

Methodology

Massachusetts U.S. Senate Poll

Prepared by RKM Research and Communications

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Results for the Massachusetts U.S. Senate Special Election Poll are based on telephone interviews with a random sample of 589 Massachusetts registered voters. Telephone interviews were conducted by landline (n=411) and cell phone (n=178). The survey was conducted by RKM Research and Communications (RKM). Interviews were conducted in English, March 2-5, 2013.

The survey was administered using a computer-assisted telephone interviewing (CATI) system. The CATI system allows data to be entered directly into a computerized database as interviews are conducted. A central polling facility in Portsmouth, New Hampshire was used to administer the survey. All interviews were conducted by paid, trained and professionally supervised interviewers.

DESIGN AND DATA COLLECTION PROCEDURES

Sample Design

A combination of landline and cellular random digit dial (RDD) samples was used to represent all registered voters in Massachusetts who have access to either a landline or cellular telephone. Both samples were provided by Survey Sampling International, LLC (SSI) according to RKM specifications.

Numbers for the landline sample were drawn with equal probabilities from active blocks (area code + exchange + two-digit block number) that contained three or more residential directory listings. The cellular sample was not list-assisted.

Contact Procedures

As many as five attempts were made to contact every sampled telephone number. Sample was released for interviewing in replicates, which are representative subsamples of the larger sample. Using replicates to control the release of sample ensures that complete call procedures are followed for the entire sample. Calls were staggered over times of day and days of the week to maximize the chance of making contact with potential respondents. Each phone number received at least one daytime call when necessary.

WEIGHTING AND ANALYSIS

Weighting is commonly used in survey analysis to compensate for patterns of non-response that might bias results. The full sample was weighted to match the Massachusetts adult gender population estimates for registered voters.

The survey's *margin of error* is the largest 95% confidence interval for any estimated parameter based on the total sample—the one around 50%. For example, the margin of error for the entire sample of registered voters is ± 4.0 percentage points. This means, in theory, that in 95 out every 100 samples drawn using the same methodology, estimated proportions based on the entire sample will be no more than 4.0 percentage points away from their true values in the population. It is important to remember that sampling fluctuations are only one possible source of error in a survey estimate. Other sources, such as respondent selection bias, questionnaire wording and reporting inaccuracy, may contribute additional error of greater or lesser magnitude.

The maximum margin of error for the survey of 309 potential Democratic primary voters is ± 5.6 percentage points.

RESPONSE RATE

Using the American Association for Public Opinion Research's calculator, the response rate (Response Rate 4) for the landline sample was 12.5 percent. The response rate for the cellular sample was 11.1 percent.