

University of Akron Bliss Institute Poll: Baseline for the 2018 Election

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Executive Summary

The 2018 University of Akron Poll finds voters nearly evenly divided in partisan terms as the 2018 campaign enters its final weeks. Key findings include:

- Ohioans are split nearly evenly on which party should be in charge of state government.
- This pattern differs from views on this issue in previous midterm elections going back to 2006.
- In terms of marquee races, Ohio voters are also evenly split on the gubernatorial candidates and the generic vote for the US House of Representatives. However, the Democratic candidate has a substantial lead in the US Senate race.
- Voters who favor either Republican or Democratic control of the Ohio government are as likely to be very interested in the 2018 election, to say they will vote in 2018, and that President Trump's job performance will be very important to their vote in 2018.
- Overall, Ohio voters say that Ohio is on the "right track" and the country as a whole is on the "wrong track." The latter—but not the former—closely match views on party control of Ohio government.

About The Survey

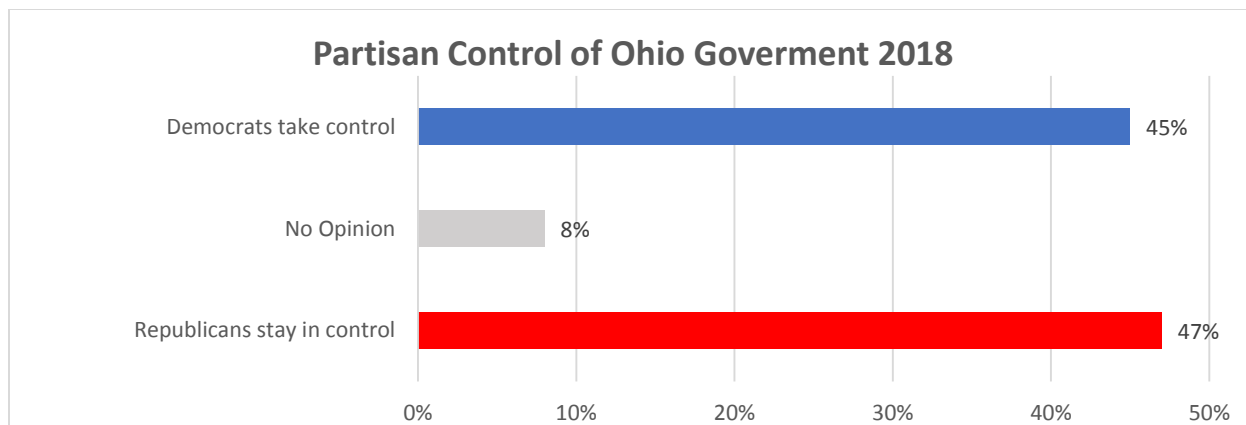
The 2018 University of Akron Poll was conducted by the Center for Marketing and Opinion Research for the [Ray C. Bliss Institute of Applied Politics](#) at [The University of Akron](#). It was a random sample of 1,000 eligible Ohio voters conducted by telephone (with cell phone and web components) between September 10 and October 4, 2018, with a margin of error of plus or minus three percentage points. These data are compared to polls in 2006, 2010, and 2014; these surveys also have a margin of error of plus or minus three percentage points.

