

FIRST NASHVILLE VANDERBILT UNIVERSITY POLL

September 2015

In January 2011, the Center for the Study of Democratic Institutions (CSDI) launched the Vanderbilt Poll to provide a non-partisan and scientifically based reading of public opinion within the state of Tennessee and the city of Nashville. The Vanderbilt Poll conducts surveys at least twice a year, prior to the start of the state legislative session and at its conclusion. In September 2015, the Poll carried out its first survey of Nashville. Our focus in all our polls is to uncover what citizens think about important public policy issues and to make our findings available to citizens, policy-makers, and scholars. Since 2011, the Vanderbilt Poll has surveyed nearly 15,000 Tennesseans and all poll results are available at www.vu.edu/poll.

Vanderbilt University (VU) offers an ideal setting for polling opinion across the state and in Nashville. Not only is Vanderbilt located in the city, but it is also a private institution that does not rely on funding from the state or local government. This allows for the flexibility to ask questions on controversial issues that may be facing the city. VU also has committed sufficient resources for us to employ state-of-the-art techniques in gathering the best possible data. Good polling is costly and cutting corners can lead to questionable data. Finally, CSDI and VU have extensive polling expertise among its faculty, students, and staff.

Joshua Clinton, Abby and Jon Winkleried Professor of Political Science, and John Geer, Gertrude Conaway Vanderbilt Professor of Political Science, have served as co-directors of the Vanderbilt Poll since its inception. Clinton received his Ph.D. from Stanford University, where he also earned an M.S. in Statistics and Economics. Geer received his Ph.D. from Princeton University, where he also earned an M.A. in Politics. Both have substantial experience in survey research, developing representative samples, drafting survey questions, and analyzing data.

We take our objective of providing an unbiased reading of public opinion very seriously. As a result, we conduct telephone interviews through both landlines and cell phones. We also weight all statistical results to achieve an accurate demographic representation. Beginning in May 2015, we began using a registered voter list to identify the sample of respondents. This allows us to gain better understanding about the opinions that state leaders hear and allows us to produce more reliable statistical estimates by eliminating the need to trim samples to exclude non-voters.

To help identify the most important issues facing our community and to ensure that our questions avoid ideological and partisan bias, we relied on the Community Advisory Board of the Vanderbilt Center for Nashville Studies. The advisory board evaluated the poll *prior* to it going in the field. We started by soliciting suggestions about what topics to include on the poll and made every effort to utilize those suggestions. Once we wrote questions for the Poll, we got the advisory board's reaction to our proposed questions and then made further revisions based on those reactions.

Current members of Vanderbilt Center for Nashville Studies Community Advisory Board are:

Steve Turner, Board Chair - Principal, MarketStreet Enterprises

Charles Bone - Founder and Chairman, Bone McAllester Norton PLLC

Andrea Carlton - AWC Foundation

Jayne Day - President & CEO, Second Harvest Food Bank of Middle Tennessee

Karl F. Dean – Former Mayor of Metropolitan Government of Nashville, Tennessee

Aubrey Harwell - Neal & Harwell, PLC

Orrin Ingram - President & CEO, Ingram Industries, Inc.

Lewis Lavine - President, Center for Nonprofit Management

Kenneth L. Roberts - President Emeritus, The Frist Foundation

Patricia Shea - CEO, YWCA of Nashville and Middle Tennessee

Ralph Schulz - President & CEO, Nashville Area Chamber of Commerce

Renata Soto - Co-Founder & Executive Director, Conexión Américas

Patricia Stokes - President & CEO, The Urban League of Middle Tennessee

Jerry Williams - Executive Director, Leadership Nashville

Nicholas S. Zeppos - Chancellor, Vanderbilt University

In April 2015, the Vanderbilt Poll became a charter member of the American Association for Public Opinion Research's Transparency Initiative, which is dedicated to encouraging broader and more effective disclosure of research methods among survey organizations. Detailed information about the methodology of our polls can be found on our website at www.vu.edu/poll.

