

Introduction to Political Science: American Politics

POLI 10

Week 2, Day 3

Nazita Lajevardi, Ph.D. Candidate

Office Hours: Mondays 11:15 am-1:15 pm

Office Location: SSB 341

Email: nlajevar@ucsd.edu

Wednesday July 6th, 2016

Agenda for Today



- Review from last week
- Public Opinion
- Political Participation
- Weekly Reading Quiz
- Group discussion – develop questions for visitors in groups
- Visit from Joel Anderson's Office (State Senate, Republican)
 - 10:00 – 10:20 am
- Visit from Scott Peters' Office (Congress, Democrat)
 - 10:20 – 10:50 am

Recall from last time

- **Federalism:**

- In a federal system, the Constitution divides authority between two or more distinct levels of government.

- **Tension between federal power and states' rights**

- **Federal Power:**

- Article I, Section 8 lists the enumerated powers explicitly reserved to Congress.
- Supremacy Clause: the national government enjoys supremacy, but only insofar as its policies conform to the Constitution, which prohibits certain kinds of federal activities

- **States' Rights:**

- Tenth Amendment: The powers not delegated to the United States by the Constitution, nor prohibited by it to the States, are reserved to the States respectively, or to the people.
 - (But actually kind of a failure)

Recall from last week



2004



2008



2012

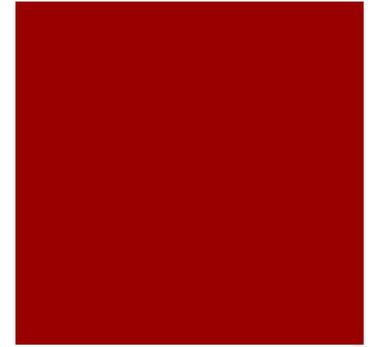


- Despite very little guidance in the Constitution,
 - “Each House may determine the Rules of its Proceedings...” (Article I, Section 5)

“factions” appeared almost immediately in Congress.

- Why are we worried about Factions again? Which Federalist Paper?
- Parties solve problems of coordination in the legislature, across branches, and in the electorate.

Today: Public Opinion



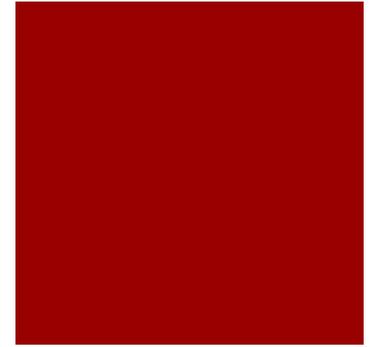
- Public opinion as a modern propellant for government action.
- Public opinion: “**those opinions held by private persons which governments find it prudent to heed.**” V.O. Key Jr.
 - Every government – democratic or otherwise – has to pay attention to the opinion/preferences of the public to some degree
 - Legislators in democracies *do find it prudent* to heed – pay attention to – the preferences of their publics, because there is always an election around the corner.

More basic understanding



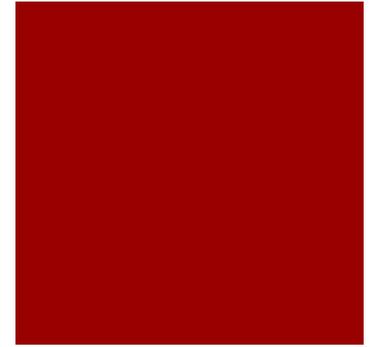
- In terms of political science, public opinion is defined as being **“the aggregate of public attitudes or beliefs about government or politics”**
- Only through the approval of the public can a government gains the authority to function.

Before scientific polling ...



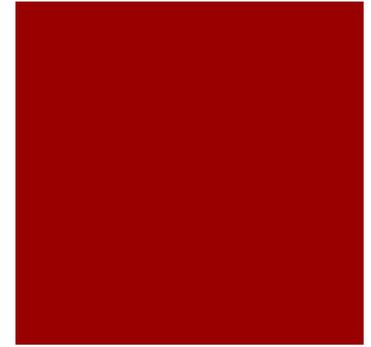
- Before the advent of scientific polling, politicians gauged public opinion haphazardly—relying on information supplied by:
 - editorials,
 - pamphleteers,
 - local leaders,
 - party activists,
 - spokespersons for social causes and
 - sometimes even less conventional sources.
- **“This might sound odd, but myself and many other members of Congress that I knew used to get a lot of ideas on how the general public felt by reading the walls in the bathrooms in towns and cities that we were in.”**
 - Member of Congress who served in the 1920s.

20th century: Development of Scientific Polling



- In the 20th century, we get **scientific polling**.
 - This was a tool to systematically investigate the opinions of ordinary people.
 - **Scientific polling** consists of surveying a random sample of the population in order to obtain statistically significant results for an upcoming vote or election.
 - **Scientific polls** are frequently used before a big election for countries or states.
 - They are informative to leaders who are up for election and need to know which issues are most important to the citizenry.

Measuring Public Opinion

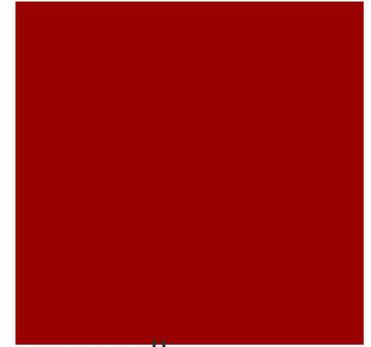


- Basic Techniques:
 1. Select a random sample of the population
 2. Ask the people in the sample some appropriate/relevant question about their views.
 3. Count up their answers

- The larger the sample, the more closely the sample's answers will approximate the answers the polls would get if the entire population could be asked.

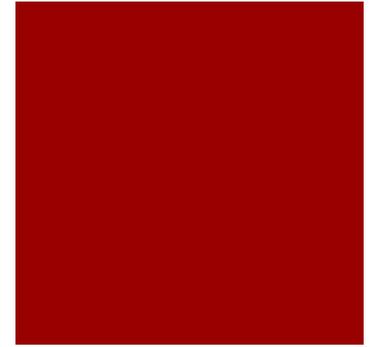
- A truly random sample \neq possible
 - Because there is no single directory where everyone is conveniently listed and so can be given a perfectly equal chance of being selected.

Measuring Public Opinion



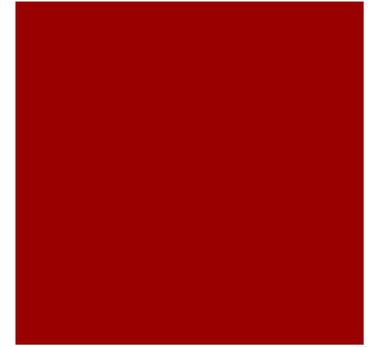
- A properly-designed survey can represent the full population with a small sample.
 - Survey of 1,000 can represent 300 million.
- The simplest way to create a representative survey is through a *simple random sample*.
- *Random digit dialing*: a computer selects a random 10-digit number (XXX) XXX-XXXX-> surveyor calls.
 - Every telephone in the U.S. is equally likely to be selected
- If 501 of 1,000 respondents approve of Barack Obama, estimate of population approval is 50.1%.
- A simple random sample of size 1,000 has a margin of error of +/-3.1 percentage points.

Measuring Public Opinion



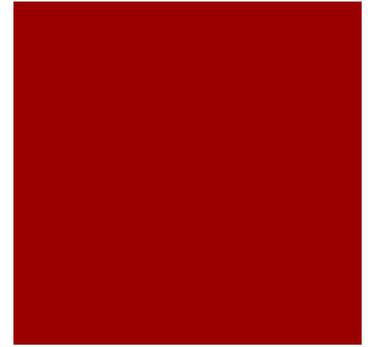
- Examples of questions polls are asking “respondents” about the election last month:
 1. Do you think...Hillary Clinton has the integrity to serve effectively as president?
 2. Do you think...Donald Trump will shake things up in Washington?
 3. Do you think Hillary Clinton is lying about how her emails were handled while she was secretary of state?
 4. Regardless of how you might vote, how qualified do you think...Hillary Clinton is to be president of the United States?...Very qualified, somewhat qualified, not very qualified, not at all qualified
 5. Do you think...Donald Trump can get things done as president to solve the country's problems?
 6. Overall, would you say you generally trust the federal government, or not?
 7. Do you think this year's (2016 presidential) nomination process has been good or bad for the Democratic Party?

Measuring Public Opinion: E.g. Polls Political Scientists Rely on



- Case study: Congressional Cooperative Election Study (2012)
 - N: 54,535, nationally representative
 - Gender: Males: 25,275, Females: 28,259
 - Education: No HS: 5,206, high school grad: 15,631, some college: 13,494, 2-year: 4,698, 4-year: 9,500, post-grad: 5,003
 - Vote 2008 = no: 12,841, usually vote but did not in 2008: 1,752, I am not sure: 812, yes I definitely voted: 38,993
 - Ideology: very liberal: 3,280, liberal: 6,742, somewhat liberal: 6,365, middle: 13,467, somewhat conservative: 6,288, conservative: 10,540, very conservative: 4,633.

