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Franklin & Marshall College Poll: June 2021

Summary of Findings

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Key Findings

The June 2021 Franklin & Marshall College Poll finds that concerns about COVID-19 are receding among the state's registered voters, declining from one in three (31%) voters who believed COVID-19 was the state's most important problem in March to less than one in ten (7%) who feel that way today. Concerns about government and politicians (30%) and the economy (15%), including unemployment and personal finances, are currently the top issues facing the state.

Nearly four in five (79%) registered voters report having received at least one dose of the COVID-19 vaccine, which is a large increase from March when three in ten (31%) registered voters reported having at least one dose. More Democrats (94%) and independents (84%) than Republicans (61%) report getting the vaccine.

Despite the lessening concerns about COVID and the increased vaccination rates, Pennsylvania's voters remain pessimistic. Only two in five (35%) state voters believes the state is "headed in the right direction," which is significantly lower than the recent, pre-pandemic high of 57 percent reported in October 2019 and essentially unchanged since the March F&M Poll. There is also no notable improvement in voters' assessments of their personal finances.

These negative assessments about the direction of the state and personal finances likely translate to lower job approval ratings for Governor Wolf. In July 2020, more than half (52%) of the state's registered voters rated the governor as doing an "excellent" or "good" job; today, his positive job approval rating is at 39 percent. President Biden's approval ratings have fared better than Governor Wolf's in Pennsylvania. About two in five (44%) voters in Pennsylvania believe President Biden is doing an "excellent" or "good" job as president and his approval rating for managing the coronavirus outbreak is higher (49%) than his overall job approval rating. Both of these numbers are consistent with his March approval ratings.

A majority (59%) of the state's registered voters believes the state's election laws need revised, although this belief is stronger among Republicans (75%) than among independents (52%) or Democrats (46%). Overall, a majority of voters favors signature matching for mail-in ballots (81%) and photo identification requirements (74%), while voters are divided about eliminating no-excuse voting by mail. Support for these electoral reforms differs substantially by party.

General Sentiment

Most Important Problem

Concerns about COVID-19 are receding among the state's registered voters, declining from one in three (31%) voters who believed COVID-19 was the state's most important problem in March to less than one in ten (7%) who feel that way today. Concerns about government and politicians (30%) and the economy (15%), including unemployment and personal finances are currently the top concerns.

Direction of State and Personal Finance

Despite the lessening concerns about COVID, Pennsylvania's voters remain pessimistic. Only two in five (35%) state voters believes the state is "headed in the right direction," which is significantly lower than the recent, pre-pandemic high of 57 percent reported in October 2019 and essentially unchanged since the March F&M Poll.

There is also no notable improvement in voters' assessments of their personal finances. Most respondents say they are "better off" (17%) or "about the same" (58%) financially as they were last year, although one in four (24%) believes their finances will be "worse off" a year from now. Republicans, conservatives, those without a college degree, and older respondents tend to express greater economic pessimism (see Table A-1).

