

THE
PEW
CHARITABLE TRUSTS

Philadelphia
Research
Initiative

PUBLIC OPINION POLL

Philadelphians are Optimistic about Their City But Residents are Split Over Budget Options

February 5, 2009

Larry Eichel, Project Director, Philadelphia Research Initiative
Cliff Zukin, Professor of Political Science and Public Policy at Rutgers University

MEDIA INQUIRIES CONTACT:
Cindy Jobbins or Emily Cherie Walz
The Pew Charitable Trusts
215-575-4812 / 215-575-4809
www.pewtrusts.org/philaresearch

Table of Contents

Assessments of the Mayor.....	1
Assessments of Philadelphia’s Fiscal Shape and Proposed Plans.....	2
Assessments of the City.....	4
About the Survey.....	7
Appendices.....	8
Survey Toplines.....	12

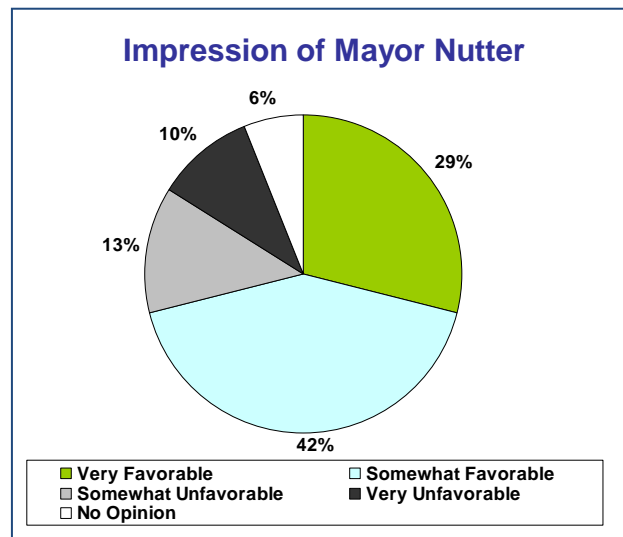
PHILADELPHIA RESEARCH INITIATIVE PUBLIC OPINION POLL

I. Assessments of the Mayor

Despite the city's budget crisis, Mayor Michael Nutter starts 2009 with a reservoir of goodwill among city residents, according to a public opinion poll by the Philadelphia Research Initiative at The Pew Charitable Trusts. Seven in 10 say they have a favorable impression of Mayor Nutter, with 29 percent saying their impression of him is *very* favorable. Another 42 percent say their impression of him is *somewhat* favorable. Just one-quarter of city residents say they have an unfavorable impression of the man, pretty evenly divided between those saying *very* and those saying *somewhat* unfavorable.

Impressions of the Mayor vary by demographics. He is slightly better regarded by whites than Hispanics or African Americans, by the better educated and more affluent, and by the older rather than younger. These assessments are displayed in Table 1 of the appendix.

