

# Unit 4: Public Opinion & Political Participation

Mr. Morales

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# Vocabulary

- **Demography:** the study of statistics using births, deaths, income, or the incidence of disease, which illustrate the changing structure of human populations.
- **Census:** an official count or survey of a population.
- **Melting Pot:** many different types of people blend together as one. The mix of race, religion, and culture.
- **Minority Majority:** instead of the American white majority. The majority of the population is made up of minority groups.

# Vocabulary

- **Political Culture:** the shared values, beliefs, and behaviors regarding government and politics that develop over time through the process of political socialization.
- **Political Socialization:** the process by which people learn about their government and acquire the beliefs, attitudes, values to form opinions about social issues.
- **Public Opinion:** the beliefs and attitudes that people have about issues, events, elected officials, and policies.
- **Political Participation:** range of activities where people develop and express their opinions on the world and how it is governed, and try to take part in and shape the decisions that affect their lives.

# Vocabulary

- **Poll:** the process of voting in an election.
- **Opinion Poll:** interviews or surveys with samples of citizens that are used to estimate the feelings and beliefs of the entire population.
- **Scientific Polling:** consists of surveying a random sample of the population in order to obtain statistically significant results for an upcoming vote or election.
- **Exit Polls:** a poll taken of voters leaving the voting place.
- **Straw Poll:** Unscientific surveys used to gauge public opinions on a variety of issues and policies.

# Vocabulary

- **Sample:** in a public opinion poll, the relatively small number of individuals who are interviewed for the purpose of estimating the opinions of an entire population.
- **Random Sampling:** a part of the sampling technique in which each sample has an equal probability of being chosen.
- **Sampling Error:** the error that results from using a sample to estimate information about a population. This type of error occurs because a sample gives incomplete information about a population.
- **Mass Survey:** A way to measure public opinion by interviewing a large sample of the population that consists of closed ended questions.

# Vocabulary

- **Random-Digit Dialing:** A technique used by pollsters to place telephone calls randomly to both listed and unlisted numbers when conducting a survey.
- **Activists:** a person who campaigns to bring about political or social change.
- **Protest:** a statement or action expressing disapproval of or objection to something.
- **Civil Disobedience:** the refusal to comply with certain laws or to pay taxes and fines, as a peaceful form of political protest.

# Vocabulary

- **Political Efficacy:** is the belief that ordinary people will have an impact on an election with their votes.
- **Gender Gap:** the difference between men and women in terms of political views, opportunities, pay, status, etc.
- **Gerrymandering:** to make a district more favorable to one or more groups of voters.

# Introduction

- **Demography**
  - Examines the size, structure, and movements of populations over time
  - Age, race, ethnicity, gender, marital status, income, education, and employment.

