

# PURPLEPOL

October 2

If the election were held today, would you be  
Republican Ben Johnson? (Candidate names)

Poll type: Automated Date: October 28, 2012 - Participants: 1 010

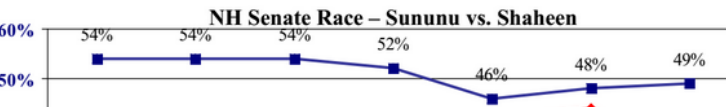
3.1%

1. 2012 Presidential Vote (leaners allocated)  
Who will you vote for in the 2012 Presidential election?

	Total
<b>ALL VOTER</b>	
Barack Obama	47%
Mitt Romney	48%
Other	1%
Undecided	2%
<b>Republicans</b>	
Totals	100%
(Weighted N)	(1,600)
<b>Democrats</b>	90%
<b>Independents</b>	12%

## ROTATE ALL

- 11. Barack Obama  
TREND MAY2012
- 12. Maria Cantwell  
TREND MAY2012
- 13. Patty Murray  
TREND MAY2012
- 14. Chris Gregoire  
TREND MAY2012
- 15. Mitt Romney  
TREND MAY2012
- 16. Jay Inslee  
TREND MAY2012
- 17. Rob McKenna  
TREND MAY2012
- 18. Michael Baumgartner  
TREND MAY2012



TABLE

TOTAL FAV	TOTAL UNFAV	Race			
		male	White	Black	Hispanic
57%	39%	55%	39%	91%	44%
54%	43%	11%	56%	7%	53%
		2%	3%	2%	2%
		2%	3%	0%	1%
		10%	100%	100%	100%
		(29)	(1,133)	(237)	(251)

# \$2.6 billion

September 14th, 2010

04:22 PM ET

deadlock



Posted by  
CNN Political Unit

(CNN) - The wild  
person fight for th

HUNTINGTON  
INSTITUTE  
JERSEY CITY, NJ

October 3, 2008

ALL PRES N=600	
MA	50%

012 Indiana Senate: Mourdock vs

1 of 600 likely voters

Donnelly (D)	43%
ew Horning (L)	9%
ard Mourdock (R)	36%

Unacriera	2%	2%	2%	4%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%
Composition of Likely Voters	100%	47%	53%	25%

