

## Political Beliefs and Behaviors

### Political Beliefs and Behaviors:

How did literacy tests, poll taxes, and the grandfather clauses effectively prevent newly freed slaves from voting?

A literacy test was a very difficult test of civic knowledge given to blacks before they were permitted to vote. Alabama's test was sixty-five questions in forty-five minutes. Poll taxes were a fee required to vote, which few blacks could afford to pay. A grandfather clause allowed a person to vote if he or his ancestors voted prior to 1867.

### Political Beliefs and Behaviors:

What is the nature of tolerance in the United States?

The overwhelming majority believe in freedom of speech, freedom of religion, and right for unpopular groups to assemble and petition. However, when surveyors ask Americans specifically about a particular group that they dislike intensely, tolerance levels tend to decrease dramatically.

### Political Beliefs and Behaviors:

What two significant pieces of legislation increased voting opportunities?

The Civil Rights Act of 1964 prohibited any discriminatory voter registration practices, while the Voting Rights Act of 1965 required the federal government to put an end to poll taxes and literacy test in states.

### Political Beliefs and Behaviors:

What is the most important factor that predicts whether a citizen will vote?

Level of Education is the most important factor.

Political Beliefs and Behaviors:  
Who is John Q. Public?

John Q. Public is the average man or woman on the street, often portrayed by cartoonist as bespectacled or befuddled. Pollsters and the mass media speak of John Q. Public when they make a blanket statement about general public opinion in the United States.

Political Beliefs and Behaviors:  
What is the theory of social capital?

Political scientist Robert Putnam wrote in the mid 1990s that the existence of clubs, churches, and other organizations that promote civic trust translates to a degree of social capital that can be measured. The more clubs and associations a population belongs to, the higher their social capital is, and the stronger their sense of efficacy is.

Political Beliefs and Behaviors:  
Why is voting turnout so low in the United States?

The most common reasons cited for low turnout are scheduling conflicts, registration difficulties, political fatigue, and political apathy.

Political Beliefs and Behaviors:  
What is the political socialization phenomenon of the benevolent leader?

Children learn that the political figures of the United States are well-meaning, honest, and trustworthy early in their childhood through the political socialization process, including children's stories of George Washington and Abraham Lincoln. These stories instill the idea of a benevolent leader.

Political Beliefs and Behaviors:  
What are the agents of political socialization?

The most important agents of political socialization are family, religion, school, peers, group affiliations, and exposure to mass media.

Political Beliefs and Behaviors:  
What is political socialization?

Political socialization is the process by which citizens acquire a sense of political identity. Socialization allows citizens to become aware of politics, form political values, opinions, and attitudes; and to associate themselves with a political party.

Political Beliefs and Behaviors:  
Explain the balance between majority rule and minority rights.

In the United States, the will of the majority extends only until it takes away the rights of the minority. Political culture in the United States will often protect the rights of the minority at the expense of the will of the majority. This is to ensure that the minority voice will still be heard.

Political Beliefs and Behaviors:  
How have political participation rates in the United States changed in recent times?

Americans are voting but participating more. People are campaigning, contacting government officials, and working on community issues more than in prior decades. Public demonstrations have increased and people are more engaged in activities online.

Political Beliefs and Behaviors:  
What is the role of religion in American politics?

The United States is among the most religious countries in the world. The average citizen is likely to believe in God, to pray on a daily basis, and to attend religious services. However, the boundary between church and state is part of the foundation that the government is built on.

Political Beliefs and Behaviors:  
How do elites influence public opinion?

Elite view shape mass views by influencing both what issues capture the public attention and how those issues are debated and decided. Furthermore, elites state the norms by which issues should be settled, they set the range of acceptable and unacceptable

Political Beliefs and Behaviors:  
What factors contribute to the development of political efficacy?

Efficacy is the feeling that one can understand government and can effectively participate in it, and that government will respond to citizens' demands. Efficacy is dependent on several factors. The most important variable seems to be education: the higher the education, the higher the efficacy.

Political Beliefs and Behaviors:  
What is ticket-splitting?

Ticket-splitting occurs when people ignore traditions party labels and vote across party lines. Ticket-splitters account for nearly 60 percent of the ballots in some elections. People are more likely to vote based on a candidate's image or a candidate's view on a single issue as opposed to party affiliation.

Political Beliefs and Behaviors:  
According to Alexis de Tocqueville's *Democracy in America*, why was democracy so successful in the United States?

De Tocqueville claimed that the independent frontier spirit of the people, the abundance of fertile land, and the fact that the United States lacks a feudal past all combined to ensure the success of democratic government.

