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Franklin & Marshall College Poll: August 2023 *Summary of Findings*

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Key Findings

The August 2023 Franklin & Marshall College Poll finds that the state’s registered voters’ feelings about their personal finances are starting to improve, although many remain dissatisfied. About two in five (39%) respondents say they are “worse off” than a year ago, which is down from nearly half (46%) in April, and more say they are “better off” financially than they were last year (15% compared to 11%). Pennsylvania voters remain more pessimistic than optimistic about conditions in the state, but this sentiment has also improved--two in five (39%) registered voters believes the state is “headed in the right direction” which is higher than the one in three (32%) who felt that way in April. Concern about the economy (23%), including unemployment and higher gas and utility prices, continues as the most important and often mentioned problem facing the state.

Almost one in two (47%) registered voters believes Josh Shapiro is doing an “excellent” or “good” job as governor, which is higher than in April (43%). This is the highest approval rating for a governor at this point in his term since Governor Ridge. The governor’s job approval rating increased despite the state budget impasse, perhaps because he was less likely to be blamed for the impasse than the legislature. One in five (20%) registered voters thought the missed budget deadline was mostly the governor’s responsibility, one in five (20%) blamed House Democrats, and one in three (32%) blamed Senate Republicans.

About one in three (30%) registered voters in Pennsylvania believes President Biden is doing an “excellent” or “good” job as president, which is a slight improvement from his April ratings (27%). It is normal for an incumbent’s job approval [ratings to start to increase at this point](#) in their first term. President Biden’s current rating is lower than President Trump’s and President Obama’s ratings in Pennsylvania at the same point in their terms.

President Trump leads the Republican primary field in Pennsylvania with an 18-point advantage over his closest rival, Florida Governor Ron DeSantis, 39% to 21%. Vivek Ramaswamy (9%) is currently in third place in the primary race. Mr. Trump's advantage over Governor DeSantis has widened considerably since April, although his relative vote share has stayed consistent. The state's registered voters do not have a favorable impression of the former President--he is viewed more unfavorably (64%) than favorably (34%) by the state's voters. These ratings are lower now than they were prior to the 2020 election (40% favorable, 57% unfavorable in September 2020). Nearly three in five (58%) registered voters think that Mr. Trump's attempt to remain in power after the 2020 election was a serious crime.

Detailed Findings

Direction of State and Personal Finances

Voters' feelings about their personal finances are starting to improve, although many remain dissatisfied. About two in five (39%) respondents say they are "worse off" than a year ago, which is down from nearly half (46%) in April, while more now say they are "better off" financially than they were last year (15% compared to 11%). Most Republicans and conservatives say they are "worse off" than last year, but fewer Democrats (24%) or independents (43%) report being worse off financially than did so in April, when a third of Democrats (29%) and half of independents (48%) said they were worse off financially (see Table A-1). One in four (27%) registered voters expects they will be "worse off" financially a year from now, which is less than the one in three (33%) who said so in April.

Pennsylvania voters are more pessimistic than optimistic about conditions in the state, although these figures also show improvement (see Figure 1). Two in five (39%) registered voters believes the state is "headed in the right direction" which is higher than the one in three (32%) who felt that way in April.

Direction of State Over Time, Pennsylvania Residents 1995-2023

All in all, do you think things in Pennsylvania are generally headed in the right direction, or do you feel that things are off on the wrong track?