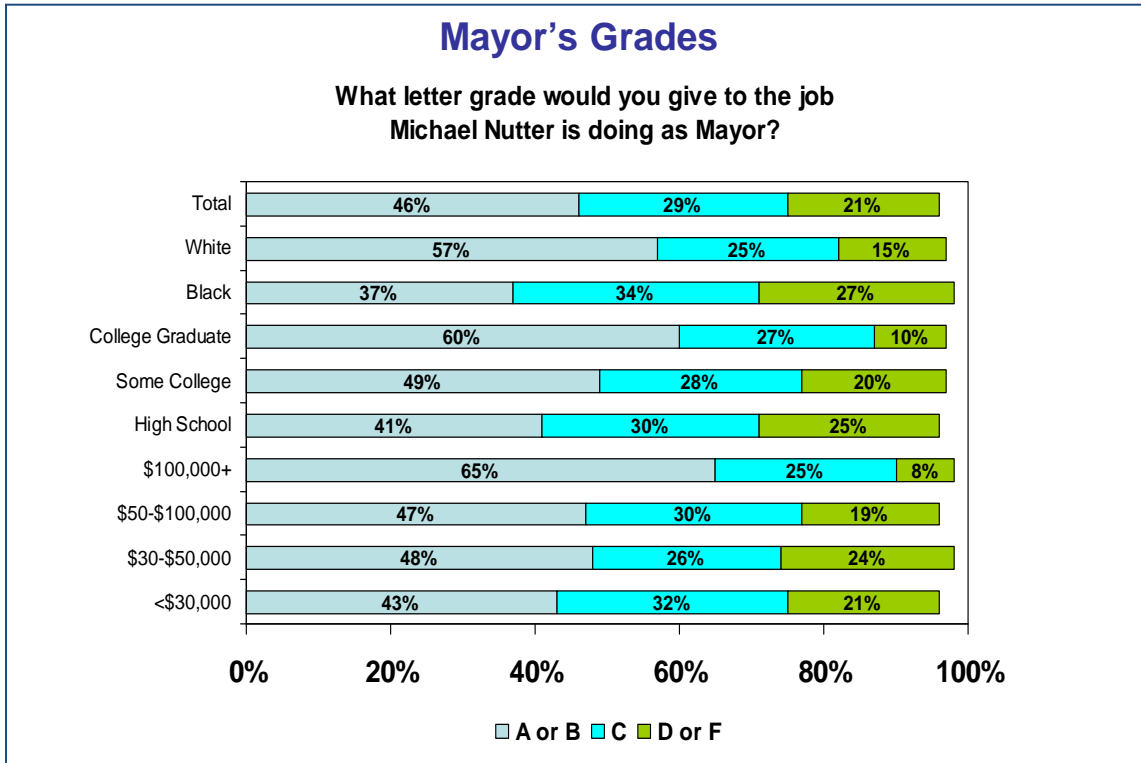
Asked to rate Mayor Nutter's performance as mayor, forty-six percent give him a grade of either A or B as the city's chief executive, 29 percent give him a C, and 21 percent give Mayor Nutter a D or F; the mayor gets higher grades from whites, the well-educated and wealthier Philadelphians. By way of comparison, 31 percent of all respondents give City Council an A or B, 22 percent a D or F. (The grades have been computed for a variety of groups on a 4.0 scale, and can be found in Table 1 of the appendix.) The assessment of Mayor Nutter's performance among various groups is as follows:



- There is a wide racial gap in the assessment of Nutter's performance; 57 percent of whites give him at least a B, compared to just 37 percent of blacks.
- He gets at least a B from 60 percent of college graduates, from about 50 percent of those with some post-secondary education, and from about 40 percent of those with a high school

education. Some 65 percent of those earning \$100,000 or more per year give Nutter an A or B, compared to about 45 percent of Philadelphians with lower incomes.

- Those in Northeast Philly and South Philly give him higher grades than do people living elsewhere in the city.

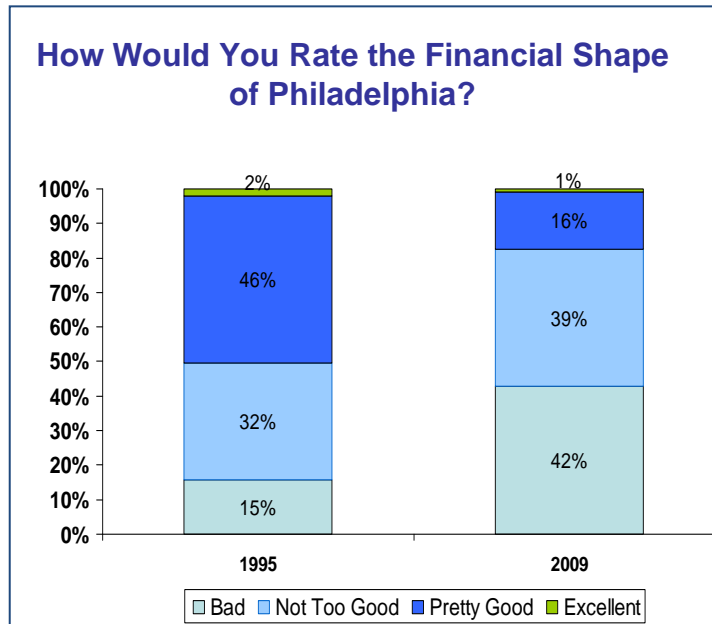


II. Assessments of Philadelphia’s Fiscal Shape and Proposed Plans

The survey contained a number of questions inquiring into residents’ views of the financial situation of the city—how much they have been following it, how they feel about his proposals, how much confidence they have in him to manage the crisis, and what they see as the relationship between taxes and services. In sum, Philadelphians recognize the severity of the financial problems facing their city and have confidence in the mayor’s ability to deal with them, even while they overwhelmingly reject elements of his proposal to do so. Moreover, polling finds residents are deeply divided over the proper mix of city services and taxes.

