

Teacher Resource

Opinion Polls

Focus Questions

1. Discuss the *Opinion Polls* story as a class and record the main points of the discussion.
2. What are opinion polls?
3. What did opinion polls say before the 2019 Federal Election?
4. The sample group of people for opinion polls is randomly chosen. True or false?
5. What method was used to collect opinion polls in the US in the 1800s?
6. How did polling improve when telephones became more popular?
7. Why was the outcome of Australia's recent election a surprise for a lot of people?
8. How is the way we communicate affecting opinion polls?
9. Why is it important for polling companies to get a good random sample?
10. What questions do you have after watching the BTN story?

Activity

Class discussion

Before watching the BTN *Opinion Polls* story, hold a class discussion asking the following questions:

- What do you know about opinion polls?
- Have you participated in a poll before? Explain.



After watching the BTN story, discuss with students what they learnt about opinion polls. Ask students to respond to one or more of the following:

- What is an opinion poll? Write a definition.
- Why do we have opinion polls?
- Who uses opinion polls (media, political parties, market research companies)?
- How have opinion polls changed over time (look at the history of opinion polls)?
- What are the advantages and disadvantages of opinion polls.
- Are opinion polls reliable? Explain.
- Can opinion polls predict the future? Explain.
- How is an opinion poll different to a survey or a census?

Key Learning

Students will conduct their own opinion poll based on an issue of interest to them.

Curriculum

HASS – Year 5

Work in groups to generate responses to issues and challenges.

HASS – Year 6

Use criteria to make decisions and judgements and consider advantages and disadvantages of preferring one decision over others.

HASS – Year 7

Evaluate and synthesise evidence to draw conclusions.

Civics & Citizenship – Year 5

The key features of the electoral process in Australia.

Civics & Citizenship – Year 6

The responsibilities of electors and representatives in Australia's democracy.

Civics and Citizenship – Year 7

Reflect on their role as a citizen in Australia's democracy.

Maths - Year 8

Explore the practicalities and implications of obtaining data through sampling using a variety of investigative processes.

Activity

Glossary

Students will develop a glossary of words and terms that relate to the BTN *Opinion Polls* story. Below are some words to get them started. Students will add words and meanings to their glossary as they come across unfamiliar words throughout their research.

Statistics	Random Sample	Population size
Opinion	Poll	Survey
Sample size	Data	Analysis

Activity

Understanding opinion polls

In this activity students will find examples of opinion polls, surveys, data and statistics that help us understand information in the world around us. Students will respond to the following:

- Look in the newspaper, on television or on the internet for news stories that include data and statistics. It may be an opinion poll, survey or census. Choose one example to focus on for this activity.
- How do you think the information was collected? Was the information collected face-to-face, on the telephone, online or through other traditional techniques?
- How is the information represented? For example, in a graph, diagram or percentage. Is it clear and simple to understand?
- Are there comparisons made about the data? Explain.
- How do these statistics help us understand the information?

Activity

Class opinion poll

Students will conduct their own opinion poll on an issue or topic that interests them. Working in groups, students will need to decide who their sample group will be and how many people will be polled. What method they will use to conduct the poll? (Face to face interviews or written responses).

Issue

Working in groups, decide on an issue that you want the public's opinion on. Decide on the question you will ask respondents, making sure that it is clear and relevant. Below are some examples:

- Should homework be banned?
- Should the voting age be lowered to 16?
- Should kids under the age of 14 be allowed to have a mobile phone?
- Is Scott Morrison a good Prime Minister?
- Should junk food ads be banned on kids' TV?

Sample size

Sample size is important for obtaining reliable data. The greater the number of people interviewed, the more likely the prediction will be accurate.

As a group decide what you will need to achieve an adequate sample size.

You will need to think about the following:

- What is your population size? E.g. whole school
- How big a sample do you need?

Polling

- How diverse is your sample?
- Will it be random or targeted?
- How will you invite people to participate?
- What method will you use to conduct your opinion poll?
- How will you record the data?
- Conduct your opinion poll.
- Sort and enter the information you have collected into an excel spreadsheet.

Present

What is the best way to represent the data you have collected? Summarise the information you have gathered and represent the results as a percentage. Alternatively create a graph, draw a diagram or create an infographic to highlight the opinion poll results.

Analyse

Analyse your results

- What do the opinion poll results tell you? Write a short paragraph explaining the results.
- How reliable do you think your results were?
- If you conducted another opinion poll with a different sample group do you think the results would differ? Explain.
- Did you have a big enough sample size? If you surveyed the whole school how would this improve the representation opinions?
- What would you do differently next time?
- What are the advantages and disadvantages of opinion polls.
- If other groups in your class have polled on the same issue compare your results.

Activity

Run that Town

[Run that Town!](#) Use real Census data to discover who's who in your area and make decisions that will sway popular opinion in your favour. Choose from hundreds of projects for your town - from the practical to the preposterous. What kind of leader will you be? Will you be treated to a ticker tape parade, or chased out of town by an angry mob?



Useful Websites

BTN – Opinion Polls

<https://www.abc.net.au/btn/classroom/opinion-polls/10531238>

BTN - Opinion Polls

<https://www.abc.net.au/btn/classroom/opinion-polls/10527164>

ABC News – Election 2019: How the polls got it so wrong in predicting a Labor victory

<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2019-05-19/federal-election-results-how-the-polls-got-it-so-wrong/11128176>

Museum of Australian Democracy – A brief history of opinion polls

<https://www.moadoph.gov.au/blog/a-brief-history-of-opinion-polls/>