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Franklin & Marshall College Poll: April 2024 *Summary of Findings*

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Key Findings

The April 2024 Franklin & Marshall College Poll finds that although the state’s registered voters are generally pessimistic about the economy and the direction of the state, these indicators continue moving in a more positive direction. More registered voters report being “better off” financially than last year compared to our last two surveys (17% compared to 15% in February and 11% in October) and more say things in the state are “headed in the right direction” (39% compared to 37% in February and 35% in October). Among the nearly half (45%) of respondents who say they are “worse off” financially than a year ago, inflation (41%), the cost of living generally (17%), the costs of goods and necessities (12%), and the cost of food specifically (6%) are the main reasons they feel worse off. The survey also includes notable findings about state-level issues on marijuana legalization, voting reforms, and democracy:

- More than three in five (62%) registered voters believes recreational marijuana should be legalized in the state, which is consistent with recent surveys. More (48%) voters favor selling legal marijuana through the state’s existing medical marijuana dispensaries than through state-run cannabis shops (29%).
- Voters favor a host of voting reforms: substantial majorities favor requiring county voting officials to contact voters if they find an error on a submitted ballot (77%), requiring photo IDs to vote (73%), and allowing for automatic voter registration (65%). A majority (50%) also favors allowing for pre-canvassing of mail-in ballots.
- Only two in five (40%) registered voters report being satisfied with the way democracy works in the United States, although nine in ten (88%) believe democracy is preferable to any other form of government.

Governor Shapiro’s job approval ratings remain high: more than one in two (54%) registered voters believes he is doing an “excellent” or “good” job as governor. He has the highest approval rating for a governor at this point in a first term since Governor Ridge.

While the mood of Pennsylvania voters is a bit more positive than it has been, views about the president and the presidential campaign are mostly unchanged. About one in three (35%) registered voters in Pennsylvania believes President Biden is doing an “excellent” or “good” job

as president, which is marginally better than his approval ratings last fall. 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. Two in five (40%) voters say that “both” President Biden and Mr. Trump are too old to serve another term. Perceptions of the candidates’ relative issue strengths have changed little since October, although President Biden’s advantages on questions of character and honesty remain substantial. One in five (18%) voters has an “unfavorable” opinion of both presidential candidates. President Biden narrowly leads Donald Trump in Pennsylvania, 42% to 40%.

About two in five (39%) registered voters in Pennsylvania thinks Bob Casey is doing an “excellent” or “good” job as their U.S. senator. 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 February (47% to 35%) and October (46% to 39%).

Detailed Findings

Direction of State and Personal Finances

Half (45%) of respondents say they are “worse off” than a year ago, which is similar to how respondents felt much of the past year. Inflation (41%), the cost of living generally (17%), the costs of goods and necessities (12%), and the cost of food specifically (6%) are the main reasons these voters feel worse off. Most Republicans and conservatives say they are “worse off” than last year, but a quarter of Democrats (25%) and half of Independents (48%) also said they were “worse off” financially (see Table A-1). One in five (22%) registered voters expects they will be “worse off” financially a year from now, which is less than the one in three (35%) who said so in October. Pennsylvania voters are more pessimistic than optimistic about conditions in the state with about half (49%) reporting the state is “off on the wrong track.” Still, two in five (39%)

believe things are “headed in the right direction,” which is an improvement since last April when 32% reported the state was on the right track (see Figure 1).

Direction of State, Pennsylvania Residents 1995-2024

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. Concerns about government and politicians (14%) and crime (10%) remain the second and third most often expressed problems confronting the state, as they were in February.

The survey also includes notable findings about state-level issues on marijuana legalization, voting reforms, and democracy:

- More than three in five (62%) registered voters believes recreational marijuana should be legalized in the state, which is consistent with recent surveys. More (48%) voters favor selling legal marijuana through the state’s existing medical marijuana dispensaries than through state-run cannabis shops (29%).

- Voters favor a host of voting reforms: substantial majorities favor requiring county voting officials to contact voters if they find an error on a submitted ballot (77%), requiring photo IDs to vote (73%), and allowing for automatic voter registration (65%). A majority (50%) also favors allowing for pre-canvassing of mail-in ballots.
- Only two in five (40%) registered voters report being satisfied with the way democracy works in the United States, although nine in ten (88%) believe democracy is preferable to any other form of government.

Governor Shapiro: Job Performance

Governor Shapiro’s job approval ratings remain high: more than one in two (54%) 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 (83%) and Independents (57%) than either Senator Casey or President Biden. Shapiro is also rated positively by one in four (29%) Republicans.

