



Mercyhurst Center for Applied Politics

The Mercyhurst Poll

State of the Economy and
the Impact of Gas Extraction
from the Marcellus Shale Formation

*A poll of 579 adult residents
of Pennsylvania*

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Summary of Findings

In spite of what has been characterized as a slow, but steady improvement in the economy, Pennsylvanians' views of the state of the nation's economy and their personal finances remain largely unchanged from 2011. While they are less likely to describe the state of the economy as poor than they were in 2011, Pennsylvanians offer a downbeat assessment of their personal financial situation. Pennsylvanians are critical of both the Republicans in Congress and Obama Administration's efforts to address the nation's economic situation.

Pennsylvania residents' opinions on extracting gas from the Marcellus Shale formation through the process commonly known as "fracking" reflect some uncertainty about the practice and the state's regulatory response to the shale gas industry. While Pennsylvanians are generally supportive of gas extraction through "fracking," they are less supportive than they were in 2011. Pennsylvanians continue to have concerns about where "fracking" occurs and the regulatory framework that ensures it is done safely. Pennsylvanians believe the potential economic benefits of gas extraction from the Marcellus Shale formation are substantial, but are most likely to say that they do not outweigh the potential risk to human health or the environment.

Finally, the poll finds that if Pennsylvania's gubernatorial election were held today, a plurality of registered voters (40%) would vote for an unnamed Democratic Party candidate rather than incumbent Republican governor Tom Corbett (29%).

Results for questions pertaining to the economy and poverty are based on interviews with 579 adult residents of Pennsylvania (MOE +/- 4.01) conducted between September 19 and October 3, 2013. Results for questions pertaining to gas extraction from the Marcellus Shale formation and the gubernatorial election are based on subsamples of 426 (MOE +/- 4.75) and 490 (MOE +/- 4.43) individuals, respectively.

Findings

State of the Nation's Economy and Personal Financial Situations

Today, as in 2011, Pennsylvanians offer a relatively downbeat assessment of the state of the nation's economy and their personal financial situation. While far fewer say that the state of the nation's economy is "poor" (32% today, 57% in 2011, today a plurality (48%) say that it is "not so good." Like 2011, very few Pennsylvanians report that there are "plenty" of job opportunities in their community (9% today, 7% in 2011) and a plurality says that jobs are "somewhat difficult to find (53% today, 47% in 2011). Although most Pennsylvanians today say that they are making just enough money to maintain their standard of living (60% today, 57% in 2011), roughly 21% say that they are falling behind. In terms of Pennsylvanians ability to maintain their standard of living, little has changed in the past two years.

Roughly one out of every five Pennsylvanians (22%) have had someone living in their household lose their jobs during the past twelve months (24% in 2011), and three out of every five Pennsylvanians (59%) have close friends or family members who have found themselves unemployed during the past year (67% in 2011). Today, three out of every four Pennsylvanians (75%) know individuals or families that struggle each month to get their basic needs met, such as rent, utilities, healthcare, proper clothes, or food (77% in 2011).

Pennsylvanians are largely critical of efforts made by the Obama Administration and Republicans in Congress to address the economic challenges facing the United States. Solid majorities say that the actions taken by the Obama Administration (58%) and the Republicans in Congress (67%) have made things "somewhat worse," "much worse," or have had "no effect" on the state of the economy. This reflects a slightly more positive assessment of the Obama Administration's performance on the economy and, to a lesser extent, the Republicans in Congress than provided in 2011.