There is no question that the city’s dire financial status has caught the attention of its citizens—64 percent say they have heard “a lot” about the Mayor’s plans to close library branches, some fire companies and

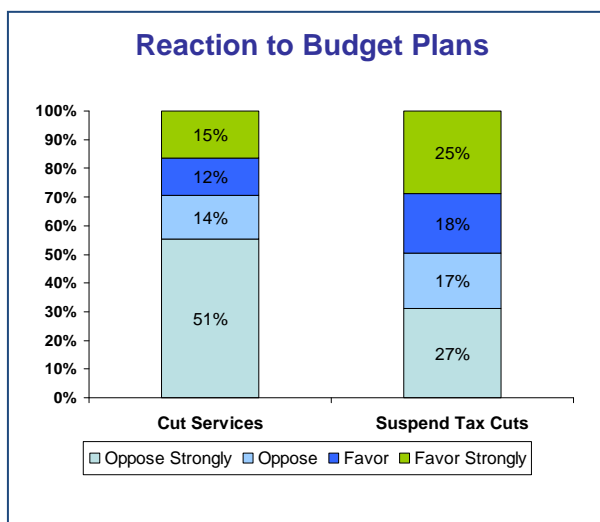
swimming pools, and another 18 percent say they have heard “some” discussion of his plans. And residents need no additional persuasion that the city is in financial trouble: four-fifths of residents now characterize the financial shape of the city as either “not very good” or “bad.” An identical question asked in a 1995 Philadelphia Inquirer - Eagleton Institute poll done by Cliff Zukin found 47 percent giving those answers.



There is a substantial reservoir of faith in the mayor’s ability to lead in this area: 17 percent say they are “very confident” and 40 percent “pretty confident” in his “ability to do the right things in handling the city’s budget problems.” On the

other side, 37 percent say they are either “not too” or “not at all” confident in him. The survey also examined public opinion on two ways of dealing with the city’s budget difficulties. They were worded as follows: 1) A plan to balance the city’s budget by closing a number of branch libraries, some fire companies and most of the city’s swimming pools; 2) The mayor also wants to suspend plans to reduce wage and business taxes.

The plan to cut from libraries and other services generates stormy opposition. Almost two-thirds oppose it, with the vast majority of them *strongly* opposed. Just one-quarter (27 percent) support these steps. The delay of wage and business tax cuts is better received, but receives a mixed review at best: 43 percent say

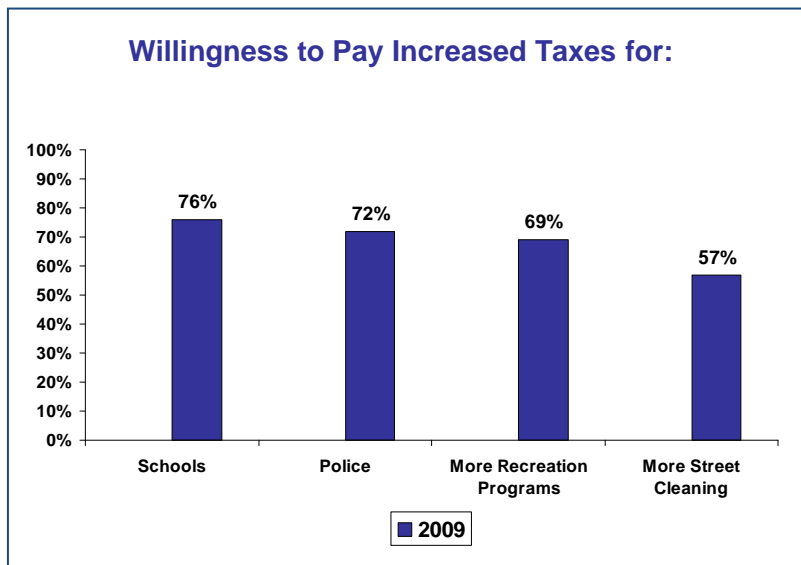
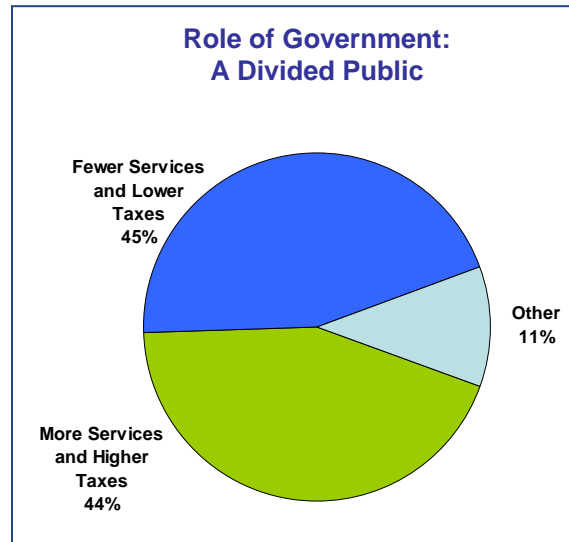