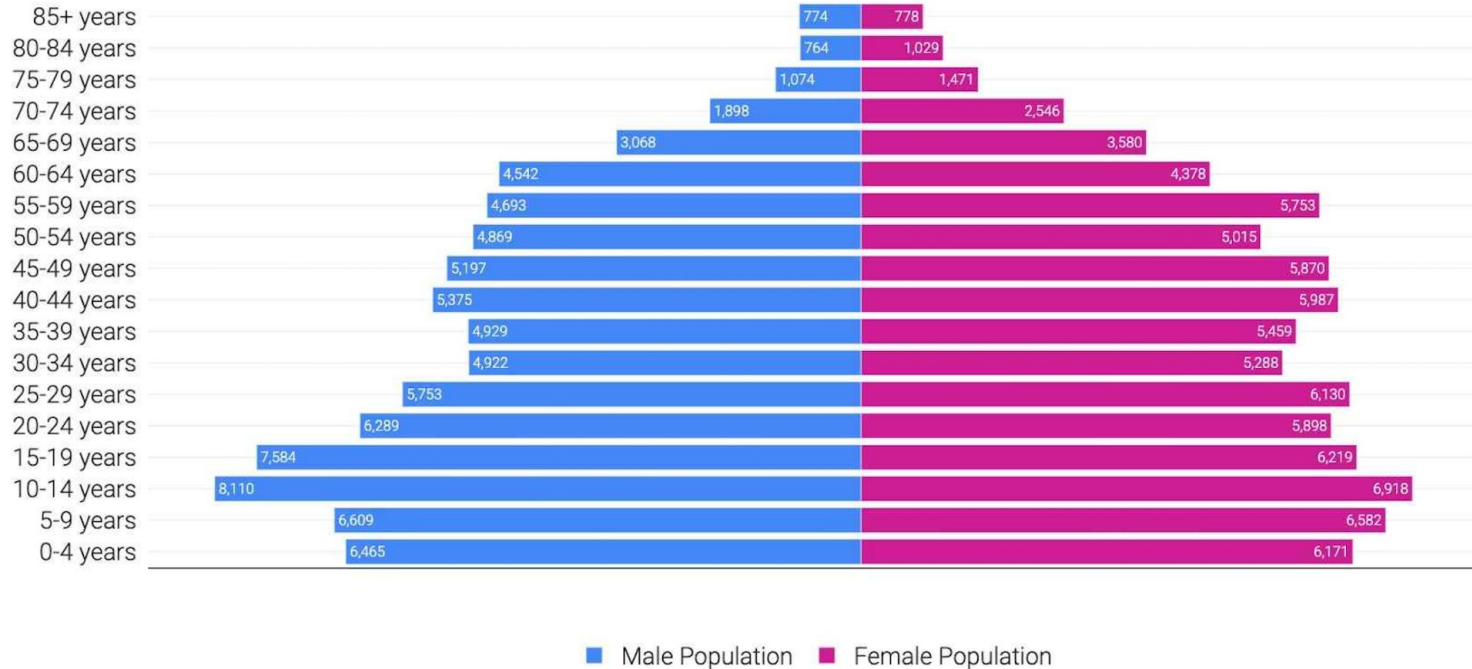


- **Census**
  - The process of finding and recording data about every member of a population that is mostly connected with national data, smaller populations, etc.
  - Every 10 years, the U.S. Census Bureau conducts a census to determine the number of people living in the United States.



# Palmdale, CA population pyramid

A wide base suggests population increase, narrow base indicates declining birth rates.



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey (ACS) 2017-2021 5-Year Estimates

# The American Melting Pot

- **Melting Pot**

- A metaphor for a society where many different types of people blend together as one
- America is often called a **melting pot**
- Some countries are made of people who are almost all the same in terms of race, religion, and culture.
- New York City is commonly referred to as the “**Melting Pot**” of America because of its massive diversity

