



2026 GENERAL ELECTION FOR U.S. SENATE & GOVERNOR IN MINNESOTA

October 28, 2026

Poll conducted by Victory Insights LLC from October 21-22, 2026, via Text-To-Web among 1,194 likely voters throughout Minnesota. Commissioned by Michele Tafoya.

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Executive Summary

Republican Michele Tafoya trails Democrat Peggy Flanagan by 3.4 points in the general election for U.S. Senate in Minnesota, with 5.6% of voters still undecided. The race for Governor is less close: Republican Lisa Demuth trails Democrat Amy Klobuchar by 7 points, with 4.4% of voters still undecided.

If the two Republican nominees are facing an equally purple electorate, why is there such a big difference in their results? We've identified a few areas where Tafoya clearly outperforms Demuth, and the first is perhaps the most obvious: nonpartisans. Demuth is down 20 points among nonpartisan voters, while Tafoya cuts the deficit to only 9 points. Additionally, Demuth trails in suburbia by 4 points, while Tafoya leads by 2. Demuth trails by 2 points among those still planning to vote, while Tafoya leads by 1. While this all sounds great for Tafoya, the elephant in the room remains: Tafoya still trails Flanagan by just over 3 points with Election Day just around the corner.

How can Tafoya make up the difference? Unsurprisingly, the path to victory runs through undecided voters. Luckily, Tafoya does have some hope here: undecided voters lean Republican, and they generally have a more positive opinion of her than of Flanagan.

But winning over undecided voters isn't the only front on which Tafoya must battle. Turnout is also key. While Democrat-leaning voters have dominated the early vote thus far, our poll sample assumes that Republicans will nearly close the gap by the time Election Day is over. To have a shot at victory, Tafoya must turn out the GOP base while simultaneously making her case to undecided and nonpartisan voters.

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Electorate Ideology

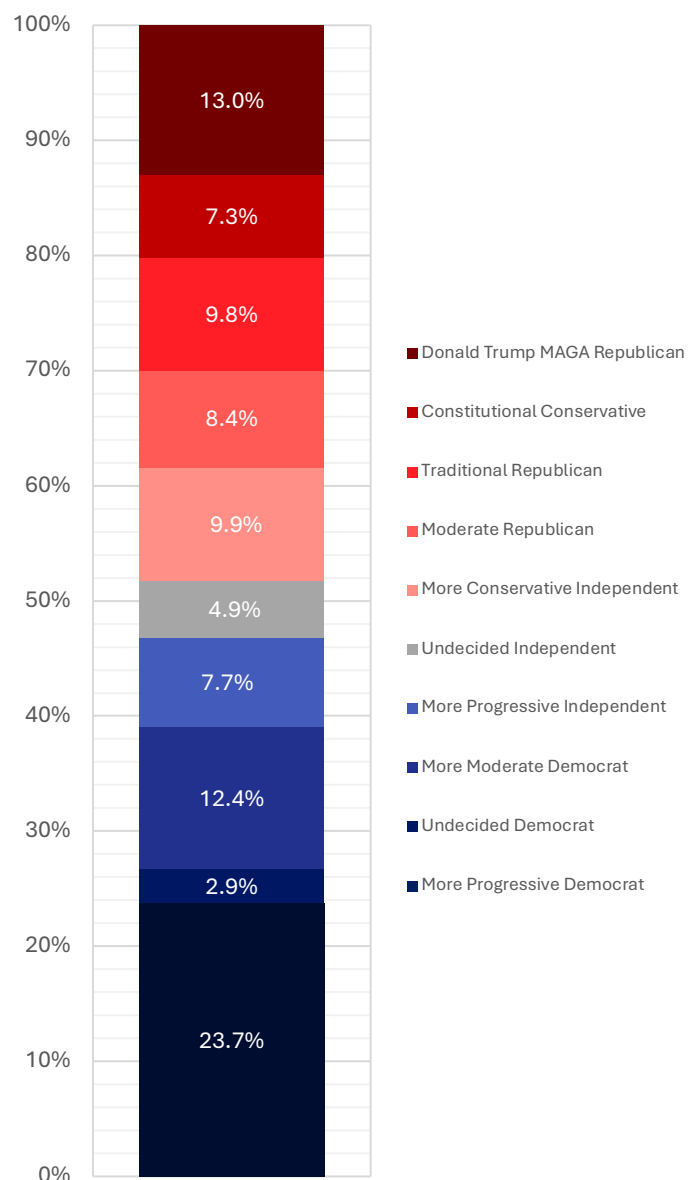
Summary

In Minnesota, voters don't register with a political party, so political affiliation is a more fluid and nuanced measure than in most other states. In our sample, 39% of voters identified with the Democratic-Farmer-Labor Party, 38% identified with the Republican Party, and the remaining 23% identified either with a third party or as nonpartisan.

