

Western New England University Polling Institute
Springfield Telephone Survey Conducted for MassLive.com, The Republican Newspaper
and Television Station WSHM, CBS 3, Springfield
(July 8-11, 2013)

METHODOLOGY

The survey consists of telephone interviews with 401 voters registered in Springfield, MA, who said they definitely or probably will vote in the city's July 16, 2013 referendum on a proposed casino in Springfield. The voters were selected at random using a technique known as "registration-based sampling." The sample for the survey was drawn from a database of registered voters in which voters' names and addresses were matched to landline and cell phone numbers using public and private sources. Labels & Lists, Inc., of Bellevue, WA, provided the sample for the survey. Labels & Lists, Inc. obtains voter registration records at the state level, and regularly updates the information by removing duplicate records, adjusting records to reflect changes of address, and deleting records of voters who have died. To create the sample for this survey, Labels & Lists began with a list of 51,788 registered voters in Springfield, and matched 36,173 of those voters by name and address to publicly or privately available telephone numbers. The vendor then drew a random sample of names and phone numbers for use in the survey, with random selection designed to ensure that the sample reflected the demographic and geographic make-up of the database of 51,788 registered voters. Interviewers confirmed the identity of each voter at the start of the interview. Registration-based sampling provides greater assurance that survey respondents are actually registered to vote, and the technique allows researchers to examine each voter's history of participation in recent elections as part of the data analysis. The trade-off, however, is that registration-based sampling typically cannot cover the entire population under study because of difficulty in matching all names and addresses to available phone numbers.

Braun Research, Inc. of Princeton, NJ conducted the telephone interviews under the direction of the Polling Institute. Of the 401 likely voters who participated in the survey, 323 completed the survey on a landline and 78 completed the survey on a cell phone. Survey respondents had the option to complete the questionnaire in English or Spanish. Of the 401 likely voters, 387 completed the survey in English and 14 completed the survey in Spanish. The full text of the English-language version of the questionnaire is available at www1.wne.edu/pollinginst. Survey results were weighted by gender, age, race and Hispanic ethnicity using weighting targets calculated from voting records in the sample for four recent off-year elections in Springfield: the November 2009 Springfield municipal election, the January 2010 special Senate election, the November 2010 gubernatorial election, and the November 2011 Springfield municipal election.

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 401 likely voters is +/- 5 percent at a 95 percent confidence interval. Thus if 50 percent of likely voters said they planned to vote in favor of the casino proposal, one would be 95 percent sure that the true figure would be between 55 percent and 45 percent (50 percent +/- 5 percent) had all likely voters 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.