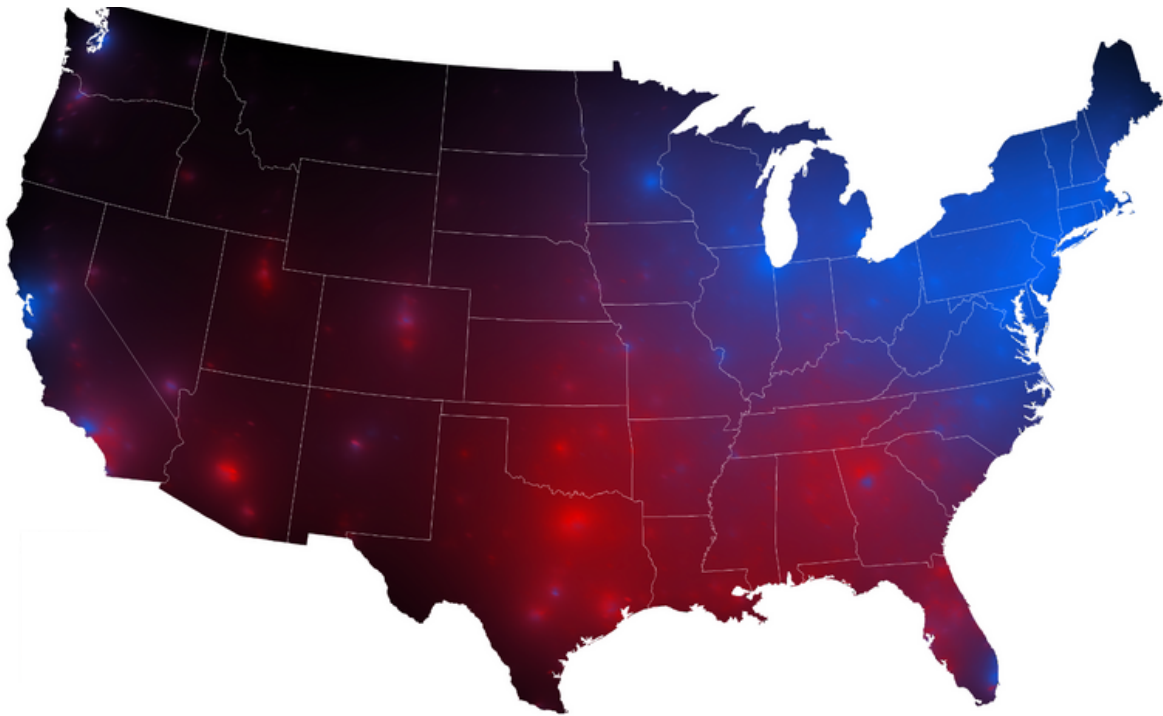


ATMOSPHERICS

04.14.23

PUBLIC OPINION



Political Opinions by Party and Population Density; source: David Sparks

Bottom Line Up Front:

- Public opinion is made up of the values, opinions, and attitudes of a group of individuals. These components are all related, with any one influencing the other. As a result, public opinion on any given topic is ever-evolving and difficult to measure.
- Public opinion holds great power to inform, influence, and alter state, local, and federal policies, economic volatility, leaders and influencers, and industry trends. However, these opinions may be at odds with other evidence, indicators, or opinions.
- Despite the obvious power that public opinion holds, individuals may still feel voiceless, particularly if they are in the minority of an opinion or feel as though their advocacy is not producing results.
- One important consideration around public opinion is the ability of outside forces, such as media, advertising, and content, to both inform and impact public opinion. This can have a range of effects depending on the source and the intent.

INFORMATION



Blue terms are connected to the word of the week via news outlets and searches, whereas black and gray terms are not directly related, but still dominate the social space.

Public Opinion defined: Public opinion is a collective's opinions and views on how a specific topic relates to the individual and to society. Gauging public opinion often starts with text mining, which is also known as text analysis. Text analysis extracts meaning from many sources of text, such as surveys, reviews, public social media, and even articles on the Web. These derived meanings, or sentiment, are then assigned positive and negative scores that correspond to the degree of sentiment within the text, also known as sentiment analysis. Interpretations of this analysis give us quantitative and qualitative evidence of public opinion.

Why this topic is important right now: A precursory general search on public opinion brought up multiple instances of Abraham Lincoln's quote that "public sentiment is everything." There is little doubt on the importance of public opinion as it relates to stand-alone issues, broader government action, and even volatility in the economy. However, there is a stark dichotomy between the importance of public opinion and in how it is actually influenced, or even quantified. A growing body of research suggests that the argument itself influences public opinion more so than the group making the argument or any prior history or established trust. Additionally, an individual's background, location, and surroundings are thought to play a larger role in public opinion than facts, media, or influencers.

"Values are the deep tides of public mood, slow to change, but powerful. Opinions, in contrast, are the ripples on the surface of the public's consciousness—shallow and easily changed. Finally, attitudes are the currents below the surface, deeper and stronger, representing a midrange between values and opinions." —Robert Worcester

TECHNOLOGY



AI Generated Image

"Understanding public opinion is like navigating a complex puzzle, where diverse perspectives, emotions, and influences come together to form a collective voice. It requires careful examination of data, context, and trends to gain insights into the collective sentiments of a society."