Party Control of State Government in Ohio

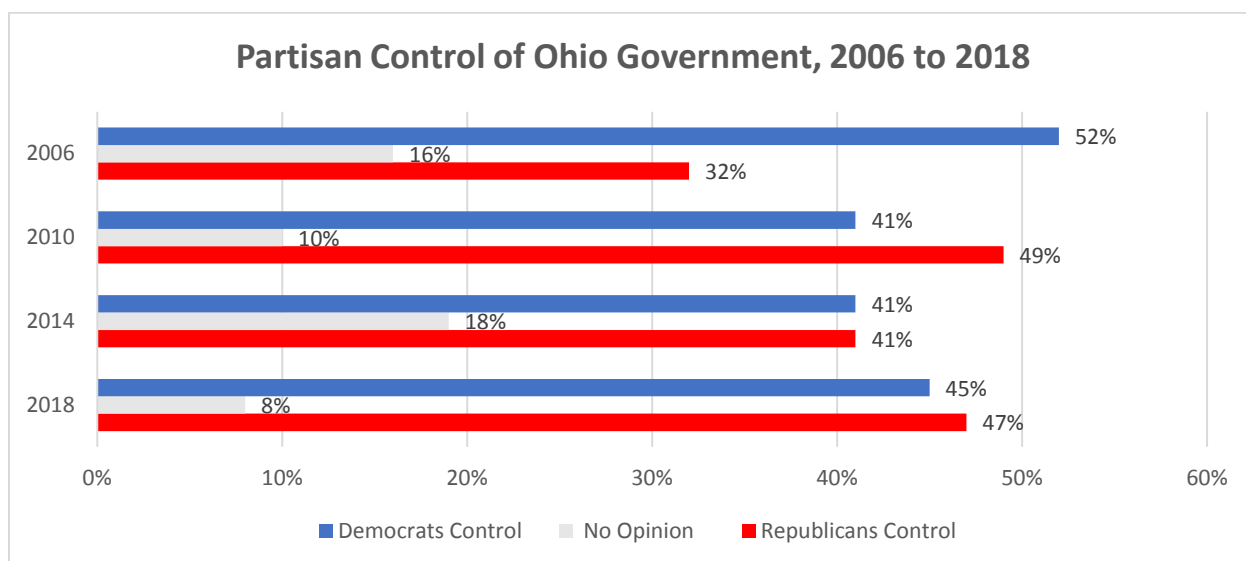
Ohio voters are almost evenly divided on whether the Republicans or Democrats should control state government. When asked:

"The Republicans have controlled Ohio state government since 2010. This year, would you like to see the Republicans continue to control Ohio state government or would you like to see the Democrats take control of Ohio state government for a change?"

Forty-five percent said they favored the Democrats taking control of state government and 47 percent favored the Republicans staying in control (the remaining 8 percent had no opinion).



Despite Ohio's reputation as a battleground state, these figures are unlike those in the 2006 and 2010 elections.



For example, in 2006—the last time there was an open seat for governor—more than one-half (52 percent) of voters favored the Democrats taking control of state government compared to just one-third (32 percent) favoring the Republicans staying in control (the remaining 16 percent had no opinion). The 2006 findings reflected a scandal with the incumbent Republican administration that led to a Democratic landslide.

In 2010, almost one-half (49 percent) of Ohio voters favored Republicans taking control of state government compared to just two-fifths (41 percent) favoring the Democrats remaining in control (the remaining 10 percent had no opinion). These figures reflect the weak economy resulting from the 2008 recession and controversy over the Affordable Care Act and produced a close Republican victory.

In 2014, views on partisan control were more like 2018, with 41 percent of voters favoring each party (the remaining 18 percent had no opinion); however, a scandal with the Democratic gubernatorial nominee resulted in a Republican landslide.

In 2018, voters who favored partisan control of state government were asked a follow up question about why they favored one party over the other. “Better ideas and policies” is the most common reason chosen for favoring one party control over the other—by almost one-half (47 percent) of each set of respondents.

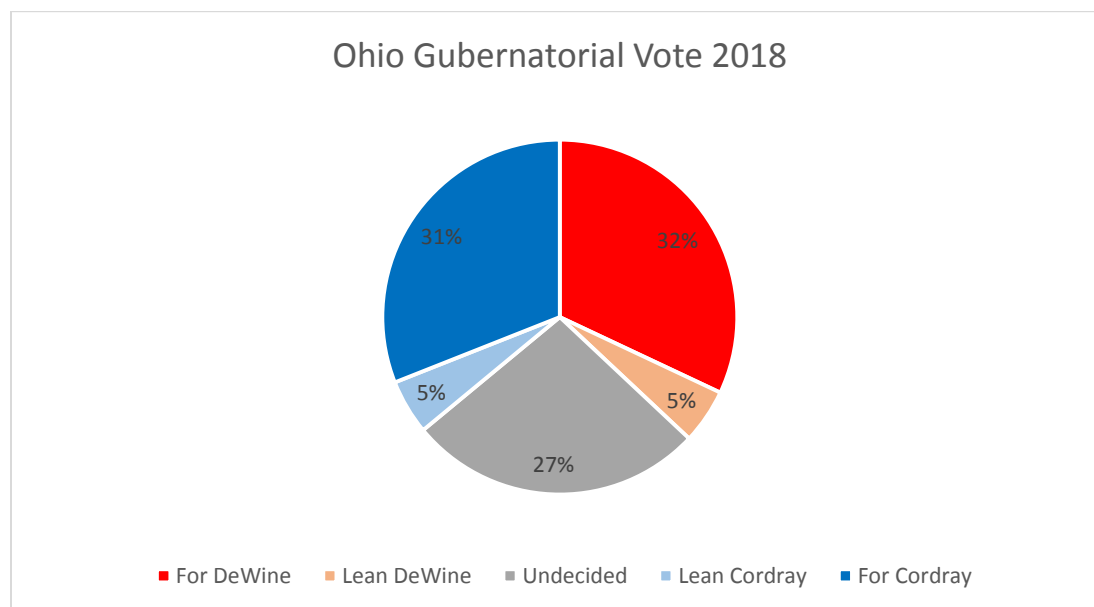
Reasons for Favoring Party Control of Ohio Government 2018

