

Western New England University Polling Institute
Massachusetts Statewide Telephone Survey
March 31 – April 7, 2014

METHODOLOGY

The Western New England University Polling Institute survey consists of telephone interviews with 477 adults ages 18 and older drawn from across Massachusetts using random-digit-dialing March 31 – April 7, 2014. The sample yielded 424 adults who said they are registered to vote in Massachusetts.

Paid interviewers at The Polling Institute dialed household telephone numbers, known as “landline numbers,” and cell phone numbers using random samples obtained from Survey Sampling International of Shelton, CT. In order to draw a representative sample from the landline numbers, interviewers first asked for the youngest male age 18 or older who was home at the time of the call, and if no adult male was present, the youngest female age 18 or older who was at home at the time of the call. Interviewers dialing cell phone numbers interviewed the respondent who answered the cell phone after confirming three things: (1) that the respondent was in a safe setting to complete the survey; (2) that the respondent was an adult age 18 or older; and (3) that the respondent was a resident of Massachusetts. The landline and cell phone data were combined and weighted to reflect the adult population of Massachusetts by gender, race, age, and county of residence using U.S. Census estimates for Massachusetts. The data also were weighted to adjust for cell phone and landline usage based on state-level estimates for Massachusetts from the National Center for Health Statistics. Complete results of the poll are available online at www.wne.edu/news. The full text of the questionnaire for this survey is available at www1.wne.edu/pollinginst.

All surveys are subject to sampling error, which is the expected probable difference between interviewing everyone in a population versus a scientific sampling drawn from that population. The sampling error for a sample of 477 adults is +/- 4.5 percent at a 95 percent confidence interval. Thus if 55 percent of adults said they are very confident that law enforcement agencies will be able to keep the Boston Marathon safe from violence this year, one would be 95 percent sure that the true figure would be between 50.5 percent and 59.5 percent (55 percent +/- 4.5 percent) had all Massachusetts adults been interviewed, rather than just a sample. The sampling error for a sample of 424 registered voters is +/- 5 percent at a 95 percent confidence interval. Sampling error increases as the sample size decreases, so statements based on various population subgroups are subject to more error than are statements based on the total sample. Sampling error does not take into account other sources of variation inherent in public opinion studies, such as non-response, question wording, or context effects.

Established in 2005, the Western New England University Polling Institute conducts research on issues of importance to Massachusetts and the region. The Institute provides the University’s faculty and students with opportunities to participate in public opinion research. Additional information about the Polling Institute is available at www1.wne.edu/pollinginst.