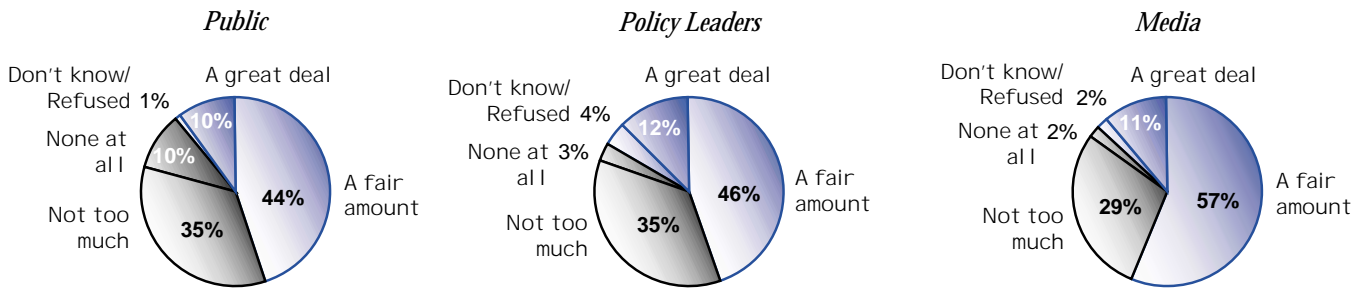


Government by the People

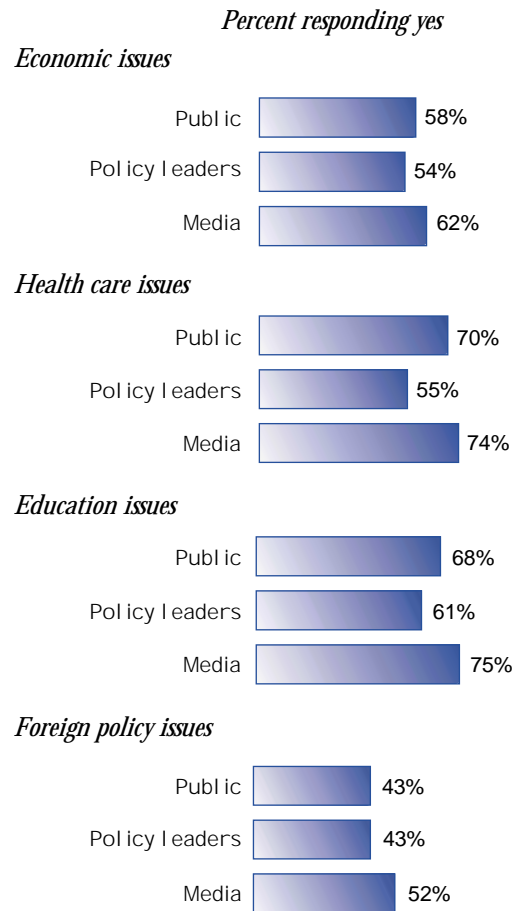
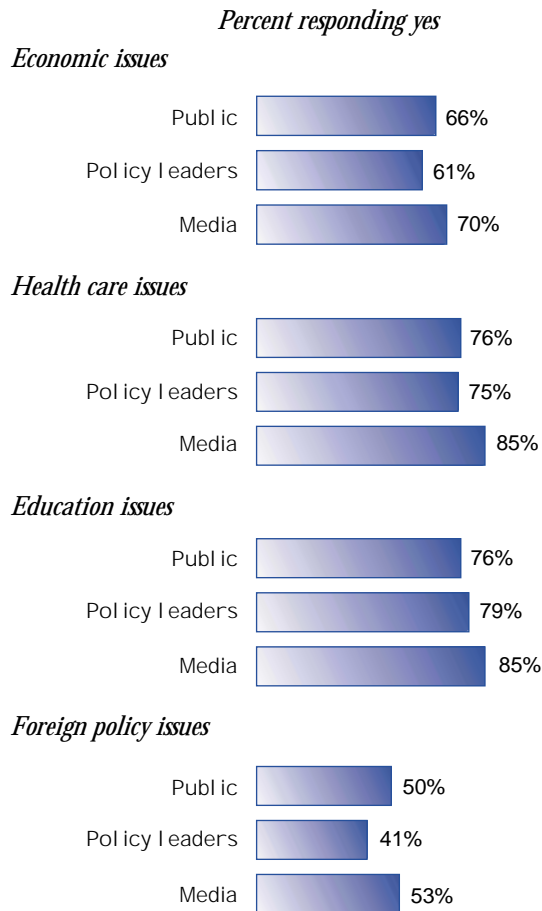
Source: All data on the 9 pages that follow are from a study by the Henry J. Kaiser Family Foundation, conducted in collaboration with *Public Perspective*. The study comprised separate surveys of random samples of the American public, policy leaders, and media professionals (see p. 11 for details). Kaiser selected Princeton Survey Research Associates to do the survey. Public interviews took place January 3-March 26, 2001, and policy leaders and media were interviewed December 21, 2000-March 30, 2001.

