State of the Midwest Kitchen Table

Rust Belt Rising Polling from Michigan, Ohio, Pennsylvania, and Wisconsin: High Costs and Other Issues on Voters' Minds

Summary:

Rust Belt Rising polling of Michigan, Ohio, Pennsylvania, and Wisconsin finds a nearly-even split outlook on President Trump and the economy. Given how close these key electoral states are—both statewide and in many districts Democrats aim to win back—it is vital that the limited opportunities candidates have to make impressions on voters are attuned to what people are concerned about.

The candidate who can empathetically speak to what people are struggling with by offering a vision for solutions will be at an advantage to win amidst such tight margins.

We found that health care is the cost people are most worried about. The related challenge of affording prescription drugs followed next.

Though people in Ohio, Pennsylvania, and Wisconsin saw the economy as on the right track in May, 67% of those we polled still cannot handle an unexpected expense of five thousand dollars. Thus, candidates should talk about getting these specific cost areas under control and creating better-paying jobs that give people the security to handle emergencies and still retire.

We polled 1,751 likely voters in Michigan, Ohio, Pennsylvania, and Wisconsin on May 7-9, 2019. The respondents were split between Clinton and Trump voters, with the majority being Obama voters.

For more economic and political messaging question results than are included in this snapshot—including breakdowns of the question by Michigan, Ohio, Pennsylvania, and Wisconsin, plus age, race, and party affiliations—join the Rust Belt Rising network by emailing info@rustbeltrising.com.
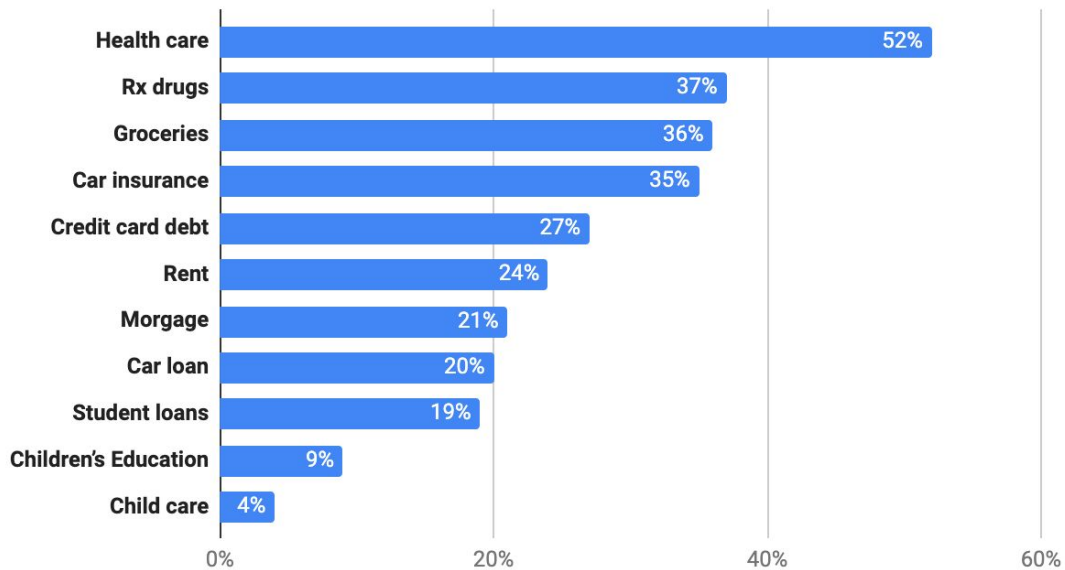
More Key Takeaways:

- In rank order, people worry most about not being able to retire, emergency expenses, losing benefits/pension, and higher monthly expenses. Many of these concerns ultimately relate to what people are making versus bills these days.

- Among companies, people are most outraged by pharmaceuticals, health care companies, oil and gas, then debt companies.

- Working-age people believe the system favoring the rich as preventing them from economic success.

- Voters see lobbyists for big corporations and wealthy donors as a big problem, followed by CEOs putting profits before fair wages.

- Those issues ranked higher for people as "big problems" than a tax code favoring the wealthy and automation and outsourcing. All of these matters ranked considerably higher as a concern than illegal immigration, suggesting that President Trump believes Midwestern voters to be more fixated on this issue as a problem than they actually are. Our candidates can tap into issues people more view to be actual impediments on their life.

- Framing raising minimum wage around costs polled better than an anti-company frame.

