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A primer for those who want to understand polls.

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Here's the Problem…

BROOKINGS

Brookings Now

Are the 2018 midterm election polls accurate?

William A. Galston Tuesday, October 30, 2018

Editor's Note:

Visit our 2018 Midterms page for Brookings experts' research and a
Creative Lab YouTube channel to stay up to date on our latest video

e polls broken? Democrats' foreseen wins pose urgent question

ng underestimated the strengths of certain Democratic idates in a number of primaries this year – inaccuracies could affect the midterm elections in November

ew Gillum's victory in the Democratic primary for Florida governor last month was enough e pollsters look like liars. Photograph: Christopher Aluka Berry/Reuters

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Andrew Gillum's victory in the Democratic primary for Florida governor

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Talk

Lively and in-depth discussions of city news, politics, science, entertainment, the a

The polls got it all wrong in 2016. Hea
into the midterms, what is the state o
polling?

Residents of Boyle Heights vote in the primary election on Tuesday, June 5, 2018.

AirTalk® | September 11, 2018

We all know how wrong most political polls go
election. That trend seems to be continuing w
races.

Vox

Polling got Andrew Gillum's victory in Flo very wrong. 8 experts on how that happe

Pollsters likely miscalculated who was going to turn out.

By Li Zhou | li@vox.com | Aug 30, 2018, 7:00am EDT

Tallahassee Mayor Andrew Gillum at a get-out-the-vote event on March 10, 2016, in Santa Monica, California. | Michael Kovac/Getty Images

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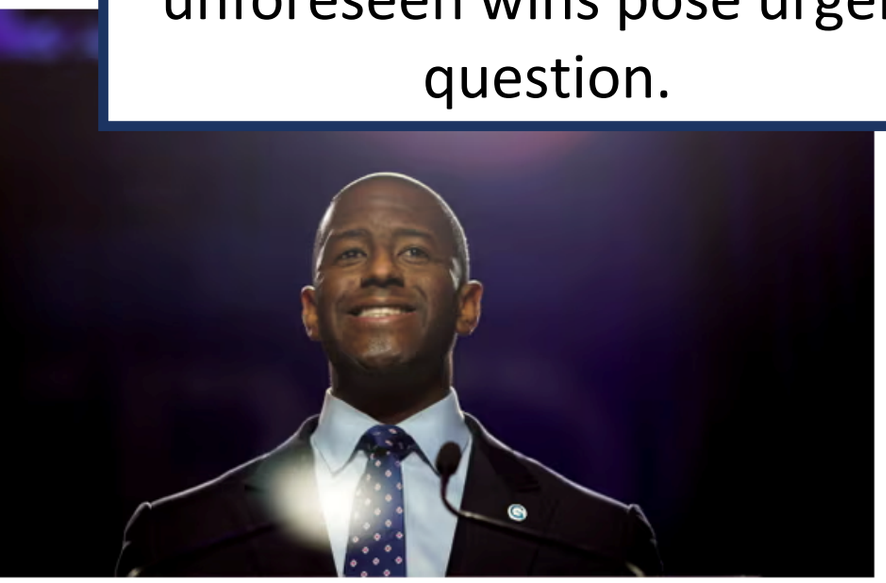

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Press on Polls

SunSentinel

Ron DeSantis, Adam Putnam tied in Republican primary race, poll shows

By ANTHONY MAN
SOUTH FLORIDA SUN SENTINEL | AUG 21, 2018

Putnam, left, and Ron DeSantis are competing in the Aug. 28 primary for the Republican nomination to run for Florida governor. (File photos)

Tampa Bay Times
tampabay.com

Poll: Ron DeSantis vs. Adam Putnam could be photo finish

al candidate Ron DeSantis (left) and rival Adam Putnam (right) during the second and final Republican cksonville University. (AP Photo/John Raoux)

This is me…

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This is also me…

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Where’s the discernment?

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4 Elements of Discernment

1. Who did the poll?
2. Who was polled?
3. How were the questions asked?
4. How were they polled?

p.s. Was it random/representative?

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1 Who did the poll?

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Who did the poll?

1. Who conducted the poll?
   - Are they credible pollster?
   - What was the motivation to release the results?
2. Who paid for the poll?

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2 Who was polled?

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Who was polled?

1. Residents/Adults
2. Registered voters
3. Likely voters
4. Likely primary voters

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Part 1: Who was polled?

