

3-22-2018

# March 22, 2018 Jefferson Parish Sheriff's Election Survey

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## Recommended Citation

Chervenak, Edward, "March 22, 2018 Jefferson Parish Sheriff's Election Survey" (2018). *Survey Research Center Publications*. Paper 51. [https://scholarworks.uno.edu/src\\_pubs/51](https://scholarworks.uno.edu/src_pubs/51)

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March 22, 2018

A survey of 617 randomly selected Jefferson Parish registered voters was conducted March 18-20, 2018 by the University of New Orleans Survey Research Center on the Jefferson Parish Sheriff's race scheduled for March 24, 2018. Survey respondents were asked in an interactive voice response telephone survey (IVR)<sup>1</sup> who they preferred in the upcoming sheriff's race. This survey of 617 randomly selected respondents yields a margin of error of +/- 3.9% at a confidence level of 95%.

The findings from the current poll are compared with the results from a poll conducted on March 4-5, 2018 of 767 randomly selected Jefferson Parish registered voters that inquired into who respondents supported in the sheriff's election. The sample size from the early March study yields a margin of error of +/- 3.5% at a 95% confidence rate.

We also simulate what the poll results would look like if we employed the turnout patterns from the October 2015 election in Jefferson Parish. While that election is not exact copy of the current one, they are similar enough in nature to make a reasonable comparison. Although the October 2015 ballot contained statewide contests, it is comparable to the current election in that it featured a parish-wide election for sheriff. In addition, there were 13,393 early voters in the October 2015 election while the March 2018 election saw 13,496 parish residents cast an early ballot.

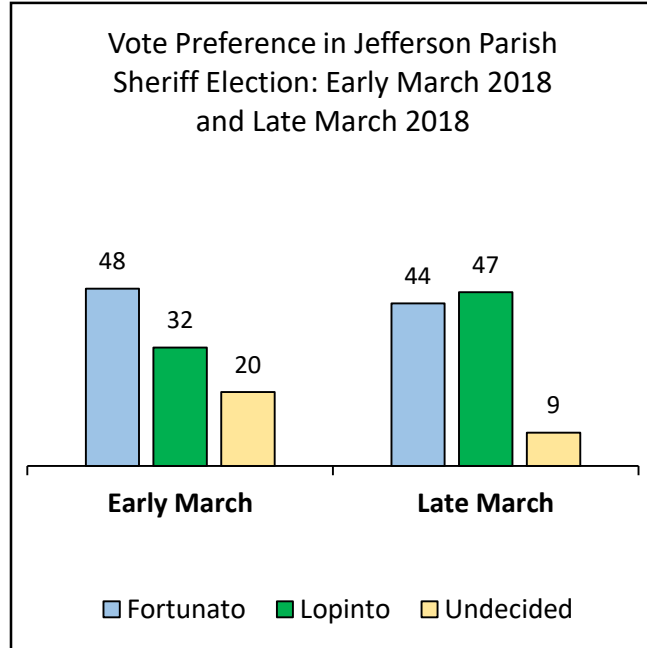
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<sup>1</sup> IVR surveys, also known as "robo-polls" employ an automated, recorded voice to call respondents who are asked to answer questions by punching telephone keys. Advantages of IVR surveys include their low cost, the almost immediate collection of data, and the simple and convenient processing of data. They also reduce interviewer bias to zero by eliminating the live human interviewer. Every survey respondent hears the same question read the same way.

