

## **Akron Buckeye Poll: Ohio Presidential Politics**

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### **Executive Summary**

The 2015 Akron Buckeye Poll investigates the underlying attitudes toward the 2016 presidential election in Ohio. The evidence suggests a close contest for the open seat in the White House, a sharp contrast with 2008, the previous open seat race. The state of the Ohio economy is a critical difference between the two elections. The poll indicates that few Ohioans have firm views on Democratic or Republican nomination contest.

#### **Key Findings:**

- On a generic party ballot, two-fifths of Ohio registered voters want the Democrats to continue in control of the White House after eight years of the Obama administration, while more than two-fifths want the Republicans to take control.
- This pattern is a sharp contrast to 2008, when one-third of registered voters wanted the Republicans to continue in the White House after eight years of the George W. Bush administration, while almost three-fifths wanted the Democrats to take control.
- A major difference between 2008 and 2015 is the state of the Ohio economy. However, registered voters that want a change in the White House are more likely to say the economy is on the “right track” than those that prefer continued Democratic control.
- These findings suggest that the 2016 presidential election may be less about the present condition of the economy and more about the future of the economy.
- One-half of the voters who favor continued Democratic control say it is because the Democrats have better ideas than the Republicans, while two-fifths of those who favor Republican control say it is because the Democrats have done a poor job in office and deserve to be replaced.

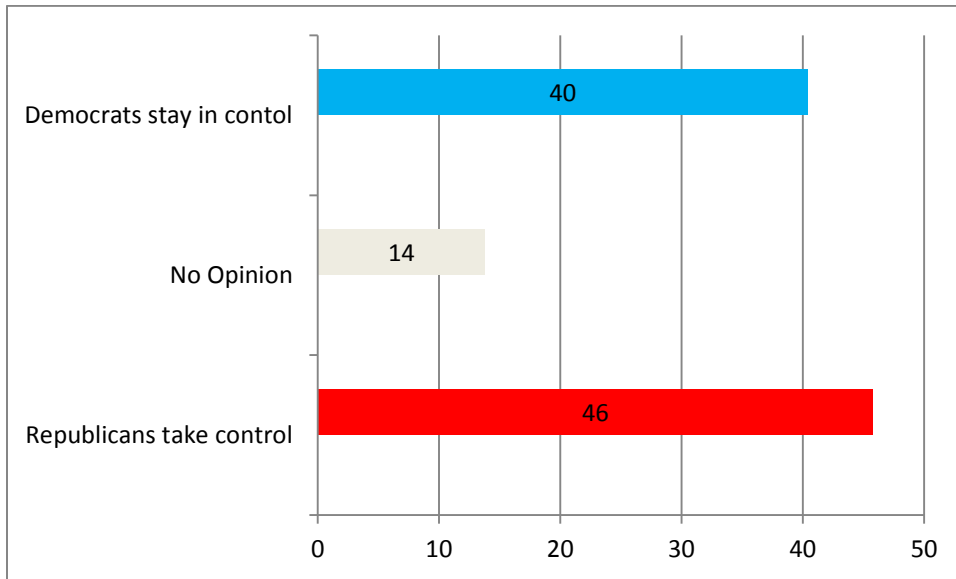
#### **The Survey**

The 2015 Akron Buckeye 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 1,074 Ohio registered voters conducted by telephone (with a cell phone component) between September 1 and October 1, 2015, with a margin of error of plus or minus three percentage points. These data are compared to a 2008 Akron Buckeye Poll, conducted in the spring of 2008. It was a random sample of 1,500 Ohio registered voters.

## Ohio Closely Divided on Generic Ballot

On a generic party ballot, Ohio registered voters are closely divided on whether the Democrats should continue to control the White House after eight years of the Obama administration or the Republicans should take control. Two-fifths (40 percent) prefer the Democrats and more than two-fifths (46 percent), with about one-seventh undecided (14 percent).

