

# Political Culture

# Political Culture

- a distinctive and patterned way of thinking about how political and economic life ought to be carried out. American political culture is uniquely distinct in many ways. This is one reason that most attempts to copy our governmental system have met with failure.
- The widely shared beliefs, values and norms that citizens share about their government



# Tocqueville

- *Democracy in America* – commentary on **American political culture** and why we are the way we are:
  - 1. No feudal aristocracy: important bc T thought the feudal aristocracy in France blocked ambition.
  - 2. Rule of Law: gov't rules are applied equally and fairly, not on the whim of a ruler.
  - 3. Few legal restrictions: open market competition with little gov't involvement fosters growth and ambition.
  - 4. Vast territories: opportunity for people to acquire land and make a living.
  - 5. Opportunity: to make money, own land, do better.
  - 6. A nation of small farmers: the idea alone seems to bind people together.

# Characteristics of Political Culture Today

- Liberty: most people tend to believe in the right to be free so long as other's rights are not abused.
- Equality:
  - Equality of opportunity more than equality of result
  - Political equality more than economic equality
  - American Dream: Reverence for property/capitalism/chance to acquire wealth
- Democracy
  - Government is by the people and for the people.

# Economic Equality in America and Europe

**Table 4.3** Attitudes toward Economic Equality in America and Europe

Statement	Percentage Agreeing				
	U.S.	Great Britain	Germany	Italy	France
It is government's responsibility to take care of the very poor who can't take care of themselves.	23%	62%	50%	66%	62%
Hard work guarantees success.	63	46	38	51	46
Government should <i>not</i> guarantee every citizen food and basic shelter.	34	9	13	14	10

Source: Adapted from *The Public Perspective* (November/December 1991): 5, 7. © *The Public Perspective*, a publication of the Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, University of Connecticut, Storrs. Reprinted with permission.

# Characteristics, con't.

- **Civic Duty**: citizens owe some allegiance to their government and that government in turn protects its citizens. Civic duties refer to the responsibilities of citizens. Often rights enjoyed by citizens also implies corresponding responsibilities.
  - This is strongest in a society when it has developed “social capital”, the social networks that bind people together.
  - Robert Putnam: *Bowling Alone*.
    - Decline in social networks (therefore social capital), with such a decline there is less likelihood of people coming together, listening to each other, exchanging ideas-→consequently a smaller degree of civic duty.
- Individualism: Rugged Individualism: pull yourself up by your bootstraps and go get your success!

# Characteristics, con't.

- Distrust of government.
  - Especially since the 1960's (Vietnam, Watergate, recent history?)
- Political Efficacy: the sense that one can both understand and influence public policy
- Political Tolerance: free discussion of ideas and acceptance of legitimate rulers or rules with ideas different from our own.
  - Americans seem to accept this more in the abstract than in the concrete
- Pragmatism: Americans tend to be less ideological
- Justice: Belief in the rule of law and the just use of those rules.

# Role of Religion in American Political Thought

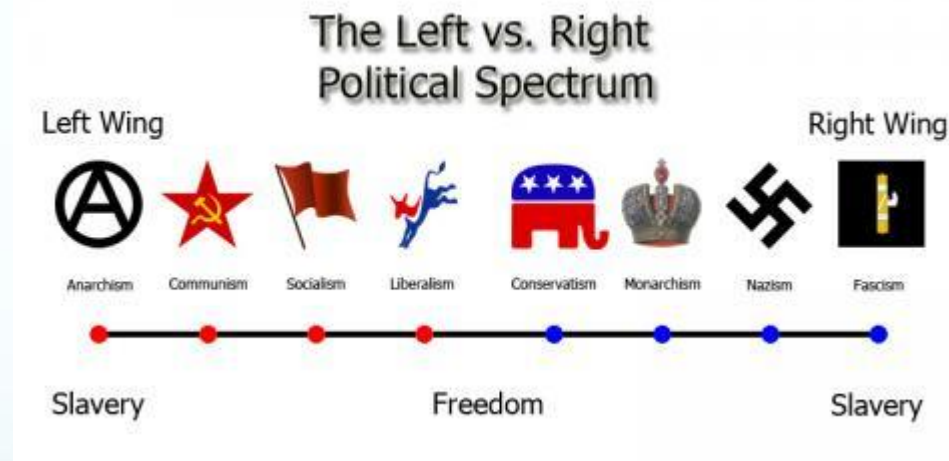
- Civic Role
  - Highly religious compared to Europeans
  - Religious organizations are a major source of volunteer and community services.





# Political Ideologies

- Ideology: integrated set of beliefs and values that shape a person's views.
- Many Americans identify themselves as liberal or conservative.