To begin, would you describe the state of the nation's economy these days as excellent, good, not so good, or poor?

| | |
|--------------------|------------|
| <i>Excellent</i> | <i>0%</i> |
| <i>Good</i> | <i>18%</i> |
| <i>Not So Good</i> | <i>48%</i> |
| <i>Poor</i> | <i>32%</i> |
| <i>Don't Know</i> | <i>1%</i> |

Hydraulic Fracturing/Fracking the Marcellus Shale Formation

Roughly three out of every four Pennsylvanians (74% today, 70% in 2011) have heard about "hydraulic fracturing, or fracking" to extract gas from the Marcellus Shale formation. Of these individuals, 49% favor "fracking" to extract natural gas, while 28% oppose it and 24% say it "depends" or "don't know." Compared to 2011, when 55% said they supported fracking to extract gas from shale, today fewer Pennsylvanians are supportive. This level of support further decreases when asked about "fracking" to extract gas within the boundaries of state forests and state parks. A clear majority of Pennsylvanians (59%) oppose the practice in state forests and a sizable majority (70%) opposing "fracking" within the boundaries of state parks. These findings indicate that little has changed since 2011 concerning Pennsylvanians aversion to hydraulic fracturing within the boundaries of state forests and parks.

Like 2011, Pennsylvanians are today divided the effects of "fracking" to extract gas from the Marcellus Shale formation. A clear majority of Pennsylvanians (61% today, 60% in 2011) continue to report that they do not believe corporations extracting gas from the Marcellus Shale formation "truly care about protecting the environment" and that "more regulations are needed" (63% today, 67% in 2011). Unlike 2011, when Pennsylvanians were evenly divided about whether gas extraction poses a "significant threat to our environment" (43% saying yes, 42% saying no), today a clear plurality (43% saying yes, 36% saying no) believes that the process does pose a threat. When it comes to whether gas extraction poses a significant threat to our water resources, Pennsylvanians today are still divided. Nevertheless, a plurality (47% saying yes, 34% saying no) believes it does pose a threat to our water resources. In contrast to 2011, when a

plurality (44%) said “fracking” to extract natural gas poses a threat to human health, today a plurality (48%) of says it does not.

Pennsylvanians are maintaining mostly positive views on the economic benefits of “fracking.” Seven out of ten Pennsylvanians (70% today, 73% in 2011) say that gas extracted from the Marcellus Shale formation should be taxed, and 53% (55% in 2011) believe that gas extraction, even if it is not taxed, will “significantly help” Pennsylvania’s financial situation. Likewise, clear majorities (56% today, 62% in 2011) continue to believe that gas extraction has brought “a significant number” of new jobs to Pennsylvania, that it will “significantly increase” the nation’s energy independence (61% today, 59% in 2011) and that a “significant number” of private landowners are “making a lot of money” leasing land to gas companies (66% today, 66% in 2011).

In spite of the economic benefits and uncertainty about the risks of “fracking” to extract gas from the Marcellus Shale, pluralities of Pennsylvanians say that that the potential benefits from the activity are not worth the potential risks to human health (47%) or the environment (45%). This contrast with findings from 2011, when pluralities said the potential benefits were worth the risk to human health (44%) and the environment (46%)

Have you heard about fracking to extract natural gas in Pennsylvania's Marcellus Shale region?

Yes 74% No 26%

Do you favor or oppose extracting natural gas through fracking in Pennsylvania's Marcellus shale region?

Favor 49%

Oppose 28%

Depends 11%

Don't Know 13%

Frequency Report

1. To begin, would you describe the state of the nation's economy these days as excellent, good, not so good, or poor? (N=579, MOE +/- 4.01)

| | <u>Today</u> | <u>October 2011</u> |
|-------------|--------------|---------------------|
| Excellent | 0% | 0% |
| Good | 18% | 5% |
| Not So Good | 48% | 39% |
| Poor | 32% | 57% |
| DK | 1% | 0% |
| RF | 0% | 0% |

2. 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? (N=579, MOE +/- 4.01)

| | <u>Today</u> | <u>October 2011</u> |
|----------------------------|--------------|---------------------|
| Plenty of Jobs | 9% | 7% |
| Somewhat Difficult to Find | 53% | 47% |
| Very Difficult to Find | 35% | 43% |
| DK | 2% | 4% |
| RF | 0% | 0% |

