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# Franklin & Marshall College Poll: September 2024 *Summary of Findings*

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## Key Findings

The September 2024 Franklin & Marshall College Poll finds that concern about the economy (34%), including unemployment and higher gas and utility prices, continues as the most often mentioned problem facing the state, according to the state's registered voters. Half (46%) of respondents say they are "worse off" than a year ago, which is similar to how respondents have felt for most of the past several years. One in seven (15%) registered voters expects they will be "worse off" financially a year from now, which is less than the one in five (20%) who said so in August and is the lowest reported number since March 2021. Pennsylvania voters are more pessimistic than optimistic about conditions in the state with about half (48%) reporting the state is "off on the wrong track." Still, two in five (41%) believes things are "headed in the right direction," which is similar to last month and the highest proportion since October 2020.

The survey also includes notable findings about foreign policy issues:

- More of the state's registered voters believe that the United States should be less active in world affairs (37%) than more active (16%), although a plurality (41%) believes it should maintain its current level of activity.
- Pennsylvania's registered voters are equally divided about providing development and humanitarian aid to the Palestinians. One in three (32%) says the United States is providing too much aid and one in three (31%) says the United States is not providing enough aid.
- More of the state's registered voters believe the United States is providing too much (45%) rather than not enough (20%) economic and military aid to Israel.
- Three in five (61%) registered voters in Pennsylvania believes that the United States should provide more or the same amount of military support for Ukraine. One in five believes the United States should provide less military support (19%) to Ukraine and one in seven (15%) wants all military aid withdrawn.
- A plurality (48%) of registered voters thinks the United States should devote more resources to controlling immigration at the border, while one in four (26%) believes the United States should devote more resources to addressing the issues that cause migration and one in five (21%) believes it should do both.

Vice President Harris leads Donald Trump in Pennsylvania, 49% to 46%, in a multi-candidate race with third party candidates included. Supporters of the major party candidates are equally enthusiastic about their respective candidates: three in five supporters of each candidate are “very enthusiastic” about supporting them. Turnout is undoubtedly a key variable in this race and the balance of regular and less frequent voters will be determinative: Harris leads among those who regularly vote, 51% to 47%, but Trump has an advantage among less frequent voters, 47% to 46%. More voters believe Vice President Harris 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.

Senator Casey leads Republican David McCormick 48% to 40% in a head-to-head matchup for US Senate, which is narrower than the advantage he held over McCormick in most of our prior polls. About two in five (37%) registered voters in Pennsylvania believes Bob Casey is doing an “excellent” or “good” job as their US senator. Senator Casey is viewed more favorably (41%) than unfavorably (39%) by the state’s registered voters. David McCormick is viewed more unfavorably (44%) than favorably (30%) by the state’s voters, although about one in four (26%) do not know enough about him to express an opinion. McCormick’s unfavorability ratings have grown more than his favorability ratings during the course of the campaign so far.

## Detailed Findings

### *Direction of State and Personal Finances*

Half (46%) of respondents say they are “worse off” than a year ago, which is similar to how respondents felt much of the past several years. Most Republicans and conservatives say they are “worse off” than last year, but a quarter of Democrats (26%) and two in five independents (43%) also said they were “worse off” financially. One in seven (15%) registered voters expects they will

be “worse off” financially a year from now, which is less than the one in five (20%) who said so in August and is the lowest reported number since March 2021. Pennsylvania voters are more pessimistic than optimistic about conditions in the state with about half (48%) reporting the state is “off on the wrong track.” Still, two in five (41%) believe things are “headed in the right direction,” which is similar to last month and the highest proportion since October 2020 (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?*



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 (34%), 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 (9%), taxes (7%), education (6%), and crime (6%) are the other frequently expressed problems confronting the state.

The survey also includes notable findings about how the state's registered voters feel about foreign policy issues:

- More of the state's registered voters believe that the United States should be less active in world affairs (37%) than more active (16%), although a plurality (41%) believes it should maintain its current level of activity.
- Pennsylvania's registered voters are equally divided about providing development and humanitarian aid to the Palestinians. One in three (32%) says the United States is providing too much aid and one in three (31%) says the United States is not providing enough aid.
- More of the state's registered voters believe the United States is providing too much (45%) rather than not enough (20%) economic and military aid to Israel.
- Three in five (61%) registered voters in Pennsylvania believe that the United States should provide more or the same amount of military support for Ukraine. One in five believes the United States should provide less military support (19%) to Ukraine and one in seven (15%) wants all military aid withdrawn.
- A plurality (48%) of registered voters thinks the United States should devote more resources to controlling immigration at the border, while one in four (26%) believes the United States should devote more resources to addressing the issues that cause migration and one in five (21%) believes it should do both.

