

## **Methods & About Us**

The “Missouri K-12 & School Choice Survey” project, commissioned by the Friedman Foundation for Educational Choice and conducted by Braun Research, Inc. (BRI), interviewed a statistically representative sample of registered voters in the state of Missouri (N=600). Methodology included probability sampling and random-digit dial. The unweighted statewide sample includes a total of **660** telephone interviews completed in English from February 27 to March 11, 2014, by means of both landline and cell phone. Statistical results were weighted to correct known demographic discrepancies.

The margin of sampling error for the statewide sample is  $\pm 4.0$  percentage points.

BRI’s live callers conducted all phone interviews. For this entire project, a total of **12,200** calls were made in Missouri. Of these calls, **3,886** were unusable phone numbers (disconnected, fax, busy, non-residential, or non-answers, etc.); **7,564** were usable numbers but eligibility unknown (including refusals and voicemail); **54** cell phone numbers were usable but not eligible for this survey; **15** people did not complete the survey. The average response rate of the landline interviews was **9.7%**. The average response rate of the cell phone interviews was **8.3%**.

Details on call dispositions, landline and cell phone response rates, and weighting are discussed in the following sections.

### ***Sample Design***

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

SSI starts with a database of all listed telephone numbers, updated on a four- to six-week rolling basis, 25 percent of the listings at a time. All active blocks – contiguous groups of 100 phone numbers for which more than one residential number is listed – are added to this database. Blocks and exchanges that include only listed business numbers are excluded.

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, but was drawn through a systematic sampling from dedicated wireless 100-blocks and shared service 100-blocks with no directory-listed landline numbers.

### ***Contact Procedures***

Interviews were conducted from February 27 to March 11, 2014. As many as eight attempts were made to contact every sampled telephone number. The sample was released for interviewing in replicates, which are representative subsamples of the larger sample. Using replicates to control the release of the 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.

We have noticed in recent years that response rates have been declining for consumer polls. Generally, running surveys over a longer period of time will boost these response rates. However, lower response rates do not lead to lower reliability of the data. For example, polls with a sample size of 1,200 respondents run over a two-day period with response rates of 3% or 4% have been acceptable for public release.

The survey's margin of error is the largest 95% Confidence Interval for any estimated proportion based on the total sample – the one around 50%. The overall statewide margin of error for this survey is  $\pm 4.0\%$ . This means that in 95 of 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 critical to note that the margin of sampling error (MSE) is higher when considering the number of respondents for a given demographic subgroup. For example, the MSE for a subgroup of 150 respondents is  $\pm 8.0$  percentage points.

In addition to sampling error, question wording, ordering, and other practical difficulties when conducting surveys may introduce error or bias into the findings of public opinion research.

### ***Call Dispositions and Response Rates***

<b>Missouri Statewide Call Dispositions</b>					
<b><u>SUMMARY</u></b>			<b><u>DETAIL</u></b>		
<b>Landline</b>	<b>Cell Phone</b>		<b>Landline</b>	<b>Cell Phone</b>	
5,600	3,200	Total	769	462	Disconnected
5,600	3,200	Released	2	0	Fax
0	0	Unreleased	98	11	Government/Business
4,475	2,720	Usable	0	-	Cell Phone
1,125	480	Unusable	-	0	Landline
4,328	2,163	Qualified	869	473	Unusable
79.9%	85.0%	Est. Usability	1,153	46	No Answer
95.8%	79.2%	Est. Eligibility	121	1	Busy
9.7%	8.3%	Est. Response	1,274	47	Usability Unknown
			420	180	Complete
			9	3	Break-Off
			429	183	Usable/Eligible
			956	879	Refused
			32	69	Language Barrier
			1,179	779	Voice Mail
			698	587	Call Back-Retry
			143	135	Strong Refusal
			1	0	Privacy Manager
			3,009	2,449	Usable/Eligible Unknown
			-	-	Under 18
			19	48	Usable/Ineligible
			<b>9.7%</b>	<b>8.3%</b>	<b>Response Rate</b>

## ***Weighting Procedures and Analysis***

Weighting is generally used in survey analysis to compensate for sample designs and patterns of non-response that might bias results. In this study, the sample demographics were balanced to population parameters. Using weighting targets, we weighted St. Louis metro and Kansas City metro areas to Age, Gender, Race, Ethnicity; then we weighted on statewide Cell/Landline; and, finally, we weighted overall results to Age, Gender, Race, Ethnicity, and Region.

The weighted and unweighted data are available on request.

All weighting measures are based on Census Bureau statistics for the state of Missouri.

Special note: We calculated age distributions from date-of-birth information on file from the state's respective registered voter database, as supplied by Aristotle International.

## **About the Author**

Paul DiPerna (paul@edchoice.org) is Research Director for the Friedman Foundation for Educational Choice in Indianapolis. He joined the foundation in September 2006. DiPerna's research interests include surveys and polling on K-12 education and school choice policies. He also directs and manages all other research projects commissioned by the foundation. DiPerna has traveled to 27 states for his work, presenting survey research findings and discussing various school choice policies for audiences including public officials, policy professionals, advocates, and academics.