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? (N=579, MOE +/- 4.01)

| | <u>Today</u> | <u>October 2011</u> |
|-------------------|--------------|---------------------|
| Getting Ahead | 17% | 17% |
| Just Enough Money | 60% | 57% |
| Falling Behind | 21% | 22% |
| DK | 2% | 1% |
| RF | 1% | 2% |
| RF | 0% | 0% |

4. In the last year, have you or has anyone living in your household been laid off or lost their job? (N=579, MOE +/- 4.01)

| | <u>Today</u> | <u>October 2011</u> |
|-----|--------------|---------------------|
| Yes | 22% | 24% |
| No | 78% | 76% |
| DK | 0% | 0% |
| RF | 0% | 0% |

5. Thinking beyond your own household, in the last year, have any close friends or immediate family members been laid off or lost their job? (N=579, MOE +/- 4.01)

| | <u>Today</u> | <u>October 2011</u> |
|-----|--------------|---------------------|
| Yes | 59% | 67% |
| No | 40% | 33% |
| DK | 2% | 0% |
| RF | 0% | 0% |

[ASK QUESTIONS 6 TO 7 IN RANDOM ORDER]

6. Thinking about the economic challenges facing the country would you say the actions taken by the Obama Administration made things much better, somewhat better, somewhat worse, much worse, or had no effect? (N=579, MOE +/- 4.01)

| | <u>Today</u> | <u>October 2011</u> |
|-----------------|--------------|---------------------|
| Much Better | 7% | 3% |
| Somewhat Better | 30% | 23% |
| Somewhat Worse | 19% | 24% |
| Much Worse | 27% | 27% |
| No Effect | 12% | 19% |
| DK | 4% | 3% |
| RF | 1% | 1% |

7. Thinking about the economic challenges facing the country would you say the actions taken by the Republicans in Congress made things much better, somewhat better, somewhat worse, much worse, or had no effect? (N=579, MOE +/- 4.01)

| | Today | October 2011 |
|-----------------|-------|--------------|
| Much Better | 3% | 2% |
| Somewhat Better | 18% | 15% |
| Somewhat Worse | 23% | 27% |
| Much Worse | 25% | 26% |
| No Effect | 19% | 24% |
| DK | 11% | 7% |
| RF | 1% | 1% |

8. Do you personally know individuals or families who really struggle each month to get their basic needs met, such as rent, utilities, health care, proper clothes, or food? (N=579, MOE +/- 4.01)

| | Today | October 2011 |
|-----|-------|--------------|
| Yes | 75% | 77% |
| No | 24% | 23% |
| DK | 1% | 0% |
| RF | 0% | 0% |

9. People have very different opinions about why a person or family is in poverty. Some people believe that poverty is the result of a person's lack of effort, while others believe it is the result of circumstances beyond their control. How about you? Would you say that most poverty is caused by people's lack of effort, circumstances beyond people's control, or a combination of lack of effort and circumstances beyond their control? (N=579, MOE +/- 4.01)

| | Today | October 2011 |
|----------------|-------|--------------|
| Lack of Effort | 10% | 9% |
| Circumstances | 23% | 21% |
| Combination | 65% | 69% |
| DK | 2% | 1% |
| RF | 0% | 1% |

Now, I'd like to get your opinions on a current energy issue in Pennsylvania. Nearly all of Pennsylvania is situated on top of a rock feature called the Marcellus Shale. Recently, companies have become interested in extracting natural gas from the Marcellus Shale. Over the past few years, these companies have begun drilling gas wells using a process called hydraulic fracturing, or "fracking."

