



**VOLUNTEER
LOUISIANA**

2015 Louisiana Volunteer Study

LSU

Public Policy Research Lab

Executive Summary

This study examining patterns of volunteerism in the state of Louisiana was conducted by the Public Policy Research Lab at Louisiana State University. The objective of the study is an examination of volunteering activity in state of Louisiana with a particular emphasis on barriers to volunteering and differences across metro and rural areas of the state as well as north-south regional differences. The study was sponsored by the Louisiana Service Commission located in the Office of the Lieutenant Governor for the State of Louisiana. The Public Policy Research Lab, located in the Manship School Research Facility at Louisiana State University, created the survey instrument which relied in part on questions from previous studies conducted by the Louisiana Service Commission and its partner organizations.

KEY FINDINGS

- Louisiana residents are much more likely to volunteer informally (70%) than through formal organizations (48%).
- Both formal and informal volunteering are higher in the southern region of Louisiana than in the northern region.
- When residents engage in formal volunteering, religious organizations are the most frequent recipients of their efforts.
- Informal volunteers spent, on average, 113 hours engaged in volunteering. The average time spent volunteering informally surpasses the average amount of time volunteering formally across all organization types with the exception of religious organizations.
- Lack of time is the greatest reported barrier to volunteering.
- Those who do volunteer overwhelmingly report a desire to help someone or improve things as their reason for volunteering.

Rates of Volunteering

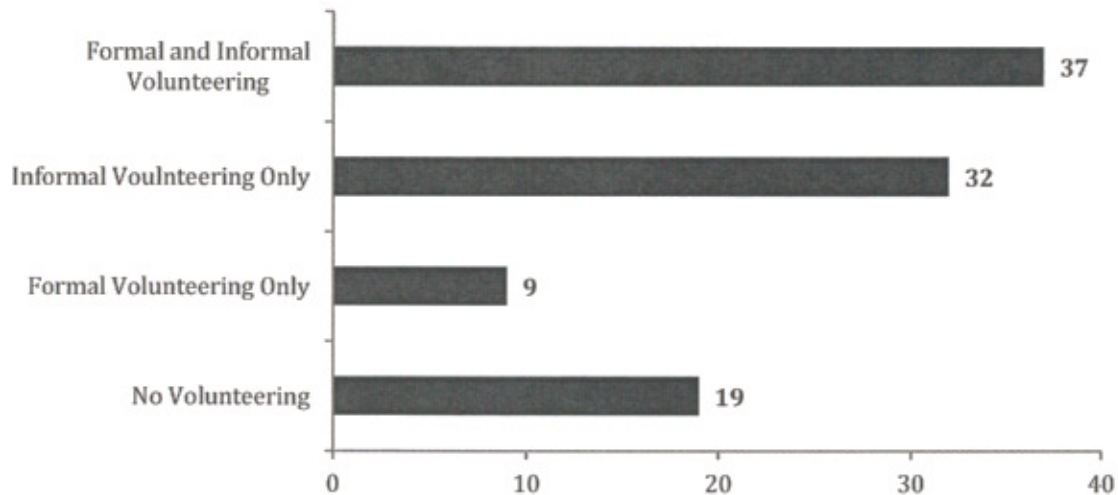
The 2015 Volunteer Survey of Louisiana reveals that the state's residents are much more likely to volunteer informally than they are through organizations. Nearly 70% of survey respondents reported volunteering informally compared to just 48% who reported volunteering through an organization. The distinction between the two types of volunteering is important when it comes to national rankings of states' volunteer rates. Typically, Louisiana ranks at or near the bottom of states in national comparisons that rely only on formal volunteering rates (<http://www.volunteeringinamerica.gov/rankings.cfm>). When formal and informal volunteering is assessed, only 19% of respondents reported no volunteering of any type.

Figure 1 reveals how important it is to capture informal rates of volunteering. Just over 32% of volunteers, nearly half of all respondents who volunteered informally, do not volunteer through an organization. In contrast, just 9% of respondents who volunteer through an organization report no informal volunteering. The importance of capturing informal volunteering is made evident by the recent inclusion of a question on the Volunteer Supplement to the Current Population Survey designed to capture informal volunteering. In this nationwide comparison, Louisiana is very close to the national average of informal volunteering.

