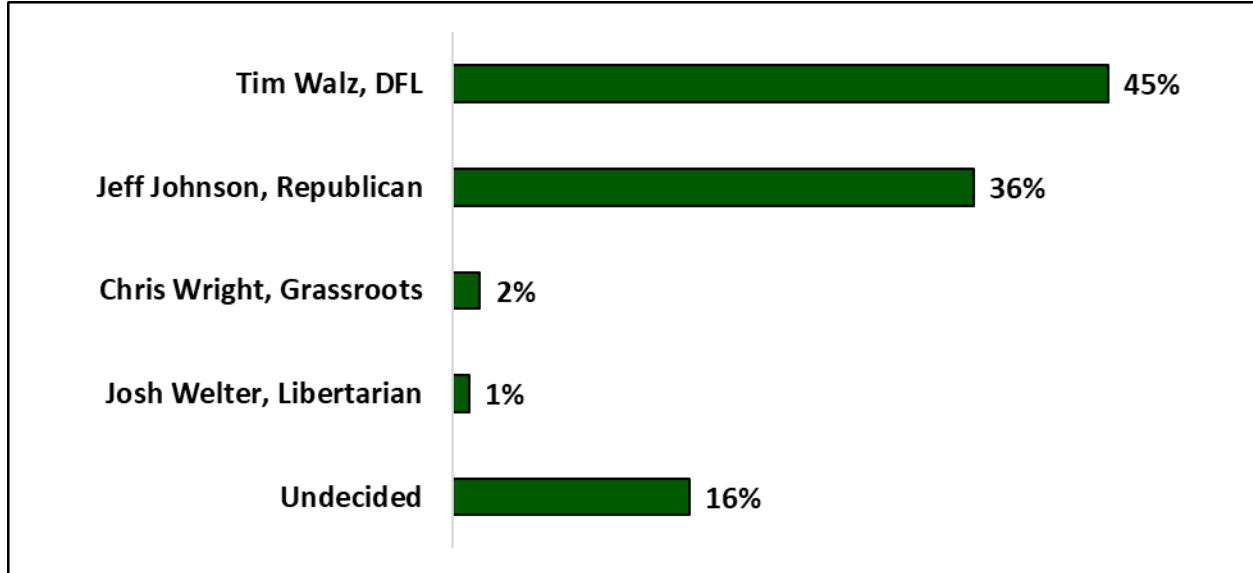# The Minnesota Governor's Race

Findings from the MPR News | Star Tribune Minnesota Poll

September 16, 2018

Tim Walz leads Jeff Johnson in the governor's race by nine points, but sixteen percent of voters remain undecided

Tim Walz, DFL	45%
Jeff Johnson, Republican	36%
Chris Wright, Grassroots	2%
Josh Welter, Libertarian	1%
Undecided	16%

Question: "If the 2018 general election for Minnesota governor were held today, would you vote for…"
Source: MPR News | Star Tribune Minnesota Poll, September 10-12, 2018. N=800 registered Minnesota voters who are likely to vote in November; overall margin of error = +/-3.5 percentage points.