10. Have you heard about fracking to extract natural gas in Pennsylvania's Marcellus Shale region? (N=579, MOE +/- 4.01)

| | Today | October 2011 |
|-----|-------|--------------|
| Yes | 74% | 70% |
| No | 26% | 30% |
| DK | 1% | 0% |
| RF | 0% | 0% |

[IF THE ANSWER IS 2 OR 8-9, THEN SKIP TO QUESTION 27]

11. Do you favor or oppose extracting natural gas through fracking in Pennsylvania's Marcellus shale region?
(N=426, MOE +/- 4.75)

[Do not offer "depends" as an option]

| | Today | October 2011 |
|-----------------------|-------|--------------|
| Favor | 49% | 55% |
| Oppose | 28% | 27% |
| Depends (volunteered) | 11% | 9% |
| DK | 13% | 9% |
| RF | 0% | 0% |

Now, I have some questions about gas extraction from the Marcellus Shale and its impact on Pennsylvania. For these questions, I want you to think only about natural gas extracted from the Marcellus Shale in Pennsylvania through the process of fracking.

[ASK QUESTIONS 14 TO 26 IN RANDOM ORDER]

12. Do you think gas extraction should or should not be allowed to occur in state forests? (N=426, MOE +/- 4.75)

[Do not offer "depends" as an option]

| | <u>Today</u> | <u>October 2011</u> |
|-----------------------|--------------|---------------------|
| Allowed | 31% | 35% |
| Not Allowed | 59% | 57% |
| Depends (volunteered) | 4% | 4% |
| DK | 6% | 4% |
| RF | 0% | 0% |

13. Do you think gas extraction should or should not be allowed to occur in state parks? (N=426, MOE +/- 4.75)

[Do not offer "depends" as an option]

| | <u>Today</u> | <u>October 2011</u> |
|-----------------------|--------------|---------------------|
| Allowed | 19% | 25% |
| Not Allowed | 70% | 67% |
| Depends (volunteered) | 5% | 4% |
| DK | 6% | 4% |
| RF | 0% | 0% |

14. Do you think Pennsylvania should or should not tax gas extracted from the Marcellus Shale? (N=426, MOE +/- 4.75)

[Do not offer "depends" as an option]

| | <u>Today</u> | <u>October 2011</u> |
|-----------------------|--------------|---------------------|
| Tax | 70% | 73% |
| Not Tax | 17% | 19% |
| Depends (volunteered) | 4% | 2% |
| DK | 9% | 5% |
| RF | 0% | 1% |

15. Do you believe that gas extraction, even if it is not taxed, will significantly help our state's financial situation? (N=426, MOE +/- 4.75)

[Do not offer "depends" as an option]

| | <u>Today</u> | <u>October 2011</u> |
|-----------------------|--------------|---------------------|
| Yes | 53% | 55% |
| No | 34% | 35% |
| Depends (volunteered) | 5% | 6% |
| DK | 7% | 4% |
| RF | 1% | 0% |

16. Do you think local communities are receiving significant financial benefits from gas companies drilling in their area? (N=426, MOE +/- 4.75)

[Do not offer "depends" as an option]

| | <u>Today</u> | <u>October 2011</u> |
|-----------------------|--------------|---------------------|
| Yes | 37% | 35% |
| No | 40% | 46% |
| Depends (volunteered) | 5% | 5% |
| DK | 18% | 14% |
| RF | 0% | 0% |

17. Do you think gas extraction has brought a significant number of new jobs to Pennsylvania? (N=426, MOE +/- 4.75)

[Do not offer "depends" as an option]

| | <u>Today</u> | <u>October 2011</u> |
|-----------------------|--------------|---------------------|
| Yes | 56% | 62% |
| No | 30% | 25% |
| Depends (volunteered) | 4% | 1% |
| DK | 10% | 11% |
| RF | 0% | 0% |

18. Do you think fracking to extract gas poses a significant threat to our environment? (N=426, MOE +/- 4.75)

[Do not offer "depends" as an option]

| | <u>Today</u> | <u>October 2011</u> |
|-----------------------|--------------|---------------------|
| Yes | 43% | 43% |
| No | 36% | 42% |
| Depends (volunteered) | 9% | 5% |
| DK | 12% | 10% |
| RF | 0% | 0% |

