, while the remaining 75 individuals (31.8%) recorded incomplete responses.

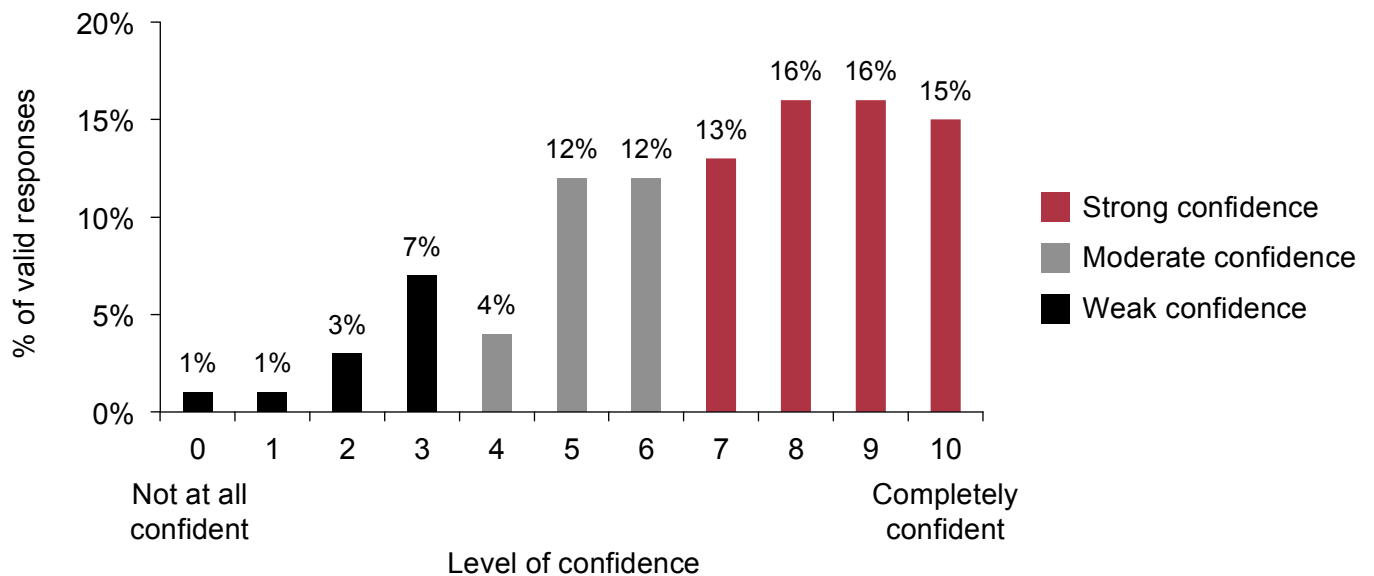
On average, the survey participants of this Phase I survey were 53 years old. Nearly 61 percent were male, 94 percent were non-Hispanic White, 71 percent completed college or a higher degree, and their median annual household income falls into the range between \$70,000 and \$80,000.

This report, entitled *2014 Arkansas Energy Policy Survey (Phase I): Assessing Local Policy Elites' Opinions On Arkansas Energy Policy Issues*, intends to summarize the key findings from the survey focusing on local policy elites' opinions on various energy issues in the state of Arkansas in general, and particularly issues pertaining to energy efficiency and renewable energy policies in local communities and the proposed installation of high voltage power lines in the Ozark Mountain area.

## 1. Confidence In Energy Sources For Future Energy Needs

When Arkansas local policy elites ( $n=211$ ) were asked whether they are confident that there will be adequate sources of energy to meet the needs of the state of Arkansas during the next 20 years, on an 11-point scale ranging from 0 (=Not at all confident) to 10 (=Completely confident), most of them (88% of valid responses) expressed moderate (4 to 6 rating on this 11-point scale) to strong (7 to 10 rating on this 11-point scale) confidence, as shown in Figure 1. Only 12 percent of respondents revealed somewhat weak (0 to 3 rating on this 11-point scale) confidence in adequate provisions for future energy demands.

