**UNIT 4 Chpt. 13 Topic 4.5-4.6 Measuring Public Opinion, Evaluating Public Opinion Data**

**4.5 Public opinion is measured through scientific polling, and the results of public opinion polls influence public policies and institutions. Describe the elements of a scientific poll.**

**WHAT IS POLLING?**

* Polling is a means to assess p\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ o\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ on issues or a candidate
* George Gallup is the Founding Father of modern-day polling = Gallup Polls

**WHAT TYPES OF POLLS EXIST?**

* **OPINION POLL**
  + Interviews or surveys with samples of citizens that are used to estimate the f\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ and b\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ of the entire population.
* **BENCHMARK POLL**
  + Benchmark is generally the first poll taken (i.e. in a campaign). Can be used as the benchmark for a tracking poll.
* **TRACKING POLL**
  + In a tracking poll, researchers ask people the same or similar questions over time to “track” the path of public opinion. Example: Presidential approval poll
* **ENTRANCE/EXIT POLL**
* They are conducted outside of polling places on Election Day to predict the outcome of an election. Entrance polls are conducted before someone votes. Exit polls are conducted a\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ someone votes.

The purpose of an exit poll is to p\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ the outcome of an election as soon after the polls close as possible. An exit poll asks whom the voters actually v\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ for.

* **Focus Groups**
* A small group of citizens—10 to 40 people—who are gathered to hold c\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ about issues or candidates; less scientific than many types of polls, focus groups allow for deeper insight into a topic. Pollsters can ask follow-up questions and examine body language and intensity that would be missed in a simple automated questionnaire over the phone.

**What Makes a Scientific Poll Scientific?**

**Randomness-** a statistical technique that ensures that everyone has an e\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ o\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ to participate in the poll. A small random sample of **\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_** people can reflect the attitudes of m\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

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**Margin of Error-** Every poll has a margin of error ( 3 3, which reflects the possible range of responses in randomly selected group. Margin of error d\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ as the number of people who respond to a poll increases.

**Questions**- the way in which a question is worded can influence a response

UNSCIENTIFIC POLLS are used by special interests and b\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ questions to create the impression that their views are the most popular. <https://classroom.synonym.com/>

**HOW IS A SCIENTIFIC POLL CREATED?**

* **Creating an Accurate Poll**
  + You must have:
    - C\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Worded Questions
      * No b\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ and c\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ differentiated alternatives
    - A poll that actually seeks the t\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
      * Not “A\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_” and “P\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Polls” which try to influence the outcome

» **"*Would you be more likely or less likely to vote for John McCain for president if you knew he had fathered an illegitimate black child?”***

» The allegation had no s\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, but p\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ the idea of undisclosed allegations in the minds of thousands of primary voters.

» *McCain and his wife had in fact adopted a Bangladeshi girl.*

* + - * Look for reliable pollsters - not party polls Remember…
      * Polls are just a snapshot and may be wrong!!!
* Define the “universe” (the p\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ to be measured)
  + National polls typically require 1\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_-2\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ respondents.
  + Sampling error: The margin of error is expressed in \_\_\_\_ */\_\_\_\_\_* terms.
    - Can reduce sampling error by adding more respondents
  + In other words…Take random samples WHERE everyone has an e\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ chance of being i\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**MEASUREMENT OF PUBLIC OPINION**

* **By elections**: deceiving – does not tell us WHY people voted as they did (and only voters participate)
* **By straw polls** – no use of sampling makes them n\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ accurate
* By Scientific polls
  + M\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ accurate
  + Through r\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ means: where each person in universe has an equal chance of being s\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ (most important for getting an accurate measure of public opinion)
  + National polls typically require ~\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_-\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ respondents
  + Margin of e\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_: expressed in +/- terms
  + Can reduce margin of error by adding more respondents, but at some point diminishing returns set in
  + Questions must avoid a b\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**RANDOM SAMPLING**

**What went wrong?**

In the fall of 1936, *The Literary Digest mailed* 10 million poll surveys but only 2.4 (24% or about ¼ of what was originally intended) million Americans responded on whether they planned to vote for President Franklin Roosevelt or his Republican challenger, Governor Alf Landon of Kansas. The magazine predicted an overwhelming Landon victory:

 Landon would get 57% of the vote against Roosevelt's 43%

**What went wrong? *A badly chosen sample***

The people included in the poll were drawn from automobile registration lists and telephone directories. Those who owned cars and had phones in the midst of the Depression were the more affluent, and they were much more likely to vote Republican than the population as a whole.