Ideological Spectrum

The chart to the right shows a detailed breakdown of the 2026 Minnesota general electorate. Though Democrats are slightly favored in terms of overall party identification, nonpartisan voters tend to lean slightly more conservative. The median voter is a nonpartisan who claims to neither lean conservative nor progressive. This electorate is quite purple, and winning nonpartisans will be absolutely crucial to both parties' candidates.

A plurality of Republicans identify as Donald Trump MAGA Republicans, though it's not an overwhelming proportion (34%). By contrast, more than 60% of Democrats consider themselves to be "more progressive," while less than a third consider themselves to be "more moderate." In other words, there is greater balance and ideological diversity on Minnesota's right wing than on its left wing. MAGA Republicans don't control the right, but progressive Democrats do control the left.



Favorability

Methodology

We asked voters to rate the Republican and Democratic candidates for Governor and U.S. Senate, as well as President Trump and Governor Walz, on a scale from extremely negative to extremely positive, with the option to indicate that they have no opinion of each public figure. The table below shows the results of these questions, as well as the following computed metrics: Positive Name ID (ratings of somewhat or extremely positive), Negative Name ID (ratings of somewhat or extremely negative), Total Name ID (all ratings besides No Opinion), and Average Opinionated Rating (the average rating given, counting Extremely Negative as “1” and Extremely Positive as “5” and so on, excluding those with no opinion). AOR approximates a candidate’s likeability. For each metric, the best result is highlighted in dark green, the second-best in light green, the worst in dark red, and the second-worst in light red.

Favorability Table

	Trump	Walz	Demuth	Klobuchar	Tafaya	Flanagan
Extremely Negative	53.4%	43.9%	24.1%	32.4%	25.1%	36.3%
Somewhat Negative	4.6%	8.0%	15.7%	13.6%	14.8%	7.2%
Neutral	6.3%	9.9%	14.9%	6.7%	9.5%	9.9%
Somewhat Positive	15.6%	23.2%	17.9%	20.4%	13.5%	19.5%
Extremely Positive	18.4%	14.5%	17.8%	24.9%	26.3%	20.9%
No Opinion	1.7%	0.5%	9.6%	2.0%	10.8%	6.3%
Positive Name ID	34.0%	37.7%	35.7%	45.3%	39.8%	40.4%
Negative Name ID	58.0%	51.9%	39.8%	46.0%	39.9%	43.4%
Total Name ID	98.3%	99.5%	90.4%	98.0%	89.2%	93.7%
Average Opinionated Rating	2.40	2.56	2.89	2.92	3.01	2.80
AOR Among Democrats	1.07	3.95	1.61	4.18	1.54	4.29
AOR Among Republicans	4.00	1.24	4.16	1.54	4.41	1.43
AOR Among Nonpartisans	2.01	2.40	2.71	3.04	2.88	2.55

Key Favorability Findings

- **President Trump is unpopular.** He has the highest Negative Name ID and the lowest AOR out of all public figures surveyed. 53% of voters hold an “Extremely Negative” opinion of him, while only 18% hold an “Extremely Positive” opinion of him.
- **Governor Walz is the least popular Democrat.** Walz scored the second-lowest AOR of all public figures, leading only Trump. 52% of voters hold a negative opinion of him.
- **Tafoya is very likeable.** At 3.01, she is the only candidate scoring an AOR above neutral (3.0). She is the most likeable Republican surveyed, and the second-most likeable figure among nonpartisans, trailing only Klobuchar.
- **Tafoya has room to grow.** 11% of voters still have no opinion of her. By comparison, that number for Flanagan is only 6%. If Tafoya can make a positive impression on this remaining cohort of voters, her numbers could get even better.
- **Democrats love Flanagan.** She scores an AOR of 4.29 among Democrats, besting Klobuchar (4.18) and Walz (3.95).
- **Klobuchar is well-known and well-liked.** Only 2% of voters hold no opinion of Klobuchar, yet she has the second-highest AOR, trailing only Tafoya. At 45% Positive Name ID, even her closest rival (Flanagan) is 5 points behind.

