

Western New England University Polling Institute
Massachusetts Statewide Telephone Survey
Nov. 8 – 15, 2015
METHODOLOGY

The Western New England University Polling Institute conducted a telephone survey Nov. 8-15, 2015. Western New England University sponsored and funded the study. The survey sample consists of telephone interviews in English only with 404 adults ages 18 and older drawn from across Massachusetts using random-digit-dialing. The sample yielded 354 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 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 281 interviews completed on landlines and 123 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, and to adjust for voter registration by party using figures from the office of the Massachusetts Secretary of the Commonwealth. Complete results of the poll and the full text of the landline and cell phone versions of the survey are available at <http://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 404 adults is +/- 5 percent at a 95 percent confidence interval. Thus if 55 percent of adults said they support establishing casinos in Massachusetts, one would be 95 percent sure that the true figure would be between 50 percent and 60 percent (55 percent +/- 5 percent) had all adults 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. The Institute is a charter member of the Transparency Initiative, sponsored by the American Association for Public Opinion Research. The Transparency Initiative supports greater openness in the reporting of survey research methodology. Additional information about the Polling Institute is available from Dr. Tim Vercellotti, director of the Polling Institute, at polling@wne.edu.