For release October 26, 2023

Franklin & Marshall College Poll: October 2023
Summary of Findings

Table of Contents

Key Findings

The October 2023 Franklin & Marshall College Poll finds that the state's registered voters have a generally negative outlook about the economy and the direction of the state. Half (50%) of respondents say they are "worse off" than a year ago, and one in three (35%) registered voters expects they will be "worse off" financially a year from now. Pennsylvania voters are more pessimistic than optimistic about conditions in the state with more than half (55%) reporting the state is "off on the wrong track." Concern about the economy (25%), including unemployment and higher gas and utility prices, continues as the most important and often mentioned problem facing the state's registered voters. The survey also includes notable findings about state-level issues on public schools and funding for crisis pregnancy centers:

- About half (47%) of the state's registered voters believe the public schools in their communities have sufficient funding to educate their students, but three in five (61%) also believe that most public schools in the state do not have sufficient funding to educate their students.
- Most (69%) registered voters favor requiring that all public schools have armed security personnel, with three in four (73%) believing it would make schools safer.
- A majority (56%) of registered voters favors continued funding of crisis pregnancy centers in Pennsylvania.

Governor Shapiro's job approval ratings remain high: almost one in two (49%) registered voters believes he is doing an "excellent" or "good" job as governor. This is the highest approval rating for a governor at this point in a first term since Governor Ridge. Governor Shapiro has more positive ratings among Democrats (76%) and Independents (38%) than either Senator Casey or President Biden.

The state's registered voters know little about the candidates running for the open state Supreme Court seat. More than seven in ten registered voters don't know enough about

Democrat Daniel McCaffery (76%) or Republican Carolyn Carluccio (71%) to have formed an opinion about them.

About one in three (30%) registered voters in Pennsylvania believes President Biden is doing an "excellent" or "good" job as president, which is the same as his ratings in August. 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 Biden narrowly leads Donald Trump in Pennsylvania, 44% to 42%. More voters believe President Biden has better judgment, is more trustworthy, and is closer to their views on values issues than Mr. Trump, while more voters believe Mr. Trump is better able to handle the economy and serve as commander-in-chief. More than two in five (43%) voters say that "both" President Biden and Mr. Trump are too old to serve another term.

About one in three (36%) 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 similar to his ratings in October 2011 (38%), about one year prior to his first re-election campaign. Senator Casey leads Republican David McCormick 46% to 39% in a head-to-head matchup for U.S. Senate, which is about the same advantage he held over McCormick in April (42% to 35%).

Former President Trump continues to lead the Republican primary field in Pennsylvania with a significant advantage over his closest rival, Florida Governor Ron DeSantis, 55% to 14%. Nikki Haley (9%) is currently in third place. Mr. Trump's advantage over Governor DeSantis has widened considerably since August.

Detailed Findings

Direction of State and Personal Finances

Half (50%) of respondents say they are "worse off" than a year ago, which is similar to how respondents felt in April (46%) and higher than in August (39%). Most Republicans and conservatives say they are "worse off" than last year, but a third of Democrats (31%) and half of Independents (59%) also said they were worse off financially (see Table A-1). One in three (35%) registered voters expects they will be "worse off" financially a year from now, which is more than the one in four (27%) who said so in August. Pennsylvania voters are more pessimistic than optimistic about conditions in the state with more than half (55%) reporting the state is "off on the wrong track" (see Figure 1).

Direction of State, 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?

Note: Beginning in 2012, question asked only of registered voters, prior surveys included all adults.

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 (25%), 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%). Concerns about government and politicians (18%) and crime (13%) are the second and third most often expressed problems confronting the state. These concerns about politics have increased considerably over the past twenty years.

About half (47%) of the state's registered voters believe the public schools in their communities have sufficient funding to educate their students, but three in five (61%) also believe that most public schools in the state do not have sufficient funding to educate their students.

Most (69%) registered voters favor requiring that all public schools have armed security personnel, with three in four (73%) believing it would make schools safer.

A majority (56%) of registered voters favors continued funding of crisis pregnancy centers in Pennsylvania. More Republicans (71%) and Independents (63%) than Democrats (37%) favor the continued funding of crisis pregnancy centers.