- The majority of people said that becoming economically successful is somewhere between not easy to very hard.
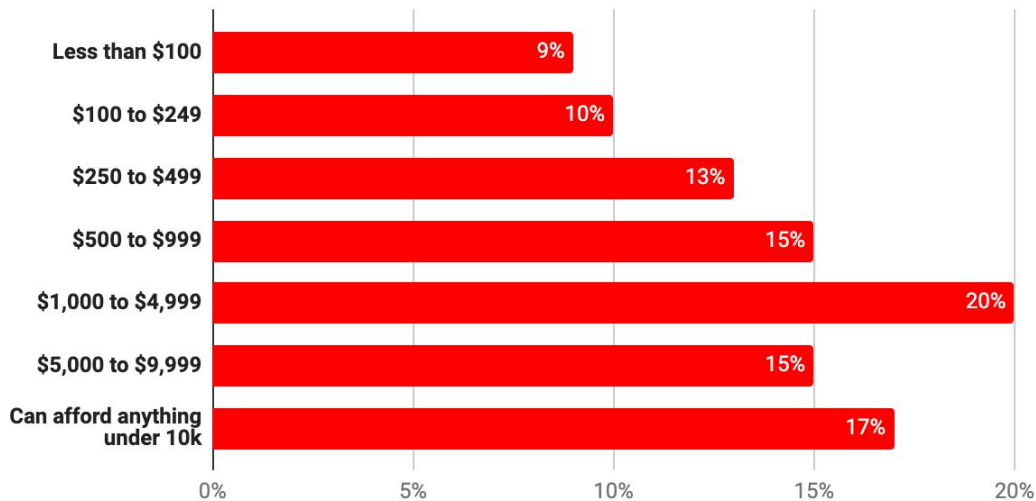
Costs:

Expense people are worried about ranked by those who selected it applied to them:

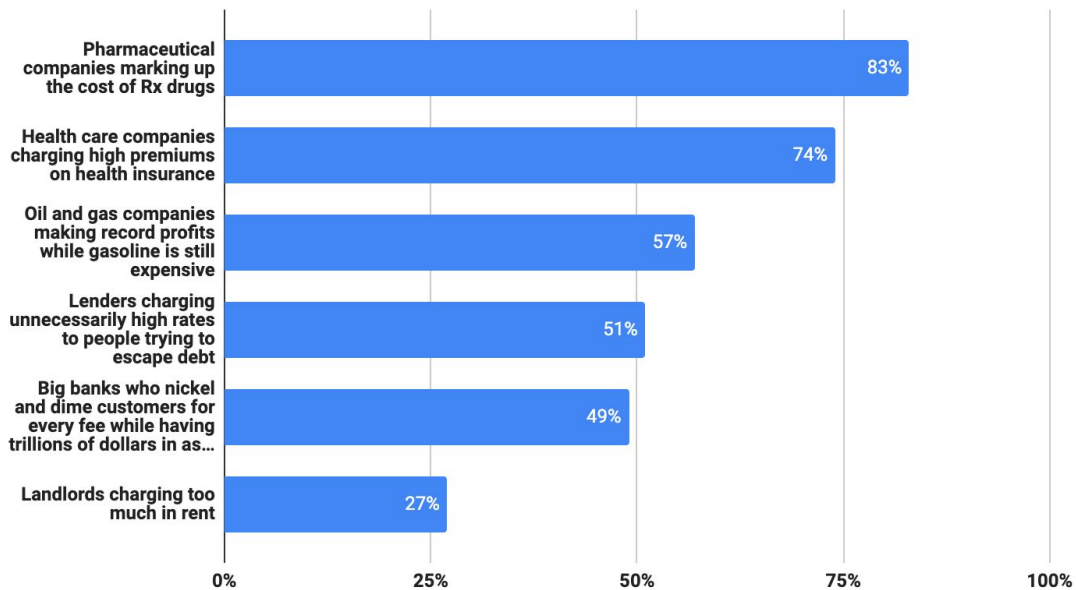| Expense	Percentage
Health care	52%
Rx drugs	37%
Groceries	36%
Car insurance	35%
Credit card debt	27%
Rent	24%
Morgage	21%
Car loan	20%
Student loans	19%
Children's Education	9%
Child care	4%

When this question was asked about the future, health care went up to 62%, children's education to 17%, and childcare to 8%.

How big of an emergency expense would you have trouble paying?
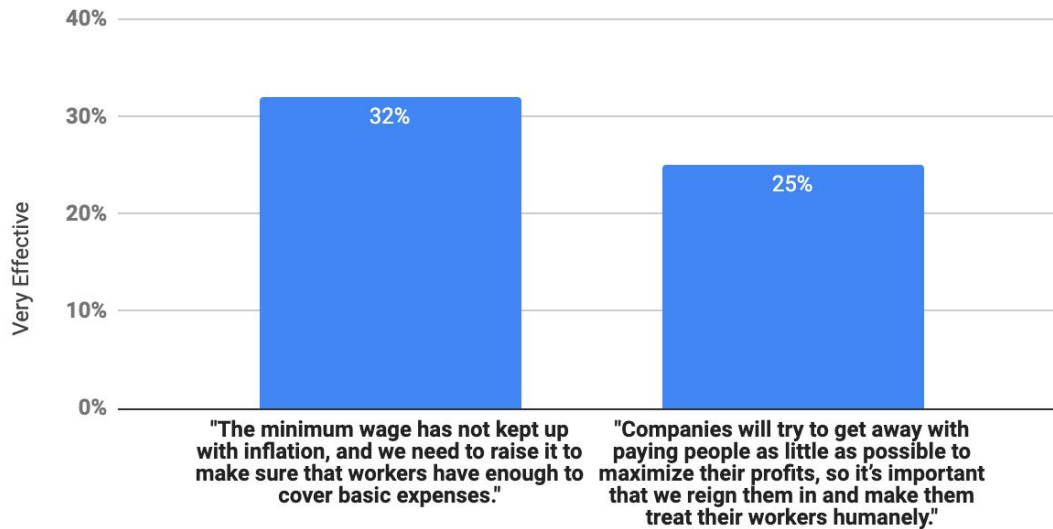
Amount	Percentage
Less than $100	9%
$100 to $249	10%
$250 to $499	13%
$500 to $999	15%
$1,000 to $4,999	20%
$5,000 to $9,999	15%
Can afford anything under 10k	17%

