FRIEDMAN FOUNDATION
FOR EDUCATIONAL CHOICE

Methods & About Us

The "K-12 & School Choice Survey" project, commissioned by the Friedman Foundation for Educational Choice and conducted by Braun Research Incorporated (BRI), interviewed a statistically representative sample of registered voters in the state of Tennessee. Methodology included probability sampling and random-digit dial. The statewide sample includes a total of **606** telephone interviews completed in English from February 11 to 21, 2012, by means of both landline and cell phone.

The margin of sampling error for the statewide sample is ± 4.0 percentage points.

BRI's live callers conducted all phone interviews. For this entire project, a total of **6,335** calls were made in Tennessee. Of these calls **1,545** were unusable phone numbers (disconnected, fax, busy, non-residential, or non-answers, etc.); **3,107** were usable numbers but eligibility unknown (including refusals and voicemail); **213** cell phone numbers were usable but not eligible for this survey; **36** people did not complete the survey. The average response rate of the landline interviews was **17.5%**. The average response rate of the cell phone interviews was **19.6%**.

Details on each sample's call dispositions, landline and cell phone response rates, and weighting are discussed in following sections.

Sample Design

A combination of landline and cellular random digit dial (RDD) samples was used to represent registered voters in Tennessee 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 11-21, 2012. 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 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 over the last several years 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 margin of error for this survey is ± 4.0 percent. 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 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 ± 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

Full statewide call dispositions and response rates for sampled landline and cell phone numbers are located on the next page.

Tennessee Statewide Call Dispositions

SUMMARY

Landline	Cell Phone	
3,993	2,342	Total
3,993	2,342	Released
0	0	Unreleased
2,681	2,109	Usable
1,312	233	Unusable
2,186	1,140	Qualified
59.4%	89.9%	Est. Usability
90.4%	53.7%	Est. Eligibility
17.5%	19.6%	Est. Response

DETAIL

Landline	Cell Phone	
1,108	226	Disconnected
61	2	Fax
143	5	Government/Business
-	0	Non Cell Phone
0	-	Non Landline
1,312	233	Unusable
701	19	No Answer
63	3	Busy
764	22	Usability Unknown
383	223	Complete
12	24	Break-Off
395	247	Usable/Eligible
587	525	Refused
9	11	Language Barrier
601	659	Voice Mail
224	403	Call Back-Retired
58	29	Strong Refusal
1	0	Privacy Manager
1,480	1,627	Usable/Eligible Unknown
-	149	Under 18
42	64	Not Registered in State
42	213	Usable/Ineligible
17.5%	19.6%	Response Rate

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. The sample was balanced to reflect the targeted population representation by Age, Gender, and Race/Ethnicity. The weighted and unweighted results are available on request.

All weighting measures are based on 2010 Census Bureau statistics for the state of Tennessee. Weighting targets have been imposed for Age, Gender, Race/Ethnicity.

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. DiPerna joined the Foundation in September 2006, and his research includes surveys and polling on K-12 education issues. He also manages and edits all other research projects commissioned by the Foundation. DiPerna previously served as assistant director for the Brown Center on Education Policy at the Brookings Institution, working there for more than six years. He was a research analyst for the first five issues of the *Brown Center Report on American Education* (2000-2004), and managed the activities of the National Working Commission on Choice in K-12 Education (2001-2005). DiPerna has presented research at the American Sociological Association annual meeting, and he has written or co-authored articles for *Education Week*, The Huffington Post, *Washington Examiner, First Monday,* and *Education Next*. In 2008, he authored a textbook chapter in the *Handbook of Research on Web Log Analysis*.

A native of Pittsburgh, DiPerna attended the University of Dayton as an undergraduate and received an M.A. in political science from the University of Illinois.

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About the Survey Organization

Braun Research, Inc. (BRI)

The Braun Research network of companies, founded in 1995, combined employ 40 full-time and more than 500 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 17 years, Braun Research has conducted more than 8,300 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.

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 (American Association for Public Opinion Research), MRA/CMOR (Market Research Association/Council on Marketing and Opinion Research), and CASRO (Council on American Survey Research Organizations).

Braun's services on behalf of other research firms are up to standards required by various professional associations where Braun enjoys membership, and in some cases, participates actively. Paul Braun is a member of the MRA/CMOR committees on response rate improvement and in launching a seal of quality for the industry. Paul Braun is recognized as a leader in the field by colleagues who asked him to serve on these committees. He has served as President of the New Jersey Chapter of AAPOR.

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 and competition 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 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 Beacon Center of Tennessee

The mission of the Beacon Center of Tennessee is to change lives through public policy. The Beacon Center, founded as the Tennessee Center for Policy Research, is an independent, nonprofit and nonpartisan research organization dedicated to providing concerned citizens, the media and public leaders with expert empirical research and timely free market policy solutions to public policy issues in Tennessee.

The Beacon Center promotes personal freedom and limited government through policy solutions that:

- Generate economic growth through reduced tax and regulatory burdens on individuals and businesses
- Create unmatched educational opportunity by empowering parents, students and teachers with choices and opportunities
- Advance healthcare solutions that restore dignity and encourage personal responsibility
- Identify opportunities to reduce cost and increase efficiency in all levels of government
- Reflect the Founding Fathers' vision of a free society grounded in property rights and individual liberty based in personal responsibility

The Beacon Center generates and encourages public policy remedies grounded in the capacity of private enterprise, the ingenuity of individuals and the abilities of active communities to achieve a freer, more prosperous Tennessee.