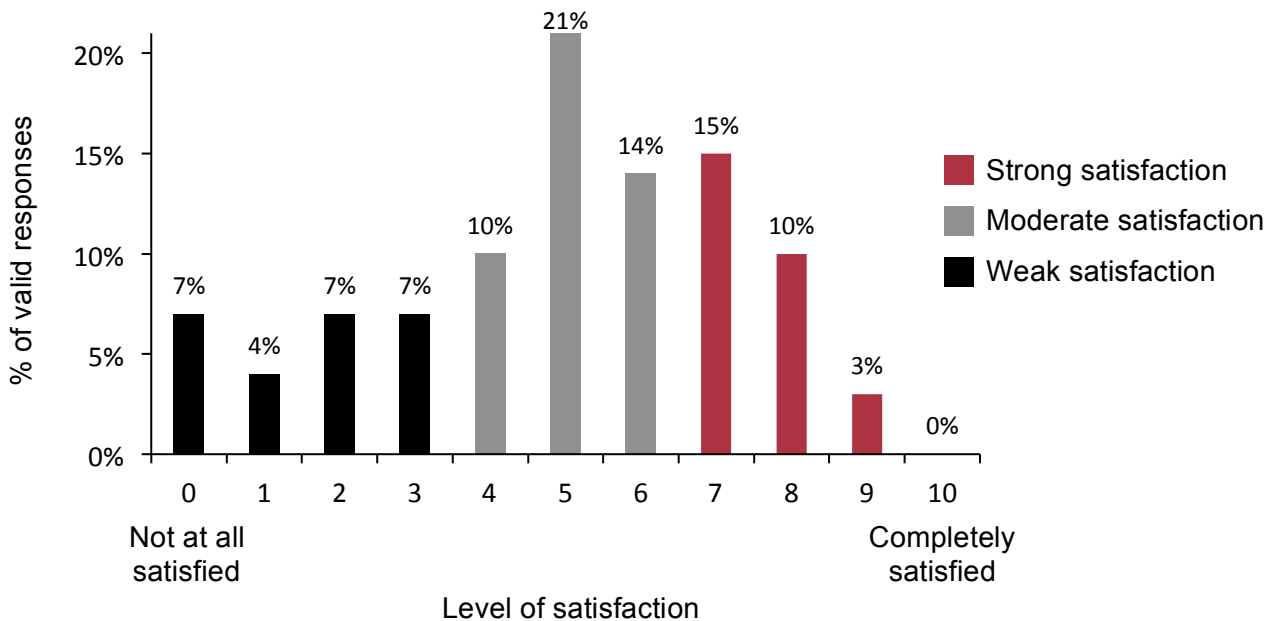
**Figure 1. “How confident are you that there will be adequate sources of energy to meet the energy needs of the state of Arkansas during the next 20 years?”**



## 2. Satisfaction With Overall Energy Policies

Arkansas energy policies generally deal with issues such as the sources and adequacy of energy supplies, costs of various types of energy, and the environmental implications of using energy. When Arkansas local policy elites ( $n=207$ ) were asked how satisfied they are with current overall Arkansas energy policies on an 11-point scale ranging from 0 (=Not at all satisfied) to 10 (=Completely satisfied), 28 percent of them revealed relatively strong satisfaction (7 to 10 rating on this 11-point scale) while 45 percent expressed moderate levels of satisfaction (4 to 6 rating on this 11-point scale). About a quarter of respondents were relatively dissatisfied (0 to 3 rating on this 11-point scale) with current overall energy policies in the state of Arkansas, as presented in Figure 2.

