



Mercyhurst Center
for Applied Politics

*2016 Pennsylvania
General Election*

*A Survey of 421 Registered
Voters in Pennsylvania*

Prepared by: The Mercyhurst Center for Applied
Politics at Mercyhurst University

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Summary of Findings

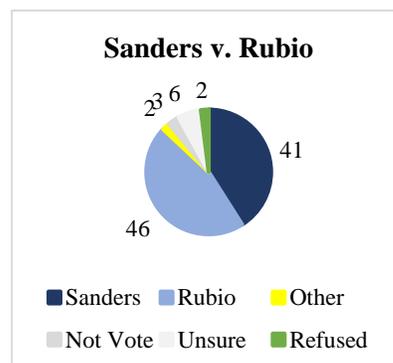
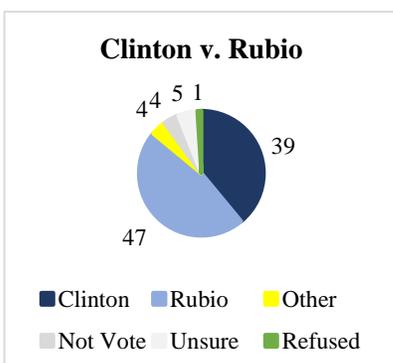
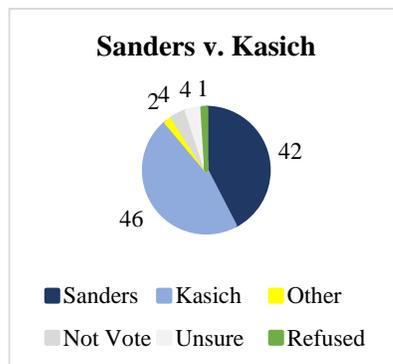
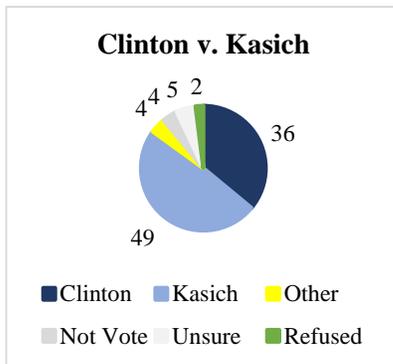
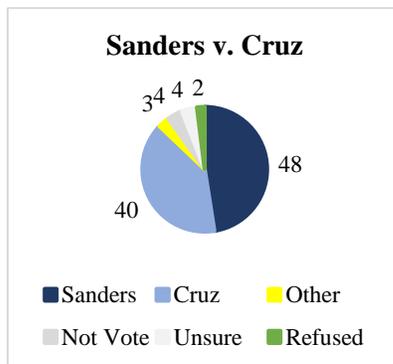
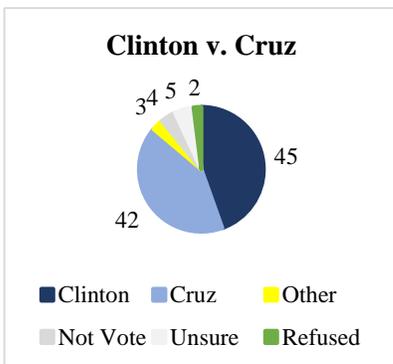
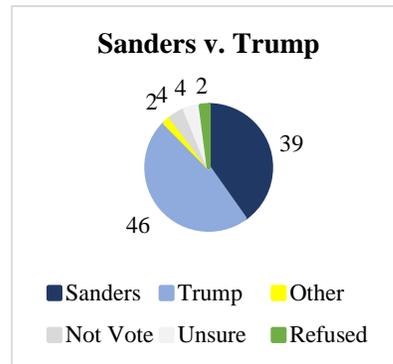
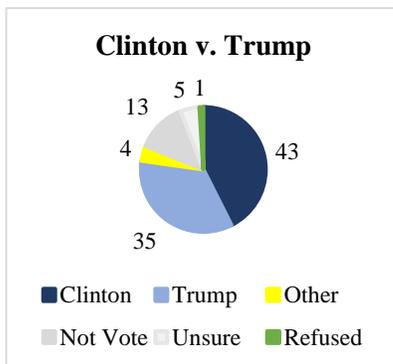
A Mercyhurst Center for Applied Politics poll of 421 registered voters in Pennsylvania (MOE +/-4.8, March 1 – March 11, 2016, live interviewers) finds Democratic candidates Hillary Clinton and Bernie Sanders leading Republican frontrunners Donald Trump and Ted Cruz in a hypothetical general election match-up (Clinton 43% v. Trump 35%; Clinton 45% v. Cruz 42%; Sanders 49% v. Trump 37%; Sanders 48% v. Cruz 40%). In head-to-head match-ups with the other Republican candidates, however, Clinton and Sanders do not fare as well. Marco Rubio and John Kasich best their potential Democratic Party rivals, with Kasich leading Clinton by double digits (Clinton 39% v. Rubio 47%; Clinton 36% v. Kasich 49%; Sanders 41% v. Rubio 46%; Sanders 42% v. Kasich 46%). In terms of the Pennsylvania Senate race, registered voters favor incumbent Senator Pat Toomey over both his potential Democratic Party rivals (Toomey 47% v. Katie McGinty 34%; Toomey 43% v. Sestak 38%).

