

Political Science 146 – Public Opinion and Mass Media

Loren Collingwood, Political Science

January 17, 2017

Course Information

- ▶ Presidential Candidate Polling

Course Information

- ▶ Presidential Candidate Polling

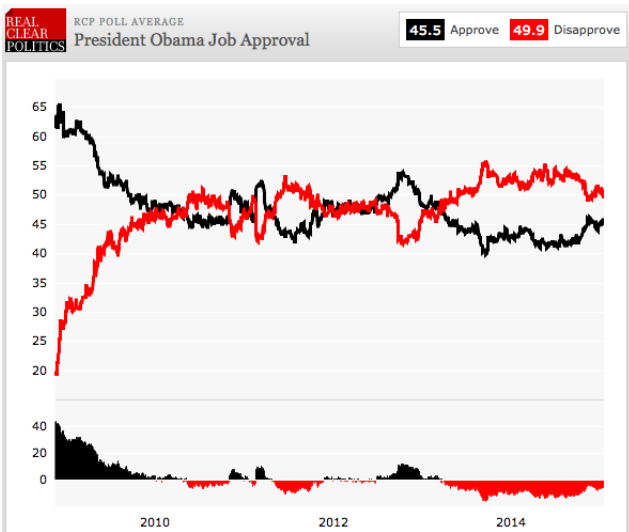
Course Information

- ▶ Presidential Candidate Polling

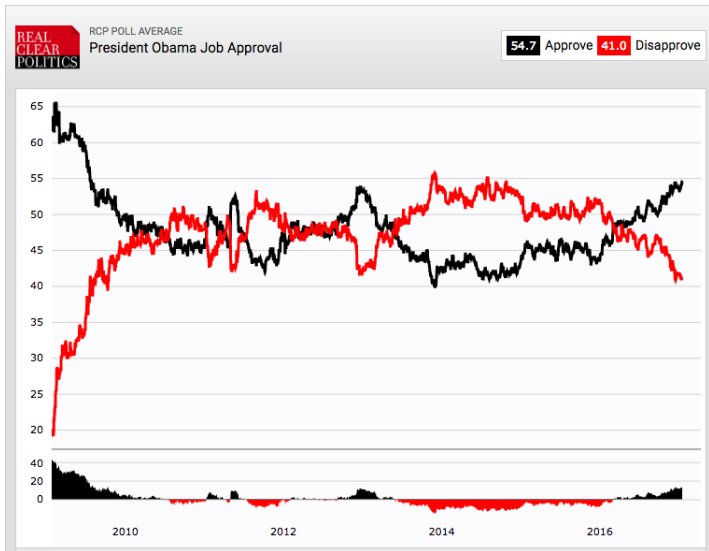
Course Information

- ▶ Presidential Candidate Polling

Barack Obama Approval Rating



Barack Obama Approval Rating: Current



