2022 Ram Poll

Pennsylvania State System of Higher Education

Election Survey

Summary of Findings

Prepared by:

WCU Election Poll Team

Laura Pyott   *Jessica Gorr*

Hayden Kanak   *Gianna Lafrance*

Emma Laughlin   *Connor McKee*

Jaiden Neff   *Evan Parker*

Julia Randazzo   *Jack Ross*

Katelyn Samples   *Elizabeth Seravello*

Ian Vanwright   *Kyle Weber*

Veronica Yeakel

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KEY FINDINGS

(OCTOBER 13-19, 2022, n=948)

The 2022 Ram Poll received 948 responses from undergraduate students attending ten universities at 13 campuses in the Pennsylvania State System of Higher Education (PASSHE). In all, 87% of the undergraduate students indicate that they are registered to vote. Of those who are registered, 31% are Republican, 53% are Democrat and 15% are Independent. PASSHE students are enthusiastic about this election with 89% stating that they will probably or certainly vote, or that they have already voted.

Students who said they were registered to vote (n=822) answered questions about the upcoming election. For the Pennsylvania governor election, 59% of PASSHE undergraduate students favor Democrat Josh Shapiro, 21% chose the Republican Doug Mastriano, and 19% do not know. For the U.S. Senator election, 56% of students chose the Democrat John Fetterman, 22% of students chose Republican Mehmet Oz, and 19% of students do not know. Regarding voting mode, 70% of students said they would vote in person while 87% will vote at their home address.

Students were asked to rate the job performance for both Governor Tom Wolf and President Joe Biden. Governor Wolf fared much better, with 47% rating his performance as "excellent" or "good." Meanwhile, 40% of students feel that President Biden has done "a poor job." In addition, students were asked how they felt they aligned politically. Overall, 36% of students identified as liberal, 36% identified as moderate, 17% identified as conservative, and 11% did not know.

Finally, students were asked how important certain policies are to them when making Election Day choices. The response options were "very important", "somewhat important", "not too important", and "not important at all" for a list of 13 issues. The issues that students found "very important" were education (74%), abortion (68%), healthcare (66%) and the economy (66%). Meanwhile, the policies at the bottom of the list were Covid policies (26%), energy policies (41%), and Supreme Court appointments (43%).

When asked to rank their three most important issues, students most frequently chose abortion (18%), then the economy (15%), education (14%), gun policy (11%), and climate change (10%) as their top priority. The issue that was most frequently ranked in the top three was abortion, with 50% of students choosing it as their first, second, or third priority.

INTERESTING CROSSTABULATIONS

VOTE CHOICE BY REGION-PA GOVERNOR (N=822)

Each respondent's county of permanent residence was recorded and aggregated to its respective region of Pennsylvania. Regions are described in Appendix table A3.

Current Pennsylvania Attorney General Josh Shapiro leads in every region, with a majority in every region except for the Central. In the Allegheny, Philadelphia, and Northeast regions, the "don't know" proportion exceeds Doug Mastriano's share. The Central region is the closest margin, where the differential is 17%.

REGION (N)	SHAPIRO	MASTRIANO	OTHER	DON'T KNOW
ALLEGHENY *(50)*	64%	10%	0%	26%
PHILADELPHIA *(43)*	64%	14%	0%	23%
SOUTHEAST *(194)*	59%	22%	1%	19%
NORTHEAST *(114)*	61%	15%	3%	22%
DUTCH *(167)*	65%	21%	1%	13%
WEST *(130)*	58%	22%	0%	20%
CENTRAL *(124)*	49%	32%	3%	16%

VOTE CHOICE BY REGION-US SENATOR (N=822)

John Fetterman leads in every region, with a majority in every region except for the Central. Fetterman's large lead in the Allegheny (Pittsburgh) region is not surprising, as his hometown of Braddock is nearby. One in five PASSHE students hail from the Dutch region, and 60% of these students supporting Fetterman. Many students are unsure of their choice, with "Don't know" response ranging from 15 to 26%. The Central region is the closest margin, where the differential is 16%.

