Mercyhurst Center for Applied Politics

2016 Pennsylvania Republican Primary

A Survey of 483 Registered Republicans in Pennsylvania

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Summary of Findings

A Mercyhurst Center for Applied Politics poll of 483 (MOE +/-4.5, September 21 – October 1, 2015) registered Republicans in Pennsylvania finds members of the GOP clearly dissatisfied with the performance of the president and Congress and eyeing political outsiders as the presidential nomination process unfolds. Majorities of Republicans disapprove of the job Barack Obama is doing as president (82%), rate Congress' performance as poor (60%), and say it is important that the Republican Party's nominee for President be an outsider (57%). Consistent with these sentiments, two political outsiders – Ben Carson and Donald Trump – lead the field of Republicans seeking their party's nomination for president of the United States. If the election were held today, 18% of Republicans say they would vote for Ben Carson, 18% for Donald Trump, 9% for Jeb Bush, and 8% for Carly Fiorina.

While Republican voters express a preference for a nominee who is a political outsider, it is uncertain if this will translate into victory for Carson, Trump, or Fiorina in April's primary. When asked if they were more likely to vote for a candidate who was not a politician and has not held elected office, a plurality (45%) say being a political outsider will have no impact on their decision. Similarly, majorities say a candidate's status as a governor or former governor (52%) or senator or former senator (55%) will have no impact on their election day decision. A solid majority (61%) of Republicans say that whether a person has a former president in their family – a clear indicator of one's status as a political insider – will have no impact on their decision. When these factors are combined with the large number of voters (17%) who say they are undecided about who they will vote for in Pennsylvania's primary election, the possibility that a skilled political insider may ultimately prevail cannot be dismissed.

Despite their frustration with Washington and relatively high level of support for political outsiders, Pennsylvania Republicans remain committed to their party. Large majorities say they have a favorable opinion of the Republican Party (79%), are enthusiastic about the field of GOP candidates (71%), and are closely following the primary election process (79%); and a solid majority (61%) says it would not vote for Donald Trump if he ran for president as an independent. Pennsylvania Republicans' enthusiasm for the field of candidates is reflected in the candidates' favorability ratings. With the exception of Ted Cruz, Rand Paul and John Kasich, majorities of Republicans say they have a favorable opinion of each of the candidates. Ben Carson (70% have favorable opinion) and Marco Rubio (62% have favorable opinion) receive particularly good marks.

Pennsylvania Republicans' opinions of their party's candidates may be shaped by the issues they believe should receive highest priority from the federal government. When asked which issues should receive the highest and second highest priority from the federal government, Republicans say national security and terrorism (50%), job creation and economy (45%), and deficit and government spending (36%). Health care, which has been a driving issue in recent elections, ranks a distant fourth (17%); and immigration, which has thus far garnered a great deal of attention from the

candidates and national news media, ranks fifth (16%).

Republican Enthusiasm, Favorability Ratings and the Primary Election

A clear majority of Republican voters in Pennsylvania is paying close attention to the party's nomination process and are enthusiastic about the field of candidates. Roughly four out of five (79%) Republicans say that they are following their party's nomination process closely (32% "very closely," 47% "somewhat closely") and seven out of 10 (71%) say they are enthusiastic about the field of GOP candidates (20% "very enthusiastic," 51% "somewhat enthusiastic"). This enthusiasm is reflected in the favorability ratings of many of the 11 candidates seeking the Republican nomination. With the exception of Ted Cruz (48% "strongly favorable" or "somewhat favorable"), Rand Paul (38% "strongly favorable" or "somewhat favorable") and John Kasich (27% "strongly favorable" or "somewhat favorable"), majorities of Pennsylvania Republicans have favorable opinions of the GOP candidates (see Table 1). Of all the candidates, Ben Carson (70% "strongly favorable" or "somewhat favorable") enjoys the highest ratings, followed by Marco Rubio (62% "strongly favorable" or "somewhat favorable"), Jeb Bush (59% "strongly favorable" or "somewhat favorable"), Carly Fiorina (58% "strongly favorable" or "somewhat favorable"), and Donald Trump (57% "strongly favorable" or "somewhat favorable"). One in every two Pennsylvania Republicans (50%) has an unfavorable opinion (25% "strongly unfavorable" and 15% "somewhat unfavorable") Donald Trump, who leads the race in most national polls.