Regardless of which candidate they are supporting, Pennsylvania voters express disappointment with the presidential campaign so far. When asked to choose a single word to describe the campaign, voters most frequently chose “ridiculous,” “joke,” “disgusting,” “embarrassing,” and other words that express similar sentiments.

In contrast to their dissatisfaction with the tone of the 2016 presidential election, Pennsylvania voters appear to be increasingly satisfied with the state of the nation’s economy and availability of jobs in their community. When asked to describe the state of the nation’s economy, a plurality (40%) say “good.” This compares favorably to 2011, 2013 and 2014 when pluralities of voters described the state of the nation’s economy as “not so good” or “poor.” While a plurality of voters (53%) say that jobs are “somewhat difficult to find” in their community, the percent saying that there are “plenty of jobs” in their community today has increased from 9% in 2014 to 19%. Despite voters more positive perceptions of the economy and the availability of jobs, the issue remains at the forefront of voter’s minds as they evaluate the candidates for President. When asked the importance of a variety of issues for determining their vote for President this November, three out of four voters (76%) say the economy and jobs are “very important.” Other issues frequently identified as “very important” are terrorism/ISIS (71%), the way Washington operates (71%), healthcare policy (67%), and moral values (63%).

2016 Presidential Campaign and General Election

The Mercyhurst Center for Applied Politics March poll finds good news and bad news for Democratic Party candidates Hillary Clinton and Bernie Sanders. The good news: In head-to-head match-ups with Republican frontrunners Donald Trump and Ted Cruz, both Clinton and Sanders are favored by Pennsylvania voters (Clinton, 43% v. Trump, 35%; Clinton, 45% v. Cruz, 42%; Sanders, 49% v. Trump, 37%; Sanders, 48% v. Cruz 40%). The bad news: In head-to-head match-ups with Marco Rubio and John Kasich, neither Clinton nor Sanders is favored by Pennsylvania voters (Clinton, 39% v. Rubio, 47%; Clinton, 36% v. Kasich, 49%; Sanders, 41% v. Rubio, 46%; Sanders, 42% v. Kasich, 46%).



In most ways Pennsylvania voters' preferences are tracking national trends. In this poll of Pennsylvania voters, like many recent national polls, Clinton enjoys a comfortable lead over Trump, is statistically tied with Cruz, and is trailing Rubio and Kasich. Unlike the results of many national polls, in Pennsylvania Rubio and Kasich enjoy sizeable leads over Clinton. Rubio holds an 8 point lead over Clinton among voters in the Commonwealth, while Kasich enjoys a 13 point lead.