they favor this action and 44 percent say they are opposed to it, with the remainder expressing no opinion.

In fact, Philadelphians are divided on the fundamental policy tradeoff between taxes and services. Almost identical numbers say they would prefer “more government services and higher taxes” (44 percent) as would prefer “fewer services and lower taxes” (45 percent). Responses differ by

education, income and age, but not by race/ethnicity. In general, the better educated and more affluent come down on the side of more services and taxes; those with relatively little income or education favor lower taxes even if that means fewer services. The data also show a significant age divide. Generally speaking, younger Philadelphians prefer more services and older ones choose lower taxes. These numbers can be found in Table 2 of the statistical appendix to this report.

Philadelphia residents are no different from people anywhere else—they would rather have more services and lower taxes, and this comes through in the data as well. By a margin of two to one, more residents say city taxes are too high (62 percent) than that tax levels are about right (31 percent). Still, it depends on the program: three-quarters say they would be willing to see their tax burden increased if it resulted in more money for schools or police, and two-thirds say they would be willing to pay more for more recreation programs. A majority also say they would accept higher taxes for more street cleaning.

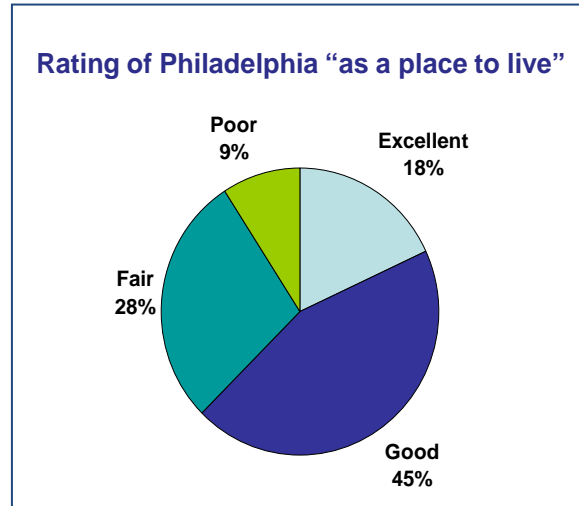


III. Assessments of the City

Philadelphia is a pretty fine place to live according to those who should know best—its citizens. At the beginning of 2009, 63 percent rate the city as either an excellent or a good place to live. This is quite a change in mindset from just two years ago when a January 2007 [poll conducted by Franklin & Marshall](#)

College found only 49 percent of residents rating Philadelphia as either an excellent or good place to live. The beginning of 2009 finds 18 percent rating Philadelphia as an excellent place to live, 45 percent as good, 28 percent as only fair, and 9 percent as a poor place to live.

