

Polling and Public Opinion





October 12/13, 2023



Learning Intention	Success Criteria	You will need	
I am learning about the elements of scientific polling.	I can identify scientific polling types and methods, such as: types of polls & polling techniques.	Agenda	Measuring Public Opinion
		Homework	Read 369-374 & 4.4 vids



Public opinion is measured through scientific polling, and the results of public opinion polls influence public policies and institutions.

Learning Intention

I am learning about the elements of scientific polling.

Success Criteria

I can identify scientific polling types and methods, such as:

- Type of poll (opinion polls, benchmark or tracking polls, entrance and exit polls)
- Sampling techniques, identification of respondents, mass survey or focus group, sampling error
- Type and format of questions

BEL

Which of

- a) A
- b) A
- c) A
- d) A



n countries

other

Public Opinion

- **Defined:** How the population collectively views vital policy issues and evaluates political leaders.
- Measured-> scientific polling.



FRQ

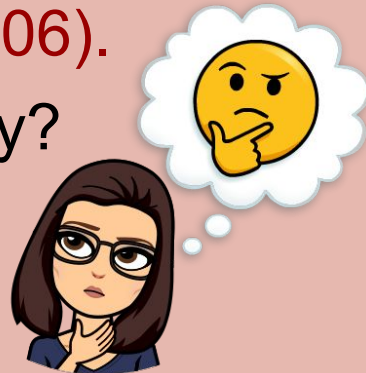
Public opinion polls are commonly used by politicians and the media.

- A. Identify two characteristics of a reliable scientific public opinion poll.
- B. Describe two ways polling results are used by politicians.
- C. Explain how frequent public opinion polls impact media coverage of political campaigns.

Keep this question in mind during the presentation.

Are you sure this is the right recipe?

- Participatory democracy requires an informed society
- Public opinions polls reveal an alarming lack of public knowledge about the American political system.
 - One national poll found that 74% of people could name the Three Stooges but only 42% could name the three branches of government (Zogby 2006).
- Maybe we'd be better off as an elite democracy?



Key Vocabulary



- **Demographics** are the statistical data relating to a given population, such as race, educational level, income, or religion.
- **Census**: an enumeration of the population utilizing demographics. Required by the Constitution every ten years.
- ***What useful information can a census provide?***

**What do you
need for a valid
poll?**



Students, write your response!

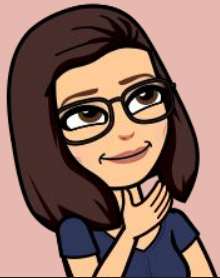
A person is sitting on a bed in a room. The room is decorated with posters and floor text that all say "THE POLL DANCE". The person is wearing a blue shirt and is looking down. The room has a red carpet and a window with white curtains. There are plants and a stack of suitcases in the room.

THE POLL DANCE

Yes

No

POLLING



Are public opinions
polls positive for
society?
Take a position and
justify your response.



Students, write your response!

Pear Deck Interactive Slide
Do not remove this bar

Are public opinions polls positive for society?

Yes

- Provides a way for the public to express its views.
- Enables political leaders to understand and implement public preferences on key issues.

No

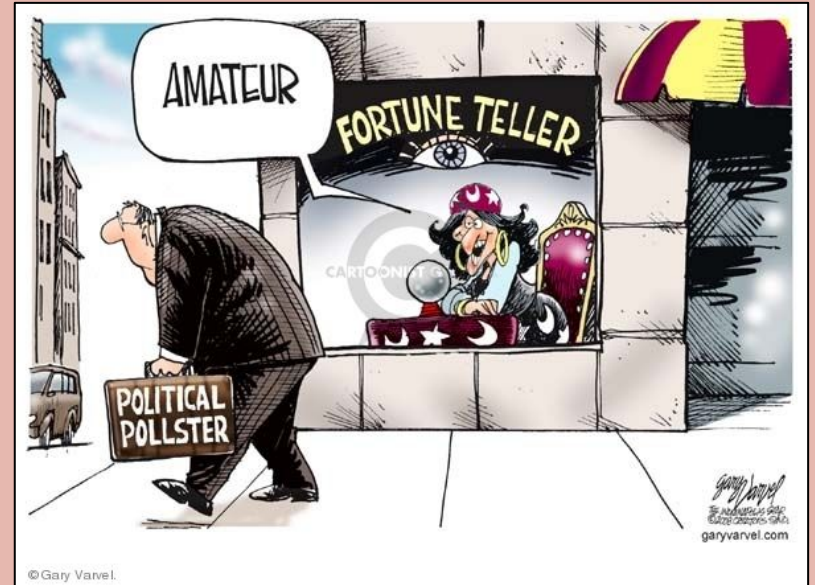
- Can also be used to manipulate public opinion.
- Just because something is popular doesn't make it right.

