

Methodology

Chicago Tribune/WGN-TV polls are based on Registration Based Samples (RBS) telephone survey of known, confirmed registered voters who have voted in elections and likely to vote again. We sample voters who have voted at least once in the last two elections and who say they are eligible to vote where they live now. In the past two general elections one was a presidential election. Interviewing is conducted on evening weekdays and daytime weekends. Poll respondents are contacted with live interviewers by phone. Respondents have either landline or cell phones compliant with Federal Communications Commission regulations.

For samples of 600 can say with 95 percent certainty that results will potentially differ by no more than plus or minus 4.0 percentage points near 50%. Results under or over 50% have smaller margins of error. Within state segments the sample margin error will have larger margins of error.

Elections district voter turnout within a state is the basis for stratified sample areas. Our area stratification in Illinois has been in use for over 20 years. Sample areas within the state is possible using stratified Registration Based Samples (RBS) of known areas voting throughout the state.

State voting districts includes major urban city wards within Chicago, suburban townships within Cook county, five individual counties within the metro, and 96 upper and lower counties in the out-state area. This is called stratification based on consistent past voter turnout patterns over the years. Sample error diminishes with properly stratified Registration Based Sample (RBS). Poll sample frames are stratified by known sub-state election districts voting over time to diminish sample error with consistently known patterns of voter areas turnout.

We take into account that registered voters do not necessarily always vote. So we screen for voters who have voted at least once in two recent elections. For example in the **2010** general election **3.7 million** Illinois voters voted well below the number of eligible registered voters **8.8 million**. And in the **2012** presidential year, **5.3 million** voted also well below the **8.9 million** voters eligible to vote. [General election data source: U.S. Election Project.]

Contrary to the more common Random Digit Dial (RDD) sampling from the last century, Registration Based Samples (RBS) do not include the general voting age population only, do not include eligible voters only, but we do include known, eligible voters who voted at least once in the last two elections. Polls below are more exact due to the highest office in the nation.

IL General Election - Nov. 6, 2012

Obama 3,019,512 58% **+17%**

Romney 2,135,216 41%

Poll, Oct. 4-8, 2012. Sample = 700

Obama 55% **+19%**

Romney 36%

Undecided 5%

[Feb. 2012 poll: Obama 56%, Romney 35%]

IL General Election - Nov. 4, 2008

Obama 3,419,348 61.9% **+25%**

McCain 2,031,179 36.8%

Poll, Oct. 16-18, 2008. Sample = 500

Obama 56% **+24%**

McCain 32%

Undecided 9%

IL General Election - Nov. 2, 2004

Kerry	2,891,550	54.8%	+10%
Bush	2,345,946	44.5%	

Poll, Oct. 16-19, 2004. Sample = 700

Kerry	50%	+8%
Bush	42%	
Undecided	7%	

IL General Election - Nov. 7, 2000

Gore	2,589,026	54.6%	+12%
Bush	2,019,421	42.6%	
Nader	103,759	2.2%	

Poll, Oct. 20-23, 2000. Sample = 899

Gore	45%	+10%
Bush	35%	
Nader	4%	
Undecided	14%	

Poll Estimate Error: One half the difference between the election margin and poll margin for the top two candidates. That difference - if added to one candidate and subtracted from the other - would exactly match the election margin. This is the only error measure comparable with sample margin of error, the method used by the National Council on Public Polls since 1997.

Above three of four years the difference was one percentage point. In 2008 the difference was one half of a percentage point.