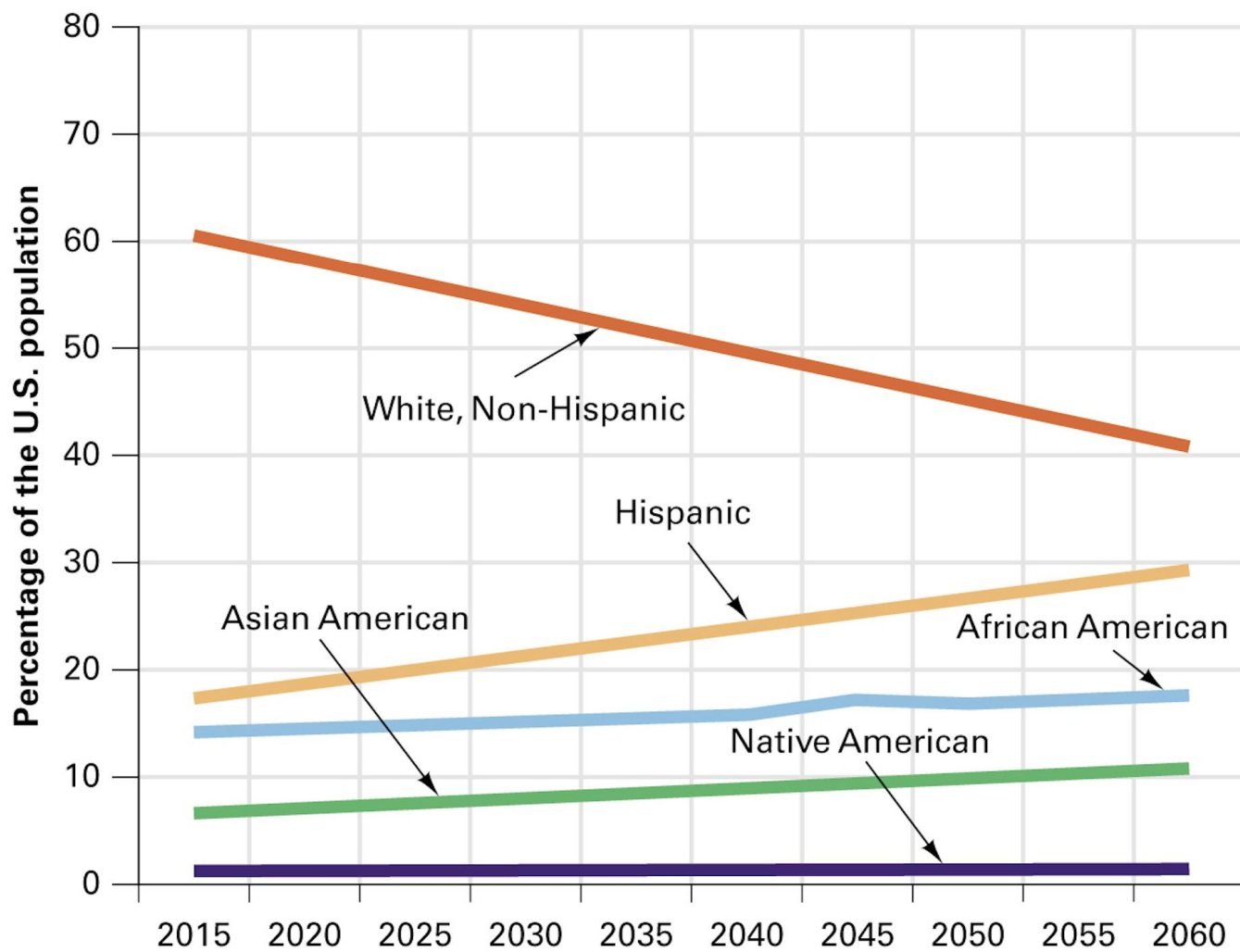
- **Minority Majority**

- One or more racial, ethnic, and/or religious minorities make up a majority of the local population
- Hawaii, New Mexico, California, Texas, Nevada, Maryland, and Georgia.

- **Political Culture**

- The values, beliefs, norms, customs, and traditions of people
- People share views and ideas of how the political system should operate





# Schoolhouse Rock – The Great American Melting Pot

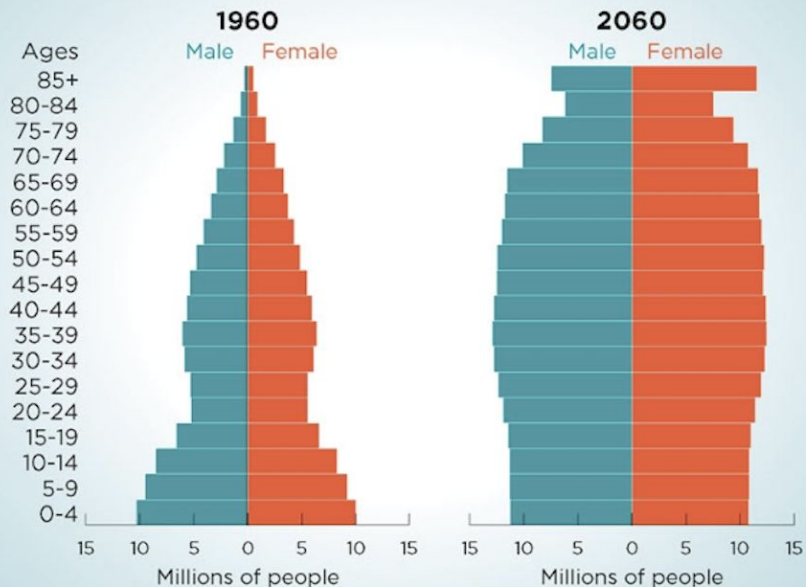


# The Greying of America

- Greying of America
  - Refers to the fact that the American population is steadily becoming more dominated by older people
  - **Meaning:** the median age of Americans is going up
  - According to the U.S. Census Bureau's 2017 National Population Projections, by 2030, all baby boomers will be older than age 65
- Social Security
  - While you work, you pay taxes into the SS system, when you retire or become disabled: You, your spouse, and your dependent children receive monthly benefits that are based on your reported earnings
  - In 1940, there were 42 workers per retiree. Today the ratio is 3-to-1; by 2050 it will be 2-to-1.

# From Pyramid to Pillar: A Century of Change

Population of the United States



United States<sup>™</sup>  
**Census**  
Bureau

U.S. Department of Commerce  
Economics and Statistics Administration  
U.S. CENSUS BUREAU  
[census.gov](http://census.gov)

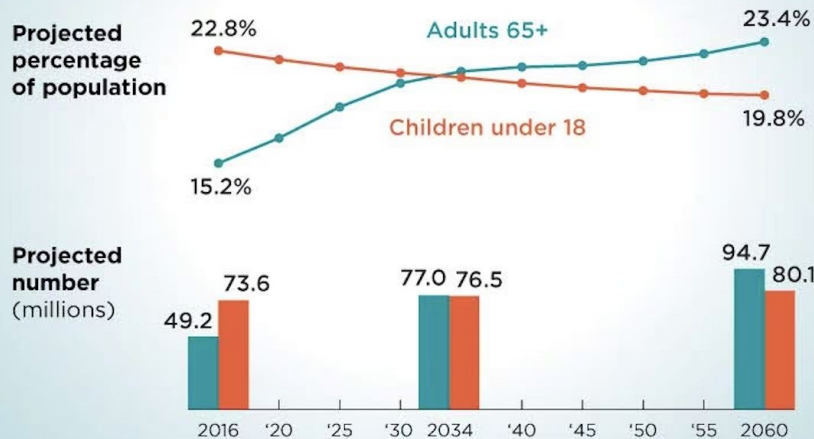
Source: National Population  
Projections, 2017  
[www.census.gov/programs-surveys/popproj.html](http://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/popproj.html)



# An Aging Nation

Projected Number of Children  
and Older Adults

For the First Time in U.S. History Older Adults Are  
Projected to Outnumber Children by 2034



Note: 2016 data are estimates not projections.