While it is true that Rubio and Kasich have an increasingly difficult path to the Republican nomination and therefore should be of less concern to Clinton and Sanders than the Republican frontrunners, 2016 is not a typical election year. Given the possibility of a contested Republican Convention, Rubio and Kasich cannot be ruled out as potential general election contenders; and Kasich who, with his Western Pennsylvania roots and strong performance as governor in neighboring Ohio, may be capable of winning the hearts and minds of voters in the Keystone state. At the very least, Rubio and Kasich's leads over Clinton and Sanders suggest that a Republican candidate with the right attributes has a chance of winning a state that has voted Democratic in recent

presidential elections. Given the turmoil in the Republican Party, exactly who the Republican nominee will be is anyone's guess.

This is not to say that Pennsylvania Republicans – and, for that matter, Democrats – don't know what qualities or characteristics they want the next President of the United States to possess. When asked this question voters most frequently identified “honesty” (n=107/388), “integrity” (n=32/388), “leadership” (n=29/388), “intelligence/knowledgeable” (n=13/388), and “trustworthy” (n=12/388) as the qualities they are looking for in the next President (see Table 1 and Appendix A)

Table 1. 2016 Campaign so far and Most Important Quality for a Candidate for President

<i>“If you had to choose a single word to describe the presidential campaign so far, what single word would that be?”</i>	<i>“In just a single word, what quality or characteristic are you looking for in the next president of the United States?”</i>
Ridiculous (n=34) Joke (n=24) Disgusting (n=18) Embarrassing (n=18) Interesting (n=17)	Honesty (n=107) Integrity (n=32) Leadership (29) Intelligence/Knowledgeable (n=13) Trustworthy (n=12)
<i>N=390</i>	<i>N=388</i>

So far, Pennsylvania voters appear to be unhappy with the presidential campaign in general. When asked to choose a single word to describe the campaign, the results were overwhelmingly negative. In fact, of the 390 responses to this question only a tiny fraction can in any way be construed as positive. Voters most frequently describe the presidential campaign as “ridiculous” (n=34/390), “joke” (n=24/390), “disgusting” (n=18/390), or “embarrassing” (n=18/390). Some (n=17/390), however, described it as “interesting” (see Table 1 and Appendix B)

In terms of the Pennsylvania Senate race, incumbent Republican Senator Pat Toomey enjoys a comfortable lead over his two most prominent potential Democratic challengers, Joe Sestak (Toomey, 43% v. Sestak, 38%) and Katie McGinty (Toomey, 47% v. McGinty, 34%).

Presidential Election Issues

Turning to the issues Pennsylvania voters say are determining which presidential candidate they will vote for in November we find domestic concerns at the top of the list. Voters identify the “economy and jobs” (76%), “the way Washington operates” (71%), “healthcare policy” (67%), and “moral values” as being very important. One international issues – Terrorism and ISIS (71%) – makes the list of the top five issues voters are using to evaluate candidates for President.

Table 2. “To begin, how important will each of the following issues be in determining which candidate you will vote for in the 2016 presidential election? Will the issue be very important, somewhat important, not very important, or not important at all for determining how you vote?”

	Very Important (%)	Somewhat Important (%)	Not Very Important (%)	Not Important (%)	Don't Know or Refused (%)
Economy/Jobs	76	21	3	1	0
Terrorism/ISIS	71	21	6	1	2
Way Washington Operates	71	19	5	3	2
Healthcare Policy	67	25	6	1	1
Moral Values	63	26	8	2	1
Foreign Affairs	56	33	8	1	1
Income Distribution	53	31	8	5	3
Immigration	49	36	11	3	1
Infrastructure	48	39	10	2	0
Race Relations	44	36	12	5	2
Env./Climate Change	39	35	18	7	1
Trade with other Nations	36	52	8	3	2

