

Minnesota Public Radio News and Humphrey Institute Poll

Dayton Jumps to Double-Digit Lead Over Emmer

Report prepared by the Center for the Study of Politics and Governance
Humphrey Institute of Public Affairs
University of Minnesota

Lawrence R. Jacobs
Director, Center for the Study of Politics and Governance

Joanne M. Miller
Research Associate, Center for Study of Politics and Governance
Associate Professor, Department of Political Science

According to the latest Minnesota Public Radio News and Humphrey Institute Poll, the Democratic Party's gubernatorial candidate Mark Dayton has opened an 11 point lead over the Republican Party candidate Tom Emmer, 38% to 27%. This represents a distinct shift from the deadlock that existed at the end of August. The Independence Party candidate is receiving 16% support with 20% remaining undecided.

Dayton and Emmer Deadlocked in General Election Matchup

	Dayton	Emmer	Horner	DK / Refused/Other/Won't Vote
September 22-29	38%	27%	16%	20%
August 25-29	34%	34%	13%	19%

Some key findings:

- Minnesota voters have awoken from their summer slumber. More than 8 out of 10 Minnesotans are interested in the November elections, a substantial increase that is being propelled by the energizing of formerly turned-off Democrats.
- Horner is crippling Emmer's campaign, soaking up one-fifth of Republican voters while taking only half as much from Dayton.
- Dayton is tapping voter frustration and appears better positioned among voters who have not yet declared their support for a candidate.

The survey was conducted of 750 likely voters in Minnesota between September 22 and September 26, 2010. The margin of error ranges between +/-3.6 percentage points based on the conventional calculation and +/-5.1 percentage points, which is a more

cautious estimate based on professional best practices. For smaller subgroups the margin of sampling error is larger. The section at the end of this report, “About the Survey,” discusses the statistical calculations for the margin of sampling error and how to interpret it.

Party Allegiances Strained, Emmer Coalition Crumbling

The usual party coalitions that unify nearly all Democrats and Republicans behind their Party’s standard bearer have broken down in the 2010 gubernatorial contest. In an extraordinary breach, 4 out of 10 Republican voters have not yet declared for Emmer. Dayton is also struggling but not as extensively as his Republican opponent; a third of Democrats are not supporting him at this time.

In a dramatic breakthrough, Horner is now drawing 22% of Republicans, starting to fulfill his plan to raid the GOP base. He is drawing far less Democrats (10%) while also taking a fifth of independents.

	Dayton	Emmer	Horner	Other/Won’t vote/Dk/Refused
Republican (38%)	6%	59%	22%	14%
Independent (12%)	16	26	21	38
Democrat (48%)	68	2	10	20

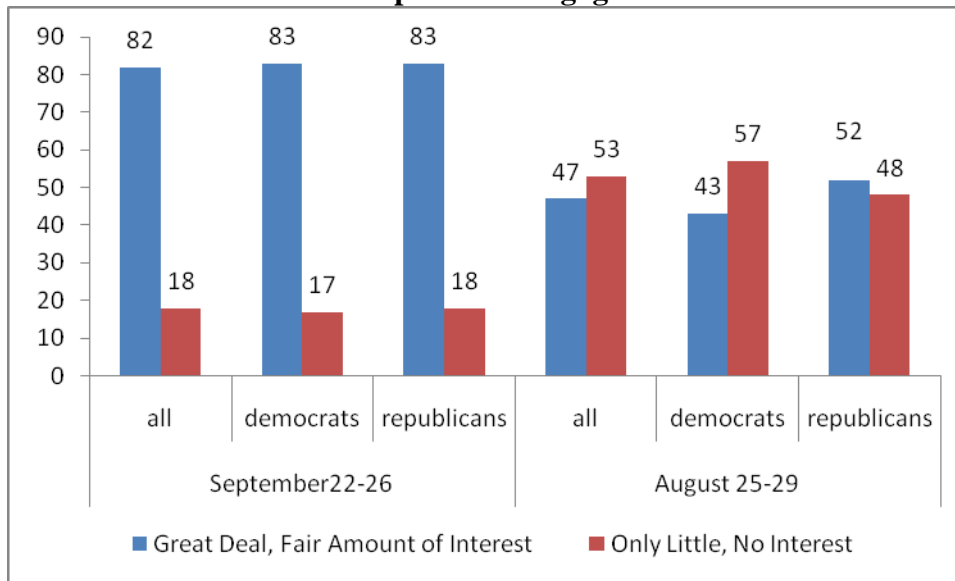
(Percentages here and elsewhere may not sum to 100% owing to rounding or to the omission of respondents who did not answer a question.)