Table 1. Favorability Ratings. *"To begin, I am interested in learning your opinion of some people and groups that have been in the news. For each person, I would like to know if your opinion is strongly favorable, somewhat favorable, somewhat unfavorable, or strongly unfavorable. If you don't recognize the name, then you can simply tell me and we will move on."*

	Favorable (%)	Unfavorable (%)	Do Not Recognize (%)	Don't Know/ Refused (%)
Carson	70	13	10	7
Rubio	62	17	13	8
Bush	59	34	1	4
Fiorina	58	17	16	9
Trump	57	40	0	2
Huckabee	57	32	5	7
Christie	54	39	3	4
Santorum	54	39	4	4
Cruz	48	26	15	11
Paul	38	45	8	9
Kasich	27	23	33	19

While Pennsylvania Republicans generally share positive opinions of the GOP field of candidates, they are divided over which one candidate deserves their party's nomination. When asked who they would for "if the Pennsylvania primary election was held today," 18% say Trump, 18% Carson, 9%

Bush, and 8% Fiorina. Huckabee (3%), Kasich (3%), Santorum (3%), and Paul (3%) garnered the least support among voters. With more than six months until primary election day in Pennsylvania, it is not surprising that a sizeable number of Republicans (17%) say they are undecided.

Table 2. *"You may be aware that in April Pennsylvanians will hold their 2016 presidential primary. If the primary election was held today, who would you vote for?"*

	Percent of Vote
Carson	18
Trump	18
Bush	9
Fiorina	8
Christie	4
Rubio	4
Cruz	4
Huckabee	3
Kasich	3
Paul	3
Santorum	3
Other (volunteered	2
Undecided	17
Refused	1

Although Trump has pledged to not run as an independent if he loses the Republican nomination contest, questions persist about the possibility of him doing so. When asked if they would vote for Trump if he were the Republican Party's nominee for president, a majority 61% say "yes," while roughly a quarter (26%) say "no." When asked if they would vote for Trump if he ran as an independent, 61 percent say "no," while roughly a quarter (26%) say "yes." Pennsylvania Republicans express a clear desire for Trump not to run as an independent.

Government Performance and Political Outsiders

Three of the top four choices for the Republican nomination are self-described political outsiders who are not professional politicians and have not held elected office. Indeed, Pennsylvania Republicans express a clear preference for a nominee who is a political outsider. When asked how important it is that the Republican nominee for president be an outsider, a solid majority (57%) said it was important (21% "very important," 36% "somewhat important"). The preference for a political outsider may be the result of Republicans' perception that neither the Democratic President, Barack Obama, nor the Republican-led Congress is performing well. When asked "Do you approve or disapprove of the job Barack Obama is doing as President of the United States?" four out of five (82%) Republicans say they disapprove (11% approve). Similarly, when asked "…how would you rate the way Congress is doing its job?" a majority (60%) of Republicans say it is doing a poor job, 33% a fair job, and 6% a good job. Zero percent (0%) of Republicans say Congress is doing an excellent job.

Although a majority of Republican voters express a preference for a political outsider, it is unclear if this preference will translate into votes in the primary election. When Republicans were asked whether they were more or less likely to vote for certain types of candidates, less than one-third (30%) said that a candidate's status as a political outsider made it more likely they will vote for him/her (see Table 3). For a plurality (45%) of voters, being a political outsider had no impact on their decision. In fact, majorities of voters say a candidate's status as governor/former governor (52%) or senator/former senator (55%) would have no impact on the decision they will make in April. On the question of whether having a former president in the family would impact their decision, a solid majority (61%) of Republicans say it would have no impact. Thus Republican voters express a desire for a nominee who is a political outsider, but majorities say they are willing to consider a political insider, including the son of a former president, as the bearer of the party's banner in the 2016 presidential election.

Table 3. *"NOT thinking about any specific candidates, I'm going to list several types of people who might run for president. For each one, please tell me whether you are more likely to vote for that type of candidate, less likely to vote for that type of candidate, or if it would have no impact on your decision?"*

	More Likely (%)	Less Likely (%)	No Impact (%)	Don't Know/Refused (%)
Military background	62	3	33	1
Self-finances campaign	45	5	49	1
Evangelical Christian	39	11	47	3
Governor/former governor	37	9	52	2
Political outsider	30	22	45	2
Senator/former Senator	27	16	55	3
Leader of Tea Party	20	26	47	6
Woman	17	12	70	1
Person over 65 years	15	17	66	2
Former president in family	12	25	61	3
Hispanic person	9	11	78	3
African-American	9	9	81	1

Issues

The issue of immigration – particularly illegal immigration – has been given a great deal of attention by many of the Republican candidates; however, for Pennsylvania Republicans the issue is of less concern than national security and terrorism, job creation and the economy, deficit and government spending, and health care (see Table 4). When asked to list the issues that they believe should be the top two priorities of the federal government, half (50%) of all registered Republicans say national security and terrorism, 45% say job creation and the economy, 36% say the deficit and government spending, and 17% say health care. Just 16% identify immigration as an issue that should be the federal government's first or second priority.