Schumer & Gillibrand Cruise into Closing Days of Campaign with Larg

# What is the purpose of pre-election polling?

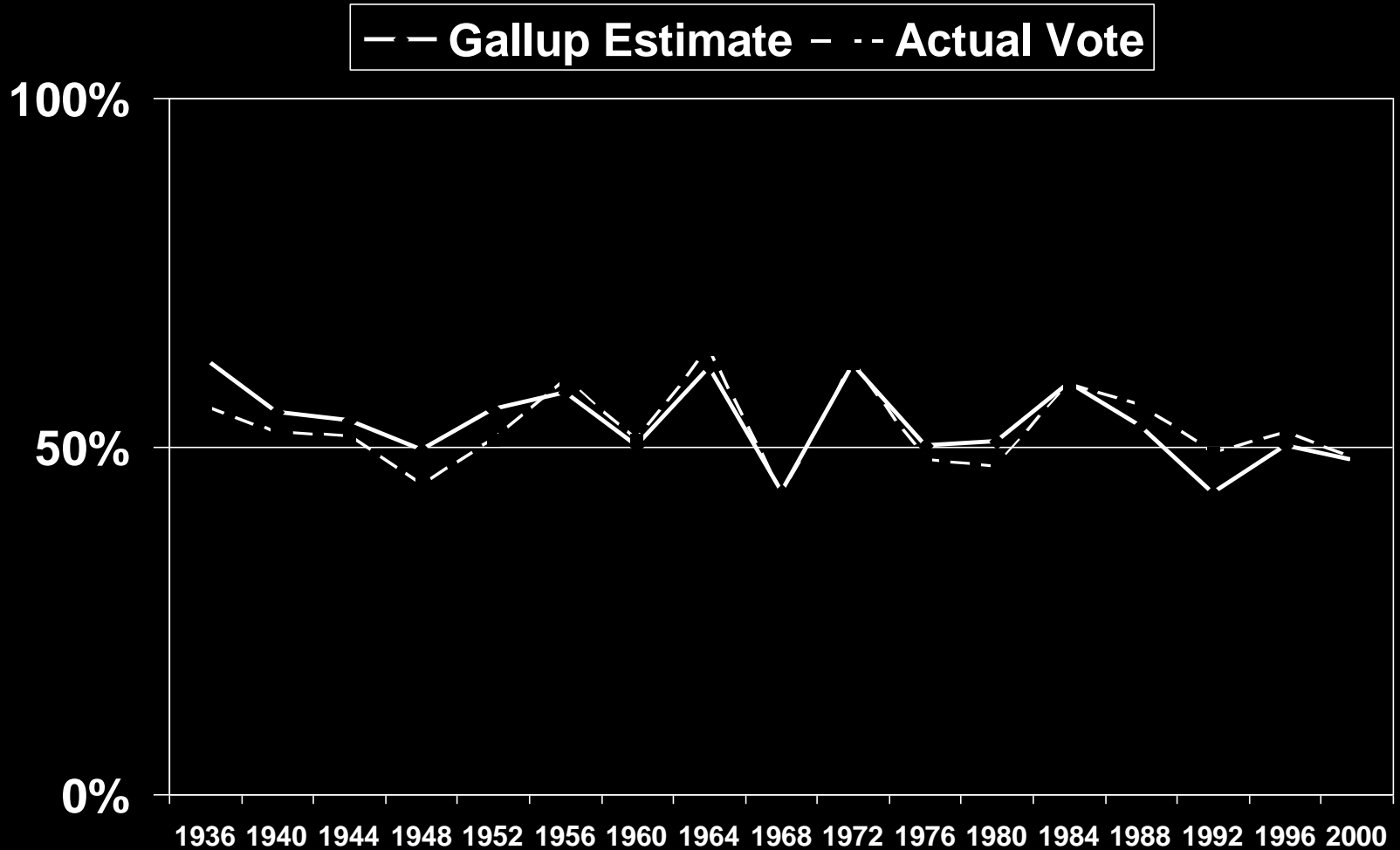
- Provide a source of entertainment
- Provide information for uninformed voters
- Provide democratic feedback to candidates/elected officials
- Provide strategic information for donors

