

## Political Polls\*

Many people are closely following the political polls during the final weeks preceding an important election. But how do these polls actually work? They are surveys of a relatively small number of people compared to the actual number who will vote. They are an attempt to determine who may actually win an election before the final vote. Let's say that 100 million people are expected to vote in the general election. If 100 people are asked for their opinions, each respondent represents a million voters. Obviously, the results of such a poll are not very reliable. The more people surveyed, the more meaningful the results.

Political parties have various ways of making their polls more accurate. They try to find a representative variety of people to question. For example, they look for people with similar backgrounds and from similar regions to those of all the voters. Political parties also ask questions that try to determine how many people who support each candidate will actually vote. If a candidate has a higher percentage of enthusiastic supporters than his opponent, he has a better chance of winning than the simple numbers might suggest.

If we look at polls that are taken over time, we can often detect a tendency. We can tell if a candidate is gaining or losing support when we compare the most recent poll to earlier ones. Polls often ask potential voters what they like or dislike about each candidate. The campaigns use those results to help them decide which issues to stress or which positions to clarify. They can also determine which voters to target with their messages.

\*Polls = Encuestas de opinión

### QUESTIONS

1.- Are the following statements TRUE or FALSE? Copy the evidence from the text. No marks are given for only TRUE or FALSE.

- a) The results of polls based on a small number of opinions are very precise.
- b) One of the objectives of opinion polls is to find out how many people will go and vote.

(Puntuación máxima: 2 puntos)

2.- In your own words and based on the ideas in the text, answer the following questions. Do not copy from the text.

- a) How can political opinion polls be made more precise? (Give two answers.)
- b) How do politicians and their advisors use opinion polls to their advantage?

(Puntuación máxima: 2 puntos)

3.- Find the words or phrases in the text that mean:

- a) significant (paragraph 1)
- b) correct (paragraph 2)
- c) trend (paragraph 3)
- d) to emphasise (paragraph 3)

(Puntuación máxima: 1 punto)

4.- Complete the following sentences. Use the appropriate form of the word in brackets when given.

a) Opinion polls \_\_\_\_\_ (use) for many years by politicians \_\_\_\_\_ (help) them plan their election strategy.

b) The \_\_\_\_\_ (large) the number of people questioned, the \_\_\_\_\_ (accurate) the result of the opinion poll.

c) Sometimes, \_\_\_\_\_ takes a long time for the election result to be decided. The votes have to be recounted several times \_\_\_\_\_ a final result is reached.

d) Opinion poll designers are people \_\_\_\_\_ always try to find new ways to improve their product. In the future the polls will certainly be more effective \_\_\_\_\_ they are now.

(Puntuación máxima: 2 puntos)

5.- Write about 100 to 150 words on the following topic.

What would you propose to improve society if you were an influential politician?

(Puntuación máxima: 3 puntos)