Public Opinion ... Thus:



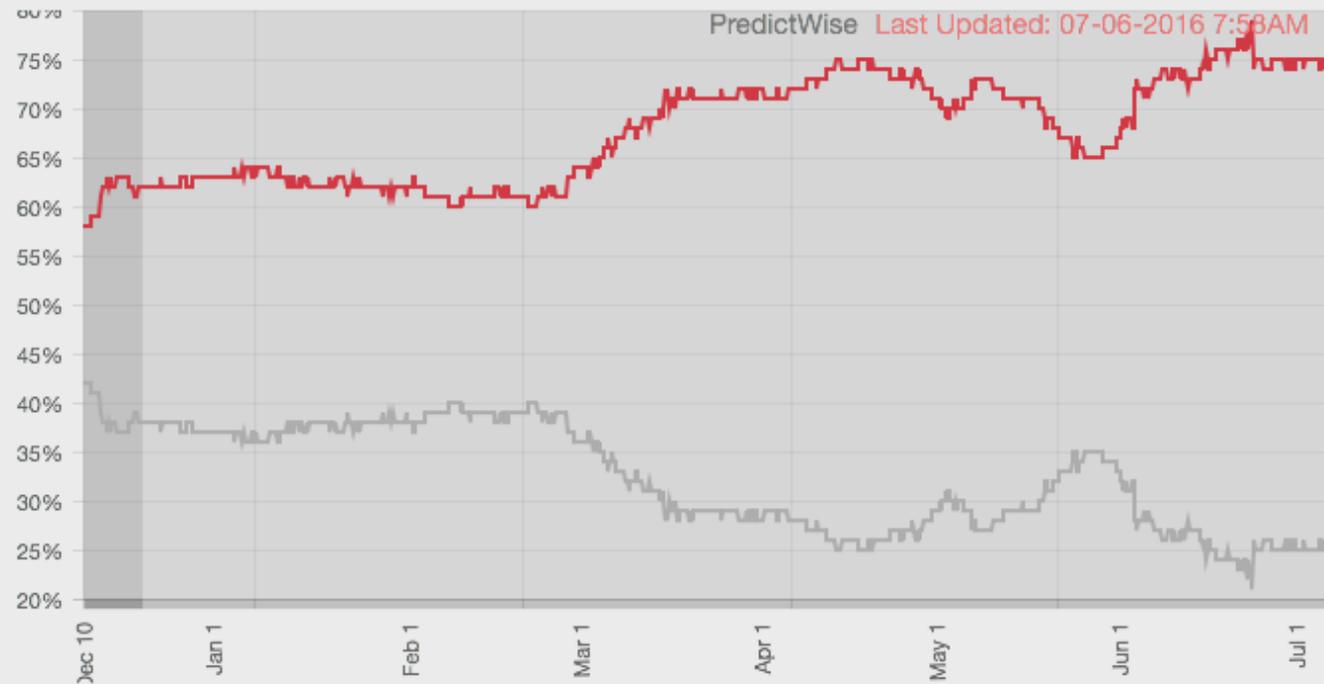
- Opinions held by citizens.
- The attitudes and beliefs that may be relevant to public policy or to elections.
- We poll people over and over again to see how public opinion is changing over time.
- Now... Onto some examples

Public Opinion on Presidential Winner



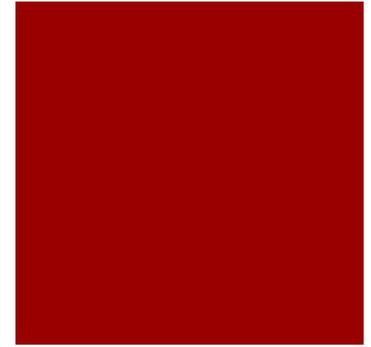
2016 PRESIDENT Winner

Democratic	74 %
Republican	26 %



Source: Predictwise.com

Public Opinion on Approval of Congress and the Direction of the Country



Approval of Congress:

- Approve: 10% (-4)
- Disapprove: 64% (+5)

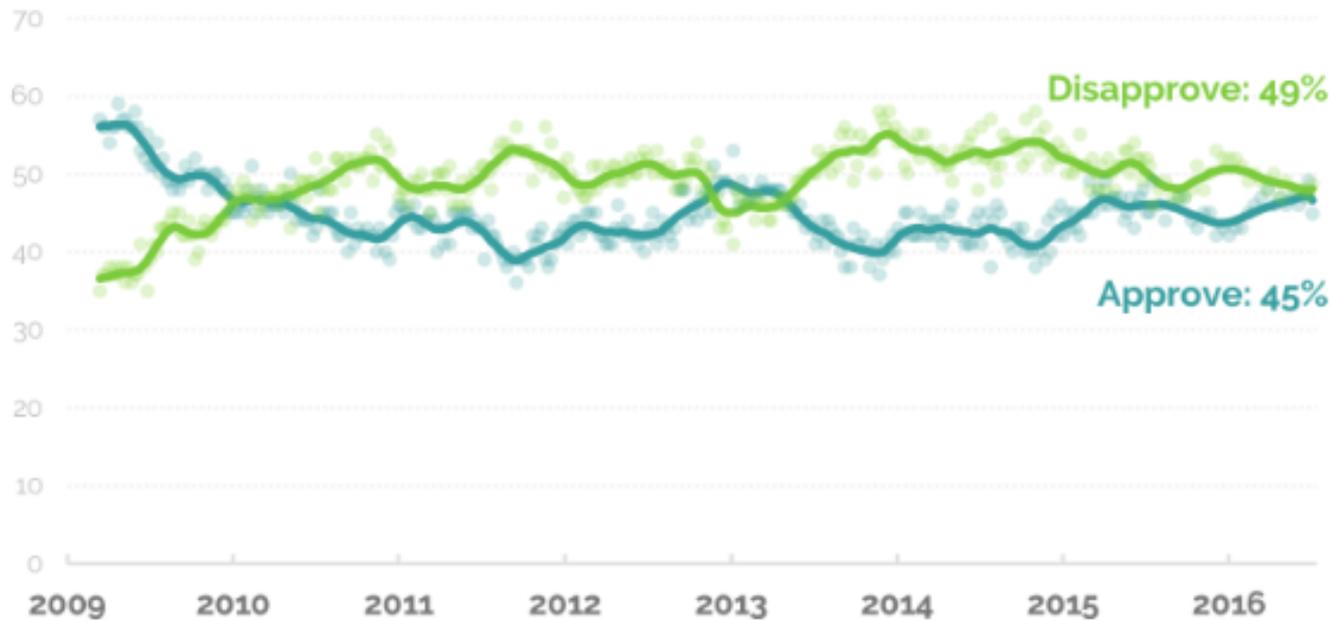
Direction of the country:

- Right direction: 26% (0)
- Disapprove: 64% (+1)

Public Opinion on Approval of President Barack Obama

Approval of Obama as President – Full trend

Do you approve or disapprove of the way Barack Obama is handling his job as President?
Among all adults



YouGov | yougov.com

Latest update July 2-4, 2016

Source: YouGov poll

Public Opinion on Approval of President George W. Bush

George W. Bush Presidential Job Approval

George W. Bush's Job Approval Ratings Trend



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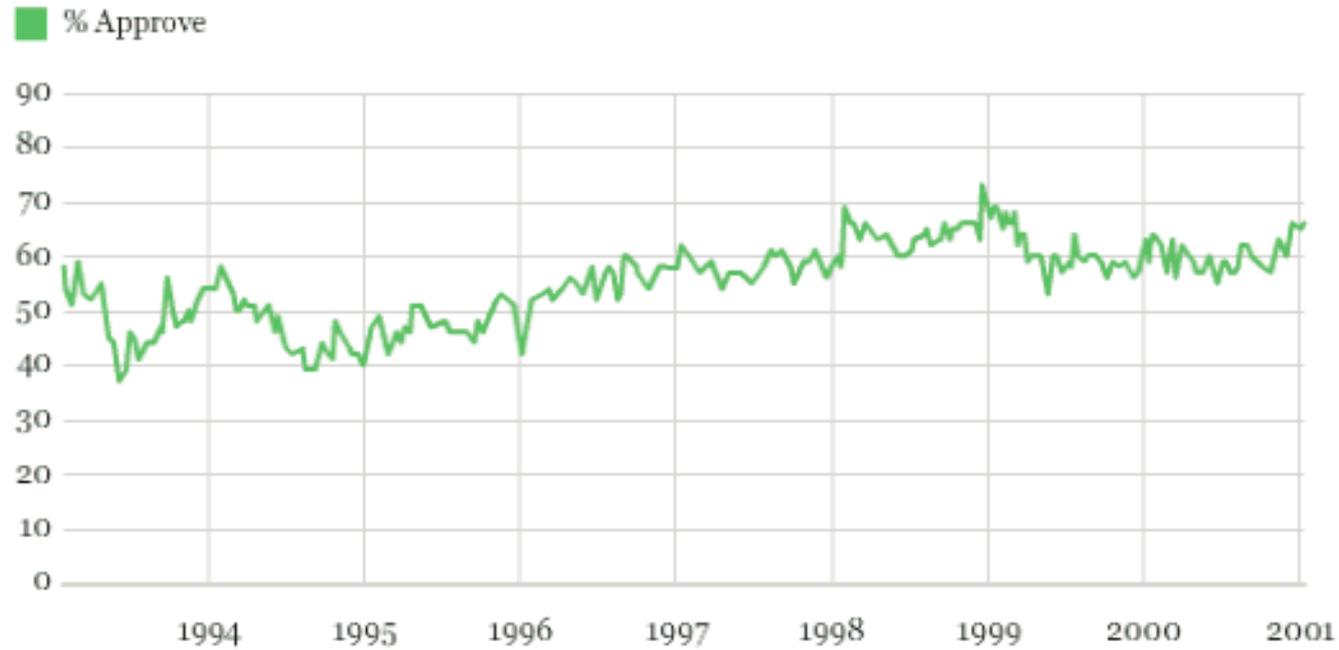
Source: Gallup

Public Opinion on Approval of President Bill Clinton



Bill Clinton Presidential Job Approval

Bill Clinton's Job Approval Ratings Trend



GALLUP®

Source: Gallup

Public Opinion on Approval of Presidents since 1945

What is the overall trend?

