

Akron Buckeye Poll Spring 2008

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Executive Summary

The survey findings cover two general areas, an assessment of Ohio, government and politics, and baseline information for the 2008 general election campaign in Ohio.

Assessment of Ohio, Government and Politics

The Ohio public has a negative view of the direction of the state, especially the economy, and a mixed but improving assessment of Ohio government and politics.

A slim majority of adult Ohioans reported that the state was on the “wrong track” overall (52.3%). A large majority said that the Ohio economy was on the “wrong track” (74.4%), and a majority said the state’s moral climate was on the “wrong track” as well (55.2%).

When asked about their confidence that state government would successfully address major problems, Ohioans offered mixed assessments. However, confidence in state government has increased compared to 2005.

Ohioans gave Governor Strickland a positive job performance evaluation, with 53.5% saying he is doing an “excellent or good” job. Ohioans gave lower evaluations to the state supreme court (45.6% “excellent or good”) and state legislature (29.8%). The evaluations of all three branches of Ohio government also improved over 2005.

The public’s assessment of the quality of Ohio politics also increased, with 36.3% reporting high quality political process. More than one-half of Ohioans reported “a great deal of confidence” that their presidential vote would be fairly counted (52.8%). This figure is largely unchanged from 2006.

Baseline Information for the 2008 Presidential Campaign in Ohio

Economic issues are the top priority for Ohioans as they look toward the 2008 presidential election, and the Democratic Party has an advantage over the Republican Party before the start of the general election campaign.

Ohioans say that economic issues, such as jobs and prices, will be most important to their 2008 presidential vote (47.5%) followed by foreign policy issues, such as the Iraq

war and terrorism (24.8%), domestic issues, such as public services and taxes (16.8%), and social issues, such as abortion and same-sex marriage (10.9%).

Overall, Ohioans see sharp differences between the major political parties on these issues. The public favors the Democrats over the Republicans on economic issues (65.1 to 31.3%) and domestic issues (58.5 to 38.2%), but is more evenly divided on foreign policy (47.8 to 46.0%), and social issues (48.5 to 44.6%).

In terms of issue positions, Ohioans assign more responsibility for creating jobs to business than to government (62.9 to 37.1%), and on balance prefer smaller government with fewer services to a larger government with more services (54.1 to 45.9%).

The Ohio public is more divided on the Iraq war with 50.8% favoring the withdrawal of troops as soon as possible and 49.2% favoring keeping troops deployed until the situation is stabilized. On abortion, 52% favor legal abortions in most circumstances and 48% favor restricting abortion.

Overall, a large majority of Ohioans favor a generic Democrat over a Republican in the presidential election, and a large majority believes that the Democrats will win Ohio in the fall of 2008. In terms of the nomination contests, there is a close division between Hillary Clinton and Barack Obama, while John McCain is favored by a large margin.

The Survey

This report is based on a survey of a random sample of adult Ohio citizens (18 years or older) interviewed by telephone between January 10 and March 8, 2008 by the Center for Marketing & Opinion Research, LLC of Canton, Ohio. This survey is part of a broader election year study of Ohio voters undertaken by the Ray C. Bliss Institute of Applied Politics at the University of Akron. The number of survey respondents was 1,507, including a state-wide random sample and over samples of respondents residing outside of Northeastern Ohio. The survey respondents were weighted to reflect the demographic characteristics of the Ohio adult population based on the U.S. Census. The overall margin of error was plus or minus 2.5 percentage points.

Findings

This report covers two general areas: an assessment of Ohio, government and politics, and baseline information for the 2008 general election campaign in Ohio.

The assessment on state government includes: respondent's assessment of Ohio's direction; confidence in state government; ratings of the job performance of elected state officials; and an assessment of the quality of Ohio politics.

The baseline information for the 2008 general election campaign in Ohio includes: issue priorities in the 2008 presidential campaign; issues and party differences; issue positions; generic party preferences and the presidential election; and presidential candidate preferences.

Assessment of Ohio, Government and Politics

Assessment of Ohio's Direction

In the spring of 2008, the Akron Buckeye Poll found that a slim majority of adult Ohioans (52.3%) reported that the state was on the “wrong track” overall, with slightly less than one-half saying the state was on the “right track” (47.7%).

However, nearly three-quarters of the respondents said the Ohio economy was on the “wrong track” (74.4%), with only about one-quarter (25.6%) saying the state’s economy was on the “right track.” At the same time, more than one-half of the respondents reported that Ohio’s moral climate was on the “wrong track” (55.2%).

