

Introduction

The following summary report presents the findings of a survey conducted between January 5 and January 9, 1999 at Millersville University. The purpose of the survey is to help interested observers understand the context of the Philadelphia mayoral election, the issues important to voters, and where the candidates currently stand relative to one another. The telephone survey, conducted by the Center for Politics and Public Affairs at Millersville University, obtained interviews with a random sample of 501 adult Philadelphians. Included in the sample were a total of 250 Democrats, 92 Republicans, and 44 independent/other voters. The sampling error for the survey is plus or minus 4.4 percent, but is larger for subgroups. As with all opinion surveys, these results are also subject to non-sampling errors. Non-sampling errors are best defined as errors that arise from interviewing, questionnaire design, and data analysis.

As you read the report, you will notice three major findings. First, residents of the city are happier today than they have been in the past about the condition of the city, but they continue to be very concerned about crime. Second, the survey finds that Ed Rendell is an extraordinarily popular politician, who is given most credit for improving the city's finances. And finally, the current candidates for mayor have a lot of work to do in the coming months to raise their name recognition among city voters.

We hope you find this report both interesting and useful. Look for future reports on Philadelphia's 1999 Mayoral election in the coming months.

G. Terry Madonna, Director
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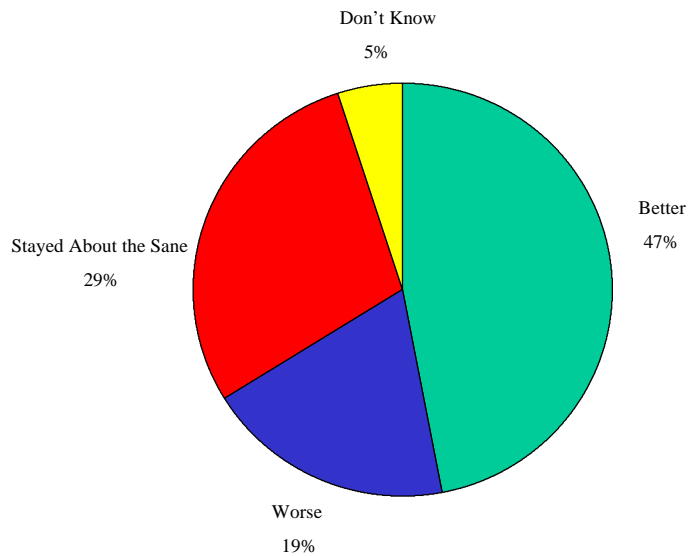
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The Condition of the City: Philadelphia Residents' Pre-campaign Attitudes

General Attitudes Toward Philadelphia

Heading into this year's mayoral election, city residents have strong, positive feelings about Philadelphia as a place to live, and about the direction in which it is headed. Two out of every three (66%) city residents believe the city is moving in the right direction. And, as Figure 1 shows, most city residents think that the condition of Philadelphia has improved as a place to live over the past four years--only one in five city residents believes Philadelphia today is a worse place to live than it was four years ago. In fact, half (49%) of all city residents rate Philadelphia as an 'excellent' or 'good' place to live, and fewer than one in ten (9%) consider it a 'poor' place to live.

Figure 1. All things considered, do you think Philadelphia has gotten better or worse than it was four years ago, or has it stayed about the same as a place to live?

