

BOX 6.1 Numbers in the News

In the 2012 presidential election, many polls predicted that Mitt Romney would receive more votes than he actually did. Because Gallup pollsters were concerned that their prediction was so far off, they worked with political scientists at the University of Michigan to find the cause.⁹ Their report identified various differences between the poll's sample and the population of voters, each of which overrepresented Romney voters. For example, in sampling the Midwest, the poll overrepresented Midwesterners from the central time zone (who were more supportive of Romney) and underrepresented those from the eastern time zone (who were more supportive of Obama). By identifying those variables where the poll sample differed from the population of voters, Gallup was able to modify its research design to provide more accurate election predictions.