Donald Trump Favorability Rating: Current

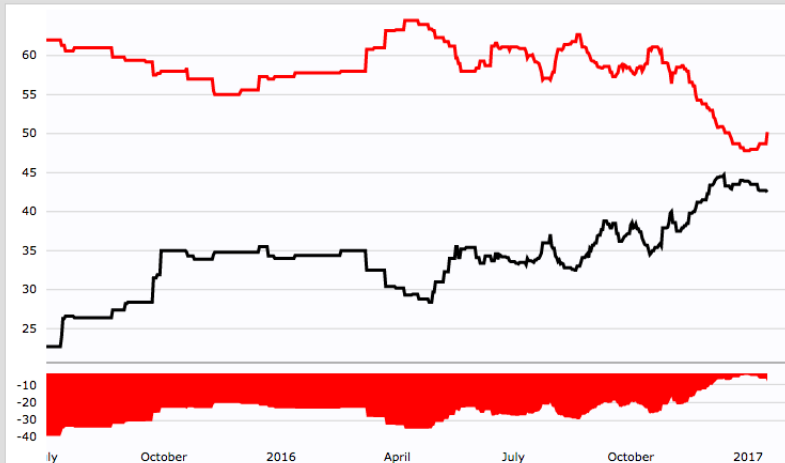


RCP POLL AVERAGE

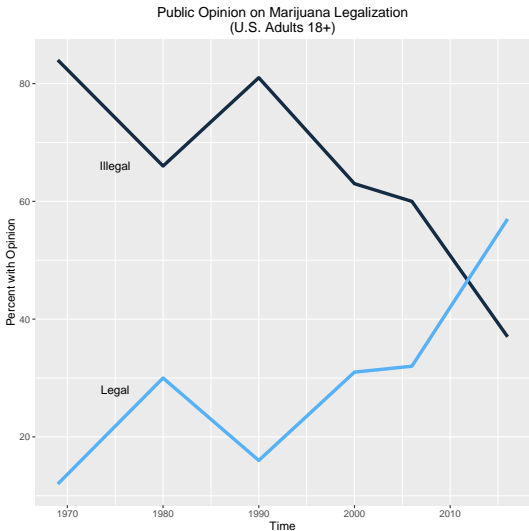
Trump: Favorable/Unfavorable

42.5 Favorable

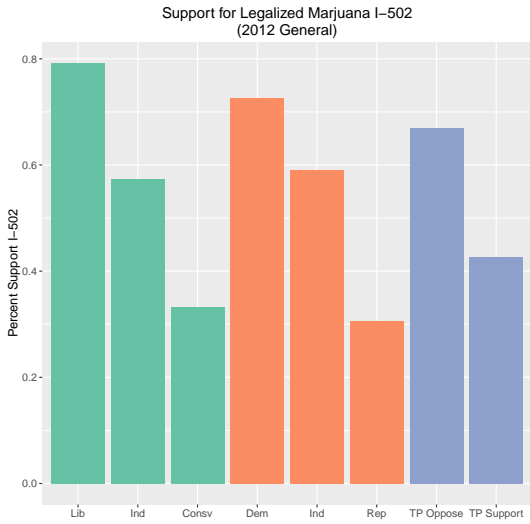
50.2 Unfavorable **+7.7**



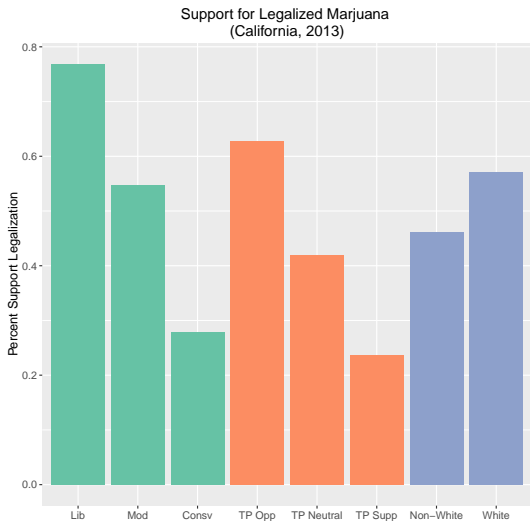
Public Attitudes Towards Marijuana Legalization



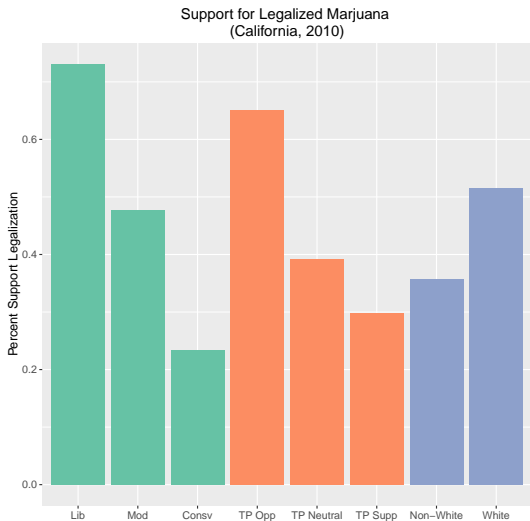
Public Attitudes Towards Marijuana Legalization (Washington State)