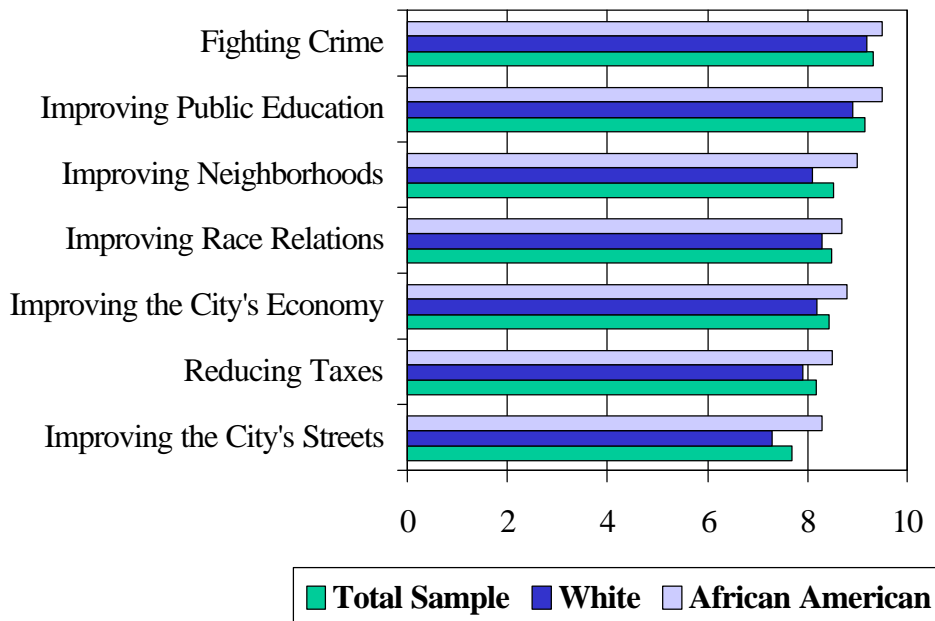


Issue Priorities

Crime is the biggest concern of city residents. Half (50%) say that crime is the most important problem facing the city of Philadelphia today, a far more dominant concern than elsewhere in the state. The August Keystone Poll found that only 16% of a state-wide sample mentioned crime as the state's most important problem. Other concerns for city residents included unemployment (11%), welfare (11%), education (7%), and taxes (3%), although none came close to the concerns about crime.

We also asked residents how important it would be for the next mayor to address seven specific issues. As with our open-ended question, city residents say fighting crime should be the next mayor's top priority. Unlike the top-of-mind results, city residents believe improving public education is a top tier issue too. We did find that the priorities for white and African-American respondents differ. African-Americans place more importance on every issue than whites. Importantly, improving public education and fighting crime are tied as African-American's top issue priority, followed by improving the condition of the City's neighborhoods. For white respondents, improving public education is second to fighting crime, and improving the neighborhoods ranks fifth out of the seven items in the list. Figure 2 presents city residents' issues priorities as well as a comparison of responses by self-described racial group.

Figure 2. I'm going to read you some issues that have been in the news recently. For each one, please tell me how important it is for the next mayor to address that issue. Please give each statement a score between 1 and 10, where 1 means it is not important at all and 10 means it is very important. How important is it that the next mayor works on...

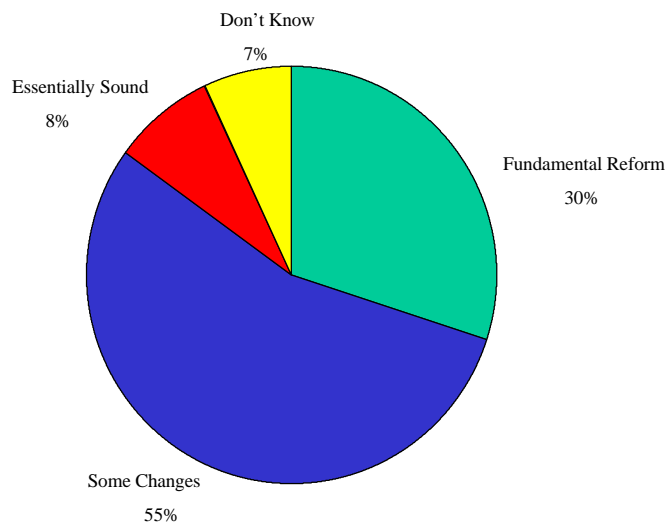


Public Education

The optimism that city residents feel about Philadelphia as a place to live does not carry over to their feelings about the city's public schools. Although a majority (56%) of city residents say the schools

have done better or stayed about the same during the past few years, more than one in four (28%) believes that the public schools have gotten worse during that time. (It is worth noting that residents who have children of school-age are a bit more optimistic about the performance of Philadelphia public schools during the past few years—60% believe the schools have done better or stayed the same during the past few years.) As figure 3 reveals, nearly a third of city residents believe that the public schools must be fundamentally reformed, whereas only one in ten thinks the public schools are essentially sound. Citizens place the blame for the condition of the public schools at the feet of many people; politicians (18%), the school board (18%), parents (15%), and the superintendent (13%) all share the blame, according to Philadelphia residents.