Also, nonresponse bias. Out of 10 million people whose names were on the original mailing list, only about 2.4 million responded to the survey. People who respond to surveys are different from people who don’t. ***Cliff Notes AP Gov Review, pg. 99***

<https://www.math.upenn.edu/~deturck/m170/wk4/lecture/case1.html>

**What is a Straw poll?- are not randomized, not accurate**

A television station flashes a question on the screen and gives viewers two toll-free numbers to call: one if you agree with the statement and the other if you disagree. A Web site asks, “Do you think the president is doing a good job handling the economy?”, and asks you to click Yes or No. These are attempts to gauge public opinion by polls. But these two examples tell us very little about what the people who called in or clicked online think. They are *straw polls* and are *h\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ u\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_* because they emphasize q\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ (the more people who respond, the better) rather than the q\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ of the sample. Also, keep in mind that in phone-in or Internet polls, people who feel strongly about an issue can call in or log on as many times as they like.

**Polls are just a snapshot and may be wrong!!!**

**HAVE POLLS BEEN WRONG?**

**Margin of Error + / -**

A **margin of error** of plus or minus 3 percentage points is common. If a presidential preference poll shows candidate A getting 53 percent of the vote and candidate B getting 47 percent, the difference might actually be as great as 12 percentage points (56 percent to 44 percent) or the election might be too close to call (50 percent to 50 percent).

**THE WAY YOU ASK THE QUESTION MATTERS**

***Cliff Notes AP Gov, pg. 99***

The w\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ questions are asked can skew results. For example, “**Do you believe that convicted serial killers should be put to death?”** will get a much different answer than **“Do you believe in capital punishment?”**

For example, “Do you believe that convicted serial killers should be put to death?” will get a much different answer than “Do you believe in capital punishment?” Pollsters need to avoid loaded questions or phrases that might prompt a particular response.

**Questions must be neutral/unbiased (objective), not emotionally charged, can’t lead the respondents towards a certain answer.**

**What are three criteria to a scientific poll?**

**WHAT TYPES OF POLLS EXIST?**

**Approval Ratings**

* are gauged by pollsters asking whether the respondent approves, yes or no, of the president’s job performance.

**Benchmark polls**

* Used to measure support for a candidate and to gather information about the issues that people care about.

**USES AND ABUSES OF POLLS**

* **Uses of polls (remember - polls are a snapshot of opinion a point in time)**
  + I\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ the public
  + I\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ candidates
  + I\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ office-holders
  + Making election night p\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ through the use of e\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ polls

**Identify and explain the following polls:**

1. **Tracking poll**
2. **Benchmark poll**
3. **Entrance poll**
4. **Exit poll**
   1. **Evaluating Public Opinion Data**

**Criticism of Polls During Elections**

Jockeys racing horses on a track

Description automatically generated with medium confidenceOne of the criticisms of polls during either a primary or general election campaign is that they e\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ how much support each candidate has. Instead of h\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ the issues v\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ are concerned with, polls turn the election into a *h\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ r\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.* There may be a serious downside to this type of poll: Political scientists have noted the “b\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ effect”—the candidate who is ahead in the polls stays ahead because voters want to go with a winner. People want to hop on the bandwagon. Ever heard of that cliché?

* + **Early projections from exit polls may discourage voter turnout, esp. in West**

**“*Why should I go and vote if the other guy is already winning?”***

**ARE PUBLIC OPINIONS POLLS POSITIVE FOR SOCIETY?**

**Yes:**

Contributes to the democratic process by providing a way for the public to e\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ its views.

Enables political leaders to understand and implement public p\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ on key issues.

**No:**

Polls can also be used to m\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ public opinion.