Question: ...[H]ow much confidence do you have in the public as a whole when it comes to making judgments about what general direction elected and government officials should take on various issues facing the nation? Do you have a great deal of confidence, a fair amount, not too much, or none at all?



Question: For each of the following issues, please tell me if you think the public can make sound judgments about the general direction elected officials should take. Do you think the public can make sound judgments about the general direction officials should take regarding..., or don't you feel this way?

Question: For each of the following issues, please tell me if you think the public can make sound judgments about the details of laws and regulations debated in Congress. Do you think the public can make sound judgments about the details of laws and regulations debated in Congress regarding..., or don't you feel this way?

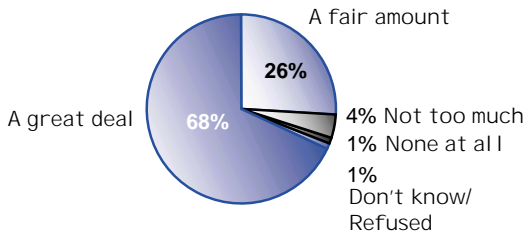


Majority Rule?

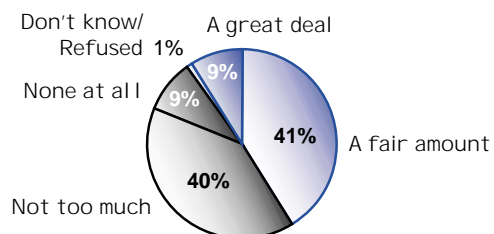
Question: ...[H]ow much influence do you think the views of the majority of Americans *should* have on the decisions of elected and government officials in Washington? A great deal, a fair amount, not too much, or none at all?

Question: How much influence do you think the views of the majority of Americans *actually have* on the decisions of elected and government officials in Washington? A great deal, a fair amount, not too much, or none at all?