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Which of the following industries or groups of people are you outraged by:

- Pharmaceutical companies marking up the cost of Rx drugs — **83%**
- Health care companies charging high premiums on health insurance — **74%**
- Oil and gas companies making record profits while gasoline is still expensive — **57%**
- Lenders charging unnecessarily high rates to people trying to escape debt — **51%**
- Big banks who nickel and dime customers for every fee while having trillions of dollars in as... — **49%**
- Landlords charging too much in rent — **27%**

0%　25%　50%　75%　100%

Which of the following economic situations worries you the most:

- Not retiring — **18%**
- Emergency expense — **17%**
- Lose benefits/pension — **16%**
- Higher monthly exp. — **16%**
- Stock market crashing — **9%**
- Not seeing my wages increase fast enoug... — **9%**
- None of these worry me — **8%**
- Losing my job — **8%**

0%　5%　10%　15%　20%

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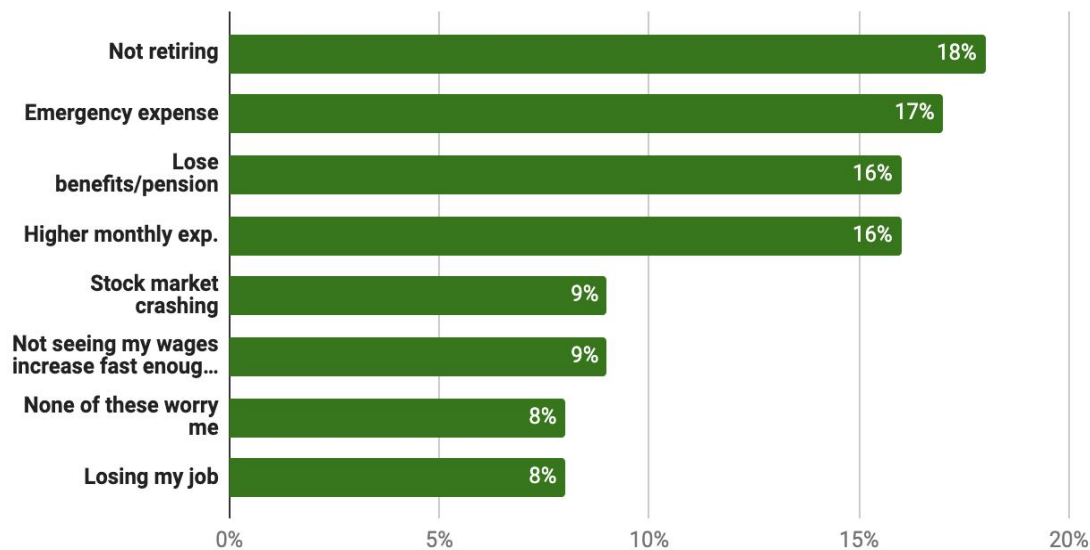
% that found the following argument for raising the minimum wage very effective

Very Effective

| | 32% | 25% |

- "The minimum wage has not kept up with inflation, and we need to raise it to make sure that workers have enough to cover basic expenses."
- "Companies will try to get away with paying people as little as possible to maximize their profits, so it's important that we reign them in and make them treat their workers humanely."

How easy do you feel it is for the average Americans to be economically successful?

Very easy	Somewhat easy	Not easy, but not hard	Somewhat hard	Very hard
4%	14%	34%	30%	18%

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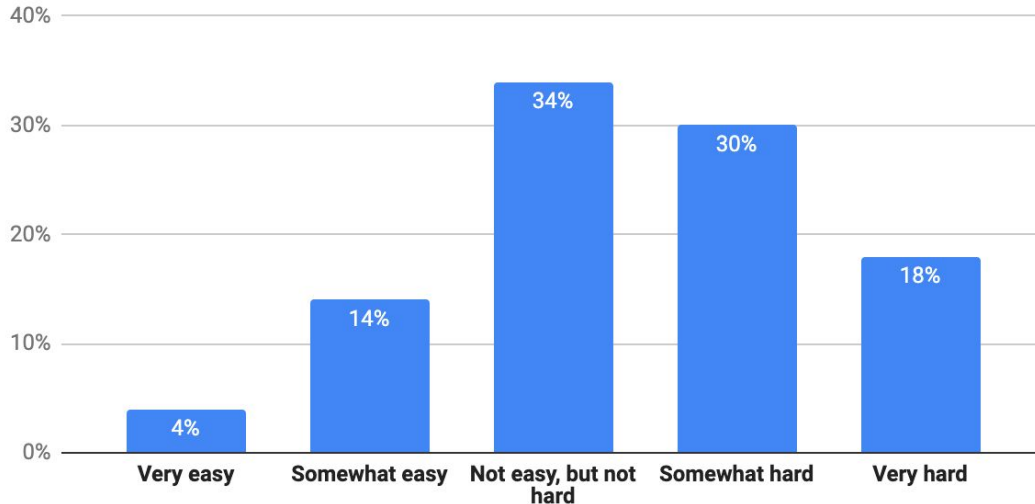
Biggest obstacle to you becoming economically successful