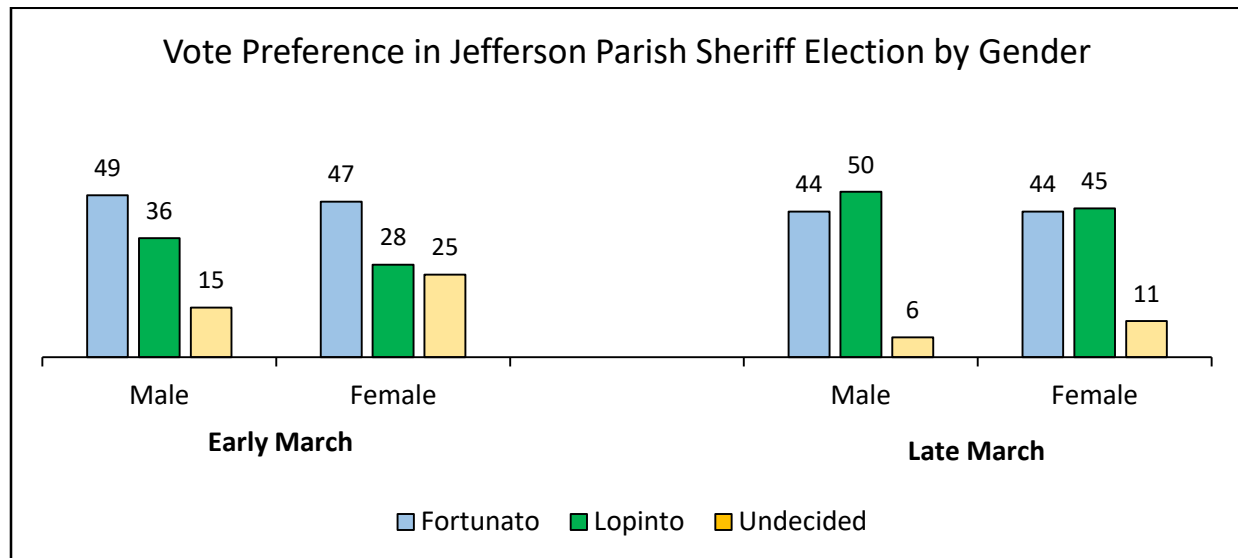
When conducting IVR surveys, pollsters must not rely on all details of a call list. They cannot assume that the details of the person in the file will match the individual who picks up the call. Demographic categories of race, age, gender, and political party identification must be self-reported by the respondent to ensure a valid and accurate analysis.

Ideally, the sample of respondents should reflect the population of interest. Unfortunately, this is usually not the case. One of the problems with telephone surveys is non-response since some people may screen their calls or hang-up when called. This may cause some groups to be over- or under-represented.

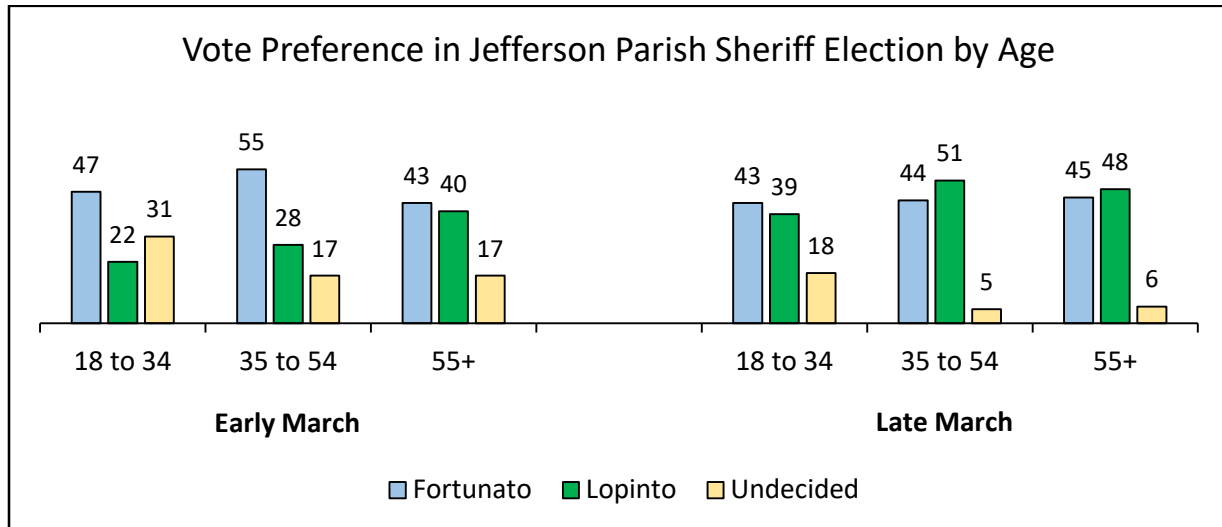
Because IVR surveying is prohibited by FCC rules from calling cell phone numbers, only VOIP and home phone numbers can be called. The growing trend of minority and younger households without land lines can result in a coverage error. Residents who are cell phone only who would be eligible to participate are excluded from IVR polls, unless they answer the survey from a home telephone in another home. As such, no reliable conclusions can be drawn from the observed survey data unless the sample has been post-weighted to correct for the lack of representativeness. It is imperative that survey analysts accurately post weight the cases to reflect the demographics of the population of interest. In this instance this sample was post-weighted to reflect gender, age, and race parameters of the population of registered voters in Jefferson Parish.



