

# WHERE DO YOU DRAW THE LINE?

## A STUDY OF STRAIGHT TICKET VOTING & VOTER PARTY LOYALTY

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### Introduction

Straight-ticket voting, also known as straight-party voting, is a voting method that allows a voter to select one political party's complete slate of candidates for every office by making a single mark on the ballot. As of September 29, 2020, six states, including Alabama, Indiana, Kentucky, Michigan, Oklahoma, and South Carolina, provided for straight-ticket voting. Additionally, Texas historically offered straight-ticket voting until recent legal developments.

The elimination of straight-ticket voting in Texas raises questions about its impact on down-ballot races in the state. Research suggests several potential consequences, including reduced support for both parties, particularly affecting Democratic incumbents.

Furthermore, the loss of straight-ticket voting may erode the incumbency advantage and lead to increased ticket splitting, potentially resulting in more divided government at various levels. Moreover, longer voting times without straight-ticket voting may contribute to reduced voter turnout, particularly in large counties where longer lines at polling stations are more likely.



### Objective

The purpose of this study is to answer the question of do the members of Fort Bend County truly recognize the candidates they are voting for or are they voting strictly based on their party loyalties regardless of the candidates' values or qualifications. While the expected result is that most respondents will declare no party loyalty, there will be participants who adhere strictly to their party lines and cast their vote against the opposing candidate even if they agree with their policies.

### Methodology

After reading the quote, respondents were asked three questions.

- Based on the above quote, would you vote for this candidate?
- Would you assume this candidate is running for the Republican or Democratic party?
- Would you change your vote if you knew this candidate is a part of the opposing party? If so, why? (A space to explain was presented.)

The quote provided was taken from the Honorable Judge Christian Becerra and served to summarize the purpose of his campaign .

"Experience, innovation, and hard work are the foundation for my candidacy and have allowed me to clear all backlog from our court, implement virtual attendance options, and ensure that every ruling I make is an act of protection for the citizens of Fort Bend County."

- Fort Bend County Judicial Candidate

### Findings

Based on the findings of the public opinion poll, it is evident that a significant majority of respondents (80%) would vote for the candidate in question, which aligned with the expected outcome. Also as predicted, when asked to identify the party affiliation of the anonymous candidate, the data reveals a division, with 60% identifying the candidate as a Democrat and 40% as a Republican. This split was intentional in order focus primarily on the candidate's personal campaign rather than political affiliation. In the final question and primary subject of study, when presented with the scenario of the candidate belonging to the opposing party, 61% of respondents stated they would not change their vote. The 39% of participants who would change their vote provided reasoning of both wholistic disagreement with the other party as well as only differing opinions on some subjects. Most respondents claimed they liked the policy of the quoted candidate but could not support them if they were not in their party because they would "disagree on everything else."