Previously, DiPerna served as the assistant director for the Brown Center on Education Policy at the Brookings Institution in Washington, D.C. His six years at Brookings included projects evaluating the federal Blue Ribbon Schools Program and analyzing student achievement in charter schools. DiPerna was a research analyst for the first five issues of the Brown Center Report on American Education (2000-2004). He also managed and coordinated the activities of the National Working Commission on Choice in K-12 Education (2001-2005).

A native of Pittsburgh, DiPerna earned an M.A. in political science from the University of Illinois (2000) and B.A. from the University of Dayton (1996).

## **Acknowledgements**

A number of people made significant contributions during the course of this survey project. James Shuls and our friends at the Show-Me Institute provided important insights and context at the local/state level. We thank the team at Braun Research who assisted in project development, and for their excellent work in conducting the interviews and collecting the data. I appreciate the time and commitments from Paul Braun, Cynthia Miller, and Dave Oshman. Finally, we are of course grateful to the respondents who generously agreed to participate in our survey interviews.

## **About the Survey Organization**

### **Braun Research, Inc. (BRI)**

The Braun Research network of companies, founded in 1995, combined employ 38 full-time and more than 250 part-time employees engaged in data collection via telephone, and internet for various survey research firms, government and advertising agencies, local community organizations, local and national business groups, foundations, universities and academic entities, as well as religious organizations. In 19 years, Braun Research has conducted almost 10,000 research projects by telephone, internet, and mail worldwide.

Nationally-known research firms have hired Braun Research, including the Gallup Organization, the Pew Research Center, the Eagleton Poll, Mathematica Policy Research, and *The Washington Post*. Braun Research has worked for the New Jersey Department of Health and Human Services, as well as other government agencies including the United States Departments of the Treasury and Defense, and the Center for Disease Control.

The work we accomplish for other research firms requires us to perform all work up to standards required by the various research organizations where we enjoy membership and in some cases participate actively. Paul Braun is recognized as a leader in the field by colleagues who asked him to serve on these committees. For example, Paul Braun is a member of the MRA/CMOR committees on response rate improvement and in launching a seal of quality for the industry. He has served as President of the New Jersey Chapter of AAPOR, and he is currently serving on AMEC in North America.

Braun Research is a well-respected firm employing techniques and standards approved by various survey research academic organizations and other affiliations including those with whom Braun is an active member, including AAPOR (The American Association for Public Opinion Research) and MRA/CMOR (Market Research Association/Council on Marketing and Opinion Research) and CASRO (Council on American Survey Research Organizations).

## **About the Survey Sponsor**

### **The Friedman Foundation for Educational Choice**

The Friedman Foundation for Educational Choice is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit and nonpartisan organization, solely dedicated to advancing Milton and Rose Friedman's vision of school choice for all children. First established as the Milton and Rose D. Friedman Foundation in 1996, the Foundation continues to promote school choice as the most effective and equitable way to improve the quality of K-12 education in America. The Foundation is dedicated to research, education, and outreach on the vital issues and implications related to choice in K-12 education.

### ***Commitment to Methods & Transparency***

The Friedman Foundation for Educational Choice is committed to research that adheres to high scientific standards, and matters of methodology and transparency are taken seriously at all levels of our organization. We are dedicated to providing high-quality information in a transparent and efficient manner.

All individuals have opinions, and many organizations (like our own) have specific missions or philosophical orientations. Scientific methods, if used correctly and followed closely in well-designed studies, should neutralize these opinions and orientations. Research rules and methods minimize bias. We believe rigorous procedural rules of science prevent a researcher's motives, and an organization's particular orientation, from pre-determining results. If research adheres to proper scientific and methodological standards, its findings can be relied upon no matter who has conducted it. If rules and methods are neither specified nor followed, then the biases of the researcher or an organization may become relevant, because a lack of rigor opens the door for those biases to affect the results. Our authors take full responsibility for research design, analysis, charts, and any unintentional errors or misrepresentations. They welcome any and all questions related to methods and findings.

## **About the Survey Release Partner**

### **The Show-Me Institute**

The Show-Me Institute is a research and educational institute dedicated to improving the quality of life for all citizens of Missouri by advancing sensible, well-researched solutions to state and local policy issues.

The Institute's scholars study public policy problems and develop proposals to increase economic opportunity for ordinary Missourians. It then promotes those solutions by publishing studies, briefing papers, and other educational materials, which help policymakers, the media, and the general public gain a better understanding of the issues.

The work of the Institute is rooted in the American tradition of free markets and individual liberty. The Institute's scholars seek to move beyond the 20th-century mindset that every problem has a government solution. Instead, they develop policies that respect the rights of the individual, encourage creativity and hard work, and nurture independence and social cooperation.

By applying those principles to the problems facing the state, the Show-Me Institute hopes to build a Missouri with a thriving economy and a vibrant civil society, a Missouri that leads the nation in wealth, freedom, and opportunity for all.