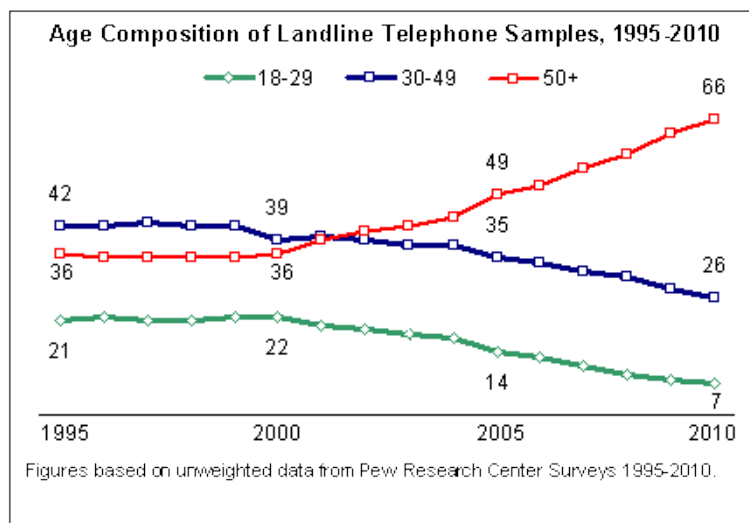


Polling News & Notes

Overlooked Recent Polling and Insights • May 27, 2010

Landline-Only Polls Produce Statistically Significant Differences in Opinion: Last week, the National Center for Health Statistics released [new estimates](#) finding that in the second half of 2009, nearly one-quarter of adults (23%) live in households with no landline telephone service. Among some subgroups, the wireless-only numbers are significantly higher—30% of Hispanics and 49% of adults aged 25-29 lack landlines. Pollsters have long used techniques like weighting to compensate for the absence of demographic groups from their samples, but can they still be successful in light of ever-rising number of cell phone-only households?

A [new study](#) by the Pew Research Center for the People and the Press suggests that traditional survey research is unable to keep up with younger Americans' abandonment of landlines. The Pew analysis compared polling responses from traditional landline samples that had been weighted to a standard set of demographic parameters with "dual-frame" samples of both landline and cell phone users between May 2009 and April 2010. The results shed doubt on the ability of landline-only samples to measure American public opinion accurately. Not only has the proportion of young voters in landline samples dwindled to a third of its level from ten years ago (see chart at left), but weighting does not correct for the bias of the landline-only samples.



For example, Republicans led by six points on the generic congressional ballot in the weighted landline-only sample, 47%-41%, but the dual-frame sample showed the generic ballot tied at 44%. President Obama's approval was at 45% among the landline-only sample, but 47% in the dual-frame sample. A few points' difference may seem trivial, but the consistent underestimation of Democratic support in landline-only samples suggests that traditional polling may no longer be fully representative of the population. Until pollsters learn to adapt to the prevalence of cell phone-only households, that few points may make all the difference in close races this fall.

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