



Election Insights from Monomoy Student Exit Poll - November 8, 2016

About forty Monomoy Regional High School students conducted an exit poll today at the Harwich Community Center. They interviewed 376 voters between 8am and 1pm about the various offices and questions on the ballot, as well as what influenced their vote. The results should not be expected to predict Harwich

totals, much less state or national ones, but they offer some possible insights.

In the poll, Clinton won the Presidential race 57% to 36% with only 2% each for Johnson and Stein. In the three other races included, Keating won for Congress 60% to 35%, Cyr was ahead of Schiavi for State Senate 54% to 46%, and Cummings led Azzato for Sheriff 60% to 40%. Cyr's lead was a surprise given that Harwich is Schiavi's hometown. On the ballot questions, only Question 3 had majority support at 78%, with 1, 2 and 4 getting 31%, 39% and 46% respectively.

When asked about which one to three issues were most important in the Presidential race, the economy was cited the most, by 43%, with health care next at 36%, education at 25%, and the candidates' characters cited by 24%. The other issues were all between 15% and 20%.

When asked if their decision was influenced by the presidential debates, 35% indicated that it had. When asked a similar question about political ads, only 17% said yes. When asked when they had decided who to support for President, 8% indicated in the last week, 11% in the month prior, and 81% had decided earlier than that. We also asked about the job President Obama has done, and 58% approved while 31% disapproved.

If we break the results down by our demographic questions, we find a dramatic gender difference in the presidential race, with Clinton winning women 67% to 25%, and Trump leading men 46% to 41%. This ~24% gender gap is much larger than the ~17% gap in the US Rep. and State Sen. races, and the ~3% gap in the Sheriff's race. This is also much more than our previous exit polls that showed an ~11% gap in 2012 and gaps less than 10% for prior presidential elections back to 2000. The gender gap for the ballot questions was lower - ranging from 2% for Question 2 to 10% for Question 3 (women more likely to support).

We grouped voters by age into younger (18-39), middle (40-59), and older voters (60+). All three groups supported Clinton, though at a declining rate with age - 62/57/53%. Age had a much bigger effect on the ballot questions, as support for question 1 was 49/34/22% younger to older, for question 2 - 24/40/43%, for question 3 - 84/80/71%, and for question 4 - 70/46/35%. These dramatic differences suggest older and younger voters have very different political judgments.

When we consider political party affiliation, Clinton did a little bit better at getting cross-party support as 10% of Republicans supported her compared to 3% of Democrats for Trump. But most importantly, Independents supported her strongly - 54% to 31%. For US Rep., Keating got support from 24% of Republicans and 57% of Independents, and for the Sheriff's race, Cummings got 30% of Democrats and 65% of Independents. Schiavi and Cyr had a close result with Republicans favoring Schiavi 85% to 11%, Democrats favoring Cyr 86% to 12%, and Independents split 46% to 46%. Cyr's overall lead in our poll was based on having more Democratic respondents. For the ballot questions, one interesting result was that only 50% of Republicans supported Question 2, surprising given the governor's advocacy. Another possible surprise was the Question 4 got only 52% support from Democrats and Independents, so the 28% support from Republicans swayed our result against it.

Looking at the issues, most favored Clinton in the Presidential race, the environment most dramatically as those who cited it supported her 81% to 6%, also education 71% to 19%, character 68% to 21%, health care 63% to 25% and the economy 52% to 39%. The three issues that favored Trump were immigration 64% to 32%, the national debt 60% to 28%, and foreign policy 51% to 44%.

Those who were influenced by the debates were more likely to support Clinton, 63% to 30%, as were those influenced by ads, 62% to 30%, suggesting that both of these elements of the campaign favored her. Considering when people made their decisions, those deciding in the last week favored Clinton 38% to 24% with a surprising 38% choosing other candidates - this group did not seem to like their choices. Those who decided the month before favored Trump 53% to 33%, perhaps indicating a hesitance among many Trump voters to commit to him at first. But Clinton's lead among the earlier deciders 62% to 32% may support the perception that this race has been hers to lose all along.

We have been conducting exit polls in Harwich since 1998, and this is thanks to the ongoing support of Town Clerk Anita Doucette. The students of Monomoy Regional High School's government classes would also like to thank the Harwich voters who took the time to talk with us today. Their candor gave the students valuable insights into how voters make decisions, which was the most important lesson of the day.

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