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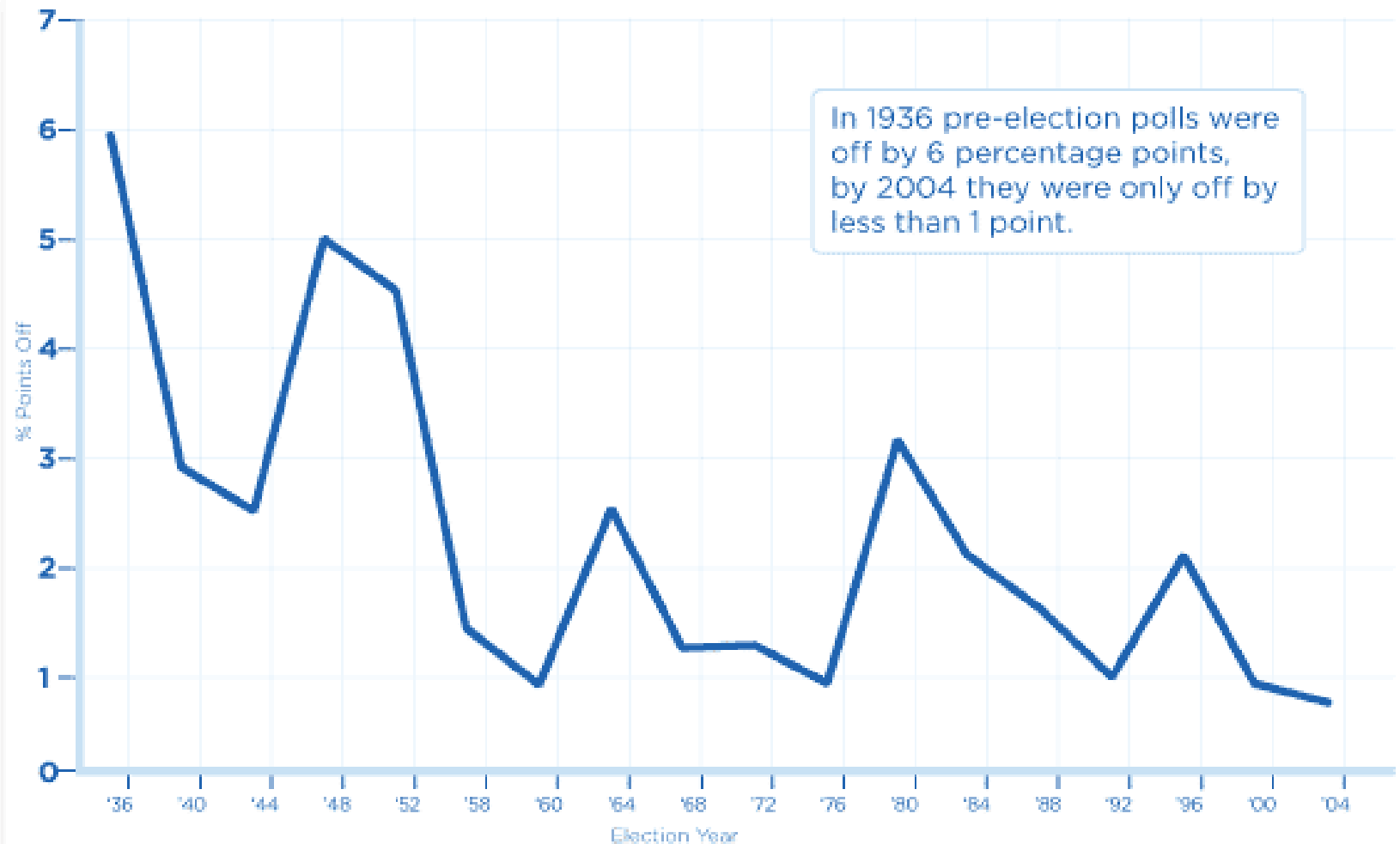
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Gallup final survey estimates of support for winning presidential candidate correlated with actual election outcome,  $r = .85$ .