19. Do you think fracking to extract gas poses a significant threat to our water resources? (N=426, MOE +/- 4.75)

[Do not offer "depends" as an option]

| | <u>Today</u> | <u>October 2011</u> |
|-----------------------|--------------|---------------------|
| Yes | 47% | 54% |
| No | 34% | 30% |
| Depends (volunteered) | 7% | 5% |
| DK | 12% | 11% |
| RF | 0% | 0% |

20. Do you think more regulations on extracting gas are needed in Pennsylvania? (N=426, MOE +/- 4.75)

[Do not offer "depends" as an option]

| | <u>Today</u> | <u>October 2011</u> |
|-----------------------|--------------|---------------------|
| Yes | 63% | 67% |
| No | 20% | 19% |
| Depends (volunteered) | 3% | 3% |
| DK | 15% | 10% |
| RF | 0% | 0% |

21. Do you think fracking to extract natural gas poses a threat to human health? (N=426, MOE +/- 4.75)

[Do not offer "depends" as an option]

| | <u>Today</u> | <u>October 2011</u> |
|-----------------------|--------------|---------------------|
| Yes | 39% | 44% |
| No | 48% | 37% |
| Depends (volunteered) | 6% | 5% |
| DK | 17% | 14% |
| RF | 0% | 0% |

22. Do you believe gas extraction will significantly increase our nation's energy independence? (N=426, MOE +/- 4.75)

[Do not offer "depends" as an option]

| | <u>Today</u> | <u>October 2011</u> |
|-----------------------|--------------|---------------------|
| Yes | 61% | 59% |
| No | 30% | 26% |
| Depends (volunteered) | 3% | 5% |
| DK | 6% | 10% |
| RF | 0% | 0% |

23. Do you think a significant number of private land owners are making a lot of money leasing land to gas companies? (N=426, MOE +/- 4.75)

[Do not offer "depends" as an option]

| | <u>Today</u> | <u>October 2011</u> |
|-----------------------|--------------|---------------------|
| Yes | 66% | 66% |
| No | 18% | 20% |
| Depends (volunteered) | 4% | 5% |
| DK | 12% | 19% |
| RF | 0% | 0% |

24. Do you think corporations extracting natural gas from the Marcellus Shale truly care about protecting the environment? (N=426, MOE +/- 4.75)

[Do not offer "depends" as an option]

| | <u>Today</u> | <u>October 2011</u> |
|-----------------------|--------------|---------------------|
| Yes | 27% | 30% |
| No | 61% | 60% |
| Depends (volunteered) | 5% | 5% |
| DK | 7% | 5% |
| RF | 0% | 0% |

25. In the end, do you believe that the potential benefits of fracking to extract natural gas from the Marcellus Shale in Pennsylvania are worth the potential risks to human health? (N=426, MOE +/- 4.75)

[Do not offer "depends" as an option]

| | <u>Today</u> | <u>October 2011</u> |
|-----------------------|--------------|---------------------|
| Yes | 37% | 44% |
| No | 47% | 40% |
| Depends (volunteered) | 4% | 5% |
| DK | 12% | 11% |
| RF | 1% | 0% |

26. In the end, do you believe that potential benefits of fracking to extract natural gas from the Marcellus Shale in Pennsylvania are worth the potential risks to the environment? (N=426, MOE +/- 4.75)

[Do not offer "depends" as an option]

| | <u>Today</u> | <u>October 2011</u> |
|-----------------------|--------------|---------------------|
| Yes | 38% | 46% |
| No | 45% | 43% |
| Depends (volunteered) | 3% | 3% |
| DK | 13% | 8% |
| RF | 1% | 1% |