POLLING



A Brief History of Bad Polling

1. Early straw polls -- non-scientific, poor sample size (like asking your friends)
2. Literary Digest vs. Gallup
3. Dewey Defeats Truman!
4. Gore wins Florida!
5. Clinton vs. Trump



The Polling Process

• Scientific poll-taking is an extremely complex process that can best be described in (5) basic steps:

1. **Define the Universe**
2. **Constructing a Sample**
3. **Preparing Valid Questions**
4. **Interviewing**
5. **Analyze and Report Findings**



What would make the process unscientific?

Should pollsters be required to share their methodology?

Constructing the Sample

1. Random
2. Representative
3. *Relatively* small size... but large enough!
4. Small margin of error
 - for statistics geeks



Simply put, a poll can survey 1,500 people with a margin of error of +/- 3% and be a reliable measurement of a vast universe.

Preparing Valid Questions

ACCEPTABLE FORMAT

- Closed-ended (but what choices?)
- Open-ended (how to report?)

UNACCEPTABLE FORMAT

- Double-barrelled (asking two separate questions in one)
- Ambiguous (uses vaguely defined terms)
- Biased/Leading (uses manipulative language, more or less force-feeding the answer to the respondent)

Analyzing and Reporting the Findings

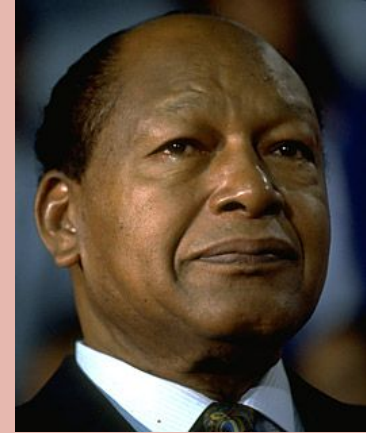


- Responsible pollsters consider the challenges of measuring intensity, stability, and relevance of data in their reporting.
- They also explain their methodology in minute detail so that others can assess how to weight the results of the poll.

Analysis II: Social Desirability Distortion

Bradley Effect - if answers would reveal socially undesirable trait/opinion, respondents might lie.

- Did you vote?
- Questions that would reveal racism, sexism, homophobia.



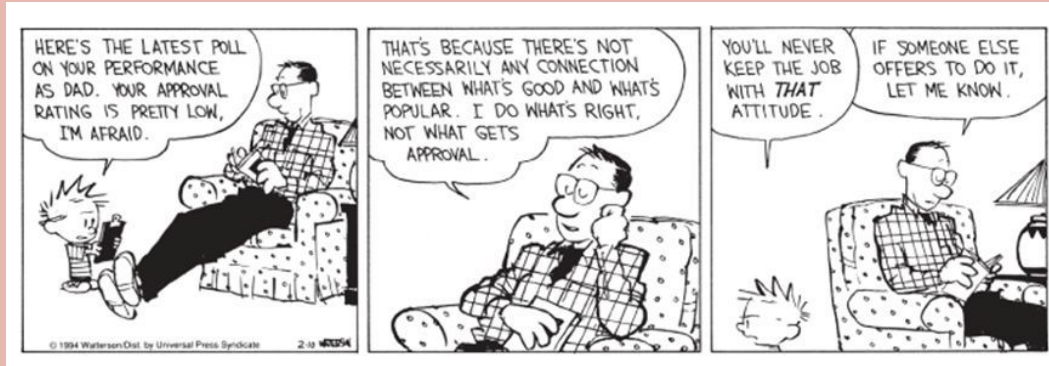
Bandwagon Effect - respondents might want to please the pollster, tell them what they think they want to hear. Or the respondent may want to feel that they are with the in-crowd, especially relevant with exit polls.

How might politicians use polling data?

