

UMass Lowell
Survey of Massachusetts Registered Voters

April 27-May 1, 2020

N=1,000 Massachusetts Registered Voters; 531 Democratic Senate Primary Likely Voters

The sample has an adjusted margin of error +/-3.6% for RVs; +/-7.8% for LVs

See <http://uml.edu/polls> for full questionnaire/topline results and detailed methodology disclosure.

Survey design and analysis by Joshua J. Dyck, Director and John Cluverius, Associate Director,
Center for Public Opinion, University of Massachusetts Lowell

Do you have a question about this poll? If so, tweet @UML_CPO and we'll get back to you.

HIGHLIGHTS

Baker popular, Trump unpopular in Massachusetts in wake of COVID-19 pandemic

In the wake of the current public pandemic, a newly released poll of Massachusetts registered voters from the UMass Lowell Center for Public Opinion finds that state government, led by Governor Charlie Baker, gets high marks, while the federal government, led by President Donald Trump, gets low marks.

A large majority (81%) of Massachusetts registered voters approve of the way Charlie Baker is handling his job as Governor; 45% strongly approve and 36% somewhat approve. Despite the fact that he is a Republican, Baker's numbers are actually stronger among Democrats (89% approve) than among Independents (77% approve) or among Republicans (67% approve).

Contrast Baker's approval with President Donald Trump's approval rating, which stands at 32% approve; 18% strongly approve and 14% somewhat approve. For Trump, 68% of registered voters disapprove of his job performance and a majority (56%) strongly disapprove. Here, Trump does poorly among Democrats (only 5% approve and 94% disapprove), while he does well among Republicans (92% approve and 9% disapprove).

Closely tied to these numbers, 80% of Massachusetts registered voters are satisfied with the state's response to COVID-19, compared to only 37% who are satisfied with the federal government response. Again, the difference appears to be driven by partisan-motivated



reasoning, with only 18% of Democrats satisfied with the federal government response and 82% of Republicans satisfied with the response.

What is harder to reconcile is how the fact that both Charlie Baker, a Republican governor, and the state as a whole, get lower overall marks from Republicans.

Still, Trump's overall poor ratings in this survey point to an unsurprising finding: head-to-head against Joe Biden, 58% of Massachusetts registered voters say they would vote for Biden, 30% say they would vote for Trump, 7% say another candidate and 4% are undecided. In 2016, Hillary Clinton defeated Donald Trump in the Bay State by 27 points, 60% to 33%.

Covid-19 Opinions and Attitudes

Turning our attention directly to the coronavirus pandemic, 4 in 10 (39%) Massachusetts registered voters report knowing someone who has tested positive for COVID-19, while 1 in 5 (21%) report knowing someone who has died from COVID-19.

Despite claims that testing is widely available, only 4 in 10 Massachusetts registered voters (13% high confidence, 27% moderate confidence) are confident that they could get a COVID-19 test if they wanted one. Notably, those who are *not confident* that they can get a test are more likely to be from lowest income brackets; those with a family income bracket of less than \$50,000 a year report "No confidence" in being able to get a test at 31% compared to 22% for those who make over \$100,000 a year.

On access to ventilators, a higher percentage of registered voters (61%) are confident they would be able to get a ventilator if needed. However, there is a large gap between white and non-white respondents; 64% of white respondents are confident in their ability to access a ventilator compared to 49% of non-white respondents. Notably, nearly 1 in 4 (23%) non-white respondents say they have no confidence they would have access to a ventilator in a hospital if needed, compared to 9% of white respondents. It is well-known that access to health-care options often vary by race/ethnicity and we see anxiety reflected in this question in the racial inequalities in delivery of health care in times of crisis.

The public also believes that the COVID-19 death count has been underreported; 60% believe more people have died than has been reported, 17% believe fewer people have died than has been reported and 23% believe that the reported death count is accurate. The partisan differences on this question are, again, staggering. For Democrats, 75% believe that the deaths have been underreported, 7% believe they have been overreported and 17% believe they have been correctly reported. However, for Republicans, 29% believe that the deaths have been underreported, 37% believe they have been overreported and 35% believe they have been correctly reported.



Despite concerns about the death count and not being able to get a test if needed, half of Massachusetts registered voters (50%) believe that the state's social distancing measures, which close non-essential businesses, limit gatherings to 10 or more people and recommend people stay at home as much as possible will be lifted on or before July 4, 2020. About a third (33%) believe that the order will be lifted between July 4 and September 7 (Labor Day). A smaller number (11%) believe that the order will be lifted between Labor Day and New Year's 2021, while just a handful (5%) believe that the order will stay in place into 2021.

The biggest differences in views on when social distancing measures will be lifted seen by party identification, race/ethnicity and age. Republicans (64%) and Independents (62%) are more likely to believe that social distancing measures will be lifted by July 4 than Democrats (40%). Whites (54%) are also more likely than non-whites (31%) to believe that state measures will be eased by Independence Day. Similarly, those over 45 (54%) are more likely than those 18-44 (43%) to believe that state measures will be lifted by July 4.

COVID-19 Work and Behavior Changes

Asked about changes to work or employment, nearly 1 in 4 (23%) say they have lost their job since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic. Women (25%) are more likely than men (20%) to say that they have lost their jobs and those under 45 (30%) are more likely than those over 45 (18%) to say they have lost their job. Notably, the majority of those who have lost their jobs (17% of 23%) say they were furloughed and expect to be able to return to work, while 6% say they were permanently laid off.

