
Toplines



The Kaiser Family Foundation in collaboration with *Public Perspective*

National Survey of the *Role of Polls in Policymaking*

Combined Topline Results:
Public, Policy Leaders, and Media Professionals

June 2001

The Henry J. Kaiser Family Foundation, based in Menlo Park, California, is a nonprofit, independent national health care philanthropy and is not associated with Kaiser Permanente or Kaiser Industries.

Methodology

The Kaiser Family Foundation national surveys of the *Role of Polls in Policymaking* were designed and analyzed by staff at the Kaiser Family Foundation, *Public Perspective* and Princeton Survey Research Associates (PSRA), and the fieldwork was done by PSRA on behalf of Kaiser. Fieldwork for the survey of the general public was conducted by telephone between January 3 and March 26, 2001. The sample consisted of 1,206 randomly selected, nationally representative English-speaking adults 18 and older.

Fieldwork for the surveys of policy leaders and journalists was conducted by PSRA between December 21, 2000 and March 30, 2001. Interviews were conducted with 300 policymakers from six different areas: senior executive branch officials, members of Congress, senior Congressional staff, think tank scholars, lobbyists and trade association executives. Interviews were conducted with 301 media professionals, including reporters and editors from top newspapers, TV and radio networks, news services and news magazines.

For results based on the public sample, the margin of error is within plus or minus 3 percentage points. For results based on the policy leader and media professional samples, the margin of error is +/-6 percentage points. Note that in addition to sampling error there are other possible sources of measurement error.

Note: In reading these toplines please note question labels in parentheses indicate question order on policy leaders and media professional questionnaires (e.g. Q1a). Also, question numbers followed by (PM) were asked only of policy leaders and media professionals. Also some questions were asked only of a random half sample of respondents noted by Form A or Form B.

Q1 In deciding where you stand on important issues, how much attention do you tend to pay to (Insert)? A great deal, a fair amount, not too much or none at all?

	A great deal	A fair amount	Not too much	None at all	Don't know	Refused
a what your family and close friends think						
PUBLIC	32	38	19	8	2	1
b what elected or government officials you respect think—by this I mean people such as the president, members of Congress and their staffs (Q1a)						
PUBLIC	24	36	24	13	2	*
POLICY	26	47	22	3	0	1
MEDIA	12	52	31	3	1	1
c what public opinion polls say the American public thinks (Q1b)						
PUBLIC	9	27	38	23	2	*
POLICY	5	26	47	21	0	*
MEDIA	3	23	51	22	*	1
d what journalists you respect think (Q1c)						
PUBLIC	9	35	36	17	2	*
POLICY	12	44	34	8	*	1
MEDIA	19	56	20	5	1	1
e what experts you respect think (Q1d)						
POLICY	42	50	7	*	0	1
MEDIA	32	55	10	1	1	1

Q3 In the last week, have you discussed the results of a public opinion poll on a social or political topic with anyone, or not?

PUBLIC	
31	Yes
69	No
1	Don't know
*	Refused

Q3(PM) How much do you consult or use public opinion polls in your job? A great deal, a fair amount, not too much or none at all?

POLICY	MEDIA	
6	14	A great deal
13	30	A fair amount
36	43	Not too much
44	13	None at all
0	0	Don't know
0	1	Refused

Q3A More specifically, how often in your job do you report on, or edit reporting about, public opinion polls? Often, sometimes, rarely or never?

MEDIA	
20	Often
38	Sometimes
33	Rarely
9	Never
0	Don't know
*	None at all

Q4(PM) In the last week, have you discussed the results of a public opinion poll on a public policy topic with (insert), or not?

	Yes	No	Don't know	Refused
a your colleagues or professional associates				
POLICY	40	60	0	0
MEDIA	42	58	0	0
	Based on form A			
b friends, neighbors or family members				
POLICY	37	63	1	0
MEDIA	28	72	0	0

Q4 On a somewhat different topic, how 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? (Q5)

PUBLIC		POLICY	MEDIA
10	A great deal	12	11
44	A fair amount	46	57
35	Not too much	35	29
10	None at all	3	2
1	Don't know	2	2
*	Refused	2	0

Q6 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. (First | Next), do you think the public can make sound judgments about the general direction officials should take regarding (Insert), or don't you feel this way? (Q7)

	Yes	No	Don't know	Refused	
a	economic issues, such as what taxes should be or how the budget surplus ought to be spent				
PUBLIC	66	30	4	*	n=620
POLICY	61	36	2	1	n=150
MEDIA	70	27	0	3	n=150
	Based on form A				
b	health care issues, such as whether to expand health insurance coverage to the uninsured				
PUBLIC	76	21	3	*	n=620
POLICY	75	22	1	3	n=150
MEDIA	85	11	1	3	n=150
	Based on form A				
c	education issues, such as how much money should be spent or testing for teachers				
PUBLIC	76	19	4	*	n=620
POLICY	79	17	3	1	n=150
MEDIA	85	12	1	1	n=150
	Based on form A				
d	foreign policy issues, such as whether to send our troops to another country or expanding our military				
PUBLIC	50	44	6	0	n=620
POLICY	41	52	5	3	n=150
MEDIA	53	44	2	1	n=150
	Based on form A				

