

# Strengths and weaknesses of public opinion polls essays example

[Experience](#), [Belief](#)



\n[[Table of Contents](#)]\n

\n \t

1. [Strengths](#) \n \t
2. [Weaknesses](#) \n \t
3. [Work Cited](#) \n

\n[/toc]\n \n

## **Strengths**

Among the strengths of public polls include the fact that the polls advance the knowledge of the people regarding public opinion. Polls that are commercial in nature satisfy the interest of the public about trends and the preferences of most people. This aspect is premised on the fact that polls establish public preferences. For instance, public polls ascertain various policy concerns and monitor the behavior of the public regarding indicators such as party and ideological identities regarding the approval ratings of the incumbent regime. Through the polls politicians are able to determine their standing and whether their ideologies augur well with the public (Fiorina, 2010). Consequently, politicians seeking public offices are able to predict their possible performance in future elections because one is can see their standings against future opponents.

Through opinion polls, leaders are able to note if and when there are changes regarding the concerns of their constituents. When leaders are able to ascertain the shifting concerns of their constituents, they are able to readjust their policy proposals to ensure refocus their policies to ensure that they address the constituent concerns. Accordingly, a strong showing in pre-

election opinion polls determine the legitimacy of an aspirant and people consider them as serious contenders and more people are willing to raise funds for such candidates.

According to Erickson, public polls are important to leaders because they enable the leaders to know how the public feels about certain policies and important issues. As such, polls act as a guide for the leaders. They are also a trigger for significant movements just prior to elections.

## **Weaknesses**

Journalists do not concern themselves with the content of the opinion polls but are usually interested in broadcasting the outcome of the polls. This renders the polls meaningless as people are unable to learn from the polls without elaborate discussions regarding the polls. In cases where opinion polls reveal that particular candidates have a poor showing prior to the elections, such candidates are almost certain to lose the election. This is because poor pre-election showing per the opinion polls lead to difficulties in fundraising as unfavorable poll results diminish the enthusiasm of the supporters.

Opinion polls enable losers to manufacture 'wins' when they beat expectations even in cases where they fail to win more votes than their opponents. Such tactics usually attract the media and a loser is likely to get favorable media coverage. Favorable press coverage following a strong showing in the primaries seems to sway the opinion of the public regarding a candidate. Conversely, those candidates who fail to manage a strong showing during primaries also fail to get favorable media coverage hence

they are at a disadvantage during elections.

The media determines personal qualities of presidential candidates based on their standings in the opinion polls. That is, when the polls favor a candidate then the media usually run favorable stories about the candidate while on the other hand presenting negative stories for the candidates who perform poorly in opinion polls. The example of Newsweek's varied analysis of Michael Dukakis when polls showed him doing well in the polls and when the polls showed that his rating had dropped and his eventual loss to his competitor George Bush is evidence of the power of the media to influence the public to vote in a particular way. For instance, a candidate's standing in the presidential polls determines whether the candidate will be invited to participate in a presidential debate.

Another weakness of the public opinion polls is that they determine the relationship between Congress and the chief executive. If public opinion shows a decrease in the support for the president, the president is unable to have influence over the Congress. As such, the president has to constantly leverage his public approval in order to gain the support of the congress in achieving his favored projects. This is exemplified by George W. Bush's increase in popularity after the 9/11 attacks when he was able to pass various legislative and his conservative agendas through the Congress without encountering much resistance. Opinion polls have ensured that the president has to constantly worry about his popularity instead of using his time to concentrate on developing agendas aimed at improving the welfare of citizens.

Only few people understand how the public opinion polls work.

Consequently, opinion polls are based on polls from around two thousand people. This number is minimal and a significant number of people do not believe that polls from such a number are of great significance as such number may not reflect the wishes of the rest of the citizens. Since the opinion polls are based on estimates hence it is prone errors thus making the public polls have a degree of inaccuracy hence they are fragile.

Consequently, there are those who participate in opinion polls but will not participate in elections because they are not registered voters. The smaller the size of the sample used in poll the higher the probability of error.

Accordingly, there are no guarantees that opinion polls are an accurate reflection of an entire society.

Accordingly, the fact that about a third of the entire phone numbers in America are not listed shows a possibility that a portion of the people providing their opinions to a poll may be young individuals with no necessary political knowledge (Erikson, 2006).

## **Work Cited**

Erikson, Robert and Kent, Tedin. American Public Opinion: Its Origins, Content, and Impact

(8th Edition). Upper Saddle River, New Jersey: Pearson Education Inc., 2010.

Fiorina, Morris. Culture War?: The Myth of a Polarized America (3rd edition).

Longman

Publishing Group, 2010.