Residents' responses show interesting and important differences. These are presented in Table 3 of the appendix. To summarize:



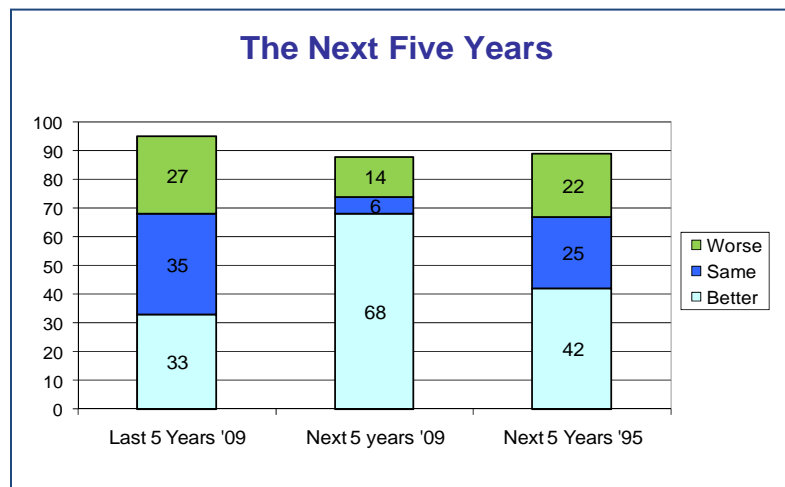
- Whites are significantly more positive than are African American or Hispanic residents of the city. Almost three-quarters of whites (72 percent) rate the city positively as a place to live compared to about 57 percent in each of the other two groups.
- There are also differences by socioeconomic status, although these are only clearly evident between those at the very top of the ladders and the others. For example, 76 percent of college graduates rate the city positively (with 28 percent rating it excellent) compared to 60 percent of those in lower educational categories (with about 15 percent rating it excellent). And 84 percent of those earning over \$100,000 a year rate the city favorably compared to about 60 percent of those in each of three other lower income groups.
- Another important difference is by age. Younger residents are not as fond of the city as are older ones. Just 55 percent of those under 35 years of age rate the city as either excellent or good. This figure climbs to 60 percent of those between the ages of 35 and 49, to 67 percent of those 50 to 64, and 72 percent of those over 65.
- Finally, neighborhood matters, although the range is not huge: the least positive marks come from those living in North Philly (59 percent), the highest from South Philly (71 percent).

There is renewed sense of optimism among Philadelphia residents; this is evident in a number of measurements of public sentiment. By a margin of 46 percent to 37 percent, Philadelphians now believe the city is going in the right direction. This is a significant finding given the city's precarious budget situation, and it represents a sea change from the last years of the Street administration. A [Franklin &](#)

[Marshall Poll](#) conducted in January of 2007 found 61% feeling that the city was off on the wrong track. The last time residents were as optimistic as they are now appears to have been in 2003.

Are things headed in the right direction or are they on the wrong track?		
	Right Direction	Wrong Track
1995	47%	36%
2003	47%	45%
2006	28%	64%
2007	31%	61%
2009	46%	37%

This optimism also comes through in examining attitudes about how the city has changed in the last five years, and what people expect five years out, as shown in the bar graph below. The left-hand column shows how Philadelphia residents assess changes in the city over the last five years. The picture is tepid, with one-third saying the city had improved, one-quarter saying it worsened, and another third finding no discernable change. The center column shows expectations of the future, and these are strongly positive. Fully two-thirds think Philadelphia is in for better days; just 14 percent expect the city to get worse. The third column presents responses to this question given by a sample of residents in the 1995 Philadelphia Inquirer – Eagleton Institute survey at the close of former Mayor Ed Rendell’s first term. Even then, in a better economic time than now, optimists outnumbered pessimists by 42 to 22 percent—a rosy forecast but well below the current 68 to 14 percent difference. Finally, as evidence of the city’s optimism, 66 percent of residents say they would recommend Philadelphia as a place to live to a friend. Just 27 percent say they would not do so.



About the Survey

The Philadelphia Research Initiative survey was conducted by telephone between January 2 and January 19 among a citywide random sample of 1,600 city residents, ages 18 and older. Most of the survey was completed before January 15, when Mayor Nutter announced that the city's budget shortfall was bigger than previously projected. Interviews were conducted with 1,200 landline users and 400 cell phone users to reach a broad representative sample of Philadelphians.

The final sample was weighted to reflect the demographic breakdown of the city. The margin of error for the entire sample is approximately +/- 2.5 percentage points. The margin of error is higher for subgroups. Surveys are subject to other error sources as well, including sampling coverage error, recording error and respondent error.

Abt SRBI Public Affairs designed the survey and conducted all interviewing, working with Cliff Zukin, veteran pollster and director of the public policy program at Rutgers University.