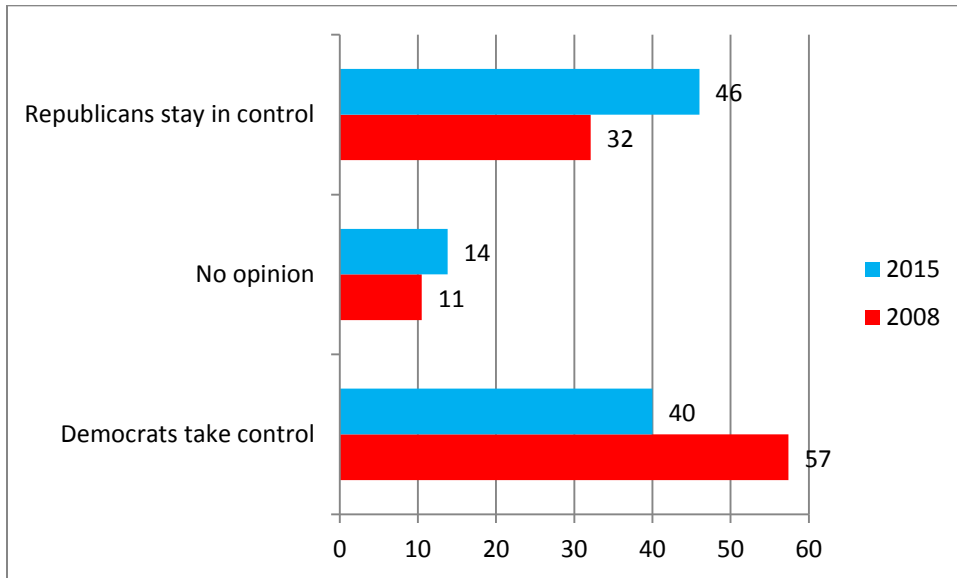
*Next year would you like to see the Democrats continue in control of the White House or would you like to see the Republicans take control of the White House for a change?*



In contrast, Ohio registered voter preferred a change in 2008 on a generic ballot. Then one-third of respondents (32 percent) said the Republicans should continue in control of the White House, after eight years of the George W. Bush administration, while almost three-fifths (57 percent) wanted the Democrats to take control; one-tenth were undecided (11 percent).

A major difference between these two open-seat presidential elections is the state of the Ohio economy. In 2008, a major recession was developing, but by 2015, the economy had substantially improved.

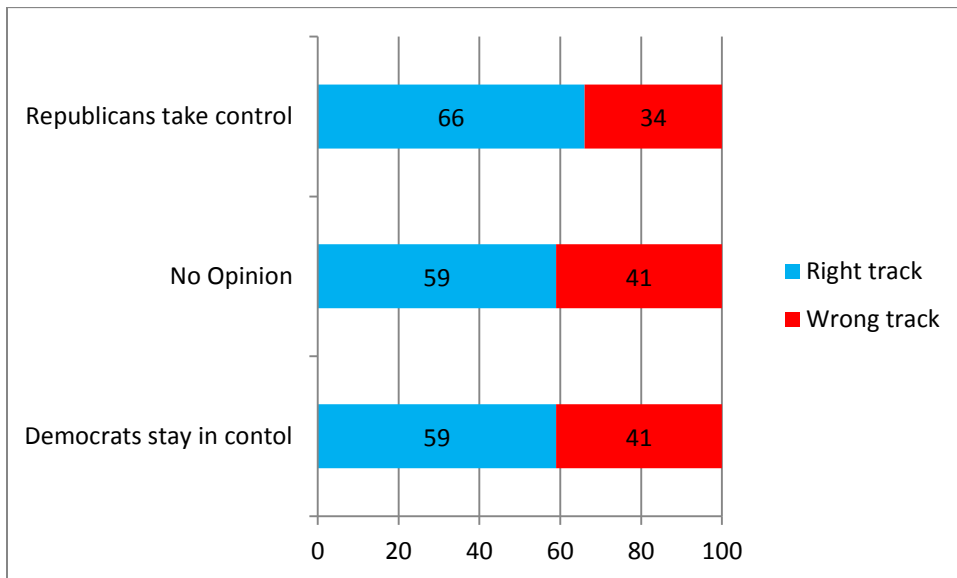
*Generic Ballot 2008 and 2015*



The improved economy in 2015 is well illustrated by the fact that 62 percent of Ohioans say the state economy is on the “right track” (compared to 26 percent in 2008).