This is the first in a series of briefs produced by APM Research Lab based on the September 2018 Minnesota Poll. For additional information, see http://bit.ly/MinnesotaPoll
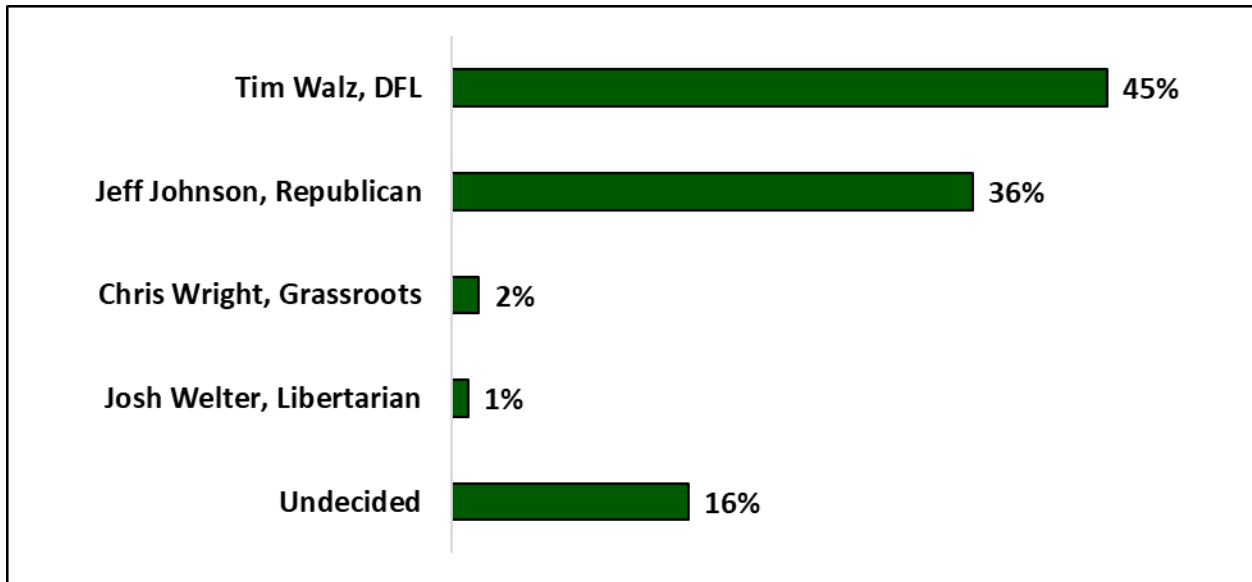
Key findings

Results from the MPR News | Star Tribune Minnesota Poll of 800 likely voters show:

- **Democratic U.S. Representative Tim Walz currently leads Republican Hennepin County Commissioner Jeff Johnson among likely voters in the race for the governor's office by a nine percentage point margin, but 16 percent remain undecided.**

  o Walz has an advantage among women, younger voters, those living in Hennepin and Ramsey counties, those living in southern Minnesota, Democrats, and independents.

  o Johnson has an advantage among Republicans and older men.

  o Only the respective advantages by party affiliation and Walz's advantage among younger voters exceed the percentage in each group who are undecided. Those age 18 to 34 favor Walz by a 46 point margin, and only 18 percent of that group is undecided.

- **More Minnesota voters express a favorable opinion of Walz than Johnson, but each candidate remains unknown by one in five likely voters.**

  o Walz has a higher percentage of favorable ratings than Johnson among women, those younger than 50, those with lower household incomes, those living in Hennepin and Ramsey counties, those living in Southern Minnesota, Democrats, and independents.

  o Johnson has a higher percentage of favorable ratings among Republicans.

  o Beyond those affiliated with their respective political parties, both candidates are unknown by 12 to 31 percent of Minnesotans, depending on the group.

- **Healthcare, public education, and the economy and jobs are the most important issues for voters when they are choosing a candidate for governor.**

  o The same three issues top the list among those indicating they will vote for Tim Walz, as well as those who are undecided.

  o Immigration, the economy and jobs, and taxes are the three most common issues selected as most important by those favoring Jeff Johnson.

The remainder of this brief details these findings in tables and graphs. Please see the appendices for survey background and methods, respondent characteristics, regional definitions, and exact question wording.

Current candidate preference

Tim Walz leads Jeff Johnson in the governor's race by nine points, but sixteen percent of voters remain undecided

Candidate	Percentage
Tim Walz, DFL	45%
Jeff Johnson, Republican	36%
Chris Wright, Grassroots	2%
Josh Welter, Libertarian	1%
Undecided	16%

Question: "If the 2018 general election for Minnesota governor were held today, would you vote for…"
Source: MPR News | Star Tribune Minnesota Poll, September 10-12, 2018. N=800 registered Minnesota voters who are likely to vote in November; overall margin of error = +/-3.5 percentage points.