Category	Percent
I'm retired	~26%
The system favors the rich	~21%
No obstacles as long as I work hard	~17%
Wages not high enough for work I do	~9%
I'm in too much debt	~8%
The system favors people who don't work as hard as me	~8%
My monthly expenses are too high	~7%
I don't have enough of an education	~3%
There aren't enough jobs for the work I do	~2%
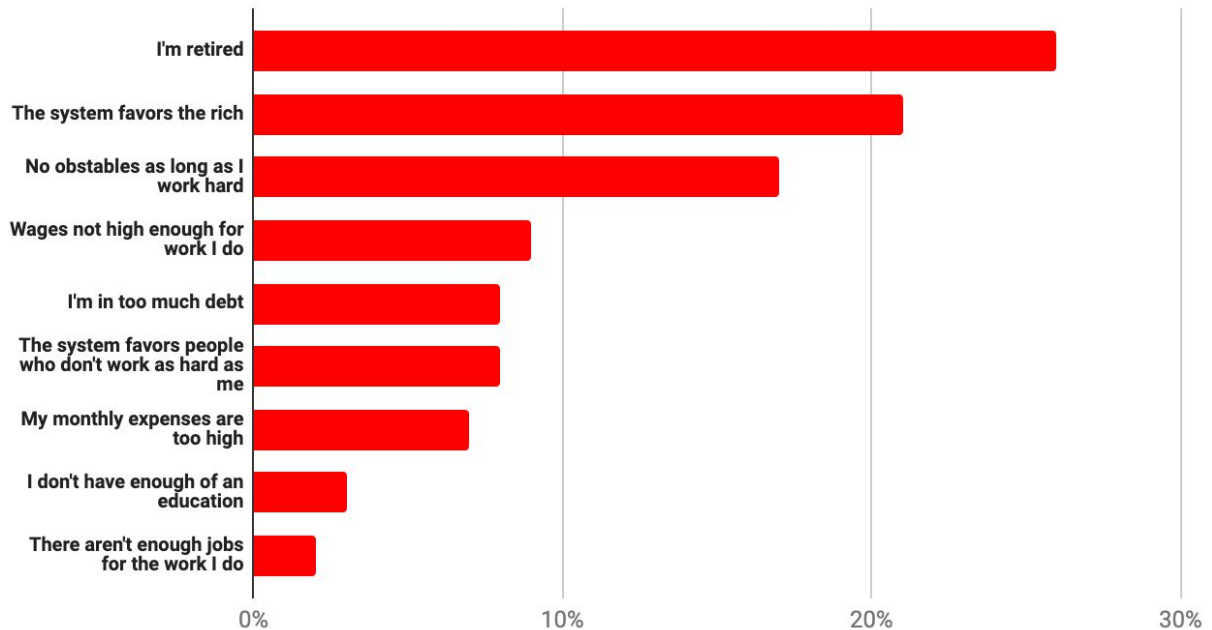
Percent who say is "a big problem"

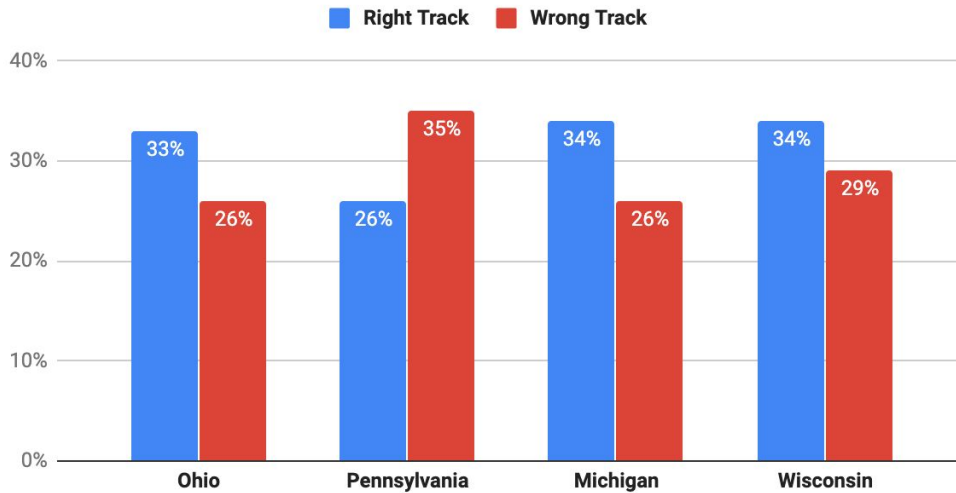| Category	Percent
Lobbyists	86%
Wealthy donors	85%
CEOs focused on profits over employees	71%
Tax code favoring the wealthy	63%
Automation and outsourcing	62%
Illegal immigration and public benefits	53%