However, these views of the economy are not closely linked to the generic party ballot in 2015: respondents who want Republican control of the White House are the *more likely* to say the Ohio the economy is on the right track (66 percent) than respondents who want the Democrats to control the White House (59 percent). This pattern may reflect in part the Republican control Ohio state government under Governor John Kasich.

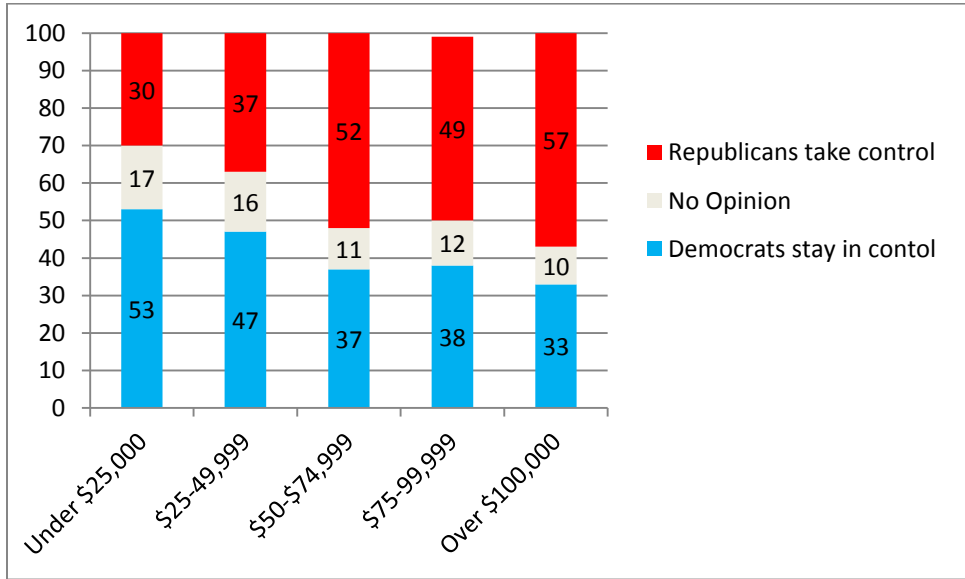
*Ohio Economy on the Right Track or Wrong Track*



Taken together, these finding suggests that the 2016 election may be less about the state of the economy and more about the future of the economy.

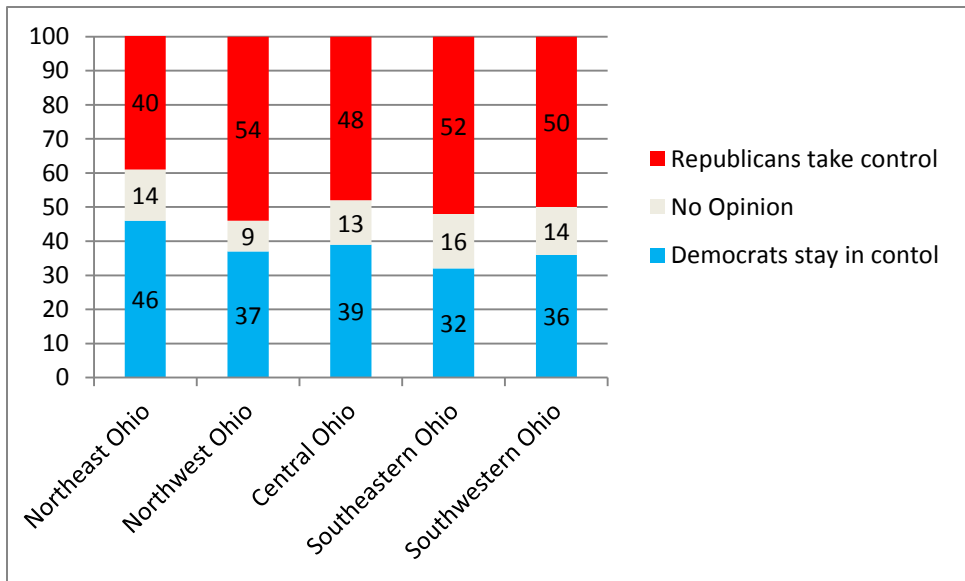
This possibility is support by the generic ballot views and levels of income. Ohio registered voters with yearly incomes of less than \$50,000 are more supportive of continued Democratic control of the White House. Overall, these voters have benefitted less from the economic recovery than higher income voters, who are more likely to favor Republican control of the White House.

