

## **Suffolk University Political Research Center**

### **>New Hampshire**

SUPRC polls are carried out via telephone using standard statistical methods to select a representative sample of likely registered voters.

Sampling, data collection and tabulation for most of these polls are conducted by professional phone banks in Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, and Utah. The fieldwork from these data collection centers helped SUPRC predict the actual outcomes of the NH Presidential Primary in 2004 – in percentage and in actual votes on C-SPAN the night before the election. The SUPRC Director, Suffolk faculty, and polling graduate students closely oversee all procedures.

### **Sampling**

Samples for SUPRC NH surveys are random digit samples of telephone numbers selected using the Probability Proportionate to Size method, which means residential numbers from across the state are selected in proportion to the relative sizes of election voting districts (wards), towns, cities, and counties.

A computer selects the first eight digits of an actual working number and then appends a two-digit random number to produce a random-digit dial (RDD) sample. A RDD sample allows for contacting not only listed and unlisted numbers, but also households with new numbers.

In order to ensure a distribution of ages and genders within households, the interviewer selects the respondent by asking to speak to the adult in the household. Quotas are applied to ensure the sample mirrors the proportions of likely voters statewide. Specifically, the aim is for parity within region, gender, and political party affiliation in order of priority. For example:

#### ***Actual NH***

30% Registered Republican

26% Registered Democrat

44% Undeclared

#### ***Sample NH (June 2007)***

29% Registered Republican

25% Registered Democrat

43% Undeclared

1% Other Party affiliation/designation

2% Not Registered but voting

The above sample includes a key component in NH of election-day registration and voting. (There were 26,890 NH residents who went to their polling place, registered, and voted in the 2004 Presidential Party Primary.)

In addition, since all SUPRC are of likely voters, each respondent is screened to establish him/her as a voter who may meet one or more of the following requirements: self-reported voter registration, intention to vote, attention to the race, past voting, age, respondents' knowledge of their polling places and/or political party identification.

## **Interviewing**

The RDD selected phone numbers are sent to the interviewers through computer-assisted telephone interviewing (CATI) software. Both the software and human supervisors monitor each step of the interviewing process. While calls are automatically dialed, the system does not use predictive dialing so prospective respondents always find a live interviewer when they answer their phone. The professional interviewers and their supervisors are extensively trained in interviewing practices, including techniques designed to achieve the highest possible respondent cooperation.

## **Accuracy**

Sampling error can be calculated when probability sampling methods, such as those described here, are employed. The standard formula to calculate sampling error at the 95 percent confidence level is:  $(\text{SQRT}(.25/\text{sample size})) * 1.96$ . In addition to sampling error, question wording and question order can influence poll results.

Poll results may deviate from full population values because a sample, not a census, is interviewed.

For a sample of about 500 interviews, the error due to sampling is plus or minus 4.38%. For example, when the survey says "46% of voters..." then chances are very strong (95 out of 100 theoretical outcomes) that no less than 41.62% and no more than 50.38% of all voters would have responded the same way.

## **Weighting**

SUPRC has a constantly updated database of demographic information about the national samples and, if one should deviate significantly from past averages, weighting is used to bring the sample into conformity with other samples.

As a general rule, the SUPRC poll results are not weighted in every instance. Sound planning, pre-test, multiple field days, and extensive fieldwork monitoring are emphasized. The statewide probability sample, if conducted properly, should accurately reflect statewide attitudes. However, in cases where fieldwork is less than three days/nights (limiting the opportunity for callbacks), some demographic deviation is possible and weighting is employed.