Political Science 146 – Public Opinion and Mass Media

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Watkins 2229
Office Hours: 1-3pm Wednesday

October 2, 2017
SHOOTING IN LAS VEGAS LEAVES AT LEAST 50 DEAD AND OVER 400 HURT
Barack Obama Approval Rating
Barack Obama Approval Rating: Last
Donald Trump Approval Rating: Current
Public Attitudes Towards Marijuana Legalization

Public Opinion on Marijuana Legalization
(U.S. Adults 18+)

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Percent with Opinion vs Time

Time:
- 1970
- 1980
- 1990
- 2000
- 2010

Percent with Opinion:
- 20
- 40
- 60
- 80

Illegal

Legal

---

Graph shows the public opinion on marijuana legalization among U.S. adults aged 18 and above from 1970 to 2010. The percentage of people with an opinion on the legalization of marijuana has fluctuated over time, with a notable increase in recent years.
Public Attitudes Towards Marijuana Legalization (Washington State)
Public Attitudes Towards Marijuana Legalization

Support for Legalized Marijuana
(California, 2013)
Support for Legalized Marijuana
(California, 2010)
Support for Legalized Marijuana
(California, 2010)
**Trump Honest?**


"Would you say that Donald Trump is honest, or not?"

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Would say %</th>
<th>Would not say %</th>
<th>Unsure/No answer %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>9/21-26/17</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8/17-22/17</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8/9-15/17</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7/27 - 8/1/17</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6/22-27/17</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5/31 - 6/6/17</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5/17-23/17</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5/4-9/17</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4/12-18/17</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3/30 - 4/3/17</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3/16-21/17</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3/2-6/17</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2/16-21/17</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2/2-6/17</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1/20-25/17</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1/5-9/17</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11/17-20/16</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
PBS NewsHour/Marist Poll. Sept. 25-27, 2017. N=1,105 adults nationwide (margin of error ± 2.9), including 700 football fans (± 3.7.).

"Players in the NFL and other sports are kneeling or locking arms together during the national anthem to protest racial inequality in the United States. Do you consider this to be a respectful or disrespectful way to bring attention to their concerns?"

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Respectful</th>
<th>Disrespectful</th>
<th>Unsure</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ALL</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Football fans</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

"With whom do you agree more: President Trump who says the players are disrespectful and should be fired, OR, the NFL who says the President's remarks are inappropriate, offensive and divisive?"

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Agree more with Trump</th>
<th>Agree more with NFL</th>
<th>Unsure</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ALL</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Football fans</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

"Which comes closest to your view about illegal immigrants who are living in the U.S.? They should be allowed to stay in the U.S. and eventually apply for citizenship. They should be allowed to stay in the U.S. legally, but not be allowed to apply for citizenship. OR, They should be required to leave the U.S." Options rotated

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Stay, apply for citizenship</th>
<th>Stay, not apply for citizenship</th>
<th>Be required to leave</th>
<th>Unsure/No answer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>%</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3/21-24/15</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1/9-12/15</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9/12-15/14</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7/29 - 8/4/14</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
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<td>29</td>
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<td>56</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>3</td>
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<td>53</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>27</td>
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</tr>
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<td>54</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Same-Sex Marriage Opinion


"Do you think gays and lesbians do or do not have a constitutional right to get married and have their marriage recognized by law as valid?"

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Do have a right</th>
<th>Do not have a right</th>
<th>Unsure</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ALL</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>%</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>63</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Men</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>58</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>67</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18-34</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>72</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35-49</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>67</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50-64</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>55</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>65 &amp; older</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>52</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Democrats</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>75</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independents</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>65</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Republicans</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>42</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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Variation in Media Coverage

Three University of Iowa wrestlers arrested; burglary charges pending
By Lee Hermistone, The Gazette

Coralville police arrest four in burglary investigation
By Lee Hermistone, The Gazette
Introduction

- In a democracy, the public has a role in governmental decision making.
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Introduction

▶ In a democracy, the public has a role in governmental decision making
▶ The precise role is unclear
▶ Politicians often heed public opinion and pass laws (NY State, same-sex marriage 2011)
▶ Politicians sometimes do not (Obama: Health care reform, Bush: setting timetable for Iraq)
▶ But, how should public function in a democracy?
Theories of Democracy

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- Who should be allowed to vote? All adults? At what age are you an adult? Should there be educational requirements? Literacy requirements? Knowledge requirements?
Theories of Democracy: Classical

- Classical models of democracy: Participation in public affairs, high levels of attention and interest in political matters, ability to decide matters in *general* interest not self-interest
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- Later theorists have criticized classical democratic theory as unpractical and unworkable (i.e., women and slaves did not have voting/participatory rights, 40 debates a year!)
Theories of Democracy: Elitism and Pluralism

- Citizens exert indirect control: elect representatives; rise of interest groups

Democratic elitists: Frequent competitive elections through which citizens express preferences
Voters select candidates
Elected officials deliberate over and vote on laws

Pluralism: similar to D.E., but emphasize role of interest groups (e.g., AARP, unions, NAACP, NCLR)

Representative democracy: Foundation of D.E. and pluralism. Main advocate James Madison

Critiques: Some groups possess more resources than others (i.e., business/trade groups); not all viewpoints are represented; less focus on citizen participation and benefits accrued from that
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- Critique: Assumptions about citizens are unrealistic (e.g., Motor Voter)
What is Public Opinion?

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- Preferences of individuals, tallied such that each person's opinion counts equally
Polling & the Public

- Polls important to average citizen, can compare your own opinions to others’...and wonder, what the hell?
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- How can 1,000 people represent 40 million?
Soup Analogy
Polling & the Public

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realclearpolitics.com
Polling & the Public

- Polls have grown in frequency in recent years
- realclearpolitics.com
- fivethirtyeight.com
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- surveyusa, rasmussen
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- Academic Polls: General Social Survey (Sociology)
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Views towards polls

- Many citizens do not trust polls
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- But they love to read about polls
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- Polls used to tell policymakers what voters want
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A healthy skepticism of polls is fine, but understand why a poll is good or bad and you will be fine