# Colorado Political Climate Survey 2020 Topline Election Report

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Courtney Johnson
Lab Fellow,
Survey Co-Lead

Anand E. Sokhey
Director

**E. Scott Adler** Associate Director



# **About the Study:**

## American Politics Research Lab

The American Politics Research Lab (APRL) is housed in the Department of Political Science at the University of Colorado Boulder. APRL is a non-partisan academic unit that supports basic research, educational activities, and public engagement on issues related to American politics. Lab faculty, student fellows, and affiliates pursue scholarly activities over a broad range of topics, utilizing a wide variety of research methodologies and analysis. Current lab projects include research on political behavior, state and local politics, and political agendas and recurring legislation in the U.S. Congress. The Lab is also home to the annual Colorado Political Climate Survey. APRL hosts a seminar series that includes talks by lab associates as well as distinguished scholars doing work related to the study of American politics.

# Colorado Political Climate Survey

In early October 2020, the American Politics Research Lab (APRL) conducted the fifth annual Colorado Political Climate (CPC) survey. The CPC is a survey of the political and policy attitudes of Coloradans. The study is designed to gauge the public's political and partisan leanings, their opinions on a number of key issues facing the state, their attitudes toward major statewide and national political figures, and the outlook for the 2020 elections.

# Methodology

The poll consists of interviews with a statewide, representative sample of 800 Colorado residents; individuals were interviewed online between October 5-9, 2020. The survey was approximately 10 minutes in length. The survey instrument was developed by APRL in the fall of 2020, and was administered online by the company YouGov.

Two different sets of weights are used in analyses; we note which set is used for specific items. For all races and ballot measures reported, a likely voter weight is applied to make the sample representative of likely voters in the 2020 elections. The margin of error for the likely voter analysis is +/- 4.64%. For general opinion items and other content included in the survey, a general population weight is applied. The margin of error for the general population analysis is +/- 4.55%. The margin of error for additional subgroups will be larger due to smaller sample sizes.

The sample was weighted according to gender, age, race, and education based on the American Community Survey, conducted by the U.S. Bureau of the Census, as well as 2016 Presidential vote, registration status, geographic region, and news interest. Respondents were selected from YouGov's opt-in panel to be representative of all U.S.

registered voters. The likely voter weight uses additional items included in the survey to create likely/unlikely voter profiles (it weights by these profiles).

The complete codebook can be found <u>here</u> – it contains additional information on how YouGov constructed the sample and weights. The original survey instrument and programming instructions can be found <u>here</u>. Finally, additional information on the methodology and margin of error for the survey can be found <u>here</u>.

# Acknowledgements

We would like to acknowledge the undergraduate students in the PSCI 3155: Survey Design and Analysis class at the University of Colorado Boulder, who provided valuable assistance in the development and execution of this survey. We also wish to thank the CU Boulder Department of Political Science, and the Leroy Keller Center for the Study of the First Amendment for their financial support of PSCI 3155.

American Politics Research Lab Department of Political Science University of Colorado Boulder 382 Ketchum Hall, UCB 333 Boulder, CO 80309

https://www.colorado.edu/lab/aprl/

Note: This is an initial release. An extended report will follow in November that reports on other items included in the survey and provides additional benchmarks against past years' results.]

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# **Topline Summary:**

Between October 5<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup>, APRL conducted a full survey of Colorado voters. Questions covered national and state contests, propositions and amendments appearing on the 2020 ballot, evaluations of state and national figures, and public opinion about a variety of other issues, including race-relations, election process/legitimacy, and responses to COVID-19. In this initial topline report we focus on the electoral races and ballot measures, along with an examination of Coloradans' attitudes toward election process and integrity. Interviews concluded on 10/9, the day that ballots were mailed out across Colorado.

A Note on Partisan Breakdowns: In the summary discussion and tables that follow (where we present numbers by partisanship), we construct the splits using respondents' *self-reported partisanship* collected as part of the survey; this was measured via a traditional 7-point scale. We then categorize "leaning partisans" in with other partisans – thus, the category of "Independents" represents a smaller number of "pure" Independents, or just the middle-category on the 7-point party identification scale. This grouping is backed by research suggesting that leaning partisans often behave similarly to stronger partisans. For more information, see <a href="https://www.pewresearch.org/politics/2015/11/23/appendix-a-why-partisans-include-leaners/">https://www.pewresearch.org/politics/2015/11/23/appendix-a-why-partisans-include-leaners/</a> Additional descriptives for partisanship and other demographic characteristics are presented in the appendix.