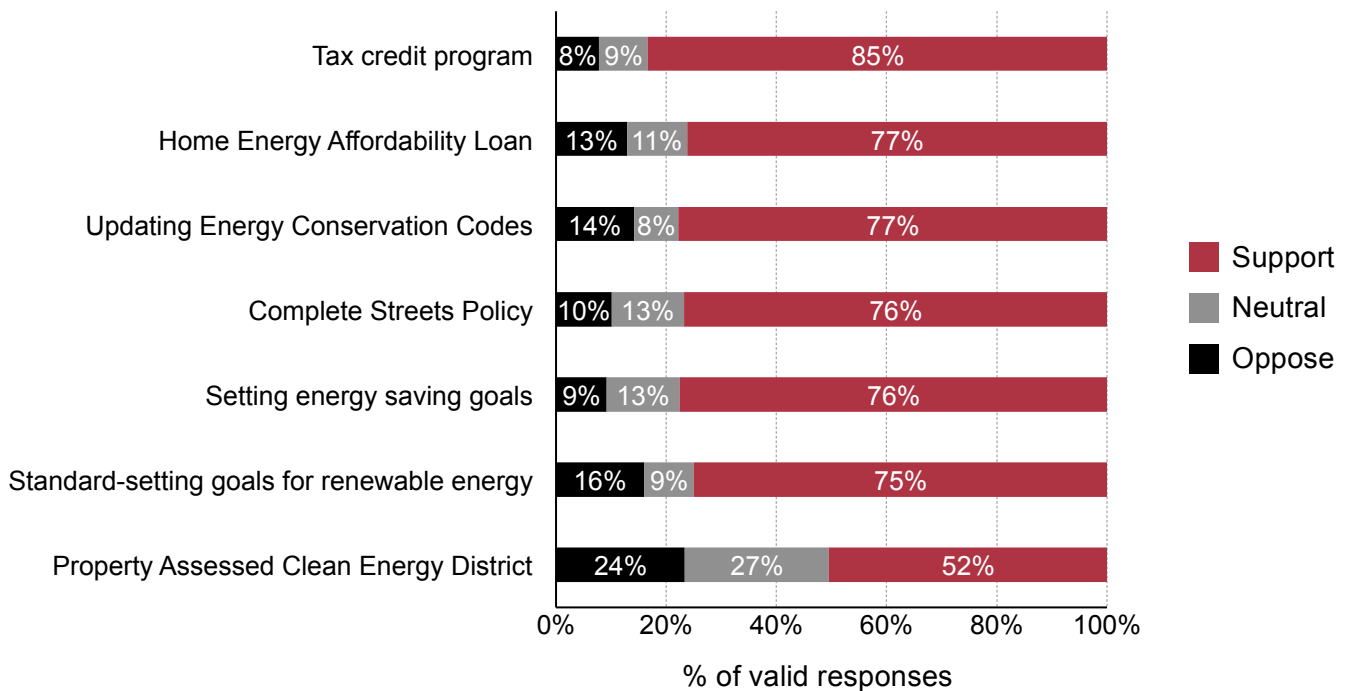
**Figure 2. “How satisfied are you with current Arkansas energy policies overall?”**



### 3. Preference Toward Sustainable Energy Policies

As shown in Figure 3, when Arkansas local policy elites ( $n=199 \sim 204$ ) were asked their opinions on various sustainable energy policy measures designed to enhance efficient energy use and increased energy production from renewable energy sources, such as wind, solar, biomass, and geothermal, in their local government and community on a 7-point scale ranging from 1 (=Strongly oppose) to 7 (=Strongly support), the majority of them were supportive (5 to 7 rating on this 7-point scale) of these policy measures, while their levels of support varied across different policy options, ranging from 85 to 51 percent. A tax credit program for renewable energy or energy conservation received the highest level of support (83%) and the Property Assessed Clean Energy District received the lowest level of support (52%), while other policy options, such as Home Energy Affordability Loan, updating Energy Conservation Codes, Complete Streets Policy, setting energy saving goals, and establishing standard-setting goals for renewable energy, gained support from approximately three quarters of survey respondents. It is noteworthy that about half of survey respondents were either in opposition to (1 to 3 rating on this 7-point scale) or neutral (4 rating on this 7-point scale) towards the policy idea of establishing Property Assessed Clean Energy District, a clean energy district financed through property assessment anchored to property deeds, not individuals, as a means of financing energy efficiency upgrades or renewable energy installations for buildings in their local government and community.