Source: Gallup

Overall Averages

President	Dates in office	Average approval rating
		%
Harry Truman	April 1945-January 1953	45.4
Dwight Eisenhower	January 1953-January 1961	65.0
John Kennedy	January 1961-November 1963	70.1
Lyndon Johnson	November 1963-January 1969	55.1
Richard Nixon	January 1969-August 1974	49.0
Gerald Ford	August 1974-January 1977	47.2
Jimmy Carter	January 1977-January 1981	45.5
Ronald Reagan	January 1981-January 1989	52.8
George H.W. Bush	January 1989-January 1993	60.9
Bill Clinton	January 1993-January 2001	55.1
George W. Bush	January 2001-January 2009	49.4

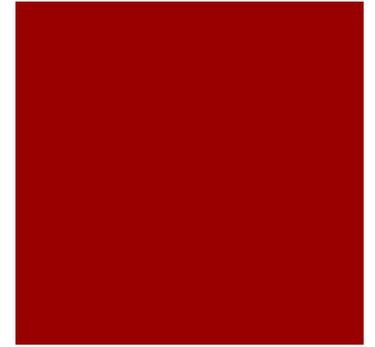
Public Opinion on this Election

GENERAL ELECTION (among registered voters):

If the 2016 presidential election were being held today and the candidates were Hillary Clinton, the Democrat, Donald Trump, the Republican, Gary Johnson, the Libertarian, and Jill Stein, from the Green Party, who would you vote for?

- **Hillary Clinton: 42%**
- **Donald Trump: 37%**
- **Gary Johnson: 4%**
- **Jill Stein: 3%**
- Someone else: 4%
- Not sure yet: 9%
- Probably won't vote: 2%

Public Opinion on this Election



If the election for Congress were being held today, and you had to make a choice, would you be voting for...

- **The Democratic Party candidate: 45%**
- **The Republican Party candidate: 36%**
- Other: 3%
- Not sure: 13%
- I would not vote: 3%

Public Opinion on illegal immigrants (2013)



Quinnipiac University. March 26-April 1, 2013. N=1,711 registered voters. Margin of error \pm 2.4.

"Which comes closest to your view about illegal immigrants who are currently living in the United States? (A) They should be allowed to stay in the United States and to eventually apply for U.S. citizenship. (B) They should be allowed to remain in the United States, but not be allowed to apply for U.S. citizenship. (C) They should be required to leave the U.S."

	Stay, apply for citizenship %	Remain, not apply for citizenship %	Be required to leave %	Unsure %
11/6 - 11/11/13	57	12	26	4
6/28 - 7/8/13	54	12	28	6
4/25 - 4/29/13	52	11	30	6
3/26 - 4/1/13	59	11	25	5
1/30 - 2/4/13	56	10	30	4
11/28 - 12/3/12	57	11	26	5

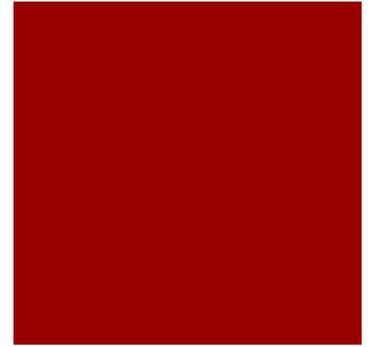
Public Opinion on medical marijuana (2013)

Gallup Poll. Oct. 3-6, 2013. N=1,028 adults nationwide. Margin of error ± 4 .

"Do you think the use of marijuana should be made legal, or not?"

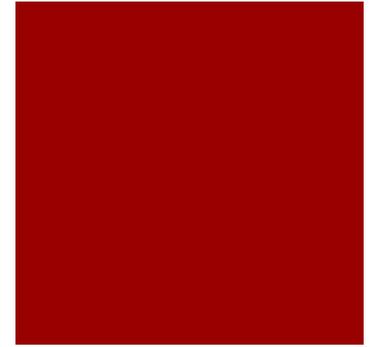
	Should be made legal	Should not be made legal	Unsure
	%	%	%
10/3-6/13	58	39	3
11/26-29/12	48	50	1
10/6-9/11	50	46	3
10/7-10/10	46	50	4
10/1-4/09	44	54	2
10/13-16/05	36	60	4
11/10-12/03	34	64	2
8/3-5/01	34	62	4
8/29 - 9/5/00	31	64	5
8/28-30/95	25	73	2
10/2-7/69	12	84	4

The Origins of Public Opinion



1. Party Identification
2. Ideology
3. Attitudes
4. Acquiring opinions
5. Information
6. Framing

The Origins of Public Opinion: Party Identification or “Partisanship”



- Longstanding, psychological, stable.
- **Democrat, Independent, Republican.**
- “Generally speaking, do you usually think of yourself as a Republican, a Democrat, an Independent, or what?”
- Democrats tend to support and identify with Democratic candidates, even if they can’t always give specific policy reasons why.
- Republicans tend to support and identify with Republican candidates, even if they can’t always give specific policy reasons why.

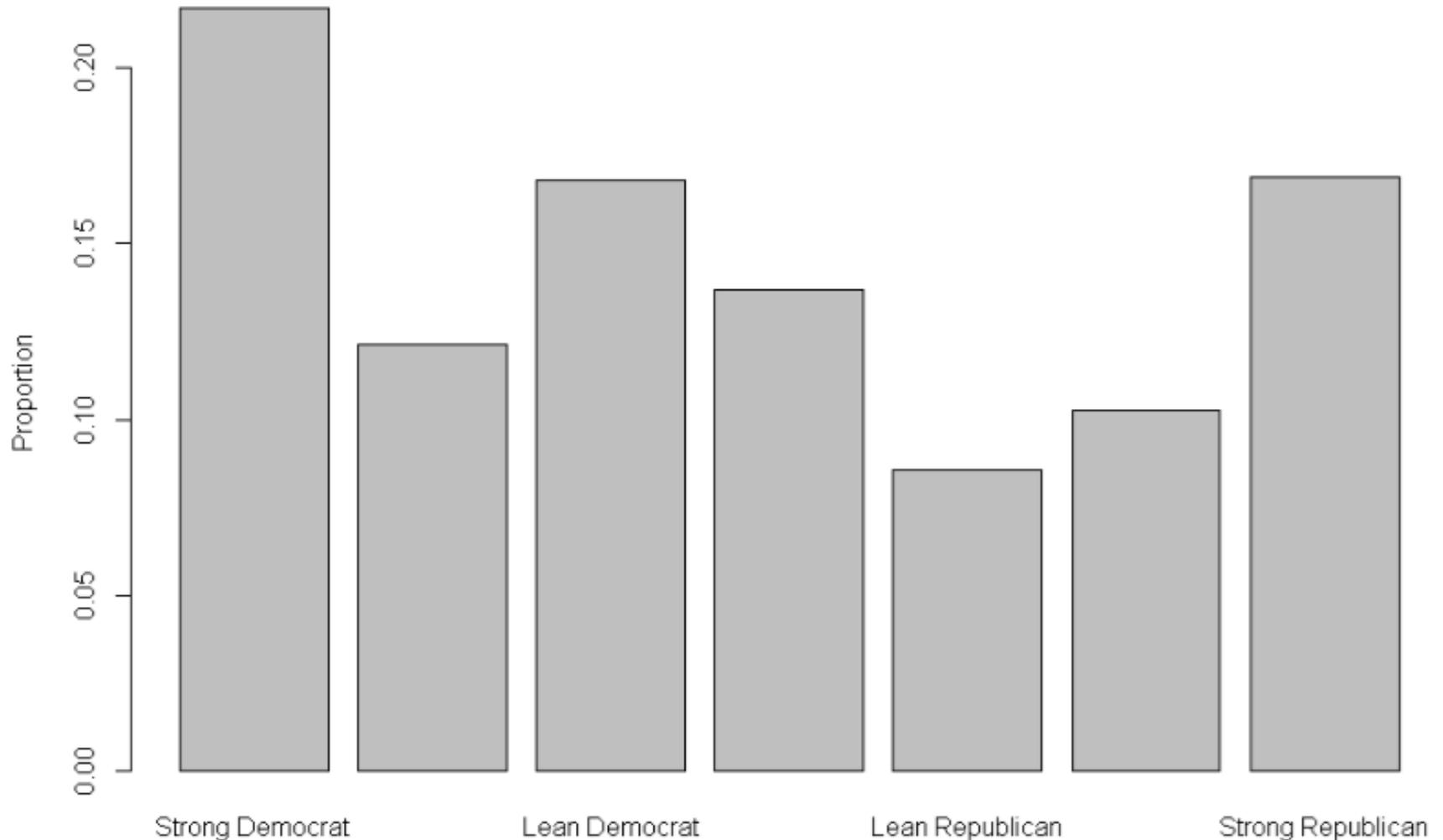
The kinds of questions that get at Partisanship