Figure 3. Thinking about the Philadelphia public schools for a moment, which of the following best reflects your feelings? The public schools are a mess and need to be fundamentally reformed, the public schools have some problems that need to be changed, or the public schools have some problems but are essentially sound?

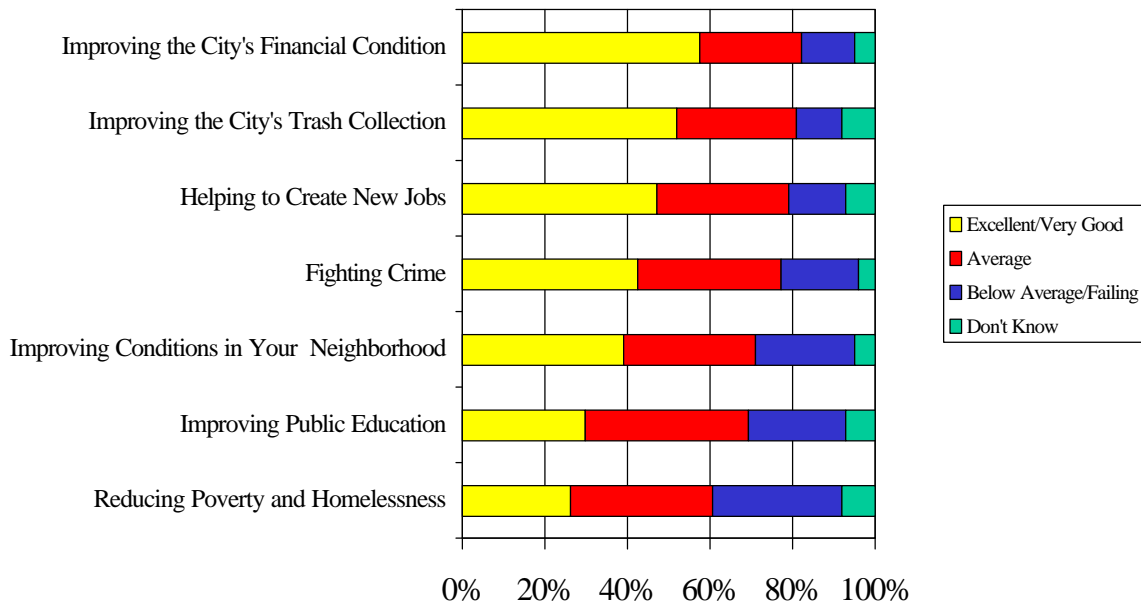


Evaluating the Mayor

Performance on Key Issues

Philadelphia residents give the Mayor and his administration high marks, particularly for his efforts to improve the city's economy. Nearly 60 percent of city residents believe Mayor Rendell did an 'excellent' or 'very good' job of improving the city's financial condition, and almost half say he was 'excellent' or 'very good' at creating jobs. In only one of the seven issue areas tested, reducing poverty and homelessness in the city, did more citizens give Rendell a 'below-average' or 'failing' grade than gave him an 'excellent' or 'very good' grade. There are differences between whites and African-Americans in evaluations of the Mayor's performance. African-Americans give the Mayor lower grades than whites for improving the city's financial condition, improving conditions in the neighborhoods, and fighting crime. Figure 4 presents city residents' evaluations of the performance of the Rendell administration on seven specific issues.