United States<sup>™</sup>  
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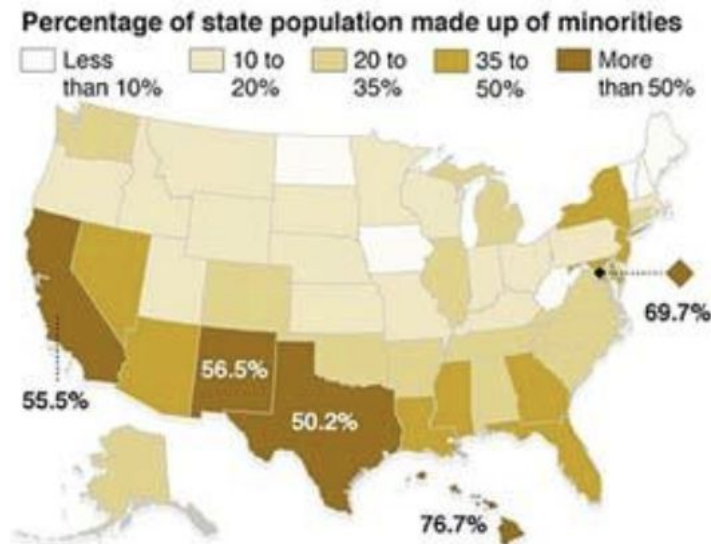
Source: National Population  
Projections, 2017  
[www.census.gov/programs-surveys/popproj.html](http://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/popproj.html)

# Political Culture

- Lucian Pye's definition is:

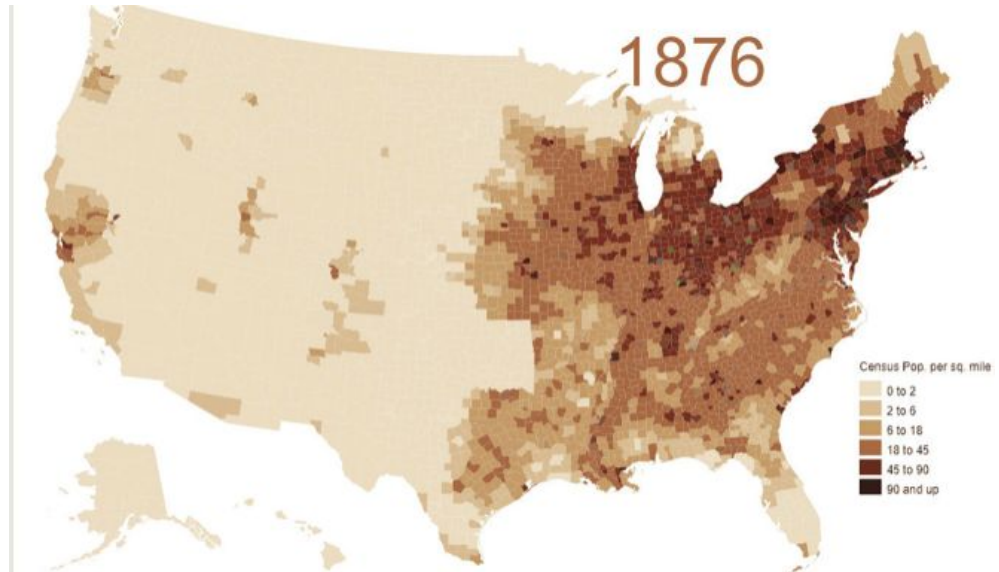
"Political culture is the set of attitudes, beliefs, and sentiments, which give order and meaning to a political process and which provide the underlying assumptions and rules that govern behavior in the political system"

Which party will benefit from the minority majority?



# The American People

- **The Regional Shift**
  - How much the region over or under performed compared to national average and industry average.
- **Reapportionment:** the process by which congressional districts are redrawn and seats are redistributed among states in the House
  - Occurs every ten years, when census data reports shifts in the population of districts
  - Each district must have an equal number of residents.



