## *Methodology*

The Town worked in cooperation with the Broome County Board of Elections to obtain the most up-to-date voter registration list for the Town, including the incorporated villages of Endicott and Johnson City. There were a total of 32,244 registered voters. An online sample size calculator (http://www.surveysystem.com/sscalc.htm)[1] was used to determine the number of responses needed to ensure a representative survey. Using information provided by the software, it was determined that a total of 380 responses would be needed to provide a 95% confidence level with a confidence interval of 5.
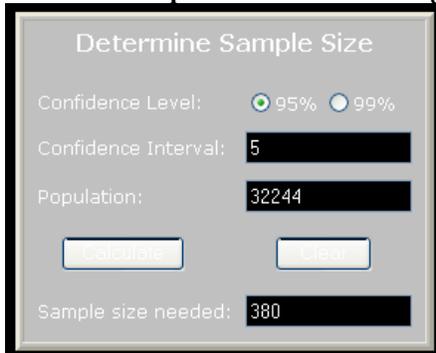
The **confidence interval** is the plus-or-minus figure usually reported in newspaper or television opinion poll results. For example, if you use a confidence interval of 5 and 47% percent of your sample picks an answer you can be "sure" that if you had asked the question of the entire relevant population between 42% (47-5) and 52% (47+5) would have picked that answer.

The **confidence level** tells you how sure you can be. It is expressed as a percentage and represents how often the true percentage of the population who would pick an answer lies within the confidence interval. The 95% confidence level means you can be 95% certain; the 99% confidence level means you can be 99% certain. Most researchers use the 95% confidence level.
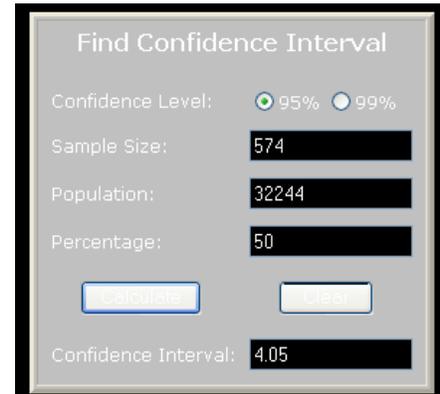
When you put the confidence level and the confidence interval together, you can say that you are 95% sure that the true percentage of the population is between 42% and 52%. Although the Town initially planned for a confidence interval of 5, the large number of responses actually decreased the confidence interval to 4.05%

Once the number of responses needed was determined, the Town created an electronic file containing only the voter identification numbers (all personal information such as name and address, date of birth, and political party affiliation was deleted) for the 32,244 registered voters. The file was then sent to Binghamton University where a random selection of 1,500 voter registration numbers was extracted. The file was then returned to the Town and the names and mailing address information was added for mailing purposes. The eight-page survey contained 128 questions for which the Town was seeking opinions. The initial mailing included a cover letter explaining the survey and also included a postage paid envelope for the completed survey to be returned to the Town. The cost of the survey was $2,591, which included printing, folding, insertion, labeling, and all mailing costs.

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[1] Calculator graphics and statistical definitions reprinted with permission of Creative Research Systems, Petaluma, CA