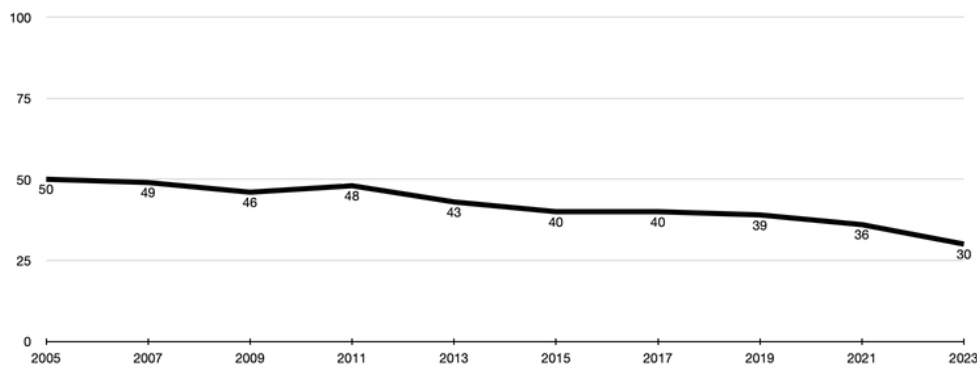
-ChatGPT, 2023

Public opinion refers to the collective views, attitudes, and beliefs held by a group or society on a particular topic or issue. It is shaped by various factors, such as personal cognition, experiences, values, emotions, social and cultural influences, media, and communication. It can influence perceptions, attitudes, and behaviors of individuals and groups, and can have significant societal impacts. Public opinion can also drive social movements, shape public policies, impact elections, and influence public discourse. However, it is not always uniform or monolithic, as different groups within a society may hold divergent opinions on a particular issue. Public opinion can also evolve and change over time in response to new information, events, and societal developments. Studying and understanding public opinion requires careful consideration of its multidimensional nature and the various factors that shape it, and it may not always align with established facts or data.

We prompted ChatGPT to discuss the short- and long-term impacts of public opinion remaining at odds with existing data and facts in a hypothetical scenario:

In a hypothetical scenario, let's consider the issue of climate change. Despite overwhelming scientific consensus that human activities, such as burning fossil fuels, contribute to climate change, public opinion in a certain region remains divided, with a significant portion of the population expressing skepticism or denial of this fact. As a result, policymakers face challenges in implementing effective climate mitigation and adaptation measures, as there is resistance from a significant portion of the public. This leads to delays or inadequate actions to address the issue, resulting in worsening climate impacts, such as more frequent and severe extreme weather events, rising sea levels, and ecosystem disruptions. The region experiences negative economic, social, and environmental consequences, as the misalignment between public opinion and established facts and data hinders the implementation of evidence-based policies, leading to increased vulnerability to climate change impacts. Efforts to educate the public, promote accurate information, and foster evidence-based decision-making become crucial to address this scenario and mitigate the impacts of climate change.

SENTIMENT



Americans' Trust in Mass Media Lowest Since 2016

In general, how much trust and confidence do you have in the mass media -- such as newspapers, TV and radio -- when it comes to reporting the news fully, accurately and fairly -- a great deal, a fair amount, not very much or none at all?

People may have a range of sentiment about public opinion, depending on their experiences and perspectives. Here are a few possible viewpoints:

- 1. Importance:** Some people may believe that public opinion is critical to democracy and that it reflects the collective will of the people. They may feel that policymakers and other decision-makers should pay close attention to public opinion and use it to guide their actions.
- 2. Skepticism:** Others may be more skeptical of public opinion, believing that it can be easily manipulated or that it does not always reflect people's true beliefs. They may be concerned about the influence of special interest groups, media bias, or other factors that can distort public opinion.
- 3. Frustration:** Some people may feel frustrated that their opinions are not adequately represented in public opinion data or that policymakers are not responsive to their concerns. They may feel that their voices are not being heard, leading to a sense of disengagement or disillusionment with the political process.
- 4. Empowerment:** On the other hand, some people may feel empowered by the knowledge that their opinions matter and that they can influence public policy through their participation in public opinion surveys or other forms of civic engagement.

Different communities may respond to public opinion in various ways depending on their cultural, social, and political contexts. Here are some examples:

- 1. Government:** Governments often pay close attention to public opinion and may use it to gauge public support for policies or to justify their actions.
- 2. Interest groups:** Interest groups may mobilize public opinion to support their agendas, especially in cases where they believe the government is not responsive to their concerns.
- 3. Media:** The media often plays a critical role in shaping public opinion by framing issues in a particular way, highlighting certain aspects while downplaying others.
- 4. Businesses:** Businesses may respond to public opinion by adjusting their marketing strategies or modifying their products or services to reflect changing consumer preferences.
- 5. Academia:** Academics may study public opinion to better understand how it is formed and how it changes over time.

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SENTIMENT:

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