

Unit 6:2 Public Opinion Polls

“Polls can help make government more efficient and responsive....” George Gallup

- I. The purpose / goals of conducting public opinion polls
 - A. Provides a measure of the public’s opinion on an issue or a candidate
 - B. May be used by political candidates to plan campaign strategies
 - C. Helps to focus attention on key issues

- II. Steps to conducting an effective public opinion poll
 - A. Define the population to be polled (universe)
 - B. Decide on the type of sample to be used
 1. random
 2. scientific
 3. quota

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C. Prepare questions

1. What are your goals /purpose?
2. How will you use the results?
3. Position questions in a logical order
4. Make sure the questions are unbiased (EX: Do you favor / oppose...?)
5. Make sure the wording of questions is clear (unambiguous)

D. Decide on the method of polling

1. telephone survey
2. exit polls
3. distribute in a specific location

E. Analyze your findings

III. Sample or Margin of Error

- A. Results may be percentage points off the actual results (+ or -)
- B. Accuracy is important in using the poll results effectively

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EXAMPLES OF PAST POLLING “DISASTERS”!



1. **1948:** The Chicago Daily Tribune predicted that Thomas Dewey (Republican) would defeat incumbent President Harry Truman and printed the headline. Results: Truman defeated Dewey.

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2. **2000:** Based on exit polling, major television networks announced that the state of Florida had been won by Democratic Presidential candidate Al Gore, then Republican candidate George W. Bush, then Al Gore again. After a long and bitter month of court decisions, George W. Bush was declared the winner of the election.