No matter how you
voted today, do you
usually think of yourself
as a:

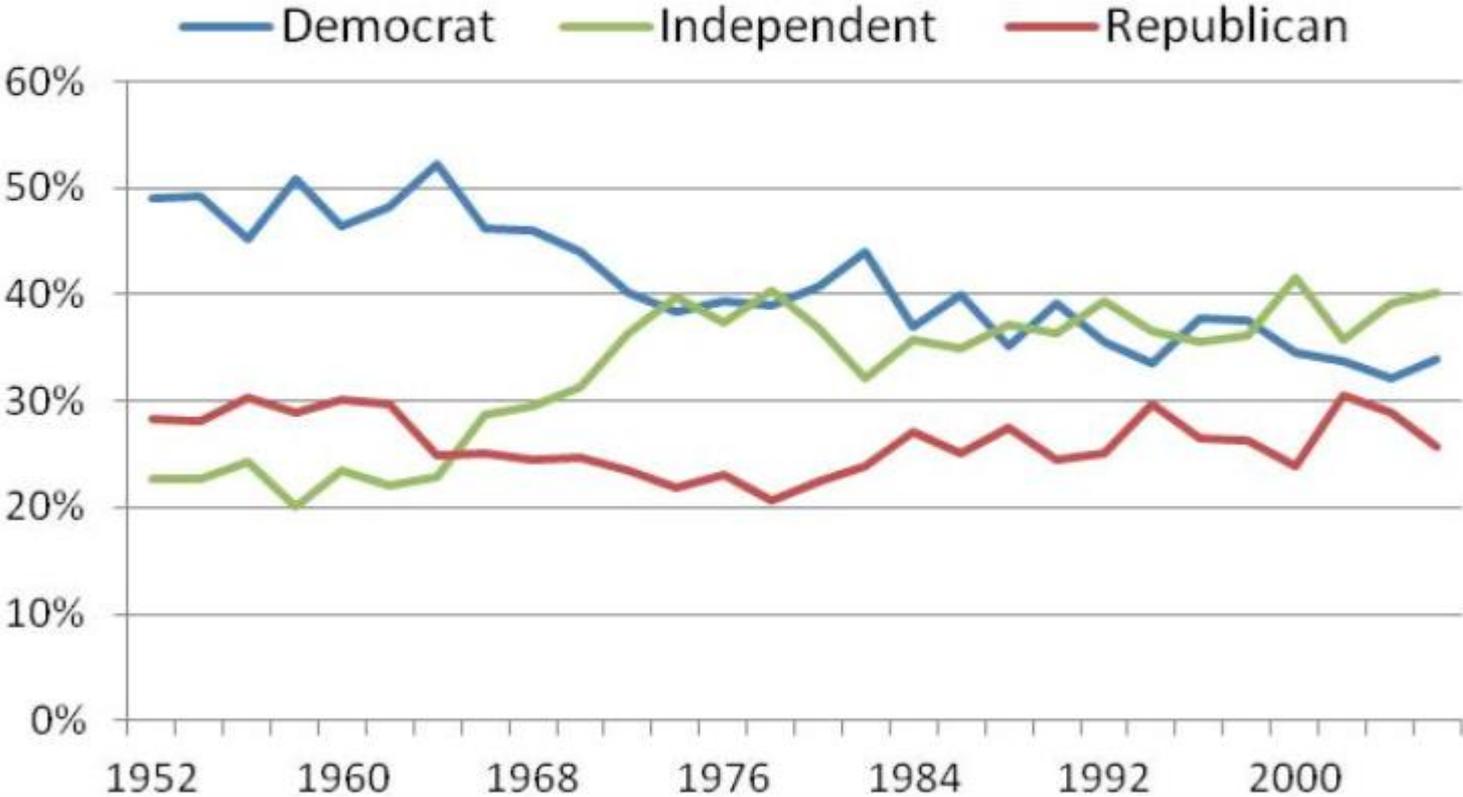
	Total	Obama	Romney
Democrat	38%	92%	7%
Republican	32%	6%	93%
Independent or something else	29%	45%	50%

Breakdown of Partisanship in 2012 Presidential Election



Breakdown of Partisanship in the last 50+ years

Party identification: American National Election Studies



Source: Cillizza, The Fix, Washington Post 9/19/12.

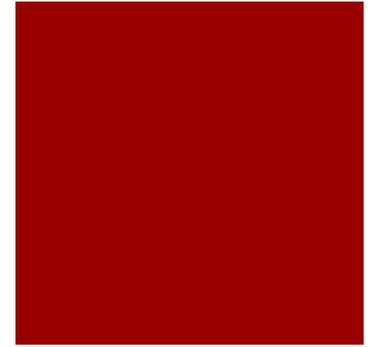
The Origins of Public Opinion: Ideology



- In American politics, general predisposition toward government intervention.
- **Conservative, Moderate, Liberal.**
- Elaborately organized sets of political attitudes
- Ideologies promote consistency among political attitudes by connecting them to something greater - a more general set of principles.

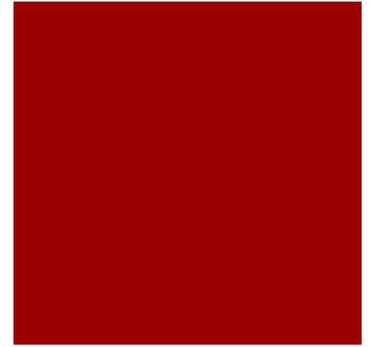
The Origins of Public Opinion: Ideology

E.g. of Question asked



- **“We hear a lot of talk these days about liberals and conservatives. When it comes to politics, do you usually think of yourself as extremely liberal, liberal, slightly liberal, moderate or middle of the road, slightly conservative, extremely conservative, or haven't you thought much about this?”**