About The Philadelphia Research Initiative

The Philadelphia Research Initiative (www.pewtrusts.org/philaresearch) is a new unit created by Pew in fall 2008 to study critical issues facing Philadelphia and provide impartial research and analysis for the benefit of decision makers, the news media and the public. The initiative conducts public opinion polling, produces in-depth reports, and publishes briefs that illuminate front-and-center issues. Coming next month is a comprehensive "State of the City" report, tracking trends on a wide array of indicators, comparing Philadelphia to other cities and to its own past.

About Pew

The Pew Charitable Trusts (www.pewtrusts.org) is driven by the power of knowledge to solve today's most challenging problems. Pew applies a rigorous, analytical approach to improve public policy, inform the public and stimulate civic life. We partner with a diverse range of donors, public and private organizations and concerned citizens who share our commitment to fact-based solutions and goal-driven investments to improve society.

APPENDIX

Table 1

Mayor Nutter Summary Table

	A or B (percent)	Grade Point Average	Very/Pretty Confident (percent)	Percent Favorable	Percent Unfavorable
Total	46	2.3	58	71	23
Race					
White	57	2.6	64	78	18
Black	37	2.1	55	64	30
Hispanic	47	2.4	51	71	18
Education					
H.S. or less	41	2.2	53	67	26
Some College	49	2.3	59	70	24
College Grad	60	2.7	68	81	15
Age					
18-34	45	2.3	53	67	27
35-49	47	2.3	58	68	26
50-64	48	2.4	59	74	22
65+	48	2.4	63	77	16
Income					
<\$30,000	43	2.3	55	69	25
\$30-\$50,000	48	2.3	61	72	24
\$50-\$100,000	47	2.4	57	70	24
\$100,000+	65	2.8	75	84	15
Neighborhood					
South Philly	47	2.4	57	71	22
West Philly	41	2.2	56	69	27
North Philly	41	2.2	51	64	24
N.W. Philly	42	2.2	61	67	29
N.E. Philly	54	2.5	60	74	21

Statistical note: The neighborhood breakdowns in this survey do not include Center City and the River Wards. The samples from those areas were too small to be statistically significant. For the purposes of this survey, Center City was defined as zip codes 19102, 19103, 19106 and 19107. The River Wards were defined as zip codes 19125, 19134 and 19137.

APPENDIX

Table 2 Taxes and Services Tradeoff

	More Services and Higher Taxes (percent)	Fewer Services and Lower Taxes (percent)	Don't Know (percent)
Total	44	45	11
Race			
White	41	46	13
Black	45	45	11
Hispanic	43	47	10
Education			
H.S. or less	38	49	14
Some College	49	42	9
College Grad	55	37	8
Age			
18-34	51	43	6
35-49	47	43	10
50-64	41	46	13
65+	33	47	20
Income			
<\$30,000	40	48	12
\$30-\$50,000	47	42	11
\$50-\$100,000	53	40	7
\$100,000+	48	48	4

APPENDIX

Table 3 Rating of Philadelphia

	Positive		Negative		Positive Total (percent)	Positive to Negative Difference
	Excellent (percent)	Good (percent)	Only Fair (percent)	Poor (percent)		
Total	18	44	28	9	62	25
Race						
White	24	48	20	7	72	45
Black	14	43	33	10	57	14
Hispanic	14	41	33	11	55	11
Education						
H.S. or less	17	42	30	10	59	19
Some College	13	48	30	8	61	23
College Grad	28	48	19	4	76	53
Years in Philly						
Under 10	17	45	28	8	62	26
10 to 30	16	42	33	9	58	16
Over 30	20	46	24	8	66	34
Age						
18-34	14	41	33	11	55	11
35-49	18	42	29	10	60	21
50-64	21	46	23	9	67	35
65+	22	50	23	4	72	45
Income						
<\$30,000	17	44	29	10	61	22
\$30-\$50,000	15	47	30	8	62	24
\$50-\$100,000	20	42	31	9	62	22
\$100,000+	29	55	10	6	84	68
Neighborhood						
South Philly	26	45	22	6	71	43
West Philly	18	39	33	10	57	14
North Philly	17	42	33	8	59	18
N.W. Philly	15	50	26	8	65	31
N.E. Philly	15	47	30	8	62	24
Children in Household						
Yes	13	42	32	11	55	12
No	22	46	25	7	68	36
Housing Status						
Own	21	47	24	7	68	37
Rent	15	41	33	10	56	13