REGION (N)	FETTERMAN	OZ	OTHER	DON'T KNOW
ALLEGHENY *(50)*	73%	8%	3%	16%
PHILADELPHIA *(43)*	55%	18%	2%	25%
SOUTHEAST *(194)*	59%	22%	2%	18%
NORTHEAST *(114)*	50%	18%	5%	26%
DUTCH *(167)*	60%	22%	2%	16%
WEST *(130)*	56%	22%	2%	21%
CENTRAL *(124)*	48%	32%	3%	15%

MODE OF VOTING BY PARTY (N=822)

Pennsylvania passed a law in 2019 allowing individuals to cast a mail ballot without needing an excuse. In the 2020 election, over 2.6 million votes were cast by mail and counted in the Commonwealth[1]. We asked students their method of voting, which is cross tabulated by party in the table below. We considered "By mail" to be either mailing a ballot or submitting a mail ballot in person at an Election Center. Vote by mail (VBM) held a higher percentage with Democratic students (59%) than Republican students (41%), perhaps not surprising given the emphasis placed on VBM by the Democrats as well as negative rhetoric and complaints of "fraud" by Republicans.

METHOD OF VOTING	DEMOCRATIC	REPUBLICAN	INDEPENDENT	OTHER	OVERALL
BY MAIL	41%	14%	25%	24%	30%
IN PERSON	59%	86%	75%	76%	70%

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[1] Pennsylvania Department of State website: https://www.dos.pa.gov/VotingElections/BEST/Pages/BEST-Election-Stats.aspx

TRUST IN POLLS BY PARTY (N=948)

The 2016 presidential election shook voters' faith in election polls. Many forecasters predicted a Clinton win. Combine this with recent rhetoric from candidates about polls being "phony"[2] and "unfair"[3] and it stands to reason that trust in election polls would be low. We asked the question, "How much do you trust public opinion polls?" The responses to this question are cross tabulated with Party in the table below. When combining the categories "A great deal" and "A good amount," trust in polls is higher with Democratic students (65%) than Republican students (47%), indicating that the opinions of Republican students may have been influenced by the rhetoric of their previous president. Both of these values have increased slightly from the 2020 Ram Poll, where trust in polls as defined above was 63% (D) and 39% (R).

TRUST IN POLLS	DEMOCRATIC	REPUBLICAN	INDEPENDENT	OTHER	OVERALL
A GREAT DEAL	6%	4%	3%	18%	5%
A GOOD AMOUNT	59%	43%	48%	29%	40%
NOT VERY MUCH	33%	46%	46%	47%	52%
NOT AT ALL	1%	6%	4%	6%	3%

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[2] https://www.cnn.com/2020/06/10/politics/trump-campaign-cnn-poll/index.html

[3] https://americanindependent.com/donald-trump-polls-2020-election-joe-biden-white-house-cnn/

METHODOLOGY

POPULATION OF INTEREST

Our intention is to capture the opinions of Pennsylvania college students. The Pennsylvania State System of Higher Education (PASSHE) is comprised of 14 universities across the state. The PASSHE system universities "enroll the largest number of Pennsylvania residents among all four-year colleges and universities in the Commonwealth."[4] Over 73,000 students currently attend PASSHE schools as undergraduates, and approximately 90% of them are Pennsylvania residents.[5] Students who attend and graduate from PASSHE schools are likely to be lifetime Pennsylvania residents, so capturing their political opinions may give an indication of which direction the state is moving. This year, 13 of the 14 universities agreed to participate in the 2020 Ram Poll. They are listed in Table A1 the Appendix. **Our target population was undergraduate students who are permanent Pennsylvania residents above the age of 18.**

SURVEY

The survey findings in this report are based on a web-based survey conducted from October 13 and October 19, 2022. We obtained random samples of email addresses from each participating university from the PASSHE Advanced Data Analytics Office. All email addresses were taken from our target population; the sample excluded out-of-state and international students as well as any students not of voting age.
Over 15,000 students received an email on Thursday, October 13 with a link to the Qualtrics survey. The initial email and all reminder emails are contained in a separate document and are available upon request. Each email explained that the survey was about the upcoming election and contemporary issues, that it would take no longer than 3 minutes to complete. The survey closed at 11:59PM on Wednesday, October 19.