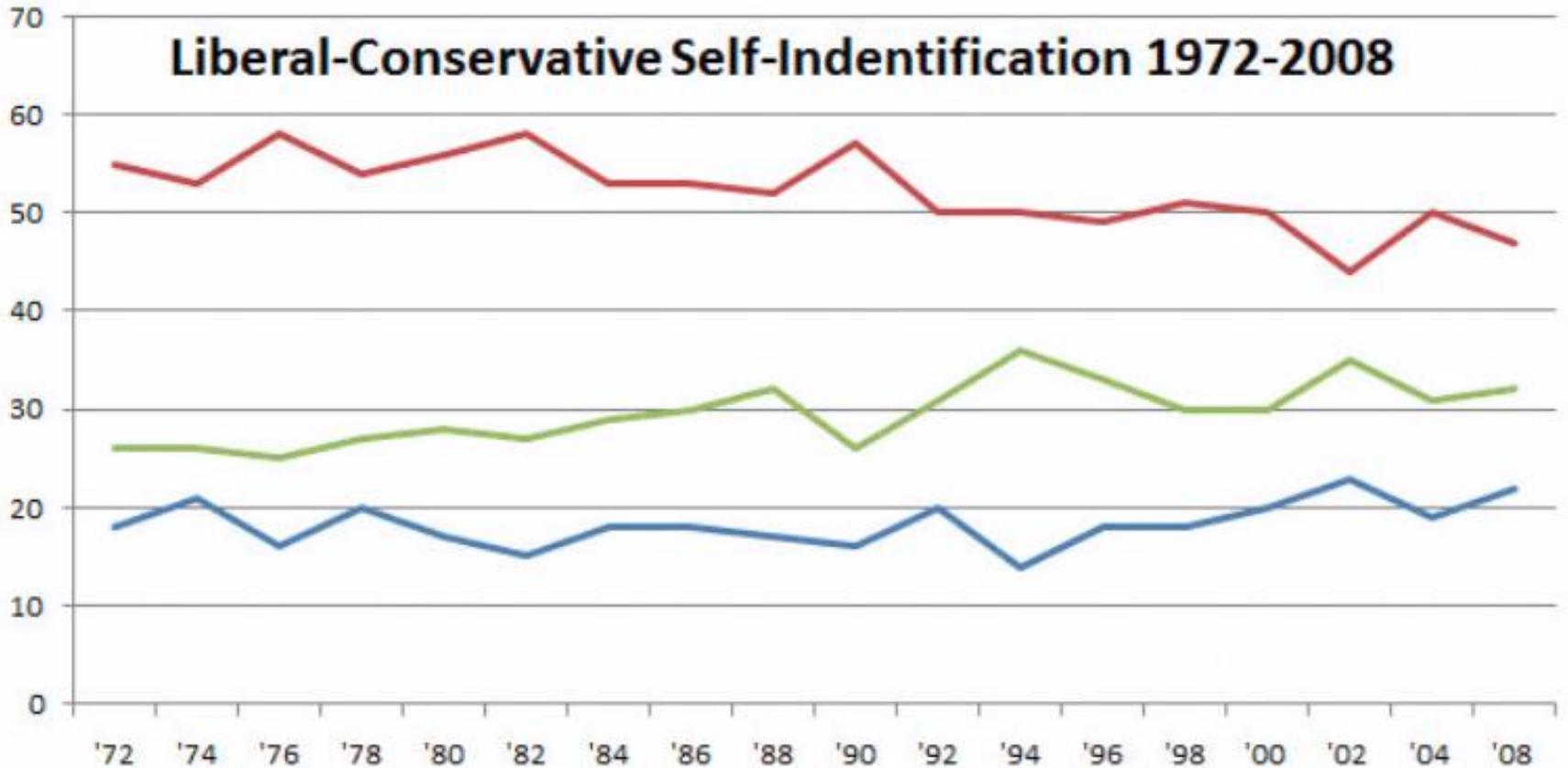
The Origins of Public Opinion: Ideology



- On economic issues, liberals tend to favor more intervention in the economy, conservatives tend to favor less intervention in the economy.
- On social issues, the reverse.

The Origins of Public Opinion: Ideology over time:

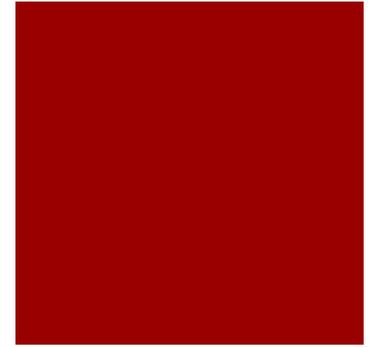
- What is the trend?



Source: American National Election Studies: http://www.electionstudies.org/nesguide/toptable/tab3_1.htm

— Liberal — Moderate/DK — Conservative

The Origins of Public Opinion: Attitudes



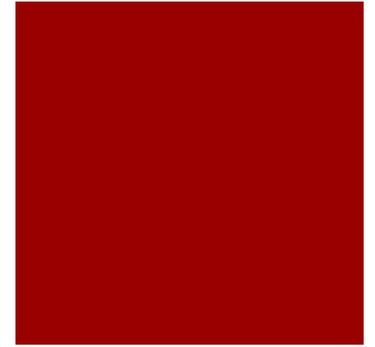
- An organized and consistent manner of thinking feeling and reacting with regard to people groups social issues or any event.
- Individuals differ widely in the attitudes they bring to bear on political choices.
- Most people have a loosely structures set of political attitudes.
- People differ in how strongly they hold attitudes

The Origins of Public Opinion: Acquiring Opinions



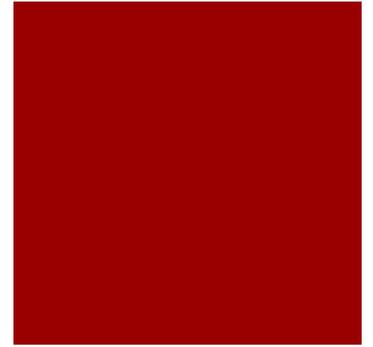
- Where do the attitudes that underlie political opinions come from?
- Attitudes acquired by families, schools, friends, opinion leaders, and the media
- Can come from the news media:
 - The news media and even entertainment programming supply a steady stream of information and commentary designed to shape people's thinking about politics (i.e. House of Cards, The West Wing, Newsroom, Scandal, etc.)

The Origins of Public Opinion: Information



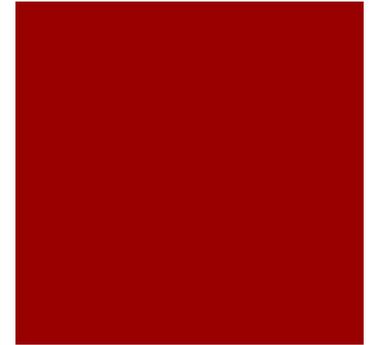
- Generally, people tend to develop more complex, richly informed attitudes only when the payoff is greater than the cost of doing so.
- Individuals raised among politically active people are more likely to develop elaborate, well-informed political views, because they can do so without much effort.
- Most people, however, live in social settings where political ideas and events are far down on the list of what their families or peers talk about

The Origins of Public Opinion: Information

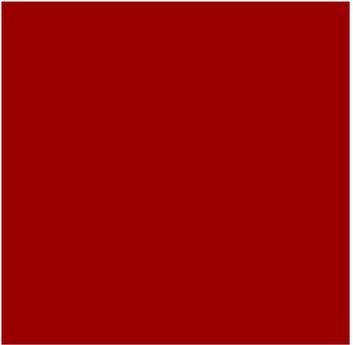


- Thus, many are ignorant of basic political facts and are in settings where they do not have incentives to develop sophisticated attitudes.
- Yet ignorance doesn't prevent people from expressing opinions.
 - Pollsters can get as many as 1/3 of the people they interview to offer opinions on entirely imaginary issues.

The Origins of Public Opinion: Framing



- Framing:
 - Explains how the media and campaigns can affect people's opinions.
 - The messages sent by the media and the candidates do not have to change underlying attitudes to change expressed opinions.
 - All they have to do is frame the issue in a way that draws out one response rather than another.
- All they have to do is frame the issue in a way that draws one response v. another.
- Simply by covering some issues and ignoring others, the news media helps to define the political agenda – and puts forth the considerations that citizens use to make political judgments.



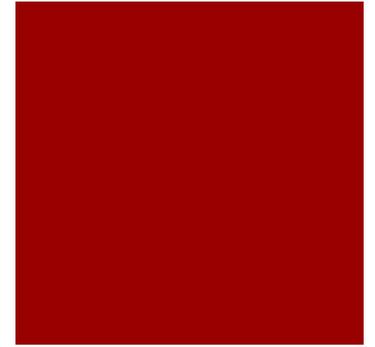
Iyengar's "TELEVISION NEWS AND CITIZENS' EXPLANATIONS OF NATIONAL AFFAIRS"

- People's accounts of national issues are significantly influenced by the manner in which television news presentations "frame" important issues.
- In addition, when individuals finally have an explanation of national issues, these explanations – which have been impacted by the way the television news "framed" the issues – powerfully affects the individuals' attitudes toward government.

Iyengar's "TELEVISION NEWS AND CITIZENS' EXPLANATIONS OF NATIONAL AFFAIRS"

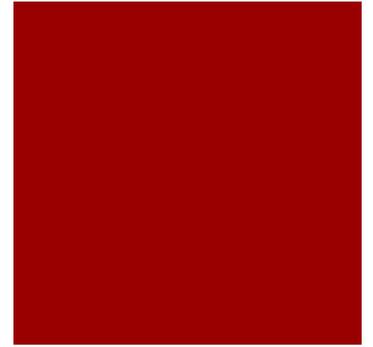
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- In addition, when individuals finally have an explanation of national issues, these explanations – which have been impacted by the way the television news "framed" the issues – powerfully affects the individuals' attitudes toward government.
- The evidence indicates that according to the manner in which television news frames national issues, individuals' explanations of these issues are altered.
- Moreover, by altering explanations of national issues, the media alters attitudes toward the incumbent president.

What was the *Method* in the Iyengar article?



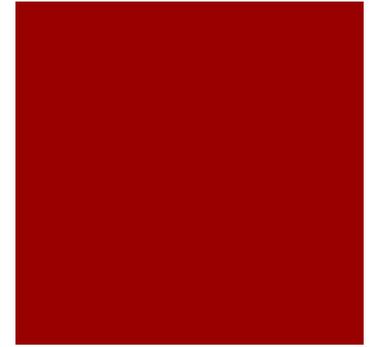
- How were individuals recruited for this study?
- What was the procedure of this study?
- What happened after the viewers saw the video?