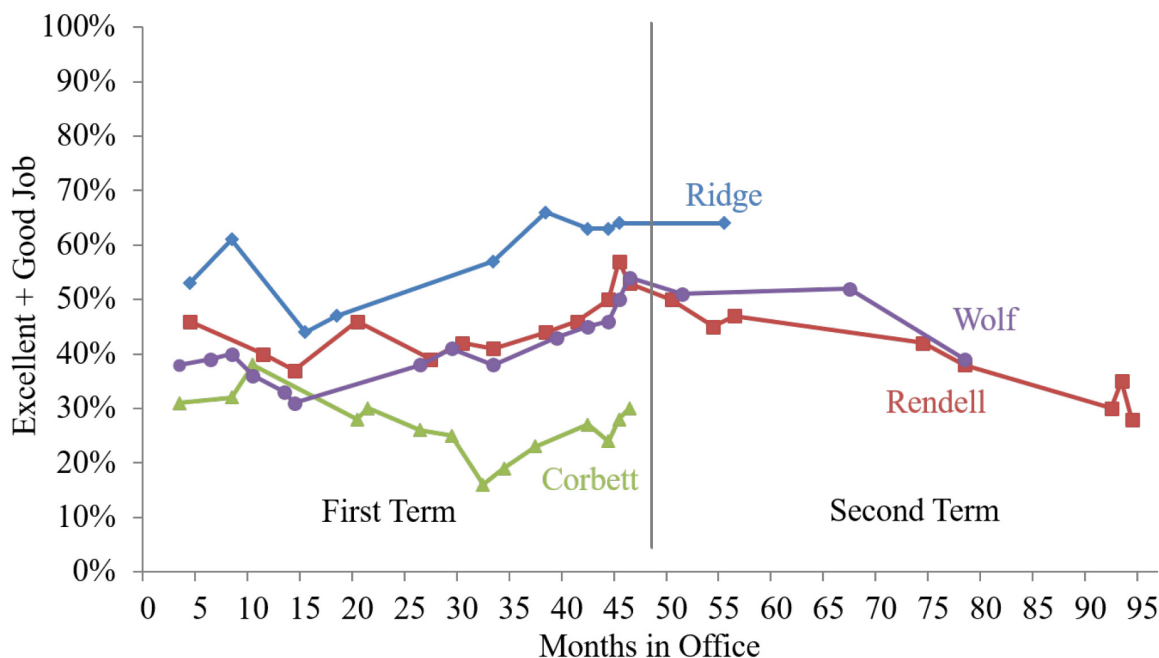
Governor Wolf: Job Performance

These negative assessments about the direction of the state and personal finances likely translate to lower job approval ratings for Governor Wolf. In July 2020, more than half (52%) of the state's registered voters rated the governor as doing an "excellent" or "good" job; today,

his positive job approval ratings are at 39 percent (see Figure 1). The governor's approval rating differs by party and ideology (see Table A-2) and is lower among all partisan groups than it was in July 2020, particularly among Democrats and independents when his ratings were 78 percent and 57 percent, respectively. Governor Wolf's positive approval rating is lower among Democrats and independents than is President Biden's.

Comparison of Governors' Job Performance Ratings, Pennsylvania registered voters, June 2021

How would you rate the way that [fill Governor] 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?



Source: Survey Conducted June 7 - 13, 2021

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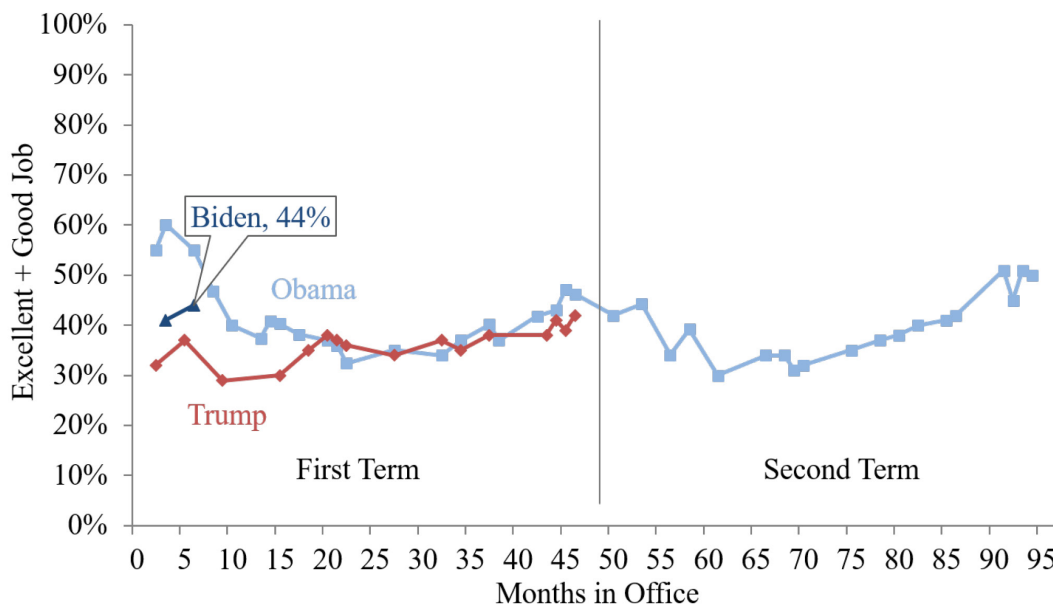
Figure 1. This figure shows how registered voters in Pennsylvania rate the performance of Governor Wolf in relation to Governors Ridge (blue line), Rendell (red line), and Corbett (green line) at similar points in their terms.