APPENDIX

Table 4 **City of Philadelphia:**
Right Direction or Wrong Track

	Right Direction (percent)	Wrong Track (percent)	Mixed/Don't Know (percent)
Total	46	37	17
Race			
White	48	37	15
Black	47	35	18
Hispanic	37	40	23
Education			
H.S. or less	43	38	18
Some College	43	39	18
College Grad	57	29	14
Gender			
Male	50	33	17
Female	43	39	18
Years in Philly			
Under 10	50	34	17
10 to 30	44	41	15
Over 30	46	35	19
Age			
18-34	44	40	15
35-49	48	39	13
50-64	49	34	17
65+	43	30	26
Income			
<\$30,000	43	38	19
\$30-\$50,000	47	40	12
\$50-\$100,000	48	35	17
\$100,000+	62	28	10
Neighborhood			
South Philly	52	31	16
West Philly	43	38	19
North Philly	48	31	21
N.W. Philly	45	38	17
N.E. Philly	43	42	15
Children in Household			
Yes	40	43	17
No	50	33	17

**PHILADELPHIA RESEARCH INITIATIVE / ABT SRBI
TOPLINE FOR SELECTED QUESTIONS
January 2 – January 19, PHILADELPHIA QUALITY OF LIFE SURVEY**

BASE= 1,600 Philadelphia Residents Except Where Noted

Q. HOW WOULD YOU RATE PHILADELPHIA AS A PLACE TO LIVE--EXCELLENT, GOOD, ONLY FAIR, OR POOR?

EXCELLENT 18%
GOOD 44%
ONLY FAIR 28%
POOR 9%
DON'T KNOW / REFUSED 1%

Q. DO YOU THINK THINGS IN PHILADELPHIA ARE GENERALLY HEADED IN THE RIGHT DIRECTION, OR WOULD YOU SAY THAT THINGS ARE PRETTY SERIOUSLY OFF ON THE WRONG TRACK?

RIGHT DIRECTION 46%
WRONG TRACK 37%
MIXED 12%
DON'T KNOW / REFUSED 5%

Q. ALL THINGS CONSIDERED, DO YOU THINK YOU WOULD OR WOULD NOT RECOMMEND PHILADELPHIA TO A FRIEND AS A PLACE TO LIVE?

WOULD 66%
WOULD NOT 27%
DEPENDS 6%
DON'T KNOW / REFUSED 1%

Q. ALL THINGS CONSIDERED, DO YOU THINK PHILADELPHIA HAS GOTTEN BETTER OR WORSE THAN IT WAS [WHEN YOU FIRST MOVED IN/FIVE YEARS AGO], OR HAS IT STAYED ABOUT THE SAME AS A PLACE TO LIVE?