The double-digit lead that John Fortunato enjoyed over Joe Lopinto in the early March poll has vanished and Lopinto now leads in the late March survey. Fortunato’s support has softened by 4 points over the last several weeks while Lopinto’s numbers have risen 15 points. Some of his improvement in the poll since early March is the result of people changing their preference from Fortunato to Lopinto. But much of the change is due to the fact that over half of the people who were in the undecided category in the early March survey appear to have shifted towards Lopinto over the last several weeks.



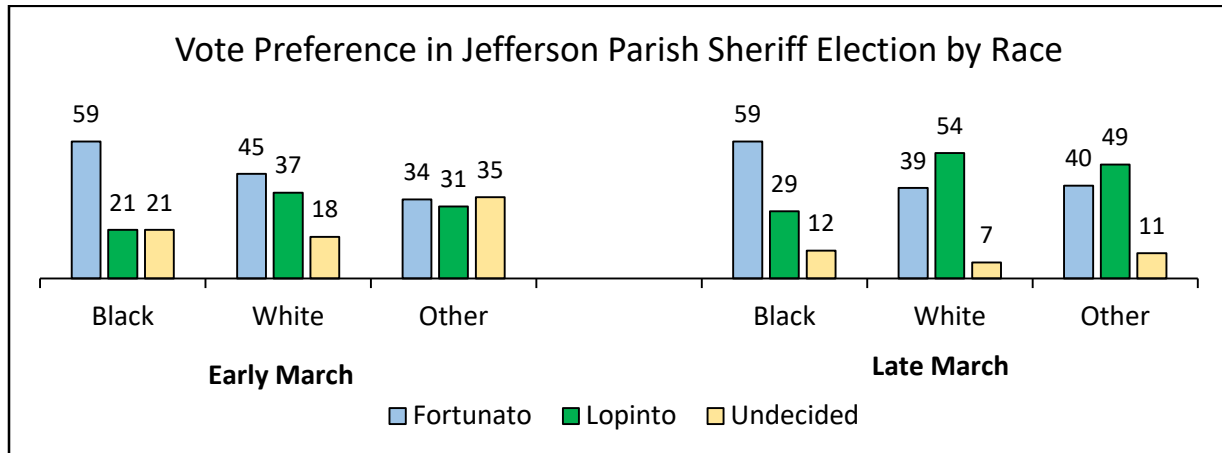
Both males and females were more likely to back Fortunato in the early March poll. However, the shift in opinion found between then and now finds men and women more supportive of Lopinto’s candidacy. His support rose 14 points among males and 17 points among females. Conversely, Fortunato lost favor with both males and females, by 5 points and 3 points, respectively. Females are twice more likely than men in the late March poll to remain undecided in who they would vote for sheriff.