Current preference for Minnesota's next governor, by group

	Tim Walz, DFL	Jeff Johnson, Republican	Other [a]	Undecided
ALL*	**45%**	**36%**	3%	16%
SEX				
Male	40%	40%	4%	16%
Female*	**50%**	**32%**	2%	16%
AGE GROUP				
18-34*	**63%**	**17%**	3%	18%
35-49	42%	33%	5%	20%
50-64	39%	41%	2%	18%
65+	42%	45%	2%	11%
AGE by SEX				
Male, 18-49*	**43%**	**30%**	5%	22%
Male, 50 or older*	**37%**	**48%**	3%	12%
Female, 18-49*	**58%**	**23%**	3%	16%
Female, 50 or older	44%	39%	2%	16%
ANNUAL HOUSEHOLD INCOME				
Under $50,000	41%	36%	5%	18%
$50,000 or more	44%	40%	2%	14%
REGION [b]				
Hennepin/Ramsey*	**55%**	**27%**	2%	16%
Metro Suburbs	39%	42%	5%	14%
Southern Minnesota*	**48%**	**34%**	3%	16%
Northern Minnesota	35%	43%	2%	20%
PARTY IDENTIFICATION				
DFL/Democrat*	**85%**	**0%**	1%	15%
Independent/other*	**40%**	**26%**	7%	27%
Republican*	**2%**	**89%**	1%	7%

Question: "If the 2018 general election for Minnesota governor were held today, would you vote for…"

Source: APM Research Lab analysis of MPR News | Star Tribune Minnesota Poll, September 10-12, 2018. N=800 registered Minnesota voters who are likely to vote in November; overall margin of error = +/-3.5 percentage points.
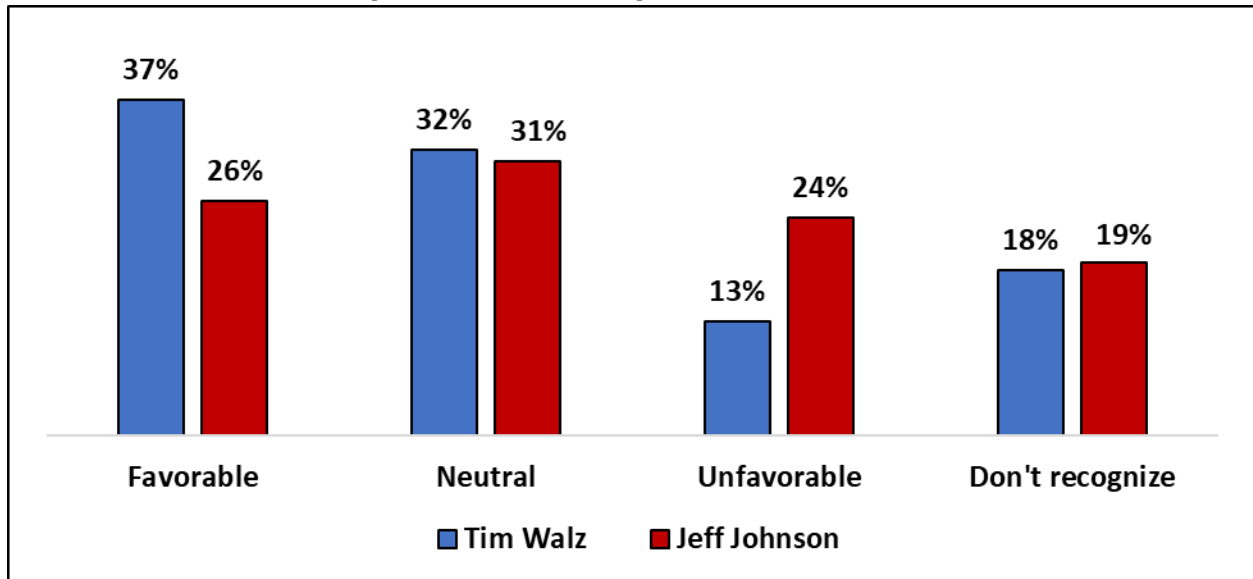
[a] Other includes Chris Wright, who is currently the candidate preferred by two percent of voters, and Libertarian Josh Welter, who is currently preferred by 1 percent of voters.

[b] See Appendix 2 for definition of regions.

* For these groups the difference in proportion indicating preference for leading candidates is statistically significant (95 percent confidence level or higher).