Table 4. Top Priorities. *"Now I'm going to list some issues that have been proposed for the federal government to address. Please tell me which ONE of these items you think should be the top priority for the federal government. And, which of these issues do you think should be the second highest priority for the federal government to address?"*

	First or Second Priority (%)	First Priority (%)	Second Priority (%)
National security and terrorism	50	25	25
Job creation and economy	45	25	20
Deficit and government spending	36	18	18
Health care	17	5	12
Immigration	16	5	11
Religious and moral values	13	8	5
Climate change	5	3	2
Other/none of these (volunteered)	3	1	2
All of these (volunteered)	15	9	6
Don't know/refused (volunteered)	2	1	1

Frequency Report

Interviews were completed with 483 registered Republican voters in Pennsylvania. For a sample size of 483, there is a 95 percent probability that our survey results are within plus or minus 4.5 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 age and gender 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.

1. To begin, I am interested in learning your opinion of some people and groups that have been in the news. For each person, I would like to know if your opinion is strongly favorable, somewhat favorable, somewhat unfavorable, or strongly unfavorable. If you don't recognize the name, then you can simply tell me and we will move on.

   [RANDOMIZED]

   How about Chris Christie? (Is your opinion strongly favorable, somewhat favorable, somewhat unfavorable, or strongly unfavorable?)

   [IF NECESSARY READ LIST]

Strongly favorable	13%
Somewhat favorable	41%
Somewhat unfavorable	26%
Strongly unfavorable	13%
Do not recognize (volunteered)	3%
DK	4%
RF	0%

   How about Mike Huckabee? (Is your opinion strongly favorable, somewhat favorable, somewhat unfavorable, or strongly unfavorable?)

   [IF NECESSARY READ ANSWER OPTIONS 1-4 BELOW]

Strongly favorable	17%
Somewhat favorable	40%
Somewhat unfavorable	19%
Strongly unfavorable	13%
Do not recognize (volunteered)	5%
DK	7%
RF	0%

   How about John Kasich? (Is your opinion strongly favorable, somewhat favorable, somewhat unfavorable, or strongly unfavorable?)

   [IF NECESSARY READ ANSWER OPTIONS 1-4 BELOW]

Strongly favorable	7%
Somewhat favorable	20%
Somewhat unfavorable	16%
Strongly unfavorable	7%
Do not recognize (volunteered)	33%
DK	18%
RF	1%

How about Rick Santorum? (Is your opinion strongly favorable, somewhat favorable, somewhat unfavorable, or strongly unfavorable?)

[IF NECESSARY READ ANSWER OPTIONS 1-4 BELOW]

Strongly favorable   16%
Somewhat favorable   38%
Somewhat unfavorable   22%
Strongly unfavorable   17%
Do not recognize (volunteered)   4%
DK   3%
RF   1%

How about Ted Cruz? (Is your opinion strongly favorable, somewhat favorable, somewhat unfavorable, or strongly unfavorable?)

[IF NECESSARY READ ANSWER OPTIONS 1-4 BELOW]

Strongly favorable   13%
Somewhat favorable   35%
Somewhat unfavorable   18%
Strongly unfavorable   8%
Do not recognize (volunteered)   15%
DK   11%
RF   0%

How about Rand Paul? (Is your opinion strongly favorable, somewhat favorable, somewhat unfavorable, or strongly unfavorable?)

[IF NECESSARY READ ANSWER OPTIONS 1-4 BELOW]

Strongly favorable   7%
Somewhat favorable   31%
Somewhat unfavorable   28%
Strongly unfavorable   17%
Do not recognize (volunteered)   8%
DK   9%
RF   0%

How about Jeb Bush? (Is your opinion strongly favorable, somewhat favorable, somewhat unfavorable, or strongly unfavorable?)

[IF NECESSARY READ ANSWER OPTIONS 1-4 BELOW]

Strongly favorable   14%
Somewhat favorable   45%
Somewhat unfavorable   22%
Strongly unfavorable   12%
Do not recognize (volunteered)   1%
DK   4%
RF   0%

How about Carly Fiorina? (Is your opinion strongly favorable, somewhat favorable, somewhat unfavorable, or strongly unfavorable?)