Figure 4. I am going to read you a list of problems and issues that the city government is supposed to take care of. For each item, please tell me how well Mayor Rendell's administration has performed in each area, using an A,B,C,D, or F. How about _____? Would you rate the Mayor's performance as an A for excellent, a B for very good, as a C for average, as a D for below average or as an F for failing?



Personal Popularity

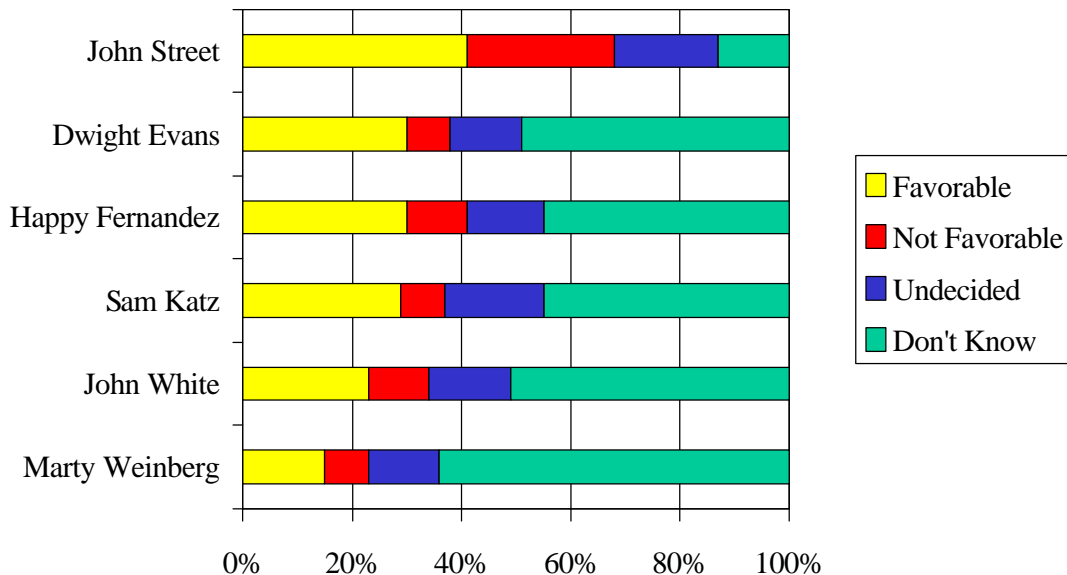
Given the positive evaluations of his administration's performance, it should be no surprise that Mayor Rendell is incredibly popular among the city's registered voters. Four out of every five (80%) voters have a favorable opinion of the mayor, whereas less than one in ten (7%) has an unfavorable opinion of him. Rendell's personal popularity could make a difference in the upcoming mayoral election--one in four (24%) city voters would be more likely to vote for a mayoral candidate who had Mayor Rendell's endorsement.

Pre-Campaign Evaluations of the Mayoral Candidates

Name Identification

Only one of the six major candidates for mayor, John Street, is known by a substantial majority of the city's voters. As figure 5 shows, with the exception of John Street, all of the candidates for mayor have a long way to go to develop name recognition among the city's voters.

Figure 5. I'd like to ask you a few questions about some people involved in Philadelphia politics. Is your opinion of ... favorable, not favorable, undecided, or haven't you heard enough about ... yet to have an opinion?



Favorability scores are related in some instances to both party affiliation and racial background. John Street, Dwight Evans, and John White all receive more favorable ratings from African-American respondents than they do from white respondents. Sam Katz receives more favorable mentions from whites than from African-Americans. In terms of party, Dwight Evans and John White both receive more favorable mentions from Democrats than they do from Republicans. Table 1 shows how candidates are rated by respondents in relation to political party affiliation and race.