Deep Dive: Tafoya’s Likeability

You may be wondering, “If Tafoya is so likeable, why isn’t she winning?” Good question. One major factor is that most voters who like Tafoya *really* like her, while many voters who dislike her only *mildly* dislike her. Specifically, 66% of voters with a positive opinion of Tafoya have an “extremely” positive opinion of her; for Flanagan, that number is only 52%. Conversely, 37% of voters with a negative opinion of Tafoya have only a “somewhat” negative opinion of her; for Flanagan, that number is only 16%.

This may seem trivial on its face, but the implications are important. It’s hard to win votes from voters who have an *extremely* negative opinion of you, but if their opinion is only *somewhat* negative, their votes are still in play. Why? Because voters oftentimes don’t like *either* candidate and are forced to choose between “the lesser of two evils.” This isn’t theoretical political science – this is actively playing out in this race. In our poll, about a quarter of respondents who were undecided in the U.S. Senate race held a negative opinion of both Tafoya *and* Flanagan. And our assumption held up: about a third of those voters held a higher opinion of Tafoya than Flanagan; *none* held a higher opinion of Flanagan than Tafoya. Being the lesser of two evils is an underrated asset in a race that could be decided by just a few thousand votes.

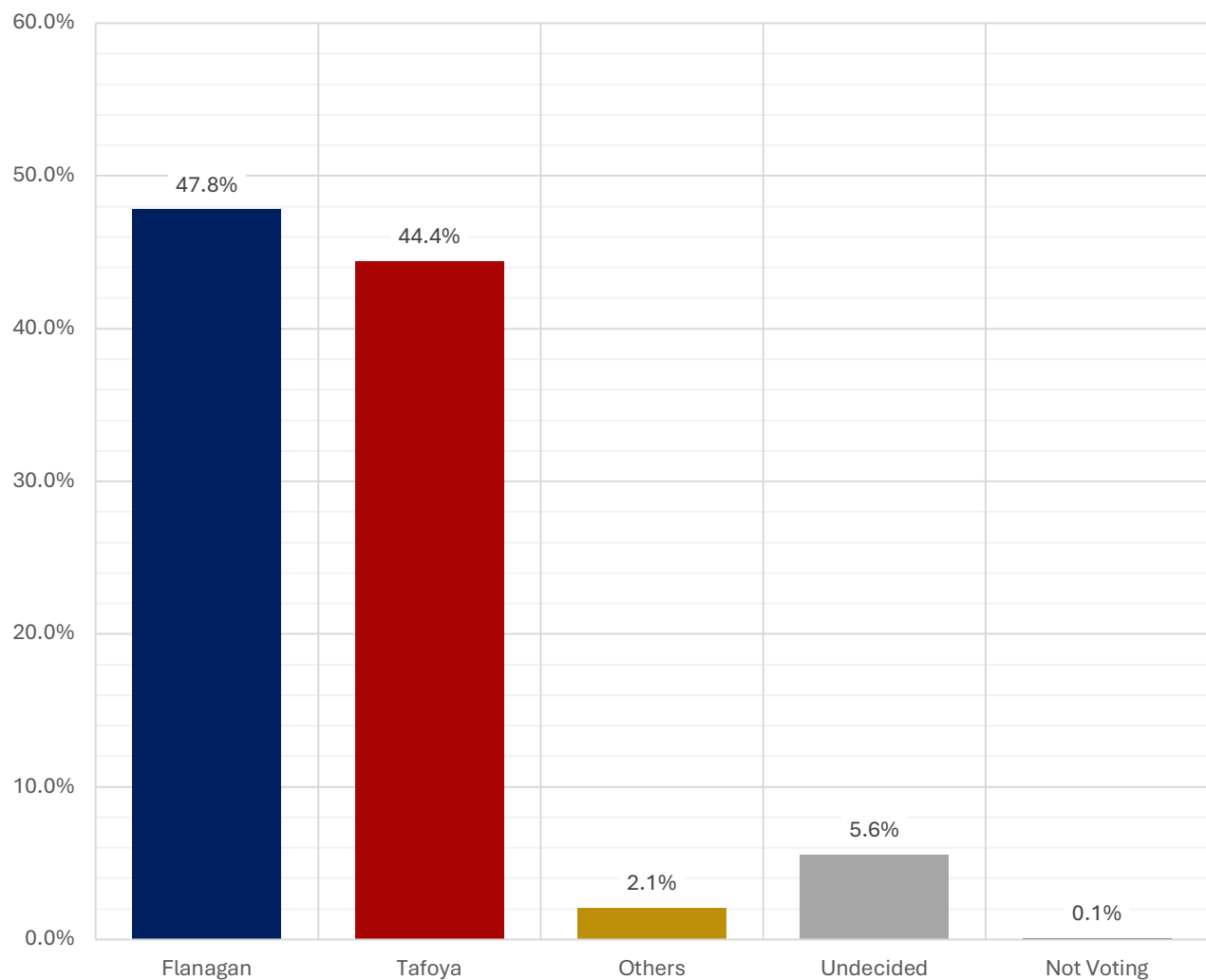
U.S. Senate Ballot