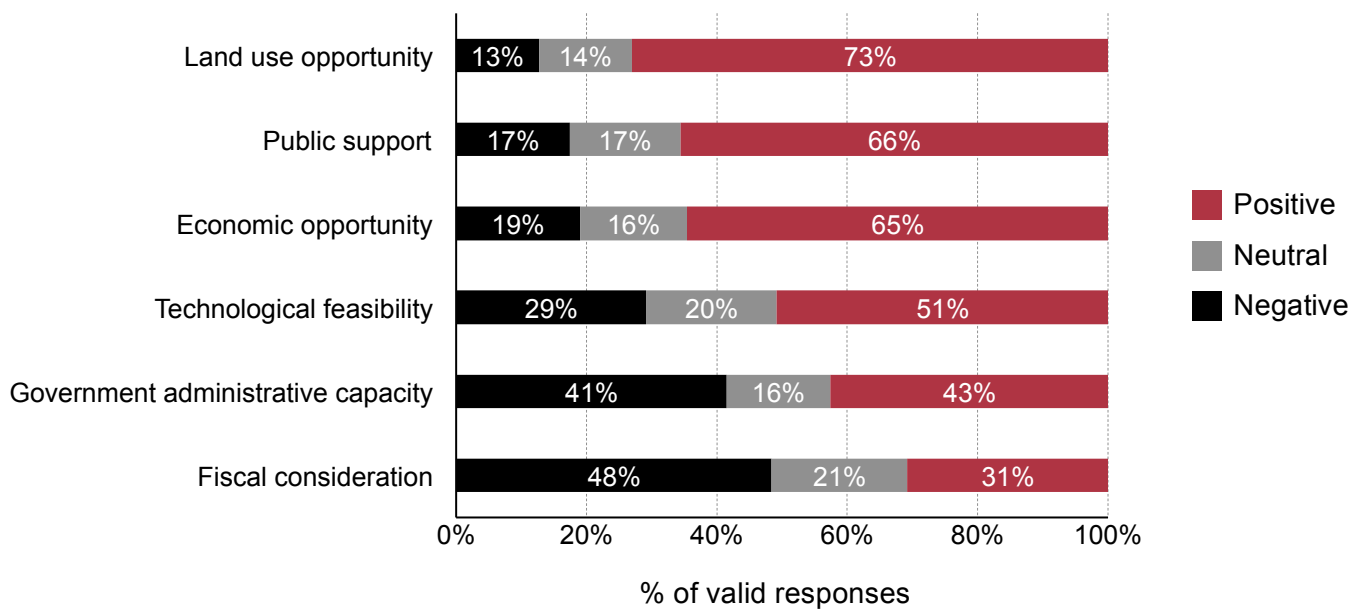
**Figure 3. “How do you feel about the following sustainable energy policies?”**



#### 4. Perceptions Of Sustainable Energy Policymaking Environment

When Arkansas local policy elites ( $n=188 \sim 189$ ) were asked to rate their degrees of agreement with the statements provided to measure their perceptions of various aspects of sustainable energy policymaking environment on a 7-point scale ranging from 1 (=Strongly disagree) to 7 (=Strongly agree), the majority were positive (5 to 7 rating on this 7-point scale) about the prospect that sustainable energy policies would provide better land use opportunities (73%) and economic opportunities (65%), such as cost savings and job creation, with a solid belief that there is public support for sustainable energy policies (66%) in their community. Their positive perception towards technological readiness for implementing sustainable energy policies was not as strong as the previous three aspects of policymaking environment, with about half of respondents expressing a positive impression (5 to 7 rating on this 7-point scale) while the rest were either negative (1 to 3 rating on this 7-point scale) or neutral (4 rating on this 7-point scale). Meanwhile, a significant number of respondents were concerned (1 to 3 rating on this 7-point scale) about administrative capacity (41%) and current fiscal status (48%) of their local government in investing and implementing sustainable energy programs in their community, as displayed in Figure 4.