## ACCURACY: Pre-election Polls Are Becoming More Accurate



# 2008 U.S. Presidential Election

## Government Totals

Obama 52.9%

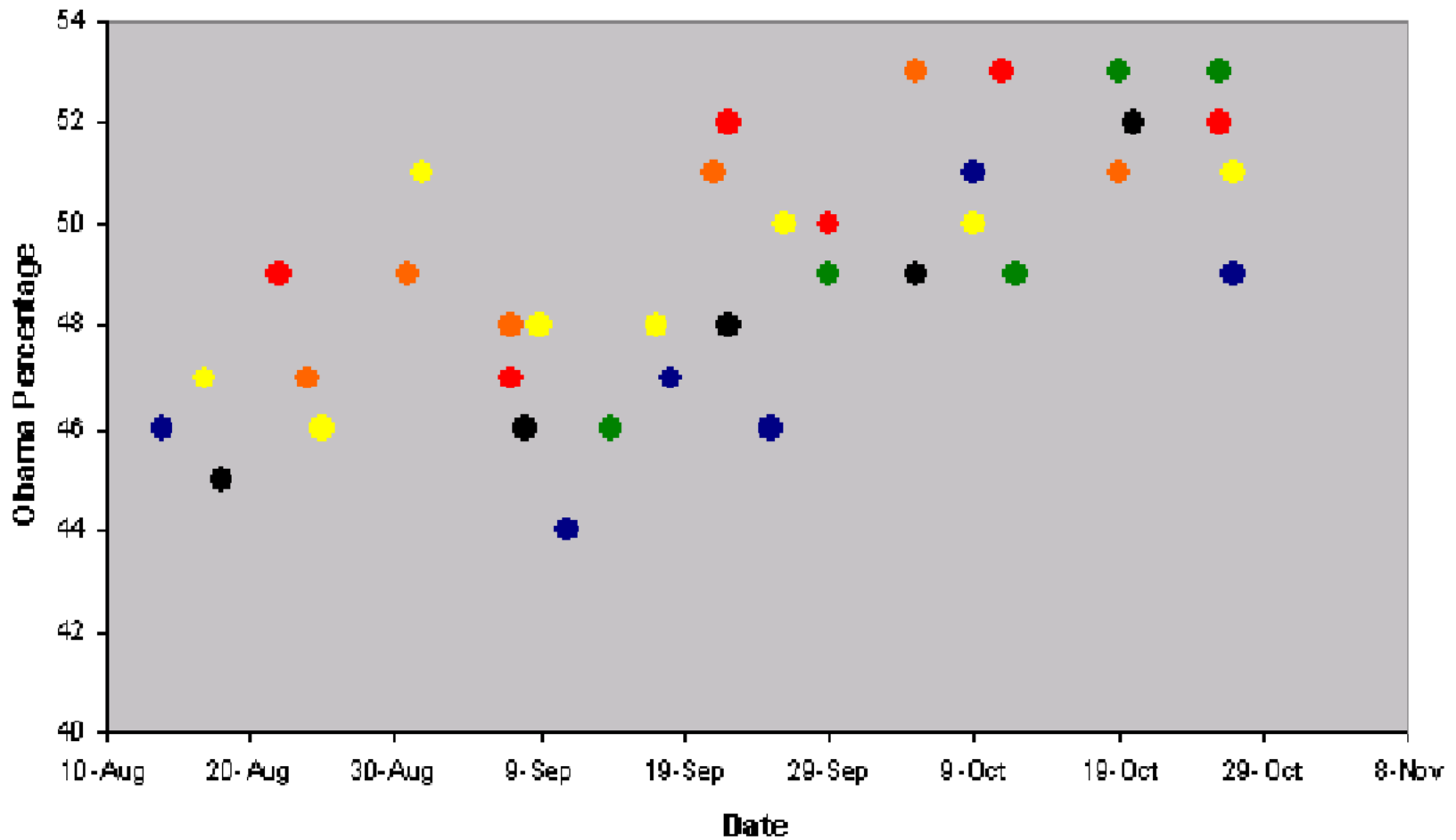
McCain 45.6%

# 2008 U.S. Presidential Election

	Government <u>Totals</u>	Final <u>Surveys</u>
Obama	52.9%	52.1%
McCain	45.6%	44.5%