That “the economy and jobs” is an issue that is very important to three out of four voters is not surprising – these issues almost always top the list of election issues in the United States. In fact, economic indicators are arguably the single most important variable for forecasting the outcome of presidential elections. Voters in Pennsylvania say that their perception of the state of the nation’s economy and the availability of jobs in their community is improving. When asked whether they would describe the state of the nation’s economy as “excellent,” “good,” “not so good,” or “poor,” a plurality (40%) say “good” (see Figure 1). March 2016 marks the first time a plurality has described the state of the economy this way since before we began asking the question in October 2011. While few voters say the economy is “excellent” (1%), fewer voters than at any time since October 2013 say that it is “poor” (21% today, 57% in 2011).

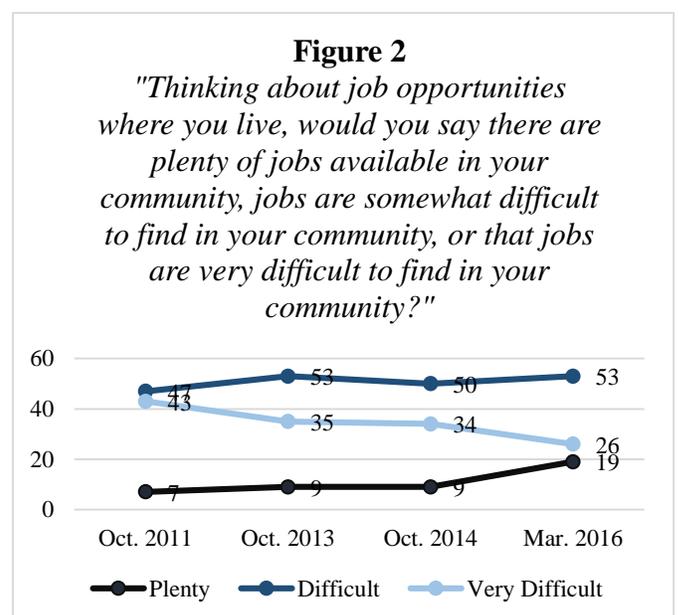
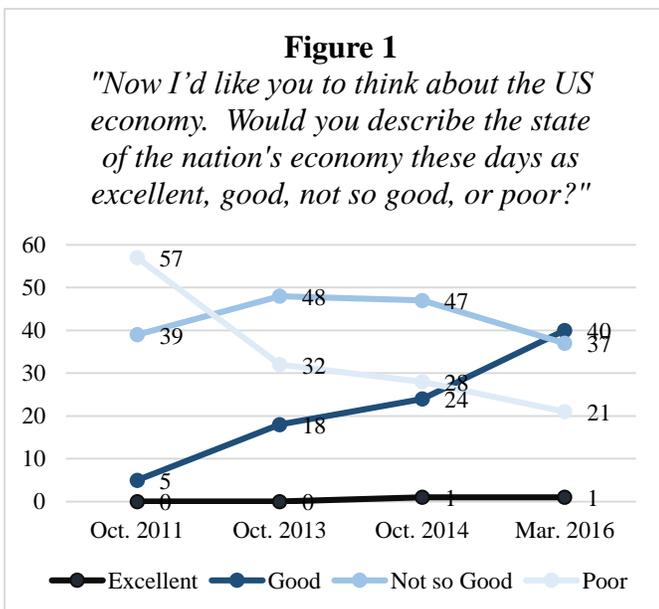
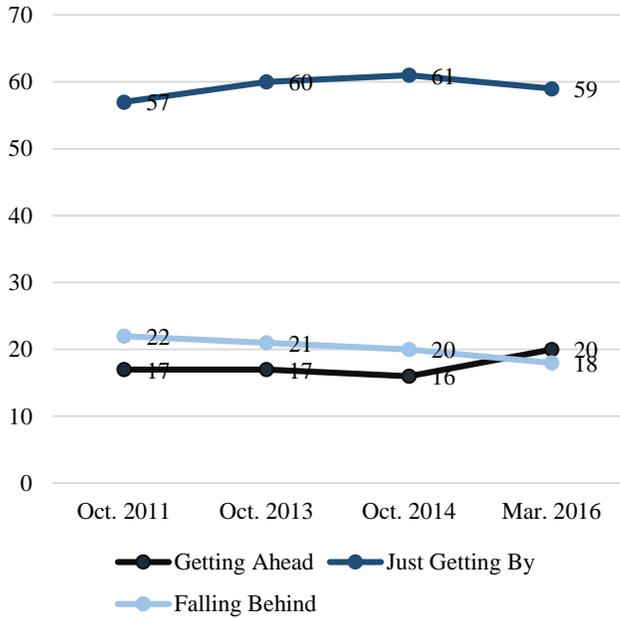