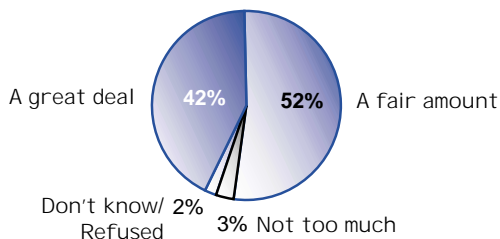
Public



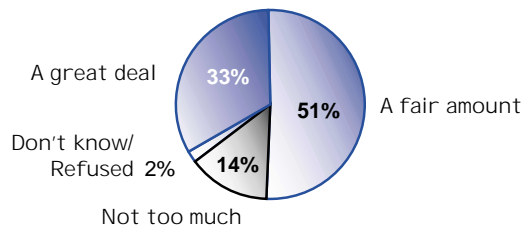
Public



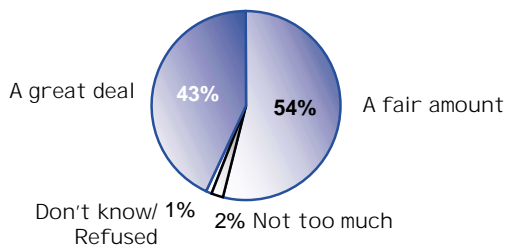
Policy Leaders



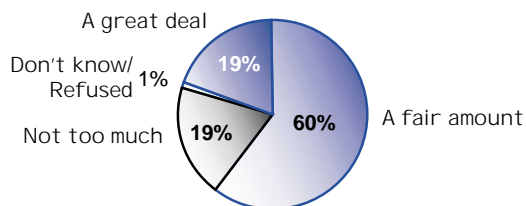
Policy Leaders



Media



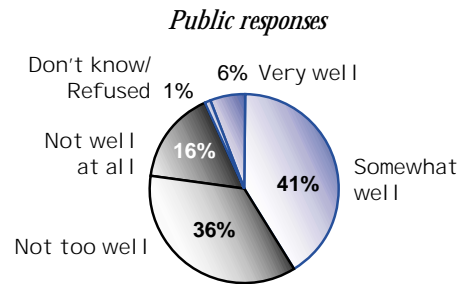
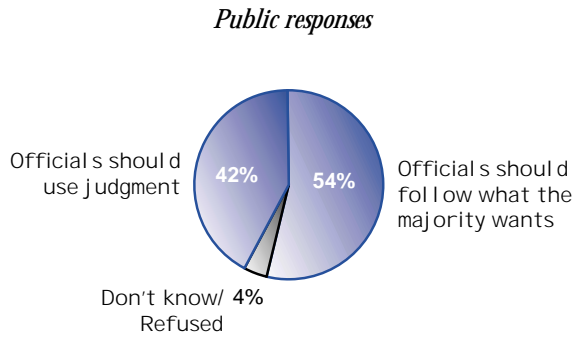
Media



Lead or Follow?

Question: ...Please tell me which [statement] comes closer to your views.... [E]lected and government officials should use their knowledge and judgment to make decisions about what is the best policy to pursue, even if this goes against what the majority of the public wants; ... [E]lected and government officials should follow what the majority wants, even if it goes against the officials' knowledge and judgment.

Question: How well do you feel officials in Washington represent what a majority of the public wants? Very well, somewhat well, not too well, or not well at all?

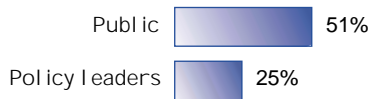


Many Perceptions Disconnected

Question: When officials in Washington make a decision that isn't supported by a majority of Americans, do you think it's often or rarely the case that...?

Percent responding often

Officials don't understand what the public wants



Officials choose to follow what special interests want instead



Officials don't believe the public is informed enough on the issues

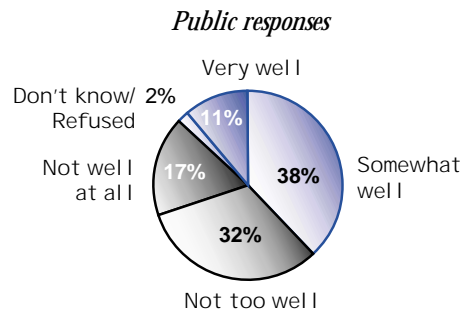
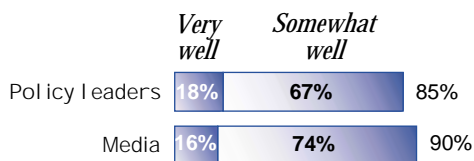


Officials are doing what they believe is ultimately in the best interest of the public



Questions: How well do you feel you understand what the public thinks about the issues facing the nation? Very well, somewhat well, not too well, or not well at all?

Question: In general, how well do you think most elected and government officials in Washington understand what the public thinks about the issues facing the nation?...

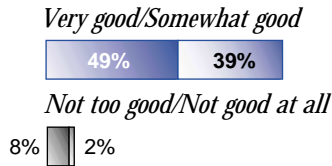


Communicating Our Views

Question: There are different ways elected and government officials could try to learn what the majority of people in our country think about important issues. Is... a very good, somewhat good, not too good, or not at all good way to learn what the majority of people in our country think?

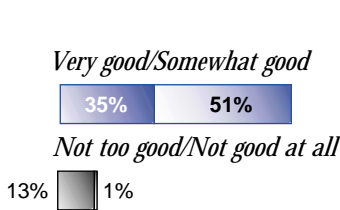
Public responses

Holding town hall meetings



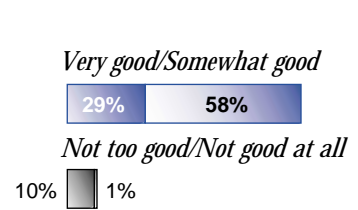
Not too good/Not good at all

Policy leader responses



Not too good/Not good at all

Media responses

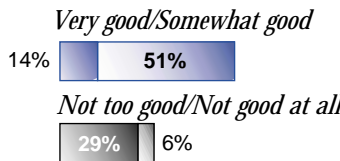


Not too good/Not good at all

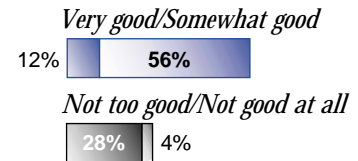
Talking to people who call, write or email the official's office