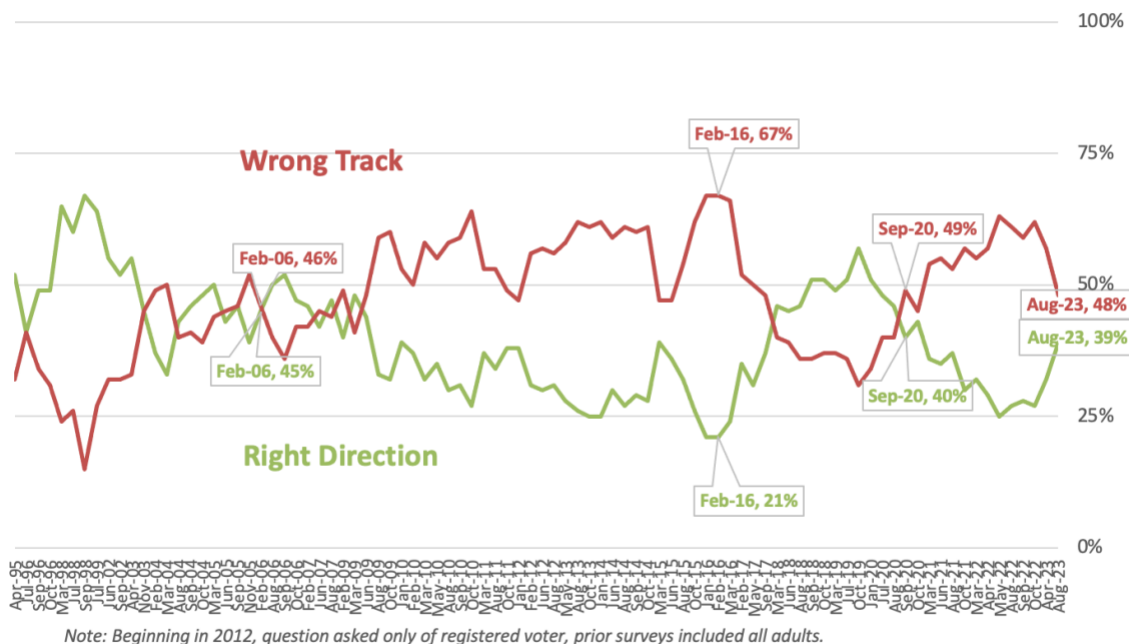


Figure 1. This figure shows how Pennsylvania’s registered voters assess the state’s general direction. Voters have not expressed net positive feelings about the direction of the state since August 2020.

State Issues

Concern about the economy (23%), including unemployment and higher gas and utility prices, continues as the most important and often mentioned problem facing the state, but fewer people mention it as the state’s top problem than did so last fall (34%). Concern about the economy is higher among Republicans (27%) than it is among independents (20%) or Democrats (16%).

Governor Shapiro: Job Performance

Almost one in two (47%) registered voters believes Josh Shapiro is doing an “excellent” or “good” job as governor, which is higher than in April (43%). This is the highest approval rating for a governor at this point in a first term since Governor Ridge (see Figure 2). Governor Shapiro has more positive ratings among Democrats (75%) and Independents (30%) than either Senator Casey or President Biden. Shapiro is also rated positively by one in five (22%) Republicans; this is higher than Republicans’ positive job ratings of Senator Casey (12%) or President Biden (3%) (See Tables A-2, A-3, and A-4). Governor Shapiro is viewed more favorably (56%) than unfavorably (26%) by the state’s voters.

The governor’s job approval rating increased despite the state budget impasse, perhaps because he was less likely to be blamed for the impasse than the legislature. One in five (20%) registered voters thought the missed budget deadline was mostly the governor’s responsibility, one in five (20%) blamed House Democrats, and one in three (32%) blamed Senate Republicans. More Republicans blamed the House Democrats (36%) than the Governor (30%) for the impasse. Only one in seven (13%) registered voters believes the state legislature is doing an “excellent” or “good” job.

Ratings of Gubernatorial Job Performance

How would you rate the way that Josh Shapiro is handling his job as Governor? Would you say he is doing an excellent job, a good job, only a fair job, or a poor job as Governor?