*Yearly Household Income and White House Control*



The generic ballot also shows important regional differences. Registered voters in Northeast Ohio favor continued Democratic control by a small margin (an exact reversal of the state level pattern); the other regions of Ohio favor Republican control by various margins.

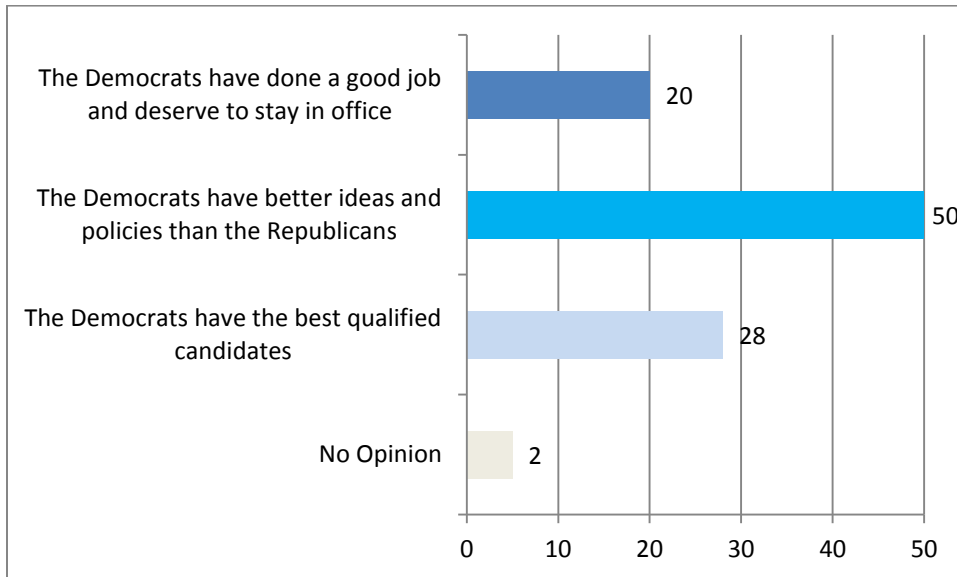
*Regions of Ohio and White House Control*