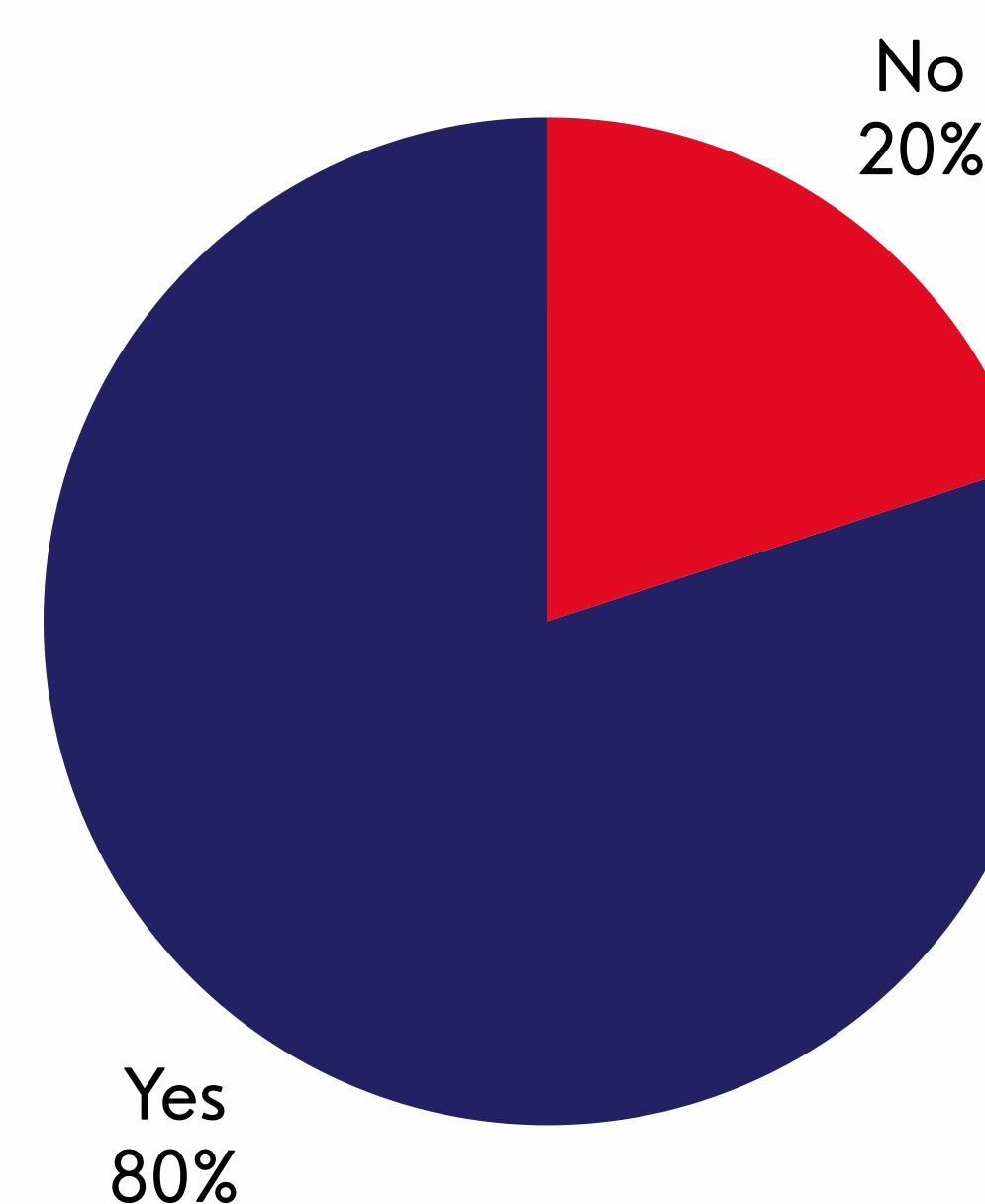
Ultimately, the results of the third question highlight a notable influence of party affiliation on voting decisions.

The overall results of the survey align with the original hypothesis and support the idea that individuals will remain loyal to their party even if they agree with the policies of an opposing candidate.

