LION POLL

Report of Methods

Director's Questions

Fall 2017

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INTRODUCTION

The Lion Poll is an omnibus survey conducted by the Center for Survey Research (CSR) at Penn State Harrisburg. A total of 1,325 self-administered web surveys were completed by adult Pennsylvanians between December 5, 2017 and January 27, 2018. The Lion Poll used a quota-based invitation system to produce a final dataset that is representative of Pennsylvania's population by region and, separately, by age/sex combined categories. Project activity was directed by Stephanie L. Wehnau, Director of the Center for Survey Research at Penn State Harrisburg.

The purpose of the Lion Poll is to provide timely and accurate data to agencies, organizations, and researchers with statewide interests and responsibilities. Sponsors of CSR's omnibus polls have used their results to track public policy issues; measure general attitudes, awareness, and knowledge of their organizations; and measure satisfaction with organizational services and performance.

Data Analysis Notes

The following notes should be taken into account when reviewing the final dataset:

1. Data are not weighted; however, the final dataset is representative of Pennsylvania's population by region and, separately, by age/sex combined categories.
2. Percentages may not total to 100% due to the exclusion of 'Don't know' responses.
3. See Appendices A and B of the report for a map and list of the Lion Poll regions.

METHODOLOGY

Respondent Recruitment

CSR utilized Cint to recruit respondents who had previously signed up to participate in a variety of web survey panels in exchange for nominal compensation. These web survey panels were constructed utilizing a double opt-in recruitment technique. In a double opt-in system, the potential respondents provide their email address to indicate interest in participating in the panel. An automated email is then sent to the email address provided to ensure that the owner of the email address is aware of the intended use. Once the email owner confirms their interest in participating, the individual becomes part of the panel. After providing information on a wide variety of demographic topics to establish a panelist profile, the panelist is eligible to participate in future surveys. A double opt-in system guarantees that all respondents have provided explicit consent to be contacted for marketing and/or research purposes in compliance with all applicable federal laws.

Cint sent emails to potential respondents that included a customized link with a respondent identifier. This link took the potential respondent directly to the web survey programmed in CSR's Qualtrics account. Upon successful completion of the survey, CSR re-directed the respondent to the appropriate panel provider via a customized link that included the unique respondent identifier. As a result of this setup, only members of the CSR project team had access to the survey results and CSR never had access to any personally identifiable information of any of the survey respondents.

Response Quality

Regular panel maintenance was performed to ensure that high-quality respondents were being utilized in the Lion Poll. First, answers to demographic questions were periodically checked to make sure that they matched with the initial panel profile established by respondents. CSR also asked screening questions in such a way that the potential respondents did not know what characteristics were required for participation. Since panelists are paid for their participation, this decreases the chance of the respondent fabricating answers to gain access to the study. CSR also embedded attention check questions and straight-lining checks into the Lion Poll to confirm that the respondent was carefully reading and responding to questions. Straight-lining is when a respondent answers all questions in a series in the same way. To check for this, one item was included in a question series in two different ways: once with positive wording and once with negative wording. If

a respondent is carefully reading the questions, they will answer these questions in contrasting ways. If a respondent participated in straight-lining or answered an attention check question incorrectly, their survey was immediately terminated and their response was removed from the final dataset. In addition, CSR identifies these responses as "low-quality," and panelists are excluded from participation in future surveys after three low-quality responses. Finally, CSR reviewed responses for other quality measures, such as survey duration (outlying surveys that were completed very quickly were removed), and applicability of open-ended responses to prevent automated (bot) responses from being included in the final dataset.