INCENTIVE

Survey completion incentives have mixed reviews on effectiveness, but little literature exists of their effectiveness in the college student population. We conducted an in-survey experiment to

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[4] PASSHE Dashboard https://www.passhe.edu/About/Pages/About.aspx

[5] PASSHE Dashboard https://viz.passhe.edu/t/Public/views/Enrollment-PublicFinal/System?%3AisGuestRedirectFromVizportal=y&%3Aembed=y

test the theory that a small incentive would increase both our response rate and our survey completion rate. Campuses were randomized into two groups: incentive and control. Students at the incentive campuses (Clarion, Bloomsburg, Kutztown, West Chester, Edinboro, and Slippery Rock) were informed that upon completion they would receive a $5 electronic gift card from Tango. The remaining campuses (Millersville, Lock Haven, IUP, Shippensburg, Mansfield, East Stroudsburg, and California) did not receive a completion incentive. Campuses' geographical locations within Pennsylvania were considered when allocating to the groups.

The incentive was funded by a Lindback Teaching Award grant.

SAMPLE SIZE AND MARGIN OF ERROR

The resulting sample size was n = 948 students. Our response rate was 6.2%. Our sample of 948 students represent 1.4% of the target population. For the questions regarding the upcoming election, only students who said they were registered to vote were queried. This resulted in a slight reduction of the sample size to 822. The margin of error is +/- 3.2% for the full sample and +/- 3.4% for the reduced sample.

WEIGHTING

The purpose of weighting survey data is to rectify an imbalance between the target population and the sample data. If the sample does not match the population for variables that are suspected to affect responses (like sex and race), weighting can fix that imbalance. However, weighting is not "free." The cost of weighting survey data is larger margins of error and reduced accuracy. For the 2022 Ram Poll, we weighted based on sex, race, and region of the state of permanent residence because we believe that these variables influence a respondent's choices. The responses were weighted using the ANESRAKE procedure in R. The population and sample proportions for region, sex, and race are found in the Appendix in tables A3-A5. All demographic data for the population were obtained from the PASSHE Data Dashboard.

MARGINAL FREQUENCIES

TRUST – How much do you trust public opinion polls?

5%	*A great deal*
50%	*A good amount*
42%	*Not very much*
3%	*Not at all*

REG - Are you currently registered to vote in Pennsylvania?

87%	*Yes*
13%	*No*

PARTY - Are you currently registered as a Republican, a Democrat, an Independent, or something else?

31%	*Republican*
53%	*Democrat*
15%	*Independent*
2%	*Something else*

VOTENOV - What would you say are the chances that you will vote in the November election?

56%	*Certain to vote or already voted*
33%	*Probably vote*
6%	*Will probably not vote*
1%	*Will not vote*
4%	*Do not know*

ADDRESS - At which address are you registered to vote?

10%	*School residence*
87%	*Permanent residence*
3%	*Other address*

MODE - If you intend to vote, how will you vote?

    70%   *In person: I will visit a polling place on election day*
    30%   *By mail: I will mail (or have already mailed) in my ballot, or I will submit*
                        my mail ballot in person at an election center

VOTEGOV – If the 2022 election for Pennsylvania governor were being held today, for whom would you vote?

    56%   *Josh Shapiro (D)*
    21%   *Doug Mastriano (R)*
    19%   *Do not know*
    1%   *Other*

VOTESEN – If the 2022 election for U.S. Senator for Pennsylvania were being held today, for whom would you vote?

    56%   *John Fetterman (D)*
    22%   *Mehmet Oz (R)*
    19%   *Do not know*
    3%   *Other*

RATEGOV - How would you rate the way that Tom Wolf is handling his job as Governor?