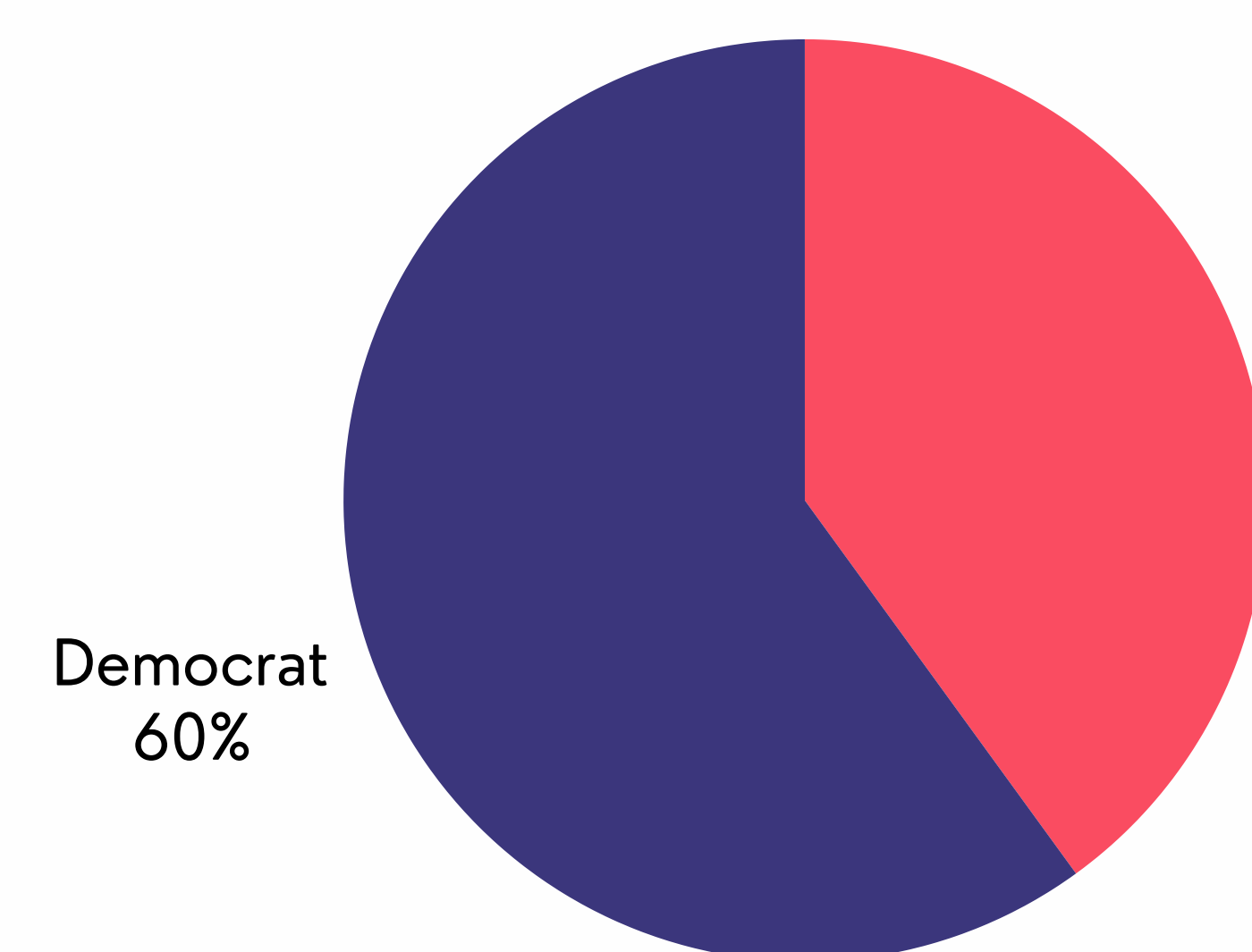
### Survey Results

The following diagrams represent the responses to each question presented on the public opinion poll.