Nationwide, nearly 63% of respondents reported informal volunteering, defined as "doing favors for your neighbor" (<http://www.volunteeringinamerica.gov/national>). A similar share holds among Louisiana residents (<http://www.volunteeringinamerica.gov/LA>). Reported informal volunteering is somewhat higher in our survey (70%), likely due to our broader definition of informal volunteering. For the purposes of this survey informal volunteering is defined as activities including "things like helping neighbors or friends with such tasks as watching each other's children, helping with shopping, or house sitting or caring for their home."

An examination of volunteering through an organization by region reveals some variation in rates (Figure 2). The Metro North has the lowest level of formal volunteering at 41% while the highest rate was in the Metro South at 51%. The Rural South's volunteering rate of 48% was slightly lower than its Southern Metro counterpart. The metro/non-metro differences within regions do not exceed the margin of error; however, there is a substantial difference between northern and southern regions of the state regardless of metropolitan status. There is a consistent pattern of greater volunteering in the southern areas of the state. The highest rate of informal volunteering (73%) also occurs in the Metro South with the Rural South coming in a close second at 71%. The lowest rate of informal volunteering occurs in the Metro North (62%).

Figure 1: Most Residents Engage In Some Volunteer Activity
Combined responses to questions reporting formal and informal volunteering

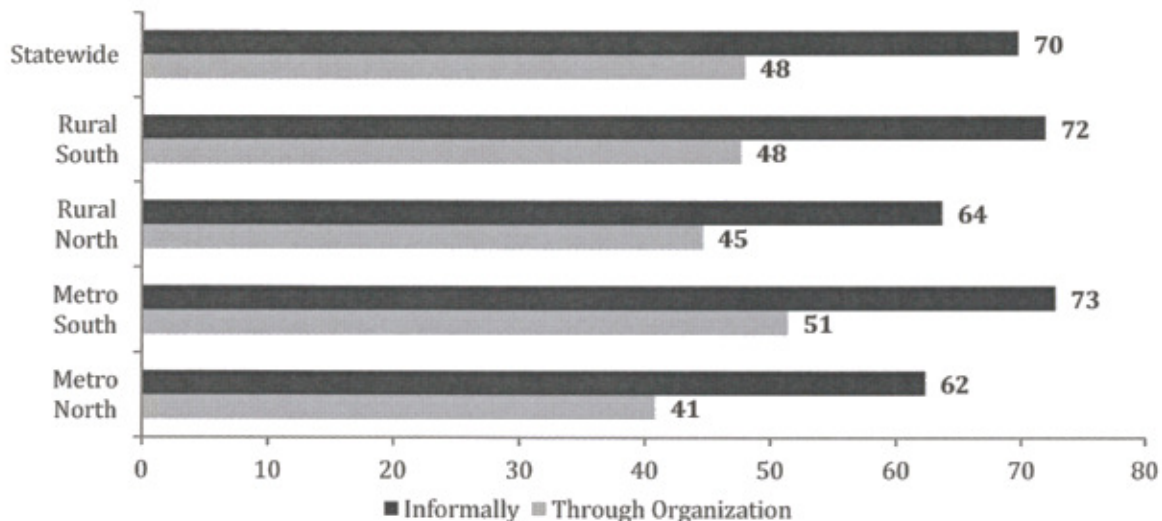


Note: 2% of respondents who failed to answer or said "don't know" to either question are not shown.

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Figure 2: Louisiana Residents Do More Volunteering on Their Own Than They Do Through Organizations

% reporting volunteer activity through or for an organization and % reporting informal volunteering not through an organization, within past year