### *Presidential Politics*

Vice President Harris leads Donald Trump in Pennsylvania, 49% to 46%, in a multi-candidate race with third party candidates included (see Table A-2 for the demographic breakdowns). Both Harris and Trump perform similarly among their respective bases, but Harris currently has an advantage among registered independent (48% to 35%) and moderate voters (58% to 33%). There were no changes in voter preference pre- and post-debate. The top reasons that Harris voters are supporting her candidacy include character (17%), women's rights (15%), anti-Trumpism (12%), partisanship (10%), and democracy (8%). The top reasons voters provide for supporting Trump include economic policy (34%), immigration (15%), and partisanship (14%).

In September 2020, most of Mr. Trump's voters said they were voting for him (84%) while most of Mr. Biden's voters said they were voting against Trump (56%), not for Biden. Currently,

most (73%) Trump voters again say they are voting for him, but most (56%) Harris voters also say they are voting for the candidate and not against Trump.

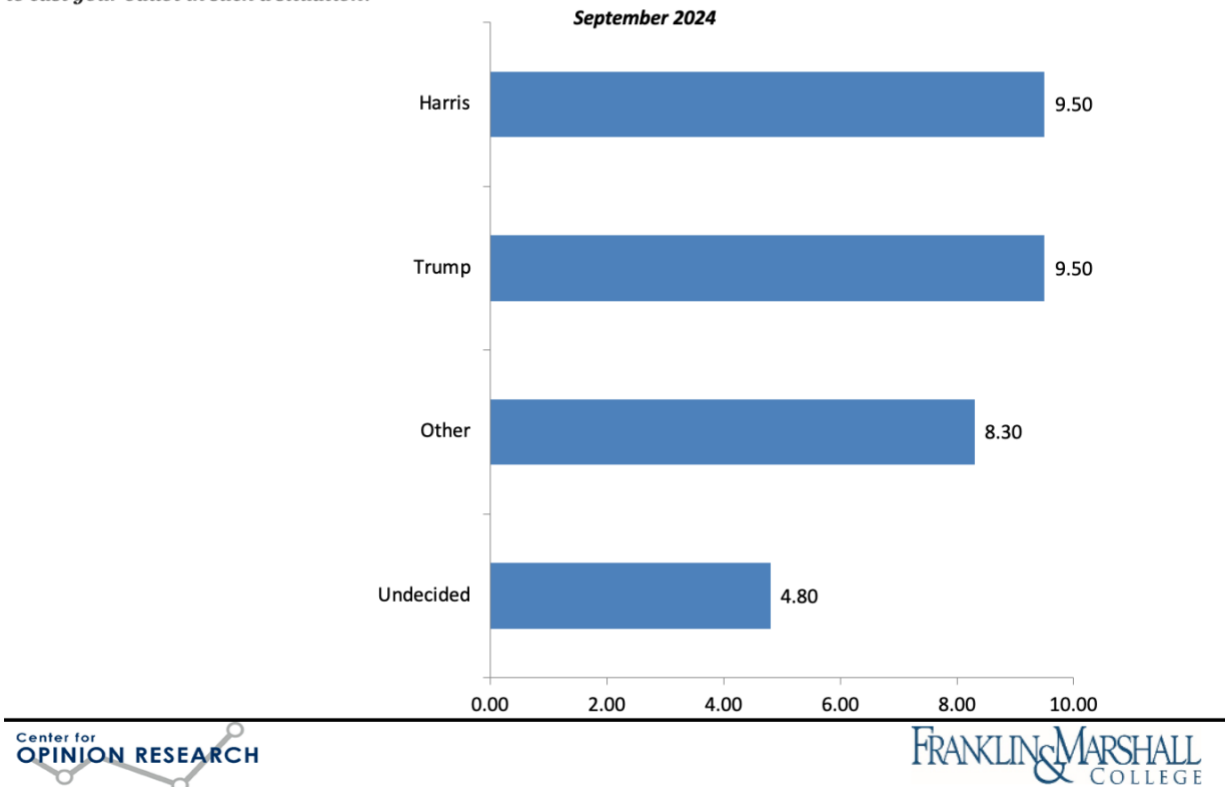
Supporters of the major party candidates are equally enthusiastic about their respective candidates: three in five supporters of each candidate are “very enthusiastic” about supporting them. The supporters of both major party candidates say they will make similar efforts to vote in November, but those voting for a third-party candidate or those who are undecided are willing to make considerably less effort to vote (see Figure 2). Turnout is undoubtedly a key variable in this race and the balance of regular and less frequent voters will be determinative: Harris leads among those who regularly vote, 51% to 47%, but Trump has an advantage among less frequent voters, 47% to 46%.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> In this instance, a regular voter is someone one who voted in at least four of the last five general election races in the state (n=491). Anyone who voted less often is considered a less frequent voter.

