
HIGHLIGHTS

A new statewide survey from the University of Massachusetts Lowell looks at trial heat matchups for the upcoming gubernatorial elections this November, the effects of growing inflation on Bay State voters, ongoing concerns and debates about the COVID-19 pandemic, and offers a concerning look toward the fall 2022 national midterms.

“In a rough year for Democrats, the governor’s race in Massachusetts looks surprisingly smooth for them. Both Democratic candidates look strong against either Republican in November. This election isn’t over, but Democrats have the high ground. If they’re going to try it, Republicans seeking the corner office on Beacon Hill need to tie themselves to Gov. Charlie Baker, who remains popular among voters across the Commonwealth.” says Associate Professor John Cluverius, Associate Director of the Center for Public Opinion

Governor Charlie Baker, a Republican, is set to retire as Governor of Massachusetts as a very popular figure. His approval rating sits at 72% and as he has throughout much of his term, he remains more popular among Democrats (77% approve) than Republicans (62% approve).

In an April UMass Lowell survey of Democratic Primary Likely Voters, Healey lead her Democratic primary opponent Sonia Chang-Diaz by 45 points (62% to 17%). Should her campaign close the gap on Healey and should Chang-Diaz become the nominee, she would still be a prohibitive favorite over both Diehl or Doughty. Head-to-head, Chang-Diaz leads Diehl 54% to 29% with 3% saying they will vote for another candidate and 15% undecided. Likewise, Chang-Diaz leads Doughty 50% to 30% with 4% saying they vote for another candidate and 16% saying they are undecided.

2. The Inflation Effect

“Sometimes economic distress is a political strategy used by the party. In this survey we see some evidence of Republicans attempting to capitalize on inflation concerns in expression of their economic attitudes. But we also see evidence of real economic distress. Nearly a third of Americans had difficulty paying for a basic expense in the last month, and this was heavily concentrated among the poorest Bay State voters” notes Professor Joshua D. Dyer, Director of the Center for Public Opinion.

Americans are experiencing rapid inflation rates in excess of 8%, the highest in over 40 years – and Massachusetts likely voters are expressing widespread concern about rising prices heading into a midterm election year. Our survey sought to understand both the sincere difficulties that Americans are encountering because of rising prices, and the way in which voters use motivated reasoning to process their experiences through their partisan perspectives.

We see strong stylized versions of reality reflected in partisan responses. For instance, 28% of Massachusetts likely voters say that things in the country are headed in the right direction, while 72% say that things are off on the wrong track. However, there are large partisan differences here: 42% of Democrats say things are headed in the right direction, compared to 11% of independents and 6% of Republicans. Likewise, Joe Biden’s approval rating overall is at 53% approve and 47% disapprove. However, among Democrats, his approval rating is 80%, compared to just 24% among independents and 6% among Republicans.

Yet, there are clear signs that objective economic circumstances are affecting certain segments of the population. Asked if they have had problems paying for basic expenses in the last month like housing, utilities, food, medical expenses, car payments, etc., 29% of Bay Staters reported that they had. Partisan differences are relatively muted: 25% of Democrats report problems compared to 33% of Republicans. However, 58% of those who make less than \$50,000/year report financial troubles in the last month, compared to only 15% of those who make \$100,000/year or more. Asked if things are going to get easier or harder in the next 6 months, the majority of respondents (54%) say that things are going to get harder, with the greatest pessimism concentrated among Republicans (70%) and independents (71%). Asked where they blame falls, the majority of Massachusetts likely voters say that it is the fault of politicians (53%), but this is far more concentrated among Republicans (85%) than Democrats (35%).

the government response to the pandemic at the state and federal level, they are worried about day-to-day interactions. We still see a slim majority supporting a mask requirement in public schools, and school committees will have a lot more bitter fighting on their hands come fall. For now though, if you're planning an indoor wedding this summer with a lot of Democrats on the guest list, expect some neshows." notes Professor Cluverius

they should require a prescription and a telehealth appointment with a medical provider, 29% believe they should require a prescription and an in-person appointment with a medical provider, and 13% believe that no medical abortions should be allowed. Finally, 56% of respondents report that they have either had an abortion or someone they know closely has had an abortion, including 60% of Democrats, 56% of independents, and 48% of Republicans.

- On June 14, the Supreme Judicial Court threw out a ballot measure which would have asked voters whether or not to approve a law sponsored by Uber, Lyft, DoorDash and other rideshare and food app companies to classify gig workers as contractors and not as employees subject to benefits. As it now stands, the measure has been struck down because of the single-subject rule and will not appear on the November ballot. However, we asked Massachusetts voters how they were thinking about the issue given that our field period took place almost entirely before the measure was struck down. Just 30% of likely voters said they intended to vote yes, compared to 59% who intended to vote no, with 11% undecided.
- In a hypothetical Super Bowl matchup between the New England Patriots and the Tampa Bay Buccaneers, led by quarterback Tom Brady, 59% of likely Massachusetts voters would cheer for the Patriots, 7% for the Buccaneers and 34% would not cheer for either team.