Iyengar: Findings



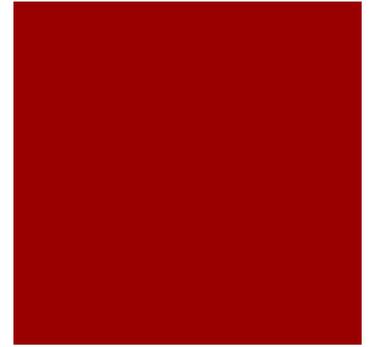
1. People can and do explain the issues and events they encounter in the world of public affairs
2. These explanations are politically consequential, for they can be and are integrated with evaluations of the president
3. Their explanations of issues like terrorism or poverty are critically dependent upon the particular reference points furnished in media presentations.
4. It is important to document the degree to which particular media frames are more or less dominant in news coverage of current issues

The Stability of Public Opinion



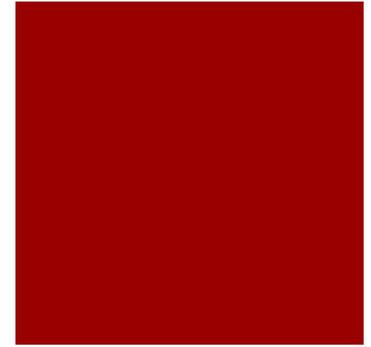
- Aggregate public opinion has been shown to be stable and coherent over time.
- Especially when there is no obvious reason to expect significant change, the distribution of opinions is highly stable.
- Aggregate opinion also varies in coherent ways
- Aggregate partisanship (the proportion of respondents who label themselves Republican or Democrats) shifts over time with
 - (1) presidential approval and
 - (2) the economy.
- Thus, popular presidents who preside over growing economies and successful foreign policies enhance their party's strength among voters.

The Stability of Public Opinion



- Moreover, public opinion is given rationality and coherence by **opinion leaders** who digest this information and spit it back to society in a way that is intelligible to the average person.
- The masses, in turn, are responsive to these leaders and use cognitive shortcuts to intake political information.

Demographic characteristics that influence public opinion



■ Race and ethnicity

- Many minority groups show distinctive patterns of issue opinion and voting behavior.
- I.e. Hispanics have lower incomes and favor more extensive services, Blacks have been captured by the Democrats and have a utility heuristic that binds them together (Frymer 2005, Dawson 1994).

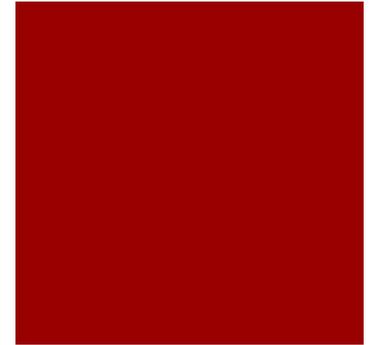
■ Gender

- On some issues, women and men do not agree. Women are less inclined than men to support the use of violence in foreign and domestic policy.

■ Income and Education

- Surveys find that opinions differ abundantly among respondents based on income and education.
- People with low incomes tend to support government services, people with higher incomes do not want to be taxed a lot. However, on non-economic issues, higher-income groups are more socially liberal than lower income groups, who are more conservative..

Demographic characteristics that influence public opinion



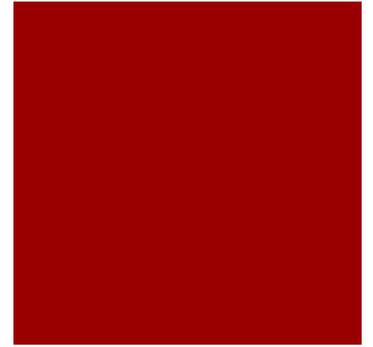
■ Religion

- Religious values have shaped political opinion
- Religion was a strong force behind prohibiting alcohol, abolishing slavery, extending civil rights to Blacks, banning abortions.

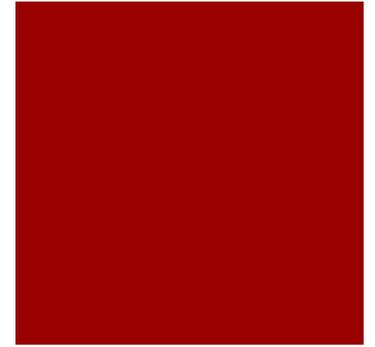
■ Age

- Younger voters tend to be more liberal on social and economic issues (i.e. they are much more supportive of gay marriage).

Now onto Political
Participation

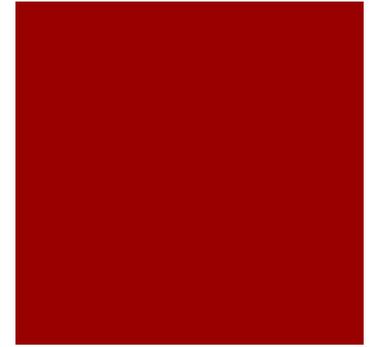


Introduction to Political Participation



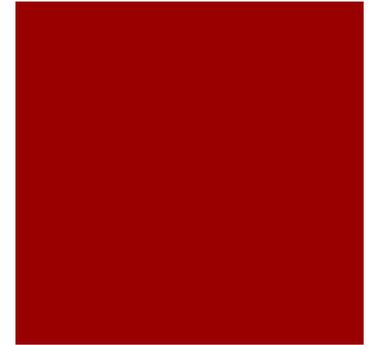
- Often, divisions in public opinion do not form consistent patterns - and so different groups must come together on different issues (and form various coalitions).
- Building coalitions (*getting people to agree on an action in the absence of agreement on the purposes of the action*) is what politics is all about.
- We have elections to delegate our authority (in this republic we all live in) to agents who represent us.
- Elections also give us the power to get rid of agents who do not do the job we wanted them to do when we delegated authority to them.

Who uses the right to vote?



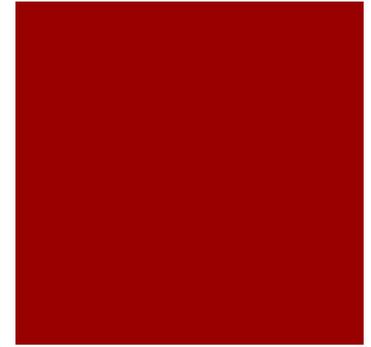
- Despite wanting so bad to have a representative democracy, many people choose not to vote.
- Why is that?
- On the one hand, people insist on the right to vote because it gives leaders a reason to care about their interests and opinions.
- On the other hand, it makes sense not to go to the polls because the likelihood that any single vote will influence anyone or anything is minute. Individually, a vote counts for next to nothing.

Who uses the right to vote?



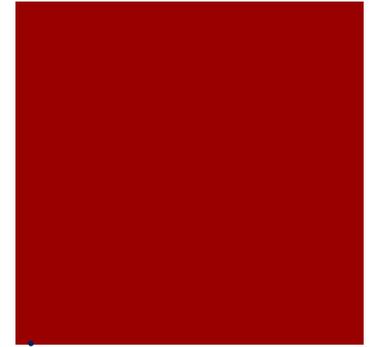
- Turnout is influenced by a number of factors: including when the election is being held, age, and education.
- For instance, other things equal, turnout in midterm elections is 27% higher for the most educated compared to the least educated.
- In presidential election years, turnout among the oldest citizens is 29% than it is among the youngest citizens.

Who uses the right to vote?



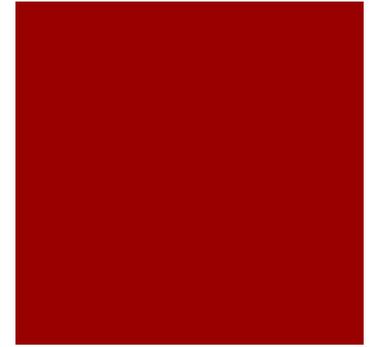
- There are institutional facts that affect turnout as well
- Institutional factors we are talking about: variation in registration laws (polling distance, voter ID laws, etc) which affect turnout.
- In the decades after the Civil War, southern states adopted devices such as:
 - Poll taxes,
 - Literacy tests, and
 - Requirement that voters reregister periodically to discourage Blacks from voting.

Alabama Literacy Test



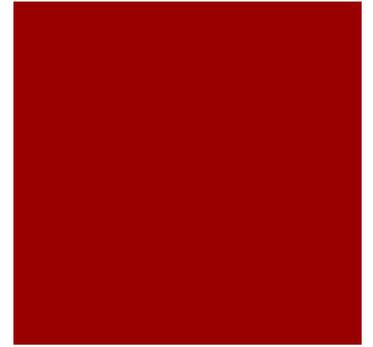
- 1. A United States Senator elected at the general election in November takes office the following year on what date? **3 Jan**
- 2. A person appointed to the United States Supreme Court is appointed for **a term of good behavior.**
- 3. When the Constitution was approved by the original colonies, how many states had to ratify it for it to take effect? **9**
- 4. Does enumeration affect the income tax levied on citizens in various states? **No**
- 5. Person opposed to swearing in an oath may say instead: **I solemnly affirm.**
- 6. What words are required by law to be on all coins and paper currency of the United States? **United States of America; In God We Trust**
- 7. Appropriation of money for the armed services can be only for a period limited to **2 years.**

