

Toplines

University of Massachusetts Amherst/WCVB
August 2026 Massachusetts Poll

Field Dates:	August 5 –12, 2026
Sample:	800 Registered Voters 445 Self-Identified Democratic Primary Voters
Margin of Error:	4.4% (All Respondents) 5.8% (Self-Identified Democratic Primary Voters)

YouGov interviewed 833 registered voters 18+ from Massachusetts, 462 of which were self-identified Democratic primary voters, providing two samples of interest. The initial 833 respondents were matched down to a sample of 800 registered voters, yielding 445 Democratic primary voters, to produce the main dataset. The respondents were matched to a sampling frame on gender, age, race, and education. The sampling frame was constructed by stratified sampling from the 2024 Current Population Survey (CPS) and subsetting on registered voters in the state, with selection within strata by weighted sampling with replacements (using the person weights on the public use file).

For the main sample, the cases were weighted to the sampling frame using propensity scores. The cases and the frame were combined and a logistic regression was estimated for inclusion in the frame. The propensity score function included age, gender, race/ethnicity, years of education, and home ownership. The propensity scores were grouped into deciles of the estimated propensity score in the frame and post-stratified according to these deciles.

The weights were then post-stratified on 2024 presidential vote choice as well as a four-way stratification of gender, age (4-categories), race (2-categories), and education (4-categories), a 2-way stratification on race (2-categories) and education (4-categories), and a single stratification on home ownership to produce the final weight for the main sample.

For the 445 Massachusetts self-identified Democratic primary voters, a sampling frame of 2022 Vote Smart Massachusetts Democratic primary voters was employed. The cases were post-stratified on a three-way stratification of gender, age (4-categories), and race (2-categories), to produce the final weight for this sample of Democratic primary voters.

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Primary Participation (N=800)

Do you intend to vote in the Massachusetts Primary Election on September 1, 2026?

	Aug. 2026	Oct. 2025
Yes, in the Democratic Party's Primary Election	58%	54%
Yes, in the Republican Party's Primary Election	29%	23%
No, I do not intend to vote in either the Democratic or Republican Party's Primary Election	13%	23%

2026 Democratic Senate Election (N=445)

Only asked of Democrats and Pure Independents who indicated that they would participate in the 2026 Democratic Primary.

If the 2026 Democratic Senate primary were held today which one of the following candidates would you vote for?

	Aug. 2026		Oct. 2025	
	Without Leaners	With Leaners	Without Leaners	With Leaners
U.S. Senator Ed Markey	54%	60%	44%	51%
U.S. Representative Seth Moulton	28%	32%	25%	28%
Former Teacher Alex Rikleen	N/A		5%	6%
Not Sure	17%	7%	25%	13%
Would not Vote	1%	2%	1%	1%

Candidate Qualities (N=444)

Only asked of Democrats and Pure Independents who indicated that they would participate in the 2026 Democratic Primary.

From the list below, please rank the **top three** qualities that are the most important to you when deciding who you will vote for in the 2026 Democratic Senate Primary.

	Aug. 2026			Oct. 2025		
	1 st	2 nd	3 rd	1 st	2 nd	3 rd
best represents my views on the issues	24%	18%	12%	19%	23%	15%
will get things done in Washington D.C.	9%	15%	14%	N/A		
strongest leader	N/A			8%	12%	12%
will challenge President Trump	19%	16%	14%	31%	20%	16%
most honest and trustworthy	13%	16%	13%	19%	18%	22%
most experienced	8%	5%	8%	3%	7%	6%
represents a new generation of leadership	9%	6%	7%	0%	0%	0%
cares about people like me	7%	9%	20%	6%	11%	19%
most progressive candidate	8%	7%	6%	11%	5%	6%
most moderate candidate	2%	6%	4%	3%	4%	3%
has the most endorsements	0%	0%	1%	N/A		

Trust (N=445)

Only asked of Democrats and Pure Independents who indicated that they would participate in the 2026 Democratic Primary.

Which Democratic candidate for the U.S. Senate do you trust more to represent you on the issues you care about?

U.S. Senator Ed Markey	66%
U.S. Representative Seth Moulton	34%

Group Representation (N=445)

Only asked of Democrats and Pure Independents who indicated that they would participate in the 2026 Democratic Primary.