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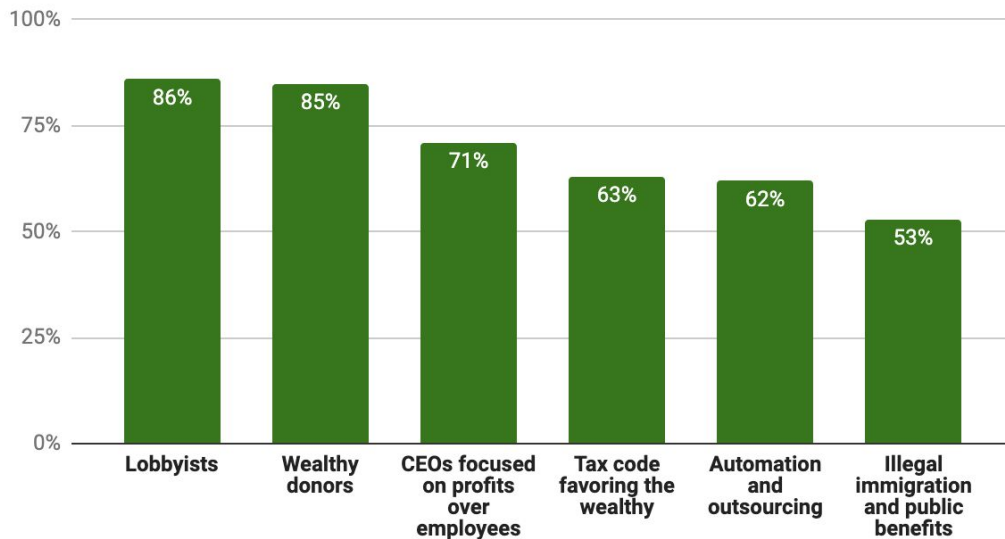
Outlook:

How would you say things in your area are going? Are they going in the right direction, off on the wrong track, or somewhere in the middle? From most optimistic to least:
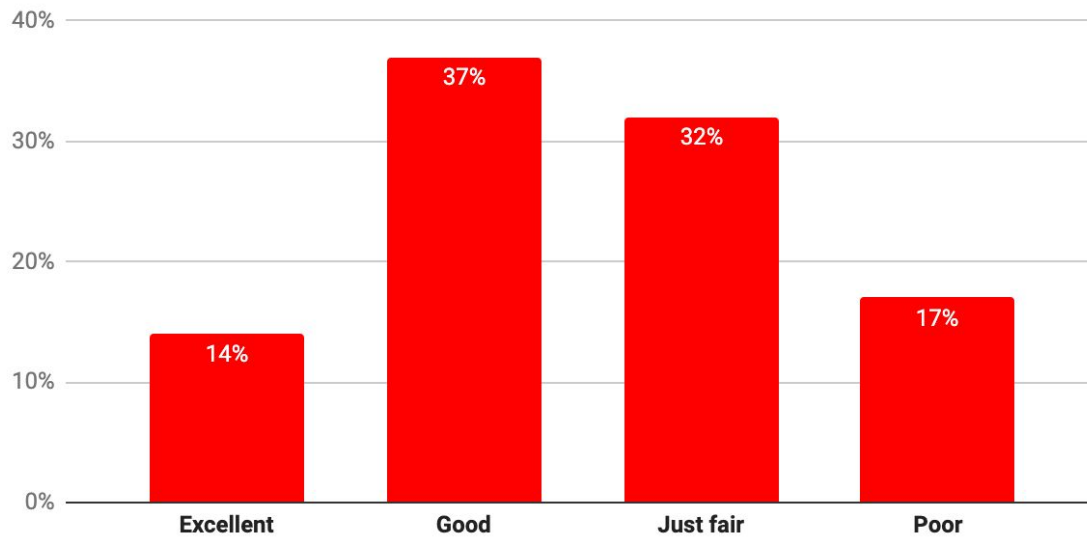
■ Right Track   ■ Wrong Track

	Ohio	Pennsylvania	Michigan	Wisconsin
Right Track	33%	26%	34%	34%
Wrong Track	26%	35%	26%	29%

40% overall said somewhere in the middle.

How would you rate the economic situation in your area five years ago?