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?

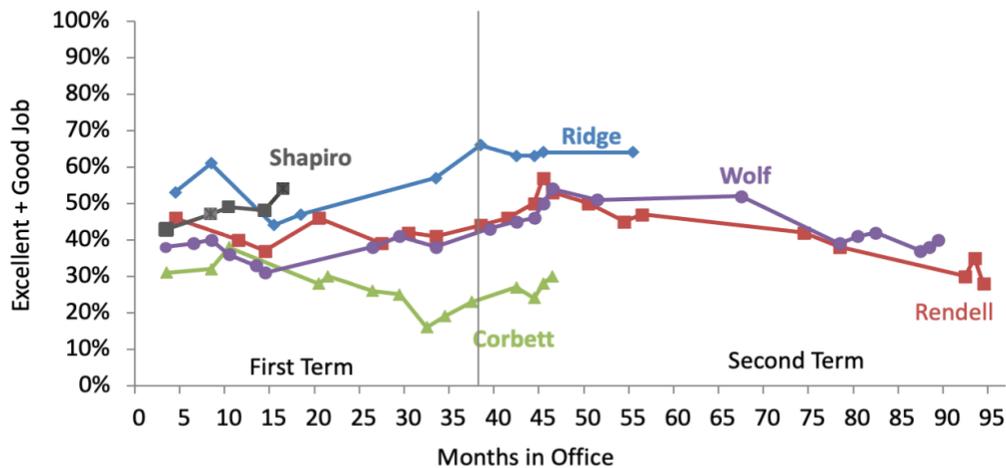


Figure 2. This figure compares the job approval ratings of Pennsylvania governors at similar points in their terms.

President Biden Job Performance

About one in three (35%) registered voters in Pennsylvania believes President Biden is doing an “excellent” or “good” job as president, which is marginally better than his approval ratings last fall. 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 (70%) rate the president’s performance positively, while fewer Republicans (7%) or Independents (27%) do so (see Table A-2). President Biden is viewed more unfavorably (57%) than favorably (42%) by the state’s voters, which is unchanged since February.

President Biden leads Donald Trump in Pennsylvania, 48% to 38%, in a one-on-one matchup, but his advantage is smaller, 42% to 40%, when third party candidates are included (see Tables A-3 and A-4 for the demographic breakdowns). To better understand the effects that third-party candidates might have on the presidential election race, this survey used a tool known as a “split-ballot experiment.” A split-ballot experiment uses a random procedure to assign different forms of a question to survey participants. Properly designed, these experiments create groups of people who are identical in all ways except for the form of the question they receive. When differences appear in a split-ballot experiment, they are the result of the question’s wording and not the result of who was asked the question. This experiment shows that the race is closer when third-party candidates are offered because support for the President declines among registered Democrats as more of them opt for a third-party candidate.

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 (see Figure 3). Two in five (40%) voters say that “both” President Biden and Mr. Trump are too old to serve another term. Perceptions of the candidates’ relative issue strengths have changed little since October, although President Biden’s advantages on questions of character and honesty remain substantial. More voters have an unfavorable (60%) than favorable (39%) opinion of Mr. Trump. Altogether, one in five (18%) voters has an “unfavorable” opinion of both presidential candidates.

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:

	Joe Biden	Donald Trump	Both	Neither	Do not know
<i>Best understands the concerns of ordinary Americans?</i>					
Apr 2024	41%	37%	1%	20%	1%
Feb 2024	40%	39%	1%	20%	1%
Oct 2023	42%	41%	0%	17%	1%
<i>Is most prepared to handle the economy?</i>					
Apr 2024	39%	48%	1%	11%	1%
Feb 2024	37%	47%	1%	13%	2%
Oct 2023	38%	49%	1%	11%	2%
<i>Is closest to your views on values issues, such as abortion and same-sex marriage?</i>					
Apr 2024	48%	35%	1%	11%	5%
Feb 2024	48%	36%	1%	11%	4%
Oct 2023	46%	35%	1%	13%	5%
<i>Will better handle the job of commander in chief of the military?</i>					
Apr 2024	41%	43%	1%	14%	1%
Feb 2024	40%	43%	0%	15%	3%
Oct 2023	39%	47%	1%	12%	2%
<i>Has the character and good judgment needed to be president?</i>					
Apr 2024	44%	31%	1%	24%	0%
Feb 2024	45%	32%	0%	22%	1%
Oct 2023	42%	32%	1%	25%	1%
<i>Is the most honest and trustworthy?</i>					
Apr 2024	43%	28%	1%	26%	2%
Feb 2024	44%	27%	1%	26%	2%
Oct 2023	41%	30%	1%	27%	1%
<i>Is too old to serve another term?</i>					
Apr 2024	40%	6%	40%	12%	2%
Feb 2024	41%	5%	43%	9%	2%
Oct 2023	41%	4%	43%	10%	2%

Figure 3. This figure shows the percentage of respondents attributing descriptions of the presidential candidates to either Biden or Trump, October 2023, February 2024, and April 2024.