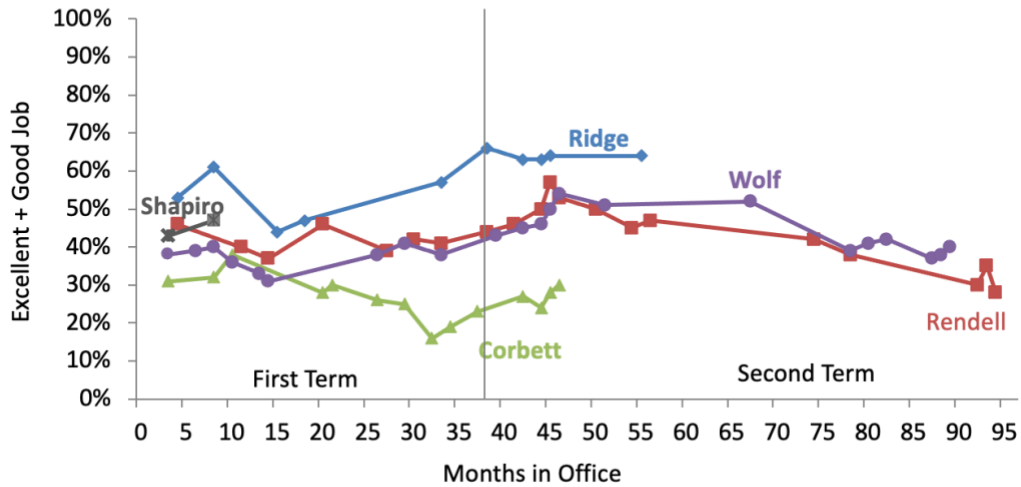


Figure 2. This figure compares the job approval ratings of Pennsylvania governors at similar points in their terms.

President Biden: Job Performance

About one in three (30%) registered voters in Pennsylvania believes President Biden is doing an “excellent” or “good” job as president, which is a slight improvement from his April ratings (27%). President Biden’s current rating is lower than President Trump’s and President Obama’s ratings in Pennsylvania at the same point in their terms. A majority of Democrats (57%) rate the President’s performance positively, while fewer Republicans (3%) or independents (24%) do so (see Table A-3). President Biden is viewed more unfavorably (58%) than favorably (40%) by the state’s voters.

US Senator Casey: Job Performance

About one in three (31%) registered voters in Pennsylvania believes Bob Casey is doing an “excellent” or “good” job as their U.S. Senator. Senator Casey’s ratings are a bit lower than his ratings in October 2018, prior to his last election, when he had a 43% positive job approval rating, although they are the same as his ratings in August 2011 (32%), about one year prior to his first re-election campaign. Nearly one in five (19%) voters says they don’t know enough about the Senator to rate his performance. A majority of Democrats (53%) rate Casey’s performance positively, while fewer Republicans (12%) or independents (19%) do so (see Table A-4). Senator Casey is viewed more favorably (39%) than unfavorably (30%) by the state’s registered voters.

President Trump and the Republican Primary

President Trump leads the Republican primary field in Pennsylvania with an 18-point advantage over his closest rival, Florida Governor Ron DeSantis, 39% to 21%. Vivek Ramaswamy (9%) is currently in third place. Mr. Trump’s advantage over Governor DeSantis has widened

considerably since April, although his relative vote share has stayed consistent (see Figure 3).

Republican Primary Vote Choice

If the 2024 Republican primary election for President were being held today would you vote for: (rotated) Donald Trump, Ron DeSantis, Mike Pence, Nikki Haley, Asa Hutchinson, Chris Christie, Vivek Ramaswamy, Tim Scott, Larry Elder, Doug Burgum, Francis Suarez, or Will Hurd? (Republicans only)

