

4.5 Measuring Public Opinion

Describe the elements of a scientific poll.

1. When John Doe assesses government, both nationally and locally, he affirms its representative and responsive nature. He possesses high efficacy. Which of the following would be the most likely outcome?

- a. John Doe is a Democrat
- b. John Doe votes
- c. John Doe has a job
- d. John Doe is an elected official

2. What is the most important benefit of public opinion polls?

- a. Determining what people are thinking about at any given moment
- b. Discovering rigidly held political beliefs
- c. Find discrepancies between fact and fiction
- d. Testing political algorithms

3. Testing the validity of public opinion polls depends upon following critical cautionary steps. All of the following are critical cautionary steps when assessing the validity of public opinion polls EXCEPT

- a. Were questions asked on the telephone?
- b. Size of random sample
- c. Margin of error
- d. Wording of questions

4. Stan works for a congressional candidate. In an attempt to persuade prospective voters, he contracts with a polling service to ask leading questions that disparage the reputation of the opposition candidate. In political science what is this practice called?

- a. Values inventory
- b. Push poll
- c. Public opinion poll
- d. Random sample

CNN/ORC Poll. May 29-31, 2015. N=1,025 adults nationwide. Margin of error +/- 3.

“We’d like to get your overall opinion of some people in the news. As I read each name, please say if you have a favorable or unfavorable opinion of these people – or if you have never heard of them. Supreme Court Chief Justice John Roberts.”

Favorable	Unfavorable	No Opinion	Never Heard of
33%	24%	16%	27%

Source: pollingreport.com

5. Using the cautionary steps when assessing public opinion polls, what statement below most accurately describes the validity of the poll above?

- a. The size of the sample is too small and appears not to be random
- b. The question is confusing to read
- c. CNN is a biased news source and therefore invalid
- d. The poll appears valid

6. Scientifically conducted public opinion polls benefit our democracy in all of the following ways EXCEPT

- a. Advantages elite opinion
- b. Collect opinions on important issues
- c. Improve efficacy
- d. Assists in grouping prospective voters

7. Which of the following best exemplifies the medias role as a scorekeeper?

- a. When ABC news uncovers unpaid taxes by a sitting member of the Senate
- b. When CNN plays horse-race journalism by showing polls that predict an election outcome
- c. When FOX news continually runs stories about an upcoming affirmative action case in the Court
- d. When NBC news fact checks a presidential speech

8. The veracity of public opinion polls depends upon a number of scientifically measured practices. All of the following are necessary for a poll to be considered valid EXCEPT

- a. Funded by the government
- b. Objective
- c. Random samples
- d. Large enough sample

9. Which of the following public opinion polls would be the most useful?

- a. A poll paid for by candidate Hillary Clinton
- b. An Internet based poll on Facebook
- c. A poll on immigration with a +/- 2 margin
- d. A push poll

10. Which of the following forms of political participation would most likely be ill affected by declining efficacy?

- a. Litigation
- b. Letter writing
- c. Voting
- d. Joining a civic group