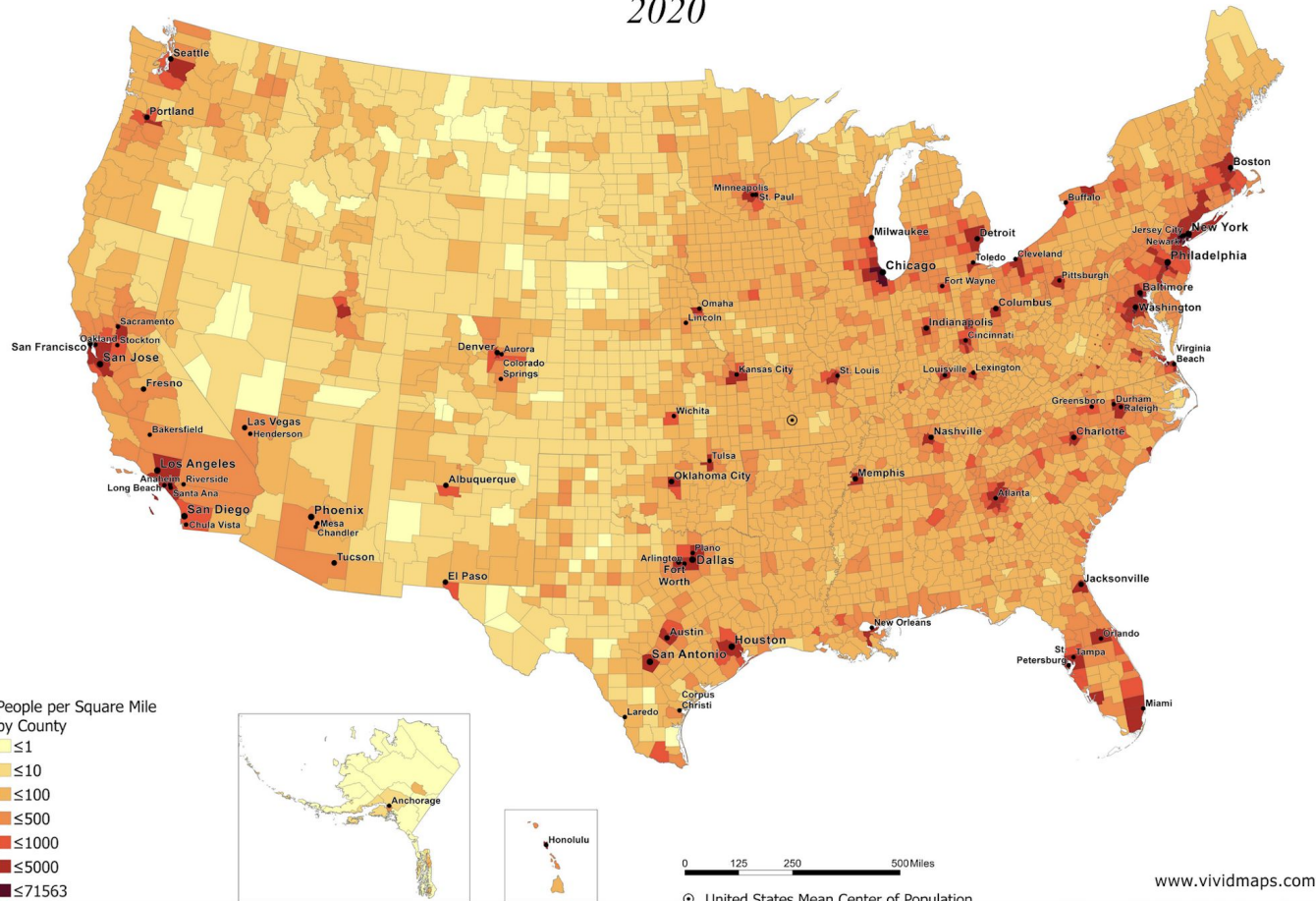


# Public Opinion: Crash Course Government and Politics #33



# U.S. Population Density by County

## 2020



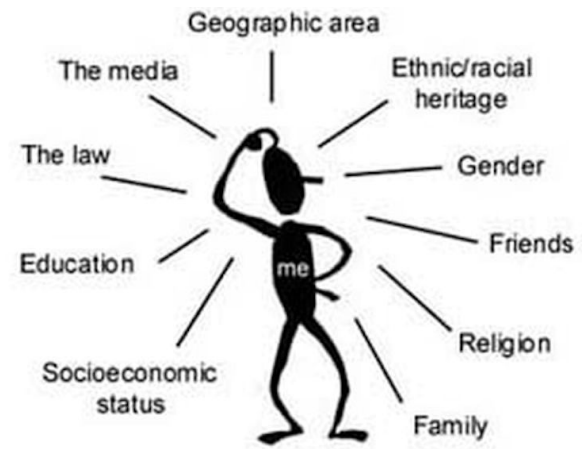
# How Americans Learn About Politics: Political Socialization

- **Political Socialization:** the process by which people acquire their beliefs, attitudes, and values towards their political orientation

What influences people to think the way they do politically?