[IF NECESSARY READ ANSWER OPTIONS 1-4 BELOW]

Strongly favorable	25%
Somewhat favorable	33%
Somewhat unfavorable	10%
Strongly unfavorable	7%
Do not recognize (volunteered)	16%
DK	9%
RF	0%

How about Marco Rubio? (Is your opinion strongly favorable, somewhat favorable, somewhat unfavorable, or strongly unfavorable?)

[IF NECESSARY READ ANSWER OPTIONS 1-4 BELOW]

Strongly favorable	22%
Somewhat favorable	40%
Somewhat unfavorable	12%
Strongly unfavorable	5%
Do not recognize (volunteered)	13%
DK	8%
RF	0%

How about Ben Carson? (Is your opinion strongly favorable, somewhat favorable, somewhat unfavorable, or strongly unfavorable?)

[IF NECESSARY READ ANSWER OPTIONS 1-4 BELOW]

Strongly favorable	41%
Somewhat favorable	29%
Somewhat unfavorable	9%
Strongly unfavorable	4%
Do not recognize (volunteered)	10%
DK	7%
RF	0%

How about Donald Trump? (Is your opinion strongly favorable, somewhat favorable, somewhat unfavorable, or strongly unfavorable?)

[IF NECESSARY READ ANSWER OPTIONS 1-4 BELOW]

Strongly favorable	20%
Somewhat favorable	37%
Somewhat unfavorable	15%
Strongly unfavorable	25%
Do not recognize (volunteered)	0%
DK	2%
RF	0%

How about the Republican Party? (Is your opinion strongly favorable, somewhat favorable, somewhat unfavorable, or strongly unfavorable?)

[IF NECESSARY READ ANSWER OPTIONS 1-4 BELOW]

Strongly favorable	38%
Somewhat favorable	41%
Somewhat unfavorable	14%
Strongly unfavorable	4%
Do not recognize (volunteered)	0%
DK	1%
RF	1%

You may be aware that several Republicans are now seeking their party's nomination for President of the United States.

2. How closely are you following the Republican primary election? Would you say you are following it very closely, somewhat closely, not very closely, or not closely at all?

very closely	32%
somewhat closely	47%
not very closely	14%
Not closely at all	6%
DK	0%
RF	0%

3. How enthusiastic are you about the field of GOP candidates? Would you say that you are very enthusiastic, somewhat enthusiastic, not very enthusiastic, or not enthusiastic at all?

very enthusiastic	20%
somewhat enthusiastic	51%
not very enthusiastic	22%
not enthusiastic at all	5%
DK	2%
RF	0%

4. How important is it to you that the Republican nominee for president be an outsider; that is, a person who is not a politician and who has not held elected office?   Would you say it is very important, somewhat important, not very important, or not important at all that the Republican nominee be an outsider?

very important	21%
somewhat important	36%
not very important	26%
not important at all	14%
depends (volunteered)	2%
DK	1%
RF	0%

5. Now I'm going to list some issues that have been proposed for the federal government to address. Please tell me which ONE of these items you think should be the top priority for the federal government.

[READ LIST]

job creation and economy	25%
national security and terrorism	25%
the deficit and government spending	18%
health care	5%
climate change	3%
immigration	5%
religious and moral values	8%
other (volunteered)	1%
all (volunteered)	9%
none of these (volunteered)	0%
DK	1%
RF	0%

6. And, which of these issues do you think should be the second highest priority for the federal government to address?

[IF NECESSARY READ LIST]

job creation and economy	20%
national security and terrorism	25%
the deficit and government spending	18%
health care	12%
climate change	2%
immigration	11%
religious and moral values	5%
other (volunteered)	2%
all (volunteered)	6%
none of these (volunteered)	1%
DK	1%
RF	0%

7. You may be aware that in April Pennsylvanians will hold their 2016 presidential primary. If the primary election was held today, who would you vote for?

[READ LIST IF NECESSARY]

Chris Christie	4%
Mike Huckabee	3%
John Kasich	3%
Rick Santorum	3%
Ted Cruz	4%
Rand Paul	3%
Jeb Bush	9%
Carly Fiorina	8%
Marco Rubio	4%
Ben Carson	18%
Donald Trump	18%
other (volunteered)	2%
DK	17%
RF	1%

8. Now I'd like you to think about politics in Washington, DC.   Do you approve or disapprove of the job Barack Obama is doing as President of the United States?

approve	11%
disapprove	82%
depends (volunteered)	6%
DK	1%
RF	1%

9. Generally speaking, how would you rate the way Congress is doing its job? Would you say Congress is doing and excellent job, good job, fair job, or poor job?

