

Tea Party for real in Massachusetts

October 1, 2010

For those who continue to view the Tea Party as a fringe group of “nutcases” or the butt of an easy political joke, take notice. The Tea Party has a sizable audience for their message in Massachusetts, according to several recent polls. Three polls in the last two weeks have used different measures to assess support for the Tea Party movement in Massachusetts.

1. This week’s MassINC Polling Group figures (tables below) show that 40 percent of likely voters in Massachusetts hold a *favorable view* of the Tea Party, 40 percent unfavorable, and 20 percent unsure.
2. A [Boston Globe / UNH poll](#) shows 25 percent of likely voters in Massachusetts say they *support* the Tea Party movement, 44 percent oppose it, and 27 percent are in the middle.
3. Yesterday’s [Rasmussen poll](#) shows that 39 percent of likely voters in Massachusetts think the Tea Party movement is *good for the country*, 40 percent say bad for the country, and 15 percent say neither.
4. The same Rasmussen poll shows that 13 percent of residents consider themselves *a part of* the Tea Party movement, 73 percent do not, and 14 percent are unsure.

Digging into these polls a bit allows us to draw two conclusions.

First off, the Tea Party is a sizable political movement in the Bay State and its supporters exceed in number any reasonable definition of “fringe”. The 40 percent who are favorable toward the Tea Party in the MassINC poll is in the same ballpark as those who are favorable toward the gubernatorial candidates Charlie Baker (37 percent), Tim Cahill (29 percent), and Deval Patrick (44 percent). While those consider themselves “a part” of the Tea Party are fairly few in number (13 percent) in the Rasmussen Poll, sympathy for the movement is much wider, with 39 percent saying it is good for the country.

Secondly, support for the Tea Party is not confined solely to the right wing of the electorate. The movement is *largely* conservative, for sure. Among those who are favorable toward the Tea Party, 59 percent call themselves conservative, and 69 percent view Sarah Palin favorably. However, while favorability toward the Tea Party is highest among Republicans (69 percent), there are also significant numbers of Independents (44 percent), and even some Democrats (17 percent) who see the movement favorably.

It should be noted that it can be difficult to peg support for the Tea Party movement in a poll. Complicating factors include, among others, differing levels of knowledge of the movement, the lack of a defined membership structure, and lack of agreement regarding the movement’s core tenets. But the truth is, [the many mechanisms](#) for polling the Tea Party each point to the unmistakable conclusion that the Tea Party, however defined, is a major feature of the national political landscape right now. As these three polls demonstrate, The Tea Party is also a force here in Massachusetts, and not just on the fringe.

About the Poll

These MassINC Polling Group results cited above are based on a statewide poll of 400 Massachusetts residents, conducted September 22-25, 2010. Live telephone interviews were conducted via both landline and cell phone. The margin of sampling error is +/- 4.9 percent with a 95 percent level of confidence.

Selected Results

"I'm going to read you the names of several people and groups who are active in public affairs. After I read each one please tell me if you have a (ROTATE TOP TO BOTTOM, BOTTOM TO TOP) very favorable view, somewhat favorable, somewhat unfavorable, or very unfavorable view of the person or group."

Favorability - The Tea Party		Count*	Very favorable	Somewhat favorable	Somewhat unfavorable	Very unfavorable	Don't Know / Ref
OVERALL	Overall	400	16%	21%	11%	25%	28%
	Registered Voters	339	18%	22%	11%	26%	23%
	Likely Voters	314	18%	22%	12%	28%	21%
PARTY ID	Democrat	130	3%	14%	16%	41%	26%
	Republican	44	36%	33%	6%	5%	20%
	Independent	183	18%	27%	9%	20%	27%
VOTER PREFERENCE (WITH LEANERS)	Deval Patrick	142	4%	10%	15%	51%	20%
	Charlie Baker	110	35%	38%	9%	5%	14%
	Tim Cahill	37	15%	20%	7%	21%	36%
	Jill Stein**	10	x	x	x	x	x
	Undec / Other	40	15%	18%	14%	14%	39%
GENDER	Male	174	18%	24%	12%	26%	21%
	Female	226	13%	19%	10%	24%	34%
AGE CATEGORIES	18 to 29	51	7%	21%	9%	20%	43%
	30 to 44	87	19%	25%	12%	15%	29%
	45 to 59	134	17%	22%	12%	28%	21%
	60+	116	17%	17%	11%	32%	23%
RACE	White / Caucasian	310	17%	23%	11%	25%	24%
	All others	79	6%	12%	12%	20%	50%
POLITICAL IDEOLOGY	Liberal	128	5%	10%	14%	46%	25%
	Moderate	118	12%	19%	16%	24%	30%
	Conservative	138	29%	36%	4%	5%	26%
INCOME RANGES	Less than \$25k	46	17%	9%	3%	27%	44%
	\$25-\$75k	123	15%	23%	9%	21%	32%
	\$75-\$150k	101	18%	21%	19%	29%	12%
	More than \$150k	33	6%	24%	20%	35%	15%
PARENTS	Have children	280	19%	23%	11%	24%	23%
	Do not have children	118	10%	18%	12%	25%	35%

* The "Count" column shows the unweighted sample size for each group.

** Not shown due to small sample size.

Favorability - Sarah Palin							
		Count*	Very favorable	Somewhat favorable	Somewhat unfavorable	Very unfavorable	Don't Know / Ref
OVERALL	Overall	400	10%	23%	16%	37%	14%
	Registered Voters	339	11%	23%	16%	38%	11%
	Likely Voters	314	12%	25%	16%	37%	10%
PARTY ID	Democrat	130	6%	10%	15%	59%	11%
	Republican	44	26%	37%	16%	10%	11%
	Independent	183	11%	28%	16%	31%	15%
VOTER PREFERENCE (WITH LEANERS)	Deval Patrick	142	3%	7%	17%	64%	9%
	Charlie Baker	110	22%	35%	18%	17%	8%
	Tim Cahill	37	13%	31%	16%	30%	10%
	Jill Stein**	10	x	x	x	x	x
	Undec / Other	40	8%	29%	11%	26%	26%
GENDER	Male	174	12%	21%	16%	35%	16%
	Female	226	8%	26%	15%	38%	13%
AGE CATEGORIES	18 to 29	51	2%	21%	21%	33%	23%
	30 to 44	87	9%	29%	13%	34%	15%
	45 to 59	134	11%	26%	17%	37%	10%
	60+	116	17%	17%	13%	42%	11%
RACE	White / Caucasian	310	11%	25%	16%	36%	11%
	All others	79	3%	15%	12%	41%	30%
POLITICAL IDEOLOGY	Liberal	128	1%	13%	18%	58%	9%
	Moderate	118	6%	22%	18%	41%	12%
	Conservative	138	23%	36%	12%	14%	16%
INCOME RANGES	Less than \$25k	46	5%	26%	6%	35%	27%
	\$25-\$75k	123	11%	22%	19%	35%	12%
	\$75-\$150k	101	12%	20%	19%	44%	5%
	More than \$150k	33	6%	14%	29%	47%	3%
PARENTS	Have children	280	11%	26%	13%	37%	12%
	Do not have children	118	7%	19%	20%	36%	17%