    9%   *Excellent job*
    38%   *Good job*
    23%   *Only a fair job*
    22%   *A poor job*
    7%   *Do not know*

RATEPRES - How would you rate the way that Joe Biden is handling his job as president?

    5%   *Excellent job*
    19%   *Good job*
    34%   *Only a fair job*
    40%   *A poor job*
    2%   *Do not know*

IDEO - Politically speaking, do you consider yourself to be a liberal, a moderate, or a conservative?

36%   Liberal
36%   Moderate
17%   Conservative
11%   Do not know

ISSUES- How important are each of the following issues in making your election day decisions:

Abortion1

68%   Very Important
21%   Somewhat Important
7%   Not Too Important
3%   Not At All Important

The Economy2

66%   Very Important
30%   Somewhat Important
3%   Not Too Important
<1%   Not At All Important

Climate Change3

56%   Very Important
26%   Somewhat Important
13%   Not Too Important
5%   Not At All Important

Health Care4

66%   Very Important
27%   Somewhat Important
6%   Not Too Important
<1%   Not At All Important

Issues around race and ethnicity5

57%	*Very Important*
24%	*Somewhat Important*
11%	*Not Too Important*
<1%	*Not At All Important*

Education6

74%	*Very Important*
22%	*Somewhat Important*
4%	*Not Too Important*
<1%	*Not At All Important*

Immigration7

48%	*Very Important*
34%	*Somewhat Important*
15%	*Not Too Important*
3%	*Not At All Important*

Gun Policy8

61%	*Very Important*
25%	*Somewhat Important*
11%	*Not Too Important*
3%	*Not At All Important*

Supreme Court Appointments9

43%	*Very Important*
32%	*Somewhat Important*
20%	*Not Too Important*
6%	*Not At All Important*

Energy Policy10

41%	*Very Important*
37%	*Somewhat Important*
18%	*Not Too Important*
3%	*Not At All Important*

COVID-19 Policies11

26%   Very Important
34%   Somewhat Important
24%   Not Too Important
16%   Not At All Important

Violent Crime12

53%   Very Important
35%   Somewhat Important
10%   Not Too Important
2%   Not At All Important

Voting Policies13

44%   Very Important
33%   Somewhat Important
18%   Not Too Important
5%   Not At All Important

TOP 3 – Of the issues above which would you consider the top three you care about the most?
First % top priority, then % in the top three.

18%   50%   Abortion
15%   41%   The economy
10%   31%   Climate Change
9%   35%   Health Care
6%   22%   Issues around race and ethnicity
14%   37%   Education
4%   10%   Immigration
11%   29%   Gun Policy
2%   7%   Supreme Court Decisions
1%   5%   Energy Policy
<1%   2%   COVID-19 Policy
5%   14%   Violent Crime
2%   5%   Voting Policies

FIRSTGEN - Are you a first-generation college student?

38%   Yes
62%   No

REGION - In which county is your permanent residence? (regions defined in Appendix Table A3)

5%   *Allegheny*
3%   *Philadelphia*
26%   *Southeast*
10%   *Northeast*
21%   *Dutch*
16%   *West*
18%   *Central*

RACE – Which of the following categories best describes your racial or ethnic background?

5%   *Hispanic*
83%   *White*
7%   *Black or African American*
2%   *Asian*
4%   *Other*

REL - What is your religious affiliation, if any?

16%   *Catholic*
36%   *Christian*
1%   *Jewish*
<1%   *Muslim*
42%   *No religion*
4%   *another religion*

SEX- What is your legal sex?

67%   *Female*
33%   *Male*

GENDER – To which gender identity do you most identify?

64%   *Female*
31%   *Male*
0.5%   *Transgender female*

0.1%   Transgender male
3%   Gender Variant/Non-conforming
1%   Not Listed
0.5%   Preferred Not to Answer

NUDGE - If you are not registered to vote, you can still do so until October 24th. Registering to vote online is easy. It takes only a few minutes. You will just need your driver's license or social security number. Knowing this, will you now register to vote?