Which Democratic candidate for the U.S. Senate do you think would do a better job of representing the following groups?

	Senator Ed Markey	Representative Seth Moulton
Women	66%	34%
Progressives	61%	39%
Moderates	55%	45%
The Middle Class	60%	40%
The Working Class	67%	33%
Labor Unions	71%	29%
People of Color	66%	34%
Young People	46%	54%
Seniors	78%	22%
Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Trans People	68%	32%
Immigrants	70%	30%
Veterans	55%	45%

Differences (N=445)

Only asked of Democrats and Pure Independents who indicated that they would participate in the 2026 Democratic Primary.

During the campaign for the Democratic nomination for the U.S. Senate, some have said that there are very few differences between Senator Ed Markey and Representative Seth Moulton in what each stands for. Others have suggested that there are important differences between the two candidates in what each stands for. What about you, would you say that there are important differences in what Ed Markey and Seth Moulton stand for?

Yes, there are important differences between Senator Markey and Representative Moulton in what each stands for	59%
No, Senator Markey and Representative Moulton are very similar in what each stands for	41%

Differences Open Text – Markey Supporters (N=189)*

Only asked of Democrats and Pure Independents who indicated that they would participate in the 2026 Democratic Primary.

In a sentence or two, please discuss what you see as the most important differences between Senator Ed Markey and Representative Seth Moulton.

Theme 1. Progressive Ideology and Policy Alignment (N= 52, 27.5%)

The largest theme among Markey supporters is Markey's progressivism, which supporters prefer to Moulton's perceived moderation.

Illustrative response:

"Ed Markey is a tried and true progressive. Moulton is too moderate for me."

Theme 2. Serving Ordinary People, Not Donors and Special Interests (N = 31, 16.4%)

These respondents indicate they prefer Markey because, in their view, he stands for ordinary people, while Moulton serves special interests.

Illustrative response:

"Markey cares about every day people in is on the ground meeting with and working for them all of the time. I've never seen Moulton do this, never seen Moulton speak at a pride day"

Theme 3. Experience, Seniority, and Proven Track Record (N = 26, 13.8%)

Respondents in this theme treat Markey's long tenure as an asset, citing his legislative skill, institutional knowledge, and documented voting record.

Illustrative response:

"I think Ed Markey's experience, understanding of what his constituents want and how to make it happen in a difficult political climate."

Theme 4. Conviction, Consistency, and Trustworthiness (N = 26, 13.8%)

This theme highlights Markey's perceived character strengths, while contrasting them with Moulton's perceived limitations.

Illustrative response:

"Seth Moulton comes across as not genuine, arrogant, entitled and not trustworthy. Ed Markey continues to be grounded yet feisty, well spoken, has a proven track record and determined to do a good job for the people of MA and Americans in general."

Theme 5. Defense of Trans and LGBTQ+ Rights (N = 18, 9.5%)

For these respondents, Markey's strong support for transgender people is the leading reason for supporting his candidacy.

Illustrative response:

| *"Senator Markey supports trans people, Seth Moulton does not."*

Theme 6. Don't Know / Unclear / No Response (N = 36, 19.0%)

Roughly one in five Markey supporters who wrote something did not supply an interpretable reason.

Illustrative responses:

| *"I'm familiar with Ed Markey and have no idea who Seth Moulton is."*

Differences Open Text – Moulton Supporters (N=62)*

Only asked of Democrats and Pure Independents who indicated that they would participate in the 2026 Democratic Primary.

In a sentence or two, please discuss what you see as the most important differences between Senator Ed Markey and Representative Seth Moulton.

Theme 1. Generational Change and a Younger, More Modern Candidate (N = 15, 24.2%)

Respondents in this theme argue that, because Moulton is younger, he has a better grasp of contemporary problems and a more current view of society.

Illustrative response:

“Seth Moulton is a number of years younger than Ed Markey and I think he's more in touch with younger people and has a more modern view of society.”

Theme 2. Too Long in Office: Term Limits and Entrenchment (N = 14, 22.6%)

Respondents in this category focus on criticism of Markey’s long tenure in office, arguing that Markey is a careerist who is unresponsive to constituents, captured by special interests, or insufficiently combative against Trump and the Republican Party.