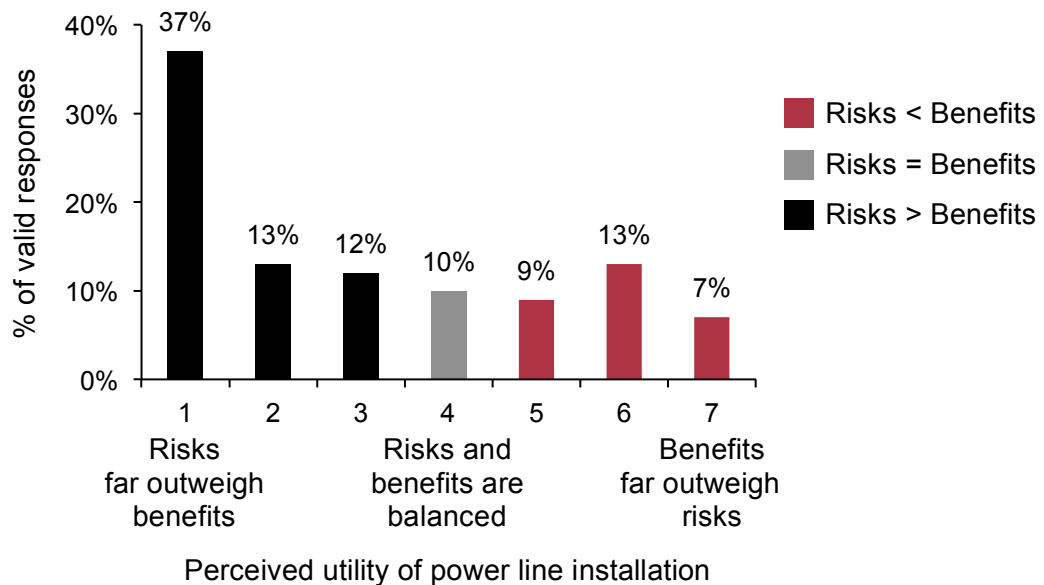
**Figure 4. Perceptions of sustainable energy policymaking environment**



## 5. Perceived Utility Of Proposed High Voltage Power Line Installation

Recently, there has been a controversial policy debate concerning the installation of high voltage power lines in Northwest Arkansas and South Missouri, particularly in the regions under direct impact. While proponents argue that such an installation is inevitable to efficiently and reliably support the identified electric load for the area, opponents claim that such a practice will degrade the natural environment and hamper the tourism-based local economy in affected regions. When Arkansas local policy elites ( $n=175$ ) were asked to rate their perceived utility of high voltage power line installation to their local government and community on a 7-point scale ranging from 1 (=Risks far outweigh benefits) to 4 (=Risks and benefits are equally balanced) to 7 (=Benefits far outweigh risks), 62 percent of respondents answered that risks are greater than benefits (1 to 3 rating on this 7-point scale), while 29 percent believed that benefits outweigh risks (4 to 7 rating on this 7-point scale). Meanwhile, one tenth of survey respondents suspected that risks and benefits are equally balanced (4 rating on this 7-point scale).

