

Election Polling

Statistics 331

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Real Sampling Error

- “Margin of error” refers to the half width of a confidence interval for the percent who would vote for a given candidate.
- Reported MOE does not apply to the spread or difference between two candidates, e.g., A leads B by 5 percentage points with an MOE of 4 percentage points.

Sampling, Mode of Interview, and Coverage

- Probability v. nonprobability methods
- RDD (random digit dialing) v. RBS (registration based sampling) v. Web
- Cell-phone-only population
- Phoneless population
- Population without internet connection

Respondent Selection Rule

- Last birthday
- Youngest man/oldest woman
- No technique

Data Collection Procedures

- Timing
 - Snapshot in time
 - Polls do not predict
- Length of data-collection period
 - Longer allows callbacks but confronts possible campaign shifts during period
 - Shorter focuses attention on opinion at a point in time, but limits the possibility of callbacks to achieve a representative sample
- Callbacks

Questionnaire

- Order effects
 - Economic issues
 - Defense issues
 - Other issues
- Wording of the horserace question
 - Two major party candidates
 - All candidates
 - Both

Estimation (Weighting)

- Census demographics
- Likely voters
- Party id

Likely Voters

- Index
 - Self-reported intention to vote
 - Measures of engagement
 - Past behavior
- Model
 - Cutoff
 - Probability
- Turnout

Polls

- Pre-election
- Exit

References

- Zukin, C (2004). Sources of variation in published election polling: a primer.
- Harwood, J (August 5, 2012). Pollsters struggle to pin down the right (cell) number, *NY Times*.