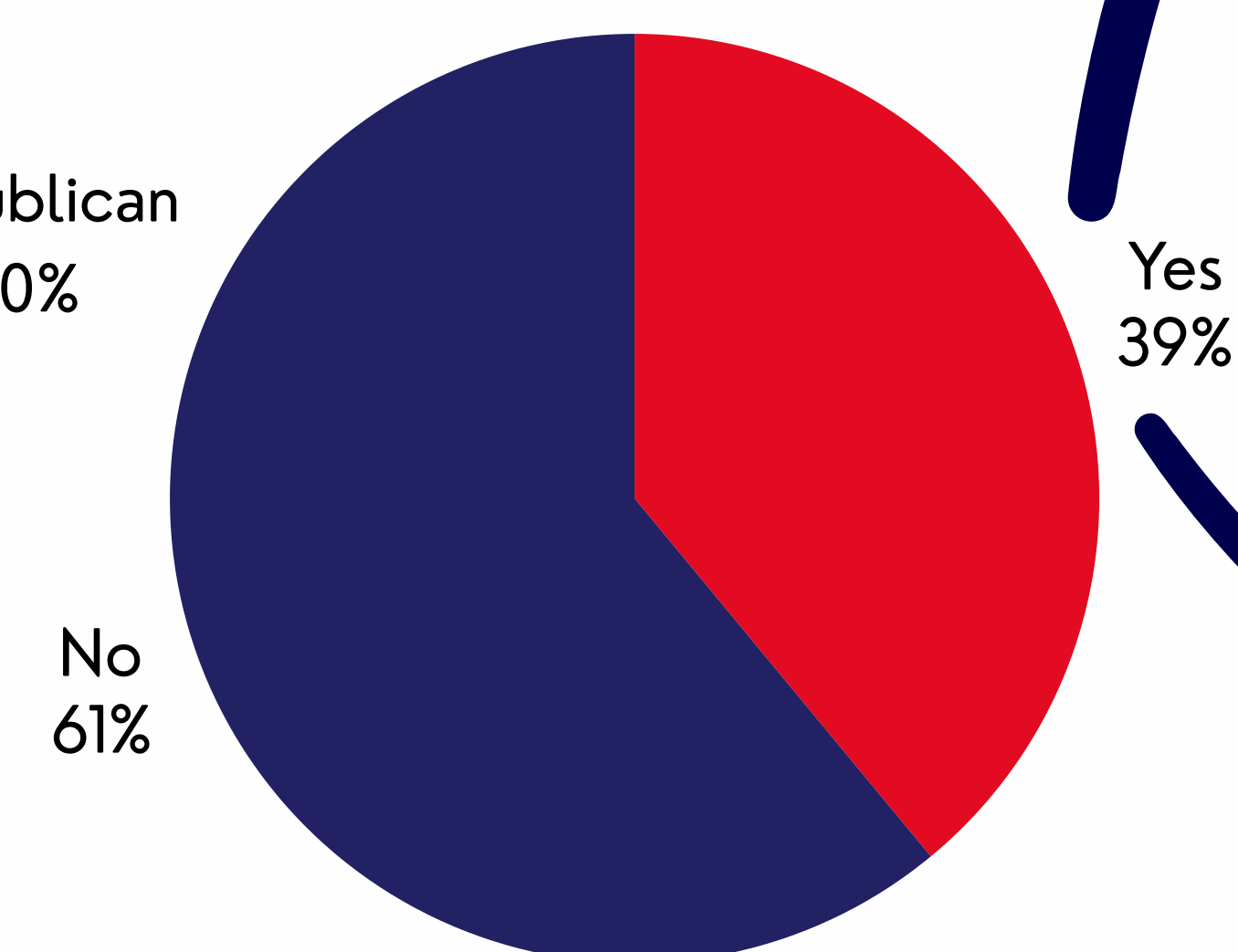
Based on the above quote, would you vote for this candidate?



Would you assume that this candidate is running for the Republican or Democratic party?



Would you change your vote if you knew this candidate is a part of the opposing party?



In addition to information provided in the final diagram, of the respondents who claimed they would change their vote, the split between Republican and Democratic participants was nearly even with 47% being Republicans and 53% being Democrats.

"The Democratic Party does not reflect a lot of my beliefs."

"This specific aspect of their campaign is positive, the rest may not be."

Republican responses to changing their vote if the candidate were a democrat justified their change based on the wholistic values of the opposing party

"We might only agree on the quote but disagree about almost everything else."

"I am very tribalistic."

The responses from the Democratic party referenced both party loyalty and value disputes as justification for changing their vote solely based on the candidate's party affiliation.

### Conclusion

While this was an overall successful study, some limitations and biases must be acknowledged, majorly, the participant demographic. The respondent pool was limited due to the availability of the reseacher. However, had the poll's range been expanded, the results would have likely remained the same but been derived from a larger scale of data.

Additionally, the study relied on the honesty of the respondents and while 31% elected to change their vote to remain loyal to their registered party, there are likely more participants that were embarrassed to admit their biases. Given the opportunity to perform this study again, improvements should include expansion of the geographical range of polling as well as the person-to-person data collection.

#### Your Vote Matters!

For information on Fort Bend County voting precinct and candidates in the upcoming election, scan the QR code!