Sample Representation

Potential respondents were invited from the universe of all available panelists on the basis of the Pennsylvania county, age, and gender indicated in their panelist profile. These questions were also asked as screener questions at the beginning of the survey to guarantee that the respondent matched the expected profile. In order to ensure that the results of the Lion Poll were not biased toward any particular location, age, or sex, CSR programmed quotas into the Qualtrics web survey platform to guarantee that the final dataset would be representative of Pennsylvania's known population by region and, separately, by age/sex combined categories. Region quotas were developed by totaling Pennsylvania's population by county and then determining what proportion of the state's residents lived in the counties represented by each region. The data source used to establish quotas was the July 1, 2016 State Population Estimates, U.S. Census Bureau, Population Division. Since the final dataset was representative of Pennsylvania's population by age, sex, and region, weighting was not needed. For a map and list of the Lion Poll's regions by county, please see Appendices A and B.

It should be noted that respondents were not selected from the general population at random; rather, only respondents who opted to participate in a paid web survey panel were included in the sampling frame. In addition, as with all public opinion surveys, the results are representative only of those who chose to participate. As a result, certain biases exist that might prevent a direct comparison to Pennsylvania's general population. Namely, results may be biased against those who are less likely to participate in web survey panels (sample frame bias) or those panelists who chose not to participate in this survey (non-response bias). In addition, although respondents who do not have access to the internet at home are less likely to sign up for web survey panels, they are not excluded from participating, and may do so through the use of public internet access, mobile

phones, or internet at their place of employment. Finally, respondents received a small incentive to participate, although this is considered to be negligible in terms of overall survey bias.

To minimize these potential biases, key demographic responses were monitored and compared to Census data to ensure that the final sample was reflective of characteristics that are known to potentially bias responses. Rigorous efforts were employed to ensure that the characteristics of the respondents in the final dataset are representative of Pennsylvania's diverse population, despite the non-probability-based sampling method employed. Although the Lion Poll is considered to be a non-probability-based sampling method, the quotas utilized resulted in a final dataset that is representative of Pennsylvania's population by region, age, and sex.

Data Collection

Surveys were self-administered through Qualtrics Online Survey Platform. As mentioned previously, rigorous strategies were employed to ensure high-quality survey responses from trusted panelists. A 'soft launch' was performed where a working draft of the survey instrument was pre-tested with a small sample of respondents before full survey distribution began. The pre-test process ensured that the skipping patterns of the programmed survey instrument were functioning as intended. Pre-testing also increases the likelihood that the questions provide accurate data while decreasing the likelihood of collecting unusable data; therefore, it is an integral component of questionnaire design. The pre-test findings were reviewed, found to be error-free, and incorporated into the final dataset. Survey responses were collected through CSR's Qualtrics web survey account between December 5, 2017 and January 27, 2018. Waves of survey invitations were sent by Cint to potential survey respondents based on the panelists' profile characteristics and the remaining region and age/sex quota needs. Respondents who indicated that they were at least 18 years of age and lived in Pennsylvania were deemed eligible to participate. Survey collection ended when CSR received 1,325 responses.

Data Preparation and Analysis Notes

All completed survey data were extracted from Qualtrics into Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) software. Data were verified for accuracy of variable coding, and verbatim text was edited for consistency in formatting before final review by the senior staff of the Center for Survey Research. A survey dataset was created in SPSS for Windows version 25.0.

The following notes should be taken into account when reviewing the final dataset:

1. Data are not weighted; however, the final dataset is representative of Pennsylvania's population by region and, separately, by age/sex combined categories.
2. Percentages may not total to 100% due to the exclusion of 'Don't know' responses.
3. See Appendices A and B of the report for a map and list of the Lion Poll regions.

Margin of Error

The margin of error for this survey is +/- 2.7 percentage points with the conventional 95% degree of desired confidence. This means that in a sample of 1,000 respondents where the distribution of responses is within the vicinity of 50%, there is a 95% chance that if the survey were repeated, the results would not differ from the survey findings by more than 2.7 percentage points. A more extreme distribution of question responses has a smaller error range. Suppose that 80% of the respondents answer "Yes" and 20% answer "No;" then the sampling error in this case is 2.4 percentage points. That is, each percentage has a sampling error of +/- 2.2 percentage points.

