

# Public Opinion

## *American Government - Chapter 5*

Define the following terms:

- |                        |                       |                               |
|------------------------|-----------------------|-------------------------------|
| 1. John Q. Public      | 6. gender gap         | 10. libertarian               |
| 2. Middle America      | 7. liberal            | 11. populist                  |
| 3. silent majority     | 8. conservative       | 12. political elite           |
| 4. social status       | 9. political ideology | 13. opinion-policy congruence |
| 5. religious tradition |                       | 14. norm                      |

Answer the following questions:

1. What checks did the Constitution provide on public opinion?
2. The weight a particular person's opinion holds is somewhat proportional to what?
3. What evidence is there that many people don't think much about political issues at all?
4. What is the argument – not made in the text – that Americans' ignorance of political issues and events is a manifestation of considerable rationality?
5. Where do most young Americans get their political party affiliation?
6. What has been the recent trend in the “ability of the family to inculcate a strong sense of party identification?”
7. What has been the trend in the percentage of Americans proclaiming strong partisan affiliation?
8. What are some possible reasons why children are more likely to adopt their parents' party affiliation than their political attitudes?
9. In general, how do the political views of white Protestants, Catholics, and Jews compare?
10. What are two theories to explain the differing political attitudes of those from different religious traditions?
11. According to table 5.2, what issue most greatly divides secular and fundamentalist Americans?
12. Fundamentalists and nonfundamentalists tend to have about the same position on what type of issues?
13. What have opinion surveys since 1960 shown about the political party affiliations of evangelical Christians and Jews?
14. How does the “gender gap” manifest itself in political party affiliation?
15. The biggest reason for men deserting the Democratic Party is attitudes about what four things?
16. According to table 5.3, what the issues on which men and women most strongly agree? strongly disagree?
17. Attending college is likely to affect your political ideology in what way?
18. According to table 5.4, what change occurred in the political ideology of college students between the 1970s and 1993?
19. What does Wilson refer to as “crosscutting cleavages?”
20. What makes it so hard to explain political differences in the United States?

21. How has the influence of social class on political views changed since the 1950s?
22. How have the voting habits of wealthy Americans changed in the last few decades?
23. What is one way in which white and black Americans are politically different?
24. What are three ways in which white and black Americans are politically similar?
25. What evidence exists that racial difference in political affiliation may be narrowing?
26. How does party identification differ among Latinos and Asian Americans?
27. How has the political party identification of white southerners changed since the 1950s?
28. How urgent is it for a Democratic Party presidential candidate to be able to carry the South?
29. How do political scientists measure political ideology?
30. How ideologically consistent is the average American voter?
31. What did the term liberal mean in the early nineteenth century?
32. What did the term conservative mean in the early nineteenth century?
33. How did the terms liberal and conservative get redefined in the 1930s?
34. What percentage of the population were “true liberals” in 1994?
35. Demographically, “true liberals” tend to be what?
36. What percentage of the population were “true conservatives” in 1994?
37. Demographically, “true conservatives” tend to be what?
38. What percentage of the population were libertarians in 1994?
39. Demographically, libertarians tend to be what?
40. What percentage of the population were populists in 1994?
41. Demographically, populists tend to be what?
42. How is political activism correlated with ideological consistency?
43. What is meant by the term “liberal middle class?”
44. How do elites influence public opinion?
45. What has been happening to opinion-policy congruence?

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### “The Art of Public Opinion Polling”

Define the following terms:

1. poll
2. random sample
3. sampling error

Answer the following questions:

1. What are the five key criteria that must be met in designing and interpreting surveys?
2. Why is it true that survey results are often reflections of bias in the question?