27. I have just a few more questions for you. Are you registered to vote in Pennsylvania? (N=579, MOE +/- 4.01)

| | |
|-----|-----|
| Yes | 85% |
| No | 15% |
| DK | 0% |
| RF | 0% |

[IF THE ANSWER IS 2 OR 8-9, THEN SKIP TO QUESTION 28]

28. As you may know Pennsylvania will hold an election for governor in 2014. It is likely that the current governor of Pennsylvania, Tom Corbett, will be the Republican Party's candidate for governor. If the election for governor of Pennsylvania was held today would you be more likely to vote for the Republican Tom Corbett or for the Democratic Party's candidate? (N=490, MOE +/- 4.43)

| | |
|------------------------------|-----|
| Republican Tom Corbett | 29% |
| Democratic Party's Candidate | 40% |
| Neither [volunteered] | 6% |
| Someone Else [volunteered] | 4% |
| DK | 16% |
| RF | 4% |

Our last few questions are used to ensure that our sample for this survey reflected the population as a whole. Again, all information will be kept confidential.

29. Generally speaking, do you usually think of yourself as a Republican, a Democrat, or an Independent?

| | |
|-------------|-----|
| Republican | 24% |
| Democrat | 30% |
| Independent | 38% |
| Other | 5% |
| DK | 1% |
| RF | 2% |

[IF THE ANSWER IS 2, THEN SKIP TO QUESTION 31]

[IF THE ANSWER IS 3, THEN SKIP TO QUESTION 32]

[IF THE ANSWER IS 8, THEN SKIP TO QUESTION 32]

[IF THE ANSWER IS 9, THEN SKIP TO QUESTION 32]

[IF THE ANSWER IS 4, THEN SKIP TO QUESTION 32]

30. Would you call yourself a strong Republican or a not very strong Republican?

| | |
|-------------------|-----|
| Strong Republican | 39% |
| Not Very Strong | 57% |
| DK | 4% |
| RF | 0% |

[IF THE ANSWER IS 1, THEN SKIP TO QUESTION 33]

[IF THE ANSWER IS 2, THEN SKIP TO QUESTION 33]

[IF THE ANSWER IS 8, THEN SKIP TO QUESTION 33]

[IF THE ANSWER IS 9, THEN SKIP TO QUESTION 33]

31. Would you call yourself a strong Democrat or a not very strong Democrat?

| | |
|-----------------|-----|
| Strong | 54% |
| Not Very Strong | 45% |
| DK | 1% |
| RF | 0% |

[IF THE ANSWER IS 1, THEN SKIP TO QUESTION 33]

[IF THE ANSWER IS 2, THEN SKIP TO QUESTION 33]

[IF THE ANSWER IS 8, THEN SKIP TO QUESTION 33]

[IF THE ANSWER IS 9, THEN SKIP TO QUESTION 33]

32. Do you think of yourself as closer to the Republican Party or to the Democratic Party?

| | |
|----------------------|-----|
| Closer to Republican | 36% |
| Closer to Democratic | 32% |
| Neither | 20% |
| DK | 8% |
| RF | 4% |

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

| | |
|----------------------------------|-----|
| Liberal | 20% |
| Conservative | 24% |
| Moderate | 25% |
| Have not thought much about this | 28% |
| DK | 3% |
| RF | 1% |

34. In what year were you born?

| | | |
|------|---------------|-----|
| Age: | 18-29 years | 21% |
| | 30-59 years | 52% |
| | 60- and older | 27% |

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

[Do not read list unless necessary]

| | |
|----------------------------------|-----|
| Less than High School | 6% |
| High School/GED | 26% |
| Some College | 15% |
| 2-Year College or Professional | 13% |
| 4-Year College Degree (BS or BA) | 23% |
| Masters Degree | 13% |
| Doctoral Degree | 3% |
| DK | 0% |
| RF | 1% |

36. What is your religious affiliation?

| | |
|--------------------------------|-----|
| Protestant | 21% |
| Catholic | 33% |
| Jewish | 1% |
| Muslim | 2% |
| Other | 19% |
| Not affiliated with a religion | 18% |
| DK | 1% |
| RF | 5% |