Energized Electorate: Democrats Match Republican Interest

The electorate has changed dramatically in the past month. Since late August, Minnesotans who express a great deal or fair amount of interest in the November elections has jumped from 47% to 82%.

The outcome of elections often rest on which candidate best turns out their supporters. The story in Minnesota in August was similar to that in many parts of the country -- Republicans were more motivated and engaged in the elections. In August, Minnesota Republicans held a significant 9 point advantage (52% to 43%) in terms of interest in the election. Today, Minnesota Democrats match the interest among Republicans.

Democrats Voters Match Republican Engagement in November Elections



The sharp shift from the deadlocked race in August to Dayton's lead a month later stems in part from Democrats being more likely to vote. In the August survey, 46% of likely voters were Republican compared to 41% who indicated they were Democrats and the 13% who said they were independent. By late September, there were more Democrats (48%) than Republicans (38%) who were likely voters; independents remained largely unchanged at 12%.

Dayton Taps Voter Anger and Concerns

Voter anger has been defining the 2010 election campaigns. In Minnesota, 61% of likely voters report that the state is off on the wrong track; only 30% are satisfied that the state is heading in the right direction. This disappointment is helping Dayton more than the other candidates: 40% disappointed with Minnesota's direction are supporting Dayton as opposed to the 27% backing Emmer and 15% siding with Horner.

Dayton Capitalizes on Voter Frustration

	Dayton	Emmer	Horner
Mn Heading Right Direction (30%)	37%	25%	18%
Mn Heading Off On Wrong Track (61%)	40	27	15
DK/Refused (10%)	27	31	14

Dayton is also capturing support from voters who are most concerned about the economy and jobs. Forty-three percent of voters single out the economy and jobs; this level of intense concern is three times higher than for any other issue including the budget deficit and taxes, which were ranked as the most important problem facing the state by 15% and 9% respectively.

What is striking is that intense voter concerns about the economy and job is helping Dayton. **Among those ranking the economy as the state's most important problem, 37% plan to vote for Dayton as compared to 25% for Emmer and 18% for Horner.**

	Dayton	Emmer	Horner
Voters identifying the economy and jobs as the most important problem facing Minnesota (43%)	37%	25%	18%

Swing Voters

As the Gubernatorial race heads into the final 5 weeks, the outcome will rest on the choices of the 18% of Minnesota likely voters who are undecided. Although detecting the inclinations of these undecided voters is notoriously difficult and their dispositions may change in the final stages of the campaign, several measures hint that they may be tilting toward Dayton at this point.

Among the 18% of likely voters who are undecided, they are predominantly Democrats (51%) rather than being Republican (25%) or independent (24%).

	Democrat	Republican	Independent
Party Identification of Undecided Voters (18%)	51%	25%	24%

In addition, the undecided voters appear a bit more positively predisposed toward Dayton. Twice as many describe Dayton’s political views as about right compared to Emmer’s. Twenty-two percent also describe Horner’s views as about right. Dayton is also more favorably evaluated for the candidate traits of temperament and caring and is similarly situated as Emmer with regard to strength.

