# ELEMENTS INFLUENCING PUBLIC OPINION

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**Annotation:** *This article examines how public opinion is formed, tracing its historical background and highlighting the influence of contemporary media—especially social media platforms—on this process. It evaluates crucial elements like individual experiences, social interactions, mass communication, political leadership, audience behavior, economic conditions, crises, and media manipulation, illustrating their impact on public awareness. The study also contrasts traditional and modern perspectives, shedding light on the mechanisms behind the development of collective opinion in society.*

**Keywords:** *public opinion, social networks, mass media, political leaders, personal experience, socialization, economic factors, manipulation, audience dynamics, internet journalism.*

**Annotatsiya:** *Ushbu maqolada jamoatchilik fikrining shakllanish jarayoni, uning tarixiy asoslari hamda zamonaviy axborot texnologiyalari, ayniqsa, ijtimoiy tarmoqlarning bu boradagi roli yoritib berilgan. Xususan, insonning shaxsiy tajribalari, ijtimoiy muhitga moslashuvi, ommaviy axborot vositalari, siyosiy yetakchilarning ta'siri, auditoriya xususiyatlari, iqtisodiy sharoitlar, turli inqirozlar va axborot manipulyatsiyasi kabi muhim omillar ko'rib chiqilib, ularning jamoatchilik ongiga qanday ta'sir ko'rsatishi tahlil qilingan. Maqolada tarixiy va zamonaviy yondashuvlar solishtirib o'rganilib, jamoada umumiy fikr qanday shakllanishi izohlab berilgan.*

**Kalit so'zlar:** *jamoatchilik fikri, ijtimoiy tarmoqlar, raqamli platformalar ommaviy axborot vositalari, siyosiy yetakchilar, shaxsiy kuzatuvlar, ijtimoiylashuv, iqtisodiy omillar, manipulyatsiya, auditoriya dinamikasi, internet jurnalistikasi.*

**Аннотация:** *В статье рассматриваются особенности формирования общественного мнения, его исторические истоки, а также значение современных информационных ресурсов, особенно социальных сетей, в этом процессе. Особое внимание уделяется таким важным аспектам, как личный опыт, процессы социализации, деятельность СМИ, влияние политических деятелей, поведение аудитории, экономические условия, кризисные ситуации и информационные манипуляции. Анализируется их воздействие на общественное сознание. Также в исследовании проводится сравнение традиционных и современных подходов и раскрываются механизмы становления коллективного мнения в обществе..*

**Ключевые слова:** *общественное мнение, социальные сети, средства массовой информации, политические лидеры, личный опыт, социализация, экономические факторы, манипуляция, динамика аудитории, интернет-журналистика.*

Public opinion formation has been an integral part of human social life since ancient times. Although the term "public opinion" was not used until the 18th century, similar phenomena have occurred throughout history. This raises the question: how was public opinion formed in times before the internet and social networks existed? In past centuries, orators and preachers played a leading role in shaping public opinion because they could rally the entire public, provide various information, and contribute to the development of public consciousness. This was a significant factor in public opinion formation. Over centuries, these factors evolved and have further developed in today's internet era. Social networks now serve as a primary force in shaping public opinion.

Nowadays, modern technologies and the development of the internet affect every sphere, including journalism. These changes have paved the way for the emergence of internet journalism. The role of social networks, that is, the internet, in shaping public opinion is substantial. Public opinion formation is a complex process influenced by various factors that shape individuals' perception, interpretation, and attitudes toward societal issues, events, and politics. Today, there are several main factors influencing public opinion formation[30]. Among them are:

- Personal experiences;
- Socialization;
- Influence of mass media;
- Political leaders;
- Social audience dynamics;
- Economic factors;
- Crisis events;
- Clear biases;
- Manipulation.

Thus, these factors are considered the foundation of public opinion formation. Below, they will be examined in more detail.

1. **Personal experiences**[31] – People often form their opinions based on personal interactions and relationships. For example, everyday communication helps form new ideas in the human mind, which can be either positive or negative. Furthermore, a person who has experienced discrimination might develop strong opinions about racial equality or social justice.

2. **Socialization**[32] – This is a crucial factor in shaping public opinion today. It refers to the role of family, peers, education, cultural background, values, beliefs, and relationships in shaping individuals' opinions. For example, a person raised in a politically active family may adopt various political ideologies, but those exposed to different viewpoints may develop more nuanced or refined opinions. Therefore, public opinion formation requires exposure not only to a single environment but to diverse perspectives,

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[30] https://cyberleninka.ru/article/n/jurnalistlarning-jamoatchilik-fikri
[31] https://cyberleninka.ru/article/n/jurnalistlarning-jamoatchilik-fikri
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since a person with broad experiences and self-reflection tends to have a wider range of thought.

3. **Influence of mass media**[33] – Mass media, including news outlets, social media platforms, and entertainment channels, plays a crucial role in shaping issues, presenting information, and influencing public discourse. In our country, television, radio, and social networks are convenient and popular sources of information. Therefore, these platforms hold significant importance in shaping public opinion.

4. **Political leaders**[34] – Political leaders, influencers, and opinion leaders can shape public opinion through their speeches, policies, and endorsements. For example, a charismatic leader advocating for healthcare reform may garner public support for such initiatives.