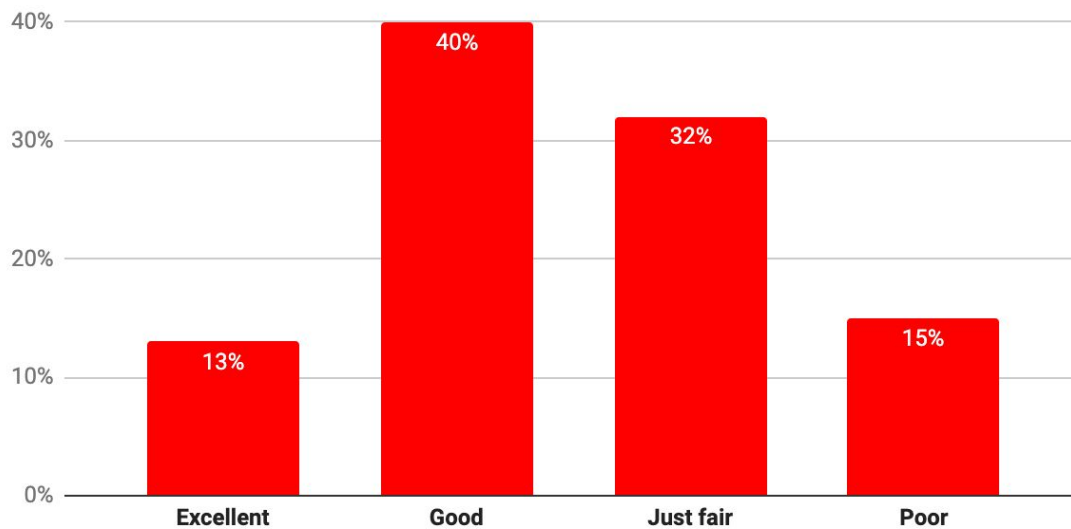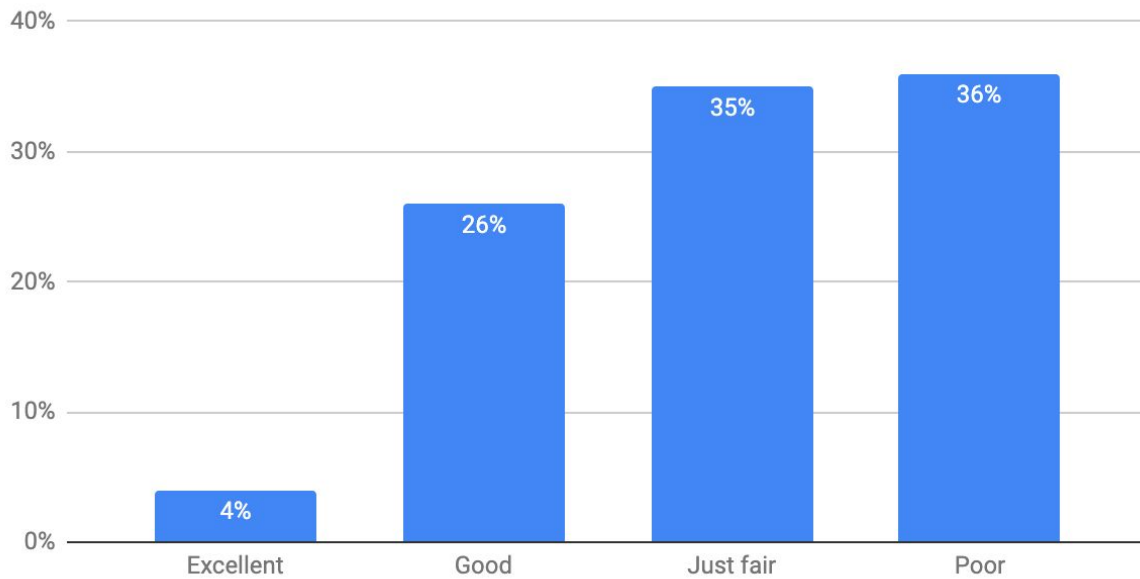| Excellent	Good	Just fair	Poor
4%	26%	35%	36%
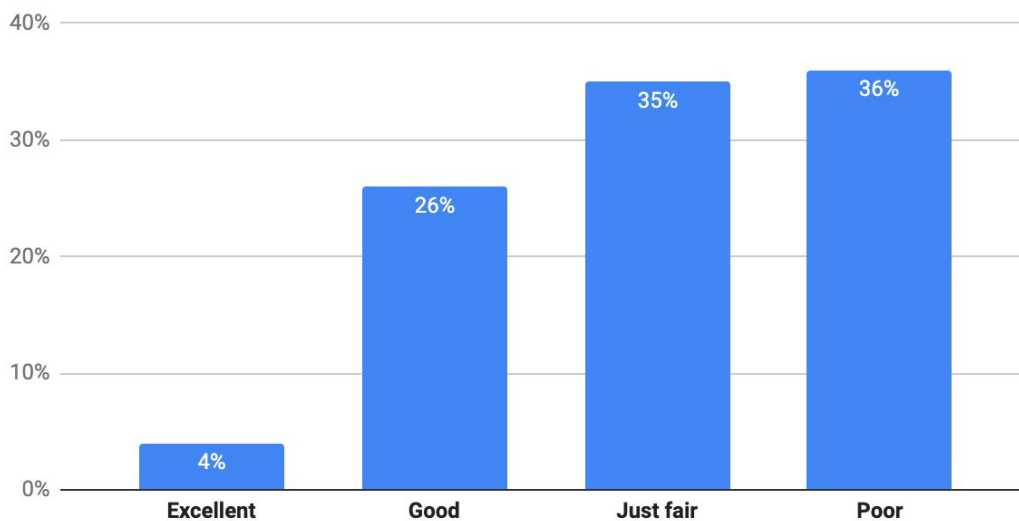
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How would you rate the economic situation in your area today?

- Excellent: 14%
- Good: 37%
- Just fair: 32%
- Poor: 17%

How would you rate your own economic situation today?