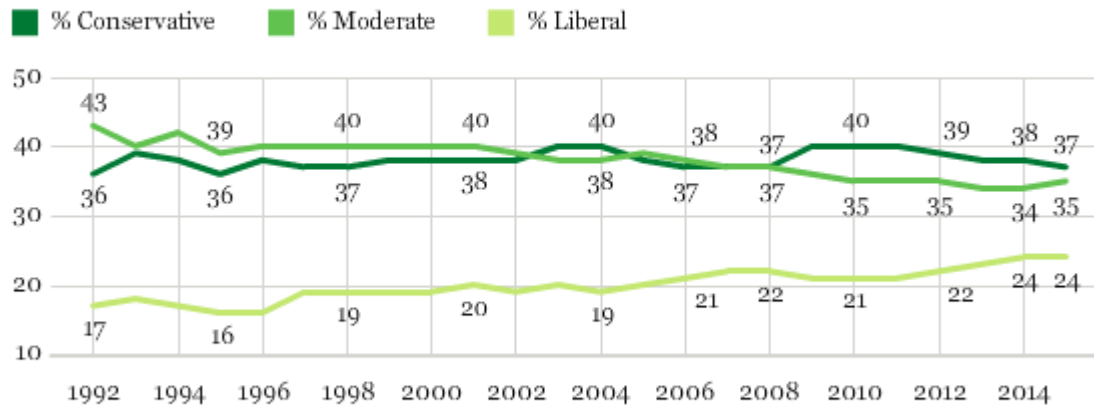


- However over time, more and more Americans tend to be non-ideological, i.e. they tend to be moderate in their beliefs.
  - Ideology implies a strong set of beliefs that are strictly adhered to, many Americans are just generally moderate.

# Political Ideologies in America

## Americans' Self-Identified Political Ideology -- 1992-2015

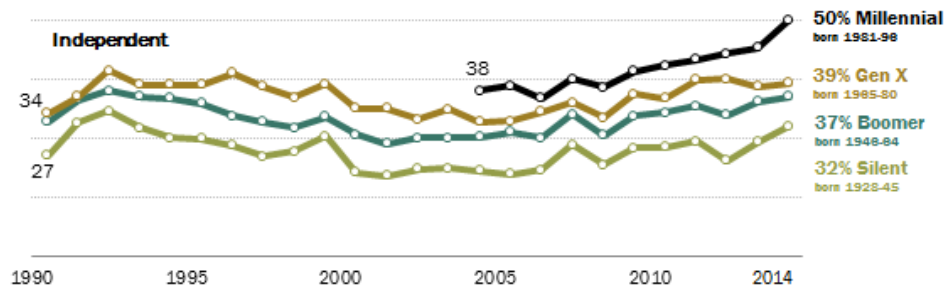
How would you describe your political views -- [very conservative, conservative, moderate, liberal or very liberal]?



Based on annual averages of Gallup multiday telephone polls

GALLUP®

% of each generation who identify as ...



Source: Data points represent totals based on all Pew Research surveys of the general public conducted in that calendar year

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

**TABLE 6.2**

## How to Tell a Liberal from a Conservative

*Liberal and conservative*—these labels are thrown around in American politics as though everyone knows what they mean. Here are some of the political beliefs likely to be preferred by liberals and conservatives. This table, to be sure, is oversimplified.

	<b>LIBERALS</b>	<b>CONSERVATIVES</b>
<b>Foreign Policy</b>		
Military spending	Believe we should spend less	Believe we should maintain peace through strength
Use of force	Less willing to commit troops to action, such as in Iraq War	More likely to support military intervention around the world
<b>Social Policy</b>		
Abortion	Support "freedom of choice"	Support "right to life"
Prayer in schools	Are opposed	Are supportive
Affirmative action	Favor	Oppose
<b>Economic Policy</b>		
Scope of government	View government as a regulator in the public interest	Favor free-market solutions
Taxes	Want to tax the rich more	Want to keep taxes low
Spending	Want to spend more on the poor	Want to keep spending low
<b>Crime</b>		
How to cut crime	Believe we should solve the problems that cause crime	Believe we should stop "coddling criminals"
Defendants' rights	Believe we should guard them carefully	Believe we should stop letting criminals hide behind laws

# Mainstream Ideologies

I'M FROM THE  
GOVERNMENT,  
I'M HERE  
TO HELP



- Liberal and Conservative.
- Basic Disagreement is over the Role of Government
  - 1. How much power should the government have over the economy?
    - Liberal: Positive action in the economy
    - Conservative: Positive action to support capitalism
  - 2. What should the government promote?
    - Liberal: Economic Security, equal opportunity, social liberty
    - Conservative: Economic Liberty, morality and social order.