Q7 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. (First | Next), do you think the public can make sound judgments about the details of laws and regulations debated in Congress regarding (Insert), or don't you feel this way? (Q8)

	Yes	No	Don't know	Refused	
a	economic issues, such as what taxes should be or how the budget surplus ought to be spent				
PUBLIC	58	37	4	1	n=586
POLICY	54	43	1	2	n=150
MEDIA	62	36	1	1	n=151
	Based on form B				

b	health care issues, such as whether to expand health insurance coverage to the uninsured				
PUBLIC	70	26	4	1	n=586
POLICY	55	41	1	3	n=150
MEDIA	74	24	1	1	n=151
	Based on form B				

c	education issues, such as how much money should be spent or testing for teachers				
PUBLIC	68	27	4	1	n=586
POLICY	61	35	3	2	n=150
MEDIA	75	23	1	1	n=151
	Based on form B				

d	foreign policy issues, such as whether to send our troops to another country or expanding our military				
PUBLIC	43	52	4	1	n=586
POLICY	43	54	0	3	n=150
MEDIA	52	46	2	0	n=151
	Based on form B				

Q9 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? Very well, somewhat well, not too well or not well at all? (Q10)

		POLICY	MEDIA
PUBLIC			
11	Very well	31	22
38	Somewhat well	52	56
32	Not too well	13	18
17	Not well at all	2	2
2	Don't know	*	2
*	Refused	1	0

Q10 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?

PUBLIC

6 Very well
41 Somewhat well
36 Not too well
16 Not well at all
1 Don't know
***** Refused

Q11(PM) 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?

POLICY MEDIA

18 **16** Very well
67 **74** Somewhat well
13 **7** Not too well
1 **2** Not well at all
0 **0** Don't know
1 **1** Refused

Q11 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 (Insert)? (Q12)

Often Rarely Don't know Refused

a officials don't understand what the public wants

PUBLIC	51	43	4	1
POLICY	25	69	4	2
MEDIA	32	59	4	5

b officials don't believe the public is informed enough on the issues

PUBLIC	60	34	5	*
POLICY	71	21	5	3
MEDIA	69	21	6	4

c officials choose to follow what special interests want instead

PUBLIC	65	29	6	1
POLICY	68	24	5	4
MEDIA	84	7	5	4

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

PUBLIC	47	49	4	*
POLICY	72	20	4	4
MEDIA	57	33	5	5

Q12 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? (Q13)

PUBLIC		POLICY	MEDIA
9	A great deal	33	19
41	A fair amount	51	60
40	Not too much	14	19
9	None at all	*	0
1	Don't know	0	*
*	Refused	2	1

Q13 And how 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? (Q14)

PUBLIC		POLICY	MEDIA
68	A great deal	42	43
26	A fair amount	52	54
4	Not too much	3	2
1	None at all	0	0
1	Don't know	*	1
*	Refused	2	*

Q14 I am going to read you two statements. Please tell me which comes closer to your views, even if neither is exactly right. The first statement is, elected 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. The second statement is, elected and government officials should follow what the majority wants, even if it goes against the officials' knowledge and judgment. Which comes closer to your views?

PUBLIC	
42	Officials should use judgment
54	Officials should follow what the majority wants
3	Don't know
1	Refused

Q15 At times in the past, the majority of Americans have held positions later judged to be wrong, such as in their support of racial segregation of blacks and whites. Do you think officials in Washington should do what the majority wants because the majority is usually right, or should officials rely on their knowledge and judgment when they think the majority is wrong?

PUBLIC	
40	Officials should do what majority wants because majority is usually right
51	Officials should rely on their knowledge when they think majority is wrong
8	Don't know
2	Refused

Q16 Do you agree or disagree that elected officials are professionals with special expertise like that of an accountant, lawyer or doctor? (Follow with) Do you (agree | disagree) strongly or somewhat? (Q15)

PUBLIC		POLICY	MEDIA
18	Strongly agree	21	11
35	Somewhat agree	28	30
24	Somewhat disagree	33	37
19	Strongly disagree	16	18
4	Don't know	1	3
*	Refused	1	1

Q18 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? Are they very useful, somewhat useful, not too useful or not useful at all? (Q16)

PUBLIC		POLICY	MEDIA
22	Very useful	27	27
54	Somewhat useful	59	67
13	Not too useful	9	5
8	Not useful at all	2	*
2	Don't know	1	0
*	Refused	1	1

Q19 If opinion polls are only somewhat useful or not useful, what other ways should officials use to find out how the public feels?

n= 919 Based on those who don't think polls are very useful for officials to understand the public

Net 40 Direct contact with constituents:

- 25** More frequent personal contact/get out and mingle/more community involvement/talk to people/listen
- 7** Spend more time in their districts/with constituents/in community
- 8** Phone calls/ correspondence/letters/mail/e-mail

Net 10 Town Hall meetings:

- 10** Town meetings/public forums

Net 9 Use other types of surveys, improve telephone survey techniques:

- 4** Better polls/questions/larger sample/ask questions better
- 5** Mail/newspaper/surveys reach more people/Internet surveys/website/focus groups

Other answers continue to stand alone:

- 3 Voting/more issues voted on directly
- 3 Polls are useful but . . . /polls don't work because
- 2 Use their intelligence/best judgment/knowledge of their district/constituents/use their own moral judgment/listen to conscience
- 2 Officials don't use the information/do what they want/influenced by lobbyists
- 2 Media
- * Nothing more than they are doing already
- 7 Other way/other comment
- 30 Don't know
- 2 Refused
- 1 Public should become more involved/more pro-active/contact officials

Q17(PM)If opinion polls are only somewhat useful or not useful, what other ways should officials use to find out how the public feels?

Multiple Responses Accepted, percentages may total more than 100%.

Policy	Media	
n= 213	n= 218	Based on those who don't think polls are very useful for officials to understand the public

Policy	Media	
Net 75	Net 82	Direct contact with constituents:
52	61	Direct contact with constituents/spending time in district
15	15	Read mail/email from constituents
5	5	Phones
3	1	Internet chats/web sites

Policy	Media	
Net 42	Net 43	Town Hall meetings:
42	43	Town Hall Meetings

Policy	Media	
Net 11	Net 6	Use other types of surveys, improve survey techniques:
11	6	Better polling/make improvements/increase sample
*	*	Mail surveys

Policy	Media	
Net 38	Net 31	Find out from other people who know/do directed research:
7	8	Reports from local contacts/local press
6	5	Through state legislators/officials/colleagues/local politicians
6	5	Discussions with experts/knowledgeable people on issues/staff
3	3	Expert or technical studies/expert testimony
3	*	Through constituents' organizations
4	6	Other educated information/understanding demographics/research
8	4	Focus groups/round table discussions
1	*	Academia

Policy	Media	
Net 21	Net 37	Other:
8	12	Being informed through media/newspapers/TV
4	8	Use their own judgment/do what they think is right
2	*	Create informed citizens/educate constituents on issues
1	1	The governments own resources
1	1	Monitor election results
0	*	Other
5	5	Don't know/Not applicable/Refused

Q19(PM) And to what extent do you think opinion polls are useful for you to understand how the public feels about important issues? Are they very useful, somewhat useful, not too useful or not useful at all?

POLICY	MEDIA	
21	23	Very useful
55	64	Somewhat useful
18	9	Not too useful
5	2	Not useful at all
*	0	Don't know
1	2	Refused

Q20 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. (First | Next), (Insert). Is this a major reason polls are (only somewhat useful | not useful) for officials to understand how the public feels about important issues, a minor reason or not a reason? (Q18)

Major reason Minor reason Not a reason Don't know Refused

a polls don't accurately reflect what the public thinks.

PUBLIC	43	41	12	3	1	n=919
POLICY	34	50	12	1	3	n=213
MEDIA	25	53	17	4	1	n=218

Based on those who don't think polls are very useful for officials to understand the public

b polls don't ask for the public's opinion on the right issues.

PUBLIC	39	43	14	3	1	n=919
POLICY	36	48	16	*	0	n=213
MEDIA	17	57	23	2	*	n=218

Based on those who don't think polls are very useful for officials to understand the public

c the results of polls can be twisted to say whatever you want them to say.

PUBLIC	58	29	10	3	*	n=919
POLICY	73	26	1	0	*	n=213
MEDIA	61	29	7	2	1	n=218

Based on those who don't think polls are very useful for officials to understand the public

Q21 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 (Insert)? A great deal, a fair amount, not too much or none at all? (Q20)

A great deal A fair amount Not too much None at all Don't know Refused

a their own knowledge on the issue

PUBLIC	35	46	15	2	2	*	n=620
POLICY	52	40	7	0	*	2	
MEDIA	46	43	9	1	1	*	

Based on form A for public (asked of full sample for policy makers and media)

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

PUBLIC	24	38	27	9	3	*	n=620
POLICY	33	47	17	1	1	1	
MEDIA	16	56	22	2	2	2	

Based on form A for public (asked of full sample for policy makers and media)

c policy experts involved with the issue

PUBLIC	28	50	15	3	4	*	n=620
POLICY	24	58	16	0	*	1	
MEDIA	18	62	17	0	2	1	

Based on form A for public (asked of full sample for policy makers and media)