For the analyses with the different weights (which were created by YouGov using the information noted on pages 1-2), the partisan composition of the sample – employing this grouping based on self-reported partisanship – is as follows:

Likely Voter Analysis, Partisan Composition of Sample			
	Democrats (Including	Independents ("Pure" –	Republicans (Including
	"Leaners")	no "Leaners")	"Leaners")
Weighted Percent	46	13.5	40
Weighted	362	106	318
Observations			

Total Observations: 786

Numbers may not sum to 100 due to rounding; 14 respondents were "not sure" about their partisanship

General Population Analysis, Partisan Composition of Sample			
	Democrats	Independents	Republicans
	(Including	("Pure" –	(Including
	"Leaners")	no leaners)	"Leaners")
Weighted Percent	46	15.5	39
Weighted	359	122	305
Observations			

Total Observations: 786

Numbers may not sum to 100 due to rounding; 14 respondents were "not sure" about their partisanship

Statewide Contests: We polled Coloradans in the days right before ballots hit mailboxes throughout the state (10/5-10/9). As voting continues, among likely voters <u>Democrats hold leads</u> in the contests for President (9-points; 47%-38%), the U.S. Senate (8-points; 48%-40%), and in a generic question about the Colorado races for the U.S. House (8-points; 47%-39%).

- •The Presidential Election: Vice-President Biden has a 9-point lead over President Trump among likely voters (47%-38%), with 11% of Coloradans reporting that they are "undecided." There are substantial gender gaps, with Trump leading among men (43%-39%), but Biden leading with women (56%-33%). Support for Biden and Trump sorts cleanly on partisan lines, but less so among those calling themselves "Independents" among such individuals Biden maintains a small lead (3%), though 30% of these respondents report being "undecided."
- •The Senate Election: The Senate race mirrors the Presidential election in Colorado, with Governor Hickenlooper holding an 8-point lead over Senator Gardner (48%-40%), and 11% of Coloradans reporting that they are "undecided." A gender gap is also present in this contest, with Hickenlooper and Gardner tied among men (45%-45%), but Hicklenlooper leading among women (51%-36%). Support for the two candidates also sorts cleanly on partisan lines, but less so among those calling themselves "Independents" among such individuals Hickenlooper maintains a small lead (2%), though 29% report being "undecided."

Ballot Measures: We polled on 4 of the measures on the ballot before Coloradans this fall and find that substantial portions of the likely voting public remain "not sure" where they stand.

- •Proposition 113 (Popular Vote Compact) appears to have a comfortable lead Favor, 34% Oppose), though 17% of respondents report being "undecided."
- Proposition 115 (Late-Term Abortion Restriction) is too close to call, with 45% opposing, 41% supporting, and 17% saying they are "not sure."
- •Proposition 118 (Paid Family Leave) has a sizable lead (65%-22%), though again a non-trivial portion of the public (13%) reports being "not sure" about how they are voting. (We randomly assigned respondents to 2 different question wordings for this item, and found minimal differences – thus we present the pooled result.)
- •Coloradans are "not sure" what to think about Amendment B (Gallagher Amendment Repeal). We did a question wording experiment on this item, randomly assigning ½ of respondents to a simple description of the measure (24% Favor; 23% Oppose; 53% Not Sure), and ½ to a question beginning with a version of the ballot wording, which opens by emphasizing not raising taxes and supporting funding for police and other services in local districts (44% Favor; 20% Oppose; 36% Not Sure). We observe a 20-point swing toward favoring the measure in the condition beginning with the ballot language, though note that 36% of respondents in this condition still report being "not sure" about how they will vote.

Other Issues: We asked respondents a series of questions about the push to confirm a replacement to the Supreme Court for the late Justice Ginsburg before the Presidential



Election, their confidence in the electoral process, and their opinion with respect to potential outcomes of the Presidential Election. These items were weighted to match the general population (not likely voters, as used in the electoral contests and ballot measures).

