

OPINION POLLS & SURVEYS

YOUTH
STAND
UP

An opinion poll can tell you how people feel about the community, its problems, and specific policies. Surveys are useful at all stages of your Youth Stand Up civic action project.

1. Creating Survey Questions

Closed-choice and open-ended questions.

Closed-choice questions ask the responder to answer yes or no, choose from a multiple-choice list, or use a rating scale.

Open-ended questions ask the responder to write their own thoughts, rather than choose from a set of possible answers.

You should make most of your questions closed-choice. Avoid too many open-ended questions because when people answer in their own words, it is more difficult to score the surveys. You can use open-ended questions to ask responders to clarify their answers.

- **Keep the survey short and simple.** Make sure that your questions are easy to understand. Avoid questions that are wordy and have difficult vocabulary. Keep your survey concise: a shorter survey lets you reach more people in a shorter time.
- **Ask questions that do not force particular answers.** Questions must be unbiased, otherwise your survey results will be open to criticism.
- **Ask for demographic information.** People's age, gender, etc., may be useful.
- **Include an "undecided" or "unsure" option.**
- **Avoid embarrassing or personal questions.**



2. Selecting the Sample

Most professional polls try to get a *random* sample of respondents, meaning that every person in the population had the same chance of taking the survey. This means that you don't have to poll everyone in the community.

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3. Conducting the Survey

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| Practice a brief introduction | Share your school's name. Explain the survey's purpose. Ask if the person is willing to take the survey. |
| Don't be too persistent | If the person is reluctant, don't try to force them to complete the survey. Their responses will be questionable. |
| Tell respondents that the survey is anonymous | Don't put anyone's name on the survey. |
| Be organized | Use a clipboard or folder to hold the surveys and bring extra pens or pencils. If you have created a digital survey, plan to have a scannable QR code and bring a charged iPad or laptop for people to use. |
| Be polite | You can ask for clarification if a response is unclear. Thank respondents when they finish. If they ask questions, take time to answer them. |
| Check each survey | Make sure that all of the information is complete |

4. Calculating the Results of Your Survey

- **Count the number of completed surveys.**
- **Tabulate the survey results on a blank survey form.** Be able to explain how your sample was chosen. People will want to know this.
- **Include respondents who were undecided.** Dropping the unsure responses can seriously distort your results. For example, you ask people whether they favor X. 40 percent favor X, 30 percent oppose X, and 30 percent are unsure. If you throw out the unsure responses, your survey will show 57 percent favored X and 43 percent were opposed. These results are misleading.

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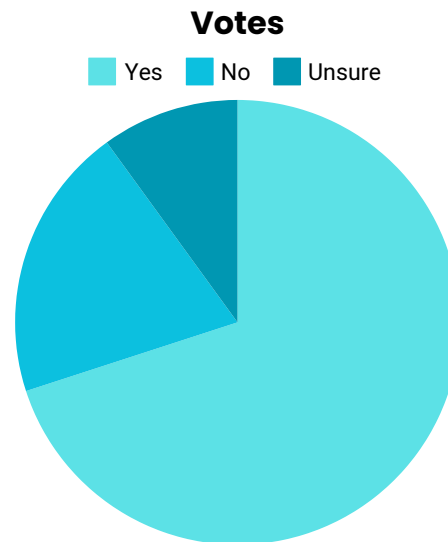
- **Write down significant findings.**

You may want to highlight any unusual differences in the responses of various groups, such as women, men, and students.

- **Decide how to present your data.** Here are some common methods:

- Percentages: "Over 77 percent favored putting the park next to the mall."
- Raw numbers: "Of the 450 polled in our survey, 348 favored putting the park next to the mall."

Pie Chart



Bar Graph