Right Track/Wrong Track

| | 2008 |
|--|--------------|
| Overall, is Ohio on the right or wrong track? | |
| Right track | 47.7 |
| Wrong Track | 52.3 |
| <i>Total</i> | <i>100.0</i> |

| | |
|---|--------------|
| Is Ohio's economy on right or wrong track? | |
| Right track | 25.6 |
| Wrong Track | 74.4 |
| <i>Total</i> | <i>100.0</i> |

| | |
|---|--------------|
| Is Ohio's moral climate on right or wrong track? | |
| Right track | 44.8 |
| Wrong Track | 55.2 |
| <i>Total</i> | <i>100.0</i> |

These assessments of the direction of the state can be put in context by a comparison to past Akron Buckeye polls taken in the spring of 2007 (right after the 2006 election) and the spring of 2005 (right after the 2004 election).¹

The overall assessment of Ohio’s direction shows the “wrong track” figures to be approximately the same size in 2007 and 2005 (52.3 and 55.7%, respectively). But in 2007, these figures showed a different pattern, with more respondents saying the state was on the “right track” (50.4%) than on the “wrong track” (49.6%). So the assessment of

¹ These comparisons are based on the spring 2005 Akron Buckeye Poll (1,500 cases, MOE of plus or minus 2.5%; and the spring 2007 Akron Buckeye Poll (1086 cases, MOE of plus or minus 3%).

Ohio's overall direction improved modestly between 2005 and 2007, but has declined modestly in the last year.

Right Track/Wrong Track: Overtime Comparisons

| | 2008 | 2007 | 2005 |
|---|--------------|--------------|--------------|
| Overall, is Ohio on the right or wrong track? | | | |
| Right track | 47.7 | 50.4 | 44.3 |
| Wrong Track | 52.3 | 49.6 | 55.7 |
| <i>Total</i> | <i>100.0</i> | <i>100.0</i> | <i>100.0</i> |
| Is Ohio's economy on right or wrong track? | | | |
| Right track | 25.6 | 32.9 | 35.6 |
| Wrong Track | 74.4 | 67.1 | 64.4 |
| <i>Total</i> | <i>100.0</i> | <i>100.0</i> | <i>100.0</i> |
| Is Ohio's moral climate on right or wrong track? | | | |
| Right track | 44.8 | 38.9 | 55.7 |
| Wrong Track | 55.2 | 61.1 | 44.3 |
| <i>Total</i> | <i>100.0</i> | <i>100.0</i> | <i>100.0</i> |

In contrast, the public's assessment of the Ohio economy has worsened over the period. In 2005, 64.4% saw the Ohio economy on the "wrong track," a figure that rose to 67.1% in 2007 and rose again to 74.4% in 2008.

Yet another pattern occurred for assessments of Ohio's moral climate. In 2005, a majority of the respondents believed the moral climate was on the "right track" (55.7%), but this figure fell to less than two-fifths in 2007 (38.9%). By 2008, the "right track" assessment had increased modestly (44.8%).

Interestingly, partisanship was associated with the overall assessment of Ohio's direction: Republicans have more positive views (52.5% "right track") than Democrats (46.7%) or independents (45.6%). However, these partisan differences did not appear on the assessment of the economy or moral climate, where there were no significant differences by party.

Right Track/Wrong Track and Partisanship, 2008

| | <i>ALL</i> | <i>Democrats</i> | <i>Independents</i> | <i>Republicans</i> |
|--------------|--------------|------------------|---------------------|--------------------|
| Right track | 47.7 | 46.7 | 45.6 | 52.5 |
| Wrong Track | 52.3 | 53.3 | 54.4 | 47.5 |
| <i>Total</i> | <i>100.0</i> | <i>100.0</i> | <i>100.0</i> | <i>100.0</i> |

Confidence in State Government

The respondents were asked how confident they were that state government would successfully address major problems.² Overall, the level of confidence was mixed. For example, about one-quarter (25.9%) of Ohioans expressed “high confidence” that Ohio government would be successful in “helping create more jobs,” more than two-fifths (44.7%) reported moderate levels of confidence, and more than one-quarter (29.4%) had “low confidence.”