Political Beliefs and Behaviors:  
How do citizens form political beliefs and opinions?

Political beliefs and opinion are largely the result of two factors, the first is that of personal benefits, wherein citizens hold beliefs that best promote their own interests. The second factor is the political and historical knowledge of citizens. People who lack much political or historical knowledge are generally more easily persuaded by media representations of politics than those who have more knowledge.

Political Beliefs and Behaviors:  
How does the political culture of the United States compare to that of Europe?

Political culture in the U.S. stresses individualism, competition, equality and following the rules. Europeans, in particular, stress communalism, social responsibility, and cooperation. People in the U.S. vote less but participate in other ways more, have greater access to their local officials, and have more faith in their national institutions than people in other nations.

Political Beliefs and Behaviors:  
What differences exist among ethnic groups in terms of community participation?

According to Voice and Equality: Civic Volunteerism in American Politics, African Americans are more likely than Caucasians to get involved in community issues (23% versus 20%) and Hispanics are more likely than either Whites or African Americans to serve on a community governing board (4.1%, 3.2% and 2.3% respectively).

Political Beliefs and Behaviors:  
What role does religion play in forming political attitudes?

In general, Protestants are more conservative on economic matters than are Catholics or Jews. Jews tend to be more liberal on economic and social issues than are Catholics or Protestants. Catholics tend to be more liberal on economic issues than they are on social issues.

Political Beliefs and Behaviors:  
What are the negative consequences of early exit polls?

Voters in the Midwest and on the West Coast are influenced by the results on the East Coast, which are broadcast well before voting finished further West. If there is a clear majority for one candidate, it could potentially discourage voters in the Midwest or on the West Coast from voting at all.

Political Beliefs and Behaviors:  
What is the difference between a political ideology and a political culture?

Political ideology refers to a consistent set of views concerning the policies government ought to pursue. A political culture is a patterned set of ways of thinking about how government and politics ought to be carried out. People can disagree on political ideology and still share the same political culture.

Political Beliefs and Behaviors:

What does a sampling error of + or – 3 percent in a public opinion poll really mean?

The results of the poll could actually be 3 points higher or lower than the number reported. For example, if the results of the poll were Democrats 45 percent, Republicans 52 percent with a +/- 3 percent sampling error, the actual results could be 42 percent or 48 percent for the Democrats and 49 percent or 55 percent for the Republicans.

Political Beliefs and Behaviors:

What are straw polls, and are they reliable?

Straw polls are unscientific attempts to measure public opinion, often used by newspapers, television stations, internet sites and even members of Congress. The results of straw polls are not reliable because there is no guarantee that the group of sample answering the question is representative of the population as a whole.

Political Beliefs and Behaviors:

How does race affect public opinion?

African Americans are generally more liberal than other racial groups on issues ranging from housing discrimination to the death penalty, national defense and national health insurance. Blacks are the most consistently liberal group within the Democratic Party. Hispanics and Asian Americans are less liberal.

Political Beliefs and Behaviors:

How do pollsters draw a representative sample?

One method is cluster sampling, where groups are drawn by geographic divisions, such as counties or congressional districts. Another method is random digit dialing, where people over 18 with birthdays in a certain month are asked to complete a questionnaire.

Political Beliefs and Behaviors:

How was suffrage extended to women?

Women were kept from the polls by law more than by intimidation. By 1915 several states, mostly in the West, had begun to permit women to vote. In 1920 the Nineteenth Amendment was ratified, ensuring all women the right to vote and doubling the size of the electorate.

Political Beliefs and Behaviors:  
What is a representative sample in a poll?

Everyone in the population has an equal probability of being selected. Generally, a national sample is 1,000 to 1,500 adults. Pollsters hoping to attain an accurate picture of the public opinion on a particular issue use this technique.

Political Beliefs and Behaviors:  
What issues affect the ability of people to vote?

The Constitution leaves it up to the individual states to regulate specific voting requirements. Issues such as residency requirements, registration procedures, age and voting times affect the ability of people to vote.

Political Beliefs and Behaviors:  
How did the Australian ballot change the way elections were held in the United States?

Australia introduced a new ballot around 1890 in an attempt to minimize the fraud in elections. To reduce instances of vote buying and fraudulent vote counts that occurred when the parties printed ballots themselves and citizens voted in public, the government produced a ballot for all parties that was required to be cast in private.

Political Beliefs and Behaviors:  
What are the culture wars?

This refers to the idea that there are two cultural classes in the U.S. and that these two groups engage in a constant battle over values. This idea is frequently simplified into a clash between liberals and conservatives.

Political Beliefs and Behaviors:  
What are the conflicting philosophies of equality of opportunity and equality of results?

