Mercyhurst Center for Applied Politics

Erie County Voters'
Perception of the Trump Administration

A Survey of 419 Registered
Voters in Erie County, Pennsylvania

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Context for the Poll

The Mercyhurst Center for Applied Politics Spring 2017 poll is the first of eight polls of voters in Erie County, Pennsylvania. The polls will be conducted biannually and include a standard battery of questions addressing a wide range of issues related to the public's perception of Donald Trump and his performance as president. The goal of the project is to provide an accurate account of the evolution of public opinion in Erie County for the duration of the Trump administration in service of the democratic process. All poll results will be made available to the public via the Mercyhurst Center for Applied Politics webpage.

Summary of Findings

A Mercyhurst Center for Applied Politics poll of 419 registered voters in Erie County, Pennsylvania (MOE +/-4.8, February 6 – February 15, 2017, live interviewers) finds Donald Trump receiving mixed evaluations of his first few weeks as President of the United States. Despite winning a majority of the popular vote in historically blue Erie County just a little more than 2 months ago, a plurality of voters say they disapprove of the job Trump is doing as president (41% approve, 49% disapprove) and a majority of voters have an unfavorable opinion of him (47% favorable, 52% unfavorable). Voters say they disapprove of the way he is handling the United States' relationship with other nations (32% approve, 60% disapprove), trade with other nations (42% approve, 48% disapprove), healthcare (36% approve, 51% disapprove), the environment (29% approve, 55% disapprove), and immigration (37% approve, 58% disapprove). When asked specifically about Trump's executive order that prevented citizens from seven nations – Iran, Iraq, Libya, Somalia, Sudan, Syria, and Yemen – from entering the United States for a period of 90 days, a plurality of voters said they disapproved of the action (40% approve, 47% disapprove). Only 40% of voters say things in the United States are headed in the right direction, while a majority of voters (53%) say they believe that things are off on the wrong track.

Erie County voters are equally critical of Trump's approach to news media. Although a majority of voters are at least somewhat untrusting of news media (53% say they have not much or no trust at all), a solid majority say either that news media reporting on Trump has not been hard enough (23%) or that it's been about right (37%). Only 37% say that news media reporting on him has been too hard. A majority of voters (53%) say that Trump's criticism of the news media has been "unfair and unjustified" while only 41% say that it has been "fair and justified."

In contrast to these negative initial evaluations of Trump's performance in office, Erie County voters generally approve of his handling of other key campaign issues. Although a plurality of voters describe the state of the nation's economy as "not so good" (2% excellent, 40% good, 42% not so good, 16% poor) and have an even bleaker perception of Erie County's economy (see Table 1), a plurality of voters say they approve of the way Donald Trump is handling the economy (49% approve, 36% disapprove). Similarly, pluralities of voters approve of the way he is handling terrorism (49% approve, 44% disapprove) and national defense (49% approve, 41% disapprove).

Table 1: Voters' Perceptions of Erie Economy

Would you describe the state of Erie County's economy these days as excellent, good, not so good, or poor?

Excellent	*1%*
Good	*10%*
Not so good	*52%*
Poor	*34%*

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	*9%*
Somewhat difficult to find	*56%*
Very difficult to find	*33%*

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	*21%*
Maintaining standard of living	*62%*
Falling behind	*15%*

Frequency Report

Interviews were completed with 419 registered voters in Erie County, Pennsylvania. For a sample size of 419, 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.

Q.1 To begin, do you approve or disapprove of the job Donald Trump is doing as president?

approve	41
disapprove	49
neither (volunteered)	2
depends (volunteered)	3
DK	5
RF	0

Q.2 Generally speaking, how do you rate the way that Congress is doing its job?   Would you say Congress is doing an excellent job, a good job, a fair job, or a poor job?

excellent job	1
good job	9
fair job	39
poor job	46
DK	5
RF	0

I'm going to read you a short list of issues and I would like you to tell me whether you approve or disapprove of the way Donald Trump is handling each one.

[Q.3 –Q.16 RANDOMIZED]

Q.3 Do you approve or disapprove of the way Donald Trump is handling the economy?

approve	49
disapprove	36
neither (volunteered)	3
depends (volunteered)	1
DK	10
RF	0

Q.4 How about taxes?

(Do you approve or disapprove of the way Donald Trump is handling...?)

approve	38
disapprove	40
neither (volunteered)	4
depends (volunteered)	3
DK	15
RF	0

Q.5   How about America's relationship with other nations?

(Do you approve or disapprove of the way Donald Trump is handling...?)

        approve   32
        disapprove   60
        neither (volunteered)   2
        depends (volunteered)   2
        DK   4
        RF   1

Q.6   How about trade with other nations?

(Do you approve or disapprove of the way Donald Trump is handling...?)

        approve   42
        disapprove   48
        neither (volunteered)   2
        depends (volunteered)   1
        DK   7
        RF   1

Q.7   How about America's infrastructure?

(Do you approve or disapprove of the way Donald Trump is handling...?)

        approve   45
        disapprove   35
        neither (volunteered)   4
        depends (volunteered)   2
        DK   14
        RF   1

Q.8   How about immigration?

(Do you approve or disapprove of the way Donald Trump is handling...?)

        approve   37
        disapprove   58
        neither (volunteered)   2
        depends (volunteered)   1
        DK   2
        RF   1

Q.9   How about health care?

(Do you approve or disapprove of the way Donald Trump is handling...?)

        approve   36
        disapprove   51
        neither (volunteered)   4
        depends (volunteered)   2
        DK   7
        RF   0

Q.10   How about Social Security?