How confident are you that Ohio government will be successful in:

| | |
|---|--------------|
| Helping create more jobs | 2008 |
| Low confidence | 29.4 |
| Moderate confidence | 44.7 |
| High confidence | 25.9 |
| <i>Total</i> | <i>100.0</i> |
| Dealing with the problems of public education | |
| Low confidence | 40.1 |
| Moderate confidence | 29.3 |
| High confidence | 30.6 |
| <i>Total</i> | <i>100.0</i> |
| Handling moral issues such as marriage and gambling | |
| Low confidence | 37.3 |
| Moderate confidence | 33.2 |
| High confidence | 29.5 |
| <i>Total</i> | <i>100.0</i> |
| Deal with mortgage foreclosures and housing problems | |
| Low confidence | 47.4 |
| Moderate confidence | 36.1 |
| High confidence | 16.5 |
| <i>Total</i> | <i>100.0</i> |

The patterns were even more mixed for two other problems, “dealing the problems of public education” and “handling moral issues such as marriage and gambling.” In both cases the percentage of the public with high confidence was larger than for job creation (30.6 and 29.5%, respectively), but at the same time, the percentage reporting “low confidence” was higher as well (40.1 and 37.3%, respectively).

However, the lowest level of confidence in state government success was with regard to a recent problem, the mortgage foreclosure and housing problems: nearly one-half of

² Respondents were asked to rate their confidence on a ten-point scale, where 1 was no confidence and 10 was the highest confidence. For purposes of presentation, low confidence was defined as a 1, 2, 3, or 4 on the ten-point scale, moderate confidence was defined as a 5 or 6, and high confidence was defined as a 7, 8, 9, or 10.

Ohioans expressed low confidence (47.4%) and only about one-sixth expressed high confidence (16.5%).

However, these measures of confidence in state government have increased since 2005. For example, in 2005 almost half (47.1%) of Ohioans expressed low confidence that state government could help create jobs, compared to roughly one-quarter in 2007 (25.8%) and more than one-quarter in 2008 (29.4%). Meanwhile, the percentage of the Ohio public with high confidence increased from less than one-fifth to more than one-quarter in 2007 (29.9%) and one-quarter in 2008 (25.9%).

**Confidence in Ohio Government:
Overtime Comparisons**

| | 2008 | 2007 | 2005 |
|--------------------------------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|
| Helping create more jobs | | | |
| Low confidence | 29.4 | 25.8 | 47.1 |
| Moderate confidence | 44.7 | 44.3 | 33.6 |
| High confidence | 25.9 | 29.9 | 19.3 |
| <i>Total</i> | <i>100.0</i> | <i>100.0</i> | <i>100.0</i> |
| Dealing with public education | | | |
| Low confidence | 40.1 | 38.2 | 45.8 |
| Moderate confidence | 29.3 | 32.0 | 35.8 |
| High confidence | 30.6 | 29.8 | 18.4 |
| <i>Total</i> | <i>100.0</i> | <i>100.0</i> | <i>100.0</i> |
| Handling moral issues | | | |
| Low confidence | 37.3 | 35.3 | 39.6 |
| Moderate confidence | 33.2 | 35.3 | 34.2 |
| High confidence | 29.5 | 29.4 | 26.2 |
| <i>Total</i> | <i>100.0</i> | <i>100.0</i> | <i>100.0</i> |

A similar change occurred with regard to public education. In 2005, nearly one-half of Ohioans had low confidence in state government, a figure that declined to about two-fifths in 2007 and 2008. A very modest positive change also occurred for moral issues as well.

Rating Elected Officials

More than one-half of Ohio adults rated Governor Strickland’s job performance as “excellent or good” (53.5%), about one-third rated his performance as “fair” (34%), and one-eighth as “poor or very poor” (12.5%).

The rating of the Ohio state legislature was lower, with less than one-third reporting an “excellent or good” rating (29.8%), nearly one-half a “fair” rating (49.6%), and one-fifth a “poor or very poor” rating (20.6%). (In part, these figures reflect the tendency of the public to give legislative bodies lower ratings than chief executives.)

Overall, more than two-fifths of the Ohio public rated the performance of the Ohio supreme court as “excellent or good” (45.6%) and another two-fifths said it was “fair” (41.8%); about one-eighth rated the high court as doing a “poor or very poor” job (12.6%).

These patterns had an expected association with partisanship, with Democrats having a more positive view of the Democratic governor, and Republicans having a more positive view of the Republican controlled state-legislature and supreme court. However, these partisan differences were modest.

Rating of Job Performance of Ohio Elected Officials:

| | 2008 |
|---------------------------|--------------|
| Ohio Governor | |
| Excellent or good | 53.5 |
| Fair | 34.0 |
| Poor or Very Poor | 12.5 |
| <i>Total</i> | <i>100.0</i> |
| Ohio Legislature | |
| Excellent or good | 29.8 |
| Fair | 49.6 |
| Poor or Very Poor | 20.6 |
| <i>Total</i> | <i>100.0</i> |
| Ohio Supreme Court | |
| Excellent or good | 45.6 |
| Fair | 41.8 |
| Poor or Very Poor | 12.6 |
| <i>Total</i> | <i>100.0</i> |

The job performance ratings of these elected officials also improved compared to 2005. For example, the rating of gubernatorial job performance in 2005 was 21.9% “excellent or good” (in the third year of Governor Taft’s second term) compared to 61.6% in 2007 (right after Governor Strickland’s election) and 53.5 % in 2008 (one year into Governor Strickland’s term).