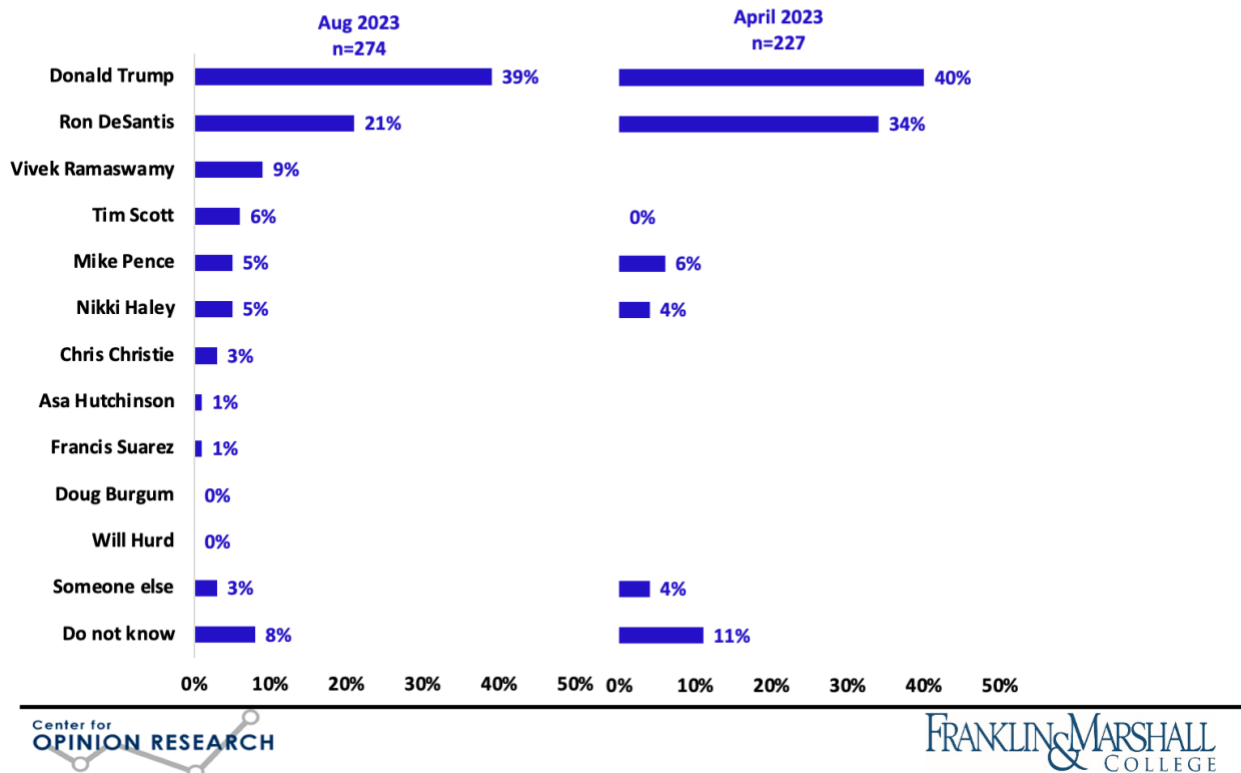


Figure 3. This figure compares the presidential primary preferences of Pennsylvania Republicans in April and August, 2023.

The state's registered voters do not have a favorable impression of the former President-- he is viewed more unfavorably (64%) than favorably (34%) by the state's voters. Mr. Trump's favorable ratings are lower now than they were prior to the 2020 election (40% favorable, 57% unfavorable in September 2020). His favorability ratings have declined even among Republicans in the state, falling from 82% in September 2020 to 70% today.

Nearly three in five (58%) of the state's registered voters think that Mr. Trump's attempt to remain in power after the 2020 election represent serious crimes. Most Democrats (89%) and

independent (62%) voters believe his actions constituted a serious crime, compared to only 20% of Republicans (see Table A-5). A majority of Republicans believe that Mr. Trump is a target of lawsuits because of his wealth and power (53%) or because he tries to push the limits of the law (26%), a sentiment that a minority of Democrats (7% target, 13% test limits) and independents (24% target, 17% test limits) share.

Methodology

The survey findings presented in this release are based on the results of interviews conducted August 9 – 20, 2023. The interviews were conducted at the Center for Opinion Research at Franklin & Marshall College. The data included in this release represent the responses of 723 registered Pennsylvania voters, including 324 Democrats, 297 Republicans, and 102 independents.¹ The sample of voters was obtained from Aristotle. All sampled respondents were notified by mail about the survey. Interviews were completed over the phone and online depending on each respondent's preference. Survey results were weighted (age, gender, education, geography, vote history, and party registration) using an iterative weighting algorithm to reflect the known distribution of those characteristics. Estimates for age, geography, and party registration are based on active voters within the PA Department of State's voter registration data. Gender and education are estimated using data from the November 2022 CPS Voter Registration Supplement.

The sample error for this survey is +/- 4.5 percentage points when the design effects from weighting are considered. The sample error for questions based on subgroups is larger.² An alternative means of calculating the variation in a sample is to take a series of bootstrap samples from the original sample and to use those bootstrapped samples to produce an estimate of sampling error.³ The procedure involves resampling a data set, calculating a statistic for each bootstrapped sample, accumulating the results of these samples and calculating a sample

¹ The data reported here is voter REGISTRATION and is consistent with past reporting practices. The survey also asked about self-reported voter IDENTIFICATION, which shows a slightly different partisan split: 44% identify as Republican (n=302), 12% as Independent (n=81), and 42% as Democrat (n=296) and the balance not offering a response. Partisan comparisons in this summary show self-reported registration.

