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Title: Mode Differences. DK Responses in the 1984 Post-Election Study
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Abstract

The 1984 Election Study presented a rare opportunity to compare telephone and face-to-face modes of interviewing using same sample frame (multi-stage area probability). Respondents to the Post-Election wave were randomly assigned to a FTF or T condition. The authors assert that differences that emerged while comparing the two half-samples cannot be attributed to biases in the demographic composition of either sample, to the difference in field periods, or to differential treatment of respondents by pre-election interviews, since the assignment to post-election condition was "blind." The FTF sample had a higher overall incidence of "Don't Know" answers over a large number of variables. Analyses concentrated on three areas characterized by "strikingly large differences" in distribution of Don't Know responses by mode: Reagan and Mondale traits, performance evaluation of candidates or institutions, and political information items. These differences are ascribed to differences in training with respect to probing for face-to-face vs. telephone interviewing staffs, as well as the centralized setting of the telephone facility which allows for more detailed supervision of probing practices.