Not too good/Not good at all

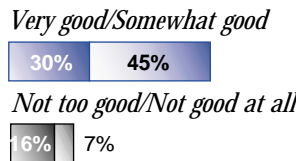


Not too good/Not good at all

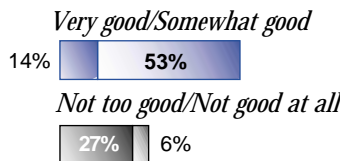


Not too good/Not good at all

Talking to people at shopping malls and on the street



Not too good/Not good at all

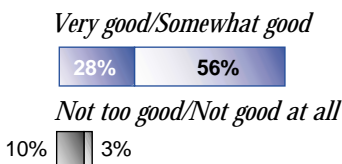


Not too good/Not good at all

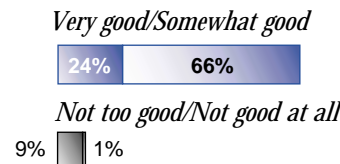


Not too good/Not good at all

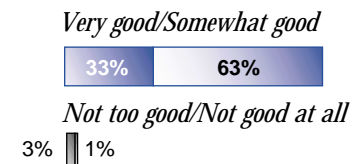
Conducting a public opinion poll



Not too good/Not good at all



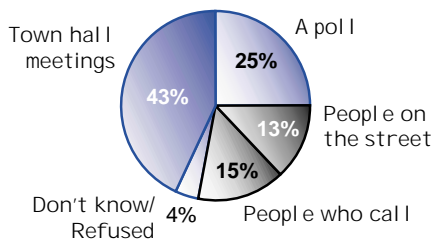
Not too good/Not good at all



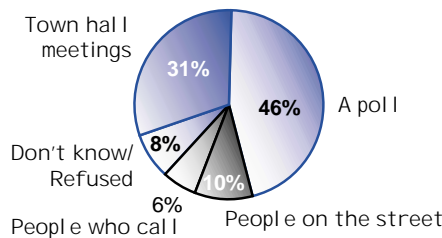
Not too good/Not good at all

Question: ...[P]lease tell me which one of the following [holding town hall meetings, conducting a public opinion poll, talking to people at shopping malls and on the street, talking to people who call, write, or email the official's office] you think is the best way for officials to learn what the majority of people in our country think about important issues.

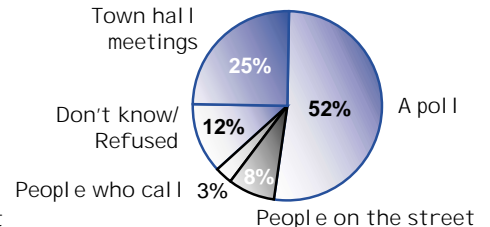
Public



Policy Leaders



Media

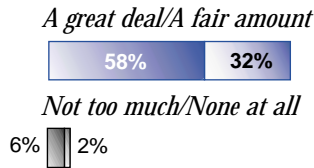


The Role of Polling

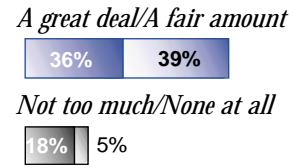
Question: ...Generally speaking, when elected and government officials in Washington make decisions about important issues, how much attention do you feel they *should* pay to...?

Public responses

Members of the public who contact them about the issue



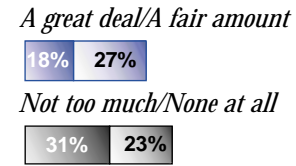
Public opinion polls



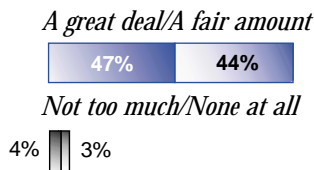
Their conscience or judgment, that is, what they think is the right thing to do



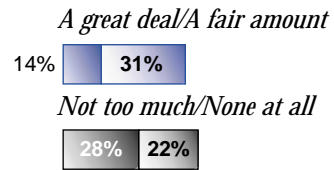
Their campaign contributors



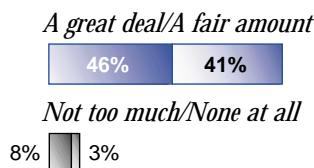
Their own knowledge on the issue



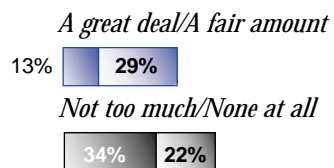
Lobbyists and special interest groups



Policy experts involved with the issue



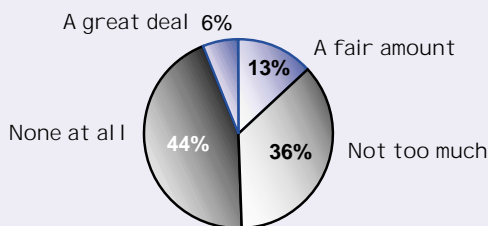
What journalists say about the issue



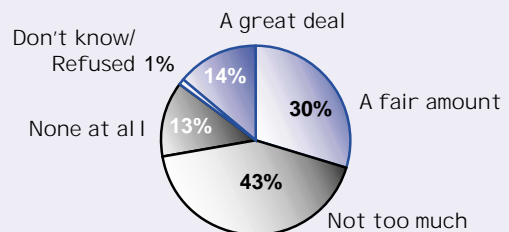
Tool of Their Trades

Questions: How much do you consult or use public opinion polls in your job...?