Figure 3

"Which best describes your family's financial situation? Do you feel as if you are getting ahead financially, have just enough money to maintain your standard of living, or are you falling behind financially?"



In terms of the availability of jobs in their communities, a majority of voters (53%) say that “jobs are somewhat difficult to find” (see Figure 2). Importantly, today voters are more likely to say that there are “plenty” of jobs in their community than they were just two years ago (19% today; 9% in Oct. 2014) and less likely to say that jobs are “very difficult to find” (26% today; 34% in Oct. 2014). Voters’ perceptions of their financial situation, however, has changed little since 2011 (see Figure 3). Today a majority of voters (59%) say they “have just enough money to get by” (57% in 2011). Only slightly fewer voters say that they “falling behind financially” (18% today; 22% in 2011) and only slightly more say they are “getting ahead financially” (20% today; 17% in 2011).

Frequency Report

Interviews were completed with 421 registered voters in Pennsylvania. For a sample size of 421, there is a 95 percent probability that our survey results are within plus or minus 4.8 points (the margin of error) of the actual population distribution for any given question. For subsamples the margin of error is larger (depending on the size of the subsample). The data were weighted on gender, age and race to correct for minor discrepancies between the sample and population. Question order was randomized whenever possible. Due to rounding, column totals may not equal 100 percent.

To begin, how important will each of the following issues be in determining which candidate you will vote for in the 2016 presidential election? Will the issue be very important, somewhat important, not very important, or not important at all for determining how you vote?

[RANDOMIZED]

Q.1 How about the economy and jobs?

[Will the issue of the economy and jobs be very important, somewhat important, not very important, or not important at all for determining how you vote?]

Very important	76
Somewhat important	21
Not very important	3
Not important at all	1
DK	0
RF	0

Q.2 How about the way government operates in Washington?

[Will the issue of the way government operates in Washington be very important, somewhat important, not very important, or not important at all for determining how you vote?]

Very important	71
Somewhat important	19
Not very important	5
Not important at all	3
DK	2
RF	0

Q.3 How about healthcare policy?

[Will the issue of healthcare policy be very important, somewhat important, not very important, or not important at all for determining how you vote?]

Very important	67
Somewhat important	25
Not very important	6
Not important at all	1
DK	1
RF	0

Q.4 How about the way income and wealth are distributed in the US?

[Will the issue of the way income and wealth are distributed in the US be very important, somewhat important, not very important, or not important at all for determining how you vote?]

Very important	53
Somewhat important	31
Not very important	8
Not important at all	5
DK	3
RF	0

Q.5 How about immigration?

[Will the issue of immigration be very important, somewhat important, not very important, or not important at all for determining how you vote?]

Very important	49
Somewhat important	36
Not very important	11
Not important at all	3
DK	1
RF	0

Q.6 How about race relations?

[Will the issue of race relations be very important, somewhat important, not very important, or not important at all for determining how you vote?]

Very important	44
Somewhat important	36
Not very important	12
Not important at all	5
DK	2
RF	0

Q.7 How about moral values?

[Will the issue of moral values be very important, somewhat important, not very important, or not important at all for determining how you vote?]