	A great deal	A fair amount	Not too much	None at all	Don't know	Refused	
d members of the public who contact them about the issue							
PUBLIC	14	40	36	8	2	0	n=620
POLICY	19	55	24	1	1	1	
MEDIA	10	52	34	1	2	1	
Based on form A for public (asked of full sample for policy makers and media)							
e their campaign contributors							
PUBLIC	59	28	7	3	2	*	n=620
POLICY	43	43	11	0	2	1	
MEDIA	70	27	3	0	*	*	
Based on form A for public (asked of full sample for policy makers and media)							
f public opinion polls							
PUBLIC	18	42	31	5	4	*	n=620
POLICY	23	63	13	0	1	1	
MEDIA	34	58	6	0	*	1	
Based on form A for public (asked of full sample for policy makers and media)							
g lobbyists and special interest groups							
PUBLIC	45	34	13	4	4	*	n=620
POLICY	44	52	3	0	0	1	
MEDIA	67	32	1	0	0	1	
Based on form A for public (asked of full sample for policy makers and media)							
i what journalists say about the issue							
PUBLIC	21	41	28	7	2	0	n=620
POLICY	15	52	32	0	1	*	
MEDIA	8	52	37	2	*	1	
Based on form A for public (asked of full sample for policy makers and media)							

Q22(PM)Public opinion polls can be used in a number of different ways. How big a role do you think polls play in shaping (Insert) in Washington? Do polls play a very big role, a moderate role, a small role or no role at all?

	Very big role	Moderate role	Small role	No role at all	Don't know	Refused
a the public policy agenda						
POLICY	28	55	15	1	1	1
MEDIA	29	56	12	*	2	1
b actual public policy itself						
POLICY	16	61	21	*	1	1
MEDIA	20	61	16	1	1	1
c the public information campaign to explain a new policy						
POLICY	41	40	15	*	3	1
MEDIA	46	42	7	1	3	1

Q23 For each of the following, please tell me how much attention you feel elected and government officials in Washington should 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 should pay to (Insert)? A great deal, a fair amount, not too much or none at all?

	A great deal	A fair amount	Not too much	None at all	Don't know	Refused	
a their own knowledge on the issue							
PUBLIC	47	44	4	3	2	1	n=586
Based on form B							
b their conscience or judgment, that is, what they think is the right thing to do							
PUBLIC	49	37	8	4	1	*	n=586
Based on form B							
c policy experts involved with the issue							
PUBLIC	46	41	8	3	2	*	n=586
Based on form B							
d members of the public who contact them about the issue							
PUBLIC	58	32	6	2	1	1	n=586
Based on form B							
e their campaign contributors							
PUBLIC	18	27	31	23	1	1	n=586
Based on form B							
f public opinion polls							
PUBLIC	36	39	18	5	1	*	n=586
Based on form B							
g lobbyists and special interest groups							
PUBLIC	14	31	28	22	3	1	n=586
Based on form B							
i what journalists say about the issue							
PUBLIC	13	29	34	22	1	1	n=586
Based on form B							

Q23(PM) When officials in Washington make decisions about (Insert), how much attention do you think officials actually pay to what polls say the public thinks? A great deal, a fair amount, not too much or none at all?

	A great deal	A fair amount	Not too much	None at all	Don't know	Refused
a economic issues, such as what taxes should be or how the budget surplus ought to be spent						
POLICY	14	54	30	1	*	*
MEDIA	16	53	28	1	1	*
b health care issues, such as whether to expand health insurance coverage to the uninsured						
POLICY	15	58	24	2	1	*
MEDIA	13	55	29	2	2	0
c education issues, such as how much money should be spent or testing for teachers						
POLICY	16	59	23	*	2	1
MEDIA	16	61	22	*	1	1
d foreign policy issues, such as whether to send our troops to another country or expanding our military						
POLICY	12	45	40	2	1	1
MEDIA	16	47	32	3	*	1
e social issues, such as the death penalty or abortion						
POLICY	19	52	26	2	1	1
MEDIA	24	47	25	3	1	1

Q27 Do you agree or disagree that (Insert)? (Follow with) Do you (agree | disagree) strongly or somewhat?

	Strongly agree	Somewhat agree	Somewhat disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know	Refused
a elected officials consult polls because they believe the public should have a say in what government does						
PUBLIC	23	40	21	14	2	*
b the main reason elected officials consult polls is because they want to stay popular and get re-elected						
PUBLIC	58	25	9	5	2	*
c public opinion polling is based on sound scientific practices (Q39a)						
PUBLIC	14	36	26	17	7	*
POLICY	32	43	14	4	4	3
MEDIA	37	46	8	2	4	3
d when people are interviewed for an opinion poll, they usually answer the questions honestly (Q39b)						
PUBLIC	46	35	11	6	3	*
POLICY	36	51	9	1	3	*
MEDIA	30	55	10	2	3	1
e the questions asked in polls often don't give people the opportunity to say what they really think about an issue (Q39c)						
PUBLIC	47	33	12	5	2	*
POLICY	57	35	6	1	1	*
MEDIA	53	35	9	1	1	*

Q29 When officials in Washington make decisions about (Insert), how much attention should they pay to what public opinion polls say the public thinks? A great deal, a fair amount, not too much or none at all?