Current name recognition and favorability ratings

More Minnesota voters express a favorable opinion of Walz than Johnson

Source: MPR News | Star Tribune Minnesota Poll, September 10-12, 2018. N=800 registered Minnesota voters who are likely to vote in November; overall margin of error = +/-3.5 percentage points.
Question: "Do you recognize the name _____? (IF YES) Do you have a favorable, unfavorable or neutral opinion of _____?"
Note: This was the first series of questions asked in the survey, and did not include reference to a specific title, office, or political party.

Leading candidates for Minnesota's next governor: Current name recognition and favorability, by group

	Recognized AND Favorable		Not Recognized	
	Tim Walz DFL	Jeff Johnson Republican	Tim Walz DFL	Jeff Johnson Republican
ALL	**37%**	**26%**	18%	19%
SEX				
Male	33%	30%	20%	17%
Female	**41%**	**22%**	17%	22%
AGE GROUP				
18-34	**51%**	**12%**	**12%**	**24%**
35-49	**37%**	**28%**	22%	18%
50-64	32%	27%	20%	21%
65+	33%	33%	18%	16%
AGE by SEX				
Male, 18-49	**37%**	**25%**	19%	17%
Male, 50 or older	29%	34%	20%	17%
Female, 18-49	**48%**	**17%**	16%	24%
Female, 50 or older	**36%**	**27%**	18%	20%
ANNUAL HOUSEHOLD INCOME				
Under $50,000	**34%**	**24%**	19%	26%
$50,000 or more	36%	30%	19%	15%
REGION [a]				
Hennepin/Ramsey	**42%**	**21%**	16%	18%
Metro Suburbs	33%	30%	20%	17%
Southern Minnesota	**43%**	**24%**	18%	19%
Northern Minnesota	31%	32%	21%	25%
PARTY IDENTIFICATION				
DFL/Democrat	**66%**	**1%**	**6%**	**24%**
Independent	**35%**	**25%**	20%	23%
Republican	**5%**	**57%**	**31%**	**9%**

Source: APM Research Lab analysis of MPR News | Star Tribune Minnesota Poll, September 10-12, 2018. N=800 registered Minnesota voters who are likely to vote in November; overall margin of error = +/-3.5 percentage points. Question: "Do you recognize the name _____? (IF YES) Do you have a favorable, unfavorable or neutral opinion of _____?"

*Notes: This was the first series of questions asked in the survey, and did not include reference to a specific title, office, or political party. Statistically significant differences are shown in **bold** (95 percent confidence level or higher).*
[a] See Appendix 2 for definition of regions.

Issues important to the vote for governor

	All voters (n=800)	Walz voters (n=360)	Johnson voters (n=286)	Undecided (n=130)
Healthcare	198	**25%**	**37%**	12%	**20%**
Quality of Public Education	142	**18%**	**24%**	9%	**22%**
The Economy & Jobs	130	**16%**	**11%**	**22%**	**17%**
Immigration	85	11%	2%	**25%**	5%
Taxes	78	10%	3%	**18%**	9%
Protecting the Environment	46	6%	9%	1%	7%
Crime & Public Safety	32	4%	6%	2%	5%
Gun Rights & Gun Control	18	2%	2%	2%	4%
Abortion	17	2%	--	3%	5%
Drug Abuse & Opioid addiction	15	2%	2%	2%	2%
Transportation & Transit	15	2%	1%	2%	3%
Affordable Housing	4	--	1%	--	--
Not sure	17	2%	2%	2%	1%

Question: "Which one of the following issues is most important to you in your vote for governor?"
Source: MPR News | Star Tribune Minnesota Poll, September 10-12, 2018. N=800 registered Minnesota voters who are likely to vote in November; overall margin of error = +/-3.5 percentage points.
*Note: **Bold** indicates three most common answers.*

Appendix 1: Survey background and methods

This survey is the result of a collaboration between Minnesota Public Radio News and the Star Tribune. It is a continuation of the Star Tribune's periodic "Minnesota Poll."[2]

Mason-Dixon Polling & Strategy, Inc. of Jacksonville, Florida, designed and executed the survey, including sample construction and screening procedures, data collection, and analysis. The poll was conducted from September 10 through September 12, 2018. A total of 800 registered Minnesota voters were interviewed statewide by telephone. All indicated they were likely to vote in the November general election. The cooperation rate (percentage of potential respondents contacted who complete the survey) was 39 percent for those contacted via landline and 19 percent for those contacted via cell phone.