### Voting Enthusiasm by Vote Choice

Imagine a situation that could make it hard for you to cast your ballot this fall, such as having a family emergency or a work assignment that takes up a lot of your time and energy when you were planning to vote. Using a scale from 1 - 10 - with 1 meaning you'd make no effort at all to vote and 10 meaning you'd make every effort to vote - how much effort would you make to cast your ballot in such a situation?"



**Figure 2.** This figure shows how much effort Pennsylvania's registered voters are willing to make to vote in this election. Supporters of the major party candidates are willing to put much greater effort into voting than are supporters of third-party candidates or those who are currently undecided.

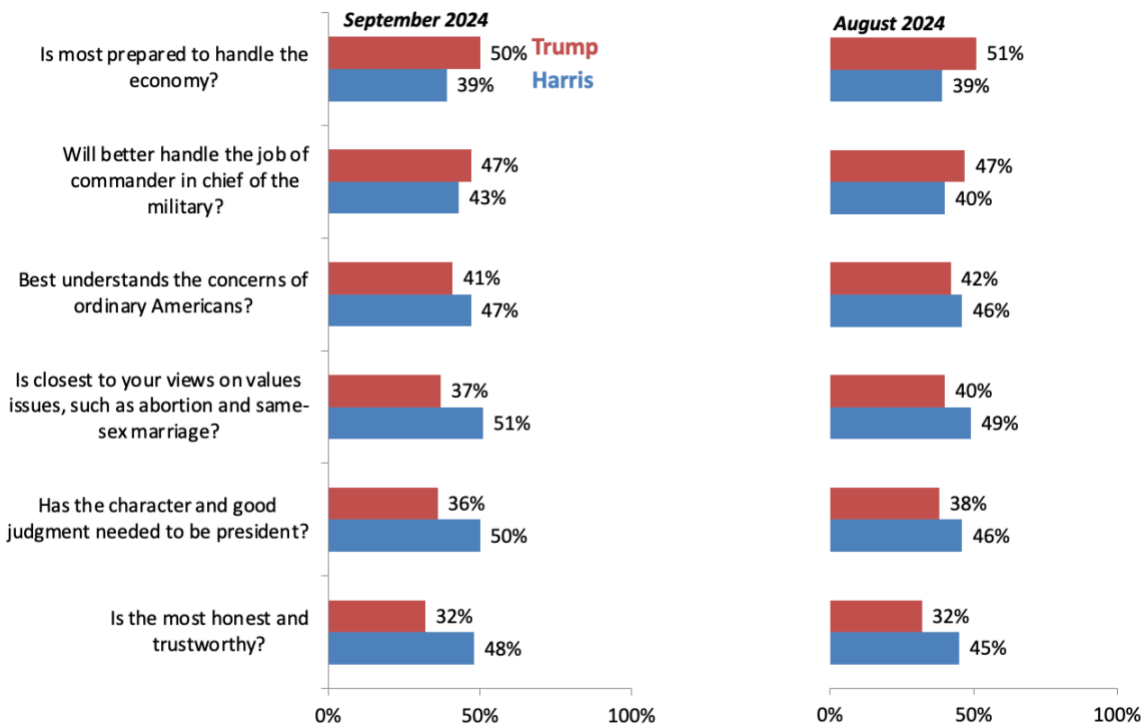
More voters believe Vice President Harris has better judgment, is more trustworthy, and is closer to their views on values issues than Mr. Trump, while more voters believe Mr. Trump is better able to handle the economy (see Figure 3). Vice President Harris improved her advantage over former President Trump pre- and post-debate on having the character and judgment to be president (from +8 to +14). More voters have an unfavorable (54%) than favorable (45%) opinion of Mr. Trump. Vice President Harris is perceived slightly more unfavorably (51%) than favorably (48%) by state voters. There were no changes in favorability ratings pre- and post-debate. Fewer (7%) voters have an "unfavorable" opinion of both candidates today than in April, when one in