Governor Shapiro: Job Performance

Governor Shapiro's job approval ratings remain high: almost one in two (49%) registered voters believes he is doing an "excellent" or "good" job as governor. 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 (76%) and Independents (38%) than either Senator Casey or President Biden. Shapiro is also rated positively by one in five (25%)

Republicans; this is higher than Republicans' positive job ratings of Senator Casey (15%) or

President Biden (5%) (See Tables A-2, A-3, and A-4). Governor Shapiro is viewed more

favorably (57%) than unfavorably (29%) by the state's voters.

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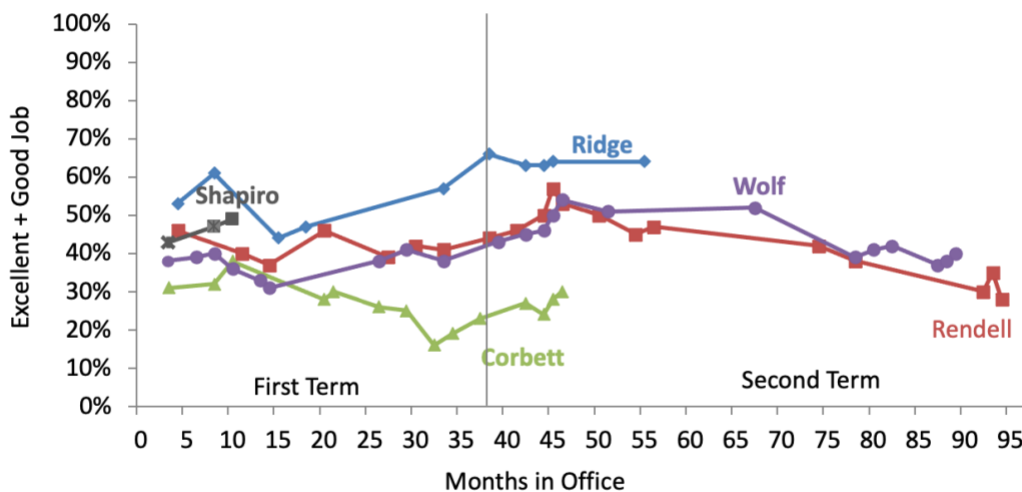
Figure 2. This figure compares the job approval ratings of Pennsylvania governors at similar points in their terms.

The State Supreme Court Race

The state's registered voters know little about the candidates running for the open state

Supreme Court seat. More than seven in ten voters say they don't know enough about Democrat

Daniel McCaffery (76%) or Republican Carolyn Carluccio (71%) to have formed an opinion

about them. Those registered voters who are more likely to vote know a bit more about the

candidates. For instance, among voters who have voted in the past two off-year elections,

McCaffery has a ten-point positive favorability rating while Carluccio has a minus three

favorability rating, but even among these voters, more than sixty percent don't know enough to have formed an opinion about the candidates.[1]

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 the same as his ratings in August. 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 (5%) or Independents (19%) do so (see Table A-3). It is normal for an incumbent's job approval ratings to start to increase at this point in their first term, making it somewhat surprising that the President's ratings are holding steady. President Biden is viewed more unfavorably (58%) than favorably (40%) by the state's voters.

President Biden narrowly leads Donald Trump in Pennsylvania, 44% to 42%. More voters believe President Biden has better judgment, is more trustworthy, and is closer to their views on values issues than Mr. Trump, while more voters believe Mr. Trump is better able to handle the economy and serve as commander-in-chief (see Figure 3). More than two in five (43%) voters say that "both" President Biden and Mr. Trump are too old to serve another term.

---

[1] McCaffery is 21% favorable, 11% unfavorable, and 69% don't know, while Carlucccio is 17% favorable, 20% unfavorable, and 63% don't know among voters who voted in the two most recent off-year elections. McCaffery also has a net positive favorability rating (20% favorable to 12% unfavorable) among those who are "very interested" in the election and are "certain to vote," while Carluccio also has a net negative favorability rating (15% favorable to 21% unfavorable) among these interested voters.