Those interviewed were randomly selected from a phone-matched Minnesota voter registration list that included both land-line and cell phone numbers. Quotas were assigned to reflect voter turnout by county. The data were not weighted.

The margin for error is no more than ± 3.5 percentage points. This means that there is a 95 percent probability that the "true" figure would fall within that range if all adults were surveyed. The margin for error is higher for any subgroup, such as a sex or age grouping, as shown in Appendix 2.

The APM Research Lab provided consultation on the questionnaire and additional analysis of survey results, including this brief.

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[2] See http://www.startribune.com/the-minnesota-poll/468458743/

Appendix 2: Characteristics of survey sample

	Survey respondents [a]		Margin of error for within-group analysis [b]	All Minnesotans age 18+ [c]
	Number	Percent [d]	Percentage points ±	
ALL	800	100%	3.5	4,277,949
SEX				
Male	377	47%	5.0	49%
Female	423	53%	4.8	51%
AGE GROUP				
18-34	152	19%	7.9	29%
35-49	200	25%	6.9	24%
50-64	226	28%	6.5	26%
65+	216	27%	6.7	20%
Refused	6	--	--	
ANNUAL HOUSEHOLD INCOME				
Under $50,000	211	36%	6.7	36%
Under $25,000	84	14%	10.7	16%
$25,000-$49,999	127	22%	8.7	20%
$50,000 or more	376	64%	5.1	64%
$50,000-$74,999	130	22%	8.6	19%
$75,000-$99,999	121	21%	8.9	14%
$100,000 or more	125	21%	8.8	32%
Refused	213	--	--	
REGION [e]				
Hennepin/Ramsey	255	32%	6.1	33%
Metro Suburbs	230	29%	6.5	28%
Southern Minnesota	160	20%	7.7	19%
Northern Minnesota	155	19%	7.9	20%
PARTY IDENTIFICATION				
DFL/Democrat	299	37%	5.7	--
Independent/other	255	32%	6.1	--
Republican	246	31%	6.2	--
INTERVIEW TYPE				--
Land-line	483	60%	--	--
Cell phone	317	40%	--	--

[a] *MPR News | Star Tribune Minnesota Poll. N=800 registered Minnesota voters who are likely to vote in November.*
[b] *Maximum margin of error at 95 percent confidence level for results presented for the group. For example, if 50 percent of males prefer a given candidate, there is a 95 percent probability that the value for the entire population would be between 42.9 and 57.1 percent.*
[c] *Mason Dixon's methods for this survey are designed to mirror the population that will vote in November. The exact characteristics of that population are unknowable; we provide characteristics of all adults as a point of reference (APM Research Lab analysis of U.S. Census Bureau (2017 Population Estimates and American Community Survey).*
[d] *Percentages in this table are calculated as "valid percentages"; refusals are excluded from the denominator.*
[e] *See next page for regional definitions.*

Regions

Hennepin/Ramsey: Likely voters in Hennepin and Ramsey Counties.

Metro Suburbs: Likely voters in Scott, Wright, Sherburne, Carver, Dakota, Anoka, Isanti, Chisago and Washington Counties.

Southern Minnesota: Likely voters in Goodhue, Rice, Le Sueur, Blue Earth, Waseca, Freeborn, Steele, Dodge, Mower, Fillmore, Olmstead, Houston, Winona, Wabasha, Rock, Nobles, Jackson, Martin, Faribault, Watonwan, Cottonwood, Murray, Pipestone, Lincoln, Lyon, Redwood, Brown, Nicollet, McLeod, Renville, Sibley, Meeker, Kandiyohi, Chippewa, Yellow Medicine, Lac Qui Parle, Swift, Big Stone, Traverse, Stevens, Pope, Douglas, and Grant Counties.