Illustrative response:

“Age. Markey's been in office since 1976, representing Massachusetts' 7th Congressional District. it's time for change”

Theme 3. Ideological Positioning and Perceived Extremity (N = 13, 21.0%)

These respondents cite ideology as their reasoning for supporting Moulton, though there is some disagreement on Moulton’s ideology. Most supporters in this category describe Markey as too far left and Moulton as a reasonable moderate better matched to middle-class priorities.

Illustrative response:

“Overall, Moulton is center-left & Markey is far-left.”

Theme 4. Trans Athletes and Willingness to Break with Orthodoxy (N = 5, 8.1%)

Supporters in this theme agree with Moulton’s substantive position on transgender participation in women's sports and, in several cases, admire the political courage they see in his willingness to absorb criticism for departing from party consensus.

Illustrative response:

“Moulton is a veteran and has a strong background in foreign policy. I also appreciated very much his willingness to take heat for not toeing the line on transgender issues in sports. That wasn't easy and cost him some I'm sure.”

Theme 5. Military Service, Foreign Policy, and Israel (N = 5, 8.1%)

A small but coherent theme centers on Moulton's Marine Corps service and the foreign-policy credibility respondents draw from it.

Illustrative response:

“I believe Seth Moulton has more recent military background to address current war issues. I believe he is more progressive in today's middle class hardships.”

Theme 6. Don't Know / Unclear / No Response (N = 10, 16.1%)

The final theme of substantive responses states no usable rationale — typically a bare acknowledgment that the candidates differ, without specifying how or which difference matters.

Illustrative response:

“They're two different people with different plans”

Ideology (N=445)

Only asked of Democrats and Pure Independents who indicated that they would participate in the 2026 Democratic Primary.

How would you describe each of the following Democratic candidates for the U.S. Senate?

	Aug. 2026	Oct. 2025	Aug. 2026	Oct. 2025	Aug. 2026	Oct. 2025	Aug. 2026	Oct. 2025	Aug. 2026	Oct. 2025	Aug. 2026	Oct. 2025	Aug. 2026	Oct. 2025	Aug. 2026	Oct. 2025
	Very Liberal		Liberal		Somewhat Liberal		Moderate		Somewhat Conservative		Conservative		Very Conservative		Not Sure	
Representative Seth Moulton	4%	2%	19%	14%	23%	22%	30%	27%	7%	5%	2%	2%	1%	1%	14%	28%
Senator Edward Markey	23%	13%	35%	33%	12%	17%	18%	20%	3%	4%	2%	2%	1%	1%	7%	11%

Qualities (N=445)

Only asked of Democrats and Pure Independents who indicated that they would participate in the 2026 Democratic Primary.

Who do you think is best described by the following characteristics - Seth Moulton or Ed Markey?

	Senator Ed Markey	Representative Seth Moulton
Honest	72%	28%
Experienced	91%	9%
Empathetic	70%	30%
Likable	64%	36%
Energetic	43%	57%
Strong	59%	41%
Moderate	45%	55%
Intelligent	67%	33%
Hard-Working	71%	29%

Preclude (N=445)

Only asked of Democrats and Pure Independents who indicated that they would participate in the 2026 Democratic Primary.

Thinking about your decision in the upcoming primary election in Massachusetts, would any of the following impact your likelihood of voting for a candidate? The candidate . . .

	More likely to vote for the candidate	Less likely to vote for the candidate	No impact on my vote
has accepted campaign contributions from the American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC)?	13%	51%	36%
has expressed positions opposing transgender rights or policies?	11%	67%	22%
has not sponsored or passed significant legislation during their time in office?	8%	68%	24%
owns investments in a company that is subject to regulation by an agency or committee they oversee?	6%	70%	24%
refuses to debate their opponent?	6%	75%	19%
declines to release their personal tax returns?	5%	82%	13%

Democratic Senate Candidate Familiarity (N=445)

Only asked of Democrats and Pure Independents who indicated that they would participate in the 2026 Democratic Primary.

In the past few months, how much have you heard about . . .