	A great deal	A fair amount	Not too much	None at all	Don't know	Refused
a economic issues, such as what taxes should be or how the budget surplus ought to be spent						
PUBLIC	49	37	10	2	1	*
b health care issues, such as whether to expand health insurance coverage to the uninsured						
PUBLIC	56	33	7	2	1	*
c education issues, such as how much money should be spent or testing for teachers						
PUBLIC	57	33	7	1	1	*
d foreign policy issues, such as whether to send our troops to another country or expanding our military						
PUBLIC	38	35	19	6	1	*
e social issues, such as the death penalty or abortion						
PUBLIC	51	33	10	4	2	1

Q31 In your opinion, how often do public opinion polls accurately reflect what the public thinks? Just about always, most of the time, only some of the time or hardly ever? (Q24)

PUBLIC		POLICY	MEDIA
5	Just about always	5	8
28	Most of the time	36	45
53	Only some of the time	55	43
11	Hardly ever	2	2
2	Don't know	1	1
*	Refused	1	1

Q33 In your opinion, how often do (Insert) accurately reflect what the public thinks? Just about always, most of the time, only some of the time or hardly ever? (Q26)

	Just about always	Most of the time	Only some of the time	Hardly ever	Don't know	Refused	
a surveys where people are randomly contacted by telephone to participate							
PUBLIC	11	29	42	14	4	*	n=620
POLICY	5	33	47	9	5	1	n=150
MEDIA	7	39	42	7	3	3	n=150
Based on form A							
b surveys where people are contacted by telephone to participate							
PUBLIC	8	32	45	12	3	*	n=586
POLICY	7	31	48	8	4	1	n=150
MEDIA	7	42	42	5	5	1	n=151
Based on form B							
c surveys where people are mailed a questionnaire and asked to fill it out							
PUBLIC	8	27	43	18	4	*	n=1206
POLICY	1	14	53	25	5	1	n=300
MEDIA	1	13	48	31	5	1	n=301
d surveys where readers of a magazine fill out a questionnaire printed in the magazine							
PUBLIC	4	22	46	23	6	*	n=1206
POLICY	*	4	43	49	3	1	n=300
MEDIA	0	4	39	52	4	1	n=301
e surveys conducted on the Internet							
PUBLIC	6	21	36	16	21	*	n=1206
POLICY	*	4	42	45	8	1	n=300
MEDIA	0	3	28	61	6	2	n=301

Q34 Most polls interview a random selection of 1000 people. Those who conduct surveys say that if these people are drawn at random and certain procedures are followed carefully, the results obtained from interviewing 1000 people will be pretty close to what you would get if you were able to interview the entire country. How much confidence do you have that this is right? Are you very confident, somewhat confident, not too or not at all confident? (Q27)

PUBLIC		POLICY	MEDIA
7	Very confident	31	32
41	Somewhat confident	36	47
31	Not too confident	25	18
19	Not at all confident	5	2
1	Don't know	1	1
*	Refused	1	0

Q36 When elected and government officials consult or use opinion polls, how often do you think they check out who sponsored the poll and whether it was conducted properly? Just about always, most of the time, only some of the time or hardly ever? (Q29)

PUBLIC		POLICY	MEDIA
8	Just about always	14	14
22	Most of the time	25	23
42	Only some of the time	39	43
24	Hardly ever	19	14
4	Don't know	3	4
0	Refused	1	2

Q37 When the news media report on opinion polls, how often do you think they check out who sponsored the poll and whether it was conducted properly? Just about always, most of the time, only some of the time or hardly ever? (Q30)

PUBLIC		POLICY	MEDIA
10	Just about always	11	27
21	Most of the time	25	34
41	Only some of the time	43	31
25	Hardly ever	19	7
4	Don't know	2	1
0	Refused	0	1

39 When you read about a poll, how much confidence do you have that you can judge whether it was done in a fair and scientific manner? A great deal, a fair amount, not too much or none at all? (Q32)

	PUBLIC		POLICY	MEDIA
	8	A great deal	10	21
	41	A fair amount	32	49
	36	Not too much	43	22
	14	None at all	11	3
	2	Don't know	1	3
	*	Refused	2	3

Q40 And when you read or hear about a public opinion poll, how much attention do you pay to who conducted or sponsored the poll? A great deal, a fair amount, not too much or none at all? (Q33)

	PUBLIC		POLICY	MEDIA
	24	A great deal	61	81
	29	A fair amount	27	15
	29	Not too much	9	3
	16	None at all	3	0
	1	Don't know	0	0
	*	Refused	0	0

Q43 What is your overall impression of (Insert)? Is it very favorable, somewhat favorable, not too favorable, not favorable at all, or don't you know enough to say? (Q36)