•RBG's replacement and the 2020 Presidential Election: Mirroring some national polling data, a majority of Coloradans (54% Agree; 32% Disagree; 14% Not sure) agreed with a statement that the winner of the presidential election should be the one to nominate a replacement for the late Justice Ginsburg. Not surprisingly, majorities of Democrats (81% agree) and Republicans (61% disagree) reported being on the opposite sides of this issue.

Confidence in the Electoral Process: We asked respondents to agree/disagree with a number of statements about upcoming elections (we collapse strongly agree/agree and strongly disagree/disagree; respondents were given the option of "not sure"):

- •A sizable majority of Coloradans expressed confidence in the mail voting system in Colorado (69% overall), and while there were some partisan differences, very sizable majorities of Coloradans of all stripes agreed that "I have confidence in the mail voting system in Colorado": 82% of Democrats, 59% of Republicans, and 62% of Independents.
- •A majority of Coloradans agreed that the upcoming elections will be "conducted fairly and accurately" (54% overall), though there were some partisan differences in reported agreement with the statement (63% of Democrats agreed, vs. 51% of Independents and 47% of Republicans).
- •A majority of Coloradans agreed that "all citizens who want to vote in the election will be able to" (64% overall), though there were some partisan differences in reported agreement with the statement, with Democrats doing so at lower rates (53% of Democrats vs. 70% of Independents and 77% of Republicans).
- •Coloradans were split on whether COVID-19 will "significantly disrupt" voting, with 44% agreeing with a statement to this effect, and 45% disagreeing. Democrats expressed a bit more concern about the effects of the coronavirus pandemic, with 52% agreeing compared to 39% of Independents and 35% of Republicans.

Democratic Process and the Presidential Election: We asked respondents to agree/disagree with a series of statements about the presidential election (we collapse strongly agree/agree and strongly disagree/disagree; respondents were given the option of "not sure"):

•A sizable majority of Coloradans expressed support for the statement that "the losing candidate in the presidential election should publicly acknowledge the winner as legitimate (78% overall). The numbers were similarly high across partisan categories (84% of Democrats; 75% of Independents; 73% of Republicans).

•A slim majority agreed that if their preferred presidential candidate did not win, they would see the winner as legitimate (57% overall) – these numbers were fairly similar by partisanship.

Coloradans are worried about the outcome of the presidential election, and about the potential for violence:

- •Only 34% of Coloradans agreed with a statement that "I am confident there will be a peaceful transition/continuation of power" (41% disagreed; 25% reported "not sure"). Republicans expressed more confidence (with only 29% disagreeing with the statement vs. 48% of Democrats and 49% of Independents).
- •71% of Coloradans agreed that they are worried about violence "on or after Election Day in other parts of the country," while 55% agreed that they are worried about similar violence in Colorado specifically. With respect to violence elsewhere in the country, the portion agreeing with the statement was similar across partisan splits; at the state level, Democrats expressed slightly more concern (59% agreement) vs. Independents (49%) and Republicans (53%).

# **The Presidential Race**

Question text: If the election for president of the United States were held today, would you vote for...

The Presidential Election	
Donald Trump	38%
Joe Biden	47%
Other	3%
Undecided	11%
Observations	800

Presidential Election by Gender			
	Male	Female	
Donald Trump	43%	33%	
Joe Biden	39%	56%	
Other	5%	2%	
Undecided	13%	9%	
Observations	413	387	

Presidential Election by Partisanship				
	Democrats	Republicans	Independents	
Donald Trump	1%	86%	24%	
Joe Biden	90%	7%	27%	
Other	1%	1%	19%	
Undecided	8%	5%	30%	
Observations	363	318	107	

# **The Senate Race**

Question text: If the election for the U.S. Senate were held today, would you vote for...

U.S. Senate Election	
John Hickenlooper	48%
Cory Gardner	40%
Other	1%
Undecided	11%
Observations	800

U.S. Senate Election by Gender			
	Male	Female	
John Hickenlooper	45%	51%	
Cory Gardner	45%	36%	
Other	1%	1%	
Undecided	10%	12%	
Observations	413	387	

U.S. Senate Election by Partisanship				
	<b>Democrats</b>	Republicans	Independents	
John Hickenlooper	89%	8%	34%	
Cory Gardner	2%	88%	32%	
Other	0%	<1%	4%	
Undecided	9%	4%	29%	
Observations	363	318	107	

# **The Generic Ballot**

Question text: If the election for the U.S. House of Representatives in your congressional district were held today, would you vote for...