## Reasons for Party Control of the White House

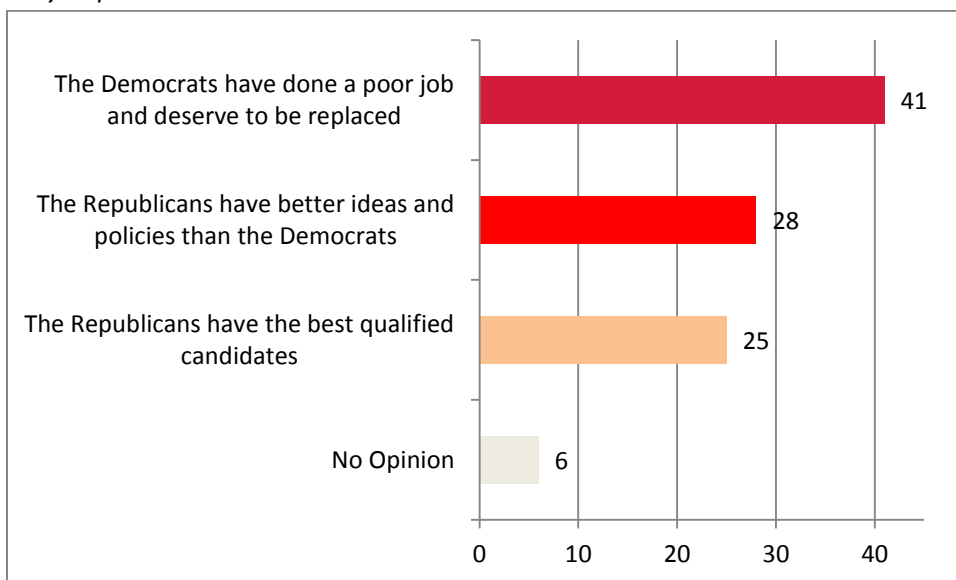
Among Ohio registered voters who said the Democrats should continue in control of the White House, just one-fifth (20 percent) said it was because the Democrats “have done a good job and deserve to stay in office.” One-half (50 percent) of such respondents said because the Democrats have “better ideas and policies” than the Republicans. More than one-quarter said was because the Democrats have better qualifies candidates.

### *Why Democrats should maintain White Control*



Among Ohio registered voters who said the Republicans should take control of the White House, two-fifths (41 percent) say because the Democrats have “done a poor job and deserve to be replaced.”

### *Why Republicans should take White House Control*

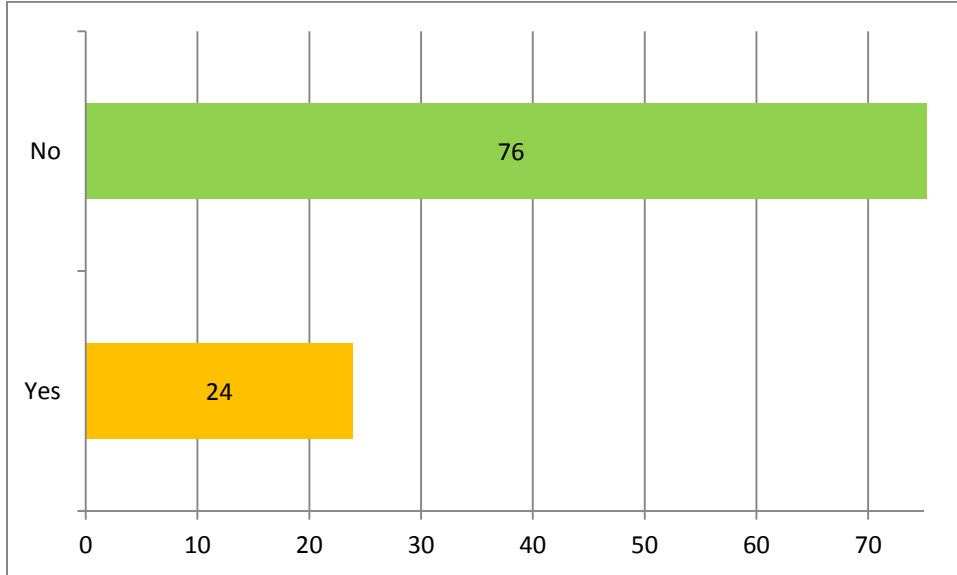


Among these voters, about one-quarter say the Republicans have “better ideas and policies” (28 percent) or have the “best qualified candidates” (25 percent).

**Fluid Nomination Contests**

Democrats. The poll results reveal a potentially fluid presidential nomination contest in Ohio. Among Democrats, just one-quarter (24 percent) say they favor a particular candidate, while three-quarters have no firm views on the candidates.