² The SE for the Republican primary question is +/- 7.0%.

³ Canty, Angelo. 2002. "Resampling Methods in R: The boot Package." R News 2/3 (December): 2-7.

distribution. The standard deviation of the mean of 10,000 bootstrapped samples for the estimated positive job approval for President Biden was 1.7% and 95% of the samples fell within a range of 27% and 34%.

In addition to sampling error, this poll is also subject to other sources of non-sampling error. Generally speaking, two sources of error concern researchers most. Non-response bias is created when selected participants either choose not to participate in the survey or are unavailable for interviewing. Response errors are the product of the question and answer process. Surveys that rely on self-reported behaviors and attitudes are susceptible to biases related to the way respondents process and respond to survey questions.

Table A-1: Financial Status

Pennsylvania registered voters, August 2023

We are interested in how people are getting along financially these days. Would you say that you and your family are better off, worse off, or about the same financially as you were a year ago?

	Better off	Worse off	About the same	Do not know
Party*				
Republican	6%	55%	38%	1%
Democrat	22%	24%	54%	1%
Independent or something else	22%	43%	35%	0%
Ideology*				
Liberal	26%	17%	56%	2%
Moderate	20%	34%	46%	0%
Conservative	4%	59%	37%	1%
Gender*				
Female	13%	35%	51%	1%
Male	18%	44%	38%	0%
Age**				
Under 35	21%	33%	46%	0%
35-54	19%	38%	42%	0%
Over 55	11%	41%	48%	1%
Education*				
HS or less	10%	44%	45%	2%
Some college	18%	46%	36%	1%
College degree	16%	32%	52%	0%
Race				
White	15%	38%	46%	1%
Nonwhite	17%	45%	38%	0%
Race & Education, White Voters*				
White, No College Degree	14%	45%	40%	1%
White, College Degree	16%	29%	54%	0%
Employment*				
Fulltime	22%	37%	41%	0%
Other	10%	42%	46%	2%
Retired	8%	38%	52%	1%
Income**				
Under \$35,000	12%	51%	34%	2%
\$35,000-\$75,000	13%	40%	46%	1%
Over \$75,000	20%	37%	43%	0%
"Born-again" or evangelical Christian*				
Yes	6%	54%	39%	1%
No	18%	34%	47%	0%
Region				
Philadelphia & Southeast	16%	37%	47%	0%
Northeast	22%	39%	39%	0%
Allegheny & Southwest	14%	35%	50%	1%
Northwest	14%	40%	46%	0%
Central	14%	44%	41%	1%
Urban-Rural Classification*				
Large Central Metro	23%	29%	48%	0%
Large Fringe Metro	10%	41%	48%	1%
Medium Metro	21%	38%	40%	1%
Small Metro	3%	60%	37%	0%
Micropolitan	13%	34%	53%	0%
Noncore	5%	47%	48%	0%
* p<0.01 ** p<0.05				

Table A-2: Gubernatorial Job Performance

Pennsylvania registered voters, August 2023

How would you rate the way that Josh Shapiro is handling his job as governor? Would you say he is doing an excellent job, a good job, only a fair job, or a poor job as governor?