Description of Presidential Candidates

Regardless of how you plan to vote, who do you think is best described by each of the following statements? Do you think Joe Biden or Donald Trump:
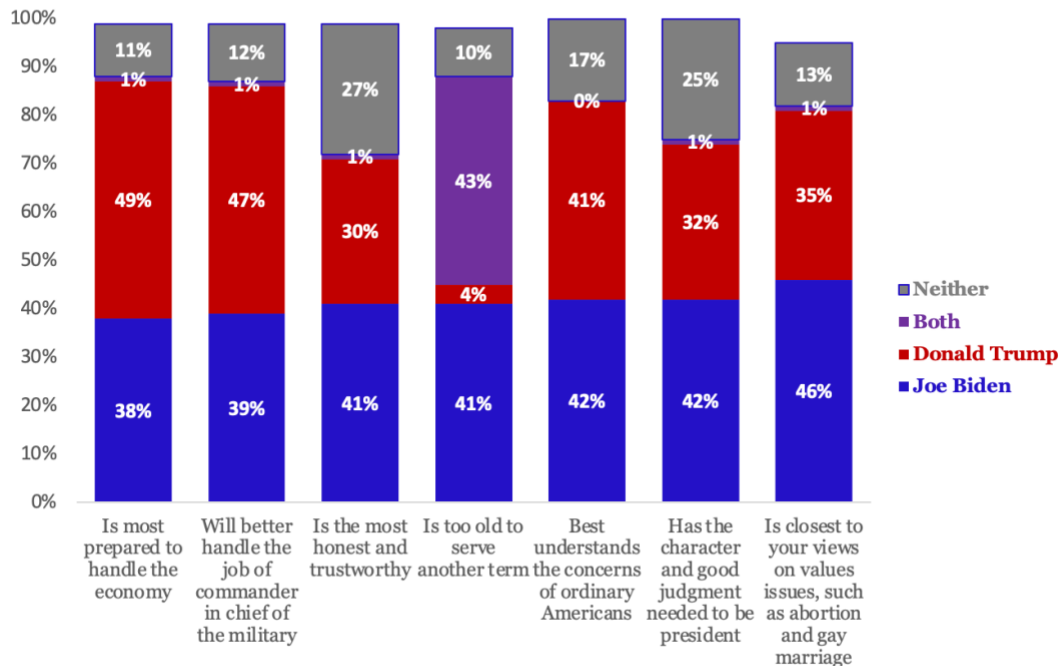
Figure 3. *This figure shows the percentage of respondents attributing descriptions of the presidential candidates to either Biden or Trump, October 2023.*

U.S. Senator Casey: Job Performance

About one in three (36%) 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 similar to his ratings in October 2011 (38%), about one year prior to his first re-election campaign. One in five (21%) voters say they don't know enough about the senator to rate his performance. A majority of Democrats (62%) rate Casey's performance positively, while fewer Republicans (15%) or Independents (24%) do so (see Table A-4). Senator Casey is viewed more

favorably (42%) than unfavorably (30%) by the state's registered voters. Senator Casey leads

Republican David McCormick 46% to 39% in a head-to-head matchup for U.S. Senate, which is

about the same advantage he held over McCormick in April (42% to 35%).

Former President Trump and the Republican Primary

Mr. Trump continues to lead the Republican primary field in Pennsylvania with a significant

advantage over his closest rival, Florida Governor Ron DeSantis, 55% to 14%. Nikki Haley (9%)

is currently in third place. Mr. Trump's advantage over Governor DeSantis has widened

considerably since August (see Figure 4).

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, or Doug Burgum? (Republicans only)

	Oct 2023 n=306	Aug 2023 n=274	April 2023 n=227
Donald Trump	55%	39%	40%
Ron DeSantis	14%	21%	34%
Vivek Ramaswamy	5%	9%	0%
Tim Scott	3%	6%	0%
Mike Pence	2%	5%	6%
Nikki Haley	9%	5%	4%
Chris Christie	4%	3%	0%
Someone else	2%	3%	4%
Do not know	7%	8%	11%