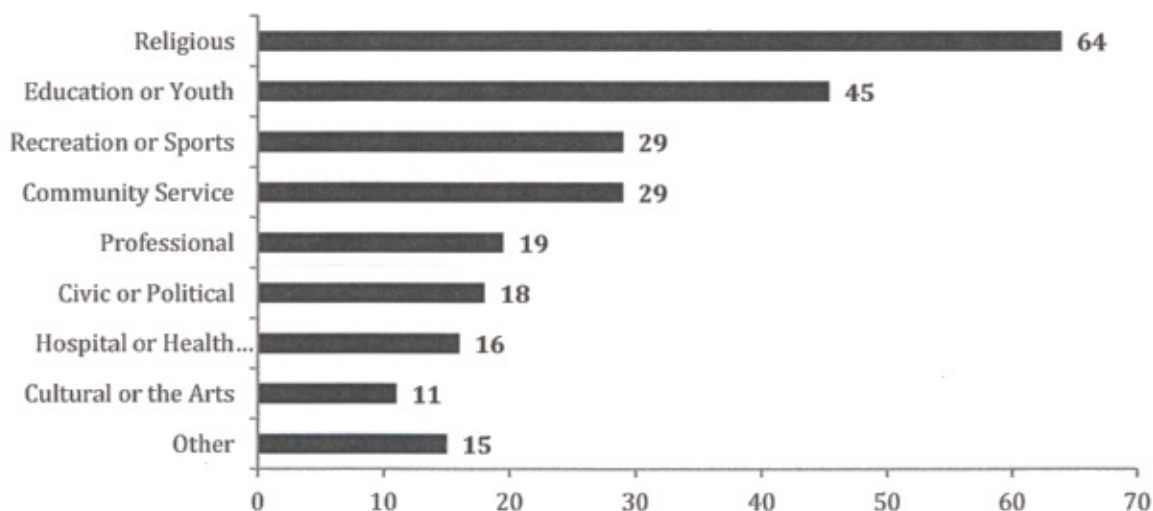
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Formal Volunteering by Organization Type

Among those who volunteer formally, religious organizations are chosen most often as the recipient of volunteering activities. Just over 64% of respondents reported volunteering for a religious organization (Figure 3). Education or youth organizations were lower with 45% of respondents reporting volunteering at an education or youth organization. Community service organizations and recreation and sports organizations were in a close race for third place, at 29%. Respondents were least likely to report volunteering for a cultural or arts organization.

Figure 3: Most Formal Volunteering Done Through Religious Organizations

*% saying they volunteered for each type of organizations within past year
(only among those who report formal volunteering)*



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Table 1 displays volunteer patterns across regions of the state. On the whole, the percentage of respondents volunteering in religious organizations does not vary considerably by region. The greatest variation by region occurs for community service organizations. Nearly 35% of respondents in the Metro North reported volunteering for this type of organization compared to just 23% in the Rural North. In fact, both of the metro areas of the state had higher rates of volunteering for community service organizations than their rural counterparts. There are some slight differences for professional organizations with 24% of the Metro North's volunteers engaging with this type of organization compared to 16% of the Rural South. Nearly a quarter, 21%, of respondents in the Metro South reported volunteering for a civic or political organization while less than 13% of the Metro North reported activity through that type of organization.

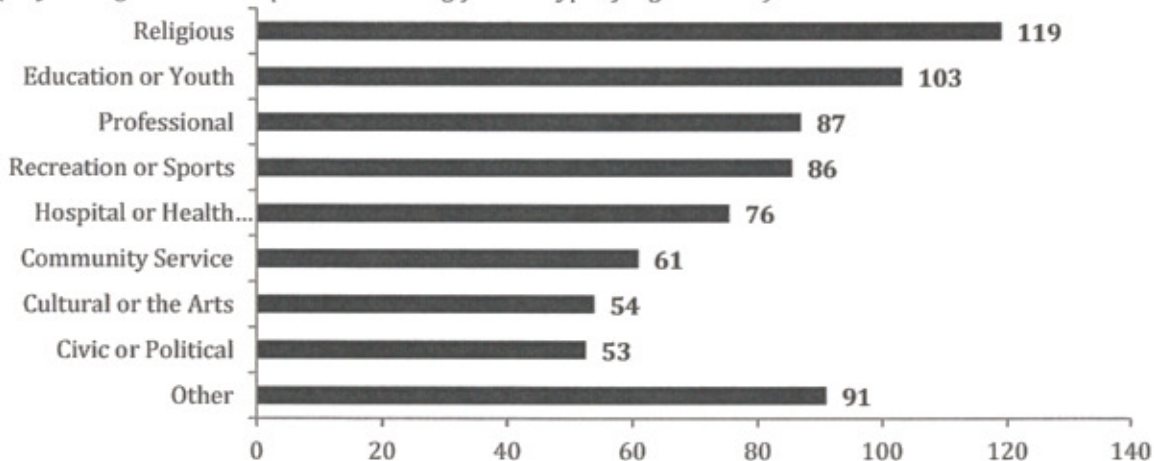
Table 1: Volunteer Patterns Throughout State*% Volunteering for each organization type by region (among formal volunteers only)*