Fortunato enjoyed higher levels of support across all age categories in in the early March poll. However, his margins have narrowed among younger voters. They are still more supportive of Fortunato, but his advantage has shrunk from 25 points to 4 point points. One fifth of younger are still unsure of who they would vote for in the election.

There has been an earthquake-like shift in opinion among respondents in the middle age category. Fortunato enjoyed the majority of support from the 35 to 54 age group in the early March poll. However, the ground has shifted as a majority of these individuals now back Lopinto. Moreover, 95 percent of the people in this age category have made up their minds on who they favor for sheriff.

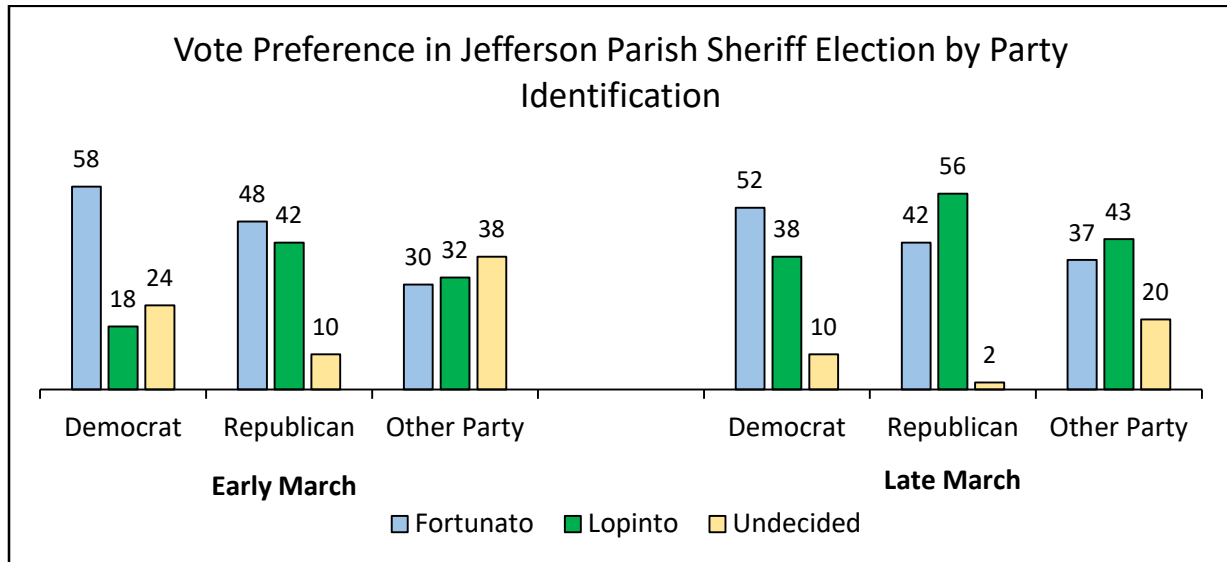
Although Lopinto was behind Fortunato in the early March poll with the oldest age cohort, Lopinto has surged ahead with this group. His support among respondents age 55 and older has risen from 40 percent to 48 percent while Fortunato’s numbers are up by 2 points. Older registered voters are a key demographic when it comes to elections since they are more likely to be chronic voters who faithfully show up in low turnout elections. Only six percent report they are undecided.



A comparison of the two polls discloses there have been significant shifts in voter preference particularly among whites and non-black minorities. Nearly six-in-ten blacks expressed a preference for Fortunato in early March. That figure has not changed. However, the most recent poll indicates that a number of noncommittal blacks appear to have moved toward Lopinto.

Forty-five percent of whites in the early March poll said they supported Fortunato, but that number has now dipped below 40 percent. Lopinto has gained traction with whites and realized a 17 point boost in support from them over the last several weeks. A majority of whites now support Lopinto. Nearly one-in-five whites were still undecided in early March, but only 7 percent were undecided in the late March poll.