5. **Audience dynamics**[35] – People tend to align their views with those of social groups such as political parties, religious organizations, or community groups. Audience dynamics, or group dynamics, can strengthen existing beliefs or generate new opinion patterns. For instance, opposition between political party supporters can lead to sharp divides and make consensus difficult on certain issues.

6. **Economic factors**[36] – Socio-economic conditions such as employment, financial hardship, or prosperity influence people's perceptions and attitudes. For example, someone facing economic difficulties might prioritize policies related to job creation and economic stability. Economic factors always play a distinct and important role in various spheres.

7. **Crisis Events**[37] – Major events such as natural disasters, terrorist attacks, various wars, or public health emergencies can shape public opinion by prompting a reassessment of policies and priorities. For example, the government's response to the pandemic has significantly influenced public trust and perceptions of competence, as we all know. Furthermore, during the pandemic, we observed a notable increase in the role of social media in shaping public opinion. This process is still ongoing, and the continued development and influence of social networks is no longer surprising to any of us.

8. **Cognitive Biases**[38] – Individuals may exhibit faulty thinking patterns such as confirmation bias or the availability heuristic, which can distort their perception of information and influence the formation of opinions. Some people may selectively seek information that supports their prior beliefs, while others may remain firm in their views despite evidence to the contrary.

Understanding these factors is extremely important for policymakers and communicators who aim to shape public opinion or implement societal change. By acknowledging the multifaceted nature of opinion formation, stakeholders can develop more

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effective strategies for engaging with the public and encouraging informed decision-making.

9. **Manipulation**[39] is the attempt to influence a person's thoughts, emotions, and future decisions. The word "manipulation" itself conveys meanings such as "to take control" or "to hold in one's grip." At the core of manipulation lies the intent to direct people's attention toward a targeted object or idea through various covert or overt methods[40]. From the earliest stages of human development, we observe that individuals have had the need to influence one another and instill their ideas in others. No individual in society can live entirely independently, without following paths already walked by others. In this natural process, some individuals take on the role of influencers, while others are influenced

The German philosopher and representative of neo-Freudianism (psychoanalytic theory), Erich Fromm, described the dynamics of interpersonal relationships in society, particularly the desire to dominate others or, conversely, the urge to submit to others, as follows: "…They readily obey the commands of others, even when doing so harm themselves. They follow any foolish idea pronounced with conviction; if it comes from a commander, they are ready to march into a war that brings nothing but destruction… The majority of people, like sleeping infants, seem to fall easily under the influence of anyone who threatens or cunningly manipulates them, and they follow without thinking. A person who remains firm in their own thoughts and can go against the will of the crowd is not the rule, but more of an exception."[41]  Today, manipulative phenomena can be observed in every sphere — in fact, in every area of life.

American sociologist Charles Horton Cooley emphasized that "public opinion is not a state of broad agreement, but rather a process of mutual influence and interaction".[42] In 1961, American political scientist V.O. Key defined public opinion as "the opinions of private persons that governments find it prudent to heed"[43] In the 1990s, advancements in statistical and demographic analysis led to an understanding of public opinion as the collective viewpoint of a population defined by specific demographic or ethnic groups.

Furthermore, it would be a mistake to claim that the influence of public opinion is limited only to politics or elections. In reality, public opinion extends its influence to many other fields such as culture, fashion, literature, art, marketing, and public relations. Today, this phenomenon is considered one of the most pressing issues.

However, the contradictory understandings of public opinion have evolved over centuries, especially as new methods of measuring public opinion began to be applied in politics, commerce, religion, and social activism. In addition, political scientists and certain historians have particularly emphasized the role of public opinion in the functioning of the state and politics, drawing attention to its influence on the formulation of public policy.

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[42] https://www.britannica.com/topic/public-opinion/Public-opinion-and-government
[43] https://www.britannica.com/topic/public-opinion/Public-opinion-and-government

Indeed, some political scientists equate public opinion with national will. In contrast, sociologists tend to conceptualize public opinion as a product of social interaction and communication. From this perspective, it is clear that without communication among members of society, public opinion on any matter cannot emerge. Even if individuals' personal opinions are similar, their beliefs do not constitute public opinion until they are communicated through television, radio, email, social networks, print media, or telephone in some form.

Moreover, sociologists also stress that on any given issue, multiple differing public opinions may simultaneously exist. According to American researcher Irving Crespi, "The essence of public opinion is that it is interactive, multidimensional, and constantly changing."[44]

Unlike scholars, political scientists, and historians, there are also other individuals who aim to influence public opinion. These may include leaders, shareholders, heads of neighborhood associations, or similar officials. Often, the opinions expressed publicly differ from private beliefs. Some views, although widely held, may remain completely unspoken. For example, in an authoritarian or totalitarian state, many people may oppose the government but fear expressing their opinions even to their families and friends. In such cases, anti-government public opinion does not develop at all.

In conclusion, public opinion is shaped by various historical, social, political, and technological factors. Today, the internet and social media have become an inseparable part of this process. Factors such as personal experience, socialization, mass media, political leaders, and audience dynamics emerge as the main driving forces shaping public consciousness. A deep understanding of these factors is crucial for comprehending how collective opinion forms and for approaching it with awareness.

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