SurveyUSA Methodology

Decision 2018 poll conducted by SurveyUSA for Spectrum News Networks. SurveyUSA interviewed 2,800 adults in Florida online from Aug. 10, 2018 until Aug. 13, 2018. Of those, 2,322 were registered to vote in Florida. Of those, 558 were likely to vote in the Aug. 28 Republican primary. The Credibility Interval for this poll is +/- 5.2 percentage points.

Funnel

n=2,800

Adults in Florida

n=2,322

Registered Voters

n=558

Registered voters who said they were “likely to vote”

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Part 1: Who was polled?

FAU Methodology

This survey was conducted August 16-20, 2018 using an online sample supplied by Survey Sampling International (n=400) and via an automated telephone platform (IVR) using registered voter landline phone lists supplied by Aristotle, Inc. (n=400) for a total sample size of n=800 registered voters who said they are likely to vote, with a margin of error of +/- 3.4 percentage points. . It is important to remember that subsets carry have higher margins of error, as the sample size is reduced. The MOE for the Democratic Primary, Likely Voters, n=239, +/- 6.3 percentage points; Republican Primary, Likely Voters, n=222, +/- 6.5 percentage points. The data was weighted by ethnicity, region, party affiliation and gender.

Funnel

n=800

Registered voters who said they were “likely to vote”

n=222

Republican primary voters who said they were “likely to vote”

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3

How were the questions asked?

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What I think I look like

What I actually look like

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How were the questions asked?

1. Referenda
2. Is party label on there?
3. Are name and order correct?

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How were they polled?

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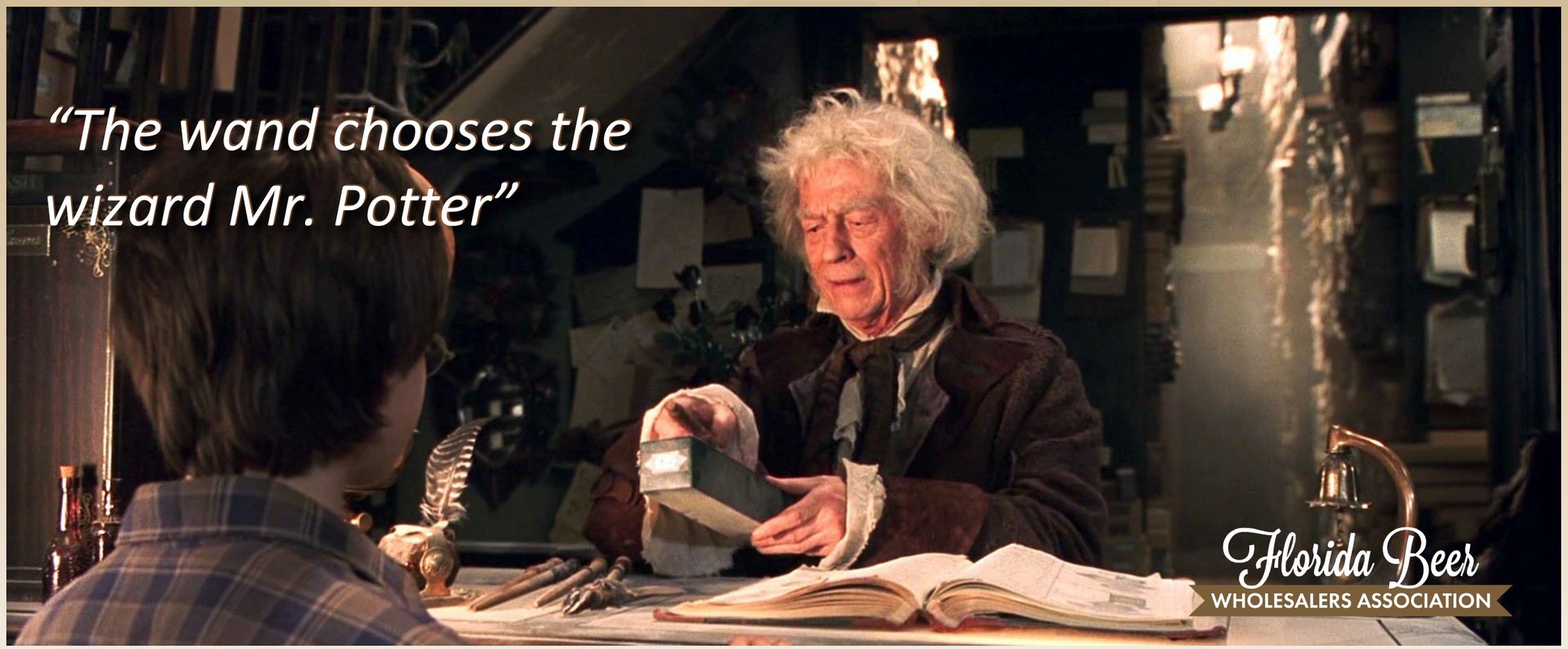
Every valid sample must be:

1. Random
2. Representative



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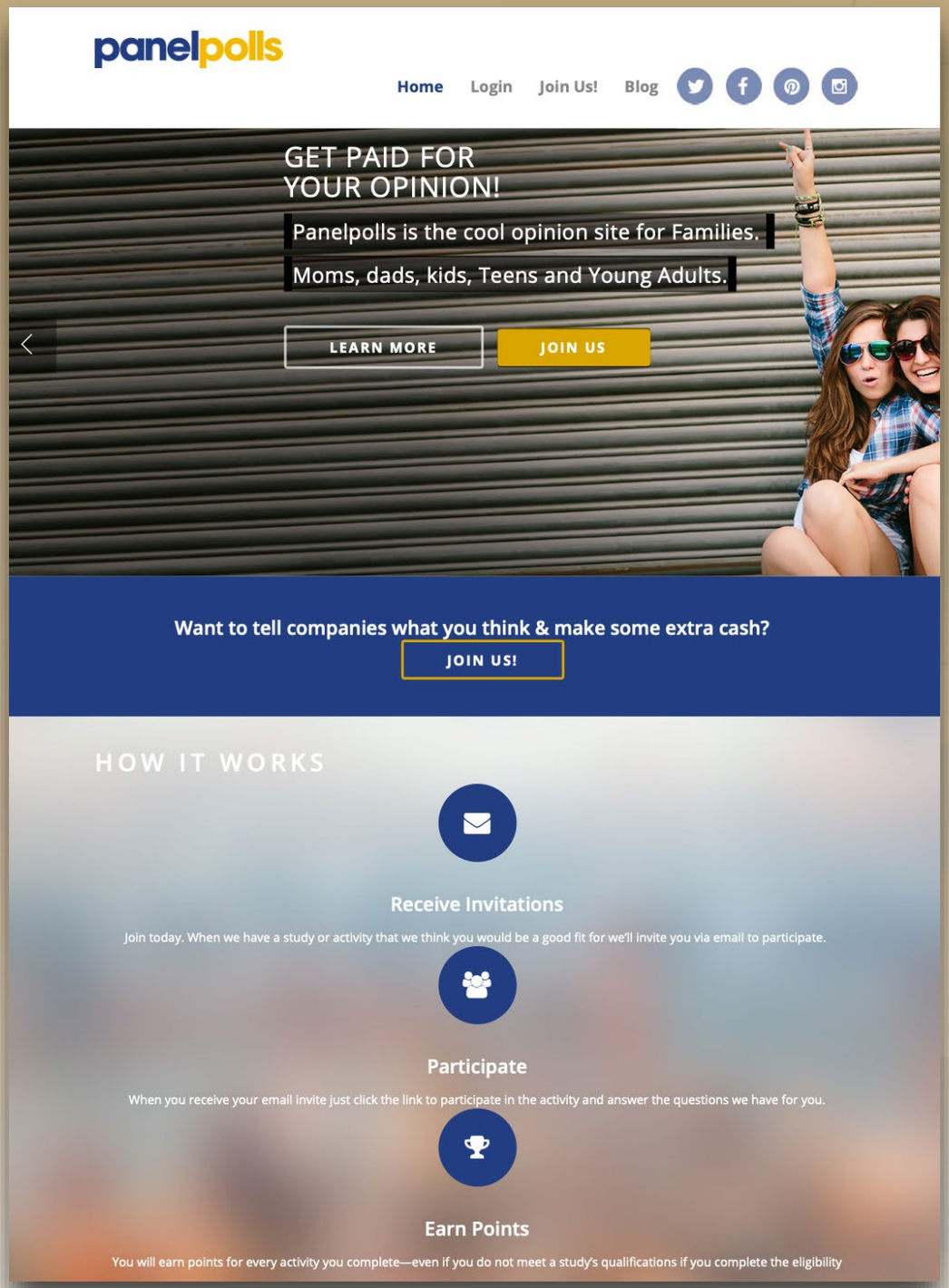

