

UMass Lowell-Boston Herald poll / Dec. 1-6, 2011 / 2012 Mass. Senate race

N=505 MA RVs reached by landline and cell phone; sampling error +/- 5.3 percentage points
Additional methodology information at the bottom of this report; see <http://uml.edu/polls> for complete questionnaire and topline results.

HIGHLIGHTS

- Democrat Elizabeth Warren has gained an apparent lead over Republican incumbent Scott Warren for U.S. Senate in Massachusetts. If the 2012 election were held today, 49% of Massachusetts registered voters say they would vote for or lean toward Warren and 42% prefer Brown.
 - This is a clear advance for Warren since a late September UML-Herald poll - with different wording for the trial-heat question (to allow tests of multiple Democratic candidates), then it was Brown 41% and Warren 38%, with sampling error of +/- 3.8 points. (The new poll did not include a Democratic Senate primary trial heat but the September poll found Warren with a huge advantage in that contest, in vote preference and name recognition.)
 - Excluding respondents who initially selected neither candidate but in a follow-up question said they leaned toward one candidate or the other, 46% in the new poll preferred Warren, 41% Brown.
 - Considering sampling error, there's a small chance Brown actually is tied or barely ahead in this race; it's also possible Warren holds an even bigger lead.
- Both candidates' negatives are increasing amid an initial volley of attack ads.
 - Brown's job approval is down 8 points since September – 45% approve and 36% disapprove, compared to a 53-29 split previously. His overall favorability rating also has dipped below 50% - 48% view him favorably and 35% unfavorably, compared to 52%/29% in September.
 - Warren's unfavorable rating is up 9 points since September – 34% favorable/27% unfavorable now compared to 30%/18% then.
- More than half (55%) of Massachusetts registered voters remain persuadable: 24% say they'll definitely vote for Warren and 21% definitely for Brown. Each candidate has roughly the same number of voters who say they could change their mind. (This poll, 11 months ahead of the election, did not attempt to discern which voters would be most likely to turn out.)
- Warren strengths include a 18-point advantage as the candidate who would do a better job "pursuing appropriate regulation of Wall Street financial institutions" (47%-29%) and a narrower but still significant 10-point advantage (43%-33%) on "looking out for the economic interests of middle class families."

- There's no indication President Obama may be a drag on Warren; his favorable/unfavorable rating in this poll was 61%/31%, virtually unchanged from 61%/34% in September.
- Brown wins only 53% of independents, an essential group for any Republican seeking statewide office in heavily Democratic Massachusetts; he won 66% of independents in his upset victory over Democrat Martha Coakley in January 2010, according to a Washington Post phone poll conducted statewide shortly after that special election.
- One Warren vulnerability is that some of her support is clustered among groups that are less apt to vote, like younger people - she has an 18-point advantage among voters (53-35) under age 35, who, on several survey measures, are far less engaged in the campaign than older people are. And as in September, Brown wins over more self-described Democrats and Democratic-leaning independents than Warren wins Republicans and GOP leaners.
- The survey tested messages in some recent attack ads:
 - 23% say Warren's support for Occupy Wall Street makes it less likely they'd vote for her but nearly as many, 16%, say that makes them more likely to back her. (In this poll, more Massachusetts voters said they oppose OWS, 34%, than support it, 26%, with 29% neutral.) And 81% of those who support OWS prefer Warren for Senate, including 49% who say they're committed to voting for her.
 - And Warren is helped more than hurt by the fact that she's a Harvard professor – 18% say that makes them more likely to vote for her, 7% less likely, while three in four don't much care either way.
 - Brown, on the other hand, is clearly hurt by impressions that he gets a lot of campaign funding from Wall Street financial institutions: 37% say that makes them less likely to vote for him and just 2% say it makes them more likely to support him.
- Brown – whose special election victory in January 2010 was seen as the first electoral triumph of the nascent Tea Party – still wins outsized backing from supporters of that movement, 72%, including 47% who say they'll definitely vote for him. But in Massachusetts, only 18% support the Tea Party; 44% oppose it and 29% are neutral, about the same split as recorded in the September UMass Lowell-Boston Herald poll and more negative sentiment than the Tea Party registers in national polls.
- Roughly the same numbers of voters say Brown is too conservative (29%) as view Warren as too liberal (25%).
- Eleven months before the general election, interest in the campaign is about the same as it was in September – 17% are following very closely, 34% somewhat closely and the rest say they're following not too or not at all closely. And 21% say they've already seen

a lot of advertising about the Senate race, while 33% say they've seen some and the rest have seen not much or none at all.

- Subgroups:
 - Gender gap: The candidates run about evenly among men (Brown 47%, Warren 46%); Warren leads among women, 51%-38%.
 - Voters with postgraduate education are a very strong group for Warren (62% would vote for her, to 34% for Brown). She's also at least numerically ahead among voters with undergraduate degrees (49%-42%) while the candidates are about even (Brown 45%, Warren 44%) among those with an associate's degree or less educational attainment.
 - Warren has a 20-point lead over Brown (58%-38%) in Boston and inner suburbs (roughly speaking, inside Route 128); the candidates are tied at 44% in the rest of the state.
 - Brown fares better with wealthier voters; among those with household income of more than \$100,000, it's Brown 52%, Warren 45% (not a statistically significant difference for that subgroup). Warren leads 51%-37% among voters below that income threshold.

- Ideology
 - Pluralities consider themselves liberal on social issues (and Warren wins them 65%-28%) and moderate on fiscal issues (Warren wins them 60%-34%). Brown wins 61% of social conservatives and 67% of fiscal conservatives, while he has a 52%-39% advantage among social moderates. Warren appears to win at least seven in 10 fiscal liberals but there are relatively few of them, just 16% of all Massachusetts registered voters.

- Apart from the Senate race:
 - Mitt Romney's favorability turned, on balance, negative since September (48% favorable/43% unfavorable then, 40/48 now). But far fewer view Newt Gingrich positively – 22% favorable, 56% unfavorable.
 - Barney Frank, in polling shortly after he announced he won't seek re-election to the House, was viewed favorably by 46%, unfavorably by 34% (12% haven't heard of him).

POLL METHODOLOGY:

This UMass Lowell-Boston Herald poll was conducted Dec. 1-6, 2011, among 505 Massachusetts registered voters reached in random digit dial samples of landlines and cell phones. Survey estimates for the full sample are subject to sampling error of plus or minus 5.3 percentage points; sampling error is higher for subgroups. Polls are subject to additional, unquantifiable but potentially larger error related to question wording and order, non-response and other factors. Fieldwork by Princeton Survey Research Associates International of Princeton, N.J.; the poll was produced for UMass Lowell and these highlights written by Mike Mokrzycki, an independent, non-partisan survey research consultant based in Massachusetts.