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Edward Fitzpatrick

Roger Williams University

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RWU/WPRI 12 Poll Shows R.I. Governor's Race a Dead Heat

Poll finds 77 percent of Rhode Islanders consider housing costs a "very serious" or "somewhat serious" problem



August 6, 2018 | Edward Fitzpatrick

Updated 10 p.m. Aug. 6, 2018, with results of survey questions about housing and abortion, plus link to full results.

Updated 1 p.m. Aug. 7, 2018, with job performance ratings for President Trump.

BRISTOL, R.I. – Amid the heat of summer, the race for governor remains a virtual dead heat, with Democratic Gov. Gina M. Raimondo clinging to a 2 percentage-point lead over Republican Cranston Mayor Allan W. Fung, according to a Roger Williams University/WPRI 12 poll released Monday, Aug. 6.

Raimondo received 39 percent of the vote compared to 37 percent for Fung, placing the results within the poll's 4.8 percent margin of error. Former state Rep. Joseph A. Trillo, an independent candidate who was honorary chairman of President Donald Trump's campaign in Rhode Island, received 6 percent, while three other independent candidates – Ann Armstrong, William Gilbert and Dr. Luis-Daniel Muñoz – received a combined total of 3 percent, the poll found. With the Nov. 6 election three months away, 14 percent of voters remain undecided.

"The governor's race has not changed since February – it's still a dead heat," pollster Joseph Fleming said. Neither Raimondo nor Fung has broken 40 percent of the vote in the RWU/WPRI 12 polls, "but if the independent candidates draw 10 percent of the vote, they will only need 45 percent of the vote to win the race."

The results reflect the second poll undertaken since RWU and WPRI 12 forged a new partnership earlier this year, aiming to provide timely polling data on the state's major electoral races and public policy issues. The February poll showed Raimondo leading with 38 percent of the vote to Fung's 36 percent.

The landline and cell phone interview poll of 407 Rhode Island registered voters was conducted July 28-31 by Fleming & Associates, based in Cumberland, R.I. RWU plans to host a live WPRI 12 candidate debate on its Bristol campus in the fall.

The latest poll pitted Raimondo not only against Fung but also against two other Republican candidates running the Sept. 12 GOP primary: In a matchup against House Republican Minority Leader Patricia L. Morgan, Raimondo would win 41 percent to 24 percent, and in a matchup against businessman Giovanni Feroce, Raimondo would win 43 percent to 9 percent, the poll showed.

Also, the poll included matchups pitting Matt Brown, the former secretary of state challenging Raimondo in the Sept. 12 Democratic primary, against the three Republican candidates. Fung would beat Brown 36 percent to 21 percent, but Brown would edge Morgan 25 percent to 21 percent, and Brown would beat Feroce 27 percent to 8 percent, the poll showed.

Many voters have made up their minds about Raimondo and Fung, who also squared off in the 2014 governor's race.

The poll found 50 percent of voters have a strongly favorable or somewhat favorable opinion of Raimondo, with just 2 percent unsure. By contrast, the poll found 40 percent of voters say Raimondo is doing an excellent or good job in office – a full 10 percentage points below her favorability rating.

The poll found 56 percent of voters have a strongly favorable or somewhat favorable opinion of Fung, with 13 percent unsure.

Other candidates are less well known. The poll found 32 percent have a strongly favorable or somewhat favorable opinion of Morgan, with 50 percent unsure. It found 25 percent have a strongly favorable or somewhat favorable opinion of Trillo, with 42 percent unsure. And it found 10 percent have a strongly favorable or somewhat favorable opinion of Feroce, with 62 percent unsure.

The poll found that 77 percent of Rhode Islanders think the cost of buying or renting a home is a "very serious" or "somewhat serious" problem, with just 6 percent saying it's "not serious at all."

Housing costs were of greatest concern among independent voters, with 82 percent saying they consider that a "very serious" or "somewhat serious" problem, compared to 78 percent of Democrats and 64 percent of Republicans.

"This confirms the findings in our yearly Housing Fact Book that Rhode Islanders are 'cost burdened' when it comes to housing," said Brenda Clement, director of HousingWorks RI at RWU. "Half of all renters and 1 in 3 homeowners with a mortgage are spending more than 30 percent of their income on housing costs. Housing is a nonpartisan issue, and we must invest more resources for housing programs and production so that Rhode Islanders at every income level can have a safe, affordable place to call home."

The poll found that 49 percent of voters support and 32 percent oppose a Rhode Island bill, called the Reproductive Health Care Act, which would give women in Rhode Island the right to have an abortion until the fetus is viable. Following President Trump's election, state legislators introduced the bill, aiming to codify existing abortion rights in state law in case the landmark U.S. Supreme Court decision *Roe v. Wade* is overturned. The bill is supported by 67 percent of Democrats, 38 percent of Republicans and 37 percent of independent voters, according to the poll.

Also, the poll found that 37 percent of Rhode Islanders rate President Trump's job performance as "good" or "excellent," while 44 percent say he is doing a "poor" job. That marks an improvement over the February poll, when 30 percent said he was doing a "good" or "excellent" job and 54 percent said he was doing a "poor" job.

For full results, click [here](#).

For in-depth coverage from WPRI 12, visit: <https://www.wpri.com/politics/wpri-12rwu-poll-raimondo-fung-still-in-tight-race-for-ri-governor/1349587973>