Generic Congressional Ballot		
The Republican Candidate	39%	
The Democratic Candidate	47%	
Other	2%	
Undecided	12%	
Observations	800	

Generic Congressional Ballot by Gender		
	Male	Female
The Republican Candidate	46%	33%
The Democratic Candidate	41%	54%
Other	2%	1%
Undecided	11%	12%
Observations	413	387

Generic Congressional Ballot by Partisanship			
	Democrats	Republicans	Independents
The Republican Candidate	<1%	91%	22%
The Democratic Candidate	92%	5%	24%
Other	<1%	0%	11%
Undecided	7%	4%	43%
Observations	363	318	107

# **Proposition 113**

Question text: Proposition 113 would allow Colorado to join an agreement among states – the National Popular Vote Interstate Compact – to elect the President of the United States by a national popular vote. If the election were held today, how would you vote on this proposition?

Proposition 113		
Yes	49%	
No	34%	
Not Sure	17%	
Observations	800	

Proposition 113 by Gender		
	Male	Female
Yes	43%	54%
No	43%	25%
Not Sure	14%	20%
Observations	413	387

Proposition 113 by Partisanship			
	Democrats	Republicans	Independents
Yes	74%	23%	40%
No	11%	62%	32%
Not Sure	15%	15%	28%
Observations	363	318	107

# **Proposition 115**

Question text: Proposition 115 would make performing a late-term abortion – when the gestational age of the fetus is at least twenty-two weeks – a misdemeanor punishable by a fine and a suspension of the medical license of those performing the abortion, except in instances where the abortion is required to save the life of the pregnant woman. If the election were held today, how would you vote on this proposition?

Proposition 115	
Yes	41%
No	45%
Not Sure	14%
Observations	800

Proposition 115 by Gender		
	Male	Female
Yes	43%	38%
No	44%	46%
Not Sure	12%	16%
Observations	413	387

Proposition 115 by Partisanship			
	<b>Democrats</b>	Republicans	Independents
Yes	24%	61%	37%
No	62%	27%	43%
Not Sure	14%	12%	20%
Observations	363	318	107

## **Proposition 118**

Question text: Proposition 118 would create a paid family and medical leave program (funded through a payroll tax to be paid for by employers and employees in a 50/50 split; it would authorize\*) authorizing paid family and medical leave for those with serious medical conditions, those caring for a new child or a family member with a serious medical condition, or those having a need for leave related to a family member's military deployment. If the election were held today, how would you vote on this proposition?

Proposition 118	
Yes	65%
No	22%
Not Sure	13%
Observations	800

Proposition 118 by Partisanship			
	Democrats	Republicans	Independents
Yes	83%	47%	60%
No	9%	40%	16%
Not Sure	9%	13%	25%
Observations	363	318	107

<sup>\*</sup>This question was presented in two ways, one with the parenthetical text and one without. Participants were randomly assigned to each treatment with a probability of .5. No significant differences were noted between the changes in the text, thus the pooled results are reported.

#### Amendment B

For this analysis, we asked the question in 2 ways. Respondents were split randomly between these questions with a probability of .5. The purpose of this split was to see if the language (which appears on the ballot) would lead respondents to support or not support Amendment B. There are significant differences between the question wordings; our analysis is intended to show the (potential) effect of this (ballot) language on the outcome.

Question version 1: Amendment B would amend the Colorado Constitution to repeal a requirement that the residential assessment rate be periodically changed to maintain the statewide proportion of residential property as compared to all other taxable property, and to repeal a nonresidential property tax assessment rate of twenty-nine percent. If the election were held today, how would you vote on this amendment?

Question version 2: Amendment B will not raise property taxes, and will help preserve funding for police, firefighters, medical services, and education in local districts. Amendment B would amend the Colorado Constitution to repeal a requirement that the residential assessment rate be periodically changed to maintain the statewide proportion of residential property as compared to all other taxable property, and to repeal a nonresidential property tax assessment rate of twenty-nine percent.