five (18%) voters had an “unfavorable” opinion of both Joe Biden and Donald Trump.

**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 Kamala Harris or Donald Trump:*



**Figure 3.** This figure shows which candidate Pennsylvania’s registered voters believe is best described by each statement in August and September 2024.

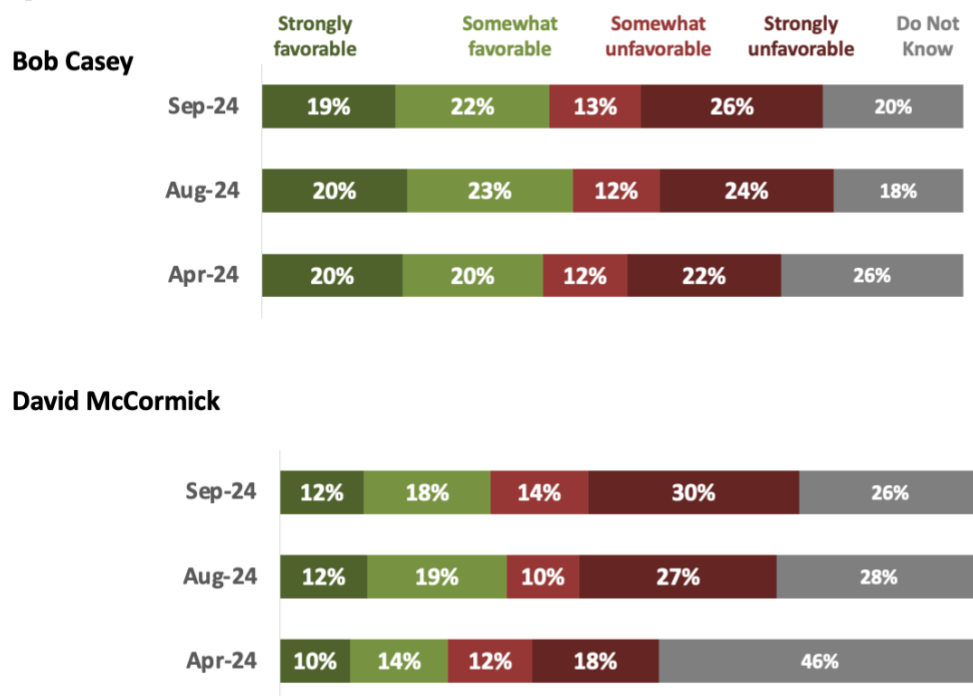
*US Senate*

About two in five (37%) registered voters in Pennsylvania believes Bob Casey is doing an “excellent” or “good” job as their US 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 September 2012 (38%) prior to his first re-election victory. One in seven (15%) voters says they don’t know enough about the Senator to rate his performance. A majority of Democrats (63%) rate Casey’s performance positively, while fewer

Republicans (10%) or Independents (31%) do so. Senator Casey is viewed more favorably (41%) than unfavorably (39%) by the state’s registered voters. David McCormick is viewed more unfavorably (44%) than favorably (30%) by the state’s voters, although about one in four (26%) do not know enough about him to express an opinion. McCormick’s unfavorability ratings have grown more than his favorability ratings since April (see Figure 4).

**Senate Favorability**

*Is your opinion of each of the following people favorable, unfavorable, or haven’t you heard enough about them to have an opinion?*



**Figure 4.** This figure shows the favorability ratings of Pennsylvania’s US Senate candidates in April, August, and September, 2024. Positive ratings are green and negative ratings are red.