Center for OPINION RESEARCH   FRANKLIN & MARSHALL COLLEGE

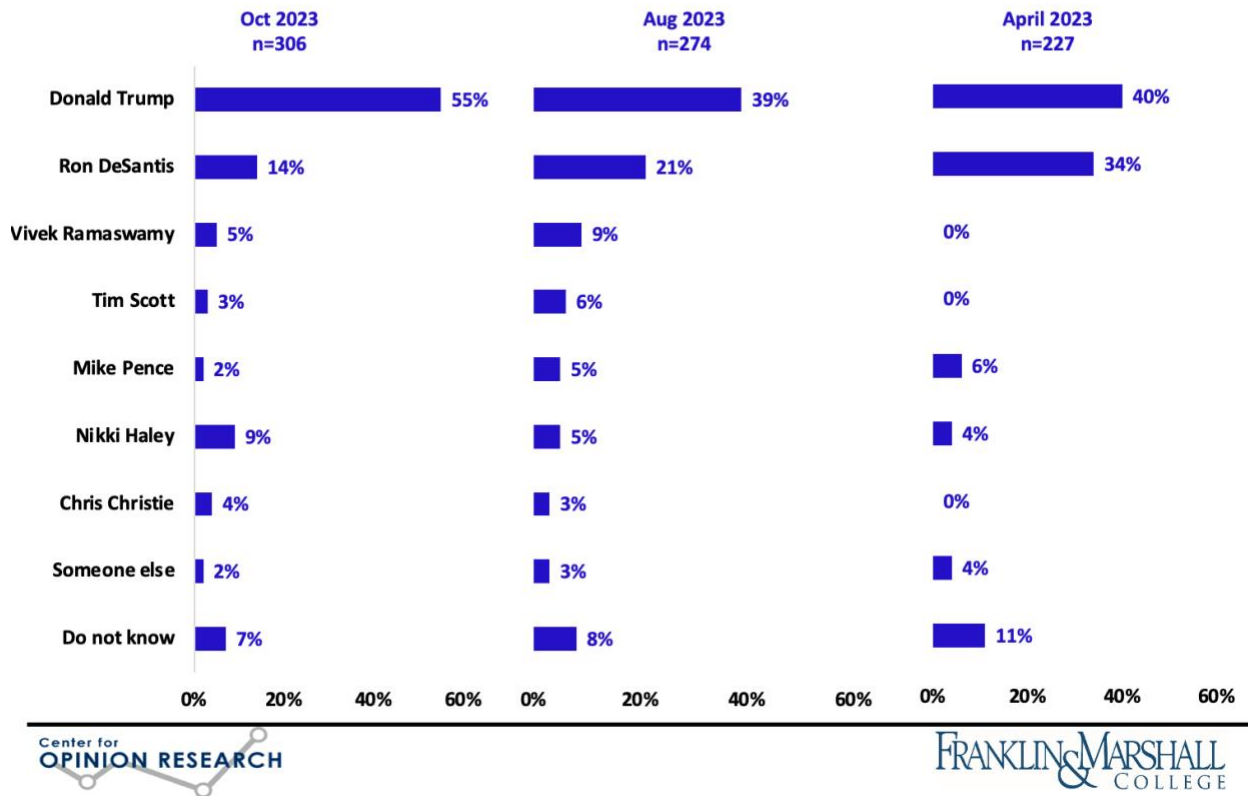**Figure 4.** *This figure compares the presidential primary preferences of Pennsylvania Republicans in April, August, and October 2023.*

The state's registered voters do not have a favorable impression of the former president--he is viewed more unfavorably (58%) than favorably (41%). Mr. Trump's favorable ratings are similar to where they were prior to the 2020 election (40% favorable, 57% unfavorable in September 2020).

Methodology

The survey findings presented in this release are based on the results of interviews conducted October 11 – 22, 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 873 registered Pennsylvania voters, including 393 Democrats, 359 Republicans, and 121 Independents.[2] 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 Pennsylvania 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 +/- 4.1 percentage points when the design effects from weighting are considered. The sample error for questions based on subgroups is larger.[3] 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.[4] The procedure involves resampling a data set, calculating a statistic for each bootstrapped sample, accumulating the results of these samples and calculating a sample

---

[2] 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: 46% identify as Republican (n=393), 9% as Independent (n=79), and 44% as Democrat (n=371) and the balance not offering a response. Partisan comparisons in this summary show self-reported registration.

[3] The SE for the Republican primary question is +/- 6.4%.

[4] 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 1.6%, and 95% of the samples fell within a range of 27% and 33%.