# Classic Liberalism

- Limited Role of Government in Society (a government that governs least is the best)
- Government seen as the chief threat to liberty
- Government should step out of the way and allow economic competition.
- Addressed the needs of the business class
- Role of government is to protect property rights
- KEY IDEA → minimal gov. and property rights.



# Populists and Progressives

- After the Civil War liberal attitudes towards government began to change.
- Liberals began to call for
  - Democratization of government (direct election of Senators)
  - Governmental involvement in the economy
  - Government programs to ease the problems of industrialization.
  - Regulation of corporations
  - Public limits in private corporate power

# Modern Liberalism of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century

- Expanded role of government
- Corporations seen as a chief threat to liberty. Need for a strong central government to smooth out the rough edges of capitalism
- Government should:
  - Ensure the economic well being of a nation
  - Provide basic guarantees (food, shelter, health care and education) to every individual.
  - Government should stay out social issues

# Tracing the path of Liberalism

- Strong influence of Liberalism in the 1930's-1970's.
  - Expansion of gov't started with the New Deal, Cold War liberalism followed (gov't spending on education, science and infrastructure skyrocketed), Civil rights liberalism: gov't involvement in social structures and laws.
- Backlash against liberalism in the 1980s and 1990's: a feeling that liberalism had gone too far. They needed to get back to more individualism and less reliance on big government



# Neoliberals, then back to Modern Liberals!

- Less likely to rely upon government as the solution to problems
- Government certainly has a role to play, but not as big a role as desired by the New Deal liberals
- Rise of the Democratic Leadership Council
  - A more centrist group (appeal to the moderate voter), felt that the current direction of the party was not viable. After Mondale was stomped by Reagan in 1984, they made a call for a new direction for the Democrats.
- Return of modern liberalism/New Deal Liberalism with the election of Obama: more of a willingness to use the federal government as a tool to protect the well-being of the people.

# Who are the Liberals?

- Usually found in the Democratic Party
- Constituencies include:
  - Minorities
  - Labor movement
  - Feminists
  - Poor



# Conservatism



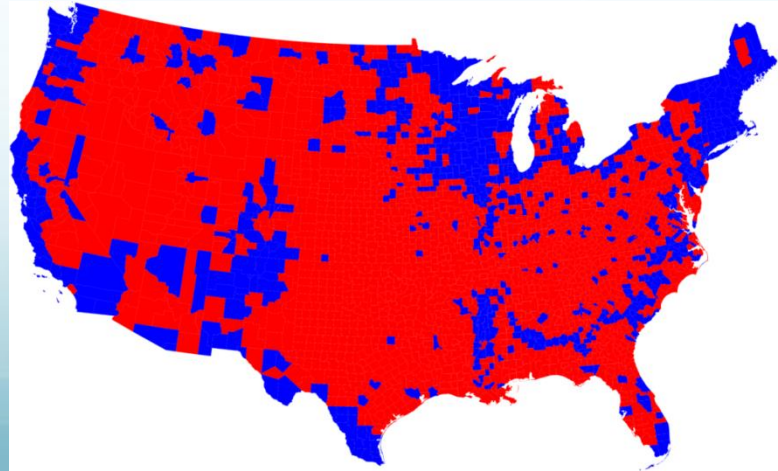
- Essentially Classical Liberalism
- Holds that established customs, laws and traditions should guide society
- Government is best that governs least
- History:
  - As America industrialized after the Civil War, conservatives embraced laissez-faire economics
  - Since the 1980's conservatives have focused on:
    - Reducing social spending
    - Reshaping the tax code (large tax cuts for wealthy)
    - Rebuilding national defense.

# Contemporary Conservatism

- A resurgence since the late 1970's
- A defense of economic individualism against the growth of the welfare state. (welfare only creates a permanent class of the poor who are dependent on the state and have no incentives to enter the working world)
- Trying to reverse the trend of automatically looking to the government as the solution to our problems
- Emphasis on the private sector to problem solve
- Strong support for large tax cuts.

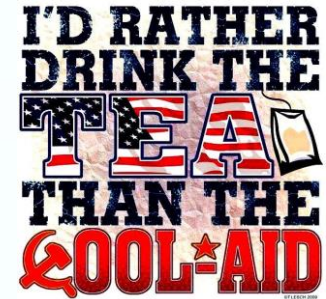
# Who are the Conservatives?