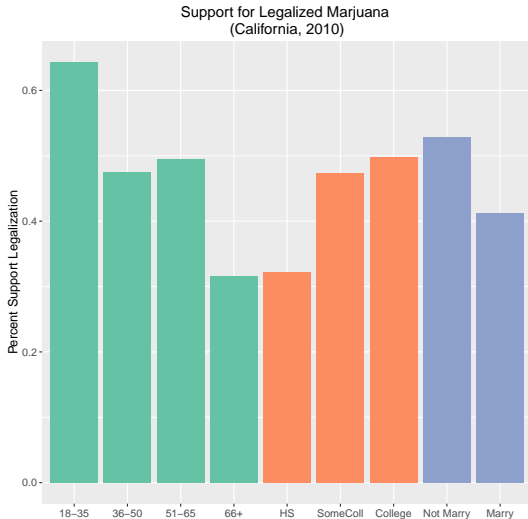
Public Attitudes Towards Marijuana Legalization



Public Attitudes Towards Marijuana Legalization



Public Attitudes Towards Marijuana Legalization



Undocumented Immigration Opinion

CBS News Poll. March 21-24, 2015. N=1,023 adults nationwide. Margin of error ± 3 .

"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

	Stay, apply for citizenship	Stay, not apply for citizenship	Be required to leave	Unsure/ No answer
	%	%	%	%
3/21-24/15	56	11	29	5
1/9-12/15	54	15	27	4
9/12-15/14	50	13	32	6
7/29 - 8/4/14	54	11	30	5
5/16-19/14	51	15	29	4
3/20-23/14	56	12	29	3
2/19-23/14	53	16	27	3
1/17-21/14	54	12	31	4

Nuclear Talks with Iran Opinion

ABC News/Washington Post Poll. March 26-29, 2015. N=1,003 adults nationwide. Margin of error ± 3.5 .

"Thinking now about the situation with Iran: Would you support or oppose an agreement in which the United States and other countries would lift some of their economic sanctions against Iran, in exchange for Iran restricting its nuclear program in a way that makes it harder for it to produce nuclear weapons?"

	Support	Oppose	Unsure
	%	%	%
3/26-29/15	59	31	10

"How confident are you that such an agreement would prevent Iran from developing nuclear weapons: very confident, somewhat confident, not so confident or not confident at all?"

	Very confident	Somewhat confident	Not so confident	Not confident at all	Unsure
	%	%	%	%	%
3/26-29/15	4	33	26	34	3

Same-Sex Marriage Opinion

CNN/ORC Poll. Feb. 12-15, 2015. N=1,027 adults nationwide. Margin of error ± 3 .

"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?"

	Do have a right %	Do not have a right %	Unsure %
ALL	63	36	1
Men	58	40	2
Women	67	32	1
18-34	72	28	1
35-49	67	31	2
50-64	55	44	1
65 & older	52	45	3
Democrats	75	24	1
Independents	65	34	1
Republicans	42	55	3

Variation in Media Coverage

Local Events | Korg.com | Mobile | 8000 US STORY TOPS | 880 Accounts


Monday, Mar 23, 2015
Full Forecast -
Overcast Peds Like 23°

NEWS WEATHER CANCELLATIONS SPORTS VIDEOS 9.2 9.3 SHOW YOU CARE YOUNG CONTACT US

Three University of Iowa wrestlers arrested; burglary charges pending

By Lee Hemmison, The Gazette

Photos



Ross Lombard, Seth Gross and Logan Ryan

Local Events | Korg.com | Mobile | 8000


Monday, Mar 23, 2015
Full Forecast -
33°
Overcast Peds Like 23°

NEWS WEATHER CANCELLATIONS SPORTS VIDEOS 9.2 9.3 SHOW YOU CARE YOUNG CONTACT US

Coralville police arrest four in burglary investigation

By Lee Hemmison, The Gazette

Video Photos



Coralville burglary suspects Kevin Crawford, Milton Whitcomb, Guerin D.W. Edman and Curtis A. Johnson (left to right)

Introduction

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

Introduction

- ▶ In a democracy, the public has a role in governmental decision making
- ▶ The precise role is unclear

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)

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)

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

- ▶ Simple definition: “Rule by the people.”