There was also an increase in the public’s job performance rating of the state legislature, from 16.7% “excellent or good” in 2005 to 29.8% in 2008. And the state supreme court received improved marks as well, with the “excellent or good” results rising from 33.4% in 2005 to 45.6% in 2008.

Assessment of the Quality of Ohio Politics

The survey respondents were also asked to rate the quality of Ohio politics, including the candidates and how campaigns are conducted. Here the assessment was also mixed: a little more than one-fifth of the respondents said Ohio politics was of “low quality”

(22.7%) about two-fifths reported “moderate quality” (41%) and more than one-third saw “high quality” (36.3%).

Here, too, there was an increase in the positive assessment over time: in the fall of 2006 two-fifths of Ohioans reported low quality the political process in Ohio compared to about one-fifth in the spring of 2008.³

A related issue is public confidence in the conduct of voting in elections. In 2008, more than one-half of Ohio adults reported “a great deal of confidence” that their vote “would be counted fairly in the November general election” (52.8%). Another one-third of the respondents expressed some confidence (33.4%), one-tenth “little confidence,” and less than one-twentieth “no confidence” (4.3%) that the vote would be counted fairly.

This assessment did not change significantly from the fall of 2006, when 53.2% of Ohioans expressed “a great deal of confidence” that their vote would be counted fairly.

Quality of Ohio Politics:

| | 2008 | 2006 |
|------------------|--------------|--------------|
| Low quality | 22.7 | 42.1 |
| Moderate quality | 41.0 | 35.0 |
| High quality | 36.3 | 22.9 |
| <i>Total</i> | <i>100.0</i> | <i>100.0</i> |

How much confidence that vote will be counted fairly:

| | | |
|----------------------------|--------------|--------------|
| A great deal of confidence | 52.8 | 53.2 |
| Some confidence | 33.4 | 30.8 |
| Little confidence | 9.5 | 11.2 |
| No confidence | 4.3 | 4.8 |
| <i>Total</i> | <i>100.0</i> | <i>100.0</i> |

In the spring of 2008, there were no significant partisan differences with regard to the quality of Ohio politics. However, there was such a pattern with regard to confidence in the electoral process: nearly two-thirds of Republicans are substantially more likely to have “a great deal of confidence” (65.1%) but less than one-half of Democrats (46.2%), with about one-half of Independents (51.7%).

Confidence in Fair Vote Count and Partisanship

| | <i>All</i> | <i>Democrats</i> | <i>Independents</i> | <i>Republicans</i> |
|----------------------------|--------------|------------------|---------------------|--------------------|
| A great deal of confidence | 52.7 | 46.2 | 51.7 | 65.1 |
| Some confidence | 33.4 | 38.9 | 31.6 | 27.3 |
| Little confidence | 9.5 | 10.0 | 11.2 | 6.2 |
| No confidence | 4.4 | 4.9 | 5.5 | 1.4 |
| <i>Total</i> | <i>100.0</i> | <i>100.0</i> | <i>100.0</i> | <i>100.0</i> |

³ This comparison is based on the fall 2006 Akron Buckeye Poll (1,073 cases and an MOE of error of plus or minus 3%).

Baseline Information for the 2008 Presidential Campaign in Ohio

Issue Priorities in the 2008 Presidential Campaign

In the spring of 2008, nearly one-half of all Ohioans said that economic issues (such as jobs and prices) would be most important to their vote for president (47.5%). Another one-quarter said foreign policy issues (like the Iraq war and terrorism) would be most important (24.8%). Roughly one-sixth (16.8%) chose other domestic issues (such as public services and taxes) and one-in-ten respondents said social issues (such as abortion and same-sex marriage) would be most important to their presidential vote (10.9%).