- Usually they belong to the Republican Party
- 104<sup>th</sup>-109<sup>th</sup> , 114<sup>th</sup> – 115<sup>th</sup> Congresses
- Strength in the South, Rocky Mountains, Great Plains, strength among evangelical Christians
- Reagan (one of the first to openly embrace conservatism and very successfully), Bush, Bush (II)



# Neo-Conservatives and the New Right

- The Tea Party
  - Name refers to the anti-tax Boston Tea Party
  - Conservative Right concerned with social issues such as abortion, gun control, prayer in schools and illegal immigration. (support from the Religious Right)
- Foreign Policy
  - Some want the US to act as the policeman of the world and more aggressively pursue all foreign threats.
  - Some prefer a more isolationist policy and shy away from any intervention (wary of international organizations like the UN, WTO, IMF, NAFTA, etc.)



# Other ideas...

- Socialism
  - System in which the means of production, distribution and exchange are controlled by the government.
  - Never gains much traction in the US
    - Associated with radicalism
    - US belief in individualism and the American Dream
    - Suspicious of Big Gov.
- Libertarianism
  - Extreme emphasis on individual liberty
  - Extreme cutback on the role of the government: essentially the gov't should only defend the nation.



# How about Progressives?

- there is a fundamental difference when it comes to core economic issues.
- Liberals- those who focus on using taxpayer money to help better society.
- Progressives- those who focus on using government power to make large institutions play by a set of rules.
- i.e- liberal policy towards prescription drugs is one that would increase taxpayer funding to the pharmaceutical industry to get them to provide medicine to the poor;

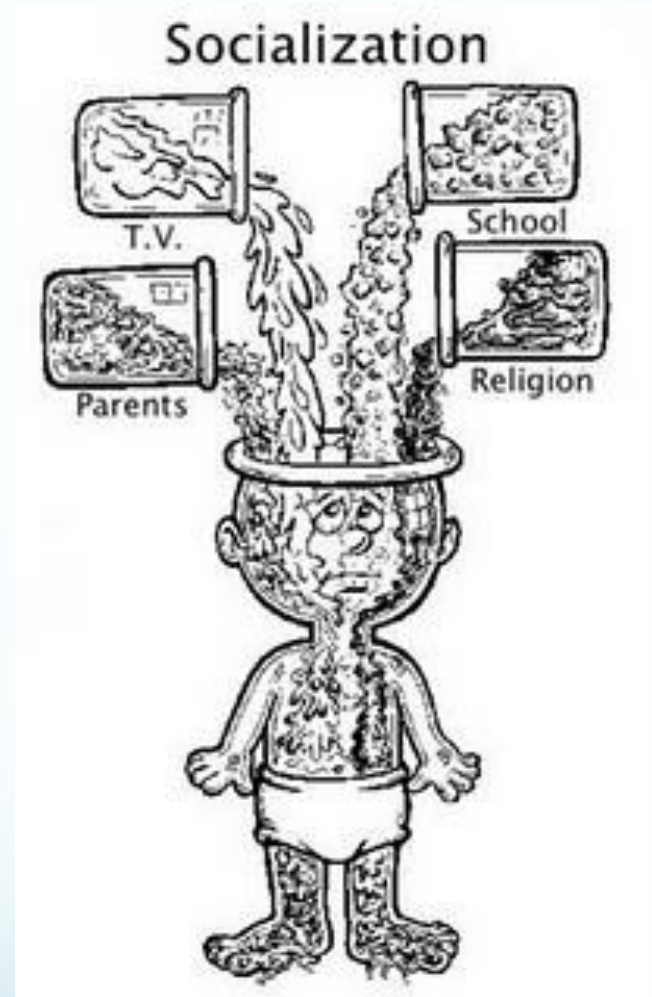
whereas

A progressive prescription drug policy would be one that centered around price regulations and bulk purchasing in order to force down the actual cost of medicine in America (much of which was originally developed with taxpayer R&D money)



# Political Socialization

- The process by which people acquire their political beliefs
- What influences it?
- Political Socialization



# Agents of Political Socialization

- FAMILY!
  - Strongest
  - Correlation between parent's party affiliation and child's party affiliation
  - Less of a correlation on specific policy issues
  - Fairly equal influence of mother and father
  - Father's party ID has a greater influence on sons, while mother's party ID has a greater impact on daughters.
- Schools
  - Impact based on values (e.g. civic duty, patriotism)
  - High school government classes apparently do not change political orientation of students.