President Biden: Job Performance

About two in five (44%) voters in Pennsylvania believe President Biden is doing an “excellent” or “good” job as president. Figure 2 compares President Biden’s job ratings to President Obama’s and President Trump’s job ratings; President Biden’s current rating is higher than President Trump’s and lower than President Obama’s rating in Pennsylvania at the same point in their terms. A majority of Democrats (84%) rate the President’s performance positively, while fewer Republicans (10%) or independents (42%) do so (see Table A-3). Compared to our March Poll, President Biden’s positive approval rating among independent voters has increased. Conservatives (14%) are much less likely than moderates (57%) or liberals (89%) to give the President positive job approval ratings. The President’s approval rating for his management of the coronavirus outbreak is higher (49%) than his overall job approval rating—Republicans (14%) and independents (52%) provide better ratings for his coronavirus management.

Comparison of Presidents' Job Performance Ratings, Pennsylvania registered voters, June 2021

How would you rate the way that [fill President] 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?



Source: Survey Conducted June 7 - 13, 2021

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Figure 2. This figure shows how registered voters in Pennsylvania rate the performance of President Biden in relation to Presidents Obama (blue line) and Trump (red line) at similar points in their terms.

State Issues

COVID Vaccinations

Nearly four in five (79%) registered voters report having received at least one dose of the COVID-19 vaccine, which is a large increase from March when three in ten (31%) registered voters reported having at least one dose.¹ More Democrats (94%) and independents (84%) than Republicans (61%) have received the vaccine (see Table A-4).

¹ <https://healthdata.gov/Community/COVID-19-State-Profile-Report-Pennsylvania/tkdp-r3p8> (accessed 6/15/2021). According to Centers for Disease Control data, 72 percent of adults had received at least one vaccine dose as of June 4, 2021. The same data shows that nearly all Pennsylvania adults over 65 years of age (99%) had received at least one dose of the vaccine.

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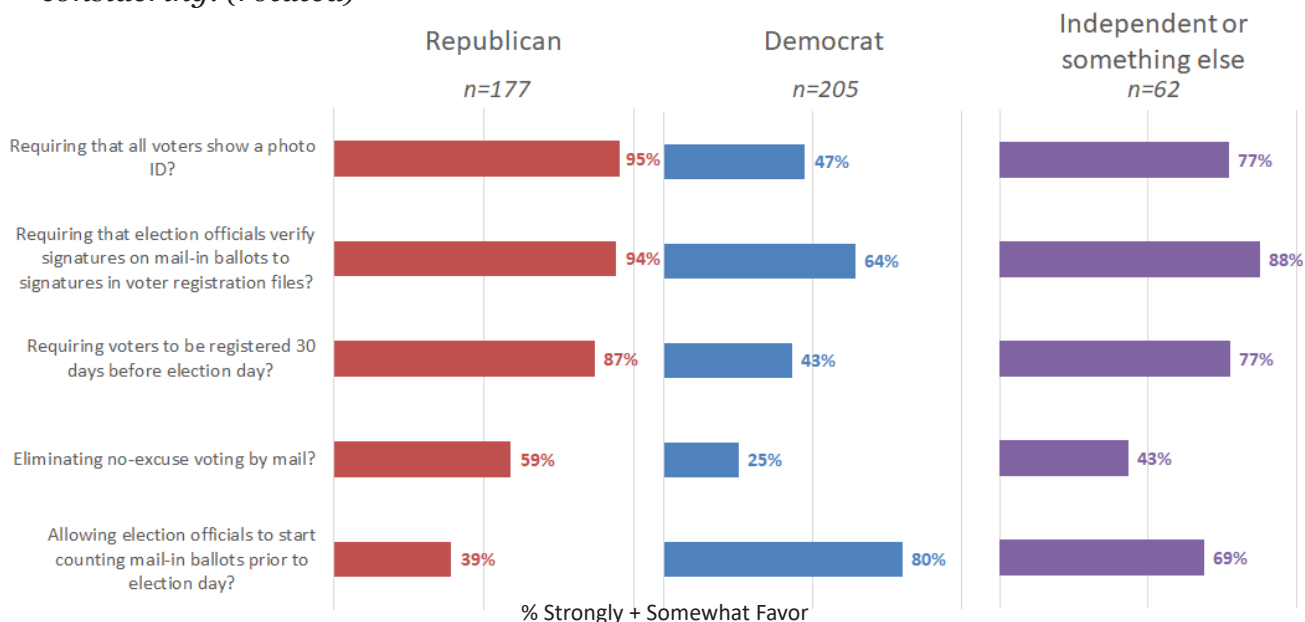
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Election Reform