Summary

Flanagan leads Tafoya by 3.4 points. Other candidates receive about 2% of the vote, while just over 5% of voters indicate that they are still undecided. Flanagan dominates among those who have already voted, while Tafoya leads narrowly among those who still plan to vote.

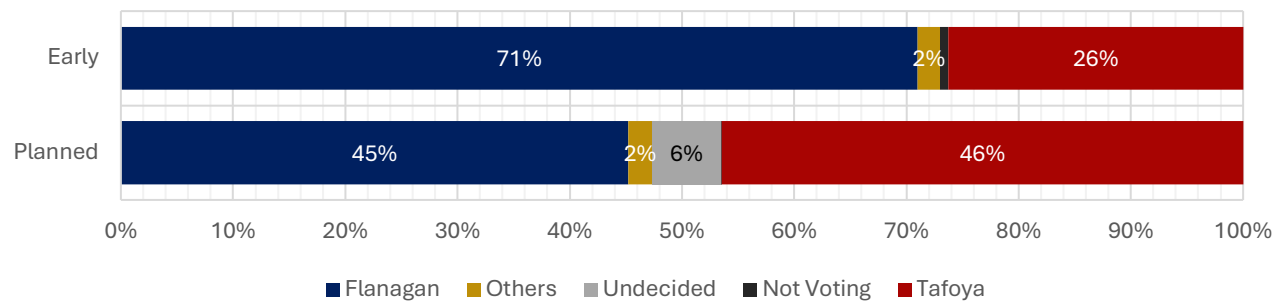
Overall Ballot

Flanagan sits just below the 48% mark, while Tafoya sits just above 44%. Importantly, the two candidates are separated by only 3.4%, which is less than the 5.6% of voters who remain undecided. Additionally, only 0.1% of those who have cast a ballot or plan to cast a ballot in the 2026 general election will be sitting this race out. All eyes are on this race.



Early vs. Planned Votes

Those who have already cast a ballot, whether in-person or by mail, lean heavily Democratic, and unsurprisingly, Flanagan has jumped out to a big lead among these voters. Tafoya is counting on making up the difference among those who still plan to vote, and these voters do narrowly favor Tafoya, but it's not enough to negate Flanagan's firewall of early votes.

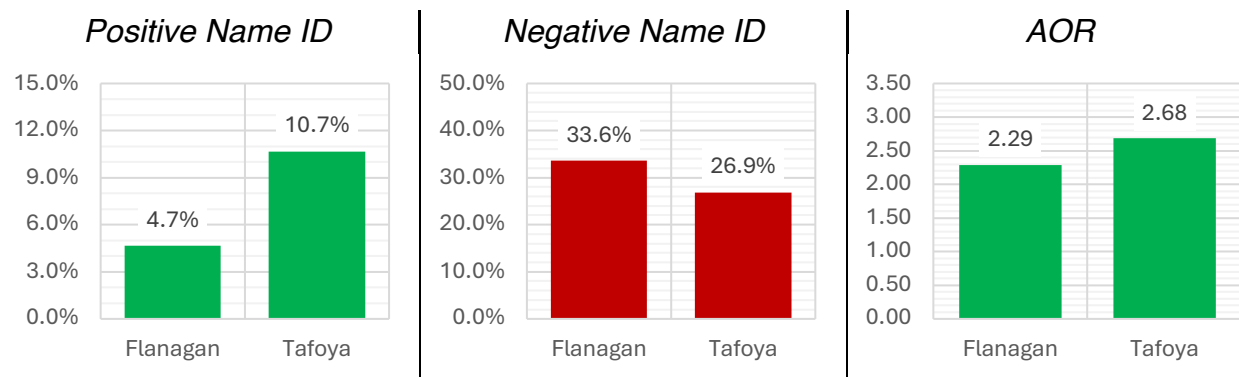


Soft vs. Strong Support

58% of Tafoya voters hold an “extremely positive” opinion of Tafoya, while only 41% of Flanagan voters hold an “extremely positive” opinion of Flanagan. This indicates that Tafoya has a stronger base than Flanagan, which is in line with what we discussed in the *Deep Dive: Tafoya's Likeability* section on page 5.