Theories of Democracy

- ▶ Simple definition: “Rule by the people.”
- ▶ Democratic theory: “the branch of scholarship that specializes in elucidating, developing, and defining the meaning of democracy.”

Theories of Democracy

- ▶ Simple definition: “Rule by the people.”
- ▶ Democratic theory: “the branch of scholarship that specializes in elucidating, developing, and defining the meaning of democracy.”
- ▶ Should citizens vote directly on legislation/laws, or should they elect representatives to do this?

Theories of Democracy

- ▶ Simple definition: “Rule by the people.”
- ▶ Democratic theory: “the branch of scholarship that specializes in elucidating, developing, and defining the meaning of democracy.”
- ▶ Should citizens vote directly on legislation/laws, or should they elect representatives to do this?
- ▶ Are citizens even capable of self-government?

Theories of Democracy

- ▶ Simple definition: “Rule by the people.”
- ▶ Democratic theory: “the branch of scholarship that specializes in elucidating, developing, and defining the meaning of democracy.”
- ▶ Should citizens vote directly on legislation/laws, or should they elect representatives to do this?
- ▶ Are citizens even capable of self-government?
- ▶ 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

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
- ▶ Popular sovereignty: Exercise of the general will (Rousseau)

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
- ▶ Popular sovereignty: Exercise of the general will (Rousseau)
 - ▶ General will not simply sum of opinions, but reflects best interest of society

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
- ▶ Popular sovereignty: Exercise of the general will (Rousseau)
 - ▶ General will not simply sum of opinions, but reflects best interest of society
- ▶ Direct democracy: All citizens meet, discuss, and decide on content of the laws

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
- ▶ Popular sovereignty: Exercise of the general will (Rousseau)
 - ▶ General will not simply sum of opinions, but reflects best interest of society
- ▶ Direct democracy: All citizens meet, discuss, and decide on content of the laws
- ▶ 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

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

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

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

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)

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**

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

Theories of Democracy: Participatory

- ▶ Greater role for the public than in standard representative democracies

Theories of Democracy: Participatory

- ▶ Greater role for the public than in standard representative democracies
- ▶ Participation is linked with social class & wealth, participatory theorists advocate greater participation by all to redress inequality

Theories of Democracy: Participatory

- ▶ Greater role for the public than in standard representative democracies
- ▶ Participation is linked with social class & wealth, participatory theorists advocate greater participation by all to redress inequality
- ▶ Emerged out of protest movements of the 1960s

Theories of Democracy: Participatory

- ▶ Greater role for the public than in standard representative democracies
- ▶ Participation is linked with social class & wealth, participatory theorists advocate greater participation by all to redress inequality
- ▶ Emerged out of protest movements of the 1960s
- ▶ Citizen apathy a problem to be solved, not accepted. **ACTIVISTS!!**

Theories of Democracy: Participatory

- ▶ Greater role for the public than in standard representative democracies
- ▶ Participation is linked with social class & wealth, participatory theorists advocate greater participation by all to redress inequality
- ▶ Emerged out of protest movements of the 1960s
- ▶ Citizen apathy a problem to be solved, not accepted. ACTIVISTS!!
- ▶ Critique: Assumptions about citizens are unrealistic (e.g., Motor Voter)

What is Public Opinion?

- ▶ “Voice of the people”

What is Public Opinion?

- ▶ “Voice of the people”
- ▶ Public opinion polls

What is Public Opinion?

- ▶ “Voice of the people”
- ▶ Public opinion polls
- ▶ Opinions on governmental and policy matters rather than on private matters

What is Public Opinion?

- ▶ “Voice of the people”
- ▶ Public opinion polls
- ▶ Opinions on governmental and policy matters rather than on private matters
- ▶ Simply the sum or aggregation of private opinions on any particular issue or set of issues

What is Public Opinion?

- ▶ “Voice of the people”
- ▶ Public opinion polls
- ▶ Opinions on governmental and policy matters rather than on private matters
- ▶ Simply the sum or aggregation of private opinions on any particular issue or set of issues
- ▶ 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?

Polling & the Public

- ▶ Polls important to average citizen, can compare your own opinions to others'...and wonder, what the hell?
- ▶ Citizens need to be aware of how polling is conducted.