Since many people have not lost their jobs, but lost hours, lost income because of lost business, been affected by changes in employment, or changes in household income because of a spouse, or been able to collect unemployment to fill the gap in their employment, we asked overall how a respondent's income has changed since the closure of essential businesses. Here, 31% of respondents report that their income has decreased, 7% report their income has increased and 62% say their income has stayed about the same. Interestingly, those who report losing income seem to be distributed across income categories: 32% for those with incomes below \$50,000 per year, 33% for those who make \$50,000 to \$100,000 and 30% for those who make \$100,000 or more. The biggest differences in the cross-tabs appear to be by race/ethnicity and age; 30% of whites report lost income compared to 39% of non-white and 28% of those over 45 report lost income compared to 37% of those under 45.

The coronavirus pandemic has changed the way Americans live. Our survey asked a series of questions about behaviors that people have engaged in that reflect a response to the pandemic and also a series of higher risk activities that would be in violation of stay-at-home orders and evolving societal norms.



For example, 83% of registered voters say they have increased/improved their handwashing, 69% say they have used more hand sanitizer, 63% say they have stocked up on food, 55% say they have conducted normal social activities via video chat, 51% say they have stocked up on personal sanitary products like toilet paper, 38% say they have purchased a mask, 32% have ordered grocery delivery, and 25% have learned a new skill at home.

However, we still also see that when it comes to family and isolated friends, a non-trivial plurality of Massachusetts registered voters has made exceptions. For example, 22% have visited a family member who does not live with them, 16% have visited isolated friends or relatives, 8% have attended gatherings with neighbors, 5% have attending religious services at a house of worship, and 5% have participated in a game of pickup sports of some kind with friends.

Interestingly, we also see some evidence of socially conscious behavior – 36% have changed their spending habits in response to how employers have treated employees during the pandemic and 22% have continued to pay for a good or service that they cannot currently use, like a housecleaner, gym membership, child care, pet care or season tickets.

Massachusetts Senate Primary

Our survey included a subsample of 531 registered Massachusetts voters who we classified as likely to vote in the September 2020 Democratic Senate primary election that pits incumbent Senator Ed Markey against challenger Congressman Joe Kennedy, III. Asked who Democratic Senate primary likely voters who support in that contest, we find a close race, within the margin of error. Kennedy has the support of 44% of likely voters and Markey has the support of 42% of likely voters while 10% are undecided and 4% say they are likely to support another candidate. The biggest differences we observe in the coalitions for Kennedy and Markey split by ideology, with liberals supporting Markey 54% to 39% compared to moderates who support Kennedy 55% to 25%.

Other Findings

- Support for election reform that would allow vote by mail for any registered voter in any future Massachusetts election is at 74%. There are some predictable partisan splits; 93% of Democrats support vote-by-mail compared to 59% of Independents and 42% of Republicans.
- Most Massachusetts registered voters say that things in this country have gotten off on the wrong track (73%) compared to 27% who think they are headed in the right direction. However, the partisan differences on this question are striking; 74% of Republicans think things are headed in the right direction compared to 6% of Democrats and 30% of Independents.



- The participatory spirit in Massachusetts is strong. A large majority say they will still vote in person (72%) if the election were held tomorrow and no vote by mail option were available. Furthermore, a majority (51%) would risk certain contraction of COVID-19 to cast the tie-breaking vote in the upcoming Presidential election.
- Our survey asked about a possible initiative headed towards the ballot in November that would ask voters to approve or reject ranked-choice voting. At this point, we find the yes and no sides evenly split, 37% yes and 38% no, with 25% unsure. There is still much to be decided on this issue and with 1 in 4 voters uncertain.
- We asked for favorability ratings of many political figures, both local and national: Charlie Baker has a +57 net favorability rating (72% fav, 15% unfav), Dr. Anthony Fauci is +57 (67% fav, 10% unfav), former President Barack Obama is +42 (67% fav, 25% unfav), Boston Mayor Marty Walsh is +36 (54% fav, 18% unfav), and former Vice President and presumptive Democratic nominee Joe Biden is +17 (52% fav, 35% unfav). On the flipside, President Donald Trump is -34 (30% fav, 64% unfav), Vice President Mike Pence is -29 (29% fav, 58% unfav), presidential advisor and son-in-law Jared Kushner is at -44 (12% fav, 56% unfav), and 2016 Democratic nominee Hillary Clinton is at -3 (42% fav, 45% unfav).
- Other fav/unfavs: Joe Kennedy is +26 (49% fav, 23% unfav), Ed Markey is +20 (45% fav, 25% unfav), Maura Healey is +20 (38% fav, 18% unfav), Ayanna Pressley is +14 (35% fav, 21% unfav), Seth Moulton is +2 (22% fav, 20% unfav), and Michelle Wu is +6 (18% fav, 12% unfav).
- We also asked fav/unfavs about a series of non-political Boston public figures, organizations and institutions. Even with the departure of Tom Brady, he, Rob Gronkowski, who is coming out of retirement to join Brady in Tampa Bay, as well as Robert Kraft and Bill Belichick all get strong favorability ratings. Brady is +35 (56% fav, 21% unfav), Gronk is +41 (55% fav, 14% unfav), Belichick is +36 (54% fav, 18% unfav), and Kraft is +23 (48% fav, 25% unfav). The kings of favorability in Massachusetts, however, remain Dunkin Donuts at +63 (73% fav, 10% unfav) and Market Basket at +64 (70% fav, 6% unfav). MassHealth also has a strongly positive rating at +48 (59% fav, 11% unfav), as does Stop & Shop (+52). Consistent with our previous survey work on Democratic primary voters, it turns out Massachusetts registered voters also have strongly negative attitudes towards Columbia Gas (-30 net fav, 10% fav, 40% unfav) and Wynn Casinos (-13 net fav, 16% fav, 29% unfav).