Policy Leaders



Media

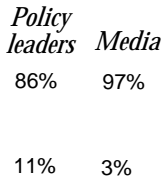
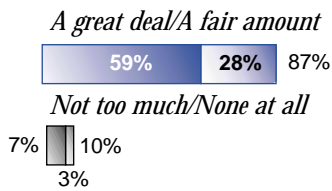


Polls in Policymaking

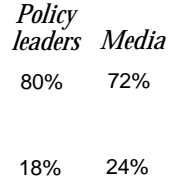
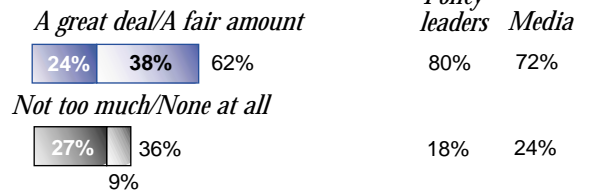
Question: For each of the following, please tell me how much attention you feel elected and government officials in Washington pay to it when making decisions about important issues. Generally speaking, when elected and government officials in Washington make decisions about important issues, how much attention do you feel they *actually* pay to...?

Public responses

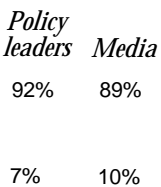
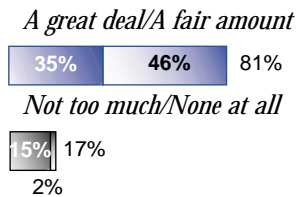
Their campaign contributors



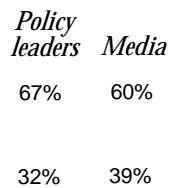
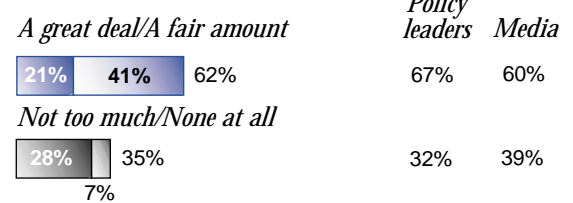
Their conscience or judgment, that is, what they think is the right thing to do



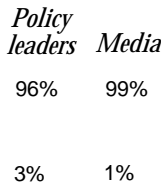
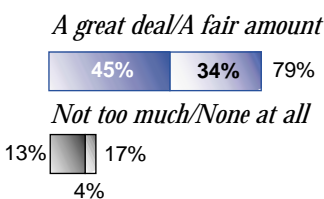
Their own knowledge on the issue



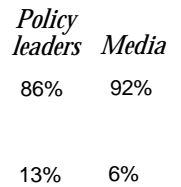
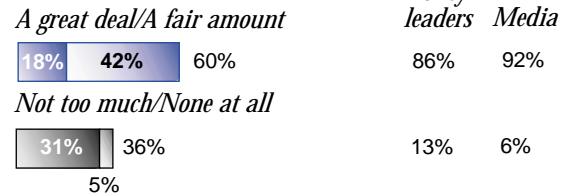
What journalists say about the issue



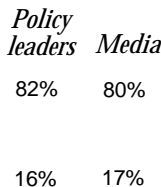
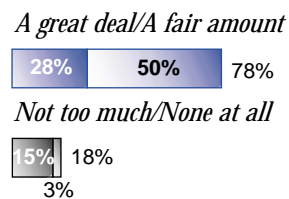
Lobbyists and special interest groups



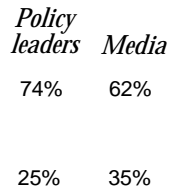
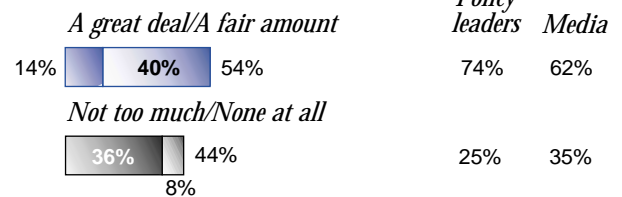
Public opinion polls