# More Agents

Presidential vote by religious affiliation and race

	2000		2004		2008		2012		2016		Dem chan '12-'1
	Gore %	Bush %	Kerry %	Bush %	Obama %	McCain %	Obama %	Romney %	Clinton %	Trump %	
Protestant/other Christian	42	56	40	59	45	54	42	57	39	58	-3
Catholic	50	47	47	52	54	45	50	48	45	52	-5
White Catholic	45	52	43	56	47	52	40	59	37	60	-3
Hispanic Catholic	65	33	65	33	72	26	75	21	67	26	-8
Jewish	79	19	74	25	78	21	69	30	71	24	+2
Other faiths	62	28	74	23	73	22	74	23	62	29	-12
Religiously unaffiliated	61	30	67	31	75	23	70	26	68	26	-2
White, born-again/evangelical Christian	n/a	n/a	21	78	24	74	21	78	16	81	-5
Mormon	n/a	n/a	19	80	n/a	n/a	21	78	25	61	+4

- Religion

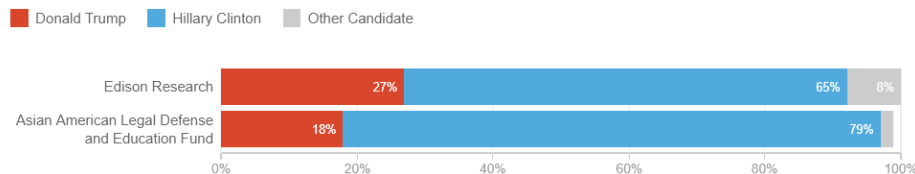
- Protestant: Generally more conservative, Evangelicals are most conservatives on social issues
- Catholic
  - Traditionally more liberal, however they tend to be significantly more conservative on social issues (abortion, gay rights)
  - Greater inclusion of Catholics into mainstream politics and society (used to be Protestant dominated)
- Jewish
  - Liberal influence
  - Strong support for the Democratic Party
  - However more religious, more conservative, still applies.

# Agents, con't.

- Race

- White Americans: Tend to be more conservative (esp. men) and tend to affiliate with the Republican Party
  - The Republican candidate has received nearly 60% of the white American vote in the last 3 elections
- Black Americans: tend to identify with the Democrats and are a consistently liberal group. In recent elections, blacks have voted in overwhelming numbers (90%+) for the Dem candidate
- Hispanic Americans: tend to be more liberal with a tendency to affiliate with the Democratic Party (although the correlation appears to be weaker than that of Black Americans)
- Asians: as a demographic they were won by the Democrats in 2000, 2004, 2008 and 2012 presidential elections (73% of Asians voted for Obama in 2012)
  - See Slate article.

Conflicting Results From Exit Pollsters On Asian-American Voters



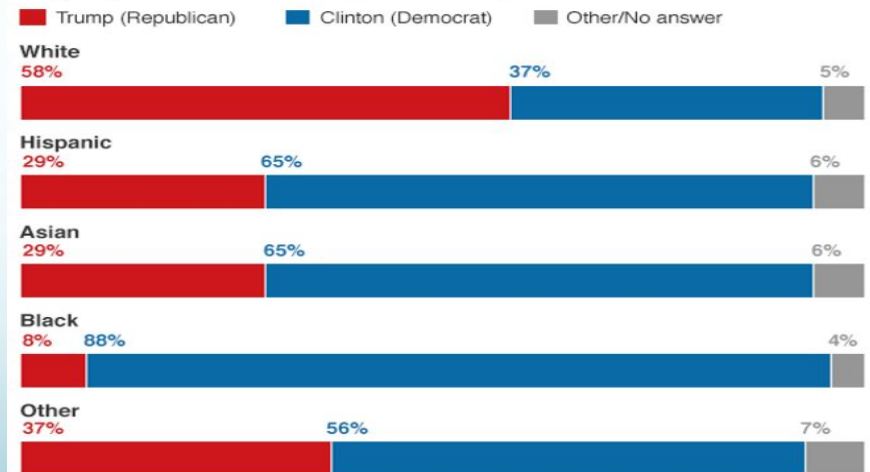
Notes

— Percentages were rounded up to whole numbers.