Just because something is p\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ doesn’t make it r\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

* **Bradley Effect:** Voters intend to vote for a white candidate would nonetheless tell pollsters they are undecided or likely to vote for the non-white candidate.
* **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.

**Voters do not want to be perceived negatively, so they may give the interviewers a socially acceptable response, or what they perceive as the acceptable response, and yet act or vote in a different way.**

**The Bradley Effect is named after Tom Bradley, who lost his bid to become America’s first black governor (1982 in California), despite being ahead in the polls.**

**DO WE REALLY WANT TO HEAR THE PUBLIC’S OPINION?**

* In *Federalist #63*, Madison promoted the indirect election of senators “as a defense to the people against their own temporary errors and delusions.”
* Electoral College indirect
* Do average citizens today lack the time, energy, and interest to make educated decisions about elections and public policy?

**HOW MIGHT POLITICIANS USE POLLING DATA?**

* Collecting i\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ on how to conduct their campaign
* Collecting i\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ to shape policy
* Promoting themselves to the public (platform formation)
* Conducting o\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ research
* Collecting i\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ to inform votes on bills/actions
* Gaining s\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ from donors

**WHEN DO POLITICIANS IGNORE PUBLIC OPINION?**

* Think of themselves as t\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, not delegates
* Loyalty to particular i\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ groups (e.g., large donors)
* Not worried about r\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
* Principle (stop laughing, seriously stop)
* Believe that p\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ opinion will c\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**WHAT IS PUBLIC OPINION?**

* Public opinion is the distribution of individual p\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ for or e\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ of a given issue, candidate, or institution within a specific population
* Distribution means the proportion of the population that holds one o\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ or viewpoint as compared to those with o\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ opinions or those with n\_\_\_ opinion at all
* Individual preference means that when we measure public opinion, we are asking i\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ about their opinions

***Understanding public opinion***

* “The opinions held by private persons which government feels it prudent to heed”
* Most of the American public shows little awareness and/or interest in p\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.
* Surveys show substantial l\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ of p\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ knowledge on part of public:
  + Identifying political figures
* Identifying key issues

**WHO ARE THE “PUBLIC” IN PUBLIC OPINION POLLS??**

**VARYING LEVELS OF INTEREST IN POLITICS**

**1) ELITES**

Those w/disproportionate amounts of political r\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_; Raise issues and help set national agenda; Influence the resolution of issues

**2) ATTENTIVE PUBLIC**

Those with an active interest in gov’t and politics - 25 percent of the American public (better e\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_)

**3) MASSES**

Those with little i\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ in gov’t and politics; Nonvoters - 35 percent of the American public (subset "political know- nothings")

**TYPE OF OPINIONS**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Stable** | Change very little (e.g., death penalty) |
| **Fluid** | Change frequently (e.g., presidential popularity) |
| **Latent** | Dormant, but may be aroused (e.g., military draft) |
| **Salient** | Have some personal importance to individuals (e.g., Brady and gun control) |
| **Consensus** | Shared by 75% of the people or more (e.g., having a balanced budget) |
| **Polarized** | Shared by less than 75% (e.g., gun control, ERA) |

**AWARENESS AND INTEREST**

**Political efficacy - belief that one can make a difference in politics by expressing an opinion and acting politically**

* **Internal efficacy** - the belief that one can u\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ politics and therefore p\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ in politics (such as voting)
* **External efficacy** - the belief that one is e\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ in making a d\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ when participating in politics, for example that the government will r\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ to one's demands

**HOW DOES PUBLIC OPINION BECOME POLICY?**

* How is information gathered?
* Who is in charge of creating policy?
* Are there politics involved?
* To whom should the “government” listen to?

**The Judicial Branch and Public Opinion**

Although federal judges are appointed for life and are not at the mercy of the ballot box, they tend to l\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ to p\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ opinion polls because the judicial branch depends on the e\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ branch to execute (e\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_) the law.

The President is a political a\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ that depends on p\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ support to carry out his agenda and if the judicial branch issues a decision that is not p\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, the President may just i\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ to enforce it.