- Collecting information on how to conduct their campaign
- Collecting information to shape policy
- Promoting themselves to the public (platform formation)
- Conducting opposition research
- Collecting information to inform votes on bills/actions
- Gaining support from donors

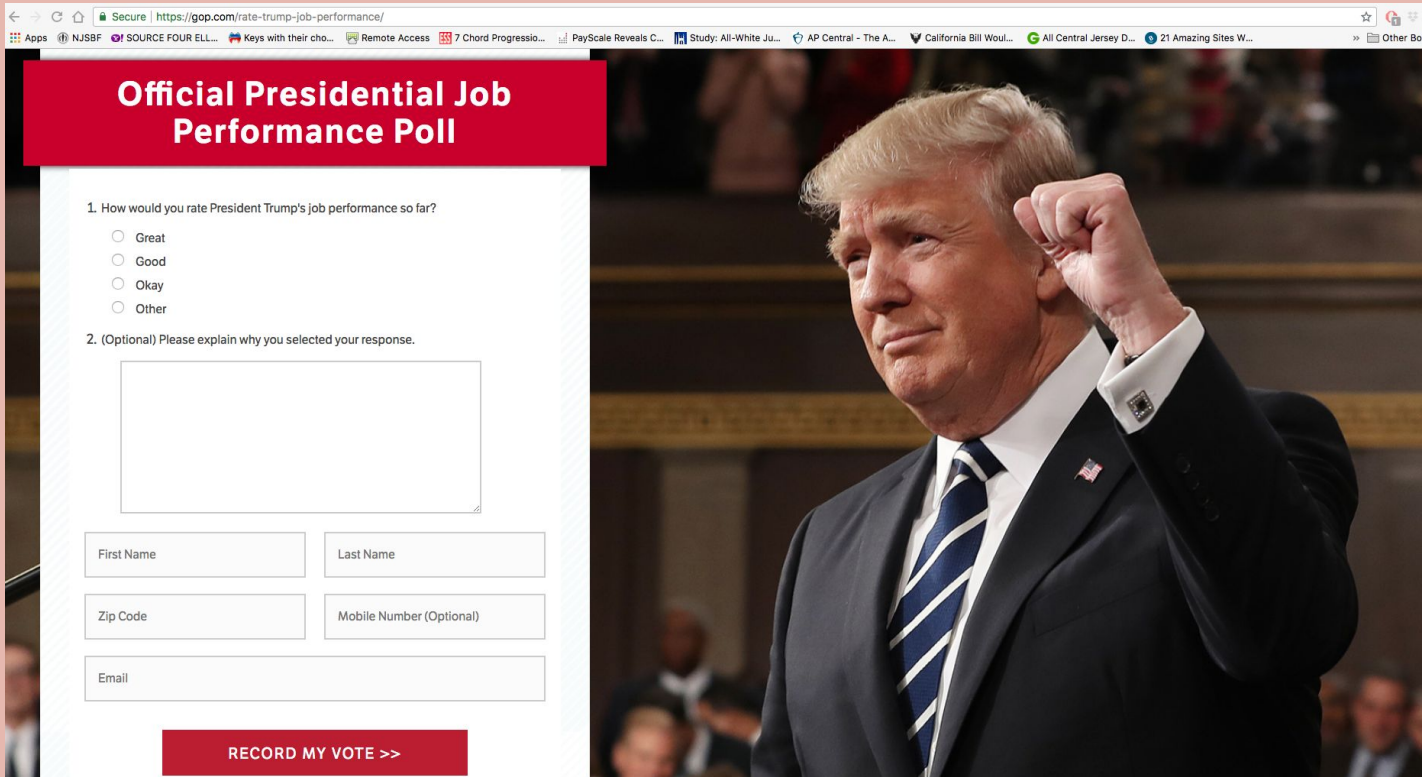


When do politicians ignore public opinion?



- Think of themselves as trustees, not delegates
- Loyalty to particular interest groups (e.g., large donors)
- Not worried about reelection
- Principle (stop laughing)
- Believe that public opinion will change

Making Survey Questions Great Again



Official Presidential Job Performance Poll

1. How would you rate President Trump's job performance so far?

- Great
- Good
- Okay
- Other

2. (Optional) Please explain why you selected your response.

First Name: _____ Last Name: _____

Zip Code: _____ Mobile Number (Optional): _____

Email: _____

RECORD MY VOTE >>

Step 1 of 3 SECURE

Response Recorded

Thank you for adding your opinion. Now take the next step.

The mainstream media have made it their mission to take down President Trump.

We need the resources to fight back every step of the way.

Please make a contribution to defend our movement from nasty, fake attacks.

Choose donation amount:

\$35	\$50	\$100	\$250
\$500	\$1,000	\$2,700	Other

Make this a monthly recurring donation.

Continue ➔

Purpose of this poll?

Public opinion polls are commonly used by politicians and the media.

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We will address Part C when we cover the media.

Students, write your response!

2018 FRQ #2

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