Alabama Literacy Test



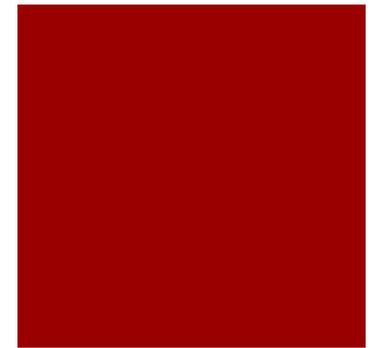
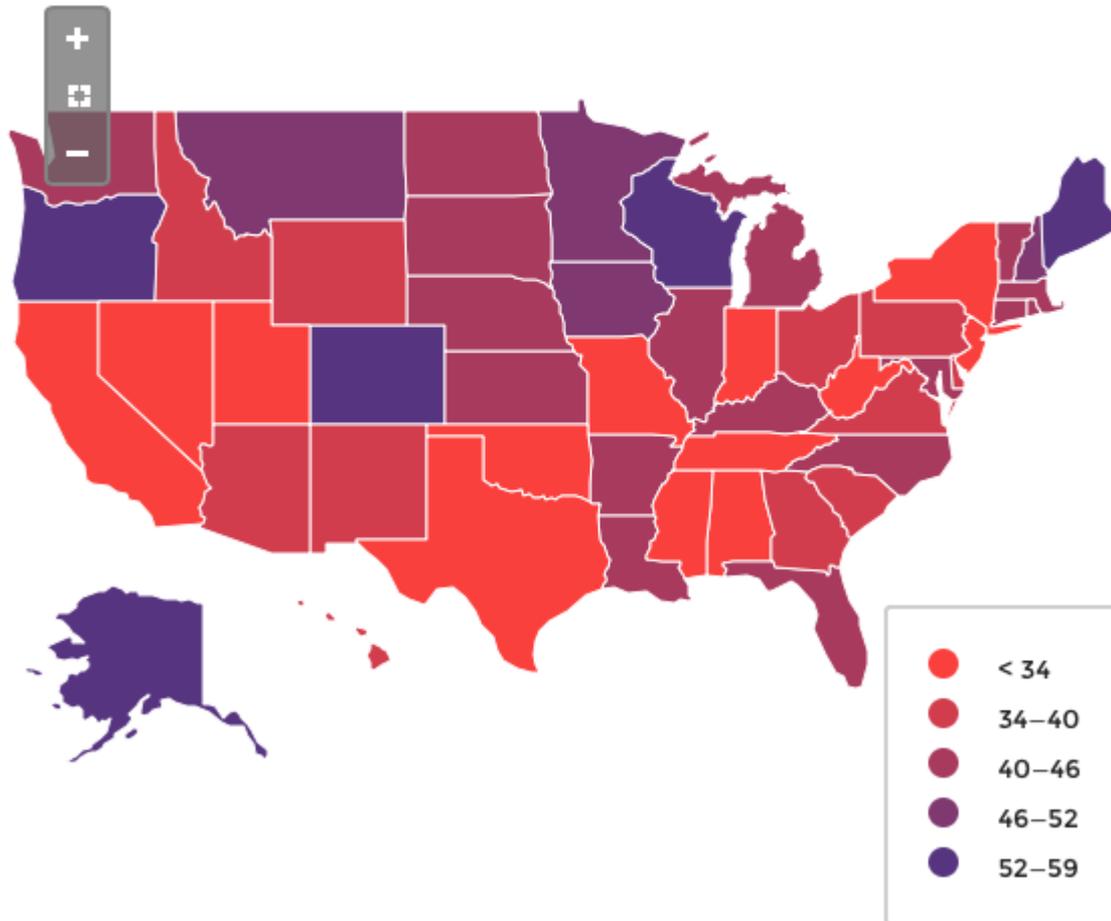
- 8. Who passes laws dealing with piracy? **The U.S Congress**
- 9. The Constitution protects an individual against punishments which are **cruel and unusual**.
- 10. For security, each state has a right to form a **militia**.
- 11. Of the original 13 states, the one with the largest representation in the first Congress was **Virginia** (10reps, 2sens)
- 12. Capital punishment is the giving of a death sentence. **True**
- 13. Involuntary servitude is permitted in the United States upon conviction of a crime. **True**
- 14. The only laws which can be passed to apply to an area in a federal arsenal are those passed by **Congress**, provided consent for the purchase of the land is given by state legislatures.
- 15. After the presidential electors have voted, to whom do they send the count of their votes? **President of the Senate**

How do voters decide?



- Voters use simple cues as cognitive shortcuts
- They also rely heavily on the free information delivered by
 - the news media,
 - campaign advertising,
 - opinion leaders,
 - and their own experience to inform their predictions.
- Voters also rely on a representative's past performance and their **incumbency status** as a cue for their future performance.
- Voters also rely on the party label voting.

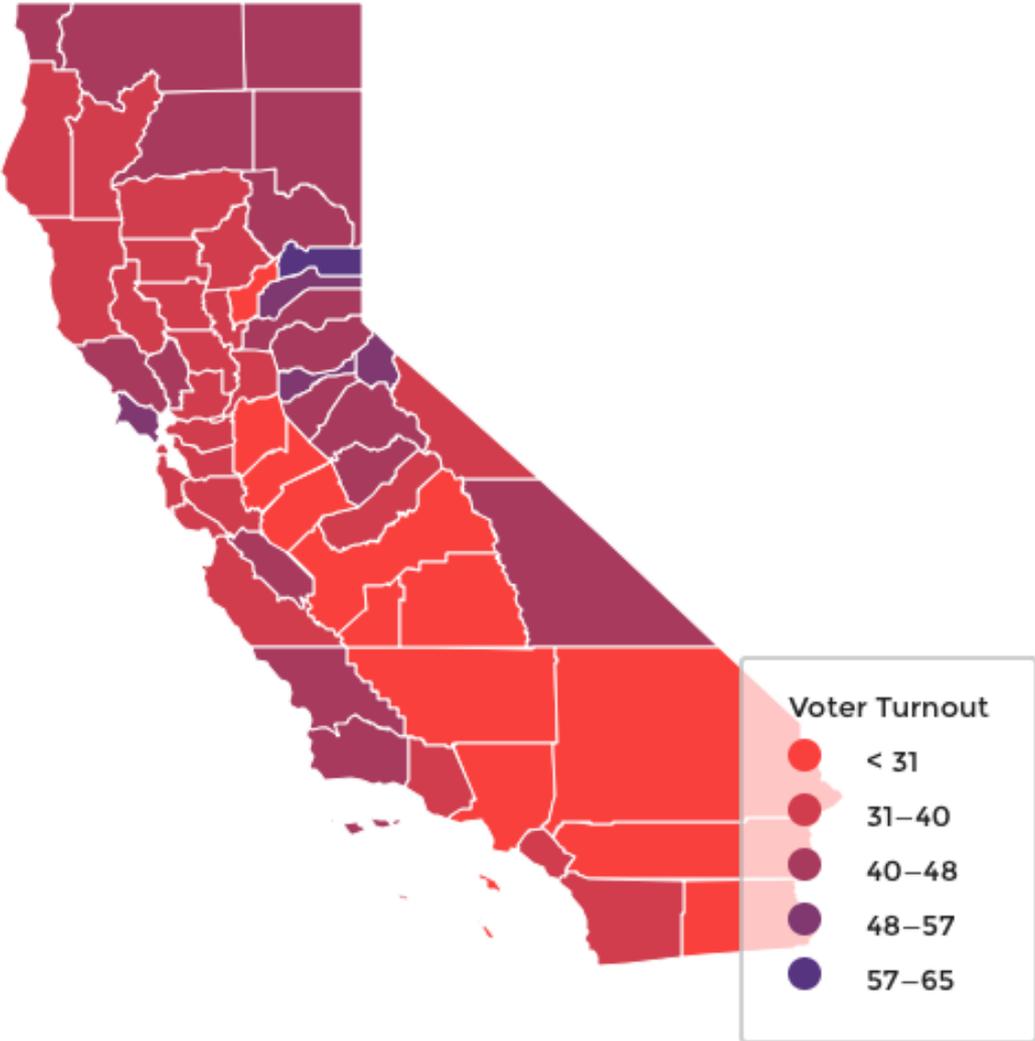
Voter Turnout in 2014 Elections



Turnout in the 2014 midterm elections

Source: Fair Vote

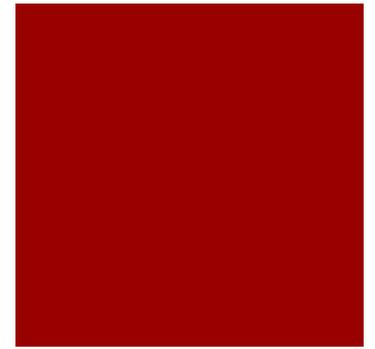
Voter Turnout in California, 2014 Election