- Excellent: 13%
- Good: 40%
- Just fair: 32%
- Poor: 15%

How would you rate the economic situation in your area five years ago?

Bar chart:
- Excellent: 4%
- Good: 26%
- Just fair: 35%
- Poor: 36%

How Would You Rate the Job Donald Trump is doing as President?

Pie chart:
- Strongly approve: 37.0%
- Somewhat approve: 13.0%
- Somewhat disapprove: 4.0%
- Strongly disapprove: 46.0%

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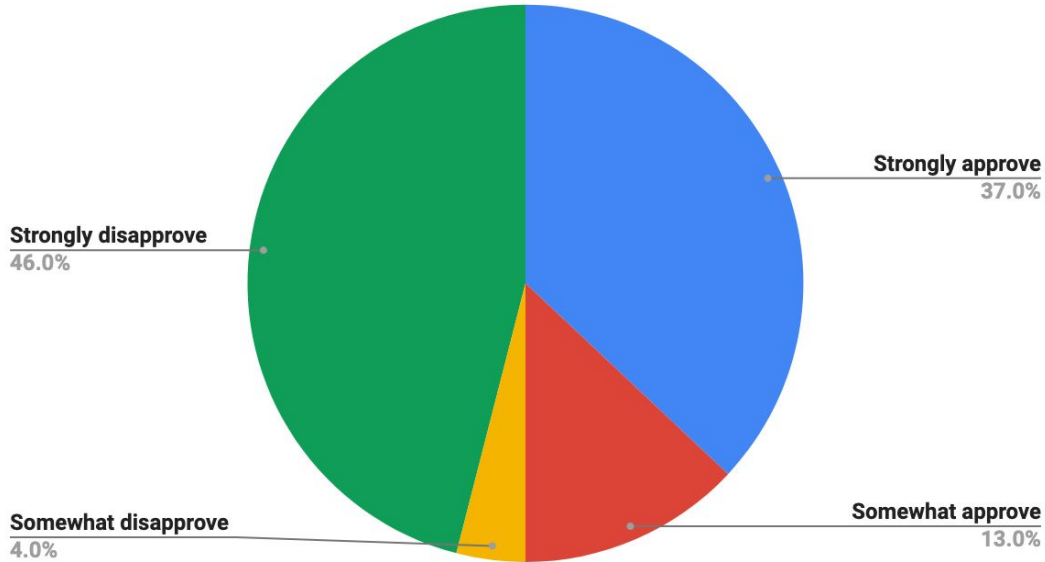
If the 2020 Election was held today, would you?

■ ■ ■

	Ohio	Pennsylvania	Michigan	Wisconsin
Vote for President Trump	47%	40%	45%	42%
Consider Voting for Someone Else	3%	9%	8%	7%
Definitely Vote for Someone Else	50%	51%	47%	51%

- Vote for President Trump
- Consider Voting for Someone Else
- Definitely Vote for Someone Else
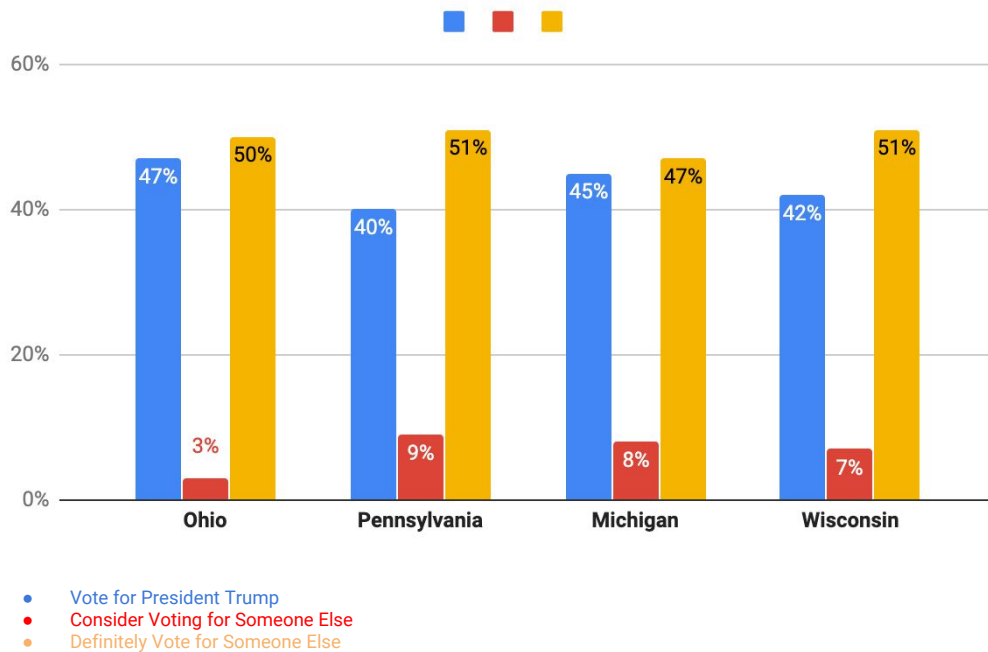
Michigan, Pennsylvania, Ohio, and Wisconsin