Source: Asian American Legal Defense and Education Fund, Edison Research

Credit: Brittany Mayes/NPR

Majority of white voters opt for Trump

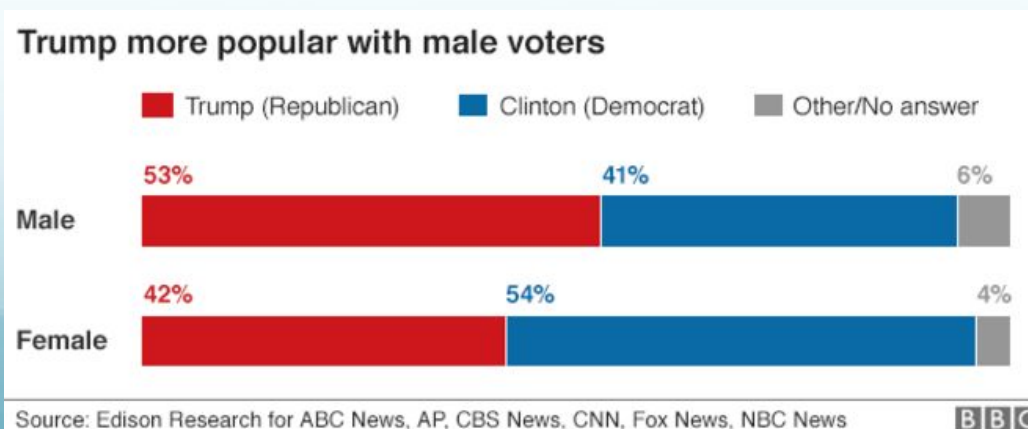


Source: Edison Research for ABC News, AP, CBS News, CNN, Fox News, NBC News



# Agents, con't

- Income: Those with higher incomes → more conservative and supportive of Republicans. Those with lower incomes → more liberal and supportive of Democrats.
- Gender:
  - 1920's → women first began to vote, more likely to support the Republican Party than men were. Republicans were the party of “hearth and home”. Continued through the 1960's
  - 1960's: Women began to support Democrats more than men. Result → a significant gender gap. The modern women's rights movement and Democrats' tendency to support sex-sensitive issues: equal opportunity, abortion, welfare, gun control, pornography)
  - 1992: The Year of the Woman: many more women than ever before were elected to Congress.



# Agents, con't

- Married vs. Unmarried
  - Based on Zogby poll data, the gender gap is not as significant as the gap between married and unmarried voters. They found that on most issues single and married voters were 25-30 points different
  - Single more likely to vote Democrat and Married more likely to vote Republican.
- Education: College education influences individuals to be more liberal on social and economic issues than they were before college. The longer students stay in college, the more prestigious the institution they attend, the more liberal they become.
  - HOWEVER: moderate voters tend to become more conservative as they become more economically prosperous (more school, usually=more prosperity)