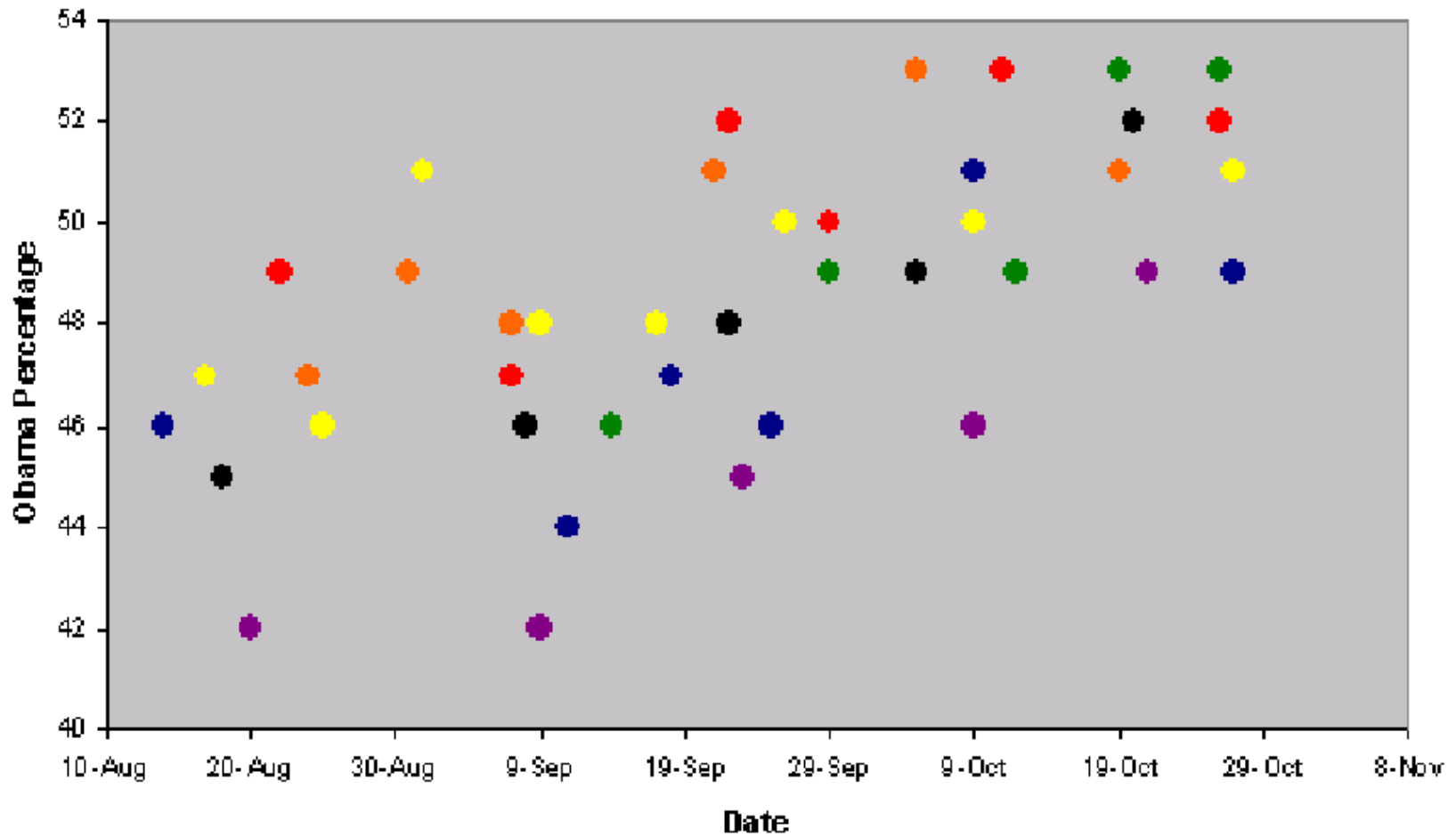


# Poll Results by Pollster



- ABC News/Wash Post
- CNN
- FOX News
- GWU/Battleground
- NBC News/All St. Jnl
- Few Research
- Rasmussen Tracking