Table 1. Favorability Scores by Party Affiliation and Racial Background

	Total Sample Percent Favorable	Republican	Democrat	Independent	White	African American
John Street	41%	29%	46%	49%	36%	50%
Dwight Evans	30%	17%	38%	2%	15%	52%
Happy Fernandez	30%	31%	31%	34%	33%	26%
Sam Katz	29%	34%	29%	16%	38%	18%
John White	23%	16%	27%	36%	13%	40%
Marty Weinberg	15%	13%	16%	13%	18%	10%

The Horse Race

When asked in an open-ended format who they would most like to run for mayor, Ed Rendell turns up again. Just over one in ten (11%) voters said they would most like to see Rendell run again, even though the Philadelphia city charter prevents him from serving a third term. About the same number (10%) said they would most like John Street to run. Sam Katz is the only other candidate mentioned top-of-mind by five percent of registered voters, although this picture changes a bit when looked at by race. For white respondents, Rendell (12%), Katz (8%), Street (6%), and Abraham (5%) are mentioned most frequently. African-Americans mentioned Street (15%), Evans (9%), Rendell (8%), and White (6%) most often.

The race in the Democratic primary currently finds John Street the top choice of Democratic voters, followed in second place by Dwight Evans, although there are racial differences evident in vote choice. Table 2 shows voter preferences for the Democratic mayoral primary field as well as vote choice by racial category. Street’s lead over Evans is smaller among African-Americans than among white voters.

Table 2. If the Democratic primary for Philadelphia’s mayor were being held today and the candidates were John Street, Marty Weinberg, Dwight Evans, John White, or Happy Fernandez, would you vote for ...

	<u>Total Vote</u>	<u>White</u>	<u>African American</u>
John Street	27%	25%	28%
Dwight Evans	13%	4%	20%
John White	12%	9%	15%
Happy Fernandez	11%	18%	5%
Marty Weinberg	3%	6%	1%
Don’t Know	34%	39%	31%

Note: Asked of Registered Democrats only.

Summary

The purpose of this Keystone Poll is to help interested observers understand the context of the Philadelphia Mayoral election, the issues that are important to voters, and where the candidates currently stand in the eyes of the city's voters.

Know first that this election is taking place at a time when Philadelphians feel good about where they live. Right now, two-thirds say the city is moving in the right direction, half believe the city is an excellent or good place to live, and half think the city is a better place to live than it was just four years ago. Compare this to four years ago, when only 46 percent of city residents thought the city was headed in the right direction, and less than one in three thought Philadelphia was a better place to live than it was at the beginning of Rendell's first term. Clearly, Philadelphians feel better about the city at the end of Rendell's second term than they did at the end of his first term.

But if the level of optimism has changed, Philadelphian's top issue concerns have not. In 1995, 57 percent of city residents mentioned crime as the top concern, and 11 percent mentioned unemployment. Today, 50 percent mention crime and 11 percent mention unemployment. There has been no discernible change in the issues of top-of-mind concern to city residents during the past four years.

So where does that leave Rendell, given that city residents feel good, but knowing that their long-standing concern about crime persists? The short answer is that Rendell is an extraordinarily popular politician. About four out of five citizens view him favorably, and there's no difference in how whites and African Americans feel about him. In fact, his endorsement of a mayoral candidate could turn one of the candidates into the winner. The longer answer is that Rendell is credited with doing many things well, and is most credited with improving the city's financial condition. Perhaps city residents see this fiscal discipline as a necessary first step to get to where they want to go in regards to crime and other important issues. What are those issues? In various ways the survey suggests three important issues in addition to crime and unemployment: improving public education, improving the condition of the neighborhoods, and dealing with welfare.

So is there a person that city voters are ready to elect to deal with these issues? As of right now, the mayoral candidates are relatively unknown and no clear leader has emerged. Only John Street is recognized by a substantial number of the city's registered voters. Obviously that will change as the primary season moves along. Consistent with his higher name recognition, John Street leads an early test of voters' intentions. He garners 27 percent of the vote, followed by Dwight Evans at 13 percent, John White at 12 percent, and Happy Fernandez at 11 percent. Marty Weinberg trails with three percent.

All of this suggests a hotly contested primary focused on the issues of crime, education, welfare, and unemployment. The survey also suggests that Rendell could be influential in determining the ultimate winner of the Democratic primary.