Favor Republican Control because:		Favor Democratic Control because:	
The Republicans have done a good job and deserve to stay in office	32%	The Republicans have done a poor job and deserve to be replaced	29%
The Republicans have better ideas and policies than the Democrats	47%	The Democrats have better ideas and policies than the Republicans	47%
The Republicans have the best qualified candidates	21%	The Democrats have the best qualified candidates	24%
Total	100%	Total	100%

Voters favoring continued Republican control modestly prefer the quality of Republican job performance (32 percent “good job” versus 29 percent “bad job”). Voters favoring Democrats taking control modestly prefer the quality of candidates (24 to 21 percent).

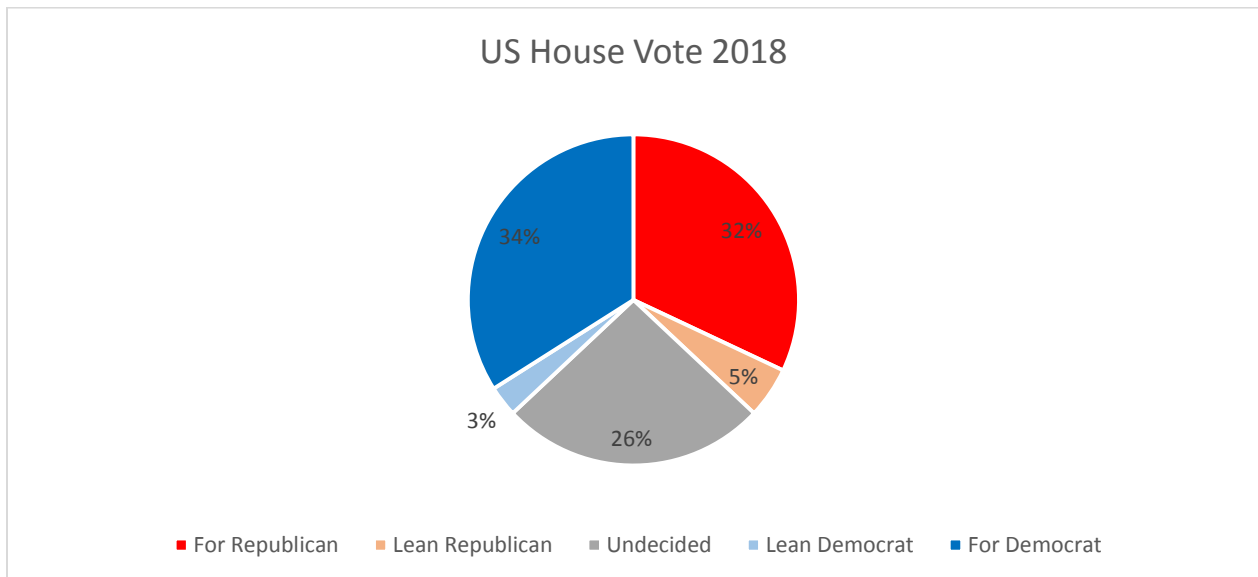
Marquee Races in 2018

The close division over party control of government is reflected in voter preferences. Overall, 37 percent of voters favored Republican Mike DeWine and 36 percent favored Democrat Richard Cordray. Although most of these preferences are firm, some five percent of voters lean toward each candidate. The remaining one-quarter of voters (27 percent) are undecided.