- The Process of Political Socialization
  - Family
  - Time and Emotional Commitment
  - Political leanings of children often come from their parents

*Some of the influences on individuals*



# Political Socialization

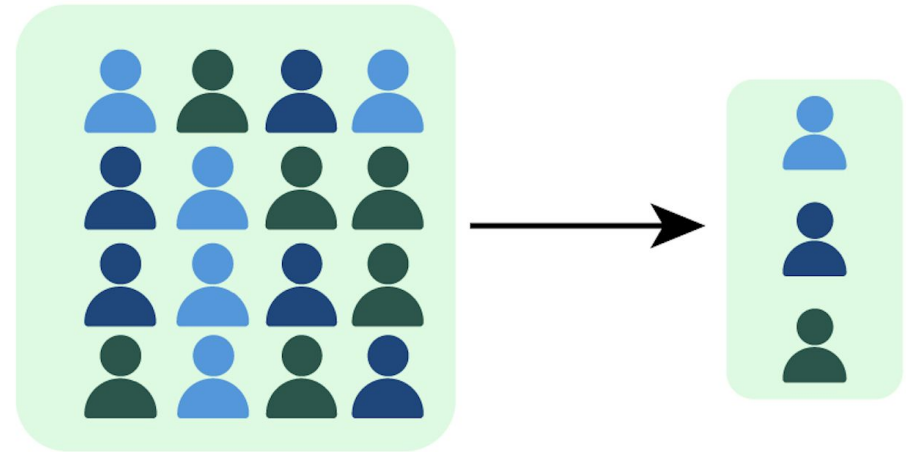
- **The Mass Media**
  - Generation gap in TV news viewing
  - Early forms of mass media include newspapers
  - Radio is another example of mass media that can reach a large group of people as long as they have a radio
- **School and Education**
  - Mass media is predicted to have a strong influence on students' behavior and their overall disposition to academic performance



# Measuring Public Opinion and Political Information

- How Polls Are Conducted?
  - **Random Sampling:** a type of probability sampling in which the researcher randomly selects a subset of participants from a population. Each member of the population has an equal chance of being selected
- **Representative Sample:** Draws from all groups
- **Sample Size:** only represents part of the group of people
- **Sampling Error:** sample is too small, sampling bias, sample selection bias

## Simple Random Sample



# Measuring Public Opinion and Political Information

- Role of Polls in American Democracy
  - Polls help politicians detect public preferences
- **Exit Polls:** polls based on interviews conducted on Election Day with randomly selected voters
- **Straw Polls:** polls that attempt to determine who is ahead in a political race
  - Example: American Idol - winner is determined by phone calls, call an unlimited amount of times
- **Polls reflect the Policy Agenda:** Issues that people believe should be addressed



# What Polls Reveal About Americans' Political Information

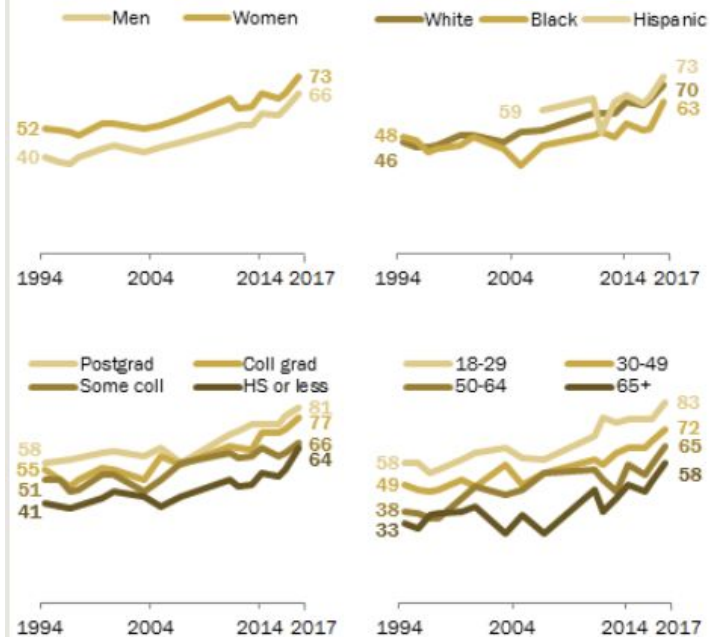
- Polls reveal the level of political knowledge that Americans have
- Americans don't know much about politics
- American political system works as well as it does give the discomfoting lack of public knowledge about politics