Very important	63
Somewhat important	26
Not very important	8
Not important at all	2
DK	1
RF	0

Q.8 How about the nation's infrastructure, such as roads and bridges?

[Will the issue of the nation's infrastructure, such as roads and bridges, be very important, somewhat important, not very important, or not important at all for determining how you vote?]

Very important	48
Somewhat important	39
Not very important	10
Not important at all	2
DK	0
RF	0

Q.9 How about the environment and climate change?

[Will the issue of the environment and climate change be very important, somewhat important, not very important, or not important at all for determining how you vote?]

Very important	39
Somewhat important	35
Not very important	18
Not important at all	7
DK	1
RF	0

Q.10 How about terrorism and ISIS?

[Will the issue of terrorism and ISIS be very important, somewhat important, not very important, or not important at all for determining how you vote?]

Very important	71
Somewhat important	21
Not very important	6
Not important at all	1
DK	1
RF	1

Q.11 How about foreign affairs?

[Will the issue of foreign affairs be very important, somewhat important, not very important, or not important at all for determining how you vote?]

Very important	56
Somewhat important	33
Not very important	8
Not important at all	1
DK	1
RF	0

Q.12 How about trade with other nations?

[Will the issue of race relations be very important, somewhat important, not very important, or not important at all for determining how you vote?]

Very important	36
Somewhat important	52
Not very important	8
Not important at all	3
DK	1
RF	1

Q.13 Now I'd like you to think about your vote in the 2016 presidential election. If the 2016 presidential election was held today and you had to choose to vote for the Democrat Hillary Clinton or the Republican Donald Trump, who would you vote for?

Clinton	43
Trump	35
Other (volunteered)	4
Neither/would not vote (volunteered)	13
DK	5
RF	1

Q.14 What if you had to choose between the Democrat Hillary Clinton and the Republican Ted Cruz?

Clinton	45
Cruz	42
Other (volunteered)	3
Would not vote (volunteered)	4
DK	5
RF	2

Q.15 What if you had to choose between the Democrat Hillary Clinton and the Republican Marco Rubio?

Clinton	39
Rubio	47
Other (volunteered)	4
Would not vote (volunteered)	4
DK	5
RF	1

Q.16 What if you had to choose between the Democrat Hillary Clinton and the Republican John Kasich?

Clinton	36
Kasich	49
Other (volunteered)	4
Would not vote (volunteered)	4
DK	5
RF	2

Q.17 What if you had to choose between the Democrat Bernie Sanders and the Republican Donald Trump?

Sanders	49
Trump	37
Other (volunteered)	2
Would not vote (volunteered)	4
DK	4
RF	2

Q.18 What if you had to choose between the Democrat Bernie Sanders and the Republican Ted Cruz?

Sanders	48
Cruz	40
Other (volunteered)	3
Would not vote (volunteered)	4
DK	4
RF	2

Q.19 What if you had to choose between the Democrat Bernie Sanders and the Republican Marco Rubio?

Sanders	41
Rubio	46
Other (volunteered)	2
Would not vote (volunteered)	3
DK	6
RF	2

Q.20 What if you had to choose between the Democrat Bernie Sanders and the Republican John Kasich?

Sanders	42
Kasich	46
Other (volunteered)	2
Would not vote (volunteered)	4
DK	4
RF	1

Q.21 Regardless of the match ups, of the candidates still running, which candidate do you think would make the best president of the United States?

Donald Trump	16
Hillary Clinton	25
Bernie Sanders	15
Ted Cruz	11
Marco Rubio	8
John Kasich	13
None/Someone Else (volunteered)	6
DK	5
RF	1

Q.22 Now I'd like you to think about the 2016 presidential race so far. If you had to choose a single word to describe the presidential campaign so far, what single word would that be?

Q.23 In just a single word, what quality or characteristic are you looking for in the next president of the United States?

Q.24 Now I'd like you to think about the US economy. Would you describe the state of the nation's economy these days as excellent, good, not so good, or poor?