Most important Issue to Presidential Vote

| | 2008 |
|--|--------------|
| Economic issues, <i>such as jobs and prices</i> | 47.5 |
| Foreign policy issues, <i>such as Iraq war and terrorism</i> | 24.8 |
| Domestic issues, <i>such as public services and taxes</i> | 16.8 |
| Social issues, <i>such as abortion and same-sex marriage</i> | 10.9 |
| <i>Total</i> | <i>100.0</i> |

These issue priorities may be substantially different from the issue priorities in 2004 presidential election. Some indication of this change can be seen by comparing the 2008 results to the 2004 Ohio exit poll. Although this comparison must be viewed with great caution because the issue priority questions are not identical,⁴ the patterns are nonetheless instructive. The exit poll data suggest that economic issues were most important to about one-third of 2004 Ohio voters, while foreign policy issues were listed by nearly as many. Social issues ranked third with about one-third of the Ohio electorate, and domestic policy issues were fourth with about one-tenth.

Most Important Issue and Partisanship

| | <i>ALL</i> | <i>Democrats</i> | <i>Independents</i> | <i>Republicans</i> |
|-----------------------|--------------|------------------|---------------------|--------------------|
| Economic issues | 47.5 | 54.0 | 47.3 | 35.4 |
| Foreign policy issues | 24.8 | 11.9 | 19.5 | 20.6 |
| Domestic issues | 16.8 | 25.9 | 22.5 | 27.7 |
| Social issues | 10.9 | 8.2 | 10.7 | 16.3 |
| <i>Total</i> | <i>100.0</i> | <i>100.0</i> | <i>100.0</i> | <i>100.0</i> |

⁴ The 2004 exit poll offered respondents a list of eight issue areas, ranging from “jobs and the economy” to “moral values.” For purpose of this general comparison, these areas were grouped into economic, foreign policy, domestic policy, and social issues.

In 2008, issue priorities differed sharply by partisanship. For example, Democrats were most likely to list economic issues (54.0%), followed by Independents (47.3%) and Republicans (35.4%). And Republicans were more likely to name foreign policy and social issues compared to Independents and Democrats. The partisan patterns were less clear for domestic issues.

Issues and Party Differences

Two-thirds of Ohioans saw the Democratic Party as “better” on economic issues, such as jobs and prices (65.1%) and less than one-third saw the Republicans as better on these issues (31.3%).

Not surprisingly, there was a sharp partisan division in such an evaluation, with over nine in ten Democrats reporting their own party as “better” on the economy, and two of three Republicans preferring the GOP.

But note that more than one-quarter of the Republicans saw the Democrats as better on the economy (29.4%). More importantly, three-fifths of Independents shared this positive perception of the Democrats (59.7%).

Which party is better on:

| Economic issues | <i>All</i> | <i>Democrats</i> | <i>Independents</i> | <i>Republicans</i> |
|-------------------------------|--------------|------------------|---------------------|--------------------|
| The Democrats | 65.1 | 91.1 | 59.7 | 29.4 |
| The Republicans | 31.3 | 7.5 | 35.2 | 65.8 |
| Neither | 3.6 | 1.4 | 5.1 | 4.8 |
| <i>Total</i> | <i>100.0</i> | <i>100.0</i> | <i>100.0</i> | <i>100.0</i> |
| Foreign Policy issues | <i>All</i> | <i>Democrats</i> | <i>Independents</i> | <i>Republicans</i> |
| The Democrats | 47.8 | 73.8 | 41.2 | 15.3 |
| The Republicans | 46.0 | 22.4 | 50.0 | 78.7 |
| Neither | 6.2 | 3.8 | 8.8 | 6.0 |
| <i>Total</i> | <i>100.0</i> | <i>100.0</i> | <i>100.0</i> | <i>100.0</i> |
| Domestic policy issues | <i>All</i> | <i>Democrats</i> | <i>Independents</i> | <i>Republicans</i> |
| The Democrats | 58.5 | 83.2 | 52.0 | 27.3 |
| The Republicans | 38.2 | 15.0 | 44.2 | 68.0 |
| Neither | 3.3 | 1.8 | 3.8 | 4.7 |
| <i>Total</i> | <i>100.0</i> | <i>100.0</i> | <i>100.0</i> | <i>100.0</i> |
| Social Issues | <i>All</i> | <i>Democrats</i> | <i>Independents</i> | <i>Republicans</i> |
| The Democrats | 48.5 | 66.6 | 41.8 | 28.8 |
| The Republicans | 44.6 | 27.3 | 48.7 | 67.3 |
| Neither | 6.9 | 6.1 | 9.5 | 3.9 |
| <i>Total</i> | <i>100.0</i> | <i>100.0</i> | <i>100.0</i> | <i>100.0</i> |

A very similar pattern held for domestic policy issues, such as public services and taxes, where almost three-fifths of adult Ohioans saw the Democrats as “better” than the

Republicans. Here 83.2% of Democrats preferred the Democratic Party, along with 52% of Independents and 27.3% of Republicans.