Vote for President Trump	Consider Voting for Someone Else	Definitely Vote for Someone Else
47%	7%	49%

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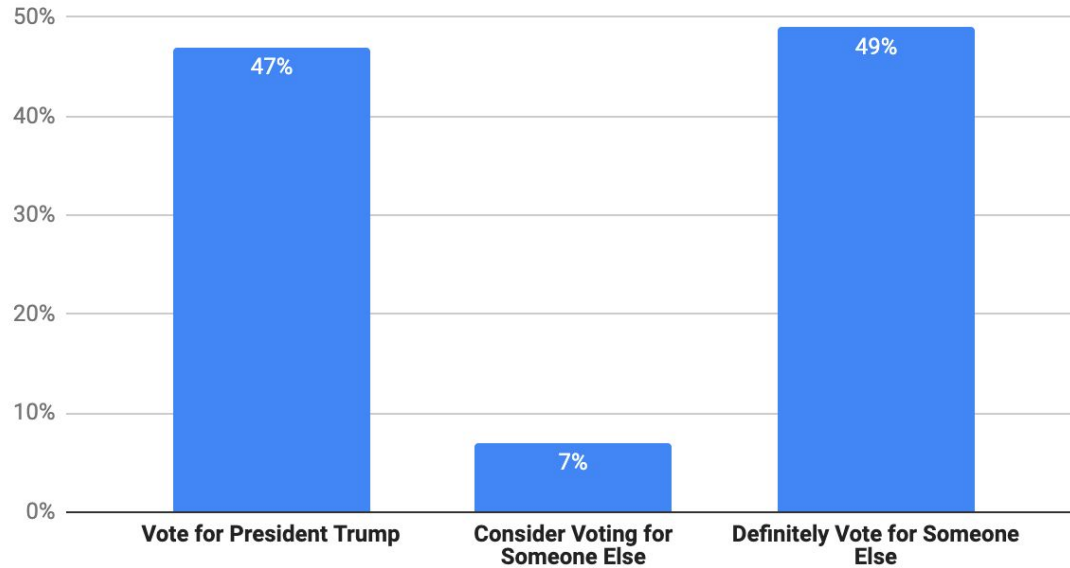
Messages

Six messages utilizing hard work, costs, and optimism were rated closely together, but in this order:

1	"The cost of living has skyrocketed in this country while wages haven't budged in years, and it's squeezing the middle-class. We need to pass laws that get drug prices under control, create educational opportunities that lead to good paying jobs and can be paid for while working part-time, and give the middle-class a tax cut so they can actually afford to put some money away for the future."
2	"In America, we've lost sight of the value of hard work and the people who do it. We need to look out for the people that are the backbone of America and built the country. That includes skills-training programs to make sure people have a path to a good-paying job even if they aren't going to college and tax cuts for working people instead of the rich."
3	"Decades ago people had job security and economic security, but now most people are one hospital bill or layoff away from ruin, and it's harder than ever for people to retire securely after life of hard work. I'll fight to secure retirement, stop health care bills from bankrupting people, and fight outsourcing that continues to destroy communities' way of life."
4	"We need to focus on making sure everyone has the opportunity to succeed if they work hard. That means a strong education system with a path for everyone, a growing economy where businesses are creating jobs, and investing in jobs of the future so America is competitive in the global economy."
5	"I'll work to make sure that our laws our written to benefit the people who elected me, not the corporations that donated the most money. I'll fix the tax code by closing loopholes and lowering taxes on the middle class to make America more fair for working people, funding priorities like schools and jobs."
6	"I believe in a brighter future for America, and that the American people can solve the problems that face us. We can build world-class schools, rebuild our infrastructure, and make our economy stronger by building the jobs of the future. If politicians could put aside the partisan fights and get to work, there are a lot of great ideas out there that we could all agree on."

Poll information of these likely voters:

- 38% were Democrats, 27% Independents, and 35% Republicans.
- 47% voted for Trump, 45% Clinton, 5% did not vote, 2% for Johnson, 1% for Stein
- 22% 18-34, 24% 35-49, 30% 50-64, and 25% 65 or older.
- In 2012, 49% voted for Obama, 29% Romney, 12% did not vote, 7% for someone else, 3% don't remember.
- 53% female and 47% male.
- 87% white, 8% Black or African American, 3% Hispanic or Latino, 2% Asian/Pacific Islander, 1% American Indian or Alaska Native, 1% other.
- 31% h.s. diploma or less, 24% some college but no degree, 9% associate's degree, 23% bachelor's degree, 13% graduate degree.
- 22% urban, 40% suburban, and 38% rural.
- 39% work full-time, 8% part-time, 37% retired, 7% unemployed, 4% homemakers, 3% students, and 3% looking for work.
- 12% were in unions, 24% used to be, 27% have family who were, 38% no past family affiliation.
- The survey was conducted on May 7-9, 2019.
- Sample demographics are close to this population for age, gender, and ethnicity.
- Post-stratification done on gender, age, race, and 2016 presidential vote.

For more survey questions and state-specific information, email:

info@rustbeltrising.com.

Polling by Change Research.

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