Amendment B by Question Version			
Version 1 Version 2			
Yes	24%	44%	
No	23%	20%	
Not Sure	53%	36%	
Observations	394	406	

Amendment B Version 1 by Partisanship			
	Democrats	Republicans	Independents
Yes	29%	22%	11%
No	15%	32%	30%
Not Sure	56%	47%	60%
Observations	187	150	56

Amendment B Version 2 by Partisanship			
	<b>Democrats</b>	Republicans	Independents
Yes	46%	46%	41%
No	20%	19%	25%
Not Sure	34%	36%	33%
Observations	171	163	59

## **Electoral Process Questions**

Note: Several of the questions in this section were modeled after questions in a <u>Pew</u> Research survey from April, 2020.

Results in this section use general population weights – they are weighted to match the general Colorado population, not likely voters (for more information, see the methodological report linked at the beginning of the document). Most (>90%) respondents in our sample are registered voters (726/800).

Questions in this section were presented with the following preface: "How much do you agree with each of the following statements about the upcoming elections?"

#### **Electoral Fairness**

Question Text: The elections will be conducted fairly and accurately.

Election fairness	
Agree	54%
Disagree	30%
Not Sure	15%
Observations	787

Election Fairness by Partisanship			
	Democrats	Republicans	Independents
Agree	63%	47%	51%
Disagree	23%	37%	32%
Not Sure	13%	15%	17%
Observations	359	305	122

Analysis done using Colorado general population weights (observations are weighted). Note that due to rounding, each column may not sum exactly to 100%

## **Ability to Vote if Desired**

Question Text: All citizens who want to vote in the election will be able to.

All Citizens Can Vote	
Agree	64%
Disagree	25%
Not Sure	11%
Observations	787

All Citizens Can Vote by Partisanship				
	Democrats	Republicans	Independents	
Agree	53%	77%	70%	
Disagree	34%	15%	21%	
Not Sure	12%	8%	9%	
Observations	359	305	122	

Analysis done using Colorado general population weights (observations are weighted). Note that due to rounding, each column may not sum exactly to 100%

## The Impact of Covid-19 on Voting

Question Text: Covid-19 will significantly disrupt voting.

Covid-19 Will Disrupt Voting	
Agree	44%
Disagree	45%
Not Sure	12%
Observations	787

Covid-19 Will Disrupt Voting by Partisanship			
	<b>Democrats</b>	Republicans	Independents
Agree	52%	35%	39%
Disagree	32%	59%	49%
Not Sure	16%	6%	12%
Observations	359	305	122

# **Confidence in Mail-In Voting**

Question Text: I have confidence in the mail voting system in Colorado.

Confidence in Mail-In Voting in Colorado	
Agree	69%
Disagree	22%
Not Sure	9%
Observations	787

Confidence in Mail-In Voting in Colorado by Partisanship			
	<b>Democrats</b>	Republicans	Independents
Agree	82%	59%	62%
Disagree	10%	34%	26%
Not Sure	8%	7%	12%
Observations	359	305	122

## **Presidential Election Outcome Questions**

Results in this section use general population weights – they are weighted to match the general Colorado population, not likely voters (for more information, see the methodological report linked at the beginning of the document). Most (>90%) respondents in our sample are registered voters (726/800).

Questions in this section were presented with the following preface: "How much do you agree with each of the following statements about the upcoming **presidential election**?"

## Losing Candidate Should Acknowledge Winner as Legitimate

Question Text: The losing candidate in the presidential election should publicly acknowledge the winner as legitimate.

Losing Candidate should Acknowledge Winner as Legitimate	
Agree	78%
Disagree	10%
Not Sure	12%
Observations	787

Losing Candidate should Acknowledge Winner as Legitimate by Partisanship			
	Democrats	Republicans	Independents
Agree	84%	73%	75%
Disagree	9%	12%	7%
Not Sure	7%	15%	17%
Observations	359	305	122

Analysis done using Colorado general population weights (observations are weighted). Note that due to rounding, each column may not sum exactly to 100%

## **Respondent Will View Winner as Legitimate**

Question Text: If my preferred candidate does not win, I will view the winner as legitimate.



Respondent Will View Winner as Legitimate		
Agree	57%	
Disagree	19%	
Not Sure	24%	
Observations	787	

Respondent Will View Winner as Legitimate by Partisanship			
	<b>Democrats</b>	Republicans	Independents
Agree	56%	59%	53%
Disagree	20%	20%	18%
Not Sure	24%	21%	29%
Observations	359	305	122

Analysis done using Colorado general population weights (observations are weighted). Note that due to rounding, each column may not sum exactly to 100%

## Confidence in a Peaceful Transition/Continuation of Power

Question Text: I am confident there will be a peaceful transition/continuation of power.