Northern Minnesota: Likely voters in Benton, Stearns, Morrison, Todd, Wadena, Otter Tail, Wilkin, Clay, Becker, Hubbard, Beltrami, Lake of the Woods, Clearwater, Mahnomen, Norman, Polk, Red Lake, Pennington, Marshall, Roseau, Kittson, Cook, Lake, St. Louis, Koochiching, Itasca, Cass, Crow Wing, Aitkin, Carlton, Pine, Kanabec, and Mille Lacs Counties.

Metro: Hennepin/Ramsey and Metro Suburbs combined.

Greater Minnesota: Southern and Northern Minnesota combined.

Errata

An earlier version of this brief reported larger margins of error in the table in appendix 2; that column of the table is corrected in this version, issued November 16, 2018. Additionally, the earlier version included inaccurate labels for some of the answer categories in question 12, both in the text and appendix. In this version, "Jobs and Wages" has been corrected to "The Economy & Jobs," "Taxes & Government Spending" has been updated to "Taxes," and "Social Issues, such as Abortion & Same-sex Marriage" has been updated to "Abortion" to precisely reflect the answer categories offered to respondents.

Appendix 3: Question wording

<u>**SEPTEMBER 2018 MINNESOTA POLL**</u>

Good evening. My name is _____ from Mason-Dixon Polling.   We are conducting a statewide public opinion poll. Would you have a few minutes to participate?

SCREENER #1: Are you a registered voter in the state of Minnesota?

YES-**SKIP TO SCREENER 3**   NO-PROCEED

SCREENER #2: Are you planning to register at the polls on Election Day in order to vote?

YES   1-**SKIP TO Q1**   NO-**TERMINATE**

SCREENER #3: In November, there will be a general election for Governor, two US Senate seats and other state and local offices. Which of the following best describes your plans for participating in that election?

I will vote by absentee ballot	1-PROCEED
I will definitely vote on Election Day	2-PROCEED
I will probably vote on Election Day	3-PROCEED
I may or may not vote	4-**TERMINATE**
I probably will not vote	5-**TERMINATE**
I definitely will not vote	6-**TERMINATE**
Not Sure **(DO NOT READ)**	7-**TERMINATE**

Do you recognize the name _____? (IF YES) Do you have a favorable, unfavorable or neutral opinion of _____?

1=RECOGNIZE NAME, FAVORABLE OPINION
2=RECOGNIZE NAME, UNFAVORABLE OPINION
3=RECOGNIZE NAME, NEUTRAL OR NO OPINION
4=DON'T RECOGNIZE NAME

(ROTATE ORDER)	FAV	UNFAV	NEUT	DR
6) Jeff Johnson	1	2	3	4
7) Tim Walz	1	2	3	4

11) If the 2018 general election for Minnesota governor were held today, would you vote for:

1- Tim Walz, the DFL candidate
2- Jeff Johnson, the Republican candidate
3- Chris Wright, the Grassroots-Legalize Cannabis candidate
4- Josh Welter, the Libertarian candidate
5- Undecided **(DO NOT READ)**

12) Which one of the following issues is most important to you in your vote for governor? **(ROTATE ORDER)**

The Economy & Jobs	01
Quality of Public Education	02
Healthcare	03
Taxes	04
Crime & Public Safety	05
Immigration	06
Gun Rights & Gun Control	07
Affordable Housing	08
Transportation & Transit	09
Protecting the Environment	10
Abortion	11
Drug abuse and Opioid addiction	12
Other **(DO NOT READ)**	13
Not Sure **(DO NOT READ)**	14

28) In terms of your political party identification, do you generally consider yourself DFL or Democrat, Republican or an independent?

DFL/Democrat 1   Republican 2   Independent/Other 3

29) What is your age?

18-34	1
35-49	2
50-64	3
65+	4
Refused	5

30) What is your annual household income?

<$25,000	1
$25,000-$49,999	2
$50,000-$74,999	3
$75,000-$99,999	4
$100,000+	5
Refused **(DO NOT READ)**	6

31) Thinking about your household's financial situation, would you say you are better off, worse off or about the same as you were two years ago?

Better	1
Worse	2
About the same	3
Not sure	4

32) NOTE SEX: Male   1   Female   2

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