
Thank you for inviting me.

You are one of the most mentally alert and critical audiences.

With such a fine audience, there is a big temptation to wander from the subject, but I will keep strictly to my subject – Gallup Polls.

You are, of course, the most expert group of questioners in Australia. I will be happy to answer all questions, except any which compare the three Australian polls.

The accuracy of all three polls in predicting the result of last Saturday's election was extraordinary. Such close agreement with each other and with the election result, is exceptional.

A few weeks ago I feared we would differ, or all be wrong. That would have been bad for all of us.

I am sure our close agreement will benefit all of us. Others who are in market research but not in political polls should also benefit.

Each of you has a six-page document. Pages 1 to 4 summarise our record predicting Federal elections, and include some explanations.

The fifth page deals with last Saturday's election.

The last yellow sheet, in the third column, describes our statistical methods. You may take those documents with you.

Before drawing your attention to some parts of those 6 pages, I will anticipate two questions:

1. Why did all of the American polls wrongly predict that Dewey would defeat Truman in 1948? and

Affiliated with Gallup Polls throughout the world.
2. Why did all of the British Polls wrongly predict that Labor would win in 1970?

I am one of the few people who worked on the pre-election polls in America in 1948 who is still in opinion research. All of the polls were wrong because they interviewed samples of people with an upper-class or Republican bias.

Dr. Gallup removed that bias by 1952. Since 1954 the American Gallup Poll has been consistently accurate - the best in the world.

The method of sampling used by Dr. Gallup until 1948 was called "quota" sampling, because each interviewer was given quotas of men and women of particular sexes, ages and economic circumstances. The interviewers were required to fill those quotas.

The method now used by Dr. Gallup, and by most opinion researchers and market researchers throughout the world, is called "probability" sampling. It is a method of controlled random sampling. The variance due to chance can be calculated.

Quota sampling and probability sampling are both described briefly in Page 3 of the sheets you have.

The British, French and German Gallup Polls still use quota sampling. Changes made at the British Gallup Poll early in 1970 may have introduced a lower-income bias and included too many Labor voters among the people interviewed.

I don't know why all of the other polls were wrong in Britain in 1970.

It seems that, basically, Age Poll and ANOP used statistical methods like ours, except that they didn't cover all of the electorates.

Their methods of questioning, however, seem to have been different.

I don't know why their percentages for A.L.P. fell by about 6% throughout the year, while our percentages for A.L.P. rose by 4%. They may have changed their questions.
In the tables in the attached sheets, I would draw your attention to the figures in the 2nd last column under "Shift". They are A.L.P. gains and losses at each election for the House of Representatives, compared with the preceding election for the House. Senate elections are not taken into account.

Note that swings of more than 3% are not normal. They occurred in 1949 at the first post-war election, in 1955 when the DLP began, in 1961 when a recession swung the pendulum to A.L.P., in 1966 when Holt obtained a vote of confidence as the successor to Menzies, and in 1969 when the pendulum swung back to a fairly normal 47% for A.L.P.

The swing of 3% to A.L.P. last Saturday was small, but it made a total swing of 10% compared with the nadir of 40% in 1966. It took A.L.P. to 50% for the first time since the emergence of DLP in 1955.

The question ahead is will A.L.P., by good government, raise its percentage at the next election to Curtin's 1946 level of 53%, despite the DLP? Or will the pendulum swing back to L-CP?

If we take the word "corrupt" to mean "dishonest", then in Australia it is not true that power causes dishonesty. But if we give the word "corrupt" the meaning it has in "Rust and moths corrupt, and thieves break in and steal", then we have the warning that power erodes and destroys itself.

Every act by a government annoys someone, while the good deeds of a government are accepted without a word of thanks.

How long can the best of governments retain majority support? Last Saturday's votes in South Australia and Western Australia, as shown in the 2nd table of the 5th sheet, should be a warning to those who would disregard public opinion, either silent majorities or militant minorities.