Policy experts involved with the issue



Members of the public who contact them about the issue

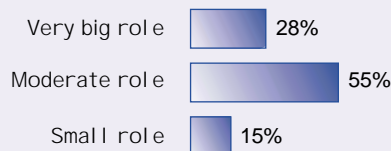


Part of the Process

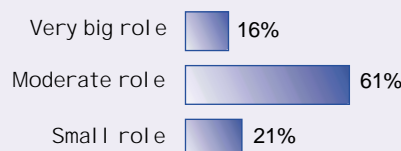
Questions: Public opinion polls can be used in a number of different ways. How big a role do you think polls play in shaping... in Washington...?

Policy leader responses

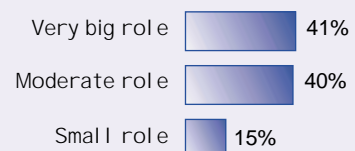
The public policy agenda



Actual public policy itself



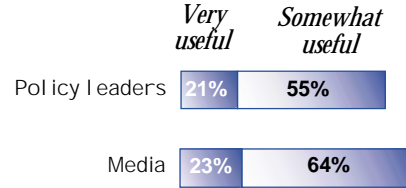
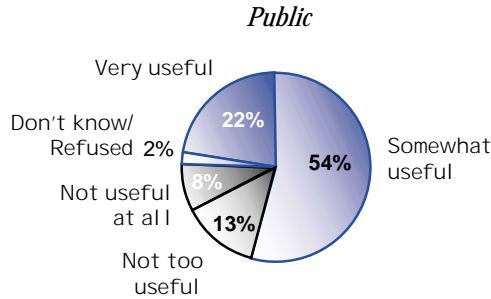
The public information campaign to explain a new policy



A Voice Through Polling?

Question: To what extent do you think opinion polls are useful for elected and government officials in Washington to understand how the public feels about important issues...?

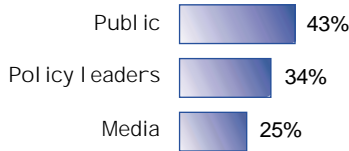
Questions: ...[T]o what extent do you think opinion polls are useful for you to understand how the public feels about important issues...?



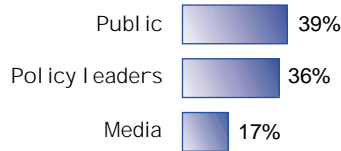
Question: For each of the following statements, please tell me if you think it is a major reason polls are only somewhat useful or not useful for officials to understand how the public feels about important issues, a minor reason, or not a reason....