U.S. Senator Casey: Job Performance

About two in five (39%) 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 October 2012 (37%) prior to his first re-election victory. One in five (16%) voters says they don’t know enough about the Senator to rate his performance. A majority of Democrats (67%) rate Casey’s performance positively, while fewer Republicans (15%) or Independents (33%) do so (see Table A-5). Senator Casey is viewed more

favorably (40%) than unfavorably (34%) 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 February (47% to 35%) and October (46% to 39%). David McCormick is viewed more unfavorably (30%) than favorably (24%) by the state's voters, although about half (46%) do not know enough about him to express an opinion.

Methodology

The survey findings presented in this release are based on the results of interviews conducted March 20 - 31, 2024. The interviews were conducted at the Center for Opinion Research at Franklin & Marshall College. The data included in this release represent the responses of 870 registered Pennsylvania voters, including 390 Democrats, 356 Republicans, and 124 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 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 +/- 4.0 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. 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: 43% identify as Republican (n=358), 9% as Independent (n=71), and 43% as Democrat (n=373) and the balance not offering a response. Partisan comparisons in this summary show self-reported registration.

² The SE for the two-way presidential horse race question (n=431) is +/- 5.7% and the SE for the multi-candidate presidential horse race question (n=430) +/- 5.7%.

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 32% and 39%.

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, April 2024

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	7%	63%	30%	1%
Democrat	29%	25%	46%	0%
Independent or something else	18%	48%	34%	0%
Ideology*				
Liberal	40%	19%	42%	0%
Moderate	18%	40%	42%	0%
Conservative	3%	68%	29%	1%
Gender				
Female	16%	46%	38%	0%
Male	18%	45%	37%	0%
Age				
Under 35	20%	44%	36%	0%
35-54	19%	46%	35%	0%
Over 55	16%	43%	41%	0%
Education*				
HS or less	11%	54%	35%	0%
Some college	12%	54%	34%	0%
College degree	25%	34%	41%	0%
Race				
White	19%	44%	37%	0%
Non-white	10%	51%	38%	0%
Race & Education, White Voters*				
White, no college degree	13%	54%	33%	0%
White, college degree	26%	31%	42%	1%
Employment*				
Full-time	21%	47%	32%	0%
Other	9%	47%	44%	0%
Retired	16%	43%	41%	1%
Income*				
Under \$35,000	5%	58%	37%	0%
\$35,000-\$75,000	15%	54%	31%	0%
Over \$75,000	24%	36%	40%	0%
"Born-again" or evangelical Christian*				
Yes	11%	55%	34%	1%
No	20%	41%	39%	0%
Region*				
Philadelphia & Southeast	25%	35%	39%	0%
Northeast	8%	61%	31%	1%
Allegheny & Southwest	11%	48%	42%	0%
Northwest	16%	43%	41%	0%
Central	17%	49%	34%	0%
Urban-Rural Classification*				
Large Central Metro	20%	39%	41%	0%
Large Fringe Metro	21%	38%	41%	0%
Medium Metro	14%	52%	33%	0%
Small Metro	9%	47%	44%	0%
Micropolitan	15%	54%	31%	0%
Noncore	13%	63%	23%	0%
* p<0.01 ** p<0.05				

