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Title: Questions on Public Attitudes Toward the Environment

Date: January 12, 1996

Dataset(s): 1995 Pilot Study

Abstract

Richardson examines the performance of the environmental policy items in the 1995 Pilot Study. She finds: (1) Responses to the questions concerning whether the government should make more of an effort to protect the environment and responses to the "tougher government regulation" question appear to reflect similar sets of preferences. Both sets of questions also seem to elicit responses similar to the environmental spending question, though the later item also appears to reflect budget constraint concerns. (2) The items which ask respondents to place political figures on the "environment vs. jobs" continuum are more effective than the "regulation vs. business" placement questions. In particular, the former set of placement items force respondents to consider the various and somewhat conflicting environmental policy priorities of the Democratic party. (3) Respondent preferences on which levels of government should be responsible for environmental protection appear to be on a different continuum than preferences concerning the importance of environmental protection. The question on the preferred level of government for addressing environmental problems then provides information about the respondents' environmental priorities not available elsewhere in the survey. (4) Responses to questions concerning national and local air and water quality reveal two interesting relationships. First, those who live in areas of higher air and water quality are less likely to want to increase environmental spending than other respondents. Second, ideology influences respondents' perceptions of national air and water quality. Thus, including questions on air and water quality sheds light on why a respondent would want to increase or decrease environmental spending. (5) The five questions on general environmental protection preferences share many of the same background correlates, indicating that people approach these questions with roughly the same concerns in mind.