



Rust Belt Rising

Programs, Research and Messages for Democrats

What we do

- *Helping Democrats be the party of all working families*
- *Research to help Democrats communicate*
- *Candidates at all levels and campaign staff training through our Messaging Bootcamp*

Dominant Themes From our Listening

*“Our income doesn’t
match our output.”*

—WI man

- *The Value of Hard Work and How it Should Still Earn You a Good Life*
- *Rising Cost of Living*
- *Health Care Bills and Prescriptions as the Overwhelming Cost*
- *Paths to Good Jobs*
- *The Need for Optimism in America*

Recent Research From Listening to:

“The economy is going well for who?”

—WI man

- ***Green Bay, Wisconsin:** white, blue-collar women and men*
- ***Southfield, Michigan:** middle class African American voters of mixed education*
- ***Mercer County, Pennsylvania:** white, rural, blue-collar non-college men and women; mix of millennial to middle-aged*
- ***Cleveland, Ohio:** non-college women and mixed-education millennials*

Themes to open up conversations

Communicate the dignity of hard work first as a way into our policies that people actually want.



“Where I’m at, they’re a lot of jobs—they’re just low paying jobs.”

—PA man

Every community is working hard so they must know we are standing up for them.

Highest rated narrative across communities when given different messaging frames:

*“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.”*

1. *The Value of Hard Work and How it Should Still Earn You a Good Life*

“I’m seeing so many part-time positions and less full-time positions. Companies are trying to avoid paying benefits.” —OH man

“People are working two jobs and still need food stamps.” —PA woman

“Working people need to be compensated. If I work hard, I should get paid hard. If I work hard, I should gain those benefits.” —OH woman

2. Rising Cost of Living

“Working class used to mean you could survive, your head was above water. Now you’re barely treading water.” —OH woman.

“The cost of living, the cost of housing, insurance, health insurance, everything, cars, expenses, dental, vision, everything is going up, but the wages are flat.” —MI man.

“For the middle class, there’s no relief for higher tuition, car insurance, the stuff we’re struggling with.” —MI woman.

3. Health Care Bills and Prescription Drugs as the Overwhelming Cost

“If you have one major illness you can lose everything and that shouldn't be.” — WI woman.

*“Big pharma shouldn't have big pockets like they do.”
—PA woman.*

“You're having to pick if you eat or get your medicine.” —PA woman.

“The out of pocket expenses are just absolutely ridiculous.” —PA woman.

“Even though we've had a lot of job growth, we've also had a lot of medical costs going up. Premiums are insane right now.” —OH woman.

4. Paths to Good Jobs

“Sometimes technical isn’t looked at as good as college. People frown on that like you’re not getting a wonderful education. There’s a big need for that—you can make money doing that—they make it look like it’s just vocational tech, it doesn’t get as much glorification.” –PA woman.

“For so many years college has been the focus and we’re all in debt. I think there’s not enough trade skill people to go work at trade jobs cause there’s so much focus on college.” –PA woman.

5. *The Need for Optimism in America*

“It seems like there’s no hope. But the American dream means you can’t see it yet but it’s attainable.”
–OH woman.

Participants liked President Obama’s positive vision for their future, as well as Tammy Baldwin and Sherrod Brown’s sleeves-rolled-up qualities to be on their side, working for them.

Messages:


- *We're all working harder and harder for less and less. Hard work has to still matter in America. That is why I support....*
- *For people that are working hard, health and education costs should no longer keep you from a better life. Your child should be able to get the care they need.*
- *While some are making tons of money, people can't afford life-saving drugs. It's un-American to make money selling drugs at prices we can't afford. They have to choose between food and medicine. That's not a choice hard-working Americans should have to make.*
- *Republicans say we can't afford to pay for your health care or retirement. We worked hard for our Medicare and Social Security, but Republicans want to cut it. They are taking away from us the things we earned.*

Messages:

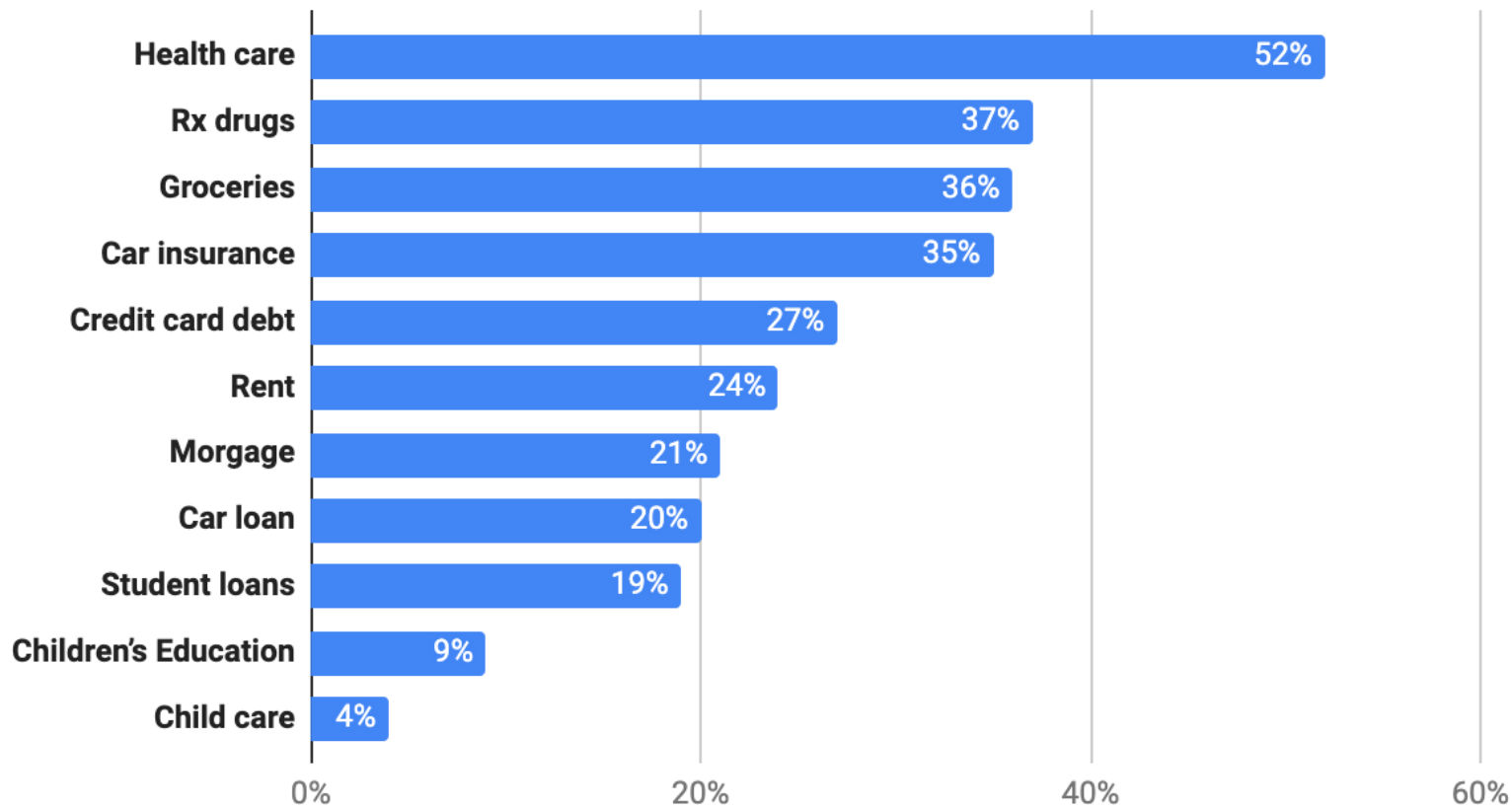
- *In an economy of working 2 and 3 jobs, we want to get back to the middle-class promise—if you work hard, you will earn the wages for a good job, a nice place to live, care you can afford, an education for your kids to have a better life, and a decent retirement.*
- *I am about common-sense, Midwestern values and bread and butter issues of the middle-class promise: a job, home, health care, education, and retirement. You work hard. You should have a little security and time with your family. You shouldn't have to worry every night and every morning that you can't pay bills.*