Senator Casey leads Republican David McCormick 48% to 40% in a head-to-head matchup for US Senate, which is narrower than the advantage he held over McCormick in most of our prior polls. Casey maintains a larger share of his base than McCormick; more than four in five (83%) Democrats support him, but McCormick currently holds only three in four Republicans (75%).

Casey does better among independent voters, leading 49% to 33%. Voters who support Senator Casey most often mention partisanship (21%), honesty (10%), women’s rights (11%), experience (5%), and his residency in the state (6%) as the reasons they are voting for him. McCormick’s supporters mention partisanship (30%), economic policy (18%), negative sentiment about Senator Casey (11%), and immigration (5%) as the reasons they support him.

## Methodology

The survey findings presented in this release are based on the results of interviews conducted September 4 –15, 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 890 registered Pennsylvania voters, including 399 Democrats, 366 Republicans, and 125 Independents.<sup>2</sup> One quarter (n=278) of the interviewing was conducted after the September 10th debate. 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. An

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<sup>2</sup> 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=381), 10% as independent (n=83), and 44% as Democrat (n=383) and the balance not offering a response. Partisan comparisons in this summary show self-reported registration.

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 distribution. The standard deviation of the mean of 10,000 bootstrapped samples for the estimated vote share for Vice President Harris was 1.7% and 95% of the samples fell within a range of 46% and 52%.

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.

### *Questions from the Public about our Polling*

Q: Do you require your final sample to have specific numbers of people in certain groups, for example, do you use quotas for age, party, or region?

- The Franklin & Marshall College Poll does not use quotas, meaning we do not specify ahead of time how many people from each group is in our sample, although we may do more non-response outreach with groups that are underrepresented in our pool of completes.

Q: What proportion of interviews are conducted by calling cellphones? What are the overall percentages who completed the survey online and by phone?

- The Franklin & Marshall College Poll uses a mixed mode approach, which means that a person can respond over the telephone or online. One quarter (n=248) of the completed interviews in this poll were completed over the phone. Two-thirds (69%) of the telephone completes were identified as cell phones.

Q: Do you send any additional mailers or do other reminders to people who don't respond to your postcard invitation? How does non-response affect your surveys?

- The Franklin & Marshall College Poll's outreach to our sample always begins with a postcard mailer. Follow up outreach includes phone calls, emails, and text messages wherever that information is available. We will do up to four phone calls, two texts, and two emails (emails are not available for all respondents). Every respondent in our sample receives a unique ID that they must use to complete a survey. We also do some non-response assessment from time to time so that people who care about that can see it (for example, [here](#) is an assessment of our 2022 polling) and we always calculate bootstrapped sample error estimates in addition to the traditional estimates.

Q: How do you handle the "someone else" and "do not know" responses for respondents taking the survey online?

- Other and don't know options appear on screen for the online surveys. Don't know is not read to phone participants and isn't included in the online question text but is accepted when offered.

Q: Do you use any push or lean question when you ask about a head-to-head matchup for respondents who do not initially pick a named option?

- The Franklin & Marshall College Poll does ask people who initially say they don't know who they plan to vote for if they lean to one candidate. Our topline reports always show

the initial preference results and the leaners separately and then combined, and we normally tell readers which indicator we are reporting in our summaries.

Q: What is Aristotle and what gives you confidence that you have a representative sample?

- The way the Franklin & Marshall College Poll is conducted is sound because we follow [best practices](#) in our industry. We draw a random sample of voters from Aristotle, which is a company that many pollsters use to provide their samples (you can read more about them [here](#)). We then send a postcard to everyone in our sample letting them know we will be calling them, after which we follow up with phone calls, text messages, and emails depending on what kind of contact information is included for each voter. Survey participants can do the survey over the telephone or complete it online based on whichever method is more convenient. So we feel confident in the way we gather our data because we encourage participation and offer people lots of opportunities to participate.

Q: What's going on with party identification in your samples? In your subsets it seems like you oversampled Democrats.