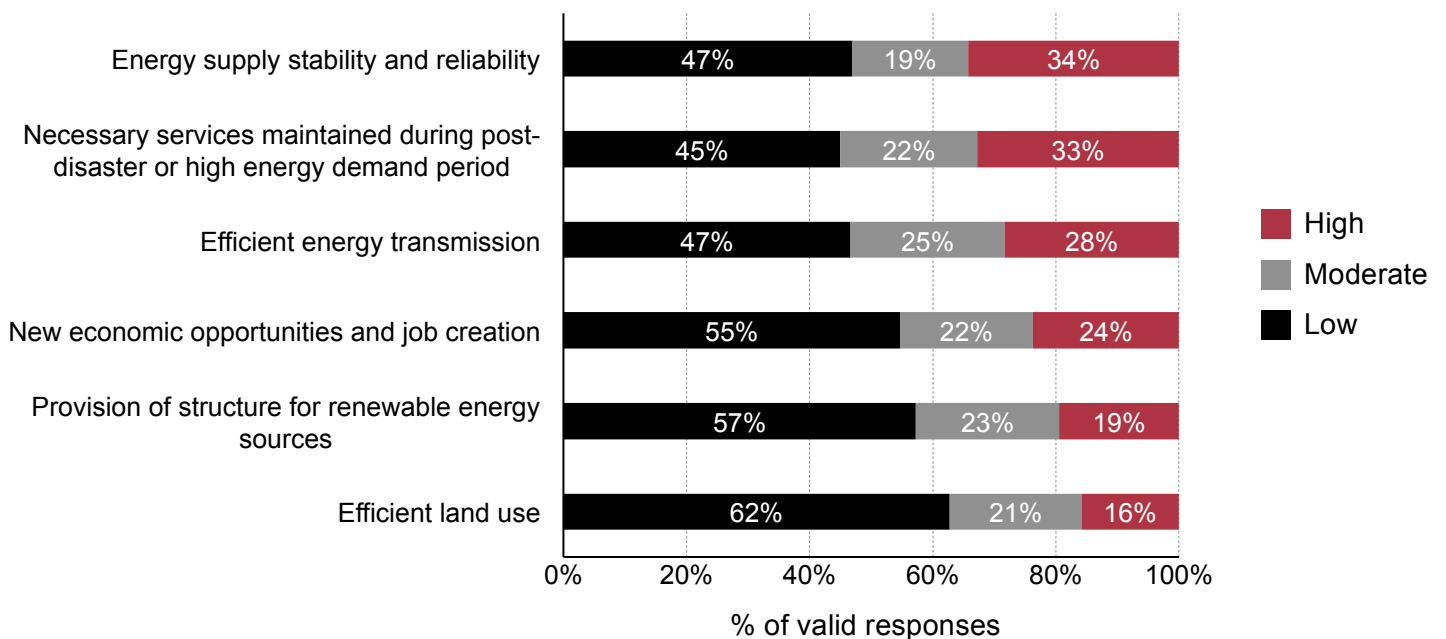
**Figure 5. Perceived utility of high voltage power line installation**



## 6. Perceived Benefits Of High Voltage Power Line Installation

As shown in Figure 6, when Arkansas local policy elites ( $n=180 \sim 181$ ) were asked to assess various aspects of benefits that the installation of high voltage power lines in Northwest Arkansas and South Missouri would bring to their local government and community on an 11-point scale ranging from 0 (=Not at all beneficial) to 10 (=Extremely beneficial), more than half of them answered that the installation would bring moderate (4 to 6 rating on this 11-point scale) to high (7 to 10 rating on this 11-point scale) levels of benefits in terms of energy supply stability and reliability (53%), necessary services maintained during post-disaster or high energy demand period (55%), and efficient energy transmission (53%). However, their perceived levels of benefits were not as high in other benefit categories when compared to the previous responses. Less than half of survey respondents expected moderate (4 to 6 rating on this 11-point scale) to high (7 to 10 rating on this 11-point scale) benefits in terms of new economic opportunities and job creation (46%), provision of structure for renewable energy sources (42%) and efficient land use (37%).