Excellent	1
Good	40
Not so good	37
Poor	21
DK	1
RF	0

Q.25 Thinking about job opportunities where you live, would you say there are plenty of jobs available in your community, jobs are somewhat difficult to find in your community, or that jobs are very difficult to find in your community?

Plenty of jobs	19
Jobs somewhat difficult to find	53
Jobs very difficult to find	26
DK	2
RF	0

Q.26 Which best describes your family's financial situation? Do you feel as if you are getting ahead financially, have just enough money to maintain your standard of living, or are you falling behind financially?

Getting ahead	20
Just enough money	59
Falling behind	18
DK	1
RF	2

Q.27 Finally, I have just a few questions about the Pennsylvania Senate race.

If the 2016 election for US Senate was held today and you had to choose to vote for the Republican Pat Toomey and the Democrat Katie McGinty, who would you vote for?

Toomey	47
McGinty	34
Other (volunteered)	2
Would not vote (volunteered)	3
DK	13
RF	1

Q.28 What if you had to choose between the Republican Pat Toomey and the Democrat Joe Sestak?

Toomey	43
Sestak	38
Other (volunteered)	1
Would not vote (volunteered)	2
DK	15
RF	1

Q.29 What if you had to choose between the Republican Pat Toomey and the Democrat Ed Pawlowski?

Toomey	47
Pawlowski	31
Other (volunteered)	2
Would not vote (volunteered)	3
DK	16
RF	1

Q.30 What if you had to choose between the Republican Pat Toomey and the Democrat John Fetterman?

Toomey	49
Fetterman	31
Other (volunteered)	2
Would not vote (volunteered)	2
DK	15
RF	1

Q.31 The last few questions are used to make sure that our sample for this survey reflects the population as a whole. Again, your answers will be kept completely confidential. Generally speaking, do you usually think of yourself as a Republican, Democrat or independent?

Democrat	48
Republican	41
Independent	11
Other (volunteered)	1
DK	0
RF	0

Q.32 Generally speaking, would you consider yourself to be a liberal, conservative, moderate, or have you not thought much about this?

Liberal	19
Conservative	33
Moderate	27
Not thought about	19
DK	1
RF	0

Q.33 Age?

18-29 years	14
30-39 years	13
40-49 years	15
50-69 years	40
70 or older	18

Q.34 What is the highest level of education you have completed?

Less than high school	2
High school	28
Some college/associates degree	28
Four year degree	21
Graduate degree	20
DK	0
RF	1

Q.35 If you add together the yearly incomes, before taxes, of all of the members of your household for the past year, would the total be?

Would it be...(read categories)

Less than \$30,000	18
\$30,000 - \$50,000	16
\$50,000 - \$100,000	33
\$100,000-\$150,000	11
Greater than \$150,000	7
DK	4
RF	11

Q.36 What is your race or ethnicity?

White/Caucasian	85
Non-White	11
DK	0
RF	4

Q.37 Gender. [Do not read]

Male	50
Female	50

Methodology

This report summarizes the results of a survey of registered voters in Pennsylvania, which was conducted between March 1 and March 11, 2016. During the 10 day field period interviewers called weekday evenings between the hours of 6:00 and 9:00 PM and between 11:00 AM and 6:00 PM on weekends. For each working phone number, interviewers made no fewer than six attempts to contact individuals selected to participate in the study. Calls were initiated by CATI software or manually dialed and relied on a list of randomly selected registered voters Pennsylvania obtained from L2.

A total of 421 individuals were interviewed. For a sample size of 421, there is a 95 percent probability that the results are within plus or minus 4.8 points (the margin of error) of the actual population distribution for any given question. For subsamples, the margin of error is higher (depending on the size of the subsample). Aside from sampling error, there are several factors that prevent the results obtained through a probability sample from being a perfect representation of the results that would be obtained if the entire population was interviewed. This non-sampling error may be caused by a variety of factors including, but not limited to, response rate and question order. In this survey, a variety of techniques were employed to reduce common sources of non-sampling error.

