Trump victory: What did the polls get wrong?

John Ferro , **Poughkeepsie Journal**   *8:20 a.m. EST November 10, 2016*

Larry Keller said he kept the faith "the whole time."

The 70-year-old Hyde Park resident had long felt the country needed to be run by a businessman, not a politician.

When Donald Trump came along, he knew he had found his candidate for president.

(Photo: Evan Vucci, AP)

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But would he win? Until early Wednesday morning, no one knew for sure.

"We have a lot of naysayers, who say, 'No, he won't be able to do this and that,' " Keller said while enjoying a bowl of soup at a local diner Wednesday. "I felt somewhere, people wanted something different and I believe we now have something different."

But while this has been called a change election, with Trump's supporters highlighting his lack of political experience, locally incumbents won nearly every race for Congressional, state Senate and Assembly seats. The only non-incumbent winner at the state and federal levels was Republican John Faso who

won the 19th Congressional District. However, Faso is a veteran politican and former minority leader of the Assembly.

Trump's upset victory has not only sent shock waves through the political establishment, it raised questions about the predictive systems that called for Hillary Clinton to win.

A Monmouth University poll released Monday favored Clinton by 6 percentage points among likely voters. A CBS News poll had her ahead by 4 points.

On Election Day, a British research startup that predicted (/story/news/world/2016/11/08/only-survey-correctly-predicted-brexit-says-clinton-wins-us-election/93415522/) the stunning Brexit vote — Britain's exit from the European Union — also said Clinton would win.

Trump dismissed all of them, and his supporters proved him right.

Zheng Gao of Shanghai, China, photographs the front pages of newspapers on display outside the Newseum in Washington, Wednesday, Nov., 9, 2016, the day after Donald Trump won the presidency. *(Photo: Susan Walsh, AP)*

"I think one of the issues," SUNY New Paltz political scientist Gerald Benjamin said, "is that the people who Trump moved (to vote) weren't people inclined to be polled."

On Wednesday, the Marist Institute for Public Opinion issued a press release highlighting the results of a Marist-McClatchy poll issued Saturday.

That poll put Clinton's pre-election lead at 1 percentage point. When the votes were counted, Marist was almost dead-on; she won the popular vote by seven-tenths of a percentage point.

"That is important not for bragging rights," Marist Director Lee Miringoff said, "it's important to understand that the public, to be a good consumer of polls, has to distinguish different types of polls and look at the methodology and the mode of data collection."

Polls are defined by the technology used to collect results — live phone interviews, automated phone interviews, online surveys, panels and other forms — and how well that method generates a representative, random sample.

Polls relying on live calls to random landlines and cell phones are viewed as the most reliable.

The increase in cell-phone-only households presents an increasing challenge, according to Peter Brown, assistant director of the Quinnipiac University Poll.

That's because calls to some mobile phones, such as those on pre-paid plans, can be an expense to the person receiving the call.

As a result, the socioeconomic sample of polls can be limited by mobile-phone participants "who are willing to spend money to do it (as opposed) to those who are not," Brown said.

This would jibe with the view that much of Trump's support was drawn from working-class voters who live in the rural areas of the country's midsection.

"If you have a paradigm shift, the past is not a good guide," Benjamin said. "You are going to make bad mistakes. And the mistakes in polling are in assuming that your technology is going to produce a representative sample from the population."

Much of the perception that Clinton would win was driven by organizations that used mathematical models to analyze dozens of national and statewide polls. Some of those poll aggregators put her chances as high as 90 percent.

Miringoff said those surveys are only as good as the polls and the models.

"In both instances," he said, "I think the aggregators came up real short this time."

Much to the delight of Trump and those who voted for him.

John Ferro: 845-437-4816, jferro@poughkeepsiejournal.com (mailto:jferro@poughkeepsiejournal.com), Twitter: @PoJoEnviro. Staff writer Jack Howland contributed to this report.

TOWN BY TOWN

Donald Trump was favored by voters in 16 of Dutchess County's voting municipalities. Hillary Clinton outperformed Trump in six towns and cities.

Trump: Amenia, Beekman, Clinton, Dover, East Fishkill, Fishkill, Hyde Park, LaGrange, Milan, Pawling, Pine Plains, Pleasant Valley, Stanford, Union Vale, Wappinger, Washington.

Clinton: Beacon, City of Poughkeepsie, North East, Red Hook, Rhinebeck, Town of Poughkeepsie.

Source: Journal analysis of Dutchess County Board of Elections data

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