- *Putting a cap on insurance premiums and out-of-pocket medical costs. Improving and expanding the current healthcare and health insurance system*
- *Cutting the cost of prescription drugs.*
- *Increasing investment in skills and technical training.*

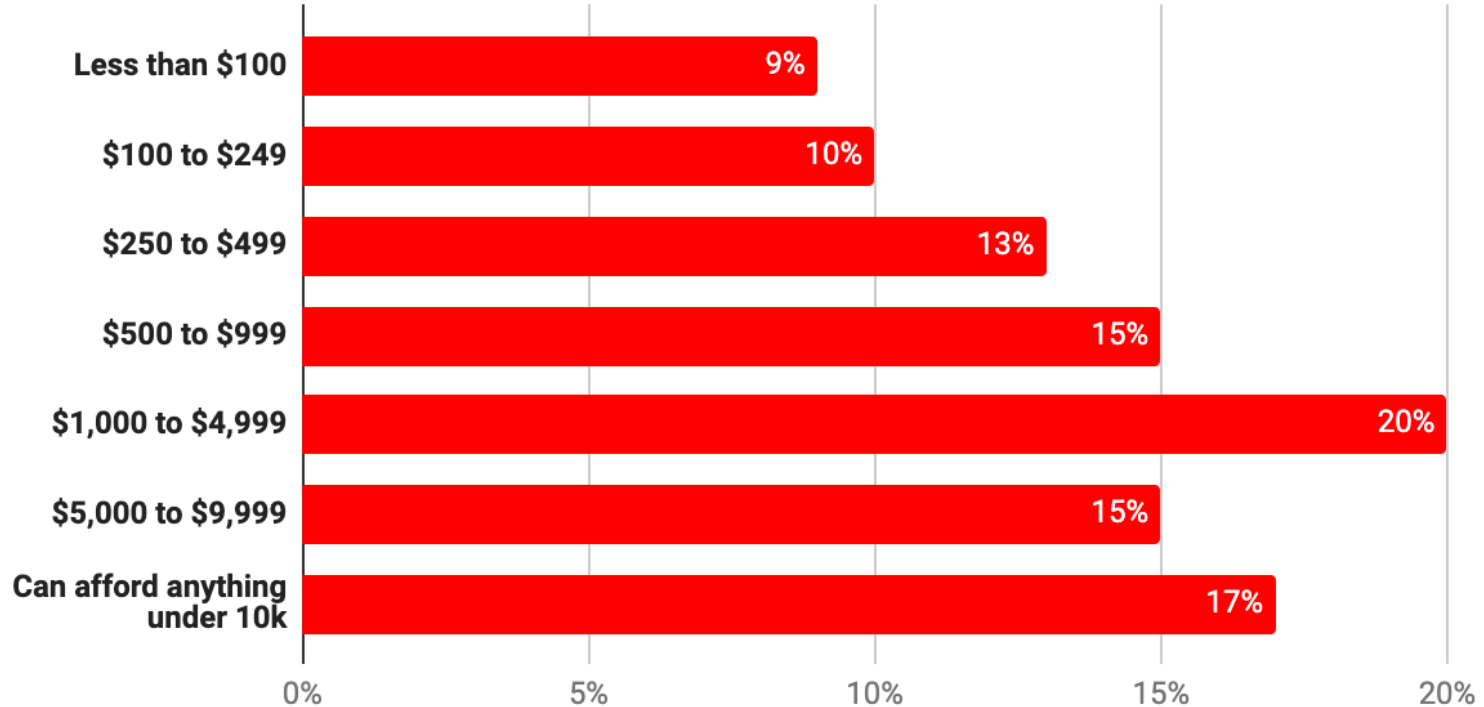
Poll:

- *We polled of 1,751 likely voters in Michigan, Ohio, Pennsylvania, and Wisconsin.*
 - *The respondents were split between Clinton and Trump voters, with the majority being Obama voters.*
 - *38% were Democrats, 27% Independents, and 35% Republicans.*
 - *22% urban, 40% suburban, and 38% rural.*
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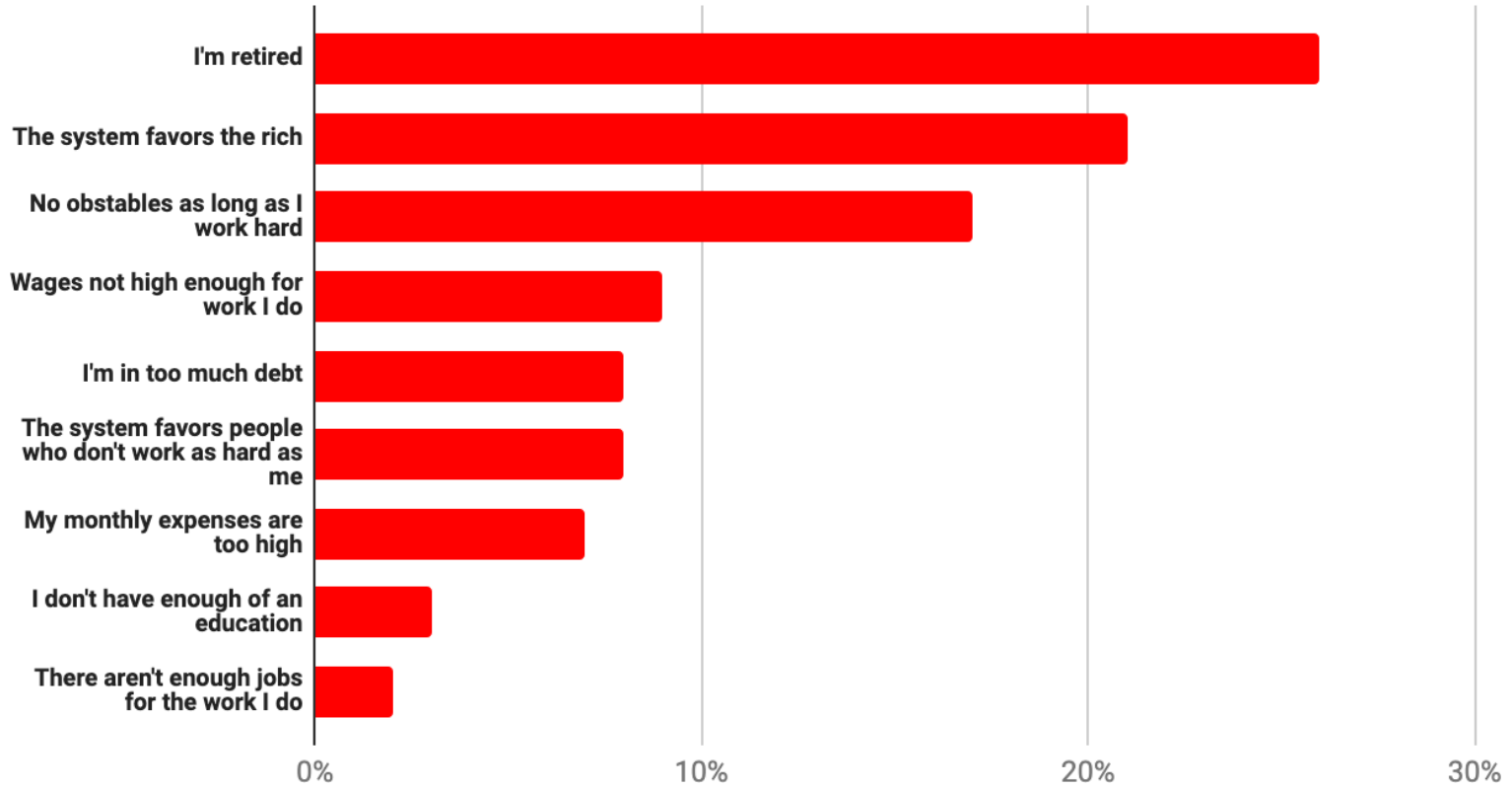
Expense people are worried about ranked by those who selected it applied to them:



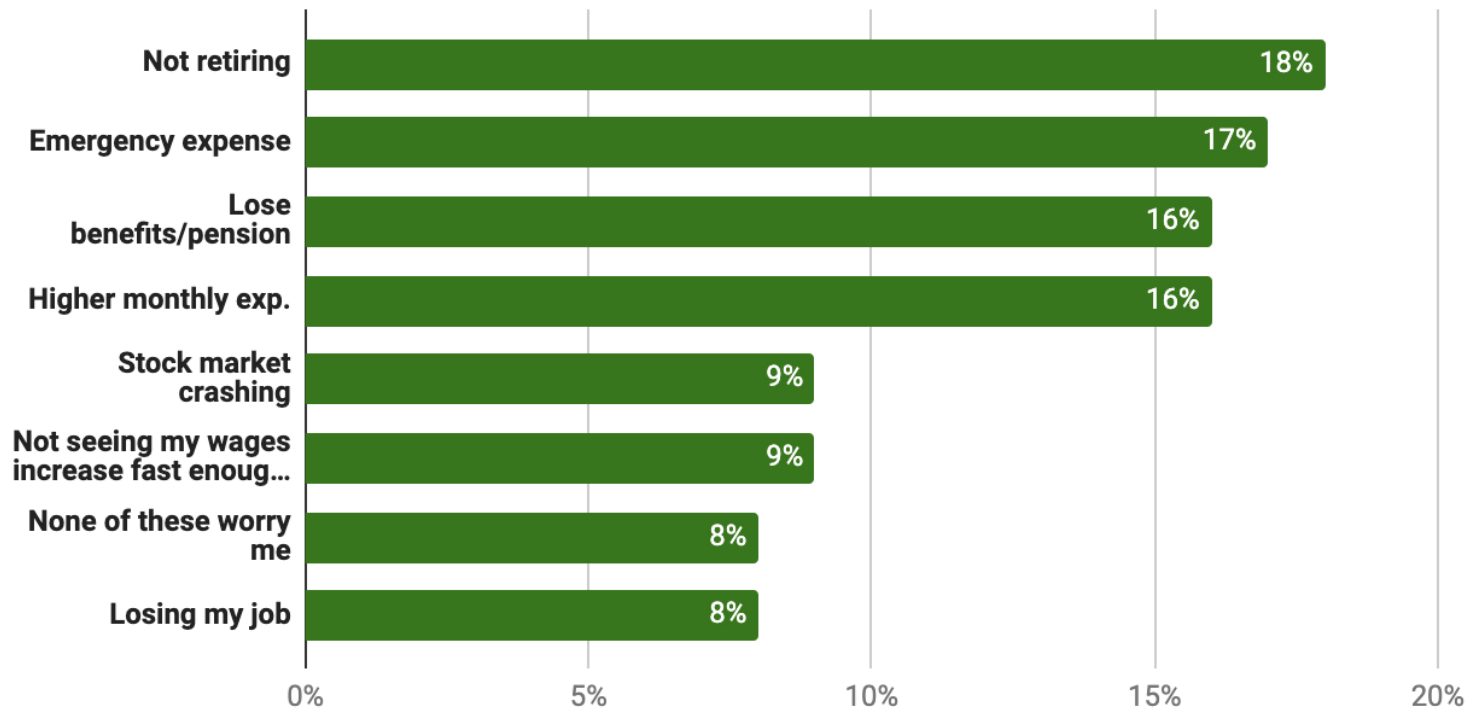
How big of an emergency expense would you have trouble paying?