excellent job	0%
good job	6%
fair job	33%
poor job	60%
depends (volunteered)	1%
DK	0%
RF	0%

10. If it turns out that Donald Trump is the Republican Party's nominee for President of the United States, would you consider voting for him in the general election?

yes	61%
no	26%
depends (volunteered)	10%
DK	1%
RF	1%

11. If it turns out that Donald Trump is not the Republican Party's nominee for President of the United States, but he runs as independent, would you consider voting for him the general election?

yes	26%
no	61%
depends (volunteered)	10%
DK	2%
RF	1%

12. NOT thinking about any specific candidates, I'm going to list several types of people who might run for president. For each one, please tell me whether you are more likely to vote for that type of candidate, less likely to vote for that type of candidate, or if it would have no impact on your decision?

An African-American [IF NECESSARY READ ANSWER OPTIONS 1-4 BELOW]

more likely	9%
less likely	9%
no impact	81%
DK	1%
RF	0%

A woman [IF NECESSARY READ ANSWER OPTIONS 1-4 BELOW]

more likely	17%
less likely	12%
no impact	70%
DK	1%
RF	0%

Someone with a military background [IF NECESSARY READ ANSWER OPTIONS 1-4 BELOW]

more likely	62%
less likely	3%
no impact	33%
DK	1%
RF	0%

A Hispanic person [IF NECESSARY READ ANSWER OPTIONS 1-4 BELOW]

more likely	9%
less likely	11%
no impact	78%
DK	2%
RF	1%

A governor or former governor [IF NECESSARY READ ANSWER OPTIONS 1-4 BELOW]

more likely	37%
less likely	9%
no impact	52%
DK	2%
RF	0%

A Senator or former Senator [IF NECESSARY READ ANSWER OPTIONS 1-4 BELOW]

        more likely   27%
        less likely   16%
        no impact   55%
        DK   3%
        RF   0%

A person who has a former president in their family [IF NECESSARY READ ANSWER OPTIONS 1-4 BELOW]

        more likely   12%
        less likely   25%
        no impact   61%
        DK   2%
        RF   1%

A person over the age of 65 [IF NECESSARY READ ANSWER OPTIONS 1-4 BELOW]

        more likely   15%
        less likely   17%
        no impact   66%
        DK   2%
        RF   0%

An Evangelical Christian [IF NECESSARY READ ANSWER OPTIONS 1-4 BELOW]

        more likely   39%
        less likely   11%
        no impact   47%
        DK   2%
        RF   1%

A leader of the Tea Party Movement [IF NECESSARY READ ANSWER OPTIONS 1-4 BELOW]

        more likely   20%
        less likely   26%
        no impact   47%
        DK   6%
        RF   0%

A person who is not a politician and has not held elected office [IF NECESSARY READ ANSWER OPTIONS 1-4 BELOW]

        more likely   30%
        less likely   22%
        no impact   45%
        DK   2%
        RF   0%

Someone who pays for their campaign using only their own money [IF NECESSARY READ ANSWER OPTIONS 1-4 BELOW]

more likely	45%
less likely	5%
no impact	49%
DK	1%
RF	0%

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.

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

liberal	4%
conservative	55%
moderate	26%
not thought about	11%
DK	3%
RF	1%

14. Age

18-29	11%
30-39	12%
40-49	16%
50-69	41%
70 and over	19%

15. What is the highest level of education you completed?

less than high school	1%
high school	25%
some college	14%
2 year degree	12%
4 year degree	32%
graduate degree	16%
DK	0%
RF	1%

16. What is your race?

White/Caucasian	96%
Black/African-American	1%
Latino/Hispanic	1%
Other	1%
DK	0%
RF	2%

17. 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	11%
$30,000 to $60,000	24%
$60,000 to $90,000	18%
$90,000 to $120,000	15%
over $120,000	19%
DK	2%
RF	12%

[DO NOT ASK]

18. Gender

male	50%
female	50%

Methodology

This report summarizes the results of a survey of registered voters in Pennsylvania, which was conducted between Monday, Sept. 21, and Thursday, Oct. 1, 2015. During the 11-day field period interviewers called weekday evenings between the hours of 6 and 9 PM and between 11 AM and 6 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 483 individuals were interviewed. For a sample size of 483, there is a 95 percent probability that the results are within plus or minus 4.5 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 were 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 who, when contacted, elect to participate in a study by responding to 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 was weighted on age and gender. Simply stated, weighting is when data collected from survey respondents is 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 by 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 31 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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