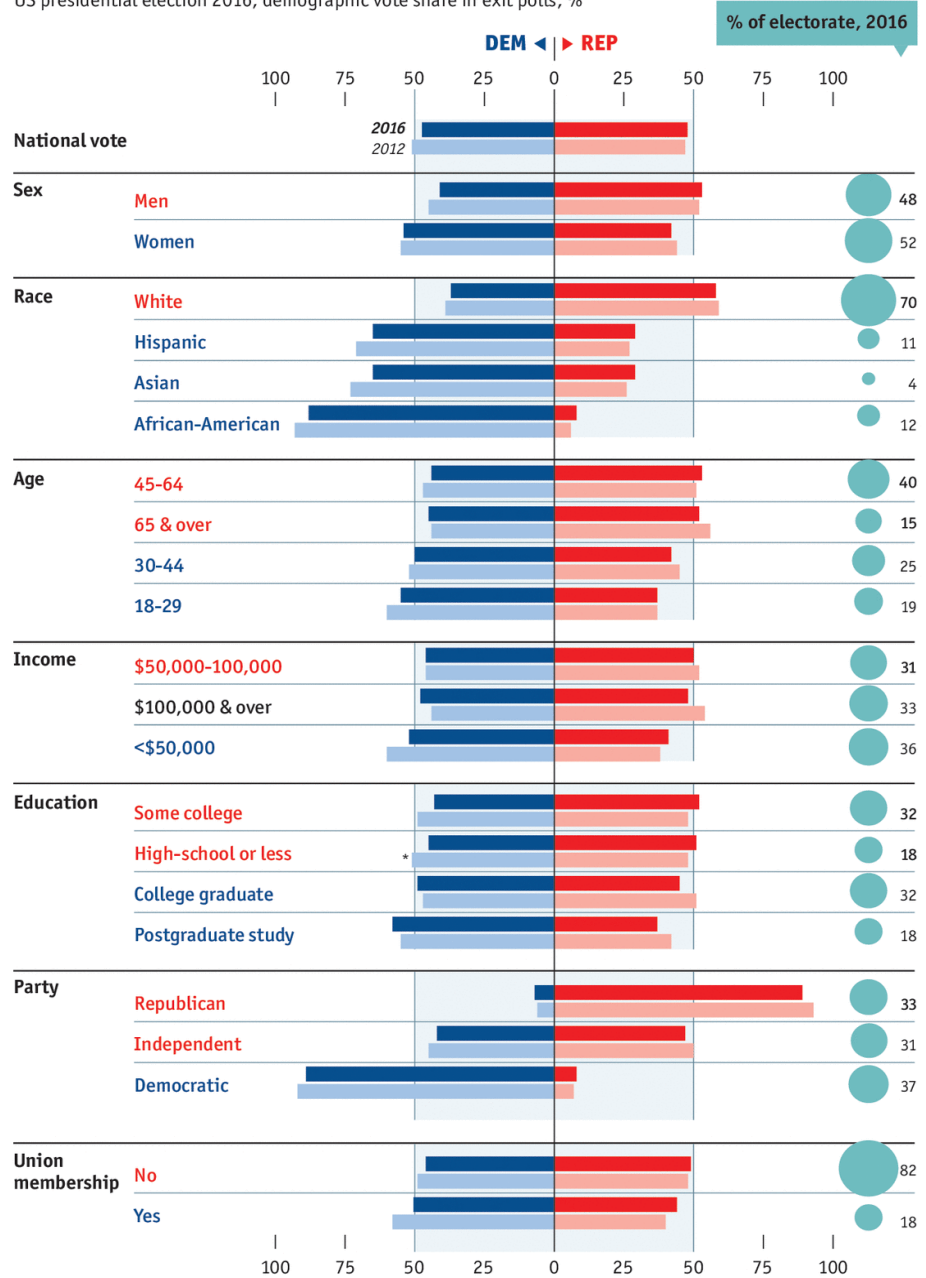
# Cross Pressure

- When there are conflicting elements within one's own socialization.
- Happens ALL OF THE TIME!
- All the more important to really educate yourself and identify what is most important to you.

# 2016 Exit Poll Data

## National breakdown

US presidential election 2016, demographic vote share in exit polls, %



Sources: Roper Centre, Cornell University; CNN; *The Economist*

\*High-school graduates only



# Exit Polls 2008 and 2012

- <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-srv/special/politics/2012-exit-polls/table.html>
- Comparison by Demographic

# Public Opinion and Political Polling

- The importance placed on public opinion and information gathering techniques should be made abundantly clear. Like any science, simple observation is not enough. Looking out across the plain may lead us to believe that the earth is flat, or driving past a poor neighborhood may lead one to believe the inhabitants are lazy, unskilled, or unintelligent.
- It is often said that polls can be made to say anything. That's true—if you don't know how to read them. Knowing how to read polls, and being able to discern good polling questions from bad ones, and what the answers mean is a learned skill.

# Public Opinion (broken down)

- Types of Publics
  - Elites: those with a disproportionate amount of political resources. They raise issues and help set national agenda and they influence the resolution of issues
  - Attentive: those with an active interest in government and politics
  - Mass: those with little interest in government and politics
- Types of Opinions
  - Stable: change very little (death penalty)
  - Fluid; Change frequently (presidential popularity)
  - Latent: dormant but may be aroused (military draft)
  - Salient: have some personal importance to individuals (gun control)
  - Consensus: Shared by 75% of the people or more (a balanced budget)
  - Polarized Shared by less than 75% of public (gun control)

# Measuring Public Opinion

- Pros and Cons of Public Opinion Polls
- By elections: deceiving → does not tell us WHY people voted as they did
- By straw (informal) polls → inaccuracies abound!
- By Scientific Polls → the best method.

# Roots of Public Opinion Research

- Literary Digest Fiasco of 1936
  - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=R2vhjC5qCQk>
    - 1:40
- George Gallup made a name for himself when he correctly predicts the 1936 election based on a scientific poll with an unbiased sample size.
  - George Gallup did not invent the modern public opinion poll, but he is the man who legitimized it, thanks in part to a dramatic bet. In 1935, in order to get newspapers to subscribe to his weekly polls, Gallup promised he would predict the winner of the 1936 presidential election. The idea was to canvass groups of people who were representative of the electorate. Gallup sent out hundreds of interviewers across the country, each of whom was given quotas for different types of respondents; so many middle-class urban women, so many lower-class rural men, and so on. Gallup's team conducted some 3,000 interviews, but nowhere near the 10 million polled that year by the Digest. Yet his prediction was the correct one.

## **What three fatal errors did the *Literary Digest* commit in its polling for the 1936 election?**

- A. Sampling, timing, and self selection
- B. Timing, unfavorable weather conditions, and the war
- C. Unfavorable weather conditions, the war, and self selection
- D. Unfavorable weather conditions, sampling, and timing
- E. Racist data collectors, gender discrimination, and sampling