# Attitudes Towards LGBTQ

## Support for acceptance of homosexuality has grown across the board, but demographic differences persist

% who say homosexuality should be accepted by society



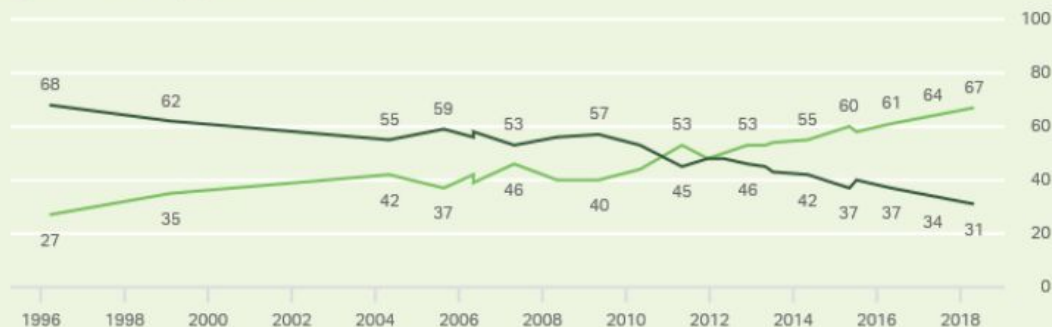
Note: Whites and blacks include only those who are not Hispanic; Hispanics are of any race. Trends for Hispanics shown only for surveys that were conducted in English and Spanish. Source: Survey conducted June 8-18 and June 27-July 9, 2017.

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## Two in Three Americans Support Gay Marriage in 2018

Do you think marriages between same-sex couples should or should not be recognized by the law as valid, with the same rights as traditional marriages?

■ % Should be valid ■ % Should not be valid



Note: Trend shown for polls in which same-sex marriage question followed questions on gay/lesbian rights and relations. 1996-2005 wording: "Do you think marriages between homosexuals ..."

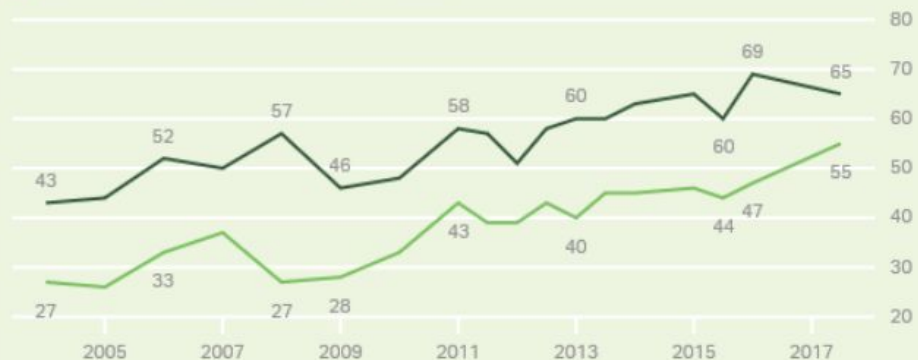
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## Support for Gay Marriage, by Religious Group -- 2004-2017

% Should be recognized by the law as valid

■ Protestants/Christians (nonspecific) ■ Catholics

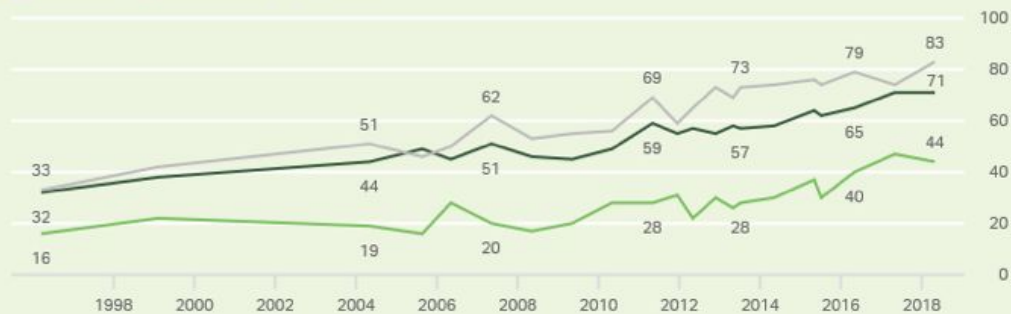


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## Support for Gay Marriage, by Political Party -- 1996-2018