Undecided Voters

The 5.6% of voters who remain undecided will likely decide the outcome of this race. Currently, they favor Tafoya. Tafoya has more than twice the Positive Name ID as Flanagan among undecided voters, as well as lower Negative Name ID and a higher AOR. 24% of undecided voters have a higher opinion of Tafoya than Flanagan; only 9% of undecided voters have a higher opinion of Flanagan than Tafoya. Furthermore, the party affiliation of undecided voters favors Tafoya: 37% are Republicans, while only 9% are Democrats.



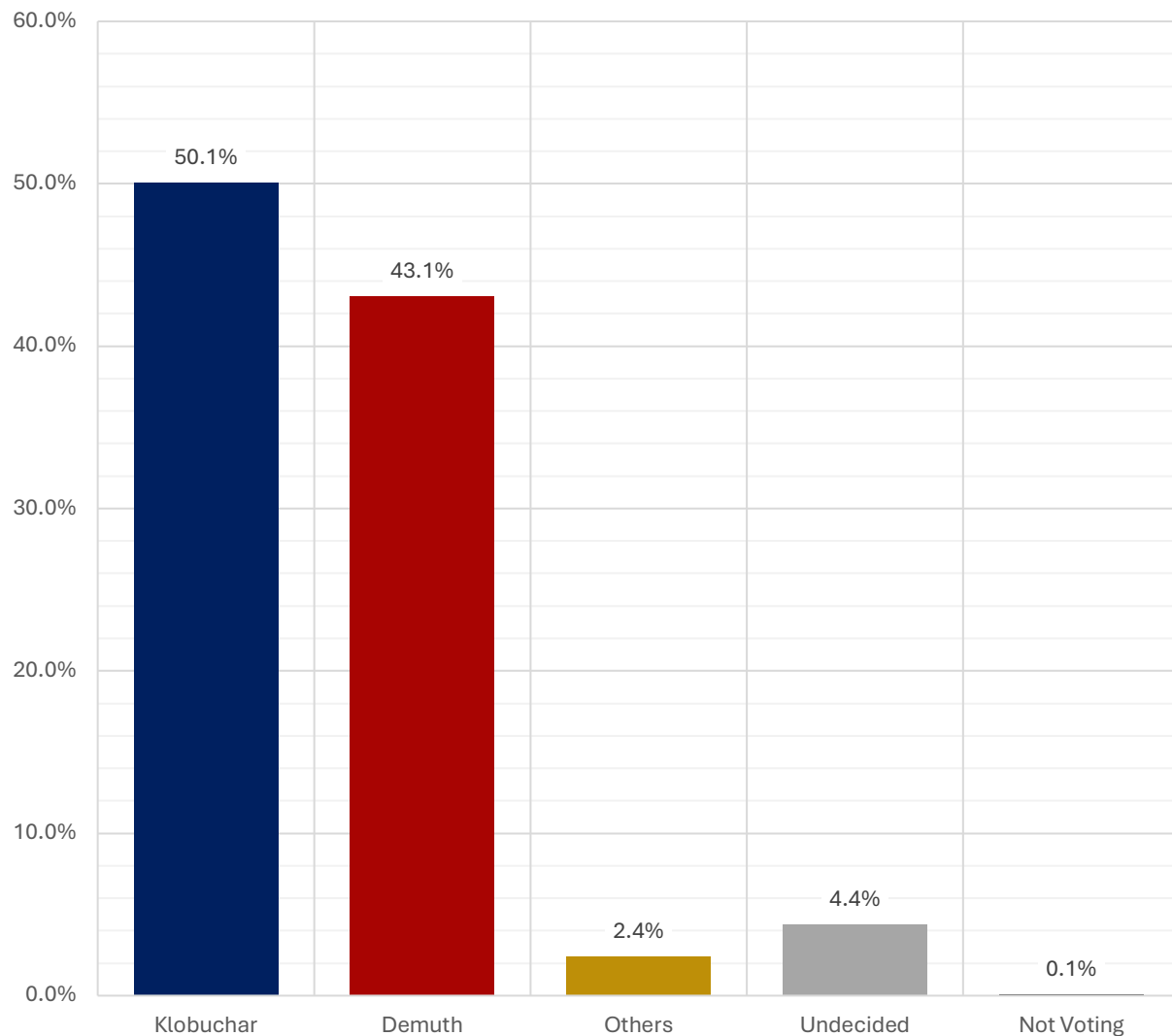
Governor Ballot

Summary

Klobuchar leads Demuth by 7 points. Importantly, Klobuchar has eclipsed the 50% mark, meaning Demuth will not only need to win over undecideds and turn out her base, but also win over some current Klobuchar supporters. This is a tall task.