Organization	Statewide	Metro North	Metro South	Rural North	Rural South
Religious	64	68	61	69	65
Education or Youth	45	41	49	43	43
Recreation or Sports	29	36	29	29	26
Community Service	29	35	31	23	26
Professional	19	24	19	21	16
Civic or Political	18	13	21	12	16
Hospital or Health Care	16	9	16	16	19
Cultural or the Arts	11	12	15	15	18
Other	15	12	15	15	18

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Figure 4 displays information on volunteer hours by organizational type. This provides a more direct measure of the amount of volunteering that occurs through these organizations than just the share of residents who donate their time and efforts. Statewide, religious organizations have the highest average number of service hours, at 119 hours. In other words, not only do more people volunteer through religious organizations, they spend more time volunteering there as well.

The average amount of time spent volunteering informally over the previous year was just over 113 hours. The fact that so many Louisiana residents choose to engage in informal volunteering and spend a great deal of time engaged in such volunteering makes it critical that informal volunteering is captured in any evaluation that wants an accurate picture of volunteering in the state.

Figure 4: More Volunteer Hours for Religious and Education/Youth Organizations Than Other Organizations*Average number of hours of volunteer activity within past year for each type of organizations (only among those who report volunteering for that type of organization)**Public Policy Research Lab, Louisiana State University***LSU**

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Volunteer Activities

The types of activities in which volunteers engage are quite varied across organizational type. We asked respondents to describe the activities they engaged in while volunteering and coded these open-ended response into 20 activity types (see 'Script and Topline Frequencies' for tabulations of these open-ended responses by organization type as well as for informal volunteering).

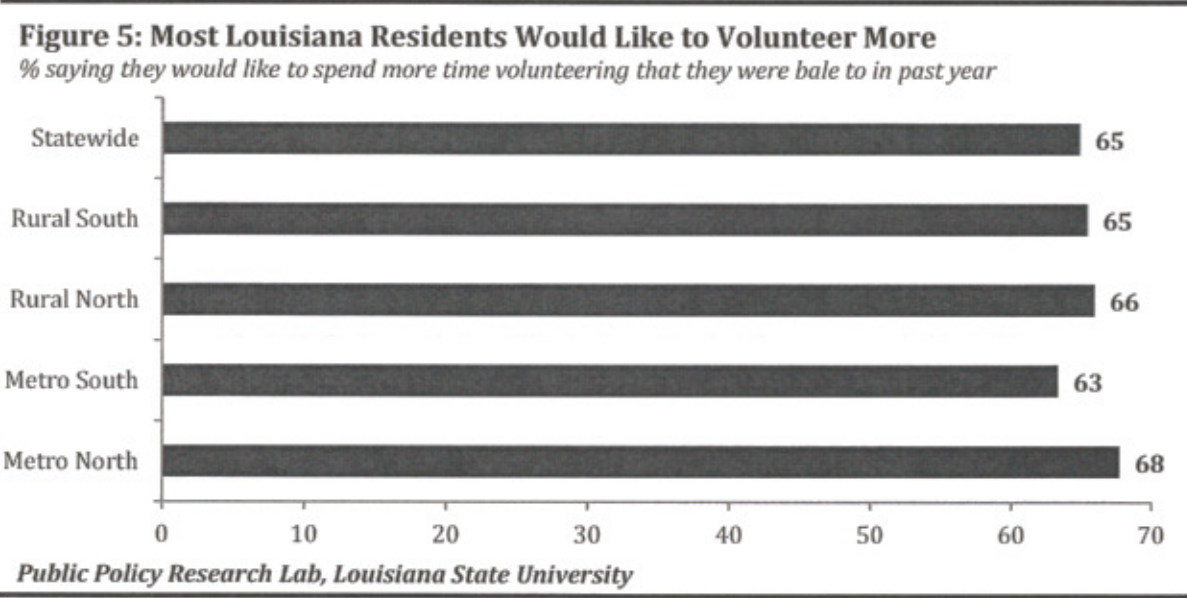
Fundraising and handling money ranked among the top four activities regardless of organizational type with the exception of religious organizations. The next most common activity across organizations is cooking and food preparation.