Percent responding major reason

Polls don't accurately reflect what the public thinks



Polls don't ask for the public's opinion on the right issues

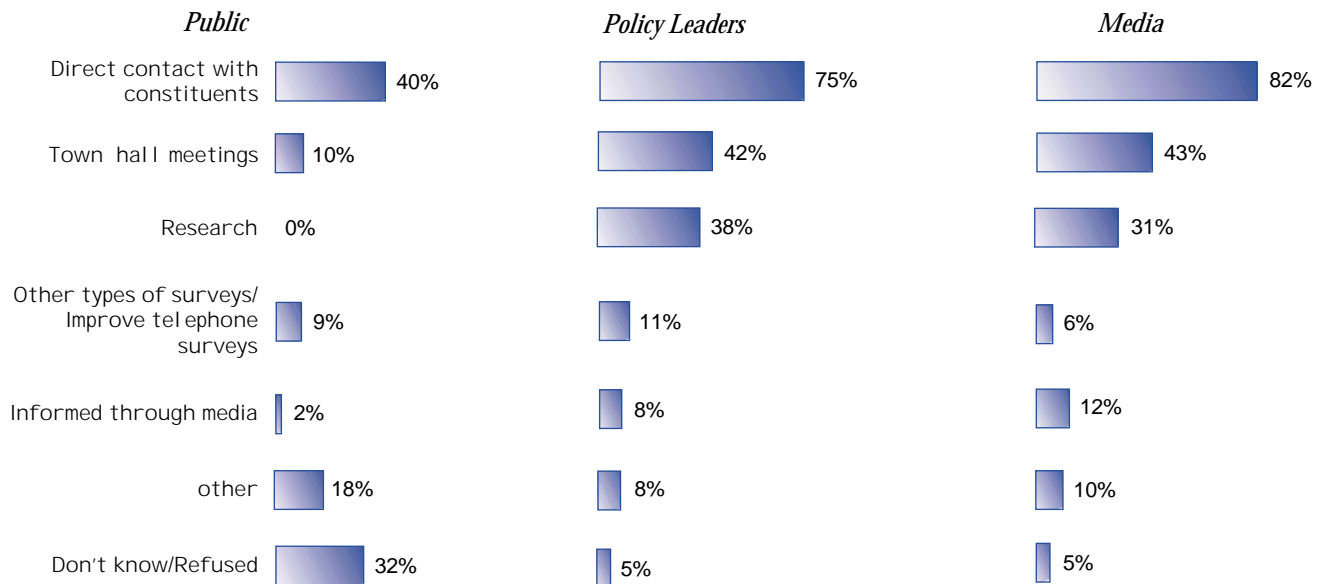


The results of polls can be twisted to say whatever you want them to say



Note: Asked of those who don't think polls are very useful for officials to understand the public.

Question: If opinion polls are only somewhat useful or not useful, what other ways should officials use to find out how the public feels?

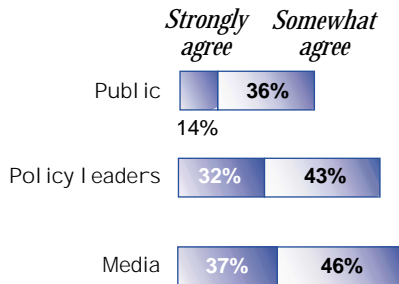


Note: Asked of those who don't think polls are very useful for officials to understand the public. Multiple responses were allowed.

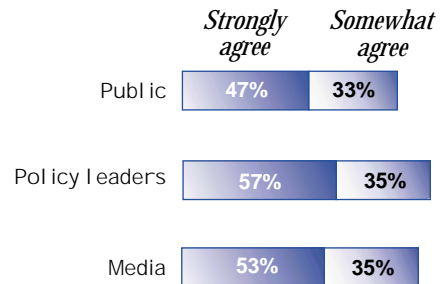
Polling Challenged

Question: Do you agree or disagree that...?

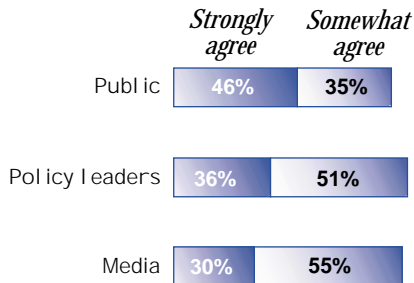
Public opinion polling is based on sound scientific practices



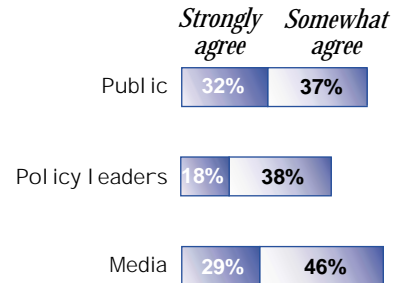
The questions asked in polls often don't give people the opportunity to say what they really think about an issue



When people are interviewed for an opinion poll, they usually answer the questions honestly

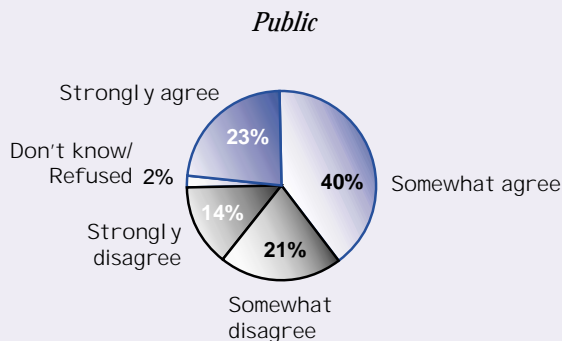


Most professional poll takers try to be very careful to ask questions that don't favor any one side of an issue

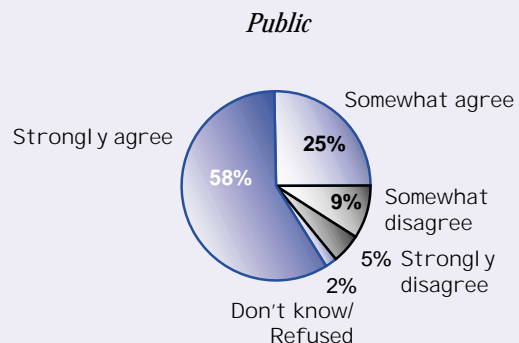


Cynicism

Question: Do you agree or disagree that elected officials consult polls because they believe the public should have a say in what government does?