A majority (59%) of the state's registered voters believes the state's election laws need revised, although this belief is stronger among Republicans (75%) than among independents (52%) or Democrats (46%). Overall, a majority of voters favors signature matching for mail-in ballots (81%) and photo identification requirements (74%), while voters are divided, 45 percent favor and 46 percent oppose, on eliminating no-excuse voting by mail. Support for these electoral reforms differs substantially by party--Figure 3 displays the support for each tested reform by party registration.

Support for Selected Voting Reforms By Party, Pennsylvania registered voters, June 2021

The state legislature held hearings this spring to consider making changes to the state's voting laws. Please tell me whether you strongly favor, somewhat favor, somewhat oppose, or strongly oppose each of the following changes that some state lawmakers are considering. (rotated)



Source: Survey Conducted June 7 - 13, 2021

Figure 3. This figure shows the difference in support for selected voting reforms by party registration.

Methodology

The survey findings presented in this release are based on the results of interviews conducted June 7 - 13, 2021. The interviews were conducted at the Center for Opinion Research at Franklin & Marshall. The data included in this release represent the responses of 444 registered Pennsylvania voters, including 205 Democrats, 177 Republicans, and 62 independents.² The sample of voters was obtained from Marketing Systems Group. 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, 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 is estimated using data from the November 2018 CPS Voter Registration Supplement.³

The sample error for this survey is +/- 6.4 percentage points when the design effects from weighting are considered. 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 (see Canty, Angelo. 2002. "Resampling Methods in R: The boot Package." R News 2/3 (December): 2-7). The procedure involves resampling a data set, calculating a statistic for each bootstrapped sample, accumulating the results of these samples and calculating a sample distribution. The standard error of the mean of 10,000 bootstrapped samples for the estimated positive job approval for Governor Wolf was 2.3% and 95% of the samples fell within a range of 35% and 44%. This indicates the actual variability of the sample

² The question reported here is self-reported 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: 45% identify as Republican (n=193), 12% as Independent (n=54), and 42% as Democrat (n=179). Partisan comparisons in this summary show self-reported registration.

³ Data downloaded from IPUMS-CPS, University of Minnesota, www.ipums.org, accessed 12/31/2019.

may be larger than standard formulas suggest. 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:Economic Outlook

Pennsylvania registered voters, June 2021

Now looking ahead, do you think that a year from now, you and your family will be better off financially than you are now, worse off, or about the same as you are now?