Dayton Advantages Among Undeclared Voters

Views of Undecided Voters (18%)	Dayton	Emmer	Horner
The he Political Views of the Candidates are “about right” ¹	23%	11%	22%
Who Does Each Trait Describe the Best ²			
Strong Leader	17%	13%	7%
Cares About People Like Me	26	8	11
Right Temperament	26	6	11

1. The question reads: “Do you think [candidate] is too conservative, about right, or too liberal?”

2. The question reads: “Tell me whether you think each statement applies more to Tom Emmer, Mark Dayton, or Tom Horner.”

About the Survey

This survey is a collaboration between Minnesota Public Radio News and the Center for the Study of Politics and Governance at the University of Minnesota's Humphrey Institute of Public Affairs. The survey was analyzed by the Center. The research team was Lawrence R. Jacobs (Center Director) and Joanne M. Miller (Associate Professor, Department of Political Science). Charles Gregory provided research assistance.

The survey was fielded by the Information Specialists Group (ISG) and is based on a landline random digit dial survey in Minnesota. ISG called a sample of telephone exchanges that was randomly selected by a computer from a list of active residential exchanges within Minnesota. Within each exchange, random digits were added to form a complete telephone number, thus permitting access to both listed and unlisted numbers. Within each household, one adult was selected to be the respondent for the survey.

As is common with public opinion surveys, the data were weighted. In the first stage, the data were weighted based on the number of potential survey respondents and the number of landline telephone numbers in the household. In the second stage, data were weighted according to cell phone usage, as well as gender, age, race, and Hispanic ethnicity to approximate the demographic characteristics of the population according to the Census.

Results are based on a model that accounts for the likelihood of a respondent voting based on the following factors: self-reported probability of voting in the upcoming election, voting in the 2006 gubernatorial election as reported by the respondent, interest in the 2010 election, and whether the respondent reported being registered to vote. The model estimates a turnout of 58%, which we expect to increase during the fall as the campaign heats up and interest in the election increases.

The key characteristics of the sample's likely voters in Minnesota are the following:

	Likely Voters
Republican	38
Independent	12
Democrat	48
Men	47
Women	53
High School or less	56
Some College or more	44
Less than \$50,000	37
More than \$50,000	55

(Percentages here and above may round to higher than 100% due to rounding.)

750 likely voters living in Minnesota were interviewed by telephone between September 22 and September 26, 2010. The margin of error ranges between +/-3.6 percentage points based on the conventional calculation and +/-5.1 percentage points, which is a more cautious estimate that takes into account design effects, in accordance with professional best practices. The conventional calculation of the margin of sampling error is primarily based on the number of respondents and, critically, assumes that all respondents selected for interviewing were actually reached. No public opinion survey successfully contacts the entire sample and therefore the professional best practice is to adjust for the actual response rate and for other design effects, producing a higher margin of sampling error. In this report, we use the conventional calculation to determine the minimal level of significance and the more cautious calculation to reach a higher level of confidence in the results.

Using the design-effect calculation of the margin of sample error, in 19 cases out of 20 the results among Minneapolis voters will differ (in theory) by no more than +/-5.1 percentage points in either direction from what would have been obtained by interviewing all likely voters in the election. The response rate is 26 percent (based on AAPOR response rate calculation 4).

The results of properly conducted scientific surveys of candidate support estimate the most probable relative positions at the time of the interviewing. The margin of error indicates a range of support with unequal probabilities of accuracy. For example, assume a poll reports that Candidate A received 55% and Candidate B received 45% of support with a margin of error of +/-5 percentage points. Based on normal sampling distribution, the 55% to 45% result is the best or most probable standing at the time of the survey. Taking into account the margin of sampling error, however, we can estimate the lower boundary of support for Candidate A as 50% and the upper boundary of support for Candidate B as 50%. These results are possible but are less probable.

In addition to sampling error, the practical difficulties of conducting any survey of public opinion may introduce sources of error into the poll. Variations in the wording and order of questions, for example, may lead to somewhat different results.

This survey invested considerable resources in a set of procedures to reduce distortions. The sample of interviewees was drawn using comprehensive lists of phone exchanges. In addition, the interviewers were carefully trained and monitored to maintain consistency in implementing the questionnaire. Further, several steps were used to capture as much of the sample as possible including call backs to numbers when no one appeared to be at home or when the initial request to conduct the interview was not accepted.