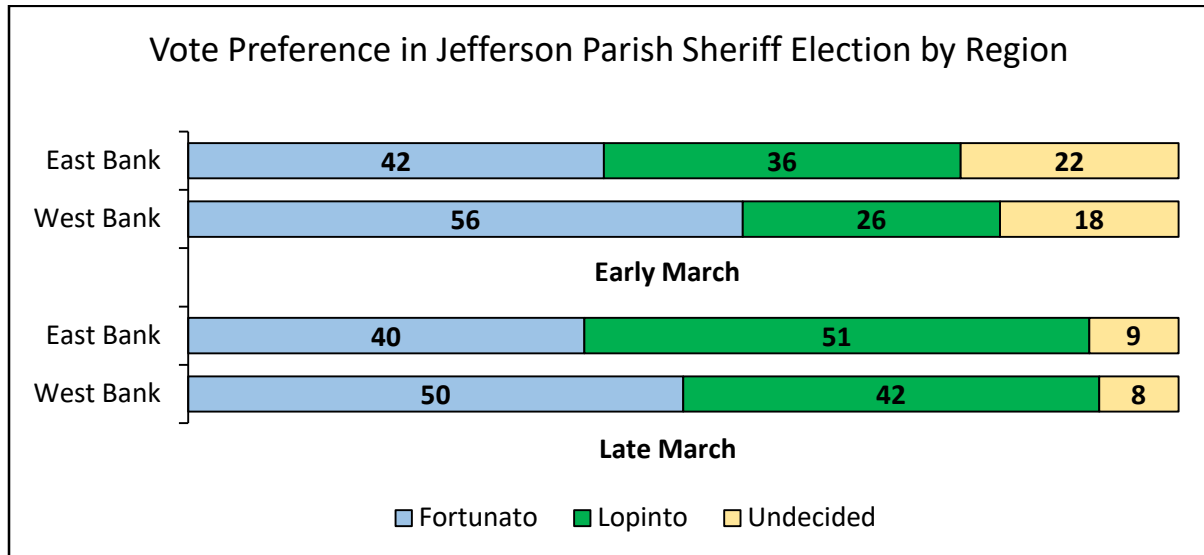
Non-black minorities in the early March poll were highly unsure of which candidate they preferred. It appears, however, that the bulk of those who were not settled on a candidate in the early March poll have swung in Lopinto’s favor. One-third of non-black minorities in the early March poll, compared to nearly one-half of them in the late March poll, back Lopinto for sheriff.



In the early March poll, Fortunato enjoyed more support than Lopinto among Democrats and Republicans, while Lopinto was ahead with Other Party/Independents. Since that time, however, the lead Fortunato had over Lopinto has deteriorated among Democrats from 40 points to 14 points. The bulk of undecided Democrats moved into Lopinto’s column while Fortunato has lost 6 percentage points with Democrats who supported him earlier.

The late March poll indicates that Fortunato has also experienced a huge decline in backing among Republicans, while Lopinto has seen his support with these voters grow considerably. Fortunato held a 6 percentage point advantage over Lopinto with Republicans in the early March poll, but he is currently down by 14 points.

Lopinto is the candidate of choice for Other Party/Independents. Both candidates have seen an increase in support from these respondents. At the same time, Lopinto has been able to put some distance between him and Fortunato with these voters.