	Very favorable	Somewhat favorable	Not too favorable	Not favorable at all	Don't know enough to say	Refused
a polling organizations, such as Gallup or Harris						
PUBLIC	10	34	9	5	42	*
POLICY	35	54	5	1	3	1
MEDIA	47	44	3	*	5	1
b polls by media organizations, such as the CBS- <u>New York Times</u> poll or the <u>Newsweek</u> poll						
PUBLIC	11	42	15	10	22	*
POLICY	17	52	21	6	5	*
MEDIA	40	52	5	1	2	0
c polls by academic research centers at universities, such as the University of Chicago or University of Michigan						
PUBLIC	18	39	6	3	34	*
POLICY	42	43	8	2	5	1
MEDIA	46	46	1	0	7	*

	Very favorable	Somewhat favorable	Not too favorable	Not favorable at all	Don't know enough to say	Refused
d polls commissioned by nonprofit and foundation groups, like the American Cancer Society or the Red Cross						
PUBLIC	27	44	5	3	20	*
POLICY	13	52	20	4	11	*
MEDIA	10	54	18	3	14	1
e polls commissioned by political parties, such as the Republican or Democratic National Committee						
PUBLIC	5	27	25	17	25	1
POLICY	3	20	47	23	6	2
MEDIA	1	18	52	23	6	1

Q44 Suppose for a minute that you just heard about two polls on the same issue. If you learned that (Insert), would you consider this a very important difference that makes one poll better than the other, somewhat important, not too important or not at all an important difference that makes one poll better than the other? (Q37)

	Very Important	Somewhat Important	Not too important	Not at all important	Don't know	Refused
a one poll interviewed 1000 people, while the other interviewed 1500						
PUBLIC	21	38	21	16	3	*
POLICY	8	35	38	17	1	1
MEDIA	11	43	33	10	3	1
b one poll selected people to be interviewed by randomly calling telephone numbers, while people took the other survey by calling an 800 number advertised on TV						
PUBLIC	37	31	14	14	4	1
POLICY	80	12	4	3	1	1
MEDIA	89	7	2	1	*	*
c one poll was conducted in a single night, while the other was conducted over three nights						
PUBLIC	28	32	18	17	4	1
POLICY	25	34	27	8	4	1
MEDIA	38	36	17	5	3	1
d one poll interviewed 50 percent of the people who were asked to participate in the survey, while the other interviewed 20 percent of the people who were asked to participate in the survey						
PUBLIC	38	36	13	9	3	1
POLICY	54	31	7	4	2	2
MEDIA	54	28	7	2	7	2

Q46 Do you agree or disagree that (Insert)? (Follow with) Do you (agree | disagree) strongly or somewhat?

	Strongly agree	Somewhat agree	Somewhat disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know	Refused
a answering questions in opinion polls about social and political issues is a waste of time						
PUBLIC	9	22	36	30	3	1
b polls on social and political issues serve a useful purpose						
PUBLIC	28	50	11	7	2	*
c public opinion polling is far from perfect, but it is one of the best means we have for communicating what the public is thinking (Q39d)						
PUBLIC	39	45	9	4	2	1
POLICY	35	43	12	5	*	4
MEDIA	44	46	8	1	*	1
d most professional poll takers try to be very careful to ask questions that don't favor any one side of an issue (Q39e)						
PUBLIC	32	37	15	10	6	1
POLICY	18	38	26	11	5	2
MEDIA	29	46	12	5	7	2

Q47 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 (Insert) 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? (Q40)

	Very good	Somewhat good	Not too good	Not good at all	Don't know	Refused
a holding town hall meetings						
PUBLIC	49	39	8	2	2	1
POLICY	35	51	13	1	*	0
MEDIA	29	58	10	1	1	*
b conducting a public opinion poll						
PUBLIC	28	56	10	3	3	*
POLICY	24	66	9	1	*	0
MEDIA	33	63	3	1	0	1
c talking to people at shopping malls and on the street						
PUBLIC	30	45	16	7	1	*
POLICY	14	53	27	6	1	*
MEDIA	16	58	21	5	0	1

	Very good	Somewhat good	Not too good	Not good at all	Don't know	Refused
d talking to people who call, write or e-mail the official's office						
PUBLIC	35	47	11	4	3	1
POLICY	14	51	29	6	*	*
MEDIA	12	56	28	4	*	*

Q48 Just to be certain I understand your opinion, please tell me which one of the following you think is the best way for officials to learn what the majority of people in our country think about important issues. (Q41)

		POLICY	MEDIA
43	Holding town hall meetings	31	25
25	Conducting a public opinion poll	46	52
13	Talking to people at shopping malls and on the street	10	8
15	Talking to people who call, write or e-mail the official's office	6	3
3	Don't know	4	5
1	Refused	4	7

Q49 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? (Q42)

n= 859 Based on those who don't think polls are the best way for officials to learn what public thinks

Net 21 Nonresponse, disinterest and lack of knowledge limit accuracy of polls:

- 6** People are hurried/distracted/don't have/take time to think/taken by surprise
- 6** Many people won't participate/take the time to answer
- 3** Those polled aren't necessarily interested in/informed about/affected by the issue/too random
- 2** Not taken seriously/people don't really care
- 4** People don't necessarily tell the truth

Net 7 Structure of conducting polls limits their accuracy:

- 6** Don't give you enough/the right choices/options/can only answer the question asked/no dialogue
- 1** They're limited (unspecified)

Net 20 Concerns over methodology/survey sampling:

- 15** Not talking to a large enough sample/adequate cross section/target certain people/types of people
- 5** Not accurate/reliable/can have errors/margin of error

Net 17 Can be purposefully misleading, possible to manipulate:

- 10** They are biased/slanted/questions written with agenda/worded to get targeted answers
- 3** Numbers can be manipulated/misinterpreted/twisted
- 3** Depends on how it is done/who conducts it/who sponsors it
- 1** Don't trust/like polls

Other:

- 4** Officials don't pay attention to them
- 3** Polls are OK/good as any other method
- 14** Other (specified) is better because
- 6** Other
- 15** Don't know
- 1** Refused

Q42(PM) 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?

Multiple Responses Accepted, percentages may total more than 100%.

Policy	Media	
n= 139	n= 109	Based on those who don't think polls are the best way for officials to learn what public thinks

Policy	Media	
Net 15	Net 14	Nonresponse, disinterest and lack of knowledge limit accuracy of polls:
8	10	Respondents not always honest/true opinions not expressed/people subject to daily emotions
4	3	People don't understand the question/interpretation problems
2	0	Not able to determine knowledge/understanding of the respondent for the question
1	1	People don't understand the issue(s)

Policy	Media	
Net 68	Net 84	Structure of conducting polls limits their accuracy:
19	31	People can't express how they feel/not enough choices/limited answers/context and intensity not expressed
14	16	They don't reflect what the public thinks/superficial view/incomplete picture/no depth
9	5	Polls give too narrow or too broad a view or coverage of issues/cannot speak for the masses/hard to target specific issues
4	5	The right question is not always asked
4	3	They are too restrictive/inability to clarify what the question is asking
3	4	It's only one method to measure public response
3	3	One way exchange of information
11	17	Need to talk to people directly/face to face reaction more honest/town hall meetings/officials need to make themselves available to constituents
1	0	Polls need to be more directional

Policy	Media	
Net 47	Net 24	Concerns over methodology/survey sampling/:
13	8	Imperfect system/can't guarantee random sampling/sample is limited/who is deciding on who is being polled
12	10	Polls have been proven wrong/subject to error/statistical errors/question of dependability, soundness, accuracy
16	5	There are too many variables in how they are conducted/variation of professionalism/not all polls are created equal
3	0	Don't know who is picking up the phone/taking the poll
1	0	Response bias
1	0	Taken by people with an axe to grind
1	1	Depends on time period poll is conducted

Policy	Media	
Net 52	Net 46	Are purposefully misleading, possible to manipulate:
21	17	Questions are structured to bias answers/easy to manipulate questions by the pollster
14	6	Questions are slanted/poorly phrased/design flaws
9	11	Easy to manipulate the answers by pollster/political parties or pollsters can manipulate polls/self selecting
8	12	Depends on who is writing the questions/commissioning or running the polls/hidden agenda

Policy	Media	
Net 6	Net 5	Other answers continue to stand alone:
5	2	Public opinion polls are useless/not taken seriously/waste of time
0	1	Officials don't want to respond to results
0	0	Other
1	2	Don't know/Not applicable/Refused

Q43(PM) We are interested to know where leaders(/journalists) like yourself get their news. How often do you (Insert)? Regularly, sometimes, hardly ever or never?

	Regularly	Sometimes	Hardly ever	Never	Don't know	Refused
a watch the national network news on TV – by national network news, I mean Peter Jennings on ABC, Dan Rather on CBS, Tom Brokaw on NBC, Fox News or UPN News						
POLICY	45	25	22	7	0	0
MEDIA	38	28	26	8	0	*
b watch the Newshour with Jim Lehrer or other PBS shows						
POLICY	27	43	23	7	0	*
MEDIA	18	44	30	9	0	*
c watch cable news, such as CNN or MSNBC						
POLICY	57	26	11	5	0	0
MEDIA	65	24	9	1	0	1
d watch local TV news-for example, “Eyewitness News” or “Action News”						
POLICY	47	21	24	9	0	0
MEDIA	41	24	26	9	0	*
e read the New York Times						
POLICY	44	30	19	7	0	0
MEDIA	80	15	4	1	0	1
f read the Washington Post						
POLICY	82	11	5	2	0	0
MEDIA	56	23	16	4	0	1
g read the Wall Street Journal						
POLICY	35	35	21	9	0	0
MEDIA	47	36	14	2	0	1
h read the Washington Times						
POLICY	11	20	25	44	0	0
MEDIA	8	17	30	45	0	1
i listen to radio shows that invite listeners to call in to discuss current events, public issues or politics						
POLICY	21	28	33	18	0	0
MEDIA	21	39	29	11	0	1

Q44(PM) On a different subject, in your opinion, what is the most important health care problem that the federal government should address?

