

The Race for Mayor

Democrat John Street and Republican Sam Katz are locked in an extremely close race to succeed Ed Rendell as Philadelphia's next mayor. Sam Katz holds a slim one-point lead over John Street, 39% to 38%, with nearly one in four (24%) voters still undecided. The conclusion: either candidate can win the mayoral contest.

Candidate support is best predicted by race, even when party affiliation is taken into account. Overall, two-thirds of white voters say they will support Sam Katz and two-thirds of African-American voters plan to vote for John Street. As Table 1 shows, about six in ten (58%) African-Americans who are registered Republicans say they will vote for Street, while the same proportion of Whites (60%) who are registered as Democrats plan to vote for Katz. The problem for Street is that there are many more whites registered as Democrats than there are African-Americans registered as Republicans. This will, of course, make Street's support among Democrats appear much weaker than Katz's support among Republicans; more than three in four (76%) Republicans support Katz, while less than half (46%) of Democrats currently support Street.

		<u>White</u>	<u>African-American</u>	<u>Other</u>
<u>All Votes</u>	Street	14%	66%	37%
	Katz	67%	13%	30%
	Don't Know	19%	21%	33%
<u>Republicans</u>	Street	3%	58%	10%
	Katz	89%	33%	60%
	Don't Know	9%	8%	30%
<u>Democrats</u>	Street	19%	69%	43%
	Katz	60%	10%	19%
	Don't Know	21%	21%	38%
<u>Independent/Other</u>	Street	20%	50%	43%
	Katz	40%	20%	43%
	Don't Know	40%	30%	14%

Street's one advantage over Katz is that Street's supporters are more firm in their vote choice. Four in five (80%) Street voters are "certain" to vote for him, while not quite three in four (72%) Katz voters are "certain" to vote for him.

During the summer, two of Street's Democratic primary challengers, John White and Happy Fernandez, endorsed Sam Katz. These candidates' voters are following their lead. Among those who voted for John White, 37% are planning to vote for Katz and 24% for Street, with the balance (39%) undecided about their choice. Happy Fernandez's supporters go for Katz by a 69% to 15% margin. More than four in five (83%) Weinberg supporters plan to vote for Katz, even though Weinberg endorsed Street.

The candidates' favorability ratings have changed somewhat since the campaign for mayor began in January. As Table 2 illustrates, Sam Katz has been able to increase his name recognition among voters, essentially in a positive direction. At the same time, the proportion of voters who view John Street favorably has declined.

Table 2. Candidate Favorability Scores, January and October 1999

I'd like to ask you a few questions about some people involved in Philadelphia politics. Is your opinion of [INSERT NAME] favorable, not favorable, undecided, or haven't you heard enough about [INSERT NAME] the person the have an opinion?

	Street		Katz	
	<u>1/99</u>	<u>10/99</u>	<u>1/99</u>	<u>10/99</u>
Favorable	41%	34%	29%	39%
Unfavorable	27%	27%	9%	12%
Undecided	19%	28%	18%	27%
Don't Know	13%	11%	45%	23%

Problems and Issues

More than one-third (37%) of city residents believe crime is the most important problem facing Philadelphia, followed closely by education (27%). These problems, however, are less of a concern when residents consider the most important problem they face. As Table 3 shows, almost one in four (23%) say the economy and personal finances are the biggest problems facing them personally. City residents also say they are personally affected by problems of crime (14%), education (12%), taxes (9%), and health care (5%). These perceptions could play an important part on election day, as voters are likely to vote for the candidate they believe can do the best job of dealing with the problems they confront on a personal level.

Table 3. Most Important Problem

Now I'd like to ask you about some issues and problems facing Philadelphia today. First,...

<p>What do you think is the most important problem facing Philadelphia today?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 37% Crime, Drugs 27% Education 15% Other 8% Unemployment, Economy 5% Taxes 4% Don't know 2% Environment 1% Government 1% Population, sprawl 	<p>What do you think is the most important problem facing you and your family today?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 23% Economy, Personal finances 17% Other 14% Crime, Drugs 12% Education 9% Taxes 8% Nothing 8% Don't know 5% Health care 2% Transportation 1% Environment 1% Government 1% Population, sprawl 1% Welfare
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In addition, city residents believe the candidates have very different strengths when it comes to addressing various issues, as illustrated in Table 4. Street is believed to be the candidate who can do the best job of improving neighborhoods (40%), improving race relations (39%), improving public education (38%), and improving city

streets (37%). On the other hand, residents believe Katz can do the best job of improving the economy (46%), keeping the city in good financial shape (45%), and reducing taxes (41%). The candidates fared equally well on the issue of reducing crime, with one-third of residents supporting both Street (33%) and Katz (35%).

Table 4. Candidates' Ability to Address Issues

I'm going to read you some issues that have been in the news recently. Please tell me which mayoral candidate you think can do the best job of addressing each issue I read. Which mayoral candidate do you think has the best idea for?