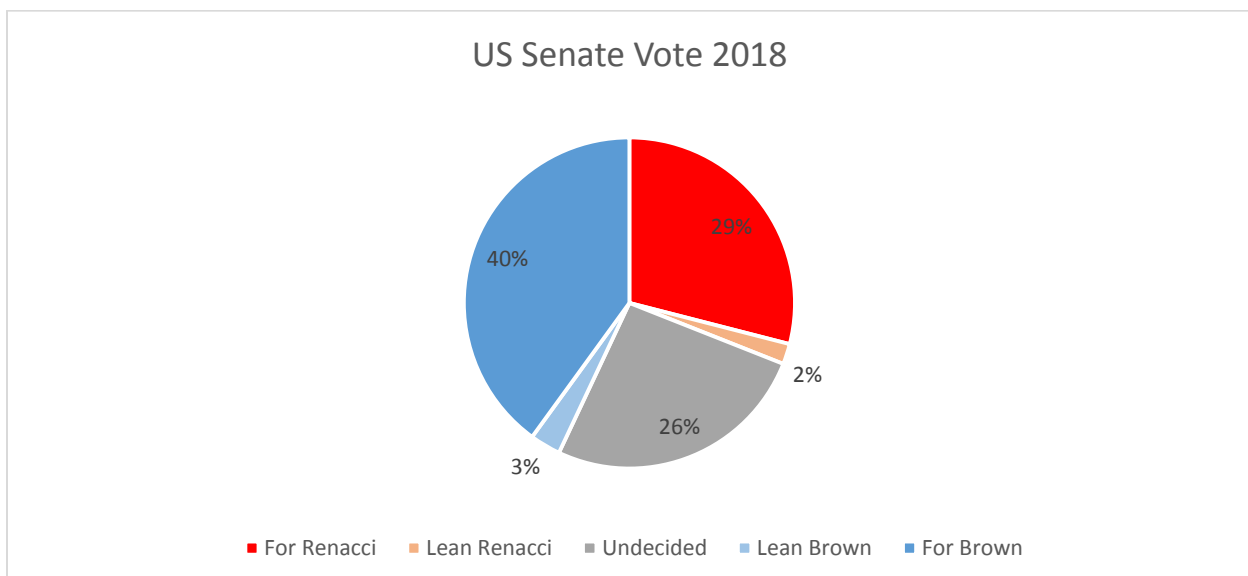


If the undecided voters are excluded, Republican DeWine is ahead of Democrat Cordray 51 to 49 percent—well within the survey's margin of error.

A similar pattern holds for the generic ballot in the Ohio races for member of the US House of Representatives. Here, support for Democratic and Republican congressional candidates are tied with almost two-fifths each (37 percent), with the remaining one-quarter undecided (26 percent).



In contrast, the US Senate race shows a large lead for Democratic incumbent Sherrod Brown with more than two-fifths support (43 percent) compared to Republican Jim Renacci at (31 percent); the remaining quarter are undecided. If the undecided voters are excluded, Democrat Brown is ahead of Republican Renacci 58 to 42 percent.



Vote Interest and Likelihood of Voting

Overall, there is a high-level of interest in the 2018 midterm election with seven in ten Ohio voters report being very interested in the 2018 mid-term election, while the remaining three in ten expressed some or no interest.

Those who favored partisan control of Ohio government are nearly equal in their interest in the election, with 71 percent of those favoring continued Republican control compared to 73 percent of those favoring the Democrats to take control. In contrast, voters with no opinion on party control are markedly less interested in the election (54 percent “very interested”).

Interest in 2018 Election and Ohio Party Control

	Very Interest	Some/No Interest	Total
Interest in 2018 Election	70%	30%	100%
Ohio Party Control			
<i>Republican</i>	<i>71%</i>	<i>29%</i>	<i>100%</i>
<i>No Opinion</i>	<i>54%</i>	<i>46%</i>	<i>100%</i>
<i>Democratic</i>	<i>73%</i>	<i>27%</i>	<i>100%</i>

When asked the most important reason why they were interested in the 2018 election, respondents who reported being “very interested” gave a variety of answers.