BETTER 33%
WORSE 27%
SAME 35%
SOME BETTER / SOME WORSE 3%
DON'T KNOW / REFUSED 1%

Q. AND, THINKING OF THE FUTURE, DO YOU THINK PHILADELPHIA WILL BE BETTER OR WORSE AS A PLACE TO LIVE 5 YEARS FROM NOW?

BETTER 68%
WORSE 14%
SAME 6%
SOME BETTER SOME WORSE 1%
DON'T KNOW / REFUSED 10%

Q. WHAT LETTER GRADE WOULD YOU GIVE TO THE JOB MICHAEL NUTTER IS DOING AS MAYOR:
A, B, C, D OR F FOR FAILING?

A 16%
B 31%
C 29%
D 11%
F FAILING 9%
DEPENDS 1%
DON'T KNOW / REFUSED 4%

Q. WHAT LETTER GRADE WOULD YOU GIVE TO THE JOB THE CITY COUNCIL IS DOING: A, B, C, D
OR F FOR FAILING?

A 5%
B 26%
C 40%
D 13%
F FAILING 9%
DEPENDS *
DON'T KNOW / REFUSED 7%

Q. IS YOUR OVERALL IMPRESSION OF MAYOR NUTTER FAVORABLE OR UNFAVORABLE?

VERY FAVORABLE 29%
SOMEWHAT FAVORABLE 42%
SOMEWHAT UNFAVORABLE 13%
VERY UNFAVORABLE 10%
DON'T KNOW / REFUSED 6%

Q. OVERALL, DO YOU THINK CITY TAXES ARE TOO HIGH, TOO LOW, OR ABOUT RIGHT?

TOO HIGH 62%
TOO LOW 1%
ABOUT RIGHT 31%
DEPENDS 2%
DON'T KNOW / REFUSED 4%

Q. HOW WOULD YOU DESCRIBE THE FINANCIAL SHAPE OF THE CITY NOW--IS IT IN EXCELLENT
SHAPE, PRETTY GOOD SHAPE, NOT VERY GOOD SHAPE, OR IN BAD SHAPE?

EXCELLENT 1%
PRETTY GOOD 16%
NOT TOO GOOD 39%
BAD SHAPE 42%
DON'T KNOW / REFUSED 3%

Q. HOW CONFIDENT ARE YOU IN MAYOR NUTTER'S ABILITY TO DO THE RIGHT THINGS IN
HANDLING THE CITY'S BUDGET PROBLEMS---ARE YOU VERY CONFIDENT, PRETTY CONFIDENT,
NOT TOO CONFIDENT OR NOT AT ALL CONFIDENT?

VERY CONFIDENT 17%
PRETTY CONFIDENT 40%
NOT TOO CONFIDENT 26%
NOT AT ALL CONFIDENT 11%
DON'T KNOW / REFUSED 6%

Q. IN GENERAL, IF YOU HAD TO CHOOSE BETWEEN MORE GOVERNMENT SERVICES AND HIGHER TAXES, OR FEWER SERVICES AND LOWER TAXES, WHICH WOULD YOU CHOOSE?

MORE SERVICES AND HIGHER 44%
TAXES
FEWER SERVICES AND LOWER 45%
TAXES
DEPENDS 6%
DON'T KNOW / REFUSED 5%

Q. PLEASE TELL ME IF YOU WOULD OR WOULD NOT BE WILLING TO PAY HIGHER CITY TAXES FOR EACH OF THE FOLLOWING.

A. MORE MONEY FOR CITY SCHOOLS

WOULD 76%
WOULD NOT 21%
DEPENDS 1%
DON'T KNOW / REFUSED 2%

B. MORE POLICE

WOULD 72%
WOULD NOT 25%
DEPENDS 1%
DON'T KNOW / REFUSED 2%

C. MORE STREET CLEANING

WOULD 57%
WOULD NOT 41%
DEPENDS 1%
DON'T KNOW / REFUSED 2%

D. MORE RECREATIONAL PROGRAMS

WOULD 69%
WOULD NOT 28%
DEPENDS 1%
DON'T KNOW / REFUSED 2%

Q. THERE IS A PLAN TO BALANCE THE CITY'S BUDGET BY CLOSING A NUMBER OF BRANCH LIBRARIES, SOME FIRE COMPANIES AND CLOSING MOST OF THE CITY'S SWIMMING POOLS. HOW MUCH HAVE YOU HEARD OR READ ABOUT THIS: A LOT, SOME, JUST A LITTLE, OR NOTHING AT ALL?

LOT 64%
SOME 18%
JUST A LITTLE 10%
NOTHING 7%
DON'T KNOW / REFUSED 1%

Q. DO YOU FAVOR OR OPPOSE THIS PLAN TO BALANCE THE BUDGET?
BASE: HAVE READ ABOUT PLAN (1,488)

FAVOR--STRONGLY 15%
FAVOR--NOT STRONGLY 12%
OPPOSE--NOT STRONGLY 14%
OPPOSE--STRONGLY 51%
DEPENDS 5%
DON'T KNOW / REFUSED 3%

Q. THE MAYOR ALSO WANTS TO SUSPEND PLANS TO REDUCE WAGE AND BUSINESS TAXES. DO YOU FAVOR OR OPPOSE THIS?

FAVOR--STRONGLY 25%
FAVOR--NOT STRONGLY 18%
OPPOSE--NOT STRONGLY 17%
OPPOSE--STRONGLY 27%
DEPENDS 4%
DON'T KNOW / REFUSED 10%