**Figure 6. Perceived benefits of high voltage power line installation**

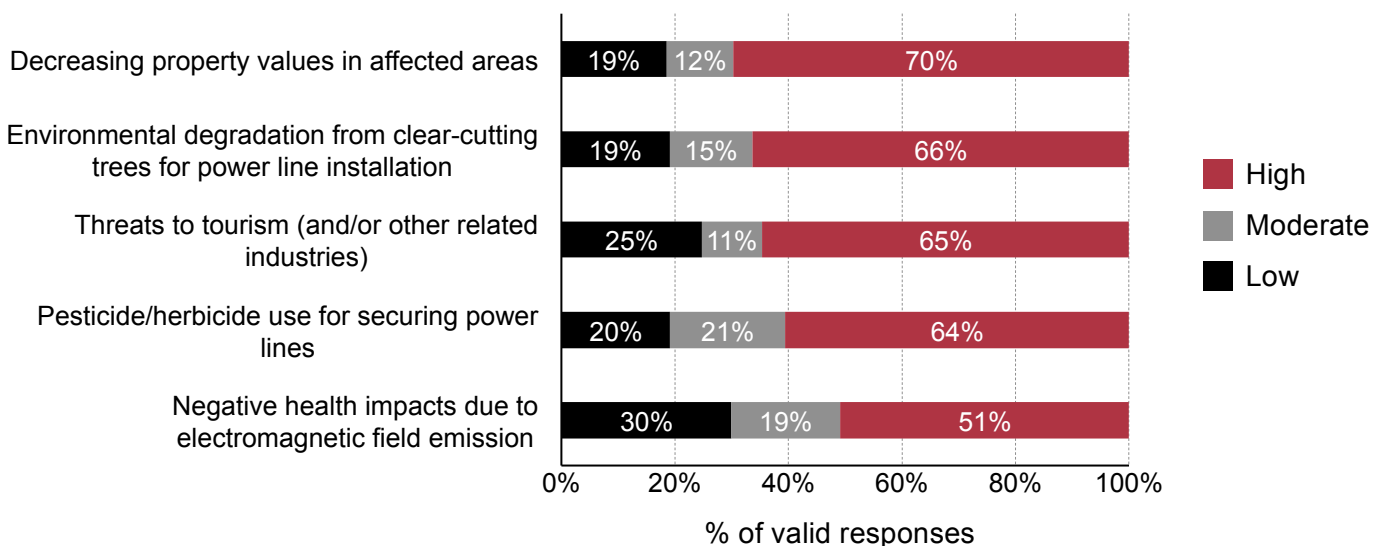




## 7. Perceived Risks Of High Voltage Power Line Installation

Considering potential risks associated with power line installation, Arkansas local policy elites ( $n=177 \sim 178$ ) were asked to evaluate various categories of risks that the installation would pose to their local government and community on an 11-point scale ranging from 0 (=No risk) to 10 (=Extreme risk). As presented in Figure 7, the majority of survey respondents perceived that the installation would bring high levels of risk (7 to 10 rating on this 11-point scale) to their community, including decreasing property values in affected areas (70%), environmental degradation from clear-cutting trees for securing power lines (66%), threats to tourism and/or other related industries (65%), pesticide/herbicide use for securing power lines (64%), and negative health impacts due to electromagnetic field emission (51%). It is noteworthy that economic risk derived from expected property value decrease in areas affected by the proposed high voltage power line installation was their biggest concern, while exposure to electromagnetic field emissions in the surrounding area of the installation was their least concern.

**Figure 7. Perceived risks of high voltage power line installation**



## 8. Trust In Information Sources

Finally, when asked about the levels of trustworthiness of various information sources for energy policy issues, such as sustainable energy and high voltage power lines, on an 11-point scale ranging from 0 (=Not at all trustworthy) to 10 (=Completely trustworthy), Arkansas local policy elites ( $n=158 \sim 160$ ) considered information from scientists and academics more credible than any other information source, with approximately seven tenths of survey respondents revealing high levels of trust (7 to 10 rating on this 11-point scale) in the information provided by this group, as displayed in Figure 8. Local policy elites also maintained a relatively strong level of trust in the information provided by environmental conservation groups, as 44 percent of them indicated high levels of trust (7 to 10 rating on this 11-point scale) in this source. Meanwhile, survey respondents believed that information provided by the energy industry, mainstream news media, and religious leaders was not as trustworthy as other information sources, as 54 percent, 49 percent, and 57 percent of them indicated low levels of trust (0 to 3 rating on this 11-point scale) in the information provided by these three groups, respectively.

**Figure 8. Level of trust in information sources**