	Better off	Worse off	About the same	Do not know
Party*				
Republican	13%	37%	44%	7%
Democrat	27%	10%	60%	3%
Independent or something else	25%	18%	56%	1%
Ideology*				
Liberal	40%	4%	53%	2%
Moderate	23%	22%	53%	2%
Conservative	11%	30%	52%	6%
Gender**				
Female	22%	20%	55%	3%
Male	21%	28%	45%	6%
Age*				
Under 35	56%	10%	29%	5%
35-54	24%	22%	51%	3%
Over 55	13%	28%	54%	5%
Education*				
HS or less	11%	27%	56%	6%
Some college	19%	29%	45%	7%
College degree	30%	18%	51%	1%
Race*				
White	19%	21%	56%	4%
Nonwhite	34%	36%	25%	5%
Race & Education, White Voters*				
White, No College Degree	13%	26%	55%	6%
White, College Degree	27%	15%	56%	2%
Employment*				
Fulltime	29%	22%	45%	4%
Other	18%	30%	47%	5%
Retired	13%	23%	60%	4%
Income*				
Under \$35,000	13%	26%	56%	6%
\$35,000-\$75,000	20%	26%	51%	3%
Over \$75,000	32%	20%	45%	3%
"Born-again" or evangelical Christian*				
Yes	23%	34%	35%	8%
No	22%	20%	55%	3%
Region*				
Philadelphia & Southeast	33%	16%	47%	4%
Northeast	16%	16%	58%	11%
Allegheny & Southwest	12%	26%	60%	1%
Northwest	21%	25%	50%	4%
Central	18%	35%	43%	4%
Urban-Rural Classification**				
Large Central Metro	26%	15%	58%	1%
Large Fringe Metro	26%	20%	48%	6%
Medium Metro	19%	26%	50%	6%
Small Metro	17%	22%	56%	4%
Micropolitan	11%	51%	36%	2%
Noncore	14%	33%	51%	2%

* p<0.01 ** p<0.05

Table A-2: Gubernatorial Job Performance

Pennsylvania registered voters, June 2021

How would you rate the way that Tom Wolf 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	10%	89%	1%
Democrat	70%	29%	0%
Independent or something else	38%	58%	5%
Ideology*			
Liberal	88%	10%	1%
Moderate	44%	56%	0%
Conservative	14%	86%	1%
Gender*			
Female	48%	51%	1%
Male	29%	70%	1%
Age**			
Under 35	33%	67%	0%
35-54	30%	68%	2%
Over 55	46%	54%	1%
Education*			
HS or less	26%	74%	0%
Some college	36%	64%	0%
College degree	48%	49%	2%
Race			
White	39%	59%	1%
Nonwhite	37%	63%	1%
Race & Education, White Voters*			
White, No College Degree	32%	68%	0%
White, College Degree	50%	47%	3%
Employment			
Fulltime	38%	61%	1%
Other	33%	67%	0%
Retired	44%	56%	1%
Income			
Under \$35,000	38%	62%	0%
\$35,000-\$75,000	35%	65%	0%
Over \$75,000	45%	54%	1%
"Born-again" or evangelical Christian*			
Yes	26%	72%	2%
No	43%	56%	0%
Region			
Philadelphia & Southeast	48%	50%	1%
Northeast	41%	59%	0%
Allegheny & Southwest	36%	62%	2%
Northwest	34%	66%	0%
Central	31%	68%	1%
Urban-Rural Classification**			
Large Central Metro	45%	52%	3%
Large Fringe Metro	45%	55%	0%
Medium Metro	38%	62%	0%
Small Metro	36%	61%	3%
Metropolitan	19%	81%	0%
Noncore	24%	76%	0%
* p<0.01 ** p<0.05			

Table A-3: Presidential Job Performance

Pennsylvania registered voters, June 2021

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	10%	90%	0%
Democrat	84%	16%	0%
Independent or something else	42%	53%	5%
Ideology*			
Liberal	89%	9%	1%
Moderate	57%	42%	1%
Conservative	14%	86%	0%
Gender*			
Female	56%	42%	2%
Male	30%	69%	0%
Age**			
Under 35	46%	54%	0%
35-54	33%	65%	2%
Over 55	50%	49%	1%
Education*			
HS or less	31%	67%	1%
Some college	38%	62%	0%
College degree	55%	43%	2%
Race			
White	43%	56%	1%
Nonwhite	49%	51%	0%
Race & Education, White Voters*			
White, No College Degree	33%	66%	1%
White, College Degree	56%	42%	2%
Employment			
Fulltime	41%	58%	1%
Other	41%	59%	0%
Retired	50%	50%	0%
Income			
Under \$35,000	45%	55%	0%
\$35,000-\$75,000	41%	59%	0%
Over \$75,000	51%	48%	1%
"Born-again" or evangelical Christian*			
Yes	28%	72%	0%
No	50%	49%	1%
Region*			
Philadelphia & Southeast	60%	39%	1%
Northeast	36%	64%	0%
Allegheny & Southwest	47%	51%	2%
Northwest	35%	65%	0%
Central	30%	69%	1%
Urban-Rural Classification*			
Large Central Metro	57%	42%	2%
Large Fringe Metro	55%	44%	2%
Medium Metro	39%	61%	0%
Small Metro	29%	68%	3%
Micropolitan	18%	82%	0%
Noncore	20%	80%	0%

