

Questions to ask before you believe a poll
adapted from
Statistics; Concepts and Controversies
by David S. Moore

Who carried out the survey?

What was the intended population?

What was the actual population?

How was the sample selected?

What design was used? A key word here is “random.”

How large was the sample? We will discuss margin of error later, but it should be reported.

What was the response rate?

How were the subjects contacted? Mail? Phone? Uniformed police interview?

When was the survey conducted? Could any events have influenced the results?
Could the area in which the survey was conducted have had an effect?

What were the exact questions asked?

What information is sought? Is it likely to be sensitive and generate bias?