Most Important Reason for Interest in 2018 Election

(Respondents “very interested” in the election)

Want Democrats to win	17%
Economy and other specific issues	17%
Want Republicans to win	15%
Civic duty to vote	15%
Future of our country	12%
Vote for candidate/party I want	12%
Change is needed	9%
Other reasons	3%
Total	100%

About one-sixth (17 percent) reported wanting the Democrats to win, and about the same number want Republican victories. About one-eighth (12 percent) mentioned favoring a candidate, but without partisan indication. About one-sixth (17 percent) listed a specific issue, with the economy being most common. Other mentions included civic duty (15 percent), the future of the country (12 percent) and the need for change (12 percent).

A very similar pattern held for likelihood of voting. Overall, more than three-quarters (77 percent) of respondents reported that they were likely to vote in 2018. Here, too, those who favored partisan control of Ohio government differed little: 77 percent of those favoring continued

Republican control are likely to vote compared to 79 percent of those favoring the Democrats taking control. (Interestingly, 72 percent of those with no opinion on party control also reported being likely to vote.)

Likelihood of Voting in 2018 and Ohio Party Control

	Likely to Vote	Unlikely to vote	Total
Likelihood of Voting	77%	23%	100%

Ohio Party Control

<i>Republican</i>	77%	23%	100%
<i>No Opinion</i>	72%	28%	100%
<i>Democratic</i>	79%	21%	100%

The Trump Factor and Right/Wrong Track

Ohio voters are also evenly divided in their assessment of President Trump's job performance: two-fifths (40 percent) say he is doing an "excellent" or "good" job and two-fifths (41 percent) say he is doing a "poor" or "very poor" job. One-sixth (16 percent) say he is doing a "fair" job with three percent undecided.

When asked how important President Trump's job performance would be on their 2018 vote, two-thirds (67 percent) of voters said the President's job performance will be very important to their vote and one-third (33 percent) said it would have some importance or not be important. Here Trump's job performance matters to both those favoring continued Republican control of Ohio government (69 percent) and those favoring the Democrats taking control (68 percent). Those with no opinion on party control say presidential performance will matter less (47 percent very important).

Trump Effect on Vote and Ohio Party Control 2018

	Very Important	Some or Not Important	Total
Trump Effect on Vote	67%	33%	100%

Ohio Party Control

<i>Republican</i>	69%	31%	100%
<i>No Opinion</i>	47%	53%	100%
<i>Democratic</i>	68%	32%	100%

Voters were also asked if the state of Ohio was on the “right track” or the “wrong track.” Overall, two-thirds (68 percent) said Ohio is on the “right track” and one-third (32 percent) said “wrong track.”

These responses do not match as closely with preference for party control of state government as other measures. Some four-fifths (81 percent) of voters who favor continued Republican control say Ohio is on the “right track” and so do one-half (53 percent) of those who favor Democrats taking control. Two-thirds (68 percent) of those with no opinion on party control say Ohio is on the “right track.”

Direction of Ohio and Ohio Party Control 2018

	Right Track	Wrong Track	Total
State of Ohio	68%	32%	100%
Ohio Party Control			
<i>Republican</i>	<i>81%</i>	<i>19%</i>	<i>100%</i>
<i>No Opinion</i>	<i>68%</i>	<i>32%</i>	<i>100%</i>
<i>Democratic</i>	<i>53%</i>	<i>47%</i>	<i>100%</i>

However, there is a large contrast when respondents were asked if the country is on the “right track” or “wrong track.” Overall, voters are almost evenly divided, with about one-half (48 percent) saying the country is on the “right track” and about one-half (52 percent) saying it is on the wrong track.

These response track strongly with preference for party control of state government. Almost four-fifths (79 percent) of voters who favor continued Republican control say the country is on the “right track,” but almost the same proportion (82 percent) of those who favor Democrats taking control say the country is on the “wrong track.” One-half (55 percent) of those with no opinion on party control say the country is on the “wrong track.”

Direction of USA and Ohio Party Control 2018

	Right Track	Wrong Track	Total
USA	48%	52%	100%
Ohio Party Control			
<i>Republican</i>	<i>79%</i>	<i>21%</i>	<i>100%</i>
<i>No Opinion</i>	<i>45%</i>	<i>55%</i>	<i>100%</i>
<i>Democratic</i>	<i>18%</i>	<i>82%</i>	<i>100%</i>