

The WAGER Vol. 5(20) - The Roper Files

May 24, 2000

Founding fathers of public opinion polling Elmo Roper and George Gallup created the Roper Center for Public Opinion Research just after World War II. Housed at the University of Connecticut, the Center maintains a searchable database of over 300,000 survey questions asked in polls since the 1930s. Poll questions range in topics from voting behavior to personal habits. A search using the keyword 'gambling' returns numerous items gleaned from 60 years of public opinion polls, suggesting that gambling has long been a topic of interest to social scientists. The graphics below present just a few of the questions and results selected from the database search.

Survey methodology has improved drastically over the years. Computers permit the use of complex sampling schema that produce samples that are more representative of the population of interest. Researchers have learned how to write questions that are more precise and understandable, and interviewers have learned to control bias. Still, there is vast variance in the quality of survey methods employed. Without knowing exactly how these gambling-related polls were conducted, it is difficult to gauge their scientific value. Nevertheless, these polls provide an entertaining glimpse at public perceptions of gambling across the decades.

Do you think government lotteries would produce an unwholesome gambling spirit in this country?



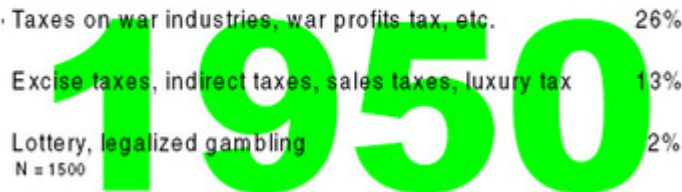
Source: Gallup Poll USGALLUP.051838

What will your New Year's resolutions be?



Source: Gallup Poll USGALLUP.47-469

How do you think this money (the proposed doubling of United States war defense spending for the coming year) should be raised?



Source: Gallup Poll USGALLUP.50-468.

Would you favor or oppose legalizing such forms of gambling as betting on races, lotteries, numbers, etc., throughout the country?



Source: Gallup Poll USGALLUP.042751

What's your best guess--if the work week is cut down to 32 hours, how will workers spend their extra time?



Source: Gallup Poll USGALLUP.57-585

Would you have any objections to your husband gambling on the races, on numbers, or in cards?



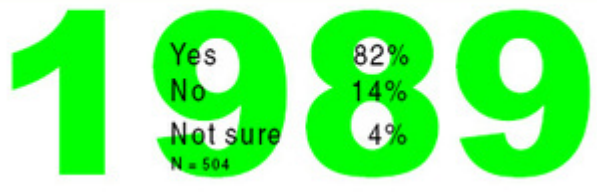
Source: Gallup Poll USGALLUP.556POS

Have you often, sometimes, hardly ever or never felt bad because you lost more at gambling than you could afford to?



Source: Harris Poll USHARRIS.061465.

In your view, is frequent gambling a disease, like alcoholism?



Source: Time/C.N.N./Yankelovich Clancy Shulman USYANKCS.070789

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