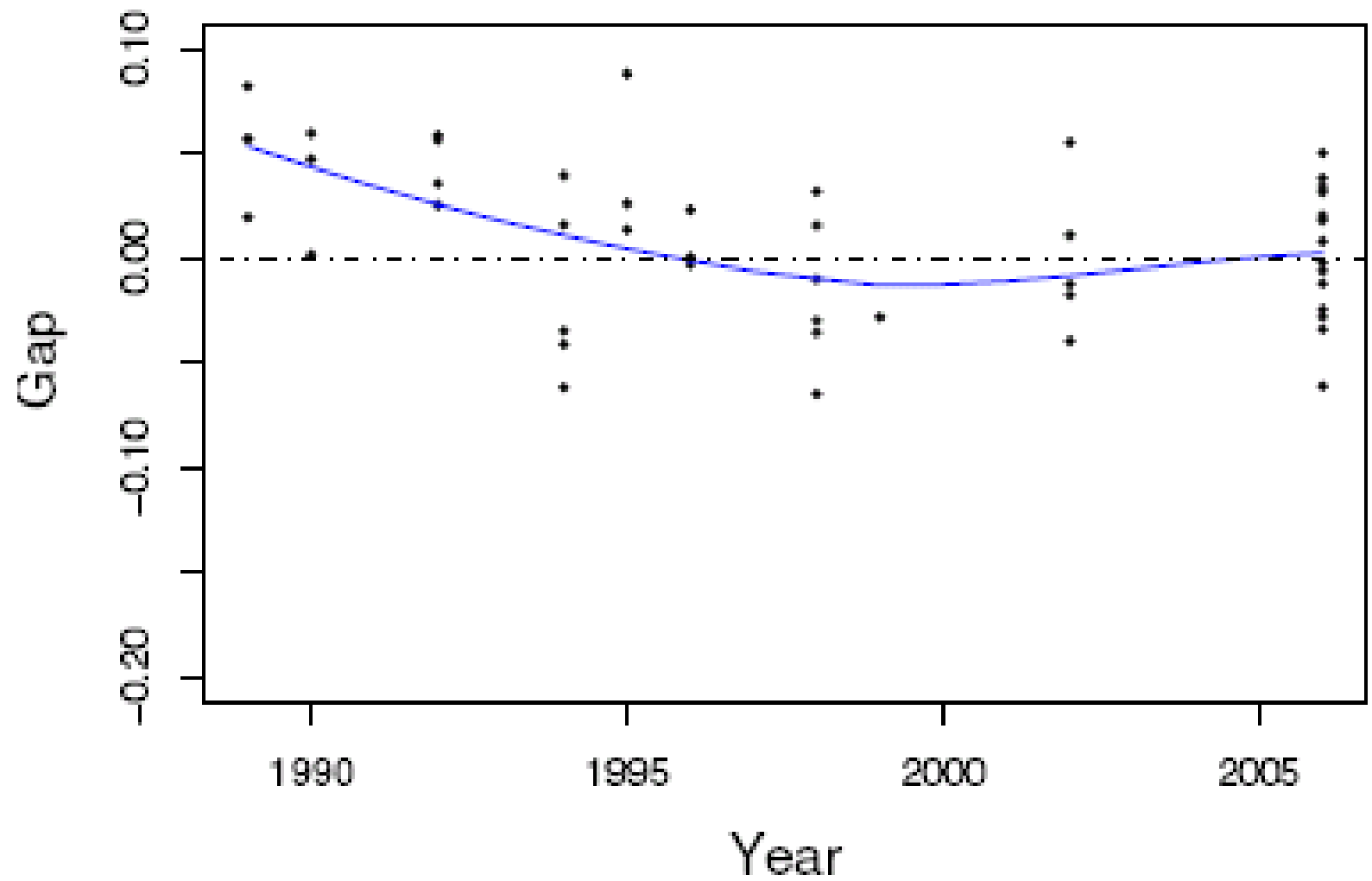
# Poll Results by Pollster



# The Bradley Effect

Do pre-election polls overstate the Black candidate's share of the vote?

# Black Candidates



# State Polls in 2008

- National Council on Public Polls.
- Average error predicting final candidate vote share.
- President and Senate
- Average error: 1.8%

# A New Study

Accuracy of Pre-election Polls  
on Referenda

# Hypotheses

- Sample size.
- Number of days between the poll and the election.
- Respondent screening: registered, likely voters.
- Percent of undecided respondents.
- Leaning questions to follow up DK.
- Live vs. pre-recorded interviewers.
- Year of the referendum.

# One View on Question Wording

“Ballot propositions are notorious for confusing or even indecipherable language.

This year's California propositions are 60 to 70 words in length, a length most pollsters consider prohibitive for a telephone survey.

Reading that much text strains the patience of the respondent, and concentrating on that much dense ballot language read aloud is a task most people are simply unwilling to do.

So telephone pollsters try to simplify and condense their descriptions.”



“However, it is critical to test actual ballot language, rather than general concepts or initiative titles.

It is tempting to test 'simplified' initiative descriptions, under the assumption that voters do not read the ballot, and instead vote on pre-conceived notions of each initiative.

That is a mistake.”

- Question wording:
  - Exact ballot wording
  - Summary of ballot wording
  - Significant mismatch from ballot wording

# Data

- 1996-2008
- Nationally known survey organizations
- Pollster.com
- Publicly available data
- 17 states
  - Arizona, California, Colorado, Florida, Idaho, Kansas, Maine, Minnesota, Missouri, Montana, Nevada, Ohio, Oklahoma, South Dakota, Tennessee, Virginia, and Washington.

- 5 survey organizations
  - The Field Poll
  - LA Times/Bloomberg
  - Mason-Dixon
  - Public Policy Institute of California
  - SurveyUSA
- DK Responses
  - 50% for, 50% against
  - Drop them
- N = 260 Poll Results

Table 1. Mean and Median Signed and Absolute Error

Statistic	Signed Error		Absolute Error	
	<u>Undecideds</u> Equally Distributed	<u>Undecideds</u> Dropped	<u>Undecideds</u> Equally Distributed	<u>Undecideds</u> Dropped
Mean Error	3.24 (8.36)	3.76 (8.84)	6.58 (6.08)	6.84 (6.73)
Median Error	2.50	2.45	5.05	4.82

Notes: Standard deviations appear below the means.

