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Title: Report on the 1991 Pilot Items on environment

Date: February 2, 1992

Dataset(s): 1991 Pilot Study

Abstract

Zaller examines the environmental policy items included in the 1991 Pilot Study. Zaller first tests the performance of the traditional environmentalist feeling thermometer against experimental thermometers, which use alternate item wording. He finds that the traditional measure, though not perfect, performs about as well as the alternatives. Zaller argues that the traditional measure should be retained on the grounds of simplicity and historical continuity. The Pilot Study also contained three experimental items concerning attitudes on environmental issues. Zaller finds that people's attitudes towards such issues carry relatively little political power. In particular, they are not substantially related to important dependent variables, such as presidential evaluations. This lack of importance, however, may be an artifact of the low salience of environmental issues at the time of the Pilot Study. Zaller suggests including the environmental items in future survey efforts if it is believed that environmental concerns are an "emerging issue."