

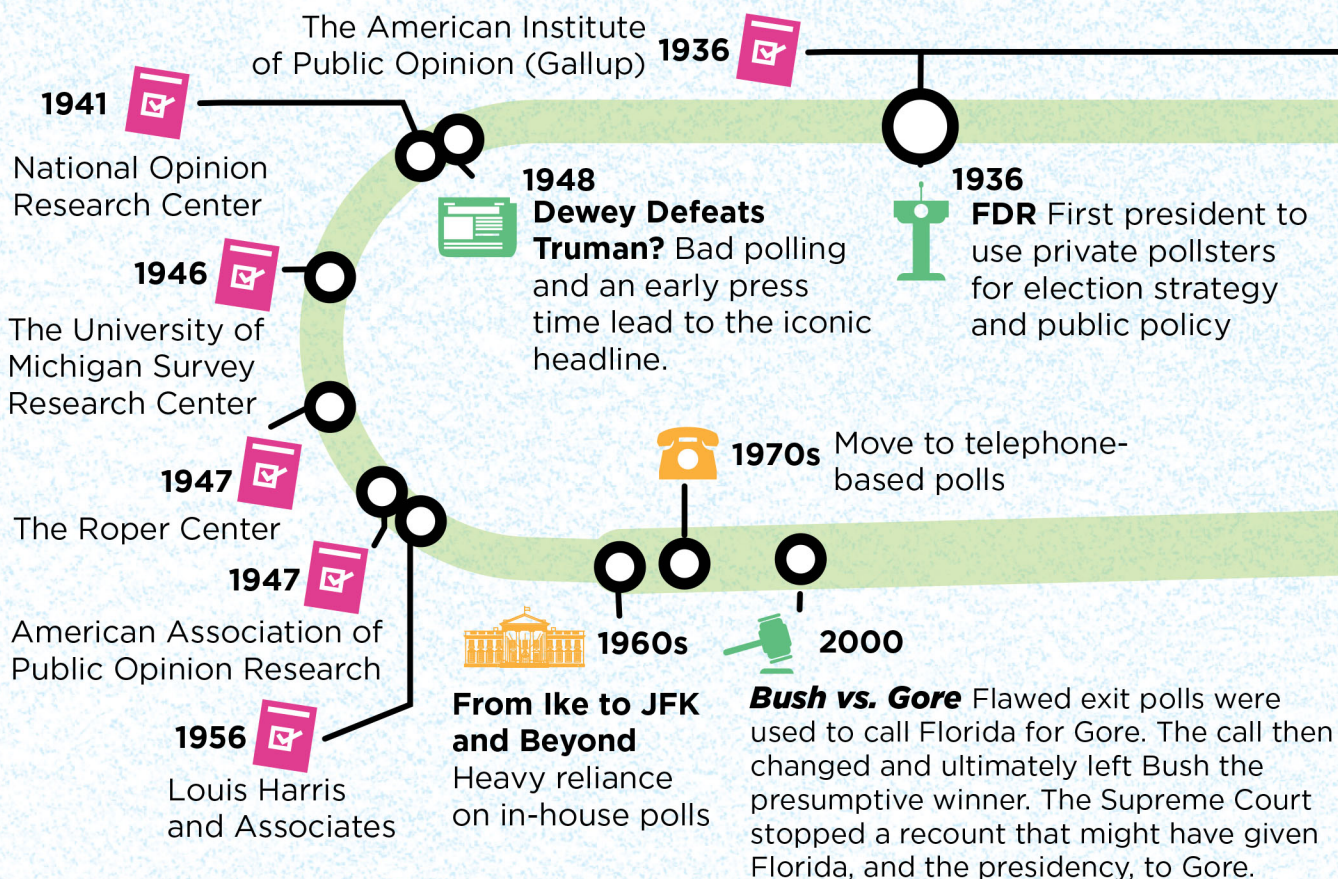
# THE BIG PICTURE: HOW WE KNOW WHAT THE PUBLIC REALLY THINKS

Public opinion polling is hard to get our heads around—how can we know what the public thinks without asking everyone? It seems beyond counterintuitive that we can estimate what an entire nation thinks by asking as few as 1,500 people, and yet, so we can. While polling can feel mysterious, the truth is it is anything but—the science of polling allows us to make very educated estimates of what the public thinks.

## The History of Polling

**JULY 4, 1776**

“When in the course of human events, it becomes necessary for one people to dissolve the political bands that have connected them with another...a decent respect to the opinions of mankind requires that they should declare the causes that impel them to the separation.”



“We all do no end of feeling and we mistake it for thinking. And out of it we get an aggregation which we consider a boon. Its name is public opinion. It is held in reverence. It settles everything. Some think it is the voice of God.” —Mark Twain, “Corn-pone Opinions,” 1900