APPENDIX A – MAP OF LION POLL SURVEY REGIONS
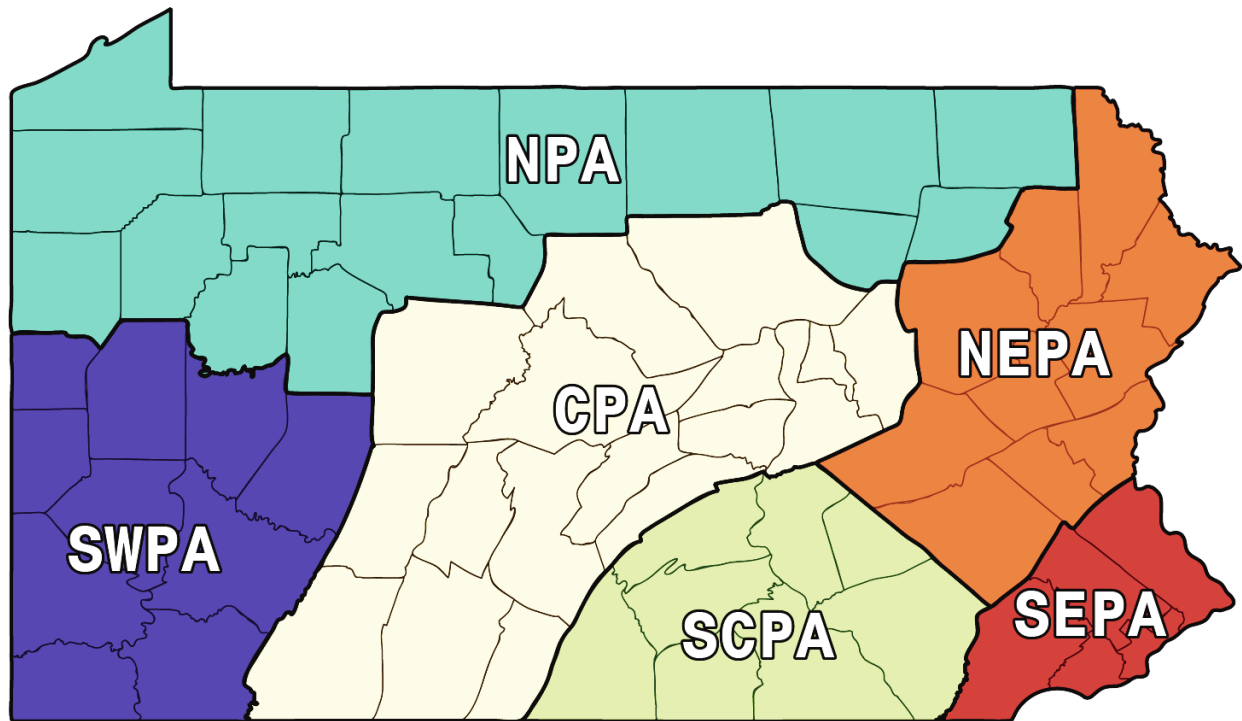
APPENDIX B – LIST OF LION POLL SURVEY REGIONS

Northern	Central	Northeast
Bradford	Bedford	Berks
Cameron	Blair	Carbon
Clarion	Cambria	Lackawanna
Crawford	Centre	Lehigh
Elk	Clearfield	Luzerne
Erie	Clinton	Monroe
Forest	Columbia	Northampton
Jefferson	Fulton	Pike
McKean	Huntingdon	Schuylkill
Mercer	Juniata	Wayne
Potter	Lycoming	
Sullivan	Mifflin	
Susquehanna	Montour	
Tioga	Northumberland	
Venango	Snyder	
Warren	Somerset	
Wyoming	Union	

Southwest	South Central	Southeast
Allegheny	Adams	Bucks
Armstrong	Cumberland	Chester
Beaver	Dauphin	Delaware
Butler	Franklin	Montgomery
Fayette	Lancaster	Philadelphia
Greene	Lebanon	
Indiana	Perry	
Lawrence	York	
Washington		
Westmoreland		

APPENDIX C – SURVEY INSTRUMENT

INTRO Welcome to the Fall 2017 Lion Poll, a survey to understand the views of Pennsylvania residents on a variety of important issues. This survey is being conducted by the Center for Survey Research at Penn State Harrisburg.