Multiple Responses Accepted, percentages may total more than 100%.

POLICY MEDIA

26	26	Provide health care for uninsured
16	21	Universal coverage/coverage for all/access to coverage
14	12	Costs/affordable medical care/rates/financing access
8	9	Drug coverage/prescriptions/help with cost of drugs
7	9	Medicare issues/prescriptions/funding
5	3	Provide for the elderly
5	2	Provide insurance for children/their mothers
4	3	Reassess entire system/effective regulation/reform/bureaucracy
3	3	Provide health care for poor
3	2	Managed care/nursing homes/become more regulated
2	1	Preventative measures (i.e., stop drinking, smoking, get exercise, etc.)
2	3	HMO reform
1	2	Cure for cancer
1	*	Long term care/assistance living
1	3	Insurance/power of insurance companies
1	*	Mental health care/Alzheimer care
1	2	Financing/funding for insurance and research
1	*	Provide competent doctors/keep top people in medicine/respect for doctors
1	*	Aging population/growth of aging population
1	*	Lack of competition between doctors and HMOs/free market incentives
1	*	Getting government out of regulating health care/less dependence on government
1	1	Epidemic diseases/contagious diseases
1	1	Cure for AIDS/providing treatment for AIDS
1	1	Patient's Bill of Rights
1	1	Drug abuse
*	1	Payment issues with insurance/single payer/third party
*	0	Home health care
*	*	Provide health care for the underinsured
*	0	Quality care vs coverage
*	1	Obesity
0	1	National Health Insurance
0	*	Education
0	0	Other
1	0	None/nothing
4	6	Don't know/Not applicable/Refused

D1	(Sex)			
		PUBLIC	POLICY	MEDIA
		48 Male	75	64
		52 Female	25	36
D2	What is your age?			
		PUBLIC	POLICY	MEDIA
		23 18-29	3	3
		19 30-39	13	24
		20 40-49	34	37
		14 50-59	35	30
		10 60-69	9	5
		12 70 and over	6	0
		2 Refused	1	1
D3	In politics today, do you consider yourself a Republican, a Democrat, an independent or something else?			
		PUBLIC	POLICY	MEDIA
		28 Republican	24	4
		34 Democrat	43	27
		21 Independent	26	55
		12 Something else	5	5
		2 Don't know	0	0
		2 Refused	2	9
D4	Would you describe your political beliefs as conservative, moderate or liberal?			
		PUBLIC	POLICY	MEDIA
		35 Conservative	18	6
		37 Moderate	52	59
		21 Liberal	25	25
		5 Don't know	2	1
		2 Refused	3	10
D5	Are you yourself of Latino or Hispanic origin or descent such as Mexican, Puerto Rican or some other Latin American background?			
		PUBLIC	POLICY	MEDIA
		10 Yes	3	4
		89 No	96	96
		* Don't know	0	0
		1 Refused	1	0

D6 What is your race? (If Latino) Are you white Latino, black Latino or some other race?
(Else) Are you white, African American or black, Asian or some other race?

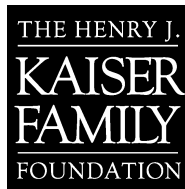
PUBLIC		POLICY	MEDIA
80	White/White Latino	87	90
12	African-American/Black/Black Latino	7	8
2	Asian	2	1
5	Other	3	1
*	Don't know	*	0
2	Refused	2	1

D7 What was the last grade or class you completed in school? (Do not read responses)

PUBLIC	
3	None, or grade 1-8
13	High school incomplete (grades 9-11)
33	High school graduate (grade 12 or GED certificate)
3	Business, technical or vocational school after high school
23	Some college, no four year degree
13	College graduate (BS, BA or other four year degree)
11	Post-graduate training or professional schooling after college
*	Don't know
1	Refused

D8 Last year, what was your total household income from all sources before taxes? Just stop me when I get to the right category.

PUBLIC	
7	Less than \$10,000
13	\$10,000 to under \$20,000
13	\$20,000 to under \$30,000
13	\$30,000 to under \$40,000
10	\$40,000 to under \$50,000
13	\$50,000 to under \$75,000
8	\$75,000 to under \$100,000
9	\$100,000 or more
7	Don't know
8	Refused



The Henry J. Kaiser Family Foundation
2400 Sand Hill Road
Menlo Park, CA 94025
Tel: (650) 854-9400 Fax: (650) 854-4800

Washington Office:
1450 G Street NW, Suite 250
Washington, DC 20005
Tel: (202) 347-5270 Fax: (202) 347-5274

www.kff.org &
www.kaisernetwork.org

Additional free copies of this publication (#3146) are available on our website or by calling our publications request line at (800) 656-4533.