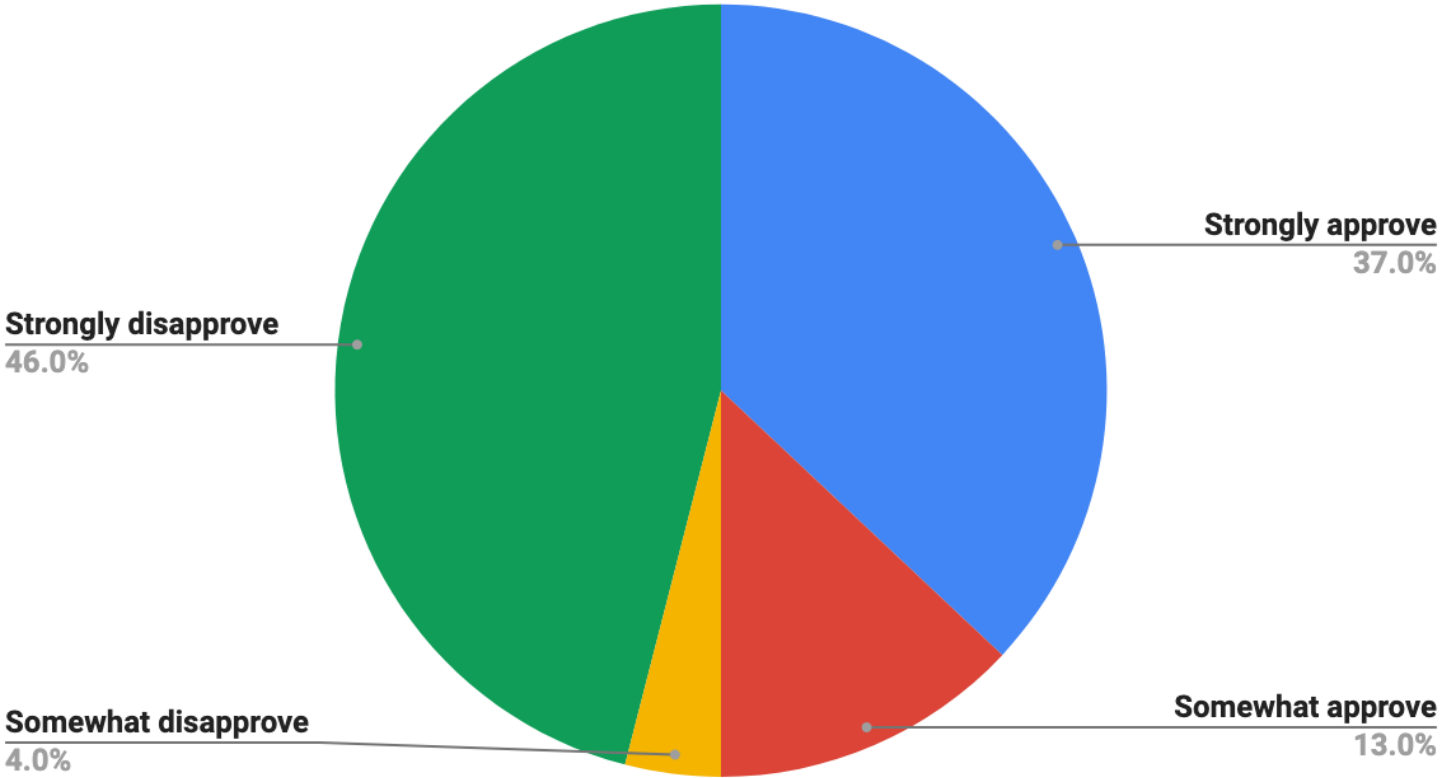
Biggest obstacle to you becoming economically successful