Your participation is voluntary and all of your answers will remain confidential. Your voluntary participation indicates your consent to participate.

If you have any questions about this research, please contact the Center for Survey Research at tjs32@psu.edu.

To continue with the survey, click ">>" below.

COUNTY In what county do you live?

○ I do not live in Pennsylvania (777)

○ I don't know what county I live in (888)

○ List of Pennsylvania counties (1 → 133, FIPS codes)

AGE What is your age?

_____

GENDER What is your gender?

○ Male (1)

○ Female (2)

○ Something else (3) _____

T_DIR Thank you for that information! You are eligible to participate in the survey. This survey will ask you about a variety of different topics that affect Pennsylvanians.

US_DIR Generally speaking, would you say that things in the **United States** are going in the right direction, or going in the wrong direction?

○ Right direction (1)

○ Wrong direction (2)

○ Don't know / not sure (8)

PA_DIR Now thinking about **Pennsylvania**, would you say that things are going in the right direction, or going in the wrong direction?

○ Right direction (1)

○ Wrong direction (2)

○ Don't know / Not sure (8)

PROBLEM In general, what is the biggest problem facing Pennsylvania today? Please be as specific as possible.

_____

_____

T_TAX The next questions ask about tax reform.

TAX_IMPACT
As you may know, Congress is currently considering a plan for tax reform. Do you think this plan will increase your taxes, reduce your taxes, or will it not have much impact either way?

○ I think it will increase my taxes (1)

○ I think it will reduce my taxes (2)

○ I think it will not have much impact either way (3)

○ Don't know / Not sure (8)

TAX_BENFIT Who do you think will benefit **most** from this plan?

○ Low-income Americans (1)

○ Middle class Americans (2)

○ Wealthy Americans (3)

○ Don't know / Not sure (8)

TAX_IDEAS Please indicate whether you think each of the following is a good idea or a bad idea.

	Very good idea (4)	Somewhat good idea (3)	Somewhat bad idea (2)	Very bad idea (1)	Don't know / Not sure (8)
Lowering the corporate tax rate from 35% to 20% (DEC_CORP)	○	○	○	○	○
Doubling the standard deduction for both single and married Americans (DBL_DED)	○	○	○	○	○
Eliminating the deduction for state and local income taxes (ELIM_STATEDED)	○	○	○	○	○
Increasing the corporate tax rate from 35% to 40% (INC_CORP)	○	○	○	○	○
Eliminating the deduction for student loan interest (ELIM_STUDENT)	○	○	○	○	○
Select "Don't know" for this response (TAX_CHK)	○	○	○	○	○
Eliminating the deduction for medical expenses (ELIM_MED)	○	○	○	○	○

MEDIA

Next, you will see a variety of statements related to the media. Please indicate your level of agreement with each statement.

	Strongly agree (4)	Somewhat agree (3)	Somewhat disagree (2)	Strongly disagree (1)	Don't know / Not sure (8)
Fake news is a serious problem (FAKE)	○	○	○	○	○
I get my news from a variety of different news agencies or sources (NEWS_VAR)	○	○	○	○	○
I can trust the media to tell me the truth (MEDIA_TRUST)	○	○	○	○	○
Media reporters do a good job of checking facts before reporting them (FACT_CHK)	○	○	○	○	○
Media agencies tend to blow news out of proportion (MED_PROP)	○	○	○	○	○
Some media and news agencies are more trustworthy than others (MED_BETTER)	○	○	○	○	○

GUN The next questions ask about gun laws in the United States. Please indicate whether you oppose or support each of the following.