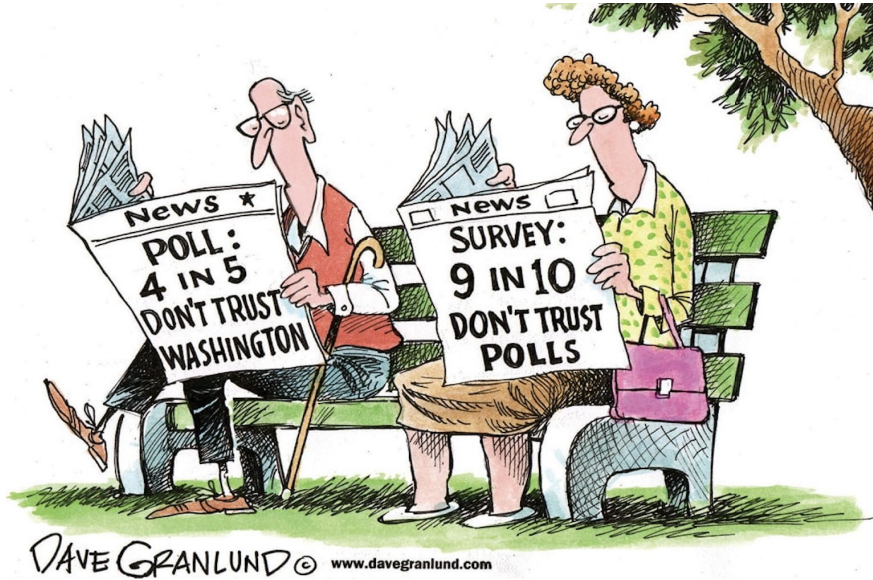
% Saying same-sex marriages should be recognized by the law as valid

■ Republicans ■ Independents ■ Democrats



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# Understanding Public Opinion and Political Action



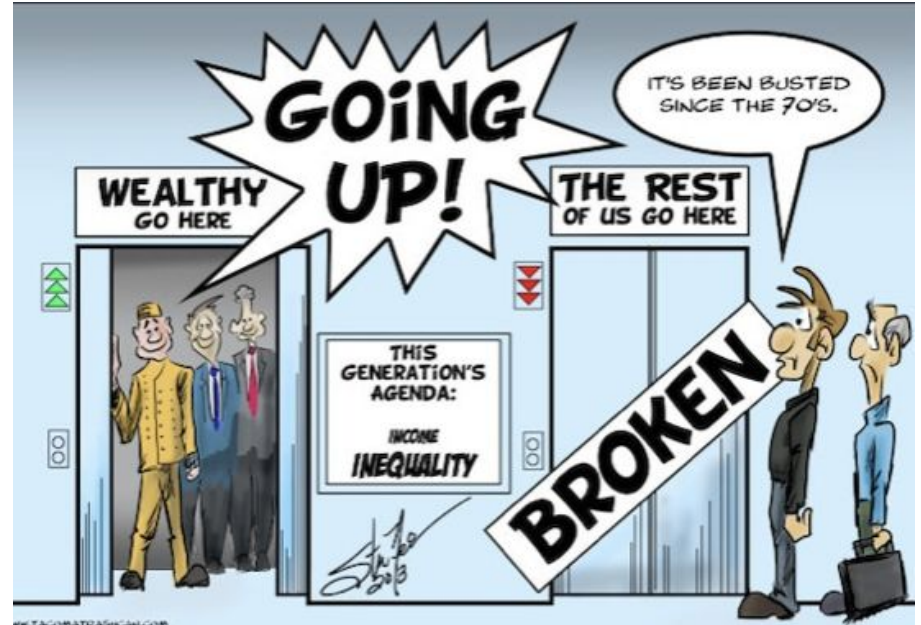
- There are limits on the role public opinion plays in the American political system
- Americans are not well informed about political issues
- Due to public opinion, politicians have a hard time knowing the public's attitudes and how to respond to it

# Demographic Factors

- **Education:** People with higher education have a higher rate of voting than less educated people
- **Age:** Older people are more likely to vote
- **Race:** African Americans and Hispanics are underrepresented among voters
- **Gender:** Women participate more in elections than men
- **Marital Status:** Married people are more likely to vote
- **Union Members:** Unions are able to mobilize voters to go to the polls
- **Government Employee:** Having something at stake and being in position to know more about the government has higher participation
- **Religion:** As people become religious they tend to be engaged more in politics
- **Two Party Competition:** In states where either party could win, voter turnout goes up
  - Why does California have a poor voter turnout?

# Class, Inequality, and Participation

- The rates of political participation are unequal among Americans
  - Americans of higher socioeconomic status participate more in politics
  - People of lower socioeconomic status tend to believe the system is against them



# Types of Political Participation

- **12%** - Attended a rally or speech
- **32%** - Signed a petition
- **24%** - Attended a political meeting on local town affairs
- **30%** - Contacted a national, state, or local government official about an issue
- **28%** - Worked with others to solve a problem in their community
- **32%** - Of internet users communicated with group members using a website
- **24%** - Of social networkers communicated with members using a social network site
- **18%** - Gave money to a candidate, party, or group
- **55 - 57%** - Voted in the last presidential election

# Protest as Participation

- **Protest:** method used by people or groups to achieve policy change through dramatic and unconventional tactics



- **Civil Disobedience:** a particular form of political protest that involves the deliberate violation of the law for social purposes
  - A conscious decision to break a law believed to be immoral and to suffer the consequences

# Shaping Public Opinion: Crash Course Government and Politics #34