Turnout in the 2014 midterm elections in CA

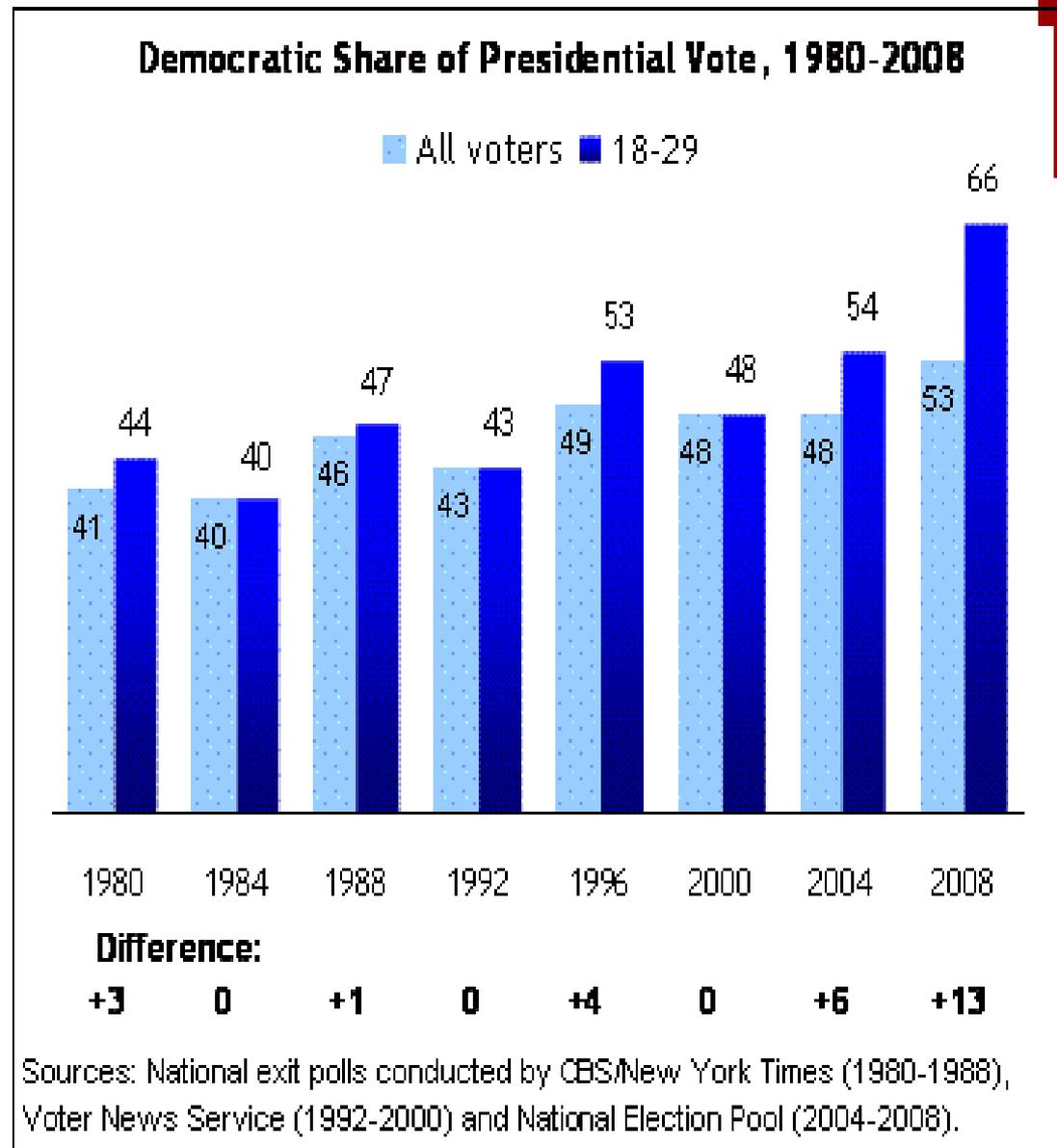
Source: Fair Vote

Young Voters in the 2008 presidential election

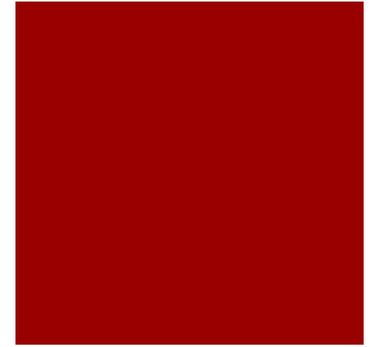


- In the last three general elections (2004, 2006, and 2008) young voters have given the Democratic Party a majority of their votes, and for all three cycles they have been the party's most supportive age group.
- In 2008, 66% of those under age 30 voted for Barack Obama

Young Voters in the 2008 presidential election



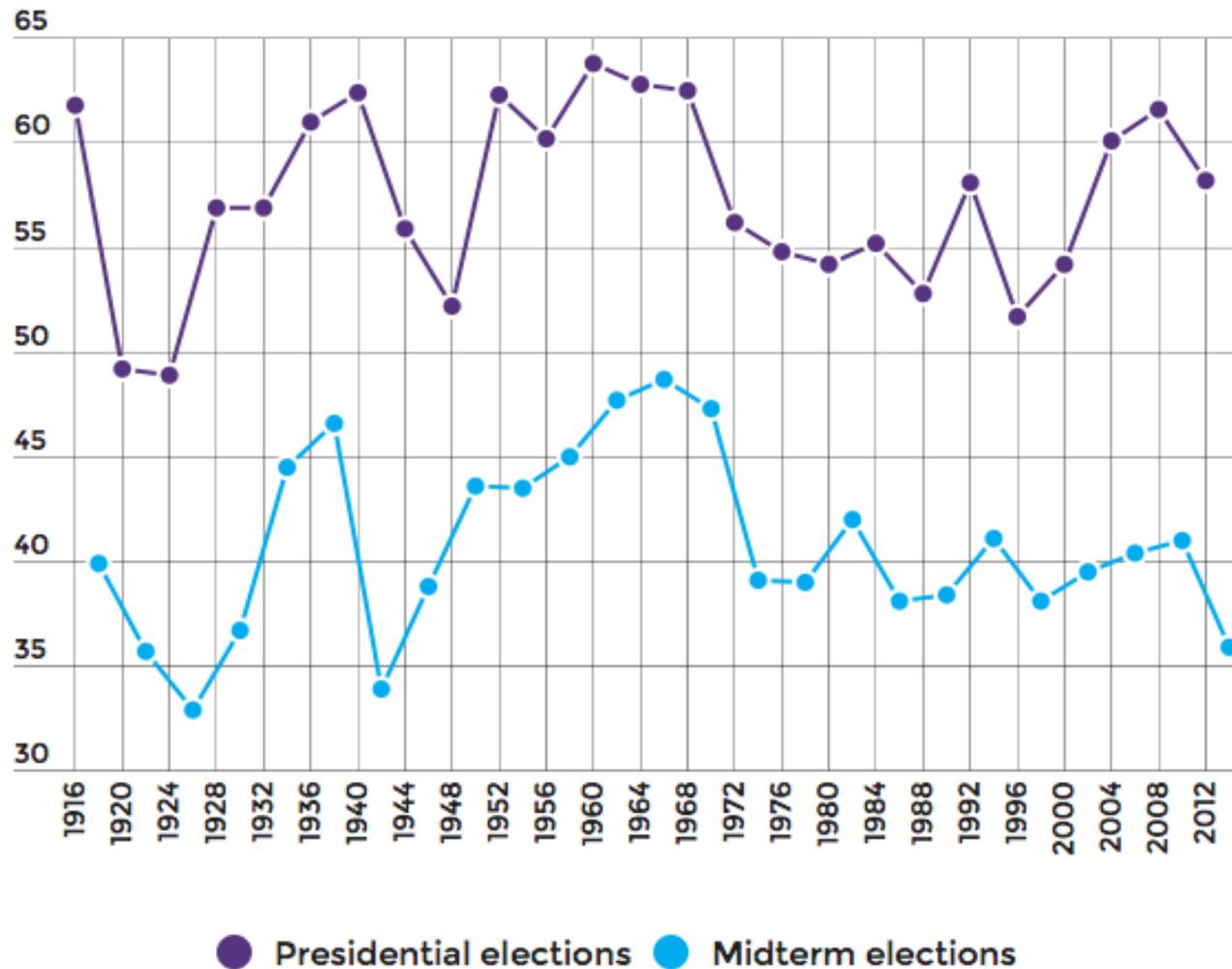
Young Voters in the 2010 midterm election



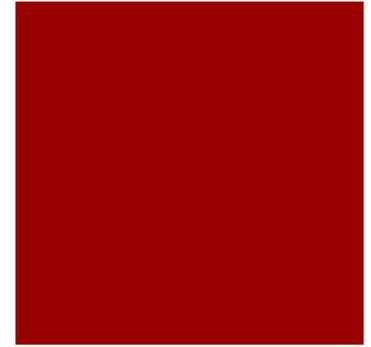
- In midterm elections compared to presidential election, voter turnout is lower among all groups, but more so for young people.
- An estimated 88.7 million people cast ballots in the 2010 midterm election. The turnout rate was 40.7%.

Midterm Elections

Voter Turnout Rates, 1916 - 2014



Discussion section (if there is time)



- Split in groups of 3-4

- Come up with 3-5 questions on
 - 1. How public opinion affects the legislator's choices in his job
 - 2. What kinds of work the interns do
 - 3. How the partisan background of the legislator they work for influences what they prioritize work-wise
 - 4. *Who* (which segments of the electorate) they think politically participates more in elections and why?
 - 5. What issues matter most to voters in their legislator's district

End of Class Notes



- We have class on Monday
- Try to get the reading done early so you're not swamped next week.
- I will have office hours on Monday.