- The question about party identification is important. Pennsylvania is one of those states where you need to be registered in a party at least 15 days prior to an election to vote and most voters in the state are registered as either Republicans or Democrats. You can get voter registration figures from the state's web site, which is [here](#). If you go to that page and download the statistics, you will find that 44% of the state's voters are registered as Democrats, 41% are registered as Republicans, and the rest (14%) are registered with a third party. If you compare the party breakdown in our samples you'll find that it matches those figures exactly, so we have the right partisan balance within our data. We write a lot about partisanship in the state (a list of some of those articles is [here](#)). It is worth noting

that party registration, which we report, is not necessarily the same as party identification, something explained [here](#).

Q: Many states' polls have listed immigration as the number one issue along with economy/inflation, yet your report barely mentions immigration?

- There are many ways to ask about issues. Our approach is simply to ask a question at the beginning of the survey about the most important problem facing the state today. Survey participants can say whatever comes to mind, after which we put their responses into categories. In this and other recent polls, the economy, education, and politicians are at the top of the list. Other pollsters give people lists of issues and ask people to rate each one or to select one issue from their list; it is often these formats that produce responses about immigration. We are not suggesting that one approach is better than the other, just that they are different ways of asking questions that sometimes produce different results.

## Table A-1: Direction of State

*Pennsylvania registered voters, September 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?*

	Right direction	Wrong track	Do not know
<b>Party*</b>			
Republican	15%	79%	7%
Democrat	66%	20%	14%
Independent or something else	34%	47%	20%
<b>Ideology*</b>			
Liberal	67%	18%	16%
Moderate	50%	37%	13%
Conservative	12%	83%	5%
<b>Gender</b>			
Female	42%	44%	13%
Male	39%	52%	10%
<b>Age*</b>			
Under 35	45%	34%	21%
35-54	40%	50%	10%
Over 55	41%	50%	10%
<b>Education*</b>			
HS or less	29%	60%	11%
Some college	37%	53%	10%
College degree	49%	37%	14%
<b>Race*</b>			
White	44%	46%	10%
Nonwhite	27%	56%	17%
<b>Race &amp; Education, White Voters*</b>			
White, No College Degree	36%	55%	9%
White, College Degree	54%	34%	12%
<b>Employment*</b>			
Fulltime	42%	46%	12%
Other	34%	47%	19%
Retired	44%	50%	7%
<b>Income*</b>			
Under \$35,000	43%	40%	17%
\$35,000-\$75,000	36%	58%	6%
Over \$75,000	48%	39%	12%
<b>"Born-again" or evangelical Christian*</b>			
Yes	20%	66%	14%
No	48%	41%	11%
<b>Region*</b>			
Philadelphia & Southeast	48%	44%	8%
Northeast	33%	56%	11%
Allegheny & Southwest	46%	39%	15%
Northwest	30%	58%	13%
Central	35%	52%	13%
<b>Urban-Rural Classification*</b>			
Large Central Metro	54%	31%	15%
Large Fringe Metro	43%	50%	7%
Medium Metro	38%	45%	17%
Small Metro	32%	59%	9%
Micropolitan	13%	81%	7%
Noncore	31%	61%	8%
	* p<0.01	** p<0.05	



## Table A-2: Presidential Vote Choice

*Pennsylvania registered voters, September 2024*

*If the 2024 election for President were being held today and the candidates were (rotate: Kamala Harris, the Democrat, Donald Trump, the Republican, Jill Stein, the Green, or Chase Oliver, the Libertarian, would you vote for ....?*