Equality of opportunity is the belief that all persons should be able to achieve success if they are given the same original opportunities. Equality of results is the belief that everyone can achieve the same results despite differences in backgrounds if they work hard enough and overcome obstacles.

Political Beliefs and Behaviors:  
Summarize the legal struggle for African American voting rights.

The Fifteenth Amendment stipulates that “the rights of citizens to vote shall not be denied or abridged by any state on account of race.” However, states employed literacy tests, poll taxes, violence and intimidation, and grandfather clauses to prevent blacks from voting. It was not until the voting Rights Act of 1965 that African American voting rights were enforced.

Political Beliefs and Behaviors:  
What is the percentage of each age group that votes in presidential elections?

In the past two presidential elections, only 17 percent of people between 18-29 voted, a disappointing percentage considering the concerted effort of both parties to raise youth participation. Approximately 25% of people 30-44 voted, while 45% of those 45-59 and 35% of those 65 and older voted.

Political Beliefs and Behaviors:  
What constitutes voting turnout?

Turnout refers to the proportion of the public that actually votes, not those that are registered to vote. About 40% of the eligible adult population votes regularly, 25% are occasional voters, and 35% rarely or never vote.

Political Beliefs and Behaviors:  
What is an exit poll?

As voters leave their polling places, pollsters ask them whom they voted for. These are usually more accurate than polls prior to an election because exit polls measure actual voters, not likely voters. Additionally, people are less likely to lie directly after they have voted.

Political Beliefs and Behaviors:  
What age group votes the most? The least?

People between 18-24 vote the least, while those over 45 vote the most.



Political Beliefs and Behaviors:  
What are some general traits of populists?

Populists are liberal on economic matters and conservative on social issues. They want a government that will reduce economic inequality and control business, but they also want it to regulate personal conduct, enforce criminal legislation and permit school prayer. Populists tend to be older, poorly educated, low income, religious and female, and tend to live in the South or the Midwest.

Political Beliefs and Behaviors:  
What is the most common form of political participation?

Voting is the most common form of political participation.

Political Beliefs and Behaviors:  
What are the differences among liberals, conservatives and libertarians in the United States?

Conservatives favor state over federal action, emphasize fiscal responsibility, and feel that social issues are best addressed by the private sector. Liberals tend to favor a more active government, especially in terms of regulation of the economy. Libertarians believe in free market economics, personal privacy and extremely limited government.

Political Beliefs and Behaviors:  
What are the views of those generally thought to be conservatives in modern American politics?

Conservatives promote a limited role for government in helping individuals economically, support traditional values and lifestyles, and favor a more active role for the government in promoting national security. They approach change cautiously.

Political Beliefs and Behaviors:  
How does region affect public opinion in the U.S.?

The South is the least liberal, with the Midwest somewhat more liberal, and the East and West most liberal. The South became part of the Democratic coalition because Southerners were liberal on economic issues (and because Lincoln was a Republican!). However, the rise of racial and social issue (on which the South is quite conservative) ended southern attachment to the Democratic Party.

Political Beliefs and Behaviors:  
Define political culture.

Political culture is a set of basic values and beliefs about a country or government shared by most citizens.

Political Beliefs and Behaviors:  
What are the views of those generally thought to be liberals in modern American politics?

Liberals support an active government role in promoting individual welfare and supporting civil rights. They accept peaceful political and social change within the political system.

Political Beliefs and Behaviors:  
What is the new class?

Sociologists and political scientists often claim that there is a new class of people who benefit from the power, resources, and growth of government. They constitute a new elite that are wealthy and powerful because of their connections with government, not business, as elites previously were.

Political Beliefs and Behaviors:  
What is the difference between a conflictual and a consensual political culture?

A conflictual political culture is one where groups with differing beliefs and values clash. A consensual political culture is where beliefs and values are widely shared. Even in a consensual political culture such as the United States, there are some issues that cause conflict.

Political Beliefs and Behaviors:  
How can the U.S. improve voting turnout?

Some suggestions include expanding the absentee voting program, declaring election day a holiday, and mobilizing party politics.

Political Beliefs and Behaviors:  
Is there a political gender gap in the United States?

Up until the 1960s, women tended to vote Republican in a hearth-and-home mentality. Since the 1960s, women have been more likely than men to support the Democratic party. This has been explained by the advent of the women's rights movement and the Democrats' tendency to support causes that women favor, such as environmental protection and education.

Political Beliefs and Behaviors:  
List the core values of political culture in the U.S.

The core values of political culture in the U.S. are liberty, equality, individualism, democracy, rule of law, and equality under the law.