*As of today, do you favor a particular candidate for the Democratic presidential nomination?*



Among Democratic voters with a firm opinion, 49 percent favored Hillary Clinton at the time of the survey. Clinton was the second choice of 18 percent of these voters. However, 31 percent said they could not support Clinton for the nomination.

*Support for Democratic Candidates among voters with a firm preference*

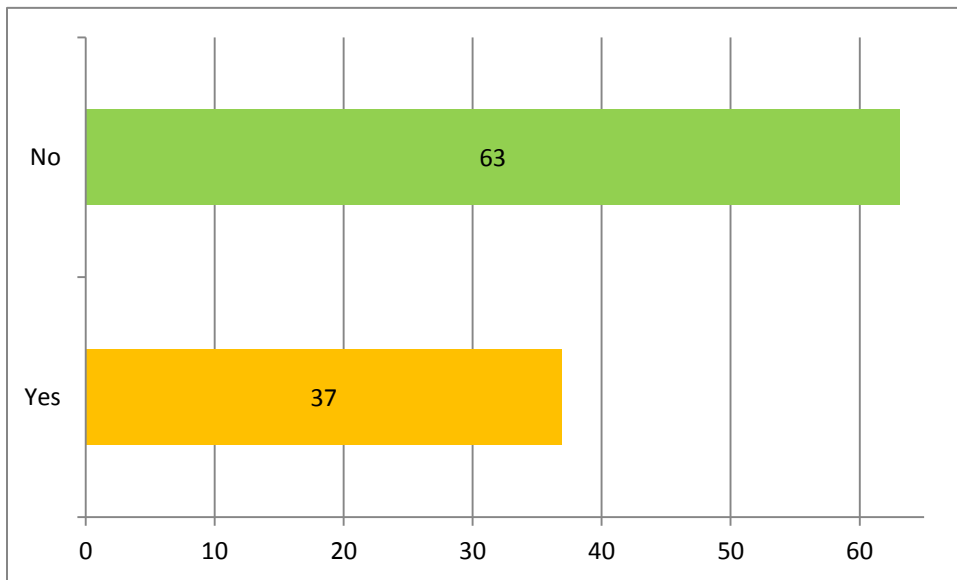
	First Choice	Second Choice	Could not Support
Hillary Clinton	49	18	31
Bernie Sanders	36	1	1
Joe Biden	11	17	1
Other	5	13	1
No one		9	1
None (support any Democrat)		44	65
Total	100	100	100

Bernie Sanders was second with 36 percent. He was the second choice of few voters but few voters said they could not support him.

These figures resemble other candidate preference polls taken in Ohio, but also reveal the large number of voters that lack firm commitments to any particular candidate.

Republicans. The poll results also reveal a potentially fluid presidential nomination contest in Ohio. Among Republicans, less than two-fifths (37 percent) say they favor a particular candidate, while three-fifths have no firm views on the candidates.

*As of today, do you favor a particular candidate for the Republican presidential nomination?*



Among Republican voters with a firm opinion, 38 percent favored Donald Trump at the time of the survey. Trump was the second choice of 10 percent of these voters. However, 38 percent said they could not support Trump for the nomination.

Ben Carson was second with one-fifth of the Republican voters with a firm opinion (20 percent) but with another one-eighth (12 percent) naming him as their second choice. John Kasich showed a similar pattern, with almost one-fifth (17 percent) naming him as their first choice and another one-tenth as their second choice (10 percent).

*Support for Republicans Candidates among voters with a firm preference*

	First Choice	Second Choice	Could not Support
Donald Trump	38	10	38
Ben Carson	20	12	1
John Kasich	17	10	2
Marco Rubio	6	7	1
Carly Fiorina	6	5	0
Jeb Bush	5	6	6
Ted Cruz	3	6	2
Chris Christie	1	4	1
Other	5	7	4
None (support any Republican)		34	45
Total	100	100	100

Here, too, these figures resemble other candidate preference polls taken in Ohio, revealing the large number of voters that lack firm commitments to any particular candidate.