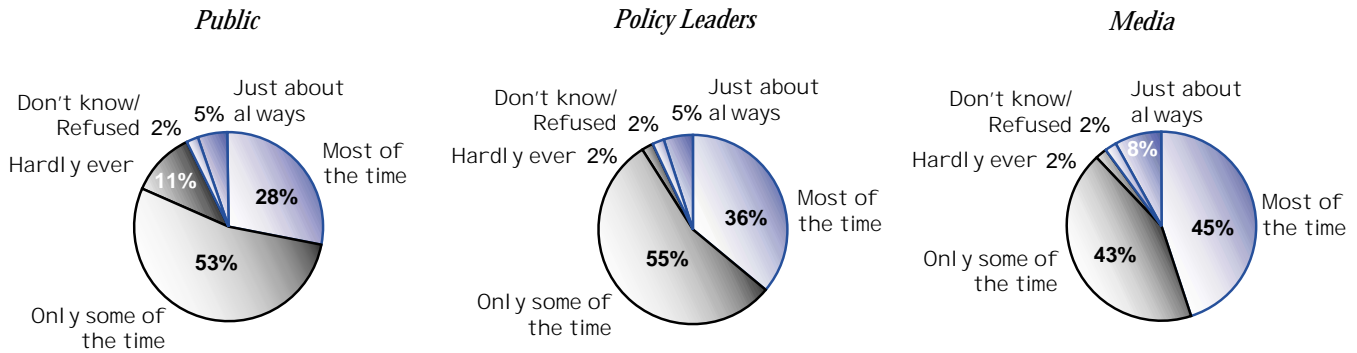


Question: Do you agree or disagree that the main reason elected officials consult polls is because they want to stay popular and get re-elected?

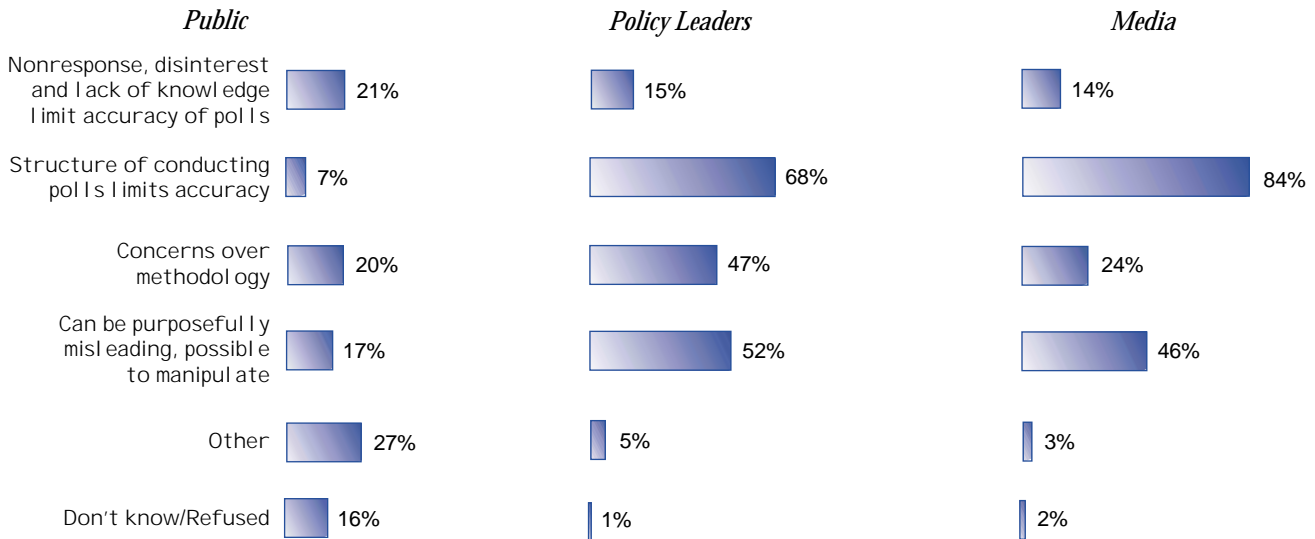


The Best We Have

Question: In your opinion, how often do public opinion polls accurately reflect what the public thinks...?



Question: Why don't you think public opinion polls are the best way for officials to learn what the majority of people in our country think?



Note: Asked of those who don't think polls are the best way for officials to learn what the public thinks. Multiple responses were allowed.

Question: Do you agree or disagree that public opinion polling is far from perfect, but it is one of the best means we have for communicating what the public is thinking?