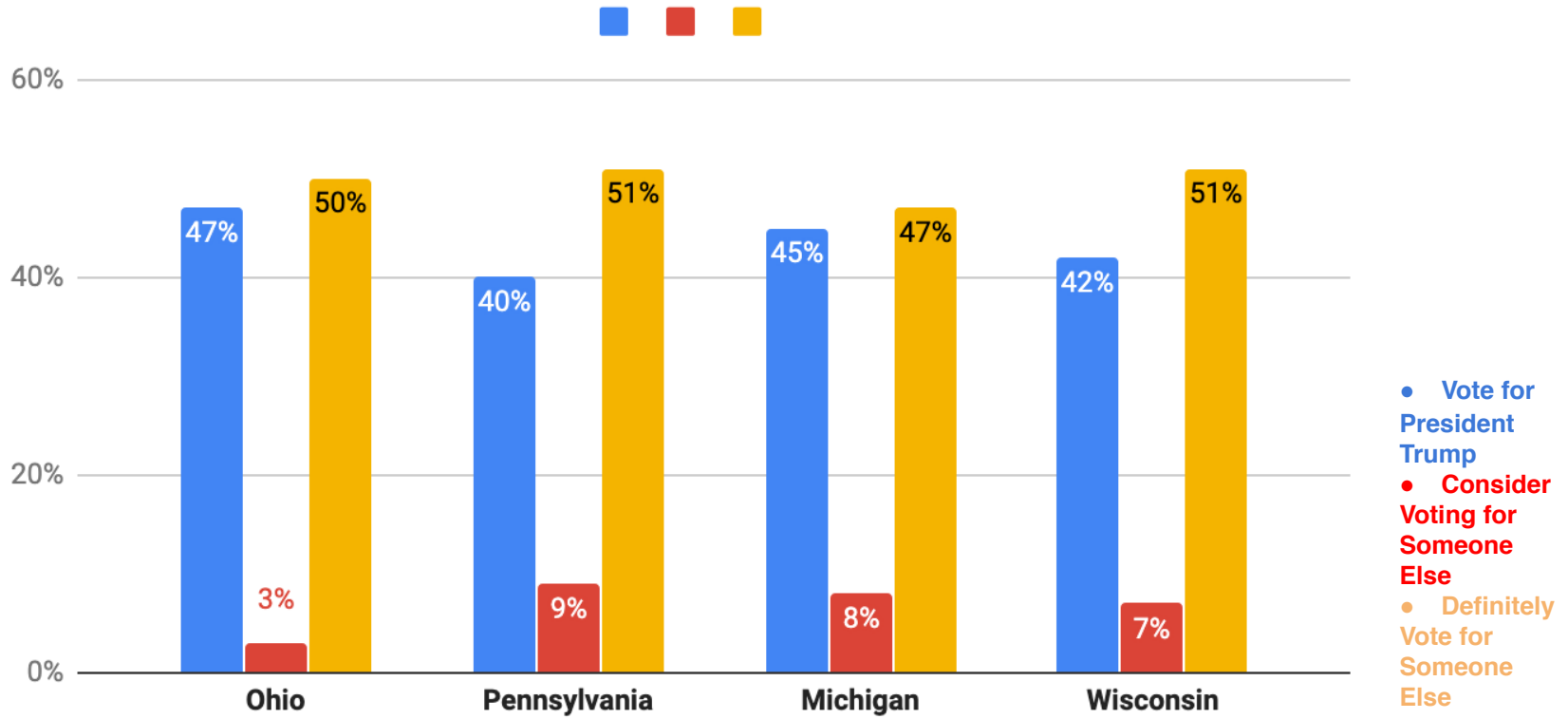
Which of the following economic situations worries you the most:



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



If the 2020 Election was held today, would you?



Polling Takeaways:

- *In MI, OH, PA, and WI, there is a nearly-even split outlook on President Trump and the economy.*
- *Health care is the cost people are most worried about. People cannot handle unexpected expenses.*
- *The related challenge of affording prescription drugs followed next.*
- *Though people see the economy as on the right track, nearly 70% of those we polled could not handle an unexpected expense of \$5,000.*



For questions, ideas, and joining to get our help: Paul@RustBeltRising.com

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