* p<0.01 ** p<0.05

Table A-4: Coronavirus Vaccinations

Pennsylvania registered voters, June 2021

Have you received a vaccine shot for COVID-19?

	Yes	No
Party**		
Republican	61%	39%
Democrat	94%	6%
Independent or something else	84%	16%
Ideology*		
Liberal	100%	0%
Moderate	82%	18%
Conservative	65%	35%
Gender		
Female	80%	20%
Male	76%	24%
Age		
Under 35	53%	47%
35-54	71%	29%
Over 55	87%	13%
Education		
HS or less	65%	35%
Some college	79%	21%
College degree	85%	15%
Race		
White	79%	21%
Nonwhite	75%	25%
Race & Education, White Voters		
White, No College Degree	72%	28%
White, College Degree	89%	11%
Employment		
Fulltime	75%	25%
Other	66%	34%
Retired	89%	11%
Income**		
Under \$35,000	66%	34%
\$35,000-\$75,000	75%	25%
Over \$75,000	85%	15%
"Born-again" or evangelical Christian		
Yes	73%	27%
No	80%	20%
Region		
Philadelphia & Southeast	93%	7%
Northeast	64%	36%
Allegheny & Southwest	77%	23%
Northwest	76%	24%
Central	71%	29%
Urban-Rural Classification		
Large Central Metro	86%	14%
Large Fringe Metro	93%	7%
Medium Metro	72%	28%
Small Metro	72%	28%
Micropolitan	54%	46%
Noncore	48%	52%

* p<0.01 ** p<0.05

Table A-5: Election Law Reform

Pennsylvania registered voters, June 2021

Generally speaking, do you think the state's election laws and procedures need to change, or not?

	Yes	No	Do not know
Party*			
Republican	75%	20%	5%
Democrat	46%	45%	9%
Independent or something else	52%	34%	14%
Ideology*			
Liberal	52%	43%	5%
Moderate	47%	46%	7%
Conservative	74%	16%	10%
Gender			
Female	56%	33%	11%
Male	62%	31%	7%
Age**			
Under 35	73%	12%	15%
35-54	61%	32%	7%
Over 55	55%	36%	9%
Education**			
HS or less	64%	21%	15%
Some college	61%	32%	7%
College degree	55%	38%	7%
Race			
White	58%	32%	10%
Nonwhite	62%	32%	6%
Race & Education, White Voters**			
White, No College Degree	63%	27%	10%
White, College Degree	52%	39%	8%
Employment			
Fulltime	59%	31%	10%
Other	57%	36%	7%
Retired	60%	32%	8%
Income*			
Under \$35,000	51%	34%	15%
\$35,000-\$75,000	72%	22%	6%
Over \$75,000	55%	39%	6%
"Born-again" or evangelical Christian			
Yes	65%	24%	11%
No	57%	35%	8%
Region			
Philadelphia & Southeast	57%	38%	5%
Northeast	57%	28%	15%
Allegheny & Southwest	55%	33%	12%
Northwest	76%	21%	4%
Central	60%	30%	10%
Urban-Rural Classification			
Large Central Metro	53%	42%	4%
Large Fringe Metro	60%	33%	6%
Medium Metro	57%	31%	12%
Small Metro	66%	25%	9%
Micropolitan	65%	23%	12%
Noncore	66%	13%	21%

* p<0.01 ** p<0.05