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, October 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	4%	70%	26%	0%
Democrat	18%	31%	51%	0%
Independent or something else	10%	59%	31%	0%
Ideology*				
Liberal	22%	29%	49%	0%
Moderate	10%	46%	43%	0%
Conservative	4%	70%	26%	0%
Gender*				
Female	6%	52%	42%	0%
Male	15%	49%	36%	0%
Age*				
Under 35	18%	59%	23%	0%
35-54	12%	49%	39%	0%
Over 55	7%	47%	46%	0%
Education*				
HS or less	6%	52%	42%	0%
Some college	7%	62%	31%	0%
College degree	16%	40%	45%	0%
Race				
White	12%	50%	39%	0%
Nonwhite	7%	53%	40%	0%
Race & Education, White Voters*				
White, no college degree	8%	57%	35%	0%
White, college degree	17%	37%	46%	0%
Employment*				
Fulltime	14%	53%	33%	0%
Other	5%	53%	41%	0%
Retired	7%	42%	50%	0%
Income*				
Under $35,000	8%	65%	27%	0%
$35,000-$75,000	7%	51%	42%	0%
Over $75,000	15%	45%	39%	0%
"Born-again" or Evangelical Christian*				
Yes	4%	61%	34%	0%
No	13%	45%	42%	0%
Region*				
Philadelphia & Southeast	15%	42%	43%	0%
Northeast	8%	57%	34%	0%
Allegheny & Southwest	7%	46%	47%	0%
Northwest	11%	50%	39%	0%
Central	9%	59%	32%	0%
Urban-Rural Classification*				
Large Central Metro	14%	36%	50%	0%
Large Fringe Metro	11%	49%	40%	0%
Medium Metro	12%	52%	36%	0%
Small Metro	2%	65%	32%	0%
Micropolitan	6%	63%	31%	0%
Noncore	0%	71%	29%	0%
	* p<0.01	** p<0.05		

Table A-2: Gubernatorial Job Performance Ratings

Pennsylvania registered voters, October 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%	21%	36%	30%	9%
Democrat	36%	40%	11%	7%	6%
Independent or something else	15%	23%	32%	21%	10%
Ideology*					
Liberal	36%	41%	8%	6%	10%
Moderate	22%	36%	23%	13%	7%
Conservative	4%	14%	39%	35%	8%
Gender					
Female	18%	30%	22%	20%	10%
Male	20%	30%	26%	17%	7%
Age*					
Under 35	11%	30%	19%	23%	17%
35-54	21%	31%	23%	18%	7%
Over 55	21%	32%	28%	14%	5%
Education*					
HS or less	14%	23%	32%	22%	9%
Some college	15%	32%	26%	18%	9%
College degree	25%	33%	19%	17%	7%
Race**					
White	20%	30%	25%	17%	8%
Nonwhite	14%	32%	21%	24%	10%
Race & Education, White Voters*					
White, no college degree	16%	28%	28%	20%	9%
White, college degree	27%	34%	21%	12%	6%
Employment**					
Fulltime	17%	30%	25%	20%	8%
Other	19%	32%	18%	17%	14%
Retired	23%	30%	27%	15%	5%
Income					
Under $35,000	21%	29%	23%	15%	11%
$35,000-$75,000	17%	38%	24%	15%	7%
Over $75,000	21%	27%	26%	17%	9%
"Born-again" or Evangelical Christian*					
Yes	9%	22%	31%	28%	10%
No	22%	33%	23%	14%	8%
Region*					
Philadelphia & Southeast	29%	32%	19%	13%	7%
Northeast	16%	31%	23%	22%	7%
Allegheny & Southwest	17%	35%	18%	21%	8%
Northwest	4%	32%	35%	15%	13%
Central	14%	25%	31%	21%	9%
Urban-Rural Classification*					
Large Central Metro	25%	47%	13%	9%	7%
Large Fringe Metro	24%	26%	22%	18%	9%
Medium Metro	16%	32%	28%	19%	5%
Small Metro	8%	18%	31%	31%	12%
Micropolitan	9%	18%	40%	25%	8%
Noncore	7%	14%	32%	25%	21%
	* p<0.01	** p<0.05			