Response Rate

Calculating a response rate for a particular study involves considering a number of variables (see http://www.aapor.org/Response_Rates_An_Overview.htm); but, simply stated, it refers to the percentage of individuals in a sample that, when contacted, elect to participate in a study by responding an interviewer's questions. In recent years, researchers have documented a sharp decline in response rates. Today, a typical study that relies on telephone interviews can expect a response rate of between 20 and 30%. Although it is unclear if, or to what extent, response rate is a source of non-sampling error, most polls strive to maximize response rate by making multiple attempts to contact individuals and taking steps to secure their cooperation once they have been reached. In this way, our study of registered voters in Pennsylvania is no different than most polls: No fewer than six attempts were made to contact hard-to-reach individuals. These attempts occurred during weekday evenings and on Saturday afternoons. To ensure a high rate of cooperation, interviewers received training on conversion techniques that are consistent with research ethics as identified by the Mercyhurst University Institutional Review Board.

Questions

This report contains the questions as worded on the questionnaire and in the order in which they were asked. Some of the questions include bracketed information, which is, in every case, an instruction to the programmer or interviewer. Whenever possible, question order was randomized to ensure that respondents did not receive a set order of response options, which allowed response set bias to be minimized. For structured (close-ended) questions, interviewers were trained to probe for clarity when respondents' answers were not identical to the predefined response options. For unstructured (open-ended) questions, interviewers were trained to record verbatim responses whenever possible. In cases where a respondent asked that a question or response option be repeated, interviewers were careful to re-read the entire question or all response options.

Data

Data collected during this study was prepared for analysis by director and associate director of Mercyhurst Center for Applied Politics. Data preparation included, but was not limited to, removing

partial interviews (respondent-terminated interviews) from the dataset. To maximize the accuracy of our results and correct for discrepancies between our sample and the population, the data were weighted on age and gender. Simply stated, weighting is when data collected from survey respondents are adjusted to represent the population from which the sample was drawn.

Mercyhurst Center for Applied Politics

The Mercyhurst Center for Applied Politics (MCAP) began operations in July 2010. Inspired by the mission of Mercyhurst University and guided by the university's core values, the center promotes reasoned discourse about problems facing communities, states and nations. It accomplishes this objective by providing elected officials, government agencies, news organizations, and nonprofits with accurate and unbiased assessments of public opinion; and offering a nonpartisan forum for public debates and roundtable discussions that address pressing public problems.

The centerpiece of MCAP is the state of the art computer-assisted telephone interviewing (CATI) facility. The facility, which is located in the Center for Academic Engagement, is comprised of thirty-one interviewer stations and staffed by well-trained research associates. The specialized computer software used to conduct telephone interviews generates random telephone numbers in a predefined geographic area or dials from a list, and allows research associates to accurately complete even the most complex interviews.

The center also has the ability to design and administer online surveys. This method of interviewing is ideal for organizations that have relatively up-to-date email addresses for their members. The software used by MCAP allows a researcher to administer a survey - whether short and simple or long and complex – to an unlimited number of email addresses. In addition, a researcher has the ability to monitor response rates and send out reminders, thereby ensuring that the study produces high quality results.

As the Northwestern Pennsylvania's only CATI facility whose primary purpose is to regularly and accurately gauge public opinion, the MCAP is an invaluable resource for community leaders. Each year the center conducts polls on issues of local, state and national interest. The results of these studies are made available to the public via the university's webpage (polisci.mercyhurst.edu/mcap). In addition to its annual polls, the center offers its services to private parties, nonprofits, news organizations, and government agencies for minimal cost.

Please direct questions about the center to Dr. Joseph M. Morris, Director, Mercyhurst Center for Applied Politics, Mercyhurst University, 501 E. 38th Street, Erie, PA, 16546, (814) 824-2154, jmorris@mercyhurst.edu.

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