Polling & the Public

- ▶ Polls important to average citizen, can compare your own opinions to others'...and wonder, what the hell?
- ▶ Citizens need to be aware of how polling is conducted.
- ▶ Are pollsters trying to pull a fast one on you?

Polling & the Public

- ▶ Polls important to average citizen, can compare your own opinions to others'...and wonder, what the hell?
- ▶ Citizens need to be aware of how polling is conducted.
- ▶ Are pollsters trying to pull a fast one on you?
- ▶ I've never been polled?

Polling & the Public

- ▶ Polls important to average citizen, can compare your own opinions to others'...and wonder, what the hell?
- ▶ Citizens need to be aware of how polling is conducted.
- ▶ Are pollsters trying to pull a fast one on you?
- ▶ I've never been polled?
- ▶ How can 1,000 people represent 40 million?

Soup Analogy



Polling & the Public

- ▶ Polls have grown in frequency in recent years

Polling & the Public

- ▶ Polls have grown in frequency in recent years
- ▶ realclearpolitics.com

Polling & the Public

- ▶ Polls have grown in frequency in recent years
- ▶ realclearpolitics.com
- ▶ fivethirtyeight.com

Polling & the Public

- ▶ Polls have grown in frequency in recent years
- ▶ realclearpolitics.com
- ▶ fivethirtyeight.com
- ▶ pollingreport.com

Polling & the Public

- ▶ Polls have grown in frequency in recent years
- ▶ realclearpolitics.com
- ▶ fivethirtyeight.com
- ▶ pollingreport.com
- ▶ [surveyusa](#), [rasmussen](#)

Polling & the Public

- ▶ These “public polls” are just a snapshot of all polls commissioned

Polling & the Public

- ▶ These “public polls” are just a snapshot of all polls commissioned
- ▶ Private polling firms, poll on all issues, guide candidates and businesses

Polling & the Public

- ▶ These “public polls” are just a snapshot of all polls commissioned
- ▶ Private polling firms, poll on all issues, guide candidates and businesses
- ▶ Academic Polls: American National Election Study (ANES)

Polling & the Public

- ▶ These “public polls” are just a snapshot of all polls commissioned
- ▶ Private polling firms, poll on all issues, guide candidates and businesses
- ▶ Academic Polls: American National Election Study (ANES)
- ▶ Academic Polls: General Social Survey (Sociology)

FRUGging, SUGging, Pseudopolls, Push Polls

- ▶ FRUGging – fundraising under the guides of surveying

FRUGging, SUGging, Pseudopolls, Push Polls

- ▶ FRUGging – fundraising under the guides of surveying
- ▶ SUGging – selling under the guise of surveying

FRUGging, SUGging, Pseudopolls, Push Polls

- ▶ FRUGging – fundraising under the guides of surveying
- ▶ SUGging – selling under the guise of surveying
- ▶ Pseudopolls – polls on websites (cnn, fox, espn), talk show call ins,

FRUGging, SUGging, Pseudopolls, Push Polls

- ▶ FRUGging – fundraising under the guides of surveying
- ▶ SUGging – selling under the guise of surveying
- ▶ Pseudopolls – polls on websites (cnn, fox, espn), talk show call ins,
- ▶ DoNotCall registry – register your cell today!

FRUGging, SUGging, Pseudopolls, Push Polls

- ▶ FRUGging – fundraising under the guides of surveying
- ▶ SUGging – selling under the guise of surveying
- ▶ Pseudopolls – polls on websites (cnn, fox, espn), talk show call ins,
- ▶ DoNotCall registry – register your cell today!
- ▶ **Push Polls**

Views towards polls

- ▶ Many citizens do not trust polls

Views towards polls

- ▶ Many citizens do not trust polls
- ▶ But they love to read about polls

Views towards polls

- ▶ Many citizens do not trust polls
- ▶ But they love to read about polls
- ▶ Polls used to tell policymakers what voters want

Views towards polls

- ▶ Many citizens do not trust polls
- ▶ But they love to read about polls
- ▶ Polls used to tell policymakers what voters want
- ▶ Can be good for democracy

Views towards polls

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