Table A-3: Presidential Job Performance Ratings

Pennsylvania registered voters, October 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%	4%	7%	88%	0%
Democrat	25%	32%	29%	11%	1%
Independent or something else	8%	11%	14%	66%	0%
Ideology*					
Liberal	29%	29%	29%	13%	0%
Moderate	14%	23%	19%	43%	1%
Conservative	1%	2%	9%	89%	0%
Gender					
Female	14%	19%	20%	47%	1%
Male	12%	15%	18%	55%	0%
Age*					
Under 35	7%	12%	32%	49%	0%
35-54	11%	19%	22%	47%	1%
Over 55	17%	19%	11%	54%	0%
Education*					
HS or less	10%	11%	15%	63%	1%
Some college	10%	12%	20%	57%	0%
College degree	17%	23%	19%	40%	1%
Race**					
White	13%	17%	19%	51%	0%
Nonwhite	13%	17%	19%	50%	2%
Race & Education, White Voters*					
White, no college degree	11%	12%	18%	59%	0%
White, college degree	17%	25%	20%	38%	0%
Employment**					
Fulltime	11%	15%	19%	54%	1%
Other	9%	20%	29%	42%	0%
Retired	20%	20%	10%	50%	0%
Income					
Under $35,000	14%	9%	20%	57%	0%
$35,000-$75,000	14%	21%	19%	47%	0%
Over $75,000	14%	17%	18%	50%	1%
"Born-again" or Evangelical Christian*					
Yes	7%	8%	14%	71%	0%
No	15%	21%	20%	44%	1%
Region*					
Philadelphia & Southeast	19%	21%	20%	39%	1%
Northeast	10%	20%	14%	55%	0%
Allegheny & Southwest	14%	19%	22%	44%	1%
Northwest	4%	9%	21%	66%	0%
Central	9%	12%	16%	62%	0%
Urban-Rural Classification*					
Large Central Metro	16%	27%	29%	25%	2%
Large Fringe Metro	18%	15%	17%	49%	0%
Medium Metro	11%	17%	18%	53%	0%
Small Metro	3%	9%	9%	80%	0%
Micropolitan	5%	8%	12%	75%	0%
Noncore	2%	11%	9%	78%	0%
	* $p<0.01$	** $p<0.05$			

Table A-4: U.S. Senator Casey Job Performance Ratings

Pennsylvania registered voters, October 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	2%	13%	27%	38%	19%
Democrat	24%	38%	14%	4%	21%
Independent or something else	9%	15%	28%	25%	22%
Ideology*					
Liberal	27%	30%	16%	3%	24%
Moderate	15%	30%	23%	17%	16%
Conservative	1%	12%	23%	44%	20%
Gender*					
Female	11%	27%	22%	17%	23%
Male	14%	21%	21%	27%	18%
Age*					
Under 35	10%	15%	19%	17%	40%
35-54	11%	27%	25%	16%	20%
Over 55	15%	26%	21%	26%	13%
Education*					
HS or less	10%	20%	25%	20%	25%
Some college	8%	20%	27%	23%	21%
College degree	17%	29%	14%	22%	18%
Race*					
White	13%	23%	23%	20%	21%
Nonwhite	9%	28%	15%	29%	20%
Race & Education, White Voters*					
White, no college degree	9%	20%	27%	22%	22%
White, college degree	20%	28%	16%	18%	18%
Employment*					
Fulltime	10%	24%	22%	24%	20%
Other	12%	22%	21%	13%	32%
Retired	17%	26%	19%	25%	14%
Income*					
Under $35,000	9%	25%	20%	15%	30%
$35,000-$75,000	10%	28%	30%	12%	18%
Over $75,000	14%	24%	18%	25%	19%
"Born-again" or Evangelical Christian*					
Yes	6%	16%	21%	28%	29%
No	15%	26%	21%	18%	19%
Region*					
Philadelphia & Southeast	17%	31%	18%	16%	19%
Northeast	17%	26%	17%	25%	15%
Allegheny & Southwest	13%	24%	32%	18%	14%
Northwest	5%	14%	24%	18%	39%
Central	8%	19%	19%	31%	23%
Urban-Rural Classification*					
Large Central Metro	17%	36%	19%	10%	18%
Large Fringe Metro	15%	22%	23%	21%	19%
Medium Metro	11%	24%	18%	27%	20%
Small Metro	5%	17%	26%	25%	26%
Micropolitan	3%	17%	27%	31%	22%
Noncore	9%	3%	21%	32%	35%
	* p<0.01	** p<0.05			