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And one other thing…

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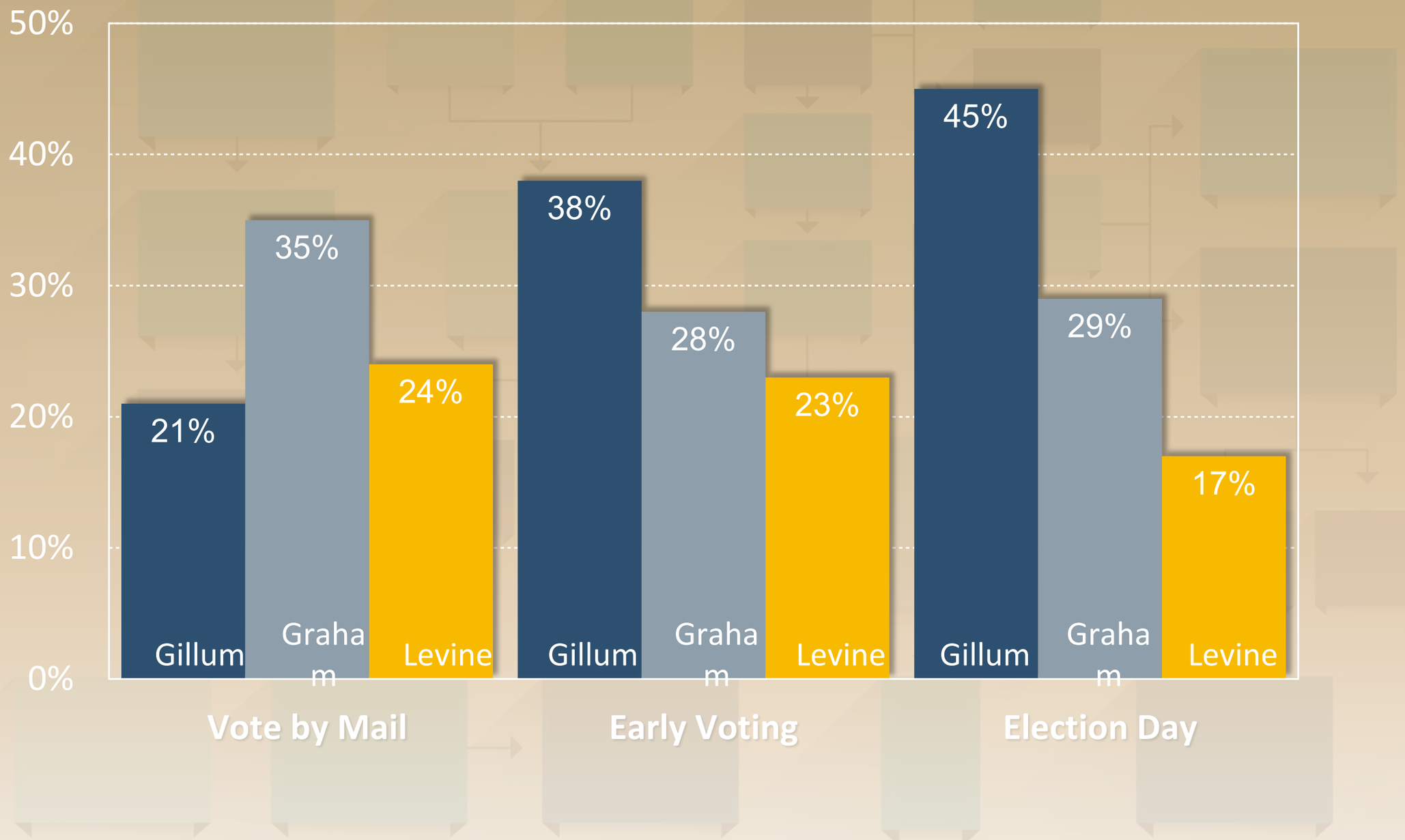
2018 Democratic Primary Election

Actual Returns



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And one other, other thing…

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A Word About the Margin of Error

1. Presumes randomness and representativenes
2. Driven by the “n”
3. Subgroups increase the MOE
4. Weighting increases the MOE

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Sorry, but one more other thing…

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Is it an outlier?

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Key Takeaways

1. Consider the pollster
2. Consider the motivation of the payee
3. Make sure only eligible voters were polled
4. Make sure sample looks like population
5. Be wary of outliers

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