

## **Methods & About Us**

The “Schooling in America Survey” project, commissioned by the Friedman Foundation for Educational Choice and conducted by Braun Research, Inc. (BRI), interviewed a statistically representative national sample of adults (age 18+) in the United States. Methodology included probability sampling and random-digit dial. The unweighted national sample includes a total of **1,007** telephone interviews completed in English from April 23 to May 4, 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  $\pm 3.1$  percentage points.

BRI’s live callers conducted all phone interviews. For this entire project, a total of **9,500** calls were made in the United States. Of these calls, **3,819** were unusable phone numbers (disconnected, fax, busy, non-residential, or non-answers, etc.); **4,628** were usable numbers but eligibility unknown (including refusals and voicemail); **23** cell phone numbers were usable but not eligible for this survey; **23** people did not complete the survey. The average response rate of the landline interviews was **15.8%**. The average response rate of the cell phone interviews was **14.1%**.

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 adults (age 18+) in the United States 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 April 23 to May 4, 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  $\pm 3.1\%$ . 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 3.1 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>Call Dispositions for National Sample</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>	
6,300	3,200	Total	1,343	842	Disconnected
6,300	3,200	Released	4	0	Fax
0	0	Unreleased	79	56	Government/Business
4,456	2,283	Usable	0	-	Cell Phone
1,844	917	Unusable	-	0	Landline
4,456	2,128	Qualified	1,426	898	Unusable
70.7%	71.3%	Est. Usability	1,325	67	No Answer
100.0%	93.1%	Est. Eligibility	102	1	Busy
15.8%	14.1%	Est. Response	1,427	68	Usability Unknown
			706	301	Complete
			14	9	Break-Off
			720	310	Usable/Eligible
			686	251	Refused
			46	43	Language Barrier
			1,058	810	Voice Mail
			856	723	Call Back-Retry
			81	71	Strong Refusal
			0	3	Privacy Manager
			2,727	1,901	Usable/Eligible Unknown
			-	23	Under 18
			-	23	Usable/Ineligible
			<b>15.8%</b>	<b>14.1%</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. All weighting measures are based on Census Bureau statistics for the United States. BRI used the dual landline/cell weighting method first; then weighted on Age, Race, Ethnicity, Gender, and Region. The weighted and unweighted data are available on request.

## **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 28 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. Michael McShane and Patrick Wolf provided important insights and feedback during development of the survey questions, and in particular, the Common Core and testing items. We thank the team at Braun Research for their excellent work in conducting the phone interviews and collecting the data. I appreciate the time and commitments from Paul Braun, Cynthia Miller, and Dave Oshman. Editing and verifying data are essential for this report, and I'm grateful to Drew Catt and Jeff Reed for their attention to detail. 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.