# Types of Polls

- Telephone polls: operate as their name suggests, by telephone. In the early days of telephones, responders were excited to speak their views to pollsters. However, in recent years it has become increasingly difficult to conduct telephone polls due to the decreasing number of landlines and the decreased desire by the public to be contacted by outsiders. Still the most popular!
- Exit Polls: are conducted at designated voting places. A pollster asks voters a set of questions as they leave the voting place. The media conducts exit polls, asking every tenth voter who emerges, and uses the results to predict the outcome of the election.
- Tracking Polls: were introduced to help presidential candidates keep watch on short-term campaign developments and how their strategies effected their campaign. Since 1992, when they were first introduced, they have been used by the media as well. The polls are taken every day and usually to only registered voters. The polls can be grouped into averages of a few to five days

# Polls, Con't.

- Internet Polls: are similar to telephone polls only using the internet. They both have the same problem of relying on the willingness of people answering them. While most internet polls are scientific, there are plenty that are not. Some can resemble the obsolete straw poll, asking only a certain audience who will probably answer one way, such as on a biased-news website. The polls can include the interests of only a limited number of people.
- Push Polls (unscientific): are conducted in order to persuade the participant. They include biased questions that are designed to either support or bash a candidate in order to influence voters. They do not necessarily provide much information and are conducted amongst thousands of people, while other polling methods use smaller numbers to reduce the **margin of error**, or sampling error in a survey's results. If the margin of error is 3%, and a result is 50% of the questioned chose one answer, then it is believed that 47-53% of the public is the same.



# Construction of Polls

- Every aspect of a poll is critical to the accuracy of the results and a small error can drastically change the results.
- Selection of the sample
  - Random Sampling: gives anybody in the public the same chance to get selected. Random sampling in theory is the best method for getting a completely unbiased sample.
  - Stratified Sampling: splits the population into subgroups, then weights them based on demographics of the entire nation. Stratified sampling does not allow volunteers, as volunteers usually have different beliefs than those who do not volunteer to be questioned.
  - National polls typically require 1500-2000 respondents
  - Sampling error: expressed in +/- terms
  - Can reduce sampling error by adding more respondents but at some point diminishing returns sets in!

# Construction, Con't.

- Question phrasing is an important aspect that makes an accurate or inaccurate poll. A survey question should be made for anybody to understand what it is asking. Poorly phrased questions can result in a ridiculous outcome or result in a high amount of "not sure" or "unknown" responses.



## Colbert Interviews Frank Luntz

- Order of the content being polled
- Yes/No questions versus allowing nuanced responses.

# Analyzing the Data

- The average margin of error in statistical data for polling is +/- 4
- Most common issue is sampling bias.

\_\_\_\_\_ polls are the most common method of polling

- a. Text messaging
- b. Internet
- c. Exit polls
- d. Telephone Polls
- e. Straw Polls

# Uses of Polls

- Informing the Public
- Informing candidates
- Informing office-holders
- Making Election night projections through the use of exit polls

# Advantages of Polls

- Meant to create a more efficient democracy: provides some public input into the decision making process.
- Best represents the will of the people
- Helps to separate issues from candidates → unlike elections
- Allows representatives to represent interests of the nation and not just their constituents.
- Most reliable measure of public opinion → not personal, can be done frequently, more representative of the electorate
- Through polls and through understanding the public's opinion on issues help interpret the meaning of elections
  - Polls reveal what elections mean and make then the political process more responsive to voters
  - Being cognizant of public opinion causes most candidates to stay away from extremist positions on certain issues (presidential elections are often contests between two moderates)

# Disadvantages of Polling

- Sometimes encourages politicians to follow rather than lead
- Founders didn't trust the people, should we?
  - Americans in general are not very politically literate
    - The average person struggles to name the Pres, VP, and forget about their senators or representatives.
- Undermines the Founders' ideas of a representative government because it goes closer to a direct democracy.
  - Often we find candidates pandering to the whim of the public
- Influences opinion and behavior rather than measuring it
- Exaggerates the divisions among the public on issues
- "Horse Race" mentality emphasized during campaigns at the expense of issues. (second by second updates of who is in the lead)
- Early projections from exit polls may discourage voter turnout, especially in the West.

# Polling and Voter Turnout

- Election of 2000 demonstrated this problem
  - Early projections in Florida may have discouraged turnout in the panhandle part of that state
  - Flawed data from the company with which all the major networks had contracted led to flawed projections (“garbage in, garbage out”)
- In 1980 the major networks declared Reagan the president-elect while the polls were still open in California. Television crews showed footage of people who were waiting in line to vote abandoning the polls.

# Polling the Public by George Gallup

- Does the disadvantages of polling or the practice of horse-race polling until election day undermine Gallups cloture argument?



# Conducting and Analyzing Public Opinion Polls

- **Analyzing “The State of Balanda”**
- **Questions 1-3:** How did you interpret the polling data to help your candidate?
- **Questions 4-5:** How did the demographic information impact your interpretation of the polling data?