Confidence in a Peaceful Transition of Power		
Agree	34%	
Disagree	41%	
Not Sure	25%	
Observations	787	

Confidence in a Peaceful Transition of Power by Partisanship						
Democrats Republicans Independents						
Agree	25%	49%	22%			
Disagree	48%	29%	49%			
Not Sure	27%	22%	29%			
Observations	359	305	122			

## Worry about Violence in the United States on/after Election Day

Question Text: I am worried about violence on or after Election Day in other parts of the country.

Worried about Violence in the U.S. on/after Election Day				
Agree	71%			
Disagree	18%			
Not Sure	10%			
Observations	787			

Worried about Violence in the U.S. on/after Election Day by Partisanship						
Democrats Republicans Independents						
Agree	71%	73%	70%			
Disagree	17%	19%	19%			
Not Sure	12%	8%	10%			
Observations	359	305	122			

Analysis done using Colorado general population weights (observations are weighted). Note that due to rounding, each column may not sum exactly to 100%

# Worry about Violence in Colorado on/after Election Day

Question Text: I am worried about violence on or after Election Day in Colorado.

Worried about Violence in Colorado on/after Election Day				
Agree	55%			
Disagree	34%			
Not Sure	10%			
Observations	787			

#### Worried about Violence in Colorado on/after Election Day by Partisanship

	Democrats	Republicans	Independents
Agree	59%	53%	49%
Disagree	32%	38%	35%
Not Sure	9%	10%	16%
Observations	359	305	122

Analysis done using Colorado general population weights (observations are weighted). Note that due to rounding, each column may not sum exactly to 100%

## Replacing Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg on the U.S. Supreme Court

Question Text: The winner of the election should be the one to nominate a replacement for Supreme Court Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg.

Winner of Election should Nominate Supreme Court Replacement				
Agree	54%			
Disagree	32%			
Not Sure	14%			

# Winner of Election should Nominate Supreme Court Replacement by Partisanship

	Democrats	Republicans	Independents
Agree	81%	26%	45%
Disagree	9%	61%	28%
Not Sure	10%	13%	27%
Observations	359	305	122

**787** 

Analysis done using Colorado general population weights (observations are weighted). Note that due to rounding, each column may not sum exactly to 100%

**Observations** 

## **Demographic Breakdown of Likely Voter Weighted Sample**

Note: Partisanship used throughout is from a self-reported 7-point measure, where Strong Democrats, Democrats, and Leaning Democrats are considered Democrats, Strong Republicans, Republicans, and Leaning Republicans are considered Republicans, and self-identified Independents are Independents. This is noted below as "Partisanship."

Partisanship			
	<b>Democrats</b>	Republicans	Independents
Partisanship	46%	40%	14%
Observations	363	318	107

An alternative version of the partisanship breakdown, which includes Leaning Democrats and Leaning Republicans as Independents, would appear as the following ("Alternative Partisanship"):

Alternative Partisanship						
	<b>Democrats</b>	Republicans	Independents			
Alternative Partisanship	33%	31%	36%			
Observations	260	241	286			

Both are calculated using likely voter weights (observations are weighted). Note that due to rounding, each column may not sum exactly to 100%

Note: The tables below present the weighted percentages and observation counts for gender, race, income, and age for the likely voter analysis (observations are weighted with the likely voter weight). For raw descriptive breakdown of these demographics in the unweighted sample, please see the codebook linked at the beginning of this document.

Gender		
	Male	Female
Gender Percentage	52%	48%
Observations	413	387

Race								
	White	Black	Hispanic	Asian	Native American	Middle Eastern	Two or More	Other
Race Percentage	73%	4%	18%	2%	1%	< 1%	1%	1%
Observations	583	30	146	17	6	1	12	5

Income Quartile	es			
	1 <sup>st</sup> Quartile	2 <sup>nd</sup> Quartile	3 <sup>rd</sup> Quartile	4 <sup>th</sup> Quartile
Income Percentage	24%	32%	20%	24%
Observations	175	241	151	178

Age							
	18-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65+	
Age Percentage	10%	21%	20%	14%	16%	20%	
Observations	78	165	162	109	128	158	

Demographics are reported using the likely voter weight. Note that due to rounding, each column may not sum exactly to 100%