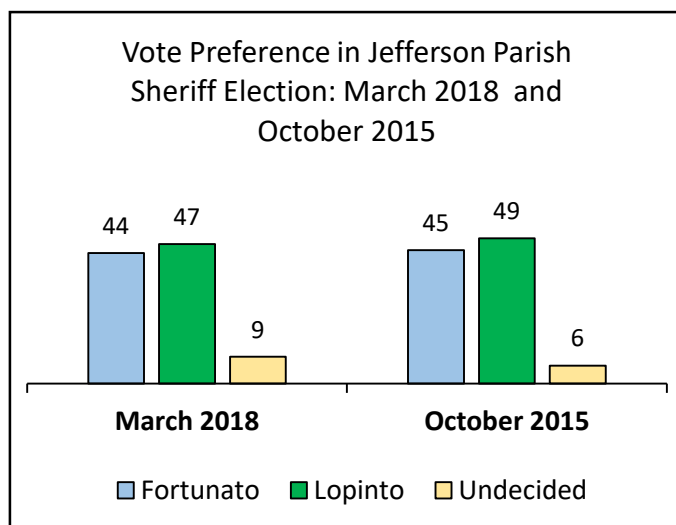


When respondents are broken along Eastbank and Westbank residency, the early March poll showed Fortunato besting Lopinto on both sides of the river. Lopinto, however, has made sizable gains in both areas of the parish. His support is up in the Eastbank by 41 percent (36 percent to 51 percent). He is now the candidate of choice by a majority of Eastbank residents. He has also realized a large measure of growth in support on the Westbank, rising from 26 percent in the early March poll to 42 percent in late March poll. As for Fortunato, he is still supported by 50 percent of Westbank residents, but that is down from 56 percent earlier in the month.

## SIMULATION MODEL USING OCTOBER 2015 ELECTION PARAMETERS

This section examines what the outcome of the late March poll would be if we employed the turnout parameters of various demographic categories from the October 2015 election. The March 18-20, 2018 uses registered voters as the population of interest in the poll. However, not all registered voters are created equal as some groups are more likely to turnout than are others. For instance, whites turnout at a higher rate than do minorities, older voters are your classic chronic voters who turnout at a higher rate than do younger voters, and men turnout at a slightly higher rate than do women. Evidence for this is found in the percentage of undecided voters in the categories of race, gender, and age in the late March poll. The poll indicates that women are more likely than men to be undecided, younger voters are more uncommitted than are middle age and older voters, and minorities have higher undecided rates than do whites. Higher rates of non-commitment at this stage of the election indicate that those particular groups are paying less attention to or are less interested in the campaign. Hence, we should expect those groups with higher non-committal rates to turnout at a lower rate than those groups who are firm in their candidate preference.

For the October 2015 election, 73 percent of voters were white, 21 percent were black, and 5 percent were non-black minorities. Voters age 18 to 34 comprised 7 percent of the electorate, 35 to 54 year olds were 26 percent and voters 55 and older were 67 percent of voters. Men were 45 percent of the electorate while women made up 55 percent of voters in this election.



As the chart illustrates, there is no significant difference in the results using the October 2015 turnout model from what was found in the survey of registered voters in the March 2018 poll.



Appendix

Frequency Tables for March 18-20 IVR Poll of Jefferson Parish Registered Voters

**Gender**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Male	275	44.5	44.5	44.5
	Female	342	55.5	55.5	100.0
	Total	617	100.0	100.0	

**Race**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Black	160	25.9	25.9	25.9
	White	387	62.7	62.7	88.6
	Other	70	11.4	11.4	100.0
	Total	617	100.0	100.0	

**Age Category**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	18 to 34	146	23.7	23.7	23.7
	35 to 54	205	33.2	33.2	56.8
	55 and older	266	43.2	43.2	100.0
	Total	617	100.0	100.0	

**Eastbank v. Westbank**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Eastbank	348	56.5	56.5	56.5
	Westbank	269	43.5	43.5	100.0
	Total	617	100.0	100.0	



## Survey Script

Q1-This is a 45 second confidential university survey of Jefferson Parish voters. If the sheriff's election was today, would you vote for Joseph Lopinto or John Fortunato? Press 1 for John Fortunato, press 2 for Joseph Lopinto, press 3 if you don't know.

Q2-If you consider yourself a Democrat press 1, Republican press 2, something else press 3.

Q3-If you are male press 1, if you are female press 2.

Q4-If you are younger than 35 press 1, if you are 35 to 54 years old press 2, if you are older than 54 press 3.

Q5-If you are black press 1, white press 2, something else press 3.

Thank you for taking the survey