

Western New England University Polling Institute
Massachusetts Statewide Telephone Survey
Oct. 21 – 30, 2014

METHODOLOGY

The Western New England University Polling Institute survey consists of telephone interviews with 586 adults ages 18 and older drawn from across Massachusetts using random-digit-dialing Oct. 21 – 30, 2014. The sample yielded 522 adults who said they are registered to vote in Massachusetts. Of those registered voters, 430 voters were classified as likely to vote in the Nov. 4, 2014 election. Voters were classified as likely voters based on their responses to questions about interest in the upcoming election, likelihood of voting in the election, participation in recent elections, and knowledge of the location and name of their polling place.

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 alternated asking for the youngest adult male or the youngest adult female age 18 or older who was 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 sample of all adults consisted of 402 interviews completed on landlines and 184 interviews completed on cell phones. 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 margin of sampling error for a sample of 522 registered voters is +/- 4 percent at a 95 percent confidence interval, and the margin of sampling error for a sample of 430 likely voters is +/- 5 percent at a 95 percent confidence interval. Thus if 55 percent of likely voters said they hold a favorable view of a candidate, one would be 95 percent sure that the true figure would be between 50 percent and 60 percent (55 percent +/- 5 percent) had all likely voters in Massachusetts been interviewed, rather than just a sample. 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.