37. What is your race?

| | |
|---------------------------|-----|
| White or Caucasian | 73% |
| Black or African American | 12% |
| Asian or Pacific Islander | 2% |
| Hispanic or Latino | 9% |
| Other | 0% |
| DK | 0% |
| RF | 4% |

38. What is your marital status?

| | |
|-----------------------|-----|
| Single, never married | 29% |
| Married | 56% |
| Separated | 1% |
| Divorced | 7% |
| Widowed | 7% |
| Other | 1% |
| DK | 0% |
| RF | 1% |

38. What is your marital status?

| | |
|-----------------------|-----|
| Single, never married | 29% |
| Married | 56% |
| Separated | 1% |
| Divorced | 7% |
| Widowed | 7% |
| Other | 1% |
| DK | 0% |
| RF | 1% |

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

[Read all Categories]

| | |
|------------------------|-----|
| Less than \$30,000 | 22% |
| \$30,000 to \$60,000 | 19% |
| \$60,000 to \$90,000 | 18% |
| \$90,000 to \$120,000 | 10% |
| Greater than \$120,000 | 14% |
| DK | 5% |
| RF | 12% |

40. What is your current employment status?

| | |
|-----------------------|-----|
| Employed | 61% |
| Unemployed | 12% |
| Laid off / Furloughed | 1% |
| Retired | 19% |
| Disabled | 5% |
| Other | 1% |
| DK | 0% |
| RF | 1% |

[IF THE ANSWER IS 1, THEN SKIP TO QUESTION 42]

[IF THE ANSWER IS 4, THEN SKIP TO QUESTION 42]

41. Are you currently seeking employment?

| | |
|-----|-----|
| Yes | 40% |
| No | 48% |
| DK | 3% |
| RF | 8% |

42. Gender [Do Not Ask]

| | |
|--------|-----|
| Male | 50% |
| Female | 50% |

[DEBRIEF]

Methodology

This report summarizes the results of a survey of adult residents of Pennsylvania, which was conducted between Wednesday, September 19 and Thursday, October 3, 2013. During the 15 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 generated by CATI software or manually dialed and relied on a list of randomly generated telephone numbers obtained from Marketing Systems Group. The telephone numbers included a cell phone supplement, which constituted 10% of the sample.

A total of 579 individuals were interviewed. For a sample size of 579, there is a 95 percent probability that the results are within plus or minus 4.01 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). Results pertaining to gas extraction from the Marcellus Shale formation (q. 11-26) are based on the 426 of 579 individuals who indicated that they were familiar with the issue (see q. 10). Likewise, results pertaining to the 2014 Pennsylvania gubernatorial race (q. 28) are based on the 490 of 579 (MOE +/- 4.43) individuals who indicated that they were registered to vote (see q. 27). 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, mornings 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 gender and age. Simply stated, weighting is when data collected from survey respondents are adjusted to more accurately reflect the characteristics of the population from which the sample was drawn.

| Table 1. Pennsylvania Population Characteristics v. Sample (before weighting) | | | |
|---|--------------|--------------|--------|
| | | Pennsylvania | Sample |
| Adult Population | | 9,910,224 | 579 |
| Sex | | | |
| | Female | 52% | 55% |
| | Male | 48% | 45% |
| Age | | | |
| | 18-29 years | 21% | 8% |
| | 30-59 years | 52% | 49% |
| | 60 and older | 27% | 43% |
| Race | | | |
| | White | 82% | 88% |
| | Black | 11% | 4% |
| | Latino | 6% | 2% |
| | Other | 2% | 5% |
| Region | | | |
| | Northeast | 9% | 13% |
| | Southeast | 43% | 35% |
| | Central | 22% | 20% |
| | Southwest | 21% | 23% |
| | Northwest | 5% | 9% |

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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