82%   I am already registered to vote.
9%   Yes! I will register to vote.
3%   No, I do not want to register.
5%   I'm still thinking about it.

APPENDIX

TABLE A1 PARTICIPATING PASSHE UNIVERSITIES

PASSHE CAMPUS	*TOTAL UNDERGRADUATE ENROLLMENT*	*PROPORTION OF TOTAL PASSHE ENROLLMENT*
BLOOMSBURG	*7095*	*10%*
CALIFORNIA	*4321*	*6.1%*
CLARION	*3310*	*4.7%*
EAST STROUDSBURG	*4011*	*5.7%*
EDINBORO	*2716*	*3.9%*
INDIANA	*7530*	*10.7%*
KUTZTOWN	*6055*	*8.6%*
LOCK HAVEN	*2604*	*3.7%*
MANSFIELD	*1466*	*2.1%*
MILLERSVILLE	*5923*	*8.4%*
SHIPPENSBURG	*4896*	*7%*
SLIPPERY ROCK	*6706*	*9.5%*
WEST CHESTER	*13311*	*18.9%*

TABLE A2 CAMPUS EMAIL REQUESTS AND RESPONSE RATES

PASSHE CAMPUS	EMAIL ADDRESSES REQUESTED	RESPONSE COUNT	RESPONSE RATE	PROPORTION OF TOTAL SAMPLE
BLOOMSBURG*	1539	10	0.6%	1%
CALIFORNIA	943	57	6.0%	6%
CLARION*	723	58	8.0%	6%
EAST STROUDSBURG	877	27	3.1%	3%
EDINBORO*	593	46	7.8%	5%
INDIANA	1645	70	4.3%	7%
KUTZTOWN*	1322	20	1.5%	2%
LOCK HAVEN	570	41	7.2%	4%
MANSFIELD	320	29	9.1%	3%
MILLERSVILLE	1294	70	5.4%	7%
SHIPPENSBURG	1070	99	9.3%	10%
SLIPPERY ROCK*	1465	88	6.0%	9%
WEST CHESTER*	2906	333	11.5%	35%
OVERALL	15384	948	6.2%	

*INCENTIVE GROUP

TABLE A3 REGION ASSIGNMENT

REGION	COUNTIES	POPULATION PROPORTION	SAMPLE PROPORTION
ALLEGHENY	Allegheny	6%	5%
PHILADELPHIA	Philadelphia	5%	3%
SOUTHEAST	Bucks, Chester, Delaware, Montgomery	23%	26%
NORTHEAST	Carbon, Lackawanna, Lehigh, Luzerne, Monroe, Northhampton, Pike, Schuylkill, Susquehanna, Wayne, Wyoming	14%	10%
DUTCH	Adams, Berks, Cumberland, Dauphin, Franklin, Lancaster, Lebanon, Perry, York	20%	21%
WEST	Beaver, Butler, Cambria, Crawford, Erie, Fayette, Greene, Lawrence, Mercer, Somerset, Washington, Westmoreland	16%	17%
CENTRAL	Armstrong, Bedford, Blair, Bradford, Cameron, Centre, Clarion, Clearfield, Clinton, Columbia, Elk, Forest, Fulton, Huntingdon, Indiana, Jefferson, Juniata, Lycoming, McKean, Mifflin, Montour, Northumberland, Potter, Snyder, Sullivan, Tioga, Union, Venango, Warren	16%	18%

TABLE A4 SEX DISTRIBUTION

SEX	POPULATION PROPORTION	SAMPLE PROPORTION
FEMALE	59%	67%
MALE	41%	33%

TABLE A5 RACE DISTRIBUTION

RACE	POPULATION PROPORTION	SAMPLE PROPORTION
ASIAN	*2%*	*2%*
BLACK	*10%*	*7%*
HISPANIC	*7%*	*5%*
OTHER	*6%*	*4%*
WHITE	*75%*	*83%*