	Kamala Harris	Donald Trump	Jill Stein	Chase Oliver	Someone else	Do not know
<b>Party*</b>						
Republican	9%	86%	1%	1%	1%	2%
Democrat	86%	11%	0%	0%	1%	3%
Independent or something else	48%	35%	5%	0%	5%	7%
<b>Ideology*</b>						
Liberal	94%	4%	1%	0%	1%	1%
Moderate	58%	33%	2%	1%	2%	4%
Conservative	6%	89%	0%	1%	1%	3%
<b>Gender*</b>						
Female	55%	38%	2%	1%	1%	3%
Male	42%	52%	1%	1%	1%	3%
<b>Age*</b>						
Under 35	61%	32%	1%	0%	0%	5%
35-54	45%	48%	1%	2%	3%	1%
Over 55	48%	47%	1%	0%	0%	3%
<b>Education*</b>						
HS or less	37%	57%	1%	1%	2%	3%
Some college	45%	50%	1%	0%	1%	2%
College degree	58%	35%	1%	1%	2%	4%
<b>Race*</b>						
White	52%	43%	1%	0%	1%	3%
Nonwhite	36%	52%	4%	2%	2%	4%
<b>Race &amp; Education, White Voters*</b>						
White, No College Degree	43%	52%	1%	0%	1%	3%
White, College Degree	63%	31%	1%	0%	1%	3%
<b>Employment</b>						
Fulltime	46%	46%	1%	1%	1%	4%
Other	57%	38%	1%	0%	3%	1%
Retired	50%	46%	1%	1%	1%	2%
<b>Income</b>						
Under \$35,000	54%	39%	3%	0%	2%	1%
\$35,000-\$75,000	46%	47%	2%	0%	1%	3%
Over \$75,000	54%	41%	0%	1%	1%	3%
<b>"Born-again" or evangelical Christian*</b>						
Yes	23%	68%	0%	3%	3%	2%
No	58%	36%	2%	0%	1%	3%
<b>Region*</b>						
Philadelphia & Southeast	58%	35%	3%	1%	1%	2%
Northeast	43%	50%	0%	1%	2%	4%
Allegheny & Southwest	54%	39%	1%	0%	2%	5%
Northwest	43%	52%	0%	1%	2%	1%
Central	40%	55%	1%	1%	1%	3%
<b>Urban-Rural Classification*</b>						
Large Central Metro	72%	20%	2%	0%	2%	4%
Large Fringe Metro	45%	48%	2%	1%	1%	3%
Medium Metro	50%	44%	0%	1%	2%	3%
Small Metro	32%	59%	6%	1%	0%	2%
Metropolitan	19%	77%	0%	0%	0%	4%
Noncore	30%	70%	0%	0%	0%	0%

\* p<0.01 \*\* p<0.05

## Table A-3: Senate Vote Choice

*Pennsylvania registered voters, September 2024*

*If the 2024 election for US Senate were being held today and the candidates were Bob Casey, the Democrat, and David McCormick, the Republican, would you vote for Bob Casey OR David McCormick?*

	Bob Casey, the Democrat	David McCormick, the Republican	Someone else	Do not know
<b>Party*</b>				
Republican	9%	75%	5%	11%
Democrat	83%	7%	2%	8%
Independent or something else	49%	33%	4%	14%
<b>Ideology*</b>				
Liberal	90%	2%	2%	6%
Moderate	57%	27%	4%	12%
Conservative	9%	83%	2%	7%
<b>Gender*</b>				
Female	54%	31%	3%	12%
Male	43%	46%	3%	8%
<b>Age*</b>				
Under 35	59%	26%	0%	15%
35-54	46%	39%	5%	10%
Over 55	47%	43%	3%	7%
<b>Education*</b>				
HS or less	37%	51%	3%	9%
Some college	42%	42%	5%	11%
College degree	59%	30%	2%	9%
<b>Race*</b>				
White	51%	39%	2%	8%
Nonwhite	37%	37%	9%	17%
<b>Race &amp; Education, White Voters*</b>				
White, No College Degree	42%	47%	3%	9%
White, College Degree	63%	28%	1%	7%
<b>Employment</b>				
Fulltime	47%	39%	3%	11%
Other	52%	34%	4%	11%
Retired	49%	40%	3%	8%
<b>Income*</b>				
Under \$35,000	59%	31%	3%	6%
\$35,000-\$75,000	41%	41%	4%	14%
Over \$75,000	55%	35%	2%	8%
<b>"Born-again" or evangelical Christian*</b>				
Yes	21%	61%	4%	13%
No	58%	32%	2%	8%
<b>Region*</b>				
Philadelphia & Southeast	55%	31%	4%	10%
Northeast	46%	50%	0%	4%
Allegheny & Southwest	56%	32%	2%	10%
Northwest	45%	45%	4%	6%
Central	39%	44%	4%	13%
<b>Urban-Rural Classification*</b>				
Large Central Metro	71%	17%	4%	8%
Large Fringe Metro	44%	43%	3%	10%
Medium Metro	50%	37%	4%	9%
Small Metro	33%	52%	0%	16%
Micropolitan	21%	62%	3%	13%
Noncore	31%	62%	0%	8%

\* p<0.01 \*\* p<0.05