In contrast, Ohioans were more sharply divided on foreign policy and social issues. On foreign policy issues, such as the Iraq war and terrorism, 47.8% of the respondents said the Democrats were “better” and 46.0% chose the Republicans. About three-quarters of Democrats (73.8%) and more than three-quarters of Republicans (78.7%) preferred their own party on foreign policy, with one-half of the Independents preferring the GOP.

A similar pattern held for social issues, such as abortion and same-sex marriage. Overall, 48.5% of Ohioans preferred the Democrats and 44.6% the Republicans, with about two-thirds of Democrats (66.6%) and Republicans (67.3%) reporting a preference for their own party on social issues. Here a plurality of Independents (48.7%) saw the Republicans as better.

Issue Positions

A majority of Ohioans said that the business community has more responsibility for economic growth than the government, a topic central to economic issues. This majority includes one-quarter of the public that assigned the business community “much more” responsibility (24.8%) and almost two-fifths who saw the business community as having “somewhat more” (38.1%) responsibility for economic growth. In contrast, one-fifth of the Ohio public assigned “somewhat more” responsibility of job creation to the government (21.3%) and less than one-sixth said the government had “much more” responsibility (15.8%).

Responsibility for Economic Growth:

| | <i>All</i> | <i>Democrats</i> | <i>Independents</i> | <i>Republicans</i> |
|---|--------------|------------------|---------------------|--------------------|
| Government Much More Responsibility | 15.8 | 15.7 | 20.0 | 10.3 |
| Government Somewhat More Responsibility | 21.3 | 25.8 | 18.0 | 18.5 |
| Business Somewhat More Responsibility | 38.1 | 37.2 | 38.3 | 39.4 |
| Business Much More Responsibility | 24.8 | 21.3 | 23.7 | 31.8 |
| <i>Total</i> | <i>100.0</i> | <i>100.0</i> | <i>100.0</i> | <i>100.0</i> |

Thus, the most common response was that business has “somewhat more” responsibility for economic growth. A plurality of Democrats, Independents, and Republicans held this position, although Republicans were more likely than Democrats to assign much more responsibility for economic growth to business (31.8 to 21.3%).

Ohioans were sharply divided over the Iraq war, a topic central to foreign policy issues. Two-fifths of the Ohio public said that the war was the “wrong decision” and that the troops should withdraw as soon as possible (40.0%). Another one-tenth (10.8%) said that the war was the “right decision” but that the troops should be withdrawn, and one-sixth said the war was the “wrong decision” but troops should stay deployed (16.7%). Finally, one-third of Ohioans believed that the war was the “right decision” and that the troops should stay deployed until the situation is stabilized (32.5%).

View of the Iraq War:

| | <i>All</i> | <i>Democrats</i> | <i>Independents</i> | <i>Republicans</i> |
|---------------------------------|--------------|------------------|---------------------|--------------------|
| Wrong decision, withdraw troops | 40.0 | 64.1 | 33.0 | 10.5 |
| Right decision, withdraw troops | 10.8 | 10.5 | 11.5 | 10.2 |
| Wrong decision, keep troops | 16.7 | 15.2 | 19.0 | 15.1 |
| Right decision, keep troops | 32.5 | 10.2 | 36.5 | 64.2 |
| <i>Total</i> | <i>100.0</i> | <i>100.0</i> | <i>100.0</i> | <i>100.0</i> |

Thus 50.8% of Ohioans agreed that the troops should be withdrawn from Iraq as soon as possible and 49.2% said that the troops should stay until the situation is stable. On this issue, Democrats and Republicans hold opposite views: approximately 64% of Democrats said the war was the “wrong decision” and the troops should be withdrawn and approximately 64% of Republicans said that the war was the “right decision” and the troops should stay deployed. On this issue, a majority of Independents favor keeping the troops deployed (55.6%).

Ohioans were also divided in the size of government and level of public service provision, a topic central to domestic issues. Overall, a majority favored smaller government and fewer public services. This figure includes about one-eighth who favored “much smaller government and many fewer services” (13.3%) and two-fifths that wanted “somewhat smaller government and with a few less public services” (40.8%). Another one-quarter preferred “somewhat larger government with a few more services” (25.6%) and one-fifth wanted “much larger government and many more services” (20.3%).