	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor	Do not know
Party*					
Republican	4%	18%	39%	24%	15%
Democrat	34%	41%	12%	4%	9%
Independent or something else	5%	25%	29%	20%	21%
Ideology*					
Liberal	42%	36%	13%	2%	8%
Moderate	18%	37%	23%	10%	11%
Conservative	3%	15%	38%	29%	16%
Gender					
Female	20%	32%	22%	15%	11%
Male	16%	26%	28%	15%	15%
Age*					
Under 35	15%	25%	28%	9%	22%
35-54	16%	28%	26%	17%	14%
Over 55	21%	32%	27%	13%	7%
Education					
HS or less	14%	34%	28%	11%	13%
Some college	16%	24%	27%	17%	16%
College degree	21%	31%	22%	14%	11%
Race*					
White	18%	30%	26%	12%	13%
Nonwhite	15%	25%	20%	27%	13%
Race & Education, White Voters**					
White, No College Degree	15%	29%	29%	13%	15%
White, College Degree	24%	32%	22%	11%	10%
Employment					
Fulltime	15%	30%	25%	16%	14%
Other	17%	23%	29%	14%	16%
Retired	23%	31%	25%	11%	10%
Income*					
Under \$35,000	8%	34%	27%	15%	16%
\$35,000-\$75,000	22%	30%	22%	12%	13%
Over \$75,000	20%	28%	26%	15%	11%
"Born-again" or evangelical Christian*					
Yes	6%	22%	26%	29%	16%
No	21%	32%	26%	11%	11%
Region**					
Philadelphia & Southeast	23%	29%	24%	12%	13%
Northeast	19%	38%	21%	11%	11%
Allegheny & Southwest	17%	36%	22%	18%	6%
Northwest	16%	14%	30%	25%	15%
Central	13%	26%	29%	14%	18%
Urban-Rural Classification*					
Large Central Metro	18%	38%	19%	16%	10%
Large Fringe Metro	22%	27%	26%	14%	12%
Medium Metro	19%	31%	26%	10%	13%
Small Metro	7%	22%	23%	29%	20%
Micropolitan	9%	14%	47%	16%	14%
Noncore	14%	43%	8%	10%	25%

* p<0.01 ** p<0.05

Table A-3: Presidential Job Performance Rating

Pennsylvania registered voters, August 2023

How would you rate the way that Joe Biden is handling his job as president? Would you say he is doing an excellent job, a good job, only a fair job, or a poor job as president?

	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor	Do not know
Party*					
Republican	1%	2%	10%	86%	0%
Democrat	18%	39%	28%	16%	0%
Independent or something else	5%	19%	21%	51%	4%
Ideology*					
Liberal	20%	43%	21%	13%	3%
Moderate	11%	27%	24%	38%	0%
Conservative	2%	1%	9%	89%	0%
Gender**					
Female	10%	23%	22%	44%	1%
Male	8%	19%	17%	55%	1%
Age*					
Under 35	0%	23%	28%	49%	0%
35-54	9%	24%	22%	43%	2%
Over 55	14%	18%	14%	54%	0%
Education**					
HS or less	6%	16%	18%	60%	0%
Some college	9%	18%	20%	52%	1%
College degree	11%	26%	19%	42%	1%
Race					
White	9%	21%	20%	50%	1%
Nonwhite	12%	22%	17%	48%	1%
Race & Education, White Voters*					
White, No College Degree	6%	15%	20%	58%	1%
White, College Degree	12%	28%	21%	39%	1%
Employment**					
Fulltime	7%	24%	23%	46%	1%
Other	7%	20%	20%	51%	2%
Retired	14%	17%	15%	54%	0%
Income					
Under \$35,000	7%	17%	21%	55%	1%
\$35,000-\$75,000	8%	20%	20%	51%	1%
Over \$75,000	9%	25%	21%	44%	1%
"Born-again" or evangelical Christian*					
Yes	6%	8%	11%	75%	1%
No	10%	25%	22%	42%	1%
Region*					
Philadelphia & Southeast	14%	25%	22%	39%	1%
Northeast	15%	18%	24%	43%	0%
Allegheny & Southwest	7%	23%	19%	51%	0%
Northwest	5%	18%	16%	59%	2%
Central	4%	18%	17%	61%	1%
Urban-Rural Classification*					
Large Central Metro	9%	30%	20%	39%	2%
Large Fringe Metro	13%	20%	21%	47%	0%
Medium Metro	9%	20%	21%	48%	1%
Small Metro	1%	13%	14%	72%	0%
Microropolitan	8%	10%	11%	69%	2%
Noncore	1%	26%	15%	58%	0%
	* p<0.01	** p<0.05			

Table A-4: US Senator Casey Job Performance Rating

Pennsylvania registered voters, August 2023

How would you rate the way that Bob Casey is handling his job as U.S. senator? Would you say he is doing an excellent job, a good job, only a fair job, or a poor job as U.S. senator?