(Do you approve or disapprove of the way Donald Trump is handling...?)

    approve   28
    disapprove   37
    neither (volunteered)   5
    depends (volunteered)   3
    DK   25
    RF   1

Q.11   How about terrorism?

(Do you approve or disapprove of the way Donald Trump is handling...?)

    approve   49
    disapprove   44
    neither (volunteered)   1
    depends (volunteered)   1
    DK   4
    RF   1

Q.12   How about national defense?

(Do you approve or disapprove of the way Donald Trump is handling...?)

    approve   49
    disapprove   41
    neither (volunteered)   2
    depends (volunteered)   3
    DK   6
    RF   0

Q.13   How about illegal drugs?

(Do you approve or disapprove of the way Donald Trump is handling...?)

    approve   39
    disapprove   31
    neither (volunteered)   5
    depends (volunteered)   1
    DK   23
    RF   1

Q.14   How about gun control?

(Do you approve or disapprove of the way Donald Trump is handling...?)

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approve                   43
disapprove                39
neither (volunteered)      2
depends (volunteered)      1
DK                        14
RF                         1
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Q.15   How about gun violence?

(Do you approve or disapprove of the way Donald Trump is handling...?)

```
approve                   42
disapprove                39
neither (volunteered)      4
depends (volunteered)      2
DK                        13
RF                         1
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Q.16   How about the environment?

(Do you approve or disapprove of the way Donald Trump is handling...?)

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approve                   29
disapprove                55
neither (volunteered)      3
depends (volunteered)      1
DK                        12
RF                         1
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Q.17   You may be aware that Donald Trump recently issued an executive order banning individuals from seven nations from entering the United States for 90 days. The seven nations include Iran, Iraq, Libya, Somalia, Sudan, Syria and Yemen. Do you approve or disapprove of this order, or are you unsure about your opinion?

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approve                   40
disapprove                47
DK                        13
RF                         0
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Q.18   Generally speaking, do you believe things in the United States are headed in the right direction, or that they're off on the wrong track?

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right direction           40
wrong track               53
DK                         7
RF                         1
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Q.19   Would you describe the state of the nation's economy these days as excellent, good, not so good, or poor?

excellent	2
good	40
not so good	42
poor	16
DK	1
RF	0

Q.20   Would you describe the state of Erie County's economy these days as excellent, good, not so good, or poor?

excellent	1
good	10
not so good	52
poor	34
DK	3
RF	0

Q.21   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	9
jobs somewhat difficult to find	56
jobs very difficult to find	33
DK	2
RF	0

Q.22   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	21
just enough	62
falling behind	15
DK	0
RF	2

Q.23   In general, how much trust and confidence do you have in the news media - such as newspapers, television and radio - when it comes to reporting the news fully, accurately and fairly - a great deal, a fair amount, not very much, or none at all?

great deal	9
fair amount	38
not very much	33
none at all	20
DK	1
RF	0

Q.24   Do you feel that news media's reporting has been too hard on Donald Trump, not hard enough, or about right?

too hard	37
not hard enough	23
about right	37
DK	3
RF	0

Q.25   Generally speaking, do you feel Donald Trump's criticism of the news media has been fair and justified or unfair and unjustified.

fair and justified	41
unfair and unjustified	53
depends (volunteered)	3
DK	2
RF	1

Q.26   Is your opinion of the US Congress strongly favorable, somewhat favorable, somewhat unfavorable, or strongly unfavorable?

strongly favorable	4
somewhat favorable	30
somewhat unfavorable	43
strongly unfavorable	21
DK	3
RF	0

Q.27   Is your opinion of Donald Trump strongly favorable, somewhat favorable, somewhat unfavorable, or strongly unfavorable?

strongly favorable	20
somewhat favorable	27
somewhat unfavorable	13
strongly unfavorable	39
DK	3
RF	0

Q.28-29   Now I have just a few questions that we'll be using for statistical purposes. Generally speaking, do you usually think of yourself as a Republican, a Democrat, or an independent?

Republican	43
Democrat	51
Independent	5
other (volunteered)	0
DK	1
RF	1

Q.30 Generally speaking, do you consider yourself to be a liberal, conservative, or have you not thought much about this?

liberal	28
conservative	35
not thought about	30
other (volunteered)	5
DK	1
RF	0

Q.31 Age

18-29	16
30-39	13
40-49	14
50-69	41
70 or older	15

Q.32 What is your marital status?

single/divorced/widowed	47
married	52
other	1
DK	0
RF	1

Q.33 If you add together the yearly incomes, before taxes, of all members of your household for the past year, would the total be...[read categories]

$0 - 30,000	21
$30 - 60,000	27
$60 - 100,000	24
$100 - 150,000	11
over $150,000	4
DK	4
RF	10

Q.34 What is your race?

white/Caucasian	87
non-white/Caucasian	11
DK	0
RF	2

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

Grade School	1
Some High School	2
High School completed	28
Some Trade/Vocational School	1
Trade/Vocational certification	4
Some College/2 Year Degree	23
College 4 Year Degree	28

Some Graduate School	2
Masters Degree	9
Doctorate	1

Q.36 [do not ask - just record] Gender

| Male | 48 |
| Female | 52 |

Methodology

This report summarizes the results of a survey of registered voters in Erie County, Pennsylvania, which was conducted between February 6 and 15, 2017. 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 419 individuals were interviewed. For a sample size of 419, 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 of 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. 38[th] Street, Erie, PA, 16546, (814) 824-2154, jmorris@mercyhurst.edu.

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