	A Great Deal	Some	Only a Little	Nothing
Ed Markey?	34%	46%	15%	5%
Seth Moulton?	29%	41%	19%	11%

Satisfied (N=445)

Only asked of Democrats and Pure Independents who indicated that they would participate in the 2026 Democratic Primary.

How satisfied are you with the two candidates running for the Democratic nomination for U.S. Senate?

Very satisfied	35%
Somewhat satisfied	50%
Somewhat dissatisfied	11%
Very dissatisfied	4%

Next Primary (N=445)

Only asked of Democrats and Pure Independents who indicated that they would participate in the 2026 Democratic Primary.

Senator Ed Markey has announced that if elected in 2026, this will be his last term in the U.S. Senate and that he would not seek reelection in 2032. Thinking ahead to the 2032 election, from the following list please select the candidate that you would be most likely to vote for in the 2032 Democratic Senate primary election.

Former U.S. Representative Joseph P. Kennedy III	10%
U.S. Representative Ayanna Pressley	14%
Boston Mayor Michelle Wu	9%
U.S. Representative Jake Auchincloss	9%
U.S. Representative Seth Moulton	16%
Governor Maura Healey	16%
Attorney General Andrea Campbell	2%
Other	2%
Not Sure	22%

2026 U.S. Senate General Election (N=800)

John Deaton is the only candidate running in the Republican primary election for the U.S. Senate. If John Deaton was running against [Insert Candidate] in the 2026 general election for the U.S. Senate, who would you be most likely to vote for?

John Deaton	30%
U.S. Senator Ed Markey	51%
Not Sure	15%
Would not Vote	3%

John Deaton	25%
Representative Seth Moulton	49%
Not Sure	22%
Would not Vote	3%

Markey One Word

Only asked of Democrats and Pure Independents who indicated that they would participate in the 2026 Democratic Primary

What one word would you use to describe U.S. Senator Ed Markey?



Moulton One Word

Only asked of Democrats and Pure Independents who indicated that they would participate in the 2026 Democratic Primary

What one word would you use to describe U.S. Representative Seth Moulton?



Markey Approval Among All Respondents (N=800)

Do you approve or disapprove of the way each is doing their job?

	Aug. 2026			Oct. 2025			Feb. 2025			Oct. 2024		
	App.	Disapp.	Not Sure	App.	Disapp.	Not Sure	App.	Disapp.	Not Sure	App.	Disapp.	Not Sure
Senator Edward Markey	56%	35%	9%	54%	28%	18%	51%	29%	20%	54%	31%	15%

Markey Approval Among Self-Identified Democratic Primary Voters (N=445)

	Aug. 2026		
	App.	Disapp.	Not Sure
Senator Edward Markey	82%	14%	4%

Demographic Breakdown of August 2026 University of Massachusetts Amherst/WCVB Poll

	Self-Identified Democratic Primary Voters (N=445)	All Respondents (N=800)
White	91%	82%
People of Color	9%	18%
HS or less	19%	24%
Some Coll.	11%	12%
Coll. Deg.	36%	37%
Postgrad	34%	27%
18-29	9%	17%
30-54	25%	38%
>55	67%	46%
Liberal	59%	39%
Moderate	37%	36%
Conservative	5%	25%
Men	42%	46%
Women	58%	54%
Harris	94%	63%
Trump	6%	37%
Self-Identified Democrat	89%	53%
Self-Identified Independent	11%	18%
Self-Identified Republican	0%	29%
<\$40K	20%	21%
\$40K-\$100K	39%	36%
>\$100K	41%	43%

*** Thematic Analysis of Candidate Preference**

2026 Massachusetts Democratic Senate Primary

Data and Method

Data. 419 respondents who indicated they were going to vote in the Democratic Senate Primary election for either Ed Markey or Seth Moulton, of whom 251 provided substantive text in the open-ended item (Q9). The remaining 168 were coded __NA__ and are excluded from the analysis.

Method. Inductive thematic coding, conducted separately for each candidate group. Five substantive themes were derived per group, plus a sixth residual category for responses that state no interpretable reason (Don't know, Unclear, NA). Each response is assigned to exactly one theme; where a response raised multiple considerations, it was assigned based on its leading or explicitly decisive claim.