Table A-2: Presidential Job Performance Rating

Pennsylvania registered voters, April 2024

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	2%	5%	6%	86%	1%
Democrat	31%	39%	16%	14%	1%
Independent or something else	10%	17%	17%	55%	1%
Ideology*					
Liberal	37%	39%	15%	8%	1%
Moderate	15%	23%	17%	43%	2%
Conservative	1%	3%	2%	94%	0%
Gender*					
Female	18%	22%	13%	46%	1%
Male	12%	17%	10%	59%	1%
Age*					
Under 35	2%	22%	20%	54%	3%
35-54	10%	20%	16%	54%	1%
Over 55	25%	18%	6%	50%	0%
Education*					
HS or less	12%	11%	16%	59%	2%
Some college	14%	16%	6%	62%	1%
College degree	18%	27%	15%	40%	0%
Race**					
White	16%	21%	10%	51%	1%
Non-white	11%	15%	17%	57%	0%
Race & Education, White Voters*					
White, no college degree	13%	16%	8%	61%	2%
White, college degree	20%	28%	14%	38%	0%
Employment					
Full-time	11%	20%	15%	53%	1%
Other	11%	21%	11%	55%	1%
Retired	25%	19%	6%	49%	1%
Income**					
Under \$35,000	14%	22%	10%	53%	1%
\$35,000-\$75,000	12%	20%	17%	48%	2%
Over \$75,000	18%	22%	10%	49%	0%
"Born-again" or evangelical Christian*					
Yes	4%	10%	12%	74%	1%
No	19%	23%	12%	45%	1%
Region*					
Philadelphia & Southeast	23%	25%	15%	37%	0%
Northeast	13%	13%	7%	68%	0%
Allegheny & Southwest	11%	21%	8%	59%	1%
Northwest	15%	18%	5%	59%	4%
Central	10%	17%	14%	57%	2%
Urban-Rural Classification*					
Large Central Metro	16%	25%	18%	40%	1%
Large Fringe Metro	22%	24%	9%	46%	0%
Medium Metro	11%	17%	11%	60%	2%
Small Metro	11%	14%	13%	62%	0%
Micropolitan	12%	15%	11%	62%	0%
Noncore	10%	16%	0%	64%	11%

* p<0.01 ** p<0.05

Table A-3: Presidential Vote Choice

Pennsylvania registered voters, April 2024

If the 2024 election for president were being held today and the candidates were Joe Biden, the Democrat, and Donald Trump, the Republican, would you vote for Joe Biden or Donald Trump?

	Joe Biden, the Democrat	Donald Trump, the Republican	Someone else	Do not know
Party*				
Republican	9%	74%	14%	2%
Democrat	89%	4%	7%	0%
Independent or something else	33%	40%	26%	0%
Ideology*				
Liberal	96%	0%	4%	0%
Moderate	51%	30%	17%	2%
Conservative	5%	84%	10%	1%
Gender**				
Female	54%	31%	13%	1%
Male	41%	46%	12%	1%
Age				
Under 35	47%	32%	20%	2%
35-54	45%	39%	16%	0%
Over 55	49%	40%	9%	2%
Education*				
HS or less	40%	46%	14%	0%
Some college	42%	46%	12%	1%
College degree	58%	27%	13%	2%
Race				
White	49%	37%	13%	1%
Non-white	42%	46%	11%	1%
Race & Education, White Voters*				
White, no college degree	41%	46%	13%	1%
White, college degree	61%	23%	14%	2%
Employment				
Full-time	44%	39%	17%	1%
Other	55%	35%	8%	3%
Retired	50%	40%	9%	1%
Income				
Under \$35,000	53%	27%	17%	2%
\$35,000-\$75,000	50%	34%	15%	0%
Over \$75,000	52%	38%	10%	1%
"Born-again" or evangelical Christian*				
Yes	24%	65%	11%	0%
No	55%	31%	13%	1%
Region*				
Philadelphia & Southeast	62%	24%	12%	2%
Northeast	29%	56%	11%	5%
Allegheny & Southwest	46%	36%	18%	0%
Northwest	44%	56%	0%	0%
Central	44%	42%	13%	0%
Urban-Rural Classification*				
Large Central Metro	63%	25%	11%	0%
Large Fringe Metro	52%	33%	14%	2%
Medium Metro	39%	45%	15%	2%
Small Metro	49%	48%	3%	0%
Micropolitan	39%	58%	3%	0%
Noncore	35%	25%	41%	0%

* p<0.01 ** p<0.05

Table A-4: Presidential Vote Choice (All Candidates)

Pennsylvania registered voters, April 2024

If the 2024 election for president were being held today and the candidates were (rotate: Joe Biden, the Democrat, Donald Trump, the Republican, Jill Stein, the Green, Robert Kennedy, Jr., the Independent) would you vote for....?