	Strongly support (4)	Somewhat support (3)	Somewhat oppose (2)	Strongly oppose (1)	Don't know / Not sure (8)
Stricter gun laws in general (GUN_LAWS)	○	○	○	○	○
Requiring background checks for all gun buyers (GUN_BGCHK)	○	○	○	○	○
A nationwide ban on the sale of assault weapons (GUN_ASSAULTBAN)	○	○	○	○	○
A nationwide ban on the sale of guns to people who have been convicted of violent crimes (GUN_VIOLBAN)	○	○	○	○	○
Stricter regulations on ammunition sales (GUN_AMMOREG)	○	○	○	○	○
Easier access to firearms (GUN_EASYACCESS)	○	○	○	○	○
A ban on gun modifications that can make a semi-automatic gun work more like an automatic gun (GUN_MOD)	○	○	○	○	○

GUN_DIFF Do you think it is too easy to buy a gun in the U.S. today, too difficult to buy a gun in the U.S. today, or about right?

○ Too easy (1)

○ Too difficult (3)

○ About right (2)

○ Don't know / Not sure (8)

T_DEM These last questions are for classification purposes only.

HUNT Do you or does anyone in your household hunt?

   ◯ No, no one in the household hunts (1)

   ◯ Yes, only I hunt (2)

   ◯ Yes, only someone ELSE in the household hunts (3)

   ◯ Yes, both I AND someone else in the household hunt (4)

   ◯ Don't know / Not sure (8)

ZIP What is your zip code?

_____

POL_AFFIL Generally speaking, do you consider yourself a Republican, Democrat, Independent, Libertarian, or Something else?

   ◯ Republican (1)

   ◯ Democrat (2)

   ◯ Independent (3)

   ◯ Libertarian (4)

   ◯ Something else (5) _____

   ◯ I have no political affiliation (0)

   ◯ Don't know / Not sure (8)

POL_VIEW How would you best describe your political views?

○ Very conservative (1)

○ Somewhat conservative (2)

○ Moderate (3)

○ Somewhat liberal (4)

○ Very liberal (5)

○ Don't know / Not sure (6)

HISP Do you consider yourself to be Hispanic or Latino?

○ Yes (1)

○ No (2)

○ Don't know / Not sure (3)

RACE Which of the following best describe your race? You can select all that apply.

☐ White (1)

☐ Black or African American (2)

☐ American Indian or Alaska Native (5)

☐ Asian (3)

☐ Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander (4)

☐ Something else (6) _____

☐ Don't know / Not sure (8)

EDU Which of the following categories best describes your educational level?

○ Less than a high school diploma or GED (1)

○ High school diploma or GED   (2)

○ Some college (3)

○ Two-year degree (Associate's) or technical degree (i.e., trade degree) (4)

○ Four-year college graduate (5)

○ Graduate work (6)

○ Don't know / Not sure (7)

INCOME What is your total annual household income, before taxes?

○ Under $10,000 (0)

○ $10,000 to $19,999 (1)

○ $20,000 to $29,999 (2)

○ $30,000 to $39,999 (3)

○ $40,000 to $49,999 (4)

○ $50,000 to $59,999 (5)

○ $60,000 to $69,999 (6)

○ $70,000 to $79,999 (7)

○ $80,000 to $89,999 (8)

○ $90,000 to $99,999 (9)

○ $100,000 to $109,999   (10)

○ $110,000 to $119,999   (11)

○ $120,000 to $129,999   (12)

○ $130,000 to $139,999   (13)

○ $140,000 to $149,999   (14)

○ $150,000 or more (15)

○ Don't know / Not sure (88)

END Thank you for your participation! Please click ">>" to submit your survey.