

MASSACHUSETTS SENATE ELECTION: YOUTH TURNOUT WAS JUST 15% COMPARED TO 57% FOR OLDER CITIZENS; YOUNG VOTERS FAVORED COAKLEY

In the January special election for Massachusetts Senator, young voters (age 18-29) preferred Democrat Martha Coakley over Republican Scott Brown by 58%-40% (with two percent for other candidates), according to a survey of 1,000 voters conducted on January 19, 2010 by Rasmussen Reports.

About 15% of Massachusetts citizens between the ages of 18-29 turned out to vote.* For citizens age 30 and older, turnout was about 57%.

In 2008, 25% of young citizens (age 18-29) voted in the Massachusetts presidential primary, and 48% of young Massachusetts citizens voted in the 2008 general election, according to CIRCLE's analysis. Seventy-eight percent of under-30 voters in Massachusetts chose Barack Obama in the 2008 general election; 20% chose John McCain.

YOUTH VOTER TURNOUT AND ENTHUSIASM DOWN SINCE 2008 PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION

While national youth turnout was very strong in 2008 (when 51% of young American citizens voted), youth turnout in the 2009 Virginia and New Jersey Gubernatorial races was poor (17% and 19%, respectively), and even lower in January's special election in Massachusetts. "Three state elections do not necessarily make a national trend, but there is clearly an issue right now with youth turnout and enthusiasm," said CIRCLE director Peter Levine. "It will be interesting to see the turnout of young voters in November's mid-term elections."

"THREE STATE ELECTIONS DO NOT NECESSARILY MAKE A NATIONAL TREND, BUT THERE IS CLEARLY AN ISSUE RIGHT NOW WITH YOUTH TURNOUT AND ENTHUSIASM," SAID CIRCLE DIRECTOR PETER LEVINE.

YOUNG MASSACHUSETTS VOTERS CITE THE ECONOMY AS MOST IMPORTANT ISSUE

Massachusetts voters age 18 to 29 preferred Coakley over Brown, 58% to 40%, (with two percent for other candidates). Moreover,

according to the Rasmussen survey, most young people who did vote for Coakley were enthusiastic about their vote: 89% of her young supporters said they voted for her, not against Scott Brown; and 43% were "very favorable" toward her. Their most important issue was the economy, whereas for voters overall, the number one issue was health care.

Of those Massachusetts voters who said that health care was the most important issue in the Senate campaign (56%), 86% opposed the Democrats' plan – this may have been one contributor to Scott Brown's victory. Young voters, however, favored the health care plan, 55%-40%.

Young voters were less likely to be "strong" supporters of President Obama than Massachusetts voters overall (30% of youth versus 35% of all voters), but they were more likely to support him at least "somewhat" (67% support the president "somewhat" or "strongly"). ★

* To estimate the turnout of young people who voted in the 2010 Massachusetts Senate Special Election, CIRCLE used the following data sources: (1) the number of ballots cast in the Senate Special Election according to the New York Times (2) the youth share of those who voted, as reported by Rasmussen's survey of people who said that they voted, and (3) the estimated number of 18-to-29 year-old citizens taken from the 2009 Census Current Population Survey, December File.