Overall Ballot

2% of voters say they'll be voting for someone other than Klobuchar or Demuth, while only 4% of voters remain undecided. Similar to the U.S. Senate race, only 0.1% of those who have already voted or plan to vote will be sitting this race out.



U.S. Senate vs. Governor Gap

Diagnosing the Gap

It's clear that Tafoya is in much closer striking distance to Flanagan than Demuth is to Klobuchar. But what's the source of this delta? In this section, we explore 4 factors contributing to Tafoya's relative competitiveness compared to Demuth: party affiliation, urbanicity, early/planned voters, and gender.

Partisan Gap

Democrats favor the Democratic nominee in both races by a 92% margin. Republicans are slightly less loyal than Democrats are; they favor Demuth by 87% and Tafoya by 90%. But nonpartisans are where the difference between Demuth and Tafoya becomes most clear. In the race for Governor, Klobuchar leads by 20 points among nonpartisans, but in the race for U.S. Senate, Flanagan leads by only 9 points. This 11-point advantage among nonpartisans is a major contributing factor to Tafoya's competitiveness.

	Democrats	Nonpartisans	Republicans
<i>Governor Race</i>	D+92%	D+20%	R+87%
<i>U.S. Senate Race</i>	D+92%	D+9%	R+90%
<i>Tafoya's Advantage</i>	0%	11%	3%

Urbanicity Gap

A similar trend arises when we look at urbanicity. Tafoya outperforms Demuth among urban, suburban, and rural voters, but the advantage is most apparent among suburban voters. Urban voters prefer the Democrat in both races by a wide margin, and rural voters prefer the Republican in both races by a clear but less overwhelming margin. Suburban voters, however, prefer the Democrat (Klobuchar) in the Governor race, but the Republican (Tafoya) in the U.S. Senate race.

	Urban	Suburban	Rural
<i>Governor Race</i>	D+34%	D+4%	R+14%
<i>U.S. Senate Race</i>	D+32%	R+2%	R+15%
<i>Tafoya's Advantage</i>	2%	6%	1%

Early/Planned Vote Gap

Those who have already voted heavily favor the Democratic nominees for both seats, though Tafoya performs marginally better than Demuth. Among those who still plan to vote, however, Tafoya has a slight edge over Flanagan, while Klobuchar retains her advantage over Demuth.

	Already Voted	Planning To Vote
<i>Governor Race</i>	D+47%	D+2%
<i>U.S. Senate Race</i>	D+45%	R+1%
<i>Tafoya's Advantage</i>	2%	4%

Gender Gap

Men prefer both Republican candidates and women prefer both Democratic candidates. Tafoya outperforms Demuth across both women and men, but the difference is more pronounced among women, where Demuth trails by 21% and Tafoya trails by just 16%.

	Women	Men
<i>Governor Race</i>	D+21%	R+7%
<i>U.S. Senate Race</i>	D+16%	R+9%
<i>Tafoya's Advantage</i>	5%	2%

Suburban Women

In the past decade or so, suburban women have been increasingly considered the quintessential swing voters. Suburban women do exhibit quite a swing in Minnesota this cycle across the two high-profile races. In the race for Governor, Klobuchar wins 53% of suburban women, while Demuth wins only 39%. In the race for U.S. Senate, however, the margin drops from 14 points to only 5: Flanagan wins 49% of suburban women, while Tafoya trails closely with 44% support.

Sample Demographics

Age

18 to 40	28.3%
41 to 60	34.0%
61 to 75	28.1%
76+	9.6%

Gender

Male	50.3%
Female	48.8%
Unknown	0.9%

Urbanicity

Rural	32.5%
Suburban	39.0%
Urban	28.5%

General Election Performance

0 of 4	4.9%
1 of 4	8.2%
2 of 4	10.8%
3 of 4	22.7%
4 of 4	53.4%

Primary Election Performance

0 of 4	54.4%
1 of 4	22.7%
2 of 4	13.5%
3 of 4	6.0%
4 of 4	3.4%