Signed error: (Survey – Actual)

Table 2. OLS Regression Coefficients Predicting Absolute Error

Predictor	b	Standard Error	Significance.
<b>Year of the referendum (larger numbers mean later years)</b>	<b><u>-5.62</u></b>	1.75	<b><u>0.001</u></b>
<b>Number of days between the midpoint of the survey fielding dates and the election date (smaller=closer to the election)</b>	<b><u>0.21</u></b>	0.03	<b><u>0.001</u></b>
<b>Square of the number of days between the midpoint of the survey fielding dates and the election date</b>	<b><u>-0.001</u></b>	0.00	<b><u>0.001</u></b>
<b>Sample size</b>	<b><u>-0.003</u></b>	0.00	<b><u>0.02</u></b>
Registered or Likely voters (0=registered, 1=likely)	-0.26	1.96	0.45
Undecided respondents were asked whether they leaned (0=no, 1=yes)	2.37	4.15	0.57
<b>Percent of undecided respondents</b>	<b><u>0.12</u></b>	0.05	<b><u>0.01</u></b>
<b>Survey question used an abbreviated summary of official ballot wording</b>	<b><u>-2.08</u></b>	1.24	<b><u>0.05</u></b>
<b>Survey question used essentially the exact wording on the official ballot</b>	<b><u>-4.41</u></b>	1.69	<b><u>0.01</u></b>
Unknown how closely the survey question matches the official ballot wording	-3.11	3.45	0.37
Special or General election (0=special, 1=general)	-0.82	1.22	0.50
<b>Presidential election (1=Presidential, 0=not)</b>	<b><u>1.73</u></b>	0.79	<b><u>0.03</u></b>
Arizona	-2.96	3.86	0.44
Colorado	-0.11	3.39	0.97
Florida	0.69	3.61	0.85
<b>Idaho</b>	<b><u>9.04</u></b>	<b><u>4.59</u></b>	<b><u>0.05</u></b>
Kansas	1.25	5.77	0.83
Maine	-1.20	3.52	0.73
Minnesota	0.40	6.00	0.95
Missouri	8.68	5.41	0.11
Montana	1.82	3.74	0.63
Nevada	2.58	3.49	0.46
Ohio	5.93	3.81	0.12
Oklahoma	-2.61	3.54	0.46
South Dakota	2.58	3.60	0.47
Tennessee	1.51	4.25	0.72
Virginia	1.96	4.22	0.64
Washington	1.18	3.13	0.71
<b>Survey Organization: LA Times/Bloomberg</b>	<b><u>-6.87</u></b>	<b><u>4.18</u></b>	<b><u>0.05</u></b>
<b>Survey Organization: Mason-Dixon Survey</b>	<b><u>-5.43</u></b>	<b><u>2.44</u></b>	<b><u>0.01</u></b>
<b>Survey Organization: The Field Poll</b>	<b><u>-4.82</u></b>	<b><u>2.58</u></b>	<b><u>0.03</u></b>
Survey Organization: Public Policy Institute of California	-2.33	2.28	0.15
Intercept <sup>2</sup>	13.16	4.14	0.002
R <sup>2</sup>	.34		
N	260		

# Predictors of Absolute Error

• Number of respondents	-.004*
• Days between survey and election	.19*
• Days squared	-.001*
• Percent undecided	.07+
• Includes leaners	6.33*
• Likely voters (vs. registered)	1.14
• Similar wording	4.17+
• Summary of official wording	6.48*
• Mismatch of wording	8.79*
• Human interviewer	-5.10*
• Earlier year	5.48*

# Simulated Accuracy

- Huge Sample
- No days between the survey and the election
- No undecideds
- Exact wording
- Human interviewers
- Year = 2015

Error = zero!



## More accuracy for:

- Larger sample size
- Survey done closer to election day
- Question wording matched the ballot exactly
- A human interviewer asked the questions
- More recent years