Opinion on Size of Government and Level of Services:

| | <i>All</i> | <i>Democrats</i> | <i>Independents</i> | <i>Republicans</i> |
|--|--------------|------------------|---------------------|--------------------|
| Much larger government, many more services | 20.3 | 28.5 | 20.2 | 7.1 |
| Somewhat larger government, a few more services | 25.6 | 28.9 | 25.8 | 20.0 |
| Somewhat smaller government, a few less services | 40.8 | 36.7 | 37.3 | 52.9 |
| Much smaller government, many fewer services | 13.3 | 5.9 | 16.7 | 20.0 |
| <i>Total</i> | <i>100.0</i> | <i>100.0</i> | <i>100.0</i> | <i>100.0</i> |

Thus the most common response was “somewhat smaller government with a few less services.” This position was held by a plurality of Democrats, Independents and Republicans. However, a majority of Democrats (57.4%) favored somewhat or much larger government, while nearly three-quarters of Republicans (72.9%) favored somewhat or much smaller government. A majority of Independents also favored somewhat or much smaller government (54.0%).

Ohioans were also divided on the legality of abortion, a topic issue central to social issues, with a small majority favoring legal abortion. This figure includes one-sixth of the respondents who agree that abortion should be “legal in all cases” (16.1%) and more than one-third who say abortion should be “legal in most cases” (35.9%). In addition, three in ten Ohioans believe that abortions should be “illegal in most cases” (30.5%) and more than one-sixth say abortions should be “illegal in all cases” (17.5%).

Abortion should be:

| | <i>All</i> | <i>Democrats</i> | <i>Independents</i> | <i>Republicans</i> |
|-----------------------|--------------|------------------|---------------------|--------------------|
| Legal in all cases | 16.1 | 24.0 | 13.4 | 7.6 |
| Legal in most cases | 35.9 | 41.2 | 34.0 | 30.5 |
| Illegal in most cases | 30.5 | 22.9 | 30.5 | 42.8 |
| Illegal in all cases | 17.5 | 11.9 | 22.1 | 19.1 |
| <i>Total</i> | <i>100.0</i> | <i>100.0</i> | <i>100.0</i> | <i>100.0</i> |

Thus the most common response was that abortion should be “legal in most cases.” Democrats and Republicans were sharply divided on the legality of abortion, with about two-thirds of the former favoring legal abortions in one form or another (65.2%) and three-fifths of the latter favoring making abortion illegal in one respect or another (61.9%). A small majority of Independents (52.6%) favored restrictions on abortion.

Generic Party Preferences and the Presidential Election

When asked “The Republicans have controlled the White House for eight years. This year, would you like to see the Republicans stay in control of the White House or would you like to see the Democrats take control of the White House?” a large majority of adults in Ohio said they preferred the Democrats to “take control” of the White House (64.1%) and a minority wanted the Republicans to stay in control (35.9%).

In 2008, which party should control the White House:

| | <i>All</i> | <i>Democrats</i> | <i>Independents</i> | <i>Republicans</i> |
|--|--------------|------------------|---------------------|--------------------|
| Republicans stay in control of the White House | 35.9 | 4.1 | 40.5 | 85.8 |
| Democrats take control of the White House | 64.1 | 95.9 | 59.5 | 14.2 |
| <i>Total</i> | <i>100.0</i> | <i>100.0</i> | <i>100.0</i> | <i>100.0</i> |

If Republicans should stay in control because:

| | <i>All</i> | <i>Democrats</i> | <i>Independents</i> | <i>Republicans</i> |
|--|--------------|------------------|---------------------|--------------------|
| Republicans have done a good job and deserve to stay in office | 13.2 | 9.1 | 15.0 | 12.2 |
| Republicans have better ideas and policies than the Democrats | 45.7 | 18.2 | 42.5 | 50.4 |
| Republicans have the best qualified candidates | 41.1 | 72.7 | 42.5 | 37.4 |
| <i>Total</i> | <i>100.0</i> | <i>100.0</i> | <i>100.0</i> | <i>100.0</i> |

If Democrats should take control because:

| | <i>All</i> | <i>Democrats</i> | <i>Independents</i> | <i>Republicans</i> |
|---|--------------|------------------|---------------------|--------------------|
| Republicans have done a poor job and deserve to be replaced | 48.8 | 48.4 | 50.4 | 42.9 |
| Democrats have better ideas and policies than the Republicans | 25.8 | 27.7 | 21.7 | 28.6 |
| Democrats have the best qualified candidates | 25.4 | 23.9 | 27.9 | 28.5 |
| <i>Total</i> | <i>100.0</i> | <i>100.0</i> | <i>100.0</i> | <i>100.0</i> |

As one might expect, these figures strongly reflect partisanship: some 95% of Democrats want their party to win the presidency and some 85% of Republicans feel the same way about their party. On this measure, 59.5% of Independents strongly favor the Democrats taking control of White House in 2008.

