# Public Opinion

## Public Opinion & The Spectrum

**PUBLIC OPINION**
- What the public thinks about a particular issue or set of issues at any point in time. Politicians will pay attention to this to avoid taking unpopular stances.

**THE POLITICAL SPECTRUM**
- Liberals fall on the left side of the spectrum.
- Conservative fall on the right side of the spectrum.
- Moderates fall somewhere in the middle of the spectrum.

## Political Ideologies

### IDEOLOGY
- A comprehensive and mutually consistent set of ideas.

### LIBERAL IDEOLOGY
- Favors less government control over social behavior and more greater regulation of businesses and the economy.

### CONSERVATIVE IDEOLOGY
- More control of social behavior, fewer regulations on businesses, and less government interference in the economy.

## Political Socialization

**POLITICAL SOCIALIZATION**
- The process by which one develops political opinions.

**MOST INFLUENTIAL FACTOR**
- Family

**OTHER FACTORS**
- Education, Religion, Race, Location, Gender, Wealth, Occupation, Media.

**GENDER GAP**
- The tendency of women to vote for Democrats in higher percentages than men, and conversely, for men to vote for Republicans in higher percentages than women.

## Scientific Methodology

### THE STEPS TO SCIENTIFIC POLLING
- Construct a questionnaire with properly worded questions.
- Select a representative sample (Define universe and have a random sample).
- Analyze the data appropriately.
- Draw conclusions.

### SHORTCOMING WITH SCIENTIFIC POLLING
- **Margin of error**: 4% up or down for 1,000 sample.
- **Sampling error**: Random sample may not be as random, hard to find homeless voters.
- **Limited response options**: Complex views may not be found in options.
- **Lack of information**: People may not know what they are talking about.
- **Difficulty measuring intensity**: True opinions may not have been expressed.

## Shortcomings of Polling

## Types of Polls

### SCIENTIFIC POLL
- A representative poll of randomly selected respondents with a statistically significant sample size, using neutral language.

### EXIT POLL
- A survey conducted outside a polling place in which individuals are asked who or what they just voted for and why.

### BENCHMARK POLL
- A survey taken at the beginning of a political campaign in order to gauge support for a candidate and determine which issues are important to voters.

### TRACKING POLL (HORSE RACE)
- A survey determining the level of support for a candidate or an issue throughout the campaign (Who is winning and losing).
### Interest Groups (LINKAGE INSTITUTION)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Definition &amp; Type</th>
<th>Electioneering</th>
<th>Lobbying</th>
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<tr>
<td>INTEREST GROUP</td>
<td>NFLUENCING ELECTIONS - Candidate Endorsement: Candidates want large interest groups to support them. - Getting out vote: GOTV (increase voter participation)</td>
<td>LOBBYING - Applying pressure to the policy-making process.</td>
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<td>- Political Action Committees (PACs): raise money to donate to candidates.</td>
<td>&quot;REVOLVING DOOR&quot; - The movement of individuals between positions in government and lobbying positions. - Many ex-members of Congress become lobbyists.</td>
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<td>SUPER PAC - An organization that may spend an unlimited amount of money on a political campaign, as long as the spending is not coordinated with a campaign</td>
<td>APPLY PRESSURE - Congress: testifying as experts &amp; writing legislation - Executive Branch: attempt to influence how agencies implement policy - The Courts: Sponsor litigation &amp; amicus curiae briefs (persuasive essay to influence judges) - The public: Persuade people not only to agree with group but to also to contact government. (Grassroots)</td>
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<td>FREE-RIDER PROBLEM</td>
<td>- Political spending is a form of protected speech under the First Amendment, and the government may not keep corporations or unions from spending money to support or denounce individual candidates in elections</td>
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### Mass Media (LINKAGE INSTITUTION)

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Types of Media</th>
<th>Functions of Media</th>
<th>Influence of Media</th>
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<tr>
<td>Print media (newspapers and magazines)</td>
<td>Gatekeeper: Mass media decides what makes the news. - Scorekeeper: Mass media keeps track of success and failures. - Watchdog: Mass media looks for corruption, scandal, or inefficiency (Watergate Scandal) - Horse-race journalism: Coverage of political campaigns that focuses more on the drama of the campaign (who is winning and losing in the polls) than on policy issues</td>
<td>- Agenda setting: public talks about stories they see (usually doesn’t influence public’s opinion of story) - Media Bias: The slanting of political news coverage in support of a particular political party ideology (Huffington Post, Breitbart, MSNBC, Fox News) - Media consolidation The concentration of ownership of the media into fewer corporations</td>
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<td>Broadcast media (radio and television)</td>
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<td>New media (internet and apps)</td>
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Landmark decision by the United States Supreme Court on the First Amendment (Freedom of the Press). The ruling made it possible for the New York Times and the Washington Post newspapers to publish the then-classified Pentagon Papers without the risk of government censorship or punishment. The court ruled that the First Amendment did protect the right of the New York Times to print the materials.