



## **Opinion Polls: Your truth or theirs**

### **Vox pops**

I think you should believe opinion polls sometimes but I think people can manipulate them in what ever way they want to. Especially politicians are known for that anyway.

### **Vox pops**

Its lovely to open a newspaper at home and be able to see what... what the public are feeling and you know what people are thinking, but at the same time it all depends on, you know, who's been asked, where, when.

### **Vox pops**

They shape opinions, they master opinions and I don't think they are democratic.

### **Jeremy Vaine – archive footage**

I show you a graph first of all these are the polls... The swings are just about the polls is a mere 3 percent. Only a couple of seats.

### **Mark Pack**

Opinion polls are sort of the public form of political gossip. You know, who's up, who's down, who's doing well, who's in, who's out ....And in the end politics is about who is the most popular with the public.

### **Peter Riddell**

All politicians deny being led by polls. I mean if you ask a politician: "The poll shows you know, you're doing disastrously, you're 15 points behind", or something like that. They say: "Oh, I don't pay any attention to the poll. The only poll that matters is on Polling Day". Well, that's baloney.

### **Mark Pack**

People often use opinion polls to test out: "Well if we said this or we took this line on a policy or we changed our mind on something else, how would the public react?"

And that gets into quite tricky territory because to the extent the job of a politician is to decide what they believe in and try to persuade the public to believe in it.

### **Peter Riddle**

For newspaper and media outlets, they're partly a marketing tool, because they can make headlines that get picked up by other papers.

Also, it's what they regard as part of their tool for covering politics.

### **Mark Pack**

The very fact of reporting that the public think something then makes the public more likely to think that...

The classic example being levels of liberal democrat support in parliamentary bar elections where very often, when the Party support has begun to grow and therefore there will then be tangible signs of that, that other people can see, including sometimes constituency opinion polls, then more people support the Party, and so you get this bandwagon effect that can roll and roll and roll.

**Jacqui Smith**

My experience of going out and knocking on doors during election campaigns is that people will play back to you the opinion polls, not you know not directly but they will say things like well of course you are behind at the moment and things like that.

**Vox pop:**

If you hear that Gordon Brown behind every day you are not likely, you know, to cast your vote for him.....You think, he's a loser so what's the point of me backing him?

**Synch archive**

... and the winner is Nick Clegg

**Nick Clegg:** Hello Chris. How are you?

At least so say the post debate polls and even his political opponents.

**Synch archive:****Jeremy Vaine**

Suddenly they are pushing labour into third place and it gets better for them. Amidst all the Clegg- mania so called they then start wrestling with the Conservatives for the first place here.

**Peter Riddell**

One of the problems with polls is to get them in perspective, to realize the difference between underlying trends and what might just be a temporary blip. And one saw that classically in the 2010 election, when your instant polls, and it turned out that they did register quite accurately what people thought at the time...

Nick Clegg's ratings rose a lot, but it was almost like a reality TV show.

When you're actually asking people how they'd vote on Polling Day, it turned out different answers.

**Jacqui Smith:**

Interestingly what you saw is a bit of a conflation of what peoples voting intentions were and who people thought had done well in the debates.

I think probably people will need to be more sophisticated about whether or not what their polling is, do you think that X has done a good job on the TV rather than what, which way you vote if the election is tomorrow.

**Peter Riddell**

As a journalist, my own feeling has been very much that you've got to report polls responsibly... but it's very difficult sometimes to say: Actually this poll might be wrong or it may exaggerate it, let's be cautious.

**Mark Pack**

There are or have been occasions, several General Elections, even in my lifetime, let alone over a longer period of time, when the opinion polls have turned out to get public opinion badly wrong. So you have to remember that they're not absolutely perfect, they are a degree art as well a degree science.

**Synch archive:****Neil Kinnock:**

Comrades, we are alright.