	Joe Biden, the Democrat	Donald Trump, the Republican	Jill Stein, the Green	Robert Kennedy Jr., the Independent	Someone else	Do not know
Party*						
Republican	9%	77%	1%	8%	3%	2%
Democrat	79%	6%	5%	5%	2%	4%
Independent or something else	57%	21%	4%	7%	5%	6%
Ideology*						
Liberal	87%	2%	3%	4%	2%	3%
Moderate	51%	25%	4%	10%	4%	5%
Conservative	4%	84%	1%	7%	2%	2%
Gender*						
Female	45%	33%	4%	9%	5%	3%
Male	38%	46%	1%	9%	2%	4%
Age*						
Under 35	44%	31%	6%	14%	3%	3%
35-54	37%	36%	4%	14%	5%	4%
Over 55	45%	44%	0%	3%	3%	4%
Education*						
HS or less	31%	44%	3%	9%	7%	6%
Some college	32%	53%	2%	11%	1%	2%
College degree	55%	27%	3%	7%	5%	4%
Race**						
White	42%	39%	2%	9%	5%	4%
Non-white	40%	41%	7%	9%	0%	2%
Race & Education, White Voters*						
White, no college degree	31%	50%	2%	9%	4%	4%
White, college degree	57%	25%	1%	8%	6%	4%
Employment*						
Full-time	41%	39%	2%	11%	3%	4%
Other	37%	35%	8%	12%	4%	3%
Retired	45%	43%	0%	4%	4%	3%
Income						
Under \$35,000	36%	39%	4%	11%	5%	4%
\$35,000-\$75,000	39%	40%	5%	7%	3%	6%
Over \$75,000	47%	34%	2%	10%	5%	3%
"Born-again" or evangelical Christian*						
Yes	17%	63%	0%	14%	0%	6%
No	50%	32%	3%	7%	5%	3%
Region*						
Philadelphia & Southeast	61%	27%	2%	3%	3%	4%
Northeast	23%	68%	5%	1%	1%	2%
Allegheny & Southwest	37%	33%	2%	18%	6%	5%
Northwest	37%	44%	5%	11%	3%	0%
Central	31%	45%	2%	13%	4%	5%
Urban-Rural Classification*						
Large Central Metro	53%	22%	3%	12%	6%	3%
Large Fringe Metro	54%	33%	1%	4%	3%	5%
Medium Metro	32%	48%	5%	10%	3%	3%
Small Metro	22%	65%	0%	5%	8%	0%
Micropolitan	33%	48%	0%	13%	0%	6%
Noncore	13%	62%	0%	24%	1%	0%

* p<0.01 ** p<0.05

Table A-5: U.S. Senator Casey Job Performance Rating

Pennsylvania registered voters, April 2024

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	3%	12%	27%	44%	13%
Democrat	33%	34%	13%	8%	12%
Independent or something else	7%	26%	17%	31%	18%
Ideology*					
Liberal	35%	26%	12%	4%	24%
Moderate	18%	30%	19%	20%	12%
Conservative	1%	9%	24%	50%	16%
Gender*					
Female	18%	25%	19%	20%	18%
Male	13%	20%	20%	33%	15%
Age*					
Under 35	12%	15%	19%	18%	36%
35-54	11%	24%	19%	25%	20%
Over 55	20%	26%	21%	26%	6%
Education**					
HS or less	15%	26%	19%	23%	17%
Some college	11%	19%	22%	32%	16%
College degree	20%	24%	18%	22%	17%
Race*					
White	18%	22%	20%	23%	17%
Non-white	7%	23%	15%	40%	15%
Race & Education, White Voters*					
White, no college degree	14%	20%	21%	28%	16%
White, college degree	22%	25%	19%	16%	17%
Employment*					
Full-time	12%	22%	20%	25%	20%
Other	14%	20%	15%	26%	24%
Retired	22%	26%	20%	26%	6%
Income					
Under \$35,000	14%	27%	19%	16%	24%
\$35,000-\$75,000	16%	22%	23%	27%	12%
Over \$75,000	17%	24%	18%	22%	18%
"Born-again" or evangelical Christian*					
Yes	3%	19%	27%	34%	16%
No	19%	23%	18%	23%	16%
Region*					
Philadelphia & Southeast	21%	24%	23%	18%	15%
Northeast	12%	23%	16%	35%	14%
Allegheny & Southwest	14%	26%	17%	28%	15%
Northwest	11%	28%	14%	25%	21%
Central	14%	18%	20%	30%	18%
Urban-Rural Classification*					
Large Central Metro	16%	26%	19%	22%	17%
Large Fringe Metro	20%	25%	21%	21%	13%
Medium Metro	12%	22%	17%	30%	19%
Small Metro	17%	9%	32%	25%	16%
Micropolitan	16%	18%	13%	41%	12%
Noncore	8%	21%	22%	20%	29%

* p<0.01 ** p<0.05