A plurality of Ohioans who favored the GOP agreed that “Republicans have better ideas and policies than the Democrats” (45.7%) and nearly as many agreed that “Republicans have the best qualified candidates” (41.1%). Only a small minority agreed that “Republicans have done a good job and deserve to stay in office” (13.2%).

In contrast, nearly a majority of Ohioans who favored the Democrats agreed that “Republicans have done a poor job and deserve to be replaced” (48.8%). Roughly one-quarter each agreed that the “Democrats have better ideas and policies than the Republicans” (25.8%) or “Democrats have the best qualified candidates” (25.4%).

When asked “Regardless of how you might vote for president, which party do you think will win Ohio in the 2008 presidential election, the Democrats or the Republicans?” 69.1% of the Ohio public said they thought the Democrats would win Ohio in 2008 and 30.9% said the Republicans would. This figure includes four-fifths of Democrats, three-fifths of Independents, and a majority of Republicans.

Regardless of how you might vote for president, which party do you think will win Ohio in 2008?

| | <i>All</i> | <i>Democrats</i> | <i>Independents</i> | <i>Republicans</i> |
|-----------------|--------------|------------------|---------------------|--------------------|
| The Democrats | 69.1 | 83.3 | 61.9 | 55.8 |
| The Republicans | 30.9 | 16.7 | 38.1 | 44.2 |
| <i>Total</i> | <i>100.0</i> | <i>100.0</i> | <i>100.0</i> | <i>100.0</i> |

Preferences for the Presidential Nominations

Of course, presidential elections are contests between particular candidates and not just party labels. Overall, Ohioans were divided between Hillary Clinton and Barack Obama for the Democratic nomination, with a slight preference for Obama. Meanwhile, John McCain was the clear preference for the GOP nomination.

Among Democrats who wanted their party to take control of the White House in 2008, a majority (51.5%) preferred Clinton as the Democratic standard bearer over Obama (41.3%).

But among Independents who favored a Democratic victory, the figures were more even (46.9% for Clinton and 43.4% for Obama). Meanwhile, Independents who wanted the Republicans to win the election favored Obama (50.0%) over Clinton (27.6%). Republicans who wanted the Democrats to win the White House also favored Obama (56.8%) over Clinton (25.2%).

There was more agreement regarding the Republican nomination: John McCain was the clear choice of all four groups of voters. The figures ranged from 52.0% among Democrats who wanted a Democrat in the White House to 54.2% for Republicans who wanted the GOP to retain the presidency. Interestingly, the group least supportive of McCain were Independents who wanted the Republicans to retain control of the White House.

These data on nomination preferences suggest that the 2008 presidential election may be close in Ohio, despite the generic party preference for the Democrats in the spring of 2008. These figures fit well with evidence from other polls that show a close contest between McCain, Clinton or Obama in trial heats.⁵

Choice for the Democratic nomination by:

| | <i>Clinton</i> | <i>Obama</i> | <i>Others</i> | <i>Total</i> |
|---|----------------|--------------|---------------|--------------|
| <i>Entire sample</i> | 42.0 | 45.7 | 12.3 | 100.0 |
| <i>Democrats who want Democrats to take control of the White House</i> | 51.5 | 41.3 | 7.2 | 100.0 |
| <i>Independents who want Democrats to take control of the White House</i> | 46.9 | 43.4 | 9.7 | 100.0 |
| <i>Independents who want Republicans to stay in control of the White House</i> | 27.6 | 50.0 | 22.4 | 100.0 |
| <i>Republicans who want Republicans to stay in control of the White House</i> | 25.2 | 56.8 | 18.0 | 100.0 |

Choice for the Republican nomination by:

| | <i>McCain</i> | <i>Huckabee</i> | <i>Others</i> | <i>Total</i> |
|---|---------------|-----------------|---------------|--------------|
| <i>Entire sample</i> | 52.7 | 20.2 | 27.1 | 100.0 |
| <i>Democrats who want Democrats to take control of the White House</i> | 52.0 | 19.1 | 28.9 | 100.0 |
| <i>Independents who want Democrats to take control of the White House</i> | 54.8 | 18.9 | 26.3 | 100.0 |
| <i>Independents who want Republicans to stay in control of the White House</i> | 46.1 | 27.8 | 26.1 | 100.0 |
| <i>Republicans who want Republicans to stay in control of the White House</i> | 54.2 | 20.2 | 25.6 | 100.0 |

⁵ For example, the February 21-24 Ohio Poll found that McCain (47%) and Obama (48%) were tied in a trial heat, and McCain (51%) led Clinton (47%) by a small margin.