	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor	Do not know
Party*					
Republican	1%	11%	37%	36%	16%
Democrat	15%	38%	22%	5%	20%
Independent or something else	2%	17%	31%	23%	27%
Ideology*					
Liberal	17%	40%	17%	6%	21%
Moderate	8%	30%	28%	15%	19%
Conservative	1%	8%	39%	37%	14%
Gender					
Female	9%	26%	29%	18%	17%
Male	6%	21%	30%	22%	21%
Age*					
Under 35	4%	18%	34%	13%	30%
35-54	6%	20%	34%	19%	21%
Over 55	10%	29%	27%	23%	11%
Education					
HS or less	5%	26%	34%	19%	16%
Some college	6%	20%	30%	22%	23%
College degree	9%	26%	27%	19%	17%
Race					
White	8%	24%	30%	18%	20%
Nonwhite	5%	22%	28%	28%	16%
Race & Education, White Voters**					
White, No College Degree	6%	21%	32%	20%	21%
White, College Degree	10%	29%	27%	16%	17%
Employment**					
Fulltime	6%	21%	30%	20%	23%
Other	9%	22%	34%	17%	17%
Retired	10%	29%	27%	20%	14%
Income					
Under \$35,000	6%	20%	37%	19%	17%
\$35,000-\$75,000	7%	22%	29%	20%	21%
Over \$75,000	8%	26%	27%	20%	18%
"Born-again" or evangelical Christian*					
Yes	3%	15%	34%	33%	15%
No	9%	26%	29%	17%	19%
Region*					
Philadelphia & Southeast	9%	27%	28%	16%	21%
Northeast	13%	24%	35%	15%	13%
Allegheny & Southwest	11%	29%	26%	22%	11%
Northwest	0%	22%	38%	25%	15%
Central	4%	18%	29%	24%	26%
Urban-Rural Classification					
Large Central Metro	10%	26%	33%	16%	16%
Large Fringe Metro	8%	28%	27%	20%	18%
Medium Metro	7%	21%	29%	22%	21%
Small Metro	0%	24%	24%	23%	29%
Microropolitan	7%	15%	38%	26%	15%
Noncore	8%	21%	40%	17%	14%
	* p<0.01	** p<0.05			

Table A-5: 2020 Election Indictment

Pennsylvania registered voters, August 2023

Mr. Trump has been charged with attempting to illegally overturn the results of the 2020 election. Do you think his actions to try to remain in power after the 2020 election were serious crimes, or not?

	Yes, serious crime	No, not a serious crime	Do not know
Party*			
Republican	20%	69%	11%
Democrat	89%	7%	4%
Independent or something else	62%	31%	6%
Ideology*			
Liberal	92%	7%	1%
Moderate	68%	25%	7%
Conservative	19%	70%	11%
Gender*			
Female	63%	32%	5%
Male	52%	39%	9%
Age			
Under 35	66%	29%	6%
35-54	61%	36%	4%
Over 55	54%	38%	8%
Education*			
HS or less	49%	47%	4%
Some college	54%	39%	7%
College degree	65%	26%	9%
Race			
White	57%	37%	6%
Nonwhite	61%	28%	11%
Race & Education, White Voters*			
White, No College Degree	49%	45%	7%
White, College Degree	69%	25%	6%
Employment			
Fulltime	59%	33%	7%
Other	62%	32%	7%
Retired	54%	39%	7%
Income			
Under \$35,000	54%	42%	4%
\$35,000-\$75,000	56%	40%	4%
Over \$75,000	63%	31%	6%
"Born-again" or evangelical Christian*			
Yes	31%	64%	5%
No	65%	29%	6%
Region*			
Philadelphia & Southeast	70%	24%	6%
Northeast	59%	32%	8%
Allegheny & Southwest	62%	29%	10%
Northwest	50%	48%	2%
Central	45%	49%	7%
Urban-Rural Classification*			
Large Central Metro	76%	15%	9%
Large Fringe Metro	58%	34%	7%
Medium Metro	55%	38%	7%
Small Metro	31%	60%	8%
Micropolitan	51%	44%	6%
Noncore	52%	48%	0%
	* p<0.01	** p<0.05	