There was some overlap of the most common activities between formal and informal volunteers. Among informal volunteers, cooking and food preparation ranked in the top four. Among informal volunteers, childcare was the most popular activity. Informal volunteers also reported transporting friends, neighbors, or family members around town for things like doctors' appointments, shopping, and errands. In addition, informal volunteers frequently engaged in lawn care and cleaning activities.

Volunteer Experiences

Respondents who chose to engage in volunteering overwhelmingly describe the experience as a positive one. Nearly 95% of respondents indicate that their experiences were either “extremely positive” or “somewhat positive.” There were no important regional variations.

Most Louisiana residents would like to volunteer more than they currently do (Figure5). Nearly two-thirds of respondents indicated that they would like to spend more time volunteering. Eleven percent of respondents who did not volunteer at all indicated that they would like to spend more time volunteering.



Barriers to Volunteering

One of the goals of this study is to examine barriers to volunteering. This allows for an assessment of whether or not there are activities in which state and local governments, nonprofits, and other organizations can engage in order to increase volunteering. The number one barrier to volunteering is a lack of time (Figure 6). Nearly 65% of respondents identified a lack of time as being an extremely or very important reason that they did not volunteer more than they did. The second most cited reason, not knowing how to find out how to get involved, was a distance second at 34%. The third most frequently named barrier was transportation with just over 28% citing it as an extremely important or very important barrier.

There are very few differences across the regions when it comes to identified barriers, with the exception of the Metro South. The Metro South is much less likely to identify any of the barriers as being an “extremely important” reason that they do not volunteer. This is likely due to the fact that the Metro South has the highest rate of volunteering across the state. It is important to note that nearly 34% of respondents identified a lack of knowledge regarding how to get involved as an important barrier. Unfortunately, less than 3% of survey respondents reported using the Volunteer Louisiana website. Since lack of knowledge is identified as a major impediment to volunteering, additional efforts should be made to publicize the website and its ability to provide volunteering activities.

Figure 6: Lack of Spare Time is Most Cited Barrier to Volunteering

% saying the item is an “extremely important” or “very important” reason for not volunteering more



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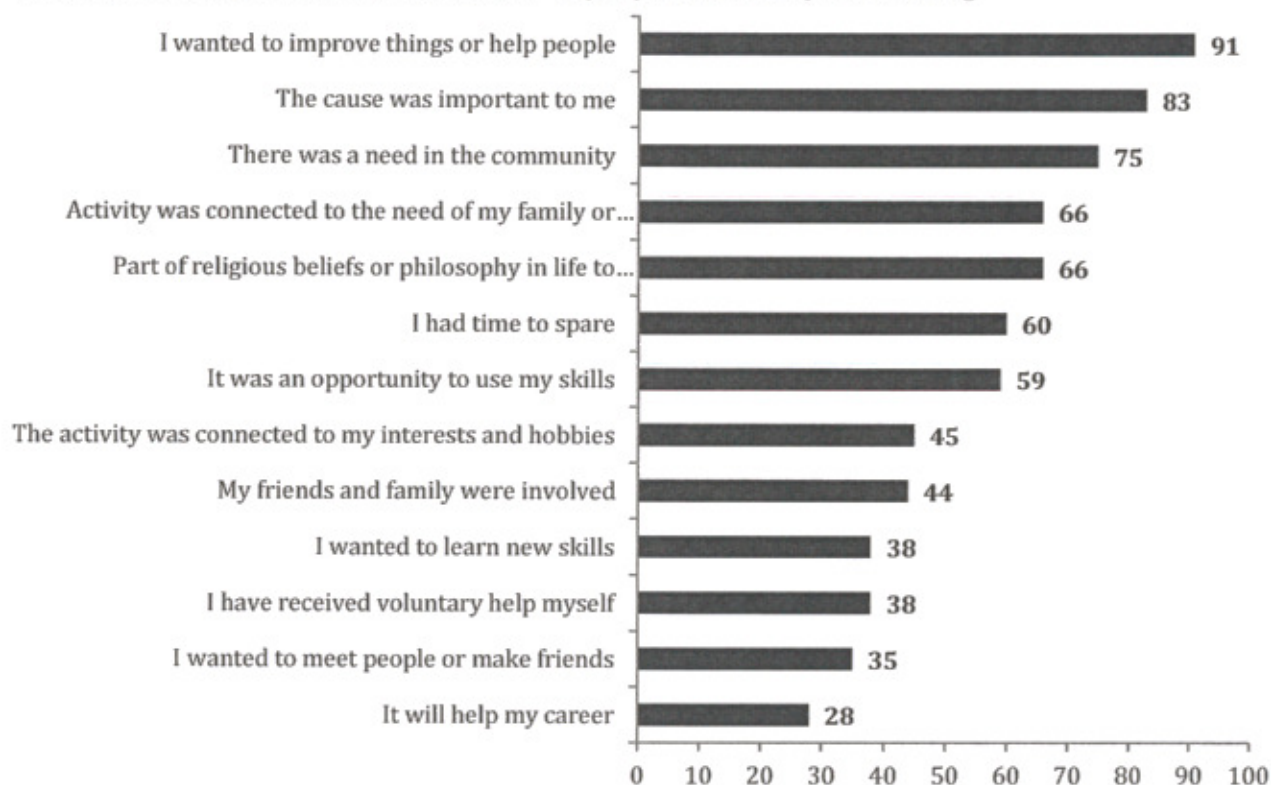
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Reasons for Volunteering

Respondents were asked a series of questions regarding the reasons they chose to volunteer. Figure 7 contains the percentage of individuals who cited that particular reason for volunteering. Just over 90% of respondents indicate that they volunteered because they “wanted to improve things or help people.” The second most common reason for volunteering was “the cause was important to me.” Interestingly, reasons such as “it will help my career” and “I want to learn skills” had the lowest percentage of volunteers indicating those choices as a reason for volunteering. Volunteering appears to be overwhelmingly “other” centered among our respondents. There do not appear to be systematic differences across the regions in terms of the reasons they choose to volunteer.

Figure 7: Wanting to Improve Things or Help People Most Important Reason for Volunteering

% saying the item is an “extremely important” or “very important” reason for volunteering



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Survey Methodology

Data in this report are from three combined samples of randomly selected adult Louisiana residents. The three samples are metro parishes, non-metro parishes of north Louisiana, and non-metro parishes of south Louisiana (see Regional Definitions section for more details). The total combined sample contains 2,209 respondents.

Data were collected via telephone interviews conducted from May 28 to July 20, 2015. The survey includes a traditional landline telephone survey combined with a survey of Louisiana cell phone users. Forty three percent of respondents in the total sample were interviewed on a cell phone. The design of the landline sample ensures representation of both listed and unlisted numbers by use of random digit dialing. The cell phone sample is randomly drawn from known, available phone number banks dedicated to wireless service.

The response rate is 9.5 percent for landline interviews and 6.5% for cell phone interviews. This response rate is the percentage of residential households or personal cell phones for which an interview is completed. The rates are calculated using the American Association for Public Opinion Research's method for Response Rate 3 as published in their Standard Definitions. Response rates have declined steadily for all surveys over the past several decades. The response rates for this survey are within or near the range of what national survey research organizations such as Gallup and the Pew Research Center have reported.

The total combined sample is weighted using an iterative procedure that matches race and ethnicity, education, household income, gender and age to known profiles for the respective populations found in the Census Bureau's American Community Survey. The sample is also weighted for population density by parish using parameters from United States Census data. Weighting cannot eliminate every source of nonresponse bias. However, proper conduction of random sampling combined with accepted weighting techniques has a strong record of yielding unbiased results.

The margin of error for the total sample is ± 1.5 percentage points. The margin of error for portions of the sample will be greater. The margin of error and tests for statistical significance take the weighting into account.

In addition to sampling error, as accounted for through the margin of error, readers should recognize that questions wording and practical difficulties in conducting surveys can introduce error or bias into the findings of opinion polls.